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## L.A. Metro highlights programs that work toward racial justice

Some programs include the agency's Faith Leaders Program, Metro Leadership Academy and the Women and Girls Governing Council.

**From** — [Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority \(Metro\)](#)

Jun 29th, 2020



L.A. Metro CEO Phil Washington at a Faith Leader's roundtable event.

L.A. Metro

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (L.A. Metro) says it has been fielding questions recently about the agency's diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, and what the agency is doing to improve racial justice and fix longstanding inequities in the communities and within the agency.

L.A. Metro notes several initiatives have been underway, including some more recent and others that started in the 90s. With that, the agency says it recognizes there is still plenty to do and that this is especially the case in historically

The following is a look at some of the programs underway at L.A. Metro that are working to end racial injustices and to make communities more equitable.

### The Metro Equity Platform

This was written and conceived by L.A. Metro staff and adopted by the board in 2018 and seeks to ensure that access to opportunity will be a core objective of L.A. Metro's decision making, investments and service decisions. The platform acknowledges that vast disparities exist among neighborhoods and individuals in L.A. County in their ability to see and seize opportunity — whether it's jobs, housing, education, health, safety or other measures of successful life outcomes. It also provides a basis for L.A. Metro to actively lead and partner in addressing and overcoming those disparities. In January 2020, L.A. Metro hired its first Executive Officer, Equity and Race, KeAndra Cylear Dodds, to lead implementation of the Equity Platform.

### L.A. Metro's Office of Civil Rights and Inclusion

This ensures that L.A. Metro meets or exceeds all local, state and federal civil rights requirements by promoting universal equity for customers and employees. Among the duties of the department are:

- Evaluate services, programs, and facilities.
- Educate employees and customers on Civil Rights.
- Monitor and advise on Civil Rights.
- Conduct investigations and make recommendations on corrective actions.
- Eliminate barriers in employment opportunities and ensure equal access and participation in the Metro transportation system.

The agency says one key effort is the mystery rider program, in which independent contractors appear as riders to determine L.A. Metro's performance when it comes to serving riders with disabilities. The office has also worked to help customers with limited English proficiency get the answers they need at Metro Customer Service Centers, rewritten job specifications to remove gender bias and encourage more people to apply for positions at L.A. Metro and developed a "Level Up" program to encourage employees to report acts of discrimination, harassment and retaliation.

### L.A. Metro's System Security and Law Enforcement (SSLE)

SLEE's mission is to use a community-based policing model with a focus on customer service. Policies in place to lower the risk of altercations between law enforcement and riders includes:

- All racial bias complaints are immediately reviewed and followed up on by L.A. Metro's Office of Civil Rights & Inclusion.
- L.A. Metro requires all contract law enforcement staff to be free of any personnel records or history of disciplinary action related to bias.
- L.A. Metro will remove any contract law enforcement staff determined by investigation to have not acted in accordance with their departmental guidance related to equity while on L.A. Metro property.
- The agency has decriminalized the fare compliance process and replaced law enforcement with civilian personnel to check all fares. Law enforcement do not write fare compliance tickets (on occasion during a criminal investigation with legitimate probable cause, officers may address Metro Code of Conduct violations). Citations for fare evasion have also significantly decreased.
- Metro has also established a transit court outside of the criminal court system to address code of conduct issues and has created a position within transit court to resolve code of conduct issues that are not punitive.

program.

- All L.A. Metro contracted law enforcement and security officers receive training in de-escalation techniques and implicit bias.
- L.A. Metro says it encourages all riders to use the Transit Watch App to report any suspicious activity on Metro which gets handled by transit security.
- L.A. Metro SSLE staff continue to receive enhanced training in sexual harassment prevention as a direct result of concerns raised by riders. L.A. Metro will be enhancing its next law enforcement contract proposal in 2022 in coordination with the new Metro Equity and Race Executive Officer to ensure a community-based approach.
- Body cameras will be part of the contractual scope to increase transparency.

## **L.A. Metro's Homeless Outreach Program (PATH/C3)**

PATH/C3, is a key part of security efforts. The goal is to connect unhoused people with social services and shelters. To date, 1,708 individuals have attained interim housing resources and 262 individuals have been permanently housed, says the agency.

## **The SEED School of Los Angeles County**

The school is scheduled to break ground this fall in South Los Angeles. The partnership between L.A. Metro and L.A. County aims to prepare youth – including at-risk youth – for career and college pathways in the global transportation industry. The SEED Foundation was selected as the school's operator and will develop an interdisciplinary curriculum that gives students a deeper understanding of the infrastructure the public relies on. The school will also be the centerpiece of a development at the site at Vermont and Manchester that will include 180 units of affordable housing, community-serving retail, a transportation-focused job training center and a plaza that will open to the future rapid bus line on Vermont Avenue.

