

MEETING OF THE SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM
SECURITY & PASSENGER SAFETY COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP (CAG)

September 7, 2022

1. ROLL CALL

Chair Welsh called the Security & Passenger Safety Community Advisory Group (CAG) meeting to order at 11:10 am. A roll call sheet listing of CAG member attendance is attached.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Vice Chair Brady moved to approve the minutes of the June 15, 2022 San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) CAG meeting. Manu Agni seconded the motion, and the vote was 9 to 0 in favor, with Karen Howard, Matthew Wechter, Rocina Lizarraga, Rodrick Colvin, Todd Temple, V. Turner and Vinton Omaleki absent.

Sharon Cooney, Chief Executive Officer, thanked the committee for accommodating the in-person meeting and stated, in-person meeting requirements under the Brown Act is meant to make sure that public proceedings remain in the public realm. Ms. Cooney explained that MTS is allowed to suspend the requirements that members have to be in person but it has to be done every thirty days. Due to the Board of Directors not having a meeting in August, MTS inadvertently did not realize this meeting was scheduled before the next Board of Directors meeting. Ms. Cooney apologized and stated going forward MTS plans to bring a new resolution to the next Board of Directors meeting and will do so subsequently as long as the Public Health Order declaring an emergency continues. Ms. Cooney mentioned the suspension of the requirement to be in person is related to public health emergencies and also related to the deadline set for January 1, 2024. Ms. Cooney continued stating that eventually, unless legislative action is taken at the state level, this committee will always meet in person rather than through a hybrid format. Ms. Cooney commented that statutes could be changed at the state level prior to that time and that MTS will keep the committee updated.

Michelle Krug asked for more clarification regarding hybrid meetings and it being the members choice to come in person or not. Ms. Landers stated that under the Brown Act now, there is a state statute that allows board members to be on a hybrid basis as long as every 30 days there is a finding that the public health emergency is continuing. Ms. Landers clarified that once that legislation sunsets, which is set to expire on January 1, 2024, then the option would no longer be available.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No Public Comments.

4. Security & Passenger Safety Community Advisory Group (CAG) Ride-A-Longs (Chair Megan Welsh)

Al Stiehler, Director of Transit Security & Passenger Safety stated that MTS scheduled ride-a-longs in August with a few CAG members that started with a half hour briefing followed with a three-hour ride-a-long and a quick debrief afterwards. Chair Welsh then called upon the CAG participants to share their experiences.

Emma Rodriguez commented that she rode on the green line and the blue line mostly in downtown San Diego. She noted that the officers were checking tickets and that some riders, that didn't pay, were asked to step off. Ms. Rodriguez stated that she was not aware of the difference between a public officer and a peace officer and that MTS officers are public officers which means they cannot arrest you but also means a lot of what they do is discretionary which lends to being non-confrontational. Ms. Rodriguez feels it would be very helpful to continue raising awareness among the public of who the officers are, what they do, what they are allowed to do and what they are not allowed to do. Ms. Rodriguez asked why her ride-a-long was kept mostly to the downtown area if the green line went all the way to Santee. Mr. Stiehler stated that the team Ms. Rodriguez was assigned to was the Metro team and their area to patrol is the downtown area. He commented that the goal is to have a train team on every line, on every shift and stated the Metro area tends to be the busiest. Mr. Stiehler mentioned the challenges with the Park and Market station and the 5th Avenue station which sometimes requires more presence. Ms. Rodriguez commented that she did see an interaction with an agitated patron and she gives praise to the officers working under uncomfortable situations. She stated that the officers do a really good job at making sure things are deescalated and that people feel safe. Ms. Rodriguez ended stating she was very impressed with the mannerisms and training of the officers.

Chair Welsh stated that she saw just how challenging a code compliance inspector's (CCI) job is and how quickly it changes. She observed the education given to passengers regarding the Pronto app, fare checks and the issuance of citations. Chair Welsh commented that it became clearer, in a new way, the challenges that MTS has with fare evasion, the diversion program and with communication and education. Chair Welsh stated she would like to have more conversations on those issues and on the distinct job roles that the CCI and transit security officers (TSO) have.

