

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

April 13, 2023

[Clerk's note: Except where noted, public, staff and board member comments are paraphrased.
The full comment can be heard by reviewing the recording at the [MTS website](#).]

1. Roll Call

Chair Montgomery Steppe called the Public Security Committee meeting to order at 2:02 p.m. A roll call sheet listing Public Security Committee member attendance is attached.

2. Public Comments

There were no Public Comments.

3. Approval of Minutes

Mike Donovan made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2022, MTS Public Security Committee meeting. Jose Rodriguez seconded the motion, and the vote was 4 to 0 in favor with Ms. Chavez absent.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Public Safety Focus Groups Report (Mark Olson, MTS; and Judith McCourt, Redhill Group)

Mark Olson, MTS Director of Marketing and Communications, and Judith McCourt, with the Redhill Group, presented the findings of the Public Safety Focus Groups that the Redhill Group did for MTS in February 2023. Mr. Olson stated that this stems from the customer satisfaction survey done by MTS about every two years. Mr. Olson stated from those results, MTS received positive reviews, but also noted areas of opportunity to improve upon. He mentioned that when the survey was done in September 2022, the question was asked if there was one thing MTS could do better, what one thing would that be. Mr. Olson stated the overwhelming response was more security and stated more security could mean a lot of different things to a lot of different people. Mr. Olson stated that is when it was decided to have Redhill Group do focus groups in regards to public security.

Ms. McCourt continued the presentation and stated that there were three areas that surfaced out of the customer satisfaction survey that were explored in these focus groups. She mentioned one was perceived safety on the system, one was the behavior of other passengers and the last one was regarding equity in checking fares. Ms. McCourt went through the presentation and discussed the project purpose, participant profiles, participant demographic, participant travel characteristics and then reviewed the key findings. Mr. Olson concluded the presentation reviewing a list of next step items.

Sharon Cooney, Chief Executive Officer, mentioned that she and other staff members sat in on the focus groups and after hearing the female focus group, she felt demoralized knowing that was how the MTS passengers were feeling. In regards to the issue with Ride Assured, Ms. Cooney mentioned that MTS is already working on a way to let passengers know that Ride Assured is there to help them. Ms. Cooney also mentioned lighting issues and that MTS will try to bring forward an enhanced lighting program with the Social Equity Listening Tour. Ms. Cooney remarked on a comment from the

passengers regarding cleanliness where they stated that if it feels unclean then it feels unsafe. The passengers stated that the buses were okay but the trolleys were not. Ms. Cooney stated MTS has enhanced their cleaning protocols, increasing the number of personnel and time of day when the trains will be cleaned. Ms. McCourt commented that MTS is not alone when it comes to female passengers feeling unsafe, that other transit agencies are seeing the same issues and she would like to applaud MTS for addressing the security issues for all people and all patrons.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Chair Montgomery Steppe mentioned that Circulate San Diego did a study on how women perceive the transit and what they experience when riding transit. She stated that we can gather wisdom from those that participated in the focus group and that it is a collective response from a collaborative community working together around these issues.

Ms. Chavez stated it is vital to understand what the riders are feeling and just the presence of an unarmed employee is enough to give that security of companionship through the ride. Ms. Chavez asked about cameras and response times. Al Stiehler, Director of Transit Security and Passenger Safety, stated that MTS does not have the technology to remotely access the cameras onboard the vehicles, but stated that cameras in the station have instant access. Ms. Chavez asked about the panic button onboard the trains and Ms. Cooney stated that once pushed it goes directly to the train operator. Brian Riley, Chief Operating Officer (Rail), stated that all vehicles are equipped with emergency response buttons which allows patrons to communicate with the train operator. Mr. Riley stated the train operator will then contact MTS control center who then will dispatch law enforcement or MTS security to respond to the situation. Ms. Cooney mentioned that if a patron feels unsafe pressing the button for help, they can use the Ride Assured texting system to send a message. Mr. Stiehler commented that he does not own a car and regularly uses the system. He stated that he uses Ride Assured when he sees issues and gets a response from the communications center almost immediately.

