Developing Community-Based Public Safety Programs for Transit Webinar

12/14/2023
Introduction

Mia Veltri
Senior Policy Analyst; Office of System Safety
Office of Transit Safety and Oversight
Agenda

• Southern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA)
• Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA)
• Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro)
• FTA Resources for Public Safety and Crime
Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority

Kenneth A. Divers

Director, Outreach Programs
SEPTA Serves 4.2 Million Residents in Southeast PA

- 5th largest mass transit system in U.S.
- 9,000 employees
- $1.69B operating budget
- $977M capital budget
- 600,000+ daily trips
- 2,800 vehicles
- 285 subway & rail stations
- 13,000 bus & trolley stops
- 150 routes
Who makes up the vulnerable population?

Where is the vulnerable population on SEPTA?

What is SEPTA doing about the vulnerable population?

What does SEPTA need help with?
Those experiencing homelessness, drug abuse, mental health issues, and sexual assault define who we refer to as...

THE VULNERABLE POPULATION
Where is the Vulnerable Population?
What is SEPTA doing about the Vulnerable Population?
S.C.O.P.E.

- **Safety**
  Strategically place SEPTA police at known hotspots while acquiring the aid of public and private security firms to help offset the challenge of coverage gaps.

- **Cleaning**
  Maintain and increase cleaning schedules by procuring additional resources needed to maintain a state of good repair and safety throughout stations, terminals, and SEPTA's rolling stock.

- **Ownership**
  Recruit local community groups, CAC, CDCs, city, government, and county stakeholders to take a vested interest in assisting SEPTA with barriers related to addressing the vulnerable population seeking shelter on the SEPTA system.

- **Partnership**
  Create a robust network of partners within the SEPTA service area. These partners will help offset financial, labor, and human barriers that often hinder the vulnerable population from receiving much needed services.

- **Engagement**
  Deploy the above resources throughout the five-county service area to aid SEPTA in eliminating homelessness on our system.
➢ Established an internal structure to build buy-in across the agency, be nimble in responding to internal opportunities and to make decisions real time

➢ Increased transparency and cross-communications while creating a culture that addressing the vulnerable populations is everyone’s priority
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Creating a System that is Safe and Interconnected

SCOPE
People, Partnership, and Purpose

Safety
- Increased lighting in stations and added field observers to greet, assist, educate and report
- Leaping commitments with SEPTA to cell phones to receive new calls directly with trained police
- Enhanced the Transit Watch App to allow riders to get help discreetly and anonymously report a crime, in other dangerous situations
- Creating a Virtual Patrol Center to monitor the system's stations and conference cameras

Cleaning
- Added control staff and increased cleaning shifts at multiple stations
- Gregarious elevators, escalators, stairs, mezzanines, exits, and entrances
- Training platform attendants and created an elevator monitor attendant role
- Partnered with Community Lig (CLIP) and Public Works to enhance SEPTA's cleaning efforts

Ownership
- Elected leaders, staff, business community, agencies, honorary service provider and housing allocate about the impact of homelessness throughout the system
- Assimilate by increased emergency shelter beds, permanent housing and access to mental health and addiction treatment services
- Established a similar internal command task force to align resources and develop system-wide solutions for the SCOPe program

Partnership
- Created a diverse network of regional partners within SEPTA's service area to:
  - Connect individuals to health services
  - Coordinate housing and behavioral health services
  - Provide case management for individuals with high needs

Engagement
- Increased the number of social service outreach specialists from seven to more than 50
- Deployed outreach workers to engage in and connect with SEPTA customers throughout the SEPTA system
- Expanded cross-departmental efforts of outreach and social worker to dispatch as needed to additional locations throughout the system
- Engaged over 4,444 vulnerable individuals over a nine-month period and connected 1,646 to housing, treatment and mental health services

HOW YOU CAN HELP US!

