

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Minutes

Westside/Central Service Sector
Governance Council

Regular Meeting

325 S. La Cienega Boulevard
Beverly Hills, CA 90211

Called to Order at 5:05 P.M.

Service Sector Representatives Present:

Jerard Wright, Chair
Glenn Rosten, Vice Chair
Catherine Bator
Peter Capone-Newton
Art Ida
Terri Slimmer
Joe Stitcher

Officers:

Mark Maloney, General Manager
William Walker, Council Secretary

1. RECEIVED Public Comment for items not on the agenda.

Ken Ruben of Southern California Transit Advocates reported on his participation of National Train Day, at Union Station on Saturday, May 10, 2008. He said the event was packed with participants as evidenced in video footage taken by Rich Morallo, Metro Community Relations Manager, that has been posted to the Youtube.com website. The event also had a rock band performance and was well publicized throughout the community. He mentioned that he, along with Bart Reed, shared space at the RailPAC and High Speed Rail Transportation Authority tables. He also said Jim Walker, Metro Archivist and Wally Shidler, Metro Gateway Cities Sector Governance Council Representative distributed Metro literature and paraphernalia and that the event was successful considering it was the very first ever. He said that Metro was also present at the TaiwanFest at El Pueblo de Los Angeles Plaza directly across from Union Station.

Joan Taylor mentioned she attended a great Metro Westside Extension scoping session where around 100 people were in attendance. She said that it was not publicized enough in local papers. She said she received mistreatment from Metro staff at a Metro Board Committee meeting. She said that she did not agree with Board action taken on May 14, 2008 regarding the Immediate Needs Program for disabled riders. She said the program is a \$5 million program that is administered by two tax-exempt groups, an Episcopalian group and the International Institute of Los Angeles. Each group disburses \$2 million in transit subsidies for taxi vouchers and tokens for disabled riders and spends \$500,000 on administrative expenses. She said the taxi vouchers were no longer available without warning beginning in March 2008. She said she wanted a restoration of the four \$7 taxi vouchers instead of the new proposal that will distribute two \$11 taxi vouchers and increase the amount of tokens distributed, making the transit subsidy 50 percent taxi vouchers and 50 percent tokens, different than the 70 percent taxi voucher and 30 percent token disbursement presently available. She said that bus tokens are useless to participants in the program because of the availability of discount monthly disabled Metro passes and tokens available to most riders, and because many disabled riders eligible for Access Services ride Metro buses for free. She said participants do not have access to free taxi vouchers and would like

to see more of the vouchers given away.

Trino Burgos, a junior at Beverly Hills High School, presented on behalf of his sister, a nursing student who lives at 18th and Robinson in Los Angeles. She takes Line 220 to Line 720 in Koreatown for her job and Line 220 to her dentist in Beverly Hills. If Line 220 is eliminated, she will be forced to walk 7 blocks to Line 105 with heavy books and a laptop, which would not be convenient. Mr. Burgos said it would be difficult to promote Metro to get drivers out of their cars if Metro eliminates buses. He said eliminating Line 220 would make a lot of lives a lot harder.

Mr. Maloney said that the Governance Council held over the decision of eliminating Line 220 until January 2009 when Culver CityBus would be looking at picking up most of the line.

Representative Rosten commended Mr. Burgos for being an interested high school student.

2. APPROVED Minutes from April 9, 2008.
3. RECEIVED report from Council Representatives on their line rides

Representative Capone-Newton shared his experience riding Line 720 on Earth Day, April 22, 2008, when the City of Los Angeles partnered with community organizations to hold a festival in observance of Earth Day that closed Wilshire Boulevard to vehicular traffic in both directions between Harvard and Western, causing reroutes on several Metro and DASH lines. Representative Capone-Newton said he normally commutes from Mt. Washington to Westwood, a trip where he rides the Red or Purple Line to Vermont and transfers to Line 720 going westbound toward Westwood. His trip from Vermont to Western, which generally takes 5 minutes, took 30 minutes. He added that his train operator did not announce the bus detour, which he could have avoided by waiting for a westbound Purple Line train to Western Avenue. He noted that there were announcements about the service interruption on the Metro.net website and that after being stuck in the delay, he signed up for Metro.net real-time text updates that are sent directly to cell phones about anticipated and unanticipated service delays and construction work impacting regular Metro service.

