



**OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
AUGUST 17, 2006**

SUBJECT: METRO BUS SERVICE NEAR SCHOOLS

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file report on the adequacy of Metro bus service on routes serving twelve schools and safety issues at Metro bus stops serving schools.

ISSUE

At the May 25, 2006 meeting, the Board of Directors requested staff to report back on whether there is adequate Metro bus service to safely and efficiently transport students on routes serving the following twelve schools:

- Belmont High School
- Fremont High School
- Gardena High School
- Jefferson High School
- Jordan High School
- Locke High School
- Los Angeles High School
- Markham Middle School
- Santee High School
- Van Nuys High School
- Washington Prep High School
- Crenshaw High School

Additionally, the Board directed staff to work with the Office of the Mayor, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), Los Angeles Police Department and Los Angeles Department of Transportation to identify safety issues at bus stops near schools and report back on potential solutions.

DISCUSSION

Metro bus and rail lines are heavily utilized by thousands of students going to and from school in the morning and afternoon. These sudden bursts of student customers can cause overloads on the lines. In response to overloads that typically occur at the start of and the end of the school day, Metro adds bus “tripper” service.

As a recipient of Federal Transit Administration grants, Metro is prohibited from providing transportation for students and school personnel if it excludes the general public or competes with private school operators. A permissible use of buses involves tripper service –

regularly scheduled transit service that is open to the public and stops only at public bus stops (see Attachment A).

Sector staff, including service development staff and supervisors, constantly monitor and evaluate changing loads on bus lines near schools and adjust service as needed and as resources permit to accommodate demand and school schedules. Scheduling staff obtains school calendars and has a contact person at each school in the service area. When early dismissals are identified in the calendar, the sector confirms the dismissal time with the school and adjusts the bus schedule accordingly. Visible checks are done on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of school trippers. In addition to coordinating with school officials, scheduling staff solicits input from bus operators on routes serving schools.

As an example, in the Gateway Sector these procedures and communications resulted in trips being added:

- Effective with the June 2005 shake-up, the sector added a trip to Line 26 (Route 51) for Locke High School, near Avalon and 111th Street. This tripper was requested by LAUSD after a shooting incident. The sector continues to monitor loads on this trip to confirm its effectiveness.
- Effective with the December 2005 shake-up, the sector added a trip to Line 26 (Route 51) for Santee High School, at San Pedro and 16th Street, to accommodate overloads at this newly built high school.

Detailed information on the Metro bus service, including trippers, for each of the twelve schools is provided in Attachment B.

Common issues Metro faces in trying to accommodate student riders include:

- Changing Schedules: School schedule changes are random in some cases and vary by school type. The sectors regularly react to calendar changes, short days, holidays and other schedule changes *when given appropriate notification*. Despite ongoing communications, schools sometimes change schedules without notification to Metro.
- Student Supervision After School: Once students are released from school, they are often unsupervised and surge and/or jaywalk across the street to the bus stop. Once the bus arrives, they rush the front door of the coach. These groups of unsupervised students are difficult for bus operators to manage and disruptive to regular customers.
- Local Gang Activity & Crime: Many schools and adjacent bus stops are located in areas with significant gang activity, posing a risk for students being robbed or injured in fights between competing gangs. Crime statistics from the twelve schools are shown in Attachment C.

- Bus Stop Distance from Campus: While Metro makes every attempt, working within the Federal restrictions, to make public bus service accessible to students, there are locations where students have to walk more than a block to access a public bus stop. When a bus stop is a couple of blocks from school, the school administrators or security personnel can no longer visually monitor the students waiting at and boarding the bus.
- Bus Stop Configuration: Bus stops may be located on narrow sidewalks. Students bunching up can pose a safety hazard, as they stand closer to the curb.

School Safety Initiatives

In addition to the regular monitoring and adjustment of bus service by sector staff discussed above, there are other initiatives that address bus stop safety.

School Safety Collaborative

Metro South Bay partners with the California State Attorney General's Office and other key stakeholders to ensure the agency's participation in providing safe passage for students. The sector participates in regular monthly meetings facilitated by the Attorney General aimed at sharing information on problems and developing solutions to student safety concerns. Participants include Metro, school administrators, parents, community activists, law enforcement (Los Angeles Police Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff, school police, Attorney General neighborhood prosecutor), and city/county human relations. The state has identified priority schools to be involved in the collaborative based upon test scores. South Bay high schools participating in the collaborative are Washington Prep., Locke, Fremont, Crenshaw, and Jordan.

