

Metro[™]

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Study Objectives and Methodology

Objectives:

- Assess Metro Riders' reactions to Metro Timetables in use since December 19, 2004 (content, layout, etc.).
- Assess Metro Riders' reactions to re-designed Metro Timetables effective June 26, 2005 (content, layout, etc.).
- Assess Metro Riders' reactions to potential enhancements to re-designed Metro Timetables effective June 26, 2005 (content, layout, etc.).

Methodology:

- Two qualitative focus group sessions held June 15th & 16th, 2005 in Mid-Wilshire District, Los Angeles.
- Respondents were adult male and female Metro patrons who had previously indicated a willingness to participate in focus group sessions sponsored by Metro.

To better serve the needs of its riders, Metro has recently redesigned its bus and rail timetables. Effective June 26, 2005, the new timetables are intended to more intuitively communicate both general and specific line/route information, and other information useful to riders. The major design changes include adding a representative line/route map onto the front cover and, improving readability — by using a new typeface, shading rows of numbers and not using all capital letters in labels, etc.

Metro hired an outside consulting firm, MSI international, to design and moderate qualitative research to test reactions to the new design and potential enhancements. The following summarizes the results of the two focus group sessions. The sessions were conducted among 10 female Metro riders on June 15th among 7 male Metro riders on June 16th, 2005. Both sessions were attended by an ethnically mixed group of riders from each of Metro's five service sectors.

Key Findings and Implications

The participants in these two focus groups are seasoned riders who are familiar with and utilize multiple routes and lines on both Metro's bus and rail transit services. As the participants were drawn from all five of Metro's service sectors, and because many regularly travel considerable distances, many of these seventeen riders routinely use four or more lines.

Most of these riders have been using Metro for more than two years and all but two of them ride Metro at least 5 days a week. Most are also dependent on Metro for transit because they don't have a car, but several choose Metro because they are afraid to drive or find the service convenient. Thus, it is not surprising that they are very familiar with and knowledgeable about Metro timetables — and many have numerous timetables at their disposal for trip planning.

The key findings from the groups can be summarized as follows:

- **The Newly Designed June 26, 2005 Timetable is a major improvement**
- Riders desire the additional Destination-Destination + Street information contained in the 2nd version of the June 26, 2005 Timetable.
- Spanish-language communications presented separately from English language text are much easier to locate and read than when they are mixed with English text.



Additional detailed findings are presented in the following sections.

Reactions to 12/19/04 Timetable Design

Overall reactions to Metro's December 19, 2004 timetables are favorable. In general, positive comments relate to timetables being easy to use, having separate weekday and weekend schedules, and being easy to read. Having both towns/communities and major cross-streets shown in the timetable header is also commented on favorably, as this information aids in planning for transfers/making connections to other lines.

Reactions to 06/26/05 Timetable Design (Version #1)

Reactions to the newly designed June 26, 2005 timetables are positive — most riders spontaneously commented favorably about several of the key design changes — having the line map on the front cover and using shading to improve readability of the timetable numbers appealed to almost all participants in both groups. Most people found the new font used for the times in the new timetables to be much easier to read, however, one rider in each of the two groups commented that the font seemed smaller than in the 2004 timetable, making the times a little difficult to read.

Typical rider comments follow:

“Shading on this one is nice. Makes it easy to read.”

“This new one is better, with the shading.”

“New one's a big improvement.”

“You know looking at it right away if it's the right bus. You can tell if you're not familiar because you can look which city it goes to.”

Riders also like the new timetable better than the 2004 timetable because the maps show the cities/communities along the line, which for many, is of greater importance than knowing only the directions the line travels. In this regard, negative comments were made about the text in the brown box at the top of the cover page for the Line 163 because it reads “East-South/North-West Local Bus Service.” Riders found this phrasing confusing.

“Having East, South, North West conveys zero. Anything is better than zero, but this is very confusing.”

“East, South, it confuses you right there. You don't know where you're going.”

When asked how to improve the phrasing and reduce confusion, some riders like knowing the streets that lines serve while others feel that destinations are better. However, a large majority in both groups was essentially saying that Metro should furnish a clear description of a line's beginning and ending points, and that Metro should also provide some details about the streets the line serves.



