

Better Buses for LA Work Group Meeting
Tuesday April 14th 3:30 - 5:00pm PT via zoom

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/99>

Purpose of Better Buses for LA Work Group

- Creating a collaborative space for partners to share ideas, information and advocacy efforts for improving bus service
- Share updates and discuss strategies around Metro's NextGen, Bus Only Lanes and COVID-19 response/recovery efforts

See last month's meeting notes here: [March workgroup meeting materials](#)

For more information on the Better Buses for LA Work Group and previous meeting notes: <https://investinginplace.org/work/work-groups/>

Agenda:

1. **Welcome, Agenda Review** – 5 min
2. **Summary report out of Better Buses Work Group survey/feedback** - 5 min
15 people took the survey - thank you ;) [Survey still open - add your thoughts here](#)

Survey responses....

- “This work group allows for a lot of different opinions from different groups which gives a chance to understand the complexity in transportation systems and its implications.”
- “Information sharing re: NextGen Bus Study; Diverse attendance at the meetings including having department/agency staff present and participating; collaborating on messaging and approach to bus-only lanes provides me a deeper understanding of the various perspectives and motivations for the project.”
- **Things the group could improve:**
 - Show our power to decision-makers
 - Clearer action items between each work group session; setting some goals to work towards
 - There could be more pre-defined sub themes and if possible at least two meetings in a month, as it feels like there can be

so many topics that are important, but only some get discussed due to the limited timing of the meeting.

- **Initiatives people want to talk about:**
 - Where is the NextGen study going?
 - Nextgen Bus, any initiatives (Bus lanes, All-door boarding, sidewalk/bike lanes, etc) that are making progress
 - Bus lane corridor updates so that doesn't fall off the radar; ridership numbers; COVID-19 response efforts
 - Bus planning efforts, bus advocacy efforts, bus planning gaps, advocacy opportunities
 - Anything relating to equity, particularly if there's space to talk about how transportation intersects with housing and renters' rights.
 - Community engagement for new initiatives, Role of community leaders, neighborhood councils, etc., How much collaboration takes place between Metro and LADOT?
- **Volunteers to help strengthen the work group:** 2 people so far volunteered ;)

[Survey still open - add your thoughts here](#)

- **Questions/ Feedback - none**

3. **Update from partners at ACT-LA, Scarlett De Leon – 5-10 min**

Trying to build a base of transit riders to do advocacy around bus improvements and more. This work came to a halt with Covid19, and in the last month we've shifted to LA City and LA County rapid response around rents (housing). Our transit rider organizers also had to shift to immediate needs like food access and letters to landlords. It's been difficult to get back to transit work, but I think we are at a place where we are more balanced now. We have an ACT-LA transit justice committee meeting tomorrow. We are looking at two things (1) what's the immediate metro work we need to do now during quarantine and community input in meetings, community engagement more broadly. We wrote a letter around our concerns and things we want to see from Metro. We got a basic response from Metro. We are pushing to schedule a follow up with Metro CEO Phil Washington soon. We need to create a space for riders to communicate directly with the agency. Much of our base include essential workers (2) Pickup campaigns on bus only lanes, bus improvements and coordinating with Investing in Place. Survey from sumit via text SMS. Going to roll out a bigger survey soon.

Q&A:

- *Did metro's response to ACT-LA's letter address or acknowledge any specific items the letter brought up? Yes, Metro said they will be increasing sanitation, but for example we asked for not just not a cut, but an increase in service and their response simply said "the ridership is down."*
- *Folks were disappointed in Phil Washington's, Metro's, response to ACT LA's/Investing in Place's letter.*
- *Encouraging folks to attend and comment at Metro's upcoming operations meeting (Thursday 4/16)*
- *How are you surveying folks? Via text message to the folks who attended the February summit but we are about to roll it out wider with partner organizations.*
- *Are there plans to share the survey results? Yes? Haven't prepped for this yet.*
- *Note, ACT LA hosted a Transit Justice summit in January*
- *How effective is text survey as a communication channel? ~35 responses from ~100 attendees so far. Partners will be texting their community members.*

