



Board Report

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Agenda Number: 30.

REVISED
SYSTEM SAFETY, SECURITY AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
AUGUST 18, 2016

SUBJECT: PERFORMANCE UPDATES ON LINE 501 PILOT EXPRESS BUS SERVICE

**ACTION: APPROVE CONTINUED OPERATION OF LINE 501 EXPRESS BUS SERVICE AND
ADOPT STAFF'S RECOMMENDED SERVICE MODIFICATIONS**

RECOMMENDATION

CONSIDER:

- A. Extending **Line 501 Pilot Express Bus Service** for an additional 180 days; and
- B. Approving modification of the service to improve scheduling efficiencies and increase service.

ISSUE

On October 2015, the Metro Board approved staff's implementation plan for a 180 day pilot bus program. The new service was expected to mitigate some of the impacts to travel in this region caused by the Interstate 5 construction expansion project in the Burbank area, as well as connect residents of the San Gabriel Valley via the Metro Gold Line to the San Fernando Valley Metro Orange and Red Lines. A new express bus service, Line 501, began service on March 1, 2016. The Board requested staff report back with a review of the operation and performance based on criterion established at the start of service.

Line 501 was designed to be a frequent service that provided quick service connecting the Orange Line with the Gold Line with few stops in high demand areas such as the Burbank Media District and Glendale. The route was placed on the freeways as much as possible to expedite travel. Caltrans assisted by providing revised HOV entrance and exit locations so this bus service could enter the HOV lanes as soon as possible.

In the implementation report approved by the Board, it was recommended that the performance of the new express line should be at least 25 passengers per revenue bus hour, which is half of the Metro system average of 50 passengers per revenue bus hour. At the rate of 25 passengers per bus hour, this line was expected to attract 1,750 riders on an average week day. If performance measures could not be achieved, it was stated that staff should take corrective actions to improve the attractiveness of the line or tailor the service to better match ridership patterns.

As part of the approval to operate the service, staff was to return at the end of 180 days with a performance report and recommendation to continue, modify or discontinue the service.

DISCUSSION

Prior to implementation, staff worked closely with LADOT, Burbank Bus, Pasadena Transit and Glendale Beeline to ensure that seamless connections are being made with Line 501. In addition, the City of Burbank currently operates Burbank Bus NoHo to Airport route which provides a direct connection from North Hollywood Station to the newly renamed Hollywood Burbank Airport and other destinations near Burbank's Empire Center.

In preparation, Metro Communications department began developing a marketing campaign to help brand and promote the new service. A special bus wrap with matching billboards and brochures were developed. The products were also cross advertised with the Metro Gold Line extension to Azusa opening.

An extensive marketing program on the new Metro Express service was initiated a month prior Line 501 initiating service, and is continuing today. This program is outlined in **Attachment A**.

Prior to the opening of Line 501, Communications, Light Duty employees, and Service Planning staff began handing out brochures to Metro Orange and Red Line patrons. A ribbon cutting was televised and featured on the nightly news, and radio and newspaper stops were purchased. Once the line began, Metro Commute Services began an outreach effort that reached 40 businesses. First, they were emailed and mailed, and later called to further advertise the service.

Findings

Once the service began, Service Planning staff rode the buses and met patrons along the route. Metro Customer Relations also received request for additional stops. While the criterion for the service was to provide fast express service, it became evident that a few additional stops were needed, as shown in **Attachment B**. The implementation of these stops was in an effort to help improve sagging ridership. On June 12, 2016, two stops in each direction were added to Line 501. These stops provide additional connectivity to other bus lines and improve accessibility by serving new destinations along the route. The new stops were placed at Olive Ave / Alameda Ave and Lankershim Bl / Vineland Ave. Onboard notices were distributed and marketing materials were updated to advertise the change. Weekday ridership continues to grow, and adding these two stops provides improved access to the Burbank Media District employment center.

As approved by the Board, this line was expected to attract 1,750 riders on an average week day. The following shows improvements in ridership since April 2016 (the first full month of operation), but it has not reached the expected patronage, as of June 2016.

Average Daily Boardings			
Month	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday
May April	511	280	186
June May	959	472	410
June	971	558	394
July	1,079	549	433

Attachment C shows Line 501 daily boardings by stop.

Considerations

June 2016 ridership data shows that Line 501 is still not performing at expected levels. Based on the Route Performance Index, the measure used to evaluate the performance of all Metro bus lines, Line 501 index is 0.36. Metro bus lines are considered to be low performers if their score is 0.60 or lower. Ridership on Line 501 would need to increase to 1,580 daily to exceed an index value of 0.60.

Weekend ridership on Line 501 is very low, averaging 9 boarding passengers per bus service hour. Weekday ridership on average is better but still only 12 boarding per bus hour. The highest ridership demand periods are weekday morning and afternoon peaks.

Staff recommends that the weekend service be reduced from every 30 minutes to every 45 minutes and that the span of service be reduced to operate between 8am and 8pm. These actions would save 2,100 annual revenue bus hours. These savings could be reinvested into an expanded weekday peak period service. Presently Line 501 operates every 15 minutes during weekday peaks and every 30 minutes during weekday mid-day and weekends. Using the weekend service hours during the weekday peak periods would allow service to be operated every 12 minutes during heart of each peak period. This would make the service more attractive and easier to use during the highest ridership demand periods.

Considerations

Metro staff has met with Glendale Beeline and a representative from the Crescenta Valley community to explore potential improved transit connections from Line 501 to the Glendale Beeline, LADOT Commuter Express Lines 419 and 549. A meeting was conducted with Metro, Glendale Beeline staff and Bus Operations Subcommittee. It was determined that an online survey of residents be developed by Metro to assess the area transit connections and potential demand in the Glendale/La Canada Flintridge area. Neighborhood councils will be responsible for administering the survey.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

Metro Line 501 reduces traffic on area freeways and streets, thereby improving safety to area motorist.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Adoption of the staff recommendation would retain the same amount of bus service hours on Line 501 as are currently operated resulting in no added cost for this enhanced service, however, there would be a need to add two buses to the peak periods.

Impact to Budget

No net change in operating cost would be incurred by approving the staff recommendation.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Continuing the existing weekend and weekday peak period's service would maintain bus service as operated today. Staff does not recommend this alternative as weekend ridership is low, and resources from the weekend service could be redeployed into more frequent weekday peak hour service. Weekday peak service is now every 15 minutes, and would increase to every 12 minutes.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval, proposed changes to Line 501 could be implemented as early as October 2016.

ATTACHMENTS

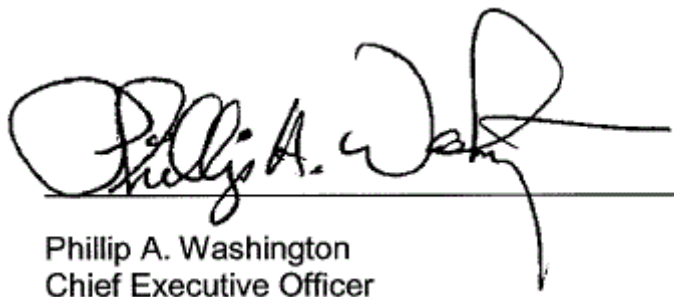
Attachment A - Line 501 Marketing Efforts

Attachment B - Line 501 Map

Attachment C - Line 501 Daily Boardings

Prepared by: Jon Hillmer, Executive Officer, (213) 922-6972
Scott Page, Director, (213) 922-1228

Reviewed by: James T. Gallagher, Chief Operations Officer (213) 922-4424



Phillip A. Washington
Chief Executive Officer