



Information Item

Date: November 20, 2019

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Edward F. King, Director of Transit Services
Subject: Fiscal Year 2018-19 Big Blue Bus Year-End Performance Report

Introduction

At the end of each fiscal year, Big Blue Bus (BBB) publishes a year-end performance report providing a detailed look at ridership, productivity, and efficiency. The report ranks all BBB routes, and gives a route-based overview of various performance metrics including on-time performance, operating cost per customer, and farebox recovery.

Mobility and transportation choices are evolving, and these changes are having mixed impacts on transit ridership. During FY2018-19, new technology and transportation systems allowed for the launch of the Mobility On-Demand Every Day (MODE) program, an on-demand transportation service for local seniors and people with disabilities which replaced the former Dial-A-Ride (DAR) system. MODE ridership is up 160% over the system it replaced. At the same time, BBB's fixed route service experienced a 5% ridership decline, which mirrored both regional and national trends.

BBB continues its efforts to attract customers in this evolving public transportation environment. Strategies implemented in FY2018-19 designed to increase bus ridership and the customer experience have helped ridership begin an upward trend in the first quarter of FY2019-20.

Background

In [September 2013](#), City Council approved the BBB service evaluation guidelines, titled "Big Blue Bus Service, Design, Performance and Evaluation Guidelines." The guidelines provided detailed recommendations for bus route and service performance metrics, a reporting calendar, and standardized methods for evaluating bus service and bus service proposals, to ensure that all services are evaluated regularly for efficiency, cost effectiveness, and overall viability. Pursuant to the [September 24, 2013](#) staff report and

subsequent action by Council, the following summarizes the performance of all BBB routes during FY2018-19.

Discussion

BBB launched the MODE program on July 1, 2018, which replaced the former DAR program's six (6) vehicles with a new system that featured app-based ride hailing, the use of Lyft cars, and a nearly unlimited supply of vehicles to provide all rides requested. During FY2018-19, MODE service carried 160% of the number of customers carried in the final year of DAR service.

BBB experienced a 5% reduction in fixed route bus ridership in FY2018-19, which continued a trend that had begun five (5) years earlier, while most bus providers in the Los Angeles region saw ridership losses between 3% and 10% year-over-year. Of the 15 local public bus transit agencies that staff tracks, only three (3) saw ridership increases year-over-year, the largest of which was less than 2%. LA Metro reported a 10% loss in bus ridership year-over-year. A recent UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies (ITS) report found that increased car ownership likely explains much of the transit ridership decline in Southern California.

Prior to the start of FY2018-19, staff had initiated a series of strategies to attract customers during the fiscal year. Additionally, Council approved new BBB service standards on [October 9, 2018](#). These standards outlined a new strategy to service design and called for the reallocation of resources away from underperforming service toward more effective service where people rode transit the most, thereby encouraging efficiency and customer satisfaction. Based on those updated standards, staff proposed major service modifications for the March 2019 Service Change, which were vetted with all BBB staff and the community, and which the Council adopted on [December 18, 2018](#).

Applying the Council-adopted standards and service plan, staff implemented the recommendations, affecting several bus routes on March 17, 2019. Weekend service was eliminated on five (5) routes, and individual low-performing trips were cut from seven (7) more routes. Service hour savings as a result of these reductions were reinvested into BBB's high ridership corridors by increasing frequency on nine (9) routes during the times of day that people were riding most often. Additionally, Route 7 was extended from its former terminus at Rimpau Terminal to connect to the Purple Line Station at Wilshire Blvd. and Western Ave. in Los Angeles.

In addition to service reinvestment, BBB continued to reduce dwell time by reducing cash boardings from 37% in FY2017-18 to 33% in FY2018-19 through moving payment for interagency transfers onto TAP, provision of mobile ticketing, and elimination of token sales. BBB also simplified fare payment with the elimination of the Rapid 10 express fare.

Other customer improvements implemented in FY2018-19 that have enhanced the customer experience include the addition of real-time signs announcing bus arrivals at 177 bus stops, and lighting at 191 bus stops to improve safety for BBB customers. During FY2018-19, BBB significantly expanded the Blue to Business Program and joined the regional TAP U-Pass program. Under the U-Pass program, BBB is now serving customers that commute to 15 different area colleges and universities. Lastly, BBB began providing complimentary Wi-Fi on select buses to help customers stay connected.

