



# Travel Trends in LA during the COVID-19 Emergency

Briefing on Research to Date | June 2020  
Prepared by Karina Macias, Rose McCarron and Rubina Ghazarian, LADOT

*Image Source: Karina Macias*

# Context on the Research to Date

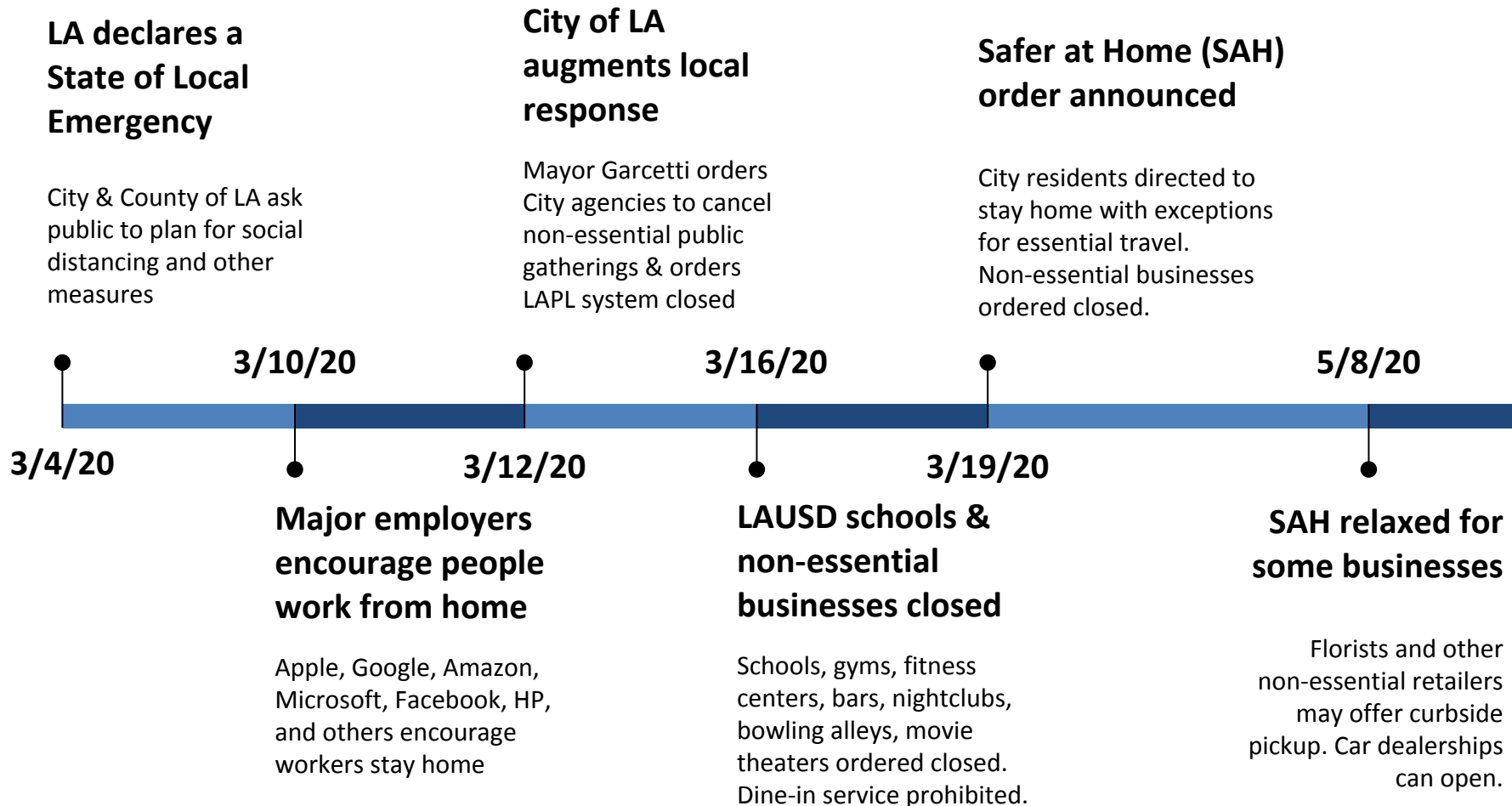
Presents insights on LA travel trends during initial phases of the COVID-19 emergency

- Based on **quantitative data** that tells LADOT *how much* and *where* people changed their travel from typical:
  - ◆ Typical trends based on January/February 2020 data -- pre-emergency
  - ◆ Study period includes last week of March and April 2020 data -- post-Safer at Home orders
- Based on **qualitative data** that helps LADOT understand relationships between travel behavior and *other factors we may not have data for*



Image Source: Karim Masri

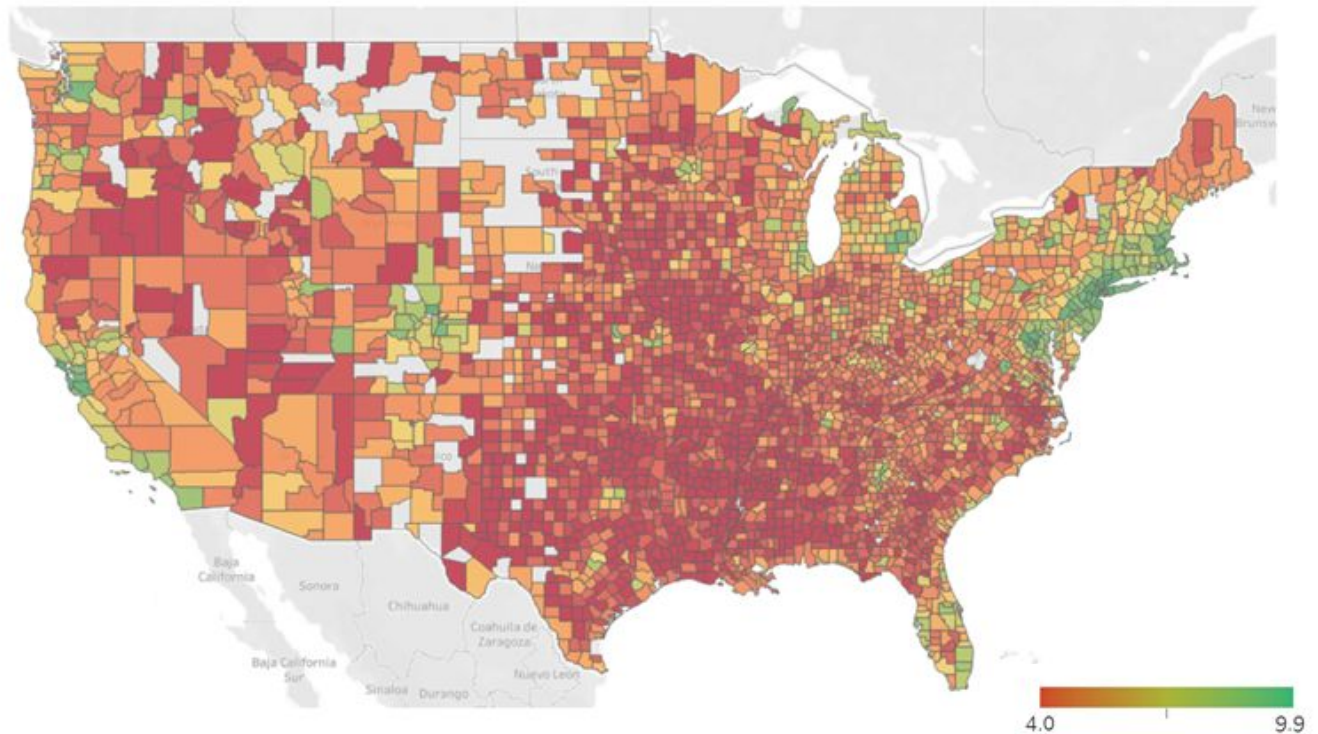
# Timeline of COVID emergency response in LA



# LA County has adhered to staying Safer at Home

- Boston Consulting Group's Trip Reduction Index (TRI) measures car travel on a 0 to 10 scale
- Where TRI=0 means 130% or more VMT than average in January 2020 and TRI=10 means no car travel was detected
- **With strong adherence to SAH orders, LA County earned a TRI=8.2**

