



Board Report

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EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MARCH 16, 2017

SUBJECT: ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS THE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS OF OLDER ADULTS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE the **action plan to address the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities**. The action plan contains extensive background information on efforts currently underway at Metro in two distinct areas:

- A. Planning and project programming efforts to identify and recommend actions addressing mobility needs of passengers with disabilities and senior individuals in Los Angeles County, including initiatives mandated under state and federal law; and
- B. Specific enhancements of both public transit infrastructure and service operations to accommodate passenger with disabilities and senior individuals on Metro's fixed-route transit system and complementary paratransit service.

ISSUE

At the June 2016 meeting, the Board approved Motion #47 (Attachment A) directing the Chief Executive Officer to: 1) develop an Action Plan to better address the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities, 2) prepare an annual accessibility report and, 3) work with Access Services to convene an annual countywide forum to address improvements in service coordination and integration.

The motion requested the Action Plan to include five specific elements including:

- A. An overview of agency-wide efforts to serve older adults and persons with disabilities with a focus on activities that go beyond the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements;
- B. Recommended metrics to measure challenges and successes;
- C. A roadmap and timeline to enhance community partnerships and participation of non-profits and other stakeholders;
- D. An evaluation of the feasibility of enhancing the paratransit service provided by Access Services beyond the ADA minimum; and,

E. An analysis of Electric Personal Assistive Mobility Devices.

This report represents the Action Plan and includes how staff will address the numerous elements outlined in the motion. Note that in several cases, as indicated, the Action Plan lays out the future steps to be undertaken in order to adequately address the elements - not all could be initiated, conducted and concluded at the time of this response.

DISCUSSION

The first step in developing the Action Plan requires identification of existing plans, current implementation efforts, and available resources to support enhancing transportation services for older adults and persons with disabilities. Based on TAP data, about 16.5 percent of Metro's total annual ridership consists of older adults and persons with disabilities. Responsibility for working with these riders is shared among several departments.

The Office of Civil Rights is responsible for ensuring that Metro complies with the requirements of the ADA and California's Title 24 and developing programs that go above and beyond the statutory minimums. Countywide Planning and Development Department prepares the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Plan, oversees the allocation of Federal Section 5310 Formula Grants for Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310 program funds for Los Angeles County, and develops new programs related to active transportation and first and last mile services. Operations is involved in many aspects of ensuring the system is fully accessible for older adults and persons with disabilities. The Community Relations Department develops community partnerships and also manages travel training for older adults through the On the Move program. Access Services is a separate, independent agency that is funded from regional sales tax dollars collected by Metro and through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

I. ACTION PLAN

A. Overview of Agency Efforts

1. Overarching Policy Documents & Initiatives

The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

The LRTP, updated last in 2009, provides a vision and the guiding policy behind funding decisions for future transportation projects and programs in Los Angeles County. Among other requirements, these major projects and programs must be developed and operated to meet ADA mandates. In addition, funding for complementary paratransit service is a priority in the adopted LRTP. During the next update, staff will conduct a needs assessment for transportation services by older adults and people with disabilities so a strategic view may be developed as part of the LRTP update. However, the LRTP must be financially constrained so these needs must be evaluated and balanced against other needs within constrained resources. Therefore, the LRTP update will include a cost assessment to ensure investments are made that provide the most benefit. Overall, the strategic view and the LRTP update will need to reflect the significant new baseline created by the passage of Measure M.

The 2016-2019 Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Plan

In July 2015, the Board adopted the locally-developed 2016-2019 Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan for Los Angeles County (Coordinated Plan). This is a long standing federal requirement, wherein the Coordinated Plan “identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, seniors, and people with low incomes (Target Populations); provides strategies for meeting those local needs; and prioritizes transportation services and projects for funding and implementation.” It also documents the considerable investment in transportation which has been made within Los Angeles County and its benefits to address some of the mobility needs of the Target Populations.

The Coordinated Plan was developed through a process that included participation by older adults, persons with disabilities, veterans, persons of low income, representatives of public, private and non-profit transportation and human services providers and other members of the public. The Coordinated Plan also considered existing research, studies, and reports relevant to the Target Populations from Metro, SCAG, Access Services, local governments and nonprofit organizations.

