



## Board Report

---

**File #:** 2022-0389, **File Type:** Informational Report

**Agenda Number:** 19.

---

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
OCTOBER 20, 2022**

**SUBJECT: METRO'S HOMELESS RESPONSE PROGRAM**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

**RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE the Homeless Gap Analysis (Attachment A).

**ISSUE**

Homelessness continues to be the defining humanitarian crisis of our time, prevalent in every community across the County of Los Angeles. The 2022 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count, which represents the most current available data, showed that 69,144 people were experiencing homelessness in LA County at that time, a 4.1% rise from 2020.

While an unprecedented amount of resources continues to be allocated to address this crisis, the scale of need and an increasing number of individuals becoming homeless continues to outpace available resources. This is largely due to the lack of affordable and permanent supportive housing in the region, making it challenging for unhoused individuals to transition off the streets, or from interim housing units into long-term stable housing.

A significant number of homeless individuals and families seek shelter on Metro's rail, bus lines, station stops, and transit centers. Metro has sought to do its part to address this challenge, including by funding and deploying outreach teams who are dedicated to serving unhoused individuals on the Metro system and Metro property. To continue improving Metro's efforts to assist and reduce the number of unhoused individuals on the system, it was appropriate to evaluate Metro's Homeless Program and identify other opportunities for Metro to engage in order to address this crisis meaningfully.

This report provides an overview of the findings, recommendations, and proposed next steps that culminate into Metro's Homeless Program 2022 Gap Analysis.

**..Background  
BACKGROUND**

In July 2016, Metro launched a strategic planning process, which culminated in a Metro Transit

---

Homeless Action Plan that was presented to the Board in February 2017 (2017 Plan). The 2017 Plan has since guided Metro's homeless outreach and engagement efforts. Given five years have passed since this initial planning effort, staff decided it was appropriate to complete a gap analysis on Metro's Homeless Program.

Most transit agencies throughout the country do not have formalized policies and procedures in place for addressing homelessness. In a study conducted by the University of California Institute of Transportation Studies, *Homelessness in Transit Environments: Survey Findings* (2021), researchers found that even those agencies without formal policies still must respond to circumstances associated with unhoused individuals on their property and system, and those responses varied in style and impact. Sixty-seven percent (67%) relied on enforcement (e.g. requiring disembarking at the ends of lines), 50% relied on "hostile architecture," 46% relied on enforcement of anti-loitering laws, 31% relied on subsidized fares (e.g. discounted and/or free fares for unhoused riders), and 24% relied on the use of vehicles and/or facilities as heating and cooling options. From this study, it's inferred that many transit agencies respond with enforcement-driven methods, while fewer respond with supportive methods.

Metro has taken a human-centered approach to address homelessness in our transit system, most notably by dedicating resources and partnering with homeless service providers in LA County. While this program has resulted in thousands of individuals being served, Metro recognizes that there are opportunities to strengthen its policy, programmatic, and capital investments to further address this crisis. Through the Gap Analysis, 15 recommendations have been proposed to be implemented by the new Homeless Outreach, Management and Engagement (HOME) Unit in the CX Department to accomplish this objective.

## **DISCUSSION**

Metro engaged LeSar Development Consultants with expertise in homelessness to work with Metro staff to complete a Gap Analysis to assess Metro's existing homeless programs and identify opportunities to improve its strategy and services in order to contextualize better Metro's role in the County's overall homeless response to reduce homelessness in the system and determine the effectiveness and impact of the program. Interviews with key stakeholders, including representatives from the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, People Assisting the Homeless (PATH), Metro staff, external service partners, as well as people experiencing homelessness, informed the assessment and analysis.

