

Advisory Recommendations for Metro's Community Engagement on Public Safety Topics

About these Recommendations

These recommendations provide guidance on what community voices Metro should center in the process of community engagement, offer categorical recommendations on community outreach methods, provide an expanded definition of programs that should be considered as part of riders' experience of safety, and provide suggestions for improving survey creation.

Expanding the Scope of Public Safety Topics: Much like PSAC's recommendations to expand Metro's [Public Safety Ecosystem](#) to include a variety of new non-law enforcement alternatives, PSAC recommends that Metro expand its view of the topics and programs that contribute to public safety and engage the community accordingly. This scope of programs must expand beyond solely law enforcement, security personnel, and social service providers. Public safety outreach should also include topics like fareless transit and low-income fare subsidy programs, transportation services that assist vulnerable riders like ACCESS or Metro Micro, and station and vehicle conditions.

Key Constituencies

As previously noted in the [Public Safety Ecosystem recommendations](#), the following describes the key constituencies Metro should regularly engage on topics of public safety on the transit system:

*PSAC advises Metro to center the following voices in discussions concerning public safety. Naturally, transit riders' voices should be at the forefront, with a particular emphasis on addressing the needs of **low-income riders** that make up the majority of Metro's existing users. The agency should also pay close attention to **Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities; women; youth; older adults; people with disabilities - physical, intellectual, and developmental; and LGBTQIA+** rider needs. It should work collaboratively with organizations representing these populations to identify and meet those needs. Equally important, including Metro's **vehicle operators and frontline staff like custodians, station attendants, and others**, should play a large role in shaping public safety policy on the system. Metro should also consult with **community-based organizations** representing issue areas like **civil rights and racial equity, disability advocacy, faith communities, bicycle and pedestrian safety, and the local arts and design communities**.*

Recommendations on Outreach

PSAC has articulated the following recommendations to improve and expand outreach on public safety topics:

- Defining public safety with transit riders:** PSAC feels it is essential to further define the concept of "public safety" with the wider transit-using public. Metro's previous surveys on Customer Experience and Public Safety have been useful steps towards reaching this goal but lacked long-term engagement with riders and these surveys are more appropriate as point-in-time snapshots. In previous meetings, PSAC was informed that surveys are ineffective tools at offering insights on open-ended concepts. Therefore, the committee recommends deploying focus groups or other in-depth engagement strategies with riders to develop a concrete definition of "public safety" that is in line with Metro's [Mission, Vision, and Values for Public Safety](#). Participants

should be drawn from the groups mentioned in the “Key Constituencies” section and compensated for their time and labor.

- **Outreach to women, persons with disabilities, BIPOC, and other key constituencies:** The experience of safety on Metro is not monolithic. Riders from these different groups will have divergent experiences of safety on the transit system. For instance, different PSAC members have noted that law enforcement officers are a source of perceived security for persons with disabilities, whereas many BIPOC riders may feel targeted and oppressed through officer’s presence. Woman-identified and non-binary riders experience safety very differently from their male-identified counterparts. It is essential that Metro engage representatives from these constituencies separately to develop priorities unique to those groups, and then together to develop a shared definition of public safety on the system.
- **Ensuring participation:** PSAC calls for Metro’s community engagement methods to eliminate as many barriers to participation as possible. Understanding that the majority of Metro’s ridership are low-income riders of color - a population group known to have barriers to civic participation - the agency should create the conditions to reach these groups. This can include paying community-based organizations with established community connections to do the outreach, doing extensive engagement on the transit system or other places where low-income riders congregate, holding meetings on nights and weekends, offering translation services, and providing food, entertainment, and childcare to boost participation in traditionally low-turnout groups like mothers and families.

PSAC also recommends that Metro endeavor to involve more members of the public in the agency’s advisory committee process. Participation is not limited to acting as a committee member. This can include increasing attendance and public comment at public advisory committee meetings, utilizing incentives like raffles and prizes to get new participants to attend meetings, or utilizing more frequent surveys and external focus groups to inform the recommendations of the advisory committee.

- **Expanding outreach methods:** While Metro outreach frequently taps into existing community events, Metro can consider hosting its own event or partnering with other municipal agencies to host a large-scale event. An event of this kind would be best hosted in an area where low-income Metro riders are concentrated. Events where Metro has representation are also an opportunity for volunteers to support Metro outreach. The agency should engage interested persons to represent the agency and provide support during events. **Another expanded method of connecting with community members could include designating staff to act as liaisons on community outreach topics for neighborhoods or regions. This position would offer a friendly point of contact who can build lasting relationships with local residents and stakeholders.**

Metro can also consider holding regularly-occurring meetings with target communities that are not tied to projects or improvements. This kind of “open door policy” will help build relations and knowledge sharing between the communities most in need of Metro services and Metro staff. Similar to Metro’s topical advisory committees, PSAC recommends that Metro form advisory committees based on locale and use this local knowledge to improve service and amenities in that region or neighborhood. One potential input from this process would be for local community members to provide in-depth feedback on their local stops and stations.

- **Bridging the digital divide:** PSAC calls for Metro to support people who have poor internet access, lack access to the necessary technology, or do not have the requisite skills to participate through a digital medium. This can include providing mobile hotspots in target areas, providing access to technologies like smartphones, laptops, or data plans, hosting technology skills training concurrent with other events, and hosting more in-person events within COVID protocols. Hosting in-person events can also be beneficial for members of the disability community who have communication barriers. Advertisements can also be placed outside of the digital space to reach

communities with low technological access. Locating Metro ads, meeting notices, and other announcements in local newspapers, television, and radio can aid in reaching these groups.

- **Language Accessibility:** PSAC calls for written, spoken, and recorded outreach materials to be written in the plain language and translated/interpreted into as many languages as possible. Plain language ensures that there are no barriers to understanding due to complicated jargon. Translation and interpretation are essential in LA County. The County has more than 180 languages spoken here, necessitating that Metro should act proactively to ensure translation or interpretation meet the needs of specific communities and does not have to occur as the result of a community member's request.¹ The agency should know their audience in a community when doing locational outreach.
- **Reaching unhoused riders:** As Metro is a key public good in Los Angeles County, it provides both transportation and shelter to many members of the unhoused community. PSAC recommends that Metro expand their engagement with the unhoused population on topics related to public safety, as well as the evaluation of Metro's homeless outreach programs. When reaching out to unhoused riders and soliciting feedback, it is essential to have compensation that can be meted out at the time of engagement. With many unhoused persons lacking a permanent address, sending compensation retroactively would prove difficult.
- **Artful, interactive, & community-focused:** PSAC recommends that outreach can also be creative and inspiring to community members. Artist activations or gamified programming can be a unique way of surveying. Metro should consider partnering with the LA County Arts Council and local artists to build out this programming.
- **Engagement on Customer Experience:** PSAC recommends that Metro allocate additional funding to engage more riders more frequently on Customer Experience topics, with a strong focus on the experience of customer service in stations and bus stops. As noted in many PSAC recommendations, the topics of service reliability, experience of stations and bus stops, personal security, homelessness, cleanliness, and other related topics hold a direct relation to transit riders' perceptions of public safety. The committee recommends that the agency prioritize an expanded outreach program on this topic to improve rider perceptions.
- **Creation of a Community Outreach advisory committee:** PSAC recommends that Metro create a standing advisory committee that advises on outreach methods and engagement outcomes for Metro projects and programs. This committee would be responsible for providing insight on connecting with hard-to-reach communities, overseeing the performance of Metro's various community engagement efforts, and ensuring that the agency is employing high-quality and equitable engagement strategies.
- **Improving community stewardship of underutilized Metro stations:** At this time, many Metro stations are spaces where riders pass through, rather than community destinations providing services and experiences outside of transit. In keeping with Metro's Transit-Oriented Community principles and the [Metro Board Motion 37 \(File #: 2020-0429\)](#) directive on improved community stewardship, the committee recommends that Metro allocate underutilized spaces at stations for community engagement purposes. This could include providing spaces for local vendors, offering space for community-based organizations to provide services and connect with residents, or offering space for artist installations. By allowing local experts to activate these spaces, it will create a greater feeling of connection between residents and their local stations, while improving safety outcomes via increased presence at the station.
- **Supporting riders prone to getting lost:** PSAC recommends that Metro implement staff liaisons and other programming supports to meet the needs of children, community elders, and other riders prone to getting lost on the system. This program could include creating a registry for these

¹ Barragan, Bianca. "More than Half of Los Angeles Speaks a Language Other than English at Home." *Curbed LA*, Curbed LA, 4 Nov. 2015, <https://la.curbed.com/2015/11/4/9904020/los-angeles-languages>.

riders, providing special TAP card passes identifying them as riders with special needs, assigning point of contact liaisons to these vulnerable riders, and providing training to Metro in-station staff on how to identify a rider in need and the proper protocols to take in that situation.

- **Additional Programs:** PSAC recommends that the following programs also have outreach conducted through a public safety lens:
 - Metro Micro
 - ACCESS Services
 - Low-Income Fare is Easy program & any fareless transit programs
 - UPass and Go Pass subsidized fare programs for college students
 - Building knowledge of and participation in Metro's advisory committees

Reframing Surveys for Public Safety

PSAC has articulated the following strategies for improving Metro's surveying practices:

- Engage in more frequent in-person surveys;
- Surveyors should be of the surveyed community or culturally competent and equipped with appropriate language skills;
- Deploy mechanisms that allows surveying at stops/stations without Metro staff e.g. through TAP card machines or purpose built infrastructure;
 - *Any newly implemented surveying mechanisms should provide real-time feedback to Metro staff.*
- Ensure that all survey participants are compensated for their time in a timely and accessible manner;
- And include the following topics as part of future surveys related to public safety:
 - Cleanliness of local stations
 - Quality of the amenities at local stations
 - Community needs for desired amenities at local stations
 - Quality of transit service
 - Opinions on non-law enforcement alternatives