

Wednesday, July 6, 2011

6:30-8:00PM

Minutes

San Fernando Valley
Service Council

Regular Meeting

Marvin Braude Constituent Service Center
6262 Van Nuys Blvd.
Van Nuys, CA 91401

Called to Order at: 6:43 p.m.

Council Members Present:

Kymerleigh Richards, Chair
Jesus Ochoa, Vice Chair
Michael Cano
Donald Weissman

Officers:

Jon Hillmer, Director
Wilbur Babb, Communications Manager
Suzanne Handler, Council Secretary



Metro

Metropolitan Transportation Authority

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. APPROVED **Minutes of the meeting held June 1, 2011.**

3. RECEIVED **Chair's Remarks**

Chair Richards welcomed Director Mel Wilson to the meeting and those present to the 100th month anniversary of the San Fernando Service Council meetings. She thanked her absent Council members for throwing her back into this seat and ascertained that she will do better as Chair this term than the previous term and will run the meetings with a better sense of humor.

4. RECEIVED **Public Comment** –

- Ray D. Lopez expressed concerns regarding bus replacements. He was happy to be informed that Line 363 on Sherman Way will be replaced with a new 162 number. Glad that they did a good job of changing it for the fall of 2011. Wished the Council a safe summer.
- Vince admitted that he was wrong and that Line 634 should have gone south and shared some words he wrote in 1975 in honor of the 4th of July.
- Director Mel Wilson thanked the Council members and had a complaint about the holiday weekend service on the Orange Line. He rode the Orange Line from the Balboa/Victory station to the 761 Rapid bus and then to Westwood where he boarded the 720 going west bound to Santa Monica. On his return trip he rode the 720 east bound, went to downtown Los Angeles and got on the Red Line to North Hollywood station and then boarded the Orange Line a little after 10:00 p.m. on Sunday. Director Wilson expected light ridership at that time but there was such heavy ridership that the bus had to pass people and had standing room only. The bus was crowded until they got to around Sepulveda Blvd. He spoke with fellow riders and this scenario is not uncommon for this line at this time. He asked the Council to take a closer look at the service on the Orange Line, particularly around Van Nuys and the area around Valley College.

The Chair requested that Scott Page look into this matter and at least give a Board Box level report with information that pertains to this issue and the rider trends on this line at this time.

Jon Hillmer said he would determine if the schedule was changed over the weekend.

The Chair's recollection is that the schedule has never been changed and the weekend and night service on the Orange Line has a 20 minute headway, 7 days a week.

Mr. Hillmer responded that if that is the case, they can evaluate the data that they have, pre-shakeup, which is what they have in the box to see if there is an on-going, consistent overload problem or whether there is an equipment issue. We'll try to get that information emailed out to the members before the next meeting.

Representative Cano questioned if this falls under driver responsibility to report back up the chain when they leave people behind due to overcrowding.

Mr. Hillmer stated that it is the driver's responsibility to report back if they are more than 10 minutes late and if they pass up riders but he's unsure if they actually follow through with reporting. It is in their best interest to report this so the scheduling group can evaluate whether additional service should be put in thereby easing the load on the operator and providing better service to the customers.

Representative Cano expressed that it should be general practice to review policy because it is harder to enforce from outside of the bus than from inside of the bus. He suggested that the drivers coordinate when there are heavy loads. Mr. Cano would like to see the TAP count versus the actual head count of passengers.

Mr. Hillmer said he'll request feedback on the number of times they are getting reports from operators of overloads or not enough running time so that we get an idea of the vibrancy of that communications system.

The Chair stated that based on the Orange Line published timetable, beginning at 9:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, the headway is 20 minutes. She would presume that this is done to match the headway of the Red Line.

Hillmer responded that is undoubtedly the case even though the midday does not quite match up during the week but we also have to take a look at how many people are actually getting off the Red Line, going to the Orange Line. Trains have a much higher capacity than buses.

The Chair has observed that exact situation every time she is at the North Hollywood station. We definitely have more passenger transfers than we have capacity.

Representative Weissman added that he often sees back to back buses and the first bus is full and the second bus is empty. This goes on all day and

all night. It seems that the first bus is probably stopping to pick up passengers and the second bus shows up very quickly and there is nobody to pick up. He suggested that they coordinate in some fashion to switch positions or have the second bus lag behind.

The Chair interjected that passenger behavior is to crowd onto the first bus and the crowd stems from a high number of transfers.

Representative Weissman agrees with that but if we are saying that our bus service is 20 minutes apart and we have two buses that are piggy-backing each other, it is not going to be 20 minutes, it is going to be 30-40 minutes before the next bus shows up.

The Chair does not believe that this is the case here. She thinks we have a case where there are too high of a number of transfers from the Red Line and even if we matched the service headway, we would lack the capacity.

Representative Weissman said that yes, this is true at the station but as you get closer to Van Nuys Blvd/Sepulveda Blvd and start heading west, you start to see the difference and see the full buses and empty buses.

Madam Chair has seen this happen as well but does not think that is the case at night and does not perceive that as being the problem that Director Wilson has brought to our attention.

In general, Mr. Cano saw that today and believes that what Mr. Weissman is getting at is that perhaps if we have a full bus in front and an empty bus in the back, if the drivers coordinate then perhaps they can swap places so that the lead bus becomes the empty bus and then the full bus lags behind.

Chair asked if that would require a change in operating policy. A follower is never supposed to pass their leader.

Mr. Hillmer clarified that they are not supposed to pass their leader if that puts them ahead of schedule unless they are directed to do so by a supervisor.

Representative Cano wants to see the data that relates to the TAP count and this issue. The hard data that we have here should be reflected in our fare media.

Mr. Hillmer responded that we should be able to do at least a rough correlation between the number of people that are tapping versus how many people are getting on the bus. The only missing point would be when a passenger is transferring with paper transfers from other municipal operators.

- Faramarz Nabari wanted to acknowledge the Transit Coalition's past support for Representative Cano's motion and we do think that the proper way to fund mitigation for construction projects in terms of transit is out of the Construction budget, not out of Operational funds. We do also applaud Metro for boosting transit service for the upcoming weekend. With respect to this proposal, there are elements of this that make sense both generally and specifically and I've observed many of the problems that Chair Richards mentioned regarding the Sherman Way service. Our main concern is that we actually do maintain the number of trips. Many Sherman Way buses (Line 163 buses) are crowded to the point where operators have to skip passengers because there is no standing room on the bus. It makes sense to implement service efficiencies but we want to make sure that the total number of trips stays the same. Also, we're wondering how the situation with Lines 163 and 363 compares to Line 152 and the limited stop service on Roscoe. Finally, since there are no major service changes that are being planned for December, we are curious where things stand with respect to increasing the service frequency on the Metro Red Line and what might be the impact on bus service.

Chair Richards gave Carol Silver the opportunity to address these concerns.

Ms. Silver responded that as far as she knows, Red Line service is not being increased and as for the 353 Line, we're waiting to see how this conversion goes first. We do not anticipate reducing service because the point is to even out the loads, because we recognize that there is overcrowding on the local service, while there is excess capacity on the limited.

5. CARRIED OVER: **Swear in new Council Member**, Maribel De La Torre from the City of San Fernando, Suzanne Handler Council Secretary.

6. RECEIVED **Director's Report**, Jon Hillmer

- Performance Report for the month of May
 - On-time performance
 - San Fernando Valley: 78.8%
 - Target: 80%
 - Metro Bus System: 76.3%
 - Complaints per 100,000 passengers
 - San Fernando Valley: 2.99
 - Target: 2.94
 - Metro Bus System: 2.56
 - Miles between mechanical road calls
 - San Fernando Valley : 4,539
 - Target: 3,635

- Metro Bus System: 3,400
- Accidents per 100,000 miles
 - San Fernando Valley: 3.00
 - Target: 2.73
 - Metro Bus System: 2.51
- Monthly ridership
 - San Fernando Valley is at 5,490,000
 - Target: 4,900,000
 - Metro Bus System: 32,560,000
- Orange Line ridership
 - Weekday: 25,500
 - Saturday: 14,900
 - Sunday: 11,500

Concern was expressed by Representative Cano regarding the accuracy of the graphs and matrices that are used to calculate these numbers. He would like to see a better way to present the data that would make it more accurate. Possibly using 3D graphs would be more helpful and easier to read.

- I-405 Closing in July
 - The Red and Purple Lines will be operating on a peak weekday service schedule with trains leaving every 10 minutes.
 - The Green Line will be doubling service levels with trains leaving every 10 minutes.
 - The Orange Line will have service levels of 6 minutes.
 - Metro Local Lines 2 and 150, Metro Rapid Lines 704, 720, 733 and 761, and Metro Express Line 534 will have service levels doubled.
 - 16 buses will be placed on standby-ready to roll status at Divisions 7, 8, 10 and 15 with 4 buses at each Division.

The Chair is not sure if doubling service will be adequate. It is known that there will be traffic but the real question is whether buses will actually get through said traffic. She strongly suggested splitting the service and planning for the worst that can happen.

Mr. Hillmer understands that the problem will be getting the buses through the traffic. He said that there is a fear of having a ridged schedule and it falling apart and that is why they have taken a looser approach to the scheduling of the buses for this closure.

Representative Cano voiced his concern that all of the money to pay for the extra service is coming out of Operations' budget and not the 405 Project budget. The delta between regular service and increased service should be paid for by the Project's budget. Representative Cano introduced a motion that this Council support funding additional service out of the 405 Project

budget and not Operations' budget, Vice Chair Ochoa seconded the motion.

