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► Haley discusses the steps Cincinnati Metro is taking to improve its infrastructure for BRT, the transition to a full zero-emissions fleet and efforts to maintain safety on its system.
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Closing out 2024 with safety top of mind

Transit agencies are leveraging funding wins to expand services, but safety and security must remain a top priority for riders and frontline workers.

This year has been pivotal for the public transit industry. Now in its third year, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has funded the deployment of over 4,600 transit buses and more than 320 rail projects have been announced, according to a fact sheet released by the Biden-Harris Administration in November. Several major projects have made significant progress, from Sound Transit opening its Link 2 Line and Denver Regional Transit District breaking ground on the East Colfax Avenue bus rapid transit (BRT) to Caltrain launching its electrified service and IndyGo opening its new Purple Line BRT.

Communities are also choosing to invest locally in their transit systems. As *Mass Transit* reported in November, 25 out of the 26 transit ballot measures in the 2024 general election were approved by voters, projecting an injection of more than \$25 billion in funding through bonds and taxes. These funds will help increase frequency, expand service, establish new routes and drive improvements to enhance the passenger experience.

However, this has also been a pivotal year in high profile security events. There has been substantial coverage in local media regarding incidents between passengers, passengers and operators and passengers and other frontline workers. While communities see the value of funding transit service expansions, they are also calling on agencies to invest in improving safety and security. In our 2024 Safety & Security Report, we dive into the significant increase of assaults against transit workers, focusing on specific actions agencies have taken to mitigate these risks.

Being transit-dependent in a large urban area, I've experienced these concerns firsthand. I've witnessed my share of confrontations, violations of codes of conduct and crime; yet I continue to choose transit. Why? Because I've seen how agencies are responding. I've seen increased security personnel, I've interacted with transit ambassadors, I've experienced refreshed stations and facilities, and I've heard what agencies are saying: They are working to fix it. But a large part of this is because not only am I a regular rider, I'm also deeply involved with the industry. I'm well-versed in agencies' communications campaigns regarding boosting safety and security.

The question is whether this messaging and these approaches resonate with your external stakeholders who don't know transit inside and out. Are your choice riders returning? Do your elected officials understand transit's immense value? How are your regular riders experiencing your system? As many agencies approach budget deficits, now is the time to double down not just on implementing safety efforts, but on how you're communicating these strategies to ensure continued ridership growth and investment in transit.

“

Now is the time to double down not just on implementing safety efforts, but on how you're communicating these strategies to ensure continued ridership growth and investment in transit.

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People & Places



IndyGo's ceremonious Purple Line ribbon cutting.
Photo: IndyGo

IndyGo launches new Purple Line BRT service

The Indianapolis Public Transportation Corporation (IndyGo) celebrated the grand opening of the Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route after its official launch into service. The Purple Line spans 15.2 miles, with 31 stations connecting downtown Indianapolis to the city of Lawrence, Ind. The \$188 million project includes \$81 million in federal funding. The Purple Line BRT will help to create better connections between downtown Indianapolis and the city of Lawrence by providing faster, more efficient and reliable transportation between many neighborhoods, major employers, healthcare and educational facilities.

[MassTransitmag.com/55237219](https://www.masstransitmag.com/55237219)



San Diego MTS trolley.
Photo: SDMTS

San Diego MTS launches new trolley service on Copper Line - East County Connector

► The San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) launched its new trolley service on the Copper Line - East County Connector on Sept. 29, 2024. The Copper Line will serve four

stations between El Cajon Transit Center and Santee Trolley Station every 15 minutes daily for most of the day. The new segment will replace the existing Green and Orange Line Trolley service north of El Cajon Transit Center. The primary purpose of the Copper Line is to reduce the impacts of the single-track segment between Gillespie Field and Santee, which will improve service reliability between El Cajon and Santee, Calif.

[MassTransitmag.com/55143522](https://www.masstransitmag.com/55143522)

SDOT breaks ground on RapidRide J Line

► The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) broke ground on the RapidRide J Line. The project will create vital community connections, making it easier for Seattle residents, workers and students to reach



Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell and other local leaders celebrate the start of construction of the RapidRide J Line project in Seattle on Oct. 8, 2024.

Photo: SDOT

their destinations. The RapidRide J Line project is a collaboration between SDOT and King County Metro to upgrade King County Metro's existing Route 70, a crucial bus line. The enhanced service will connect vibrant and growing Seattle neighborhoods like the University District, Eastlake, South Lake Union and Belltown with more frequent, reliable transit.

[MassTransitmag.com/55234254](https://www.masstransitmag.com/55234254)

MTA rolls out new R211S subway cars on Staten Island Railway

► The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) has rolled out its new R211S subway cars on the Staten Island Railway. The cars are part of a 535-car order, which includes 440 R211A standard cars with 75 Staten Island Railway cars and 20 cars with the open gangway feature. The MTA's R211S cars feature 58-inch-wide door openings that are eight inches wider than standard door openings on existing cars. The new doorways will help to speed up boarding and reduce the amount of time trains sit in stations. MTA notes the new cars are also six times more reliable than cars in the current fleet - able to travel an average of 240,000 miles between replacements and major repairs.

[MassTransitmag.com/55234305](https://www.masstransitmag.com/55234305)



First R211S subway cars are launched into service on Staten Island Railway.

Photo: MTA

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

VIA Metropolitan Transit (VIA)



Jon Gary Herrera was named VIA's new president and CEO, succeeding Jeffrey C. Arndt, effective Jan. 4, 2025. Arndt is retiring after 40 years in the transportation industry and 13 years

at VIA. Herrera has served as VIA's senior vice president of public engagement since 2017, overseeing efforts to deliver major milestones, including the 2020 initiative to secure additional funding for the agency's Keep SA Moving plan. Herrera will be VIA's first Latino president and CEO.

[MassTransitmag.com/55242543](https://www.masstransitmag.com/55242543)

Trinity Metro



Effective December 2024, **Anette Landeros** will officially take on the newly created position of chief strategy officer for Trinity Metro. Landeros will work towards expanding services and enhancing connectivity across the region. Landeros spent 12 years with the U.S. Department of Transportation in the Office

of the Inspector General. Her background in both community leadership and transportation will help to guide Trinity Metro's growth plans. As chief strategy officer, Landeros will oversee the development of strategies that support both immediate goals and long-term growth.

[MassTransitmag.com/55238340](https://www.masstransitmag.com/55238340)

Island Transit



Melinda Adams was appointed executive director of Island Transit, effective Nov. 18, 2024. Adams brings over 15 years of dedicated service with the city of Everett, Wash., and Everett Transit, where she

has held key leadership positions, including program manager, transportation on systems manager and most recently, transportation services manager. From March to June 2024, Adams served as acting director of Everett Transit, where she demonstrated strong leadership and commitment to the region. As a resident of Island County, Wash., Adams is invested in serving her community and enhancing the quality of public transportation.

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Integrating BRT Systems into Roadway Networks

Strong roadway partnerships on BRT projects improve outcomes for all.

BY GINA THOMAS, DANY MALONEY, CONTRIBUTORS



The METRO D Line BRT recorded over four million rides in its first year.

Photo: HDR

Thirty-six of the 56 transit projects — nearly two-thirds — in the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) Capital Investment Grants (CIG) pipeline are bus rapid transit (BRT) projects, according to data posted Nov. 1, 2024, on the CIG dashboard.

