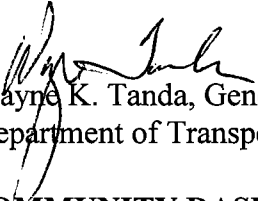


**CITY OF LOS ANGELES**  
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

Date: April 1, 2005

To: The Honorable City Council  
c/o City Clerk, Rm 395, City Hall  
Attention: Honorable Antonio Villaraigosa, Transportation Committee

From:  Wayne K. Tanda, General Manager  
Department of Transportation

Subject: **COMMUNITY DASH NEED ASSESSMENT STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS**  
**(C.F. # 04-0823-S1)**

### SUMMARY

The Community DASH Need Assessment Study, prepared by the Department of Transportation (LADOT) with the assistance of its consultant, Transportation Management and Design (TMD), has produced a ranked/prioritized list of potential new Community DASH routes to be considered for implementation by the City, subject to available funding. The Study also includes recommendations for remedial actions for those few existing Community DASH routes which are currently performing poorly or marginally (as determined by the Council-adopted transit service performance standards). The list of new DASH routes is intended to guide the growth of the DASH system, as funding permits, over the next seven to ten years. Because of the current and short-term future funding constraints, and the context of the ongoing MTA Metro Connections planning exercise, additional recommendations are also hereby transmitted with the intent of maximizing transit funding while also preserving any enhanced funding for purposes of expanding the supply of transit service to City residents.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

That the City Council :

1. **Adopt** this report and attachments prepared by LADOT with the assistance of its consultant, Transportation Management and Design (TMD), as its report on this matter.
2. **Adopt** the recommended prioritized list of Potential New Community DASH Routes (Exhibit E-1) as the guide for future expansion of the Community DASH system, subject to available funding.
3. **Consider** inclusion of sufficient operating and capital funding in the City's FY 2005/06 Budget for the implementation of the top one or two ranked new DASH routes as listed in Exhibit E-1.

4. **Resolve** to include in the City's Legislative Program support for federal, state and local funding for replacement of existing City transit vehicles, and for purchase and/or operation of new transit vehicles for the top five recommended new or expanded Community DASH routes as listed in Exhibit E-1.
5. **Direct** LADOT, in cooperation with affected Council Offices, to:
  - (a) Initiate the public hearing process to implement the Study's cost neutral recommendations (Exhibit E-2) concerning the restructuring of the existing marginal/poor performing DASH Fairfax, DASH Hollywood/West Hollywood, DASH Beachwood Canyon and DASH Van Nuys/Studio City services after the Department has pursued reasonable remedial steps (including additional marketing) to improve the performance of these services.
  - (b) Implement expanded DASH Warner Center service to complement the opening of the Metro Orange Line in September, 2005.
6. **Direct** the CAO, in cooperation with LADOT, to report back to the Transportation Committee of Council regarding potential alternative DASH transit funding sources, such as MICLA/bonding, local Proposition C funds and assessment districts for expansion of the Community DASH system.
7. **Adopt** as a policy, in response to potential MTA bus service reductions within City boundaries, to not substitute Community DASH for cancelled MTA service unless the City is guaranteed on-going funding for the operation of that replacement DASH service route, such as through inclusion of the route in the County Formula Allocation Procedure (FAP).
8. **Adopt** as a policy that the City, through its representatives on the MTA Board, aggressively pursue a fare reimbursement agreement for all DASH routes to honor MTA passes.

## **BACKGROUND**

This Department initiated the citywide Community DASH Need Assessment Study during FY 2003-04, executing a contract (City Contract C-106512) with a consultant team headed by Transportation Management and Design (TMD), in April 2004. The consultant team includes participation by the UCLA Department of Urban Planning/Institute of Transportation Studies in its Senior Advisory Committee.