“Best to give a description such as West Hills to Hollywood, then whatever street at this part, then whatever street at this part.”

These riders also noted and commented favorably about the revised Line 163 layout/formatting change from the 2004 spinefold + accordion fold to only an accordion fold. This is because the new format does not have to be opened up like a newspaper and is easier to read. Comments from riders include:

“It’s a lot less paper. You don’t have to open it up.”

“It’s much smaller. I like the map on the front cover. You know where the line’s going without having to open it up.”

“Improved. Better, more color, it’s darker so you can read it better and there’s less paper.”

Reactions to 06/26/05 Timetable Design (Version #2)

Reactions to a second version of the June 26, 2005 timetables were also obtained and are even more favorable than for the first version.

The major difference between the 1st and 2nd versions of the June 26, 2005 timetables relate to the text contained in the shaded box on the front cover. The text in the first version communicates only direction (East/West) and indicates the type of service. The text in the second version is intended to communicate streets served as well as destination-destination.

"Both of these are good already because of the map. It just improves it a little bit just by adding on which streets the line actually takes."

"It says serving the different streets and cities. I like that. A lot of times when I ride the buses with other people who are not familiar with the area the buses go through, if they have the schedule it gives them not only the times, but it gives them what cities the bus actually rides through."

"It says serving the different cities. I like that. A lot of times when I ride the buses with other people who are not familiar with the area the buses go through, if they have the schedule it gives them not only the times, but it gives them what cities the bus actually rides through."

Choosing Between the Two Proposed Covers

For some participants, the difference in the complexity of the two routes made evaluating whether the clearest communication in the box above the map should be “direction of travel,” “streets served,” or “destination-destination via streets” difficult. This may also relate to the text in the Line 163 (Version #2) timetable having the word “serving,” followed by three street names and then “Hollywood.”



However, even though there may have been some confusion, a majority of the groups supports having a combination of origin to destination with more street information rather than just street information or origin to destination information.

Reactions to Spanish Language Formats

Participants also offered opinions about two ways of incorporating Spanish language information — one in which Spanish text immediately followed English text and one in which the English and Spanish text were presented side-by-side in separate panels.

Rider opinions strongly favor the separate columns for English and Spanish text. When both English and Spanish text is combined, they find reading either the English or Spanish text difficult and confusing — and this is the case among both participants who are multilingual as well as those who read English only.

“163 (side-by-side) for Spanish speakers OK. For me, speaking Russian, it’s hard if English and Spanish is together. I can’t tell which one is which.”

“163. It’s broken down.”

“163. It looks neater. The other looks like a run-on sentence.”

“163. Breaks it down easier. The main facts in English and then separately in English.”

“On the 105 version (continuous), it looks like it’s only in English until you keep reading. 163 is better. It’s clearer.”

Trip Planning and Timetable Use

These riders mention obtaining trip planning information mostly from both Metro’s telephone assistance service “1-800-Commute” or from the trip planning function on the Metro.net website. Relatively few cite getting hardcopy timetables for new trips — because doing so is inconvenient compared with calling for assistance or going to the website.

Both pros and cons were mentioned for both calling “1-800-Commute” and for going to the website. The major objection to using the “1-800-Commute” service is the length of time that people are put on hold. However, for some, a call to “1-800-COMMUTE” yields more information than that which is available from the trip planner on the website. Typical comments follow.

“I’ll call 1-800-COMMUTE, wait the 25 minutes and a lot of times, they’ll tell you but you just have to catch on by commuting anyway. I just give myself an extra hour and a half.”

“I call 1-800-COMMUTE and end up waiting 20-25 minutes before I get somebody on the line.”



"I prefer to use 1-800-COMMUTE because if you have to walk, like a block or so, they'll tell you that. The Internet doesn't tell you that. It just gives you your starting point and ending point."

"I prefer the internet because it's faster. You don't have to be on hold that whole time. But, I prefer the 1-800-COMMUTE because they give you more accurate directions."

"I call 1-800 and start doing something else and put it on speaker."

While time spent waiting for assistance dominates the complaints about "1-800-COMMUTE," the trip planner on the website is criticized because it is not felt to offer alternatives, especially when service may be limited.