Regional Community Relations Manager, Jody Feerst Litvak, added

that the group that organized the Earth Day Celebration advertised it as if Metro was a co-sponsor. When Metro was informed of this, they first asked that the organization remove the Metro logo from its materials. Metro representatives attempted to negotiate a co-sponsorship based upon leaving one lane in each direction open for Metro to provide uninterrupted service along Wilshire Boulevard for regular riders and event participants, considering Wilshire is the highest ridership corridor in the Metro system. Metro ultimately was not associated with the event in any way.

Representative Rosten reported on his line ride between his car dealership on Santa Monica and Lincoln Boulevards and his home in Beverly Hills. He said that there was lack of communication tools for someone who does not ride the bus on a regular basis. He said that he could not distinguish Metro Rapid buses and bus stops from Metro Local buses and bus stops. He also said he tried calling 1 (800) COMMUTE to ask where to wait for the Rapid bus but was unable to get through the phone prompts. He said Metro Communications team should focus on how to provide signage for occasional riders and riders that are new to the system. He added that the purpose of what Metro does is not to help the existing riders but to also encourage new ridership. He added that there should be more Next Bus signs installed informing riders of when the next bus will arrive.

Representative Bator said she enjoys her ascent from Wilshire/Vermont station to the bus stop sans scaffolding and construction materials. She mentioned that she has been traveling to Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., over the past few weeks and found that each bus stop she encountered on the East Coast had a bus sign and a map with a schedule listing when buses would arrive at the stop. She added that every Metro stop needs a bus schedule and map, especially on community lines. She said that this should be a top priority for Metro this upcoming fiscal year.

Rex Gephart, Metro Director of Countywide Planning, suggested that riders use rapidbus.net, a website that can be used from a mobile phone that predicts when the next Metro Rapid Bus is arriving at a particular stop. He added that Metro was in the process of adding more Next Bus Arriving signs to stops throughout the county.

Representative Slimmer shared her experience riding Line 704 from West Hollywood to Union Station and mentioned that Metro should

restore Line 704 service to Patsaouras Transit Plaza because the relocated stop at Vignes and Cesar Chavez inconveniences many riders who are attempting to connect with Metrolink trains at night when often they miss their last train because of the added walk from Vignes Street into the transit plaza. She also mentioned that San Vicente Boulevard would be closed in West Hollywood on May 15 between Melrose Avenue and Santa Monica Boulevard for an event that will either protest or celebrate a decision that will be made by the California Supreme Court regarding same sex marriage.

Representative Wright asked why poppy-colored articulated buses were running on Metro Rapid Line 728. Mr. Maloney said that mechanical problems with engines have been affecting a number of articulated buses. Representative Rosten asked if the problems would continue. Mr. Maloney said that articulated buses have not been making emissions targets, which will keep them off the road for the time being.

4. RECEIVED General Manager Report, Mark Maloney, General Manager
 - Mean Miles between Mechanical Failures are at 3100 miles for the month of March, compared to 3200 miles last year. He added that April was not a good month for this indicator systemwide. He said Division ___ was now at 4,000 miles, which can be attributed to the December 2007 batch of new articulated buses.
 - In-service on-time performance is at 57 percent, which is 2 percent better than last month.
 - Accidents are at 4.23 per 100,000 hub miles, which is good for the sector. Collisions and accidents are both doing better than last year. Division 7 has experienced a lot of cars hitting Metro buses. In March there were 5 collisions and in April there were 4 collisions, including one where a Metro bus was hit by a car involved in another accident. Divisions 6 and 10 are doing really well. Overall 20 percent of accidents in the sector are the fault of the Metro operator.
 - Three things that have brought the accident rate down:
 - Stickers on the rear view mirrors of articulated buses have alerted drivers to maintain enough clearance when passing.
 - NABI, the bus manufacturer, has moved the mirrors two inches closer to the vehicle
 - The last order of articulated buses moved the position of the mirror so it hangs from the top of the bus rather than the left

side

- Accidents for FY 2007 were 4.76 per 100,000 hub miles for FY 2008 that has been reduced to 4.18.
- Complaints continue to be strong; the Sector tracked well and continues to be below target.
- Worker's compensation did not do well for the second month in a row due to increased accidents
- In-service on-time performance is beginning to improve because of analysis performed in conjunction with the Service Performance and Analysis group and an incentive program called "Mark's Lunch ..."
 - Sector management worked one-on-one with Division 6 operators to provide feedback on their on-time performance and offer incentives for operators to improve their on-time performance
 - \$10 Subway Sandwiches gift cards were awarded to operators who achieved an on-time performance rate of 75 percent or better
 - Management learned that operators often were unaware of their on-time performance
 - Many operators were actually arriving earlier than scheduled, which is a lot easier to correct
 - Performance was evaluated for a five month period, reviewing on-time performance for two months prior to the incentive program, the month of the incentive program, and for two months following the incentive program
- How Are We Doing? Campaign
 - Messages have been coming in on the voice mailbox set up for the program. The number is posted on buses above the timetable and literature racks near the front of the bus.
 - First call to come in on April 17 reported an operator smoking on a bus.
 - The ads follow Metro's style guide for advertisements and changes might be made to the ad based upon feedback

