

Public Transit and Social Responsibility: Homelessness

Leadership APTA
September 19, 2018



Authors:

Lacy Bell (Sound Transit), **Gabriel Beltran** (DART),
Elayne Berry (MARTA), **Derik Calhoun** (AC Transit),
Tera Hankins (BART), and **Laura Hester** (NJ Transit)

Table of Contents

1.	Leadership APTA Class of 2018 Project Team.....	3
2.	Executive Summary.....	4
3.	Project Purpose.....	6
4.	Project Background.....	6
5.	Approach.....	8
6.	Literature Review.....	10
7.	Transit Agencies Survey.....	11
8.	Interviews.....	14
9.	Case Studies.....	19
10.	Conclusion and Call to Action.....	26

Appendix A: Survey Questions

Appendix B: Contributors

1. Leadership APTA Class of 2018 Project Team



Lacy Bell – Sound Transit
Corridor Operations Director
Ph: (206) 398-5399
Email: Lacy.Bell@soundtransit.org



Gabriel Beltran – DART
Director of D/M/WBE Programs
Ph: (214) 749-3542
Email: GBELTRAN@dart.org



Elayne Berry – MARTA
AGM of Safety and Quality Assurance
Ph: (404) 848-6204
Email: eberry@itsmarta.com



Derik Calhoun – AC Transit
Director of Transportation
Ph: (510) 891-4805
Email: dcalhoun@actransit.org



Tera Hankins – BART
Group Manager of Transportation
Ph: (510) 464-6983
Email: thankin@bart.gov



Laura Hester – NJ Transit
Deputy Chief of Police
Ph: (973) 491-8938
Email: lhester@njtransit.com

2. Executive Summary

This report explores the role of public transportation as it pertains to social responsibility—more specifically, homelessness. In light of recent events including the “#MeToo Movement,” increased school shootings, heightened awareness of the challenges of individuals with mental illness, growing concerns of crimes committed by the homeless, and various greenspace initiatives, what is the role of the transit CEO in terms of social responsibility? How should issues related to homelessness be prioritized when there are so many additional requests for transit agencies to address social issues?

In addition, one of the largest concerns for much of the transit industry is declining ridership. Many factors have been identified as contributing to this trend and it is possible that the impacts of homelessness may be contributing due to some riders feeling unsafe or uncomfortable if there are large numbers of homeless individuals congregated at stations and on vehicles. As such, our project focused specifically on the social responsibility of transit agencies to address homelessness given its impact on ridership and regional expansion.

Our project team reviewed case studies, interviewed executive level transportation and community leaders and conducted open discussions with public and private community partners. We considered the constraint of limited resources to develop a call to action that can serve as a framework for transportation properties/transit CEOs to effect change and elevate the call for social responsibility specifically related to homelessness.

In order to develop a call to action that is useful and achievable for the industry, much of the focus of the project was on answering three questions:

- 1. Why are transit systems attractive to homeless individuals?*
- 2. How are agencies balancing ridership and the homelessness epidemic?*
- 3. What are the biggest challenges related to homelessness for transit providers?*

Key findings from our survey of 49 transit agencies are that the majority of agencies (73%) believe homelessness impacts their ridership in one form or another and most (68%) believed that transit agencies should play a role in addressing homelessness. However, very few agencies (5%) have resources allocated for this issue.

Through the transit executive interviews, it was clear that many agencies have been playing an active role in serving the homeless populations in their communities for many years. However, these initiatives have primarily been initiated as a result of local requests not because there has been a concerted effort by the industry to agree that as transit providers we have a social responsibility to be a part of the solution to help solve homelessness.

Given the findings that many agencies are able to accomplish a lot without dedicated funding, the call to action presented here may be achievable even without dedicated funding sources.

This will require leveraging partnerships with other community services such as law enforcement, nonprofit organizations, and social service providers.

We recommend every transit provider to take on at least one of these strategies.

1. **Transit providers must treat all individuals with dignity and respect.** Remember, that transit is a good for the entire community including homeless individuals.
2. **Incorporate outreach officers with law enforcement to connect individuals to services.** This is something that can be started on a small scale with the addition of one or two outreach officers targeted at locations that are known locations where homeless individuals congregate.
3. **Align transit service with social service destinations.** Depending on locations of those services, consider operating a fare-free route.
4. **Partner with local municipalities and the private sector to identify funding opportunities.** There may be opportunities for funding that are not typically considered for transit service if they are sought out in partnership with social service organizations.
5. **Develop creative solutions that do not require funding** such as hiring a homeless individual for an entry level position. These positions could even be stationed at facilities to provide attended restrooms or elevators.

The other recommendation that we have for the industry is to continue talking about this issue so we can learn from each other the same way that we do about other topics such as service delivery and project development.

This call to action is more than a culmination of surveys, literature review, and agency interviews. It is the also the result of real agency experiences, honest discussions, hopes, failures, but most importantly the desire to be better. As public servants, we have the responsibility to serve the riding public – all of the riding public. This report provides insights from a team of dedicated transit professionals who worked tirelessly to determine what transit’s social responsibility is and how best to provide that responsibility across agency departments.



This picture reflects the situation encountered at transit stations across the country.

3. Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to explore the social responsibility of the public transit industry to address the homelessness epidemic given the impact that it has on current and future transit ridership. This paper details the approach, research findings and case studies that were conducted to develop a call to action for the transit industry to elevate the response to the larger societal crisis.

In order to develop a call to action that is useful and achievable for the industry, much of the focus of the project was on answering three questions to determine what problems need to be solved and what agencies are already doing to address them:

- 1. Why are transit systems attractive to homeless individuals?*
- 2. How are agencies balancing ridership and the homelessness epidemic?*
- 3. What are the biggest challenges related to homelessness for transit providers?*

Understanding that homelessness is a much larger issue than its impact on public transit, many of the strategies being utilized by agencies include partnerships with social services and nonprofit organizations. Building upon and expanding these partnerships is critical to the success of the initiatives that transit agencies choose to take on.