"I know they changed the interface of the website, of the scheduler, recently. I noticed there were a couple of routes that I could check before and it would pop something up and nowadays, it'll say 'Route Not Found. 'Online you can specify what time you want to leave by or what time you want to get there by. For some reason, if it does give you a route, sometimes it's off by like an hour. So if I need to get there by 7, how come the route it's giving me, I'm going to get there by 8?"

"On the Internet, what I don't like is it just gives you one option, and when you know the road, you discover there are two or three ways."

"I had to get a ride here, came from Highland. I went online to find out I couldn't get here. But when I called "1-800-COMMUTE" they gave alternative routes. I prefer 1-800-COMMUTE because they tell you when you have to walk. On the internet, it doesn't tell you."

In addition, other negative comments about timetables not being available on buses emerged in both groups, as well as comments about buses having incorrect timetables.





Appendix A. Screening Questionnaire

MSI International Job #: 921-005

Sex: M F Age: _____ Ethnicity: W B H A O Service Sector : _____

Recruiter's Initials	Date:	Time:
Recruited For: Group #1	Wednesday June 15	6:30 p.m. <input type="checkbox"/>
Group #2	Thursday June 16	6:30 p.m. <input type="checkbox"/>
Respondent Name:		
Street Address:		
City:	State: CA	Zip Code:
Work Phone ()	Email:	
Home Phone ()		
Cellphone ()		
Confirmation Letter/Directions/Map	Date Sent:	Initials:
Reminder Call Made:	Date:	Initials:

Hello, I'm _____ calling from _MSI_____, an independent marketing research company hired by METRO, the company that provides public transit throughout Los Angeles County. We are not selling anything, and we will not ask for a donation or contribution of any kind. May I please speak with **(name on sample sheet)**_____

If not available, get callback date and time and record below

Callback _____ Date: _____ Callback
Time: _____ AM / PM

Callback _____ Date: _____ Callback
Time: _____ AM / PM

Callback _____ Date: _____ Callback
Time: _____ AM / PM

READ INTRODUCTION:

Last Fall, you participated in a survey conducted by Metro regarding the use of public transit and you indicated that you would be interested in attending a focus group session in the future. We are calling on behalf of Metro to invite you to come to one of two sessions that are being held on Wednesday & Thursday, June 15th and 16th at 6:30p.m. If you agree to attend, we are offering a very generous honorarium. But, to make sure we have a good cross-section of riders in attendance, we have a couple of questions to ask those who are being invited **(GO TO Q.1)**



Appendix A. Screening Questionnaire

1. First of all, are you still riding the bus?

Yes ----- []
No ----- **TERMINATE**

(ASK ALL RESPONDENTS)

2. What, if any, other types of public transit do you take besides the bus? **(RECORD ALL MENTIONS BELOW)**

Metro Green Line ----- [] 1
Metro Blue Line ----- [] 2
Metro Red Line ----- [] 3

Other: _____ --

Other: _____ --

Other: _____ --

3. Just to make sure that everyone is represented in this survey, with which racial or ethnic group do you identify yourself: **(READ RESPONSES)** ?

Anglo/ white ----- [] 1
Black/ African American ----- [] 2
Hispanic or Latino ----- [] 3
Asian ----- [] 4
Other: _____ - [] 5

4. What is your age? Are you: **(READ RESPONSES)**

Under 18 years old ----- **TERMINATE**
18-24 years old ----- [] 1
25-29 years old ----- [] 2
30-34 years old ----- [] 3
35-39 years old ----- [] 4
40-44 years old ----- [] 5
45-49 years old ----- [] 6
50-54 years old ----- [] 7
55-69 years old ----- [] 8
60-64 years old ----- [] 9
65 years or older ----- [] 10





Appendix A. Screening Questionnaire

RECORD GENDER BY OBSERVATION

Male----- [] 1

Female----- [] 2

CHECK TO SEE IF NEEDED FOR QUOTAS BEFORE CONTINUING

We will be holding focus group discussions regarding potential new services for bus riders and Metro would like you to attend and be a part of the discussion on either Wednesday, June 15th or Thursday, June 16th, 2005, at 6:30PM at Atkins Research on Wilshire Boulevard at Highland. Participants will receive an honorarium of \$75.00. And, if you arrive a little early, Metro will also give you a free monthly pass valued at \$52.00. Will you be able to attend?

