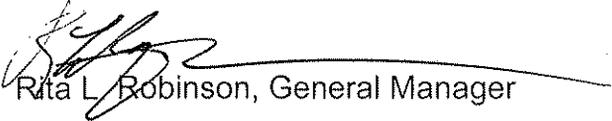


CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

Date: October 22, 2008

To: The Honorable City Council
c/o City Clerk, Room 395, City Hall
Attention: Honorable Wendy Greuel, Chair
Transportation Committee

From: 
Rita L. Robinson, General Manager

**SUBJECT: STATUS REPORT ON THE FEASIBILITY OF EXTENDING THE HOURS
OF DASH DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES ON FRIDAY NIGHTS
(CF 08-1858)**

SUMMARY

This report is a follow-up to the Department's August 27, 2008 report on the feasibility of extending the hours of DASH Downtown Los Angeles service on Friday nights (CF 08-1858). As directed by the Transportation Committee at its September 10, 2008 meeting, the Department has been coordinating with a task force of affected Council Offices and Downtown stakeholders concerning the development of a proposed late night DASH Downtown service. A preliminary consensus has been reached on the proposed service including routing, days of week, span of service, etc. The proposed service would operate on Friday and Saturday nights from 6:30pm to 3:00am during the holiday season, and from 6:30pm until midnight for the rest of the year.

The proposed service would be operated as part of a public/private partnership, with 100% of the operating funds provided by the private sector. LA Inc. (Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau) has agreed to take the lead role in soliciting private sector funding to pay for the proposed service. The goal is to initiate the late night DASH service on Saturday November 22nd, which corresponds with the planned start date for the extension of the Metro Red Line service hours from midnight until 3am during the holidays (CF 08-2119).

The proposed service would be operated by the Department's DASH Downtown contractor utilizing City-owned DASH buses. In order to facilitate the start-up of service by the planned start date, the Department is requesting City Council approval to utilize City DASH vehicles for this service, subject to the availability of private sector funds. Since the DASH buses would be used after regularly scheduled DASH Downtown service hours, the Department anticipates no impact on existing DASH services.

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TRANSPORTATION

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council:

Authorize the Department of Transportation and its DASH Downtown Los Angeles contractor to utilize City-owned DASH buses to operate the proposed late night DASH Downtown service, subject to the availability of private sector funding. The operation of this late night DASH service shall be 100% funded by the private sector.

BACKGROUND

The City Council, at its meeting on September 19, 2008, received and filed the Department's report dated August 27, 2008 concerning the feasibility of extending DASH Downtown Los Angeles service hours on Friday nights, including options to partner with businesses to raise the necessary funds. The Department's report was in response to a Motion (Greuel – Perry – Garcetti) which cited the need for more evening transit services in Downtown Los Angeles for residents and visitors to access restaurant, entertainment and retail venues. The Council also instructed the Department to coordinate with affected Council offices and other Downtown stakeholders, and to report back on cost, the proposed route and community support.

The Department last addressed the issue of extending the hours of operation for DASH Downtown Los Angeles as part of its "DASH Downtown Los Angeles Study and Recommendations", which was submitted to the Mayor and City Council in September 2007 and adopted by the Council on February 26, 2008 (CF 07-3772). That study was undertaken by the Department in part because new residential units were being added in Downtown at a rapid pace, and the developers as well as the new residents of those units were interested in having the local circulation service of DASH Downtown Los Angeles available in the evenings.

The Department's Study concluded that, given the City's projected shortfall in local Proposition A transit funds, the most effective response to the growing demand for travel within Downtown in the evening would be privately funded event-based shuttles. The Department has implemented a number of new and/or expanded DASH services in recent years, including the Holly Trolley, the Downtown Art Walk and the Larchmont Shuttle, using funding provided exclusively with private (non-Proposition A) funding. During discussions of the Study with the Transportation Committee, the Department indicated that it continues to be open to potential initiatives from Downtown stakeholders to extend DASH hours if the private sector could supply the funds to operate the City-owned DASH vehicles.

DISCUSSION

The Department has coordinated with a task force of key Downtown Los Angeles stakeholders, including representatives from CD 9, CD 13, LA Inc., LA Live, the Central City Association and the Downtown Neighborhood Council, to help develop the proposed late night DASH service. A representative from CD 2 also participated in the meetings. The focus of the discussions was to encourage residents living throughout the Los Angeles region to utilize the existing regional public transit system (bus and rail) to travel to Downtown in the evening and then to use special evening DASH service to access restaurants, bars, cultural venues, sporting events and other entertainment attractions located in Downtown. This service was proposed, in part, as an alternative to driving to Downtown, given the sharp increase in gasoline prices. Based on these discussions, the task force has reached a preliminary consensus on the proposed route and service characteristics.

As indicated in the attached map, two routes were developed that link the 7th St./Metro Center Red & Blue Line Station (7th St./Figueroa St.) with a variety of activity centers throughout Downtown. One route operates between the Music Center and LA Live/Convention Center, with service operating primarily on the west side of Downtown along the Figueroa St. corridor and Grand Avenue. The second route is designed to serve the Historic Core towards the eastern portion of Downtown, with service operating along Broadway, Main St. and 7th/8th Streets. Two in-service buses would operate on each route, with a service frequency of approximately 10 minutes. Riders may transfer between the two DASH routes and connect to the Metro Red Line at the 7th/Metro Center Station.

The proposed service would operate on Friday and Saturday nights from 6:30 p.m. (end of current weekday DASH service in Downtown) until 3 a.m. during the holidays and until midnight during the rest of the year. Operating the extended DASH hours until 3am during the holidays would match the planned extension of the Metro Red Line service hours from midnight until 3am during the holidays. The task force believes that DASH serves as an important link for travel within Downtown for riders using the Red Line to travel to Downtown from outlying areas. The anticipated start date for the extension of the Red Line hours is Saturday November 22, 2008. The goal of the task force is to initiate the expanded hours for DASH on the same date, subject to available funding.

The Department has estimated the cost to operate expanded DASH service hours during the 2008 holiday season to be approximately \$34,000, with an estimated annual cost of approximately \$180,000 to operate during all of calendar year 2009. The Department made it clear in these meetings that, given the projected deficit in Proposition A funding used to operate City transit services, LADOT's participation in operating this route would focus primarily on supplying DASH vehicles and managing the operation of the service. Therefore, the feasibility of launching and sustaining such a

shuttle would rely on the willingness of the hotels, restaurants, bars, Downtown entertainment attractions and other potential sponsors to fund its operational costs.

LA Inc. has agreed to serve as the entity responsible for reaching out to the business community in Downtown to solicit funding for the extended DASH hours. The current proposal is for LA Inc. to solicit and collect the funds from the Downtown businesses and to pay the Department's Downtown DASH contractor directly for the operation of the service utilizing City-owned DASH buses. The current DASH Downtown operating contract expires on December 31, 2008. The Department has submitted a separate report to the Mayor and Council to award a new contract for the service. At some time in the next year, if the service is determined to be successful, then the Department and LA Inc. may enter into discussions to consider amending the DASH Downtown contract so that LADOT could assume the operation of this service under this contract and be reimbursed directly by LA Inc.

LA Inc. is currently in the process of soliciting funding from the business community. As of the writing of this report, no information was available as to the amount of funds raised to-date, anticipated service start date, etc. The Department will keep the Transportation Committee informed of major new developments.

IMPACT ON THE BUDGET

Funding for the expanded DASH Downtown Los Angeles service hours would be provided by the private sector. Therefore, there is no impact on the budget.

Attachment

NIGHT-TIME DASH ROUTES

