



Information Item

Date: July 22, 2014

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Edward F. King, Director of Transit Services
Subject: Big Blue Bus August 2014 Service Change Update

Introduction

The Big Blue Bus (BBB) continually studies the performance of its routes and schedules to ensure efficiencies and to assure that limited resources are applied strategically. Informed by the performance and resource allocation data collected throughout the year, BBB engages in a service planning process resulting in three annual service changes in order to implement schedule modifications responsive to the needs identified through the process. These service changes take place in February, June and August. Depending upon the time of year, these changes may be permanent and therefore would not change again unless a service standard is not achieved or demand/market conditions take place along the route. Or the change may be subtle due to seasonal school modifications that are targeted as efficiencies such as temporary suspension of operating Route 6 SMC Commuter schedule during summer or increased summer operations of Route 3 from LAX Airport and beach locations during the summer tourist season.

On Sunday, August 24, BBB will launch changes to some routes and schedules based on recommendations from the service planning process and based on known shifts in travel habits as riders transition from taking more leisure trips to more school and work trips. In addition to the seasonal shifts, the driving force behind the changes for August are to improve service efficiency and reliability for BBB customers, especially on Routes 1 and 3 that currently do not achieve on-time standards. In order to improve performance and adherence to published timetables, BBB will adjust the published timetables on Route 1 to allow for more realistic running times. Other operational improvements, including more operator recovery time and operator relief at key points along the route, will benefit customers with even further schedule reliability.

Changes will address the on-time challenges on Route 3 and involve splitting what is now a very long “L” shaped single route into two separate routes, which will allow more driver recovery time to get back on schedule if a trip is running late. Along with high ridership at several major stops, Route 3 is the longest route in the Big Blue Bus system in terms of travel time, at 95 minutes one way, almost double the average travel time for other Big Blue Bus routes. The route also travels through five key traffic congestion areas (see Appendix A), which are challenging to schedule for, and can add as much as 30 minutes to each trip. In some instances, the change will require customers to transfer and for those not using monthly passes, pay a separate fare. All bus stops previously serviced by Route 3 will continue to be serviced by one or the other of the new routes so no customer will lose service.

Background

At the end of each summer, the Big Blue Bus takes advantage of shifts in riders' travel patterns from taking more leisure trips to more school and work trips by making relevant route and schedule adjustments. This year, fall service changes will begin on Sunday, August 24.

As well as the seasonal shifts in travel behavior, the fall service changes are primarily focused on improving on-time performance of two routes.

The route and schedule adjustments reflected in the August service change detailed below will remain in effect until the next scheduled service change in February 2015.

Discussion

Route 3

Route 3 was not always the longest in the Big Blue Bus' system, and the extensions to Route 3 have hurt Big Blue Bus' ability to retain customer satisfaction through on-time performance. An early incarnation of Route 3 ran from Barrington Avenue and San Vicente Boulevard to the Marina. The route was extended over fifteen years ago to span the distance from UCLA to LAX transit center. Then in 2005, the route was extended again to Green Line Aviation Station, which is the condition seen today. The

extensions and the concurrent worsening of Los Angeles traffic have made appropriate scheduling of the route impossible.

Only Routes 1 and 7 carry more passengers than Route 3, which carried almost 175,000 passenger trips in April 2014, or 12.6% of the total passenger activity for the Big Blue Bus system. The ridership on the route is heavy, but is also grossly imbalanced, with the portion of the Route running south from downtown Santa Monica to Green Line Aviation Station carrying more than five times the passenger loads than the portion of the route running north from downtown Santa Monica to UCLA. Less than one in five passengers (16% of the total Route 3 ridership) on the route passes through downtown Santa Monica. Four out of five passengers either board or alight in downtown Santa Monica or make their entire trip either north of downtown or south of downtown. This imbalanced loading results in passengers routinely standing or being refused service as buses pass through areas south of downtown. Buses become inefficient and partially empty as they pass through the San Vicente corridor and other areas north of downtown Santa Monica (see Appendix C).

