CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

Date: December 3, 2020

To: Honorable City Council
c/o City Clerk, Room 395
Attention: Honorable Mike Bonin, Chair, Transportation Committee

From: Seleta J. Reynolds, General Manager
Department of Transportation

Subject: **NextGen Bus Study / Operational and Infrastructure Improvements / Reliable Service**

SUMMARY

In response to direction in Council File (CF) 19-0885, this report provides an update on the NextGen Bus Speed Engineering Working Group, a joint effort between the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro). The joint working group implemented its first dedicated bus lanes on priority corridors and is beginning community engagement on additional corridors.

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council RECEIVE and FILE this report.

BACKGROUND

On September 17, 2019, Council directed LADOT to convene a monthly NextGen Bus Working Group (Working Group) with Metro and provide quarterly updates to the Transportation Committee, starting in October 2019. The working group is responsible for developing a list of priority bus-supportive infrastructure projects to support Metro's NextGen bus service plan, with an emphasis on near-term improvements implemented concurrently with each phase of NextGen.

Starting in October 2019, the working group meets regularly to identify and prioritize corridors for infrastructure improvements, develop project scopes, and determine outreach strategies. LADOT will continue to provide quarterly updates on the coordination to the Council.

In May 2020, LADOT provided a report to Council outlining community outreach for proposed projects on 5th, 6th, and Aliso Streets in Downtown and identified Olive and Grand as recommended corridors for consideration of dedicated bus lane projects.

DISCUSSION

The Working Group identified several ways to improve bus speed and reliability throughout the City. The NextGen Bus Plan identifies eligible corridors, while the Working Group recommends tools based on the specific needs of each corridor. The partners will implement initial bus speed improvement

infrastructure first in Downtown Los Angeles, where a significant portion of bus routes begin and end, demand is highest, and service is most frequent. The working group identified an additional corridor outside the Downtown area to begin outreach, and will continue to identify priority corridors for bus improvement citywide. Bus speed and reliability is increasingly critical during the Safer at Home order, as more frequent and reliable service can accommodate better social distancing for essential workers who rely on transit to connect them to jobs and services.

Phase 1: Downtown Los Angeles

The Working Group identified priority corridors to focus initial infrastructure improvements in Downtown Los Angeles. These corridors and recommended improvements are summarized below and described in greater detail in the attached Metro report.

Flower Street Bus Only Lane

The Working Group evaluated the 1.8-mile pilot bus only lane on Flower Street, and found significant improvements to bus speed and reliability, increased ridership, positive user survey response, and minimum traffic impacts. Based on these positive outcomes, Metro will file a Notice of Exemption with the County Clerk to continue the dedicated bus lane.

5th Street & 6th Street Bus Only Lane and Signal Queue Jumper

Based on current bus demand and frequency, and preliminary traffic impact assessment, the Working Group identified 5th and 6th Streets as priority candidates for dedicated bus-only lanes. Following community outreach, LADOT designed both 5th and 6th Streets for bus lanes from Flower Street to Central Avenue and incorporated protected bike lanes east of Spring Street. In coordination with the Bureau of Street Services (StreetsLA) ADAPT resurfacing program, LADOT installed the bus and bike lanes on 5th and 6th Streets in June 2020.

To further the improvements of the 5th Street dedicated bus lane, the technical working group identified the intersection at Flower Street and 5th Street for a signal queue jumper to provide buses a dedicated signal phase to safely and efficiently merge to the left ahead of freeway traffic to make their way towards Westlake and Koreatown. The attached Metro Board report includes more information on this proposed signal treatment scheduled in Spring 2021.

Aliso Street

Metro's NextGen outreach identified Aliso Street as a primary congestion point for buses accessing the ExpressLanes entrance on Alameda Street, affecting service reliability and speed for San Gabriel Valley transit riders. To address this issue, the technical working group identified a connecting bus only lane on Aliso Street from Spring to Alameda Street, allowing buses to turn from the existing bus only lane on Spring Street and access the 10 freeway ExpressLanes with priority. Metro installed the Aliso Street dedicated bus lane with LADOT assistance in September 2020.

Olive Street and Grand Street

In May 2020, LADOT reported that the Working Group identified Olive Street and Grand Street as high bus frequency corridors that would benefit from a dedicated bus lane. In coordination with StreetsLA's ADAPT resurfacing program, LADOT designed and relocated the existing bike lanes on Olive and Grand Streets to the left side of the roadway to reduce conflicts with transit and allow for future bus lanes. The

joint working group anticipates that community outreach for these dedicated bus lanes will begin in Spring 2021.

Phase 2: Citywide bus speed and reliability improvements

While the working group focused initial efforts on bus only lanes in Downtown Los Angeles to improve speed and reliability on the vast number of routes that begin, end, or pass through these streets, improved service citywide requires treatments across the City's most transit dependent corridors.

