

## RT|Entertainment and Sports Complex (ESC) Business Advisory Panel

**Purpose:** Phil Serna, as the Chairman of the Sacramento Regional Transit (RT) Board of Directors, invited a handful of key business leaders with invested interest in Downtown Sacramento to serve on an Advisory Panel looking at RT's service as it relates to the new Entertainment and Sports Complex (ESC). The Panel's purpose is to provide the RT Board, RT management, and the general public honest and constructive advice about how to improve the RT system.

For many attendees of the future ESC, their first encounter with this exciting new experience won't be at the turnstiles of the arena; rather, it will be using RT buses and light rail trains (LRT) to get to the venues. Many of these people will be using these transit options for the first time. That means RT has to do some things differently in order to facilitate and complement the experience offered by a new urban entertainment and sports complex downtown.

In 20 months, the ESC, with approximately 17,500 seats and hundreds of performances anticipated each year, will open its doors to a demanding public. The ESC is the single largest potential trip generator on the LRT and bus system. As such, the ESC will provide a tremendous opportunity to make a positive first impression with special event riders and, if done right, it will lead to new choice riders at other times and for other trip purposes.

The RT|ESC Business Advisory Panel wants to work collaboratively with RT on parallel tracks for both short-term performance improvements (prior to the ESC opening in 2016) and longer-term institutional, management, and governance changes.

**Immediate Focus:** Attention must be given in the short-term to clear performance standards and accountability on station/stop *cleanliness, safety, and location/consolidation*, as well as developing an *operational plan specific to the ESC*.

**Longer-term Focus:** Management and institutional issues, both current and with the future Streetcar system, must also be targeted for strategic improvements.

### Participants

The following business leaders, each a major Stakeholder in the downtown area and beyond, have actively participated in this process.

- Mark Friedman
- Warren Smith
- Ali Youssefi
- Steve Goodwin
- David Taylor
- Roger Kittredge
- Michael Heller
- Dain Domich
- Michael Ault
- Larry Kelley
- Tina Thomas
- Dion Dwyer

**Panel Meetings:** The RT|ESC Business Advisory Panel met four times in late 2014: September 29, October 20, and November 5 and 17. The meetings were facilitated by Wendy Hoyt. The Advisory Panel discussed a number of issues and ideas to address real and perceived safety issues and fare evasion, improve operating and maintenance efficiencies, plan possible

station/stop consolidations near the ESC, improve marketing/ branding and customer service, and facilitate greater private citizen and private-sector stakeholder support and involvement in RT. The Advisory Panel also met with the RT General Manager on December 16<sup>th</sup> to discuss their observations and recommendations.

## 1. SAFETY AND FARE EVASION

**The Problem:** Light rail is not safe at night, and in some cases even during the daytime. In short, there is a significant safety problem – both real and perceived. As a result, there are many lost opportunities for choice riders in the evening; for example, many restaurant and bar patrons would like to take light rail home at night but may feel unsafe.

**Recommendations:** The RT-initiated Safety Peer Review provided several excellent recommendations. The Panel endorses those recommendations, including but not limited to the following:

1. Create a full-time RT Director of Security (or similar) position responsible for managing all security contracts and day-to-day system security.
2. Place both plain-clothed and uniform officers on vehicles and at "hot spot" stations.
3. Implement clearly defined "paid fare" zones at all light rail stations. Explore effective and appropriate means of signage and visual cues to deter non-paying pedestrians from loitering or otherwise creating a nuisance for paying RT customers. Where possible, modify the current 'barrier-free' system to allow 'closed' stations, such as the Broadway LRT station.
4. Reposition CCTV cameras at light rail stations to provide full coverage of the station. Also, landscaping that is blocking camera views should be cut back.
5. Add and track performance metrics for fare inspection and incorporate such metrics in the performance review process for RTPS employees.
6. Display an RT Code of Conduct at stations in an easy-to-read format (e.g. "Dos and Don'ts").
7. Plan for crowd control and fare enforcement for large special events, engaging external stakeholders.

**The RT|ESC Business Advisory Panel was particularly concerned that the Peer Review found that "[t]he current design of stations near the Entertainment Sports Complex does not provide RT the opportunity for effective crowd control before/after events or fare enforcement. All RT safety and security policies and procedures need to incorporate the changing conditions and needs associated with the new Entertainment Sports Complex as well as with future downtown development affecting service."**

In addition to the safety recommendations provided by the Peer Review, the RT|ESC Business Advisory Panel recommends:

1. RT must adopt a Zero Tolerance Policy for civil disobedience at RT stations and on RT vehicles.
2. Focusing on suburban stations where patrons are originating their trips is just as important as the downtown stations.

