



July 23, 2019

Via email: Metro Board Secretary Michele Jackson

Re: NextGen Bus Study -- Regional Service Concept Framework

Dear Metro Chair James Butts and the Metro Board:

The NextGen Bus Study may be the most important work Metro is doing today. Prop A, Prop C, Measures R and M are pouring tens of billions of dollars into our rail network, while buses already handle more than 70% of Metro’s daily ridership. With the LA region’s expansive roadway network, buses will continue serving as the workhorse of our region’s transit system. It’s imperative that we do everything we can to ensure our bus network offers safe, accessible, fast, dignified, frequent, and reliable transportation that results in increased economic opportunity, and improved health and wellness outcomes.

Metro’s *Regional Service Concept Framework* primarily outlines Metro staff’s goals and objectives for redrawing Metro’s bus lines and schedules. As a condition of the Board’s adoption, Metro staff must update the framework to first serve communities based on need, to demand from cities and LA County the street infrastructure Metro needs to respectably operate buses.

Below are the priority issues that we hope to see addressed as conditions of the Board's adoption of the *Regional Service Concept Framework*.

- 1) Serve Communities Based on Need -- With NextGen’s Transit Propensity Maps, Metro staff should include race as a variable and use weighted averages to place heaviest weight to trips of current riders living in Equity Focused Communities.**

Metro’s NextGen staff will purportedly use the Transit Propensity Maps to redraw bus lines and schedules. Therefore, the quality of the resultant bus lines and schedules can only be as good as the input data included in the Transit Propensity Maps.

Currently, the Transit Propensity Maps appear to exclude race, despite Metro Board’s rightful inclusion of race in the board-adopted Equity Focused Communities Map last month. Moreover, since race is a researched indicator of transit propensity (UCLA ITS 2018, USC PERE 2018), the Transit Propensity Maps should include race as a variable.

Lastly, the Transit Propensity Maps should apply the Equity-Focused Communities (EFCs) Map, adopted by the board in June 2018 to inform the NextGen process, as a statistical floor. The Transit Propensity Maps should place the heaviest weight on the EFC variables: race, income, and car ownership. After doing so, Metro staff should verify that communities included in the Transit Propensity Map are equal to or *more* inclusive of historically underinvested communities reflected in the EFCs map (i.e. more inclusive of more communities of color, low-income communities, or communities with zero car ownership).

- 2) Demand Bus Supportive Infrastructure -- Metro board should take a position in support of more and better quality bus supportive infrastructure and Metro staff should establish and execute an ongoing partnership with cities and LA County focused on correcting street infrastructure inadequacies and sustaining a minimally acceptable bus operating environment.**

Metro is in a great position to work with cities to achieve the street infrastructure Metro needs to respectably operate buses. The quality of Metro bus service relies on how well streets are designed to respect public transit. Metro service relies on a basic operating environment that currently falls below a minimum level necessary to enable bus operators to serve riders respectably.

Understandably, Metro does not hold political authority over streets (cities and LA County collectively hold that authority). However, in order for Metro to respectably serve current bus riders and rebuild Metro's ridership (an explicit goal of the NextGen project), Metro should establish and execute an ongoing partnership with cities and LA County that is focused on correcting street infrastructure inadequacies and sustaining a bus operating environment that respects and prioritizes bus trips.

For example, Metro staff can start by identifying shared street priorities by overlapping the Transit Propensity Map with maps in cities and LA County's respective General Plan mobility elements, such as the City of LA's Mobility Plan 2035. **As for partnerships, Metro staff should convene the leadership of cities and LA County transportation officials and may consider elevating the functionality of already-convened Metro advisory bodies including the Metro Technical Advisory Council, Policy Advisory Council, and Metro's five Service Councils.**

- 3) Deploy More Buses to Serve Increasingly More Riders -- Metro staff should redraw bus lines and rewrite bus schedules with a baseline, minimum increase of 20 percent more bus service hours over 2016 levels to keep the Measure M promise and Metro staff should develop a funded and staff resourced plan to deploy more buses incrementally beyond that baseline.**

Metro staff often states that their primary goal with the NextGen project is to 'do more with existing resources.' While such an exercise is a prudent first step, the NextGen project -- a first in a generation bus network redesign -- demands a far bolder target. For

Metro to meaningfully achieve equitable outcomes and for Metro to work for climate resiliency, at the very least, Metro needs a bolder plan that better serves current riders and attracts more riders, not simply sustains a falling trend. **Metro's Vision 2028 strategic plan contains valuable accessibility goals. Metro staff should analyze how much operations resources are necessary in order to achieve strategic plan goals.**

Metro staff should redesign its bus network with at least 20 percent more service hours than 2016 levels to keep the Measure M promise (see Measure M's [Outline of Expenditure Categories](#) and [this October 2016, Investing in Place blog post linked here](#)). Additionally, Metro staff should propose an actionable, funded, and staff resourced service plan that outlines the range of rider benefits anticipated (e.g. travel time savings from a discrete bus only lane) and contingencies needed (e.g. city street authorization) to increase bus service hours beyond the baseline of 20 percent more than the 2016 service levels.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these issues,

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