



Board Report

File #: 2024-0502, **File Type:** Informational Report

Agenda Number: 26.

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 24, 2024**

SUBJECT: METRO TRANSIT WATCH APP UPDATE

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE an update on the Metro Transit Watch app in response to Motion 46 (Attachment A).

ISSUE

At its July 2024 meeting, the Board approved Motion 46 by Directors Hahn, Barger, Horvath, Najarian, Butts, and Yaroslavsky, directing staff to report back in October 2024 on efforts to improve and/or replace the Metro Transit Watch App, including ways to: increase awareness of and access to the app on Metro buses and trains, improve user-friendliness for a more intuitive app; and elevate elements of the app relating to rider experience like cleanliness, graffiti, and other concerns that extend beyond public safety.

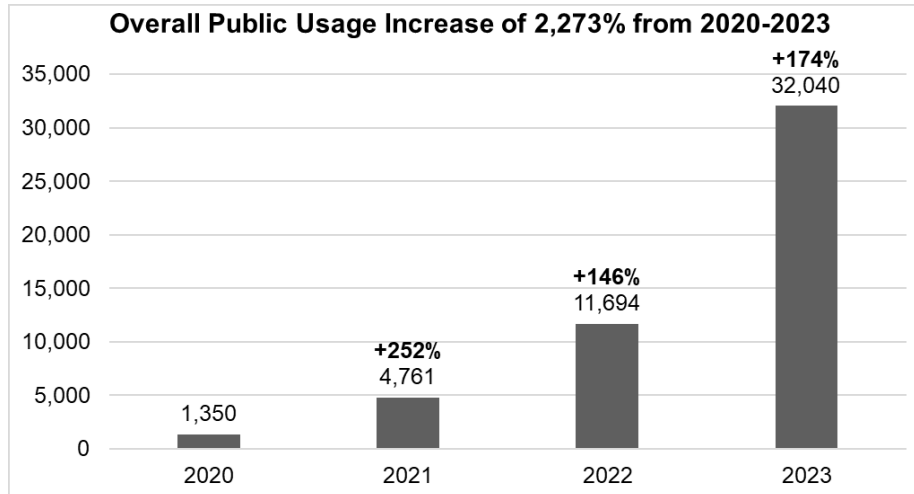
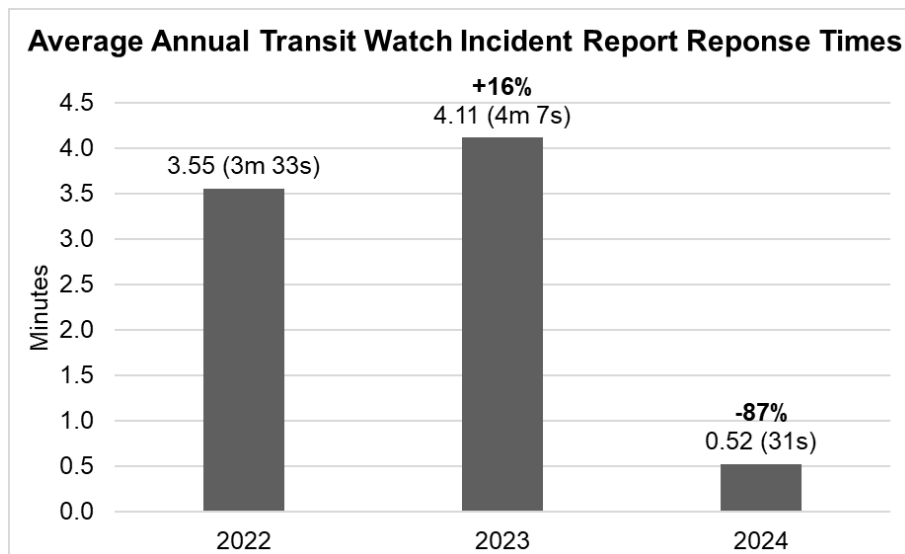
BACKGROUND

Many large cities nationwide, including Los Angeles, are confronting an increase in the severity and frequency of transit crimes experienced by customers and employees compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Available for all smartphone devices, the Transit Watch application is a critical component of Metro's efforts to enhance the system's safety and security. It provides passengers with an accessible and direct line of communication to report security incidents, suspicious activities, safety concerns, and maintenance issues directly to Metro. The app is also the tool Metro's transit ambassadors use to report issues on the system, which means operations, maintenance and safety departments can see the majority of issues reporting in one place, which means they can dispatch the necessary staff to address the issue more quickly. The reporting process is comprehensive, allowing users to report incidents categorically, provide descriptions, specify locations, and timestamp reports. Additionally, users have the option to securely attach photos and provide personal information that can be used to obtain additional incident details. Users can also receive push notifications with critical alerts from Metro, informing them about important updates, such as service interruption, elevator/escalator

outages, and safety information. Finally, the app allows users to set up an account to view the status of their reports and access their submission history, though users are also able to submit reports anonymously.

Since its inception, Transit Watch app usage has increased significantly.



DISCUSSION

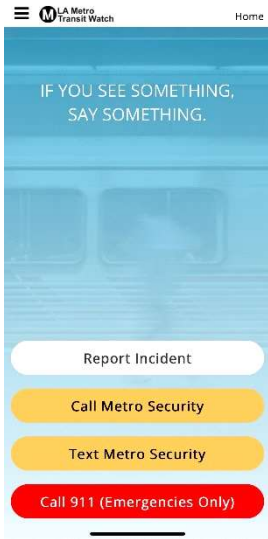
Responding to customer feedback, Metro’s staff has been working on the development of a new version of the Transit Watch mobile application. This includes completely overhauling the back-end code, redesigning the user interface, improving existing features, and introducing several new ones to address the specific needs of Metro and its riders. The product of this significant undertaking, which began at the beginning of 2023, is an easy-to-use mobile application for the riding public and a

multifunctional back-end desktop application used by Metro staff to track and resolve reports on a 24-hour basis, verifying reported issues, and taking steps to resolve them swiftly.

