

Wednesday, December 12, 2012

5:01-5:13 PM

Minutes

WESTSIDE/CENTRAL
SERVICE COUNCIL

Regular Meeting/Corridor Workshop

Plummer Park Community Center
Rooms 5 and 6
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.
West Hollywood, CA 90046

Called to Order at 5:01 p.m.

Council Members Present:

Jeffrey Jacobberger, Chair
Elliot Petty, Vice Chair
Peter Capone-Newton
Perri Sloane Goodman
Joe Stitcher
George Taule
Jerard Wright

Officers:

Jon Hillmer, Regional Councils Director
Jody Litvak, Community Relations Mgr
Dolores Ramos, Council Admin Analyst
Henry Gonzalez, Council Comm. Rel. Mgr.



Metro

Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

1. **ROLL Call**
2. **APPROVED Minutes of November 14, 2012 meeting**
3. **PUBLIC Comment for items not on the agenda**

Ken Ruben of Culver City shared that he was reelected to the Board of Directors of Southern California Transit Advocates. He wished everyone happy holidays on behalf of the organization. He recently attended a Citizens Advisory Committee meeting where presentations were made by Metrolink and by David Sutton regarding TAP. Mr. Sutton assisted Mr. Ruben to address issues with his TAP cards. Mr. Ruben also shared other TAP issues with Mr. Sutton, who responded promptly. Mr. Ruben shared the response he had received with other transit advocates, who were pleasantly surprised by how responsive Mr. Sutton is to their concerns.

Adjourned to Corridor Study 5:13 p.m.

Jody Litvak, Community Relations Manager recognized the presence of Anny Semonco, an original member of the Westside/Central Service Council.

Jon Hillmer, Director, gave the October Performance Report as a prelude to the workshop.

- On-time performance trends: 73.3% compared to 73.1% in September and to 80% FY13 goal. School was back in session, and gas prices went up, which can result in more riders and longer passenger loading times.
- Customer Complaint per 100,000 passengers: 2.94 compared to 2.55 in September and to FY13 goal of 2.20.
- Operator Was Courteous and Respectful – approximately 99%
- Monthly Wheelchair Boarding Trends – approximately 80,000 per month
- Miles between Mechanical Road Calls: 3,101 compared to 2,855 in September and to FY13 goal of 3,900. Articulated buses that operate on Wilshire Blvd. take a lot wear and tear, they average 2,000 miles between road calls.
- Clean Bus Ratings: 8.37 in October compared to 8.28 in September, and to goal of 8.0.
- Accidents per 100,000 miles: 4.08 compared to 3.26 in September and to FY13 goal of 3.10.
- Average Weekday Ridership: 671,289 compared to 675,297 in September.
- November Bus Station Cleanliness Evaluation on 20 bus stations: No “D’s” this month. Culver City up 0.3 to 7.7 (C); Patsaouras Plaza up 0.3 to 8.5 (B-); Pico Rimpau Bus Center stayed at 8.2 (B-). System average bus station cleanliness score was 8.27 (B), improved 0.7 since December 2011.
- Line 720 Ridership: 42,108 weekdays, 28,822 Saturdays, 22,880 Sundays.
- Bus/Rail Average Monthly Ridership: Bus Weekday Passengers 1,190,262; Rail Weekday Passengers 360,901, for combined system total of 1,551,163.

Mr. Hillmer distributed information regarding the work session program and the information regarding the on-time performance trends, frequency of service, customer

complaints, ridership statistics, and bus line performance for Lines 4, 16 and 704. He also listed potential service modifications for consideration. (See materials [here](#).)

Council Member Wright requested information regarding the on-time performance on Line 4 owl service at a future meeting, as he has observed sporadic arrivals of the service.

Council Member Capone-Newton asked if there is a time-of-day graph that illustrates the cycling of ridership during the day. The closest is the information provided in the workshop materials which is broken down by morning rush hour 6-9 a.m., midday 9 a.m. -3 p.m., 3-6 p.m. peak hours, evening service 6-10 p.m., and owl services after 10 p.m. There are unique boarding patterns to each of the lines.

Ken Ruben asked if owl service would be run on Line 4. **Mr. Hillmer** clarified that if Line 704 is cancelled during midday or weekends, the Line 4 would be extended to cover the City of Santa Monica portion west of Sepulveda. If the 4 would take up that route, it would make the Rapid stops, not all the Local stops. **Mr. Ruben** noted that he rode the Line 4 to the Red Line, where lots of people boarded. He also mentioned that the bus stop signs in front of the Del Taco on Venice Blvd. going east have been removed.

