

**Board Report**

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**OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE  
JUNE 15, 2023****SUBJECT: JUNE 2023 SERVICE CHANGE****ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE****RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE a status report on the June 2023 bus and rail service changes effective Sunday June 25, 2023.

**ISSUE**

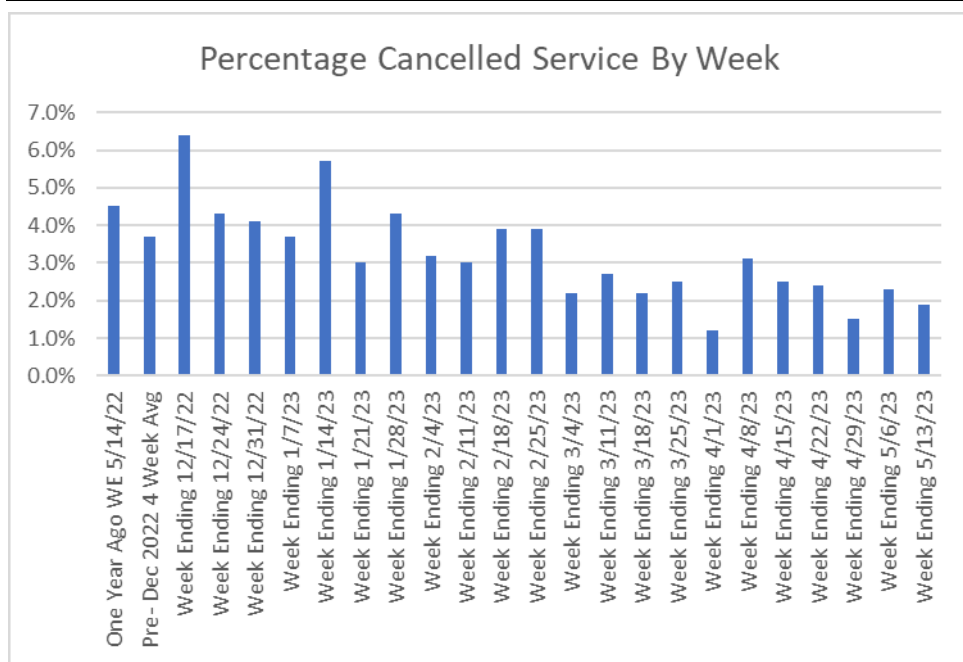
Metro regularly makes service changes each June and December, to improve service for our riders on a predictable schedule without an excessive number significant changes each year. These changes are also coordinated with bus and rail operator assignment changes required by labor contract. In December 2022, Metro restored the full scheduled 7 million revenue service hours (annualized) of bus service, based on the NextGen Bus Plan approved by the Metro Board in October 2020.

This report describes Metro bus and rail service changes being implemented in June 2023, with a primary focus on service reliability.

**BACKGROUND**

With the COVID-19 cases now having much less impact on the community and Metro transit system, in 2023, Metro is resuming the usual practice of twice-annual service changes. This allows Metro to improve the customer experience through revised transit routes and schedules. Metro is seeing few cases of COVID among the workforce, and the hiring and training of many new transit operators continues. Metro looks forward to being fully staffed with bus operators by mid-year. As Table 1 below shows, service cancellations have declined steadily since the December 2022 service change. Cancellations will continue to decline as more new operators are hired and trained.

**Chart 1: Weekly Bus Service Cancellation Rates Dec 22 to Apr 23**



**DISCUSSION**

For the June 2023 service change, Metro will continue to schedule the full 7.0 million revenue service hours (annualized) that were restored in December 2022. This followed a ten percent temporary reduction in bus services in February 2022 due to the acute bus operator shortage and impacts to operator availability from the spike in COVID-19 Omicron variant cases.

The main focus of the June 2023 service change is to improve the on-time performance of bus and rail service. On time performance has averaged 70.8 percent in 2023, below the goal of 78.5 percent. A total of 65 weekday, 43 Saturday, and 42 Sunday bus schedules, and the Red (B) and Purple (D) Line subway rail schedules have been reviewed and adjusted to better match current traffic levels and travel times in support of improved on time performance towards achieving the goal of 78.5 percent. Staff is committed to the safety and satisfaction of both Metro operators and customers. To meet this commitment, staff plan enough time for operators to drive safely on each trip and take rest breaks at the end of each trip. Staff may slightly adjust some trip times and numbers in order to give our valued customers a more reliable service with reduced wait times overall for riders.

There are also ten bus lines that will have route changes either associated with new Regional Connector light rail service through downtown LA, the NextGen Bus Plan to improve service connections, or address long term construction impacts. Eight lines have trips added or extended to better service our customers by offering more frequent service direct to key destinations.

