

**THIS PRINT COVERS CALENDAR ITEM NO. :** 10.10

**SAN FRANCISCO  
MUNICIPAL TRANSPORTATION AGENCY**

**DIVISION:** Transit

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION:**

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) Board of Directors authorizes the Director of Transportation to make the N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express Bus Pilot a permanent service based on the strong ridership and positive customer input collected during the pilot project.

**SUMMARY:**

- The N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express began on June 13, 2011 as a six month pilot project that aimed to reduce crowding and reliability problems on the N Judah rail line.
- The N Judah is the most heavily used Muni rail line, serving almost 40,000 boardings per day. Prior to the pilot, crowded peak period conditions led to pass-ups and reliability issues.
- The N<sup>x</sup> pilot provided an opportunity to test new service management and maintenance techniques, leading to record on-time performance and reduced in-service vehicle failures.
- The N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express has met the pilot objectives of reducing pass-ups and improving reliability of the N Judah rail line.
- Overall customer feedback has been extremely supportive of the service.

**ENCLOSURES:**

1. SFMTAB Resolution

**APPROVALS:**

**DATE**

DIRECTOR \_\_\_\_\_ 12/01/11

SECRETARY \_\_\_\_\_ 12/01/11

ADOPTED RESOLUTION

BE RETURNED TO Julie Kirschbaum

**ASSIGNED SFMTAB CALENDAR DATE:** December 6, 2011

## **PURPOSE**

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) Board of Directors authorizes the Director of Transportation to make the N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express Bus Pilot a permanent service based on the strong ridership and positive customer input collected during the pilot project.

## **GOAL**

The Nx Judah Express Route provides customers in the outer Sunset with an additional service choice and helps relieve crowding on the entire N Judah line. As a result, approving the permanent service would address the following strategic goals:

- Goal 1: To provide safe, accessible, clean and environmentally sustainable service, and encourage the use of auto-alternative modes through the Transit First Policy;  
Objective: 1.1 Improve accessibility across transit services
- Goal 2: To get customers where they want to go, when they want to get there;  
Objectives: 2.1 Improve transit reliability to meet the 85% on-time performance standard  
2.2 Ensure efficient transit connectivity and span of service  
2.4 Reduce congestion on major corridors
- Goal 3: To improve the customer experience and community value, and enhance the image of the SFMTA, as well as ensure that the SFMTA is a leader in its industry;  
Objective: 3.2 Pursue internal and external customer satisfaction through proactive outreach and heightened communication conduits

## **DESCRIPTION**

The N Judah is the heaviest ridership line serving almost 40,000 daily customers. It is the most crowded rail line in the system, resulting in pass-ups at several stops in the peak periods. Travel time and reliability is also impacted by the congested operating environment and long dwell times on the crowded vehicles.

The N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express Bus pilot program was implemented on June 13, 2011 to reduce crowding and improve reliability on the N Judah rail line. Additionally, the N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express provides our outer Sunset customers, who live in a predominately minority neighborhood, with another option to get to their destination. The N<sup>x</sup> bus also provides expanded accessibility in the corridor. The rail system is only accessible to people with mobility impairments at key stop locations (e.g., 19<sup>th</sup> & Judah), whereas the bus is accessible at all stops.





The morning N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express Bus service operates every 10 minutes inbound only from Ocean Beach starting at 6:30 a.m. weekdays, making all eleven local stops between 48<sup>th</sup> and Judah avenues and Judah and 19<sup>th</sup> avenues. Express service into downtown begins at Judah and 19<sup>th</sup> and continues non-stop to Bush and Montgomery. The last inbound N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express Bus leaves Ocean Beach at 9 a.m. The afternoon N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express Bus service operates every 10 minutes outbound only from Sutter and Sansome streets starting at 4 p.m. weekdays, with non-stop service to 19<sup>th</sup> and Judah avenues. All local outbound stops are made between Judah and 19<sup>th</sup> avenues and Judah and 48<sup>th</sup> avenues. The last outbound N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express bus leaves the Financial District at 6:30 p.m.

