



# Information Item

**Date: July 19, 2016**

To: Mayor and City Council  
From: Edward F. King, Director of Transit Services  
Subject: Big Blue Bus Customer Perceptions Survey Results

## **Introduction**

In January 2016, Maroon Society Research Strategy Solutions conducted the first Big Blue Bus (BBB) Customer Perception Survey to assess BBB riders' perceptions of BBB on a variety of metrics related to services and amenities. This research supports BBB's long-term strategy to provide enhanced service and connectivity to customers, while keeping pace with Metro's light rail expansion. The report establishes benchmarks of customer perceptions and travel behavior which will be used to measure against future customer perception research under Maroon Society's 5-year contract with the City.

## **Background**

At the [October 27, 2015](#) Council meeting, the Council authorized the award of BBB's Transit Customer Perception Survey services to Maroon Society Research Strategy Solutions, Inc., to conduct ridership and customer surveys to measure and benchmark customer satisfaction, attract new riders, and cultivate strong relationships with stakeholders.

Staff identified metrics in the BBB Strategic Business Plan to measure outcomes as a result of planned service enhancements and changes associated with Expo, as well as service quality metrics to measure customer perceptions about BBB service, safety/security and rider amenities. The initial Customer Perception Survey will provide

baseline data for future research efforts, post one year from the inauguration of Expo Light Rail service, and for the next four years, thereafter, to evaluate progress.

## **Discussion**

The development of a robust, recurring customer perception survey program will allow BBB to assess service, amenities, brand equity, reputation, efficacy and effectiveness in messaging, as well as to help better understand the mobility wants and needs of current and prospective riders, creating a foundation for the retention and expansion of ridership.

Maroon Society conducted survey work on BBB buses from January 23, 2016 to February 2, 2016. More than 3,200 random surveys on all 20 BBB routes were conducted in English and Spanish, administered by surveyors through a survey instrument that was developed with staff, tested in early January through pre-sampling, and revised based upon the pre-survey work.

In summary, 92% of BBB customers are satisfied with service, with satisfaction linked to Motor Coach Operator behavior, especially in greeting customers. Ninety-three percent of customers felt safe onboard BBB buses. Almost one-third of BBB customers are students and just over one-third of BBB customers are 14-24 years old. Over 50% of BBB customers ride BBB to commute to work. Key findings include the following.

- Overall satisfaction with BBB is 92%.
- Satisfaction is linked to the Motor Coach Operators' greeting of customers.
- Satisfaction with safety on-board is 93%.
- Language: 80% speak English.
- Students: 30% are students.
- Age: 37% are 14-24 years old.
- Ethnicity: 44% are Hispanic.
- Trip Purpose: 53% commute to work.
- Trip Frequency: 56% ride at least 5 days/week.

- Duration: 66% have commuted 12 months or more.
- Fare Type: 56% pay with cash.
- Transfer: 55% transfer; 55% transfer to/from BBB to another transit system; 31% transfer to/from BBB to BBB; 5% transfer to/from Metro Light Rail.
- Travel Information: 76% use real-time information. Google is the preferred application.
- Origin/Destination: 78% of riders reside and begin their trip outside of Santa Monica (62% from LA), 16% from Santa Monica, (6% did not provide zip code information).

### **Summary**

Staff will begin to use this data to evaluate service levels and markets, improve customer service training for Motor Coach Operators and Supervisors, evaluate fare media for frequent riders, and target specific age groups for marketing and special promotions, focusing on retention of BBB's customer base as well as expansion to new segments that include choice riders as well as captive riders.

**Prepared By:** Edward F. King, Director of Transit Services