
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Consistent with national trends, transit ridership in Los Angeles (LA) County has been declining over the last several years. Although various regional planning and economic factors have contributed to these ridership trends, there may be local City and County efforts that can help address these patterns. The Metro Office of the Inspector General (OIG) understands that an important core business goal for Metro is to increase transit use and ridership; as such, it initiated this study to determine what methods and strategies are currently being deployed within LA County to identify potential policies and programs that could influence LA County commuters, employers and agency partners to increase transit ridership and rideshare usage on a system-wide basis.

Purpose of the Study

The study included the following steps and research objectives:

- Perform market research surveys on business and government entities to gather information on their transit subsidy program, and to understand factors that may affect employee ridership patterns including transit and non-transit commuters.
- Interview various Metro and Southern California Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) department staff to gather their perspectives on existing and potential new rideshare and transit programs.
- Research national trends and industry best practices to encourage promoting the use of public transit through relationships with business and agency partners.

Trends Affecting Ridership

Ridership Trends and User Characteristics

Metro has had a 13.2 percent decrease in ridership since 2014. Based on Metro's On-Board Ridership Surveys and interviews with Metro staff, general ridership trends may be related to improved economic conditions, competing options of ride-hailing/sharing services, and the perception of safety and convenience of the system. Also during this time period, fare prices have increased (locally and regionally) and the price of gas began to decrease.

Of current Metro riders, about one-third are transit dependent (have no other modes available), and one-third are choice riders (have other transportation options). Based on Metro's market research, the most common reasons why transit was not used for commuting were: it was too hard to get to/from transit, service was too slow, service was not reliable, and security concern.

To capture more riders, Metro has been implementing programs to address customer satisfaction. In 2017, Metro has improved bus stops and rail stations, established a Customer Experience Committee, created plans to improve bus system speed, on-time performance, and provided rideshare/shared mobility program support, contracted for transit policing services with LA County Sheriff Department, LA Police Department, Long Beach Police Department, and implemented planning for first/last mile program to help Metro riders travel easier from their home to first transit stop and from last transit stop to their destinations.

Surveys and Interviews

Interviews were conducted with Metro executives and staff from various departments, as well as SCAQMD staff to provide insight on Metro ridership trends, rideshare/transit opportunities for Metro employees, and vendors/contractors. In addition, interviews were conducted with a sample of 42 public sector agencies and private sector vendors throughout LA County to understand their level of transit and parking subsidies and their current policies that support transit and rideshare usage.

Key Findings

Ridership Can Be Increased by Metro Stakeholders

Overall, the surveys and interviews indicated that there are opportunities to encourage transit usage by employees of Metro contractors/vendors and government agencies in the County through marketing campaigns, provision of additional incentives, and improved awareness of Metro's Employee Annual Pass and Guaranteed Ride Home programs. Furthermore, the review of the current commute subsidy programs indicated that some government agencies and most private-sector firms do not provide transit subsidies that help cover a portion of the cost of monthly transit passes, although some of these entities provide free or subsidized parking.

Existing Policies and Best Practices

Few of the agencies surveyed tie transit incentives through the procurement and contracting processes. However, there are several examples which indicate that Metro could adopt programs to encourage promoting transit/rideshare use. In addition, there are opportunities to leverage current Metro policies and programs to reduce incentives for driving and encourage transit and rideshare usage.

Opportunities to Increase Ridership

Based on the review of the ridership data, surveys/interviews, reviews of policies, and best practices, multiple approaches that Metro could take to increase ridership were identified. These include encouraging Metro business partners to promote public transit/ridership use, increased marketing to specific audience groups (such as students and employees who live near transit), working with other government agencies in LA County, and better publicizing the Guaranteed

Ride Home Program to employees. Implementation of these programs by Metro would ensure that opportunities are provided to improve rideshare and overall transit ridership.

Key Recommendations

- Increase marketing to specific audience groups to increase ridership by developing additional marketing programs directly aimed at user groups such as students, business and government entities, and employees "Live Near Your Work" campaigns.
- Coordinate with other LA County public agencies to encourage additional use of public transit and participation in ridership programs, including maximizing allowable transit subsidies over parking subsidies.
- Explore modifications to Metro's Employer Annual Pass Program to further encourage transit usage, such as the addition of a monthly pass option.
- Publicize the Guaranteed Ride Home Program to employees.
- Encourage use of public transit at meetings and events where contractors will be present.
- Consider whether any programs can be created that specifically address vendor/contractor use of public transit.

To view the entire report on Increasing Public Transit and Rideshare Use Study, please visit the following link to download a copy:

<http://libraryarchives.metro.net/DB Attachments/Final%20Report%20on%20Increasing%20Public%20Transit%20and%20Rideshare%20Use%20Study%201-30-18.pdf>