



## Board Report

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**OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE  
MARCH 18, 2021**

**SUBJECT: BETTER BUS PROGRAM**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE report on Metro's new Better Bus program, a Customer Experience initiative to improve service for our bus customers.

### **ISSUE**

Metro is launching a new initiative, the Better Bus Program, to transform the bus riding experience in Los Angeles County to provide dignified experiences for the 75 percent of Metro riders who take the bus each day. This report describes the rationale for creating the program, the key focus areas, the current work plan, and next steps for advancing the program.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Better Bus, a new agency-wide effort coordinated by the Customer Experience unit in the Office of the CEO, seeks to highlight and address bus rider needs by making improvements to bus services and stops. The purpose of Better Bus is to align Metro's collective efforts around elevating investments that improve bus speed, ease, safety and comfort. Metro aims to transform the bus riding journeys in Los Angeles County by providing dignified experiences for the three-fourths of Metro riders that take the bus.

Currently, the half-a-million daily riders on our bus system disproportionately represent Equity Focus Communities (communities Metro defines as high-need based on income, race, and car ownership), with significant numbers of essential workers and people in economic distress. Even prior to the COVID pandemic-driven service cuts, bus riders sometimes experienced pain points such as unreliable and slow buses, long wait times, insufficient delay or service advisory information, uninviting bus stops, concerns about homelessness, concerns about personal security, and cleanliness at bus stops and onboard. These aspects of service need to be improved to provide a dignified customer experience and advance social and racial equity for Metro customers.

Providing high-quality trip experiences for bus riders is more imperative now than ever before. During the

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pandemic, the Metro's bus system retained more riders than other public transit modes. The bus is a lifeline for riders and non-riders alike, as it is critical to the functioning of LA County's health and economic systems. Bus ridership has continued to recover since early 2020, and as of January 2021, hovers at just around half of pre-pandemic levels. Metro buses continue to transport just under 500,000 riders each day, compared to around 120,000 riders on rail. There are more daily bus riders during the pandemic than on rail on a typical pre-pandemic day.

This report outlines key components of the Better Bus Program and how they relate to existing Metro plans and programs that seek to improve bus service, most notably NextGen and the 2020 Customer Experience Plan. This report also sets a broad vision for implementing Better Bus through the development of a comprehensive, multi-year funding plan.

Metro works to provide high-quality bus service to the residents of LA County through the everyday efforts of front-line employees, operations and maintenance staff, and projects such as the NextGen Bus Plan. However, despite this abundant attention, there has never been a consolidation of Metro's bus efforts into one unified program. The goal of Better Bus is to provide a framework for improving all aspects of the bus rider experience that will allow for ridership growth, equity, and increased effectiveness of the bus in delivering mobility and access to opportunity for all. The Better Bus Program also advocates for greater investment in all aspects of the bus system.

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown into sharp relief the importance of bus as the workhorse of the public transit system in Los Angeles. Even prior to the COVID pandemic, nearly three-fourths of Metro's systemwide ridership was on bus, and many essential workers continue to travel by bus. In California, an estimated 36% of residents who commute by transit work in essential industries, and half of these commuters are service workers in the most critical sectors, including healthcare, food service, public safety, transportation and government services (2015-2019 ACS data).

Improving the bus is also key to Metro's commitment to racial justice, particularly during the pandemic, as racial inequities have been exacerbated by the parallel health and economic crises. Based on comparisons of Fall 2019 and Fall 2020 bus rider surveys, bus riders who have continued to ride during the pandemic are largely Latino (70%, up from 66% prior to the pandemic) and Black (18%, up from 15%), 15% of riders have at least one disability, and the median household income of bus riders is about \$18,000 (compared to about \$28,000 for rail riders).

The Better Bus Program incorporates the work contained in the NextGen Bus Plan and ties closely with several initiatives in the Customer Experience Plan.

The first phase of the NextGen Bus Plan was rolled out in December 2020, and subsequent phases will be completed in 2021. NextGen is restructuring the bus network to be more relevant to today's travel patterns, provide more frequent service on key corridors, particularly off-peak, and improve the speed of service via supportive infrastructure such as the new 5th and 6th Street bus-only lanes in Downtown LA. Metro recognizes, however, that more needs to be done to realize a high quality bus system, including more frequent service, improved on-time performance, bus stop seating, shelter and lighting, better security, improved cleanliness, and reliable real-time information. Better Bus will advance the work on these additional aspects of service quality beyond what was contemplated in NextGen.

The Board-adopted Customer Experience (CX) Plan also places bus-related improvements front and center, to reflect the large majority of Metro's riders who take the bus. The CX Plan set the stage for the launch of the Better Bus Program by outlining 25 bus-specific recommendations that are planned or underway, led by various departments across Metro that are a part of the Better Bus Team. Better Bus is housed in the Office of

the CEO and led by the Customer Experience Executive Officer, and the initiative enjoys active participation from all corners of the agency.

**DISCUSSION**

**Bus Customer Pain Points**

The Better Bus Program focuses first and foremost on bus customer pain points and seeks to develop solutions that are responsive to these issues. Staff has completed an annual Customer Experience Survey that will guide decision-making and investments in Metro transit service. From the results of this annual survey, Better Bus will focus on the pain points identified as target issues for current and lapsed bus riders, detailed in Table 1. Target issues are those that customers rate low but are most important to their trip experiences.

*Table 1: Bus Results from 2020 Customer Experience Survey*

Target Issues	Other Pain Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delay advisories</li> <li>• Bus interior cleanliness/graffiti</li> <li>• Bus stop cleanliness/graffiti</li> <li>• Bus stop seating</li> <li>• Rule enforcement</li> <li>• Security</li> <li>• Rider concerns about homelessness on the bus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On time performance</li> <li>• Speed/travel time</li> <li>• Bus Frequency</li> <li>• Sexual harassment</li> <li>• Racial/ethnic harassment</li> </ul>

Some pain points may receive lower or higher ratings among particular groups of riders. For example, safety from sexual harassment is lower among young women and especially among riders who are gender non-binary. Another example, bus on-time performance, frequency, and speed receive fairly high scores from current riders. However, as these are all important components of travel time competitiveness with driving, they are among the top reasons that potential riders choose not to ride Metro buses.

