



**California Transit Association  
Oct. 25, 2018**



## What Is Metrolink?

### **Governance Structure**

Joint Powers Authority made up of the five county transportation commissions with 11 board members representing the commissions. Our Board members are appointed by our member agencies; LA Metro, OCTA, SBCTA, RCTC, VCTC.

### **Funding**

Our primary funding comes from our member agencies. We receive limited funds directly. Our member agencies do pass through some of their state and federal dollars.

### **Service**

We link 6 counties in Southern California and dispatch up to 300 trains a day from our main dispatching center in Pomona. Provide seamless transfers to 30 other transportation providers.



# Metrolink Serves the Entire Southern California Region





## Incident

**Date:** June 9, 2018

**Time:** 9:42 a.m.

**Location:** Riverside – Downtown Station

**Train:** Inland Empire-Orange County Line train 859

### Tweets from rider about incident

Please READ! At the Metrolink station in Riverside and two workers made a racist comment saying "This train is going to Tijuana" because the majority of passengers in the cart where Hispanics including my DAD! I got kicked off the train for telling him that was racist.

The security who said this, his name is Tom Balaja. He came up afterwards and said he was trying to make the train move faster and that it was a "joke" He could have denied he said that, but instead, he confirmed it by coming up afterwards and adding more.

[Link to video posted with tweet.](#)



## Metrolink's initial public response over the weekend



Follow

Replying to @nicolelieve

Thank you for reporting this, it was brought to our attention earlier and forwarded to the correct department for further investigation.

1:15 PM - 9 Jun 2018

3 Retweets 21 Likes







## Metrolink's outreach to person

Thanks. My teammate Sylvia got in touch with you first. She told me what happened. I have notified our CEO. I am the Chief of External Affairs. I can assure you we care about our riders too much to allow any mistreatment. Our team will be back in touch with you. [2134948396](tel:2134948396) Sherita

I appreciate you and your team reaching out. Thank you



Jun 10, 5:37 PM

Hi there. Just wanted to give you an update. The security guard does not work for us but was immediately taken out of service for an investigation. We also took the conductor out of service. Because they are union employees, we have

of it. Wanted to find out, do you take Metrolink regularly, if so, I want to get you some passes for this inconvenience in addition to conducting a thorough investigation. -Sherita

Jun 10, 7:08 PM

I really appreciate the follow up and keeping me updated. I'm glad to know something was actually done about it. I just got off the phone and was told the same so thank you. I don't take the train regularly and it's not necessary for passes, wasn't looking for anything like that but my family does take the Metrolink to the beach every few months and they would be the people who would love the passes because I was speaking up for them. Again, appreciate the communication



Double tap to like



## Response

**Immediate action:** Determined train number and location of incident.

**Operations:** Replaced train conductor for investigation.

**Member Agency:** Determined security guard was not a Metrolink employee, reached out to Riverside County Transportation Commission (owner of station). RCTC contacted Allied Universal, the company that is contracted for security at Riverside stations.

**Outreach:** Metrolink Public Affairs Director Sherita Coffelt reached out to the person who posted the incident apologizing for what took place and to ensure her that the agency will take appropriate action.



## **Additional Actions**


The train conductor was removed from service for the week to undergo additional customer service training.

Metrolink CEO Art Leahy and RCTC CEO Anne Mayer agreed that the security guard will not be assigned to Metrolink/RCTC facilities going forward.

Metrolink Deputy CEO met with Assemblymember Jose Medina and the rider to discuss the incident and work together to prevent future instances. Metrolink provided the family with replacement tickets so they can take the train to the beach in the future.



## Metrolink Statement to Media and on Social Media on Monday



metrolink • Follow

metrolink Over the weekend, Metrolink was contacted about an alleged racially insensitive remark made by a security guard at one of the stations which escalated into a negative situation on the train. The security guard is not a Metrolink employee or contractor, however Metrolink is taking this very seriously. Once notified, Metrolink's executive management got involved to ensure immediate action was taken. We contacted our rider to get more information and reached out to the employer of the security guard who made the alleged statements. The conductor involved was also taken out of service the day of the incident to be interviewed. We are still investigating the incident, but please know the highest levels of the agency are involved and will ensure Metrolink riders are treated with dignity and respect.

532 likes

JUNE 11

“Over the weekend, Metrolink was contacted about an racially insensitive remark made by a security guard at the Riverside - Downtown Station which escalated into a negative situation on the train.

The security guard is not a Metrolink employee or contractor, however Metrolink is taking this very seriously. Once notified, Metrolink's executive management got involved to ensure immediate action was taken. We contacted our rider to get more information and reached out to the employer of the security guard who made the alleged statements. The conductor involved was also taken out of service the day of the incident to be interviewed.

We are working to conclude our investigation of this incident, however, we've made clear that Metrolink will not tolerate disrespect and will take action to ensure riders are treated with dignity.”



## Commendations

**Passenger:** The person expressed gratitude that we reached out to her so quickly and worked diligently to resolve the issue and prevent it in the future. We offered her train tickets, which she declined but did accept passes for her family to use for a future trip.

**Statement by Assemblymember Jose Medina:** “Over the weekend, a young woman and her family confronted racially insulting words from a security guard while boarding Metrolink on their way to the beach and were subsequently kicked off of the train. The comments delivered by the security guard are appalling and racist. We’ve had too many racially charged events like this occur in Riverside over the past several months and we need to band together as a community to build tolerance and inclusivity in our region.

I commend Metrolink and the Riverside County Transportation Commission for taking this incident seriously and quickly suspending the guard involved. I look forward to working within our community to improve understanding and foster positive dialogue.”



## Lessons Learned

**Access to website/social:** There was limited access to Metrolink’s website and social media pages as the incident took place over the weekend and the staff who oversee those pages were unavailable with no designated back up.

To prevent this, a person has been designated to be “on call” to provide assistance if necessary and access has been granted to more employees as necessary.

**Social Media:** Weekend social media team was unable to access certain platforms and were unable to provide statements.

Holding statements were drafted in case a situation occurred in the future. Additionally, the social media team worked with to ensure that access to all platforms were available on the weekends and after hours.

## METROLINK MISSION

**TO PROVIDE SAFE, EFFICIENT, DEPENDABLE AND ON-TIME  
TRANSPORTATION SERVICE THAT OFFERS OUTSTANDING  
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND ENHANCES QUALITY OF LIFE.**



**SAFETY | PEOPLE | GROWTH | QUALITY | EFFICIENCY**