

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

Date : September 21, 2007

To: The Honorable City Council
c/o City Clerk, Rm. 395, City Hall
Attention: Honorable Wendy Greuel, Transportation Committee

From: Gloria J. Jeff, General Manager
Department of Transportation



Subject: **MAXIMIZING MASS TRANSIT USAGE FOR SPECIAL EVENTS IN
DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES [CF 07-0508]**

SUMMARY

At its May 22, 2007 meeting, the City Council adopted a Transportation Committee recommendation, pursuant to a Motion introduced by Councilmembers Greuel, Perry and LaBonge, that (1) a task force be established "to address potential strategies for maximizing mass transit usage for special events"; and (2) the task force report back to Council "with suggestions to improve the utilization of public transportation from the outlying areas of the City to special events in Downtown Los Angeles" with regard to public/private partnerships, existing transit routes and assets, and new improved transit service (07-0508).

In the short term, public - private partnerships appear to offer the best prospects for maximizing transit usage for special events Downtown, either through provision of charter-type bus service or through provision of shuttle services within Downtown that are complementary to existing bus and rail service. Some examples are described in this report. In the intermediate term, both the Expo Line light rail project (by connecting Culver City and Downtown) and the Grand Avenue Project (by improving walkability) offer the prospect of making public transit a far more attractive option for Downtown arts / entertainment patrons who reside on the Westside or in the West Valley.

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council receive and file this report, as it is for informational purposes only and no Council action is required.

BACKGROUND

As noted in the preamble to the initiating motion, the performing art and music venues in Downtown are among the City's greatest assets and serve as cultural resources for the entire

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region. There have been anecdotal reports that “patrons are becoming reluctant to visit these venues [e.g. the Music Center] from areas outside of Downtown due to . . . unpredictable traffic conditions or long travel times” on weekday evenings, as noted in the City Clerk report summary accompanying the Transportation Committee recommendation. Specific reference was made to the Westside and West Valley as “outlying areas” whose resident patrons of the arts are increasingly reluctant to travel to Downtown venues. The Hollywood Bowl park-n-ride / bus shuttle program was also referenced in the original motion as an example of a successful transit alternative. While the impact of travel conditions on event attendance is a matter of some dispute, the congested conditions during weekday evening peak hours for travel into and out of Downtown are well documented. The nature of the various performance and musical events and their duration, with the typical start times of 7:30 PM or 8:00 PM - requires that travel from outlying areas into Downtown to the arts venues take place during the evening peak hours.

Pursuant to the Council instruction, a Task Force was established by the Department of Transportation (LADOT) to consider potential strategies to facilitate weekday evening access to Downtown arts and entertainment venues. Representatives from the Music Center companies (Los Angeles Philharmonic, Los Angeles Opera, and Center Theatre Group) as well as from Staples Center participated in the Task Force. Representatives from Metro (Westside/Central Sector) and Santa Monica Big Blue Bus (SMMBL) also participated. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works / Transit Operations Section provided substantial information regarding the Hollywood Bowl park-n-ride shuttle program. The Task Force was chaired by LADOT, and met three times prior to the preparation of this report. Representatives of Council Districts 9 and 14 also participated in Task Force meetings.

Hollywood Bowl Park-n-Ride Program

The preamble to the initiating motion cites the Hollywood Bowl shuttle bus program as a model. It must be noted that the Hollywood Bowl park-n-ride program has been successfully tailored to respond to conditions specific to the Hollywood Bowl venue: the location of the Bowl at the foot of a mountain pass [a transportation bottleneck]; that it is a facility with approximately 18,000 seats but with on-site parking for fewer than 3,000 cars; and that it is a single-event venue which attracts patrons who may choose to arrive very early and picnic on the grounds [as opposed to all patrons seeking to arrive within a few minutes of the event start time]. The Bowl park-n-ride program serves 14 remote parking locations located throughout Los Angeles County with chartered buses, free parking at the remote lots, and a \$5 fare per passenger for the round trip. The County of Los Angeles utilizes its local Proposition A local funds to make up the difference between the passenger fares and the actual trip cost (which is, on average, \$15 per passenger); that constitutes a significant public subsidy on the part of the County. The fare is kept low (the total fare for two riders is slightly less than the cost of parking at the Bowl) so as to provide an incentive to utilize the service. On average (including weekends), the program serves over 2,800 patrons per event.

