

Minutes/Proceedings

San Gabriel Valley Service Sector Governance Council

Special Meeting

Eaton Canyon Nature Center
1750 North Altadena Drive
Pasadena, CA

Called to Order at 7:52 a.m.

Council Members Present:

Bart Doyle, Chair
Sid Tyler, Vice Chair
Harry Baldwin
Emile Bayle
Henry Lopez
Sharon Martinez
David Spence
Rosie Vasquez

Officers

Jack Gabig, General Manager
Helen Ortiz, Community Relations Manager
Michele Chau, Council Secretary



Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Metro

1. GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the Governance Council Members and staff members with Teri Fisher, President of Insight Strategies Inc.

Ms. Fisher acted as a conduit between the Council and the MTA to facilitate in enhancing communications, adding insight and providing guidance for the meeting.

Chairman Doyle stated that the key discussion points of this meeting will be communicated at the June 22 Service Sector annual meeting with the CEO and Deputy CEO.

A) SGV Strategic Plan:

Jack Gabig, General Manager, gave an overview of the San Gabriel Valley Sector Strategic Plan for FY05-FY07. He mentioned that the Plan is complementary but not identical to a similar Plan that the agency as a whole has implemented. The Council intends to foster a safety conscious environment, value employees, continuously improve customer-focused service, efficiently use its resources, and work to enhance the image of Metro. These goals reflect the Council's values and will help support its mission. Mr. Gabig stated that establishing safety as a priority reflects the agency-wide focus on increasing accountability for safety in all aspects of operations management. He reviewed action items and objectives associated with each goal and the project leads who will oversee implementation of action items.

Councilmember Tyler noted that achieving the Sector's vision of being among the nation's best in transportation would likely entail recognition by both the Sector's peers and customers. He stated that it's important to evaluate how the Sector measures its performance.

Mr. Gabig mentioned that many of the Sector's measures of performance are presented monthly and that specific measurable, quantifiable performance measures are currently available for FY05.

In response to Councilmember Bayle's inquiry regarding the relative importance of improving customer service as a Sector goal, Mr. Gabig stated that safety supercedes customer service as a priority. The Sector arrived at the consensus that employee values and safety set the foundation for providing quality customer-focused service. He also noted that the goals listed in the Strategic Plan are Sector-specific and that the Plan represents a work-in-progress.

Councilmember Spence asked if employees exercise any control over these goals, and whether or not they are actually desirous of achieving these goals.

Mr. Gabig stated that most employees support the goals in concept, and that they may need Sector leadership to empower them to achieve these goals. He mentioned that focusing on employee recognition may be unique in each Sector.

Chairman Doyle inquired about APTA's recognition program and whether it uses the same criteria for all agencies.

Mr. Gabig responded that APTA recognizes transit agencies on the basis of multiple categories of achievement, including system performance, cost structure, community attitudes, innovation, etc.

Councilmember Tyler clarified that APTA recognition would not apply to individual Sectors, but rather, to the agency as a whole. However, the Sector may consider incorporating APTA's criteria into its objectives.

Councilmember Spence noted that the goals of improving customer service, upholding safety as a priority, and enhancing Metro's image are all interdependent.

B) Interview Finding Debrief:

Ms. Fisher gave an overview of some of the concerns that emerged during her interview session with each of the Council members prior to the Special Retreat. These include the desire for more efficient use of time at meetings (including reducing time spent on reporting), viewing meetings as a positive public relations forum, and general consensus that clarifying the goal of the Council will direct how time is best spent during Sector meetings. Ms. Fisher noted that the perspectives of the customer, Council itself, the Sector, and agency as a whole serve as a starting point for determining the direction the Sector should take in its strategic initiatives.

Councilmember Tyler stated that the agency has historically understated the importance of the customer's perspective and that this ought to be given greater weight. He added that in order for the Sector to bring decision-making closer to the public, more information is needed on the customer's feelings.

Councilmember Spence stated that it would be helpful for the Sector to increase the public's awareness that there are representatives from their area who are striving to improve the transit system. He noted that placing suggestion forms on buses might be one way to accomplish this.

