

**Board Report**

File #: 2018-0577, **File Type:** Plan**Agenda Number:** 42.

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 20, 2018****SUBJECT: TRANSIT LINE OPERATIONAL NAMING CONVENTION****ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION****RECOMMENDATION**

DIRECT the Chief Executive Officer to return to the December 2018 Board meeting with a recommendation on a Transit Line Operational Naming Convention, including an implementation plan, and cost estimate.

ISSUE

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) is implementing the largest transportation expansion program in the nation. As Metro grows, the agency will add more rail and bus rapid transit (BRT) lines across LA County. In addition, when the Regional Connector Project is complete, the agency will unite the operations of the Blue and Gold Lines, providing a one-seat ride between Azusa and Long Beach, and the operations of the Gold and Expo Lines, facilitating a one-seat ride between East LA and Santa Monica. The current naming convention impacts the customer experience and contributes to difficulties in navigating the system. As a result, the agency will need to establish the future operational naming convention for the rail and BRT system that can sustain the expansion.

BACKGROUND

Metro's current transit line naming convention is inconsistent. Most names are based on colors (Blue, Red, Gold, Purple, etc.) with one exception - the Expo Line. This is the only transit line that doesn't follow the consistency of the color designation system. As the system grows, continuing with color names will mean selecting line names based on shades of color (i.e. Lime, Rose, Aqua, Olive, Lavender, etc.). This can sometimes be difficult to decipher on maps and signage.

DISCUSSION

Metro's system is growing and changing. There are currently eight rail and BRT lines in Metro's system. With the passage of Measure M in 2016, the agency will build out and operate eight additional rail and BRT lines in the coming years. Staff believes the time is right to establish the naming convention of the future due to the following logic:

Clarity and Consistency

- The agency needs a clear, consistent, uniform navigation system to enhance the riding experience.
- Clarity of information and making it easy to use the system reflects the goals of The Metro Vision 2028 Strategic Plan, which commits to the agency being customer-focused and working to improve customer satisfaction.

The Timing is Right

- The New Blue Improvements is an opportunity to launch a new naming convention
- The Regional Connector will unite the Gold and Blue Lines between Azusa and Long Beach, and the Gold and Expo Lines between East LA and Santa Monica, which will change the existing operations and how the agency will refer to the lines.

World-Class System

- Metro already serves a diverse population that lives, works and plays in LA County, which will grow, especially when the agency welcomes the world for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Staff researched naming conventions used by various transit agencies around the world and found some main alternatives: colors paired with numbers, colors paired with letters, and colors only. In some cases, agencies name their lines for destinations or geographic location. Colors are used in all cases and often paired with another identifying factor since colors define the differences among lines on maps and other informational materials.

Staff then conducted a series of focus groups through a consultant partnership of Consensus and FM3 Research. The team tested the alternatives most commonly used in the transit industry: colors paired with numbers, colors paired with letters, colors only and Metro's current naming convention, a combination of colors and geographic location. Five focus groups were conducted at different locations around LA County with a cross-section of participants representing diverse backgrounds from each county supervisorial district. The focus groups were conducted with English-speaking riders, English-speaking non-riders, Spanish-speaking riders, English-speaking visually impaired individuals, and Korean-speaking residents to get feedback from a group whose language uses a different alphabet. While focus groups do not result in statistically precise data, they are an opportunity to collect qualitative feedback that helps guide a rationale for preferences.

Several findings emerged from the focus groups. Participants felt that consistency across the system is the most important factor when naming the lines, and that naming the lines with logic in mind is important. Non-riders said that simplicity and knowing Metro will expand the system to serve more places makes them more likely to try Metro in the future. Also, participants said if Metro decides to change its operational naming system, to do it as soon as possible to give people the chance to get used to it as the system grows.

When focus group participants were asked which naming convention they preferred most, responses fell into the following order of preference: *(For detail, see presentation attachment.)*

1. Colors paired with numbers
2. Colors paired with letters
3. Colors only
4. Combination of colors and geographic names

While focus group results are an important data point, staff will conduct additional broader research on how the alternatives appear on signage and the trip planner. Research is one of several factors including industry lessons learned that should be considered when making a decision about the transit line naming convention.

Another preference unrelated to the naming convention that emerged during the focus groups among riders and non-riders alike was the desire to have more help at stations to figure out how to get where they want to go (i.e. which lines to take, how to get to the right platform, etc.).

Moving forward, there are some important factors that help shape perspective when considering the operational naming convention for Metro's system. Clear, consistent, simple information enhances the customer experience and makes riding Metro less intimidating. Legacy names like the Expo Line, Gold Line, Crenshaw/LAX Line, etc. and the operational names of the lines can live in harmony. People can still refer to the legacy or corridor names, but consistent operational names are important for navigation purposes. And finally, no naming convention is perfect; there are benefits and challenges with all of them. A robust public education and marketing program will be a key component to helping riders understand the system, while also helping non-riders find the experience more inviting.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Staff is developing cost estimates for a change of signage and customer information across the system, as well as marketing outreach costs to educate the public. If the agency changes to a new naming convention, staff will transition to the new naming system through a phased implementation plan that takes advantage of planned capital projects (i.e. New Blue Improvements, Project, Crenshaw/LAX Project, Regional Connector Project). If approved, the estimates could be presented to the Board along with a staff recommendation and implementation plan at the December meeting.

If the Board chooses to keep the existing naming convention but decides to change the naming convention in the future after some capital projects are complete, it will require retrofitting signage and customer information, which will ultimately result in increased costs.

NEXT STEPS

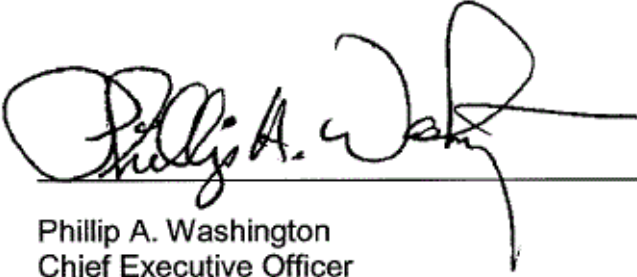
Staff will conduct additional research with diverse groups to test naming alternatives and how they appear on signage and the trip planner. Additional activities will include online quantitative research and field research pop-ups at some Metro rail stations.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment A - Transit Line Naming Focus Groups

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