



King County

1200 King County
Courthouse
516 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Meeting Agenda Committee of the Whole

Claudia Balducci, Chair;
Jorge Barón, Vice Chair;
Rod Dembowski, Reagan Dunn, Teresa Mosqueda, Sarah Perry,
Dave Upthegrove, Pete von Reichbauer, Girmay Zahilay

Lead Staff: Andy Micklow (206-263-3226)
Committee Clerk: Blake Wells (206-263-1617)

9:00 AM

Monday, January 13, 2025

Hybrid Meeting

SPECIAL MEETING

Hybrid Meetings: Attend the King County Council committee meetings in person in Council Chambers (Room 1001), 516 3rd Avenue in Seattle, or through remote access. Details on how to attend and/or to provide comment remotely are listed below.

Pursuant to K.C.C. 1.24.035 A. and F., this meeting is also noticed as a meeting of the Metropolitan King County Council, whose agenda is limited to the committee business. In this meeting only the rules and procedures applicable to committees apply and not those applicable to full council meetings.

HOW TO PROVIDE PUBLIC COMMENT: The Committee of the Whole values community input and looks forward to hearing from you on agenda items.

There are three ways to provide public comment:

1. In person: You may attend the meeting and provide comment in the Council Chambers.
2. By email: You may comment in writing on current agenda items by submitting your email comments to kcccomitt@kingcounty.gov. If your email is received before 8:00 a.m. on the day of the meeting, your email comments will be distributed to the committee members and appropriate staff prior to the meeting.
3. Remote attendance at the meeting by phone or computer: You may provide oral comment on current agenda items during the meeting's public comment period by connecting to the meeting via phone or computer using the ZOOM application at <https://zoom.us/join>, and entering the webinar ID number below.

	<p>Sign language and interpreter services can be arranged given sufficient notice (206-848-0355). TTY Number - TTY 711.</p> <p>Council Chambers is equipped with a hearing loop, which provides a wireless signal that is picked up by a hearing aid when it is set to 'T' (Telecoil) setting.</p>	
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You are not required to sign up in advance. Comments are limited to current agenda items.

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Webinar Meeting ID: 853 1323 8538

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HOW TO WATCH/LISTEN TO THE MEETING REMOTELY: There are several ways to watch or listen in to the meeting:

- 1) Stream online via this link: www.kingcounty.gov/kctv, or input the link web address into your web browser.
- 2) Watch King County TV Comcast Channel 22 and 322(HD), Astound Broadband Channels 22 and 711(HD).
- 3) Listen to the meeting by telephone – See “Connecting to the Webinar” above.

To help us manage the meeting, if you do not wish to be called upon for public comment please use the Livestream or King County TV options listed above, if possible, to watch or listen to the meeting.

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

To show a PDF of the written materials for an agenda item, click on the agenda item below.



3. Public Comment

Briefings

4. [Briefing No. 2025-B0006](#) p. 4

Staff Briefing on Transit Safety and Security Activities

Mary Bourguignon, Council staff

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5. [Briefing No. 2025-B0007](#) p. 10

Panel Report on Findings and Progress on Transit Safety and Security

Michelle Allison, General Manager, King County Metro

Patti Cole-Tindall, Sheriff, King County Sheriff's Office

Kelly Rider, Director, King County Department of Community and Human Services

Greg Woodfill, President, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 587

Russ Arnold, Deputy CEO (Chief Service Delivery Officer), Sound Transit

Adjournment



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King County

**Metropolitan King County Council
Committee of the Whole**

STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item:	4	Name:	Mary Bourguignon
Proposed No.:	2025-B0006	Date:	January 13, 2025

SUBJECT

This staff report provides an overview of Metro Transit’s security functions, as prelude to a panel discussion on transit safety and security.

SUMMARY

The King County Metro Transit Department (Metro) is the largest provider of public transit in the Puget Sound region. Metro uses a “care and presence” public safety model that includes traditional public safety functions, as well as behavioral health support and community engagement, including:

- **Metro Transit Police (MTP).** MTP is a division of the King County Sheriff’s Office (KCSO) contracted to Metro. MTP deputies patrol Metro services and undertake and support criminal investigations related to transit.
- **Transit security officers.** Metro contracts with a private provider for 160 transit security officers (TSOs), whose role is to deter incidents, monitor activities, address behavioral issues, and assist Metro’s passengers and employees with questions and safety concerns.
- **Fare enforcement.** Metro had previously conducted fare inspections on bus routes, such as RapidRide, that offer off-board payment. Fare enforcement was suspended during the pandemic, but is planned to resume beginning March 31, 2025, with full fare inspections beginning May 31, 2025.
- **SaFE Reform Initiative.** Over the last several years, Metro has implemented a Safety, Security, and Fare Enforcement (SaFE) Reform Initiative to provide support for people in need on buses and at transit centers and to coordinate with community members on transit security.

