



Board Report

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Agenda Number: 29.

OPERATIONS, SAFETY AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE JUNE 16, 2022

SUBJECT: JUNE 2022 RESTORATION AND CHANGES

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE a status report on June 2022 service change and restoration of 200,000 annualized bus revenue service hours.

ISSUE

Metro implements transit service changes (bus and rail) in June and December of each year. Metro plans to implement the June service change on Sunday, June 26, 2022. With the changes, annualized bus revenue service hours will increase from approximately 6.3 million revenue service hours to 6.5 million revenue service hours.

BACKGROUND

Metro's twice-annual service change program allows Metro to improve the customer experience through revised transit routes and schedules. However, since the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, multiple service changes have been implemented to respond to the impacts on ridership and operator availability:

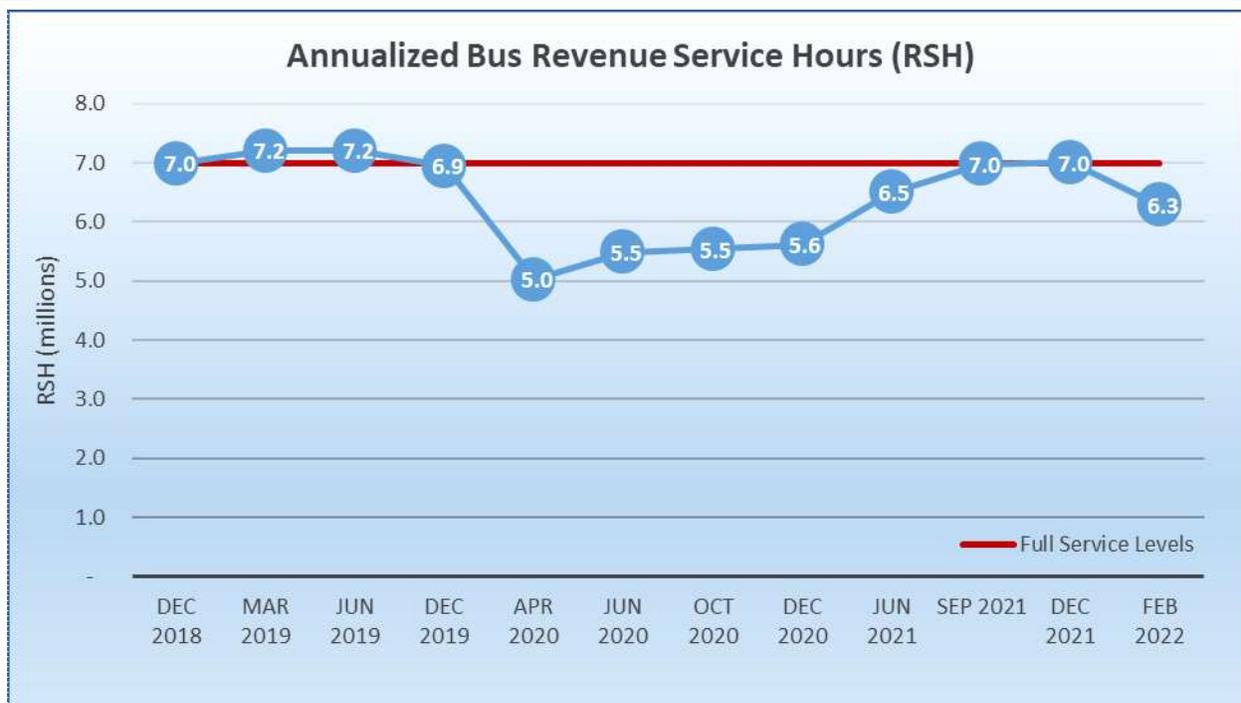
- At the beginning of the Covid pandemic, service levels were reduced by 30% in **April 2020** from 7.0M annualized Revenue Service Hours (RSH) to 5.0M - representing the deepest cut in service during the pandemic. The reductions were made as a result of three factors: 1) 70% decline in bus ridership, 2) significant loss of sales tax revenues, 3) high service cancellation rates close to 20% due to operators out due to Covid infection, taking care of family with the virus, and childcare needs due to the Safer at Home orders.
- As ridership rebounded to about 50% of pre-Covid levels in **June 2020**, service levels were increased to 5.5M annualized RSH to meet additional demand and to ensure social distancing.

- By **June 2021**, ridership rebounded to 65% of pre-Covid levels. As such, and per Board approved Motion 27.1 by Director Garcetti, service levels were increased to 6.5M annualized RSH.

 - Service levels were fully restored to 7.0M annualized RSH in **September 2021** as directed by Motion 27.1.

