


CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

Date: June 12, 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 working group has identified its first priority corridors for improvement and is conducting community engagement.

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 developed 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 established a regular meeting schedule 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.

DISCUSSION

The Working Group identified several available tools to improve bus speed and reliability throughout the City. The NextGen Bus Plan identifies priority corridors based on ridership and travel time, and the Working Group will recommend tools based on the specific needs of each corridor. The first focus area for bus speed improvements is in Downtown Los Angeles, where a significant portion of bus routes begin and end, demand is highest, and service is most frequent.

Phase 1: Downtown Los Angeles

The Working Group identified priority corridors to focus initial infrastructure improvements in Downtown Los Angeles. We summarize the corridors and recommended improvements below, 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 (additional detail in attached Metro report). Based on these positive results, the Technical Working Group recommends making the Flower Street Bus Only Lane permanent.

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

To complement and enhance existing north-south transit supportive infrastructure on Flower Street, the Working Group recommends additional bus only lanes that address east-west mobility. Based on current bus demand and frequency, and preliminary traffic impact assessment, the Working Group identified 5th and 6th Streets as priority candidates for bus only lanes (additional detail in attached Metro report).

Both 5th Street and 6th Street are included in StreetsLA's ADAPT program for June, escalating anticipated timelines. Based on Working Group recommendations and the support of both the Mayor's Office and Council District 14, community outreach on these corridors is in progress. Outreach will follow existing Safer at Home directives to protect public health. Metro will lead this community engagement effort, in coordination with the City, and additional detail is available in the attached Metro report.

Aliso Street

Metro's NextGen outreach identified Aliso Street as a primary congestion point for buses accessing the ExpressLane entrance on Alameda Street, affecting service reliability and speed for San Gabriel Valley transit riders. To address this issue, the Working Group recommends installing a 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 101 freeway with priority. Existing bus frequency and traffic impact estimates as detailed in the attached Metro report support this recommendation.

Olive Street and Grand Street

The Working Group identified Olive Street and Grand Street as high bus frequency corridors that would benefit from a dedicated bus lane. Running parallel to the existing bus only lanes on Flower Street and Figueroa Street that are currently running above their per minute capacity for bus frequency, these dedicated lanes would provide additional capacity and further relieve congestion. The Working Group recommends implementing bus only lanes on these corridors to create a holistic network through Downtown.

Next Steps

While bus only lanes in Downtown Los Angeles provide the greatest opportunity to improve service speed and reliability on the vast number of routes that begin, end, or pass through these streets, bus speed and reliability citywide requires additional tools used on corridors across the City. The technical

working group will develop corridor specific project scopes using a wide range of bus speed improvement treatments that improve bus speed and reliability. The Working Group will 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

Attachments



Board Report

File #: 2020-0131, **File Type:** Informational Report

Agenda Number: 16.

OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE MAY 21, 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 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 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. Communication, 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.

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

Flower Street Bus Only Lane

Since the last update provided to the Board on October 17, 2019, the Technical Working Group had met on:

- December 9, 2019
- January 29, 2020
- March 4, 2020
- May 4, 2020

During this period, the Technical Working Group had continued its evaluation of the 1.8 mile Flower Street pop-up bus only lane and determined the following:

- This single bus only lane served 86% of the total people on Flower Street compared with only 14% in private vehicles in the two general lanes
- Bus travel speeds improved up to 30%
- 80% of survey respondents agreed that reliability improved in the corridor
- 85% of survey respondents agreed that mobility was improved in the corridor
- Ridership has increased 32% during bus lane hours, even with Metro Rail fully reopened
- Bus riders collectively save over 340 hours each day compared to pre-pilot
- General traffic impacts were relatively minor, slowing by 2 MPH on a 35 MPH corridor.

Given these compelling results which are aligned with NextGen's guiding principles, the Technical Working Group has recommended to make permanent the Flower Street Bus Only Lane in its current

operation.

As most elements of the bus only lane are already installed, Metro expects to complete this project by June 2020 with bus lane restriping in conjunction with LADOT.

5th Street & 6th Street Bus Only Lane

While the Flower Street bus only lane fully completes the complementary MyFigueroa project for comprehensive north-south transit supportive infrastructure in the Downtown LA region, there are also numerous buses which traverse east-west through Downtown LA. With Citywide support to address east-west mobility, the Technical Working Group recommends next to install a westbound bus only lane on 5th Street and an eastbound bus only lane on 6th Street, between Flower Street and Central Avenue.

