

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 5:05 P.M.

Council Members Present:

Harry Baldwin
Emile Bayle
Bart Doyle
Henry Lopez
David Spence
Rosie Vasquez

Officers:

Jack Gabig, General Manager
Michele Chau, Council Secretary



Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Metro

1. Introductions.
2. APPROVED **Minutes** of Regular Governance Council Meeting held January 10, 2006.
3. RECEIVED **Public Comment** – Ken Ruben, Southern California Transit Advocates. Mr. Ruben mentioned that he boarded the first Gold Line Express train and noticed that a great deal of extra staff members were on hand to distribute new timetables. He stated that he was not aware that passengers boarding a train to reach the Sierra Madre Villa Station would not be able to take the same train to go in the opposite direction. Staff should consider informing passengers that they need to switch trains to go in the opposite direction.
4. Chair’s Remarks – None.
5. RECEIVED report of the **General Manager**.

➤ PRESENTED **Resolution of Appreciation to Foothill Transit**.

Mr. Gabig acknowledged Foothill Transit for leading the effort in the funding, design, and project management of the El Monte Station improvement project.

Mr. Gabig acknowledged the Council members for their dedication in attending the meeting this Valentine’s Day evening. In appreciation for their time, staff prepared a small gift for the Council members to give to their loved ones to celebrate Valentine’s Day.

Mr. Gabig provided an overview of **Key Performance Indicators** for December 2005.

He reported that December was a difficult month for the Sector in terms of accidents and injuries. **Monthly Worker’s Compensation chargeback Costs** totaled \$893,000 for the month of December. There were a total of 3 operator assaults (2 out of Division 9 and 1 out of Division 3), which resulted in sizable reserves in this category. **New WC Indemnity Claims per 200,000 Exposure Hours** totaled 16.7 for December. This amount includes the 3 assaults noted above as well as a large number of primarily medical-only claims in Division 9.

Mr. Gabig stated that the Sector is optimistic that performance in safety-related indicators will improve in January.

There were 1.8 **Complaints per 100,000 Boardings** in December, and this reflects a downward trend occurring both in the SGV Sector and the other four Sectors.

On-Time Performance (OTP) for December was 69%. The target is 75%. Maintaining a high OTP level continues to be a challenge for the Sector. Tactics for improvement will be discussed in Item #8.

Councilmember Baldwin asked if OTP figures include the performance of both Divisions 3 and 9 combined, and Mr. Gabig responded affirmatively.

Mr. Gabig reviewed **Complaints Data** for December. He noted that schedule adherence is the most problematic category, and this is true for other Sectors as well.

“How You Doin’?” Program:

December 2005: Division 9 Transportation placed 1st and Division 9 Maintenance placed 1st.

Final Results for 2nd Quarter FY06: Division 9 placed 1st and Division 3 placed 4th.

Mr. Gabig provided a progress report on **El Monte Station renovations**. The project is being funded and built by Foothill Transit with support from Caltrans and MTA. He stated that the renovations are essentially complete and include new landscaping, lighting, berth numbers, and fixtures, among other amenities. He reported that final inspection of a new service island to the west of the Station is pending. The Sector hopes to begin operation of the service island, which will include 6 bus bays, sometime in March. Staff will inform the Council of any dedication ceremonies that take place at the Station.

Mr. Gabig presented slides showing the February 3 groundbreaking ceremony for the Division 9 operations building. He stated that this represents the first major improvement at an MTA Division in over 20 years. Mr. Gabig noted that a rendering of the 3-story building was on display in the meeting room. The new building will house operations staff, Council, and Sector staff. The Sector anticipates that the project will be completed in February 2007.

Mr. Gabig introduced Lieutenant Bayless, the Sector’s new contact with the L.A. County Sheriff’s Department.

Financials:

Mr. Rosenberg provided an overview of financial data through December 2005. **Subtotal Sector Operations** was approximately \$1.1 million over budget YTD based on a YTD budgeted amount of \$53 million. **Other Sector Support** was approximately \$800,000 over budget for December due primarily to an accounting error that needs to be resolved.

Mr. Rosenberg reviewed **significant items**. **Monthly Operator Wages** were 1.4% under budget and **Monthly Maintenance Wages** were 1.2% under budget for December. **Monthly Non-Work Allocation/Fringe Allocation** was 56% over budget for December. **WC Allocation** was 45% under budget YTD, and this is among the largest underrun of any Sector. **Monthly Fuel & Fuel Tax Expense** was 23% over budget. It is not likely that the upward trend in this category will reverse itself in the immediate future. **Monthly Parts Expense** was 16% over budget for December. Mr. Rosenberg explained that increased costs in fuel and parts are the main drivers of the Sector's budget overrun. **Monthly Public Liability/Property Damage** was 42% over budget for December. Mr. Rosenberg stated that because overruns in this category are attributed mainly to occurrences prior to this fiscal year, the Sector is limited in its ability to make improvements. It may be necessary to explore other methods of budgeting for this item. **Monthly Other Sector Support** was 113% over budget for December, and this is entirely due to M3 startup errors. Mr. Rosenberg mentioned that the SGV Sector was the first to bring the system online. Staff will meet with the accounting department to find a way to reverse the errors.