Vice Chair Brady stated he is looking forward to scheduling his ride-a-long and mentioned that he recently spoke with SDPD Captain Takeuchi who mentioned they are seeing significant increases in erratic behavior that could be coming from financial pressure not just in transit riders or any specific subpopulation. Vice Chair Brady asked if MTS is seeing the same thing. Mr. Stiehler stated yes and that during a rail conference in June, a researcher from the Mineta Institute said there is a rise across the country in anti-social behaviors that is not just affecting transportation agencies but every municipality.

Michelle Krug mentioned that she would like to be contacted via a phone call to schedule a ride-a-long and then asked who the bargaining unit is for the CCI officers. Mr. Stiehler stated it is the Transit Enforcement Officers Association (TEOA).

Ms. Cooney wanted to elaborate on training and youths on the system especially around school bell times. She commented that at the end of the day MTS is experiencing a great deal of challenges including rocks being thrown at buses, pushing, shoving each other and inappropriate touching onboard buses. Ms. Cooney stated that MTS realizes the need to have specific training dealing with youths on the system and that Mr. Stiehler is looking into such training. Ms. Cooney stated now that the youth have free access to MTS, MTS wants to make sure they travel safely and that they keep each safe and out of trouble. She commented that MTS is seeing an escalation of violence in some of the interactions and the police departments are getting involved.

Michelle Krug suggested finding a way to present a short video to the youths talking about keeping themselves safe, who the safe people are to reach out to if needed, talk about acceptable behavior and what isn't acceptable behavior including consequences for unacceptable behavior. Mr. Stiehler stated he recently appeared with Mid-City Can and gave a presentation in regards to safety on MTS systems including some rules and regulations. He also mentioned that a few CCI's are state trained and certified with Operation Lifesaver. Mr. Stiehler commented that Operation Lifesaver is about safety in and around railroads, railroad tracks, railroad stations, and added to it MTS rules and regulations and about behavior expectations. Mr. Stiehler stated MTS will soon be doing a presentation at the schools. Emma Rodriguez added that being a youth representative, the school presentations could be very helpful and having a short video sent out through the schools is a great idea.

Ariana Federico Mondragon commented that she is looking forward to hearing about training and how to work with youth riding transit. Ms. Mondragon would like to collaborate and support MTS with plans to provide safety protocols and highlighting youth programs via social media. Mr. Stiehler stated that one of the department goals is to work with marketing to have social media presence.

Hoan-Vu Do asked if there are statistics showing what type of incidents happen throughout the day and the most common period when high level incidents occur. Mr. Stiehler stated that once MTS rolls out their beta version app, then MTS will have a better understanding where things are happening and at what time.

Chair Welsh remembered a conversation pertaining to the possibility of a youth ambassador program and asked if other transit systems in the United States use opportunity passes and if we could learn from them. Mr. Stiehler stated he is not aware of any but he could reach out to the Peer Advisory Group to see if there is anything similar out there.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Rocina Lizarraga – Ms. Lizarraga asked questions regarding the public using transit northbound to southbound to visit the border businesses and asked if there is any data as to why people from Carlsbad, Del Mar and Escondido are not using public transportation to travel to border businesses. Chair Welsh asked if there was another venue where this feedback would be relevant and actionable. Ms. Cooney stated there is a Board of Directors meeting next week.

Action Taken

Informational only.

5. Customer Survey Results (Mark Olson, MTS; and Judith McCourt, Redhill Group)

Mark Olsen, MTS Director of Marketing and Communications, started his presentation stating that MTS has been doing customer satisfaction surveys since 2011 and has been doing them about every two years but this is the first one since the pandemic began. Mr. Olsen stated that there were some things MTS was doing well but the environment has changed. He mentioned the introduction of a new fare collection system, the launch of the Mid Coast extension to UTC and the different emphasis on security and passenger safety. Mr. Olsen introduced Judith McCourt with the Redhill Group then turned the presentation over to her to present the results of this survey.

Judith McCourt, President of the Redhill Group, mentioned that during the presentation she will briefly cover the survey methodology, current rider demographics, rider satisfaction across a series of service attributes, perceptions on safety and perceptions on PRONTO. Ms. McCourt noted the survey was conducted in April 2022 and there were approximately 1,800 riders that participated. She stated riders were surveyed in accordance with the sampling plan that was jointly developed by MTS and the Redhill Group and explained the ridership numbers used were from February 2022. Ms. McCourt noted the different options that were available for riders to participate, stated the survey was given in multiple languages and shared a map reflecting participation per zip code zones. Ms. McCourt stated the 2022 survey was redesigned and included additional comments on safety and security, fare checking and satisfaction with the new PRONTO system. Ms. McCourt went through her presentation sharing charts and percentages from the survey findings then concluded with a word cloud that showed what customers said would help to make their transit experience better.