The growth of new BRT projects can be attributed to many positive factors, including flexibility, cost, development time and more. However, integrating a new mode of travel within a busy operating roadway comes with planning and design challenges. Strong collaboration between project sponsors, transit and roadway agencies can help overcome these obstacles, improving overall corridor operation, user experience and safety.

Getting roadway partners to the table

Adding a BRT line can significantly enhance overall roadway operation. Increased transit ridership, improved safety and greater mobility within a corridor benefit all users within the community. Starting conversations early with potential partner agencies — and communicating how a BRT benefits them through shared opportunity — opens the door to continued collaboration and in some cases, financial and project development support. This collaboration is key.

The RapidRide J Line in Seattle, which broke ground in October 2024, is a joint effort of the Seattle Department

of Transportation and King County Metro. The project will also include new protected bike lanes, nearly 200 improved crosswalks, two miles of repaved roadways and nearly three miles of repaired sidewalks. In addition, critical water main work will be undertaken along Eastlake Avenue E to provide resilient infrastructure for Seattle residents. The work is part of a complete streets effort that improves the experience for all road users.

Emphasizing win-win scenarios like this can build support with potential partners, showing how BRT projects can complement safety and other active transportation investments. Key to this is the partnership between transit and roadway agencies needed to successfully integrate new BRT routes into existing roads. On the J Line, for instance, because of limited right of way space in the tight Eastlake Avenue corridor, roadway and transit teams collaborated to tailor

the design to each road section, placing stations on islands to separate bicycle and pedestrian space from vehicle traffic.

Agencies leading BRT projects will sometimes need to help roadway partners understand the benefits of partnering. Getting roadway partners engaged often begins with positioning the BRT as a long-term transportation asset. Transit agencies can highlight how a BRT project can help mitigate congestion and improve the resilience of the overall transportation network by addressing future growth and mobility needs. In many cases, new corridors' multimodal improvements also align with roadway agencies' long-term goals, such as Vision Zero, sustainability or equity initiatives.

Collaborative design improves overall operation and safety

The most successful BRT projects meet the needs of transit operations while recognizing the importance of roadway knowledge. By engaging roadway professionals at the onset of project development and involving them throughout the process, projects can identify and resolve conflicts, providing better integration into existing networks and improving mobility for the whole community.

Charleston, S.C., is building the first BRT in the state. Part of the proposed route travels along a wide roadway with little pedestrian infrastructure and a need for traffic improvements. Taking advantage of the road's wide median, the partners collaborated on a solution, putting the new BRT route in what had been a median, rather than side lanes on the already congested street. This redesign of traffic lanes will create a pedestrian refuge for shorter crossings, improving the experience for drivers and pedestrians. It also allows for a dedicated lane for buses to improve transit reliability, showing how BRT projects developed in collaboration can improve the mobility and safety for all users.

In Colorado, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) has partnered with multiple local jurisdictions to advance the CO7 (Arapahoe Avenue) BRT program, linking Brighton

to Boulder. This heavily traveled commuter route includes a combination of urban and rural areas. The corridor was divided into multiple segments to be sensitive to urban, rural and transitional characteristics. The urban section includes a recommended cross section with curbside business access and transit (BAT) lanes, multi-use paths and protected intersections for bicycles and pedestrians. CDOT is now supporting the city of Boulder with advancing the full design of the urban

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Getting roadway partners engaged often begins with positioning the BRT as a long-term transportation asset that supports management of capacity and boosts safety outcomes.

segment. These will enhance mobility for pedestrians and cyclists while also addressing first-mile/last-mile access for those using the new BRT line.

Tailor design solutions to unique roadway corridor and jurisdictional characteristics

Every roadway corridor has its own characteristics that require tailored solutions for successful BRT integration. These challenges can be compounded when a route travels through multiple jurisdictions. However, whether addressing urban, suburban or rural design challenges, effective collaboration with roadway and transit experts helps BRT systems fit into each existing environment.

As Metro Transit planned the METRO D Line BRT system in the cities of Minneapolis, Bloomington, Brooklyn Center and Richfield, Minn., it overcame several roadway-related challenges. The D Line has nearly 80 platforms, with many adjacent to driveways and intersections. It was critical that the BRT shelters and pylons did not create visual obstructions and stations needed to match established criteria for driver sightlines. The more than 18-mile project travels a route with roads maintained by multiple authorities and those authorities each have slightly different design standards for sightlines.

As a result, the location and design of each station was

assessed based on the standards of the relevant roadway authority for that section. In collaboration with Metro Transit and other stakeholders, stations were modified as needed to meet the requirements of each authority. For example, station amenities were shifted at various locations to avoid visual obstructions.

BRT projects often face multi-jurisdictional challenges. Having roadway engineering professionals on the project allowed the team to collaborate with these agencies and meet varying standards. Upon launching, the METRO D Line became the most heavily used BRT line in Minnesota, with more than four million rides taken within its first year. Ridership continues to expand.

Shared roadway improvements can mean shared funding

BRT projects are often intricately linked with roadway improvement projects as part of larger corridor upgrades.

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Knowing multi-modal grant funding processes and understanding the use requirements is important to finance roadway improvements and transit components. The FTA's CIG program will remain central to funding transit infrastructure construction. Other federal funding sources aimed at multi-modal corridor development and improvement can be useful for studies or planning.

Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant funding can be acquired to offset the cost of road safety improvements that are often desired to be implemented along proposed BRT corridors. SS4A funds are obtainable through the program for the next two years for use on any project within an area with a Safety Action Plan.

Cities and transit agencies can apply and receive money to pay for safety infrastructure improvements such as high intensity activated crosswalks,

sidewalk improvements, pedestrian lighting and high friction and traffic calming treatments.

Additionally, Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation and Advanced Transportation Technologies and Innovation grants can boost efficiency and safety, such as advanced traffic signals and intelligent transportation systems. Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funding — used to advance the RapidRide J line — can also be awarded to BRT projects.

An alignment of capital planning allows all partners to plan improvements in the same corridor and seek funding. For example, in Minnesota, the successful arterial BRT program has stitched together coordinated efforts funded by a variety of sources to propel corridors forward.

Uniting roadway and BRT stakeholders to boost mobility

By integrating roadway design expertise with BRT planning, projects can expand mobility options, enhance safety and provide lasting infrastructure improvements. Successful BRT systems rely on partnerships that prioritize the unique characteristics of each corridor, leveraging tailored design solutions and diverse funding opportunities to create efficient, reliable and community-focused transit networks. **L**



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2024 Safety & Security Report



Transit agencies are doubling down on enforcement to create a safer environment for transit workers while providing a better rider experience.

BY MEGAN PERRERO,
EDITOR IN CHIEF

S

everal high-profile incidents have taken place on public transit systems throughout the U.S. this year, resulting in groups from rider advocacy organizations and unions to elected officials and the federal government calling on the industry to take decisive action. This report focuses on national trends in safety and security incidents and what specific actions agencies are taking to address them.

Increased security personnel boosts frontline worker safety

Addressing the safety of frontline workers has been a key focus throughout the year. From 2013 to 2021, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) cited a 120 percent increase in the number of assaults against transit workers as documented by the National Transit Database. In response, the FTA issued a general directive requiring more than 700 transit agencies to take action to protect frontline workers from the risk of assaults.

