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ITEM 11 ATTACHMENT

John Catoe
Deputy CEO/COO
Metropolitan Transportation Authority
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November 22, 2004

Dear Mr. Catoe:

At the October 2004 Metro San Gabriel Valley Sector Governance Council Meeting, Isaac Lim from Metro Service Planning, made a presentation regarding the Draft Transit Service Policy. During this presentation he requested that the SGV Governance Council provide comments and suggested modifications to this document. With that in mind, the SGV Governance Council authorized me to relate their recommended changes to you.

The Transit Service Policy document is on balance well written. Our recommendations focus on four key areas.

- 1) Focus on the service philosophy, standards, and goals, and allow the Sectors the flexibility to meet these guidelines in the contexts of the communities we serve.
- 2) Change the language in the document to allow the Sectors flexibility in the design and operation of our bus lines
- 3) The performance standards should be set as a fixed numerical target rather than a percentage, and
- 4) To the extent possible, use sector level costs rather than system level costs

Section 1: Purpose and Background states that this policy is to guide decision-making to increase ridership, improve service quality, and in using resources wisely. This is excellent and provides clear goals. This should be the theme throughout this policy document.

However, the language used in most of the rest of the document appears to be too restrictive, leaving little room for consideration of local circumstances. I will list a few examples.

In Section 1.1 *"Bus lines that do not meet the minimum performance standard after 18 months of operation will be cancelled."* This leaves little room for continued efforts to improve ridership or efficiencies after 18 months, nor would it allow for the cancellation before 18 months. An alternative would be to broaden the time frame and to state that poor performing lines must be evaluated, modified, and subject to cancellation.

In the Bus Route and Design Guidelines Section 2.3 it states, *"Express bus service usually operates daily peak service only."* Our strongest express bus lines operate all day seven days per week, with strong mid-day and weekend ridership. We should be striving to develop the strongest express corridors possible.

Section 2.4 deals with shuttle services and states that *"Metro should only operate these services when no other operator is available"*. While I agree with this in general terms, this should not preclude us from aggressively using our collective bargaining agreements to use BDOF operators on new shuttle lines.

Section 2.6 dealing with bus/rail interface is excessively restrictive on when bus routes would be modified to serve rail stations. For bus lines parallel to rail lines these are the stated factors:

- *The walk time from the nearest station is greater than 3 minutes*
- *The diversion time in one direction is 5 minutes or less*
- *The average three hour peak load factor is less than 50 percent*

For intersecting bus lines the factors are:

- *The diversion time in one direction is 5 minutes or less*
- *The average three hour peak load factor is less than 75 percent*
- *There is a net travel time benefit for connecting and through-traveling riders*

If these sections and others are taken as they are written, they leave very little room for the Sector Governing Councils to design and manage our bus service. It would be helpful to add language in the introductory section of the document stating that these policies are guidelines, and may create a presumption that certain priorities apply when making service and route decisions, but they are not mandatory. The Sectors should retain the discretion to take other factors into account, such as the provision of equivalent service by municipal operators.

It is very important for Metro to have performance standards as a guide to improve service efficiencies. A relative minor tweak to the proposed standards would be to use a fixed numerical target rather than a percentage. The use of the 60% rule would result in approximately 40% of the bus service always being below standard. Even when all lines below the standard were brought up to the standard or cancelled, next year there would still be 40% of the service below standard.

Finally, It appears that system average costs per hour and revenue per passenger are being used to evaluate the efficiency of all bus lines. To the extent practical, the sector level costs per hour should be used. This will better reflect actual operating costs, and further encourage sectors to reduce unit costs of service.

The recommendations of the Metro San Gabriel Valley Sector are:

- Focus on the service philosophy, standards and goals. Allow the Sectors flexibility to meet these guidelines.
- Modify the language throughout the document to set standards but allow sector governance councils flexibility to implement service appropriate for the areas we serve.
- Establish fixed targets for the Bus Performance Measures rather than a percentage of the system average.
- To the extent practical use sector level cost and passenger revenue data.

Working together we can accomplish great things.

Sincerely

Bart Doyle
Chairman
Metro San Gabriel Valley Governance Council

cc SGV Governance Council Members
Jack Gabig