Ms. Dillard asked if the operator can hear what is going on inside the trolley. Mr. Riley stated that if the incident is happening in the lead vehicle, where the train operator is located, then the operator could hear it; however, if an incident happens on the second or third car then only if the emergency response button is pushed can an operator hear what is going on. Ms. Dillard asked if the information collected from the survey showed if the incidents were occurring inside the trolley or outside the trolley or both. Ms. McCourt stated that the occurrences were throughout the trip chain and could be either onboard or in station. Ms. Dillard asked about security presence and does MTS have the need or the capacity to regularly have security present on the platform. Mr. Stiehler stated that the transit enforcement and passenger safety department is a small amount of people trying to cover a large amount of area. Ms. Dillard suggested loud speakers on the platform to periodically remind people that they are being recorded stating that may make patrons feel safer.

Mr. Rodriguez inquired if MTS believes that the focus group results represent the broader ridership perception. Ms. McCourt stated that focus groups are qualitative however this group is very much in line with the customer satisfaction survey and

reflects what the ridership is thinking. Mr. Rodriguez asked if there are specific stops that seem safest on transit routes or some that are perceived to be unsafe. Mr. Stiehler stated on the Blue Line, the Iris Avenue and Palomar stations tend to get more vehicle break-ins. He stated that on the Orange Line, there are a few areas that tend to get a little more violence and sometimes there are significant problems on the Green Line around Fashion Valley. Mr. Stiehler stated that as of now there is no specific data showing dates, times or patterns. Ms. McCourt stated that, in the focus group, passengers mentioned Old Town and City College were concerns as well as 12th and Imperial, Iris Avenue and sometimes the Euclid Avenue station. Mr. Rodriguez asked if MTS has standards or metrics regarding station lighting, station cameras and how often cars are cleaned. Ms. Cooney stated that MTS has a Designing for Transit manual for both bus stops and rail transit centers and mentioned that MTS follows that manual, but also commented that every station will have a different dynamic.

Mr. Donovan stated that he sat in on the focus group with the females and mentioned that he too walked away from that feeling demoralized. Mr. Donovan would like to encourage MTS to pursue all of the good ideas to do as much as we can to try to alleviate some of the issues with lighting, cleanliness, panic buttons and with the emergency phone number. Mr. Donovan would like to recommend the MTS Board hear a condensed version of this report.

Ms. Chavez inquired how much it would cost to have real time camera footage on vehicles. Mr. Stiehler stated the band width necessary to push that kind of data, including good quality and sound, would be enormous. Ms. Chavez inquired about the front-line workers and what would make their jobs better. Ms. Cooney stated there were meetings with marketing and various departments, called the MTS Experience, and mentioned that MTS asked the employees what MTS could do to make the experience better for the patrons as well as for the employees. Ms. Cooney stated there were serious concerns from all in regards to keeping things safe for patrons and employees.

Chair Montgomery Steppe noticed the focus group and the survey differed in regards to how patrons perceived the fare check by ethnicity and commented that matching up the differences is important as decisions are being made. Chair Montgomery Steppe stated that it is MTS's job to keep patrons safe and feels MTS does keep that in mind with these discussions. Chair Montgomery Steppe inquired, as the budget is coming up, will the survey and focus group responses pertaining to lighting and capital improvement projects be serving as input to the decisions made around the budget. Ms. Cooney responded yes, especially with the lighting which is a capital project cost and the cleaning just included an amendment to the current cleaning contract. Chair Montgomery Steppe asked if there was an opportunity to interview persons who identify as non-binary. Ms. McCourt mentioned there was a non-binary person signed up for the focus group, but on the day of, they cancelled. Chair Montgomery Steppe appreciated being an observer to the focus groups, hearing their experiences and for MTS staff being focused on being in tune with the riders.

Action Taken

No action taken. Chair Montgomery Steppe stated she would like for the MTS Board to hear this presentation and would like to leave the date up to MTS staff.

