

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

March 7, 2025

[Clerk's note: Except where noted, public, staff and Committee 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 10:00 a.m. A roll call sheet listing Public Security Committee member attendance is attached as Attachment A.

2. Public Comments

There were no Public Comments.

3. Approval of Minutes

Committee Member Hall moved to approve the minutes of the September 20, 2024, MTS Public Security Committee meeting. Committee Member Dillard seconded the motion, and the vote was 4 to 0 in favor with Committee Member Goble, Committee Member Rodriguez and Committee Member Foster absent.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Transit Security and Passenger Safety Department Overview (Dan Brislin)

Dan Brislin, MTS Deputy Director of Transit Security and Passenger Safety, presented on Transit Security and Passenger Safety Department Overview. He presented on: new training efforts, provided a 2024 update, the Bus Enforcement Support Team (B.E.S.T), the Homeless Outreach Team, encampment details, K-9 Program, introduced the new Code Compliance Investigator position, data driven crime reduction efforts, ridership experience details, Special Enforcement Details, the Passenger Safety Team, law enforcement collaboration, Communication Center (Dispatch), provided updates on the new Diversion Program and its revenue impact.

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Dillard expressed appreciation for the clear passion and dedication evident in staff's work; while acknowledging that other committee members may have comments on various aspects of the presentation, she shared a personal perspective related to bias. Committee Member Dillard stated that she was pleased to see that bias training is a part of MTS's efforts, however, she emphasized the need to recognize that bias is experienced differently by minorities. Committee Member Dillard shared that she, like many others, has encountered numerous examples of bias throughout her life. She

recounted a personal experience and explained that she once held an unconscious bias against individuals who shook hands with a light grip, interpreting it as a lack of confidence or engagement. This belief comes from her military background and the values instilled by her father, who taught her the importance of a firm handshake as a sign of presence and respect. Over time, she came to understand that cultural norms around handshakes can vary significantly, and that some individuals such as men concerned about being too forceful when shaking a woman's hand may approach the gesture differently. She shared this example to highlight the importance of recognizing and addressing unconscious bias through meaningful and culturally aware education. Committee Member Dillard continued by highlighting the impact of experiencing racism and bias, describing it as "a thousand cuts" over time. She noted that individuals who have endured repeated instances of bias may sometimes react strongly, which can lead them to being unfairly stereotyped, especially when their reaction is not accompanied by an explanation of why a statement or action was offensive or racist.

Committee Member Dillard shared her experience serving on the task force that helped draft ordinances for what became the Community Police Oversight Board in 2020. During that volunteer effort, she recalled discussions around the intense encounters that many community members, particularly African Americans, have with law enforcement and how there was often a lack of misunderstanding from police departments about the issues being raised. Committee Member Dillard noted that while many people recognized the presence of bias, especially as it was repeatedly captured on video both locally and across the nation, there were still some who did not understand. She recalled receiving letters during that time, including one from a woman who wrote in support of the police, saying she had lived in the community for 40 years and had only positive experiences. Committee Member Dillard pointed out the importance of considering personal context in such statements, noting that her response was to ask the woman if she was white, highlighting how race and experiences can significantly influence one's perception and interactions with institutions like law enforcement. Committee Member Dillard continued by emphasizing the importance of representation and lived experience in bias training. She expressed that if agencies are conducting training on bias, it is essential to include at least one person of color in that process while acknowledging she did not know the current MTS training team but, she strongly recommended ensuring such representation, as individuals with lived experience can speak to the nuanced, repeated biases to what she referred to as "thousand cuts a day" that people of color regularly endure. Committee Member Dillard stated that these are often subtle or normalized comments that may go unnoticed by others but are deeply felt by those on the receiving end. She shared her personal passion for this issue and recounted her experience working on the development of the ordinances for the Community Police Oversight Board. In the process, she and her colleagues pushed hard for change, despite initial resistance from both the police department and the union by urging them to partner in reform efforts, they began to see progress and a shift in understanding. Committee Member Dillard referenced the 2020 riots in La Mesa as a

pivotal moment when the police department began to recognize these issues and the urgent need for change. She noted that the community, including many white residents, supported those changes and as a result the department made strides toward training officers in empathy and equitable communication, ensuring that all individuals are treated with the same level of respect and dignity. Committee Member Dillard addressed Mr. Brislin and shared that bias training is an issue she deeply cared about. She emphasized the importance of including people of color in the development and delivery of the training, stating that without their involvement, the training can only cover surface level issues and will lack the depth needed to truly address the lived experience of those most affected by bias. Committee Member Dillard noted that, even today, she continues to experience subtle, persistent forms of bias she described as “a thousand cuts” and that while bias can affect anyone, the experience is significantly more frequent and impactful for people of color. She urged that those involved in bias training bring both empathy and a clear understanding of what meaningful training should entail. Committee Member Dillard concluded by thanking the group for allowing her to share her perspective.

