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**LEARNING FROM**

**RIDER SECURITY AND SERVICE PROGRAMS**

**IN OTHER U.S. TRANSIT SYSTEMS**

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### Acknowledgement

Special thanks to the police and security leadership at agencies across the country, who took the time to share their experiences and lessons with us just as they were beginning to deal with the full extent of the COVID-19 crisis.

We thank you whether you are named here or not.

## 1 Executive Summary:

### Transit rider security and service staff produce substantial safety benefits

Transit is an essential service that connects us to work, to education and opportunity, and to our broader communities, including our families. We began this work just as Metro Transit was reporting record ridership on its rail and Bus Rapid Transit lines, and as we complete it, Metro Transit and every other transit agency in the state (and the country) is asking people *not* to use transit except for essential trips. A large number of essential workers continue to use our transit system. Our first lesson, then, is that we need safe, comfortable, welcoming transit services, across Minnesota, *in all kinds of conditions*.

East Metro Strong is completing and releasing this research now because:

- Legislators in both chambers, from both parties, have described an urgent need;
- Legislators in both chambers, from both parties, have introduced bills to address that need; and
- Governor Walz made transit safety part of the COVID-19-informed supplementary budget proposal.

Transit safety is a priority goal for the Legislature this spring. COVID-19 has not changed the need for improvement now.

We urge that the lessons from this research—lessons from other regions as they met similar safety challenges—will inform all of our conversations about what works, whether those conversations are between legislators, in the press, or between Minnesotans as we talk by phone and over the internet.

#### 1.1 Key findings

How do transit systems around the country work to create safe, comfortable travel on buses and trains?

Part of the answer is: transit security and service staff who are not sworn police officers.

For this research, we spoke with chiefs of police and chief safety officers on other transit systems. They told us that *their* non-sworn security and service staff produce substantial safety benefits.

Chiefs of police and chief safety officers on other transit systems told us:

- *We use non-sworn, unarmed, officers and/or other staff to check fares, administer a code of conduct, and offer various kinds of assistance, on trains, buses, and platforms; and*
- *We find that doing so improves actual and perceived safety.*

Safety is paramount; we also want to ensure that customers comply with fare policies.

We reviewed national-level research on best practices. The Transportation Research Board of the National Academy of Sciences studied transit systems across the US, and recommends:

- “Using a customer-oriented approach to fare payment rather than a traditional policing approach”
- “Creating a focused fare inspection team with nonsworn officers.”

Overall, the lessons from national experience, as shared in interviews and in published research, are:

- Adding non-sworn or non-police staff lets police focus on policing.
- Non-sworn staff
  - Act as presence and force multipliers
  - Deter and reduce crime
    - through presence, by projecting authority and multiplying eyes and ears
    - through actively creating a positive culture of safety
  - Reduce calls to police for non-police needs, and increase calls to police for actual police needs
- More police alone do not necessarily make a place feel safer

We were struck by the consistency of what we heard from security personnel across the country and its consistency with findings from earlier national research on best practices.

Together, these lessons lead to recommendations for action in Minnesota.

## 1.2 Recommendations for Minnesota

East Metro Strong is a public-private partnership of counties, cities, and private employers; all of our members value transit as a cornerstone of regional prosperity. We also know that our system is not as safe or comfortable as it needs to be. This has not changed with COVID-19; the fundamental needs do not change with ridership.

Prior to COVID-19, the existing transit police force was stretched by covering a large, multi-modal, seven-county system. That remains the case. So, we also support additional police and police resources.

Transit police are also stretched because we as a state are asking them to do work that could be done by non-sworn staff: checking fares, giving directions, and connecting people to social services. Metro Transit police officers do those things with dignity and compassion.

Other agencies, with the same goals as ours, have faced similar decisions about how best to size and use their police forces.

We recommend implementing the lessons they learned:

1. Add a substantial number of non-sworn staff as an important *part* of creating a safe, comfortable, welcoming experience for all Minnesotans and visitors using transit.
2. Classify fare non-payment as a petty misdemeanor to allow such non-sworn staff to enforce fare policy.

