



August 24, 2020

Metro CEO Phil Washington and Metro Board of Directors:

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold in Los Angeles and around the world, we know that government agencies at all levels have been forced to make difficult choices on their budgets. We know, too, that it is for this reason that Metro delayed the development and adoption of the Fiscal Year 2021 budget, so that the Board could act with the clearest possible financial information available. These are unprecedented times in Metro's history and we appreciate the challenges the agency faces amidst so much uncertainty.

However, we also know that budgets are reflective of an agency's priorities, and that Metro's single most important task is rescuing the bus network from years of declining ridership caused by poor service - infrequent, unreliable buses, plagued by crowding and declining speeds due to traffic from private autos. That is why we are so concerned to see Metro considering 20% service cuts in the immediate aftermath of the Covid pandemic and further proposing an 8% "new normal" bus service cut for Fiscal Year 2022. These cuts are worrying to bus riders and transportation advocates throughout the city: they suggest that Metro is deprioritizing the quality of bus service and they threaten to undercut the NextGen Bus Plan before it even has a chance to be implemented.

Over the past several years, the NextGen Bus Plan was created by Metro to comprehensively overhaul the regional bus network for the first time in decades. The NextGen plan, which was the product of extensive

outreach and analysis, rightfully sets targets for what it would take to build a bus network that LA could be proud of. The NextGen plan would result in more than 2 million Angelenos having access to frequent all-day bus service in just the first phase of implementation. That first phase assumed that no new bus service hours would be added, but it also assumed there would not be cuts either. Given the need to not only stabilize ridership but also grow ridership in order to meet Metro's own targets as well as the County's sustainability targets, our organizations have advocated for the agency to focus on Metro's "Future Funding" scenario as a "north star" for current funding decisions. The proposed cuts take us in the exact opposite direction, imperiling NextGen, and threatening to hamper mobility options for those who rely on the bus system.

As the stewards of one of the largest public transportation systems in the country, Metro has a responsibility to protect the safety of riders and drivers. With reopening proceeding, even if it is happening slowly, we know that there will be more and more riders returning to the transit system. We also know that these riders will be concentrated in low-income neighborhoods, particularly in predominantly Black, brown and API communities. There is no safe way to cut service during this pandemic. Service cuts result in crowded buses where passengers cannot sufficiently socially distance. They result in passengers being left behind at stops. Consequently, we the undersigned call on you to take the following actions:

1. **Reject the 20% cuts to bus service in FY21.**
2. **Reject the 8% "new normal" cuts to bus service in FY22.**
3. **Support the proposed expansion of bus-only lanes.**
4. **Commit to fully funding NextGen reorganization with no delays in implementation.**

The NextGen reorganization, with a commitment to eventually hitting the "Future Funding" scenario, is Metro's best hope for saving Los Angeles's bus network from dysfunction and decline. We look forward to partnering with Metro to help build the bus network that Angelenos deserve.

Sincerely,

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