RECEIVED questions regarding the General Manager report

Representative Ida said that gas prices have increased which has increased ridership for municipal operators such as Culver City Bus and Santa Monica Big Blue Bus. Considering that pattern, Representative Ida asked whether Metro ridership has increased and how it has affected on-time performance.

Mr. Maloney said that ridership has increased on rail but not on Metro buses. Rail ridership has increased significantly. He added that driver habits tend to skew toward trying rail first before attempting to ride the bus.

Representative Rosten said that now is the time to promote riding transit considering the level of gas prices. Mr. Maloney said that two budget items for next fiscal year include just that: a ridership improvement program and more communications funding for Service Sector Councils to market programs to their sectors.

Mr. Maloney also mentioned that the Board of Directors reversed proposed June 2008 service reductions except for changes related to the implementation of the 6 new Rapid lines to be introduced in June. The motion also postponed service reductions slated for January 2009.

5. RECEIVED quarterly financial report and FY09 Budget, Michael Davis, Administration and Financial Manager

Mr. Davis reported that the Westside Central Sector is operating within its authorized budget of \$152.6 million. Year-to-date spending is at \$117.7 million, a \$3.4 million overrun.

- FY 2008 quarterly update
 - All labor categories are running a positive variance, totaling \$6.5 million in both contract and non-contract labor funds. Although normal time is under budget, overtime for supervisors and managers offsets a portion of savings in this category.
 - Noncontrollable expenses are running a negative variance of \$6.6 million due to chargebacks from settlements from costly accidents.
 - Fuel costs are under budget by \$82,000 even though fuel costs continue to increase. The compressed natural gas (CNG) hedging contract has allowed for considerable cost savings on purchasing CNG, but only 90 percent of the needed fuel is hedged, meaning the Sector still feels a pinch from increasing fuel costs.
 - Although Worker's Compensation claims are increasing, the budget is still running a positive variance of \$250,000.

Mr. Davis mentioned increasing the amount of training for operators to decrease traffic collisions, which would decrease the amount of liability claims being charged back to the Sector.

➤ FY 2008/2009 Budget Comparison

Mr. Davis reported that the budget for FY 2009 is very close to the previous year's budget. He added that retaining service originally slated to be canceled during the June 2008 service changes will increase sector revenue service hours by 60,000 resulting in a \$4 to \$5 million increase in revenue bringing the total budget closer to \$159 million rather than the previously reported \$154 million. He mentioned a Board motion that would add 3 additional transit operations supervisors to each Sector, but has not been given direction from the Board to reinstate those positions. Full time equivalents for the Sector were projected to decrease because of service reductions. Because the service hours were reinstated, budgeted FTEs for next year will be closer to FY 2008 levels.

RECEIVED questions regarding report on FY 2008 quarterly financials and the FY 2009 budget:

Representative Ida asked if the \$1.1 million positive variance in parts and supplies is lower than expected because of Metro's relatively younger fleet. Mr. Davis agreed that fleet ages as well as mechanic vacancies make it a bit more difficult to respond to faulty equipment. Representative Ida mentioned that the cost for parts is increasing on average by 15 percent and cautioned Sector staff to consider this before lowering the parts line. Mr. Davis added that a part spending is based upon hub miles and that the item will increase because of a reinstatement of service hours from the canceled June 2008 service changes.

Representative Bator asked how many buses run on diesel versus compressed natural gas. Mr. Maloney said that 230 of the 2600 Metro buses systemwide are diesel. Metro has been using alternative fuels since 1996.

6. RECEIVED update on Westside Extension Transit Corridor Study, Jody Feerst Litvak, Regional Communications Manager

The Westside Extension Transit Corridor planning team just completed its third round of community outreach meetings and is in the process of reviewing the remaining alternatives. This is an Alternatives Analysis (AA) study. Once completed, the Metro Board would have to authorize a full EIS/EIR before the project could move forward.