The two primary objectives of the Study have been to: (1) analyze the existing Community DASH services operating in Los Angeles and the communities in which they operate to make

recommendations for the implementation of new, viable service in areas of the City with good transit potential; and (2) recommend measures to improve existing Community DASH services which are under-performing in terms of productivity and cost-effectiveness based on the City Council adopted transit performance standards. The overall Study goal was to produce a prioritized list of new and/or modified Community DASH services that the City may consider for implementation, subject to available funding, over the next ten years.

Note that the study area does **not** include Downtown Los Angeles (the area generally bounded by the 101 Freeway/Los Angeles River/10 Freeway/110 Freeway). A Downtown DASH Restructuring Study is to be carried out by the Department during FY 2005/06.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Study Methodology**

The consultant team produced a methodology to identify areas within Los Angeles (outside of Downtown) of potential transit need/demand and to predict the Performance Index (PI) score of any new proposed or restructured Community DASH service. The PI score is a composite of three factors [passengers per revenue hour; subsidy per passenger mile; operating ratio] which, per City Council-adopted policy (CF 98-1121), are utilized by this Department to evaluate transit service performance on an annual basis. This predictive performance evaluation methodology follows a four step sequence:

- (1) **Predict Community DASH Performance**: For each existing Community DASH route, analyze the characteristics of the community or communities it operates in and develop a model based on those characteristics which predict each route's PI score.
- (2) **Critical Factors Analysis**: Identify barriers to performance success and other transit operational factors to be considered for remedy as a condition of service implementation.
- (3) **Transit Service Supply and Unmet Transit Need/Demand**: Identify areas of Los Angeles with an under-supply of transit service which therefore present potential unmet transit need/demand. Note that areas of Los Angeles with population densities of 5 persons or fewer per acre and/or employment densities of 5 jobs or fewer per acre were excluded from the analysis; public fixed route transit simply cannot be provided in a cost-effective manner in those areas.
- (4) **Community DASH Potential**: Analyze areas with high levels of unmet transit need/demand which also present higher predicted PI scores, resulting in a combined score which reflects an area's potential for community-based transit (i.e., Community DASH-type service).

A more detailed discussion of the steps in this sequence is presented on pp. 22 - 28 of Attachment III.

The resultant predictive model was then translated into a performance analysis for the screening and evaluation of proposed new Community DASH routes as well as for evaluation of remedial measures for under-performing existing Community DASH routes. For this Study, proposals for new DASH service were collected from City Council offices, residents and transit riders via public meetings and via our project website ([www.tmdinc.net/clients/LADOT](http://www.tmdinc.net/clients/LADOT)), LADOT Transit Bureau and MTA staff, previous (mid- to late 1990's) transit restructuring studies (i.e. recommendations from those studies which have not been implemented to-date), earlier (1999/2001/2003) Biennial MTA Call for Projects Transit Capital project proposals, and from the consultant team based on the findings of the Study analysis.

There were over 100 route/service suggestions collected through this Study process. Out of these approximately 100 DASH route suggestions, 85 potentially viable proposed new service/modified current routes were analyzed, along with several route/service modifications for a number of current Community DASH routes which are under-performing (annual PI scores < 0.70). The complete list of potentially viable routes, in alphabetical order with commentary, is presented in Attachment II. Our analysis has produced a list of 20 recommended viable new, or enhanced existing, Community DASH service routes. These recommended new and enhanced DASH routes, scored and ranked, are attached as Exhibit E-1.

### **Public Participation**

A first round of public meetings was conducted during July 2004 at each of the seven City Area Planning Commission venues. Notification was provided through the numerous certified Neighborhood Councils (via e-mail) as well as through direct mail/e-mail/telephone contacts with interested individual or groups identified through previous transit planning exercises and by Council offices. Notices were also posted on our existing DASH bus fleet. Briefings, with solicitation of input, were also presented to each of the three MTA Sector Governance Councils whose territories are located in whole or in part within City boundaries in July and August of 2004.

