

## South Bay Cities Council of Governments

### Transit Operators' Working Group

September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020

### Meeting Notes

Attendees: Joyce Rooney, Diane Amaya & Leslie Scott (Beach Cities Transit); Dana Pynn (GTrans); James Lee (Torrance Transit); Scott Greene (Metro); Steve Lantz, Jacki Bacharach & David Leger (SBCCOG)

#### 1) Self-Introductions & Acceptance of the August 6, 2020 Meeting Notes

The virtual meeting was called to order at 3:03 p.m. Meeting notes were accepted as presented.

#### 2) Transit Operator Issues and Concerns Including COVID-19 Impacts

Mr. Lantz opened up discussion for the agencies to share issues and concerns in general and pandemic-related.

Ms. Rooney shared that Beach Cities Transit is currently working to install permanent barriers on buses and continues to operate under a modified schedule. Until schools are back to in-person learning, BCT will continue operating around current levels. BCT continues to rear-board only and is not collecting fares. Due to City Hall closures, the agency is unable to sell bus passes. Once students return to in-person learning, BCT will likely face bus shortages due to the limited capacities caused by social distancing requirements. The agency is looking into potential solutions. Unrelated to COVID-19, Redondo Beach is preparing to start construction on their transit center, and BCT will soon have their real-time feed on Google Transit.

Ms. Pynn reported that GTrans is also operating on a limited service schedule and will soon be installing permanent barriers. Service may start increasing around January but could change based on conditions at the time. The agency just received two new CNG buses and executed a contract for off-site fueling since the on-site station won't be completed for over a year. Mr. Lee asked if FTA is allowing GTrans to hold on to older buses for longer during the pandemic to accommodate social distancing impacts on capacity. Ms. Pynn explained that it is all based on the contingency plan that drives the number of buses allowed, not COVID.

Mr. Lee reported that Torrance Transit is operating on a modified schedule but has been seeing an uptick in ridership that has prompted them to dispatch additional vehicles to ensure social distancing. Currently, their busses are running at 18-person capacity (15 seated, 3 standing). Torrance Transit staff will be installing permanent barriers soon and is also only boarding via rear doors. Similar to other agencies, Torrance Transit will be operating on a thin margin of back-up vehicles as ridership continues to return but maintaining social distancing at the same time.

Mr. Greene announced that Metro is running a lot of the articulated buses in their fleet because it allows them to maximize ridership while maintaining social distancing and facilitating double door or rear-door boarding. Metro is at about 50% of pre-pandemic ridership levels and has been limiting front-door boarding as much as possible. Mr. Lantz added that Metro leadership has been stating they don't have the capital and financial resources to run their entire fleet at social distancing requirements. Metro staff is forecasting a full recovery in service level in FY22-23 so service will be monitored frequently over the next few years.

Mr. Lantz reported that Metro continues to identify ways to reduce budgets by various methods such as retirement acceleration programs and voluntary fee reductions by contractors. However, Metro staff is still expected to receive raises which caused some concern due to severe service cuts and financial issues caused by the pandemic.

#### 3) Measure R SBHP Decennial Transfer Update & Metro Budget Request Update

Mr. Lantz reported that Metro has notified the Legislature and the one-year countdown has begun and will be completed in June 2021.

#### 4) NextGen Study Status Update

Mr. Greene reported that there were public hearings last week. Staff continues to prepare reports for the various Service Councils. The South Bay Service Council will meet on September 18<sup>th</sup> and vote on staff recommendations at that meeting. Mr. Lee added that Torrance Transit has been working with Mr. Greene and Metro Phase 2 of their

Comprehensive Operational Analysis which includes the potential takeover of Metro's Line 130 and the new service to Inglewood.

**5) Metro Free Fare Proposal**

Mr. Lantz briefly touched on the recent proposal by Metro CEO Phil Washington to study the possibility of a free fare policy. The proposal will return to the Metro Board later this year and may entail a phased approach, such as beginning with targeted groups and eventually all riders. There is much work to do before it could be implemented though due to the intricacies of transit payment (transfer fares between agencies, etc.)

Ms. Scott added that she was recently at a Metro meeting where they discussed a congestion pricing study. Mr. Lantz explained that they are calling it their "Traffic Reduction Study" and that the study is looking into the feasibility of using congestion pricing to change travel behaviors and drive residents to transit by charging drivers fees to drive through a corridor, enter a specified geographic area, or based on vehicle miles traveled (VMT). During a recent meeting with Metro staff, Mr. Lantz noted that they expect the VMT option to be too difficult to implement. SBCCOG staff will monitor this study closely as there are some significant concerns about the study.

**6) Inglewood Special Event Service Coordination Update**

Ms. Pynn noted that there is nothing happening at the moment due to impacts of the pandemic. Special service will be on hold until spectators are allowed into the stadium. Mr. Lee reported that Torrance Transit has been working with Inglewood on the requested bus cutouts at the new stadium, part of the new service to Inglewood.

**7) September 2020 Transportation Report – Received and Filed**

**8) Announcements/Adjournment – Next Transit Operators Working Group meeting**

Mr. Greene reported that there will be service disruptions to the Green Line September 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>. Service will be replaced by shuttles during that time.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:58 p.m. to October 1, 2020.