

Monday, May 11, 2009

5:00 PM

MINUTES

San Gabriel Valley Service Sector Governance Council

Regular Meeting

Metro San Gabriel Valley Sector Office
3449 Santa Anita Avenue
El Monte, CA 91731
3rd Floor, Council Chambers Room

Called to Order at 5:00 p.m.

Sector Representatives Present:

Roger Chandler, Chair
Joseph Mosca, Vice Chair
Harry Baldwin
Alex Gonzalez
Bruce Heard
Dave Spence
Rosie Vasquez

Officers:

Jack Gabig, General Manager
Michele Chau, Council Secretary



Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Metro

1. APPROVED **Minutes** of Regular Governance Council Meeting held April 13, 2009.

2. RECEIVED **Public Comment:**

Bob Thomas, Metro community volunteer, asked if it is possible for Metro's TAP cards to be used as a cash purse. He noted that Foothill Transit's TAP cards already have this capability. Mr. Gabig responded that Metro is not able to implement this function right away as it is fairly complex. He added that Foothill Transit has a simpler fare structure.

Wayne Wright, transit user, stated that several months ago the Gateway Cities Sector Governance Council discussed eliminating fare zones on Line 460. He indicated that the Metro Board is the only entity that has a final say in the fare structure of the upcoming Silver Line. He stated that if an honor system is adopted on the Silver Line, conflicts may arise regarding providing proof of fare. He requested that the Council and Board more closely examine the issue of fare equity and eliminate zone fares for other Express bus lines.

Mr. Gabig stated that staff is in the early stages of conducting a fare policy review that examines zone charges for all applicable Metro bus lines. This review originated from issues related to the Silver Line. The Metro Board has ultimate authority over fare structure.

Ken Ruben, transit user and member of Southern California Transit Advocates, stated that he recently attended former Metro CEO Roger Snoble's retirement celebration and was able to obtain a TAP card which included a photo of Mr. Snoble. He indicated that the EZ transit pass is still being issued in paper format rather than in a TAP card format. He stated that he attended a RailPAC meeting last week and that various transit officials were present at the meeting. National Train Day was held on May 9 at Union Station. The event was well-attended. He mentioned that a YouTube video showing footage of patrons at Metro's informational table is available online.

3. RECEIVED **Chair's Remarks** - Representative Spence has been nominated by the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments to fill the seat recently vacated by former Representative Ernest Gutierrez. This nomination will be confirmed by the Metro Board at the May 28 Board meeting.

Metro is promoting Bike to Work Week. Metro will offer free rides throughout Los Angeles County on Thursday, May 14 to bicyclists who board Metro buses and trains with a bike and/or helmet.

Metro is also co-hosting more than 40 bike pit stops with local organizations, inviting bicyclists to stop by for refreshments and free giveaways.

4. **RECEIVED AND FILED report of the General Manager.**

Mr. Gabig reported that four major labor contracts expire at the end of June. Discussions with all four bargaining units are ongoing. Staff hopes to finalize the contracts by the end of June.

CEO Art Leahy visited Division 3 on April 30. Mr. Gabig noted that Mr. Leahy, who has held a number of management positions in the transit industry, began his career as a bus operator at Division 3. In addition, Mr. Leahy's parents were both former employees who met at Division 3. Mr. Leahy's five major priorities for bus operations include safety, bus cleanliness, reliable and on-time service, operator courtesy and cost-effective and efficient service. Mr. Leahy has expressed an interest in visiting the Governance Council at some future point.

Mr. Gabig announced that Juan Navarro, Division 3 bus operator, and three Maintenance mechanics represented the agency at the International Bus Rodeo which took place last week in Seattle. The Metro bus team won the Grand Champion title. This is the second time the agency has garnered this title in the past three years.

Mr. Gabig reviewed performance indicators for the month of March 2009. Ridership levels for the month were lower relative to FY08 figures. Mr. Gabig stated that a service re-alignment resulted in the Sector serving fewer customers. In addition, the Sector lost ridership on Lines 28, 30 and 42, which are no longer operated through the Sector's two divisions. As a result, these figures do not indicate a true loss in ridership.

Representative Baldwin asked if current ridership figures would exceed last year's levels if the ridership loss on the three lines noted above were excluded from the data.