Metro’s safety and security functions are coordinated with local jurisdictions, as Metro’s authority is limited to its buses, bus stops, transit centers, and bases. Metro also coordinates with Sound Transit on transit security, because, although Metro operates Sound Transit’s Link light rail and express bus routes under contract, Sound Transit is responsible for providing its own security and fare enforcement on its services.

BACKGROUND

Transit safety and security oversight. Transit safety is generally understood to be about preventing unintentional harm on transit, with a focus on problems such as vehicle malfunctions or collisions.¹ Transit security is generally understood to be about preventing intentional harm on transit, with a focus on problems such as disturbances or assaults.²

Metro's actions related to transit safety and security are regulated by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and overseen by the Council.

At the federal level, the FTA requires each transit agency to develop and regularly update a Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP),³ which must include safety performance targets, data on safety and security incidents, mitigation plans, and an agency Safety Management System. In addition, transit agencies must report safety and security incidents to the FTA through the National Transit Database (NTD).^{4,5}

At the local level, the Council exercises its oversight authority through its review and approval of Metro's budget and adopted policies, as well as through ongoing updates and briefings. In recent years, Council oversight has included:

- **Review of Metro's federally required safety and security reporting.** Metro's Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans (PTASPs) must be approved by the Council by motion before they can be submitted to the FTA. The most recent PTASP was approved by the Council in 2024.⁶
- **Budget support for transit security.** As part of the 2023-2024 and 2025 budgets, the Council appropriated funding to support increased transit security, in part by doubling the number of contracted transit security officers (TSOs) from 70 in 2022 to 140 in 2023-2024⁷ and to 160 through 2025.⁸ The adopted 2023-2024 and 2025 budgets also included funding for additional bus and bus stop cleaning, behavioral health workers stationed in areas of concern, transit Ambassadors in local communities, and social services support for people in need on buses or at transit centers.
- **Requests for targeted changes and improvements.** Council budget provisos in each of the most recent adopted budgets have asked Metro to revise, refocus, and report on its actions to improve transit safety and security. A proviso in the

¹ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, Handbook for Transit Safety and Security Certification, Final Report, November 2022 ([link](#))

² U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, Enhanced Transit Safety and Crime Prevention Initiative ([link](#))

³ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans ([link](#))

⁴ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, 2024 NTD Safety and Security Reporting Policy Manual ([link](#))

⁵ U.S. Department of Transportation, The National Transit Database (NTD) ([link](#))

⁶ Motion 16618

⁷ Ordinance 19546

⁸ Ordinance 19861

2021-2022 budget⁹ led to the development of the Safety, Security, and Fare Enforcement (SaFE) Reform Initiative, which is discussed below. A proviso in the 2023-2024 budget¹⁰ led to a community engagement and outreach effort focused on improved transit security in geographic areas of concern, as well as the creation of Metro’s Safety Emphasis Coordination Team, also both discussed below. A proviso in the 2025 budget requires Metro to brief the Regional Transit Committee (RTC) or the Transportation, Economy, and Environment (TrEE) Committee on transit safety and security improvements by April 30, 2025.¹¹

- **Safety-focused restructure.** In 2024, the Council approved¹² the creation of the new Safety, Security, and Quality Assurance Division within Metro, the functions of which include managing safety and security administration and emergency management activities for the traveling public and Metro employees, as well as maintaining regulatory compliance activities. The functions in this new division were previously housed under the General Manager’s office. According to Metro staff at the time, placing these functions within their own division was expected to create the structure necessary to support the increased safety and security programs required under federal regulations, as well as the expanded transit safety and security work being carried out by this group.
- **Performance tracking.** The Council and RTC included customer safety satisfaction, number of assaults and disturbances, and number of preventable collisions as transit safety and security metrics in the 2021 update to the Strategic Plan for Public Transportation.¹³ Performance on these metrics is tracked on Metro’s online Strategic Plan dashboard.¹⁴
- **Ongoing oversight and review.** The Council has requested and received regular reporting on transit safety and security from Metro leadership over the last several years at the RTC, TrEE Committee, Law and Justice Committee, and Committee of the Whole.

