

Metro Transit Safety Conversations

A preliminary summary of results



Project Scope and Structure

Project Scope

- Definition of safety
- Community impact of interactions on transit

Project Team

- Citizens League Executive Director
- Citizens League Public Policy Director
- Twin Cities Innovation Alliance

Stakeholder Group

- Metropolitan Council Members, Metropolitan Council staff, Metro Transit Police Department, community organizations, business chambers, and others.
- Serve as advisers for high level strategy and guidance on stakeholder engagement.

Community Group

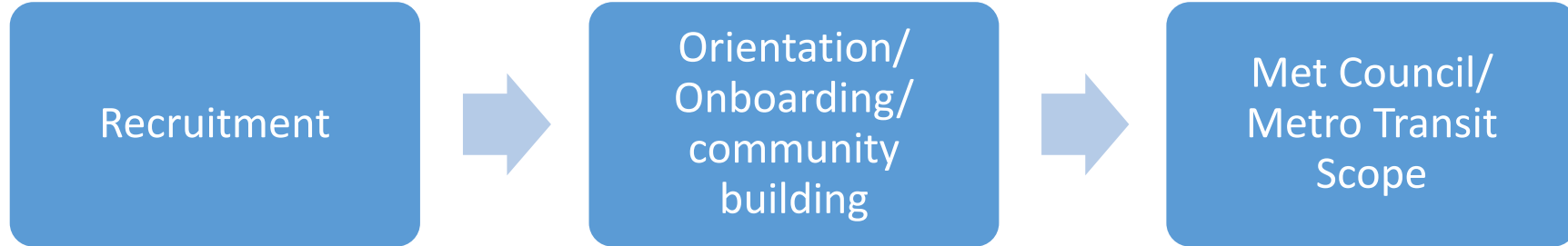
- Community members who use transit
- BIPOC
- Youth
- Compensation for their time
- Guidance on curation of engagement events and survey questions.



