



July 13, 2017

To: Transit Committee

From: Darrell Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Fiscal Year 2017-18 Bus Service Improvement Plan

Overview

Bus system changes to improve productivity are proposed for October 2017 and February 2018. The proposed changes for February 2018 require a public hearing, and staff recommends initiating a public outreach process to gather customer input prior to implementation. Results from the outreach process will be presented to the Board of Directors in September 2017.

Recommendations

- A. Direct staff to implement a public outreach program to solicit feedback on the Draft February 2018 Service Change Proposal.
- B. Direct staff to return to the Board of Directors on September 25, 2017 with outreach findings.

Background

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) implements schedule and route revisions to selected bus routes three times a year, in February, June, and October. The goal is to improve system productivity and reduce fleet requirements. Boardings per revenue hour of service, a systemwide measure of productivity, have declined from 31.4 in 2013 to 25.4 in 2016, a 19 percent drop.

Proposed recommendations for October 2017 were presented to the Transit Committee and Board of Directors (Board) in May 2017. These changes do not require a public hearing, and staff has started the process of implementing these changes in October, which is provided in Attachment A and Attachment B. Staff is soliciting input regarding draft recommendations for February 2018. Several of the recommendations are considered “major service changes” under OCTA policy, and require public outreach and a public hearing prior to Board approval.

Discussion

To address continuing bus ridership declines, in 2015, the Board endorsed a comprehensive action plan, known as OC Bus 360°. This effort included a comprehensive review of current and former rider perceptions, a peer review panel that reviewed the OCTA performance and plans, new branding and marketing tactics tied to rider needs, upgraded bus routes and services to better match demand and capacity, technology changes to improve the passenger experience, and pricing and other revenue changes to stimulate ridership and provide new funding.

With the decline in ridership, productivity for OCTA bus service has declined over the last several years while service levels generally remain constant. There are some indications that the ridership decline is slowing after implementation of the OCBus 360° Program. Staff has developed the February 2018 Service Plan to reallocate additional service to improve productivity. The scope of this effort is approximately a third of the size of the major service changes made in 2016, which reallocated about 10 percent of the bus service or 160,000 annual revenue hours. The service recommendations are consistent with prior OCBus 360° efforts and initial recommendations and findings from the Transit Master Plan.

Final October 2017 Service Change Plan

Staff presented recommendations for the October 2017 service changes to the Transit Committee and Board in May. Some refinements have been made based on timing with other route changes and after receiving a formal request from the City of Newport Beach regarding nighttime service to the Newport Transportation Center (Attachment C). The following changes have been made to the October plan:

- Added elimination of trips on routes 55 and 57 to the Newport Transportation Center between 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. Trips will be cut back to existing turnaround locations in Costa Mesa and Santa Ana.
- Moved some span trip eliminations on routes 46, 50, and 60 to February 2018 because of other proposed schedule changes on these routes.

Staff is proceeding with the implementation of the October 2017 service changes and will provide the Board with updates at subsequent meetings.

Draft February 2018 Service Change Plan

The draft service plan for February 2018 consists primarily of a redeployment of resources, including both service reductions and improvements. The operating resources required (revenue vehicle hours) will be similar to current levels after implementation. Long-term capital needs will be reduced because the service plan requires less peak buses. The lists below summarize the proposed service improvements and reductions.

Service Improvement Highlights

- Improve evening frequencies on five major routes in the core service area, consistent with the Transit Master Plan proposed service standards.
- Improve weekend frequencies on five major routes in the core service area, consistent with the Transit Master Plan proposed service standards.
- Improve weekday peak frequency to 30 minutes on three south county routes and one central county route, based on the transit demand analysis developed for the Transit Master Plan.

Service Reduction Highlights

- Reduce bus trips in the early morning or late evening that have less than eight boardings per trip.
- Slightly reduce peak and midday service on two core routes operating better than 15 minute frequencies where productivity has decreased over the last several years.
- Reduce weekend peak frequency on two core routes based on productivity.
- Restructure one and eliminate another Stationlink route.
- Eliminate two express routes and reduce trips on two others based on low ridership and high fleet requirements.
- Eliminate weekend service on one route.
- Reduce or eliminate service on some lower-ridership route segments.

More detailed descriptions and ridership impacts are included in Attachment D. Maps of the impacted routes on weekdays and weekends are shown in Attachment E and Attachment F. The proposed service changes would reduce service by about 15,000 annual revenue hours. Staff is currently working on the development of a new service, OC Flex. This would be an on-demand service that would provide transit mobility in lower demand areas, reduce total operating and capital cost, and extend the reach of fixed route and Metrolink services. Staff plans to return to the Board with a recommendation by Fall 2017.

Next Steps

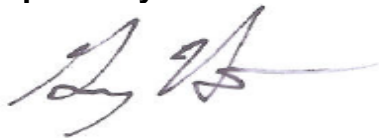
Staff is seeking Board approval to present the proposed February 2018 service changes to the public in August. A public outreach process is required for service changes of this magnitude, and the comments received will be used to refine the recommendations. This process will include three community meetings in the areas impacted by the changes. With Board direction, a public hearing would occur on September 25, 2017, and final recommendations would be presented to the Transit Committee and the Board in October.

Summary


Staff is seeking Board input on the proposed February 2018 Service Change Plan which will redeploy service to improve productivity and reduce peak vehicle requirements.

Attachments

- A. Final October 2017 Service Change Plan
- B. October 2017 Bus Service Change
- C. Letter from Dave Kiff, City Manager, City of Newport Beach, to Kia Mortazavi, Executive Director of Planning, Orange County Transportation Authority, Dated May 8, 2017
- D. Draft February 2018 Service Change Plan
- E. Proposed Weekday Route Changes for February 2018
- F. Proposed Weekend Route Changes for February 2018

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