



INSTITUTE OF TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERS

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SECTION

NEWSLETTER

2008 – 2009, Issue No. 4

January 2009

President's Message

Carlos Ortiz, PE, TE, PTOE



I'm writing the President's message prior to Christmas and New Year's so as part of my personal tradition, this is the time when I also look ahead to my personal and professional agenda for 2009, but first, I need to revisit 2008.

In June gas prices were over \$4 a gallon and now gas prices are under \$2 a gallon. Definitely, I enjoy paying less money to fill my "big" gas tank but not sure if it will last through 2009. During the last quarter of 2008, banks, insurance companies, and car companies got bailout packages from our federal government. This week (December), I read that our state has suspended nearly \$4 billion in public works projects because of capsizing budgets, an inability to attract investors to the municipal bonds used to bankroll many projects, and a reduction in gas tax revenues. Is our state going to get a bailout package?

Well, let's be optimistic in 2009 and let's hope President-elect Barack Obama's economic-stimulus plan will include funding for infrastructure programs in our state. If it happens, it will be the single largest new investment in our national infrastructure since the creation of the federal highway system in the 1950's.

At our November joint meeting with the Riverside-San Bernardino ITE Section, we had over 110 people in attendance. Mr. Andrew Sokol, Project Manager with STV Incorporated, gave us an overview of the California High Speed Train Program. It was their first public presentation since the passing of Proposition 1A, Reliable High-Speed Passenger Train Bond Act. Mr. Sokol gave us an overview of the Los Angeles-Orange County segment and he answered many interesting questions after the presentation. Please see the Scribe Report for more details.



Our upcoming January Meeting will be our annual joint meeting with City Traffic Engineers, Our guest speaker will be Ms. Monica M. Suter, ITE District 6 President and Senior Engineer with the City of Santa Ana. As always, Ms. Suter will provide us with a great presentation. Her presentation will be on "Engineering Recommendations: Getting to 'Yes' With the Public and Elected Officials". Please make sure that you RSVP for the meeting.

President's Message Continued on Page 2

Meeting Announcement

Joint Luncheon Meeting With City Traffic Engineers

Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2009
@ 11:30 a.m.

Monterey Hill Restaurant
3700 W. Ramona Boulevard
Monterey Park, CA 92629
(323) 264-8400

For Reservations Contact:

Lisa Martellaro-Palmer at
lisa.martellaro-palmer@lacity.org

Ph. (323) 957-6823

By 12:00 pm on Friday,
Jan. 16th, 2009

(E-mail preferred)

See Flyer for More Details

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President's Message (Cont.)

Carlos Ortiz, PE, TE, PTOE

Continued from Page 1

Our lunch sponsor will be **South Coast Lighting and Design**. Please stop by their table and check out their display and get information about their products.

We are trying to make it easier for our colleagues working in the City of Los Angeles Downtown Area to attend our monthly meetings. We are inviting you to carpool with your colleagues to our monthly meetings. Mr. Sam Morrissey will be taking the lead on this program. Please read the newsletter for more information. We hope that you can participate.

Brian Ngo, our newsletter co-editor, has resigned his position. He will be moving out of state. Brian has done an excellent job as our co-newsletter editor. We will miss his excellent work. Let's wish Brian the best as he starts a new chapter of his career in 2009. Therefore, his position will be available. Please call Mr. Steve Itagaki or myself, if you have some great ideas and would like to take the position as our co-newsletter editor.

Please mark your calendar for upcoming events. The Riverside-San Bernardino ITE Section will have their Annual Vendors Day Conference on January 15, 2009. This is always a great show. Also, our next meeting will be on February 10, 2009. The meeting will be a joint meeting with the Central Coast ITE Section. ♦

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THERE!

November 2008 Scribe Report

By John A. Dorado II



The ITE Southern California Section monthly meeting was held jointly with the Riverside-San Bernardino ITE Section on Wednesday November 19, 2008 at The Restaurant at Kellogg Ranch at Cal Poly Pomona. The meeting was filled to capacity with ITE members from both sections, as well as members from the Cal Poly Pomona ITE Student Chapter. As tradition has it, the meeting was kicked off with introductions and each participant was asked to announce their name, company, and college they attended. It is always interesting and entertaining to hear what college our colleagues have attended, and as usual the Cal Poly Pomona alumni were well represented.



