

MINUTES

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 5:03 p.m.

Council Members Present:

Bruce Heard, Chair
Harry Baldwin
Bart Doyle
Henry Lopez
Sharon Martinez
David Spence
Rosie Vasquez

Officers:

Jack Gabig, General Manager
Michele Chau, Council Secretary



Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Metro

1. Introductions – Council members, staff, and audience members introduced themselves.
2. CARRIED OVER TO MAY COUNCIL MEETING approval of **Minutes** of Regular Governance Council Meeting held March 14, 2006.
3. RECEIVED **Public Comment**.

- Mary Griffith, transit user, expressed concern that the homeless may sometimes park their carts in locations that make it difficult for riders in wheelchairs to board and alight buses.

Mr. Hillmer responded that bus operators are responsible for ensuring that the wheelchair ramp can be properly deployed.

- Hank Fung, Southern California Transit Advocates, commented that reductions in owl service on low productivity lines may pose a risk to riders traveling in high-crime areas. This issue needs to be specifically addressed on page 53 of the Transit Service Policy. Referring to page 31 of the Policy, Mr. Fung added that according to FTA requirements, notices regarding public hearings must be posted 30 days (rather than two weeks) in advance.
- John Zeigler, L.A. County Department of Public Works Transit Operations Section, expressed concern about the lack of system connectivity that may result when reducing or eliminating service on lines that can be provided by other operators, even those that are poor-performing.

Mr. Fox, Transportation Planning Manager, stated that a route performance index is used to determine lines that need to be eliminated. Staff typically engages in discussions with other operators before lines are eliminated. He added that the Rapid bus network is designed to be a grid network.

4. RECEIVED Chair's Remarks:

- March 29 Service Sector Annual Meet and Confer meeting was well-attended and involved a spirited exchange of information between the Governance Councils and MTA staff. The CEO and Deputy CEO spoke on a range of issues, including FY07 proposed budget, budget targets, structural deficit, operational efficiencies, Consent Decree, and labor negotiations. Chair Heard stated that increasing ridership represents a major challenge for the Sectors in the year ahead.
- Annual Service Sector presentation to the MTA Board is tentatively scheduled for May 25. The presentation will allow the Sectors to report on their progress and express their concerns.
- Council member Baldwin, acting on behalf of Chair Heard, presented a proclamation to the Foothill Transit Board of Directors on March 24. During the presentation, Mr. Baldwin congratulated the Foothill Transit Board on their new facility and accomplishments throughout the year.

5. RECEIVED report of the General Manager.

Mr. Gabig reported that while the **Key Performance Indicators for February 2006** show a few negative trends in the area of Safety, the Sector is generally performing well in the area of Bus Operations.

Monthly Worker's Compensation (WC) costs for February were \$1.2 million, which is well above the target. Mr. Gabig noted that the Bus Traffic Accident rate is still within the target despite several severe accidents and three stress claims filed by operators. There was a rise in WC claims in one division, and this tends to occur prior to labor negotiations. A severe shortage of bus operators has led to increased injuries.

Although overall ridership is trending upward, the number of Passenger Boardings within the Sector continues to trail behind the agency-wide figure. This has raised questions about the ridership estimation method. The Sector is using the Universal Fare System and other technologies to re-examine this method.

Complaints/100,000 boardings, including those within the top 3 complaint categories of Schedule Adherence, Passed Up, and Operator Conduct/Discourtesy, are trending downward. Mr. Gabig cautioned that complaints may increase due to the manpower shortage and service changes.

“How You Doin’?” Program:

Transportation: Division 9 placed 1st and Division 3 placed 6th, due primarily to WC claims in February.

Maintenance: Division 9 placed 1st and Division 3 placed 9th, due to WC issues in February.

Mr. Gabig presented a slide of the March 24 Foothill Transit event mentioned in the Chair’s report. The event allowed the Sector to provide the Foothill Transit Board with a brief overview of the El Monte Station improvements.

