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Metropolitan Transportation
Authority
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Los Angeles, CA

Metro

Board Report

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OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE
APRIL 17, 2025

SUBJECT: NEXTGEN RIDERSHIP UPDATE - Q4 CY2024

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE status update on NextGen Bus Ridership.

ISSUE

This report provides an assessment of Metro's bus ridership for the fourth quarter of calendar year 2024 (Q4 CY2024) consisting of October, November, and December 2024 compared to the pre-pandemic/pre-NextGen Bus Plan ridership from the same period in 2019. Ridership changes are examined by day type (weekday, Saturday, Sunday), service area, across Equity Focus Communities (EFCs) and non-EFCs, time period, line/line group, as well as average passenger trip length.

BACKGROUND

- The Metro Board adopted the NextGen Bus Plan in October 2020.
- The NextGen Bus Plan was designed to create a fast, frequent, and reliable Metro bus system and will be rolled out in two phases: "Reconnect" and "Transit First."
- Reconnect was the initial phase to restructure the existing network, and it was implemented over three implementation dates between December 2020 and December 2021.
- Transit First was an additional phase to maximize the plan's effectiveness through strategic, quick-build capital investments in improved bus speeds and direct revenue service hours saved on bus frequency improvements.
- While the NextGen Bus Plan was fully implemented by the end of 2021, the national operator shortage during the COVID-19 pandemic required Metro to temporarily reduce service by 10% in February 2022 to stabilize service reliability.
- Full restoration of the NextGen Bus Plan service levels were completed in phases by December 2022.

- Metro continued to operate the full NextGen bus service levels through 2023 into 2024 with improved reliability due to full bus operator staffing, which was achieved by August 2023.
- However, a 1-2% operator shortage has existed since the December 2023 service change, when the operator requirement increased due to greater peak service from higher ridership and recruitment challenges. Recruitment efforts have since increased in response, and overall canceled service levels remain low. However, they remain higher than in the second half of CY2023. Full operator staffing was again achieved by January 2025, with cancellation rates reduced to generally under 1% on weekdays and Saturdays and below 2% on Sundays.

The NextGen Bus Plan Reconnect phase implementation established a set of service frequency tiers for Metro's 117 bus lines (two lines were transferred to Pasadena Transit in December 2024), summarized in Table 1. Tier 1 and 2 lines are all-day, high-frequency services designed to support ridership growth across the NextGen network and support ridership recovery after a decrease caused by the pandemic. Tier 3 and 4 lines ensure neighborhood connectivity and coverage throughout the service area.

Table 1: NextGen Frequency Tiers as of December 2024

Service Type	Peak Weekday	Midday Weekday	Evening	Daytime Weekend	Number of Lines
Core Network (Tier1)	5-10	5-10	10-15	7.5-15	29
Convenient Network (Tier 2)	10-12	10-12	20-30	15-30	26
Connectivity Network (Tier 3)	20-30	20-30	30-60	30-60	26
Community Network (Tier 4)	40-60	40-60	60	60	36

When fully implemented, the Transit First scenario was expected to achieve a 15-20% increase in ridership. This expected ridership was attributed to increased speed of service/reduced travel times after implementing items from the speed and reliability tool kit, including new bus lanes, expanded transit signal priority, and reinvestment of time savings for increased service frequencies. Progress on such implementations includes 70.7 miles of new bus priority lanes implemented as of December 2024, and 24 additional lane miles are in planning (Vermont Av) or pending construction (Florence Av, Santa Monica Bl). Transit signal priority are other speed and reliability initiatives that should begin implementation in the first half of CY2025, with ongoing optimization of bus stops and terminals.

Metro bus ridership continues to recover and is nearer pre-COVID levels as of Q4, with average Sunday exceeding pre-COVID levels. This quarterly report is intended to track progress towards the ridership growth expected from the NextGen Bus Plan, including growth supported by implementing the remaining Transit First bus speed and reliability improvements.

DISCUSSION

In examining ridership results to date, it is essential to note the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in March 2020 and had significant effects on Metro bus service levels/ridership as well

as societal changes such as increased telecommuting.

As of Q4 CY2024, average daily bus system ridership continues to grow. The recovery rates of Q4 CY2024 compared to Q4 CY2019 are:

- Weekday ridership was 88.1% (up from 83.4% in Q4 CY2023; record Q4 post-COVID average weekday ridership of 804,963 in October 2024)
- Saturday ridership was 96.2% (up from 90.3% in Q4 CY2023; record Q4 post-COVID average Saturday ridership of 545,208 in October 2024)
- Sunday ridership was 107.4% (up from 100.0% in Q4 CY2024; record Q4 post-COVID average Sunday ridership of 450,972 in October 2024).

