



Legislation Text

File #: 2021-575, Version: 1

Report to Mayor and City Council

Tuesday, July 20, 2021

Discussion

SUBJECT:

WORKSHOP TO DISCUSS LONG BEACH TRANSIT SERVICES PROPOSAL (CITY COUNCIL)

I. SUMMARY

In response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Disaster Council suspended the City's local fixed-route bus service effective March 28, 2020. As COVID-19 cases continued to climb, the City ended its fixed-route bus service agreement with MV Transportation, Inc. effective November 8, 2020.

The City's Dial-A-Ride program remained in operation, but was expanded to include all Carson residents, regardless of the program's standard requirements for eligibility. Additionally, the City entered into an agreement with Lyft, Inc. (Lyft) to provide residents with on-demand subsidized Lyft rides.

Prior to the declared pandemic, with the aim of improving regional travel to and from the city, staff had engaged Long Beach Transit (LBT) in discussions to provide fixed-route bus service in Carson. LBT's service model is to have its buses run down major surface streets in both directions, providing much faster service with direct connections to major destinations and neighboring bus lines. This shift in bus travel would provide longer-distance regional service, connecting several communities along the line.

Through a series of meetings and service planning efforts, staff recently received from LBT the proposal being discussed today. Assuming a 5-year contract, tiers with varying levels of service coverage were presented for consideration. Dependent upon the selected tier of service (or combination therein), City drivers can provide supplemental fixed-route bus service through areas uncovered by LBT.

In addition to providing fixed-route bus services, LBT offered to provide Dial-A-Lift paratransit services, for non-ambulatory riders with severe mobility impairment. At an additional service cost, LBT would add Carson to their service map, providing eligible participants with paratransit service.

Should the City Council provide direction to staff on a preferred fixed-route bus scenario, and/or Dial-A-Lift paratransit service, staff will bring forth the proposed interagency agreement to a future meeting for final approval.

II. RECOMMENDATION

PROVIDE direction to staff on preferred service options as presented in the Long Beach Transit services proposal.

III. ALTERNATIVES

TAKE another action the City Council deems appropriate.

IV. BACKGROUND

Fixed-Route Bus Services

The City's fixed-route bus service, the Carson Circuit, was suspended effective March 28, 2020, out of safety concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the possibility of spreading the virus to passengers and bus operators. Dial-A-Ride remained in operation and was expanded to include all Carson residents, as an exception to the program's standard requirements for eligibility. Additionally, the City entered into an agreement with Lyft, Inc. (Lyft) to provide residents with subsidized on-demand Lyft rides.

Prior to the suspension of the Carson Circuit, staff had engaged Long Beach Transit (LBT) in discussions to succeed MV Transportation, Inc. as the contracted bus operator in Carson. With the aim of improving regional travel to and from the City, LBT buses will run exclusively down main surface streets in both directions, providing much faster and direct connections to major destinations and neighboring bus lines. This shift in bus travel replaces the neighborhood-serving routes of the former Carson Circuit, which historically had low ridership, with longer-distance regional service, connecting several communities along the line.

Service planning efforts from both entities have resulted in a recent proposal from LBT, with accompanying service schedules and fares. Assuming a 5-year contract, tiers with varying levels of service coverage were presented for consideration. Annual service costs are in line with the chosen level of service coverage.

It is important to note the current unavailability of LBT's highest tier of service coverage, as LBT would require at least 1-2 more years to scale to this level. This highest tier could connect riders to multiple points of interest, such as LA Harbor College and Artesia Blue Line station. However, the additional service coverage may exceed the City's annual Proposition A and C budget for bus service.

Proposition A and C returns are distributed on a "per capita" basis, resulting in marginal increases year-over-year. On the other hand, appropriations of existing and unused Prop A and C funds from prior fiscal years may allow the City to consider higher tiers of service in future years.

Per LA Metro, Prop A and C returns must be expended within three years of their respective disbursement, in a "use it or lose it" fashion. Therefore, the City can choose to utilize unused funds from prior years to cover the annual overruns. However, as these funds are intended for new bus acquisitions and future Transportation CIP items, the City may need to seek an alternative funding source before closing out the final year of the proposed agreement.

In consideration of Transportation's total programs, and their respective budgets, staff recommends a middle-tier service option at this time (Exhibit No. 1).

A middle-tier service option would help connect riders to major destinations in and around the city, to include: UCLA-Harbor Medical Center, Carson High, Dominguez Prep, CSUDH, Metrolink Del Amo / Wardlow Blue Line stations, Carson Community Center / City Hall, South Bay Pavilion, and more.

All tiers of service provide riders with bi-directional bus travel down major surface roads, resulting in direct connections to many destinations in and around the city. Additionally, LBT Route 1 currently connects riders between east Carson and CSUDH. In essence, by selecting the middle-tier option, the city would be serviced by a total of four LBT routes. However, for a certain number of riders, the new routes may require a further walk to a bus stop when compared to former Carson Circuit routes.

To help bridge this potential gap, staff will bring to the City Council at a future meeting, a proposal to reestablish a supplemental local bus service run by City staff, utilizing existing minibuses, by means of: 1) modified bus routes and 2) running service exclusively during peak traveling times. These changes are also supported by the City's recently completed Comprehensive Operations Analysis, or route study.

The proposed supplemental service routes would be designed to complement the middle-tier option in areas that may require a longer walk to a bus stop, and in areas that can help Carson students get to and from their respective schools. The concurrent offerings of LBT and Carson service will help achieve a newfound level of regional and local travel options, furthering equitable mobility.

Upon approval of final service options, PIO will advertise new service offerings through the City's social media pages, City home page, and Parks & Recreation guides. Printed flyers will also be distributed to all K-12 Carson schools, CSUDH, City parks, and Task Force Grab & Go meal bags. New bus schedule boxes with LBT and Carson Circuit route information will be installed at all major bus stops. Upon commencement, staff will continuously evaluate service for any inefficiencies and adjust operating parameters accordingly.

Dial-A-Lift

In addition to fixed-route bus services, LBT is offering Dial-A-Lift paratransit service for an additional service cost. To sign up, the program requires both 1) severe mobility impairment and 2) existing enrollment with Access Services (Access). Access currently operates ADA complementary paratransit service in many Los Angeles County cities,

including Carson. Eligible riders will have the option to ride with either LBT or Access.

The proposed contract cost for Dial-A-Lift will be provided as an annual not-to-exceed dollar amount, i.e., no cap on number of rides per year.

To confirm, the City's existing Dial-A-Ride taxi program, for residents age 60 or older, with or without a disability, will continue to be offered.

V. FISCAL IMPACT

Should the City Council consider selecting a fixed-route bus scenario, and/or Dial-A-Lift service, contract costs will be appropriated out of Proposition A account no. 218-90-940-180-6010, and Proposition C account no. 219-90-940-180-6010.

VI. EXHIBITS

1. Long Beach Transit services proposal. (pgs. 5-8)

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