RECRUIT: 15 for 10-12 to show

Yes----- []

No----- []

IF YES, CONFIRM ADDRESS AND PHONE INFORMATION ON FIRST PAGE, AND LET PARTICIPANT KNOW THAT WE WILL BE MAILING A LETTER CONFIRMING THE DATE AND TIME OF THE SESSION AND A MAP SHOWING THE LOCATION.



Appendix B. Moderator's Guide

Timetable Focus Groups
Job # 921-005

6/15/05 & 6/16/06
6:30pm

A. Introductions

1. **Welcome** — discussion, confidentiality, perhaps being recorded, but so can write report
2. **Speak with complete candor** — tell us what you like and dislike, regardless of what others here at the table have said or may think
3. **Introductions** — go around the timetable – each person tells how long they've been riding Metro buses, how often they ride and what lines they use.

B. Trip Planning

1. When you ride, are you usually making a trip you've made before, or are you frequently traveling a new route? How often are you traveling a new route or to a destination you don't usually go to?
2. How do you plan your trips?
 - a. 1-800-COMMUTE
 - b. Metro Trip Planner
 - c. Timetables
 - d. Bus Pole decals
 - e. Other

C. Timetable Use

1. How do you use timetables? Are they easy or hard to use? In what ways are they easy to use? What is it about timetables that you find that makes them hard to use?
2. Where do you get them? (Onboard bus, transit center, Metro website?)
3. How do you choose the timetables you need?



Appendix B. Moderator's Guide

D. **June 2004 Timetable Design** - old (pass out old timetable samples **#1**; also show blow-up of cover #1)

1. What do you think of the way the timetables look? What do you particularly like about the way they look? What do you dislike?
2. Do they provide all the information you need? What, if any other information should be on the timetable? What, if any of the information that is there could be done away with?
3. Are they easy to use? What do you like and dislike about them? What should be done to make them easier to use? What else?
4. How else do you think they could be improved? Agree? Disagree? In what other ways can they be improved?

E. **June 2005 Timetable Design** - new (show new timetable sample **#2**; also show blow-up of cover #2)

1. This is a new design we're trying on our timetables. Have any of you seen it?
2. What do you think of the way these new timetables look? What do you particularly like about the way they look? What do you dislike?
3. Do they provide all the information you need? ? What, if any other information should be on the timetable? What, if any of the information that is there could be done away with?
4. Do you think they'd be easy to use? What do you like and dislike about them? What should be done to make them easier to use? What else?
5. How do you think they could be improved? ? Agree? Disagree? In what other ways can they be improved?



Appendix B. Moderator's Guide

F. **Timetable Design** – additional options (show comps of potential revisions)

1. We're thinking about making some refinements to the new timetable design. I'd like to get your reaction to a few different options:

(ask the following series of questions for each version)

2. Here's one option (point out the differences — #3 Line 105 has “Metro Local” and text indicating West Hollywood – Vernon via La Cienega Boulevard. In the inside, the Additional Information Section has Spanish text translation. #6 Line 163 has “Metro Local on front cover and has text that says “Serving Sherman Way, Hollywood Way, Barham Bl., and Hollywood. #6 163 also has TTY instructions on front cover. Open up and point to differences — #163 also has panel showing Holiday Schedule and Special Notes in Spanish.).
3. What's your reaction to this version?
4. Do you think this would be easy to use? What do you like and dislike about it?
5. Does this do a better or worse job of providing all the information you need?
6. How do you think this could be improved?

(SHOW #6 – 163 BEFORE SHOWING SPANISH LANGUAGE LAYOUT PREFERENCE BOARDS)

G. **Spanish Language Layout Preferences** (show 2 large boards with English/Spanish language text)

1. Which of these two do you prefer? Why
2. Which of these two is easier to use? Why?

H. **Timetable Design – Re-cap** (show all versions)

1. Let's look back at all of these different versions of timetables. As you think about all the different options, which one version do you think would be the easiest for current riders to use?
2. Which version do you think would be easiest for new riders to use?
3. Which version do you think is best overall?