Alvarado Street

The technical working group will study the feasibility and impacts of a dedicated bus lane on Alvarado Street from 7th Street to Sunset. The proposed project converts existing peak hour travel lanes to dedicated bus lanes that operate Monday - Friday from 7:00 - 10:00 am Southbound and 3:00 - 7:00 pm Northbound. These dedicated bus lanes will increase bus frequency along the corridor from approximately 10 minutes to seven minutes, and reduce travel time by three minutes in each direction. In addition to improving bus service for riders, dedicated bus lanes reduce conflicts between vehicles and improve pedestrian safety.

The proposed project extends no parking limits by one hour in each direction, but maintains all parking availability, loading zones, and ADA parking throughout the rest of the day. Detailed traffic impact studies are underway, but based on an initial review anticipated impacts are approximately 90 seconds along the entire corridor.

Based on sociodemographic ridership information collected by Metro, bus riders along the corridor are primarily Latino (77%) women (52%) over the age of 35 (52%) who do not own vehicles (94%) and rely on bus service to connect them to jobs and services five days a week or more (77%). Improved service is critical for these bus-dependent residents, and during the pandemic increased frequency will ensure all riders are able to maintain social distancing.

Community outreach for the Alvarado dedicated bus lane is expected to begin in January 2021. Throughout the project design and community outreach process, the working group will identify opportunities to further improve pedestrian safety, lighting, and mobility for all road users.

Next Steps

The Working Group will continue meeting to identify the next phase of corridors and appropriate treatments based on bus service frequency, demand, existing traffic volumes, and identify the next phase of priority corridors and treatments in its next report.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

SJR:mr
attachment

Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation
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Los Angeles, CA

Metro

Board Report

File #: 2020-0623, **File Type:** Informational Report **Agenda Number:** 25.

OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 15, 2020

SUBJECT: MOTION 22.1: NEXTGEN BUS SPEED ENGINEERING WORKING GROUP STATUS UPDATE

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE the status report in response to Motion 22.1 entitled NextGen Bus Speed Engineering Working Group (July 2019). This update provides details regarding a technical working group appointed by Metro and its efforts to coordinate with a complementary group from Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) to develop a work program to improve bus priority and assess the need to coordinate with other jurisdictions and municipal operators.

ISSUE

In July 2019, the Board approved Motion 22.1 entitled NextGen Bus Speed Engineering Working Group as part of the NextGen Service Concept. This motion requests the following:

A. Develop a list of priority bus supportive infrastructure projects needed to support the NextGen bus service plan, with an emphasis on near-term improvements that can be implemented concurrently with each phase of NextGen;
B. Form a NextGen Bus Speed Engineering Working Group co-chaired by the Metro CEO and the General Manager (GM) of the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), or their designees, and establish a regular meeting schedule, at least monthly;
C. Assess the need for coordination with additional local jurisdictions and municipal operators where bus delay hotspots exist; and
D. Report back to the Operations, Safety and Customer Experience Committee on the above in April 2020, and quarterly thereafter.

This report provides a status update for FY21Q1 on the response to Motion 22.1.

BACKGROUND

In July 2018, the Board adopted Motion 38.1, endorsing travel speed, service frequency, and system reliability as the highest priority service design objectives for the NextGen Bus Study. These objectives have been incorporated in the Regional Service Concept, that was approved by the Board in July 2019, which provides the framework for restructuring Metro's bus routes and schedules.

Concurrent to the approval of the Regional Service Concept, the Board approved Motion 22.1: Engineering Working Group, which provides direction to staff to establish a partnership between Metro and LADOT to identify, design, fund and implement transit supportive infrastructure to speed up transit service as part of the NextGen Bus Plan.

The Metro CEO has appointed a Technical Working Group focused on identifying, planning, designing and implementing bus speed and reliability improvements. This group, consisting of Metro Service Planning will work in close partnership with LADOT's equivalent technical team, consisting of Traffic Operations, Active Transportation, Vision Zero, and Transportation Planning Groups, meeting on a regular basis (every 2-4 weeks), to ensure ongoing coordination and advancement of the program. Additional Metro departments (e.g. Communications, Planning, OMB, OEI, Program Management, Security), as well as other municipal traffic departments and transit operators, would be engaged as needed when specific projects have been defined and advanced towards design and implementation.

An External Affairs Working Group has also been established as a subcommittee of the Technical Working Group. It is comprised of staff from Metro Community Relations, LADOT External Affairs, StreetsLA, the Los Angeles Mayor's Office, Metro Board Staff and Metro Service Planning. Their work focuses on coordinating to communicate with and prepare communities for coming improvements including identifying and addressing potential impacts, as well as coordinating outreach and engagement efforts for these projects.