Several mitigation strategies have focused on increasing the presence of security personnel at stations and onboard vehicles. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority even hired its first criminal justice advocate, who is responsible for advocating and providing support for crime victims in the system while working with local stakeholders to ensure offender accountability.

For the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), adding contracted non-armed security officers at the end of line service has helped decrease the amount of people taking shelter at transit facilities. The officers also help with patrolling the system when it's shut down, deterring unwanted behavior. These efforts are paying off, with the authority reporting a 34 percent decrease in serious crimes through the third quarter of 2024.

According to SEPTA Transit Police Chief Chuck Lawson, the agency is "getting a lot of good feedback" from frontline workers that safety is improving.

At ABQ Ride, frontline workers are also noting a safer environment, which Transit Director Leslie Keener contributes to their own increased presence of security.

"That's been the general feedback that we've been getting from our staff—is [safety] has been much better with the presence that we've had," Keener said.

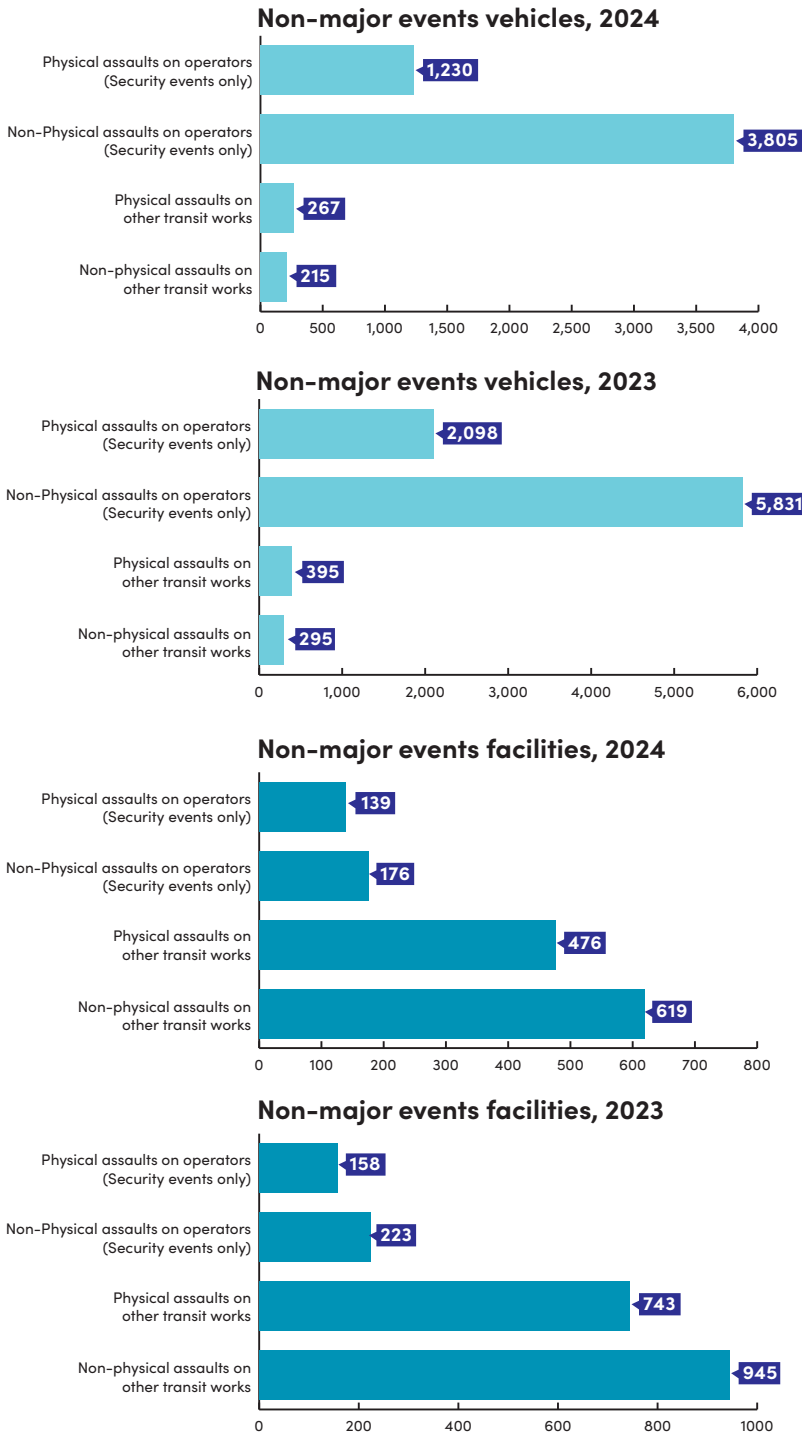
The agency has seen a significant decrease in the number of incidents taking place on transit buses. In April 2022, ABQ Ride's Metro Security responded to 251 events compared to 194 in April 2023 and 60 in April 2024.



ABQ Ride's contracted security and police aids hop between buses and platforms to increase their presence on the system.

Photos: ABQ Ride

Worker assaults based on location (vehicle vs facility)



Source: National Transit Database

Note: Data from 2024 (for all charts) is for the first half of the year (through June 2024). 2023 data is for the full year.

Keener credits this to a bus hopping program where officers disembark the bus and onto the platform, expanding their presence throughout the system. This also randomizes where security officers are patrolling so riders can't predict their location.

Targeted enforcement improves rider safety

With agencies increasing security and police presence throughout their systems, they've become more deliberate about what's in their codes of conduct and more targeted in their enforcement.

TriMet's safety and security staff are focused on increasing enforcement of behavior and actions that are prohibited by its code of conduct. TransLink has also increased fare enforcement patrols to reduce fare evasion, educate riders and improve safety. The King County Sheriff's Office—in collaboration with King County Metro Transit and others—launched Operation Safe Transit, a pilot program focused on targeted work on transit vehicles and at transit facilities.

SEPTA also increased its enforcement efforts, but first, the agency shifted from an administrative model back to a criminal justice model to better address the increase of quality-of-life issues throughout the system.

"That afforded a little more responsibility for violating policies on the system and one that we thought would give us a better chance at reducing low level offenses on SEPTA," Chief Lawson said. "Every category of crime that we enforce for quality of life is up over 100 percent enforcement compared to last year."

Experiencing a similar uptick in incidents and reports from the public feeling unsafe, ABQ Ride updated its Rules to Ride in March 2024 to more accurately reflect the current reality of the system. The agency then looked to a multi-pronged approach because "not everybody needs a sworn officer," Keener says. A good portion of security staff are contracted observe and report



Want to hear more about RTC's deployment with ZeroEyes' technology? Check out the Infrastructure Technology Podcast, coming January 2025.

non-sworn officers. ABQ Ride’s direct connection to the Albuquerque Police Department (APD) is relatively new. This resulted in a safety partnership for targeted enforcement. While the agency increased non-sworn officers on buses, APD’s Southeast Proactive Response Team conducted a proactive transit safety operation along the Central Avenue corridor. The intent was to address crime concerns at known problem locations.

“At some point, it’s now not [only] a rules to ride violation, but it’s also illegal activity that’s going on that we need to get [APD] sworn officers involved in,” Keener said. “I think it sent a really good message to the community that we were taking this very seriously and that kind of behavior would not be tolerated on the transit network.”