Through these efforts, the Coordinated Plan documents the results of a transportation needs assessment for the Target Populations. Key findings include: heavy reliance on both local and regional transit services ranging from fixed-route to specialized services; north county communities have additional transit needs not being met by existing services; specific mobility challenges exist in using the established transportation network effectively; changes in demographics (aging and languages) are increasing the challenges of providing needed transportation; and difficulty in accessing medical trips.

The Coordinated Plan also provides and prioritizes 38 strategies grouped by five goals to address gaps in services for the Target Populations. The five goals include: 1) fund mobility options, 2) address mobility gaps, 3) provide support services, 4) promote and improve information portals, and 5) enhance accountable performance monitoring systems. Attachment B contains a listing of the 38 subregional and regional strategies to achieve these goals. Importantly, these strategies serve as the list of project types eligible for Section 5310 program funds. However, the needs are much greater than the Section 5310 funding available.

Section 5310 Program

Metro is the Designated Recipient of FTA Section 5310 funds in urbanized areas of Los Angeles County, totaling about \$7 million per year, and is responsible for the planning, programming, distribution and management of these funds. To fulfill our Designated Recipient obligations, a competitive solicitation for projects was conducted in 2015 and the Board approved allocation of available funds to 22 eligible projects for Los Angeles County. The next solicitation for Section 5310 projects is planned for 2017 and the proposed process will be presented to the Board for approval in January 2017. As noted above, projects selected for funding must be included in the adopted Coordinated Plan. Outreach to various stakeholders to receive input on the eligibility requirements, evaluation criteria and funding allocations for the 2017 solicitation has been completed.

Periodically, other federal, state or non-profit discretionary funding opportunities such as the recent FTA Rides to Wellness Demonstration and Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility emerge, and staff will determine how these efforts align and support the future Annual Accessibility Report.

The Office of Civil Rights

Metro's Office of Civil Rights was created in 2011 to oversee and manage the services for users protected under various Civil Rights legislation at the federal and state level and Metro's own civil rights policies. The Civil Rights Office also ensures that Metro is fully compliant with requirements of the ADA and other state and federal requirements for ensuring our system is fully accessible to persons with disabilities. Prior to 2011, Metro had a single staff person assigned to deal with all aspects of customer ADA issues. Today the Office of Civil Rights has a staff of 7 individuals dedicated to improving accessibility for persons with disabilities and ensuring that Metro meets all federal and state accessibility requirements.

The Consolidated Transportation Services Agency

In 1994, in response to the passage of Assembly Bill 120, the Social Services Transportation Act, Metro designated Access Services as the Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA) for Los Angeles County. The role of a CTSA is to facilitate coordination of transportation services to reduce gaps in transportation for low mobility groups including older adults and persons with disabilities. The role of a CTSA is also to achieve cost savings, lower insurance premiums and more efficient use of vehicles and funding resources to serve these disadvantaged groups. The CTSA and its unique supporting legislation allow it to deal with the problems of efficient or duplicative transportations systems and can/should be the leaders in developing new services for the populations with mobility challenges in Los Angeles.

Metro Strategic Plan

The Office of Extraordinary Innovation (OEI) has initiated the development of a Metro Strategic Plan to establish a clear vision for the agency, develop a roadmap to guide Metro in achieving our goals, measure our progress, and ensure that our agency can adapt to the changing needs of our customers and LA County residents, and the way they travel. This includes working with the Board, staff, and the larger community to define mobility goals for the county and enhancing our business strategies to tie programs together across Metro and align them towards a focused purpose. As part of this work, we will be exploring how Metro can better serve all LA County residents, which includes older adults and persons with disabilities, to create and maintain a seamless, world-class transportation system.

2. Technical and Outreach Enhancements to Operational System

There have been a number of new and innovative technical enhancements that have been implemented to address the accessibility on the Metro system. The initiatives include: the G-Tel system that assists disabled riders to gain access to the rail system where turnstiles are latched; specialized interior designs for new bus and rail vehicles to make them more convenient and safer for persons with disabilities and older adults; tactile pathways and directional bars to lead visually-impaired riders through the system; Wayfindr Bluetooth beacon system to help the visually impaired navigate complex terminals; enhanced bus operator training and accessibility fairs at bus divisions to reinforce training; Mystery Rider program that provides ADA checks on bus operators; enhancements to transit terminal information systems to improve provision of information to visually-impaired and other disabled riders; and new rail station lighting criteria. In addition to these enhancements, Metro offers discounted fares to older adults and persons with disabilities. Attachment C contains additional information on these current operational systems.