Councilmember Vasquez asked whether the overrun in parts was due to increased costs of parts or increased usage.

Mr. Rosenberg responded that there is no one factor responsible for the parts overrun. He stated that the agency's bus fleet is one of the oldest among transit agencies and that beyond a certain point, repairs may multiply exponentially.

Councilmember Vasquez asked if the Sector will reach a point at which it will "max out" in terms of number of repairs that can be made to a bus.

Mr. Gabig responded that the average life span of a bus is 12-13 years. A mid-life rehab at the RRC typically takes place during the 6th year. He noted that because of budget cutbacks, Metro has needed to defer mid-life rehabs.

Councilmember Doyle asked about the median age of buses.

Mr. Hillmer responded that the median age is approximately 7.2 years.

Councilmember Doyle asked if higher maintenance wages and operator overtime are a reflection of the increased need to rehab and repair vehicles.

Mr. Rosenberg responded that a significant amount of the labor overrun is due to the implementation of M3 and associated labor transition issues. M3 integrates an inventory system and parts ordering with other components.

Councilmember Lopez inquired about the life span of new bus engines.

Mr. Gabig responded that the life span is approximately 350,000 miles, and that rebuilding of the engine may be needed after 200,000-250,000 miles. The best outcome is to rebuild an engine only one time before retiring a bus.

Mr. Lopez asked where buses go after they are retired.

Mr. Gabig responded that retired buses have little residual value. Some are sold at auctions at a significantly lower price than the purchase price.

6. RECEIVED oral **update on the Budget** by Steve Rosenberg, Admin. and Finance Manager.

Mr. Rosenberg reported that February is the kickoff month for the budget process. He reviewed MTA budget assumptions. These include an increase in labor costs by 2% (except AFSCME, which is defined by existing contract), an increase in fringe benefits by 6% overall, no growth in system-wide revenue service (except for Orange Line and Consent Decree-mandated service increases), no growth in headcount (except as directly related to Consent Decree increases), and an increase in fuel unit cost estimate by 32.15%. Mr. Rosenberg also reviewed non-labor line-item reductions requested.

Mr. Rosenberg provided an overview of major **budget issues**, including:

- Expected **shift of service** from over-capacity divisions to El Monte. Mr. Rosenberg mentioned that there is a lack of adequate parking for additional buses in several divisions.

Councilmember Doyle asked if the agency will allocate certain lines to the SGV Sector.

Mr. Gabig responded that certain lines based in Division 10 may be allocated to the Sector to absorb Consent Decree-mandated service. He clarified that while service that is diverted to the Sector will be supervised by other Sectors, the SGV Sector will take responsibility for running the service. Mr. Hillmer also explained that certain lines may be managed by multiple divisions. For example, the SGV Sector manages a portion of Line 68, which is also operated by Divisions 2 and 7.

- **Additional street supervision** for vehicle operations.

Councilmember Spence asked if additional supervision could be used to improve on-time performance.

Mr. Hillmer responded that there are only 3 individuals supervising all lines running through the Sector. As a result, the chances of an operator having face-to-face contact with a supervisor is remote. He added that increasing field staff helps actively manage service.

- **Increase in parts cost per hub mile** due to aging fleet.
- **Division 3 conceptual design study** – this will evaluate Division 3 facility and include recommendations on how to make the facility more cost-effective and efficient.
- **Drive cam installation** and operation at Divisions 3 and 9.
- Structural shortfall in **Sector facilities maintenance headcount**.
- Addressing certain **facility deferred maintenance items**.
- Expansion of **operator lumbar support program**. Mr. Rosenberg stated that Sector staff provided a briefing to other transit agencies on the benefits of this program. A contract will be negotiated to purchase the supports on an as-needed basis.

7. RECEIVED oral report on the **Gold Line Express Service** by Jon Hillmer, Service-Development Manager.

Mr. Hillmer explained that this new service came about due to the general public perception that Gold Line service is slow. Normal Gold Line service runs at a speed of roughly 24 miles per hour (or 34 minutes from end to end), whereas Express service runs at a speed of roughly 28 miles per hour (or 29 minutes from end to end). This represents a 15% improvement in speed. He noted that in comparison, the Blue Line runs at a speed of roughly 23 miles per hour.