Leveraging real-time information to mitigate crime

Increasing security presence is a great tool for addressing unwanted behavior but stationing them throughout the entire system is usually unfeasible. Relying on real-time technology products can help fill the gaps.

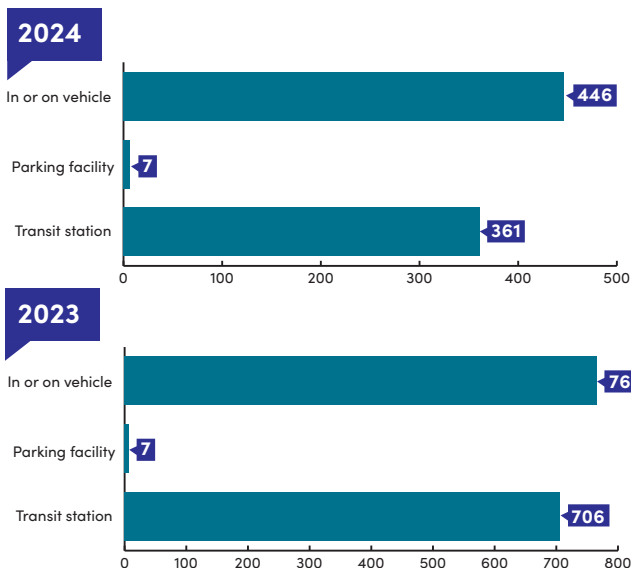
The Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) of Southern Nevada deployed ZeroEyes, a weapons detection software that uses artificial intelligence-based gun detection technology layered onto existing digital security cameras to monitor and alert security officials to firearms. What started as a pilot has become a full program, RTC of Southern Nevada CEO MJ Maynard tells *Roads and Bridges* Associate Editor Harlee Hewitt in an interview for the Infrastructure Technology Podcast. Maynard credits the software with helping to save lives without overreacting.

“Our security team got an alert [from ZeroEyes] that there was somebody at our downtown transit terminal with a gun in their hand. It turned out it was a young man with a water pistol that looked very much like a real gun, and so we were able not only to not overreact, but we were able to identify what it was,” Maynard said.

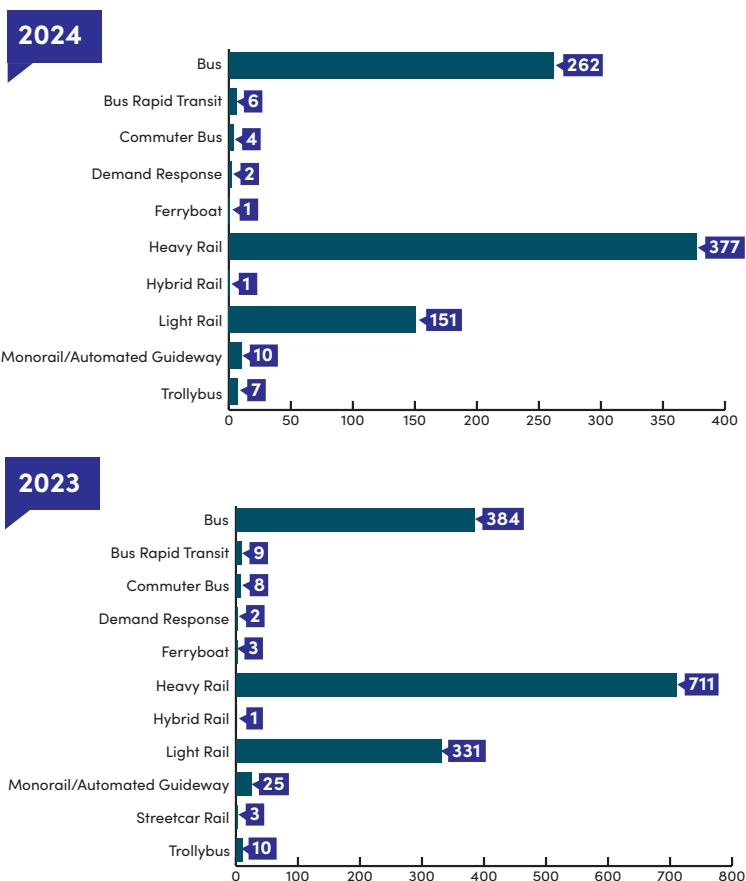
Maynard notes the program’s success is due to the agency’s continued invest-

Assaults, robberies, and homicides not against a transit worker

Location where these incidents are taking place



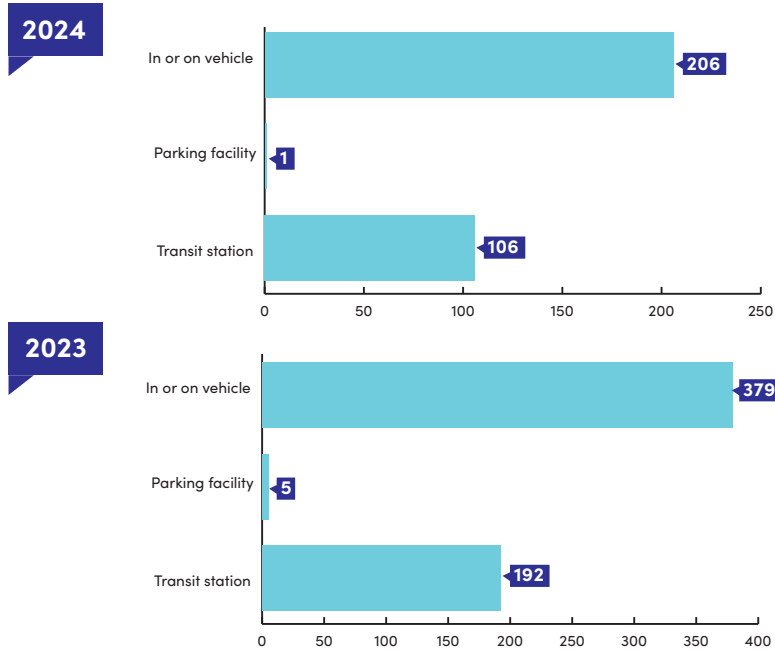
Transit mode where these incidents are taking place



Source: National Transit Database

Physical and non-physical assaults on operators and other transit workers

Location where these incidents are taking place



ment in its technology infrastructure. Chief Lawson agrees with this sentiment, noting the over 30,000 cameras SEPTA’s system relies on. That’s a lot to monitor, so Chief Lawson started a virtual patrol network where civilians patrol the system by camera. This allows them to view multiple stations at a time.

“All of this is occurring in real time. It has been one of the reasons I think that we are seeing such a reduction in crime on the system and it’s one of the reasons I think that our clearance rate and arrests rates are so hot,” Chief Lawson said.

ABQ Ride is also leveraging its existing camera network to monitor activity at facilities. Keener and Sisneros have cameras in their offices so they can monitor platforms. APD’s real-time crime center also has access to the camera system but both agree that launching the See Say customer app has been a big help.

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“The See Say app was a big one for us because we just weren’t getting that real-time information,” Keener said. “Anything that comes in through [the app] goes directly to our transit dispatch, so we’re able to respond much quicker.”

