

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

May 30, 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 10:33 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 Dillard moved to approve the minutes of the March 7, 2025, MTS Public Security Committee meeting. Committee Member Fernandez seconded the motion, and the vote was 5 to 0 in favor with Committee Member Rodriguez and Committee Member Hall absent.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Fare Enforcement Diversion Program Update (Samantha Leslie)

Samantha Leslie, MTS Deputy General Counsel, presented on the Fare Enforcement Diversion Program Update. She provided details on: the current Fare Enforcement Diversion Program, the new revisions made to the Diversion Program, MTS Policy goals, MTS civil justice goals, roll-out of the new Diversion Program updates, education and outreach efforts, implementation, online and pay by phone options, update on the first three months of the new Diversion Program, Diversion Program participation, correspondence received from the public, and next steps.

Public Comment

Parke Troutman – Representing Mid-City CAN provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Parke expressed concerns about the Youth Opportunity Pass in relation to fare enforcement and fare evasion policies and mentioned some comments received from youth following the March 31 verification requirement and mentioned some were denied rides or required to pay despite the one month grace period. Parke highlighted there was confusion among youth regarding inconsistent enforcement and stated that the fare ordinance allowed youth to be asked for a school, government, or college ID when boarding and requested clarification on the effect these policies may have on program users.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Goble asked how staff verified if a patron already used the one-time waiver noting that Code Compliance Inspectors (CCI) would not have this information available at the time of issuance and wondered if there was MTS staff or a tracking

system reviewing the incoming requests. Ms. Leslie clarified that patrons issued a citation may request a one-time waiver, and afterwards, MTS staff will review their citation history and verify if it is the patron's first fare evasion citation since February 1, 2025. If found eligible, the waiver would be granted, and the patron would receive confirmation by letter or email that the citation was voided and would not go to court. Committee Member Goble thanked staff for the clarification.

Chair Montgomery Steppe asked if MTS was already engaging with the Neil Good Day Center or seeking direction with other agencies. Ms. Leslie emphasized that MTS staff are open to connecting with additional agencies and shared that they are currently waiting for a meeting date with the Neil Good Day Center.

Chair Montgomery Steppe supported collaboration efforts and suggested contacting the County's Mobile Unit, which provides resources and services that could support the Diversion Program. She noted the Mobile Unit has previously been used for outreach events with MTS and would be a valuable resource. Chair Montgomery Steppe asked about the Youth Opportunity Pass in relation to the fare evasion rates and the definition of "Stored Value" in the new data. Karen Landers, MTS General Counsel, clarified that past statistics grouped all stored value data together and on the back end, MTS has refined the data to distinguish between true stored value, one-way passes, and other categories including Youth Fare or Youth Free passes.

Ms. Landers reported that after re-running past data, about 7% of fares previously counted as "stored value" were Youth Free Passes and with this adjustment, the fare evasion rate decreased from 33% to 26%. She noted this change only affects data reporting, not field operations. Ms. Landers stated that CCIs could verify Youth Free Passes, and citations are not issued if the pass is valid and emphasized that youth must still have a valid pass to ride. Sharon Cooney, MTS Chief Executive Officer (CEO), clarified that citations are not being issued to youth riders, as the Diversion Program does not apply to them. Instead, MTS focuses on educating youth riders about the transit system and promoting the Youth Opportunity Pass, with participation increasing to about 89% in the past two months. Ms. Cooney stated the Committee that no youth riders would be left stranded at the transit stations. Chair Montgomery Steppe asked Tim Curran, MTS Director of Transit Security & Passenger Safety, if he had any additional comments. Mr. Curran agreed with Ms. Cooney and confirmed that inspectors are not citing youth riders without passes or removing them from transit vehicles. He stated the main focus was ensuring youth riders reach their destinations safely. Chair Montgomery Steppe thanked staff for their responses and requested contact with Mid-City CAN for clarity on how these issues are being addressed. She noted she would return to the topic later for other members' input.

