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**OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 19, 2004**

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON METRO CONNECTIONS

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file a report on the status of the bus service restructuring effort, formerly known as the Hub and Spoke Project and now named Metro Connections.

ISSUE

This item is intended to provide the Board with an update on project efforts upon staff's completion of the first phase of the bus service restructuring effort. It is anticipated that this effort will result in the implementation of the initial phases of restructured bus service during FY 2006.

BACKGROUND

The latest comprehensive restructuring of the Metro Bus system was implemented in the 1980s with the introduction of grid network service. Since then a series of incremental service changes have been implemented. While these efforts have resulted in service improvements, they have not fully addressed the significant changes in the region's service needs. In the last 20 years, there have been significant regional changes as the County's population and employment numbers and density have expanded at a high rate. These demographic changes have been reflected in the region's development patterns with densification occurring in the county's urban core and with significant expansion taking place in northern Los Angeles County and other County areas. The decline of technological and industrial employment, coupled with the growth of the service-oriented job sector in Los Angeles County, has impacted travel patterns with more dispersed peak travel needs, rather than the previously typical morning and evening peak period commuter needs. The last 20 years has also witnessed the implementation of the region's now 73-mile rail system along with the successful Metrolink and Metro Rapid programs. In addition,

there has been an expansion of Municipal Operators and other service providers who have an increasing ability to effectively provide community-based transit service. As demonstrated by these successful transit service efforts, there is an opportunity to increase transit's travel market share, which can provide corresponding mobility, economic development and air quality benefits. Based on these factors, along with funding realities, there is a growing need to evaluate and develop a long-term strategy on how to best to provide regional bus service.

Service Concept

The intention of this bus service restructuring effort is to move the region's predominately grid system to a hybrid hub and spoke service delivery, which would better reflect the region's multi-activity centers and destinations, while resulting in reduced travel times for a majority of our current riders. This multi-centered, multi-operator service delivery would more effectively utilize the strengths of the region's service providers.

Other systems implementing this type of bus service delivery including Seattle, Portland, Denver and Dallas – all with similar land use and travel patterns to Los Angeles County. These systems have experienced benefits including: improved service quality, increased customer satisfaction and expanded travel market share along with a more effective use of resources and the elimination of any duplication in service. Lessons learned from other systems include the need to develop local support and partnerships, and to communicate with and involve the customer throughout the process. Other systems identified their major service restructuring challenges to be how to successfully change long-term, engrained travel patterns of existing riders, while attracting new discretionary riders to the system.

The service delivery concept uses a network of major activity centers, or hubs, as the focal points of the system that are served by major travel corridors, or spokes. In a majority of the systems implementing the hub and spoke concept, portions of the pre-existing grid network have been preserved where they represent the best service delivery for an area, and are incorporated into the new system. This will be the most likely case in Los Angeles County. For this bus service restructuring effort, hubs and spokes are defined as follows:

- ***Hub or transit center*** – place where customers make connections between communities, inter-community and regional transit services. Four types of transit centers reflecting varied service and community needs have been initially identified.
- ***Spoke or travel corridor*** – key transit corridors providing service connections – some with transit speed and reliability-related improvements.

Project Plan

A four-phased bus service restructuring effort was initiated in the fall of 2003 to develop a long-term strategy on how to best provide bus service throughout the region. It is anticipated that this effort will result in the implementation of the initial phases of restructured bus service during FY 2006. Any revisions to the Transit Service Policy resulting from this restructuring effort will be

incorporated during the annual policy update process. The restructuring effort will consist of the following major activities:

- Phase 1 – Needs Assessment
- Phase 2 – Develop Alternative Strategies
- Phase 3 – Detail Implementation Plan
- Phase 4 – Implement Service

The first phase of the service restructuring effort was completed in January 2004. This initial effort included identification of project goals and objectives, and extensive stakeholder outreach. This report presents an overview of those efforts.

Project Goals and Objectives

Based on stakeholder input, internal working group discussions and a review of adopted Agency policies and plans, the following goals and objectives have been identified to guide development of bus service restructuring strategies and the resulting implementation plan:

1. Provide our customers with high quality service
2. Build on the region's backbone Metro Rail and Rapid system
3. Eliminate duplication of service
4. Use resources effectively
5. Increase travel market share
6. Match capacity with demand

Stakeholder Outreach

Outreach included briefings and presentations to the region's key stakeholders to seek their comments and concerns on the proposed bus service restructuring effort. Outreach was conducted with Board members, Sector Governance Councils, Subregional groups (Council of Governments), elected officials and service provider groups. Stakeholder comments fell into three categories: expressions of support, identification of concerns, and recommendations on how to best proceed with the restructuring effort.

There was strong support among all stakeholders for the bus service restructuring effort with some individuals expressing the opinion that it was long overdue. Several Board members stated that this effort recognizes and would strengthen the Agency's meeting of its core mission, which is to provide the best possible transit service to our customers. Other stakeholders expressed that the restructuring effort would allow MTA and the Municipal Operators to do what each does best – recognizing the regional service versus the local service role. A majority of the stakeholders expressed strong support for restructuring of service delivery to more effectively utilize the region's increasingly constrained resources.

Stakeholder concerns were expressed related to developing the proposed service delivery partnership between MTA and the Municipal Operators in regard to funding, agreements, performance measures and transfers between services. There was strong support to rethink

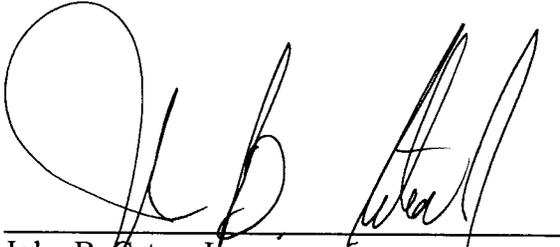
regional service funding policies and processes to ensure that the partnerships with other service providers worked successfully. Others stated concerns on how the restructured service would be phased in and how this information would be effectively communicated with customers. Stakeholders expressed their concern that the identification of hubs or transit centers and spokes or travel corridors fit with local plans. While a majority of stakeholders supported the goal of attracting and serving an increased number of discretionary riders, they expressed concerns about the short-term difficulty of doing this and felt that this may be a longer-term goal, while we focused on improving service to our current riders.

Recommendations included taking the time up front to ensure that all stakeholders are involved and heard, and then clearly communicating the resulting restructuring plan's benefits as well as any impacts. Many stakeholders strongly recommended that the new system's centers and corridors relate to existing and planned land use patterns and local desires. Several stakeholders suggested that any increase in the number of transfers should be mitigated with timed transfers along with the provision of customer services and amenities at the hubs or transit centers.

NEXT STEPS

The next phase of the bus service restructuring effort – Develop Alternative Service Strategies – will be initiated during February 2004. This effort will continue to be based on and incorporate stakeholder involvement. Staff will return to the Board in late spring with a set of proposed alternative service strategies for review and comment.

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