Metro to require use of face coverings by riders on Metro buses and trains beginning Monday, May 11

by Steve Hymon , May 7, 2020

Metro today is revising its policy on face coverings for riders. Beginning on Monday, May 11, Metro will require all riders on buses and trains wear face coverings to help

prevent the spread of the Coronavirus. Up to now, Metro has been recommending face coverings.

The agency will enforce this requirement to the extent that is practical — and we'll be considering the best way to enforce this rule going forward. In addition, Metro will be looking at ways the agency can help riders obtain face coverings while protecting our own supply of coverings that are needed for our employees. Metro will also commence an educational campaign to inform the public of the requirement to wear face coverings in public and on our system.

Some quick background to help explain the update in policy. In early April, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention amended its position on face coverings and began recommending face coverings as a way to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

On April 6, Metro began strongly recommending that riders wear face coverings but haven't made it a requirement because of concerns about who would enforce such a rule. We don't want to put our bus operators in harm's way. Nor we want to put our law enforcement officers in an untenable position where confrontations with riders escalate — as we've seen happen in other cities.

We are also well aware that face coverings are not advised for some riders with disabilities or with certain non-virus health conditions, including difficulty breathing. There are also civil liberties issues. All these are reasons why we've been recommending but not requiring face coverings.

That said, we also recognize that our region will be reopening from Safer-at-Home orders in the coming weeks and months. As we prepare to restore bus and rail service that has been reduced due to the pandemic, we want transit to be as safe as possible. And we want our riders and employees to feel safe. Of the 58 Metro employees or contractors who have tested positive for COVID-19, 16 are bus operators.

We want our bus operators to know that we are listening to them. And while we have been engaging employees constantly, we're a big agency with nearly 11,000 employees and we're acutely aware that *some* employees have been on social media and telling the news media that this is a change they want.

As we said above and we want to emphasize, the enforcement piece of this will be a work-in-progress.

Metro has also taken other important steps to protect our bus operators. Specifically, we began rear-door boarding in March and at the same time mandated all bus

operators to use the plexiglass shields that help seal the driving area. Metro has also constantly been ordering more personal protective equipment. To date, we have supplied employees with over 715,000 pairs of gloves, more than 385,000 masks and over 40,000 personal hand sanitizers.

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1. **AnthonyTheTransportationTraveler33** says:
   May 7, 2020 at 4:35 pm
   I have been seeing some homeless people without wearing a mask while the pandemic is active. I wonder what if the bus operators will react when a passenger didn't wear a mask. 😷

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2. **Lionel** says:
May 7, 2020 at 4:43 pm
Heres the problems with this policy.
1 people with asthma or sinus conditions shouldn't be wearing masks
2 in temperatures above 80 degrees wearing a mask could be extremely dangerous as breathing is the way the body cools itself, so you could be looking at people passing out on the bus if it gets too hot, and then you have a lawsuit, bad overall policy

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- **JenOfLA** says:
May 9, 2020 at 5:25 pm
Not trying to be argumentative here, but the primary way the body cools itself is by sweating. Other ways are by convection or conduction (physical contact) not breathing, though nobody would ever diminish the importance of breathing on the whole. I'm hoping that Metro partners with the many lovely organizations who have sewed thousands of handmade, reusable cloth masks to offer them to riders who do not have one. They are breathable, and actually offer a sense of security once one gets used to wearing them. Consider all the areas of the world where people cover up their faces to protect from heat and sand. People in those parts of the globe have asthma and sinus conditions, too.

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3. **fine7760** says:
May 7, 2020 at 4:48 pm
Due to my experience as a Supervisor at the RTD/MTA I urge you to make it extremely clear that the Bus Operators should make a announcement via the P.A. system to patrons boarding without a mask to put one on, but under no circumstance should they set the bus down if someone does not comply.

The policy makers at the MTA may deem this suggestion unneeded but consider the source and the experience my 30 years primarily as a supervisor. And please make the policy clear to all the Operators with a special effort to those with

english as a second language. It was a problem when I was an Supervisor and I'm sure it is a problem today.

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4. **Earthman** says:
May 7, 2020 at 5:28 pm
Even the Surgeon General said wearing masks makes things worse. Why are you doubling down as we strive to open up?

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5. **Bill Jones** says:
May 7, 2020 at 5:32 pm
If you are going to mandate masks, you need to make sure air conditioning on buses, and especially trains, is fully functional and putting out adequate cooling, something the newer trains seem to lack.

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6. **Eliot** says:
May 7, 2020 at 5:55 pm
Just gonna air your dirty laundry with the italics on "some"?

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7. **Jim** says:
May 7, 2020 at 6:27 pm
97% ineffective masks. Great. Your all idiots

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8. **Dominick Falzone** says:
May 7, 2020 at 6:44 pm

I rode the #720 bus on Wilshire Boulevard to go food shopping last Friday. It was too crowded to practice 6 foot social distancing. All of the seats were occupied, and a few passengers were standing.

You need to put more buses on Wilshire Bouevard in order to alliviate overcrowding.

I am aware that some employees need to stay home from work to protect their own health, to protect their families' health, or to provide child care for their children. However Metro should offer voluntary overtime to any bus driver who wants its.

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9. **Mr Cat** says:
May 7, 2020 at 7:40 pm
Should of been enforced from the beginning. Drivers have a responsibility of not only operating the vehicle but keeping passenger safety. Can't tell you how many crazies get on the Orange Line and cause a disturbance but the driver just keeps on going before the virus. Now people cough and drink and eat, no mask in site. I only take it twice a week and all 4 rides its the same. A driver even said the reason she's not wearing a mask is her parents didn't think it was necessary! Can you believe the stupidity. They should post signs and no mask…no ride. Hold the bus till they disembark. I'd rather be late than DEAD.

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10. **lrm1994** says:
May 7, 2020 at 8:24 pm
I know this is also due in part because some businesses and parks are reopening– will Metro augment and increase service to help maintain social distance though?

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11. **Jayne** says:
May 7, 2020 at 9:11 pm

Greetings,

It's great that Metro decided to require passengers to wear masks to protect Metro Drivers and Passengers.

Attention Metro, some of your Drivers do not wear masks. However, they do block 6 to 8 seats in the front portion of the Bus. Needless to say…it cause crowding of the Bus.

Also, Meto has failed to answer my question regarding a Driver from Division 5 whom contracted Covid-19 and Metro has never listed the Bus Number or Dates the Driver was Driving the Bus.

Stay Healthy and Safe,

Jannie
Metro Customer Not Impress With Sunday Schedule (There's no daily schedule, the Bus arrives when it arrives no scheduling involved period!)

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12. **J Latino** says:
May 7, 2020 at 10:12 pm
I'm surprised masks weren't a requirement ever since the Safer at Home order went into effect. The reasons stated as to why face coverings weren't required are iffy, at best. There seems to be massive disconnect here b/w the county wide order and the mass transit system! It seems to me that the mass transit system would be the #1 most likely spot for spreading COVID-19. Doh!

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13. **JenofLA** says:
May 7, 2020 at 11:01 pm
The majority of riders right now are homeless people just cruising around, not essential workers. It would be great if metro could put conductors on board to help enforce this new policy. It is MUCH needed. Now if they could just move the farebox to the rear of the bus, it would keep passengers away from the operators!

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14. **Khanh Hồ** says:
May 8, 2020 at 5:14 am
Covering the nose and mouth is part of a nationwide effort to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus, which transmits easily from coughs and sneezes and from droplets in breath.

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15. **Karyn Joshua** says:
May 8, 2020 at 10:45 am
I'm a Bus Operator I Commend My Company for there Valiant Work towards Keeping Us the Drivers Safe, but it is Up to the Passengers to Comply, JUST WEAR YOUR MASK, ENTER THROUGH THE BACK DOOR. We Will All Be Safer, Or Just Stay Home😷

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- **Steve Hymon** says:
May 8, 2020 at 12:13 pm
Hi Karyn;

Thank you for your work and for the comment. Stay safe!!! And readers and riders: help keep Karen and her many colleagues safe by wearing a face covering, social distancing the best you can and using the rear doors. We also recommend washing your hands frequently and avoid touching your face.

Steve Hymon
Editor, The Source

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  - **Lionel** says:
May 8, 2020 at 1:12 pm
Interesting that the only person you reply to is the employee, when 6 comments voiced legit concerns, about the policy including my own

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16. **John Rupkalvis** says:
May 8, 2020 at 10:11 pm
With rear door entry, what is the procedure if you are using a TAP card?

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- **Steve Hymon** says:
May 9, 2020 at 10:27 am
Hi John;

No need to use the farebox. Just have a TAP card with you with the proper fare loaded.

Steve Hymon
Editor, The Source

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17. **jose cerna** says:
May 10, 2020 at 3:07 pm
Still is not clear ,how are you going to enforce it,or who will enforce it. Everything that metro has implemented was done first by the other transportation agencies,curver city has been leading it, metro should get some advice from them.

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