



## Board Report

File #: 2021-0245, File Type: Program

Agenda Number: 24.

### OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE MAY 20, 2021

**SUBJECT: BETTER BUS PROGRAM FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

**ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

The following actions are recommended:

1. ADOPT the Better Bus Program as a major component of Metro's portfolio of improvements.
2. APPROVE the Better Bus investments Plan and pursue the five-year funding and implementation strategy (Included as Attachment B), including additional staffing, and report progress to the Operations, Safety, and Customer Experience Committee every six months.
3. APPROVE the inclusion of Better Bus program investments and expenditures in each annual budget and in future updates to the Short Range Transportation Plan and Long Range Transportation Plan.
4. APPROVE, by mid-year, the addition of 14 new project FTEs, in Operations (5), Communications and Government Relations (7), and Grants Management, Planning and Programming (2), to the FY22 staffing budget, dedicated exclusively to the funding and implementation of the Better Bus Program.

#### **ISSUE**

At the January 28<sup>th</sup> Regular Board Meeting, Metro's CEO informed the Board that he had directed the Countywide Planning Department, Operations Department, and Office of Management and Budget to work with the Chief of Staff and Executive Officers for Equity and Race and Customer Experience to develop a multi-year financial plan to implement the Better Bus Program. Metro reported to the Board on the Better Bus Program in April 2021. This report builds upon the April informational report that was received and filed by the Operations, Safety, and Customer Experience Committee, and establishes a process for future, biannual reports to the Board.

As described below and in Attachment B, the Better Bus implementation and funding strategy is an

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ambitious framework to drive systemwide and long-term investment in bus performance, ridership, and customer experience improvements. It is recommended that Metro staff will report back to the Operations, Safety, and Customer Experience Committee every six months on updates to the funding and implementation strategy, informed by funding and staffing needs, changes in individual project scopes, the success of Better Bus pilot programs, new funding opportunities and grants programs, allocation of flexible funding, and other considerations.

## **BACKGROUND**

Better Bus, a new agency-wide effort coordinated by the Customer Experience unit in the Office of the CEO, seeks to highlight and address bus rider needs by making improvements to bus services and stops. The purpose of Better Bus is to align Metro efforts and elevate investments to improve bus speed, ease, safety, and comfort. Metro aims to transform the bus riding journeys in Los Angeles County by providing dignified experiences for the three-fourths of Metro riders that take the bus, who are largely from Equity Focus Communities (EFCs) and living under the poverty line, nine of 10 of whom are persons of color.

Better Bus is about addressing needs and disparities, as well as justly serving and prioritizing people who are critical to the future well-being of Los Angeles County. Many riders are also essential workers, serving much-needed roles such as public service, caregiving, maintenance, and other frontline roles that are the foundation of Los Angeles' recovery out of the pandemic. We all rely on essential workers and therefore, we all rely on buses.

This report documents the unfunded and funded portions of the Better Bus Program and sets an ambitious agenda for the types of investments the agency will make over the next five years to meet the needs of bus riders.

## **DISCUSSION**

Staff envisions Better Bus as an ongoing improvement program that is meant to ensure that Metro staff is continually collaborating to incorporate and prioritize bus customer experiences in the annual budget and long-term planning processes, such as the Long Range Transportation Plan, as well as ongoing grant-seeking efforts and the shaping of federal and state legislative policy. In the early phases of the program, staff will prepare standards and design plans that will prepare Better Bus capital initiatives to be "shovel ready," as funding becomes available.

As discussed in the April 2021 Receive and File Report (2021-0194), the total projected cost to implement Better Bus over five years (FY22-26, funded and unfunded, not including staff positions identified later in the report) is estimated at \$2.1 billion. Of this amount, \$1.08 billion is unfunded during FY23-26, and \$783.9 million will be included in baseline bus operations from FY23-26 (see Table 1).

Table 1: Overview of Proposed Funding for Better Bus and NextGen Service Restoration

Total Projected Cost	FY22 Proposed Funding	Projected FY23-26 Unfunded Total	Total Projected Cost
Better Bus Incremental Proposed Investment	\$50.6 million	\$1.08 billion	
Service Restoration to 7.0 RSH (per Motion 27.1)*	\$165 million	\$783.9 million**	
<i>Total Incremental Projected Cost</i>	<i>\$216.6 million</i>	<i>\$1.9 billion</i>	<i>\$2.1 billion</i>

\* reflects only Operations Department cost increase from FY21

\*\*per Motion 27.1, FY23-26 costs to maintain 7.0 million annual RSH are assumed to be funded as part of the baseline bus operations, to be approved as part of each fiscal year's budget process

Staff have realized some success in securing grants to support components of the Better Bus vision. As an example, the agency recently received a grant through the Federal Transit Administration for security lighting at bus stops (\$858,000, in addition to a 25% local match), and an SB1 Local Partnership Program grant to install bus speed improvements along the NextGen Tier I corridors (\$25 million with a \$25 million local match). The Better Bus Program adoption and implementation will position Metro to quickly capitalize on other funding opportunities that arise in the future.

## Key Elements of the Better Bus Program

Key components of the Better Bus list of improvements (Attachment B) include bus stop improvement pilots and the NextGen Speed and Reliability Capital Program.

### Better Bus Stop Local Partnership Pilot Program

The Better Bus team is exploring opportunities to address the urgent, unmet needs of riders at bus stops for shade, as well as lighting, seating, and real-time information displays. Only 24% of bus stops served by Metro have transit shelters, which has profound social equity and health implications. The Better Bus team is beginning the conversation with the 88 local jurisdictions in the county, as well as the County Department of Public Works, which oversees bus stops in unincorporated areas, to determine possible approaches to simplify and expedite shelter placement and other improvements at bus stops county-wide.

Additional bus stop partnership strategies that Metro is pursuing include:

- Expanding data and technical support for local jurisdictions during important decision-making processes that affect bus customers. For example, Metro is working with the City of Los Angeles as they re-bid their Sidewalk and Transit Amenities Program. The City is adopting a five-part criteria developed by Metro for determining the first-year rollout plans, which outline the highest priority stops for shelter installation. The criteria prioritize stops based on:
  1. High heat
  2. Equity Focus Communities
  3. High ridership

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4. Access to key destinations and social services
  5. Long wait times

These priority criteria will be used countywide to help local jurisdictions make data-driven decisions on where to site shelters, as well as other bus stop improvements.

- Partnerships with local jurisdictions and LA County to jointly seek grants and inform local, state, and federal legislative policy.
- Developing a standard kit-of-parts for bus stop furniture (including such features as an enhanced signpost, bench, shelter, trash can, real-time displays, and other amenities) that local jurisdictions can opt-in to purchase and place to provide consistency and dignified waiting experiences county-wide.
- As a pilot program, offering limited-time, targeted partnership incentives to help local jurisdictions leverage funds to cover the upfront costs for shelters and other amenities to meet a goal of providing shade at 60% of bus stops across the county by 2026. Additionally, Metro is currently testing low-cost solar and real-time information displays that, if successful, can be installed more broadly to meet riders' needs across the system. For example, Metro could offer to match a portion of capital costs with the agreement that local jurisdictions pay the balance, in addition to installation and ongoing maintenance costs. This could also be used to incentivize streamlining of local approval processes so that improvements can be installed more quickly. Costs included in Attachment B reflect a possible incentive model.
- Exploration of a potential procurement strategy to allow local jurisdictions to benefit from optimal pricing through joint purchasing for shelters and other bus stop amenities that will improve the rider experiences.

### NextGen Speed and Reliability Capital Program

As a part of the board-adopted NextGen Bus Plan, Metro staff developed the NextGen Transit First Plan, a program to create priority infrastructure along corridors with the highest-frequency service (Tier I & II) to minimize delay and maximize service frequency and reliability. This effort is overseen by the speed and reliability team in the Operations Department at Metro, which has begun rolling out bus lanes and other capital improvements in partnership with the City of LA, such as Transit Signal Priority, signal retiming, bus bulbs, and stop relocations. However, there is a need to expand and expedite this work, with an aggressive target to complete all Tier I & II corridors (50 corridors in total) by 2026. The cost of this program is roughly \$800 million over the next five years. Similar to the Bus Stop Improvement Pilot Program, there may be components of this funding strategy that could require cost-sharing with local jurisdictions.

### **FY22 Proposed Budget for Better Bus**

The proposed Better Bus FY22 budget (Attachment B) of \$216.6 million includes incremental costs to restore 7.0 million revenues service hours (RSH) by September 2021 (per Motion 27.1) and \$50.6 million in seed funding for pilot programs (see Table 1), which includes board-directed public safety



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and homelessness funding that will be guided by the Customer Experience unit in the OCEO (per Motion 26.2). Additionally, two positions have been included in the FY22 budget proposal to cover the expanded leadership demands and program scopes for Better Bus and Customer Experience.

As a part of the Board-adopted 2020 Customer Experience Plan, the Better Bus team is launching a series of bus-specific pilot programs, beginning in FY22, to test innovative approaches to address customer pain points, including:

- Bus Reliability: a Rescue Ride Pilot Program to help bus riders delayed by a missed run or passup by quickly offering free ride-hail service, and a Bus Headway Management Pilot Program to test how Metro could operationalize a headway-based (rather than schedule-based) dispatch model for high-frequency routes (NextGen Tiers I and II) to shorten wait times, balance loads and reduce crowding.
- Cleanliness on-board buses and at stops/stations: enhanced equipment for on-call pressure-washing of bus stops and zones in instances of unsanitary conditions affecting health and safety, and to test a bus mid-line cleaning pilot where service attendants provide midday interior cleaning while buses are between trips at two high-volume terminals.
- Delay advisories: a Digital Rider Alert System, a robust system to enable riders to receive customized service and emergency alerts through text messages and other channels, and to provide an easy way for riders to communicate with Metro.

## **FY23-26 Unfunded Needs**

Beyond FY22, the Better Bus Team has identified opportunities for potential funding of Better Bus investments through competitive grants and other funds.

Full implementation of Better Bus is contingent on funding availability. Many of the investments included in the Better Bus Program are also priorities of local jurisdictions and subregions, such as bus priority infrastructure and more shelters at bus stops. Metro looks to subregions and local jurisdictions to help define funding opportunities that could be explored to advance these shared goals, such as the discretionary multi-year subregional highway funds, dependent on the subregion's interest and ordinances.

This funding strategy does not yet include potential new or additive funding that may arise from a multi-year surface transportation authorization bill that will replace the FAST Act, implementation of the Biden Administration's proposed American Jobs Plan, or new State-level budget legislation. In concert with the County of Los Angeles, the City of Los Angeles, and other local municipal governments across Los Angeles County, the Board has directed Metro to continue advocating for financial resources that can be made available for operational and capital improvements. The Board's prioritization of Better Bus related investments (including bus stop shelters and customer amenities, homeless support funding) will further help Grants Management, Planning and Programming staff to direct these resources from local, state and federal sources to advance these improvements. Should additional capital funding arise from a future federal surface transportation authorization bill or the Biden Administration's infrastructure plan, this could result in funding specifically for the Better Bus improvements and reduce or eliminate the impact on competing needs.

The Better Bus investments in Attachment B are estimates, both for the amount needed and the year

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expended. In particular, the timing of the proposed bus stop improvement program is dependent on the participation by municipalities and the type of investment that is pursued. Should the municipalities forgo participation in this program or take longer than expected to identify investments, the amount of funding needed over the next four years could be lower. However, the estimates included in this funding strategy are intentionally ambitious so that we can accelerate improvements for bus riders as quickly as possible.

### **Better Bus Program Additional Staffing Requirements**

As with any major construction project, the success of Better Bus is heavily dependent on the allocation of adequate financial and staffing resources to deliver the full scope of investments. Staff resources to-date have largely drawn from employees who are assigned to many other tasks, fitting in Better Bus work as they have time available. Better Bus will require dedicated, full time staff, above and beyond the current FY21 and proposed FY22 FTE levels, to realize the vision of this program. The recommended action requests approval to add the first 14 of these FTEs at mid-year FY22.

Currently, the Bus Speed Engineering Technical and External Affairs Working Groups only have staffing capacity to deliver a few bus lanes per year. At this rate, it will take more than a decade to deliver all 50 corridors of bus lanes proposed in NextGen. In order to accelerate this effort, additional staffing resources working concurrently in multiple teams will be required to work with communities and deliver these speed and reliability benefits in the five-year time frame of this Better Bus Program. These teams will comprise Service Planning and Development staff in Operations to conduct the technical analysis and design work and Communications staff to do outreach and engagement with all interested and affected stakeholders, including the general public. In addition, the Better Bus Program will require staff in Grants Management, Planning and Programming who are dedicated exclusively to the pursuit of funding for the Better Bus Program and the bus system at-large. Details of the functions and allocations of additional FTEs needed beginning in FY22 are listed below.

Operations (Service Planning) - Total of five (5) FTEs to:

- manage the BRT quick build projects per Motion 16: BRT Vision & Principles and coordinate the NextGen speed and reliability program with other Measure M BRT projects.
- manage the ongoing NextGen bus lane program, design and implementation of bus bulb outs and other street and sidewalk treatments, stop relocations, design and implementation of queue jumpers and other transit priority treatments including City of LA and Countywide signal priority optimization programs for bus and rail, and layover optimization.
- liaise between service planning and other Operations groups, as well as the Better Bus and Customer Experience teams, responsible for coordinating and integrating BRT projects with NextGen, and implementation of All Door Boarding.

Community Relations & Government Relations - Total of seven (7) FTEs to:

- oversee the overall strategy for countywide bus improvements, coordination with elected officials, local jurisdictions, etc.
- conduct day-to-day management of multiple outreach and engagement efforts on bus service and stop improvements countywide
- support planning/outreach and construction/mitigation for capital programs associated with Better Bus

- serve as Metro's liaison to the public, elected officials, and private entities; communicates the benefits of Better Bus
- perform entry-level work for the scheduling, tracking, and production of Metro's outreach and engagement program countywide
- Support state and federal outreach, coordination and advocacy efforts

Grants Management, Planning and Programming - Total of two (2) FTEs to:

- identify and pursue funding to advance the Better Bus program
- conduct Federal and State Legislative Analyses on all Programming, Competitive and Discretionary Grants opportunities aligned with Better Bus activities
- develop and submit applications for Federal and State discretionary grant opportunities aligned with Better Bus activities
- provide multi-year funding plans for the Better Bus program, including cost benefit analyses for all grants strategies, to support bus-related grants applications
- manage all grants activities within Federal and State programs, focused on enhanced oversight and management of bus and operations related grants
- prepare and advance the fleet electrification and replacement funding plan
- liaise with Operations and Community/Government Relations on all outreach with external stakeholders for support of grants applications for bus improvements.

Beginning in FY23 and continuing through the life of the Better Bus Program, the Stops & Zones Department in Operations will require an additional seven (7) FTEs to focus on evaluating and cleaning, as well as installation and maintenance of lighting and amenities at nearly 13,000 bus stops in LA County. As this work gets underway, an additional two (2) Customer Experience FTEs will be needed to manage and oversee the full portfolio of concurrent Better Bus work. Two (2) additional FTEs will also be needed in Planning for countywide grants management and Los Angeles County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) activities related to the Better Bus and bus system funding. Additional staffing needs for future fiscal years will be brought to the Operations, Safety, and Customer Experience Committee as part of the biannual reports to the Board.

## **DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT**

The adoption of the Better Bus Program has no immediate impact on safety. However, the funding strategy includes many investments that are focused on improving safety and security for Metro bus riders.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Funds required in the next fiscal year have been proposed in the FY2022 budget, subject to adoption by the Board.

At the April 2021 Operations, Safety, and Customer Experience Committee meeting, the Board requested the inclusion of a line item in the Annual Budget for the Better Bus Program. Staff have

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recommended that the list of Better Bus Program investments for each fiscal year be included as part of the Customer Experience summary in the Annual Budget report.

### Impact to Budget

The sources of funds for the recommended actions are local and other funds that are eligible at the time of expenditure.

### Multiyear Impact

To deliver the fully envisioned \$2.1 billion investment proposed, the estimated additional non-labor funding needed to implement Better Bus is \$1.08 billion over FY23 to FY26. Attachment B provides line item detail, along with potential existing sources for the funding. This excludes amounts already in the proposed FY22 budget and components assumed as part of the baseline operations funding (e.g., bus service restoration to 7.0 million revenue service hours by September 2021, per Motion 27.1). The actual amount of funding needed may differ, as much of the estimated cost and schedule in Attachment B is preliminary. The cost incurred by Metro may also differ depending on the amount funded by local jurisdictions for assets that they will own and or control.

Some of the funding for Better Bus may come from existing local, state, and federal sources, including operations-eligible funding and capital funding that is currently programmed for other uses, as Better Bus was not included in the Board-adopted September 2020 Long Range Transportation Plan (which allocated Metro funding to all Board-approved projects and programs). There are currently no new or existing sources of funding that have been identified for Better Bus in the Long Range Transportation Plan. This could result in additional debt financing for those investments and/or a reallocation of available resources.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

Metro's 10-year strategic plan, Vision 2028 calls for Metro to "invest in a world class bus system that is reliable, convenient and attractive to more users for more trips" (Goal 1.2). Central to this goal is a vision for a "smooth trip" which includes both high-quality service features, such as faster and more reliable service, but also improved customer experience along the complete trip journey, from planning one's trip, accessing the transit stop, and arriving at one's destination on time (Goal 2). Better Bus is paramount to achieving both of these goals.

## **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The Board could elect to adopt the Better Bus Program without directing staff to pursue the five-year funding and implementation strategy. This is not recommended as the recommended funding and implementation strategy and biannual reporting increase transparency of Metro's investments in a high-quality bus system and place these investments on equal footing with other Board approved and adopted capital and operating projects and programs.

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The Board could elect to reject the Better Bus Program. This is not recommended as the Better Bus Program is a direct way to improve trip experiences for the vast majority of Metro's systemwide riders who rely on the bus every day, who are largely persons of color, living in poverty, and currently, mostly essential workers.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The Better Bus team will aggressively seek funding and staffing resources to implement the Better Bus Program and report progress to the Board every six months. The next report is planned for October 2021.

Attachment A -April Board Receive and File Informational Report on the Better Bus Program (File #2021-0194)

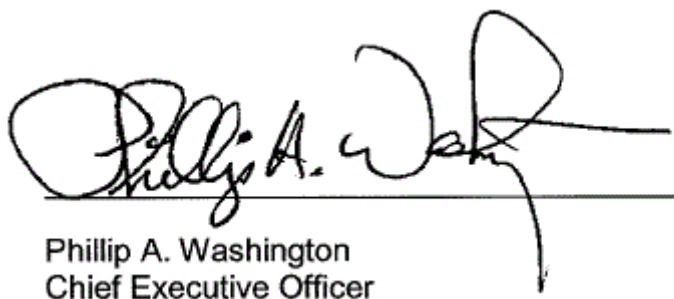
Attachment B - Better Bus Program Funding and Implementation Strategy FY22-FY26

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## Board Report

**File #:** 2021-0194, **File Type:** Informational Report

**Agenda Number:** 27.

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### OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE APRIL 15, 2021

**SUBJECT: BETTER BUS PROGRAM**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE report on Metro's new Better Bus program, a Customer Experience initiative to improve service for our bus customers.

#### **ISSUE**

Metro is launching a new initiative, the Better Bus Program, to transform the bus riding experience in Los Angeles County to provide dignified experiences for the 75 percent of Metro riders who take the bus each day. This report describes the rationale for creating the program, the key focus areas, the current work plan, and next steps for advancing the program.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Better Bus, a new agency-wide effort coordinated by the Customer Experience unit in the Office of the CEO, seeks to highlight and address bus rider needs by making improvements to bus services and stops. The purpose of Better Bus is to align Metro's collective efforts around elevating investments that improve bus speed, ease, safety and comfort. Metro aims to transform the bus riding journeys in Los Angeles County by providing dignified experiences for the three-fourths of Metro riders that take the bus.

Better Bus gives special attention to bus riders, guided by our board-adopted Equity Platform, which calls for "an equality of outcome" and not just equal treatment of our riders. For example, where rail riders largely have shelter, lighting, seating at all train stations, most bus riders lack access to these basic amenities at stops (only 24% of stops served by Metro have shelter). Better Bus works toward providing dignified trip experiences for all riders, by addressing the greatest inequities first, which are largely felt by our bus riders.

Currently, the half-a-million daily riders on our bus system disproportionately represent Equity Focus Communities (communities Metro defines as high-need based on income, race, and car ownership), with significant numbers of essential workers and people in economic distress. Even prior to the COVID pandemic-driven service cuts, bus riders sometimes experienced pain points such as unreliable and slow buses, long wait times, insufficient delay or service advisory information, uninviting bus stops, concerns about

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homelessness, concerns about personal security, and cleanliness at bus stops and onboard. These aspects of service need to be improved to provide a dignified customer experience and advance social and racial equity for Metro customers.

Providing high-quality trip experiences for bus riders is more imperative now than ever before. During the pandemic, the Metro's bus system retained more riders than other public transit modes. The bus is a lifeline for riders and non-riders alike, as it is critical to the functioning of LA County's health and economic systems. Bus ridership has continued to recover since early 2020, and as of March 2021, hovers at just around half of pre-pandemic levels. Metro buses continue to transport just under 500,000 riders each day, compared to around 120,000 riders on rail. There are more daily bus riders during the pandemic than on rail on a typical pre-pandemic day.

This report outlines key components of the Better Bus Program and how they relate to existing Metro plans and programs that seek to improve bus service, most notably NextGen and the 2020 Customer Experience Plan. This report also sets a broad vision for implementing Better Bus through the development of a comprehensive, multi-year funding plan.

Metro works to provide high-quality bus service to the residents of LA County through the everyday efforts of front-line employees, operations and maintenance staff, and projects such as the NextGen Bus Plan. However, despite this abundant attention, there has never been a consolidation of Metro's bus efforts into one unified program. The goal of Better Bus is to provide a framework for improving all aspects of the bus rider experience that will allow for ridership growth, equity, and increased effectiveness of the bus in delivering mobility and access to opportunity for all. The Better Bus Program also advocates for greater investment in all aspects of the bus system.

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown into sharp relief the importance of bus as the workhorse of the public transit system in Los Angeles. Even prior to the COVID pandemic, nearly three-fourths of Metro's systemwide ridership was on bus, and many essential workers continue to travel by bus. In California, an estimated 36% of residents who commute by transit work in essential industries, and half of these commuters are service workers in the most critical sectors, including healthcare, food service, public safety, transportation and government services (2015-2019 ACS data).

Improving the bus is also key to Metro's commitment to racial justice, particularly during the pandemic, as racial inequities have been exacerbated by the parallel health and economic crises. Based on comparisons of Fall 2019 and Fall 2020 bus rider surveys, bus riders who have continued to ride during the pandemic are largely Latino (70%, up from 66% prior to the pandemic) and Black (18%, up from 15%), 15% of riders have at least one disability, and the median household income of bus riders is about \$18,000 (compared to about \$28,000 for rail riders).

The Better Bus Program incorporates the work contained in the NextGen Bus Plan and ties closely with several initiatives in the Customer Experience Plan. The first phase of the NextGen Bus Plan was rolled out in December 2020, and subsequent phases will be completed in 2021. NextGen is restructuring the bus network to be more relevant to today's travel patterns, provide more frequent service on key corridors, particularly off-peak, and improve the speed of service via supportive infrastructure such as the new 5th and 6th Street bus-only lanes in Downtown LA. Metro recognizes, however, that more needs to be done to realize a high quality bus system, including more frequent service, improved on-time performance, bus stop seating, shelter and lighting, better security, improved cleanliness, and reliable real-time information. Better Bus will advance the work on these additional aspects of service quality beyond what was contemplated in NextGen.

The Board-adopted Customer Experience (CX) Plan focuses on providing dignified trip experiences for all

riders while emphasizing the need to prioritize bus-related improvements, to reflect the large majority of Metro's riders who take the bus. The CX Plan set the stage for the launch of the Better Bus Program by outlining 38 bus-specific recommendations that are planned or underway, led by various departments across Metro that are a part of the Better Bus Team. Better Bus is housed in the Office of the CEO and led by the Customer Experience Executive Officer, and the initiative enjoys active participation from all corners of the agency.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Bus Customer Pain Points**

The Better Bus Program focuses first and foremost on bus customer pain points and seeks to develop solutions that are responsive to these issues. Staff has completed an annual Customer Experience Survey that will guide decision-making and investments in Metro transit service. From the results of this annual survey, Better Bus will focus on the pain points identified as target issues for current and lapsed bus riders, detailed in Table 1. Target issues are those that customers rate low but are most important to their trip experiences.

*Table 1: Bus Results from 2020 Customer Experience Survey*

<b>Target Issues</b>	<b>Other Pain Points</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Delay advisories</li><li>• Bus interior cleanliness/graffiti</li><li>• Bus stop cleanliness/graffiti</li><li>• Bus stop seating</li><li>• Rule enforcement</li><li>• Security</li><li>• Rider concerns about homelessness on the bus</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On time performance</li><li>• Speed/travel time</li><li>• Bus Frequency</li><li>• Sexual harassment</li><li>• Racial/ethnic harassment</li></ul>

Some pain points may receive lower or higher ratings among particular groups of riders. For example, safety from sexual harassment is lower among young women and especially among riders who are gender non-binary. Another example, bus on-time performance, frequency, and speed receive fairly high scores from current riders. However, as these are all important components of travel time competitiveness with driving, they are among the top reasons that potential riders choose not to ride Metro buses.

The customer input from the 2020 Customer Experience survey and past Metro surveys and studies has been central to the vision, workplan, and performance metrics of Better Bus. Bus riders have consistently experienced particular pain points and have shared their feedback with Metro for some time. The bullets below summarize feedback received through a variety of past surveys and public outreach efforts:

- **Vision 2028.** The Customer Satisfaction Survey conducted in 2017 for the Vision 2028 strategic planning process showed that speed, frequency, and reliability are top issues. Also, concerns over security on board and at bus stops also serve as major barriers to riding the bus.
- **NextGen Bus Study and Plan.** Metro staff began this project in February 2018 and received a total of 16,300 comments about how to improve bus service. When fully implemented, NextGen will help address the factors listed as concerns of “all riders” in the first column of Table 2: travel speed, frequency, and reliability. However, many of the documented customer needs extend beyond what is being addressed through the NextGen Bus Plan implementation. Among current, former, and infrequent riders/non-riders, staff identified key pain points for each customer group, also shown in Table 2. These include bus stop safety, first/last mile connections, on-board comfort, and other



experiential aspects of riding the bus. NextGen found that the waiting experience (at bus stops) can be as important as the on-board experience for bus riders.

Table 2: Findings from NextGen Outreach and Engagement

	All Riders	Current Riders	Former Riders	Infrequent/Non-Riders
Key Pain Points	Travel Speed	More service	Security (women, certain geographies)	Information (non-riders)
	Frequency	Fares	First/Last Mile (elderly, higher income)	First/Last Mile (women, youth, elderly)
	Reliability	Information	Comfort (odor, crowding)	Comfort (odor, crowding)

- Understanding How Women Travel Study.** In 2019, Metro completed a study titled *Understanding How Women Travel* guided by the agency's Women and Girls Governing Council. This study team surveyed current and previous riders, as well as non-riders, and analyzed gender data currently collected by the agency. The study found that women, who make up more than half of current bus riders, are largely impacted by concerns over personal security, service reliability, and rider amenities at bus stops and on board:
  - Personal security (all transit users and non-riders):** Based on a stated preference survey of current and previous Metro riders, as well as non-riders, concern over personal security is the largest barrier to riding transit for women. Just 13% of current female riders feel safe waiting for transit after dark (compared to 30% of male riders).
  - Bus reliability:** The top three complaints filed by female Metro bus riders are all related to reliability: bus pass-ups, no shows, late buses, and unreliable or absent real-time information. Considering that women are more likely to trip chain than men, service reliability becomes increasingly important.
  - Bus customer facilities:** Nearly 60% of female riders with children bring their kids on transit, yet many women express difficulty in riding Metro with children and strollers. Only 39% of women feel that there is adequate space on board for the items they need to carry.

This feedback underscores the need to focus more attention on our bus system going forward. Hence, Better Bus seeks to address these pain points and more. By doing so, Better Bus will dramatically improve service and attract more riders to the system.

### Better Bus Work Plan

Better Bus was first established in 2019 as an ongoing, inter-departmental forum for staff to collaborate on bus-focused improvements. The initiative consists of an Executive Team and topical working groups. The Better Bus vision and early actions, detailed in Table 3, center on the core needs of Metro's bus riders, evidenced by the various surveys and studies detailed above. To address these pain points, staff structured a work plan around three key focus areas: speed and service quality, ease, and safety and comfort. These three areas of focus are core to improving the customer experience for Metro bus riders and merit taking a comprehensive approach to realize a Better Bus system.

Table 3: Better Bus Vision and Early Actions

Category	Vision	Working Group	Proposed Early Actions (FY21-22) – subject to funding	Lead Department
<b>Speed &amp; Service Quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Travel time is competitive</li> <li>Wait time is minimal</li> <li>Bus is on time</li> </ul>	NextGen Joint Bus Speed Working Group (with LADOT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Securing approvals for 2-3 new bus lanes</li> <li>Transit signal priority on all Tier I corridors</li> <li>Bus stop and zone improvements</li> <li>NextGen frequency improvements</li> <li>Exploring policy changes and permitting agreements with local jurisdictions</li> </ul>	Service Planning and Analysis (Operations)
<b>Ease</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Easy to pay and validate fare</li> <li>Affordable</li> <li>Trip planning is easy and real-time information is accurate</li> <li>Accessing bus stop is convenient from home, and key destinations are easy to access from bus stops</li> <li>The transfer experience is easy between</li> </ul>	Real-Time Arrival Information, Better Bus Customer and Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procure enhanced prediction engine to improve real-time data accuracy</li> <li>Improve data feed for Transit App</li> <li>SMS alert system and route-by-route scorecard</li> <li>Coordination with the Fareless System Initiative to offer free rides for qualifying customers to make it easier and more affordable for more people to ride</li> </ul>	ITS, Marketing (Communications), TAP (Finance & Budget)

	modes and agencies			
<b>Safety &amp; Comfort</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Riding the bus feels safe</li> <li>Crowding on board is at a comfortable level</li> <li>The waiting experience, and boarding and alighting the bus, is comfortable for people of all abilities</li> <li>Riders and operators are following mask requirements*</li> </ul>	Better Bus Stops, On-board security and cleanliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot tests of new features at bus stops</li> <li>Develop regional standards for bus stops</li> <li>Launch Flexible Dispatch Pilot to improve bus security</li> <li>Install vinyl seats on buses</li> <li>Pilot tests of midday layover cleaning of bus interiors and enhanced bus stop cleaning</li> <li>Exploring partnerships with local jurisdictions and municipal operators</li> </ul>	Stops and Zones (Operations); System Security & Law Enforcement; Environmental Compliance and Sustainability; Vehicle and Equipment Acquisition (Operations); Office of Civil Rights and Inclusion

\*temporary measure during COVID

The Better Bus Team acknowledges the range and scope of work needed to holistically improve the bus system, particularly given the increasing demands on limited resources. For this reason, the Team established the following guidelines in developing the work plan. As the program evolves, these guidelines will remain.

- **Prioritize highest-impact investments.** Better Bus focuses first on the top customer pain points to guide investments. Additionally, Better Bus will prioritize improvements for Equity Focus Communities and vulnerable riders, including riders with disabilities, the elderly and women and girls.
- **Package a vision for a better bus experience.** Metro will work hand-in-hand with local and regional partners to communicate a vision for improving the bus system that emphasizes creative and nimble approaches to improve the experience of current riders as quickly as possible. Metro will be leveraging local, regional and federal opportunities to prioritize bus investments and collaborate on achieving shared goals. Better Bus will also look to national and international best practices for inspiration.
- **Develop an ongoing dialogue with riders.** The program will solicit feedback on an ongoing basis and open a two-way dialogue with riders. The Better Bus team is developing an online tool that allows riders to gain access to critical information for their trip, including delay advisories and providing opportunities to weigh in on how to make their trips better. The team will also be engaging customers and community partners through rider listening initiatives, which could take the form of focus groups or telephone surveys.

The Better Bus Program takes an incremental approach, starting with innovative, lower cost, and scalable solutions wherever possible. For example, Better Bus is launching a series of pilot programs by mid-2021 to test improvements, such as e-paper signs, lighting and other customer amenities at select bus stops. Better Bus also looks beyond these pilots at long-term, enterprise-wide improvements that will require systems change and ongoing funding sources. For example, only about a quarter of bus stops served by Metro have shelter, and providing shade at the remaining bus stops will require larger investment and new partnership models with cities. This change will not happen overnight, but the Better Bus Program will formalize the effort to ensure long term investment for our riders.

The Better Bus Program is supported by the CX Plan, which sets deadlines and assigns responsible

departments for each of its 38 bus improvement recommendations. A full menu of proposed Better Bus investments through FY26 is included as Attachment A and denotes initiatives not previously captured in NextGen or the CX Plan. In addition, the Better Bus team has also identified 37 performance metrics that will be used to measure progress in completing each of the recommendations.

### **Better Bus Funding and Implementation**

At the January 28<sup>th</sup> Regular Board Meeting Metro's CEO directed the Planning Department and Office of Management and Budget to work with the Chief of Staff and Executive Officers for Equity and Race and Customer Experience to develop a comprehensive multi-year financial plan for Better Bus.

The total projected investment for the Better Bus Program through FY26 is \$1.88 billion (Attachment A). Many of the line items within the Better Bus work plan are unfunded or partly funded. Some were approved by the Board through the FY21 mid-year budget adjustment and are already being pursued. The Better Bus Team has requested funding for several items in the FY22 budget as well. Per CEO direction in January, Metro will develop a funding strategy for the unfunded components.

With Metro's fiscal constraints, which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, funding Better Bus improvements will require creativity, resourcefulness, and tradeoffs. The pandemic has significantly reduced bus ridership and fare revenue, and the sales taxes that provide the bulk of Metro's operating subsidy are also lower than anticipated. The lower revenue has increased our operating shortfall. Federal stimulus funding helps address the shortfall, but when it ends, Metro will need to identify other sources of funding. The Better Bus Team, with the support of the Planning Department and OMB, will present options that have the potential to fund the Better Bus program during the May Board meeting.

Better Bus staff will be prioritizing projects based on four qualitative criteria (each rated Low/Medium/High):

1. Equity
2. Customer Priority (as determined by the annual customer experience survey results),
3. Project continuation (for example, for pilot projects that need funding to continue), and,
4. Cost/benefit.

### ***Funding of Incremental Improvements (FY21-22): Progress***

Several Better Bus pilot programs received funding (totaling \$2.3 million) to get started via the FY21 midyear Customer Experience program, including:

- Homelessness: Limited emergency short term shelter (hotel vouchers) and regular statistically valid counts on bus and rail.
- Flexible Dispatch Pilot: enables Metro to respond to issues on the system with appropriate staff, such as homeless outreach or law enforcement as the situation demands.
- TransitWatch marketing campaign: Digital advertising campaign to increase TransitWatch app and text message use to help customers feel safe.
- Digital Rider Alert system: A robust system to enable riders to receive customized service and emergency alerts through text messages and other channels.
- Rescue Ride: A pilot program that quickly identifies customers impacted by a missed run or pass-up in real-time and offers them a free ride code for an on-demand shared ride service to get them where they need to go.
- Cleanliness: Acceleration of vinyl seat installations on bus fleets and power washing equipment for Metro Stops & Zones for a bus stop cleaning pilot.

Metro's Environmental Compliance and Sustainability Department (ECSD), has been working on several climate impact reduction projects that strengthen the execution of future Better Bus related projects. The

outcomes of the ECSD work allowed the Better Bus Team to: 1) develop priority criteria for shelter placements and other bus stop improvements, and 2) complete a conceptual design of a bus stop pole that can accommodate additional improvements, such as solar lighting, real-time information, shade/cooling options and seating for customers. These efforts align with the execution of climate impact-reduction strategies contained in the 10-year sustainability strategic plan, *Moving Beyond Sustainability*. Additional ECSD resources and efforts could potentially be leveraged alongside future grants to develop and execute bus stop improvement pilots, especially in Equity Focus Communities and high-heat areas.

Staff also continue to apply for, and secure, grants to support the Board-approved components of the Better Bus vision, including a SB1 grant that Metro received to install bus speed improvements along the NextGen Tier I corridors (\$25 million with 50% local match). The Board has also directed staff to use \$24.3 million of FY21 mid-year funds to support preparation to restore bus service to a 7.0 million Revenue Service Hour level by September 2021.

#### *FY22 Proposed Funding*

As shown in Attachment A, the below Better Bus elements (totaling \$208.5 million) have been included in the FY22 budget, which will be presented to the Board for approval in May 2021.

- Additional staffing to cover expanding scopes for the Better Bus and Customer Experience programs to conduct annual customer experience surveys and to develop a comprehensive LA28 Mobility Concept Plan per Board motion 42, to prepare for the World Cup and Olympics.
- NextGen Speed and Reliability Improvements
- Programs to address homelessness
- Flexible dispatch pilot
- TransitWatch marketing
- Call Point Security Program
- Bus stop cleaning enhancements
- Bus interior mid-day layover cleaning pilot
- Bus stop improvement pilots with shelter, solar lighting, real-time displays, and other customer features
- Acceleration of vinyl seat installations
- Digital Rider Alert System
- Surprise and Delight Program: arts, music, and customer giveaways to surprise and delight customers, per Board motion 45.1

#### *Long-Term Investments (FY23-26) Progress*

Beyond FY22, the Better Bus Team is developing a multi-year capital and operating plan for Better Bus (FY23-FY26) and applying criteria to prioritize high-impact investments. Metro's Planning Department is currently identifying opportunities for potential funding of Better Bus investments through grants and where there might be other funds that can address the needs of the Better Bus program, while addressing Metro's expected growing operating shortfall.

The Better Bus Team is working with OMB, Planning, and Government Relations to identify funding sources and policies that could accelerate the implementation of the program by:

- Aligning State and Federal legislative agenda to the goals of Better Bus with specific requests for financial resources for homeless supportive services and for bus shelters to address rising heat and racial inequalities.
- Providing input on the Automated Bus Lane Enforcement (ABLE) pilot program enabling legislation (AB 917, Bloom), that would help address bus reliability issues sometimes faced by our riders by keeping bus lanes clear.
- Developing a list of grants that could support Better Bus improvements, understanding that

Metro already receives and/or programs virtually all available transit-eligible grants to ongoing operations, essential state-of-good-repair, and the voter-approved expansion of transit service.

- Identifying, for Board consideration, tradeoffs for repurposing existing funds.

Full implementation of Better Bus is contingent on funding availability. Many of these improvements, such as customer features at bus stops, will require regional collaboration and cost-sharing.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

At the direction of the CEO, Planning and OMB are developing a funding strategy for the Better Bus program improvements over a five-year time frame. The funding strategy is expected for the May Board cycle.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

Metro's 10-year strategic plan, Vision 2028 calls for Metro to "invest in a world class bus system that is reliable, convenient and attractive to more users for more trips" (Goal 1.2). Central to this goal is a vision for "smooth trip" which includes both high-quality service features, such as faster and more reliable service, but also improved customer experience along the complete trip journey, from planning one's trip, accessing the transit stop, and arriving at one's destination on time (Goal 2). Better Bus is central to achieving both of these goals.

## **NEXT STEPS**

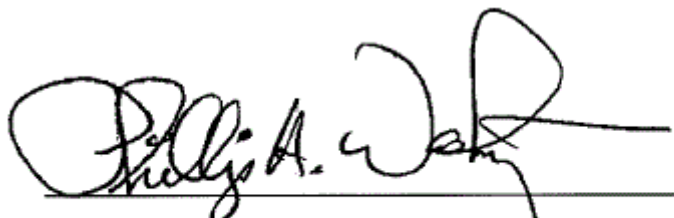
Metro plans to publicly launch Better Bus and start a round of public engagement and outreach in 2021. Many of the early action items outlined in this report (Table 3) will begin in mid-2021.

Staff continues to develop the funding strategy for Better Bus and will update the Board in May.

Attachment A - Better Bus Program Menu of Potential Investments FY22-FY26

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Phillip A. Washington  
Chief Executive Officer

## ATTACHMENT B

## Better Bus Funding and Implementation Strategy FY22-FY26

	Category	Project/Initiative	FY22 Proposed Funding	Unfunded FY23-FY26 Estimated Cost	Primary Target	Secondary Target(s)
1	Multiple	<b>Customer Experience Bus-Related Pilots - including</b> Rescue Ride, Automated Bus Lane Enforcement, Bus Stop Cleaning Pilot, Bus Mid-Line Interior Cleaning at Layovers, Digital Rider Alert System, Surprise and Delight Seed Funds, Flexible Dispatch Program, TransitWatch Marketing. <i>EXPANDED beyond 2020 CX Plan</i>	\$ 2,906,653	\$ 13,416,836	Most pilots being considered for funding through operating funds. Future funding needs above the \$13.4M is TBD based on success of pilots.	Making specific requests for financial resources for Better Bus / CX Pilot programs from State and Federal government
2	Safety & Comfort	<b>Programs to Address Homelessness.</b> Customer Experience Initiatives to be guided by the Public Safety Advisory Committee related to homelessness, including systemwide initiatives (leaving out rail-specific programs in Motion 26.2) <i>EXPANDED beyond 2020 CX Plan</i>	\$ 33,250,000	\$ 166,794,318	In concert with the County of Los Angeles, the City of Los Angeles and other local municipal governments across Los Angeles County, making specific requests for financial resources for homeless supportive services from local, state and federal government	Operating funds
3	Safety & Comfort	<b>Bus Stop Shelter Incentive Pilot Program "Shade for All."</b> Cost reflects capital costs (without maintenance or installation costs, which would be the responsibility of the city) of 25% share for 3,700 shelters with initial goal to reach 60% coverage goal. First year (\$7.8M) in FY23 would determine if viable model. <i>Expanded beyond 2020 CX Plan</i>	\$ -	\$ 23,326,250	Existing CMAQ funding for Metro's 25% share	
4	Safety & Comfort	<b>Bus Stop Lighting Pilot Program.</b> FY22 reflects 5307 grant funding with 25% Metro match for pedestrian lighting partnership with BSL, and \$100K for solar light tests. Lower-cost, post mounted model currently in POC, and \$1M would be spent on a pilot of approx. 300 units in FY23 to determine if a viable model. Cost reflect 100% share at 5,600 stops to reach target of 50% of bus stops with lighting. Only includes capital costs. <i>EXPANDED beyond 2020 CX Plan</i>	\$ 1,172,500	\$ 20,208,833	5307 1% Transit Enhancement Fund	Homeland Security Grant Program
5	Safety & Comfort	<b>Bus Stop Real-time Info Improvement Pilot Program.</b> Installation of E-Paper Displays and Text-To-Speech at Bus Stops. Cost reflect 100% share at 500 bus stops spread over three years. First year (\$1.3M) in FY23 would determine if viable model. <i>EXPANDED beyond 2020 CX Plan</i>	\$ -	\$ 4,125,000	FTA AIM Grant	5307 1% Transit Enhancement Fund
6	Safety & Comfort	<b>Acceleration of Vinyl Seat Installs.</b> Replace fabric seats with easier-to-clean vinyl to improve ability to clean and sanitize buses and improve passenger comfort. Cost projected for 1,000 buses. <i>EXPANDED beyond 2020 CX Plan</i>	\$ 1,016,037	\$ 2,250,420	Prioritize in SGR funding / CX Initiative with operating funds	Bus and Bus Facilities Grant
7	Safety & Comfort	<b>Call Point Security Program.</b> Blue light boxes recommended by Women and Girls Governing Council to improve security on BRT and the rail system, per Motion 26.2. Pursuing external grant. <i>EXPANDED beyond 2020 CX Plan</i>	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 7,579,000	Homeland Security Grant Program	5307 1% Transit Enhancement Fund
8	Safety & Comfort	<b>Station Evaluation Program - Quarterly inspection of 144 Metro stations and transit centers</b>	\$ 250,000	\$ 1,051,010	Using operating funds currently	
9	Speed (NextGen Capital Improvements)	<b>Bus Priority Lane Expansion on Tier 1 Lines.</b> \$25M via SB1 awarded for FY22-24. Would expand pace from 5 corridors a year to 10 corridors a year.	\$ 3,500,000	\$ 84,298,858	Partially funded through SB1 Local Partnership Program grant.	For expansion, existing or debt financed Prop C 25%
10	Speed (NextGen Capital Improvements)	<b>Spot Improvements (signal retiming, etc.)</b>	\$ -	\$ 31,020,201	Partially funded through SB1 Local Partnership Program grant.	For expansion, existing or debt financed Prop C 25%
11	Speed (NextGen Capital Improvements)	<b>Bulb outs for Tier 1 &amp; 2 Corridors</b> to speed up service and make room for bus stop shelters and other improvements.	\$ -	\$ 416,323,213	Partially funded through SB1 Local Partnership Program grant.	For expansion, existing or debt financed Prop C 25%
12	Speed (NextGen Capital Improvements)	<b>Layover Optimization</b> (10 per year) to improve efficiency	\$ 400,000	\$ 130,101,004	Partially funded through SB1 Local Partnership Program grant.	For expansion, existing or debt financed Prop C 25%
13	Speed (NextGen Capital Improvements)	<b>Relocating Bus Stops Nearside to Farside</b> to improve safety and speed (100 stops/year)	\$ 100,000	\$ 26,020,201	Partially funded through SB1 Local Partnership Program grant.	For expansion, existing or debt financed Prop C 25%
14	Speed (NextGen Capital Improvements)	<b>Transit Signal Priority Field Implementation for Tier 1 &amp; 2 Corridors</b>	\$ 3,000,000	\$ 84,298,858	Partially funded through SB1 Local Partnership Program grant.	For expansion, existing or debt financed Prop C 25%
15	Speed (NextGen Capital Improvements)	<b>City of LA Transit Signal Priority Software Upgrade</b> to improve speed. Cost sharing.	TBD	TBD	Partially funded through SB1 Local Partnership Program grant.	For expansion, existing or debt financed Prop C 25%
16	Speed (NextGen Capital Improvements)	<b>All-door boarding expansion.</b> Pending Fareless System Initiative decision.	\$ -	\$ 29,000,000	Partially funded through SB1 Local Partnership Program grant.	For expansion, existing or debt financed Prop C 25%
17	Speed	<b>Additional NextGen Frequency Improvements.</b> Bus frequency improvements. Feasibility and timing TBD.	\$ -	TBD	Operating funds	
18	Speed	<b>Labor Budget to keep Cancelled Assignments under 1%.</b> Order of magnitude cost to shift average bus OAR from 1.18-1.20 to 1.25 to avoid missed bus runs. This is scalable to various OAR levels. Due to NextGen service changes, costs associated will be reassessed in FY22 midyear. <i>Included in 2020 CX Plan.</i>	\$ -	TBD	Operating funds	
19	Ease	<b>ATMS 2 - Replacement of aging information systems</b> involved in delivering real time information to modernize functionality and improve reliability. Costs are inclusive of both bus and rail. Note: total project is expected to be approximately \$100M (including unshown needs after FY26).	\$ -	\$ 41,216,080	Considering FY22 midyear request for operating funds.  Olympics federal funding request for capital. P3 model.	Prioritize in SGR.
			\$ 50,595,190	\$ 1,081,030,081		





We're bringing you  
a better bus experience.



BETTER BUS PROGRAM

May 2021



# Recommended Actions

1. ADOPT Better Bus Program
2. APPROVE Better Bus Investments Plan; pursue five-year funding/implementation strategy; report progress every six months
3. APPROVE Better Bus investments and expenditures in each annual budget and in future updates to Short Range and Long Range Transportation Plans
4. APPROVE, by mid-year, 14 new project FTEs dedicated exclusively to the Better Bus Program



# Background on Better Bus Program

- **Unifies Metro bus-related efforts** to improve bus speed, ease, safety, and comfort
- **Sets into action the Vision 2028 goal** to transform bus riding journeys in LA County
- **Addresses the mobility needs of today's riders**, largely essential workers and people of color living in poverty
- **Establishes ongoing bus improvement program** with six-month report-outs on funding and implementation progress



Speed



Ease



Safety & Comfort

# FY22 Proposed Budget for Better Bus

- **\$165 million to restore 7.0 million RSH by September 2021** (Motion 27.1)
- **\$50.6 million for pilot programs**, including:
  - on-board, midday bus interior cleaning pilot.
  - equipment for enhanced pressure washing at bus stops.
  - Digital Rider Alert System: delay advisories and emergency messages by text message and other channels.





# FY23-26 Unfunded Needs

**\$784M to maintain 7.0 million RSH - assumed to be funded as a part of baseline bus operations, per motion 27.1**

Projected over the next four years, \$1.08B in unfunded needs include:

- **\$801M to expedite expansion of the NextGen Speed and Reliability program** (bus lanes, bulb-outs, signal priority) from 2-3 to 10 corridors a year
- **\$167M in programs to address homelessness** (includes costs associated with bus and rail)
- **\$48M in demonstration projects at bus stops**, to incentivize the placement of shelters, real-time information, lighting, and accessibility improvements

# Bus Customer Experience: Speed

- **Bus speeds** consistently slowing over the past 25 years (average speed is about 10 mph)
- **Bus lanes and other improvements** can enhance performance and customer experience, increase ridership

Better Bus proposed funding: \$801M for bus lanes, signal preemption, bulb-outs, and other speed and reliability improvements.



Photo credit: StreetsblogLA

# Bus Customer Experience: Safety & Comfort



Photo credit: Grist

- **A lack of shade and seating** is a major pain point for current and lapsed Metro riders
- Currently only **24% of bus stops** served by Metro have a transit shelter
- Metro to deepen local partnerships to achieve **60% of stops with shelter by 2026**

Better Bus proposed funding:  
\$23M for pilot shelter incentive program



# Bus Customer Experience: Safety & Comfort

- **Homelessness** is a crisis for many people
- It also impacts customer experience
- **Cleanliness** is also an important issue for bus riders

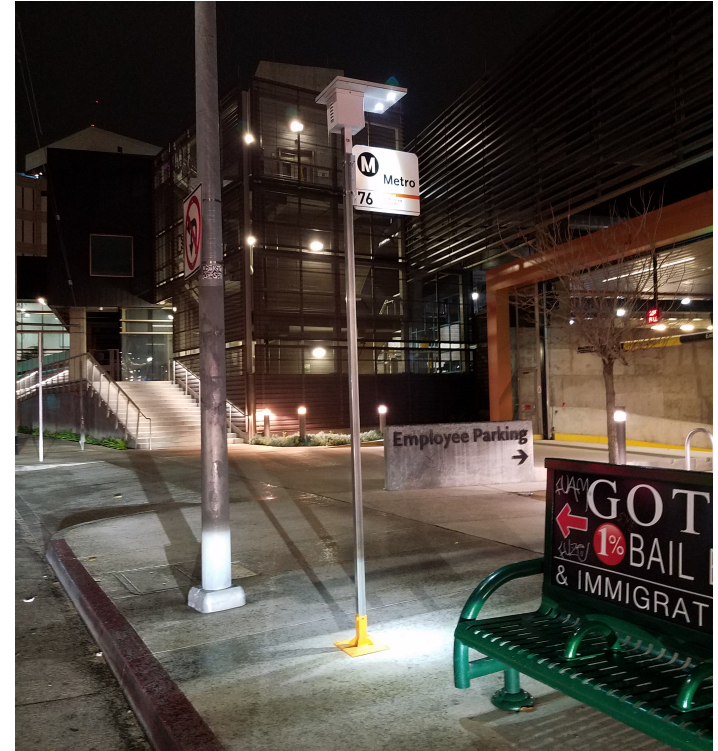
Better Bus proposed funding: \$167M for programs to address homelessness and pilot test layover cleaning



# Bus Customer Experience: Ease

- **Women, seniors and people with disabilities** can experience daily barriers to accessing the bus system
- **Piloting new improvements at bus stops**, such as text-to-speech buttons, lighting, tactile markers, etc. to address unmet needs

Better Bus proposed funding: \$24M  
for demonstration projects

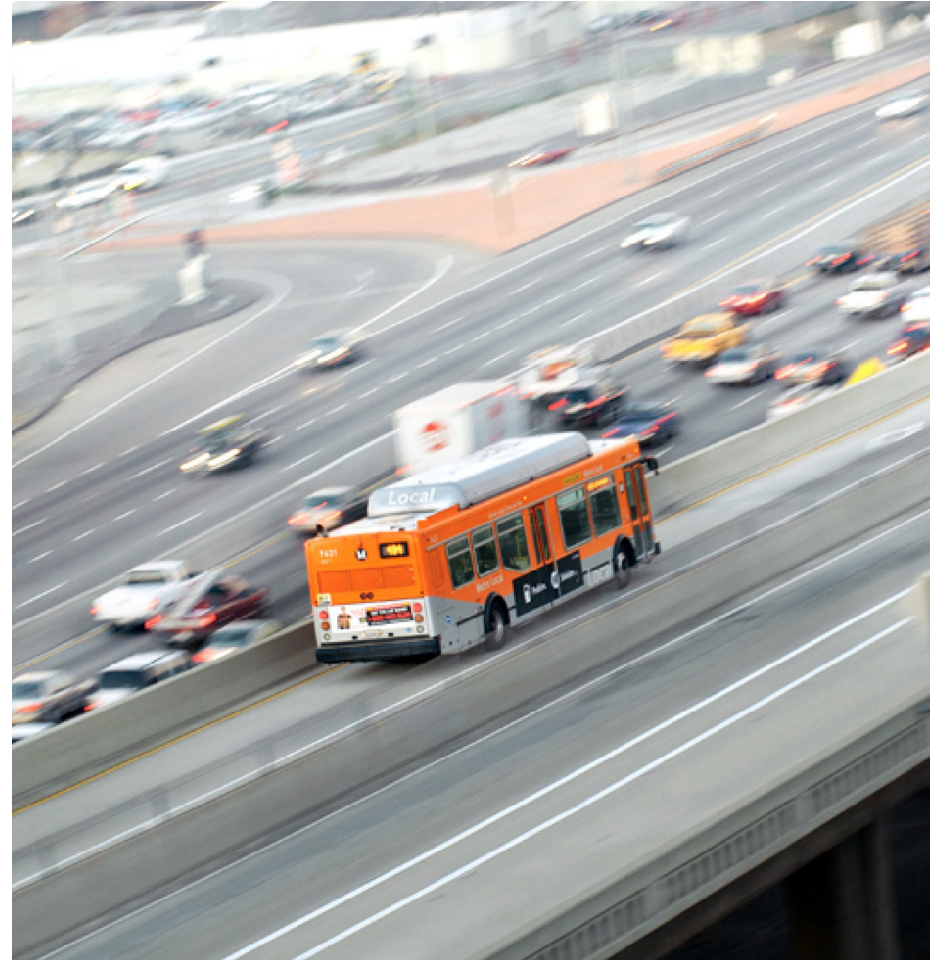


Test of a solar lights at a Metro bus stop. Lighting can improve safety as well as detectability of the stop for individuals with low vision.



# Potential New Funding Opportunities

- Prop C 25% Funds
- CMAQ
- Reprogrammed highway funds\*
- American Jobs Plan
- Multi-year Surface Transportation Authorization
- State-level budget legislation
- Advertising



\*within ordinances and based on collaboration with subregions

# Dedicated Staffing Needs

Total of 14 new project FTE by FY22 midyear:

- Operations (5 FTE) and Communications (7 FTE) for Speed and Reliability Program and Better Bus Stop Local Partnership Program
- Grants Management (2 FTE) to oversee funding and grant-seeking for the Better Bus Program





# Summary

Better Bus will transform bus riding journeys for today's riders.

Better Bus will directly benefit Equity Focus Communities, which are critical to the well-being of Los Angeles County.



*We rely on essential workers.  
Therefore, we rely on buses.*



# Thank you.



Metro