Together, these improvements have helped attract customers and have begun to turn the tide of ridership. Although the 2018-19 fiscal year concluded with a 5% ridership loss, data for the first quarter of FY2019-20 shows ridership increased by 6.2%, compared to the same period the prior year. This upward trend in ridership has continued into the second quarter of FY2019-20.

Prepared by: Edward F. King, Director of Transit Services

Attachment: Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Year-End Performance Report

Fiscal Year-End Performance Report FY 2018-19



PERFORMANCE RANKING BY BUS ROUTE

Ranking*	Route Number	Route Name
1	Rapid 12	UCLA - Westwood & Overland Ave
2	Rapid 7	Pico Blvd Rapid
3	1	Main St & Santa Monica Blvd
4	Rapid 3	Lincoln Blvd Rapid
5	7	Pico Blvd
6	14	Bundy Dr & Centinela Ave
7	2	Wilshire Blvd
8	9	Pacific Palisades
9	3	Lincoln Blvd
10	8	UCLA/Westwood & Ocean Park Blvd
11	43	SMC - 26th St - San Vicente Blvd
12	44	17th St Station - SMC - Ocean Park Blvd
13	41/42	17th St Station - SMC - Montana Ave
14	15	Barrington Ave
15	17	UCLA - VA Medical Center - Palms
16	Rapid 10	Downtown LA Freeway Express
17	18	UCLA - Abbot Kinney - Marina del Rey
18	16	Wilshire Blvd - Bundy Dr - Marina del Rey
19	5	Olympic Blvd - Century City

Rapid 12 once again is BBB's best performing route.

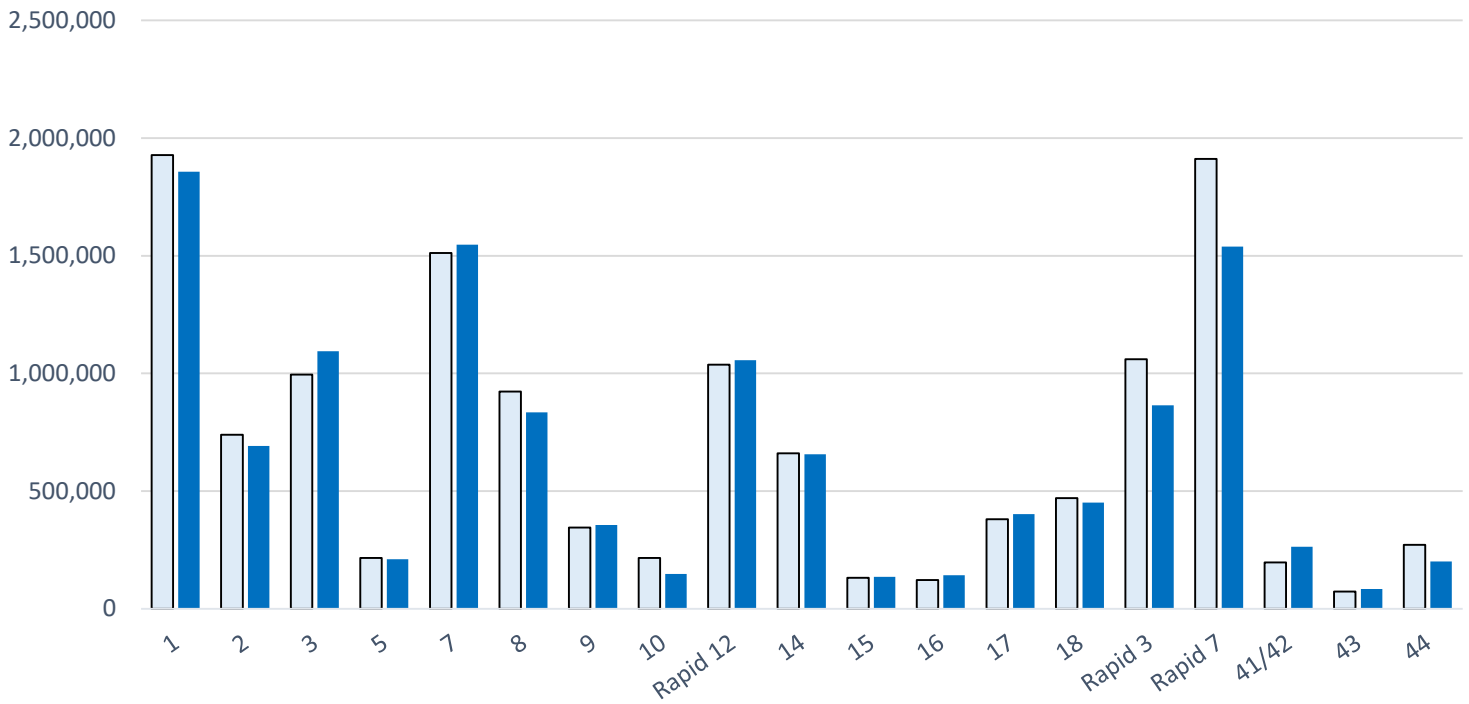
Rapid 10 (ranked at the bottom last year) has, through reductions in poorly performing service, become far more efficient and productive.

