

Metro ExpressLanes Low-Income Assistance Plan

April 30, 2015



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Background

- **SB 1422 (Ridley-Thomas) required assessment of potential impact of the ExpressLanes on low income commuters**
- **Currently there are 21 Express Lanes programs nationwide, 6 of which are in California**
- **Metro ExpressLanes is the first and only program of its kind in the nation that provides low-income assistance to qualifying customers**
- **The Plan was developed through:**
 - **An independent assessment providing recommendations**
 - **Peer review of the assessment's recommendations by representatives from USC, UCLA, the Environmental Defense Fund and the Corridor Advisory Groups**
 - **Outreach to stakeholders: Approximately 696 program briefings from April 2008 to the present**



2010 Assessment's Findings and Recommendations

- Public support for tolling grows with experience of such systems
- Low-income drivers support tolling when able to make a choice about whether to pay the toll as with the Metro ExpressLanes
- **Enhanced transit services are a high priority of the low-income community**
- **Low-income solo drivers are unlikely to use the ExpressLanes on a regular basis but may choose to do so for urgent situations**
- Recommended eligibility threshold of twice the federal poverty level
- Substantial net benefit given a toll credit, transit service improvements, transit rewards program and value of time savings
- Develop the plan with consideration of account set-up fees, transponder distribution network, account maintenance charges and use of cash for account establishment



Current Low-Income Assistance Plan

- Income threshold is twice the federal poverty level—actual amounts updated every year (currently \$40,180 for a 3-person household)
- \$25 credit for qualifying households for account set-up/ establishment
 - Can be applied to transponder deposit/pre-paid toll balance
- Limit eligibility to LA County residents, 1 per household
- Waive monthly account maintenance fee
- In a survey of the low-income assistance plan account holders, 81% of the respondents stated that the \$25 credit was instrumental in their decision to open an account
- Alternative options for unbanked customers - cash, pre-paid Visa cards
- Transponders available at 2 Customer Service Center (CSC) locations, 3 retail providers, online, mail and phone



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Transit Improvements: \$153 million

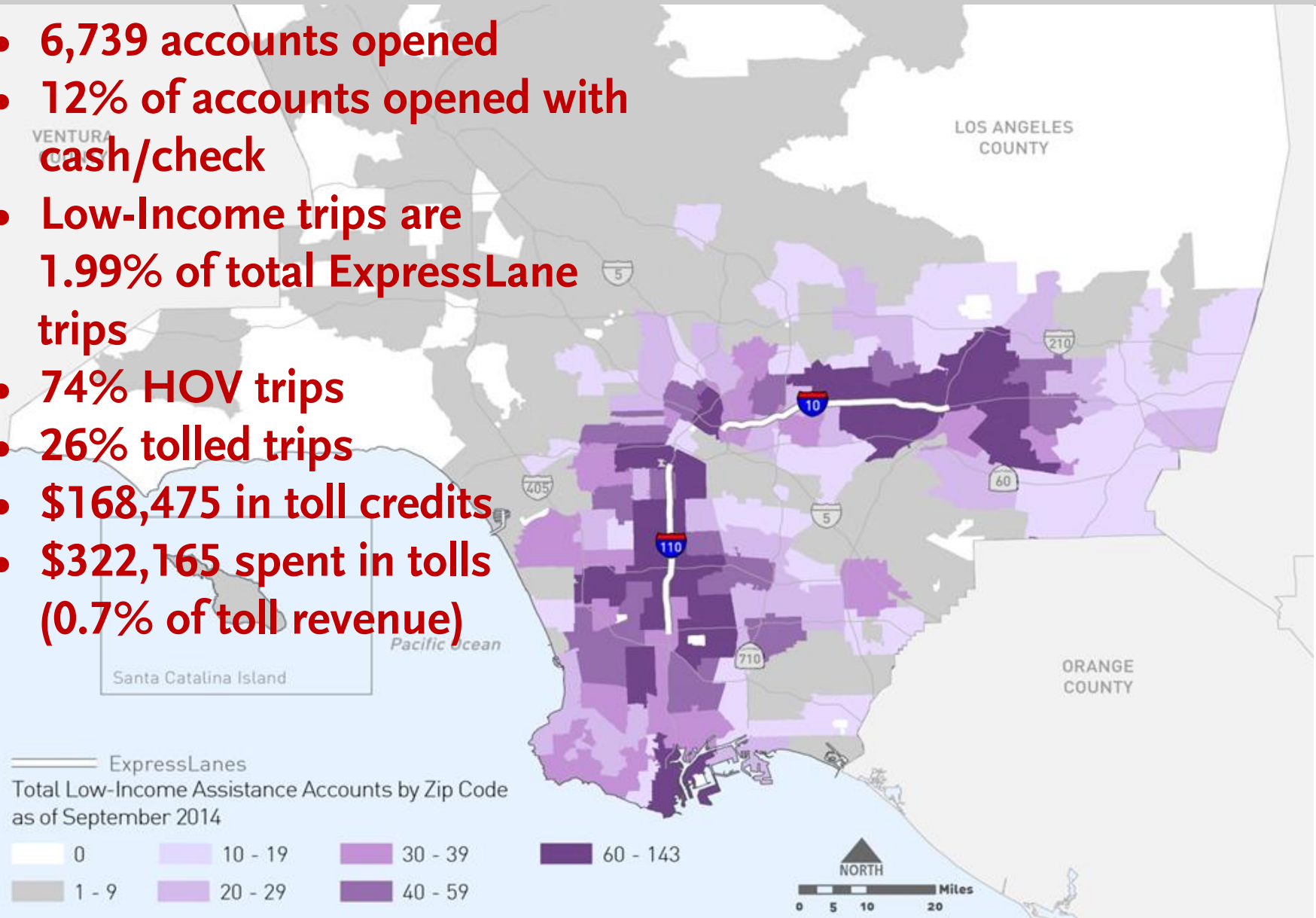
- **Increased bus service – Metro, Foothill Transit, Gardena and Torrance**
 - 59 new buses and additional service
 - Since implementation of CRD funded service in June 2012, Silver Line ridership has increased by 44%
- **Harbor Transitway Improvements**
- **New El Monte Station**
- **Patsaouras Plaza Connector**
- **Transit Signal Priority through downtown LA**
- **Net Toll Revenue Grant - approximately \$26 million allocated to transit providers and jurisdictions along the corridors for transportation improvements**



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Status of Low Income Assistance Plan

- 6,739 accounts opened
- 12% of accounts opened with cash/check
- Low-Income trips are 1.99% of total ExpressLane trips
- 74% HOV trips
- 26% tolled trips
- \$168,475 in toll credits
- \$322,165 spent in tolls (0.7% of toll revenue)



Low-Income Assistance Focus Groups

- **March 2014 Feedback:**
 - Feedback was positive and all attendees would recommend the program to others
 - Suggested improvements included increasing advertising in their communities and changing the program name – name was changed from the Equity Plan to Low-Income Assistance Plan (July 2014)
- **March 2015 Feedback:**
 - Positive feedback – Participants are happy with program benefits
 - Suggested more visible program layout and simpler program language on the website
 - Recommended promoting program in neighborhood businesses and social services



Low-Income Assistance Plan Marketing

- **Developed landing page for the Low-Income Assistance Plan on metroexpresslanes.net website (March 2015)**
- **Metro bus card campaign promoting the plan (January - April 2015)**
- **Distribution of brochures to social service (April 2015)**
 - Legal Aid South L.A., Legal Aid East L.A., All W.I.C offices in LA, YMCA San Pedro, YMCA Wilmington, YMCA Gardena, Weingart YMCA Wellness & Aquatic Center
- **Billboard and bus shelter advertising along 10 and 110 corridors (April - June 2015)**
- **Media buy on local radio stations that reach target demographics (May 2015)**
- **Mall advertising on DMSs – food court and common space areas (May - June 2015)**
- **Low Income Assistance Plan customer survey (August 2015)**



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