Metro transit security functions. Metro uses a “care and presence”¹⁵ public safety model that includes traditional public safety functions, as well as behavioral health support and community engagement, including:

- **Metro Transit Police (MTP).** MTP is a division of the King County Sheriff’s Office (KCSO)¹⁶ under contract to Metro¹⁷ that enforces the Transit Code of Conduct.¹⁸ MTP focuses its efforts on Metro services in Seattle, South King

⁹ Ordinance 19120, Section 113, Proviso 5, as amended by Ordinance 19364, Section 86, Proviso P5 and Motion 16128

¹⁰ Ordinance 19546, Section 114, Proviso P2 and Motion 16647

¹¹ Ordinance 19861, Section 115, Proviso P6

¹² Ordinance 19741

¹³ Ordinance 19367

¹⁴ King County Metro Strategic Plan Dashboard ([link](#))

¹⁵ A Metro document describing its “care and presence” transit safety model can be found [here](#)

¹⁶ Members of the MTP are commissioned police officers.

¹⁷ Motion 11711 approved Transit Security Policies that included guidance on the staffing model for the Metro Transit Police. The MTP contract is funded by Metro’s budget, not by the General Fund.

¹⁸ KCC 28.96

County, North King County, and parts of unincorporated King County.¹⁹ It does not currently patrol the Water Taxi, Access, Metro Flex, or Seattle Streetcar.

MTP staff patrol buses, routes, bus shelters, and park and ride lots, as well as Seattle's central business district; undertake and support criminal investigations; provide anti-terrorism services; coordinate with schools in response to issues with students using Metro; and manage community-based programs such as the Operator Assault Program and Sexual Misconduct Reduction Program.

As of January 2025, Metro states that 65 of 79 budgeted MTP positions are filled. Open patrol shifts are backfilled with available staff on overtime.

- **Transit security officers.** Metro contracts with a private provider for contracted transit security officers (TSOs), who work to deter incidents, monitor activities, address behavioral issues, and assist customers and operators with questions and safety concerns. TSOs provide on-coach security on routes and in areas with the highest reported security incidents, as well as terminal (last stop) security at locations of concern. They also provide outreach support to individuals within a three-block radius of the terminal.

As part of the 2023-2024 biennial budget, the Executive proposed and the Council approved funding to double the number of contracted TSOs from 70 to 140.²⁰ Metro then used salary savings to increase the number to approximately 160. The adopted 2025 budget includes appropriation authority to maintain this level of additional TSOs, as well as to provide for additional bus and bus stop cleaning and to expand behavioral health support at Metro transit centers.²¹

As of Fall 2024, Metro indicated that these TSOs will continue to ride bus routes with the highest rates of security incidents (currently Routes 7, 36, A, C, D, E, F, and H). In addition, TSOs will continue to be stationed at the Aurora Village and Burien Transit Centers and will continue to provide support at overnight bus terminals.

- **Fare enforcement.** Metro had previously conducted fare inspections on bus routes, such as RapidRide, that offer off-board payment, but suspended fare enforcement during the pandemic. Fare inspections are planned to resume beginning March 31, 2025, with full fare inspections beginning May 31, 2025.²² Under the fare inspection system, riders receiving a third warning may be required to pay a fine, enroll in a reduced fare program (if eligible), or perform community service.

¹⁹ Metro reports that MTP maintains a small presence in incorporated East King County area when extreme circumstances are present. When calls come into 911 to report a crime on transit property, local police departments often take the lead on responding as they are better positioned to be the first to arrive.

²⁰ Ordinance 19546

²¹ The 2025 budget (Ordinance 19861) includes \$4.7M for additional bus stop and bus cleaning; \$11.8M to sustain extra 100 transit security officers from 2023-2024; and \$4.7M to expand behavioral health and Metro Ambassadors programs to provide support and assistance.