TRANSIT WATCH 3.0

The development process of Transit Watch (TW) 3.0 entailed a comprehensive and multifaceted endeavor. Staff worked diligently to develop an app that is more useful and accessible to users and an administrative solution that leveraged the valuable information provided in the reports.





Development

End-user input played an important role in shaping the new version of the TW app. In July 2023, Metro's Customer Experience team presented the findings from moderated interviews with Metro riders, eight who are app users as well as ten who are non-users. This research provided valuable insights into understanding the needs and preferences of the app's target audience, helping to refine the UI and prioritize features. For instance, feedback from this research led to the implementation of real-time translation services and a streamlined reporting process. These insights reinforced the app's user-centric redesign and met the specific needs of Metro's diverse ridership.

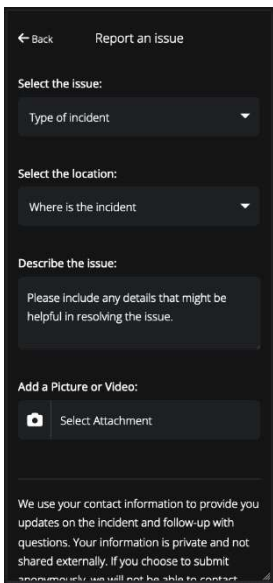
Special functionalities have been tailored for Metro Ambassadors, security officers, and field personnel, allowing for more targeted and effective reporting.

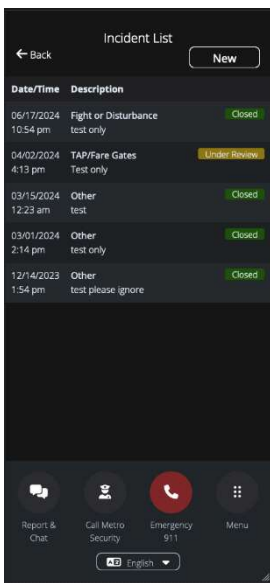
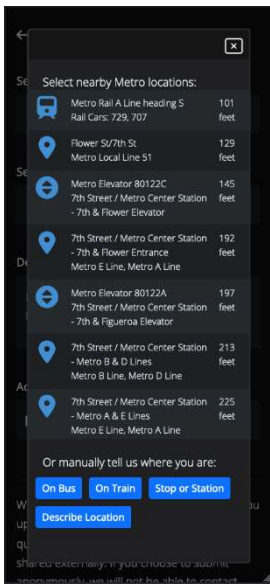
Outreach & Workshops

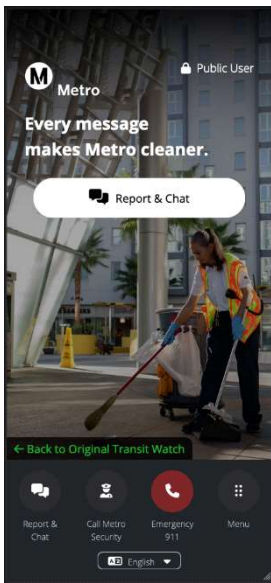
Internal outreach and workshops were integral to the app's rollout. SSLE and ITS staff moderated several workshops for different user groups, including Data Analytics, Ambassador Program, Maintenance & Engineering (M&E), Customer Experience, Office of Civil Rights, Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), Security Operations Center (SOC), and Contract Security. These sessions provided an opportunity to gather specific changes to the look and feel of the app more importantly to its functionality. Metro collaborated with these groups to develop a registry of proposed changes and functionalities to expand the utility of the app and accessibility to users or to tailor the administrative functions to the needs of the user groups.

Improvements & Changes

Ultimately, the result of the various efforts undertaken by the project team led to the development, testing, and implementation of key features, among them:







End-User Mobile App

- More intuitive and modern user interface, making it easier to report incidents quickly
- Enhanced interface also accommodates the Top 14 languages most spoken in the Region allowing broader inclusivity and accessibility
- Optional “Share Location” feature identifies users’ specific location on the Metro system, whether it be at a station, bus stop, train or bus, enabling faster reporting and response times
- Expanded media capability allows users to upload videos in addition to photos
- In-app messaging allows users to communicate with Metro Security in real-time, 24/7, without ever leaving the app

Administrator-End Platform

- Data Analytics for real-time incident trends
- Customizable Reports for information dissemination across functional groups and tracking Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Enhanced and more intuitive Data Dashboard visualizes overall operational performance and incident management stats
- Direct Maintenance & Engineering Helpdesk Integration to streamline maintenance and custodial service tickets for review and resolution
- Customized User-Group Functionality for assigning roles and responsibilities to different incident management and reporting Functions

User Interface

The redesign of the TW App marks a significant improvement in the user interface (UI). The UI is now sleek, intuitive and user-friendly, accommodating a diverse user base with varying levels of technological proficiency, styled in a modern and dynamic design.

The app's language settings are accessible through the push of a button from the home screen, as is the ability to call Metro Security or 911 directly. The design team focused on ensuring that all essential functions, such as incident reporting, location-based services, real-time communication, and image and video sharing, are easy to locate and navigate. The layout also highlights the primary reporting functions of the app and gives users choices to address their safety and maintenance concerns through appropriate channels. This greatly streamlines the reporting functionality of the app and helps to promote quick and accurate data and information gathering.

New Features

In addition to the multilingual interface, accessibility features were improved to accommodate font enlargement and easier navigation between panes.

