

Tuesday, November 8, 2005 5:00 P.M.

MINUTES

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 5:09 p.m.

Council Members Present:

Bruce Heard, Chair
Harry Baldwin
Emile Bayle
Henry Lopez
Sharon Martinez
Rosie Vasquez

Officers:

Jack Gabig, General Manager
Michele Chau, Council Secretary



Metropolitan Transportation Authority

1. Introductions – Council, staff and members of the public introduced themselves.
2. APPROVED **Minutes** of Regular Governance Council Meeting held October 11, 2005.
3. Public Comment – none.
4. RECEIVED Chair's Remarks:
 - Mentioned that last month's Closed Session was productive and that the Council submitted its performance goals and expectations for the General Manager three days earlier than expected.
 - Orange Line opened to the public on October 29 and ceremony was well-attended. The Metro Liner buses were spectacular. Photos of the Liner buses were distributed to the Council. Noted that there have been several accidents on the Orange Line. Because it is designed to replicate a train, crossing gates should be used. Motorists should be advised to refrain from running red lights.
 - Announced that the Council will not meet in December. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 10, 2006 at 5 P.M.

Councilmember Baldwin announced that a dedication ceremony for the Alameda Corridor East project's first grade separation at Nogales St. will take place on Monday, December 5.

5. RECEIVED report of the General Manager.

Mr. Gabig reported that performance indicators for September were mostly positive. There is a \$45,000 credit in the area of Monthly Worker's Compensation Costs due to low actual costs established for injuries incurred during September and an accounting adjustment for an incident that was mischarged. The Sector is optimistic that this trend will continue. OSHA Recordable Incidents continue to be higher than targeted. More information will be provided by Scott Boim, Sr. Safety Specialist. Bus Traffic Accidents/100,000 Hub Miles were just below the target at 2.7. The number of New WC Indemnity Claims per 200,000 Exposure Hours is close to last year's figure but not quite at the desired level. In the area of road calls, the Sector is performing well with the new indicator. It outperformed the monthly target with 3,818 Miles Between Mechanical Failures in September. On-Time Performance continues to be a disappointment. Congestion coupled with construction in several key areas have contributed to delays. The Sector hopes to achieve a higher standard as the year progresses. Complaints/100,000 Boardings remain below the target at 2.0 for September.

Mr. Gabig reviewed detailed complaint data for the Sector, comparing September to the 12-month average. The three primary complaint categories are Schedule Adherence, Passed up, and Operator Conduct/Discourtesy. There was a decline in the total number of complaints for September.

Chair Heard asked if running hot is included in the Passed Up category.

Mr. Gabig responded that this is related to Schedule Adherence.

“How You Doin’?” Program:

The Sector fared well in September. Division 3 Transportation placed 1st, Division 9 Transportation placed 3rd, and Division 9 Maintenance placed 3rd.

Final results for the first quarter of FY06 show a similar trend. Scores for Transportation and Maintenance Divisions for all Sectors were combined. Division 9 placed 1st and Division 3 tied with Division 2 for 3rd place. Mr. Gabig noted that Division 9 will receive a financial award of \$1,000 for its commendable quarterly performance. This will be used for employee benefits and other enhancements for employees.

Slides showing construction at the El Monte Station were presented. Mr. Gabig stated that a new passenger island with three berths is being constructed. The contractor is on schedule and the Sector anticipates that the Station will be completed sometime in January. The Station will feature new landscaping, lighting, and signage. Mr. Gabig reported that operation of the Station will be shared with Foothill Transit, which runs half of all service through the Station and is funding and sponsoring the project.

Mr. Gabig invited Council to attend the upcoming Mobility 21 Summit scheduled for Monday, November 14. Leon Panetta, former White House Chief of Staff, will be this year’s keynote speaker. Optional tours of the Alameda Corridor trench and other areas will be provided. Staff will make arrangements for interested Councilmembers to attend. The registration fee of \$125 will be reimbursed.

