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Agenda Number: 28.

**SYSTEM SAFETY, SECURITY AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
APRIL 12, 2018**

SUBJECT: WARNER CENTER SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE report on the proposed Warner Center Service Improvement Plan.

ISSUE

The Orange Line currently provides service to a station in Warner Center at Owensmouth Av and Oxnard St by exiting the Right of Way at Canoga Station onto City streets. The Metro Board approved a motion to electrify the Orange Line by 2020. As a result, there is a need to keep the Orange Line on the Right of Way to allow for charging of the electric buses, which would remove service from Canoga Station to Warner Center. As a result, access between Warner Center and the Orange Line will be provided by a new Circulator operating every 10 minutes to and from the Canoga Station. The Circulator will improve access to the Orange Line by connecting to more destinations with 10 new additional stops. Local buses will also be routed to the Canoga Station to maintain transfers with the Orange Line. This set of service changes will be accomplished at no additional cost by streamlining existing local routes for faster and more direct service, and from removing Orange Line service through Warner Center.

DISCUSSION

There are a number of initiatives that are currently being implemented on the Orange Line and within Warner Center that warrant a comprehensive review of transit service in the area, including:

- 1) Orange Line Electric Bus Conversion - In October 2016, the Metro Board approved a motion to electrify the Orange Line by 2020. The current technology requires "in-line" charging of the buses to ensure adequate electricity is onboard to provide the scheduled service. At this time, charging stations can only be placed on Metro owned property, so the existing Warner Center Transit Hub on Owensmouth Av cannot accommodate this requirement. Therefore, a new Warner Center terminal must be identified along the Orange Line Right of Way.
- 2) Service to New Development - An Orange Line connection was requested to the recently opened Village at Westfield Topanga. Extending the Orange Line to this development would require a substantial investment in the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) amenities such as Ticket Vending Machines and Next Bus information.

- 3) Better Connections to Employment - The existing one Orange Line stop on Owensmouth Av creates a long walk to nearby employment centers. Therefore, the Warner Center Association has requested that staff review alternatives to improve connections between the Orange Line and the employment centers located in South Warner Center.
- 4) Warner Center 2035 - The Warner Center 2035 Plan calls for enhanced transportation services to offset increased development. There are currently planned construction projects throughout Warner Center which are transit oriented development that support convenient access to the Orange Line as well as other destinations within the area.
- 5) U-Pass - Pierce College recently joined the Metro U-Pass program which is expected to generate additional Orange Line ridership. Therefore, any changes to Orange Line service levels should account for this opportunity.

Based on the comments and initiatives discussed above, staff concluded that a comprehensive review of all services in the Warner Center area was warranted to refocus transit service to reflect these opportunities. In order to better understand Warner Center and its future transportation needs, staff met with a number of key stakeholders in the area including developers, City Council Staff and local businesses. The staff received public input at presentations given at the San Fernando Valley Service Council. Ridership on all lines at each stop was analyzed, and a review of TAP data was conducted. The quantitative analysis and qualitative input revealed the following issues:

- Access to retail, new development, local businesses and employment from the Orange Line is limited.
- Local and Rapid routes are not intuitive due to out of direction moves and long one-way loops.
- Due to many turns along the routes, travel time through the area is slow.
- Most customers on Local and Rapid Lines are connecting to the Orange Line, with the greatest stop activity at the Warner Center Transit Hub.

Warner Center Service Improvement Plan

As a result of the analysis, the Warner Center Service Improvement Plan was developed. To guide the plan development, the following study goals were established:

- 1) Create a new transit hub that would allow for direct connections to the Orange Line, reduce transfers, and provide a terminal location for charging electric buses.
- 2) Provide more frequent and direct connections to and from the Orange Line and new transit oriented development planned in Warner Center.
- 3) Establish a simple and intuitive hierarchy of routes on key corridors through Warner Center.
- 4) Improve travel time through Warner Center by streamlining routes and eliminating

unnecessary out of direction moves.