TWIN CITIES INNOVATION ALLIANCE

Project Timeline

Exploratory Phase: January 2021 – February 2021



Development: March 2021 – April 2021



Delivery: May 2021 – June 2021 → August 2021



Engagement Strategies

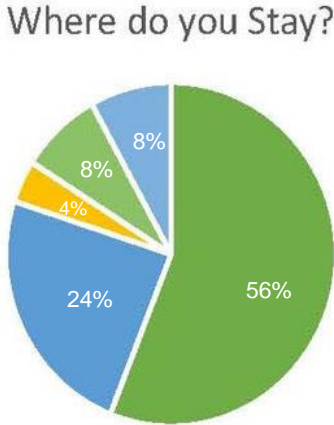
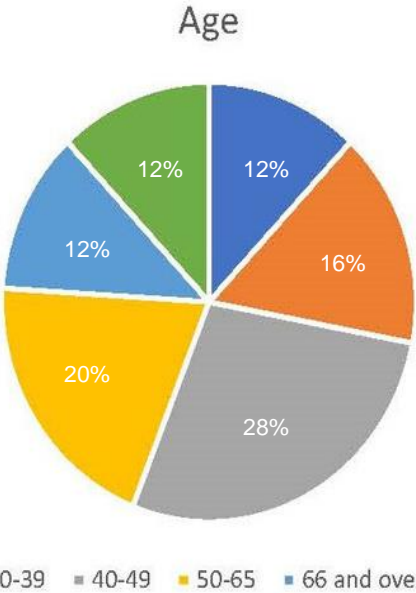
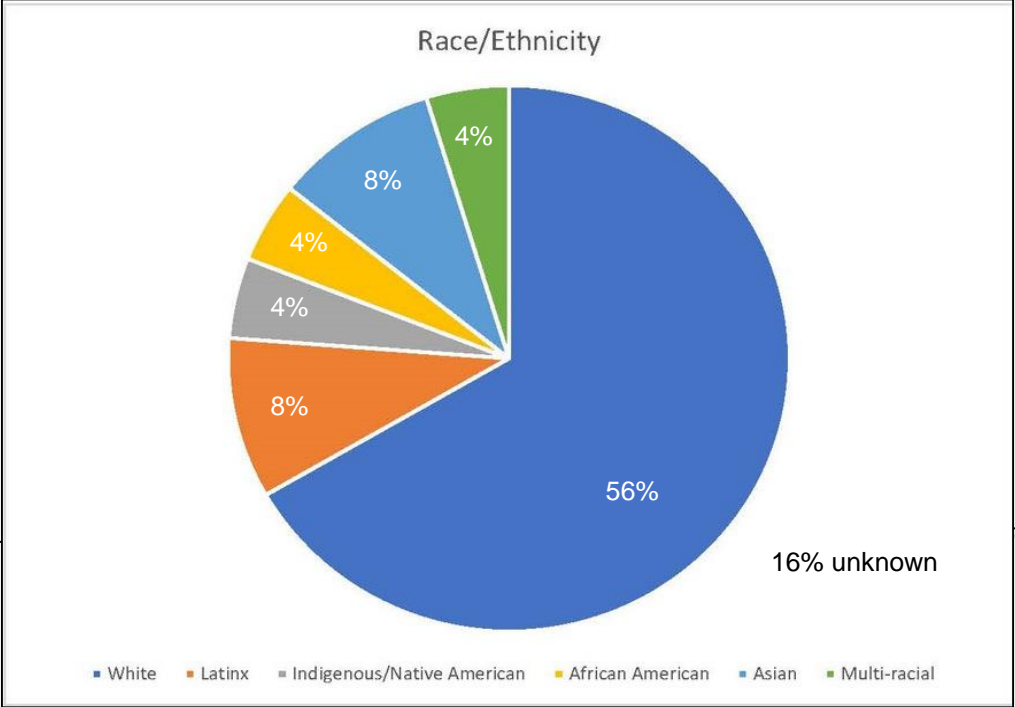
- Virtual community forums
- Surveys
- In person engagement

Virtual Community Forums

- 66 individuals registered
- 25 individuals participated



Participant Demographics – Virtual Community Forums



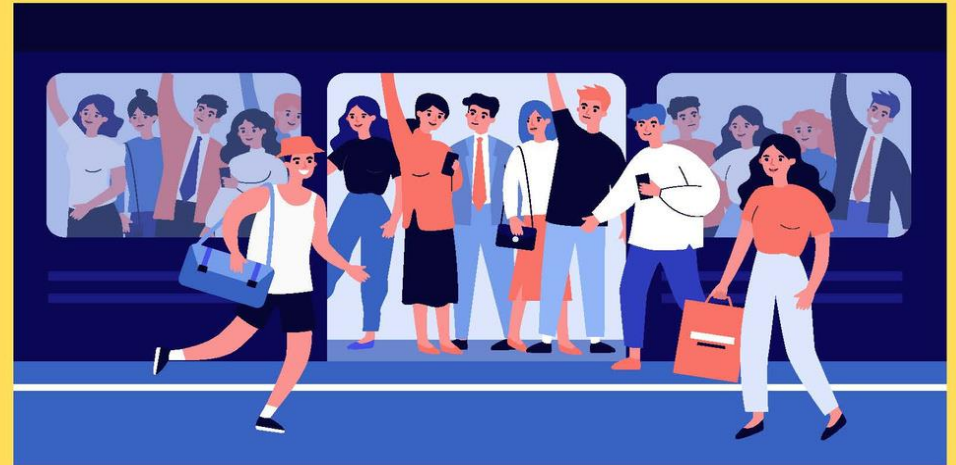
- Minneapolis
- St. Paul
- Anoka County
- Dakota County
- Scott County
- Carver County
- Suburban Ramsey County
- Suburban Hennepin County

HOW DO YOU DEFINE SAFETY ON TRANSIT?

'A safe public transit system is a well funded public transit system.'

