



A Metro Rapid Bus pulls into the newly constructed Sepulveda station on the Ventura Boulevard line. Variable message sign announces the arrival time of the next bus. PHOTOS BY MICHAEL RICHMAI



Metro Rapid Bus Program Meeting Goals: Ridership, Customer Satisfaction are Up

(Jan. 25) The Metro Rapid Bus demonstration program has met its initial goals, the program's manager told the Board, Thursday, reducing travel times by 25 percent and boosting ridership by 26 percent.

In fact, reported Transportation Planning Manager Rex Gephart, Metro Rapid Bus service in the Wilshire/Whittier and Ventura Boulevard corridors is faster than similar bus service in Curitiba, Brazil, the model for the MTA's program.

The Wilshire/Whittier service, with 90,000 daily boardings, is now the MTA's most heavily traveled bus line. The Ventura line averages 14,000 daily boardings.

"Nearly half of this increase is new ridership," Gephart said. "These are people who have never tried public transit in their lives."

A before-and-after survey conducted by the MTA indicates customer satisfaction on the Metro Rapid Bus lines is up significantly, he added.

Station construction program

The MTA expects within the next several weeks to complete installation of Metro Rapid Bus stations along the 16-mile Ventura line. Stations then will be constructed on the 26-mile Wilshire/Whittier line, a project expected to take several months.

The stations have canopies for weather protection and feature variable message signs that announce when the next bus is due at the station. Because the stations are brightly lit, passengers have said they are some of the safest they've used, Gephart reported.

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Following an evaluation of the program later this year, he expects to propose an expansion of the Metro Rapid Bus program that could include exclusive lanes on major thoroughfares, high-capacity buses and a feeder network.

Gephart noted that the MTA and the LADOT cooperated in the development of the Metro Rapid Bus program. LADOT has installed electronic equipment at intersections to give the buses traffic signal preference. The agency also provides access to its ATSAC traffic surveillance network, which helps the MTA monitor bus movements.

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