

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE REPORT relative to curtailing street harassment in public spaces and transit systems.

Recommendations for Council action:

1. INSTRUCT the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) to require the City's transit operating contractors to collect data about street harassment and to develop procedures and processes to receive and report incidents of harassment on transit and at bus stops.
2. INSTRUCT the Department of Recreation and Parks, LADOT, Bureau of Street Lighting, and Bureau of Street Services to undertake an analysis of public space under their jurisdiction and report on the physical environment and recommended improvements to improve safety, as well as any new design standards that would improve safety and reduce harassment.
3. INSTRUCT the LADOT to:
 - a. Report with statistics on the reliability of transit service and the possibility of expanding the real-time bus arrival information at bus stops to include anti-harassment information and options to report real-time incidents.
 - b. Report on their new pilot program that would require the City's transit contractors to allow on-demand stops at night.
 - c. Report on the resources needed to create a mandatory educational and bystander training program for transit operators and all other LADOT employees who work in the public right-of-way.
4. INSTRUCT the Information Technology Agency to report on digital tools and technologies that include digital platforms and smartphone apps that would make it easy to report street harassment in the public right-of-way and connect people with services if they have been affected by harassment.
5. INSTRUCT the Civil, Human Rights and Equity Department and the Department of Cultural Affairs, with the assistance of the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA), to develop a strategy to implement an anti-harassment public education campaign, as well as potential funding options.

Fiscal Impact Statement: None submitted. Neither the City Administrative Officer nor the CLA has completed a financial analysis of this report.

Community Impact Statement: Yes

For:
Los Feliz Neighborhood Council

(Immigrant Affairs, Civil Rights, and Equity Committee waived consideration of the above matter.)

Summary:

On April 12, 2022, your Committee considered an October 7, 2021 CLA report relative to curtailing street harassment in public spaces and transit systems. According to the CLA, over the past few years, increased awareness about sexual harassment has brought attention to the issue, particularly through the #MeToo movement. Most of this attention has concentrated on workplace behavior, however, harassment in public spaces and on public transit systems is less publicized but often more prevalent.

Street harassment is generally used to define unwanted, disrespectful or threatening comments, gestures or other actions forced on a stranger in a public place without their consent and directed at someone because of actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, or national origin. These incidents may begin to occur to people when they are young and likely occur multiple times over the years. Most harassed people report that, at least once, they were fearful that an incident would escalate. In many respects, society has normalized street harassment and in some cases, people see it as complimentary or a 'joking' matter. Street harassment is a form of violence that causes many harassed persons, especially women, to feel less safe in public places, limit their time there, and change their travel patterns or way of life in some way to avoid such incidents.

Since 2008, the nonprofit Stop Street Harassment (SSH) has collected thousands of street harassment stories. Their 2014 study confirms that across all ages, races, income levels, sexual orientations, and geographic locations, many women in the United States experience street harassment. Those who identify as gay, bisexual, queer, or transgender, do as well. Street harassment is a symptom of inequality, and it keeps harassed persons from fully participating and thriving in the world. Numerous studies have shown that harassment in transit environments is very common.

Some characteristics of the surrounding physical and social environment influence harassment incidence, reduce transit usage and recreational opportunities, and is largely underreported. Surveys of transit operators in the United States have found that operators are gender-neutral in their policies, leading to a significant mismatch between the security needs of women riders and the adopted strategies. There has also historically been a general lack of awareness from transit agencies regarding the extent of harassment on public transit. This may be due to scant data, which may be the result of both underreporting by victims and the fact that reporting of crime statistics do not specify harassment.

In 2019, the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) commissioned "Changing Lanes," a study to advance its efforts to achieve a gender-equitable transportation system. According to the study, one of the main obstacles to achieving this goal is the lack of data pertaining to the unique experiences and needs of women navigating Los Angeles' transportation system. The study also found that women are more likely than men to have complex travel patterns, that women face varying barriers, including safety concerns, poor walking environments, lower access to driver's licenses, high costs, and transit inefficiencies such as long travel times and infrequent service. Women are also more likely than are men to be concerned about their safety while using public transit. In addition to gender disparities, there are racial disparities in perceptions of safety waiting for transit, using transit, and walking. Respondents identifying as Latinx, Black, or Asian are more likely than those that identify as White or other to feel unsafe. These barriers prevent them from taking trips, making them less mobile than men. Additionally, a poor walking environment is the greatest barrier to travel for men and women across all three study neighborhoods.

After further consideration and having provided an opportunity for public comment, the Committee moved to make a series of recommendations, as detailed in the above recommendations. This matter is now submitted to Council for its consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

Transportation Committee

COUNCILMEMBER	VOTE
BONIN:	YES
KORETZ:	ABSENT
BUSCAINO:	YES

ARL
4/12/22

-NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL COUNCIL ACTS-