



NEWS

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METRO RAPID BUS SPEEDS CROSSTOWN COMMUTE AND COMPLEMENTS METRO RAIL SERVICE

The new Metro Rapid Bus Demonstration Program, launched by MTA on June 24, 2000, is speeding the crosstown commutes of thousands of passengers. Metro Rapid buses, operating along two corridors, are cutting the travel time of passengers commuting across the San Fernando Valley and the LA Basin by as much as 25 percent and complementing service on the nearly 60-mile Metro Rail System.

Approximately 66 new low-floor Metro Rapid buses operating on low-emission compressed natural gas (CNG) provide service along a 26-mile route through the Wilshire/Whittier corridor from Santa Monica to Montebello, including stops at the Wilshire/Western, Wilshire/Normandie, Wilshire/Vermont and Westlake/MacArthur Park Metro Red Line stations.

An additional 22 Metro Rapid buses whisk passengers on a 16-mile route along Ventura Boulevard between Warner Center and the Universal City station, one of three new Metro Red Line stations along the subway's 6.3 mile North Hollywood extension which also opened June 24, 2000.

With stops at these Metro Red Line stations, Metro Rapid buses provide a quicker connection not only to the Metro Red Line but also to the remainder of the Metro Rail System which includes the Metro Blue Line and Metro Green Line.

The red and white Metro Rapid buses function like a "rubber tire railway." Each bus is equipped with a loop detector which can turn a red signal to green up to 10 seconds earlier and extend green signals up to 10 seconds longer to allow a Metro Rapid bus to continue through many intersections without stopping.

More...

Page 2 of 3 Metro Rapid Bus To Complement Metro Rail

Metro Rapid buses board passengers at specially designed stations spaced approximately 0.8 miles apart. Limited-stop and local service buses, on the other hand, stop approximately every 0.6 miles and 0.2 miles, respectively.

Average Metro Bus speeds have declined by 12 percent since the mid-1980s, and a study by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) found that approximately 50 percent of the time a bus is in service it is stopped either at a red light or bus stop. The goal of the Metro Rapid bus system is to make up much of that lost time.

Metro Rapid buses operate on an "interval-based" schedule, unlike buses in regular service which arrive at and depart from stops according to a "time-point-based" schedule.

"The interval-based schedule is aimed at maintaining the distance between buses and moving buses from one end of the route to the other as quickly as possible," said Rex Gephart, Metro Rapid project manager.

In the future, many of the stations will feature a display which will let passengers know when the next Metro Rapid bus will arrive.

Gephart says the MTA is looking at a number of service options, including the maintenance of three to five minute service intervals during peak hours on the Wilshire/Whittier route, and the platooning, or grouping, of buses on Ventura Boulevard.

"On Ventura Boulevard we're considering the platooning of Metro Rapid buses in pairs at 10-minute intervals," said Gephart. "The purpose of platooning is to ensure that we have enough capacity to handle passenger demand when Metro Red Line trains arrive at the Universal City station."

The Metro Rapid Bus Demonstration Program is the result of a partnership between the MTA and LADOT. LADOT designed and installed the bus signal priority system.

More...

Page 3 of 3 Metro Rapid Bus To Complement Metro Rail

The prime contractor for the Metro Rapid project is Transportation Management & Design, Inc. (TMD) of Solana Beach, California. Architectural and graphic design services were performed by Suisman Urban Design of Santa Monica, California.

In addition to the design and installation of the bus signal priority system, LADOT also is providing a link from its Automated Traffic Surveillance and Control (ATSAC) center based at Los Angeles City Hall to the MTA's Bus Operations Control Center. Some 130 ATSAC television cameras, located at strategic intersections, monitor the flow of traffic throughout the city. With access to the ATSAC system, MTA personnel will be able to track and direct Metro Rapid buses to keep service moving.

Gephart says if the two routes in the Metro Rapid Bus Demonstration Program are successful, the MTA will consider adding a minimum of 14 other routes to the Metro Rapid system.

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