



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Department Source: Public Works

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: May 15, 2023

Re: GoCOMO Update and Route Combining.

Executive Summary

Staff has prepared a report to update Council on the GoCOMO transit system. Staff intends to combine the current six (6) fixed bus routes to three (3) due to the staffing shortage in August 2023. A communications plan has been developed and will begin immediately.

Discussion

An update to the GoCOMO status is as follows:

Staffing: There continues to be a shortage of 11 full-time drivers.

Recruitment: HR staff is actively using media to recruit. Conversations with Moberly Area Community College (MACC) are taking place regarding a class offering for potential drivers to earn a commercial driver's license (CDL) and the necessary license endorsements for driving a bus.

Retention: GoCOMO drivers are continuing to work a mandatory 12 hours per week of overtime. As mandatory overtime continues, the physical and mental wellbeing of staff is being taxed.

Ridership: Fixed route service remains comparable to fiscal year 2022 numbers. Paratransit service is increasing monthly and increasing the demand on drivers, supervisors, and lead drivers to meet service requirements. This also pulls supervisors and lead drivers away from their other job responsibilities.

Funding: Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grants, State of Missouri funding, local funding, and advertising revenue comprise the funding sources for GoCOMO. Fiscal year 2023 is the third year of fare-free operations. Staff is currently analyzing funding and fare comparisons for discussion during budget sessions later this year.

Operations: Six (6) additional electric buses, two (2) CNG buses, and four (4) paratransit vans are on order and hope to be delivered in fiscal year 2024. Bus tracking, Paratransit scheduling, and Automatic Voice Annunciator software is being replaced due to the loss of the current vendor.

Transit Study and Route Combining: The study is in the contractual phase with hopes of beginning late spring or early summer this year. Anticipated completion date is summer of 2024.



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It continues to be staff's opinion that combining Fixed Route service is the necessary option to reduce mandatory overtime, help meet the increased Paratransit demand, and retain current staff.

The updated timeframe for Fixed Route combining will be August of 2023 with communication to begin immediately. August was selected because MU Tiger Line operations are suspended between mid-May and mid-August, thus freeing more available drivers. It is during this time that staff can take vacation and help reduce the demand on Paratransit service.

A comprehensive communications plan has been developed by our Public Information Specialist and the City's Creative Services staff. This plan is to include a new schedule booklet with the updated schedules, signage inside the buses and in bus shelters, fliers, press releases and electronic notifications. These notifications will take the form of announcements in the Go COMO app, on Facebook, Twitter, NextDoor and GoCOMOTransit.com, as well as text alerts through the City's notification service, Alerts.CoMo.gov.

The possibility of combining routes either in the mornings or afternoons only was analyzed and it was determined that combining routes for the entire day serves to best accomplish the goal of decreasing mandatory overtime and utilizing existing staff most efficiently. This is also the most easy to communicate and provides turnaround times that can be best relied on citywide.

The Public Transit Advisory Commission (PTAC) has been apprised for five (5) consecutive months regarding the route combining need. A letter from the chair of the commission is attached for reference.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: None

Long-Term Impact: None

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impacts

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Mobility

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Mobility

Legislative History

Date	Action
N/A	N/A



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Suggested Council Action

Acceptance of the report.