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March 18, 2011

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## **Ridley-Thomas Urges Approval of Project Labor Agreement for Expo Light-Rail Line**

**Los Angeles**— Workers in Los Angeles County are poised for a historic victory with the anticipated approval of the final component of a Project Labor Agreement today by Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority for Phase 2 of the line's construction. The Project Labor Agreement (PLA), championed by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and City Councilman Herb Wesson, ensures that local workers will have access to thousands of jobs created by the \$1.5 billion Expo line rail from Culver City to Santa Monica.

“The agreement before the Expo Authority today means employment for thousands of residents at a time when Los Angeles County is facing an unemployment epidemic,” said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas. He added: “An investment in our physical infrastructure is incomplete without a similar investment in our human capital. Anything less is not only economically unsound, it is immoral.”

The months-long effort to include a strong local hiring provision in the light rail project began in May 2010, when Supervisor Ridley-Thomas and Councilman Wesson sought and obtained approval from the authority for the development of a Construction Careers Policy (CCP) and PLA. The CCP and the agreement ensure that at least 30% of total construction hours are from local

residents who live within five miles of the project and L.A. County zip codes where unemployment is high.

Throughout the County residents in neighborhoods where unemployment exceeds 150% of the county average will have special access to jobs on the project. Another noteworthy provision of the agreement, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas noted, is a component setting aside job opportunities for disadvantaged workers, such as those who are homeless, are high school drop-outs or who have criminal records

With unemployment throughout the County hovering at 13%, it is imperative that projects paid for with billions of dollars in local taxes benefit local residents.

“In Communities that have been hard hit by the recession, this will put people back to work in career-track apprenticeship programs,” said Flor Barajas-Tena, director of the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy’s construction careers project.

The agreement between the Expo Authority and the building trades also will serve to streamline the construction process. The superlative diligence by the Expo staff on this matter ultimately should save the County money and result in a project that comes in on time, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said.

Rick Thorpe, chief executive officer of the Exposition Line Metro Construction Authority, concurred.

“Board adoption of the PLA for this project will help ensure that there will be no strikes, picketing, or work stoppages during the construction of the project,” Thorpe said. “It will help us meet our goal of delivering this much needed project by its targeted completion date of 2015.”

Furthermore, the agreement opens the door to life-long construction careers by offering workers multi-year apprenticeship programs. Over the months, while advocating for a PLA, dozens of workers shared stories with the authority of how such programs had changed their lives.

“Before I became an apprentice construction worker, I had to work thirteen-hour days to make ends meet,” said Alton Wilkerson. “Thanks to my job I can provide for my family and be a father too.”

Action today also will allow small business enterprise contractors to participate in intensive training provided by the Los Angeles Unified School district, one of the premiere instructional programs in the region – this is in addition to the small business enterprise program adopted by the authority in December 2010.

The MTA acquired the old Pacific Electric Railroad right-of-way in 1990, and Phase 1 of the project, with service to the Culver City station is expected to begin next year. The complete line will reach Santa Monica by 2015. By 2030, the MTA estimates 64,000 people will ride the Expo Line each day, making it one of the most heavily used light-rail lines in the country.

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