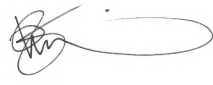


**CITY OF LOS ANGELES**  
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

Date: August 13, 2025

To: Honorable City Council  
c/o City Clerk, Room 395, City Hall  
Attention: Honorable Heather Hutt, Chair, Transportation Committee

From: Laura Rubio-Cornejo, General Manager   
Department of Transportation

Subject: **TRANSIT-TO-PARKS SERVICES IN GRIFFITH PARK**

**SUMMARY**

In response to Council File (CF) 23-0441, this report outlines the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) recommendations for the redeployment of LADOT buses as a pilot Transit-to-Parks service connecting the existing Metro B Line (Red) to the Park's northern amenities, including the Los Angeles Zoo (Zoo).

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the City Council NOTE and FILE this report.

**BACKGROUND**

In December 2019, LADOT, in partnership with the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP), launched a pilot transit service known as Parkline, connecting the iconic Griffith Observatory with the broader Griffith Park. This project, funded by RAP and operated by LADOT using decommissioned CityRide vehicles, aimed to provide convenient and sustainable mobility options for park-goers. This initiative not only aimed to enhance accessibility within Griffith Park but also underscored the City's commitment to environmental sustainability through the creative reuse of existing resources.

In March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and closure of the Griffith Observatory, LADOT and RAP made the decision to temporarily pause Parkline service. To date, the Parkline remains suspended due to insufficient resources and a shortage of drivers and operable vehicles.

In June 2023, the Los Angeles City Council (Council) directed LADOT, with support from RAP, to report back with recommendations for the redeployment of LADOT buses as a pilot Transit-to-Parks service to connect the Metro B Line to northern Griffith Park destinations, including the Zoo. Specifically, the Council requested an evaluation of potential routes, termini, and stop locations, along with an assessment of whether an interior park circulator and Zoo-specific service should operate separately or as a combined route. The report is also expected to include operational needs such as staffing, funding, and the resources required to maintain service with 15-minute headways or better.

In July 2024, the Council directed LADOT to initiate a revised Transit Service Analysis (TSA) to identify potential service changes that would reduce ongoing operational expenses (CF 18-0244-S4). In October 2024, LADOT released a Task Order Solicitation (TOS) to initiate a TSA, now referred to as a Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA), and on November 14, 2024, LADOT held a mandatory Pre-Submittal Conference. All Proposals were submitted in February 2025, and the selection panel conducted interviews on April 2, 2025. LADOT aims to award and execute the contract by the summer of 2025.

## **DISCUSSION**

LADOT conducted a comprehensive analysis of potential solutions to replace the Parkline Shuttle and optimize transportation within Griffith Park, including the costs, vehicles, and human resources needed in order to operate the route. LADOT identified a new Transit-to-Parks route that combines an interior park circulator and Zoo-specific service, as outlined below, to be evaluated in the upcoming new COA which will be an in-depth service assessment with recommendations for new bus service that better reflects current travel patterns.

### Proposed Route

The identified new route (See Exhibit A - Map of Proposed Service) for the Transit-to-Parks service envisions an efficient and convenient transportation option that caters to the diverse needs of Griffith Park visitors. The route is designed to start at the Metro B Line (formerly known as the Red Line) Universal/Studio City station, providing a seamless link to the regional Metro rail network. Starting at this central point, both maximizes accessibility and encourages a regional car-free journey to the Zoo and various other destinations within Griffith Park.

The service would proceed from the Universal/Studio City station directly to the Zoo, serving as a dedicated connection to this attraction. The route will then continue its journey to terminate at The Southern Railroad, providing access to the scenic and recreational areas within Griffith Park. The return trip will follow the same path in reverse, ensuring that passengers can easily return to the Universal/Studio City station.

