



December 14, 2012

To: Executive Board

Subject: **Foothill Transit Service Status**

Recommendation

Receive and file a status update on Foothill Transit's on-street service.

Analysis

At its October 26, 2012 meeting, the Executive Board directed that an update be provided on Foothill Transit service quality, particularly as it relates to on-time performance.

As of July 1, 2012 Foothill Transit's on-time performance is now tracked and reported using the agency's SMART*Bus* system (SBS). The system collects and reports data from every revenue vehicle in service throughout the day. In the past, on-time performance was monitored and reported manually using approximately 6,000 in-person observations collected monthly at randomly selected locations throughout the service area. The SBS collects data at every timepoint for every trip throughout the day, providing approximately 285,000 pieces of on-time performance data each month.

Several issues that have an impact on on-time performance have been identified and are being addressed. Among these are:

- Late departures of coaches from the operating facilities
- Coach operator meal and rest period requirements
- Inconsistent traffic patterns affecting consistent daily running time
- Short and long-term detours

In recent months occurrences of late departures from Foothill Transit's operating facilities have been caused by unavailable or deficient vehicles. Make-ready work for the most recently procured coaches and the final remaining fleet turnover repairs that were not completed by the prior contractor are now complete, and service interruptions as a result of fleet availability are no longer occurring. Each operating location is currently provided a spare ratio of just less than 20 percent to ensure that sufficient vehicles are available in the event of a coach breakdown and to facilitate regularly scheduled preventive maintenance.

Schedule adherence has been impacted when a bus experiences a delay along the route on its way to a layover/recovery location or as a coach operator is returning to the operating facility for a meal or rest break. In these instances, the coach operator is required to take her or his full meal or rest break before returning to work. The current

agreement with First Transit for operation of transit service at the Arcadia location makes it a violation for the contractor to schedule coach operator meal or rest breaks in the middle of a trip as had had been a regular practice in the prior contract. Previously, these mid-trip reliefs had been the cause of chronic service delays on Foothill Transit's longer lines. Under the new contract, in a small percentage of instances, coach operators are consistently arriving late to the end of a trip which then causes them to depart late on the return trip. The Planning team is currently working with First Transit on strategies to address this issue.

One of the biggest challenges to effective service delivery is the ever changing traffic patterns that affect the proper spacing of trips. Customers are significantly impacted when coaches begin traveling back-to-back with unacceptably long intervals until a third coach/trip arrives. To address this, members of the Quality Assurance team have been stationed in the dispatch offices of both operating facilities at various times throughout the day to assist the dispatchers with the proper spacing of trips along a route. The Quality Assurance Inspectors have been advised to immediately inform the General Manager at each location when these instances occur so that front-line personnel can take immediate action to get service back on schedule.

As a result of these actions, preliminary SBS on-time performance data appears to have resulted in an improvement of 2.6 percent in November over October's on-time performance figure.

Several road improvement/construction projects throughout Foothill Transit's service area are ongoing and these impact service to varying levels systemwide. Long term detours that are known at the time of the development of the Bus Book are built into the schedules. Unfortunately, when there are detours that occur subsequent to the publication of the Bus Book, schedule changes that incorporate these detours cannot be made because of the difficulty of disseminating this revised schedule information to customers who already have a Bus Book. Real-time bus arrival technology is currently being implemented and will be available to customers in the next two months that will help to advise customers when these unanticipated detours or road construction issues occur. Schedule adjustments have been incorporated into the upcoming service change to address known detours and other traffic issues.

A separate issue that negatively impacts the reporting of on-time performance is related to the way in which data is collected. Currently the SBS system counts early arrivals at drop-off only locations as an on-time performance violation. These occur for example when a coach on a commuter line transporting customers to work downtown arrives at and departs from a timepoint ahead of schedule. While our commuter customers consider this to be a benefit, the system counts this occurrence as an on-time performance violation. Early departures at timepoints where customers expect to be picked up according to the published schedule should be and are valid on-time



performance violations. Xerox, the manufacturer of the SBS, is working on a means to extract early arrivals at drop-off locations from the reporting of on-time performance. When completed, on-time performance reports on commuter lines will show marked improvement.

Cross-functional teams consisting of members of the administrative team and members of both operations contract staff have been formed and will continue to track and address schedule adherence issues and improve on-time performance.

Budget Impact

This is a status update item only. There is no budget impact.

Sincerely,

Kevin McDonald
Deputy Executive Director

Doran J. Barnes
Executive Director