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# MTA urged to seek funds for Gold Line

By Dan Abendschein Staff Writer

PASADENA — A bipartisan group of 14 Southern California congressional members has signed a letter asking county transportation authorities to request federal funds for the Gold Line Foothill Extension.

The letter also calls for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to request federal funding for several other county projects, including the Gold Line Eastside Extension's second phase, which would extend the current East Los

Angeles line out to Monterey Park, and either along the 60 Freeway or down to Whittier.

Rep. David Dreier, R-San Dimas, was among those who signed the letter. He said the San Gabriel Valley needs to be better represented by the MTA.

"There was a commitment made three decades ago to transportation in the San Gabriel Valley, and it is time to live up to it," Dreier said.

The MTA will consider its Long Range Transportation Plan on

Thursday. A draft of the plan excludes Gold Line extension plans from federal funding requests, focusing instead on the Westside Subway extension. It also excludes a "regional connector" plan that would connect several different rail lines in downtown Los Angeles, reducing travel times for riders on those lines.

But the congressional leaders who signed the letter argue there is no reason not to pursue federal funding for all those projects. Each would provide much-needed jobs

and help help reduce traffic congestion.

In fact, the lawmakers said if MTA does not include these projects on the so-called "New Starts" funding priority list, Los Angeles might not be eligible for federal New Starts funds for years to come.

"If the Board does not include these projects, we leave hundreds of millions of federal dollars on the table that will be directed elsewhere in the country," Rep. Adam

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Schiff, D-Pasadena, said in a statement. "At a time when our unemployment rate is among the highest in the nation, the MTA Board cannot afford to overlook the economic imperative to include these projects in its long range plan and bring dollars and jobs to the region."

The necessary environmental work for the Gold Line Foothill Extension already has been completed. The Westside extension and the "regional connector" have not completed environmental work and, as a

result, cannot receive federal funds right away.

"Their (the MTA's) view is that if they get funding for the Gold Line that the subway will be penalized later," said Schiff. "But you can get funding for multiple projects at the same time."

The Gold Line extension project currently is funded only to bring the line to the Azusa/Glendora border, rather than out to the county line in Montclair, as most San Gabriel Valley lawmakers prefer. The extension currently is not slated to receive any federal

funds.

In addition to Schiff and Dreier, the letter was signed by Rep. Judy Chu, D-El Monte; Rep. Gary Miller, R-Brea; Rep. Grace Napolitano, D-Santa Fe Springs, and Rep. Linda Sanchez, D-Cerritos.

The letter stated that MTA staff had estimated that Los Angeles County should receive \$200 million in federal funding annually for transportation projects.

It has often not come close to that, said Schiff.

"We've done pretty poorly when it comes to bringing in

federal dollars over the years," he said.

"We need a federal strategy that truly leverages the billions of dollars being raised by Measure R and gives the county the most bang for its buck," Chu said in a statement. "If the Gold Line Foothill and East Side extensions and Crenshaw Line are excluded from entering the federal process, myself and the rest of the local congressional delegation will very literally have our hands tied from helping meet our community's transit needs."

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