

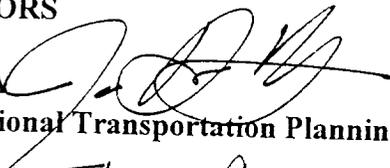


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Metropolitan
Transportation
Authority

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TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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SUBJECT: METRO RAPID BUS DEMONSTRATION – STATUS OF
PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

ISSUE

Last March, the MTA Board approved the Metro Rapid Bus Implementation Plan and authorized staff to proceed with the planning, design, and engineering of the MetroRapid Demonstration Program. A budget to cover the operating and capital expenses of the demonstration was approved in the MTA's FY 2000 budget. Working with the City of Los Angeles, significant progress has been made over the past six months to implement the program. The status of four key program elements, the schedule, and budget is summarized below.

DISCUSSION

MetroRapid Vehicles – Early in the spring of 2000, the MTA will begin to receive delivery of 215 NABI low floor forty-foot CNG buses. The MetroRapid program is proposing to use the initial part of the order for the first two demonstration lines on Whittier/Wilshire and Ventura Boulevards, requiring approximately 90 vehicles. Current plans call for MetroRapid to be operated out of two or three MTA divisions, depending on the final schedules.

The vehicle exteriors will have a unique design/image in order to differentiate them from both MTA's regular bus service and the various municipal providers. Several factors have influenced the design, including the following:

- Differentiation from other bus service
- Visualization at a distance
- Provision of a clean, uncluttered design without advertising during the demonstration to facilitate customer comprehension of the new service

- Communication to patrons and the general public that MetroRapid is provided by the MTA
- Provision of a design that will maintain an excellent appearance over time

A design review committee, composed of MTA staff from Planning, Operations (maintenance/paint), Marketing, Graphics, and MTA Arts, along with the consultant (TMD/Suisman), developed the design images. A final design is expected by November 1st, with specifications forwarded to NABI shortly thereafter.

MetroRapid Stations - A station design and implementation committee has met regularly to both finalize the design and the engineering/fabrication/installation process. This group is composed of MTA Planning, Facility Engineering, and Operations (Stops/Zones); the City of Los Angeles Bureau of Street Services, Department of Transportation, Bureau of Street Lighting, Cultural Affairs, and City Planning; Outdoor Systems, Inc (OSI); and the consultant (TMD/Suisman). The current plan is for the City of Los Angeles to be the general contractor, with OSI to oversee the fabrication and installation. MTA is also working with the County of Los Angeles and the Cities of Beverly Hills and Santa Monica regarding MetroRapid station designs and implementation. We anticipate having the station design work complete within the next six weeks.

The station design will be unique to the MetroRapid program and visually linked to the vehicle design to provide clear differentiation with regular bus service and to communicate the unique boarding/alighting locations to customers. The current design represents a new customer and community-friendly approach to passenger stations that will work on all sidewalk widths and streetscapes along the MetroRapid corridors. Key elements in the new design include the following:

- Use of a modular, free-flow design with the canopy supports curbside and part of a pedestrian lighting system. This provides a boarding and alighting 'gate' for customers to access MetroRapid buses, a canopy that serves both transit riders and pedestrians, no visual barriers for adjacent businesses, excellent lighting, and elimination of ADA access problems. The modular design allows the size of the station to be tailored to the needs at each site by using one, two, or three modular 'gates.' The canopy design allows for a large canopy on wide sidewalks and smaller canopies or no canopy on narrow, constrained sites.
- Comprehensive MetroRapid/transit information and local community maps will be provided in a separate kiosk or pylon. In addition, provision of 'real-time' bus information will be provided with 'next MetroRapid bus arrival' displays over the gate area. Pending approval of local jurisdictions, a separate advertising kiosk may be included to defer part of the station capital and operating costs.
- All MetroRapid stations are being planned for easy upgrade from forty-foot buses to sixty-foot articulated buses (50% more seats) in the future.

Station Locations – MetroRapid stations/stops are spaced approximately one mile apart. Stop locations have been finalized based on existing high ridership and the presence of transfers to other bus and/or rail lines. MetroRapid stops will be located ‘far-side’ of the intersection wherever possible in order to maximize benefit from the bus signal priority system. In some cases this involves relocation of the existing local stop from the ‘near-side’ in order to avoid ‘last minute’ street crossings by passengers trying to decide between MetroRapid and regular service. MTA is working closely with each local jurisdiction in finalizing all station and stop locations.

Bus Signal Priority System - Installation and testing of LADOT’s bus signal priority system is currently ahead of schedule. Installation of loop detectors has been completed along approximately half of the Ventura Boulevard corridor and is proceeding on Wilshire Boulevard. Installation will begin shortly on Whittier Boulevard, the outer segments of Ventura Boulevard, and on West Sixth Street. Testing of the loop detectors, bus transponders, and priority signal software has been successful on the first segment of Ventura Boulevard. Testing will begin shortly to simulate MetroRapid operation and to identify the travel time reduction benefit. Over the next two to three months, LADOT will develop software to help reduce bus bunching for MetroRapid buses by maintaining even vehicle spacing.

Project Schedule - The original demonstration schedule called for the start of MetroRapid service on the Whittier/Wilshire corridor in March 2000, with Ventura corridor service starting in May 2000. Several factors have influenced the decision to reschedule the start of service such that both lines will open concurrently in June 2000:

- The NABI bus order is running approximately two months behind the original schedule. The 70 buses needed to operate the Whittier/Wilshire corridor will not be available until late-April 2000.
- Since the NABI bus is the first deployment of the coach with CNG and represents a new fleet for MTA, the Steering Committee recommended that MTA obtain several thousand miles of experience with the coach prior to MetroRapid deployment.
- Coordinating the opening of the Whittier/Wilshire and Ventura Blvd MetroRapid lines with the opening of the Red Line to North Hollywood allows the MetroRapid program to build off of the marketing and public awareness for the Red Line by strengthening the linkage of faster, more reliable bus transit.
- Coordination with the MTA’s June 2000 operator ‘shake up’ will reduce unnecessary costs and improve operator training and coordination.

Project Budget – The adjustment in the project schedule reduces the FY 2000 operating budget of the MetroRapid demonstration to \$2.1 million, including operations support, customer service, and marketing costs. The FY 2000 capital budget remains at \$5.8 million, including passenger facility and technology costs. FY 2001 operating and capital costs associated with continuing the MetroRapid demonstration through December 2000 will be included in the MTA's FY2001 budget.