Trip reduction index as of April 24, 2020



Source: StreetLight Data, BCG Analysis

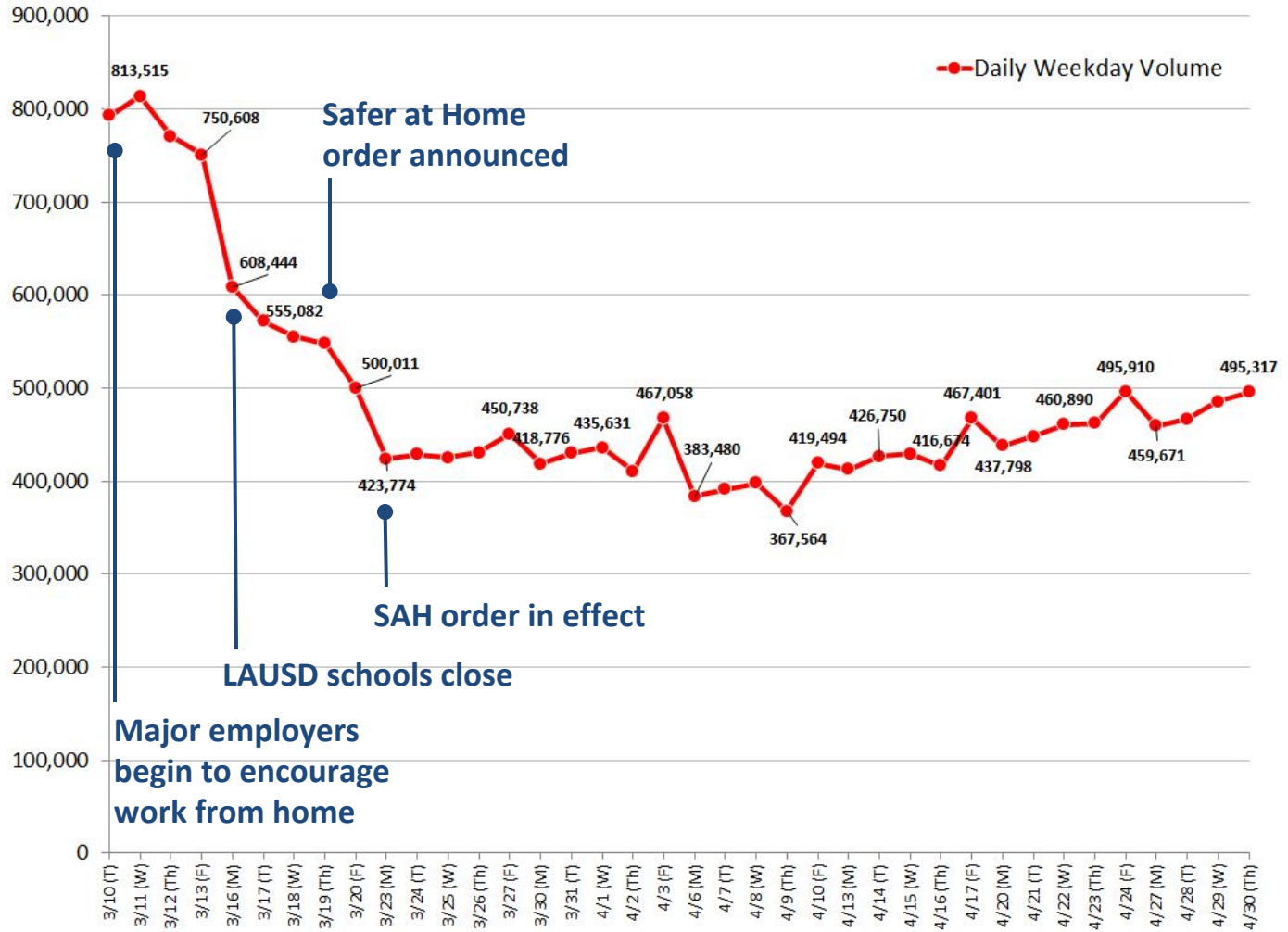
A close-up photograph of a hand holding a blue pen, pointing at a document. The document features a bar chart with blue, red, and yellow bars, and a line graph with green and red lines. The text "Based on quantitative mobility datasets" is overlaid in the center of the image.

**Based on quantitative mobility datasets**

# After an initial drastic decline, Citywide vehicle trip making is on the rise

**Based on data from LADOT ATSAC loop detectors at top intersections...**

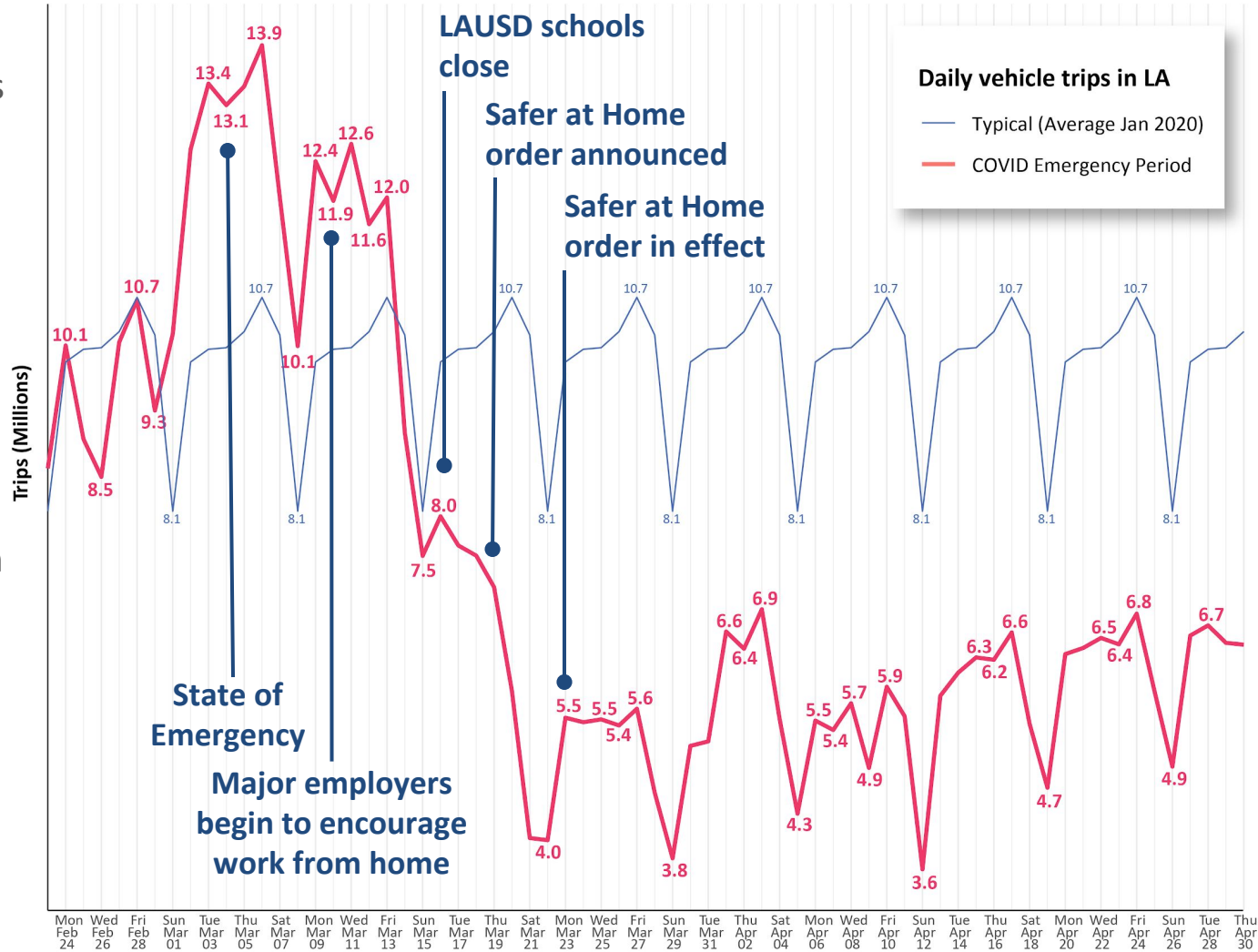
- When LAUSD schools closed, -30% vehicles counted than Tue 3/10
- Post-SAH order, -47% vehicles counted than Tue 3/10
- *Daily vehicle volumes range -37% to -58% than Tue 3/10*



