



## Board Report

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**File #:** 2016-0693, **File Type:** Motion / Motion Response

**Agenda Number:** 8.

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**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE  
OCTOBER 19, 2016**

**SUBJECT: TRANSIT TO OPEN SPACE AND PARKS MOTION RESPONSE**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE REPORT RESPONDING TO BOARD MOTION ON OPEN SPACE AND PARKS**

**RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE status report on **Transit to Open Space and Parks Motion response.**

**ISSUE**

On June 23, 2016, the Metro Board of Directors approved a motion (Attachment B) directing an action plan to better connect communities to open space and parks. The motion required a report back to the Board on the October 2016 agenda.

**DISCUSSION**

This report details a preliminary review of park access issues and describes a work plan for addressing those issues. In summary, Metro staff will initiate a strategic planning process to achieve the following objectives:

- Analyze park access needs across the county with a focus on disadvantaged park-poor communities. Review and evaluate prior efforts by Metro and other transit agencies to improve open space access;
- Guide decision making on future projects and investments;
- Engage potential partners and other stakeholders; and
- Recommend potential Metro and partner activities to improve access to parks and open space.

As noted in the Board Motion, Los Angeles County has a wealth of open space and recreational assets. Often, however, those assets are out of reach for many county residents, particularly for lower income disadvantaged communities. Access barriers include physical distance, lack of transportation options for non-auto owners, as well as periodic heavy traffic and constrained parking

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especially for popular destinations at peak times. At the same time, lower income and disadvantaged communities would benefit most from improved access, especially in places that have inadequate opportunities for local recreation and physical activity, and that suffer from poor air quality, or other conditions that lead to poor health outcomes. A 2016 study by the LA County Department of Public Health concluded a clear correlation between economic hardship, reduced local park space, and premature mortality and cardiovascular disease among other health issues.

### Technical Approach

Metro's proposed work in addressing the motion emphasizes connecting park-poor disadvantaged communities to regionally significant open space. As such, the work effort will define and analyze key indicators including:

- Park needs - Metro's effort will index availability of parks, open space, and recreational opportunities within the county. There have been numerous prior efforts at creating a park inventory in Los Angeles County, including the recent Los Angeles County Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment (hereinafter LA County Needs Assessment) which we can draw upon and adapt for a countywide effort focused on transportation. The LA County Needs Assessment ranked 188 study areas in the county into five categories of need based on availability of parks compared to population.
- Disadvantaged communities - Similarly, there are several current measures for disadvantaged communities, including the CalEnviroScreen scoring method used in Cap-and-Trade and other state funding programs. The LA County Needs Assessment, although it did not consider socio-economic or health indicators in its needs ranking, did include a compilation of indicators, with a focus on health and air quality. Other methods include the USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) Environmental Justice Screening Method, and the Public Health Alliance of Southern California's Southern California Health Disadvantage Index. Metro's effort will review available methods and determine which is most applicable to this work effort.
- Park/Open Space Facilities of Interest - Metro's work effort will identify which park facilities are of most interest due to a variety of factors including size, features, and demand. It is noted that the recent LA County Needs Assessment includes an inventory of parks as well as a typology that may be directly applicable for Metro's efforts. That project categorized parks into four types - Local Parks, Regional Recreation Parks, Regional Open Space, and Natural Areas; the latter two include most National Monument and Recreation Areas, as well as other mountain and beach destinations. As intended by the Motion, any subsequent Metro project to improve access may be focused on large regional scale facilities such as mountains and state and federal non-urban parks, but the strategic planning effort will also consider the opportunities for access improvements at a variety of scales.
- Measures of Accessibility - A key component of Metro's analysis will be to establish measures

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of accessibility, which are typically expressed in terms of ability to access destinations within a specified time frame. As with other indicators, there is a substantial body of work to build on in this area, including, notably, within the Environmental Justice analysis for SCAG's Regional Transportation Plan, which looks at ability to access open space from a specified location by both auto (within 30 minutes) and public transit (within 45 minutes).

