

# Mobility Conference

Louisville, KY  
May 21, 2019

## Public Transit and Social Responsibility: Homelessness

2018 Leadership APTA Team Project





# Public Transit and Social Responsibility: Homelessness



1. Why transit systems are attractive to homeless individuals
2. How agencies are balancing ridership and the homelessness epidemic
3. Biggest challenges for transit providers
4. Call to Action for the industry

**WHY ARE TRANSIT  
SYSTEMS ATTRACTIVE  
TO HOMELESS  
INDIVIDUALS?**

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# Transit Facilities Can Provide Basic Needs

- Shelters not always an option
- Police presence
- Food and clothing donations
- Public restrooms



**“Homeless individuals would rather be at transit facilities because they know they are protected by the police.”**

– Gary Denamen, New Jersey Transit Police Outreach Officer



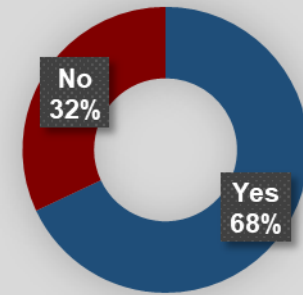
# Survey and Interview Organizations



# Survey Findings: Impact on Transit

- Homelessness is an issue that impacts nearly all agencies
- Often more visible in cities with large homeless populations
- 78% say homelessness impacts ridership
- Desire for agencies to be a part of collective solutions

Do you believe transit agencies should play a role in addressing homelessness?



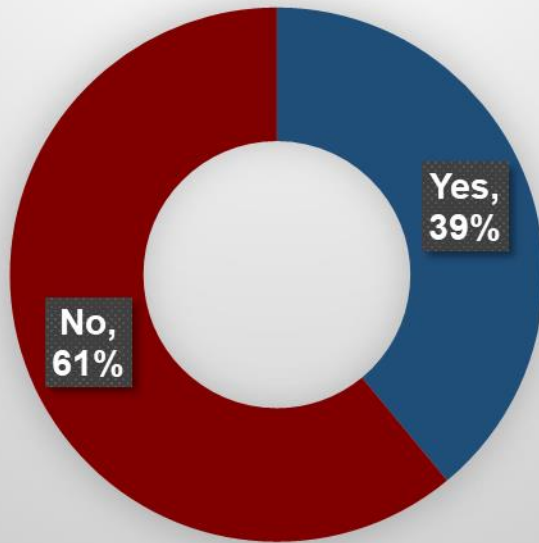
Two Different Viewpoints:

“Homeless individuals can make others feel uncomfortable, thereby deterring choice riders”

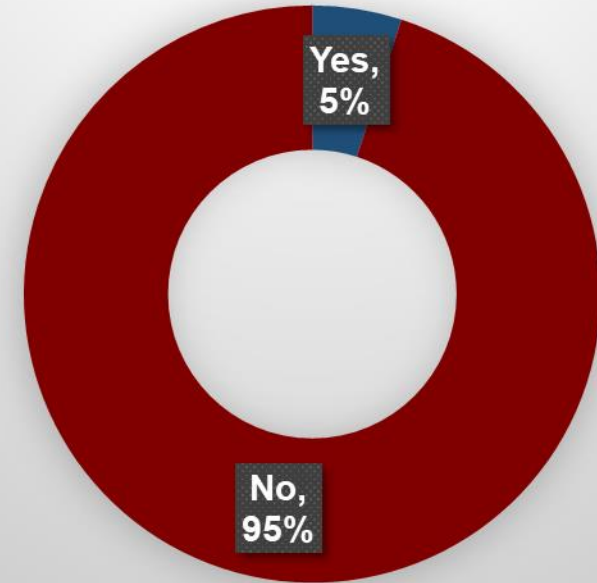
“Homeless individuals ride transit for shelter, thereby adding ridership”

# Survey Findings: Resources

Does your agency have a homeless outreach program or partner with any community organizations?



Does your agency have budget allocated for issues related to homelessness?







**WHAT ARE AGENCIES  
DOING TO BALANCE  
RIDERSHIP AND  
HOMELESSNESS?**

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# Transit Agencies as Community Partners

- Work with social service organizations to align transit service with key social service destinations
- Reduced fare partnerships
- Shelter in inclement weather





# Considerations for Bus Systems

- Fare free services
- Operator safety and training
- Transportation for all community members



Fare free downtown shuttle in Savannah, GA





# Pit Stop Restrooms





# New Jersey Transit: Crisis Intervention Officers

- New Jersey Transit Police Department (NJTPD) has two crisis intervention officers specifically to work with homeless individuals
- Partner with Volunteers of America and other social service organizations
- Includes a safe surrender partnership with the courts





**WHAT ARE THE  
BIGGEST CHALLENGES  
FOR TRANSIT  
PROVIDERS?**

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# Recognition of Responsibility: Why Should We Care as an Industry?

- Selling public transportation to areas beyond those currently served
- Ensuring the safety of customers and cleanliness of facilities
- Homelessness is projected to keep growing

# Providing a System that Supports the Entire Community

- “If we’re here for just the transit dependent population, we won’t be here for long. Addressing the homeless population is a must to maximize expansion opportunities.”

Gary C. Thomas, President/Executive Director, Dallas Area Rapid Transit

- “We must collect big data to tell the story of the human experience as it relates to homelessness.”

Curtis Koleber, CEO and Executive Director, CAT (Savannah, GA)

- “Match good intentions with adequate funding.”

Chuck Kamp, General Manager, Madison Metro (Madison, WI)



# Call to Action



# Call to Action

- 1. Treat all individuals with dignity and respect.** Serve the entire community including homeless individuals
- 2. Incorporate outreach officers with law enforcement to connect individuals with services**
- 3. Align transit service with social service destinations to help ensure services are received**

# Call to Action

4. **Partner with local municipalities & the private sector to identify funding opportunities**
5. **Develop creative solutions that do not require funding such as hiring a homeless individual for an entry level position**





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Thank You