DISCUSSION

LADOT staff and the Task Force considered and reviewed each of the three areas of potential actions suggested in the Council motion, from both a short term and an intermediate term perspective, for weekday evening service to / within Downtown.

Reexamination of Existing Routes and Transit Assets

The current scheduling and routing of limited stop public transit services into and out of Downtown is such that the journey to and from work is the trip type which is best served. Thus, during the weekday evening peak period there is substantially more bus service to exit Downtown than to bring riders from the Westside and the West Valley into Downtown. During this peak period, the various bus operations which serve Downtown tend to be at full deployment, with extremely limited resources for any additional redeployment.

The Metrorail (and busway) services, on the other hand, provide frequent bi-directional service throughout the evening peak period and remain in service until past midnight. For arts patrons coming from these outlying areas into Downtown, however, peak period headways are far from the sole consideration. As the number of transfers multiply, the attractiveness of the transit mode diminishes; also, during the hours after 7:00 PM, bus service becomes less frequent and routing may be modified (e.g. “short runs” are inserted, as a response to lower ridership). Arts patrons from the Westside or West Valley seeking a “one seat” transit ride, or at the very least a trip with a single transfer, into Downtown in the early weekday evening currently have very limited options. The following is a summary of potential existing public transit options and estimated travel times:

West Valley to Music Center

Metro Orange Line (busway) with a transfer to the Red Line at North Hollywood [stop @ 7th Street Metro Center for Staples / LA Live; stop @ Civic Center (1st / Hill) for the Music Center]. The Orange Line offers **free** parking at the Canoga Avenue, Pierce College, Tampa, Reseda and Balboa stations. Typical travel time (from Warner Center): 75 - 80 minutes. The following table presents typical weekday evening trips between the West Valley and the Music Center.

West Valley to Music Center (Metro Orange Line to Red Line)

Pierce College Orange Line (depart)	No Ho Red Line Station (arrival)	No Ho Red Line Station (depart)	Civic Center Station (arrival)	Est. Travel Time (minutes)
5:54 PM	6:31 PM	6:39 PM	7:05 PM	71

Music Center to West Valley (Metro Red Line to Orange Line)

Civic Center Station (depart)	No Ho Red Line Station (arrival)	No Ho Red Line Station (depart)	Pierce College Station (arrive)	Est. Travel Time (minutes)
10:19 PM	10:45 PM	10:49 PM	11:26 PM	67

Westside to Music Center

Santa Monica Bus Line 10 serves several local stops between the downtown Santa Monica Transit Mall and Bundy Drive along Santa Monica Blvd., with two runs into Downtown on the Santa Monica Freeway in the early weekday evening [stop @ Olive / 11th or 12th for Staples / LA Live; stop @ 1st / Hope or Temple / Grand for the Music Center]. Typical travel time: 75- 80 minutes. The last Santa Monica Bus Line 10 bus leaving Downtown, however, is currently scheduled for 8:30 PM on weekdays. Thus, the return trip would require the use of Metro Red Line and/or Metro Rapid Bus service during hours of reduced service frequency. Westside patrons who start their trip from east of Westwood Boulevard (for whom Bundy Drive is too far west as an option) can use a combination of Rapid Bus and Metro Red or Purple Line as their best round trip public transit alternative. The following table presents typical weekday evening trips between the Westside and the Music Center:

Westside to Music Center (Metro Line 920/Red Line or S.M. Line 10)