## **NextGen and Bus Improvements**

L.A. Metro's buses carry nearly 75 percent of riders, the majority of whom are people of color and/or from low income households. Under the draft NextGen plan released earlier this year, buses would arrive every five to 10 minutes for 83 percent of current riders compared to 49 percent today. The number of L.A. County residents who could walk to bus lines running every five to 10 minutes would more than double to almost 2.2 million people. The agency says it is hoping to begin implementing NextGen in December and has other plans in the works to speed up buses and make bus stops safer and more comfortable.

## **The Women and Girls Governing Council**

L.A. Metro says it has taken a proactive approach towards gender equity in the transportation sector since 2017 with the establishment of the council, which analyzes how L.A. Metro's programs, services and policies impact the lives of women and girls in L.A. County. To date, 20 initiatives have been implemented or are in the pipeline, including one that led to increased hiring of women as service attendants. Last year, L.A. Metro published its Understanding How Women Travel report, a broad effort to identify and eliminate barriers and challenges faced by women using the Metro system. L.A. Metro says it will next be developing a gender action plan that will ensure policies and programs include a gender perspective.

## **The Metro Leadership Academy**

The academy was created in 2017 and is aimed at developing the next generation of transportation leaders. The year-long program provides L.A. Metro employees with the framework and tools to create a stronger corporate succession plan. The academy works to ensure participants are diverse and represent a cross-section of Metro's workforce — and

## Faith Leaders Program

L.A. Metro says its engagement with religious leaders and faith-based organizations plays a role in its commitment to racial justice. The faith leaders the agency engages and partners with administer programs that help those in most need – the impoverished, the formerly incarcerated, small minority business owners, people struggling with affordable housing and experiencing homelessness and others looking for good jobs to support their families. The agency says relationships with faith leaders strengthen its ability to provide L.A. Metro's resources for these vulnerable communities and to integrate their voices into L.A. Metro projects and programs.

## Women Build Metro Los Angeles (WBMLA)

WBMLA works with union-sanctioned training programs to address barriers to women applying for construction apprenticeships – i.e. concerns over childcare, sexual harassment and life at a job site where other women can be scarce. In the three years since the program began, several hundred women have attended WBMLA sessions across L.A. County. Names of attendees are given to potential employers for follow up.

## Workforce Initiative Now – Los Angeles (WIN-LA)

This is L.A. Metro's workforce development program started under CEO Phil Washington in 2017 to create career pathways for local residents in operations/maintenance, administration and professional services at L.A. Metro and the transportation industry. The program provides support for participants in areas such as life skills development, skill set enhancement and educational attainment services. WIN-LA also increases the resources needed for training and placement for hard-to-fill positions.

## Project Labor Agreement/Construction Careers Policy (PLA/CCP).

The L.A. Metro Board approved this program in 2012 to encourage construction employment and training opportunities on L.A. Metro projects for workers residing in economically disadvantaged areas and for Disadvantaged Workers (individuals that have barriers to employment, i.e. homeless, welfare recipients, unemployment, a history with the criminal justice system and veterans). As of March 2020, more than \$295 million in wages have been paid out to targeted workers and over \$56 million in wages to disadvantaged workers.

## Metro Art

This is L.A. County's cultural connector. The agency says it seeks to provide increased and equitable access to arts and culture for its diverse ridership and to move people through the arts. L.A. Metro says the projects and programs reflect the communities because it actively, intentionally and proudly pursues a path of inclusion. Metro Art commissions artists at all career levels, and the agency has created technical assistance initiatives and career pathway opportunities that have led to broader diversity at its own agency and within the field. Over half of the artists Metro Art has worked with represent Black, Indigenous and people of color communities, according to the agency.

## Metro's Diversity and Economic Opportunity Department

This department helps firms that are economically and socially disadvantaged win contracts with L.A. Metro. Since 2015, L.A. Metro says it has awarded more than \$900 million to small, minority, women and veteran-owned businesses. Within this program, L.A. Metro has teams assigned to help firms win the certification they need to bid for contracts – L.A. Metro has more than 2,000 certified firms. The MetroConnect program also helps small businesses learn how to work with L.A. Metro via events such as "How to do Business with Metro" workshops and informal Coffee and Conversation meetings.





THIS policy was approved by the L.A. Metro Board in 2014 and raised the minimum pay for the workforce on Metro's service and maintenance services contracts. Better wages provide employees with a higher standard of living and the ability to pay for health care benefits — and over time gives more workers and their families the chance to raise incomes above the poverty line. Among the contract jobs impacted by the Living Wage Policy are facility and building maintenance, janitorial and custodial, landscaping, laundry services, trash collection and office and clerical work, among others.

## Business Interruption Fund (BIF) and Business Solution Center (BSC)

These provide support to small businesses, including those in underserved communities, impacted by rail construction. L.A. Metro's BIF provides financial assistance to small “mom and pop” businesses directly impacted by construction of the Crenshaw/LAX Line, the Regional Connector in Little Tokyo and the Purple Line Extension. To date, L.A. Metro says BIF has granted more than \$27.9 million to more than 400 of these small businesses. The BSC has to date provided hands on business development and support services to more than 300 small businesses in the Crenshaw and Inglewood communities impacted by work on Crenshaw/LAX Line. Both programs were approved by the board in 2014.

## Fare Relief and Fare Study.

The L.A. Metro Board voted in May to provide a 50-percent discount for all Metro day, weekly and monthly passes (the discounts will begin later this summer). Prior to that board action and continuing, the agency is in the midst of a Comprehensive Pricing Study (CPS) that will look at how L.A. Metro prices all of its services — including transit fares, Metro Bike, parking, ExpressLanes tolls and VanPool — to better ensure equitable pricing going forward. The study aims to be inclusive and transparent, and the agency says it will be seeking meaningful participation from customers, the communities it serves, elected officials, transit partners and other stakeholders, throughout the process.

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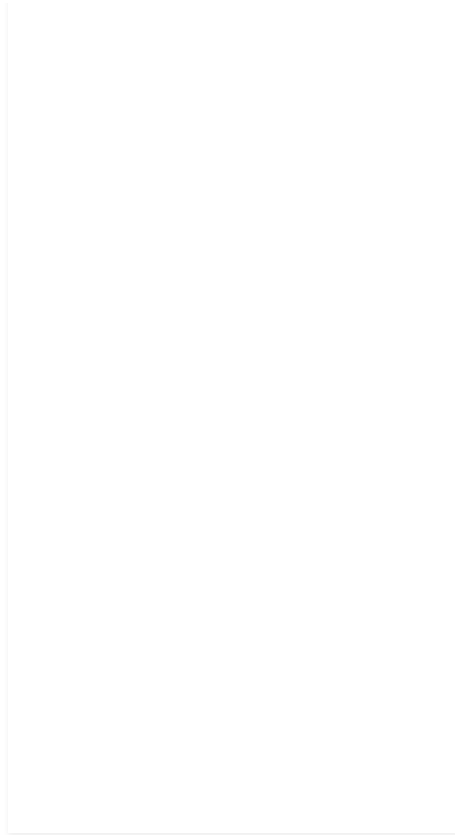
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[Knoxville Area Transit \(KAT\)](#)

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Julie Peel has been promoted to the position.

**Transdev North America**

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### **Virtual event rallies support for transit funding**

Agencies, union leaders, elected officials and riders continue to call for an additional \$32 billion in transit funding.

**Mischa Wanek-Libman**

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### **OH: Downtown Cleveland Residents group backs property tax increase for public transit**

Downtown Cleveland Residents this week announced its support of a property tax increase for Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority to boost public transit service, though the RTA does not have a tax heading to the ballot.

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### **MBTA names new chief safety officer**

Ronald Ester, a transit industry veteran with more than 28 years of experience, has been appointed to the position.

**Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)**

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Alt. Mobility

### **USU launches NSF-funded engineering research center for electrified transportation**

The center will focus on developing new infrastructure that facilitates widespread adoption of electric vehicles.

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### **DART extends meal delivery to DISD students through Aug. 27**

The agency and the school district deliver 4,500 weekly meals.

**Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART)**

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**TransTrack Solutions Group expands EAM offering with acquisition of StarTran Software**

The acquisition allows TransTrack to incorporate maintenance EAM services.

**TransTrack Systems**

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**CA: Caltrain funding measure heading to November ballot**

After weeks of uncertainty about Caltrain's future, the three counties the commuter rail train service run through jointly agreed to place a sales tax measure on the November ballot. If approved, it would fund its services for 30 years.

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**TX: Houston considers plan that could mean more 'walkable' neighborhoods, less reliance on cars**

After more than three years of study, the city is poised to adopt new regulations aimed at fostering more "walkable" neighborhoods, easing Houston's overwhelming reliance on automobiles and directing more residents toward a growing transit system.

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**US: Commentary: Congress must act to save public transit**

Funding transit is not just about the riders, it's about the future of our country's economy. Transit connects people to employment. It enables cities to avoid paralyzing gridlock. It employs hundreds of thousands of people and supports even more jobs.

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**NFTA surveys riders to gain insight and plan for the future**

The online survey provided valuable feedback to the agency's COVID-19 response.

**Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA)**

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**MST donates vehicles to local groups supporting agriculture employees and employers**

The minibuses will support COVID-19 field testing, along with other resources for agriculture workers.

**Monterey-Salinas Transit District**

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**Erika Vandenbrande named city of Boulder's director of transportation and mobility**

The experienced leader from Washington State brings expertise in transportation and mobility in a local government context.

**City of Boulder, Colorado**

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**OP-ED: PANYNJ Executive Director Richard Cotton and Chicken Little**

An argument is made that two of PANYNJ's capital projects were in jeopardy before the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Larry Penner**

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