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**OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
APRIL 17, 2008**

SUBJECT: METRO RAPID EXPRESS SERVICE

**ACTION: APPROVE CONTINUING THE WILSHIRE METRO RAPID EXPRESS
AND DISCONTINUING THE HAWTHORNE METRO RAPID EXPRESS**

RECOMMENDATION

Continue the Wilshire Metro Rapid Express and discontinue the Hawthorne Metro Rapid Express.

ISSUE

In June 2007, the Hawthorne and Wilshire Metro Rapid Express services were implemented as a pilot program. Staff has evaluated both services to determine if Metro Rapid Express should be added to our family of services as a new service type. Based on performance to date, staff recommends discontinuing the Hawthorne Metro Rapid Express and continuing the Wilshire Metro Rapid Express.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

As a service type, both the Metro Rapid Service Warrants and Metro Connections have identified Metro Rapid Express as a means to improve transit service in certain corridors. Continued evaluation is necessary in the Wilshire corridor to determine if this service type should be added to our family of services.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

One option is to not discontinue the Hawthorne Metro Rapid Express, which is not recommended since it is not performing at acceptable levels. Another option is to discontinue the Wilshire Metro Rapid Express as well. This is not recommended either since it is performing moderately well and additional time is needed to further evaluate the merits of the service.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Adoption of the recommended action is included in the FY09 proposed budget as projected in the FY08 ten-year forecast.

BACKGROUND

In November 2006, the Board approved implementing the Wilshire Metro Rapid Express in June 2007 as a pilot program. At its February 2007 meeting, the Board approved including the Hawthorne corridor in the Metro Rapid Express pilot program and implementing this service in June 2007 as well.

Service Performance

Performance indicators for the two services have not met expectations in terms of time savings and boardings. Boardings on the Wilshire Metro Rapid Express have remained flat at about 4,800 boardings per day and approximately 31 boardings per service hour. In December 2007, 40-foot buses replaced 60-foot buses for the service and frequency was reduced in the off-peak direction, resulting only in a small increase in boardings per hour. The Hawthorne Metro Rapid Express' performance has also remained flat with about 150 boardings per day or 15 boardings per service hour. (The Hawthorne Metro Rapid Express only operates eight trips per day with 30-minute frequency.)

Travel time savings are also less than expected. The program objective is 10% to 15% faster service than the underlying Rapid service in a corridor. So far, the Wilshire Metro Rapid Express service is offering an average savings of about 9% in the a.m. peak and about 11% in the p.m. peak. The Hawthorne Metro Rapid Express is offering an average savings of about 20% in the a.m. peak and about 2% in the p.m. peak.

Marketing

The launch of the Metro Rapid Express pilot program included a substantial marketing and outreach effort including: inside and outside bus advertising, bus bench ads, system-wide brochure distribution, radio and print advertising, and special signage and headsigns on the Metro Rapid Express buses. Additional marketing was conducted over the last several months.

Customer Feedback

A customer feedback survey was conducted in November 2007. Results show that Metro Rapid Express customers have an increased satisfaction with their commute. However, many regular Wilshire Metro Rapid customers are less satisfied with their commute because the regular Wilshire Metro Rapid service was reduced to implement the Wilshire Metro Rapid Express service.

While the survey showed that a higher percentage of Metro Rapid Express customers had a car available for their trip compared to regular Metro Rapid customers, it was inconclusive in showing that Metro Rapid Express customers are new riders to public transit.

Pilot Program Findings

Metro Rapid Express service works best in Metro Rapid corridors with above average passenger trip lengths (greater than 4.6 miles) and ridership (greater than 9,000 boardings), and in corridors that have ridership concentrated at just a few stops. For example, the Wilshire Metro Rapid has

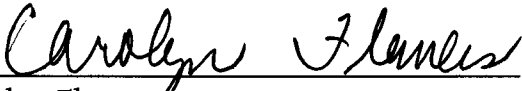
the highest daily ridership in the Metro Rapid network with over 40,000 daily boardings, and about 31% of the ridership is attributed to those stops served by the Wilshire Metro Rapid Express. In contrast, the Hawthorne Metro Rapid is below average in terms of daily ridership, with just over 8,000 daily boardings and only about 20% of the ridership is attributed to those stops served by the Hawthorne Metro Rapid Express.

Also, the expectation of travel time savings of 10-15% may be optimistic, as the only speed advantage that the Rapid Express has is fewer stops. After eight months of operation with extensive marketing, there have not been increases in ridership in the two Metro Rapid Express corridors.

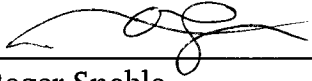
NEXT STEPS

Staff will continue to monitor performance of the Wilshire Metro Rapid Express and make service-level adjustments as necessary.

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