

Daily News

Local Section

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2004

Los Angeles

City: Give up appeal Council protests MTA proposal

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The City Council voted Tuesday to formally protest the MTA's appeal of a court order to buy 145 more buses, a week after the mayor and his appointees to the MTA board failed to muster a majority to stop the legal fight.

Mayor James Hahn was attending a ground-breaking and visiting a Boys & Girls Club on Feb. 2, when the Metropolitan Transportation Authority voted to appeal the federal court order. However, Hahn's aides said he supported the council's resolution, which also calls on the MTA to report its progress on reducing bus overcrowding as well as how much it's spent on legal appeals.

"Bus riders have been through enough," the mayor's deputy, Brian Williams, told the council. "The mayor wholeheartedly supports this."

The resolution — put forward by fellow MTA board members Councilmen Martin Ludlow and Antonio Villaraigosa, along with Councilman Ed Reyes — won widespread support from the council.

The only opposition came from Councilman

Greig Smith, who changed his vote to tally 14-0 in support. Reyes was absent.

MTA spokesman Marc Littman said the City Council doesn't have jurisdiction over the MTA and that the information requested by the council was "readily available" to Hahn and his three appointees.

The MTA was ordered in January to buy 145 more buses and replace 380 others in order to comply with a 1996 consent decree designed to relieve overcrowding. The MTA maintains that it would cost \$30 million a year to operate the new buses and believes it can meet the target — no more than eight passengers standing — with 300 new buses it's putting into service this year and next.

MTA officials say the agency has spent \$750 million to add 420 buses during peak-hour service and a million service hours since the consent decree was signed. The MTA also has spent \$10 million on legal bills — including the plaintiffs' bills and \$1 million on appeals.

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