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September 25, 2012

Metro Board Members  
One Gateway Plaza  
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2952

Dear Chairman Antonovich and Metro Board Members,

I urge you to eliminate the tunnel option identified as F7, from the alternatives being considered in the North State Route 710 Gap Closure Draft Environmental Impact Statement being prepared by Metro on behalf of California Transportation Department (Caltrans) as lead agency. My recent discussions with Caltrans suggest that the state would defer to Metro's decision on this issue. It is my understanding that your staff will soon present to you recommendations to reduce the number of alternatives being studied to five. I wholeheartedly agree with the staff recommendation as far as it goes and ask you to add F7, the tunnel option, to the list of alternatives to be eliminated.

When I first learned about the tunnel alternative to the then proposed cut and cover project, it was presented as costing the same as the cut and cover and likely to meet with greater public acceptance. Needless to say, neither is true today. Estimates of the cost currently range from \$2.8 to \$5.8 billion (figures I would expect to escalate by the time shovel was put to ground) as compared to the cut and cover cost of less than \$2 billion. Further, the cities and communities I represent have made it clear in writing and at public meetings held by Metro and the cities, that they oppose the tunnel. The City of Los Angeles has adopted a resolution asking for elimination specified options including the F7 tunnel option. The City of South Pasadena has informed Metro that conducting a DEIR on the North SR 710 Gap Closure separately from the DEIR on the Southern SR 710 Project violates CEQA.

As plans to assess the tunnel option progressed, I made it clear that a tunnel project might be an appropriate alternative to the originally proposed cut and cover project if, and only if, no trucks were allowed to pass through it. However, my understanding is that the tunnel is being designed to accommodate trucks. This is but one more reason why I oppose the tunnel alternative. Further, with the North and South SR 710 project environmental impact analyses being conducted separately, the cumulative impacts of truck traffic are not being adequately considered.

Analyses of the tunnel to date indicate that it would open at Level of Service F, in violation of Caltrans policy not to construct projects that would open at less than Level of Service E. Clearly, the tunnel

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alternative does not provide congestion relief and, especially if opened as a toll road, would likely cause more local traffic congestion as drivers opted to by-pass the tunnel and travel local streets to their destinations.

Other analyses of the tunnel reveal high levels of disruption to the communities where construction would take place. Residents would be asked to endure vibration, noise, dust, and emissions from construction equipment and activities and for no meaningful long term benefit to the community. Those who favor the project because it would create jobs don't understand that we are talking many years in the future before construction would begin. A DEIR that includes the tunnel option is not expected to be complete until sometime in 2014. My expectation is that a final decision to build a tunnel would encounter lawsuits and monumental delays just as the original project did in the last century. Other alternatives being considered, such as the low build multi-mode alternative, include many shovel-ready projects among them and promise a more immediate and steady stream of jobs.

To summarize, the tunnel option is not feasible, not now, not ever, for several reasons. It is too expensive, it is too disruptive, it does not solve the problem of growing truck traffic, it would open at an already congested and unacceptable operating level, and it would divert money from many more worthy transportation projects that have broad-based public support.

From a statewide perspective, spending \$6 billion dollars or more to close a 4.5 mile stretch of highway is pure folly. In this era of budget limitations, we need to put our priorities in order. A 2009 report by the California Department of Finance estimates that the cost of needed transportation infrastructure repairs and improvements across the state tops \$50 billion. It makes no sense to spend more than 10 percent of that figure on a project with no benefit.

I firmly believe eliminating the tunnel option will speed up and substantially lower the cost of preparing the North SR 710 Gap Closure DEIR. Coming to a publicly acceptable conclusion on the locally preferred alternative will speed implementation of the selected project(s) and the sale of the over 500 properties Caltrans owns in the 710 study area. Revenue from these sales can be used to fund the locally preferred alternative.

I sincerely hope you will consider my request as a win-win solution for all concerned. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



CAROL LIU  
Senator  
21<sup>st</sup> District

cc: All Metro Board Members; Art Leahy, Chief Executive Officer; Doug Failing, Executive Director, Highway Programs; Michael Turner, Director, Government Relations; Paul Taylor, Deputy Chief Executive Officer