Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority One Gateway Plaza 3rd Floor Board Room Los Angeles, CA



Board Report

File #: 2021-0732, File Type: Informational Report

Agenda Number: 40.

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE NOVEMBER 18, 2021

SUBJECT: LIFE PROGRAM STRATEGIC DOUBLE ENROLLMENT PLAN

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE the Low-Income is Easy Fare (LIFE) Program Strategic Double Enrollment Plan in response to Motion 40.

<u>ISSUE</u>

Increasing enrollment in the LIFE Program is an important interim step for an expansion of the Fareless System Initiative (FSI). Staff has developed the LIFE Program Strategic Double Enrollment Plan (Enrollment Plan) to serve as a framework for strategies, tactics and activities to double the number of LIFE Program enrollees by the end of 2022.

BACKGROUND

At its September 2021 meeting, the Board approved the FSI funding plan for Phase I (K-14) and Motion 40 by Directors Mitchell, Solis, Garcetti, Sandoval, Bonin, and Dupont-Walker, revamping the LIFE Program (Attachment A). Recognizing the expansion and enhancement of the LIFE Program will alleviate the impact of fares on low-income riders while Metro continues to seek funding to implement FSI Phase 2 (low-income adults), the Enrollment Plan outlines tactical and strategic actions that lend to increasing enrollments into the LIFE program and furthering access to public transit for low-income riders.

As directed in Motion 40, staff is to develop a plan to double the number of LIFE Program enrollees by the end of 2022. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Metro customers took more than 1 million daily trips on the bus and rail system. This includes 67,625 riders participating in the LIFE program. As of September 23, 2021, Metro customers took more than 700,000 daily trips on the bus and rail system, which included 91,739 participants in the LIFE program.

DISCUSSION

The Enrollment Plan has been developed with a focus on increasing enrollments in the LIFE Program through transformative approaches such as:

- A streamlined LIFE application process that enables on-the-spot enrollment and allows applicants to self-certify;
- Online application enrollment;
- Allows low-income applicants to gain access to the program through direct enrollment and coenrollment with existing County of Los Angeles and city social services programs;
- Deep discounts such as the three months of fareless transit to new enrollees once fare collection resumes; and
- Recognizing the goal to increase program enrollment during the ongoing challenges and complexities of the COVID-19 pandemic which has disproportionally impacted vulnerable people, households, and communities, the Enrollment Plan is centered with the core themes to inform, identify and enroll low-income people throughout Los Angeles County in a manner that meets people where they are in life.

Double Enrollment Plan Core Strategies:

- Identify: Employ wide-ranging efforts to identify qualifying program participants.
- **Inform:** Leverage Metro's coordinated, proactive outreach and engagement plan to inform low -income riders, people and households about the enhanced LIFE program and discounted transit benefits to support program enrollment.
- **Enroll**: Mobilize LIFE Program community partners, public agencies and Metro staff to facilitate networked resources to create a seamless and streamlined process for people to apply, self-certify and enroll in the LIFE Program through either direct enrollment or co-enrollment.

Furthermore, the Enrollment Plan is being implemented through multi-pronged tactics to support Metro's goal to double life enrollment to up to 183,478 enrollments by December 2022. The plan is focused on three tactical areas:

- Direct Enrollment
- Co-Enrollment and Agency Partnerships
- Marketing, Promotion and Referrals.

The mulit-pronged tactics are summarized in a matrix in Attachment B.

I. <u>Direct Enrollment</u>

Direct Enrollment focuses on in-person outreach and "on the spot" enrollment in the LIFE program. The direct enrollment activities will be facilitated through personal engagement activities that will support direct outreach and "on the spot" enrollment for applicants through Metro hosted regional pop -up events, as well as through the contracted LIFE Program administrators, FAME Assistance Corporation (FAME) and the International Institute of Los Angeles (IILA). Direct enrollment is also available to applicants at designated enrollment centers such as Metro Customer Care Centers and the Big Blue Bus Transit Store.

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• **Regional Pop-up Events:** Metro hosted pop-up events will be staffed by Metro, FAME, IILA and their community-based organization (CBO) and service provider partners to allow for on the-spot enrollment. Metro staff, in collaboration with CBO partners, has also developed a schedule of outreach events that will be held throughout the County and at various locations, including high traffic transit centers, walk-up food basket distributions, faith-based events, and other potential sites including County and Los Angeles City operated housing developments.

