

**Board Report**

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REVISED
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
JANUARY 27, 2022

Motion by:**DIRECTORS SOLIS, HAHN, SANDOVAL, AND GARCETTI****Providing Critical Mental Healthcare and Connections to Housing on Metro's Transit System Motion**

Sandra Shells was an avid Metro rider and a dedicated public servant. As a 38-year veteran healthcare worker in the emergency room at the LAC-USC Medical Center, she was on the frontlines of the pandemic helping countless individuals get the healthcare they needed. On January 16, 2022, Ms. Shells tragically succumbed to injuries she sustained in an unwarranted and unprovoked attack that occurred while she was waiting for her bus at the Cesar Chavez Transit Pavilion near Union Station. She was on her way to work, during the Omicron surge, to provide lifesaving care to her patients like she had for 38 years, including nearly two years of the pandemic. Her loss is heartbreaking, and the violence she experienced is unacceptable and preventable.

No Metro passenger or employee should experience violence or even fear for their safety while using our transit system - but, too often, they do. In the case of Sandra Shells, her assailant was an unhoused individual with severe mental health needs, a demographic that is, unfortunately, all too common in Los Angeles County. As an agency dedicated to providing transit to all Angelenos, Metro also serves many of the 66,000-plus unhoused Angelenos, including those in need of mental healthcare.

Given the significant need to provide care and resources to unhoused individuals directly where they are located, the Department of Mental Health (DMH) offers multiple outreach services to provide on-site care. Psychiatric Mobile Response Teams (PMRT) consist of DMH clinicians who perform evaluations and provide services to individuals determined to be at risk of harming themselves or others or who are unable to provide food, clothing, or shelter as a result of a mental disorder. Law Enforcement Teams (LET) is a co-response model which pairs a DMH clinician with a specially trained law enforcement officer, to respond to 911 or patrol officer requests for assistance on calls involving mentally ill, homeless, or high-risk individuals. Homeless Outreach Mobile Engagement (HOME) teams provide Countywide field-based outreach and engagement services and intensive care management to persons experiencing homelessness who are mentally ill, living in homeless encampments, or frequent locations where outreach is not readily available. Homeless Outreach Teams (HOT) utilize PMRT staff to provide outreach and engagement to mentally ill homeless persons. Metro currently partners with co-response teams comprised through the Los Angeles

Sheriff's Department (LASD) Mental Evaluation Team (MET), the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Homeless Outreach and Proactive Engagement (HOPE), the Long Beach Police Department (LBPD) and mental health clinicians.

In recognition of the growing need at the Metro system, Metro recently approached DMH with a proposal to enter into an agreement to engage more effectively with persons who are in cognitive crisis and in need of support while on the Metro system. With this partnership, the goal is for DMH's outreach teams to respond to calls for assistance whenever mental illness is reported or suspected within the Metro transit system, with the mental health experts focusing on de-escalation tactics and minimizing the potential for incidents involving force. To facilitate this collaboration, between Metro and DMH, in October of 2021, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed a motion directing DMH, in coordination with County Counsel, to work with Metro and negotiate an agreement for DMH and Metro to execute and operate co-response teams and psychiatric team services. The goal of this program is to begin implementation in early 2022 and scale up from there.

As the County continues its shift toward a care first approach, with an emphasis on de-escalation to minimize the need to use force, a multi-pronged approach is necessary to ensure the safety of our Metro community. In December 2021, the Metro Board authorized an additional \$75 million for its multi-agency law enforcement contract, however law enforcement funding alone is not sufficient nor is it the only solution. In addition to the partnership with DMH, Metro partners with Los Angeles County's Department of Health Services (DHS) on a comprehensive homeless outreach and engagement program in addition to a partnership with People Assisting the Homeless (PATH) to connect homeless individuals on Metro's system with adequate health, social, and supportive housing services. Since 2017, PATH teams engaged over 5,300 individuals and nearly half have been connected with interim housing. Over 500 individuals have been permanently housed through Metro's partnership with DHS/PATH. While these accomplishments are significant, there is much more Metro can do with its partners to connect with individuals on the transit system who need help and resources. Metro must immediately expand its outreach, provide adequate resources and treatment to high acuity individuals and those experiencing homelessness on the system, and expedite the development of the Alternative Crisis Response program to make our transit system safe and welcoming for all Angelenos.

SUBJECT: PROVIDING CRITICAL MENTAL HEALTHCARE AND CONNECTIONS TO HOUSING ON METRO'S TRANSIT SYSTEM MOTION

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE Motion by Directors Solis, Hahn, Sandoval, and Garcetti that direct the CEO to:

- A. Immediately partner with the County to deploy the County's Multidisciplinary Homeless Outreach Teams (MDT) in collaboration with PATH, to conduct outreach to unhoused and high acuity individuals at the Cesar Chavez Transit Pavilion and throughout the Metro transit system. MDTs should work in partnership with additional County and City resources including but not limited to MET, MEU HOPE, HOST, PSAC, and DMH's Alternative Crisis Response teams including PMRT, LET, and HOME teams.

- B. Direct the CEO to immediately begin work with the Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office and DMH to conduct an assessment of the crisis response deployment on our Metro system with recommendations on how to best deploy available resources;
- C. Delegate authority to the CEO, or her designee, to work with the Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office and DMH to finalize the agreement pursuant to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors' October 19, 2021 motion to expand the Alternative Crisis Response program to provide services on Metro; and
- D. Report back in February and March 2022 with progress updates on the above directives.

WE FURTHER MOVE that the Board direct the CEO to return in March 2022 with recommendations to memorialize the life of Sandra Shells at the Cesar Chavez Transit Pavilion and to develop the plan in partnership with Ms. Shells' family, loved ones, and coworkers.