Wayne Wright addressed potential changes to Line 704 midday or weekend service. He suggested if that service is cut, to branch off Line 4 into two routes 4 and 5. Line 704 provides direct service to Union Station. If it was cut, patrons riding Line 4 would have to get off at Vermont and take the Red Line or get off at Civic Center. He would prefer a replacement line along with Santa Monica Line 4 to get to Union Station. On Line 16, he recommended expanding the trip east to the Gold Line Little Tokyo Station, which would be more convenient in terms of providing transfers.

Kevin Burton stated that he uses Lines 704 and 4 to go to Santa Monica and Union Station. He endorsed the idea of assembling a group of advisory riders. He noted that Line 4 is packed with riders during evening peak hours eastbound into downtown, that service is inadequate. He uses Line 704 to go to Union Station because it's a hub to other services such as the Flyaway, Metrolink, and Amtrak. Riders can get off at Vermont and take the Red Line, but would prefer to stay on the bus. Because it goes to Union Station where there are connections, on-time performance is key.

Wayne Coombs commented regarding the possibility of Line 704 truncating at Vermont. There would be 2,000 people a day that would be inconvenienced by having to make an additional connection to get downtown or to Union Station, and asked that change to not be implemented.

Alexander Friedman agreed that cutting 704 service to end at Vermont is a bad idea, as it defeats the one-seat ride and would double the price of riding for many. He suggested that westbound service to Santa Monica use 40-45 foot buses instead of using 60 foot articulated buses. He stated that service frequency is closer to 20-40 minutes. He suggested that Rapid buses go all the way to Santa Monica instead of stopping at Sepulveda.

Anny Somanco is a frequent user of both Lines 704 and 4. She doesn't think it's a good idea to cancel the 704 on weekends, as people who work on weekends depend on it. She suggested that the midday schedule could be modified. She thinks ridership is down on weekend midday because the line doesn't go where people want to go. A Plummer Park stop has been requested for years, but the closest stop is at Fairfax and La Brea. If the stops were different, there might be more ridership.

Council Member Sloane-Goodman stated that Line 704 is used a lot to go to the beach, particularly in the summer. The frequency only every 20 minutes, but maybe there would be more riders with greater frequency. More frequency is very important to build ridership. She asked if there's been any change in ridership on lines with less frequent service since the implementation on Nextrip, as people can anticipate the next trip. There is not yet enough data to judge whether Nextrip has had an effect.

Council Member Stitcher asked about the late night weekend statistics on 704. What was causing congestion on the route? Were there any trends or influencing factors such as construction at the 405? Construction was a factor, as were large events such as big events at Staples Center.

Council Member Wright remarked that a connection to Little Tokyo Gold Line Station a good idea. In reference to on time performance trends on the 704 on weekdays, he asked where the early arrivals occur. **Mr. Hillmer** did not have that level of detail, but speculated that it occurs at the beginning of the route, as operators will sometimes adjust their own schedules by leaving early in order to avoid running late later in the route. **Council Member Wright** suggested that maybe some of the schedules should be adjusted to avoid that tendency.

Council Member Capone Newton is reading Jarrett Walkers' book "Human Transit" which discusses local versus rapid planning. The philosophy is to run high frequency rapid service, then have lower frequency with more stops on local service, depending on the distribution at particular stops. High frequency rapid service would get people to their destinations and low frequency local service would be available to those who need it may be more efficient. If people are forced to transfer on our system, it means an additional cost to them unless they have a pass, which is an important consideration unless or until our transfer/fare system is changed. How would implement an approach like this? We might want to run a more frequent Rapid service, adding a few more Rapid stops so as to reduce the impact of not having the frequent local service. Extra stops would slow down the Rapid a bit, but because the bus would run quicker, you can get more trips in. You may be forcing people to transfer or walk, but you're giving them a better service in terms of frequency. Maybe the Local service could be broken up, in order to garner resources to add to the 704 Rapid Line.

Chair Jacobberger asked what the walking distance is to bus stops. Generally people are willing to walk $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile to take transit. If Rapid Line stops are $\frac{1}{2}$ mile apart, and Local service is $\frac{1}{4}$ mile apart, if the stops are well placed, then most people would be located within that distance. He advocated for making Rapid service the priority. If Line 704 service were to end service near Vermont Red Line Station, what is the travel time

from Vermont to Union Station? Overall, the trip length times differ slightly. It can be up to 5 minutes longer on the bus, but depends how long you had to wait for the train. If service were to be truncated near Vermont, it would make sense to extend the service at least to Sunset Junction to service riders who are coming from Echo Park or Silver Lake who would rely on that connection. Any changes definitely need to make transfers possible. **Mr. Hiller** clarified that Rapid stops are typically ½ mile apart, Local stops are ¼ mile apart, and rail stops are generally 1-2 miles apart.

