



Information Item

Date: July 19, 2016

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Edward F. King, Director of Transit Services
Subject: Big Blue Bus Route Changes in Venice – Adjustments

Introduction

This report provides an update to the [March 25, 2016](#) information item on Big Blue Bus' Evolution of Blue Expo Light Rail Line service integration to Venice, outreach efforts to the Venice community, the Venice community response to these service changes, and next steps.

Background

The Evolution of Blue Plan to restructure Big Blue Bus services to better integrate with Expo light rail service was approved by Council on [April 28, 2015](#). Implementation of the plan was to occur over four service changes in a one-year period, which began in August of 2015 and which will be completed with the August 2016 service change.

Phase 2 of the Evolution of Blue plan was implemented with the February 21, 2016 service change, expanding service to key destinations such as Venice's Abbot Kinney and to Marina Del Rey, along with regional service connections to the Expo Line light rail stations, thereby improving mobility for the region and providing more mobility choices for new customers.

On February 21, 2016, Big Blue Bus changed service on Route 1 and Route 18. These changes were the culmination of years of planning effort on the part of Big Blue Bus to create connectivity between Venice, Oakwood, Marina Del Rey and the Expo Line

extension. The intent behind the change is to provide a public benefit to all constituents in these neighborhoods. Access to good public transit increases access to jobs, healthcare, and overall wellbeing, while contributing to better air quality, lessened congestion, and relief of parking shortages. Some constituents are pleased with this new connectivity, while others have expressed concerns about routing, bus stop placement, noise, and perceptions of safety. This spring, subsequent to the changes put into effect, the four routes serving Venice (1, 3, Rapid 3, and 18) recorded an average of over 4000 boardings and alightings per day in Venice.

At the invitation of Councilmember Mike Bonin, Big Blue Bus staff met with more than 150 community residents on March 9th to listen. Ninety-two comment cards were submitted, more than 40 attendees spoke, and over 100 comments were received separately at Big Blue Bus. Big Blue Bus was asked to review and evaluate optional routing alternatives that were presented by Councilmember Bonin's Office, and by constituents who attended the meeting. As a result of the meeting, Big Blue Bus staff re-engaged with members of the Venice Neighborhood Council, several neighborhood groups representing citizens along the Abbot Kinney corridor, Councilmember Bonin's Office, and community stakeholders to consider service options and obtain feedback, as well as to engage customers who used and depended on the service from March through May. Staff analyzed alternatives and return to Council, herewith, to share findings and recommended service adjustment.

Discussion

Additional Stakeholder Input

BBB staff had ongoing dialogue with Councilmember Bonin's staff regarding additional community member feedback received by the office. In response to community concerns that Venice community member input had not been solicited and was not valued, Big Blue Bus reached out to 14 local Venice neighborhood groups and business groups and met with the ones that expressed an interest in communicating their thoughts. Concurrent to

this round of outreach, BBB staff kept the Venice Neighborhood Council and Councilman Bonin's office informed of progress.

Organizations Contacted During Outreach:

- Abbot Kinney Merchants Association (a Committee of Venice Chamber of Commerce)
- Del Rey Neighborhood Council
- Marina Peninsula Community Council
- Ocean Front Walk Business Improvement District
- Presidents Row Neighborhood Association
- Rose Avenue Working Group
- Silver Strand Marina Homeowners Association
- Venice Boardwalk Association
- Venice Canals Association
- Venice Chamber of Commerce
- Venice Neighborhood Council
- Venice Stakeholders Association
- Venice Walk Streets
- Washington Square Business Improvement Association

Meeting Schedule:

- Venice Merchant Groups – meeting April 2016
- Presidents Row Neighbors – April 13, 2016
- Del Rey Neighborhood Council – meeting April 21, 2016
- Oakwood Residents – email dialogue May 2016
- Venice Neighbors Association – email dialogue May 2016
- Abbott Kinney Residents Group – June 2, 2016

Summation of Overall Comments Received from Venice Community Members and Groups

Below is a summation of the questions and comments heard by BBB staff, BBB answers, and BBB intent going forward.

Why were the Big Blue Bus service changes to Venice Corridors happening?

Before the service changes were made to Routes 1 and 18, there were two north/south bus corridors in Venice – along Lincoln Blvd and Main Street to Pacific Avenue. The introduction of Expo rail service has increased the need for north/south travel, and the two existing corridors are too far apart to create easy access to transit. The distance between Main St-Pacific and Lincoln Blvd is approximately 1 mile. Ideal route spacing for a transit friendly environment is .5 miles or less. In Oakwood, the distance suggests adding one new corridor (Route 18). South of Venice Blvd, the distance suggests adding two new north/south corridors. However, due to budgetary constraints, one corridor was added on Ocean Avenue: Route 1 was extended south from the Venice Circle to Marina Del Rey.

