



Item #: F2

DATE: November 6, 2024
TO: Board Chair Frank J. Navarro and Members of the Omnitrans Board of Directors
THROUGH: Erin Rogers, CEO/General Manager
FROM: Jeremiah P. Bryant, Chief Strategy & Planning Officer
SUBJECT: **Bus Rapid Transit/Express Bus Update in SBCTA's Long Range Multimodal Transportation Plan**

Form Motion

Receive and file this staff report regarding the Board Bus Rapid Transit considerations in SBCTA's Long Range Multimodal Transportation Plan.

Strategic Plan Alignment

This item aligns with Goal 5 – Long-Range Planning – *Strengthen our leadership in creating mobility solutions in local and regional planning.*

Initiative f) Implement new or modify existing services to take advantage of innovation, automation, and emerging transportation technology

Background

This item will be reviewed by the Executive Committee at their November 1, 2024 meeting.

During Omnitrans' September 2024 Executive Committee and October 2024 Board Meeting and at San Bernadino County Transportation Authority's (SBCTA's) September 2024 Transit Committee and October 2024 Board Meeting, Omnitrans and SBCTA staff provided updates on Priority Transit/Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)/Express Bus corridor options being considered in SBCTA's Long Range Multimodal Transportation Plan (LRMTP). The update at these meetings focused on city manager meetings that occurred in June and August 2024 with most cities in the San Bernardino Valley to gather feedback on community interest in BRT. In most cities, city staff expressed a strong interest in exploring BRT within their community.

Omnitrans' and SBCTA's Board of Directors have adopted a 10-corridor BRT/express bus plan (Attachment A) multiple times over the last approximately 15 years. SBCTA is updating priority and overall strategy within the upcoming LRMTP.

This update will be important in developing a strategy for investing approximately \$125 million in unallocated Measure I BRT/Express Bus funds to improve transit service, increase ridership, and spur economic development with Measure I BRT funding over the next few years.

Within the LRMTTP, SBCTA is exploring two options:

- 1) Spreading the investments across most/all remaining corridors focusing on transit signal priority, queue jumps and stop/station improvements; or,
- 2) Investing fully in one or two BRT/Express Bus corridors.

SBCTA still will present a staff report to the November Transit Committee and Metro Valley Study Session outlining the pros and cons of these options. Considerations include overall benefit to the region, cities' desire for BRT, potential for ridership increase, leveraging grant funding opportunities, and spurring economic development.

A valley-wide approach, or spreading the investment across most/all corridors, will have a limited impact on travel speed, no impact on frequency, may have difficulty bringing in federal competitive grant funds, and will not increase ridership nor help spur economic development. It will make a limited investment and impact in most cities primarily focused on implementing transit signal priority and stop improvements. While there are benefits of implementing transit signal priority such as increased travel speeds, Omnitrans staff believes continuing to build out the the high frequency bus network by fully investing in one or two corridors will yield the most positive result for transit users in the region.

Fully investing in one or two BRT/Express bus corridors could enhance frequency, improve travel speeds, increase ridership, bring in competitive state and federal grants and spur economic development. It also may also provide an opportunity to connect the two existing (sbX Green Line and West Valley Connector Purple Line) BRT corridors to create a regional, connected high frequency BRT system.

The \$320 million West Valley Connector (WVC) project is an example of fully investing in one corridor. The WVC has brought in nearly \$200 million in competitive state and federal grants by leveraging approximately \$40 million in Measure I BRT/Express bus funds for capital improvements. The WVC will increase transit ridership, and the city of Ontario has actively utilized the investment to jump start economic development. Nationally, the investment in BRT can bring in \$5 of private economic development for each \$1 spent.

The WVC funding approach can be replicated on other BRT corridors if the region chooses to prioritize one or two corridors. Additionally, investing in high quality transit corridors is consistent with both state and federal policy goals and would compete well in the applicable grant programs. In addition, SB 125 established transformation ridership goals for transit service statewide. Increasing frequency and speed of transit service will move Omnitrans toward these ambitious goals.

SBCTA is working to finalize its LRMTTP in early 2025. The plan provides Omnitrans' and SBCTA's Boards of Directors with an opportunity to prioritize the next BRT/Express Bus corridor, which will support Omnitrans' vision to provide innovative mobility solutions that connect our region and strengthen the economy.

Conclusion

The choice of how to prioritize future BRT/Express Bus corridors will significantly impact how Omnitrans' service and regional transit ridership grows over the next decade. The impact of choosing to invest in one or two corridors will have a greater positive impact on transit riders and our communities than spreading limited investments across multiple corridors.

ER:JB

Attachment

A. PowerPoint Presentation