A second round of six public meetings, and briefings to MTA Sector Governance Councils, was conducted in February and early March 2005 to present preliminary Study findings. In addition to the public meetings and briefings, the project website referenced above was established to provide both information and downloadable Study maps/reports, as well as to provide an additional opportunity for public input. For the under-performing current Community DASH routes, focus group meetings with riders and community representatives were conducted; interviews were also conducted with bus operators assigned to the under-performing routes. A more detailed discussion of the public outreach effort is found on pp.10 - 12 of Attachment III.

The Department also conducted a total of three rounds of Study briefings for all Council Office staff. The first round of Council Office briefings was conducted in June 2004, prior to the first round of community meetings. A second round of Council Office briefings was conducted in November 2004 to review the Study methodology. A third round of Council Office staff briefings was conducted in January 2005 to discuss the preliminary Study results.

### **Recommended New Community DASH Routes**

The recommended viable proposed new or substantially modified Community DASH routes are presented in Exhibit E-1 in scored, rank order based on Community DASH Potential scores. Maps of each of the individual routes are included in Attachment I to this report. Exhibit E-1 also provides information on route length, the number of vehicles required to operate the service, and the predicted PI score.

Ranking by Community DASH Potential score (as opposed to predicted PI score) is appropriate in that this DASH Potential score takes into account the degree to which the service would operate in any of the identified transit service deficit areas of Los Angeles. All other conditions being equal, those proposed DASH routes that operate in an area identified as having a relatively low level of existing transit service (transit deficit) will have a higher Community DASH Potential score relative to those routes with a high level of existing transit service. Note that in addition to rank order, the candidate routes are also separated into groups based on score ranges.

### **Recommended Remedial Actions**

As part of the Study process, all existing marginal or poor performing DASH services were evaluated to determine if remedial actions could be taken to improve performance. Recommended cost-neutral remedial actions for the DASH Fairfax, DASH Hollywood/West Hollywood, DASH Beachwood Canyon and DASH Van Nuys/Studio City routes are presented in Exhibit E-2 (attached). These are DASH routes or route segments which have exhibited marginal or poor performance for a number of years. Note that the remedial actions recommended in Exhibit E-2 would not require additional vehicles or operating funds. Consistent with the City's adopted Transit Service Notification Process, the Department would be required to conduct a public hearing process and receive Council approval prior to implementing any of the remedial actions which reduce the route miles or service miles by 25 percent or more. The Department recommends the implementation of these cost neutral remedial actions after all reasonable steps to improve performance on the existing routes (including additional marketing) have been pursued.

The proposals to improve the marginally performing DASH Pueblo del Rio and DASH Los Feliz listed in Exhibit E-1 do require additional vehicles, and therefore must compete with new candidate routes for the City's limited Prop A funding. As with all marginal/poor performing

DASH routes discussed in Exhibit E-3 (attached), the Department will pursue reasonable available steps to improve the performance of these services. Depending on the success of these additional remedial actions in improving performance, the Department may recommend (in a separate report) the cancellation of these and any other mature marginal performing transit services with the objective of freeing up transit resources which could be re-allocated to facilitate implementation of one or more of the new higher-scoring recommended DASH routes. [This may involve an amendment to the existing Council adopted transit performance guidelines to improve marginal services; these guidelines identify steps to improve service performance but do not provide direction to cancel marginal services in the event that performance is not enhanced over time].

Note that during the Study period, 2004 performance data became available which indicated significant improvement for the DASH San Pedro and DASH Hollywood/Wilshire routes in comparison with their 2003 PI scores. DASH San Pedro improved from a 0.61 score to 0.82; DASH Hollywood /Wilshire improved from 0.47 to 0.71 - in both cases, sufficient improvement to move these routes up out of the marginal or poor performance range. Thus, substantial remedial actions for these two routes are no longer required. A summary of the key findings for all existing marginal or poor performing DASH routes is provided in Exhibit E-3.