The customer input from the 2020 Customer Experience survey and past Metro surveys and studies has been central to the vision, workplan, and performance metrics of Better Bus. Bus riders have consistently experienced particular pain points and have shared their feedback with Metro for some time. The bullets below summarize feedback received through a variety of past surveys and public outreach efforts:

- **Vision 2028.** The Customer Satisfaction Survey conducted in 2017 for the Vision 2028 strategic planning process showed that speed, frequency, and reliability are top issues. Also, concerns over security on board and at bus stops also serve as major barriers to riding the bus.
- **NextGen Bus Study and Plan.** Metro staff began this project in February 2018 and received a total of 16,300 comments about how to improve bus service. When fully implemented, NextGen will help address the factors listed as concerns of “all riders” in the first column of Table 2: travel speed, frequency, and reliability. However, many of the documented customer needs extend beyond what is being addressed through the NextGen Bus Plan implementation. Among current, former, and infrequent riders/non-riders, staff identified key pain points for each customer group, also shown in Table 2. These include bus stop safety, first/last mile connections, on-board comfort, and other experiential aspects of riding the bus. NextGen found that the waiting experience (at bus stops) can be as important as the on-board experience for bus riders.

Table 2: Findings from NextGen Outreach and Engagement

	All Riders	Current Riders	Former Riders	Infrequent/Non-Riders
<b>Key Pain Points</b>	Travel Speed	More service	Security (women, certain geographies)	Information (non-riders)
	Frequency	Fares	First/Last Mile (elderly, higher income)	First/Last Mile (women, youth, elderly)
	Reliability	Information	Comfort (odor, crowding)	Comfort (odor, crowding)

- Understanding How Women Travel Study.** In 2019, Metro completed a study titled *Understanding How Women Travel* guided by the agency’s Women and Girls Governing Council. This study team surveyed current and previous riders, as well as non-riders, and analyzed gender data currently collected by the agency. The study found that women, who make up more than half of current bus riders, are largely impacted by concerns over personal security, service reliability, and rider amenities at bus stops and on board:

  - Personal security (all transit users and non-riders):** Based on a stated preference survey of current and previous Metro riders, as well as non-riders, concern over personal security is the largest barrier to riding transit for women. Just 13% of current female riders feel safe waiting for transit after dark (compared to 30% of male riders).
  - Bus reliability:** The top three complaints filed by female Metro bus riders are all related to reliability: bus pass-ups, no shows, late buses, and unreliable or absent real-time information. Considering that women are more likely to trip chain than men, service reliability becomes increasingly important.
  - Bus customer facilities:** Nearly 60% of female riders with children bring their kids on transit, yet many women express difficulty in riding Metro with children and strollers. Only 39% of women feel that there is adequate space on board for the items they need to carry.

This feedback underscores the need to focus more attention on our bus system going forward. Hence, Better Bus seeks to address these pain points and more. By doing so, Better Bus will dramatically improve service and attract more riders to the system.

**Better Bus Work Plan**

Better Bus was first established in 2019 as an ongoing, inter-departmental forum for staff to collaborate on bus-focused improvements. The initiative consists of an Executive Team and topical working groups. The Better Bus vision and early actions, detailed in Table 3, center on the core needs of Metro’s bus riders, evidenced by the various surveys and studies detailed above. To address these pain points outlined, staff structured a work plan around three key focus areas: speed and service quality, ease, and safety and comfort. These three areas of focus are core to improving the customer experience for Metro bus riders and merit taking a comprehensive approach to realize a Better Bus system.

Table 3: Better Bus Vision and Early Actions

Category	Vision	Working Group	Proposed Early Actions (FY21-22) – subject to funding	Lead Department
<b>Speed &amp; Service Quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel time is competitive</li> <li>• Wait time is minimal</li> <li>• Bus is on time</li> </ul>	NextGen Joint Bus Speed Working Group (with LADOT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Securing approvals for 2-3 new bus lanes</li> <li>• Transit signal priority on all Tier I corridors</li> <li>• Bus stop and zone improvements</li> <li>• NextGen frequency improvements</li> <li>• Exploring policy changes and permitting agreements with local jurisdictions</li> </ul>	Service Planning and Analysis (Operations)
<b>Ease</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to pay and validate fare</li> <li>• Affordable</li> <li>• Trip planning is easy and real-time information is accurate</li> <li>• Accessing bus stop is convenient from home, and key destinations are easy to access from bus stops</li> <li>• The transfer experience is easy between</li> </ul>	Real-Time Arrival Information, Better Bus Customer and Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procure enhanced prediction engine to improve real-time data accuracy</li> <li>• Improve data feed for Transit App</li> <li>• SMS alert system and route-by-route scorecard</li> <li>• Coordination with the Fareless System Initiative to offer free rides for qualifying customers to make it easier and more affordable for more people to ride</li> </ul>	ITS, Marketing (Communications), TAP (Finance & Budget)

	modes and agencies			
<b>Safety &amp; Comfort</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Riding the bus feels safe</li> <li>Crowding on board is at a comfortable level</li> <li>The waiting experience, and boarding and alighting the bus, is comfortable for people of all abilities</li> <li>Riders and operators are following mask requirements*</li> </ul>	Better Bus Stops, On-board security and cleanliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot tests of new features at bus stops</li> <li>Develop regional standards for bus stops</li> <li>Launch Flexible Dispatch Pilot to improve bus security</li> <li>Install vinyl seats on buses</li> <li>Pilot tests of midday layover cleaning of bus interiors and enhanced bus stop cleaning</li> <li>Exploring partnerships with local jurisdictions and municipal operators</li> </ul>	Stops and Zones (Operations); System Security & Law Enforcement; Environmental Compliance and Sustainability; Vehicle and Equipment Acquisition (Operations); Office of Civil Rights and Inclusion