Taken together, the compilation and analysis of these indicators will determine areas of focus for any Metro or partner project or investment. This effort will point toward investment recommendations that connect the most disadvantaged and park-poor communities to the facilities of greatest interest in a cost-effective way.

### Process

We anticipate engaging in a 6 to 9 month strategic planning process (after procurement) in order to carry out the direction included in the motion. This process will include engaging a working group consisting of public agency and community stakeholders as well as affected Metro departments, and will result in a final report and set of recommendations for further Board consideration.

### Available Data

As noted, the LA County Needs Assessment covers much of the same material that staff anticipates analyzing for our upcoming effort and will serve as a major source of data. To the extent appropriate, we will seek to define terms consistently with the county report.

SCAG includes measures of open space accessibility as part of the Environmental Justice analysis to the Regional Transportation Plan.

Non-profit and advocacy organizations, notably the City Project and the Trust for Public Land, have conducted independent analysis of transit-to-parks and transit-to-trails opportunities. We have begun discussions to understand this work and to access data for Metro's upcoming effort.

### Current Transit Service

We have prepared a preliminary analysis of current Metro transit service to Regional Open Space and Natural Areas as included in the LA County Needs Assessment. Through this, we have found that 461 Regional Open Space or Natural Areas are served by transit (Metro rail and bus, municipal, and regional rail) within ¼ mile, while 764 such locations are served within 1 mile. This is a preliminary screen that does not take into account important factors such as frequency or travel time, but provides some indication of the scope of future analysis and opportunities for enhanced connections. The results of this preliminary review are shown in a map as Attachment A.

### Project Examples (Past and Current)

The strategic planning process will include a critical review of access projects, including those with

direct Metro involvement, others in Los Angeles County, and from around the country. This will be done to establish best practices and lessons learned that will guide any future investments or projects, noting that many prior projects have suffered from distinct flaws that can result in poor utilization and high costs. To date, we have compiled a preliminary sampling of projects from the region, state, and out-of-state, including:

- ParkLINK Shuttle - Led by the Mountains Recreation and Conservancy Association, the ParkLINK shuttle ran from 2005 to 2007, circulating within the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and connecting to communities and transit facilities within Calabasas.
- Muir National Park Shuttle - Initially a partnership with Marin County, the National Park Service and Golden Gate Transit, the responsibility for this service shifted in 2009 solely to Marin County Transit District (Northern California). MV Transportation currently operates the service since 2012, and in 2013 the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy began administering the fare collection process.
- Boulder County, Colorado - Boulder County provides free shuttles during the summer from a Denver Rapid Transit District Park-and-Ride to a popular mountain trailhead on US Forest Service Land.
- City of Duarte - During the spring of 2016, the City of Duarte ran a shuttle on Saturdays from the Duarte Gold Line station to the popular Chantry Flats trailhead in the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument. The shuttle was well used, but the limited-term pilot was shortened due to fires around the destination.
- Los Angeles County Topanga/Beach Shuttle - Los Angeles County currently runs a shuttle connecting Warner Center, Topanga Canyon, and Will Rogers State Beach.

#### Parallel, Complementary Planning Efforts

- San Gabriel Mountains National Monument Transportation Plan - As part of the monument designation, the US Forest Service was directed to collaborate with other agencies to develop a transportation plan focused on visitor access, sustainability, and other goals. This is an on-going process expected to result in a final plan in by October 2017.
- California Long Range Transportation Plan - This is a USDOT effort focused on transportation infrastructure within federal lands. The plan does not directly allocate funding, but can be useful to highlight needs and set priorities for future federal investment.

#### Funding Opportunities/Fund Availability Review

Our strategic planning effort will also consider potential funding sources for access improvements.