Mr. Gabig reported that the lower level passenger island is in full operation. Passenger confusion and signage issues are in the process of being resolved. Staff will meet with Foothill Transit this week to discuss more improvements to the passenger island.

Financials:

Mr. Rosenberg reviewed financial data through February 2006. Although February was a short month, the Sector is performing well overall. Subtotal Sector Operations was \$1.1 million over budget YTD. Other Sector Support was \$500,000 over budget for the month and \$2.1 million over budget YTD. This amount includes a significant accounting error which will be reversed in the March financials. Mr. Rosenberg stated that the annual budget increased in February by \$700,000 due to a rise in revenue service hours which were transferred to the San Gabriel Valley Sector from the South Bay Sector.

Mr. Rosenberg provided an overview of significant items shown on page 4 of the Council report. He noted that while monthly Non-Work Allocation/Fringe Allocation was 13% under budget, this figure tends to catch up at the end of each quarter. Although monthly WC Allocation was 66% over budget in February, the Sector remains one of the top-performing Sectors in this category. The overrun in Monthly Parts Expense, which was 14% over budget in February, has been fairly consistent over the past few months. It is likely that the Sector will have an impact on the budget for Public Liability/Property Damage in the next fiscal year.

Mr. Rosenberg, in response to concern expressed by the Sector Councils that they were not adequately briefed on the budget, explained the **capital budget process**. This is detailed on page 5 of the Council report.

Reviewing a list of SGV Sector capital requests for FY07-11, Mr. Rosenberg noted that very few requests are going to be funded. The Sector may receive some funding from the Bus Operations Subcommittee of the MTA (which consists of municipal operators) in order to complete the Division 9 bus capacity expansion. Security provisions for Divisions 3 and 9 may be funded through Homeland Security funding. Mr. Rosenberg indicated that a new transit center (expansion of El Monte Station) and new maintenance building, fuel island, and bus wash facility at Division 9 represent long range planning items to facilitate the eventual implementation of the transit village project.

Council member Spence asked if the items are listed according to greatest need.

Mr. Rosenberg responded that the first items listed on the slide are the highest priority. These include Division 9 bus capacity expansion, El Monte Station major infrastructure repairs and improvements, Division 3 facility planning study, and security provisions for both divisions.

Council member Spence asked if we are short 300 bus operators at the Sector level or agency-wide.

Mr. Gabig responded that this is an agency-wide figure which has recently escalated. The Sector needs approximately 20% more operators to function effectively.

Council member Lopez inquired about reasons for the manpower shortage.

Mr. Gabig responded that this will be discussed in greater detail at the next meeting. Two major factors include 1) a low starting wage of \$10 per hour and 2) a complicated hiring progression in which bus operators are initially hired full-time at a low-scale position, converted to part-time status at a higher pay, and then promoted to full-time status at a higher wage.

Council member Spence asked how the agency's starting wage compares with that of Foothill Transit.

Mr. Gabig responded that the starting wages are comparable, but Foothill Transit tends to be more attractive to applicants because bus operators who are hired there know where they will be assigned ahead of time.

Council member Baldwin mentioned that during the Annual Meet and Confer meeting, the CEO discussed the possibility of a fare increase to provide the monies for higher operator wages.

Mr. Gabig stated that while a fare increase is essential, it is not likely to fill the growing deficit. Addressing the operator hiring progression is a top priority in the labor negotiation process.

6. APPROVED Option 2 (as specified in the Council report) as the **Governance Council Restructuring Recommendation** to be forwarded to the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments for approval.

Mr. Gabig mentioned that the Sector Council has been existence for three years and that the terms of office of two city cluster positions (currently being held by Council members Martinez and Bayle) will expire June 2006. Mr. Gabig explained that when the Sector was first formed, the COG was concerned that Council members representing the same cities would be present on both the Foothill Transit Board and SGV Sector Council. This is because some of the Sector's service areas (e.g., the cities of Arcadia, El Monte, and Temple City) overlap with those of Foothill Transit. He stated that the Council is comprised of 4 representatives from clusters of cities established by the San Gabriel Valley COG, 2 representatives appointed by L.A. County Supervisors Gloria Molina and Michael Antonovich, 2 transit users, and 1 at large representative appointed by the COG.

