



Chicago Transit Authority

Transit Community Safety Workshop Summary

Meeting Report from 8.28.25

Chicago Transit Authority
567 West Lake Street
Chicago, Illinois 60661
transitchicago.com

Dear Colleagues and Community Partners,

I am writing to thank you for your attendance and participation in the first ever Transit Community Safety Workshop, held on August 28, 2025. I was pleased to see so many dedicated individuals from various backgrounds, experiences and areas of expertise who provided thoughtful contribution to this discussion about how to serve our communities while creating a great CTA travel experience for our riders.

This gathering marked more than just a meeting—it was part of a historic time at the CTA. We are making unprecedented strides in engaging with the public and external organizations in ways we've never done before. We are forming new partnerships and strengthening existing ones, rooted in mutual respect and a shared commitment to the communities we serve. We convened this workshop because we recognize that CTA's future success is directly tied to how well we engage our broad and diverse network of stakeholders. That includes talking honestly about our successes and -- just as importantly -- our challenges. As a 24-hour public agency, we serve people in some of their most vulnerable moments. The complexity and sensitivity of public safety in such a setting demands thoughtful and informed approaches.

Enclosed you will find a post-workshop report to reflect on the key themes, insights, and takeaways from our time together. It also serves as a record of this important moment and foundation for the work ahead. The outcomes of this workshop will play a vital role in shaping CTA's pilot design and creating a system where all riders and employees feel safe, respected, and supported.

Thank you for your belief in CTA and your continued support as we drive the solutions identified at the workshop forward.

Sincerely,



Nora Leerhsen Acting President
Chicago Transit Authority

Cc: Veronica Alanis, CTA Chief Operating Officer
Molly Poppe, CTA Chief Planning & Innovation Officer
Cara Bader, CTA Vice President of Strategy & Innovation

Executive Summary

On August 28, 2025, the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) hosted its first **Transit Community Safety Workshop**, convening more than 50 participants, including 33 external stakeholders and seven CTA departments, including CTA Board members, representing a diverse cross-section of expertise and lived experience. The event brought together voices from behavioral health, homelessness services, youth engagement, accessibility advocacy, violence prevention, union leadership, and the business community with deep knowledge of outreach, resource coordination, and community engagement. The facilitated session represented a milestone in CTA's ongoing commitment to transparency, collaboration, and rebuilding public trust through community-informed safety solutions.

The workshop began with a presentation from various senior leaders on the transit security environment, challenges CTA faces, and rider feedback. The program featured a peer agency panel discussion, **“Partnerships That Protect: Insights from Leading Transit Systems,”** spotlighting the experiences of **TriMet, BART, and Metro Transit**. Panelists shared insights on non-law enforcement safety models and crisis response strategies addressing complex issues such as homelessness, behavioral health, and rider safety perceptions. During breakout discussions, participants explored real-world rider personas to co-design actionable solutions for CTA's forthcoming Safe Ride Ambassador pilots focusing on testing various staffing models, training, coordination, and partnerships that promote compassion and accountability across the transit system.

Goals Achieved

- Presented CTA's current safety and security landscape and its **layered, comprehensive approach** to transit safety.
- Learned from peer agencies operating **ambassador and crisis response programs**, gaining insight into challenges and successes.
- Gathered **community input and actionable ideas** to guide the development of CTA's **Safe Ride Ambassador pilot**.
- Strengthened **transparency and two-way communication** between CTA, riders, and partner organizations.
- Reinforced CTA's role as both a **service provider and community partner**, committed to building a transit system where riders and employees feel safe, respected, and supported.

The outcomes of this workshop will directly inform CTA's pilot design, request-for-proposals process, and long-term strategy for creating a system where all riders and employees feel safe, respected, and supported.

Attendee Details and Agenda

CTA welcomed more than 50 attendees from 33 external organizations which represented groups from community agencies, labor partners, mental health and social service experts, civic stakeholders, community public safety specialists, sister government agencies and CTA governance organizations.

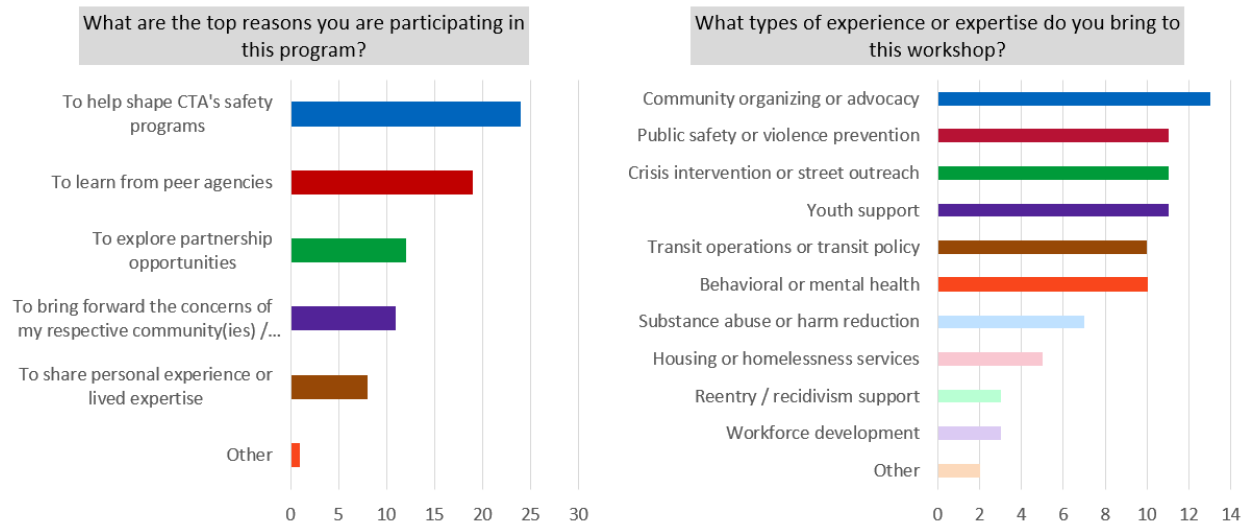
AARP
Active Transportation Alliance
Advocate Health Care - South Side
ATU-241
ATU-308
Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT)
Chatham Business Association SBDI
Chicago Community Trust
Chicago CRED
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
Chicago Park District
Chicago Police Department
City of Chicago, Office of the Mayor
Civic Consulting Alliance
Colliers and BOMA Chicago
CTA ADA Advisory Committee
CTA Board of Directors
CTA Citizens' Advisory Board
Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS)
Elevated Chicago
Garfield Park Community Council
Haymarket
Institute for Nonviolence Chicago
Kids Off the Block (KOB)
Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO)
Metra Police
Metropolitan Family Services
NAMI Chicago
Palenque Logan Square Neighborhood Association
RTA
The Night Ministry
Thresholds
University of Chicago Crime Lab

Additionally, more than 30 attendees supported from CTA leadership and subject matter divisions, including the President and President's Office, Security, Bus and Rail Operations, Rail Station Management, Control Center, Planning and Innovation, Customer Service,

Infrastructure, Training and Workforce Development, and our consulting partners with Pivot Strategies and Cambridge Systematics.

External partners were sent a survey prior to the meeting to help understand specific goals and areas of expertise that would be represented. CTA received 28 responses to the pre-meeting survey.

Attendees indicated shaping CTA programs and learning from peer agencies as key goals, and community advocacy, violence prevention, crisis intervention and behavioral health as key areas of expertise represented.



When asked about the core responsibilities of the CTA vs. responsibilities to be delivered through partnership with other providers, attendees stressed CTA's responsibilities to deliver reliable service, maintain safe and welcoming spaces, upholding the code of conduct and expanding infrastructure enabling safety activities. Attendees stressed that partners should assist in coordinating various resources, tailoring responses to specific needs and administering specialized resources or services like health response, case management, and crisis stabilization.

CTA's Responsibilities

- Deliver accessible and reliable services
- Maintain safe and welcoming spaces
- Maintain code of conduct
- Expand safety infrastructure with technology, communication systems, applications, and partnerships
- Communicate efforts to public

Partner Responsibilities

- Coordinate across providers
- Tailor responses to issues and needs
- Administer direct resource provision (e.g. Narcan)
- Provide ongoing case management for those in need
- Offer crisis stabilization and follow-up services
- Facilitate program evaluation

Workshop Agenda

1. CTA Overview
2. Peer Agency Panel
3. Breakout Activity and Discussion
4. Conclusion

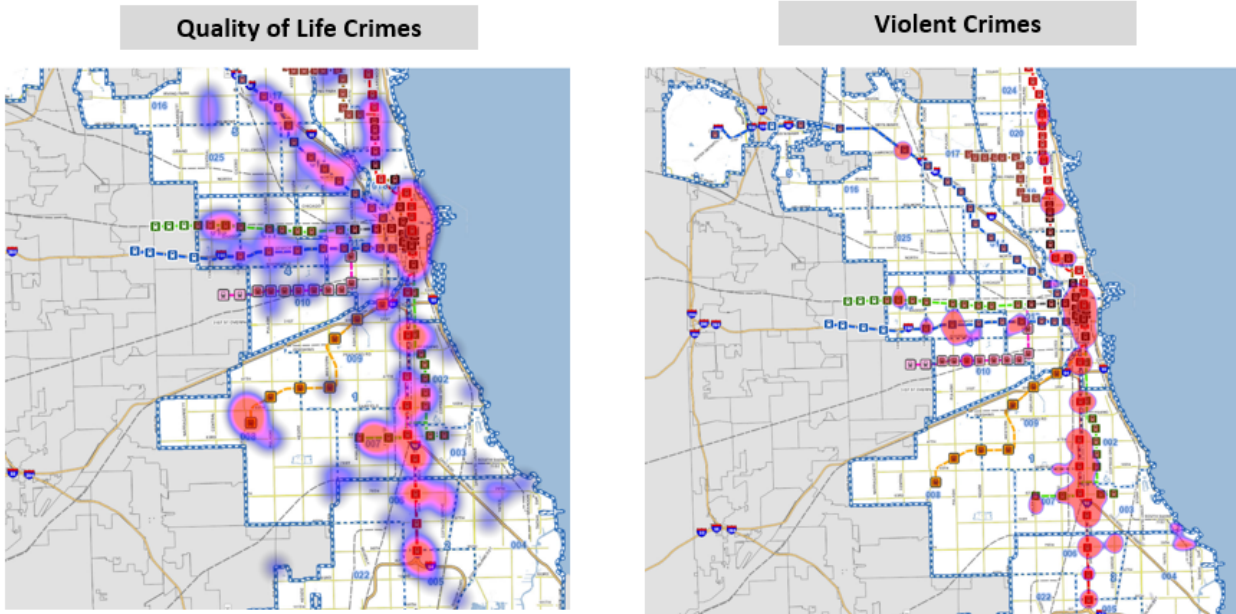
1. CTA Transit Security Overview

The transit environment presents a unique and dynamic set of security challenges that require thoughtful and multifaceted approaches. During the workshop, it was emphasized by CTA's Vice President of Security Kevin Ryan, that both riders and front-line transit staff navigate a space where criminal activity, unruly behavior, code of conduct violations, and behavioral health or unhoused concerns often intersect and, in most ways, the environment on CTA is a reflection of the environment shared in many public spaces across the City. While these categories are interconnected, they are not identical—and the response to each must be appropriately nuanced. A one-size-fits-all approach is neither effective nor equitable. Below is a breakdown of the current security challenges CTA faces, customer reactions, impacts on service and the tools and responses CTA currently leverages.

Criminal Activity

- The Chicago Police Department (CPD) and law enforcement focus on criminal activity, chronic offenders, and hot spots.
- Violent crime is primarily focused on the Red Line.
 - Violent Crimes are down 3% YOY in June/July after a 26% increase last year, concentrated on the red line south. 108 incidents last year, 105 incidents this year. [As of 8.28.25]

- Quality of life crime and related issues are primarily focused on the Blue Line.
 - Quality of life crimes are defined as theft and other non-violent crime incidents. Currently, quality of life crimes are down 6% YOY in June/July after a 16% decrease last year. [As of 8.28.25]




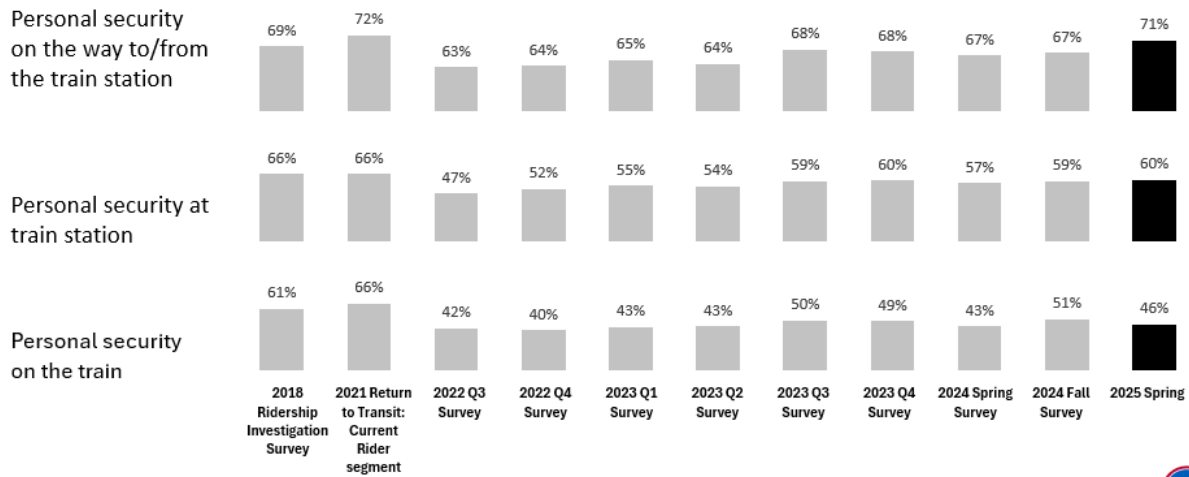
- **Unruly Behaviors** often are result of two different types of issues: mental health & substance abuse, which is often non-criminal in nature, and other anti-social/criminal activity.
- **Code of Conduct Violations** are the focus of customer complaints and include smoking, drinking, loud music, and related policy complaints. These occur across the system.
- **Behavioral health** and reports related to riders sheltering on CTA are concentrated in the Loop and Blue Line.

Recognizing this, the CTA is committed to deploying the right mix of resources—ranging from law enforcement to social services—to address the full spectrum of issues present in the system. The goal is to ensure safety while promoting dignity and appropriate support for all individuals in the transit space.

CTA Customer Satisfaction

CTA's Vice President of Innovation and Strategy Cara Bader discussed customer satisfaction rates. CTA customer satisfaction with security on the train has yet to reach satisfaction levels before the COVID-19 pandemic, while other security factors are closer to pre-pandemic levels. Security on board rail has become a bigger issue than at and near rail stations.

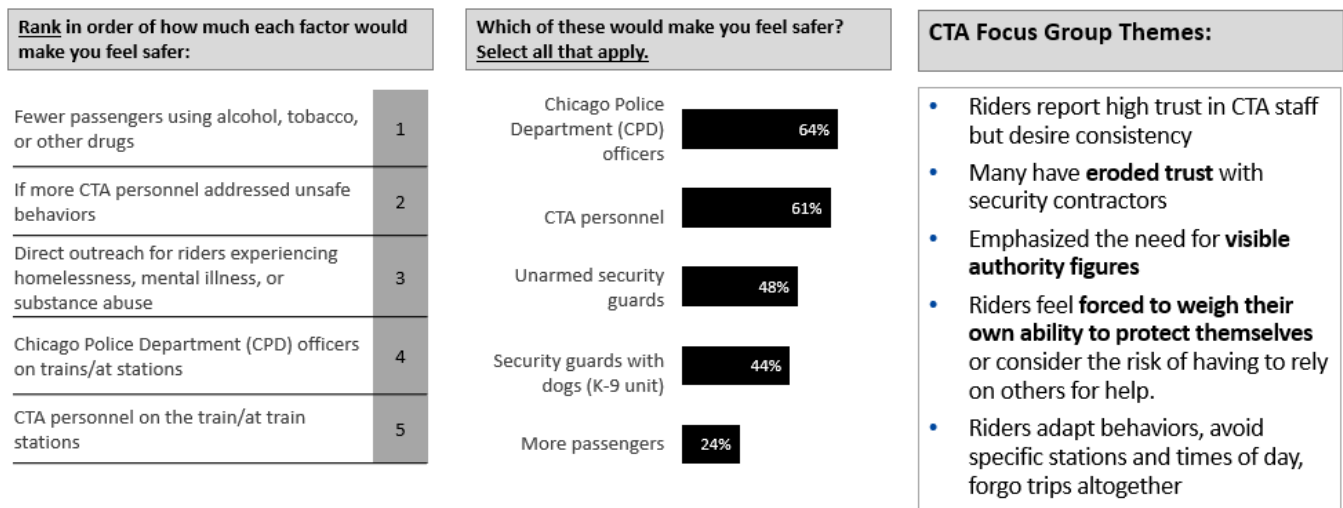
 Satisfaction with Train Security



- The most recent customer satisfaction survey shows a 46% satisfaction rate with personal security **on the train**; this is in line with results the agency has been seeing throughout COVID, but nearly 20 pts below satisfaction levels in 2018 with 61% satisfied.
- Riders tend to be more satisfied with personal security **at train stations** (60%) and personal security on the way **to/from train stations** (71%). Satisfaction with security at train stations is slightly below pre-COVID levels (66%), while satisfaction with personal security on the way to/from train stations slightly exceeds pre-COVID levels of 69%.
- It is important to note that satisfaction also varies by rail line as some of the highest satisfaction with personal security is on the Orange Line, while the Red Line (North & South), Loop, and Green Line Lake Street station have some of the lowest satisfaction rates at 39%

It is important to note that security is not as big of a concern on bus as rail, but we still see bus security concerns driving some individuals to reduce their riding limit. Overall satisfaction with personal security on bus is around 79% on bus, while at the bus stop it is 78%, and 83% when on the way to/from the bus.

Across riders, there is a strong desire for a greater staff presence on CTA trains. Opinions from riders on preferred interventions varied, but CTA and CPD staff were most consistently rated as improving safety. Riders wish for greater and more visible accountability and personnel supervision; it is imperative to them that they see meaningful action has been taken.

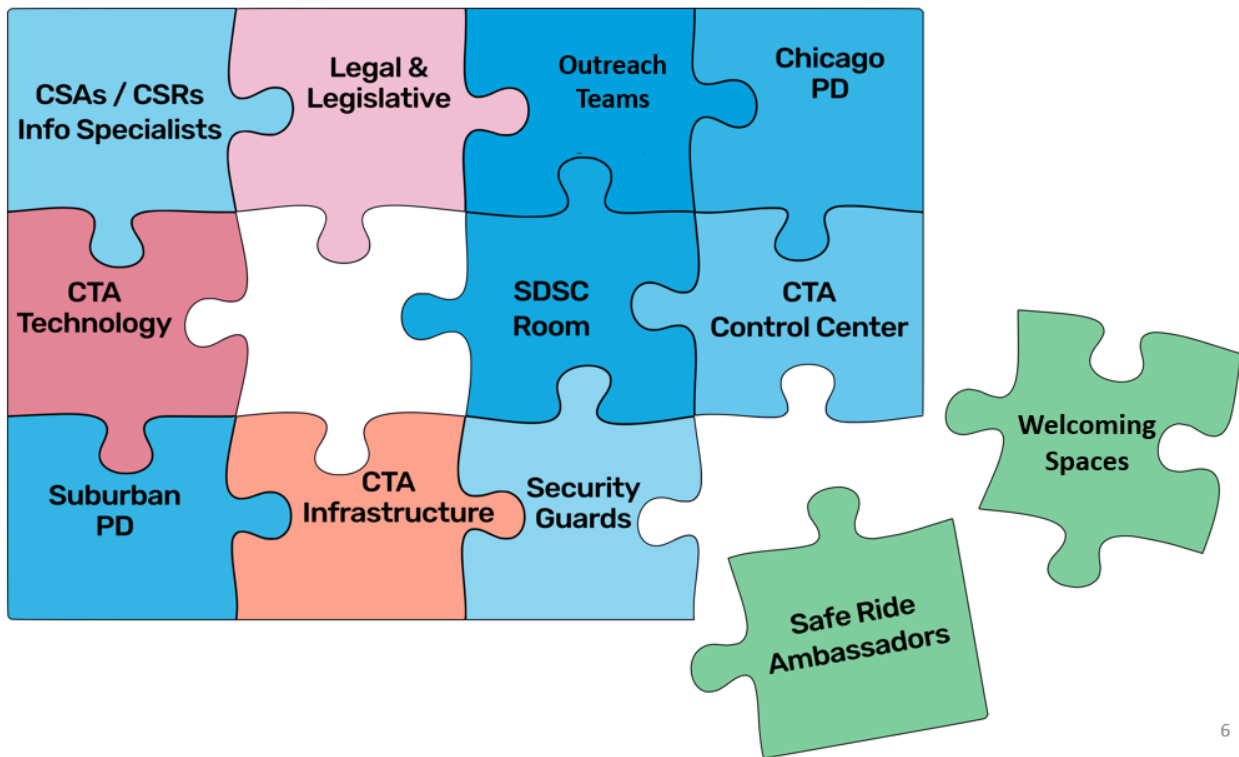


Operations Impacts

Vice President of Rail Operations Jeannie Alexander presented data showing the impact of security incidents on operators and service delivery. CTA is required to report physical and non-physical assaults to the FTA, and operators and front-line staff are under significant pressure to deliver the core functions of our service, while also contending with security challenges. CTA gathers feedback from meetings at bus garages and rail terminals with operators and station staff. CTA also presented a string chart that shows the cascading impacts of a delay on the Blue Line due to a disruptive passenger holding a door, which created a 27-minute delay that resulted in the subsequent bunching of five consecutive trains.

Layered, Comprehensive Approach

Finally, Chief Operating Officer Veronica Alanis presented on the landscape of tools CTA leverages in a layered, comprehensive approach. These tools range from our partnership with CPD and other policing districts who are responsible for law enforcement efforts and proactive measures enhancing safety on the system, to our partnerships with contracted security resources who conduct code of conduct enforcement and report incidents. These partnerships also include social service agencies, who take different steps to monitor service conditions and provide opportunities for a meal or other hygiene resources and refer passengers to available resources.



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2. Transit Peer Agency Panel

The CTA Transit Community Safety Workshop also featured a peer agency panel – *“Partnerships That Protect: Insights from Leading Transit Systems.”* The panel was moderated by Flora Castillo and included representatives from three peer agencies where safety response teams have been established and are assisting in the transit systems. The three agencies were:

- TriMet
 - Servicing the Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon
 - Speaker: Andrew Wilson, Executive Director of Safety & Security
- BART
 - San Francisco’s Bay Area Rapid Transit
 - Speakers: Deputy Chief J’ason Scott and James Lancaster, Senior Supervisor, Crisis Outreach & Behavioral Response
- Metro Transit
 - Leading Transportation resource for the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN)
 - Speaker: Lesley Kandaras, Metro Transit General Manager

TriMet's Safety Response Team (SRT)

Andrew Wilson – TriMet, Executive Director of Safety and Security/Chief Safety Officer



Andrew brings more than 20 years of risk management experience and an impressive TriMet history of leadership performance, fiscal responsibility and dedication to the safety and well-being of TriMet riders, employees and the public.

Andrew oversees four departments including Safety, Security, Transit Police and Environmental Services. He leads all safety and security practices and activities, advances workplace safety efforts and will direct the safe delivery of transit services and agency projects.

The Safety Response Team (SRT) is responsible for maintaining a high-visibility presence, conducting social service outreach, providing referrals for housing, mental health, and addiction support, distributing emergent supplies to riders in need, and addressing low-level incidents without relying on 911 resources.

- Launched as a pilot program in 2021.
- Started with a team of 7 members and are now currently at 90 Safety Response Team members.
- \$1.8 million-dollar initial investment and now are spending around \$4million on SRT personnel annually.
- Officially adopted as a fully budgeted program in July of 2023 and was the recipient of the APTA Gold Award in 2023.

Ja'Son Scott – BART, Deputy Chief



Deputy Chief Scott began his law enforcement journey in 1999 with the Oakland Police Department as a graduate from the department's 142nd Basic Recruit Academy. Over the years, he held a variety of roles— from a School Resource Officer, Field Training Officer to a Motor Officer and traffic investigator, demonstrating his versatility and dedication to public safety. In 2012, he transitioned to the BART Police Department, where he continued to serve as COPPS Sergeant, watch commander, and zone commander.

On November 7, 2022, Ja'Son was appointed Deputy Chief of the Progressive Policing and Community Engagement Bureau by then, Chief Alvarez. Prior to this leadership role, he served as the Personnel and Training Lieutenant for two years, where he was instrumental in recruiting hundreds of talented candidates for the BART Police Department.

James Lancaster – BART, Crisis Intervention & Outreach Programs Supervisor



James is an experienced behavioral health leader and licensed psychotherapist with a strong forensic mental health background. He has defined his career by a commitment to improving public safety, enhancing behavioral health access, and leading systems-level initiatives at the intersection of clinical care, criminal justice, and policy reform.

James currently leads BART’s Crisis Intervention and Outreach Program. He oversees clinical strategies that support individuals experiencing psychiatric emergencies, homelessness, and substance use challenges within the transit system. James manages Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) and Advanced Officer Training (AOT) programs for sworn and non-sworn personnel, integrating topics such as mental illness and the law, trauma-informed care, suicide prevention, and cultural responsiveness.

BART Progressive Policing and Community Engagement Bureau (PPCEB)

- The PPCEB was created in 2020 to lead the way in new approaches to address systemic societal issues affecting: public safety, including homelessness, mental illness, and addiction.
- The PPCEB is a part of the overall San Francisco Police Department Budget.
- The team is comprised of both sworn and unarmed civilian personnel on trains in the core areas of the BART system.
- Progressive Policing has a positive and measurable effect on individuals in crises by minimizing exposure to the justice system through collaborative alternatives.
- The PPCEB employs a Deputy Chief that oversees the expanded non-sworn personnel, which includes Crisis Outreach Specialist Supervisors, 24 trained Crisis Intervention Specialists, and 10 ambassadors.

Metro Transit – Transit Service Intervention Project (TSIP)

Lesley Kandaras - Metro Transit, General Manager



Lesley Kandaras has served as Metro Transit's general manager since July 2023. In 2024, she completed her mission to [ride every route Metro Transit operates](#) within her first year in the general manager role and recorded more than 1,000 annual rides. Kandaras also led efforts to co-create a new strategic framework, [Metro Transit Forward](#), that identifies Metro Transit's strategic priorities as employees, experience, and service.

Kandaras joined the Metropolitan Council in 2012 as a senior project coordinator, supporting the Council Chair and Council Members. She came to Metro Transit, a division of the Met Council, in 2019 to serve as senior manager-policy development and later served as chief of staff and interim general manager. She is the first woman to permanently fill the position of Metro Transit general manager.

The Metro Transit Service Intervention Project, a one-time \$2 million state-funded effort was established on June 1, 2023. This project, also known as the Transit Service Intervention Project or TSIP, is a joint effort by Metro Transit and local partners to provide coordinated, high visibility interventions on light rail, enhanced social services outreach and engagement, Code of Conduct regulation, and law enforcement in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

- The TSIP has 10 contracts with community-based/non-profit organizations approved for intervention services and outreach.
- Engagement with transit riders experience homelessness, with substance use disorders, and/or with mental or behavior health disorders.
- The TSIP is shaped and led by the Homeless Action Team leadership and outreach.

Key Takeaways

Panelists acknowledged the complexity of the challenges that these safety programs are designed to address and recognized that making progress involves types of interventions that lie outside of standard transit operations. To address this complex environment, the panelists stressed the importance of developing clear goals for the program related to the safety of riders and the well-being of those in crisis. Establishing tangible measures of success and reporting on progress towards these measures is essential for demonstrating how the programs are intended to work. Storytelling around the metrics also helps to explain the value they are creating within the transit systems, such as the social benefits created by diverting those in need from the criminal justice system towards more holistic forms of recovery and social assistance.

However, those holistic social assistance models have their own challenges, as they involve engagement with a multifaceted social safety net that consists of multiple organizations, often involving multiple levels of government and nonprofit service

providers. Clear roles and responsibilities for safety ambassadors are needed to delineate what forms of support can be provided within the transit system – such as physical and mental first aid, care provision, and crisis de-escalation – and what forms require the involvement of dedicated social workers or other professionals.

Referral services and warm handoffs play a key role in the assignment of roles and responsibilities, as these practices allow those in crisis to move from safety ambassadors to social workers and other partner staff with a clear understanding of what the individual is experiencing and what types of help are needed to resolve the crisis. At the same time, ensuring that safety ambassadors are properly equipped to provide the care for which they are trained (the aforementioned first aid and care provision) and to communicate effectively with partners further strengthens the holistic model, as this equipment enables the safety ambassadors to make a positive impact and build trust with the individuals experiencing crisis at the point of initial contact.

The complexities that the safety ambassador programs face point to two additional factors that greatly influence their efficacy: scale and funding. Panelists discussed the challenges associated with moving from the pilot phase to a more permanent program. They noted that increasing the scale of the program's services, geography, and time coverage all require extensive planning and ongoing administrative support to identify where additional ambassadors are necessary throughout the transit system; train up and equip ambassadors; deploy and oversee a larger number of field personnel; and assess performance and communicate out to internal and external stakeholders.

Peer transit agencies emphasized that the success of safety and crisis response programs must be measured not only through enforcement reductions but also through community impact and trust-building outcomes. Effective measures include a decrease in police-only interventions, increased successful referrals to outreach or health services, and improved rider and employee perceptions of safety. Agencies noted the importance of tracking quantitative data such as incident reductions, response times, and coverage areas alongside qualitative feedback from ambassadors, riders, and community partners to capture real progress. Regular reporting, transparent data-sharing, and collaborative evaluation with stakeholders were identified as essential practices for sustaining accountability, refining program design, and reinforcing the credibility of non-law enforcement safety models across transit systems.

With scale comes the need to secure additional funding that can be relied on for long-term programmatic support. Funding contributions from the transit agency play a significant role in building sustainability for the ambassador program, as they signal to social service providers and other government agencies that the transit agency is a committed partner in this effort. However, the multisector nature of the safety ambassador programs is a strong

encouragement for identifying and securing funding from entities outside the transportation sector, including public health, public safety, and the nonprofit sector.

3. **Breakout Group Activity**

Following the overview from CTA staff and presentations from peer agencies, attendees were organized into eight groups to construct their ideal response role for a crisis intervention resource using different, real-life scenarios informed by the experiences of CTA riders and frontline staff. Four personas were created by staff to guide the breakout discussion and attendees collaborated to specify their vision of how the service should function.

Together attendees collaborated on the vision for the CTA Safe Ride Ambassadors developing the qualifications and core competencies for this new type of role. Each table was instructed to build their ambassador using a toolkit provided and with help from group facilitators and note takers and share out as a group. The feedback received will be used for the development of CTA's new ambassador program, including the potential for different Ambassador models to address different concerns (crisis intervention, violence interrupters, youth engagement, etc.).

The “Build Your Ambassador” Toolkit

- **Response Model** (e.g., peer specialist, transit police/ CPD, social workers, staff, security guards, co-response etc.)
- **Policy/Practice** (e.g., Code of conduct, required training, resources (Narcans, dogs)
- **Community Engagement** (e.g., marketing, public safety campaigns, local partnerships, rider education)
- **Technology** (e.g., ChatBot, Cameras, AI monitoring, panic buttons, apps)
- **Branding** (name, uniform, station/vehicle signage)
- **Evaluation and Reporting** (Reporting/measures/KPIs)



Real-Life Scenarios Used for Breakout Activity

Persona A: Dennis: Long-Term Shelter-Seeking Rider in Crisis at CTA Bus Terminal

- **Age:** 50
- **Profile:** Dennis has recently been living at the Ford City Mall CTA bus terminal. Once a factory worker, he lost stable housing after a job loss and the passing of a close family member. Dennis now cycles between survival mode and visible mental health crisis. He suffers from untreated major depression, PTSD, and substance use, and is known to express suicidal ideation.
- **Behaviors Observed:** Frequently yells at riders who approach the shelter; uses threatening or incoherent language. Has exposed himself to passengers, likely in a state of confusion or dissociation. Refuses to leave when asked by operators or CTA personnel. Sometimes seen crying or muttering to himself, saying things like “I shouldn’t be here anymore”.

Discussion Tables 2 & 6

- Participants emphasized a proactive and compassionate ambassador model centered on risk assessment, de-escalation, and non-police interventions. Ambassadors should be clearly identifiable (e.g., safety vests), use respectful communication and calming body language, and be trained to recognize signs of mental health distress. Ambassadors should work closely with mental health providers, housing agencies, family services, and crisis partners like CPD and behavioral health providers.
- Access to tools such as radios, shelter contacts, and local resource directories (e.g., food pantries, faith houses) is essential for timely support and warm handoffs when trying to relocate Dennis from the Ford City Bus Terminal. The approach should prioritize Dennis’s dignity and safety while addressing both immediate risks and long-term needs. Like Martha (see below), participants recommended having an on-the-spot database such as a tablet where encounter notes can be tracked and referred to later.

Persona B: Grandmother Rosa and Grandson – Experiencing Violence Exposure

- **Age:** 65
- **Profile:** Primary caregiver of her 10-year-old grandson with asthma. Uses a cane, limited stamina for long transfers and standing. CTA is her only reliable mode of transportation, including trips to visit extended family members and frequent medical appointments for grandson. Frequently travels through high-incident neighborhoods.

- **Behaviors Observed:** Keeps to herself, anxious about safety on platforms and avoiding triggers of smoke for grandson, avoids eye contact and asking uniformed security for help due to limited English proficiency, instead relies on other passengers, occasionally refuses assistance even when visibly struggling.

Discussion Tables 5 & 8

- Participants emphasized that the ideal transit ambassador model should focus on familiarity, trust, and cultural responsiveness. Safe Ride Ambassadors should be consistently assigned to specific routes, ideally representing a variety of ages, in doing so this will foster familiarity with everyday riders on routes. The Ambassadors' presence should be visible through identifiable vests or badges, a forward-thinking idea that developed from the breakout season was having specific badges that demonstrate said ambassador's ability to speak in multiple languages. Like the other three personas, ambassadors should be trained in de-escalation, and first-aid use. Ambassadors should also be proactive, helping with directions, identifying signs of struggle, and connecting riders to services without relying solely on police or security personnel.
- If ambassadors do not possess the ability of speaking multiple languages, attendees recommended that technology and tools like multilingual pamphlets, translation devices, and QR codes can support communication and access to safety resources as well. It was stressed that clear communication, including public announcements and visible materials in multiple languages, will reinforce the ambassadors' availability and role. Success would ultimately be measured by greater comfort and presence of vulnerable riders like Rosa, who currently avoid using transit or may not seek help due to language barriers and safety fears.
- While the Safe Ride Ambassador would be responsive to the needs of the grandmother, the issues that the grandmother encounters in the system – including youth rowdiness and smoking – might need a different response. Having a good system in place for ambassadors to communicate with central command and call for additional resources was highlighted as critical.
- ***Persona C: Martha: Adult Female in Visible Crisis on the Train and Station***
Age: 55
- **Profile:** Martha is a long-time Chicagoan and a veteran who has been cycling in and out of temporary shelters. She experiences untreated schizophrenia and chronic medical issues, including open leg wounds. She has difficulty accessing regular behavioral and medical health care. She frequently rides the trains, especially during off-peak hours, using them for mobility, warmth, and rest.
- **Behaviors Observed:** Talking to herself loudly or muttering unintelligibly. Occasionally shouting in response to internal stimuli. Wearing soiled or torn

clothing; strong body odor. Engages in unsanitary behaviors in elevators and on platforms (urination/defecation). Open, unbandaged wounds on legs; sometimes leaking fluid. Can become verbally defensive if approached abruptly and appear agitated or confused when asked to exit or move.

Discussion Tables 1 & 3

- Participants asserted the Safe Ride Ambassador response model should be rooted in compassion, trust-building, and non-enforcement strategies. Ambassadors should be trained in de-escalation, emotional support, harm reduction, and behavioral health response. Recommended technologies included tablets, first aid kits, and access to case management systems to best serve someone like Martha. If ambassadors are armed with an on-the spot case file with a list of every touchpoint someone has had with Martha it can help strengthen their approach. Strong partnerships with mental health advocates, crisis teams, and social services are essential for effective warm handoffs and ongoing support.
- In dealing with someone such as Martha who can be easily agitated, it is important to take a non-co-responder method with her: prioritize comforting her and talking to her and avoid overwhelming her. Clear communication is vital. Attendees noted that program success should be measured by tracking referrals, service connections, and case management outcomes. This people-centered model prioritizes dignity, safety, and lasting community trust, something the CTA strives for.

Persona D: “The After-School and Overnight Crew” – Youth Groups Seeking Freedom & Testing Boundaries

- **Age:** 13–17
- **Profile:** A group of 6–10 teens who ride CTA together after school or during summer afternoons. They gather at and ride back and forth between transfer points like 95th/Dan Ryan, Roosevelt, and Jackson late afternoons and during overnight hours. Sometimes loud, joking, or arguing among themselves. At times, their behavior causes discomfort or fear among other riders and contributes to a perception of disorder.
- **Behaviors Observed:** Holding train doors open, playing music loudly, jumping turnstiles. Occasional verbal confrontations with passengers or operators. May be testing boundaries rather than intending real harm, however mild incidents may escalate quickly.

Discussion Tables 4 & 7

- Participants emphasized that the ideal Safe Ride Ambassador response model for youth groups should be visible, approachable, and rooted in relationship-building,

with ambassadors who are trauma-informed, trained in youth development, and skilled in de-escalation. Ambassadors should focus on respectful, non-judgmental communication, using body language and tone that puts youth at ease while helping manage disruptions in a calm, understanding way. Establishing consistent presence in key transit areas allows for familiarity, which can reduce tension and build trust. A strong customer service approach—asking simple questions like “How are you?,” was recommended to open dialogue and humanize interactions.

- Technology tools such as two-way radios, centralized dispatch systems, and interactive signage or QR codes were suggested to improve communication and connect youth with nearby after-school activities or safe hangout spaces. Participants from tables 4 & 7 stressed the need for clear role definitions between ambassadors, CTA staff, and law enforcement, and recommended building partnerships with behavioral health, housing, and community service providers for warm handoffs when needed. Branding should clearly associate ambassadors with the CTA while avoiding terms like “security” or “police” to maintain a youth-friendly image. Lastly, community feedback and visibility were seen as key to refining and evaluating the program’s success over time.

4. Conclusion

CTA leadership reconvened the group after Group Discussion report outs. CTA indicated that Pivot Strategies and Cambridge Systematics would lead a short wrap up exercise. Attendees engaged with two questions on Mentimeter, an interactive polling tool for group meetings. Over 60 respondents at the event answered two key questions:

- (1) What are the most important elements for a successful program?
- (2) What does a successful program achieve?

The key themes from the first questions are summarized below, and a direct screen capture of a word cloud from the second question is also recreated here.

- 17 out of 17 responses indicated the Breakout Activity was Effective or Very Effective in allowing attendees to contribute their ideas

Next Steps

CTA staff concluded the meeting with a commitment to delivering this full report of the discussion topics of the meeting in October. This report is also being distributed to organization representatives that were not able to attend the workshop as well as representatives from CTA's governance boards.

Additionally, since the workshop, CTA staff and consultant teams have been organizing the feedback from the workshop into a framework for potential Safe Ride Ambassador pilot models. Agency staff, consultants and other stakeholders are reviewing the framework, which will inform pilot partnership opportunities. The Agency aims to release the pilot opportunities by the end of the year; organizations will be able to submit proposals under one or more pilot models and will have ample time to ask questions of the Agency and prepare responses for submission in early 2026.

Attachments

Peer Agency Ambassador Comparisons

CTA Presentation

Peer Agency Presentations

Transit Ambassador Program Comparison

Transit System	Program Name	Role Description	Core Skills	Success Metrics
GCRTA (Cleveland)	Transit Ambassador Program	Handles non-criminal issues, assists with fare compliance, connects riders to mental health resources via Crisis Intervention Specialists	Conflict resolution, CPR/Narcan training, de-escalation, customer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rider surveys Safety incident reduction
WMATA (DC)	Metro Ambassadors	Proactive customer service on trains/stations, prioritizes safety, and reports maintenance issues	De-escalation, CPR certification, system knowledge, radio communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer satisfaction Safety incident response times
Sound Transit (Seattle)	Fare Ambassadors	Fare compliance checks, anti-bias engagement with passengers, and connections to subsidized fare programs	Anti-bias training, conflict de-escalation, first aid/CPR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer feedback Fare compliance rates Safety incident reduction
BART (San Francisco /Oakland)	Crisis Intervention Specialists (CISes) and Transit Ambassador Program	<p>Uniformed presence on trains, addresses safety concerns, and provides conflict resolution</p> <p>A visible presence in the system, equipped with radios to report safety concerns and biohazards</p>	De-escalation, anti-bias training, customer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer feedback
LA Metro (Los Angeles)	Transit Ambassador Program	Lifesaving interventions (Narcan), suicide prevention, and maintenance reporting	Crisis intervention, Narcan administration, mental health outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rider engagement
NY MTA (New York City)	Customer Service Ambassadors	Roaming assistance at busy stations, real-time service updates, and tourist guidance	Communication, system navigation, conflict resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer feedback
King County Metro (Seattle)	Metro Ambassadors Pilot	Supports fare enforcement reform, engages riders at transit centers, and assists operators	De-escalation, community outreach, CPR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer feedback Safety perception surveys
SEPTA (Philadelphia)	SCOPE Outreach Workers	Roaming unarmed peer specialists who work in special engagement teams to connect people with support services	Crisis intervention, Narcan administration, mental health outreach, De-escalation, services navigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rider engagement Client referrals Narcan deployments

To learn more, visit:

[WMATA: Transit Ambassadors](#)

[BART: Transit Ambassador Program](#)

[GCRTA: Transit Ambassadors Program](#)

[King County Metro: Metro Ambassadors](#)

CTA Transit Community Safety Workshop

August 28, 2025

Agenda

- ➔ Workshop Goals and Logistics
- ➔ Welcome from Chairman Lester Barclay & Acting President Nora Leerhsen
- ➔ CTA Transit Security Overview & Introduction to Pilot Program Concepts
- ➔ Transit Agency Panel Discussion
 - TriMet, Andrew Wilson, Executive Director of Safety and Security
 - BART, Ja'Son Scott, Deputy Chief of Progressive Policing and Community Engagement Bureau
 - Metro Transit, Lesley Kandaras, General Manager
- ➔ Breakout Group Activity
- ➔ Closing and Next Steps

Who is here today?



Rules of Engagement & Meeting Guidelines

To ensure a respectful, productive, and inclusive discussion during today's breakout sessions, we ask all participants to uphold the following agreements:

- **Respect Different Perspectives** – In every chair, a leader.
- **One Voice at a Time** – Listen to understand.
- **Assume Positive Intent** – Value our time together.
- **Support Emotional Safety** – Take care of one another.
- **Encourage Full Participation** – Be present, be engaged.
- **Confidentiality & Respect** – Share insights, not identities.
- **Focus on Solutions** – We are responsible for our experience.

Workshop Theme & Goals

In support of CTA's *comprehensive security strategy*, we welcome our community partners to learn and engage with us around the security issues impacting our transit agency, and our city.

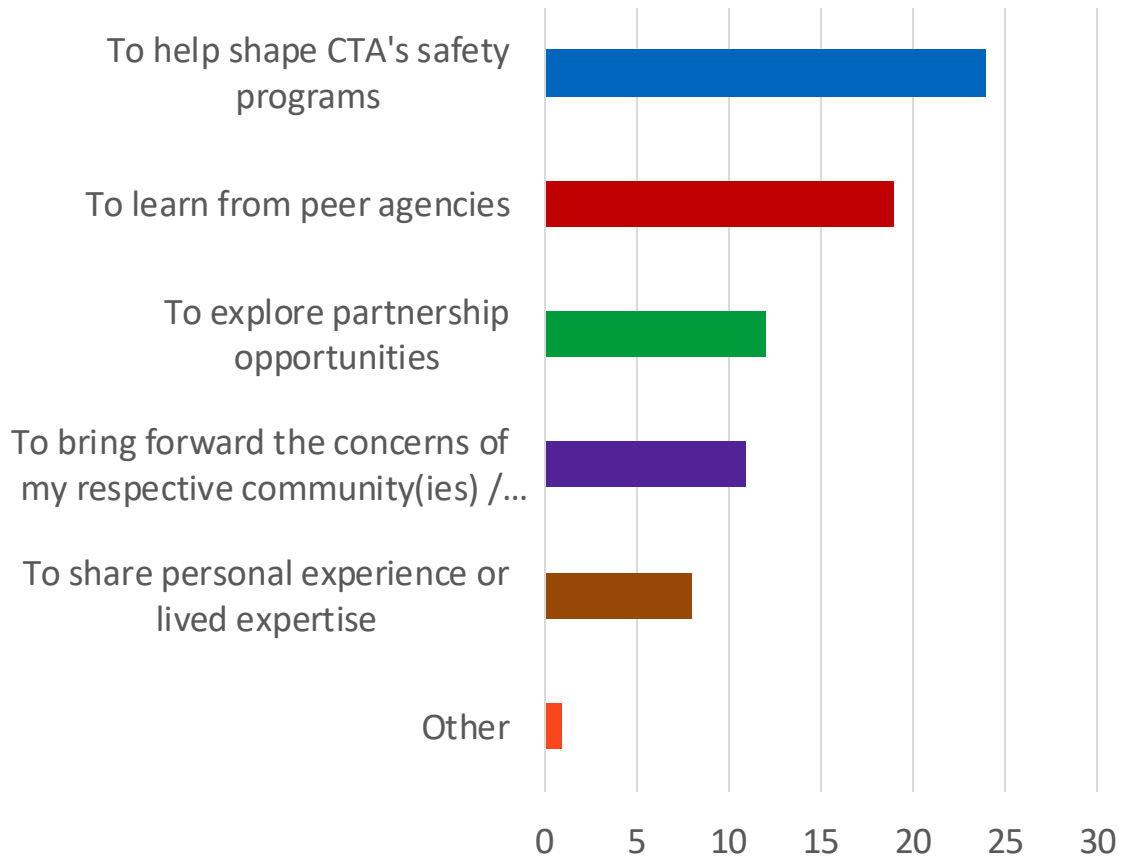
Theme: "Safety Through Presence, Partnership, and People"

Goals of Today's Workshop:

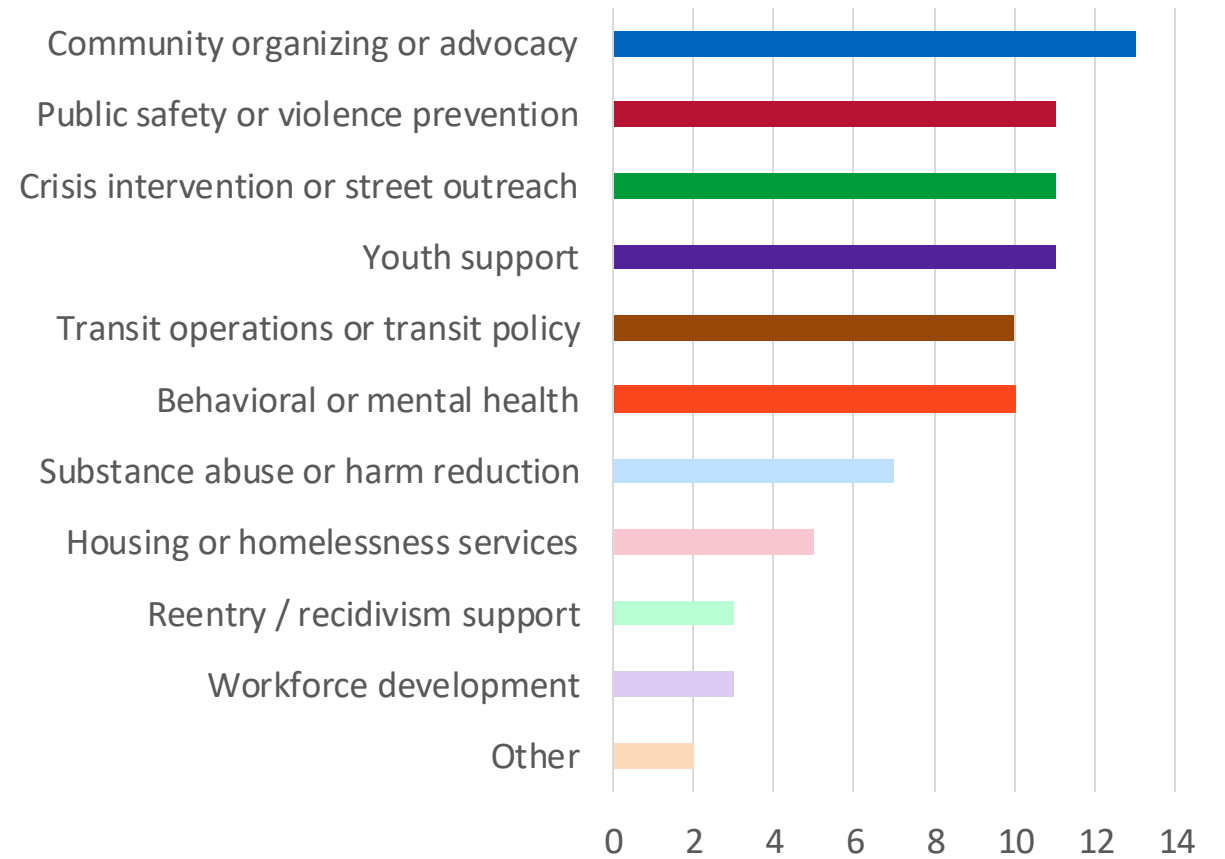
- Provide transparency on current safety conditions, hotspots, and responses.
- Introduce new ambassador program concept: **Safe Ride Ambassadors**.
- Gather stakeholder feedback to align program design and implementation to current CTA riders' needs, community support and resources availability.
- Foster a sense of ownership, build trust and open ongoing channels for collaboration.

Survey Results

What are the top reasons you are participating in this program?



What types of experience or expertise do you bring to this workshop?



CTA's Responsibilities

- Deliver accessible and reliable services
- Maintain safe and welcoming spaces
- Maintain code of conduct
- Expand safety infrastructure with technology, communication systems, applications, and partnerships
- Communicate efforts to public

Partner Responsibilities

- Coordinate across providers
- Tailor responses to issues and needs
- Administer direct resource provision (e.g. Narcan)
- Provide ongoing case management for those in need
- Offer crisis stabilization and follow-up services
- Facilitate program evaluation



Lester Barclay, Chairman
CTA Board



Nora Leerhsen, Acting
President of CTA





CTA's Security Landscape

Overview from CTA Leaders on current security challenges, customer sentiment, impact on front line workforce and service, and current programs

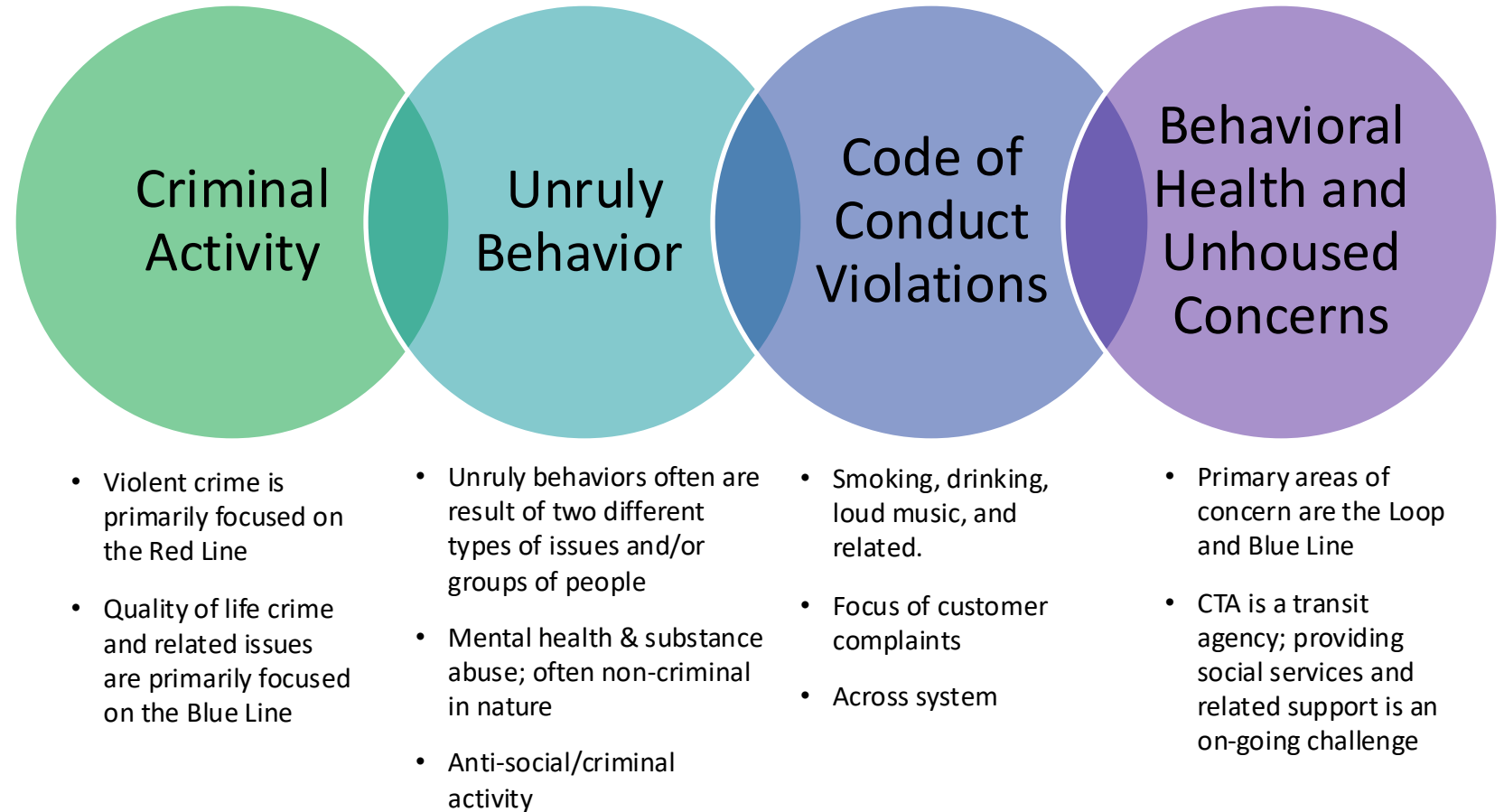


Chicago Transit Authority

The Transit Environment is Unique

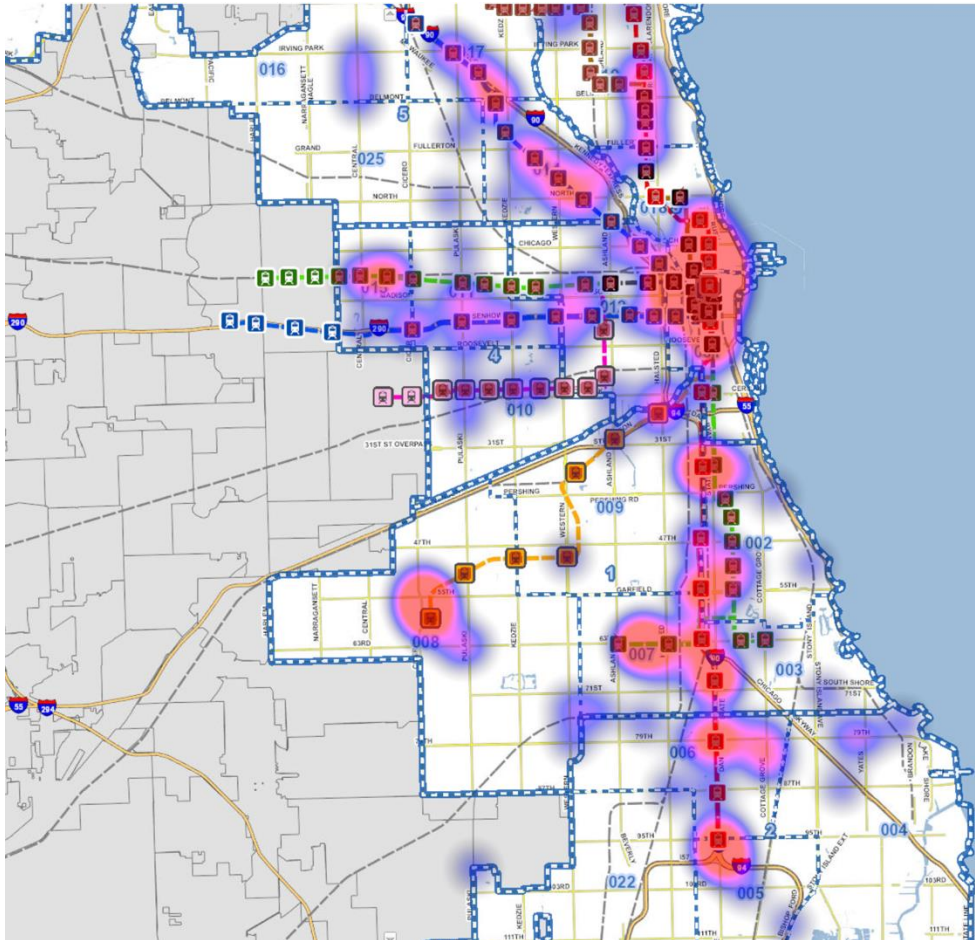
Complex Security Challenges Are Present for Riders and Front-Line Staff

- Multiple challenges require multiple strategies and partnerships
- Law Enforcement focuses on criminal activity, chronic offenders and hot spots
- Security teams deploy to proactively discourage behaviors and criminal activity
- Support teams deploy to selected locations to address on-going social and mental health challenges
- Sister agencies and local governmental support needed for funding, logistics and coordination

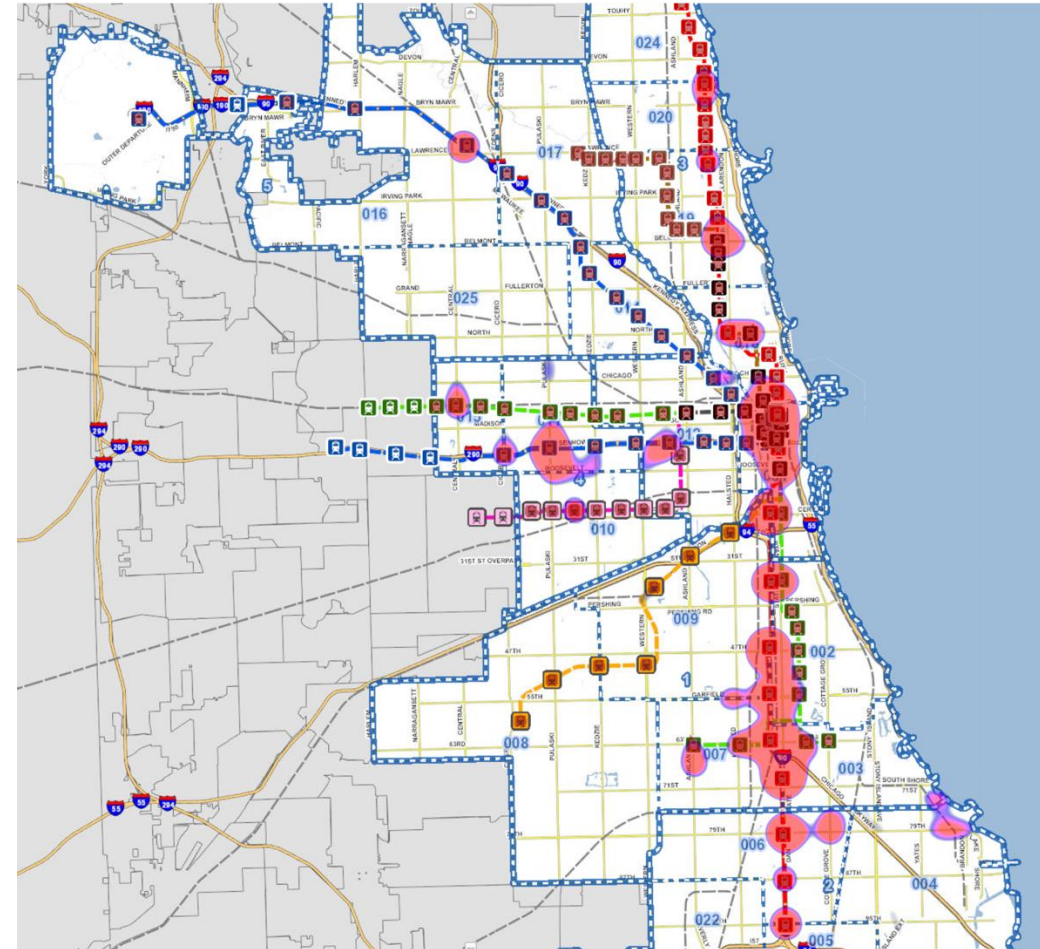


Quality of Life Crimes & Violent Crimes on CTA June/July 2025

Quality of Life Crimes



Violent Crimes



City of Chicago only

*Quality of life crimes are based on FBI definitions: Burglary, Theft/larceny, Motor Vehicle Theft, Vandalism, Prostitution, Drug Abuse

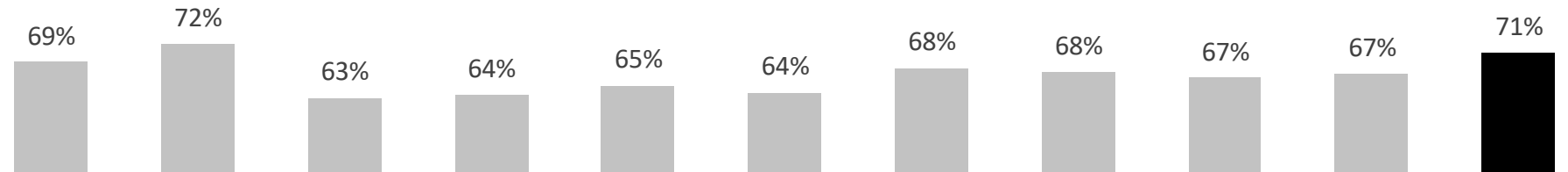
CTA customer satisfaction with security on the train has yet to reach the levels of security experienced before the pandemic, while other security factors are closer to pre-pandemic levels

Security on board is a bigger issue than at and near the stations

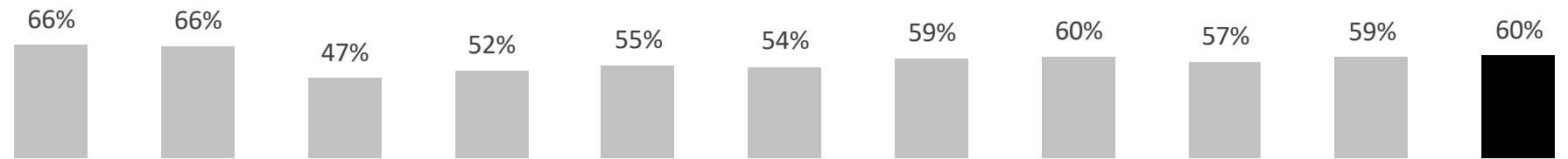


Satisfaction with Train Security

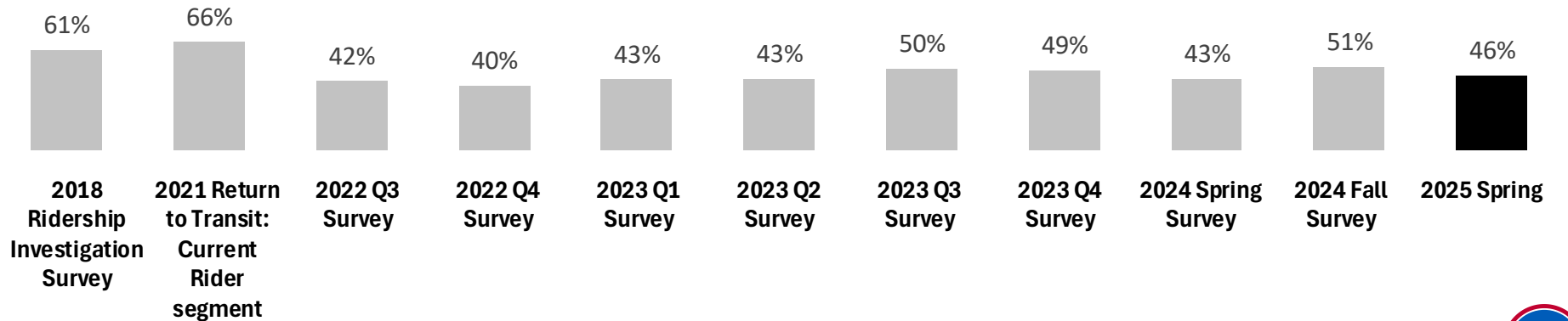
Personal security on the way to/from the train station



Personal security at train station

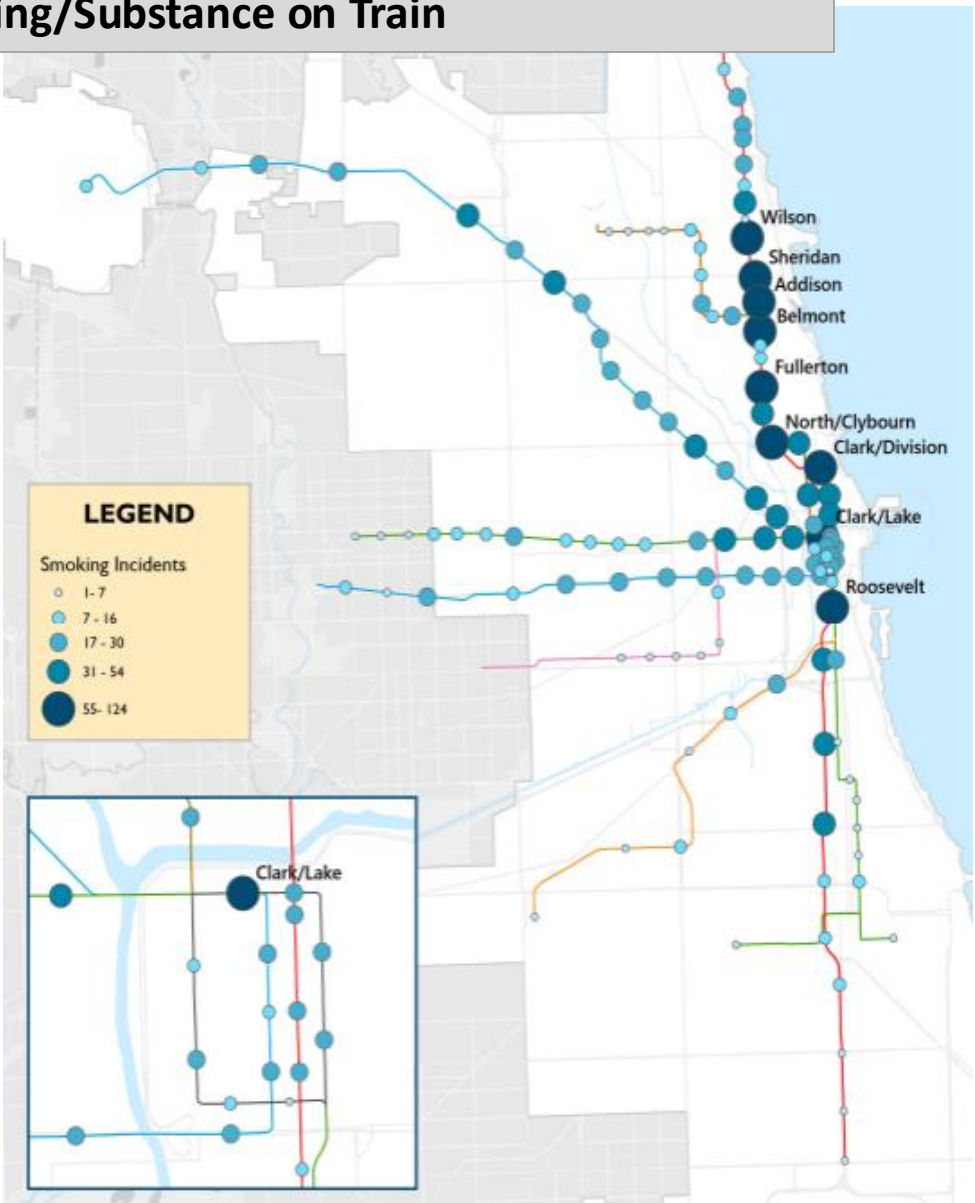


Personal security on the train

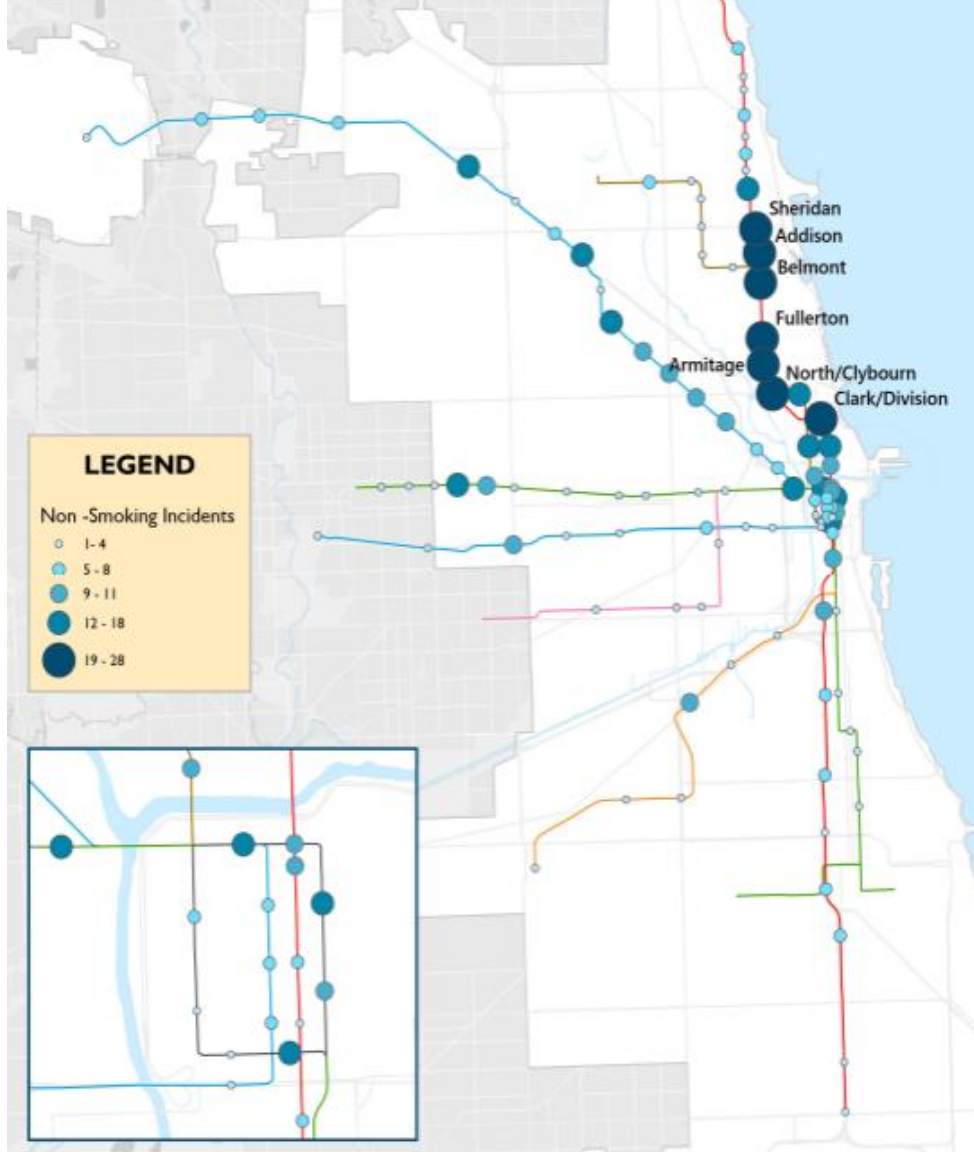


CTA has invested in more channels for real time customer reporting, which show alignment with other customer data reported – though geography varies

Smoking/Substance on Train



Disruptive Passengers – Aggressive/Other



Approaches Riders Want to See from CTA

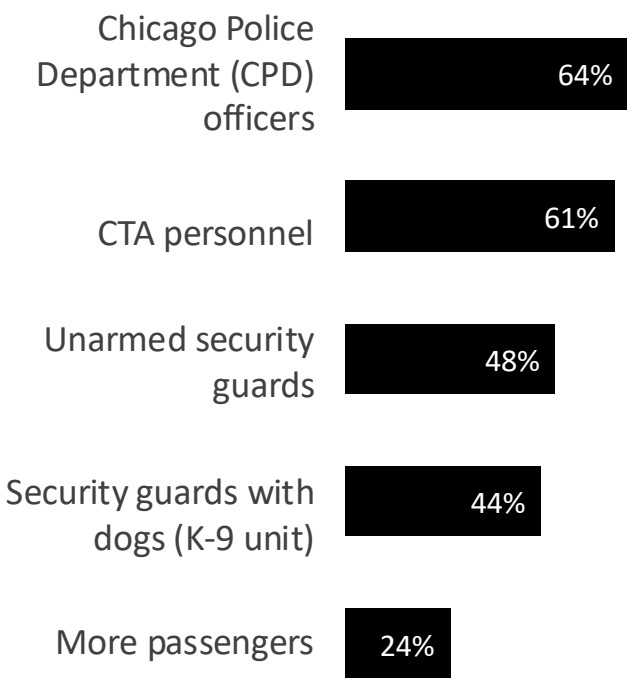


Among those dissatisfied with train security, n=952

Rank in order of how much each factor would make you feel safer:

Fewer passengers using alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs	1
If more CTA personnel addressed unsafe behaviors	2
Direct outreach for riders experiencing homelessness, mental illness, or substance abuse	3
Chicago Police Department (CPD) officers on trains/at stations	4
CTA personnel on the train/at train stations	5

Which of these would make you feel safer? Select all that apply.

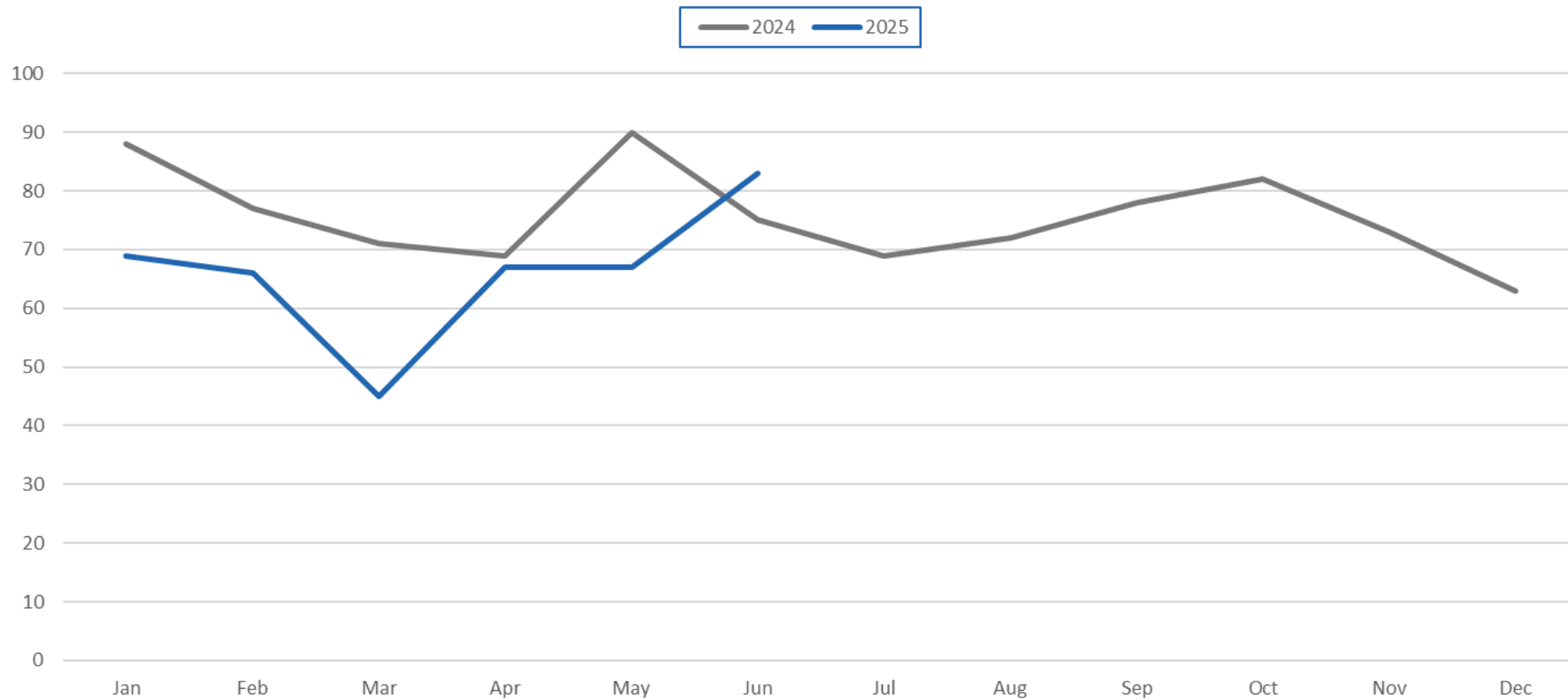


CTA Focus Group Themes:

- Riders report high trust in CTA staff but desire consistency
- Many have **eroded trust** with security contractors
- Emphasized the need for **visible authority figures**
- Riders feel **forced to weigh their own ability to protect themselves** or consider the risk of having to rely on others for help.
- Riders adapt behaviors, avoid specific stations and times of day, forgo trips altogether

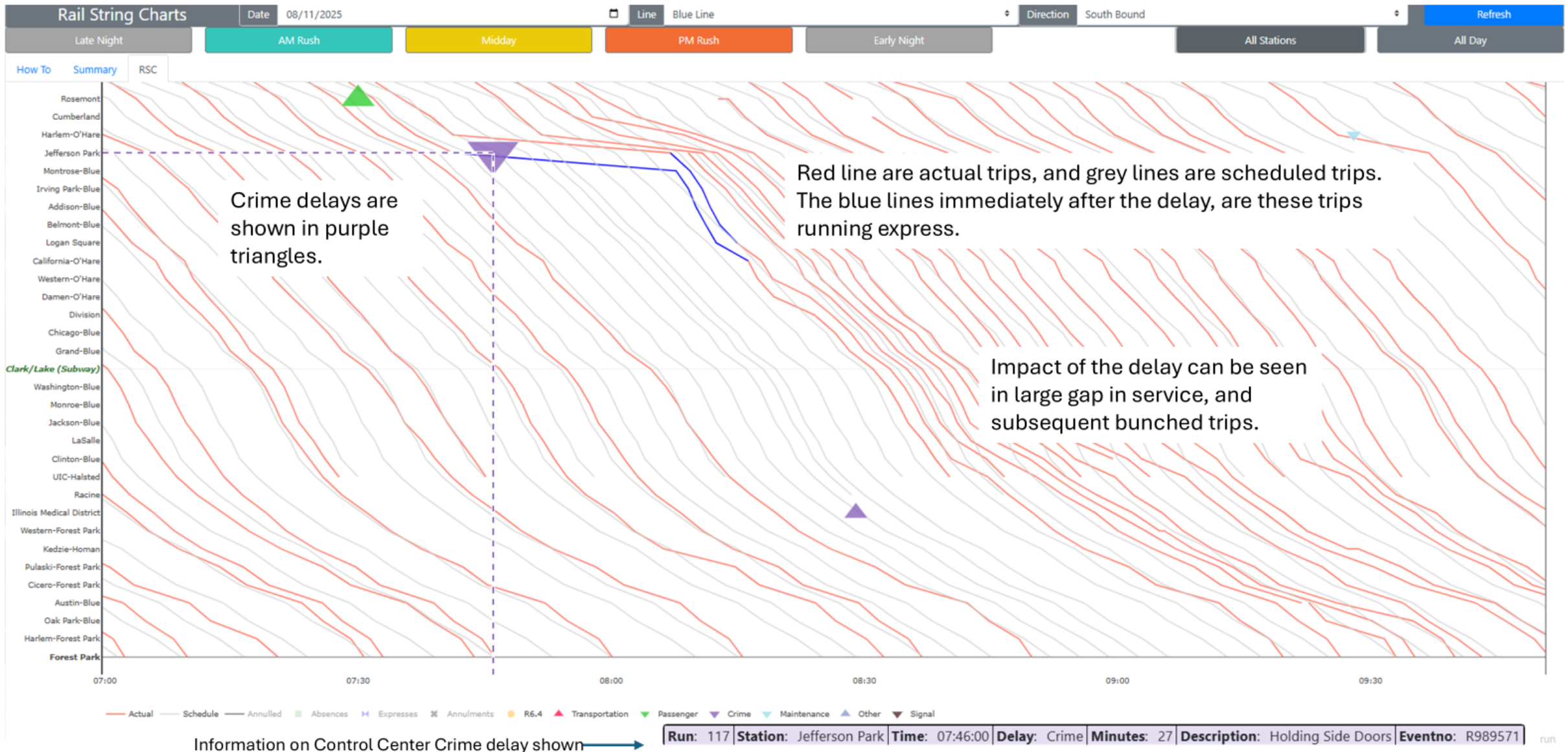
Front-Line Employees Face Security Challenges and Threats

CTA Incidents Reported to National Transit Database
(Includes Physical and Verbal Assaults)

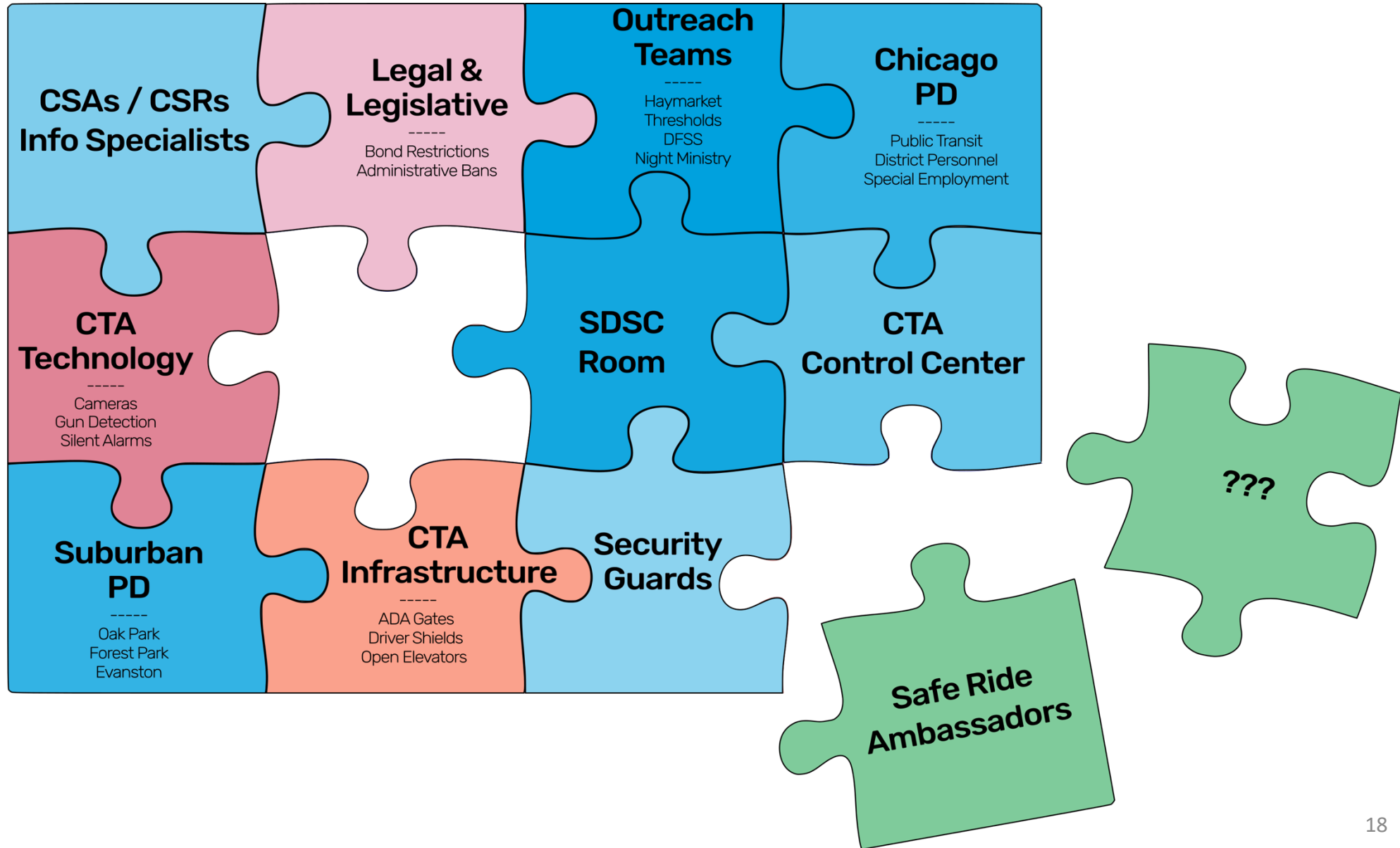


Note: As of April, 2023, the FTA requires transit agencies to report both physical and verbal assaults to the National Transit Database. Previously, transit agencies only reported physical assaults.

27 Minute Delay Due to Passenger Holding Door

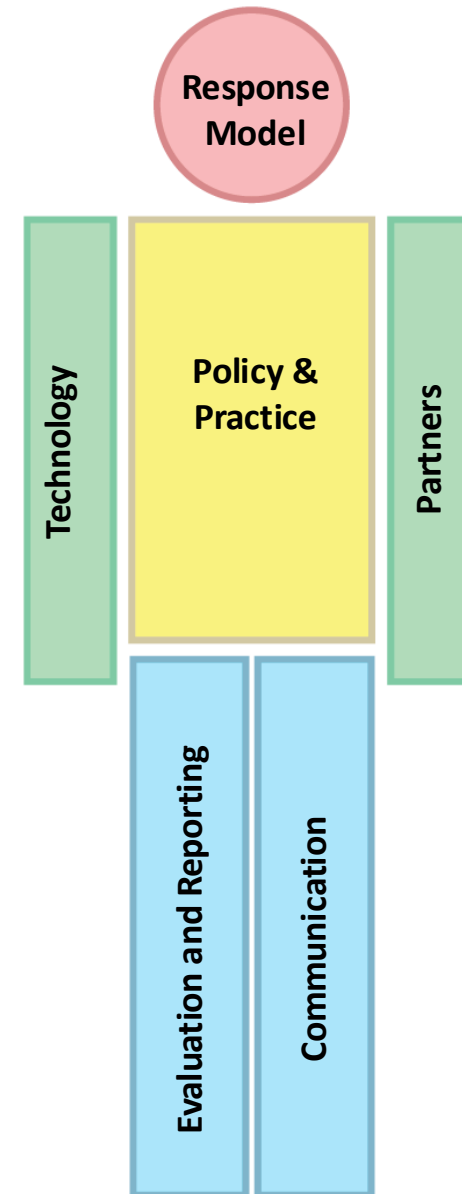


Layered, Comprehensive Approach



Pieces of the Comprehensive Approach

- Compassionately engage with vulnerable riders, reduce substance misuse and safety incidents, improve transit experience for riders and employees, and maintain a safe environment using a community-informed approach
- Together we are going to collaborate on our vision for **Safe Ride Ambassadors** developing the qualifications and core competencies for this new type of role
- Each table will build their ambassador toolkit and share out as a group



Meet your tables



Table 1

Facilitator: Arlana Johnson
Notetaker: Michael Rivera
CTA SME: Veronica Alanis



Table 2

Facilitator: Jeannie Alexander
Notetaker: Jack Hogan
CTA SME: Jairo Naranjo



Table 3

Facilitator: Baird Bream
Notetaker: Monaé Nunnery
CTA SME: Donald Bonds



Table 4

Facilitator: Tiya Sumter-Cunningham
Notetaker: Laura De Castro
CTA SME: Lenny Romano



Table 5

Facilitator: Brayon Williams
Notetaker: Gail Ribas
CTA SME: Kevin Ryan



Table 6

Facilitator: Tory Kurlander
Notetaker: Natalie Kindred
CTA SME: Gus Lostaunau



Table 7

Facilitator: Emily Drexler
Notetaker: Alex Rosander
CTA SME: Eddie Winters



Table 8

Facilitator: Lucien Liz-Lepiorz
Notetaker: Jeremy Fischer
CTA SME: Rich Porter

Break!

See you back in 10 minutes!

Washroom Codes

Women 0702#

Men 0701#

Gender Neutral 9998#





Peer Agency Panel

Partnerships That Protect: Insights from Leading Transit Systems



Chicago Transit Authority

CTA Transit Community Safety Workshop

Peer Agency Panel –

"Partnerships That Protect: Insights from Leading Transit Systems"

Program Name: TriMet Safety Response Team

Presenter's Name: Andrew Wilson

Thursday, August 28, 2025



TriMet's Safety and Security Teams



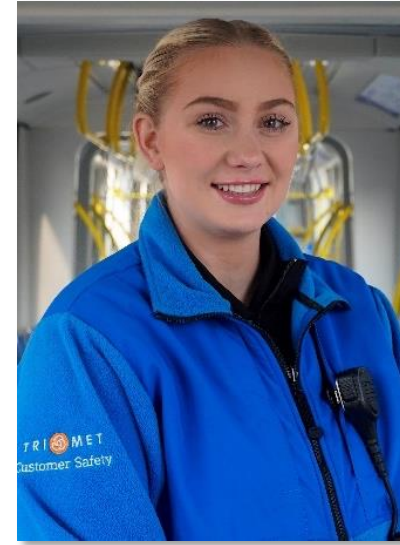
Transit Police



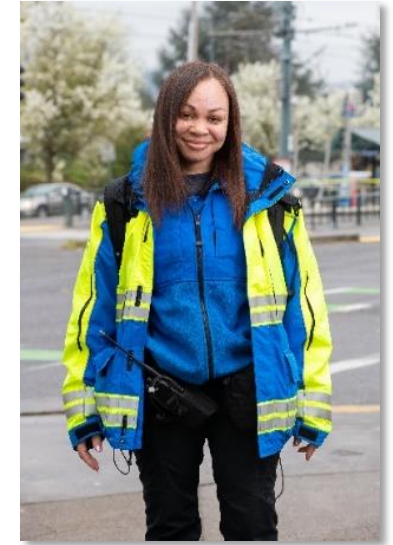
Transit Security
Officers



Customer Safety
Supervisors



Customer Safety
Officers



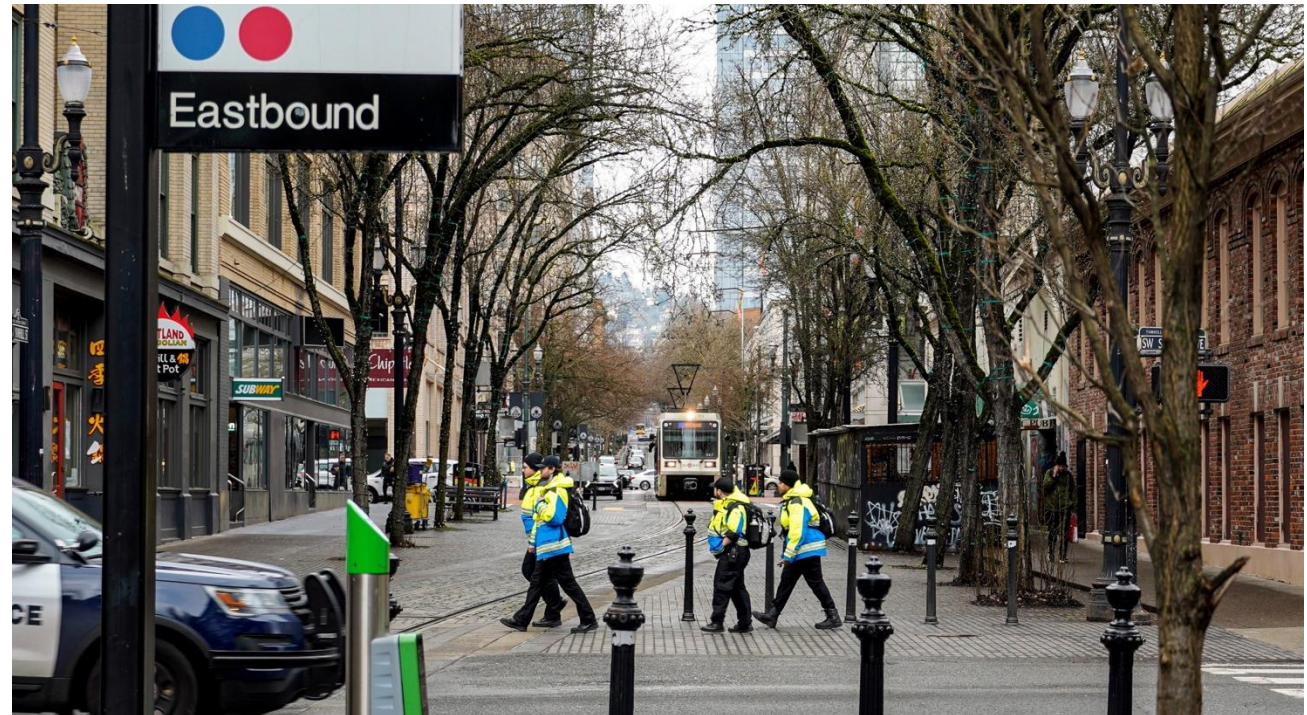
Safety Response
Team

TriMet's Safety Response Team (SRT)

- Launched as a pilot program in 2021
 - Reimagine Public Safety
 - \$1.8 Million Initial Investment
 - Started with 7 SRT's – Currently at 90
 - Adopted as a fully budgeted program July 2023
- APTA Gold Award 2023

TriMet's Safety Response Team (SRT)

- Provide a high visibility system presence
- Conduct social service outreach
- Give referrals for housing, mental health and addiction services
- Provide emergent supplies for riders in need.
- Address low-level incidences without relying on 911 resources.



TriMet's Safety Response Team

- Unarmed ridership engagement
- De-escalation of persons in crisis
- Increased outreach for community-based resources
- Free up Transit Police from low-level incidents not requiring police resources

Technology

- CCTV
- Blue Light Phones
- Hot-Spot Data
- Security Operations Center (SOC)

TriMet's Safety Response Team (SRT)

- Portland Patrol Inc. (PPI)
- NARCAN in partnership with Multnomah County
- Partner with Tri-County Mental Health & Housing Providers
- Reporting
 - January to July 2025 - 70,858 contacts
 - July 10,467 contacts
 - Top 5 SRT Activities July 2025
 - Education 2,913
 - Welfare Checks 2,396
 - Wayfinding 2,135
 - Assists 794
 - Resources-Referrals 694

CTA Transit Community Safety Workshop

Peer Agency Panel –

"Partnerships That Protect: Insights from Leading Transit Systems"

Program Name: San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District Progressive Policing and Community Engagement Bureau (PPCEB)

Presenter's Name: Deputy Chief Ja'Son Scott & James Lancaster

Thursday, August 28, 2025



History, Funding and Program Evolution (Timeline)

Vision: The vision for the Progressive Policing and Community Engagement Bureau is to address and mitigate the negative impact on Safe & Clean transportation by people in crisis through non-enforcement alternatives when appropriate while ensuring compliance with the law and BART's Code of Conduct.

We created the bureau in 2020 to lead the way in new approaches to address systemic societal issues affecting public safety, including homelessness, mental illness, and addiction.

PPCEB is a part of the overall police budget.



Addressing Quality of Life Concerns

- BART Police Department's Deployment Plan: We understand not every problem on BART requires a response by sworn police officer
- Progressive Policing has a positive and measurable effect on individuals in crises by minimizing exposure to the justice system through collaborative alternatives
- We are focusing both sworn and unarmed civilian personnel on trains in the core areas of the BART system
- Partnerships: Community policing is at the core of what we do. Collaboration with community partners and agencies

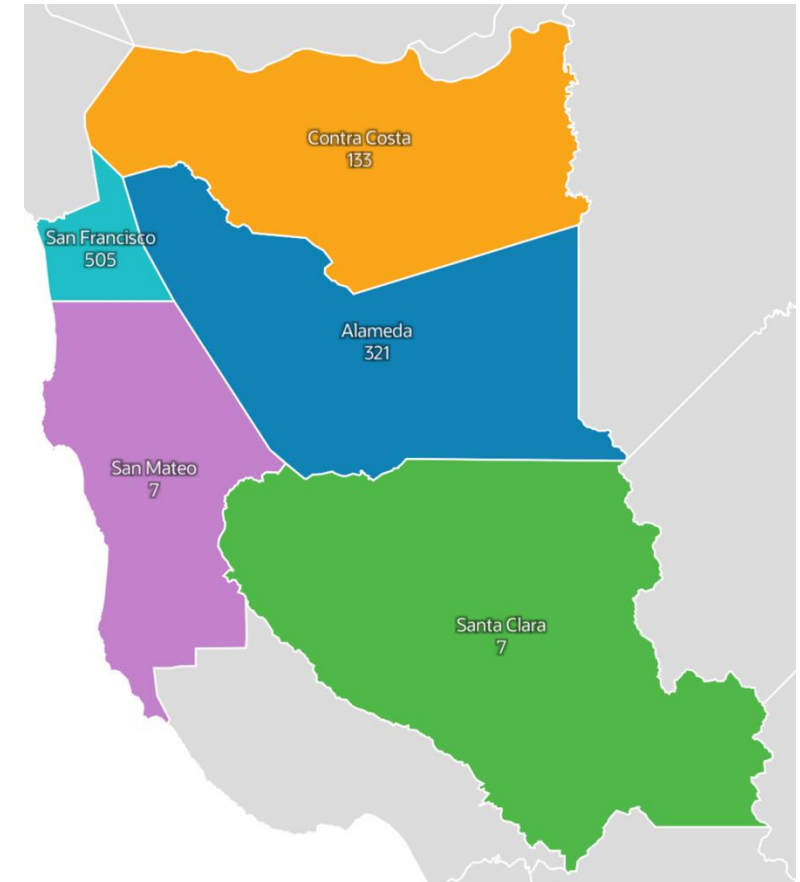
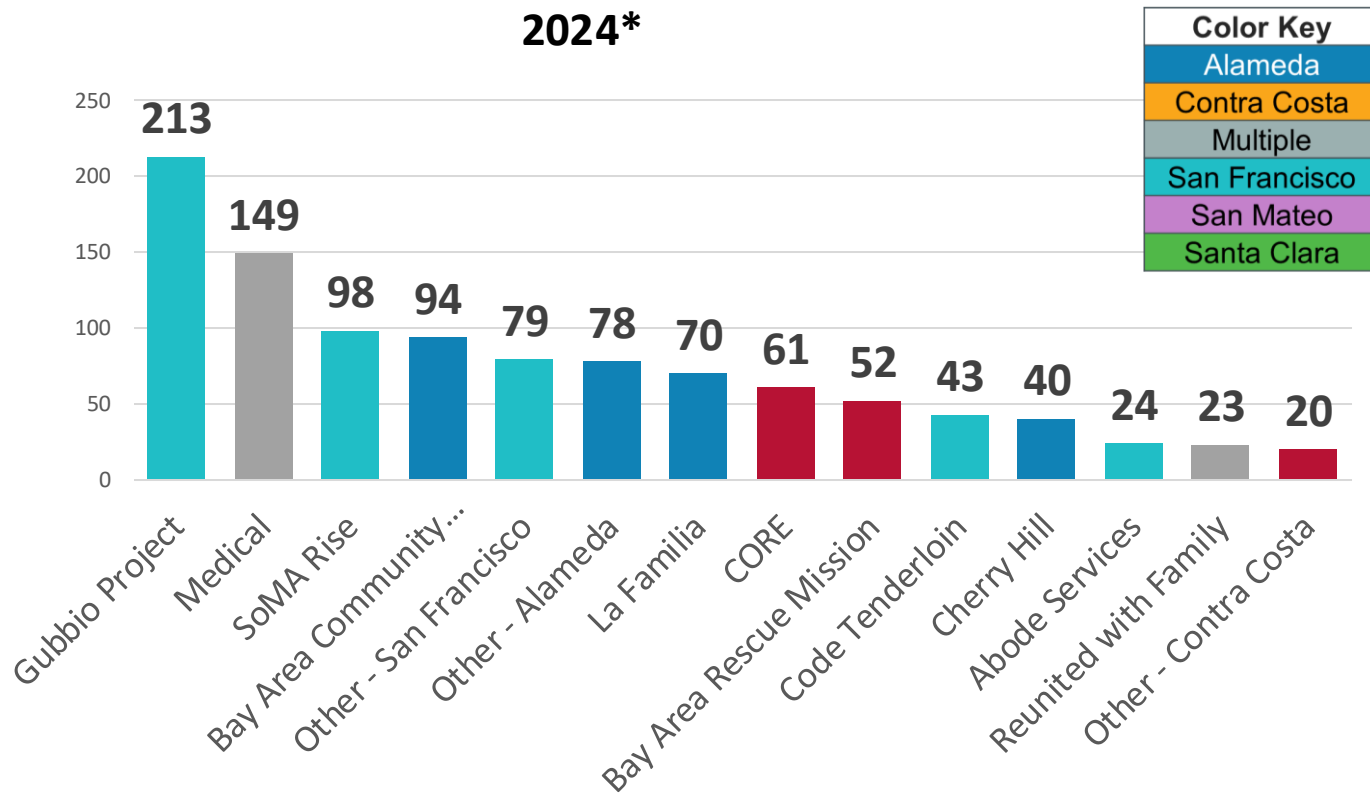
Teams and Deployment Strategy

- With a Deputy Chief assigned, they oversee the expanded non-sworn personnel, which includes Crisis Outreach Specialist Supervisors, 24 trained Crisis Intervention Specialists, and 10 Ambassadors.
- This is a team approach that will address how we deal with societal issues.
- Crisis Intervention Specialists and Ambassadors boosts the visible safety presence on trains in stations while ensuring BART is welcoming to all riders.
- The Bureau will work with social-resource partners to connect those in need with services.
 - For example, BART Police has helped countless people struggling with homelessness, mental illness and drug addiction to reunite with family members, get treatment and begin to restore their lives.
- Crisis Intervention Specialists and Ambassadors wear easily identifiable uniforms distinct from other classifications.

Partnerships & Measures of Success

Connecting Those in Crisis to Services

PPCEB Top 14 Connections to Services - Calendar Year 2024*



CTA Transit Community Safety Workshop

Peer Agency Panel –

"Partnerships That Protect: Insights from Leading Transit Systems"

Program Name: Transit Service Intervention Project - Pilot and Next Steps

Presenter's Name: Lesley Kandaras, Metro Transit General Manager

Thursday, August 28, 2025



History, Funding and Program Evolution (Timeline)

2018 – Developed Metro Transit Police Department Homeless Action Team, began partnership with Metro HRA to provide housing vouchers for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness

2019 – First legislative session when Metro Transit introduced administrative citations for fare non-compliance

2020 - 2021 – Metropolitan Council (the regional government of which Metro Transit is a division) initiates review of the Metro Transit Police Department; review involved extensive community, rider, and employee engagement regarding public safety on transit

2021 – Metro Transit increased visible presence (sworn officers, CSOs, and real-time information center staff), funded by federal COVID relief dollars

2021-2022 – Metropolitan Council formed a Council Member workgroup to act on the Metro Transit Police Department Review findings/feedback Policymaker workgroup directed staff to develop the Safety & Security Action Plan, and the Safety & Security Action Plan endorsed by Metropolitan Council in June 2022. Plan includes multiple action items focused on increased presence, including non-sworn personnel and contracts with community-based organizations.

2023 – Minnesota Transportation Omnibus law (1) established new dedicated sales tax for transportation, including Metro Transit, and required that Metro Transit use sales tax funds on public safety (among several other items), (2) established 13-month Transit Service Intervention Project to increase law enforcement, code of conduct enforcement, and social services outreach with \$2M in one-time state general funds, and (3) authorized Transit Rider Investment Program (TRIP) to create TRIP Agents who are non-sworn personnel that inspect fares, issue administrative citations for fare-non-compliance, and assist customers.

2023-2024 – Transit Service Intervention Project official ran June 1, 2023-June 30, 2024, with some contracts extended beyond the official end of the project. Metro Transit launched TRIP in December 2023 with CSOs to conduct fare enforcement and assist customers. Metro Transit expanded TRIP with first group of TRIP Agents in Feb 2024.

2025 – Metro Transit continues Safety & Security Action Plan, including, releasing new RFP for organizations to connect people with social services, expanding TRIP Agent staffing, increasing contracted supplemental security, and continuing to support hiring more MTPD police officers and CSOs.

Roles, Responsibilities and Integration with overall agency safety strategy

Metro Transit's Safety & Security Action Plan includes several action items that build layers of visible presence. Includes police, operations, and contracted staff.

Transit Service Intervention Project served as one "layer" staffed by contracts with non-profit/community-based organizations.

Coordinated layers of official presence



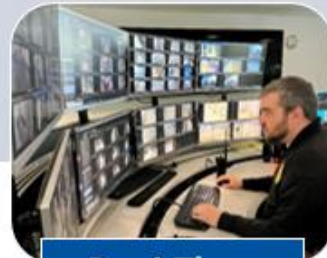
Police
Officers

111



TRIP Agents

70+



Real Time
Information
Center

5+



Community
Service
Officers

21

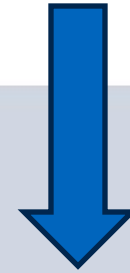


Contracted
Security

9 locations



Contracted
non-profit and
community-
based orgs



Roles, Responsibilities and Integration with overall agency safety strategy

Transit Service Intervention Project (TSIP) - one layer of presence

- Established in state law to run June 1, 2023-June 30, 2024
- Funded by one-time \$2M general fund appropriation
- “Provide coordinated, high-visibility interventions on light rail, enhanced social services outreach and engagement, Code of Conduct regulation, and law enforcement”



Teams and Deployment Strategy

TSIP Elements

- 10 contracts with community-based/non-profit organizations approved for intervention services and outreach
- Engagement with transit riders experiencing homelessness, with substance use disorders, and/or with mental or behavior health disorders
- Shaped and led by Homeless Action Team leadership and outreach



Lessons learned - what's next after TSIP

RFP for next round of social services providers posted last week. New round builds on lessons learned from TSIP.

- **Clear Definition of Service Expectations**
 - Scope of work will be based on a preset definition of expected activities
 - With increased security and TRIP resources, enforcement responsibilities will be removed from outreach duties
- **Service Delivery on the Line**
 - Outreach and intensive referral expertise will be teamed, and take place on the line, offering immediate access to resources
 - Service will take place late evenings and very early mornings, filling a gap in the larger community service continuum
- **Larger award, Potential for Stronger Impact**
 - Provide larger multi year awards to only 1-2 vendors, with the goal to attract a partner with deep expertise in addiction and mental health services
- **Safety Protocols Defined**
 - Vendors will be required to define safety screenings and crisis escalation procedures
 - Buddy systems will be a required contractual expectation

Partnerships & Measures of Success

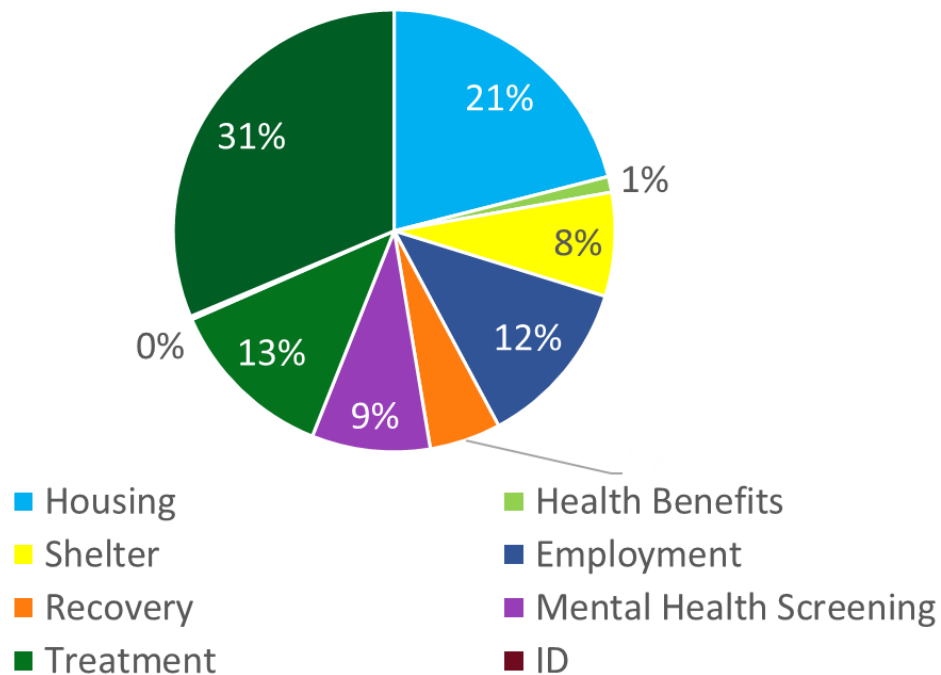
TSIP Referrals

Total contacts: 15,827

Total referrals: 7,627

Percent of contacts resulting in referrals: **48.2%**

Referral Types - All Time



Customer Perception

2024 Customer Survey Results

A greater share of riders feel safe



On board buses

64%

Improved 3 points



Waiting at bus stops

48%

Improved 7 points



On board trains

41%

Improved 8 points



Waiting at train stations

36%

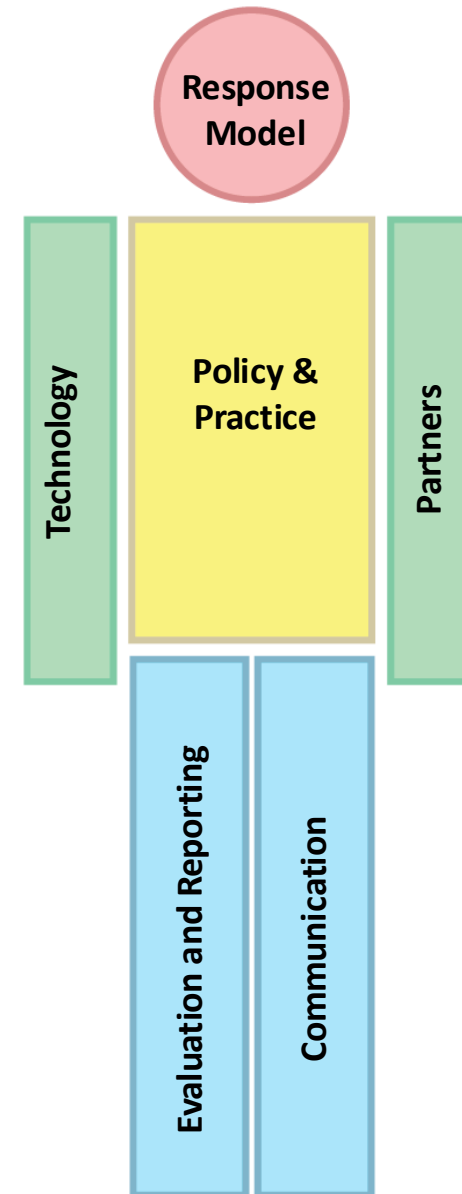
Improved 7 points

Breakout Activity



Pieces of the Comprehensive Approach

- Compassionately engage with vulnerable riders, reduce substance misuse and safety incidents, improve transit experience for riders and employees, and build a safe environment using a community-informed approach
- Together we are going to collaborate on our vision for **Safe Ride Ambassadors** developing the qualifications and core competencies for this new type of role
- Each table will build their ambassador toolkit and share out as a group



Report Out!



Thank you!

And Next Steps

