



**Metro**

Los Angeles County  
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

One Gateway Plaza  
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2952

213.922.2000 Tel  
metro.net

**MARCH 18, 2020**

**TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**FROM: PHILLIP A. WASHINGTON** PAW  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**SUBJECT: WEEKLY UPDATE ON RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

### ISSUE

This memo is the first of weekly updates to update the Board on Metro's actions responding to COVID-19.

### BACKGROUND

Due to the crisis regarding COVID-19, staff will be issuing weekly updates to the Metro Board of Directors on the latest actions to respond to federal, state, and local directives during this national emergency.

In response to the current COVID-19 crisis, Metro has taken critical steps to ensure the health and safety of its workforce and the public. Metro has activated its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to a modified level 2 and has established an Incident Management Team (IMT) led by me and Chief System Security and Law Enforcement Officer, Bob Green, to manage the public health crisis. The IMT meets at 0800 daily for an overall situation brief and assessment of incident objectives. The IMT is liaising with Metrolink, Amtrak, Access Services, and Union Station. The Metro EOC is in daily contact with the City and County EOC and LA City Emergency Management Division (EMD). Chief Communications Officer, Yvette Rapose and Deputy Executive Officer for Media and Public Relations, Joni Honor, have established a Joint Information Center (JIC) and are coordinating messaging with Metrolink, Amtrak, Union Station, and the Los Angeles Mayor's office. Chief Safety, Risk and Asset Management Officer, Ken Hernandez, is coordinating with County Public Health for updates to keep the IMT and workforce informed. Chief Human Capital and Development Officer, Joanne Peterson, is coordinating all Human Resource (HR) needs and providing guidance in a quickly changing environment to ensure employees are taken care of and understand HR requirements. Each of the Section Chiefs (Operations, Planning & Intelligence, Logistics and Finance) are ensuring that the Agency Objectives are being accomplished.

## Operations

As of Wednesday, March 18, ridership is down significantly (50-60%) resulting from school closures, restaurant, bars, and entertainment venue closures, and widespread recommendations for social distancing. After consultation with the Board Chair, adjusting service to On-street reality and being sensitive to the health of our employees, some of whom having called out due to childcare needs or being over 65 and vulnerable, (as an FYI, LA Metro has a total of 727 employees over the age of 65), as of Wednesday, March 18, staff have reduced service levels on bus by 10%, while being careful not to heavily impact those high frequency lines that carry most of our low income riders. The A (Blue), E (Expo), and C (Green) Line services have been reduced from 6 minute peak frequencies to every 8 minutes. B (Red) and D (Purple) Lines have decreased from 10 minute peak frequencies to every 12 minutes (6 minutes in the trunk segment through downtown LA). Gold Line continues to operate on its regular 8 minute headway. Service levels in place currently are providing sufficient capacity to allow for social distancing on both buses and trains. Staff will continue to monitor on-street reality and will adjust service as needed. Beginning Friday, rail services will shut down at 10 p.m., after which rail daily services will run between the hours of 5 a.m. and 10 p.m. Bus will remain on its current span of service.

Metro is NOT considering halting transit services at this time. We consider our service a lifeline to thousands in the most populous county in America, including first responders, hospital workers, and essential county and city workers.

## *Augmented Service*

Metro's partner in the Mobility on Demand (MOD) Service (Via) is limiting the number of passengers per vehicle to two to support social isolation measures. The service will continue regular operations as an essential means of transportation for vulnerable populations.

For MOD, Via currently offers no-fare service to and from Metro and Metrolink stations in three zones – El Monte, North Hollywood, and Compton. Staff have been in discussions with Via with a goal of achieving the following changes to the extent possible:

- Include point to point trips to allow our most vulnerable populations to access essential services such as grocery stores, pharmacies, and medical centers from their homes. This would be at no additional cost to Metro as it would be absorbed by the unused supply due to decreased demand at this time. Metro will notify hospitals in the service areas that the Via service is now point to point and may be helpful in accommodating their patients and/or workers.
- Expand the zones to include additional essential service locations that are near but not in our current MOD zones. This would also be at no additional cost as it would be absorbed by the unused supply due to decreased demand at this time. The additional services will connect several critical locations in each corridor.

Metro is developing a concept to offer to hospitals, health clinics, or other essential services, the use of the Via contract to provide transportation specific to their workers and/or customers and patients. This will take additional time to implement and may increase costs for this contract.

