



REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Metropolitan Planning • Public Transportation & Operations • Engineering & Construction

Metropolitan Planning Organization of Washoe County, Nevada

September 18, 2020

AGENDA ITEM 4.1

TO: Regional Transportation Commission

FROM: James Gee
Manager of Service Planning
and Innovation

Bill Thomas, AICP,
Executive Director

SUBJECT: Public Hearing – January 2021 RTC RIDE Service Adjustment

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the January 2021 RTC RIDE Service Adjustment, currently scheduled for January 2, 2021, including extension of the RTC RAPID - Virginia Line to the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), elimination of the UNR – Midtown Direct temporary route, and miscellaneous time adjustments.

SUMMARY

RTC RIDE continually looks to provide the best service by improving on-time performance, shortening passenger’s travel times, and offering innovative services. This fiscal year, three service changes will occur due to the upcoming completion of the Virginia Street BRT extension project to the University of Nevada, Reno. This service change is currently scheduled for January 2, 2021 and is proposed to contain the following items:

- Extension of the RTC RAPID – Virginia Line to UNR
- Elimination of temporary route UNR – Midtown Direct
- Miscellaneous time adjustments

RTC Management Policy P-18 (Public Involvement for Modifications to Transit Service or Fares) requires the RTC to hold a public hearing to solicit public comment for any major service reduction defined as:

- a reduction or increase of 10% or more of system-wide service hours;
- the elimination or expansion of any existing service that affects:
 - 25% or more of the service hours of a route
 - 25% or more of the route’s ridership (defined as activity at impacted bus stops).

A public hearing and Title VI analysis is necessary for these changes due to the elimination of the temporary UNR – Midtown Direct route. Under Federal Transit Administration (FTA) policy, these steps are required because the temporary route was in operation longer than one year in duration.

FISCAL IMPACT

The projected annual savings, as a result of this proposed service change, is \$568,881.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS BY BOARD

July 19, 2019 Approval of Fall 2019 RTC Service Adjustment including establishment of temporary route UNR – Midtown Direct

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

RTC RIDE continually looks to provide the best service by improving on-time performance, shortening passenger's travel times, and offering innovative services. RTC RIDE is committed to performing at least two service changes per year to ensure the latest innovations and services are available to the passengers and the public. The next service change is scheduled for January 2, 2021, and is proposed to contain the following changes:

RTC RAPID – Virginia Line

The Virginia Street BRT UNR Extension project, which was approved for construction in CY 2014, is nearing completion. This project was designed to improve Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access and facilities, improve pedestrian access and facilities, construct three new transit stations, and improve the street facility and traffic patterns for the Midtown area from Plumb to Liberty. Additionally, the project also extends the Virginia Line – RAPID service from RTC's 4TH STREET STATION to a new roundabout on Virginia Street at the Lawlor Events Center with five additional new transit stations. Therefore, the recommendation is to extend the Virginia Line – RAPID service to UNR to serve these new facilities. Service will be every ten minutes which corresponds to the rest of the existing Virginia Line RAPID service. The actual implementation date may be delayed as approval is required from the FTA to operate service along this corridor.

Route UNR – Midtown Direct

The UNR – Midtown Direct route is a temporary route instituted to improve transit connections between the UNR campus and Midtown during the Virginia Street BRT Extension construction project and better support the businesses in downtown Reno and Midtown. As originally planned and proposed, the recommendation is to discontinue this temporary route upon implementation of the newly constructed Virginia Line – RAPID service.

Limited Specific Segment Run-Time Adjustments

In an on-going effort to ensure each route is operating in a most efficient manner, the run-times between time-points need to be adjusted to stay relevant to the times. The effects of these adjustments ensures the passenger has accurate timetable data to rely on, that operators are given the time necessary to operate the service in a safe and courteous manner, and it creates a reliable service. Therefore, staff will be making limited specific segment run-time adjustments that will change the timetables for certain routes.

Title VI Analysis

FTA Circular 4702.1B requires that recipients of federal transit funds prepare service equity analyses for proposed major service changes or any fare change. RTC policy identifies a major service change as:

- A reduction or increase of 10% or more of system-wide service hours
- The elimination or expansion of any existing service that affects:
 - 25% or more of the service hours of a route
 - 25% or more of the route's ridership (defined as activity at impacted bus stops).

FTA policy dictates a Title VI analysis when a route is eliminated from service, including temporary routes that last more than one year in duration. Given that the temporary UNR – Midtown Direct route has operated greater than one year, a Title VI analysis is required.

The analysis prepared under Title VI requirements is used to determine if a disparate impact exists with minority and disadvantaged populations. RTC's Title VI policy defines that a disparate impact exists if the impact of any major service change requires a minority population to bear adverse effects (20% more or less) than those adverse effects borne by the non-minority population. Should a proposed major service change result in disparate impact, RTC will consider modifying the proposed change to avoid, minimize or mitigate the disparate impact of the change. If RTC finds potential disparate impacts and then modifies the proposed changes in order to avoid, minimize or mitigate potential disparate impacts, RTC will reanalyze the proposed changes in order to determine whether the modification actually removed the potential disparate impacts of the changes.

RTC's policy thresholds for disparate impact and disproportionate burden is 20%. For the proposed route changes as measured by the process guided by RTC's Title VI policy, the burden for low-income populations is 5.8% and the burden for minority populations is 30.5%. However, there are three contributing factors involved with running the analysis mandated by the Title VI policy:

1. RTC's Title VI process states that the agency will use U.S. Census or American Community Survey data as the basis for all Title VI analysis. However, this data is inadequate when used for analyzing the census blocks around the UNR campus. This inadequacy is a result of the student population using a permanent address from off-campus locations while their primary activity and residence is on and around campus.
2. The method used for this analysis uses a catchment area of ¼ mile around every individual bus stop to denote the distance that will attract users to the transit system. However, the typical transit practice is that while ¼ mile is generally accepted for regular bus stops, ½ mile is the standard for fixed guideway services including BRT routes such as the Virginia Line. Rerunning the analysis using a ½ mile buffer for the Virginia Line stops shows that the proposed change should be considered an increase in service, not a decrease.

3. The low usage of the UNR Midtown Direct route is partially a result of it being advertised as a temporary route and in the case of the January 2021 route changes, this poorly performing route is being replaced with the high performing Virginia Line BRT service extension to the university. Below is a table outlining the differences between the two routes.

Route	Base Frequency	Rides per Hour	Productivity Rank	Transfer Opportunities
RAPID – Virginia Line	10 minutes	36.9	1 (of 27)	19 routes
UNR – Midtown Direct	30 minutes	5.9	27 (of 27)	5 routes

After review of the issues presented above, RTC staff recommends the approval of the discontinuation of the temporary route

ADVISORY COMMITTEE(S) REPORT

The proposed service change concepts discussed above were presented to the Citizens Multimodal Advisory Committee on September 2, 2020, and the Technical Advisory Committee on September 3, 2020.