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Occupy L.A. and environmental protesters demonstrate downtown

One 'Occupy' protester is arrested, apparently for the second time in a week. Separately, another group opposes cuts to bus service and a proposed expansion of the 710 Freeway.

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Occupy Los Angeles protesters returned to the streets Saturday in a large march that included many of the same demonstrators who were arrested during a police sweep of their camp outside of City Hall last week.

One person was arrested during Saturday's heavily policed march in downtown L.A., apparently for failing to follow police orders to stay on the sidewalk. Other protesters identified him as Anthony Lascano.

Lascano was one of nearly 300 protesters who were arrested in early Wednesday's eviction, an elaborate police action that involved some 1,400 officers.

To protest his second arrest, the crowd marched past the headquarters of the Los Angeles Police Department and to the Twin Towers Correctional Facility, where many Occupy arrestees have been held. A line of police officers in riot gear blocked the doors.

Police Department spokesman Cleon Joseph confirmed that there had been an arrest at the protest but said he did not have more details.

Demonstrators on Saturday were trailed by about 100 Los Angeles police officers. Police have maintained a large presence at Occupy protests downtown in the days since the eviction, especially during demonstrators' nightly general assembly meetings on the west steps of City Hall.

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who ordered the encampment closed because of health and safety concerns and because of damage to the lawn, instructed city crews to keep the west steps open while the lawn is rehabilitated so that the protesters — and anyone else — have a place to gather.

In another downtown protest Saturday, hundreds of demonstrators outside City Hall called on elected leaders to do more for the environment and said decisions to cut bus service and pursue some freeway projects were local symptoms of a global climate crisis.

"Climate change starts in our communities. The pollution starts in our communities," said Mark Lopez of the group Communities for a Better Environment.

Lopez's group and three others, including the Bus Riders Union, wrote a letter to Villaraigosa last week urging him to use his positions as president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and chairman of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority board to better address climate issues.

They said reducing bus service and cutting bus lines in the region puts more cars on the road, increasing pollution.

The groups also said a proposed expansion of the 710 Freeway could be bad for local communities and criticized spending on such freeway projects, saying it would serve more people and be better for the environment to put funds into mass transit.

"We urge you and the other members of the MTA board to reverse this trend by restoring and expanding bus service and stopping the proposed 710 expansion," the letter read.

Protesters on Saturday carried signs that said "Stop the 1% from profiting from pollution" and "710, I'm on the highway to hell."

The march was designed to be one of several across the nation this weekend coinciding with a meeting in South Africa of some 20,000 delegates from more than 190 countries focused on climate change.

One member of the Bus Riders Union, Francisca Porchas, is in South Africa. In an email to The Times, she said Los Angeles could set an example for the rest of the country "by implementing a first-class transit system, a network of bus-only lanes across the county, auto-free zones, affordable fares to reduce auto use."

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