If you have an emergency, call SEPTA 9-1-1. You can also use the emergency call boxes located at each Broad Street Station: 215-882-3000. If you are a SEPTA customer, you can help SEPTA accomplish its mission by:

SEPTA POLICE
S.O.S.
OUTREACH
Health Navigators
Bolstering Safety and Security
Outreach & SEPTA Health Navigators

Medical Students
Health & Exercise Sciences Students
Coming Soon: Nursing Students

SCOPE is built on partnerships. Stakeholders work together to address broader societal issues like homelessness, substance use disorder & mental illness:

- Eagle Staffing
- Fit4God Outreach Ministry
- Merakey Parkside Recovery
- One Day At A Time (ODAAT)
- Northeast Treatment Centers
- Drexel University Medical Students
- WOAR - Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence
Department of Public Health

Philadelphia Department of Public Health

Public Restroom Specialists: City partners will aid SEPTA's bathrooms in the non-paid area as part of the monitoring rotation. Their role is to observe and report conditions to the onsite team who is striving to create a safe, clean, and pleasant customer experience for riders and non-paying customers at Suburban Station.

Environmental Services/Project REACH: Responsible for installing and maintaining needle boxes in several SEPTA stations.

PHD Smoking Program (Tobacco Policy and Control Program): The Pennsylvania Statewide Tobacco-Free Recovery Initiative (PA STFRI) envisions behavioral health systems that integrate tobacco use disorder treatment and tobacco-free services in pursuit of the highest quality of care and best possible treatment outcomes.

NET Centers

Northeast Treatment Centers is a nonprofit agency providing trauma-informed behavioral health and social services designed to meet the needs of individuals and families at times of stress in their lives.

Services include mental health treatment, addiction treatment, foster care, residential group care, adoption, juvenile justice services, and child welfare services. This is accomplished by setting up two “Mobile Hub” locations on the Broad Street Line.

Montgomery County Community College

Community College of Philadelphia
Homeless Encampment Removals
Stations Removed From Hotspot List

- Huntingdon Station
- Jefferson Station
- Snyder Station
Investing in Infrastructure and Resources

- **Hiring specialists to meet the challenges of a growing vulnerable population:**
  - Onboarded 57 outreach social workers
  - Created elevator and bathroom monitors
  - Installed 88 SEPTA guides on trains and in stations to create presence
  - Recruited more SEPTA police officers
  - Engaged additional transportation managers to help remove “destination-less riders” off of SEPTA vehicles

- **Expanding existing positions and tools to better meet conditions:**
  - Equipped our 282-cleaning staff with SEPTA cell phones to call police when they see something of concern
  - Hired additional cleaning staff (200)
  - Provide mandatory overtime for the current SEPTA officers on staff
  - Created enhanced crowdsourcing tools for the public and SEPTA employees to report concerns
  - Expanded use of SEPTA’s YouTube Channel to seek the public’s help in identifying suspects

- **Forming new partnerships to work with us:**
  - Created a first-of-its kind partnership with 13 first-year medical students from Drexel University serving as health navigators, performing their six-month practicum
  - Onboarded five “health and exercise science” college students as health navigators
  - Formed multiple county partnerships
30,000 cameras placed across the system in vehicles and stations are monitored by SEPTA Transit Police and Video personnel.

New virtual patrol center is now staffed to monitor surveillance video live streams with a special focus on “hot spots” to dispatch patrol officers to parts of the system where they are needed the most.

ZeroEyes Pilot program to identify weapons on the system.

New $5M state grant funding program will allow SEPTA to expand ZeroEyes across the system.
Philadelphia Office of Homeless Service granted SEPTA Unique Access to HMIS
### SEPTA’s Annual Point-in-Time Count

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<th>County</th>
<th>SEPTA 2022 Unsheltered</th>
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<td>Delaware</td>
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### Statistics and Data

- **44,361 ENGAGEMENTS**
  - Each engagement represents an individual who was guided of SEPTA’s system and some guided-date services. Most of these interactions do not require police intervention.
  - *38,464 Removals WITHOUT Police Involvement*

- **5,709 RESOURCE DISTRIBUTIONS**
  - Food, clothing, found cars, and transportation are resources distributed by SEPTA’s outreach teams.

- **7,970 REFERRALS**
  - Mental health treatment, drug and alcohol treatment, shelters, PADS office, and other social services providers are examples of places a vulnerable individual may be referred.

- **159 NARCAN DEPLOYMENTS**
  - Narcan is a treatment that reverses opioid overdose. With opioid overdoses on the rise in Philly, this is an essential work.

- **391 WARM HAND-OFFS**
  - During a warm hand-off, outreach teams directly and physically connect a vulnerable individual with a social services provider.

- **1,563 CALLS TO POLICE DISPATCH**
  - Outreach teams reduce the number of contacts between police and vulnerable individuals.