Appendix C. Visual Stimuli

December 19, 2004



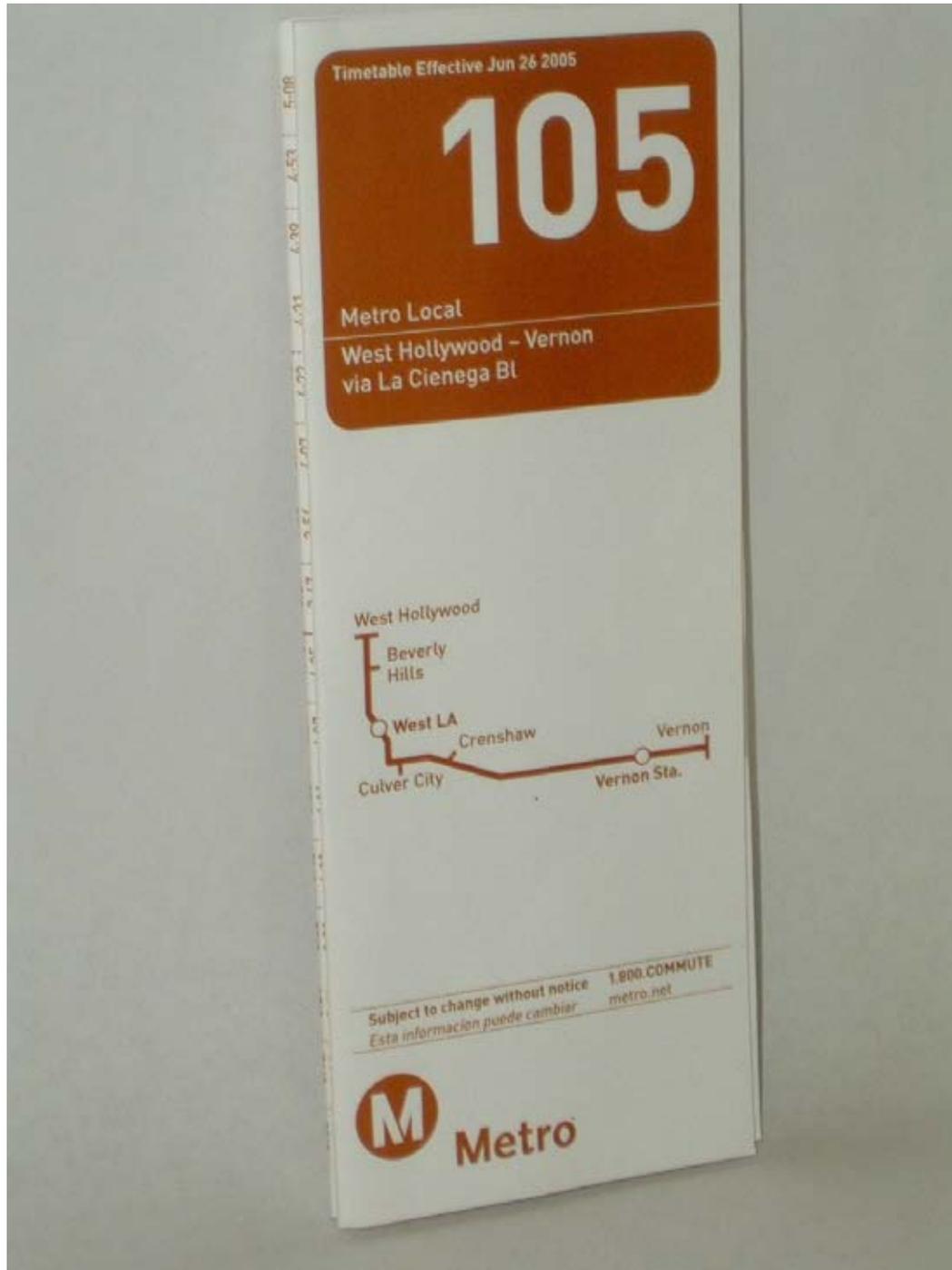
Appendix C. Visual Stimuli

June 26, 2005 (Version #1)



Appendix C. Visual Stimuli

June 26, 2005 (Version #2)