²² King County Metro, Metro Matters, King County Metro to resume fare inspection in March 2025, January 6, 2025 ([link](#))

- **SaFE Reform Initiative.** As part of the 2021-2022 biennial budget, the Council included a proviso that recognized “the vital importance of reimagining and reforming safety and security functions” within Metro.²³ The implementation report²⁴ for this effort, which Metro named the Safety, Security, and Fare Enforcement (SaFE) Reform Initiative, noted that Metro’s SaFE Reform Initiative priorities include:
 - Increasing presence in and around transit hubs
 - Providing timely and appropriate response realized in a way that is genuinely equitable for all transit riders
 - Prioritizing community voices
 - Providing spaces for intentional partnerships that directly impact and improve transit
 - Allowing community to take ownership of current and future safety-related Metro pilot programs to improve customer transit experience²⁵

Metro has implemented several strategies that were identified as part of the SaFE Reform Initiative. These include:

- **Transit Ambassadors.** Metro established a group of transit Ambassadors, who are bus operators on light duty service, who are stationed throughout Seattle and South King County, as well as at special events, to provide information and assistance to transit riders, including in-language assistance in more than 140 languages.²⁶

As of Fall 2024, Metro reported that it had 10 Ambassadors working with the program and anticipated that the number of light duty bus operators working as Ambassadors would remain steady during 2025, at between 12 and 15. The 2025 adopted budget²⁷ includes funding for 14 short-term temporary Ambassadors and two Lead Ambassadors. As proposed, the Ambassadors would continue to focus on Jackson/23rd, Lower Queen Anne/Belltown, Mt. Baker/Columbia City, and Skyway/Renton. In addition, in partnership with the City of Seattle, Ambassadors may expand to other locations, such as the University District and UW Husky Stadium, Second Avenue, Rainier Beach, and the Seattle Waterfront.

- **Behavioral health team.** Metro coordinated with King County’s Department of Community & Human Services (DCHS) to establish a team of behavioral health specialists, who are stationed at Burien Transit Center. As of Spring 2024, Metro reported that team members had made 4,504 contacts with people in need of help and made 213 referrals for housing assistance.²⁸

²³ Ordinance 19120, Section 113, Proviso 5, as amended by Ordinance 19364, Section 86, Proviso P5

²⁴ Motion 16128

²⁵ Proposed Motion 2024-0210, Attachment A, Page 8

²⁶ 2024-B0050

²⁷ Ordinance 19861

²⁸ 2024-B0050

The 2025 budget includes funding to expand the program, with the proposal that the four current employees of the program will work in teams at the Burien Transit Center (Mondays to Fridays, 9:00 am-3:00 pm; Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 5:00-11:00 pm) and will also ride the RapidRide C, D, and E Lines with TSOs (Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, from 5:00-11:00 pm).

As part of the SaFE Reform Initiative, Metro also engaged with community members and local businesses in affected areas, focusing on the Aurora Village and Burien transit centers, Chinatown/International District and Little Saigon, Third Avenue in Downtown Seattle, 23rd Avenue South & South Jackson Street, and Skyway-West Hill. Metro reported on this outreach effort in 2024,²⁹ providing information on system-wide and area-specific security incidents over the last several years and outlining planned safety and cleanliness interventions for each of the geographic areas involved.

As noted above, this effort also led to the development of Metro's Safety Emphasis Coordination Team. Metro states that this team provides cross-divisional coordination and collaborates with local jurisdictions and other organizations to more efficiently deploy resources to improve transit safety across the region. Metro states that the coordinated effort allows it to better address physical conditions and the built environment of transit areas, provide appropriate forms of presence to improve safety and resolve security incidents in the system, and have accessible public health and human and social service options available when and where they are needed.

Coordination with other agencies and jurisdictions. Metro's security functions are coordinated with those of local jurisdictions, as Metro's authority is limited to its buses, bus stops, transit centers, and bases. Metro also coordinates with Sound Transit, because, although Metro operates Sound Transit's Link light rail and express bus routes under contract, Sound Transit is responsible for providing its own security and fare enforcement on its services.

Next steps. Today's panelists will provide more information about transit security, as well as the steps that are being taken or have been proposed to enhance safety for Metro employees, riders, and community members. These next steps, which will be discussed by the panelists, include support for overtime for TSOs on night-time service, support for overtime for MTP officers to increase presence and work on law enforcement on transit, and a planned increase in the budgeted number of MTP positions covered by Metro's contract with the KCSO.

²⁹ Motion 16647



King County

Committee of the Whole

January 13, 2025

**Agenda Item No. 5
Briefing No. 2025-B0007**

**Panel Report on Findings and Progress on Transit
Safety and Security**

**Any materials for this item will be available at the
meeting.**