July 12, 2016

The Honorable John Fasana, Chairman and
Board of Directors
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
One Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, CA. 90012

Dear Chairman Fasana and Members of the Board of Directors:

Gateway Cities Council of Governments Opposition to MTA's Proposed 2016 Ballot Measure

At its regular meeting on July 6, 2016, the Gateway Cities Council of Governments (GCCOG) Board of Directors voted to oppose MTA's proposed countywide transportation sales tax measure planned for the November 8, 2016 ballot. The member cities of this COG are acutely aware of the need for additional transportation funding, and strongly supported the grounds up approach and the process that led to the identification of subregional project transportation needs. Support for the measure began to erode with the release of the initial Expenditure Plan and the delay and definition of the major Gateway Cities initiatives. GCCOG staff has actively participated in the Council of Governments meetings held by MTA CEO Phil Washington and GCCOG City Managers also met with him and senior staff to explore potential solutions to the areas of disagreement. Regretfully, significant changes were not made to the document released for public review and the “tweaks” that were offered do not provide sufficient foundation for this organization’s support.

The GCCOG Board of Directors voted 21-1 to oppose the measure, with one abstention. The GCCOG did not make this decision lightly or without considerable deliberation. The GCCOG Board even held a special meeting on June 21, to discuss the final expenditure plan that resulted in the adoption of an “oppose unless amended” position. Mr. Fasana, our Board sincerely appreciates the time you personally took to address our Board. We also appreciate the considerable time and effort spent by Mr. David Yale in trying to explain the MTA point of view.

Fundamental to the vote to oppose are issues that were raised by both the Gateway Cities and South Bay COGs that were not addressed in the Expenditure Plan and Ordinance. The following major concerns were expressed:
• The GCCOG recommended that 2nd and 3rd decade Measure R transit projects be formally accelerated to qualify for 2018 PBM funding and that Measure R projects be advanced through the environmental and preliminary engineering phases to receive funding on a construction-ready status, as envisioned in the 30-10 Board approved policy, and not be superseded by new PBM projects. The COG also asserted that keeping with the 2008 Measure R promises that the recently adopted Performance Metrics be applied solely to PBM projects and not retroactively to Measure R 2nd and 3rd decade projects. We view these principles as honoring the Measure R commitment made to the voters in 2008.

• Like the South Bay COG and other cities throughout the county, GCCOG requested an increase in the allocation of local return funds. The justification for the increase is that cities have traditionally relied upon gasoline sales tax subventions and revenue for the improvement and maintenance of local streets. This source continues to decline. The dramatic decreases in revenues are already adversely impacting our ability to reduce congestion, improve access and safety of our local streets and highways. Even the increased 17% local return allocation fails to recognize that a city's streets are the foundation of all the other elements of the transportation system. With the increased emphasis on active transportation and First/Last mile connections, it is critical that the foundation for these elements, the city street, be funded at a level sufficient to meet the increased demand. A 20% local return allocation effective from day one would help fund the increased demand on city streets. We are disappointed that there was no discussion on alternative formulas for the distribution of local return funds. The South Bay COG suggested a sales tax receipts/population/lane-mile formula and Gateway Cities requested consideration of a different formula that would be more equitable to those cities that are bedroom communities at night but have a robust daytime infrastructure. Cities like Vernon, Commerce, Industry, Pico Rivera and La Mirada do not receive an adequate return on their contribution.

• The GCCOG does not support the continued expectation that local jurisdictions hosting a Metro Rail project be required to contribute 3% of the capital cost of the extension based on a proportionate share of route miles and station locations. This requirement is potentially devastating to smaller communities. The West Santa Ana Branch/Eco-Rapid Transit corridor goes through the heart of Gateway Cities' disadvantaged communities as identified by the Cal EPA EnviroScreen; requiring a 3% contribution would tie-up local return funds for decades.

Like the South Bay COG, GCCOG supports encouraging local jurisdictions to invest in community infrastructure such as active transportation,
enhanced transit safe pedestrian paths and other First/Last Mile connections that will improve access to the stations, enhance safety and aesthetics adjacent to the rail rights of way, and undertake economic development initiatives that will add local ridership once the project is completed.