- 5) Expand access to the Village at Westfield Topanga.
- 6) Ensure the Orange Line headway remains the same to Pierce College as scheduled today.

To achieve these goals, the Warner Center Service Improvement Plan includes the following service changes:

New Transit Hub - To address Goal #1, Canoga Station is recommended to be the new transit hub for Warner Center. This location will provide easier connections between the Orange Line and local buses. Existing platforms have shelters, TAP machines, P-Tels and are well lit. Curb space at the Canoga Station exit driveway will serve as layover locations for local buses, eliminating on-street layovers on Owensmouth Av.

New Circulator - As part of the study, a Public Hearing was conducted in May, 2017 to discuss options for a new circulator route that would connect the Orange Line with activity centers throughout Warner Center. Two options were evaluated. Option A would mirror the current Orange Line routing in Warner Center from Canoga Station to Owensmouth Av, and extending it north to Vanowen St to connect with The Village at Westfield. This service would run every 10 minutes throughout the day. Option B was to operate a similar route as Option A, but with an extension south to Burbank Av and Desoto Av. This service would operate every 15 minutes throughout the day.

Upon further review with the San Fernando Service Council, local elected staff and the public, a refined option was developed that will further extend Orange Line access in the south east direction to serve area employment and Kaiser Hospital. This option concentrates high frequency all day, every day service in the area where mixed use transit oriented development has and will continue to occur in the near future. The final Orange Line Circulator route is shown in Attachment A.

Routes Simplification - The recommendation to create a new transit hub at Canoga Station will provide improved access to the Orange Line. Therefore, lines that currently terminate at the Warner Center Transit Hub on Owensmouth Av will need to be routed to Canoga Station. Existing local lines operate large one-way loops, require out of direction moves and several turns, increasing travel time. Three local routes that terminate at the existing Warner Center Transit Hub will be extended to the new Canoga Station, providing a simplified two-way service eliminating a transfer, unnecessary out of direction moves, and improving travel time. Other route changes will provide better connections between Ventura Bl, Topanga Canyon Bl and Sherman Way, and provide improved service along Canoga Bl. Customers who used to transfer to and from local buses or to the Orange Line will still have the same options.

Orange Line Frequency - Currently, the headway to Warner Center is every 8 minutes during the peak travel periods because every other bus goes to either Chatsworth Station, or to Warner Center. By extending local lines to the Canoga Station, customers transferring to the Orange Line will wait only 4 minutes. This is a benefit that will reduce wait time by 100% and improve the overall travel experience.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

The new proposed Canoga Station transit hub will provide increased safety for over 2,000 patrons that currently board and alight at four different stops stretched along Ownesmouth Av. Patrons will now be transferring between the Orange Line and other Metro buses at the Canoga Station, which provides improved lighting, seating, shade, and increased security. Also, due to the proposed straightening of bus routes in the area, numerous turns will be eliminated, thereby reducing accidents.

NEXT STEPS

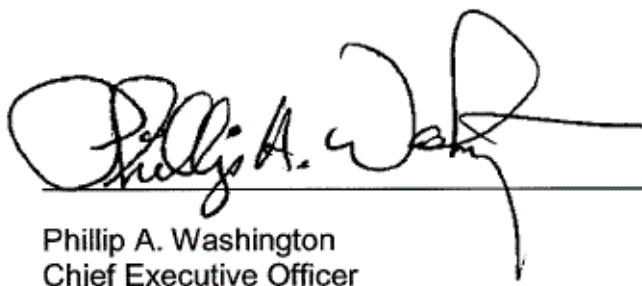
The Warner Center Service Improvement Plan will be implemented as part of the June 2018 service changes. Marketing and Communications staff will begin developing messaging and materials to support the service changes. Extensive marketing and public outreach will take place in the months prior to the proposed changes to support our customers through the transition to the new services.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Warner Center Service Improvement Plan

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