 - Unfortunately, due to the Omicron variant of the Covid virus, we saw a significant increase in operator absences. This, coupled with the shortage of operators, consistent with the National labor shortage, and higher attrition rates, resulted in a significant shortage of available operators and thus an increase in canceled service (as high as 15%-20%) and ordered call backs of available operators to work. No service adjustments disproportionately impacted Equity Focused Communities and contributed to operator fatigue, burnout, and low morale.

 - In order to stabilize the system, a strategic service reduction throughout the network with an equity lens using the NextGen framework was implemented (7.0M RSH was reduced by 10% to 6.3M RSH in **Feb 2022**.)
 - This temporary reduction has resulted in a much more reliable and predictable system for our customers, balances the passenger loads, evens out headways, and values our employees by significantly reducing the ordered call backs that were fatiguing our operators resulting in higher attrition.
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Conditions for an Equitable and Reliable Service Restoration

At the January 2022 Board meeting, Staff reported that full service restoration (7.0 M RSH) requires all conditions below to be met:

- No pandemic spike, no more than 30 new COVID cases per month for operators;
- Metro operator numbers (4,003) required to meet the needs of 7.0M RSH;
- No more than 200 mandatory (ordered) call-backs per week systemwide; and
- No more than 2% systemwide bus service cancellations.

Staff also indicated the potential for progressive restoration. Specifically, if sustained progress towards these conditions are realized, incremental service recovery can begin with the June 2022 service change.

DISCUSSION

The June service change revises schedules to provide more reliable bus service with schedules adjusted to reflect increased road traffic across the network as the impacts of the pandemic reduce. The June 2022 service change also marks the beginning of service level restoration based on increased operator availability, following the temporary reduction made in February 2022 due to an operator shortage.

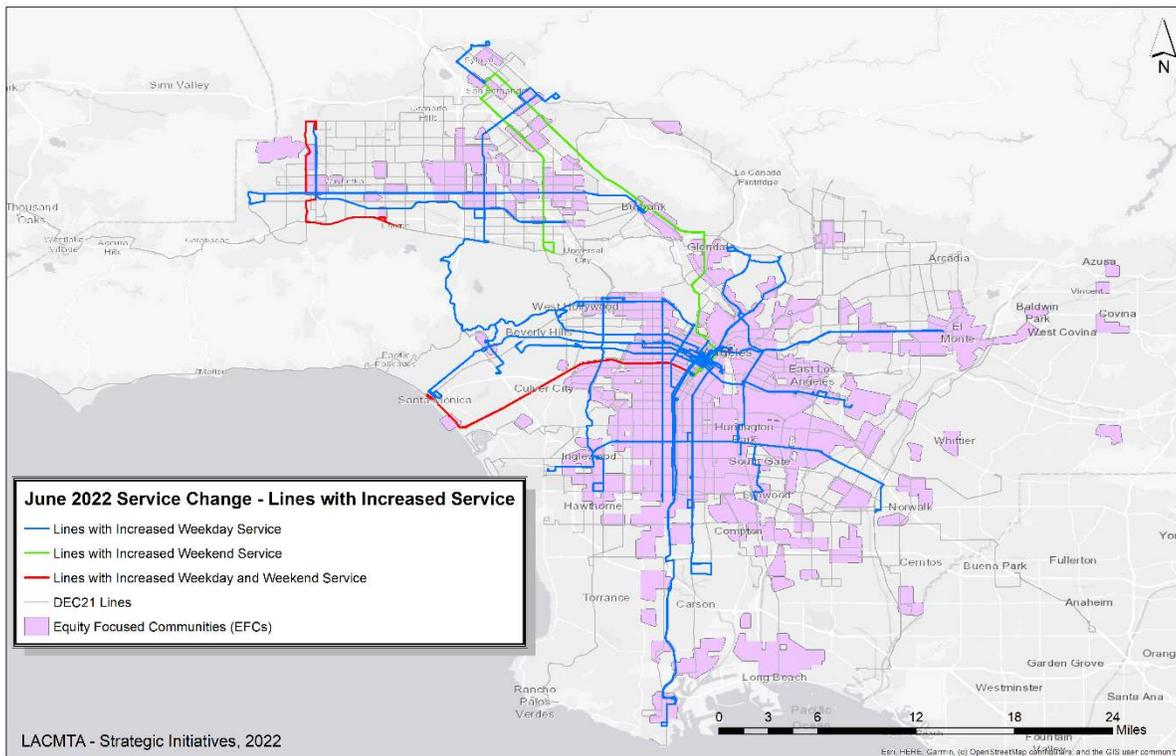
The restoration framework focuses on Service Quality, Valuing our Employees, and NextGen. The new schedules will value our operators by giving them the time needed to operate each trip safely

and reliably and obtain rest breaks at the end of trips. Some of the longest shift lengths will also be reduced. The level of service restoration has been set to avoid spikes in cancelled service and reduce ordered call backs. The changes are consistent with Board approved Motion 43 by Directors Mitchell, Solis, Bonin, and Garcetti for service restoration and are based on the NextGen Bus Plan.

