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**OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 18, 2004**

SUBJECT: METRO CONNECTIONS

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE UPDATE ON THE METRO CONNECTIONS BUS
SERVICE RESTRUCTURING EFFORT**

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file a report on the status of the bus service restructuring effort known as Metro Connections.

ISSUE

This report is intended to provide the Board with an update on project efforts related to the Metro Connection bus service restructuring. It is anticipated that this effort will result in the implementation of an initial phase of restructured bus service during FY 06.

BACKGROUND

Last fall, Metro and the region's service providers initiated a countywide effort to develop a long-term strategy for the provision of bus service. A comprehensive restructuring of countywide bus service was last undertaken in 1980, and while incremental service changes have been implemented to upgrade service, they have not fully addressed the significant changes in the region and the resulting impact on transit needs.

In the more than 20 years since the last restructuring of countywide service, there has been a significant change in the size and distribution of the county's population and jobs, as well as a significant increase in the range of transit options and number of transit service providers. The region's population and employment growth has been reflected in changing development patterns with densification occurring in the county's urban core and expansion taking place along the edges of Los Angeles County. These changes have resulted in growing travel needs and new travel patterns. Some of the region's increasing travel capacity needs have been addressed with implementation and operation of new high-speed, high capacity countywide service options including 186 miles of Metrolink and 73 miles of Metro Rail service. Along with the increase in travel options, there has been a significant expansion in the number of Municipal Operators and other service providers with the proven ability to effectively provide community-based transit service.

In addition to addressing existing transit needs, this restructuring effort provides the region with the opportunity to assess and plan for future transit needs in order to improve mobility, support economic development opportunities, maintain air quality improvements and enhance the quality of life for all residents, while effectively and efficiently deploying the County's transit resources. Metro Connections is focused on developing a transit strategy to best serve Los Angeles County in 2010. This assessment seeks to identify future travel needs and patterns, along with evolving service needs that may have a significant impact on future service plans and budgets, and is being undertaken through several efforts:

1. Review of regional plans including Metro's *2001 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)*, SCAG's recently adopted *2004 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)* and business-related information from the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation.
2. Identification and analysis of future growth and resulting travel patterns through computer modeling efforts validated by current travel information.
3. Countywide outreach to elected officials, staff, community and business groups, other service providers and stakeholders.

A review of the *2004 RTP* identifies the following key projections with transit service implications for 2010 and beyond:

- *Continuing growth in population and employment* – Forecast increase of 2.6 million daily trips from 2000 to 2010.
- *Increasingly younger and older population* – These two most transit dependent age groups are forecast to grow significantly over the next 10 to 30 years. In particular, the projected growth in the senior population has profound implications for transit and related paratransit services and budgets.
- *Continuing densification in the urban core and expansion on the edges of Los Angeles County and beyond* – Resulting in increasing transportation system needs and changing travel patterns.
- *Changing job types* – A continued increase in service sector employment and loss and consolidation of manufacturing and industrial jobs in the central portion of Los Angeles County, and creation of new job development in adjacent counties with resulting changes in travel patterns and commute times.

Restructuring offers Metro the opportunity to accomplish several key service-related tasks: 1) rethink Metro's bus service niche, 2) more effectively deploy Metro's and other operators' constrained resources, and 3) leverage a higher benefit from Board-approved projects and programs.

When the current bus service plan was identified and implemented, there were seven service providers operating in Los Angeles County – Metro and six other municipal operators. At

that time, Metro operated a wide range of services from community circulator service in Downtown Los Angeles to regional connections such as express bus service between Downtown Los Angeles and Downtown Long Beach. With the passage of Propositions A and C, funding became available both to the region to build a rail system and to the region's cities to provide community-based transit services. Today, the number of service providers has grown to more than 80 operators, including sixteen municipal operators.

In many ways, Metro's service role reflects 1980 operational conditions, not conditions faced today or anticipated in the future. Metro's service role should be clarified to focus on what we do well and effectively, while allowing the region's other service providers to do what they do best. In summary, Metro's bus service niche might be more effectively described as heavy-capacity, line haul services providing subregional and regional connections on heavily-traveled corridors, along with facilitating transit service in areas of the county lacking another operator, while other providers operate city-based low- and medium- capacity local and subregional connections.