## 2 Purpose of this research

“A safe, efficient transit system is critical to the success of our region. Millions of people rely on transit to get to work and school, and the business community tells us that transit is mission critical to their ability to attract workers and customers... Today, unfortunately, too many riders are witnessing behavior that ranges from obnoxious (playing loud music) to unhealthy (smoking on buses and trains) to outright criminal activity.”

- Metropolitan Council Chair Charlie Zelle, *StarTribune*, 2/16/2020

“You have to have an environment where people feel safe and secure because we want people to use this train.”

- Rep. Paul Torkelson, *MinnPost*, 2/13/2020

What steps can we take to get closer to the goal, universally shared and well expressed by Rep. Torkelson, of a transit system that people are eager to use because it safe and comfortable, and people feel welcome whether they are regular users, new users, or visitors?

Metro Transit has already begun to implement a multi-pronged safety and security strategy, including investing in additional police presence, security cameras, and increased staffing for its “Text for Safety” program. The Metro Transit Police Homeless Action Team has increased its capacity to assist homeless riders (many of whom have paid their fares and who are often victims of crime) with accessing shelter, housing and services.

In addition to these resources, state legislators, the Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit, and others have proposed various new responses to concerns about the safety and comfort of transit. As Chair Zelle put it:

“One of the most effective steps we can take is to increase the level of supervision on our buses and trains.”

Some proposals for additional presence involve additional police officers; others propose that a new class of transit security and customer service personnel should augment police presence. Supporters of the latter approach point to similar programs on transit systems elsewhere in the country.

### 2.1 What have other agencies learned from their security and service programs?

As the legislature and the community have discussed the idea of creating such security and service staff, many people have expressed interest in learning about the experience of other transit agencies.

The purpose of this research is to provide a timely review of relevant other programs and share lessons that may be useful to legislators and community members as they debate legislative proposals.

### 2.2 Relationship to current state legislative proposals

Minnesota legislators have introduced several bills whose goal is to provide better safety, enforcement, and service on Minnesota transit systems. Some of these would apply only in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metro area; others would apply to all systems in Minnesota.

The goal of this research is *not* to evaluate any current proposal; the goal is to share national experience to inform the broader conversation about what other agencies have found works.

### 3 Transit Security & Customer Service Programs

Transit security officers, fare enforcement officers, customer service agents, and transit ambassadors — these positions have different names in different places. Distinct from their sworn-officer counterparts and team-mates, these individuals perform combinations of the following types of activities:

1. Provide additional security presence on transit vehicles
2. Call on police support for serious criminal activity
3. Engage riders by providing information about stops, programs, payment instructions, etc.
4. Validate fare payment
5. Issue citations if no proof of fare payment
6. Provide information about low-income fare assistance and other social-service programs
7. Remind riders of the code of conduct rules, and resolve situations/ enforce codes of conduct as appropriate and necessary

Across the country, these approaches are helping transit agencies provide additional passenger security and comfort, while allowing sworn, armed police officers to focus their efforts on more serious criminal activity.

In order to inform discussions in Minnesota, we researched programs at agencies that have programs most like those currently being discussed for Metro Transit (rather than agencies that are closest to Metro Transit's size). The agencies we reviewed in depth include: Sound Transit (Seattle, WA); San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency "MUNI" (San Francisco); and Bay Area Rapid Transit "BART" (San Francisco Bay Area.)

We also completed a higher-level review of eight additional transit agency programs.

#### 3.1 Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART)

##### *Description*

BART serves the San Francisco Bay Area with multiple levels of transit security. All are different classification levels within the agency's Police Department, and each is distinguished by a different uniform.

