

Committee Report

Transportation Committee



Committee Meeting Date: November 27, 2023

For the Metropolitan Council: December 13, 2023

Business Item: 2023-284

Metro Transit Code of Conduct

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council adopt a Code of Conduct for public transit use to comply with the 2023 Legislature's mandate in the Transit Rider Activity Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct allows authorized transit representatives to order a person to depart transit property for violations if the person continues to violate the Code of Conduct after being warned once to stop.

The proposed Code of Conduct:

Required:

- Pay your fare
- Wear tops, bottoms, shoes
- One fare = one seat
- Animals must be in a carrier (exception: service animals)
- Drinks must be covered

Not Allowed:

- Sexual or discriminatory harassment
- Phone calls or music played on speaker
- Vulgar language
- Eating
- Soliciting/gambling/panhandling/loitering
- Prohibited Items: flammable, explosive, radioactive, and hazardous items. This includes anything gas-powered, car or motorcycle batteries, and gasoline/fuel containers
- Large items that block the aisle
- Riding bikes, skating, or skateboarding

Riders will be informed that violations of the Code of Conduct can lead to removal from transit property. For ease of use to transit riders, the written materials may be written in plain language or translated into other languages.

Summary of Transportation Committee Discussion/Questions

Metro Transit Customer Relations and Experience Manager Pam Steffan presented this item. Dolkar asked if we collected income data when asked questions and if racial equity and age were collected also. Steffan responded that income was a question and that the information on racial

equity and age can be provided. Vento suggested that when we get to the signage, website, and other communication tools to put language encouraging riders to report code of conduct violations. Dolkar asked if some of the signage would be in braille. Steffen stated that hasn't been talked about but is a great suggestion that will be included in discussions. Chair Barber asked what the policy is as it relates to e-bikes. Steffen stated that we just recently updated that policy to allow e-bikes on the front of our buses, but they do need to be under 55 lbs. Metro Transit Deputy General Manager/Chief Operating Officer Brian Funk added that we are currently testing a new style of bike rack on buses that will allow fat bikes.

Motion by Vento, seconded by Morales. Motion carried.



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District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: Minn. Stat. § 473.4065, Subdivision 1

Staff Prepared/Presented: Lesley Kandaras, General Manager, 612-349-751
Sophia Ginis, Director Community Affairs, 612-373-3853
Pam Steffen, Manager, Customer Relations & Experience

Division/Department: Metro Transit – Administration – Community Relations

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Background

Prior to the 2023 Legislature’s directive to establish and adopt a Code of Conduct, a Metro Transit cross divisional team started refreshing the existing Code of Conduct in October 2022. This initiative is part of Metro Transit’s Safety & Security Action Plan, action item #1.4. The activities to refresh the Code of Conduct include:

- **Discovery:** Identify and document all existing signage and communications relating to code of conduct. Research similar efforts at other transit agencies.
- **Approach:** Create a matrix of existing code of conduct policies, rules and laws. Meet with internal stakeholders to evaluate and gather feedback. Implement outreach and engagement to customers and document priorities.
- **Design:** Create internal and external communications plan, as well as training for internal staff on enforcement.
- **Implementation:** Launch all communications and marketing materials.

From November 2022 through July 2023 project staff performed outreach and engagement to Metropolitan Council employees as well as our customers. The legislation required that the process include solicitation and consideration of public comments on conduct requirements and the rider’s experience. Over 2,000 customers were surveyed in-person at light rail, bus rapid transit and fixed route stations, social media and in newsletters. Staff also attended bus operator mentor workshops, Transit Safety & Security Committee, Equity Advisory Committee, and employee facility visits. Those responses helped shape the Code of Conduct. Employees and customers discussed the top items of concern, Employees and customers discussed the top items of concern, which included both illegal and legal activities. The Code of Conduct proposal above includes only the top items of concern that are legal conduct. Illegal activities are addressed separately as discussed below.

Legislation passed in 2023 directed the Metropolitan Council to adopt a code of conduct for transit passengers. The legislation required the Council to:

1. Post the code in prominent locations at each light rail station, bus rapid transit station, and transit center.
2. Ensure the code does not prohibit sleeping in a manner that does not otherwise violate conduct requirements.
3. Perform a stakeholder engagement process before adoption of the rider code of conduct or revision that includes, at a minimum, solicitation and consideration of public comments on conduct requirements and the rider experience.

Under the 2023 legislation, any authorized transit representative may order a person to depart a transit vehicle for violating the Code of Conduct, but only if the person continues to act in violation after being warned once to stop. Metro Transit is developing operational procedures to define “authorized transit representative.”

In addition to the Code of Conduct, Metro Transit will also advise transit riders of Rules on Transit that identifies illegal behavior. The following list includes those illegal behaviors that employees and staff identified as most concerning.

- Interfering with operator/movement of vehicle (includes holding doors)
- Disorderly conduct



- Threatening or spitting on others
- Smoking/vaping or illegal drug use
- Drinking alcohol
- Sexual assault
- Urination or Defecation
- Vandalizing or littering
- Walking on tracks/trespassing

Rationale

State law requires the Metropolitan Council to adopt a rider Code of Conduct.

Thrive Lens Analysis

This action supports the following Thrive Outcomes:

- Providing for economic vitality by creating a safer transit system that connects residents and visitors to their employment, schools, medical and social services, special events in the downtown cores and other activities.
- Equity: a Code of Conduct helps maintain positive rider experiences on our vehicles and facilities which provides benefits to riders of all races, ethnicities, economic means, and abilities.

Funding

Funding is provided by Metro Transit's Council authorized operating budget.

Small Business Inclusion

There are no direct impacts to small businesses with this action.