Manu Agne asked for clarification on the methodology and if the only two data collection methods for riders were to be surveyed in person by an employee with a tablet or to do survey via text. Ms. McCourt confirmed those were the two data collection methods used and the employees were independent Redhill employees and not MTS employees. Mr. Agne asked about the distribution of the employees throughout the day, night and weekends. Ms. McCourt stated surveys were done from five in the morning until eight in the evening and were not done on weekends.

Michelle Krug inquired what the dates were when the surveys were done. Ms. McCourt stated the survey was done during the month of April, from the beginning of April to April thirtieth. Ms. Krug asked if the surveys were done on just the trolley lines or were they also done on the bus lines. Ms. McCourt stated the goal was 800 surveys for trolley and 800 surveys for bus and ended up getting 900 surveys on both.

Kathryn Durant asked if the disability percentage increased or decreased since the previous survey and what was the actual question asked. Ms. McCourt stated there were 12 percent of persons who considered themselves disabled or to have a disability. Ms. McCourt stated the question asked was which of the following would you consider

apply to you. It was a self-assessment question with three options/selections: veteran, concerning disability and student and they could check one or all of them.

Emma Rodriguez asked if it were possible to breakdown by route the perception of safety in vulnerable populations, or populations who feel less safe. Ms. McCourt stated that it can be done by trolley but because there are so many bus lines that the data would be unreliable. Sharon Cooney clarified that while MTS has a beat system patrol schedule on the trolley, the bus team is assigned to deal with problems along the bus system and is not assigned to any specific area. Chair Welsh then asked if MTS could act on the data already collected for the trolley lines regarding what the perception of safety and security are. Mr. Olsen commented that MTS wants to look closer at that possibly with another survey or with some focus groups. Ms. Cooney stated the word cloud speaks volumes and Chair Welsh asked to clarify if the word cloud was unprompted responses. Ms. McCourt noted the statement was: Briefly tell us what changes would make the biggest difference in improving your transit experience. Ms. McCourt stated that with approximately 900 participants, 196 people said they wanted more security.

Ariana Federico Mondragon asked what happens to the responses that are not priority and wanted to know if there could be a pathway to having what the issues are, lined up with what MTS is doing. Mr. Olson stated MTS is sharing the results of this survey internally, with the board and with this group to get feedback and from there MTS can assess a plan of action.

Vice Chair Brady asked if the security video monitoring on the trolleys were real time. Mr. Stiehler stated MTS does not have the ability right now to view them all live and stated some vehicles have advanced technologies but not all of them. He stated that it also depends on where the vehicle is and if it's getting a strong enough Wi-Fi signal that can broadcast back to MTS control center.

Chair Welsh asked if there will be a written report of the findings from the survey. Mr. Olson stated that after the Board of Directors meeting, the plan is to release the findings and develop a web page for it as well as the PowerPoint presentation given here today. Chair Welsh asked if there was any more detailed information surrounding the word cloud that could be shared with the CAG committee. Mr. Olson stated MTS can share information as they can to provide specific information. Chair Welsh commented that this is a conversation she feels the committee should continue to have and asked to keep it on the agenda for the next CAG meeting.

Bobby Ray Salas stated that he would like to have the security issues broken down more. Ms. McCourt stated this survey was a quantitative snapshot and that some of the questions needing answered are qualitative and will come from the next steps. Ms. McCourt stated the CAG is having the very first look at all of the data collected and that the next steps will be incredibly helpful to get some qualitative feedback. Ms. Cooney stated the word cloud could be put into an excel spreadsheet with all of the information collected on each issue.

Action Taken

Ms. Cooney will report to the MTS Board of Directors that the CAG has discussed the survey and would like to continue conversations around the data at the next meeting.

