

**Board Report**

File #: 2015-1437, **File Type:** Program**Agenda Number:** 63.

**SYSTEM SAFETY, SECURITY AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 15, 2015****SUBJECT: PROPOSED NEW PILOT EXPRESS BUS SERVICE FROM PASADENA GOLD LINE
TO THE NORTH HOLLYWOOD ORANGE/RED LINE STATIONS****ACTION: APPROVE NEW PILOT LINE FOR 180 DAY PERIOD****RECOMMENDATION**

SYSTEM SAFETY, SECURITY AND OPERATIONS RECOMMENDED (3-0):

- A. APPROVING proposed **180 day new pilot bus service to operate from the Metro Gold Line in Pasadena to the North Hollywood Red/Orange Line Stations**; and
- B. REVISING the FY16 budget \$784,000 to fund the FY16 portion of this 180 day pilot program.

ISSUE

The Board approved Motion 40 (Attachment A) by Director Najarian in November 2014, directing staff to explore establishing a new bus service between the Burbank Airport and the Metro Gold Line in Pasadena with stops at the North Hollywood Orange/Red Line Stations, Burbank Media District, and Glendale. This would provide new transit service that would mitigate some of the impact to travel in this region caused by the Interstate 5 construction project, as well as connect residents of the San Gabriel Valley to the San Fernando Valley rail and BRT systems. Subsequent to Motion 40, Metro staff gave a preliminary report to the Metro Board in January 2015 outlining planning efforts and budget impacts of the proposed line. In that document, staff outlined work with Caltrans to modify the HOV lane entrance and exit points, as well as bus on shoulder running. Caltrans has modified the HOV entrance and exit points and has developed rough estimates of improvements, including freeway widening to accommodate bus on shoulder running.

Our current report contains a final proposed route, implementation plan, impact on bus equipment and estimated marginal operating costs associated with proposed pilot service.

DISCUSSION

If this proposed service is approved by the Metro Board and service could start with the opening of passenger service on the Foothill Extension of the Gold Line. Following initiation of this new express bus service, staff will arrange for public hearings at the San Fernando Valley and San Gabriel Valley

Service Councils in April 2016. During the first two months of operation, staff will also complete the Title VI and Environmental Impact reports for this new service. The findings from these evaluations will be brought back to the Metro Board for action in June or July 2016.

Staff has researched and analyzed different routing options that would provide an efficient and productive operation. Attachment B depicts staff's final recommended route configuration. Metro staff has scheduled regular meetings with many interested groups including Cities of Burbank and Pasadena, LADOT, Caltrans, Bob Hope Airport and others. The recommended route and bus layover locations were determined after meeting with Cities of Pasadena and Burbank. The proposed route will depart the North Hollywood Station bus plaza and utilize the SR-134 Freeway towards Pasadena, making limited stops connecting with the Burbank Bus and Glendale Bee Line systems.

Staff has worked very closely with LADOT Transit staff as Commuter Express Line 549 duplicates much of this same corridor (map and schedule shown in Attachment C) from the Lake Ave Metro Gold Line Station to the North Hollywood Metro Red Line Station, then continuing to Encino. This service operates Monday through Friday, rush hours only, in both directions, every 30 minutes. Daily ridership averages 430 boarding passengers, or approximately 21 patrons per one-way bus trip.

LADOT and Metro staff worked on options that included incorporating LADOT service into the proposed NoHo - Pasadena Gold Line express service. This could have included alternating trips during weekday peaks, using the same route, stops and fare structure. The aim was to develop a seamless combined service to minimize passenger confusion and to reduce Metro operating costs. Another option explored was for LADOT to expand their existing service to also operate during weekday mid-day and weekends. This would have required them to adjust their route, stops and fares to expedite travel times and ease transfers to/from Metro Gold, Orange and Red lines. This became a difficult effort to accomplish in a relatively short period of time, and LADOT has indicated it is not interested in assuming more service to operate at this time. They will continue to operate Commuter Express Line 549 and Metro would provide all of the new NoHo - Pasadena Gold Line service. Metro will ensure that the LADOT and Metro bus trip times will be staggered so as to provide better service to our customers.

The City of Burbank currently operates Burbank Bus' NoHo to Airport route connecting North Hollywood Station with destinations along Burbank's Empire Center and Bob Hope Airport. The City was recently able to obtain I-5 mitigation funds to improve bus service. In June of 2015, NoHo to Airport route extended span of service from peak hour only, to all day, seven days a week service including evenings (map and schedule shown in Attachment D). The fare is \$1, and Metrolink patrons are able to ride for free.