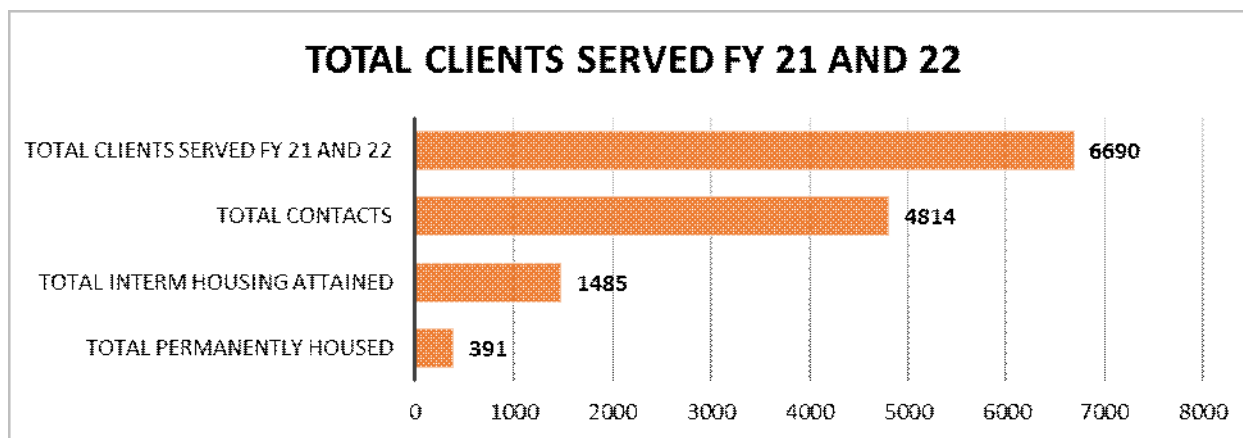
### **Review of Metro's Programs**

#### **Dedicated Outreach Teams**

Since 2017, Metro has funded multi-disciplinary outreach teams (MDTs) staffed by the non-profit homeless services agency People Assisting the Homeless (PATH), under the administration of the Department of Health Services - Housing for Health Program. PATH's MDT's include mental health specialists, substance use specialists, street outreach specialists (with both lived and/or years of experience), and nursing/medical staff. This multidisciplinary approach allows the teams to provide individuals with services that meet their most immediate needs, whether it be someone with an urgent wound or someone having a mental health crisis. Over the past five years, the pilot program

has expanded to eight teams of five members conducting outreach on the transit system every day of the week, from 3:00 AM- 3:30 PM on weekdays and from 7:00 AM- 3:30 PM on weekends.

A review and assessment of data for April 2020 - April 2022 shows that PATH effectively serves unhoused individuals on the Metro system. PATH MDTs follow a “Housing First” model, which means that the team works to find housing for individuals regardless of their condition. Housing First is also an industry standard, which is consistent with the housing model employed by leading LA County social service providers. PATH provides aggregated monthly data, which is collected in the course of outreach and engagement on the Metro system. The chart below illustrates the cumulative number of clients served and the number that attained Interim Housing and Permanent Housing over the past two years.

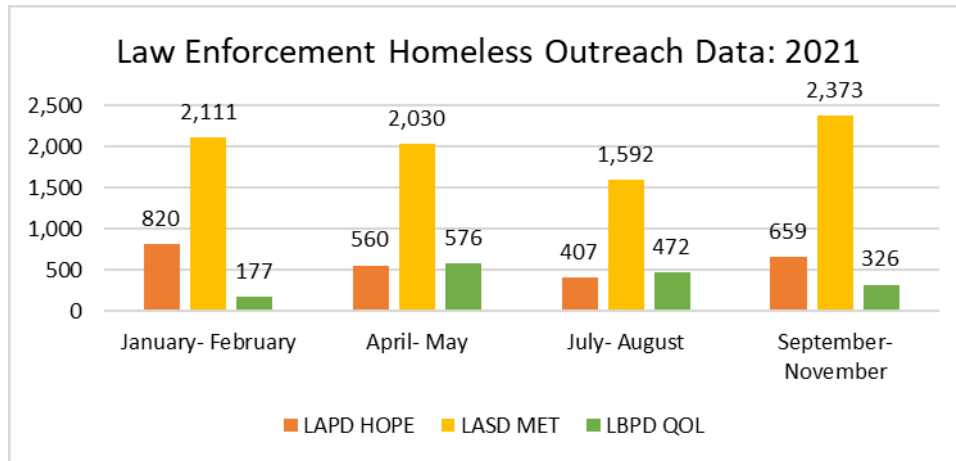


PATH’s MDTs have also responded to and met basic needs, healthcare concerns, and other essential services integral to aiding unhoused individuals in creating and maintaining housing stability. Between July 2021 and April 2022, PATH’s MDTs distributed basic necessities and hygiene items to 3,044 individuals and food and drinks to 2,781 individuals. In addition, MDTs provided a substantial number of people experiencing homelessness with healthcare services and referrals to healthcare providers, bridging the gap that prevents easy access to healthcare needs. These services include:

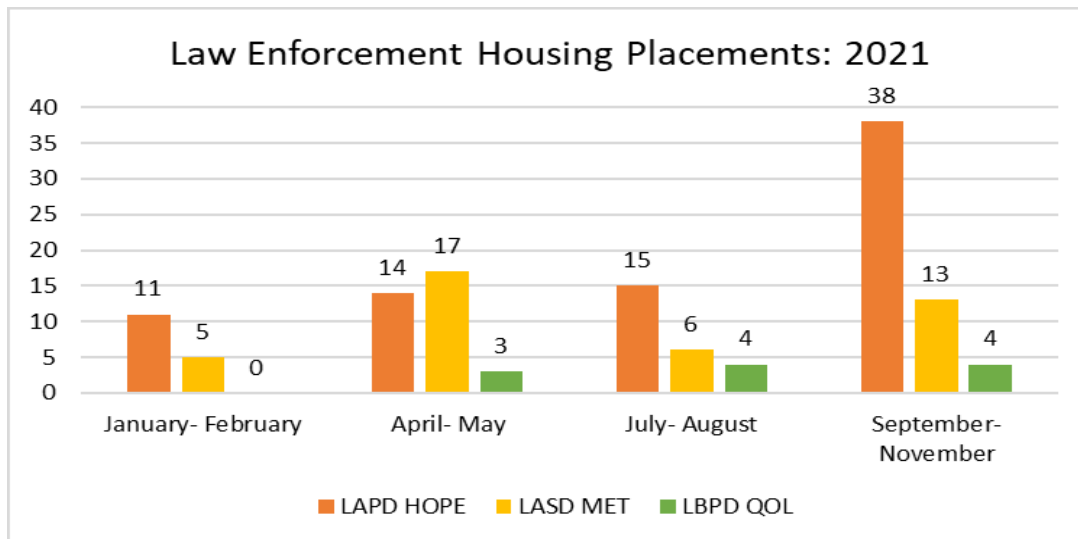
- COVID testing (36 engagements)
- Mental health services (500 engagements)
- Substance abuse counseling (1,114 engagements)
- Physical health assistance (130 engagements).

Other key services provided include pet support (19 engagements) and transportation (1,135 engagements), both of which play an integral role in an unhoused individual’s ability to accept and stay in permanent supportive housing.

### Deployment of Specialized Law Enforcement Teams



Specialized and trained teams led by law enforcement, which include mental health and social service experts, such as LAPD’s Homeless Outreach and Proactive engagement (HOPE), the LASD’s Mental Health Evaluation Team (MET) teams, and LBPD’s Quality of Life Program (QOL), have also been deployed to assist unhoused individuals in distress that require specialized care and attention (including assessment for a medical hold). The following table shows the various metrics for outreach measures (e.g., referrals, mental illness) for the LAPD HOPE, LASD MET, and LBPD QOL teams in 2021. The review shows that after comparing data on the effectiveness of law enforcement and service providers, there is value in keeping law enforcement separate from routine homeless outreach.



Nearly 9,000

contacts were made over the course of 9 months among these specialized law enforcement teams, and 130 individuals/families were referred to housing (~1.4% of the contacts). The law enforcement teams identified mental illness 1,155 times (~13% of contacts) and substance abuse 1,001 times (~11%). The table below lists the number of instances individuals experiencing homelessness were connected to specific housing outcomes.

The most common housing placement was in shelter (57 placements), which accounted for more than 75% of the total housing outcomes. There were 6 motel housing placements (~8%), Transitional long-term housing placements, detox placements, and rehab placements were each made 3 times (~4%), Return to family occurred 2 times (3%), and a VA housing placement was made once (~1%).

**Encampments**

Metro’s approach to addressing encampments is both sensitive to the needs of the people living in the encampments as well as judicious in keeping Metro’s property safe and clear of debris. Metro has an Encampment Clean-Up Protocol, which the agency follows when addressing reports of encampment sites. The protocol went into effect in 2017 to provide an outline of the internal and external coordination process to respond to an encampment and initiate a site clean-up process. The protocol is an industry best practice and is aligned with other jurisdictions’ homeless encampment

response protocol.

Metro requires that outreach be conducted before any action is taken, notification of an upcoming clean-up be given to individuals living within a designated encampment site, and, ultimately, a request for bio-hazard environmental assessment and abatement. This process is a multi-departmental effort that requires daily coordination between the System Security and Law Enforcement, Office of the CEO, Operations (Contracted Facilities Maintenance), Customer Experience (CX) and other departments.

**Reorganization of Metro’s Homelessness Response Under Office of the Chief of Staff (COS)**

As part of the FY23 budget adoption, three positions were funded to staff the newly-formed Homeless Outreach, Management and Engagement (HOME) unit within the Office of the Chief of Staff. The move from Safety, Security and Law Enforcement to the COS office reflects a logical shift for the agency, as homelessness impacts many systems and departments and is one of the pressing issues facing Metro. This move reflects Metro’s commitment to addressing homelessness on the system with compassion and dignity. Surveys among both internal and external stakeholders highlighted the benefits of reorganizing Metro’s homelessness response under the COS office. Positions like the Senior Director of Special Projects in the COS unit were regularly lauded for their commitment to and coordination in addressing homelessness across the system. Once the newly created positions are filled and the contracts to expand homeless outreach services are approved, the newly formed HOME unit will move to its permanent location in the CX Department.

**Housing Through Utilization of Metro Property.**

Through the Board’s leadership Metro prioritizes affordable housing in joint developments on Metro property. Metro has more than 2,000 income restricted units complete, in construction or active.

<b>Affordable Housing / JD Units (JD Team)</b>				
	Projects	Income-Restricted Units	Market-Rate Units	Total Units
Completed	22	791	1430	2221
In Construction	4	373	0	373
Active	9	892	2186	3078
<b>MATCH Units (There is overlap between Match and JD Units)</b>				
	Units Funded			
Active	305			
Repaid	843			
Total	1148			

Due to the urgent need to identify temporary and permanent shelters, Metro has also supported the creation of interim housing units to continue to support the Countywide efforts to temporarily house the unsheltered.

Homeless Support on Metro Properties

Homelessness Properties (Real Estate Team)			
Location (Address)	14333 Aetna St.	100 Sunset*	6073 N.Reseda Blvd.
Location (City)	Van Nuys	Venice Beach	Van Nuys
Number of Beds	74	150	148
City vs County	City	City	City
Metro's rights to the beds	No	No	No
Operator	Salvation Army	PATH	Hope of the Valley
Vacancy levels (if we know)	Not known**	Not known**	Not Known**
<i>*Note: The 150 beds in Venice are separated into 100 adult and 50 youth</i>			
<i>**Note: It is not known at the time but the team is working to get this answered.</i>			

Safe Parking Program

The Safe Parking Program was implemented on August 1, 2020, at Metro's Atlantic Station parking facility, located at 255 S Atlantic Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90022. Metro partnered with Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), which funds and operates the Safe Parking Program through July 2023. LAHSA contracts with Volunteers of America Los Angeles (VOALA) for program operations. The Safe Parking Program offers a safe place for vehicle dwellers to park without having to worry about street parking regulations and/or waking up every few hours to relocate their vehicle to a different area. Additionally, the program offers outreach services for participants, such as referrals and links to community services and access to case management and financial assistance. This location can currently accommodate up to 20 vehicles per night. Since November 2020, there have been over 130 households enrolled in the program, with over 70 percent transferred to temporary or permanent housing.

Metro has made the agency's properties available at no cost to Homeless Support Organizations to provide the necessary emergency shelter for the unhoused which is a scarce resource. These programs provide a benefit to the community, but they do not support Metro's efforts to reduce the number of unhoused individuals on the Metro system as Metro has no rights to the beds at these facilities located on Metro property, which is identified in the program GAP analysis. Despite Metro's aggressive affordable housing achievements, there currently aren't any projects on Metro property that prioritize unhoused individuals on Metro's system.

**Means-Based Fare for Low-Income Ridership as a Homeless Prevention Strategy**

Through its ongoing investments, Metro has demonstrated meaningful commitment and leadership to addressing and preventing homelessness. While these investments are significant, Metro recognizes that there are opportunities to expand its programs and initiatives, and look to new and external sources of funding and partnerships, in order to make a deeper impact.

The Gap Analysis (Attachment A) summarizes the main constraints associated with Metro's current programs and investments and identifies opportunities to address those issues.

Implementing the strategies is envisioned to strengthen Metro's Homeless Program, and ultimately create a framework for assisting more unhoused individuals seeking shelter on the transit system to connect with housing and services they need.

Metro can increase the impact its investments are making which will improve the Metro riding experience for customers and improve the quality of life for people experiencing homelessness.

### **DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT**

The receiving and filing of this report will seek to advance efforts to improve the safety of customers and employees.

### **EQUITY PLATFORM**

In adopting the staff's recommendations, Metro will be able to improve its efforts and expand opportunities to serve the most disenfranchised members of our communities that come onto Metro property and facilities in search of shelter.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

Metro's homeless outreach program supports Strategic Plan Goal #3.4: *Metro will play a strong leadership role in efforts to address homelessness in LA County.*

### **NEXT STEPS**

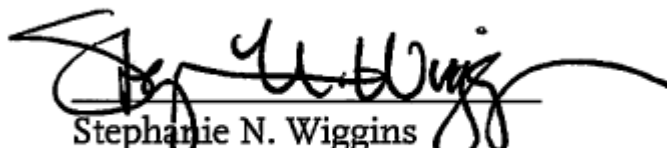
The HOME unit will initiate a strategic planning process to identify agency-wide Homeless Goals and develop a work plan to guide the implementation of the opportunities and recommendations identified in the gap analysis.

### **ATTACHMENT**

Attachment A: Metro's Homeless Program: Gaps Analysis Summary

Prepared by: Desarae Jones, Senior Director, Special Projects, Office of the CEO, (213) 922-2230  
Elba Higueros, Deputy Chief of Staff, (213) 922-6820

Reviewed by: Nicole Englund, Chief of Staff, Office of the CEO, (213) 922-7590



Stephanie N. Wiggins  
Chief Executive Officer