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PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
JUNE 21, 2001

Metropolitan
Transportation
Authority

SUBJECT: FY 2002 LADOT SMART SHUTTLE PROGRAM

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDED FUNDING PLAN

RECOMMENDATION

One Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, CA
90012-2952

- A. Extend funding for the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) Smart Shuttle program for six months, beginning July 1, 2001, at a not to exceed cost of \$1.25 million.
- B. Direct staff to return to the Board by October 2001 with a comprehensive plan regarding the role of the MTA in coordinating and funding Community Based Transportation Services.

ISSUE

The newly adopted Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) establishes a three-tiered service approach to efficiently planning countywide public transportation services. Tier-3 services are defined to include neighborhood circulator/paratransit service in either a fixed route or demand responsive fashion, primarily with smaller vehicles. In Los Angeles County there are 43 different public agencies providing some Tier-3 service, 80 publicly funded dial-a-ride services, and at least 190 additional organizations that provide trips to persons with disabilities. The LRTP articulates a vision for a regional service development strategy, including both a regional master plan and a regional Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP). These regional plans must define the role of the MTA in operating, funding and planning Tier-3 services.

Pending presentation of the SRTP to the MTA Board, staff is recommending continued funding for current Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) Smart Shuttle for six months at a not to exceed cost of \$1.25 million.

In May 2000, the Board approved the staff report recommending continuation of Smart Shuttle funding for FY 2001, with the goal of providing future funding based on operating savings. That report also indicated that staff would work with LADOT to develop a Business Plan and also return to the Board with a more comprehensive plan regarding the role of the MTA in coordinating, funding and guiding Community Based Transportation Services.

Completion of the Business Plan was delayed while staff worked on the LRTP. Interim funding for the shuttles will provide continuing service while the MTA Board considers its overall strategy.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Staff has been working to develop a consistent role for the MTA as the countywide planning and programming agency as well as the largest operator of service. In order for this role to be effective, coordination with partnering agencies such as municipal, local and other service providers is essential.

With regard to Community Based Transportation Services (CBTS), also known as Tier-3 services, there appears to be an opportunity for the MTA to provide incentives for operators to connect to or augment the countywide network, including a seamless fare system. To date, service comparisons have been made based upon evaluation criteria first developed as part of the Transit Service Expansion program, later modified to examine performance on the Consent Decree New Services. However, since CBTS include not only demand responsive and fixed route services, but also user side subsidy token and taxi voucher programs, additional work will be required to more comparatively analyze benefits and costs.

The staff recommendation was based on the policy perspective that six- month funding for Smart Shuttles would provide the City of Los Angeles with the opportunity to continue operating the Smart Shuttles as the overall strategy is being developed.

OPTIONS

The Board could decide that the Smart Shuttles are a local program and should be entirely funded by the City of Los Angeles. Another option is to continue funding for more than six months. Neither of these options is recommended because the role of the shuttles in the countywide transportation picture should be considered as part of the Tier-3 strategies plan.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The six-month cost for Smart Shuttles has been negotiated not to exceed \$1.25 million and this has been included in the FY 2002 budget. For comparison purposes, in FY 2001 MTA provided \$2 million in Proposition C discretionary funds for the Smart Shuttle program.

DISCUSSION

Smart Shuttles, which were originally approved as part of the FY 96 Call for Projects, were initially envisioned to include service delivery options ranging from capacity enhancement for fixed route service to demand responsive paratransit. There were a number of assumptions and presumptions with this new program regarding entrepreneurial service operation and demand that did not materialize. To a large degree, the inability to delete or modify existing fixed route or demand responsive services, as originally contemplated, resulted in Smart Shuttles adding a layer on top of other services without defining a sustained niche market.


Thus, in order to maximize funding effectiveness, staffs began in October, 1999 to concentrate on the ability of Smart Shuttles to provide short distance trips on heavily traveled corridors,

functioning as capacity enhancers or overlay service. In the May 2000 report to the Board, staff indicated it would work with Operations to provide these services in a manner that would reduce MTA operating costs. Attachment A illustrates the line-level performance of the ten Smart Shuttle overlay services for July 2000 through March 2001. With the exception of the Manchester/Florence Avenues shuttle, all of the Smart Shuttle routes are performing well. In addition, Attachment B provides a summary of the service modifications that LADOT staff and the Smart Shuttle Operators, in conjunction with MTA staff, have proposed to make the overlay service more effective.

