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January 29, 2016

The Honorable Roger Hernandez
Assembly Member, 48th District
State Capitol, Room 5016
Sacramento, CA 95814

AB 620 (Hernandez) – OPPOSE

Dear Assembly Member Hernandez:

On January 28, the South Bay Cities Council of Governments (SBCCOG) Board of Directors voted to oppose AB 620 which would require Metro to grant hardship exemptions from tolls to low-income commuters in Metro's ExpressLanes program. The primary goal of the ExpressLanes project is to provide a toll lane in which travel speeds can be kept above 45 miles per hour by implementing a variable toll policy. To exempt low income users from the toll would overwhelm the small amount of capacity that remains on the lane and defeat the purpose of the toll.

Metro's original design for the ExpressLanes program specifically addressed potential inequities with a Low Income Assistance Program. It was developed after extensive outreach with the community and with local transportation partners. That effort led to a program that balances mobility needs in the I-10 and I-110 ExpressLane corridors. We are concerned that AB 620 does not recognize that process and the comprehensive way in which the ExpressLanes and the Low Income Assistance Program address the needs of all commuters. No other ExpressLanes or toll project in California or the nation have implemented a Low Income Assistance program to address the needs and priorities of the communities the ExpressLanes serve.

Since the inception of the ExpressLanes program, Metro has used initial grants and revenues generated from the project to invest over \$150 million in transit improvements along the I-10 and I-110 ExpressLanes corridors and communities, including:

- New Transit Center at the El Monte Station.
- Improvements to the Harbor Transitway such as new lighting, improved signage, improved access, and safety enhancements.
- Increased bus service for Metro, Foothill Transit, Gardena and Torrance Transit
- Signal priority for transit through downtown Los Angeles speeding travel times from the corridor to patrons' final destination.
- Continued funding to transit providers in the corridors.

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In addition, Metro's ExpressLanes program policies require net revenues generated from tolls to be used for projects that improve transit operations and mobility for all commuters in the two corridors from which the tolls are generated. Metro has not only taken the lead in creating this program, it is meeting its goals and consistently works with the adjacent communities to improve the program.

We believe that AB 620 is unnecessary and will significantly reduce Metro's ability to operate the ExpressLanes program and re-invest toll-revenues in transit. We respectfully ask that you reconsider this measure.

Sincerely,

James Gazeley, Chair
Mayor, Lomita