3. At the current Sleep Train Arena, there is a very strong Sheriff/City Police Department (PD) presence. RT must explore now how to best augment the safety around the ESC during special events by partnering with City PD and the County Sheriff.
4. Identify high-volume stations/stops and pathways now, to ensure proper patron flow, signage, crowd management, customer service, and safety.
5. Currently, many patrons do not pay the fare; resulting in the loss of sorely needed revenue to RT. RT must implement and track performance metrics for fare inspection and tie the metrics into the employee performance review process. Accountability is critical here, as well as with station cleanliness and maintenance.

## 2. RT STATION CLEANING

**The Problem:** Several property owners experience a consistent lack of attention to bus and LRT stops on their property. By default, the private owners clean and even maintain the stops. In many cases, the stops are dirty and in disrepair.

The stations are old, tired, and uninviting, and no one party is responsible for their maintenance. Several parties including Pride Industries, INALLIANCE Inc., and the Downtown Sacramento Partnership (DSP) have contracts to help RT staff clean the stations, leaving gaps throughout the system (e.g., DSP cleans up the trash and debris but does not empty the trash cans that constantly overflow). The 7<sup>th</sup>/K Streets stop is power washed regularly by DSP under a contract with RT. The sidewalk at this stop is clean. Yet a stop a few blocks away at 16th/Q Streets is maintained by RT and is very dirty.

### Recommendations

Set performance standards and establish accountability to ensure stations are maintained regularly and are clean, bright, and inviting.

#### 1. Classification

RT should classify their stations based on criteria that include the number of boardings (peak period, daily, and special event). Once the more heavily used stops are identified, it can be determined how much cleaning is needed and at what frequency based on the stop's classification.

#### 2. Amenities

RT should identify the amenities that are needed at each stop. For example, a stop with less than 50 boardings a day might only need a sign; however, a stop with 500 boardings a day might need a bench, trash can, and shelter, while a stop with 1,500 boardings a day might need all of the above plus lighting, bike racks, and security cameras. Once the stops have been classified and the amenities have been aligned, RT can overlay a proper cleaning schedule. This will also allow RT to flex up or down based on the historical number of boardings.

#### 3. Basic Services of the heaviest stops should include:

- Pressure washing 2-4 days a week based on usage (which also displaces loiterers)
- Trash abatement at least once, preferably twice a day

- Empty trash cans at least once, preferably twice, a day
- Graffiti removal within 48 hours of identification
- Clean/replace lighting within 48 hours of outage

4. Major services should include:

- Deep cleaning once a quarter
- CPTED review annually
- Painting annually
- Review organic obstructions of lighting and cameras annually

5. Long-term funding

Identify long-term dedicated funds as part of the RT Annual Budget specifically for station/stop maintenance and cleaning.

6. Reporting

Implement a proper reporting process to ensure a maintenance or safety issue can be logged by the public and tracked until resolved, similar to the City of Sacramento's 311 "app." This "app" interface will provide additional opportunities to leverage customers' ability to report incidents or unruly behavior, as well as cleanliness and maintenance problems. *The number and type of reported incidents, as well as the resolution and date, need to be presented to the RT Board each month.*

### 3. CONSOLIDATION OF STATIONS

**The Problem:** Having an RT bus or LRT stop in front of a business should be an asset, a benefit to help a developer attract tenants and to the businesses located there to attract customers. Yet far too often in downtown Sacramento, the opposite is the case. RT facilities are often dirty, there is gum on the street/platform, and loiterers generate a sense of unease and lack of safety. Stops like the ones at 7<sup>th</sup>/K Streets and La Valentina at 12<sup>th</sup>/E Streets are actually a detriment to the adjacent retail businesses. Conversely, the Township 9 LRT Station is different—It is prideful, cool looking, and fun; providing a benefit to both the developer and the tenants. The Land Park LRT stations are also inviting. A private-sector developer refreshed the 29th/R Streets Station with a 4-story medical office project across the street. They took it upon themselves to create a fresh new look with improved lighting, new landscaping, Wi-Fi, etc. (some of this was done in partnership with RT).

There are currently too many transit stops in the heart of downtown. RT's current system seems to be a makeshift; where new services were added it looks like there was no consolidation but rather only additional stops added.

**Recommendations:**

1. Establish criteria for station consolidation and enhancements (fewer stations with a greater presence or statement (which will also reduce O&M costs).
2. Consolidate stops and make those that remain higher profile; invest in those stops and make a statement. Make them safe, clean, and attractive. Any consolidation must consider security, including placement of cameras.

