



Board Report

File #: 2021-0709, **File Type:** Motion / Motion Response

Agenda Number: 38.

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 18, 2021**

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT OF METRO STREET SAFETY POLICY

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE update on development of Metro Street Safety Policy.

ISSUE

Metro’s Board of Directors passed a motion instructing staff to develop a street safety policy (See Attachment A). Metro staff formed an internal working group and conducted outreach to advisory bodies. This update references key challenges and opportunities to reduce deaths and injuries from collisions. Vehicle collisions are a leading cause of death and injury in Los Angeles County, with higher rates of harm for Black and Latino residents, for people walking and biking, and for unhoused people. Street safety also impacts Metro’s mission of providing world-class transportation because people are less likely to take transit or use active transportation if they feel they cannot safely access and use these modes of travel. The update also 1) summarizes progress in identifying roles for Metro through which the agency can contribute to greater street safety; 2) notes that the main responsibility for street regulation and safety will still rest with local jurisdictions; 3) lists key themes that staff have heard from advisory boards; and 4) shares next steps.

BACKGROUND

In January 2021, the Metro Board of Directors adopted the Street Safety Policy Motion (File 2020-0928) instructing staff to report back on development of a Street Safety Policy, a countywide street safety data collection program, and assessment of internal risk and liability to safety of all Metro-provided public transportation services. The motion emphasized that this would build upon Goal 1.2 of Metro’s strategic plan and that the safety of street users is a public health issue and a key factor in people’s willingness to travel by transit and active transportation. The Motion also recommended that in developing a policy, staff should focus on Metro roles that intersect with street safety.

DISCUSSION

Consequences of Unsafe Streets

According to state data, 719 people were killed and 88,068 people were injured by vehicle collisions in LA County in 2019. Vehicle collisions are the fourth leading cause of **premature** death in the County, ahead of homicides, strokes, and lung cancer. This is due to the fact that collisions harm people of all ages. Crashes are in fact the leading cause of death for children aged 5-14, the second leading cause of death for ages 15-24 and the fourth leading cause of death for those 25-45.

Deaths from collisions are also not equitably distributed. According to research by UCLA, Black people, who are 8.6 percent of Los Angeles City's population, were 14.1 percent of those killed by collisions between 2013 and 2017. People experiencing homelessness in LA County were 16 times more likely to die from transportation related causes than the general public, with 164 deaths in 2019. 329 of those killed across LA County in 2019 were walking or cycling. This represents 46% of those who lost their lives, a disproportionate number given that the walk and bike share of trips in LA County is approximately 15 percent for non-commute trips and just 5 percent for commute trips.

For references for the above data, additional data on street safety and a discussion of Vision Zero principles, see Attachment B: Street Safety Trends.

Roles for Metro Under Consideration to Advance Street Safety

How can Metro best contribute to street safety? *Metro does not control the design of streets, the speed limits for vehicles on streets, nor enforcement of traffic laws. Therefore, Metro's Street Safety Policy will not look like a local jurisdiction's street safety plan.* It will instead, as suggested in Board Motion 2020-0928 (see Attachment A), focus on Metro roles that allow the agency to contribute to and partner on safer streets. Through staff deliberations to date, we have identified the 2014 Complete Streets Policy as precedent to the intended Street Safety Policy with similar goals around directing various Metro functions to influence the design and safety of public rights-of-way. As such, we intend to approach the development of this policy as, in part, an update and addition to the adopted Complete Streets Policy.

The staff working group has identified the following roles as an initial framework for policy development:

- **Operator.** Metro operates bus service, Metro Micro, street running BRT and light rail and provides bike share. All of these services give the agency insights about street safety from operators' observations and from data on collision incidents involving Metro vehicles. Staff will further discuss and develop the potential to analyze these insights to help jurisdictions identify unsafe conditions and to recommend improvements that could help reduce collisions. *It will also be important to promote complete street designs which can simultaneously reduce dangerous vehicle speeds and speed up buses through bus prioritization measures.*
- **Planner and Builder.** Metro plans and/or builds rail, BRT, highway and active transportation projects. The agency also creates regional scale plans that address different modes of travel on public rights-of-way, including BRT, bus lanes and other prioritization measures, active transportation and goods movement, among others. Within Metro's transit project delivery functions, the first/last mile program provides a focus on street safety surrounding future stations and establishes clear partnership roles between Metro and local agencies. That focus

can be sharpened and enhanced within the street safety policy. Metro also has a Strategic Plan and Long Range and Short Range Transportation Plans, providing an opportunity to develop, refine, and track street safety goals at the countywide scale. Staff will further develop how these projects and plans can continue to help provide safe, multi-modal ways to travel in LA County. *Staff also note that work on and potential adoption of a Street Safety Policy does not change Metro's Board Adopted 2013 Supplementary Modifications to Transit Projects Policy, which addresses requests for Metro to pay for upgrades to third party facilities (betterments).*

