

# MIAMI BEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

NO. LTC #

592-2017

LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor Dan Gelber and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager

DATE: December 12, 2017

SUBJECT: **SOUTH BEACH LOOP AND COLLINS EXPRESS TROLLEY SERVICE**

The purpose of this Letter to Commission (LTC) is to provide an update on the new South Beach Loops and Collins Express trolley service as well as efforts being made to address customer feedback on both loops.

The South Beach Loop trolley service was soft-launched on November 1, 2017 and full service implementation commenced on November 20, 2017. During the soft-launch period, staff conducted observations and received feedback from passengers and the South Beach community. As a result of community feedback, operational changes to the South Beach Loop Trolley service became effective on November 20, 2017 (see Attachment A for LTC # 557-2017 including a map depicting the three (3) loops that comprise the South Beach Trolley service).

The new South Beach Loop has been effective from a usage perspective. Even though the service has been in full operation for less than 3 weeks, the average daily ridership is approximately 4,000 passengers per day, which is more than twice as high as the average daily ridership of its predecessor, the County-operated South Beach Local, from January 2017 to November 2017. Overall our trolleys are carrying approximately 13,000 passengers per day. While the service is well-used, below are some concerns reported by riders and members of the South Beach community:

1. "Via 10<sup>th</sup> Street" Loop
2. Potential Extension of the South Beach Loop to Collins Park Neighborhood
3. Seats on the low floor trolley
4. Bunching (2 or more trolleys of the same route at the same location or close to each other)
5. Customer Service
6. Capacity on other trolley serving the area, particularly Collins Express

Transportation Department staff and the City's trolley operator, Limousines of South Florida (LSF), have been working diligently to promptly address the above issues. Below is additional information on how the Administration and LSF are collaboratively addressing each of the concerns:

## 1. Via 10<sup>th</sup> Street Loop

It is important to note that the "Via 10 Street Loop" was developed in response to community input during the public meetings held in 2016 as part of the development of the South Beach Loop route and service plan. However, based on recent community input, the "Via 10 Street Loop" appears to

be creating confusion among passengers given that it turns onto 10<sup>th</sup> Street rather than continuing to travel in a north-south direction, such as Loops A and B.

**Solution:**

Staff is currently evaluating ridership along this loop and, in particular, the number of boardings and alightings at the 10<sup>th</sup> street stops to determine if operational changes, including terminating this loop and reassigning the 2 trolley vehicles to other loops, is warranted.

**2. Potential Extension to Collins Park Neighborhood**

A few residents of the Collins Park neighborhood have requested that the South Beach Trolley service be extended to serve their neighborhood which was historically served by the South Beach Local. While the Collins Park neighborhood is currently served by the Middle Beach Loop, some elderly and/or disabled Collins Park residents have expressed a concern with accessibility of the Middle Beach Trolley due to its steps and high floor. These Collins Park residents would prefer to be served by the low-floor South Beach Trolley. Additionally, some Collins Park residents have expressed a preference to shop at the Publix in Sunset Harbour (served by the South Beach Trolley) rather than the Publix on Dade Boulevard which is served by the Middle Beach Loop. Currently, in order for these residents to access the Publix at Sunset Harbour, a transfer between the high-floor Middle Beach Loop and low-floor South Beach Loop is required.

**Solution:**

In order to not adversely affect the 15 minute frequency of service on the South Beach Loop, Transportation Department staff is evaluating a potential extension of South Beach Loops A and B to Collins Park neighborhood coupled with either eliminating or realigning the "Via 10 Street Loop". The two (2) low-floor trolleys currently operating along the "Via 10 Street Loop" would be reassigned to South Beach Loops A and B (one additional vehicle on each loop) to enable the extended service to Collins Park while keeping headways on South Beach Loops A and B at approximately 15 minutes.

**3. Seats**

To maximize seating capacity inside the trolleys, the first row of benches is located above the front wheel wells and, as a result, are higher than standard. Additionally, the existing foot rests for these benches are too narrow, thus producing an uncomfortable experience for passengers who choose to sit on these benches.

**Solution:**

In order to improve passenger comfort while ensuring compliance with ADA requirements, staff has requested that the trolley manufacturer (Hometown Trolley) add a folding foot-rest that can fold-down when needed and provide additional support and comfort for those passengers who choose to use these benches. Additionally, the seat cushions on the first two (2) rows of seats are too narrow. These seat cushions will be replaced by wider ones within the next two (2) weeks. Staff will provide a timeframe for the installation of the folding steps as soon as one is available.

**4. Bunching**

Vehicle bunching typically occurs along transit routes with high passenger demand and high frequency of service. Factors including traffic congestion, incidents/accidents, and lane closures/detours can adversely affect spacing between transit vehicles and may cause or contribute to bunching. It is worth noting that all three (3) South Beach Trolley loops have the same alignment and directionality in the area north of Alton Road/16 Street (including the Sunset Harbour and Belle

Isle service areas); thus, it is expected that more trolleys will be seen operating in these areas at the same time. While this may appear as bunching to the general public, it is important to emphasize that South Beach Trolleys are operating along three (3) independent loops; therefore, it is possible that seeing several trolleys in close proximity may not be an accurate depiction of bunching as trolleys may be operating along different loops, particularly in areas where loops overlap and at transfer points.

**Solution:**

The Transportation Department staff works closely with LSF dispatchers to monitor spacing between trolleys on all trolley loops throughout the City in order to help proactively identify conditions that may cause bunching and prevent bunching. Once bunching occurs, there are ways to mitigate. LSF communicates with drivers to take measures intended to correct the spacing between vehicles. Additionally, LSF is in the process of hiring one (1) additional road supervisor who will be dedicated to the Miami Beach Trolley Service and closely monitor trolley operations, including ensuring appropriate spacing between trolley vehicles. This will enable for a total of two (2) LSF road supervisors per shift overseeing operations of the Miami Beach Trolley service. LSF has advised that the new Road Supervisor will be hired within the next two (2) weeks.