Route 3 runs from UCLA to the Aviation Station on the LA Metro Green Line passing through downtown Santa Monica on its way. It is characterized by long length, a wealth of important BBB destinations, high frequency, high ridership, but also poor on-time performance, and the resultant high levels of passenger dissatisfaction with service quality. Bus bunching, which is the outward manifestation of poor on-time performance, is a frequent problem on Route 3.

Route 3 fell below average for on-time performance in April 2014, remaining on time only 65.4 percent of the time, which is characteristic of its normal performance. A trip that takes 90 minutes one day, may take over two hours the next day, with little predictability. Route 3 is particularly vulnerable to traffic irregularities due to its exceedingly long overall length and resultant infrequent recoveries. Route 3 is the longest Route in the Big Blue Bus system in terms of travel time, at 95 minutes one way. This travel time is approximately double the average travel time for Big Blue Bus routes, which is 47 minutes, and almost fifty percent longer than the next longest route, Route 10 at 66 minutes (see Appendix B).

All bus routes are given a “recovery period” at each end of the route to get back on time. If a driver is exceedingly late, he or she is able to start the next trip on time given this recovery period. Ideally, these recoveries occur every 45 to 60 minutes and are ten to fifteen minutes long.

Route 3 passes through five points of high variability in congestion. Those points are the LAX area, Lincoln Blvd at Venice Blvd, downtown Santa Monica, Wilshire Blvd at I-405, and UCLA. Each of these areas can routinely have congestion that can add up to 30 minutes to the total trip travel time, and sometimes multiple areas become congested at once. This congestion is not always routine or predictable.

Early and late occurrences were nearly evenly split. Early occurrences on the route were 16.8 percent, and late occurrences were 18.2 percent. When congestion does not materialize, the bus then has far too much time and the driver is left to choose between running ahead of schedule or pulling to the side of the road to wait, which erodes service quality perceptions. The only way to correct this condition is for recovery periods to occur more frequently, which means shortening the route by splitting the existing route into two complementary routes, each with more frequent recoveries.

The on-time performance issues on Route 3 can only be corrected with more frequent recoveries and shorter overall route length. For this reason, Route 3 will be broken into two shorter routes beginning August 24.

The most sensible course of action is to break the route at the point where most passengers get on or off, which is in downtown Santa Monica. As a result, the southern portion of the route, which would retain the route number “3”, would have a total trip time of 56 minutes, and the northern end of the route, which would receive a new number, “3M”, would have a total trip time of 39 minutes. These trip lengths comport with system averages and would enable Big Blue Bus to create more regular and enforceable schedules. Furthermore, Big Blue Bus will gain the added benefit of being able to schedule the two sections appropriately and efficiently based on their respective passenger loads.

Riders will experience an increase in overall service quality and on-time performance. Both routes are expected to have a higher level of reliability due to the change.

Transfers between the two routes in downtown Santa Monica will be facilitated by close proximity of bus stops. Some Route 3 customers will be required to pay a new fare and possibly experience increased total travel time through downtown Santa Monica. However, this will be somewhat offset by less bus bunching and better overall reliability.

Some customers traveling through downtown will see higher daily costs depending on how they pay their fare. Cash paying Senior and Disabled customers (approximately 7.5% of customers) traveling round trip and now paying \$0.50 fares on Route 3 (\$1 per round trip) will be less impacted with the option of purchasing a Day Pass at a highly discounted rate of \$1.50 rather than having to pay two senior or disabled fares each way (\$2). UCLA students and staff (approximately 25% of the riders traveling north of downtown Santa Monica) who have a discounted UCLA Flash Pass will see no fare increase. The remaining customers, estimated to be about 400 per day, will be invited to purchase a monthly pass in order to control their costs, or they will see an increase of \$1 each way (an increase of \$2 round-trip).

This change will also correct an existing inequity in the fare system. Currently Route 3 is almost 50% longer than the next longest single fare route, making it an exceedingly better value than other routes. Rather than the existing Route 3 being the longest Route in the system that exceeds the average by almost double, the new Route 3 and new Route 3M will be the sixth and twelfth longest routes of twenty in terms of total travel time, putting the new route lengths squarely in the middle of Big Blue Bus averages.

