

MEETING OF THE SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM  
PUBLIC SECURITY COMMITTEE (PSC)

November 17, 2022

1. ROLL CALL

Chair Montgomery Steppe called the Public Security Committee (PSC) meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. A roll call sheet listing PSC member attendance is attached.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Hall moved to approve the minutes of the June 23, 2022 San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) PSC meeting. Chair Montgomery Steppe seconded the motion, and the vote was 4 to 0 in favor, with Vice Chair Aguirre, Mr. Whitburn, and Mr. Goble absent.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Director's Security Update (Al Stiehler)

Al Stiehler, Director of Transit Security & Passenger Safety, provided a presentation with updates on the rider experience details, which were designed in response to customer complaints and recurring issues. He mentioned the success of the bike patrol team and pointed out the quicker response times in congested settings. Mr. Stiehler stated that MTS is continuing to work on the transit worker assault program and gave an update on the new database created to help recognize how big this problem is and to help identify trends and patterns. He mentioned the continued success of the Narcan Project and the Bus Enforcement Support Team (B.E.S.T.). Mr. Stiehler was pleased to report that the Downtown San Diego Partnership has committed to working with MTS staff four days per week which has been very helpful in being able to do more outreach in and around MTS stations and the metro area. He stated that two of the biggest obstacles are not having enough beds and not having a mental health component within the outreach team.

Mr. Stiehler mentioned the meetings with the Security & Passenger Safety Community Advisory Group and what topics were discussed. He gave an update on the Inter-Con transition including a headcount report, the hiring progress, staffing percentages, resignations, terminations and discussed the health report feature on the app used by the Inter-Con employees at the end of their shifts. Mr. Stiehler introduced Shaun Donelson, MTS's new Professional Standards Unit and congratulated Jeremiah Johnson for his promotion to the Crime and Data Analyst Unit. He discussed the TSA EXIS workshop and the purpose which was to see how MTS would react and respond to multiple incidents occurring on the system all at the same time. Mr. Stiehler also mentioned that Francisco Bautista, Canine Sergeant, received the Patriotic Employer Award. He discussed Rail Safety Week, Operation Lifesaver, Employee Recognition Day, special events and charity events. Mr. Stiehler concluded his presentation

mentioning a couple of appointments that he has been selected to be a voting member of.

Sharon Cooney, Chief Executive Officer, added that she attended the California Transit Association Conference and mentioned that MTS's peer agencies are all experiencing the same struggles and challenges, but they are also seeing some benefits from the reforms they have been making.

#### COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Chair Montgomery Steppe congratulated Mr. Stiehler on his appointments, then asked what system is being used to track the assaults and what is MTS looking at improving. Mr. Stiehler stated that MTS is tracking the number of assaults, but with the new database MTS will be able to track more data and once MTS can identify trends, MTS can focus on reducing the assaults. Chair Montgomery Steppe commented that she is concerned about there not being enough beds and that there is no available mental health expertise to help. She mentioned that she is very appreciative for the partnerships MTS is engaged in now and knows the ongoing issues everyone is working on. Chair Montgomery Steppe asked if MTS has any interactions with the Regional Task Force on Homelessness. Mr. Stiehler stated that he attends the regular symposiums and plans on attending the upcoming conference. Ms. Cooney mentioned that she attends different events posted with the Lucky Duck Foundation and the Task Force on Homelessness. Ms. Cooney stated as everyone is struggling to see how to better interconnect what is being done, that MTS is ultimately looking at the cities and counties to focus a lot of the effort through the Regional Task Force.