Source: LADOT ATSAC Loop Data, LADOT Analysis

# After an initial drastic decline, Citywide vehicle trip making is on the rise

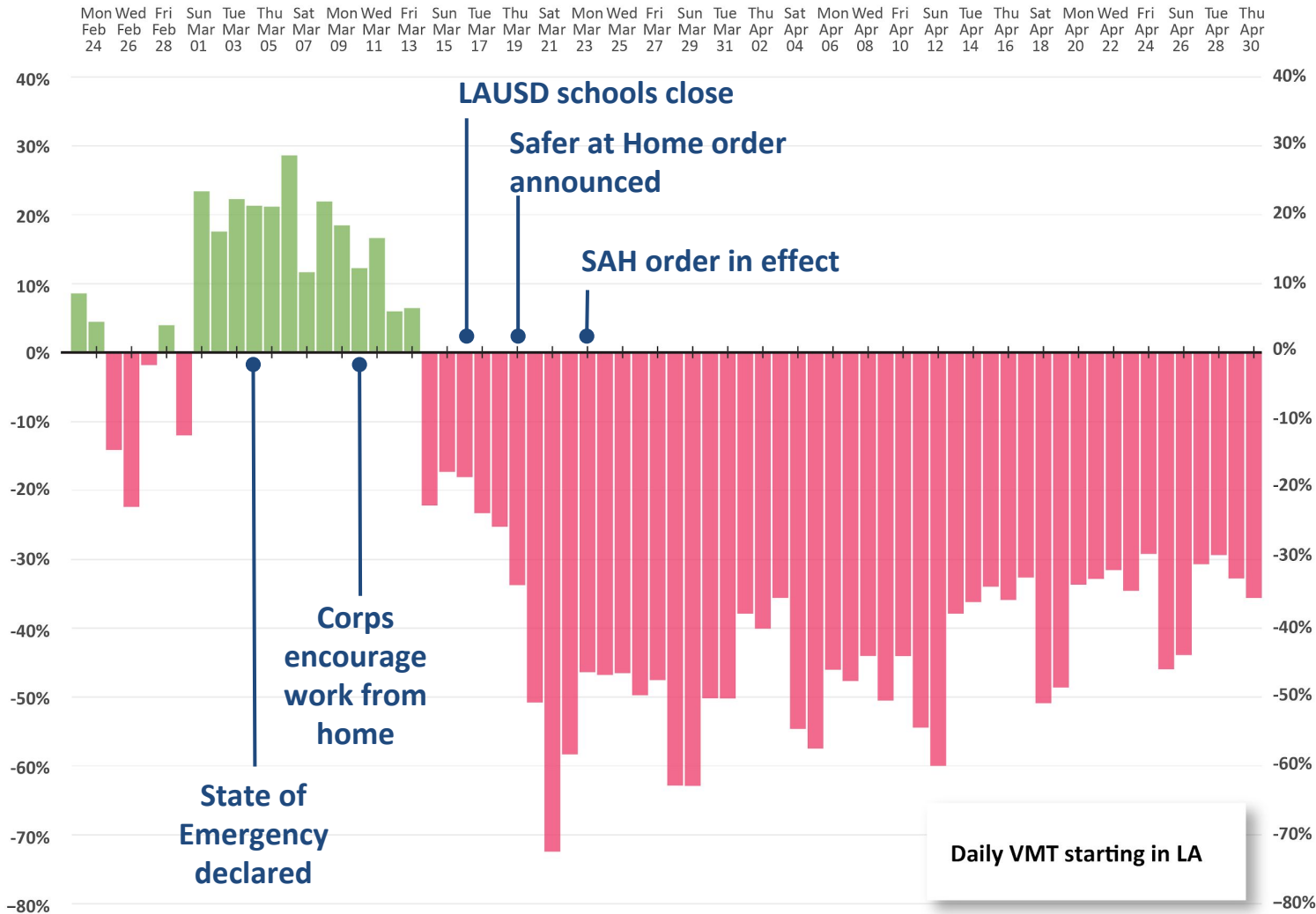
- On Sun 3/1 vehicle trip making increases
- Mon 3/2 sees +23% trips than usual
- Fri 3/6 sees +30% trips than usual
- With LAUSD schools closed, Mon 3/16 sees -21% trips
- Post-SAH order, Mon 3/26 sees -46% trips
- **Daily trips remain between -36 to 46% than typical, but increasing**



Source: StreetLight Data, LADOT Analysis

# After a major drop, Citywide vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is on the rise

- On Fri 3/13, VMT peaks at +29% higher than usual
- When LAUSD closed, VMT fell 16% below normal
- After SAH order, daily VMT -50%
- 1st Sat post-SAH, daily VMT -72%
- 1st Mon post-SAH, daily VMT -46%
- **Daily weekday VMT -30% to -50% than typical, but reduction is shrinking**



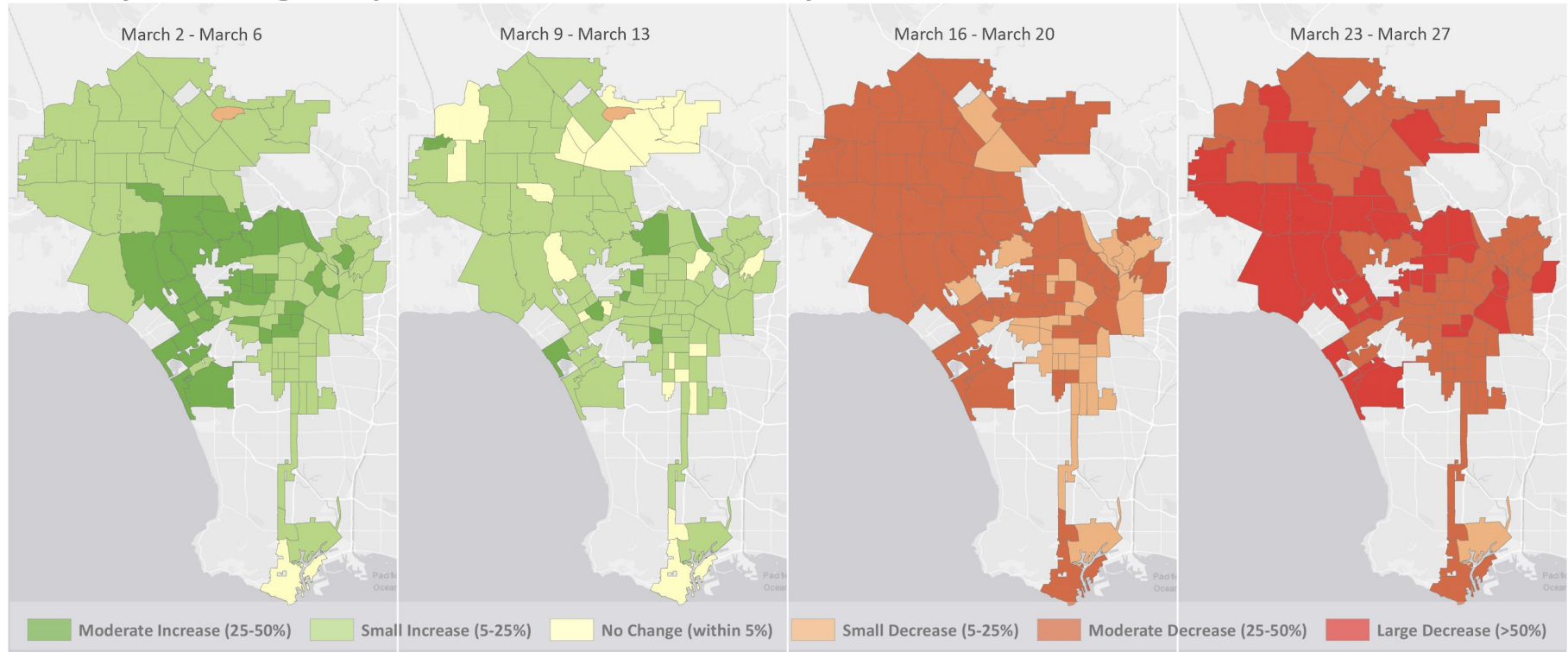
Source: StreetLight Data, LADOT Analysis





