

Minutes

GATEWAY CITIES
SERVICE COUNCIL
Regular Meeting

Thursday, September 10, 2015
6:00PM

Salt Lake Park Community Center
Lounge
3401 E. Florence Ave.
Huntington Park, CA 90255

All Metro meetings are held in ADA accessible facilities. Meeting location served by Metro Lines 111, 311, and 612.

Called to Order at 6:02 p.m.

Council Members:

Gene Daniels, Chair
Wally Shidler, Vice Chair
Richard Burnett
Jo Ann Eros-Delgado

Officers:

Jon Hillmer, Executive Director
Gary Spivack, Deputy Executive Officer
David Hershenson, Comm. Rel. Mgr.
Dolores Ramos, Council Admin Analyst
Henry Gonzalez, Council Comm. Rel. Mgr.
Michael Sieckert, Transportation Planning Mgr.

For Metro information in English, please call the following phone number: 213-922-1282.

Para más información de Metro en español, por favor llame al número que aparece a continuación: 213-922-1282

Մետրոյի մասին հայերեն լեզվով տեղեկություններ ստանալու համար, խնդրում ենք զանգահարել այս հեռախոսահամարով՝ 323-466-3876

Для получения информации о Metro на русском языке, пожалуйста, позвоните по указанному ниже телефонному номеру: 323-466-3876

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สำหรับข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับรถโดยสารเมโทรเป็นภาษาไทย กรุณาติดต่อที่หมายเลขโทรศัพท์ด้านล่าง: 323-466-3876

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메트로(Metro) 정보를 [한국어]로 알아보시려면, 아래 번호로 전화하십시오: 323-466-3876

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Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Metro

1. PLEDGE of Allegiance
2. CARRIED OVER Swearing in of Isaac Galvan, Compton City Councilmember, as Service Council Member
3. ROLL Called
4. CARRIED OVER Approval of Minutes from August 13, 2015 Meetings
5. RECEIVED Presentation on Transit Court and Citation Collection, Karen Gorman, Inspector General

Citations are issued throughout county for violations on Metro buses, rail, and on Metro owned or managed property such as parking lots and stations. Los Angeles Superior court was processing 150,000 tickets per year when the Blue Line was opened. Citations issued are now civil citations. Civil court doesn't require the officer who gave the ticket to appear, which allows deputies to deploy back onto the system rather than spending their day at court. Fare inspectors are also deployed to issue citations for fare evasions, which is more cost effective than use of sheriff deputies alone. As of late, when passengers are found to not have paid their fare they are removed from the bus or train and told not to come back until they have paid their fare which creates an immediate penalty. The previous system resulted in an average of \$23 per citation being paid to Metro, as the large penalty discouraged payment and the courts imposed a \$200 fee. The lower amount was implemented with the thought that it would encourage payment. However, stronger legal grounds to ask for identification are needed for civil matters; Metro is looking into legislation to get patrons to better identify themselves when cited. As the court system would not provide detailed statistics of citation payments and dismissals, Metro does not have information that can be compared to the current civil citation process vs. the previous criminal citation process.

Vice Chair Shidler asked what happens to the 83% of tickets for which fines are not collected. Ms. Gorman replied that they remain an unpaid debt. When someone has 3 or more unpaid tickets within a certain amount of time, they are listed on the hot sheet. If they are found on the system, they can be suspended from riding the system for 30 days. However, they can appeal. If they are found in system when suspended can be arrested for trespassing. Metro have had people suspended and arrested for violation of their suspension. Metro is attempting various strategies to make an impact on customer code violation behavior.

Vice Chair Shidler commented that he sees the same vendors on the Blue Line. If they've been cited at least three times, why are they still on the system? He didn't realize collections are so low. Estimates are that 300,000 people are evading fare payment per day, which adds up to lot of missed revenue when there are discussions of having to trim service.

Councilmember Eros-Delgado asked what the rate of completion is for the 30% of people who request to do community service for a fare violation. Ms. Gorman replied that they are given a number of months to complete their community service, and as completion of

community service in lieu of paying a fine has only been offered for a limited period, there is no data regarding rate of completion available yet.

Vice Chair Shidler asked if those who opt to complete community service have the option of doing service for Metro. Ms. Gorman replied that requiring them to do so would be a conflict of interest. Metro provides the option through a community service organization which provides various options including completing work for Metro.

Councilmember Burnett commented that he would be more confident of the crackdown on fare evasion if he saw more sheriffs riding the system. Ms. Gorman replied that the civil citation system has resulted in an additional 13,000 hours of sheriffs' deployment on the system as opposed to making court appearances.