*Routes are composite ranked using a three-factor index: Passengers per Revenue Hour, Operating Cost per Passenger, and Farebox Recovery .

ANNUAL PASSENGERS BY BUS ROUTE

Fiscal Year-End % change
 13,187,418 FY2017-18
 12,536,069 FY2018-19
 (651,349) **-5% Change**

□ FY18 ■ FY19

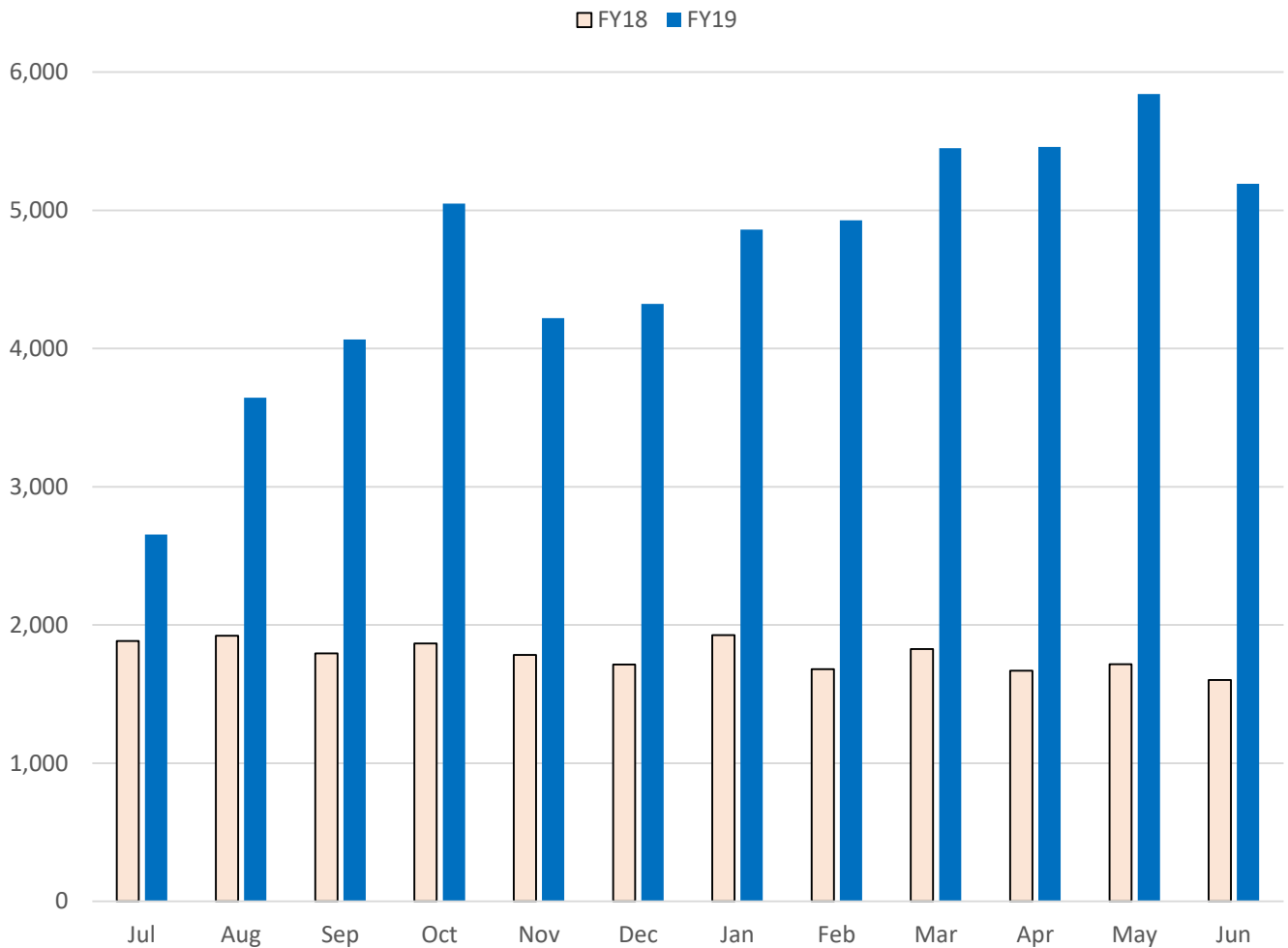


Routes 3, 7, 9, Rapid 12, 16, 17, 41-42, and 43 saw net gains.

