



Board Report

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Agenda Number:

**OPERATIONS, SAFETY AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE
MARCH 21, 2024**

SUBJECT: TRANSIT AMBASSADOR PILOT PROGRAM SERVICES

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION

AUTHORIZE the Chief Executive Officer to execute Modification No. 5 to Contract No. PS88001001 with Strive Well-Being to continue to provide Transit Ambassador Pilot Program services in the amount of \$7,200,000, increasing the current three-year base not-to-exceed contract value from \$16,403,235 to \$23,603,235.

ISSUE

Transit Ambassador Pilot Program Contract No. PS88001001 awarded to Strive Well-Being (Strive) will reach its full three-year base period contract authority before April 30, 2024, as the contractor was called upon to provide additional Ambassador staff for fixed post deployment to meet the Agency’s safety and security needs. Staff is requesting an increase in contract value for Strive to continue operations while staff transitions the Ambassador program in-house. There will be a corresponding decrease in contract value for the Transit Ambassador Pilot Program services provided by RMI International.

BACKGROUND

Following a competitive procurement process, at its June 2022 meeting, the Board awarded contracts to Strive Well-Being Inc. (Contract No. PS88001001) and RMI International Inc. (Contract No. PS88001000) to provide a Pilot Transit Ambassador Program that would introduce a uniformed, unarmed, 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. RMI’s base (3-year) period not-to exceed contract is \$55,479,104 for 245 Ambassador program staff. Strive Well-Being’s \$15,903,235 base (3-year) not-to-exceed contract placed 55 Ambassador staff on the system.

In September 2022, Metro introduced the Transit Ambassador Pilot Program as a soft launch, deploying teams across the system as they were hired and trained. On March 6, 2023, with 300 Ambassador staff trained, Metro officially launched the pilot 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, staff presented a year one evaluation of the program, and noted that contract authority would likely need to be increased to support Strive-Well Being before the end of the base contract period. The Board approved a staff recommendation to make the Ambassador program permanent and bring it in-house,. Metro is in the process of developing a plan for that transition.

DISCUSSION

At the outset of the Metro Ambassador pilot program's introduction, Customer Experience (CX) staff deployed the Ambassadors as greeters at fixed posts. However, staff quickly realized the Ambassadors would be more visible and helpful to a larger group of customers if they rode trains and buses from station to station as customers do. So, within a couple of months most of the ambassadors were deployed as riding and roving teams, vs fixed post teams, allowing them to serve as the eyes and ears across more areas of the system.

Concurrently with the ambassador pilot program launch, Metro's System Safety and Law Enforcement (SSLE) team was grappling with several societal crises that were becoming more prevalent on the Metro system, including the county's growing fentanyl and mental health crises. Specifically, in late 2022 Metro began seeing a spike in reports of drug use on buses and trains. SSLE began devising proactive strategies to address the situation, including special coordinated fixed-post deployment of all the layers of the Metro safety ecosystem in key hot spots, particularly the B (Red) and D (Purple) Line subways.

To support these special fixed post deployments and ensure the safety, security, and comfort of Metro's customers and employees while not compromising the effect of the Ambassador program on other areas of the Metro system, the CX staff needed to expand the number of ambassadors deployed on the system.

Further, to ensure a care-first approach to the mental health and drug addiction crises, staff determined that the additional ambassadors hired to work these assignments should have mental health awareness training. Strive Well Being was at the time the only Ambassador program vendor providing enhanced mental health training to their ambassadors, so CX staff asked Strive to quickly hire and train additional staff to support special, fixed post deployments.

To support these efforts, beginning in May 2023, Strive hired 47 additional ambassadors administrative staff to support deployment of 102 ambassadors per day. To enable the Ambassador program to support fixed post assignments at key hot spots on the system and at the new Regional Connector stations. This was in addition to the 55 Ambassador staff required in Strive's contract.

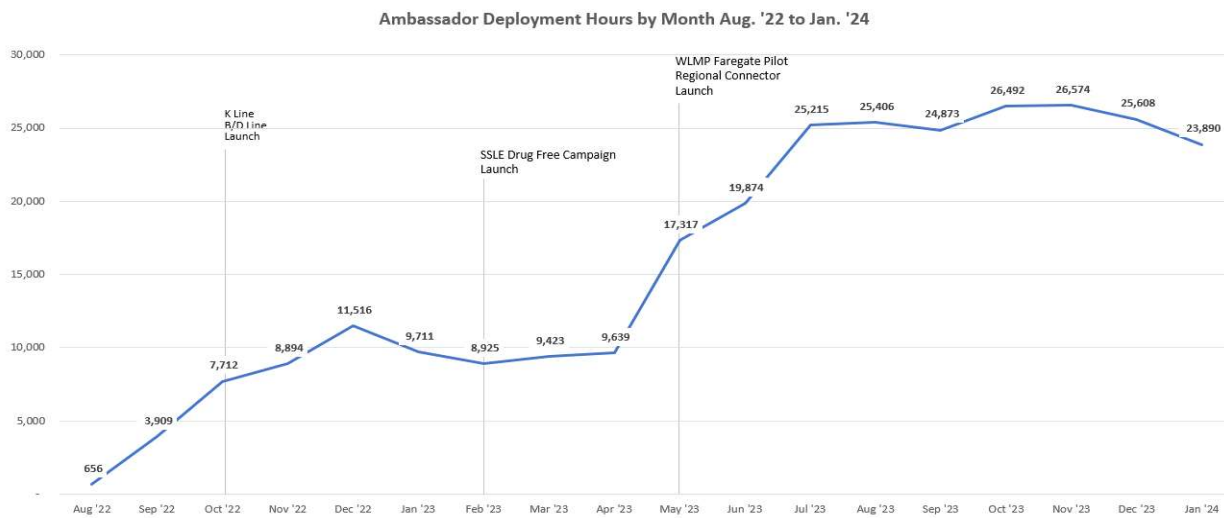
Today there are 82 Ambassadors deployed at fixed posts per day as follows:

- 6 staff per shift each day (12 total) at the Westlake MacArthur Park station
- 6 staff per shift each day (12 total) at the 7th/Metro Station
- 6 staff per shift each day (12 total) at the LA Union Station
- 2 staff per shift each day (4 total) at the NoHo station
- 4 staff per shift each day (8 total) at the new Little Tokyo Station

- 4 staff per shift each day (8 total) at the new Historic Broadway Station
- 8 staff per shift each day (16 total) at the Grand Avenue Arts/Bunker Hill Station
- 10 staff for the late-night shift (10 total) deployed at Little Tokyo, Historic, and Grans Avenue Arts/Bunker Hill Stations.

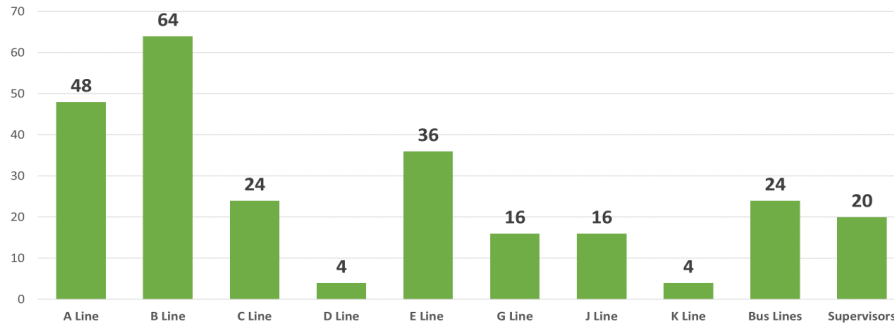
This additional staff deployment tripled Strive’s monthly Ambassador deployment hours billed as noted below.

Strive Monthly Ambassador Deployment Hours



The additional staff have enabled Metro to be nimbler in addressing new safety and security issues that emerge on the system while at the same time maintaining coverage and even growing presence across more areas of the system.

Current Metro Ambassador Deployments by Line



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The annual costs for this enhanced coverage offered by Strive Well Being are noted below. To continue to provide enhanced Transit Ambassador Pilot Program services and ensure service continuity while the Agency works to bring the program in-house, staff requests an increase of \$7.2M to Strive’s three-year base pilot contract value for a total not-to-exceed amount of \$23,603,235.

STRIVE WELL BEING

Contract Year	Contracted Budget	Actuals/Forecast	Difference	Notes
9/1/22 - 8/31/23	\$5,130,784	\$7,093,424	\$1,962,640	Additional fixed post staff hours for 4 months (May - August, 2023)
9/1/23 - 8/31/24	\$5,254,854	\$14,386,488	\$9,131,634	Additional fixed post staff hours for 12 months
9/1/24 - 8/31/25	\$5,517,597	\$5,517,597	\$0	Does not include demobilization when in-house transition occurs TBD.
Total	\$15,903,235	\$26,997,509	\$11,094,274	

There will be a corresponding decrease to RMI’s three-year base pilot contract value revising the total not-to-exceed amount to \$48,279,104. The annual costs of RMI International’s billings are outlined below.

RMI INTERNATIONAL

Contract Year	Contracted Budget	Actuals/Forecast	Difference	Notes
9/1/22 - 8/31/23	\$18,015,640	10,543,891	(\$7,471,749)	

9/1/23 -8/31/24	18,460,549	16,709,720	(\$1,750,829)	
9/1/24 -8/31/25	19,002,915	16,709,720	(\$2,293,195)	Does not include demobilization when in-house transition occurs TBD.
Total	\$55,479,104	43,963,331	(\$11,515,773)	

Strive Well Being is an SBE and enlists the services of Community Based Organizations (CBO) such as Union Station Homeless Services, Communities Actively Living Independently & Free, and Homeboy Industries. Since the program launched, Strive has recruited 21 ambassadors from CBOs. Strive has demonstrated an understanding of the importance of strong, robust community participation in the Transit Ambassador Pilot Program. Through its core business platform of facilities management and health and wellness management initiatives, Strive has demonstrated its experience and interaction with a general public population with a wide range of varying degrees of lived experiences.

RMI International is currently exceeding their DBE commitment with their SBE participation at 25.02% exceeding the commitment by 12.84%.

Of the two selected firms to implement the pilot program, RMI International Inc. was awarded 81% of the contract, assuming 244 people to perform the transit ambassador services. In comparison, Strive Well-Being was awarded 18% of the contract, assuming 55 people to perform the transit ambassador services. This modification would increase Strive’s contract representation to 30%, utilizing 102 ambassadors to perform the transit ambassador services on Metro’s rail system and station elevators, with a corresponding reduction by RMI commensurate with existing vacancies.

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 professional services of Strive through the defined Statement of Work and associated contract requirements and deliverables. 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 recommendation, the contract value for Strive Well Being Contract No. PS88001001 will be increased by \$7.2M to a not-to-exceed amount of \$23,603,235. In addition, the contract value for RMI International Contract No. PS88001000 will be decreased by \$7.2M to a not-to-exceed amount of \$48,279,104 until the program is brought in-house.

Funds are budgeted under Cost Center 5420, Customer Programs and Services, Project 300040, Rail Operations Management and Admin. Since this is a multi-year contract/project, the cost center manager, Executive Officer of Customer Care, and Chief Customer Experience Officer will be

accountable for budgeting the cost in future years.

BUDGET IMPACT

The sources of funding are sales tax revenues dedicated for rail operations and rail capital projects.

EQUITY PLATFORM

The Transit Ambassador Pilot Program deployment model has staff assigned to work in high need areas, including bus stops/stations and rail stations serving Equity Focus Communities (EFCs). 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.

The program also provides opportunities for community engagement through Community Based Organizations (CBOs). The current contractors successfully collaborate with local CBOs whose mission is to save lives by assisting in the personal development of high-risk individuals and recruitment that includes 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 provides a visible and approachable presence, fostering relationships with Metro riders and employees while providing in-person support with a trauma-informed care approach to enhance the transit customer experience. Strive is a Metro certified Small Business Enterprise. Strive has demonstrated their awareness of the Metro transit system, its cultural and geographic diversity, and the communities we serve.

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 customer visibility 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 can consider not authorizing the requested action; however, this alternative is not recommended as it is not responsive to Metro's goal to improve the customer experience and of providing Motion 26.2 investments in public safety program initiatives.

NEXT STEPS

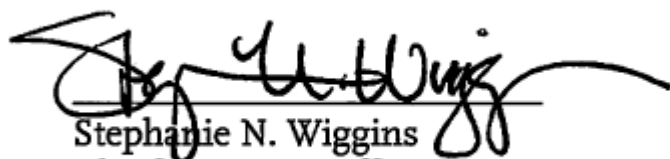
Upon Board approval, staff will execute Modification No. 5 to Contract No. PS88001001 with Strive Well-Being Inc. to continue to provide Transit Ambassador Pilot Program services.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Procurement Summary
Attachment B - Contract Modification/Change Order Log
Attachment C - DEOD Summary

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