Solutions implemented by the sector have included bus and school schedule adjustments, improved monitoring of students, addition of tripper service, and review of bus stop locations. Examples are:

- Monitoring Students: In some locations, parents have volunteered to monitor bus stop activity. Schools use grant money to secure services of gang intervention groups. Agencies such as the Fire Department near Fremont volunteer to drive around the campus after the vehicles come back from a call and to keep the fire station doors open to serve as a refuge.
- Schedules: Gompers Middle School and Locke High School coordinated their dismissal schedules to cut the number of students waiting for the bus at any one time.

Policy and Communications Improvements

As a result of a serious incident involving Taft High School students waiting at a bus stop in 2003, Metro made a number of changes in 2003/2004 to its policies and communications

processes that impact all schools. These changes were made in response to recommendations from a task force formed following the incident.

Policies

- Modified policy 7.10 Refusing Transportation. Bus operators to call the Bus Operations Control Center (BOC) immediately upon passing up a bus stop regardless of the situation. If warranted, BOC then contacts Los Angeles Sheriff Department Transit Services Bureau for follow up.
- A Policy was established in which a bus operator must call into the BOC and request to speak to a supervisor or police officer when the operator has requested that an unruly passenger under the age of 18 exit the transit vehicle.

Communications with Schools

- 3 points of contact were established between Metro and each high school (principal, campus police, LAUSD Office of Environmental Health and Safety)
- Metro established direct speed dial number between BOC and school police
- Metro staff took LAUSD staff on tour of BOC to familiarize them with Metro incident reporting system/technology
- Metro Operations Central Instruction met with LAUSD Human Resources to review bus operator training materials and incorporate new elements regarding adolescent behavior
- School schedules and maps were forwarded to sector and LASD Transit Services Bureau staff
- LAUSD notifies Metro of new school openings and coordinates on location of bus stops/changes to service
- Sector staff contacted school officials and some joint field surveys at bus stops were completed

Safe School Zone Signage

In 2005, the LAUSD passed a resolution to establish a Violence Prevention Program. The California State Penal Code Section 626 enables the Board of Education to designate a school, nearby bus stop, and adjacent property extending 1000 feet from a campus as a "Safe School Zone", empowering principals, their selected representative, school police and/or security or local law enforcement to require any individual without lawful business to be on campus or adjacent public property, and whose presence or acts interfere with the peaceful conduct or activities, to leave immediately or be arrested.

Metro Stops and Zones staff subsequently received a request from LAUSD to submit a proposal to install "Safe School Bus Zone" signs at 120 bus stop locations at 60 high schools throughout the District. The general specifications include two signs to be mounted at the top of each of two existing Metro bus stop posts at each school (see sample sign in Attachment D). Per the proposal, LAUSD produced the signage and Metro Stops and Zones staff completed installation of the signage in May 2006.

Meeting with School District

In response to the board motion, Metro Operations and Community Relations staff met on July 24, 2006 with four LAUSD representatives (Office of Environmental Health and Safety and Local District Operations Administrators). Discussion items included general student safety issues at bus stops, some specific problem locations, responsibilities for student safety, the need for safety education, and next steps.

Meeting participants agreed that the next step is establish a collective task force including Metro Operations, Community Relations, LASD Transit Services Bureau and Sector Service Development staff, and the following LAUSD personnel: Violence Prevention, Local District Operations Administrators, Youth Relations, School Police , local law enforcement, probation officers for each area and possibly a representative of the non-profit, Community and Schools. The group discussed the eventual establishment of geographically based task forces with many of the same participants discussed above.

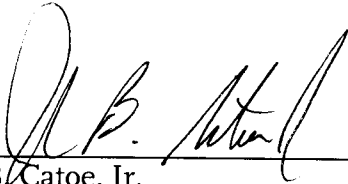
Metro has set a tentative date in early August for the collective task force meeting and is awaiting confirmation from LAUSD.

