



## Board Report

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### EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE JANUARY 19, 2023

**SUBJECT: END OF LINE POLICY MOTION RESPONSE**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE a status report on the End of Line Policy evaluation.

#### **ISSUE**

On October 27, 2022, the Metro Board approved Motion #20 by Directors Hahn, Najarian, Solis, Barger, Dutra, and Krekorian (Attachment A) to:

- A. Evaluate Metro's End of Line policy and its impacts on communities that have a station that is the end of a Metro rail line;
- B. Conduct a thorough evaluation of the unhoused populations exiting trains at night and boarding trains in the morning at the ends of rail lines to better understand the impact of the End of Line policy and to inform future resource deployment;
- C. Coordinate with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) for its annual Point-In-Time Count to determine the numbers of unhoused riders on Metro's bus and rail system; and
- D. Report back on the above three directives no later than January 2023 with recommendations on what we can do differently.

The following report serves to provide a status update on the evaluation of the End of Line Policy.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The homelessness crisis continues to challenge communities nationwide, including their respective transit agencies. As ridership fell during the pandemic, there was a noticeable increase in people experiencing homelessness (PEH) seeking shelter on the Metro system. While transit vehicles and stations are not designed to be used as a shelter or viewed as an encampment, the system provides refuge from the cold weather during the winter and the heat in the summer. Metro's primary role is that of a transit operator, not a homeless service provider, yet the magnitude of the crisis requires all hands on deck.

Metro customers are concerned about homelessness on the system. We have heard from our

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customers through various channels, surveys, social media, customer care, and community meetings that homelessness is a top priority area for improvement. The homelessness crisis in Los Angeles is among the most severe in the country, and Metro riders told us that homelessness has a major impact on the customer experience. In a 2018 brand survey, 64% of respondents felt that there were too many homeless people on the system, and some residents avoid Metro entirely due to widespread homelessness on the system. Metro also recognizes the urgency of curtailing behaviors and conditions that adversely affect the health and safety of other customers and employees. The lack of adequate local, state, and federal resources to prevent and respond to homelessness represents an existential threat to the thousands of individuals experiencing homelessness daily in LA County. It also threatens to undermine the willingness of residents to take public transit, even as the system rapidly expands via the largest transit construction program in the country. Metro's 2020 and 2022 Customer Experience Survey found that how Metro addresses homelessness on buses was one of the top 5 improvements that our bus and rail customers want to see.

Metro has taken a human-centered approach to addressing homelessness on the Metro system by dedicating resources and contracts with homeless service providers in Los Angeles County to connect thousands of individuals to services. Burdensome referral processes, lack of housing navigation support, the lack of available services, and low shelter bed availability continue to be barriers to reducing homelessness on the Metro system. Countywide, people experiencing homelessness are often required to meet specific eligibility requirements to receive services or access to housing. These eligibility requirements include meeting certain mental and physical acuity levels, proving residency, and even providing social security numbers or identification. Most individuals Metro serves in its homeless outreach do not have identification and need mental health support and medical services. These requirements impede Metro's outreach workers from placing more individuals into housing.

Metro conducted its own point in time count in March 2022 and estimates that approximately 800 individuals experiencing homelessness were sheltering at the rail and bus rapid transit stations on any given night. Over the past five years, Metro allocated more than \$28 million in advancing solutions to support unhoused individuals who take shelter on the Metro system. Since 2017, Metro has funded dedicated multidisciplinary outreach teams, which are contracted through the County of Los Angeles Department of Health Services' (DHS) Housing for Health Program, to provide service on the Metro system.

The non-profit homeless services agency, People Assisting the Homeless (PATH), staffs these multidisciplinary teams and specializes in supporting PEH who are also dealing with mental health concerns and addiction. The program has expanded to eight teams of 5 with plans to expand to 16 teams in February 2023. The PATH teams are deployed 7 days a week, between the hours of 3:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. on weekdays and 7:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. on weekends. The teams assess the needs of unhoused riders and connect them with services such as medical care, social services, and food in addition to emergency, short-term, interim, and long-term/permanent supportive housing (including family reunification) when available.

Despite the significant efforts, the scale of homelessness on the system far exceeds Metro's ability. Metro relies upon county and city resources to provide permanent housing solutions, interim housing,

crisis beds, motel vouchers, rental assistance programs, and medical and social services.

