



Board Report

File #: 2025-0509, **File Type:** Informational Report

Agenda Number: 45.

OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE JULY 17, 2025

**SUBJECT: STATUS REPORT: METRO'S RESPONSE TO EATON & PACIFIC PALISADES
WILDFIRES**

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE status report on Metro's Response to Eaton & Pacific Palisades Wildfires.

ISSUE

At its January 2025 meeting, the Board passed Motion #36 by Directors Hahn, Barger, Horvath, Solis, Dutra and Bass (Attachment A) which directed the CEO to modify the eligibility criteria of all reduced fare programs to include individuals and families displaced by the wildfires for six months, with an option to extend the program as needed and report back to the board in June 2025 on the outcomes and impacts of this effort.

Staff immediately implemented the Wildfire Recovery modified LIFE enrollment. Riders participating in this program received a free 30-ride pass good on Metro, a free 90-day pass good on all LIFE participating transit agencies, and three months of 20-free-ride passes under the LIFE Program, regardless of income. The benefits allocated during this initial period expire six months after the individual's enrollment in the program.

On June 18, 2025, staff provided an oral report to the Board on the preliminary outcomes and impacts to riders and Metro employees affected by the wildfires. The next steps reported to the Board in June included staff conducting a financial analysis on the possibility of extending the program beyond the initial 6-month period, which ends on July 23, 2025.

BACKGROUND

On the evening of Tuesday, January 7, 2025, wildfires, propelled by hurricane-force winds, low humidity, and dry bush, burned through multiple communities in Los Angeles County. The Palisades fire, which had started that morning, would go on to burn through more than 23,000 acres, reducing much of a vibrant community to ash, and killing at least eight people. The Eaton fire, which started later that same day in Altadena, ravaged more than 14,000 acres, destroyed thousands of homes and businesses, and had 17 confirmed deaths.

Metro's role in ensuring its customers have access to transportation options during and after this crisis was critical to individuals and families displaced by the wildfires. Metro's wildfire response also included financial assistance and access to resources for Metro employees who were displaced and will need significant support to rebuild their homes and lives as they recover.

DISCUSSION

Analysis of Wildfire Recovery Relief Program

In analyzing the Wildfire Recovery modified LIFE enrollment program, the data indicates a downward trend in enrollment through the initial six months of the program. Based on enrollment from January through June 2025, 69% of the Wildfire LIFE enrollees live in the affected areas, whereas 31% are either unhoused, unidentified, or have their place of work in the area. (see Figure 1 below):

Figure 1:

Month	EATON	HURST	PALISADES	TOTAL FOR FIRE AREAS (Eaton, Hurst, Palisades)	OTHER (Workers, Unhoused, etc.)	GRAND TOTAL
Jan	1,703	5	25	1,733	311	2,044
Feb	699	5	14	718	885	1,603
Mar	220	-	766	986	328	1,314
Apr	37	2	4	43	116	159
May	833	4	35	872	267	1,139
Jun	15	-	1	16	37	53
Grand Total	3,507	16	845	4,368	1,944	6,312
Percentage of Total Enrollments				69%	31%	

Of the 6,312 enrollees in the Wildfire Recovery program, 42% (2,626) actively used their passes from January through June 2025. Comparatively during this same time period, the general LIFE Program had a 37% (128,114) utilization rate from active riders (the wildfire recovery data does not include LIFE Limited participants,) which is why it indicates a minimally higher utilization rate compared to general LIFE Program usage. (see Figure 2 below)

Figure 2:

Month	Active Users (Cumulative)
January 2025	345
February 2025	1,082
March 2025	1,351
April 2025	1,424
May 2025	1,447
June 2025	1,530
Total Active Users:	2,626
Total Enrollees:	6,310
Utilization Rate:	42%
LIFE General Utilization	37%

Additionally, from January through June 2025, 68% of the active enrollees (2,626) boarded 1-20 times per month, with 32% active enrollees riding more than 21 times per month. (see Figure 3 below):

Figure 3:

Boardings Per Month	Average Boardings (Jan-June 2025)
1-20	68%
21-30	10%
31-40	8%
41-60	8%
61+	6%

Based on the boarding data collected, participants boarded 187,907 times on bus/rail. The estimated costs for this program from January through June 2025 totals \$328,837. (see Figure 4 below):

