



Agenda Item No. 1

To: Rules, Policy and Industrial Relations Committee/Committee of the Whole
Meeting of April 8, 2011

From: Z. Wayne Johnson, Deputy General Manager, Administration and Development
Joseph M. Wire, Auditor-Controller
Denis J. Mulligan, General Manager

Subject: **DISCUSS AND APPROVE ACTIONS RELATIVE TO THE CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTER**

Recommendation

The Rules, Policy and Industrial Relations Committee recommends that the Board of Directors approve actions relative to the Customer Service Center, as follows:

- 1) Authorize staff to proceed with the Customer Service Center relocation and restructure project currently referred to in the FY 10/11 District Capital Budget (previously titled "Interactive Voice Recognition") as a Reorganization project for an estimated budget of \$250,000 to be funded from District reserves;
- 2) Authorize Customer Service Center reorganization and staffing changes, including:
 - a. Elimination of the current department manager level Customer Relations Supervisor position;
 - b. Elimination of nine Customer Service Representative positions;
 - c. Addition of a new supervisory level Customer Relations Supervisor position;
 - d. Creation of four additional full-time Customer Relations Assistant positions; and,
 - e. Creation of one part-time Customer Relations Assistant position
- 3) Authorize initiation of formal meet-and-confer discussions with Teamsters Local 856 which represents potentially affected employees, regarding the effects of the Board's decision to implement an automated call processing system,
- 4) Authorize an Enhanced Severance Package to the non-represented position potentially affected; and,
- 5) Amend the Table of Organization accordingly.

If approved, the staff recommendation would result in a ten-year net savings of \$2,999,250. If approved by the Rules, Policy and Industrial Relations Committee, this item will be presented to the Board of Directors for consideration on April 8, 2011.

Summary

Facing a current \$89 million five-year projected deficit, the Board approved the *Financial Plan for Achieving Long-Term Financial Stability* (Financial Plan) on October 30, 2009. The purpose of this report is to provide information and recommendations for initiative #2, *Further Reliance on Automated Information for Transit Customers*. Additionally:

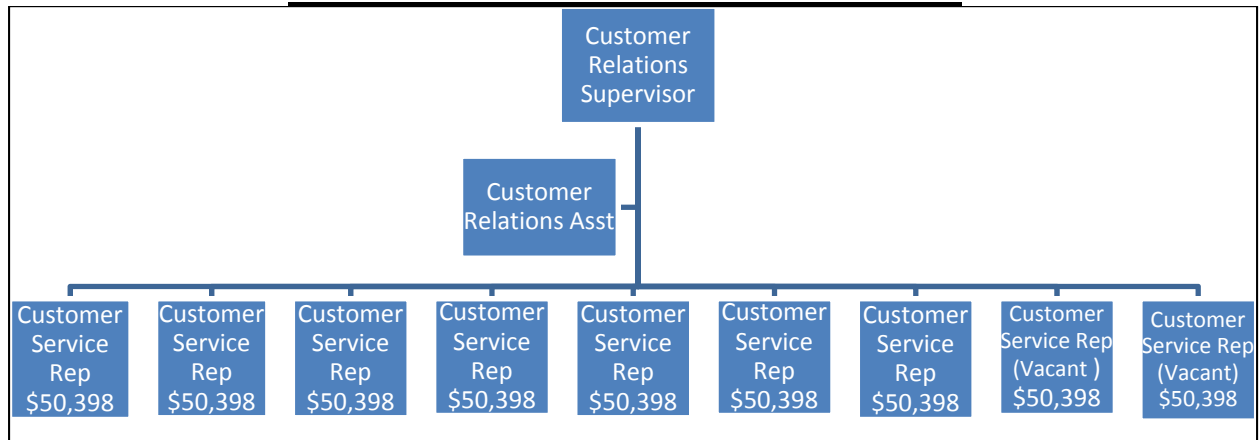
- Currently, customers can receive schedule information via the Customer Service Center only during hours the center is staffed (Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturdays 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.). The automated interactive telephone voice recognition information system will provide access 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in Spanish and English for our customers without internet access.
- The volume of calls coming into the Customer Service Center has dropped approximately 50 percent over the last five years as more customers access transit information via the internet, so the workload can be accommodated at a reduced staffing level.
- The District's lost and found is currently located at 1011 Andersen Drive in San Rafael, where a bus stops once an hour. The new location at the San Rafael Transit Center is much more convenient for our customers and is the busiest bus stop in Marin County. There are approximately 230 buses a day that stop at the San Rafael Transit Center, and thousands of customers transfer and board buses daily at this location.

