


Origins of the Metro Code of Conduct

By Dana Gabbard | Feb 22, 2012 |  6 COMMENTS

If you have ridden a Metro bus or rail car you may have recently found in the holders for brochures and timetables (known in the industry as take-ones) [a brochure for Metro's Code of Conduct](#). The who/what, you may wonder?

Let me share with you the circuitous story of this bit of rulemaking. If nothing else, I think the reader's of this blog will find it an entertaining tale. And I even have a personal role at one key part of the narrative.



In August 2003 the Metro Board adopted an Administrative Code for the agency. The [Minutes](#) from that meeting indicate the code (item #24) was merely adopted; no mention of amendments being made or follow-up actions to be taken. This is interesting because in November 2007 when the Metro board was presented the Customer Code of Conduct draft the [staff report](#) stated "In 2003 Metro's Board adopted an Administrative Code ... After adoption of the Administrative Code, the Board instructed staff to evaluate the efficacy of creating a Customer Code of Conduct in furtherance of the purposes for which the Administrative Code was adopted." Note the ambiguity that no mention is made of who actually sought such a Code, merely that "The Board" instructed staff. Only in a [2009 document](#) is it revealed Duarte Councilman and Metro Board member John Fasana first suggested Metro needed a Code, as an adjunct to the creation of a Transit Adjudication Bureau (basically Metro's own court).

Read the full brochure by [##http://www.metro.net/here.##](http://www.metro.net/here.##)

The Code and Transit Adjudication Bureau seemed somewhat in limbo after the initial inquiry in 2003 until then L.A. County Supervisor and Metro Board member Yvonne Burke in Feb. 2006 [amended a motion about TAP](#) (item #16). These few paragraphs are the birthplace of the rail station turnstiles, with the Code and Adjudication Bureau tied to it. Burke's main motivation was complaints from her constituents about having to go to court for tickets they received when they were found riding the Blue Line without Metro tickets or passes. Bruke put all her political clout behind making the gates happen (and by default the Code and Bureau). By Sept. 2006 legislation ([SB 1749](#)) had passed the legislature and been signed by the Governor authorizing Metro to set up a Court if it wished to.

The 2007 Code draft is what motivated my involvement. Staff in the aforementioned 2007 report stated "The proposed ordinance will be presented for final adoption at a subsequent Board meeting after the ordinance has been published for public comment." Poking around and asking question I learned Mero staff felt a notice published in a newspaper of general circulation (i.e. a legal notice buried in the classifieds) was all that was necessary to seek public comments. I [sent a letter](#) to then-Metro CEO Roger Snoble decrying this state of affairs. In response Metro's ethics officer Karen Gorman cited presentations at a bunch of [obscure governmental meetings](#) as constituting making the public aware. This was in a period when Metro had a widely publicized public hearing about tiles. You read that right: tiles. As I mentioned in my letter SO.CA.TA in response to this deplorable situation placed on the front page of its website [a notice](#) about the Code with links to the obscure location it had been posted on the Metro website plus information on how to submit comments via e-mail or written letter. We didn't have a Streetsblog back then so this was about the best means available to get the word out to riders, etc.

By Dec. 2008 when Burke left the Board of Supervisors the Code had momentum as part of its association with the Court and gates. The following year things slowed down as then Metro CEO Roger Snoble felt the Court was impudent to implement until the agency's finances were stabilized. In the middle of the year when Art Leahy took over he gave the thumbs up for it to go ahead.

And so in [July 2010](#) the Metro Board adopted the Code. It was supposed to become effective July 1, 2011. But in [June 2011](#) the Metro Board [amended the Code](#) to reflect previously made changes to Metro's bicycle policies. Also the effective date was pushed back to October 31, 2011 to enable the procurement of a citation processing vendor to be completed. Evidently things may have taken a bit longer than that to get up and running which accounts for why Metro's first push to inform patrons about the Code is only starting up now.

So that is the story (with more twists and turns than an episode of public radio's Guy Noir) of Metro's not-so-new, long-time being born Code of Conduct. Such as it is.

