



Board Report

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**FINANCE AND BUDGET COMMITTEE
MARCH 16, 2022**

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MARCH 17, 2022**

SUBJECT: METRO BIKE SHARE PROGRAM UPDATE

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE Motion Response Work Plan (Attachment A) to Board Motion Item No. 41 approved December 2021.

ISSUE

The Board of Directors approved Motion Item No. 41 “Improving the Effectiveness and Sustainability of Metro Bike Share” in December 2021 (Attachment B). The Motion directs staff to report back in 90 days. This report provides staff’s response.

BACKGROUND

The Metro Bike Share (MBS) program was launched in July 2016 in partnership with the City of Los Angeles and is in its fifth year of operation. It continues to provide a service to Los Angeles County residents with more than 200 stations located in the Downtown Los Angeles, Central Los Angeles, Westside, and North Hollywood service areas. MBS recently expanded and launched new service in Hollywood offering a total of 12 stations and a new mobility option for residents in this community. Both the Westside and the North Hollywood service areas, although initially launched as Smart systems, have now been converted to a Classic system. As MBS has grown, greater connectivity has been achieved between the service areas as well as an improved user experience. To date, a total of 1.3 million trips have been taken, 4.4 million miles have been traveled, and 4.2 million pounds of CO2 have been averted. In addition, the operator, Bicycle Transit Systems (BTS), has achieved its Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) commitment of 22.37% overall.

Over the last two COVID impacted years, MBS has continued to remain in full operation. However, as with other programs, ridership has been negatively impacted. Latest ridership figures from January 2022 show year-over-year improvement but are still lower than pre-COVID ridership. Sanitation protocols continue to be implemented as well as other guidelines as directed by the CDC and the Los Angeles County Public Health Department. Despite these challenges, in September

2021 MBS agreed to a one-year sponsorship deal with DoorDash valued slightly over \$1 million. The agreement includes placing DoorDash decals on bicycles and stations. The revenue obtained from this agreement will offset ongoing Operations and Maintenance (O&M) costs. Staff is coordinating with Metro Communications to support the continuation of sponsorship opportunities.

In addition, demographic data of MBS users is provided below. The data is from the MBS Annual Survey conducted in calendar years 2020 and 2021.

MBS Annual Survey - Demographic Data		2020	2021
Gender			
	Male	59.08%	57.82%
	Female	38.35%	40.26%
	Non-Binary	2.58%	2.03%
Race/Ethnicity			
	Caucasian/White	44.51%	47.79%
	African American	7.45%	14.59%
	Latinx/Hispanic	23.73%	19.01%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	18.82%	11.07%
	Native American	1.18%	3.62%
	Other	4.31%	3.92%
Income			
	\$24,999 or less	16.00%	14.35%
	\$25,000 - \$49,999	17.72%	20.02%
	\$50,000 - \$74,999	19.76%	24.20%
	\$75,000 and above	46.51%	41.53%
Age			
	16-24	9.67%	19.66%
	25-34	36.31%	47.37%
	35-49	33.08%	24.92%
	50 years and over	20.95%	8.06%

*Multiple responses allowed

The current deployment of MBS represents Metro’s initial implementation of a regional bike share program. The deployment is accomplished primarily through the contract with BTS, which is in the final year of the 7-year term set to expire July 31, 2022.

DISCUSSION

MBS is currently deployed under its initial pilot implementation. While bike share was not a new service when MBS was launched, it was nevertheless the first deployment by Metro. As with many services and programs, the initial deployment provides many learning opportunities which have informed the program's direction. The points and directives contained in Board Motion No. 41 identify issues and challenges to be addressed by the program to ensure MBS's success in meeting the agency's sustainability and equity goals and the program's goals to increase utilization, growth, and regional mobility.

The Board's Metro Bike Share Motion includes directives (A) to (F) along with clarifying information. Overall, staff is proposing to address this Motion with a number of immediate, short-term and mid-term actions. The actions include work to be performed directly by staff as well as through contract/consultant services. Examples of staff actions include steps to replenish the bike fleet and ensure uninterrupted service. Staff is also actively engaged with the City of Los Angeles and has reached out to other parties who have expressed past interest and/or with whom MBS has routine dialog. Staff's goal is to identify and create a working group comprised of regional interested parties to assist with the review of MBS and the development of the final recommendations.

