

Wednesday, July 3, 2013

6:30-8:00PM

Minutes

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY
SERVICE COUNCIL

Regular Meeting

Marvin Braude Constituent Center
6262 Van Nuys Boulevard
Van Nuys, CA 91401

Called to Order at 6:30 p.m.

Council Members Present:

Michael Cano, Chair

Donald Weissman, Vice Chair

Gary Bric

Antonio Lopez

Jesus R. Ochoa

Kymberleigh Richards

Dennis Washburn

Officers:

Jon Hillmer, Director Service Councils

Collette Langston, Board Secretary Office

Dolores Ramos, Council Admin. Analyst

Henry Gonzalez, Council Comm. Rel. Mgr

1. PLEDGE of Allegiance
2. SWORE IN Antonio Lopez, Mayor, City of San Fernando, and Dennis Washburn, Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains as Council Members.
3. APPROVED Minutes of the June 5, 2013 Council meeting.
4. RECEIVED Chair's Remarks

Chair Cano mentioned the groundbreaking held on June 21st for a new Metrolink Station to serve Bob Hope Airport, which will make the airport a major transportation hub and increase accessibility from the High Desert area. The Metro Board of Directors had strong attendance at the event. Chair Cano welcomed Mayor Garcetti to the Metro Board and noted that Borja Leon and Nat Gale will continue to work on transportation issues with Mayor Garcetti's office. Chair Cano expressed interest in having the Council invite Mr. Leon to attend a Service Council meeting to share the Mayor's vision for transportation.

5. RECEIVED Public Comment

- Vince Garofalo shared a poem about the 4th of July that he wrote 38 years ago.
- JoAnne Erickson stated that bus drivers do not pull up anywhere near the curb and she has a hard time stepping off the curb then into the bus because her knees don't work well anymore. Ms. Erickson would prefer that the bus stopped a few inches from the curb instead of a few feet. She is appalled that some operators won't allow passengers with several bags to board. How are people who don't own cars supposed to get their groceries home? In addition, she has seen women with 5 kids get onto the bus and none of them paid a fare. It isn't fair that the paying passengers subsidize non-paying passengers.

Mr. Hillmer responded that the policy is for bus operators to pull up within 18 inches of the curb. If they cannot get that close then they are to stop four feet away from the curb to prevent people from leaping onto the curb. Operators are obligated to deploy the ramp if it is requested of them. He noted that if shopping carts or other items cannot be stored out of the aisle that they present a safety hazard for tripping to other passengers. He added that operators are required to quote the fare but are not allowed to badger or argue with non-paying customers, and are to record non-payment of fare.

Councilmember Richards stated that she would like to see the shopping cart rule better enforced, as public transit is a shared resource; as such, there are rules and safety regulations that should be respected.

6. RECEIVED presentation on the Title VI Public Participation Plan, Linda Hoos, Civil Rights Program Manager

Every three years, a Title VI program update is required. The 2011 FTA civil rights compliance review found 5 deficiencies; all 5 have since been resolved. Metro received a letter from the FTA on June 27, 2013 stating that Metro has “satisfactorily addressed all of the deficiencies identified” and that the compliance review is now closed.

The 12 areas for the Title VI Program update are in progress as follows:

1. Notice to beneficiaries – completed
2. Complaint procedures/Complaint Form – completed
3. Record and report transit: related complaints, investigations, or lawsuits – completed
4. Public participation plan – in process
5. Language Assistance Plan – completed
6. Minority representation on planning and advisory committees – in process
7. Providing assistance to/monitoring subrecipients – in process
8. Determination of site or location of facilities
9. Service standards and system-wide service policies – completed
10. Collect and report demographic data – in process
11. Requirement to monitor transit service – in process
12. Requirement to evaluate service and fare changes – completed

Part of the Title VI report to be submitted to the FTA in October includes a Public Participation Plan, a document that describes efforts to engage low-income and minority communities. It describes the agency’s proactive strategies and procedures to conduct outreach, and the desired outcome of those Metro activities. Metro has wide latitude to determine when, how and how often specific activities take place and which specific measures are most appropriate. The FTA audit found Metro not deficient in this area and will submit a completed, Board approved plan in October.

Chair Cano commended Metro staff on doing a great job responding to the FTA and their varying requests for responses.

7. RECEIVED presentation on Metro’s Response to Growing ADA Ridership, Daniel Levy, Civil Rights Program Compliance Director

ADA ridership is growing rapidly and Metro has the highest ridership by people in wheelchairs in the nation. Metro’s ADA ridership has grown from 3,500 to 80,000 per month on buses alone in the last 10 years. In comparison, New York has 66,000/month on buses and rail. Metro’s increased ridership has been stimulated by past improvements such as use of low floor buses. There have been challenges handling the growth but Metro is committed to building and operating the most accessible transit system in the U.S. Metro is adopting many initiatives that go above and beyond the minimum accessibility requirements set forth by the Federal ADA and State Title 24.

