



Board Report

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Agenda Number: 33.

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 15, 2016

SUBJECT: METRO'S MODEL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM AND 2016 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

ACTION: ADOPT A MODEL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM AND APPROVE METRO'S 2016 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

RECOMMENDATION

ADOPT Metro's Model Public Engagement Program (Program) and approve the 2016 Public Participation Plan (Attachment A) as the baseline and guiding policy for all public outreach.

ISSUE

The FTA requires that Metro issue a Public Participation Plan to guide all outreach as part of its Title VI Program Update every three years. This plan is accountable, first and foremost, to the public, and it demonstrates Metro's ongoing commitment to provide a robust and inclusive public engagement program that sustains, strengthens and deepens our relationships with stakeholders countywide. The plan meets and exceeds the requirements set forth by the FTA, FHWA, and Title VI, and it aligns with our mission and commitment to excellence in service and support. Adoption of the Model Public Engagement Program will formally establish the agency's baseline commitment to providing a robust and inclusive public engagement process that provides critical public participation throughout the life of projects, programs and initiatives.

DISCUSSION

As the system expands, Metro is uniquely positioned with an unprecedented opportunity to invest in Los Angeles County's transportation system for all types of travel - buses, trains, highways, and more. This transformation through transportation will impact stakeholders throughout the region. As such, it is essential that the agency continues to bridge connections with communities and individuals who have deep relationships and insights into community-specific needs and opportunities through a comprehensive and sustained Public Engagement Program. This Program also aligns with the goals and guiding principles set forth in Metro's Public Participation Plan, approved by the Board as part of the Title VI Program Update in 2013. The 2016 plan was updated in response to internal review by a

multidisciplinary committee and public feedback received in the spring. The three main components to Metro's 2016 Plan are:

- Goals and Guiding Principles
- Minimum Baseline Thresholds for Public Outreach
- Strategies, Methods and Procedures

Stakeholder Outreach

Staff conducted an extensive process to ensure that a diverse set of stakeholders had an opportunity to provide input to the plan. In early 2016, a multidisciplinary committee of Metro departments, including Communications (Marketing; Construction Relations, Community and Municipal Affairs, and Transit Safety Programs within Community Relations; Digital Communications; Customer Relations; Public Relations; and Government Relations), Planning (Office of Strategic Initiatives, Rider Relief Programs), and Civil Rights, updated the plan approved by the Metro Board in 2013. Shortly thereafter, a 30-day comment period was held to gather public input on the updated draft plan.

A variety of outreach methods were used to collect meaningful public feedback. The updated draft plan was posted online in English and eight other languages (Armenian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Thai, and Vietnamese), emailed to more than 11,000 stakeholders countywide, presented to Metro's five sub-regional Service Councils, Citizens Advisory Council, Accessibility Advisory Committee, and LA County Commission on Disabilities, and shared through social media and Metro's blogs, The Source and El Pasajero. Metro's committee tabulated the 46 public comments received, revised the draft plan in response to these comments, and is submitting the final 2016 plan as part of the 2016 Title VI Program Update.

Goals and Guiding Principles

The 2016 plan outlines goals and guiding principles for all outreach that is deployed in support of Metro's projects, programs and initiatives. Given that many non-English speaking and low-income communities use public transit as a primary method of transport, the plan emphasizes access to multilingual resources, holding meetings that are flexible around working hours, enhancing new outreach methods, measuring the effectiveness of community outreach and encouraging meaningful participation especially for those who rely on walking, bicycling, buses and trains for their daily trips.

It guides staff to look at community decision-making processes through several lenses, taking into consideration neighborhood and community values, community structures, urban and rural areas, and special ethnic and cultural groups. The plan promotes exploration of unconventional but effective approaches like contemporary education methods to explain harder to decipher technical details and utilizing participatory planning tools to increase awareness and understanding.

Minimum Baseline Thresholds for Public Outreach

Driven by these goals and guiding principles, the plan has established eight Minimum Baseline Thresholds for Public Outreach and grounded this plan with these principal strategies to ensure that surrounding neighborhoods, individuals and civic engagement organizations are involved in all stages of the life cycle of each project, program or initiative, from planning to implementation. These

minimum thresholds are in addition to the guidelines for public hearings on fares and service changes that are outlined in Metro's Administrative Code and Title VI Program Update.

As stated in the Minimum Baseline Thresholds for Public Outreach, the plan promotes public participation at every decision opportunity, including:

- New policy and policy changes, such as possible changes to bus and rail service, fares, and other programs
- Development, planning and construction of new projects and programs, including bus, rail, highway and transit oriented communities

The Minimum Baseline Thresholds for Public Outreach describe minimum requirements for each of the following eight outreach methods:

- Community Meeting and Public Hearing Noticing
- Community Meeting and Public Hearing Locations and Times
- Community Meeting Language Translation
- Public Hearing Language Translation and Documentation
- Neighborhood/Community Lenses
- Non-traditional Popular Education Methods
- Online Language Translation
- Telephone Interpretation

Outreach Method	Description
Community Meeting and Public Hearing Noticing	Stakeholders will be given a minimum of 10 days' notice for all Metro-hosted community meetings and public hearings. Notices will be provided in English and Spanish at a minimum, and translated into multiple other languages as demographics indicate. Ads and take-one notices will be placed on adjacent buses and trains for specific area meetings whenever possible. Meeting and hearing materials will also be posted online for those who are unable to attend in person.
Community Meeting and Public Hearing Locations and Times	Metro-hosted community meetings and public hearings will be held at transit-convenient, ADA compliant venues at times that are flexible around working hours, such as at nighttime and on the weekends. Venues will be near the communities of interest.

Community Meeting Language Translation	Community meeting materials and live translation will be provided in English and other languages spoken by significant populations in the project area, as resources allow, and as outlined in Metro's LEP Plan Four Factor Analysis; additional languages and ADA accommodations, such as large print and Braille, will be provided upon request with at least three working days' (72 hours) notice. Language translation will be performed by fluent speakers.
Public Hearing Language Translation and Documentation	Public hearing materials and live translation will be provided in English and Spanish at a minimum; other languages and ADA accommodations, such as large print and Braille, will be provided upon request with at least three working days' (72 hours) notice. Language translation will be performed by fluent speakers. Court reporters will also document the hearing proceedings and public comments.
Neighborhood/Community Lenses	Metro will look at community decision-making processes through several lenses, including neighborhood and community values, LA County community structures, urban and rural areas, and special ethnic and cultural groups, paying particular attention to users with the most need who rely on walking, bicycling, buses and trains to meet their daily needs.
Non-traditional Popular Education Methods	Metro will strive to use videos, pictures, examples, participatory planning tools (such as interactive maps and activities), the use of real life examples, art, and other popular education programs whenever possible to explain harder to decipher technical details and increase public awareness and understanding.
Online Language Translation	The Metro Rider's guide, available on www.metro.net < http://www.metro.net >, will provide web visitors with transportation information assistance in nine languages in addition to English. Additionally, Metro will offer Google Translate on every web page for language accessibility above Title VI requirements. Metro's website content will also be ADA accessible; it will be compatible with screen reading devices for individuals with visual impairments.

Telephone Interpretation	Metro's Customer Relations Department will provide patrons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) with transportation information assistance in over 200 languages by utilizing a third party language interpretation service. Telephone interpretation will also be ADA accessible with California Relay Line http://ddtp.cpuc.ca.gov/default1.aspx?id=1482 . In addition to Customer Relations, Rail Operations will utilize the third-party languages interpretation service to provide information and emergency response to LEP patrons who contact the Rail Operations Center (ROC) using the communication devices (G-Tel, P-Tel, and E-Tel) located on rail platforms.
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Strategies, Methods and Procedures

Beyond the Minimum Baseline Thresholds, the Model Public Engagement Program outlines a range of strategies, methods and procedures that will be utilized to conduct comprehensive community outreach and encourage robust public engagement at every decision opportunity. Each Metro study or initiative will develop an individual public participation plan that targets the unique needs of its stakeholders. This tailored approach results in meaningful dialogue and broad public access throughout the decision-making process. In addition, this will ensure the agency's connectivity to stakeholders whether it relates to daily issues, operations, studies, initiatives, construction activities, transit safety programs, and interagency communications and collaboration. All of these activities require a measure of public participation, and this Program creates baseline commitment that all stakeholders regardless of their sex or age - including minority and low-income communities, people with Limited English Proficiency, and individuals with disabilities - are given an opportunity to participate as options are considered and decisions are made.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

The plan covers the life cycle of projects including Metro's Transit Safety Program. This Program is responsible for increasing public awareness and knowledge on how to live, work and travel safely around trains and grade crossings to reduce pedestrian, vehicle and bicycle accidents.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no additional financial impact to Metro's expenditures or revenues because the Model Public Engagement Program and 2016 Public Participation Plan are policy updates that are already budgeted for in the FY2017 budget. Policy updates are executed by staff that are already Metro employees and consultants so there is no need for additional costs.

The Model Public Engagement Program and 2016 Public Participation Plan policy updates formalize

how Metro as an agency will continue to meet and exceed the minimum baseline thresholds for public participation that are required by the FTA, FHWA, and Title VI. Failure to approve the 2016 Public Participation Plan today may result in adverse impacts with the FTA and FHWA.

Impact to Budget

There are no additional impacts to the operating or capital budgets because the Model Public Engagement Program and 2016 Public Participation Plan are already budgeted for in the FY2017 budget.

Public engagement is embedded in everything that we do as an agency. We encourage public participation at every decision opportunity, including:

- New policy and policy changes, such as possible changes to bus and rail service, fares, and other programs
- Development, planning and construction of new projects and programs, including bus, rail, highway and transit oriented communities

As such, the Model Public Engagement Program and 2016 Public Participation Plan apply to many Metro Departments and staff as they guide all of our outreach to gather important public input on everything from possible changes to bus and rail service, new projects in planning and construction, fare changes and other programs.

Because the Model Public Engagement Program and Public Participation Plan are implemented by staff across the agency in many different departments, there are a variety of different funds that are used.

Many departments will be responsible for leading implementation of the Minimum Baseline Thresholds outlined herein, including Communications (Marketing; Construction Relations, Community and Municipal Affairs, Transit Safety Programs within Community Relations; Digital Communications; Customer Relations; Public Relations; and Government Relations), Planning (Office of Strategic Initiatives, Rider Relief Programs), and Civil Rights.

Some of the funds are eligible for bus, rail, or capital expenses. Other funds are eligible for environmental planning, communications or transit safety programs.

In summary, the actions requested in this report have no direct impact upon Metro's expenditures or revenues, and approval is consistent with the implementation of the adopted FY2017 Budget.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board could decide to delay or forgo the adoption of the Plan. This alternative is not recommended as it would not advance previous Board direction and policies, including

- Metro's 2013 Public Participation Plan and Title VI Program Update

What makes this new 2016 Plan different from years past is that it establishes eight Minimum Baseline Thresholds for Public Outreach to ensure that surrounding neighborhoods, individuals and civic engagement organizations are involved in all stages of the life cycle of each project, program or initiative, from planning to implementation. These thresholds are in addition to the guidelines for public hearings on fares and service changes that are outlined in Metro's Administrative Code, and they serve as direction for staff on what is needed at a minimum for public participation at every decision opportunity.

The alternative to approving a Public Participation Plan as part of the Title VI Program Update by October 1, 2016 could have significant negative impacts to the agency. Failure to timely file a Public Participation Plan may result in suspension of federal funds, the initiation of an audit by the FTA and FHWA, and ultimately the loss of eligibility for federal funds.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval, the 2016 Public Participation Plan will be submitted to the FTA as part of the Title VI Program Update not later than October 1, 2016. In addition, staff will broadly inform every public-facing Metro department of the newly established Minimum Baseline Thresholds for Public Outreach, and continue implementation of the strategies, methods, and procedures identified in the Plan.

ATTACHMENTS

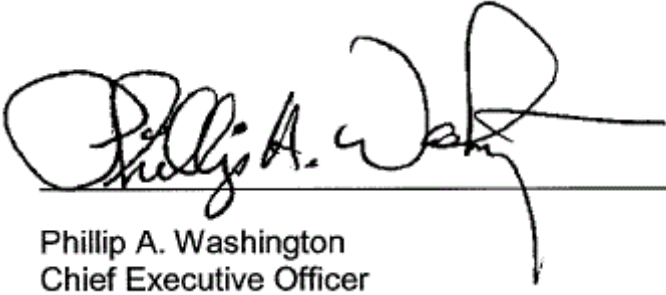
- A. Metro's 2016 Public Participation Plan
- B. Metro's 2016 Public Participation Plan Staff Guidelines

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