Metro's system has 13 outlying End of Line Stations at the following locations:

- A Line (Blue): 7<sup>th</sup>/Metro Center, Downtown Long Beach (between 1<sup>st</sup> and Pacific Ave Stations along the loop)
- B Line (Red): Union Station, North Hollywood
- D Line (Purple): Union Station, Wilshire/Western
- C Line (Green): Redondo Beach, Norwalk
- E Line (Expo): Downtown Santa Monica, 7<sup>th</sup> Street/Metro Center
- L Line (Gold): APU/Citrus College, Union Station, Pico-Aliso, Atlantic
- K Line (Crenshaw): Expo/Crenshaw, Westchester/Veterans

Consistent with standard transit agency operating procedures (Attachment B), Metro requires debordering of all passengers and belongings at the end of the line when trains go out of service to ensure that no unauthorized persons or suspicious packages are left on the train before it enters the maintenance yard for necessary cleaning, maintenance, and servicing. As the trains pull into end-of-line stations at the end of the revenue service day, all the electronic signs on the platform and the train display read, "Out of Service." Inside the station, there is an audible announcement advising passengers that the train is out of service, the system is closed, and they need to exit the station. The train operator conducts a walk-through, which includes visual inspections of each car to ensure that all passengers have left the train and have taken their personal belongings with them before the train is authorized to exit the mainline and travel to the yard. If passenger(s) are found on the train, they are asked to leave promptly. If the passenger(s) do not comply, the train operator is required to notify Rail Operations Control and request Transit Security or Law Enforcement assistance. This debordering procedure is part of the system closing process as it is critical for Metro to ensure that the vehicles are thoroughly cleaned and adequately serviced and maintained at the end of the day.

Metro recognizes that at some end of line locations, PEH are exiting the trains with no alternative shelter option.

In October 2022, the Long Beach City Council raised concerns about the number of PEH offboarding at the end of the A Line nightly in their city and submitted a letter requesting an evaluation of Metro's End of Line policy. In response, the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors approved a motion to strengthen the coordination between the County and Metro to improve homeless response on the transit system (Attachment C). While discussions with the County continue, there was no commitment to additional resources.

## **DISCUSSION**

Despite these efforts, Metro lacks the necessary external funding to support the level of engagement needed on the system to curb the influx of PEH seeking shelter on the transit system daily. County and city services are only operational during regular business hours (Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.) and have extremely high demand. Specifically, in the late night and early morning hours, Metro

outreach teams have few, if any, options available as there is only one interim housing site in Los Angeles County that is open for referrals after regular business hours.

This is a clear gap that exists today in the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) and County's existing service delivery model.

### ***Evaluation of Unhoused Populations at End of Line Stations***

Metro staff partnered with PATH and law enforcement agencies to complete counts and surveys of people experiencing homelessness identified at the End of Line station in downtown Long Beach. The count and survey of the Downtown Long Beach Station occurred December 7-10 and December 12-13, 2022, for both late night debarking and early morning departures. Surveys are scheduled for the end of line stations in Santa Monica and APU/Citrus College Station during the week of January 9, 2023. Surveys at the remaining end of line locations are scheduled for later in January and early February 2023.

### ***Downtown Long Beach Offboarding Count and Survey***

Metro conducted a count and survey of riders who were offboarding from the last two trains arriving at the Downtown Long Beach Station. The surveys were completed at approximately 12:45 a.m. and 1:15 a.m. on the abovementioned dates. Initial observations show that most people exiting the trains were not people experiencing homelessness. Tables were set up on the north sidewalk on 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Pine Ave and 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Pacific Ave, staffed by a Sheriff's Mental Evaluation Team and Long Beach Police Department, Quality of Life Team. The officers and deputies sought to survey individuals, offering an incentive for completing the survey, and provided coffee and donuts for individuals. The team identified 234 unhoused riders offboarding over the 6 evenings, an average of 39 riders a night.

There were 44 PEH willing to complete the survey. The survey data is summarized as follows:

- All participants were adults - Transitional Age Youth were not identified
- 30 identified as unsheltered and living in an outdoor location (street, sidewalk, alley, or bus/train stop) in the past 30 days.
- 10 said they had some form of shelter available in the past 30 days (car/RV/occasional motel, etc.)
- 39 males
- 4 females
- 1 other gender identity
- 29 were willing and ready to receive assistance in the form of services and or housing
- 9 responded their last known city of residence was Long Beach
- 24 reported that they have, at some point, resided in Long Beach
- 12 reported being from cities in Southern California
- 10 reported being from Los Angeles
- 10 reported being from out of State as the last known area of residence
- 22 have been homeless for a year or more.