The vendor sponsor for this meeting was **MaxCell Products**, and our guest speaker was **Mr. Andrew Sokol**, with **STV Incorporated**, making a presentation regarding the “High-Speed Trains in Southern California Project-Level EIR/EIS Briefing”, which was a great topic considering the passage of Proposition 1A.



Mr. Ken Sharples with **MaxCell Products** conducted a brief presentation showcasing their product line which is “The only flexible fabric innerduct system in the industry”, and

identified the benefits and applications such as: maximizes conduit space, separates and provides cable management, use as overlay in existing conduit, and can be provided in new conduit. For more information visit www.maxcellinnerduct.com

Mr. Andrew Sokol, with **STV Incorporated**, representing the **California High Speed Rail Authority**, opened his presentation with a four minute video promoting the high speed rail showing impressive renderings/simulations of the proposed alignments and stations including endorsement testimonies from local and state politicians.

The presentation outlined the length of the proposed California High Speed Rail Project, which is approximately 800 miles spanning from San Francisco to San Diego including sub-systems to Sacramento and Irvine, and is projected to be completed by year 2020.

The project will be funded through State bonds, local agencies, and private developers/constituents. Some local benefits include roadway improvements and grade separation projects.

The Southern California high speed rail system encompasses routes between Palmdale, Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Diego. The Los Angeles sub-system includes routes between Irvine, Anaheim, and Los Angeles. It was noted the Anaheim/Los Angeles system will most likely be one of the first implementations. The bulk of segment extends within existing railroad right-of-way from the City of Fullerton to the City of Vernon.

Anaheim to Los Angeles	
Distance:	29 miles
CO2 saved/trip:	21.75 lbs
Travel Time High-Speed Trains:	20 mins

High-Speed Trains:	\$9.00
Car:	\$7.00
Rail:	\$8.00

In addition, a portion of the presentation focused on alignment from the City of Anaheim to the City of Los Angeles consisting of three sub-sections. Critical items were discussed including potential alignments, project constraints, and potential rail locations (aerial, at-grade, and tunnel).

- Next steps will include the following project milestones:
- Draft EIR/EIS Fall 2009
 - Complete Final EIR/EIS and 30% engineering design by the end of 2010

For more information visit www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov



As a token of appreciation our guest speaker was presented with a picture frame that has the Southern California Section ITE logo including a picture of the proposed California High Speed Rail Train. ♦

Announcements

Let's Carpool to Our Monthly Meetings

ITE Southern California Section would like to offer carpooling to our monthly meetings.

In order to coordinate, please provide the following information to our board members:

1. Name and contact information (cell phone preferred).
2. Whether you are looking for a ride or if you are driving and have room in a vehicle.
3. Location (e.g., downtown LA, Santa Monica, etc.)
4. How many seats available in your car if you are driving.
5. Ability to travel to a central meeting point.
6. Any other accessibility concerns (e.g., in a wheelchair, etc.)

For those interested in joining a carpool in the **downtown LA area**, please contact:

Sam Morrissey, PE
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smorrissey@wilbursmith.com
www.wilbursmith.com

NCHRP Accessible Pedestrian Signals Workshop

February 3, 2009
Caltrans Building
100 S. Main Street, 1st Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012

The Accessible Pedestrian Signals workshop was developed under the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Project 3-62 (*Guidelines for Accessible Pedestrian Signals*). The goal of Project 3-62 was to develop guidance regarding recommended and optional characteristics of accessible pedestrian signals (APS) to optimize safe and independent crossing at signalized intersections by pedestrians who are blind. The guidance is being incorporated into the Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines and the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and will likely lead to more installations of the newer types of APS. ♦

This workshop was developed to disseminate this knowledge to:

- engineers and administrators who may be responsible for making decisions about APS installations,
- signal technicians who are charged with installation and maintenance of the devices, and
- Orientation and Mobility professionals who make requests for APS devices on behalf of their clients and train their clients on the use of APS.