Lt. Barry Shapiro commented that while not everyone sees the deputies, they are on the system riding different trains. There aren't enough for them to be everywhere. On buses, they have to observe the fare evasion occur before they can cite. On trains, they can check for proof of payment. Vendors are cited, and undercover rides are conducted regularly to identify problems and vendors.

Councilmember Burnett asked what value the transit education class has if people continue reoffending. Ms. Gorman replied that she doesn't assume that the fare evader meant to do so; there are people who made a mistake and don't have money or didn't know how or where to pay their fare. The approach is to try to educate, and not assume that all fare evaders have committed an offense intentionally.

Chair Daniels asked if plain clothes deputies are more effective than those in uniform. Lt. Shapiro replied that both are effective for different reasons. The uniforms serve as a deterrent, and plain clothes deputies can observe patron behavior.

Vice Chair Shidler commented that he takes system all the time and asked why there is a preponderance and fare inspectors on the Gold Line as opposed to other lines where they're needed. Lt. Shapiro replied that Metro pays for certain number of deputies to police each line. The highest crime area for a long time was Willowbrook. A year ago, the sheriffs placed fixed post deputies at that site and have almost eliminated crime there, but don't have enough deputies to do that everywhere. The areas with more issues have more fixed posts.

Vice Chair Shidler asked if the fare inspectors can cite the vendors. Lt. Shapiro replied that they cannot, but they can call deputies to deal with it.

Chair Daniels commented that last week when he rode the Blue Line, it was first time he wasn't proselytized or sung to, and that he didn't see a panhandler or vendors. Lt. Shapiro replied that crime is down on the Blue Line right now; the Green Line crime rate has been down 11% over the last 7 months. Every year consistently, bus crime has increased, but for the first time, it stayed the same. Progress is slowly being made.

Councilmember Burnett asked if the various quality of life issues such as loud music, eating and drinking are improving and how enforcement is approached. Lt. Shapiro replied that if patrol sees a violation, they cite for it. The sheriffs gather information from the public, through the Transit Watch app, and Metro managers and operators to find out where there

are quality of life issues. If it is a larger issue that needs following up on, they conduct special operations.

6. RECEIVED Presentation on Ridership Trends and Initiatives, Parvaneh Ahmadi, Transportation Planning Manager

Overall, Metro has experienced a decline in bus ridership since 2014, similar to national and regional trends. Metro and regional rail ridership has declined despite national upward trends. In examining external factors affecting ridership, employment has the strongest correlation. However, the reduction in service hours as an internal factor that occurred a couple of years ago did not influence boardings. Fare changes generally have temporary effect on ridership. Increased enforcement also caused a slight decline, but ridership is rebounding. Overall, customer complaints have increased, which warrants closer examination. Metro has formed a task force aimed at retaining current ridership, and trying to encourage choice riders to use the system for more of their trips.

Chair Daniels asked about the pass up complaints and how pass ups are defined. Mr. Spivack replied that they are complaints received where the customer has perceived that the bus passed them. Approximately 40% of those complaints are not valid; sometimes the passenger wasn't at the stop, or they expected the bus to wait for them to arrive at the stop, or other situations occur. When a passup complaint is received, the division investigates and if it is legitimate, they counsel the operator who is subject to progressive discipline. Over the last few years, Metro has added the ability to receive comments from various media including email, Twitter. As people can submit complaints easily and quickly, Metro has seen an increase in reporting.

Vice Chair Shidler asked what Metro is doing to get choice riders. The fare structure is confusing to people who already use the system. He has tried to get people to take a chance and ride, but every time they say they'll never do it again due to the things they see happen on the bus or due to the poor connections to make their trip - they don't want to deal with it. The municipal operators need to coordinate their service with Metro, especially the timing of schedule changes and transfer points.

7. RECEIVED Report on Gateway Cities Service Performance, Gary Spivack, Deputy Executive Officer

Chair Daniels commented that the complaints regarding operator discourtesy concern him. Mr. Spivack replied that the complaints categorized as operator discourtesy and operator conduct is reviewed for how the operator handled the event. Eleven percent of those complaints are found to be substantiated. There are 92 different dialects spoken in Los Angeles; sometimes the perceptions and misunderstandings are cultural. However, Metro does not tolerate discourtesy from operators and addresses any legitimate complaints.

Councilmember Shidler asked if it is advantageous to move to far side stops in order to avoid people turning in front of the bus. Mr. Spivack replied that far side stops are used and stops are consolidated where they can be to avoid people running across the street to catch the first bus to arrive, but it's not always possible, especially at heavily used stops where additional room is needed.

Vice Chair Shidler asked how Metro compares in terms of key performance indicators to other transit systems. Mr. Spivack replied that while all systems use their own definitions and goals, Metro is within the same range.

