



Board Report

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EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OCTOBER 20, 2022

SUBJECT: GENDER ACTION PLAN

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE the Metro Gender Action Plan (Attachment A).

ISSUE

Although women comprise over half of all transit ridership, their mobility needs, concerns, and preferences have not been critically accounted for in the way our transportation systems are planned. The Understanding of How Women Travel (UHWT) study's core findings provided a rich understanding of women's travel needs and the challenges they experience. These findings provided a foundation of knowledge upon which Metro can actively work toward enhancing the quality of the travel experience for women in LA County through the Gender Action Plan (GAP).

BACKGROUND

In 2017, Women & Girls Governing Council (WGGC) was established to eliminate barriers faced by women when using public transportation. In February 2018, the WGGC recommended embarking on the UHWT study to understand more about these issues, to improve women and girls' experiences on Metro, and cultivate more gender-inclusive practices at Metro.

In 2019, the UHWT study analyzed women's travel patterns; identified common barriers and challenges focused on four themes to be explored further by the GAP. The UHWT study found that disaggregated gender data was not collected, making it more difficult to understand patterns of travel or preferences. Results of the UHWT study pointed to findings related to how and when women travel, and their most significant barriers and challenges when traveling on transit. Key findings from that study:

- Women account for a larger share of Metro bus and rail ridership
- Almost 90% of all female riders who use the system, ride more than three days per week.
- 57% of women bring their children on transit.
- Women in Los Angeles are also more likely than men to travel mid-day, with a travel peak around 2 PM when transit service may be reduced.

- Based on the How Women Travel survey, the top reason that women find it difficult to ride transit is they do not feel it is safe. While 60% of female riders who participated in the survey feel safe riding Metro during the day, that number plummets to just 20% at night. Safety perceptions for waiting and walking to the stop or station were even lower.
- The physical design of vehicles and stop/station spaces also create access challenges for women. Women were observed in our study traveling with bags, carts, and strollers. Negotiating the space on transit vehicles and at stops and stations appeared to be a challenge.
- Fewer than 40% of female riders surveyed for this study feel that transit is comfortable or that transit vehicles have the space they need for their belongings and 44% - of women's transit trips are longer than an hour.

The Gender Action Plan (GAP) digs deeper into data and trends and uses Metro's recent initiatives to create a foundation for actionable and measurable changes. The GAP will allow Metro to align existing work, with new strategies specifically intended to improve travel experiences for women.

DISCUSSION

Metro aims to provide world-class public transportation for all the people of LA County, one key aspect of that mission is making sure the needs of people are what drives Metro's plans, policies, and actions - which in turn requires that Metro pay special attention to the needs of women and other groups that may not have historically been included in this planning process.

The GAP is Metro's commitment to view all policy, planning, and design efforts through a gender lens that recognizes the diversity of its riders and to closing the gender gap through gender equitable, programs, policies, and services.

With distinct travel patterns and amplified travel concerns, women's travel needs have been omitted in the design of our transportation system. As Metro transforms the customer experience, leading with equity, now is the time to address these needs. Studies have shown that women are more likely to travel throughout the middle of the day with children in tow and are more likely to feel unsafe traveling at night. Metro aims to create a better customer experience by bringing a gender-focused perspective to the delivery of our services. This Gender Action Plan establishes a framework and implementation plan that responds to the expressed needs and preferences of women riders.

The primary goals of the GAP are to:

- Raise awareness of the gender differences in travel
- Ensure diverse gender perspectives are considered in Metro's policies, projects, programs, and services
- Address gender gaps related to Metro's policies, projects, programs, and services
- Improve the quality and accessibility of Metro's services for women
- Create measurable progress toward the GAP goals

Building off that work, the GAP provides specific strategies on how gender perspectives can be incorporated into the design and implementation of Metro's policies, projects, programs, and services. Drawing from best practice research from within the transit industry, input from focus groups and public outreach, and analysis of recent data sources, the GAP defines actions and desired outcomes of gender-inclusive strategies and programs centered around four themes:

- safety
- fare policy
- service frequency & reliability
- station/stop & vehicle design

Due to the changing landscape of COVID-19 response and economic recovery, the importance of safety, cleanliness, comfort, and costs for women are further heightened. The improvements articulated in this Gender Action Plan will not only improve travel experiences for women - they will benefit the experience of all riders.

APPROACH

The analysis approach for the action plan is built on a foundation of social justice principles and sociological methods. It was designed to capture "hard-to-reach" populations and employ the project's intersectional approach to gender. While traditional collection techniques such as findings from the UHWT study, best practice research, public workshops, focus groups, and comment cards helped inform this analysis, much of the data collection process revolved around conversations with the community. Metro is committed to an ongoing effort to create understanding, trust, and a two-way partnership with the community we serve. Central to the effort was a series of workshops and interviews with community-based based organizations and stakeholders. The outreach process aimed to understand which of the most relevant practices would best meet the needs of women riders.