The workshop is a full day course, consisting of six hours of instruction. Participants are eligible for 6 professional development hours (PDH).

The City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation will be hosting the workshop. Daniel Carter of the University of North Carolina will conduct the workshop. Seating is available for 120 persons and will be available on a reservation basis. Attendance is free. Please reserve a seat through Janet Eklund at Janet.Eklund@lacity.org or call (213) 972-8449 and leave your name, phone number and employer. See attached flyer for more details.

Legislative Analysis

By Walter Okitsu, PE, PTOE



Federal Outlook Is Promising, But Not the State's

We in the local surface transportation industry were on a roll until December. Measure R passed in Los Angeles County for a half-cent sales tax increase dedicated to transportation, and so did Proposition 1A, the high speed rail bond measure. The Feds even granted Southern California the congestion pricing money, turned down by New York State, to be used for the San Bernardino Freeway and Harbor Freeway toll lanes. And President-Elect Barack Obama has been talking about a hundred billion dollars or so going to highway and transit projects in the next stimulus package, which is a welcome surprise considering that he had barely mentioned infrastructure prior to his election. But then the bad news came from Sacramento to ruin the party.

California's Budget Woes

First, the bad news. California can't sell bonds for transportation projects, or even the basic everyday bonds that the State relies on to cover bills and payrolls. Vendors will soon be receiving IOU's from the State. The State has ordered 2,000 projects to stop right in their tracks: mostly for schools, but a lot of highway projects as well. The State Treasurer Bill Lockyer doesn't expect to sell any bonds until the Legislature and Governor Schwarzenegger sort out the budget mess because, well, bond buyers aren't stupid.

The State's budget is expected to run a \$42 billion deficit. The Governor is upset with the Democrats in the legislature who have proposed to reduce that deficit by only \$18 billion through a mixture of fee increases and expenditure cuts. But he is even more upset with the Republicans, who insist on being gutsy by slashing more programs, but came up with a just as wimpy proposal that reduced the deficit by only \$16 billion. Unlike the Federal government, California can't ignore a deficit by printing up more money.

The Republicans have just enough legislators in the Capitol to prevent the two-thirds vote needed to raise taxes. However, only a simple majority greater than 50% is required to raise new fees, or to redistribute taxes with no net increase. The Governor has apparently given up on the Republicans and is working with the Democratic majority to eliminate the deficit through some clever loopholes that allow "fees" to replace "taxes". Wasn't this guy a Republican? Obviously, he has not tied himself to the conservative don't tax-don't spend dogma, or even his own campaign promises.

Here's one of the loopholes that involve us. Currently transportation in this state receives an 18 cents excise tax per gallon of gasoline and diesel fuel, plus the 5% portion of the sales tax dedicated to transportation through Proposition 42. At current gasoline prices of around \$1.50 per gallon (before taxes), this works out to a 26 cent reduction of fuel-related taxes. The Democrats' proposal is to eliminate those taxes and replace them with a 39 cents per gallon fee. The elimination of fuel taxes allows the State to raise other taxes that can be used for general fund items such as the schools.

ACEC California (American Council of Engineering Companies, the former CELSOC) is concerned about raids on the Transportation Investment Fund because revenues from fees, unlike taxes, would no longer be protected by Proposition 42. However, Auto Club of Southern California believes Proposition 42 still protects against such raids, although the fund's usage could be diluted because transportation administration and traffic enforcement costs could tap into it.

My personal concern: we have an ideal situation with the current Transportation Investment Fund receiving a percentage-based sales tax on gasoline, because when prices shot up last summer, so did tax revenues, even though gasoline consumption went down due to people driving less and putting their Hummers in storage. Apparently a "fee" cannot be charged as a percentage of fuel prices, so we'd lose that advantage. If gasoline went back up to \$4.00 per gallon, we'd end up with less revenue with the Democrats' proposal than we would have had with the current tax system. My personal politics lean toward "tax-more-and-spend-more", at least for transportation, but now I'm starting to think Republican.

