



## Board Report

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**File #:** 2021-0241, **File Type:** Informational Report

**Agenda Number:** 23.

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### OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE MAY 20, 2021

**SUBJECT: STATUS OF MOTION 10.1: FY21 OPERATIONS RECOVERY PLAN (MAY 2021)**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE status report on the May 2021 response to Motion 10.1: FY21 Operations Recovery Plan.

#### **ISSUE**

On September 24, 2020, the Metro Board of Directors (Board) approved Motion 10.1: FY21 Operations Recovery Plan (Attachment A) directing staff to:

- A. Report back to the Operations, Safety, and Customer Experience Committee in 60 days, with updates every 60 days thereafter, with an FY21 Operations Recovery Plan that achieves the following outcomes:
1. Aligns bus lines with their respective NextGen service tier standards.
  2. Does not exceed maximum load factors on buses and trains based on industry accepted health and safety standards.
  3. Sets criteria for adding service in anticipation of future on-street conditions related to economic sector and/or school re-openings and the return of traffic congestion and effect on bus speeds.
  4. Takes full advantage of operational savings from faster bus speeds to achieve performance-based service outcomes.
  5. Restores revenue service hours as appropriate to achieve all of the above outcomes.
- B. Report back to the Finance, Budget, and Audit Committee in 60 days with an amendment to the FY21 Budget, if necessary, to implement the above FY21 Operations Recovery Plan.

This report addresses Items 1-5 in Section A above.

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## **BACKGROUND**

In September 2020, the Board approved the FY21 Annual Budget which included 5.6M annual Revenue Service Hours (RSH) for Metro bus operations. Motion 10.1: FY21 Operations Recovery Plan was approved as part of the budget deliberations to direct staff to monitor service performance and determine criteria for increasing service to levels envisioned by NextGen while balancing vehicle loads, financial constraints, public health directives, and service quality.

## **DISCUSSION**

The following provides the status update for each item listed in the motion:

### **1. Aligns bus lines with their respective NextGen service tier standards -**

No Change. Attachment B lists all bus lines by service tier for the December 2020 and June 2021 shake-ups, as well as the NextGen Transit First full buildout scenario frequencies.

### **2. Do not exceed maximum load factors on buses and trains based on industry accepted health and safety standards**

Service continues to be scheduled to maintain a max. load standard of 75% of seated capacity during any 20 min. time slice during peak periods and 60 min. time slices during off peak period. A total of 47 weekday, 86 Saturday and 48 Sunday trips were added to the bus network starting April 12, 2021 to address load issues on specific lines detailed in Attachment C.

### **3. Set criteria for adding service in anticipation of future on-street conditions related to economic sector and/or school reopenings and the return of traffic congestion and effect on bus speeds**