Metro also conducted:

- Additional research on the UHWT Study: Additional research was conducted to expand on the areas of focus identified in the UHWT study, especially considering the changes in travel behavior due to the pandemic.
- Internal Gender Audit of Metro's Current Plans, Programs, Policies, & Projects: The Gender Audit (Audit) was one of the key first steps of the GAP, and was an element of the Gender Analysis process. The Gender Audit (Audit) evaluated Metro governing documents, plans, policies, programs, and projects adopted or in development since the UHWT was prepared using a critical gender lens to determine their responsiveness to the unique travel needs of women.

Plan/Program/Policy/Project	GAP Themes			
	Safety	Fare Policy	Stop/Station/Vehicle Design	Services/Frequency/Reliability
Metro Rail Design Criteria	X		X	
Bus Operator Rulebook/Standard Operating Procedures	X			
HR4000 Heavy Rail Vehicle Specification			X	
Low-Floor Zero-Emissions Bus Technical Specification			X	
Joint Development Policy			X	
Disability and Aging Action Plan				X
Transit Oriented Communities Policy			X	
Transfer Design Guideline	X		X	
Code of Conduct	X	X		
Systemwide Station Design Standards Policy	X		X	
NextGen Bus Study	X			X
Customer Experience Plan	X	X	X	X
Customer Experience Survey Results	X	X	X	X
Transit Service Policies & Standards				X
Our Next LA	X	X	X	X
Moving Beyond Sustainability			X	X
System Security & Law Enforcement Strategic Plan	X			
Covid-19 Recovery Task Force	X	X	X	X
Better Bus Program	X	X	X	X
Traffic Reduction Pilot Program		X		X
Comprehensive Pricing Strategy		X		
Street Safety Policy	X			
New Mobility Regional Road Map	X			X
Microtransit Pilot Program				X
Travel Rewards Research Program				X
Equity & Race Program	X			
Bus Rapid Transit Vision and Principles Study	X		X	

- **Department interviews-** To understand how policies, programs, and plans address gender from an internal staff perspective.
- **Workshops with transit agencies-** Research, workshops, and interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of gender-inclusive practices and strategies. To supplement best practices research, virtual workshops were held with nine transit agencies in the U.S. and two international agencies to gather more insight into their practices. Three virtual GAP workshops were held with staff from these 11 transit agencies.

These efforts helped identify existing gaps and issues areas for improvement and create a basis of knowledge for developing a set of impactful, implementable strategies in the GAP.

Gender Analysis Tool (GAT)

The GAP starts with an overarching strategy, the Gender Analysis Tool (GAT), that aims to institutionalize Metro’s dedication to gender equity across all future policies, programs, and investments. This tool will create a tangible process through a gender lens and will create a rich source of data to allow Metro to understand how things are improving for women riders over time. The GAT provides a guide for staff to identify and articulate how Metro can better anticipate and

support the needs of women riders.

The GAT creates a formalized and ongoing process to understand how all future investments impact and perform in relation to gender. This critical need corresponds with Metro’s Strategic Plan goals to deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users and to provide responsive and accountable governance within the organization.

The GAT will instill a culture of gender equity by ensuring that gender issues, benefits, and challenges are considered during the initiation, development, and evaluation of all policies, projects, programs, and actions.

GAP Strategies

The GAP offers Metro a solid beginning to pioneer innovative gender-focused strategies. The strategies reflect the vision and goals of the GAP - to raise awareness, consider diverse perspectives, address gaps, improve services for women riders, and create measurable progress towards gender equity. The strategies are described through an understanding of “What We Heard,” calling out supportive information from the gender analysis, and “Metro’s Solution” presenting the proposed strategy. Also included is other background information on “how it will work”, “responsible parties”, and applicable “cost and timeframes.” The strategies are organized by the four major themes i.e., safety; station, stop and vehicle design; and fare policy.

The table below summarizes the strategies detailed in the GAP with information about their contribution to the GAP goals, anticipated timeframes, and anticipated costs. Strategy timelines are characterized as short-term (less than one year), medium-term (1-3 years), and long-term (3-5 years).