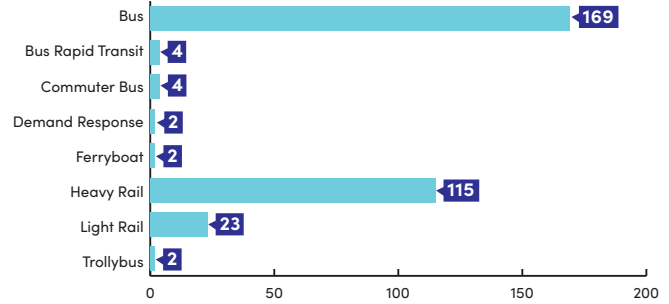
Enforcement efforts are paying off

Agencies are reporting increased ridership and fewer crimes following strategic, targeted efforts. Investing in personnel while streamlining the use of real-time information have proven to be effective tools in addressing incidents on transit systems. Agencies should continue to leverage existing camera systems, explore automation processes to analyze data and maintain high visibility for security staff. [L](#)

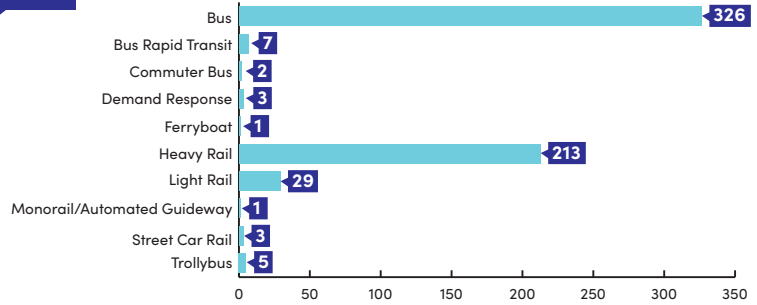
The full report can be viewed at MassTransitmag.com/55243476

Transit mode where these incidents are taking place

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Transfo

Rail Transit on the

Transit expansion and electrification projects in Washington and California have expanded mobility up and down the West Coast, connecting people and communities.

BY SUZE PARKER, CONTRIBUTOR



ermining West Coast

Caltrain's seven-car electric trainsets maintain operating speeds up to 79 mph.

Photo: HTNB

Two recently opened transit projects are reshaping mobility access on the West Coast. Seattle's 8.5 mile Lynnwood Link Extension and the Bay Area's 51 mile Caltrain Electrification Project demonstrate the power of transit investments to improve quality of life and set the stage for a more sustainable and connected future.

"Great transit systems are a commonality of the world's most iconic cities," said Pranaya Shrestha, senior program manager for HNTB, which served as owner's representative for the Caltrain project. "They also are vital parts of great communities. We see projects as more than simply moving people safely from point A to point B. They are delivering a significant return on investment, bringing people together and providing economic, health and leisure opportunities that are critical for communities to be successful."

Powering the future of Caltrain

The transformational Caltrain Electrification Project moves the San Francisco Peninsula toward modernized, faster, sustainable public transportation. Electrified service on the 51-mile corridor from San Francisco to San Jose, Calif., began Sept. 21, 2024.

The electrification improves Caltrain system performance and curtails environmental impacts by reducing noise, improving regional air quality and lowering greenhouse gas emissions. The electric trains, powered by renewable energy, will reduce annual emissions by a projected 250,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide per year, the equivalent of taking 55,000 cars off the road.

“This project represents a leading-edge change that has gained attention locally, nationally and even internationally,” Shrestha said.

“Caltrain’s Electrification is a transformative leap forward for our community and every rider who will benefit from these advancements,” said Caltrain Executive Director Michelle Bouchard. “We are running a faster, greener, across-the-board better system than any time in the 160-year history of our corridor and the Bay Area will reap the rewards of this project for decades to come.”

Throughout construction and consistent with Caltrain’s goals, the project team minimized inconvenience to corridor passengers by keeping existing service in place and scheduling construction during overnight hours and weekends.

The project team installed foundations, pre-engineered poles and millions of feet of wire to support the overhead contact system (OCS) that powers Caltrain’s fleet of electric trains. Additionally, 10 traction power facilities — electric power stations that distribute and regulate electricity to the OCS and electric trains — were installed on the corridor.

The power upgrades will also accommodate California high-speed rail trains when they are ready, allowing riders to step off a Caltrain vehicle and onto high-speed rail to travel further south.

As part of its signal system upgrade, Caltrain implemented wireless grade crossing technology that improves warning time consistency. When wireless crossing is enabled, Caltrain’s



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Sound Transit's 8.5 mile Lynnwood Link Extension extends into Snohomish County, Wash., and is anticipated to serve approximately 40,000 daily riders.

Photo: Sound Transit

Positive Train Control-equipped electric locomotives facilitate constant warning times at the crossing based on the train's GPS position and speed.

Electrification of the line also delivers faster, more frequent service for passengers, including doubling service on weekends. Caltrain's seven-car electric trainsets maintain operating speeds up to 79 mph, zipping between San Francisco and San Jose in less than an hour. Service to stations increased by 20 percent, with trains arriving every 15 to 20 minutes during rush hours at most stations and every 30 minutes during weekends, midday and evenings.

The train cars are equipped with roomier seats, free Wi-Fi, electrical outlets under every fixed seat and expanded storage capacity. Each train includes an ADA-compliant restroom and two bicycle cars. CCTVs in the train cars enhance safety and the electric trains provide a quieter, more comfortable rider experience.

Caltrain's new electrified corridor will serve as a key component of the region's interconnected transportation network. The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority and Amtrak will connect with Caltrain at San Jose Diridon Station while Bay Area Rapid Transit provides a direct link to San Francisco International Airport via Millbrae Station.

The electrification of the corridor provides a more sustainable and efficient transportation solution. Shrestha expects the project to also serve as a model for rail transit modernization throughout the country.

"Just as our country moved from steam to diesel, electric corridors are the next big step," Shrestha said. "In the years ahead, we'll see diesel move toward electrification and Caltrain is leading that effort."



About the author

Suze Parker is a public relations consultant and writer who frequently writes about transit and other infrastructure projects.

Lynnwood Link's impact on Seattle's North

Sound Transit's transformative Lynnwood Link Extension opened at the end of August 2024.

"This new service marks the first time Sound Transit's Link light-rail system has extended into Snohomish County, broadening the range of the entire line and connecting communities across the region," said Snohomish County Executive and Sound Transit Board Vice Chair Dave Somers.

The new line serves the Shoreline, Mountlake Terrace and Lynnwood communities, connecting them directly to Seattle's urban core, the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and beyond. As project manager, HNTB provided construction support for the extensive, multiyear project, which incorporates four new stations and three new parking garages.

The Lynnwood Link Extension delivers a fast, frequent and reliable connection for riders through some of the heaviest traffic congestion in the state of Washington. Running parallel to Interstate 5, the Lynnwood Link alignment minimized the line's construction footprint and allowed gentle curvature on wide curves, permitting a maximum operating speed of 55 mph.

By design, the project team minimized traffic impacts during construction. Where the extension crosses I-5 north of Mountlake Terrace, the original design called for a cast-in-place, balanced-cantilever long-span bridge to be built over the interstate. To deliver a more cost-effective bridge, the project team instead used falsework to facilitate construction of a more conventional cast-in-place box structure. A section of the bridge was precast in Tacoma, Wash., while the other sections were poured in place due to the structure's curved shape.

