



Transit agency responses and trends addressing societal complexity on transit

Presentation to the TTC Board

April 16, 2025

Purpose

This presentation will discuss current safety trends and their impact on transit systems, as well as how peer transit agencies are addressing societal complexities. **Although safety issues are generally decreasing in frequency, many are becoming more complex to resolve.**

Insights on Transit Safety Trends

Levels of perceived safety do not fully correlate with levels of actual safety

- The percentage of riders feeling unsafe on transit increased since the start of the pandemic, even though the number of safety incidents has decreased in some cities.

Drug use is a heighten area of concern on public transit.

- Visibility of drug use on transit vehicles has increased since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

More staff has resulted in safety improvements.

- Increased deployment of law enforcement, front-line customer service staff and outreach workers, has supported in improvements to transit safety.

Calls for service have increased.

- The number and frequency of calls for service related to safety have trended upwards over the past several years.

Sample of Publicly Available Transit Safety Data

	TransLink	Calgary Transit	Edmonton Transit Service	Toronto Transit Commission
Offences Against Passengers	Per-Capita & Total Yearly	Total Monthly (for LRT)	<i>n/a</i>	Per-Capita & Total Quarterly
Offences Against Employees	Per-Capita & Total Yearly (for Buses)	Assaults Quarterly	<i>n/a</i>	Per-Capita & Total Quarterly
Offences Against Property	Per-Capita & Total Yearly	Total Quarterly	<i>n/a</i>	Total Yearly
Emergency Calls	<i>n/a</i>	Total Yearly (for LRT)	Total Monthly	Total Yearly
Check on Welfare	<i>n/a</i>	Total Quarterly	Total Monthly	Total Monthly
Overdoses	Total Yearly (naloxone deployments) by Transit Police	Total Quarterly	<i>n/a</i>	Total Yearly
Crime Severity	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	Quarterly	<i>n/a</i>

Canadian Urban Transit Association – Prioritizing Safety on Public Transit Recommendations: Focus Areas

Customer and Staff Safety	Housing and Supports	Substance Use	Mental Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transit safety plans• Resourcing• Communications and technology• Infrastructure• Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using transit as shelter space• Connection to the housing crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Substance use in transit facilities• Connection to the opioid crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partnership models with service providers and health care providers.

Source: [Canadian Urban Transit Association \(2023\)](#)

What Are Other Agencies Doing?

Safety Initiative	Peer Agency Examples
1. Implementing Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) changes to stations and facilities.	Calgary Transit, Los Angeles Metro, RTD (Denver), STM (Montréal), TransLink
2. Improving cleanliness at stations and facilities.	Los Angeles Metro, SEPTA (Philadelphia), TransLink
3. Deploying additional law enforcement staff .	Calgary Transit, ETS (Edmonton), MTA (New York City), RTD, SEPTA
4. Deploying additional front line customer service staff (e.g. customer service agents/ambassadors) to assist riders and to increase visibility	BART (San Francisco), Los Angeles Metro, RTD, STM
5. Deploying outreach staff to assist vulnerable individuals and connect them to resources for housing, mental health, and drug use.	CTA (Chicago), SEPTA, TriMet (Portland)
6. Fostering partnerships with city agencies and non-profit organizations to deliver services for vulnerable individuals.	CTA, SEPTA, ETS, Calgary Transit
7. Funding temporary shelter beds for individuals sheltering on the transit system.	Los Angeles Metro, SEPTA
8. Reviewing codes of conduct and bylaws.	Calgary Transit, Los Angeles Metro
9. Updated camera surveillance systems	RTD

CPTED & Station Cleanliness



Crowd control barriers at LA Metro station.

Source: LA Metro



Cleaning efforts at SEPTA station in Philadelphia.

Source: SEPTA



Temporarily closed second entrance to STM Atwater Metro Station in Montréal.

Source: [Magder \(2024\)](#)

Additional front line staffing resources



Calgary Police Service officer and Transit Peace Officer.

Source: [Herring \(2022\)](#)



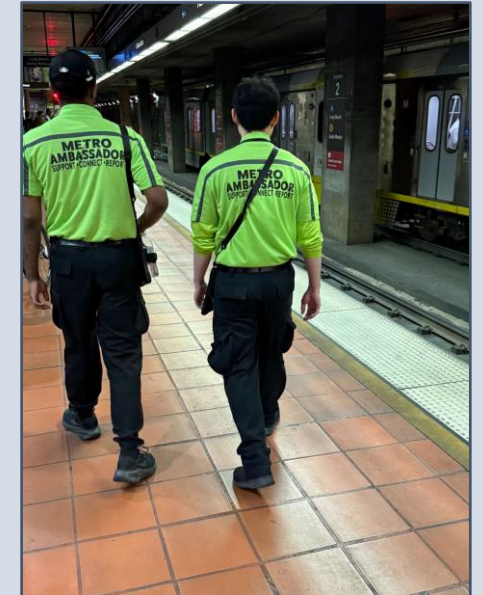
Edmonton Transit Peace Officer.

Source: [City of Edmonton \(n.d.\)](#)



BART Crisis Intervention Specialists.

Source: [Bay Area Rapid Transit \(n.d.\)](#)



LA Metro Ambassadors.

Source: David Cooper

Transit System Specific Outreach Programs



ETS Community Outreach Transit Team.

Source: [City of Edmonton \(n.d.\)](#)



Outreach worker entering CTA train.

Source: CTA



Calgary Transit Community Outreach Team.

Source: [City of Calgary \(2023\)](#)

Code of Conduct

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Please report any issues through the *Transit Watch* app.

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- > Call 888.950.SAFE (7233)
- > Text 213.788.2777
- > Call 911 in an emergency

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Metro no tolera fumar ni uso de drogas ilegales en nuestro sistema.

Si ve algo, diga algo.
Por favor reporte cualquier problema a través de la aplicación *Transit Watch*.

Conéctese con la seguridad de Metro 24/7:

- > Llame al 888.950.7233
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- > Llame al 911 en una emergencia

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Advert discussing how drug use is prohibited use on Los Angeles Metro.

Source: LA Metro

External Partnerships on Transit Property



Sign for Hub of Hope, a drop-in centre within a Philadelphia transit station.

Source: David Cooper

Overall observations from across the transit sector

Expanding Responsibilities of Transit Agencies

Transit agencies are experiencing mission creep as they take on complex public health and outreach responsibilities beyond their original scope, adding operational burdens, complexity, and costs.

Limitations in Data

Many agencies operate without well-defined goals, leading to decentralized and fragmented data that complicates strategy integration and outcome measurement.

Balancing Harm Reduction and Safety

A tension exists between harm reduction practices and the need to maintain safety on transit systems for employees and customers. Key areas of concern include Naloxone administration, sharps disposal, and allowing outreach services to use transit stations as intervention hubs.

Challenges from across the transit sector

- **Navigating Complex Partnerships:** Transit agencies face challenges in addressing homelessness, substance use, and mental health by engaging with new external parties, requiring them to operate in new domains with complex governance structures, evolving roles and limited resources.
- **Hesitancy to advocate on societal topics and public policy issues impacting customers and staff** outside of the core domain of public transit.
- **Information sharing and communications** between the transit agencies, outreach providers, law enforcement and referring support organizations is an area for improvement for day-to-day operational support and resource referrals.
- There is a **low voluntary uptake of offered support services** due to the mismatch between the services provided and individual needs, as well as gaps in the availability of longer-term housing, mental health, and drug treatment programs.
- **Impacts to front line staff and contractors particularly on psychological health** is an area for further analysis.

Opportunities for the transit sector

- **Developing a universal operational policy for Naloxone** deployment will save lives.
- Communicating roles in multidisciplinary enforcement and outreach programs can **enhance customer and staff awareness** of transit agencies' responses.
- **Physical design changes** to stations can be effective in increasing transit safety but can also have a potential tension with customer experience.
- **Integrating insights both data and front-line staff is vital to build the case for expertise, staffing resources and funding support.**

Questions?