

Minutes/Proceedings

San Gabriel Valley Service Sector Governance Council

Regular Meeting

Metro San Gabriel Valley Sector Office
San Gabriel Valley Conference Room
3369 Santa Anita Avenue
El Monte, CA 91731

Called to Order at 5:15 P.M.

Council Members Present:

Bart Doyle, Chair
Sid Tyler, Vice Chair
Henry Lopez
Rosie Vasquez

Officers:

Jack Gabig, General Manager
Michele Chau, Council Secretary



Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Metro

1. CARRIED OVER TO APRIL COUNCIL MEETING DUE TO LACK OF A QUORUM approval of February 8, 2005 minutes.
2. RECEIVED Public Comment.
3. Chair's Remarks:
 - Introduced Mayumi Lyon, who recently took the place of Bill Lowe as the new ethics officer.
 - Reminded Councilmembers to submit their Form 700 by April 1st.
4. RECEIVED an oral report on Governance Council Term Expirations by Bart Doyle, Governance Council Chair.

Chair Doyle mentioned that effective April 16, he will resign his position as Chair of the Council as he no longer meets the criterion established by the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments requiring that its appointees be elected officers. He recommended that Councilmember Tyler, whose term expires in June, take over as Chair. He noted that all Councilmembers who were up for re-election were re-elected yesterday.

Mr. Gabig mentioned that the San Gabriel Sector Governance Council has no restrictions on re-appointments or term limits. The first cycle of vacancies for the Sector will occur in June. He stated that with respect to those vacancies that represent a cluster of cities, the cities within each cluster would act as the nominating bodies. For example, the three cities that Councilmember Tyler represents would be polled to establish their nominations and based on these nominations, the cities would select a representative to the Governance Council. The Council will solicit, and forward to the MTA Board for approval, specific nominations for the Council of Governments (COG) transit user vacancy, the two cluster appointee vacancies and the two positions appointed by the L.A. County Board of Supervisors. Mr. Gabig stated that Councilmembers who are re-appointed will serve 3-year terms. The Sector would like to submit all nominations to the MTA Board sometime in mid-May.

Chair Doyle noted that Councilmembers Lopez and Vasquez, whose terms will expire in June, would like to continue to serve on the Council.

Mr. Gabig stated that the Sector can assist by forwarding to the MTA Board recommendations for existing members to continue serving on the Council or by soliciting other nominees on behalf of the Council if desired.

Councilmember Vasquez inquired about the role of the COG in overseeing the vacancies for the Non-Elected (transit user) category.

Mr. Gabig stated that the COG establishes the process and structure for the three categories in which Councilmembers fall (COG-Elected members, COG-Non-Elected members, and Board of Supervisor-appointed members), and that the Council manages the process.

Councilmember Tyler asked about the process for selecting the COG-Elected member representing the San Gabriel Valley at large (currently held by Chair Doyle).

Mr. Gabig responded that this position is appointed by the COG's governing board. He added that depending upon when the nominations are submitted by the Council, the MTA Board may not act on the nominations in June. The Sector can assist by sending letters to those cities that current COG-Elected members represent, if these members express an interest in continuing to serve on the Council. However, it is up to the cities to submit their final nominations to the Sector.

Chair Doyle mentioned that Councilmember Vasquez, who had made arrangements to meet with Supervisor Molina's office as part of the Strategic Initiative to build relationship and trust with the MTA Board and staff, will need to re-schedule this meeting.

He also announced that Director Proo was defeated in yesterday's election; adding that as new MTA Board members are selected, they will need to be informed on how the Sector is operated.

Councilmember Tyler expressed disappointment with the COG's policy requiring that its appointee must be an elected official in order to serve on the Council. He commended Chair Doyle for the tremendous knowledge and energy he has shown during the past two years and for his efforts and instrumental role in helping to form the Sector. He hopes that Chair Doyle will be able to return to the Council in the future.

5. RECEIVED report of the General Manager.

Mr. Gabig stated that January key performance indicators show mostly positive trends. The Sector continues to face financial hurdles in the area of Worker's Compensation chargebacks.

Monthly WC Costs for January exceed the YTD monthly average. Division 9 has experienced some difficulties with an increase in claims over the last year, which has been driving costs above budget. The Sector is optimistic that the FY06 budget will more fairly allocate Worker's Compensation dollars.

OSHA Recordable Incidents is trending well below target with 4 incidents for the month of January.

Bus Traffic Accidents/100,000 Hub Miles met the target with 2.77 accidents for January.

New WC Indemnity Claims per 200,000 Exposure Hours were 8.24 for the month of January. While this is well below the target of 14, the cost of the claims is significant.

Miles Between Mechanical Failures were 7,518 for January. While this is an improvement over the YTD figure, the Sector is seeking to reach the target of 9,000.

Bus Cleanliness Rating was 7.96 for January. The target is 8.00.

Complaints/100,000 Boardings were 3.45, which represents an improvement over the YTD monthly average.

Passenger Boardings level was roughly 4.9 million for January, and this mirrors the level of boardings experienced throughout the agency.