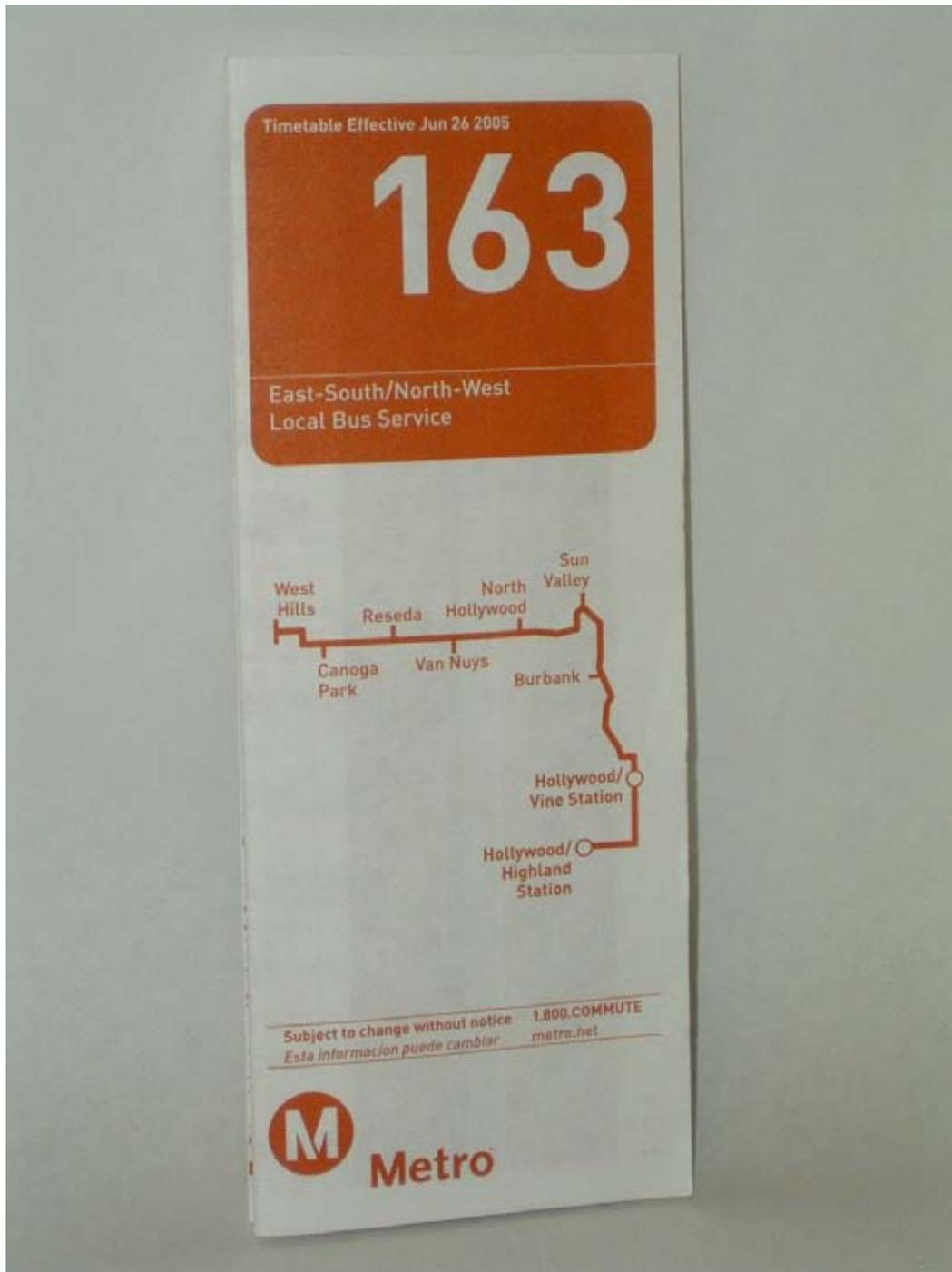
Appendix C. Visual Stimuli

December 19, 2004



Appendix C. Visual Stimuli

June 26, 2005 (Version #1)



Appendix C. Visual Stimuli

June 26, 2005 (Version #2)



