



May 31, 2000

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**TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**FROM: THOMAS K. CONNER** *Thomas Conner*  
**EXECUTIVE OFFICER, TRANSIT OPERATIONS**

**SUBJECT: DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION**

**ISSUE**

The Democratic National Convention will take place August 13-17, 2000 in Los Angeles and the MTA has been asked to provide support for convention transportation needs. In March, the Board directed that staff work with convention planners to provide transportation assistance to the convention. The Board further directed that MTA support for the convention would be provided on the condition that it is cost-neutral to the agency and that it does not impact service to MTA's regular customers.

This Board Box item updates the status of MTA's involvement in convention transportation planning efforts.

**DISCUSSION**

More than 20,000 people are expected to come to Los Angeles for the Democratic National Convention (DNC) August 13-17, 2000. These include delegates, officials, sponsors, media, guests, staff, volunteers, and others. The city of Los Angeles has the primary responsibility for planning and addressing the transportation-related needs of the convention. MTA staff has been participating in DNC planning meetings.

MTA has been asked to provide support for the DNC in the following areas:

- Providing buses, operators and support staff under a "charter-type" arrangement for the DNC shuttle service;
- Honoring a regional transit pass for convention attendees;
- Providing MTA passes or tokens for sale at training sessions for convention volunteers and staff, and at hotels;
- Providing information about using public transit in Los Angeles; and
- Purchasing advertising space in the Official Delegate Guide.

Additional information about each of these requests, and the status of MTA's response, is provided below. Staff is committed to assisting the DNC in meeting

their transportation needs and in ensuring a safe and successful convention. As part of our planning activities, MTA staff has contacted individuals at SEPTA involved in planning for the 2000 Republican National Convention in Philadelphia, as well as individuals at transit agencies involved in past national political conventions in San Diego, New York, Chicago, and Atlanta. The level and type of involvement contemplated for the MTA in Los Angeles is commensurate with these other efforts.

### Shuttle Service

There will be an extensive, secured shuttle operation for the DNC. All delegates, and a variety of other credentialed individuals will be provided with shuttle bus service between their hotels and the Staples Center for the convention, and for selected other official events. The city of Los Angeles, working through the Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau (LACVB), has contracted with Event Transportation Associates (ETA) to plan, manage and operate this service.

ETA estimates that more than 275 buses will be needed to provide this service. They would like at least half of the buses to be equipped with wheelchair lifts. In March, RFPs were sent out soliciting buses from private charter companies. As of this date, 120 buses have been secured from these private companies. About 10 of these are equipped with wheelchair lifts. While ETA is working to secure more private sector buses, a significant number of buses will be needed from the public sector. Buses are also being sought from other public bus companies including Long Beach Transit, Foothill Transit, Culver City, Santa Monica, Montebello, OCTA, and Omnitrans. To date, the municipal operators have pledged approximately 25 buses.

In initial discussions with LACVB and ETA staff, MTA staff indicated that MTA may be able to provide 50-75 lift-equipped buses under a charter-type arrangement to the DNC shuttle operation. This estimated number of buses was included in the Board report adopted on March 23, 2000. MTA has now received a formal written request to charter up to 100 lift-equipped buses for the DNC from August 13<sup>th</sup> through 17<sup>th</sup>. During this period, all buses will be garaged at a secured facility provided by ETA/LACVB. In follow-up discussions, ETA has indicated that, based on their best estimates of the number of private sector and other public sector buses they can secure, they would need the full 100 buses from MTA to meet their needs. The request is to provide buses and operators, along with some mechanics and supervisors. In addition, we have been asked to make our operators available for 10-12 hours of training in advance of the convention.

