

## At Consent Decree's Mid-Point, MTA Marks Significant Progress

By ED SCANNELL

(Nov. 15, 2001) At the mid-point of the 10-year Consent Decree, the MTA has made significant improvements in bus service, putting hundreds of new buses on the road, dramatically reducing overcrowding and customer complaints, and inaugurating more bus lines and new types of service.

In a report to the Board, the MTA staff presented a "report card" that showed in detail the progress over the past five years.

"The MTA has put its shoulder to the wheel in the last five years, something our passengers recognize," said Board Chairman John Fasana. "The improvements we've made in bus service give testimony to the MTA's commitment to delivering the best bus service possible."

"It continues to get 'better on the bus' and our record of achievement in the coming years will be even better," he added.

Fasana's comments were underscored by CEO Roger Snoble.

"I've now had an opportunity to carefully analyze the MTA's response to the Consent Decree and I'm convinced we are in full compliance by any reasonable measure," said Snoble. "The MTA Board has asked me to make a renewed effort to work collaboratively with the Bus Riders Union and other Metro passenger representatives to avoid further litigation. I'm fully committed to that goal."

The Consent Decree was signed in October 1996 to settle litigation brought by a coalition of civil rights groups. The report to the Board noted these improvements on Consent Decree issues:

**Record Level of Bus Service** – The MTA and its contracted services have set a new record this year for the most bus service operated, more than was operated by its predecessor, the SCRTD in the mid-80s. The record was achieved despite the fact that many bus lines once operated by the SCRTD are run today by Foothill Transit and some of the county's municipal bus operators, and despite the fact that Metro Bus service today also is augmented by Metro Rail.

**Reduced Overcrowding** – MTA has succeeded in reducing the number of standees on Metro buses as prescribed by the Consent Decree. Weekday compliance is now 97.5 percent.

**New Bus Purchases** – MTA accelerated new bus purchases with a multi-year plan to purchase more than 2,100 new CNG buses through FY 2004. To date, more than 1,400 of these have been placed into service. MTA will begin taking delivery of its next bus order in December 2001.

**Reduction In Average Age of Fleet** – The infusion of new buses has resulted in a significant reduction in the average age of the fleet. In November 1996 the average age of the Metro Bus fleet was 9.05 years. In September 2001, that number dipped to 5 years, making MTA's fleet one of the youngest among major bus operations in the U.S. By March/April 2002 the average age of the fleet is expected to reach 4.8 years.

**New Bus Service** – The MTA has initiated important new bus service

aimed at improving the access of patrons who depend on public transit to get to jobs, medical facilities and places of recreation. The agency implemented a pilot project that included 15 new lines and 84 buses added since December 1997. Three remaining lines are being evaluated for implementation. In addition, MTA inaugurated the Metro Rapid Bus Program on the Wilshire/Whittier and Ventura Boulevard corridors, with plans for a future 22-line expansion on the county's most congested corridors.

**Additional Metro Rail Service Benefits Bus Passengers –** MTA

extended Metro Rail service to Hollywood and North Hollywood, which resulted in an increase of 120,000 average daily boardings. The extensions provided direct benefit to bus patrons, many of whom rely on both bus and rail service in their daily commutes.

**Reduce Monthly Pass Rate/Add New Weekly Pass –** The MTA lowered the monthly Metro pass rate from \$49 to \$42, introduced a weekly pass, implemented an off-peak 75-cent fare system-wide from 9 p.m to 5 a.m.

**Additional Funding for Municipal Operators –** The Municipal Bus Service Improvement Program has been funded with \$15 million annually to address overcrowding and provide new countywide service.

**Customer Complaints Reach All-Time Low –** All these improvements have contributed to the lowest rate of customer complaints received by the MTA in one month. Customer complaints declined from a ratio of 6.37 complaints per 100,000 daily boardings in July 1997 to a ratio of 3.15 complaints per 100,000 daily boardings in July 2001.

[Back to MTA Report](#)