Financial Results:

Mr. Rosenberg gave an overview of FY06 financial data through September. He indicated that September marks the end of the first quarter of the fiscal year. Total Transportation was approximately \$380,000 under budget both YTD and for the month of September. Total Maintenance was \$448,000 over budget for September and \$186,000 over budget YTD. Total Sector Office was \$37,000 under budget for the month and \$169,000 under budget YTD. Subtotal Sector Operations was \$31,000 over budget for the month based on an actual of \$8.9 million, and \$364,000 under budget YTD based on an actual of \$26 million. Other Sector Support was \$14,000 under budget for the month of September and just under \$200,000 under budget YTD. Total SGV Sector was \$17,000 over budget for the month and \$563,000 under budget YTD.

Total Revenue Service Hours was over budget both for the month and YTD. Cost per Revenue Service Hour was under budget both for the month and YTD.

Mr. Rosenberg reviewed significant items. Monthly Operator Wages was 2.1% over budget for the month and 2.9% over budget YTD. There was a spike in Monthly Maintenance Wages, which was 9.3% over budget for the month and 4.6% over budget YTD. Monthly OT was 37% over due to the need to train the Maintenance department in the new M3 system. The SGV Sector is the first to incur this cost. Monthly Non-Work Allocation/Fringe Allocation was .2% under budget for the month and 9.3% under budget YTD. This category is largely responsible for the Sector being under budget for the quarter. Monthly WC Allocation is 67% under budget YTD. Monthly Fuel and Fuel Tax Expense was 39% over budget for the month and 12% over budget YTD. The Sector expected higher figures in this category due to the increase in fuel prices. Mr. Rosenberg explained that while gas and diesel prices have decreased, the cost of CNG has risen steadily.

Monthly Parts Expense was 46% over budget for the month and 17% over budget YTD. This is due to issues with on-board ATMS system parts. Some rather expensive parts have failed, and the Sector expects to receive a warranty reimbursement. This will appear as a separate line item. The Sector anticipates that it will be back on an even keel over the next few months. Monthly Public Liability/Property Damage was 46% over budget for the month and 66% over budget YTD. This is due primarily to accidents occurring prior to this fiscal year. The Sector has implemented initiatives to reduce costs in this area. Monthly Other Sector Support was 2% under budget for the month and 13% under budget YTD.

6. RECEIVED an oral report on Bus Operator manpower shortages and recruitment efforts by Stefan Chasnov, Director of Human Resources.

Mr. Gabig introduced Mr. Chasnov, who was asked to share the HR perspective on the agency's bus operator recruitment efforts. Mr. Chasnov stated that employees are instrumental to the success of an organization. MTA is unique in that the bulk of employees are represented, and bus operators may be randomly assigned to Sectors based on seniority and other factors. As a result, the only employees who are at the Sectors by choice tend to be those at the management levels. He noted that the Sector has an exemplary management team and that he is not surprised that the Sector's Divisions often rank at the top.

Mr. Chasnov reported that as of November 1, 2005, there are 3,855 total actual FTE's. The budgeted number is 3,977, leaving a total of 122 FTE vacancies. While the agency has a 97% occupancy rate, it needs to have a 100% occupancy rate for operators. This is because for every operator that is not on the road, there is one less bus in operation. There are an additional 332.5 FTE's on leaves of absence as of November 1. This figure is not included in the numbers provided above. Employees may be on leave due to an occupational injury or non-occupational injury, family medical leave, non-medical related leave, etc.

Mr. Chasnov reviewed the agency's recruitment and retention efforts and opportunities. These include partnerships with community agencies such as EDD, job fairs, job postings and advertising, targeted recruitment efforts (e.g., ESL Pilot Program at community colleges and foster children transition program), leave of absence reduction efforts, and faster promotional opportunities. Bus operators are hired at the BDOF level and are paid at a lower rate until they are promoted to part-time status. However, their hours are cut upon promotion to the part-time level, and operators may make less than they did at the BDOF level. Once promoted to full-time status, however, wages increase and hours remain intact. Most turnover occurs either at the BDOF level or after transitioning to part-time status.