3. Walkable distances to stops are important. For professional sports venues, walkable distance is a quarter to half a mile. Our city blocks are roughly .07 miles, so a minimum distance between each stop should be 7 blocks.
4. A pilot program ("Own Your RT Stop") should be designed (in the spirit of Separovich Domich's 29<sup>th</sup>/R Street LRT Station approach) to make it clear how a private property owner can elect to spend their own money to improve the RT stations at their properties. The program should answer owners' potential questions such as: "How does it work? What is the approval process with RT? How will it be maintained?" If RT creates a clear and easy path for property owners, they might elect to spend the extra money if they believe a benefit will be derived. Also, for every dollar a property owner spends, they should get a matching dollar-for-dollar voucher for RT rides, which can be given to tenants as inducements to lease. This incremental ridership would not add to fixed costs.
5. New stops should be added only when O&M funding is available and dedicated to properly clean and maintain the stop. If O&M funds do not exist, then a new stop can only be added if another one is eliminated, thereby insuring proper upkeep.
6. Hire a consultant (with stakeholder input) to 1) review RT's entire downtown network of service and stops, and 2) recommend a consolidation plan for consideration.

*Note: The Panel is not educated in ADA compliance issues and is respectful of the need to have any station consolidation be sensitive to ADA concerns and comply with federal law.*

#### 4. OPERATIONS RELATED TO ESC

**The Problem:** In 20 months, the ESC will be open for business. The ESC will be the single largest potential trip generator on the LRT system and will be second only to CSUS on the bus system. Yet no discussion or partnership effort with key stakeholders and the public has taken place, other than this RT|ESC Advisory Panel effort.

##### **Recommendations:**

1. It is imperative that RT prepare an all-encompassing plan for both the initial opening and the long-term servicing of the ESC. Working in partnership with the City of Sacramento and the ESC, and taking the best practices from other transit systems serving entertainment and major sports complexes, RT must develop a plan that includes:
  - Physical facilities (current and modifications to handle high peak volumes)
  - Service levels (express trains and buses)
  - Safety
  - Trash removal and other cleaning efforts
  - Marketing
2. Marketing plan components must reassure potential riders that the RT system is clean and safe, with an educational guide of how the system works and how to access it.
3. RT should work with City of Sacramento staff to identify high-volume pathways (i.e., key bus stops, the 10<sup>th</sup>/I Streets and 10<sup>th</sup>/L Streets parking garages) and plan for appropriate security, traffic, and pedestrian flows.
4. Hire a transit/special event coordinator (via contract) to focus their full attention on marketing and operational issues, working closely with partners such as the City, DSP, the River District, and others.

5. Create an RT ESC Standing Committee to include Phil Serna (2014 RT Board Chair and County Supervisor representing downtown), Jay Schenirer (2015 RT Board Chair), Steve Hansen (City Councilmember representing downtown), and one Board Member from Folsom, Rancho Cordova, Citrus Heights or Elk Grove. This committee would work closely with the business community to ensure timely implementation of actions related to improving the ESC|transit experience.

## 5. MARKETING AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

**The Problem:** RT is often thought of as a social service and not relevant to choice riders. Customer Service is sorely lacking. There is a great potential to increase RT riders, and therefore revenues, without increasing cost by simply attracting riders to the current system. For example, 42% of Sacramento Republic soccer fans want to arrive by transit.

**Recommendations:** The ESC will provide a tremendous opportunity to make a positive first impression with special event riders, and, if done right, it will lead to new choice riders at other times and for other trip purposes.

1. The fundamentals of customer service need significant improvement. All RT personnel interfacing with riders and the public need to be friendly and helpful (e.g., helping people access the system, understand the fare payment process, etc.)
2. Once tangible improvements have been made, sell the benefits of the new and improved RT. Hire a creative third-party marketing firm to rebrand and bring new energy and vibe to RT. Think outside the box and be creative. The rebranding should include new colors and a new logo that seek to make RT more hip/cool, targeting the urban downtown residential market (giving them a reason to give up a car or reduce driving).
3. Develop a marketing campaign directed to choice riders—no increase in cost yet increased revenue.

## SUMMARY

While RT does many things well, there are a number of issues of significant concern that discourage ridership, such as public safety, station cleanliness, and poor customer service. As a regional amenity, the ESC provides an unparalleled opportunity to reinvigorate and reintroduce RT to the public. This is a wholly unique opportunity that cannot be squandered, as the prospects offered by a project like the ESC come along only once in a region's history. The Advisory Panel encourages RT staff to incorporate more entrepreneurial expertise and industry best practices into their operational and planning efforts. The Advisory Panel is committed to staying engaged in order to assist RT in this laudable effort to ensure a viable and attractive transportation option for choice and special event riders, as well as the transit dependent.