Ridership losses were not concentrated in one area, but instead were spread across the BBB system.

ANNUAL MOBILITY ON DEMAND EVERY DAY (MODE) PASSENGERS BY MONTH

Fiscal Year-End Monthly	
21,384	FY2017-18
55,682	FY2018-19
34,298	160% Change

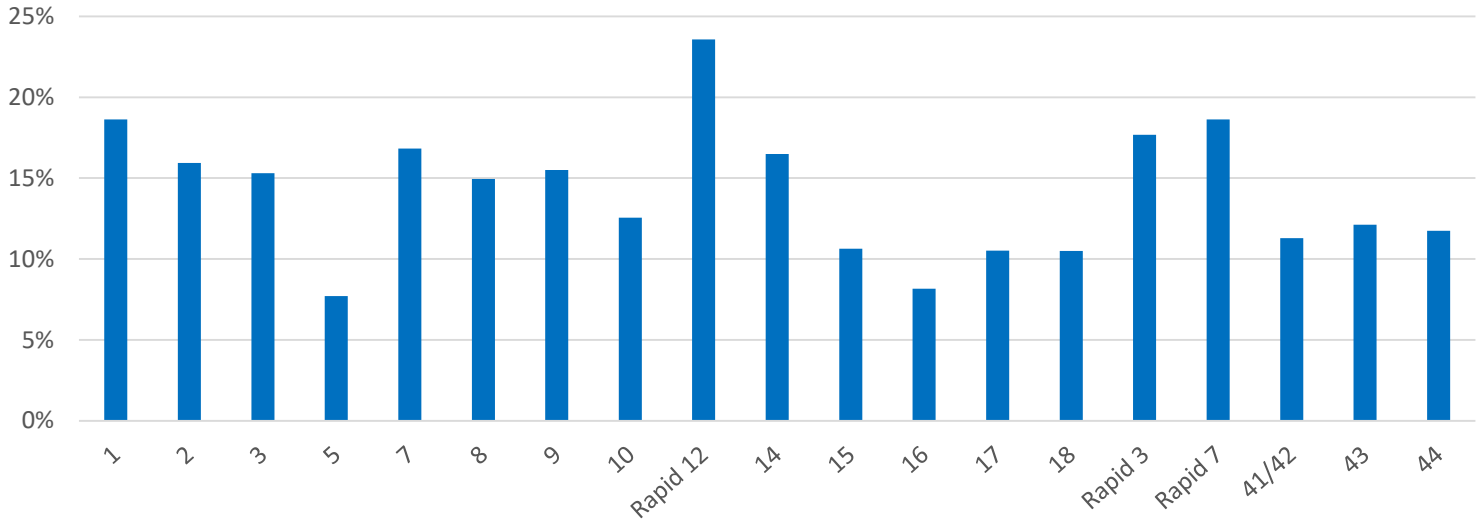


MODE (which replaced Dial-A-Ride) ridership increased 160%, indicating increased mobility for Santa Monica seniors and people with disabilities, a welcome bright spot in the ridership picture.

