



Safety for All

TransitCenter




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TransitCenter works to improve public transit in ways that make cities more just, environmentally sustainable, and economically vibrant. We believe that fresh thinking can change the transportation landscape and improve the overall livability of cities. We commission and conduct research, convene events, and produce publications that inform and improve public transit and urban transportation. For more information, please visit www.transitcenter.org.

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Design

Cause + Matter

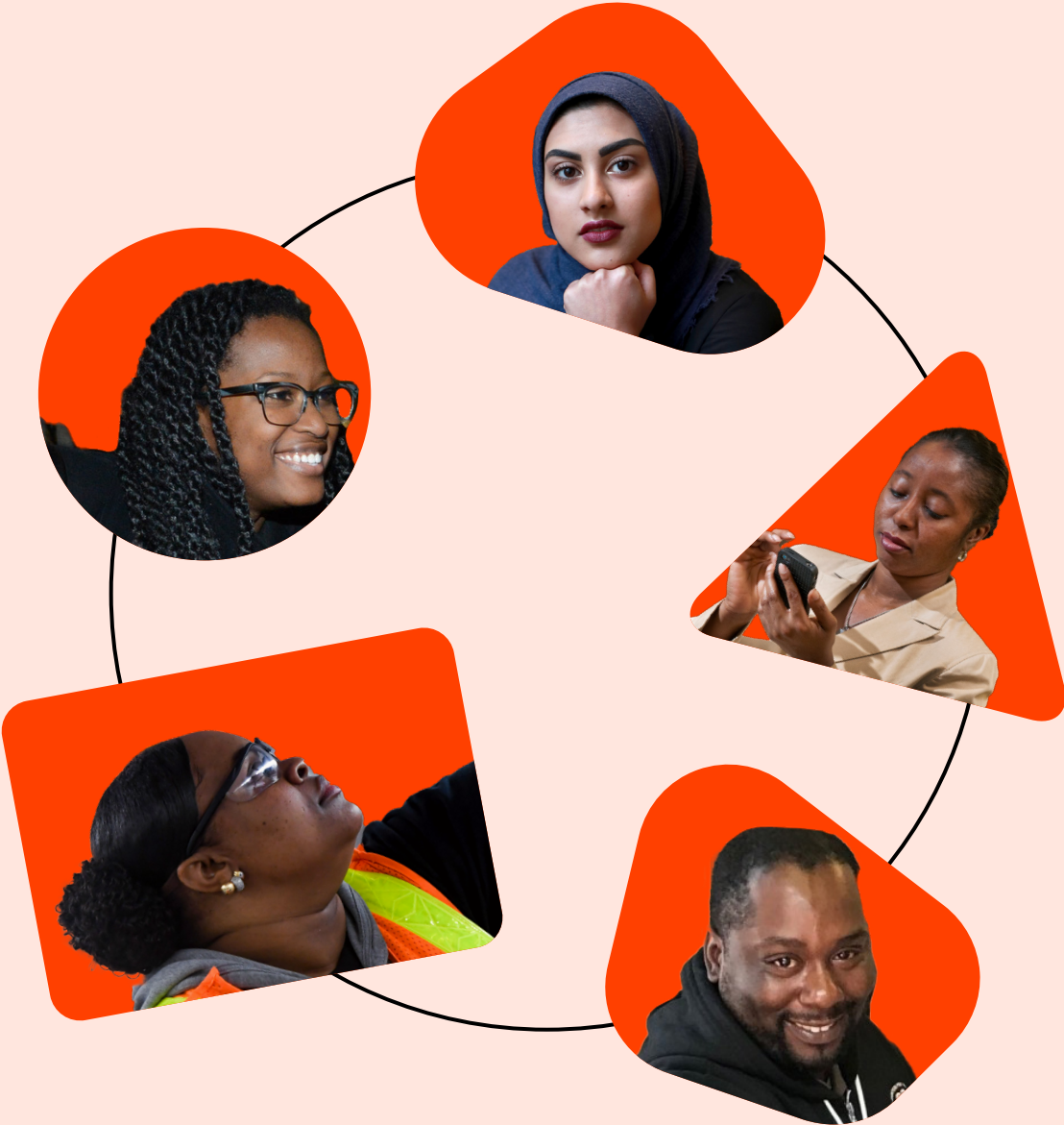
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Introduction



Historically, transit agencies have sought to create a sense of safety and security through the use of police presence. This approach has placed an unjust burden on vulnerable riders while falling short of its promise to make riders and transit workers feel secure on the system.

At its best, public transit represents the freedom to move about a city and take advantage of all it has to offer. This freedom can be constrained by barriers that discourage ridership, such as unreliable service or unaffordable fares. One of the most significant barriers is the perception that transit is unsafe¹. Incidents of harassment, crime, and violence on transit vehicles and near transit stops compromise riders' safety, degrade their sense of dignity, and dissuade many from using transit. Rider safety is a key feature of a well-run transit system. Safety is also a key component of ensuring that transit employees can perform their duties effectively. Frontline workers that feel they are not safe travelling the system will not be able to provide the quality of service riders deserve. Ensuring a safe system is an imperative for public transit agencies if they want to maintain and grow ridership.

Historically, transit agencies have sought to create a sense of safety and security through the use of police presence. This stems from a belief that a focus on fare enforcement and adhering to rider codes of conduct will reduce incidents of violent crime and result in transit systems where all riders feel safe.

This approach has shortcomings: it has placed an unjust burden on vulnerable riders while falling short of its promise to make riders and transit workers feel secure on the system. Police intervention has contributed to reduced incidents of violent crime but it has had tradeoffs. The overreliance on police for routine safety issues often makes riders less safe, as police response to "code of conduct" issues like putting feet on seats, eating food, or not paying the fare is consistently discriminatory against Black and brown riders and regularly escalates into incidents of brutality. Police are also often called to respond to riders experiencing mental-health crises and homeless riders using the transit system for shelter. Riders in mental-health crises who threaten, harass, or assault other riders are often removed by police, but receive no treatment or minimal treatment, and repeat their behavior. Police presence is necessary to ensure that violent crime is kept in check but it cannot be the only tool for creating safe transit systems. Holistic public safety programs that balance police presence with unarmed customer and social service workers are needed.

For decades, civic leaders and community groups have called attention to the ways that police profile, target, and brutally harm Black and brown people and constrain their movement in public space. In 2020, the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor brought additional scrutiny to policing tactics and oversight, bringing more

1 Higashide, Steven & Buchanan, Mary. (2019, February). Who's On Board 2019: How to Win Back America's Transit Riders. TransitCenter. https://transitcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/TC_WhosOnBoard_Final_digital-1-1.pdf

This brief summarizes research on the safety concerns faced by transit riders and operators, and the spectrum of approaches transit agencies can take to address them.

energy to calls to shrink or eliminate the police, improve accountability, and expand community safety. This has been a turning point at some transit agencies, lending new urgency to longstanding calls to examine the harm caused by police on transit and the safety issues that are not effectively addressed by the current approach.

Since simply increasing police presence can generate additional risks for many riders, transit agencies need to shift resources toward public safety programs that acknowledge that a safe system can mean different things to different people. More holistic approaches that make use of unarmed customer service and social welfare personnel should be used to reduce interactions between riders and the police while building better support for vulnerable riders. By placing less emphasis on monitoring and penalizing misconduct, agencies can build safety programs that connect riders to programs that address their vulnerabilities and reduce their likelihood of creating disruptions for other riders. Police resources are misspent when officers are asked to respond to non-violent offenses and intervene in crises that they are not equipped or trained to handle. When police are asked to perform tasks beyond their expertise, it reduces the likelihood that vulnerable passengers are given the help they need and creates unnecessary friction between riders and police. Holistic safety programs would allow police to spend less of their time on such incidents and focus their attention where they are needed: policing violent crime. A few US transit agencies are now engaged in processes to reimagine public safety and develop new systems that can more effectively create a safe environment for riders and transit workers. However, this needs to be more widespread.