Obama Wants Big Bucks for Transportation

President-Elect Obama is pushing for the next economic stimulus bill to provide millions of jobs for road construction and mass transit – fast. This requires off the shelf, ready to go projects, meaning a lot of unexciting road resurfacings and bus purchases. We're entering an age of huge deficit spending, something that the Feds can do but the State can't, or at least, isn't supposed to.

The previous stimulus bill passed the House but died in the Senate last fall, so Obama is waiting for the lame ducks to leave town and the new Congress to start in January 6th. He is hoping, perhaps optimistically, to sign a stimulus bill as soon as he is inaugurated January 20th.

Legislative Analysis Continued on page 6...

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New US DOT Secretary: A Mystery

Also starting work on January 20th will be Ray LaHood, a Republican congressman from a mostly rural Illinois district, who has been appointed as Secretary of Transportation by President-Elect Obama. It's hard to tell where LaHood stands on transportation issues, but he seems to "lean urban", having voted for the latest transit bill that ultimately failed. He also voted for the successful bill that reauthorized Amtrak, although his vote might have been because of the positive rail control provisions that would have been difficult for any congressman to vote against. He has exhibited none of fuel tax elimination sentiments expressed by current DOT head Mary Peters.

So Long to Outgoing USDOT Head Mary Peters

Begin editorial: one of the great missed opportunities in transportation funding occurred when US Transportation Secretary Mary Peters torpedoed the recommendations of a non-partisan committee that she chaired early in 2008. That committee recommended an increase in the Federal gasoline excise tax by as much as 40 cents, to be raised annually over the next 5 years in 8-cent increments. Since then, she has waged a campaign against the gas tax, saying the "current tax system is broken" and encouraging its replacement by tolls or a VMT tax. I don't completely disagree with that, but it could take years to figure out how to create a toll or VMT tax collection system that would come even close to supplementing the gas tax. We don't have that kind of time. The Highway Trust Fund ran out of money in the fall until Congress issued an \$8 billion bailout, and another bailout will probably be needed sometime in 2009.

The missed opportunity became obvious when gasoline prices shot up by to almost \$5 a gallon, sometimes rising by more than 8 cents in a single day. Consumers wouldn't have even noticed the increased excise tax. Now that gasoline prices are under \$2 per gallon as I write this, another good opportunity arises with the next DOT Secretary.

I'm primarily irritated with Secretary Peters' belief that the gasoline tax is broken. The gasoline tax has been successful in collecting revenues from every driver who uses all public roads, not just specific toll roads, and rewards those who choose to drive fuel-efficient vehicles.

To be fair, her predecessor Norman Mineta was also a believer in replacing the gasoline tax with tolls. However, because he was the lone Democrat in the Bush Cabinet, he might have resisted pressure from

above to overturn the recommendations of the majority of that committee.

Good luck on your next job, Ms. Peters. End editorial.

Private Firms Wanted for High-Speed Rail

In accordance with the Amtrak/Rail Safety Bill that Congress passed last fall, USDOT is requesting "expressions of interest" from private firms to provide fast-train transit in 11 federally designated routes nationwide. One of the routes would be "the California Corridor", whatever that means. I wonder whether any company will propose given the current economic environment. Anyway, the bill does not require any funding or action from the Federal Government, other than to have US DOT Secretary Mary Peters issue the RFP. She's just doing her job, or what's left of it.

Bike Tax Credit Confuses Everyone, Including IRS

Congress allowed employees who bicycle to work to receive \$20 per month tax-free as part of last fall's massive -- or what we used to think was massive -- financial bailout bill. But the bill is imprecise on how employees are supposed to collect that credit. Most bike riders will have to wait for the IRS to issue guidelines before getting their 20 bucks.

Still Waiting for Caltrans' Call on Speed Limits

I reported in the last issue that by November Caltrans Director Will Kempton would decide on the California Traffic Control Devices Committee (CTCDC) recommendation to change the California MUTCD's setting of prima facie speed limits.