\*temporary measure during COVID

Core goals of the Better Bus program include:

- Prioritize highest-impact investments.** Better Bus focuses first on the top customer pain points to guide investments. Additionally, Better Bus will prioritize improvements for Equity Focus Communities and vulnerable riders, including riders with disabilities, the elderly and women and girls.
- Package a vision for a better bus experience.** Metro will work hand-in-hand with local and regional partners to communicate a vision for improving the bus system that emphasizes creative and nimble approaches to improve the experience of current riders as quickly as possible. Metro will be leveraging local, regional and federal opportunities to prioritize bus investments and collaborate on achieving shared goals. Better Bus will also look to national and international best practices for inspiration.
- Develop an ongoing dialogue with riders.** The program will solicit feedback on an ongoing basis and open a two-way dialogue with riders. The Better Bus team is developing an online tool that allows riders to gain access to critical information for their trip, including delay advisories and providing opportunities to weigh in on how to make their trips better. The team will also be engaging customers and community partners through rider listening initiatives, which could take the form of focus groups or telephone surveys.

The Better Bus Program takes an incremental approach, starting with innovative, lower cost, and scalable solutions wherever possible. For example, Better Bus is launching a series of pilot programs by mid-2021 to test improvements, such as e-paper signs, lighting and other customer amenities at select bus stops. Better Bus also looks beyond these pilots at long-term, enterprise-wide improvements that will require systems change and ongoing funding sources. For example, only about a quarter of bus stops served by Metro have shelter, and providing shade at the remaining bus stops will require larger investment and new partnership models with cities. This change will not happen overnight, but the Better Bus Program will formalize the effort to ensure long term investment for our riders.

The Better Bus Program is supported by the CX Plan, which sets deadlines and assigns responsible departments for each of the 38 bus improvement recommendations (Attachment A). A full list of proposed Better Bus investments through FY26 is included as Attachment B. In addition, the Better Bus team has also

identified 37 performance metrics that will be used to measure progress in completing each of the recommendations.

### **Better Bus Funding and Implementation**

At the January 28<sup>th</sup> Regular Board Meeting Metro's CEO directed the Planning Department and Office of Management and Budget to work with the Chief of Staff and Executive Officers for Equity and Race and Customer Experience to develop a comprehensive multi-year financial plan for Better Bus.

Many of the line items within the Better Bus work plan are unfunded or partly funded. Some were approved by the Board through the FY2021 mid-year budget adjustment and are already being pursued. Per CEO direction in January, Metro will develop a funding strategy for the unfunded components.

With Metro's fiscal constraints, which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, funding Better Bus improvements will require creativity, resourcefulness, and tradeoffs. The pandemic has significantly reduced bus ridership and fare revenue, and the sales taxes that provide the bulk of Metro's operating subsidy are also lower than anticipated. The lower revenue has increased our operating shortfall. Federal stimulus funding helps address the shortfall, but when it ends, Metro will need to identify other sources of funding. The Better Bus Team, with the support of the Planning Department and OMB, will present options that have the potential to fund the Better Bus program during the April Board meeting.

#### *Funding of Incremental Improvements (FY21-22): Progress*

Better Bus staff has prioritized projects based on four qualitative criteria (each rated Low/Medium/High):

1. Equity
2. Customer Priority (as determined by the annual customer experience survey results),
3. Project continuation (for example, for pilot projects that need funding to continue), and,
4. Cost/benefit.

Several Better Bus pilot programs received funding to get started via the FY21 midyear Customer Experience program (totaling \$2.2M), including:

- Homelessness: Limited emergency short term shelter (hotel vouchers) and regular statistically valid counts on bus and rail.
- Flexible Dispatch Pilot: enables Metro to respond to issues on the system with appropriate staff, such as homeless outreach or law enforcement as the situation demands.
- TransitWatch marketing campaign: Digital advertising campaign to increase TransitWatch app and text message use to help customers feel safe.
- Digital Rider Alert system: A robust system to enable riders to receive customized service and emergency alerts through text messages and other channels.
- Rescue Ride: A pilot program that quickly identifies customers impacted by a missed run or pass-up in real-time and offers them a free ride code for an on-demand shared ride service to get them where they need to go.

Metro's Environmental Compliance and Sustainability Department (ECSD), has been working on several climate impact reduction projects that strengthen the execution of future Better Bus related projects. The outcomes of the ECSD work allowed the Better Bus Team to: 1) develop priority criteria for shelter placements and other bus stop improvements, and 2) complete a conceptual design of a bus stop pole that can accommodate additional improvements, such as solar lighting, real-time information, shade/cooling options and seating for customers. These efforts align with the execution of climate impact-reduction strategies contained in the 10-year sustainability strategic plan, *Moving Beyond Sustainability*. Additional ECSD resources and efforts could potentially be leveraged alongside future grants to develop and execute bus stop improvement pilots, especially in Equity Focus Communities and high-heat areas.

Staff also continue to apply for, and secure, grants to support the Board-approved components of the Better Bus vision, including a SB1 grant that Metro received to install bus speed improvements along the NextGen Tier I corridors (\$25 million with 50% local match). The Board has also directed staff to use \$24.3 million of FY21 mid-year funds to support preparation to restore bus service to a 7.0 million Revenue Service Hour level by September 2021.

