

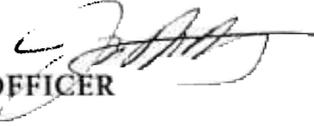


**Metro**

December 1, 2004

**TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**THROUGH: ROGER SNOBLE**   
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**FROM: JAMES L. de la LOZA**   
**CHIEF PLANNING OFFICER**

**SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO MOTION BY DIRECTOR MOLINA  
REGARDING COMMUTER RAIL TRACK INSPECTIONS**

**ISSUE**

In response to the October 28, 2004 Motion by Director Gloria Molina, staff has asked the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA) to identify a plan that would increase commuter rail track inspections. The motion followed the October 16, 2004 Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) derailment in North Whittier.

**DISCUSSION**

Staff wrote a letter to the SCRRA on October 28, 2004 (Attachment A), transmitting a copy of Director Molina's motion and requesting that SCRRA staff assist in responding to the motion. Since that time, our staff has begun working with SCRRA staff to review railroad inspection practices affecting passenger rail operations in Southern California. SCRRA staff is reviewing the frequency and technology used for rail track inspections by its contractors and the host railroads on whose tracks the SCRRA operates several of its lines.

**Background**

Metrolink is Southern California's regional commuter rail system. The SCRRA operates Metrolink services over a combination of member agency-owned tracks, UPRR and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) tracks. SCRRA contractors maintain the member-agency owned tracks and they determine the frequency and method for inspection and maintenance. However, the UPRR and the BNSF are responsible for inspecting and maintaining their own tracks.

The SCRRA will be reviewing the agreements governing its use of the UPRR and BNSF tracks to determine what, if any, it has in the frequency and/or technology used for inspections of the host railroad tracks. The SCRRA also will be reviewing its own inspection schedules and methods for the member-agency owned tracks to

determine whether they are adequate or whether modifications should be made to better protect commuter rail passengers and the public.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Once the SCRRA completes its review of railroad track use agreements and inspection practices affecting its commuter rail operations in Southern California, staff will work with the SCRRA to determine whether or not there are areas that should be strengthened or studied further. Staff anticipates returning to the Board in February 2005 with a report to be received and filed or a report that could provide recommendations, depending on the results of staff's and SCRRA's review and discussion.

### **ATTACHMENT**



**Metro**

October 28, 2004

Members of the Board, Alternates, and staff of the Southern California Regional Rail Authority  
Chief Executive Officer  
Southern California Regional Rail Authority  
700 South Flower Street, Suite 2600  
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In response to the recent Union Pacific Railroad derailment near Pico Rivera, the MTA Board of Directors has approved a motion by Supervisor Gloria Molina which directs MTA staff to work with SCRRA, the freight railroads and the NTSB to improve safety for residents and Metrolink commuters in Los Angeles County. We would like to work with you to address the area of the motion relating to identifying a "plan that would increase inspections of the commuter rail lines using ultrasonic technology and other techniques that would identify fatigued rail tracks".

Enclosed please find a copy of the motion. We would appreciate an initial response by Thursday, November 11, 2004 in order to assist us in preparing a timely response to our Board. Should you have any questions or wish to schedule a meeting to discuss the motion, please contact Patricia Chen at (213) 922-3041.

Sincerely,

James L. de la Loza  
Chief Planning Officer  
Countywide Planning & Development

cc: Roger Snoble

SCRRA Distribution: see attached

Enclosure

Motion by Director Molina

On Saturday, October 16, 2004, a Union Pacific cargo train crashed into homes in the unincorporated area of Los Angeles. Rail officials cited that a defect in a steel track was a probable cause of the break. Twenty-five homes were impacted, two homes suffered irreparable damages and two more homes sustained minor damages.

This is a very disturbing development in the wake of last year's accident in the City of Commerce when a Union Pacific derailment damaged homes terrified residents. Union Pacific must be held accountable for ensuring the safety of its tracks. These are the same tracks utilized by the Metrolink commuter lines each weekday. According to officials, rail tracks are monitored three times a week to identify problems. However, the safety of residents and Metrolink commuters should be of utmost importance and measures should be in place to protect them from future derailments.

I, THEREFORE MOVE, that the Board direct MTA staff to work with Metrolink Board members and staff to identify a plan that would increase inspections of the commuter rail lines using ultrasonic technology and other techniques that would identify fatigued rail tracks and report back to the Board within 30 days.

I FURTHER MOVE, that the Board direct County Counsel to request the commercial rail operators and the National Transportation Safety Board to submit to the Board a safety plan and status report on their inspection of railroad tracks in Los Angeles County.

**DISTRIBUTION**

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