

Minutes/Proceedings

San Gabriel Valley Service Sector Governance Council

Regular Meeting

Metro San Gabriel Valley Sector Office
San Gabriel Valley Conference Room
3369 Santa Anita Avenue
El Monte, CA 91731

Called to Order at 5:05 P.M.

Council Members Present:

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

Officers:

Jack Gabig, General Manager
Michele Chau, Council Secretary

1. APPROVED January 11, 2005 Governance Council Minutes.

Chair Doyle, referring to comments that were included in the January minutes, asked if the Sector is still having difficulty recruiting bus drivers.

Mr. Gabig stated that the agency as a whole is short about 150 operators. The Sector is also struggling with maintaining a sufficient number of both full-time and part-time operators.

2. RECEIVED Public Comment.

3. Chair's Remarks:

Chair Doyle stated that the Sector will continue to follow up on the progress of its Strategic Initiatives. Councilmembers are still in the process of making arrangements to meet with MTA Board members as part of Initiative One, developing a plan for building relationship and trust with the Metro Board and staff.

4. RECEIVED report of the General Manager.

Mr. Gabig gave an overview of key performance indicators for December 2004:

- Monthly Worker's Compensation (WC) costs were \$889,000. December marked the fourth consecutive month in which the Sector exceeded the monthly target of \$376,000 in this performance category. Mr. Gabig mentioned that although the Sector is doing well in managing the number of claims filed, the large cost structure is due to adjustments to prior year reserves, severity of the claims, and continued escalation of health-care costs. The Sector also is taking a disproportionate number of chargebacks.

Councilmember Tyler asked if WC indemnity claims are distinguished from off-duty or lost work time claims.

Mr. Gabig mentioned that the Sector does track this information even though it is not listed as a separate item in the report.

- Miles Between Mechanical Failures were 7,898. Division 3 performed particularly well in this category in December.
- Bus Cleanliness Rating was 7.78. Division 3 did an exceptional job in this category by reaching the 8.0 mark.

- Complaints/100,000 Boardings: The Sector is tracking well below the target with only 2.26 complaints/100,000 boardings for December.
- On-Time Performance was 68% for December. The target is 75%.

“How You Doin’?” Program:

For the month of December, Division 3 Transportation ranked 1st place, Division 9 Transportation ranked 3rd place, and Division 3 Maintenance ranked 3rd place.

Final results for the 2nd quarter of FY05 indicate that Division 3 ranked 2nd place and Division 9 ranked 3rd place. Mr. Gabig mentioned that cumulatively, the Sector is at the top of the pack.

Financial Review:

Mr. Rosenberg noted that the Sector is halfway through the fiscal year and Total Transportation is roughly \$200,000 over budget for the month of December. The monthly budgeted amount is \$4.7 million. Total Maintenance is approximately \$177,000 over budget for the month. The monthly budgeted amount is \$2.7 million. Total Sector Office is very close to the monthly budget with an \$8,000 under-run. Other Sector Support is \$354,000 over budget and Total SGV Sector is roughly \$721,000 over budget. Increased costs from additional reserves for PL/PD insurance accounts for most of the year-to-date overrun in Other Sector Support. Mr. Gabig added that accident rates in the Sector are trending down but the cost per accident has increased dramatically, largely due to the medical aspect of claims. Transportation Labor is 6.8% over budget. Maintenance Labor is 10% over budget for the month, and WC allocation is 48% over YTD budget. Fringe Benefits is \$510,000 under budget YTD. Fuel expense is \$157,000 over budget for the month. Mr. Gabig stated that he fully expects an adjustment to budgeted fuel expense for next year’s budget. Parts Expense is \$24,000 under budget for the month. The Sector is resolving a few glitches in the new computer system and will not know if there is an actual under-run in this category until mid-February.

Mr. Gabig mentioned that HR and Labor Relations are working to address the issue of difficulties in expanding service due to the manpower shortage. Three main factors contributing to the operator shortage are: 1) Below-market starting wage for operators, 2) Uncertainty about the exact location where operators will report to work once hired and trained, and 3) the labor contract and three-tier structure in which operators start working full-time at a low wage scale with limited benefits, advance to part-time status with a higher wage, and finally progress to regular full-time status.

Chair Doyle inquired about the feasibility of implementing a policy change that provides operators who have been hired and trained with greater assurance as to the division in which they will be placed.

Mr. Gabig stated that this is a bargaining unit issue and that the current agreement does not allow for it. This issue will likely re-surface in the summer of 2006 when the labor contract is up for renegotiation.

