



## Board Report

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**FINANCE, BUDGET, AND AUDIT COMMITTEE  
APRIL 17, 2025**

**SUBJECT: REVIEW OF METRO BUS STOPS CLEANLINESS AND SAFETY**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

**RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE Office of the Inspector General (OIG) Final Report on Review of Metro Bus Stops Cleanliness and Safety.

**ISSUE**

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) reviewed a sample of Metro bus stops for cleanliness and safety. The public considers cleanliness and safety as critical factors in deciding whether to take public transportation. The primary purpose of this review is to ensure that practices for bus stops cleaning and safety are sufficient and meet or exceed any industry benchmarks for cleanliness, hygiene, and standards for the safety of bus stops.

**BACKGROUND**

As of October 31, 2024, Metro has 12,033 bus stops serving 1,447 square miles in Southern California. Metro operates 119 lines and Contracted Services operates 12 lines. Metro directly operates a bus fleet of 1,930 buses. There are 109 buses assigned to contractors to provide service on Metro routes.

Metro maintains 137 bus stops throughout the system and the balance of bus stops on the system are to be maintained by local municipalities across the County.

Maintaining bus stops is crucial for ensuring a clean and safe environment for employees, customers, and visitors. These practices are essential in creating a pleasing aesthetic and reflect Metro's mission to provide a world-class transportation system for all and the vision to provide high-quality mobility options and outstanding trip experiences for all.

The ability for riders to get to and from, or access to, transit stops is critical for providing a safe, pleasant, and convenient trip from beginning to end. Improvements to riders' experience and access to bus stops can yield higher ridership and greater customer satisfaction.

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The 2028 Summer Olympics and Paralympics, commonly known as the 2028 Games, are upcoming international multi-sport events scheduled to take place from July 14 to 30 and August 15 to 27, 2028, respectively.

More people are expected to utilize Metro public transit during the 2028 Games. It is important to ensure that Metro bus stops are clean and safe for all riders before the 2028 Games and other events such as the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

A high level of maintenance for bus stops is designed to ensure the safety and accessibility of passengers. Standards are developed by a combination of federal, state, and local regulations, with an emphasis on visibility, accessibility, and pedestrian safety. The standards include Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, clear signages, and proper lighting, which should be located to maximize safety, minimize the risk of collisions, and minimize impacts on adjacent property. Bus stops should be located away from potential safety risks, such as intersections, railroad crossings, and high-crime activity areas. Amenities like benches, trash receptacles, and shelters are encouraged.

Managed under Facilities Maintenance, Metro's Stops and Zones Department is responsible for maintaining the satisfactory conditions of Metro's 137 bus stops maintained by Metro. Their tasks include installation, removal/reinstallation, cleaning Metro signs and posts, removing trash, and performing other preventative maintenance. If the bus stop zones require maintenance by outside contractors or other governmental municipalities, Stops and Zones personnel inform their respective supervisors, who in turn contact the appropriate entity, municipality, or contractor, to address the noted issue(s).

Local Municipalities are responsible for maintaining nearly 12,000 bus stops in the public easements while Metro is responsible for maintaining 137 bus stops across the system. Metro owns the posts where Metro signs are installed and, in some cases, non-Metro bus stop signs are also installed on Metro posts.

## **DISCUSSION**

Our review found that Metro generally complies with its policies on cleanliness and the industry safety standards for bus stops and ensures that Metro-owned bus stops meet regional accessibility and safety needs.

Of the 245 bus stops we reviewed across the Metro system, we found two issues on Metro-owned bus stops; however, we found 83 issues on bus stops in the public easements that require local municipalities to address:

- The majority of the issues were related to cleanliness such as graffiti in bus stop shelters and benches, dirty sidewalks, and overfilled or uncollected trash bins. Other maintenance issues that need to be addressed include broken or rusty shelters and benches.
- We also noted illicit activities involving drugs at a bus stop at Figueroa & 7<sup>th</sup> Street, a very active area for bus patrons, and some areas close to tourist attractions, such as Crypto.com

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Arena and the Grammy Museum at LA Live in Downtown Los Angeles. In addition, we witnessed streetwalkers or apparent sex workers in the Figueroa Corridor that were sometimes close to bus stops.

- We also found safety and cleanliness issues with nearby homeless encampments, bus stops with improper and inadequate lighting, and vehicles parked at the bus stops in no parking zones.