- Fare Inspectors (20 positions) started recently and Transit Ambassadors (10 positions) began in February 2010.
- The Ambassador program began when the Board of Directors expressed interest in doing a program like MUNI's Municipal Transit Assistance Program in San Francisco, where trained staff from a non-profit rides buses where juvenile misbehavior has been documented. Due to Police Union issues (i.e. that ambassadors would be doing much of the same kind of work that Community Service Officers (CSOs) were classified to do), BART moved the program in-house.
  - 10 transit ambassadors came from the Community Service Officer pool (CSOs are typically assigned to parking enforcement at BART)

- Ambassadors wear uniforms distinct from CSOs or Fare Inspectors and are equipped with radios to report safety and security concerns or biohazards. Staff are trained to respond to customers' questions, complaints or requests for service and will observe, report and call upon an officer when enforcement is needed.
- Department provided additional training in de-escalation, verbal command classes, and anti-bias policing.
- Transit ambassadors are unarmed. They carry a radio, Narcan (all personnel have this), and pepper spray.
- Their task is to be the eyes and ears on their assigned routes – on platforms and trains.
- The ambassador program isn't an enforcement activity, but instead increases "presence," which could lead to less need for police contact.
- BART riders complained that they did not feel safe riding on evening and weekends, and ridership was decreasing during those times. In January of this year, BART police assigned 12 officers and designated them as the "Train Team"; they ride from 2 pm – midnight, 7 days/week.
  - They don't ride during the morning rush because that hasn't been a time of concern and the trains are too crowded.
  - On Saturdays, all 10 ambassadors and the 12 officers ride the train. Have found in the first month that calls for service have decreased, when Saturdays used to be a heavy day.
  - They have a full-time crime analyst to review data.
- Chief believes that "Presence = Safety." When any of their uniformed staff are onboard it is a crime deterrent. When ambassadors work with officers, it's a force multiplier.

#### *Fare Enforcement Policy*

- Civil citation for first three violations within 12-month period. At 4<sup>th</sup> time, it's a criminal citation.
- Citation is \$55 for youth, \$75 for adults. For those that can't or don't pay, fee can be waived if 8 hours of community services are completed.

#### *Results to be measured*

BART police are compiling the following measures for their newly established Transit Ambassador program:

- Train rides taken
- Patrol checks (walking platforms)
- Educational contacts (letting people know if they are violating a code of conduct; Transit Ambassador's aren't authorized to take enforcement action)
- Patron contact (answering customer questions re: transit)

- Police/Service contacts (see a fight in progress, requires police assistance)

When the 12-officer train team began their patrol this January, BART recorded an 18% drop in crime.

As the Chief notes, “you can’t measure criminal activity avoided”, but likely that the presence of BART Ambassadors or Officers likely makes people think twice about committing crime.

### *Lessons Learned*

- Make sure staff get training and tools to be effective. Be precise and clear in the mission of the unit. They need to know what their goal is and why they are on the trains.
- Make sure that staff is uniformed, not in plainclothes (Transit Ambassadors wear high visibility/reflective shirts. It makes them visible and they stand out.)
- Find staff that understand customer service, who interact with riders; don’t put people on team that don’t want to be there.

### *Sources*

- 3/5/2020 Interview, Ed Alvarez, Chief of Police | BART Police Department
- <https://www.bart.gov/news/articles/2020/news20200109>
- <https://www.sfexaminer.com/news/bart-board-to-vote-on-unarmed-ambassador-proposal/>

## 3.2 Sound Transit

### *Description*

Sound Transit opened its first LRT in 2009 and has had the same general tiered approach to fare enforcement and security since then. Thus, in “Results” below, there is no ‘before and after’. Note also that Sound Transit does not operate the region’s buses, so this discussion applies only to LRT and commuter rail.

Washington state law authorizes Sound Transit to designate fare enforcement action by either contract or in-house staff. They contract with Securitas, which provides 300 security officers with varying duties and different uniforms as well as with the King County’s Sheriff’s office to act as the agency’s police force.

#### *1. Tiered security*

Security is provided by these three units:

- **Sound Transit police** are a unit of the King County Sheriff’s Office.

Uniformed officers routinely patrol Link trains and stations to create a safe environment. Officers also monitor car, bicycle and pedestrian traffic. Sound Transit police are King County Sheriff officers, and their uniforms say “Sound Transit Police.” There are approximately 35 Sound Transit police officers. They are responsible for handling criminal activities, patrolling for terroristic threats, and dealing with nuisance crimes.

- **Transit security officers** contract with Sound Transit and are assigned to stations and platforms.

They are assigned to deal with safety concerns and to answer questions about service, schedules or fares. Transit security officers wear uniforms with dark green tops. Those that aspire to be fare enforcement officers begin as Transit Security officers.

- **Fare enforcement officers** contract with Sound Transit and travel on trains.

They are assigned to check fares, answer questions and offer help. Fare enforcement officers wear uniforms with blue tops. There are 32 FEOs. They carry hand cuffs and collapsible batons, but do not carry firearms.

FEOs have specific authority to:

1. Request proof of payment
2. If no proof of payment, can request an ID
3. Write citations (which then go into the county court system)

FEOs are given extra training about Sound Transit policies, programs, and approaches. Customer service is a large part of their job-answering questions about routes and stops, and programs.

In the event FEOs encounter criminal activity, they have radio contact with a dispatch center and law enforcement that will intercept them at the next station.

## *2. Fare Enforcement Procedure & Policy*

A team of two FEOs board the train car and split up going to opposite ends, checking everyone.

- If a rider is found without proof of payment for the first time, the individual is warned, put in database, and a 12-month rolling period begins. FEOs also educate riders about low income fare cards and programs that they might qualify for.
- If found without payment for a second or third time in 12 months, individual is issued a civil citation for \$124.
- On the 4<sup>th</sup> time in 12 months, the individual may be suspended from riding Sound Transit for a set period, and/or given a misdemeanor charge of theft. If found on Sound Transit property after being suspended the individual can be charged with criminal trespass.

## *Results*

Sound Transit has a goal to inspect 8% of its total ridership every year and has found that at that level, fare non-payment is below 3%.

The agency is currently reviewing its policy in response to findings of disparate citation rates between white passengers and passengers of color. As part of that work, Sound Transit completed an onboard survey of ~1,100 riders (half of which had proof of payment and half which did not) that found:

- A higher percentage of respondents without proof of payment (POP) were African American or Black, Hispanic or Latinx, under 25, low income, living with a disability, and/or lacking a working vehicle.
- Most people rated FEOs highly:
  - FEOs are professional: 93% with POP and 88% without POP
  - FEOS treat everyone the same: 92% with POP and 85% without POP
  - FEOs approached all riders near me: 88% with POP and 83% without POP

A web survey completed by 8,000 individuals recorded the following opinions:

- Sound Transit should: reduce fines from \$124, increase the number of warnings and reduce the warning period from 12 months to six months, help riders who can't afford to pay, and expand outreach to hard-to-reach communities.
- 75% thought FEOs should offer on-the-spot information about reduced-fare programs.
- Large majorities supported suspending fare enforcement under certain circumstances and providing other ways for people to resolve fines.

Sound Transit's Board of Directors will be deliberating on possible changes this spring.

#### *Lessons learned*

- Sound Transit's Transit Security Officers and Fare Enforcement Officers have overlapping, but distinct duties.
- Sound Transit's Deputy Director of Public Safety noted that it's critical to marry uniformed presence with a customer service outreach approach. In particular, staff with any enforcement role need to wear some kind of identifying uniform – so that their role is clear to customers.
- Sound Transit expects that all security staff engage with riders and promote social interaction.

#### *Sources*

- Interview with Steve Tucker, Deputy Director, Public Safety on 3/4/2020
- <https://www.soundtransit.org/>, including <https://www.soundtransit.org/blog/platform/sound-transits-fare-enforcement-preliminary-survey-results-are>.

### 3.3 San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency "MUNI"

#### *Description*

According to MUNI's Chief Security Officer, the goal of their division is to "make the system safe and secure, but not over-police." Overseen by the Sustainable Streets division, the Security, Investigations and Enforcement (SIE) Division takes a multi-pronged approach to address security, fare enforcement, and investigations.