Furthermore, in effort to maximize outreach at transit corridors, Staff has identified the highest use transit centers in order to directly connect with current riders that will benefit the most from program benefits. Each site will be advertised up to 7 days in advance through a series of onsite flyer distributions, web-site announcements, blast emails, and other promotional activities.

<u>Timeline</u>: There are 20 pop-up and outreach events scheduled beginning November 2021 through December 2022. Events are currently being scheduled for early 2022. The event list will be updated monthly. The event locations will continue to be identified with consideration to equity focus communities (EFC) throughout Los Angeles County (Attachment C). The scheduled pop-up and outreach events are referenced in the Enrollment Pop-Up and Outreach Events Schedule (Attachment D).

• LIFE Program Administrator Events : The LIFE Program is administered by FAME and IILA which oversee a network of approximately 500 non-profit and CBOs including homeless centers, hospitals, senior centers, low-income housing agencies, educational institutions, food banks, faith-based organizations, including other non-profits, and referral agencies. Metro's LIFE program administrators will be conducting in-person outreach and on-the-spot enrollment at community events, support service centers, and other client focused locations throughout the region.

Timeline: Beginning November 2021 through December 2022

• **Designated Enrollment Centers:** LIFE applicants are able to submit the application for enrollment in the LIFE Program through designated enrollment centers such as Metro Customer Care Centers and the Big Blue Bus Transit Store. Although the designated enrollment centers do not support on-the-spot enrollment the centers provide applicants the opportunity to submit applications through the self-certify process, receive guided support and assistance from customer care staff, and easily gain access to the LIFE program during transit commutes at designated transit centers.

Timeline: Launched October 2021 through December 2022

• **Individual Direct Enrollments:** Due to the limits of on-site enrollments and pre-scheduled events, Metro has launched an online-application portal that supports unlimited enrollment

through an easy-to- use web-based portal. The online portal supports direct enrollment at any time and location, and at the ease and discretion of the applicant. The portal as well as the streamlined application process allow applicants to self-certify eligibility.

<u>Completed:</u> Launched November 1, 2021

II. <u>Co-Enrollment and Agency Partnership</u>

Recognizing the possible constraints of direct enrollment and specifically on-site enrollment, Metro continues to collaborate with partner agencies to identify solutions to identify, inform, and co-enroll eligible low-income clients in the LIFE Program. Metro is collaborating with CBOs, including County and City of LA agencies to assist with mass enrollment. Leveraging existing public support systems and programs will serve as an opportunity to further streamline the LIFE eligibility and enrollment process, therefore Metro is pursuing high-touch opportunities to facilitate co-enrollment for low-income

clients of public agency service providers such as the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) which oversees and administers various relief programs through the County as well as the Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA), which serves as the administrator and operators of County owned and operated housing facilities and Section 8 rental subsidy programs.

- Social Services Co-Enrollments: The opportunity to co-enroll pre-qualified low-income clients of public agencies' social services programs will provide automatic access to the LIFE Program benefits for more than 1 million County residents. Therefore, through the LIFE Enrollment Plan, Staff will focus efforts on developing collaborations with designated public agency service providers to establish procedures and/or partnering agreements to allow clients to auto qualify and enroll in the LIFE Program. If automatic enrollment is not feasible due to technical or privacy considerations, Metro staff will collaborate with agency partners to distribute enrollment materials and information to participants in programs such as but not limited to:
 - Angeleno Card program
 - Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card program
 - California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs)
 - Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI)
 - CalFresh
 - Basic Income Guaranteed: L.A. Economic Assistance Pilot.

<u>Timeline:</u> Efforts will be initiated in November 2021 through December 2022

• **Transit Operator Partnerships:** Recognizing the LIFE program is a regional program that offers discounts for low-income riders throughout Los Angeles County, Metro is collaborating with the participating transit operators in promoting the program with the riders, identifying pop

up locations and requesting transit stores to accept and/or screen LIFE applications. Currently, 13 transit operators, including Metro are participating:

o Antelope Valley Transit o Big Blue Bus o Culver City Bus o Foothill Transit o Gardena Transit o Long Beach Transit o Los Angeles DOT o Montebello Transit o Norwalk Transit o Pasadena Transit o Santa Clarita Transit o Torrance Transit

