



Metro

OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 15, 2007

SUBJECT: METRO RAPID EXPRESS PILOT PROGRAM

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file status report of the Metro Rapid Express Pilot Program.

ISSUE

The Metro Rapid Express Pilot Program was implemented in June 2007. This report provides some early results and initial findings on the program.

BACKGROUND

In November 2006, the Board approved implementing the Wilshire Metro Rapid Express service in June 2007 as a pilot program. At its February 2007 meeting, the Board approved including the Hawthorne corridor in the Metro Rapid Express Pilot Program and implementing this service in June 2007 as well.

At that time, the Board directed staff to report back with a recommendation as to whether the Pilot Program should be made permanent in one or both corridors, and with any recommendations regarding other possible Metro Rapid Express corridors.

DISCUSSION

Metro Rapid Express service is designed to attract new riders by reducing travel time by 10 to 15 percent over that of the underlying Rapid service in a corridor. It offers all the features of a Metro Rapid, but with fewer stops. Staff is evaluating this new service type to determine its viability as a permanent service type in the Metro family of services. Below are findings to date:

Service Performance

The two services have been in operation for three months and staff's evaluation uses data from the first two months of operation. The Wilshire Metro Rapid Express has about 4,500 boardings per day or about 30 boardings per service hour. The Hawthorne Metro Rapid Express has about 150 boardings per day or 15 boardings per service hour. (The Wilshire Metro Rapid Express operates far more service and offers much better frequency.)

Overall, travel time savings have been less than expected. The program objective is 10 to 15% faster service than the underlying Rapid service in a corridor. So far, the Wilshire Metro Rapid Express service is offering an average savings of about 7% in the a.m. peak and about 16% in the p.m. peak. The Hawthorne Metro Rapid Express is offering an average savings of about 10% in the a.m. peak and about 18% in the p.m. peak.

Marketing

The launch of the Metro Rapid Express Pilot Program included a substantial marketing and outreach effort including: inside and outside bus advertising, bus bench ads, system-wide brochure distribution, radio and print advertising, and special signage and headsigns on the Metro Rapid Express buses.

Customer Feedback

Customer feedback surveys are scheduled and the results will be reported in the next Board update. Additionally, customer comments from the Metro Customer Relations Department are also being monitored. There has been very little feedback from customers on the Hawthorne Metro Rapid Express; however, there have been two main themes to the customer comments from the Wilshire Metro Rapid Express: 1) Those who use the service are very pleased with the faster, more direct service; and 2) the regular 720 customers have complained that their service has become more crowded and less reliable.

A reason that the regular 720 customers have made these comments is that there has been an increase in the boardings per hour on the 720 from about 57 in June 2007 to 66 in July. This is due in part to the fact that the 920 was implemented by reallocating service from the 720. However, this increase may also be attributed to other service changes implemented in June 2007. These included reducing service levels on the ends of the Wilshire Metro Rapid corridor and truncating local service on the west end of the corridor.

Initial Findings

Metro Rapid Express service works best in Rapid corridors with above average passenger trip lengths (greater than 4.6 miles) and ridership (greater than 9,000), and in corridors that have ridership concentrated at just a few stops. For example, the Wilshire Metro Rapid has the highest daily ridership, over 40,000 daily boardings, and about 31% of the ridership is attributed to those stops served by the Wilshire Metro Rapid Express. The Rapid Express service in this corridor is carrying 4,500 boardings per day.

The Hawthorne Metro Rapid is below average in terms of daily ridership. It has over 8,000 daily boardings and about 20% of the ridership is attributed to those stops served by the Hawthorne Metro Rapid Express. The Rapid Express service in this corridor is generating approximately 150 boardings a day.

Also, the expectation of travel time savings of 10-15% may be optimistic, as the only speed advantage that the Rapid Express has is fewer stops.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will continue to monitor performance of the Pilot Program and will report back to the Board before the June 2008 service change. Also, due to its evaluation, staff is slightly reducing the level of service on the Wilshire Metro Rapid Express to better match customer demand.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Wilshire Metro Rapid Express
2. Hawthorne Metro Rapid Express

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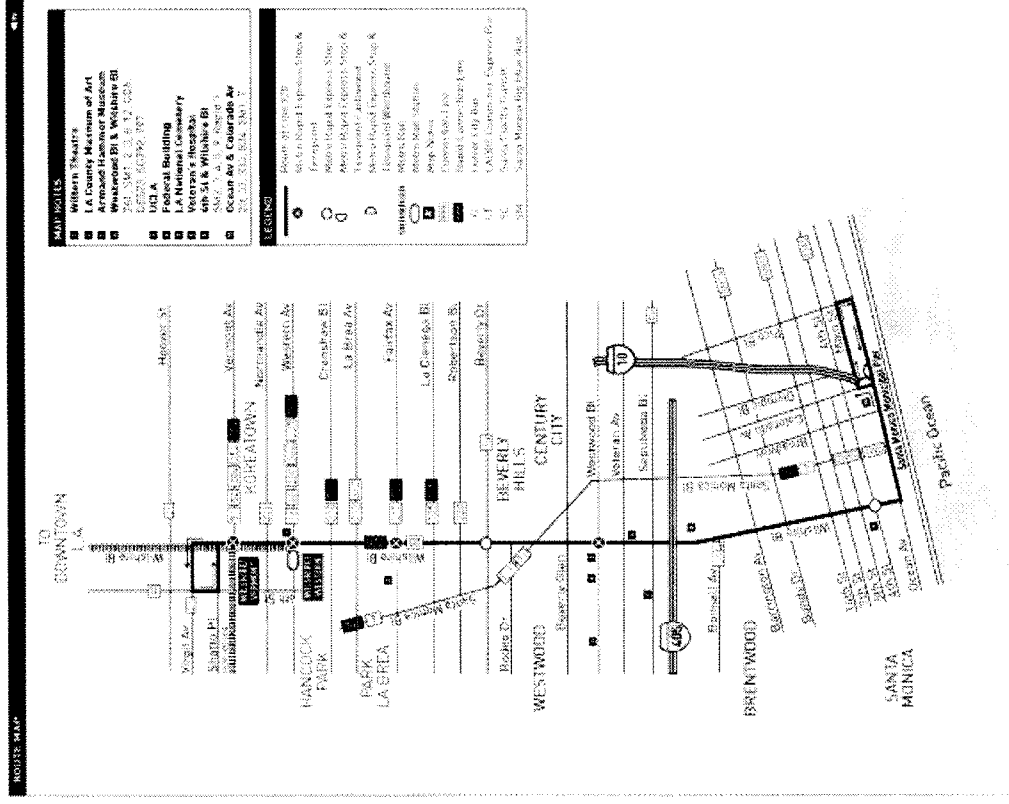
Roger Snoble

Roger Snoble
Chief Executive Officer

Attachment 1: Wilshire Metro Rapid Express (Line 920)

Key Characteristics

- Span - Operates weekday peak hours (both directions) 6am-10 am and from 3pm-7pm.
- Frequency - 5-10 minutes
- Peak Buses - 28 articulated
- Daily Bus Trips – 140
- Daily Service Hours – 163.4
- Route Length – 15.0



Attachment 2: Hawthorne Metro Rapid Express (Line 940)

Key Characteristics

- Span - Operates weekday peak hours (peak direction only)
Northbound from 5:45 am-8:30 am and southbound from 4 pm-6:50 pm
- Frequency - 30 minutes
- Peak Buses - 4
- Daily Bus Trips - 8
- Daily Service Hours - 9.4
- Route Length - 19.6 miles