4 th / Wilshire - Santa Monica (depart)	Wilshire/Vermont Red Line (arrive)	Wilshire /Vermont Red Line (depart)	Civic Center Station (arrive)	Est. Travel Time (minutes)
5:42 PM (Metro 920)	6:43 PM	6:53 PM	7:03 PM	81
5:46 PM (SM 10)	---	---	7: 00 PM (1st/Hope)	74

Music Center to Westside (Metro Red Line to Line 720)

Civic Center Station (depart)	Wilshire/Vermont Red Line (arrive)	Wilshire/Vermont Red Line (depart)	4 th / Wilshire (arrive)	Est. Travel Time (minutes)
10:19 PM	10:26 PM	10:30 PM (Metro720)	11:00 PM	41

For the Bunker Hill venues, the Metrorail option includes a weak pedestrian linkage: the walk from the Civic Center subway station to Grand Avenue. The walk involves a relatively steep grade, whether along 1st Street, through the LA County/Civic Center Plaza or along Temple Street and currently none of these offer a particularly attractive evening walking environment.

While these transit options may serve the southerly Figueroa Corridor as well as Bunker Hill, they clearly are not very attractive alternatives for those Westside and West Valley patrons with the option of driving and parking - despite the evening peak period congested conditions suffered during the drive into Downtown. Unfortunately, due to the fiscal crisis facing public transit service providers, there is very little that can be done in the short term to expand service which would better accommodate weekday evening “one seat” or single transfer trips into Downtown from the Westside or West Valley on fixed route public transit.

Suggestions for Improved Transit Service

The following are selected potential short term and intermediate term improvements to public transit services that would be expected to enhance transit access to special events in Downtown Los Angeles.

Short term: Due to evening peak period conditions and funding constraints, there simply are no additional resources to deploy in terms of fixed route bus services - whether from LADOT, Santa Monica Bus or Metro - for the purpose of enhancing Westside / West Valley weekday evening service to and from Downtown . Santa Monica Bus currently has no plans to extend its Line 10 service later into the night. Public / private partnerships could provide (1) a park-n-ride express charter service from the Westside and / or (2) extension of DASH Downtown F service later into the evening along Flower / Figueroa for the connection from the Convention Center / Staples Center / LA Live to the 7th Street Metro Center and / or (3) a shuttle service connecting the Civic Center subway station with the Music Center venues along Grand Avenue. Potential public - private partnerships are discussed below.

Intermediate term: For the Westside, the Expo Line light rail could prove to be a very attractive alternative. Its westernmost station (for the first phase, scheduled to begin operation in 2010) will be Washington / National in Culver City, and the Downtown terminal will be the 7th Street Metro Center - offering a connection to the Red Line/Purple Line to continue on to 1st / Hill. The estimated travel time from Washington / National to the 7th Street Metro Center is 30 minutes. The current design indicates public parking will be available at the Washington / National and La Cienega stations.

The Grand Avenue Project has the potential to vastly improve the pedestrian linkage from 1st / Hill to the Music Center venues, thereby enhancing the attractiveness of the Metro Orange Line / Red Line option for West Valley patrons and of the Expo Line / Red or Purple Line option for Westside patrons. Phase I of the Grand Avenue Project, which includes the upgrade / enhancement of the Civic Center Plaza, currently has a completion target date of August 2011.

Potential Public-Private Partnerships

Public - private partnerships hold the greatest potential for maximizing public transit usage for special events in the short term. As examples, LADOT has partnered with Paramount Studios to

implement a mid-day Larchmont Shuttle; we have also partnered with the Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council to implement a Downtown Art Walk shuttle (an extension of Downtown DASH route D) and with Hollywood CRA to implement a "Holly Trolley" nighttime shuttle serving the entertainment district in Hollywood.

LADOT supplied City owned vehicles for these services and the other entities paid all of the operating costs. The following discusses selected potential new private and public-private operated transit services that would enhance access from the Westside and West Valley to entertainment venues in Downtown.

