



## Board Report

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### OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE MARCH 16, 2023

**SUBJECT: METRO TRANSIT SECURITY**

**ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

AUTHORIZE the Chief Executive Officer to amend the FY23 Budget to add 48 Metro Transit Security full-time equivalent (FTE) positions to include 44 Transit Security Officers, three Supervisors, and one Director, Transit Security (Captain).

**ISSUE**

Metro's multi-layer reimagined public safety plan includes a significant priority to protect our employees, including bus operators, from experiencing violence while they are on our system. Metro's Employee Assault Mitigation Task Force has recommended implementing additional Safety Bus Riding teams as a means to reduce and prevent operator assaults. This report requests authorization to amend the FY23 budget to add 44 Metro Transit Security Officers (TSO), three Supervisors, and one Captain to be deployed as safety bus riding teams for this purpose.

**BACKGROUND**

All forms of public transportation, airplanes, trains, and buses have seen a concerning increase in passengers who are unruly, angry, and sometimes violent. Public transit agencies across the nation have all seen a disturbing increase in operator assaults. The cause and contributors to operator assaults vary widely; studies have identified broader societal trends to these random acts of violence, such as mental health issues, economic and social factors, and pandemic impact.

The following chart illustrates the top reasons for assault for calendar year 2022.

Top Reasons For Assault January 2022 - December 2022	
Reason	Count
No Reason	44
Other	30
Demand Stop	21
Disorderly	14
Mentally Ill	13
Fare	8
Missed Stop	5
Out of Service	5
Policy/Drink	4
Mutual Combat	2
Mask	2
Policy Stroller	2
Sex	1
Other/Vehicle Accident	1
Mask/Fare	1
Accident	1
Policy/Food	1
Policy Scooter	1
Accident	1
Policy Smoking	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>158</b>

Implemented Strategies to Prevent Operator Assaults

Metro has been proactive in our efforts in the research of best practices and analysis of data to implement safety strategies to protect our employees. Metro has been implementing prevention strategies to reduce the risk of safety incidents and create a safer environment for all Metro employees to safely perform their jobs.

1. Metro buses have on-board cameras and DVR
2. Metro buses have operator barriers (March 2020)
3. Metro buses have emergency buttons
4. Clear signage is posted about punishment for assaults on operators (“Let’s Respect Operators ... injuring an operator is punishable by up to 3 years in prison or up to 10,000 fine, or both.” .... Penal Code 243.3”)
5. We have a “See something, say something” Campaign

On July 11, 2022, based on bus operator feedback and data showing a spike in operator assaults, LAPD Transit Services Division deployed the Special Problems Unit (SPU) to address assaults on the ten bus lines having the highest number of assaults and ridership recorded during a 16-month period. The operation concluded on July 25, 2022. It was discovered that most bus operator concerns were mainly focused on issues and disruptive behavior related to Customer Code of Conduct violations.

On August 31, 2022, Bus Riding Teams were launched composed of Metro Transit Security Officers responsible for code of conduct compliance and Law Enforcement Officers responsible for penal code compliance to provide a high visibility presence. To complete this pilot, Transit Security Officers were reassigned or paid overtime.

Bus Operator feedback resulting from this initiative was overwhelmingly positive. One bus operator commented: *“With officers on the bus, riders behave and don’t start any problems. It’s a safer environment for me to drive the bus and for the passengers. I don’t have to worry about calling the BOC[Bus Operations Control Center] or having to deal with unruly riders”* and *“It’s a big help for us as Operators when we can just focus on driving the bus.”*

In November 2022, the Employee Assault Mitigation Task Force was created in collaboration with various departments to develop proactive solutions to provide safety tools to ensure employees have a safe work environment. In response to bus operator surveys and monthly meetings with operators, also known as division rap sessions, the task force identified the following strategies to reduce operator assaults:

1. Provide de-escalation training (Implemented January 2023)
2. Review bus operator barriers for increased effectiveness (underway)
3. Bus operators to provide safety input for new buses (underway)
4. Collect, review and analyze of assault data for prevention measures (underway)
5. Collaborate with operations to create new policies and procedures to reduce assaults (underway)

## **DISCUSSION**

The safety of all Metro employees and passengers remains our top priority, and Metro intends to maintain the highest safety standards in the industry. Bus operators are responsible for the safe operation of the buses while at the same time assisting our passengers. Assaults on operators during the operation of a vehicle create a serious threat to not only our operators but to our passengers and the public as well. Importantly, these assaults have a physical and mental impact on our operators and affect their overall well-being. Metro believes all employees should be able to conduct their job without harassment or threat of violence.

Between 2018 through 2022, Metro Operations reported a monthly average of nine bus operator assaults. (Attachment A). During this period, the highest monthly average was 13 assaults in 2022. Between CY21 and CY22, Metro saw a 37.9% increase in bus operator assaults - from 115 to 158 respectively.

Although Metro has retrofitted all buses with operator shields that minimize the severity of the assaults, assailants can still reach around the shields and throw objects at, punch, or spit on the operator because the operators are not completely enclosed within the shields. Also, operators are outside of the operator shield when assisting customers such as those who use a wheelchair.

Our bus operators have been consistent and vocal regarding their concerns over their personal safety. In the 2022 Bus Operator Survey (Attachment B), 21.5% said that their biggest concern with being an Operator was safety from passenger confrontation, and 14.9% of respondents said they would leave Metro due to not feeling safe while operating the bus. During division RAP sessions and focus groups, Operators were asked to provide details about the factors that cause them to feel unsafe, as well as scenarios that lead to confrontation with passengers. Bus operators stated that riders know Metro's Customer Code of Conduct is not enforced with regularity and expressed the importance of setting an expectation for passengers that a uniformed security presence would be regularly seen on board a bus. This action, they said, would serve as a deterrent to unruly behavior on the system. Most bus operator concerns were mainly focused on issues and disruptive behavior related to violations of Metro's Customer Code of Conduct.

Furthermore, in the 2022 Customer Experience Survey, Metro customers echo bus operators' concerns, with safety from crime being a top aspect riders want Metro to improve. A combined 47% of bus riders were neutral, not satisfied, or not satisfied at all when asked about the enforcement of the Metro Code of Conduct on the Bus.

