Distinguished Gateway Cities Council of Governments Members

The fresh start of a new year brings with it the promise of a clean slate—new goals and resolutions, the turning of a “new leaf,” and new energy to tackle the breathless challenge of what lies ahead. And for us at the Gateway Cities COG, this sense of new-ness is further enhanced by our recent move to a “new” headquarters. Yet, for the Gateway Cities COG, the first months of the year are as much about picking up where we left off as about forging a new path. With transportation projects like the I-5 improvements from the Orange County line to the I-605, I-710 Major Corridor Study and the SR-91 & I-605 Needs Assessment Study at strategic phases in their advancement, the first quarter of 2005 will hopefully provide us with renewed resolve to turn the knowledge gained from these processes into tangible solutions to the region’s growing transportation challenges. At the same time, Gateway Cities COG’s lauded Clean Air Program continues on its mission to update the fleet of diesel trucks coming to and from the ports. Please be assured that while we are energized by our new environment, there is nothing novel about Gateway Cities COG’s focus this quarter—improving the quality of life for the two million plus residents of the Gateway Cities through cleaner air, better housing and more efficient transportation remains our number one vision.

Best Regards,
Ed Wilson, President

Local Officials and Residents Turn Out for Gateway Cities COG Open House

The New Gateway Cities COG Headquarters Located in the City of Paramount’s Newly Redeveloped Civic Center.

Last December, nearly 100 local government officials, business owners and community advocates gathered together to celebrate the COG’s move to its new headquarters—in the same neighborhood.

On hand for the open house was honored guest Congresswoman Grace Napolitano, staff from the office of Senator Lowenthal and Assemblymember Calderon. Also in attendance were all of the past Presidents of the Board.
including Doug Drummond, Marcine Shaw, Beatrice Proo, Bruce Barrows, Keith McCarthy and Frank Colonna. “We are honored and proud to have played a role in the COG during the past 10 years,” said Beatrice Proo. The celebration was capped with a photo of all past and current Presidents of the Board, which will be displayed at the COG offices. “This move was a perfect opportunity for the COG’s headquarters to have a more central location that will increase our synergy with local government,” said Ed Wilson. “We hope our new location will serve as an open invitation to our member cities,” he added.

**COG Open House (cont’d)**

**I-710 Major Corridor Study (MCS)**

**Oversight Policy Committee (OPC) Formally Adopts the Locally Preferred Strategy**

Determined to ensure community participation in the development of regional transportation solutions, the Oversight Policy Committee formally adopted the Locally Preferred Strategy for the improvement of the I-710 corridor at a public meeting on November 18, 2004. The Locally Preferred Strategy includes both hybrid design concept developed by the Technical Advisory Committee with input from the Tier 1 & 2 Citizen Advisory Committees, and the health and safety recommendations included in Tier 2’s report “Major Opportunity/Strategy Recommendations and Conditions.” These were submitted to the OPC for review following months of community outreach about issues including health, air quality, traffic congestion and quality of life in I-710 corridor communities. “The decision by the OPC has tremendous, practical and symbolic significance in that it solidifies the committee’s dedication to addressing the community’s concerns,” said OPC Co-Chair Frank Colonna.

In short, the approved hybrid design concept consists of ten mixed-flow lanes, specified interchange improvements, and four truck lanes between the inter-modal rail yards in Vernon/Commerce and Ocean Boulevard in Long Beach. It also calls for Alternative B Transportation System Management/Transportation Demand Management; Improvement of arterial highways within the I-710 Corridor and construction of truck inspection facilities to be integrated with the selected overall design concept.

The Locally Preferred Strategy Recommendation has also been approved by the MTA Board of Directors.

Please contact COG staff for a full color copy of map (right).
SR-91 & I-605 Needs Assessment Study

Cities Take Action, Study Moving Forward

This year, the Gateway Cities Council of Governments will study alleviating congestion on the SR-91 and I-605 Freeways a top priority. The first order of business; establishing underlying problems and potential solutions. With developments of the study’s framework in its final stages, the impacted communities are formalizing their commitment to the process.

To date, the city councils of Artesia, Bellflower, Cerritos, Downey, Hawaiian Gardens, Lakewood, Long Beach, Norwalk, Paramount, Pico Rivera, Santa Fe Springs, Whittier, and the County of LA have approved agreements to participate in the study.

“We are eager to move forward with addressing the many problems plaguing this transportation corridor, and their impact on our city. This study is a key first step in a complex process,” said Vice President of the Board of Directors and Mayor of the City of Whittier Greg Nordbak.