The Board has instructed that MTA's assistance to the DNC be cost-neutral to the agency. The LACVB's request indicates that we will be fully reimbursed for this effort and the LACVB is responsible for raising the funds to cover these expenses. One funding option that has been offered would be to participate in a "Clean Diesel Retrofit Project" during the DNC. Coincidentally, the Board on May 25 instructed the staff to within 30 days, expand the existing low sulfur diesel fuel test program to evaluate particulate traps on 10 methanol conversion buses. The LACVB is working to secure state and private funds to pay to retrofit up to 150 public transit buses with continuously regenerating traps (particulate traps) for operation with low-sulfur diesel fuel. This project would provide funding for the retrofit as well as for the fuel and

operation of the buses during the week of the convention. This funding option would provide more value to MTA than a cash reimbursement. However, if the MTA accepts the grant funds in lieu of cash reimbursement, there will be a continuing cost to MTA to maintain the particulate traps and to fuel the converted buses with low sulfur diesel fuel.

The Board also determined that any assistance to the DNC should not adversely impact service to our regular customers. Staff believes that, because the MTA is receiving over 500 new buses this year, we will have sufficient extra coaches to charter up to 100 coaches for the one-week convention without impacting regular service. We have also been working closely with our labor union partners to provide approximately 120 bus operators and a few mechanics and supervisors as part of the charter agreement. All of our coaches will be lift equipped and there would be a mix of alternate fuel (CNG) and diesel buses.

In order to provide charter service, MTA staff is seeking both a federal and state waiver. The federal waiver is needed for all the public transit agencies providing charter type buses for the DNC. MTA took the lead in seeking this waiver which was granted on May 25. Action at the state level is needed only for the MTA. Assembly Bill 102 (Wildman/Hertzberg) has been amended to include language allowing us to provide charter service. This is similar to action taken by the State Legislature which allowed us to provide charter service for the 1984 Summer Olympic Games. AB 102 was approved by the Senate Transportation Committee on June 6<sup>th</sup>.

#### Transit Passes

In meetings with MTA and other public transit operators, LADOT had proposed the concept of a free commemorative transit pass that would be honored by all operators within the region. The pass would be prepared by LADOT and distributed to all conventioners. Whatever impact there would be on public transit would be felt most by the MTA, primarily on our rail service, and by LADOT, on the DASH service.

MTA staff determined that a free pass for the DNC would be precedent setting. No such passes were provided at prior national conventions, nor is SEPTA providing such a pass at the 2000 Republican National Convention in Philadelphia. For this reason, as well as legal and other considerations, staff has communicated that MTA could not accept such a pass without reimbursement. It appears now that no such pass will be offered.

Alternatively, MTA staff has proposed to make MTA passes and tokens available for purchase at the more than eighty hotels being utilized for this event, and for DNC staff and volunteers who will not have access to the charter buses. These discussions are still underway.

#### Transit Information

LADOT has also asked for assistance from all transit operators in providing transit information to convention visitors. MTA staff has provided input to a brochure indicating how to reach top

tourist attractions in the area using public transit. These will be distributed in the "welcome bags" that all convention visitors will receive.

We are establishing a phone number for convention visitors which will link directly to our customer service center. In operation from August 5-21, this will allow convention visitors to access MTA customer service and receive trip planning information using MTA and other public transit operators in the area. This approach was developed as a more effective alternative than providing printed schedules at each of the hotels.

MTA has also committed to purchase an advertisement in the Official Convention Guidebook that is being prepared by the host committee. The ad will indicate the convenience of using MTA services while visiting Los Angeles. Staff is also working to ensure that transit information printed in the Guidebook is accurate. Finally, staff is working with the host committee to ensure that MTA brochures will be included in DNC "welcome bags."

It should be noted that certain MTA bus lines will need to be rerouted around the "secure area" being established at the Staples Center. Similar to our response to other special events such as the Los Angeles Marathon or Grammy Awards, MTA will be preparing information to notify customers about these route changes. The Pico Station of Metro Blue Line is immediately adjacent to the secure area and Blue Line service will be maintained during the convention.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

MTA staff is continuing discussions with DNC planners on the issues reviewed in this report. Prior to the convention, staff will bring the DNC transportation assistance plan and funding agreement to the Board for final approval.