The urban environment also drove creative designs at the stations to accommodate bus transfer facilities and parking garages. The extension is expected to serve approximately 40,000 daily riders, providing reliable alternative transportation while creating access and promoting sustainable urban growth.

Local transit agencies have added bus feeder networks at each station. The line's four new stations have already spurred nearby transit-oriented development. Roughly 10,000 housing units have been added or are being developed near the four stations.

Trains are expected at the stations every eight minutes at peak times on weekdays and every 10 minutes in the evenings and on weekends. In the next few years, Sound Transit plans to begin work on the line's next phase to the north, a 16-mile connection from Lynnwood to Everett.

"The Lynnwood Link Extension project stands as a testament to the ability to deliver complex infrastructure on time and on budget through effective collaboration and strong relationship management," said HNTB Project Manager Moein El-Aarag. "Together, Sound Transit, [Washington State Department of Transportation], the project team and the cities of Lynnwood, Mountlake Terrace, Shoreline and Seattle have achieved a significant milestone in enhancing the region's transit infrastructure." **L**



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Paratransit Improvements Essential to Customer Experience

Paratransit services are essential for people with all disabilities to get around and agencies are taking action to improve the experience.

BY BRANDON LEWIS, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

It was an early June night in my hometown of Cleveland, Ohio, during the 2024 American Public Transportation Association's Rail Conference. I was using the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority's (GCRTA) paratransit service to meet the *Mass Transit* team downtown for dinner. We had scheduled to meet at the restaurant Fahrenheit in Public Square. My paratransit driver dropped me off at Tower City, an approximate three-minute walk from the restaurant, as the address given to him was the Fahrenheit restaurant located in Tower City, not the one in Public Square. The driver told me he could not change my drop-off address, so I had to navigate the rest of the way myself.

The next day, another incident occurred on my way home from the APTA Rail Conference. It was me, the driver and another passenger. As we turn down my street, we drive right past my house. I told the driver he missed my street. I vividly remember the words he said to me next, "Oh, I didn't know that! The GPS is telling me to drop her



off first. If I had known this was your street, I would have dropped you off first. This happens all the time."

That time, I was picked up from downtown Cleveland after the APTA Rail Conference around 5:10 p.m. I did not arrive back at my residence until 6:30 p.m. On a heavy traffic day, I am located 20 minutes away from the Huntington Convention Center.

As a paratransit rider and a journalist covering the public transit industry, I saw a unique opportunity to connect my personal experiences and what I think could be improved with my knowledge of how the industry operates and the challenges it faces that the average rider may not understand. *Mass Transit* does not typically center first-person features; however, this is a piece I've wanted to write for a while because I want to be able to provide a solution to improve paratransit, not only in Cleveland, but across North America. I want every paratransit ride to be a positive experience.

I wanted to give my perspective as a user, but I also wanted to talk to GCRTA about its paratransit program, a GCRTA paratransit rider to get another perspective and a paratransit



service outside of GCRTA to cover what paratransit systems are doing to better their services throughout the U.S.

While conducting my interviews for this feature, there were two main issues that came up when it came to paratransit:

- Scheduling/tracking rides
- Route selections

Scheduling/tracking rides

When riders schedule a ride with GCRTA, the scheduling system uses a 30-minute pick-up and drop-off window for each individual trip. Nick Davidson, GCRTA's paratransit district director, notes the scheduling system intelligently selects a window based on the trip's direct travel time and says the goal of the system is to ensure a rider arrives at their destination within a reasonable amount of time, not too early and not too late.

Jen Taggart uses the GCRTA paratransit system on average four times per week for grocery store runs, medical appointments, work and leisure activities. Taggart says she feels GCRTA is on time for her needs more often than not.

"I've been early way more often than I have been late to things using paratransit," Taggart noted, while claiming her strategy for scheduling rides is to plan an hour ahead to give herself and paratransit plenty of time.

In California, San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans) launched its same-day paratransit pilot program in December 2023. The program allows riders to ask for a same-day paratransit trip within San Mateo County between 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. during weekdays. The dispatchers at the scheduling center attempt to schedule the trip within 90 minutes of the requested time.

The 12-month pilot will end in December 2024 and will be evaluated to potentially become permanent. SamTrans will be sending out a customer

SamTrans launched a pilot program allowing riders to schedule same-day trips.

Photo: SamTrans



GCRTA introduced a new online scheduling platform for its paratransit service in October.

Photo: GCRTA

survey to receive feedback on the pilot. The agency is defining success of the pilot by the number of rides taken and overall satisfaction shown by customers based off survey feedback.

Tina Dubost, SamTrans' manager of accessible transit services, says riders have been asking for same-day service for a long time.

"Things come up at the last minute that you have unexpected trip needs. We are offering the service on a space available basis so we're making better use of our existing capacity," Dubost said.

The same-day paratransit pilot costs more to ride (\$10 per ride, \$8 for reduced fare) compared to SamTrans' regular paratransit service (\$4.25 per ride, \$1.75 for reduced fare). Dubost says early data shows ridership is about the same compared to regular paratransit service so she feels the price is not too high. SamTrans has provided 896 rides to 309 different riders during the pilot.

While GCRTA does not offer same-day paratransit services the way SamTrans does, the agency launched an updated online scheduling platform on Oct. 7, 2024, for riders to schedule their rides through GCRTA's website. The old platform was outdated and would constantly bug out, not allowing riders to see their rides from the platform, as well as schedule rides to certain locations. The issues forced most riders (including myself) to call in their rides, which becomes frustrating to someone who wants 24/7 access to view their rides.

Both Davidson and Taggart agree the new system will help the scheduling process.

"This was a longer process than I would have liked but we wanted to make sure that we delivered it and tested it thoroughly," Davidson said. "We got it right and corrected some items from our old system, as well as updating the technology. It'll provide a better customer experience for our customers. Our customers have busy lives and this will provide 24-hour access to our scheduling system and help free up our call system."

"It's gonna be a huge time saver and I'm glad that now I can see my rides on the website," Taggart noted. "Short-term, it's an adjustment, but long-term it's gonna be a great thing."

While the updated platform provides more convenience for scheduling rides, Taggart says she wishes there was a way to track rides, such as an Uber or Lyft, to provide more flexibility. This, she says, would help her not have to leave a social outing or work early because she thought her paratransit ride was on the way.

"That would kind of give you the time back if you could look at your phone and be like, 'Oh they're still half an hour away,' then you can go back and do whatever you were doing, whether it was working, whether it was sitting at a table eating with your friends," Taggart said.

Davidson understands the need and says it's something that's on the way.

"We've earmarked funds for a mobile app, which will have all of that information, as well as being able to track the bus as it's coming to you," Davidson said. "We expect that in approximately a year from now, we'll have that option available for our customers so that they can interact with public transit the same way that they do with other businesses."

Dubost notes SamTrans is just using the call center currently to schedule rides. She notes scheduling rides over the phone works for the agency currently and there is not an app in development.

Route software/route making

On-time performance is as critical as having flexibility in scheduling and managing a trip. Trips that take double or triple the amount of time to complete can be a frustrating experience for riders.