Figure 4:

Wildfire Program Estimated Cost (January-June 2025)		
Month	Boardings	Cost @ \$1.75 Per Boarding
Jan	4,143	\$ 7,250
Feb	28,146	\$ 49,256
Mar	40,036	\$ 70,063
Apr	41,807	\$ 73,162
May	41,048	\$ 71,834
June	32,727	\$ 57,272
Grand Total	187,907	\$ 328,837

Some Wildfire Recovery participants may qualify for one or more Metro programs offered to transit dependent communities. As the program ends, staff will register existing enrolled participants, if they qualify, into other subsidized Metro fare programs:

- **Low-Income Fare is Easy (LIFE) Program** - Provides 20 free rides per month on participating transit agencies for low-income and unhoused riders
- **GoPass** - Provides free transit for K-12 and Community College students in participating school districts, including Santa Monica Malibu Unified and Pasadena Unified School Districts in the affected areas
- **U-Pass** - Provides free or reduced-cost transit for students at participating 4-year colleges and universities, including UCLA and Pasadena City College
- **E-Pass** - Providing free transit for employees of participating employers

Alternatives

The Board could decide to extend the modified program through December 2025. Metro will then seek a Title VI waiver from the FTA to allow Metro to continue offering benefits to residents impacted by the wildfires. The estimated cost through December 2025 is \$380,191.

Fare Equity Analysis

The extension of a modified LIFE Program beyond the current six-month period would require that a Fare Equity Analysis be conducted by Metro's Office of Civil Rights, Racial Equity and Inclusion. Per Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Circular 4702.1B, which states that "If a promotional or temporary fare reduction lasts longer than six months, then FTA considers the fare reduction permanent, and the transit provider must conduct a fare equity analysis."

This analysis, which could take between six to twelve months to complete, would compare the percentages of minority and low-income Wildfire Recovery participants against the total minority and

low-income percentages for all Metro riders. For a favorable outcome, these percentages in the Wildfire Recovery program would need to be equal or greater to the percentages for all Metro riders.

Because the LIFE income requirement was waived for Wildfire enrollees, this data was not initially collected, and a separate survey would need to be conducted to obtain it.

EQUITY PLATFORM

Metro's response to the Wildfires of Eaton and Pacific Palisades through the modified LIFE program, provided immediate transportation relief to individuals thrust into financial hardships, experiencing homelessness, health disparities, loss of employment and long-lasting impacts from this heartbreaking environmental disaster in these communities. This modified program also aligned with Metro's Equity Platform Framework, Pillar 3 "Focus and Deliver", by removing barriers and increasing access to opportunity for all. Metro also recognizes that residents from these communities may continue to experience financial hardships and will work to partner with community-based organizations, faith-based institutions, senior facilities, schools, health care institutions to help promote, and enroll people into Metro's discounted fare transit programs.

Discounted fare transit programs, like LIFE, are Metro's investment in social mobility and an important tool to assist in the fight against income and health inequality. These programs, which include enrollments, outreach, partnerships with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and taxi vouchers for individuals with short-term/immediate transit needs, make Metro more accessible to riders facing financial and other barriers, while providing financial relief from the ever-rising cost of living.

VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED OUTCOME

VMT and VMT per capita in Los Angeles County are lower than national averages, the lowest in the SCAG region, and on the lower end of VMT per capita statewide, with these declining VMT trends due in part to Metro's significant investment in rail and bus transit.* Metro's Board-adopted VMT reduction targets align with California's statewide climate goals, including achieving carbon neutrality by 2045. To ensure continued progress, all Board items are assessed for their potential impact on VMT.

The Wildfire Recovery modified LIFE program has increased VMT savings for participants utilizing the free transit passes. As part of this ongoing effort, this item is expected to contribute to further reductions in VMT. This item supports Metro's systemwide strategy to reduce VMT through investment activities that will improve/benefit and further encourage transit ridership. Metro's Board-adopted VMT reduction targets were designed to build on the success of existing investments, and this item aligns with those objectives.

*Based on population estimates from the United States Census and VMT estimates from Caltrans' Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) data between 2001-2019.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

These programs support Metro's Strategic Plan Goal 3) Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity, and Goal 4) Transform LA County through collaboration and leadership. Metro will continue to work toward providing accessible and inclusive services for the residents of Los Angeles County.

