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THE BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE:

Transportation Needs More Than Prop. 42

Last week we heard some good news from Sacramento. Legislative leaders said that we would get a budget on time. Although by the end of the week it was clear that they would not deliver on their promise once again, I want to focus on something else they said that they must deliver.

The better news is that the legislature intends to fully fund Proposition 42, ending the two-year robbery of transportation funds approved by the voters. Sending us the money we were supposed to get all along will help—to the tune of $300 million for Los Angeles County. Not only will it fund major regional projects, but it will also make money available in every city for street repair and local projects.

This is good news, but it means little if it is just a one-year-only event. We need the assurance that these funds will flow every year, as directed by the voters, because these funds are dedicated to projects that take years to implement. So let's hope that this is not just a flash in the pan.

As much as we appreciate legislative action to restore Prop. 42, it won't be enough. Not even close.

We need to keep up the pressure on Washington to make sure that we receive adequate federal funds for major projects. After all, California receives less than 79 cents from the federal government for every dollar of taxes we send there. We must make sure that we continue to lobby for our fair share for major transportation and other projects.

But even that won't be enough.

It has been estimated that it will take in excess of $20 billion to solve our region's transportation crisis. This includes projects to build roads, public transit, rail, alternative transportation modes, etc. The fact of the matter is that we need to build facilities of all types if we are to solve this crisis. And solve it we must.

We need to find faster and easier ways to move people from home to work. We need it easier for businesses to move goods throughout our region and beyond to feed the growing economy.

What is needed most of all is vision. We need leadership with the foresight to say that this is not only a crisis we must solve, but one we must address in a comprehensive and systematic way. And we must do so with a financing plan that assures success.

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It is time to face up to the reality that we cannot wait for Sacramento and Washington to solve it for us.

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It is time for the leadership of the region to make this a priority and develop a complete solution that assures we will successfully solve one of the most critical crises we face.

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Let's hope it is the former.
Los Angeles Mayor-elect Antonio Villaraigosa has made transportation a major priority for his administration. He has the unique opportunity to serve as the political catalyst to drive this issue in the right direction.

We pledge our commitment to work with him to make it happen.

And that's The Business Perspective.

Russell J. Hammer
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