Effective on Sunday, June 26, 2022, the service change focuses on the following key areas of improvement for Metro bus service:

- Begin the process of restoring bus service levels with 19 weekday, 4 Saturday, and 3 Sunday directly operated bus lines having service expanded based on lines with trips experiencing the highest load factors. Map 1 below is provided on the following page to illustrate where the lines with these increased service levels operate. Key locations served by these improved lines include downtown Los Angeles, El Monte Bus Station, California State University Los Angeles, LAC USC Medical Center, Eagle Rock, Harbor Gateway Transit Center, Venice, downtown Santa Monica, Westwood/UCLA, North Hollywood Station, downtown Burbank, Canoga Park, and Olive View Medical Center at Sylmar.
- Improving service reliability (on-time performance) with revised schedules with added time for 65 weekday, 42 Saturday, and 25 Sunday bus lines, in response to increased ridership and road traffic as the economy recovers from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- As planned in the NextGen Bus Plan, Line 130 East of Artesia A Line Blue Station will transition to become Long Beach Transit Route 141. This follows the western section of Line 130 becoming Torrance Transit Line 13 in June 2021.
- Temporary reductions to service levels on seven weekday, two Saturday, and one Sunday contracted lines to ensure reliable service delivery.
- Other minor route changes. Full details are included in Attachment A.

Map 1 - June 2022 Service Change - Lines with Increased Service



There will be no changes to rail service levels as part of the June 2022 service change. Metro continues to prepare for the launch of the new Crenshaw/LAX and Regional Connector rail lines.

Full Restoration Forecast

For June, we are balancing our approach to service restoration by valuing our employees with schedule changes that better match the increased traffic experienced today and eliminating the longest assignments. We are also ensuring that we maintain a low level of service cancellations and increase on time performance for our customers by restoring services that match our available operating staffing levels.

Further service restoration is expected by September. Depending on progress with new operator hiring and allowing for two new rail service startups, it may be necessary to complete the full restoration of the 7 million revenue service hours (annualized) consistent with the NextGen Bus Plan in December 2022.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Implementation of Metro’s June 2022 service change is consistent with the Board approved FY2022 Annual Operating Budget and is recommended as part of the FY23 Annual Operating Budget. The planned changes are made within the allowed budget for revenue service hours in each of these budget years.

EQUITY PLATFORM

Two key focuses of service restoration and service reliability form the largest components of the June 2022 service change. These changes help ensure the best possible service is provided to those who rely on transit the most. In the first few months of 2022, over 70% of ridership activity (boardings + alightings) has occurred in Metro's Equity Focus Communities (EFCs).

The June 2022 service change will improve both the quality and quantity of service provided across the Metro bus network and especially in EFCs. 10 of the 20 bus lines seeing added service and 35 of the 69 lines with revised schedules for improved on time performance in the June 2022 service change have greater than 50% of their line miles located in EFCs. The additional service added in the June 2022 service change ensures Metro begins the process of restoring the full 7 million revenue hours of service planned under the NextGen Bus Plan. This plan allocated the highest service levels to equity focus areas where high quality transit is a key to enhanced mobility for residents.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The recommendation supports strategic plan goal #1: Provide high quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling. The service changes also respond to the sub-goal of investing in a world class bus system that is reliable, convenient, safe, and attractive to more users for more trips.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will implement the June 2022 service change on Sunday June 26, with the marketing of the changes occurring beginning June 12 and continuing up to and beyond the implementation date. Implementation will include staff attending major stops to inform riders of changes, as well as printed materials (summary brochure and schedules) available on buses, a special service change section on Metro.net, social media and Source posts, and signage placed at all impacted bus stops informing of the changes.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Description of June 2022 Service Change

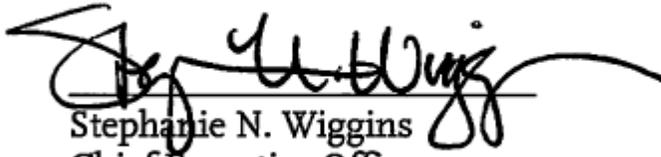
Attachment B - Motion 10.1

Attachment C - Motion 27.1

Attachment D - Motion 43

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