

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

September 28, 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 9:03 a.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**

Board Member Dillard moved to approve the minutes of the April 13, 2023, MTS Public Security Committee meeting. Board Member Chavez seconded the motion, and the vote was 4 to 0 in favor with Mr. Rodriguez absent.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**4. Annual Security Report (January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022 (Al Stiehler and Tim Curran))**

Al Stiehler, Director of Transit Security and Passenger Safety, mentioned the presentation contains the 2022 Annual Report, and updates on programs and new initiatives within the department.

Tim Curran, MTS Deputy Director of Transit Security and Passenger Safety, gave an introduction of the Transit Security and Passenger Safety Department, and then showed a service area map of the trolley stations where officers patrol. Mr. Curran reviewed the Part I and Part II Crimes for trolley incidents including comparisons between calendar years 2021 and 2022. He mentioned the increase of crimes in 2022 could be related to COVID restrictions being lifted and the increasing ridership. He commented that across the nation there has been a significant increase in crime. Mr. Curran also reviewed the Part I and Part II Crimes pertaining to buses with comparisons for 2021 and 2022. He mentioned that there was not a significant change for Part 1 Crimes, but the Part II Crimes did increase for 2022. He reviewed assaults, non-compliant arrests, fare inspection and other citations that were issued. Mr. Curran gave an update on the Naloxone (Narcan) Project, Encampment Details, Ridership Experience Details, Bus Enforcement Support Team (B.E.S.T.) and Outreach Efforts. Mr. Curran discussed the expansion of the department and Rail Safety Week.

Mr. Stiehler continued the presentation mentioning the suspension of the Special Enforcement and Outreach Details (SEDs) in 2020 due to COVID restrictions. He discussed the results of the first SED since 2020, which was conducted on September 20, 2023. Mr. Stiehler mentioned the next SED will be held at the Grossmont station in La Mesa on October 11, 2023. Mr. Stiehler concluded the presentation with a review

and explanation regarding what the Blue Envelope Program is and mentioned that MTS is excited to be part of this initiative.

### **Committee Comments**

Board Member Chavez commended to the MTS staff that assist patrons. She stated they were kind and did a good job at keeping the crowds moving. Board Member Chavez did mention that she felt it is still unclear where to tap for PRONTO. Board Member Chavez feels the panic button on the trains are not visible or recognizable for most riders. Board Member Chavez asked about the procedure for issuing a citation in regards to Fentanyl. Mr. Stiehler stated that if a person is encountered smoking Fentanyl, that a citation can be issued if the person is cooperative with identification. He stated that if the person does not have identification and are uncooperative, that the police department would be called to assist and identify. Board Member Chavez asked about the Blue Envelope Program and how people could find out about it. Mr. Stiehler stated that MTS was contacted by the Sheriff's Department and believes they will be making it a media campaign to make it available for everyone. Board Member Chavez asked if it would be possible to have the PRONTO system have the ability to tap on the trolley cars/doors. Sharon Cooney, MTS Chief Executive Officer, stated it is possible, but comes with a high cost and low durability. Ms. Cooney mentioned that if obtaining compliance from riders with the current PRONTO system does not work, then MTS could circle back to the Board for further discussion.

Board Member Dillard stated the presentation was highly informative and appreciates MTS's forward thinking on how to make the transit system safer and more appealing to more people. She mentioned seeing the Blue Envelope Program being promoted on the news and feels it will help prevent misunderstandings with riders who have challenges. Board Member Dillard mentioned the east county SEDs and is very excited to see them return. Board Member Dillard asked what the plan is for those who refuse to participate. Mr. Stiehler stated that individuals are given the option to step off the trolley to purchase a fare to avoid receiving a citation, but there are riders who just opt to receive the citation. Mr. Stiehler commented that there are times when police agencies are not assisting and MTS officers use their discretion to let riders walk away without a citation in order to avoid a bad situation. Board Member Dillard noticed that there is an alarming increase in violence and asked if MTS has an opinion on what is causing the increase. Mr. Stiehler mentioned a recent conversation with a peer advisory group where a member of that group commented that the social contract has been broken. Mr. Stiehler feels that is a good way to look at it and stated that there is a lot involved with it from inflation, to the drug epidemic and the mental health crisis across the nation, to name a few issues. Mr. Stiehler commented that MTS is working on being as visible as possible and that officer presence is the biggest deterrent for preventing incidents from happening. Board Member Dillard commented that she would be skeptical about PRONTO door taps working and recommended making the existing PRONTO tap machines more visible in all stations. Ms. Cooney noted that the special detail done in El Cajon was done on a weekday between 4:00 pm and 8:00 pm. Board Member Dillard asked if MTS felt that most of the riders contacted were typical commuters that used the system on a regular basis. Mr. Stiehler stated that at the beginning of the detail there were more commuters compared to the end of the detail. Ms. Cooney stated that if a person uses the system regularly, then they know where the validators are located

versus the Snapdragon events which tend to have more non-regular commuters. Ms. Cooney stated that most people contacted during special details are riders who know the system, have money on their card and could tap. Board Member Dillard asked what is the reason behind having to tap more than once. Ms. Cooney stated the PRONTO system is set up like a debit card and when a person taps they are paying for their fare, but are never charged more than the fare cap. She stated that tapping the card throughout the month will allow patrons to get the best fare possible and will never pay more than the cost of a monthly pass. Board Member Dillard asked if when a person taps their PRONTO card if it shows the balance on that card. It was stated that the balance shows on the app, but not on the validators.