#### *Additional FY22 Funding Needs*

FY22 operating funds will be needed to continue pilot programs and make additional bus-focused customer experience improvements, such as:

- Additional staffing to cover expanding scopes for the Better Bus and Customer Experience programs to conduct annual customer experience surveys and to develop a comprehensive LA28 Mobility Concept Plan per Board motion 42, to prepare for the World Cup and Olympics.
- Bus stop cleaning enhancements
- Bus interior mid-day layover cleaning pilot
- Bus stop improvement pilots with shelter, solar lighting, real-time displays, and other customer features
- Acceleration of vinyl seat installations on over 300 buses per year
- Surprise and Delight Program: arts, music, and customer giveaways to surprise and delight customers, per Board motion 45.1

#### *Long-Term Investments (FY22-26) Progress*

The Better Bus Team is developing a five-year capital and operating plan for Better Bus (FY22-FY26) and applying criteria to prioritize high-need investments. Metro's Planning Department is currently identifying opportunities for potential funding of Better Bus investments through grants and where there might be other funds that can address the needs of the Better Bus program, while addressing Metro's expected growing operating shortfall.

The Better Bus Team is working with OMB, Planning, and Government Relations to identify funding sources and policies that could accelerate the implementation of the program by:

- Aligning State and Federal legislative agenda to the goals of Better Bus with specific requests for financial resources for homeless supportive services and for bus shelters to address rising heat and racial inequalities.
- Providing input on the Automated Bus Lane Enforcement (ABLE) pilot program enabling legislation, that would help address bus reliability issues sometimes faced by our riders by keeping bus lanes clear.
- Developing a list of grants that could support Better Bus improvements, understanding that Metro already receives and/or programs virtually all available transit-eligible grants to ongoing operations, essential state-of-good-repair, and the voter-approved expansion of transit service.
- Identifying, for Board consideration, tradeoffs for repurposing existing funds.

Full implementation of Better Bus is contingent on funding availability. Many of these improvements, such as customer features at bus stops, will require regional collaboration and cost-sharing.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

At the direction of the CEO, Planning and OMB are developing a funding strategy for the Better Bus program improvements over a five-year time frame. The funding strategy is expected for the April Board cycle.



## **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

Metro's 10-year strategic plan, Vision 2028 calls for Metro to "invest in a world class bus system that is reliable, convenient and attractive to more users for more trips" (Goal 1.2). Central to this goal is a vision for "smooth trip" which includes both high-quality service features, such as faster and more reliable service, but also improved customer experience along the complete trip journey, from planning one's trip, accessing the transit stop, and arriving at one's destination on time (Goal 2). Better Bus is central to achieving both of these goals.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Metro plans to publicly launch Better Bus and start a round of public engagement and outreach in 2021. Many of the early action items outlined in this report (Table 1) will begin in mid-2021.

Staff continues to develop the funding strategy for Better Bus and will update the Board in April.

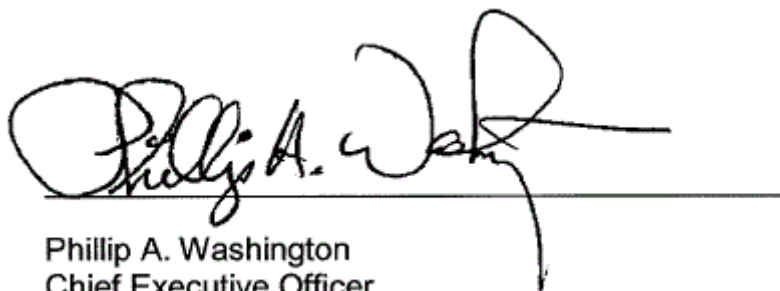
Attachment A - Better Bus Recommendations in 2020 Customer Experience Plan

