



October 21, 2020

RE: Item #22 NextGen Bus Plan

Metro CEO Phil Washington and Metro Board of Directors:

For millions of Angelenos, seismic changes are coming to the bus lines that criss-cross their neighborhoods - starting in December. The service changes that Metro will implement between December 2020 and December 2021 will not go unnoticed, unlike regular June and December service changes. Hundreds of stops are set for consolidation. The limited stop Metro Rapid network will cease to exist. Familiar route numbers will twist in unfamiliar directions. Some routes will disappear completely.

Part of NextGen's appeal was that in its first phase it was purely a "reorganization," meaning that existing service hours would be more efficiently used to create a frequent all-day network. In doing so, the reorganization meant that the same amount of operations monies could be used to send buses down busy corridors more frequently.

The highest tier of the NextGen network is defined as buses running every 7.5 minutes or more often during peak hours, with substantially shorter headways during midday and evening hours

as well. The next-highest tier would comprise buses running every 10 minutes or less during peak hours. Between these top two tiers, Metro would be operating frequent service across its most successful corridors, an unprecedented accomplishment for the agency.

This month, as you propose to finalize NextGen after years of development and analysis, you are doing so when public outreach was conducted during the summer albeit, before Metro voted to continue service cuts on the bus network indefinitely.

And therein lies the problem. Advocates can't help but note the toll that has been taken on this ambitious plan by Metro's unfortunate and self-defeating decision to cut bus service by 20% compared to the pre-Covid baseline. Those cuts preclude the NextGen reorganization plan from being implemented as written. There simply are not enough bus service hours left to be redistributed to create that frequent all-day network. The likely result is that Tier 1 and Tier 2 routes will be operating at lower frequencies from the first day onward.

We would like to be absolutely clear: this is not an auspicious start for the NextGen era in Los Angeles. What will be called NextGen by Metro leaders when it is implemented is actually something less than the plan that is being presented to the Board this month. Due to service cuts, we do not know when (or if) we will ever see the highest service tiers implemented as planned on Los Angeles's busiest corridors.

As it stands, we remain deeply concerned that NextGen could end up being a slow-rolling bait-and-switch: that the frequent bus network on our streets will never materialize, and that the institutional willpower to implement this plan will gradually fade before the finish line is reached.

As we repeatedly highlighted in the lead-up to Metro's budget vote in September, Metro has taken a fully funded reorganization plan and defunded it with bone-deep service cuts. We believe that Metro will not live up to its responsibility to implement NextGen without a concrete commitment to fully implement NextGen.

We renew our call for Metro to fully fund the NextGen plan and provide service to bus lines in accordance with the tiers in the final NextGen plan.

Sincerely,

Anthony Dedousis  
Abundant Housing LA

David Diaz  
ActiveSGV

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Los Angeles Walks

Maryann Aguirre  
People for Mobility Justice

Melanie Winter  
The River Project

Michael Schneider  
Streets For All

Strategic Actions for a Just Economy  
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Bart Reed  
The Transit Coalition

CC: Metro Directors:

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