Current Customer Service Center Duties/Staffing

Currently, the District receives an average of 8,000-10,000 telephone calls per month into the Customer Service Center. In addition to receiving public inquiries about schedules and transit information, this department also receives, enters, tracks and ensures proper disposition of customer comments, complaints and commendations. Other duties performed by this department are processing applications for the Regional Transit Connection cards (RTC) and the Toll Rates for Persons with Disabilities (TRPD), fulfillment of online ticket sales (Marin Local passes), administering the lost-and-found program, handling high-volume mailings of transit materials to communicate quarterly service changes, and assisting with transit and other outreach events throughout the District's service area.

The Customer Service Center currently has a staff of one Customer Relations Supervisor (currently compensated as a manager level position), one Customer Relations Assistant and nine Customer Service Representatives (of which there are currently two vacancies). The Customer Service Center is open Monday through Saturday, except for certain holidays. When the center is closed, an answering machine message advises callers that the Customer Service Center is closed and refers them to the website for additional information.

CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



Automated Interactive Telephone Voice Recognition Processing System

Over half of all telephone calls received into the Customer Service Center are routine transit or schedule-related inquiries. Staff has identified an automated attendant software system capable of effectively handling routine and schedule-related customer telephone calls. This system would greet callers, identify the nature of their inquiry and route the call through appropriate channels. The system is able to access downloaded bus schedule information and provide next scheduled departure information from a particular location for buses and ferries. Remaining staff would be freed up from providing routine information and will be able to focus on resolving customer complaints, handling lost-and-found items, having face-to-face contact with customers, and assisting customers requesting RTC cards. Other higher-level responsibilities could be performed as well.

The automated information will provide 24/7 access for our customers. Currently, customers can receive schedule information via the Customer Service Center only during hours the center is staffed (Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturdays 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.). For customers without internet access, the automated system will enable customers to obtain bus and ferry schedule information regardless of the hours the Customer Service Center is staffed.

Proposed Customer Service Center Staffing Impacts

Because the automated attendant software system will handle many of the routine information requests, and because the volume of calls has been declining, fewer individuals will be needed to provide customer assistance via phone. After carefully evaluating call efficiency statistics and other customer service-related responsibilities performed by the Customer Service Center, it is recommended that several changes be made within the work unit.

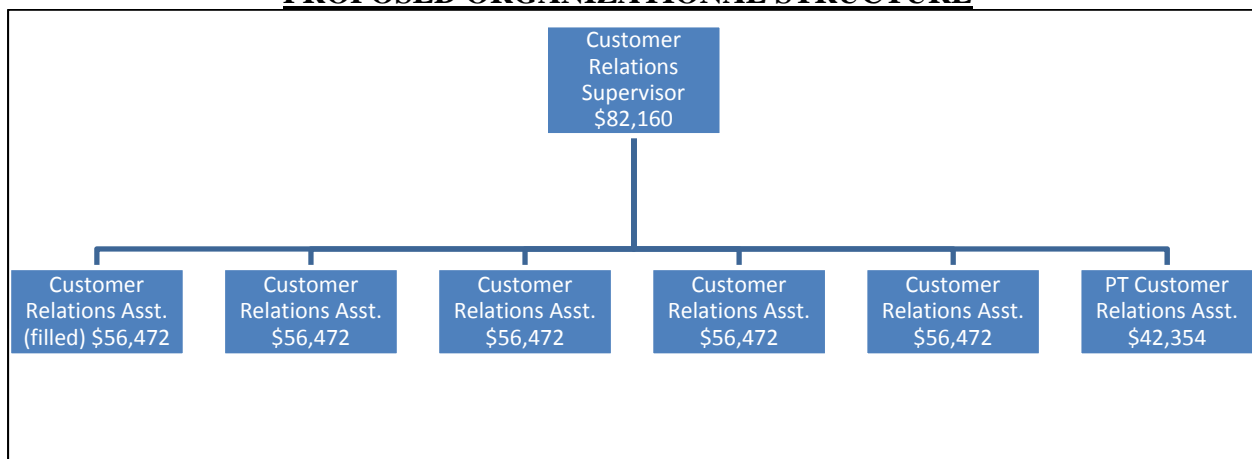
Presently, Customer Service Representatives earn \$41,704 to \$50,398 annually. However, in accordance with the labor agreement, they potentially receive differential pay to handle special duties such as handling money, processing online fare media orders, handling and processing customer service complaints and inquiries, etc. Many of these functions are performed by individuals with specialized duties. Under the proposed streamlined staffing arrangement, it will be necessary that all employees within this unit perform these higher level duties, and thus a higher level job classification is proposed for all remaining positions in the bargaining unit.

Responsibilities will require more advanced skill sets such as the ability to interpret policies and procedures, the ability to analyze problems and implement effective solutions, demonstration of effective written and oral communication skills, demonstration of strong interpersonal and customer service skills, proficient computer skills, and the ability to listen to and effectively resolve customer complaints. Following internal and external compensation review, the Human Resources Department has determined that the existing Customer Relations Assistant position is the appropriate job classification and associated compensation level for the proposed positions which will consolidate various functions in the Call Center. Thus, it is recommended that the nine existing Customer Service Representative positions be eliminated, and instead, four higher level full-time and one part-time Customer Relations Assistant level positions be created approved to perform the consolidated duties and functions required of this unit. The proposed annual salary for the new positions would range from \$46,742 to \$56,472.

Several years ago, the Customer Service Center Department was transferred from the Bus Division and realigned in the Administration and Development Division. At that time, certain duties previously performed by the Customer Relations Supervisor were assigned to managers in the Bus Division. These functions included issuing driver discipline, driver coaching, and publishing division operating memos and bulletins. Approximately one year ago, the Customer Service Center Department began reporting to the Marketing and Communications Director rather than directly reporting to the Deputy General Manager, Administration and Development.

Historically, Customer Relations Supervisor position was classified at a department manager level. In light of the proposed changes created by new technologies, reduced number of staff, changes in the reporting structure and job responsibilities, this position should no longer be compensated at a manager level. The scope of responsibility more closely aligns with a front-line supervisory role rather than a managerial role. Human Resources staff reviewed similar positions with the District's benchmark agencies, as well as internal District classifications, and has determined that the title of Customer Relations Supervisor is appropriate, but the recommended classification and compensation should range from \$67,995 to \$82,160 annually. The managerial level position pays \$79,414 to \$95,971 annually. The Customer Relations Supervisor position is not represented.

PROPOSED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



Specific information about staffing impacts and mitigation efforts will be presented to the Board by the Deputy General Manager for Administration and Development, Z. Wayne Johnson.

It is recommended that approval be given for staff and counsel to initiate the formal meet-and-confer discussions with the Teamsters Local 856 which represents potentially affected employees concerning the effects of the Board's decision to commence implementation of automated call processing system.

It is further recommended that the Table of Organization be amended to reflect the Customer Service Center Department reporting to the Marketing and Communications Director.

Customer Service Center Relocation Plan

The Customer Service Center is currently located at the San Rafael Bus Facility on Andersen Drive. This location is inconvenient for customers seeking to retrieve lost-and-found items, purchase Clipper cards, get photographs taken for special cards (RTC and TRPD), among other customer service related activities.

The San Rafael Transit Center (SRTC), located at 3rd and Tamalpais streets in downtown San Rafael, is the District's largest transit hub in the system, with up to 9,000 customers passing through the facility each weekday. A recently vacated leased retail space at the SRTC has been identified as an appropriately-sized space which could accommodate a customer service facility. Relocation of the Customer Service Center to the SRTC would be more accessible and convenient for customers requiring assistance or transit information. The identified space will require minor cosmetic repairs/upgrades and installation of technology and security systems prior to it being operational as a Customer Service Center. Repairs and systems installation will be funded through the Customer Service Center Reorganization grant currently funded in the FY 10/11 Administration and Development Division Capital Budget.

Estimated Project Schedule

Implementation of the rehabilitation, procurement and testing of software system, personnel impacts and relocation of the Customer Service Department will take approximately six months. If the Board approves the proposal in April 2011, the schedule will be as follows:

- Procurement of Systems –May/June/July
- Rehabilitation of Office Space and Installation of Technology and Security Systems – April/May/June
- Systems Installation/Testing –July/August/September
- 90-Day Notice to Affected Employees – July
- “Soft Launch” of System (Live Testing) –August/September
- Implement Personnel Changes – October/November (Representatives) and January/February 2012 (Supervisor position)

Fiscal Impact

It is estimated that operating cost savings of approximately \$2,999,250 will be generated over the ten-year period corresponding to the Financial Plan. The annual operational savings of \$352,925 will be offset by the cost of operating the automated attendant system of approximately \$50,000 annually.

The Interactive Voice Recognition project, now named the Customer Service Center Reorganization project, is \$250,000 and included in the FY 10/11 Administration and Development Division Capital Budget to cover the cost of implementing voice recognition software, moving of staff, and converting the physical space for the employees. This project is funded with 100% District funds and sufficient funds are available to support these activities.