NEXT STEPS

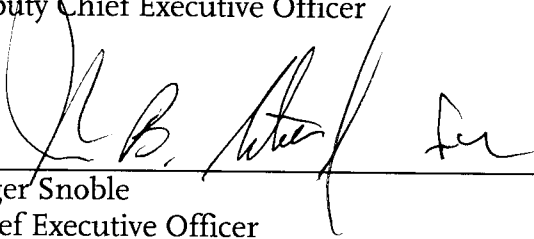
Staff will report back to the board with the results of the collective task force meeting and any follow up meetings.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Federal Transit Administration brochure, "Public Transportation and School Buses"
- B. Bus Service Near 12 Schools
- C. Crime Statistics from 12 Schools
- D. Sample Safe School Bus Zone sign



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Federal Transit Administration

Public Transportation and School Buses

Questions and Answers

Federal transit laws and regulations place limitations on the use of public transportation to transport students to and from school and school-sponsored activities or trips in competition with private transportation providers. This brochure is intended to help transportation providers understand those limitations, as well as the permissible use of public transportation for school students.

General Rule Regarding School Transportation*

In general, recipients of Federal Transit Administration grants cannot provide transportation for students and school personnel if that transportation excludes the general public or competes with private school bus operators.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question 1: Does the prohibition against providing school bus service apply to school field trips or trips to other school-sponsored activities, like football games?

Answer: Yes. The prohibition against school bus service applies to both home-to-school transportation and transportation for school-sponsored activities or trips. However, an FTA grantee may use buses, facilities, and equipment for the transportation of school students, personnel and equipment for incidental charter bus operations, if one of more of the charter bus service exceptions apply. These include situations where there are no willing and able private charter operators to provide the service, or when the trip involves a significant number of persons with disabilities. For a complete description of the charter bus exceptions, please refer to the charter service regulations (49 CFR 604). They are available on line at <http://www.fta.dot.gov/library/legal/charter-service/index.html>

Question 2: Does the prohibition against providing school bus service apply to transporting children who are participating in Head Start programs?

Answer: No. Head Start transportation is not school bus service; it is transportation to a human service program.

* The complete text of FTA's School Bus Operations regulations, 49 CFR Part 605, can be accessed online at <http://www.fta.dot.gov/library/legal/schoolbus>

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TRIPPER SERVICE

Question 3: Can students going to school ride regular transit to their destination?

Answer: Yes. Public transportation vehicles can be used to transport students and school personnel to and from school if they ride regularly scheduled mass transportation service that is open to the general public. Such service may be designed or modified to accommodate the needs of school students and personnel, using various fare collection or subsidy systems. This is commonly known as "tripper service."

Question 4: I want to offer tripper service. Can I put a sign on my regular public transit buses or use the school name as the designated destination to help students figure out which bus to take to school?

Answer: Buses used for tripper service can only use a school name as the designated destination if the school is the final destination of a regularly scheduled mass transportation route. Further, buses used for tripper service must be marked as open to the general public, in the same manner as other public transit buses. They may not carry designations such as "school bus," "school special," "student," or any other indications that could deter the general public from using the bus.

Question 5: Can a bus in tripper service stop directly in front of a school?

Answer: Only under certain conditions. Buses may stop only at stops that are accessible to the public and that are clearly marked like all system stops as available to the public (except in the case of traditional unmarked flag stops). Stops may not be located on private property or on property that restricts access to the public. All routes traveled by tripper buses must be part of a grantee's or operator's regular service route, and must be included in the published route schedules.

AVAILABILITY/COST OF PRIVATE SCHOOL BUS OPERATORS

Question 6: If a school system doesn't want to contract with any of the private bus operators in its area because the prices are too high, can a grantee provide transportation to students?

Answer: An FTA grantee in an urban area may provide transportation that is exclusive to students and school personnel if private school bus operators in the urban area are unable to provide adequate transportation at a reasonable rate and in conformance with applicable safety standards. However, buses, facilities, or equipment purchased with FTA assistance cannot be used to provide this service. So a grantee may use only buses, facilities, and equipment that have been purchased exclusively with non-FTA funds to transport students and school personnel to and from school or school-sponsored activities.

Question 7: How should a grantee determine whether private school bus operators in the area are unable to provide adequate transportation at a reasonable rate?

Answer: A grantee that wants to provide school bus service must place a notice in a newspaper of general circulation within the proposed geographic area of service, send a copy of the notice to all private school bus operators in the area, and provide an opportunity for a public hearing on its application for approval of school bus service.

FTA also recommends that a copy of the notice be sent to the National School Transportation Association.

PUBLICLY OWNED AND OPERATED SCHOOL BUS SYSTEMS

Question 8: If a community operates both the schools and the public transportation

system, can it provide its own school bus service using public transportation buses?

