

A LETTER FROM THE METRO BOARD CHAIR



How METRO Has Responded to the COVID-19 Outbreak

May 18, 2020

Dear friends,

As we all navigate through this challenging time, I wanted to share with you the many actions METRO has taken to keep our riders and employees safe, flatten the curve, support community relief efforts, and plan for the gradual reopening of our local economy.

METRO has asked its riders to take only essential trips. Yet during this time, METRO is providing about 100,000 rides every weekday to essential jobs (including health care jobs in the Texas Medical Center), grocery stores, pharmacies and doctors' offices. Also, METROLift, our paratransit service, gives about 2,000 rides every weekday to people with disabilities. To put this in context, during normal times METRO provides 280,000 rides every weekday and 7,000 rides every weekday on METROLift.

METRO's number one priority is always the health and safety of our customers, our employees, and our community. Thus, in early March, we began implementing a series of precautions to prevent or minimize transmission of COVID-19. The measures currently in effect are synopsisized in the fact sheet below, and include:

- Coordinating closely with the county, city, and other governmental entities on measures to flatten the curve of COVID-19.
- Encouraging only essential trips.
- Frequently disinfecting METRO vehicles and operating facilities, including added midday cleaning of vehicles, with emphasis on frequently-touched surfaces such as handrails, handholds and seats.
- Temporarily suspending fares to prevent unnecessary touches and provide financial relief during this challenging time.
- Posting signs on all buses and rail cars asking each rider to follow CDC recommendations, including to: stay home if you're sick; wash your hands for 20 seconds before boarding and after disembarking; cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing or cough or sneeze into your elbow; and avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Further communicating CDC safety protocols through signs, social media, website information, and public service announcements on local media.
- Giving all employees temperature checks upon reporting to work.
- Instructing employees who feel ill not to report to work.
- Requiring bus operators to wear masks and carry hand sanitizers for personal use.
- Implementing rear-door bus boarding for all but mobility-impaired riders and using mesh fencing to enforce social distancing between operators and passengers.
- Limiting riders' ability to sit too close to one another by marking seats unavailable to ensure social distancing.
- Making buses available to handle overflow from the reduced seating capacity.
- Encouraging riders to wear masks, providing brochures on how to make your own mask, and providing a mask to any rider who lacks one.
- If a bus operator tests positive, immediately disseminating information on the routes, days, and times the driver drove, encouraging riders to monitor themselves carefully, and asking that they not ride the system for 14 days.
- Implementing technologies allowing employees, such as call center operators, to do their jobs from home.
- Holding meetings – including Board meetings – through ZOOM and other virtual means.
- Staying in frequent contact with transit agencies all over the country to make sure METRO is keeping abreast of the best practices in coping with the pandemic, and to share our own initiatives.

METRO has also been a full partner in community relief efforts. For example, working with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, METROLift drivers have made thousands of grocery deliveries to those in need. METRO has also provided relief buses at testing sites.

As we move forward, METRO will keep working closely with local public health and other officials to respond appropriately as developments occur, and will keep everyone informed about service and other changes through service alerts, news releases, social media, email blasts and the special coronavirus landing page at RideMETRO.org.

METRO is continuously assessing demand so that we can increase METRO services as needs increase. During peak periods in normal times, more than one-third of the rides to downtown, and approximately 30% of rides to the medical center, occur on METRO. As businesses reopen, we will be working with our business partners to implement additional measures that can handle the increasing demand while keeping our transit system safe for all riders. So that METRO has the capacity to maintain social distancing on our normally full Park & Ride buses, for example, staggered work times could be implemented. We also suggest that all businesses provide cloth washable and reusable masks and hand sanitizer to their employees for use while on transit and elsewhere. (The masks METRO supplies to riders are not meant for continual reuse, and available supplies could conceivably run low.) We are fully focused on developing all necessary procedures to ensure the health and safety of our workforce and the public.

In the meantime, METRO is taking incremental steps to resume service. On Monday, May 11, METRO opened for normal operations the 100 miles of HOV/HOT lanes that we operate. Moreover, in addition to the Park & Ride service we have continued to provide to the TMC, on Monday, May 18 we began limited service on other select Park & Ride routes, while maintaining the precautions set forth above.

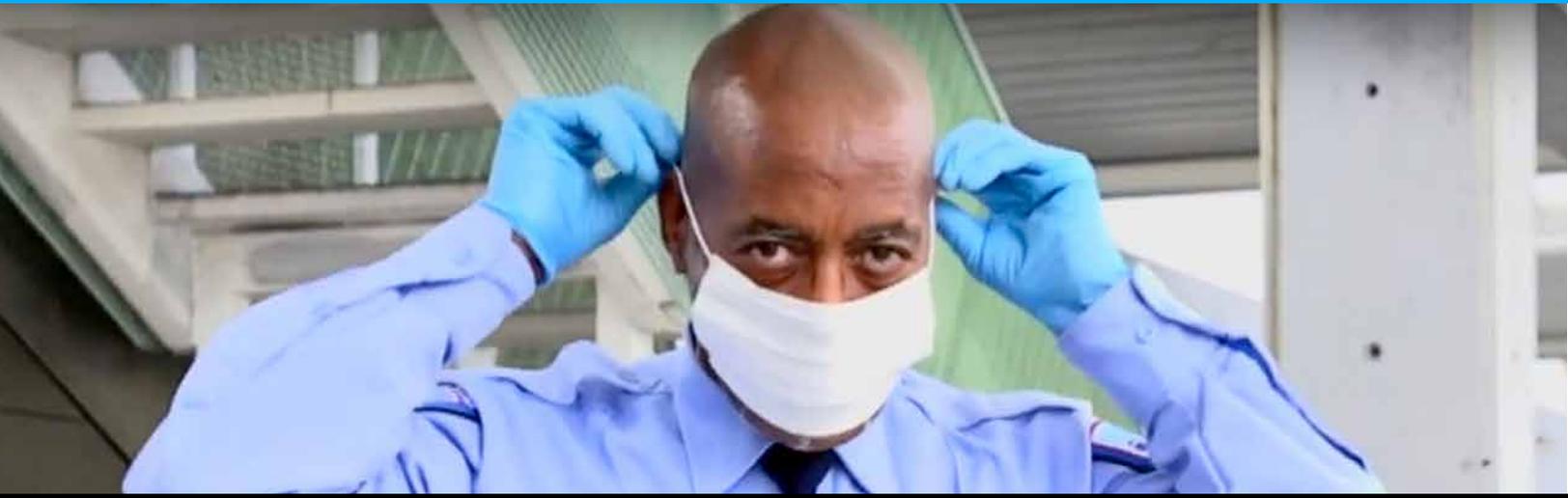
In summary, we remain committed to providing vital transportation services and being a great community partner. Please let us know if we can help you in any way. We welcome hearing from you directly at **713-739-4832**, or by e-mail to me at carrin.patman@ridemetro.org or to our CEO Tom Lambert at tom.lambert@ridemetro.org.

We look forward to our great region's emergence from this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Carrin F. Patman

CARRIN F. PATMAN
METRO Chair



SAFETY IS OUR PRIORITY

Providing Essential Service for Essential People

METRO is committed to the safety of our customers and employees during this challenging time as we respond to COVID-19.

WHAT WE'RE DOING



✓ Moving People

- **Transportation is vital** as it relates to essential employees and others who depend on METRO
- **Adding buses** to our most traveled routes including those in the Texas Medical Center
- **Adding a TMC Shuttle** route to move essential employees in the Texas Medical Center



✓ Keeping the System Clean

- Continued emphasis on **disinfecting surfaces** touched by the public
- Ongoing dedication to thorough, **daily cleaning of bus and rail vehicles as well as additional midday cleaning**
- Frequent **cleaning of bus shelters and rail platforms**



✓ Encouraging Social Distancing

- Installing **seat tags** on bus and rail vehicles to encourage social distancing
- Monitoring boardings per vehicle to enable a safe **passenger capacity of 50 percent**
- Instituting **rear boarding** to reduce bus operator and customer interaction
- **Adding buses to routes** with more riders to enable social distancing
- **Installing orange mesh barriers** to keep more distance between bus operators and customers



✓ Focusing on People

- Encouraging people to **wear a face mask**, providing information on how to make a face mask, and working to make masks available to people as requested
- Offering **free fares** to limit unnecessary exposure for customers and employees
- Requiring **temperature checks** for all employees at METRO facilities
- **Providing masks and hand sanitizer** to all bus and rail operators



✓ Going the Extra Mile

- Using METROLift vehicles to **deliver groceries to those in need** in conjunction with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities
- Providing relief buses at **testing sites**
- Acting as a **leader in the industry** by sharing best practices and educational materials with other transit agencies
- Working to show ongoing **appreciation for frontline employees**



✓ Communicating the Message

- Printing and distributing more than **250,000** pieces of educational material on best practices
- Running **safety announcements on rail platforms and buses**, and including safety messages on bus destination signs
- Providing **service alert updates** on specific routes and service
- Partnering with media outlets to run **METRO Public Service Announcements (PSAs)** on radio and television
- Staying in close **communication with local authorities** to provide service tailored to our regional needs
- Providing ongoing updates with **press releases, social media content and email blasts**

NEXT STEPS

METRO continues to monitor service needs throughout the region. We remain dedicated to being the transportation provider for our region.

RIDEMETRO.ORG