Chair Jacobberger stated that in downtown, it's always confusing when Local and Rapid routes diverge. Transfer policy makes it problematic for infrequent customers and can create a financial hardship.

Anny Somanco commented about potential cancelling of 704 weekend service. With changes on Line 217 where it was extended and there is no Rapid serving the Fairfax corridor. The 217 has been extended and is always packed, she has had to wait for the next bus in order to board. Crowding of buses may cause similar delays if service is cancelled.

Council Member Wright noted that Local 4 picks up the bulk of riders downtown and by at Echo Park. There is high turnover with people getting on and off at the Red Line Station then continuing west down Santa Monica Blvd. He sees the need to keep the local line and for it to travel to downtown, but would like to see resources better allocated to enhance Line 704 service to extend it to Santa Monica and provide more frequent service. On Line 16, he is in support of limiting stops and potentially consolidating local stops in order to speed up trips.

Council Member Sloane-Goodman asked if it would make sense to use smaller equipment on the 704 westbound to realize cost savings in order to run more frequent service.

Council Member Stitcher asked how rider support groups would function. Would they be ad-hoc, ongoing, staffed by Metro? **Mr. Hillmer** stated they might meet once per quarter to summarize their comments and present their comments to the Service Council. There has been discussion about Metro branding and whether red/orange is needed. Where is the decision process? From a marketing perspective, it makes sense, but operationally can cause issues. The Board supports the distinct color scheme, but we currently have more red buses, so the public is aware that the bus color does not necessarily correlate to the service.

Anny Somanco commented regarding the rider support group formation proposal. She stated that the governance council's original purpose was to provide citizen input. She understands the desire to gather more input, but is concerned that such groups may complicate things.

Wayne Coombs has an issue with Rapid lines being slowed down. He asked that the timepoints be eliminated and that they depart on time, as they currently slow themselves down to keep with the time points. That would allow them to both run quicker service

and make more frequent trips. Also, many buses are not being tracked by Nextrip. The Nextrip is often inaccurate. Metro needs to make sure every bus is being tracked by Nextrip.

Chair Jacobberger suggested that 704 could originate at Wilshire and Westwood, or terminate Wilshire/Westwood.

Vice Chair Petty stated that any adjustments to Line 704 are going to impact Line 4 – what kind of adjustments can be made to improve Line 4? Over the route of Line 4 from Sunset & Santa Monica to downtown, Line 2 runs down the same route as Line 4. Line 2 service could be increased from any reductions on Line 4 based on demand, or create a branch on Line 4 that would continue to Union Station, or supplement 704 service to run to Union Station.

Chair Jacobberger commented that when you get off at a rail station, there's rarely any clear direction to connecting buses. More signage is needed. There are lots of tourists who ride everywhere, particularly in the Hollywood area. Little things can make the system much easier to navigate. **Mr. Hillmer** commented that he spent time with Wayne Coombs reviewing the signage at 7th and Metro. He agreed that there is a need for simpler directional signage. On the same note, **Council Member Sloane-Goodman** noted that it's impossible to figure out how to get to the Silver Line Stop at Union Station.

Council Member Wright asked if at some point in the future, bus lines might terminate at Metro Rail stations as start and end points.

Council Member Stitcher asked how the corridor workshop would proceed. **Mr. Hillmer** said all comments would be categorized, additional concepts would be drawn up, a consult with the Planning group would occur, and he would come back in two months with potential options that the Council might look at more closely and discuss.

Chair Jacobberger commented regarding rider support groups that it is very hard to get people to focus on the system as a whole, rather than just the stops they use.

Vice Chair Petty supports gathering more active feedback from riders and asked if there is another method to gather input on an ongoing basis that could be utilized. **Mr. Hillmer** agreed that better outreach to the public in general is a goal. Metro does conduct focus groups as well as quarterly and annual surveys, but those generally don't ask for rider advice on particular lines, just gather their statistics. They can be approached about conducting a special study from time to time.

Ken Ruben was waiting for Line 10, was running badly, he called customer service who told him that another was on its way. He ended up transferring to another service. A lot of the issues on the 704 apply to the 33 and 733 Lines. He also volunteered to provide more feedback regarding Metro services and ventured that many of the regular Service Council meeting attendees would be willing to do so as well.

Corridor Workshop Adjourned