At major milestones and as needed, the Technical Working Group will report on progress to the Metro CEO and LADOT's GM, and/or their designees, to seek direction on goals and objectives of the Technical Working Group as well as policy guidance on balancing priorities for roadway and curb space.

DISCUSSION

Since the last update provided to the Board on May 21, 2020, the Technical Working Group met on August 12, 2020.

During this period, the Technical Working Group accomplished the following:

5th Street & 6th Street Bus Priority Lane

In partnership with LADOT and StreetsLA's ADAPT Program, the Technical Working Group has completed a westbound bus priority lane on 5th Street and an eastbound bus priority lane on 6th Street, between Flower Street and Central Avenue.

- Weekdays between 7:00 AM and 7:00 PM
- Typically, over 80 buses per hour use either 5th or 6th Streets, which equates to one bus every 45 seconds
- Benefits to bus riders from the Eastside, Westside and Southeast

While the project has been implemented, staff is deferring an evaluation of this project until traffic volumes and ridership patterns recover from COVID-19, which has brought a significant reduction in traffic volumes and relaxed parking enforcement policies by LADOT, including bus lane enforcement, through October 2020. Therefore, there are no substantive impacts to report on travel time, reliability or ridership.

Bus Signal Queue Jumper at 5th Street/Flower Street

As bus lanes are just one of the tools in the Speed & Reliability Toolkit, Metro has also identified an opportunity to employ a different tool to reduce bus delays for westbound buses at 5th Street/Flower Street. Currently, buses must serve the nearside stop at 5th Street/Flower Street with 700 daily boardings and alightings, and then slowly maneuver from the right hand side of the curb to the left side of 5th Street, which results in potentially conflicting crossover with private vehicles attempting to use the 110 Freeway On-Ramp on the right hand side of the street.

With a bus signal queue jumper, Metro and other transit buses would have a dedicated signal phase to safely and efficiently “jump the queue” of adjacent cars to merge to the left and away from freeway traffic to make their way towards Westlake and Koreatown.

Metro expects to complete engineering design and installation of this project in Spring 2021.

Aliso Street Bus Only Lane

The Technical Working Group has also implemented a critical, “missing gap” bus lane that links the existing Spring St bus only lane at Los Angeles City Hall with the I-10 ExpressLanes entrance (formerly El Monte Busway) at Alameda St. In conjunction with the soon-to-open Patsaouras Bus Plaza Busway Station at Union Station East, Metro and Foothill Transit commuters will benefit from an improved customer experience in this segment.

- Identical hours of operation with existing bus only lane on Spring Street and Left Turn Pocket at Alameda Street
- Typically, over 60 buses per hour use Aliso Street, which equates to one bus every minute
- Benefits to San Gabriel Valley riders and Busway users at Cal State LA and LAC+USC Medical Center

Because this bus only lane is always in effect, the Technical Working Group has agreed to pilot a raised curb treatment that seeks to improve bus lane compliance. This treatment will be evaluated for effectiveness and potentially expanded to other areas if successful.

Looking Ahead

The NextGen Bus Speed Engineering Working Group is continuing to discuss and analyze future corridors along key arterials for equitable opportunities and are actively collaborating with partner agencies and stakeholders. Staff plans to provide further details about these corridors in the next quarterly update in January 2021.

Additionally, Metro is working with LADOT to expand TPS to more buses and along non-TPS Tier 1

corridors under the NextGen Bus Plan. Today, only Metro Rapid (Red) buses receive TPS, which can extend green lights to prioritize certain buses. Given the NextGen Bus Plan to combine the best of Metro Rapid priority attributes with Metro Local access for all riders, Metro is exploring the viability to install TPS transponders on its entire 2,300 bus fleet and work with LADOT to increase opportunities for Metro buses to receive signal prioritization along Metro Tier 1 bus routes.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Recommendations support strategic plans:

Goal #1: Provide high quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling. Improving the speed and reliability of the bus network will reduce transit travel times as well as improving competitiveness with other transportation options.

Goal #2: Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system. These initiatives help to move more people within the same street capacity, where currently transit users suffer service delays and reliability issues because of single occupant drivers.

Goal #3: Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity. With faster transit service and improved reliability, residents have increased access to education and employment, including Cal State LA Station, with greater confidence that they will reach their destination on time.

Goal #4: Transform Los Angeles County through regional collaboration and national leadership. Because Metro does not have jurisdiction over local streets and arterials, collaboration with other partner agencies such as LADOT, City and County of Los Angeles are necessary to ensure these speed and reliability improvements are successfully implemented.

NEXT STEPS

Metro and LADOT will continue to collaborate on implementing transit supportive infrastructure and provide quarterly progress reports to the Board.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Motion 22.1

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