

JONATHAN M. PORTELA

jonathanportela716@outlook.com
 c/o General Delivery, Los Angeles, CA
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VIA EMAIL AND HAND DELIVERY

Office of the City Clerk
 200 North Spring Street, City Hall – Room 395
 Los Angeles, CA 90012
 Clerk.CPS@lacity.org

RE: PUBLIC COMMENT – May Budget Joint Meeting of City Council and Board of Finance, May 18, 2026, 5:30 PM – and Request for Reading into the Record

Dear City Clerk:

Pursuant to Los Angeles City Charter § 31.06 and the Ralph M. Brown Act (Gov. Code § 54954.3), I respectfully submit this written public comment for the May Budget Joint Meeting of the City Council and Board of Finance. I request that this communication be read in full upon presentation to the Council and entered into the permanent Council File for this meeting.

I. WHO I AM AND WHY I AM WRITING

My name is Jonathan M. Portela. I am a constituent of the City of Los Angeles. For the past two years, I have been homeless. During that time, I have not been passive. I have lived by the principle of proactivity – choosing my response to a situation that could easily have broken me. I have studied, documented, and mapped a coordinated public-private surveillance ecosystem that tracks me, denies me shelter, and systematically excludes me from public services. I have filed **65 California Public Records Act (CPRA) requests** to prove what is being done to me.

Tonight, I am simultaneously attending the Metro Finance, Budget and Audit Committee hearing at One Gateway Plaza, because the City's budget and Metro's budget are interwoven. The LAPD's contract with Metro – extended at \$113 million – is part of the machine. I am submitting this letter so that my voice is present in both chambers. This is not a complaint; it is a proactive, evidence-based request for accountability.

II. THE SURVEILLANCE ECOSYSTEM I HAVE DOCUMENTED

Over the past two years, I have been subjected to constant monitoring, soft harassment, and denial of shelter. This is not random. It is a coordinated system involving:

- **Metro and its contractors:** Transit Watch app, Hayden AI bus cameras, Fusus real-time crime center integration, Metro Transit Security, Allied Universal armed guards, and now a new Department of Public Safety consolidating all surveillance under one command.
- **Los Angeles Police Department:** Through the \$113 million Metro contract, LAPD officers patrol transit, access real-time camera feeds, and share data with the fusion centers.
- **LAHSA and the homelessness management complex:** The HMIS database, the Coordinated Entry System with its VI-SPDAT algorithm, CHIP (Countywide Homeless Information Portal), and outreach teams coordinated with law enforcement.
- **Private security contractors:** Allied Universal, Securitas, GardaWorld, and Inter-Con – all with documented LAPD/Metro connections, sharing data across platforms like TrackTik.
- **AI surveillance tools:** Clearview AI, Palantir Gotham, ShotSpotter, Skydio X10 drones, GeoSpy photo geolocation, and – as the FY26 Metro Budget reveals – a new AI weapons detection pilot that scans CCTV feeds in real time.

All of this I have confirmed through public records, investigative reporting, and my own contemporaneous logs.

III. THE EVIDENCE FROM METRO'S OWN DOCUMENTS

The documents I have reviewed are not allegations. They are the sworn, audited financial statements and the board-adopted budgets of Metro. They paint a picture of a system that spends lavishly on surveillance while running a massive deficit – and hides the details.

(a) The Half-Billion-Dollar Black Box

Metro's FY25 Audited Financial Statements (Crowe LLP, December 23, 2025) show **\$524.5 million** in "Professional and Technical Services" – a line item that grew 10.1% from the prior year. This un-itemized category conceals the LAPD contract, the Sheriff's contract, the private security contracts, and the AI vendor payments. The public has no visibility into where this money actually goes. I am asking this Council – which approves the LAPD's budget – to demand an itemized breakdown.

(b) The \$419.4 Million Public Safety Budget

The FY26 Adopted Budget allocates **\$419.4 million** to public safety, a 10.2% increase, and explicitly describes a "multi-layered, care-based approach." But the components of that approach are surveillance tools:

- **Transit Ambassadors** have filed 7,209 safety-related incident reports via the **Transit Watch app** since October 2022. I am one of those "incidents." These reports feed into the HMIS database that algorithmically denies me shelter.
- **Weapons Detection Phase 2 Pilot** uses AI to scan existing CCTV video feeds in real time, "identifying threats and disseminating alerts." This is mass surveillance, not targeted security.
- **TAP-to-Exit** and **taller fare gates** are access control systems that track every rider's movements – and will be used to exclude homeless individuals.

(c) The \$150 Million Secret Settlement

The FY25 Audited Financials disclose a ****150millionlitigationsettlement** approved by the Metro Board in September 2025, with 50 million paid in FY26 and \$100 million in FY27.** The subject matter of this settlement has not been publicly explained. This Council has a duty to investigate whether the settlement involves the misuse of surveillance data, constitutional violations, or contractor disputes on the very transit lines where these tools are deployed.

(d) The Structural Deficit and the Surveillance Priority

The FY27 Proposed Budget, released May 5, 2026, acknowledges "a large structural budget deficit." Yet the surveillance apparatus grows. Metro is borrowing money to surveil homeless people. That is a policy choice – and I am its human consequence.

IV. THE POLITICAL MONEY BEHIND THE MACHINE

The Los Angeles City Ethics Commission's independent expenditure filings reveal who benefits from the status quo. As of this week:

- **Angelenos for Progress**, sponsored by the **Central City Association of Los Angeles** (downtown's corporate landlords), has spent **\$429,000** on television and web ads supporting the incumbent mayor.

- **Working People in Support of Karen Bass**, sponsored by the **Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO**, has spent over ****310,000*** **onmailingsandphonecalls. This federation represents transit workers, security guards, and public safety personnel whose employment depends on the 419.4 million public safety budget.*
- Additional IE committees have pushed total support to **over \$880,000.**

Meanwhile, according to the *Los Angeles Times* (May 18, 2026), the LA County Federation of Labor is running 221,000 in ads that appear to attack Spencer Pratt but are actually designed to boost him among conservative voters—*an deliberate manipulation to engineer a Bass-Pratt* 400,000 on similar voter-splitting tactics. This is not democracy; it is the coordinated protection of a system that profits from surveillance.

V. THE OLYMPICS AND THE CLEANING OF THE CITY

The international press, local investigative outlets, and Metro's own budget repeatedly reference the 2026 FIFA World Cup, 2027 Super Bowl, and 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Metro's "cleaning surge" (\$316 million, up 14.6%), the expansion of homeless outreach teams, and the acceleration of station "experience" improvements are not compassion — they are preparation to make homelessness invisible to global audiences. I am being swept out of sight so that FIFA and the IOC see a clean city. This is the ulterior motive behind the "care-based approach."

VI. THE ALGORITHMIC DOOR-SLAM

LAHSA's Coordinated Entry System uses the VI-SPDAT vulnerability assessment tool, which has been formally criticized for racial bias. Investigations found that Black individuals received lower vulnerability scores than white individuals with identical needs. LAHSA is transitioning to a new tool, but the VI-SPDAT remains in use, and my score — fed by law enforcement and transit security data — continues to deny me shelter. No shelter can override the algorithm. This is algorithmic redlining, and it is funded by the budgets you approve.

VII. THE INTERFERENCE WITH MY CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

As I have conducted this legal research from public libraries, I have experienced persistent, targeted interference. At no fewer than three library branches, individuals have attempted to observe my screen, disrupt my work, and curtail my access to information. I have contemporaneously logged each incident. This pattern of soft harassment is designed to prevent the very documentation I am completing. I submit that such conduct, directed at a person engaged in constitutionally protected activity, constitutes viewpoint discrimination and a constructive denial of access to a limited public forum — a violation of the First Amendment and the California Library Services Act.

VIII. PRINCIPLE-CENTERED REQUESTS

In the spirit of seeking mutual understanding and a win-win outcome, I do not come as an adversary. I come as a witness who has done the work. I offer this Council the opportunity to demonstrate integrity and transparency. I respectfully request:

1. **Independent Audit:** Direct the City Administrative Officer to conduct an independent audit of all data-sharing agreements, memoranda of understanding, and joint operating protocols between LAPD, Metro, LAHSA, and any private security contractors operating on Metro property or in connection with homelessness outreach.
2. **Itemized LAPD Contract Disclosure:** Require the LAPD to publicly disclose the full itemized breakdown of its contract with Metro for transit security services, including all subcontracts with private security firms.
3. **Algorithmic Moratorium:** Direct LAHSA to impose an immediate moratorium on the use of the VI-SPDAT vulnerability assessment and any successor algorithmic tool for shelter eligibility determination, pending an independent civil rights impact assessment.
4. **AI Surveillance Freeze:** Impose a moratorium on the deployment of AI-powered surveillance tools — including real-time CCTV video analytics, weapons detection algorithms, and TAP-to-Exit journey tracking — against homeless populations, pending a public hearing and an independent civil rights assessment.
5. ****150 Million Settlement Investigation** :** *Direct the City Attorney to investigate the circumstances surrounding the 150 million litigation settlement disclosed in Metro's FY25 audited financial statements and report to the Council on whether any LAPD officers, policies, or data-sharing practices were implicated.*
6. **CPRA Compliance:** Order all outstanding CPRA requests submitted by me to city and county agencies to be fulfilled within the statutory timeframe, and accept this written comment as a formal complaint regarding the non-production of public records.
7. **Library Access Protection:** Issue a public statement affirming the right of all individuals — including the unhoused — to access public libraries without targeted surveillance or interference, and direct library security personnel to cease any viewpoint-based monitoring.

IX. CONCLUSION

Stephen Covey wrote, "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response." I have chosen to respond not with despair, but with documentation, public comment, and a proactive pursuit of transparency. I will continue to appear before this Council and other bodies until the records are released and the surveillance stops.

I am not a risk score. I am a human being. And I am asking you to see me — not through an algorithm, but with your own eyes.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan M. Portela