(1) Park-n-Ride Express Charter Bus Service From the Westside

LA Opera offered a pilot "luxury express bus service" in early June 2007 to its patrons. The West Los Angeles Federal Building was the location of the parking (\$3 charge) with a motor coach provided for transportation to and from the Music Center (\$15 round trip). Patrons were provided with bottled water, opera programs and a pre-opera talk. For the three dates the pilot service operated (June 6th, 12th and 14th), seat occupancy of the single coach averaged just over 30%. LA Opera patrons were advised of the availability of this service through "e-blasts" and postcards. Based on this successful pilot, the service is to be continued for the 2007/08 Opera season. This will cover up to 23 weekday night performances, beginning in late September of this year and concluding in late June of 2008. If it is to be expanded, the Department recommends that additional park-n-ride locations on the Westside be investigated, as should prospects for participation from other Music Center venues. At this point in time, the LA Philharmonic and Center Theatre Group are studying the LA Opera experiment with interest.

(2) Extension of DASH F Service Hours

Downtown DASH F serves the Figueroa / Flower corridor from 4th Street south to USC. On weekdays, there are 10 minute headways and service runs till 6:30 PM. On Saturdays and Sundays, there are 20 minute headways and service runs till 5 PM. Due to the City's projected shortfall in local Prop A transit funds, the Department recommends that any extension of service hours later into the evening be privately funded. As a cost reduction measure, a reduced route could be implemented for this nighttime service, e.g., truncating at Wilshire Boulevard in the north and 11th Street (or Venice Boulevard) in the south. Representatives from Staples Center / LA Live have expressed an interest in enabling an extension of DASH F service later into the night, and discussions with LADOT are ongoing. Consideration should also be given to coordinating headways with event surges, e.g., 10 minute headways 6:30 PM till 8:30 PM and 10:00 PM until 11:00 PM, with 20 minute headways in the interval of performance / game time on weekday evenings. Note that Metro Blue Line headways are 20 minutes after 7:45 PM; Metro Red and Purple Line headways are 20 minutes after 8:15 PM.

(3) Shuttle From 1st / Hill to Grand Avenue

Unless and until the pedestrian linkage/ experience from the Civic Center subway station to Grand Avenue improves dramatically, a local shuttle bus service may be needed to make travel

into Downtown for evening cultural events via public transit more attractive. Once again, this additional service would have to be privately funded. This could be as simple as a short, clockwise circular route along 1st / Grand / Temple / Hill or an expanded route which could also provide a link with Little Tokyo (with 3rd / Alameda as an easterly terminal). As a cost reduction measure and to maximize efficiencies, headways could be frequent during the 7:00 PM to 8:00 PM and 9:30 PM to 11:00 PM weekday hours with minimal service between the hours of 8 PM and 9:30 PM [the typical period of performances for the Music Center venues]. On weekdays, eastbound Red line or Purple Line subways arrive at the Civic Center station every six minutes in the early evening (up till 8:15 PM). Such a service could be provided utilizing DASH vehicles for a truncated version of DASH Downtown A (as with the Downtown Art Walk shuttle / DASH Downtown D) or utilizing smaller cutaway vehicles (such as utilized by the Downtown building-based shuttles and operated by their parking services).

For each of these potential services, private sector funding of shuttle operations is a critical issue, as is maximizing cost efficiency. For options (2) and (3), implementation would need to be accompanied by heavy promotion at point-of-sale for event tickets and by a promotional campaign through Metro.

CONCLUSION

While the intermediate term outlook is good for more attractive public transit alternatives for weekday evening travel from the Westside and West Valley to Downtown venues and back (due to the Expo Line and the Grand Avenue Project), in the short term privately funded shuttles may be necessary to complement the currently available public transit options. Potential private sector funding sources and promotional activities need to be further explored.

IMPACT ON THE BUDGET

This report is for informational purposes only. There is no impact on the Budget.