Answer: A state or municipality that is an FTA grantee and operates a school system with its own separate and exclusive school bus program may provide transportation that is exclusive to students and school personnel. However, buses, facilities, or equipment purchased with FTA assistance cannot be used to provide this service.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST FTA GRANTEES

Question 9: How can a private school bus operator file a complaint about a violation of the school bus regulations?

Answer: Information concerning the service should be sent in writing to the FTA Regional Administrator. Include as many specifics as possible, such as who provided the service, date and time of the service, origin, destination, and equipment used. After consideration of this information, the Regional Administrator will make a preliminary determination as to whether probable cause exists to believe that a violation of the agreement has taken place. If probable cause exists the Regional Administrator will investigate the complaint and make a written determination of whether there has been a violation and may impose a remedy.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Question 10: Is an FTA grantee permitted to bid on a school transportation contract in competition with private school bus operators to provide exclusive transportation for students with disabilities?

Answer: No, but see Question 7 concerning charter service exceptions. In addition, a grantee may use paratransit service to transport students and others to school.

Question 11: Can an FTA grantee that provides paratransit or demand responsive service (such as "Dial-a-Ride" service) pick up a student and take him or her to school?

Answer: Yes, as long as the student qualifies for the service and the service does not exclude the general public. Such service would be comparable to allowable "tripper service" using the fixed route system.

Question 12: If a transportation broker wins a school district contract to provide exclusive transportation for students with special needs, can the broker subcontract with an FTA grantee for this service?

Answer: No. Whether the public transportation provider contracts directly with the school district or contracts with a broker, exclusive transportation of students and school personnel is a violation of the school bus regulation. However, a grantee may use such buses, facilities, and equipment for the transportation of school students (including students with disabilities), personnel and equipment for incidental charter operations, if one or more of the charter service exceptions apply (49 CFR Part 604).

FURTHER INFORMATION ON SCHOOL BUS SERVICE

National School Transportation Association
113 South West Street, 4th Floor
Alexandria, VA 22314
800-222-NSTA www.yellowbuses.org

National Association for Pupil Transportation
1840 Western Avenue
Albany, NY 12208
800-989-NAPT www.napt.org

National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services
The Plains, VA 20198
800-585-0340 www.nasdpits.org

School	Sector	Intersection	Closest Stops	# of Blocks from School	Lines Serving Operating School Sector	Add'l Trips (#)?	Frequency at Dismissal	Comments
Fremont Hi 7676 S. San Pedro Los Angeles, CA 90003	SB	San Pedro/between 76th & 78th	San Pedro/78th	0	48 WSC	NO	15 MINUTES	No Reported Overloads or requests for additional service
		Avalon/between 76th & 79th	Avalon/76th Avalon/79th	0 1	51 GWC 51 GWC	NO NO	7-12 MINUTES 7-12 MINUTES	
		Florence/San Pedro	Florence/San Pedro	5	111, 711 SB	NO	5 MINUTES COMBINED	Also served by Community DASH
Jefferson Hi 1319 E. 41st St. Los Angeles, CA 90011	WSC	41st/between Hooper & Compton	41st/Hooper	0	102 GWC	NO	30 MINUTES	
			41st/Compton Compton/MLK	0 1	55 GWC 55 GWC	NO NO	10 MINUTES 10 MINUTES	
Locke Hi 325 E. 111th St. Los Angeles, CA 90061	SB	111th St. between San Pedro and Avalon	S. Pedro/111th	0	51 GWC	YES- 1 TRIP	7-12 MINUTES	One trip going northbound. Based on Boardings and Alightings, Service not needed.
			Avalon/110th Avalon/110th San Pedro/Imperial	1 1 4	48 WSC 51 GWC 120 SB	1	15 MINUTES 7-12 MINUTES 25 MINUTES	
			103rd St./Gorman Av.	1	117 SB	NO	20 MINUTES	Also served by Community DASH Schedule coordinated with dismissal time
Jordan Hi 2265 E. 103rd Los Angeles, CA 90002	SB	103rd/Gorman	103rd/Gorman	0	117 SB	NO	20 MINUTES	Also served by Line 117
			Tweedy/Alameda 103rd/Grape	2 2	612 SB/GWC 254 C	NO NO	30-35 MINUTES 30 - 60 MINUTES	