Facts about the outreach process:

- Over 800 people attended; 750 comments were submitted in person at meetings, in writing, or through customer relations.
- Most of the comments agreed upon pursuing some type of transportation improvement in the corridor.
- Most preferred a subway below grade; Wilshire was the preferred alternative.
- There is a lot of support for a combined Wilshire/Santa Monica subway although most want Wilshire first.

Facts about the corridor study:

- 17 build, a no-build and TSM alternatives (as required by federal and state funding guidelines) were studied
 - 3 Wilshire subway heavy rail transit alignments
 - 5 Santa Monica Boulevard subway heavy rail transit alignments
 - 5 combined Wilshire/Santa Monica heavy rail transit alignments
 - 3 aerial/elevated light rail transit options
 - 1 Bus rapid transit alternative
- Evaluation criteria was developed that eliminated 12 alternatives, leaving five: 2 Wilshire subway, 2-combined subway, and 1 bus rapid transit alternative.
 - 1 – Classic Wilshire: serving Wilshire between Western Avenue (Purple Line terminus) in Koreatown and either Century City or Westwood Boulevard in Los Angeles
 - 2 – Other Wilshire: serving Fairfax District, The Grove, and Cedars-Sinai Hospital, then returning to Wilshire Boulevard, ending at Century City or Westwood Boulevard (missing Wilshire and La Cienega but possibly adding Wilshire and Robertson or Wilshire and Beverly)
 - 3 – Combined Classic Wilshire/Santa Monica: combining Classic Wilshire with a Santa Monica Boulevard alignment with stops at Santa Monica and La Brea, Fairfax, La Cienega or San Vicente, and the Beverly Center.

- 4 – Combined Other Wilshire/Santa Monica: combining Classic Wilshire with a Santa Monica Boulevard alignment with stops at Santa Monica and La Brea, Fairfax, La Cienega and the Beverly Center.
 - 5 – Bus Rapid Transit: 3 routes – Santa Monica Pier – Wilshire/Western, Santa Monica Pier – Hollywood/Highland, and UCLA – Hollywood/Highland
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- As required, a no-build and TSM alternative are still included.
 - Metrics were developed that projected travel demand in the area justifying the highest capacity system. Comparisons of the carrying capacity of different modes were shown and only heavy-rail is robust enough for this corridor. The high construction costs heavy rail subway necessitate choosing an alignment with the most user benefits that is most cost effective.
 - The analysis determined that a combined subway would generate slightly more new station boardings than a Wilshire-only subway. New boardings on a Westside subway would also translate into 20,000 to 30,000 additional boardings throughout the Metro system. Aerial station boardings skewed higher as a result of the forced transfer that would be required.
 - Transit user benefits are a factor of the number of riders and the amount of travel time saved.
 - Capital costs for either a Wilshire or combined subway were very similar with a combined alignment costing slightly more. The cost for aerial is similar or more than subway when mitigations and needed above ground facilities are included (placement of stations, station mezzanines, vending machines, power substations, elevators & escalators, lost traffic lanes).
 - Cost effectiveness is best for a Wilshire subway. The cost effectiveness for a combined subway is not far behind that, especially when a transfer station at Hollywood/Highland is considered.
 - When considering the urban fit of a transit mode, below grade heavy rail was determined to be the best fit for the corridor given its dense, built-out nature. Aerial structures and station profiles

drastically impact transform the street and pedestrian environment in this area.

- Outreach continues through several channels including the metro.net/westside website, the Metro Westside Extension Facebook Page, and through presentations to community groups and elected officials.

RECEIVED questions regarding update on Westside Extension Transit Corridor Study

Representative Capone-Newton asked why there was not an alternative that terminated at Interstate 405. Ms. Litvak said there are a number of additional alternatives that need to be studied.

Representative Rosten asked where riders will come from for the new subway and whether any studies have been done regarding how new riders will get from their homes to the rail station. Ms. Litvak said the scoping presentation in the fall identified job densities in the corridor and illustrates that the Westside corridor is now a job center unlike 20 years ago. In any other region in the country, the Westside would be a downtown. Buses continue to be the mode within the corridor but with increasing congestion, are limited in their ability to meet the growing travel demand. Metro typically restructures bus service to feed new rail lines when they open.

Representative Rosten said it seemed that new riders would not ride the new service without a place to park their automobile. Ms. Litvak said that the Metro Orange Line continues to break ridership records while many of the park/ride lots sit empty.