This brief summarizes research on the safety concerns faced by transit riders and operators, and the spectrum of approaches transit agencies can take to address them, including physical design and increasing non-police staff such as social service workers and customer service employees. It explains the history of transit policing in the U.S., and examines non-police approaches to fare evasion and homelessness—two issues that transit police spend substantial time on but are being effectively addressed by alternatives in some systems. It offers case studies on reform efforts underway in the Bay Area and Portland, Oregon. Finally, it suggests immediate steps that transit agency board members and leaders can take to reimagine their approach to public safety.

- 2 TriMet. (2020, November 11). Re-imagining Public Safety & Security on Transit: Recommendations and What Comes Next. <https://blog.trimet.org/2020/11/20/reimagining-public-safety-security-on-transit-recommendations-and-what-comes-next/>
- 3 Alliance for Community Transit. Reimagining Safety on Public Transit <http://allianceforcommunitytransit.org/reimagining-safety-on-public-transit/>
- 4 Kaba, Marianne. (2020, June 12) Yes, We Mean Literally Abolish the Police. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/12/opinion/sunday/floyd-abolish-defund-police.html>
- 5 Asher, Jeff & Horowitz, Ben. (2020, June 19) How Do Police Actually Spend Their Time. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/19/upshot/unrest-police-time-violent-crime.html>

"Defund," "Reform," or "Reimagine"?

In this brief, we generally use the phrase “reimagining public safety” to refer to changes that reduce the scope of transit police and improve safety through design, regulatory change, and increased deployment of service providers and non-police staff. We use this language because it is commonly used by both transit agencies (for example, TriMet²) and transit advocacy groups (for example, the Los-Angeles-based Alliance for Community Transit³).

There are three other commonly used terms that are important to understand:

Many activists, including the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL), call for “defunding the police.” M4BL calls for “shifting massive spending on police that do not keep us safe and reinvesting it in a shared vision of community safety ... [and] spending on health and human services that meet the needs ... of our communities.”

M4BL lists several examples of how municipal governments can defund the police, including:

- “Withdrawing police departments from state and federal grant programs that provide surveillance tech, military gear, weapons, training, and automated decision-making tools
- Denying benefits/pay to police officers under investigation for using excessive force
- Requiring police officers (not cities) to pay for misconduct lawsuits and use-of-force settlements
- Removing police from schools and universities
- Establishing non-police alternatives to 911 calls involving people with mental-health needs or other forms of health crisis
- Repealing laws that hide/enable/excuse police violence and misconduct”

Other leaders position themselves within the police and prison abolitionist movement, which calls for the eventual elimination of funding for the police and prison systems as they now exist and increased investment in education, social services, and community-building institutions that address poverty, alienation, and other root causes of crime. Organizer Mariame Kaba has cited a New York Times analysis showing that the majority of police time is spent on noncriminal matters to argue that U.S. police budgets could immediately be halved, with the funding redirected to human service providers.^{4,5}

This phrasing contrasts itself with “police reform,” which generally refers to attempts to increase transparency and accountability, and reduce bias in policing, for example through improved training, body cameras, use-of-force policies like banning chokeholds, “community policing” strategies, civilian oversight boards, and making it easier to fire police officers who commit misconduct. However, some groups that support “police reform” also support reducing the funding and role of police and expanding other safety programs.

Origins of Modern Transit Policing



Law enforcement strategies like broken windows that target low level offenses in public spaces such as subways and buses or that criminalize poverty like fare evasion and homelessness reinforce and operationalize racist assumptions of criminality among Black people, people of color, and low-income people.

The origins of policing on transit as we know it today—enforcement of low level quality of life issues and fare payment—can be directly traced to the emergence of broken windows policing theory which was first put into practice on the New York City public transit system in the 1990s. Broken windows as a policing theory first appeared in an Atlantic Monthly article in 1982. The authors, George Kelling and James Wilson, discuss the difference between actual crime rates versus perceptions of community safety and the role law enforcement plays in each.⁶ Broken windows therefore emphasizes the deployment of law enforcement officers, instead of other public employees, in the upkeep of the surrounding environment of public spaces—like subway stations and bus stops—rather than on solving crimes, as a critical component to community safety, crime reduction, and policing. The authors frequently use trains, buses, and transit stops to illustrate how the maintenance of public spaces is key to maintaining public order and preventing more serious crimes. While the authors recognize the role community members can play in upholding social norms and expectations among each other, the authors ultimately declare: “the police are plainly the key to order maintenance.”⁷

Consequently, the first practical implementation of broken windows policing theory was on New York City’s public transit system—first in the 1980s when the Metropolitan Transportation Authority hired George Kelling as a consultant to tackle widespread graffiti on subway cars, and then more forcefully under Chief of Transit Police William Bratton in the 1990s. In 1993, under the direction of New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, Bratton sent hundreds of NYPD officers into the New York City subway to target vandalism and enforce fare payment. Concluding that, “not all fare beaters were criminals, but a lot of criminals were fare beaters,” the City of New York determined broken windows was an effective policing approach.⁸

Despite New York City’s policy-makers’ confidence in broken windows theory in the 1990s, the causal relationship between broken windows policing and crime reduction remains less clear.⁹ Its relationship to reports of police abuse and racial discrimination is, however, clearer. Sworn statements from NYPD Transit Bureau police officers, for instance, allege in a 2019 discrimination lawsuit that they were instructed by their commanding officer to treat white and Asian-American subway riders as “soft targets” and instead focus on enforcing low-level violations like turnstile jumping against Black and brown riders.¹⁰ Law enforcement strategies like broken windows

- 6 Kelling, G. L., & Wilson, J. Q. (1982, March). Broken Windows The police and Neighborhood Safety. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1982/03/broken-windows/304465/>
- 7 Ibid
- 8 Vedantam, S et al. (2017, May 29). How A Theory Of Crime And Policing Was Born, And Went Terribly Wrong Hidden Brain. *National Public Radio*. <https://www.npr.org/2017/05/29/530192364/how-a-theory-of-crime-and-policing-was-born-and-went-terribly-wrong>
- 9 Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy Broken Windows Policing. <https://cebcp.org/evidence-based-policing/what-works-in-policing/research-evidence-review/broken-windows-policing/>
- 10 Goldstein, J., & Southall, A. (2019, December 6). I Got Tired of Hunting Black and Hispanic People. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/06/nyregion/nyc-police-subway-racial-profiling.html>



that target low level offenses in public spaces such as subways and buses or that criminalize poverty like fare evasion and homelessness reinforce and operationalize racist assumptions of criminality among Black people, people of color, and low-income people.

Working in tandem with the ongoing erosion of non-police public services and an over-reliance on law enforcement as stand-ins for critical public health and socioeconomic interventions, these approaches result in the over-policing of people of color, both on and off public transit systems. Aggressive policing approaches that presuppose criminal behavior invite brutal policing with racially discriminatory impacts and significant consequences.

Ultimately, the organizational structures and policing approaches of transit police vary according to different local and regional contexts—some transit police are part of the local municipal police departments, while others are stand alone police forces specific to the transit agency. But the widespread adoption of broken windows policing theory is more uniform throughout agencies. In public transit systems across the country, instances of heightened surveillance and militarized presence, racial profiling, and excessive police violence against Black, Indigenous, and People of Color transit riders stemming from low level offenses—fare evasion, homelessness, street vending, or mask compliance—are widespread and well documented.



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MTA PD

What does safety mean to riders?



As transit agencies seek to reimagine their approaches to policing, they must keep in mind the varied concerns of their riders and the needs of their employees. While safety is paramount for all, safety means different things to different groups. For some, it's simply the ability to ride transit without fear of crime—a matter of getting from one place to another without having to worry about one's physical safety. For others, this means assurances that other riders will not threaten them.

