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Chief Executive Officer

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Los Angeles County
Metropolitan
Transportation
Authority

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TO: MTA BOARD MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES

FROM: FRANKLIN E. WHITE *Few*

SUBJECT: CEO REMARKS ON HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD

213.623.1194

As requested at the June 28th Board meeting, please find enclosed a copy of my speech and the "Cording Report."

If you need further documentation or have questions, please contact my office.

CEO REMARKS TO MTA BOARD

6-28-95

METRO RED LINE

In the last few days we have witnessed a series of extraordinary events which I would like to put in perspective for the Board. You will recall that in May, 1994 the Board was given a lengthy report regarding the alignment deviation in the Metro Red Line tunnels. This report showed that minor alignment adjustments will be required, but indicated that our construction is within the normally expected industry standards. Last Thursday the B-251 contractor was undertaking realignment hand spading work to assure that the tunnel alignment would fit the proper operating criteria. As you know, on that date we experienced a dramatic failure in the surface of Hollywood Boulevard following our discovery of water saturated soil directly above the southern (2) tunnel below the street surface just west of Vermont Avenue and the Barnsdall Park excavation site.

Immediate safety precautions by the contractor and construction manager in

consultation with OSHA prevented any loss of life in this instance; we are still conducting an investigation to determine the causes of why the ground failed and broke through the temporary tunnel liner.

Outstanding cooperation between the public and private utilities, the contractor on the job, the construction manager and the MTA staff helped to stabilize the tunnel and restore the street and utility services to the affected area by early Monday morning (less than 60 hours), much sooner than initially had been expected.

We immediately began an inspection of both tunnels after receiving clearance from Cal-OSHA on Sunday evening and observed that the temporary concrete slurry had stabilized the southerly tunnel, but there was evidence of minor cracks in two sections of tunnel liners in the north tunnel under Hollywood Boulevard. Tuesday morning the construction manager and safety inspectors again inspected the north tunnel and determined there appeared to be some increase in the stress cracks. The construction manager recommended we take immediate action to support this area, so there would be no further damage and we agreed. We requested the closure of Hollywood Boulevard for the short distance between Vermont and

Edgemont Street while we installed steel support liners in the area where the cracks occurred in the two concrete liners. No utility service will be disturbed by this action and the street should be restored to its construction detour status by late today.

We have reinstated meetings with the same review group that monitored our actions after the incident last year at Hudson and Hollywood Boulevard, i.e., a representative from the City of Los Angeles' public works department, the Los Angeles City Council's engineering advisor, the FTA's oversight construction manager and contractor representatives to determine appropriate remediation measures. We will keep the Board informed of the plans for action and the progress achieved.

You may also have noted the article in the newspaper concerning a section of the Vermont tunnel where a small five by five foot section of the finished tunnel liner was discovered to be inadequate. A notice of non-conformance was issued to the contractor directing him to correct the problem; and he did so. Internal construction management procedures have produced, therefore, the desired quality

control results. An inspector made note of the fact that there was a defect and that the construction procedure needed to be checked to insure that further defects would not occur in the installation work which followed.

The newspaper story would lead readers to the conclusion that all of the subsequent installation might be defective. It did not report that the construction manager also requires the contractor to not only check the forms for proper depth before the concrete liner is poured, but also to drill through the finished concrete after the installation to assure that the work is performed as required by the specifications. That requirement has been and is being enforced.

There were many facts omitted from the article and this has no doubt created unnecessary alarm in our community. First up, Mr. Zarian and I held a press conference to reaffirm the facts in this case. I am confident that in the coming days and weeks the facts will show that the MTA staff, the CM and the contractor have responded to this emergency in a safe and appropriate manner. Once the cause of the problem is determined, appropriate procedural adjustments will be ordered.

One thing not mentioned in the article needs to be separately addressed with you. You'll remember, probably a year and a half or two years ago, there were extensive allegations over a period of time having to do with the depth of concrete and so called thin tunnel walls. We spent seven months and better than \$1 million inviting the best experts in the country to assess the as-built condition and the seismic risks that we face.

This panel of experts, headed by Dr. Edward Cording from the University of Illinois, concluded that under the circumstances in which the tunnel was designed, and we know that engineers design for redundancy as part of the plan, that thin tunnel walls by themselves did not lead to the conclusion that there was any threat to the structural integrity of the tunnel. That was their clear conclusion. In fact, the report advised that with respect to certain walls no remedial action was necessary and directed our focus to preserving the operations and maintenance conditions of the tunnels in the right-of-way. Thus, the reappearance of the story, without reference to the \$1 million and 7 months, created the alarm that we had spent so many months to make clear.

Engineers overdesign as a matter of policy and they should. So there is no cause for alarm if the only thing we know is that a particular wall is thin. I would be remiss in not telling you that. We spent \$1 million to reach that conclusion and people don't like to hear it, but that is the conclusion. The Cording report was distributed in February 1994, and we will distribute again to Board Members.

Now let me go to some very critical matters that we have got to deal with very directly. These difficulties come at a very critical period for the MTA. All of you know that Washington has proposed that federal support for urban rail construction be terminated. That's where we were a month ago and we are very concerned about that. This was troublesome for us because Los Angeles has helped support the creation of regional rail systems in all the other cities. We didn't want to be told now that this program should be turned off when we are 20 to 30 percent into it. And this is an issue which is quite apart from whether it's a subway or above ground. We were facing the likelihood that we would have no federal money to go forward. We would have holes in the ground; and we would have a lot of explaining to the residents of this region.

Over the last several weeks all of us in Los Angeles came together in conjunction with other cities to turn around the outcome. We were successful. A week ago, Washington reinstated the program and Los Angeles continues to receive more monies than any other city in the country. We deserve it since we have been paying for other systems. So this is where we are in light of the two stories in the press. And I say to you, if we are not measured and thoughtful about how we respond to what happened to us, we will be committing self immolation.

There are a number of cities who did not make that list, and the most intense lobbying one can imagine goes on in Washington. We have to be careful about how we deal with this. Anybody who believes that one can have construction of this complexity and magnitude without incident is either a fool or misinformed. It cannot happen. I showed a Board member just one headline from the Boston Globe dated August 3, 1994 (and I did not choose to get them all) which appeared the same week we had our problem in Hollywood. The headline is an inch and a half or two inches and it says new tunnel could add \$500 million and two years to the job. What is my point? I could get this article for every other city building a regional rail system.

If the first resort is to run to the microphone and run to Washington asking to shut off the program, we will let every other city have all it needs to take us out of the program. Then somebody will have to explain to the residents of this community why Los Angeles hasn't been able to finish the program it has started. This is crazy. We ought to inform ourselves; we ought to act like a responsible Board and accept the reality of this difficult situation.

Scapegoating doesn't get us anywhere. Let's figure out what's wrong and then let's solve it. But for us to go to Washington and ask to have the program turned off will have every city who did not make the list clapping. They should, and we deserve all the condemnation in the world, if we do this to ourselves. And that, Mr. Chairman, will conclude my remarks.