Additionally, Metro is implementing a number of outreach efforts to improve access to information about reduced fare, services provided and specialized features on the rail and bus system for older adults and persons with disabilities. The programs include a mobile customer service center that visits senior facilities; On the Move Riders Club that provides senior peer-to-peer training; and various travel training activities through the Abilities Expo, Rancho Los Amigos Hospital and the Braille Institute. Attachment C presents further descriptions of these outreach efforts.

In addition to the many technical enhancements and specialized outreach in support of better accessibility to the Metro transit system that have been implemented to date, Metro is pursuing several additional initiatives. These initiatives include: hands-free elevators, stronger signage for reserved (priority) seating, mandatory wheelchair securement, further bus enhancements, grade crossing protection, Countywide Forum on Coordination and Integration of Transportation for Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities, and Mobile Wheelchair Strapping and Marking program to assist passengers with wheelchairs be correctly secured as they ride on Metro buses. Attachment C presents further descriptions of these programs that are being considered. A cost assessment will be conducted as staff determines whether these enhancements should be pursued.

It is the goal of Metro to become the most accessible transit system in the world and these innovative programs go above and beyond the minimum requirements provided in federal and state regulations.

B. Recommended Metrics

The motion passed at the June meeting includes a requirement to develop metrics to measure challenges and successes for providing countywide services for older adults and persons with disabilities. Metro will begin reporting on the proposed metrics in the Annual Accessibility Report that will be prepared as an augmentation of the Coordinated Plan as discussed above. The metrics currently being considered to be included in the Accessibility Report include:

1. Ridership growth rate of older adults on Metro compared to growth rate of countywide older adult population

The purpose of this metric is to determine if ridership on Metro by older adults is growing faster, slower or at the same speed as the population growth of older adults in the county. Data will be obtained from periodic surveys of ridership onboard Metro buses and rail lines and compared to publicly available estimates of the annual growth rate of the population of older adults in Los Angeles County.

2. Free trips (Taps) taken by Access Services members on Metro

This metric measures the use of certified Access members riding Metro. Access members are permitted to ride Metro free of charge in order to encourage the use of Metro rather than the much more expensive paratransit service provided by Access. The opportunity to ride Metro, and most other fixed-route services in Los Angeles at no cost, has encouraged many Access riders to use fixed route rather than Access paratransit.

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3. Number of trips taken by Access Services registrants on Access and number of trips taken by wheelchair registrants on Access Services

The opportunity to ride Metro, and most other fixed-route services in Los Angeles at no cost, has encouraged many Access riders to take as many trips on fixed-route services. These two numbers will show how many trips are being taken on Access and provide an indication of how successful Metro is providing services that are convenient and attractive to users of wheelchairs.

4. Number of Access Services registrants in LA County

It is believed that in recent years the number of Access Services riders has increased due to an increase in the older adult population that are also disabled and, as a result, eligible for ADA paratransit service. As more baby boomers reach retirement age and as older adults suffer further declines in their health, more of them may choose or need to use ADA paratransit services for their transportation needs. This data will allow Metro to compare the growth rate in registrants with the actual number of rides on both Access and Metro and to assess this trend.

5. Trips (Taps) by Los Angeles County Transit Operators Association (LACTOA) Card Holders on Metro

Older adults and persons with disabilities are eligible to obtain a LACTOA TAP Card which entitles the pass holder to receive discounted fares. Knowing the number of Taps from these users will enable Metro to report on use by older adults and persons with disabilities. The data can be separated to provide totals for each category of rider.

6. Number of active LACTOA cards in circulation

This metric, when used in combination with the number of LACTOA Taps, will allow Metro to understand how often older adults or persons with disabilities are using Metro and to measure the success of service enhancements in attracting new rides by older adults or persons with disabilities.