4. Project Background

One of the biggest challenges facing transit agencies today is declining ridership. In recent years, this trend has been the topic of much research and discussion within the transit industry. Initial discussions determined the decrease was most likely attributed to lingering impacts from service reductions made during the Great Recession as well as the changing transportation landscape with the introduction of Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) such as Uber and Lyft. In April of 2018, APTA's Policy and Research team published a summary of research indicating that recent ridership declines are a result of many factors and cannot easily be explained with anecdotes of TNCs covering trips that were once covered by public transit.

The APTA report noted four broad categories that contribute to declining ridership: Erosion of Time Competitiveness, Reduced Affinity, Erosion of Cost Competitiveness, and External Factors. One of the external factors identified in the report was that many urban areas have experienced an increase in homelessness due to housing shortages and changes in mental health policies. Often homeless individuals use public transit service and facilities as make-shift shelters which can lead to the perception that public transit is unsafe or an unpleasant transportation option.

Public transit is unique in that it is a good for the entire community. The following quote by the former Mayor of Bogota, Enrique Peñalosa, is often cited by urban transportation planners as one of the key requirements to develop sustainable cities:

“An advanced city is not one where even the poor have cars, but rather one where even the rich use public transport.”

This quote clearly articulates that public transit is intended to serve the entire community – everyone, independent of their income or status. In many locations across North America, especially in smaller cities, public transit is considered a resource only used by poor people. This stigma is a challenge for the industry and something that needs to be overcome for transit to be most successful.

It has become clear to transit providers that homeless individuals riding transit or congregating at transit facilities are contributing to this stigma and deterring choice riders. As such, many agencies have started to actively develop strategies to address the larger problem of homelessness. Developing strategies counteracts the former approach of the enforcement and removal of individuals from facilities when they were disruptive or evading fare payment.

Figures 1 & 2 display news headlines from this year that demonstrate the impact homelessness is having on transit systems across the country. A few of the headlines highlight how some agencies are taking an active approach by adding officers with social workers to their systems.

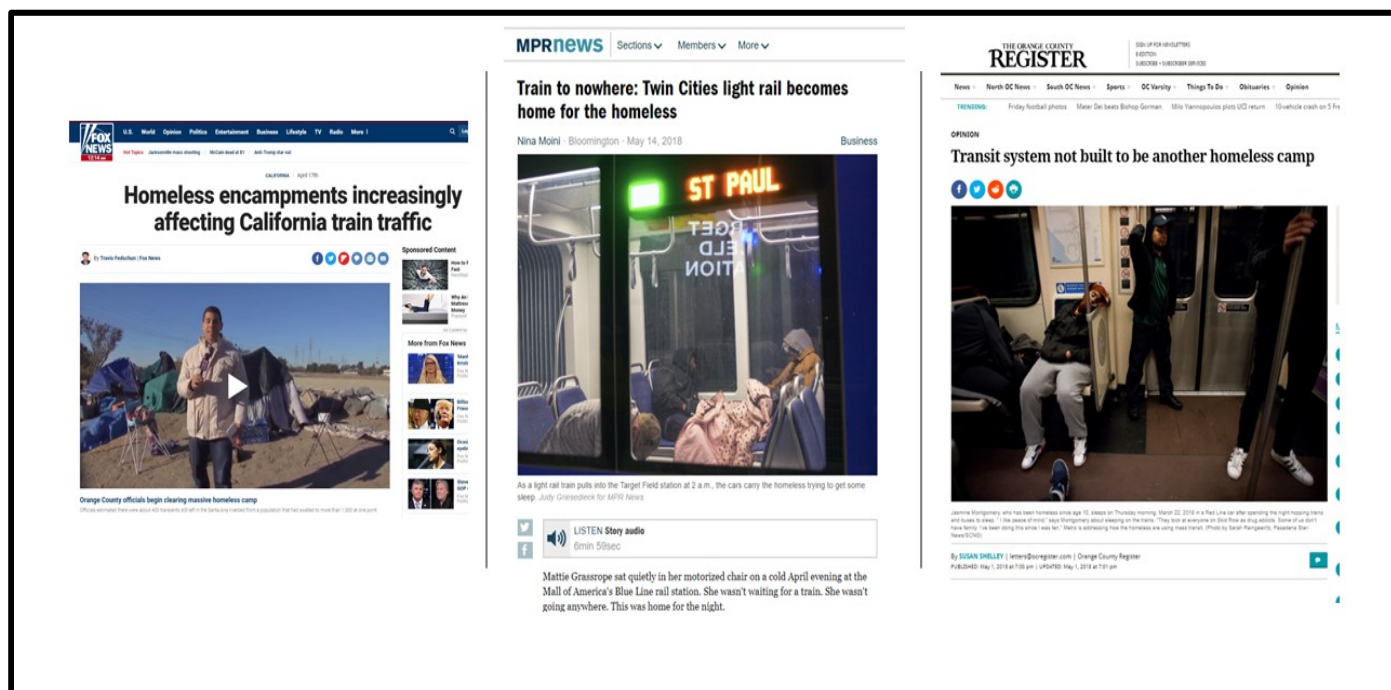


Figure 1: Sample Headlines Showing Impact of Homelessness on Transit Systems

- Homelessness is an issue that impacts all transit providers/agencies (public or private, large or small).
- The issues are often more visible at the larger agencies in cities with very large homeless populations.
- The opinions about the role that the transit agency should play in addressing this issue vary depending on the person's role within or interacting with a transit agency.
- Many agencies have programs or partner with social service providers to provide reduced fares and shelter in inclement weather for homeless individuals. Most of these programs have been developed based on the unique needs of the communities each agency serves.
- All agencies agreed that this is an important topic and were very interested in learning what other agencies are doing.

