

Metro Board Approved Policy

Metro System Advertising Policy

Adopted: March 23, 2000

Historical Perspective

This policy was last amended on February 23, 2017.

The agency and its predecessor agencies, both public and private, have generated revenue for nearly a century through the sale of advertising on the transit fleet. The agency and its predecessors have also placed in-house advertising to promote transit related objectives in a variety of forms and locations throughout the transit system.

Staff drafted a comprehensive policy to formalize advertising practices and increase the efficiency of procedures related to them. The policy acknowledges the permissibility of generating revenue from advertising; sets guidelines for the acceptability of advertising content and clarifies the use of advertising space for agency transit services.

In March 2000, the Board adopted a comprehensive advertising policy that provided specific guidelines regarding revenue-generating advertising on agency vehicles.

In February 2017, the policy was expanded to include digital assets and Metro's facilities and other properties such as maintenance buildings and facilities, parking structures and lots, and other properties as recommended by the Risk Allocation Matrix.

Under the current advertising contract, the payment amount is tied to a benchmark of 1,700 buses used in peak-hour service that accept advertising. Should there an increase of 200 buses over the contract benchmark that accept advertising during peak hour operations, monthly revenues would increase 10% commencing the following month. Similarly, should there be a net decrease of 200 buses during peak-hour service; monthly revenues would decrease by 10% starting the following month.

On January 27, 2005, the Board approved the amendment to policy GEN-34 to permit revenue-generating advertising to be posted on the exteriors of Bus Rapid Transit vehicles.

In January 2016, the Metro Board of Directors approved the Risk Allocation Matrix (RAM) where staff identified cost saving and revenue generating initiatives, and created the Internal Savings Account - intended as tools to ensure long-term financial stability and mitigate projected budget shortfalls. Among some of the financially significant initiatives is the expansion of advertising on the Metro system to include digital advertising, opportunities at parking structures, facilities and buildings, and other Metro-owned properties.

Revision of the Metro System Advertising Policy would enable staff to explore expanded advertising opportunities on Metro's system in order to generate additional and significant revenue for the agency. This revised policy positions the agency to benefit from expanded advertising opportunities.



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1. GENERAL

The display of paid (revenue-generating) advertising carries with it a responsibility to protect Metro from potential litigation and to recognize the potential association of advertising images with Metro services, while simultaneously respecting First Amendment principles. The agency addresses these issues through the responsible and consistent application of written criteria for advertising acceptability. It is not Metro's intent to create a public forum through the acceptance of advertising.

Metro's ability to directly reach customers is crucial in order to provide transit and agency information. Any use of the unique distribution channels at its command (such as allotments of interior and exterior bus advertising space; on-board "take-one" boxes; and in-station Variable Message Signs) for purposes unrelated to customer information or retention is to be avoided, as it effectively "pre-empts" the availability of transit information to the public. Metro's Communications Department administers the use of these unique distribution channels as part of its overall responsibility for customer communication.

2. PROCEDURES

2.1. Revenue-Generating Advertising

Metro contracts with outside vendors to sell and display short-term advertising on its transit-related properties for the sole purpose of generating revenue. Metro does not sell or post advertising directly. Vendors for such contracts are solicited through competitive bids, which must conform to Metro's procurement procedures and be approved by Metro's Board of Directors.

Such agreements may dedicate up to, but no more than, 90% of the available space covered by the contract for revenue-generating advertising, reserving the remaining available space for Metro's own transit-related information. This percentage of available space, and the remaining percentage of space held for Metro's information, will be negotiated as part of any contract with an outside advertising space vendor.