Mr. Gabig responded that this is not likely since reduced ridership reflects an agency-wide trend.

Mr. Page noted that there was one less day in February 2009 due to the leap year, resulting in slightly lower ridership figures compared with FY08.

Mr. Gabig stated that the Sector is trending well in the area of On-Time Performance. The FY09 YTD figure is slightly above the target of 68%. The FY10 target has been set at 72%. Staff hopes to exceed this target.

Mr. Gabig reported that while overall complaints per 100,000 boardings decreased relative to FY08 figures, the dip in ridership resulted in a slight increase in complaints. Customer complaint investigation efforts and additional operator training should mitigate complaints. Pass-ups and late or missed service represent the largest complaint categories.

Representative Baldwin asked if pass-ups are due to service that is running hot.

Mr. Gabig responded that there are a variety of reasons for pass-ups, including but not limited to an overloaded bus or operator behavior issues. In addition, passenger confusion has resulted when the headsigs of buses previously taken out of service were changed.

Mr. Gabig reported that there were a total of 91 operator commendations for the third quarter of the fiscal year. Commendations regarding operator assistance with a lost wallet or purse were received for operators Ricardo Martinez and Jose Ornelas of Division 9 and operators Willy Ivory and Fernando Marroquin of Division 3. In addition, commendations regarding operators maintaining composure while dealing with an aggressive passenger were received for operator Joe Barbosa of Division 9 and Jose Garcia Serafin of Division 3.

Representative Heard asked if staff tracks the performance of contract bus line operators.

Mr. Gabig responded that contract managers are required to monitor and report this information.

Representative Heard stated that in the eyes of the public, there is no distinction between contract lines and directly-operated lines. He indicated that there may be an incentive for staff to provide commendations to contract bus operators as well.

Mr. Gabig reported that the FY09 YTD actual figure in the area of Bus Accidents was lower than the FY09 target. However, incidents involving Lines 81 and 206 resulted in a spike in this category in March. The two lines noted above serve heavily traveled corridors. There has been re-focused field supervision on Line 81.

A majority of the accidents were minor, and most involved sideswipes, collision with a fixed object such as a mirror, and collision between another vehicle and a bus standing in the zone. Mr. Gabig stated that there was a spike in accident severity in February due to several incidents, one of which involved a bus colliding into a hardware store in Altadena. Although the latter incident resulted in major property damage, only the operator sustained injuries. The incident will result in an increase in liability charges. The other accidents were mostly unavoidable.

Miles Between Total Road Calls is trending well, though the FY09 YTD actual figure did not reach the target. Staff is pleased with progress made in this category and will not set a higher target for the next fiscal year.

The number of OSHA recordable incidents has flattened for the third quarter of the fiscal year. The Sector is attempting to avoid the spikes that occurred earlier in the fiscal year. A new Safety Specialist will be joining the Sector sometime next week. The position has been vacant since last November.

Workers' Compensation Indemnity Claims per 200,000 Exposure Hours were above target. This category will be the focus of the new Safety Specialist.

“How You Doin’?” Program FY09 Third Quarter Results:

Division 9 placed first overall.
Division 3 placed third overall.

Mr. Gabig stated that staff is reviewing the structure of the program.

FY09 Financial Update:

Paula Faust, Administration and Financial Services Manager, stated that total San Gabriel Valley Sector is \$3.3 million under budget year-to-date. The majority of savings is in the Transportation budget, specifically in the areas of labor, Workers' Compensation and liability. Total Maintenance is \$987,000 over budget due to challenges in parts and Worker's Compensation chargebacks. Ms. Faust noted that parts was under-budgeted from the start. Mr. Gabig added that the entire agency is struggling with an aging bus fleet. The average age of a bus engine is seven years. Over 100 buses at Division 9 have in excess of 350,000 miles on the engine. The bus rebuild program has been and continues to remain under-funded.

Staff hopes that the proposed budget will address this issue as it could result in serious service reliability problems.

Ms. Faust stated that there have been some fuel savings in Maintenance. Workers' Compensation is trending close to budget.

Mr. Page reported that each Sector will need to reduce bus service by up to 25,000 revenue service hours due to budget shortfalls. The changes would be implemented in December 2009. Mr. Page reviewed the public hearing timeline. The San Gabriel Valley Sector hearing is scheduled for August 10.