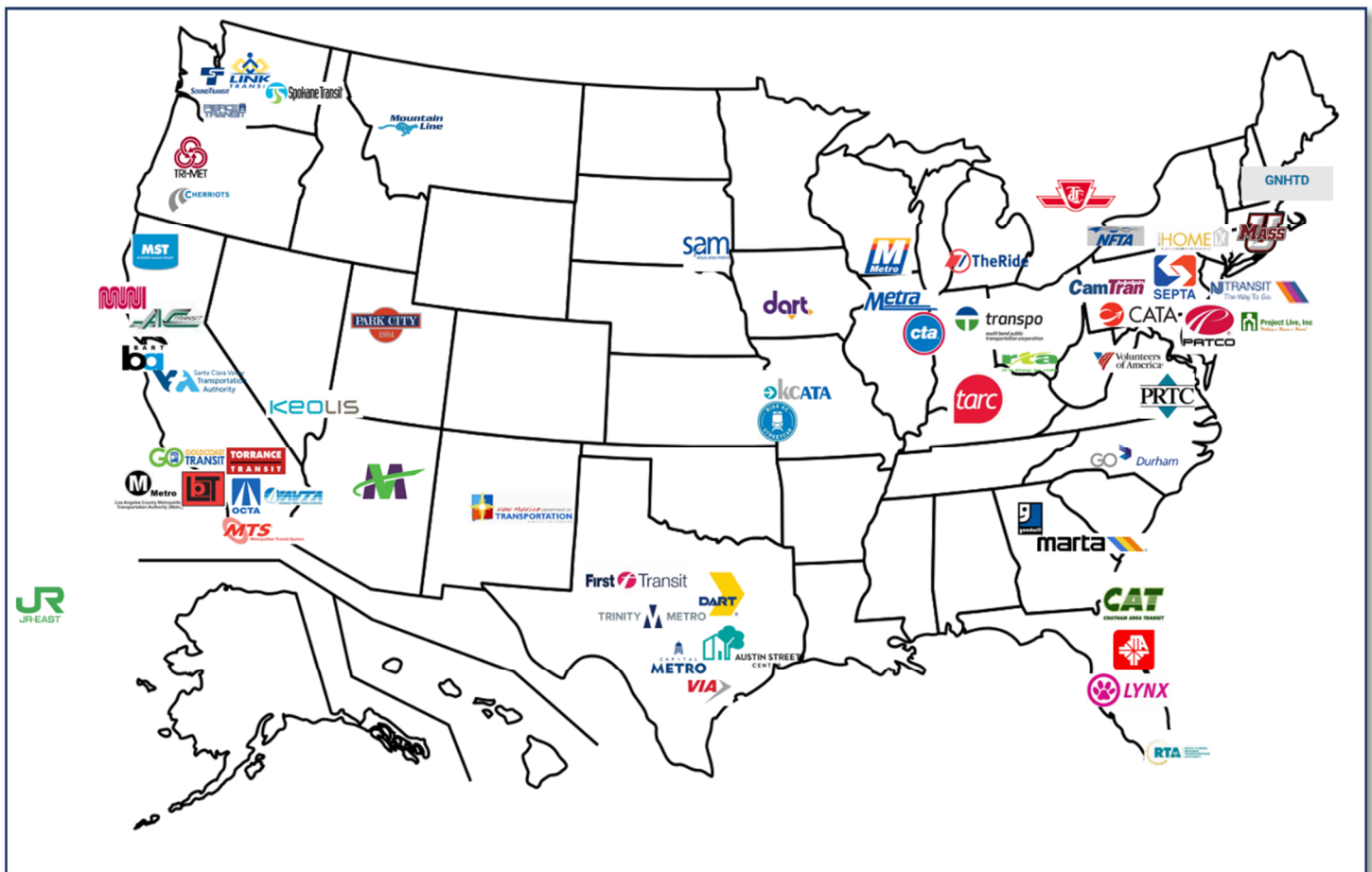


Figure 3: Organizations that were Interviewed or Completed the Survey

6. Literature Review

Our team started with a literature review to grasp what information has already been published. The most relevant discovery was that the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) completed A Synthesis of Transit Practice on this topic in 2016. TCRP Synthesis 121: Transit Agency Practices in Interacting with People Who Are Homeless included valuable information and the conclusions / areas for future study from that report helped shape the survey and interview questions that we used. One of the key findings from the synthesis was that while consistent enforcement of policies is critical to day to day dealings with homeless individuals, enforcement alone is not enough to truly address the issue. As such, many of our questions were focused on what opportunities there are for transit agencies to develop partnerships that will allow for innovative approaches beyond enforcement.

The literature review included numerous articles about how homelessness is impacting transit agencies similar to those shown in **Figures 1 and 2**. These news articles noted reports of homeless encampments impacting railroad or other transportation rights of way. There was also an article published for CityLab in 2013 entitled Why Homelessness is a Transportation Issue. One key takeaway from that article was that transportation government agencies are often a first point of contact for homeless individuals, but transportation agency employees are not equipped with training to deal with such a situation. This article was not specific to transit but identified this as an issue that impacts state departments of transportation including the highway and railroad divisions. The general concept that employees of these organizations require training to best support homeless individuals on their systems helped guided much of our research as well.

7. Transit Agencies Surveys

Via weekly teleconferences, our team created an electronic fifteen question survey that would best capture a cross-functional pulse of the transportation industry as it pertains to social responsibility and homelessness. This survey was sent to the transit leaders across the United States. We received responses from 46 agencies of varying sizes. The survey as distributed is included in the **Appendix**. The key findings from the survey are summarized in **Figures 4 – 6**.

PUBLIC TRANSIT AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	
<p><u>IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS ON RIDERSHIP</u></p> <p>73% of respondents believe homelessness impacts ridership</p> <p>They believe homelessness impacts ridership in the following ways;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They homeless make other riders uncomfortable thereby deterring choice riders - Homeless people ride buses/trains and increase ridership - Hostile / disruptive interactions with other passengers decrease ridership - Some of the homeless people ride the trains as a form of shelter and are a nuisance to other passengers.. 	<p><u>ROLE OF TRANSIT AGENCIES IN ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS</u></p> <p>68% of respondents believe transit agencies should play an active role in addressing homelessness</p> <p>39% of repoding agencies have a homeless outreach program or partner with community organizations to address homelessness</p> <p>24% have a department/office that is responsible for addressing homelessness</p> <p>5% of responding agencies have an allocated budget for specifically working with the homeless</p>
<p><u>HOMELESSNESS AND CRIME IN TRANSIT</u></p> <p>54% of responding agencies have a police department/security staff that has been certified with crisis intervention training (CIT)</p> <p>37% of responding agencies have seen an increase in crime attributed to homelessness. Some of the crimes that have seen an increase are; assault, property damage, theft, drug sales/use, vandalism, gang activity, grafitti, and trespassing</p>	<p><u>FRONT LINE EMPLOYEE TRAINING</u></p> <p>87% of responding agencies have trained front line employees on how to deal with the homeless or mentally ill</p> <p>Some of the training undertaken by employees are, De-escalation, First Aid, Critical Intervention Training, Customer Service and Courtesy, Sensitivity Training, etc.</p>