School	Sector	Intersection	Closest Stops	# of Blocks from School	Lines Serving Operating School Sector	Add'l Trips (#)?	Frequency at Dismissal	Comments
Markham MS 1650 E. 104th Los Angeles, CA 90002	SB	104th St. between Compton and Grandee	Compton/105th	0	55 GWC	NO	10 MINUTES	
					55 GWC	NO	10 MINUTES	
					117 SB	NO	20 MINUTES	
					305 SB	NO	30 MINUTES	
		103rd/Compton	1	254 C	NO	30-60 MINUTES		
		103rd St. Blue Line	1					
Santee HS (South LA New Hi #1)	WSC	Maple/between Washington & 23rd	Washington/Maple	1	65 GWC	NO	15 MINUTES	No Reported Overloads or requests for additional service
					48 WSC	NO	12-15 MINUTES	
					51 GWC	YES-1	6 MINUTES	
Belmont HS 1575 W. 2nd Street Los Angeles, CA 90026	WSC	1575 W. 2nd Street	Beverly & Belmont	0	14 WSC	YES-4	2 - 12 MINUTES	Service is Adequate
					16 WSC	YES-4	2-3 MINUTES	Service is Adequate
Gardena HS 1301 W. 182nd Street Gardena, CA 90248	SB	Normandie and Budlong	Vermont/182nd	2	205 C	NO	30 MINUTES	Gardena Muni services Normandie Avenue
					52/352 GWC	NO	12 MINUTES	
					130 C	NO	25 MINUTES	
Los Angeles HS 4650 W. Olympic Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90019	WSC	Olympic Blvd. between Rimpau BI & West BI.	Olympic/Muirfield	0	28 SGV	9 buses between 3:12 pm & 3:24 pm	4-5 MINUTES	
						3 buses between 5:50 pm & 6:01 pm for Intersection	8-9 MINUTES	
						3 buses between 9:21 pm & 9:26 pm for Adult Class	20 MINUTES	
Van Nuys HS	SFV	Van Nuys & Victory	Van Nuys & Victory	4	233, 761 SFV	NO	4-5 MINUTES, 7-10 MINUTES	

School	Sector	Intersection	Closest Stops	# of Blocks from School	Lines Serving Operating School Sector	Add'l Trips (#)?	Frequency at Dismissal	Comments
6535 Cedros Avenue Van Nuys, CA 91411		Van Nuys & Haynes Victory and Cedros	Van Nuys & Haynes Victory and Cedros	2 2	233 SFV 164 SFV	NO NO	4-6 MINUTES 10-12 MINUTES	
Washington Prep Senior H SB 10860 S. Denker Avenue Los Angeles, CA 90047		Denker Av. between 108th and 110th Sts.	108th/Denker	0	206 SB	YES - 2 N/B	12 MINUTES	Trips coordinated with dismissal time
			Imperial/Denker 108th/Western	3 3	120 SB 207 SB	NO NO	25 MINUTES 12 MINUTES	
Crenshaw HS 5010 11th Avenue Los Angeles, CA 90043	SB	11th Av. between 50th and 52nd Sts.	52nd/11th	0	40 SB	YES - 2 S/B	10 MINUTES	Trips coordinated with dismissal time
			52nd/11th	0	108 SB	YES - 1 E/B	7 MINUTES	Trip coordinated with dismissal time
			52nd/11th 54th/Crenshaw	0 2	210 SB 607 C	YES - 1 S/B NO	12 MINUTES 35 MINUTES	Trip coordinated with dismissal time

C= CONTRACT LINE

ATTACHMENT C

Los Angeles Unified School District Crime Statistics
Fiscal Year 2006 – Year to Date

	ADW	Battery	Substance	Property	Destructive
Belmont	9	4	16	61	0
Crenshaw	3	7	2	15	0
Fairfax	4	12	20	34	0
Fremont	3	3	14	66	1
Gardena	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Jefferson	4	13	14	120	0
Jordan	16	25	21	65	1
Locke	11	25	10	39	0
Los Angeles	3	11	27	97	1
Markham MS	9	26	5	30	0
Santee	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Van Nuys	1	10	21	46	1
Washington Prep	4	11	10	51	0

SAFE SCHOOL ZONE BUS STOP

Any person who
commits any crime
within this area is
subject to increased
penalties.

Violators Will Be Prosecuted
Penal Code § 626 et seq.

