



**Metro**

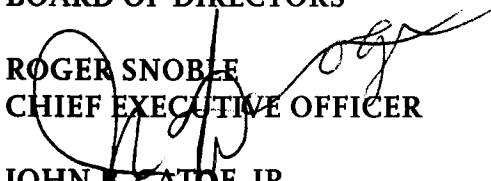
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

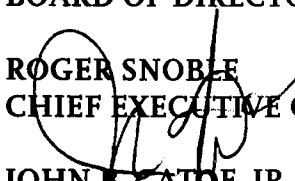
One Gateway Plaza  
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2952

213.922.2000 Tel  
metro.net

SEPTEMBER 7, 2004

**TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**THROUGH:  ROGER SNOBLE  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**FROM:  JOHN B. CATOE, JR.  
DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**SUBJECT: ELIMINATING THE SECOND BELL ON THE METRO GOLD LINE**

**ISSUE**

At the May 22, 2004 Board meeting, the Board requested staff to evaluate, in conjunction with the Braille Institute, how eliminating the second bell on the Metro Gold Line would affect blind passengers.

**DISCUSSION**

Since the opening of the Metro Gold Line, residents along the alignment have raised concerns regarding noise from various sources during operations. There are three main generators of noise: warning devices (bells along with flashing lights and gates) installed at the grade crossings, train-borne warning devices (horns, gongs), and the rail-wheel interface in a curve as a train traverses through it.

Staff has made considerable efforts in mitigating the noise impacts of the Metro Gold Line light rail system while ensuring the safety of Metro Gold Line operations for passengers, operators, motorists, and pedestrians. Although the warning devices are regulatory requirements of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), the MTA sought and received an exemption from the CPUC from the continuous sounding of bells at certain crossings. MTA installed a "low horn" on the trains and adjusted the decibel level of the horn to the lowest allowable limits in compliance with CPUC requirements. In addition to these design changes, MTA also revised its operating rules for operators, modifying the pattern and use of the low horn to further mitigate noise impacts. To address the issue regarding noise inherent during train operations on a curve, MTA installed friction modifiers that automatically dispense a thin film of lubricant on the rails every time a train operates through the curve.

Despite its efforts, a community group in South Pasadena, Pasadena Avenue Monterey Road Committee (PAMRC) has filed applications with the CPUC requesting further noise

mitigation measures.

In order to evaluate Director LaBonge's motion, staff contacted the Braille Institute and conducted a test at the Avenue 50 grade crossing by alternately turning off one of the two existing bells at the crossing to determine the effectiveness of the remaining bell as a warning device, particularly for blind pedestrians. After several tests, all four Braille Institute participants expressed concern about eliminating any warning bells. Their concern was based on the fact that since one bell is installed on each side of the crossing, eliminating a bell on one side would not provide a discernible warning to blind pedestrians approaching the crossing on that side. The Braille Institute forwarded their concerns, observed during the test, to MTA in a letter dated June 8, 2004 (Attachment A).

MTA also discussed Director LaBonge's proposal with the ADA Compliance Officer for the City of Los Angeles, and the Legislative Representative for the National Federation of the Blind of California. They both expressed the same concerns shared by the Braille Institute team and requested we not eliminate any of warning bells. Eliminating one of the bells at the crossing would not only have a negative impact on the safety of blind passengers, but also on persons who have an attendant hearing loss. When combined with the ambient traffic noise at a crossing, the one bell would clearly be inadequate in providing the necessary warning for such individuals.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

Much has been done to satisfy concerns about noise impacts, but there are limits to what can be accomplished in way of noise mitigation while maintaining MTA's commitment to safe rail operations.

Based on input received from the Braille Institute and other similar organizations, staff recommends not pursuing the proposal to eliminate one of the two crossing bells at a vehicular crossing on the Gold Line. Instead, staff recommends that the additional noise mitigation strategies outlined in a settlement agreement between the MTA, City of South Pasadena and the PBLCA be considered, subject to it being adopted by the CPUC in the course of the above referenced administrative hearings, or to implement any other noise mitigation measures that the CPUC may require.

#### **ATTACHMENT**

- A. Letter from Braille Institute



# BRAILLE INSTITUTE

741 North Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90029-3594 • (323) 663-1111 • (323) 666-5881 FAX  
www.brailleinstitute.org

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June 8, 2004

Administration-Executive Office  
Chip L. Hazen  
ADA Compliance Administrator  
One Gateway Plaza  
Mail Stop: 99-15-2  
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2403

Dear Chip,

It was a pleasure to meet with. As you know, I shared this experience with three other visually impaired students of Braille Institute. After experiencing the variations of bells, we feel that there is a definite need for at least two bells per intersection/crossing at the Gold Line stop at Avenue 50 in Highland Park.

The team found it very hard to interpret the one bell ringing as it is very difficult to hear unless you are standing on the side by which the bell sounds.

We also discussed other ideas that we would like to suggest:

- ✓ The tactile bumps on the ground should be moved back about a foot from the crossing arm. If a visually impaired person is crossing on the strip when the bell starts to ring they will stop, wait, listen and the arm will come down on them.
- ✓ An audible sound different (for caution) from the bell should beep prior to the bell to let a visually impaired person know that the arm is coming down so he/she will know to stop. The same sound could be used when the arm is going up. This sound could be low in tone just loud enough to be heard by people approaching.
- ✓ To accommodate the deaf/blind, the beeper/bell and/or the tactile yellow pad could vibrate.
- ✓ The tactile yellow pads should be centered on the middle of the walkway so a visually impaired person can line up to walk a straight line across the tracks.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our opinions.

Hifrance Raftie  
Employment Specialist

Braille Institute provides a variety of services for blind and visually impaired individuals. Funded by contributions and bequests. Founded 19