

Big Blue Bus

Title VI Service Standards & Policies

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Overview

Big Blue Bus is the primary transit provider for the City of Santa Monica and surrounding Westside region, providing Local and Rapid service to major destinations including UCLA, the Rimpau Transit Center, the Culver City Expo Line station, the Wilshire/Western Purple Line station, the Aviation/LAX Green Line station, and downtown Los Angeles.

Big Blue Bus operates more than 50 fixed-route peak vehicles and is located in an urbanized area of more than 200,000 people and is therefore subject to the requirements set forth in the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Circular 4702.1B.

Pursuant to the requirements of FTA C 4702.1B, Big Blue Bus must establish and monitor system performance under quantitative service standards and qualitative service policies. In addition, Big Blue Bus must establish service and fare equity policies to evaluate the impacts of a major service change on minority and low-income populations.

Every three years, Big Blue Bus submits a Title VI Program to the FTA documenting compliance with the established Title VI requirements. In accordance with this submittal, Big Blue Bus will monitor and evaluate system performance relative to the service standards and policies, contained herein, no less than every three years.

Big Blue bus is committed to the enforcement of USDOT's Title VI regulations, which state that no person or group of persons shall be discriminated against with regard to the routing, scheduling, or quality of transit service on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

Service Design

Big Blue Bus fixed-route services are grouped into three service categories for the purposes of setting service standards and policies. The majority of these services are Local routes, which operate on a set schedule and make frequent local stops. Big Blue Bus also operates several Rapid routes (limited-stop or express) with fewer stops and higher speeds. Lastly, Big Blue Bus operates limited Commuter routes, which supplement the other two services by providing service during the peak periods.

Service categories may have different standards and expectations based on the types of markets served and the operating protocols required. Wherever necessary, the service standards are shown by service category.

Service Category	Network Role	Bus Routes*
Rapid	Provides high-frequency, limited-stop service between Santa Monica and neighboring destinations of strong regional importance.	R3, R7, R10, R12, R20
Local	Serves the greater Santa Monica area, providing service along major and secondary corridors and serving larger local destinations and intermodal connections.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 41, 44
Commuter	Augments the local network with additional peak hour service to key destinations.	6, 13

*Bus routes are current as of 2014

Service Standards and Policies

The FTA requires that all fixed-route transit providers develop service standards and policies to provide a context for the monitoring and assessment of transit service. These standards and policies are used to compare the services provided in minority areas with the services provided in non-minority areas. Service standards and polices include:

- Service Standards
 - Vehicle Load
 - Vehicle Headway
 - On-time Performance
 - Service Availability
- Service Policies
 - Transit Amenities
 - Vehicle Assignments

Vehicle Load

Vehicle load is the ratio of passengers to the number of seats on a vehicle, relative to the vehicle's maximum load point. For example, on a 40 seat bus, a vehicle load of 1.5 or 150% means all seats are filled and there are 20 standees.

Vehicle overcrowding is dependent upon ridership activity and the seating capacity of each vehicle assigned to the route. Big Blue Bus operates three vehicle sub-groups each with varying capacities. To account for the difference in seating, the vehicle load will be measured as an average from the maximum load point.

Vehicle Load Standard

Service Category	Maximum Load Standard
Rapid (non-freeway), Local, Commuter	Maximum of 150% or more of the seated capacity at the maximum load point on all trips
Rapid (on-freeway)	Maximum of 100% or more of the seated capacity at the maximum load point on all trips

- Vehicle load standards are consistent for the peak and off-peak periods

Vehicle Headway

Vehicle headway is defined as the amount of scheduled time between two vehicles traveling in the same direction on the same route.

Vehicle headways determine how long customers must wait for bus service. Higher frequencies result in reduced wait times, which make the service more attractive to potential riders. At the same time, higher frequencies can significantly increase costs by requiring additional buses and drivers. Frequent service, which enables customers to use the service “spontaneously” without consulting the bus schedule, is defined as 15 minute headways or better.