### *LA Union Station*

LA Union Station will undergo a partial closure during the current COVID-19 event. The station will remain operational for ticketed Amtrak and Metrolink passengers. Access to ticketing will be in a defined area. The public will be encouraged to purchase their tickets in advance on-line if possible. Persons using Metro Red, Purple and Gold lines and bus conveyances will also be guided to those services by security and station personnel. All other persons without station business or valid ticketing will be denied entry. Additionally, Metro continues to partner with our homeless service providers to engage homeless citizens around Union Station.

Also, we will begin installing and increasing sanitation stations and access to hand sanitizer at major stops and stations to allow riders to wash their hands and prevent further spread. We realize that riders do not always have access to handwashing before getting on or transferring to Metro, Metrolink, Amtrak, or other modes. We are also researching how we can equip buses and trains with hand sanitizer to help control the virus.

## Communications & Government Relations

### *Cancellation of March Board Meetings*

The March Board and committee meetings were canceled as of March 17. Staff communicated these cancellations through The Source, social channels, on the Metro website, and City News.

### *Public Communications*

Depending on the messages to the public, Communications is using a diverse array of tactics and assets. This Friday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, adjustments to Metro services will be communicated to the public through press briefings, news releases, social media outlets (Twitter, Facebook, etc.), The Source/El Pasajero, and the Metro JIC email. I also taped an audio message that will be played at all rail stations. Portions of that message convey that our Number One priority is to keep our riders and workforce safe and healthy and how Metro has strengthened the cleaning of all trains and stations on a daily basis.

### *Workforce Communications*

As Metro's response to COVID-19 is evolving with the changes, we are communicating with the workforce daily. Communications to employees are distributed through CEO newsletters, Every Voice Counts, and myMetro and daily staff updates. In addition, Metro has provided a call-in number for employees who do not have access to email. Metro has also posted information at all divisions and remote facilities.

Staff is also pursuing federal reimbursement of additional COVID-19 costs. More to come on that initiative.

### Employee Safety

Members of the Senior Leadership Team have been assigned to serve on a Task Force to address matters related to the virus. This task force reports to me daily to be certain that Metro is using the best information possible to make any necessary decisions. This task force is represented as part of the IMT.

Specific actions presently being taken include:

- Metro is following the orders and recommendations from LACDPH and the CDC. Representatives from Metro serve on LA County's Emergency Management Team.
- Its primary direction to our workforce is to protect themselves and others through good personal hygiene practices, work/social spacing, and other precautions.
- Metro has strengthened its cleaning regimes within buses, trains, stations and work spaces.
- Employees are requested to stay home if they are sick and avoid close contact with others.
- LA Union Station will undergo a partial closure.

To ensure the safety of our employees, we have taken the following steps:

- Employees are directed to refrain from gatherings/meetings of no more than 10 in a single space and are encouraged to utilize telephonic meetings where possible.
- Effective Wednesday, March 18, 2020, until further notice, Metro's Gateway Headquarters will be closed to the public. Exceptions will be made for prescheduled appointments and essential business.
- Metro has relaxed leave and telecommuting policies to ensure that employees are provided with the flexibility they need to ensure their health and safety, while also ensuring the continuity of essential business operations. Management is encouraging staff to work remotely, where appropriate.
- Employees who can telecommute are telecommuting to encourage social distancing (this is for those that can complete essential work remotely)
- In response to the closure of LAUSD, Metro is providing employees with up to 80 hours of paid leave in a 14-day period where the employee needs to stay home due to their child's school or daycare closure, or where the employee has been directed to self-quarantine by a competent governmental agency such as the CDC or TSA.
- We have a limited supply of N95 Masks on hand. It is important that we prioritize the distribution of the Masks and gloves based on employee positions and duties. And, the County Department of Public Health and CDC has not directed their use for nonessential personnel.

Specific to front line employees, Metro has also committed to meeting with leaders from our five labor unions on a weekly basis to ensure that we have a partnership approach in our response to the COVID-19. Management and Labor conduct weekly teleconferences to discuss our responses and actions.

### Construction Projects

Construction is not being impacted by COVID-19 at this time. We have asked all contractors to fulfill their contractual obligations. We are monitoring the situation and are in close coordination with our contractors to determine any potential impacts on labor availability and supply chain.

### NEXT STEPS

Metro will continue to monitor and adapt to the evolving situation. Weekly updates will be provided to the Board.

For more information or if you have questions, please contact me directly at 213.922.7555 or our Chief of Staff, Nadine Lee, at 213-922-7950.