



Metro

Metropolitan Transportation Authority

One Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2952

213.922.21
metro.net

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**SYSTEMS SAFETY & OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
JANUARY 19, 2012**

SUBJECT: METRO SILVER LINE UPDATE

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file report on Metro Silver Line update.

ISSUE

The Metro Silver Line has been operating for two years. This report provides a review of the initial project, an update since its inception, including improvements, patronage, and future service expansion.

DISCUSSION

Since December 13, 2009, commuters traveling to and from the San Gabriel Valley through Downtown Los Angeles to Gardena and Carson have enjoyed a through-bus service that eliminates transfers and improves service reliability. Metro Silver Line, outfitted by a fleet of new 45-foot buses with unique branding, provides consistent peak hour bus service operating every 5 to 10 minutes in the morning and afternoon, and mid-day service every 15 minutes. The new buses provide more seats, and the frequent service reduces wait times along the route. A flat fare of \$2.45 eliminates zone charges and zone checks.

From El Monte Station, buses travel west to Downtown Los Angeles along the I-10 El Monte Busway, serving stations at Cal State LA, County/USC Hospital, and Union Station. In Downtown Los Angeles, service operates faster by only serving stops with high patronage at key locations, such as City Hall, Civic Center, Bunker Hill, 7th St./Metro Center, Olympic Bl. (LA Live), Pico Bl. (STAPLES Center, Convention Center), Washington Bl. (LA Trade Tech College), and Exposition Bl. Buses then enter the Harbor Transitway on the I-110 Freeway, serving stops at 37th St/USC, Slauson, Manchester, Metro Green Line, Rosecrans, and terminate at the Harbor/Gateway Transit Center (formerly Artesia Transit Center).

From the beginning of service, ridership continues to climb each month. As of October, 2011, average daily ridership exceeds 11,000 boardings. This is a 70% increase in ridership since its inception two years ago.

Program Goals and Objectives

The Metro Silver Line utilizes two popular freeway segments with High Occupancy Vehicle lanes, both terminating in Downtown Los Angeles. Prior to the Metro Silver Line, six individual express lines operated the same corridors, all of which also operated local service segments prior to entering the HOV lanes. Service planning staff established service guidelines for studying and ultimately designing the service:

- Reduce duplication on the HOV lanes and in Downtown Los Angeles;
- Analyze stop usage in Downtown;
- Improve on-time performance of the express service and local feeder lines;
- Generate a service savings yet improve service frequency; and,
- Provide a branded service that was intuitive for current and new patrons.

Planning Steps to Implementation

Prior to implementation of the Metro Silver Line, Service planning staff studied existing patronage travel data, service scenarios, bus stop usage, and fare types to determine a need for an improved express service. Areas of study included:

- Survey of existing patrons to determine need. Service planning staff positioned at El Monte Station and Harbor/Gateway Transit Center met patrons, staffed information tables, and rode buses.
- Determine patronage impacts at El Monte Station and Harbor/Gateway Transit Center. It was proposed that the existing six express lines, which also operated locally on surface streets, would be folded into a new transit center to transit center route, and the local portions would be operated as stand alone routes. The data showed that patronage turnover was quite large at the transit centers, and only 10% to 15% of the existing through express riders would have to transfer. Also, patronage on the existing express lines mostly came from the transit center park-and-ride, or transferring patrons from other lines.
- Study the existing fare structure to speed boarding and utilize the new TAP card. The fare structure of the old express lines included three fare types on each line: a local fare, plus two zone increments. Data also showed that most patrons boarding at El Monte Station and Harbor/Gateway Transit Center were paying the two zone fare of \$2.45. To reduce confusion, improve boarding and on-time performance, and better utilize the TAP card, a flat fare of \$2.45 was established. To accommodate cash paying passengers who would require an additional transfer due to the new route alignment, the Metro Day Pass is valid for boarding without requiring additional fare.
- Propose a Downtown Los Angeles route alignment. Stop usage and the routes of the six express lines were reviewed. Work and new travel destinations, such

as the STAPLES Center and LA Live, were reviewed to develop a route that was best utilized and the fastest route through downtown.