Chair Montgomery Steppe also raised concerns about how stored value is used as a data point in calculating fare evasion rates and expressed that while she appreciated the refinements, she still felt the numbers seemed somewhat inflated. Ms. Cooney said that all complaints received are investigated thoroughly to ensure consistency in processes.

Committee Member Dillard asked how inspectors or drivers verify youth eligibility whether by ID or appearance. Ms. Cooney explained that youth riders must obtain a PRONTO Youth card by providing photo ID and a current picture uploaded at the time of the online request or at the Transit Store. Once processed, the card or app displays as a

Youth pass and the drivers and tap readers accept it without further questions, as the photo verifies ownership. Committee Member Dillard asked how drivers identify youth riders before they showed a pass, and whether drivers allow them to board without proof of eligibility or if there was a filter system to verify students that claimed youth status. Ms. Cooney said drivers would ask for adult fare; if refused, they would not enforce but instead radio dispatch if the rider did not comply. Ms. Landers explained the differences by transit vehicles and provided each's fare evasion rates: 3% on buses and 26% on Trolleys. She provided context stating that if a rider without a PRONTO pass appeared to be youth, inspectors only issued a warning and if the rider was not youth or did not show valid ID, a citation may be issued but could be appealed after. Ms. Landers stated youth citations may be voided through the Diversion Program.

Committee Member Goble mentioned the difference between patrons that ride to travel to work and those riding for other purposes. He suggested that if workers in uniform are cited, MTS could reach out to their employers to encourage purchasing monthly passes for them as it benefits both employees and employers. Committee Member Goble recommended exploring ways to identify work-related riders and provide them with informational pamphlets and promote employer support for frequent riders.

Chair Montgomery Steppe thanked MTS staff for including the rider's quote response to the approval of his one-time waiver that highlighted the program's purpose. She provided historical context on the origin of the Diversion Program and explained it was initially created to address high citation numbers while balancing enforcement with compassion. Chair Montgomery Steppe appreciated the data provided and noted it showed the program's growth while acknowledging some past factors that could have contributed to affecting rates and emphasized that making the program permanent had a positive outcome.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

5. Administrative Fare Enforcement Model (Karen Landers)

Karen Landers, MTS General Counsel, presented on the Administrative Fare Enforcement Model. She presented on: Fare Enforcement Models, MTS's Fare Enforcement Model: Hybrid Fare Enforcement Model, Administrative Fare Enforcement Model, MTS's Hybrid Comparison to Administrative Fare Enforcement Model, estimated costs to change to an Administrative Model and the possible action.

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Dillard expressed concern about investing further in the Diversion Program since it is still new. She shared that excessive fines could create a spiral effect by impacting a patron's credit and leading to long term difficulties with the courts. Committee Member Dillard cautioned that moving too far toward the administrative model could worsen these repercussions and asked if other transit agencies use this model and whether comparisons had been made on successes or challenges. Ms.

Landers said Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro) and San Francisco Municipal Railway (Muni) used the administrative model, but outcomes vary depending on who is consulted for this information. She noted fare evasion rates at those agencies have not changed significantly, and comparisons are difficult due to different calculation methods. Ms. Landers mentioned that Samantha Leslie, Deputy General Counsel, has been in contact with these agencies and could arrange site visits to gather more detailed information on operations, hearings, revenue, and collections. Ms. Landers provided details on how LA Metro and Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) manage their administrative processes and noted BART used a hybrid system with courts and virtual hearing officers, highlighting differences such as requiring fines to be paid before hearings and uncertainty about what is argued during hearings. Ms. Landers suggested MTS staff be present at one of the hearings to observe and make note of the discussions and provided MTS's current Diversion Program timeframe deadlines to resolve the citations: 120 days to pay the citation and 15 days to appeal although deadlines were flexible and clarified the 15 day window was tied to MTS's camera memory, which stored only about 14 days.