Focusing on what each service provider does well and effectively would allow Metro and the region to make the highest use of constrained resources. With limited or no infrastructure improvements planned in some county areas in the short-term, the region is going to become more and more dependent on utilizing existing transit services to maintain mobility and support economic development. Correspondingly, with constrained service funding, Metro and the region's operators need to use every service dollar in the most effective manner, while providing high quality customer service.

Restructuring is also the logical next step in leveraging a higher benefit from other Board-approved projects and programs. This effort can provide the opportunity for Metro to integrate and maximize the many bus service and other transit improvements, both planned and underway, to ensure that transit can become an increasingly attractive alternative in meeting the region's growing travel needs. Over the years, the Board has approved funding for regional transit infrastructure improvements including the Metro Rail and Rapid systems and transitway facilities. Bus service restructuring will allow the region to make the highest possible use of these significant investments.

Correspondingly, fully involving the region's cities and other transit operators in the restructuring effort ensures that projects, programs and plans by other entities are used most effectively to best serve future transit needs. This restructuring effort attempts to recognize and create synergy between local and regional decisions, and to accomplish continuing transit service improvements during this time of limited capital and operating funds.

Service Concept

The intent of Metro Connections bus service restructuring effort is to move the region's predominately Downtown Los Angeles-focused grid system to a hybrid "hub and spoke" service delivery, which would better reflect the region's multi-activity centers and destinations. This multi-centered, multi-operator service delivery would provide faster regional connections, better meet local needs and more effectively utilize the strengths of the

region's service providers. It is anticipated that regional and subregional trips will be better served with this service concept, while portions of the existing grid service network will continue to provide the more local, sector-based travel needs. This service delivery concept would use a network of major activity hubs or centers as the focal points of the system that are served by major travel spokes or corridors.

Study Effort

A four-phased bus service restructuring effort was initiated in the fall of 2003, with the initial phase of restructured service anticipated to be implemented during FY 2006. The restructuring effort consists of the following four major activities.

- Phase 1 – Needs Assessment
- Phase 2 – Develop Alternative Strategies
- Phase 3 – Detail/Identify Implementation Plan
- Phase 4 – Implement Service

While stakeholder involvement is an on-going effort, the first phase of the study focusing on initial outreach to the region's stakeholders, was completed in January 2004. This effort both provided an overview of the service planning process and solicited initial input on current and future needs. An overview of those initial outreach efforts was presented in February and June 2004 Board Reports. On-going stakeholder involvement is described below in more detail.

Development of alternative strategies was initiated in February 2004 and has been divided into two efforts: first, identification and analysis of community transit centers and travel corridors, and second, utilization of the resulting information to develop service concepts and a resulting service framework. The analysis of centers and corridors is close to completion with initial results currently being presented for review and comment through outreach to the subregional Councils of Government, Sector Service Governance Councils, and study-related stakeholder working groups.

Center Analysis

Community transit centers are seen as serving both as entry points to the region's transit system and to each community. Centers will be designed to be an integral part of each community, not as stand-alone facilities. Four types of transit centers have been identified reflecting varied service and community needs: Regional, Subregional, Community and On-Street. Regional centers will facilitate connections to/from the high capacity, high-speed backbone system of Metrolink, Metro Rail, Metro Rapid and Transitway-based services. A majority of our customers will continue to assess the transit system through on-street bus stops, and a program to upgrade Metro's bus stops is being developed. A description of each center type, along with the related customer and operational components, is provided in Attachment A.

Based on extensive stakeholder input, a total of 81 centers have been identified and evaluated (Attachment B). At this study phase, centers were identified at a large scale, such as

Downtown Long Beach or Pasadena, and not based on specific facilities or locations. This definition of the centers at a larger scale, approximately a six-mile diameter encompassing key destinations, allowed the evaluation of future conditions throughout a majority of the county. A specific facility or facilities that would best serve future needs within each center will be identified during a future study phase.

The 81 centers were evaluated through a future year forecast analysis to identify population, employment, total number of daily trips, total number of transit trips and resulting transit mode share (based on the existing transit system). The center evaluation process also included consideration of: service coverage and connectivity, future transit system improvements, future land use and development plans, and community and stakeholder input.

