

Wednesday, August 12, 2009

MINUTES

Westside/Central Service Sector
Governance Council

Open Forum Meeting

Westwood Presbyterian Church
10822 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90024

Called to Order at 4:30 P.M.

Council Members Present:

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

Officers:

Mark Maloney, General Manager
William Walker, Council Secretary



Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Metro

1. CARRIED OVER Minutes of the July 8, 2009 Regular Meeting.
2. RECEIVED General Manager's Report – Michael Greenwood, Deputy Executive Officer, Westside/Central Service Sector

Hybrid gasoline bus trial run update – The Sector has been testing a hybrid gasoline bus over the past 6 months. The bus is averaging a gas economy of 3.7 miles per gallon which is exceptional. On the downside, the bus is a fairly new technology and is less reliable than desired. Metro continues to work with the manufacturer to work out problems. It operates on a hybrid gasoline battery which pollutes slightly more than a compressed natural gas bus.

Year-end Key Performance Indicators for Fiscal Year 2009

- Four of five main measurements met or exceeded targets for the year:
 - Mean miles between chargeable mechanical failures did not meet the target of 3,500 miles
 - Accidents (3.88 per 100,000 passenger miles), Complaints (2.78 per 100,000 hub miles), Worker's Compensation claims (7.5 claims per 200,000 working hours) and in service on-time performance (60 percent) all met or exceeded goal for the fiscal year
 - In service on-time performance showed significant progress increasing by 11 percent in a 13-month period, exceeding its goal by 7 percent.

511 Update [Anne Karna, Communications Manager, Los Angeles County Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (LA SAFE)] - Ms. Karna provided an overview of the new 5-1-1 traveler information system, funded by LA SAFE, a separate organization funded completely by the \$1 per vehicle surcharge on motor registration fees that must be utilized to improve freeway system mobility. SAFE primarily funds the call box system and freeway service patrol tow trucks that remove disabled vehicles along freeways throughout Los Angeles County. Call volume on call boxes has decreased because motorists more typically than not own a mobile phone, which has lessened the need for retaining call boxes which cost money to maintain and to provide monthly airtime service.

In July, 2000, the Federal Communications Commission reserved 511 as a designated traveler information phone number. LA SAFE is in the process of establishing a regional, multimodal service accessible through either dialing 5-1-1 or logging onto go511.com. The system benefits include:

- an easy to remember number

- a system that helps commuters make informed decisions before and while traveling
- a system that will improve regional mobility
- a system that provides information about the 5-county region: Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, San Bernardino and Riverside Counties

The telephone system will provide real time traffic information through a voice-controlled computer-aided system that is responsive to question prompts such as “What’s traffic like on the 405 at Wilshire Boulevard?” The system will give information on traffic speeds at that location, whether any traffic collisions or Caltrans road closures might be impacting that location, and travel times along the freeway a user is asking about. The system will also plan a trip on transit based on any starting and ending point and transfer a caller to any transit agency in the region. At any point during the call, a caller can “barge-in” with instructions or use short cuts to jump past prompts in order to get the desired information faster. Go511.com will have the same tools available through the telephone system as well as a traffic map, changeable message sign information describing traffic conditions throughout the region, exact traffic speeds on a given freeway segment, park-and-ride lots and how to access them, an expanded trip planner based upon the existing “metro.net trip planner” and a “find your transit provider” feature that will display all nearby transit and paratransit providers for each city in the region. Transit agency website links from throughout the region will also be posted on the 511 website.

Representative Rosten suggested placing an item on a future meeting agenda that will give Sector Council Representatives and select members of the public in attendance an opportunity to participate in a live demonstration of the 511 telephone system.