The San Fernando Valley continues to show the highest ridership recovery in Q4 CY2024 compared to the four other service areas at 98.0% of pre-pandemic Q4 CY2019 levels on weekdays (up from 89.4% in Q4 CY2023), 109.2% Saturdays (up from 101.5% in Q4 CY2023), and 125.7% Sundays (up from 113.4% in Q4 CY2023). Increased ridership of 8.6% occurred on weekdays over the same quarter of 2023, with a 7.7% gain on Saturday and a greater increase of 12.3% on Sunday. Many San Fernando Valley lines benefit from NextGen Bus Plan investments, especially during off-peak frequencies. However, they were mainly Tier 2 lines with service improved all day on weekdays and 15-minute service with some weekend improvements as well.

This quarter, the proportion of boardings in Equity Focus Communities (EFCs) is around 0.7% above pre-pandemic levels on weekdays, with Saturdays and Sundays about the same as pre-pandemic levels. Again, the NextGen Bus Plan prioritized EFCs for frequency improvements.

Midday weekday Q4 CY2024 ridership recovery was at 92% of pre-pandemic levels, exceeding both AM peak (76%) and PM peak (84%) recovery. This is aligned with investing service hours during the midday period under the NextGen Bus Plan and changes in travel patterns related to factors such as increased telecommuting by office workers. The Owl period exceeded pre-pandemic levels, with a late evening period at 97% recovery. These two periods have the highest proportion of transit-dependent riders and declined the least during the pandemic. Performance of lines serving downtown LA and other areas with large offices, such as Westwood and Pasadena, will continue to be monitored as changes to corporate culture are shifting and requiring a return to in-office work by some workers, which may improve ridership recovery on such lines. These changes in office work arrangements are beginning to take effect in March 2025 for federal workers who are now required to attend their office all five workdays each week. Similarly, California state government employees must attend their office four workdays per week beginning in July 2025.

The average passenger trip length remains at around 3.5 miles, the same as the previous quarter. It is below the pre-NextGen/pre-COVID average passenger trip lengths above 4 miles, reflecting both post-COVID changes to trip-making (more telecommuting, etc.) and the NextGen focus on increasing market share for the shorter 1-5 mile trips.

In Q4 CY2024, there were 25-weekday lines/line groups (up from 20 in Q3 and up from 11 in Q4

CY2023), 34 Saturday lines/line groups (up from 29 in Q3 and up from 18 in Q4 CY2023), and 53 Sunday lines/line groups (up from 43 in Q3 and up from 37 in Q4 CY2023) exceeding their pre-COVID Q4 CY2019 ridership numbers. The strongest recoveries continue to be those lines/line groups with significant NextGen improvements.

A more detailed analysis is provided in Attachment A, which this report summarizes. Attachments B, C, and D to this report provide detailed data on systemwide and line/line groups for average weekday, Saturday, and Sunday bus ridership observed between Q4 CY2019 (pre-pandemic and pre-NextGen) and the same period Q4 CY2024. The period of this analysis tracks the significant decrease in ridership at the beginning of the COVID pandemic in early 2020 and the subsequent recovery in ridership and service restoration since 2021, based on the implementation of the NextGen Bus Plan.

Ridership Trends from 2019 to 2024

Complete restoration of bus service by December 2022, combined with more reliable service delivery and the introduction of new fare programs (e.g., GoPass for students and LIFE Program for low-income riders), have contributed to much stronger ridership recovery through 2023 and continued in 2024. This reinforces the importance of frequent and reliable service delivery in attracting and retaining ridership.

