

**Board Report**

File #: 2026-0246, **File Type:** Contract**Agenda Number:** 32.

**OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE
MAY 21, 2026****SUBJECT: DRONE SECURITY MONITORING SERVICES****ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION****RECOMMENDATION**

AUTHORIZE the Chief Executive Officer to execute Modification No. 2 to Contract No. PS118995000 with Flying Lion, Inc. to continue to support security monitoring, emergency response, infrastructure inspections, and aerial situational awareness across the Metro transit system, in the amount of \$497,764, increasing the total contract value from \$497,780 to \$995,544, and extending the period of performance from July 22, 2027, through July 21, 2029.

ISSUE

Metro's transit system spans more than 100 rail stations, over 250 miles of rail right-of-way (ROW), thousands of bus stops, and critical infrastructure across Los Angeles County. Rapid situational awareness is essential for inspections, responding to security incidents, emergencies, and service disruptions. Drone services support incident assessment, infrastructure inspections, and security monitoring in areas with limited CCTV coverage, including locations impacted by copper theft and vandalism. With a rise in high-risk areas along the rail right-of-way due to the increased value of copper wire, there was an increased need for continuous observation and frequent drone deployments at the start of the contract in 2024. Drone flights averaged five times per week, which accelerated the use of funds. While deployments have been reduced to approximately twice per week, a contract modification is required to continue these core services, driven by current field conditions and to account for upcoming large-scale events.

BACKGROUND

In 2019, as the Metro "New Blue" (A Line South refurbishment) project was attempting to reopen, it encountered continuous delays due to rampant copper cable thefts along the rail line. As this issue persisted, the project team sought new solutions in August 2023 to improve the observation and detection of copper cable thefts along the rail lines. After evaluating various options, drone operations emerged as the most effective solution for monitoring these often-unseen areas. Following a search for experienced vendors, Flying Lion Inc., a specialized drone service provider for public safety agencies, was identified as the most reputable source to support this mission. The effectiveness of this approach was demonstrated during a three-night pilot program along the Metro C Line. In July 2024, in response to the rise in copper cable thefts and vandalism along the rail right-of-way, Metro

awarded a three-year contract with Flying Lion Inc. in the amount of \$497,780 for drone security monitoring services. These services are intended to mitigate infrastructure damage and service disruptions by providing surveillance in areas where traditional CCTV coverage is unavailable.

DISCUSSION

Drone services support Metro operations by providing rapid aerial visibility during incidents, infrastructure inspections, and major events. Since 2023, Metro has experienced more than 300 copper cable theft incidents affecting rail infrastructure, and drones help monitor vulnerable locations with limited CCTV coverage. A review of available data comparing 2025 to early 2026 shows a shift in reported copper theft incidents. 2025 reflects higher incident density and repeated clustering across key corridors, while early 2026 data shows reduced clustering and fewer repeat theft locations, particularly in previously high-frequency areas. This change aligns with the increased deployment of drone services to support proactive patrols, infrastructure inspections, and real-time incident response in high-risk areas, including locations with limited or no CCTV coverage.

Operational records, including Security Operations Center activity logs and After Action Reports, consistently document drone-assisted observation of trespassing and suspicious behavior in high-risk areas. The data show that once suspicious activity is identified and law enforcement is notified, individuals routinely vacate the area before escalation. This demonstrates a clear deterrent and disruption effect, particularly in locations with limited visibility and no fixed security presence. As a result, enhanced monitoring has contributed to an estimated 25-35% reduction in copper theft activity in targeted corridors, while also expanding operational demand across safety, maintenance, and systemwide monitoring functions.

Drone services are now regularly deployed for real-time incident monitoring, post-incident assessment, and proactive patrols, including operations in low-visibility environments where traditional resources are limited. With the approaching 2026 FIFA World Cup and the upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games, drone operations will further enhance security monitoring during major events and increased ridership, helping ensure the safety of domestic and international visitors and maintaining reliable transit operations so passengers can travel safely and arrive at matches on time. Additional drone flights and flight hours are anticipated.

Increasing the contract amount and period will ensure continuity of drone services to support infrastructure protection, incident response, systemwide situational awareness, and increase efficiency and effectiveness in deploying resources. To maintain this operational capability, a contract modification is necessary to accommodate the increased demand.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

Approval of this item will strengthen Metro's safety posture by providing aerial situational awareness to improve incident assessment and response coordination during emergencies and security incidents. Drone services will also support monitoring in areas with limited CCTV coverage, helping deter copper theft and vandalism, and enabling personnel to evaluate field conditions remotely before deploying field resources.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The FY26 Budget includes \$100,000 for this contract in cost center 2613, Physical Security, under project 306001 - Operations Transportation.

