

Communication from Public

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Council File No: 20-0875

Comments for Public Posting: Please find the attached statement from the PUSH LA coalition.



March 22, 2023

Los Angeles City Council Transportation Committee
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: LADOT General Manager's Report on Non-Law Enforcement Alternatives to Traffic Safety (File No. 20-0875)

Dear Council Members,

We, the undersigned members of the PUSH L.A. coalition, are writing to express support for the draft recommendations by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) Task Force on Non-Law Enforcement Alternatives to Traffic Safety.¹ We believe that, if adopted, the Task Force's recommendations would make critical progress towards addressing systemic racism and promoting safer streets for all Angelenos.

Racial Bias and Traffic Enforcement

As you are aware, traffic stops have historically been a breeding ground for racial profiling and bias. Studies show that Black and Latinx people are far more likely to be stopped, searched, and subjected to uses of force by law enforcement than white people.² These practices not only violate civil and human rights, but also inflict devastating harms on community health and safety. Indeed, the effects of such stops often extend beyond initial interactions with law enforcement and have ripple effects on numerous aspects of community life, including physical and behavioral health, access to education and employment opportunities, housing access, as well as civic engagement.³

According to a study by Catalyst California's RACE COUNTS initiative, Black people are 5 times more likely to be stopped and nearly 9 times more likely to be arrested for traffic violations than white people, while Latinx people are 1.6 times more likely to be stopped and 3.5 times more likely to be arrested. Furthermore, the same study found that Black and Latinx drivers are more likely to be searched during traffic stops than white drivers, despite the fact that searches of white drivers are more likely to result in the discovery of contraband.⁴

¹ Traffic Enforcement Alternatives Advisory Task Force, *Draft Recommendations Slide Deck (2023-02-16) #6A*, February 16, 2023, https://ens.lacity.org/ladot/enforce_reports/ladotenforce_reports3669169071_02132023.pdf

² Chauncey Smith, Elycia Mulholland Graves, Jacky Guerrero, Melanie Ochoa, Eva Bitrán, *Reimagining Community Safety in California*, Catalyst California & ACLU of Southern California, October 2022, <https://www.catalystcalifornia.org/campaign-tools/publications/reimagining-community-safety-in-california>

³ Aaron Stagoff-Belfort, Daniel Bodah, and Daniela Gilbert, *The Social Costs of Policing*, Vera Institute of Justice, November 2022, <https://www.vera.org/publications/the-social-costs-of-policing>

⁴ Chauncey Smith, Elycia Mulholland Graves & Laura Daly, *Reimagining Traffic Safety & Bold Political Leadership in Los Angeles*, RACE COUNTS, May 3, 2021, <https://www.racecounts.org/push-la>.



Recommendations

Utilizing civilian-led traffic safety models, as recommended by the Task Force, has the potential to reduce racial biases and promote transportation safety for all residents. PUSH L.A. supports the draft Task Force recommendations. When the final study is released, we urge City Council to take concrete steps in addition to those listed in the report, including:

1. Requiring LAPD officially and publicly admit to racial profiling and issue an apology to all residents of South LA, and elsewhere in the city, who have been unjustly stopped and searched.
2. Holding accountable officers who engage in unwarranted pretextual stops, who have patterns demonstrative of racial profiling, or who engage in misconduct and abuse by disciplining and removing them from our communities.
3. Immediately removing the LAPD's Metro Division from South LA in recognition of the devastating impact Metro Division has had on people in South LA.
4. Banning pretextual and consent searches.
5. Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the civilian safety program, including analyzing traffic stop data to identify and address any racial disparities.

We commend LADOT Task Force's draft recommendations that address this critical issue. By recommending civilian-led traffic safety alternatives, the City is taking a proactive step towards reducing the harm caused by policing and promoting racial justice in our city. This approach aligns with our values of community-based safety and accountability, and we urge the City of Los Angeles to ensure these recommendations are finalized and adopted.

Sincerely,

ACLU of Southern California
Black Lives Matter Los Angeles
Brotherhood Crusade
Brothers, Sons, Selves
Catalyst California
Children's Defense Fund California
Community Coalition
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
LA Voice
Labor/Community Strategy Center
Million Dollar Hoods
SEIU 2015
SEIU Local 99
Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Southern California
Social Justice Learning Institute