Route 1

Changes to Route 1 are also proposed, with increased running times that will more accurately reflect true trip times and allow for more schedule adherence and additional recovery times for operators. These changes will also ensure that at times where

congestion and heavy ridership still puts the trip behind schedule, the next trip will start on time.

Delineated below are the changes to take effect on August 24. The collective effect of these changes will be continued improvements in rider experiences as a result of reducing overcrowding and improving timeliness.

The following routes have planned service adjustments for the August 24, 2014: 1, 3, R3, 4, 5, 6, 7, R7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 20, & 41.

1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All days - significant schedule adjustments will be made to improve on-time performance. The last trip from UCLA to Downtown Santa Monica at 12:12am is discontinued due to low ridership. • Weekends - significant schedule adjustments to improve on-time performance. Morning service between California Ave/Lincoln Blvd and Venice Circle reduced to hourly before 10:00am. • Operationally - more running time and recovery time was added to improve service reliability for customers and provide relief to MCO's working the line. • Directionality changed from Outbound/Inbound to Eastbound/Westbound, respectively.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Route will be split into two routes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Route 3</u> – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will serve existing stops between Green Line Aviation Station and 4th St in Downtown Santa Monica serving LAX Transit Center and Lincoln Blvd. ▪ Current service levels on all days will be maintained but with significant adjustments. This includes the first two weekday northbound trips at 5:02am and 5:22am from the Green Line Aviation Station which will depart 7 minutes earlier at 4:55am and 5:15am, respectively. ○ <u>Route 3M</u> – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will serve Downtown Santa Monica, Montana Ave and UCLA. See Route 3M information below for details. • Discontinue additional Friday, Saturday, and Sunday summer service from Downtown Santa Monica to Green Line Aviation Station. (Will operate for Labor Day weekend, August 29, 30, 31, and September 1.) • Discontinued bus stop pairs: Aviation/111th & Lincoln/Palms • Directionality changed from Outbound/Inbound to Northbound/Southbound, respectively

3M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New designation for existing Route 3 service between Downtown Santa Monica and UCLA serving Montana Ave. • Will serve existing stops between UCLA and 4th and Santa Monica Blvd. in Downtown Santa Monica. Route will connect 4th & Santa Monica bus stop with the existing bus stop on 7th St. at Olympic Blvd, where the route will begin and end. • Service levels during weekday peak commute times will be reduced from every 15 minutes to every 20 – 30 minutes to better match service with demand. Weekday service after 8pm reduced to hourly from every 30 minutes and the last westbound trip from UCLA will depart 11 minutes earlier than the current schedule. • Weekend service before 9:00 a.m. and after 7:00 p.m. reduced to every hour instead of every 30 minutes. • New Stops: 7th St. and Olympic Blvd. and 5th St. and Colorado Ave. • Directionality changed from Outbound/Inbound to Eastbound/Westbound, respectively.
R3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northbound service between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. improved to every 10 minutes instead of every 12 minutes; between 11:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. moved 5 minutes earlier to improve on-time performance and better separate departures at Green Line Aviation Station and LAX Transit Center from Route 3. • The 9:10 a.m. northbound trip will be discontinued. • Directionality changed from Outbound/Inbound to Northbound/Southbound
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New routing on all days: Buses arriving to the Civic Center area will travel southbound on 4th St. through downtown Santa Monica, turn right on Pico Blvd (serving the stop on Pico at 4th St), right on Main St terminating at the new Civic Auditorium bus stop near the courthouse. Buses departing the Civic Center area will begin at the Civic Auditorium bus stop, turn right on Olympic Dr., left on 4th St., continuing on the current routing through Downtown Santa Monica. • Weekdays, the 7:20pm westbound trip from Olympic Blvd. and Sawtelle Blvd and the 6:45pm eastbound trip from downtown Santa Monica will be discontinued due to low ridership. • Weekends, significant schedule adjustments including the discontinuation of the 7:09 a.m. and 7:11 p.m. Sunday eastbound trip from Downtown Santa Monica and the 7:13 p.m. Sunday westbound trip from Westside Pavilion. • Discontinued bus stop: Olympic Blvd and Avenida Mazatlan. • New bus stops: 4th St. and Civic Center Driveway, Pico Blvd and 4th St, Main St and Civic Auditorium. • Directionality changed from Outbound/Inbound to Eastbound/Westbound, respectively.

