



Legislation Text

File #: 2021-692, Version: 1

Report to Mayor and City Council

Tuesday, October 19, 2021

Consent

SUBJECT:

CONSIDER THE REESTABLISHMENT OF THE CARSON CIRCUIT FIXED-ROUTE BUS SERVICE (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, the Carson Circuit, 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. 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 is a California public benefit nonprofit corporation, founded and solely owned by the City of Long Beach.

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 popular 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 planning efforts, the City Council approved a service agreement with LBT at the September 7, 2021 meeting. The agreement provides for LBT to operate three new fixed routes in addition to the preexisting Route 1.

In conjunction with new LBT routes, staff is proposing to reestablish the Carson Circuit as a staff-operated service, utilizing City-owned minibuses. The intention of the new service is to help connect Carson residents to LBT bus stops in the form of two (2) new neighborhood-serving routes, thereby bridging the travel gap between Torrance Transit and Metro bus

stops as well.

The service would run on weekdays during peak AM and PM commute times, with no changes to fares of the former Carson Circuit. These modifications were also supported by the City's recently completed Comprehensive Operations Analysis, or route study.

The City Council is asked to approve the reestablishment of the Carson Circuit fixed-route bus service as proposed.

II. RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE staff recommendation to reestablish the Carson Circuit fixed-route bus service.

III. ALTERNATIVES

TAKE another action the City Council deems appropriate.

IV. BACKGROUND

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. Through a series of meetings and planning efforts, the City Council approved a 3-year service agreement with LBT at the September 7, 2021 meeting. The current target commencement date is September 26, 2021.

In conjunction with new LBT routes, staff is proposing to reestablish the Carson Circuit as a staff-operated service, utilizing City-owned minibuses (Exhibit No. 1; Carson Circuit Map and Schedule). The intention of the new service is to help connect Carson residents to new LBT bus stops in the form of two (2) new neighborhood-serving routes, thereby bridging the travel gap between Torrance Transit and Metro bus stops as well (Exhibit No. 2; Service Map with neighboring bus lines).

Route A would connect riders between South Bay Pavilion - CSUDH - Stevenson Park and Anderson Park via Avalon Boulevard, Victoria Street, Central Avenue, University Drive, and Turmont Street. Route B would connect riders between South Bay Pavilion - City Hall - Carson Park - Carson High School and Veteran's Park via Avalon Boulevard, 213th Street, and Main Street.

The preexisting fare structure will remain the same as before - \$1.00 regular fare, no fare

for seniors (ages 60 and over) and/or disabled, and \$30.00 for unlimited monthly ride pass. Buses would run every 40 minutes during peak AM and PM commute times. Service for Routes A and B on weekdays would operate from 7:00 a.m. through 9:55 a.m. and from 2:00 p.m. through 4:55 p.m. These modifications were also supported by the City's recently completed Comprehensive Operations Analysis, or route study.

Based on pre-pandemic ridership numbers, staff anticipates a gradual rise to 2,600 rides per month, and \$1,700.00 in monthly fare revenue. Annually, this is 31,200 rides and \$20,400.00 in fare revenue. Also based on pre-pandemic ridership, 900 rides out of the 2,600 rides are expected to come from passengers ages 60 and over (free fare), or 35% of total riders.

Prior to the pandemic, the east side of Carson had been served by LBT Route 1 and the Carson Circuit Route G. Currently, the new LBT Route 4 replaces both routes by covering the exact same streets. The east side has not experienced any losses in service coverage as a result. During the 2020 study of the City's transit needs, consultants did not uncover nor state any needs to provide additional service to the east side beyond what was already being provided. Adding additional service to the east side would require bus travel down truck-heavy traffic, commercial truck yards, and large industrial buildings. This could not only impact the safety of riders waiting for the bus, but their safety getting to and from the bus stops.

For these reasons, staff recommends holding off on providing additional service to the east side at this time. Should a third Carson Circuit route be considered, this would cost approximately \$50,000 in additional operating expenses, including two more part time drivers, and the purchase of at least one new minibus (estimated at \$200,000).

Staff is also looking into future purchases of low-emission and/or zero-emission buses in preparation for Electric Vehicle (EV) charging opportunities on City properties. EV shuttle buses are estimated to cost between \$200,000 to \$300,000 per bus. GPS tracking technology for City buses is being explored as well, to allow for more accurate pick-up and drop-off performance monitoring.

Community Outreach

Should the City Council approve the proposed reestablishment, staff will launch a city-wide outreach effort to include the following stakeholders: CSUDH, Carson school administrators, Metrolink stations, Harbor-UCLA, Torrance Transit, G-Trans, Carson Chamber of Commerce, Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, and others.

The City's Public Information Office will also advertise services through the City's social media pages, City home page, and quarterly Parks & Recreation guides. Printed flyers will be distributed to all Carson schools, City parks, and Task Force Grab & Go meal bags. New bus schedules with LBT and Carson Circuit route information will also be installed at all major bus stops. Upon commencement, staff will continuously evaluate service for any inefficiencies and adjust operating parameters accordingly.

V. FISCAL IMPACT

The anticipated and fully burdened cost for operating Carson Circuit service is \$340,318.00 per year (Exhibit No. 3; Cost breakdown). This is accounting for fuel, vehicle maintenance and staff. The City's Prop A and C revenues can cover these anticipated costs on a year-by-year basis.

Should the City Council authorize staff to reestablish the Carson Circuit program, funds are budgeted in the Fiscal Year 2021-22 Proposition A accounts 218-90-940-101-6004, 218-90-940-180-7005, 218-90-940-180-7007, and Proposition C account 219-90-940-180-7007. There is no impact to the City's General Fund accounts.

VI. EXHIBITS

1. Carson Circuit Map and Schedule (pg. 5).
2. Service Map with neighboring bus lines (pg. 6).
3. Cost breakdown (pg. 7).

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