Metro Transit Police Work Group Update

Committee of the Whole
November 17, 2021
Topics For This Month’s Update

• Overview of topics covered since the October 20 Committee of the Whole update
• Reminder of upcoming work plan items
Topics covered since October update

• Work group met once since the October 20 COW Update
• November 5 meeting focused on employee perspectives
• Topics included:
  – **Overview of recent employee feedback**
    • Frontline employee engagement during Citizens League process
    • Overview of MTPD Employee Survey Results
  – **Employee Panel** comprised of employee representatives from:
    • Metro Transit Safety & Security Committee
    • Metro Transit Equity & Inclusion Team
    • ATU
    • TMSA
    • LELS – Full Time Officers
    • LELS – Supervisors
Overview of recent employee feedback

• Approximately 100 frontline employees were engaged during the Citizens League process. Themes included:
  – More prominent security presence on vehicles and general availability
  – Demonstrable consequence for behaviors on the system
  – Cameras, barriers, other safety features help
  – Concern about creating unwelcome environment for passengers
  – Employees generally feel unsafe and anxious about safety on transit

• Police Work Group commissioned a survey of MTPD employees
  – Survey conducted in mid-October 2021
  – 118 employees (63%) responded
  – 11 questions were repeated from a January 2020 survey to compare 2020 to 2021
  – Also added new, 2021-only questions per Work Group request
  – Shows a decrease in job satisfaction, increased concern there are not enough MTPD staff, and disagreement that referrals and enforcement actions are adequately resolved by other entities
Employee Panel Overview

Employee Panel Participants

- Transit Safety & Security Committee: Rich Miller, Bus Operator
- Metro Transit Equity & Inclusion Team: Andrew Kimbell, Bus operator
- ATU: Leatha Falls, Public Facilities Helper
- TMSA: David Barnhart, TCC Supervisor and Heidi Wrenson, District Supervisor
- LELS – Full Time Officers: Officer Tim Birkholz, FT Police Officer Union President and Officer Frank Hintz
- LELS-Supervisors: Lt. Mario Ruberto

Panel and Work Group Member comments included (not exhaustive list)

- Frontline employees shared significant concerns about their safety and security.
- Employees who require police assistance feel response time is slow, and there is too little presence on the system to effectively support them.
- MTPD officers are leaving for other departments, but most are staying within law enforcement. Work Group requested data on staffing levels (MTPD will present this data during this meeting).
- Current situation is not unique or isolated to Metro Transit; broader systemic issues are operating, and some are further compounded by the pandemic.
- Structures for accountability and leveraging partnerships to address systemic issues are important.
- Panelists offered several ideas for improvements.
Work Plan Overview

**Charge:** Deliver recommended safety outcomes and strategies to the full Council by 2/28/22 and provide monthly COW updates to inform the recommendations.

Work plan is structured in three phases:

- **Phase 1 (8/27-9/15):** Work Group kick-off and initial issue identification
- **Phase 2 (9/23-12/17):** Review existing policies, practices, and procedures and identify potential recommendations
- **Phase 3 (12/31-2/28):** Develop and submit recommendations
Topics discussed to date towards developing recommendations

- Review of Citizens League Final Engagement Report (9/10)
- 21st Century Policing at MTPD – Presentation by Chief Frizell (9/23)
- Other transit agencies’ law enforcement and public safety practices (9/23)
- Experiences and perspectives regarding public safety and police interactions (10/8)
- Reviewed plan to survey MTPD employees (10/8)
- Code of Conduct (10/15)
- Community partnerships and MTPD contracts with community-based organizations, with guests from A Mother’s Love (10/15)
- Homeless Action Team Update (10/15)
- Added since last update: Employee Perspectives (11/5)
Work Plan Overview Continued – Current Plans for Upcoming Meetings

Dates reflect current work plan but will be adjusted as needed

- November 19 – Interactions with youth
- December 3 – Data, governance, and accountability structures
- December 17 – Open forum for individuals and groups to provide comments
- December 31 to February 28 – Developing recommendations

Future COW Updates are scheduled for

- December 15, 2021
- January 19, 2022
- February 16, 2022