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TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

THROUGH: PHILLIP A. WASHINGTON *PAW*
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FINANCE AND BUDGET

SUBJECT: SIX MONTH ACTION PLAN TO IMPROVE TRANSIT SERVICE AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

ISSUE

As reported to the Board in January 2016, ridership on the Metro bus and rail system continues to follow a regional and national trend of ridership decline. In response, staff has outlined a Six Month Action Plan to improve service and the customer experience in an effort to increase ridership. Understanding that fully recovering from the decline in ridership is a longer term effort, this report provides information on specific tactics that staff will follow immediately to begin improving ridership.

DISCUSSION

Staff continues to analyze ridership trends throughout Metro's bus and rail system. While bus and rail ridership in general has declined at a rate of about 4% per year since April 2014, there have been some areas of growth. The Gold Line ridership continues to increase about 3-4% per year, as well as the Silver Line and other I-110 corridor express bus services. In addition, the data shows slight increases in weekend rail boardings during several quarters of the past two years.

As a result of this analysis, Metro's multi-departmental Ridership Task Force was established to coordinate and advance efforts to attract and retain ridership. While external factors that impact ridership, including changes in travel patterns and attractiveness of other travel modes, are difficult to respond to in the short term, internal

factors such as service quality, comfort and convenience can be improved immediately. In fact, several improvements have been made within the past six months, as reported in the January 2016 Board report on Ridership and Customer Service Initiatives, and summarized in Attachment A.

The Task Force has outlined a Six Month Action Plan to be implemented immediately that focuses on five key areas of opportunity for ridership growth:

- **New Rail Line Openings** – With the opening of the Gold Line Foothill extension to Azusa on March 5, 2016, there is a significant opportunity to attract new ridership to and from the Eastern San Gabriel Valley. Coupled with the anticipated opening of Expo Phase II to Santa Monica, these two new rail lines are expected to attract an additional 830,000 monthly boardings to the rail system during their first year of operation.

Actions:

- Comprehensive Marketing and Outreach Campaign – A heavy marketing and promotional campaign will accompany the rail line opening to ensure the greatest success in achieving the ridership estimates of each line. This campaign will be implemented in three phases: Pre-Launch to promote the upcoming grand opening of the rail line, Grand Opening celebrations, and Post-Opening to provide ongoing information on the new service.
- Free 5-Day TAP Promotion – To encourage new ridership on the rail extensions, staff is developing a program to provide residents within proximity of the new rail lines with a free 5-Day promotional TAP card. Residents will be asked to register their cards prior to use, which will allow staff an opportunity to follow-up with new riders on “how we’re doing” and “how can we improve?”
- Baseline and First Month Ridership Counts – Prior to the opening of the Gold Line Foothill Extension to Azusa, staff will conduct special boarding and alighting counts at key Gold Line stations to provide a baseline ridership estimate. This information will be compared to counts to be conducted along the extension and at the baseline stations during the first month of implementation to provide an account of ridership growth from the new extension.
- **Safety and Security Improvements** – Several past customers have commented at Service Council meetings, emails, and social media posts that concerns over safety/security, harassment, vendors, loud music, and rider discourtesy have

resulted in their use of the system less, or abandoning it entirely. Improving this aspect of customer comfort on the system will be a key focus over the next six months.

Actions:

- Increased Presence on Buses and Trains – Staff will target safety and security issues on the Blue and Green Lines, which both have experienced significant ridership declines. In addition, security personnel will also focus on major bus transit hubs.
- **Improve System Reliability** – Reliable service is critical for attracting and retaining ridership. Metro's bus On-Time Performance (OTP) goal is 80%. While the bus system OTP is at 74%, there is significant variation in OTP by line. The top 13 worst performers are below 65% while the top 25 best performers are above 80%. Several actions will be implemented to improve overall OTP by targeting worst performers for triage and promoting best performers to the public.

