

MIAMI BEACH

COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager

DATE: July 17, 2020

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION AND UPDATE ON TROLLEY SERVICES

RECOMMENDATION

This item is presented to the City Commission for discussion and direction.

BACKGROUND

Based on the 2019 Miami Beach Resident Survey, 75% of residents surveyed are satisfied with the trolley service, however, service reliability and service frequency were the main factors of service dissatisfaction. Based on the same survey, 63% of respondents use their automobile as a primary mode of transportation for trips within Miami Beach, and 73% of respondents consider trolleys and local bus circulators as the most viable alternative to using a personal automobile within the City.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City's trolley service was providing a reliable transportation option to over 14,000 daily passengers and removing approximately 5,400 vehicle trips per day from our local streets. Service operated 18 hours a day, Monday to Saturday, and 16 hours a day on Sundays, with 25 vehicles in service and an average service frequency of 15-20 minutes, at a cost of approximately \$986,000/month.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff closely monitored trolley ridership data in March 2020 and modified trolley service levels to properly meet passenger demand. Additionally, to protect the health of trolley passengers and drivers, the following educational and sanitation efforts were conducted throughout March 2020:

1. Installed CDC-approved educational posters (two per vehicle in both English and Spanish) to help prevent spread of the virus in all trolley vehicles.
2. Provided guidelines on-board the trolleys advising elderly and immune-deficient passengers not to take public transportation unless urgent and necessary.
3. In addition to standard daily cleaning practices, the trolley operator (LSF) increased the frequency of cleaning to help protect passengers from the spread of the virus. In particular, "high touch" areas, including buttons, handholds, pull cords, and rails were cleaned more frequently.
4. On Friday, March 13, 2020, LSF deployed a dedicated sanitation van and personnel to sanitize all trolley vehicles during the mid-day shift change, 7 days a week.
5. On Saturday, March 14, 2020, the City and LSF established dedicated stations with personnel sanitizing all trolley vehicles throughout the day using industrial grade CDC-

approved sanitizing products. Trolley cleaning continued in this fashion until service was suspended.

6. Clorox disinfecting wipes were provided on-board the trolley vehicles while supplies lasted
7. Due to a significant decrease in ridership, on March 21, 2020, citywide trolley service was modified to operate at 30-minute service frequency (headways) from 8AM-7PM, 7 days a week. The Via 11 Street Loop was discontinued.

Throughout the month of March 2020, the City's trolley ridership decreased by over 85% as a result of the pandemic. Ultimately, in the interest of public health and to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, the City suspended all trolley service on Thursday, March 26, 2020 at 7:00 PM. The public was made aware of service suspension thorough all applicable channels including, but not limited to, social media, trolley website, trolley customer service line, trolley email, advance notices on-board the trolleys, notices at major stops, and rider alerts on the trolley tracker mobile application.

Since suspension of trolley service on March 26, 2020, the City has received over 70 trolley service-related inquiries, mainly from residents. The low number of inquiries is likely due to significantly reduced demand from residents, workforce, and visitors resulting from emergency orders requiring various closures of establishments in the City and current "stay at home" messaging during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ANALYSIS

Cost Associated with Service Suspension

Although trolley service is suspended, there are various monthly fixed costs associated with protection of the program assets (33 trolley vehicles) for which LSF has requested financial assistance from the City. Staff had multiple discussions with LSF regarding their fixed costs and, through negotiations, staff was able to reduce LSF's initial request from \$182,709.59/month to \$135,914.69/month. LSF's fixed costs include, but are not limited to:

- Vehicle amortization: \$87,457.36/month
- Vehicle insurance: \$22,800/month (LSF requested 50% of the actual amount)
- Performance bond: \$10,657.33/month
- Monthly rent of LSF's vehicle maintenance/storage facility: \$15,000/month

By the end of July 2020, LSF's accrued fixed costs are estimated to be \$581,000. LSF provided backup documentation for each of the above costs. In lieu of providing lump sum financial assistance to LSF, City staff is exploring a potential contract extension that would allow LSF to recover their fixed costs incurred during the suspension period. Staff estimates that approximately three to four months of additional contract time is necessary to offset one month of service suspension.