#### Proposed Stop Locations:

- Metro B (Red) Line Universal/Studio City Station
- Travel Town
- Live Steamers
- Zoo / Autry Museum
- Crystal Springs / Griffith Park Drive
- Ranger Station / Visitor Center
- Southern Railroad

This route focuses on connecting the Metro B Line to the northern amenities of Griffith Park, such as the Zoo and Pony Rides. While it does not extend to the southern portion of the park where the Observatory and Greek Theatre are located, those destinations are currently served by the existing DASH Observatory route, which connects to the Metro B Line at the Sunset/Vermont station. By maintaining the existing Griffith Park DASH route to southern destinations within the park, and launching a new Transit-to-Parks route to serve northern destinations, the City can provide car-free travel options to all major park attractions.

This approach offers lower operational costs than operating a separate interior park circulator and Zoo-specific service by reducing fuel, maintenance, and staffing expenses. It minimizes the number of vehicles in rotation, which helps optimize resources and supports the City’s sustainability goals by lowering emissions and the overall carbon footprint. Finally, by reducing the number of drivers needed, the combined route makes it more feasible to staff and maintain consistent service levels. Overall, this combined service option reduces operational costs, fleet requirements, and driver demands and will allow LADOT to maintain 15-minute headways during operating hours.

The route would operate exclusively on weekends, mirroring the previous Parkline schedule, with a 15-minute headway between shuttle departures to maintain reliable transportation within Griffith Park.

Headways	Service Hours	One Way Travel Time	One Way Mileage
15 Minutes	Weekends Only 8:00 AM - 6:00 PM	40 Minutes	9 Miles

Taken together, this proposed Transit-to-Parks route can provide equal or greater service as the former Parkline shuttle, minimize costs, and complement the existing transportation options within Griffith Park.

Resources Needed

Additional resources are needed in order to operate the new route, including new drivers, additional vehicles, and operational funding. In total, LADOT estimates this new service requires approximately 8 vehicles, 12 drivers, and \$1,020,000 in operational funding each year. The operations cost for the proposed new service was estimated based on LADOT’s current hourly operating cost for transit service operating out of the DASH Mid-City yard, multiplied by the number of revenue service hours required to operate the route.

Vehicles Needed	Drivers Needed	Operating Cost
6 Service Vehicles 2 Additional Spare Vehicles	12 Additional Drivers	\$1,020,000 Per Year

The operation of this service will be based at the Mid-City yard. The shuttle will operate out of this yard because it is the closest to the service area, which minimizes non-revenue travel and reduces deadheading costs. Its location supports more efficient operations, quicker response times, and lower overall operating expenses than deploying the service from a more distant yard. LADOT recommends using smaller cut-away vehicles, similar to those used for Cityride, which are better suited to navigate the often narrow and winding roads within Griffith Park, offering improved maneuverability and minimizing the impact on the park’s environment. The previous Parkline service was operated with refurbished decommissioned buses, some of which had already exceeded their useful life. These buses have remained in storage for the past three years. Reintroducing these buses into service would entail substantial costs, including comprehensive refurbishment efforts, and LADOT cannot ensure the reliability of these vehicles due to their advanced age and prior wear and tear. For these reasons, LADOT

recommends acquiring new buses for this service. Based on research, new electric cutaway buses are estimated to cost approximately \$500,000 each, and the service would require a total of 8 vehicles. This translates to an upfront capital cost of \$4,000,000 solely for the purchase of these vehicles. Furthermore, an additional \$1,000,000 will be needed to enhance the bus yard and facilitate the installation of more charging infrastructure. LADOT estimates an annual operations cost of approximately \$1,020,000, alongside a capital cost of \$5,000,000.

LADOT will include an evaluation of this new route, including costs, in its forthcoming COA and report back to Council with its recommendations to enhance the City's transit services citywide.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

There is no impact to the General Fund at this time. The estimated cost for the operation and management of the Parkline service, as well as the vehicle procurement required as outlined in this report will have an impact on the General Fund. LADOT estimates an annual operations cost of approximately \$1,020,000, alongside a capital cost of \$5,000,000. These cost estimates will need to be further analyzed in the COA.

LRC:ks

Attachments

### Exhibit A - Map of Proposed Service