Councilmember Tyler asked about the impact of the operator shortage on service.

Mr. Gabig responded that the Sector is occasionally canceling some service and providing more operator overtime.

Councilmember Martinez asked if the three-tier system was conceived by the bargaining unit.

Mr. Gabig responded that the system was negotiated over a series of contracts.

5. RECEIVED a status report on SGV Transit Restructuring Study Draft Scope of Work by Jon Hillmer, Service Development Manager.

Mr. Hillmer reported that staff has met with LADOT staff, representatives of cities in the central and west San Gabriel Valley, and senior staff of L.A. County Supervisorial Districts 1 and 5. These meetings have been positive and staff anticipates finishing an update of the expanded Scope of Work by this week. The Technical Advisory Committee will review the expanded Scope of Work by mid-February and a draft Request for Proposals should be released by early March. The Sector plans to award the contract in April after a 30-day advertising period and initiate the 9-12 month Study in May.

Councilmember Tyler asked if the Study represents an attempt to identify high-potential demand areas.

Mr. Hillmer responded that the Sector will work with other transit operators to best serve the needs of riders in light of anticipated increases in future development and population density. Metro intends to focus on providing higher-demand regional service while municipal operators would provide sub-regional service. The Sector will examine regional and sub-regional centers identified by the Metro Connections project to assist in planning the restructuring of routes.

Chair Doyle asked if the Sector has received funding from participating cities.

Mr. Gabig responded that Sector staff has sent a formal letter to all cities within the study area requesting their participation and official endorsement. He noted that the funding provided by the primary sponsors, Metro San Gabriel Valley and Foothill Transit, should be more than enough to cover study-related expenses for the remainder of the year.

Councilmember Tyler asked if the budgeted amount of \$180,000 to conduct the study is sufficient considering the scope of work and goals of the study.

Mr. Hillmer responded that the consultant for the study will use existing data provided by MTA, other transit operators and existing studies rather than collect primary data. This significantly reduces the costs to carry out the study.

6. RECEIVED AND FILED report on Potential Minor Route Modifications by Jon Hillmer, Service Development Manager.

Mr. Hillmer stated that low-performing lines were examined to determine whether implementing minor route modifications would result in higher performance. He noted that the Transit Service Policy was adopted at the January Board meeting. As part of the Policy, any bus line with an average performance of less than .6 for all three Performance Index categories of subsidy per passenger, passengers per bus hour, and passenger miles per seat mile is considered to be low-performing. Close to one-third (10/33) of bus lines in the San Gabriel Sector fall in the below-standard category. Mr. Hillmer noted that the Sector operates more bus lines than other Sectors. He gave an overview of potential modifications being evaluated for each of the following 10 poor-performing lines: Line 268 (El Monte Station-JPL via Baldwin Ave.-Washington Blvd.), Line 201 (Silverlake Blvd.-Glendale), Line 270 (Monrovia-Norwalk via El Monte Station), Line 258/259 (Fremont Ave.-El Sereno), Line 170 (El Monte Station-Cal State L.A. via Montebello Town Center), Line 267-264 (El Monte-Altadena via Temple City and Del Mar, Altadena-City of Hope via Duarte Rd.), Line 255 (Rowan Ave.-Griffin Ave.), Line 256 (Eastern Ave.-Ave. 64-Hill Ave.), Line 254 (Willowbrook-Gage Ave.-Lorena St.), and Line 177 (JPL-Pasadena-City of Hope). Once those modifications that are determined to be suitable for implementation are identified, they will be brought back to the Council for approval in March and implemented June 2005 or later.

Councilmember Heard mentioned that several months ago, he had suggested that a portion of service on Line 177 be turned over to the Glendale Bee Line. He asked if the Sector is still considering this.

Mr. Hillmer stated that the suggestion will be included as part of the study. The Sector has approached Glendale Bee Line representatives and would also like to work with the City of Pasadena. He noted that about 2/3 of the total ridership on the line can be attributed to the portion from JPL to Pasadena.

Councilmember Lopez pointed out that if the Sector moves forward with some of the potential route modifications, there will not be as great a need for more operators.

Mr. Hillmer explained that the Sector will re-invest any savings that result from implementation of route modifications. The goal is to improve service and not so much achieve cost savings.

Councilmember Lopez expressed disappointment with the on-time performance of Line 487. On certain days, he has experienced delays of 30 minutes or more.