Attachment B - Proposed Better Bus Investments through FY26

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**ATTACHMENT A**

**Better Bus Recommendations in the 2020 Customer Experience Plan, Adopted by Board of Directors Dec 3, 2020**

Category	Action	Due Date	FY21 midyr	FY22	FY23	FY24
<b>Metro Bus reliability</b>	1. By January 15, 2021 Metro Operations to specify the Operator Assignment Ratio needed to meet the 1% cancelled assignment limit (1.25 OAR).	January 15, 2021		\$ 15,000,000	\$ 15,300,000	\$ 15,606,000
<b>Metro Bus reliability</b>	2. By March 1, 2021, Metro's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to establish a process for budget flexibility to move funding between categories (e.g. between authorized headcount, overtime and hiring bonuses) and to more nimbly add service as needed mid-year to meet ridership demand. This is especially important due to uncertainty about the pace of ridership restoration post-COVID-	March 1, 2021				
<b>Metro Bus reliability</b>	3. By April 1, 2021, Metro Marketing and OEI to work with Customer Care to implement a short-term pilot program that quickly identifies customers impacted by a missed run or pass-up in real time, and offers them in real time a free ride code for an on-demand shared ride service. This should also meet the needs of people with disabilities, possibly through Access Services. This will help customers get where they are going on time, and show them that Metro truly cares about their well-being.	April 1, 2021	\$ 100,000	\$ 400,000		
<b>Metro Bus reliability</b>	4. By June 30, 2021, Metro's Bus Operator Task Force to develop options and recommendations for ways to meet the 1% cancelled assignment limit (subject to discussion with Metro labor representatives). Specific options to consider include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fast track hiring for licensed commercial drivers and former and current transit agency bus operators, and flexibility to hire them directly into full time positions</li> <li>- Bus operator applicants being able to shadow a bus operator for a day to see what the job entails</li> <li>- Continuous mentorship of bus operators for the first year, beyond the current three-week period, to improve retention</li> <li>- Possible milestone bonuses to boost retention (e.g. after two years of service)</li> <li>- Reevaluation of shift bidding and work rules to provide as much latitude as possible to more finely tailor extra board assignments to days and locations where the need is expected to be greatest based on historical patterns. The goal is to provide as much flexibility as possible to fill potential Missed Assignments on short notice when needed to avoid a missed run</li> <li>- Evaluation of improvements in working conditions to give bus operators the support they need for work/life balance</li> <li>- Evaluation of pooling some extra boards across divisions (which may require cross-training on different bus equipment and different routes), borrowing from rail extra boards or operations supervisors who have recent bus operating experience, or allowing part-time operators to cover assignments on short notice when there are no other options to avoid a cancelled assignment</li> <li>- Considering use of technology to give division markup staff more tools to fill assignments at the</li> </ul>	June 30, 2021				
<b>Metro Bus reliability</b>	5. By June 30, 2021, the Better Bus Stops working group to work with Metro Bus Operations and Metro Stops and Zones to identify locations where inadequate lighting causes pass-ups, and provide recommendations on incentivizing municipalities to add lighting (or push-button beacons as	June 30, 2021				
<b>Metro Bus reliability</b>	6. By May 1, 2021, Metro Operations to develop a plan for divisions to communicate revised pass-up procedures with each bus operator multiple times when COVID-19 dissipates, and confirm that each bus operator understands what is expected.	May 1, 2021				
<b>Accuracy of real-time info</b>	1. By February 1, 2021, the Real-time Information Team to develop a charter and clearly identify scope of work, schedule, budget, and roles and responsibilities to provide high quality real time information and predictions to Metro riders.	February 1, 2021				
<b>Accuracy of real-time info</b>	2. By February 1, 2021, the Real-time Information Team to develop a comprehensive set of metrics for monitoring major points of failure (including hardware, software, communication, and operating procedure issues), a plan for monitoring the metrics, and a procedure for escalating issues that cannot be quickly solved by the team members.	February 1, 2021				
<b>Accuracy of real-time info</b>	3. By March 1, 2021, Metro ITS to release a real-time vehicle position Application Programming Interface (API) feed compliant with the GTFSS RT standard to help third-party apps and websites accurately predict Metro bus and train arrivals.	March 1, 2021				
<b>Accuracy of real-time info</b>	4. By June 30, 2021, to address operational changes that can occur such as detours and missed runs, the Real-time Information Team to work with Operations to develop required internal work flows and release a more accurate alerts API feed compliant with the GTFSS RT standard, and incorporate delay advisories prominently on the Metro website, apps, and real-time information digital displays.	June 30, 2021				
<b>Accuracy of real-time info</b>	5. By June 30, 2021, to improve dissemination of real time information, OEI, Countywide Planning, and Stops and Zones to test lower cost "e-paper" displays operated by solar panels, similar to what is currently being tested in London and Big Blue Bus in Santa Monica.	June 30, 2021				
<b>Accuracy of real-time info</b>	6. By June 30, 2021, Marketing and Research to study technology habits of Metro riders and evaluate options to disseminate real-time information, including to riders without smartphones and people with disabilities.	June 30, 2021				
<b>Metro Bus frequency</b>	1. By April 1, 2021, as part of the FY22 budget development, Metro Operations and OMB to update the rollout schedule for the NextGen phases based on ridership and revenue trends.	April 1, 2021				
<b>Bus stops</b>	1. By March 1, 2021, the Better Bus Stop working group to finalize a system for prioritizing which bus stops receive amenities first, based on Equity Focus Communities, weekday bus boardings, wait time, urban heat, high collision areas, and the presence of schools, senior centers and other public facilities. The criteria will be developed in partnership with cities in the Metro service area.	March 1, 2021				
<b>Bus stops</b>	2. By April 1, 2021, the Better Bus Stop working group, in consultation with subregional stakeholders, to recommend bus stop improvements for potential inclusion in local return project plans and uses.	April 1, 2021				
<b>Bus stops</b>	3. By April 1, 2021, Metro Real Estate to finalize an agreement to dedicate a portion of possible new digital billboard revenue to fund bus stop improvements.	April 1, 2021				