This evaluation effort resulted in the identification of the 19 Regional and 22 Subregional centers presented in Attachment C. The remaining centers will be served through a mix of Community Transit Centers and improved on-street bus facilities. Community-level transit centers will be primarily identified during the sector-based service planning process. This study is based on an iterative process and as the corridor analysis provides more detailed information and stakeholder outreach provides input, revisions may be made to the list of Regional and Subregional centers. The current list includes some pairs of possible Subregional Centers where there was not enough technical information to make a decision between two locations in the same vicinity. City and stakeholder outreach, along with the travel corridor analysis, will provide the basis for making a final locational decision.

Corridor Analysis

Identification and analysis of future year (2010) travel corridors for all trips was performed using the SCAG model at three levels: county-to-county, subregion-to- regional center and regional center-to-regional center. Subregion-to-subregion travel information was identified from Metro's *2001 LRTP*. This effort is intended to identify future travel patterns and needs, fit of existing transit services, missing transit services (both service types and corridors) and to provide the basis for implementation phasing decisions. The future year travel information is being validated through a comparison with approximately 300,000 actual home-to-work trips from the 2000 Census along with trip origin and destination pair requests documented by the Metro's Customer Service Center. The travel corridor information currently is being completed and mapped for discussion.

The second effort in this study phase – utilizing the center and corridor analytical information to develop service concepts and a resulting countywide bus service plan – has been initiated. The resulting plan will incorporate two levels of service: a countywide bus service network providing center-to-center connections, and sector-specific plans supporting the regional network and addressing local service needs. The sector-based service planning process, which will include all sector service providers, has been initiated. Several sectors are completing or considering strategic planning efforts to support the restructuring efforts, develop consensus among operators and ensure the most effective use of resources.

Final Product

The final product of this study effort is envisioned as being a Policy Framework document incorporating: guiding service concepts, a countywide bus service network, related service and capital plans, and a proposed funding strategy. Completion of a draft Policy Framework for Board consideration is anticipated for Spring 2005, with sector-based service plans being developed over a longer timeframe.

It is anticipated that service improvements will be implemented over the next two to three years (FY 06-08). Service funding strategies will consider a range of options including: operating more effectively within current resources, reflecting the concurrent regional funding discussion among Metro and the municipal operators concerning the Formula Allocation Plan (FAP), and possible new funding sources.

Capital improvements, which will include customer amenities, transit center facilities and speed and reliability improvements, will be initially identified as part of the Policy Framework process. Refinements to the capital plan will be made as the service plan becomes more detailed. These improvements are seen as being implemented over the next two to ten years (FY 06-15), with some associated improvements already reflected in projects underway such as the future Exposition Light Rail Line plans. Funding options will reflect possible revisions to current funding programs, possible new funding sources, and leveraging other regional, city and private sector efforts.

Outreach Efforts

All efforts undertaken by this restructuring process have been and will continue to be based on extensive, on-going stakeholder involvement. To date more than 100 outreach efforts have been conducted with elected officials, legislative briefings, Subregional groups (Councils of Governments), City Council commissions and staffs, City of Los Angeles Neighborhood Council Groups as well as individual Neighborhood Councils or Council Committees, Metro Service Sector Governance Councils, Metro Advisory Committees, business organizations, employee transportation coordinators, unions, service provider groups and stakeholder organizations.

Three groups have been formed to provide on-going input and coordination to ensure the success of restructuring planning and implementation efforts:

1. *Downtown Los Angeles Transportation Working Group* – formed by Los Angeles City Councilperson Jan Perry to guide and coordinate the many downtown-area transportation-related planning and implementation efforts currently underway by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation, Los Angeles Department of Planning, the Community Redevelopment Agency, Caltrans and Metro.
2. *Metro Connections MUNI/LTSS Working Group* – formed from representatives of Metro's Bus Operations Subcommittee (BOS) and Local Transit Systems Subcommittee (LTSS) along with Metrolink and Access Services to provide staff-to-staff input, review and coordination of efforts.

