

Transit Operations Eyeing Division 12 if Court Ruling Requires Service Expansion

By Bill Heard, Editor

(Jan. 13) Transit Operations management is studying the possible need to reopen Division 12 in Long Beach. Part of the decision rests on whether a U.S. District Court ruling - expected later this year - requires the MTA to add 106 buses into service to meet Consent Decree requirements.

Richard Hunt, deputy executive officer, Bus Maintenance, believes there's "less than a 50-50 chance" that Division 12 - closed since mid-1997 - will reopen soon. Factors in the decision, he says, include the continued expansion of Metro Bus service and the need for additional bus parking and maintenance areas.

Deadheading a factor

Another important element as the fleet grows is whether buses have to drive too many "deadhead" miles between their home divisions and the start or termination point of a service route. The earliest Hunt would expect Division 12 could reopen, if that decision is made, would be in December.

"Where we have space right now is not where we have a need for additional coaches," says Gary Spivack, director, Transit Operations Support Services, referring to Division 8 in Chatsworth and Division 15 in Sun Valley. "We're in a position of putting new buses at existing divisions, but increasing deadhead time."

Division 12 could accommodate 135 buses, according to Hunt. It would require an estimated staff of about 300 operations and maintenance personnel to provide full service. At present, the division has fueling facilities only for diesel coaches. Refitting the division to handle CNG buses could mean an investment of \$5 million to \$7 million, Spivack says.

MTA appealing decision

As Transit Operations studies Division 12, the MTA is asking the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals to overturn a District Court's order that would require the agency to purchase 297 new CNG buses and to put 248 temporary buses into service until the permanent buses are received.

With the buses the MTA already has placed in service, however, the agency would have to add only 88 buses and 18 spares, a total of 106, to its fleet. Oral arguments in the lawsuit, brought by the Bus Riders Union and the NAACP, are expected later this year.

Division 12, located on West Chester Place in Long Beach, was closed June 30, 1997, as a cost-cutting measure. The majority of service was shifted to Division 18 in Carson. Division 12 opened in 1902 as a Pacific Electric Line yard and continued to serve the "Red Cars" until 1961. Rail and bus service began in 1930.

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