  * 760 Removals with Police Assistance

### SEPTA SCOPE efforts have helped to decrease homelessness on the system by 35%
A Holistic and Compassionate Approach to Homelessness
Notable Visitors

Long Beach, CA
Los Angeles, CA
New York, NY
Chicago, IL
Washington, DC
Toronto, Canada
American Public Transportation Association

2022

Innovation Award - SCOPE

Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), Philadelphia, PA
Developing Community-Based Public Safety Programs

Keith Leighton
Sr. Director, Risk Assessment
Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA)
Our division is comprised of a team of dedicated professionals who are committed to fulfilling our mission of ensuring a safe and secure transit system for all.

With our combined expertise and diverse backgrounds, we work diligently to identify and mitigate potential risks, making certain that we maintain the highest standards of safety throughout our operations.
COTA Strategic Response Specialists

Strategic Response Specialists are change agents within our community to increase safety and security while serving vulnerable populations and proactively addressing issues including unhoused people, substance misuse, and mental health concerns.
### The Strategic Response

**Tasks of the Strategic Response Specialists**

- Address vulnerable populations with compassion and dignity
- Proactively monitor high ridership lines to have a visual presence and engage riders
- Physical presence at Park and Rides, transit centers, stops and shelters
- Partner and support "Safe and Secure COTA For All" task force
- Align organizational missions of security, accident investigation, claims, and litigation and insurance defense within a single division
**Specialized Training**

- Accident Investigations
- ADA
- COTA Strategic Plan
- LINK US Initiative
- Public Records Requests
- Photography
- Report Writing
- Special Duty Officer (SDO) Program/K9

- TSA First Observer
- National Incident Management System
- Active Shooter Training - DHS
- Mental Health Training – North Community Center
- Human Trafficking – Out of Darkness Columbus
- De-Escalation Training – CPD
Strategic Community Partnerships

- Mt. Carmel Hospital Street Medicine Team
- Capital Crossroads Special Improvement District (SID)
- Franklin County Public Health Department
- ADAMH
- University District Organization
- 30+ nonprofit and other community organizations (Task Force)
Safe and Secure COTA for All Task Force

COTA’s Safe and Secure for All was created to lessen security issues and safety concerns for all and to help solve issues from a human lens. The goal is to identify solutions that will help connect people with specific needs to existing resources.
# Safe and Secure COTA for All

## Task Force

### Objectives
- Reduce non-destination/shelter-seeking customers on COTA
- Partner with nonprofit and public partners to identify solutions
- Address shelter needs with a focus on keeping customers safe and spaces clean and inviting.
- Help to create an environment where all customers feel welcome and safe on our transit vehicles.
- Serve as a collaborative partner to provide access to mental health and/or addiction resources and shelters.

### Our Plan
- Identify a team of nonprofit and public partners and organizations to help address the prevalence of non-destination and shelter-seeking customers.
- Develop a task force with goals, timing and report out-process to the COTA Leadership Team.
- Utilize the Task Force to create deliverables to achieve objectives through human-focused tactics.
- Utilize partner expertise, resources and initiatives to help solve problems like homelessness, addiction and mental health.
Safe & Secure COTA For All Task Force

Community Partnerships
Safe and Secure COTA for All
Task Force

30+ Community Partnerships and counting…
Impact on the Unhoused Community

Collaboration between Task Force members and the Strategic Response Specialists team has been especially impactful in connecting unhoused individuals with community resources.

Successful Initiatives

- Warming and Cooling stations
- Overnight lodging during extreme weather
- Winter clothing drive
- Collaboration with the Community Shelter Board (CSB), Mt. Carmel Outreach and the SID.
- Community Ambassador Team (CAT) cards

These achievements demonstrate the positive impact we are making in addressing the needs of the unhoused community.
We provide solutions that connect people to prosperity through innovation, dedication and teamwork.”
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Jennifer Vides
LA Metro
Chief Customer Experience Officer
Metro Ambassador Pilot Program

Support Connect Report
Public Safety Reimagined

MISSION

Metro safeguards the transit community by taking a holistic, equitable and welcoming approach to public safety. Metro recognizes that each individual is entitled to a safe, dignified and human experience.

VALUES STATEMENTS

Emphasizing Compassion and a Culture of Care

Metro commits to treating all transit riders, employees and community members with dignity and respect. The key pillars of our approach to public safety are compassion, kindness, dependability and fair treatment for all.

Recognizing Diversity

Metro commits to recognizing and respecting the wide range of people and communities we serve. Metro will work with transit riders, community members, families, neighborhoods, and historically underserved groups to identify needs and tailor public safety approaches.

Acknowledging context

Metro understands that neglected communities have disproportionately endured the negative effects of systemic inequalities. Historically, institutions have excluded these same groups from decision-making. Metro’s approach to public safety recognizes this context and seeks reparative models to minimize harm and promote inclusion.

Committing to Openness and Accountability

Metro’s commitment to public safety recognizes that the agency must operate with the highest ethical standards, prioritize transparency, and rely on community-defined accountability measures.
Metro’s Public Safety Eco-System

- Patrol and secure facilities
- Support emergencies & special events
- LA Metro Riders & Employees
- Crisis Response Teams
- Law Enforcement
- Contracted Security
- Homeless Outreach
- Metro Ambassadors

> Customer support
> Security awareness
> Visibility
> Outreach to riders
> Connection to services
> Patrol and secure facilities
> Support emergencies & special events
> Respond to mental health crisis incidents
> Visibility
> Response to crime
> Security Ops Center
> Patrol facilities
> Code of conduct
> Open/close stations
> Customer support
> Security awareness
> Visibility
Program is a part of Metro’s re-imagined approach to public safety and was recommended by Metro’s Public Safety Advisory Council.

**Pilot program launched Oct. 2022**
- Two vendors to manage and operate program
- Deploys trained contract personnel on Metro’s buses, bus stops, trains, and stations.
- More than 300 staff

**Ambassador profiles**
- From the neighborhood
- Transit riders
- Lived experiences
- Multicultural and multilingual
Ambassador Deployment

Typical Deployment:

Ambassador teams consist of at least two people, deployed depending on the specific need

- **Fixed Post**: Staffing within the station—coverage on platforms, regular elevator/escalator checks, fare gate/TVM areas, do not ride trains.

- **Roving Team**: Ride trains and buses exiting at designated stations and bus stops conducting station checks, including elevator/escalator checks.

- **Riding Team**: Ride trains and buses, moving throughout vehicles, exit to get on adjacent rail car or bus.

Special Deployment:

Ambassadors have also been instrumental in supporting key agency initiatives including:

- Special events, e.g., sporting and entertainment events
- Special security deployments, e.g., pilot interventions, surges, specialized enforcement campaigns
Training

3-Day Classroom includes:

- Topics in customer service and customer experience
- Conflict de-escalation
- Public safety awareness
- Emergency preparedness
- Trauma-informed response
- Disability awareness
- Transit operations
- CPR and naloxone training.

80-Hour Field Training

- LA Union Station
- 7th/Metro Station
Service Hours & Locations

Our Metro Ambassadors provide service to riders 7 days a week, including holidays/special events, on rail cars, buses, stops, stations and elevators.

Monday – Friday
- 6:00 am – 10:00 pm

Saturday – Sunday
- 8:00 am – 10:00 pm

Deployment on Regional Connector Stations:
- 4:30am – Midnight
Program Goals and Evaluation

• **Improve perceptions of safety** by providing a visible presence on the system to enhance riders’ sense of personal safety and security. For issues that require special intervention, Ambassadors alert the elements of our public safety ecosystem:
  o Law enforcement regarding incidents of crime;
  o Metro transit security officers for code of conduct compliance;
  o Homeless outreach teams and crisis intervention teams who provide care-first support for vulnerable riders; and
  o Cleanliness and elevator/escalator maintenance issues that, if not promptly addressed, make stations, trains, and buses feel less safe.

• **Improve customer experience** by helping riders more confidently navigate the system, anticipate their needs, proactively engage and connect with customers, and connect vulnerable riders to resources.

HERE’S WHAT WE LOOKED AT:
Overall, Ambassadors have...

**Significantly increased Metro face-to-face customer service interactions**

174,751 + 502,656 = 677,407

- Customer Center Visits
- Ambassador Interactions with riders (beyond a greeting)

**Improved** response times by reporting cleanliness and maintenance issues

- 9,404 Cleanliness/maintenance issues
- 2,809 Graffiti Sightings
- 2,671 Escalator/Elevator Problems

**Alerted first responders and outreach teams**

- 1,785 Safety-related submissions on Transit Watch App
- 381 Phone calls to 911 or Metro’s Security Operations Center

**Saved 72 Lives**

- 52 + 20 = 72 Lives saved using Narcan since April
- Lives saved using CPR, suicide intervention, etc.
Most riders want more Ambassadors on Metro

61% Want to See More Ambassadors on Metro
(Among Those Who've Seen Ambassadors)

54% Say Ambassadors Make Them Want to Ride Metro More
(Among Those Who've Seen Ambassadors)

Source: Ambassador Program Evaluation Survey, July-Aug 2023, n=5,889

Q: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? "I would like to see more Ambassadors on the system"; "Metro Ambassadors make me want to ride Metro more"
Most riders agree that seeing Ambassadors on Metro makes them feel safer

63% Agree
Seeing Ambassadors Makes Them Feel Safer
(Among Those Who Have Seen Ambassadors)

- 63% agree
- 35% Strongly Agree
- 27% Somewhat Agree
- 22% Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- 6% Disagree Somewhat
- 9% Disagree Strongly

Source: Ambassador Program Survey, July-Aug 2023
Q: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? n=5,889
Q: What has made your Metro riding experience better?

- I haven’t been on the Metro in over 5 years and I remember hating it because it felt unsafe. Now I absolutely love it because I feel safe and welcomed with the Ambassadors and security you have staffed.
  - Rider, Westlake

- I think the presence of Metro ambassadors has helped discourage illegal activity on the train.
  - Rider, Pasadena

- The ambassadors have cleaned up the environment some.
  - Rider, Glendale

- I think the new metro ambassadors at the stations has really helped the cleanliness and overall safety of the stations and trains.
  - Rider, Glendale

More Likely to Agree Ambassadors Make Them Feel Safer:
- Asian/Pacific Islanders (70%)
- Hispanics/Latinos (68%)
- Women (66%)
- Under $25K HHI (66%)

Visible presence Improves Perceptions of Safety
Ambassadors improve riding experience and boost satisfaction levels

Riders who have seen or interacted with Ambassadors are more likely to feel their Metro riding experience has improved.

Riders who have had more interaction with Ambassadors have higher satisfaction levels

Source: Ambassador Program Survey, July-Aug 2023
Q: Is your overall Metro riding experience, including both bus and rail, better than, worse than, or the same as it was a year ago? n=11,337
Q: Thinking about your experiences during your entire journey door-to-door and all your interactions with Metro [INSERT “Bus” OR “Rail” BASED ON ASSIGNMENT AT HIDDEN_VARIABLE_MODE_ASSIGNMENT], how satisfied are you with Metro [Bus/Rail]? n=11,337
When we asked riders how they would like see the Ambassador program improved, key themes emerged:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas for Possible Improvement</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Expand to Other Areas</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Expand Hours at Night</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Clarify What Ambassadors Do</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Less standing around talking, on phone</strong></td>
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<td><strong>More knowledge of routes &amp; arrivals</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Help with additional duties that are currently out of scope</strong></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Suggestions</th>
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<td><em>Hire more people. I have seen them at significant stations but I’d like to see them at more stations and stops.</em></td>
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<td><em>Rotate them thru a wider range of lines.</em></td>
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<td><em>Put them on the subways after dark.</em></td>
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<td><em>Have them available at night would be helpful too.</em></td>
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<td><em>More clarity for the average rider on how they can help us.</em></td>
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<td><em>Make it more clear what they do.</em></td>
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<td><em>Ambassadors could move around more.</em></td>
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<td><em>Often I see several standing and talking among themselves.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Hire those who want to do the job rather than just standing around...</em></td>
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<td><em>Inform the riders about what they do.</em></td>
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<td><em>Space them out more. I see clumps of Ambassadors.</em></td>
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<td><em>Mandatory training and hiring process to ensure that ambassadors are knowledgeable of the various metro lines and routes.</em></td>
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<td><em>Give information about each metro line or bus line.</em></td>
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<td><em>Them having access to real time information.</em></td>
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<td><em>Have them kick out rude/aggressive people.</em></td>
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<td><em>Deputizing them and helping get all the homeless off the buses and the trains.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Maybe help out a bit with the cleanliness of the train.</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ambassador Program Evaluation Survey, July-Aug 2023
Thank You!

Jennifer Vides
Videsj@metro.net
FTA Resources for Transit Workers

Mental Health

Enhanced Transit Safety
Question and Answer

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LA Metro Chief Customer Experience Office
Thank you!

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