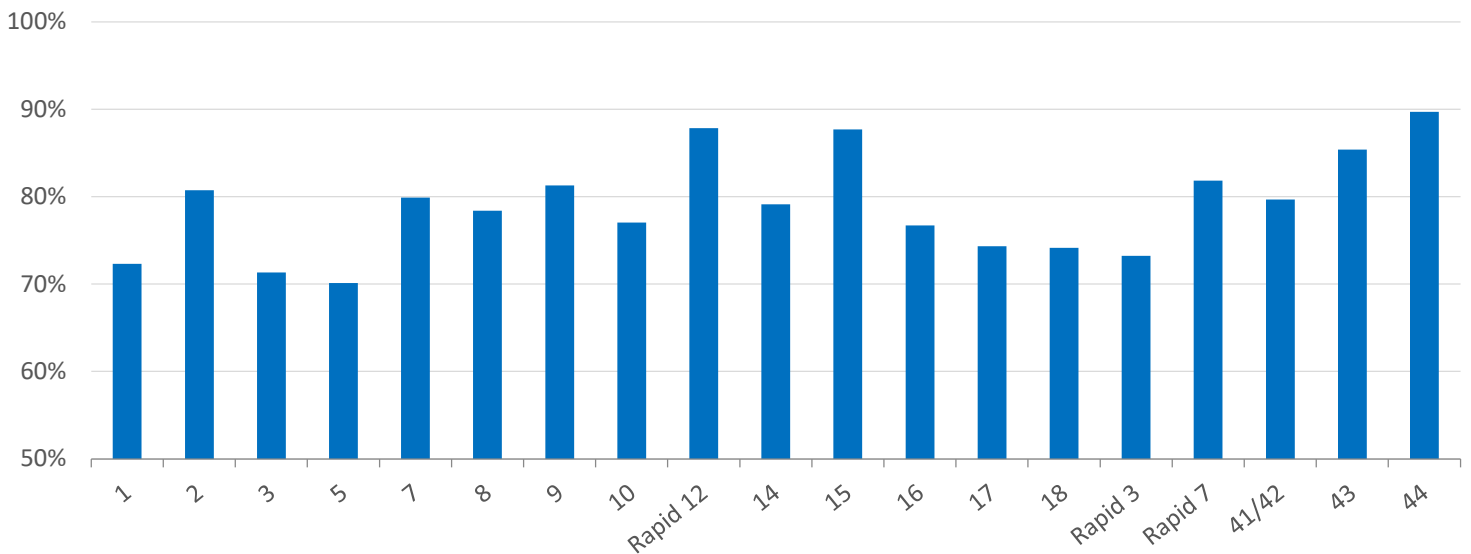


ROUTE BASED PERFORMANCE (BUS)

Farebox Recovery

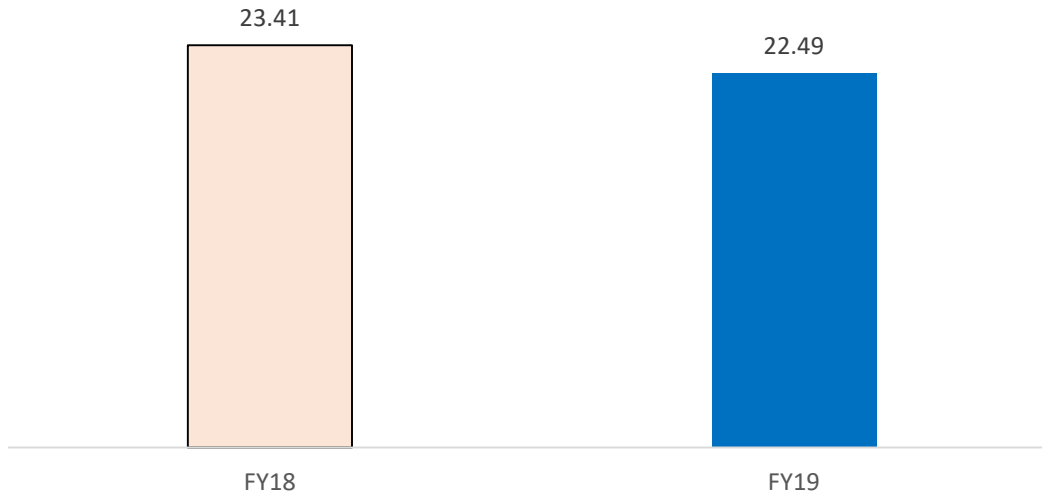


On-Time Performance



SERVICE EFFICIENCY (BUS)

Passengers per Vehicle Revenue Hour



Operating Cost per Passenger

