



Board Report

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OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE NOVEMBER 19, 2020

SUBJECT: MOTION 39 RESPONSE - POLICIES AND PROTOCOLS FOR FUTURE SERVICE SHUTDOWNS

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE the motion 39 response regarding policies and protocols for future service shutdowns.

ISSUE

During the June 18, 2020 Operations, Safety and Customer Experience Committee, Directors Bonin and Solis requested a report on policies and procedures for future service shutdowns.

BACKGROUND

On Saturday, May 30, 2020 at approximately 6 p.m., Metro made a decision to suspend service from 8 p.m. through the balance of the evening. Service resumed as scheduled on Sunday at 5:30 a.m. The decision to suspend Metro bus and rail service was made in the context of quickly escalating civil unrest; soon thereafter, curfews were in effect in the cities of Los Angeles, Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, Culver City and West Hollywood as a result of demonstrations and protests. Later that night, Governor Gavin Newsom declared a State-of-Emergency in the City and County of Los Angeles. This rapidly evolving situation put Metro Operators and the riding public in great danger. As a result, Metro made the difficult decision to suspend transit services across the County to ensure the safety of Metro employees and riders during the on-going George Floyd protests. The decision was made by Metro's Incident Management Team in alignment with the National Incident Management System's (NIMS) guidance for Major Incidents and Disasters.

DISCUSSION

Metro's ability to deliver service in emergency situations may be impacted by the unique, dynamic, and specific challenges of each event. The primary criteria affecting a decision to continue service

during an emergency are:

- Maintaining safety for people (Metro's employees and customers)
- Preservation and protection of public property (Metro equipment and resources)
- Active FEMA Type I or Type II event (described below)

After the events of May 30th, Metro held after-action reviews and identified opportunities to improve the processes for making and communicating our service continuity decisions during emergency situations. The Chief Civil Rights & Inclusion Officer and the Executive Officer of Equity and Race have both been consulted and engaged in the discussions to improve these tactics.

Service Suspension Criteria

The Incident Management Team (IMT) with guidance from Metro's Emergency Management Department's policies and in alignment with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) may activate Metro's Emergency Operation Center (EOC) if there is consideration for a declaration of a FEMA Type I or Type II event. These events include, but are not limited to, severe earthquakes, bombs, chemical agents, active shooters, or other emergencies affecting multiple rail lines or buses simultaneously. Type I or Type II events may also include service suspensions to protect life and property.

Decisions regarding service suspensions due to such emergencies will continue to be guided by Metro's Emergency Management process with considerations from our law enforcement and oversight agencies' directives. Prior to reducing, redirecting or suspending service, Operations will assess the level of risk to our employees, customers, and equipment. As part of the IMT (comprised of Metro's CEO, Chief Operations Officer, Chief of System Security & Law Enforcement, Chief Communications Officer, Chief of Risk, Safety, and Asset Management, and others as needed), Operations will communicate a recommended set of strategies to safely and strategically provide service that is responsive to the emergency affecting service continuity. Any decisions affecting service will be communicated to the Metro Board Chair and subsequently with the Metro Board of Directors.

Decisions regarding the continuity of service will follow these principles:

1. Metro will endeavor to continue operating regular services to the extent possible, as an essential service provider.
2. If circumstances do not allow Metro to operate regular services safely through isolated areas, Operations will attempt to re-route buses to maintain a buffer of approximately five blocks around the affected areas. Detours can be adjusted as needed and would continue as long as feasible or until the crisis has ended in the area. For rail, service disruptions would occur at stations in the affected areas. Metro will attempt to maintain service at stations outside of the affected areas, as long as operationally feasible.
3. If circumstances become untenable, as they pertain to on-street disruptions in service, the Metro CEO will consult directly with the Metro Board Chair.

Public Notification

In the aftermath of the events of May 30th, staff continue to explore new and better strategies for

informing customers of dynamic, unplanned service emergencies. Staff recognize real-time communications as one of the most challenging aspects of our relationship with customers. In reviewing Metro's tactics for emergency public notifications, it became clear that Metro has the most difficulty reaching two specific segments of the rider population: those without mobile data plans (~35%) and those whose primary language may not be English (~32%). Working with Metro's Chief of Civil Rights & Inclusion and Executive Officer of Equity & Race, staff have taken a closer look at how to reach these two populations during a crisis.

According to Metro's 2019 Fall On-Board survey, 95% of our riders state that they now have access to a mobile phone. From the same survey, 60% of riders say they own a smartphone and 35% say they own a cell phone. These results appear consistent with similar findings from the Pew Research Center. According to the Pew Research Center, 27% of low-income people are mobile dependent, meaning riders who do not have internet access at home and likely don't have access to a desktop computer. In comparison, 48% of Metro riders can be characterized as mobile dependent, per the 2019 Fall On-Board survey. Because their cell phones are the only way they can connect to the internet, it is a critical tool for accessing transit information in addition to other essential services.