# Declines in VMT were not equal throughout LA

## Weekday VMT change compared to the last week of January 2020



**Week of**  
**3/23/20:**

**Bottom**  
**10**

- Bottom ten neighborhoods by VMT Reduction**
- |                         |                     |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 105 Vermont Knolls      | 110 Vermont Vista   |
| 106 Broadway-Manchester | 111 West Adams      |
| 107 Pacoima             | 112 Florence        |
| 108 Watts               | 113 Adams-Normandie |
| 109 Jefferson Park      | 114 Wilmington      |

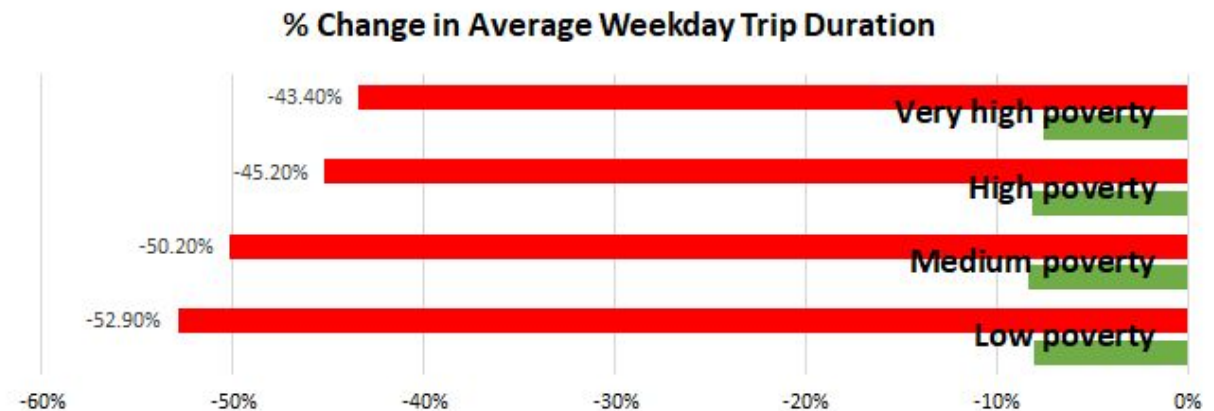
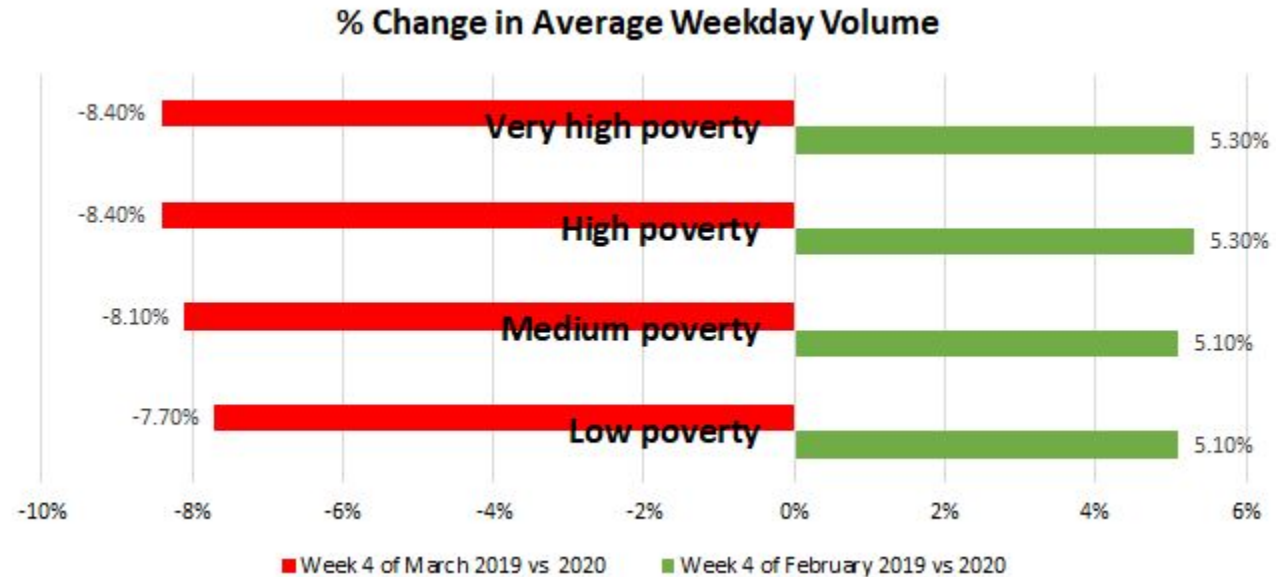
**Top**  
**10**

- Top ten neighborhoods by VMT Reduction**
- |                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1 Century City    | 6 Studio City  |
| 2 Rancho Park     | 7 Hancock Park |
| 3 University Park | 8 Hollywood    |
| 4 Playa Vista     | 9 Encino       |
| 5 Downtown        | 10 Westchester |

Source: StreetLight Data, LADOT Analysis

# People in poor communities made less trips, but drove for longer time periods during Safer at Home orders

- Post-SAH, average number of weekday trips decreased more in in very high/high poverty areas than low poverty areas
- However, very high/high poverty areas saw a smaller drop in car trip duration in minutes
- **People in affluent areas made more, brief car trips**



*Source: StreetLight Data, California Healthy Places Index, LADOT Analysis*

# People in poor communities have reduced their VMT less than people in affluent areas

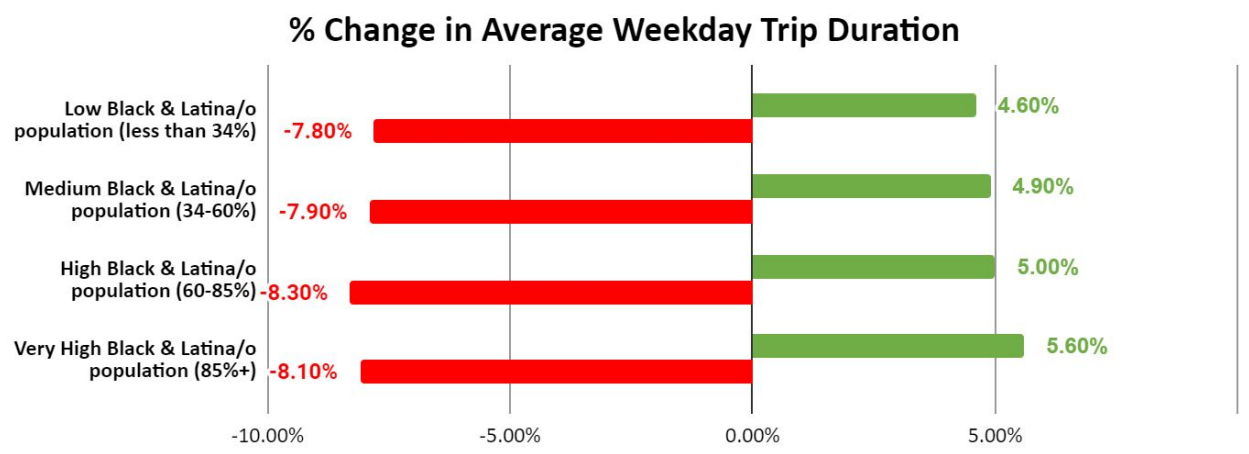
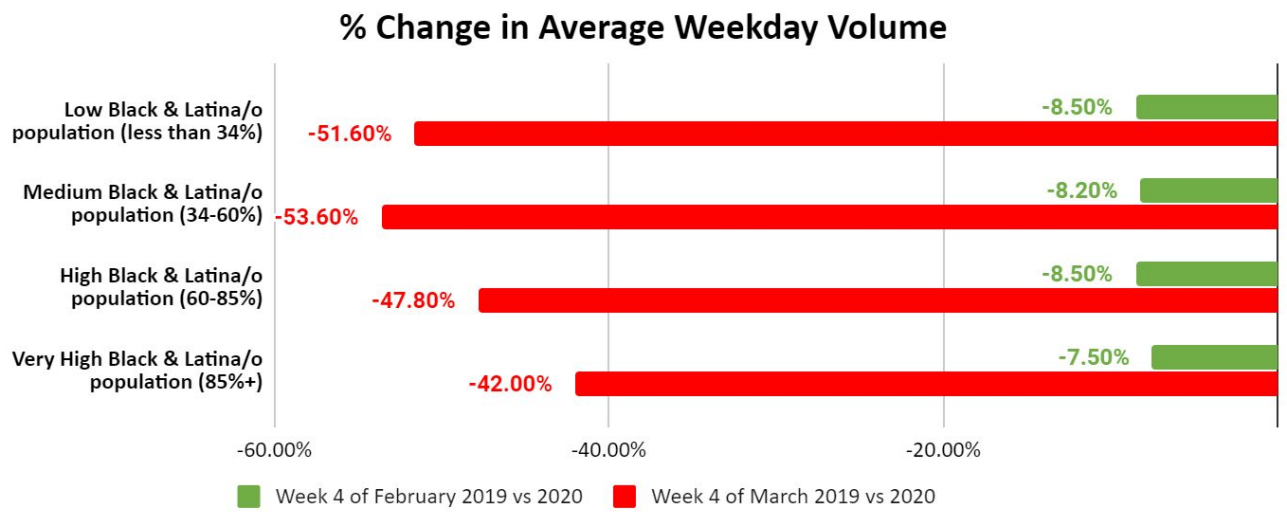
- Post-SAH, average number of weekday car trips starting in areas with more poverty are lengthier
- People in very high/high poverty areas saw lower reductions in VMT during post-SAH



