



SGVCOG Transportation Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: April 8, 2021
Time: 4:00 PM
Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting

PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

1. Call to Order
J. Pu called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
P. Chan led the Transportation Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Roll Call
A quorum was in attendance.

Committee Members Present

Alhambra	Adele Andrade-Stadler
Claremont	Ed Reece
Glendora	Vanessa Mikhail
Industry	Cory Moss
La Cañada Flintridge	Keith Eich
Monterey Park	Peter Chan
Pasadena	Laura Cornejo
Pomona	Tim Sandoval
San Gabriel	Jason Pu
South El Monte	Gloria Olmos
Temple City	Cynthia Sternquist
Walnut	Allen Wu
L.A. County District #4	Jamie Hwang

Absent

Diamond Bar
Duarte
South Pasadena
L.A. County District #1
L.A. County District #5

Guests

City of Temple City	Ashley Avery
Metro	Andrew Lee
Metro	Dennis Tucker
Metro	Doreen Morrisey
Metro	Daniel Tran
Metro	Giovanna Mastascuso Gogreve
Metro	Marie Kim
Metro	Mark Linsenmayer
Metro	Mary Lou Echternach
Metro	Robert Gutierrez
Metro	Shahrzad Amiri
Foothill Transit	Doran Barnes
Foothill Transit	John Xie
Foothill Transit	Michelle Caldwell

SGVCOG Staff

E. Shen, Staff
K. Ward, Staff
A. Fung, Staff

Foothill Transit Yoko Igawa
Sen. Portantino's Office Dominick Correy

4. Public Comment
There were no public comments at this meeting.
5. Changes to Agenda Order
There were no changes to the Agenda Order.

CONSENT CALENDAR

6. Transportation Committee Meeting Minutes – 03/11/2021
Action: Review and approve.

There was a motion to approve consent calendar item 6. (M/S: K. Eich/G. Olmos)
[Motion Passed]

AYES:	Alhambra, Claremont, Glendora, Industry, La Cañada Flintridge, Monterey Park, Pasadena, San Gabriel, South El Monte, Temple City, Walnut, L.A. County District #4
NOES:	
ABSTAIN:	
NO VOTE RECORDED:	Pomona
ABSENT:	Diamond Bar, Duarte, South Pasadena, L.A. County District #1, L.A. County District #5

DISCUSSION ITEM

7. Metro Fareless System Initiative
Metro Principal Transportation Planner, Doreen Morrissey, and Metro Veteran's Program Manager, Dennis Tucker, provided a presentation on this item. Metro previously announced the formation of the Fareless System Initiative (FSI) Task Force to identify challenges and provide recommendations on implementing fareless transit for riders on all Metro bus and rail routes. Since last year, the 19-member FSI Task Force collaborated with Metro staff and local and municipal transit operators to identify the benefits and challenges of implementing a fareless system. As a result, the Task Force proposed an 18-month phased pilot program that would begin with low-income riders in January 2022 and expand to all K-12 students starting in August 2022. The Metro Board of Directors is scheduled to review the draft details of the FSI pilot program later this month.

Key Questions/Discussions:

- G. Olmos expressed appreciation to Metro for improving residents' quality of life and requested Metro staff to provide additional clarification on the funding sources for the FSI once the information is available.
- E. Reece inquired about FSI's possibility of hindering Metro's growth if fares are not collected. Ms. Morrissey responded that Metro is hopeful that the implementation of FSI can lead to an increase in ridership, as Metro is currently experiencing a 13% farebox recovery due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Ms.

Morrissey added that the pilot program, if approved, can provide Metro staff with more time to seek additional funding sources, such as applying congestion pricing revenue to fund FSI programs. The pilot program can also help the region determine if the FSI is truly beneficial to the community.

- E. Reece inquired about the cost of operating the FSI pilot program. Ms. Morrissey responded the estimated cost to implement the pilot program is approximately \$300 million. The program's sources of funding will be presented to the Metro Board of Directors later this month.
- E. Reece inquired about Metro's method of evaluating success in the pilot program. Ms. Morrissey responded that the program's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are currently being developed in consultant with the Task Force and Ad-hoc Committee members. Ridership, financial sustainability, safety, security, quality of service, and level of service factors will be incorporated in the KPIs. E. Reece added that providing KPIs and measurements of success is crucial for programs and projects that are seeking support from stakeholders and governing bodies.
- E. Reece inquired whether the FSI pilot program would only be implemented by parts of Los Angeles County. Ms. Morrissey responded that the pilot program would apply to all low-income residents of Los Angeles County on buses and rails that are serviced by Metro and added that Metro survey results highlighted that almost 70% of Metro riders are low-income. Metro expressed interest in partnering with agencies that would also be interested in implementing fareless programs.
- C. Sternquist inquired about the FSI's impact on the LIFE Program. Ms. Morrissey responded that the LIFE Program will remain in place as the FSI pilot program is being implemented. All registered LIFE participants will be automatically enrolled in the FSI. All riders who are eligible for the LIFE Program would also be eligible for the FSI pilot program. Additionally, the LIFE Program will soon be rebranded.
- C. Sternquist inquired about qualifications for a rider to be eligible for the FSI pilot program. Mr. Tucker responded that methodology from the LIFE Program would be utilized to determine eligibility and that Metro would collaborate with social services agencies and community-based organizations to increase participation in the FSI pilot program.
- C. Sternquist inquired about Metro's strategy for addressing riders' safety and security concerns. Ms. Morrissey responded that the most effective strategy appears to be working with social services agencies to offboard non-destination riders at the end of each lines. A Customer Ambassador Program is also currently in development to support such efforts. C. Sternquist added that it is crucial for riders to feel safe in public transit systems.
- J. Hwang inquired about the timeline of utilizing congestion pricing to fund the FSI. Ms. Morrissey responded that the Congestion Pricing Program's revenue would not be funding the FSI until the pilot program concludes. Decisions would also need to be made regarding the future of the FSI depending on directions from the Metro Board of Directors.
- J. Hwang inquired about how LIFE Program applicants would be informed about the FSI pilot program. Ms. Morrissey responded any individual who joins the FSI pilot program would have 18 months of fareless benefits; however, the benefits

