



# OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

HALL OF JUSTICE

ALEX VILLANUEVA, SHERIFF



November 9, 2021

Chair Hilda L. Solis  
Metro Board Member  
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Chair Solis:

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Captain Shawn Kehoe and I am the Unit Commander for your Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Transit Services Bureau (TSB). As the transit policing bureau within the Sheriff's Department, we have over 300 budgeted positions serving Public Safety at Metro. This includes specially trained transit patrol deputies, transit mental evaluation team members, canine handlers, special assignment teams, transit detectives, dispatch, and support personnel.

I have personally served Metro for over eight years as a sergeant, lieutenant, and now the captain. I interviewed for this position so I can continue to have an opportunity to impact those most in need. As we can agree, transit riders are among the most vulnerable and historically marginalized in the community. Our riders include those unable to afford or operate a motor vehicle, disabled individuals, commuters, school children, and people from all walks of life. Every person has the right to travel safely on the Metro system. Our bureau, in partnership with Systems Security and Law Enforcement (SSLE) and our law enforcement partners, share equally in this belief.

I write this letter in reaction to the Public Safety Advisory Committee's (PSAC) recommendation dated Wednesday, November 3, 2021, recommending the "elimination" of your specialized transit policing agencies and shifting to local law enforcement on a non-contractual, as-needed basis.

211 WEST TEMPLE STREET, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012

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## Public Safety Advisory Committee Recommendations

With more than two decades in law enforcement and having devoted my life to the service of others, I have a duty to speak up when I see the community I serve being placed at risk. It is important to recognize that although the motion by PSAC claimed Metro had previously utilized non-contract policing, this is incorrect. Factually, the Rapid Transit District (RTD) and later Metro has had transit policing in place continuously since the late 1970's.

I have attended each PSAC meeting since its inception and was invited to present at one session for PSAC. Although I have tremendous respect for the perspectives of the PSAC members, it is important to consider that no PSAC member has ever served as a peace officer. Unfortunately, the committee does not have knowledge of public safety from a transit law enforcement perspective. Although the perspectives of PSAC is important for public trust, inclusive analysis should consider input from those who have knowledge of transit policing.

It is my professional opinion the recommendations provided by PSAC to eliminate the law enforcement contracts places Metro riders at significant risk for injury and victimization. The elimination of deputy sheriffs on a 24-hour basis, along with all investigative and specialized teams and shifting of this responsibility to local law enforcement would result in risks to Metro and the public in the following ways:

- A delay in response from local agencies prioritizing their own responsibilities
- Difficulty in identifying the appropriate responding agency among LA County's 23 Sheriff Stations and 46 independent police agencies
- Metro would have no oversight on individual police agencies and sheriff station policies nor their prioritization of resources
- Significantly reduced law enforcement presence on platforms, transit centers, and layovers
- No oversight over the investigative efforts when crimes occur
- Difficulty in solving crime series that span multiple jurisdictions
- Considerable difficulties with tracking crime statistics associated with the system

It is crucial for us to keep in mind that transit policing is a specialized type of law enforcement, above and beyond that of standard city police work. Our deputies are solely assigned to transit policing, are trained specifically for this environment, and work for Metro every day. Some points to highlight:

## Public Safety Advisory Committee Recommendations

- Deputies understand the need to keep the rail and buses moving
- Deputies have rail safety training and can operate around this high-risk environment
- Trains and buses traverse numerous cities and platforms requiring specialized knowledge for coordination of response and containment efforts
- Buses have specific routes and stopping points, requiring knowledge of the transit operation
- Rail platforms have unique layouts requiring deputies to know what level and side a suspect or victim is located – when seconds count, being on the wrong side of the platform could have serious ramifications
- Deputies know how to disable buses and rails and have associated keys to enter areas in the event of an emergency
- Deputies are trained on how to respond to mass transit emergencies and terrorism
- Deputies are trained in and actively utilize Metro's CCTV system to respond to calls
- Deputies learn the "ins and outs" of Metro, ensuring coverage during busy commuter locations
- Deputies know transit, which can be pivotal to keeping riders safe and addressing small issues before they become big ones

In addition to the above key points, the following are just a few real-life examples of crimes solved solely due to the expertise of the specially trained transit deputies and their presence on the system:

- Rape in Progress – Transit Services Bureau desk personnel received notice of a "suspicious person" on the platform. Staff watched the cameras and saw a man and a woman on the platform. Deputies reversed the video and witnessed a heinous act of rape of an unconscious woman take place. Deputies upgraded the call to an emergency – as deputies arrived, dispatchers witnessed the suspect hiding a firearm. Deputies detained the suspect and recovered the firearm. In this case, the coordination and knowledge of the platform were the critical factors to capturing the suspect. Due to the nature of this crime, the Sheriff's Department, Special Victims Bureau, a specialized bureau within the Department, took over the investigation.
- Child Molestation – Deputies were patrolling a platform during school hours in order to protect the children as they ride the train to and from school. One young victim, whom the deputy had interacted with numerous times, appeared to be withdrawn and acting abnormally. The deputy began speaking with her.

## **Public Safety Advisory Committee Recommendations**

After a long conversation, she stated she was the victim of child molestation at home (not on Metro property). The deputy immediately coordinated with the appropriate law enforcement agency and worked to ensure the safety of the victim.

- **Robbery Series** - Sheriff personnel viewed hours of videos, connecting the series and identifying the habits of the suspect. On multiple occasions the suspect was spotted live on CCTV. Deputies were informed of suspect locations. On two occasions, suspect ran away from deputies. A third time suspect was seen live on CCTV, deputies responded and arrested the suspect. The suspect was recently sentenced to 20 years for over eight robberies.
- **Attempted Murder** - Suspect stabbed victim in the neck on a train. As the call came in, Sheriff personnel viewed platform video and sent out description of suspect and emailed pictures to deputies. As deputies were responding to the scene, they identified the suspect about a mile away from the scene. Deputies detained the suspect who still had the knife on him.
- **Assault with a Firearm** - While deputies were conducting a patrol check of a station, a victim ran up to them and told them a man just ran away who had pointed a gun at numerous patrons on a train. Working with Metro security, deputies determined the suspect ran into a nearby business's parking lot. Deputies located and arrested suspect.
- **Wire Thefts Impacting Train Operations** - A suspect was arrested for multiple copper wire thefts along the Gold Line. These thefts have significant impact to train operations but would be minor property crimes for most local agencies. Specialized deputies contacted numerous recycling centers in the area and showed wanted bulletins of the suspect. Deputies were called by an informant and told the suspect was at a local recycling center trying to sell copper wire. Deputies immediately responded to recycling center. The suspect fled the location. Sheriff deputies coordinated a containment of the area and suspect was arrested.

Although local agencies are excellent at what they do for their communities, these examples, along with countless other crimes directly against Metro and its riders, could not have been handled in such an effective manner without the unique skillset and tools developed by transit deputies and detectives.

**Public Safety Advisory Committee  
Recommendations**

In closing, I would like to highlight that our deputies work closely with Metro staff and we are a part of the Metro family. We have dedicated ourselves to public transit and believe engagement with the community and riders is paramount to the safety and success of Metro. We are here to serve the riders and the Metro family. I urge you to take the specialized nature of transit policing into consideration while determining the future of policing at Metro. Your decision will have far reaching impacts on the safety and quality of life for all riders.

**ALEX VILLANUEVA, SHERIFF**



**Shawn R. Kehoe, Captain  
Transit Services Bureau**