Source: StreetLight Data, California Healthy Places Index, LADOT Analysis

# Black and Latina/o people made more weekday trips, experiencing slight travel time savings during Safer at Home

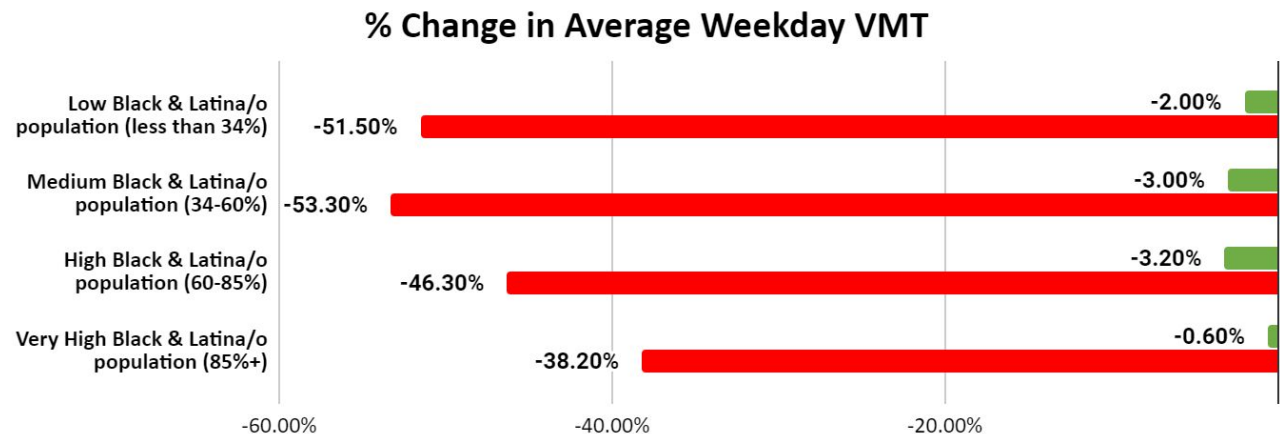
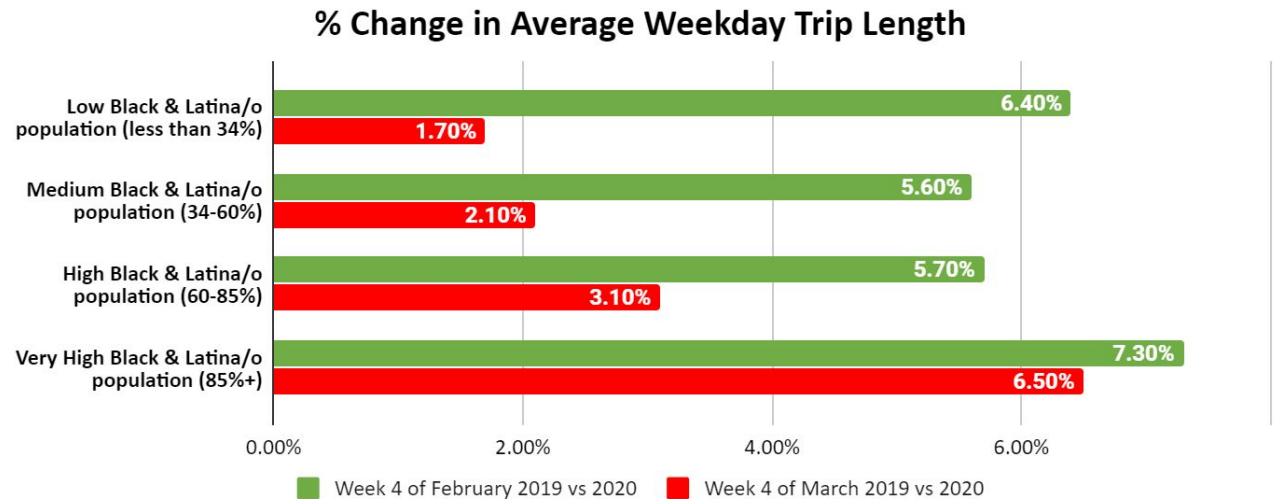
- Areas with low proportions of Black and Latina/o people saw major reductions in average weekday car trips post-SAH
- Also, majority Black and Latina/o areas saw a slight decrease in vehicle trip duration
- **People in majority Black & Latina/o areas made more weekday trips, slightly shorter in duration**



Source: StreetLight Data, California Healthy Places Index, LADOT Analysis

# People in majority Black and Latina/o communities have experienced significantly smaller VMT reductions than

- Post-SAH, majority Black and Latina/o areas experienced smaller reductions in vehicle trip lengths
- **People in majority Black and Latina/o areas reduced their VMT less than all other areas during post-SAH**

