



April 24, 1998

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**TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**FROM: SCOTT MUGFORD, INTERIM EXECUTIVE OFFICER,  
CUSTOMER SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS** 

**SUBJECT: 1-800-COMMUTE SERVICE; RESUMPTION OF  
SUNDAY OPERATING HOURS**

**ISSUE**

At the February 1998 Board of Directors meeting, the Board authorized an increase in Metro Information staffing of 8.5 FTE Customer Information Agents. The Board took this action to restore Sunday information service and to reduce customer wait time. At that time, staff was also directed to enter into negotiations with other County transit providers to determine their reasonable, fair share cost of supporting Metro Information operations.

**BACKGROUND**

*Sunday Service Resumption*

Sunday service resumed on March 8, 1998. Call volumes, initially low, are now virtually at the same level as they were prior to the curtailment of Sunday service last December. Metro Information responds to 2,500 to 3,500 incoming calls on Sunday vs. 8,000 on the average weekday. Average daily customer wait times throughout the week have remained in the 4-6 minute range, down from the 10-12 minute average waits common previously. About 40 percent of calls are now answered within three minutes; the 20- 25 minute peak period wait times experienced by our customers are a thing of the past.

The recruitment and selection process of the part time agents destined for the initial training class has been completed. The first class of 9 part time Information Agents began on April 20, 1998. The incremental cost of staffing for the resumption of Sunday service was \$200,000.

### *Regional Significance*

There are undeniable benefits to the transit-riding public in having a regional transportation system which, though consisting of the services of many disparate transit properties, offers a comprehensive, interconnected web of access to every portion of the county. Similar benefits are realized by ready access to a single-point source of information about that transportation web. Metro Information, through the 1-800-COMMUTE number, is at the forefront of efforts to make regional transit information available to the widest possible audience.

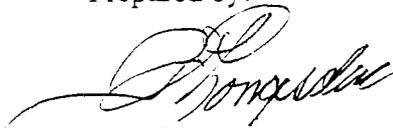
The versatility of the Metro Information/1-800-COMMUTE service is borne out by an analysis of recent transit itinerary transaction data which showed that 11½ percent of patrons' information requests resulted in itineraries which used bus service operated solely by non-MTA properties. An even greater number of transactions involved "interlined" trips using a combination of MTA service and one or more municipal or Proposition A carrier(s). There is a mutual, proximate benefit to all regional transit partners in being included in these multi-carrier itineraries which is difficult to quantify, but impossible to discount. The keys to increased region-wide transit patronage are ease of use and reliability and Metro Information makes access to transit information quick, easy and reliable. Customers no longer must contact several bus operators to plan an itinerary; only one call is needed to obtain the optimal route based impartially on each customer's individual needs.

### *Funding Participation*

Informal discussions with other service providers have indicated strong support for maintaining a single customer point of contact for all Los Angeles County transit users. MTA's transit partners are pleased with the quality of service Metro Information operators provide, are generally supportive of our efforts to reduce customer wait intervals and have expressed a willingness to participate in a reexamination of their financial support for the function.

In light of this, Customer Relations, Countywide Planning and Budget Office staff are coordinating efforts to finalize a funding arrangement equitable to the MTA as well as its municipal and Proposition A transit partners for the coming fiscal year involving 11.56 percent of Metro Information's operating budget, or \$647,000. During FY99, staff will finalize work with the regional transit operators regarding fair share funding allocations and will provide a full report to the Board at the conclusion of negotiations.

Prepared by:



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