



Board Report

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Agenda Number: 16.

OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE JANUARY 16, 2020

SUBJECT: PUBLIC REVIEW OF NEXTGEN TRANSIT FIRST SERVICE PLAN

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION

CONSIDER:

1. AUTHORIZING the release of the NextGen Draft Transit First Service Plan for public review;
and
2. APPROVING updates to the Transit Service Policy to reflect the NextGen Regional Service Concept

BONIN AMENDMENT: Add a report back from OMB by April 2020 regarding funding options for the capital portion of the NextGen Transit First scenario.

ISSUE

In July 2019, the Metro Board approved the NextGen Regional Service Concept, which is the framework for restructuring Metro's bus routes and schedules for NextGen and includes:

1. Goals and objectives of the new bus network;
2. Measures of success;
3. Route and network design concepts based on public input and data analysis;
4. Framework for balancing tradeoffs that consider Metro's Equity Platform

Staff have updated the Board adopted Transit Service Policy (TSP) to reflect the Regional Service Concept which was used to develop the NextGen draft service plans. This report requests approval of the updates to the TSP and the release of the Draft Transit First Service Plan for public review starting February 2020.

BACKGROUND

In January 2018, Metro began the NextGen Bus Study aimed at reimagining the bus network to be more relevant, reflective of, and attractive to the diverse customer needs within Los Angeles County.

More specifically, the NextGen Bus Study aims to increase transit use within the County over the next decade by retaining current customers and attracting them to ride more often, reclaiming past customers, and recruiting new customers

The NextGen Bus Study is divided into four phases:

1. Conduct market research, travel demand analysis and existing service evaluation to identify areas of success, deficiency, and gaps within the network;
2. Establish a Regional Service Concept to guide the development of the NextGen Service Plan;
3. Develop the NextGen Service Plan, including routing, stop spacing, frequency, span of service, and coordination with municipal operators;
4. Implement the NextGen Service Plan through extensive engagement and public hearing process.

The first phase of the project consisted of understanding customers and what they want in a bus system. A significant effort went into understanding overall travel patterns within LA County using cell phone location data as well as an analysis of regional TAP use across 26 transit operators. A comprehensive evaluation of the existing bus network (Attachment A), broken down by routes and segments by time of day, was conducted to understand current successes as well as deficiencies and gaps in service. Significant public engagement was conducted with customers and residents with over 10 million touchpoints throughout the County via online engagement, print advertising, pop-up sessions, 260+ stakeholder and community meetings, on-board bus canvassing, and at 20 interactive public workshops to validate the market research, receive comments, and to gain valuable insight into route and area specific concerns and recommendations.

Based on the research and outreach conducted in Phase I, the Board adopted the Regional Service Concept in July 2019 which established:

1. Goals and objectives of the new bus network;
2. Measures of success;
3. Route and network design concepts based on public input and data analysis;
4. Framework for balancing tradeoffs that consider Metro's Equity Platform

This Regional Service Concept provides a planning framework to redesign the bus network.

Transit Service Policy

The policy choices set by the NextGen Regional Service Concept have been incorporated into an updated Transit Service Policy. This Board adopted document translates policies and objectives into criteria and thresholds to be used in designing and managing the Metro bus network. In addition to the changes from NextGen, other changes to the document have been incorporated to reflect the updated Title VI program, including service standards, definitions of what constitute major service changes, and the standards for determining disparate impact on minorities, and disproportionate burden for low income persons.

NextGen Draft Service Plan (Building a World Class Bus System)

In 2018 the Board adopted Metro Vision 2028 as the agency's strategic plan. This plan envisioned

building a World Class Transportation System in which a World Class Bus System is a cornerstone to its success. Building a World Class Bus System requires improving the attractiveness and competitiveness of the bus network. Attractiveness includes addressing issues such as safety and security, cleanliness, comfort, real time arrival information, easy fare payment, wayfinding and signage, and first/last mile access. Competitiveness requires developing a bus network that minimizes the overall travel time to complete a trip compared to the driving alternative. This travel time considers directness of route, access to the bus stop, waiting time, and onboard travel time.

NextGen's primary purpose is to improve the competitiveness of the bus network. However, through this process, improvements to certain aspects of attractiveness can also be achieved. The following outlines a strategy for how NextGen will set the foundation for building a World Class Bus System.