III. Public Engagement and Marketing Program:

To support the direct enrollment and co-enrollment activities, Staff is implementing a robust, multicultural, multi-channel public engagement and marketing program to inform, identify and support the enhanced LIFE Program. Through the following activities Metro will:

- Execute a multi-cultural marketing/advertising campaign that will inform and educate the
 residents of Los Angeles County on fare resumption, half off passes and the LIFE program,
 with a strong emphasis on driving sign-ups to the LIFE program. This campaign will utilize inlanguage local print media, radio and TV as well as social and digital media assets. It will also
 include Metro-owned assets, including digital, bus and rail cards, posters, Metro.net and
 Metro's Blog.
- Highlight promotional passes and other discount programs at point of sale (POS) locations, including TVMs, Metro Customer Care centers, and TAP website.
- Integrate fare resumption message into NextGen/December shake up materials where space is available
- Utilize point of level communication tactics to inform customers of the LIFE program, fare collection, including ambassadors, signage at bus stops, alert banner on Metro.net, push alerts to 70,000 Transit app users and all other digital assets
- Utilize seat drops on the Metro bus system to distribute LIFE Program information
- Utilize Metro's Street Teams on the bus and rail system to distribute materials and information directly to riders

- Drive enrollees to the online portal via earned and paid media channels that 30-Day, 7-Day and 1-Day passes are half price for a promotional limited time.
- Educate and inform current cash-paying customers of the LIFE program, including additional discounts available as part of the half-off passes promotion.
- Drive awareness to LIFE participants that their passes will be deeply discounted.
- Update the application to be "mobile first" moving away from using a PDF to complete the application; and conduct other tactical and strategic activities.

In effort to achieve the enrollment goal, Staff will pursue robust engagement, collaboration and partnering opportunities with civic organizations, CBOs and elected officials such as:

- Partnering with elected officials, civic organizations, and CBO's to:
 - Provide general information on Metro's discounted fare programs, with targeted communication on additional pass discounts to LIFE participants and current pass holders.
 - Encourage the inclusion of LIFE materials and links to the online portal through established email and newsletter distribution lists
- Partnering with community-based organizations to educate and identify potential LIFE participants on the bus and rail system.
- Partnering with community-based organizations to identify and conduct outreach and engagement at culturally appropriate community gathering places such as barber shops, salons, shopping centers, and community events.
- Engage Metro advisory bodies including Metro Service Councils, Community Advisory Committee, Public Safety Advisory Committee to promote and distribute information about the LIFE program
- Incorporate LIFE program messaging into blast emails and communications for Metro projects, programs, and initiatives in the planning and construction phase.

<u>Timeline:</u> Efforts will be initiated in November 2021 through December 2022

LIFE Enrollment Projections

Preliminary LIFE enrollment projections have been established based on the current levels of enrollment from the online portal, pop-up events, FAME/IILA and partnering CBO agencies' enrollments, and the expected enrollment through partnerships with County agencies and public

service providers. The current enrollment levels are expected to increase as a result of the expanded marketing campaigns which will increase program visibility, the 90-day free transit pass enrollment incentive, and easier sign-ups with the self-certify option. It is anticipated that enrollments will significantly increase upon fare collection resumption in January 2022. The projected enrollments as result of coordinated efforts initiated in October 2021 are summarized in the LIFE Monthly Enrollment Projections Chart (Attachment E).

Metro staff will continue to assess the effectiveness of the Enrollment Plan over the next fourteen months through December 2022, and staff will make needed adjustments based on enrollment results. Staff in collaboration with the contracted LIFE Program administrators, FAME and IILA, will monitor the projected enrollment targets, the actual enrollments, develop and program performance metrics that will be assessed monthly and reported quarterly.

<u>Timeline:</u> Efforts initiated beginning October 2021 through December 2022

EQUITY PLATFORM

The LIFE Program Strategic Double Enrollment Plan is a multi-pronged plan centered on partnering with the LIFE program administrators, CBOs, and public agency service providers within Los Angeles County's diverse communities and specific geographic areas to build awareness of the LIFE Program and the benefits afforded through enrollment; including to identify qualifying low-income riders, people and households; and to help facilitate the enrollment or co-enrollment of vulnerable people in the LIFE Program. The Enrollment Plan will be supported by a communications and public engagement plan that commits to providing non-English translation and multilingual, culturally appropriate materials. Additionally, the plan seeks to meet community members where they are to reduce barriers to Metro updates and information. These efforts will target messaging and access to enrollment to economically vulnerable people in our communities and improve access to transit through discounted passes and the enhanced LIFE Program.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The Enrollment Plan supports strategic goal #3 "Enhancing communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity" by providing financial relief by reducing the cost of riding transit for all riders, especially the most economically vulnerable people in our communities.

NEXT STEPS

Over the next two-weeks staff will continue to focus efforts in preparation for the formal 45-day LIFE Program enrollment period which commences November 26, 2021. Recognizing staff has initiated early actions to facilitate the "soft-launch" of the enhanced self-certify application process, over the next 30 days staff will continue to focus efforts on formalizing partnerships with community-based organizations and public agency service providers such as the DPSS, LACDA, and others in support of co-enrollment and/or mass distribution of LIFE Program information to existing clients and/or program applicants. Lastly, staff will return to the Board in January with an update.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Motion 40 - Fareless Systems Initiative (FSI) Attachment B - LIFE Program Enrollment Activity Matrix Attachment C - LIFE Outreach Events Equity Focus Communities Map Attachment D - LIFE Program Enrollment Pop-Up and Outreach Events Schedule Attachment E - LIFE Monthly Enrollment Projections Chart

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Metro

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority One Gateway Plaza 3rd Floor Board Room Los Angeles, CA



Board Report

File #: 2021-0627, File Type: Motion / Motion Response

Agenda Number: 40.

REGULAR BOARD MEETING SEPTEMBER 23, 2021

Motion by:

DIRECTORS MITCHELL, SOLIS, GARCETTI, SANDOVAL, BONIN, AND DUPONT-WALKER

Related to Item 35: Fareless System Initiative (FSI)

Effective March 23, 2020, former LA Metro CEO Phil Washington ordered that all passengers shall board the rear door when entering an LA Metro bus and, accordingly, removed the requirement for bus passengers to use the fare box. This practice was established to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmissions on transit and to protect transit operators at the front of the bus from potential exposure to COVID-19. While put in place as a health pandemic response, this practice has been one of the most effective strategies in our region to respond to the economic pandemic our communities face.

Riders and community advocates quickly embraced LA Metro's fare free bus service and in August 2020, CEO Washington announced the formation of the Fareless System Initiative (FSI) Task Force to study the potential for continuing fare-free service as a recovery strategy to continue after the pandemic. The Task Force's research confirmed what riders already know; that LA Metro's riders are overwhelmingly low-income people of color for whom transit fares are an economic burden and for whom fare enforcement perpetuates racial disparities. Furthermore, the Task Force found that a fareless system would grow ridership and help the region meet its mobility, congestion reduction, and sustainability goals more effectively than almost any other LA Metro initiative. Buoyed by these findings, on May 27, 2021, the Board directed staff to proceed with FSI, subject to a final financial plan, which is before the Board for consideration today.

The financial plan identifies funding for free student passes as Phase 1 of FSI. Staff has moved quickly to build on the previously existing U-Pass program to expand free student passes to students in every participating school district throughout the county. However, the financial plan does not identify the funding needed to move forward and launch Phase 2 of FSI, which would serve all low-income riders. In the interim, staff proposes to build on the existing LIFE Program as a first step toward FSI Phase 2, until additional funding can be secured.

Increasing enrollment in the LIFE Program is an important interim step for an expansion of FSI. If implemented, it will create a pre-qualified pool of applicants for FSI Phase 2. While enrollment has grown since its launch in 2019, the LIFE Program still falls far short of its intended impact, largely due

to intimidating, restrictive, and tedious enrollment barriers. The current LIFE Program design will require an overhaul to meet the needs of eligible low-income riders. Namely, the LIFE Program must be far easier to enroll in, more accessible, easier to pay for, and truly affordable for low-income riders.

Our communities are still faced with a dual economic and health pandemic that racial and economic inequalities have further exacerbated. Programs across this region-created to support families in need-will be expiring later this year, despite evidence that these programs have collectively spurred a record drop in poverty (as much as half according to the Urban Institute). Costs will quickly escalate for families, many of whom are still unemployed, taking care of children and loved ones at home, and paying off rental debt. LA Metro must do more to prevent the resumption of fares from exacerbating economic distress among economically vulnerable people in our communities. Removing financial barriers for those who cannot afford transportation creates a lifeline for those who need access to essential travel.

Revamping the LIFE Program will alleviate the impact of fares on low-income riders while preparing LA Metro to implement FSI Phase 2.

SUBJECT: AMENDMENT TO FARELESS SYSTEM INITIATIVE (FSI)

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE Motion by Mitchell, Solis, Garcetti, Sandoval, Bonin, and <u>Dupont-Walker</u> that the Board direct the Chief Executive Officer to:

- A. Develop a plan to double the number of LIFE Program enrollees by the end of 2022.
- B. Expedite a streamlined application system that enables on-the-spot enrollment and the immediate issuance of LIFE Program benefits through a process that allows applicants to self-certify qualification in the program. Applicants should attest that their information and eligibility in the program is accurate under penalty of fine.
- C. Ensure the fare capping pilot approved by the Board in March 2021 applies to LIFE Program participants.
- D. Expand partnerships with local, state, and federal public benefit programs to automatically enroll members in LIFE upon qualification.
- E. Partner with community-based organizations to canvass LA Metro buses and trains to enroll qualifying riders.
- F. Provide three months of fareless transit to new enrollees as an incentive to enrollment, beginning upon the resumption of fare collection.
- G. Evaluate whether qualified applicants can enroll in the LIFE Program with the next generation of touch screen TAP Vending Machines.

WE, FURTHER MOVE, that the Board direct the Chief Executive Officer to:

- H. Continue the current boarding practices until prospective participants can enroll-on-the spot and self-certify their eligibility, with no less than 90 days for promotion and 45 days for enrollment before fare collection resumes. The resumption of fare collection should also be subject to a 45day awareness-building period that fares collection will resume as detailed in Attachment I of the September 2021 FSI report (Board File 2021-0574).
- I. Return to the Board in January 2022 with an update on LIFE Program changes.
- <u>J.</u> Conduct a LIFE Program evaluation in partnership with community-based organizations -- to:
 - 1. Develop additional strategies that support the enrollment of new participants in the LIFE Program.
 - 2. Survey and convene current and prospective LIFE Program enrollees on how well the current program meets the needs of eligible applicants.
 - 3. Review current benefit levels and recommend changes, as appropriate.

BONIN AMENDMENT:

I would like Metro staff to come back to us in your next report with a more reasonable evaluation of the benefits and costs of going truly fareless. This analysis needs to consider:

- A. <u>A phased approach that winds down contracts rather than breaching them.</u>
- B. <u>The cost of anticipated upgrades and maintenance of our fare collection system that could be</u> <u>avoided.</u>
- C. <u>Realistic ridership and fare revenue forecasts that take into account actual ridership trends,</u> use today's ridership as a baseline, and factor in already Board-approved discounts, including today's actions.
- D. <u>Operational savings from reduced bus dwell times and reduced staff needs for fare collection</u> and enforcement.
- E. <u>Validating cost assumptions from munis.</u>
- F. <u>Looking more holistically at Access Services, including potential savings from Federal waivers</u> and coordination with Microtransit; and
- G. Look at universal \$26 pass proposal from Bus Riders Union.

KUEHL AMENDMENT:

Report back on the communication plan.

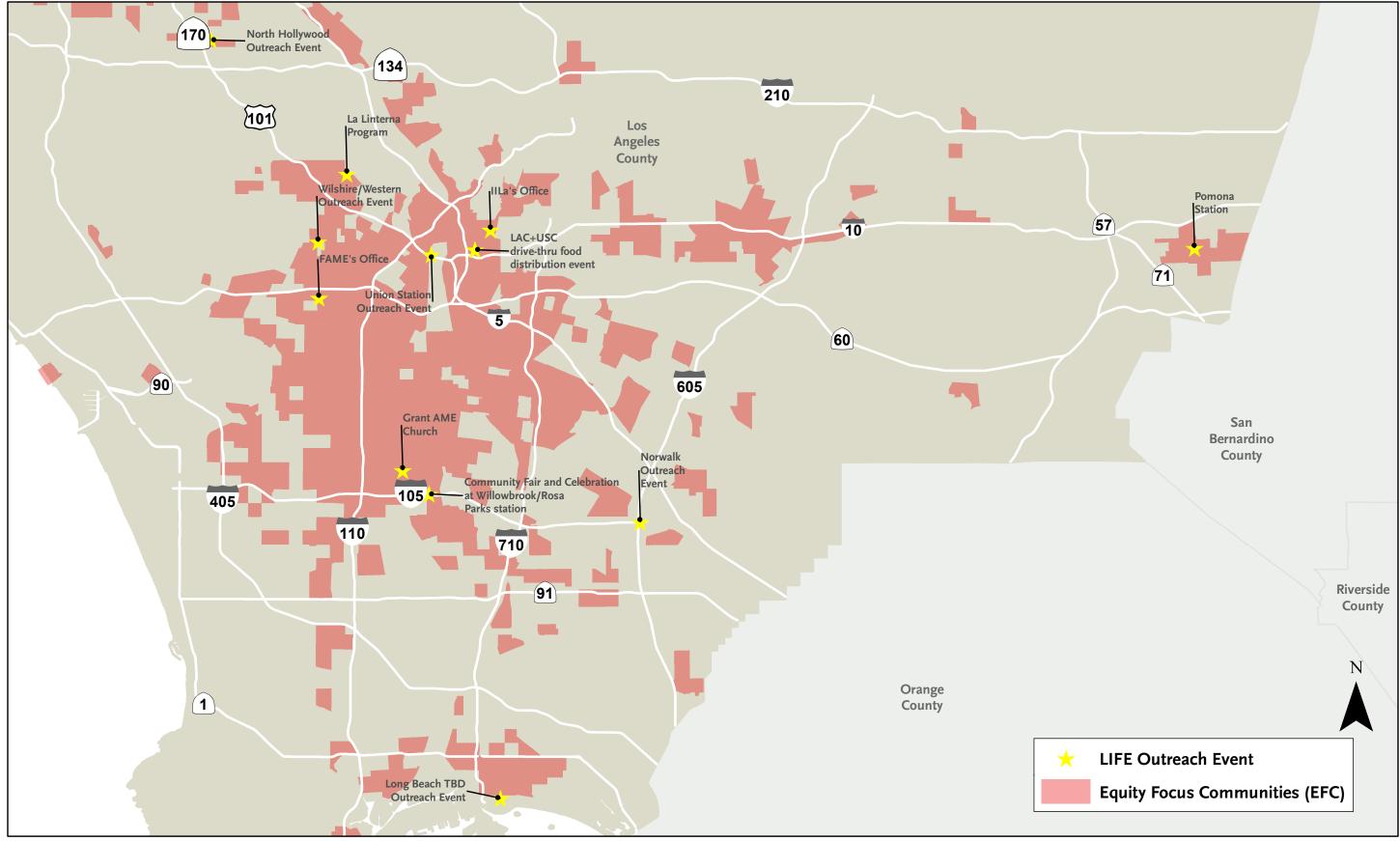
LIFE PROGRAM ENROLLMENT EXPANSION

Activity Matrix

November 2021

Activity/Timeline	November –	January – March	April-June	July – September	October –
	December 2021	2022	2022	2022	December 2022
Direct Enrollment Activities					
Regional Pop-Up Events					
Administrator/CBO Partner Events					
Enrollment Centers					
LIFE Online Portal					
Co-Enrollment Activities					
LA County DPSS					
LA City Basic Income Program					
Transit Operator Partnership					
Public Engagement and					
Marketing Program					
Paid and Earned Media					
Street Teams					
NextGen Shakeup					
Transit App/POS					
Seat Drops					
CBO Partners					

LIFE Outreach Events



ATTACHMENT C

ATTACHMENT D

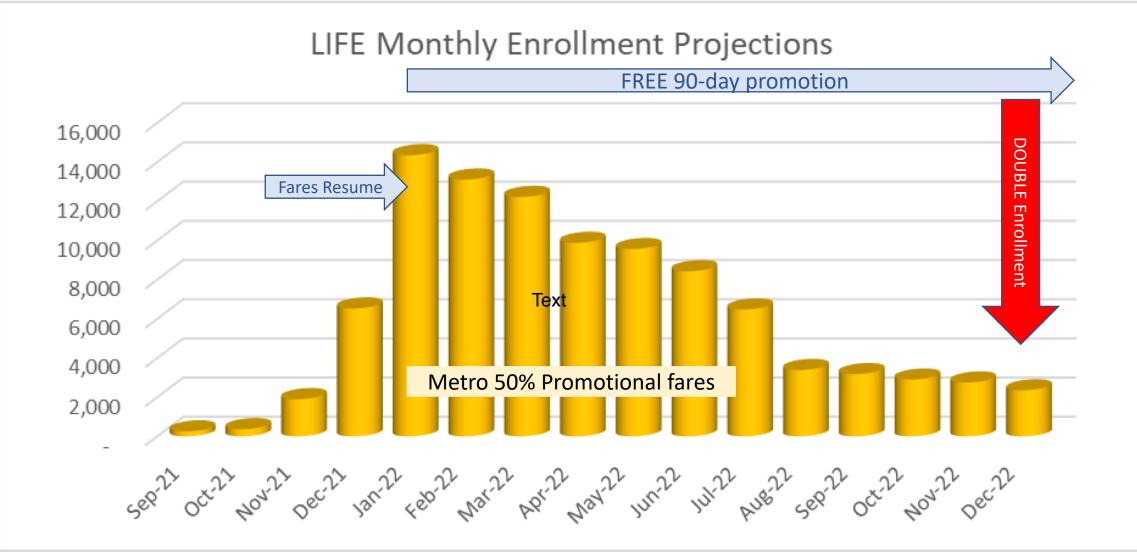
LIFE PROGRAM ENROLLMENT EXPANSION Pop-up & Outreach Events As of November 2021

	EVENT LOCATION	ADDRESS	EVENT DATE	SCHEDULED TIME	Equity Focus Community
1.					
	La Linterna Program	4650 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90027	November 5, 2021	8:00am-3:00pm	Х
2.	IILa's Office	3845 Selig Place, Los Angeles, CA 90031	November 12, 2021	9:00am-2:00pm	Х
3.	LAC+USC drive-through food distribution event	1200 N State Street Los Angeles, CA 90033	November 12, 2021	12:00pm-2:00pm	Х
4.	Grant AME Church	10435 S. Cental Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90002	November 12, 2021	10:00am-2:30pm	Х
5.	FAME's Office	1968 W. Adams Blvd., Los Angeles CA 90018	November 15, 2021	10:00am-3:00pm	Х
6.	Union Station Outreach Event	One Gateway Plaza, LA CA 90012	November 17, 2021	10:00am-2:30pm	
7.	LAC+USC walk-up food distribution event	1200 N State Street Los Angeles, CA 90033	November 17, 2021	8:00am-12:00pm	Х
8.	La Linterna Program	4650 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90027	November 19, 2021	8:00am-3:00pm	Х
9.	Community Fair and Celebration at Willowbrook/Rosa Parks Station	11611 Willowbrook Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90059	November 19, 2021	10:00am-2:30pm	х
10.	Norwalk Outreach Event	12901 Hoxie Ave, Norwalk, CA 90650	December 1, 2021	8:00am-3:30pm	
11.	North Hollywood Outreach Event	5391 Lankershim Blvd, North Hollywood, CA 91601	December 2, 2021	8:30am-3:30pm	

ATTACHMENT D

12.					
	IILa's Office	3845 Selig Place, Los Angeles, CA 90031	December 3, 2021	9:00am-2:00pm	Х
13.					Х
La Linterna Program 4		4650 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90027	December 3, 2021	8:00am-3:00pm	
14.	100 W Commercial St, Pomona, CA				
	Pomona Station	91768	December 6, 2021	8:00am-4:00pm	Х
15.	Wilshire/Western Outreach	3775 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles, CA			
	Event	90005	December 8, 2021	10:00am-2:30pm	Х
16.		100 W Commercial St, Pomona, CA			
	Pomona Outreach Event	91768	December 9, 2021	8:00am-3:30pm	Х
17.	LAC+USC walk-up food	1200 N State Street Los Angeles, CA	December 15,		
	distribution event	90033	2021	8:00am-12:00pm	Х
18.	Long Beach TBD Outreach		December 16,		
	Event	130 E. First Street, Long Beach, CA 90802	2021	8:00am-3:30pm	
19.			December 17,		
	La Linterna Program	4650 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90027	2021	8:00am-3:00pm	Х
20.		100 W Commercial St, Pomona, CA	December 20,		
	Pomona Station	91768	2021	8:00am-4:00pm	Х

ATTACHMENT E



- 1. Expect significant uptick when fare resumes in January
- 2. Nov/Dec are holiday months which will impact enrollment (anticipated uptick with the extensive marketing campaign)
- 3. County partnerships will play significant role in increased enrollment