**ATTACHMENT A - Cont'd**

**Better Bus Recommendations in the 2020 Customer Experience Plan, Adopted by Board of Directors Dec 3, 2020**

Category	Action	Due Date	FY21 midyr	FY22	FY23	FY24
Bus stops	4. By June 30, 2021, Metro's OEI, Countywide Planning, Service Planning, and Office of Management and Budget to work with external fund sources, including local jurisdiction street furniture/advertising contracts, to develop a funding plan to provide seating and shade for at least 60% of Metro bus stops, along with low-cost solar lighting, new bus signs, real-time information, and low-cost seating.	June 30, 2021				
Bus stops	5. By Dec 31, 2021, Stops and Zones and Community Relations to work with municipalities to test inviting neighborhoods and businesses to adopt bus stops, as done in other cities.	December 31, 2021				
Bus stops	6. By Dec 31, 2021, the Better Bus Stops working group, Stops and Zones, Customer Relations, and Community Relations to work with the City of LA and at least two other cities in the Metro service area to formalize policies and procedures to keep bus stop areas clean, to address homelessness, and to develop a system to invite bus riders to report bus stop issues.	December 31, 2021				
Speed	1. By February 1, 2021, the Better Bus team in conjunction with the City of LA to finalize the next round of bus-only lane improvements to continue the momentum from successes in 2020.	February 1, 2021				
Crowding	1. While Metro cannot guarantee social distancing on all routes at all times, Metro will introduce a new service configuration in December 2020 that is expected to increase social distancing on targeted bus routes during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is expected to reduce the 10% of bus runs that exceed the temporary average daily load factor measure of 0.75 (a temporary change from the usual 1.3 standard due to COVID-19) to 3% or less based on current ridership levels.	December 13, 2020		\$ 150,000		
Crowding	2. By December 1, 2021, Metro Operations to engage a research center or consultant to conduct best practices research on headway management, and consider pilot testing headway management along Tier I service in 2022.	December 1, 2021	\$ 100,000	\$ 150,000		
Personal security	1. By February 1, 2021, Metro SSLE and Marketing to jointly set an ambitious goal for Metro Transit Watch market penetration. It is also recommended that, in addition to promoting the Metro Transit Watch app, communication campaigns widely publicize the 213-788-2777 text number (for people with phones that do not accommodate apps).	December 1, 2021				
Homelessness	1. By April 1, 2021, Metro to pilot test a flexible dispatch concept whereby Metro responds to safety and security issues on the system by dispatching appropriate staff: from homeless outreach or mental health workers to unarmed security ambassadors or law enforcement as the situation demands.	April 1, 2021	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,133,000	
Homelessness	4. By April 1, 2021, Metro Community Relations to initiate work with local and regional partners to provide more shelter and housing to help Metro towards reducing homelessness on the system by at least 50%.	April 1, 2021				
Cleanliness	1. By June 30, 2021, Metro Operations to evaluate opportunities and funding requirements to provide facilities and equipment to enhance the productivity, working conditions, and effectiveness of custodians and service attendants.	June 30, 2021				
Cleanliness	4. By June 30, 2021, Metro Operations to resume vinyl seat transition.	June 30, 2021		\$ 3,000,000	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 1,000,000
3.10 Cleanliness	1. By September 30, 2021, Metro's Office of Extraordinary Innovation (OEI) to work with Operations to test odor meters for station inspections, with an emphasis on elevators, escalators, stairwells, bus stops, and other areas where urination or defecation tend to occur. If this turns out to be viable, odor meters would help Metro track progress on this important aspect of the customer experience.	September 30, 2021				
Other CX funding requests	Metro.net website overhaul (including Better Bus Engagement Tool) - Interactive website to support Better Bus launch, plus real-time, automated system to communicate with riders, including during emergency shutdowns. Customize to each rider based on routes and times they ride, and the channels they use: metro.net, third-party apps like Google Maps and Transit, push notifications, text alerts, social media. note: also requires unfreezing two positions in Digital Services.	TBD	\$ 250,000	\$ 2,500,000	\$ 550,000	\$ 561,000
Other CX funding requests	Call Point Security Project Blue light boxes recommended by Women and Girls Governing Council to improve security on the BRT and rail system	TBD		\$ 5,000,000	\$ -	\$ -
Other CX funding requests	Surprise and Delight - Arts, music, and customer giveaways to surprise and delight customers, per Board motion 45.1	TBD		\$ 400,000	\$ 408,000	\$ 416,160
Other CX funding requests	Bus Service Scenario (6.5m rsh) - bus frequency improvements.	TBD		\$ 131,148,000	\$ 133,770,960	\$ 136,446,379
Other CX funding requests	NextGen Scenario A/B (7.0m rsh) - bus frequency improvements.	TBD			\$ 87,432,000	\$ 89,180,640
Other CX funding requests	NextGen Scenario C (9.4m rsh) - Potential bus frequency improvements. Feasibility and timing TBD.	TBD			TBD	
Other CX funding requests	ATMS 2 - Replacement of aging information systems involved in delivering real time information to modernize functionality and improve reliability .	TBD			\$ 10,000,000	\$ 10,000,000
Other CX funding requests	Bus stop improvements: 1200 additional signs with real time information for use by bus riders	TBD		\$ 1,139,793	\$ 12,537,727	\$ 1,453,200
Other CX funding requests	Bus stop improvements: Metro has over 13,000 stops. This increases the % with shelters from 24% to 60%.	TBD			\$ 58,220,000	\$ 4,650,000
Other CX funding requests	Bus stop improvements: Seats and solar lights attach to bus stop posts	TBD			\$ 6,800,000	\$ 544,000