The Sector is considering restructuring the city clusters to include the cities of Arcadia, El Monte, and Temple City, all of which are within the Sector's core service area. Mr. Gabig, referring to the Council report, reviewed two options for modified clusters. Because option 2 more evenly distributes population among each of the 4 clusters, it is the preferred option. Once approved, the recommendation would be forwarded next month to the COG, which would make the ultimate decision. Mr. Gabig announced that Council member Bayle will not be serving another term on the Council.

In response to Council member Doyle's suggestion, Mr. Gabig stated that the Sector will solicit applications for the transit user position which will expire June 2006. He noted that this position is appointed by the Council rather than the COG. Potential nominees will be discussed at the May Council meeting, and a final nomination will be forwarded to the MTA Board in June.

Council member Spence asked what will happen to Council member Bayle's position.

Mr. Gabig responded that the city that Council member Bayle represents (San Marino) has been merged with the Rosemead/San Gabriel cluster. The Pasadena, La Cañada, Sierra Madre cluster position is currently vacant. He stated that it would be a good idea to seek a representative from the city of El Monte for the new cluster position because of major planning taking place on this site. A representative from El Monte would help maintain good communication between the city and the Sector.

APPROVED Council member Doyle motion to appoint a committee not to exceed three members to select a candidate for the transit user position.

Council members Doyle, Martinez, and Vasquez volunteered to serve on this committee.

7. **RECEIVED** an oral report on **Metro's Marketing of Sector Programs** by Matt Raymond, Chief Communications Officer.

Mr. Raymond reported that last January, the community relations function merged with the government relations function. Point persons and support teams will be assigned to each Sector to carry out cross-functional community relations activities, including market research and addressing customer complaints.

The Marketing Department will be providing all Council members with copies of "In the Public Eye", a monthly communications report which includes a summary of all community outreach and related activities. This report is also distributed to in-house staff.

Council member Spence asked if there are ways to gauge if newspaper advertisements designed to increase ridership are effective.

Mr. Raymond responded that the Marketing Department conducts direct mail campaigns in which response rates are analyzed. The agency provides new residents in certain areas with free ride offers and coupons. The typical survey response rate is 10%. Staff also examines the routes that have been promoted and tracks routes with the greatest number of new riders.

Council member Spence asked if Gold Line Express ads have impacted ridership levels on the Gold Line.

Mr. Raymond stated that ridership figures in the first 18 months of operation of the Gold Line roughly parallel ridership figures in the first 18 months of operation of the Green Line. He added that complaints have subsided and routes have been adjusted to account for the new express service.

Council member Lopez noted that he rides Line 487 and that the TV volume on some of the buses is too low.

Mr. Raymond responded that the agency has received complaints that the volume on the TVs is either too high or too low. He stated that the sound increases steadily when commercials are played. Bus operators have the ability to control the volume on the sets.

Chair Heard inquired about the role of the Sectors in targeted ads that specifically apply to certain Sectors. He asked if the Sectors can preview the ads before they are distributed.

Mr. Raymond responded that there are many benefits to having the Sectors approve the ads before they are published; however, it is a logistical challenge. Timing is also an issue as not all staff and Council members may be able to review the ads before they go to press.

8. RECEIVED draft report on **Transit Service Policies Update** by Transportation Planning Managers Isaac Lim & Steve Fox.

Mr. Fox stated that Sectors are an integral part of the Transit Service Policy review process. He provided a brief background of the Policy, which guides decision making during service changes. The Policy was originally adopted September 2003 and is updated annually. Current updates reflect a response to Consent Decree rulings on the service change process and Rapid bus program. Regarding service changes, the Policy will document the Council role during the public hearing process to address issues of public safety, and create an appendix detailing actions to mitigate impacts to transit-dependent riders.