- 4 have been experiencing homelessness for less than one month,
- 10 between one to six months,
- 2 between seven months and 11 months
- 16 for one to three years,
- 6 for more than three years.

In addition, PATH conducted outreach at the Downtown Long Beach station on December 7-9, 2022, and on December 12, 2022, between the hours of 3 a.m. and 5 a.m. PATH observed 181 PEH at the station, an average of 45 individuals per day. More than half of those identified as being from the Long Beach area. Sixty individuals were willing to engage with PATH and 8 enrolled for services via the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

### ***Impacts on the City of Long Beach***

Staff met with the City of Long Beach and staff from Supervisor Hahn's office on January 9, 2023. The City of Long Beach reported that they provide a number of homeless services and emergency and interim housing options within the city. The city shared that the overall homeless crisis in the region has stretched their available resources thin, and their downtown businesses are suffering. Their shelters, including inclement weather shelters, are at capacity and the Multi-Service Center is over-subscribed, with individuals waiting in long lines for services when the center opens at 9 am on weekdays. The City's Health Department also noted that staffing and funding resources are limited to operating sites and services during regular business hours (9 a.m. - 5 p.m.). Metro's homeless outreach partner, PATH, has noted that in the City of Long Beach specifically, there is a prioritization of services for people who can prove their current or previous residency in Long Beach.

Metro reached out to Mental Health America - Los Angeles, which serves the Long Beach area, to provide services on the A Line, but the agency declined to partner with Metro at this time due to staffing and resource constraints and a concern that they would be requested to work late night hours to serve people experiencing homelessness at the end of the line. Metro continues to engage Long Beach area service providers to identify partners that can best serve riders experiencing homelessness in this area.

The city expressed a willingness to partner with a non-profit to open an additional emergency shelter with 24-hour intake if provided with operations funding. As a reminder, Metro does not receive any Measure H funding.

### ***Exploring Strategies to Align Outreach Services with End of Line Operations***

The survey showed that there are riders from the City of Long Beach who need social services when Metro's A Line train goes out of service. Those services do not currently exist. Metro's homeless outreach program aims to address some of the need by dedicating outreach workers to meet riders at 3 a.m. before service begins. However, expanding outreach services beyond these current service hours would have to be further evaluated. Without complementary and no or low-cost social services and housing options operated by the County or City, Metro's contracted homeless outreach

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workers have very limited options. The options that Metro's contracted outreach teams have available at 3 a.m. include providing basic case management services such as client support funds for meals. Motel vouchers provided by the County require individuals to meet certain age and disability requirements to be eligible. The use of motel rooms also creates a burden on Metro's homeless outreach services because they require daily follow-up visits and intensive case management and supportive care by Metro contracted outreach teams.

With the exception of the soon to open "Safe Landing" in South Los Angeles, which will allow intake 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, shelters and interim housing sites across the County do not accommodate intake outside of normal business hours (Mon-Fri, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.). Metro previously explored opportunities to deploy outreach services at the end of service, but the approach was deemed to be infeasible given that outreach workers had no immediate shelter or housing services to provide.

### **Industry Best Practices**

In order to identify potential new strategies and best practices to support PEH at end of line stations, Metro CEO reached out to the Chief Executive Officers of New York City Transit (MTA), Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, Memphis Area Transit Authority, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Chicago Transit Authority, and New Jersey Transit. With the exception of SEPTA, all other agencies confirmed that they closely coordinate with their respective social services agency to provide services to unhoused riders at the end of the line but do not directly fund homeless-related services.

The City of Philadelphia operates a year-round "Hub of Hope" daily from 6:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. to support unhoused individuals that tended to congregate in the lower concourse of SEPTA's Suburban Station. Daily services include resource coordination and case management, coffee and meal service, showers, laundry, transportation to shelters, and group meetings/therapy sessions. SEPTA built upon this model with the "S.C.O.P.E. Program," which stands for safety, cleanliness, ownership, partnership, and engagement. S.C.O.P.E. is a platform for coordinating with civic organizations, local governments, nonprofits, and universities to work on solutions to homelessness and involves deploying outreach workers to multiple stations throughout its system.