Representative Mosca inquired about the lines being reviewed as part of the service change program.

Mr. Page responded that because the Sectors are not required to reduce bus service by a substantial amount, staff will likely implement trip thinning and modify headways, among other cost-cutting strategies. Mr. Gabig added that the Sector does not plan on cutting any bus lines.

5. RECEIVED *Can't Go Anywhere Without You Awards*.

David Hershenson, Community Relations Manager, reported that this is the third installment of the Can't Go Anywhere Without You program which was initiated a year ago. The program stems from a motion introduced by Metro Director Antonovich regarding provision of marketing funds for the Service Sectors. Jon Hillmer, Transportation Manager, stated that the program is significant in that it encapsulates the importance of the customer.

Mr. Hershenson announced the current winners of the Can't Go Anywhere Without You campaign:

Operator Vincent Rojas and Customer Linda Pendigrass.

Operator Richard Lopez and Customer Ralph De Silva.

Representative Spence asked if this information is forwarded to the Metro Board.

Mr. Gabig responded that this information has been presented to the Operations Committee in the past. In addition, the Metro Communications Department circulates this information to the general public.

6. **RECEIVED El Monte Station Preliminary Design Results Report.**

Tim Lindholm, Director of Capital Projects, provided an overview of the Congestion Reduction Demonstration Initiative and the El Monte Transit Center project. He presented slides showing the El Monte Station today, existing land use for the Station, history of the Station, and facts at a glance. Mr. Lindholm reviewed station usage and bus access at the facility. The Station opened in 1973 and is the busiest bus terminal west of Chicago. The Station is over capacity and is unable to accommodate additional bus service. Staff anticipates that commuter parking will soon reach capacity. Challenges include but are not limited to inadequate security and an aging facility. Metro will receive \$45 million from the federal government to build a new Station. Mr. Lindholm discussed the conceptual design of the new Station and stated that it will accommodate the future Fast Lanes and provide a connection to the El Monte Transit Village. Staff hopes to attain LEED platinum certification for the project. The goal is to complete the project by December 31, 2010. The contract for construction was awarded in November 2008. Mr. Lindholm stated that the Station will feature a two-level terminal, a new Sheriff's station, a kiss-and-ride area, and a solar canopy. He presented graphs of the local and express levels of the terminal.

Representative Vasquez asked if there will be security after dark while construction takes place.

Mr. Lindholm stated that the construction area will be fenced and lit and that there will be Sheriffs present on-site. He added that impacts to commuters will not be substantial.

Mr. Lindholm reviewed the project schedule. He stated that the timeline is rather punishing, but it will be necessary to complete the project by the end of next year so that it can open in conjunction with the Fast Lanes project. He presented a brief video showing the various sections of the proposed Station. It has been designed so that pedestrians will not cross the path of buses entering the terminal. He stated that there will be a Patsaouras Plaza connector in downtown for patrons who travel on the El Monte busway and stop in the vicinity of Union Station.

Representative Heard asked if efforts will be made to integrate Metrolink into the Transit Village.

Mr. Lindholm stated that staff hoped to accomplish this but it was impossible due to the location of the Village relative to the Metrolink tracks. He stated that the train does not stop at curved areas. Staff is examining providing shuttle service to assist patrons in reaching the Metrolink station.

Representative Mosca asked for clarification about why the new Station needs to be completed in one year.

Mr. Lindholm responded that while the Station does not necessarily need to be completed by next year, the tolling portion of Fast Lanes will be operational by December 2010. He stated that the Fast Lanes project and complementary services such as the upcoming Silver Line bus will not be able to function at their peak without a new Station.

Representative Mosca asked about Metro's share in funding the new Station.

Mr. Lindholm responded that Metro will receive \$45 million from the federal government for the project. Metro will match 20% of this amount.

RECEIVED public comment –John Ziegler, County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, asked if the former Sector office building on Santa Anita Avenue is considered a historic structure.

Mr. Lindholm responded that it is not considered a historic building. Mr. Gabig added that the building was built in the 1930's and once housed the Gas Company.