Warner Center DASH / Orange Line Interface: A Special Case - DASH Warner Center, from its inception, has performed poorly based on the annual transit service performance evaluations. However, DASH Warner Center has never been truly comparable to the other Community DASH routes in that it is a weekday, mid-day service only [unlike the standard Community DASH service span which is 7 am till 7 pm weekdays plus weekend service]. The existing DASH Warner Center service utilizes Commuter Express Line 575 (Simi Valley to Warner Center) vehicles which would otherwise simply be laying over through the mid-day awaiting early evening return trips to Simi Valley from Warner Center.

The commencement of Metro Orange Line busway service in September 2005 (connecting Warner Center to the North Hollywood Red Line station) could create an effective demand for DASH service within and around Warner Center; and a local circulator appears to be essential for Orange Line riders to complete their trips to or from the Warner Center Transit Hub (the westerly terminus of the Orange Line). With a restructuring of Commuter Express Line 575 service, it would be possible to establish standard Community DASH service for Warner Center to coincide with the opening of the Orange Line if additional operating funds can be appropriated.

The Department is currently evaluating the possibility of utilizing Warner Center Trust Fund monies to help fund the enhanced DASH Warner Center service. A private development-funded study is also planned (subject to LADOT review) which will expand upon the efforts of this Study to further refine the design of the DASH Warner Center route.

**Critical Barriers**

The Study also provides findings relative to critical performance barriers for Community DASH service, taking into account past and current performance as well as projected performance. These critical barriers can be summarized into three types:

(1) Fare Integration with MTA : Currently only five of our 27 Community DASH routes honor MTA passes, for which the City receives reimbursement from MTA. [Downtown DASH honors MTA passes, but the City receives no reimbursement.] This lack of fare integration is a barrier to increased transit ridership. The Community DASH family of routes functions as a local circulator system and a feeder system to regional MTA transit services (bus and rail). Due to its higher cost, and the price sensitivity of Community DASH riders (over 70% of whom have annual incomes of less than \$20,000), the Metro EZ Pass has not proven to be an effective fare integration alternative for Community DASH. Unlike other municipal operators (Santa Monica Blue Bus, Culver Citybus, Foothill Transit, etc.) with defined service areas distinct from MTA service areas, the City's Community DASH operates wholly within the MTA service area and complements MTA bus and rail service. Fare integration (wherein Community DASH honors MTA passes, and MTA reimburses the City) has the potential to boost ridership on both systems by facilitating transfers. This fare integration seems especially appropriate for those Community DASH routes which serve MTA rail or busway stations.

(2) Transfer of Service from MTA to LADOT without Provision of Operating Funds: Based on the performance records of those former failing SCRTD routes which were taken over by LADOT at the request of City Council [Beachwood Canyon (formerly RTD Line 208); Los Feliz (formerly RTD Line 203); San Pedro (formerly RTD Line 147)], poor-performing RTD/MTA routes or segments of routes typically become poor-performing Community DASH routes, despite fare integration and a reduced fare (although DASH San Pedro has just recently climbed up above the marginal performance level). Therefore, the Department recommends that, if and when the MTA proposes to eliminate service due to low ridership (and/or due to Metro Connections transit restructuring), the City should not agree to inherit the service responsibility without also assuming operating funds from MTA. Cost savings which accrue to MTA from elimination of its service should be shared with the City if LADOT is to provide replacement bus transit service; the City will otherwise be locked in to utilizing our heavily-committed Proposition A funds toward replacement service (and thus no net gain in transit service to City residents) rather than investing in expansion of the Community DASH system through this Study's recommended routes.

(3) Operational Barriers: This Study concludes that certain operational factors have critical impact on the performance of a Community DASH route. Route length is one of these; if a route is shorter in length than five miles, it typically cannot connect enough desired destinations to attract sufficient ridership. A route may also be too long (in excess of 10 miles), traversing low