While Metro has well-established standard practices for notifying the public of service impacts through traditional and social media, staff recognizes opportunities to improve notifications to cell phone users who may not necessarily have a data plan. Even without data plans, the vast majority of cell phones have some kind of digital communication capability and the most basic cell phones can send and receive SMS texts.

Staff are currently exploring a text alert system through our CRM ActiveCampaign. Such a system would allow people to opt-in for text alerts, which would prove useful during emergency situations. This system would also have the added benefit of allowing Metro to deliver real-time, non-emergency mobile alerts directly to our riders, notifying them of routine delays, detours, and disruptions.

In addition to understanding Metro riders' cell phone capabilities, it is also important to understand the languages in which Metro riders best consume information. Metro ensures that our passengers with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) have meaningful access to information on services and programs. As part of our commitment to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Metro translates vital passenger information in seven languages: Armenian, Chinese (traditional), Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese based on the FTA-mandated translation needs analysis conducted in 2019. Additionally, Metro has installed Language Assistance phones at Customer Service Centers and Lost and Found to assist LEP customers. The Language Assistance phones have the capability of translating over 250 languages.

While Metro does a great job providing fixed information in multiple languages, providing translations during dynamic emergency situations presents significant challenges. However, staff have identified several strategies to vastly improve access to information in multiple languages.

An improvement that emerged from the after-action review was the need for better live multi-language telephone assistance. The public is well aware of 323-GO-METRO and know to call with any queries or for assistance with trip planning, payments, etc. However, currently, calls are only answered during the hours of 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. As an improvement for handling calls during emergencies that occur after

hours, Customer Care will re-open the Call Center (323-GO-METRO) remotely and handle any calls that may come in. This will provide an almost seamless experience to callers who may otherwise not have a way to get information digitally, and best of all, the Lionbridge translation services will ensure that callers get the information needed in their preferred languages.

Also, in evaluating our technology resources, it was quickly learned that the “translate” button on metro.net was not intuitive or easy to find. A quick win for non-English speakers is to ensure their ability to easily find and have all of the information on metro.net translated to their language. Even though most non-English speakers have their browsers set to their preferred language that translates the web page content on a regular basis, it is important that the “translate” button is easily found on the metro.net site. Metro has the ability to translate all of its content to 16 languages. As part of the immediate website improvements, that button is being relocated to a much more prominent location.

During the after-action review, it was also determined that there wasn't evergreen information available on metro.net that communicates to riders what to do during an unplanned emergency, how to get up-to-date information, and what to do in the event that Metro cannot provide transit services. To mitigate this, staff are developing a Customer Experience Toolkit that will be placed on metro.net. Among other things, it will provide information about what to do in the event of an unanticipated service shut down when Metro cannot get riders to their destinations. For example, there will be instructions for the public to take an alternative transit option and submit a verifiable receipt for reimbursement. It will also provide information on how they can receive updates on service interruptions during emergencies. It is anticipated that the toolkit will launch by the end of this calendar year with a campaign to educate the public of this new resource. When the platform is secured for a texting notification option, instructions for opting-in will also be added to the Customer Experience Toolkit.

Communications will also continue to leverage its alerts system to publish disruption information that reaches a large percentage of riders through the *Transit* app, Google Maps and Apple Maps. Staff will continue to use our partnership with *Transit* app to improve the accuracy and impact of our rider tools and communications related to planned and unplanned service suspensions.

Staff have also identified other tactics to reach a wider audience during emergency situations. These improved tactics generally include traditional and social media/blogs, web updates, telephone, live voice announcements and digital assets. They can be activated through the Emergency Operation Center during an event and allow for remote changes to messaging in real-time. A list of these tactics and the process flow chart can be found in Attachment B (Public Notification Plan).

After action reviews have also revealed the need to conduct more research to find more effective ways to provide information to Metro's most marginalized and vulnerable customers. As part of Metro's efforts to improve equitable outcomes, staff will gather data to better understand the needs of our customers and explore additional tactics that allow us to consider needs and disparities, where possible, in emergency decision-making and better reach riders with essential travel information during emergencies, as well as during regular service disruptions.

Engage Service Councils for Review & Feedback

This report will be shared with our Service Councils in November 2020 to allow for any feedback and

concerns they may have. Metro will gather their input and use it as we continue to review and enhance our protocols and procedures for future service shutdowns.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

Metro's protocols for shutdowns will have a positive impact on the safety of our frontline employees and riders.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Recommendation supports Metro Strategic Plan Goal 2 -To deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system.

NEXT STEPS

Metro, in collaboration and coordination with our Board and internal/external partners, will continue to review and update our policies and procedures for service continuity during emergency situations in a manner that is safe, responsible, and upholds local and state directives for the overall safety and well-being of the communities and county we serve. Metro will implement the changes proposed in the Public Notification Plan to ensure that staff is prepared to act, when faced with another emergency situation.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Motion 39
Attachment B - Public Notification Plan

Prepared by: Nancy Saravia, Director, Finance & Administration
Bob Holland, Sr. Executive Officer, Bus Operations
Bernard Jackson, Sr. Executive Officer, Rail Operations
Aston Greene, Executive Officer, System Security & Law Enforcement
KeAndra Cylear Dodds, Executive Officer, Equity & Race
Joni Honor, Executive Officer (Interim), Public Relations, Communications

Reviewed by: James T. Gallagher, Chief Operations Officer, (213) 418-3108
Jonaura Wisdom, Chief Civil Rights Officer (213) 418-3168
Robert Green, Chief Systems Security & Law Enforcement, (213) 922-4811
Yvette ZR Rapose, Chief Communications Officer, (213) 418-3154
Nadine Lee, Chief of Staff, (213) 922-7950



Phillip A. Washington
Chief Executive Officer



Board Report

File #: 2020-0431, **File Type:** Motion / Motion Response

Agenda Number: 39.

**OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE
JUNE 18, 2020
REVISED**

Motion by:

DIRECTORS BONIN AND SOLIS

Policies & Protocols for Future Service Shutdowns

On May 30, 2020, Metro made a decision to shut down bus and rail service countywide due to rapidly developing civil unrest in multiple locations and unpredictable risks to operators and riders. While this unprecedented decision was not made lightly, it resulted in riders being stranded throughout the region with little to no notice or alternative travel options. The same factors that led to Metro's decision to suspend service—a rapidly developing situation and curfew order—posed risks to stranded riders up to and including potential arrest by law enforcement. Furthermore, while the situation was fluid in central Los Angeles and the Westside, the decision to suspend service countywide left riders stranded in areas of the county where there was no reported unrest.

As the provider of critical transportation services to hundreds of thousands of transit dependent residents, Metro should have in place policies and protocols that anticipate all conceivable disruptions to service and guide Metro's decision-making process. Metro's CEO was forced to make decisions in the absence of policy because the Metro Board of Directors had failed to provide said policy or guidance for these types of situations. These guidelines must balance protection of Metro personnel and assets with providing essential transportation services. Additionally, when a decision is made to suspend service in part or all of the service area, there should be pre-existing protocols that ensure that riders are promptly notified using all appropriate technologies and languages to effectively reach all of Metro's ridership.

SUBJECT: POLICIES & PROTOCOLS FOR FUTURE SERVICE SHUTDOWNS

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE Motion by Directors Bonin and Solis that the Board direct the Chief Executive Officer to:

- A. In consultation with the Office of Civil Rights and Executive Officer for Equity & Race, develop clear criteria for when suspending service is necessary and appropriate. Such criteria should

include measures to minimize service disruptions by containing service suspensions to the line (s), division(s), or service sector(s) affected whenever feasible and prudent.

- B. Develop protocols for rider notification of service suspensions and policies for providing alternative transportation. Such protocols should consider demographic, language, and technology access data from Metro's on-board rider survey.
- C. Circulate proposed criteria and protocols for input from Service Councils.
- D. Report back on all the above to the Operations, Safety, and Customer Experience Committee in 90 days.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - RBM Item 39 (Before Amendment)

Public Notification Plan
Emergency Service Suspension & Unanticipated Systemwide Shutdown
(Attachment B)

Once an emergency has been declared and it is known that service will be impacted, Metro's Emergency Operation Center is activated in coordination with Metro's Emergency Management Department. The initial step in activating the EOC is the establishment of the Incident Command Team. The ICT from that point forward will be responsible for decision-making and policy setting. The Chief Communications Officer serves as the Public Information Officer and is responsible for activating all public notifications through coordination with various Metro departments including Operations, ITS and SSLE and with support from the Deputy PIO serving in the EOC.

Staff within the various departments who have a role in providing real-time, remote updates will be placed on an on-call rotation to ensure that coverage is available when an emergency happens. The intent is that updates will be provided from the moment of impact through resumption of service as is feasible, given the platform.

To that end, the following updates can be made remotely for emergency communications:

Traditional Media (Public Relations, Media Relations Team)

- Issues service alert to news media through City News Wire Service for major service disruptions lasting longer than 30 minutes in duration
- Issues a news release to all media contacts for major service disruptions expected to last several hours or days
- Maintains frequent communication to convey updates related to fluidity of the situation
- Delivers public messages through pre-identified radio stations during emergency situations through resumption of service (purchase small stand-by media buy – placeholder for now)

Social Media/Blogs (Public Relations, Digital Team)

- Issues service alerts within 12 minutes of major disruption (given solid, accurate information available) through Metro's social platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) and blogs (The Source and El Pasajero)
- Maintains frequent communication to convey updates related to fluidity of the situation

Web and Digital Assets (Marketing Web/Digital Team)

- Updates information on metro.net
- Makes available reimbursement information through the Customer Experience Toolkit
- Includes opt-in feature in toolbox for emergency text notification when text option is available

Telephone (Customer Care/Bus Operations Control)

- The Call Center (323-GO-METRO) will open remotely if emergencies occur after scheduled hours with multi-lingual assistance

Live Voice Announcements (Operations/BOC/ROC)

- On-site notifications and passenger announcements are made throughout the rail system by Rail Operations Control personnel
- Bus Operations Control advises bus operators and Vehicle Operations Supervisors of service suspensions and events
- Bus Operators communicate this information to customer onboard Metro buses and to those customers at bus stops or stations
- Vehicle Operations supervisory personnel rove throughout the system to notify customers and direct service operations
- Both Metro Bus and Rail Operations Control Centers coordinate with SSLE to ensure all personnel on the system deliver customer information that is consistent and accurate
- Train and public announcements are made systemwide continuously until service resumption
- All Vehicle Operations supervisory field staff are directed to verbally announce to any patrons at bus stops and at rail stations about the service disruptions

Digital Assets (Marketing/ITS/Operations)

- Utilize the Transit App to communicate emergency service suspensions and related Customer Experience Information
- Remotely update all digital assets including new digital panels, kiosks, East Portal (LAUS) Tower, video walls, **TPIS'** and about 350 bus stops (equipped with digital messaging) with emergency service suspensions and related Customer Experience Information
- Push out emergency notifications via Apple and Android

Response to Motion 39: Future Service Shutdowns

Operations, Safety & Customer Experience Committee Meeting

November 19, 2020

Service Continuity Criteria

- Metro's ability to delivery service during emergency situations are determined by dynamic and specific conditions of each event.
- Primary criteria driving service continuity during emergency are:
 - Maintaining safety for people
 - Preservation and protection of public property
 - Active FEMA Type I or Type II event

Process for Service Decisions During Emergency Situations

- Follow Metro's Emergency Management process with considerations from law enforcement and oversight agencies
- Assess level of risk to employees, customers, and equipment
- Incident Management Team consultation and Operations recommendation for service that can respond to emergency in a safe manner
- Any decisions affecting service will be communicated to the Metro Board Chair and subsequently to the Metro Board of Directors

Principles for Service Decisions During Emergency Situations

- Continue operating regular services to the extent possible, as an essential service provider
- Operations will attempt to re-route buses to maintain a buffer of approximately five blocks around areas affected by the emergency, adjusting as needed.
- If circumstances become untenable, Metro CEO will consult with Metro Board Chair

Public Notification Plan

- Two major challenges for public notification
 - Riders without mobile data plans
 - Riders whose primary language may not be English

Digital Notifications

- According to 2019 Fall On-Board Survey, of the 95% of riders that have access to a mobile phone, 60% own smart phones, while 35% say they have a cell (non-smart) phone; and 48% of our riders are mobile dependent, meaning they don't have internet access at home.
- Staff are currently exploring a text alert system through CRM ActiveCampaign
 - Even the most basic cell phones can send and receive SMS text messages
 - Does not require data plan
 - Supplements traditional and digital communications

Language Translations

- After-action review revealed the need for continued telephone assistance via 323-GO-METRO during emergencies
 - During emergencies that occur after hours, Customer Care will re-open the Call Center remotely to handle calls.
 - Lionbridge translation services will continue to be available through Customer Care during emergency situations
- Communications will make the “translate” button on the Metro website more intuitive and easier to find

Public Notification Plan

- Evergreen information prominently available on metro.net
- Customer Experience Toolkit
- Transit App
- Traditional and social media/blogs
- Web updates
- Telephone
- Live voice announcements
- Digital assets

Next Steps

- Share report with Service Councils and gather feedback
- Maintain continuous improvement process for communicating with most vulnerable customers
- Identify and consider needs and disparities that will allow Metro to better reach riders with essential information

Thank you!