6. Employee Assault Reduction Task Force (Al Stiehler)

Sharon Cooney, Chief Executive Officer, commented that all throughout the United States, transit agencies are grappling with their concerns about transit worker assaults especially on frontline workers. Ms. Cooney stated that it is not just bus operators but also security officers, janitorial staff and ambassadors at all levels. Ms. Cooney mentioned that this is a high concern for MTS Board of Directors and felt this committee might be able to offer some insights or advice. Al Stiehler, Director of Transit Security and Passenger Safety, started his presentation stating that an increase in antisocial behavior has led to an increase in assaults on MTS frontline employees. He mentioned the increase of assaults on all MTS employees between 2020 and 2021. Mr. Stiehler stated that MTS put together a task force and initiated a transit worker assault prevention program stating it is an agency wide initiative. Mr. Stiehler discussed the objectives to identify patterns, enhance training, increase advocacy and heighten awareness. Mr. Stiehler stated that MTS wants to reduce the assaults and wants the employees to be safe in doing their jobs to help everyone use the transit system as safely as possible.

Vice Chair Brady appreciated the report and stated the committee should focus on the assault issues. Mr. Brady asked if it would be possible to view footage for some of these interactions. Karen Landers, General Counsel, stated that videos are considered public records and MTS could put together a future presentation with some cases that have already been resolved, didn't get prosecuted or incidents where a police report wasn't filed. Mr. Brady asked if the presentation could also include some data where MTS feels the best efforts and de-escalation were applied and where there were opportunities for improvement.

Mr. Salas asked for clarification on the penal code for assault on transit workers versus an assault on a regular person and are they the same level. Mr. Stiehler stated assaults on transit workers is the same level as assaults on transit passengers but that code is different than an assault on a person on the city streets. Mr. Stiehler commented that MTS would like to get laws passed to have stiffer penalties for assaults on employees.

Manu Agni inquired about the bus operator shields installed on the buses and are they effective. Ms. Cooney mentioned the shields are effective and MTS has seen multiple incidents where the shield saved the operator's from being injured.

Hoan-Vu Do asked if MTS is going to do an annual survey for bus and trolley operators on how they feel related to safety. Mr. Stiehler stated that it can be made part of the objectives when looking at training.

Action Taken

Informational only.

OTHER ITEMS

7. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS AND OTHER BUSINESS

Vice Chair Brady inquired about having hybrid meetings and asked if that could be an option for this committee and if yes what would the next step be to make that happen. Ms. Landers confirmed that it could be and Ms. Cooney stated the way this is done is the clerk of the committee reaches out to the committee members before the next meeting to find out who will be attending in person and who will be attending virtually.

8. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting date is scheduled for Wednesday, November 2, 2022 at 11:00 a.m.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Welsh adjourned the meeting at 1:23 p.m.

/S/ Megan Welsh

Chairperson
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

/S/ Karen Wisniewski

Clerk of the Security & Passenger
Safety Community Advisory Group

Attachment: Roll Call Sheet

SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM
SECURITY AND PASSENGER SAFETY COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP (CAG) MEETING

ROLL CALL

MEETING OF (DATE): September 7, 2022 CALL TO ORDER (TIME): 11:10 am
ADJOURN: 1:23 pm

COMMITTEE MEMBER		REPRESENTING	PRESENT (TIME ARRIVED)	ABSENT (TIME LEFT)
Ariana Federico Mondragon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Community Advocacy Group Member	11:10 am	1:23 pm
Bobby Ray Salas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public Safety Professional/Consultant	11:10 am	1:23 pm
Emma Rodriguez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Youth/Young Adult	11:10 am	1:23 pm
Hoan-Vu Do	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	City of San Diego Resident Transit Rider	11:10 am	1:23 pm
John Brady	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Community Advocacy Group Member	11:10 am	1:23 pm
Karen Howard	<input type="checkbox"/>	City of San Diego Resident Transit Rider		
Kathryn Durant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Regional Task Force on Homelessness Member	11:10 am	1:23 pm
Manu Agni	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Youth/Young Adult	11:10 am	1:23 pm
Matthew Wechter	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social Service Agency Professional/Public Defender/Other Court Personnel		
Megan Welsh	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Educator with a Primary Study Focus in Public Safety	11:10 am	1:23 pm
Michelle Krug	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disabled Community Advocate	11:10 am	1:23 pm
Rocina Lizarraga	<input type="checkbox"/>	South Bay Resident Transit Rider		
Roddrick Colvin	<input type="checkbox"/>	Educator with a Primary Study Focus in Public Safety		
Todd Temple	<input type="checkbox"/>	Business/Tourism Professional		
V Turner	<input type="checkbox"/>	Senior Community Advocate		
Vinton Omaleki	<input type="checkbox"/>	East County Resident Transit Rider		

CLERK OF THE CAG: Karen Wisniewski