



Metro

Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

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February 16, 2021

Honorable Grace Napolitano
Member of Congress
1610 LHOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Napolitano:

On behalf of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), I am writing to urge the Biden Administration and Congress to rapidly provide resources to fund a fare-free public transportation pilot program as outlined in the Freedom to Move Act introduced last year by U.S. Senator Ed Markey and Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley. Metro's Board of Directors voted unanimously to support the Freedom to Move Act on August 27, 2020.

The Freedom to Move Act's creation of a federal grant system to provide for a fare-free public transportation program is in total alignment with the Biden/Harris Administration's Justice40 Initiative "on how certain Federal investments might be made toward a goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits flow to disadvantaged communities." Metro welcomed the fact that this worthwhile goal related to transportation and disadvantaged communities was embedded in the Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, issued by President Biden on January 27, 2021. Given that the average income of Metro bus riders is \$17,975, and \$27,723 for our rail riders, providing fareless access to Metro's bus and rail transportation options will enhance equitable access to transit, eventually increase ridership, provide positive environmental benefits by taking cars off the road, and promote economic vitality in disadvantaged communities throughout Los Angeles County. Designating federal funding for a fare-free public transportation pilot program is sound public policy.

Consistent with the goals of the Freedom to Move Act and the Justice40 Initiative, Metro launched on August 27, 2020 the Fareless System Initiative (Operation FSI) – an exploratory task force to examine how our agency can institute a fareless system for all of our bus and transit riders. I have requested the Operation FSI task force members to present Metro's Board of Directors with a plan on how our agency can become the first major transit system in the world to become entirely fareless. This transformative effort will decisively meet the Biden/Harris Administration's goals with respect to their Justice40 Initiative and also serve to increase transit ridership in disadvantaged communities. As I shared on Metro's Blog the Source, "LA Metro has a moral obligation to pursue a fareless system and help our region recover from both a once in a lifetime pandemic and the devastating effects of the lack of affordability in the region."

As the Biden/Harris Administration and Congress explore a jobs-focused infrastructure legislative package in the coming weeks and months – we urge you to consider including sufficient funding for a pilot program that would permit the U.S. Department of Transportation to explore the efficacy of instituting a fare-free public transportation grant program – consistent with Metro’s Fareless System Initiative. Should such a pilot program be successful, which we believe it would, it would set a strong foundation for Congress to authorize a more permanent fare-free transportation grant program as envisioned by the Freedom to Move Act.

Thank you in advance for considering Metro’s proposal to include funding for a fare-free public transportation pilot program in any jobs-focused infrastructure legislative package that may be crafted and considered by Congress in the coming weeks and months. We believe such an initiative, consistent with the Biden/Harris Administration’s Justice40 Initiative and the Freedom to Move Act, will be a brilliant example of how we can rapidly and effectively provide more equity and more mobility to all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phillip A. Washington". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Phillip A. Washington
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Metro Board of Directors
House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development