



Feinstein, Berman Place Priority on Easing 405 Gridlock
June 30, 2005

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Representative Howard Berman (D-Van Nuys) today urged that \$400 million in federal funds be authorized to speed construction of a northbound carpool lane on the 405 Freeway through the Sepulveda Pass.

In a letter to the members of the Senate-House Conference Committee considering the reauthorization of the Transportation Equity Act for another five years, the two California lawmakers said, “there is a very compelling case for making this HOV lane a high priority.”

The letter was sent after Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger on Wednesday pledged to make a 20 percent contribution from the state for the 10-mile lane northbound from the Santa Monica Freeway through the Sepulveda Pass to the Ventura Freeway. Mayor-elect Antonio Villaraigosa, members of the state Legislature and the MTA had previously proclaimed the project a top priority.

“As always, the competition is very tough for these federal transportation dollars, so it is extremely important that the Governor has now weighed in and that Mayor-Elect Villaraigosa and other officials are on board to support this crucial project,” Senator Feinstein said. **“It will help make the case that help is urgently needed to ease the gridlock along the 405 and the state will pay its fair share.”**

“We have finally received assurances from state officials that they will work with us to provide matching funds and legal authority to begin the project promptly,” Representative Berman said. **“I wish we had been able to get these commitments earlier, but the conferees are still meeting and so there's still a chance that we will win funding for this vital project.”**

Following is the text of the letter by Senator Feinstein and Representative Berman:

‘Dear Transportation Conferee,

We are writing to urge your support for a project of major importance to California – the construction of an HOV lane on the Northbound I-405 between the I-10 and I-101.

According to recent statistics, the I-405 suffers from the second worst congestion of any highway in the nation. And this particular section over the Sepulveda pass – the only stretch without an existing or soon-to-be-built HOV lane – suffers from ever-worsening gridlock at almost all times of the day and night. This unbelievable congestion hinders the movement of goods, pollutes the air, and takes an enormous toll on the lives of countless individuals and families in the Los Angeles area.

We have received written assurances from California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, Los Angeles Mayor-elect Antonio Villaraigosa, Los Angeles County MTA CEO Roger Snoble and Members of the California Legislature that they will allocate the required matching funds and provide the legal authority to ensure that substantial progress is made on the construction of the project during the life of this authorization bill.

While there are many other worthy projects competing for the limited funds available under the program known as ‘projects of regional and national significance,’ we believe there is a very compelling case for making this HOV lane a high priority. Accordingly, we strongly urge you to support \$400 million for this project in the conference agreement.”