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JackGerritsen • 11 years ago

The amended (6/23/2011) code of conduct allows for 1st Amendment expressive activities within section 6-05-210 Solicitation, but signs at entrances to Union Station and Section 6-05-120 Loitering, forbid; "Remaining in a Metro facility or vehicle without a lawful transportation purpose . . ." Exercising freedom of speech is not a law transportation purpose, therefore the code of conduct is contradictory and unclear and subject to misinterpretation by enforcement officers and dangerous to freedom of speech.

^ | v • Reply • Share

Dana Gabbard • 11 years ago

One again Matt Barrett at the Metro Library has shared with me some addenda: There is a 2004 receive and file staff report on transit courts that Matt theorizes could be what led to everything else - the 2006 Burke motion, passenger code of conduct, and the creation of transit court. http://boardarchives.metro....

And Mr. Barrett dug up a 1992 reference to creating "transit courts" by Antonio Villaraigosa (who was an Board alternate during his years as a labor organizer)! See item 7 "Director Special Items" in these December 17, 1992 SCRTRD meeting minutes: http://boardarchives.metro....

I would counter to James that sharing the process has value, and I think noting pointedly the dismal lack of public input is a bit more than "look! here's how sausage is made! see?" Trust me, some Metro staff will be displeased at my bringing that to light...

^ | v • Reply • Share

James • 11 years ago

There's an awful lot of "inside baseball" in that description of the Code of Conduct. There's nothing wrong with having a code or even a transit court, but this just seems to say "look! here's how sausage is made! see?"

I would love to see an American transit agency come up with a common courtesy campaign as cute, clever, funny and easy to understand as Tokyo Metro's "Please Do It At Home" posters. Or even borrow the Japanese posters, after fixing the inevitable English.

^ | v • Reply • Share

JackGerritsen → James • 11 years ago

I don't understand how any MTA business has anything to do with the making of sausage, or for anyone to look and see how sausage is made.

^ | v • Reply • Share

TAPman • 11 years ago

Burke's main motivation was complaints from her constituents about having to go to court for tickets they received when they were found riding the Blue Line without Metro tickets or passes."

Which is odd considering that the Blue Line does not and will not, for the most part, have turnstiles.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share

JackGerritsen → TAPman • 11 years ago

When people have allegedly violated the law, what is the problem of having to go to court. Is the MTA court system supposed to be fairer than the prior court system.

^ | v • Reply • Share





Do You Have Any Metro/LACMTA Tokens? They Still Work!

By Dana Gabbard | Nov 26, 2012

Recently the Employee Transportation Coordinator at my workplace asked me how does one pay to ride Metro Rail using tokens. After a few days I acquired and passed along a take one brochure (of the type you see on rail and bus vehicles) describing the procedure. In the interim the ETC had also sent a [...]

Metro's Civil Rights Review Odyssey

By Dana Gabbard | Jul 2, 2013

A few months ago I spotted on the bus a new take one multilingual brochure titled "Metro Notice of Civil Rights". Informational placards with the same information also popped up on Metrorail equipment. I recognized this as the latest component of the actions Metro has undertaken to satisfy the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regarding its [...]

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By Damien Newton | Nov 18, 2011

Century City Mailer for Web The Beverly Hills newspaper of record, the esteemed Beverly Hills Courier, has been doing its best to rile the residents of the 90210 against the Westside Subway route that would take the Subway under Beverly Hills High School The paper all but declared the Mayor a traitor to the city [...]

Will Metro's Measure R "Informational" Campaign Backfire?

By Damien Newton | Sep 29, 2008

On Top of a Pile of Junk Mail, or Part of a Pile of Junk Mail? Last Thursday during Metro's Board of Directors meeting, LA County Supervisor Gloria Molina protested that Metro was spending \$4.1 million of public funds to promote Measure R in violation of federal and state laws that prohibit governmental organizations from [...]

What Questions Would You Ask Daily Transit User Reps. on Advisory Panel to Metro's Measure R Oversight Committee?

By Dana Gabbard | May 16, 2011

My metaphor of choice to describe transportation funding and policy making is an onion, in which there are a succession of layers representing complexities and multifaceted cross-jurisdictional dimensions. And one cannot be complacent since there are always new aspects to explore and try to fathom. For example, in a previous commentary I laid out the [...]





Civility Breaks Out at Metro Eagle Rock BRT Meeting

By Joe Linton | Aug 8, 2019

Despite threats in advance, last night's Metro Eagle Rock BRT meeting was very civil

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