3. *Metro Connections Service Provider Working Groups* – formed in each sector from representatives of the full range of service providers, including municipal operators, local service providers, Metrolink, Access Services and city/county representatives, to provide the basis for development and implementation of sector-based service plans as well as an on-going forum to better coordinate current and future service efforts.

In addition, six focus groups with system users and non-users were conducted between September 29 and October 2, 2004 to solicit information on current travel behavior and use of public transit along with input on how current Metro service is meeting their expectations and what future system and service improvements would best meet their needs. A summary of findings that emerged from this initial focus group research is presented in Attachment D. A second round of focus groups is planned for early 2005 when the Policy Framework and related service and capital plans are more detailed.

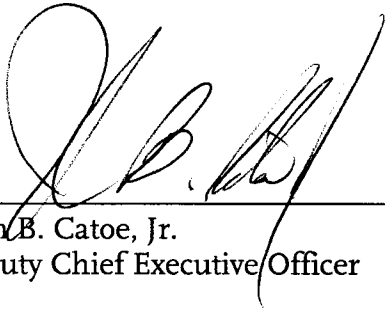
NEXT STEPS

The second phase of the bus service restructuring, *Develop Alternative Service Strategies*, is currently underway and is anticipated to be completed in December. A draft Policy Framework incorporating proposed service and funding strategies will be developed and presented to the Board for consideration and discussion in February 2005, with Board approval anticipated in the spring.

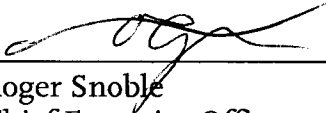
ATTACHMENTS

- A. Community Transit Center Types
- B. List of Community Centers Analyzed
- C. List of Regional and Subregional Centers
- D. Summary of Focus Group Research Findings

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Community Transit Center Types

1. Regional Community Transit Center*
 - Serves Metro Rail and the interface of two or more Metro Rapid lines along with Metro Local, MUNI Operator, Other Service Provider and community-based services; along with limited and express services as appropriate
 - May include a combination of on- and off-street customer service and bus service/layover facilities; may include some off-street operational support facilities
 - Accessed by full range of modes: rail and bus transfer, auto, drop-off, walking, bicycle and station car
 - May include shared or transit-only park-and-ride facilities
 - May be located adjacent to transit-oriented retail and/or mixed-use development; may be integrated with on-site development
 - Customer services and amenities potentially including:
 - Service identity
 - Customer protection (canopy, shelter or building element)
 - Service maps/timetables
 - Neighborhood area map/information
 - Ticket vending machines
 - Lighting
 - Seating and phones
 - Lighting, seating and phones
 - Bicycle racks/lockers
 - Sidewalk/intersection paving improvements (for improved pedestrian and ADA access and safety)
 - Communication system (such as VMS) to provide real-time travel, service problem and delay information
 - Closed-circuit television cameras monitored by security personnel and security speaker telephones in case of an emergency
 - Landscaping
 - Public art

* Addressed by several station/stop prototypes in the *Integrated Land Use/Transportation Policy within the City of Los Angeles* adopted in 1993 by Metro and the City of Los Angeles.

2. Subregional Transit Center
 - Serves Metro Rail and/or the interface of two Metro Rapid lines along with Metro Local, MUNI Operator, Other Service Provider and community-based services; along with limited and express services where appropriate
 - May include a combination of on- and off-street customer service and bus service/layover facilities; may include some operational support facilities

- Accessed by full range of modes: rail and bus transfer, auto, drop-off, walking, bicycle and station car
- May include shared or transit-only park-and-ride facilities
- May be located adjacent to transit-oriented retail and/or mixed-use development; may be integrated with on-site development
- Customer services and amenities potentially including:
 - Service identity
 - Customer protection (canopy, shelter or building element)
 - Service maps/timetables
 - Neighborhood area map/information
 - Ticket vending machines
 - Lighting
 - Seating and phones
 - Lighting, seating and phones
 - Bicycle racks/lockers
 - Sidewalk/intersection paving improvements (for improved pedestrian and ADA access and safety)
 - Communication system (such as VMS) to provide real-time travel, service problem and delay information
 - Closed-circuit television cameras monitored by security personnel and security speaker telephones in case of an emergency
 - Landscaping
 - Public art