STRATEGY	WHAT WILL METRO DO?	TIMEFRAME	LEVEL-OF-EFFORT
Gender Analysis Tool	A standardized tool to help all Metro staff assess how projects, plans, and policies advance the goals of the GAP. This includes asking important questions about how the project or plan serves women, collecting gender-specific data, and engaging with the community early and often.	Short	Low
Camera Visibility & Lighting	Continue to upgrade lighting at stations and install cameras within rail and bus vehicles. Camera locations will be emphasized through prominently placed signs letting riders know that video recording is in progress.	Short	Moderate
Station/Stop Design & Safety Assessment	A tool for gathering regular and measurable feedback from women on safety and design elements that can be used to guide future design choices.	Short	Low
Metro Employee Travel Partner Program	A pilot program where employees are paired with one or more coworkers that share a similar transit commute.	Short	Moderate
Promote Travel Partner Opportunities	A campaign to provide information and support to external groups such as businesses, CBOs, and other institutional partners to establish commute partnerships among their employees.	Short	Moderate
Promote Courtesy Request-a-Stop Service	Promote and advertise the existing “Night Owl Stops” for late-night riders and work with bus operators through training, to ensure the rider courtesy stops are accommodating and offered as often as possible.	Short	Moderate
Sexual Harassment Prevention Program	Expand and update Metro’s current anti-sexual harassment campaign to include: new visuals, messaging, and artistic elements for posters; increased distribution of posters and messaging; with an annual refresh of the anti-sexual harassment campaign based on community and rider feedback.	Short	Moderate
Gender-Specific Operator Training	Develop and conduct gender-related training for Metro bus and rail operators based on real-world scenarios and experiences.	Medium	High
Explore Silent Alarm	Explore installation of silent alarm strip or button on new Metro buses and trains to allow riders to discretely alert Metro staff and/or security without attracting the attention of nearby riders.	Long	High

STRATEGY	WHAT WILL METRO DO?	TIMEFRAME	LEVEL-OF-EFFORT	
STATION, STOP, AND VEHICLE DESIGN STRATEGIES	Strollers on Metro Vehicles	Support the updated stroller policy to allow for unfolded strollers on board buses. Additional efforts will go into a reassessment of vehicles to accommodate more designated stroller areas and flip seats.	Medium	Moderate
	Adopt-A-Stop Program	A community-based program to engage with businesses, CBOs, or other organizations to help maintain areas around bus stops while promoting a sense of community pride.	Short	Low
	Business Partnerships	Leverage partnerships with businesses, to offer cross-promotion of services for businesses, and access to services, the opportunity to purchase food, and restroom facilities for riders.	Medium	Low
	Restroom Design Standards	Create restroom design standards for new stations to include elements like changing stations, varied sink levels, and vending machines for toiletries, including diapers.	Short	Moderate
	Improve Interiors on Buses & Trains	Update vehicle design standards for new or renovated vehicles to account for new configurations of seats, handles, straps, and buttons into the interior layout of the vehicle.	Long	High
	Concentrated Amenities Zone at Subway Platforms	Create a designated zone on rail platforms where amenities such as seating, lighting, security personnel, and security technology (e.g., emergency call boxes and security cameras) are concentrated.	Short	Moderate
FARE POLICY STRATEGIES	Prioritize Household-Serving Uses at Transit Stations	Encourage the development of household-serving uses – grocery markets, medical offices, pharmacies, childcare centers, health centers, community spaces, and social services – at and near stations.	Long	Low
	Address Multi-Directional Transfers through Fare Capping Program	Implementation of the fare capping pilot will address the issue of multi-directional travel for women. Fare capping eliminates the need for transfers in that fares will be capped to a daily amount, and once the cap is reached, it allows for unlimited travel in either direction for the rest of the day, thus eliminating the time and directional constraints.	Short	Low
	Partnership with Health Providers to Promote LIFE Program	Leverage existing partnerships with institutions by connecting with healthcare providers to promote Metro's LIFE Program.	Short	Low

Measuring Success

The GAP will make Metro the first major transit agency to monitor and evaluate customer experience outcomes through a gender-oriented lens. This groundbreaking work continues Metro’s ongoing efforts to innovate and lead the transit industry in creating evidence-based changes in the realm of gender-responsive transit planning and customer service. To define and measure success for the GAP each strategy has its own KPIs with both process-oriented and outcome-oriented metrics.

...Equity_Section EQUITY SECTION

By understanding how all of Metro’s actions can affect people differently because of their gender, Metro can more effectively work towards that goal of gender equity for women and girls and support Metro’s customer-centric culture by improving rider experiences. The GAP advances a path to gender equity for women and girls, providing specific recommendations to incorporate gender perspectives into the design and implementation of Metro’s policies, projects, programs, and services to improve the quality and accessibility of Metro’s services for women and girls. The GAP has 18 different strategic actions, such as improving lighting in and around stations and implementing fare capping to address issues of multidirectional travel for women, each aimed at reaching one or more of five primary goals:

1. Raising awareness of the gender differences in travel
2. Ensuring diverse gender perspectives are considered in Metro’s policies, projects, programs, and services
3. Addressing gender gaps
4. Improving the quality and accessibility of Metro’s services for women
5. Creating measurable progress toward the GAP goals

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The Project supports the following strategic plan goals identified in Vision 2028: Goal 2 is to deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system. Goal 3: Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity and Goal 5: Provide responsive, accountable, and trustworthy governance within the Metro organization.

NEXT STEPS


With a deeper understanding of the role gender plays in the rider experience, the GAP will enable Metro to meet the complex and diverse needs of women riders and support our goal to be the first choice in transportation for all Angelenos. Staff will work with identified departments on the implementation of the GAP strategies and report back to the board annually.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Metro's Gender Action Plan
Attachment B - Gender Analysis Tool
Attachment C - Draft Station Evaluation Sheet

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