The N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express Bus pilot program has been extremely successful and will serve as a model for future service expansion. In the initial planning phases, different groups within the Transit Division worked together to plan the route. Various routes were tested for run times to determine the ideal routing. From there, bus stops were evaluated and a schedule was created. Furthermore, a comprehensive customer information program was developed, including deploying ambassadors in the initial days to introduce customers to the service. The route is served by a dedicated fleet of Gillig motor coaches with a distinctive blue stripe around the roof line and windshield, purple beacons, the N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express logo featured prominently on the bus exterior, and a map of the route in the interior.

The N<sup>x</sup> pilot provided an opportunity to test new service management and maintenance techniques, leading to record on-time performance and reduced in-service vehicle failures. All runs have been filled throughout the pilot resulting in no missed trips since the route was introduced, the line management center monitors route performance and management receives daily reports on service performance. Additionally, labor intensive maintenance practices have led to mean distance between failures exceeding 7,000 miles, double the Prop E standard for motor coaches. This was accomplished by an in-house vehicle rehabilitation on the Gillig fleet. Vehicles go through a stringent mechanical check daily to ensure vehicle reliability. This effort although focused on the Nx is a model of what needs to happen on the entire fleet to maintain system wide vehicle and service reliability.



All of the key statistics for the N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express Bus exceed expectations—average ridership has grown from 5,000 to over 7,000 weekly boardings and average loads are above 80 percent. Departure times are closely managed at the terminal to make sure that buses depart before the trains. Because passenger demand (as measured by average load) remains high in the last half hour of the p.m. peak, staff recommends that the service hours be expanded by 30 minutes to 7 p.m.

The service continues to meet the objective of relieving over-crowding on the N Line trains. Our trains still remain crowded, but there have been fewer instances of pass-ups during the times that

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the N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express is in operation because the Nx has created additional boarding capacity on each train. Customer feedback also indicates that the N service is more reliable when the Nx is in operation.

Customer feedback regarding the N<sup>x</sup> has been overwhelmingly positive. As of mid-November we received nearly 150 comments and only 10 were negative. Limited complaints relate to residents not wanting buses on their streets. In general, most of the positive comments expressed gratitude for the service and recommended that the service extend past the pilot. Customers report more predictable commute times and reduced stress levels because of the service.

The City Attorney has reviewed this report.

## **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

Alternatives to the N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express bus include running more LRV trains on the N Judah line. Due to vehicle availability constraints, additional trains cannot be immediately added into service.

During the planning phase of the project, several routes were evaluated for the express service. The final route was selected because the travel time was the most competitive with the travel time on the train.

## **FUNDING IMPACT**

The adopted 2012 budget includes a total of 3.5 million scheduled service hours. The additional hours on the N<sup>x</sup> route represents 0.4 percent of the total service budget. We have missed 100,000 hours, which allows us to operate additional hours on the N<sup>x</sup> route and stay within our amended service budget.

## **OTHER APPROVALS RECEIVED OR STILL REQUIRED**

### **Public Notice**

Charter Section 16.112 requires published notice and a public hearing before the SFMTA may institute any significant change in the operating schedule or route of a street railway, bus line, trolley bus line or cable car line. Pursuant to Charter Section 16.112, advertisements were placed in the City's official newspaper to provide notice that the Board of Directors will hold a public hearing on December 6, 2011, to consider the above modifications. An advertisement was scheduled to run in the San Francisco Examiner beginning on November 20, 2011 for 5 days. In addition to the required legal notice, advertisements were placed in Chinese and Spanish in the Sing Tao and El Mensajero papers to reach our limited-English proficient customers and advise them of the Board meeting where they could seek further information and register comments and concerns, if any. The meeting notice was also posted on the SFMTA website in English, Spanish and Chinese and the multilingual 311 Customer Service line was listed as an additional source of information and outlet for gathering customer comments.

