



Board Report

File #: 2024-0535, File Type: Contract

Agenda Number: 28.

OPERATIONS, SAFETY AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE NOVEMBER 21, 2024

SUBJECT: TRANSIT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION

CONSIDER:

- A. AUTHORIZING the Chief Executive Officer to execute Modification No. 7 to Contract No. PS88001001 with Strive Well-Being Inc. to continue to provide Transit Ambassador Pilot Program services while staff transitions the Ambassador Program in-house, in the amount of \$6,500,000, increasing the current three-year base Not-to-Exceed (NTE) contract value from \$24,103,235 to \$30,603,235; and
- B. AMENDING the FY25 Budget by \$1,500,000 to pay for additional Ambassador presence to support the agency's efforts to increase visible presence of uniformed personnel.

ISSUE

Transit Ambassador Pilot Program Contract No. PS88001001 awarded to Strive Well-Being (Strive) has been called upon to deploy additional Ambassador staff to meet the Agency's safety and security needs. Staff is requesting an increase in contract authority for Strive to continue operations through the end of fiscal year 2025, while staff transitions the Ambassador Program in-house. Staff is also requesting a \$1,500,000 increase to the FY25 Ambassador budget to cover enhanced deployments to support the agency efforts to increase visible presence of uniformed personnel. Resources were not added to the budget when the surge was implemented.

BACKGROUND

In 2022, the Board authorized Metro to create a Pilot Transit Ambassador Program that would introduce a uniformed, unarmed, and visible presence on the Metro system while providing care-based, in-person assistance to riders, with the primary objective of enhancing the overall customer experience. Following a competitive procurement process, the Board awarded contracts to Strive Well-Being Inc. (Strive) in the amount of \$15,876,242 for the three-year base pilot (Contract No. PS88001001) and RMI International Inc. (RMI) in the amount of \$55,400,768 for the three-year base pilot (Contract No. PS88001000) at its June 2022 meeting.

In September 2022, Metro began deploying Ambassador teams across the system as they were hired and trained. On March 6, 2023, with 300 Ambassadors trained, Metro officially launched the program. It quickly became an important part of Metro's public safety ecosystem, alongside homeless outreach teams, Metro transit security officers, and contracted law enforcement and security. In September 2023, the Board received a staff presentation evaluating the first year of the program and approved a staff recommendation to make the Ambassador Program permanent and bring it in-house.

In March 2024, the Board approved Modification No. 5 to Contract No. PS88001001 with Strive, increasing the three-year base pilot from \$16,403,235 to \$23,603,235 to continue to provide Pilot Transit Ambassador Services until the program is brought in house.

DISCUSSION

Since the Board approved the recommendation to bring the Ambassador program in-house, the Metro Ambassador Program team has been addressing areas for program improvement identified in the October 2023 evaluation, including additional training, deployment strategies and communications tools. In addition, the Metro Ambassador Program team is working with the Chief People Office on steps necessary to bring the Ambassador program in-house, including standard Metro job specifications, a hiring plan and union representation. This process timeline is dependent upon ongoing contract negotiations with the labor unions.

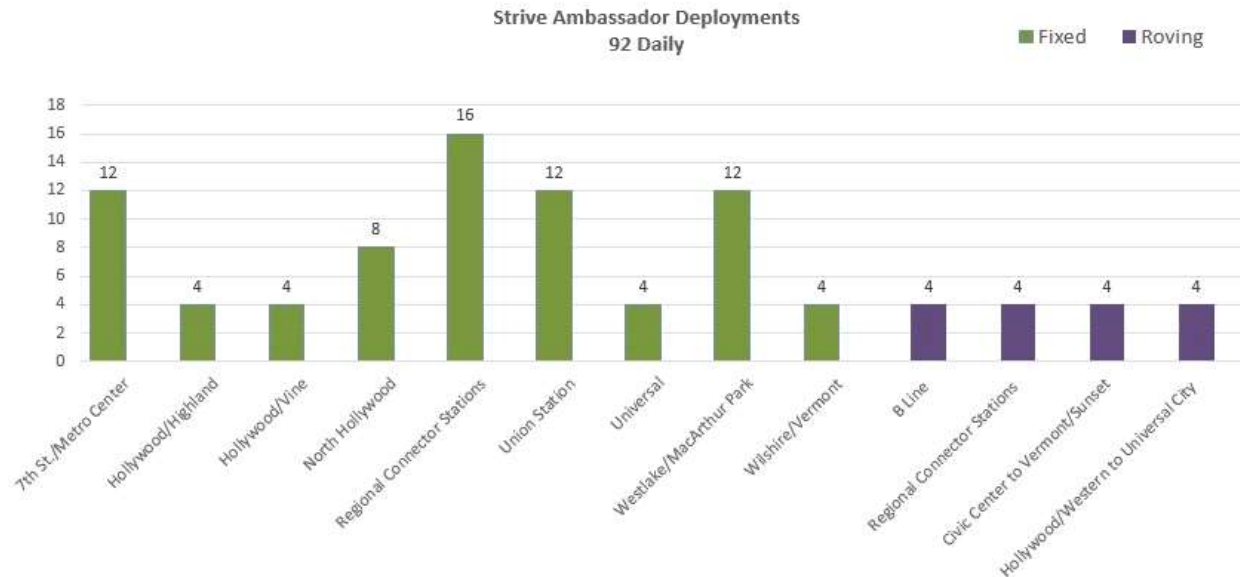
Concurrently, the Metro system experienced acts of significant violence in the spring and summer. As a result, the directed surge efforts of visible uniformed personnel across the system to keep employees and riders safe. Starting in May 2024, the Metro Ambassador Program Team deployed an additional 52 Ambassadors during peak hours across two, 4-hour shifts with the goal of increasing Ambassador visibility at key locations. Staff have successfully deployed, on average, 45 additional Ambassadors daily to remain fixed throughout the system providing more support for riders.

Deploying an additional 52 Ambassadors daily requires funding to cover staffing time of 1,456 hours weekly or about 5,900 hours monthly. If fully staffed, there is an estimated cost of \$325,000 per month for increased Ambassadors during surges. All surge deployments are staffed using overtime (OT), the average OT fully burdened hourly rate is \$55.00 per hour. The total cost for operating the Ambassador Surge from May 2024 through October 2024 was approximately \$1.5M.

- May 2024: \$31,000
- June 2024: \$310,049
- July 2024: \$295,496
- August 2024: \$317,479
- September 2024: \$254,478
- October 2024: \$290,000
- Total: \$1,500,000

Currently, Strive has been tasked with deploying a total of 92 Ambassadors daily, with 72 dedicated

to the B/D Line and 20 dedicated to the A/E Line stations (see chart below for a breakdown of these deployments by fixed versus roving assignments).



Impacts of Ambassador fixed post and Narcan use for fiscal year 2025 (July through present):

- 11 lives saved at Westlake/MacArthur Park station through the administration of Narcan.
- 6 lives saved at 7th Metro Center through the administration of Narcan.
- 3 lives saved at Union Station through the administration of Narcan.
- 8 lives saved at North Hollywood through the administration of Narcan.

Securing additional contract authority for the Strive Well-Being contract is crucial to supporting key Agency safety and customer experience initiatives and support Metro customers.

With continued investment, Metro can ensure that key stations across the system remain fully staffed, allowing for consistent support during peak times and special events without compromising service quality across the system. This will help maintain the progress made in increasing Ambassador visibility and improving the overall transit experience for all riders while Metro works to bring the program in-house.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

The approval of the recommendation will positively impact the perception of public safety on the transit system. The staff recommendations will allow Metro to continue to manage the Transit Ambassador Pilot Program services. Ambassadors serve as a layer within Metro’s overall public safety ecosystem in connection with Metro’s system security, law enforcement, crisis response teams, and homeless outreach.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Upon Board approval of the recommendations, the contract authority for Contract No. PS88001001 will be increased by \$6,500,000 to a NTE amount of \$30,603,235 until the program is brought in-house, and \$1,500,000 will be added to the FY25 Budget under Cost Center 5420, Customer Programs and Services, Project 300040- Rail Operations Management and Admin. and Project 306006- Systemwide Bus Operations Management and Admin.

Since this is a multi-year contract/project, the cost center manager and Chief Customer Experience Officer will be accountable for budgeting the cost in future years.

Impact to Budget

The sources of funding are operating eligible federal, state, and local resources, which are eligible for bus and/or rail operating expenses.

EQUITY PLATFORM

The Transit Ambassador Pilot Program deployment model assigns additional unarmed staff to work in high need areas, including bus stops/stations and rail stations serving Equity Focus Communities (EFCs), Low-income households, Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) residents; and Households with no access to a car. In response to growing calls for reforms, the Transit Ambassador Pilot Program emphasizes compassion and a culture of care, treating all transit riders, employees, and community members with dignity and respect.

Most riders agree that seeing Ambassadors on Metro makes them feel safer; this number increases with people of color (Asian/Pacific Islanders - 70%, Hispanics/Latinos - 68%, women - 66%, and households with lower income - 66%; Source - Ambassador Program Survey, July-Aug 2023).

The program also provides opportunities for community engagement with Community Based Organization (CBOs) partners. The current contractors successfully collaborate with local CBOs by assisting in the personal development training to engage with BIPOC, low-income households, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups and recruiting Ambassadors to ensure a diverse and inclusive workforce. Ambassador recruitment includes outreach to communities of color, individuals with disabilities, older adults, and those facing barriers to employment.

Strive is a Metro-certified Small Business with a history of serving Los Angeles County and has demonstrated their awareness of the Metro transit system.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

These recommendations will support Vision 2028 Strategic Goal #2 - Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system and will support the agency's implementation of 2022 Customer Experience Plan Goals - a coordinated, comprehensive Transit Ambassador Program provides a visible Metro safety resource for customers and demonstrates to communities that Metro is investing in improving the quality of commutes via the transit system. A successful Transit Ambassador Pilot Program provides Metro with a flexible workforce of trained, uniformed, unarmed

personnel on the system to welcome back former transit riders to the system and encourage customers to choose transit as they move around LA County.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board could consider not authorizing Recommendation A, however, , such action would require an immediate reduction of Ambassador deployment across the system as additional riding and fixed teams have been deployed to B and D line stations to support these necessary enhancements. This alternative is not recommended as it is not responsive to Metro's goal to improve the customer experience and provide Motion 26.2 investments in public safety program initiatives.

The Board could consider not authorizing Recommendation B, however there will be a shortfall in the Ambassador Program fiscal 2025 budget.

NEXT STEPS

Upon Board approval, staff will execute Modification No. 7 to Contract No. PS88001001 with Strive Well-Being Inc. to continue to provide Transit Ambassador Pilot Program services while staff transitions the Ambassador Program in-house.

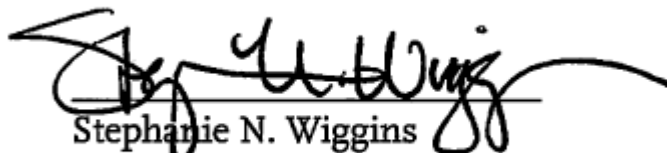
Staff are currently preparing to report to the Board with an Ambassador Program in-house transition plan update in the third quarter of fiscal year 2025.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A - Procurement Summary
- Attachment B - Contract Modification/Change Order Log
- Attachment C - DEOD Summary
- Attachment D - Metro Ambassador Surge Deployments Summary

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