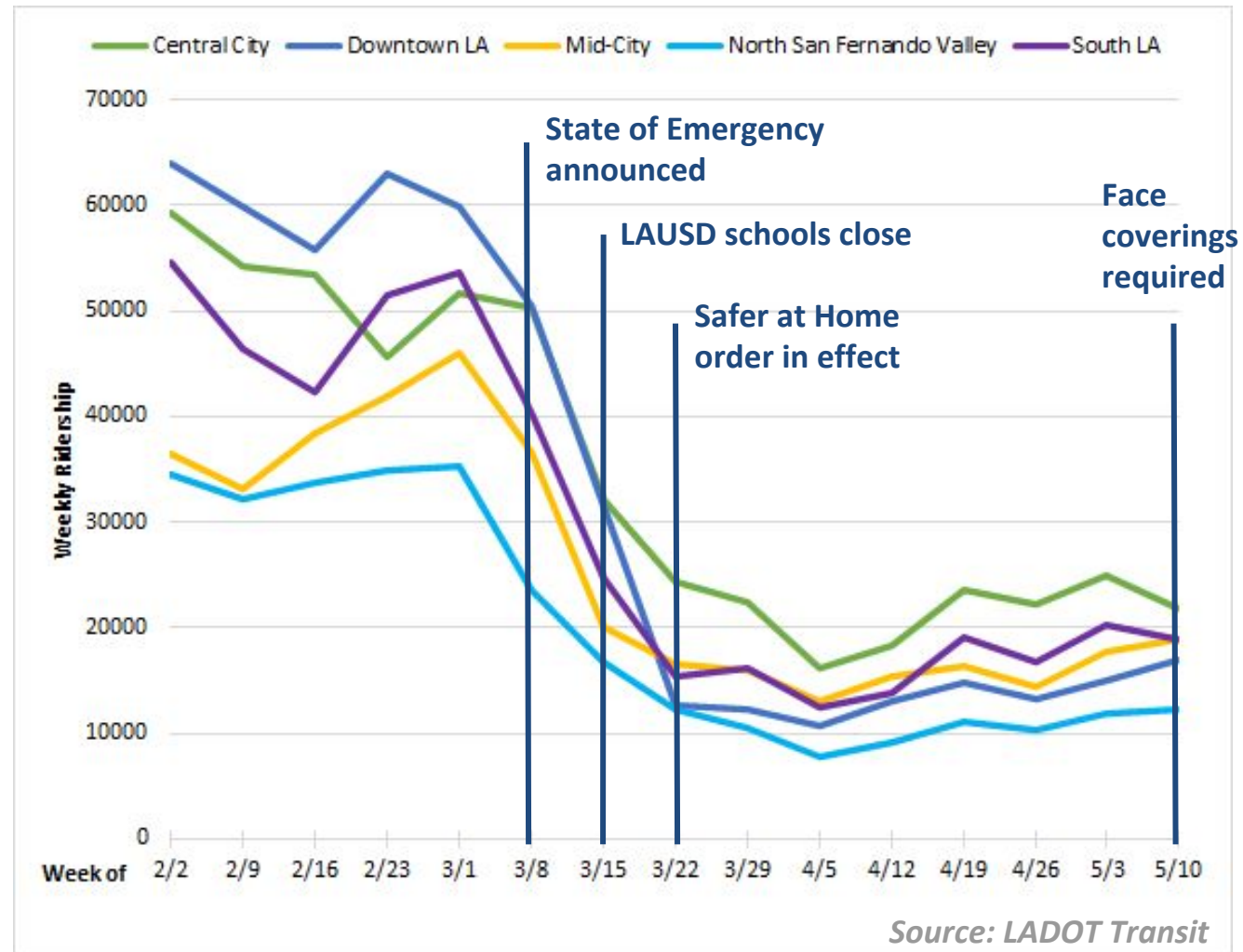


Source: StreetLight Data, California Healthy Places Index, LADOT Analysis

# Many people are riding DASH in Central City & South LA

## Compared to February 2020 average week ridership:

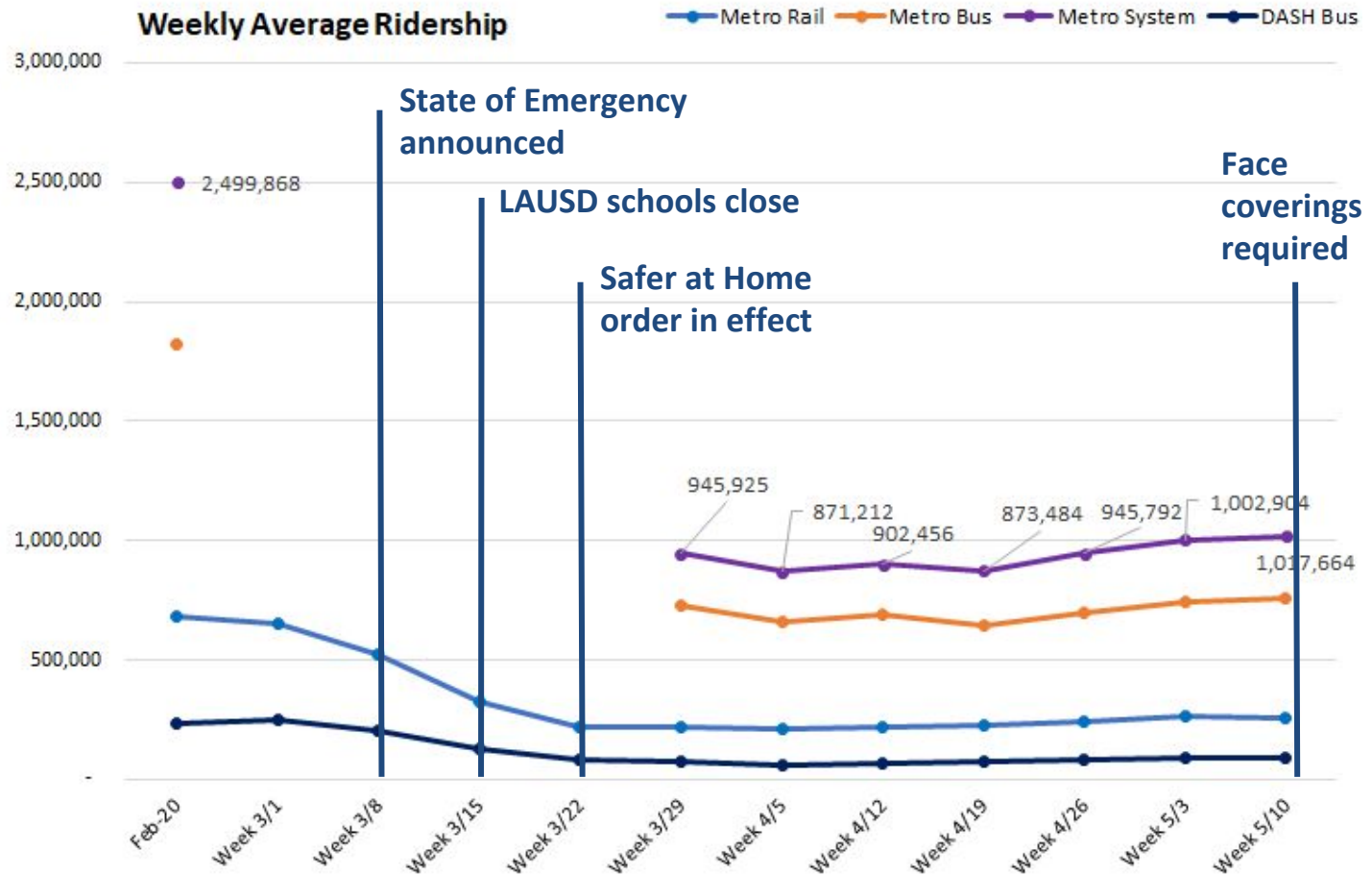
- DASH buses see -13% riders when state of COVID emergency announced
- LAUSD schools close, DASH buses see -46% riders
- SAH order goes into effect, DASH buses see -68% riders
- **~32% weekly DASH bus riders continue to use the system**



# Ridership on Metro Buses is climbing, seems stagnant on Metro Rail

Compared to Feb '20 average week ridership:

- LAUSD schools close, **Metro rail sees -52% riders**
- Metro Buses continue to move 37% of weekly ridership, at **~930k riders/week**
- Metro Rail moves 34% of weekly ridership, at **~233k/week**



