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**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
JANUARY 16, 2014**

**SUBJECT: LOS ANGELES UNION STATION SECURITY AND MAINTENANCE  
PILOT PROGRAM**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

**RECOMMENDATION**

Receive and File Report on Los Angeles Union Station (“LAUS”) Security and Maintenance Pilot Program.

**ISSUE**

In December 2013, Metro staff instituted a pilot security and maintenance program to address serious health, safety and operational concerns at LAUS related primarily to non-transit visitors to the station. This report provides background for the Board as to the issues that arose, the actions undertaken to address the issues and the next steps to be taken.

**DISCUSSION**

**Background**

In April 2011, Metro purchased the approximately 40 acres containing the historic Union Station and rail yards. With the purchase of this asset, we both secured the hub of the region’s rail operations and the opportunity to create one of the finest multi-modal transportation facilities in the country. In addition, purchase of the property brought with it stewardship responsibilities for one of the most iconic architectural treasures in the country. At the same time as the Board authorized purchase of the property, it directed staff to develop a master plan for the property. During the development of the master plan, the Board has given strong consistent direction that our goals for the property included maximizing the property’s function as a premier multi-modal facility and creating a sense of place that welcomed the entire community. A place that would become a destination for Angelenos and visitors alike, a family oriented place that was both a portal to all the attractions the city and the county had to offer but also a destination in and of itself. The master plan, the station management and the capital improvement plans have all been driven by these over-riding objectives.

## Statement of the Problem

Over the last several months, conditions at Union Station have deteriorated with a large influx of non-transit users, loitering and encamping on the station property.

Management of the station began documenting the station conditions, including taking a census of persons camping in and around the historic station. On August 8, 2013, a census was taken that identified over 468 persons at 4:00 a.m. occupying the station and the grounds. They literally occupied every seat in the station (282) to the exclusion of arriving Amtrak passengers needing to wait for a connecting train. This condition resulted in increased maintenance requirements, increased calls on law enforcement and other operational concerns. A management decision was made to close the station to the non-traveling public between the hours of 1:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m. to allow for maintenance activities. Following this change, new counts were made and the numbers of non-transit persons loitering or encamping fell to approximately 114.

Despite these efforts, conditions in the station during Station operating hours continued to deteriorate, as non-transit visitors re-entered the station immediately upon opening at 4:00 a.m. and occupied all the seating in the waiting area such that Amtrak and Metrolink ticket passengers had no available seating. Metro and our tenants began receiving a high level of passenger, tenant, and casual visitor and employee complaints regarding the following:

- Aggressive panhandling
- Threatening behavior
- Open drug use and sales
- Unhealthy conditions including the confirmed presence of bed bugs and other vermin in the waiting area
- Unavailability of restroom facilities due to occupancy by non-transit visitors
- Increased vandalism to Metro property
- Demands for increased law enforcement presence due to a rise in the number of assaults, battery and theft. During the months of October, November, and December the Sheriff's TIU Hub team reported a total of 98 arrests, 96 citations, 140 calls for service, and 216 disturbance related incidents
- Individuals defecating and urinating in the Waiting Room seats and in the patios.

These conditions have seriously hampered the ability of the transit users and general public to utilize the station and have also impacted the Station's ability to attract restaurant patrons and commercial filming, motion picture shoots, special events, weddings and the like. Commercial tenants at the Station have advised that patronage had been significantly impacted.

## Outreach To Homeless Services Agencies and Neighboring Public Agencies

We instituted outreach to the homeless service providers making them aware of the presence of large numbers of individuals in need of assistance. Representatives of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) were invited on-site and they conducted their own evaluation. They reported being completely unaware of the large size of the population and immediately began their intervention program. LAHSA as the lead agency began offering social, psychological, medical, dental, financial and housing assistance to persons in need.

Metro staff has participated in a series of coordinating meetings among the County Of Los Angeles, El Pueblo, City of Los Angeles and La Plaza as well as homeless services providers convened under the auspices of County Supervisor Molina's office. These meetings continue and are designed to take a larger view of this important visitor and cultural area and how we can coordinate.

## The Current Pilot Program

To begin to address these conditions we have undertaken a program to be sure our transit visitors and the general public can utilize the station without disruption, fear or intimidation. The first step has been to address the transit needs.

- All seating within the concourse area (immediately outside Starbucks and Subway) has been removed pending the beginning of the historic seating restoration program scheduled later this month. This historic seating was originally located in the waiting area, and will not be returned to the concourse area so as to improve visibility and passenger flow through this area.
- As an interim measure, all seating in the waiting room has been reserved for Amtrak and Metrolink ticketed passengers with less than 3 hour waiting time, using temporary stanchions to demark the seating areas. Once we evaluate the seating demand for these transit passengers, we will address short-term seating for the general public. We are outreaching to an informal association of major transit station owners and operators across the country to discuss best practices and approaches. Seating for patrons of the convenience eating establishments will also be addressed.
- Increased security and Sheriff's presence has been implemented. No-smoking areas have been expanded in the south patios as well.
- Maintenance levels have been increased as necessary, but demand has fallen from the level required before these measures were instituted.

## Community Reaction

Since implementing this pilot program, a limited number of emails from the general public have been received, approximately 20. Concerns have been expressed about the plight of persons in need of help generally and the impact on the casual visitor to the station. In several cases we found that once they understood the issues, that the station continued to be open to the general public, efforts are underway to refine the program, and the LASHA outreach was in place, they also became supportive. E mails from tenants, employees of tenants and service providers and transit riders have been supportive of the results so far. A December 25, 2013 editorial in the Los Angeles Times, while sympathetic to the needs of the homeless population, was generally supportive of the actions taken to ensure the Station can be an effective part of the transportation network (Attachment A). We have responded to people who wrote or emailed us directly.

## NEXT STEPS

Staff will continue to work with County Counsel, the Sheriff's Department, our Metro and private security, tenants and the station management to evaluate the pilot program and implement changes to address the needs of the transit and general visitor. Seating for customers of the retailers and the general public will be further evaluated and solutions identified. Station management staff will continue to work with homeless service providers. Our goal continues to be to enhance the property as a superior transit station, a community/family friendly place and preserved national landmark, consistent with the goals established by the Board.

## ATTACHMENTS

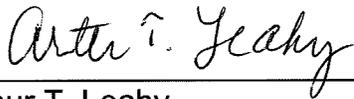
A. Los Angeles Times Editorial dated December 25, 2013

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# Los Angeles Times | OPINION

EDITORIAL

## Union Station: No stop for the homeless?

**The MTA is forbidding anyone without a ticket to sit in the train station's waiting room seats. Which leaves the homeless out in the cold. What's to be done?**

By The Times editorial board

*December 25, 2013*

The new pilot program at Union Station that forbids people who are not holding train tickets to sit in the waiting room seats is another sad reminder of the city's desperate homelessness problem — and of how difficult it is to balance the rights of Los Angeles' most vulnerable citizens with the rights of others to go about their business safely and without fear or harassment.

The pilot program was instituted this month by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority because, MTA officials say, about 135 homeless people a night were descending on the station, intimidating travelers with aggressive panhandling, taking over the bathrooms and sprawling across seats. Officials said they were worried about a public health hazard because the homeless might be carrying bedbugs or have scabies.

They are right to be concerned: Union Station is a working train station. It is a public place, but it is also a building where business must get done, where travelers get their first view of Los Angeles, where Angelenos eat meals and commuters transfer to the Metro. It is not a homeless shelter and shouldn't be turned into one.

<http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-homeless-20131225,0,1771880.story#ixzz2pfF2LJTI>