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

In March 2020, Metro Community Relations developed and began implementation of an outreach and engagement program for the 5th Street & 6th Street Bus Only Lane. Community outreach and engagement is being conducted by Metro Community Relations in coordination with the Los Angeles Mayor's office, Los Angeles Council District 14, and the Los Angeles Department of Transportation. The outreach and engagement plan, consistent with Metro's Equity Framework, engages stakeholders including residents (housed and unhoused), commercial/retail businesses, property owners, BID's, and community-based organizations. Based on our collective experience with the area with similar initiatives, this multi-pronged strategy is based on potential benefits and potential areas of concern. The outreach and engagement program include but is not limited to:

- On-street assessments
- Face-to-Face stakeholder outreach
- Development and distribution of a fact sheet, maps and collateral materials
- Briefings with key stakeholder groups (BIDS, Business Associations, NC)
- Email communications and distribution to a
- Online project Information and an online survey

Metro Community Relations had planned to work directly with stakeholders between April and May 2020 to educate them about the project and discuss potential benefits, challenges and mitigations measures. However, given the state and local emergency declaration in response to COVID-19, outreach activities were suspended in March 2020. Outreach and engagement activities are currently under review and will be restarted in a format and at a time deemed appropriate given the public health crisis.

Preliminary traffic estimates reveal that both 5th and 6th Street have sufficient capacity along the entire corridor to install a bus only lane without significant impacts to general traffic, above and beyond the usual traffic conditions near the 110 Freeway interchanges.

Metro expects to complete public outreach, engineering design and installation of this project by December 2020.

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, then slowly maneuver from the right hand side of the curb to the left side of 5th Street, which results in traffic conflict 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 Montebello 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 by December 2020.

Aliso Street Bus Only Lane

During the NextGen public outreach period, Metro heard from numerous riders and bus operators that Metro J Line (Silver) and Foothill Transit buses were encountering significant traffic congestion from Los Angeles City Hall to the I-10 Busway/ExpressLanes Entrance at Alameda Street. As a result, these express buses are delayed in providing fast and reliable service to San Gabriel Valley transit riders.

The Technical Working Group has identified a solution to link the existing Spring Street Bus Only Lane at City Hall with the Bus Only Left Turn Pocket at Aliso Street/Alameda Street, using a bus only lane for continuity of existing transit supportive infrastructure.

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

Aliso Street stakeholders are primarily institutional and include federal, state and local government. Metro Community Relations is working in coordination with the Los Angeles Mayor's office, Los Angeles Council District 14, and the Los Angeles Department of Transportation on engagement with key stakeholders in the area. The outreach and engagement will be consistent with Metro's Equity Framework and include institutional stakeholders as well as unhoused residents in the area.

Given the state and local emergency declaration in response to COVID-19, outreach and engagement activities proceed in a format and timeframe appropriate for the circumstances.

Preliminary study indicates that a bus only lane can be installed without significant without significant impacts to general traffic, above and beyond the usual traffic conditions along the 101 Freeway. It is important to note that much of today's traffic is attributed to cut through congestion from 101 Freeway motorists, which negatively impacts transit users entering from the Civic Center area to the Busway entrance.

Metro expects to complete public outreach, engineering design and installation of this project by June 2020.

Looking Ahead

While a number of projects are currently focused on Downtown LA, where the greatest amount of bus service converges into a dense environment, there are many other key corridors outside of Downtown LA where transit supportive infrastructure could dramatically improve bus speed and reliability. The Technical Working Group is continuing to discuss future corridors outside of Downtown LA for equitable opportunities and are actively collaborating with partner agencies and stakeholders.

Second, Metro is working with LADOT to expand “Transit Priority Signaling” (TPS) to its entire fleet of buses. 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 for all Metro bus routes.

Third, Metro is also working with TAP to expand All Door Boarding to future lines. Results show bus stop delay improvements and improved customer experience on today’s All Door Boarding Lines 720, 754 and Metro J Line (Silver). However, All Door Boarding requires additional bus mobile validator (BMV) equipment and labor resources to install and maintain.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The status report does not have financial impact.

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.

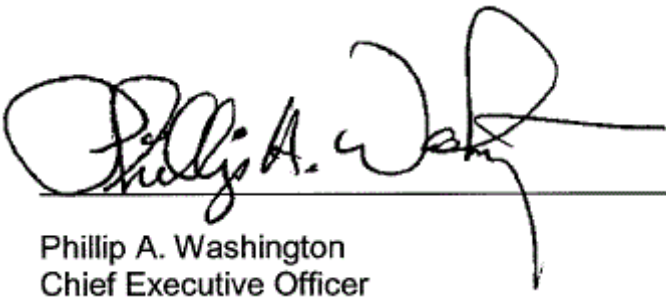
NEXT STEPS

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

Prepared by: Conan Cheung, SEO Service Development, (213) 418-3034
Stephen Tu, Director, Service Planning, (213) 418-3005
Reviewed by: James T. Gallagher, Chief Operations Officer, (213) 418-3108



Phillip A. Washington
Chief Executive Officer