5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjustments to routing and schedule: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All days: Route will no longer serve 4th St and Arizona Ave in Downtown Santa Monica. Instead, buses will terminate on 7th St at Olympic Dr. enroute to/from Broadway, Century City and Culver City. A new stop leaving downtown Santa Monica will be added on 5th St south of Colorado Ave. Additional running time added to improve on-time performance and service quality. ○ Weekdays, the first westbound trip from Robertson and Venice at 5:41 a.m. will depart 11 minutes earlier at 5:30 a.m. Eastbound service before 7:30 a.m. will be reduced to every 30 minutes from every 20 minutes to better match service with demand. ○ Weekends, the first eastbound trip (arriving Culver City Expo Station at 6:27am) is discontinued. Other significant schedule adjustments. • Directionality changed from Outbound/Inbound to Eastbound/Westbound, respectively.
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Route 6 returns from summer break September 2 when SMC begins classes.
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekdays, morning eastbound service before 6:45 a.m. adjusted by up to 14 minutes. Evening westbound service between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. will operate every 30 minutes instead of every 20 minutes. Designated SMC extra trips will be reinstated.
R7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinstate SMC extra trips. • Eastbound service between 12:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. moved 1 minute later; between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. will operate every 10 minutes instead of every 12 minutes; and, after 9:00 p.m. service will operate every 20 minutes instead of every 30 minutes. • Westbound service between 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. moved 1 to 2 minutes earlier to help improve on-time performance.
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekends, the first westbound trip leaving Pico Blvd. and Westwood Blvd. will be discontinued due to low ridership. • New Stop: 5th St and Colorado Ave.

9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Routing on all days: Buses arriving to the Civic Center area will travel southbound on 4th St through downtown Santa Monica, turn right on Pico Blvd (serving the stop on Pico at 4th St), and right on Main St., terminating at the new Civic Auditorium bus stop near the courthouse. Buses departing the Civic Center area will begin at the Civic Auditorium bus stop, turn right on Olympic Dr., left on 4th St, and continue on the current routing through downtown Santa Monica. • Weekdays: 7:05 a.m. northbound trip will be reinstated for the school year. Northbound service between 7:20 a.m. and 8:20 a.m. will improve to every 20 minutes. Southbound service between 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. adjusted by up to 2 minutes earlier. The 2:15 p.m. and 3:13 p.m. southbound school extra trips from Sunset Bl. & Marquez Ave. will be reinstated. • Weekends: Minor schedule adjustments. Please see new schedule for details. • Discontinued bus stops: Olympic Blvd. at Avenida Mazatlan and Chautauqua and Corona del Mar (Pair). • New bus stops: 4th St at Civic Center Driveway, Pico Blvd at 4th St., Main St. at Civic Auditorium. • Directionality changed from Outbound/Inbound to Northbound/Southbound, respectively.
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekdays, eastbound service adjustments before 7:00 a.m. including service every 20 minutes between 6:00 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. instead of every 14-15 minutes. Westbound service between 6:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. reduced to every 30 minutes instead of every 20 minutes. Please see new schedule for details. • At Bundy/Pico, alighting will be allowed eastbound toward Los Angeles and boarding will be allowed westbound toward Santa Monica. The Rapid 10 premium fare of \$2.00 will apply. • Discontinued bus stops: Figueroa at 6th, Grand at 7th, Grand at 8th, Santa Monica at 22nd (Pair). • Directionality changed from Outbound/Inbound to Eastbound/Westbound, respectively.
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekdays, the 6:31 a.m. southbound trip from Pico/Westwood is discontinued and the 6:39 a.m. southbound trip from UCLA will operate 5 minutes earlier. Reinstate morning northbound UCLA extra trip.
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule adjustments to improve on-time performance and service quality: • Weekdays, an earlier northbound trip from Centinela Ave at Culver Blvd. will depart at 5:25 a.m. Morning service adjusted to operate every 15 minutes instead of every 12-13 minutes. Service between 1:15 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. and between 6:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. will be adjusted to operate

