

**SunLine Transit Agency**

**DATE:** October 28, 2020 **RECEIVE AND FILE**

**TO:** Strategic Planning & Operational Committee  
Board of Directors

**FROM:** Rohan Kuruppu, Chief Planning Consultant  
Nicholas Robles, Marketing and Events Manager

**RE:** Refueled Implementation Status Report

---

**Recommendation**

Receive and file the SunLine Refueled implementation status report.

**Background**

The Board of Directors approved the Refueled FY21-23 Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) on June 24, 2020 and subsequently the SRTP was approved by the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) for funding and grant eligibility. The Refueled plan is fully funded as approved in the FY21 budget, financially sustainable, and within the financial projections for FY22 and FY23. The SRTP laid out short- and long-term initiatives for SunLine Transit Agency (SunLine) to support the local economy, meet the mobility needs of Coachella Valley, expand transit market share, gain new transit users, and recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. To support these broader objectives and the economic recovery efforts, SunLine will be transitioning to regular weekday and weekend service, pre-COVID-19 levels of service, effective Sunday, January 3, 2021.

Key Refueled objectives are summarized as follows:

- Streamline the local transit network and routes with enhanced connections to provide faster and more convenient service for existing customers as well as attract new customers. Revenue service will resume Sunday, January 3, 2021, the first day of the spring service change. (Exhibit A. Local Routes 1 – 9)
- Implement new microtransit pilot projects at four locations to test the effectiveness of meeting the mobility needs of hard-to-serve areas of low density or unimproved infrastructure. (Exhibit B. Microtransit Zones)
- Route 10 Commuter Link service operating weekdays between Indio and San Bernardino will begin on Monday, January 4, 2021. This route, which is provided through a financial partnership with Cal State University San Bernardino (CSUSB), will connect the university's Palm Desert and San Bernardino campuses with bus stops in Beaumont and the San Bernardino Transit Center (SBTC)/Metrolink station. (Exhibit C. Commuter Link Route 10)

- Route 1X weekday pilot express service, which is funded by a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) grant, will serve Indio and Palm Springs via Hwy. 111 with bus stops in Indio, Palm Desert and Cathedral City, and is scheduled to start revenue service on Monday, May 3, 2021. (Exhibit D. Route 1X Express Service Indio – Palm Springs)
- When area K-12 schools resume traditional in-person classes, SunLine will activate school-tripper service, which are planned and budgeted.

Upon approval of the SRTP in June, staff began preparing the Refueled implementation plan, the major tasks included:

- A public information and education campaign led by the Marketing Department (Attachment: Community Engagement Report).
- Finalizing the proposed route alignments with Operations staff and safety groups to ensure the proposals were both logistically feasible and safe.
- Performing a detailed operational and fatal flaw analysis using pre-COVID-19 pandemic data. This step included validating segment-to-segment running time data by time period and season, estimating running times for new segments, analyzing on-time performance, and analyzing reliability of transfer connections.
- Discussing Refueled recommendations with each of the respective jurisdictions.
- Reviewing input received from passengers through surveys and informal conversations (Attachment: Survey Results Report).
- Conducting substantial field work to select new bus stop locations that met accessibility standards and safety reviews.
- Preparing bus stop lists for all new routes, geocoding the locations and programming the automated voice announcements.
- Preparing the Refueled Operating Plan, which included a review of labor rules to ensure compliance, assumptions, and scheduling strategies for review by Planning, Operations and Maintenance departments.
- Initiating bus stop installations and removals by SunLine's Stops and Zones crew.
- Preparing scopes of work for relocating bus shelters and contracting it out. All shelters will remain within the same jurisdiction to maintain equity.
- Preparing a fleet plan that assigned appropriate buses to certain routes and garages to maximize cost efficiency and operating effectiveness.
- Producing a video for training new coach operators on Route 10 Commuter Link service.
- Preparing content for the Rider's Guide, including maps, schedules, fare information, interagency transfer information, how to ride the bus, etc.
- Interagency coordination between Omnitrans, CSUSB, Metrolink, Riverside Transit Agency (RTA), RCTC, Beaumont Transit, Banning Transit, including formal agreements between these agencies as needed.
- Preparing coach operator training information to ensure outstanding customer service.

- Holding formal and mandatory public hearings and open house sessions in both English and Spanish. These events, all conducted by SunLine staff, were held at the following dates, times and locations:
  - Thursday, August 27, 2020, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Palm Springs City Hall, Palm Springs
  - Monday, August 31, 2020, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at SunLine's Division 2, Indio
  - Online Public Hearings:
    - Tuesday, September 1, 2020, from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m., and
    - Wednesday, September 2, 2020, from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
  - Thursday, September 3, 2020, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. at SunLine's Board Room, Thousand Palms

The public was welcome to attend these events to view and discuss the proposed service changes with staff. For the in-person public hearings, SunLine staff followed social distancing guidelines to ensure safety. Comments were accepted by mail, telephone at (855) 925-2801 (project code: 9750), fax at (760) 343-0576, or email at [refueled@sunline.org](mailto:refueled@sunline.org) up to Thursday, September 3, 2020.

Based on public input and staff recommendations, the following changes (which impact less than 20 percent of the total route miles, hours or passengers) were made to the implementation plan:

- Route 4: Due to the inability to safely make a left turn from Palm Canyon Drive on to Tahquitz Canyon Way, the westbound route was aligned to operate via Palm Canyon Drive, Ramon Road and Indian Canyon Drive before connecting with Tahquitz Canyon Way.
- Route 6: The alignment in Indio was modified to operate on Monroe Street to Ave. 48. The deviation to Shadow Palm Ave., and Aladdin, Ave. 46 and Clinton streets was eliminated due the inability to regularly make a safe right turn from Monroe Street to Shadow Palm Ave. and the inability to install safe bus stops. Similarly, in the absence of a controlled intersection and high-speed traffic on Ave. 48, the left turn from Oasis to Ave. 48 was determined unsafe.
- Route 8: To support connections with Route 1 and Route 6 at the future Coachella Transit Hub on 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Harrison Street/Cesar Chavez Street, Route 8 was extended to 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Vine Avenue, at a current transfer point adjacent to the future hub. Additionally, with the introduction of the new microtransit Coachella zone, the route will continue to operate on Harrison Street/Cesar Chavez Street to Ave. 54.
- Route 1X: It was determined that since the current Route 111 will be labeled Route 1 starting January 2021, that the proposed express service should follow the same simplified numbering system for the ease of use of passengers. For this reason, the express service will be launched as Route 1X.

The Refueled recommendations have been positively received by the communities we serve. Neither the public nor staff identified a fatal flaw that required major revisions or delay the implementation of any part of the plan.

Next steps:

- Training coach operators
- Continuing the efforts of the transit ambassador program, including street team visits and mobile outreach bus interactions
- Connecting with riders and organizations to educate community members about the January service information
- Publishing the new Rider's Guide
- Monitoring the performance of the new service, beginning in January
- Continuous improvement of SunLine's services and amenities
- Conducting a comprehensive third-party review of the Refueled network and customer satisfaction survey at the nine-month mark, in October 2021

### **Financial Impact**

The operating and capital costs have been covered in the FY21 budget and the plan is within the financial projections of FY22 and FY23.

Attachments:

- [8.1 – Refueled Status Report Presentation](#)
- [8.2 – Refueled Community Engagement Report](#)
- [8.3 – Refueled Survey Results Report](#)
- [8.4 – Exhibit A-D with Route Maps](#)