Step 1: Reconnect Scenario

Metro currently provides roughly 7 million revenue service hours (RSH) of bus service per year. The first step in creating a World Class Bus System is to redesign the routes and schedules to attract trips where and when there is the greatest market potential. The lessons learned in Phase 1 present a path forward for reinventing the bus network:

- **85% of LA County residents have used transit at least once in the past year**, THEREFORE, we should attempt to maintain coverage throughout the County by minimizing discontinued segments.
- **Fast/Frequent/reliable service is key**, THEREFORE, we need to create a competitive transit network that reduces overall travel time by optimizing all components of the trip, including walking, waiting, and riding.
- **Metro's current system is not always competitive to get people where they want to go**, THEREFORE routing should be adjusted to reflect the key origins and destinations identified in the cell phone location data.
- **The greatest opportunity to grow ridership is between midday & evening when many trips are short distance**, THEREFORE service levels should be improved for midday, evenings and weekends.
- **Need to integrate Metro's Equity Framework into the planning process**, THEREFORE service improvements should be prioritized for equity-focused areas.

A draft service plan has been developed based on the lessons learned to "reconnect" or realign routes and schedules based on where and when people travel today. Reconnect is estimated to increase ridership by 5% with no additional increase in revenue service hours.

Step 2: Transit First Scenario

Once the bus network is reestablished to reflect the travel patterns of today, the next step in building a World Class Bus System is to: 1) invest in speed and reliability infrastructure, 2) create safe &

comfortable waiting environments, 3) improve the boarding and riding experience, and 4) establish facilities to optimize layovers. These capital improvements create a more competitive and attractive bus network while saving resources to be reinvested into more service.

- Speed and Reliability Improvements - As bus system speeds continue to decline, Metro must allocate an additional \$10 million cumulatively every year to provide the same amount of service. Not only does this reduce the opportunity to increase service, it degrades our competitiveness and attractiveness. Therefore, investing to improve the speed and reliability of the bus system is critical to the success of NextGen. Some improvements can be implemented within METRO's control, such as optimizing stop spacing, all door boarding, and headway-based service management. However, other improvements can only be implemented through collaboration with local jurisdictions, including transit priorities, bus bulb outs, and bus only lanes. Under the Transit First scenario, \$750 million in capital improvements are proposed to support speed and reliability improvements for the regional bus network. This investment is anticipated to save 25%-34% in system speed if fully implemented.
- Customer Wait Environment - Through the significant public outreach conducted in Phase 1, as well as other Metro efforts such as the How Women Travel Study, we learned that an uncomfortable and unsecured wait environment is a significant barrier for customers in using the bus network. This is particularly concerning for women who account for over half of our customers and often travel with young children. Metro completed the Transfer Design Guideline in March 2018. Under the Transit First scenario, we plan to begin implementing the recommendations from this policy document at our busiest wait and transfer locations. This investment is anticipated to cost \$150 million and address several of the safety and comfort issues identified in the NextGen outreach and How Women Travel Study.
- Boarding and Riding Experience - Metro has implemented All Door Boarding on several lines, including Orange Line, Silver Line, Line 720 (Wilshire), and Line 754 (Vermont). Experience on the Silver Line showed that dwell times were reduced by 15% on average, on time performance improved, cash payment declined with more TAP penetration, and significant customer and operator satisfaction. Other strategies to improve boarding and on board experience include level boarding at key stops and improved on board information. These improvements are estimated at \$100 million systemwide.
- Layover Optimization - Due to limited curb space, many routes are extended purely to access a layover location. These unnecessary route extensions cost several million dollars in operating cost per year with little to no benefit to the customer. By investing in off street layover terminals to optimize layover locations, we can reallocate wasted resources and reallocate it to more productive use. In addition, these locations would provide facilities for better regional mobility coordination, a better wait and rest environment for customers and operators, improve bus service reliability, and opportunities for new en route Zero Emissions Bus (ZEB) charging infrastructure.

With the investment in this \$1 billion capital program, we expect to achieve resource savings by generating more revenue service miles/trips within the same revenue service hours. These savings would be reinvested into Transit First service improvements, including:

- Ensure that all regular bus lines operate 7 days per week, including weekend service on eight lines;
- Ensure no wider than 30 min headways on any line between 6:00 am and 7:00 pm;
- Expand owl (overnight) service on an additional eight lines;
- Increase weekday midday and evening service levels;
- Increase weekday evening service levels.