MUNI's programs and units include:

- **Proof of Payment Unit** – Conducts inspections for fare compliance on all SFMTA vehicles, bus stops, rail platforms, and subway stations. The inspectors are uniformed and have a shield displayed. They are trained to be POST certified (Police Officers Standards and Training is a standard curriculum for police officers) but do not possess police powers and are not armed. Riders without valid Proof of Payment may be removed from the vehicle and issued a fine of more than \$100. Customers can perform community service or set up a payment plan for parking and transit violations.\* Note: Muni also has turnstiles at its subway stations.
- **Muni Transit Assistance Program (MTAP)** – Provides community-based staff to ride transit lines with high incidences of graffiti and juvenile disturbances and assists with enforcement. Transit Assistants also monitor high schools, junior high schools, bus stops, and bus lines throughout the City with a particular focus on juvenile safety and order.
- **Video Surveillance Unit** – Records and stores all video footage from SFMTA vehicles, subway stations, rail and bus divisions, and rail platforms for use in investigations and legal action.
- **Emergency Preparedness Department** – Responsible for agency-level all-hazard emergency management, training and exercises; system security and internal audits; interagency coordination of citywide special events; and security grants management.
- **Contract Security Service** – Provides unarmed security officers for all bus and Light Rail Vehicle yards, monitoring of live video feeds from SFMTA facilities, secure courier services, and armed security officers for the Revenue Department and Customer Service Center.
- **San Francisco Police Department SFMTA Work Order** – The following groups are under the command of the SFPD Traffic Company Commander and operate in close coordination with SIE.
  - Muni Response Team (MRT): a uniformed presence in the transit system, assists with transit enforcement and special events.
  - Muni Task Force (MTF): Plain clothes investigative services specific to criminal activity in the transit system.
  - MTA K-9 Unit: Explosive threat assessment and detection on the transit system.†

*Muni Transit Assistance Program (MTAP): Unique, community-based security model*

Launched in 1996, MTAP works with and trains members of the community in conflict resolution who then ride on specific routes with the purpose of diffusing and deterring any conflicts, acts of vandalism, and who assist the bus operators as needed. This model was started to address fights that would break out on MUNI property and buses near high schools. More than half of San Francisco's public school students take transit to school. MTAP staffers are unarmed and have no ticket writing authority. MTAP Ambassadors check in with the schools every day and ride the lines and concentrate at the hubs / stations where juveniles come together.

Chief Security Officer Kim Burrus noted that the ambassadors are part of a re-entry program, individuals serve for three years (and are then encouraged to find another job within the city), and MUNI seeks

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\* From: <https://www.sfmta.com/getting-around/drive-park/citations/community-service-program>.

† From: <https://www.sfmta.com/units/security-investigations>

Ambassadors that have a connection to the riders on their assigned routes. “‘Ambassadors’ is not just about putting more people [staff] on the system...; because they are from the neighborhood, they understand the nuances.” She says that they decrease crime in part by decreasing recidivism.

### *Results*

Between 2014 and 2018 MUNI saw crime drop 48%.<sup>‡</sup> Officials attribute the drop to engineering changes (e.g. plastic barriers between bus operators and riders) and increased surveillance and other measures. Then-Chief Security Officer Glenn Mar, a retired SFPD captain, pointed to MTAP as a success, noting, “You don’t necessarily need an armed officer to help with safety and security on the bus. They can talk to people doing unruly behavior and ask them to discontinue what they are doing and ask them to leave the bus. That helps.”

Burrus noted that the MTAP program has not had enough evaluation and that they have anecdotal evidence that it is working. She would like to know: how many people have successfully transitioned? how many aren’t gang members today? how many incidents prevented?

### *Lessons Learned*

- According to Burrus, generally, involving police tends to escalate a situation. “Police aren’t meant to enter every social situation.” She notes that this is true with the homeless population and with Ambassadors who can “build the trust that a police officer cannot.”
- Burrus brought with her from Baltimore “Critical Incidents Training” and the Baltimore County response model in which the clinician is the lead, and the officer is second.
- She recommends asking “What are you trying to affect? What are you trying to measure?” Answers to those questions will tell you what you need.
- She felt that there should be a separate fare inspection function. “Our Ambassadors help the community. Don’t mix that mission with fare inspection...just makes every interaction adversarial.”

### *Source*

- Interview with Kimberly Burrus, Chief Security Officer, MUNI

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<sup>‡</sup> <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Crime-on-Muni-drops-by-half-as-agency-beefs-up-14867952.php>

### 3.4 Other Agencies

In addition to the detailed reports above, our review found that the following transit agencies have some version of a non-sworn, security and service program.

Agency	Duties	Authority to check fares?
Community Transit – Snohomish County, WA	<p>The Swift service ambassadors interface with customers on board and at BRT stations. They help educate customers on fares and fare policy and provide instruction on how to use the ticket vending machines and card readers and how to read route and schedule information.</p> <p>The ambassadors encourage fare payment, keep a record of customers who do not pay their fares, and alert the Snohomish County Sheriff’s Office transit police deputies if they identify any repeat nonpaying customers.</p>	Yes
Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) – Dallas, TX	<p>Fare Enforcement Officers ride DART trains and commuter rail and inspect passengers’ fares to ensure that those aboard are riding with proper fare.</p> <p>Uniformed, unarmed, but part of Police Dept.</p>	Yes
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) – Boston	<p>Transit Ambassadors wear bright red polo shirts, sweaters, or jackets with “T” logos and can be found at stations throughout the system.</p> <p>They can help users buy tickets and passes, figure out the best way to get to a destination, and provide real-time travel information.</p>	No
Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) – San Diego	<p>Code Compliance Inspectors (CCIs) are primarily responsible for enforcing ordinances and maintaining quality of life throughout the MTS Bus and Trolley system.</p> <p>CCIs are classified as public officers with powers of arrest, are non-sworn, and unarmed.</p> <p>“Under the new protocol, security guards are paired with inspectors and assigned to patrol three to five stations along a particular trolley line. Many of the security guards carry guns, while inspectors don’t. Both wear law-enforcement-style uniforms and carry handcuffs, pepper spray and body cameras.... The new approach has correlated with a drop in arrests for crimes such as assault, vandalism and drunkenness. At the same time, a recent agency poll found that more than 80 percent of riders said that having security on the trolley made them feel safer.” <i>(San Diego Union-Tribune, January 10, 2020)</i></p>	Yes

<p>Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) – Buffalo, NY</p>	<p>NFTA uses a combination of transit police and fare inspectors. Fare inspectors do not have police powers and are considered “transit ambassadors” as part of NFTA’s Customer Appreciation Program.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Regional Transportation District (RTD) – Denver, CO</p>	<p>RTD Transit Security officers provide a visible presence on vehicles and at transit centers and stations. Officers inspect fares, discourage disruptive and inappropriate behavior and act as ambassadors by assisting riders who may need help navigating the system.</p> <p>Allied Universal Security Services hires RTD Transit Security officers. Applicants are required to have previous law enforcement or military experience.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) – Philadelphia, PA</p>	<p>SEPTA is rolling out a “tap to exit” feature at different stations as part of their new Key program. Key Ambassadors are at each location to assist customers with their transaction and answer questions.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Tri-Met – Portland, OR</p>	<p>Tri-Met has many layers of security personnel, in addition to police officers, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customer Safety Officers who patrol the system, discourage inappropriate behavior, assist fare inspectors and supervisors, enforce the Tri-Met Code, report serious concerns to police, emergency responders, assist riders, and encourage safe behavior</li> <li>▪ Fare Inspectors who have that as primary duty, but also do items above. Staff is not armed and will call police if a serious incident should occur. Transit police officers, as well as officers from other jurisdictions, can check fares on the LRT.</li> <li>▪ Customer Service Representatives engage with and assist riders, educate riders about the Hop Fastpass® fare system and service adjustments, and assist during special events and service disruptions</li> </ul> <p>In 2018, Tri-Met revised its code to state that if fare non-payment is an only offense, it is a violation and not a crime for which the person could be arrested. Tri-Met began resolving adult fare non-payment citations directly within the first 90 days before they automatically go into the court system. Tri-Met changed the penalties when fare non-payment was the sole offense to a tiered fine or community service. If the person successfully enrolled in TriMet’s reduced fare program, the citation was voided.</p>	<p>Yes (except Customer Service Reps)</p>

### 3.5 Suggested practices from Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Synthesis 96

The Transit Cooperative Research Program of the National Academy of Sciences commissioned the study “Off-Board Fare Payment Using Proof-of-Payment Verification” (2012), to review how transit agencies across the country were handling fare inspection, enforcement, adjudication, and penalties for parts of systems that used off-board fare payment—like our regional LRT and BRT lines.<sup>§</sup>

In-depth case studies of seven systems produced suggested “practices for other operators to consider”, the first four of which are:

- Using a customer-oriented enforcement to fare payment rather than a traditional policing approach
- Implementing an agency-administered adjudication process
- Instituting an administrative process for payment of the fare evasion penalty
- Creating a focused fare inspection team with nonsworn officers

On this point, the study notes: “Six of the seven case study operators use personnel for fare inspection who do not possess police powers.

“The two primary advantages of this approach are labor cost savings and a force dedicated to one primary purpose, fare enforcement. In each case, the inspectors are uniformed but not armed. For incidents that require police support, the inspectors have radio contact with either transit police or municipal police.”

The study/synthesis collected and offers numerous lessons and suggestions for how to best implement these practices.

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<sup>§</sup> <http://www.trb.org/Publications/Blurbs/166757.aspx>. “Issues addressed by TCRP Synthesis 96 include evasion rates, inspection rates, enforcement techniques, duties of fare inspection personnel, adjudication processes, and the kinds of penalties involved for evasion.”

## 4 Learning from Minnesota’s local experiences

In addition to other regions, we wanted to learn from experience with non-sworn, non-armed security and service staff in Minnesota.

- The Minneapolis Downtown Improvement District (DID) has been running a Downtown Ambassador program since 2009.
- The Saint Paul Downtown Alliance piloted a downtown Street Team during the summer of 2019.

Both programs were responses to concerns similar to those facing the transit agencies (including safety, behavior, cleanliness). Their experiences are local and highly relevant.

### 4.1 Minneapolis Downtown Improvement District (DID) Ambassadors

The DID’s Director of Safety Initiatives came from security operations at Target Corp., and offered a comparison between stores and downtown, and between stores and transit: we want people to come, we want them to feel welcome, and neither will happen if they don’t feel safe. No store responds to that need with a police officer in every aisle or every department. Successful stores create safety through hospitality, and work *with* police.

The DID calls collaboration with police a “layered” approach to security. The DID praised the Minneapolis Police Department, saying their partnership works because it allows each to focus on what it does best.

That “layered” approach includes a clear, visible line between ambassador staff and police. The DID said their experience warned against having non-police staff wear uniforms that look like police.

Other lessons include:

- *Each part* is necessary: police, ambassadors, and cameras.
- Ambassadors should not be thought of as reducing police calls overall.
  - Ambassadors *increase* police calls by being in places that police will not be, and seeing things police will not see, and then calling the police.
  - Ambassadors *decrease* police calls by handling issues that are not police issues.

The net impact depends on a variety of factors. Regardless, an ambassador program means that more of police time is spent on calls that require a police presence.

- Success comes from *partnership*. Police and ambassador programs work closely together. They work hard to be clear on roles:
  - Ambassadors and police have clear understandings about ‘Who deals with what.’
  - The narrower the assignment for each party, the more effective they will be. Letting police, *police*, makes them more effective.

- Policing and security are full of subtleties and details that people may not be aware of.

For example: the growing use of body cameras has a variety of consequences that people may not be aware of. Sworn officers may feel that they have less discretion in an encounter, even a fare enforcement encounter. That, in turn, may lead to officers writing violations for people who have, for example, genuinely forgotten a monthly transit pass.

The Downtown Improvement District offered an overall takeaway from its experience with Ambassadors:

The program is funded year to year and is scrutinized for performance each year. The businesses who have funded it each year for the past 10 years find that it is successfully improving safety and traffic.

In the words of the DID: “It works and people love it.”

#### Sources

- Interview with
  - Shane Zahn, Director of Safety Initiatives, Downtown Improvement District; and
  - Steve Cramer, President & CEO, Minneapolis Downtown Council
- Editorial Board, “Helping downtown Minneapolis survive and thrive: Minneapolis is better because of a decade of work by DID ambassadors.” *Star Tribune*, July 5, 2019.  
<http://www.startribune.com/helping-downtown-survive-and-thrive/512276652/?refresh=true>

## 4.2 Saint Paul Downtown Alliance Street Team

The Saint Paul Downtown Alliance is a public-private partnership funded primarily by downtown businesses.

The Alliance began its Street Team pilot after studying how other downtowns were meeting similar needs and finding that “ambassadors are the way just about every downtown addresses these issues.”

The Alliance and its members found the pilot a success. From it, the Alliance learned:

- That ambassadors are a “force multiplier” for police.
- While cleaning and providing customer service, ambassadors are eyes and ears for police.
- Sufficient staffing for an area allows staff to better know the area and the people in it. That then allows them to know when something is wrong, or off.

*Not* sufficiently staffing an area can lead to the conclusion that the approach as a whole doesn’t work, which would be the wrong conclusion.

- Visibility is critical. That means both sufficient staffing, and identifiable uniforms. There is a role for plainclothes police, but visibility is key.

The Downtown Alliance is often asked about the difference between the Street Team and more police. Their answer is that “flooding any public space with police officers” makes the space uncomfortable and unwelcoming.

*Source*

- Interview with Joe Spencer, President, Saint Paul Downtown Alliance

## 5 Overall findings from research

- a. *Transit agency police and security chiefs find that non-sworn security and service programs fill critical roles distinct from policing by sworn officers.*

These roles include fare enforcement, additional authoritative presence / eyes and ears for security, and helping riders and creating a welcoming environment.

Some agencies further subdivide tasks, but in general policing is one job, and other roles, also important, are another.

- b. *Transit agencies, including their police and security chiefs, find that these programs are successful.*

These programs are relatively long-lived, indicating that the programs are successful and worth ongoing investment.

All find that security and service staff deter and reduce crime in a variety of ways.

Most of the programs were established when a transit line opened, so there is no ‘before’; some others are new enough that no data exists yet.

- c. *Local MSP experiences confirm these findings*

Our downtown ambassadors do not check fares, but in many other aspects work toward similar goals as transit staff: supporting thriving public and private spaces that return their investments, by enhancing safety, providing information, and creating welcome.

The funders of these programs (all private businesses in Minneapolis, mostly private businesses in Saint Paul) find them to be effective and continue to fund them.

The municipal and transit police forces these programs work with find them to be extremely helpful in allowing police to focus on situations that require police.

## **6 Conclusions**

Transit agencies across Minnesota connect us. They face a variety of challenges in providing that essential service. Legislators are discussing various proposals about how to address a set of related challenges involving safety, fare enforcement, and the overall experience of using our transit systems.

- Parts of some of those proposals involving reclassifying the penalty for fare non-payment would affect all statewide transit agencies.
- Other parts would focus on the Metro Transit system, also a statewide asset, by hiring non-sworn transit staff to take over fare enforcement from Metro Transit police. These staff would also have various other duties.

Discussions of those proposals—at the Legislature, in the press, among stakeholders—raised a variety of questions about how such approaches have worked in other places. Most of the questions at the Legislature focused on the safety impacts of these programs, and their relationships to policing, so this research focused there.

The answer from around the country—including from transit chiefs of police—is that using uniformed, non-sworn staff has proven to be an important part of creating safe, attractive, widely used, transit systems.