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## MTA responds to civil rights violations cited in federal audit

The agency plans a new civil rights monitoring program, improved review of projects and increased language assistance for passengers.

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By Ari Bloomekatz, Los Angeles Times  
December 13, 2011

The county's transportation agency on Monday released a one-year action plan to address civil rights violations cited in a federal audit.

The audit criticized the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority for not doing enough to accommodate riders who speak little or no English and faulted the organization for poor planning. The audit found that a language other than English is spoken in 54% of homes in the county.

In one section of the audit, which was also released Monday by the Federal Transit Administration, an examiner described a group of community members upset "with the lack of translated hand-out materials at public hearings and meetings."

In another section, federal officials instructed Metro to integrate an environmental justice analysis into its documentation of construction projects that involve a federal law. That type of analysis includes descriptions of low-income and minority groups within a project's area and requires Metro to discuss potential harm to them during and after construction.

"It makes Metro look completely out of touch and insensitive to the real conditions and needs of the people that are its users, who are overwhelmingly people of color and low-income people," said Eric Romann, an organizer with the Bus Riders Union, a group that has long been critical of the agency.

In response, Metro released a 47-page [corrective action plan](#), pledging to be in full compliance with the federal guidelines within one year.

"They are basically process issues.... They are things that we are required to do in a certain fashion which we did not adequately do," Art Leahy, Metro chief executive officer, said last week. "We are going to comply with the rules, no question about that," he said.

The plan includes a new civil rights monitoring program to review whether equal service is given to all riders; improved planning and review of projects; and increased language assistance for passengers. The federal audit notes that students in the Los Angeles Unified School District come from households that speak 91 languages.

Another issue found in the audit was that the notices Metro posts around the system telling passengers about their civil rights have not included ways for riders to file complaints.

Metro officials said they have produced new signs in 11 languages and plan to produce more transit materials in multiple languages.

Leahy said he aims to go beyond compliance and has, on his own accord, ordered dozens of managers to undergo civil rights training.

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He said he has met with FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff several times since the audit began last summer, and Metro officials said they plan biweekly conference calls to be sure progress is on track.

In a statement, Rogoff said federal officials would work with Metro to "bring the agency back into full compliance with federal civil rights law."

"The FTA takes enforcement of the Civil Rights Act very seriously and has recently made significant improvements to clarify its expectations regarding civil rights compliance," Rogoff said. "We expect all transportation agencies to do the same."

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**Streets** at 2:31 PM December 13, 2011  
"English Only"

**LosGangeles** at 2:08 PM December 13, 2011  
California is not the UN. Do we need 158 languages post everywhere? Another reason Kalifornia is drowning.

**areeda** at 12:02 PM December 13, 2011  
Wow, I am blown away by the idiocy of saying a government agency must translate its signage and publications into other languages rather than inconvenience foreigner language speakers by having them learn English or have the documents translated. Sounds like a very valid reason for an official language of the Nation.

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