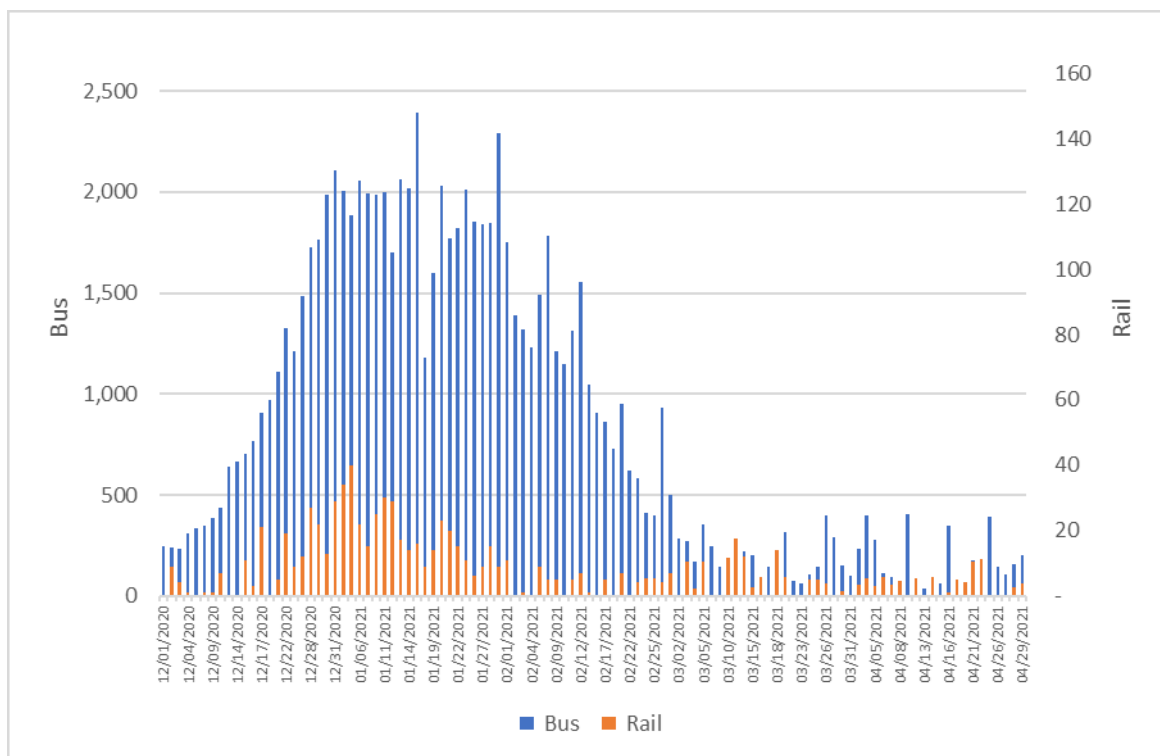
#### Percent of Trips Exceeding Maximum Load Standard

Maximum loads on all Metro bus trips continue to be monitored weekly. The percent of trips on average each week exceeding the 75% of seated load standard during April 2021 is as follows:

- Weekdays: average 1.8% or 196 trips (range 1.7% to 2.0%) so on average meets the target
- Saturdays: average 5.3% or 367 trips (range 4.9% to 5.7%)
- Sundays: average 2.8% or 183 trips (range 2.5% to 3.2%)

Canceled work hours for bus continue to hover around the pre-pandemic levels (see Figure 1). With cancelled service stabilized, 47 weekday, 86 Saturday and 48 Sunday trips were added to the bus network starting April 12, 2021 to address load issues to accommodate heavier loads.

Figure 1  
Cancelled Work Hours (Weekdays)



The next scheduled service change will be June 27, 2021 which will continue implementation of the NextGen bus plan including a significant amount of network changes and reallocation of underutilized services to high ridership lines. The June 2021 service change focus on the San Fernando Valley and San Gabriel Valley to improve service and simplify the bus network. There will also be some changes in Beverly Hills and Compton areas as well as a new line linking northeast LA directly with East Hollywood. The changes also include consolidation of 8 more Metro Rapid lines with partner local lines on key corridors. In total, over 90 of Metro’s 141 lines operating today will be changed in the June 2021 service change.

In addition, per Motion 27.1: FY22 Service Restoration, an additional 880K annualized RSH will also be added to the current 5.62 million annualized RSH bringing the base service levels beginning in FY22 to 6.5 million annual RSH. As a result, service will increase on many of Metro’s highest ridership lines as ridership continues to slowly recover from the pandemic low point in mid-2020.