Ms. Fisher noted that during the interview process, Councilmembers identified budgetary accountability as a key area that needs improvement.

Mr. Gabig explained that the budget process remains centrally driven and that areas such as marketing, administrative support, and bus procurement fall largely outside of the Sector's budgetary control.

Chairman Doyle stated that the Sector does not have detailed information about costs and revenues, and that the Sector may consider assembling this data over a period of time. He added that a mutually agreeable cost allocation for all Sectors is needed.

Mr. Gabig reported that budgets for the Sectors are determined based on need. He stated that this system is flawed in that it financially rewards higher cost structures while penalizing more efficient areas of operations, some of which may not be adequately funded. He stated that the budget ought to be based primarily on the level of service provided.

Ms. Fisher discussed common themes that surfaced about areas that need improvement with respect to the Sector, MTA in general, and the Governance Council. These include developing a clear process for proper allocation of responsibility and authority, building better trust between the Council and the Board, bridging the communication gap with the Board, providing members of the Board with consistent information about the Sector, obtaining more information about ridership, service quality, and consumer needs, and analyzing the impact that municipal operators have in improving service to local communities as it relates to Metro.

With respect to the format and content of meetings, Ms. Fisher noted that a few of the Councilmembers have suggested that presentations be limited to highlights of detailed written reports and areas in which variances show significance. Generally, Councilmembers would like to spend less time reviewing data line by line and instead address the details presented in written reports with discussion.

C) Purpose Statement:

After much deliberation, the Council agreed on the following purpose statement:

Oversee and guide public transit services in the San Gabriel Valley Sector while improving service quality and efficiency.

D) FY05 Strategic Initiatives:

Ms. Fisher presented a list of strategic initiatives that resulted from her collaboration with individual Councilmembers. These include developing a business case for the MTA to request budgetary accountability, emphasizing local marketing representation, developing a plan for building a relationship with the Board and MTA staff that includes proactive on-going communication and updates on the progress of the Sector, increasing ridership, and formulating an innovative long-term transit plan. In addition, the following initiatives were added: improving customer satisfaction and attracting positive press involvement for public relations stories.

E) Prioritizing Initiatives:

Councilmembers agreed that the following initiatives should be given priority:

- 1) Developing a plan for building a relationship with the Board and MTA staff;
and
- 2) Developing a case for the MTA to request budgetary accountability.

F) SMART Goals:

Ms. Fisher explained that the Council will have the necessary tools to develop a work plan once strategic initiatives are converted into "SMART" goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, results-oriented, and time-bound.

Councilmembers formed small groups to deliberate ways to convert initiatives into SMART goals using a template presented by Ms. Fisher and to discuss a final work plan.

G) Preparation for MTA Annual Sector Meeting on June 22:

Staff distributed copies of the Service Sector Annual Meet and Confer Meeting agenda to Councilmembers. Chairman Doyle stated that ideally, there should be a high degree of congruency in the information reported by each Sector, especially with respect to issues such as budgetary accountability, building trust between the Sectors and MTA Board, and long range transit priorities. Chairman Doyle gave a brief review of some of the items that will be discussed during the meeting. He noted that the Board of Directors will not be present at the meeting and that each Sector Chair will be allotted 5 minutes to present a report on the state of the Sector and to articulate goals and objectives for the upcoming fiscal year. Chairman Doyle added that Sector Chairs and Vice-Chairs should get together some time between June 22 and July 22 to explore commonalities in order to provide a tightly focused presentation to the Board for the July 22 meeting.

Issues of possible discussion may include best practices, how Sectors contribute to the agency as a whole, and an overview of what the Sector has learned during the past year.

H) Next Steps:

Councilmembers will attempt to move forward with the following steps:

- Add strategic initiative updates to Council meeting agenda
- Establish alignment and communication between Sector Governance Councils
- Obtain more information on Utah Transit, which has a successful transit program, and data on Descanso Gardens.
- Gather more information about cost allocation
- Obtain a copy of on-bus survey
- Initiate more top-line reporting at meetings
- Write goals for increasing ridership and customer satisfaction

2. Public Comments – None.

ADJOURNED at 1:35 P.M.

Michele Chau, Council Secretary