



September 8, 2015

VIA EMAIL (washingtonp@metro.net)

Philip Washington, CEO
Metro
1 Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Mr. Washington,

We write to express our concern regarding public safety at the many Metro light and heavy rail stations located throughout Los Angeles. As reported last year, an audit found that the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department failed to adequately secure Metro's bus and rail lines.¹ As the Los Angeles Times reported, the audit states that "[w]ithout a coordinated policing plan for the countywide transit system, deputies have not been able to help passengers with questions and do not have a 'felt presence' on trains and buses []. It also found that the department has no way to quickly route emergency calls to other law enforcement agencies when their assistance is needed."² As Mayor Garcetti said, "[i]f there's a feeling that people aren't safe, that affects our ridership."³ We completely agree.

The reality is that with no Metro or law enforcement personnel permanently assigned to rail stations, riders are too often subjected to harassment, threats, and intimidation. Riders simply have no recourse, no one to turn to for assistance. Stations are places where people congregate. As such, some see this as an opportunity to victimize riders. Compounding the issue, is the lack of any wireless or cellular service in many of Metro's stations and trains. Riders are left to fend for themselves. This is unacceptable, especially in the nation's third-largest bus and rail system.

And in the Red Line, riders are trapped in individual cars between stations where they are subjected to whatever whims a rider may wish to impose on others. In one incident, a physical altercation broke out in a train car as it was traveling between stations. Riders in the car ran from one end to another to avoid being hit. As soon as the train came to the station, everyone fled for the doors. There was no law enforcement present, no communication from the conductor, absolutely nothing. Riders were again left to fend for themselves.

Another recent Los Angeles Times article, published on August 25, further illustrates the dire state of affairs in riding Metro.⁴ The article recounted incidents of sexual harassment that riders

¹ http://media.metro.net/about_us/oig/images/14aud08_lasd_audit_2014-Jun.pdf

² <http://www.latimes.com/local/cityhall/la-me-transit-audit-20140724-story.html>

³ *Id.*

⁴ <http://www.latimes.com/local/crime/la-me-mta-rider-harassment-20150825-story.html>

encountered while riding Metro trains. These riders, unfortunately, could not locate the appropriate personnel to report the incident, and according to the article, after the “train reached Union Station, a security guard pointed [the rider] to two uniformed Metro employees, who said they would have to find a sheriff’s deputy to help her. As they searched, they told her that filing a report would be ‘useless’ without the number of the train car she’d been in.” In her words, the rider described the incident as follows:

The whole process was so disheartening . . . Everyone wanted to direct me to someone else. They have people to check to see if your fare is paid, to make sure they get their money, but they don’t actually care about what happens.

Metro **must** do better. Provided below is a list of actions that the [Downtown Los Angeles] Neighborhood Council requests be immediately considered and implemented to protect the public, increase safety, reduce liability, and improve ridership:

1. **Station Presence:** Assign full-time Metro personnel to each and every major light and heavy rail station and make their presence known at all hours of operation.
2. **Safety:** Increase law enforcement presence in stations and trains. In lines where cars are not interconnected to enable riders to move from one car to another, law enforcement should make rounds by visiting each train car by moving between cars at stations.
3. **Mobile Reporting App:** While we understand that wireless and/or cellular infrastructure will be installed in the coming months, Metro should better publicize its Transit Watch app or create a more robust mobile application to enable riders to contact law enforcement, report crimes, report vandalism, request clean-ups, and report issues. The existence of Transit Watch was a surprise to many, who had never heard of this application. Alternatively, Metro should consider consolidating its Go Metro app with the Transit Watch app, as it makes little sense to have two different applications where one would suffice.
4. **Training:** Train conductors on how to identify trouble riders and to interject by intercom where an incident appears to be escalating. If necessary, call for law enforcement.
5. **Lighting:** Pedestrian thoroughfares leading to Metro stations should be well lit.
6. **Surveillance:** Install video surveillance to monitor stations and install signage informing riders of video monitoring.
7. **Designate Safety Zones:** In stations, designate a safety waiting zone that is actively monitored by video surveillance and has intercoms readily available within the spaces to call for help or report any suspicious activity. The waiting zones would act as safe havens for late night riders and deter would-be attackers. Zones similar to these have been

installed in the Taipei Metro system.⁵



These actions, if implemented, would discourage illicit behavior and increase safety, reduce liability, and improve ridership. Thank you for your attention to these issues.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

Patricia Berman
DLANC President

Eric R. Garcia
DLANC Community Impact Committee Chair

CC: Stephanie Wiggins - Deputy Chief Executive Officer (wiginss@metro.net)
Gregory Kildare - Enterprise Risk, Safety & Asset Management (kildareg@metro.net)
Vijay Khawani - Corporate Safety (khawaniv@metro.net)
Duane Martin – Project Management (martind@metro.net)
Mark Ridley-Thomas (markridley-thomas@bos.lacounty.gov)
John Fasana (fasanaj@accessduarte.com)
Eric Garcetti (mayor.garcetti@lacity.org)
Michael Antonovich (fifthdistrict@lacbos.org)
Mike Bonin (mike.bonin@lacity.org)
Diane DuBois (kheit@gatewaycog.org)
Don Knabe (AskDon@bos.lacounty.gov)
Paul Krekorian (councilmember.krekorian@lacity.org)
Sheila Kuehl (sheila@bos.lacounty.gov)
Ara Najarian (anajarian@glendaleca.gov)
James Butts (mayor@cityofinglewood.org)
Hilda L. Solis (Hilda@hildasolis.com)
Jim McDonnell (jmcdonnell@lasd.org)

⁵ <https://openideo.com/challenge/womens-safety/research/zoned-safety-nighttime-safety-zones-in-taipei-transit-system>