

Metro



Board Report

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**REGULAR BOARD MEETING
DECEMBER 3, 2020**

Motion by:

DIRECTORS BONIN, SOLIS, NAJARIAN, KREKORIAN, AND KEUHL

Buses with Optional Left-Side Boarding

Metro is developing multiple new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines throughout Los Angeles County as part of an unprecedented expansion. These BRT lines will operate in a variety of urban environments, including mixed-flow city streets, curbside dedicated lanes, center-running dedicated lanes, and freeways. In such complicated settings, the ability to board on either the left or right side of the bus can help improve street design and reduce conflicts with other street users by increasing compatibility with amenities such as street trees, landscaped medians, protected bike lanes, and on-street parking.

Metro has previously considered the use of left-side boarding in individual BRT projects, but the benefits of project design flexibility were outweighed by concerns over introducing operational and maintenance complexity into the bus fleet. However, Metro has never before had so many BRT projects in simultaneous project development, which could increase the benefits and reduce the costs of introducing left-side boarding as a design alternative. Once primarily used internationally, left-side boarding is now common in cities throughout the United States, including planned or operating BRT systems in Oakland, San Bernardino, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Houston, Albuquerque, Eugene, and Provo.

Metro is currently undertaking the systemwide modernization and replacement of its entire bus fleet due to the Board-adopted goal of 100% electrification by 2030. While this is already a challenging and complex feat, upcoming bus procurements also present the potential opportunity to introduce new vehicle types into the fleet without substantial extra costs. Metro should therefore reconsider the potential for buses with boarding on both sides in the context of ongoing BRT project development and upcoming bus procurements and present a comprehensive evaluation of the benefits and costs of this feature.

SUBJECT: BUSES WITH OPTIONAL LEFT-SIDE BOARDING

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE Motion by Directors Bonin, Solis, Najarian, Krekorian, and Kuehl that the Board direct the CEO to report back to the Planning & Programming Committee in February 2021 with the following information:

- A. Which projects could benefit from the additional street design flexibility created by left-side bus boarding? Can community-supported amenities, such as street trees, medians, and bike lanes be added/retained if left-side boarding is introduced?
- B. What tradeoffs are there for passenger capacity and/or customer experience, if any?
- C. How did other U.S. transit agencies procure their buses with boarding on both sides and are those procurement options available to Metro?
- D. How many buses would need to have this feature if left-side boarding were pursued on BRT projects currently under development? What would be the marginal capital and/or operational/maintenance costs, if any?
- E. Would existing BRT lines, such as the Silver Line, operationally benefit from the introduction of left-side boarding?
- F. How could buses with boarding on both sides be incorporated into upcoming purchases of electric buses?