

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

Date: February 3, 2009

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

From:   
Rita C. Robinson, General Manager  
Department of Transportation

**SUBJECT: LATE NIGHT DASH PROGRAM RESULTS – 2008 HOLIDAY SEASON  
(CF 08-1858)**

**SUMMARY**

Pursuant to a November 19, 2008 action of the City Council authorizing use of City DASH vehicles to operate late night service in Downtown Los Angeles on Friday and Saturday nights during the year end holidays, the Department worked with Downtown stakeholders to design and implement a single late night DASH route serving Downtown attractions. Three buses operated by the Department's DASH contractor provided service every 10 minutes from 6:30 PM to 3 AM on Friday and Saturday nights starting on November 21, 2008 and ending on December 27, 2008. Service was also operated on December 31, 2008 (New Year's Eve).

The late night DASH service was fully funded by private sector sponsorships, with Downtown stakeholders raising the approximate \$23,000 needed to fund the service during the holidays. Overall, the service carried a total of about 1,850 riders, or an average of 142 riders per night. The service was generally well received by the stakeholders, and discussions are ongoing about whether there is interest in funding the operation of the Late Night DASH service in the future. This demonstration service proved to be a successful example of a public/private partnership between the Department and Downtown stakeholders to expand public transit service without utilizing scarce City public funds.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the City Council RECEIVE AND FILE this report as it is for informational purposes only and no Council action is required.

## **BACKGROUND**

The City Council, at its meeting of November 19, 2008, authorized the Department of Transportation and its DASH Downtown Los Angeles contractor (First Transit) to utilize City-owned DASH buses to operate a proposed Late Night DASH service in Downtown Los Angeles subject to the availability of 100% private sector funding. This action was recommended in the Department's October 22, 2008 report in response to a Motion (Greuel – Perry – Garcetti) which directed the Department to explore the feasibility of operating DASH Downtown Los Angeles transit service on Friday nights during the 2008 holiday season, including options to partner with businesses to raise the necessary funds.

As discussed in the Department's October 22, 2008 report, LADOT coordinated with Downtown stakeholders to develop the proposed service parameters including route, span of service and frequency. The original proposed service consisted of two routes which interconnected at the 7<sup>th</sup> Street/Metro Center Red and Blue Line Station. One of the proposed routes operated in a north/south configuration along the western portion of Downtown connecting the Music Center and LA Live/City Convention Center via the 7<sup>th</sup> St./Metro Rail station. The second proposed route generally served the eastern portion of Downtown including the Historic Core.

At the November 6, 2009 meeting of the Transportation Committee, the Department reported verbally that operation of the service was dependant on private sector funding and set a deadline of November 14th for the funding to be in place to enable the Late Night DASH service to start on November 21, 2008. The service was designed to operate in conjunction with the extended late night hours on Metro's Red Line during the holiday period which also started on November 21, 2008.

LA Inc. had agreed to take the lead in terms of coordinating with the various Downtown stakeholders and other potential sponsors to solicit and collect funds for the operation of the Late Night DASH service. The goal was to collect sufficient funds to operate the service until 3am on Friday and Saturday nights during the 2008 holiday season, and until midnight during the year in 2009.

## **DISCUSSION**

Unfortunately, due in part to the deteriorating national economy, LA Inc. was unable to secure commitments to run the Late Night DASH service for a full year or even the 2008 holiday period. Approximately one week prior to the proposed November 21<sup>st</sup> start date, a group of stakeholders lead by Eric Richardson (blogdowntown.com) and Gilmore Development were able to secure the approximate \$23,000 in funding from various sponsors to operate three DASH buses on Friday and Saturday night from Friday

November 21 to Saturday, December 27, and Wednesday, December 31 (New Year's Eve). The service operated for a total of 13 nights. Portions of the two original proposed routes were combined in a single route serving the Music Center, LA Live/Convention Center and the Historic Core of Downtown with service approximately every 10 minutes (see Attachment 1). The service was free to riders as the operating costs were completely paid by the private sector. Attachment 2 of this report contains a complete list of sponsors for the service.

The Department expedited the design and preparation of marketing materials to help promote the service, including a press release, temporary plastic bus stop signs, and a simple flyer showing the route and stop locations. Information about the service was available at LADOT's Transit Store and on all DASH Downtown Los Angeles buses, LADOT's website and various Downtown attraction websites. A number of Downtown attractions prepared their own print materials promoting the service. Metro also promoted the service in conjunction with its extended Red Line hours.

During its operation, the Late Night DASH service had a total of 1,847 people boarding the service, an average of 142 per night (or 5.4 boardings per bus per hour). On Saturday night, December 6th, the same night as the Old Bank District Block Party, a record 334 people (12.7 boardings per bus per hour) used the service. Ridership during most other nights varied from 100 to 200 per night with a low of 66 boardings the night after Christmas. Ridership was heavier in the 6:30 to midnight period and decreased sharply after that except for New Years Eve. Boardings and alightings were concentrated near the Music Center, LA Live, the 7<sup>th</sup> Street/ Metro Center Station and several bars and restaurants in the Historic Core.

Ridership was adversely impacted by the lack of sufficient time to market the service in advance of its debut. The extremely short lead time (one week) limited the opportunity for Downtown attractions to promote the Late Night DASH service in conjunction with their own advertising, particularly LA Live which had long lead times for its advertisements. Other potential factors that limited ridership were the economic downturn and a very sharp drop in gasoline prices that made auto usage more attractive relative to public transit. There were also some concerns raised that the single route may have been too complicated for some riders to readily understand. Cold, damp weather may have also affected ridership, along with operating the night directly following Christmas.