In New York City, MTA officials work with the New York City Police Department, the New York City Department of Homelessness, and the homeless service provider Bowery Residents' Committee to identify unhoused individuals and provide linkages to services and shelter and the end of line stations.

Staff has initially identified a number of strategies to further evaluate the impacts of Metro's end-of-line operational policy.

### ***A Line Improved Signage and Announcements***

All trains approaching the end of line station that are going out of service display "Out of Service." The digital train arrival sign displays the number of minutes before the train will arrive. Until recently, once the train arrived, the screen was blank because there were no additional departures or arrivals. For clarity, Operations staff has changed the display "Station Closed" on the screen to help ensure

passengers aren't remaining on the platform expecting a train back to Downtown LA.

As a train that is going out of service approaches the end-of-line station, a pre-recorded announcement plays, "This train is out of service." The announcement repeats three times. To further ensure passengers are aware of trains that will go out of service at the end of the line, Operations staff is developing an announcement for the operators to make as the train travels the line on the final trip that informs passengers the train will go out of service once it reaches the end of the line. In addition to the A Line, these announcements will be made on all lines and only on the last trips for the evening to ensure passengers are aware that the train is going out of service before arriving at the terminal.

### ***Evaluation of Train Schedule - A Line and Supporting Bus Route 60***

Currently, four A Line trains ending at Downtown Long Beach each night arrive at 12:03 am, 12:23 am, 12:43 am, and 1:03 am. The last northbound train is 11:57 pm, and the first train is at 4:03 am. Bus Line 60 OWL has 12:01 am, 1:01 am, and 2:01 am departures northbound from Downtown Long Beach. They depart from Bay A at the Transit Gallery (Transit Mall), which is 750 east of the Downtown Long Beach Station platform but 250' west of the second to the last A Line station (1st St).

Metro will work with Long Beach Transit to see if we can move Line 60 OWL to the other end of the Transit Mall nearer to Downtown Long Beach Station. Metro acknowledges that the last train arrival times do not match well with the bus departure times. The 60 OWL schedule is designed to make connections with other bus lines in Downtown Los Angeles.

Operations staff does not recommend adjusting the arrival times for the buses or the trains. Any adjustment to the bus departure times in Downtown Long Beach would mean losing the connection on the other end. A change to the train schedule would require adding 2 additional trips, 2 operators, and 8 rail cars (2, 4-car trains) at a time of the night when resources are sparse.

To address homelessness at the end-of-line stations, staff will further explore and evaluate the impacts of the following strategies to improve regional coordination and seek additional partnerships and support.

### ***Whole of Government: Social Service Partnership Support***

On December 12, 2022, Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass declared a state of emergency on homelessness and activated the City's Emergency Operations Center. Among other components, the declaration seeks to expedite efforts to bring unhoused individuals inside. On December 20, 2022, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors adopted a motion that called for County staff to work collaboratively with City officials, including by identifying appropriate departmental personnel to attend City leadership meetings and having a presence at the City's Emergency Operations Center. The County action also calls for department liaisons to work with City outreach teams and help

connect the homeless with county services such as mental health and substance abuse counseling while also working directly with interim-housing providers in the City to ensure people in such facilities are connected to County services. The County also agreed to similarly work collaboratively with other cities across the County that may declare emergencies on homelessness. On January 10, 2023, the County Board of Supervisors also declared an emergency. Similarly, other cities in the County are declaring emergencies, such as the City of Long Beach. To facilitate the necessary safety, cleaning, and maintenance activities that must occur when the system closes and a train goes out of service, Metro recommends stronger coordination with the County, the City of Los Angeles, and local jurisdictions to provide the necessary housing and services for unhoused riders in the late night and early morning hours, seven days a week.