Metro's multi-layer public safety plan ensures that the right response is given to each situation. Code of Conduct violations are not criminal, and as such, Metro's Transit Security Officers - not Law Enforcement - ensure compliance. Enforcement of all violations of the code of conduct is imperative as it can lead to a more serious safety incident if not addressed.

### Metro Transit Security Officers (TSO)

Metro currently has 213 uniformed TSO FTEs. They are deployed over three shifts, as follows:

- (54) Code of conduct enforcement across the system
  - only four TSOs are available to deploy and board buses on one bus line per week
- (25) Mobile patrol
  - Responds to calls for service at Metro's division, patrol parking structures/lots, layover zones - do not conduct fare or Code compliance
- (25) Union Station Gateway
  - Fixed security inside building, interior and exterior roving patrols

- (16) Rail Safety
  - Opens and closes heavy rail stations
- (14) Revenue
  - Security oversight for revenue services
- (14) Supervision
  - Sergeants and Lieutenants
- (4) Security Control Specialists
- (2) Operations Support
  - Consists of one sergeant in Support of Special Events and one sergeant as the Training Coordinator.
- (5) Long-term leave
- (9) In training
- (45) Currently in the hiring process as of February 28

The approach is to assign TSOs to bus lines, with deployment being based on information gathered from key data sources such as operator feedback, Transit Watch App, and customer complaints.

Of the 48 TSO FTEs requested in FY23, 44 will be deployed to board approximately ten bus lines on a given shift to address bus operator safety and rider concerns, an overall increase of 79% in TSO presence on the Metro system. Dedicating safety resources to the bus system demonstrates Metro's commitment to ensuring the safety of our employees and our customers, and will ultimately enhance the experience of customers using the mode that carries most of Metro's ridership.

The positions being requested for Metro TSO include 22 unarmed and 22 armed officers which will be deployed to expand the Bus Riding Teams to ensure bus operator safety, add presence aboard the buses and ensure compliance of the Customer Code of Conduct. This effort is in the spirit of the Public Safety Advisory Committee's recommendations regarding non-policing onboard bus safety strategies and utilizing a "buddy system" where a presence would ride along during an operator's shift rather than solely responding to incidents (Attachment C). Although PSAC also recommended unarmed presence, the 22 armed officers being requested will be deployed during the owl service which can give the perception of more dangerous conditions as expressed by our bus operators.

### *Recruitment*

As of February 28, Metro Transit Security has a total of 45 vacancies (28 of which are Code of Conduct compliance officers) which are in the following stages of the hiring process:

- (11) Security Control Specialists to start March 20
- (3) TSO I (unarmed) candidates to start on March 6
- (9) TSO I (unarmed) candidates to start on March 20
- (7) TSOI (unarmed) candidates are in the background check stage
- (7) TSO II (armed) candidates are in the final stages of recruitment
- (6) Sergeant candidates are in final stages of recruitment
- (2) Lieutenant candidates are in final stages of recruitment

The average period to fill a TSO I position is six months. While the current process lends itself to

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thorough, but time-intensive, background checks and physical agility tests, staff have identified opportunities to streamline and improve the process. Metro hosted quarterly weekend hiring events in November 2022 and February 2023 where multiple steps of the recruitment process were completed in one day. Lastly, we are in the process of hiring a temporary (as needed) employee that would be dedicated to assessing the recruitment process, identifying areas to streamline, and be dedicated to recruitment and outreach. Through these efforts, we are confident we will fill the vacant and additional requested positions by the end of the fiscal year.

### *Training*

In-depth and regular training is key to providing prompt, efficient and equitable service. SSLE is updating its training curriculum to enhance accountability, legitimacy, innovation and professional development through equity, de-escalation and customer experience courses. A key and critical part of transforming our safety program is to establish a solid training foundation.

### *KPIs*

The following KPIs have been established to enhance accountability and measure the success of TSO operations.

- Bus Operator Assaults (reduction)
  - Reduce assaults by 10% year over year, with a stretch goal of zero assaults.
  - The Bus Riding Teams, staffed by Transit Security Officers, will provide a greater presence on the bus system and ensure compliance with the Code of Conduct.
- Dispatch response time to Transit Watch response incident reports.(reduction)
  - Reduce response time from 5 minutes to 4 minutes
  - Metro Transit Security is responsible for receiving and responding to Transit Watch App reports. By measuring dispatch response time, it will ensure Officers are being timely in responding to patrons submitting a report and providing them an excellent customer experience.

These KPIs will be tracked and reported in the Monthly Public Safety board report.

.Determination\_Of\_Safety\_Impact

### **DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT**

The authorization to add positions will have a positive impact on safety.

The requested positions will add security presence onboard buses - a request that has recurrently been raised by operators during division RAP sessions and by riders and address riders concerned as outlined in the 2022 Customer Survey.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

This action pertains to the \$3M pilot safety strategies on board buses initiative as outlined in Motion 26.2. The annual budget required for the 48 additional FTEs is \$6.2M, and the FY23 cost is estimated to be nominal with the intent of filling all positions towards the end of the fiscal year.

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Since this is a multi-year project, the cost center manager and Chief Safety Officer will be accountable for budgeting the positions in future years.

### **Impact to Budget**

The sources of funding would be operating eligible federal, state and local resources that include fares, and operating eligible sales tax resources.

### **EQUITY PLATFORM**

Increasing the number of Transit Security personnel will allow Metro to provide dedicated safety resources to the bus system. In the Public Safety Advisory Committee meetings, one of the members was an operator and shared first-hand experiences of safety on the bus system as well as feedback from peers. These concerns and pain points are key factors that contribute to low morale, high turnover, and a key challenge in regaining ridership to pre-pandemic levels. Through this effort, we aim to increase rider and operator safety. We recognize that in the past, there has been an under-investment of safety resources for the bus system. However, this is a step in the right direction towards supporting our front-line employees and taking actionable measures to address their safety concerns.

Furthermore, this request further enhances Metro's efforts towards reimagining public safety by investing in unarmed personnel and in our Transit Security personnel by further professionalizing their training curriculum and enhancing the customer experience.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

The recommendation supports strategic plan goal 2.1 of committing to improving security. Metro will continue to rely on a multi-layered security program that comprises contract law enforcement, ambassadors, and contract security, along with the expansion of Metro's in-house Transit security personnel to achieve this goal.

### **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The Board could decide not to approve the recommendations. This is not recommended as only Metro TSOs conduct Code of Conduct compliance.

One alternative would be to reassign existing Metro personnel from current duties to support security expansion. This approach is not recommended because it would have a negative impact on Metro's ability to adequately maintain the current level of staffing to meet required security needs.

Another alternative would be to authorize security expansion by using overtime; however, this approach is also not recommended because it increases TSO costs, and it is not sustainable for a long period of time.

### **NEXT STEPS**

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If approved, staff will launch additional quarterly hiring events and attend weekly job fairs to increase the pipeline for Metro Transit Security positions. And report to the board monthly on the bus riding team efforts.

**ATTACHMENTS**

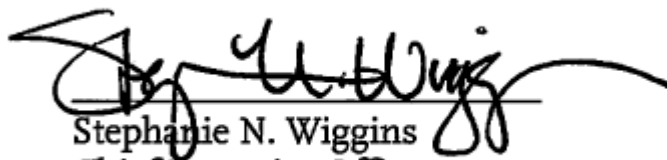
Attachment A - Bus Operator Assaults Data

Attachment B - 2022 Bus Operator Survey Update

Attachment C - PSAC Onboard Bus Safety Strategies

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## Bus Operator Assaults 2018-2022

<b>Bus Operator Assaults</b>	<b>CY2018</b>	<b>CY2019</b>	<b>CY2020</b>	<b>CY2021</b>	<b>CY2022</b>
Jan	8	6	6	3	12
Feb	4	8	5	5	13
Mar	9	8	5	8	15
Apr	5	9	5	6	14
May	5	8	4	8	8
June	4	6	13	10	14
July	4	10	4	8	17
Aug	8	7	8	10	14
Sep	8	5	2	15	6
Oct	10	10	9	9	17
Nov	11	6	5	18	15
Dec	4	12	7	15	12
<b>Totals</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>Average per FY</b>	<b>6.67</b>	<b>7.92</b>	<b>6.08</b>	<b>9.58</b>	<b>13.08</b>

\* Average Monthly Bus Operator Assaults over the past 5 Years:

**8.67**

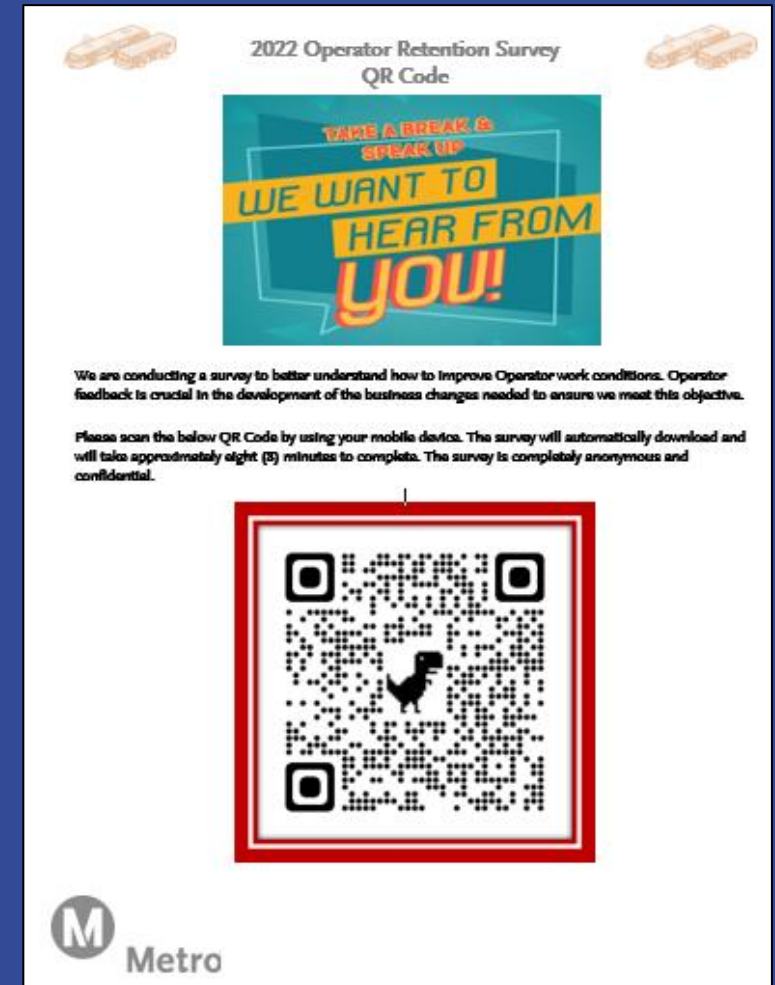
# 2022 Bus Operator Survey Update



Operations, Safety & Customer Experience Committee Meeting  
May 19, 2022

# Overview

- Dates: Opened February 22, 2022 and closed March 21, 2022
- Bus Transportation Goal: 513 responses
- Responses Received (Bus Operators only):
  - 588 responses
  - Across 10 Bus Divisions
  - Requested a minimum of 50 responses from each Division
- Division Outreach: Visited twice and most three times
- Survey Questions: 19 total questions
  - 16 closed ended and 3 open ended
- Three Focus Areas: Job satisfaction, Concerns & Culture



# Overview: Division Responses

Bus Division	Responses	Percentage
1	54	9%
2	60	10%
3	52	9%
5	75	13%
7	61	10%
8	63	11%
9	54	9%
13	61	10%
15	56	10%
18	52	9%
<b>Systemwide Total</b>	<b>588</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Job Satisfaction Questions

Q8. I enjoy being an Operator.

		Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	29.6%
	Agree	29.6%
	Neutral	27.8%
	Disagree	7.0%
	Strongly Disagree	6.0%
	Total	100.0%

Q9. I see myself working as an Operator another 5 years.

		Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	21.2%
	Agree	20.3%
	Neutral	32.6%
	Disagree	11.6%
	Strongly Disagree	14.3%
	Total	100.0%

Q10. I would recommend being a Metro Operator to my family and friends.

		Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	13.8%
	Agree	17.1%
	Neutral	26.5%
	Disagree	17.0%
	Strongly Disagree	25.6%
	Total	100.0%

Takeaways:

- About 60% of respondents enjoy being an Operator, however enjoyment trends downward over time
- About 40% of operators see themselves working as an operator another five years, however longevity trends downward over time
- About 1/3 of operators would recommend the job to family and friends

# Concerns and Pain Points

Q4. My biggest concern with being an Operator.

Areas of Concern	Responses	
	N	Percent
<b>Low pay</b>	347	23.0%
<b>Safety from passenger confrontation</b>	324	21.5%
<b>High stress</b>	316	20.9%
Fatigue	206	13.6%
Safe operation of bus while driving	113	7.40%
Other Concern	90	6.00%
Unfair treatment from my direct manager	51	3.40%
Childcare concerns	36	2.40%
Commute time	25	1.60%
Safe operation of Micro vehicle	3	0.20%
TOTAL	1,512	100.0%

Q5. I think about leaving Metro often.

		Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	28.0%
	Agree	26.1%
	Neutral	22.9%
	Disagree	12.9%
	Strongly Disagree	10.1%
	TOTAL	100.0%

Q6. If I were to leave Metro, it would be due to:

Areas of Concern	Responses	
	N	Percent
<b>Low pay</b>	356	27.0%
<b>High stress at work</b>	342	25.9%
<b>Not feeling safe while operating the bus</b>	197	14.9%
<b>Not feeling safe from passenger confrontation</b>	190	14.4%
Management	83	6.30%
Retirement	77	5.80%
Commute time	35	2.70%
Childcare issues	35	2.70%
Not feeling safe while operating the train	3	0.20%
Not feeling safe while operating the micro vehicle	1	0.10%
TOTAL	1,319	100.0%

Takeaways:

- **Low pay is the greatest concern for operators and is subject to current negotiations**
- **Respect the Ride campaign, homeless outreach, and new ambassador program will work to improve safety**
- **Key issues of high stress and fatigue lead to burnout which can be directly impacted by long assignments, ordered call backs, and insufficient run times**

# Workplace Culture and Environment

Q12. Having a good relationship with my direct manager is important to me.

## Systemwide Results

	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	43.1%	43.1%
Agree	35.9%	79.0%
Neutral	17.3%	96.3%
Disagree	1.9%	98.3%
Strongly Disagree	1.7%	100.0%

## Division Results

Division	% Agree or Strongly Agree
1	75.9%
2	82.0%
3	92.3%
5	76.7%
7	80.3%
8	81.0%
9	81.5%
13	75.4%
15	75.0%
18	74.5%

# Snapshot: Systemwide Job Satisfaction, Pain Points and Concerns

Job Satisfaction	Pain Points and Concerns
<p>60% enjoy being an operator *greater % among PT operators</p>	<p>98% noted concerns with being a bus operator</p>
<p>40% see themselves work as a bus operator another five years</p>	<p>23% low pay- being the greatest concern. Followed by 22% safety and 21% high stress</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longevity trends downward over time</li> <li>• Only about a third of operators would recommend the job to family and friends</li> <li>• Part-time employees are more likely to recommend the job than full-time employees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low pay concerns are highest among part time operators and those with two or fewer years of service</li> <li>• The concern declines steadily as tenure increases</li> </ul>



# Culture Findings: Recognition & Tenure

Q15. Being recognized for good work is important to me.

How many years have you been an Operator?		Valid Percent
2 years or less	Strongly Agree	49.3%
	Agree	28.2%
	Neutral	18.5%
	Disagree	1.9%
	Strongly Disagree	2.2%
Total		100%
3-5 years	Strongly Agree	50.7%
	Agree	33.5%
	Neutral	14.5%
	Disagree	0.6%
	Strongly Disagree	0.6%
Total		100%
6-10 years	Strongly Agree	56.2%
	Agree	27.1%
	Neutral	9.9%
	Disagree	2.6%
	Strongly Disagree	4.2%
Total		100%
More than 10 years	Strongly Agree	48.4%
	Agree	32.8%
	Neutral	14.4%
	Disagree	2.8%
	Strongly Disagree	1.6%
Total		100%

Q16. The culture at Metro needs to improve.

How many years have you been an Operator?		Valid Percent
2 years or less	Yes	81.6%
	No	18.4%
	Total	100%
3-5 years	Yes	89.9%
	No	10.1%
	Total	100%
6-10 years	Yes	87.9%
	No	12.1%
	Total	100%
More than 10 years	Yes	83.4%
	No	16.6%
	Total	100%

## Takeaway:

- About 80% of Operators surveyed value a good relationship with their direct manager and coworkers, as well as recognition



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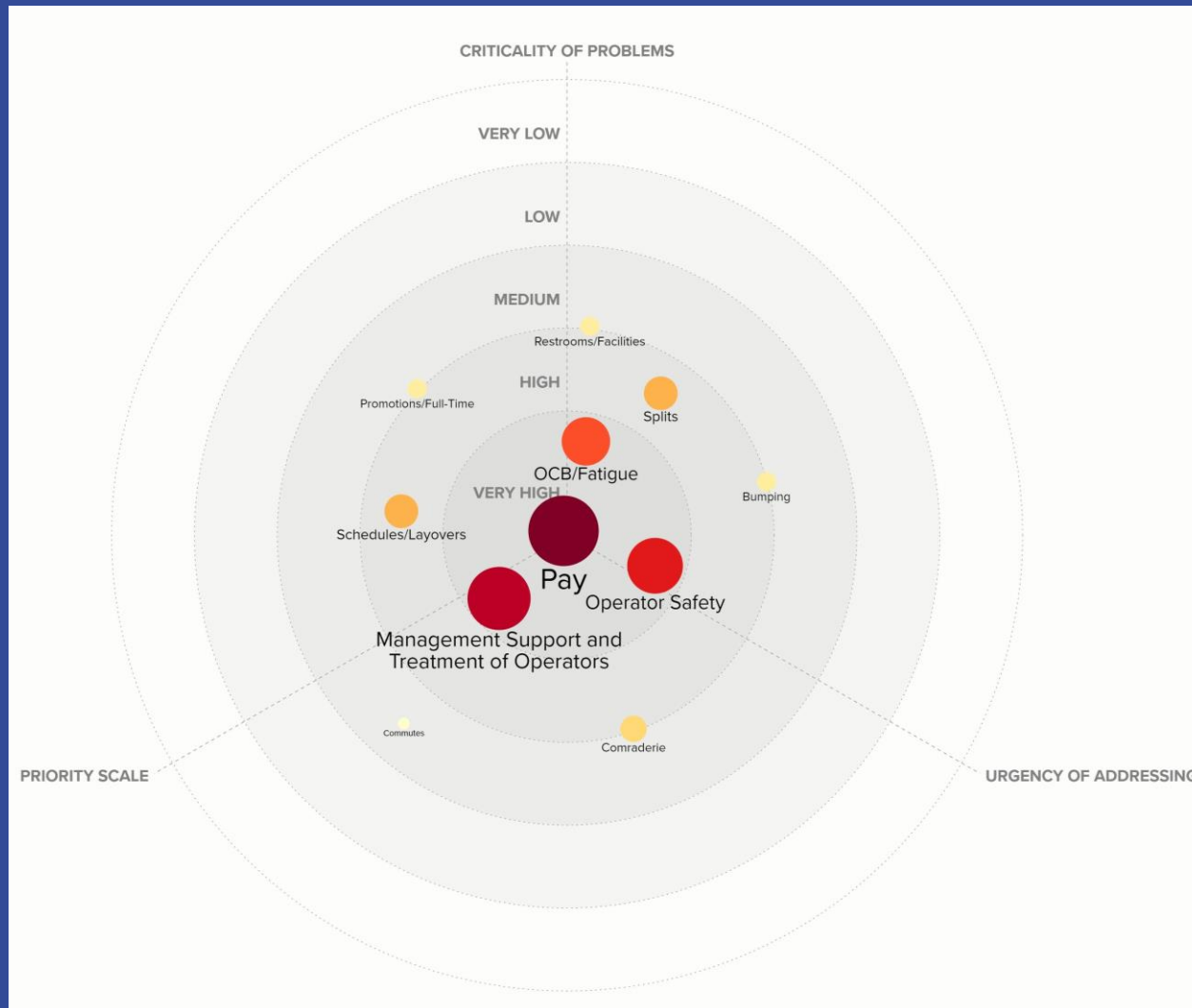
# Qualitative Feedback

## Q18. What suggestions do you have to create a better Operator work environment?

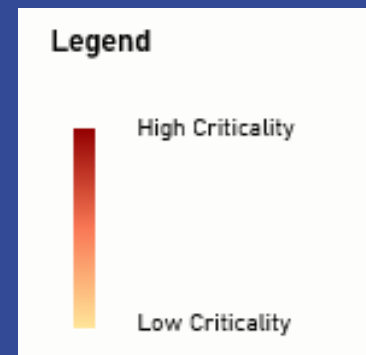
Responses were classified into the following themes using descriptive research coding:

- Social Issues – 190 responses
  - ✓ Humanize, Recognize, Respect, Morale...
- Policy/Political Problems – 99 responses
  - ✓ OCBs, Enforcement of Safety, Ease for New Employees
- Solutions Suggested – 118 responses
  - ✓ Layover 8:01 Rule too little, Scheduling, Enclosed Cabs...
- One Word/Phrase Responses – 63 responses
  - ✓ Just Pay, Benefits, Make it Safer etc.

# Qualitative Feedback



Higher Pay and Better Benefits HAVE to be implemented. **Even though out of 521 responses, 100 mentioned pay explicitly, it is implied in almost every response:** calling for respect & dignity, overworking, need for hiring more operators, promise for promotions etc.



# Qualitative Feedback - Operator Comments

Q11. What do you like most about being an Operator.

- *“I really enjoy driving busses from our fleet and helping the public. We make it look easy but its a true skill set that takes years to master. “*
- *“The independence involved. Just you and your bus.”*
- *“There is an importance of being an operator and my passengers make me feel great when they appreciate my performance on the road.”*

Q18. What suggestions do you have to create a better Operator work environment.

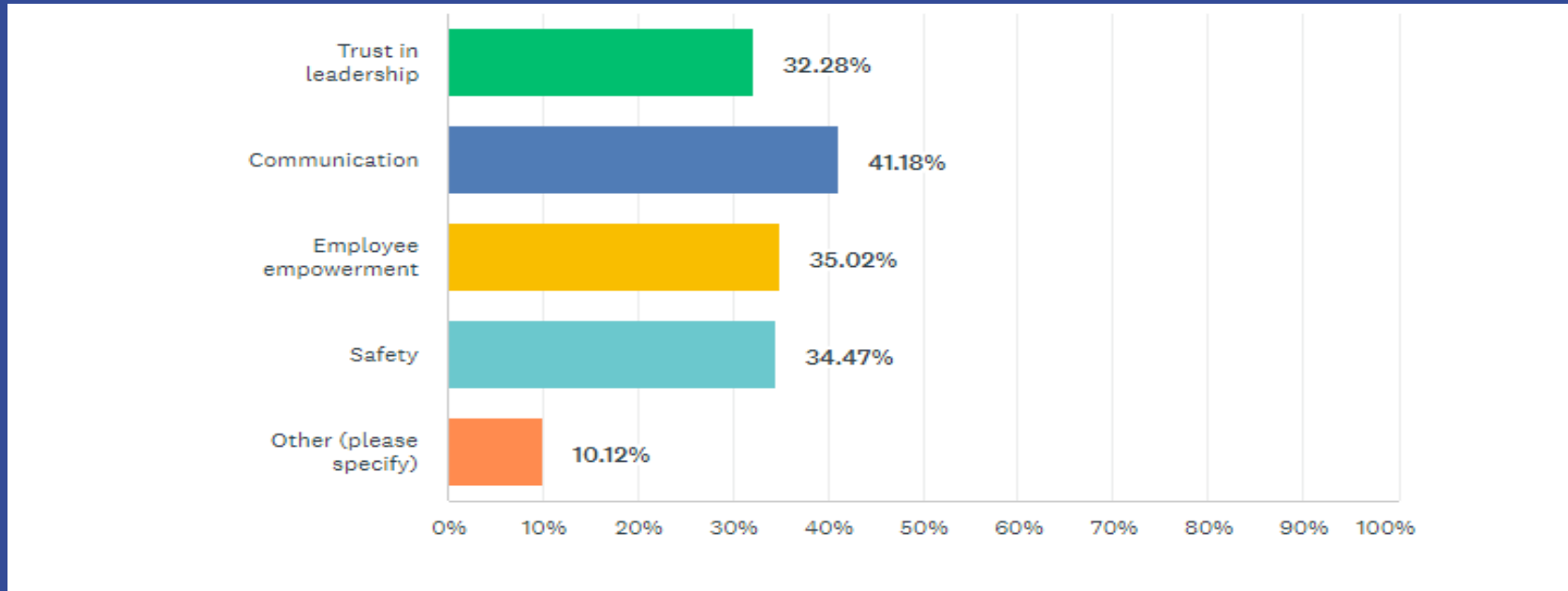
- *“Reduce OCB to allow for proper rest, recovery, and stress reduction.”*
- *Management engagement more with operators.”*
- *Provide more running time during rush hours. More layover time. Have better restrooms facilities at layovers.”*

Q19. What strategies should Metro use to attract more Operators to the organization

- *“Make driving less stressful by providing more running time. Pay more.”*
- *“Better benefit, starting salary (inflation is a big problem), some operator need to drive far to the reporting location.”*
- *“Increase the pay per hour and offer full flexibility time schedules.”*



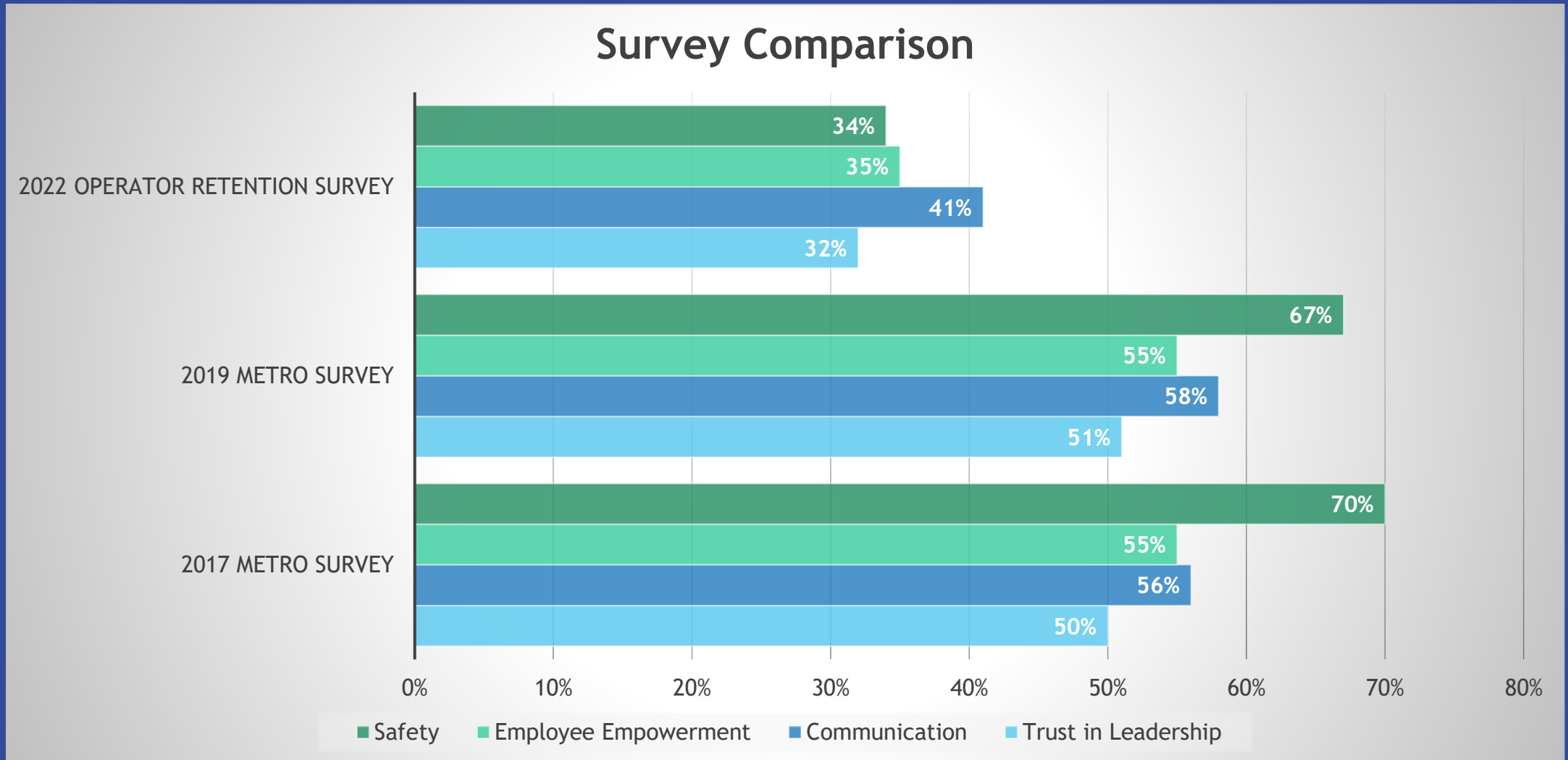
# Opportunities for Improvement



## Takeaways:

- Most operators feel the culture at Metro needs to change with communication, employee empowerment, safety, and trust in leadership being the top four areas needing improvement
- About half of the Operators surveyed feel satisfied with the benefits that Metro offers
- Additional areas of concern relative to culture change were:
  - ✓ Stress management
  - ✓ Respect

# Metro Survey Comparison



Metro

# Comparison 2017/2019 2022 Survey Takeaways

- 2017 & 2019 Agency Survey results indicate areas for improvement relative to Communication and Trust in Leadership were important to Operations staff
- Similarly, the 2022 survey results in the areas of culture, communication, trust in leadership, and employee empowerment indicate Bus Operators still want change in these areas
- Recognition is very important for Operators to receive on a consistent basis
- Operators feel a good relationship with their direct manager and coworkers is important



# Next Steps

- Metro will continue to review and analyze survey data, for bus and Metro Micro personnel, and concentrate on the following:
  - ✓ Division outreach and engagement to report out survey findings in coordination with Operations, Customer Experience, Chief People Office, and Safety management personnel (to be completed by May 19, 2022)
  - ✓ Create Operator focus groups to drill down into feedback and suggestions
  - ✓ Develop actionable recommendations to improve areas of concern
  - ✓ Steering committee/task force to oversee and execute recommendation implementation with status updates
  - ✓ Re-survey operators to gauge progress (12-18 months)





# Recommendations on Onboard Bus Safety Strategies

## About these Recommendations

This document lays out the Public Safety Advisory Committee's (PSAC, the committee) recommendations for strategies to improve bus operator and passenger safety on Metro. During internal focus groups and staff interviews, bus operators expressed concerns about their safety in the system, particularly after 3:00 p.m. and during nighttime service. Operators also reported that Code of Conduct violations are frequent and often go unaddressed. In response, Metro's board has allocated \$3M for onboard safety strategies, including CCTV, increased staff presence, and improved emergency communications protocols. The following recommendations include opportunities to improve bus operator security through non-law enforcement alternatives and other staffing solutions. The document also identifies opportunities to implement improvements to the design of buses and on-system communications infrastructure.

## A Note on Deployment & Data

PSAC understands that the lines chosen for deployment of these onboard bus safety strategies will be primarily determined by the number of bus operator assaults, with additional consideration given to the number of Code of Conduct and fare enforcement violations. The committee recommends that Metro consider additional factors including the following: reviewing incident reports for contextual information on rider and operator assaults, bus service reliability and timing, and vehicle conditions in their analysis. Metro should review incident reports to understand the factors influencing assaults on drivers and passengers (e.g., inability to pay fares, passengers experiencing mental distress, etc.). They should use this context to determine the appropriate staffing response (e.g., considering fare-free options, enhanced presence, and flexible deployment of mental health service providers, etc.). Additionally, Metro should prioritize customer experience enhancements on priority bus lines, focusing on enhancing reliability, delivering excellent customer service, providing real-time information, and ensuring cleanliness on vehicles and at stops.

## Expanding the Scope of Public Safety Considerations

PSAC recommends that Metro considers customer experience, service improvements, and fareless transit programs as interventions that improve public safety on buses. Looking beyond the traditional security methods of staffing, physical interventions, and communication, focusing on improved service and rider satisfaction will greatly improve safety outcomes in the system. With fare collection being a key point of contention between riders and operators, the committee endorses a fareless transit program to eliminate that point of conflict. Additionally, this policy will assist low-income riders – the primary users of Metro transit – by improving access to jobs and recreation. Metro bus riders are more numerous and ride more miles than rail riders, at almost a 4:1 disparity during 2021.<sup>1</sup> Given that bus riders make up the core of Metro service, the agency should continue to prioritize working with local jurisdictions to implement bus-only lanes and dedicate internal resources for vehicle deep cleaning to meet the needs of their core ridership.

## Staffing Strategies

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<sup>1</sup> Metro Ridership. (n.d.). Retrieved August 10, 2022, from <https://isotp.metro.net/MetroRidership/YearOverYear.aspx>

PSAC has articulated the following recommendations to improve and expand staffing on Metro's bus routes. These recommendations will enhance safety for riders and operators and foster a rider culture as outlined in PSAC's [Mission, Vision, Values](#), and [Code of Conduct](#) documents:

- **Increased Staff Presence:** Currently, Metro's contract law enforcement partners deploy teams of officers to ride buses that are deemed priority safety concerns. However, these partners lack the resources to sufficiently cover the system. In keeping with PSAC's long-term vision to shift funding from law enforcement to non-law enforcement alternatives, the committee has identified opportunities to add Metro staff presence on buses to improve operator and rider safety.

PSAC recommends that Metro deploys a combination of the following solutions as appropriate: transit ambassadors, homeless outreach teams, mental health crisis response teams, unarmed Metro transit security officers, and social service providers. Increased uniformed staff presence can alleviate the stress felt by operators and reduce Code of Conduct violations. These employees can also act as a liaison between law enforcement in emergencies. Metro may consider utilizing a "buddy system," where vehicle operators are consistently accompanied by a staff member from the applicable partner named above. In this "buddy system," those partners would be present throughout the driver's shift, rather than responding to incidents.

Additionally, Metro's recruitment efforts for these positions should focus on reaching people who live in the communities served by priority bus lines, individuals involved with the justice system, veterans, and people facing barriers to employment.

- **Staff Training:** PSAC highlighted the need for staff on the system to be culturally competent, trained in de-escalation techniques, familiar with Metro's security ecosystem, and aware of how they interface with law enforcement. Cultural competency means that staff should be recruited from (or have an understanding of) the communities these bus lines serve. See recommendation #8 "[Acknowledging context for vulnerable transit riders](#)" from the Code of Conduct recommendations for further information on how the experience of public safety on transit differs for different population groups. To this end, the committee recommends that onboard bus staff are well-trained in de-escalation techniques that can be utilized in tense situations. Staff must also have a full understanding of Metro's security system and the roles of non-law enforcement alternatives and non-contracted law enforcement. Staff must be able to easily assess a situation and deploy the proper resources as needed.
- **Increased Partnerships with Cities and the County:** The Metro system extends through many cities across LA County. Recently, certain cities indicated their interest in partnering with Metro on contracted law enforcement duties. Rather than utilizing these cities' resources as law enforcement, PSAC recommends exploring partnerships between Metro and these cities to provide non-law enforcement staffing solutions. These partnerships would increase local staff presence along Metro's bus lines without expanding the law enforcement services from LAPD and LASD. Additionally, Metro may consider partnering with LA County to provide services specifically for unincorporated areas.
- **Customer-Centric Workforce:** Metro should train and foster a workforce with a strong culture of providing excellent customer service. However, this approach will only be achieved through high-quality jobs that offer competitive wages.

## Physical Intervention Strategies

Making improvements to the environment on the bus and at stops will help improve safety and comfort for riders and operators. PSAC has articulated the following recommendations as physical interventions to improve onboard bus safety:

- **Improved Rider Environment:** The environment onboard a bus will impact the way riders interact with each other and the Metro system. Maintaining a clean bus can reduce anxiety and discomfort among riders, leading to improved perceptions of safety. PSAC also recommends that Metro improve the environment at bus stops to alleviate stress among riders; this includes well-maintained bus stops that have adequate lighting, shade structures, and benches.
- **Panic Button Modifications:** To modify the existing panic button for bus operators, Metro may consider including features that alert waiting bus riders, partners responding to incidents, and other relevant parties to incidents occurring on the vehicle. This could occur through messages on the bus destination sign, signal lights, or other visual notifications. It is important that these modifications do not exacerbate the unfolding situation and should be designed accordingly. However, the committee would like this strategy to be considered a lower priority than staffing and rider environment improvements.

## Communication Strategies

PSAC has prioritized building a positive relationship between the public and Metro as a key safety strategy. PSAC has articulated the following recommendations as communication strategies to improve onboard bus safety and improve customer service:

- **Service Alerts:** PSAC has noted there have been instances of buses passing riders at bus stops because they are full. This may result in unhappy passengers when the next available bus arrives, increasing the likelihood of an incident. PSAC recommends developing or utilizing an existing application or alert system that will notify riders ahead of time whether a bus is unable to take on more passengers. Additionally, when a bus is unavailable, PSAC recommends offering an alternative mode of transport for riders (e.g., Metro Micro) to use.
- **Public Campaigns:** PSAC has highlighted an opportunity for Metro to build stronger relationships with bus riders through public campaigns and outreach. This includes getting to know routine commuters on bus lines to start a “Get to Know Your Rider” campaign. Additionally, PSAC recommends establishing a reward system by enabling Metro staff and security to recognize riders that are courteous and helpful. Through positive messaging and reinforcement, Metro can emphasize that bus safety is a collective responsibility.

# Metro Transit Security

GINA OSBORN

CHIEF SAFETY OFFICER

# Bus Operator Safety

Top Reasons For Assault January 2023	
Reason	Count
Disorderly	2
Missed Stop	2
No Reason	1
Demand Stop	1
Mentally Ill	1
Fare	1
Other	1
Policy Music	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>10</b>

Top Reasons For Assault January 2022-December 2022	
Reason	Count
No Reason	44
Other	30
Demand Stop	21
Disorderly	14
Mentally Ill	13
Fare	8
Missed Stop	5
Out of Service	5
Policy/Drink	4
Mutual Combat	2
Mask	2
Policy Stroller	2
Sex	1
Other/Vehicle Accident	1
Mask/Fare	1
Accident	1
Policy/Food	1
Policy Scooter	1
Accident	1
Policy Smoking	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>158</b>

- From 2018 through 2022 to date, bus operator assaults had a monthly average of nine.

- The highest monthly average in 2022 was 13 assaults.

- In CY21, bus operators reported 115 assaults and 158 assaults in CY22, an increase of 37.39%.

The above charts illustrate the top reasons for assault by calendar year.

# Implemented Bus Safety Strategies

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- Metro has been implementing prevention strategies to reduce the risk of safety incidents and create a safer environment for all Metro employees to safely perform their jobs.
- ✓ Metro buses have on-board cameras and DVR
- ✓ Metro buses have operator barriers (March 2020)
- ✓ Metro buses have emergency buttons
- ✓ Clear signage of punishment of assaults on operators
- ✓ See Something Say Something campaign
- ✓ LAPD's deployment of their Special Problems Unit
- ✓ Bus Riding Teams (law enforcement + Metro Transit Security)
- ✓ Employee Assault Mitigation Task Force



# Bus Riding Teams

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- As part of *Respect the Ride*, SSLE launched Bus Riding Teams composed of Law Enforcement Officers and Transit Security Officers to ride the top 10 lines with the highest number of assaults.
- Bus operators commented:
  - “With officers on the bus, riders behave and don’t start any problems. It’s a safer environment for me to drive the bus and for the passengers. I don’t have to worry about calling the BOC or having to deal with unruly riders.”
  - “It’s a big help for us as Operators when we can just focus on driving the bus.”
- The primary request from Operators is that bus riding efforts continue, and their main question was sustainability and expansion.

# Metro Transit Security Staffing

**FY23 Active Budget: 213 uniformed FTEs deployed over three shifts:**

Staffing*	Function	Scope of Work
54	Code of Conduct	Deployed mainly across the rail system, with only 4 TSOs deployed to board buses on one bus line/week.
25	Mobile Patrol	Responds to calls for service at Metro's division, patrol parking structures/lots, layover zones – do not conduct fare or Code enforcement.
25	Union Station Gateway	Fixed security inside building, interior and exterior roving patrols.
16	Rail Safety	Opens and closes heavy rail stations.
14	Revenue	Security oversight for revenue services.
14	Supervision	Sergeants and Lieutenants
15	Security Control Specialists	Trained dispatchers dedicated to the Security Operations Center. (11) to start end of March.
2	Operations Support	Consists of one sergeant in support of Special Events and one sergeant as the Training Coordinator.
5	Long Term-Leave	
12	In Training	Recently hired and are undergoing training
31	In Recruitment	(10) TSOI to start on March 20 <sup>th</sup> ; (8) TSOI in background check stage; (5) TSOII in final stages; (6) SGT in final stages; (2) LT in final stages.

*\*As of March 8<sup>th</sup>.*



# Recommendation

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Amend the FY23 Budget to add 48 Metro Transit Security positions:

- (44) Transit Security Officers
  - 22 armed/22 unarmed
- (3) Supervisors
- (1) Director, Transit Security [Captain]

# Thank You

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