NEXT STEPS

The LIFE Program will work on ensuring that all enrollees who signed up for the modified program are informed how to remain in the LIFE program, if they qualify, as well as sharing information on additional subsidized programs Metro offers. Staff will also continue to conduct outreach and partner with agencies and organizations to enroll eligible participants into the LIFE program.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment A - Motion #36

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Stephanie Wiggins
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Metro

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Metropolitan Transportation
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Los Angeles, CA

Board Report

File #: 2025-0039, **File Type:** Motion / Motion Response

Agenda Number: 36.

REGULAR BOARD MEETING JANUARY 23, 2025

Motion by:

DIRECTORS HAHN, BARGER, HORVATH, SOLIS, DUTRA AND BASS

Response to Eaton & Pacific Palisades Wildfires

On the evening of Tuesday January 7, 2025 wildfires, propelled by hurricane-force winds, low humidity and dry brush, burned through multiple communities in Los Angeles County. At its peak, six blazes were simultaneously threatening America's most populous county. The Palisades fire, which had started that morning, would go on to burn through more than 23,000 acres, reducing much of a vibrant community to ash, and killing at least eight people. The Eaton fire that tore through Altadena has now ravaged more than 14,000 acres, destroyed thousands of homes and businesses, and left at least seventeen dead.

Metro's role in ensuring its customers have access to transportation options during this crisis is critical. For individuals and families displaced by the wildfires, access to free or subsidized transit may prove vital in connecting them to shelters, medical care, workplaces, schools, and other essential services. Expanding Metro's subsidized fare programs, such as the Low-Income Fare is Easy (LIFE) program to include survivors of the recent wildfire disasters for a temporary period may help address these immediate transportation needs while reinforcing Metro's mission of equity and accessibility for all.

At least 19 Metro employees have lost their homes in the wildfires and at least 46 employees have been displaced and will need significant support to rebuild their homes and lives. This includes financial assistance and access to resources as they recover. As the backbone of Metro's operations, assisting our employees during this incredibly difficult time is also an investment in maintaining a resilient workforce capable of sustaining critical transit operations during and after recovery.

Additionally, and with an understanding of the compounding effect this tragedy will have on the existing housing crisis, Metro should play an important role in long-term housing recovery efforts by leveraging the policies and assets already in place through its joint development program and advocating for streamlined policies to accelerate housing development. Metro's Joint Development Policy is intended to enable Metro to build as much quality housing near transit as possible, for those who need it most, as soon as possible. Metro has committed to building 10,000 units of housing on 20 Metro-owned sites by 2031 - 5,000 of which will be income-restricted. The recent wildfires have only exacerbated the region's need to deliver housing

and amenities for everyone.

Furthermore, the scale of these tragedies will undoubtedly have a ripple effect across the region. It is important for Metro to gain a timely understanding of how these impacts might affect budget development, operations, and program delivery so that we may be able to make important decisions, identify opportunities for collaboration with regional partners, and adjust accordingly.

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO EATON & PACIFIC PALISADES WILDFIRES MOTION

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE Motion by Hahn, Barger, Horvath, Solis, Dutra and Bass that the Board direct the Chief Executive Officer to:

- A. Modify the eligibility criteria of all reduced fare programs to include individuals and families displaced by the wildfires for six months, with an option to extend the program as needed. The CEO shall report back to the board in June 2025 on the outcomes and impacts of this measure;
- B. Mobilize outreach teams to the Eaton and Palisades Fire evacuation centers, resource centers, workshops, and other critical locations, providing resources to wildfire survivors, to assist in the registration efforts for reduced fare programs;
- C. Identify and provide financial or other forms of assistance that are eligible for cost recovery from State or Federal natural disaster assistance programs and/or non-governmental disaster assistance entities to Metro employees who have lost their homes in the wildfires and/or have been displaced as a result of the wildfires; and
- D. Work with the City and County of LA, and any other directly impacted jurisdictions to identify ways that Metro may aid in recovery efforts- including, but not limited to its fleet, services, expertise, and properties. The CEO shall provide the Board with regular updates on these efforts as they are being established.