The June 2023 service change also includes a 6-month pilot program for an operating concept, known as “Headway-Based Service Management.” This pilot will be conducted on Line 16 on West 3<sup>rd</sup> St between Downtown LA and West Hollywood, beginning on Monday, July 10. Under this pilot, service will be managed based on regularity and of headways rather than a focus on adherence to

timepoints. This line is one of Metro's highest frequency well used bus services, but it experiences a relatively low on time performance of 64.1 percent (2023 year to date) versus system average of 70.5 percent and goal of 78.5 percent). The line can also frequently see bunching of buses, all of which results in less reliable service for riders.

For high frequency lines, such as Line 16, headway based service management provides dedicated supervision at terminals and managing the line from Bus Operations Center. A tool is also provided to each operator's bus to help communicate their position in relation to the bus before and after them and help them adjust to maintain more even intervals between buses. This provides the advantage of operating at the current speed of traffic, vs. adhering to a schedule that may require buses to hold at a timepoint if traffic is faster. It also ensures that buses will arrive at more consistent intervals, reducing average wait times for riders, reducing bunching, and balancing the loads between buses and improving the consistency of service. Buses will operate on a scheduled start and end times for each trip weekdays between 5 a.m. and 9 p.m., eastbound and westbound. There will not be intermediate timepoints as the high frequency of service of the line (every 5-6 minutes at peak times morning and afternoon and every 8 minutes in the midday period) mean riders can walk to their local stop and experience a more consistently short average wait time to board the next Line 16 bus.

The goal of the pilot is to test whether this operating format can improve the customer experience with overall lower wait times, more consistent intervals between buses, and increased speeds when traffic is lighter. Instead of an overall target of 78.5 percent on time for each trip at timepoints (1 minute early to 5 minutes late), this program targets intervals between buses, such as 8-minute scheduled intervals with actual interval targeted to be between 6 and 10 minutes 80 percent of the time. The program will also target an on-time departure within one minute of schedule from the first stop on each trip, achieved through more line supervision. For trips departing weekdays outside of the hours of 5 a.m. and 9 p.m., and all-day weekends, operators will still observe intermediate timepoints for Line 16.

For more details on these changes, please refer to Attachment A.

As is the practice for all service changes, implementation will be supported by staff assigned to stops with more significant changes as well as Metro Ambassadors throughout the system during the week leading up to the change to inform riders of route changes. In addition, printed materials on the changes will be distributed starting two weeks ahead of the service change (summary brochure, service change notices, and updated schedules for each impacted line) on buses, a dedicated service change section on Metro.net, social media and Source posts, and on signage installed at all impacted bus stops informing riders of the changes. This will also occur for the launch of the Line 16 headway-based service management pilot that begins July 10.

Metro continues to focus on new operator hiring and retention to maintain a high level of reliability in delivering scheduled service with minimal cancellations.

## **EQUITY PLATFORM**

The June 2023 service change focuses on improving the reliability of service delivery with increased on time performance. Lines are reviewed based on need, as determined by documented lower on

time performance and feedback from operators and customers. Of the 65 weekday, 43 Saturday, and 42 Sunday lines with revised schedules for improved reliability, 27 weekday, 18 Saturday, and 17 Sunday lines have over 50% of their route miles operating in EFCs. Overall service cancellations are low, as reflected in Table 1, and should continue to decline as additional new bus operators are hired to achieve and maintain full operator staffing levels.

The continued operation of the full 7 million revenue hours of service based on the NextGen Bus Plan allocates the highest service levels to EFCs where high-quality transit is a key to enhanced mobility for residents. Metro will continue to receive feedback on the changes directly from riders at bus stops, from Metro Ambassadors, through the Metro Customer Service call center, the Metro website, social media blog (The Source), and at the five Metro Regional Service Council meetings each month.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

These service changes support 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**

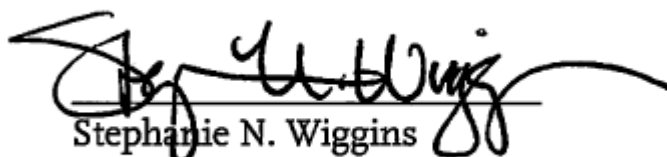
Staff will implement the June 2023 service change on Sunday, June 25, 2023. with the marketing of the changes occurring beginning June 11, and continuing up to and beyond the implementation date. Additional outreach will also be conducted for Line 16 pilot of headway-based service management, which is planned to launch Monday July 10, 2023.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - Description of June 2023 Service Change

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