Reduced Service Plan

The City's trolley service is largely funded by resort tax and parking surplus funds – sources which have been significantly impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of this financial impact, the Administration is proposing that trolley service resume operation at a reduced service level and ramp-up to normal (pre-COVID) service level. Pursuant to the current trolley agreement between the City and LSF, any increase or decrease of service levels of more than 20% as

compared to originally negotiated service levels (i.e. revenue hours) requires re-negotiation of hourly operating rates.

The Administration is currently negotiating new hourly rates with LSF for various reduced service levels (i.e. fewer vehicles operating fewer service hours). The new hourly rates will be higher than the current contract rates given LSF must recoup its fixed costs while operating fewer service hours. Nevertheless, staff believes the City can provide citywide trolley service for approximately 13 hours a day, 7 days a week, from 8AM to 9PM, with 15 vehicles in daily service and 30-minute average service frequency (passenger wait times). The Via 11 Street Loop will be discontinued due to low ridership as recommended by the Neighborhood/Quality of Life Committee in February 2020.

Once negotiations are finalized, the reduced service plan, including the new hourly rates, potential contract extension, and other changes to the current agreement, will be memorialized as part of Amendment No. 9 to the trolley agreement which the Administration anticipates taking to the July 29, 2020 City Commission meeting for Commission approval.

The cost of the reduced service plan is estimated to be \$537,000/month. Service hours and vehicle assignment to routes may be modified as needed to most appropriately meet demand, given available resources and funding limitations. To allow for social distancing on-board the trolleys, vehicle capacity would be limited to 10-12 passengers. Reduction in service frequency combined with reduced vehicle capacity is expected to result in missed trips and longer passenger wait times. To compensate for lost capacity and meet passenger demands, transit agencies around the U.S. are placing more vehicles in service. For example, Miami-Dade Transit is exploring the use of vehicles from private transportation providers to compensate for reduced passenger capacity on its buses. For our trolley service, funding will be the limiting factor in our ability to respond in a similar fashion.

Vehicle Cleaning in Response to COVID-19

Protecting the safety and health of our trolley passengers and drivers is of utmost importance. To that end, the City will supply all LSF drivers with a disinfecting solution to spray throughout the interior of the trolley vehicle after each loop to disinfect high-touch areas including door handles, steering wheel, seat belts, buttons, handholds/railings, and pull cords. The estimated cost to the City to provide this cleaning solution is approximately \$9,000/month. City staff will conduct periodic trolley inspections to ensure LSF drivers are properly disinfecting vehicles and meeting the City's expectation.

Staff will explore the feasibility of installing hand sanitizing dispensers and gel/foam for passengers on-board the trolley vehicles. The cost of such solution would vary depending on usage; however, it is estimated to be \$53,000 for the first month (includes installation of dispensers in all trolleys) and \$11,000 - \$22,000 every month thereafter, depending on usage.

Furthermore, LSF will conduct extensive/deep cleaning of every vehicle each night.

Driver and Passenger COVID-19 Prevention Measures

Upon service resumption, LSF will be required to conduct daily temperature checks on all drivers before they enter the facilities and board the trolley vehicles. All drivers will be required to wear facial masks at all times. A clear face shield may be worn in tandem with a face mask.

Passengers will be required to wear a facial mask or a facial covering at all times, and follow social distancing while waiting to board at a trolley stop, boarding, sitting/standing in the vehicle,

and disembarking. Passengers boarding will be instructed to wait for passengers on-board to exit before entering the trolley vehicle.

Signage will be posted on-board all trolley vehicles advising passengers of limited capacity and where seating is allowed/prohibited, requirements to wear facial mask/facial covering while aboard the trolleys as well as encouraging riders to conform to CDC-recommended prevention and hygiene practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Drivers will be required to communicate to passengers the above requirements and guidelines and to ensure compliance to the extent possible.

CONCLUSION

This item is presented to the City Commission for discussion and direction.

STRATEGIC CONNECTION

Ensure Comprehensive Mobility Addressing All Modes Throughout The City

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Legislative Tracking

Transportation and Mobility