Table 2: Comparison of Average Daily GoPass Boardings by Day Type and Year

Day Type	Weekdays	Saturday	Sunday
2023	6,600	2,384	1,359
2024	7,289	2,841	1,777
Year over year difference	689	457	418
Year over year % change	**10%**	**19%**	**31%**

Table 3: Comparison of Average Daily LIFE Boardings by Day Type and Year

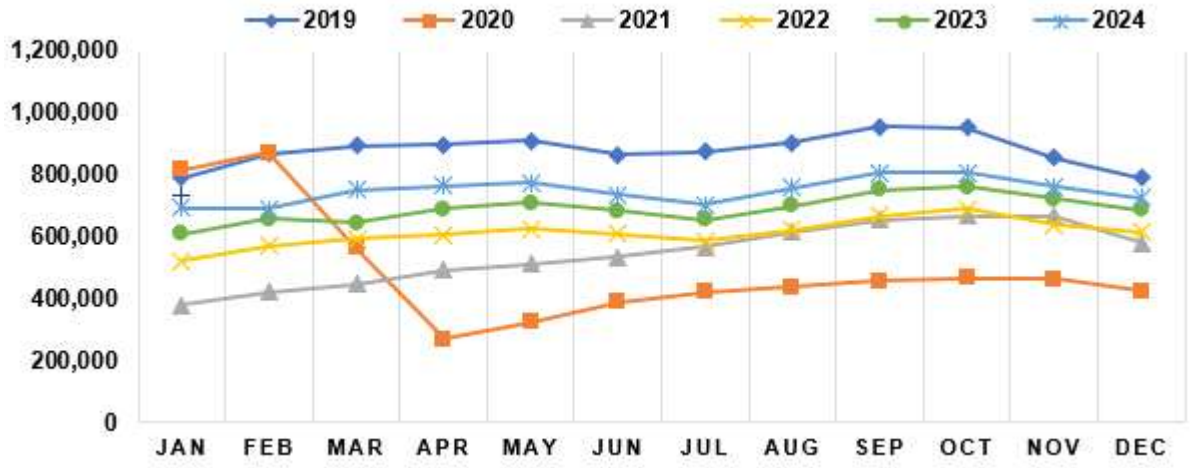
Day Type	Weekdays	Saturdays	Sundays
2023	58,276	37,619	26,699
2024	71,008	48,259	34,654
Year over year difference	12,732	10,640	7,955
Year over year % change	**21.8%**	**28.3%**	**29.8%**

The overall growth in the LIFE Program and GoPass boardings exceeds the overall increase in ridership. However, while some of the growth in these programs is due to new riders participating in them, much of this growth is from existing riders enrolling in them.

In March 2024, average weekday bus ridership again exceeded 750,000, and the post-pandemic average weekday ridership of 761,757 records set in October 2023 was exceeded in both April and

May 2024 (762,811 and 772,969, respectively). The highest monthly averages in 2024 were September (804,279) and October (804,963) 2024. (Attachment A Chart 6 - Average Weekday Ridership 2019 - 2024).

Chart 1: Average Weekday Ridership by Month



Ridership by Service Area

Ridership recovery was examined for each of the five Metro Service Council areas. The San Fernando Valley shows the highest rate of weekday ridership recovery at 98.0% in Q4 CY2024 (up from 89.4% in Q4 CY2023). This recovery rate, in part, shows a strong response to NextGen Bus Plan improvements that created a network of 10 local lines and the Metro G Line BRT with 10-15 minute frequencies all day on weekdays across the San Fernando Valley. The NextGen changes improved these lines, especially during off-peak hours when many of these lines had frequencies ranging from 20 to 30 minutes. Several lines in the East Valley were also restructured to match regional travel patterns that were more focused on North Hollywood. The average weekday ridership of the Q4 CY2024 San Fernando Valley area average weekday ridership compared to Q4 CY2023 increased by 8.6%, indicating that ridership growth remains strong.

The four other Service Council areas' weekday ridership recovery rates for Q4 CY2024 were as follows, each increasing compared to the same quarter in CY2023:

- San Gabriel Valley: 83.7% (up 5.0% from 78.7% in Q4 CY2023)
- Gateway Cities: 85.1% (up 6.1% from 79.0% in Q4 CY2023)
- Westside Central: 85.3% (up 5.2% from 80.1% in Q4 CY2023)
- South Bay Cities: 90.1% (up 7.7% from 82.4% in Q4 CY2023)

South Bay Cities has a larger growth and recovery rate of the above service areas. Increased efforts will be given to the other three service areas to identify service improvement opportunities and generate higher ridership. For example, the Line 260 extension to Willowbrook and Line 665

frequency improvement in East LA were implemented in the December 2024 service change. Two small lines in the San Gabriel Valley service area (Pasadena) were also transferred in December 2024 to municipal operator Pasadena Transit to integrate their network for improved local travel options, as planned in NextGen. Also, new bus lanes on Roscoe Bl were implemented by the end of October 2024 to provide faster, more reliable service for Line 152 to better serve our riders and increase ridership.