Figure 4: Summary of Survey Findings

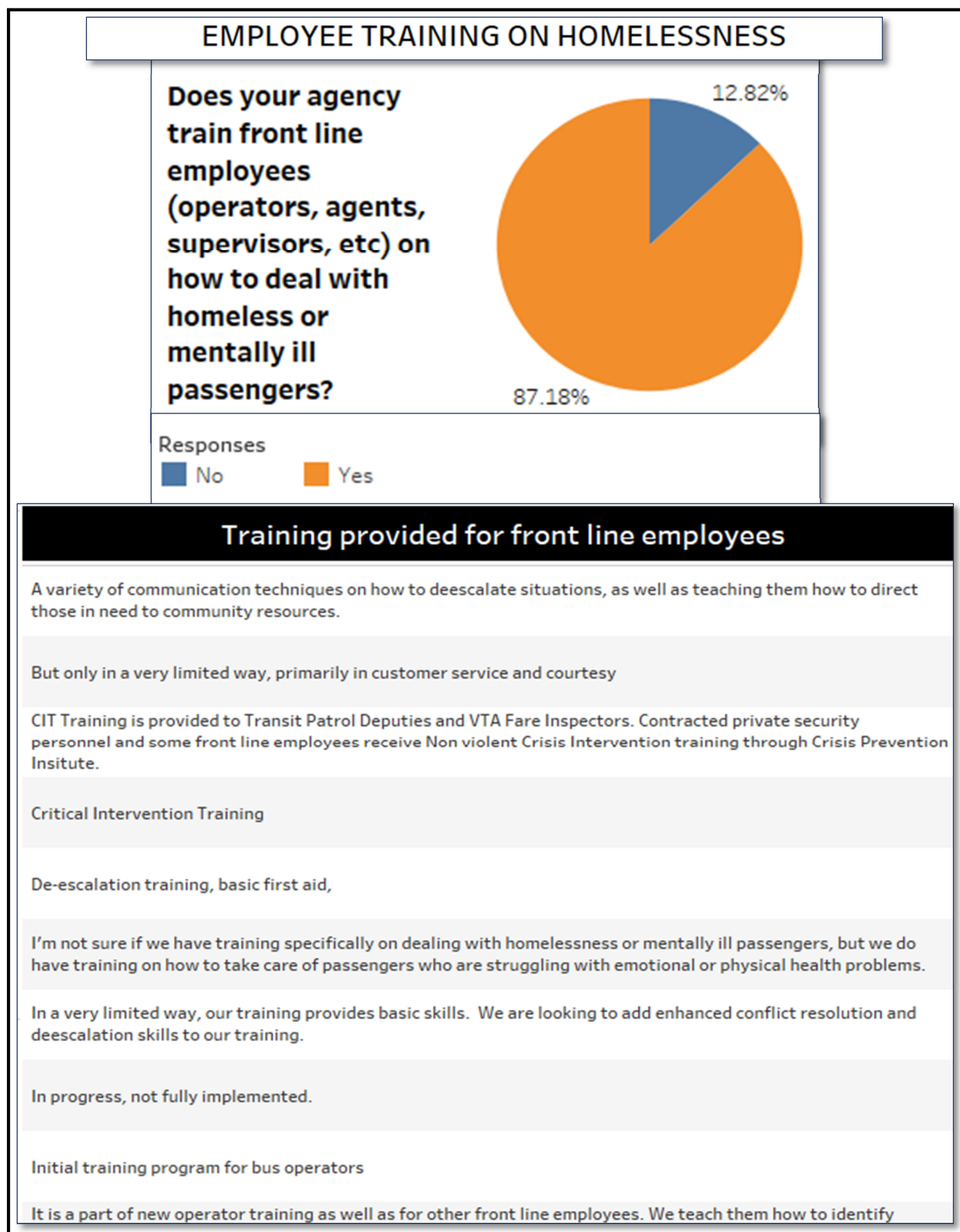
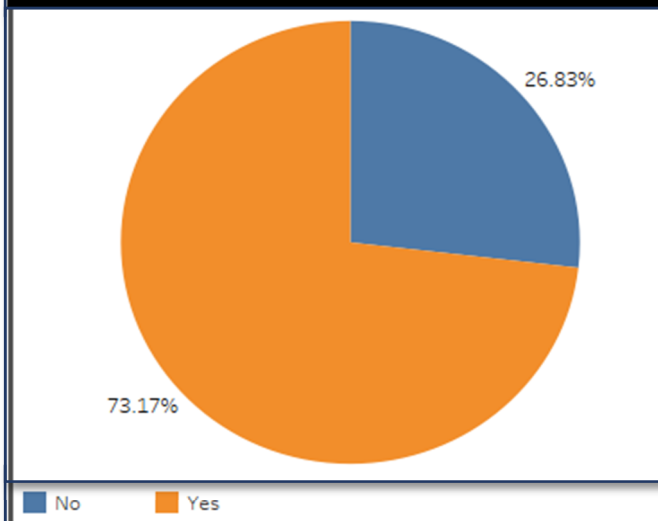


Figure 5: Survey Findings Regarding Employee Training

HOMELESSNESS AND RIDERSHIP

Do you believe homelessness impacts your ridership?



Why do you believe homelessness impacts ridership?

Homeless people around transit terminals deter choice riders in their bid to avoid contact

If people are homeless they may not have the ability to pay the fare or they prioritize other activity.

Issues related to cleanliness of the passengers, the bus. Issues related to safety at bus stops and on the bus. Just recently a regular homeless passenger walked into a restaurant and stabbed a father, with his child on his lap, to death. This passenger had made many comments about violence and had been banned more than once from the service. Many passengers will avoid the service due to holdups caused by difficult homeless passengers.