Of note for externally-available funding is the Federal Lands Access Program, which provides approximately \$250 million annually in grants for transportation facilities serving federal lands. Metro funding available for parks access will be determined through the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update process, which will need to prioritize this potential use of funds against other needs and their requisite cash flow demands. The open space/parks access strategic planning process may result in funding recommendations, potentially to include individual pilot or demonstration projects. Funding sources for comparable projects awarded through Metro's Call for Projects program include Proposition C (25%), federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ), and federal Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) funding.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Based on a review of comparable prior projects, Metro staff estimates that the cost to carry a strategic planning process as described in this Board report is approximately \$300,000 for professional services. \$75,000 is anticipated to be required in FY17, and the funding is included in the FY17 budget in Cost Center 4340, Sustainability Policy and Programs, under Project Number 450009, Sustainability Demonstration Projects.

Since this is a multi-year project, the cost center manager and the Chief Planning Officer will be accountable for budgeting the cost in future years, including any option exercised.

#### **Impact to Budget**

The funding source for this project is Propositions A, C, and TDA Administration, which is not eligible for bus and rail operating and capital expenditures.

### **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The Board may consider alternative actions to address the intent of the June 2016 Motion on Parks and Open Space access. This could include initiating short-term pilot projects to test and evaluate access improvements for selected locations, or providing direct project funding on a competitive basis through a "Call"-like process. Staff's recommendation is made given the sporadic and varied history of such projects, suggesting that a more thorough analysis and input process would facilitate successful efforts.

### **NEXT STEPS**


Pending approval of this item, staff will proceed with budget actions and procurement. We anticipate initiating a strategic planning process within six months, and will provide progress reports to the Planning and Programming Committee periodically.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - Regional Open Space and Natural Areas Accessible by Transit  
Attachment B - June 23, 2016 Board Motion, Transit to Open Space and Parks

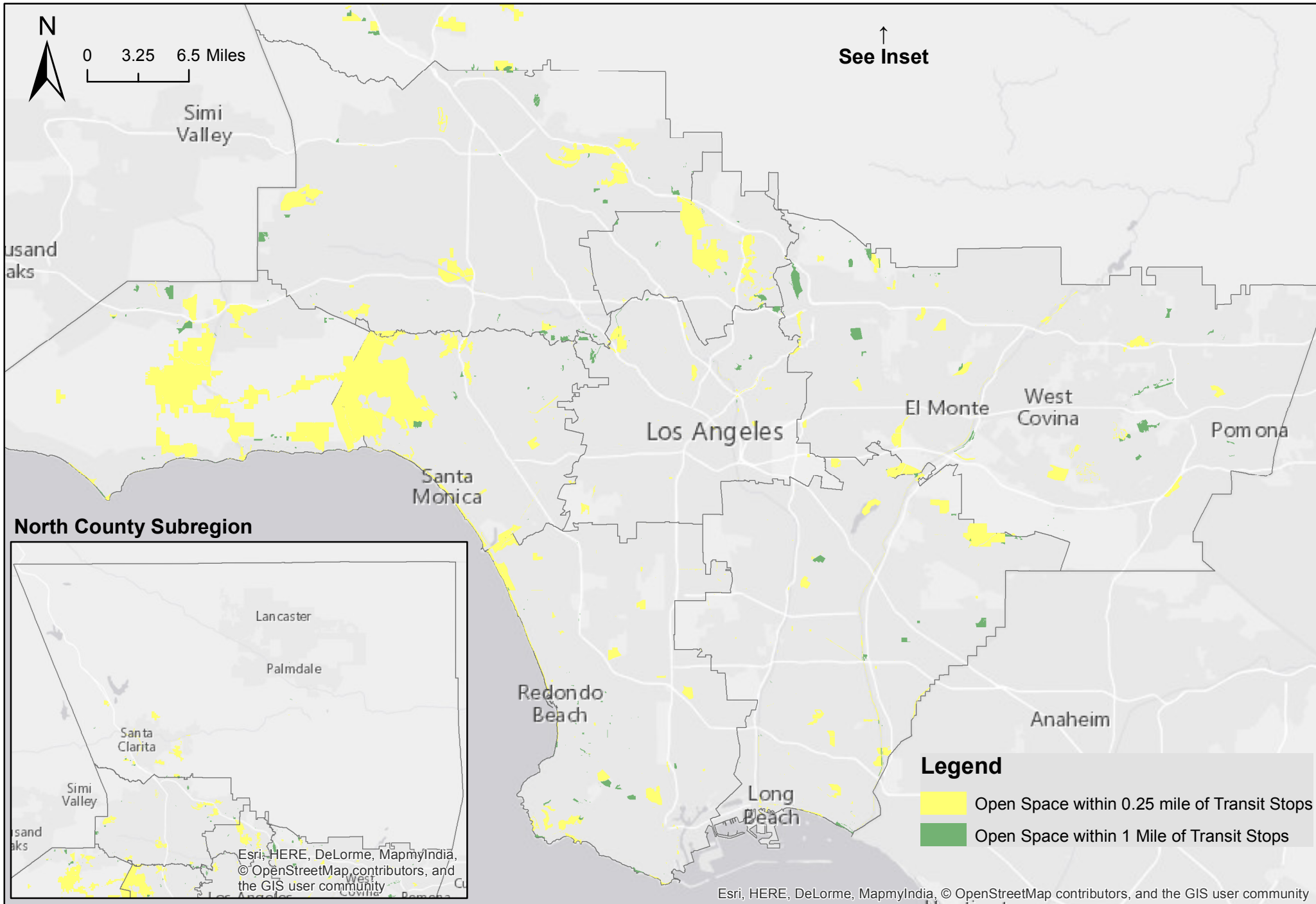
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Phillip A. Washington  
Chief Executive Officer

# ATTACHMENT A: Regional Open Space and Natural Areas Accessible by Transit





## Board Report

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**File #:**2016-0511, **File Type:**Motion / Motion  
Response

Agenda Number:52

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**REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
JUNE 23, 2016**

**Motion by:**

**Directors Solis, Kuehl and Fasana**

**as amended by Director Solis**

June 23, 2016

**Transit to Open Space and Parks**

Los Angeles County is a community rimmed by dramatic open spaces from the tranquil coasts to the rolling Santa Monica Mountains and vast deserts. The San Gabriel Mountains are closer to downtown Los Angeles than Denver is to the Rockies. Yet, access to the majestic places remains unattainable for many members of our community.

The purpose of this action is to develop a systematic plan for increasing access to parks and open space, countywide. This is a key priority for the region as demonstrated in the LA County Parks Needs Assessment and the Southern California Association of Governments' Long Range Transportation Plan highlighting a lack of access to the newly designated San Gabriel Mountains National Monument.

In December of 2015, the Board affirmed its commitment to increasing access to parks and open space when it adopted performance measures for project in the Long Range Transportation Plan and Potential Ballot Measure that included Sustainability & Quality of Life and Accessibility. Both categories reference access to parks and open space. Metro has taken actions to provide access to green space to communities, but further gains in connecting people to open space could be achieved with more coordinated efforts.

Given that the Los Angeles Basin is home to 10+ million people, it is critical that we provide affordable, publically managed, transit to parks, open spaces, and publicly managed land. The LA basin is park-deficient-the only way we can ensure the health of Angelenos is by providing access to transit that connects communities, especially disadvantaged (income-poor and park-poor) communities to parks. For instance, 3 million people visited the San Gabriel National Monument last year, but there are no viable public transit options to access the area.

There are funding opportunities to support these programs at the federal, state and local levels, but a



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lack of coordination and information can prevent local municipalities and transit agencies from accessing these funds. Metro, as a regional leader, is uniquely able to help coordinate efforts and assist public land managers, transit authorities, nonprofits and municipalities seeking to increase access to parks and open space.

**MOTION by Solis, Kuehl, Fasana** that the Board direct the Chief Executive Officer to report back to the Metro Board in October 2016 with an action plan to better connect communities to parks and open space. The plan shall include the following elements:

- A. An overview of existing transit system connections to parks and open space and identification of opportunities to increase access to parks and open space. This assessment should draw upon, but not be limited to, data from the following agencies:
1. the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation;
  2. the National Park Service;
  3. U.S. Forest Service;
  4. California State Parks;
  5. the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy;
  6. the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority; and
  7. Southern California Association of Governments.
- B. Identification of funding sources for transit to parks and open space including, but not limited to:
1. Federal Grants and Programs like the Federal Lands Access Program, the Federal Lands Transportation Program, the Transportation Alternatives Program, and the National Parks Service Challenge Cost Share Program;
  2. Existing eligible local revenue like Proposition A, Proposition C and Measure R;
  3. Nongovernmental and private partnerships; and
  4. Other Creative funding opportunities
- C. Methods to support the implementation of programs to connect communities to parks and open space, such as offering technical assistance and grants to jurisdictions.
- D. Recommendations to promote the usage of current services and the building of the new service including:

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1. Shuttle services from transportation infrastructure such as MTA Metro Rail stations, busway stations, bus stops, and regional rail stations as connector hubs for direct shuttles to parks and open space.
  2. Prioritized services for communities with 20% lowest per capita open space acreage in the county; communities that have less than 3 acres of parkland per 1000 people, making them park poor, and incomes below \$48,706 median household income, making them income poor.
  3. Connections to parks and opens space through active transportation corridors such as bike lanes, walkways and greenways.
  4. Potential extensions of existing public transit bus lines to park and open space.

ADDITIONALLY WE MOVE that the Board direct the Chief Executive Officer to engage with other agencies with related planning processes such as the California Collaborative Regional Transportation Plan and the Southern California Association of Governments Regional Transportation Plan and the United States Forest Service San Gabriel Mountains National Monument.

SOLIS AMENDMENT: Include rivers and mountains conservancy and water conservation authority.

# Motion Response – Parks Access Plan

Planning and Programming Committee  
October 19, 2016



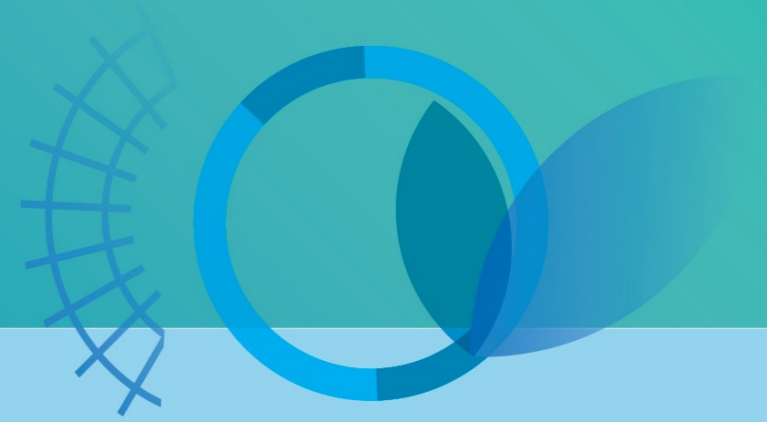
# Motion (June 23 – Item 52)



## Board Requests:

- > Action Plan to Improve Parks Access, to Include:
  - > Assessment of Current Service
  - > Identification of Funding
  - > Potential Support Efforts
  - > Ways to Promote/Expand Service
- > Report Back for October Board Cycle

# Proposed Work Approach



## Strategic Planning Process

- > 6-9 Month Duration (after procurement)
- > Engage a Stakeholder Working Group
- > Define Universe of “Parks” to be Addressed
- > Study Access Issues
- > Identify Project Opportunities/Support Investment Decisions
- > Build from Prior Planning Work
- > Come Back to Board with Recommended Next Steps

# Preliminary Assessment



## Parks Access Issues for Metro:

- > Substantial Prior Work and Data (esp. LA County Parks Needs Assessment)
- > Range of Prior/Current Access Projects (e.g. park shuttles)
- > Many Parks can currently be Accessed by Transit, More Study Required
- > Some Grants/Funding Programs Available
- > Metro Funding Subject to On-Going Processes (e.g. LRTP)

# Thank You

