



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 spots 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

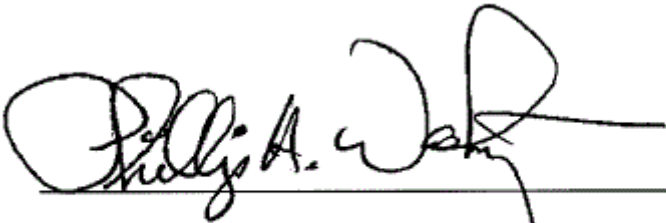
Upon approval, proposed changes to Line 501 could be implemented as early as October 2016.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A - Line 501 Marketing Efforts
- Attachment B - Line 501 Map
- Attachment C - Line 501 Daily Boardings

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Marketing Efforts on Line 501

Physical Content

- **Take Ones** with line information and map of new route, system-drop distribution (*drop 1- mid-Feb, drop 2- mid-April*)
- **Car cards** promoting new connection from Pasadena to North Hollywood; Burbank Bus also assisted with the placement of car card on their buses (*1/25-4/25*)
- **Vinyl Banners** at selected locations to promote new *service (currently still at stations, posted in Feb)*
- **Timetable updates** created new timetable for print and online versions (*completed by planning group on Feb 15*)
- **Large Bus Wraps** promoting Line 501 were installed on entire fleet covering the both sides of the buses; buses are essentially mobile pieces of advertisement along the route. (Feb-present)

Digital Content

- **Digital Billboards** along corridor promoting new service (*2/1-4/24*)
- **E-blast** to all Employee Transportation Coordinators promoting new service (*Monthly Feb, Mar, Apr*)
Employee Transit Coordinator (ETC) Monthly Newsletter post short blurb with information of new service (*Feb, Mar*)
- **Transit Passenger Information System (TPIS) AD** posted at selected Red, Orange and Gold Line Stations with connecting service to promote the new 501 service (*2/11- still running*)
Web Module includes web banners on metro.net promoting new service and updated web page with Line 501 information (*2/15-4/1*)
Metro Briefs with information on express service targeted for beginning (*Monthly Feb, Mar, Apr*)
- **Story** on *The Source* and *El Pasajero* with information about new service (*several stories done starting in Feb*)
- **Featured** on MyBurbank.com article (*4/23/16*)
- **NoHo To Pasadena Express was on KTTV Fox 11** "Car-less Commute." Link to story at: <http://www.foxla.com/news/local-news/142440668-story>. The 501 line is featured at approximately 1:48 minutes into the segment.

Social Media

- **Social Media** posts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter promoting new line (*began March 2016*)

Paid Advertisement

- **Bus Shelters** along the bus route promoting new service (*2/1-4/24*)
- **Bus Benches** along the bus route promoting new service (*2/1-4/24*)
- **Newspaper Ads** targeted at cities where route travels (*2/11-3/20*)

Other Forms of Marketing

- **Partnership with Disney** to promote Line 501 to their Burbank campus as well as promote Metro's B-TAP Program. (May-June 2016)

- **Messages on Hold** promoting new service, began a week before service (*Ran all of Feb, March all month. Will start again end of April- we stagger these as we have limited space*)

Meetings and Presentation

- **Ongoing – Metro Staff** has continued to promote and distribute take-ones at:
 - SGV COG Governing Board
 - SGV Service Council
 - Transportation Forum hosted by Assembly member Nazarian
 - Transportation Forum at CSUN hosted by Senator Hertzberg
 - District office of Councilmember and Board Director Krekorian
 - Universal City – North Hollywood Chamber of Commerce
 - Encino Chamber of Commerce
- **Formal Presentations at:**
 - San Gabriel Valley and San Fernando Valley Service Councils
 - San Fernando Valley COG Transportation Committee
 - VICA Transportation Committee

Events

- **Media Event** - ribbon cutting event in Pasadena (March 2016)
- **Ride Along** with Krekorian, Najarian and Talamantes on 4/14/16
- **Line 501’s physical appearance** at “Burbank on Parade”; Ad space was also purchased on the Burbank Guide to promote this service (4/23/16)
- **“Metro in the Community”** - Metro Staff Set up information tables on launch week and again on 4/14/16
- **Promoted** at Assembly District 41 block party (7/30/16)

Future Advertisement

- **Will be prominently featured** at the North Hollywood Station Underpass ribbon cutting even (8/15/16)
- **Will be promoted** at a series of scheduled CSUN campus visits. (begin August 2016)

Line 501 Map



Line 501 Daily Boardings