4. **Updates and Thoughts on Metro and COVID-19** – 10-15 min

- [Investing in Place Blog Post- COVID-19 and Metro – More questions than answers](#)
 - Metro is in for a major decline in revenue, which means there will be some big and tough decisions for Metro leadership to make. How will smaller cities fare? What plans will Metro advance, and which will be tabled? In the midst of this crisis, and then during recovery, will Metro lead with the goal of ensuring safety and access for those who are most exposed and most vulnerable in its system: bus drivers and bus riders?
 - Metro needs to publish bus and train ridership data weekly to identify where ridership is dropping off during the pandemic, but more importantly what are key lifeline transit lines for essential workers and essential trips? This data should also be coordinated with local cities/municipal transit operators to create a more informed picture of what is happening on the streets and what travel demand looks like during COVID-19.
 - [See more here.](#)
 - *How will metro use stimulus money? Will we prioritize high need communities being hit the hardest?*
 - *There is some data in the blog, bus ridership is down 80%, train ridership 75%. This supports what we know already about the communities where these services are located*
 - *Essential workers are still using transit.*

- *Metro is moving to Sunday service April 19th.*
 - *One of the reasons this work group meets third thursday work group meetings is because they are just before Metro Committee meetings.*
- **[Metro Committee Meetings this week](#) - Operations Committee**
Thursday 4/16 9am where we anticipate ridership and transit service COVID-19 response/recovery will be discussed. Public comment letters/emails encouraged.
- *What are people hearing around NextGen? Will Metro implement some of the NextGen recommendations as an element of the recovery program?*
 - *Hearing mixed things about next steps with NextGen.*
 - *Request for ridership data by week not month.*
 - *Community and advocates Need to see more data before policy decisions.*
 - *Need more transparency in budget decisions by the Metro Board.*
 - *Metro is more than bus and trains, they are a big funder and holder of real estate. So during covid and covid recovery this becomes important.*
 - *Q: Can you share more about equity focused communities and how that should play a role in Metro's decisions?*
 - *Many folks have been pushing Metro to define equity, historically this has been by population or by district. Ie: each region is equal but we know that's not true. A few years ago Metro introduced an equity platform using criteria communities of color, low income, households without a car and used partners to set thresholds.*
 - *liP in a recent blog and work more broadly are pushing metro to use this platform in recovery efforts and establish an equity lead.*
 - *We should look at not cutting any transit while we are paying for road projects. We should look at redirecting this funding.*
 - *Re. NextGen as part of a stimulus package approach and accelerating bus system improvements, see this [infrastructure acceleration motion that passed the LA City Council on Friday last week](#). It takes inspiration from Metro speeding up Purple Line construction by closing down*

Wilshire Blvd, and directs City departments to also seize this opportunity to do street closure infrastructure projects.

- *On the [agenda for the operations committee](#), the last item is covid service update. Already proposing a 28 hour reduction. This is very concerning and something we should hammer at, we know essential trips happen in the bus.*
- *Have there been thoughts about job seeking? It's premature to cut hours when people will be looking for work again soon.*
- *LAUSD has said they will not have classes until Fall, but many people will be going back to work sooner. What spaces will be available for children.*
- *PPE and protections for bus operators, in the agenda they have some items about numbers - but that doesn't reflect need. How can we know how much of the workforce is being protected?*
- *How are we reaching out to board deputies with these comments? See [Metro Board and Staff Contact Information](#).*
- *Which transit agencies are getting it right? Some are moving into test, trace, and isolate? Are we using funds for PPE?*
- *There are issues about what funding sources can be used for operations. Climate plan and transform and others are getting together to talk. Caltrans is going to do a discussion with advocates statewide, about this concern wanting to be able to access capital dollars during the crisis. Using low carbon transportation program funds but also money from _____. Interest statewide in knowing what money can be used for what going forward. Will try and get liP invited to webinar tomorrow.*