3. CARRIED OVER report from Council Representatives on their Line Rides
4. CONVENED Open Forum and RECEIVED Public Comment

E.D. Glass – Said she owns a gas guzzler, which is why she rides transit about 70 percent of the time. She rides Lines 33 and 333 (Venice Boulevard) most, which she said are often severely overcrowded and off-schedule. She said on many occasions she’s waited up to 45 minutes at Patsaouras Transit Plaza for a Culver City-bound bus only to see 4 to 5 buses bound for layover instead. Often this bus is standing room only after reaching downtown Los Angeles and continues this way even beyond Culver City. She reported an incident where she feels a bus driver unfairly and publicly berated her for pulling the

stop request cord a stop early and felt the operator should not have acted so inappropriately.

Nancy Sternberg – Said she noticed a printing error in the Line 704 schedule effective June 28, 2009. She said the correction was not available to bus riders until July 22, nearly a month later. She said many of the display cases and bus cubes on the Westside have information about Rapid service that dates back to February 2008, meaning much of this information is no longer valid. She added that many of the bus cubes along Santa Monica Boulevard west of Sepulveda Boulevard do not reflect a service change that eliminated all daytime service on this line segment, often leading a rider to believe a Line 4 bus will arrive at the stop when it in fact will not. She also added that information regarding road work at on- and off-ramps to Interstate 10 in downtown Santa Monica, which often impacts where Metro buses will stop in this area, needs to be provided to the operator in a timely manner so operators know to observe temporary bus stops, which are at times disregarded by some operators. She complained of Line 704 buses suffering more overcrowding since the “short lining” of certain trips and of buses being very noisy with Transit TV background noise combined with noise pollution from the air conditioner.

David Hollander – Said many operators continue to abuse the policy that prohibits an operator from using a cell phone while operating a transit vehicle. He often reports operators violating this policy, but says he has never received any follow up from division management regarding investigation of the complaints, even though he leaves contact information on each complaint. He said the investigation done by ABC7 regarding how customers using wheelchairs have received unfair treatment by some Metro bus operators has improved customer service to these individuals. He said he yelled at an operator this week for not ensuring a customer was secured by wheelchair restraints before pulling away from the transit stop. He noted that Metro buses often do not kneel for riders who are mobility impaired like he has observed from Santa Monica Big Blue Bus operators who typically kneel the bus. He said that the stops for Rapid and local service located at Wilshire and Beverly Boulevards and Wilshire and Westwood Boulevards (westbound) continue to be at separate nearside and farside stops. He mentioned that leisure trips on transit continue to take much longer. He said he disagreed with the proposal for bus only lanes along Wilshire Boulevard because he does not see how the right lane of traffic can be fully dedicated to buses when a number of homes in the Holmby Hills section of Wilshire Boulevard depend upon service vehicles parking in the right lane of traffic for pickups and deliveries. He added that all three tiers of Metro service (Line 20 Local, Line 720 Rapid, Line 920 Rapid Express) tend to use all three lanes in the first place and that buses would never stick to one lane.

Rosa Miranda, Bus Riders Union – Said she represents many bus riders who are concerned about having to wait more than 30 minutes for a bus. She said she supports the Bus Riders Union Clean Air and Economic Justice Plan, which will reduce congestion and help riders throughout the county. She said the plan calls on the MTA to use funds from the Measure R 20 percent set aside for bus operations along with federal economic recovery stimulus funding to put more buses on the street. She asked that MTA reduce fares to 2007 fare levels, which would increase ridership and act as an economic stimulus package for transit dependent families that purchase multiple passes monthly. She said the plan proposes establishing a network of bus only lanes to improve mobility and reduce travel time for workers who commute by bus. She said the plan will also improve night and weekend bus service which is a concern for riders who ride at night and often wait more than an hour for a bus to arrive. She said the plan would be a great improvement for the environment and improve the quality of life for riders should it be implemented.

Colleen Katie – Suggested adding a limited stop on Line 16/316 at West Third and Bixel Streets to serve an area between St. Paul Avenue and Witmer Street (approximately 0.6 miles) without a stop. She added that rapid stops on Vermont Avenue at West Third Street, Beverly, and Melrose continue to be split between nearside (Local) and farside (Rapid).