As result of the enhanced service currently linking Bob Hope Airport with the North Hollywood Red/Orange Line Station, the proposed route in Attachment A was revised to terminate at North Hollywood Station with a convenient transfer to Burbank Bus. Metro's proposed headway will be similar to Burbank Bus' headway to ensure proper connectivity between the two services.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

As ridership increases on the proposed pilot line, more vehicles will be removed from the freeways, potentially reducing accidents and regional emissions of greenhouse gases.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Based on the service parameters required to operate this line, resource requirements are as follows:

| | Directly Operated | Contracted Service |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Frequency | Weekday -15 min peak/30 min base | |
| | Weekend - 30 min all day | |
| 180 Day Pilot Period RSH | 13,005 | |
| Annual RSH | 26,370 | |
| # of Buses | 8 + 2 spares | |
| 180 Day Pilot Marginal Operating Cost | \$1,341,000 | \$1,176,000 |
| Annual Marginal Operating Cost | \$2,720,000 | \$2,386,000 |

The marginal cost estimates shown reflect Metro directly operated or contracted costs. As this would be a new bus service that does not duplicate or replace existing Metro operated bus lines, it could be operated under contract by a private operator. Under that scenario, with service beginning no earlier than March 1, 2016, the marginal cost for 180 days would be \$1,176,000 while the cost incurred during the last four months of FY16 would be \$784,000. The annual cost estimate for this service, based on FY16 contract cost rates, would be \$2.386 million.

The performance of the new express line should at least 25 passengers per revenue bus hour, which is half of the Metro system average of 50 passengers per revenue bus hour. At the rate of 25 passengers per bus hour, this line should attract 1,750 riders each week day. This performance should be achieved by the end of the 180 day pilot period. If not, corrective actions will be undertaken to improve the attractiveness of the line or tailor the service to better match ridership patterns.

If this new express line achieves the target ridership levels, passenger revenue would achieve a 21% marginal cost recovery ratio.

Metro maintains a bus fleet with a 20% spare ratio. There are no additional spare buses to be used for the new pilot service. Providing ten additional buses to our contract service providers will require that the Metro bus spare ratio be reduced from 20% to 19.8%. This may have a negative impact on meeting our service needs on some days.

Given the scenario of a contract service provider operating this line, the total cost of the pilot program is \$1,176,000. The FY16 portion of this pilot program is \$784,000. Budget will be added to cost center 3590 - Contract Services, Account 50801 - Purchased Transportation.

IMPACT TO BUDGET

The source of funds for this effort is Bus eligible operating funds. No other funding has been considered because these funds are directly designated for this use.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The LADOT Commuter Express service currently operated over a similar route (Line 549) could be expanded to provide the pilot service. However, LADOT has indicated at this time resources are not available to expand the Commuter Express program.

NEXT STEPS

If the Pilot Line is approved by the Metro Board, service planning staff will initiate an implementation process for the new express service including a marketing campaign. Implementation date would mirror Gold Line's Foothill Extension's initiation of service.

Prior to the conclusion of the initial 180 day pilot period, staff will return to the Board with a performance report for the line, with a recommendation to either continue, modify, or discontinue the service. This will be based on service performance that will include passenger demand and impacts to LADOT Commuter Express Line 549. The evaluation will also provide the results of a public hearing and a Title VI and Environment Justice report.

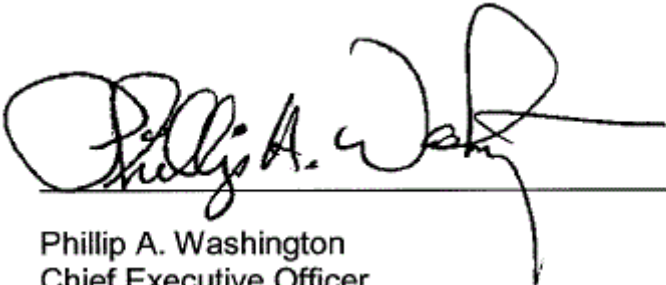
ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A - Motion 40: I-5 North Construction Mitigation Transit Service
- Attachment B - Metro Routing Map
- Attachment C - LADOT Commuter Express Line 549 Map and Schedule
- Attachment D - Burbank Bus NoHo to Airport Map and Schedule

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