Safety is being free from danger, free from experiencing or witnessing violence, free from gender based harassment. Safety is both physical and emotional. For some, safety is feeling comfortable, for others there is a clear difference between safety and comfort. Reliability and consistency play a significant role in safety. Accessibility for differently abled folks is safety (plexiglass barrier around driver makes communication difficult). Accessibility includes platforms and stops that are free from snow. Transit safety includes pedestrian safety - being able to move on and off platform/stop safely.

'Safety is knowing I am part of a bigger community of people who use and rely on public transportation.'



DO YOU FEEL SAFE ON METRO TRANSIT? WHY OR WHY NOT?

Safety on Metro Transit has declined significantly in the past year, since pre-Covid days. Choice riders are gone, less riders = less safe ('eyes of the street' thinking), busses are perceived to be safer because of access to the driver; trains and platforms feel very unsafe, primarily due to the behaviors of other riders, other people using those spaces, and the general lack of timely response to calls for help.



Choice riders are choosing not to ride, others are not taking transit during evening and night hours, others are no longer taking certain routes. Train riders talked about exiting and switching cars to feel more safe (particularly Green Line) and avoiding certain platforms (Lake St. on Blue Line).

HOW IS YOUR SENSE OF SAFETY DISRUPTED? WHAT EXPERIENCES HAVE MADE YOU FEEL UNSAFE?

Since the pandemic, hardship and desperation among people have skyrocketed.

'Metro Transit is the dumping ground for underfunded safety net/services.'



Considering transit as a public space and what is happening on transit is happening in all public spaces, there has been a sharp increase in disruptive behavior: weapons, firecrackers, smoking, drug use, foul language, sex, gender based harrassment, verbal abuse, urination, etc. These disruptive behaviors are impacting safety.

Unreliable timetables: the apps and schedules are frequently wrong, leaving folks standing in the extreme cold or heat waiting. The service to call for bus status is not available

on Sundays.

There is no clear way to get help - call 911, transit help line, emergency call buttons - consistent lack of response and/or timely response.

The lack of cleanliness and basic upkeep of platforms and stops - broken windows, urine, feces, garbage, etc. contributes to feeling unsafe.

Police presence can be a deterrent for disruptive behavior, but it can also be unsettling, given that escalation often occurs; there is a general lack of response. Transit police are too focused on fare violations.



The lack of masks - compliance and enforcement.

Remote and infrequent stops feel unsafe (one woman was stalked and hid behind dumpster)