Mr. Brislin expressed full agreement with Committee Member Dillard’s comments and emphasized the importance of approaching the topic with humility and acknowledging the responsibility MTS has in addressing bias. He reiterated his support for the points raised, noting that this is why MTS has not only implemented bias training once or twice, but is committed to ongoing, repeated training due to the significance of the issue. Mr. Brislin distinguished between deliberate acts of discrimination and unconscious bias where individuals may not even realize they are treating or approaching others differently and stated that it is MTS responsibility to ensure that all new personnel are properly trained and retrained to prevent such behavior and reinforce that it is not tolerated. Mr. Brislin also shared that MTS benefits from having an Operations Manager who teaches at Point Loma Nazarene and Grossmont College, and who brings expertise in this area. He highlighted that field operations are not enforcement focused alone but also grounded in cultural humility. Mr. Brislin concluded by emphasizing that humility is more important than anything else, especially in adapting to different cultures and understanding the profound impact discrimination can have on individuals and entire communities. He acknowledged that such experiences could have lasting, deep-rooted effects, and assured the Committee that over the coming year, MTS will continue reinforcing these values through staff training. Additionally, he recognized that there is still progress to be made and highlighted that addressing these issues is a key point amid the agency’s current growth. Ms. Cooney clarified that the essential point Committee Member Dillard was trying to make is the need for someone with lived experience of discrimination to be directly involved in the training and confirmed that MTS will ensure this is implemented.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

5. Transit Security and Passenger Safety 2024 Annual Report (Josh Ortiz)

Josh Ortiz, MTS Transit Enforcement and Passenger Safety Operational and Crime Data Analyst, presented on Transit Security and Passenger Safety 2024 Annual Report. He provided details on: Group A & B crimes: Trolley, Group A & B crimes: Bus, assaults, non-compliant arrests, fare inspections, citations and Naloxone (NARCAN).

[Clerk's note: During the meeting, staff reported that there were 2,528,421 fare inspections in 2024, representing a 19.65% decrease. However, after further review, this was corrected to 4,138,750 fare inspections, which reflects a 31.52% increase for 2024. Additionally, staff reported that there were 84 incidents of administered Naloxone (NARCAN) doses in 2024. However, after further review, this was corrected to 124 incidents which reflect an increase for 2024.]

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Hall expressed concern regarding the assault data presented. He noted that if an MTS employee is assaulted and chooses not to press charges, it raises an issue. Committee Member Hall stated his belief that regardless of the employee's personal decision, the agency should pursue charges if the individuals responsible for the assault are detained. Karen Landers, MTS General Counsel stated that this initiative is part of ongoing efforts at MTS, in conjunction with the Lewd Act Pilot Program. She explained that it began due to instances where either passengers or employees chose not to press charges, often because they felt unsafe or didn't want to take on the responsibility. Ms. Landers noted that MTS consulted with the City Attorney's Office about the possibility of needing a state law allowing MTS to be considered the victim. However, after further discussions, the City Attorney's Office concluded that a change in the law was not necessary and that charges could still be pursued if there were sufficient witness statements and evidence. Ms. Landers added that MTS has been working on a collaborative approach in which Gary Avalos, MTS Code Compliance Investigator, contacts the affected employee or passenger directly to offer support. The goal is to assure them that MTS is willing to assume the administrative and policy burden while encouraging their participation in the prosecution process. Ms. Landers added that MTS then compiles evidentiary packets for the City Attorney's Office, enabling the office to follow up, independently contact the victim as a witness, and still proceed with prosecution.

