

Metro Writing Guide

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1. Introduction

This manual details basic style guidelines to maintain consistency in Metro's written communications. By applying these simple rules, we can all help to clarify and strengthen the public's understanding of Metro's services, programs and leadership role in the region.

2. Metro's Name

Metro's full, legal name is:

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Anything else is an abbreviation...a "popular" name, or nickname. As part of our Board-approved re-branding efforts launched in January 2004, we selected as our preferred nickname:

Metro

(Why Metro? It's easy to say and remember. It's short and friendly. It's always been in our logo and in the name of our services. And all over the world, Metro means movement.)

Surveys in Los Angeles County show that Metro is the name most people associate with us. When asked to name a transit operator, about 70% of the population says "Metro" first. Only about 22% say "MTA" or "RTD." So consistently using Metro as our preferred nickname reinforces our strong identity throughout Southern California.)

A. Rules for Using Metro's Name

- For headings on such materials as agency-wide letterhead stationery and report covers, use the full, legal name:

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

- In official business documents that keep repeating the name, use the full legal name on the first reference, followed by the popular name in parentheses:

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro)

After that, use Metro for the balance of the document.

- In all other communications materials and common references, use:

Metro

- If geographic clarification is required, a modifier of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, or LA is acceptable.

Examples: Los Angeles Metro, LA Metro

B. Examples of items that use “Metro”

Customer materials (maps, brochures, timetables, etc.)
Customer facility names (i.e., Metro Customer Center)
System-wide signage
Advertising
Publications and brochures
Uniforms and badges
Board reports
Intranet news stories

C. Examples of items that use the full name followed by “(Metro)” on first reference:

Contracts
Procurement solicitations
Employment advertising
Bond and finance documents
Legal documents
Press releases

D. Examples of items that use “MTA” or “LACMTA”

None!

3. Correct Names of Metro Transit Services

The name Metro is joined with our various categories of transit service to form the proper complete name for each one.

A. Transit Service Names

Metro Local
Metro Limited
Metro Rapid
Metro Rapid Express
Metro Express
Metro Liner
Metro Rail

Notes:

1) While references are often made to Metro bus service, “Metro Bus” is not a proper name for transit service; therefore “bus” is not capitalized when following “Metro.”

Example: Metro bus service on Ventura Boulevard includes several Metro Local lines and a Metro Rapid line.

2) Similarly, *local*, *express* and *rail* are not capitalized when used as general descriptors.

Example: Metro has several express lines that connect the South Bay with downtown; Metro Rail connects the two areas as well.

3) Metro Liner service refers to bus service with rail-like amenities, such as pre-boarding fare payment, multi-door boarding and stations on dedicated rights-of-way. Currently, the only line providing Metro Liner service is the Metro Orange Line.

4) Do not add “bus” or “train” to the service name.

Correct:

Metro Rapid offers service every ten minutes.
Metro Rail runs frequently.

Incorrect:

Metro Rapid buses arrive every ten minutes.
Metro Rail trains are frequent, too.

Please see additional Usage Examples in Section 6.

B. Bus Line Names

References to specific bus lines use the service name followed by the word “Line” (capitalized) and the appropriate number.

Examples: Metro Local Line 133; Metro Rapid Line 720

Note: The only exception to the above is the Metro Orange Line. It is currently the only bus line that carries a unique name and is typically not identified by its service type or line number. However, Metro Orange Line actually has two meanings. It can be used to refer both to the line, and to the fixed guideway on which it runs. This is also true of Metro’s rail lines.

C. Rail Line Names

Each rail line has a unique name and is typically identified by that name rather than by its service type and line number.

Metro Blue Line
Metro Gold Line
Metro Green Line
Metro Purple Line
Metro Red Line

Examples: It’s easy to get to STAPLES Center on Metro Rail. Just exit the Metro Blue Line at Pico Station.

Riders in Pasadena can take the Metro Gold Line to Union Station and then hop the Metro Red Line to reach the Pantages Theater.

Note: Rail line names actually have two meanings. They refer both to the line and to the fixed guideway on which they run. This is also true of the Metro Orange Line.

4. Correct Names of Metro Projects, Programs, Departments and Entities

Metro has many services, programs, projects and other entities. The preferred style for Metro branding of these services takes place at the first mention in written materials. Subsequent repetition of Metro is not necessary unless emphasis is desired.

A. Examples of Project, Program and Department Names

- Metro Commute Services
- Metro Customer Relations
- Metro Information
- Metro Freeway Service Patrol
- Metro Call for Projects
- Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension
- Metro Joint Development

B. Service Sector Names

Service Sectors are geographically defined and referred to in a consistent way as follows:

- Metro Gateway Cities
- Metro San Fernando Valley
- Metro San Gabriel Valley
- Metro South Bay
- Metro Westside/Central

As appropriate, the term “Service Sector” may be attached to these names; e.g. “Metro Gateway Cities Service Sector.”

Similarly, the term “Governance Council” may be attached to these names when referring to those bodies; e.g. “Metro San Fernando Valley Governance Council.”

The words “Sector” and “Service Sector” should always be capitalized when referring to these entities.

Metro Rail is informally considered a sixth Sector, and may be cited as “Metro Rail Service Sector” if appropriate.

5. Punctuation Guidelines

Typical English punctuation is used for all written materials. In some instances where more than one method of punctuation is correct, Metro has a preferred style. These instances are listed below.

A. Bullets

Use simple dots (●), carets (>), or dashes (-) for bullets. Once selected, be consistent in size and style.

B. Dates

When dating correspondence, reports or other materials, use the standard month-day-year arrangement. The year should be comprised of four digits, except when referring to the fiscal year, when a two-digit description is acceptable.

European, digital and other styles are not appropriate.

Correct usage:

January 7, 2007

January 2007

JAN 2007

FY07 or FY 2007

Incorrect usage:

January 7, 07

7 January 2007

2007.01.07

FY'07

Note: Metro uses two types of abbreviation for some materials: Month/year, such as January 2007, is used for regularly updated information such as reports. Abbreviated, all caps month/year, such as JAN 2007, is used for map legends.

C. Intersections

Use a slash to indicate intersections or Metro stations identified by an intersection.

Examples:

Board the southbound Metro Rapid Line 740 at Hawthorne/Rosecrans to get to the Galleria at South Bay.

Visitors to both Hollywood/Vine and Hollywood/Highland Stations will see the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

D. Los Angeles

To abbreviate Los Angeles, do not use periods: LA
(Analogous to UCLA, LA Marathon and LAX.)

E. metro.net

Use italics for *metro.net* or any other URL or email address. This is an electronic-age standard that maintains the whole address as a discrete unit. It also avoids the reading difficulty of punctuation at the end of a sentence after a URL with a dot in it. If the general text is in Italics, the reverse should be used. Use all lowercase on metro.net.

Examples:

For more information, visit *metro.net*.

Be sure to visit metro.net to find the latest timetables.

Please contact *customerrelations@metro.net* to obtain a printed map.

F. Street Abbreviations

When space is at a premium, such as on maps, use two-letter abbreviations for street designations; no periods are necessary for the abbreviation. Here are a few examples:

Av
Bl
Ct
Dr
Pl
Rd
St
Wy

Notable exceptions include Sherman Way and Ave 26 (or Avenue 26).

For a complete list of acceptable abbreviations, please refer to Metro's policy on Line Identification Standards.

Abbreviations should be consistent within a document. If a street designation is spelled out in one area then it should be spelled out throughout the text. If street designations are limited to two letters for space considerations, then the two-letter abbreviation should be used throughout.

G. Telephone numbers

Preferred Metro style is to use numbers and periods only. Do not use parentheses or dashes.

Example: 213.922.2000

6. Additional Terminology and Usage Guidelines

Below are some frequently used terms, and usage guidelines.

A. Bus and Train

”Bus” and ”train” are not capitalized except at the beginning of a sentence.

B. Bus Rapid Transit, BRT

Bus Rapid Transit and BRT are industry terms that are meaningful to transit professionals but not to the general public. Minimize industry jargon in all written communications aimed at customers and the general public.

C. Busway/Fixed Guideway/Transitway

A busway refers to paved lanes that are for the exclusive use of buses.

A fixed guideway refers to a fixed path designed and equipped for exclusive use by light rail, heavy rail, monorails, funiculars or trams.

A transitway refers to a thoroughfare on which public transit vehicles travel. It is a broad term that can be applied to bus or rail corridors and can include other vehicle traffic.

A transitway frequently refers to non-rail thoroughfares and is the broader and preferred term to describe either a busway or transitway.

D. EZ transit pass

Due to trademark issues with an east coast product that has a similar name, we are legally obligated to follow very strict rules in using the term ”EZ transit pass” in order to avoid charges of trademark infringement.

- Capitalize ”EZ” but lowercase ”t” and ”p” in all copy forms, as in ”EZ transit pass”
- Use the entire name in all copy; never abbreviate or allow ”EZ transit pass” to appear as ”EZpass,” ”E-Z Pass,” ”EZ,” etc.

- Never italicize “EZ transit pass”
- Never use the color purple in relation to “EZ transit pass”
- Always use the same font size for the entire name “EZ transit pass” in its relation to surrounding copy

E. Gateway Transit Center

The Gateway Transit Center is a transit complex that encompasses:

- Metro headquarters, including building and plaza with Metro Customer Relations and employment offices
- Patsaouras Transit Plaza, with bus bays for connecting buses and LAX flyaway service
- East Portal, with Metro Customer Center, aquarium and refreshment stand
- Metro Red, Purple and Gold Line Stations, with mezzanines and platforms
- Historic Union Station, with Metrolink and Amtrak rail service, Amtrak thruway bus service and taxi service, newsstand and restaurants
- Parking garage

“Gateway Transit Center” should be used when referring to the entire complex.

“One Gateway Plaza” is the Metro headquarters street address and should appear only on letterhead and as a mail address.

When space is at a premium, i.e. maps, timetables or bus headsigns, areas of the Gateway Transit Center can be abbreviated.

Examples: Patsaouras Plaza, Union Station

F. Line Names

Capitalize “Line” when identifying specific Metro routes; do not capitalize when using it as a general descriptor.

When referring to more than one line, use Metro once and capitalize “Lines;” do not use slash marks (e.g., “Metro Red/Purple Lines”).

Examples:

Take the Metro Blue Line to Imperial/Wilmington Station to connect to the Green Line.

The best line to take is Metro Local Line 170; Lines 10 and 11 are also good. Metro Local Lines 150 and 240 travel along Ventura Boulevard. The subway lines are the Metro Red and Purple Lines.

Either the line number or the route name can be used to identify Metro Rapid service as appropriate.

Examples:

Metro Rapid Line 750 travels along Ventura Boulevard. The Wilshire Metro Rapid provides service between Santa Monica and Commerce.

Take Metro Rapid Line 750 to Encino.
Take the Ventura Metro Rapid to Encino.

G. Metro Stations

Metro Rail, Metro Orange Line, Metro Rapid and transitway stops are referred to as stations. Capitalize “Station” when it is part of the proper name of a rail or Orange Line station.

Example: Sepulveda Station.

Please refer to the Metro Signage Standards for a complete listing of correct station names.

When identifying a station for general purposes, combine the station name with Metro Rail rather than the color of the rail line on first reference. Thereafter, the station name can stand alone.

When identifying a station for the purpose of giving directions, either combine the station name with the color of the rail line, or join them with an appropriate conjunction.

Examples:

Metro Rail’s Pico Station is surrounded by entertainment options.

STAPLES Center is one block west of the Metro Blue Line Pico Station.

The Pershing Square Metro Rail station lies in the heart of the jewelry district.

To reach Angie’s Jewelry Exchange, exit the Metro Red Line or Purple Line at Pershing Square Station.

H. Metro System

The Metro System includes all Metro bus and rail service. Capitalize “Metro System” to identify the entirety of bus and rail service.

Example: The Metro System serves millions of passengers yearly.

I. Park/Ride

The facility where you park your car and then join a bus or car/vanpool is officially “Park/Ride.” This designation is used for maps and other materials where the park and ride facilities must be formally or precisely identified. In text, “Park/Ride” and “park and ride” are both acceptable; but use only one of these terms consistently throughout the document.

J. Position Titles

When identifying individuals by title, the first letter of the title is capitalized when it precedes the name. If the title follows the name, it is in all lower case letters.

Readily identified titles such as CEO and CFO can be abbreviated on first usage, however, less common titles should follow the rule of first mention.

Examples:

Communications Manager Bill Heard is looking for interns.

Bill Heard, communications manager, is looking for interns.

K. Relative Geographic Perspective

A key point to remember about geographic location is that it is relative. Bus and rail lines run from one point to another, in both directions. “To” and “from” are therefore relative geographic terms. To avoid showing any geographical preferences, Metro communications should state that a line runs *between* two points.

Correct: The Metro Blue Line runs *between* LA *and* Long Beach.

Incorrect: The Metro Blue Line runs *from* LA *to* Long Beach.

L. Subway, Heavy Rail, Light Rail

Industry professionals often refer to subway transit as “heavy rail.” Heavy rail systems are typically comprised of four- and six-car consists and thus have larger capacity than light rail. Light rail generally refers to above-ground rail service with two- and three-car consists that carry fewer passengers than heavy rail.

(While both the Metro Blue Line and Gold Line East Side Extension have underground segments, they are still light rail.)

However, this jargon should be avoided in materials for customers and the general public unless absolutely necessary. All lines can be referred to as “rail lines;” “subway” may be used to refer to the Red and Purple lines.

M. Transit Centers, Bus Centers, Stations

There are many locations throughout LA County that have multiple transit connections. These locations use various names such as transit centers, bus centers, stations, depots and other similar terms.

Many of these locations have been in existence for many years and the name associated with an individual facility may have been elevated to a landmark. While a uniform set of terms would be helpful, doing so could infringe on a local cultural site and there is no wish on Metro’s part to impose new naming in these cases.

Examples:

Artesia Transit Center
Fox Hills Transit Center
LAX City Bus Center
El Monte Station
Union Station
Transit Mall

Within the Metro purview, several levels of transit service hubs have been developed to assist in the planning and execution of the Metro Connections Network Master Plan:

Regional (tier 1, rail, bus rapid transit and express service)
Sub-regional (tier 2, Metro Rapid, limited and some local service)
Local/community (tier 3, local, shuttle and community circulator service)

The differences between the transit service hubs involve scope and type of connections.

7. Writing Tips

Here are some general writing tips to help make each document as effective as possible:

- Use a cordial tone, emphasizing a connection between Metro and the audience(s). When appropriate, use pronouns such as “we” and “our” to convey a personal connection, but avoid an “us” vs. “them” approach.
- Keep technical terms to a minimum and provide simple explanations when technical terms are needed. Avoid geek speak, endless acronyms and overly officious writing.
- Avoid mixing terms. When a technical term must be used but an informal term is preferred, state the technical term on first mention and immediately identify the informal term to be used. Use the informal term thereafter; do not introduce new terms for the same technicality.
- Present a glossary of terms in more complex documents.
- Vary sentence structure and length to create an animated reading rhythm and to engage the audience. Shorter sentences interspersed with longer ones ease the read.
- Use brief headlines, bullets and sidebars to demonstrate organized thoughts and to present them in a quickly digestible format. Remember that body copy is the least-read part of any document. State key information in headlines and bullets.
- Edit, edit, edit. Focus on making the point quickly.
- Ensure the message has been properly proofread for grammar, punctuation, content and language usage.
- For headlines and banners, use sentences or phrases. When using sentences, use normal punctuation; when using phrases, use initial capital letters.

8.0 Conclusion

Metro is committed to providing accurate information through clear and consistent communications. This Metro Writing Guide is intended as a tool to assist writers in achieving this goal and will be updated periodically as needed.

For more information or help in representing Metro in writing, contact your Communications Project Manager directly or call Warren Morse at extension 25661.