Zachary Strom – Gave Metro a “thumbs up” on performance, specifically on the number of 45-foot high-capacity composite buses that have been introduced on Lines 33/333 Venice Boulevard, and the lessening of bus bunching on that corridor. He mentioned that overcrowding still occurs during weekday off-peak and all day weekends. He said “Canyon Crossers” that traverse the Hollywood Hills on Line 761 could easily try Line 218 over the canyon and connect with other lines going west from the Fairfax District to Westwood/West Los Angeles. He encouraged Metro riders to continue supporting public transit as a viable option, suggested the following:

- Riding faster alternative routes (i.e. 728 Olympic Rapid, 218 Laurel Canyon) instead of already great performing but overburdened lines (333 Venice Limited, 761 Van Nuys-Sepulveda Rapid).
- Participating in Governance Council meetings and speaking up.
- Encourage municipal operators to “step up their game” – pumping up service on corridors where Metro may need to reduce service in the future (i.e. LADOT Line 573).
- Not giving up on transit.

Ken Ruben – He said he’s experienced severe overcrowding and late evening delays on Lines 33 and 333 (Venice Boulevard). He suggested transferring from local Line 33 service at Broadway and Venice for riders wishing to travel beyond 6th and Main Streets considering the number of lines available operating northbound on Broadway (Lines 40, 42, 45, 740, 745) between Venice Boulevard and Cesar Chavez Street (near Union Station). He thanked San Gabriel Valley Service Sector General Manager Jack Gabig for his help with securing a valid discount TAP card with an acceptable picture on it.

Lisa Wilson – Said ad wraps on buses cause her a headache and often when bus wraps are on both sides of the buses she feels as if she is in a tunnel. She said wrapped windows appear grimy and are difficult to see through. She observed operators not calling out stops per federal Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines and said that many operators feel they have a great job except for the customers riding. She added that timetables often run out on buses and asked if bus drivers were penalized for wrongdoing since customers are fined \$250 when breaking posted rules on transit. She suggested Metro maintain buses periodically rather than only when necessary. She mentioned that Metro could place comment cards on buses as an alternative to a long hold time with the telephone customer service center.

Joan Taylor – Asked that Rapid stops at First and Hope Streets in Downtown Los Angeles be combined for Lines 14 and 714 in both the eastbound and westbound direction. She reported that NextBus displays at Wilshire Boulevard and Fairfax Avenue have not displayed the arrival time of the next bus for the past five months. She added that criminal abuse from electronics misuse by passengers and operators on Lines 14 and 16 operating between Beverly Hills and the Fairfax District during late evening hours is very prevalent, putting her at risk. She, then, suggested that Metro install more cameras on buses to catch criminal behavior.

Eric Roman, Bus Riders Union – Said the Metro bus system is overburdened and under resourced and that Metro staff, though doing their best with the resources that they have, should make a massive investment in the bus system. He said the MTA Board should take leadership and massively expand the bus system with the 20 percent of Measure R resources (estimated at \$5 billion) specifically allocated to bus operations and federal economic recovery stimulus funding. He added that Sector Council Representatives should appeal to the Board as representatives of bus riders to have the political will to invest in the bus system, which will benefit passengers, stimulate the economy, create 10,000 green jobs, combat global warming, reduce the public health impacts of air pollution on county residents, and create a 21st Century bus system.

Nancy Sternberg – Said she didn't understand why two "not-in-service" buses would ever be seen bunched together when buses on average run 15 minutes late. She added she wanted to board a Line 20 bus but the operator passed her by while wagging her finger and giving a serious glance. She said if it is against the law for an operator to stop for her she would like to know such.

David Hollander – Suggested Metro introduce a family TAP card where a family could purchase a card instead of using their card. Mr. Greenwood said the Sector would look into offering such.

5. Chair's Closing Remarks – None

ADJOURNED at 5:50 pm.



Prepared by: William L. Walker
Council Secretary