will expire by June 2023. All FSI pilot program users will be using TAP cards as well.

- C. Moss inquired about other examples of fareless programs that have been implemented in other areas. Ms. Morrissey responded that 26 agencies implemented similar programs throughout the state and other major programs were also introduced across the country. Specifically, Trenton implemented a fareless program in the 1970s on a smaller scale and Austin implemented a similar program in the 1990s. Riders in Austin expressed concerns regarding the increase of intoxicated riders on the transit system. Additionally, Kansas City is currently implementing a fareless program, which began before the COVID-19 Pandemic. Social services began providing meals and services at Kansas City bus stops, which resulted in an increase in trash and loitering issues. Furthermore, the country of Estonia experienced positive results from implementing a fareless transit system given that the increase in ridership enhanced public safety.
- L. Cornejo expressed appreciation for Metro to include both local and municipal operators in the conversations of developing the FSI and recommended Metro to evaluate the impacts of FSI on local municipal operators.
- D. Barnes inquired about the need to implement additional services as a result of FSI implementation and commented that adding the miles of additional services may impact regional funding. Ms. Morrissey responded that the increased service hours would fit within Metro's 7 million service hours and that Metro does not anticipate that the FSI would impact the FAP. Currently, Metro is at 5.5 million service hours and it is anticipated that the FSI will increase Metro's service hours to up to 7 million; however, it is unclear how much of an increase FSI would have on ridership.
- E. Reece inquired whether the FSI only covers the cost of eligible Metro riders. Ms. Morrissey responded that Metro plans on covering the cost of eligible Metro riders only; however, Metro expressed a willingness to partner with interested local and municipal operators to implement the FSI pilot program.
- E. Reece commented that residents from areas that are not primarily serviced by Metro lines may not benefit from the FSI. D. Barnes added that some LIFE Program participants are also Foothill Transit's riders and commented that there is a tradeoff for local and municipal operators to participate in the FSI given that Metro would not be covering the FSI costs for local and municipal operators. Mr. Morrissey responded that the Metro Board of Directors directed Metro staff to analyze the cost for local and municipal operators to be included in the FSI and the information will soon be presented to the Metro Board.
- J. Pu inquired about the FSI's local funding sources. Ms. Morrissey responded that the FSI's local funding sources would only include the possibility of utilizing congestion pricing funds. Mr. Tucker added that local funding sources referred to Metro's internal funding dollars that can be identified to support the FSI pilot program.
- J. Pu inquired about ongoing public-private partnerships that are involved with the development of FSI. Ms. Morrissey responded that there are no public-private partnerships to develop the FSI pilot program at this moment.

PRESENTATION

8. Metro I-10 ExpressLanes Overview

Metro Congestion Reduction Programs Executive Officer, Shahrzad Amiri, provided a presentation on this item. Metro launched the ExpressLanes several years ago to reduce congestion, improve traffic flow, and provide additional travel options for commuters in Los Angeles County. In 2017, the Metro Board of Directors approved the Countywide ExpressLanes Strategic Plan to focus on evaluating Los Angeles County corridors for ExpressLanes implementation. The Strategic Plan identified the I-10 ExpressLanes Extension Project as a Priority Tier 1 Project, which implies that Metro plans on completing the project within 10 years of the Plan's adoption. The I-10 ExpressLanes Extension Project aims to address the existing ExpressLanes gap on the I-10 between the I-10/I-605 Intersection and the Los Angeles/San Bernardino County Line. While Metro plans on pursuing all available funding, including grants and loans, to advance this project, Metro stated that most of the project's funds will originate from Metro's revenues, including both existing and future net toll revenues.