The agency is examining ways to reduce the amount of time from application to hire. Challenges include starting pay, reduction in hours accompanying promotion from BDOF to part-time status, competitive market and shrinking talent pool, and the State of California's leave of absence program.

Councilmember Bayle asked for clarification on BDOF.

Mr. Chasnov responded that this stands for Business Development Operating Facility. The BDOF classification was originally conceived to provide the agency with the flexibility to use lower-paid employees to work various hours and to provide alternative forms of service at train stations, corporate centers and other locations. Although BDOF employees do not receive benefits while in training, they receive the full cadre of benefits, including a "23 and out" pension plan, once they reach full-time status (generally after 2-3 years). Mr. Chasnov noted that while the first few years are difficult, operators find it hard to leave the agency after they are promoted to full-time status.

Councilmember Martinez asked if there is a referral program to attract candidates.

Mr. Chasnov responded that the agency has not been able to do this due to the current budget situation. However, a referral program is being considered.

Councilmember Vasquez asked how the 3% vacancy rate impacts the SGV Sector.

Mr. Chasnov responded that the vacancy rates are relatively consistent across the Sectors.

Councilmember Vasquez asked if overruns in OT are due to lack of operators.

Mr. Rosenberg explained that overruns in operator OT represent an agency-wide trend. The SGV Sector's OT costs are slightly above average because it has more high-seniority operators at Division 9.

7. APPROVED route modification to line 170 (El Monte Station-Montebello Town Center) in South San Gabriel.

Mr. Hillmer reported that the Council approved a number of service modifications at the September Council meeting, including those impacting Line 170, which presently provides service from El Monte Station to CSULA via Montebello Town Center. He indicated that as a result of the approved modifications, the line will be shortened and provide service only between El Monte Station and Montebello Town Center.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina's office has requested a change to the approved Line 170 as a result of feedback from two senior complexes in South San Gabriel. Staff from the Supervisor's office is proposing to modify the route to provide direct service at Potrero Grande Dr. and Hill Dr. in order to better serve the senior centers. Mr. Hillmer presented slides of the proposed route modification, which would create a larger one-way loop but not add mileage to Line 170. The change would also provide service on the north side of Montebello Town Center, which provides closer access to stores within the Center. He noted that one stop was abandoned between Paramount Blvd. and Walnut Grove Ave.

The change will be implemented effective December 19, 2005.

8. APPROVED addition of new Rapid Bus stop on Central Ave. at Colorado St. in the city of Glendale for Line 780 (Pasadena-Glendale-Hollywood Rapid Bus).

Mr. Hillmer stated that Rapid Line 780 was implemented in December 2004 and has 16 paired bus stops. Staff is proposing to add an additional bus stop on Central Ave. at Colorado St. in the city of Glendale. This stop is situated at the southern end of the Glendale Galleria. Mr. Hillmer mentioned that in the past, the Sector has surreptitiously added a temporary stop in this location during the Christmas shopping season due to high demand. The Gateway Cities and Westside/Central Sectors are also considering adding a new stop to one of their existing Rapid Bus lines.

Mr. Hillmer reported that in August 2004, the MTA Board of Directors approved the "Metro Rapid Program Service Warrants," which includes rigorous standards for adding or removing bus stops. The Service Warrants are designed to maintain Rapid speeds and enhance the attractiveness of Rapid Bus lines. The three standards for establishing or removing Rapid Bus stops are: 1) The existing local bus stop at the candidate location must have at least 250 daily boardings; 2) The average distance between Rapid stops on the line must be no less than .7 miles; and 3) The stop location must pass the "Time Delay Index" (TDI) rating with a score of less than "5" if the new stop is between 0.5 and 0.7 miles from an existing Rapid stop. Mr. Hillmer stated that the last criterion cannot be met. The TDI for the proposed stop is 29, which far exceeds the maximum value of 5 stipulated by the Service Warrants. The TDI decreases only slightly even when the number of boardings at the proposed stop is increased 100 times.