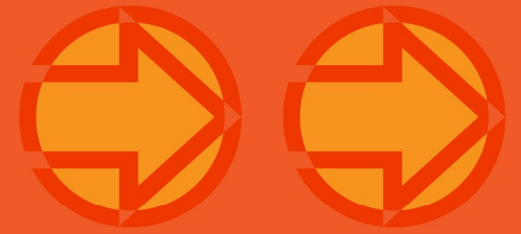
Status Report on Motion 2025-0039

Response: Eaton and Pacific Palisades



Operations, Safety, and Customer Experience Committee
July 17, 2025

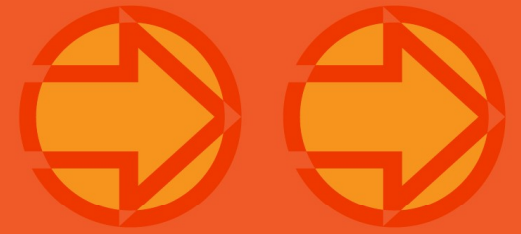
Background



- On January 23, 2025, the Metro Board passed motion 2025-0039 by Directors Hahn, Barger, Horvath, Solis, Dutra and Bass which required staff to modify the eligibility criteria of the LIFE Program to include individuals and families displaced by the wildfires for six months, with an option to extend the program as needed and report back to the board in June 2025 on the outcomes and impacts of this measure.
- On June 18, 2025, staff provided an oral report to the Board of Directors on outcomes and impacts to riders and Metro employees affected by the wildfires.
- The next steps included staff conducting a financial analysis on the possibility of extending the program beyond the initial 6-month period, which ends on July 23, 2025.

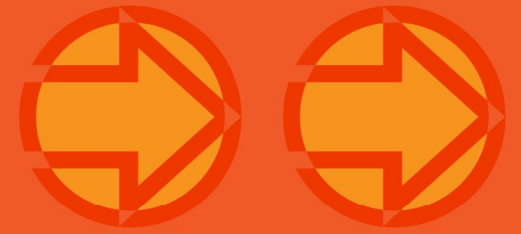


Wildfire Recovery LIFE Program Enrollments



Month	EATON	HURST	PALISADES	TOTAL FOR FIRE AREAS (Eaton, Hurst, Palisades)	OTHER (Workers, Unhoused, etc.)	GRAND TOTAL
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Percentage of Total Enrollments				69%	31%	

Wildfire Recovery LIFE Program Utilization and Boardings

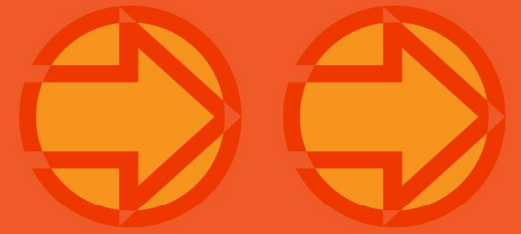


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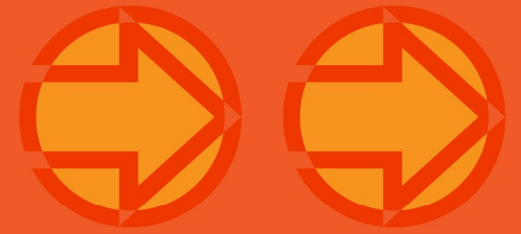
**Includes data from LIFE Limited participants*

Wildfire Recovery LIFE Program Estimated Program Costs



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Wildfire Recovery LIFE Program Fare Equity Analysis



- The extension of a modified LIFE Program would require a Fare Equity Analysis.
 - Per Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Circular 4702.1B which states that “If a promotional or temporary fare reduction lasts longer than six months, then FTA considers the fare reduction permanent, and the transit provider must conduct a fare equity analysis.”
- The LIFE income requirement was waived for Wildfire enrollees. This data was not initially collected, and a separate survey would need to be conducted to obtain it.

Next Steps



- The LIFE Program will work on ensuring that all enrollees who signed up for the modified program are informed how to remain in the LIFE program, if they qualify, as well as sharing information on additional subsidized programs Metro offers.
- Staff will also continue to conduct outreach and partner with agencies and organizations to enroll eligible participants into the LIFE program.