5. Director's Department Overview (Al Stiehler)

Al Stiehler, Director of Transit Security and Passenger Safety, provided a presentation on the overview of the department. Mr. Stiehler started with an introduction to the management staff in the department then discussed the departments mission, vision and values statements. He explained the code compliance officer and the transit security officer duties and differences in responsibilities. Mr. Stiehler reviewed officer training classes, mentioned the various teams within the department (e.g. bus, bike and canine) and briefly mentioned the outreach services at MTS. Mr. Stiehler mentioned that in response to some of the incidents happening on the transit system, MTS developed the Rider Experience Details (R.E.D.) designed to respond to customer complaints and also the Passenger Safety Team (P.S.T.) which is currently in the pilot phase but is showing to be successful. Mr. Stiehler discussed Operation Life Saver and mentioned that MTS has five officers certified with California Operation Life Saver. He gave a quick look at the trolley side of the system: how many stations, how many miles of track, weekday trips, weekend trips, monthly ridership and mentioned that it is a lot of area to cover and be visible at all times. Mr. Stiehler reviewed a few department challenges and a few thoughts on re-imagining the security department then concluded with offering ride-a-longs to the committee members.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Ms. Chavez mentioned that it is important to emphasize that the officers are the face of MTS. She mentioned that not all riders can read, have access to technology or have access to a panic button, but that the patrons will approach the bright shirt, worn by the officers, for help. Ms. Chavez would like to hear from the officers to see how they feel about what is needed to better the MTS service. Mr. Stiehler stated that he took pride in hearing the focus group comments about positive experiences with the officers.

Chair Montgomery Steppe stated that the number of assaults is not acceptable and never wants to send the message that that is okay. Chair Montgomery Steppe mentioned that she is not sure how the assaults are handled across the board. Karen Landers, General Counsel, stated that MTS is working on a new initiative and working with the City Attorney's Office to find out what MTS's options are in regards to MTS submitting evidentiary report packets that would support prosecution.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

6. Partnership Efforts to Assist Persons Experiencing Homelessness (Al Stiehler)

Al Stiehler, Director of Transit Security and Passenger Safety, gave a presentation on the effects of homelessness and the increasing impact it has on MTS services, rider perception of safety, the overall customer experience and what the MTS Transit Security and Passenger Safety Department is doing to be part of the solution. He started with an overview of the department's outreach personnel and the teams and talked about working with the Downtown San Diego Partnership. He introduced Alonzo Vivas, Executive Director with Downtown San Diego Partnership and asked him to speak regarding their partnership with MTS. Mr. Vivas explained how pedestrians do not understand if issues are city, county or MTS issues and feels it is important to have the collaboration with all of the efforts.

Mr. Stiehler discussed the department's Homeless Outreach Team's productivity and read a letter of thanks written for Cynthia Rogers, MTS Code Compliance Homeless Outreach Team officer. The letter was regarding Ms. Rogers saving the life of a pedestrian and Mr. Stiehler mentioned the life she saved was not on MTS property. Mr. Stiehler feels working outside of silos should be the model for the county and the city stating that some of the problems that MTS faces is that some agencies will say they are unable to help MTS because their programs do not allow for them to help MTS. Mr. Stiehler mentioned a few issues and challenges in regards to getting beds, shelter, health care and talked about the department's wish list for future homeless outreach teams. Ms. Cooney added that because MTS is an open system that it is more like a conduit for people and that people do not live on the MTS system. She stated the same people will not always be in the same location every day and that the challenge for MTS is not being able to build the relationship like other agencies can. Ms. Cooney stated that MTS could be the conduit for other contractors or agencies working for the city or the county who are out there trying to do outreach. Ms. Cooney said it would be great if they were willing and able to ride the system to reach the people they are trying to help.

Mr. Stiehler discussed the department's Bus Enforcement Support Team (B.E.S.T.), their productivity, their challenges and talked about the teams wish list. Mr. Stiehler talked about the department's Camp Team and the agencies that work with MTS to do camp cleanups. He reviewed the team's work, talked about the challenges and mentioned the team's wish list. Mr. Stiehler concluded his presentation sharing additional outreach efforts that MTS has done.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Zeke Sandoval with PATH, one of California's largest and most impactful nonprofit homeless service providers, stated that in addition to PATH's decade of service to the San Diego communities they also operate across the state and they run a comprehensive outreach program on Los Angeles Metro trains and buses. He mentioned the successes and lessons learned from that program could be helpful to MTS as MTS thinks about options for successful engagement. Mr. Sandoval commented that MTS's concerns for its passengers of every housing status are unsurprisingly shared with other transit agencies across California. He talked about the pilot program that was started in 2017 for Los Angeles Metro Transit and the growth that it has had, including the amount of people they have helped, thus far. Mr. Sandoval stated that these programs can work, that people do want services and will accept them when offered by trained specialist in a trauma informed manner. He commented that security personnel would still have a vital role to play in case of emergencies and firmly believes that MTS would see results that would be better for all riders when outreach programs are lead with care and supportive services.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Ms. Dillard thanked Mr. Stiehler for all of the department's hard work, for all of the security that are out there helping patrons every day and that it is very admirable and difficult work. She mentioned that La Mesa has a program, HOME (Home Outreach Mobility Engagement), and would like to make sure the MTS officers are utilizing the program when in the La Mesa area. Ms. Dillard inquired if MTS officers are asking the people being contacted if they are veterans in order to connect them with the appropriate