Transit Watch 3.0 introduces several innovative features, including:

- In-app messaging, which allows users to send pictures and videos and chat with Metro staff directly through the app. Previously, this feature required a user to provide a phone number to communicate through text messages.
- Real-time translation functionality from inbound and outbound messages to accommodate Limited English Proficiency users.
- Improved reporting capabilities by streamlining information gathering and allowing users to opt-in to share geolocation and integrating mapping throughout the desktop application. Access to user location enables the integration of Metro's real-time vehicle positioning systems for both buses and trains, and proximity to bus stops and rail stations, so the user can easily select the location from where they are reporting.
- An integration effort to allow maintenance and custodial issues to be automatically routed to the Maintenance and Engineering (M&E) Help Desk. This ensures the appropriate group addresses the service tickets generated by the report, with advanced functionality for workflows and incident confirmation.
- Improved real-time reporting and statistical analysis on the desktop application, which helps Metro respond to issues more efficiently.
- New data analysis features to help identify trends, issue heatmaps, and geolocated report tracking.

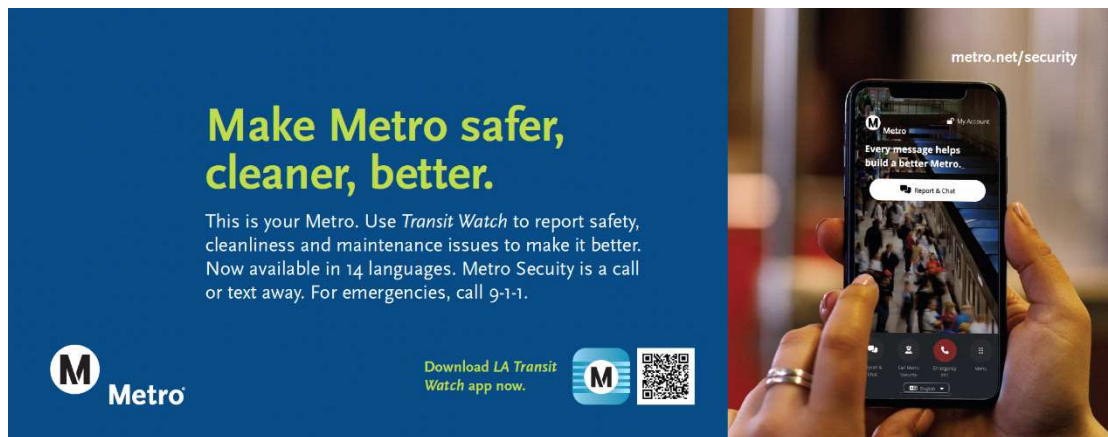
Upcoming functionalities of the app include integration with Genetec, Metro's new, enterprise-wide video management system, enabling localized CCTV awareness to make security monitoring more efficient.

A beta release of the updated app was made available on October 2 to the Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) and Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), and up to 5,000 users at a time, accompanied by a feedback survey to solicit comments on the new version. Based on feedback, modifications will be made, and a full launch is tentatively before the end of the month.

Marketing Plan

Staff developed a comprehensive marketing communications plan to promote Transit Watch 3.0, encourage its adoption among Metro riders, and clearly articulate the ways in which Transit Watch

can be used to report safety, cleanliness, and maintenance incidents. The marketing plan includes digital campaigns, social media promotions, and on-board posters to raise awareness about the app's new features and benefits.



Metro will also leverage its existing communication channels, such as onboard announcements and station displays, to inform passengers about the app and how to download it. Additionally, Metro will promote the app during outreach events, where representatives can demonstrate the app's capabilities and assist with downloads and installation. This proactive approach will familiarize users with the app and ensure a successful adoption of the new app's features.

EQUITY PLATFORM

The Transit Watch application has been a platform for riders to report any security incidents, suspicious activities, safety concerns, and maintenance issues directly to Metro. While the current version of Transit Watch serves its intended purpose as a security tool, staff have been aware of ongoing issues with the user interface and accessibility. With this feedback in mind, Transit Watch 3.0 is in development with new and improved features. Real-time translations and a multilingual interface in the 14 most spoken languages will make this application much more accessible to non-English speakers and compliant with Title VI. The access to user location function may raise concerns about privacy and tracking but Metro will abide by the applicable privacy laws by including appropriate disclosures about the use, retention, and deletion of user data. All these new features benefit riders, particularly individuals in Equity-Focused Communities who rely on public transit to access their daily needs, by providing them with an improved, user-friendly platform to report security and cleanliness issues.

During the development process, staff consulted the Metro's Office of Civil Rights and Accessibility Advisory Committee to gather input on suggested changes. Moreover, as this new version is rolled out to the public, there will be several marketing and outreach efforts to promote its adoption among Metro riders. Staff will ensure these efforts are visible throughout the areas that Metro serves and be in multiple languages. User beta testing commenced on September 27, 2024, and included Metro Staff, 20 percent of the overall user base, as well as the AAC and PSAC.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This recommendation supports Strategic Plan Goals #2.1: Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system; Metro is committed to improving security and #5.6: Provide responsive, accountable, and trustworthy governance within the Metro organization; Metro will foster and maintain a strong safety culture.

NEXT STEPS

The anticipated full launch date for Transit Watch App 3.0 is the end of the month. The staff working on Transit Watch will continue to improve the mobile app based on planned improvements and customer feedback. The following key performance indicators (KPIs) will continue to be monitored by staff:

- Total monthly incident report submissions
- Total monthly downloads of Transit Watch App
- Customer satisfaction with the Transit Watch App (as answered in a post-report feedback survey)

Staff continue to collaborate with Metro's mobile app consolidation working group as it finalizes its recommendations and next steps.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Board Motion 46

Attachment B - Key Functions and History of Transit Watch

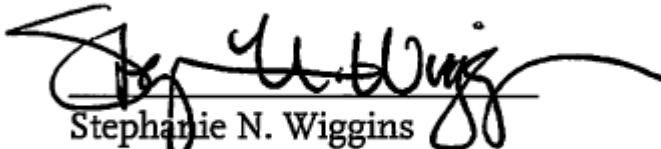
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Metropolitan Transportation
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Board Report

File #: 2024-0500, **File Type:** Motion / Motion Response

Agenda Number: 46.

