



July 10, 2020

Metro Board of Directors  
One Gateway Plaza  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Draft Long Range Transportation Plan

Dear Metro Board and Staff,

We write this letter to comment on the *"Our Next LA" 2020 Long Range Transportation Plan*. We believe that the overall goals of the Long Range Transportation Plan should align with Metro's Equity Platform and prioritize the needs of the mostly low income residents of the County of Los Angeles who are transit dependent.

ACT-LA is made up of 37 organizations from LA County that have come together "to create community transit – just, equitable, sustainable transit systems and neighborhoods for ALL people in Los Angeles, placing the interests of low-income communities and communities of color first as we create a more sustainable city."

As a coalition we are advocating for Metro to become a sanctuary for the Los Angeles public, to provide a high level of service and enact policies that would result in "transit justice," such as:

- Eliminate fares. Los Angeles residents are already paying for the transit system through our sales tax. The average household income for a person who rides the bus is \$26,900, with over 57% of Metro bus riders living below the poverty line.
- End policing contracts. We must invest in true community-centered safety solutions that make ALL riders feel safe. Also, we can use the hundreds of millions of dollars saved on improving bus service, bus infrastructure and eliminating fares.
- Focus on improvements to the bus system. New train lines have taken the air out of the room when it comes to Metro's mission of creating a world class system. Metro staff and board members often say that buses are the workhorses of the system, and clearly buses are what most riders depend on.

Our coalition includes organizations who work with transit riders, the majority of whom are bus riders and who have expressed to us the need for a better, fare-free transit system. Therefore, we support the Long Range Transportation Plan's efforts to identify access to opportunity, including by specifically adding a goal of identifying ways to "Reduce Transit Cost." Our members have told us that they often have to choose between paying for a bus pass for a month to get to and from work or to pay for adequate groceries. Although Metro currently has fare reduction programs, the reality is that many of these are not currently accessible to its riders, whether

because of lack of education regarding the program, or because even though riders are low income, they are above the threshold to qualify. Our coalition is committed to working with Metro to identify ways to achieve the goal of fare-free transit in the short-term rather than longer-term.

**Given our priorities listed above, our coalition is in full support of discussions within Metro to eliminate fares. However, we strongly believe this goal needs to be decoupled with the goal of regional congestion pricing.**

The plan appears to relate the ability to reduce transit costs specifically with congestion pricing. We do not believe that the ability to offer fare-free transit should rely exclusively on congestion pricing, especially when there is so much research to do regarding the effects that congestion pricing has on low-income communities.

The LRTP names congestion pricing as an overall goal for the development and improvement of the transit system in the county. Our coalition has some concerns and reservations due to currently unanswered questions about how congestion pricing is currently affecting our county and how the expansion of congestion pricing will impact our constituencies. Congestion pricing has equity challenges; any time you institute a toll for access you exclude low-income people that are unable to pay. Furthermore, viable alternatives for some essential trips such as work, school and medical appointments may not be available until better bus service is achieved. To mitigate these challenges, we should improve public transportation quality and make transit free *before* congestion pricing is actualized.

Although the LRTP has many ambitious goals to reduce congestion in the corridors, we question whether congestion pricing may just redirect traffic to other routes. We are concerned about the potential for pricing to redirect traffic to neighborhoods that already experience higher levels of pollution due to historical environmental racism. For example, the 110 freeway cuts through South Los Angeles and many low-income communities. Presently, congestion on the 110 pushes traffic that would otherwise be on the freeway to the already polluted areas in our communities; congestion pricing may exacerbate this.

Lastly, the Long Range Transportation Plan was released in the middle of the pandemic that we are currently suffering from in our region and worldwide. It is irresponsible that the draft plan does not make mention of the effects that this has caused on its transit dependent citizens. We urge Metro to take into consideration our questions and concerns regarding the draft plan. Thank you.

Signed,

The Alliance for Community Transit  
Investing in Place  
Strategic Actions for a Just Economy