



Board Report

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OPERATIONS, SAFETY AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE MAY 19, 2022

SUBJECT: QUARTERLY UPDATE ON METRO'S HOMELESS OUTREACH EFFORTS

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE Update on Metro's Homeless Outreach Efforts.

ISSUE

Metro continues to fund and deploy C3 (community, city, and county) street-based teams to conduct homeless outreach services throughout Metro's transit system to connect riders with supportive resources and housing. PATH's multi-disciplinary outreach teams, in partnership with the County's Department of Health Services, Los Angeles City Attorney's Office (LA DOOR), and the Dream Center conduct outreach on the system daily.

Staff provides quarterly updates to this Committee on its continued outreach efforts to assess the impacts of Metro's outreach initiative on addressing homelessness on the Metro system. This quarterly report outlines the outreach efforts throughout January, February, and March 2022.

BACKGROUND

Metro has made notable progress in addressing homelessness on the Metro system by expanding its resources and partnering with community-based organizations and outreach through partnerships administered by the Department of Health Services. Metro's street-based outreach teams, People Assisting the Homeless (PATH), are deployed daily on the Metro system to meet individuals and connect them to services and housing.

Since 2017, PATH has served over 21,000 individuals experiencing homelessness on the Metro system. PATH has successfully connected 2,791 individuals with interim housing, including crisis and bridge housing. Most significantly - since 2017, Metro's homeless outreach program has resulted in over 600 people being permanently housed.

DISCUSSION

The following quarterly report provides an overview of the homeless response activities during January, February and March 2022.

People Assisting the Homeless (PATH) Outreach on the Metro System

PATH provides Metro's homeless street-based outreach services under the Department of Health Services' administration. Metro funds eight street-based outreach teams deployed seven days a week on Metro's system. These forty PATH staff make up multi-disciplinary teams of outreach workers, case managers,

addiction specialists, clinicians, and medical personnel. Every day, PATH collects data on homeless outreach on Metro's system - including the number of contacts, engagement/enrollment, placement, and challenges.

Metro's PATH homeless outreach teams contacted 709 individuals on the Metro system during this period, a 17% increase over the previous quarter. This number does not illustrate the total picture of homelessness on Metro's system, but it indicates that PATH teams are successfully engaging with homeless individuals and building trust, which is the first step to connecting unhoused individuals to the services and housing that they need.

During the reporting period, PATH engaged 579 individuals, a 32 percent increase over the previous quarter. This increase in enrollment indicates a willingness by individuals to receive services and shows that PATH is successfully building connections with unhoused Metro riders.

During this period, PATH was able to refer 166 individuals to interim housing and permanently placed 37 individuals in housing. Figure 1 below summarizes the data collected from January - March 2022. Connection to housing and supportive services is Metro's core goal in its ongoing outreach efforts. PATH refers individuals to interim shelters and housing and tracks that data through interim housing placement, linkages to permanent housing, and permanent housing placement. As a homeless service provider and outreach partner, PATH can access a network of existing housing and supportive services for each client, including short-term/emergency housing and interim and permanent housing.

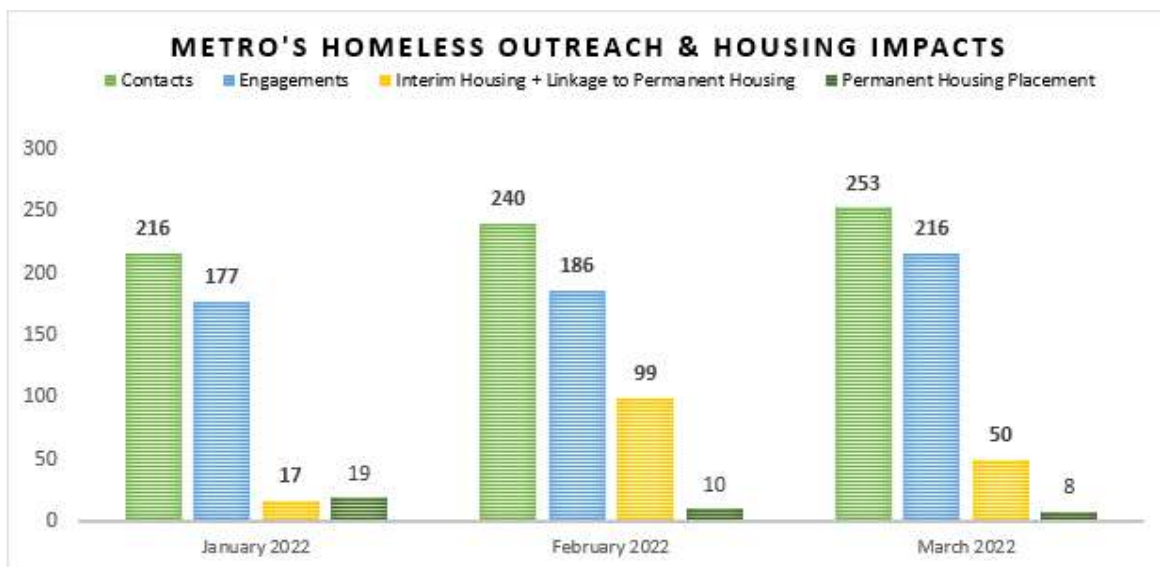


Figure 1. Metro's Homeless Outreach and Housing Impacts January - March 2022.

Improved outreach outcomes are a top priority and Metro's outreach model is expanding. This expansion will include new elements to address the many needs of Persons Experiencing Homelessness (PEH) and will correspond to the Customer Experience Plan. When available later this month, the updated LAHSA 2022 Point in Time Count figures will help to better structure resource allocation in the highest-need zones, including Metro Focused Communities.

Increased Outreach at the 7th and Metro Transit Station

Metro's CEO directed staff to create a comprehensive plan to address the encampment issues specifically at

the 7th Street/Metro Center station in January 2022 in direct response to customer and employee concerns related to homelessness. Staff coordinated with PATH and LAHSA to deploy resources to increase outreach at the station and to provide additional resources to the unhoused individuals camping nightly at station entrances on the lobby level and the city's street-level sidewalks. This increased outreach effort began on January 25, 2022 and continues today.

Attachment B includes an image of the 7th St/Metro Center station CCTV camera footage from the Figueroa Street entrance at 2:30 am. The station and rail system are not in operation at that time. Individuals experiencing homelessness had begun to seek shelter in the lobby areas of the station entrances due to them being dry, secure and well lit. The subway station opens daily at 3:30 am, and trains begin service at approximately 3:45 am.

To address the needs of PEH seeking shelter at the 7th Street/Metro Center station on a nightly basis, the PATH outreach early morning shift was re-deployed to the station beginning at 3 am to approximately 5 am Monday - Friday. PATH tracks the engagement numbers and provides data on services and shelter placements daily. Metro submitted a request for LAHSA to conduct outreach at least once weekly to the station area. The data included below shows that the increased outreach is successfully reducing the number of PEH camping at the station entrances and that PATH outreach is connecting individuals with housing and other supportive services. This reduction in PEH at the station entrances gives Metro's Operations/Facilities Maintenance teams improved access to thoroughly clean the station and station entrances and ultimately improves the overall customer experience.

As a result of Metro's dedicated outreach at the station - staff is noting a **63% reduction** in the PEH counted at the station entrances by week 10, concluding on April 1, 2022. The data included in the chart below shows the trend line of engagements - which is indicative that there are significantly less PEH seeking shelter at the station entrances during the overnight hours.

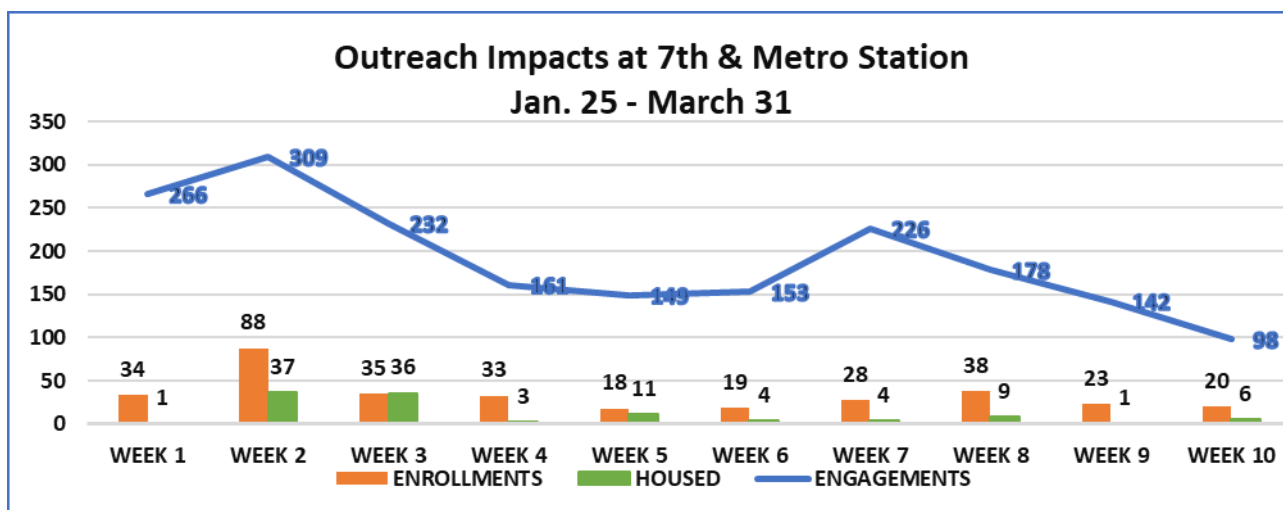


Figure 2. PATH 7th St/Metro Station - Outreach Data - January 25 - March 31, 2022

During week 1, PATH successfully placed one individual into a sober living facility. Week 2 and 3 of the 7th Street/Metro Center expanded outreach effort (1/31/2022 - 2/22/2022), PATH placed 73 persons experiencing homelessness into interim shelter at motels countywide under the state's project room key program or at negotiated reduced rates for the stays. On February 2, 2022, after less than 2 hours of outreach - PATH placed 20 individuals into temporary shelter at motels. Half of the 73 individuals at motels were transitioned to permanent housing, family reunification, other interim shelter placement, or hospitalization. Of the 73 placed,

32 individuals denied placement or abandoned the motel room before a connection to a shelter resource could occur.

Metro's Homeless Outreach teams are working in tandem with the Public Safety *Respect the Ride* program to support a layered approach to increase public safety awareness, presence and to support and provide services to PEH seeking shelter at the rail stations. PATH staff also support this effort by delivering critical on-site mental health services, evaluation and substance abuse support, i.e. NARCAN, and "Care Kits" to clients in need.

Metro will distribute 2,000 "Care Kits" to unhoused riders over the next year. Metro's outreach work requires providing services to riders who may be experiencing homelessness, including transportation, meals, temporary shelter and other basic needs to support their transition into housing. Metro staff and PATH staff will distribute "Care Kits" to educate and engage riders who may be experiencing homelessness in direct support of Metro's *Respect the Ride* Campaign.

Recap of February 2022 Outreach Pilot with LA Mission

The Los Angeles Mission outreach team performed outreach to PEH during the pilot period of February 1 - February 12, 2022. The LA Mission team worked at seven stations during the pilot: 7th Street/Metro Center, Union Station, Civic Center, Pershing Square, Hawthorne-Lennox, LAX-Aviation and Crenshaw. Los Angeles Mission, founded in 1936 and located in Skid Row, is a non-profit, faith-based organization that serves the immediate and long-term needs of homeless men, women, and children. The Mission is among the nation's largest service providers to the homeless. Images of LA Mission's outreach work are included in Attachment B for reference.

The team was comprised of four individuals specially trained in homeless outreach, team members had lived experience of homelessness. Their deployment was inclusive; members of the team outreached on trains and within encampment sites while other team members provided outreach services at a booth at a stationary location within the station or on the street level. The team supplied meals, hygiene kits and resource information to persons engaged on the system. Many persons engaged recognized LA Mission and increases the likelihood of engagement.

LA Mission Outreach identified "hot spots" around the system and cited the Civic Center station area as a major encampment site. The demographics showed the most PEH identified were between the ages of 16-32. A number of individuals that LA Mission outreach engaged with were recently released from prison/jail going straight to the encampments on Metro properties. Drug use and sale is high at these encampment sites (Meth/Fentanyl). Mental illness is prevalent (physically seen when in contact; the individual(s) are absent and not aware of their own identity). Having demographic information about the clients Metro is serving through its homeless outreach efforts is important to better understand the needs and impacts of homelessness on Metro riders and make improvements to the program delivery model.

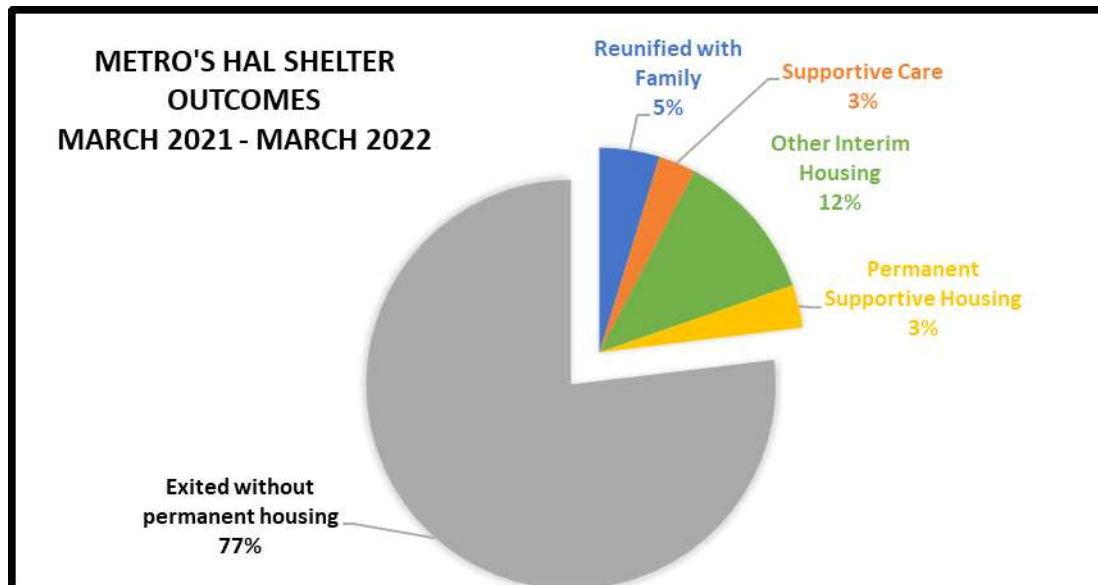
The LA Mission Outreach Team outlined their outreach protocol with Metro staff and provided comprehensive reports that contained detailed demographic information for clients served, client needs assessments, and type of services provided. LA Mission connected a number of PEH with LA Mission sober living facilities and interim shelter, as well as workforce training programs and support. Staff will explore future partnerships with LA Mission and other homeless service providers to increase the visibility of outreach workers on the system and increase the connection to housing and services for PEH.

Home At Last (HAL) Interim Shelter Program

Metro currently funds the Home At Last (HAL) 80-bed communal shelter facility in South Los Angeles that continues to serve referred clients identifying as single male, female and transgender/non-binary who are

currently experiencing homelessness. The facility provides interim housing and full supportive services to clients referred to the facility.

The client census as of April 21, 2022, reflected a population of 75 clients out of 80 total spaces.



The average monthly utilization over the report period (January, February and March 2022) is 72 percent. This is a key indicator that Metro's outreach and housing rate is heavily reliant on access to the facility and available shelter beds. The average length of stay for individuals housed at the facility is 67 days. During the stay at the facility - individuals are connected to existing LAHSA, statewide and county resources like Medi-Cal, Social Security, income, housing and addiction support services. Figure 3 shows that although a majority of PEH exit the facility/program without permanent housing - 23 percent were connected with supportive care, other interim housing, permanent supportive housing or reunified with their families.

The Home At Last (HAL) shelter is integral to the increased outreach efforts. At this time, staff has confirmed that HAL is the only publicly operated shelter countywide that accepts new clients outside of normal business hours. The PATH team is able to directly connect individuals with interim shelter at the early 3 am - 9 am time period on a daily basis. Normally - PATH and other outreach providers would have to wait until 9 am to make housing connections during normal business hours.

Due to the winter pandemic surge of positive COVID cases at communal living facilities, interim and emergency shelter facilities were experiencing extended quarantines and not accepting new clients. The quarantine mandates extended to Metro's Home at Last (HAL) facility as well. Referrals in the months of January and February were reduced significantly due to the restrictions in place.

The Board authorized the partnership to continue through June 30, 2022. Beginning in May 2022, current residents will be notified of the program conclusion and will be transitioned to other housing alternatives through DHS. With the HAL partnership ending in June 2022, over the coming months, staff will be working with DHS, LAHSA and other housing providers to build a network of options to establish direct connections to interim and emergency shelters countywide.

Outreach at Encampment Sites Countywide

There are hundreds of encampments on or near Metro-owned property, facilities, and right-of-way reported

and tracked annually. Outreach at encampment sites requires daily response and close coordination between Metro's PATH teams, System Security & Law Enforcement, Operations/Facilities Maintenance departments. Metro has instituted an encampment response protocol that requires homeless outreach teams to be the first point of contact to connect individuals to services at the reported site. Staff has found that outreach efforts are generally successful in connecting unhoused individuals with services and housing. However, some individuals are not receptive to services and require follow up from law enforcement.

Currently, Metro has an active encampment list of 9 locations countywide that Metro is tracking. Encampment outreach efforts require PATH teams to be re-deployed to various sites around the county that are not necessarily near bus or rail stations. If individuals accept services or housing placement, their personal property is transported to the housing site or facility. The encampment then requires a special post-engagement clean-up team to ensure that the site is cleared of debris, trash, or potential biohazards. Encampment site response requires homeless outreach and engagement, system security and law enforcement response, facilities and maintenance clean-up, and infrastructure improvements to secure areas and ensure that employees, the public, and Metro assets remain safe.

Metro's Facilities Maintenance team reports monthly on the details of encampment mitigation, facility reinforcement and clean-ups at various Metro owned property and Rights of Way. The following encampment clean ups were reported during the reporting period:

- January 2022 - 6 sites
- February 2022 - 3 sites
- March 2022 - 3 sites

Encampments are often reported to Metro that are in the public right of way, posing severe safety and risk to Metro assets at bus and rail divisions, specifically. Encampment site mitigation and clean-up is very resource intensive and encampment sites often return after a clean-up effort has been completed.

Coordination with System Security & Law Enforcement on Outreach

The outreach efforts through the pandemic focused on the rail system stations and rail cars in support of Security's Operation "Shelter the Unsheltered" program to complement Facilities Maintenance's heightened cleaning protocols on the rail system. PATH teams are deployed throughout the system, providing daily outreach to individuals from 3 a.m. - 3 p.m. PATH teams are also deployed to active encampments reported to be on or adjacent to Metro-owned facilities, property, and right-of-way.

System Security & Law Enforcement continues to oversee the partnership with law enforcement for the homeless outreach teams to be deployed on the Metro system and at encampments on, and adjacent to, Metro-owned property. City of Los Angeles Police Department deploys the HOPE team, LA County Sheriff's Department deploys the TMET team, and Long Beach Police Department deploys the QOL team to engage and provide outreach to unhoused individuals during the hours that PATH is not on the system, and also at encampment sites. These law enforcement teams are multi-disciplinary, like PATH, but also include specially trained law enforcement officers, who are trained on trauma-informed response, as a part of the teams.

During the period of January - March 2022 law enforcement partners outreach included:

- LAPD HOPE: 555 Contacts, 159 Referrals, 12 Housed*
- LASD MET: 1,630 Contacts, 44 Referrals, 55 Housed*, 1,218 COVID masks distributed
- LBPD QOL: 290 Contacts, 51 Referrals, 1 Housed*

*Combined housing placement data shows individuals placed in shelter, motel, Veterans Administration housing, hospital, medical facility/resource, family reunification, transitional/long-term housing, detox and rehab)

Comprehensive Program Evaluation

Staff engaged a consultant's services to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of Metro's homeless programs and provide recommendations for how Metro should best structure its investment in homeless programs. This analysis will suggest program refinements to yield the most benefits for the transit system and our customers while also providing solutions that connect the homeless to appropriate housing and supportive services. This will further create opportunities to align homeless strategies, resulting in better leveraging and coordination of services and funds. Staff anticipates a report back to the Board in June 2022 with the analysis and recommendations. The final phase of this work includes the development of a revised framework and updated strategic plan for Metro's homeless response programs and overall department vision.

Local, State and Federal Funding

Currently, Metro uses Operations funding to support the homeless outreach efforts annually. Homelessness in LA county continues to grow, and it is reflected in the continued work that Metro's PATH and partnerships do month over month. To sustain and improve Metro's overall impacts to reduce homelessness on Metro's system additional funding will be needed in the future. There is available funding for affordable housing and improved homeless response services locally, statewide, and nationally. Currently, Metro is not a direct recipient of any of these funds. Staff will be working with LA City Council Districts and LA county Supervisorial Districts and transit agencies statewide to identify short and long-term funding sources that can assist Metro in this comprehensive response effort.

EQUITY PLATFORM

Increasing Metro's outreach efforts in Service Planning Area 4 (which includes Central Los Angeles), where higher concentrations of homeless individuals currently reside, will address the most need and directly impact Metro's efforts to invest in Equity Focus Communities. Metro has invested in outreach services that span the Metro system. With greater coordination and expansion into areas with the most need - Metro can form additional low or no-cost partnerships with service providers and other agencies in equity focus communities to ensure that our outreach efforts are equitable and effective. An assessment of which communities have the highest need is needed to provide more effective outreach.

Statewide, 47% of homeless individuals are awaiting permanent housing placements - a number of those individuals are currently a part of Metro's outreach program. Increasing funding in future fiscal years for outreach and interim/short-term housing options will directly improve Metro's ability to connect individuals to the services they need while they wait for permanent housing and will directly result in reducing the number of chronically unhoused individuals and families in Los Angeles County.

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.* Through the continued investment in Metro's Homeless Response program - the agency is leading the fight to end homelessness in LA County. With expanded partnerships, Metro can directly influence the outcomes and shape the policies affecting the local, state and federal response to homelessness in transit.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will return to the Board in June 2022 with an update on the comprehensive analysis of Metro's Homeless

Outreach programs.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - January - March 2022 - PATH Homeless Outreach Data & Motel Report

Attachment B - January - March 2022 - Metro Outreach Client Success Stories

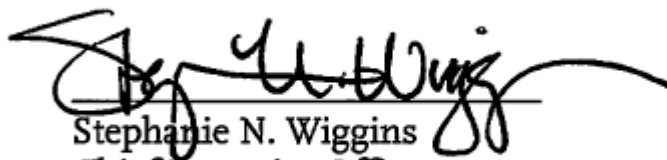
Attachment C - January - March 2022 - Homeless Outreach Images

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