### **Environmental Clearance**

Modifications in transit service are subject to the California Environment Quality Act (CEQA).

The San Francisco Planning Department evaluated the Nx Judah Express Bus service and determined that the proposed supplemental express bus service would result in a negligible change in the overall Muni transportation system. CEQA provides a categorical exemption from environmental review for the operation, repair, and maintenance of existing public facilities involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency's determination pursuant to the CEQA implementing guidelines, Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations section 15301. As a result, the Planning Department issued a Class 1 categorical exemption on June 2, 2011.

### Title VI Compliance

Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and FTA requirements, the SFMTA must analyze the impacts and benefits of major service changes on low-income and minority communities to ensure that such service changes do not result in a disparate impact on such communities. Introducing a new route falls under SFMTA's definition of a major service change. During the planning phase of the pilot, SFMTA conducted an equity analysis and determined that the N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express Bus would not result in a disparate impact. It was also determined that minority customers would be beneficiaries of the supplemental service, given the fact that the vast majority of the N<sup>x</sup> stops are located in minority census tracts.<sup>1</sup> The evaluation of passenger loads throughout the rail system identified the N Judah as Muni's most crowded light rail service.

Prior to implementation of the pilot project, a multilingual customer information campaign was conducted. Customer information in English, Spanish and Chinese was posted at each stop to inform customers about the pilot project and a multilingual brochure was distributed by transit ambassadors at the beginning of the pilot. The brochure directed customers to [www.sfmta.com/judah](http://www.sfmta.com/judah) to provide feedback on the pilot project. The pilot website is available in English, Spanish and Chinese. In addition, several of the agency ambassadors are bilingual and were able to address customer questions in both English and Chinese prior to the beginning of the pilot program and after it had begun. Customer comments and requests for information were also handled by the City's 311 multilingual Customer Service Center.



### RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the SFMTA Board of Directors authorize the N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express Bus as a permanent supplemental route to the N Judah rail line to reduce crowding and improve conditions on the N Judah rail line.

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<sup>1</sup> If the percent of minority residents in a census tract is higher than the San Francisco Citywide average, then it is defined as a minority census tract in the SFMTA Title VI Program.

SAN FRANCISCO  
MUNICIPAL TRANSPORTATION AGENCY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RESOLUTION No. \_\_\_\_\_

WHEREAS, The N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express Bus pilot project began on June 13, 2011, with the goal of attracting customers and reducing crowding on the N Judah; and

WHEREAS, The N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express Bus relieves crowding and improves reliability of the N Judah rail line; and,

WHEREAS, The N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express Bus has built a solid customer base; and,

WHEREAS, The SFMTA has analyzed the impacts of the N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express Bus on low-income and minority communities in San Francisco and determined that it does not create discriminatory impacts under Title VI and minority customers would be beneficiaries of the supplemental service, given the fact that the vast majority of the N<sup>x</sup> stops are located in minority census tracts; and,

WHEREAS, The San Francisco Planning Department has determined that the proposed supplemental express bus service would result in a negligible change in the overall Muni transportation system and issued a Class 1 categorical exemption on June 2, 2011, pursuant to the CEQA implementing guidelines, Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations section 15301; and,

WHEREAS, Said CEQA determination is on file with the Secretary to the SFMTA Board of Directors and is incorporated herein by this reference; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to Charter Section 16.112, advertisements were placed in the City's official newspaper for a five-day period beginning on November 20, 2011 to provide notice that the Board of Directors would hold a public hearing on December 6, 2011 to consider the N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express Bus service modification; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors authorizes the Director of Transportation to approve the N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express as a permanent supplemental bus service to the N Judah rail line.

RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors authorizes the Director of Transportation to extend the service hours of the N<sup>x</sup> Judah Express to 7:00 p.m.

I certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors at its meeting of \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary to the Board of Directors  
San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency