

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 10:00AM March 17, 2021

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Ahead of key Metro Board hearing, “Metro As A Sanctuary” report reimagines safety for all riders by divesting in policing and investing in improving rider experience

Los Angeles, CA—The **Alliance for Community Transit - Los Angeles (ACT-LA)** released a report titled “[Metro As A Sanctuary](#)” in advance of Thursday’s Operations, Safety, and Customer Experience Committee meeting, urging the Metro Board of Directors to reimagine safety for all riders.

The report, authored by ACT-LA, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Southern California, CoDesign @ Harvard Graduate School of Design, Public Counsel- Statewide Education Rights Project, and Tamika L. Butler Consulting, with additional research by UCLA School of Law Veterans Legal Clinic, outlines how the Metro Board of Directors has an exciting opportunity to reshape rider safety by divesting from the \$796 million, five-year, multi-agency policing contract that the agency will consider renewing later this year for 2022-27 and instead invest in measures that would improve the experience and the safety of all Metro riders.

"Responding to calls for improved transit safety by entrenching police on buses and trains is wrong. It must stop," said **Asiyahola Sankara**, Transit Justice Campaign Manager and Legal Researcher at **ACT-LA**. "The L.A. Metro Board of Directors must act to reimagine safety on transit by ending the five-year police contracts and investing in the care-centered safety infrastructure riders deserve. The future of transit safety looks like transit ambassadors, environmental design, outreach and services—not police."

"Metro’s current law enforcement approach is based on an illusion of safety through the presence of armed police, and the result makes Black riders feel targeted and criminalizes poverty," said **Adrienna Wong of ACLU of Southern California**. "Right now an earthshaking movement to reimagine public safety has lifted its voice, and by listening to it, Metro can join the conversation that’s taking place across Los Angeles

County and among transit authorities across the country. Let's move away from the punitive model and invest in a holistic vision of safety for all riders. The Metro Board of Directors has the opportunity to lead, and undo the policies that have made buses and trains oppressive and unwelcome for too many."

The report finds that the current police-first punitive model criminalizes poverty, disproportionately impacts Black people who receive citations at more than double the rate of their ridership, and "plays a role in the cycle of mass incarceration that often begins with racial profiling and criminalization."

"Residents of Los Angeles have made it clear through activism and at the ballot box that business as usual is not good enough. An improved rider experience that centers safety for all and the most vulnerable riders can fuel local economic growth and increase ridership in the long-term," **said Carmina Calderon**, Community Organizer with **Community Power Collective**. "By divesting in a punitive police-first model and investing in job creation, inclusive safety services, and rider-friendly active spaces, we can create a more just, inclusive, and downright joyous transit system—a welcoming sanctuary for every passenger regardless of race, housing status, or accessibility."

The report argues that "Transit riders deserve care-centered, community-based planning and design approaches. Public transportation is indispensable to people's livelihoods and mobility needs, especially among BIPOC communities." Achieving this vision is possible by investing in six pillars of community safety:

- **Rider-friendly active spaces** that emphasize a transit system's ability to foster community and improve a rider's experience;
- **Replacing police officers with Metro staff** to act as transit ambassadors and trust agents trained to promote inclusive safety and accessibility;
- **Programming** that taps into transit stations' ability to promote public health, art, and feelings of safety through rider-centered design;
- **Support services** that are more budget-efficient and effective at aiding unhoused riders than the current reliance on police-led response teams;
- **Multi-lingual public education campaigns** and bystander trainings that encourage riders to care for each other in a community-based transit system;
- **Creating well-paying jobs** as higher ridership generates local commerce and an increased need for maintenance and operating staff.

ACT-LA plans to present more of the report's findings during a public webinar on Tuesday, March 23 at 10am-12pm PT. Every person interested in reimagining Metro's model of safety for all is encouraged to attend. [The link to RSVP can be accessed here.](#)

The Alliance for Community Transit-Los Angeles (ACT-LA) strives to create community transit – just, equitable, sustainable transit systems and neighborhoods for ALL people in Los Angeles, placing the interests of low-income communities and communities of color first as we create a more sustainable city.

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