Saturday's average recovery rate was 96.2% overall. San Fernando Valley again showed the highest recovery, at 113.4%, while other areas were 84.7% to 93.3%. Saturday ridership increased in all service areas by 6.6%-7.8% over the same quarter in CY2023. Gateway Cities had the highest increase, followed by San Fernando Valley at 7.5% and Westside Central with the lowest increase of 6.6%.

The average Sunday ridership recovery rate was 107.4% overall. San Fernando Valley's recovery rate was the highest at 125.7%, and three other service areas exceeded 100% recovery (101.8% for San Gabriel Valley, 103.5% for Westside Central, and South Bay Cities at 109.1%) for the first time, while Gateway Cities were at 95.2%. Sunday Q4 CY2024 ridership recovery rates increased by 11.2% for Gateway Cities (lowest recovery but largest increase) and 9.2% for Westside Central compared to Q4 CY2023.

Table 4: Percentage Change in Average Daily Ridership by Service Area and Day Type, Q4 CY 2024 compared to Q4 CY2023

Service Area	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday
Gateway Cities	7.7%	7.8%	11.2%
San Fernando Valley	9.6%	7.5%	10.9%
San Gabriel Valley	6.4%	6.8%	9.8%
South Bay Cities	9.3%	6.9%	10.2%
Westside Central	6.6%	6.6%	9.2%

Table 4 above shows full details of the percentage change in average daily ridership by service area between Q4 CY2023 and Q4 CY2024. See Attachment A, Charts 10-12, Average Weekday, Saturday, and Sunday Ridership Recovery by Service Area Q2 CY2019 - Q4 CY2024.

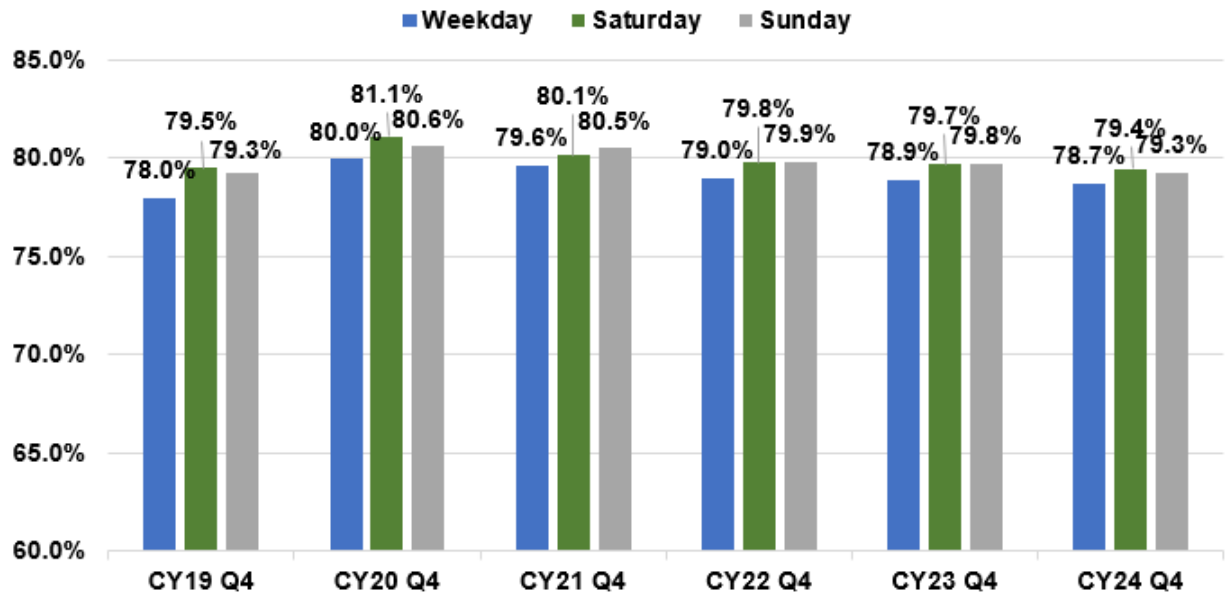
Ridership by Equity Focus Communities (EFC)

Average daily boardings in EFCs increased by 2.0% on weekdays, 1.6% on Saturdays, and 1.3% on Sundays during Q4 CY2020. This was during the most impactful time of COVID cases, when much of the transit ridership was in EFCs, and people still needed to travel to access jobs and services.