■ [Metro Board and Staff Contact Information](#)

5. **Breakout Groups (2-3 groups depending on size).** Directions: appoint someone to take notes for your group in this google doc and a volunteer to report back to the larger group on your discussion.
- What are the challenges, and even system failures, transit riders are experiencing right now?
 - These could be existing challenges that are exacerbated or new ones that have arisen in the midst of COVID19.

- What longer term challenges does COVID19 and shelter-in-place pose for Metro?
- Other related issues that the group wants to talk about/explore

Report Backs/Notes from Break Out Groups:

- **Break Out Group 1:** Steve Fox, Enzo, Reed Alvarado, Cathy Hillman, Carter Rubin
 - What are the challenges, and even system failures, transit riders are experiencing right now?
 - Steve in Long Beach - Long Beach and Foothill doing rear door boarding, not crowded, passengers are pretty good at distancing, Blue Line had a lot of patrons who were seeking shelter on the train.
 - Reed in SF - The new core bus network is impressive. Supporting hospitals and neighborhoods with few cars. Not seeing crowding.
 - Enzo - Working at different grab and go centers and taking the bus occasionally. Not crowded in East SFV. Concerned about headways and consistency.
 - What longer term challenges does COVID19 and shelter-in-place pose for Metro?
 - Concerned about cuts to transit service. Need to prioritize transit as funding falls.
 - Need to get clarity from the NextGen team.
 - How do help people get to daily needs without getting on the bus
 - Emergency bike lane network
 - Dedicated buses for seniors and immunocompromised, ensure ACCESS/ADA services help this population
 - Other related issues that the group wants to talk about/explore
 - Adapt Program: Expedited Fixing Main Streets
 - Ensure repaved streets include the Mobility Plan elements
 - Follow up: check these six streets to see what mobility plan calls
 - <https://streetsla.lacity.org/adapt>
 - Finances/sales tax reliance
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- **Break Out Group 2**
 - Vyki, Paola, Carolyn, Daisy, Clara, Jessica, Khalilha. No recent transit riders in our group.
 - What can or should Recovery look like?

- Will people want to invest in updating transit or will they be fearful of riding transit?
 - Seen some evidence that it will take some time, there will be fear. People are already worried about space on transit.
- If we start phasing back in a few months
 - There might be greater need for off peak service as folks are job searching or taking part in care work, peoples travel patterns will be different.
- What could go wrong?
 - We increase things like wage gap if we are thinking of serving those dependent on transit for commuting.
- PPE? How might the narrative change as we see death numbers of transit operators? This might entrench held views, increase divide based on ability of different populations to take other modes.
- Metro needs to operate in a way that increases and builds trust. We've already put a lot of financial trust in Metro via voting for taxes, now we need Metro to be strategic and thoughtful. Ie: everyone sucks but metro is doing this right.
- We have four transportation sales taxes, none have sunset dates! We have given metro so much money to serve us.
- More than 40 transit operators receive money through Metro. Is there regional guidance on what PPE is? Back door boarding? Metro has been reluctant to embrace their role as a funder.
- Who is making decisions at Metro right now? Check out that org chart. CEO has 16 direct reports? Equity lead is not one of them? Has anyone called for this person to report up higher? Position create last spring - filled just a few months ago.
- Next steps?
 - Comment letters for the operations committee?
 - Can we get specific to Metro on what kinds of communication we need/ want. Esp communication to change the narrative and build trust. Ie: what kind of masks are operators wearing, not just total glove counts but use rates. What PPE on ADA operators.
 - Request Metro add equity lead to covid response, request equity lead report directly to CEO.
 - What is bike share doing?
- **Break Out Group 3**

- Jennifer Gill, Charlotte Will, Oscar Pena, Tulsi Patel, Stacy Weisfeld, Priscilla
- Challenges we're seeing, experiencing, concerned about
 - Metro does have strong enough cleaning solutions, supplies
 - Unhoused riders are not being tested (temperature check)
 - Switching mode from transit to bikes. What is happening with Metro Bike, how is the bike programming being continued, made more robust, safe?
 - What is metro doing to help ppl shift to metro bike? Free for essential workers? What is the data for the bike ridership
 - BOS is repaving major roads right now. Where is the language about how Mobility Plan 2035 and other plans will be integrated into these street improvements?
 - Free transit right, especially to balance economic hardships.
 - How do we pull people back to transit after this all ends? Will people be transitioning to cars (new purchases) to ensure jobs access? Will those
 - Service for essential workers who are transit reliant
 - Safety for transit operators
 - Concern for transit dependent and operators' safety
 - With reduced service ensuring that transit reliant essential workers are getting timely, reliable service to get to work
 - Personal safety, vulnerability
 - If the concern is that free transit will make it like a shelter for unhoused folks, what's Metro/Phil W.'s role in supporting the City to move unhoused people into hotels, Metro facilities (if available)
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- **Break Out Group 4**

- Gloria Ohland (MoveLA), Lyndsey Nolan (Community Arts Resources), Pam O'Connor (Metrolink Board), Rina Vela (consultant on Crenshaw Project), Bryn Lindblad (Climate Resolve), Nolan B. (Metro OEI)
- Why do capital projects always steal money from Operation?
- Capital programs won't stop, but it's critical that we continue operations.
- What to prioritize?
- What will transit look like in the interim? Will there be enough buses to allow for proper physical distancing? Can we make transit such that people aren't scared of it?
- Will there be a "new normal" or will we return to the "old normal"?
- How is ridership behavior going to change? What will funding look like?

- Prioritize: service, low-income riders, and data-based decision-making.
- Manage mobility ecosystem to enable good quality of life. Telecommuting, wearing masks, more street space for biking. We don't know how much space people will have.
- How can we keep the no traffic and clean air, but get back activities and quality of life?
- 1918 pandemic was followed by LA's big red line build-out and housing boom. Hopefully we'll get back to a robust economy in the near future, and transit will need to be there to power that economic activity.
- SCAG's old 2% plan: put all projected growth along transit corridors with 4 times per hour frequency. We need to create more of a nexus between housing growth and transit to avoid creating traffic.
- Some people will be anti-density, but it's really about not overcrowding. Need enough sidewalk and bike space.
- Are shared rides and shared spaces going to be socially accepted?
- People will overcome being in shared spaces, whether it's a bus or a restaurant.
- BizFed and SCAG private sector calls recently contained people airing pushback on increased density. E.g. someone suggested delaying SCAG's RTP/SCS because it was transit- and density-based.
- Irrational PTSD is what those anti-density sentiments are. Let's listen to expert advice. Get ahead of the messaging.
- Be supportive of bus operators and make sure their working conditions are safe.
- Let's not be over-reactionary and undo what we've been working on.
- Collective action is happening right now. That's important for other pressing issues, too, like climate change.
- Leaders have been really clear about what sort of behavior is good for society right now (e.g. six-foot distance)
- How much regulation of driving is appropriate when we enter the economic recovery phase?

Next Steps, opportunities for individual action:

- Public Comments for April 16th Operations Committee or April 23rd Metro Full Board Meeting
- [May Better Buses Work Group Meeting](#)
 - Part 2 May Work group or before: identifying solutions to the issues and challenges raised today

- Provide feedback on these work group meetings: [Survey still open - add your thoughts here](#)
- Please take the [Go DTLA Mobility Survey!](#)
- Check out Metro’s Covid19 information:
 - Blog post being updated: [UPDATING: Metro COVID-19 news and service information, April 14 This page is being updated as Metro responds to the ongoing health crisis.](#)
 - [Metro update on COVID-19, FAQ](#)
 - [Sign up for updates from Metro on COVID-19](#)
 - (this info could be helpful for writing your comment letters to Metro)
- Other ideas?
 - BSS projects to accelerate <https://streetsla.lacity.org/adapt>

Resources/Links:

- [Directions on accessing Metro Committee/Board meetings and how to provide public comment](#)
- [Metro Board and Transportation Deputies Contact Sheet](#)
- [For more background on the role of Metro \(pre-covid\) see our Metro 101 video here.](#)
- [Metro’s Equity Focused Communities Map](#)
- [ACT-LA and liP Comment Letter- March 18, 2020](#)
- [Metro’s Letter to Senator Diane Feinstein March 18, 2020](#)
- [Metro’s Legislative email in response to S. 3548 – The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act](#)
- [LA Metro Equity Framework and the COVID-19 Crisis. Rail~Volution CEO Dan Bartholomay interviews Metro CEO Phil Washington and Executive Officer, Race and Equity, KeAndra Cylear Dodds](#)
- [Transit Has Been Battered by Coronavirus. What’s Ahead May Be Worse. Emily Badger, New York Times, April 9, 2020](#)

Who’s in the meeting:

| First Name | Last Name | Organization |
|------------|-----------|--------------------------------|
| Audrey | Netsawang | City of Los Angeles, StreetsLA |

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|-------------|-------------|---|
| Bryn | Lindblad | Climate Resolve |
| Bubba | Fish | Streets for All |
| Carolynn | Johnson | ITDP |
| Carter | Rubin | |
| Charlotte | Will | Master of Urban and Regional Planning Student |
| Clara | Karger | |
| corina | martinez | |
| Daisy | Villafuerte | Los Angeles Walks |
| Deborah | Murphy | Deborah Murphy Urban Design + Planning |
| doreen | Morrissey | Metro |
| Dylan | Gasperik | |
| Edgar | Mejia | ITDP |
| Eli | Lipmen | Move La |
| Gil | Solomon | |
| gloria | ohland | Move LA |
| Hilary | Norton | FASTLinkDTLA |
| Jayro | Queme | |
| Jennifer A. | Gill | LABAC - Vice Chair |
| Jenny | Hong | Steer |
| Jerard | Wright | BizFed |
| Jessica | Cruz | TransitCenter |
| Jessica | Meaney | Investing in Place |
| Joe | Linton | Streetsblog L.A. |
| Jonathan | Matz | |

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|-----------|------------------|--|
| Julia | Salinas | Office of Mayor Garcetti |
| Karina | Macias | City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation |
| Khalilah | Haynes | |
| Lorenzo | Mutia | |
| Lyndsey | Nolan | CARS |
| Madeline | Brozen | UCLA Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies |
| Mehmet | Berker | Los Angeles Walks |
| Melissa | Hernandez | JCDecaux |
| Nathan | Pope | Palms NC |
| Nina | Kin | LA Metro |
| Nolan | Borgman | Metro |
| Norman | Emerson | Emerson & Associates |
| oceana | gilliam | chc |
| Oscar | Peña | |
| Pam | OConnor | Self |
| Paola | Mendez | Council District 4 |
| Priscilla | Freduah-Agyemang | SCAG |
| Ray | Dang | Metro |
| Reed | Alvarado | FASTLinkDTLA |
| Rina | Velasco | Stantec |
| Rubina | Ghazarian | LADOT |
| Sandra | Romero | LISC LA |
| Scarlett | De Leon | ACT-LA |

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|-------|----------|-------------------|
| Stacy | Weisfeld | |
| Steve | Fox | SCAG |
| Tom | Bellino | SCAG |
| Tulsi | Patel | Estolano Advisors |
| Vyki | Englert | Compiler LA |