Mr. Fox explained that impact analysis is a process required by a prior Consent Decree ruling to determine if the overall service program provides benefits to riders. The methodology for impact analysis was developed as part of the September 2005 policy amendment, and latest rulings require adjustments to the methodology when there are fare impacts or pre-existing alternative service that is not being upgraded.

The Policy incorporates Consent Decree final orders as they relate to Metro Rapid service, including minimum span and frequency of service, exception provisions for span and frequency, re-allocation limits when initiating new Rapid buses, and bus stop guidelines.

Other changes include a modified policy for substandard-performing lines covered by a subsidy agreement with another entity, addition of charter bus policy and rail productivity guidelines, and inclusion of a route numbering and classification system.

Current status and next steps include ongoing stakeholder review, conducting briefings to all Councils in April, preparing an updated draft Policy in May, completing a Board report in June, and presenting the updates to the MTA Board for approval in July.

Mr. Gabig commented that, with a few exceptions, these are reasonable changes to the Policy.

Mr. Hillmer pointed out two changes to the Policy which could pose potential problems:

- Page 2, first bullet under “Using Resources Wisely” – The Policy states that “bus lines that do not meet the minimum performance standard after 18 months of operation will be cancelled.” If interpreted literally, this may be too harsh. Instead of “will be cancelled,” Mr. Hillmer suggested that the Policy revise this sentence to “could be considered for cancellation.”

Mr. Fox explained that the body of the Policy specifically states that such a cancellation would be contingent upon approval by the Councils. Staff will consider inserting language on page 2 of the Policy to match this statement.

- Page 29, first paragraph under “Internal Review and Oversight of the Service Change Process” – This section of the Policy holds Councils responsible for addressing personal safety issues raised by riders as a result of a proposed service change. Mr. Hillmer stated that determining who falls under the category of the “transit dependent” and specifying the nature of safety issues should be the responsibility of staff rather than the Councils. He stated that there should be continuity between the Sectors in defining a “transit dependent” person.

Ed Clifford, Service Planning and Development, indicated that the Policy can be updated to include a greater degree of specificity on this issue.

Mr. Hillmer asked if it is possible to provide the Sector with a revised copy of the Policy. Mr. Clifford responded affirmatively.

9. RECEIVED an oral report on **Restructuring Status of Line 177** by Jon Hillmer, Service Development Manager.

Mr. Hillmer noted that frequency of service on this line has improved to 30 minutes as a result of the last service change program. The route performance index indicates that this line is the worst in the system. Nevertheless, it has a high subsidy per boarding and ridership levels are strong on some portions of the line. Mr. Hillmer reported that the Sector has retained all three buses on this shortened line and that it is too soon for a ridership count update. More specific information will be provided at the July Council meeting. The Sector continues to receive complements from JPL regarding this line. Staff will begin engaging in discussions with the City of Pasadena to possibly incorporate the line into the Pasadena ARTS bus system. If this happens the item will be brought back to the Council for consideration.

Councilmember Spence asked if the Sector has received any complaints from transit dependent riders on this line.

Mr. Hillmer responded that the Sector received complaints from an individual in his 70's. There were 7 complaints about the line after service changes were implemented.

10. RECEIVED an oral report on **Signal Priority System** by Jon Hillmer, Service Development Manager.

Mr. Hillmer distributed a map of extended Line 780. The line is 23 miles long. Mr. Hillmer reported that the cities of Pasadena and Glendale currently do not have signal priority and are preparing to accommodate the system into their infrastructure. An agreement on a signaling software package will be signed and implemented by late June or July 2006. A time point will be placed in the middle of Line 780 to regulate service on the line. However, if signaling in Pasadena and Glendale is up to speed, the time point will be removed. Mr. Hillmer noted that only 60% of the route is signal prioritized, and that many areas outside of the City of Los Angeles do not have this system in place.

Council member Spence inquired about who will pay for the installation of the sensitive signals.

Mr. Hillmer responded that the agency has funds allocated for installation of Rapid hardware, bus stops, etc.

11. Consideration of Items not on the Posted Agenda – none.

ADJOURNED at 6:48 p.m.

Michele Chau

Michele Chau, Council Secretary