7. Number of annual trips provided and/or program participation as a result of Section 5310 program grant awards

The Section 5310 program provides funds to Metro for the purpose of awarding grants to assist private nonprofit groups and/or governmental agencies in meeting the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities when the transportation service provided is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meet their needs. As part of the awards process, the number of trips that will be taken or program participants served as a result of the grant funding will be monitored. This metric will measure how the grant money is being used to provide transportation options in Los Angeles County.

8. Mystery Rider Accessibility Index

The Office of Civil Rights has developed an Accessibility Index based on the results of the

Mystery Ride program on Metro buses. The Index will come into effect in 2017 following updates to the Mystery Ride questionnaire and it will become a key performance indicator for accessibility. Including this metric will provide a picture of how well Metro equipment and staff are meeting the accessibility standards required by the ADA and Metro policies.

9. Number of Outreach Events and Contacts

This metric will provide an estimate of the number of outreach events attended and the contacts made with older adults and persons with disabilities. The total numbers will include estimates since definite data will not always be available; however it should provide an indication of the strength of our outreach activities.

10. Qualitative Research on Rider Experience

This metric will help Metro better understand the experience of older adults and people with disabilities using the Metro system, including the identification of impediments to the full utilization of available transportation resources by these groups. This will include analysis of available focus group data.

11. Community Feedback by Older Adults and People with Disabilities

This metric will analyze feedback submitted in writing or by telephone regarding concerns by older adults and people with disabilities regarding the provision of Metro Service. Comments will be categorized by subject and frequency.

12. Incidents of Facility Failure Impacting Accessibility at Transit Stations

This metric will monitor the number incidents where transit station facilities, such as elevators and escalators, fail to operate properly and impact accessibility for older adults and people with disabilities. The location and time of the facility failure will be included in the analysis.

The above noted metrics may be modified and other metrics may be added once staff begins developing the Annual Accessibility Report.

C. Roadmap and Timeline to Increase Community Partnerships

As highlighted in the Overview of Agency Efforts, the Coordinated Plan requires extensive outreach and engagement with multiple stakeholders in the disabled and elderly communities, and those who serve them. As we develop the Annual Accessibility Report, staff will assess how this outreach needs to be enriched, and a timeline for doing so. Staff is considering establishing an advisory group to provide input on Action Plan efforts, and assist Metro to expand its reach in providing information to older adults and people with disabilities through advisory member communication networks.

D. Evaluation of Enhancing Access Services Paratransit

Access Services will be undertaking a Comprehensive Operational Review (COR) of its service

delivery model. As part of the review, Access will investigate centralizing its reservations, scheduling and/or dispatch systems to see if it would make the service more efficient. During this review, Access will task the consulting firm with evaluating the feasibility and the costs associated with changing from a next day service to same day service model, and expanding Access' service area beyond the minimum required ¾ mile from a fixed-route corridor to 1.5 miles. Access has awarded a contract for comprehensive operational review. Additionally, Access has issued an RFP and is reviewing new methods for conducting its eligibility review process.

E. Evaluation of EPAMDs

Staff will develop a scope of work in order to study a range of issues related to Electronic Personal Assistive Mobility Devices (EPAMDs) e.g. Segways and other self-balancing 2 wheel devices. These issues will include those specifically directed within the motion including Metro policy review, assessing newer technologies, expanding current Metro shared-mobility programs, infrastructure needs, and potential legislative or policy changes.

The work effort will result in a report focused on opportunities to expand mobility options and complement existing transportation services. We anticipate completion of a report in approximately 9 months, with results to be highlighted within the upcoming annual report also directed by this motion. The study will focus on scenarios and case studies that will evaluate the use of devices for specific types of trips. Recommendations will focus on the trips/devices that are the most promising for meeting the objectives of the motion, but will also consider broader mobility benefits for all users, including first/last mile accessibility to transit.

Work to develop the report will include the creation of a project working group which will advise staff and consultants. The group would consist of Metro departments with applicable expertise including Civil Rights, Bus Operations, Information Technology Services (ITS) and OEI. Additionally, the group will include representatives of older adults and disability communities. It should be noted that ITS recently completed a review of some EPAMDs as part of a Coro Fellowship project. While not focused on older adults or persons with disabilities, the Coro report will provide baseline data useful for this effort.

