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**METRO SAN FERNANDO VALLEY GOVERNANCE COUNCIL**  
**JUNE 1, 2005**

**AGENDA ITEM #8**

**SUBJECT: METRO ORANGE LINE STATUS REPORT**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

**RECOMMENDATION**

**It is recommended that the Sector Council receive and file this status report.**

**DISCUSSION**

Schedule

Staff is endeavoring to meet a planned opening of the line in September 2005. Achievement of a September opening is dependent on the success of construction to complete the line according to the milestones outlined in the acceleration agreement. The final set of schedule decisions will be made on June 10<sup>th</sup> at a joint meeting between the SOJV and MTA staffs. Under the acceleration agreement, the plan called for the line to be turned over to Operations for training and testing in two segments. The first segment from North Hollywood Station to Van Nuys is to be completed by July 29<sup>th</sup>. The remainder of the line is to be completed by August 15<sup>th</sup>. Assuming that the schedule can be met, Operations would have access to the alignment for approximately two weeks prior to opening. Unfortunately, this season was one of the wettest on record and delays due to rain may be substantial. Depending on the length of delay agreed to by the MTA, the net effect would be to move the opening to later in September. Operations staff is monitoring this closely and working with Construction staff daily to work out access to the alignment for training.

Training and Buses

Supervisory staff at Division 8 began training on May 10<sup>th</sup> and will begin training other Division 8 staff immediately with the coach that has been delivered. A second coach is expected later this month. Deliveries of buses will accelerate through early summer so that all of the vehicles will be available for opening day. Training staff, drawn from Divisions 8 and 15, Central Instruction, and Bus Operations Control, will train operators, mechanics, and service attendants from Division 8 first followed by Division 15 personnel.

Training will occur in three steps. Step 1 is familiarization with the equipment. Step 2 will involve training staff on street. Step 3 will involve training on the busway itself. Operations staff will use the period of 5:00pm to 5:00am for training purposes prior to opening; the period of 7:00am to 4:00pm will be retained by Construction for their activities. Signage will be installed along the alignment as well as community notices provided by Community Relations staff prior to the commencement of training. Motorists and community residents will be notified that testing will commence and to expect Metroliners to be operating at various locations and that intersection signals are active. Staff will also work with LASD

Deputies to monitor the line during the testing phase. It is likely that testing will begin on the North Hollywood to Van Nuys segment first because this segment is the most complete. No testing will occur unless the signal system is approved by LADOT to place into operation. This requires that all intersection signals and warning devices are active and in place.

Standard operating procedures (SOP) have been drafted and presented to various sectors of the operating community for review and comment. These SOPs will be integrated into the training videos for the new line. Two videos are in production, one to familiarize staff with the new articulated coach and the second one to deal directly with the operation of buses along the alignment. Special attention will be placed on crossing intersections and the roles and responsibilities of Operators, Vehicle Operations staff, and others who have to respond in an emergency. Should buses have to divert off the alignment as a result of a community or traffic emergency, Operators will be trained on how to safely exit the busway to avoid a blockage.

#### Express Operation on the Busway

At the last Sector Council meeting, Council member Rosenheim requested that staff evaluate operating express buses over the alignment in an effort to further increase passenger speed and make the Orange Line more competitive with the automobile. Staff has not recommended the introduction of this type of service in the past until the line has been operating for six months to a year and staff has gained experience with the line.

To make the concept operational, express trips would be overlaid onto the basic schedule at staggered intervals and run ahead / behind of regularly scheduled trips. Under the assumption that all operates as planned, then express vehicles would never have to pass another coach or otherwise be restrained because a local coach was operating ahead of the express bus<sup>1</sup>. Express service would only operate in the peaks. It is estimated that an express trip could save 4-5 minutes, on average, over the local operation on the line. To increase the speed, Laurel Canyon, Woodman, Woodley, Tampa, and Desoto stations would be skipped. The savings would theoretically be achieved by elimination of station dwell time at these stations and the ability to maintain a higher average speed from end to end.

There appears to be no schedule impediment to inserting express service on a staggered headway into the basic Metro Orange Line schedule. However, according to LADOT staff, the signals are set for buses making all stops. In effect, as a bus travels faster because of skipped stops, the signal system will actually work against the “express bus” so that it faces more red lights and thereby is forced to slow down. Instituting a second traffic regime on this new system will be a difficult task particularly when the base system has yet to be fully tested. Like Metro Operations staff, LADOT staff is recommending obtaining experience with the new system prior to contemplating changes to the software design.

#### NEXT STEPS

Staff will continue to monitor and report on system progress as well as update the Council on schedule issues.

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<sup>1</sup> The proposed schedule for the Metro Orange Line includes seven day a week operation with 5-6 minute headways in the morning and evening peaks and base service from 10-12 minutes. Weekend service runs every 10-12 minutes.