

Communication from Public

Name: Oscar Zarate
Date Submitted: 12/03/2024 05:03 PM
Council File No: 18-0244-S4
Comments for Public Posting: See letter attached.



November 19, 2024

Transportation Committee
Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring St., Room 435
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Fare Reinstitution on LADOT Dash Service - RESCIND

Dear Transportation Committee Members,

We are a group of community-based organizations and direct service providers in the City of Los Angeles, representing hundreds of Angelenos who rely on DASH buses to get to school, work, and access essential services. We firmly believe that the Transportation Committee and the Los Angeles City Council should view public transportation as a public good—a vital service that enhances the quality of life for all Angelenos, especially Black and Brown residents, who comprise the overwhelming majority of DASH's ridership [LADOT Equity Analysis, October 2024].

Earlier this year, through the budget process and with minimal community engagement, the City Council approved reinstating fares on DASH buses, effective January 11, 2025. At a recent public hearing, every one of the 17 public comments submitted by community members—including representatives from SAJE, CPC, and DSA—opposed this decision. Additionally, our coalition, along with other concerned Angelenos, submitted over 200 written comments expressing opposition to the fare reinstatement plan.

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we respectfully request that the Transportation Committee rescind this plan and establish a transparent, community-centered process to evaluate DASH fares. The decision to reinstate fares was made without sufficient community outreach, leaving many riders uninformed about how this change will affect their daily lives.

Our concerns are three-fold:

1. **Zero Transparency:** Reinstating fares will place an undue financial burden on working-class Angelenos, removing thousands of dollars from their pockets. LADOT held only one public meeting to address the potential impacts on riders. Over 80% of DASH riders would qualify for free fares through programs like LIFE, yet most do not enroll due to administrative hurdles, immigration concerns, or lack of awareness. Charging fares while knowing that most riders are eligible for fare-free transit is inequitable.
2. **Bus Driver Safety:** DASH bus operators are essential workers who kept the city moving during the pandemic. Requiring them to enforce fare collection increases the risk of confrontations and violence. When New York MTA piloted fare-free transit on five bus lines in 2023-2024, operator assaults dropped by 39%. Maintaining fare-free service, alongside safety measures like rear-door boarding and protective shields, will help ensure drivers' safety.
3. **Environmental Impact:** California is falling behind on reducing transportation emissions and meeting Vision Zero goals to eliminate traffic fatalities. Los Angeles faces the nation's worst ozone pollution and rising traffic deaths, with 337 fatalities in 2023. These crises disproportionately affect historically Black neighborhoods in South LA. Expanding public transit use is critical for achieving clean air, climate stability, and safer streets. Evidence from U.S. and international cities shows that fare-free transit boosts ridership by 20%-60%. New York MTA's fare-free pilot reported increases of 30%-38%. Reinstating DASH fares will likely decrease ridership, undermining environmental and justice goals.

We appreciate your continued commitment to the working-class communities of color in Los Angeles that rely on accessible public transportation to navigate the city. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the Transportation Committee to find a just and equitable solution that prioritizes the needs of DASH riders.

Sincerely,

Oscar U. Zarate
Director of Advocacy and Organizing
Strategic Actions for a Just Economy

Brenda Jackson
Lead Transit Justice Organizer
Community Power Collective

Kalayaan Mendoza
Senior Mobility Justice Organizer
People for Mobility Justice

Scarlett De Leon
Campaigns Director
ACT-LA

Sam Range
Co-chair of Power Mass Transit Campaign
Democratic Socialists of America – Los Angeles