7. **RECEIVED Report on Silver Line 910 Implementation.**

Wayne Wassel, Transportation Planning Manager IV, reported that the Silver Line 910 will connect two major transit hubs, the Artesia Transit Center in the South Bay area and the El Monte Transit Center in the San Gabriel Valley. The Silver Line will replace the existing freeway express services provided by Lines 484 and 490 (San Gabriel Valley Sector) and Lines 444 and 446 (South Bay Sector). Implementation of the plan has been postponed to December 2009 due to three factors: 1) the need to better coordinate with other transit operators to provide more complementary and efficient service, and to avoid service duplication; 2) the need to assess the amount of savings in revenue service hours (RSH) to apply to the budget deficit (implementation of line is expected to save 12,600 annual RSH); and 3) fare equity issue as it relates to similar service along both the Harbor Transitway and El Monte Busway. In order for the Silver Line to be equitable with the Blue Line, which also serves the Harbor Transitway, the fare for the Silver Line would need to be set at only \$1.25. In order to attain equity with the Foothill Transit Silver Streak line on the El Monte Busway, the fare for the Silver Line would need to match that of the Silver Streak line, currently set at \$2.50. Mr. Wassel stated that these fare discrepancies will need to be resolved. Mr. Gabig noted that there is also some complexity in eliminating zone charges.

The Sector will be receiving new equipment that will be introduced on the Silver Line, but it will not be available until December. New 45-foot vehicles will be used on the line, providing greater capacity.

Representative Baldwin asked if Silver Line issues will be discussed at the July Council meeting. Mr. Gabig stated that Silver Line issues may be briefly referenced as part of the December service plan discussion.

RECEIVED public comment – Jose Melendez, transit user, stated that he appreciates that new buses will be used on the upcoming Silver Line but is concerned about lines currently running on the Harbor Transitway. He asked if staff has engaged in discussions with South Bay transit operators about coordinating alternate transit services with the Silver Line.

Mr. Wassel responded that staff is seeking to reduce service duplication and coordinate headways with other transit providers. Staff is continuing to engage in discussions about the fare structure. Staff is meeting with Foothill Transit this week to discuss fares.

Bob Thomas, transit user, asked if information regarding Line 910 is available on the metro.net website.

Mr. Gabig responded that more information regarding Line 910, along with other proposed service changes, will be provided at a later date since implementation of the line has been deferred to December.

8. RECEIVED Community Relations Update on Line 177 Campaign.

David Hershenson, Community Relations Manager, reported that ads and car cards featuring previous winners of the Can't Go Anywhere Without You campaign were posted in April and May. The new car cards featuring the current winners will be posted in June. Mr. Hershenson stated that the Sectors provide presentations to the Operations Committee on a regular basis. These presentations have been well-received.

Staff has been proactive in working with various communities to promote Line 177. The line was targeted for cancellation on several occasions. Staff is focusing on placing ads in newspapers to promote the line. In addition, Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) has requested that Metro issue special electronic documents with information about the line and links to pocket guides, timetables and complementary services. This electronic document may be customized for use by JPL and Caltech staff and students.

Staff will also issue a press release to promote the line to transit users at Caltech. In addition, take-ones and rider alerts will be used to advertise the line.

Mr. Hershenson announced that the next bi-annual San Gabriel Valley transit coordinators meeting will be held in June. The City of Pasadena has offered to host the next meeting. Staff would like to invite the Council to attend the next transit coordinators meeting. A date has not yet been set.

Representative Vasquez asked if there is a timeline for release of the JPL electronic document.

Mr. Hershenson responded that staff will launch the ads and electronic document in June.

Representative Vasquez expressed concern about monitoring the impact of the campaign.

Mr. Hershenson stated that staff hopes ridership will increase as a result of the line promotion.

Representative Heard asked if progress has been made in upgrading the fleet. He stated that the ride on Line 177 is unpleasant due to the aging equipment.

Mr. Page responded that the Metro Board approved the purchase of 35-foot NABI buses which will be used on the line. However, the new buses will not be available for one year. He stated that the contractors for Line 177 have received older equipment that is not yet due for replacement. This equipment is being deployed on contracted lines with heavier passenger loads. Staff will continue to push for redistribution of vehicles from other lines to Line 177.

9. CARRIED OVER receipt of **Line 81 Profile Report** by Scott Page, Service Development Manager.
10. **Service Sector Representatives Closing Remarks** – none.

ADJOURNED at 6:20 p.m.

Michele Chau

Michele Chau, Council Secretary