Kansas City homelessness has impacted our transit system, due to individuals seeking shelter on our bus lines, stops and transit centers. The lack of sufficient housing and shelter services for homelessness has increased the use of our transit system as an alternate form of shelter. Just riding around to sleep on the buses. This has directly impacted our ridership. Some of our riders look at homelessness as drug addicts and people with mental illness.

Makes other commuters uncomfortable.

Mental illness, addiction and hygiene issues of some members of the homeless who frequent transit centers can create safety concerns among other members of the public that utilize transit, discouraging them to choose transit.

Most homeless have become very aggressive

Figure 6: Survey Findings Regarding Impact on Ridership

8. Interviews

Executive Level Transit Leader Interviews

As part of the information-gathering phase of the overall project, we conducted interviews with executive-level personnel familiar with the current market conditions and trends affecting the homelessness epidemic. These interviews were intended to provide a “big picture” perspective that corroborates and enhances the data collected from the survey provided by a group of agencies country wide. A list of the interviewees is provided in the Appendix. The goal of this process was to get a perspective from leaders in the industry on what responsibility transit agencies have to help address the homelessness epidemic. We wanted to understand what agencies are currently doing and if they have any future plans or ideas to deal with this issue.

Highlights of Important Findings. The interview responses can be briefly summarized in terms of the following key themes:

- Agencies cannot turn a blind eye to the homelessness epidemic. There is a distinct correlation to how this issue affects transportation.
- An agency should reflect the community they serve. Community engagement is key and should be a part of an agency’s make up.
- Partnerships between social service agencies and transportation leaders are very important to addressing the homelessness concern.
- Perception is reality. If people think the transit system is unsafe or feel uncomfortable than it is.

As CEO/GM, what do you believe are your agency’s social responsibilities regarding homelessness?

- Most compelling thought why would transit agencies have a responsibility to help with the homeless crisis.
- Agency, an operating business within a community or a city, have a responsibility to help build the fabric of the place they do business.
- Ideal agencies would partner with local social services, and community leaders to look for all resources available to address this issue. Working together, there should be a way to find housing or shelter when transit is not operating.
- Most people that encounter homelessness find it difficult to find shelter as many shelters are overbooked and lack the available space to serve all homeless individuals in a community.

“To be a fully engaged partner with the city and county agencies that are responsible for social services”. **Chuck Kamp, General Manager of Metro Transit**

No matter the approach, transit agencies should focus on getting people where they need to go safely. To help with the perception of homelessness always being attributed to mental illness, agencies should—over the longer-term—train their operators about homelessness to increase their understanding of how the plight of this epidemic could affect some riders on their system. Alongside the importance of training bus and rail operators to handle circumstances surrounding active shooters, suspicious activity, and individuals with mental illness, agencies are increasingly understanding that equipping operators with the emotional intelligence to handle encounters with the homeless individuals is important as well.

Ultimately, transit agencies should not necessarily be a refuge for the homeless, but a provider of means for them to connect to available resources.

What does the ideal transit agency look like in terms of social responsibility and what can you do to create this?

- Understanding the needs of your community.
- Good stewardship of taxpayer's money.
- Listen to the needs of the city you serve.
- Seek out questions to answer how addressing the issue would suit your agency best.

TARC in Louisville for instance listened to the concerns of community and partnered with community partners on “white flag days” to provide free transportation to shelters on days with inclement weather. TARC doesn’t call the police on the homeless, they try to support the city by staying involved and a part of all community activity groups.

During the course of these interviews most agencies have a mission to connect with the community that they serve and a goal of making a better way for those that need transportation in partnership with social service agencies. The question is always, what would be wrong with a social program that offers transit passes to homeless persons seeking work or education opportunities? Leaders of all agencies working together is essential.

“By working with each other there is a greater chance that more homeless and mentally ill people can make doctor’s appointments or have the opportunity to find work”. Lee Burner, Executive Director/Vice President of Long Beach Transit

Is homelessness impacting your agency financially? Most agencies felt like the biggest financial impacts include:

- Non-payment of fares
- Additional resources needed to do train or bus sweeps
- Additional resources for cleaning of shelters and removal of encampments from their properties
- Need to purchase more expensive goods that can be kept clean such as rubber bus/train sets as opposed to regular cushion material that can absorb blood borne pathogens
- Slowdowns to service delivery or the closure of stops

There are several agencies that are looking at their fare box structure and educating their board of directors on the percentage of fare box revenue compared to the community benefits. Some agencies have the benefit of being part of a city structure, so the city bares the cost of many programs that would normally impact their agency. The city of Madison provides a total of four hundred and fifty low income passes sold at twenty-eight dollars to individuals who sign a form identifying them as low-income individuals. This program is a benefit for Metro Transit.

Several leadership members within the transportation community serve on boards that give them the platform to help the community in understanding the issues their agencies take on.

Is there anything else that you would like to share about how homelessness is impacting your agency and your role in addressing it?

- Tourism is affected by the presence of homelessness. Fear for physical safety. Tourists are not attracted to riding either early in the morning or late at night because of this.
- The lack of communication and involvement between businesses, the homeless, and social services to understand how new transit projects could cause substantial gentrification within their city.
- Projects are forced to move encampments which could place an agency and a city on within the news. Agencies should carefully deal with social issues and what role they play.
- Not necessarily cutting transit service, but work to leverage startup costs for new projects to support social services. This rings especially true of projects that cause a potential influence with gentrification within a community.

There are several partnership solutions through that could help by partnering with social agencies, private networks and community groups, the homeless epidemic could be helped in many ways. Partnering could offer a variety of outlets for the homeless such as job training, education assistance, medical referrals, housing, individual services, vocational training, identification services, and several other outreach programs that could change the outcome of an individual's homeless situation.

"I spent 30 days in a homeless encampment, I was able to help Charles get out of his homeless problem by staying with me. I helped him to get his life back in order. He was able to get an identification card and begin working. All I wanted to do was make a difference". **Ken Houston, Oakland Community Activist and Mayoral Candidate**

Agencies are steadily working with their boards to formulate the scope of transit benefits throughout their respective communities by building relationships with social service organizations, providing a wider range of options impacting this issue. Nevertheless, addressing the homeless population is a must to maximize expansion opportunities. For instance, the City of San Francisco supports the homeless; they spend more percent per capita than any other city to address the homeless issue. They offer programs to do everything possible to return the homeless back to work and to get housing.