The current MUTCD requires us to round off the 85th percentile speed to the nearest 5 miles per hour, which might require us to round up as well as down. We can deduct at most another 5 miles per hour for roadway features not readily apparent to motorists. The CTCDC's proposal would allow the speed limit to be within 5 mph of the 85th percentile speed, that is, you can round down by more than 2 mph, plus take an additional 5 mph reduction for unapparent roadway features. Caltrans prefers a hard floor requirement that the prima facie speed limit SHALL NOT be less than the 50th percentile speed. However, the CTCDC voted against that, and recommended a soft floor with "SHOULD NOT" language. Several local agencies noted that some roads have such tightly-packed speed distributions that the speed limit could end up below the 50th percentile just by simply rounding down.

Legislative Analysis Continued on Page 7...

Continued from Page 6

CalTrans is concerned that a soft floor would raise enforceability issues. Kempton's decision is now unlikely to be made before late February.

Measure R's Remarkable Passage

This column ends on an upbeat note: Los Angeles County's Measure R has officially passed, just barely receiving the 2/3 vote it needed. This measure raises the sales tax in L.A. County by a half percent for 30 years.

LA County MTA seemed to have lousy timing in proposing this measure. The economy has been a mess, and asking the voters to raise the sales tax on themselves seemed like a long shot, especially with Governor Schwarzenegger asking for a state-wide sales tax increase to balance the budget. Not much money was raised in support of the measure. And the County Supervisors were opposed 3 to 2 to even letting the voters see it on the ballot.

Then the following events fell into place: County Supervisor Don Knabe changed his mind, deciding to let the measure go on the ballot. The Governor stopped asking for a sales tax increase, just as Assemblyman Mike Feuer was pushing the State legislature to approve the measure. The Governor postponed talk of a statewide sales tax increase until after the election. Perhaps most importantly, Barack Obama brought in an entirely different batch of voters, more liberal than the usual electorate. As a result, Measure R passed and a lot of us are more likely to stay employed in this business.

This analysis is based on the world as it stood December 28, 2008, 23 days before Mary Peters can stop showing up for work. Send comments to wokitsu@crainandassociates.com. ♦

Fake Speed Bumps
By Lisa Martellaro-Palmer



There is a new traffic calming device being used across the country. Currently, our arsenal contains bumps, dips, traffic circles and roundabouts and now we have speed hump markers with reflective glass beads. These fake speed bumps can work where real speed humps are unacceptable but remind motorists to slow down. Philadelphia transportation officials are installing several of them around their town and analyzing the effects.

These fake speed bumps are blue, white and orange pyramid-shaped pieces of plastic that adhere to the

pavement and create an optical illusion. Two years ago, the Phoenix area experimented with these fake bumps and now, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration will study them. Soon, the northeast section of Philadelphia will install these fake bumps on 60 to 90 streets. The plastic markings cost \$60 to \$80 each and are manufactured by Sekisui Jushi Corporation of Japan.

Initially, these fake bumps have a huge impact but eventually motorists will resume speeding. However, in Arizona, a campaign informed the public that very real police officers would monitor speeding on the very fake bumps. ♦

Newsletter Sponsorship

This newsletter is a perfect venue for advertising your products and services, as it is circulated nine (9) times a year to more than 700 ITE recipients all over Southern California. Advertisements are priced reasonably for the benefit of our members.

There is no charge for brief job announcements or course announcements (about 100 words) that would be of interest to our members. Free announcements may be edited or condensed as necessary, though.

Thank you in advance for your contribution to the ITE Southern California Section.

On behalf of our Newsletter committee, I, Julia Wu, would like to thank you, all currently-committed sponsors, for your support. It is thanks to your help in sharing the production costs that makes the newsletter distribution possible and allows us to increase our student support. I hope the advertisements in our newsletter have contributed to raising your profiles in the local transportation industry. Please note that with the electronic newsletter, the ads are now full-page and in color. To our prospective sponsors, I encourage you to make your companies better known in the community. We have vacancies **after March**. Feel free to contact me, Julia Wu, at jwu@koacorporation.com, to schedule your sponsorship ad. ♦

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Sep-08	Minagar & Associates
Oct-08	KOA Corporation
Nov/Dec-08	LSA Associates, Inc.
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Feb-09	Phoenix Highway Products, Inc.
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If you find any factual errors, have comments about any of the things you have read in this newsletter, or have suggestions on how to improve the newsletter, please e-mail our newsletter editor: Steve Itagaki (sitagaki@jmdiaz.com).