Vice Chair Shidler asked if there has been any discussion about the Mayor wanting to push to complete the Purple Line extension before the Olympics. Mr. Spivack said that if Los Angeles were awarded the Olympics, there would likely be a push to do so. To complete the project faster would take money, as the project is expensive. Metro is pursuing loans and seeking private sector investors to invest the system.

Chair Daniels commented that the Gateway Cities Council of Governments is concerned that the Measure R designated funds are going to be allocated to other projects ahead of the already approved designated projects with next ballot measure. Mr. Spivack replied that cannot happen as the funds are restricted.

Vice Chair Shidler shared that on Tuesday, Mike Kodama of Eco-Rapid Transit made a presentation at the Huntington Park City Council on the eco rapid transit line. After the presentation, Vice Chair Shidler he was invited to meet with a group of students and with Nancy Michali to talk more about development along the line.

8. PUBLIC Comment for items not on the Agenda

Roberto Hernandez commented regarding bus safety. Last month, there was a shooting outside of a Line 111 bus, and there was recently a shooting inside a bus at Western Ave. He thinks the sheriffs should ride the bus, or if they follow the bus, they can ticket people who turn their cars in front of the bus. He thinks that sometimes operators speed up so that they don't have to load wheelchair passengers. He added that from Atlantic/Firestone to Tweedy, there were several stops moved but there are no signs posted. Line 111 is really crowded even at 9 pm.

Jose Estrada commented that it's very common that operators tell him that they're sorry, the wheelchair spaces are already occupied, but usually there's only one wheelchair in that space or one person sitting in that area; this happens to him a lot on Line 260, which he usually rides around 2-2:30 pm. On Line 760 by the college there's not enough shade at the stop.

Lisa Kalsper commented that Metro is a public agency trying to do a public service. She's believes people say that gas tax should only go for roads because they're confused about what is public and private. If Metro can explain that, they can respond to comments like that when a potential ballot measure comes up. Regarding the earlier conversation about people playing guitars and preaching on the trains, she thinks we need to be more concerned about violence on transit. She was on a westbound Norwalk Bus #4 on August 13 around 9pm to the Green Line. When they got to the Metrolink Station, she asked the driver if they were going to sit there the whole half hour, forgetting that they do that. The operator got off the bus and a woman started going into a schizophrenic rant, threatened her, and continued to rant at her for around a half hour. The operator got back on and didn't say anything. She emailed Norwalk Transit next day, received no response, and resent her concerns again 10 days later, but still received no response. She thinks they could at least acknowledge public comments especially on an assault type of incident. It was the first time she made a

comment to a public transit agency that was completely ignored; when she has made comments to Metro, she's always received a response.

9. CHAIR and Council Member Comments

Vice Chair Shidler asked the Council to review Article 2F of the Service Council bylaws regarding attendance and removal of representatives with over 3 absences within a 6 month period. He suggested that ongoing attendance issues should be brought to attention of the COG. Chair Daniels added that the Council's work is important and asked that an item to discuss Mr. Galvan's absences and any further action be placed on the agenda. He asked that Mr. Galvan be contacted to see what his intentions are. Mr. Spivack replied that he will contact Mr. Galvan to convey that the Council is considering his removal for lack of attendance.

Councilmember Eros Delgado commented that in discussing operator discourtesy and increasing ridership, regardless of language, gestures can convey a lot. It's important to pass that message on to the operators. Mr. Spivack invited the Council to participate in a ride along to facilitate more firsthand understanding knowledge of the operation of the system and passenger/operator interaction.

Vice Chair Shidler asked if there's been any operator feedback on the enclosures. He asks the operator's opinion when he gets on the bus. Mr. Spivack replied that there have been some reports that operators feel closed in, and that there's a glare off the plastic onto the windshield, particularly at night. Operators have been experimenting with use; if they sense danger, they'll close the top portion. Vice Chair Shidler asked if use of the enclosures is going to be required by the UTU contract. Mr. Spivack replied that he doesn't think use will be enforced in that way. While Metro wants to provide operators with tools to remain safe, use of the enclosures is a personal preference.

Vice Chair Shidler replied that in talking with operators, they complain that when they're boarding patrons in wheelchairs, the enclosure won't stay open. He's never seen any of them operating the bus with the top portion closed. Mr. Spivack replied that Metro's approach is to make the commitment to operator safety – it may take few iterations of the device to find out what works, but Metro is committed to keeping operators safe.

Chair Daniels commented that while he doesn't want to step on anyone's freedom of speech rights, he doesn't think they need to be rude or disrespectful of the people in their surroundings.

ADJOURNED at 7:53 p.m.