Social Service Personnel Interviews

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding about the homeless epidemic and how it relates to public transit, speaking to those that have day-to-day interactions with this population was a necessity. Continuing with the information-gathering phase for this project, we conducted interviews with director-level personnel within the social services arena, that had ideas and recommendations about public transit's role in its interactions with homeless individuals and how the transit industry in general can better serve this population. These interviews were conducted in person or over the phone. In every instance, the personnel interviewed made it a point to let us know they were very appreciative for allowing them a platform to express their thoughts.

Highlights of Important Findings. The interview responses can be briefly summarized in terms of the following key themes:

- Public transportation is here to serve every individual within the community it provides services.
- Diversion is the best practice to combat homelessness.
- Public transportation and social work organizations must work together to get homeless individuals to the appropriate facilities.
- Innovative planning and design by transit agencies can assist in improving the current situation of homeless individuals.

How can public transportation agencies work with organizations like yours to better serve the homeless?

- As a homeless shelter Director, no one from the transit industry has ever reached out me regarding homelessness issues and ideas on how to combat it on their system.
- The only interaction I have had is regarding subsidized passes to hand out to our sheltered population. As grateful as I am for that, the bigger picture solution would be collaboration and the providing of platforms for people like myself to provide input and assistance on this issue.
- I think a great start would be for the CEO's to meet with individuals like myself (on a regular basis) to discuss the issues and problems that are affecting their system due to homelessness. If the homeless problem is truly an issue that is wanting to be addressed, it must be given meaningful time by those that sit in the most important chairs at their organizations.

What are some initiatives that public transit agencies can be doing to help in addressing this growing epidemic?

- Providing a fare free zone would be a great start. Portland had/has a fare free zone in their downtown area. Houston also provides what is often referred to as a "Social Service

Loop". This is a bus route service that provides the convenience of homeless/severely low-income individuals to visit all the area social service agencies in one route (but anyone can ride). This helps them meet crucial deadlines and obtain vital services without spending days upon weeks trying to figure out routes and fares for multiple bus routes to the numerous locations.

- In times of extreme inclement weather, agencies should allow people to board buses and trains without a fare requirement. This could save someone's life.

Why should public transit agencies consider this a problem large enough to commit time and resources to address?

- On a local and national level, the homeless population has grown every single year since 2010.
- At the beginning of every year, our shelter does a counting of the homeless population within the city and not only are general homeless numbers going up, but so are the numbers of chronic homeless. This means that more people are living longer on the streets which translates to a more visible presence in areas like libraries and transit facilities.
- If there is no forethought on how to address these issues, transit agencies will eventually have to allocate money to address things like enforcement, repairs to facilities, and replacement of equipment.
- If we work together and have plans and procedures in place before this issue gets too far in front of us, we have a better chance to be successful on all fronts.

How would you describe the current situation with homeless children and their relationship with public transit?

- Transit agencies typically give free passes to hand out to the kids that fall under this category, however it is never enough. Furthermore, the passes that are given are only valid during the week...I assume that is because school is held during the week. This, however, is doing a great disservice to our high school children because many of their activities occur on the weekends as well. Take for example a high school junior that needs to visit the library over the weekend to conduct research for a school project. Or maybe a high school senior who is employed and works on the weekend to earn money for themselves or their family. Extending these passes for two extra days per week can help to improve the social, educational and financial hurdles that being a homeless teen poses. These are not areas we expect transit agencies to initially recognize as solutions to address homelessness, however these small changes possibly can prevent future homelessness. Allowing these children access to a transit system during the weekend, especially in large urban settings, allows them a greater opportunity to improve their grades and employment chances.

9. Case Studies

In addition to the executive level interviews with transit and social service providers, our team gathered more information about how homeless individuals are interacting with transit systems by interviewing transit security officers, police officers, and staff at social service agencies and volunteer organizations. We also spoke to crisis intervention officers throughout the country and visited the Hub of Hope which is a walk-in engagement center for homeless people in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. We discovered several commonalities among transit agencies.

1. Many agencies have paired law enforcement with social services to engage the homeless and offer an array of services.
2. Several agencies spoke of the importance of offering services to homeless and found it equally important to educate the homeless about the rules and regulations for their systems.
3. Agencies expressed their concerns about homeless individuals excessively riding on buses or trains without tickets and taking multiple seats in the waiting rooms.
4. Several agencies reported an increase in employee and commuter assaults as well as an increase in customer complaints.
5. Each agency believed they had responsibility to get actively involved in finding a medium between the growing homeless epidemic and the commuting public.

Through the survey and interviews we were able to get basic information from a diverse set of transit agencies. We selected agencies that are taking innovative approaches to address homelessness as case studies in order to highlight strategies other agencies can utilize.

Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA)

The Hub of Hope is a partnership between Project Home, The City of Philadelphia and SEPTA. The center opened in January 2018. Since its inception approximately 2,000 people have visited and requested some type of services. It's located in Center City Philadelphia, in the concourses of Two Penn Center Suburban Station. Some of the services offered are acute medical care, case management and meals, showers, clothes, toiletries, washing machines.

They have physicians and medical students on staff from local hospitals to help with acute medical needs. On an average they engage about 200 people per day and provide thousands of daily cups of coffee donated by Wawa Convenience Stores. Hub of Hope is staffed with 16 full time employees and many volunteers. The average clients are usually males between the ages of 40-50 years old.

Clients walk in and sign up for services at the main desk. At around 4pm clients sign up for transportation to shelter for overnight housing. Outreach teams from Hub of Hope provide transportation to the various shelters throughout the city. In addition to the walk in care, they have outreach teams that work with Septa Police and Philadelphia City Police on the streets and

train stations to link people with services and educate them about Hub of Hope. They police the partnership with the police is very important.



