

# Metro Transit Safety Conversations

Final summary of results



# Project Scope and Structure

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## Project Scope

- Engage stakeholders (those who have been impacted by the Metro Transit policing system and those who can create impact) in conversations about experiences with the Metro Transit Police Department.
- Learn from stakeholders how they define safety and enforcement.

## 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.

# Engagement Strategies

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- Virtual community forums
- Surveys
- In person and virtual engagement

# Key Themes

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## Perception vs reality of safety

*“People conflate “safety” and “comfort.” People can have an experience where they aren’t threatened, but they are uncomfortable, e.g. being on the train with someone who is drunk”*

# Key Themes

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## Passenger behavior impacts safety

*“Metro Transit is the dumping ground for underfunded safety net/social services”*

# Key Themes

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## More riders lead to a feeling of safety

*“The fact that fewer commuters are taking transit (likely due to more folks choosing to work from home) can make me feel like a target at times. I feel a sense of safety in numbers”*

# Key Themes

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## Safety is more than enforcement

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

# Key Themes

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## The presence of an authority figure leads to a greater sense of safety

*“Replace police with transit workers on trains. It’s weird and aggressive to have police doing a conductor’s job”*

*“As a Black woman, I already don't trust the police and feel totally safe around them. However, as a Black woman who more often than not is traveling alone, I also recognize that I'm as a higher risk to deal with harassment and be a victim of violence. If it comes down to the devil I know or the devil I don't, I'd rather have police present on the platforms because their presence will likely keep people from using drug, fighting, and harassing me which end up being more of a threat to my safety than the police. However, I would not want the police to carry guns and they should be wearing body cameras with them on at all times”*



# Recommendations

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Conduct review of other cities transit systems to understand their best practices, how they're addressing perceptions of safety vs realities of safety, and to learn from jurisdictions that have robust transit systems in place.

# Recommendations

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Continue community engagement efforts.

# Engaging Frontline Transit Employees

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- 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

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“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

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“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

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- 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

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- 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

# Closing & Questions

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



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