By Q4 CY2024, EFC boardings were 0.7% higher than pre-COVID on weekdays and returned to pre-COVID levels on weekends. Trips during the early part of COVID were likely made by people who relied on transit to access essential jobs/services and mainly reside in EFCs. The NextGen Bus Plan

prioritized investing in frequency improvements for key lines serving EFCs, which is likely attributed to the 0.7% increase in the share of weekday boardings. This should continue in 2025 for EFCs, though these most recent results show recovery in non-EFC areas is also increasing. This change can also be attributed to choice riders using services in non-EFCs, which may have been slower to recover due to factors such as telecommuting post-pandemic.

Chart 2: EFC Ridership as a Percentage of Total Ridership



See Attachment A, page 16, for further discussion of bus system ridership in Equity Focus Communities.

Lines serving Equity Focus Communities with the strongest ridership recovery (over 90% recovered weekdays and weekends) include:

- Central Av Line 53
- Compton Av Line 55
- W 8th St and E Olympic Bl in East LA Line 66
- Vernon Av Line 105
- Slauson Av Line 108
- Gage Av Line 110
- Florence Av Line 111
- Century Bl Line 117

- Willowbrook Av Line 202
- Vermont Av Local Line 204
- Western Av Line 207
- La Brea Av Line 212
- Atlantic Av Line 260
- Soto St East LA and Huntington Park Line 251
- Hoover St Line 603
- Boyle Heights Shuttle Line 605
- Huntington Park Shuttle Line 611

Many of these lines operate 15-minute or better service all day on weekdays as a result of the NextGen Bus Plan implementation.

Metro has deployed the full annualized 7 million revenue service hours planned under the NextGen Bus Plan, with service frequencies specifically targeting EFCs. Ridership recovery has been lower on lines serving Downtown LA, which have likely seen reductions in daily office worker attendance due to increased telecommuting and associated impacts on service industry jobs. This is despite NextGen frequency improvements (e.g., Broadway Line 45, Avalon Bl Line 51 in South LA, W Olympic Bl Line 28, and Pico Bl Line 30 serving the inner Westside). Metro will continue to monitor ridership recovery on each line to determine if adjustments to the NextGen Bus Plan are needed to address impacts, particularly as employers increasingly require a return to in-office work, which should increase transit ridership by these office workers. This includes changes being implemented for federal government workers in March 2025 requiring full-time office attendance and California state government employees that will need to attend their office four days per week starting in July 2025.

Ridership by Time Period

As of Q4 CY2024, early AM and AM peak period ridership remains the least recovered at 80% and 76% of 2019 levels, respectively, while the PM peak and evening recovery rates were 84% and 86%, respectively. By contrast, the midday, late evening, and Owl periods share of weekday ridership continued to have the highest recovery rates compared to their 2019 (pre-pandemic) levels at 92%, 97%, and 101%, respectively, so the Owl period weekdays have fully recovered. This suggests that fewer traditional office workers commute on transit during peak morning hours. The increase in midday share of weekday ridership is consistent with the intent of the NextGen Bus Plan to grow ridership during off-peak weekdays. All time periods showed increases over the same quarter, Q4

CY2023, with the largest increases in midday (8%) and late evening (7%), with other time periods increasing by 4-6%.

Saturday AM peak ridership had the lowest recovery rate at 88%. In contrast, Saturday early AM, midday, PM peak, and evening showed higher recovery rates at 94%, 92%, 92%, and 96%, respectively, suggesting these periods led the Saturday ridership recovery. As with weekdays, the Saturday late evening and Owl periods had the highest recovery rates, now exceeding pre-pandemic levels at 104% and 106%, respectively, with their usage likely dominated by those dependent on transit. The evening and late evening periods showed the most growth over Q4 CY2023, at 7% and 8%, respectively, with other time periods increasing by 4-6%.

Sunday recovery rates by time period for Q4 CY2024 were topped by early AM, which at 119% exceeded both the overnight Owl (111%) and late evening (106%) recovery rates. However, the late evening (10%) and Owl (9%) periods saw the largest increases over Q4 CY2023. Other Sunday periods saw good growth of between 5-8%. All periods on Sunday exceeded 100% in Q4 CY2024 compared to Q4 CY2019. See also Attachment A, Charts 14-16: Weekday, Saturday, and Sunday Ridership by Time Period Q4 CY2019 - Q4 CY2024.