The FTA requires priority designated seats on every bus and rail vehicle for seniors and persons with disabilities. FTA rules allow operators to ask people to vacate priority seats but don't require people to move. Conflicts occur because flip-up seats are designated as the priority seats. Metro's response to this issue is to install new signs and new seats that will be identified as reserved for seniors and persons with disabilities by using different color seat fabric and a pictogram. Flip-up seats will no longer be designated as reserved. All decals on buses and railcars will be replaced to designate flip up seat areas as being reserved for mobility devices. All floor areas for wheelchairs will be finished in blue and marked with the Accessibility Symbol. These changes will be on new buses and railcars first with retrofitting as vehicles are rehabilitated.

Safety rules dictate that walkers can't block aisles and must be secured. This takes up an available wheelchair securement site. The response to this issue involves creating a space for walkers by installing a single flip up seat with extra space on the next order of buses. This would allow one walker to be compartmentalized without taking up a wheelchair position.

The ADA requires 2 wheelchair spaces on buses 22' or longer. Metro has purchased articulated buses that are at least 50% longer than a 40' bus. This has increased the capacity for ambulatory passengers but capacity for wheelchair passengers has not kept up. Response includes working with suppliers to determine if 3 positions can be installed in future articulated buses and whether retrofits are feasible in existing buses.

Metro currently uses conventional 4 point securement systems that are slow, difficult to use and unable to handle three wheel devices. 75% of wheelchair users refuse to have their wheelchair secured, risking injury to themselves and other passengers. Metro is requesting funding to allow new buses to be equipped with a 3 point system, offering fast, easy and flexible securement for forward-facing wheelchairs called Q'Pod. The objective is to encourage more people to choose securement. A rear facing wheelchair position has proven to be safe without securement. New buses will be equipped with dual positions that support forward-facing 3-point securement or rear facing without securement. Ultimately, there will be a policy change to reflect that a wheelchair passenger can ride secured facing forward or unsecured rear facing.

The ADA does not have specific requirements for allocating space; each car on the Red and Purple Lines has one space that is shared between wheelchairs, bikes, strollers and luggage. The area isn't large enough for a bike and wheelchair at the same time. The response is to dedicate space on the subway cars for wheelchairs only. New Light Rail Vehicles will have space for 4 wheelchairs in each articulated car.

Tactile paths that are currently required by Metro for the visually impaired are above and beyond ADA and Title 24 requirements. Tactile directional bars identifying waiting stations are being installed in new stations and will be retrofit in stations that do not have them. An Interdepartmental Committee will advise the CEO on feasibility of placing tactile pathways in new rail stations and old stations.

The Transit Passenger Information System (TPIS) in many rail stations has poor use of color and uses fonts that do not meet ADA standards for fixed signs. New larger fonts and fully contrasting colors compliant with ADA requirements for fixed signage will be operational by summer on these variable message signs.

Another issue is that destinations are not called on subway platforms. The visually impaired have no way to know if a train is Red or Purple until after they board. Unlike light rail cars, the subway cars are not equipped with external speakers. As subway cars are sent to rehab, new external speakers will be installed.

The Metro Board has ordered that turnstiles be installed and latched at most rail stations to reduce fare evasion. Latching turnstiles at unmanned stations will reduce accessibility for some people. G-Tel, a hands free device, was developed based on input from the Accessibility Advisory Committee and Rail Communications. This allows people without use of their hands or arms to have the gate remotely opened.

Another issue arises with Metro's long standing policy that persons in wheelchairs are first to board and last to alight. When there are 2 wheelchairs onboard and one or both are alighting the one at the stop can't board until others alight. Ambulatory people can board first and grab the space or seats, resulting in the person in the wheelchair being left behind. Metro has changed the policy to allow persons in wheelchairs to alight first and then be the first to board. Ambulatory passengers who are in a hurry to alight may alight through the center doors while the operator assists the people in wheelchairs.

All of these enhancements will improve safety and accommodations. Many of these changes will be incorporated within existing budgets. Incremental cost of Q'Pod and rear facing is approximately \$3.7 million. It is anticipated these proactive measures will significantly improve the experience of riders with disabilities and reduce future civil rights claims.

Chair Cano commended Metro on being proactive in addressing ADA issues.

8. RECEIVED report on Transit Safety and Security, Deputy Darren Martin, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department

The Service Council requested discussion on the topics of Metro operator and passenger assaults and the new LA Metro Transit Watch Smart Phone Application.

There are two types of assault. The aggravated assault category includes assaults by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated injuries (broken bones, internal injuries or injury requiring stitches). This type of assault is usually accompanied by the use of a weapon or means likely to produce death or great bodily harm which may include personal weapons such as hands, fists or feet. Non aggravated assault includes all assaults which involve the use of a personal weapon such as hands, fists or feet and in which there were no serious or aggravated injuries to the victim(s). Overall, assaults are up over the last few years, but assaults on operators went down last

year. This year is trending slightly higher. As of January 2013, there has been one aggravated assault on an operator and three on patrons, and eight non-aggravated assaults on operators and nine on patrons. Of the total 21 assaults, 8 have been solved to date. The San Gabriel Valley and Gateway Cities areas have the lowest numbers of assaults this year to date.