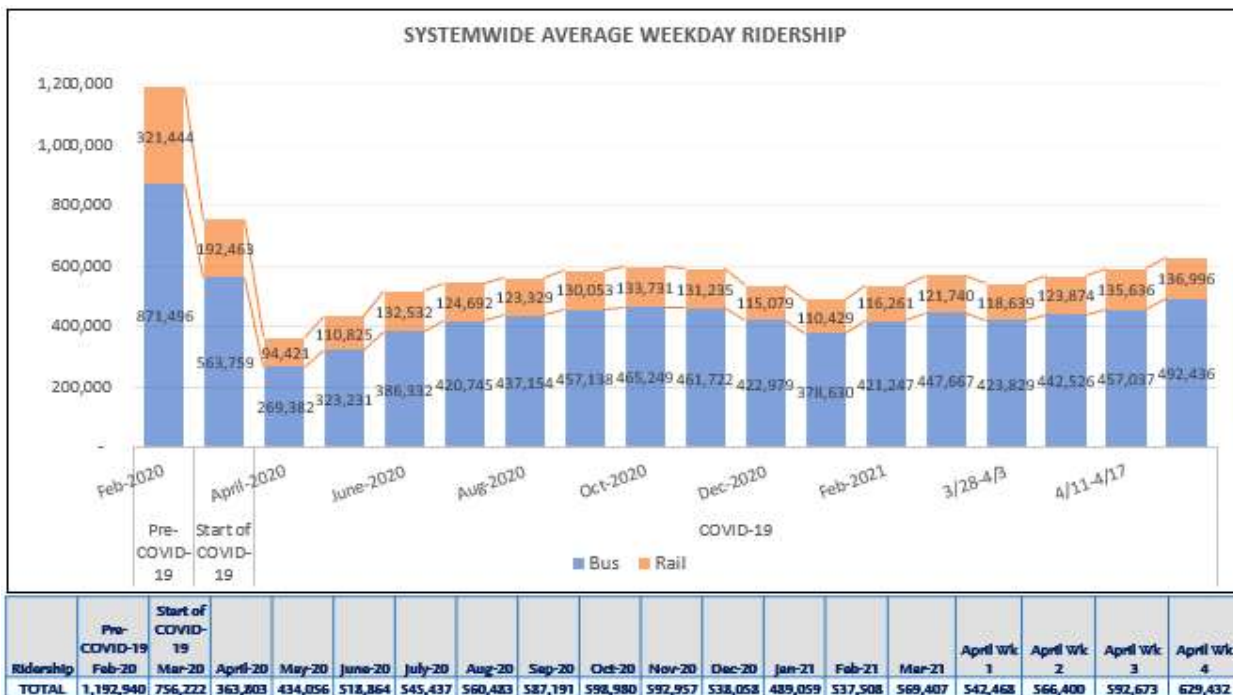
Loads will continue to be monitored on a weekly basis and further adjustments can be made if needed through interim schedule adjustments.

Ridership Potential and Public Health Directives

During April 2021 average weekday bus ridership increased to about 45% below pre-COVID levels, compared to 50% below in previous months. Saturday and Sunday ridership were about 30% and 26% down compared to pre-COVID, respectively. Ridership is anticipated to grow

steadily through FY21Q4 given the declining number of new COVID cases, significant number of vaccinations and the State’s anticipated reopen on June 15, 2021. Figure 2 shows bus and rail ridership trends through the COVID pandemic to date.

Figure 2  
Systemwide Average Weekday Ridership



Ridership will continue to be monitored on a weekly and monthly basis.

Resource Availability

**Financial**

No Change. The Board adopted Motion 11.1 in January 2021 that reallocated \$24.3M in the FY21 mid-year budget adjustment for the restoration of transit service and directed staff to immediately begin preparing to restore service no later than end of FY21 to increase the agency’s capacity to run 7.0 million annual bus RSH. The budget planning assumptions for service levels in FY22, as presented to the Board in February 2021, outlines a plan to restore bus service levels, including:

- June 2021 - Increase from 5.62 million current annualized RSH to 6.5 million;
- September 2021 - Increase to 7.0 million annualized RSH;

**Staffing and Accelerated Bus Operator Hiring Activities**

Implementing the FY22 service level increases is highly dependent on the availability of operators. Operations has accelerated bus operator training classes and will continue with our

enhanced hiring plan until enough operators are onboarded to support the final adopted FY22 RSH plan. In addition, Operations will continue to work closely with Human Capital & Development to return as many existing operators out on leaves as soon as possible. It should be noted that through early May 2021, Metro has received over 1,346 applications in the hiring pipeline with interviews scheduled, classes in progress, and 2 classes scheduled per month through the summer. All class space, including the use of non-Metro facilities, are currently being planned in a manner that is safe and adheres to all COVID-19 guidelines.