Taggart had a night on paratransit she will never forget in 2022. She was leaving a social outing at approximately 9:00 p.m. On her way home, she and another passenger had to go pick up another rider downtown at the Cleveland Guardians baseball game, 20 minutes the other direction from Taggart's residence. Taggart says that when the paratransit vehicle arrived to pick up the passenger, the passenger was not at his pick-up location. Taggart notes it took almost two hours to find the passenger, an experience she, nor the driver, will never forget.

"That was my one wild paratransit story," Taggart said. "I was on that bus for nearly three hours."

According to Davidson, GCRTA's route-making system takes into account several factors, including pick-up and drop-off windows and appointment times. The average on-

time arrivals and drop-offs occur 30 minutes before/after an appointment time. He notes drivers have the ability to change routes if they feel the need to, but that need comes with experience.

“If an operator were to believe that the order of trips should be different or a customer requests to be dropped off first or whatever the scenario is, they would call dispatch and we would evaluate that and make that change when possible,” Davidson said.

Dubost says SamTrans’ route scheduling system is “quite sophisticated” and takes into account factors such as:

- Pick-up time
- Appointment time
- Approximate travel time

She says she tells riders to schedule rides by their appointment time to ensure they arrive at their destination on time.

Dubost notes she expected the same-day paratransit pilot to be used mostly for medical cases but the data reveals something different.

“Medical appointments are less than 40 percent of our same-day trips,” Dubost said. “We do restaurant trips. We do grocery runs. We do nail salons. This really is life enhancing.”

Conclusion

Paratransit is essential to riders with all sorts of disabilities —

physical, mental and emotional. It can be a lifeline for them to get from place to place. Paratransit has allowed me, someone with a physical disability, to be more independent in my day-to-day life.

GCRTA and SamTrans, as well as other paratransit systems across North America, are working to improve paratransit services the same way agencies are constantly working to improve fixed-route service.

GCRTA is focused on offering a better scheduling system for riders with its new online portal, as well as developing an in-house app where riders can track their rides 24/7. Meanwhile, SamTrans will take feedback from their same-day paratransit pilot in December to make decisions on the future of the pilot and paratransit as a whole.

The improvements to ride tracking, pick up/drop-off windows and route selections is just the start to what paratransit may look like across North America within the next half decade. [L](#)



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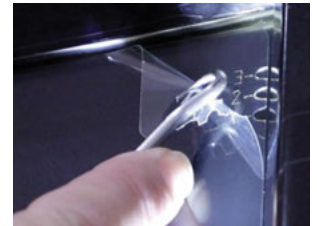
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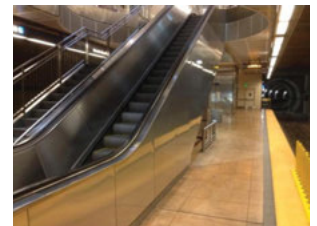
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Equitable solutions

Tools to support the entire community

How Lane Transit District Approaches Equity Pragmatically



By Anni Katz, Sarah Koski

Anni Katz is the public information officer for Lane Transit District in Eugene, Oregon.



Sarah Koski is the community resource liaison for Lane Transit District in Eugene, Oregon.

EUGENE, ORE. • When Lane Transit District (LTD) broke ground on its \$3.8 million Eugene Station Modernization Project in January 2024, it sought to create an environment that promotes inclusiveness, safety and security.

It's about harm reduction

LTD's Community Resource Liaison Sarah Koski was apprehensive. She was hosting a lived experience group and wondered if it would find common ground on a public restroom design at the bus station.

The challenge was fentanyl. No sharps containers were included in the initial design. "That could make it look like LTD endorses drug use," said an LTD employee. Someone from a nonprofit noted evidence-based practices demonstrate having sharps containers increases accessibility for those with medical conditions requiring self-injection.

"LTD doesn't have to be the expert in everything, especially when this community has an array of diverse voices who can help," Koski said. "The focus group led to the bathroom stall doors being undercut with a four-inch gap at the bottom, which means we can check on people. It led to a 10-minute time limit."

Eugene Station now has a de-escalation cabinet. "Our public safety officers (PSOs) engage with agitated or non-conforming riders. It could be drugs or a mental health crisis but what if it's hunger or a person with diabetes? Now we have water, trail mix and crackers," Koski said. "This is health equity. It also decreases loitering and increases safety on our platforms and buses."



LTD doesn't have to be the expert in everything, especially when this community has an array of diverse voices who can help.

Sarah Koski



Lives can be changed with a little bit of kindness

Shoes are a requirement to ride. LTD's Operations Department spends time and resources on riders who try to board without them.

Koski bought a box of 50 inexpensive (\$1 per pair) rubber-soled slippers. "Every week, one or two pairs would disappear. Organically, PSOs and customer service worked together to get them to riders stuck at bus stops," Koski said.

Koski reached out to the Lane Community Health Council to help with distribution. McKenzie-Wilamette Medical Center purchased and now distributes the slippers to anyone discharged without shoes. Same goes for Buckley Detoxification Center. A pilot program will also place inexpensive supply kits in PSO vehicles with slippers, warm blankets and bathing wipes.

LTD partnered with the Reveille Foundation, an organization that supports underserved populations, to bring its Navigation Center to Eugene Station so unhoused individuals can start the process of qualifying for housing programs with Lane County. To date, Reveille has done 32 county assessments, 20 housing or shelter placements and referrals and 20 referrals to services like food boxes and showers. Placing Reveille at Eugene Station means essential services are more accessible.

Vonnie Willard, a 12-year veteran of LTD, is an operations supervisor. "I feel like more of a human with these tools because I can directly help someone. LTD has come a long way in opening our processes to creative approaches and how we manage or assist our diverse community of riders," Willard said.

Equity is pragmatic

LTD invested in a community resource liaison after seeing that not approaching things equitably was taking a toll on employees and negatively impacting LTD's budget and daily operations. Employees spent valuable time addressing challenging and sometimes dangerous situations. Now, LTD gives its employees tools to support the entire community. Willard says LTD is recognizing the value of "what we can bring to the community," while Koski keeps her focus on LTD's mission of "connecting our community. The majority of LTD's workforce are frontline employees. We're all dedicated to that mission and ensuring community means everyone." **L**

Community-guided Board Policy on an Equitable Distribution of Amenities



By Emma Martinez, Rose Lisska

Rose Lisska is a principal planner at CapMetro and served as the project manager for the updated service standards and guidelines.



Emma Martinez is a senior planner at CapMetro and served as the deputy project manager for the updated service standards and guidelines.

AUSTIN, TEXAS • In the summer of 2022, Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (CapMetro), the transit authority for Austin and the Central Texas area, began the typical process of updating its service standards and guidelines. As part of the update, the agency also determined how to go beyond the federal requirement of Title VI with an amenities enhancement process that aimed to not only equally, but equitably distribute amenities.

Central to CapMetro's process was community feedback. The agency asked transit riders and the surrounding communities what works best for them and how the placement of amenities should be prioritized. In the fall of 2022, the agency reviewed the responses, which indicated that all bus stops should have seats and shelters, and that stops with more ridership should have extra amenities. They also said CapMetro should prioritize improving bus stops that are used by people who need them most, like bus stops near services for people with disabilities or seniors.

In 2023, as Austin experienced its hottest summer, more inquiries and requests came in calling for increased shade and other amenities to protect riders from the sun. CapMetro accelerated the implementation of the amenity enhancement process, approved and championed by its board in June 2023.