The agency hopes that expedited trips will result in increased ridership. Mixed service will be provided in which regular trains will run every 15 minutes and Express trips will run every 30 minutes. The new service will stop at 5 stations.

Mr. Hillmer distributed copies of Express service timetables to Council.

8. RECEIVED an oral update on SGV Sector's **On-Time Performance Improvement Program** by Aurora Jackson, Assistant Transportation Manager of Vehicle Operations.

Ms. Jackson reported that the Sector's current On-Time Performance (OTP) level is 70%. The target is 75%, and the ultimate goal the Sector would like to reach is 80%.

The original action plan involves using Advanced Transportation Management System (ATMS) to monitor targeted lines from end to end and use data collected to respond faster to service interruptions. Ms. Jackson mentioned that one challenge is the lack of coordinated focus on OTP. There are no OTP goals for all departments involved in the process. She added that replacing missing service has not been a top priority. In terms of manpower, the agency is short 226 bus operators. The Sectors are short 27 operators, and this has led to increased operator overtime.

In the area of mechanical breakdowns, Ms. Jackson stated that there is no measurement for replacing service in a timely manner. She explained that mechanical breakdowns are measured by miles between total road calls, with Division 3 averaging 1,500 miles between road calls per month and Division 9 averaging 2,500 miles between road calls per month.

Ms. Jackson reported that with regard to ATMS monitoring, the system is an adequate tool for data collection but not yet a reliable source for real-time monitoring as the wireless system doesn't update consistently. She mentioned that there are a large number of buses with "no show" status.

Actions taken by the Sector to improve OTP include:

- Efforts by the Scheduling department to adjust running times, add service, and use ATMS to facilitate schedule changes. A service quality evaluation program was recently implemented, and staff from a contract company will ride the line undercover to monitor OTP.
- Field supervision of targeted lines. This includes monitoring operators with scheduling problems, observing hot spots, and conducting yard checks and line sweeps.
- An OTP taskforce to identify OTP factors, establish goals, define roles, and establish standards, procedures, and accountability.

Expected results include developing a multi-year plan for making incremental OTP improvements.

Councilmember Spence inquired about the number of operators from both divisions.

Ms. Jackson responded that there are approximately 600-670 combined.

Councilmember Spence asked about the number of problem operators.

Ms. Jackson responded that less than 15 are problem operators.

Councilmember Spence asked about the disciplinary process for operators.

Ms. Jackson responded that operators who are consistently behind schedule go through training. The Sector has been disciplining operators who are ahead of schedule. She noted that disciplinary action is limited to Sector boundaries. The satellite system assists the Sector in overseeing OTP and conducting remote discipline. The Sector is coordinating with other Sectors in this effort.

Councilmember Spence asked if there is an incentive for operators who perform well.

Mr. Gabig stated that the Sector is working on developing an incentive recognition program for safety and service quality. He added that the only agency-wide incentive program that exists is in the area of safety.

Mr. Gabig reported that one challenge is that while a majority of the Sector's service operates predominantly in the San Gabriel Valley, the 3 most problematic lines operate largely outside the Sector. These include the Figueroa line, Olympic line, and Atlantic line to Long Beach. These lines have negatively impacted the Sector's performance. The Sector doesn't have the resources to support service outside its area. Mr. Gabig stated that he hopes that the OTP task force will help to gain consensus among the Sectors that field supervision is important regardless of which Sector is responsible for the line.

Councilmember Doyle inquired about the level of OTP improvement that would occur if the Sector backed out lines on which it does not have supervisory ability.

Mr. Hillmer responded that he has no specific data on this. He added that the heaviest lines are those going to downtown and that many operators tend to be ahead of schedule. He estimated that 40-50% of problems occur either just outside the Sector or just outside the border of the Sector. OTP problems may not be due solely to supervision, but may also be the result of congestion and other factors.

Councilmember Spence asked about the purpose of the Sectors given that service is being allocated from one or more Sectors to another.

Mr. Gabig responded that it is inefficient to strictly adhere to Sector boundaries in determining where service should operate and that it may be more expensive to re-locate service because divisions may not be strategically located. For example, the Gateway Cities Sector's two divisions are in downtown and much of the service in this Sector is not within the boundaries of the Gateway Cities area.

Mr. Hillmer noted that the Sector is conducting a study which examines how to best re-structure various lines from both an operations and passenger perspective.

Councilmember Vasquez inquired about the status of this study.

Mr. Hillmer responded that next month would be a good time to provide an update on the study.

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

ADJOURNED at 6:15 p.m.

Michele Chau

Michele Chau, Council Secretary