On-Time Performance was 70% for January. More information regarding this category will be presented in Item #7.

“How You Doin’?” Program:

For the month of January, Division 3 Transportation ranked 2nd place, and Division 9 Maintenance ranked 2nd place.

Financial Review:

Mr. Rosenberg reported that Total Transportation was \$633,000 over budget for the month of January. Total Maintenance was \$444,000 over budget and Subtotal Sector Operations (including Total Transportation, Total Maintenance, and Total Sector Office) was just over \$1 million over budget for the month of January. Other Sector Support was \$138,000 over budget for January. Total SGV Sector actual was \$9.9 million for the month of January based on a monthly budgeted amount of \$8.7 million. January operator overtime was 90% over budget, which is primarily due to an increase in service across all Sectors coupled with an inability to recruit operators quickly enough to accommodate the increase in service. Mr. Gabig stated that since last summer the Sector has experienced difficulties with entry-level bus operator recruitment. The problem intensified in December with the imposition of additional Consent Decree requirements. Currently, there is a shortage of just over 100 bus operators.

Councilmember Tyler asked about the number of approved operator positions in the Sector.

Mr. Rosenberg stated that there are approximately 650 approved operator positions, and this reflects a difference of about 10 positions compared with last year.

Mr. Gabig explained that the recruitment and training process involves a combination of efforts by Human Resources and the instruction department.

De-centralizing the recruitment process is not a simple task, as the Sector cannot guarantee that operators who prefer to work at one of the Sector's divisions will be assigned there. The location of the vacancies takes precedence over the preference of operators.

Councilmember Vasquez asked if the dramatic increase in operator overtime can be attributed to the shortage of 18 full-time operators in Divisions 3 and 9.

Mr. Rosenberg responded affirmatively and added that in addition to the shortage, the increase in January operator overtime can be illustrated by normal time being under budget as the Sector is not incurring straight time for the budgeted number of operators.

Maintenance Labor was 5% over budget for the month. Non-Work Allocation (including vacation, sick leave, etc.) was 37% over for the month. This item has remained under budget up until this point. WC Allocation was 52% over YTD budget. Mr. Rosenberg stated that this figure is misleading because by most measures, the Sector is performing better than average in this category. Fuel Expense was \$183,000 over budget for the month, and this overrun impacts the entire bus operations. Parts Expense is on budget for the month, reflecting a trend across all Sectors. Other Sector Support was \$1.5 million over YTD budget.

Councilmember Tyler asked if there is a committee within MTA corporate that examines this information.

Mr. Gabig responded that Sector-related financial and key performance indicator information falls under the purview of the Operations Committee of the MTA Board. John Catoe, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, presents Sector-related information to Board members on a regular basis. The Board recently took action to allocate more funding to the Sectors for fuel expenses and WC costs.

Mr. Rosenberg gave an overview of FY06 SGV preliminary Sector budget premises. The Sector will operate 1.275 million revenue service hours. Operator headcount allocation is up 2.4 FTE's from 659 to 661.4. The number of full-time mechanics remains unchanged. The fuel budget is up by 38%, parts budget is reduced 10%, and WC chargeback allocation will be based on headcount. One additional custodian will be allocated to assist with the El Monte Station upkeep. Administrative cutbacks will occur, as each Sector has been directed to reduce its administrative staff.

Mr. Gabig gave an update on the status of the Division 9 Transportation Building. Financial cost proposals will be opened next week and the Sector hopes that this will end up being close to or under budget. The Sector is currently in a design-build process, and hopes to execute the contract by the end of the fiscal year.

6. RECEIVED an oral report on Status of Metro Connections by Nancy Michali, Director Service Performance & Analysis.

Ms. Michali mentioned that since she last provided an update on Metro Connections in October, she has met with the San Gabriel Valley COG and has also given a presentation to the MTA Board in January. She reported that the agency currently faces the challenges of stagnant ridership, increasing costs, and attempts to update a system and set of services that is more than 25 years old. Customers have expressed an interest in having the system operate as one integrated whole, reflecting the widespread perspective that Metro bus and rail are separate and distinct. Customers have suggested that the agency market and coordinate bus and rail schedules more effectively. Many riders state that they use several operators (e.g., Long Beach Transit) in addition to the MTA. The public generally rates the system with a grade of "C."

Councilmember Tyler inquired about how the Metro Connections team gathered opinions leading to the "C" rating.

Ms. Michali responded that people who have called to complain or provide input were asked by the agency if they would like to become a part of a focus group. Those who expressed interest were later re-contacted and focus groups consisting of 30 members were formed. Members of each group were asked to provide input on their expectations of the agency and engaged in a free-form discussion on salient issues. All comments were summarized and analyzed. One startling insight from these discussions was the refusal of non-transit users to board the system if the trip would require a transfer. This may stem from lack of knowledge and experience regarding how the system works.

