52

LACMTA BOARD MEETING – MAY 22, 2008
MOTION BY DIRECTOR FASANA

In March 2008, Metro released its Draft 2008 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for public comment. The Draft LRTP includes various statements on transit's potential role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in California:

- "The single most effective action a household can take to reduce their carbon emissions footprint (up to 30 percent) is replacing one car in a two-car family with transit and bicycling."

- "In 2007, Los Angeles had the worst air quality in the nation. ... Through new transit, bicycling and carpool projects, this Draft 2008 Plan reduces annual air pollution by an estimated 14 tons by 2030."

- "Based on the average vehicle, one [vehicle mile traveled] emits approximately one pound of CO_2; therefore, the Draft 2008 Plan reduces [greenhouse gas emissions] by 725 metric tons of CO_2 equivalent ..."

- "Since transportation is the largest contributor (41 percent) of [greenhouse gas emissions] in California, Metro's role in providing transportation solutions to meet the 2020 target reductions will become increasingly important."

- "We also must use this Draft 2008 Plan to demonstrate our collective strategy for securing the funding for critical projects needed for congestion relief and air quality improvements."

United States Code Title 23, section 134, mandates that Metro prepare and periodically update a 20-year long-range transportation plan in coordination with Clean Air Act agencies. The code further requires Metro to consider projects and strategies that will, "[p]rotect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life...."

A recent study by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) found that use and availability of public transit saves approximately 4.2-billion gallons of gasoline per year; in other words, 11-million gallons per day.

The Draft LRTP Technical Document ranks transit projects using a performance analysis that considers attributes of project performance and corridor need. None of the attributes attempt to quantify the environmental benefits of a transit project.

I MOVE that Metro staff explore and present to this Board at the next Board meeting a transit project performance analysis that includes consideration of the environmental benefits of a transit project, both in terms of overall benefits and time to realize such benefits.

52

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PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
JUNE 18, 2008

SUBJECT: LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFIT ANALYSIS

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file report on environmental benefit analysis for the Long Range Transportation Plan process.

ISSUE

The Board directed staff to review how environmental benefits of transportation projects could be considered in the Long Range Transportation Plan process.

DISCUSSION

At its May 2008 meeting, the Board directed staff to report back at the June 2008 meeting regarding how environmental benefits, and in particular, air quality benefits of transit and highway projects could be considered in the Long Range Transportation Plan process. The Board also asked staff to consider Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) system performance criteria. Finally, the Board asked staff to consider how other factors that affect the emission benefit of transportation projects could be addressed, such as diversion from other modes or the impact of parallel transportation facilities.

Regional transportation planning requirements used by FTA, FHWA and SCAG for air quality purposes are governed by the federal Clean Air Act, various sections of SAFTEA-LU, and federal transportation planning regulations jointly issued by FTA and FHWA. In general, federal law and regulations require that air quality analysis be done at the plan level for the entire transportation system, rather than project by project. This ensures that the cumulative air quality impact of the transportation plan is addressed for

all air basins within a region. The use of the transportation demand model for this analysis ensures that all transportation impacts are fully analyzed for the entire transportation system, including issues such as diversion of person trips across modes and the impact on travel behavior of parallel transportation facilities. There are no requirements for transportation plans to do project by project air quality or environmental analysis.

The LRTP performance measures adopted by the Board in May 2006 included a system measure to report the air quality benefits of the plan as a whole. This analysis is based on the results of the transportation demand model, and is consistent with regional, state and federal requirements. Air quality analysis is conducted based on the mobility benefits shown by the travel demand model. The air quality benefit of the Constrained Plan was reported on page 47 of the draft Plan. It demonstrated that implementing the draft Constrained Plan will result in a projected 5 percent reduction per day in emissions. Additionally, the draft Plan reported on page 15 that the Constrained Plan will reduce greenhouse gases by 725 metric tons per day.

In order to more specifically determine the air quality benefit of the Strategic Plan on a project by project basis would require a significant investment in staff and consultant time beyond the FY '09 budget and work plan. Staff would be required to conduct a separate model run for each individual Strategic Plan project. It is anticipated that modeling all transit and highway projects individually in the Tier 1 Strategic Plan would take 18 – 24 months and divert modeling staff and consultants from other on-going corridor studies.

Given the extensive analysis that would be required for this assessment, it may be more appropriate to review the environmental results of environmental impact reports as they are completed as an alternative to project by project modeling. This will allow staff to consider the modeling analysis and environmental impact results for the various transportation corridors currently under study and to incorporate this analysis into the Long Range Transportation Plan process for future Plan updates.

The Board also asked us to consider the air quality impact of port projects. Assessing the air quality impact of port projects could be done in several ways. First, environmental impacts can be addressed through the review and comment on draft Environmental Impact Reports for port facilities. Secondly, we could seek early involvement in the planning stage on port capacity expansion projects and seek input from the Board as such projects are developed.

NEXT STEPS

Proceed as directed by the Board to integrate environmental considerations in the Long Range Transportation Plan development process.

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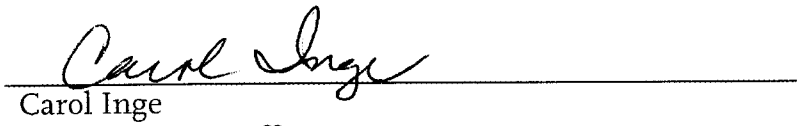

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