Locations for revenue-generating advertising may include, but are not limited to: exterior surface areas of buses and rail cars (see restrictions in section 2.1.1 below); interior display frames in bus and rail vehicles; back-lit map cases, at stations and transit hubs; automated public toilets and other fixed outdoor displays on Metro property; electronic Variable Message Signs (VMS) on station platforms; banner ads



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on Metro's website; Metro-owned/run social media channels, Metro-sponsored computer/phone apps; space in Metro's printed brochures, timetables and other publications and printed materials, interior and exterior of Metro buildings, facilities and parking structures; and any other location approved by Metro's Board of Directors. Metro and its advertising contractors will obtain necessary permits as required to comply with local jurisdiction.

Content restrictions for advertising displayed through these arrangements are as follows:

2.1.1 Alcohol, Tobacco, and Cannabis Advertising

Advertising of all alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis products, services, and events is prohibited. Advertisements that simulate or encourage drinking, smoking, vaping, or ingesting of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis are prohibited.

2.1.2 Non-Commercial Advertising

Metro does not accept advertising from non-governmental entities if the subject matter and intent of said advertising is non-commercial. Specifically, acceptable advertising must promote a for-sale, lease or other form of financial benefit for a product, service, event or other property interest in primarily a commercial manner and purpose.

Exception 1: Governmental Agencies, meaning public agencies specifically created by government action located in Los Angeles County or a Federal or State of California Governmental Agency, may purchase advertising space for messages that advance specific government purposes. The advertising must clearly, on the face of the advertising, identify the Governmental Agency. It is Metro's intent that government advertising will not be used for comment on issues of public debate.

Exception 2: Metro will accept paid advertising from non-profit organizations that partner with a Governmental Agency (as defined in Exception 1 above) and submit advertising that advances the joint purpose of the non-profit organization and the Governmental Agency, as determined by each of them. In order for advertising to qualify under this exception, the advertising must clearly, on the face of the advertising, identify the Governmental Agency and indicate that the Governmental Agency approves, sponsors, or otherwise authorizes the advertising. The non-profit organization must also provide a Statement of Approval (attached) from the Governmental Agency describing the joint purpose



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to be advanced and setting forth a statement acknowledging support and approval for the submitted advertising. Any message displayed under this exception must adhere to all other content restrictions stated in this policy, including that this advertising will not be used for comment on issues of public debate.

2.1.3. Other Subject Matter Restrictions

Advertising may not be displayed if its content involves:

- Illegal activity - Promotes or relates to an illegal activity.
- Violence - Contains images, copy or concepts that promote guns/firearms or gun violence, or that depict weapons or other devices in an act of violence or harm on a person or animal, or contain any material that incites or encourages, or appears to incite or encourage, violence or violent behavior.
- Demeaning or disparaging matter - Contains images, copy or concepts that actively denigrate, demean or disparage any individual or group.
- Vulgarity - Contains images, copy or concepts that are obscene, vulgar, crude, sexually suggestive, indecent, profane or scatological.
- Obscene matter - Contains obscene matter as defined in the Los Angeles County Code, Chapter 13.17, Section 13.17.010, or sexually explicit material as defined in the Los Angeles County Code, Chapter 8.28, Section 8.28.010D.
- Adult entertainment and content – Promotes or displays images associated with adult book stores, video stores, dance clubs or other adult entertainment or sexually-oriented establishments, telephone services, internet sites, films, video games or escort services.
- Political endorsements – Contains messages that are political in nature, including messages of political advocacy, that support or oppose any candidate or referendum, or that feature any current political office holder or candidate for public office, or take positions on issues of public debate.
- Religion - Contains images, content or copy related to religion or religious ideas or viewpoints.
- Negative connotations of public transit - Contains images, copy or concepts that actively denigrate public transportation.
- Unsafe transit behavior – Contains images, copy or concepts that depict unsafe behaviors aboard buses or trains, or in or around transit stations or railroad tracks.
- Injurious to Metro's interests – Promotes products, services or other concepts that are adverse to Metro's commercial or administrative interests. Metro's



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- endorsement – Contains images, copy or concepts that inaccurately state or imply Metro’s endorsement of the subject of the advertisement.
- Harmful or disruptive to transit system – Contains material that is so objectionable as to be reasonably foreseeable that it will result in harm to, disruption of, or interference with the transportation system.

