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**REVISED**  
**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE**  
**September 19, 2007**

**SUBJECT: FY 2009 VERY SMALL STARTS PROJECTS**

**ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION**

**RECOMMENDATION**

- A. Approve the following three Very Small Starts projects for submittal to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for their consideration in the FY 2009 federal funding cycle:
- Wilshire Boulevard Bus-Only Lane
  - Van Nuys Corridor Bus Speed Improvement
  - Sepulveda Corridor Bus Speed Improvement
- B. Approve ~~\$10.2~~ **10.3** million in Transportation Congestion Relief Program (TCRP) funds as local match funds for the Van Nuys and Sepulveda Corridor Bus Speed Improvement projects.

**ISSUE**

One of the new discretionary grant programs created through the passage of the federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU) is the Small Starts program. This program provides funding on a competitive basis for small public transportation capital projects that operate along dedicated corridors or fixed guideways. One component of this program of particular interest to Metro is the Very Small Starts program.

This document is to advise the Board that the above three projects were submitted to the FTA for their consideration as Very Small Starts projects in the FY 2009 funding cycle on September 7, 2007, in order to meet the application deadline. The proposal to submit all three projects by the application deadline was discussed in the August 10, 2007 Board Box titled: "FY 2009 Very Small Starts Proposals".

**ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The Board could request staff to pull one or more of the three applications out of the Very Small Starts request. Staff is not recommending this, as these are the projects in Metro's 2001 Long Range Transportation Plan that best meet the eligibility requirements for the Very Small Starts Program.

## FINANCIAL IMPACT

**Capital** – The Small Starts provision of the Section 5309 Capital Investment Grants Program stipulates that project sponsors may request up to 80% of the net project cost in Small Starts funds. It also states that grantees may apply Federal funds, other than Small Starts funds, to the project. With the Board of Directors' approval, the minimum required local match (20%) for both the Van Nuys and Sepulveda Corridor Bus Speed Improvement Projects will be met with TCRP funds. The local match requirement for the Wilshire Boulevard Bus-Only Lane project will be met through the use of existing City of Los Angeles Call for Projects funds, resulting in a 24% match.

**Operating** – Approximately 120 Metro buses operate during the peak periods on Wilshire Boulevard each weekday. This includes Metro Rapid, Rapid Express, and local service. Implementation of bus-only lanes, and realization of the projected 30% improvement in bus travel times, will increase service efficiency along the corridor by as much as 30%. Service efficiencies can be expected with the Van Nuys and Sepulveda Corridor Bus Speed Improvement projects, but at a lesser level since the bus only lane segments are shorter.

## DISCUSSION

SAFETEA-LU (Section 5309(e)) created the Small Starts program to fund various small-scale transit corridor projects. One component of the Small Starts Program, known as the Very Small Starts program, encourages the implementation of small, low-risk bus or rail projects that meet certain criteria. In particular, this category encourages projects that are less than \$50 million in total cost and less than \$3 million per mile, **unescalated**. Bus Rapid Transit projects generally are highly competitive in this category.

Last year, Metro submitted three Very Small Starts projects to the FTA for consideration as part of FTA's FY 2008 funding cycle. The three projects were: 1) Metro Rapid System Gap Closure Project, 2) Van Nuys Corridor Bus Speed Improvement Project, and 3) Sepulveda Corridor Bus Speed Improvement Project. Of these three projects, the Metro Rapid System Gap Closure Project was provided approximately \$16.7 million in the FY 2008 Budget released by the President earlier this year. This project is to complete the implementation of the Metro Rapid system adopted by the Board through the Metro Rapid Five-Year Plan and the Long Range Transportation Plan. The other two projects, also identified in the Long Range Transportation Plan, were not awarded funding.

FTA recently published a Federal Register notifying transit operators that the deadline for submitting Very Small Starts applications for the FY 2009 funding cycle was September 7, 2007. Staff reviewed the program requirements and submitted the Wilshire Boulevard Bus-Only Lane project along with re-scoped Van Nuys and Sepulveda Corridor Bus Speed Improvement projects. Both the Van Nuys and

Sepulveda Bus Speed Improvement projects were re-scoped to more closely align with FTA's Very Small Starts program objectives and project evaluation criteria and, thereby, make them more competitive. Submittal of these projects was subject to concurrence by the City of Los Angeles since all three projects involved operational improvements to City-controlled arterials. All three projects are included in the 2001 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and best meet the eligibility criteria and time frame of the Very Small Starts Program.

