

Wednesday, May 9, 2007

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# MINUTES

Westside/Central Service Sector  
Governance Council

Regular Meeting

La Cienega Tennis Center  
325 S. La Cienega Blvd.  
Beverly Hills, CA 90211

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Called to Order at 5:02 p.m.

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Council Members Present:

Brad Robinson, Chair  
Jerard Wright, Vice Chair  
Peter Capone-Newton  
Greg Fischer  
Carol Gross  
Glenn Rosten  
Terri Slimmer

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Officers:

Mark Maloney, General Manager  
William Walker, Council Secretary

1. **RECEIVED** Public Comment for items not on the agenda

Ken Ruben – Said he rode Line 33 [toward Union Station] on Saturday, May 5 and dropped something while riding the bus. As he got up to pick up the item, the bus lurched forward and he hit his head against another passenger's knee. He said the bus driver did not inquire to see if he was ok.

Arnold Sachs – Said he felt that drivers on Lines 720 and 21 lines drive at unsafe speeds, often scary for a typical passenger.

Joan Taylor – Said Metro operators on Wilshire (Lines 20, 21, 720) and Fairfax (Lines 217, 780) refuse to lower the ramp for those who are mobility impaired. She asks the Board of Directors to discipline operators and provide a toll free number for seniors and people with disabilities to complain when they encounter operators unwilling to lower their wheelchair ramps. She asked that operators be told not to hold on to the farebox when driving since they should have both of their hands on the wheel. She also said interpretation or "closed captioning" should be provided for those who are deaf or hard of hearing

2. **APPROVED Minutes** as amended from April 11, 2007.

3. **RECEIVED** report from Council Members on their line rides

Carol Gross – Mentioned that she has been informed by riders that service on Line 439 is unreliable, often causing its riders to miss their flights departing the airport, which has caused many of its regular riders to seek alternatives for transport to the airport besides Metro.

Terri Slimmer – Mentioned that the automated annunciator on Line 304 buses says "Line 4" rather than "Line 304" which confuses passengers.

Peter Capone-Newton – Said that he had to wait more than 20 minutes on a couple of occasions – once around 11 or 11:30 in the morning going westbound (Wilshire and Normandie), and again around 8 in the evening going eastbound (Wilshire and Westwood) – which is contrary to the printed schedule.

4. **RECEIVED General Manager's Report**

**Notice of Public Hearing on December 2007 Service Changes** – Mr. Maloney announced that a public hearing date will be set at the June Sector Council meeting for August 2007. A plan for new service changes will be presented at the June meeting. Public comment will be heard at the August public hearing and the final service changes will be voted upon at the September meeting.

**Transit Access Pass (TAP) Program** – Mr. Maloney mentioned that he will invite members of the TAP Development Team to attend an upcoming Council meeting this summer to field more questions regarding implementation of the TAP program.

**Performance Indicators** – Mr. Maloney said that Westside Central Sector continued to have a strong month with Mean miles between mechanical failures, on-time performance, complaints and worker's compensation claims all continuing to be on target. Accidents continue to be a problem but Sector management continuing to address it.

5. **RECEIVED** report on **FY07 YTD March 2007 Financials**, Michael Davis, Administration and Finance Manager

Mike Davis reported that Westside Central Sector is currently over budget due to an increase in allocated fringe costs. A \$28 million dollar adjustment was made in April 2007 to cover the rate change in retirement costs. An operator shortage and new technologies, such as the high capacity articulated buses, have caused labor, maintenance and parts costs to come in over budget. Personal Liability/Property Damage has had two settlements with continued increasing costs, bringing that account to \$4.3 million. Fuel costs have been low due to lower compressed natural gas costs. Mr. Davis also gave an update on a previous FY 2008 budget proposal from earlier this year that added 7 mechanics. Because each department was asked to scale back their budgets for FY 2008, the new budget does not reflect that staffing increase at all.

6. **RECEIVED AND FILED** report on bus bunching and proposed resolutions, Rogelio Gandara, Service Development Manager

Mr. Gandara gave a presentation on bus bunching that defined the phenomenon, stated what causes it, and attempted solutions on Wilshire Boulevard. He said that mathematical/engineering simulations have shown that bus-bunching increases with decreases in headways, increases in route length, and increases in traffic congestion.

**RECEIVED** Public Comment on Bus Bunching Presentation

Sheryl McCalister – She mentioned bus bunching is a regular occurrence for her on Line 720 and suggested that bus operators refrain from bunching their buses together. She said that many operators purposely bunch because they do not want to have a crowded bus. She suggests Metro implement a text messaging system that allows riders to text Metro when bus bunching occurs.