**ATTACHMENT B**

**Proposed Better Bus Investments FY22-FY26**

Category	Project/Initiative	Description	Estimated Five-Year Cost	Rider Priority
Safety & Comfort	Work towards reducing homelessness on Metro by 50%	Limited emergency short term shelter pending more housing from local and regional partners	\$ 3,500,000	High
Safety & Comfort	Work towards reducing homelessness on Metro by 50%	Regular counts to monitor trends and gauge the success of Metro efforts to address homelessness	\$ 600,000	High
Safety & Comfort	Flexible Dispatch Pilot	Cost of dispatchers to enable Metro to respond to problems on the system with appropriate staff: from homeless outreach or law enforcement as the situation demands.	\$ 2,333,000	High
Safety & Comfort	TransitWatch marketing	Digital advertising campaign to increase TransitWatch downloads and use to keep Metro safe.	\$ 250,000	High
Safety & Comfort	Acceleration of Call Point Security Program	Blue light boxes recommended by Women and Girls Governing Council to improve security on BRT and the rail system.	\$ 5,000,000	Medium
Safety & Comfort	Bus Stop Improvements	Pilot tests of seats, solar lights, e-paper displays for real-time information, and text-to-speech buttons attached to bus stop posts. Partnership with 1-2 cities to install cooling features in high-heat areas.	\$ 1,100,000	High
Safety & Comfort	Bus Stop Improvements	Metro has over 11,000 stops. This increases the % with shelters from 24% to 60%. Financial incentive for use of local return for shelters and seating. 25% match for pilot program.	\$ 62,870,000	High
Safety & Comfort	Bus Stop and On-Board Cleaning Pilots	New powerwashing equipment for Stops & Zones and technology to improve efficiency and maximize existing staff time.	\$ 199,104	High
Safety & Comfort	Bus Stop and On-Board Cleaning Pilots	Bus interior mid-run cleaning pilot	\$ -	High
Safety & Comfort	Bus Stop and On-Board Cleaning Pilots	Replace fabric seats with easier-to-clean vinyl to improve ability to clean and sanitize buses and improve passenger comfort. Cost projected for 1,000 buses.	\$ 2,799,000	High
Safety & Comfort	Digital Rider Alert system	A robust system to enable riders to receive customized service and emergency alerts through text messages and other channels, and to provide an easy way for riders to communicate with Metro.	\$ 500,000	High
Safety & Comfort	Surprise and Delight	Arts, music, and customer giveaways to surprise and delight customers, per Board motion 45.1	\$ 250,000	N/A
Speed	Transit Fist Capital Improvements	Bus Priority Lane Expansion on Tier 1 Lines	\$ 104,080,803	Medium
Speed	Transit Fist Capital Improvements	Transit Signal Priority Field Implementation for Tier 1 & 2 Corridors	\$ 124,080,803	Medium
Speed	Transit Fist Capital Improvements	Spot improvements (queue jumpers, signal retiming, etc.)	\$ 31,020,201	Medium
Speed	Transit Fist Capital Improvements	Bus Stop Bulb Outs for Tier 1 & 2 Corridors	\$416,323,213	Medium
Speed	Transit Fist Capital Improvements	Layover Optimization (10 per year)	\$130,101,004	Medium
Speed	Transit Fist Capital Improvements	Relocating Bus Stops Nearside to Farside (100 stops/year)	\$26,020,201	Medium
Speed	Transit Fist Capital Improvements	Transit Signal Priority Software Upgrade / ATSAC	TBD	Medium
Speed	Transit Fist Capital Improvements	All-door boarding expansion	\$ 29,000,000	Medium
Speed	Automated Bus Lane Enforcement (ABLE) Pilot program	Cost to pilot testing of camera enforcement on bus lanes. Some cost could be offset by fines issued to motorists through the program.	\$ 6,800,000	Medium
Speed	Headway Management Best Practices Review	Conduct best practices research on headway management to even out bus spacing and loads on high frequency routes	\$ 150,000	Medium
Speed	Bus Service Scenario (6.5m rsh)	Bus frequency improvements. Incremental cost relative to 5.6m rsh	\$ 682,499,459	Medium
Speed	NextGen Scenario A/B (7.0m rsh)	Bus frequency improvements. Incremental cost relative to 6.5m rsh	\$ 454,999,639	Medium
Speed	NextGen Scenario C (9.4m rsh)	Bus frequency improvements. Incremental cost relative to 7.0m rsh. Feasibility and timing TBD.	TBD	Medium
Speed	Labor Budget to keep Cancelled Assignments under 1%	Order of magnitude cost to shift average OAR from 1.18-1.20 to 1.25 to avoid missed bus runs. This is scalable to various OAR levels.	\$ 15,000,000	Medium
Ease	Rescue Ride Pilot	A pilot program that quickly identifies customers impacted by a missed run or pass-up in real-time, and offers them a free ride code for an on-demand shared ride service.	\$ 500,000	Medium
Ease	ATMS 2	Replacement of aging information systems involved in delivering real time information to modernize functionality and improve reliability.	\$ 41,216,080	Low
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$ 2,141,192,507</b>	



We're creating a better bus experience.



# Objective

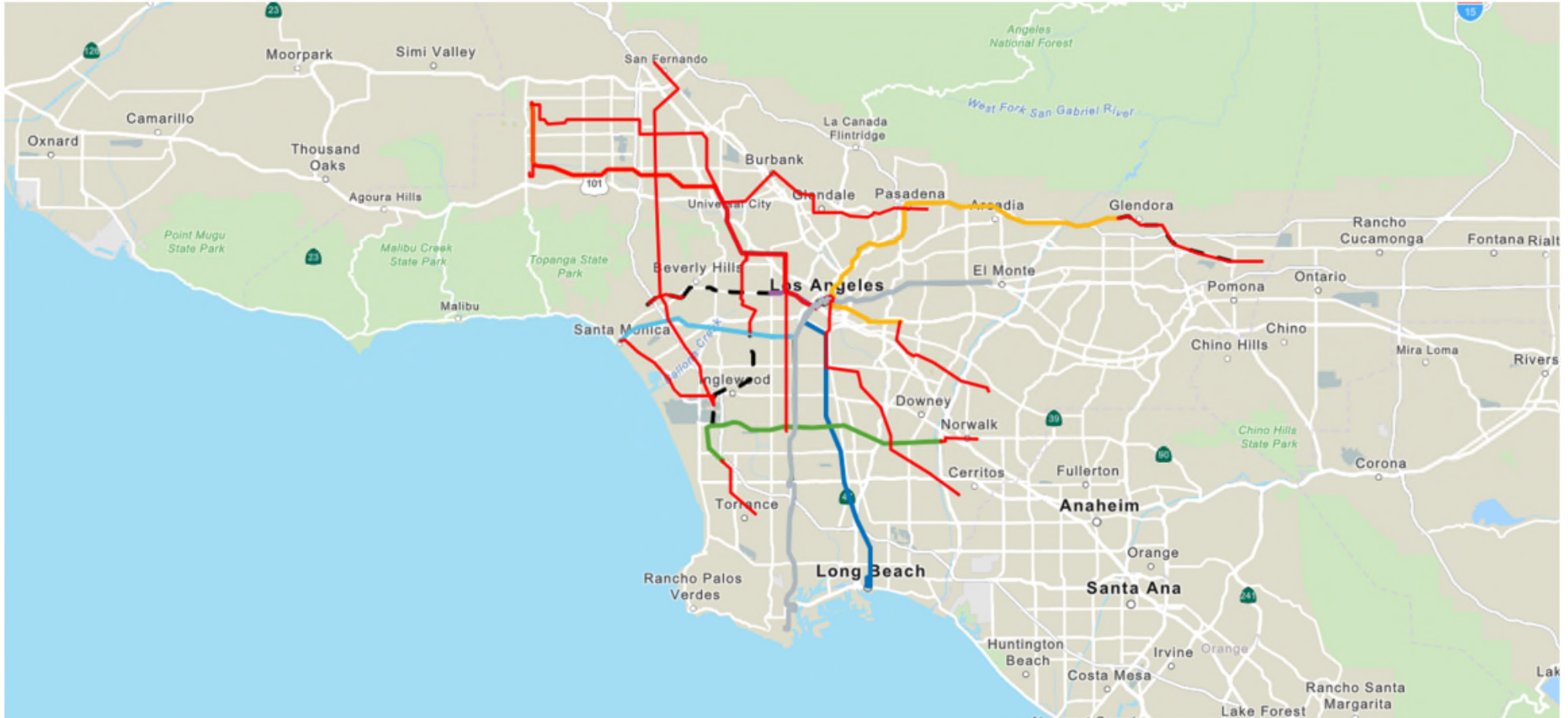
- Build on existing plans to deliver all aspects of the bus rider experience: fast, safe, easy and comfortable.
- Elevate investments that improve the quality, equity and effectiveness of the bus as the workhorse of LA County's transit system.
- Create a new and better relationship with our bus riders.

