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## Focus on Consent Decree Compliance Risks Losing Ridership, Transit Peer Panel Warns

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(March 10, 2004) The narrow focus on complying with the Consent Decree's bus passenger load standards could cause a "negative spiral of declining ridership," a panel of transit executives has warned.

The executives, who convened in Los Angeles March 1 – 3 for a peer review of Metro Bus service, represented transit properties in Chicago, Boston and San Francisco. They were joined by an advisor from the American Public Transportation Association.

"Successful routes may be victims of their own success," the panel observed in its report. "LACMTA is penalized for growth in ridership. This can lead to a disincentive to marketing and improving service."

Commenting on the Consent Decree's passenger load standards, the panelists wrote, "By the laws of probability, compliance...as interpreted by the Special Master is unachievable."

### Achieving the standard

Instead, the panelists advised applying passenger load standards consistent with current industry practice. Under those standards, they said Metro Bus service is achieving the required 1.20 load factor.

In fact, the panel said Metro service enhancements have "outpaced most, if not all, of the nation's transit systems."

Noting that passenger loads "are only one measure of service quality," the panel recommended focusing on a broader range of service quality issues. These included continuing to develop the Metro Rapid bus network and modifying service as ridership grows or shrinks in certain areas.

**Also:** [BRU Calls for Consent Decree Extension](#)

The panel also observed that MTA has deferred significant capital projects in meeting its Consent Decree obligations.

Overall, the peer review panel felt the Metro staff "demonstrated exceptional diligence" in its efforts to improve bus service.

