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**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 15, 2007**

SUBJECT: SMALL BUSINESS OUTREACH ACTIVITY

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file the following report on Metro's small business outreach activities for fiscal year 2007.

ISSUE

Staff has conducted extensive outreach in an effort to increase opportunities to the small business community. Since October 2006, staff has participated in eleven (11) outreach events to share information with the small business community such as how to do business with Metro, how to get certified as a small business with Metro, and to inform business owners of the small business supportive services offered by Metro. The audiences of these small business related events total approximately 3,500 individuals. Staff has continued to meet monthly with the 14 member organizations of the Transportation Business Advisory Council (TBAC) and is extending its reach to other local chambers of commerce. Additionally, staff has continued to work with the City of Los Angeles' Minority Business Opportunities Center (LAMBOC) of the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) and other public agency organizations to communicate contract opportunity information to a larger audience.

As a result of this activity, Metro has seen an increase in the submittal of small business certification applications. Since October 1, 2006, twenty (20) small businesses have submitted certification applications with 50% of the applicant firms crediting Metro outreach efforts as the reason for applying for certification.

BACKGROUND

At the September 2006 Regular Board meeting, staff presented their recommendation of 13% for Metro's Federal Fiscal Year 2007 DBE Program Overall Participation Goal. The Goal represents the level of DBE participation Metro expects to achieve on its federally-assisted contracts in Federal Fiscal Year 2007 and, as required by federal grant agreement, is submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for review. The Board approved the 13% Goal and, through an amendment by Chair Villaraigosa aimed

at increasing the population of certified DBE firms, directed staff to work with TBAC, LAMBOC, and others to increase contract opportunities for DBEs by February 2007.

DISCUSSION

Metro makes every effort to ensure that its outreach services are available to all minority, women, and small business organizations in the greater Los Angeles community. The outreach efforts include the following activities.

- **Increase print media advertisements for Small Business-related periodicals:**
Metro has invested outreach funds in select small business events. Support of such events provides staff an avenue to connect and network with many small business owners and small business community representatives, while providing an opportunity to advertise Metro's commitment to the small business community through the event's program journal and related materials.

During the reporting period, Metro advertised its small business program message in seven (7) small business related event program journals, reaching an audience of approximately 3,300 individuals.

- **Metro Small Business Orientation and Certification Workshop:**
Staff meets monthly with representatives of small businesses interested in learning about doing business with Metro. The workshop covers important topics such as small business certification, vendor registration, and pre-qualification. Participants meet one-on-one with Metro Buyers and Contract Administrators to present their product and/or services.
- **Broaden sponsorship and participation in major vendor fairs:**
Staff tracks all regional vendor fairs to determine those events that will provide the greatest exposure to the small business community. Most of these events will take place in 2007.

During the reporting period, Metro participated in eleven (11) small business organization events, sharing information on how to do business with Metro, how to get certified, and inviting firms to participate in Metro's monthly small business certification and orientation workshops.

- **Major coordination of the 14th Annual Greater Los Angeles Vendor Fair:**
Staff is tasked with the coordination and facilitation of the 2007 Greater Los Angeles Vendor Fair. This year's fair will include programs designed to engage small business owners such as the Green Program, Cyber Café, A/E mega workshop, and p-card marketplace.
- **Enhance support of Small Business-related professional organizations:**
Metro, as a corporate member of TBAC member organizations, attends many organization events to share information on Metro Small Business Program activities. These efforts have provided direct access to a significant number of small business owners that have yet to engage in business with Metro.

Metro will facilitate a TBAC Retreat in February where TBAC goals will be developed by the TBAC Executive Committee. Additionally, staff will present to the TBAC Executive Committee a plan to recruit five to ten (5-10) members from each organization to participate in Metro's small business certification workshop, with the ultimate goal of certifying these firms.

- **Targeted Outreach:**
Staff will perform targeted outreach to expand its pool of certified firms in two (2) specific industries in preparation for upcoming contract opportunities. Community relations and audit industry firms will receive targeted outreach efforts due to a shortage of these firms in the Metro and California Unified Certification Program (CUCP) databases. Staff will conduct workshops on certification, successful strategies for Metro Request for Proposals (RFPs), pre-qualification, and lobbyist registration. Staff anticipates completing these workshops by mid-February.
- **Revamping of the Metro website to better service Small Business Inquiries:**
Staff will upload documents online for a "self-serve" approach to frequently requested business tools such as small business certification application, the *10 Steps of Doing Business with Metro* brochure, and the Metro certified small business database.
- **Opening of the Metro Small Business Center:**
The Small Business Center will include a small business plan room, comprehensive resource center for individuals interested in doing business with Metro, information on accessing Metro contracts, assistance in completing small business certification application, and additional information necessary to better position small businesses for contracting success. The center will include information to connect with other agencies and opportunities, including LAMBOC announcements, Metropolitan Water District, City of Los Angeles, County of Los Angeles, Orange Country Transportation Authority, Los Angeles Unified School District, et al. A Metro staff person is a current member of the LAMBOC Advisory Council.
- **Increase membership and participation in local chambers of commerce to enhance Metro's visibility to local small businesses:**
Metro has participated in targeted regional chambers of commerce events to educate their membership on opportunities provided to small business owners by Metro's Small Business Program.

Metro continues to work with the fourteen (14) member organizations of TBAC. Additionally, staff has increased its effort to communicate contract and small business information to other organizations including the Los Angeles Metropolitan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Los Angeles Regional Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the North Valley Chamber of Commerce, and the San Fernando Valley Black Chamber of Commerce, East Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, Boyle Heights Chamber of Commerce, Lincoln Heights Chamber of Commerce.

Metro and LAMBOC continue to exchange information on upcoming contracting opportunities which are broadcast to the respective organizations constituency. Additionally, Metro and LAMBOC support each other by participating (exhibiting and financial support) in respective agency small business outreach events. Often, Metro and LAMBOC participate on professional panels in support of small business programs and are co-partners for the Turner Construction Management Training Program. Metro is a major sponsor of the City of Los Angeles' Minority Enterprise Development Week celebration, culminating in an event which will be held February 2, 2007 at the Millennium Biltmore.

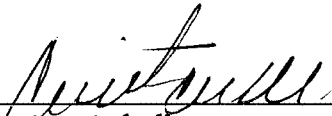
NEXT STEPS

Staff anticipates that the continuation of these activities will further increase small business owners' awareness of the opportunities provided by Metro's Small Business Programs and additionally, increase the base of certified small businesses. Metro will continue to track its outreach activities and will be prepared to update the Board as needed.

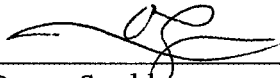
ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

None.

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