- The GCCOG's objections to the reprioritization of Measure R projects stems from the reality that 19 of the 44 listed projects in the Expenditure Plan are new (44%). Many of these new projects are also accelerated past the Measure R initiatives based on their “performance” under the Board approved Performance Metrics criteria. In the first 15 years, 11 of the total projects are new projects. The cost estimates and performance benefit for the new projects are speculative until they undergo specific project development, environmental clearance and other analyses. This speculative nature allows a project with little or no definition to utilize attributes for the most favorable mode and model accordingly. It also has allowed funding scenarios to be created that may have very little relation to the ultimate financial plan. Projects scheduled behind massive, new undefined initiatives are at risk of being further delayed because of unknowns and resultant cost increases. This risk is simply not acceptable to the Gateway Cities jurisdictions.

- The last area of contention is the classification of projects as system connectivity. This classification was strictly interpreted to exclude projects such as the I-710 and the I-5 even though they met the definition below:

  “... These regional facilities for passengers and goods include airports, seaports, central rail stations, and the modernization of highway and transit infrastructure that serve these facilities. This program is intended to support system-wide highway improvements, access to airports and seaports, and transit connectivity and modernization. System-wide highway improvements include improved technology to better manage traffic flow on freeways and roadways, freeway construction projects that eliminate key bottlenecks and enable increased volumes of commuters to travel on freeways at faster speeds through new carpool lanes, and expanded services that eliminate bottlenecks created by traffic incidents such as Freeway Service Patrol. Access improvements to the Los Angeles County airports and seaports include projects that improve the direct access to the airports and seaports from the highway system, improving the flow of goods and passengers on the highway system while reducing the impact of truck and vehicle traffic to the surrounding communities through projects that use technology to reduce air pollution emitted from truck traffic.”

A comprehensible rationale for exempting nationally recognized freight corridors has never been provided to the GCCOG and, as a result, the I-5 Corridor (I-605/I-710) has been designated a “Subregional project” as has the I-710, which serves the nation’s largest ports.
The MTA Board compounded the sub-regional inequity at its June 23, 2016, meeting by approving an amendment that designated $189 million for a new and undefined bus rapid transit line with an unknown total cost that will link the West San Fernando Valley to Cal State Northridge and labeling it “system connectivity” to allow for the entire county to pay for this project.

The ballot language states that a “Yes” vote will:

“...improve freeway traffic flow/safety; repair potholes/sidewalks; repave local streets; earthquake retrofit bridges; synchronize signals;...”

What is left out of the ballot measure is the reality that most of this will not even begin until 2026 (I-710) or 2032 (I-5) and that fixing potholes will be an even greater challenge given the funding commitment. The GCCOG finds this situation unacceptable, hence the approval of the attached Resolution.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Al Austin II, President
Board of Directors

Enclosure: Resolution 2016-02

cc: Board of Directors - Gateway Cities Council of Governments
MTA Board of Directors
Mr. Phillip Washington, Metro CEO
All State and Federal Legislative Offices
RESOLUTION NO. 2016-02

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE GATEWAY CITIES COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS OPPOSING THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY EXPENDITURE PLAN FOR THE 2016 PROPOSED BALLOT MEASURE

WHEREAS, the Gateway Cities Council of Governments (COG) participated in the development of a countywide process to accumulate a listing of all subregional transportation projects. This process resulted in the identification of $275 billion of transportation projects countywide

WHEREAS, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) in response to the identified need developed an expenditure plan to address the project capital and operational needs for the County. This expenditure plan will be the Los Angeles County template for mobility for the next 40 years. The tax itself will remove the sunset form Measure R continue in perpetuity or until repealed by the electorate.

WHEREAS, instead of giving the Measure R project initiatives first priority for new tax revenues, assuring that 2nd and 3rd decade Measure R projects are completed, the MTA initiated a modeling process, utilizing performance metrics, that places well-defined projects with analysis in competition with new projects with assigned attributes. This modeling exercise has resulted in a reordering or resequencing of projects. This new implementation schedule has not proven to be advantageous to the Gateway Cities.

WHEREAS, multi-modal projects that would benefit the Gateway Cities are being leapfrogged by higher profile projects in more affluent areas, which are also being given priority access to federal funding. That is simply not geographically equitable, nor is it fair to our residents who will be funding these projects for decades before they truly benefit.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Directors of the Gateway Cities Council of Governments opposes the Adopted Ballot Measure Expenditure Plan

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED this 6th day of July, 2016.

ATTEST:

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Al Austin II, President

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Richard Powers
Secretary

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  )
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  ) ss