



Metro

Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

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MAY 1, 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 weekly update to the Board, for the Week ending May 1, on Metro's actions responding to COVID-19.

BACKGROUND

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

DISCUSSION

Incident Management

Metro's Incident Management Team (IMT), in coordination with the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and several departments, continues to respond to the evolving crisis and take actions accordingly. Metro continues to send out daily COVID-19 briefs using our alert system to all field staff and maintains a 24-hour duty-officer to receive COVID-19 related calls from staff.

On April 1, 2020, Systems Security & Law Enforcement initiated "Operation LA Metro Homeless Outreach", a multi-agency Homeless Outreach effort as well as an effort to educate ridership on the Los Angeles County Safer at Home order.

The agencies involved are PATH, LASD MET, LAPD HOPE, LBPD QOL officers and Metro Transit Security officers. The main focus was to find shelters for those members of society that are experiencing homelessness and are riding on the LA Metro system on a daily basis as a shelter. The operation focused on Citrus/APU Station, Atlantic

Station, 4th Street/Santa Monica, Union Station, 7th/ Metro, North Hollywood and downtown Long Beach Transit Mall.

Below are the results of the Homeless Outreach operation as of April 27, 2020.

- Total taken to shelters: 294
- Total outreach information provided: 385

Union Station Update

Union Station continues to operate on a partial closure with COVID-19. The station has an efficient system in place for patrons to access their train or bus while observing social distancing. Our COVID-19 sanitizing and operating methods continue and the traveling public is cooperative and appreciative. We have plans in development for reopening Union Station and are looking forward to the days of enjoying Union Station food and beverage once again safely.

Retail services and tenants may choose to remain open but most have closed temporarily. West Union Station Subway Sandwich, Wetzel's Pretzels and Trimana remain open. Starbucks is considering a possible re-opening. Imperial Western Brewery is looking forward to the opportunity of reopening once the "ground rules" for doing so are published.

Operations

The most current ridership numbers indicate that the Metro system is carrying about 363,000 people a day with 270,000 people a day on bus and 93,000 people a day on rail. We continue to communicate to our customers using various platforms that Metro is operating an Enhanced Sunday Schedule for essential trips only, to use rear-door boarding, wear face masks/coverings, and to maintain six feet of distance from others as much as possible when riding Metro.

Service

For just under two weeks now, Metro is operating the modified Enhanced-Sunday schedule as follows:

- Weekday Service: Includes Sunday bus service plus Rapid and most Local/Express service, with some additional morning trips. Most trains run every 12 minutes between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. and every 20 minutes at other times, with last trains leaving terminal stations at about 12 a.m. Service also includes the use of weekday consists and 60-foot buses to allow for physical distancing, to the extent possible.
- Weekend Service: Includes Sunday service on bus and rail lines.

We will continue to monitor ridership and adjust service in response to customer feedback and on-street observations.

Completed B Line (Red) Partial Station Closures

As of this Wednesday, April 29, we completed fencing to partially close the following seven stations along the B Line (Red) to reduce touchpoints, maintenance resources and materials, while maintaining ADA access:

1. Union Station (West Entrance)
2. Civic Center/Grand Park (1st St Entrance)
3. Pershing Square (4th St NW Entrance)
4. 7th St/Metro Center (Hope St Entrance)
5. Westlake/MacArthur Park (North Entrance)
6. Vermont/Santa Monica (City College Entrance)
7. Universal City/Studio City (Park & Ride/CityWalk Entrance)

Strengthened Cleaning Regimes, Consideration of Additional Cleaning Activities & PPE
Metro continues to practice strengthened cleaning regimes in addition to regular cleaning activities in response to COVID-19 on all vehicles, stations and terminals. Additionally, Operations is conducting a cost-benefit analysis for the potential use of UV lights for sanitation/spot treatments and deployment of additional cleaning personnel at end of terminals and lines. Metro will continue to distribute and procure the necessary personal protective equipment and supplies for our frontline employees as safety remains our top priority.

Communications & Government Relations

State and Federal

Congress and the White House are continuing to discuss the parameters of the next COVID19 legislation they will draft, consider and potentially adopt in the coming weeks. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) is aggressively working to advance a major package of assistance for State and Local governments – which was not addressed in the most recent COVID19 federal bill adopted by Congress. In a press conference held on April 30, 2020, Speaker Pelosi shared her intent to have the lion's share of a future COVID19 bill - as large as \$1 trillion – to be directed to State and Local Governments.

In the U.S. Senate, a bi-partisan legislative proposal by U.S. Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA) advances the idea of providing \$500 billion to State and Local governments in the next COVID19 bill. Most recently, the Chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means Richard Neal (D-MA) is suggesting that Congress could reinstitute a direct grant program from the 1970s – the General Revenue Sharing Program that was originally authorized in the State and Local Fiscal Assistance Act of 1972 – to pump money into State and Local governments adversely impacted by the pandemic.

Metro's Government Relations team is tracking all matters related to Congressional consideration of COVID19 related legislation – including the future prospect of embedding elements of our CEO's Board-approved Rebuilding America initiative – in a potential infrastructure package that Congress and the White House may work together on in the weeks and months ahead.

Media Coverage

The Agency and its staff members were mentioned in more than 39 print and electronic stories.

CEO Phil Washington participated in a live 30-minute interview Wednesday about Metro and its response to COVID-19 on AirTalk with Larry Mantle on KPCC. Topics discussed included the decline in transit usage, altered bus and rail service during the pandemic, financial impacts to the agency as a result of loss farebox revenue and sales tax monies, status on federal bailout funding, employee and passenger safety and cleanliness of the transit system.

Workforce Communications

A new short, *happy•ish*, debuted on Monday and will air three times a week, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. *happy•ish* is the two-minute good news segment that gives shout-outs to employees and departmental accomplishments. The short is hosted by five women in Communications. Here's our first episode:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/otveyf1bz1u79lm/happy-ish%20ep1.mp4?dl=0>

Members of the Senior Leadership Team were interviewed this week about what their departments have been doing over the past six weeks during COVID-19 stay-at-home order and how their teams have been managing. The 2-3 minute segments will be sent to staff via email blast on Tuesdays and Thursdays beginning Tuesday, May 5.

COVID-19 Confirmed Cases

Metro continues to post a list of confirmed cases of COVID-19 among Metro employees, contractors and vendors. The list is available [via this link](#) on the Metro website and will be updated by 6 p.m. daily.

As of May 1, 2020, 12 p.m., Metro has 40 Total Confirmed Cases:

- 13 Operators
- 7 Maintenance
- 2 Administrative
- 2 Security
- 16 Contractors/Vendors
- 1 Death (Contractor/Vendor)
- 1 Recovered

Workforce and Leave Policy

We continue to support employees as we implement the new COVID-19 leave of absence process that aligns with the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA). Since April 1, we have received more than 325 inquiries to our dedicated phone and email inbox for COVID-related questions. Notably, the numbers of inquiries have steadily decreased week-to-week since implementing the new leave program. We have also provided ongoing updates to FAQs, which now contains answers to over 125 questions and visual aids to assist with navigating the new process. Additionally, staff has been working through the new return-to-work process for employees who were

exposed to or confirmed to have COVID-19. To date, we have returned 5 employees to work who previously tested positive for COVID-19 and 4 are currently pending clearance.

Members of the Senior Leadership Team continue to meet our Labor Leaders twice a week. This forum has worked well to resolve issues early and often.

General Services will be leading the work to re-open the Gateway Building. The plan is coordinated with the key stakeholders within the facility. While in early development, progress is being made to have the first draft available late next week.

PPE

Metro ordered 25,000 cloth masks for staff. They started coming in last week and are being prepared by staff for dissemination. Each staff person will receive a package with two washable masks in a plastic bag with a personalized note. The masks have a pouch that is available should people care to slide in a filter for greater coverage. The divisions and frontline employees are priority for distribution. As of Wednesday, they have gone out to four divisions. Once the field has been covered, departments at Gateway will receive their allotments through the SLT members.

Employee Rideshare Program Subsidy Exemption Extension

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, on March 18, Metro implemented temporary exceptions to the Employee Rideshare Program Subsidy (HR 18) policy. As a precaution (should the “Safer at Home” Order be lifted or extended), this temporary exception will continue through June 30, 2020.

This is a temporary suspension of the Rideshare Program’s minimum 75% of days-worked participation requirement and allows full distribution of transportation subsidies to existing Vanpool Coordinators, for vanpool participants that opt to drive-alone to social distance themselves and/or are impacted by school district closures or COVID related medical leaves. This temporary extension will allow vanpool coordinators ample time to provide their leasing company notice of cancellation, should they deem it necessary. This is also a temporary relaxation of program deadlines to allow for Metrolink or bus passes to be canceled/placed on hold past the deadline or to request a refund for a payroll deduction for an unused Metrolink pass (not printed or activated on mobile app).

Construction

Construction continues to proceed on all projects with an emphasis on safe work practices. Some contractors have notified Metro of impacts to productivity and these are being evaluated. Overall, however, there have not been significant impacts to our projects. Mayor Garcetti announced that construction workers can now be tested regardless of showing any symptoms and we are encouraging contractors to take advantage of this program for their workers.

On April 30, Metro participated in a nationwide virtual meeting organized by FTA to review status, advice, lessons learned and other pertinent COVID-19 information on large rail projects across the country.

Finance

The Finance Department's monthly forecast remains unchanged for sales tax, fare revenue and expense from last week. We will have a sales tax loss update coming this month.

NEXT STEPS

Metro continues to monitor and adapt to the evolving situation. As the crisis continues, we will stay in close contact with the Board to keep everyone informed.

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.