

Innovation Studio Safe Ride Specialists Q&A

Will the outreach team be expected to ride the train or set up a station on a platform?

It is anticipated that teams will be expected to conduct a mix of deployment approaches, including fixed post at a station/platform, roaming a station/platform and riding the train(s) through stations in the deployment zone.

Will there be an opportunity to do a site visit?

Partners selected for the pilot program will be able to conduct a site visit prior to finalizing a scope of services, if preferred.

Does CTA already have a preferred provider for crisis services - i.e., housing, mental health services, crisis beds? Or are they open to all options?

CTA is open to all options for qualified providers that can provide wraparound services in conjunction with a pilot proposal.

Can CTA provide access to incident data to support KPI development for the pilot, or does CTA have predefined KPIs that proposers should use?

Proposers should recommend KPIs, that aligns with the pilot's goals, their proposed service model, best practices, and their capabilities to track and measure these during the pilot. KPIs may also be developed or added with CTA input throughout the length of the Pilot(s).

CTA may provide historical or current incident data (e.g., customer feedback data etc.) when possible, to Pilot vendors during the scoping stage. However, vendors are responsible for collecting data related to their KPIs and monitoring progress throughout the Pilot period.

I am writing to request access to CTA incident report data for the past five years. Please let me know the process for obtaining these records and if any additional information is required from my end.

As part of the innovation Studio application process, applicants should indicate which types of data in addition to incident reports it proposes to collect and measure as a part of its evaluation of the pilot. Once selected, CTA will work with selected applicants to provide other relevant data (e.g. aggregated incidents) as applicable.

Individuals and organizations can follow the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) process if they choose. To request records, proposers must submit a public records request, otherwise known as a FOIA request, to CTA's FOIA staff. FOIA requests must be made *in writing*.

The easiest, fastest way to submit a FOIA request is to use our online portal available through CTA's webpage at: <https://www.transitchicago.com/foia/>

FOIA requests may also be submitted to CTA:

By Mail addressed to: Freedom of Information Officer

Law Department

Chicago Transit Authority

567 W. Lake Street

Chicago, Illinois 60661

By e-mail to FOIA@transitchicago.com

By fax to (312) 681-2809

In Person at CTA's customer service desk on the second floor of the CTA's main office, at 567 W. Lake Street in Chicago, during regular weekday business hours (8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.).

Can multiple orgs collaborate on an app?

Yes, a proposal can include multiple organizations in collaboration. One organization should serve as lead applicant, and the proposer's application should clearly indicate each organization's responsibilities in the project management structure.

What is the distinction between research & development, and evaluation? Is the latter permitted, particularly if transit experience isn't present?

We are seeking partners that have a defined approach for evaluating the effectiveness of their pilot service model, based on a service model that is well defined and rooted in existing best-practice approaches. Projects that propose purely to research and develop a new program model, without an application of an existing defined service model, will not be considered.

Confirming that staff time can't be covered insofar as funding?

Applicants are asked to provide a fully loaded project budget for a 12-month pilot, inclusive of staff costs and other costs indicated on the problem statement page.

Do staff need all the training that was listed?

CTA is seeking proposals for Safe Ride Specialists that possess skills for safe and effective deployment in the transit environment. CTA will prefer proposals for Specialists with training and demonstrated competency in trauma-informed care, de-escalation, and crisis intervention, including the ability to stabilize situations without reliance on enforcement whenever appropriate. Specialists should also have training on warm handoffs and referral processes, including knowing which organizations to contact based on pilot location, time of day, etc.

In your staffing plan, proposers should clearly describe how these core competencies are trained, documented, reinforced, and supervised across the Specialist team, and reference

prior experience successfully deploying teams with comparable baseline training in transit or similar public-facing environments.

We have an extensive research portfolio in crisis response, including both qualitative and quantitative work. If an applicant has a valuable intervention pilot idea, but limited capacity for an independent or methodologically sound evaluation, perhaps there is a role for us?

We welcome partnerships amongst applicants. Please refer to the attendee list for the public information session that was hosted on 1/9/2026, posted on the problem statement webpage, for a non-exhaustive list of possible partners.

Regarding the pilot program, are there specific times of day/days of the week CTA is intending to implement these services? i.e., high traffic times, overnight, 24/7, etc.

CTA prefers to be able to test different deployment times and days as a part of the pilot. Applicants should specify what, if any, limitations on deployment times they would have under their program model as a part of their application.

Could you provide anonymized, aggregated data on incident reports (e.g., disorderly conduct, disturbances, assaults) for the proposed pilot stations—specifically Roosevelt to Howard on the Red Line—broken down by time of day, day of week, and age group (where recorded), from the last 12-24 months? This will help us establish a baseline and measure impact.

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What strategies, programs, or campaigns have the CTA previously implemented to address youth behavior and safety on platforms and trains? Could you share any internal evaluations or learnings on what has shown promise and, just as importantly, what has not worked and why?

CTA's security strategy includes close partnership with the Chicago Police Department (CPD), private security guards, social service outreach providers and existing CTA operational divisions. CTA has increased deployment of many of these resources in recent years, including conducting targeted missions with CPD in the past year to enforce the CTA's Smoking and Code of Conduct rules.

CTA is looking to leverage Specialists teams to increase safety through targeted, trauma-informed approaches, while also providing support and compassion. CTA does not have formal internal evaluations to share currently. However, approaches that work in alignment with existing processes have shown promise.

What is the potential budget or in-kind resource allocation (staff time, digital screen space, Ventra app integration, etc.) the CTA can commit to a 12-month pilot? Are there existing funds from safety, customer experience, or capital budgets that could be directed toward this public-private partnership?

Applicants should include any requests for additional in-kind or coordinated resources from CTA as a part of their proposal. As indicated on the problem statement page, applicants should provide a fully loaded project budget based on their proposed model.

Who are the key internal stakeholders—from Operations, Security, Customer Experience, and Communications—we need to align with? Additionally, what are the current protocols for CTA staff when encountering non-violent but disruptive behavior, and how could a new system integrate with or enhance those protocols without increasing staff burden?

CTA will coordinate a group of internal stakeholders that can be engaged in ongoing pilot project implementation, which may include but not be limited to front line operations teams, security teams (internal and external partners), customer service and customer communication, planning, and other external partners. Pilot project management will be designed to help answer the questions above. Further information on current response strategies is described in the report of CTA's Transit Community Safety Workshop linked here: [Transit Community Safety Report.pdf](#)

Beyond reducing incident reports, what are the CTA's top-priority metrics for judging the success of a pilot like this (e.g., rider satisfaction scores, ridership recovery at certain hours, employee feedback)? What specific thresholds would need to be met for the CTA to consider the pilot successful and worthy of system-wide expansion?

CTA has not yet determined specific thresholds that must be met to consider expansion and may look at a variety of factors. Applicants should propose pilot metrics based on the goals of the pilot problem statements listed on the Innovation Studio web page. CTA may propose additional metrics if needed.

Is the CTA open to integrating a new feedback mechanism (e.g., a dedicated text line) into its control room or customer service workflow for this pilot? Are there existing partnerships with community organizations (e.g., parks, schools, violence prevention groups) that we should connect with from the start?

Applicants should include existing partnerships and/or speak to their ability to engage with relevant community partners as a part of their application response. CTA is open to considering communication technologies proposed by applicants, but new technology features may involve significant additional project timeline depending on the features and project applicants should include a realistic timeframe to adopt new technologies in their overall project timeline and feasibility.

Is there any historical call volume data for each of the identified pilot areas you can share to inform our staffing model for the program?

Respondents should build their proposed staffing model based on CTA's current level of service within the pilot zone, factoring in their proposed service hours and a desire to be able to test deployment models fixed at stations and riding between service in the zone. Current schedule information is available here: <https://www.transitchicago.com/schedules/>

Is there a hard launch date for the program to start and does it need to be fully operational on day 1? For example, if we anticipate hiring 10 people, do all 10 need to be hired and trained by the launch date?

Applicants should indicate what they view as minimum viable staffing for project launch and an anticipated timeline for full staffing under the pilot as a part of their project application.

Will Phase 2 presentations be in person or virtual?

CTA staff will attend Phase 2 presentations in person at CTA headquarters. A virtual option can be provided for presenters who are not local within the CTA service area.

Under the FTA mandated Safety Management Systems (SMS) requirements in 49 CFR Part 673, transit agencies are required to first identify systemwide hazards and assess their probability and severity before selecting mitigations. Has CTA completed or updated a comprehensive hazard identification and risk assessment under 49 CFR §673.25 that supports the proposed deployment of Community Violence Intervention and Crisis Intervention Specialists? If so, can CTA please share relevant details at a high level?

CTA has conducted an assessment pursuant to FTA requirements. The relevant details supporting the proposed pilots are included within the problem statement web pages.

Based on that hazard analysis, which specific, prioritized hazards were determined to necessitate these roles? For example, a passenger or train on fire scenario constitutes a fire/life safety emergency requiring coordinated fire department response, and train door holding incidents primarily impact dwell time, service reliability, and operations; it would be helpful to understand how such scenarios were evaluated in determining the need for violence or crisis intervention specialists.

A door holding can result from the escalation of boundary-testing behavior as described in the violence intervention problem statement. These scenarios may vary and escalate quickly, often resulting in operational delays, but they have also resulted in escalations that drive a perception among riders of an unsafe or unwelcoming environment. Further scenarios considered resulting in the development of these pilot proposals are described in the report of CTA's Transit Community Safety Workshop linked here: [Transit_Community_Safety_Report.pdf](#)

In which operating environments are these specialists expected to be deployed (onboard trains vs. station platforms), and how does CTA ensure that the selected mitigations provide adequate coverage for hazards occurring within

each operating environment identified through the SMS process?

Please refer to question 1.

How does this approach align with the FTA's recent findings that increases in staffing or police presence, without demonstrable reductions in incident rates, do not satisfy SMS requirements for safety risk controls, and does CTA anticipate engaging independent safety assurance or SMS professional services to support hazard analysis, mitigation verification, and the ongoing demonstration of measurable safety risk reduction, under this or a future innovation challenge?

These pilot resources are intended to work alongside, but distinct from, law enforcement resources. The goal of the pilots is to test new solutions that can enable the de-escalation of conflicts and the provision of competent, human-centered approaches which can enhance existing CTA approaches. Further background on the relationship to existing resources and how peer transit agencies have integrated these new services is included in the report of CTA's Transit Community Safety Workshop linked here: [Transit Community Safety Report.pdf](#)

Can you say more about how you're looking for solutions that are "relatively" already developed? Is there any opportunity for micro-iterations or pivots within the pilot period?

Proposals should have a well-defined service model based in engagement approaches that are proven and supported by externally validated training and previous successful applications in a non-transit context or by peer transit agencies. There will be flexibility to iterate different deployment strategies and coordinating partners during the pilot period.

Are government organizations eligible to apply with a co-response proposal?

Yes.

Do we have any info on pilot programs that didn't work that were designed to address similar concerns? If so, can you provide info or a list?

Please see response to question 13.

Will JC Decaux be a willing participant?

Coordination with various stakeholders involved in managing the pilot spaces will be a joint effort of pilot service providers and CTA.

How long will the pilot program continue?

We are seeking to launch a pilot program that will last for up to 12 months.

Are these safe ride specialists contracted, or will they be CTA staff?

For the purpose of these pilots, we are seeking contracted Safe Ride Specialists from organizations, not CTA staff.

Are there plans to pilot the Roosevelt to 95th corridor?

As part of the current Innovation Studio pilot, we are focused on the locations identified here. If the Innovation Studio pilots are successful, we would look to deploy at other locations.

First, Innovation Studio is a fantastic initiative! Are you working with any researchers on the evaluation of these initiatives? It would be great to capitalize on your efforts and inform policy and practice beyond CTA about the impacts and learnings.

CTA will participate in the evaluation of the pilot projects but would like applicants to describe how they can support this effort.

Will this run on FY starting July 1? Is this for trains and buses in the zone?

The pilot will begin in the summer of 2026 but is not tied to a specific fiscal year calendar. Pilot zones selected at this time predominantly reflect our rail service (trains and stations), but as indicated the pilot zone may extend to include the use of specialists in a bus terminal co-located with a train station.

Will there be an approved vendor list for training support (especially de-escalation and frontline readiness) as part of these pilots? We are a training organization focused on preparing frontline teams and would love to support successful implementation.

We will not have an approved vendor list for the pilot. However, we're asking responders to indicate the training that their resources have completed and the relevancy of that training. We will consider pre-approved training for the future.

How were the pilot areas selected?

The pilot areas were selected based on both customer feedback, internal and external incident data, as well as speaking with our frontline operations leadership about where they see complaints and where they see concerns.

The Blue line corridor Forrest Park is tough via severe drug users. Police should serve that corridor. Can the applicant opt out of servicing a particular corridor?

Applicants do not need to serve all pilot zones. They must choose at least one pilot zone and indicate how they would serve that specific zone.

My organization has already been riding the trains and providing services. Who should we submit our information too?

You can apply via Innovation Studio. We have provided a list of attendees which you can view [here](#). Applicants are encouraged to engage with other interested organizations to develop joint applications or share information.

Can applicants submit more than 2 applications?

Applicants can apply for both problem statements. Applicants can submit multiple unique solutions to the same problem statement but should submit separate applications. For reference, CTA has not selected the same applicant for multiple pilot models in the past but is not restricted from doing so.

I would like to fully understand what partners will be involved in this project.

CTA is seeking a lead partner to serve as pilot project applicant and overall project manager. CTA is looking for the specialized skills and service models indicated in the problem statement, which may be filled in by a subordinate partner in an application. CTA will be looking for a history of a demonstrated relationship between provider and communities, and familiarity with the other ecosystems that exist in those communities and bring it over to CTA. Applications featuring multiple partners should clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each partner.

Can you provide any guidance around budget i.e., maximum ask amount?

There is funding available for these pilots. Throughout the stages of the evaluation process, we will discuss potential costs. We will lean on applicants to tell us what the resource would require, and what the cost would be based on industry standards.

Regarding warm hand-offs, will you provide a preset list of reasonable sites, or will the vendor determine the sites? Warm handoffs in the central district can be problematic.

We currently do not have a preset list of hand-off sites for these pilot zones developed yet. That is something we will be analyzing internally at CTA while this application period is open, but we are also open to feedback from applicants who may possess firsthand experience of which locations may work best.

Can you please define “warm hand-off sites”?

There are two spaces in which Safe Ride Specialists might interact with customers: one is on the live service itself, and the other is in the station. In the scenarios that we see, and what we have heard from our peer agencies that have similar programs, it could be beneficial in the positive relationship building to build that trust, and then move an individual whether they are experiencing some form of mental or behavioral crisis, or escalating rowdy behavior, to help get them off the

system and into an environment where they can calm down and an organization can provide the service to allow the individual to decompress prior to transferring them to another location where additional services and resources can be provided.

Can we anticipate a role for the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority?

As part of your application, if you are submitting for a location that is near one of these organizations or event locations across the city, think through what that partnership could look like and what may be some challenges as well around that and provide feedback as to why we should partner with this organization and how would you manage that.

In looking at the identified areas, I'm wondering why the Blue Line (terminating in Forest Park stops at Austin instead of going to Pulaski and Kedzie Homan (this is for the crisis proposal) and on the Green Line—why the pilot zone doesn't extend to those hot spots?

We understand that we have unique challenges throughout our system, and we worked to identify a diverse set of locations that have different types of needs and responses that we believe can be applied there. This is a pilot program; we have identified these locations as part of the pilot and if the program is successful and we find that there are scalable solutions that we can look to expand beyond the locations that are identified as part of the pilot we will absolutely look to do that.

The location decision making is problematic. Can we pre-determine from past incidents, where the clients may derive from?

We will do our best as partners to bring specialized data that we have available to us to this pilot implementation.