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## **Transit Funding Bills Advance in Senate** *Transportation Committee Approves Measures to Ease Flow of Funds for Capital Purchases and Construction*

SACRAMENTO – With efforts to bridge the colossal state budget deficit stuck in a seemingly never-ending cycle, prospects for a legislative remedy to the recent elimination of state funding for public transit operations show few signs of near-term progress.

But transit operators and the millions of Californians they serve got a potential boost today when the Senate Transportation and Housing Committee unanimously approved Assembly Bill 1072, which would provide certainty and accountability in the allocation of funds for transit capital purchases and construction for bus, rail or ferry projects.

“This bill would be particularly helpful in getting some transit funds flowing, especially in light of recent massive state funding cuts inflicted on public transit,” said Joshua Shaw, Executive Director of the California Transit Association. “With the recent elimination of the State Transit Assistance program, transit providers must have predictability in spending the remaining limited resources that are made available.”

AB 1072, authored by Assemblymember Mike Eng (D-Monterey Park), allows for long-range planning and contracting on the part of transit operators by locking in the formula on all remaining funds in the Public Transportation Modernization, Improvement and Service Enhancement (PTMISEA) program. The bill also contains an expenditure program mechanism, whereby agencies would be required to submit an expenditure plan for their share of the remaining funds available, in order to support advocacy for sufficient annual appropriations from the PTMISEA. Furthermore, the measure would allow recipients to “bank” their allocations over multiple years so that they can accumulate funds for large high-priority projects, and permit borrowing between agencies to ensure that each allocated dollar is being utilized.

Today’s passage of AB 1072 follows recent approval by the same Senate panel for Assembly Bill 729 (Evans), which would extend the sunset date for transit operators to enter into design-build contracts to January 1, 2015. The current authority is set to expire as of January 1, 2011. The measure would allow transit providers to maintain a tool that may help expedite capital projects made available through allocations from Proposition 1B or the federal economic stimulus package.

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“We appreciate the efforts on the part of Committee Chair Alan Lowenthal (D-Long Beach), other legislators and their staff to advance these vital funding measures,” said Shaw. “While we maintain that those who depend on public transit have borne far more than their fair share of the budget burden, we welcome any steps that can be taken to help transit providers access these funds and utilize them more efficiently.”

Both bills now move to the Senate Appropriations Committee. Pending their approval there, the bills would then be eligible for consideration by the full Senate.

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