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HENRY A. WAXMAN
30th District, California

Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce

Joint U.S. Senate and House Field Hearing

"Improving and Reforming our Nation's Surface Transportation Programs to Support Job Creation and the Economy"

February 23, 2011

Thank you Chairman Boxer and Chairman Mica for convening this hearing in Los Angeles. I welcome you to the 30th Congressional District, which I am honored to represent. I particularly want to express my appreciation to Senator Boxer for her long-time dedicated work to address our challenging transportation issues.

Today, we sit at the West LA Veterans Campus. Ten years from now, if all goes as planned, it will be the interim terminus of the Westside Subway Extension. But today it is the heart of some of the worst congestion in the region and just miles from one of the most congested interchanges in the country.

These traffic bottlenecks are a drain on our economy, our productivity, and our health. That is why I strongly support the bold vision Los Angeles County has adopted to chart a path forward. With the approval of Measure R in 2008, an overwhelming two-thirds of Los Angeles County voters supported a tax increase for a bold initiative to dramatically expand and integrate the County's transit system. Mayor Villaraigosa has propelled the plan with his "30/10" initiative, which has as its ambitious goal the completion of 30 years of projects in the next 10 years.

The impact of Measure R cannot be overstated. Already projects like the Expo Line to Santa Monica, the Crenshaw line through Culver City, the Gold Line Foothill Extension, and the Green Line extension to the airport have taken leaps from concept to construction.

Likewise, the cornerstone Westside Subway Extension and Regional Connector projects have achieved environmental clearance for Preliminary Engineering and Design. Indeed, the President's Fiscal Year 2012 budget places both projects in the pipeline for a future Full Funding Grant Agreement.

The jobs are ready and the riders are eager. The missing ingredient is a bold

transportation reauthorization bill that will empower LA County to leverage Measure R revenues and properly finance the biggest physical, economic, and environmental transformation of a generation.

Now is the time to invest. Now is the time to put forward creative plans like the Infrastructure Bank, expansion of the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act and other dynamic proposals that will move us forward. Now is the time to shore up the New Starts program and the state grant formulas that enable high density areas like the Westside of Los Angeles keep up with growth.

Stagnation is not an acceptable option. I look forward to working with you to build a better future for the county, the state, and the country.