Mr. Hillmer responded that he will pass those concerns on to Paul Taylor.

- Enhanced Public Communications Plan
 - The plan includes Metro Council web pages with photos and bios, maps of each region, meeting schedules and agendas and a customer comment link. There are also Car Cards and Take-Ones for buses as well as promotional programs including customer/operator appreciation programs.
 - Quarterly Meeting of Transit Operators
 - The meeting is scheduled for July and invitees include the cities of Burbank, Glendale, Antelope Valley, Santa Clarita as well as LADOT, Metrolink and Metro.
 - Meet and Confer Summary
 - At the June 30th meeting the following items were discussed: the I-405 closure, bus/rail fares, future bus buys, redeployment of resources to address deferred maintenance, introduction of Roberts & DiNuzzo, Expo Line update and the emergency action plan for bus or rail incidents.
 - Metro Board Actions in June
 - The actions that were taken by the Metro Board in June were as follows: approval of the 2011 Countywide Preliminary Project Funding Strategy; the SCRRA FY2012 Budget & Metro Annual Work Program and directed the CEO and ATVC to solicit a Best Value Request for Proposal for up to 30 Super Low/Zero Emission buses and up to 100 45-foot Composite CNG buses with staff to return with an analysis of the relationship of bus size to service frequency.
 - August Public Hearing
 - Due to the lack of significance of the Line changes that are occurring, a public hearing is not necessary.
7. DISCUSSED staff **proposals for the 163 and 363 Lines**. Presentation was given by Ms. Silver of Service Development and Planning. The proposed change is to convert Line 363 limited stop service to local service. The slideshow that was presented for this item included a number of maps and statistics to support this proposal.

Representative Cano mentioned that the Board may change the fare structure and questioned whether this change would affect or impact the ridership and cost for this Line.

The Chair responded that this proposed change grew out of conversations that she had with Planning because of the service on this line. In her opinion, the real problem is that over time, ridership and the demographics along this line have changed and this proposal is the best solution to prevent cancellation.

8. RECEIVED report regarding the **On-Time-Performance Program** at Divisions 8 and 15.

Gary Spivack presented a PowerPoint and stressed that our time belt is the standard or tighter than the standard across the board. One of the issues that affect the 4 minute headway for the 901 Line is when a bus gets delayed for any reason (helping handicapped customers, riders with bicycles, etc.) then another bus ends up on the tail of the original one. With a 4 minute headway at the peak periods, if a bus is delayed at one station or one signal cycle, which is 2.5 minutes, you're bound to have another bus on your tail. Second problem is that some of the transponders are being read by the system but are not being given priority. We've been struggling with this for 9 months and the City is scratching their head about this issue. Also, the walk signals affect the traffic signal timing which in turn affects the bus headways. The City is reluctant to give us full signal priority.

Representative Cano said that speaking with general management may garner a better response as they tend to be more sympathetic. He timed the signal stops at non-major streets at 1-2 minutes. Maybe focus on time savings on some of the smaller streets and put together a patch that Mr. DeLaVega could propose in his new duties.

Mr. Spivack responded that his department is currently trying to fund 2 positions that would be dedicated to cleaning up and maintaining our systems. The hope is to have these in place by the August meeting.

The Chair requested clarification regarding pushing the cross walk button and whether pushing it multiple times will speed up the system and if that affects the signal timing. Directed Mr. Hillmer to request DOT to present on how the signal system works.

9. DISCUSSED AND APPROVED Chair Richards **Resolution for I-405 Closure** for the weekend of July 16-17 which includes the support of free fares for the Metro local and Rapid bus lines which connect to the Red and Orange Lines in

the Valley, and those which connect the Red Line with the Westside, and Rapid Line 761 between Sherman Oaks and Westwood.

10. RECEIVED **Chair and Council Member Comments**

- Line Rides

Representative Cano had a big transit day with the HOT Lanes groundbreaking ceremony that he attended via the Silver Line. He feels that there are too many stops in the downtown area. He took the Red Line to the Orange Line in an hour flat from downtown. He experienced the standing room only issue on the Orange Line.

Vice Chair Ochoa expressed concern about the buses that run between 5:00 – 5:30 p.m. on the 234 Line because the buses that were scheduled to arrive at 5:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. failed to do so and he had to wait until the 6:00 p.m. bus. In addition people with walkers crowd the aisles and he observed people smoking around the stops. He feels that the signs that direct passengers where to sit and stow their walkers are a bit vague.

Mr. Hillmer said that there was an issue in the past with operators smoking on their layovers but the issue has been rectified.

Chair Richards stated that she has sent numerous emails regarding the service on the 163 Line. She feels that after the June shake-up, the service has worsened. She also touched on the point that events at the Hollywood Bowl cause major delays.

Mr. Hillmer responded that he did speak with the Planning Department regarding this issue.

Adjourned at 8:22 p.m.



Collette Langston, Council Secretary