Key Questions/Discussions:

- A. Wu inquired about the eligibility for cities to receive funds from the Net Toll Revenue Reinvestment Program. Ms. Amiri responded that jurisdictions within the I-10's three-mile radius are eligible to receive funds from the Net Toll Revenue Reinvestment Program.
- A. Wu inquired about plans to improve the I-10 between the City of Los Angeles and the I-605. Ms. Amiri responded that the Metro Board of Directors recently approved the environmental phase of extending the ExpressLanes from the I-10/I-605 Intersection to the Los Angeles/San Bernardino County Line, which can address the bottleneck issues that are occurring around the I-10/I-605 Intersection.
- A. Wu expressed concerns regarding the long wait for residents to speak with an ExpressLanes customer service representative. Ms. Amiri responded that the COVID-19 Pandemic impacted Metro's Customer Service Center; however, the wait time for the past few weeks have been decreased given that an electronic voice option was recently introduced.
- M. Echernach expressed appreciation to Ms. Amiri and her team for supporting the SGVCOG.
- A. Andrade-Stadler expressed concerns regarding the lack of time and roadway length for commuters who enter the I-10 through the Fremont Avenue entrance to enter the ExpressLanes entrance and recommended Metro to explore additional options for commuters to enter the ExpressLanes throughout the I-10 Corridor to increase accessibility of the ExpressLanes. J. Pu also shared similar concerns regarding drivers leaving the ExpressLanes at inappropriate times to reach a certain freeway exit. Ms. Amiri responded Metro staff will continue to evaluate additional options to enhance accessibility.
- A. Andrade-Stadler inquired about safety studies on the newly-installed yellow barriers that separate the ExpressLanes from the other lanes on the I-10. Ms. Amiri responded that the yellow plastic barriers were installed to enhance safety to discourage commuters from weaving into the ExpressLanes without paying. These commuters increase the traffic in the ExpressLanes and, in turn, increase the toll

fees for users on the ExpressLanes. These plastic barriers prevent accidents that occur as a result of drivers weaving between the ExpressLanes and general purpose lanes; however, additional safety studies and research would need to be conducted.

- P. Chan inquired about the I-10's capacity to accommodate additional lanes to extend the I-10 ExpressLanes to the Los Angeles/San Bernardino County Line. Ms. Amiri responded that the project's environmental assessment will evaluate the need to install either a dual or single ExpressLane(s). While the preference is to include dual ExpressLanes, Metro will continue to work with Caltrans to evaluate the feasibility of including dual ExpressLanes in the segment between the I-10/I-605 Intersection to the Los Angeles/San Bernardino County Line.
- P. Chan inquired about the validity of 37% of vehicles that utilize the ExpressLanes include three or more commuters. Ms. Amiri responded that it is possible for commuters to falsely report the number of individuals in the vehicle to pay less fees. Metro is in the process of evaluating enforcement strategies with the California Highway Patrol (CHP).
- P. Chan sought additional details on the I-10 ExpressLanes Busway HOV 5+ Pilot Program given that the simulation modeling analysis showed an increase travel time in general purpose lanes of four minutes. Ms. Amiri clarified that the four minutes measurement represents the average increased time in general purpose lanes throughout the entire day. During the peak hours, the increased time may be longer.
- P. Chan commented that he was charged with a penalty to pay the toll road fees in Orange County due to payment options that were not designed to be user-friendly. Ms. Amiri responded that Orange County's operations are different than Los Angeles County's version. Currently, Metro allows commuters without transponders 30 days to submit their toll payments. P. Chan recommended Metro to continue exploring user-friendly payment options.

UPDATE ITEM

9. Metro FY 2022 Budget

Metro Transportation Planning Senior Manager, Giovanna Mastascuso Gogreve, provided a presentation on this item. Currently, Metro staff is analyzing and evaluating the budget for infrastructure, transit system, highway, and regional rail planning and construction projects. As part of the budget development process, Metro staff will provide relevant status updates to the Metro Board of Directors, as well as subregions and stakeholders, until the targeted budget adoption date in May. According to Metro, the proposed FY 2022 Budget Book will be made available starting May 4, 2021. A public hearing has also been scheduled on May 19, 2021 to obtain public comments from external stakeholders. The Metro Board of Directors is scheduled to adopt the final FY 2022 Budget at its meeting on May 27, 2021.

Key Questions/Discussions:

- A. Wu inquired whether Metro anticipates receiving federal funding from President Biden's American Jobs Plan. Metro staff responded that Metro is closely monitoring the Plan, as additional details would need to be provided from the

federal level.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

10. Oral Report

A report on the American Jobs Plan and Made in America Tax Plan was provided.

LIAISON REPORTS

11. Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority Report

Metro Board Member, Tim Sandoval, and Metro Board Deputy, Mary Lou Echternach, provided reports on this item.

12. Foothill Transit Report

Foothill Transit Chief Executive Officer, Doran Barnes, provided a report.

13. Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority Report

Committee Vice Chair and Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority Board Member, Ed Reece, provided a report.

14. Metrolink Report

There were no reports on this item.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no additional announcements.

ADJOURN

J. Pu adjourned the Transportation Committee meeting at 6:00pm.