3. Community Transit Center

- Serves a high level of bus activity including Metro Rapid, Metro Local, MUNI Operator, Other Service Provider and community-based operations; along with limited and express services where appropriate
- On-street customer service; primarily on-street bus service and layover facilities
- Accessed by bus transfer, drop-off, walking and bicycle
- May include shared park-and-ride opportunities in some locations
- May be located adjacent to transit-oriented retail and/or mixed-use development
- Customer services and amenities potentially including:
 - Service identity
 - Customer protection (canopy, shelter or building element)
 - Service maps/timetables
 - Neighborhood area map/information
 - Ticket vending machines
 - Lighting
 - Seating and phones
 - Lighting, seating and phones
 - Bicycle racks/lockers
 - Sidewalk/intersection paving improvements (for improved pedestrian and ADA access and safety)

- Communication system (such as VMS) to provide real-time travel, service problem and delay information
- Security speaker telephones in case of an emergency

4. On-street Transit Stop

- Stop may be used by a single or combination of services including Metro Rapid, Metro Local, MUNI Operator, Other Service Provider and community-based operations; along with limited and express services where appropriate
- On-street customer service and bus layover facilities
- Accessed by bus transfer, drop-off, walking and bicycle
- May be located adjacent to transit-oriented retail and/or mixed-use development
- Customer services and amenities potentially including:
 - Service identity
 - Service maps/timetables
 - Lighting
 - Real-time travel information
 - Bicycle racks
 - Sidewalk/intersection paving improvements (for improved pedestrian and ADA access and safety)

List of Community Centers Analyzed

Alhambra/San Gabriel/South Pasadena
Antelope Valley
 Lancaster
 Palmdale
Artesia (Blue Line)
Artesia Transit Center/Harbor Transitway
Athens
Azusa

Bell Gardens/Downey
Beverly Hills
Burbank Downtown

Cal Poly Pomona
Carson
Century City
Chatsworth
Chinatown
Claremont
Commerce/Montebello
Compton (Blue Line)
Covina/Glendora
Crenshaw District (Crenshaw/MLK)
Culver City (Downtown)

East Los Angeles (Boyle Heights)
East Los Angeles (Atlantic/Pomona)
El Monte
El Segundo

Fox Hills Mall

Gardena
Glendale

Hawaiian Gardens
Highland Park
Hollywood
Huntington Park/Vernon

Industry/Walnut
Inglewood (Florence/La Brea)

Koreatown (Wilshire/Western)

Lakewood (Lakewood Center Mall)
LAX area:
 Aviation/Green Line
 LAX
Long Beach (Downtown)
Long Beach (Airport Area)

Los Angeles:

7th/Figueroa

Pershing Square/Broadway

Civic Center/Financial District

Union Station/Gateway

Little Tokyo

Los Cerritos

Manchester (Florence/Vermont)

Marina del Rey

Mid-Cities (Pico/Rimpau)

Mid-Wilshire (Wilshire/Vermont)

Mission Hills/Panorama City

Monrovia/Duarte

Montebello Town Center

Northeast San Fernando Valley (Sylmar/San Fernando)

North Hollywood

Northridge

Norwalk (Green Line/I-605)

Norwalk (Downtown)

Pasadena (Downtown)

Pasadena (Sierra Madre Villa)

Puente Hills Mall/Industry

Rancho Dominguez

Redondo Beach

Green Line

South Bay Galleria

San Pedro/Harbor

Santa Clarita (Metrolink)

Santa Clarita (Valencia Town Center)

Santa Monica

South Central Los Angeles (Imperial/Wilmington)

Third/Fairfax

Thousand Oaks

Torrance (Del Amo Fashion Center)

Union Station/Gateway

Universal City

USC/Expo/Harbor Transitway

Van Nuys

Warner Center

West Covina (Central San Gabriel Valley)

West Los Angeles (La Cienega/Expo LRT)