Anticipated resources to complete a work as described here are reviewed in the Fiscal Impact section of this report. Among the options to be considered will be augmenting an existing study developing a Slow Speed Lane Network Strategic Plan that is currently being developed in conjunction with the South Bay Cities Council of Governments.

II. ANNUAL ACCESSIBILITY REPORT

The Motion approved by the Board also directed staff to prepare an annual accessibility report, which will include at least five elements. These elements include: A) all planned and implemented Coordinated Plan programs and projects funded with federal Section 5310 funds and other fund sources; B) an assessment of first mile/last mile accessibility, connectivity, and opportunities to, from and at transit stations and bus stops; C) an analysis of local return funds utilized and allocated towards services for older adults and people with disabilities; D) steps to improve outreach and education so older adults and people with disabilities are more informed about available services; E)

identification of other metrics to evaluate how Metro and partnering agencies are serving older adults and people with disabilities; F) efforts to expand Metro staff training to increase responsiveness to the needs of the older adults and people with disabilities; and G) summary of results from the Annual Forum and any resulting actions.

Given these elements, the Annual Accessibility Report almost exactly maps with the purpose of the Coordinated Plan that Metro must currently prepare under federal law. For example, the Coordinated Plan states that “addressing the remaining mobility gaps and needs of the Target Populations will require maintaining the breadth of existing transportation options that are already in place and expanding these to accommodate demographic and other changes.” It notes that the region will also need to support nontraditional modes that provide transportation alternatives to the Target Populations and encourage innovation and pilot efforts to meet some hard-to-serve trip needs. Given this significant work to date, and the clear overlap it has with desired elements of the Annual Accessibility Report requested in the motion, and the need to avoid duplication as Metro coordinates and enhances efforts to address the needs of seniors and persons with disabilities, staff will determine how to augment the Coordinated Plan and its attendant community outreach requirements to address many of the motion’s directives.

III. ANNUAL COUNTYWIDE FORUM

Finally, the Board directed staff to convene a countywide forum working jointly with Access Services to address improvements in coordination & integration of services for older adults and people with disabilities. The forum will include: gerontology & mental health specialists; local governmental/non-governmental transportation & social services providers; municipal operators, local jurisdictions and consumers of services. The forum will be held no later than 90 days from the date the Annual Accessibility Report is released.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There will potentially be numerous and significant administrative, operational and capital impacts associated with recommendations in the Action Plan, and the future Annual Accessibility Report identified under this motion. As individual elements are brought forward for implementation, associated costs and the revenues available to meet those will be fully vetted, including resources that will need to be included in the FY18 and future Budgets.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will begin developing the Annual Accessibility Report which will be prepared as an augmentation to the Coordinated Plan. The report is estimated to be released this summer after the 2017 Solicitation of Projects for Section 5310 funding is completed. Staff will present the report to the Board for approval at that time. Metro, in partnership with Access Services, will then convene an annual countywide forum to address improvements in coordination and integration of services to older adults and persons with disabilities. The forum will occur no later than 90 days after the release of the Annual Accessibility Report, estimated to be in late fall

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Motion #47 on Countywide Services for Older Adults and People with Disabilities

Attachment B - The 2016-2019 Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Plan for LA County
Prioritized Strategies by Goal

Attachment C - Existing System and Potential Future Enhancements

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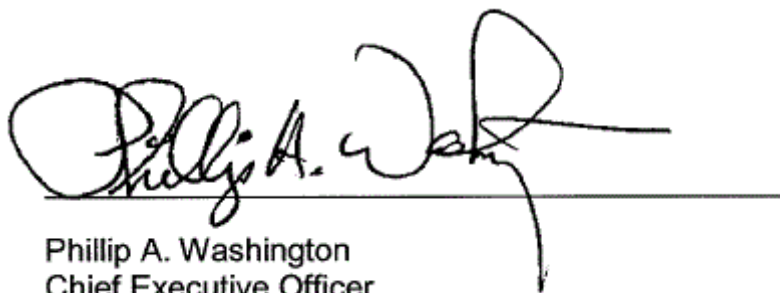
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