

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Metro Transit Police Work Group – Dec. 17, 2021



METROPOLITAN
C O U N C I L

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Comment Overview

This report serves to summarize feedback received in advance of the Dec. 17 meeting of the Metro Transit Police Work Group. The meeting was set aside as an opportunity for anyone to offer their feedback about transit safety and related topics under consideration by the committee.

The comments included were submitted ahead of the meeting by members of the public and employees. Individuals chose this option rather than speaking before the work group members at the meeting.

The table below summarizes the comments received; the contents of each comment are on the following pages.

Date	Format	Last name	First name	Organization represented
11/30/2021	Email	Draz	Keith	
12/10/2021	Email	von Dohlen	Clara	
12/16/2021	Email	Foster	Amity	

Comments in full:

Keith Draz (via email)

Please don't dismiss my admiration for Metro Transit Police officers. They do a great job when called upon. However, their does not seem to be a coordinated safety plan to make train travel safe and pleasurable, in both Minneapolis and St.Paul. I am a retired St. Paul Police Officer.

For the last four years, I have worked as a Security officer for the Minnesota Twins.

I have taken both the Green line and Blue line, to and from the Twins stadium multiple times over this four year period. I have personally felt, the quality of service and the perception of safety, is moving in the wrong direction.

Not only do many Twins employees depend on the trains for game day transportation, many hometown baseball fans, out state fans and fans visiting the Twin cities from across the country, use our Metro trains for transportation.

Based on my observation and comment's I hear while riding the trains, many people do not feel safe using our Blue and Green line trains.

These are things that contribute to that negative experience.

1: Poor interior train maintenance.

* Vomit, trash, spilled alcohol and alcohol containers, cigarette smoke, paraphernalia, bad odor etc...

2: Enforcement of rules inside trains and outside on train decks.

* Free-riding, Loitering, Rowdy behavior, Noise, Smoking, Drug use and Solicitation are common.

*Passed out, sleeping, and non paying riders are common. Many homeless and others with mental health challenges, depend on the trains for shelter and warmth.

3. Not nearly enough Law Enforcement officers riding the trains or patrolling platforms.

*Visibility and Enforcement: Not enough uniformed officers , who are visibly removing bad actors, enforcing rules, laws, etc... *How often are plainclothes officers being used?

* Communication between Train personnel and Police. Is it happening? Response times? Do train personnel feel safe?

4. Improving public perception.

* Many Twins employees who ride the trains, (many are senior citizens) witness every day, that both the Green and Blue lines have problems. Some employees have quit their jobs or refuse to work evening games, because they are afraid to ride the trains.

* Include employer's in your comprehensive planning.

5. Minneapolis does a nice job of employing people to keep the downtown streets clean (Green Team?) and those people work firsthand at being ambassadors of goodwill and welcome to those visiting, working and living downtown.

*Use the same strategy on the trains. Uniformed, visible ambassadors who work to keep the trains safe, clean and welcoming. This will allow for the Metro Transit Police to concentrate on problem people and problems that require a swift police response when needed.

Thanks for listening....

Clara von Dohlen (via email)

Hello,

I am emailing to submit my comments to the Metro Transit Police Work Group.

1. It is essential that no metro transit police have lethal weapons, particularly guns. It is apparent that no matter how much sensitivity/ally training police officers have, implicit bias and racial fear win out when weighing the lives of our black and brown community members. Immediately strip metro police officers of any lethal weapons, particularly guns.

2. Change "Confer with the Equity Advisory Committee and the BIPOC work group as appropriate throughout the process of reviewing Metro Transit Police Department and developing recommendations" to ALWAYS and not "as appropriate" because policing is/has been ALWAYS about controlling black and brown bodies through violence and any work pertaining to policing - particularly on transit which is often especially used by black and brown community members as their only transit method - should always involve equity advisors and BIPOC working groups.

Stop allowing police brutality to be forced upon our community.

Amity Foster (via email)

I am mostly transit reliant; and have been so for the 20 years I have lived in Minneapolis. I have never had a direct interaction with transit police, but I have definitely seen them interact with other riders; and it's usually checking fares, or sitting in their cars watching the light rail stop on Nicollet. I see them in surveillance roles, not providing safety; just watching.

In so many places, we are hearing that police do not make communities safe. They respond to calls after something has happened, or target specific riders, but don't provide an overall sense of safety. That can be provided by other measures--increasing transit service, heated and well-lit shelters, lower fares (or fare-free), the presence of unarmed ambassadors or helpers at transit stops. A lot of safety comes from an authority figure being on the buses or trains, one who can help de-escalate sticky situations, AND also answer questions about the system: how do I get from this bus to this location, how do I pay, how do I use the system? My experience with transit police, when I've asked them those types of questions, they give short answers or, honestly, don't know the answers.

Some concerns about safety on transit can be addressed by that ambassador presence--stopping smoking on trains, wearing headphones, disrupting harassment, keeping transit clean. We do not need police officers to do this. We do not need CSOs who are police in training, who have access to tasers or chemical irritants.

I'll end with this--transit is a community. We deserve safety, and that safety should be provided with dignity. Again, in my experiences with transit police, they are focused on resolving a situation with speed and the focus on removing all involved from the train or bus, or stop, and dignity is lost in that. We can do better as a transit system.

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