The perception that transit is unsafe discourages people from using it and has a negative impact on ridership. A 2016 survey of former LA Metro riders found that 29% cited personal safety concerns as the primary reason they stopped taking transit. A study of bus stops in New Jersey found that riders were more concerned about crime than traffic safety while waiting for a bus; this sometimes led to “riskier pedestrian behaviors, such as walking in the road, crossing outside of crosswalks, and disobeying traffic signals” as riders sought to avoid routes that they perceived would put them at higher crime risk.¹¹

For Black and brown riders, safety concerns include fear of crimes committed against them but also extend to freedom from harassment from police officers and security. Black and brown riders have been both overpoliced and underprotected, meaning that they disproportionately bear the brunt of the harms of policing while reaping fewer safety benefits. They are more likely to be the victims of crimes¹², leading to doubts about the police's ability to protect them from crime and harassment.¹³ As people of color are more likely to be unfairly stopped by law enforcement—Black adults are five times as likely to report being unfairly stopped by police as white adults¹⁴—increased police presence does not always engender a feeling of increased safety but one of heightened scrutiny against them.

Asian Americans have increased concerns about using transit as incidents of hate crimes and violence against them have risen.¹⁵ From 2019 to 2020, hate crimes against Asian Americans more than doubled, rising from 49 to 122.¹⁶ These incidents and their perpetrators make it much more difficult for Asian American riders to travel from one place to another without fear for their safety.

Undocumented riders may feel a heightened sense of distress and unease when police officers are responsible for checking fares. Undocumented riders have reason to fear that such interactions could threaten their ability to remain in the United States. A 2017 fare inspection on the Metro Transit light rail system resulted in Ariel Vences-Lopez being deported to Mexico.¹⁷ Many undocumented

- 11 Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center. (2012, September 19). Pedestrian Safety at Bus Stops Study. Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers University. http://vtc.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Pedestrian-Safety-at-Bus-Stops_FINAL09192012.pdf
- 12 Gonnerman, Jennifer. (2015, January 21) Jill Leovy's 'Ghettoside'. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/25/books/review/jill-leovys-ghettoside.html>
- 13 Doherty, Carroll, et al. (2020, July 9). Majority of Public Favors Giving Civilians the Power to Sue Police Officers for Misconduct. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/07/09/majority-of-public-favors-giving-civilians-the-power-to-sue-police-officers-for-misconduct/>
- 14 DeSilver, Drew, Lipka, Michael, and Fahmy, Dalia. (2020, June 3). 10 Things We Know About Race and Policing in the U.S. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/03/10-things-we-know-about-race-and-policing-in-the-u-s/>
- 15 Nessen, Stephen. (2021, April 21). As Ridership Ticks Up On Subways, Some Asian New Yorkers Still Fear For Their Safety. Gothamist. <https://gothamist.com/news/ridership-ticks-subways-some-asian-new-yorkers-still-fear-their-safety>
- 16 Yam, Kimmy. (2021, March 9) Anti-Asian hate crimes increased by nearly 150% in 2020, mostly in N.Y. and L.A., new report says. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/anti-asian-hate-crimes-increased-nearly-150-2020-mostly-n-n1260264>
- 17 Otárola, Miguel. (2017, March 27) Man questioned about immigration status on light rail to be deported. Star Tribune.

Women are more likely to be targeted on transit: a 2018 Rudin Center report of NYC residents found that 75% of female respondents had experienced harassment or theft on public transit compared to 47% of male respondents.

immigrants depend upon transit but they may not always feel safe—there are reasons to fear the threat of deportation spurred by an interaction with a police or security officer on the transit system.

Women have added security concerns on transit. Women are more likely to be targeted on transit: a 2018 Rudin Center report of NYC residents found that 54% of female respondents were concerned about harassment on public transit compared to 20% of male respondents.¹⁸ Female respondents reported that experiences with harassment and perception of decreased safety made them less likely to use transit at night—29% avoided night travel. The perception of decreased safety was confirmed by the experience of female respondents—75% had experienced harassment or theft on public transit compared to 47% of male respondents. A study by LA Metro found that in addition to the feeling of decreased safety on transit, female riders felt less safe walking to and waiting for their transit vehicle to arrive.¹⁹

In 2019, Bay Area-based Alliance for Girls released the “Together We Rise” report. The report, based on interviews and focus groups, worked to identify structures that enable or inhibit the success of girls of color in the region. One prominent theme that arose in the focus groups and listening sessions as a barrier was safety on transit. Girls shared incidents of sexual and verbal harassment on trains, in stations, and on walks to/from stations. In San Francisco, an analogous survey conducted by the not-for-profit One Day at a Time found that 45.3% of students reported feeling unsafe on BART, and that students had missed school or other activities as a result of their unwillingness to ride. One of the key findings that girls spoke about was the lack of bystander intervention. Girls reported that there were often witnesses to the harassment, but that other witnesses did not speak up. At the same time, bystanders who do intervene often do so in ways that girls find uncomfortable.

LGBTQ riders face elevated risk of harassment and discrimination on transit systems. Bias incidents have led 10% of LGBTQ people to avoid public transit.²⁰ Transgender riders, especially, feel unwelcome on public transit. A survey by the National Center for Transgender Equality found that 34% of transgender respondents reported having been denied equal treatment or service, verbally harassed, or physically attacked on public transit in the past year.²¹ In 2020, the Human Rights Campaign recorded 44 fatal incidents against transgender and gender non-conforming people—the most violent year since HRC began tracking these crimes.²²

For transit operators and other frontline workers, transit safety

- 18 Kaufman, Sarah M., Polack, Christopher F., and Campbell, Gloria A. (2018, November) The Pink Tax on Transportation: Women's Challenges in Mobility. New York University Rudin Center for Transportation. https://wagner.nyu.edu/files/faculty/publications/Pink%20Tax%20Survey%20Results_finaldraft4.pdf
- 19 LA Metro. (2019, August 30) Understanding How Women Travel. LA Metro. http://libraryarchives.metro.net/DB_Attachments/2019-0294/UnderstandingHowWomenTravel_FullReport_FINAL.pdf
- 20 Movement Advancement Project. LGBT Policy Spotlight: Public Accommodations Nondiscrimination Laws <https://www.lgbtmap.org/file/Spotlight-Public-Accommodations-FINAL.pdf>
- 21 James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016 December). The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey. National Center for Transgender Equality. <https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS-Full-Report-Dec17.pdf>
- 22 The Human Rights Campaign. Fatal Violence Against the Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Community in 2021. <https://www.hrc.org/resources/fatal-violence-against-the-transgender-and-gender-non-conforming-community-in-2021>



is a matter of workplace safety. Fear of abuse and harassment from riders creates stress for transit workers and makes carrying out their duties more difficult. Transit operators advocate for police presence as it helps to reassure transit workers and makes them feel protected—replacing them with unarmed security personnel can be a solution but other steps may need to be taken to address operator concerns. Zachary Arcidiacono, of New York’s Transit Workers’ Union Local 100, recommends that police be deployed strategically to protect workers rather than focus on quality of life enforcement. “I don’t think it’s realistic to expect you’re going to deploy enough police to have them all over the system. I would like to see the police available at the points where there are the most likely interactions between our crews and somebody that may act out in a volatile manner.”²³

Long term, building a system that is safe for transit workers and riders alike will need solutions beyond simply increasing police presence. “I do know enough to say you’re not going to police your way out of this problem,” said Arcidiacono. “This is a social ill that needs social solutions. If you really want to make the subways safer, you need to give the folks that are displaced for whatever reasons, real solutions.”²⁴

23 Martinez Jose & panelists (2021, March 22). Restoring the 24/7 Subway: Examining the Shutdown’s Effects on Riders and Workers. TransitCenter. <https://transitcenter.org/event/reopening-new-yorks-subways-how-to-resume-24-7-service/>

24 Ibid

Case Study

BART

On January 1st, 2009, Oscar Grant was killed by Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Police Officer Johannes Mehserle at Fruitvale station in Oakland, CA. Protests and public accountability after Oscar Grant's death catalyzed BART to reform its police department. In July 2010, the BART Board set up two **independent oversight commissions** to investigate police misconduct: 1) Office of the Independent Police Auditor and 2) BART Police Citizen Review Board. Civilians can make complaints to either of these oversight bodies that have the ability to review evidence and access records. Additionally, in the past decade, BART has instituted reforms that have become increasingly common at police departments nationwide including use of officer-worn body cameras and updates to use-of-force policies.

How has BART been able to enact reforms?

Progressive BART Board of Directors: The BART Board is responsible for voting on resolutions, adopting policies, and implementing reforms to the system. BART is unique when compared to other transit agency boards in that voters elect their representatives to the Board. This aspect has been key in members being held accountable for reforms. In the past decade, several members have run on a platform or a record of reforming the police and ending police violence. Some of these members include Directors Lateefah Simon, Rebecca Saltzman, Bevan Dufty, and Janice Li.

Lesson: Agencies with publicly elected boards may be the ones that are best positioned to respond to public accountability efforts.

Hiring of non-armed personnel: A unifying sentiment regarding the state of policing across the country is that police are tasked with things they are not trained or equipped to handle. In a transit system, police may be asked to deal with: safety threats to the infrastructure, robberies, and fare evasion. They are also often the workers that are the first to respond to people suffering from mental health or substance abuse issues. In an effort to reduce unnecessary police interactions, while maintaining a clean and safe system, BART has created two new roles:

1. Elevator attendants²⁵—These attendants are hired from the community. The attendants help ensure that the elevators are in sanitary condition for passengers to use them. They also serve as another set of eyes and ears in the station to the public and can relay data to other teams at BART.
2. Ambassador Program²⁶—BART was inspired by SFMTA's MTAP

25 Jordan, Melissa. (2018, July 18) Elevator attendant pilot program extended after positive results: "Amazing on so many levels". BART. <https://www.bart.gov/news/articles/2018/news20180718>

26 BART. (2020, January 9) BART to launch ambassador program on trains in February. BART. <https://www.bart.gov/news/articles/2020/news20200109>



program.²⁷ In early 2020, BART voted to re-direct \$2 million from BART PD to hire 10 ambassadors. These unarmed ambassadors respond to safety issues on trains, and radio armed officers for back-up. The unarmed ambassadors carry pepper spray, police radios, and NARCAN to prevent overdoses. Instances where police officers are called for back-up include physical altercations. A key difference between SFMTA’s MTAP and the ambassador program is that BART ambassadors are hired and trained through the BART PD. This may lead to certain on-the-job training that reinforces the culture of the BART PD.

Lessons: Riders want to see more BART personnel to create a sense of safety. This does not mean armed police. Rather, agencies should respond to this by hiring for other roles that can achieve desired outcomes such as clean elevators and defused altercations. In this instance, BART also looked to find key lessons from a peer agency.

Working with community organizations: Alliance for Girls is a Bay-Area based membership organization, consisting of over 100+ member organizations, that mobilizes girls’ champions to address barriers facing girls. In 2019, Alliance for Girls released the “Together We Rise” report that was based on focus groups and listening sessions with girls and gender-expansive youth. One of the prominent themes that emerged from these conversations was **safety on transit**. Specifically, girls detailed the harassment they suffered on trains, in stations, and on walks to/from stations. Many girls also spoke about the lack of bystander intervention in these instances.

27 SFMTA. Muni Transit Assistance Program. SFMTA. <https://www.sfmta.com/getting-around/muni/routes-stops/muni-routes-serving-city-schools/muni-transit-assistance-program>

Alliance for Girls approached BART GM Bob Powers and BART Board President Lateefah Simon to address these concerns. These conversations culminated in a resolution wherein BART committed to launching a sexual harassment prevention campaign.²⁸ The “Not One More Girl” campaign went live in April 2021. This initiative seeks to “dismantle the systems that have enabled gender-based violence and create empowerment for all.” The campaign includes posters and zines to educate riders with some of the following messages and resources:

1. Raise awareness of what sexual harassment or gender-based violence entails
2. Raise awareness on the resources available to a survivor including information on how to request real-time assistance and/or how to report incidents of gender based violence to BART PD
3. Provide sample language that bystanders can use to intervene in a way that centers the survivor

Additionally, Alliance for Girls would like to see BART include youth in decision-making processes especially as it relates to station planning and hiring panels for unarmed personnel. In focus groups, girls expressed that they would feel safer with more of these amenities: better lighting, access to charging stations, emergency phones/buttons, improvements to waiting areas/transfer stations.

Lessons: Safety on the system is also about passenger conduct. Surveys show that BART is failing to protect the needs of girls and gender expansive youth. In working with the Alliance for Girls, BART has shown itself to be an agency that responds to and incorporates reforms from community organizations and advocates.

What's next for BART

Despite these reforms, BART has a long way to go to ensure that Black riders are not disproportionately targeted by BART police. In 2019, use-of-force incident data showed that Black riders were involved in 61% of incidents despite accounting for 10% of BART's riding populace.²⁹

In October 2020, the BART Board took the next step in formalizing the ambassador program by voting to make the pilot program permanent. The new public safety officers will be housed in BART's Policing and Community Engagement Bureau. In total, the Bureau will have 40 personnel, including community outreach specialists, crisis intervention specialists, and transit ambassadors. As BART begins to hire for these positions in 2021, they will be looking for candidates that are customer-service oriented and have demonstrated capability to work with the public in a professional and equitable manner.

28 BART. (2020, February 29) BART Board approves resolution in support of Alliance for Girls efforts. BART. <https://www.bart.gov/news/articles/2020/news20200229>

29 Moench, Mallory. (2020, September 17). Half of BART police use-of-force incidents were against Black men last year, report shows. The San Francisco Chronicle. <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Half-of-BART-police-use-of-force-incidents-were-15576294.php>



**SILENCE
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CONSENT.**

MORE GIRL
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Fare enforcement and policing



In many transit systems, the punishment for fare evasion is more comparable to that of robbery and assault. Not only are these punishments disproportionate to the infraction, but such checks often provoke violent and deadly interactions between armed officers and transit riders.

A standard practice across transit agencies is fare enforcement, the inspection of valid fares. Who holds the responsibility for checking fares varies amongst American transit agencies, but it can fall under the duties of: municipal police officers, transit agency police officers, and/or civilian fare inspectors. Punishment for fare evasion also varies, but typically includes fines and/or a court summons. These punishments are often out of proportion when compared to penalties that drivers receive for parking tickets. In many transit systems, the punishment for fare evasion is more comparable to that of robbery and assault. Not only are these punishments disproportionate to the infraction, but such checks often provoke violent and deadly interactions between armed officers and transit riders.³⁰

In addition, a substantial number of people who “fare evade” do so due to difficulty with transit payment. Researchers from Australia’s Monash University found that up to 40% of city residents (in a survey of transit riders in 10 cities) evade the fare at least once a year—but most do so in “one off” incidents due to payment issues like no available ticket machine, a broken farecard, or someone choosing to run for the train without reloading their fare.³¹

The ostensible justification for fare enforcement is that agencies are losing tens of millions of dollars. New York’s MTA estimates that it loses \$300 million annually and WMATA estimates a \$40 million annual loss. However, independent analyses including that from the DC Policy Center argue that such estimates likely rely on imprecise measuring tools.³²

The data we have on fare enforcement citations does show one clear statistic: Black riders receive a disproportionate percent of citations relative to ridership. In a January 2021 hearing, BART Director Janice Li noted: “We don’t have data that shows that fare enforcement increases public safety or has any revenue recovery, but we do have data that shows huge racial disparities on who is impacted.”³³ Director Li prompts the question: What does policing fare accomplish? Is it worth continuing this practice if it disproportionately puts Black and brown riders in harms’ way? Is there a way to fairly check fares and deter fare evasion?

New York: Fare enforcement in MTA stations is conducted by the city’s police department—the NYPD. Departmental data from October 2017 to June 2019 shows that Black and brown people account for 90% of fare related arrests and 70% of summonses. Analysis from the Community Service Society finds two key conclusions: (1) fare enforcement largely occurs in high-poverty neighborhoods

30 Shepard, Katie. (2019, October 28) ‘Putting dozens of lives at risk over \$2.75’: NYPD slammed for pulling guns on fare-hopping teen. The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/10/28/nypd-video-guns-pointed-subway-train-unarmed-fare-hopper/>

31 Currie, Graham. (2016, January 19). Revenue Protection—National and International Research Perspectives. Public Transport Research Group, Institute of Transport Studies Monash University. <http://publictransportresearchgroup.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/PRESENTATION-2016-TfL-Revenue-Protection.pdf>

32 Zickuhr, Kathryn. (2020, February 20) What is the impact of fare evasion in DC?. DC Policy Center. February 20, 2020. <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/fare-evasion-data/>

33 Li, Janice. (2021, January 15) Twitter. <https://twitter.com/JaniceForBART/status/1350198608700690432>



- 34 Stolper, Harold. (2020, January 29). The MTA's False Fare Evasion Narrative. <https://www.cssny.org/news/entry/mta-false-fare-evasion-narrative-data>
- 35 Washington Lawyers' Committee For Civil Rights and Urban Affairs. (2018, September 13) Unfair: Disparities in Fare Evasion Enforcement by Metro Police. Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs. https://www.washlaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2018_09_13_unfair_disparity_fair_evasion_enforcement_report.pdf
- 36 Lancaster, Vicki & Schroeder, Aaron. (2017, July 25) A Study of Metrobus Fare Evasion. Virginia Tech Biocomplexity Institute Social & Decision Analytics Laboratory. Presented to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.
- 37 Rodrigo, Chris Mills. (2018, November 14). DC votes to decriminalize fare evasion. The Hill. <https://thehill.com/policy/transportation/public-transit/416687-dc-votes-to-decriminalize-metro-fare-evasion>
- 38 Vaccaro, Adam. (2020, August 2.) People of color cited more often for skipping fares on MBTA. The Boston Globe. August 2 2020. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/08/02/metro/minority-riders-cited-more-often-skipping-fares-mbta/>

when compared to ridership and (2) there is more enforcement in high-poverty Black and Latinx neighborhoods compared to high-poverty white and Asian neighborhoods.³⁴ Similarly, Black and Hispanic NYPD officers have testified that they were instructed to target Black and brown riders and to ignore white and Asian riders who jumped the turnstile.

Washington DC: At WMATA, fare evasion citations are issued by WMATA's Metro Transit Police Department. A Washington Lawyers' Committee report found that 91% of fare evasion summons from Jan 2016 to Feb 2018 were given to Black riders in a city where Black people make up 50% of the population.³⁵ In that same two-year period, fare evasion was considered a criminal offense and over 2000 people were arrested after fare evasion stops. A 2017 analysis by Virginia Tech's Social and Decision Analytics Laboratory found that the highest rates of bus fare evasion took place in neighborhoods with high poverty and no machines to purchase or reload SmarTrip farecards.³⁶ In November 2018, the DC Council voted to decriminalize fare evasion and it is now considered a civil offense that carries a maximum penalty of \$50.³⁷

Boston: MBTA Transit Police Department (TPD) is tasked with issuing fare enforcement citations. A Boston Globe analysis of citations from October to November 2019 found that 42% of citations were given to Black riders and 20% to Latino riders.³⁸ The citations were from the T's subway system where nearly 2/3rds of riders are white. As of December 2020, the fine for a first offense of fare evasion is \$100. The MBTA has indicated that it will move towards a civilian fare enforcement team in 2021 to coincide with a current shift towards all-door boarding in its bus fleet.

San Francisco Bay Area: In 2018, BART created a new fare

inspector position to shift inspection duties away from police officers. The civilian inspectors walk through a train car in a team and ask that riders tap their Clipper cards on a machine to check for valid fares. In certain circumstances, BART PD officers can also check fares. Chief of Police Ed Alvarez explains: “Our police officers are allowed to ask for proof-of-payment, but only when you’re detaining someone for another offense.”

While the use of fare inspectors can reduce negative interactions between Black riders and police, work must continue to reduce disparities in enforcement. 46% of citations were given to Black riders despite composing 12% of riders between the period of July 2018 and June 2019.³⁹ In December 2020, 72% of citations were given to Black or Hispanic/Latinx riders.⁴⁰

Seattle region: Sound Transit data from 2015 to 2019 shows that Black riders received 22% of fare enforcement citations, despite making up 9% of riders. In December 2020, the Sound Transit Board voted to suspend fare enforcement for the year 2021, and has committed to replace fare enforcement security contractors with fare ambassadors.

Recommendations:

- 1.** Remove fare enforcement duties from armed personnel. Instead, create an unarmed civilian position. Examples: BART, Sound Transit⁴¹
- 2.** Understand your riders. What is the cause of fare evasion? Is it something that can be addressed by the agency? For example, a solution might be to install more ticket-vending machines at stations that have been identified as high fare-evasion stations. Additionally, King County Metro (Seattle) found that a majority of the citations in their system were riders who identified as homeless or to riders with very low incomes. To address this, enforcement stops are paired with education on the agency’s low-income fare pass—Orca Lift.
- 3.** Ensure that the low-income fare program and student/youth fare programs are easy to sign up for.
- 4.** Change the penalties for evasion. Fare evasion tickets should not cost hundreds of dollars, and they should certainly not result in arrests or a summons to appear in criminal court. Example: Since 2019, King County Metro has enabled riders to remedy evasion citations with a few options, including 2 hours of community service or loading \$25 on an ORCA fare card.⁴²

39 Swan, Rachel. (2019, December 19) Nearly half of BART fare citations go to black riders, but police say system prevents profiling. The San Francisco Chronicle. <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Nearly-half-of-BART-fare-citations-go-to-black-14920414.php>

40 Arvin, Chris. (2021, January 15) Twitter. <https://twitter.com/chrisarvinsf/status/1350195734591651840>

41 Duke, Martin H. (2020, December 21). ST suspends fare enforcement another year. Seattle Transit Blog. <https://seattletransitblog.com/2020/12/21/st-suspends-fare-enforcement-another-year/>

42 Groover, Heidi. (2019, April 6). Metro tests new fare-enforcement system, looks for more help for low-income riders. The Seattle Times. <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/metro-tests-new-fare-enforcement-system-looks-for-more-help-for-low-income-riders/>

Homelessness



People experiencing homelessness who take shelter within the system—whether that means the day on a train or the night in a station—need to be respected as people existing within the public space that the system provides.

For many people experiencing homelessness, transit systems provide much-needed shelter, opportunities for donations from passers-by, and bathroom facilities.⁴³ These individuals' transit experience is unique from other users, whose stay within the system is often limited to the length of their commute or trip. Importantly, people experiencing homelessness who take shelter within the system—whether that means the day on a train or the night in a station—need to be respected as people existing within the public space that the system provides. It is crucial to highlight that the primary cause of homelessness is the shortage of safe, affordable, and stable housing, and related support services for mental illness, throughout so many cities in the United States.

Acknowledging the reality of this housing shortage and lack of adequate social services has two implications for transit agencies looking to improve the transit system for all users:

1. People experiencing homelessness are often forced to live within the transit system because the alternatives—most often, shelters or the street—are not safe or appealing. Some shelters have rigid admission requirements, like being spotted by an outreach worker in the same location twice with a certain time range. Other shelters are feared for their frequent violence, theft, and unhygienic conditions. And still others just don't have the capacity.
2. The scope of the housing crisis extends far beyond what a transit agency, itself, is responsible for. Agencies cannot build housing or improve the shelter system. Transit agencies will need assistance from other agencies and government partners.⁴⁴ Transit agencies should make clear the extent of the homeless crisis in their systems so that they can best identify their role in managing solutions and call on outside partners to assist with matters outside their expertise and ability to manage.

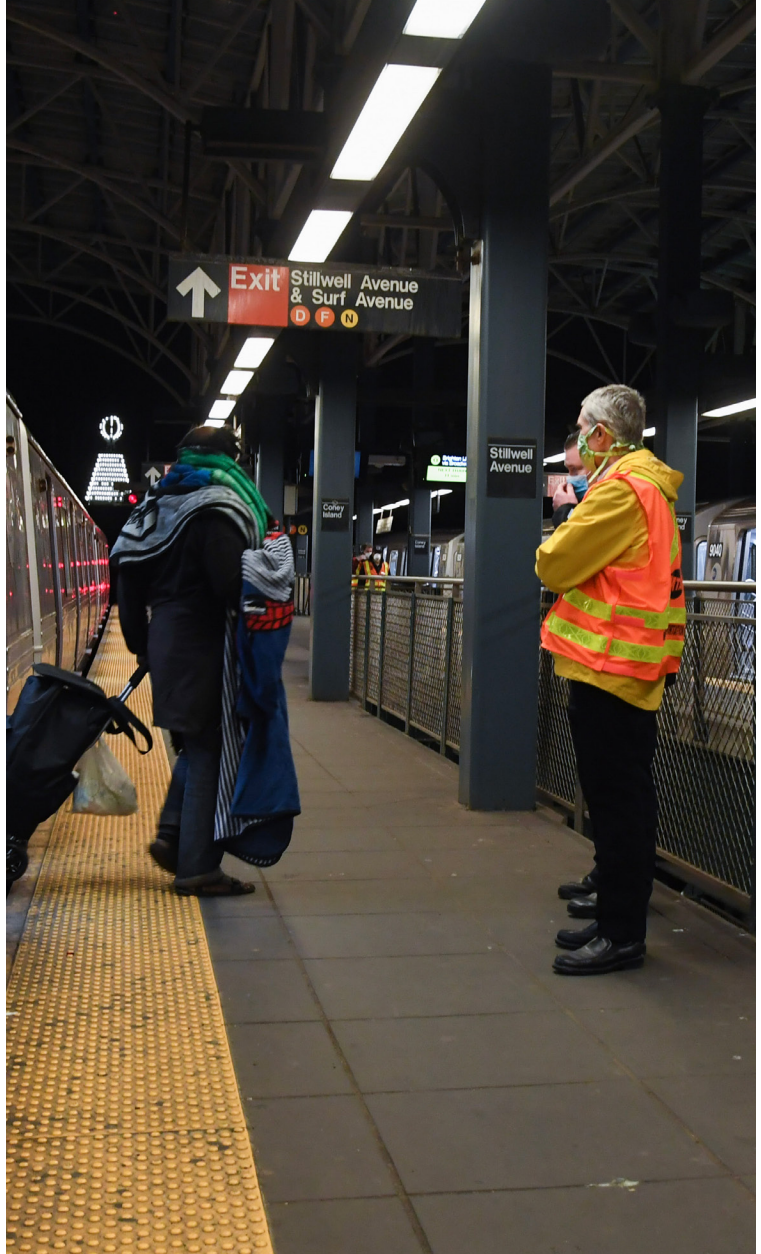
Without that type of cooperation with other agencies, transit agencies that focus their efforts simply on reducing the total number of people experiencing homelessness within the system will only worsen the quality of life for those individuals, who will most likely cycle back on to transit as soon as the episodic enforcement is over. And agencies often use armed police officers as the blunt instruments enforcing this strategy, relying on codes of conduct that discriminate against behaviors associated with people experiencing homelessness: for example, in addition to hiring 500 new police officers to clear people experiencing homelessness, the MTA recently enacted new policies forbidding passengers from having wheeled carts greater than 30 inches in width or length or from remaining in a station for longer than one hour.⁴⁵

43 2018 Leadership APTA Team Project. (2019, May 21). Public Transit and Social Responsibility: Homelessness. APTA Mobility Conference 2019. <https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/Lacy-Bell-.pdf>

44 New York City Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg wrote in an April 2020 opinion piece, "We are North America's largest transportation system. But we aren't a social-services agency or health-care provider, and we have limited expertise in the unique challenges of mental illness or homelessness. Simply put, we are, under no circumstances, the right people to tackle this problem."

Feinberg, Sarah. (2020, April 27) City Hall must not let the subways turn into a homeless shelter. The New York Post. <https://nypost.com/2020/04/27/city-hall-must-not-let-the-subway-turn-into-a-homeless-shelter/>

45 Offenhartz, Jake and Nessen, Stephen. (2019, December 18). Cuomo's 500 New Subway Cops Approved By Cuomo-Controlled MTA. Gothamist. <https://gothamist.com/news/cuomos-500-new-subway-cops-approved-cuomo-controlled-mta>



Agencies sometimes justify such policies as guarding other transit users and transit workers, citing instances when a person experiencing homelessness may have defecated on the train or spit on a bus operator. These concerns are legitimate: transit workers should be able to work without fear of assault and bodily fluids present a serious operations issue—not to mention public health and sanitation—when they cause a vehicle to go out of service for cleaning. The question is: what type of professional is best qualified to address these situations: a social worker trained to help and equipped with a range of service options, or an armed law enforcement officer?

Someone sleeping on the subway should not automatically register

as a potential criminal any more than any other transit user. Yet this is how people experiencing homelessness are stigmatized and policed. Human.NYC Executive Director Josh Dean, who has done extensive outreach within the New York City transit system, calls out the biases that should be familiar to many in the policing context:

“You may see someone and your immediate judgment is that that person may have a mental illness, but what it very well may be [is] that they spent the previous night on the subway and all night the cops were banging their batons on the seats and waking them up and asking them to sit upright. If you’ve ever seen someone who’s homeless and you see their feet and their ankles are swelling, that’s in large part because they’ve been asked to sleep upright. What we’ve seen is police officers who clearly don’t want to be doing this: that’s not what they signed up to do, but for whatever reason they’ve been asked to wake up homeless people and ask if they’re okay and if they need services and make sure they’re sitting up and not taking up more than one seat, even when the car’s empty.”

Fortunately, the American Public Transit Association has focused more research efforts on this issue in recent years and has collected some of the best practices from agencies across the United States. Several agencies have adopted particularly good strategies that can inform models elsewhere. These strategies recognize the important role that agencies play as part-time social services coordinator, treating homelessness as a persistent crisis and not just a problem to be “solved” within their respective systems.

Call to Action

- Treat all individuals with dignity and respect. Serve the entire community including homeless individuals
- Incorporate outreach officers with law enforcement to connect individuals with services
- Align transit service with social service destinations to help ensure services are received
- Partner with local municipalities & the private sector to identify funding opportunities
- Develop creative solutions that do not require funding such as hiring a homeless individual for an entry level position

Philadelphia: SEPTA’s unique Hub of Hope is a partnership with the nonprofit Project HOME and the City of Philadelphia to provide

personal outreach throughout the system as well as physical space and resources, such as bathrooms, showers, food, and health services. Rather than pushing individuals out of the system altogether, SEPTA fashions the Hub of Hope as a gateway space situated within its own Center City sub-concourse to which outreach workers can direct those who may be in need of the services. Notably, SEPTA has not measured success in the number of people experiencing homelessness in the system: a statistic detached from the root cause of an affordable housing shortage and the growing number of people experiencing homeless, overall. Instead, it counts its positive interactions:

“In the first six months of operation, the Hub of Hope touched over 2,500 different people through more than 41,000 visits. The Hub of Hope has provided over 1,200 case management visits and facilitated over 1,240 placements into shelters, treatment, safe havens, and other locations. Each day, 350-to-400 people find comfort, care and dignity in the showers, loads of laundry, food and health services available at the Hub of Hope, and dinner is being served on weekends and expanding to five nights a week.”⁴⁶

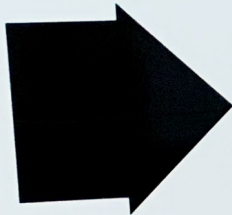
San Francisco Bay Area: BART has established new resources for people experiencing homelessness that benefit the public, as a whole. In coordination with the San Francisco Department of Public Works, BART’s Pit Stop Program provides public bathrooms with attendants. Community organizations staff the bathrooms, which serves as a step to full-time employment. BART also employs attendants for its elevators to ensure that they remain clean and available to all users. Through public bathrooms and elevator attendants, the agency can curb unsanitary and unsafe behaviors like public urination or drug use in its system without increasing its police presence. Simple design choices like hard-surfaced (as opposed to cloth) seats on buses can ease the cleaning process and improve the sanitary conditions on transit, too.

Los Angeles: LA Metro has dedicated significant internal resources to homeless outreach, as well, recognizing, “We cannot police ourselves out of this.”⁴⁷ While the agency *has* hired 22 police officers to address homelessness in the system, it has also hired 40 full-time social workers to conduct outreach. LA County has joined the effort by staffing 40 part-time social workers to supplement Metro’s investment. Partnerships and collaborations like these have great potential when the right partner organization is chosen and when the agency maintains an active role.

46 Redfern, Heather. (2018, November 1) Hope Grows: Project HOME, City of Philadelphia and SEPTA Hold Benefit to Support Hub of Hope. SEPTA. <http://www.septa.org/media/releases/2018/11-1-18.html>

47 Wiggins, Alex Z. LA County Metro’s Homeless Action Plan. LA Metro presentation to APTA. <https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/Alex-Wiggins.pdf>

**HUB
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HOPE**



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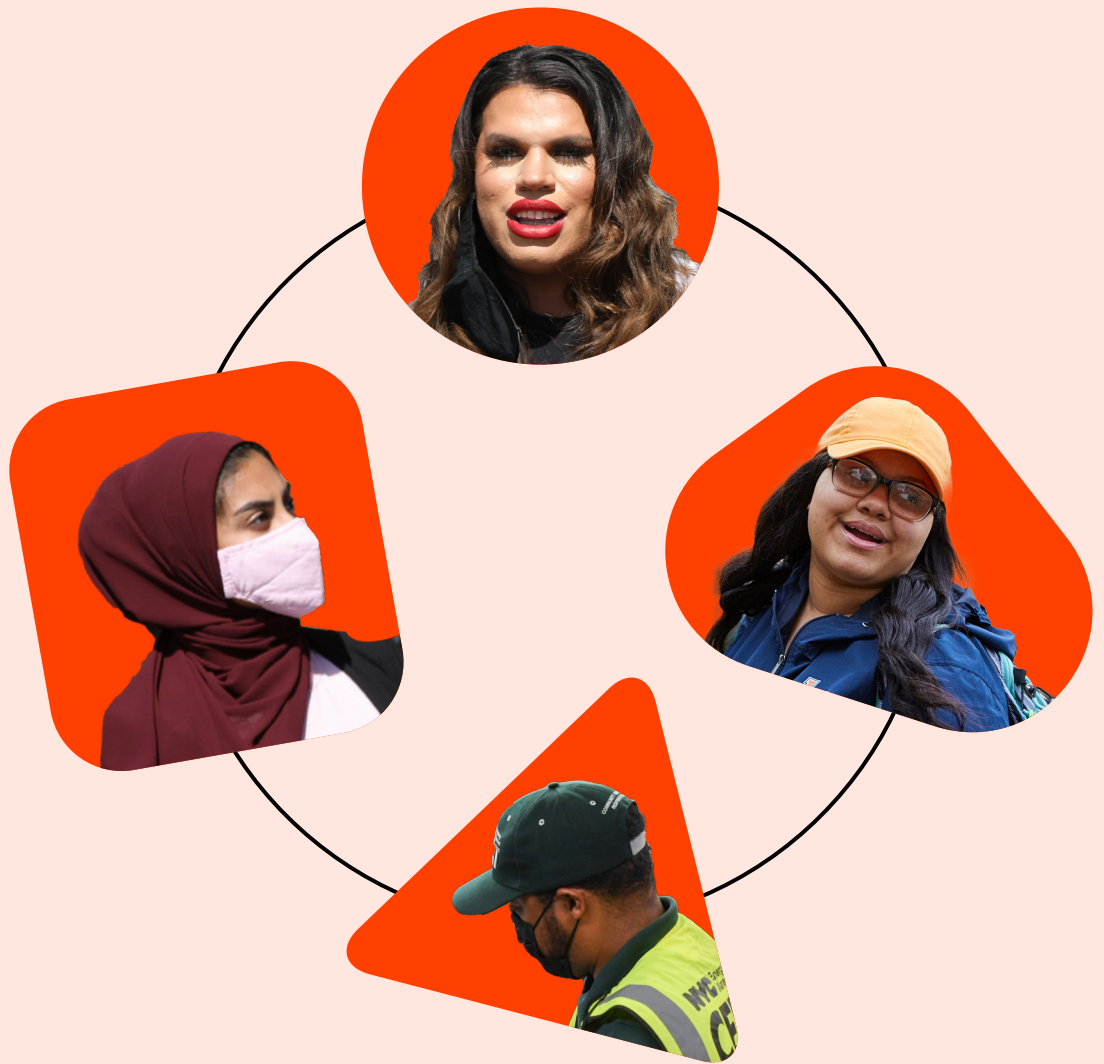
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Tickets



Steps toward equitable transit safety programs



The process through which agencies investigate past harms and identify potential reforms is key. It is the first step toward regaining public trust and charting a new direction.

Agencies moving toward equitable transit safety programs should carefully consider the processes through which they'll conduct community outreach, design their new program, and introduce it to the public. They should be prepared for months of work before comprehensive reforms can be proposed and implemented. Case studies on BART and TriMet's reforms found within this report show the paths that agencies can take.

To complete its planning process, TriMet used a blue ribbon panel made up of local and national experts on transit security, equity, and community engagement. The panel conducted a month long review of TriMet policing before creating recommendations for new community investments. The panel provided reports to the TriMet board so that results would be known to the public.

BART PD set up two independent oversight committees to investigate police misconduct. Those committees paired with a progressive Board of Directors were able to increase transparency and guide the agency toward a reimagined approach to public safety.

The process through which agencies investigate past harms and identify potential reforms is key. It is the first step toward regaining public trust and charting a new direction. Agencies should be intentional about how these processes will be carried out.

In July 2020, The Center for Policing Equity (CPE) released a set of recommendations for communities responding to calls for defunding or reforming the police.⁴⁸ The steps seek to guide communities that wish to reduce the footprint of law enforcement while ensuring that the public remains safe and violence is prevented. Communities should consider five questions:

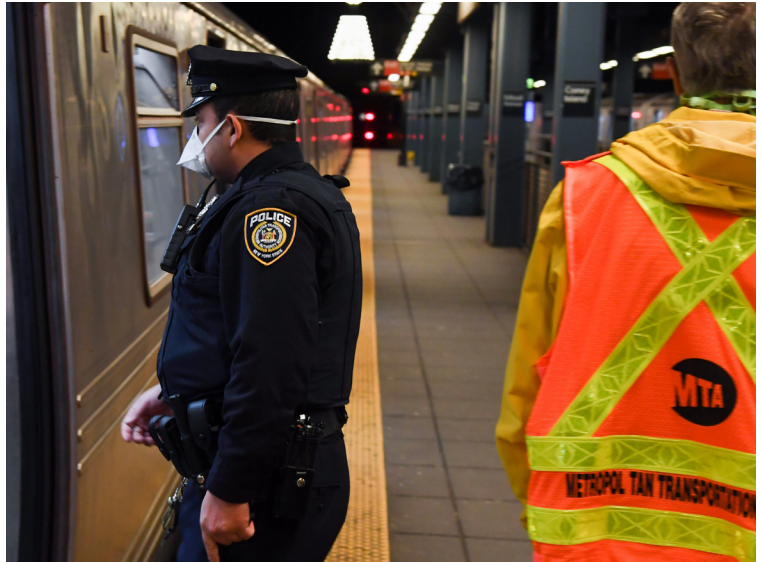
1. What services might replace law enforcement to reduce their footprint on communities?
2. How can departments reduce their footprint in "overpoliced" communities?
3. What communities need more resources and what mechanisms can deliver them?
4. How can we measure the response to change?
5. How can we respond to community violence with a lighter law enforcement footprint?

Transit agencies seeking to reform their transit safety programs could also apply this framework. BART PD made use of these recommendations after they underwent a review by the CPE to help inform its approach to equitable transit policing.

The need for long-term planning toward police reform should not

48 The Center for Policing Equity. (2020, July 27) Center for Policing Equity Releases Critical Steps for Exploring How Public Safety Resources are Allocated. The Center for Policing Equity. <https://policingequity.org/newsroom/press-releases/critical-steps-exploring-public-safety-resources-allocation>

Agencies should demand that police departments are held accountable for their actions while on the system.



stop agencies from taking short-term actions. Their initial steps toward reform can promote increased transparency and accountability. Agencies should provide the public with information on how much agencies spend on policing in comparison to other public safety programs. They should also report police actions on their systems so that outside parties are able to evaluate and critique the use of force.

The police will continue to play a role in transit safety. They will still be necessary for investigating violent crimes and arresting perpetrators. Armed officers will be needed to back-up unarmed personnel when situations escalate and their safety is threatened. As long as a police presence in transit systems remains necessary, agencies should ask police departments to provide a high quality of service to their riders. A transit system is a unique environment and officers patrolling the system should be well aware of how it functions. Police officers should take special care to only disrupt operations when necessary. They should be sensitive to the needs of operators and frontline staff and strive to ensure that they can carry out their duties without interruptions from disruptive passengers and police functions alike.

Agencies should demand that police departments are held accountable for their actions while on the system. Agencies must take oversight of the police seriously. Use of force data should be provided to agencies and shared with the public. This data should be used to ensure that best efforts are being made to reduce the need for such incidents. It should also be used to audit tactics used and ensure systemic biases are not negatively impacting certain riders.



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MTA NYCT

Case Study

TriMet

Following the murder of Michael Brown and the resulting protest in Ferguson, Missouri, TriMet answered calls from Portland activists to begin to reduce systemic biases from their transit policing. TriMet has had to balance the need for reform against the need to protect riders and employees from crime and other harassment. In 2017, a racist attack against two Muslim riders⁴⁹ occurred on the system. Two riders intervened on behalf of the two women but the good Samaritans were tragically murdered. The incident highlighted the added need for some form of security—while the police’s role in non-violent events could be reduced, they would still be needed to respond to violence on the system.

The agency’s initial response to the Islamophobic attack was simply to increase police presence on the system. Community groups encouraged a different approach. Some riders expressed the fear that increased police presence would lead to more fare evasion crackdowns rather than the prevention of future attacks.

In response to the hard work of activists and community groups, TriMet began to reduce the presence of armed security and increase the number of unarmed security personnel on the system. TriMet also joined with community groups to call for and receive a change in state law allowing them to decriminalize fare enforcement and seek alternative means of penalizing fare evaders.

Beginning in July 2018, fare evaders were given opportunities to reduce their penalties and avoid the criminal justice system: they could pay a lower fare within 90 days of offense, complete community service in lieu of fines, or join the low income ridership program.⁵⁰ TriMet also reduced the role of armed police in conducting fare checks through the use of unarmed security personnel.

Further reforms would follow after the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. Portland TriMet reallocated \$1.8 million in funding from its transit police to community-based safety programs. The agency conducted a year-long review of its public safety approach composed of three information and learning approaches. TriMet conducted community-led listening sessions to gain input from community members and frontline employees regarding their safety concerns while travelling on the TriMet system.⁵¹

A blue ribbon panel, made up of local and national experts on transit security, equity, and community engagement, was established to discuss the results and provide a recommendation to the TriMet General Manager.

49 Green, Aimee. (2020, February 21). Jeremy Christian guilty on all counts in MAX stabbings trial, including murder and hate crimes. The Oregonian. <https://www.oregonlive.com/news/2020/02/jeremy-christian-guilty-on-all-counts-in-max-stabbings-trial.html>

50 Altstadt, Roberta. (2018, February 28) TriMet Board of Directors approves fare evasion penalty changes. TriMet. <https://news.trimet.org/2018/02/trimet-board-of-directors-approves-fare-evasion-penalty-changes/>

51 TriMet. (2020, November 19) Reimagining Public Safety & Security on Transit. TriMet Board Retreat Discussion. <http://www.trimet.org/meetings/board/pdfs/2020-11-19/Final%20Reimagine%20Board%20retreat%20presentation.pdf>



The panel recommended the \$1.8 million be dedicated to three areas:

1. Training in anti-racism, cultural competency, mental health & de-escalation for TriMet employees
2. Increased presence of TriMet personnel, and unarmed safety presence
3. Crisis intervention teams trained to deal with those in mental health crisis or other behavioral issues

The panel identified key investment themes such as increasing system presence and crisis response services, making infrastructure improvements, and establishing better community partnerships, outreach, and staff training.

System presence will be increased through the use of customer service and social services staff. A Crisis Intervention Team will be created to address mental and behavioral health and other quality of life issues. Existing security personnel will be provided with training on anti-racism, cultural competency, de-escalation, and mental health first-aid to strengthen their ability to respond without using force. Additionally, TriMet office staff and leadership will increase their use of the system, during the day and at night, to strengthen their knowledge of the network and its challenges.

While efforts will be made to reduce their role in some cases, armed police officers will be retained to deal with crimes such as murder, assault, or robbery. These crimes are where police resources are best spent as officers are trained to investigate such incidents and possess the



force needed to deal with individuals menacing riders and transit staff.

A Safety Advisory Committee will be created to pilot new approaches to system safety. The committee will pilot models for rider support, hire rider advocate, and begin new community partnerships. The committee will also be responsible for the launch of a new communication and outreach safety and security campaign. Quarterly reports on the committee's work will become a part of board meetings. These reports will include rider surveys tracking the riders' perception of system safety.

Infrastructure improvements will also be employed to increase safety on the system. To start, TriMet will conduct system safety audits and complete a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) study. Lighting audits will be conducted at platforms and transit centers, stop and station safety assessments will be conducted in communities of color and low-income service areas. When the audits are completed, TriMet will work to improve infrastructure near stops and stations with a focus on addressing access for people with disabilities, security, lighting and pedestrian safety. Communities of color and low-income service areas will be given priority as these improvements are rolled out.



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Stand behind yellow line

Conclusion



Transit operators must think of public safety reforms as a key component of improving their systems and creating a service that riders and employees can depend on.

In order to create public transit systems that are safer for all riders, agencies will have to approach the issue with fresh eyes and acknowledge that the status quo is failing riders and the greater public. Agencies must engage with their riders and operators to learn more about each group's safety needs and carefully tailor safety programs to address them. Agencies must be willing to shift their focus from just policing bad behavior and enforcing the fare and toward holistic programs that create an uplifting environment and contribute to more equitable cities and regions.

Public transit systems do not exist in a vacuum—many of the public safety issues found on transit systems are out of the control of public transit operators. Solutions to these problems on public transit should not be solely the responsibility of agencies. Cities and regions served by transit must help fund and implement programs that reduce homelessness, address mental health, and increase affordability.

- 1. Be transparent**—Provide the public with data on use-of-force incidents. Work with independent oversight commissions to investigate misconduct and identify remedies.
- 2. Listen to and learn from riders and community groups**—Conduct public safety forums for riders held in conjunction with community groups.
- 3. Increase system presence through the use of unarmed personnel.**—Unarmed personnel should be used for non-police activities when possible. These personnel can serve as an agency's eyes and ears while they conduct their everyday work. An increased agency presence can help create a sense of community and of safety on transit systems.
- 4. Reduce the use of police officers in response to fare evasion, homelessness, and mental health crises**—Police officers should be called on when necessary. For other functions, agencies should use unarmed personnel or create new programs that point riders in the direction of needed services or assistance. Agencies should work with outside partners to create and administer such programs.

Reimagining public safety on transit systems will provide agencies with an opportunity to reorient old policing models toward providing better customer service. Agencies can build a new relationship with their riders and seek to better address their needs while ensuring that all feel safe from abuse from bad actors and from overzealous policing. Transit operators must think of public safety reforms as a key component of improving their systems and creating a service that riders and employees can depend on.

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