programs and services for veterans. Mr. Stiehler stated that MTS is aware of the La Mesa HOME program and has been provided assistance when needed. Mr. Stiehler commented that he is unsure if MTS encounters many veterans, but will make sure to put the question out there.

Chair Montgomery Steppe commented that the care and compassion shown by CCI officer Ms. Rogers is what is missing in the equation when solutions are being rolled out for the unsheltered community. Chair Montgomery Steppe stated that it is crushing to hear the number of people who accepted help, but there were no beds available. Mr. Stiehler commented how the trust is so easily lost in those situations. Chair Montgomery Steppe feels it is necessary to brain storm with the county, the city of San Diego or all of the cities combined to work towards solutions to these issues and thanked everyone for all the hard work being done.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

7. Shared Mobility Devices (Al Stiehler)

Al Stiehler, Director of Transit Security and Passenger Safety, presented a letter from the San Diego City Mayor's office in regards to asking MTS to take necessary steps to prohibit shared mobility devices (SMDs) from being allowed on MTS vehicles. He explained that the City of San Diego contracts with four SMD companies (Bird, Link, Lime and Spin). Mr. Stiehler stated that these companies are reporting well-coordinated and large-scale thefts of SMDs throughout San Diego. Mr. Stiehler then shared information on potential training requirements and potential enforcement procedures. He discussed possible consequences of enforcement and concluded his presentation with a few questions surrounding joint enforcement details.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Derek Stehlin, Government Partnerships for the US West Coasted Spin, a SMD company in San Diego, stated SMDs provide a sustainable first and last mile compliment to bus and trolley travel. Mr. Stehlin commented that their continued operations have come under threat due to a significant increase in thefts, much of which is enabled by the use of MTS trolley lines that enable the disassembly and transportation of the stolen devices to the international border. He stated that this activity is resulting in tremendous losses impacting the company's ability to continue operating in San Diego. Mr. Stehlin stated that MTS security is unable to dissuade individuals from transporting stolen devices in the absence of code language and is respectfully requesting an amendment to MTS ordinance 13 that would prohibit the transportation of SMDs or for-rent motorized or electric scooters and bicycles by way of MTS trolley or bus apparatus. Mr. Stehlin encourages MTS's support and looks forward to partnering with MTS to curb theft and foster a more sustainable city.

Kylee Floodman with Bird's Government Partnership's Team and on behalf of Bird, would like to express their appreciation for including this item on the MTS agenda for consideration to ban SMDs on transit vehicles and facilities. Ms. Floodman commented that since Bird's launch in San Diego in 2018, Bird has been committed to working with regional transportation leaders such as MTS and SANDAG to incorporate micro mobility

as a viable first and last mile option that compliments the public transportation network in San Diego. Ms. Floodman stated that unfortunately scooters have become the target of thefts with the majority of them ending up south of the border by means of vehicle transport as well as through public transit. Ms. Kylee stated that with partnership of the Mayor's office, San Diego Police Department and the Sustainability and Mobility Department, SMD operators have been trying to reduce the incidents of theft throughout closer monitoring of the vehicles, pursuing prosecution of theft rings and elevating this problem with local, state and federal Mexican authorities. Ms. Kylee commented that putting a ban on SMDs from entering MTS facilities, trolleys, shuttles and buses is another impactful way to discourage theft and modification from occurring.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Ms. Chavez agrees this is an issue and commented that enforcement may come with a monetary cost. Ms. Chavez asked who would be absorbing the cost for enforcement as MTS does not have enough personnel for current day to day issues. Mr. Stiehler stated that is one of the questions being asked in this presentation and commented that he is unsure how it will be addressed.