Average Trip Length

The Metro bus system's average passenger (unlinked) trip length dropped from 4.2-4.3 miles to just below 3.0 miles in the pandemic year 2021. This trend was likely due to a significant reduction in long-distance commuter trips. As ridership recovered in 2022 through 2024, average passenger trip lengths have increased and remain at around 3.5 miles, well below pre-COVID lengths. This change was expected as COVID has transitioned trip-making to shorter trips to address a market identified as a significant opportunity to grow ridership through the NextGen Bus study by providing more frequent local bus lines serving shorter distance trips. This change in average passenger trip length is seen for weekdays and weekends. (Attachment A, Chart 17 Average Passenger Trip Length)

Ridership and Productivity by Service Tiers and Lines

This section compares average daily line ridership for Q4 CY2024 versus Q4 CY2019 for each day type (weekday, Saturday, Sunday). Due to the NextGen Bus Plan change involving the restructure of bus lines and line groups, this analysis must, in some cases, be based on comparing ridership for groups of lines to provide a fair comparison of the changes in ridership at line level. In Q4 CY2024, 119 individual Metro bus lines were operating (though two were transferred to Pasadena Transit in December 2024). However, the ridership recovery rate analysis for this quarter is based on 82 weekday, 75 Saturday, and 74 Sunday lines/line groups to allow for a fair comparison. Detailed data is included in Attachments B, C, and D, respectively.

The overall bus system ridership recovery rate in Q4 CY2024 was 88.1% for weekdays, 96.2% for Saturdays, and 107.4% for Sundays, compared to Q4 CY2019 as a pre-COVID baseline. There were 25 (up from 20 in Q3) weekday, 34 Saturday (up from 29 in Q3), and 53 (up from 43 in Q3) Sunday lines/line groups exceeding their pre-COVID Q4 CY2019 ridership numbers in Q4 CY2024. The

review focused on lines showing above and below system average ridership recovery. The review also examined lines/line groups for the four NextGen Bus Plan Tiers.

The high number of Tier 1 (10-minute or better weekday service) and Tier 2 (15-minute or better weekday service) lines/line groups (which make up 46% of all bus lines) with above-average recovery suggests that the improved frequencies implemented through the NextGen Bus Plan are a vital component of more robust ridership recovery:

Table 5: Line Recover by Tier and Day Type

Number of Lines/Groups with Above Average Recovery Q4 CY2024	Of 82 Total Weekday	Of 75 Total Saturday	Of 74 Total Sunday
Tier 1	17	15	17
Tier 2	12	11	11
Tier 3	6	8	8
Tier 4	10	5	8
Total	45	39	44

Tier 1 and Tier 2 higher frequencies continue to show stronger recovery, while some of these lines also include route changes to better connect riders to key destinations.

The common denominator of less ridership recovery along some Tier 1 and Tier 2 lines is that they serve Downtown LA. This neighborhood has seen reduced daily work-related trips due to increased telecommuting, which has negatively impacted many downtown service industry businesses and further reduced travel to downtown LA. Some of these lines were also restructured to move riders to other bus lines or, in some cases, rail lines. An opportunity exists to promote downtown LA travel on the new Metro Regional Connector and the Metro bus network for those returning to work, as well as the many leisure and entertainment events occurring there.

This same pattern was noted for the G and J Line BRT services, with notably lower ridership recovery, especially on weekdays. Before COVID, these lines had higher usage by discretionary riders who appear not to be traveling as much for work in downtown LA or other locations, such as Van Nuys or Warner Center in 2023. Notable ridership changes also occurred in the Vermont corridor, where frequent Local and Rapid bus lines have continued to operate. The ridership recovery rate for the corridor overall was 91.3% on weekdays (up from 87.3% in Q3), with the Local Line 204 having a recovery rate of 112.0% (up from 105.7% in Q3). By comparison, the Vermont Rapid Line 754 serves a very high EFC corridor with the same frequency as the local line but on a limited stop format and had a ridership recovery rate of 70.7% (up from 68.7% in Q3). Line 754 saw notably high cancellation rates in 2022, which may have diverted riders to use the Local bus. The same patterns were seen for Saturday (Local 122.4%; Rapid 70.7%) and Sunday (Local 120.5%; Rapid 89.0%).

As mentioned, the performance of the largely Tier 2 network of lines in the San Fernando Valley is notable for its strong ridership recovery as a group. Other Tier 2 lines across Metro's service area had similarly high ridership recovery rates. Examples include Line 55 on Compton Av, Line 110 on

Gage Av, and Line 117 on Century Bl, all of which serve South LA, as well as Line 260 on Atlantic Av and Line 605, which serves Boyle Heights.