Board Member Donovan asked in regards to the special enforcement detail, what it means when a patron does not validate their PRONTO card. Mr. Stiehler stated this is when a patron has a PRONTO card, set up like a debit card, but does not tap the card before riding. Mr. Stiehler stated that MTS does not acquire the funds until the patron taps the card. Board Member Donovan commented on the use of Narcan and the dangers of coming in contact with Fentanyl and asked if the MTS officers are trained and are aware of the dangers. Mr. Stiehler commented that the officers are fully trained and have the appropriated equipment and safety protection for encountering people in those situations.

Chair Montgomery Steppe inquired about the comparisons for 2021 and 2022 and wondered if the numbers were askew due to lack of ridership and COVID restrictions. Chair Montgomery Steppe asked to see comparison numbers pre COVID with full ridership. Chair Montgomery Steppe appreciates the special enforcement detail and asked what type of violations were occurring and would it be possible to track people who are consistently not validating their PRONTO card. Mr. Stiehler commented that he has talked to the PRONTO team regarding tracking repeat offenders and they are working with the provider to see if there is anything in the software that can track this.

Board Member Chavez commented on breaking the social contract and stated that MTS is relying on an honor system. She would like to see an analysis done on other agency fare system implementations, how other agencies recover fare and what works for other states that could possibly be implemented for MTS. Mr. Stiehler stated that New York City subway has a closed system, turnstiles and gates, and they still have a very high evasion rate. Ms. Cooney commented that LA Metro has the same issues. Ms. Cooney feels MTS is moving in a better direction, having more personnel on the system and with the ability to do more special details will provide more data. Ms. Cooney mentioned before the pandemic, before the PRONTO system, MTS had a high farebox and compliance rate. Ms. Cooney mentioned that MTS has implemented a lot of positive initiatives including the diversion program and trying to be less of an enforcement and more of a public service type of security force. Ms. Cooney stated that with the PRONTO system, and the move in that direction, she feels MTS can get back to where MTS needs to be.

Chair Montgomery Steppe requested for presentation materials to be distributed to the members in a timely manner. Chair Montgomery Steppe feels it is a crazy time we live in and that the government has also played a big part in that. Chair Montgomery Steppe feels there is a larger reconciliation that needs to occur so that when MTS is doing enforcement they can be sure they are doing it fairly for everyone.

Board Member Dillard added that when dealing with public safety, a lot of it can be depressing and overwhelming. Board Member Dillard stated that on a positive note, she appreciates the Marketing department's increase of highlighting events in the county. She feels it is important and gives a positive impact publicly, especially when it goes on local networks and is reported in the local papers around the county. Board Member Dillard feels that having positive reasons to use transit is on the rise and again compliments the Marketing department in getting exposure for MTS in a positive light.

**Action Taken**

Informational item only. No action taken.

**OTHER ITEMS**

**5. Committee Member Communications and Other Business**

Ms. Cooney mentioned that Wednesday, October 4, 2023, is free ride day and that MTS is excited about the opening of the new Iris Rapid Transit route later in October.

**6. Next Meeting Date**

The next Public Security Committee meeting is scheduled for December 7, 2023, at 2:00 p.m.

**7. Adjournment**

Chair Montgomery Steppe adjourned the meeting at 10:01 a.m.

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

/S/ Jasiel Estolano  
Committee Clerk  
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

Attachment: Roll Call Sheet

SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM  
PUBLIC SECURITY COMMITTEE MEETING

ROLL CALL

MEETING OF (DATE): September 28, 2023 CALL TO ORDER (TIME): 9:03 a.m.

ADJOURN: 10:01 a.m.

COMMITTEE MEMBER		(Alternate)	PRESENT (TIME ARRIVED)	ABSENT (TIME LEFT)
Chavez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)	9:03 a.m.	10:01 a.m.
Dillard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)	9:03 a.m.	10:01 a.m.
Donovan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)	9:03 a.m.	10:01 a.m.
Rodriguez	<input type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)	ABSENT	ABSENT
Montgomery Steppe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)	9:03 a.m.	10:01 a.m.

COMMITTEE CLERK: /s/Karen Wisniewski