

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 20, 2009

Board of Directors
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
One Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Metro Board of Directors:

Los Angeles County is the largest and most congested region in the United States, yet it has received significantly less federal funding for transit projects than other areas. You are faced with a critical decision on Thursday that could worsen this regional inequity. We are writing to strongly urge you to have a more inclusive, regional and longer term federal funding strategy. In order to maximize federal funding we strongly urge you to broaden the County's federal strategy. We are very concerned that Los Angeles County is not positioning itself well to receive its fair share of New Starts funding in the near- and long-term.

Metro staff has estimated that the County should be receiving \$200 million in federal funding annually. However, Metro's current plan puts the County at risk of being out of the New Starts funding queue for several years, perhaps for the entire surface transportation reauthorization bill. It is highly unlikely that federal funding for the Westside Subway Extension and the Regional Connector Transit Corridor could be allocated through the federal New Starts process in as little as 3 years, leaving the County without a source of federal funds in the interim.

A listing of the most projects approved by the Federal Transit Administration for Full Funding Grant Agreements (FFGAs) shows that light rail transit (LRT) projects range from 1.5 years to 7.8 years while heavy rail projects range from 5.75 years to 6.5 years from the point that FTA approves the project for entry into preliminary engineering (PE) to completion of the New Starts process and receipt of a Full Funding Grant Agreement. This does not account for the time each of these projects spent in alternatives analysis prior to entry into PE.

A review of recent projects that received FFGAs indicates the following:

- Phoenix East Valley LRT– Opened in December 2008 – 7.5 years from entry into PE and signed FFGA

- Los Angeles Gold Line Eastside Extension – Opening December 2009 - 3.5 years from entry into PE and signed FFGA
- Denver SE LRT – Opened in November 2006 – 2.75 years from entry into PE to signed FFGA
- Denver West LRT – Opening May 2013 – 7.8 years from entry into PE to signed FFGA
- Portland South Corridor LRT – Opened September 2009 – 3.3 years from entry into PE to signed FFGA
- Dallas NW/SE LRT – Opening June 2011 – 6 years from entry into PE to signed FFGA
- Salt Lake Mid-Jordan LRT – Opening December 2011 – 1.5 years from entry into PE to signed FFGA
- New York Second Avenue Subway – Opening June 2014 – 6.5 years from entry into PE to signed FFGA
- Washington Dulles Heavy Rail Extension – Opening December 2014 – 5.75 years from entry into PE to signed FFGA

It seems extremely short-sighted not to include the Gold Line Foothill Extension, Gold Line Eastside Extension and Crenshaw/South Bay Transit Corridor in Metro's New Starts funding priority list. The Gold Line Foothill Extension project, Azusa to Montclair, is developed enough to be ready for Federal New Starts funds in the years before the Westside Subway Extension and the Regional Connector Transit Corridor. The Crenshaw/South Bay Transit Corridor will provide a major connection with Los Angeles International Airport, connecting the Green and Expo Lines and possibly the Wilshire Corridor, serving 12,800 to 15,600 riders. The Eastside Extension will improve mobility in the communities east of Los Angeles, which are expected to experience 30% population growth over the next 20 years.

It is not at all unusual for regions to have more than one project in the New Starts program at the same time. In fact, many of the regions listed below with multiple projects in the New Starts program at the same time have smaller populations than the Los Angeles region:

- New York – Long Island Railroad East Side Access and Second Avenue Subway
- Denver – Southeast and West Corridors
- New Jersey – Hudson-Bergen LRT and Access to the Region's Core Commuter Rail
- Seattle – Central Link and University Link LRT
- Salt Lake City – Mid-Jordan LRT and Weber County to Salt Lake City Commuter Rail
- Portland – South County LRT, Eastside Streetcar and Milwaukie LRT

Los Angeles County is investing \$40 billion over the next 30 years in local transportation projects through Measure R. It is imperative that we have a robust, long-term federal strategy that brings as much federal funding for the County's transportation needs as possible and

needs as possible and leverage the significant local dollars on the table. Otherwise, we will continue to lose out on Federal funding to other regions in our State and across the country.

We would like to work together as a team as we pursue New Starts funding for Southern California's priorities on the federal level.

Sincerely,

<u>Jerry Lewis</u>	<u>Luelle Royal Allard</u>
<u>Mary Brown Mack</u>	<u>Al Schiff</u>
<u>Judy Chu</u>	<u>Diane G. Watson</u>
<u>Grace S. Napolitano</u>	<u>Dan Dreier</u>
<u>Sax Miller</u>	<u>Ken Calvert</u>

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