



Board Report

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OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE JULY 20, 2023

SUBJECT: PUBLIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE QUARTERLY REPORT

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE quarterly status report on Metro's Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC).

ISSUE

In June 2020, the Board approved motions directing Metro staff to form an advisory committee that would contribute to developing a community-based approach to public safety on the transit system. This Board report provides a quarterly update on the work of the Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC).

BACKGROUND

Metro established the first cohort of PSAC as a pilot on April 7, 2021. During their 16-month term, they provided guidance on the development of a community-based approach to public safety, provided input on the development of the multi-agency policing contract renewal, reviewed the Customer Code of Conduct, input on Metro's mission and value statements regarding public safety, and guided the establishment of Metro's Transit Ambassador's program, among other accomplishments. Given that PSAC was established to cover specific objectives over a designated time period, their work concluded on August 17, 2022. At the September 2022 Board meeting, the CEO provided a report with recommendations to continue the PSAC. The second cohort was established on February 25, 2023, and will serve for two years through February 2025.

Executive Committee

PSAC elected an executive committee to serve from February 2023 to February 2024.

Jeremy Oliver-Ronceros, Chair

Misty Wilks, Vice-Chair

Catherine Baltazar, Secretary

Work Plan Objectives

On April 3, 2023, the PSAC Executive Committee met with CEO Wiggins to co-develop the committee's work plan for the first year. The work plan outlines five objectives that frame the scope of work of the PSAC to enhance the customer experience by addressing safety concerns on the

system. Under each objective, the PSAC Executive Committee with Metro staff and the CEO have identified key strategies that the committee can review, evaluate, and/or help initiate.

DISCUSSION

On May 4, 2023, the PSAC held its fourth general meeting with two informational agenda items and one agenda item for committee approval. The System Safety and Law Enforcement (SSLE) Department presented an update on Metro's Public Safety Department Feasibility Study. Staff presented the approach to the feasibility study, an overview of other transit agencies with in-house safety departments, and key potential benefits such as accountability and autonomy over deployment. Comments from members included concerns about resource allocations when restricted to an in-house safety department, preference for a 'public safety department' as opposed to a 'police department', and a suggestion for community oversight as an accountability piece to implementation.

The Office of Civil Rights in partnership with Metro's Accessibility Advisory Council (AAC) presented on Metro's programming and initiatives to improve the ridership experience for people with disabilities. The committee heard directly from AAC Chair, Cynde Soto, and from AAC member and Aging and Disability Transportation Network (ADTN) member, Carrie Madden; both who are transit dependent life-long riders. Comments from members included the desire to see more emphasis on developmental disability mental illness training for security officers and Metro Ambassadors. Members expressed the desire to establish strong working relationships with AAC to identify safety concerns specific to people with disabilities.

At this meeting the committee approved integration of staggered terms into the PSAC Charter and Bylaws. For continuity, cohorts will be staggered in two-year terms, with the current cohort in place between February 2023 through February 2025. The current PSAC cohort will serve a two-year term, with seven members offered the opportunity to serve a third year and set into motion a staggered term that would facilitate institutional memory.

Six motions passed at the May 4th PSAC meeting.

1. Request for update on Metro's Public Safety Department Feasibility Study.
2. Request for information on Metro Bus Stop Cleanliness and Safety Standards.
3. Request for information on Metro Bus stop and bus shelter responsibilities.
4. Request for Metro to Contact Mental Health Organizations and Gather Information on Ridership.
5. Request for information on Metro Bus CCTV monitoring.
6. Request for information on Metro's / LAPD's fare-check policy and procedures.

On June 1, 2023, the PSAC held their fifth general meeting with three informational agenda items. Metro's Office of Homeless Initiatives gave a briefing on Metro's approach to supporting unhoused riders by offering various support services. Staff reported on the expanded number of outreach teams, an encampment response and abatement program, a social work licensure partnership, and a pilot services hub. Comments include one member stating that this was the most excited they have been about Metro's approach to homelessness and one member who works at Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) was very pleased with the update. Members had questions

about services provided across jurisdictional boundaries, about what happens when unhoused riders refuse services, and concerns about loss of property during encampment clean ups.

Metro's Operations Department provided PSAC with an update of the Westlake/MacArthur Park Station Pilot Interventions. Staff presented preliminary data showing improvements in public safety with reports showing decreased vandalism and a support sentiment from station users surveyed by Metro. Comments from members included a recommendation to Metro staff to ensure that ADA accessibility is maintained as the station access has been rearranged, and positive responses to the pilot program's improved lighting and partnership with PATH and Metro Ambassadors. One concern raised during this presentation was for the arrest statistics published for the Westlake/MacArthur Park Station, showing that 20 out of 25 arrests at this station during the month of February 2023, were of black men.

The SSLE Department presented an update on Metro's Drug-Free Campaign piloting drug use reduction interventions on the system. Staff presented tactics to increase safety, cleanliness, and highlighted decreases in customer complaints and Transit Watch App reports. Staff reported the program taking a holistic approach by offering eligible offenders a drug diversion program as well as mental health social services to those experiencing drug addiction.

Comments from members included gratitude towards SSLE from an ex-officio member who works as a supervisor and understands the daily safety risks to bus operators, one member recommended that SSLE utilize the health van deployed at Westlake/MacArthur Park as a resource at other high-priority stations, and one member expressed concerns of fear tactics being used to justify over policing.

There were three motions passed at the June 1st PSAC meeting.

1. Request for information on recent transit arrests data disaggregated by ethnicity.
2. Request that Metro invite the LAPD to speak to PSAC regarding outcomes for people who are offered the Drug Diversion Program.
3. Request that Metro invite AAC members to share their experiences with accessibility at the Westlake/MacArthur Park Station during the pilot interventions program.

On July 6, 2023, SSLE presented the latest update on Metro's Public Safety Department Feasibility Study including direction received from Metro's Board of Directors. PSAC members had a discussion with considerations for the implementation plan. Members were asked what role they see for riders in the development of an implementation plan, how they would ensure that Metro's values of public safety are front and center, and how PSAC would consider addressing community concerns to a Public Safety Department.

Comments from PSAC members included a recommendation for Metro to consider establishing an oversight committee for the law enforcement component of the Public Safety Department. Members recommended that SSLE ensure inclusion of feedback from people with physical and developmental disabilities in the formation the implementation plan and in the creation of the department. Lastly, members shared support of a "public safety" and "community safety" department rather than using the term "law enforcement", as elements of public safety may not always include armed law enforcement.

The meeting included a facilitated conversation planning for a PSAC Community Listening Session. Members suggested that Metro staff and PSAC meet riders where they're at, through tabling and other in-person strategies to gather safety concern and ideas for improving public safety. The PSAC Executive Committee and Metro staff are planning for the first Community Listening Session in September 2023.

EQUITY PLATFORM

One of Metro's goals is for the second PSAC cohort to represent community voices from across the county as a part of Metro's safety policy introduction, implementation, and evaluation processes. As riders from throughout LA County, members of this committee have a unique and expert perspective on how the everyday rider experiences safety policies and programs on our system. As an advisory body committed to equitable safety outcomes across the system, as noted above, PSAC's feedback and recommendations to presenters during the past couple of months have elevated consideration for riders with disabilities, especially during station reconfigurations such as that at Westlake/MacArthur Park. Members have requested Customer Experience Survey data specific to youth and older adults to identify key concerns from these age demographics. Members have also requested arrests data disaggregated by ethnicity and crime type to identify if over-policing is a concern.

As part of PSAC's mission to take an equitable approach to public safety, at the July 6th meeting, members will be discussing logistics and planning for a PSAC listening session. The listening session is intended to gather community feedback and input on key safety initiatives such as Metro's Westlake/MacArthur Park Pilot interventions and Metro's Feasibility Study to establish an in-house Public Safety Department.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The PSAC work supports Goal 2:
Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system.

Metro's Vision 2028 second goal outlines that the agency will specifically take action to improve security and ease of use by preventing crime and enforcing Metro's code of conduct. To achieve a safe system, Metro will rely on a multi-layered, integrated security program that includes technology, people, and partnerships. The PSAC is a key component of this goal as the committee will work to safeguard the transit community by taking a holistic, equitable, and welcoming approach to public safety.

NEXT STEPS

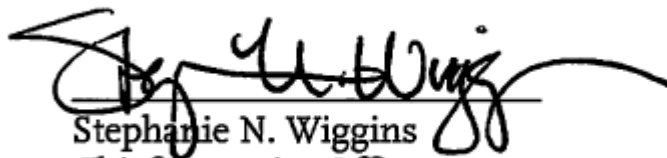
To ensure that the priorities of the Board are met, the CEO will continue to meet with the PSAC Executive Committee monthly.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - PSAC May and June 2023 Motions and Responses

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