The agency would like to provide opportunities for more operators/service providers and more high-speed, high-capacity miles. In addition, it would like to embrace a service concept involving direct, high-speed point-to-point service, more effective use of funding, and greater physical customer improvements. Criteria used in centers identification include where people live and work, where they intend to travel, and service coverage and connectivity. Ms. Michali presented maps showing locations of system centers (regional and subregional centers), corridor travel activity, and system plan. She noted that the maps do not reflect recent updates in subregional and regional centers identified. Implementation of the service plan will likely occur in 2008, and implementation of the capital plan will likely take place in 2015.

Ms. Michali reviewed the project schedule, which includes a Draft Plan presentation in June and final plan approval in September.

Councilmember Tyler inquired about the possibility of reviewing the Draft Plan prior to its presentation in June.

Ms. Michali stated that she would like to come back to the Council in May and provide a copy of the Draft Plan to Councilmembers for their input.

Councilmember Doyle asked when the Sector will undergo the normal route change process.

Mr. Hillmer responded that the route change process will tie in with the restructuring study that is currently taking place as part of Strategic Initiative number two, developing a long-term strategic transit plan. The Request for Proposals (RFP) will be ready by the end of the month. The study is expected to last 9 months and involves multi-level service restructuring. The Sector hopes to begin implementation one year from now.

7. RECEIVED an oral report on SGV Sector Vehicle Operations Program by Aurora Jackson, Assistant Transportation Manager.

Mr. Gabig mentioned that Ms. Jackson has had 15 years of experience in the transit industry. She has worked as a bus operator, radio dispatcher, and instructor. She was previously employed with Montebello Bus Lines and has worked in both divisions of the Sector.

Ms. Jackson gave an overview of the performance of the Sector, relative to the system as a whole, in the areas of Accidents/100,000 miles, On-Time Performance, and Complaints/100,000 miles. The Sector's performance in all three areas exceed that of the system as a whole.

Ms. Jackson noted that the Sector is targeting seven lines to increase on-time performance, including lines 78/79, 81, 180, 260, 484, and 490. Some of these lines have also had problems with accidents. The Sector's plan involves developing a profile of each targeted line to include its distinctive qualities, using the line profile to create a line action plan, and coordinating with the Sector's partners. The line profiles will provide information regarding the route service type (e.g., local, express, or Rapid), type of ridership, passenger loads, location of bus stops, frequency of service, distribution of time allotted between time points, traffic patterns, connection with other lines, safety performance, percentage and type of mechanical road calls, series of buses used, and bus operator performance. Implementation of line action plans will allow the Sector to assign targeted lines to each field supervision team, manage the targeted lines using the line profiles to identify problems, resolve recurring customer complaints, and improve communication with patrons and operators.

Ms. Jackson reviewed several on-going activities being carried out by the Sector. These include the monitoring of lines by bus operations control center (BOCC) via Advanced Transportation Management System (ATMS), live monitoring of service via ATMS, executing two line sweeps per month on targeted lines using division personnel, and holding monthly meetings with other Service Sectors and BOCC. The Sector's new goals include improving performance in all three key areas noted above and applying the same line action plan to all bus service in the Sector. Ms. Jackson gave an overview of efforts by the Sector to improve the use of headsigs, which will allow the Sector to identify problems with bus operator performance as well as mechanical problems. A small working group is in the process of evaluating the appropriateness of headsign messages for each bus line. Ms. Jackson stated that Sector staff is meeting with the scheduling department and reviewing all line profiles which were

drafted in mid-January to ensure their accuracy. She would like to come back to the Council in 9-12 months with an update on progress in this area.

Chair Doyle asked about how the Sector gauges the success of its Vehicle Operations Program.

Ms. Jackson responded that success is defined in terms of the Sector's ability to meet a minimum of 75% in its on-time performance level for the two months in which evaluations occur. In addition, the Sector should examine whether it identified the correct profiles for bus lines (as this may be the cause of delays) and the accuracy of information provided to customers.

Councilmember Lopez stated that he recently noticed that the timetable for Line 487 has changed, and this creates frustration among bus riders as it may interfere with their schedules.

Ms. Jackson explained that changes in timetables occur every six months, usually in June and December. Changes are generally made to improve service and address customer needs.

Mr. Hillmer added that changes in timetables are based on a compilation of information and may result from changes in other bus lines. In the case of Line 487, the timetable updates were part of a major change in service involving cancellation of the freeway segment of Line 491 and the resulting increase in running time to Line 487.

Mr. Gabig mentioned that the Sector would like to provide a demonstration showing how ATMS works at a future Council meeting. This would be done by projecting information from the ATMS system on the screen.

8. RECEIVED report on Community Relations by Liz Armijo-Holbrook, Community Relations Officer.

Ms. Armijo-Holbrook reported participation in the following community outreach activities during the past two months: a media event for the extension of Line 620 in Boyle Heights on January 10 and a media event announcing the opening of the extension of the I-10 High Occupancy Vehicle lane through El Monte on February 4.

9. Consideration of Items not on the Posted Agenda – None.

ADJOURNED at 6:41 P.M.

Michele Chau, Council Secretary