The Department held a meeting of stakeholders involved in operating the service on January 8, 2009 to discuss whether there was interest in operating the Late Night DASH service during 2009, or the 2009 year end holiday season, with continued private sector funding. The group agreed to approach potential sponsors including those involved in the 2008 program as well as new participants. There was also interest in approaching operators of existing private shuttle services in Downtown to see if they

Honorable Wendy Greuel  
Late-Night DASH Service  
CF 08-1858

4

February 3, 2009

might agree to contribute funding to operate the Late Night DASH service in lieu of continuing to operate their own shuttles. Another meeting was tentatively scheduled in February to assess further interest in funding the late night DASH service in Downtown Los Angeles.

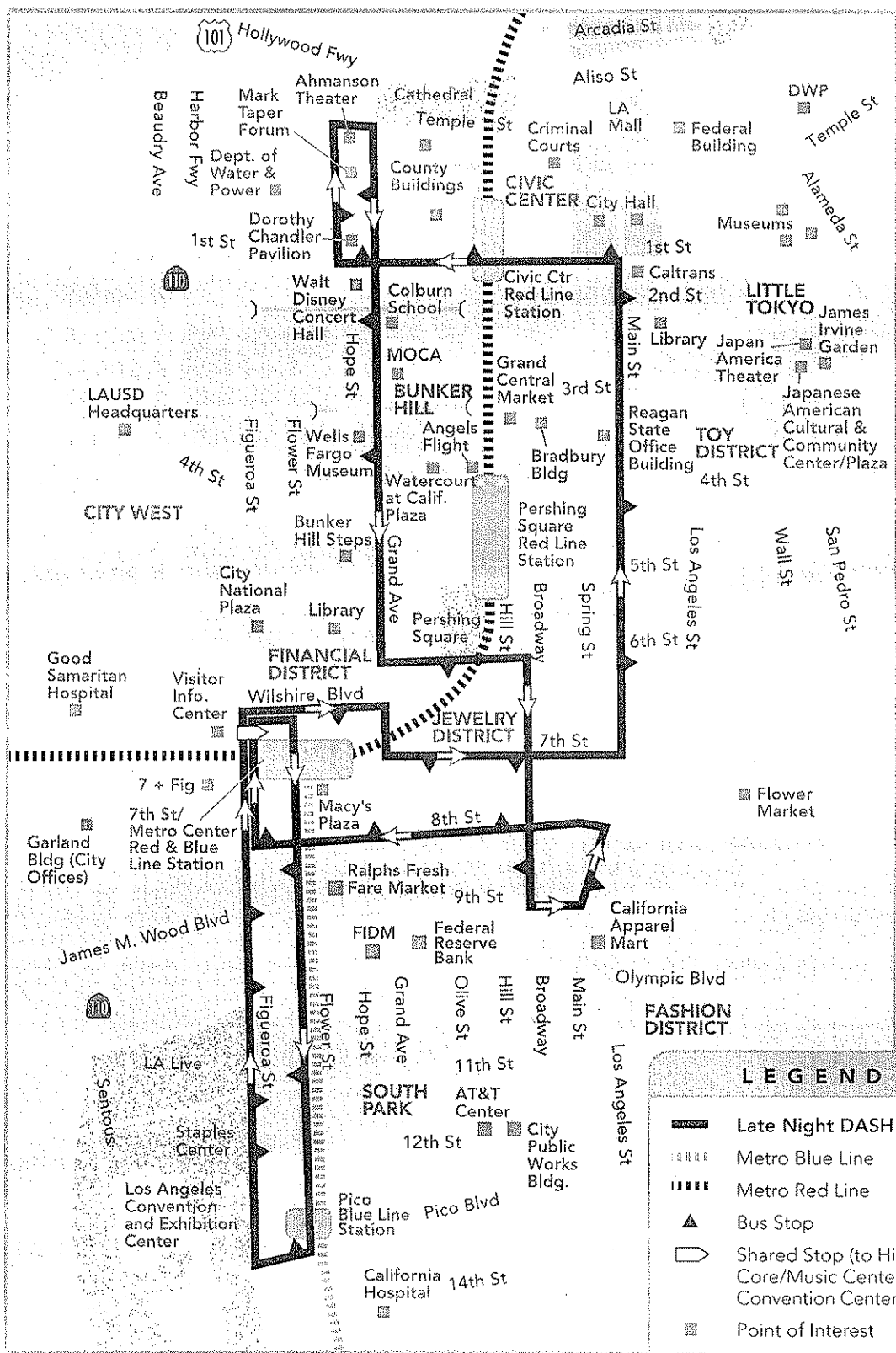
### **IMPACT ON THE BUDGET**

This report is for informational purposes only. There is no impact on the Budget.









Attachments

# FREE LATE NIGHT DASH

## HOLIDAY SERVICE IN DOWNTOWN LA



### LEGEND

-  Late Night DASH Route
-  Metro Blue Line
-  Metro Red Line
-  Bus Stop
-  Shared Stop (to Historic Core/Music Center or Convention Center/LA Live)
-  Point of Interest
-  Metro Station and Entrances
-  Tunnel

ATTACHMENT 2

**LATE NIGHT DOWNTOWN DASH SERVICE  
2008 HOLIDAY SEASON**

**LIST OF SERVICE SPONSORS**

213 Inc – Broadway Bar, Casey’s Irish Bar and  
Grill, Cole’s Original French Dip, Golden  
Gopher & Seven Grand

The Association

Astani Enterprises

Barry Shy  
Group

blogdowntown.com

Brookfield Properties

City Loft Square

Historic Downtown BID

J Restaurant and Lounge

LA Live

Los Angeles City Councilmember Jan Perry

Los Angeles City Councilmember Wendy Greuel

Los Angeles Theater

MerueloMaddux

Music Center

Pacific Electric Lofts

Patina Restaurant

Pete’s Cafe

Pitfire Pizza