Vehicle Headway Standard

Service Category	Maximum Headway Standard
Rapid	15 minute service or better throughout the day*
Local	30 minute service or better throughout the day
Local on Rapid Corridor	20 minute service or better throughout the day
Commuter	Per trip basis

* Rapid (on-freeway) service may operate less frequently during the off-peak period

- Whenever possible, Rapid services should operate more frequently than Local service on the same corridor, to allow maximum customer convenience and greater access to the faster, more efficient service option
- Local service on major corridors, especially those without Rapid service, may warrant more frequent service of 15 minutes or better
- Commuter service is tailored to ridership activity and may have inconsistent headways

On-time Performance

On-time performance is a measure of service reliability that determines the percentage of buses that arrive or depart within a certain amount of time before or after the published schedule. On-time performance reflects the quality of service and influences a customer’s choice to use transit.

On-time Performance Standard

A vehicle is considered on-time if it runs no more than one (1) minute early and no more than five (5) minutes late compared to the scheduled time at each timepoint. Early arrivals at the final timepoint will be considered on-time.

Big Blue Bus maintains a systemwide on-time performance goal of eighty-five percent (85%) on-time, which allows for some level of service variability while maintaining the reasonable expectation of reliability for customers.

Service Availability

Service availability is a measure of transit accessibility based on the distribution of routes and the placement of stops within a transit provider's service area. Stops spaced further apart allow for faster bus speeds and reduce customer travel times but also require customers to walk further to access the service. Stop spacing standards differ by service category.

Service Availability Standard

Rapid Service Stop Spacing

Rapid bus routes on corridors also served by Local routes should have stops spaced a minimum of 2,640 feet (1/2 mile) apart, and should be placed at major destinations, intersections, and transfer points. Rapid stop placement should be determined based on overall spacing as well as ridership demand.

Local Service Stop Spacing

For Local services, stop spacing from 1,000 feet up 1,300 feet (1/4 mile) is desirable. Local stops on major arterial streets risk introducing unnecessary delay if stops are spaced closer than 1,000 feet. Existing stops with continuously low usage will be subject to review for consolidation with other stops or removal in order to increase service speed and reliability.

Commuter Service Stop Spacing

Commuter services may use either Local or Rapid stop spacing patterns depending on the type of service, passenger needs, and areas served.

Transit Amenities

Transit amenities refer to items of comfort, convenience, and safety that are available to transit passengers. These items include, but are not limited to, shelters, seating, signage, and trash receptacles. Transit amenities must be equitably distributed on a systemwide basis.

Transit Amenities Policy

Big Blue Bus has significant authority over bus stop improvements and amenities within the City of Santa Monica. Bus stops located in neighboring cities and jurisdictions may be subject to external policies. Transit amenities will be allocated based on ridership activity (total number of average daily boardings) and will be equitably distributed to reflect the systemwide demographics of Big Blue Bus. Ridership activity levels are classified as follows:

Average Daily Boardings	Bus Stop Category	Amenities Provided
49 or less	Low Volume	Public information kiosk
50-99	Medium Volume	Above plus shelter and seat
100-999	High Volume	Above plus real time signage
1,000 or more	Very High Volume	Above plus multiple shelters or extra-large shelter

Vehicle Assignment

Vehicle assignment refers to the process by which transit vehicles are placed into service. Big Blue Bus presently maintains a fixed-route fleet with three vehicle sub-groups: articulated 60-foot motor coaches, 40-foot motor coaches, and 32-foot motor coaches. All vehicles are maintained and operate from a single depot.

Vehicle Assignment Policy

Vehicles are assigned based on service category and vehicle capacity. Vehicle assignments are as follows:

Articulated 60-foot Motor Coaches

The articulated 60-foot coaches are assigned to Rapid services that have higher ridership activity. Given that there are not enough articulated buses to supply all of the assignments for Rapid service, some 40-foot coaches are also assigned to Rapid service. Rapid routes with the highest average passenger loads are assigned the 60-foot articulated coaches due to the greater seating capacity. Within Rapid service, buses are assigned among routes to maintain fleets on each route with an average age that does not exceed the systemwide average.