Voice announcements are loud.

Federal law protects the rights of those with sight impairment, who are waiting for a bus, by requiring voice announcements where two or more routes share a bus stop. In response to complaints, Big Blue Bus has adjusted the volume by time of day, and turned announcements off where allowed. Community members will be informed that if a voice announcement is heard at a stop with a single bus route, to report the bus number, date, and time through the online feedback form at bigbluebus.com (under “Contact Us”) or by calling 310-451-5444 and BBB will investigate.

Are pedestrians and bicyclists less safe with buses in our neighborhood?

There is no evidence to suggest that adding a Big Blue Bus route to a street causes an increase in danger to pedestrians and bicyclists. In fact, BBB shares the roadway along many high-density bicycle corridors.

There was no outreach to the Venice community.

There was extensive outreach prior to the changes. Big Blue Bus conducted three surveys in 2014 and 2015, and received 76 responses from residents who identified themselves as being from 90291. An additional 271 surveys made comments on the routes being changed in Venice. Big Blue Bus invited input from neighborhood councils, held three rounds of public meetings in Santa Monica and Los Angeles attended by 119 people, held a public study session and a public hearing, and sent letters to property owners adjacent to bus stops before service was initiated. In addition, BBB sent email communications to the Venice Neighborhood Council in August and December of 2015.

Is anyone going to take this bus?

Ridership is expected to increase now that the rail line is open. BBB's internationally recognized consultant, Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates, determined that Venice and Oakwood have sufficient density to support these new routes. Recent studies show that with the presence of ride-sourcing (Uber & Lyft), bike share, and a robust transit network, households using all of these options are downsizing the number of cars they own.

Can the buses be made to be quieter?

Big Blue Bus, in its long-term strategy, is committed to a 100% conversion to electric vehicles. BBB recently listed Route 18 as a preferred route for electric bus conversion, and applied for grant funding to support this. Conversion to electric vehicles is expected to lessen vehicle noise considerably.

Is what Big Blue Bus is doing legal? Will it ruin the neighborhood?

Big Blue Bus runs routes on many streets that are congested, residential, and narrow. These conditions do not make a street inappropriate for public transit bus service under the law. There are also no documented losses in real estate value, increased accidents, or new social problems that develop as a result of adding bus service.

Alternatives Analysis

BBB staff reviewed the alternative route options presented at the March 9th meeting as well as those offered during subsequent email communication and in-person meetings with Venice community members and stakeholder groups. BBB staff reviewed these alternatives considering complex issues requiring careful reflection, such as travel time, ridership projections, additional operating costs, ADA accessible bus stops, adequate sidewalk space, opinions of other stakeholders in affected areas, bus connectivity, as well as challenges with potential service duplication impacts with our partners, Metro and Culver City Bus.

When BBB first considered how best to provide greater transit service to the Venice community, Ocean Avenue and Abbott Kinney Blvd were both considered for bus service. Budgetary constraints and optimal transit service coverage narrowed the choice to identify Ocean Avenue as the preferred corridor. However, after further consideration, Abbott Kinney Blvd is significantly wider and contains a mix of residential, commercial and retail uses which equate to a high potential transit corridor. In observing these differences, and the feedback received, Abbott Kinney Blvd appears to be a more appropriate corridor for bus service.

After careful consideration, analysis, community/stakeholder feedback and ensuring that these changes are expenditure neutral, Big Blue Bus will make the following changes to both Routes 1 and 18 in August 2016.

- Truncate Route 1 at Windward Circle, and remove service from Venice Way and Ocean Avenue.
- Extend Route 18 to the Marina Peninsula via Abbott Kinney Blvd to Washington Blvd to Via Marina.

The truncation of Route 1 at Winward Circle and extension of Route 18 to Marina Del Rey in essence moves the Marina Del Rey to Expo service from Route 1 to Route 18. The

benefit of making this change is that service is moved on to a wider street in response to neighborhood and stakeholder requests that buses stay on major streets and streets without speed bumps as much as possible. Ocean Avenue, where Route 1 is currently running, is predominantly 30 feet wide and has speed bumps. Conversely, Abbott Kinney Blvd south of Venice Blvd where Route 18 will run is predominantly 55 feet wide and does not have speed bumps. Moving the service onto Abbott Kinney Blvd conforms to the sentiments expressed at the March 9th 2016 meeting. Due to the wideness of the street, and the mixed use aspect of the land use on Abbott Kinney Blvd, the move is also expected to cause less impact to area residents.

Below is a map showing the proposed routing for Big Blue Bus, along with existing routing for Culver City Bus and LA Metro bus.



Big Blue Bus intends to continue the work of strengthening these bus routes and working

with the Council office to address resident concerns.

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