



Metro

Board Report

Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation
Authority
One Gateway Plaza
3rd Floor Board Room
Los Angeles, CA

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REGULAR BOARD MEETING JANUARY 23, 2025

Motion by:

DIRECTORS HAHN, BARGER, HORVATH, SOLIS, DUTRA AND BASS

Response to Eaton & Pacific Palisades Wildfires

On the evening of Tuesday January 7, 2025 wildfires, propelled by hurricane-force winds, low humidity and dry brush, burned through multiple communities in Los Angeles County. At its peak, six blazes were simultaneously threatening America's most populous county. The Palisades fire, which had started that morning, would go on to burn through more than 23,000 acres, reducing much of a vibrant community to ash, and killing at least eight people. The Eaton fire that tore through Altadena has now ravaged more than 14,000 acres, destroyed thousands of homes and businesses, and left at least seventeen dead.

Metro's role in ensuring its customers have access to transportation options during this crisis is critical. For individuals and families displaced by the wildfires, access to free or subsidized transit may prove vital in connecting them to shelters, medical care, workplaces, schools, and other essential services. Expanding Metro's subsidized fare programs, such as the Low-Income Fare is Easy (LIFE) program to include survivors of the recent wildfire disasters for a temporary period may help address these immediate transportation needs while reinforcing Metro's mission of equity and accessibility for all.

At least 19 Metro employees have lost their homes in the wildfires and at least 46 employees have been displaced and will need significant support to rebuild their homes and lives. This includes financial assistance and access to resources as they recover. As the backbone of Metro's operations, assisting our employees during this incredibly difficult time is also an investment in maintaining a resilient workforce capable of sustaining critical transit operations during and after recovery.

Additionally, and with an understanding of the compounding effect this tragedy will have on the existing housing crisis, Metro should play an important role in long-term housing recovery efforts by leveraging the policies and assets already in place through its joint development program and advocating for streamlined policies to accelerate housing development. Metro's Joint Development Policy is intended to enable Metro to build as much quality housing near transit as possible, for those who need it most, as soon as possible. Metro has committed to building 10,000 units of housing on 20 Metro-owned sites by 2031 - 5,000 of which will be income-restricted. The recent wildfires have only exacerbated the region's need to deliver housing

and amenities for everyone.

Furthermore, the scale of these tragedies will undoubtedly have a ripple effect across the region. It is important for Metro to gain a timely understanding of how these impacts might affect budget development, operations, and program delivery so that we may be able to make important decisions, identify opportunities for collaboration with regional partners, and adjust accordingly.

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO EATON & PACIFIC PALISADES WILDFIRES MOTION

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE Motion by Hahn, Barger, Horvath, Solis, Dutra and Bass that the Board direct the Chief Executive Officer to:

- A. Modify the eligibility criteria of all reduced fare programs to include individuals and families displaced by the wildfires for six months, with an option to extend the program as needed. The CEO shall report back to the board in June 2025 on the outcomes and impacts of this measure;
- B. Mobilize outreach teams to the Eaton and Palisades Fire evacuation centers, resource centers, workshops, and other critical locations, providing resources to wildfire survivors, to assist in the registration efforts for reduced fare programs;
- C. Identify and provide financial or other forms of assistance that are eligible for cost recovery from State or Federal natural disaster assistance programs and/or non-governmental disaster assistance entities to Metro employees who have lost their homes in the wildfires and/or have been displaced as a result of the wildfires; and
- D. Work with the City and County of LA, and any other directly impacted jurisdictions to identify ways that Metro may aid in recovery efforts- including, but not limited to its fleet, services, expertise, and properties. The CEO shall provide the Board with regular updates on these efforts as they are being established.