Ms. Landers stated that MTS is continuing to learn what level of evidence is required for prosecution, emphasizing that this remains a high priority for the agency. She explained that efforts vary depending on whether the incident involves a passenger or an employee, but MTS is committed to taking on as much of the burden as possible, so the individual only needs to recount what happened to them. Committee Member Hall raised

the issue of repeat offenders, noting it has been an ongoing concern and stating that it is time to remove them from the system. Ms. Landers in response said MTS is considering a future presentation on its exclusion policy. She explained that the agency currently has a detailed policy aimed at balancing the due process rights of individuals who rely on transit with the need to protect passengers and employees. Ms. Landers clarified that for repeat safety related offenses, MTS issues exclusion orders that prohibit individuals from using the system. These orders allow MTS to issue citations for trespassing if the individuals return. Ms. Landers noted that while exclusion orders are not issued lightly and only a few have been sent, they have been effective. Once a repeat offender is identified and sufficient evidence is available, Samantha Leslie, MTS Deputy General Counsel, works closely with the Security Department to review and prepare the exclusion order. Ms. Landers also praised Transit Security for their effectiveness in locating and serving these individuals. She emphasized that the exclusion process enables MTS to remove offenders from the system promptly, especially in cases where criminal prosecution may be delayed, while still working with the criminal justice system to ensure accountability.

Committee Member Hall commented that assaults and lewd acts are offenses he believes should be treated with zero tolerance. Chair Montgomery Steppe thanked MTS staff for addressing all the questions submitted by her team and requested a more in-depth discussion on the expanded definitions within the crime report, particularly under the assault category and asked for a comparative breakdown of crime types reported in 2023 across all categories. Ms. Cooney responded that a detailed explanation can be provided in a future presentation. Chair Montgomery Steppe thanked MTS staff for their presentation.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

6. American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Recommendation Review (Tim Curran)

Tim Curran, MTS Director of Transit Security and Passenger Safety, presented on the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Recommendation Review. He presented on: APTA Review, Effectiveness of CCI's and Security Contract Structure (Analyst, LE Liaison, Inter-Con, Onboarding, Team), Fare Inspection Practices (Fare Check, Discretion, FPZ, Diversion Program), Technology Enhancement Related, Training (CCI and TSO, In-Service, ROW), Organizational Climate of the Department, Standard Operating Procedures, Video Retention (Actions Taken), Other Observations (Homeless Outreach, Bus & Additional Services, Safety and Security) and Effectiveness of CCI's and Security.

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments.

Committee Comment

Chair Montgomery Steppe thanked MTS staff for the presentation and requested to be invited to attend the unconscious bias training presented by the District Attorney's Office, as well as to review the training curriculum. Mr. Curran asked if she would like additional information about the training, to which Chair Montgomery Steppe replied that if the sessions are regularly scheduled, she would appreciate receiving an invitation. Mr. Curran confirmed that the dates would be provided.

Chair Montgomery Steppe also noted previous comments regarding the APTA review, highlighting the importance of revisiting the topic and receiving an update. She expressed appreciation that the review has continued to be followed internally rather than being set aside. Chair Montgomery Steppe then raised a question regarding the homelessness outreach recommendation, asking whether MTS had ever considered contracting service providers and conducting a cost analysis in connection with the report. She recalled that this topic was discussed by the Committee approximately five to six years ago, during which time various ideas were explored, and asked Ms. Cooney for her perspective. Ms. Cooney explained that MTS believes it is important to have dedicated in house personnel conducting homelessness outreach, given the unique transit environment and the value of building direct relationships between staff and riders experiencing homelessness. She recalled that several years ago, one of MTS's outreach staff members had been approached about partnering with an external organization, which she believed was the Rescue Mission; Mr. Curran confirmed the name. Ms. Cooney noted that the offer had become inactive over time, and a similar situation occurred with PATH, which had also been presented to the Committee in the past.

She shared that the cost estimate for a one-year contract with an external provider was approximately \$1 million at the time. Ms. Cooney also pointed out that transit agencies are currently ineligible to receive state or federal homelessness assistance funding, and MTS is actively working to change that. The agency is collaborating with the California Transit Association to advocate for eligibility at the state level. Ms. Cooney emphasized the strength of the relationships built by MTS's outreach staff with other service organizations, resulting in successful partnerships and consistent participation in MTS hosted events. She also acknowledged that Chair Montgomery Steppe had previously attended such events. Chair Montgomery Steppe clarified that she had organized two of them. Ms. Cooney emphasized that having dedicated internal personnel has greatly benefited MTS, as these staff members have built strong, ongoing relationships with key community partners. She highlighted their active involvement with the Downtown Partnership's Clean and Safe program, including her own participation in multiple meetings focused on assisting individuals in the downtown San Diego area. These efforts, she noted, are just a few examples of MTS's ongoing outreach initiatives. Ms. Cooney explained that if the agency were to contract with an external provider for outreach services, it would be required to follow the standard procurement process, including a competitive bidding process. She noted that while MTS could assess the scope and requirements of such an effort if directed by the Board or Committee and mentioned that there is currently no dedicated funding in place to support this type of contract.

Committee Member Fernandez acknowledged the extensive data involved and expressed his appreciation. Referring to the Chair's interest in attending MTS staff training, Committee Member Fernandez added that he was also curious about the agency's data driven initiatives. He suggested that, if appropriate, Board Members be invited to observe one of the Transit Security and Passenger Safety monthly internal meetings to better understand how the agency processes and applies data to improve operations. Ms. Cooney asked if he was referring to the monthly presentations by MTS's Data Analyst, to which Committee Member Fernandez confirmed. Mr. Curran agreed to provide meeting dates and invitations.

Chair Montgomery Steppe then inquired whether MTS has access to the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) managed by the Regional Task Force on Homelessness. Ms. Cooney confirmed that MTS does not currently have access. Chair Montgomery Steppe acknowledged the broader effort to coordinate support for individuals who move in and out of different service systems and shared her intent to advocate for making HMIS more accessible and integrated agencies like MTS. Doing so could reduce the workload for staff involved in outreach and coordination. Chair Montgomery Steppe suggested they could revisit the discussion at a future time. Committee Member Dillard returned to the discussion regarding the potential RFP mentioned earlier. She stated that if a motion is needed or if there is agreement that this is a direction worth pursuing, she would like the effort to also include an educational component. Committee Member Dillard recommended specifically incorporating training that addresses bias against individuals experiencing homelessness and challenges the perception that they are undeserving of attention or support. Committee Member Dillard emphasized that many people experiencing homelessness are facing difficult circumstances and have encountered significant misfortune, which is often misunderstood by the public. She noted that these individuals are frequently seen as a nuisance or inconvenience, rather than as people in need of compassion and assistance and expressed the importance of educating the public to recognize the humanity of those experiencing homelessness but rather supported in any way possible. Committee Member Dillard urged that such education be included as a complement to broader efforts to address homelessness.

Chair Montgomery Steppe thanked Committee Member Dillard for her comments and requested that the next meeting agenda include a more detailed overview of current efforts related to homelessness outreach. She suggested that this could lead to a potential action item to explore alternative collaboration approaches, if deemed necessary. While noting the importance of budget considerations, she emphasized the value of having a deeper discussion about existing initiatives. Additionally, Chair Montgomery Steppe requested that the selection of a Vice Chair be included on the next agenda. She invited volunteers for the role and mentioned she may follow up individually to encourage participation. She concluded by expressing her appreciation for the three presentations, noting that they provided valuable context, particularly for the new members. Chair Montgomery Steppe thanked MTS staff for their ongoing efforts and asked that gratitude be shared with the entire team.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

OTHER ITEMS

7. **Committee Member Communications**

There was no Committee Member Communications and Other Business discussion.

8. **Next Meeting Date**

The next Public Security Committee meeting is scheduled for May 30, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

9. **Adjournment**

Chair Montgomery Steppe adjourned the meeting at 11:38 am.

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

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

Attachment: A. Roll Call Sheet

SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM
PUBLIC SECURITY COMMITTEE MEETING

ROLL CALL

MEETING OF (DATE): March 7, 2025 CALL TO ORDER (TIME): 10:00 am

ADJOURN: 11:38 am

REPRESENTING	BOARD MEMBER	ALTERNATE	PRESENT (time arrived)	ABSENT (time left)
Chair	Montgomery Steppe <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no alternate	10:00 am	11:38 am
Committee Representative	Dillard <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no alternate	10:00 am	11:38 am
Committee Representative	Hall <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no alternate	10:00 am	11:38 am
Committee Representative	Goble <input type="checkbox"/>	no alternate	ABSENT	ABSENT
Committee Representative	Foster <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no alternate	10:06 am	11:38 am
Committee Representative	Rodriguez <input type="checkbox"/>	no alternate	ABSENT	ABSENT
Committee Representative	Fernandez <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no alternate	10:00 am	11:38 am

COMMITTEE CLERK: /S/ Jasiel Estolano