First Day and Beyond

The Metro Silver Line began service on Sunday, December 13, 2009. Metro staff, prior to this day, provided information tables at El Monte Station and Harbor/Gateway Transit Center. On Monday morning, December 14, commuters were aware and ready to ride the new service. During the first two weeks of operation, staff continued to pass out brochures, timetables, and provided information to new patrons. Transportation also provided additional staff to ensure the smooth transition and operation of the line during the first weeks of service.

The key to any successful transportation project is its usage. During the first month of operation, approximately 6,200 patrons used the system daily. This number was similar to the combined freeway boardings of the six express lines. Since opening day, patronage has climbed steadily each month to a high of more than 11,000 in October 2011. This figure represents a 70% increase in patronage since inception. The increase can be attributed to:

- Frequent and consistent headways provides customer confidence;
- Faster service through Downtown Los Angeles;
- Less confusion between six different express line services;
- Marketing efforts and increased service branding has attracted new patrons;
- Flat fare of \$2.45, acceptance of Metro Day Pass, combined with increased TAP usage has reduced confusion and increased boarding speed; and
- Local patrons on feeder lines have enjoyed a 21% increase in on-time performance, making timed transfers a seamless operation.

Over the two year period, service has increased to meet demand. Mid-day weekday service has doubled on the I-110 Harbor Transitway segment, from every 30 minutes to every 15 minutes, and on Saturday from hourly to every 40 minutes. Additional weekday trippers have been added to relieve overcrowding. For first time this year, patronage has increased on the Harbor Transitway segment by USC fans destined to the 37th St./USC Station. Most patrons park and ride from the Harbor/Gateway Transit Center, or transfer from the Metro Green Line. Due to this patronage increase, post game service has been added to reduce overcrowding on regularly scheduled trips.

Other projects are currently under design and construction that will continue to enhance ridership by improving the rider experience. El Monte Station, which originally opened in 1972, was demolished and a new one with increased bus bays and passenger amenities will open next year. Design work has been completed for a revamped Harbor/Gateway Transit Center, with bathrooms and improved passenger amenities. All stations on the Harbor Transitway are scheduled for improvements including real time arrival info, wayfinding, lighting,

and soundproofing. Furthermore, plans to increase the safety and security of Metro customers will include dedicated uniformed officers who will patrol Metro facilities, such as bus stops, stations and park-and-ride lots, along the entire length of the transitway served by the Silver Line.

ExpressLanes Improvements

Six months prior to the opening of the ExpressLanes, Metro Silver Line will begin further improvements of service levels and quality for passengers. These enhancements will be funded through the ExpressLanes project to provide additional capacity for existing HOV drivers wishing to transition to transit.

<i>Time Period</i>	<i>Current</i>	<i>Planned</i>
Weeknights after 9pm	60 min	30 min
Rush Hour (1 extra round trip)	5-10 min	4-8 min
Harbor Transitway Saturdays	40 min	20 min
Harbor Transitway Sundays	60 min	30 min

SAFETY IMPACT

If approved by the Board, the scope outlined in this report is expected to have a positive impact on safety with further improvements of service levels and quality for passengers.

NEXT STEPS

Service Planning staff will continue to monitor Metro Silver Line service, particularly as it relates to the ExpressLanes project. This also includes planning for the opening of the new El Monte Station next year, and continued improvements at existing stations on the Harbor Transitway.

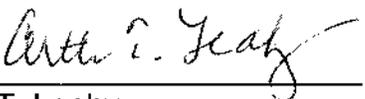
ATTACHMENT

A. Silver Line Ridership Growth

Prepared by: Conan Cheung, DEO, Service Planning & Scheduling
R. Scott Page, Manager, Service Planning & Scheduling



Lonnie Mitchell
Chief Operations Officer



Arthur T. Leahy
Chief Executive Officer

Silver Line Ridership Growth

Daily Patronage
70% Increase