### **Wilshire Boulevard Bus-Only Lane Project**

The Wilshire Boulevard Bus-Only Lane project is a 12.5 mile project for which Metro is seeking Very Small Starts funding to construct bus-only lanes in the City of Los Angeles (9.0 miles) and Los Angeles County (0.6 miles). When implemented, bus passenger travel times are expected to improve by an average of 30%. The total cost of this project is estimated at ~~\$28.8~~ **31.5 million, in escalated dollars.**

Metro and the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) initiated a study in November 2006 on the feasibility of implementing bus-only lanes along Wilshire Boulevard between Valencia Street, just west of the LACBD, and Centinela Avenue in West Los Angeles, a 12.5 mile corridor. The study identified locations where buses experience delay, and proposed specific bus speed improvement measures to significantly reduce bus passenger travel times. The study covered all jurisdictions along Wilshire Boulevard, including the City of Los Angeles (9.0 miles), City of Beverly Hills (2.9 miles) and Los Angeles County (0.6 miles). Projected benefits suggested that significant improvements in bus travel times and a commensurate mode shift would result from implementing dedicated bus-only lanes along the entire length of the corridor. In the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County segments, end-to-end bus travel times were projected to improve by an average of nearly 15 minutes, or 30%. Average Metro Rapid bus speeds were projected to increase by an average of nearly 35%. A 10% mode shift from mixed flow to bus use was projected.

On May 3, 2007, the Los Angeles City Council adopted recommendations provided by the LADOT to implement "Peak Period End-to-End Bus-Only Lanes" along the City's segment of the corridor. On August 15, 2007, the Los Angeles City Council approved the project's scope and the recommendation to work with Metro to submit the project to compete for FY 2009 Very Small Starts funding. Future funding, as outlined in the 2001 Long Range Transportation Plan, would remain in place for upgrading the reconstruction between Fairfax Avenue and Western Avenue from asphalt to concrete in the future. The 2001 Long Range Transportation Plan reserves approximately \$124 million for this project in FY 2012-2014.

While discussions with the City of Beverly Hills regarding improvements along their segment of the corridor have only recently begun and, as such, were not included in the Very Small Starts application, the County's segment has been designed and is in preliminary engineering. Key elements of the Wilshire Boulevard Bus-Only Lane project are summarized in **Attachment 1**.

### **Van Nuys Corridor Bus Speed Improvement Project**

Construct a series of bus speed improvements along Van Nuys Boulevard between Ventura Boulevard and Foothill Boulevard, designed to increase bus travel speeds and, thereby, increase the attractiveness of the service. Improvements include the construction of one-half mile bus-only lane, intersection queue jumper, lane re-striping, bus signal priority improvements, Ventura -101- Freeway/Van Nuys Boulevard Interchange improvements, and bridge widening. The total cost of the project was estimated at \$8 million in Metro's 2006 application. Staff has since revised that estimate to ~~\$9.8~~ **8.5 million, in escalated dollars**. Key elements of the Van Nuys Corridor Bus Speed Improvement project are summarized in **Attachment 2**.

### **Sepulveda Corridor Bus Speed Improvement Project**

Construct a series of bus speed improvements along Sepulveda Boulevard between Ventura Boulevard and Brand Boulevard, designed to increase bus travel speeds and, thereby, increase the attractiveness of the service. Improvements include construction of a seven mile bus-only lane (primarily northbound only), lane re-striping and peak period parking restrictions. The total cost of this project was estimated at \$37 million in Metro's 2006 application. Staff has estimated that the cost should be escalated to ~~\$41~~ **43.0 million, in escalated dollars**. Key elements of the Sepulveda Corridor Bus Speed Improvement project are summarized in **Attachment 3**.