Mr. Hillmer explained that uniform standards for all Rapid Bus lines, which vary substantially in ridership and size, have made it difficult to implement needed modifications to Rapid lines which are moderate in size.

Mr. Hillmer stated that if the Gateway Cities and Westside/Central Sector Councils approve a proposed stop to one of their existing moderate-sized Rapid lines, a joint report will be drafted for consideration by the Board in February 2006. The SGV Sector will also participate in the preparation of the report, which would request a waiver from the existing Service Warrants in order to implement the proposed new Rapid stops.

Mr. Gabig asked what the Time Delay Index represents.

Mr. Hillmer responded that the Index estimates the delay passengers on a Rapid line will experience. The Index doesn't represent miles or minutes, and is merely a value. Only stops that do not result in a significant delay can be added. The purpose of the Index is to make the Rapid lines run faster.

Mr. Gabig stated that the purpose of the proposal is to accommodate customers even though it may result in delays to the line. Benefits derived from the change offsets any delays.

Chair Heard mentioned that any delays can be minimized through signal synchronization. Mr. Hillmer noted that signals will be installed in the Pasadena/Glendale area in the coming months.

9. RECEIVED an oral report on Operator Ergonomic initiatives by Scott Boim, Sr. Safety Specialist.

Mr. Boim remarked that bus operators are the Sector's most valuable resource. He reviewed bus operator injuries occurring at Division 9 only in 2004. 70% of all occupational injuries in 2004 were related to Muscular Skeletal disorders. Mr. Boim explained that Division 9 is a higher-seniority division, and is experiencing the effects of an aging workforce. Almost 70% of all injuries are back-related and occur in-service on buses. He mentioned that he spent 6 weeks trying to understand what operators experience behind the wheel on a day-to-day basis, and concluded that lumbar supports may reduce the discomfort of prolonged driving. Mr. Boim presented slides underscoring in-seat challenges experienced by operators. Operators frequently suffer back and neck strain, knee pain and numbness, and carpal tunnel syndrome as a result of spending hours behind the wheel. Typically, ergonomic training and identifying optimal seating positions will help reduce some of these negative effects. Mr. Boim noted that inability to adjust the seats forward and back exacerbates the problem.

After attending a national ergonomics expo last year, Mr. Boim identified two innovative programs that the Sector can implement to help mitigate discomfort experienced by operators. One of these is bus operator ergonomic seat indexing, which was conceived by Atlas Ergonomics and will be implemented by the Sector in

January. The second program, which has already been initiated with great success, involves the use of Moller back supports. The Sector received samples and was able to purchase these supports in bulk at a fraction of the retail price. The supports come in three sizes with varying lumbar positions. Each operator receives a support that is tailored to his or her needs. Mr. Boim stated that the back supports help straighten the back and may take several weeks to get used to. The Sector received overwhelming responses from a survey that revealed that the supports help alleviate discomfort in the upper and lower back. The Sector also received a great deal of unsolicited feedback, most of which was positive.

Councilmember Martinez asked how this particular support was selected.

Mr. Boim responded that he attended last year's conference with a focus on examining bus seat ergonomics issues. He spoke with several vendors and returned with best practices, two of which the Sector was able to fund.

Chair Heard inquired about the approximate cost of each support.

Mr. Boim stated that the Sector was able to negotiate a good deal on the supports, which sell for \$85 on the Internet. The Sector purchased them at \$57 apiece.

Mr. Gabig added that compared with the average cost of \$40,000 for back injury-related claims, this is a small investment with major returns.

Chair Heard asked if the SGV Sector is the only Sector implementing such a program.

Mr. Gabig responded affirmatively. He stated that staff intends to recommend this program to corporate safety.

Councilmember Vasquez suggested providing the supports to trainees so that they can establish good habits from the start.

Mr. Gabig stated that this program should help reduce costs related to Worker's Compensation. The Sector has been proactive at examining ways to increase safety initiatives. It would like to pursue more options in the wellness area.

10. Consideration of Items not on the Posted Agenda – none.

ADJOURNED at 6:35 P.M.

Michele Chau

Michele Chau, Council Secretary