REGULAR BOARD MEETING JULY 25, 2024

Motion by:

DIRECTORS HAHN, BARGER, HORVATH, NAJARIAN, BUTTS, AND YAROSLAVSKY

A Better Transit Watch

Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (“Metro”) has developed multiple smartphone applications (apps) for the numerous services that the agency has to offer. One of this agency’s apps, Metro Transit Watch, offers a direct interface between transit riders and Metro services, with a focus on safety.

Using a “See Something, Say Something” approach, the Metro Transit Watch app gives riders the ability to share what they see in real-time, with the ability to call or text transit security directly, or to use an online form to report other issues, like graffiti or a dirty train station platform. This direct connection between the riders and Metro’s staff could be a more powerful tool, informing everything from delayed buses to trash hotspots to someone having a mental health crisis.

While the application offers a variety of ways to report issues and incidents, a majority of Metro users are not aware of this application and its purpose. Wherever possible, Metro users should feel empowered to report their experiences on the system with reassurance that an appropriate response will be taken. A timely follow-up communication with the rider is also a vital component in ensuring our riders feel encouraged to continue using the application in the future.

SUBJECT: A BETTER TRANSIT WATCH MOTION

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE Motion by Hahn, Barger, Horvath, Najarian, Butts, and Yaroslavsky that the Board direct the Chief Executive Officer to report back by October 2024 on efforts to improve and/or replace the Metro Transit Watch App, including ways to:

- Increase awareness of and access to the app on Metro buses and trains,
- Improve user-friendliness for a more intuitive app; and
- Elevate elements of the app relating to rider experience like cleanliness, graffiti, and other

concerns that extend beyond public safety.

Attachment B – Key Functions and History of Transit Watch App

Key Functions

The app fulfills several critical functions, making it a versatile and indispensable tool for Metro operation and security efforts, including:

- **Facilitating direct communication with Metro’s Security Operations Center (SOC) for safety and security-related incidents through text messages or phone calls.** The SOC communicates directly with Metro Transit Security (MTS), private security officers and law enforcement partner agencies, People Assisting the Homeless, and other parts of the multi-layer strategy, allowing it to act as a central hub that coordinates the response to security incidents.
- **Informing Metro’s security operations.** The desktop application logs every incident report submitted on the app and keeps track of response times to each report. This information is critical in identifying hotspots and determining deployment and other responses.
- **Collecting reports on maintenance issues affecting transit facilities, buses, and trains, helping keep our transit system clean, comfortable, and accessible for our customers.** Maintenance issues regarding graffiti, non-functioning equipment, such as elevators, escalators or lighting fixtures, litter, and general uncleanliness in Metro’s buses, trains, and bus and rail stations are directly forwarded to the Maintenance and Engineering (M&E) Help Desk and M3 system, logged and queued to be addressed.
- **Directing resources to populations sheltering on the transit system.** It allows Metro to mobilize teams to locations where encampments or sheltering are reported to share available information and resources about housing assistance and social service programs to the unhoused population.

Continual Improvements to the Transit Watch App

Prior to 2020, Metro employed a third-party, off-the-shelf commercial product for the Transit Watch (TW) program. While functional, this solution posed several challenges regarding customization, flexibility, and cost. Although the system’s primary reporting function was enabled, it soon became apparent that the dynamic nature of Metro’s security operations required a more versatile tool that could be readily adapted to meet changing needs.

In 2019, Metro staff determined that the agency’s Information Technology Services (ITS) department met the technical expertise, skills, and technology services required to deploy, update, and maintain the program as well as to quickly develop, implement, and test new features to meet emerging functional requirements. This shift reduced operating costs, but most importantly, it allowed Metro to tailor the system to address the agency’s unique needs and ensure the flexibility to perform continuous development as new programs and operational procedures emerged. Initially, this led to the

Attachment B – Key Functions and History of Transit Watch App

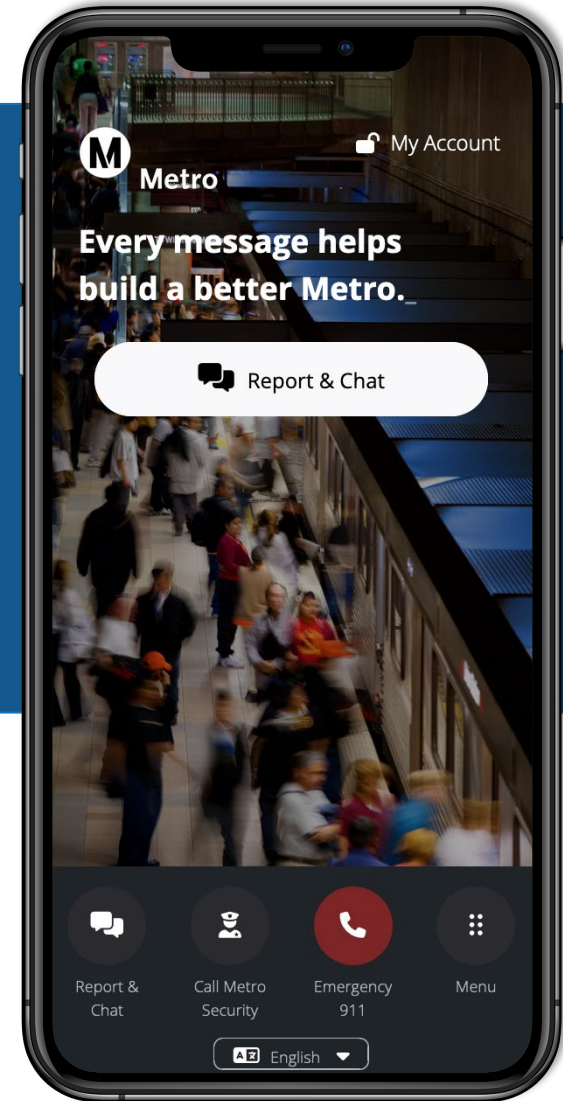
integration of user profiles, categorized reporting, location, line and service information, as well as media and messaging communication.

More recently, the Transit Watch program was updated to integrate such initiatives as the Metro Ambassador Pilot Program and Subway Ancillary Safety effort. Contract Security extensively used Transit Watch to report issues in the subway ancillary areas, resulting in significant improvements in cleanliness and maintenance. New software implementations, like the integration with the agency's M3 system used for maintenance requests, will further streamline business process workflows pertaining to any reports of cleanliness and maintenance and significantly reduce manual processes for Metro's Maintenance and Engineering Help Desk staff.

Throughout the years, these improvements in both the user interface and administrative platform have led to a dramatic decrease in response time, defined as the time between when the Metro Security Operations Center receives an incident report and an initial response is transmitted by a Security Control Specialist, from an average of 4:07 minutes to a 31-second response time to confirm reports; all while experiencing an exponential growth in incident reports year over year.

Metro Transit Watch App Update

Ken Hernandez
Interim Chief Transit Safety Officer



Motion 46 A Better Transit Watch

In July 2024, the Board approved Motion 46 by Directors Hahn, Barger, Horvath, Najarian, Butts, and Yaroslavsky, directing staff to report back in October 2024 on efforts to improve and/or replace the Metro Transit Watch App, including ways to:

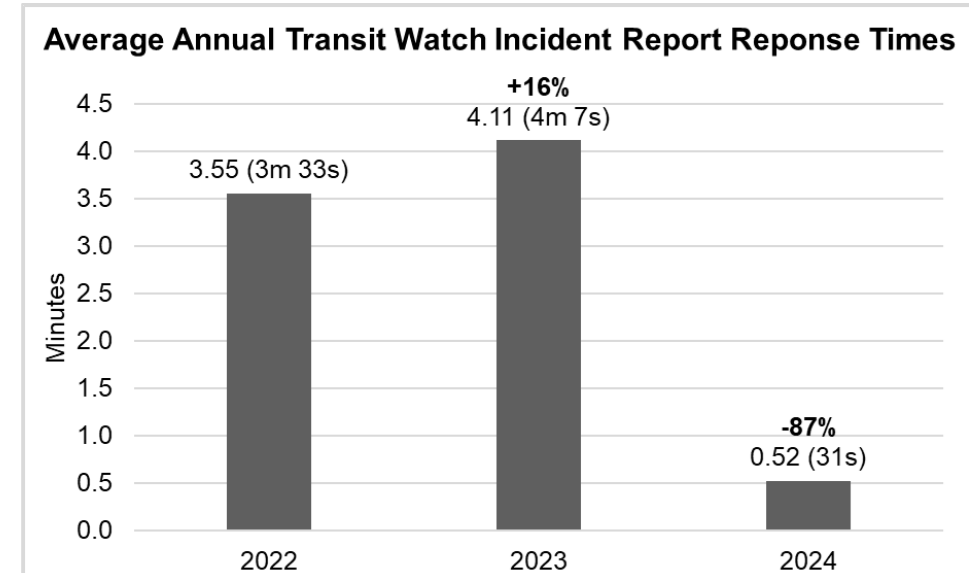
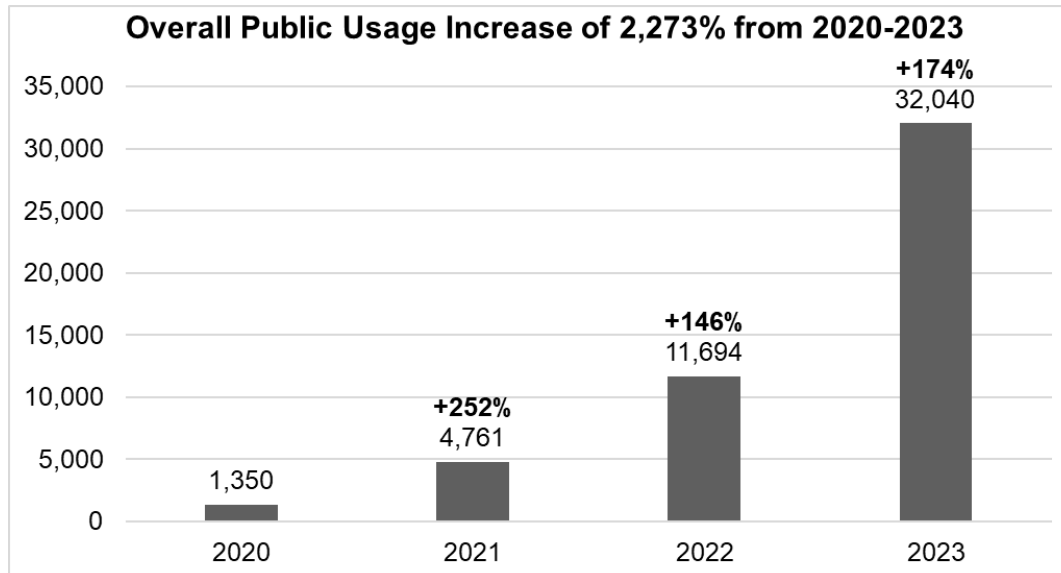
- Increase awareness of and access to the app on Metro buses and trains
- Improve user-friendliness for a more intuitive app
- Elevate elements of the app relating to rider experience like cleanliness, graffiti, and other concerns that extend beyond public safety

Background



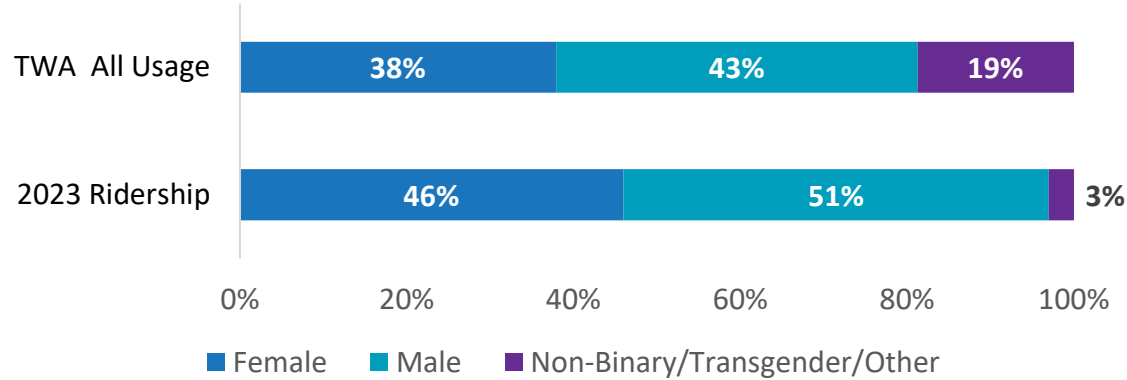
The Transit Watch App (TWA) is a critical component of Metro's efforts to enhance the system's safety and security.

- Provides passengers with an accessible and direct line of 24/7 communication to report security incidents, suspicious activities, safety concerns, and maintenance issues directly to Metro.
- Offers user the option to securely attach photos and provide personal information that can be used to obtain additional incident details.
- Can push notifications with critical alerts from Metro, informing them about important updates like service interruptions and elevator outages.



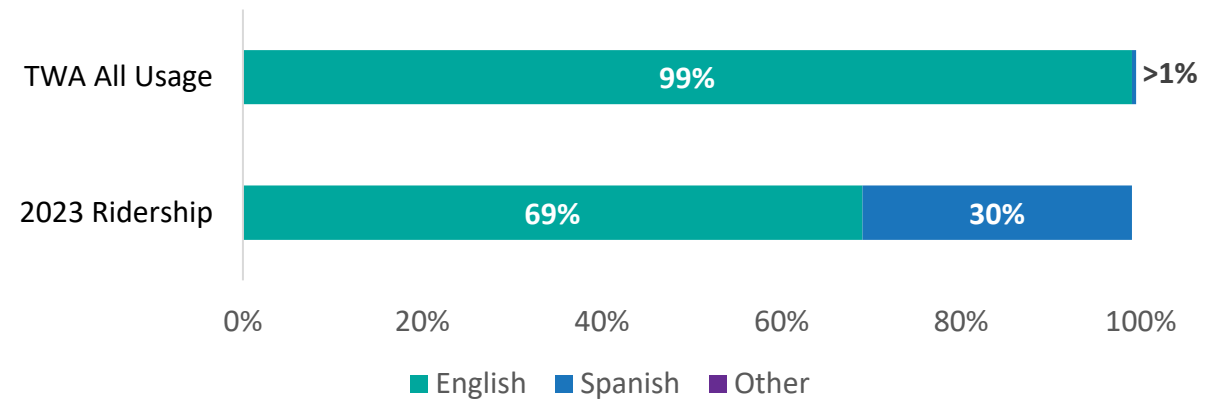
TWA User Demographics

TWA Gender vs Ridership



Source: 2023 Planning Survey; TWA Users (opted-in with gender);
Note: gender grouping is due to different answers collected by TWA vs Planning survey

TWA Languages Used vs Ridership



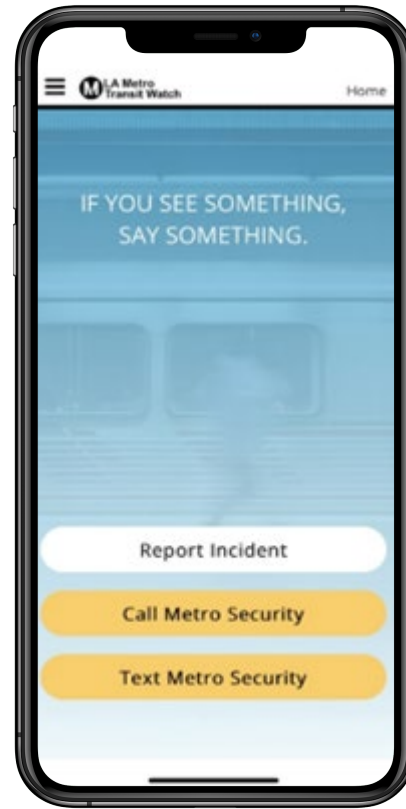
Source: 2023 Planning Survey; TWA Users (language of report)

Why Transit Watch App 3.0?

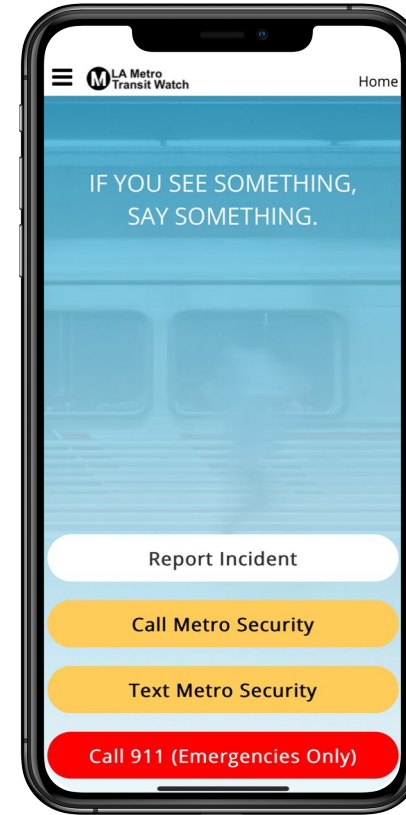
The TWA team has been documenting and addressing updates since the launch of TWA 2.0.

In-depth user experience (UX) testing was conducted in Fall 2023.

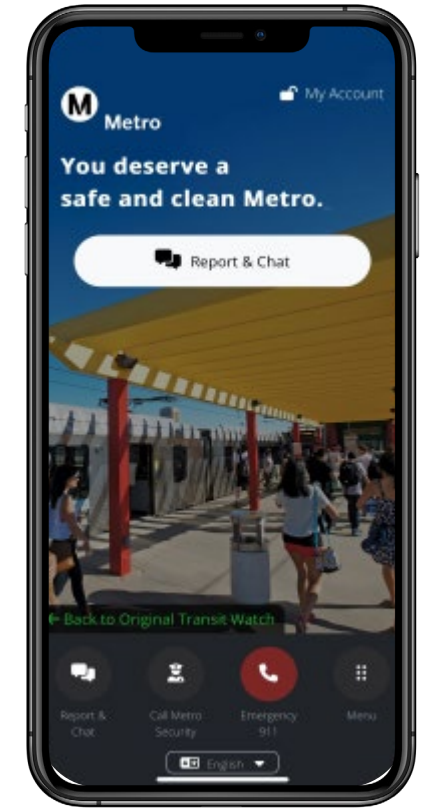
Based on the customer feedback, the team learned that it should launch a new app version instead of making smaller updates to address faster reporting, improvements to location selections, incident transparency, and clearer user interface.



**TWA 2.0
Home Screen –
Fall 2023**



**TWA 2.0
Home Screen –
Current**

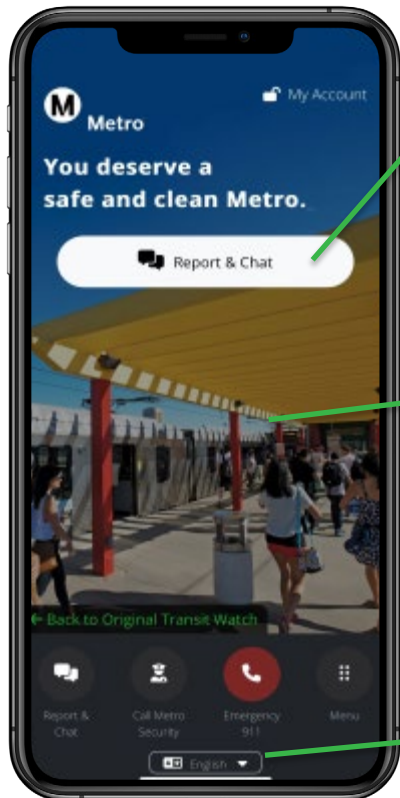


**TWA 3.0
Home Screen**

What's New in TWA 3.0?

End-User Mobile App

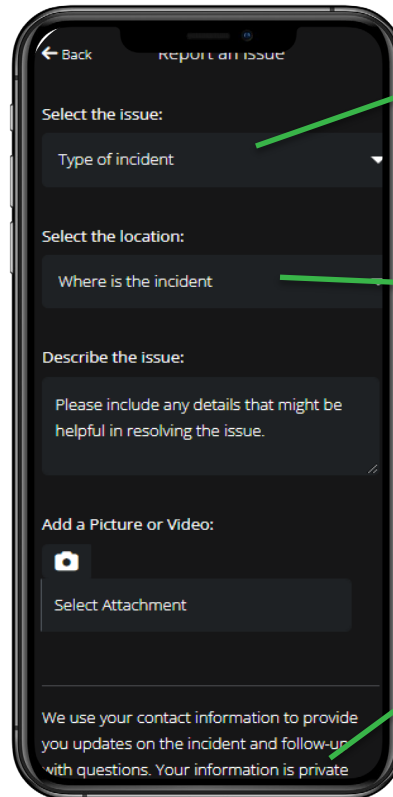
We've made significant updates to the user interface and functionality of the app, enhancing the experience to be more efficient and supportive. These improvements not only make navigation smoother but also empower our staff to respond more quickly to submitted reports.



Highlighting primary action – report & chat with us in the app.

Modern design and inviting user interface with photos and icons

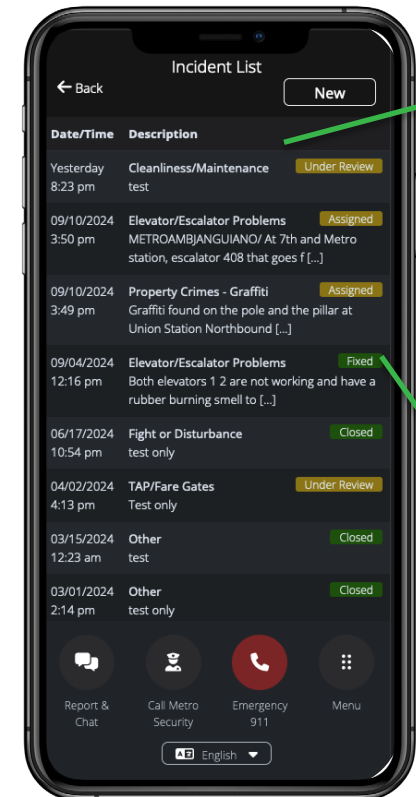
Clear language options (Top 14 languages)



Shortened for quicker submission

More accurate real-time location to help user and staff

Saved information (when logged in to account)



Clearer history of report and chat history

Maintenance tickets with more defined progress and closure categories (connected directly to Metro's maintenance ticketing system)

Beta Testing

On 10/2, the TWA team launched the Beta version of the app for testing to:

- Compare survey results to the previous UX survey data collected on TWA 2.0 to understand satisfaction and ease of reporting.
- Monitor comments for specific feedback on bugs and areas we can improve upon.

Initial roll out of Beta testing focused on TWA power users, PSAC and Accessibility Advisory Council (AAC). To increase usage and survey completion, Beta was expanded to all current users (772 current users as of 10/17/24).

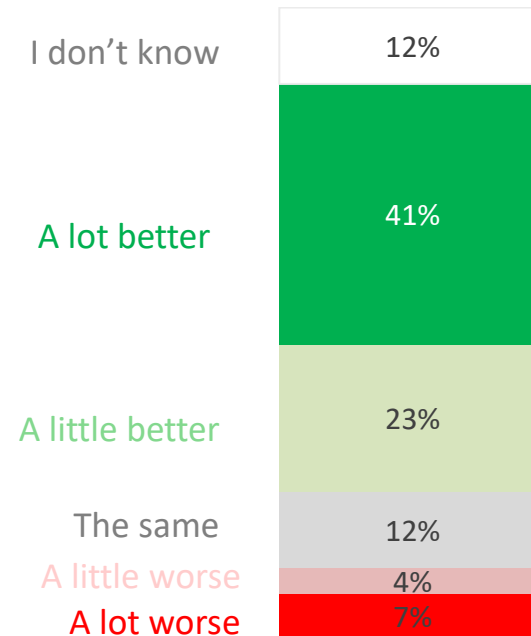
“Great improvements”

Beta User

“... the look is great and the movements seem seamless...”

PSAC Member

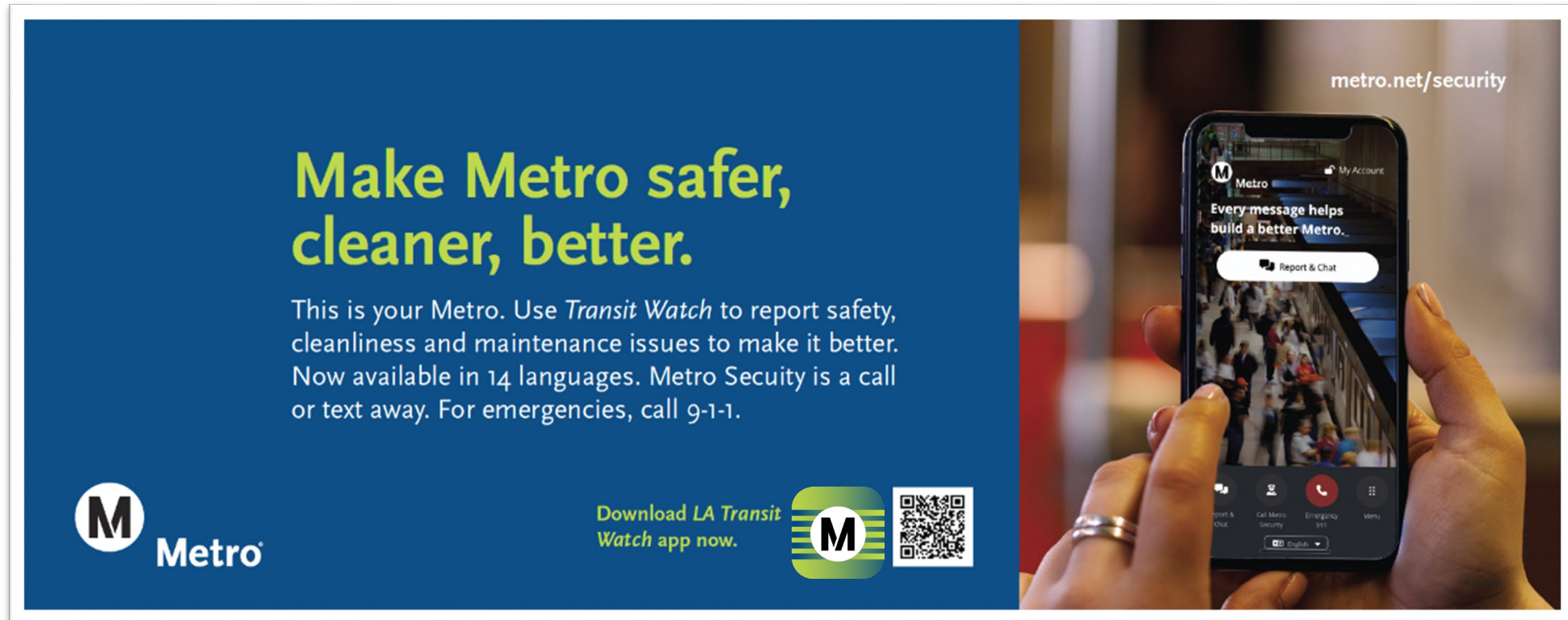
Is this version better or worse than TWA 2.0?



TWA 3.0 Beta Users
As of 10/21, N=75


Marketing Plan



Staff developed a comprehensive marketing communications plan to promote Transit Watch 3.0, encourage its adoption among Metro riders, and clearly articulate the ways in which Transit Watch can be used to report safety, cleanliness, and maintenance incidents. This marketing plan includes digital campaigns, social media promotions, and on-board posters to raise awareness about the app's new features and benefits.



**Make Metro safer,
cleaner, better.**

This is your Metro. Use *Transit Watch* to report safety, cleanliness and maintenance issues to make it better. Now available in 14 languages. Metro Security is a call or text away. For emergencies, call 9-1-1.

 **Metro**

Download LA Transit Watch app now.  

metro.net/security

Metro My Account
Every message helps build a Better Metro.
Report & Chat

Report & Chat Call Metro Security Emergency 911 Menu
English

Next Steps

The anticipated full launch date for Transit Watch App 3.0 is the end of the month. The staff working on Transit Watch will continue to improve the mobile app based on planned improvements and customer feedback.

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