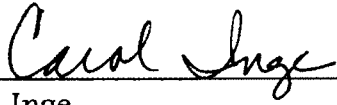
### **NEXT STEPS**

Staff will work with FTA to make any revisions to the grant applications through the month of October. Metro Government Relations staff will work to seek FTA approval of proposed projects and to secure an appropriation for any FTA recommended projects in the FY 2009 Transportation Appropriations Bill.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

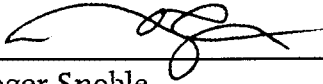
- 1 – Wilshire Boulevard Bus-Only Lane – Key Elements
- 2 – Van Nuys Corridor Bus Speed Improvement – Key Elements
- 3 – Sepulveda Corridor Bus Speed Improvement – Key Elements

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**ATTACHMENT 1**  
**WILSHIRE BOULEVARD BUS-ONLY LANE – Key Elements**

Key elements of the City’s project scope include the following:

- Traffic lane re-striping, bus signal priority upgrades, and traffic/transit signage necessary to implement a dedicated peak period bus-only lane along the entire length of the City’s segment. (approximately 9.0 miles)
- Widening of Wilshire Boulevard between Barrington Avenue and Federal Avenue to allow for the installation of an eastbound bus-only lane. This improvement will link the existing bus-only lane between Centinela Avenue and Barrington Avenue with the County’s segment mentioned above. (approximately 0.1 miles)
- Reconstruction of the curb lanes between Fairfax and Western with asphalt. (approximately 2.9 miles)
- Removal of existing “jut-outs” and alignment of curbs to increase the roadway width of Wilshire Boulevard between Westwood Boulevard and Comstock Avenue, thus allowing for the addition of a bus-only lane in the segment. (approximately 1.3 miles)
- Implementation of a construction-level public outreach program.

The County’s bus-only lane project consists of all work to accommodate roadway and traffic modifications, including transitions back to existing roadway approaches, on the portion of Wilshire Boulevard on County/Federal land between Federal Avenue/San Vicente and Veterans Avenue. Key elements of the County’s project scope include the following:

- Widening of Wilshire Boulevard between Federal Avenue and Bonsall Avenue.
- Traffic lane re-striping and the addition of an eastbound bus-only lane between Federal Avenue and Bonsall Avenue, including adjustments of geometrics and traffic signals, signage, and markings in the Federal-Sepulveda segment and approaches.
- Extension of the northbound left turn pocket at Sepulveda Boulevard.

**ATTACHMENT 2**  
**VAN NUYS CORRIDOR BUS SPEED IMPROVEMENTS – Key Elements**

Key elements of the Van Nuys Corridor Bus Speed Improvement project include the following:

- Northbound peak period bus-only lane between Addison Street and Chandler Boulevard – approximately 0.5 miles. Project can be completed with re-striping and peak period parking restrictions.
- Southbound queue jumper lane at the intersection of Vanowen Street and Van Nuys Boulevard.
- Dual directional bus-only lanes between Burbank Boulevard and Oxnard Street – approximately 0.5 miles. Project can be completed with re-striping and peak period parking restrictions.
- SR-101/Van Nuys Boulevard Interchange Improvements: This would be a contribution toward a \$45 million freeway intersection improvement project being jointly funded by LADOT, Caltrans and Metro.
- “Super” transit priority – an enhanced bus signal priority system that addresses congestion at minor cross streets.
- Bus approach lane on the southbound side of Van Nuys Boulevard at Parthenia Street – approximately 0.5 miles. Can be completed through roadway re-striping.
- Bridge widening over the flood control channel between Beach Avenue and Arleta Avenue; project would enable the street to be three continuous lanes in each direction.

**ATTACHMENT 3**  
**SEPULVEDA CORRIDOR BUS SPEED IMPROVEMENTS – Key Elements**

Key elements of the Sepulveda Bus Speed Improvement project include the following:

- A Sepulveda Boulevard northbound peak period bus-only lane between Ventura Boulevard and Chatsworth Street – approximately 7.6 miles. Right-of-way acquisition will be required to enable roadway widenings at two key intersections (Burbank Boulevard and Sherman Way). For the remainder of the Boulevard, a northbound bus-only lane will be constructed through re-striping, peak period parking restrictions, and other minor on-street improvements.
  
- A Sepulveda Boulevard southbound peak period bus-only lane between Rinaldi and Nordhoff Streets – approximately 3.0 miles. The three mile southbound bus-only lane will be adjacent to a segment of the 7.6 mile northbound bus-only lane, allowing for three miles of dual directional bus-only lanes. Due to the wide configuration of Sepulveda along this stretch of the Boulevard, a southbound bus-only lane can be added with re-striping and peak period parking restrictions.