Several Tier 3 lines had frequency improvements that generated high ridership recovery. By comparison, many Tier 4 lines (40-60 minute frequency) had low ridership recovery, no NextGen route changes in most cases, and a lower percentage of route miles serving EFCs. It will be essential to test the best performers among these lines by upgrading to a 30-minute service to see what impact that might have on their ridership recovery.

Data also consistently showed that increased service hours implemented through the NextGen Bus Plan for many lines or line groups generated higher ridership recovery and better productivity compared to lines that saw stable or fewer service hours compared to pre-NextGen. This suggests that the NextGen Bus Plan changes have successfully generated a good return from service hours reinvested in the NextGen frequent network.

More details on line-level ridership can be found in the report (Attachment A) and data tables (Attachments B, C, D). This analysis shows that the NextGen Bus Plan's focus on a fast, frequent, and reliable network supports higher ridership recovery. These ridership recovery results will continue to be tracked and reported as further investments in NextGen bus speed and reliability improvements occur, including new bus lanes and expanded transit signal priority (more details on these initiatives are in the next section). Staff will review ridership for Q1 CY2025 (January through March 2025) as the basis for the next ridership report.

Speed and Reliability

Beyond the initial Reconnect phase of the NextGen Bus Plan with route restructuring and establishment of frequency tiers, the Transit First scenario of NextGen is designed to increase ridership based on the increased speed of service/reduced travel times from implementing items from the speed and reliability toolkit. These items include new bus lanes and expanded transit signal priority, stop optimization, and reinvestment of time savings for increased service frequencies.

Progress on such speed and reliability implementations include 70.7 lane miles of new bus priority lanes implemented at the end of CY2024 across Metro's service area, with the Roscoe Bl bus priority lanes in San Fernando Valley being the latest to be implemented and completed at the end of October 2024. Updates on upcoming and recent projects are listed below:

Roscoe Boulevard Bus Priority Lanes (Metro Line 152)

At the end of October 2024, LADOT completed installing this 21-lane-mile project. This project provides peak-period bus priority lanes on Roscoe Bl between Topanga Canyon Bl and Coldwater Canyon Av. It is the first project to be delivered as part of the North San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor Improvements Project.

Florence Avenue Bus Priority Lanes (Metro Line 111)

In June 2024, the design was completed for the City of LA portion of the Florence Av Bus Priority Lanes project. The design for the Unincorporated LA County portion is expected to be completed in March 2025. This project will provide 10.2 lane miles of peak-period bus priority lanes in both directions on Florence Av between West Bl and the Florence A Line Station. Concurrent with design, Metro is working to secure construction permits from both the City of LA and LA County. Construction is expected to begin in Q2 CY2025.

Vermont Avenue Bus Priority Lanes (Metro Lines 204 & 754)

Metro will deliver quick-build bus priority lanes to key corridor segments ahead of the larger BRT project as part of the Vermont Transit Corridor project. This will improve the speed and reliability improvements to over 36,000 daily weekday riders ahead of the larger project.

The Bus Speed Working Group identified a 5-lane mile northern segment of Vermont Av between Sunset Bl and Wilshire Bl, as well as a 7.5-lane-mile southern segment of Vermont Av between Gage Av and Vermont/Athens C Line Station for quick-build bus lane projects that could be delivered ahead of the BRT improvements on Vermont Av. The proposed bus lanes would be in service full-time along the southern segment and weekday peak periods along the northern segment.

Metro Community Relations staff and Community Based Organization partners have completed briefings and presentations to interested stakeholders, community groups, and neighborhood councils, as well as outreach to businesses along Vermont Av for the overall BRT project and the quick-build bus lanes. The northern segment of the quick-build bus lanes will begin construction starting as soon as March 2025, with the southern segment following afterward.

Bus Lane Enforcement

Metro continues partnering with LADOT to have dedicated parking enforcement details patrol and enforce bus lanes in the City of LA. Enforcing the no-parking regulations in the bus lanes helps riders arrive at their destinations faster and more reliably.

In addition, Metro continues to make progress on the automated Bus Lane Enforcement (BLE) program. Metro awarded a contract to Hayden AI Technologies to implement the BLE pilot on 100 buses. Half of these buses have been equipped with the BLE hardware, with the second half expected to be complete in FY25 Q1.