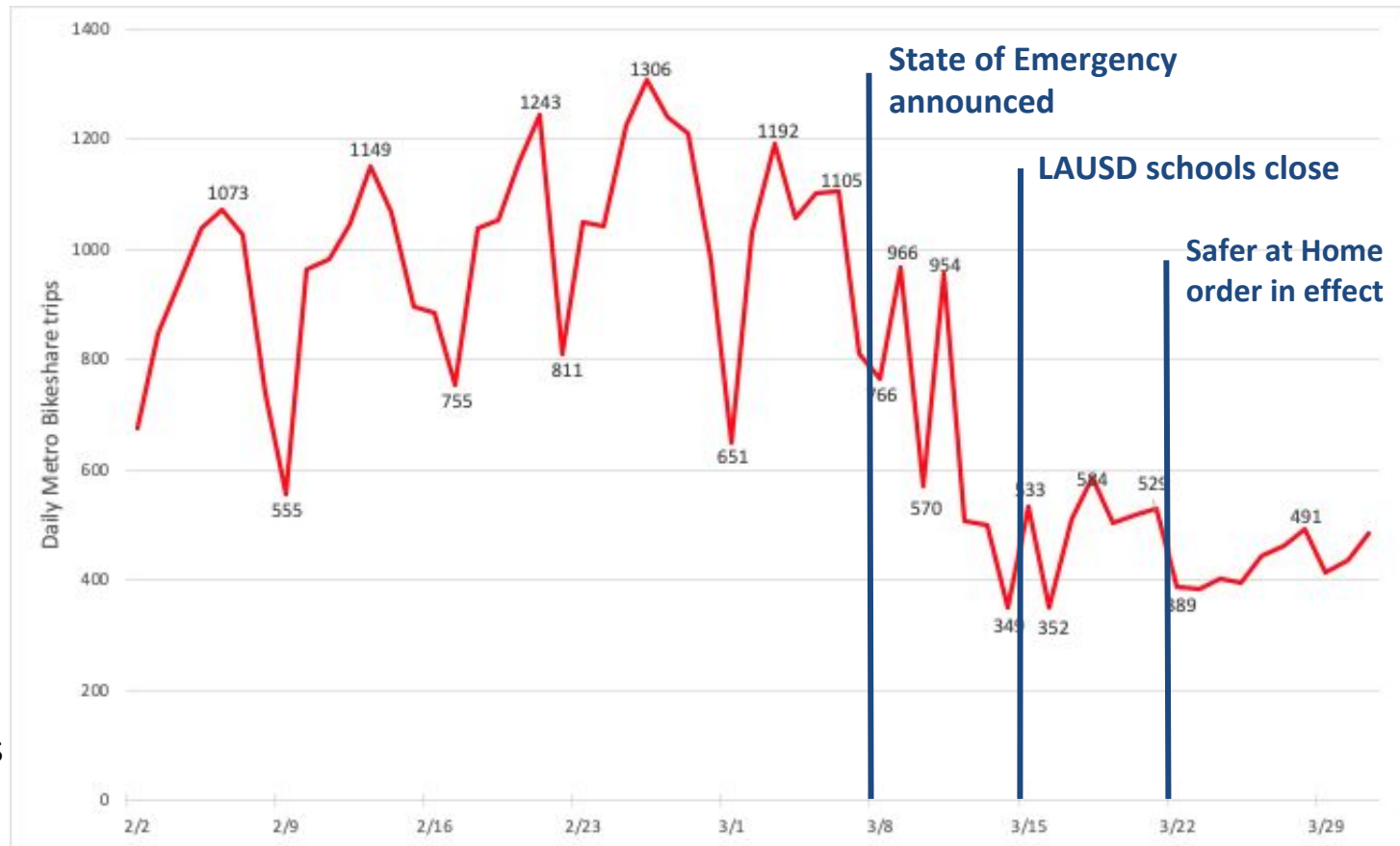
Source: LA Metro\*

\*Bus ridership data for 3/1 to 3/28 was not yet available

# Half as many people are using Metro Bike Share

Compared to February 2020 average daily ridership:

- Bikeshare rides decline by 30% when state of COVID emergency announced
- LAUSD schools close, rides decline by 50%
- SAH order goes into effect, rides decline by 58%



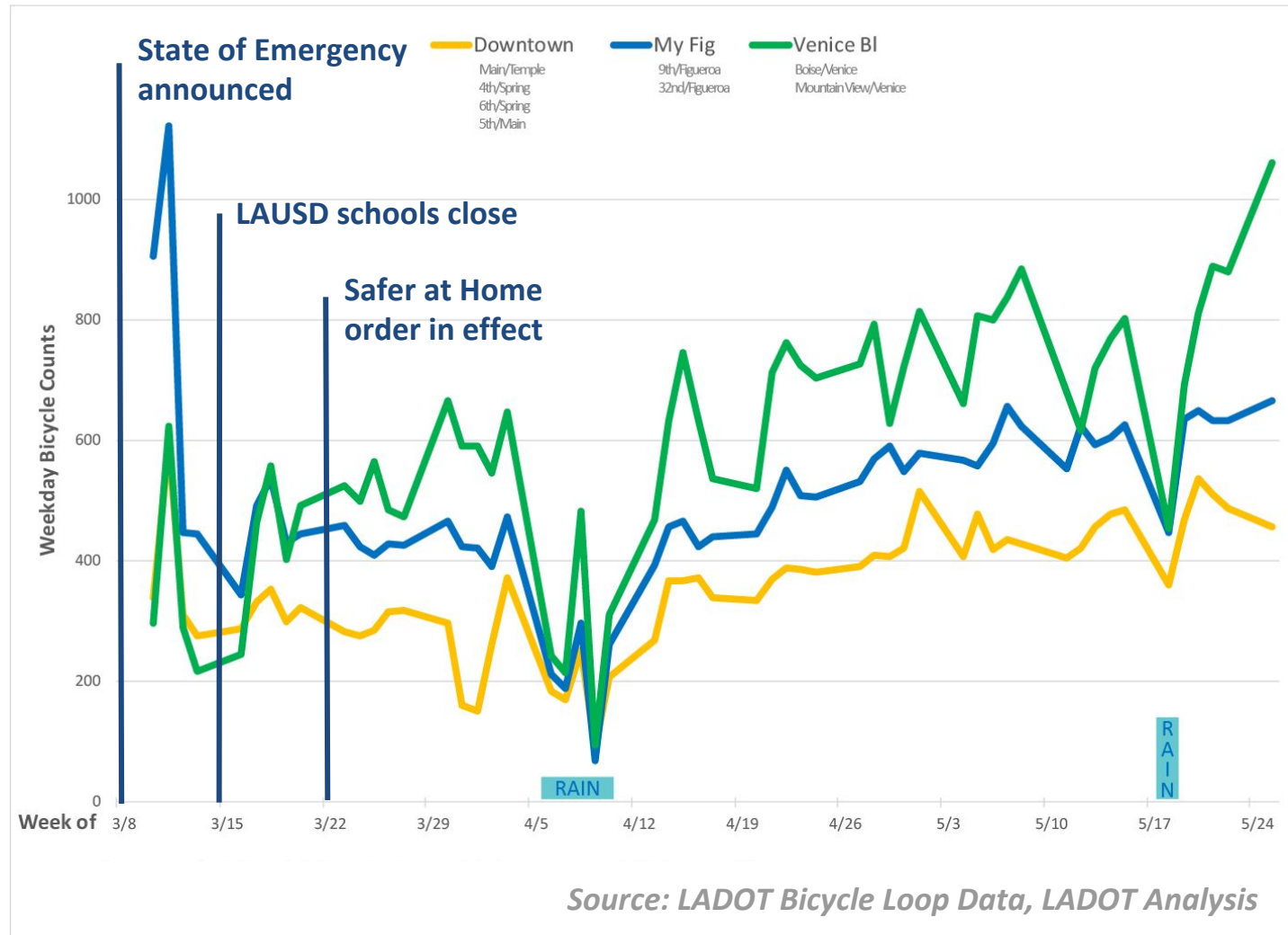
Source: Los Angeles Metro, LADOT Analysis



# More people are riding in separated bikeways

Based on data from bicycle loop detectors at separated bikeways ...

- Post-SAH order, bicycle counts have increased on clear days
- In May, bicycle counts were on average 54% higher compared to the week prior to SAH



# Travel trends in LA during the COVID-19 emergency, by the numbers

- **Total observed vehicle trips citywide decreased 30 - 50%** compared to January 2020 but **vehicle trip making is on the rise**
- While daily weekday citywide VMT also decreased 30 - 50% below January 2020 levels, **VMT is beginning to increase**
- **People in communities of color had smallest observed VMT reductions**, including Jefferson Park, Vermont Vista, West Adams, Florence, Adams-Normandie, Wilmington
- **People in high poverty areas made less trips, but drove for longer time periods & more miles during SAH** when compared to people in affluent areas
- DASH buses continue serving about 32% of their weekly ridership, with **highest weekly ridership figures seen on bus routes in Central City & South LA**
- Similarly, **LA Metro Buses continue moving ~930k bus riders/week**, 37% of typical weekly ridership, and **LA Metro Rail serves ~233k/week**, 34% of typical
- Metro Bike Share seeing **about 50% decrease in typical daily ridership**
- On physically separated bikeways, **bicycle ridership is growing**