Staff is also proposing to use consultant services in response to the Board Motion. One immediate action is to modify an existing task order to support the Market Survey, planning/development of the Industry Forum and in identifying funding and/or legislative opportunities. In addition, staff is recommending that a consultant be secured to support the evaluation of MBS and assist in the development of the final recommendations as identified in Motion Directive F.

Staff has prepared the following update, addressing each of the directives identified in the Motion. A more detailed action plan is provided as Attachment A.

Board Motion Item No. 41

(A) An action plan to stabilize the current fleet size including actions for how to identify, prioritize, and address new mechanisms of theft as they arise.

Metro staff continues to address the issue of bicycle loss and theft through loss prevention and recovery activities. Bicycle loss is expected as part of the cost of business operations given the public nature of the program with the level of loss/theft experienced in the US and around the world at 1% to 2% a month. Although there is an acknowledgement that some loss will continue to impact the system and that the program's losses have grown during the pandemic as compared to pre-pandemic levels, the goal is to continue to implement efforts and strategies that reduce loss and theft while increasing recovery.

Staff has identified a myriad of actions/tactics to mitigate the loss and improve fleet retention and recovery efforts. Attachment A outlines 10 actions that staff is pursuing. These actions include:

- Purchasing bicycles to re-establish the fleet size;
- Purchasing and installing GPS equipment on all bicycles;
- Improving the operator's lost/missing bike recovery rate;

- Deploying a marketing/awareness campaign;
- Implementing technical system improvements;
- Implementing new inventory protocols to ensure a consistent and stable service to the public.

Staff is keenly aware of the need to re-establish the MBS fleet and is currently in discussions with the operator, BTS, to secure additional bicycles and GPS equipment with a target of the April Board meeting with recommendations to address the purchase of the bicycles and GPS equipment. Additionally, despite the proposed efforts to reduce loss and missing bicycles, staff anticipates that there will continue to be bicycle loss. To maintain a consistent and stable fleet, staff is developing a protocol to maintain a readily available inventory. Staff is currently reviewing available data to best determine the minimum inventory level required to support a stable operation. The inventory will enable the contractor to swap out bicycles in need of maintenance and to replace missing or lost bicycles. The goal will be to maintain a consistent deployed fleet size for public use.

(B) An action plan to address equitable access in the current program and in any future form of the program. This plan shall include recommendations on issues such as serving people who may be unbanked, addressing the digital divide and keeping fare cost low.

Staff is proposing to include a request in the Market Survey (Motion Directive E) to obtain information from other bike share programs regarding how they address equity, unbanked and digital divide matters. Additionally, this will be included as a topic in the Industry Forum (Motion Directive D). Staff will also continue to engage with the Metro Office of Equity and Race as well as the City of Los Angeles (in particular the Los Angeles Department of Transportation) to review and address current and future equity considerations. Staff has held discussions with TAP and will continue to engage to identify solutions to handle unbanked and digital divide issues. Staff will also investigate alternative/innovative fare and sponsorship options for possible implementation. Finally, staff will include this as an action item in the MBS evaluation study.

(C) A plan to provide uninterrupted service as the next iteration of the program is determined and executed.

Concurrent with the discussions to purchase bicycles and GPS equipment, negotiations with BTS for a contract extension are underway. The extension will allow staff to ensure the continued and uninterrupted operation of MBS, while continuing to address all directives of the Board Motion.

(D) A plan to convene an Industry Forum (as was performed for Metro Micro) to bring together academics, cities with existing bike share programs, community stakeholders, and industry experts to provide recommendations on advancing Metro Bike Share beyond the current contract in one of several forms including but not limited to:

1. Continuing Metro Bike Share as a contracted service,
2. Operating the program In-house with Metro employees,
3. A private-sector model with financial subsidy provided by Metro.

Staff has engaged Metro Micro to understand and learn from their experience. Staff is now working to develop the format, invitees, subject/agenda, and logistics to hold the forum. Staff is proposing that the forum be included as part of the MBS evaluation study and that information gathered from

participants help inform recommendations.

(E) Performing a Market Survey to identify best practices and business models among existing bike-share systems in the US, and comparable global systems (e.g., Paris, London, Barcelona, Madrid, and Mexico City), and to develop comparative data on subsidy cost per ride, total ridership, size of fleet, vehicle technology, theft and damage, loss and prevention, and alternative financing sources like sponsorship and advertising.

