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Home (<https://www.metro.net/>) > About Metro (<https://www.metro.net/about/>) > **L.A. Metro Celebrates Official Launch of New Ambassador Pilot Program**

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Dave Sotero March 6, 2023

### **Nearly 300 Ambassadors are Now Trained to be Deployed Throughout the Metro Transit System to Help Improve Riders' Experience**

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) today announced that it has successfully trained nearly 300 new Metro Ambassadors in preparation for their deployment on the Metro Bus and Rail System. The program is now one of the largest of its kind in the country, and is one part of the agency's multi-layered and reimagined approach to public safety.

Metro Ambassadors help riders navigate the transit system, provide extra eyes and ears and support riders who need assistance. They will welcome riders to Metro, answer their questions, connect them to the resources they need and report issues they see.

Metro Ambassadors have been deployed along certain routes of the Metro Rail System since the first cohort was trained in October 2022, providing critical customer support first on the K (Crenshaw) Line, and then gradual expansion to the A Line (Blue), B and D Lines (Red, Purple), and L Line (Gold, as well as key bus lines where they are needed most, including Bus Line 20, 720, 40, 210 and the J Line (Silver). As more are trained, their deployment will expand across more areas of the Metro system as they are needed.

Ambassadors are available seven days a week to help Metro customers. Work shifts will cover 14-16 hours of the day: 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. on weekdays and 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. on weekends. They wear special green polo shirts and vests for easy identification and are equipped with communication devices like cell phones or iPads to contact appropriate staff to connect customers with resources and report maintenance and safety concerns via Metro's Transit Watch App.

The new Metro Ambassadors are diverse and come from the communities Metro serves. All have either lived or professional experiences with the various types of challenges experienced by many Metro customers, which makes it possible for them to perform their job with empathy, respect and skill.

"I've seen these ambassadors interact with our riders with my own eyes, and I can honestly say I am impressed with the excellent job they are doing," said Glendale City Council Member and Metro Board Chair Ara J. Najarian. "They have turbocharged Metro's customer service at stations and on trains and buses, and are helping the agency proactively address some of the thorny issues we are now seeing on the transit system. I think they make an excellent addition to Metro's ongoing efforts to improve conditions for all our daily transit riders."

Ambassadors are not security officers and are not replacing existing security staff or law enforcement. Their specific responsibilities are to support riders as they navigate the system by providing a welcoming and visible presence and support that customers can rely on. They will connect riders to resources they need, whether it be for directions to get them where they are going, providing information about how to pay their fare, or to connect people experiencing homelessness with the services available through Metro's homeless outreach teams. Lastly, ambassadors help Metro respond to issues more quickly. They are tasked with reporting maintenance, cleanliness or safety concerns directly to appropriate Metro departments for expedited response.

"Metro Ambassadors are at the core of our efforts to re-envision how to keep people safe on Metro. These ambassadors will serve as the eyes and ears of our system, as a trained, friendly presence to welcome riders to Metro every day," said Holly J. Mitchell, Los Angeles County Supervisor and Metro Board Member. "Our ambassadors come from our communities, and understand how to help riders navigate the system, report any incidences, and make sure our aren't alone when they ride transit."

To best prepare them to help transit customers, Metro Ambassadors had to successfully complete a thorough classroom and field training program that was specially designed by Metro based on the collective experience of multiple agency departments, including Bus and Rail Operations, Office of Civil Rights and Inclusion, Customer Experience and System Security and Law Enforcement, among others. Metro Ambassadors were trained on a wide range of critical customer-facing issues they will likely experience on a daily basis, including conflict de-escalation, disability awareness, trauma-informed care, cultural and situational awareness, Metro Operations and other personal and public safety issues.

"Metro riders deserve safety and support while using our transit system, and the Metro Ambassador Program is ready to deliver," said Los Angeles County Supervisor and Metro Board Member Lindsey P. Horvath. "As a longtime proponent of expanding community ambassador programs, I know first-hand the value that an unarmed security presence can bring to the Metro system. I am grateful for every ambassador from across the county who joined this awesome team. To everyone thinking about hopping on bus or rail: I encourage you to tap into the system and to lean on our ambassador team for support along the way."

The pilot program was inspired by similar programs implemented by San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) and Philadelphia's Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority's (SEPTA) transit system. Metro also received valuable input on the formation of its pilot program from the first cohort of its Public Safety Advisory Committee, which is tasked with helping Metro safeguard the transit community by taking a holistic, equitable and welcoming approach to public safety.

"Three years ago we created the Public Safety Advisory Committee to help us design a safer Metro system for all our riders. They told us that this was what we needed to do, and we listened," said Janice Hahn, Chair of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and Metro Board Member. "These Ambassadors are taking us a big step forward in our mission of protecting the safety and the dignity of all of our riders."

"Metro riders and employees alike deserve a safe, comfortable, and inclusive experience when they use and navigate through our transit system. This pilot program will bring personnel trained to provide excellent customer service to serve our riders and support our employees," said Metro Board Member and Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda L. Solis for the First District. "They will play a critical role in making our system feel welcoming for all and will help bring back ridership."

Metro is using a \$122.8 million pilot vendor contract for up to five years to operate the ambassador program. The contract is split between Strive Well-Being Inc., a Small Business Enterprise firm for \$27.76 million, and RMI International Inc. (RMI), a Minority Business Enterprise firm for \$95.09 million.

"I'm glad to see that our contractors have been assigned a small business utilization goal to ensure that their staffing will reflect the communities they serve," said Jacquelyn Dupont-Walker, Metro Board Second Vice Chair.

The pilot program is an important component of Metro's reimagined, multilayered public safety plan that includes Transit Security Officers, law enforcement, improved cameras and lighting, more frequent cleaning as well as homeless outreach and crisis intervention teams.

"In survey after survey, our customers have told us that they want more wrap-around support for riders on Metro," said Metro CEO Stephanie Wiggins. "Metro Ambassadors are a key part of delivering that support, along with the other layers of our Metro team. We know we've got a lot of work to do to deliver the type of transit service people expect and deserve on our system – and we're far from done."

Public feedback has been positive; riders have said they appreciate the presence of the Metro Ambassadors. In addition to helping customers navigate the system, the Metro Ambassadors have helped report sexual harassment, criminal activity and other issues of key importance to our riders. On several occasions, Metro Ambassadors have helped summon emergency medical assistance for riders in distress.

For more information, please visit [metro.net/riding/ambassadors/](https://www.metro.net/riding/ambassadors/) (<https://www.metro.net/riding/ambassadors/>).

Photos

