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November 20, 1995

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS
FROM: LINDA BOHLINGER *LB*
SUBJECT: STATUS OF BIKE-ON-BUS DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

ISSUE

This report is in response to a request for information by Director Patsaouras on the status of MTA Bike-on-Bus demonstration projects. The MTA Bike-on-Bus demonstration project on Line 130 will be replaced by a systemwide Bike-on-Bus demonstration project on Foothill Transit Lines. The Foothill project will equip buses with a new generation of racks that may attract more patrons while significantly lowering dwell time and maintenance costs.

BACKGROUND

In July, 1991, Line 130 was equipped with bicycle racks in a Bicycle-on-Bus demonstration project. Line 130 operates on Artesia Boulevard from the Fullerton Park-Ride lot to Redondo Beach. In December, 1992, the Board of Directors extended the Line 130 Bicycle-on-Bus Demonstration Project for one year. Staff was directed to use 20 boardings per week as a criterion for continued operation after the demonstration period.

The Line 130 demonstration did not meet the boarding criteria but discontinuation has been postponed until another demonstration could be funded. The MTA had several Bike-on-Bus demonstrations to consider in the latest Call for Projects, including an internal application which would have equipped several MTA and LADOT bus lines with racks. The MTA awarded funding to Foothill Transit. The Foothill project will equip its entire fleet with state-of-the-art bicycle racks. This generation of rack is able to go through bus washers, eliminating the labor costs associated with removal and reinstallation of racks before and after washing. It is also possible that the new rack will allow quicker loading of bicycles, reducing dwell time impacts that can result in increased operating costs.

The Foothill demonstration: extending the service area of an urban/suburban system

The Foothill project is an appropriate and ambitious extension of existing Bike-on-Bus programs. Surveys of transit operators indicate that most bike-on-bus programs are deployed on lower density routes in suburban areas with moderate to low patronage levels – usually initiated with hopes of extending the transit service area of outlying suburbs. The Foothill demonstration will deploy racks on some routes with high patronage that travel in congested urban areas.

Mixed results and the need for evaluation

While staff supports the implementation of Foothill's demonstration, it will ask for an evaluation of the demonstration with mutually agreed upon cost-benefit objectives (see Attachment 1). Bicycle-on-Bus programs have been curtailed or abandoned more frequently than other transit demonstration projects of similar size and scope. In the last twelve years ten programs have been abandoned, two agencies have significantly curtailed their operations, and four have stated that there are no plans to expand their limited operations. Almost all of the agency actions have been attributed to patronage/cost inefficiencies. Staff believes that the new technology, combined with wide-area accessibility and a strong marketing program, makes this demonstration a strong candidate for success; but the track record of prior demonstrations makes careful evaluation necessary.

Bike-on-Bus programs are appropriate in Los Angeles because the bicycle's share of the travel market is very low. However, it should be noted that their potential to dramatically increase the bicycle's share of the transportation market is self-limiting due to the low bicycle carrying capacity of the bus (two bicycles per bus). Japanese and European planners have increased the bicycle's market share to where it rivals transit's share – generally through provision of roadway accommodations and large scale parking at transit and other facilities. These other strategies form the core of MTA's bicycle program detailed in the April 1994 Los Angeles Countywide Bicycle Policy Document.

PREPARED BY: Jesse Simon, Transportation Technical Manager

ATTACHMENT 1

The evaluation component of the Scope of Work, under review by Foothill Transit as of the writing of this report, is as follows:

EVALUATION / DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

Customer surveys will be conducted to determine increased ridership associated with the program, and to estimate trip reduction relief. In particular, we anticipate using on-board surveys to determine customer acceptance of the program. Currently, supervisors monitor schedule adherence daily, and reports are submitted by line, so schedule adherence monitoring data is easily available before and after rack installation. Foothill Transit's existing schedule adherence monitoring program will be enhanced to determine any impact on dwell time associated with loading and unloading of bicycles on the racks.

Management staff will coordinate with operations contractors to monitor any impacts on maintenance costs (e.g., potential incompatibility with bus washers, structural integrity of racks, replacement and/or repair needs). We will ensure that our contractors and that Foothill Transit supervisors monitor bike rack personal liability claims or damaged buses related to the project. It is anticipated that Foothill's operating contractors will require formal liability waivers specific to the racks, ensuring that any claims will come directly to the management staff. Modifications to buses and bus yard operations will not be an issue since no modifications are required with the new racks.

Net patronage impacts can be estimated by adding the total increases in bicycle ridership to Foothill Transit's total ridership. On-board surveys for project evaluation purposes will target users to ask if they previously used the bus. This will allow us to estimate the effectiveness of the program at increasing the transit mode share. Monitoring loss of ridership can be estimated by comparing Foothill Transit's before and after ridership data; such data is continuously collected as required by Section 15 Reporting and Short Range Transit Plans (SRTPs). Additionally, our evaluation will include analyses of whether the program attains the two hundred (200) boardings per day as projected.

Foothill Transit agrees to work with MTA staff on mutually agreed upon survey objectives and methodology. In addition, Foothill Transit agrees to the Special Grant Conditions for data collection, specified in Attachment D of the MOU.

ATTACHMENT D: TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT SPECIAL GRANT CONDITIONS

1. Quarterly Narrative Update on Project Progress: Grantee must submit quarterly project progress reports on the last day of the months of October, January, April and July. Should Grantee fail to submit such reports within 10 days of the due date, MTA may withhold, at its sole discretion, the Funds from Grantee. MTA staff will provide Grantees with a reporting form to assist them in meeting this requirement.
2. Final Report: Grantee must submit a final report documenting project results within 30 days of project completion. MTA may withhold final payment of funds until grantee submits a final report.
3. Data Collection: Grantee must collect data documenting project before and after conditions in terms of vehicle trips reduced or vehicle miles reduced. The data collection method is subject to MTA staff review and may vary depending on the specific project's Scope of Work, Attachment C. MTA will not provide additional funding for this data collection. All Call for Project applicants were required to reserve 5% of their total project budget for evaluation costs. The Grantee will use up to half of this reserved amount to fund data collection costs. The remaining evaluation budget amount will be used by the MTA to fund an overall assessment of the projects funded through the TDM category of the Call for Projects.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL CONDITIONS:

4. Other Conditions: Where appropriate, MTA staff may itemize special agreements or understandings unique to the specific project that are necessary for successful project implementation or are needed to comply with understandings/conditions for award of the grant by the MTA.