Mr. Hillmer stated that the recent deployment of ATMS on bus lines in the Sector has enabled staff to more closely monitor the performance of lines. He noted that the Sector is working on a variety of fronts to identify possible causes of delays.

Councilmember Tyler asked if ATMS is being used on all lines in the Sector.

Mr. Hillmer responded in the affirmative. He stated that the Sector is receiving quality real-time data from ATMS and that the volume of this information is fairly large. ATMS also provides information on bus supervisors and their exact locations. Mr. Hillmer mentioned that the Sector will be able to obtain more accurate ridership data from the system within the next 6 months.

7. RECEIVED an oral report on status of Rapid Lines 751 and 780 by Jon Hillmer, Service Development Manager.

Mr. Hillmer stated that Rapid Line 751, which serves Soto Street between Lincoln Heights and Lynwood, was implemented last year as the first Rapid line to operate in the San Gabriel Sector. The Sector is considering adding running time and adjusting the schedule of this line. Several issues with regard to local service have emerged since the opening of the new Rapid Line 780, which runs every 12 minutes during rush hour. The Sector may add service on the leg of the line that overlaps with Line 181. In addition, the MTA Board is considering extending the line along Fairfax to the West L.A. Transit Center. Mr. Hillmer cautioned that this may not be feasible over the long term due to unpredictable traffic patterns along the entire length of the proposed route to be extended.

Councilmember Heard inquired about signaling issues in Pasadena.

Mr. Hillmer responded that Pasadena and Glendale are on track with respect to signaling and that the Sector is working to resolve technical issues with signaling and to have the software debugged.

Mr. Gabig mentioned that the decision of whether to extend Line 780 down Fairfax will ultimately be made by the Westside Sector or MTA Board. Both the Westside and San Gabriel Sectors decided not to pursue the original plan to include the corridor under consideration due to operational issues.

8. RECEIVED an oral report on Managing Employee Safety Programs by Dan Frawley, Division 3 Transportation Manager.

Mr. Rosenberg stated that the success of Division 3 in the "How You Doin?" competition is largely due to its ability to minimize its number of employee claims. Mr. Frawley presented slides showing average monthly case reserve dollars per operator from July through December 2004 and monthly indemnity claims per 200,000 exposure hours from July 2002 to October 2004. He explained that claim severity dollars are driving the overall charge factor. The average monthly case reserve dollars per operator is \$26 for Division 3, and this is the lowest of any of the divisions. In addition, over the past 2.5 years, Division 3's average monthly indemnity claims per 200,000 exposure hours were significantly below the rolling average of all transportation divisions. Mr. Frawley explained that short-term injuries are those that cause an employee to be off duty for less than 30 days. He gave an overview of the major keys to the success of Division 3 in managing employee safety.

The Division's strategy for dealing with short-term injuries typically involves the following actions: maintaining an excellent relationship with the two medical clinics serving the Sector's divisions, Boyle Heights Medical Clinic and U.S. Health Works, and visiting clinics every six months to meet administrators face-to-face to share the Sector's expectations; arranging interviews between injured employees and the manager or assistant manager to determine if first aid would be more effective at treating the injury (thereby averting a claim); conducting accident/injury investigations and asking employees if they need to see a doctor (many times they do not); performing an employee record interview to determine if the injury is related to a previous incident; providing a transitional duty program whereby operators are offered temporary clerical positions while undergoing recovery; conducting follow-up interviews and line rides with injured employees; and sending letters to injured employees to ascertain whether their injury is long or short term. Strategies for addressing long term injuries include transferring employees to indefinite leave status, obtaining monthly attending physician's statements, and conducting a round table discussion.

Councilmember Vasquez inquired about the availability of statistics on the number of employees belonging to each of the three tiers.

Mr. Frawley responded that Division 3 has 83 part-time (tier 2) operators and no BDOF (tier 1) operators.

Councilmember Vasquez asked if part-time or full-time employees are more likely to file WC claims.

Mr. Frawley stated that claims are filed by both full-time and part-time operators.

9. CARRIED OVER TO MARCH COUNCIL MEETING receiving an oral report on SGV Sector Vehicle Operations Program by Aurora Jackson, Assistant Transportation Manager.
10. CARRIED OVER TO MARCH COUNCIL MEETING receiving report on Community Relations by Liz Armijo-Holbrook Community Relations Officer.
11. Consideration of Items not on the Posted Agenda – None.

ADJOURNED at 6:37 P.M.

Michele Chau, Council Secretary