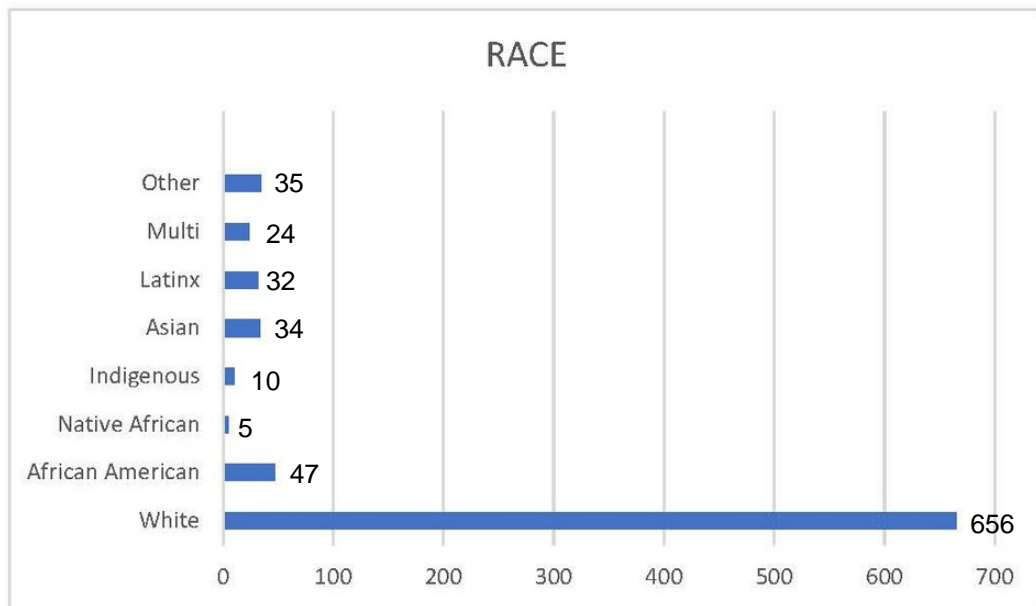
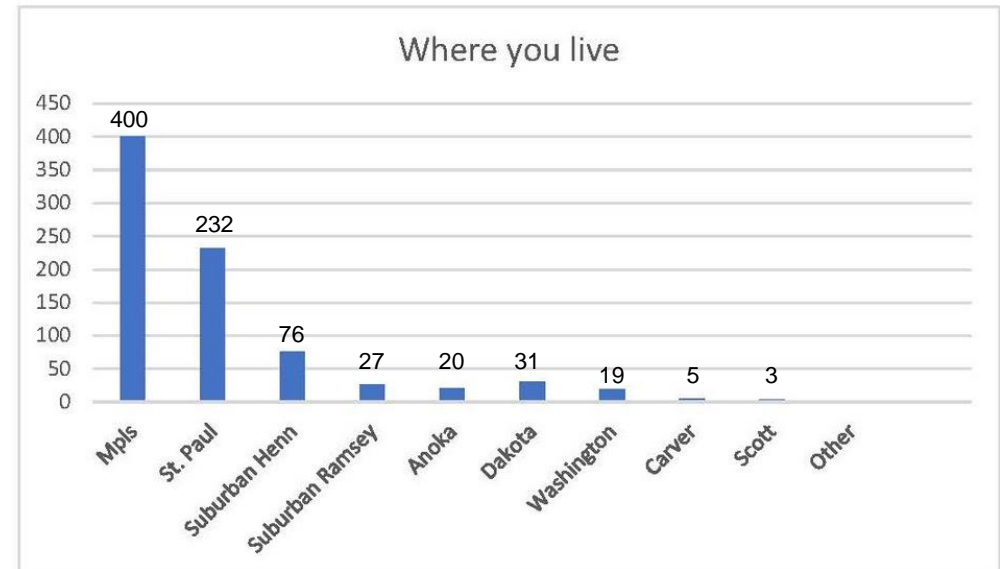
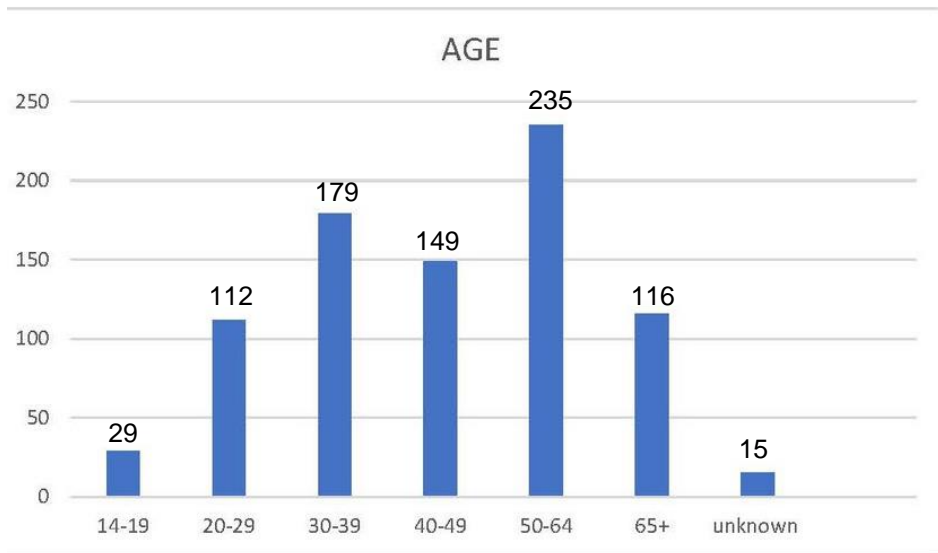
Surveys

782 Surveys have been completed as of 7/13

10 of those were in Spanish
771 in English
1 in Somali



**Survey and outreach efforts are ongoing*

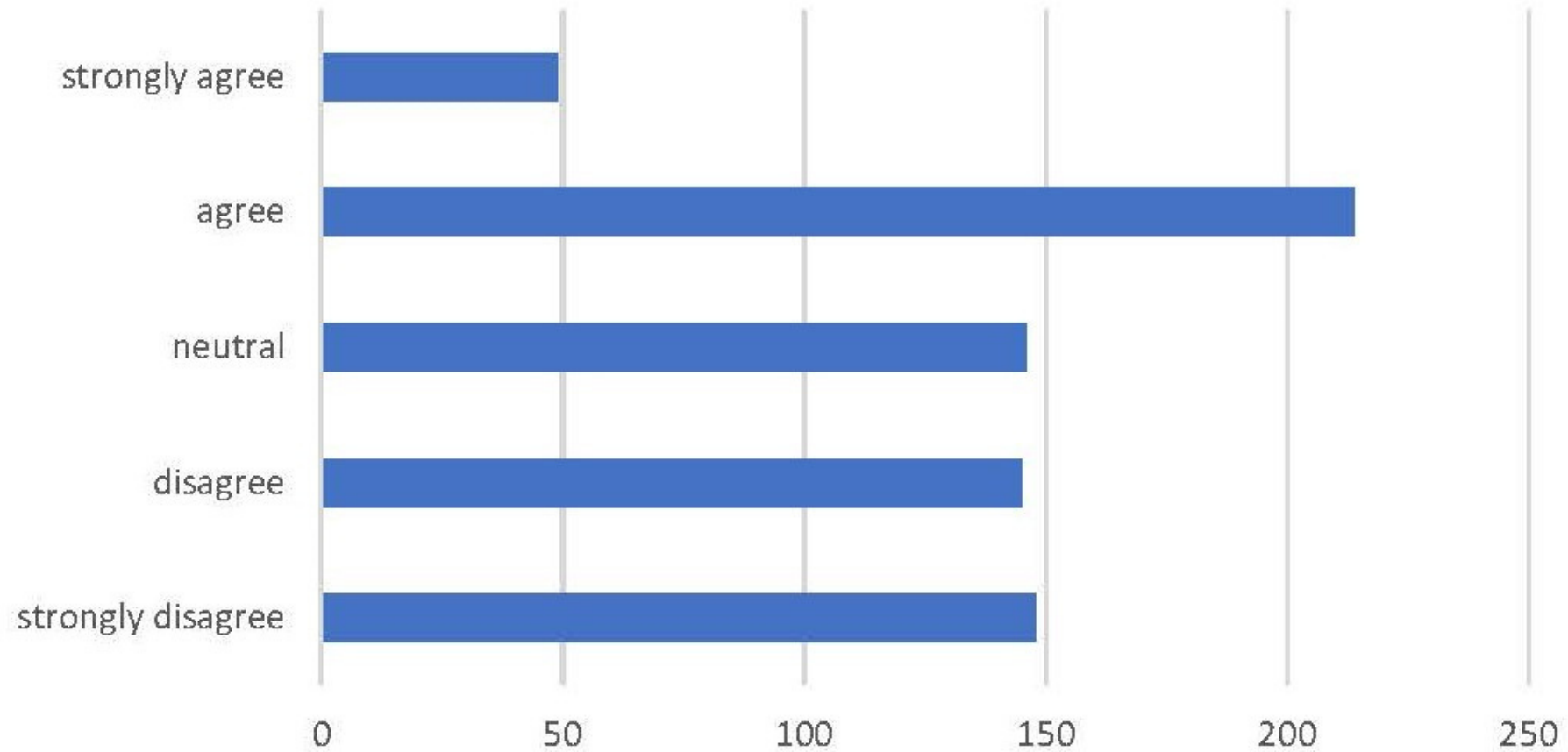


Work, Social activities and School lead as reasons for riding

Rush hours - afternoon and morning lead for times folks are riding.

66% of English survey takers are traveling to Minneapolis, 90% of Spanish survey takers.

I feel safe as a passenger on Metro Transit



Definitions of Safety

“Getting where I need to go without harm.”

“For me and for others - getting to and from where I need to go without getting killed or seriously injured by cars, police, etc.; without threatening future generations via pollution/climate change.”

“Feeling that I don't need to worry about being robbed or injured.”

“Being transported to and from my destination while suffering no mental or physical health consequences.”

“Being able to ride the train without fear or anxiety of being assaulted.”

Overview of Questions and Results

- 28% Agree and 28% Strongly Agree that smoking impacts their sense of safety.
- 43% Agree and 30% Strongly Agree that the cleanliness impacts their sense of safety.
- 34% Agree and 19% Strongly Agree re Emergency Call Buttons increase sense of safety
- 45% Agree and 30% Strongly Agree that additional lighting would increase sense of safety
- 43% Agree and 39% Strongly Agree that the train/bus being on time affects their sense of safety.

Overview of Questions and Results

- 49% Agree and 36% Strongly Agree that the friendliness of the bus driver impacts their sense of safety.
- 20% Agree and 75% Strongly Agree that the behavior of other passengers affects their sense of safety.
- 72% said that safety concerns have impacted when and how often they ride.
- 24% Agreed and 38% Strongly Agreed that they feel safer when police are present
- About half have had a direct experience with Transit Police; 18% Agreed and 29% Strongly Agreed that it made them feel safer.

Overview of Questions and Results

84% indicated they have witnessed the Transit Police interacting with others; as a result 22% Strongly Agreed, 25% Agreed, 23% were Neutral, 15% Disagreed, and 14% Strongly Agreed that it made them feel safer.

Regarding some of the open ended questions about what things could contribute to increased safety, the same themes that surfaced in the forums are here in the survey: better facilities (lights, cleanliness, more shelter, shoveled stops, etc.), timeliness, and talk of unarmed security/ambassadors

Youth Engagement

Community Committee
Outreach to MPS

Outreach to youth serving
organizations

Host Focus Group

One on one Interviews

“We feel so targeted”



Engaging Frontline Transit Employees

- On-site, in-person engagement at with operators, and other frontline staff – maintenance, cleaners, mechanics
- Small-group engagement
- Survey
- Strong participation
 - Nearly 40% of participants identify as people of color.
 - 21% identify as women.

Frontline Employees – Defining Safety

“Doing your work without fear”

“The ability of our employees and riders to be able to travel on our buses and trains safely.”

“To provide a clean and crime free environment for our staff and customers where they feel comfortable and secure.”

Frontline Employees – Defining Safety

“If people don't have to be afraid to be who they are, they are safe. If people can exist in a space without experiencing harm, harassment, or violence, they are safe.”

“An environment free from violence or harassment, or the threat of violence or harassment.”

“Not feeling like I might not make it home each night”

Themes from Frontline Transit Employees

- More prominent presence on vehicles
 - Officers
 - Availability and response time
 - Others (security, staff with authority)
- Demonstrable consequence
 - Enforce policies, rules, expectations
- Recognition of need to offer help, assistance, human-centered response
- Opportunities for better coordination among agencies, local government

Themes from Frontline Employees – Continued

- Concern about creating unwelcome environment for passengers
 - People returning to the system post-pandemic
- Employees feel unsafe
 - Operators feel they are being asked to deal with too much while operating a vehicle. They need greater access to police response/presence
 - Maintenance and facilities employees feel vulnerable, especially when they're alone or at later hours
 - The conditions they are faced with – especially on light rail – makes it a very difficult job
- Employees are anxious, concerned, disengaging

Other Frontline Employee Safety Consideration

- Availability of layover stops
- Barriers
- Cameras
- Sign placement and local conditions
- Awareness around vehicles
- Traffic violations – downtown, busy corridors

Current Context

- Current Moment
- Virtual Environment

Questions?

<https://citizensleague.org/projects/metro-transit-safety-conversation/>



TWIN CITIES INNOVATION ALLIANCE