Ms. Galvez thanked Mr. Stiehler for his leadership and positive attitude. She mentioned the need for MTS to have the ability to remove people from MTS property especially as data is being collected regarding assaults. Ms. Galvez feels MTS should consider precluding individuals from using MTS including being able to revoke a person's pass, particularly if said person was involved in an assault on a transit worker. Ms. Galvez asked if there are any consequences besides going to court or if there is anything else that can be done to prevent some of these incidents from happening. Ms. Landers stated that MTS does have the ability to exclude riders and uses it sparingly making sure to follow principles of due process by documenting the specifics especially when the situation where someone has presented an ongoing safety threat to MTS passengers or personnel in which case the person is given a letter revoking their riding privileges and gives them the right to appeal. Ms. Landers mentioned that MTS also works with the prosecution office when possible. Mr. Stiehler commented that the research panel he sits on is specifically looking at this topic, looking to do a quick synthesis and provide best practices for transit agencies and stated that MTS will be able to enhance their program going forward. Ms. Galvez mentioned that she would be in favor of a one and done process where if a person assaults an MTS employee just once that they would no longer be allowed to use any MTS transit services.

#### Action Taken

No action taken. Informational item only.

5. Fare Evasion Diversion Program (Karen Landers)

Karen Landers, General Counsel, gave an update in regards to the proposal to make the Fare Evasion Diversion Program permanent. Ms. Landers stated that per the last meeting on June 23, 2022, MTS made a recommendation to this committee to make the Diversion Program permanent with some recommended changes. Ms. Landers noted one of the changes was to remove the option to immediately purchase a fare at a ticket vending machine or on cell phone. She stated that, as it is related to the Diversion Program, the person would receive an MTS citation but would have the option to pay a \$15 fine (reduced from \$25) and another change was to do one hour of community service instead of three. Ms. Landers stated no other changes were recommended at that time. Ms. Landers mentioned the committee was supportive of all the changes except the one to remove the option to immediately purchase fare at ticket vending machine or on cell phone and directed MTS staff to do additional research. The committee wanted MTS to provide additional data that would support removing the option to immediately purchase a fare and another recommended suggestion was to review the feasibility of increasing the dollar amount if someone chooses to immediately buy a fare. Ms. Landers stated that although the Diversion Program Pilot expired August 31, 2022, MTS will continue to implement the Diversion Program Pilot without any changes while MTS completes its research. Ms. Landers continued stating the participation in the Diversion Program has been limited and proceeded to break down the participation numbers. Ms. Landers stated that what MTS is focusing on now, by not allowing a person to be able to immediately purchase a fare, is to address the calculated risk that many passengers are making and she provided additional data from May 2022 to October 2022 from the PRONTO inspection app. Ms. Landers ended her presentation discussing the research in regards to creating a penalty fare for an on-the-spot pay option stating that it would be technically feasible.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

*Jack Shu, La Mesa City Councilmember and MTS Board Member* – Mr. Shu commented that he would like to see it as more of a reward for tapping/paying rather than as a punishment for not tapping/paying. He feels that eventually MTS will need to raise fares and he thinks a considerable raise in fare prices could then be used to lower the price as an award for those who tap or pay their fare and if you are found to have not tapped more than once then it goes to the \$15 Diversion Program. Ms. Cooney commented that there is an incentive for patrons to tap/pay their fare with the PRONTO fare capping. Mr. Shu added that MTS needs more people to use the transit system and feels there is a need to find other ways to fund MTS. Mr. Shu commended the MTS staff and all the efforts in trying to even out the budget.

## COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Ms. Galvez appreciates the idea to allow a patron to pay a fine right away. She also appreciates fare collection enforcement as it ensures that fellow passengers are law abiding and getting to their destination without messing around or taking advantage of the system. Ms. Galvez stated that MTS is a paid service and is highly subsidized by tax payers and she does not know how much further MTS can go or how many more accommodations can be done for those patrons who just refuse to pay a fare. Ms. Galvez mentioned that MTS now offers youth opportunity passes and the PRONTO fare capping that surmounts the obstacles that riders would have to try to calculate every month. Ms. Galvez feels MTS has done a lot to make fare collection easy and accessible stating it is an open system and not a turn style system making it easier for people to scam.

Chair Montgomery Steppe requested this as an extra item in order to break it out from the update. Chair Montgomery Steppe stated she never feels comfortable leaving programs hanging in the balance as they could be shut down and procedurally wants to make sure MTS is keeping up with it. Chair Montgomery Steppe commented that if it is necessary to create another pilot until all the research can be done, then that is what should be done. Chair Montgomery Steppe feels further discussion is needed in regards to the additional fee that is known now to be technically feasible. Chair Montgomery Steppe wants to make sure MTS is giving the patrons enough time to understand the PRONTO system as it requires tapping more than once and wants to make sure the data set that is being looked at accounts for the system still being new. Ms. Landers stated that MTS has had over 12 months of implementation and added that most of the education has already happened. Ms. Landers stated the fare data being collected shows that more people are choosing to risk riding without tapping/paying knowing they have stored value available and only tap/pay their one-way fare if they get contacted by an officer. Ms. Landers stated that MTS has not seen that the education has not yet taken hold, but instead said it seems like the remaining patrons that are still doing this are doing it intentionally.

Chair Montgomery Steppe asked for clarification regarding monthly pass holders and if they are required to tap. Ms. Landers stated that monthly pass holders should still tap, but if they do not, it would not be a fare violation and that this is something the officers are able to check upon their inspection. Chair Montgomery Steppe asked what happens to the patron who refuses to pay the fare. Mr. Stiehler stated that at the moment when someone refuses to pay the fare or refuses to step off, then the officer will issue a citation. He stated that if the patron is willing to get off at the next stop, but refuses to pay a fare and chooses to walk away, the officer lets them walk away. Chair Montgomery Steppe stated that she understands people are now willing to risk it and commented that maybe finding the balance is the penalty fee. Ms. Cooney highlighted that MTS has made many efforts to educate everyone and that she has seen officers asking patrons to tap and the patron just keeps on walking without tapping. Chair Montgomery Steppe would like a comparison of loss from before the Diversion Program and Ms. Cooney stated that it is not so much the Diversion Program, but more the actual add that allows a patron to step off and pay their fare rather than having them participate in the Diversion Program.

Mr. Elo-Rivera would like to know the difference between correlation and cause and wants to make sure that the change being proposed is the cause of the losses and that MTS was not incurring them before. Ms. Landers stated that one distinction to understand is right around the time MTS adopted the Diversion Program Pilot was around the same time MTS implemented PRONTO. She explained that with PRONTO a patron can pay as they go working up to the cost of a monthly pass whereas under the Compass Card System, in order to get the volume discount, a patron would have to right away buy a day pass or at the beginning of each month buy a monthly pass. Ms. Landers commented that MTS had a lot of patrons who would buy the monthly pass under the Compass Card System and MTS would get that money upfront. Ms. Landers stated the way it is structured now, patrons found a loop hole to get away with only paying when contacted. Ms. Cooney stated that the data shows the patrons being lost are those patrons who previously would buy a day pass more so than the monthly pass. Mr. Elo-Rivera suggested that maybe officers could hand out resource information to those in need.

Chair Montgomery Steppe agreed that Ms. Landers made a good point that the PRONTO system is a different system and that maybe the penalty will deter some of the behavior, but would like MTS to go back to do a little more research and bring again their findings to this committee or to the Board.

Action Taken

No action taken. Informational item only.

6. Committee Member Communications and Other Business

There was no Committee Member Communications and Other Business discussion.

7. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is to be determined based on the members' availability.

8. Adjournment

Chair Montgomery Steppe adjourned the meeting at 3:05 pm.



Chairperson  
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

Attachment: Roll Call Sheet

SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM  
PUBLIC SECURITY COMMITTEE MEETING

ROLL CALL

MEETING OF (DATE): 11/17/2022 CALL TO ORDER (TIME): 2:00 pm

ADJOURN: 3:05 pm

COMMITTEE MEMBER	(Alternate)	PRESENT (TIME ARRIVED)	ABSENT (TIME LEFT)
AGUIRRE <input type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)		
ELO-RIVERA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)	2:00 pm	3:05 pm
GALVEZ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)	2:00 pm	3:05 pm
GLORIA <input type="checkbox"/>	(Whitburn) <input type="checkbox"/>		
GOBLE <input type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)		
HALL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)	2:00 pm	3:05 pm
MONTGOMERY STEPPE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)	2:00 pm	3:05 pm

COMMITTEE CLERK:

Karen Wisniewski