



Metro

Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

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May 5, 2021

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker, California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 219
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Toni Atkins
President pro Tempore, California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
State Capitol, Room 5094
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Speaker Rendon, Pro Tem Atkins, Chairperson Ting, and Chairperson Skinner,

The State Legislature will soon begin full deliberations on the State Budget. This budget year is unique due to the State Budget surplus. This surplus is historic, yet, it is also temporary. It also provides the state with the unique opportunity to make investments that will energize green infrastructure, boost our economy, and help to address the needs of disadvantaged communities. Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) is poised to partner with the Legislature to accomplish those goals and we have prepared a strategic set of initiatives that will address all three of those goals. We would like to work with our partners in the Legislature on how we can bring these initiatives forward in the State Budget process.

These initiatives include support for the construction of zero-emission charging facilities for public transit, programs that address the needs of the un-housed on our transit system, accelerating the construction of transit capital projects, addressing the state highway soundwall backlog and providing fareless transit service. All of these initiatives help to achieve the State's climate goals, improve health, and address equity. While the programs in SB 1 provide some funding for transportation needs, using some of this year's budget surplus will help fill in funding gaps for these critical needs as the state begins to recover economically from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Helping the Unhoused

The pandemic has heightened the urgent need to address housing and providing support for the unhoused in the state. Since 2016, Metro's Homeless Task Force has met quarterly and includes stakeholders such as Metro staff, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, Department of Health Services, law enforcement, city prosecutors, homeless outreach providers, and the County CEO's office, in order to better coordinate efforts to address homelessness on the Metro system and connect unhoused individuals with social services and housing around the County.

Metro contracts with a community organization - PATH (People Assisting the Homeless) to connect people experiencing homelessness on Metro's properties with services in LA County. In the past four years, the agency has connected hundreds of individuals with supportive services and emergency shelters. To better address the needs of these individuals, Metro seeks to triple

the number of outreach teams, create a Metro safety ambassador program, and incorporate social workers into police dispatch, at an annual cost of \$42 million. Metro's unarmed safety ambassadors will provide frontline customer service and help to keep the transit system safe.

Boosting Zero Emission Vehicle Programs

Governor Newsom has proposed \$1.5 billion investment in zero-emission vehicles and charging/refueling infrastructure, which includes \$315 million for zero-emission trucks, buses and off-road freight. In supporting this proposal, we urge you to create a funding set-aside of *at least* \$80 million for transit agencies, specifically, within the Hybrid and Zero-Emission Truck and Bus Voucher Incentive Project (HVIP), which itself is funded by the \$315 million investment for zero-emission trucks, buses and off-road freight. We would further urge the State to consider boosting green investments by allocating surplus funds to transit agencies to accelerate the construction of charging infrastructure.

LA Metro has a fleet of over 2,300 buses, larger than any agency that provides transit service in the state. Our Board of Directors has committed to converting the agency's fleet to zero-emission technology ahead of the state's deadline.

Building Soundwalls in Equity Focused Communities

Los Angeles County's freeway system has a backlog of soundwall projects that is decades old. While these soundwalls are mitigation measures for noise from the State's highway system, the responsibility to fund them has been transferred to local taxpayers. We believe the State now has the opportunity to reduce that backlog and bring noise relief to thousands of residents that live near State Highways. The construction of new soundwalls will also create construction jobs in Los Angeles County. The construction of soundwalls is estimated to cost between \$10 million to \$20 million per mile.

Funding for Capital Projects

Metro is currently engaged in the most aggressive expansion of a transit system ever undertaken in our country. The Board has adopted four projects as pillar projects to the expansive portfolio of projects to be funded through Measure M. They are the West Santa Ana Branch Corridor project, the Eastside Gold Line Light Rail Extension, the Green Line Extension to Torrance and the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project. We urge the State to consider funding opportunities that could advance these priority projects. We are also engaged in a comprehensive investment strategy to improve our bus system that could include bus speed improvements, station improvements such as increased shade at bus shelters and improvements to our vehicles to enhance the overall customer experience. The State could also make a significant investment in Active Transportation Projects, but this investment should be proportionate to the benefits these projects provide.

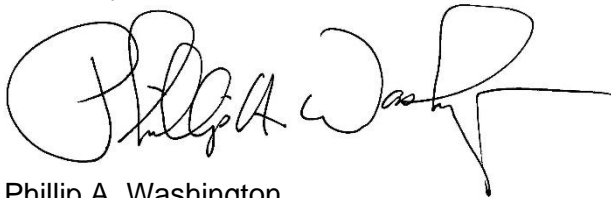
Fareless System Initiative Serving Low-Income Transit Riders and Students

Finally, Metro is currently exploring ways to make our bus and rail system fareless as a way to spur an economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, increase ridership, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and address equity and affordability in the region. In May, our Board will vote on whether to move forward with a 23-month pilot program for low-income residents of LA County and students. We urge you to consider providing funding for this pilot program and support the needs of the transit dependent in Los Angeles County. This free-fare project could start as early as August 2021. Increasing transit ridership is a proven way to reduce VMT and

greenhouse gas emissions. The cost for this program over a 2-year period is currently estimated to be approximately \$50 million.

We would like to reiterate our commitment to work with the Legislature on ways in which we can advance our mutual goals and would like to thank you in advance for considering our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phillip A. Washington". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "W".

Phillip A. Washington
Chief Executive Officer
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

cc: Members and Staff, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Members and Staff, Assembly Budget Committee
Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
Board Members and Staff, California Air Resources Board
Los Angeles County State Legislative Delegation