Westwood/UCLA

Whittier

Wilmington

Draft Final List of Regional and Subregional Centers

Regional

East Los Angeles – Atlantic/Pomona (interim)
El Monte
Glendale
Hollywood
Huntington Park/Vernon
Koreatown – Wilshire/Western (interim)
LAX/Aviation
Long Beach (Downtown)
Mid-Wilshire – Wilshire/Vermont
Norwalk – Green Line/I-605
North Hollywood
Pasadena (Downtown)
Santa Monica
South Bay
Union Station
USC/Exposition/Harbor Transitway
Warner Center
West LA/La Cienega
Westwood/UCLA

Subregional

7th/Metro Center
Alhambra/South Pasadena
Artesia/Compton (Blue Line)
Bell Gardens/Downey
Beverly Hills/Century City
Burbank
Carson/Artesia Transit Center
Claremont
Covina/Glendora
Crenshaw District
Culver City (interim)
East Pasadena – Sierra Madre Villa
Industry/Commerce or Puente Hills
Inglewood
Lakewood
Mid-Cities – Pico/Rimpau
Monrovia/Duarte
Northeast Valley
San Pedro/Harbor
Third/Fairfax
Van Nuys
Whittier

Summary of Focus Group Research Findings

1. The immense size of Metro's service area, along with the complexities of Metro's services in conjunction with the other bus and rail providers, makes using public transit a formidable learning experience especially among non-users. A continuation of Metro's efforts to present and portray "one, unified system" is important. In addition to communicating its specific services, Metro should continue promoting and marketing how to obtain information for using the system.
2. The public transit system should be made more customer friendly from an informational viewpoint. While real-time bus arrival information would be greatly valued by riders, such signs cannot be installed at every bus stop. It is important to provide bus stops with basic information such as the hours of service, frequency and last trip time for each route serving that stop.
3. While non-users avoid using the bus system, they are very open to using the rail system (comments included "fast, clean, safe and efficient"). The more that the bus system can be made to operate similar to the rail system, the more successful Metro will be in serving current riders and attracting new choice riders. Implementation of additional express bus routes, use of high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, exclusive busways and new bus transit/transfer centers could move the bus system closer to the rail service concept.
4. The primary concern among current users is "reliability" as measured by on-time service performance and pass-bys. Since these problems are primarily caused by the same on-street traffic issues faced by automobiles, improvements such as priority signalization and exclusive busways, could help to improve actual and perceived service reliability concerns. These speed and reliability improvements will also improve total travel times, which is a concern about all users.
5. There was a strong feeling among both users and non-users that the rail and bus systems are not well coordinated. Metro could take steps to better communicate the linkages that exist possibly through better design and/or signage at rail stations and major bus transfer points. In addition, more timely connections and/or more frequent bus service also may be necessary.
6. The bus system is viewed as "inefficient" and "ugly" by both current users and non-users. Upgrading the appearance of the system could be accomplished through cleaner buses (interior and exterior), clean and improved bus stops, and the provision of additional amenities at bus stops (lighting, seating and shelter).
7. "Safety/security" is a major issue (real and perceived) among both users and non-users. This could be addressed through the use of more uniformed police and security personnel on the buses and at the stops. A related approach for improving perceived safety and security concerns is to provide cleaner, better-lighted bus stops.

8. Both users and non-users placed high importance on personal space and comfort while riding the bus. Personal comfort was identified as including seat availability, cleanliness, larger seats and aisles, quiet and air conditioning. Current users cited availability of seats for all riders as the most desired service feature.
9. Many bus riders feel that some bus drivers are either rude or unfriendly, or they are unable or unwilling to provide important information regarding service. These criticisms indicate a need for some form of “customer service” training among bus drivers.
10. While the consolidation of multiple signs/poles for multiple bus operators using the same stop was not a major issue among current riders, improvements would help to upgrade the visual quality of the bus system. The decision to consolidate signs/poles at a specific stop could be based on the frequency of buses and the magnitude of riders using that stop. Some form of sign uniformity (size, appearance and information) would enhance the environment and functionality of Metro’s bus stops.

In reviewing the findings and conclusions from this research effort, it is important to understand the context of focus group research and how to use it. Focus group research is qualitative or directional – it is not quantitative or projectional. Focus group research offers the advantage of exploring issues in-depth and provides insight into the reactions and responses of customers to concepts and ideas.