**5. Customer Service**

The Administration has received feedback from the community regarding the customer service skills of various trolley drivers, and, in particular, the inability of some drivers to effectively communicate with passengers in English or respond to questions from English-speaking passengers. Additionally, feedback was received regarding the Customer Call Center, including creating an option for passengers to speak to a live person after 6PM, given the City's Trolley Service operates until Midnight every day, including weekends.

**Solution:**

Based on information provided by LSF, over 70 drivers are assigned to the Miami Beach Trolley Service. Of those, four (4) drivers do not speak English. LSF is in the process of replacing those drivers which is expected to take approximately one (1) month. Additionally, the City's contract with LSF requires that LSF drivers provide "Ambassador Style Customer Service". In an effort to help improve the customer service skills of LSF drivers, the City staff is developing training material that will help existing trolley drivers become more familiar with the City's landmarks, events, connectivity between trolley loops and with County bus service, etc. Additionally, City staff is developing a series of questions to be used to test the proficiency of prospective drivers in the English language.

With regard to the Customer Service Line (305-673-7117), all incoming calls are answered by the City's Customer Service staff during normal business hours (7:30AM-6PM on weekdays). Outside of these hours, customers are able to leave voicemails which are answered by Customer Service staff or Transportation Department staff on the next business day. To enable for passengers to speak with a live person outside of the City's normal business hours, LSF has agreed to answer trolley customer service calls after 6PM and on weekends while trolley service is in operation. This enhancement is anticipated to be implemented during the week of December 11, 2017.

**Collins Express**

Given the more direct and convenient service being provided by the new Collins Express between North Beach and South Beach, this loop has experienced an increase in ridership as compared to its predecessor, the Collins Link. Ridership has increased from approximately 2,900 passengers per day on the Collins Link to approximately 3,650 passengers per day on the new Collins Express.

ridership increase has resulted in some trolleys occasionally reaching capacity and drivers unable to allow for any additional passenger boardings.

**Solution:**

The Collins Express trolley drivers are documenting the times of the day and days of the week when their trolleys are reaching capacity. Additionally, when at capacity, drivers are instructed to change outside destination sign to indicate vehicle is at capacity. Furthermore, drivers are instructed to stop at stop and communicate this message to waiting passengers as well as provide an estimated time of arrival of the next vehicle operating along the route to waiting passengers. Transportation Department staff is evaluating passenger data in order to determine if there are any contributing factors to overcrowding including vehicle spacing (i.e. bunching) as well as if additional trolley vehicles should be placed in service during peak passenger hours to accommodate the additional demand. Staff expects to have this evaluation completed within the next few weeks.

Additional updates will be provided via LTC. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Attachment: LTC # 557-2017

  
JLM/KGB/JRG/MM

# MIAMI BEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

NO. LTC # **557-2017**

LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor Dan Gelber and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager

DATE: November 20, 2017

SUBJECT: **SOUTH BEACH LOOP TROLLEY SERVICE OPERATIONAL MODIFICATIONS**

The purpose of this Letter to Commission (LTC) is to report on operational modifications to the South Beach Loop trolley service effective November 20, 2017. The changes are intended to improve the South Beach Loop trolley service.

The South Beach Loop trolley service was soft-launched on November 1, 2017 with a limited number of 6 low-floor vehicles in service out of a full fleet of 10. Full service implementation commenced today, November 20, 2017, at 6:00AM with all 10 low-floor vehicles in service. During the soft-launch period, staff conducted observations and received feedback from passengers and the South Beach community. As a result of community feedback, staff determined that changes to the South Beach trolley service plan were warranted. The proposed changes were discussed with the South of Fifth Neighborhood Association (SOFNA) at its meeting on November 15 and with Rebecca Towers residents on November 17. Both groups responded favorably to the proposed changes.

Effective Monday, November 20, the South Beach Trolley service will consist of (3) distinct loops: 1) "Loop A" operating in a clockwise direction; 2) "Loop B" operating in a counter-clockwise direction; and 3) "Via 10 Street Loop" operating in a "figure 8" configuration to serve the Flamingo Park neighborhood and provide a direct east-west connection between Alton Road and Washington Avenue - via a temporary detour on 10<sup>th</sup> Street given that 11<sup>th</sup> Street is currently under construction. The portions of the South Beach Trolley route serving the Sunset Harbour and Belle Isle neighborhoods remain the same. Attachment depicts the modified South Beach Trolley loops in service as of Monday, November 20, 2017.

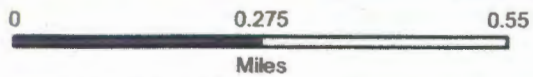
The frequency of service along the bi-directional loops (Loop A and Loop B) will be approximately 15 minutes while the frequency of service along "Via 10 Street Loop" will be approximately 35 minutes. It is worth noting that the "Via 10 Street Loop" duplicates either Loop A or B along most of its route, thereby increasing the overall frequency of service of the South Beach Trolley.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Attachment: Modified South Beach Trolley Loops

JLM/KGB/JRG/MM

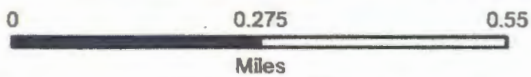




New South Beach Loop A - Clockwise



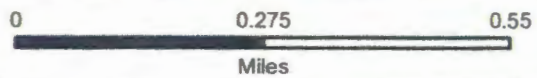




New South Beach Loop B - Counterclockwise







New South Beach Loop via 10 Street