Actions:

- Line Management – Line 720 (Wilshire Blvd) and the Silver Line are two of the highest ridership lines in the bus system. They also post some of the worst OTP within the system. Supervision will be dedicated to managing the flow of buses along these two heavily travelled corridors with the goal of evenly spacing buses (headways) and improving service reliability.
- Control Early Terminal Departures – There are currently 29 bus lines that have early departures greater than 5%. This aspect of OTP is the easiest to improve. Supervision will be focused on ensuring that buses on these lines depart their terminals on time and operators leaving time points early are held accountable.
- Promote Best Performers - Staff will develop a campaign to promote lines that have proven to provide the highest levels of service quality.
- **Restructure Universal College Pass Program** – Along with employment, educational institutions provide the greatest opportunities to attract riders. Metro's current Universal College Pass Program is undergoing restructuring to ensure that the pass is promoted, easily accessible by students, supported by educational institutions, and revenue neutral. Staff will target May 2016 for establishing the new program.

Actions:

- Close Coordination with Task Force – The Ridership Task Force will work closely with Communications to ensure this program is restructured within the targeted timeframe and achieves the overall goals of maximizing participation while being revenue neutral.
- **Promotional Fare** – Promotional fares can be an effective way to reinvigorate ridership. For example, the Blue Line is experiencing the most significant loss in ridership as constant service disruptions occur along the line as a result of system maintenance. To mitigate the inconvenience caused by construction activities, staff is evaluating the options for establishing a promotional reduced fare for Blue Line riders on a temporary basis. In addition, the downtown LA rail system has excess capacity during off peak periods. Establishing a downtown LA off peak discounted pass could attract new ridership that may not use transit to commute, but would like to use the rail network for meetings, errands, dining, shopping and entertainment in downtown LA during the midday, nights and weekends.

Actions:

- Evaluate Feasibility of Promotional Fares – Staff will analyze the ridership and revenue impacts of implementing promotional fares.

NEXT STEPS

Over the next six months, the Ridership Task Force will take the actions outlined above as well as any other tactics that can be expeditiously implemented to begin reversing the current trend in ridership.

ATTACHMENT A

FY16 Q2 Improvements to Service Quality, Convenience, and Comfort

Service Quality

- During the December 2015 service changes, several improvements were made to improve the speed, frequency, and reliability of bus service, including increasing extending the Silver Line to San Pedro, consolidating unproductive bus stops, and improving frequency by adding trips to Rapid Lines including Line 704 (Santa Monica Blvd).
- The Transit Service Policy was updated in the Fall of 2015 which included guidance on establishing a frequent bus network.
- To improve the customer experience during service disruptions requiring buses to “bridge” between rail stations that are out of service, TAP “Blue Shirt” ambassadors and other customer service representatives are being deployed to assist riders navigating between the rail and bus bridge service as seamless as possible.
- Metro staff are coordinating with local jurisdictions to identify and address congestion hot spots.
- The evaluation of All Door Boarding pilot project on Line 720 has been completed and recommendations for path forward will be presented to the Board in March 2016.

Convenience

- TAP TVM Screens and TAP2GO website have been redesigned to improve the ease and clarity of use purchase fare products and load stored value.
- Real-Time arrival Information is now integrated within the Google Maps transit trip planning feature, and the installation of new Transit Passenger Information System (TPIS) monitors continues along the Blue and Green Lines.
- Cellular service on the Red/Purple Lines is also being implemented at the subway stations, and eventually on the trains.

- Other technology projects are in the works to improve the trip planner, call center improvements, and other customer amenities.
- Promotional agreements with sporting and music events are in place to encourage fans to take Metro to and from the games.

Comfort

- Police and security staffing on the Blue Line was increased in Dec, 2015, and with a new security contract anticipated to be in place by July 1, 2016, law enforcement officers will be redeployed to increase visibility on buses and trains
- The video surveillance center at Gateway Plaza will be active before June 30, 2016, and two of the four mobile SkyWatch video surveillance towers that were acquired in 2015 are now activated. Nine security kiosks were also purchased in 2015 to increase security presence on the system.