Committee Member Dillard raised concerns about court costs and questioned the benefits of moving to an administrative model. She suggested waiting for more data before making changes and recommended extending the appeal period from 15 to 21 days. Ms. Landers provided information on the appeal process saying that once an appeal request is received, MTS staff will review footage with the information submitted including checking ticket machine use on the reported date. Ms. Landers explained that submitting appeals quickly allows for thorough investigation and helps determine a decision and that is why the Diversion Program appeal period deadline is 15 days. She clarified that during the initial 120-day window, citations stay internally at the MTS Records office and are not sent to court until the 120 days pass, the citation then gets sent to court. If left unresolved, then the fine may eventually get sent to collections, which could affect the rider's credit.

Committee Member Dillard agreed that addressing citations sooner was more convenient and asked when a patron's credit would be affected. Ms. Landers noted that other agencies using the administrative model typically send unpaid fines to collections after 21 days. Patrons usually have 21 days to request an initial review, and if undisputed, an administrative hearing follows. Afterwards, unpaid fines go to collections and may eventually be reported to credit agencies. She added that more research is necessary to fully understand this process.

Committee Member Dillard expressed concern and stated that involving a third-party vendor could incur additional costs and that it appeared it could take about six months before unpaid fines negatively impact patron's credit. She expressed support for the current MTS program and suggested waiting at least a year to gather more data before considering major changes.

Chair Montgomery Steppe asked if the program began as a pilot in 2020 and then later became permanent. Ms. Landers confirmed. She explained that the on-the-spot fare option was added by the Board when the program was initially approved and mentioned that patrons preferred paying the fare immediately after getting caught by CCIs rather than participating in the Diversion Program. Chair Montgomery Steppe noted that MTS had a program in place prior to the Board's later decision to broaden it and made

mention that she knew staff who had gone through the previous program before additional components were added. Chair Montgomery Steppe emphasized that the program had existed at MTS in some form for a long time.

Committee Member Dillard expressed concern about moving to an administrative model and recommended continuing with the current program, gathering more data, and monitoring its progress, especially given the upcoming financial challenges. Committee Member Dillard added that as fare compliance improves and the program gains traction, the Committee could revisit potential changes in the future.

Committee Member Goble asked about the accessibility of community service participation. Ms. Landers responded that the process was flexible, with MTS providing suggestions and reviewing patron requests for approval, ensuring they prefer participation with nonprofits rather than personal businesses or jobs. She noted most participants have not chosen community service compared to paying the fine and that MTS would support those who request it by providing options. Committee Member Goble asked if patrons could serve at a local youth center for a few hours and be eligible. Ms. Landers confirmed.

Chair Montgomery Steppe shared historical context on the creation of the Diversion Program, and she explained that in 2019, citations carried ballooned fines ranging from \$190 to over \$500, based on external factors. She clarified that at the time, MTS worked with PATH and SDSU, whose studies showed that unsheltered individuals seeking housing or employment continued to face barriers due to trolley citations. Chair Montgomery Steppe mentioned that the public defender's office also confirmed these challenges and noted that these issues led to the start of the Diversion Program. There was initial resistance to creating and expanding it. Chair Montgomery Steppe stated that since the removal of the on-the-spot payment option on February 1, participation in the Diversion Program has increased. She clarified that the Committee's goal is to decriminalize fare evasion, emphasizing that it is not a violent crime and should be addressed differently than violent offenses on public transit. Chair Montgomery Steppe explained that during legal analysis of the administrative model, the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) initially indicated that CCIs would not be able to detain individuals but later clarified they could if there was probable cause of a crime. Chair Montgomery Steppe highlighted that the broader issue was determining whether fare evasion should carry high fines and long-term consequences, such as impacting housing opportunities, and concluded that the Diversion Program is a strong alternative. Chair Montgomery Steppe clarified that the discussion was about decriminalizing fare evasion and whether it should result in fees exceeding \$500 and potential barriers like being unable to secure housing, emphasizing the importance of the Committee making its decisions based on all available data and acknowledged the Diversion Program as a strong alternative.

Ms. Landers added that the administrative program statute did not include a Diversion Program, and no agencies with administrative models currently use one. She said it was unclear whether MTS would be legally barred from also including the Diversion Program, but it would likely add another step to the implementation process. She said that other agencies using the administrative process started fines at \$75 and increased up to \$125. Chair Montgomery Steppe observed that parts of the Diversion Program resemble administrative enforcement. Ms. Landers agreed, confirming that MTS's current model was a hybrid model. Chair Montgomery Steppe asked how penalties were processed

under the court system compared to the administrative model. Ms. Landers explained that some agencies using administrative processes work with third party collection vendors and the California Franchise Tax Board, but more research would be needed. Ms. Cooney also noted that further research would be required to develop an implementation plan. Chair Montgomery Steppe asked if the appeal process had always been 15 days. Ms. Landers confirmed and clarified that MTS was flexible and often accepts appeals up to 21 days to preserve evidence and encourage a timely resolution. Chair Montgomery Steppe recalled seeing data showing that by the 14-day mark, few people were engaging. Ms. Cooney added that about two years ago, potential changes were presented, but the only update made was reducing the penalty fee to \$25. Ms. Landers clarified that while other proposals were discussed, no changes were implemented. She explained that the 15-day appeal deadline was set due to camera memory limits, as footage is often not available after 21 days.

Chair Montgomery Steppe moved to recommend that MTS staff develop a plan to transition the current hybrid enforcement model to a fully administrative fare enforcement model and have the plan address unresolved questions raised during the Committee meeting and return to the Committee once comparisons and potential consequences were gathered. Committee Member Foster noted that although he is a new MTS Board Member, he agrees the focus should be on not criminalizing fare evasion. He recalled a San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) meeting discussing fare increases and related studies, highlighting considerations of fairness and undue burden. Committee Member Foster stated that the study found the majority of riders, about 70%, were low income, and that the analysis supported the fare increase. Ms. Cooney explained that SANDAG surveyed transit riders, finding they preferred higher fares over service cuts, and this led to a fare study that considered the possibility of adjusting MTS's fare structure, especially considering an upcoming \$120 million operating budget deficit. Committee Member Foster noted that the hearing discussed fare impacts on low-income riders and potential discrimination. Chair Montgomery Steppe confirmed it was related to a Title VI analysis, and Ms. Cooney clarified it may have been a Disparate Impact hearing.

Committee Member Foster emphasized that many riders rely on public transit as their primary transportation and highlighted the importance of considering how fare enforcement affects them. Committee Member Foster agreed with the motion to explore a fully administrative fare enforcement model, noting that Government Codes referenced in Attachment A suggest some flexibility in fines and administrative processes. He added that the Diversion Program statutes do not explicitly limit actions, allowing for flexibility.

Committee Member Foster supported the motion for MTS staff to return with a more comprehensive plan and thanked MTS staff for their presentation. Chair Montgomery Steppe asked where the fines gathered under the administrative model would go to. Ms. Landers explained that the process is opaque and stated that fines are collected by the court, and MTS receives a check about once a year without individual accounting and that the funds could include restitution, fare evasion fines, or other cases. She noted that the amount is not significant, and the program was not intended as a revenue source, but rather to encourage fare payment. Ms. Landers clarified that the total collected revenue could be calculated and presented to the Committee if requested. Chair

Montgomery Steppe thanked MTS staff for the presentation and committee members for their responses.

Action Taken

Chair Montgomery Steppe moved to recommend that MTS staff develop a plan to transition the current hybrid enforcement model to a fully administrative fare enforcement model and have the plan address unresolved questions raised during the Committee meeting and return to the Committee once comparisons and potential consequences are gathered. Committee Member Dillard seconded the motion, and the vote was 4 to 1 in favor with Committee Member Goble voting no and Committee Member Hall and Committee Member Rodriguez absent.

6. Public Safety Through Environmental Design (Heather Furey and Chris Duddy)

Heather Furey, MTS Director of Capital Projects, and Chris Duddy, MTS Senior Transportation Planner, presented on Public Safety through Environmental Design. They provided details on: the recent environmental design projects, public art in Massachusetts Station, Grossmont Station, E St Station, 62nd St Station, listed the changes in lighting improvements at Grossmont Station, Lemon Grove Depot Station, Old Town Pedestrian Tunnel and updates to the Orange Line stations, the Bus Stop Lighting Pilot, landscaping and cleanliness, upcoming projects, transit station improvements, listening tour, transit amenities survey, future plans and fare gates.

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Fernandez asked MTS staff to explain the details behind the Listening Tours and the process. Ms. Cooney provided context on the Social Equity Listening Tour conducted by MTS, which gathered community input on areas of underinvestment along with support from consultants and partnerships with NGOs and community organizations. The effort identified gaps in service and barriers to accessing public transportation. She noted that a major concern raised was public safety at bus stops, with patrons citing uncomfortable waiting environments and out of the 4,000 bus stops, some were more isolated than others. Other recommendations included improvements such as better lighting, accessibility, and overall upgrades to the waiting experience. Ms. Cooney noted that disadvantaged communities were a key factor in the Listening Tour. Committee Member Fernandez asked how MTS plans to identify bus stops in need of upgrades. Ms. Cooney responded that the ongoing Transit Amenities Study will create a comprehensive database to pinpoint bus stops in need of attention, though some locations cannot be improved due to constraints such as private property, hillsides, or freeways. She explained that MTS is applying for a grant, with a response expected by summer or fall, with a goal of implementation planned by the end of 2026, if successful. If additional funding resources were created and available, improvements could begin sooner.

Chair Montgomery Steppe thanked staff, stating the importance of the discussion particularly regarding women's safety on transit and emphasized that public input on this matter has already influenced changes and ongoing conversations.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

OTHER ITEMS

7. Committee Member Communications

Committee Member Dillard announced that the City of La Mesa will host a Juneteenth event, with this year's focus on financial literacy. The event will include a community breakfast supported by the San Diego Firefighters and La Mesa Police Department. Families, including parents and children, are invited to attend at McArthur Park.

Chair Montgomery Steppe announced that she is seeking volunteers to serve as Vice Chair of the Public Security Committee and noted that the item will be included on the agenda for the next Board meeting for further discussion. [Clerk's Note: on June 26, 2025 (Agenda Item 19), the MTS Board of Directors appointed Committee Member Dillard as the Vice Chair of the Public Security Committee for the 2025 calendar year.]

8. Next Meeting Date

The next Public Security Committee meeting is scheduled for October 9, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

9. Adjournment

Chair Montgomery Steppe adjourned the meeting at 12:22 p.m.

/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): May 30, 2025 CALL TO ORDER (TIME): 10:33 am

ADJOURN: 12:22 pm

REPRESENTING	BOARD MEMBER	ALTERNATE	PRESENT (time arrived)	ABSENT (time left)
Chair	Montgomery Steppe ☒	no alternate	10: 33 am	12:22 pm
Committee Representative	Dillard ☒	no alternate	10: 33 am	12:22 pm
Committee Representative	Fernandez ☒	no alternate	10: 33 am	12:22 pm
Committee Representative	Foster ☒	no alternate	10: 33 am	12:22 pm
Committee Representative	Goble ☒	no alternate	10: 33 am	12:22 pm
Committee Representative	Hall ☐	no alternate	ABSENT	ABSENT
Committee Representative	Rodriguez ☐	no alternate	ABSENT	ABSENT

COMMITTEE CLERK: /S/ Jasiel Estolano