



Board Report

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OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE OCTOBER 19, 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, provided input on Metro's mission and value statements regarding public safety, and guided the establishment of Metro's Transit Ambassadors program, among other accomplishments. PSAC was established to cover specific objectives over a designated period, and 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 Members

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

The work plan, developed between the PSAC Executive Committee and CEO Wiggins, 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, has identified key strategies that the committee can review, evaluate, and/or help initiate. On July 13, 2023, the PSAC Executive Committee met with CEO Wiggins to outline PSAC meeting agenda items for the months of August 2023 through February 2024. Agenda items include but are not limited to Metro Transit Security Bus Riding Teams, Customer Experience Plan, Transit Community Safety Department, Transit Ambassadors Program Evaluation, safety for people with disabilities, station intervention strategies, crisis response strategies, and a PSAC community listening session.

DISCUSSION

August 3, 2023 - PSAC General Meeting

On August 3, PSAC held its seventh meeting with three informational agenda items.

1. The Metro Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) Experience
2. Westlake/MacArthur Park Station Pilot Interventions
3. Metro Transit Security Officer Bus-Riding Teams

The Metro Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) Experience

Metro Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) members were invited to speak to PSAC about their experience using Westlake MacArthur Park (WLMP) station from the perspective of a person with a disability. AAC member Carrie Madden, identified as a rider who frequents the Westlake MacArthur Park Station, spoke to PSAC about her experience using the station and her experience of the station interventions. Ms. Madden praised Metro Ambassadors for their presence and support and suggested that they also focus on assisting passengers using the elevators, which are often malfunctioning. She shared her concern regarding out-of-service elevators posing a challenge for people with disabilities. She shared that one day, she rode the system to the WLMP station, and the elevator from the mezzanine to the street level was out of service, rendering her unable to exit the station as she is a wheelchair user. In conversation with PSAC members Ms. Madden shared that she had not received any reports from AAC members regarding sensory issues with the classical music played at the station, and that she was not bothered by the classical music at the station. PSAC members highlighted Ms. Madden's comments, noting visible improved safety at the station and her call for Metro to focus on environmental design and enforcement.

Westlake/MacArthur Park Station Pilot Interventions

Metro's Operations Sr. Admin Analyst, Jorge Martinez, presented an update on the Pilot Station Interventions at the Westlake/MacArthur Park. He showcased improvements to lighting, CCTV cameras, and deployment of support services and staff presence, such as Metro's LIFE program, Transit Ambassadors, and the Mobile Health Clinic. Mr. Martinez shared that 40% of the Narcan interventions systemwide have occurred at this station. He reported that community survey results of over 500 riders supported that Metro's comprehensive approach to safety is yielding positive results at this station. Some, positive outcomes such as less loitering and less drug activity are brighter lighting illuminating station plaza hiding spots, outreach teams connecting the unhoused to services, the LA Department of Health providing no-cost medical treatment at the station parking lot, and 24-hour CCTV camera coverage. The layered staffing approach includes Transit Ambassadors, TAP Blue Shirts, Homeless Outreach, and LIFE program outreach. He informed PSAC that Metro is also working to expand these most effective interventions to other stations, and members expressed interest in the timeline for those expansions. Mr. Martinez shared that the staff is working with various

departments to begin the pilot process at Pershing Square and 7th Street/Metro Center stations later this year.

Metro Transit Security Officer Bus-Riding Teams

Metro's System Security and Law Enforcement Sr. Director of Special Projects, Nancy Felix, updated PSAC on Metro's Transit Security Officer (TSO) Bus-Riding Teams. Ms. Felix reported on the first 90 days of the new program that enhances the safety of the bus operators, bus riders, and the overall riding experience by assigning armed and unarmed TSOs to ride buses. Ms. Felix shared that Bus Riding Teams reported 193 boardings, removed 66 riders for unruly behavior, had 2,937 customer contacts, and issued no arrests. She also reported bus operators' positive sentiments with TSOs on their buses. Members questioned if Metro would consider reducing the number of TSOs per riding team to expand coverage. Ms. Felix reported that the teams of three have been set up as a minimum for the safety of the officers. Members stated they were very glad to hear the high number of verbal warnings and expulsions from the systems with zero arrests and commended the program's success.

Two motions passed at the August 3 PSAC meeting.

1. Request for information regarding PSAC member's observation of LAPD fare checks on Expo Line.
2. Motion for information regarding Metro Operations' reasoning for not implementing push plates at station elevators.

September 7, 2023 - PSAC General Meeting

On September 7, PSAC held its eighth meeting with four informational agenda items.

1. Metro Station Activation at Westlake/MacArthur Park
2. Metro Transit Ambassadors Program Update
3. Metro Customer Experience Plan Update
4. Los Angeles Police Department Drug Diversion Program

Metro Station Activation at Westlake/MacArthur Park

PSAC members received a brief update on Metro's August 10 Station Activation at Westlake/MacArthur Park, including the experiences of Members Annang, Duong, and Bunker, who participated in the activation. During the activation, PSAC staff and members set up an information table with comment cards for members to the public to share if and how their experience on the system has improved and their thoughts on what the Transit Community Safety Department responsibilities should include. PSAC received 66 community comments during this engagement opportunity, 20 in English and 46 in Spanish. Community members' top concerns submitted via comments were cleanliness, security, homelessness, elevator accessibility, and drug use.

Metro Transit Ambassadors Pilot Program Update

PSAC members received an update on Metro's Transit Ambassador Pilot Program from Customer Care Executive Officer Vanessa Smith and Senior Director Karen Parks. The presentation included details about their extensive training and deployment methodology throughout the system. Notable data shared during this update included that since April 2023, Transit Ambassadors have been equipped to administer Narcan and, as of September 7, had administered it in 41 incidents, saving several lives. Members were informed that as a pilot program reaching its first year, the Transit Ambassador Program is undergoing an evaluation.. PSAC members expressed high regard and

support for the program and advocated for expanding service hours throughout the system.

Metro Customer Experience Plan Update

PSAC members received a presentation on Metro's Customer Experience Plan from Customer Experience (CX) Senior Manager Lauren Deaderick and Chief Customer Experience Officer Jennifer Vides. The presentation included an overview of the CX Plan's approach, outlining 57 action items and corrective actions to improve riders' experience. Members shared their key concerns with poor station cleanliness and a lack of enforcement of Metro's Code of Conduct. Members requested to receive an update on the 2023 CX survey results once completed.

Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Drug Diversion Program

PSAC members received a presentation on LAPD's Drug Diversion Program from LAPD Transit Bureau Deputy Chief Donald Graham and LAPD Captain Alex Baez. Deputy Chief Graham provided a comprehensive overview of the program's inception, implementation process, and current statistics and explained how Metro's human-centered approach to public safety and the LAPD Drug Diversion Program work together to build trust, identify needs, and create alternatives to traditional law enforcement models in historically neglected communities. Members engaged in an extensive discussion in which they asked about LAPD's policy when arresting undocumented offenders; LAPD responded that they do not report any identifiable information to US Immigration Enforcement. PSAC members expressed concerns over their personal observations of LAPD officers not actively enforcing fares and often being observed on their phones while on patrol. Deputy Chief Graham explained that the LAPD's responsibility is to check for riders' fare cards (TAP) for trespassing purposes but not fares and explained that officers use cell phones as their primary reporting tool while on foot patrol. Deputy Chief Graham shared his contact information and asked members to report any LAPD activity out of line with their duties. He also invited the PSAC to participate in a ride-along to see first-hand the day-to-day experiences of LAPD officers on the system.

September 27, 2023 - PSAC Community Listening Session

The results from the independent program evaluation of PSAC's first cohort in 2022 and report to the Board recommended that PSAC implement Community Listening Sessions to listen and learn about safety priorities from riders and community groups. Thus, the PSAC held its first listening session at the Union Station Ticket Concourse on Wednesday, September 27, 2023. Metro staff presented brief updates on Metro's Station Pilot Interventions and the exploration of an in-house Transit Community Safety Department. Approximately 12 community members joined in person and over 40 joined virtually. PSAC heard over 40 comments verbally shared by in-person attendees and virtually submitted in writing via zoom, including a letter from City of Long Beach District 1, Councilwoman Mary Zendejas.

Community comments were aggregated into four key themes; need for visible security, need for improved cleanliness, need to address unhoused individuals sheltering on the system, and the need for enforcement of Metro's code of conduct. As the top request, community members called for a more visible security presence including armed and unarmed officers on buses, trains, and platforms. Community members expressed a lack of clarity about the role and limitations of Metro Transit Ambassadors. Some went as far as saying they were only there for tourists, while others exclaimed that "with Ambassadors on the system, I know I'm never alone and that's comforting." Several young women shared their experiences witnessing various crises on the system and reported feeling

scared, particularly when traveling alone and at night. When commenting about unhoused individuals, community members expressed feelings of sympathy for, and discomfort with their ridership experience when riding with unhoused individuals sleeping in train and buses. Participants called for Metro to address unhoused individuals at end of line cities, and for stronger partnership with mental health and homeless services providers.

The majority of attendees spoke in support of the exploration of an in-house Transit Community Safety Department with recommendations including education and training, a citizen oversight commission as an accountability component, and authority to enforce Metro's code of conduct. Cultural competency education suggestions included courses on ethnic studies, human development, psychology, and communications. Violence-prevention training suggestions include de-escalation tactics and strategies, and crisis intervention training to interact with people having mental health crises while on the system. Attendees particularly called for officers of an in-house safety department to have the authority to enforce Metro's code of conduct and facilitate fare checks. A small minority of attendees commented that uniformed personnel would be intimidating and instead Metro should seek more care-based solutions and less sworn officer strategies.

October 5, 2023 - PSAC General Meeting

On October 5, PSAC held its ninth meeting where they were briefed on feedback resulting from the Community Listening Session and supplemental listening activities hosted throughout LA County. In addition to the listening session, Metro staff and PSAC members attended in-person engagement opportunities where they surveyed riders on sentiments towards the exploration of an in-house Transit Community Safety Department and on what the department's responsibilities should include that would help them feel safer when riding. In addition to the listening session, PSAC engaged riders at four community events, including Queer Mercado in southeast Los Angeles along the E Line, Aquarium of the Pacific's Community Night near the A Line, Long Beach Night Market along the A Line, and Metro's Youth Summit hosted at Union Station. PSAC received 184 community comments during these engagements, 127 in English and 57 in Spanish. Community members' top concerns submitted via comments were the lack of visible security, the need to address issues of cleanliness, discomfort when riding with unhoused individuals, and support of an in-house Transit Community Safety Department that can enforce Metro's Code of Conduct. Of note, at the meetings in Los Angeles and Long Beach there were complaints of LAPD and LBPD officers just standing around. Public comment suggested that if they were Metro officers, there would be greater accountability.

PSAC members had a lengthy discussion analyzing the thematically organized community comments and conceptualizing possible actions and recommendations that can be made to CEO Wiggins. PSAC's feedback included questions for Metro's System Security and Law Enforcement Department on how an in-house Transit Community Safety Department would affect riders of color and low-income riders. Members suggested that Metro launch an educational campaign to educate riders on the various teams on the system to differentiate Transit Ambassadors, Homeless Services, Transit Security Officers, and law enforcement partner and their unique roles. Members expressed the need to keep services such as the Ambassador Program and cautioned Metro to not divert resources away from this care-based approach that they consider a success. Lastly, members shared that should an in-house Transit Community Safety Department be implemented, they have the authority to enforce Metro's Code of Conduct and also hold professional qualities that make them welcoming and approachable to all riders. The meeting was focused as a briefing of thematic results from community

comments, members conceptualized their initial reactions to the comments and will reconvene at the monthly PSAC meeting on November 2, 2023, to discuss formal recommendations to CEO Wiggins.

As part of the supplemental engagement efforts, PSAC will continue to table at community events throughout October, including:

- Taste of Soul in South LA
- Dia De Los Muertos in Pacoima
- 626 Golden Streets Festival in South Pasadena

One motion passed at the October 5 PSAC meeting requesting information of fare evasion and fare inspection processes..

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 in this report, PSAC's feedback and recommendations to presenters during the past three months have elevated consideration for riders with disabilities, especially during station reconfigurations such as those at Westlake/MacArthur Park. PSAC leadership is ensuring that they establish strong partnerships with and consistently listen to all transit riding community members such as Metro Accessibility Advisory Committee.

As part of PSAC's mission to take an equitable approach to public safety, members and staff were very mindful of equitable planning for PSAC's community listening session. The listening session aimed to gather community feedback and input on two key safety initiatives, Metro's Westlake/MacArthur Park Pilot interventions and Metro's Feasibility Study, to establish an in-house Public Safety Department. Feedback received at the September 27 meeting and at PSAC outreach throughout the county will be aggregated into a single report that will help PSAC develop formal committee recommendations to the CEO. The report will also be provided to Metro's System Security and Law Enforcement (SSLE) Department to consider community voices as the department develops the implementation plan for Board evaluation in January 2024. As part of this engagement process, PSAC staff collects as many community contacts as possible to ensure a continuous communication loop, keeping community members informed of all future PSAC updates and monthly meetings.

Members and staff ensured that both the outreach process and the community listening meeting were set up to have and inform non-English speakers, riders from all parts of the county, and particularly riders from Metro Equity Focus Communities. To ensure transparency and accessibility, the meeting was held at the Union Station Ticket Concourse, in an ADA and transit accessible open forum. The meeting hosted Spanish language translation and ASL interpretation. The outreach process included material translated into Spanish, Mandarin, and Japanese. Because safety is a countywide concern, the event was held in a hybrid in-person and virtual format. Ensuring far-reaching outreach, PSAC members and Metro staff held outreach in Lancaster, San Fernando Valley,

North Hollywood, South and Southeast LA, Compton, and Long Beach. As part of PSAC's mission and plan to ensure a comprehensive community engagement process, staff and members are hosting supplemental engagement events after the listening session at community events, including Taste of Soul in Crenshaw along the K Line and the 626 Arroyo Fest Golden Streets event along the E Line.

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. Metro will rely on a multi-layered, integrated security program that includes technology, people, and partnerships to achieve a safe system. 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

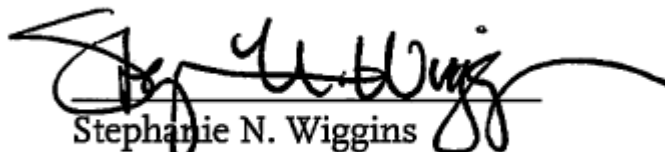
To ensure that the priorities of the Board are met, the CEO will continue to meet with the PSAC Executive Committee monthly.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - PSAC August 2023 Motion Responses

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