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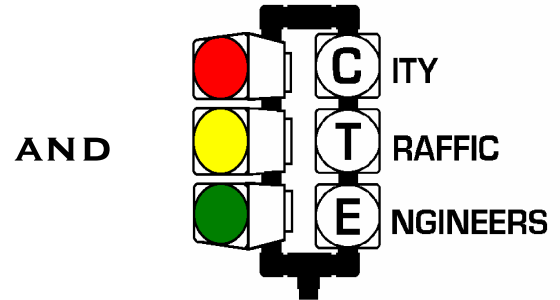
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INSTITUTE OF TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERS



Are Joining Forces to Bring You the First Luncheon Meeting of 2009

Wednesday, January 21, 2009 at 12:00 PM

Registration Begins at 11:30 AM

With the Topic:

ENGINEERING RECOMMENDATIONS: GETTING TO 'YES' WITH THE PUBLIC & ELECTED OFFICIALS

Presented by:

Ms. Monica Suter, PE, TE, PTOE
Senior Civil Engineer, City of Santa Ana
and ITE District 6 President

Place:

Monterey Hill Restaurant, Monterey Park

3700 West Ramona Boulevard, Monterey Park (323) 264-8400

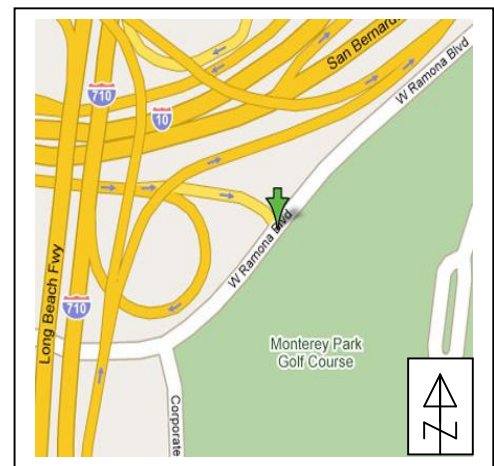
Price:

\$30 with Reservation, **\$35** without, **\$10** for Students

Reservations:

EMAIL: lisa.martellaro-palmer@lacity.org

PLEASE RESERVE BY FRIDAY, 01/16 AT NOON !



NCHRP Accessible Pedestrian Signals Workshop

February 3, 2009
Caltrans Building
100 S. Main Street, 1st Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012

The Accessible Pedestrian Signals workshop was developed under the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Project 3-62 (*Guidelines for Accessible Pedestrian Signals*). The goal of Project 3-62 was to develop guidance regarding recommended and optional characteristics of accessible pedestrian signals (APS) to optimize safe and independent crossing at signalized intersections by pedestrians who are blind. The guidance is being incorporated into the Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines and the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and will likely lead to more installations of the newer types of APS. This workshop was developed to disseminate this knowledge to:

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Workshop Agenda:

8:30 – 8:45	Welcome/Introductions
8:45 – 9:30	Module A – Accessible Pedestrian Signals and Accessible Public Rights-of-Way
9:30- 10:30	Module B – Travel Needs of Blind or Low Vision Pedestrians/ Understanding Traffic Signals and Modern Intersection Design
10:30 – 10:45	Break
10:45 – 11:30	Module C – APS Features
11:30 – 12:30	Module D – When to Install APS and APS Prioritization Tool
12:30 – 1:00	Lunch
1:00 – 2:30	Module E – Designing Installations and Design Exercises
2:30 – 2:45	Break
2:45 – 3:30	Module F – Installation, Operation, and Maintenance
3:30 – 3:45	Module G – Public Education on APS
3:45 – 4:00	Overall Review/ Final Comments
4:00	Adjourn