Figure 7: Picture of the Hub of Hope at Surburban Station in Philadelphia, PA

New Jersey Transit and Volunteers of America (VOA)

The New Jersey Transit Police Department has established a partnership with the local Volunteers of America (VOA) to provide outreach to homeless individuals on their system. Amanda Leese from Volunteers of America stressed the importance of partnering with law enforcement. She is the Regional Director of Safe Return, Delaware Valley Affiliate, and stated her program would not be successful without these partnerships. Her office provides immediate direct services to individuals experiencing homelessness. Services offered are job training, education assistance, medical referrals, transportation legal consultation, housing, individual services, identification services, vocational training, benefits, budgeting training, jail diversion programs. Most of their clients are from New Jersey Transit hubs. Each morning her counselors pair up with New Jersey Transits outreach police officers and engage the homeless at the train stations. Once contact is made they conduct an evidence based intake assessment which determines services needed for the individual and begin the intake process to provide the services. Some services are considered immediate such as shelter and others are long term. The partnership also includes New Jersey Superior Court. Once a month VOA, New Jersey Transit Police and New Jersey Superior Court offer a Safe Surrender Program at a designated New Jersey Transit train station that affords

people with open warrants an opportunity to turn themselves without being arrested. The warrant is temporarily vacated while the individual receives services.

New Jersey Transit also has two crisis intervention outreach police officers. They are trained in crisis intervention and work exclusively with the homeless as well as social services, The Veteran's Administrations, shelters and volunteer organizations. They are also actively engaged with churches, the courts, jails, hospitals, state police missing persons units and they hold outreach events. Police Officer Gary Denamen and Police Officer Sean Pfeifer engage the homeless and provide weekly status reports to the Chief of Police, Christopher Trucillo. Each status report contains a photo of the person the engaged, the person's pedigree, the services requested and the linkage to services. These reports are important because it's a way to keep track of the amount of times a person has been engaged, offered services and refused. It also serves as a reference when a case worker or missing persons unit is looking for an individual that may be homeless.

Each month NJ Transit holds an outreach event at a designated train station by bringing services to the homeless. They set up outreach tables at various stations and invite representatives from Superior Court, The Veteran Services, Addiction Treatment programs and Legacy treatment and many others to attend. This program has been very success for New Jersey Transit because it offers all the resources one location. Many homeless people attend these events and sign themselves into treatment. New Jersey Transit also provides a van to transport people to services.

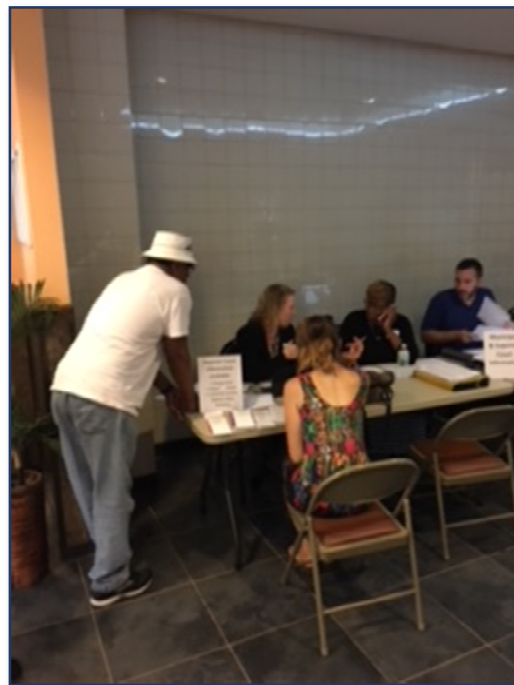


Figure 8: Pictures from a New Jersey Transit Outreach Event

New Jersey Transit also implemented a two hour seating limit in the waiting rooms where commuters must have a valid ticket. New Jersey Transit police check the tickets of every person seated in the waiting room to ensure that every paying customer has the right to a seat in the waiting room. This has been very helpful curtailing customer complaints about available seating.

VOA also has a Navigation Outreach Center which provides re-entry programs for individuals that have been out of jail for three years or less. They provide housing, job training, budgeting, mental health and addiction counseling. The goal is to get people to be self-sufficient. They have plenty of case studies of at risk individuals who have been chronically homeless in the train stations for years and are now employed and self-sufficient.

Amanda Leese also mentioned that the VOA has successful programs throughout the US: HOST (Homeless Outreach Service Team) in Utah, LEAD in Washington State, SIP (Serial Inebriate Program) in San Diego

HOST (Salt Lake City Utah): The program is a partnership with the police and homeless services. They connect the homeless with social services and resources. Donations are set up all throughout Salt Lake City Utah where people you put spare change into a meter: the meter reads “INTO REAL CHANGE”. The money is spread out throughout the city to help service providers with the greatest needs. The meters are all throughout the city. Utah is facing an Opioid crisis right now.

SIP (San Diego): Was developed with a partnership with law enforcement, courts, medical services and hospitals. The program is designed to offer services to chronic homeless inebriates in lieu of custody thru a court order. The person who has five transports to the reception center within a 30 day period will be placed into custody. The success of this program in San Diego has now brought it to New York City. San Diego has chronic homelessness issues.

LEAD (Seattle, Washington): Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion- the program was designed to help low level offenders into community based treatment, housing, healthcare job training and mental health support. The coalition consists of law enforcement, public officials, community groups, and public officials. The goal is help offender instead of arresting them. The budget exceeds \$2.5 million. Seattle Washington has severe drug use and prostitution issues causing homelessness that are being addressed with LEAD.

Chicago Transit Authority (CTA)

Laura Decastro, Senior Project Manager from Chicago Transit Authority stated her agency is currently working with Alisa Rodriguez, Deputy Commissioner of Homeless and Family Services. Their coordinated efforts fostered a partnership with Featherfist (city wide not-for-profit social service agency) and The Catholic Charities. They set up outreach teams to engage the homeless and offer services. A great deal of their resources are focused on the blue and red line trains

which operate 24 hours a day and are frequented by homeless late at night. The outreach teams work on the late night trains and connect the homeless to resources. They also educate the homeless on the code of conduct for Chicago Transit Authority.

CTA has an Intergovernmental agreement with Chicago police department who enforce the code of conduct rules. CTA supplements their enforcement with a vendor called Action K-9, who are on posts in terminals and work with Featherfist and the Catholic Charities to assist the homeless.

Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART)

BART has been providing transportation throughout the Bay Area for more than 45 years. The homeless crisis is noticeable on BART trains and stations. This national epidemic has not spared this transit agency. In response, BART has been focusing on addressing the homeless crisis to ensure the safety, security, comfort and convenience of BART passengers. BART does not have resources that are needed by homeless individuals, so they have partnered with local organizations to connect homeless individuals that are in the BART system with services and resources.