Marshall Anderson with California Strategies and Advisor to Spin, stated that they are not asking for a lot of targeted enforcement. He commented that the real issue is in the absence of code language. Mr. Anderson stated that what they are trying to do is to solve the vacancy of any code language to at least take a step forward to ensure a clear message is sent to would be thieves that this is not an allowable use of MTS vessels.

Mr. Rodriguez inquired about where most of the thefts occur. Mr. Stiehler stated that he does not know where they originate. Jesse Gibbs, Manager of Southern California Spin, identified through hot spots and maps that primarily around trolley stations is where most of the scooters are losing their IOTs (the brains of the device). Mr. Rodriguez stated he is very sympathetic to any business that loses very expensive equipment, but is also weary of MTS's financial resources, the constraints and the need to make patrons feel safe on the MTS system.

Mr. Donovan asked if everyone agrees to ban these devices on MTS vehicles, can direction be given to MTS staff to develop language for MTS guidelines and make recommendations on what enforcement, if any, MTS would like to take on. Mr. Donovan is concerned about liability and stated it cannot be put on the security staff to catch everyone and would be his recommendation to give that direction to staff. Chair Montgomery Steppe stated this item is listed on the agenda as having possible action if Mr. Donovan wanted to make a motion to that affect. Mr. Donovan stated he would like to make a motion. Ms. Cooney commented that currently MTS does not allow an individual with multiple devices onboard MTS vehicles as it is considered to be unsafe. Ms. Cooney comment that Mr. Stiehler's staff has been instructed to remove those persons and/or scooters. Ms. Cooney mentioned that SANDAG is currently doing an onboard survey and one of the questions being asked is: how did you get to transit. Ms. Cooney stated MTS is hoping to get better data on who is using the scooters to access transit, but the data may not be available until the end of the summer. Ms. Cooney commented that the data could inform MTS to the usefulness of allowing these devices onboard. Ms. Cooney also commented that UCSD has a shared interest in solving this issue because they have a push to try to get these SMDs to be a part of their plans for a

sustainable mobility choice for their students. Ms. Cooney stated all of this is appropriate for MTS to contemplate while considering what the Board may want to do to invest in solving the problem.

Ms. Dillard asked if it is a consideration for MTS to collaborate with UCSD or join in the efforts regarding solving this issue. Chair Montgomery Steppe stated that discussion can be had with the language that will be brought to a future meeting. Chair Montgomery Steppe mentioned there are a lot of different ways to tackle this issue and stated there are a lot of questions brought forth with this presentation that will need to be answered. Chair Montgomery Steppe commented that MTS would need to be confident as an agency in the choices made while being conscious of what the MTS security staff is currently going through including the MTS budgetary situation. Chair Montgomery Steppe looks forward to having more data for making the decisions. Karen Landers, General Counsel, stated that UCSD is supportive of the proposal MTS received from the city and commented that MTS's analysis will highlight the party's requests and what the risks will be to MTS.

Action Taken

Mr. Donovan moved to recommend MTS staff to put together language to change MTS ordinance 13 to potentially not allow shared mobility devices on MTS vehicles as well as any recommendations as to what role MTS should play as far as enforcement and tracking. Ms. Chavez seconded the motion, and the vote was 5 to 0 in favor.

8. Committee Member Communications and Other Business

There were no Committee Member Communications and Other Business discussion.

9. Next Meeting Date

The next Public Security Committee meeting is scheduled for June 28, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

10. Adjournment

Chair Montgomery Steppe adjourned the meeting at 4:16 p.m.

/S/ Monica Montgomery Steppe
Chairperson
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

/S/ Karen Wisniewski
Committee Clerk
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM
PUBLIC SECURITY COMMITTEE MEETING

ROLL CALL

MEETING OF (DATE): April 13, 2023 CALL TO ORDER (TIME): 2:02 pm

ADJOURN: 4:16 pm

COMMITTEE MEMBER	(Alternate)	PRESENT (TIME ARRIVED)	ABSENT (TIME LEFT)
Chavez <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)	2:03 pm	4:16 pm
Dillard <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)	2:00 pm	4:16 pm
Donovan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)	2:00 pm	4:16 pm
Rodriguez <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)	2:00 pm	4:16 pm
Montgomery Steppe <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)	2:00 pm	4:16 pm

COMMITTEE CLERK: Karen Winiwiski