40-foot Motor Coaches

The 40-foot motor coaches make up over half of the Big Blue Bus fleet. These buses are primarily assigned to Local service, as well as to some Rapid service as noted above. Within routes with 40-foot bus assignments, buses are assigned among routes to maintain fleets on each route with an average age that does not exceed the systemwide average.

32-foot or smaller Motor Coaches

The 32-foot or smaller motor coaches are assigned to routes with lower ridership activity and/or to routes that use local streets. Some of the 32-foot coaches may also be assigned to routes that primarily use 40-foot coaches, specifically at times when ridership is expected to be light, such as nights or weekends. Within routes with a mix of 40-foot and 32-foot bus assignments, buses are assigned among routes to maintain fleets on each route with an average age that does not exceed the systemwide average.

The low number of vehicles in the 32-foot or smaller sub-group, and the propensity to replace the whole fleet at once, means that there is less opportunity to assign a variety of vehicles in order to maintain fleets on each route with an average age that does not exceed the systemwide average. Buses on routes with exclusive use of 32-foot or smaller motor coaches are currently younger than the systemwide average and will age on that route until they are replaced with new vehicles, or until the sub-group is large enough to enforce an average age policy.

Monitoring Transit Service

Big Blue Bus will monitor and evaluate transit performance relative to the service standards and policies, contained above, no less than every three years.

Big Blue Bus will use the FTA minority transit route definition to implement this monitoring program. A minority transit route is one in which at least one-third of the revenue miles are located in a Census block or Census block group where the minority population percentage exceeds average minority population in the Big Blue Bus service area. This method of analysis may be supplemented with on-board passenger survey data, as available, to adjust route designations accordingly.

Big Blue Bus will evaluate the results of the monitoring program to determine if a disparate impact exists as a result of prior policy actions and decision-making. Big Blue Bus will take steps to remedy any potential disparity where the monitored service fails to meet the established service standards or policies.

The results of the monitoring program will be submitted to the Santa Monica City Council and the FTA as part of the triennial Title VI Program submittal.

Service and Fare Equity Policies

In accordance with FTA Circular 4702.1B, "Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration Recipients," effective October 1, 2012, transit providers, operating 50 or more fixed route vehicles during peak service and serving a population of 200,000 or greater, must evaluate prior to implementation, any and all proposed changes that exceed the transit provider's major service change threshold to determine whether those changes will have a discriminatory impact.

To comply with this requirement, transit providers must adopt the following three policies:

- Major Service Change Policy
- Disparate Impact Policy
- Disproportionate Burden Policy

The Major Service Change Policy defines what actions constitute a major change and are therefore subject to a service or fare equity analysis. The Disparate Impact Policy establishes a threshold for determining when adverse impacts of a proposed change are borne disproportionately by the minority population. The Disproportionate Burden Policy establishes a threshold for determining when adverse impacts of a proposed change are borne disproportionately by the low-income population.

The low-income population is defined as all persons living at or below the U.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines as established annually by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Big Blue Bus intends to use rider demographic data rather than Census data for this calculation because the percent low-income population in the service area is close to the fifteen percent (15%) threshold established in the Disproportionate Burden Policy.

Major Service and Fare Change Policy

Proposed changes that qualify as a major service change include changes to existing routes that result in an increase or decrease in route revenue miles or route miles that are equal to or greater than twenty-five percent (25%) of the existing service, as happening one-time or cumulatively throughout the year. A major service change also includes the introduction of a new route and the elimination of an existing route.

All fare and fare media changes will be subject to a fare equity analysis which will include an analysis of adverse impacts.

Changes that are exempt from this policy include the introduction or elimination of a limited-term route that will be, or has been, operated for no more than twelve (12) months, promotional

or temporary fare reductions lasting no longer than six (6) months, and occasional “free ride” days.

Disparate Impact Policy

A disparate impact occurs when the percent minority population adversely impacted by a major service change is fifteen percent (15%) higher than the average minority population of the Big Blue Bus service area, or when the percent non-minority population beneficially impacted by a major service change is fifteen percent (15%) higher than the average non-minority population of the Big Blue Bus service area.

A disparate impact analysis on routes with a major service change will be examined on a cumulative basis by evaluating all route changes together.