# According to the people of Los Angeles

Image Source: REUTERS/Mario Anzuoni

# Feedback on streets + mobility during the COVID-19 emergency **from people privileged to work from home**

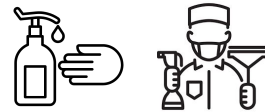
- **Expand provision of working from home** beyond COVID-19 emergency
- Reclaim road space and parking lots for **for shopping, for dining, or to recreate**
  - **Convert curbside spaces** into high-turnover pick-up or delivery zones to benefit essential retailers
  - **Expand outdoor marketplace footprints** onto adjacent streets to relieve crowding and support physical distancing
  - Test our new uses like **transformative placemaking**
  - Provide public spaces to **escape the online, virtual spaces** that are being surveilled
- Take advantage of low traffic conditions to **accelerate construction of improvements**
- **Continue building** dense, urban communities



*Sources: Local social media posts, local advocates, Mayor's Office of Public Engagement*

# Feedback on streets + mobility during the COVID-19 emergency from people still riding public transit

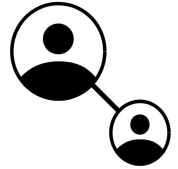
- Based on 1,102 Transit app users surveyed in LA metro area,
  - **40% respondents/riders are 35 - 54 years old**, 39% are 18 - 34 yrs old
  - **85% of respondents/riders do not own or have access to car**
  - **25% of respondents/riders who ride transit daily, do not have a car**
  - Top 3 reasons for travel, **work (72%), errands (49%), and healthcare (28%)**
  - **Nearly half (49.5%) have changed their travel time, earlier or later**
  - Essential workers riding transit are **employed in food prep & service (18%), building/grounds maintenance (9%), sales/retail (8%), healthcare support (7%)**
  - **About 50% earn less than \$20k a year**
- Reduce anxiety of current transit riders, by delivering **enhanced bus service capacity to allow physical distancing, improved reliability, transit vehicle cleanliness, and access to facilities for personal hygiene**



Sources: LA Metro via Transit App Survey, HCIDLA FamilySource Centers, LA Mayor's Angeleno Card Assistance Program, EWDD Rapid Response Centers, Mayor's Office of Public Engagement

# Feedback on streets + mobility during the COVID-19 emergency from financially impacted people (1/2)

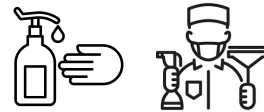
- Former transit riders who do not own a car are **shifting to community-based car sharing, shared rides, bicycling, or walking**
- Oversubscribed on-street parking due to overcrowded housing and/or high vehicle ownership rates has motivated people to **avoid moving their car, increase online shopping, or have anxiety about citations**
- Fear of crowded spaces has motivated people to **make essential trips early or late in the day or to travel farther**
- Fear of COVID-19 exposure has isolated some people at home, resulting in **feelings of anxiety, fear, loneliness, isolation, and disconnection**
- Struggling to find work, unemployed low-income people are **considering moving out of state**



Sources: HCIDLA FamilySource Centers, LA Mayor's Angeleno Card Assistance Program, EWDD Rapid Response Centers, Mayor's Office of Public Engagement

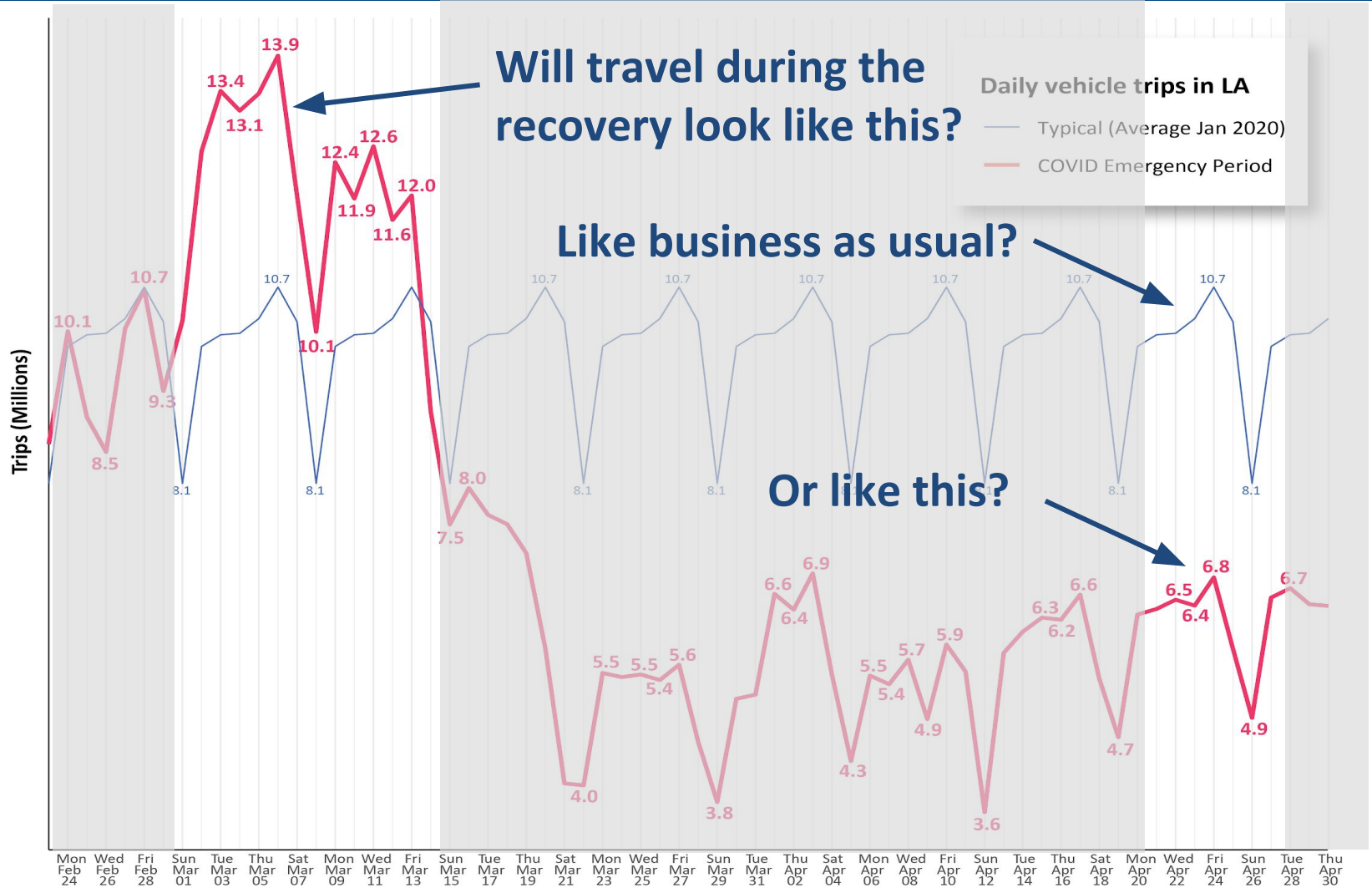
# Feedback on streets + mobility during the COVID-19 emergency from financially impacted people (2/2)

- Newly unemployed/underemployed people are either **driving more to generate income or not at all to reduce expenses and health risk exposure**
- Employed people **only go out for essential trips**, like reporting to a physical location for work, to go grocery shopping, or to fill prescriptions
- All surveyed families **avoid riding transit and stopped non-essential travel**, limiting existence to their neighborhoods and restricting fresh food access
- Many families with young children reported living in crowded housing and nearby parks are closed, but are **hopeful parks will reopen with facilities for personal hygiene and with public information on physical distancing**
- Linguistically isolated communities would like **more accessible public information on agencies' public transit vehicle and facilities sanitation procedures, on processes for making maintenance requests, and on fare discounts**



*Sources: HCIDLA FamilySource Centers, LA Mayor's Angeleno Card Assistance Program, EWDD Rapid Response Centers, Mayor's Office of Public Engagement Area Representatives*

# Rebounding from the COVID-19 emergency



Will travel during the recovery look like this?

Like business as usual?

Or like this?



# About the LADOT Research Team



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LADOT'S VISION

**In Los Angeles, all people have access to safe and affordable transportation choices that treat everyone with dignity and support vibrant, inclusive communities.**

*Image Source: Karina Macias*