- 1. Request hotel vouchers or spaces in master leased interim housing locations near end of line stations in partnership with the County and local jurisdictions as a pilot.** As described above, shelters and other housing sites across the County are closed for intake in the middle of the night. The City and County of Los Angeles and other jurisdictions should coordinate with Metro to provide hotel vouchers or have master leasing spaces available to deploy a model similar to what occurs in New York City, where Metro contracted homeless outreach teams can immediately facilitate shelter or interim housing placements. With a dedicated stream of housing beds and social service providers available in the late evening hours, Metro and the city of Long Beach's outreach teams could pilot an end of line program. Metro would need the County's existing outreach organizations serving the Service Planning Area (SPA) to provide the necessary follow-up services after placement in the available voucher beds.
- 2. Allow Metro property for a pilot navigation hub to serve people experiencing homelessness on the Metro system.** As described in the September 2022 Homeless Gap Analysis and Recommendations Report, there is an opportunity to enhance outreach efforts by siting navigation hubs near Metro stations where there regularly are a significant number of people experiencing homelessness. Metro is currently evaluating opportunities to locate this type of facility and expand on best practices, such as the City of Philadelphia's Hub of Hope. While the County Homeless Initiative representatives have stressed to the Metro CEO that existing homeless funding is fully encumbered to County departments and social service providers, the CEO and staff will continue to work with the County, the City of Los Angeles, and other cities across the system to identify potential locations and new sources of non-transit operational funds to pilot this model.
- 3. Explore faith-based, community-specific partnership opportunities associated with end-of-the-line stations.** Metro staff will reach out to faith based organizations, cities, and service providers serving the communities around the respective end-of-line stations to determine if there are opportunities for enhanced partnerships. For example, they stated their willingness to partner on shelter solutions to serve the end of line station.
- 4. Require set asides for PEH on Metro when leasing Metro property for interim and supportive housing.** As part of a longer-term effort, and consistent with the recommendations



provided in the September 2022 Homeless Gap Analysis, Metro staff will continue to vet potential Metro properties that could be made available for interim and supportive housing, with the objective of creating beds that can be made available to unhoused individuals sheltering on the Metro system.

5. **Request that LAHSA report disaggregated data for the Metro system in the upcoming Point in Time Count.** The 2022 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count showed that 69,144 people were experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County. Historically, Metro has not been included in the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) Point in Time Count. In 2022, LAHSA formally invited Metro to participate as a member agency on the 2023 Point in Time Count Advisory Board. Moving forward, LAHSA has committed to including the Metro system in the Point in Time Count. The first such count will occur between January 24-26, 2023.

### **DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT**

The current deboarding policy is necessary to maintain efforts to improve the safety of the Metro system for our customers and employees. The five recommendations above offer innovative and practical solutions to facilitate short and long-term options to ensure improved safety for frontline employees and our customers by reducing the number of PEH on Metro's system.

### **EQUITY PLATFORM**

Metro is working to improve its human-centered efforts and expand opportunities to serve the people experiencing homelessness that come onto the Metro system in search of shelter. The recommendations also support efforts to ensure Metro's ability to ensure a safe, clean, and well-maintained system for our riders.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

The report back supports Strategic Plan Goal #3.4: Metro will play a strong leadership role in efforts to address homelessness in LA County, Goal #2.2: Metro is committed to improving legibility, ease of use and trip information on the transit system, and Goal #5.6: Metro will foster and maintain a strong safety culture.

### **NEXT STEPS**

1. Complete the counts and surveys at the remaining end of line stations
2. Continue to meet with end of line local jurisdictions to explore partnership opportunities
3. Continue to research and dialogue best practices to support PEH at end of line stations with our peer transit agencies
4. Identify possible locations for a pilot service hub
5. Seek opportunities to participate in the County and City's emergency interagency coordination activities to expedite housing placements for unhoused individuals sheltering on the Metro system.

6. Return to the Board with another progress report in April 2023.

Staff will continue to monitor impacts at the end of line stations and provide updates to the Board of Directors regarding the agency's coordination with LAHSA and the County to address homelessness on the transit system.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - October 2022 Board Motion - End of Line Policy

Attachment B - Standard transit agency operating procedures

Attachment C- County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors Motion

Prepared by: Desarae Jones, Senior Director, Special Projects (213) 922 - 2230

Joe Forgiarini, Senior Executive Officer Service Development,

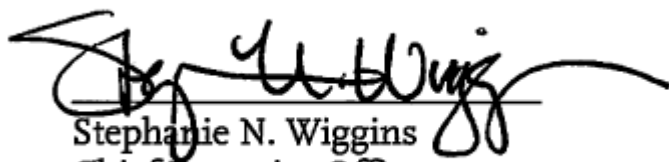
(213) 418-3400

Edna Stanley, Deputy Chief Operations Officer-Transit Service Delivery, (213) 922-4084

Elba Higueros, Deputy Chief of Staff, (213) 922-6820

Reviewed by: Nicole Englund, Chief of Staff, (213) 922-7950

Conan Cheung, Chief Operating Officer, (213) 418-3034



Stephanie N. Wiggins  
Chief Executive Officer