# Metro Bus Riders

- 66% Latinx
- 15% Black
- 32% Limited English Proficient
- 81% have no car
- 68% ride 4 times a day\*
- 30% pay cash
- Only 55% have a smartphone
- Median household income under \$18,000

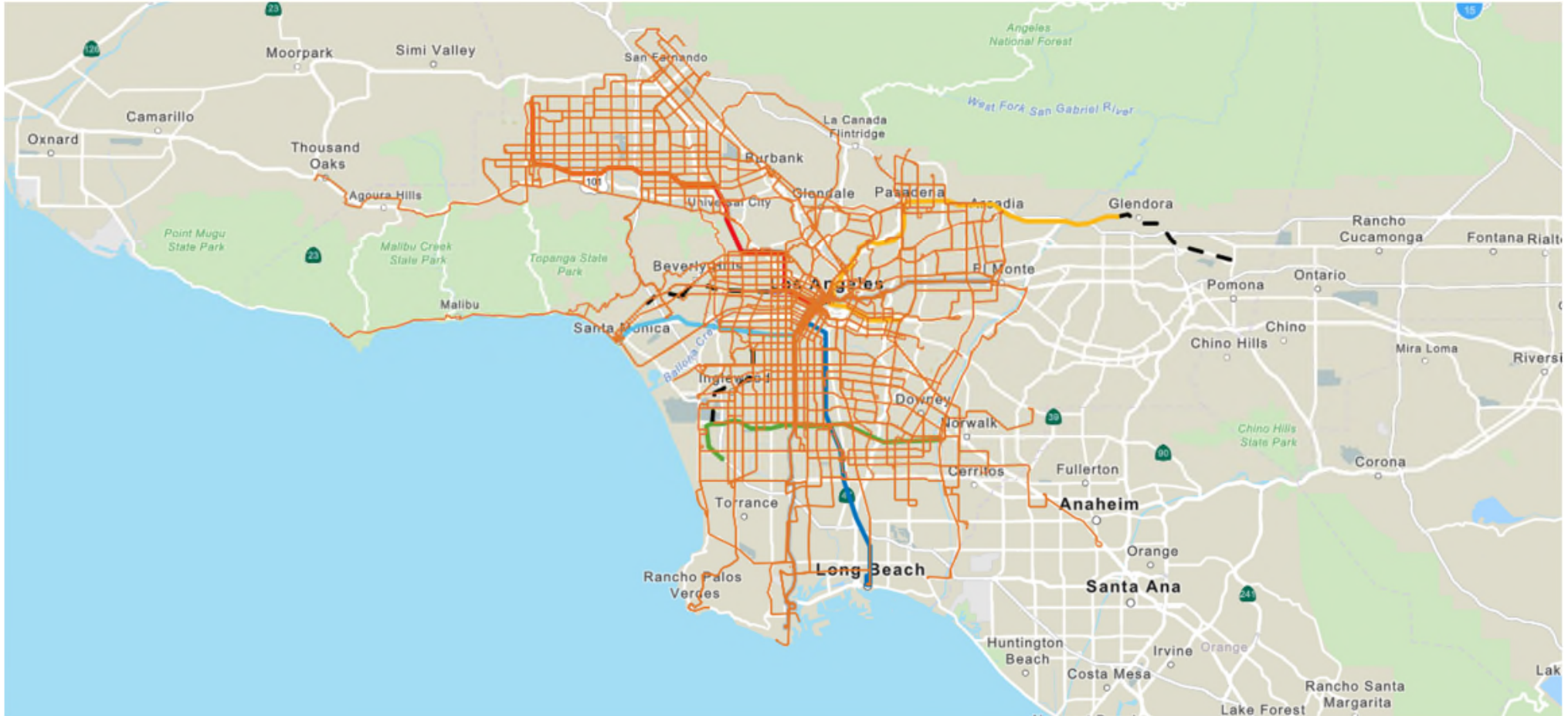


# Measure M Transit Projects





# Metro Bus System Coverage



# Guiding Priorities & Highlights of Early Actions

Creating a better bus experience.



## Speed

Securing approvals for new 2-3 bus lanes  
Transit signal priority on all Tier I corridors



## Ease

Improved data feed for Transit App  
SMS alert system and route-by-route scorecard\*



## Safety & Comfort

Pilot tests of new features at bus stops  
Accelerate vinyl seats on buses\*

# Example of Improvements: Bus stop pilots



Testing lighting and real-time information displays on bus stop posts, surveying riders, looking to test other on-post improvements over the next year

# Look Ahead

- Bring a Better Bus comprehensive financial plan to the Board of Directors in April, totaling \$2.1B over the next five years
  - Inclusive of funded/unfunded, mix of Metro and municipal share
  - Represents scale of investment needed for a high-quality bus system
- Continue to roll out funded Better Bus improvements throughout 2021, including:
  - Bus stop pilots
  - Publishing real-time feed (GTFS-RT)
  - Bus lanes and signal priority

Thank you.