- **Funder.** Metro provides large amounts of pass-through funding that is available to local jurisdictions to spend on street improvements and safety enhancements, including Local Return and Measure M's Sub-Regional Programs. Metro also manages smaller discretionary funding programs. As noted above, 2014 Complete Streets Policy was intended to influence the design and function of public right-of-way within Metro discretionary funding programs. The staff working group will further develop ways to publicize and promote use of the non-discretionary funds to advance street safety as well as fine-tune the street safety focus of discretionary/competitive programs.
- **Legislative advocate.** Metro's 2021 State and Federal Legislative Programs include a goal to "[m]onitor and support legislation that would authorize the cities and unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County to develop and implement strategies to reach Vision Zero goals of improving safety and eliminating traffic-related fatalities." At the state level, Metro supported AB 43 (Friedman- greater local authority to set speed limits), AB 550 (Chiu- pilot speed camera programs), and funding for active transportation projects from the budget surplus. Metro also sponsored SB 917 (Bloom- camera enforcement of bus lanes), which is primarily intended to speed up buses but would likely have secondary safety benefits by reducing bus-vehicle conflicts. At the federal level, Metro has supported proposals for additional grant funds for safe streets and provided comments on FHWA's update of the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices. Staff will further discuss and develop how Metro could support additional legislation that would protect pedestrians and other vulnerable road users.
- **Data provider.** Metro gathers and shares information on its services and programs and hosts Los Angeles County Regional Integration of Intelligent Transportation Systems (RIITS), which provides data sets related to arterial traffic. For information on collisions, deaths and injuries, the statewide Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS) is the chief data source. To report back on the second goal of this motion on a countywide street safety data collection program, the staff working group are discussing how Metro and RIITS could help improve the quality of data provided by local agencies to TIMS, and how to help analyze and share LA County data from TIMS in formats that promote greater awareness of street safety and help identify key trends and unsafe segments of the road network as well as potential mitigations.
- **Educator.** Metro's Community Education & Mobility Programs (MCE) Team is responsible for increasing transit safety awareness and providing education to residents of Los Angeles County who interact with Metro's public transportation system through various safety programs. This includes safety for Metro's rail lines, bus system, bicycles and pedestrians. Through its Transit Safety Program, educational site-specific safety training, hands on travel

training and continuous local community engagement is provided to K-12 schools. One on one and peer to peer travel training is provided to senior centers and independent living facilities throughout LA County. Staff will further discuss and develop whether and how additional partnerships and outreach methods could help advance street safety.

- **Innovator.** Metro's mission is to provide world-class transportation and the agency operates pilot projects to test transportation approaches. The staff working group is discussing how to learn lessons from places that have successfully reduced deaths and injuries, and how new technologies can advance street safety.

Input from Advisory Bodies

Over the summer of 2021, Metro staff briefed eleven advisory bodies, including the Policy Advisory Committee, all Service Councils, and the Public Safety Advisory Committee about the goals of the motion and the Metro roles that staff were considering leveraging. Advisory bodies provided feedback on this potential framework. Comments were supportive of Metro helping improve street safety in a partnering role. Some recommendations included:

- Connect to regional and city efforts
- "Put teeth" into funding
- Don't disadvantage cities that have already invested in safety
- Talk to advocates working on traffic safety
- Pay attention to challenges faced by those with disabilities
- Explore how to advance vehicle safety improvements
- Try social media campaigns to promote street safety

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Receiving and filing an update on progress on a Metro street safety policy does not have financial costs.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This update provides a status report of progress towards a Metro Street Safety Policy. Completion of the process and adoption and implementation of a new street safety policy will specifically advance Goal 1.2 which calls for Metro to "reduce roadway collisions and injuries." Safer streets would also advance Goals 1 and 2 by making people feel safer and more comfortable in using transit and active transportation, and Goal 4 through Metro partnering to advance public policies and safer street networks.

EQUITY PLATFORM

Completion of the process and adoption and implementation of a new street safety policy that helps reduce collisions, deaths and injuries is expected to disproportionately save the lives of vulnerable residents of Los Angeles County, specifically when implemented with intentional equity considerations and consultations with disproportionately impacted groups." Staff development of a proposed Metro Street Safety Policy includes consideration of how policy implementation will prioritize and address unique needs of marginalized communities who currently experience

disproportionate impacts from traffic violence, often connected to historic and ongoing exclusion and disinvestment. A street safety policy will also be based on a broader analysis of safety in public spaces, which intersects with issues such as public safety, law enforcement, and environmental design.

Additional ways to maximize equity benefits and avoid disproportionate burdens being explored including how to:

- Conduct outreach that prioritizes Equity Focus Communities, historically marginalized communities, and vulnerable road users;
- Have nuanced conversations on enforcement, including connecting this effort to the work of the Public Safety Advisory Committee;
- Use funding as an equity tool;
- Improve regional data collection and sharing in a manner that helps local jurisdictions identify and address disparities in harm from vehicle collisions.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will conduct outreach to the public and stakeholders, then draft a street safety policy based on staff research and discussions as well as input from the Board, advisory bodies and the public. This draft will be shared for additional public feedback, then brought to the Board for consideration.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Motion 2020-0928

Attachment B - Street Safety Trends

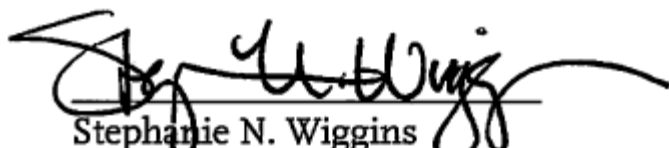
Prepared by: Mark Vallianatos, Executive Officer, Office of Extraordinary Innovation (626) 375 8293

Reviewed by:

Joshua Schank, Chief Innovation Officer, (213) 418-3345

James de La Loza, Chief Planning Officer, (213) 922-2920

Bryan Pennington, Chief Program Management Officer, (213) 922-7449



Stephanie N. Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer