

Metro Public Safety Advisory Committee

General Committee Meeting #9

MINUTES

Wednesday, August 18, 2021

5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

I. Call To Order

A. **Zoom Meeting Protocols**

Facilitator Thomson Dryjanski called the meeting to order. Noted that Spanish and American Sign Language interpreter services would be available throughout the meeting. Additionally, he instructed committee members that all comments must be use the “all participants and panelists” function so they are visible to all attendees.

B. **Roll Call**

Present: Ashley Ajayi, Andrea Urmanita, Carrie Madden, Charles Hammerstein, Chauncey Smith, Clarence Davis, Constance Strickland, Darryl Goodus, Esteban Garcia, Fabian Gallardo, Florence Annang, Glenda Murrell, James Wen, Jessica Kellogg, Jose Raigoza, Maricela De Rivera, Mohammad Tajsar, Ron Rodney, Scarlett de Leon

Absent: Ma’ayan Dembo, Raul Gomez, Dr. Sabrina Howard

C. **Approval of 07/21 meeting minutes**

A vote was taken to approve the meeting minutes for the July 21, 2021, meeting.

Ayes: 10

Nays: 0

Abstentions: 1

II. General Public Comment

Public comment was taken from meeting participants. The following comments were shared:

- A. Commentor was a member of ACT-LA. Speaking on mission and values, commentor felt that it should reflect the board motion that created PSAC; it should speak to shifting away resources from policing, prioritizing dignity of people targeted by Metro’s policing, including Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) communities, unhoused folks, and disabled people.
- B. Commentor was also a member of ACT-LA. Speaking on mission and values, commentor felt like it is a needed step in moving away from police. Commentor encouraged PSAC members to consider a mission and values statement that is steeped in the language of the board motion on non-law enforcement alternatives and shift resources from policing, and it should center solutions on Black, unhoused, poor, disabled, and mental health and substance abuse disabilities.

III. Discussion

Introductions

- A. Imelda Hernandez introduced two Metro employees who will be joining the PSAC initiative, Nicole Englund and Elba Higueros.
 - a. Nicole Englund introduced herself as the Chief of Staff at LA Metro. The CEO of Metro, Stephanie Wiggins, asked for Nicole and Elba to act as co-leads for PSAC, which now

interface more closely within the Office of the CEO. They are working on arranging a meeting between the CEO and PSAC soon.

- i. An urban planner by training, Englund is two months into her position at Metro, but she has twenty years of experience in transportation planning.
 - b. Elba Higueros introduced herself as the Chief Policy Officer at LA Metro. She has been in this role for six years and has been at Metro for eighteen years.
 - c. Higueros stated she has watched recordings of previous PSAC meetings and heard that some people are overwhelmed by the volume of information and confused by the committee's scope of work. She stated that Metro needs to do a better job of presenting information and highlighting important and pertinent details and committed to Metro being transparent and upfront about their security and police forces.
 - d. She then requested advice from PSAC on two main focuses: the "big picture" for public safety on Metro, and advice and strategies for forthcoming security and law enforcement contracts.
 - i. She stated that the recommendations for the contracts are time sensitive and that Metro welcomes recommendations whether or not the contracts fit the committee's future vision for public safety.
 - e. Englund followed up to share the deadline for the law enforcement and security contracts.
 - i. The Infrastructure Protection Services (IPS) contract expires March 2022, and the law enforcement contract ends June 2022, but it will run out of money in January 2022.
 - ii. She shared those new procurements take a better part of a year, and the existing contracts need to be extended and cannot be abandoned.
 - iii. Metro welcomes input on modifications to these contract extensions, such as strategies and tactics to define the contracts' scope and advice on performance metrics and accountability mechanisms.
- B. Members had a short Q&A with Englund and Higueros. They discussed the following:
- a. Member Davis asked the following questions: is it possible for PSAC to suggest a system of 90-120 day contract extensions for the IPS and public law enforcement contracts. Could Metro back date invoices for contractual obligations on a temporary basis? No matter what PSAC decides, there is already a timetable for Metro?
 - i. Englund responded. Metro has flexibility regarding the length of any extensions, but the issue is that procurement takes the better part of a year. Metro can arrange for a follow-up presentation on the procurement timeline for these contracts (the IPS and Policing Practices ad hoc subcommittee already saw a presentation from Metro's procurement department).
 - ii. There needs to be mindfulness of the time needed to get committee recommendations and develop the solicitation's scope of work. Metro is accepting feedback from members to make any modifications to these forthcoming contracts so that changes can be implemented more quickly.
 - b. Englund suggested a presentation for PSAC members on the procurement schedule.
 - i. Member Davis welcomed the presentation. It would help PSAC understand their choices.
 - c. Member Annang stated that the procurement presentation has brought a lot of clarity when it presented in the Policing Practices ad hoc subcommittee.

- i. She shared that being able to understand those contracts, what PSAC can and cannot do, where their input is needed, and being able to offer some tangible feedback on those contracts is beneficial to moving forward.
 - ii. She requested an additional presentation in the Policing Practices ad hoc subcommittee to show where the “red flags” are so that PSAC can provide recommendations.
 - d. Member Smith referenced a discussion that the Policing Practices ad hoc subcommittee had where they favored a short contract extension over a year-long extension. They were told that extending the contract for a few months is not possible because of existing procurement timelines. Member Smith asked for clarity on those timelines; he stated that there should be some effort to revisit procurement process to shorten some processes.
 - i. Englund responded that it is not impossible to do a shorter extension, but Metro’s existing practices may not make it feasible. She further added that depending on what is added to the contract, there are cost implications.
 - ii. She agreed with revisiting the procurement process to possibly shorten it and will go back to the procurement staff. She does not believe that there is a lot of room for streamlining, but she is willing to walk PSAC through the process to see what new ideas there may be.
 - e. Member Davis asked if it is possible to have a preview of what alternative security initiatives Metro has come up with to supplement the public policing contract?
 - i. Englund responded that she only got the list of draft alternatives earlier this week and will commit to a preview for PSAC, possibly at the next meeting.
- C. To close out this section, Facilitator Butler noted that she will be leaving the facilitation team as she begins a PhD program and focuses more on parenting. She shared that it was a difficult decision, but she has enjoyed time with everyone who is a part of the PSAC process.

Ad-Hoc Subcommittee Reports

- A. **Community Engagement (CE) ad hoc subcommittee:** Committee member Urmanita reported on the CE ad hoc committee for meetings held on 8/02/21 and 8/16/21. The ad hoc subcommittee discussed the following:
 - a. **Unhoused rider outreach and engagement:** the ad hoc subcommittee discussed best practices for unhoused rider outreach, including how to provide for unhoused riders’ immediate needs and identifying long-term efforts to offer sustained support.
 - b. **Community-centered design and community stewardship:** the ad hoc subcommittee discussed these efforts generally. This included looking at infrastructure, bus stops, etc.,. The committee discussed where there may be opportunities for Metro to invest in design interventions that better support community-identified needs. One idea was recommending Metro develop policy guidelines for these designs.
 - c. The ad hoc subcommittee also discussed a policy for vendors to operate on (or near) transit stops and stations.
 - d. They also considered what role community organizations should play in supporting these interventions.
 - e. **Who/what is Metro:** the ad hoc subcommittee discussed the existential question for the agency Metro: i.e., Who/what is Metro and whom does Metro serve?
 - f. Metro has the opportunity to expand ridership and make better use of transit spaces. The committee discussed looking at underused property, where there is the opportunity for open space, recreation, renewable energy, public art, recycling centers, services, and parking space for people living in vehicles.

- i. The committee asked for Metro to identify what properties are available for public use and engaging riders.
 - g. **Comments and questions from the full committee:**
 - i. Member Tajsar stated that the works sound super interesting and that he is excited by the discussion and alternative uses of Metro property.
- B. **Non-Law Enforcement Alternatives (NLEA) ad hoc subcommittee:** Committee member Smith reported on the NLEA ad hoc subcommittee for meeting on 8/03/21 and 8/17/21. The ad hoc subcommittee discussed the following:
 - a. **Transit Ambassador program goals & objectives:** the ad hoc subcommittee began by reviewing the goals and objectives for other cities' transit ambassador programs.
 - i. The group landed on prioritizing a customer service role and the ability for ambassadors to serve as an initial touchpoint with service responders.
 - ii. They also discussed the importance of training, placement, and location for ambassadors.
 - b. **Jamboard:** the facilitation team prepared a Google Jamboard for the members work as a group to identify further goals and objectives for the transit ambassador program. The ad hoc subcommittee shared four key concepts: (1) Ambassadors as outward facing and welcoming to riders, (2) prioritizing safety for riders and operators, (3) connecting the public to resources (especially for vulnerable populations), and (4) ambassador positions as good jobs accessible to marginalized populations frequently facing barriers to employment.
 - i. **Outward and welcoming presence:** The ad hoc subcommittee revisited the Jamboard on 8/17 and began to dig further into the "Outward and welcoming presence" idea of ambassadors. They discussed this component as helping riders feel appreciated on Metro.
 - ii. To create a sense or perception of safety, members thought of ambassadors as a part of an ecosystem of non-law enforcement alternatives. They began thinking of who this might be, naming the following: social workers, system security, customer service, operators, EMTs, and community-based organizations.
 - c. **Comments and questions from the full committee:**
 - i. Englund mentioned that Metro has also considered the non-law enforcement alternatives who will be part of the ecosystem for Transit Ambassadors as part of their list of what makes up a robust ambassador program.
- C. **Policing Practices (PP) ad hoc subcommittee:** Committee member de Leon reported on the PP ad hoc committee for meeting on 8/11/2. The ad hoc subcommittee discussed the following:
 - a. **Procurement process:** the ad hoc subcommittee received a presentation from Metro on the procurement process.
 - i. The ad hoc subcommittee is curious as to what practices Metro uses to collect public comment during the solicitation process; committee members wanted to make sure that Metro had a plan in place to ensure that when the request for proposals is posted on their website, communities are aware and can easily provide comments.
 - b. **Guest speakers:** the ad hoc subcommittee prioritized giving their requests for guest speakers.
 - c. **Jamboard:** the ad hoc subcommittee began a Jamboard by the facilitation team to share priorities.

- i. The ad hoc subcommittee has been considering a work area focus, choosing between cancelling the policing contract or giving recommendations on amendments to the policing contract.
 - ii. They are also considering how (or if) law enforcement will interact with non-law enforcement alternatives.
 - iii. Members had the most questions around identifying research gaps and/or identifying mission & goals.
- d. **Comments and questions from the full committee:**
- i. Member de Rivera asked what is the likelihood of the Metro board going through with the recommendation for not continuing the policing contract if the committee were to recommend that?
 - 1. Englund stated that it is impossible to speak to what action the board may or may not take but noted that the board is relying on PSAC recommendations to inform their decisions.
 - 2. Englund responded that in lieu of extending the contracts, Metro does not have an alternative plan in place and the agency feels strongly that it cannot be without police and security as they move through the PSAC process of reimagining public safety on Metro.
 - 3. After the extension, the question depends on how law enforcement is re-envisioned and what programs could occur in its place.
 - 4. De Rivera replied that it is helpful framing for keeping PSAC on track for making substantive changes. There are concrete things that the committee can do now, and she looks forward to making lasting change for the way that BIPOC and unhoused communities are policed (or not).
 - ii. Member Annang stated that, being a part of PP, she likes the clarity Nicole and Elba brought. The details they provided allow the committee to see the big picture.
 - 1. She wants to get into the contract language and provide recommendations.
 - 2. Referring to the language in the board motions establishing PSAC, she stated that the committee's work it is not solely about responding to the protests and uprisings last year but also about what happens far in the future, and she hopes the PP ad hoc subcommittee can focus on that.
 - iii. Member Davis asked Englund if PSAC is able to shape what contract renewal looks like?
 - 1. Englund initially responded that she was speaking to the *extension* of existing contract, not future *renewals*.
 - 2. Members have room to influence the contract renewals and may also affect contract language for the extensions.
 - iv. Member Davis asked if Metro can influence building codes for public safety and if Metro is part of the Clean Air and Green initiative?
 - 1. Englund responded that Metro can influence its own building and property and it has models for complete streets, but beyond that, the agency has limited control over building codes or zoning.
 - 2. Higueros responded that she is not sure if Metro is a part of the Green initiative, but she will follow up with the committee member.
 - v. Member Smith wanted to reiterate that the Board created PSAC to provide their own ideas, not to have PSAC provide what they think the Board wants. However, the two positions are not mutually exclusive.

- vi. Member de Rivera shared that she is grateful for the follow-up questions from members Davis and Smith. Prior to this discussion, Member de Rivera thought that the committee might be an exercise in futility, given the lack of clarity on the committee's charge.
 - 1. She wanted to avoid a situation where people who look like PSAC members - implying people of color and members of the public – are used as public relation campaigns, but she felt like that is not what is happening here.

D. **Infrastructure Protection Services (IPS) ad hoc subcommittee:** Committee member Garcia reported on the IPS ad hoc subcommittee for meeting on 8/10/21. The ad hoc subcommittee discussed the following:

- a. **Procurement presentation:** the ad hoc subcommittee received a presentation from Metro on the procurement schedule. He noted that the contract with RMI expires in March 2022, and that Metro is asking for recommendations on this contract by January 2022.
 - i. That timeline gives the ad hoc subcommittee until October to share recommendations with the full committee. Metro suggested accepting recommendations on a rolling basis rather than waiting to share everything all at once.
- b. **Guest speakers:** the ad hoc subcommittee prioritized guest speakers, coming up with three main categories: (1) internal security staff, (2) use of force experts, and (3) victims advocacy experts.
 - i. He noted that Metro shared that use of force incidents occurred 31 times out of over 220,000 calls for service and that Metro System Security & Law Enforcement's position is that these armed officers are a deterrent to crime.
- c. **Recommendations on Uniforms:** All members agreed on a marketing campaign to identify Metro staff by uniform.
 - i. For private security, uniforms should have recognizable emblem, they should be easily identifiable for people with developmental disabilities. Uniforms most likely should be a gray color – different from law enforcement gray – and they should be recognizable and Metro-specific.
- d. **To further discuss:** the ad hoc subcommittee felt that it needs more discussion regarding whether utility belts would look too militaristic.
 - i. Metro also requested more feedback on uniforms being recognizable and Metro-specific.
- e. **Comments and questions from the full committee:**
 - i. Englund mentioned that uniforms are on Metro's list of ideas for PSAC to consider.
 - ii. Member Davis asked if there is any other pilot program or initiatives that the ad hoc subcommittee is considering?
 - 1. Member Garcia responded that they have not considered others yet.
 - iii. Member Tajsar asked if the ad hoc subcommittee or Metro considered evidence that deterrence occurs because of people seeing armed officers? He questioned further why does Metro believe this and is there data to support it? Deterrence has come up in the past meetings but lacks data to support it.
 - 1. Member Garcia stated that Metro did not offer data to support their assertion and reaffirmed that the ad hoc subcommittee's members will root their recommendations in data.

Drafting a Mission & Values Statement for Public Safety on Metro

The facilitation team shared a Jamboard for members to participate in this exercise and shared a Google Form with the public to respond to the same prompts as committee members.

- A. Facilitator France clarified for members that “Mission” refers to big picture goals (i.e., What they want to accomplish), while “Vision” refers to principles, ideas, and priorities that guide the agency’s work.
- B. Responding to “What do you like about Metro’s System Safety & Law Enforcement (SSLE) vision and mission statement?”**
 - a. Member Strickland shared that, based on the mission statement, she did not get a sense of what Metro is, what they want to do, or where they want to go in the future.
 - i. She acknowledges that surveillance is double-edged sword. She stated that it is used to police people but can also be used to capture situations. In her own experience, she had no evidence or video to document incidents she previously experienced.
 - b. Member Madden shared that Metro’s statement felt militaristic, and it loses people that constitute the agency’s riders.
 - i. She did not like it at all. Especially given what PSAC is trying to do with equity, where everyone feels welcome, the statement is the polar opposite of what they are doing.
 - c. Member Wen sees Metro’s ridership growing and changing to meet the needs of a more climate-change conscious society and with the new connections to LAX. An expanded system and ridership may need a digitally-connected security environment.
 - i. He also agreed with Members Strickland and Madden comments, as well as with others’ reactions on the Jamboard.
 - d. Member Goodus shared that Metro SSLE’s statement is not a human-centered statement.
 - i. Metro serves riders with a diverse and persistent needs, but he did not see how this statement connects to those riders.
 - e. Member Garcia shared that he does not totally disagree with the statement.
 - i. On customer experience, he considers Metro a public service and space. The term “customer” removes idea that public has a right to feel safe because they are people from Los Angeles.
 - ii. He also felt like security technology could be useful and liked that part.
 - f. Member Davis indicated this discussion made him think of police acting as a deterrent. For instance, when he sees an empty police car outside a train station, he thinks about the money paying for that – even though it may not be effective at preventing crime.
 - i. Davis works in South LA, and being a single parent and a rider, he has never seen an improvement in technology where it makes him feel safe.
 - ii. For documentation purposes, technology can be useful, but every time there is new tech it never considers the public’s diverse needs.
 - iii. For him, these statements don’t answer the questions of: Who is the system for and who does the system benefit? He asked PSAC to consider what else can we do to center this statement on the needs of individuals?

IV. General Public Comment

Public comment was taken from meeting participants. The following comments were shared:

- A. Commentor thanked everyone for their service. Commentor wanted to share experience on Red Line to downtown. Between LA Police Department officers and Metro security, nobody enforces the mask mandate, and there is not enough space for social distancing. When the commentor talks talk to police officers, they are not allowed to do anything about it.
- B. Commentor rides the Red Line to work and each day and sees maskless riders. Commentor has made several reports but has seen no improvement. A police officer told the commentor that officers have been advised not to remove passengers who do not comply with the mask mandate, but there are regular announcements that all passengers must wear face masks per federal law. Commentor wants action and for Metro to protect the public.
- C. Commentor has sent a few emails about maskless operators on Metro, but they continue to see maskless operators despite the existing penalties for being maskless. Commentor suggests informing Metro employees of the punishments for being maskless, including a public news release about the consequences.
- D. Commentor states that there are too many maskless riders on crowded trains and platforms. Commentor rides the Red Line daily for work and never sees anyone enforcing the mask mandate or handing out masks. Commentor states that Metro should refuse entry to anyone without a mask.
- E. Commentor frequently rides Metro rail and sees riders smoking meth, cigarettes, or marijuana on vehicles daily. Commentor has asthma and this is a threat to their health.
 - a. They also added that the U.S. will likely soon see six million new evictions and wants Metro leaders can advocate for systemic change for affordable housing and mental health services, calling for social workers, substance use peer support, and housing where people can sleep and feel safe. Commentor has done homelessness outreach and stated that rapport and trust are important but difficult to keep without housing.
- F. Commentor is concerned about the threat to safety from allowing unmasked unhoused riders and from public drug use. Drug use makes users erratic. Commentor would like to see stricter security and enforcement, a separate bus for drug use, and collecting fee fare again.
- G. Commentor representing the City Council of the City of Hawthorne unanimously approved a letter in support of Los Angeles deputy sheriffs against any defunding of police. The council encourages the use of Metro transit and supports non-law enforcement alternatives that do not come at the expense of traditional policing.
- H. Commentor would like to hear from planners, consultants, and advisors on the treatment of elderly and special needs community segments.
- I. Commentor noted that in a previous meeting on July 7th, an operator voiced concern about removing police from Metro. Commentor would like to increase police presence after 8pm on different lines known to have problems. Commentor feels like having more officers on board taking a passive, observant role would make riders feel at ease, but that it is important not to have officers deal with petty issues.
- J. Commentor was in a general committee meeting and disappointed by other callers who spoke about institutional racism in broad terms. Commentor hopes that in future meetings, participants are specific.
 - a. Commentor also has seen altercations on rides before and has seen operators pull over to call the police. Commentor stated that the security presence helps.
- K. Commentor was on the Red Line on July 22nd around noon when they saw two Black males experiencing a mental health crisis. They called the Metro Customer Service line who transferred them to the Sheriff's department. They explained the situation but then told them to disregard it to prevent a bigger problem. They explained that there needs to be more counselors on the ground to monitor and de-escalate when necessary.

- L. Commentor came to the U.S. twenty years ago because their home country was unsafe and did not provide many opportunities. Commentor shared that recent Metro changes in security practices have made it scary for them to be on the train alone. They counted on police presence to make them feel safe. Commentor feels betrayed that the government cares more about criminals and their rights. Commentor urged committee to consider their daughters, sisters, wives, mothers, and other women in their lives.
- M. Commentor read from LAPD and LASD statistics that crime is going up while their budgets are going down. Commentor asked PSAC if they are willing to be personally responsible to the victims of violent crime. Commentor stated that no amount of ambassadors can prevent serious crime, only police can.
- N. Commentor hopes that police are removed from Metro so that they can see more fights and weapons.
- O. Responses from Metro and the full committee:**
 - a. Imelda Hernandez clarified on comments regarding mask usage: Metro has taken an educational approach to urge riders to use masks. There are displayed mask dispensers, and they are using frontline staff to educate folks about the mandate.

V. Adjournment

- A. Meeting adjourned at 7:20pm

VI. Next Steps and Follow-Ups

Facilitation Team

1. Facilitation team will debrief with PSAC members who had to leave before adjournment.