Metro' accelerated bus operator hiring plan includes, but is not limited to the following:

- ✓ Bus Operator Specific Landing Web page
- ✓ Recruitment Flyer
- ✓ Organic Social media and source posts
- ✓ Paid Search, social media, Indeed advertising
- ✓ Metro-owned Bus and Rail ads including bus wraps & car cards
- ✓ Paid Radio Ads (ESPN, Ellen K Radio Blog & LA Kings Newsletter and Local News Channels)
- ✓ Bus Operator Hiring Video
- ✓ Bus Operator Hiring Featured on external and internal job posting emails
- ✓ Board of Director (BOD) Media Tool Kit
- ✓ Metro-owned Bus and Rail ads including bus wraps & car cards

#### Performance

Boardings per RSH for March and April 2021 are trending around 26, short of the 30 boardings per RSH. Should ridership increase through the remainder of FY21 with mass vaccinations and the full reopening of the state anticipated mid-June 2021, the performance of this indicator would expect to improve.

#### **4. Takes full advantage of operational savings from faster bus speeds to achieve performance-based service outcomes**

The NextGen Speed and Reliability team continue to make progress towards implementing bus lanes, improving Transit Signal Priority (TSP) and other enhancements to the bus network. Since January 2021, the team is has been working on implementation of a bus lane on Alvarado Street, Grand and Olive Streets in downtown Los Angeles, improving signal priority on Metro G Line (Orange), and continuing to work with LADOT to identify future bus lane corridors and expanding TSP to more buses along non-TSP Tier 1 corridors under the NextGen Bus Plan.

#### **5. Restore revenue service hours as appropriate to achieve all the above outcomes**

The FY22 service restoration plan as described has been developed based on the criteria established in item #3 above and is consistent with Motion 11.1 related to FY2021 (FY21) Mid-Year Budget.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Implementation of Metro's final FY22 bus service restoration plan will be adopted as part of the FY22

annual budget.

Impact to Budget

There is no impact to the approved Metro FY21 budget and allocated funding sources. The planned changes are made within the revenue service hours budgeted.

**DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT**

This report does not have a negative effect on the safety of our customers or employees.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

Recommendation supports strategic plan goal #1: Provide high quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling. The service changes also respond to the sub-goal of investing in a world class bus system that is reliable, convenient, safe, and attractive to more users for more trips.

**NEXT STEPS**

This is the last scheduled report back on Motion 10.1. Future updates to service recovery and operator hiring status will be presented as part of the COO monthly COVID report.

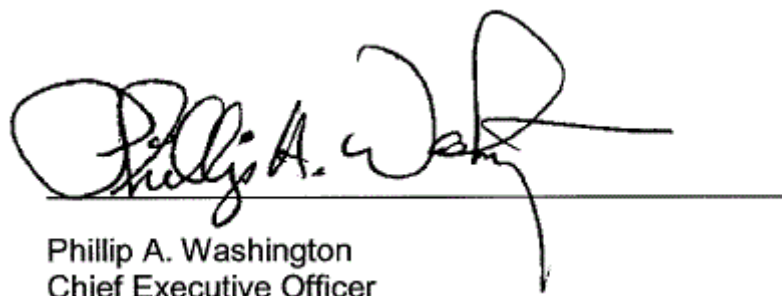
**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - Motion 10.1: FY21 Operations Recovery Plan

Attachment B - Dec. 2020 & June 2021 Scheduled vs. NextGen Planned Frequencies

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