Appendix C. Visual Stimuli

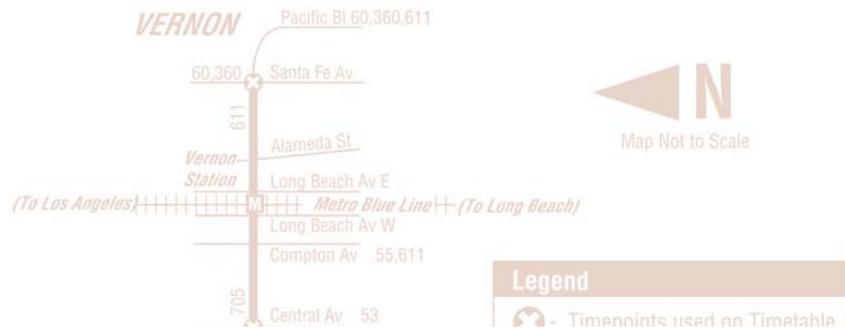
English & Spanish Text (Continuous)

11:28	11:40	11:50	11:57	12:06A	12:14A	12:21A	12:26A	3:27	3:34	3:40	3:55	---	---	---	---
---	---	---	---	1:05	1:14	1:21	1:26								
---	---	---	---	2:05	2:14	2:21	2:26								
---	---	---	---	3:05	3:14	3:21	3:26								
---	---	---	---	4:05	4:14	4:21	4:26								

Additional Information	TTY 800.252.9040	All service accessible
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Holiday Schedule / Horarios en los días feriados
 Sunday & Holiday schedule will operate on / Los horarios de Domingos y días festivos serán en: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day.

- Special Notes / Avisos especiales**
- Ⓛ Trip originates at Venice & Cadillac (Kaiser Hospital) approximately 2-3 minutes before time shown. *El viaje sale desde Venice y Cadillac (Kaiser Hospital) aproximadamente 2-3 minutos antes del horario indicado anteriormente.*
 - Ⓛ Waits at Vernon & Vermont for transfer connection. *Espera en el cruce de Vernon y Vermont para la conexión de trasbordo.*



Appendix C. Visual Stimuli

English & Spanish Text (Columnar)

7:02	7:10	7:18	7:28	7:35	7:43	7:52	8:05	8:09	8:23	8:38	8:44
7:45	7:53	8:00	8:09	8:15	8:23	8:32	8:45	8:49	9:02	9:15	9:21
8:50	8:57	9:03	9:11	9:17	9:24	9:33	9:45	9:49	10:02	10:14	10:20
9:52	9:59	10:05	10:13	10:19	10:26	10:34	10:45	10:49	11:01	11:13	11:19
10:50	10:56	11:02	11:10	11:15	11:23	11:31	11:42	11:46	11:58	12:10A	—
11:36	11:43	11:49	11:57	12:03A	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
12:36A	12:43A	12:49A	12:57A	1:03	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1:36	1:43	1:49	1:57	2:03	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Holiday Schedule

Sunday & Holiday schedule will operate on New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

Horarios en los días feriados

Los horarios de Domingos y días festivos serán en New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day y Christmas Day.

Special Notes

- A** Trip originates at Vineland & Cantara 7 minutes before time shown.
 - B** Trips terminates at Vineland & Cantara 7 minutes after time at Hollywood Way & Thornton.
- Note 1: Trips shown terminating at Vineland & Strathern continue to Vineland & Cantara arriving one minute after time shown. Also, selected trips connect with Line 169. Obtain Line 169 timetable for further information.
- Note 2: Trips shown originating at Vineland & Strathern depart Vineland & Cantara one minute before time shown. Also, selected trips connect with line 169, obtain Line 169 timetable for further information.

Avisos especiales

- A** El viaje sale desde Vineland y Cantara aproximadamente 7 minutos antes del horario indicado anteriormente.
 - B** El viaje se termina en Vineland y Cantara aproximadamente 7 minutos después de la hora indicada para Hollywood Way y Thornton.
- Nota 1: Los viajes que terminan en Vineland y Strathern continúan a Vineland y Cantara llegando un minuto después del tiempo indicado.
- Nota 2: Los viajes que salen desde Vineland y Strathern saldrán de Vineland y Cantara un minuto antes del tiempo indicado anteriormente. Además, ciertos viajes conectan con la línea 169. Consulte los horarios de la línea 169 para más información.



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