Ken Ruben – Said he has seen bus bunching occur frequently with Metro Local and Metro Rapid services, especially on Wilshire Boulevard. He also said that street demonstrations also cause bus bunching. He said that often 10 Rapid buses will pass by before a Metro Local, another form of bus bunching in his opinion.

Lionel Jones – Suggested that Metro place field supervisors at busy intersections such as Wilshire and Westwood Boulevards or Wilshire Boulevard at Vermont Avenue, in order to short turn buses. That would return a bunched flow to normal.

7. **RECEIVED** community input for fare changes

Bonnie Cherko – Brought six letters from seniors who use the Culver City Senior Center who expressed how much hardship they would face if the fare was increased. She said Metro's Senior Citizen outreach programs have made many seniors in the community excited about riding public transit. She also said \$70 would be too steep for seniors who are mostly on fixed incomes.

Sheryl McAllister – Said that the proposed fare increase will gouge Metro riders. She disputed the fact that Metro's costs have increased 60 percent. She said the fare increase should be discussed more thoroughly. She suggested broadcasting 30-minute infomercials several times per week on local television channels that fully divulge the state of Metro's finances. She also suggested that Metro release information regarding revenue generated from the public-private land development partnerships Metro has entered and wanted to know what happened to all the state transportation bond funding that Mayor Villaraigosa campaigned for during the November 2006 election. She also asked that Metro explain its exact labor cost and justify why Metro hires landscapers, electrician and trades people who build roads rather than contracting these services out as is done with several Metro bus lines.

Sherrie Stark – Said that she would not be able to afford taking transit if monthly pass prices increased three-fold as proposed with the current fare increase proposal. She said she is handicapped and on a fixed-income which would make it difficult to endure a price increase. She also said she understands [they] voted for a fare increase because [they] were hoping for a new kind of public transportation system [that is as expansive and far-reaching] such as New York MTA or Boston's MBTA. She also noted increasing fares at a time when Metro should be encouraging more riders is sad and poorly timed due to higher gasoline costs.

Arnold Sachs – Asked questions about how Metro justifies a construction authority for the Exposition Light Rail line but not the Gold Line Eastside Light Rail extension. Also asked where funds are going.

Lionel Jones – Said Metro is due for a fare increase but what is proposed is unfair. He says other cities charge a \$2 fare and sell a \$75 monthly pass. He says the national average base fare to monthly pass cost ratio is 1 pass for 40 rides. He said that Metro's proposal is a cost ratio of 1 pass for 60 rides. He said increases in price for the EZ Pass would force municipal operators to abandon the program and that riders would not elect to purchase the pass because it wouldn't be cost effective. He also said the cost of a Metrolink EZ Pass would be cheaper (\$175) than the cost of an EZ Pass (\$218) in 2009.

Ken Ruben – Said that proposed fare increases are too steep. Also said that Southern California Transit Advocates will suggest a compromise fare increase proposal at the May 24 Fare Hearing.

Anny Semoco – Said the fare increase would hurt more than it would help. She also said there is a need for a fare increase but the one currently proposed is too high. She also mentioned the increase would hinder cities like West Hollywood that subsidize the passes for seniors and the disabled, a community that will become more isolated if Metro increases its fares. She also said reducing the amount of paper at Sector Council meetings and possibly lowering the stipend paid to Council members would also help.

8. **APPROVED** support letter for fare increases, Governance Council

**Recognizing an increasing operating cost, we of the Westside Central Sector Governance Council are supportive of a reasonable and creatively broad-based fare restructuring plan. In order for our customers to have a workable transit alternative by preserving as much services as possible during the budget deficit time, a fare restructure would be a viable solution. We recognize that a delay in implementation may be necessary in order to create a most effective and equitable fare structure. Please take into consideration our collective voice on this subject.**

**RECEIVED** Public Comment

Sheryl McCalister – Said she is surprised that the Council seems to have already made up their mind regarding the fare increase before considering public comment on the letter presented. She does not believe that there is proof that the fare is justified and said the Council is acting prematurely.

Sherrie Stark – Said that the public voted to subsidize Metro in order to fund new public transportation initiatives and not the existing ones. She said that buses are not reliable and if they were reliable more people would use them. She also said that we will have a better city if more people used buses and rail.

Arnold Sachs – Said he heard at one meeting there was no fare increase in 2004, but heard there was a fare increase in 2004 at another meeting.

Lionel Jones – Said that the Council represents the voices of the constituents in the Westside Central Sector and added if 99 percent of the people testify that the fare increase is not a good idea, then the Council should evaluate whether or not to support a proposal its constituents do not endorse.

9. Election of Governance Council officers for July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008

**APPROVED** nomination of Jerard Wright as Chair and Glenn Rosten as Vice Chair.

10. Chair's Remarks – None.

## **ADJOURNMENT**