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**OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 18, 2007**

SUBJECT: METRO GOLD LINE SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file report to increase peak headway service along the Metro Gold Line to 7.5 minutes, increase non-peak and weekend headway service to 12 minutes, and replace express service with the increased peak headway service.

ISSUE

The benefits of the express service have been mixed. Those traveling on express trains enjoy an average the time savings of approximately 2 minutes and the additional seating and standing room, as these trains are less crowded than the local trains. However, a number of the skipped stations are those adjacent to large transit and business oriented developments. Passenger comments often indicate a desire for their stations to be serviced with express trains or more frequent train service.

In addition, Director Antonovich requested Metro staff to assess its current service plan and recommend cost effective improvements that would lead to increased ridership along the Metro Gold Line.

DISCUSSION

Over the last six months, the Metro Gold Line has averaged approximately 19,100 weekday, 13,300 Saturday and 11,300 Sunday boardings. The weekday number is approximately 5,000 less boardings than originally projected for FY08. In 2005, weekday trains were scheduled every 10 minutes during the peak period, 15 minutes mid-day and 20 minutes nightly and on weekends. In 2006, three improvements were made in an effort to increase ridership which include the following: 1) Travel Time Reductions; 2) Adding Peak Trips; and 3) Peak Express Service. The characteristics and evaluation of these three improvements are summarized below.

Travel Time Reduction: In late 2005 and early 2006, Metro completed modifications to the Train Control System, resulting in a five minute reduction in scheduled travel time savings (a 17% improvement) from one end of the line to the other. The reduction in travel time is considered a significant improvement and has contributed to higher ridership.

Adding Peak Trips: Taking advantage of the improved travel times, two additional train trips were added in each direction of travel during the weekday peak hours. This provided a peak headway ranging from as low as 7 minutes to a high as 14 minutes, depending upon the placement of the express service trips as described in greater detail below. The additional two peak trips are also considered a significant improvement which have contributed to higher ridership.

Express Service: Express Service was initiated for weekday service in February 2006. Currently, there are a total of four express train trips in each direction during the peak periods running every 30 minutes. Stations serviced are Sierra Madre Villa, Lake (SB morning and NB afternoon), Memorial Park (NB morning and SB afternoon), Del Mar, Mission, Highland Park and Union Station. The service provides additional travel time savings to customers with a travel itinerary that allows for boarding and alighting at the designated six "Express" stop stations along the Metro Gold Line. By skipping the remaining seven stations, a customer traveling from Sierra Madre Villa to Union Station can save approximately 4 minutes of travel time over the local trains. A customer using express service from stations in the middle of the line will save approximately half of that time.

The benefits of the express service have been mixed. Those traveling on express trains enjoy the time savings and the additional seating and standing room, as these trains are less crowded than the local trains.

Overall service delivery to "Express" stations (combined express and local trips) during the peak periods is a total of eight trips an hour, or an average of one train every 7.5 minutes. Service delivery to "Local" only stations is a total of six trips an hour, or an average of one train every 10 minutes. However, in combining both services, the time between trains (either express or local) at stations can be as much as 14 minutes.

Additionally, a number of the skipped stations are those adjacent to large transit and business oriented developments, (including those at Memorial Park, Lincoln Heights/Cypress Park, and Fillmore). Passenger comments often indicate a desire for their station to be serviced with express trains.

Lastly, because of the unique nature of the express service delivery, interaction with the intersection traffic controllers and their spacing along the rail system, grade crossing gates are down longer at intersections throughout the day, causing traffic concerns in Pasadena and South Pasadena.

In light of the above, and the desire to improve service and increase ridership, the following three recommendations will be implemented:

RECOMMENDATION ONE:

Implement a consistent 7.5 minute service headway during weekday peak periods, with all trains servicing all stations. This has a number of benefits including:

1. Provides better frequency of service for all stations.
2. Provides a consistent service delivery.
3. Supports the joint public/private efforts with Transit and Business Oriented Developments (such as those at Memorial Park, Fillmore, and Lincoln Heights/Cypress Park Stations), which Metro is most interested in encouraging throughout its vast transit network.
4. Eliminates customer confusion at terminals as to which train is an express or local.
5. Reduces automobile traffic queuing impacts at grade crossings.

This recommendation can be accomplished within the current deployment of trains and Train Operators with no budgetary increase.

RECOMMENDATION TWO:

Change the current 15 minute service headway during the non-peak periods and on weekends (mid-morning until early evening) to 12 minutes. Operating at 12 minutes is the current practice on Blue, Red and Purple Lines. The primary advantage of this change will be to allow for improved connecting services for customers transferring to and from the Metro Red Line at Union Station, in turn reducing overall trip time.

This proposed action can be achieved by adding one additional train set during the time periods as noted and will be staffed within Metro's current annual budget.

RECOMMENDATION THREE:

Replace the "Express Service" with "Local Service" during the peak hours as described in Recommendation one. Implementing the recommended Local Service will provide service 8 times during the peak hours for all 13 Gold Line stations. Currently the "Express Service" provides service 8 times for only 6 Stations, and only 5 times for the remaining 7 Stations, which includes three skipped stations that are immediately adjacent to Transit Oriented Developments. Adding local service will result in 28 additional station stops during a single peak hour and will yield an excellent peak headway of 7.5 minutes for all stations.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Replacing express service with increased peak headway service will involve the same number of trains and operators; as a result there is no financial impact for the peak hour improvements as noted above. There is a minimal budgetary impact for the mid-day and weekend service which can be absorbed in Metro's current Rail operating budget.

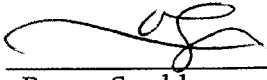
NEXT STEPS

Metro is currently preparing a service schedule and work assignments to support the proposed service changes, and would be implemented effective with the December 16, 2007 Metro Service Change Program.

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