Metro is leading the BLE outreach plan in coordination and cooperation with LADOT, and it is underway. The outreach effort will focus on the affected BLE corridors and include some general program informational materials for a wider audience. Metro’s partner agency, LADOT, worked to amend the City’s municipal code to allow citations under the BLE program. The City Council approved these changes in October 2024. A warning period and outreach effort began on November 1 and ended on February 16, 2025, with fines being issued since February 17, 2025. A full community engagement plan is also being developed, with outreach conducted in English, Spanish, and other significant languages relevant to the program's communities.

EQUITY PLATFORM

The NextGen Bus Plan was developed with an equity methodology, placing more service in Equity Focus Communities, which have historically been more transit-dependent. A central goal of the NextGen Bus Plan is to provide improved transit service frequencies, travel times, and reliability improvements for Metro system riders. Eight in 10 Metro riders are Black, Indigenous, and/or other People of Color (BIPOC); nearly 9 in 10 live in households with a total annual earnings below $50,000, and almost 6 in 10 are below the poverty line.

Improvements such as greater off-peak frequencies have helped essential workers and other riders make essential trips, with an increased share of off-peak ridership noted during the height of the pandemic.

This analysis shows that a subsequently greater proportion of increased ridership has occurred among EFC residents since the NextGen changes were implemented, with increased frequency of service and speed and reliability enhancements that continue to be implemented. By providing a fast, frequent, reliable network designed through the NextGen process, there is a significant focus on serving EFCs to provide these communities with reduced wait times, shorter travel times, and improved access to key destinations.

Staff will continue to monitor ridership in EFC and non-EFC areas to ensure NextGen benefits for marginalized groups are achieved, ensuring enough service capacity is provided based on ridership, and that all planned NextGen speed and reliability initiatives are implemented with the intended benefits achieved. Staff will also continue to gather rider feedback through the various sources used to gather public input regarding bus services and related adjustments, such as comments received via Metro's social media channels, Customer Care, and Service Council meetings. These channels provide valuable insight into riders' key customer experience concerns.

VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED OUTCOME

VMT and VMT per capita in Los Angeles County are lower than national averages, the lowest in the SCAG region, and on the lower end of VMT per capita statewide, with these declining VMT trends due in part to Metro's significant investment in rail and bus transit.* Metro's Board-adopted VMT reduction targets align with California's statewide climate goals, including achieving carbon neutrality by 2045. To ensure continued progress, all Board items are assessed for their potential impact on VMT to ensure continued progress.

This item supports Metro's systemwide strategy to reduce VMT through planning and operational activities that will improve and further encourage transit ridership, ridesharing, and active transportation. Metro's Board-adopted VMT reduction targets were designed to build on the success of existing investments, and this item aligns with those objectives.

*Based on population estimates from the United States Census and VMT estimates from Caltrans' Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) data between 2001-2019.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The recommendation supports strategic plan goals:

Goal #1: Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling. Improving the speed and reliability of the bus network will reduce transit travel times and improve competitiveness with other transportation options.

Goal #2: Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all transportation system users. These initiatives help to move more people within the same street capacity, where currently transit users suffer service delays and reliability issues because of single-occupant drivers.

Goal #3: Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity. With faster transit service and improved reliability, residents have increased access to education and employment, with greater confidence that they will reach their destination on time.

NEXT STEPS

The NextGen Bus Plan network ridership will continue to be monitored through 2025 as Metro continues to deliver full service based on the NextGen Bus Plan. The agency will continue to hire new bus operators to remain fully staffed and to reliably deliver full service daily. Metro will also continue implementing bus speed and reliability improvements, such as new bus lanes. Another update is planned for the Board in mid-2025, tracking the detailed progress on ridership recovery during Q1 CY2025.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - NextGen Ridership Analysis Q4 CY2024
Attachment B - Weekday Ridership Recovery Comparison by Line and Line Group
Attachment C - Saturday Ridership Recovery Comparison by Line and Line Group
Attachment D - Sunday Ridership Recovery Comparison by Line and Line Group

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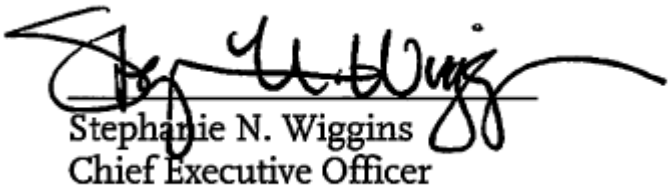

Stephanie N. Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer