



Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

One Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2952

213.922.2000 Tel
metro.net

Metro

SEPTEMBER 25, 2020

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**FROM: PHILLIP A. WASHINGTON
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

SUBJECT: BI-WEEKLY UPDATE ON RESPONSE TO COVID-19

ISSUE

This memo is the bi-weekly update to the Board, for the Week ending September 25, on Metro's actions responding to COVID-19.

BACKGROUND

Due to the ever-changing crisis regarding COVID-19, staff will issue bi-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 public health and safety updates and intelligence briefs, deploy best practices in emergency management, communicate and share information with City, County, State, and Federal partners, and plan for needs related to logistics/supplies for staff, such as gloves and masks, the impact of ridership reductions, the financial analysis associated with grant reimbursement opportunities and other emergency response activities. The ICS will remain activated during the continued declarations of emergencies and is linked to the EOC on a 24-hour basis for emergency updates and response. Metro staff receives regular updates and guidance on how to respond to cases of positive tests for COVID-19 and to take prescriptive actions related to quarantine directives from LA County Public Health.

Metro continues to send out daily COVID-19 briefs using our emergency alert system to all field staff and maintains a 24-hour duty-officer to receive COVID-19 related calls from staff.

Coordination recently took place with Countywide Planning and Finance to respond to FEMA Request for Information on approx. \$153M of Metro expenses related to COVID-19 FEMA Reimbursement Application.

Union Station

Union Station, in cooperation with the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD), will continue to host a COVID-19 testing kiosk in the Union Station South Patio until Thursday, October 1.

On another front Metro is making arrangements with County Vote Center to have voting booths and drop off facilities in the Waiting Room and Ticket Concourse of Union Station. We are in the process of finalizing the arrangements. The facilities should be open from October 24 through November 3, 2020.

CARES Act Funding Update

As of last Friday, September 18, we have drawn 100% of Metro's \$861.9 million CARES act funds. The \$861.9 million is new Federal revenue to help fight the funding shortfalls caused by COVID-19. These funds were used to pay for bus and rail operations and maintenance expenses incurred since January 20, 2020. This additional revenue was needed to help alleviate the reduction in sales tax and fare revenue resulting from the pandemic.

Operations

The current ridership numbers indicate that Metro is carrying about 596,400 boardings/weekday. Field observations continue to show that the majority of customers (99%) are wearing face masks/coverings when riding on our system. Also, effective Sunday, October 4, 2020 Operations will no longer permit roping off the front of buses, in order to allow for added capacity in support of social distancing for customers.

Service

As part of Metro's Service Recovery Plan, several bus service adjustments have been made over the past several months in support of social distancing and to even out loads for those making essential trips. Rail service will continue with an enhanced modified Sunday schedule and use of weekday rail-car consists to the extent possible. Operations will continue to monitor ridership and adjust service as necessary as we prepare for ridership to change as schools reopen and as restrictions are gradually lifted.

Strengthened Cleaning Regimes, PPE & UV-C Light Pilot Update

Metro continues to practice strengthened cleaning regimes in response to COVID-19 on all vehicles, stations and terminals with EPA-approved disinfectants. The necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) continues to be distributed and procured as safety is our top priority. Metro is currently awaiting efficacy testing results from the EPA for both the UV-C escalator devices at Union Station East Portal and the UV-C portable light pilot program on B Line (Red).

Communications

Media Coverage

The Agency and its staff members were mentioned in 7 print and electronic stories through Wednesday, September 23.

Workforce Communications

We have individually packaged more than 100,000 masks for distribution to the riding public. This is the last week of street team mask distribution. We are going to save the remaining earmarked funds for mask distribution if and when there is a COVID-19 surge later this fiscal year. In the meantime, we have launched the Mask Pac Ambassadors which is comprised of employees who ride our system to and from work. Those who sign up are given backpacks full of individually wrapped masks and PPE so they can distribute masks to fellow bus, train and subway riders. So far, 33 employees have signed up to be Ambassadors

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 September 25, 2020, 12 p.m., Metro has 367 Total Confirmed Cases:

- 101 Operators
- 74 Maintenance
- 43 Administrative
- 11 Security
- 138 Contractors/Vendors
- 3 Deaths (1 Contractor/Vendor; 2 Bus Operations)
- 207 Recovered

Metro Headquarters Re-Opening Update

Human Capital & Development meets with labor leaders on a weekly basis and has added the summary of Metro's COVID-19 Data Dashboard to this meeting. Updates are shared on internal and external conditions being monitored as the agency progresses through Phase Two of Our Path Forward, Metro's pandemic recovery plan. Data gathered for the dashboard aligns with state and local details and serves as a decision-making tool.

With the implementation of a hybrid model for telecommuting, the Metro headquarters building has remained at a 35% capacity within Phase Two of the Our Path Forward plan. The conditions for maintaining a low-risk workspace at Los Angeles Metro continue to be monitored as the agency responds to the impacts of the pandemic.

Workforce and Leave Policy

Well-Being Services continues to support the COVID-19 leave of absence process that aligns with the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA). Since April 1, we have resolved more than 730 inquiries sent to our dedicated phone and email inboxes for COVID-related questions. We have seen an increase in inquiries, likely due to the start of the school year and the new COVID Personal Leave process.

Currently, there are approximately 611 employees on a continuous non-occupational medical leave of absence (less than one year), from an average of anywhere from 450-500. In addition, there are 58 employees off work using continuous Emergency Family/Medical Leave (EFML) under the FFCRA, or who were advised to self-quarantine due to their age or underlying condition and who required leave beyond the provisions of the FFCRA. This brings the total number of employees off due to non-occupational reasons to approximately 669. Additionally, we have approximately 160 employees in our Long-Term Disability process (both occupational and non-occupational conditions), but at this time only one of these employees is off work due to COVID-related reasons.

As for leave benefits, we continuously monitor our processes to ensure we are adhering to best practices and maintaining legal compliance. Governor Newsom recently signed legislation that will expand California Family Rights Act benefits for some employees. These amendments will not become effective until January 1, but we are already working with counsel to ensure our processes are updated to align with any changes. We also continue to refine Metro's COVID leave processes to ensure we are managing cases to effectively meet business needs and in accordance with federal, state, and local laws.

Medical Services continues to coordinate the return-to-work process for employees who were exposed to or confirmed to have COVID-19. To date, we have returned 207 employees to work who previously tested positive for COVID-19 and 7 are currently pending clearance. In total, we have returned 1,048 employees to work who were off due to COVID-related reasons, including exposure or suspected/confirmed positive cases. Due to the volume of employees seeking to return to work after quarantine, there is a delay in getting employees processed to return to work. With the help of loaned staff from HC&D and Operations, we continue to improve our response times.

Finally, we regret to report that we have received notice that 7 Metro retirees have passed away from COVID-19 complications. Staff from Pension & Benefits has worked

to ensure the families of these retirees are supported during this difficult time. We offer our heart-full condolences to the families and friends impacted by these losses.

Labor-Management Partnership

Metro continues to meet weekly with our senior leaders and our 5 labor unions to discuss the impacts of the pandemic on our workforce.

Construction

Construction continues across all projects with emphasis on proper safety protocols - social distancing, masks, cleaning, contact tracing, etc. We continue to identify opportunities for expanded work areas and hours with lower impacts to the communities.

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.