If a disparate impact exists as a result of the proposed changes, Big Blue Bus will determine whether there are alternatives that would serve the same legitimate objectives but with less disparate impact on the minority population. If there are no viable alternatives, Big Blue Bus must have a substantial legitimate justification for making the proposed change.

Disproportionate Burden Policy

A disproportionate burden occurs when the percent low-income population adversely impacted by a major service change is fifteen percent (15%) higher than the average low-income population of the Big Blue Bus service area, or when the percent non-low-income population beneficially impacted by a major service change is fifteen percent (15%) higher than the average non-low-income population of the Big Blue Bus service area.

A disproportionate burden analysis on routes with a major service change will be examined on a cumulative basis by evaluating all route changes together.

If a disproportionate burden exists as a result of the proposed changes, Big Blue Bus may take steps to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the impact of the proposed change on the low-income population.

Public Input & Review

A major service change will be subject to a public hearing and adoption by the Santa Monica City Council. Public input will be actively sought in regard to the proposed changes prior to the public hearing. Customers, stakeholders, and the general public will be invited to provide comment through at least one of the following methods: the Big Blue Bus website, public meetings, through surveys, or at public hearings with the Santa Monica City Council.

Public Notification

When required, the public comment process will begin with the publishing of a legal notice seven (7) calendar days in advance of the public hearing date in the local newspapers of general circulation. This notice will set a specific place, date, and time for one or more public hearings. Written comments will also be accepted on the proposed changes seven (7) calendar days beyond initial publishing of the legal notice. Legal notices will inform the public of the proposed actions that initiated the public comment process. Press releases will also be prepared and sent to the local media.

In addition to the public hearing process, Big Blue Bus employs various outreach methods including:

- Publication on website
- Information posted on buses
- Public meetings in various parts of the Big Blue Bus service area
- Notices to public officials, key stakeholders, and community groups
- Targeted surveys to riders of affected services
- E-communications to self-identified Big Blue Bus passengers (those who provide contact information)
- "Ambassador" personnel stationed at key bus stops and transit hubs to discuss service changes with customers

Scheduling Public Hearings

The public hearing(s) will be scheduled and conducted by the City of Santa Monica City Council at a time, date, and place to be designated. The facility utilized for public hearings will be accessible to persons with disabilities. Special arrangements will be made for vision or hearing impaired persons if requested at least three days prior to the meeting.

Procedure for Conducting Public Hearing

Forms will be available to attendees to register their presence and desire to speak. Public hearings will begin with a reading of the public notice, purpose, and proposed action that necessitated the public hearing. After an explanation of the proposed action is completed, the public will be invited to offer their comments. The City Council will determine the amount of time the public has to comment during the public hearing. After all registered persons have commented, a final opportunity will be offered for any additional public comment. This offering will precede the close of the public hearing.

Documentation of Public Hearing

Official records of public hearings on service or fare adjustments will be generated by:

- Affidavits of newspaper publications of public notices

- Press releases conveying information on upcoming public hearings
- Tape recordings and transcripts of proceedings

Addressing Public Comments Received

All relevant comments received verbally or in writing at a public hearing, or as otherwise conveyed to Big Blue Bus prior to the established deadline, will be entered into the public record of the comment process. Subsequent to the public comment period, staff will evaluate and analyze all relevant comments received and prepare a written report for consideration by the Santa Monica City Council.

City Council Notification

The City Council will be notified by the City Manager of all written public comment solicitations in advance of all scheduled public hearings on fare and service adjustments. A summary of public feedback received will be provided to the City Council along with staff recommendation for final disposition of the issues. Upon review by the City Council, the City Manager will be directed accordingly to proceed with or amend the recommended service and/or fare adjustments.

Conclusion

Big Blue Bus is committed to the enforcement of USDOT's Title VI regulations and will provide the most effective and efficient transit service possible, with full accountability to those it serves. Through the use of the established service standards and policies, Big Blue Bus will ensure that no person or group of persons shall be discriminated against with regard to the routing, scheduling, or quality of transit service on the basis of race, color, or national origin.