

- **Special Committee on Water Education**

November 9, 2004 Committee Meeting

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**3a**

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**Subject**

Review Director-Sponsored Inspection Trips Program

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**Description**

The recent state audit stated, “Director-Sponsored Inspection Trips program may not be the most cost-effective way to educate the public on its operations.” The audit report did not make specific recommendations to Metropolitan for changing or discontinuing the inspection trips except to assert that steps should be taken to make information available to a broader audience rather than conducting inspection trips. This letter is intended to facilitate the Board’s review of the inspection trip program with information about the trips and their intended role in Metropolitan’s overall outreach program.

Metropolitan’s Administrative Code states the policy basis and purpose of the inspection trip program are to:

- Provide visual inspection of District facilities;
- Disseminate information about the District and water issues facing the water industry;
- Acquaint guests with current updates on District current operations, programs and objectives, both present and future.

The Administrative Code specifies three types of trips, to Colorado River Aqueduct facilities, the State Water Project, and One-Day trips. It also includes a provision for alternative trips to be added by approval of the Board Chairman, which has been done for the Major Colorado River Water Users or “Agriculture” trip. The Administrative Code also defines the intended audience for these trips to be “elected and appointed officials, members of the business and environmental communities, members of the media, and other leading citizens and interested persons from each member public agency.”

To properly assess their value, one should consider the role inspection trips play in the larger context of Metropolitan’s public outreach and education efforts. The inspection trip program comprises just under 44 percent of the education budget. Other education programs focus on school children (K-12) and their parents. Other methods such as news releases, community outreach projects, the Internet Web site, and in particular the advertising program, aim to reach much larger portions of the public. These programs all inform and educate the broad public on Metropolitan’s water resources, quality, financial, and other priorities. While inspection trips are not available to the entire population of this region, they have been useful to local elected officials, state legislators and members of the news media as they attempt to grasp the complexity of planning and policy matters related to water. Inspection trips provide community leaders focused and intensive exposure to water issues for up to three days at a time. Inspection trip participants leave with a factual understanding about Metropolitan and current water issues, and an up-close “experience” of the immense system that secures and supports drinking water and the security measures that keep it safe.

Inspection trips have been a part of Metropolitan’s educational efforts since its earliest days, and the Board of Directors has regularly approved changes to the program to maintain currency. The one-day trip to the Eastside Reservoir Project – now Diamond Valley Lake – was added. More recently, an “Agriculture” trip was approved which informs guests about the major Colorado River water users of Southern California. The inspection trip materials and itineraries are now created and managed by professional educators and communicators. The traditional State Water Project trip was broadened to incorporate significant issues and players of the CALFED Bay-Delta program on a timely basis. Since the 2000/01 season, Metropolitan has also implemented an easy-to-complete trip survey to quantify the educational value for the guests on all trips.

Inspection trip program costs (excluding labor) were approximately \$525,000 in FY 2003/04, and \$575,000 is budgeted in 2004/05. Per person costs for the various trips (one or multiple day trips) are shown in [Attachment 1](#). Current fiscal year expenditures on other public information and education programs such as those listed above are projected at approximately \$8.3 million.

### Policy

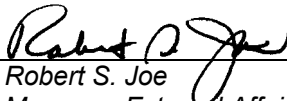
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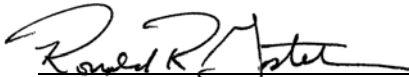
Metropolitan's Administrative Code Section 1301(c) indicates that the Board of Directors will produce written governing policies addressing, among other things, "Development of guidelines relative to communicating with the public, legislature and stakeholders." Policies governing inspection trips are found in Sections 2610 through 2615 of the Administrative Code.

### Fiscal Impact

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None

 Robert S. Joe Manager, External Affairs	10/27/2004 Date
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 Ronald R. Gastelum Chief Executive Officer	10/28/2004 Date
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### Attachment 1 – Inspection Trip Costs

BLA #3184

**Inspection Trip Costs**

<b>Trip Type</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Cost/guest</b>
<b>CRA</b>	Three-day	\$156.00
	Three-day (CRA/Hoover)	\$256.00
	Two-day	\$110.00
<b>SWP/Bay-Delta</b>	Three-day, fly up/back	\$633.00
	Two-day, fly up/back	\$467.00
	Three-day, fly up/drive	\$504.00
<b>Agriculture</b>	Three-day	\$341.00
	Three-day (one night's stay at Gene)	\$222.00
<b>Diamond Valley Lake</b>	One-day	\$ 40.00