The needs assessment will address a myriad of questions surrounding traffic patterns on the corridor, roadway capacity, accident history and truck traffic impacts. It will also explore the potential impact of the new 210 Freeway opening, a 710 South Pasadena gap closure, a 710 dedicated truck lane system and the impact of 24-hour port operation, along with community concerns such as air quality, aesthetics and noise. At the end of an initial study, the communities can make an informed choice to use the results to secure state funding and support to be used appropriately.

SR-91/I-605 Corridor Communities

- Artesia
- Bellflower
- Cerritos
- Compton
- Downey
- Hawaiian Gardens
- Lakewood
- Long Beach
- Norwalk
- Paramount
- Pico Rivera
- Santa Fe Springs
- Whittier
- Los Angeles County

Shelter from the Storms

Three Gateway Cities Get New and Improved Bus Shelters

In time for Southern California’s wet winter season, three Gateway Cities cites have completed the construction of fourteen new and improved bus shelters, courtesy of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA).

Last spring, the Gateway Cities COG received a $97,000 grant from the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) for “transit stop safety evaluation and improvements” in three COG cities: Artesia, Bell and Maywood. The grant was given to the Gateway Cities COG as an outgrowth of the MTA Southeast Bus Restructuring Study (SABRE), a comprehensive evaluation of the transportation needs of the southeastern part of Los Angeles County.

“The grant was intended to encourage transit ridership by making bus services more attractive through the installation of new bus stop facilities and upgrades to existing stops,” notes Gateway Cities COG President Ed Wilson. Under the grant, Artesia constructed three new shelters, Bell constructed four and Maywood constructed seven.

Safety improvements such as lighted shelters and shelter relocations were designed to enhance safety and security at existing bus shelters. Within a year of the installation of these improvements, the cities will conduct a follow-up assessment of the impact of this “makeover” on public safety and public perception. Actively encouraging the use of public transportation will go a long way toward alleviating traffic congestion in the Gateway Cities region,” added Mr. Wilson.
THE ROAD AHEAD

I-5 Joint Powers Authority Makes Progress on the first phase of the I-5 Freeway Improvement Project.

Today alone, a staggering 200,000 vehicles will travel Interstate 5 (I-5) between Interstate 710 (I-710) at the north end and State Route 91 (SR-91) at its south end. Yet like much of the region’s transportation system, this stretch of highway is more than half a century old and is woefully insufficient to handle existing and future traffic demands.

The I-5 Joint Powers Authority JPA, a consortium of six cities that borders the freeway working with county transportation agencies and Caltrans, has been exploring multiple solutions to overcrowding on the I-5, including the addition of general-purpose lanes and High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes (for vehicles with two or more passengers) to the I-5 freeway, increasing the efficiency of adjacent arterial traffic, and improving existing modes of public transportation and their connections to the freeway. Additionally, the JPA has conducted intensive public outreach from which they extracted a locally preferred strategy for improving sections of the freeway.

The first section addressed by the I-5 JPA is an eight-mile section of I-5 that is now under review and design to widen the freeway between SR-91 in Orange County and I-605 in Los Angeles County. This first portion of this section is located in Orange County. This 2-mile section, from the SR-91 to the Los Angeles County line, contains a classic bottleneck where five lanes in Orange County transition down to three. This first portion is known as the I-5 Far North Widening Project in Orange County and will complete one of the most ambitious freeway expansion programs ever developed for the I-5 in Orange County. The project will eliminate the congestion caused by the bottleneck and improve traffic flow to the Los Angeles County line.

Measure M - Orange County’s local 1/2 cent transportation sales tax - will provide approximately two thirds of the funding while State Transportation Improvement Programs will provide the remaining funds for these I-5 improvements in Orange County. Currently, right-of-way acquisition and utility relocations are in progress, with the design phase to be completed in mid-2005. Construction will begin in early 2006, with completion scheduled for mid-2009.

In addition, the I-5 JPA is working with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and Caltrans to continue the I-5 improvements into Los Angeles County. This next portion will be from the County Line (basically Artesia Blvd.) to the I-605 freeway. MTA is providing the initial funding to be used for this next portion of this section of the freeway. Those funds will be used to improve the Carmenita Rd. and the Valley View Ave. interchanges, including freeway improvements starting at Artesia Blvd. An environmental document for the Carmenita Rd. interchange has been completed and preliminary design has been started. An environmental document for the remainder of the project is currently being prepared and is planned to be completed during 2005. The resulting improvements will continue the I-5 improvements started in Orange County into Los Angeles County, with plans to ultimately improve the I-5 freeway north of its juncture with the I-710 freeway.