Representative Capone Newton said he commutes from Mt. Washington to UCLA daily and that a 12-minute trip between Wilshire/Western and Wilshire/Westwood via a Purple Line extension would shave his current commute time down from 90 minutes to 45-minutes by eliminating a mode transfer and additional wait time. He said a 45-minute commute is more attractive to a solo driver than commute times exceeding an hour. He also said changes in land use planning in the corridor would change neighborhood structures thereby allowing for increased transit utilization.

7. RECEIVED update on the Wilshire Boulevard Bus Lane Project, Scott Page, Transportation Planning Manager and Rex Gephart, Director Regional Transit Planning

Mr. Page said Wilshire Boulevard is the busiest bus corridor with a combined daily local and rapid bus ridership of 93,000 passengers. Average bus speed in the corridor reaches 11.9 miles per hour with 20 percent of trips in the corridor made on public transit. Segments within the corridor experience severe bus delays, such as eastbound Wilshire Boulevard between Federal and Westwood.

Metro partnered with both the city and county of Los Angeles and requested \$23.3 million from the Federal Transit Administration FY2009 Very Small Starts Funding program to construct a peak hour bus lane on Wilshire Boulevard between Bundy Drive and Valencia Street, excluding the Beverly Hills segment of Wilshire Boulevard between Santa Monica and San Vicente Boulevards. Metro will lead the environmental assessment (EA) process and the City of Los Angeles will spearhead project construction. In addition to a bus lane that will improve average bus speeds in the corridor, the project will repair the poorly deteriorated curb lanes along Wilshire between Western and Fairfax avenues, remove sidewalk “jut outs” between Comstock and Westholme in Holmby Hills, and create a new traffic lane eastbound on Wilshire between Federal and Sawtelle by removing a portion of the sidewalk.

RECEIVED questions regarding update on Wilshire Boulevard Bus Lane Project

Representative Capone-Newton asked if Beverly Hills was invited to participate. Mr. Page said Beverly Hills was consulted, is interested in evaluating the outcomes of the project, but is noncommittal at this time.

Representative Rosten said a study should be done to see how residents in the corridor can be encouraged to use the rail system if their home exceeds a walkable distance to or from a new subway project or the proposed exclusive bus lanes.

Representative Capone-Newton asked if there were safeguards to ensure the project will not be abandoned if the public or Metro Board of Directors does not approve of the project after its built. Mr.

Gephart said the project is a permanent transportation project, which requires an environmental assessment and analysis that will work with impacted communities to ensure a project that the community will support once built.

Representative Stitcher asked for a project timeline. Mr. Page reported that the project would begin analysis once funding is approved at the federal level, which is expected in October 2008.

Representative Bator asked how bicycles would interface with the bus lane. Mr. Page said that the City of Los Angeles transportation department policy requires that the lane be shared with bicycles and vehicles turning right.

Representative Rosten mentioned that all three Wilshire lines (20, 720, 920) operate at three different speeds, which will create nightmarish traffic if the project is implemented. Mr. Page said the EA process would analyze how the exclusive bus lanes impact traffic in adjacent lanes. Mr. Gephart added that the initial demonstration project in West Los Angeles two years ago increased average automobile speeds because bus lanes caused buses to weave less into and out of adjacent traffic lanes, causing less congestion in the corridor.

Representative Capone-Newton asked whether cue jumpers were considered for buses once lanes are introduced because of the three tiers of bus service operating in the corridor. Mr. Gephart said this would be analyzed in the design stage in partnership with the City of Los Angeles Bureau of Street Design.

Representative Slimmer asked if this project would move forward without Very Small Starts funds. Mr. Gephart said the project would need to seek other funds if Very Small Starts funds were not granted. He added that the project received the highest ranking of any Very Small Starts project in its seven years of existence based upon the number of cars this project could shift from the corridor onto transit. That shift alone exempted the project from local Air Quality Management District and federal Environmental Protection Agency air quality reviews.


8. ELECTED Glenn Rosten, Chair and Art Ida, Vice Chair for next term of office beginning July 1, 2008.

9. RECEIVED Chair's Remarks

Chair Wright thanked meeting presenters and said that in the time of increasing gas prices the Council should strive to get more people to ride transit. Despite the financial impact, the decision to rescind the proposed June 2008 service changes was a good decision.

ADJOURNED at 7:00 P.M.

Prepared by:



William L. Walker
Council Secretary