2.1.4. Metro’s Right of Rejection

Beyond the above, Metro’s vendors may review advertising content according to their own guidelines of acceptability. Metro will screen and in all contracts Metro reserves the right to reject any advertising content submitted for display on its properties and/or to order the removal of any advertising posted on its properties. Decisions regarding the rejection or removal of advertising are made by the Chief Communications Officer or their designee based upon the criteria in this policy statement.

2.1.5. Vinyl Window Graphics

To ensure the safety and security of passengers, operators and law enforcement officers, advertising displays which employ vinyl window graphics are restricted from fully obscuring window surfaces on Metro vehicles as follows. (Note: this excludes the front window surface, which may not be covered in any manner.)

2.2 Informational Advertising

Metro has several unique distribution channels at its disposal for disseminating transit information for which it incurs no “space” cost (the fee charged for advertising space). These distribution channels include, but are not limited to: “take-one” boxes onboard Metro buses and Metro Rail trains; “take-one” racks at Metro Customer Centers; back-lit and non-lit map cases inside Metro Rail stations and on Metro bus stop poles; advertising kiosks at select Metro Rail stations; electronic Variable Message Signs (VMS) on station platforms digital advertising kiosks; interior rail posters on board Metro Rail trains; Metro’s website; Metro-owned/run social media channels; and Metro-sponsored computer/phone apps.

As specified in section 2.1, Metro has the use of an allotment of exterior and interior bus advertising space at no charge by agreement with the vendor that sells all remaining interior and exterior bus advertising space under a revenue-generating agreement.



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Informational advertising space is limited, and reserved exclusively for Metro transit information. All messages and materials distributed by this means are prepared, approved and/or authorized by the Chief Communications Officer or their designee.

Acceptable information for these distribution channels is categorized as follows:

2.2.1 Regular Transit Information

Regular transit information is prepared by Metro's Communications Department in accordance with its annual strategic planning process, as well as upon request from other internal departments. Regular transit information includes, but is not limited to: campaigns promoting ridership, service features and changes, fare information and changes, safety and security messages, maps and explanations of related transportation services.

2.2.2 Cross-Promotional Information

On an occasional basis and only when space is available, Metro's Communications Department may use Metro's distribution channels to participate in cross-promotional opportunities that offer a direct opportunity to promote use of transit. Any materials distributed for this purpose must prominently include promotion of Metro services (e.g., Metro Ridership Promotion such as, "Go Metro to Fiesta Broadway"). Metro is prohibited by law from donating advertising space to any entity for purposes that are not directly transit-related.

The outside organization involved must either bear the cost of producing such materials or, if approved by Metro's Communications Department, provide an equivalent or greater value in cross-promotional benefits (i.e. advertising space, editorial space, etc.). Any cross-promotional arrangement must be approved by the Chief Communications Officer or their designee based upon the criteria in this policy statement.

2.2.3 "Added Value" Materials

On an occasional basis and only when space is available, Metro's Communications Department may use Metro's distribution channels to provide "added value" materials to its customers. Such materials must present a specific and time-dated offer uniquely provided for Metro bus and Metro Rail customers (generally a money-saving discount) in which transit can be used to access the redemption point. Any materials distributed for this purpose must prominently include the Metro logo and other wording approved by Metro's Communications



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Department to indicate that the offer is specifically designed for Metro bus and Metro Rail customers. Metro is prohibited by law from simply donating advertising space to any entity for purposes that are not directly transit-related.

The outside organization involved must either bear the cost of producing such materials or, if approved by Metro's Communications Department, provide an equivalent or greater value in cross-promotional benefits (e.g., advertising space, editorial space, etc.). Any added value programs must be approved by the Chief Communications Officer or their designee based upon the criteria in this policy statement.