Investing “one time” capital dollars into transit supportive infrastructure would increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of the bus network, while freeing resources to reinvest into service enhancements. Under the Transit First scenario, these benefits are expected to generate a 15-20% increase in ridership (10-15% over Reconnect) without additional increases in revenue service hours.

Step 3: Future Funding Scenario

Should future funding be secured through efforts such as de-congestion pricing, additional resources can be added to the Transit First network. However, without disincentives for driving, there will be diminishing returns on benefits since most customers would already have been served well within the Transit First Scenario. Therefore a 34% increase in revenue service hours would only be expected to yield a 10% increase in ridership over Transit First.

Summary of Benefits

The following is a summary of benefits from each scenario described above.

	Existing Conditions	Reconnect Scenario	Transit First Scenario	Future Funding Scenario
Revenue Service Hours	7 million	7 million	7 million	9.4 million
Revenue Service Miles	75 million	75 million	82 million	95 million
# High Freq Lines ¹ (weekdays)	16	28	29	46
# High Freq Lines ¹ (weekends)	2	14	14	19
Pop within walk access to High Freq Lines (weekdays)	900k	2.15m	2.17m	2.96m

Pop within walk access to High Freq Lines (weekends)	630k	1.14m	1.18m	1.49m
Ridership Change ²	0	+5%	+15-20%	+25-30%
% Riders who lose convenient access to transit ³	0	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%

Notes

¹ Every 10 min or better

² Compared to Existing Conditions

³ Beyond a 5 min walk (.25 mile) to a transit stop

Recommendation

Based on the benefits and costs identified above, staff recommends that the Board approve the Transit First scenario as the NextGen Service Plan to be released for public review and comment starting February 2020. This scenario includes:

- Service adjustments recommended through the Reconnect scenario (revenue service hour neutral);
- \$1 billion in transit supportive capital infrastructure to improve speed and reliability, customer wait environment, boarding and riding experience, and layover optimization.
- Reinvestment of resource savings from speed infrastructure and layover optimization into additional revenue service as outlined above

If fully implemented, the Transit First scenario is expected to achieve a 15-20% increase in ridership over current levels.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Approving the Transit First scenario for public review and updates to the Transit Service Policy will not have an impact on the FY20 budget. However, future implementation of any components of the Transit First scenario will be evaluated for financial impact at that time based on cost and implementation schedule. Funding will be identified and programmed into the appropriate annual budget.

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 study also encompasses two sub-goals: 1) Target infrastructure and service investments towards those with the greatest mobility needs; and 2) Invest in a world class bus system that is reliable, convenient, safe, and attractive to more users for more trips.

NEXT STEPS

Should the Board approve the recommendations above, staff will begin the public outreach process to review all route and schedule changes within Transit First with stakeholders and the public. Public workshops will be held between February and March 2020 followed by community and stakeholder meetings/briefings. The formal public hearing process to approve the service changes for implementation is scheduled to begin in June 2020 with Service Council consideration of approval in August 2020. If approved by the Service Councils, the final NextGen service plan will be presented to the Board for approval in September 2020. Assuming approval, the service plan will be implemented in two to three starting in December 2020, then June 2021 and possibly December 2021.

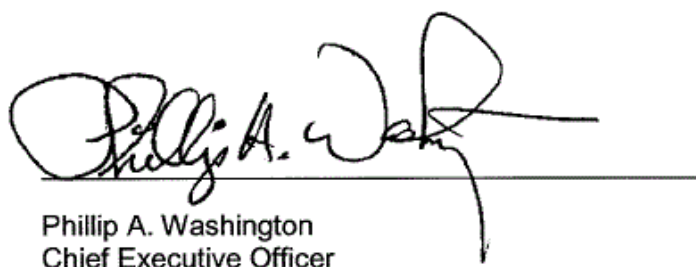
As a complementary effort, staff will continue to work with LADOT through the established traffic engineering working group to develop annual work programs to design, engineer, fund and construct the speed and reliability infrastructure. The customer experience and layover infrastructure will also be further defined and scoped. The individual elements of the Transit First capital program will be presented to the Board for approval of Life of Project (LOP) budget as they are defined and programmed through the annual budget development process for implementation.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - NextGen Transit First service plan
Attachment B - Transit Service Policy

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