



Board Report

File #: 2016-0249, File Type: Informational Report

Agenda Number: 25

SYSTEM SAFETY, SECURITY AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MAY 19, 2016

SUBJECT: FOOTHILL EXTENSION EXPRESS BUS CONNECTION

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE status **report on Motion 63 - Review of Potential North/South Metro Express Routes (Foothill Extension Express Bus Connection).**

ISSUE

The recent opening of the Foothill Extension of the Metro Gold Line has prompted interest in reviewing transit alternatives that could connect the Long Beach area, Norwalk, and El Monte with the rail line. Motion 63 directed staff to review a potential north/south Metro express bus line connecting a number of destinations providing linkages to the Gold Line.

DISCUSSION

The Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension provides rail access to a number of higher demand locations such as City of Hope, Azusa Pacific University/Citrus College and more. Staff evaluated the potential for higher speed bus service from Long Beach to directly connect with the Gold Line.

Metro Express Line 577 currently operates Monday through Friday from the Long Beach VA Hospital to El Monte Station, via the I-605, serving Norwalk Metro Green Line Station, Rio Hondo College, and El Monte Station. Service operates from 5:30AM to 10:00PM, every 40 to 50 minutes.

The line performs poorly; ridership averages 850 daily boardings, 90% of these boardings are between Norwalk and El Monte. The average boardings per hour is 14, while the system average is 48. The Route Performance Index is 0.45, well below the 0.60 system minimum considered for maintaining a line.

Based on the motion to connect Long Beach with the new Metro Gold Line Foothill extension to Azusa, staff evaluated expanding and modifying the existing Line 577 route and service. To serve the destinations listed in the motion (Long Beach, Orange County connections, Metro Green Line, Metrolink, El Monte Station and Metrolink, and the Metro Gold Line), a new route Line 578 could be added to the existing Line 577, each using the San Gabriel -605- Fwy as the trunk route.

These two routes are shown on the attached map, and could operate in the following manner:

Line 577 - Begins at the Long Beach VA (connects with three OCTA lines, numerous core Long Beach Transit Lines, and the Cal State Long Beach Campus). This links to the I-605 via 7th St in Long Beach.

Line 578 - Begins at the Norwalk Metrolink Station/Norwalk Transit Center (provides connections to the Orange County/Oceanside Metrolink and Amtrak services). This line would proceed along Imperial Highway to the Norwalk Green Line Station before entering the I-605. Based on the current Metrolink schedule, this branch would only operate during peak train/travel times. (Weekdays 5am - 11am and 2pm - 8pm).

Each of the two routes could provide 30 minute frequency of service. When these routes join at the Norwalk Metro Green Line Station, they would then provide a fifteen minute service to El Monte Station with a stop at Rio Hondo College. From El Monte Station, this combined route could serve the El Monte Metrolink Station before continuing no-stop along Santa Anita Av to the Arcadia Gold Line Station.

As stated in the 2016 Metro Transit Service Policies and Standards, any new or modified service should have near term goals established prior to the service change and or implementation. If implemented, it is proposed that average boardings per hour be established at 20. With a proposed span of service of 16 hours, this equates to a projected 2,450 boardings per day. Also, the Route Performance Index should be 0.60 or better. Six months after the service has operated, service will be evaluated to determine what actions may be necessary to improve patronage and or reduce cost.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

At this time, an expanded Line 577 and a new Line 578 as proposed above are not included in the proposed FY17 budget. Should the service be implemented, and funds are not provided, staff would reduce existing service in the Gateway Cities/San Gabriel Valley region to fund the expansion of Line 577.

Impact to Budget

The span of service would be weekdays only from 5:00AM to 10:00PM. With the service level assumptions, existing Line 577 resources (hours and buses) have been folded into the estimated cost for weekday service shown below:

- The total annual cost of operating Line 577/578 is \$3.60 million, which is **an annual increase of \$2.02 million** from the current operating cost of \$1.58 million
- Marketing Startup Cost: \$200,000 (includes special wraps)
- Acquisition of Eight Additional Buses (six in service and two spares) for contract services. At the cost of \$550,000 per bus, the total **capital cost would be \$4.4 million**

- If no additional operating funds or an inadequate level of funding were provided for this project, Metro bus service would need to be reduced within these service regions to offset the increase in Metro bus operating costs

As proposed, Lines 577 and 578 would only operate on weekdays. Line 577 does not operate weekend service at this time and no weekend service on this corridor is being considered in these cost calculations.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

No alternatives were considered based on the Motion's direction to serve the Foothill Gold Line extension using a routing that begins in Long Beach.

NEXT STEPS

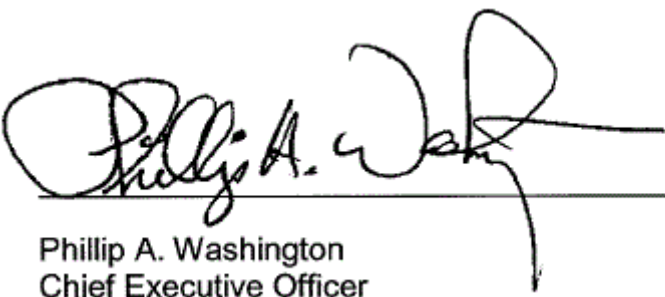
Though not recommended by staff, if there is a desire to consider implementation of this or similar service, the expansion of Line 577 and creation of Line 578 would constitute a major service change. This would require Metro to conduct public hearings at both the San Gabriel Valley and Gateway Cities Service Councils. In addition, Title VI and Environmental Justice evaluations would be required. The Board would also need to direct staff to amend the FY17 Budget to provide funds, as listed above, or reduce service on other Metro bus lines to fund the operation of this service.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment A - San Gabriel -605- Freeway Alternatives
Attachment B - Motion 63

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