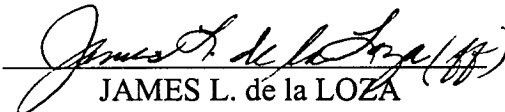
NEXT STEPS

If approved by the Board, staff will continue to work with LADOT on the phase out of MTA funding for the Smart Shuttle program. Additionally, staff will develop a more detailed plan regarding alternatives for MTA coordination of CBTS, including service, routing, fare and funding participation and return to the Board within 180 days,

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Attachments

- A. FY 2001 Smart Shuttle Service Performance Evaluation Using TSE-Shuttle Standards
- B. Smart Shuttle Service Modification Summary

Attachment A:

**FY 2001 Smart Shuttle Service Performance Evaluation
Using Transit Service Expansion Performance Standards for Shuttles**

**SMART SHUTTLE PERFORMANCE YEAR-TO-DAY
THRU MARCH 2001**

<i>Transit Service Expansion Standards - Shuttles</i>										
Service Area Route Name	MTA Lines	Psgs.	Rev. Hrs.	Cost per Hr.	Psgr Mi. per Seat mile	Sub. Per Psgr.	Opera. Ratio	Psgs. Per Rev. Hr.	Crit. Met	Pass
				\$110.84	0.260	\$0.47	32%	15		4 or More
				LOWER	HIGHER	LOWER	HIGHER	HIGHER		
Westlake/MacArthur Park										
1.Western	207	155,144	3,710	\$39.06	0.434	\$ 0.287	50.9%	42	5	Yes
2.Normandie	209	162,662	3,704	\$39.08	0.332	\$ 0.351	52.7%	44	5	Yes
3.Vermont	204	127,927	3,674	\$39.07	0.289	\$ 0.542	42.0%	35	4	Yes
4.Alvarado	200	66,063	1,994	\$39.02	0.210	\$ 0.804	38.5%	33	3	Cond.
5.Olympic	28	73,290	2,108	\$39.08	0.291	\$ 0.441	41.2%	35	5	Yes
Northeast San Fernando Valley										
6.Van Nuys	561	400,674	12,052	\$40.02	0.341	\$ 0.204	44.2%	33	5	Yes
7.Sherman / Victory	163 / 164	261,114	7,371	\$40.02	0.346	\$ 0.199	45.5%	35	5	Yes
8.Sepulveda	234	116,006	3,244	\$40.03	0.426	\$ 0.168	47.5%	36	5	Yes
West Valley										
9.Winnetka / De Soto	243	221,184	9,690	\$36.11	0.216	\$ 0.394	35.2%	23	4	Yes
South Central LA										
12.Manchester / Florence	111 / 115	220,056	11,897	\$35.66	0.177	\$ 0.916	24.0%	18	2	No
Smart Shuttle Totals										
		1,804,120	59,444	\$38.27	0.298	\$ 0.323	39.9%	30		

 Shaded values indicate performance standard not being met.

Attachment B:

Summary of Service Modification Recommendations
LADOT Smart Shuttle Program

With the exception of the Manchester/Florence Avenues Smart Shuttle, all of the Smart Shuttle routes are performing well. These lines are generating over 34 passenger boardings per vehicle hour, and generating a cost recovery of over 40% from passenger fares. The Smart Shuttle subsidy per passenger mile of \$0.288 is 29% below the MTA system average of \$0.357. While these performance values are good, the program in its present form dilutes Smart Shuttle service. Twenty-four Smart Shuttle vans operate over thirteen major corridors. This results in a Smart Shuttle vehicle operating, on average, about every 25 to 35 minutes.

After an extensive review of the Smart Shuttle system including rider interviews and discussions with MTA Operations, LADOT, the Smart Shuttle Operators and MTA Transit Planning staff, the following service philosophy has been developed. Smart Shuttle overlay service should be offered during peak demand periods on frequencies of 10 to 15 minutes. The Service should be focused along major transit corridors, with flexible destination alternatives offered to customers at the ends of the routes.

Following is a summary of the specific service recommendations:

Westlake/MacArthur Park -

- Operate 10-minute service on Western and Normandie between Pico and Hollywood.
- Suspend service on Vermont and Alvarado.
- Operate flexible destination service on Olympic.

Northeast San Fernando Valley -

- Operate 15-minute service on Van Nuys and San Fernando between Victory and the Sylmar Metrolink Transit Center.
- Operate a flexible destination shuttle service north of the Sylmar TC serving the Sylmar area and Olive View Hospital and Sylmar Juvenile Hall.
- Suspend service on Sherman Way, Sepulveda and Victory.

South Central Los Angeles -

- Operate 15-minute service on Florence between Vermont and Pacific.
- Suspend service on Manchester.

West Valley -

- Operate 15-minute service on Ventura between Reseda and Warner Center with flexible destination service along the route.
- Suspend service on De Soto and Winnetka.