

Metro explains decision to suspend service Saturday night and law enforcement's use of our buses

BY STEVE HYMON , JUNE 1, 2020

It was a rough weekend for our region, LA Metro and our riders. After the city of L.A. expanded its curfew citywide on Saturday night, Metro took the highly unusual step of suspending service systemwide at 8 p.m. to protect the safety of riders and employees.

We'd like to explain our decision to suspend service Saturday and another issue that has been rightly questioned: the use of Metro buses by the LAPD to transport those who had been arrested.

Both of these situations were criticized by riders and questioned by the media. On Sunday morning, we apologized to riders who were stranded, and we offered to reimburse them for expenses getting home (please see the information on reimbursements at the bottom of this post).

We stand by our decision to put public safety first. While suspending service was a very difficult decision to make, we believe it was the right one given the growing violence on the streets of our county — other transit agencies across the U.S. had to do likewise. The safety

of our riders and our staff has been, and will continue to be, our number one priority. Always. On Saturday afternoon, a Metro bus was trapped in the Fairfax District among protest crowds, threatening the safety of our operator. The bus was vandalized extensively. We've had about 62 buses damaged, including many in downtown Los Angeles on Friday night. That, of course, impacts our ability to provide transit service to our customers.

We also very much want to reiterate our apology to transit customers who were left stranded and for the delay in announcing that we were suspending service. Metro did reissue some buses to pick up stranded passengers in specific areas of L.A. and we sent Street Supervisors to various areas to patrol bus stops and notify riders that they needed to make other arrangements to get home. We understand that did not help all riders.

It is an unfortunate and unintentional coincidence that service suspension occurred at the same time local law enforcement requested our agency to provide eight Metro buses to transport detainees that night. Metro is required by law to provide mutual aid in times of emergencies.

We recognize the incongruent and unfortunate optics of this situation — taking transit services away from riders while providing our equipment for other purposes. We were asked to provide six buses tonight and we did so. We have asked authorities to exhaust their resources first before requesting our vehicles.

It is not Metro's choice to provide these buses. And to be clear about Saturday night: Metro's decision to suspend service was based solely on public safety and had nothing to do with law enforcement's request to utilize Metro buses to transport detainees. With the exceptions of some rolling detours and station closures, we ran our regular service Sunday and we're doing so again today and tonight.

Metro unequivocally believes in liberty and justice for all and we concur with and understand all protestors in their clarion call for racial justice and equality and against police brutality. Our own agency programs greatly reinforce this agenda, including our Board-adopted Equity Program, our Women and Girls Governing Council and our programs to help small and disadvantaged businesses.

Reimbursement info: For people who were able to get rides on Uber, Lyft or via taxi to replace a Metro trip, Metro will provide reimbursement for verifiable replacement trips with receipts that are made with these services. Patrons should contact Metro Customer Relations at 323.GO.METRO (323) 466-3876 for additional reimbursement information.

We do want to hear from you. Please leave a comment on what you thought of our decision and what you think Metro's role should be during these challenging times.

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<https://twitter.com/CountyofLA>
•Two other cities have different curfews: Beverly Hills - The business district curfew starts at 1 p.m., June 3, 2020
In "Transportation Headlines"

Update: Metro Bus and Rail service has resumed on Sunday morning
UPDATE, 2:45 P.M. SUNDAY:
<https://twitter.com/metrolosar>
UPDATE, 8:25 A.M.: We know many people expressed concerns about riders being
May 30, 2020
In "Service Alerts"

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Very scary times. I appreciate that Metro did the best it could under these circumstances. I'm sure there is no easy rule book for these kinds of situations and things changed by the minute. Appreciate the update.

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I concur and its very noble of Metro to reimburse customers. I was scared for the bus driver who got trapped and had to make a U-turn.

Like

You absolutely cannot support just causes like pride month and pull a stunt like this. Stranding riders puts people in danger and this was an absolutely reckless decision. LAPD can take care of themselves.

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If LAPD took care of themselves, they would not be out in the field. Is this what you are proposing? NO POLICE AND LET THE LOOTERS AND VANDALS RULE?

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LAPD isn't taking the bus, Bob.

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Metro has to balance out the safety of their employees and the public given very unstable circumstances. They did – I believe – offer to reimburse Uber and Lyft rides. It is not right to expect perfection in the face of chaos. Caltrans and the CHP could not guarantee free passage of our freeways during this either. It's good to ask how we can do better but let's be thankful that Metro is there and is doing the best that they can.

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Yes. But how many people that ride a bus can afford “alternate” transportation?

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“We recognize the incongruent and unfortunate optics of this situation”

Oh gosh I feel SO BAD for you. The OPTICS were unfortunate. Yes, that's everyone's objection to this.

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The transparency of this message is much appreciated. Scary times indeed. Thank you Metro

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You have no reason to apologize.

You did it for the safety of the employees first and then for the public.

because without the employees, who would operate those busses for the public.

You did what was right.

Stop apologizing.

It happened, people will always criticize everything, let them be.

But never go down and beg for forgiveness.

Be strong LA!

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You could have detoured a few blocks or a mile around the unsafe area. Plus numerous routes which do not go anywhere near the unsafe area (such as routes across the San Fernando Valley) were also suspended.

You could have provided 8 buses to the police without discontinuing all of your normal service. In a worse case scenario, you could have pulled one bus from each of 8 routes. Passengers would have had to wait a little longer for a bus. In a best-case scenario, you could probably have offered 8 drivers voluntary overtime to drive the police, while still operating your normal buses. Or you could have probably used 8 drivers from your extra board of standby employees to drive the police.

When you fail to provide a ride home, or a ride for an urgent trip, it makes potential passengers question, "Will Metro's service be reliable under normal conditions? Or should I give up on depending on Metro because I could get stranded?" That is true, whether you discontinue service every time a tragedy occurs on the other side of the country,

or whether you continuously operate overcrowded buses during a disease pandemic while your board of director members continuously nag us to stay 6 feet apart from each other.

I dislike seeing buses or train cars be vandalized by paint. But as far as graffiti is concerned, any bus can still get the job done, transporting passengers, unless someone puts paint on the driver's windshield, or the driver's safety mirrors.

Since you did provide buses to the police for mass arrests, did you insist that each prisoner be seated 6 feet apart from anyone else? If not, you endangered both the prisoners and law abiding members of the general public.

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Hello, which law specifically were you required to follow to let cops use busses? Because it was stated by Metro earlier that this was going to be discussed at your next board meeting. Thank you!

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Hi Miley;

In 2011, the Metro Board approved entering into the California Disaster and Civil Defense Master Mutual Aid Agreement, which provides for mutual aid in accordance with the California Emergency Services Act. In plain English, the state and local agencies agree to help one another. The agreement is most often useful for natural disasters but can also apply to events such as this week.

Steve Myrioni
Editor, The Source

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No good decision in this instance. Being concerned for riders safety though would be number one as that's what you do. But leaving them stranded God knows where is unacceptable. Should have at least sent a shuttle or a few buses around to help these people.

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The violence in the streets of LA this week is police violence. Property destruction and looting is not violence.

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It's not violence but it doesn't make it right either. Why vandalize a bus filled with patrons that are just trying to make a living is beyond me.

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So it was unsafe to drive the bus for your riders... But totally safe to drive the bus for LAPD?

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“On Sunday morning, we apologized to riders who were stranded, and we offered to reimburse them for expenses getting home”

COOL STORY STEVE, BUT METRO DIDN'T ANNOUNCE OR COORDINATE this at all Saturday night. This is at best, mitigating damage after the fact, and not even trying to limit it before people are impacted.

Is there a cap on what Metro will reimburse? Because those surge prices were unbelievable, and a \$5 reimbursement on an unexpected, unbudgeted \$30+ charge does no one any good.

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Hi —

I don't know if there is a cap but I would definitely contact our Customer Relations department sooner rather than later if you were stranded and had reimbursement costs. Patrons The number is 323.GO.METRO / (323) 466-3876. I agree that Saturday night was difficult for riders and I reiterate our apology. I'm very sorry if you were stranded or if you're commenting on behalf of someone who was.

Steve Hymon
Editor, The Source

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You say Metro is required to provide buses in emergencies. Who decides what is an emergency? Is Metro able to make their own assessment, decide it is not an emergency, and deny the request? It's worrying to me if it's the case that LAPD can commandeer buses for whatever they deem is an

emergency when it's so clear they do not always have the best interests of Angelenos at heart.

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The “state of emergency” was declared by the Governor. You can read the document that Steve mentioned above here:

<https://www.caloes.ca.gov/PlanningPreparednessSite/Documents/CAMasterMutAidAgreement.pdf>

(<https://www.caloes.ca.gov/PlanningPreparednessSite/Documents/CAMasterMutAidAgreement.pdf>)

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Here's a question though, and anyone please correct me if I'm wrong, but outside of Downtown LA there was no REAL threat to either riders and employees within the county as of Saturday evening? At best, buses could've turned around at Vermont, Soto, USC area and Ave 26 area and avoiding Downtown altogether. Yet bus lines in the valley that felt no effect from a direct result of all this were suspended, and just to add insult to injury, the agency just throws Anna under the bus by having her provide a simple tweet, with from it seems she probably wasn't even given little to no information as to why this was happening at all.

Metro has proven time and time again that they are simply not competent in handling crisis like this that require an on the spot decision, and regardless, the decision to screw over you're CORE ridership to help out one time DOES NOT look good on you guys AT ALL and people will remember that. Don't apologize, the damage has already

been done, just OWN IT, move forward and like I mentioned in the past, communication, Communication, COMMUNICATION!!! At least a 60-90 min heads up if having to Suspend system-wide service is absolutely necessary.

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You strand people out after curfew without warning, and then instead use our public transit vehicles to 'aid' with the 'emergency' of arresting people who are out after curfew? It's not just the optics that are bad there. As a regular rider, I'm very disappointed in this decision, and hope Metro will seriously reconsider both cutting off services and providing buses to LAPD in the future. Your main responsibility is to riders, not to the police who have a plenty big enough budget to figure out their own transit.

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Metro, stop spending regressive sales tax money building white elephant lines to Torrance and Azusa just because Janice Hahn and Michael Antonovich said so. Your ridership base is severely underrepresented at the decision-making table, which is composed of car drivers and people who live in (usually white) single family areas inhospitable to transit. A tiny fraction of Measure R and M money funds Metrobus, while suburban operators have cleaner and more timely buses with fewer riders. Meanwhile, those of us along major corridors deal with buses that run under 10 mph. I have no receipts for reimbursement on Saturday bc scooters suspended service and I assumed ride share did

the same; instead, I walked 6 miles home. Please stop wasting your breath with empty words about how you are pro equity when you spent 200,000 per rider on the train extension to Azusa while us, the riders, are packed like sardines into slow, late buses. Cities that want to remain segregated should not get local return money until they agree to zone for affordable housing around Metro stops a la JJJ.

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