



## Board Report

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### OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

**FEBRUARY 16, 2023**

**SUBJECT: MONTHLY UPDATE ON PUBLIC SAFETY**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE Public Safety Report.

#### **ISSUE**

Metro's main priority is providing riders with a safe experience and employees with a safe work environment. As noted in the 2021 Public Safety Survey, safety is a top concern for riders - about four-in-ten respondents who have reduced their Metro ridership cited concerns about their safety (not related to COVID) as a reason. Metro is researching, listening, reassessing current safety programs, and launching new safety initiatives. This report provides a status update on these public safety initiatives.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Metro's mission is to provide a world-class transportation system that enhances the quality of life for everyone living, working, and playing in LA County. Metro has implemented several non-law enforcement initiatives to reimagine public safety. The Chief Safety Office continues to incorporate information from surveys, customer complaints, and physical security assessments, amongst other sources, to analyze a wide array of safety-related issues. Using this information, Metro will formulate solutions to problems, anticipate future issues, and develop programs and initiatives for areas needing improvement.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The Chief Safety Office is responsible for the public safety program's strategic and cohesive deployment. Through agency collaboration, the focus is to increase a safety presence on the system, protecting Metro riders, employees, and infrastructure and conducting fare and code enforcement. Furthermore, the Chief Safety Office oversees safety programs and tools such as the Respect the Ride pilot, the Transit Watch app, and other efforts that are responsive to the security needs of riders and employees.

The following outlines the status of existing programs and the research efforts for new initiatives to help decrease crime while we restore ridership to pre-pandemic levels.

## **RESPECT THE RIDE**

The Respect the Ride initiative, launched in April 2022, continues as a coordinated effort between internal and external partners. This joint effort can deploy various safety efforts at once in concentrated stations, such as fare enforcement and deep cleaning. Since inception, the initiative has transitioned to the B (Red) Line stations due to feedback from Operations employees, riders, and our safety personnel. As such, the initiative is currently deployed Monday through Friday at the following stations:

- Union Station
- Westlake/MacArthur Park
- 7<sup>th</sup> St/Metro Center
- North Hollywood
- Wilshire/Vermont

In December, Wilshire/Vermont Station was added in response to an increase in loitering and littering on the platform and mezzanine levels.

In the coming weeks, the Respect the Ride layered approach will expand to the A (Blue) Line with joint Transit Security/LASD Train Riding Teams traveling between Slauson and Willowbrook/Rosa Parks Stations. We will provide updates on this deployment in future reports.

### *Respect the Ride - Bus*

In August 2022, the Respect the Ride initiative was expanded to the bus system in support of Bus Operator safety. Bus Riding Teams are deployed to bus lines that are identified in partnership with Operations. The teams ride specific segments of a bus line, determined by ridership, crime stats, and Operator feedback.

In December, Bus Riding Teams were deployed on the following lines:

- Line 30 - Pico Bl.
- Line 33 - Venice Bl.
- Line 210 - Crenshaw Bl.

Future Bus Riding Teams in support of Respect the Ride will be deployed on the following lines:

- Line 40 - Hawthorne Bl.
- Line 60 - Long Beach Bl.
- Line 260 - Atlantic Av.

SSLE's Transit Security Community Liaison regularly attends Division Rap sessions and

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communicates to operators about the Bus Riding Teams' efforts to ensure they are aware that safety personnel is being deployed on the bus system. We will continue updating bus riding efforts as new lines are selected.

### **ANCILLARY INTRUSION TASK FORCE**

Due to security incidents of unauthorized individuals entering Metro's ancillary areas, an Ancillary Intrusion Task Force was created on April 9, 2018, in collaboration with Operations. As a result of unauthorized individuals entering these areas, it has created a surge in maintenance and repair requests for Operations. Furthermore, maintenance staff feels unsafe entering these areas, hindering their ability to perform their job duties.

As a response to nefarious activity and severe uncleanness at Metro underground rail stations, SSLE has initiated rail station inspections. The purpose of the inspections is to identify people loitering and engaging in illegal activity, such as the use of narcotics, indecent exposure, lewd acts, vandalism, public defecation, trespassing, and many other activities. In addition to the nefarious activities, some trespassing occurs within underground ancillary rooms containing critical infrastructure. This poses a significant risk to Metro's transit system.

In coordination with Maintenance and Facilities, SSLE began station inspections on 12/29/2022 and had been conducting them weekly. Initially, the periodicity of these inspections occurred once per week. However, given the amount of nefarious activity and uncleanness observed at these locations, coupled with trespassers resurging to areas the task force had previously inspected, the task force deemed it necessary to increase the frequency of these inspections from one to three times per week. The task force utilized data-driven analysis and valuable input from front-line employees to formulate the schedules for the weekly inspections. Stations inspections include LAPD Officers, Metro Transit Security Officers, as well as Metro executive staff and custodial staff. The result of these efforts is as follows:

#### *12/29/2022: Civic Center and Hollywood and Vine*

Station inspections at both locations resulted in three arrests for trespassing in the ancillary areas. All three individuals who were arrested for trespassing had felony records for other violations. Ten individuals were removed from the platforms for loitering. A Metro cleaning staff member made SSLE aware of an individual who was known to frequently publicly masturbate on the platform in front of her. This individual was removed for loitering, and it was subsequently determined by LAPD that this individual had an outstanding arrest warrant in Illinois, since the state of Illinois would not extradite him, LAPD cited the individual for loitering, and he was released.

No inspection occurred during the week of 01/02/2023 to 01/05/2023 due to weather related excessive flooding on the system.

#### *01/10/2023: MacArthur Park/Westlake*

The station inspection resulted in five arrests for trespassing and four individuals removed from the platform for loitering.

#### *01/24/2023: Wilshire/Vermont*

The station inspection resulted in two arrests for trespassing.. Five individuals were removed for

loitering by LAPD before the Metro station inspection team arrived on site.

01/25/2023: Hollywood/Vine & North Hollywood

These station inspections resulted in two trespassing arrests. Two individuals were removed for loitering.

01/26/2023: Vermont/Beverly & Vermont/Sunset

These inspections resulted in no trespassing arrests, but five individuals were removed for loitering. In coordination with Facilities and Maintenance, the following interim protocol was developed regarding trespassers who are found to be in the ancillary areas by Metro employees:

#### Ancillary Intrusion Protocol for Trespassers

1. Report the trespassing incident immediately to the SOC or ROC.
2. Employees are not to engage with the trespasser. For employee safety, it is essential that no approach be made to an individual who has been discovered in an ancillary area.
3. MTS and LAPD will be requested to respond to the ancillary to detain and make arrests under California Penal code 602.8.

#### Long Term Strategy

1. Effective immediately, based on data-driven analysis, SSLE will conduct random, weekly inspections of the ancillary areas deemed problem areas based on ancillary data in hand.
2. These inspections will be conducted by SSLE and Facilities and Maintenance staff, who will be accompanied by MTS TSOs. These inspections will be conducted randomly each week.
3. Once the station inspection process has been refined, we will rely on contract security to increase the number of daily inspections of the ancillary areas to minimize trespassing incidents which will have a direct impact on the cleanliness and safety, and security of Metro employees as well as its ridership.

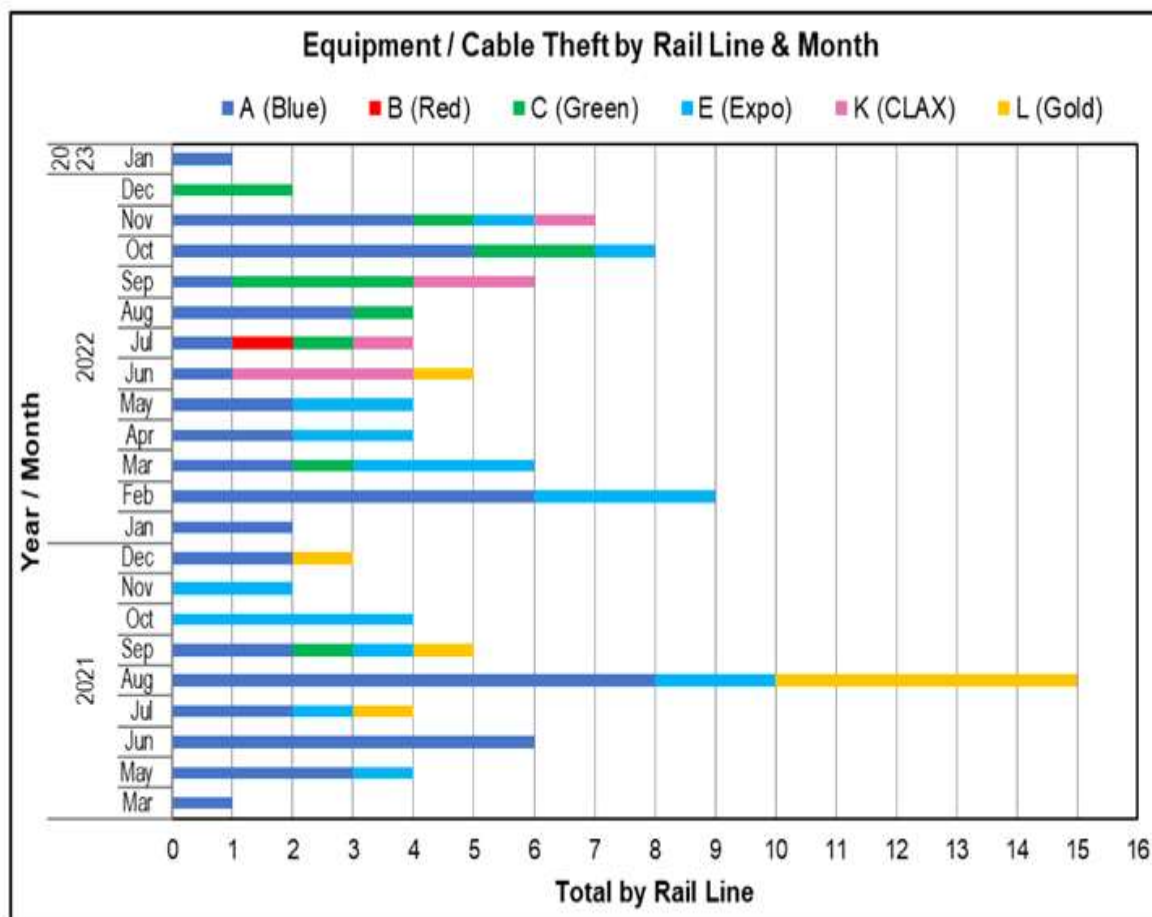
#### **COPPER WIRE THEFT MITIGATION TASK FORCE**

The rail system is built with miles of costly and critical copper wire. We've experienced incidents of individuals cutting copper wire, impacting critical infrastructure in terms of loss of service and posing a potential threat to the safety and well-being of Metro employees, as well as its ridership. Thieves have become increasingly complex in their tactics, techniques, and procedures to steal copper wire from our system, then sell it for profit at nearby scrap yards. Perpetrators now use advanced cutting tools to remove the wire from our system which thereby enhances their speed and efficiency. It is assessed that most of these individuals sell the copper for profit to purchase narcotics.

In 2022, Metro experienced 62 total copper thefts. Some of these thefts significantly impacted Rail Operations due to the fact that repairs needed to be effectuated to restore service.

From January 2022 to October 2022, Metro averaged 4.3 copper thefts per month. Based on data driven analysis, the task force, which is comprised of SSLE, Operations, LAPD, and LASD, formulated a response plan. Thus far, in 2023, Metro has only experienced one cable theft. It is unknown if the task force's efforts have resulted in the reduction of copper thefts. More data will have

to be gathered to assess causality.



Based on the data analysis, the task force deployed the following to the A (Blue) Line - the area where most copper thefts were occurring based on data analysis - in an effort to mitigate the thefts. This effort entailed the following:

1. Sky watch was deployed to 92<sup>nd</sup> Street.
2. MTS mobile units increased their patrols.
3. Contract security increased their patrols at the interlocking of Washington and 103<sup>rd</sup> Street.
4. LAPD deployed a helicopter in this corridor equipped with Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) technology to identify the perpetrators and track them to the scrap yards where they sell the copper between the hours of 0100 to 0400 (time based on data analysis when most thefts occur).

Do date, these efforts have not resulted in any arrests but may be serving as a deterring factor for those removing copper wire from Metro's infrastructure for sale and profit. Until Metro's copper wire

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network is fully encased (estimated end of year 2023) SSLE will continue review data to determine where to next deploy this mitigation plan strategy.

SSLE will continue to work with internal and external stakeholders to

- Research the feasibility of utilizing drone technology to enhance copper theft detection as well as identify suspects for prosecution. Drone technology would not only be beneficial in terms of addressing copper wire thefts but could enhance physical security in other areas such as terrorism detection and mitigation and vandalism prevention.
- SSLE will work with County Counsel and the LA County Prosecutor's Office to determine the feasibility of making copper wire thefts a felony given these thefts significantly impact critical infrastructure.
- Once Metro's copper wire structures have been fully encased, SSLE will adjust its deployment strategy accordingly.

## **USG PARKING GARAGE SAFETY**

The USG Parking Garage is predominantly used by employees or contractors who work at Metro headquarters. The four-level garage experienced an increase in security incidents, such as a carjacking in October 2022. To ensure employees felt safe walking to and from their vehicles, we increased uniformed presence to include LAPD and MTS hourly patrols and provided training during an All-Hands meeting. As a result, we've had zero employee assaults since October 2022. In addition to hourly patrols, Corporate Safety is developing a parking garage safety training for employees.

## **OPERATOR SAFETY**

### *Bus/Rail Operator Assaults and Bus Boardings*

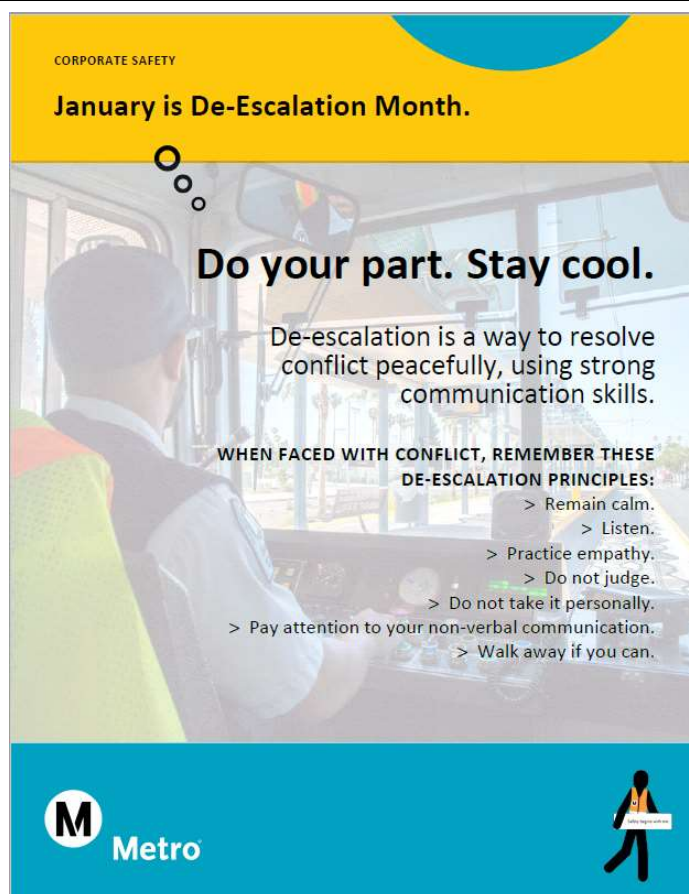
In December, there were a total of thirteen (13) assaults on bus/rail operators, with ten (10) assaults occurring in LAPD's jurisdiction and three (3) assaults occurring in LASD's jurisdiction. Furthermore, there were 16,800 bus boardings by LAPD officers and 2,459 bus boardings by LASD deputies.

### *Assault Prevention: De-Escalation Month*

From 2021 to 2022, there was a 36.5% increase in bus operator assaults. As a result, an Employee Assault Mitigation Task Force was created in collaboration with various departments to develop proactive solutions to provide safety tools to help employees have a safe work environment. As a result, in coordination with Emergency Management, Talent Development, Transit Security, Rail Transportation Instruction, Bus Central Instruction, and Facility Management departments, Corporate Safety deployed a de-escalation campaign for the month of January, focused on assault prevention.

The objectives of De-Escalation Month were to provide all employees with an organized way of making decisions about how employees will act in the face of conflict; reduce/eliminate workplace violence and assaults; and motivate employees to be more situationally aware and promote safety.

A flyer with safety tips was designed, distributed, and posted at Divisions. In addition, the emergency notification system was utilized, to distribute safety tips to employees.



## DRUG USE ON THE SYSTEM

As raised during January's Regular Board meeting, illegal drug use on the Metro system has increased, impacting the customer experience for riders and safety for employees. In 2022, Metro's SSLE received 1,385 incident reports via Transit Watch regarding the presence, usage, possession, and selling of narcotics on the Metro system. Furthermore, via the Customer Comment Analysis & Tracking System, from 2021 to 2022 we saw a 98.7% increase in complaints as it pertains to drug use on the system. Apart from being a violation of Metro's Code of Conduct, it is a social issue that needs to be addressed with preventative and collaborative measures to truly address it at its core.

On the Metro system, the following 30-day pilot will focus on the Red line.

- Implement a multi-layered approach including PATH homeless outreach, transit ambassadors, transit security officers, law enforcement, contract security and custodians to strategically address the issue. Ambassador and PATH teams presence
- Reassign TSOs as Rail Riding Teams
- Partner with the LA City Attorney and LADA to determine the feasibility of a drug diversion program for offenders

- Identify potential partnerships with community-based organizations, such as Urban Alchemy
- Work with CX to initiate an anti-drug campaign

Staff will provide updates in future reports.

### **TRANSIT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM UPDATE**

As of January 9, 2023, 175 Metro Ambassador program staff been hired, trained, and deployed on our system. Two additional trainings for the month of January 2023, have been scheduled to conclude staffing of up to 300 Metro Ambassadors.

Metro Ambassadors' jobs are to support our riders and safety, connect riders to resources, and report incidents. Deployment on bus lines 20 and 720 began the week of December 26, 2022. Metro Ambassadors are currently deployed on the K Line, L Line (Gold), and B/D Lines (Red/Purple). As well as bus lines 210, 40, 20, and 720.

On December 26, 2022, at about 4:08PM, Metro Ambassadors at the 7<sup>th</sup> St. Metro Ctr. came across a woman from New York, who was lost on the street level and could not find the station entrance to get to the E Line (Expo) train platform. The patron's phone was sending her in another direction, and she could not find the entrance to the train station. The Metro Ambassadors guided her to her train and made sure she got on safely. She was very thankful for the Ambassadors and expressed her appreciation for their jobs.

On January 2, 2023, on the way to Union Station around 5:25PM, Metro Ambassadors came across a disabled woman struggling to get off the train in her wheelchair. The Ambassadors approached this patron and asked if it was okay if they helped her off the train and she accepted the offer. They asked her where she was headed, and she told them that she was headed to the Greyhound at the East Wing. They escorted her to the Greyhound service center to buy her ticket. The patron expressed she felt safe with the Metro Ambassadors around and expressed her gratitude for their assistance.

By the numbers - Reporting Period: 12/2/2023 - 1/5/2023

Metro Ambassadors conducted 32,386 customer interactions, and reported to following:

- 819 cleanliness issues
- 267 graffiti incidents
- 192 elevator and escalator problems
- 166 safety issues

Metro Ambassadors will continue to support our customers and employees as extra eyes and ears on Metro bus and rail systems.

### **EQUITY PLATFORM**

The Metro Transit Ambassadors and De-escalation Campaign are two components of Metro's ongoing efforts to reimagine public safety. The campaign provides employees with tips on how to do their part in having a safe environment while performing their job duties or when riding the system. In



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doing so, it can assist in defusing situations without needing uniformed personnel to intervene. Thus, allowing uniformed personnel to tend to other safety matters on the system.

In the deployment of Metro Ambassadors, staff considers the needs of riders, including language barriers and cultural differences. The Ambassador program vendors ensure that the workforce is diverse culturally and continues to recruit bilingual staff to serve in the many communities that Metro serves.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Staff will continue to monitor our law enforcement partners, private security, and Transit Security performance, monitor crime stats, and adjust deployment as necessary.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - Systemwide Law Enforcement Overview December 2022

Attachment B - MTA Supporting Data December 2022

Attachment C - Transit Police Summary December 2022

Attachment D - Monthly, Bi-Annual, Annual Comparison December 2022

Attachment E - Violent, Prop, and Part 1 Crimes December 2022

Attachment F - Demographics Data December 2022

Attachment G - Bus & Rail Operator Assaults December 2022

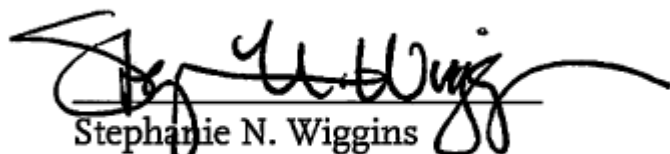
Attachment H - Sexual Harassment Crimes December 2022

Prepared by: Vanessa Smith, Executive Officer, Customer Experience, (213)922-7009

Robert Gummer, Deputy Executive Officer, Administration, (213)922-4513

Imelda Hernandez, Senior Manager, Transportation Planning, (213) 922-4848

Reviewed by: Gina Osborn, Chief Safety Officer, Chief Safety Office, (213) 922-3055



Stephanie N. Wiggins  
Chief Executive Officer