The Transit Policing Partnership continues to work to make the Metro rider community aware of the Rules of Ridership and Code of Conduct to increase safety and security. They also continue to work to enhance operator training in communication skills-defusing volatile situations because often assaults are related to fare disputes, displaced aggression and/or arguments that escalate. High visibility and pro-active enforcement details continue to be conducted throughout the system based on intelligence led policing concepts. Deputy Martin shared his opinion that Metro should consider installing compartments to enhance safety and security of the bus operator, similar to airplane pilots, taxi drivers and train operators who are separated by barrier from passengers.

Transit Watch LA is a website that includes information regarding crime on the Metro system. It promotes the Department of Homeland Security's "If You See Something, Say Something" campaign to encourage the public to be vocal about questionable items they see on the system. A new app has been developed that allows the public to report suspicious activity or quality of ride problems and submit photos with their reports directly to Metro Sheriffs anonymously.

Councilmember Bric asked if the cost of installing some sort of operator compartment had been examined by Metro or if there are any plans to do so. Mr. Hillmer responded that there is currently no plan or budget to install protective compartments into buses for operators. Approximately 7 years ago, Metro experimented with installing a Plexiglas compartment with openings for operators. The majority of operators didn't like it as they felt confined and that it kept them from being able to interact with customers. Metro is examining the issue again; attitudes may have changed. Chair Cano asked that the Service Councils be kept updated on any developments regarding the compartment issue, and shared that legislation to increase the penalties for assaulting bus operators is being considered.

9. RECEIVED update on Orange Line Bikes on Buses, Jon Hillmer, Director

The Orange Line is a very vibrant route with a heavy need for bicycle capacity for passengers. Some options to help alleviate bicycle overcrowding issues include creating a sub-fleet during times of heavy demand or repurposing some space on the current buses. Metro is continuing to look at alternatives for this line.

10. RECEIVED Director's Performance Report on May 2013 San Fernando Valley Service, Jon Hillmer, Director

- On-time Performance: San Fernando Valley: 78.1%, Goal: 80.0%, System: 74.7%
- Complaints Per 100,000 Passengers: 3.49, Goal: 2.20, System: 2.86
 - Customer complaints Customers complaints to Metro Customer Relations are entered into PCMS (Passenger Complaint Management System).
 - During the 3 months of March, April & May 2013, a total of 2,825 complaints related to Metro bus service were made, which equals a rate of 2.98 bus customer complaints per 100,000 passengers
 - Complaints were received by the following means: 72% Phone; 16% Metro internet; 10% E-Mail; and 2% other entry types
 - If a complaint is NOT entered into PCMS, even if a response is provided to the customer, the complaint is not counted in the statistics that are reported.
- Miles Between Mechanical Road Calls: 4,515, Goal: 3,900, System: 3,806
- Bus Cleanliness Rating: 8.94, Goal: 8.5, System: 8.57
- Accidents per 100,000 miles: 2.64, Goal: 3.10, System: 3.93
- Bus Station Monthly Cleanliness Ratings: 8.14, Goal: 8.0, System: 8.23
- Average Weekday Bus Ridership: San Fernando: 212,478 of System's 1,171,271.
- Orange Line Ridership: 31,019 weekdays, 18,712 Saturdays, 14,547 Sundays
- Red/Purple Line Ridership: 157,257 weekdays, 101,440 Saturdays, 73,874 Sundays

Gate latching continues and all Red/Purple line gates should be latched by early August. There have been some issues with lots of municipal providers

Chair Cano asked if there is a correlation between the age of fleet and the miles between mechanical road call. Mr. Hiller responded that there is a correlation, and that generally those regions with the youngest fleet have the highest number of miles between road calls, but that strong mechanic teams also contribute.

Chair Cano asked what steps are being taken to target rider complaints. Mr. Hillmer explained that there are a range of programs in place to address various types of complaints, such as the Mystery Rider program. *Councilmember Richards* asked if a further examination of complaints by line might reveal additional information, such as complaints regarding frequency of service on lines that only run once per hour, rather than complaints about the service being provided. Discussion regarding ability to correlate complaint types with the line frequency ensued. Mr. Hillmer stated he would examine the issue further.

11. AUTHORIZED Council to go dark for August 2013.

12. RECEIVED Chair and Council Member Comments

Councilmember Washburn said that he is happy to be part of the Council and is interested in learning more about the transportation issues that affect the San Fernando Valley.

Councilmembers Bric, Ochoa, Richards and Vice Chair Weissman welcomed the new members of the Council and wished everyone a good holiday.

Chair Cano updated the Council that the new Chair of the MTA Board of Directors is Diane DuBois and although the Vice Chairs have not been chosen, it is likely that the 1st Vice Chair will be Mayor Garcetti with Mark Ridley-Thomas as the 2nd Vice Chair.

ADJOURNED at 8:16 p.m.