3.0 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Added Value Materials – Informational advertising which offers a tangible benefit to patrons as a means of rewarding and retaining customers (i.e., a money-saving discount).

Cross-Promotion – A cooperative partnership in which two or more entities work together with the goal of jointly promoting their respective services.

Digital Advertising Kiosks - A small physical structure (often including a computer and a display screen) that displays information for people walking by. Kiosks are common near the entrances of shopping malls in North America where they provide shoppers with directions.

Exterior King Ad – Large ad measuring 144" x 30" displayed on the sides of Metro buses. King ads are directly applied to the bus with adhesive vinyl.

Exterior Tail Light or "Tail" Ad – Smaller ad measuring 48" x 15 ½" or 72" x 21" displayed on the rear of Metro buses. Tail ads are directly applied to the bus with adhesive vinyl.

Governmental Entities – Public entities specifically created by government action.

Interior Bus Car Card – A 28" x 11" poster that mounts above the seats in Metro buses to provide information on fares, routes, safety, pass & token sales locations, service changes and other matters relevant to the use of the Metro System.

Interior Rail Poster – A 21" x 22 ¼" poster that mounts in frames on the walls of Metro Rail cars, used to display Metro Rail System Maps and provide information on fares,



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routes, safety, pass & token sales locations, service changes and other matters relevant to the use of the Metro System.

Map Cases – Fixed cases in Metro Rail stations that hold a 46¾” x 46¾” display, usually back-lit. Used to display Metro Rail System Maps and provide information on fares, routes, safety, pass & token sales locations, service changes and other matters relevant to the use of the Metro System.

Metro Transit-Related Properties – Metro Bus and Rail systems; Metro facilities; Metro electronic outreach channels (websites, social media, computer/phone apps, etc.).

Non-Commercial Advertising – A public service announcement, event notification, political statement or other message which does not have as its primary purpose to propose a commercial transaction.

Social Media Channels – Online/digital communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing collaboration.

Take-One – A printed brochure measuring 3½” x 8½” placed inside Metro buses or Metro Rail trains, used to provide information on fares, routes, safety, pass & token sales locations, service changes and other matters relevant to the use of the Metro System.

Take-One Box – A metal rack or plastic holder installed on the interior of Metro buses and Metro Rail trains designed to hold approximately 40 take-ones. Many Metro buses have a multi-pocket rack in addition to 2 plastic take-one boxes; most Metro Rail cars have from 2 to 6 plastic take-one boxes.

Variable Message Signs (VMS) – Electronic sign boards in Metro Rail stations controlled from the Rail Operations Control Center that scroll through a series of written messages. Used to provide information on safety, pass & token sales locations, service changes, emergency announcements and other matters relevant to the use of the Metro System.

Vinyl Window Graphics – An adhesive vinyl super-graphic which covers a portion of the window surface of a bus or rail vehicle. Such graphics are manufactured to be largely transparent to those inside the vehicle, permitting passengers to see outside through the graphics.



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4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

Communications Department prepares all messages and materials for dissemination on board Metro buses and Metro Rail trains; administers the distribution/display of transit information; tracks/coordinates the availability and use of Metro's unique information distribution channels.

Mailroom distributes quantities of take-ones to Metro Operating Divisions and Customer Centers according to distribution list prepared by project managers in Communications.

Operators and Service Attendants physically place take-ones on buses/trains for distribution to the public.

Advertising Vendors sell, post and maintain all revenue-generating advertising on Metro properties; implement Metro's policies on revenue-generating advertising; post all Metro informational advertising according to instructions from the Metro Marketing Department.

Chief Communications Officer (or designee) reviews and approves/rejects all cross-promotions and added value programs using Metro's unique distribution channels based upon the criteria in this policy statement; enforces Metro's right to reject and/or order removal of revenue-generating advertising based upon the criteria in this policy statement.