We found issues on 35% of the sampled bus stops. This should be measured to see improvements over time, before the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2028 Olympics and Paralympic Games.

From the sampled bus stops we reviewed, most were on public easements maintained by local municipalities. We contacted 14 municipalities across Los Angeles County to inform them of our report on the review of bus stops including issues we found in their jurisdictions. Most municipalities stated that they took immediate action to address issues such as dirty sidewalks and graffiti as we informed them during the audit. Some of the municipalities have in-house staff, while others have contractors, who regularly clean the bus stop amenities and sidewalks, as well as provide as-needed repairs. Most of the local municipalities said that Metro's Stops and Zones Department informs them when their bus stops have any maintenance problems that need immediate attention.

We found the response from the City of Los Angeles did not directly address our recommendations or deliver a solution to bus stop cleanliness and safety. We recommend that they coordinate with Metro departments to develop a workable plan that addresses cleanliness, maintenance, and safety issues at the bus stops within their area of responsibility (public rights-of-way.)

The public considers cleanliness and safety as critical factors in deciding whether to take public transportation. This includes having safe and convenient access to bus stops. With clean and safe bus stops, Metro may increase patron satisfaction, ridership, and revenue.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend the following:

### OPERATIONS (STOPS AND ZONES DEPARTMENT)

#### **1A: Graffiti on Bus Stop Furniture**

For Metro-owned bus stops:

1. Utilize effective methods for easy graffiti removal such as specialized coating on the shelter and bench surfaces.
2. Ensure that all required cleanings are performed within the specified goal date (e.g., ten days from receipt of the report).

For non-Metro-owned bus stops:

3. Continue to report graffiti to the respective jurisdiction that should implement regular graffiti removal practices to maintain the cleanliness of the bus shelter/bench.
4. Develop a procedure to log in and follow up with notifications to local municipalities, their contractors, and/or other transit agencies to take action on the issues reported.

**1B: Graffiti on Newly Installed Electronic Paper Displays**

5. Continue to perform regular inspections of the e-paper displays to ensure that the units are free of graffiti; advise the contractor if graffiti is seen or if other maintenance is needed.
6. Investigate if there is any screen protector, paint, or texturizer that could be applied to these displays to make them harder to graffiti and faster or easier to clean of graffiti.

**1C: Bus Stops with Trash Issues**

7. For Metro-owned bus stops, continue to implement regular cleaning schedules and increase the frequency of cleaning for the locations that repeatedly exhibit cleanliness issues.
8. For non-Metro-owned bus stops, report cleanliness issues to the respective local municipalities, and their contractors.
9. Work with respective local municipalities to provide notices or flyers to educate the public on how to dispose of trash/waste properly at bus stops.
10. Work with respective local municipalities to provide an information campaign by media, signs, notices, or flyers to educate the public on how to dispose of trash/waste properly at bus stops.
11. Establish a cleanliness hotline as part of the digital dashboard program and a new agency customer interaction application under development.

**1D: Maintenance Issues**

12. Request the local municipalities ensure that the riding public is provided with reasonable comfort and convenience such as shelter seating at bus stops maintained by them.

**1E: Overgrown Tree Blocking the Bus Stop Sign**

13. Properly trim, prune, and maintain trees near bus stops to ensure the visibility of the bus stop sign. Ask municipalities to trim landscapes at bus stops maintained by them.

**1F: Bus Stop Sign without the Line Number**

14. Address the noted issues promptly to ensure that the riding public is provided with reasonable comfort and necessary information (e.g., proper signage).

**For All Cleanliness and Maintenance Issues:**

15. Consider communicating bus stop repairs to the public with a public-facing “dashboard” on Metro’s website that will provide transparency and information to the public about any reported bus stops that require maintenance or repair. (See Attachment C.)

**2A: No Proper Lighting**

16. Continue to test and determine the effectiveness of the independent solar panel lights on top of the signposts. Consider expanding use of the solar lights if the cost and benefits of these lights prove to be a good solution.
17. Identify bus stop zones that need improved lighting and create a light improvement plan for Metro-maintained stops or inform the local municipality to enhance passenger safety for municipalities-maintained stops with improved lighting.

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18. Post Metro Maintenance Dashboard contact information allowing passengers to easily report lighting and other issues at the bus stop(s).
  19. Consider sustainable options like lights generated by small solar panels or other environmentally conscious methods, as stated earlier.

**2B: Vehicles Parked in Bus Stops**

20. Monitor the effectiveness of the Bus Lane Enforcement (BLE) program in keeping Metro bus lanes clear from parked vehicles across the system to improve transit safety and reliability.
21. Have the bus operator inform the BOC to inform the road supervisor of vehicles at the bus stop to get the plate number and call traffic enforcement for towing.

**2C: Homeless Encampment and Individuals in Bus Stops and Parking Lot**

22. Discuss with the local municipalities the development of a plan to perform outreach, fencing, or similar deterrents to discourage homeless encampments.
23. Work with Metro-related departments to collaborate with local governments, community organizations, and/or other transit agencies to provide outreach and support services and programs to homeless individuals.
24. Post signs at the bus stops and in buses where to go or call for shelter and other services.

**2D: Illicit Activity Involving Drugs at Figueroa & 7th Street Bus Stop**

25. Discuss with local law enforcement and Metro System Security & Law Enforcement the possibility of assigning Security or law enforcement personnel around highly active bus stops to discourage or prevent homeless individuals and other people from engaging in illegal activities at Metro-maintained bus stops.
26. Coordinate with law enforcement agencies, municipalities, and other transit agencies sharing the same bus stop, and local business security to determine how this issue can be effectively addressed and resolved. Request municipalities to assign law enforcement or personnel to discourage and address illicit activities near bus stops.
27. Discuss with municipalities their arrangements for improved security for municipalities-maintained bus stops.

**2E: Streetwalkers in the Figueroa Corridor**

28. Coordinate with law enforcement to implement security measures that will deter illegal activities in municipality-maintained bus stop zones. Join the task force that is operating the effort. Request municipalities to assign law enforcement or other personnel to address illegal activities.
29. Metro should work with other local entities that have programs to provide resources and opportunities to help vulnerable individuals disengage from illegal activities.
30. Obtain updates on the Figueroa Corridor Human Trafficking Initiative and review any recommendations.
31. Consider additional safety measures at Metro bus stops where this kind of activity is regularly observed.

**3A: Lawsuits Involving Bus Stops**

32. Regularly inspect all Metro signposts, sidewalks, and Metro-owned bus stops, shelters, and seats to ensure that they are safe and there are no hazards to the public.
33. Report any hazardous areas that may lead to an injury or lawsuit involving bus stops at public easements. Use

the dashboard recommended in Attachment C.

### **3B: Non-Compliance of the Contractor with the Terms of the Contract**

34. Enforce contractor compliance with the terms of the contract; i.e., e-paper displays are completely installed and maintained, and all required documentation such as photos of the units are submitted.
35. Continue to regularly inspect the e-paper displays to ensure that they are functioning properly.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

36. Consider communicating bus stop repairs to the public with a public-facing “Dashboard” on Metro’s website that will provide transparency and information to the public about any reported bus stops that are in the process of maintenance or repair. (See Attachment C.)

### **LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES**

37. Monitor and correct deficiencies at bus stops on public easements they own and do not rely solely on Metro reporting cleanliness or safety issues.
38. Regularly monitor and take corrective action to clean and repair bus stops maintained by the municipality.

### **EQUITY PLATFORM**

It is the OIG’s opinion that there are no equity considerations or impacts resulting from this audit. However, to the extent any of the bus stops with noted deficiencies are located in equity focus communities, the recommendations, if acted upon, can make bus stops and surrounding areas cleaner and safer in those locations.

### **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.

As part of these ongoing efforts, this item is expected to contribute to further reductions in VMT.

This item supports Metro’s systemwide strategy to reduce VMT through bus stop maintenance, increasing cleanliness and safety that will improve and further encourage transit ridership 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**

Recommendations support strategic plan goal no. 2: Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Metro management and relevant municipalities may collaborate to implement the audit report recommendations.

**ATTACHMENT**

Attachment A - Final Report on Review of Metro Bus Stops Cleanliness and Safety (Report No. 25-AUD-05)

Prepared by: Asuncion Dimaculangan, Senior Auditor, (213) 244-7311  
Yvonne Zheng, Senior Manager, Audit, (213) 244-7301  
George Maycott, Senior Director, Special Projects, (213) 244-7310

Reviewed by: Karen Gorman, Inspector General, (213) 922-2975