Amenity enhancement process

CapMetro used the newly approved guidelines, which provided standards for where stops are placed to support safety, speed and access, and identified the types of amenities needed for various types of stops. Stops were classified using several variables, including ridership, service type and customer wait time (i.e., how often the bus arrives at a stop).

Thanks to community feedback, CapMetro retained the threshold that stops with an average daily boarding of 50 riders require a shelter and added language

that a shelter, while not required, is vital for stops with an average daily boarding of 15 riders and/or stops with longer wait times. This change in terminology flagged many more stops as potentially needing amenities, particularly those in areas with historic disinvestment. CapMetro worked quickly to implement new amenities using stop classifications, along with an amenities enhancement process that prioritizes equitable placement of amenities using the following criteria:

- Proximity to those more likely to use transit (Data: Black, Indigenous, People of Color, low income, car-free households, people with limited English, older adults, young people, people with disabilities and Justice 40 populations).
- How long customers wait for the bus (Data: Route frequency by stop).
- The number of key destinations near a stop and reliability of pedestrian connectivity to stops (Data: Key destinations and sidewalk infrastructure).
- Customer requests (Data: Customer calls and messages with specific stop amenity requests).

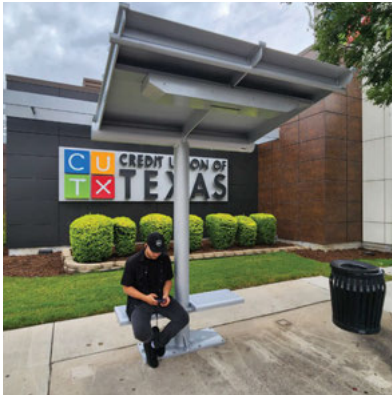
What has implementation looked like?

CapMetro's prioritization process effectively guided agency staff in the initial review of stop needs. However, the process found that stops located in areas that have historically experienced disinvestment often required additional infrastructure improvements before amenities could be installed. As a result, adding amenities became more time-consuming and costly for the areas that needed support the most.

CapMetro had limited funding for additional infrastructure improvements needed before installing amenities. The agency expanded its database and built an Airtable to track all the happenings at every stop to help identify opportunities to leverage funding from adjacent infrastructure projects, new developments or new transit services near a bus stop in need of a shelter. This strategic maneuver brought down the upfront project costs and effectively used resources so that more shelters could be installed.

As the adage goes: right place, right time. The agency's look to enhance programming around bus stops took place at just the right time, as 2024 was one of Austin's hottest summers on record. CapMetro's community-guided policy on an equitable distribution of amenities, paired with a database that leverages available resources, supported CapMetro's implementation of more amenities and shelters across the city.

CapMetro continues to implement its process of installing amenities across the transit system to provide a sense of dignity to customers and much-improved riding experiences. After all, all trips on public transit start and end at a bus stop. **L**



Sunset EcoShade

Tolar Manufacturing Company's Sunset EcoShade bus shelter provides passenger seating and shade at stops with limited space. The shelter is built in an all-aluminum EcoShade system that features a protective fully welded radius roof and seating for two (benches come with or without backrests). RMS80F Solar Lighting is powered by 80W roof mounted panels with integrated battery storage, providing five-day minimum autonomous lighting operation of dusk-to-dawn 8W LED lighting fixture. Finished in durable baked powder coat.

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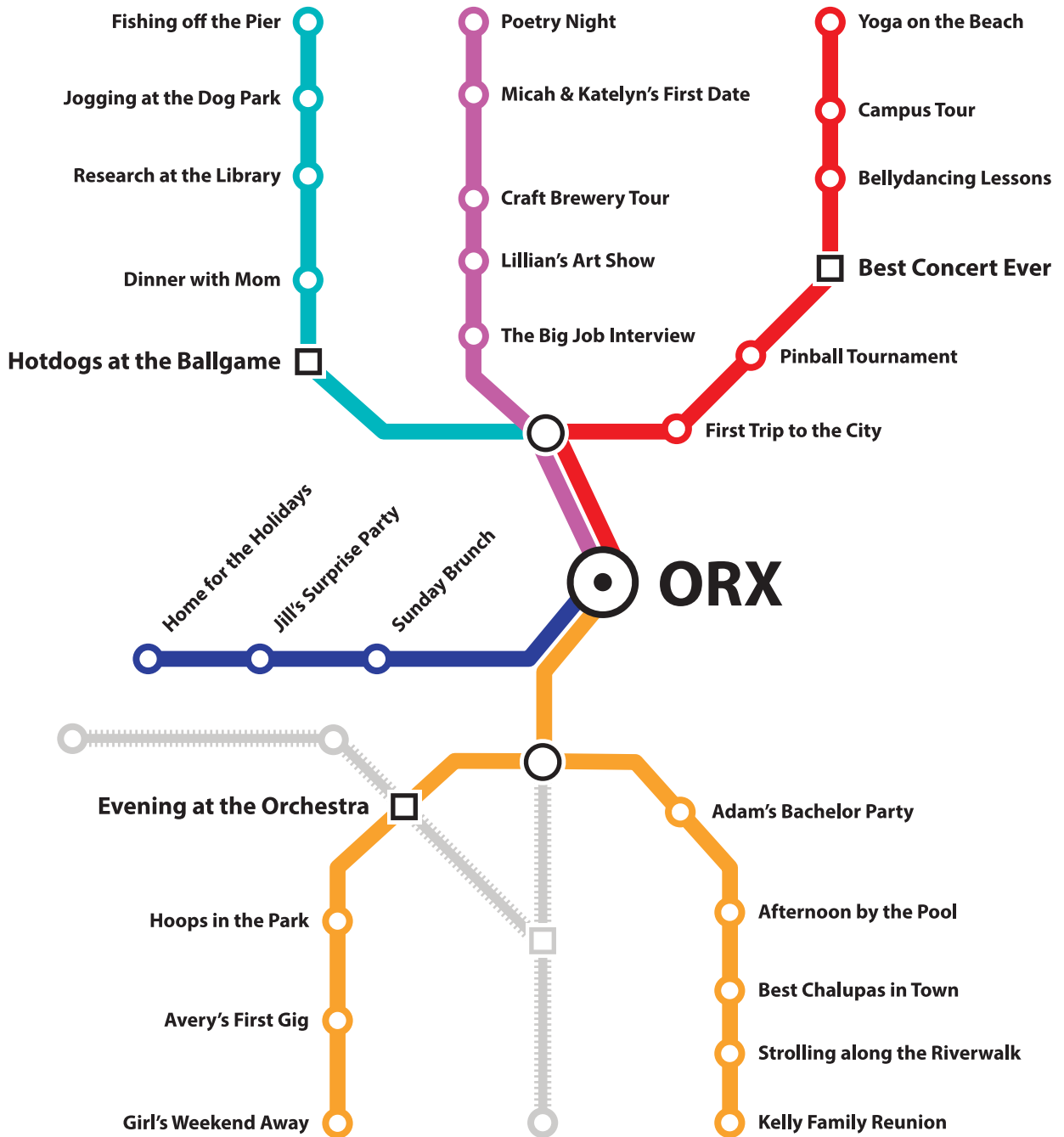
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