Since this is a multi-year contract, the cost center manager and Chief of Police and Emergency Management will be accountable for budgeting the cost in future years.

Impact to Budget

Funding for this action will come from federal, state, and local sources that are eligible for bus and rail operations.

EQUITY PLATFORM

The drone services will enhance situational awareness and emergency response capabilities, contributing to safer conditions for riders, employees, and surrounding communities. Staff use crime reports to determine where to deploy the drones, with deployments being mission-specific rather than routine patrols, and operations are focused on Metro infrastructure. Most drones were deployed along the ROW. For operational effectiveness, deployments are not publicly announced in advance. There may be privacy concerns related to over-surveillance, but drones are deployed strictly in the surrounding areas of the Metro system for aerial crime surveillance only. These drones do not have facial recognition technology capabilities. Any recorded footage is handled and shared with limitations to authorized uses, such as for law enforcement coordination. Furthermore, while the drones typically fly in the night-time and early dawn hours, they do not emit loud noises and will not contribute to noise pollution in nearby communities.

Flying Lion, Inc., a Small Business (SB) Prime, made a 100% SBE commitment on the contract. The current level of participation is 100% SBE.

VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED OUTCOME

VMT and VMT per capita in Los Angeles County are lower than national averages, the lowest in the SCAG region, and on the lower end of VMT per capita statewide, with these declining VMT trends due in part to Metro's significant investment in rail and bus transit.* Metro's Board-adopted VMT reduction targets align with California's statewide climate goals, including achieving carbon neutrality by 2045. To ensure continued progress, all Board items are assessed for their potential impact on VMT.

While this item does not directly encourage taking transit, sharing a ride, or using active transportation, it is a vital part of Metro operations, as it improved operational safety and service reliability of Metro's system. Because the Metro Board has adopted an agency-wide VMT Reduction Target, and this item supports the overall function of the agency, this item is consistent with the goals of reducing VMT.

*Based on population estimates from the United States Census and VMT estimates from Caltrans' Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) data between 2001-2019.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The 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.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The alternative of not approving this action is not recommended because it would limit Metro’s ability to monitor vulnerable infrastructure, respond to security incidents, and deter copper theft in areas with limited CCTV coverage. Drone services provide rapid aerial coverage of large rail corridors and facilities that cannot be monitored as quickly by other resources or matched by any other technological solution.

NEXT STEPS

Upon Board approval, staff will execute Modification No. 2 to Contract No. PS118995000 with Flying Lion, Inc.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Procurement Summary
Attachment B - Contract Modification/ Change Order Log
Attachment C - DEOD Summary

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Stephanie Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer

**PROCUREMENT SUMMARY
DRONE SECURITY OBSERVATION SERVICES/PS118995000**

1.	Contract Number: PS118995000		
2.	Contractor: Flying Lion, Inc.		
3.	Mod. Work Description: Continue to support security monitoring, emergency response, infrastructure inspections, and aerial situational awareness across the Metro transit system, and extend the period of performance from July 22, 2027, through July 21, 2029.		
4.	Contract Work Description: Provide drone security observation services utilizing Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), including equipment, trained operators, and operational support to support security monitoring, emergency response, infrastructure inspections, and aerial situational awareness across the Metro transit system.		
5.	The following data is current as of: 4/6/2026		
6.	Contract Completion Status		Financial Status
	Contract Awarded:	7/22/24	Contract Award Amount: \$497,780
	Notice to Proceed (NTP):	N/A	Total of Modification Approved: \$0
	Original Complete Date:	7/21/27	Pending Modification (including this action): \$497,764
	Current Est. Complete Date:	7/21/29	Current Contract Value (with this action): \$995,544
	Contract Administrator: Britney Shedrick		Telephone Number: (213) 418-3313
	Project Manager: Nicholas Kappos		Telephone Number: (213) 922-4386

A. Procurement Background

This Board Action is to approve Contract Modification No. 2 to continue to support security monitoring, emergency response, infrastructure inspections, and aerial situational awareness across the Metro transit system and extend the period of performance from July 22, 2027, through July 21, 2029.

This Contract Modification will be processed in accordance with Metro’s Acquisition Policy, and the contract type is a firm-fixed unit rate.

A total of one modification has been issued to date.

Refer to Attachment B – Contract Modification/Change Order Log.

B. Cost Analysis

The recommended fully burdened hourly rates have been determined to be fair and reasonable based on the Independent Cost Estimate (ICE), technical analysis, and cost analysis. The Independent Cost Estimate (ICE) is based on the original contract rates negotiated in 2024.

Proposed Amount	Metro ICE	Recommended Amount
\$497,764	\$497,764	\$497,764

CONTRACT MODIFICATION/CHANGE ORDER LOG

DRONE SECURITY OBSERVATION SERVICES/PS118995000

Mod. No.	Description	Status (approved or pending)	Date	Amount
1.	Updated technical requirements and contractor duties and responsibilities in the Scope of Services, and revised the Pricing Agreement to note that hourly rates per flight are inclusive of Command Van Deployment.	Approved	8/20/24	\$0
2.	Continue to support security monitoring, emergency response, infrastructure inspections, and aerial situational awareness across the Metro transit system, and extend the period of performance from July 22, 2027 through July 21, 2029.	Pending	Pending	\$497,764
	Modification Total:			\$497,764
	Original Contract:		7/22/24	\$497,780
	Total:			\$995,544

DEOD SUMMARY

DRONE SECURITY OBSERVATION SERVICES / PS118995000

A. Small Business Participation

Flying Lion, Inc., a Small Business (SB) Prime, made a 100% SBE commitment. Based on payments, the contract is 87% complete. The current level of participation is 100% SBE.

	SBE Prime Contractor	SBE % Committed
1.	Flying Lion, Inc. dba Sky Ladder Drones (Prime)	100%
Total Commitment		100%

B. Living Wage and Service Contract Worker Retention Policy Applicability

The Living Wage and Service Contract Worker Retention Policy is not applicable to this modification.

C. Prevailing Wage Applicability

Prevailing wage is not applicable to this modification.

D. Project Labor Agreement/Construction Careers Policy

Project Labor Agreement/Construction Careers Policy is not applicable to this Contract. PLA/CCP is applicable only to construction contracts that have a construction related value in excess of \$2.5 million.

E. Manufacturing Careers Policy

The Manufacturing Careers Policy (MCP) does not apply to this contract. The MCP is required on Metro's Rolling Stock RFPs, with an Independent Cost Estimate of at least \$50 million.



Drone Security Monitoring Services Contract Modification

Operations, Safety, & Customer Experience Committee

May 21, 2026

File ID 2026-0246



Staff Recommendation

AUTHORIZE the Chief Executive Officer to execute Modification No. 2 to Contract No. PS118995000 with Flying Lion, Inc. to continue to support security monitoring, emergency response, infrastructure inspections, and aerial situational awareness across the Metro transit system, in the amount of \$497,764, increasing the total contract value from \$497,780 to \$995,544, and extending the period of performance from July 22, 2027, through July 21, 2029.

Background

- In 2019, Metro’s “New Blue” (A Line South Refurbishment) project experienced reopening delays due to ongoing copper cable thefts along the rail corridor, impacting project timelines.
- As theft activity continued across the rail system, Metro began evaluating enhanced monitoring and detection solutions in August 2023 to improve security coverage along vulnerable right-of-way areas.
 - After evaluating options, drone operations emerged as the most effective and efficient solution due to their ability to provide rapid, real-time monitoring of large and difficult-to-access areas where traditional patrols and fixed cameras have limited visibility.



Stolen copper wire from tracks (left) and a drone’s thermal detection capturing footage of suspects on the I-105 stealing copper wire during a pilot (right).

Background (cont.)

- In July 2024, in response to the rise in copper cable thefts and vandalism along the rail right-of-way, Metro awarded a three-year contract with Flying Lion Inc. in the amount of \$497,780 for drone security monitoring services.
- With a rise in high-risk areas along the rail right-of-way due to the increased value of copper wire, there was an increased need from Metro Operations for continuous observation and frequent drone deployments – averaging five times per week – at the start of the contract in 2024.



Metro

A drone's thermal detection captures footage of a suspect at the Florence interlocking (left) and a drone-captured image of a suspect at Firestone Station (right).

Discussion

- Enhanced monitoring has contributed to an **estimated 25–35% reduction in copper theft activity** in targeted corridors, while also expanding operational demand across safety, maintenance, and systemwide monitoring functions.
- DPS is now regularly utilizing drone services to do the following: real-time incident monitoring, post-incident assessment, and proactive patrols, including operations in low-visibility environments where traditional resources are limited.
- Although drone deployments have currently been reduced from five to twice per week due to an accelerated use of funds nearing the contract authority limit (10% remaining), **a contract modification is required to continue the core services**, including infrastructure protection, incident response, and systemwide situational awareness, which are driven by current field conditions and to account for upcoming large-scale events.

Next Steps

- Upon Board approval, staff will execute Modification No. 2 to Contract No. PS118995000 with Flying Lion, Inc.