Staff is currently compiling all readily available information and will be securing a consultant to conduct an initial Market Survey. In addition to the information listed in the Motion, the survey will also seek to obtain information regarding programs or services offered that address the unbanked and the digital divide.

(F) Recommendations for continuing and evolving the Metro Bike Share program to meet the goals of the agency, with countywide stakeholder engagement and consideration of cost-sharing, with the goal of expanding service area and local participation to all subregions in the County. These recommendations should include eligible local, state, and federal funding sources for capital and operations budgets, as well as legislative opportunities to expand such funding eligibility.

Staff is working on procuring services from a consultant team to support the review of MBS. Staff will also coordinate with the City of Los Angeles' pending bike share program review/evaluation, as the City's findings may impact MBS operations. Additionally, staff will form working groups and actively engage regional stakeholders and partners to ensure a comprehensive, transparent, and realistic evaluation of MBS. Working group participants may include other cities who have had bike share and cities that have not as well as Council of Government organizations (COG), and Community-Based Organizations (CBO). Staff is also working on plans to improve market awareness and customer engagement to support the operation and ensure the overall quality of the future MBS program. The evaluation of the current program and feedback from working group(s) will result in recommendations to provide a roadmap ensuring a successful, regional, equitable and viable bike share program. Staff is targeting to complete the evaluation by fall 2022.

Equity Platform

In support of the response to the Motion, several activities will be implemented in the next 3 to 12 months. Activities include implementing a plan to reduce theft and increase recovery of missing bikes making more of them available. Staff will continue to work with Metro Security and the program's LAPD liaison, each of which have provided support to the theft/recovery task force. Staff will also engage with programs that can offer support to certain users in need of access to more long-term transportation. In addition, staff will be developing a plan focused on increasing accessibility to individuals who are unbanked or face a digital divide; keeping fares low and increasing reduced fare and LIFE participation; conducting a Market Survey of other bike share programs and an Industry Forum to learn about best practices including increasing participation from marginalized groups and reducing barriers for people in EFCs.

Given the demographic information collected from the annual surveys, staff is aware that bike share ridership is not representative of Metro ridership or Los Angeles County demographics. However,

results from the survey show that there is an increase in utilization by females as well as African American/Black and Native American MBS users. Staff will work to improve user data collection to better understand potential barriers to the MBS system and address or mitigate them in the future. As delineated in Motion Directive B, staff will work to improve awareness of the utilization of the program and will ensure that the future MBS program addresses equitable access and increased diversity actions/recommendations.

In addition, staff will be working with community groups and other organizations such as NABSA and NACTO, to gather their feedback and incorporate it in the recommendations moving forward. Information from users will also be gathered to inform the future program. Activities will be carried out to ensure CBOs and community members in EFCs, including those who are unbanked or have a digital divide, are aware and can fully participate. Staff engagement will include community outreach efforts in EFCs, providing information in various languages, and targeted communication using different forms (print, online, social). The information gathered through this process will help inform the recommendations for a new operations model for the future MBS program.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

The Board action will not have a negative impact on the safety of Metro's patrons or employees. The Metro Bike Share program has demonstrated effectiveness in providing a mobility service to Los Angeles County residents.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Recommendation supports the following strategic plan goals:

1. Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling;
2. Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system; and
3. Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity.

NEXT STEPS

Upon Board approval, staff will complete the negotiations for the contract modification with BTS with the goal of returning in April for approval. Staff will also continue to move forward with the actions as outlined in the Motion Response Work Plan and with the procurement of the consultant teams in support of responding to other aspects of Motion No. 41.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Motion Response Work Plan

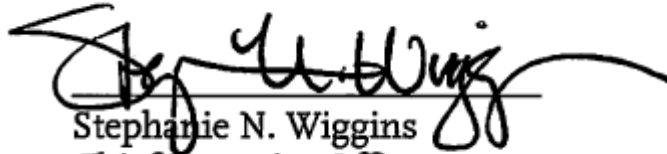
Attachment B - Board Motion Item No. 41 (November/December 2021)

Prepared by: Eric Houston, Senior Manager, Operations, (213) 922-4063

Paula Carvajal-Paez, Senior Director, Operations, (213) 922-4258

Ken Coleman, Deputy Executive Officer, Operations, (213) 922-2951
Shahrazad Amiri, Acting Deputy Chief Operations Officer, (213) 922-3061

Reviewed by: Conan Cheung, Deputy Chief Operations Officer (213) 418-3034



Stephanie N. Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer