



## Staff Report

**TO:** Mayor, and City Council Members  
**FROM:** Elizabeth Gibbs, Director of Community Services  
**DATE:** February 4, 2020  
**SUBJECT:** **Opposition Letter – SunLine Transit Agency Proposed Commuter Link Route 10**

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### **Background and Analysis:**

On November 7, 2019, SunLine Transit Agency (SunLine) announced to the Transportation Now (T-Now) committee that they had completed a new draft schedule for their Commuter Link 220, which provides service from Palm Desert to the Riverside Metrolink Station, with stops at Casino Morongo and Beaumont Walmart (Attachment A).

On November 12, 2019, SunLine held a community meeting at the Beaumont Civic Center and presented a proposed new commuter link route with service from the Coachella Valley to California State University San Bernardino's (CSUSB) main campus in San Bernardino, with a stop at Beaumont Walmart (Attachment B).

SunLine presented their proposal as follows:

#### Current Service

- Three (3) eastbound and three (3) westbound trips from Coachella Valley to Riverside,
- FY 19 ridership was 13,561 passenger trips,

#### Proposed Service

- Four (4) eastbound and four (4) westbound trips from Coachella Valley to San Bernardino, and
- Target passengers are CSUSB students.

Following the community meeting, City staff contacted SunLine staff and requested a meeting to discuss the proposed route to gain more information about future service; however, no response was received.

On January 9, 2020, SunLine staff emailed a draft support letter for their grant application for a solar microgrid to hydrogen transit project. In the letter, they introduced a new Commuter Link Route 10 bus service from Indio to San Bernardino, with stops at Beaumont Walmart and the San Bernardino Transit Center (SBTC) (Attachment C). It should be noted that the letter lacked any information on connectivity for passengers within the San Gorgonio Pass area, but rather, highlighted the multiple connections available to passengers from the SBTC.

Beaumont staff received a phone call from Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) on January 10, 2020, discussing SunLine's proposed support letter. At that time, City staff notified RCTC that Beaumont opposed SunLine's new route as presented because it duplicated an already existing service via Beaumont's Commuter Link 120. At this time, it is unclear whether RCTC intends to fund the new route.

#### SunLine Objectives

On January 17, 2020, SunLine's staff provided a PowerPoint presentation with specific details on the proposed route, including potential time points, with a tentative starting date of May 4, 2020 (Attachment D).

There are two key elements listed in their objectives for this new route that should be highlighted:

- (1) Connectivity – **Connect residents of Coachella Valley to PASS transit and Riverside Transit Agency (RTA)** and key destinations such as Cabazon, Riverside University Health Center, Veterans Administration (VA) Hospital and other destinations served by PASS transit and RTA; and
- (2) The CSUSB University pass program and College of the Desert pass program entitles **students and faculty to use all SunLine fixed route services at no cost**, with a valid ID.

#### *Objective No. 1 Analysis*

Staff created a matrix of possible connections for SunLine passengers at Beaumont Walmart, using the most corresponding timepoints between the routes, and no more than a 30-minute layover.

SUNLINE ROUTE 10 - WESTBOUND

SunLine 10	Beaumont 120	Beaumont 125	RTA 31	RTA 31
Arrives Walmart	Departs Walmart			
	Service to Calimesa and SBTC	Service to Calimesa, Redlands Kaiser, and Loma Linda VA Hospital	Service to Moreno Valley**	Service to SJ/Hemet
7:05 AM	7:25 AM		7:13 AM*	
9:00 AM			9:07 AM*	
2:10 PM			2:14 PM*	
4:10 PM			4:17 PM*	

\*NOTE: Passengers have 4 to 8 minutes to connect with RTA

\*\*NOTE: RTA's stop is located on the southside of 2<sup>nd</sup> St. across from Farmer Boys

SUNLINE ROUTE 10 – EASTBOUND\*\*\*

SunLine 10	Beaumont 120	RTA 31	RTA 31
Arrives Walmart	Departs Walmart		
	Service to Casino Morongo	Service to Moreno Valley**	Service to SJ/Hemet
9:55 AM	10:00 AM	9:56 AM*	
12:55 PM		1:02 PM	
4:55 PM		5:20 PM	4:56 PM*
6:55 PM	6:55 PM	7:11 PM	6:58 PM*

\*NOTE: Passengers have 1 to 3 minutes to connect with RTA

\*\*NOTE: RTA's stop is located on the southside of 2<sup>nd</sup> St. across from Farmer Boys

\*\*\*Beaumont 125 was eliminated from the eastbound analysis due to the direction of travel back to Redlands

It should be noted that Beaumont Commuter Link 120 has twelve (12) service loops per day, Commuter Link 125 has seven (7) per day, RTA's service to Moreno Valley has sixteen (16) per day, and RTA's service to San Jacinto/Hemet has sixteen (16) service loops per day.

*Objective No. 2 Analysis*

SunLine's Haul Pass program provides college students free unlimited access to SunLine's public transit network, including the proposed Commuter Link Route 10. Although this free service is subsidized by California's Low Carbon Transit Operations Program, much like Beaumont's Free Fare Program in 2018, their objective is to improve students' access to the valley's colleges and universities with the program.

Conversely, Beaumont's Commuter Link routes have a \$3.50 fare for general passengers each way and would be at a severe disadvantage to compete with SunLine's free service under the Haul Pass program.

### Summary

SunLine's Commuter Link Route 10, as proposed, is a duplication of service and will not connect Coachella Valley passengers with Beaumont Transit. The Transportation Development Act of 1971 clearly states:

PUC §99280 – Adding or Extending Routes

*“The establishment of new routes, or the extension of existing routes, outside the boundaries of an included municipal operator, but within the reserved service area, as defined in this section, shall not be permitted where the operation or establishment of such routes will compete with or divert patronage from a route of the transit district as of the date the transit district is given the notice hereinafter required.”*

PUC §99281

*“The transit district may operate or establish new routes or extend existing routes in all or part of the area outside a municipal operator, except where the operation or establishment of that service will compete with or divert patronage from an existing service of any included municipal operator or service in a reserved service area under Section 99280.”*

Furthermore, the proposed route will promote a free alternative to CSUSB students already using Beaumont's commuter link service, resulting in a reduction of passenger trips, and ultimately jeopardizing Beaumont's ability to meet the mandated farebox recovery ratio.

Finally, SunLine has not provided sufficient data to warrant any support of a stop in Beaumont and therefore, strong opposition of this route, as presented, is necessary (Attachment E). However, should SunLine redesign the new route to bypass Beaumont, staff would certainly recommend supporting the new route in the interest of promoting public transportation throughout the region.

### **Fiscal Impact:**

Cost to prepare this report and the attached opposition letter is estimated to be \$3,150.

**Recommended Action:**

Approve the opposition letter and authorize the Mayor to execute on behalf of the City of Beaumont.

**Attachments:**

- A. Current SunLine Commuter Link 220
- B. SunLine Community Meeting Handout
- C. SunLine Requested Support Letter (Draft)
- D. PowerPoint sent by SunLine
- E. Beaumont Opposition Letter (Draft)