	<p>every 30 minutes instead of every 15 minutes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekends, service before 9 a.m. and after 6 a.m. adjusted by up to 10 minutes earlier or later. Southbound service before 8:00 a.m. on Saturday reduced to every 30-40 minutes instead of every 20 minutes. Southbound service before 9:00 a.m. on Sunday reduced to every 50-60 minutes instead of every 30 minutes. • Directionality changed from Outbound/Inbound to Northbound/Southbound, respectively.
20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekdays and Saturday, some trips will be adjusted.
41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service before 9:00 a.m. reduced to every 20 minutes from every 15. The 6:25 p.m. trip from SMC to Montana and Euclid will be discontinued.

Public Outreach

BBB held a public meeting on June 25th to receive input on the proposed Service Plan to modify Route 3. Proposed schedules for the new Route 3 and 3M were presented at the meeting. Approximately 10 of the 50 participants at the public meeting were frequent Route 3 customers. Other customers came to the meeting largely to discuss issues other than service changes. The majority of Route 3 customers who were able to attend were customers who ride primarily on one segment or the other and recognized the need to address on-time issues and were pleased with the proposed solution to improve schedule reliability. BBB also posted the information and the presentation online and has received about 15 email responses with feedback about the service change. While three of the email customers applauded the changes as much needed to improve on-time travel, the remainder of the email responses were from customers who are concerned about having to make a connection and pay a second fare. BBB Customer Service Representatives have responded to each of these customers with options on prepaid fare media options that may save them money over cash fares.

Outreach to customers and the general public will be conducted through various means to ensure that the August service change details are available in advance of the implementation dates. Detailed below is a summary of the service change public outreach efforts.

- Post service change details on BBB website – July 15.

- Post transit mall digital announcement – July 15.
- Stock service change “take one” brochures in each motor coach – August 4.
- Install interior car cards in each motor coach – August 4.
- Place City TV ad – August 4.
- Send Email blasts to BBB Alerts subscribers – August 6, 15, and 23 with final reminders on August 24.
- Post service change web link on Facebook and Twitter – August 6, 15, and 23.
- Print new schedules for Route 3 and Route 3M and placed on coaches – August 11.
- Resend letters to schools about start of service - August 12.
- Station modified duty MCO’s at Transit Center to give information to customers traveling THROUGH downtown – August 18 through August 28.
- Post new “eyelevels” with new schedule information at bus stops served by new scheduled trips – August 20 - 23.
- Attend SMC Student and Faculty Orientation Days.

Summary

August 2014 service changes will take place on August 24. Service related information will posted on the Big Blue Bus website at bigbluebus.com/servicechange.

Prepared by: Suja Lowenthal, Transit Government & Community Relations Manager

Attachments:

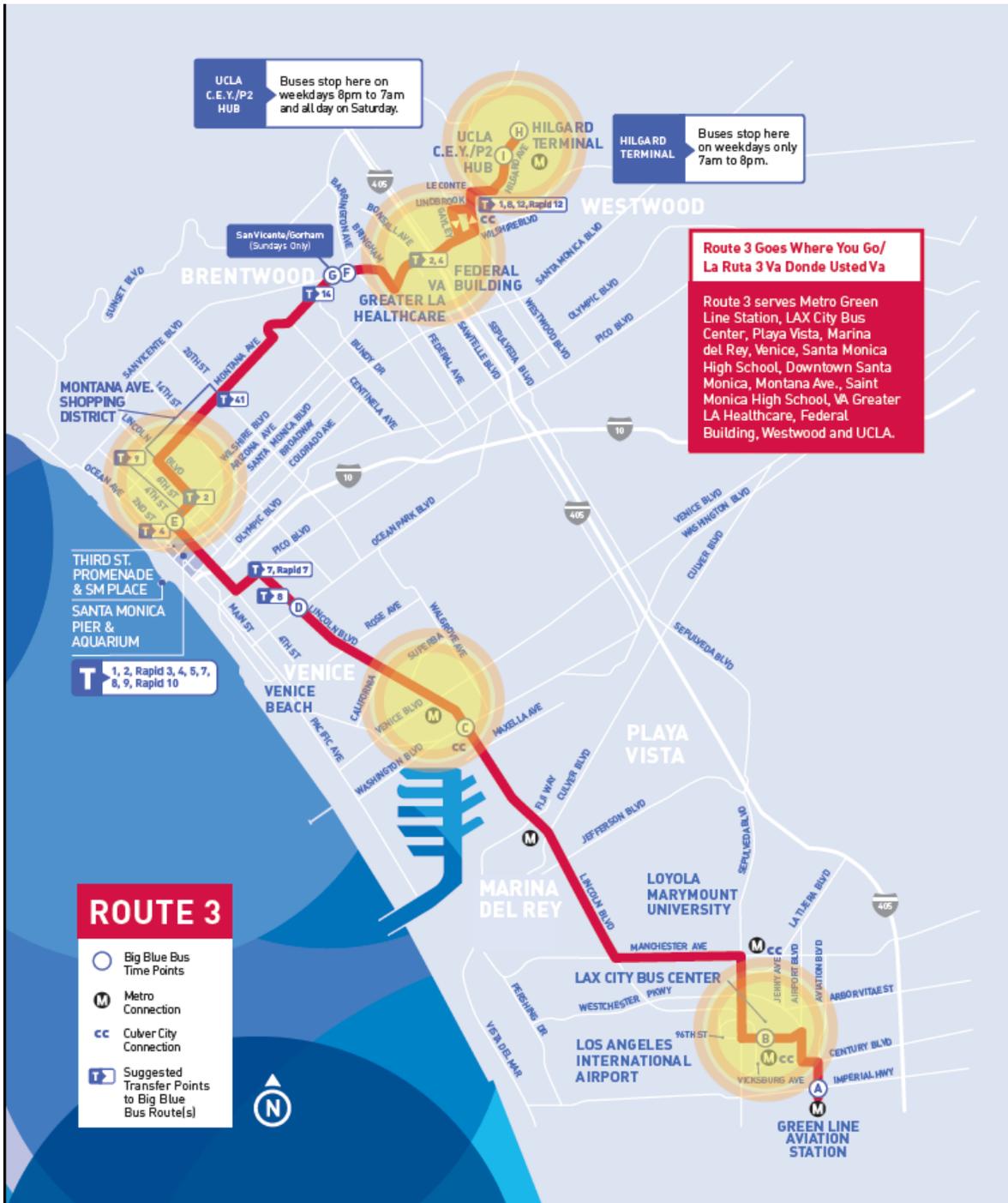
Appendix A: Key Congestion Points

Appendix B: Average Scheduled Trip Times

Appendix C: Daily Activity by Stop

Appendix A

Route 3: Five Key Congestion Areas



Appendix B
Average Scheduled Trip Times for Big Blue Bus Routes

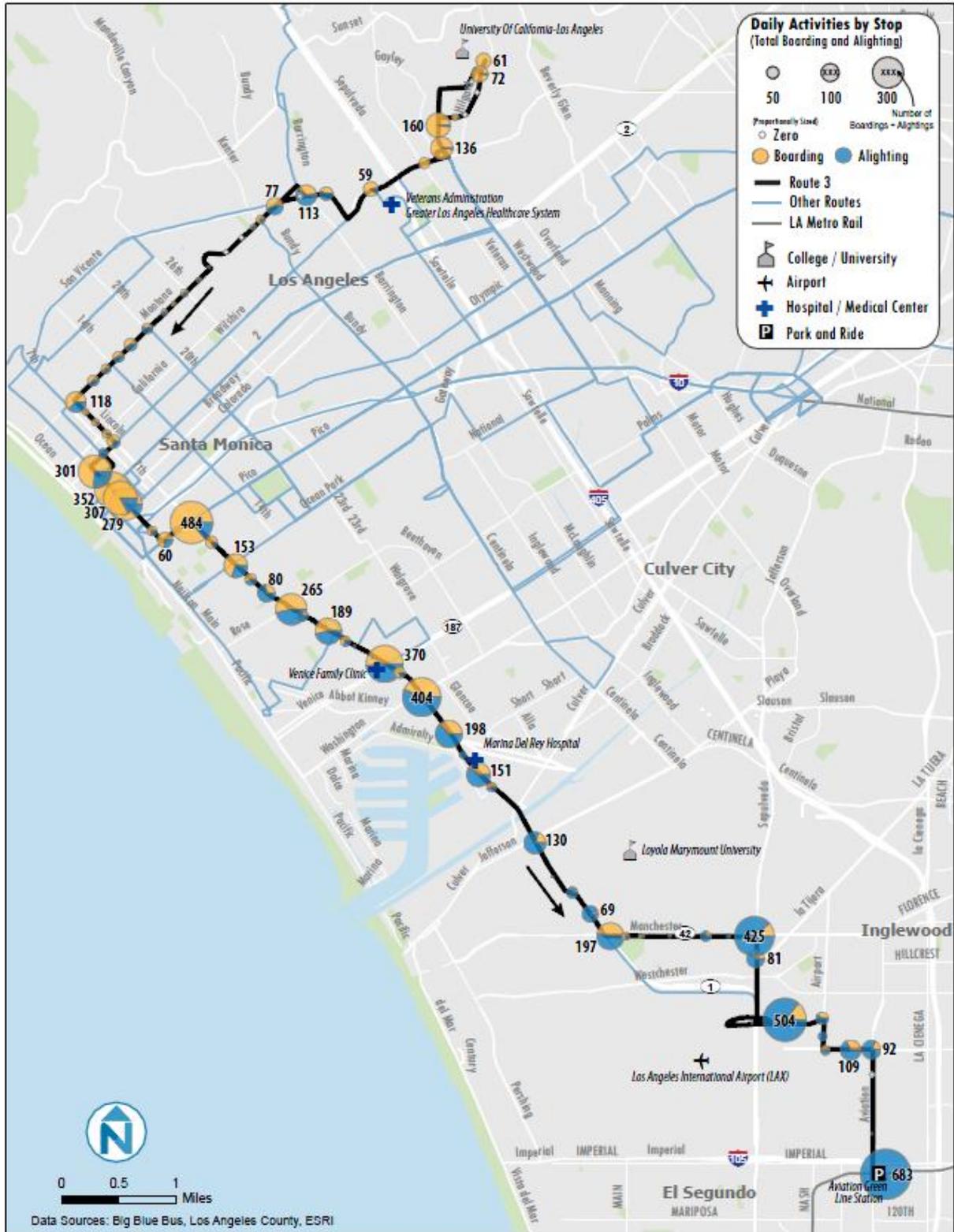
Existing Big Blue Bus Routes	One Way End to End travel time in minutes*
1	63
2	44
3	95
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Rapid 3	45
4	42
5	65
6	36
7	61
Rapid 7	64
8	54
9	30
10	66
12	47
Rapid 12	35
13	27
14	33
20	20
Crosstown	28
Sunset Ride	34
Average	47

New Big Blue Bus Route Configuration	One Way End to End travel time in minutes*
1	63
2	44
3	56
3M	39
Rapid 3	45
4	42
5	65
6	36
7	61
Rapid 7	64
8	54
9	30
10	66
12	47
Rapid 12	35
13	27
14	33
20	20
Crosstown	28
Sunset Ride	34
Average	47

* one-way weekday travel time at noon on a weekday

Appendix C Daily Activity by Stop – Inbound

Route 3 Inbound: Weekday



Appendix C (continued) Daily Activity by Stop – Outbound

Route 3 Outbound: Weekday