BART has been working on several measures that are permanent and pilot initiatives to address the homeless epidemic as summarized in **Figure 9**.

BART has been connecting homeless individuals with services and resources by implementing the following initiatives:

- Hired a full time Crisis Intervention Training and Homeless Outreach Coordinator on the BART Police Department (BPD) staff. The Outreach Coordinator acts as a liaison with public and private entities to provide resources for homeless. This collaboration ensures that BPD personnel are prepared to assist in the most appropriate and culturally responsive manner.
- BART Police officers receive Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) which is a law enforcement program based on having specially trained officers who can respond to crisis calls involving populations with special needs, such as mentally ill individuals, the homeless or those with drug and alcohol addictions. The CIT training develops sensitivity and understanding regarding these issues. This will increase officer safety and provide a proactive method for resolving these sensitive situations.



Figure 9: Overview of BART's Strategies to Address the Homelessness Crisis

- Helped fund the fully attended restrooms for customers and non-customers called Pit Stop bathrooms. These bathrooms are located at major station entrances and exits in Downtown San Francisco to provide safe and clean access to restrooms for the public.
- In November 2017, BART helped fund a partnership between MUNI and the City of San Francisco's Department of Homelessness to provide two full-time Homelessness Outreach Teams (HOT) with an initial focus on Powell and Civic Center. They help move people from the stations into shelters, while also connecting them to treatment and more

permanent resources. During the team's first two weeks they contacted 39 individuals, 29 of which were connected to services.

- In May 2018, BART Police Department and San Francisco Police Department partnered to tackle quality of life issues that are plaguing the Civic Center Station in Downtown San Francisco. The two agencies have increased their patrols in the station and with the help of the Salvation Army. Homeless individuals are being offered and provided services and educations. BART has started small to tackle the homeless crisis by collecting service data, customer feedback and starting pilot programs. Starting small has given the agency time to find the necessary partners, funds and resources to continue with programs to help the homeless.

Transit Authority of River City (TARC)

The Transit Authority of River City (TARC) in Louisville, Kentucky has considered working with social service organizations that support homeless individuals to be the right approach to serve their community for over 20 years. J. Barry Barker, the Executive Director of TARC indicated that he was asked to provide free tickets to get homeless individuals to shelters and took that as an opportunity to meet with the head of the local Coalition for the Homeless to understand how they could develop a program to meet the needs of the local homeless population while still being mindful of the need for TARC to collect fares. The agreement that they settled on was to provide two tickets for the price of one to the coalition and they can distribute those tickets to their member organizations and in turn their clients as they see fit.

The agency has also agreed to provide free transportation to shelters on "white flag days" when temperatures fall below 35 degrees for more than four hours. The determination for when shelters are operating on a "white flag" basis is at the discretion of the shelters, not TARC, but TARC has agreed to be a part of the overall solution to get individuals to a safe place when it is most critical.

One of the other lessons learned from TARC was that partnerships are key and even if something seems like it is just a transit agency issue it is helpful to get others involved. The downtown Convention Center had concerns about one of the TARC bus stops that was located right next to the large tourist destination. The Convention Center asked TARC to move the stop because of the large number of homeless individuals congregating at the stop. Instead of just moving the stop TARC leadership decided to set up a meeting to discuss the options and included the Coalition for the Homeless in those discussions. This resulted in the Coalition for the Homeless sending social service workers to that location to meet with the individuals at that stop and connect them to resources. This is an example of an agency adapting to the situation that arises and being an active participant to bring the right community resources together.

Chatham Area Transit (CAT)

Curtis Koleber, Executive Director/CEO of Chatham Area Transit (CAT) in Savannah, Georgia a small transit agency that celebrated 30 years of service in January 2017 stated that homelessness is generally pushed aside and/or avoided by the transit agencies. In Savannah, the city funded a free downtown shuttle service which localized the homeless in a central area. Mr. Koleber, believes that transit agencies have a role in supporting the homeless, but cities and municipalities, have to take ownership. In order to provide adequate support to the homeless community, a collaborative partnership between cities, transit agencies, social and private organizations, counties, etc. must exist.

Mr. Koleber believes that big data can be collected to leverage funding to address homelessness in transit. Transit agencies must go beyond a generic ridership number. Transit agencies have to tell the story of how many homeless are transported on a daily basis to hospitals, schools, social agencies, etc. The homeless epidemic must be communicated as a human story. The right data captured will be able to identify the good stories and should lead to increase funding for homeless initiatives and support.

Ridership at CAT is greatly impacted on the free service and lightly on the paid service by the presence of the homeless community. There is no security on the free service. CAT is in the process of implementing full-time police services. The impact on homeless ridership from the creation of the CAT Police Department is unknown at this time, but it is the hope that it will help to make a CAT ride enjoyable for all riders.

10. Conclusion and Call to Action

The focus of our project was to educate and offer a Call to Action that the transit industry could review and consider implementing to effect change and elevate the call for social responsibility specifically related to homelessness. This is a challenging undertaking given the magnitude of the issue and the understanding that it is an issue that transit industry will never be to tackle alone or completely be able to solve.

Our group concluded that one of the biggest challenges that transit industry faces in addressing homelessness is recognizing that it is a transportation issue that warrants action from transit providers.

- It became clear from the interviews that the industry is in agreement that homeless individuals in and around transit systems can often result in other riders feeling unsafe and in turn opting for other travel modes.
- Homelessness and the impact on transit is not an issue that is going away and will continue to grow.
- It seems that the issue is reaching a tipping point where if the transit industry does not take responsibility for finding solutions to minimize the impact on their system, ridership and future expansion will be in jeopardy.

- There was also a consensus that enforcement alone is not enough and continuing to remove the same individuals from transit systems is not a solution.

We know that funding is always a challenge and most agencies do not have resources dedicated to this issue. As such, we focused on developing a Call to Action that is achievable even without dedicated funding sources. This will require leveraging partnerships with other community services such as law enforcement, nonprofit organizations, and social service providers.

The Call to Action has to be a commitment to something that is bigger than our own individual agencies but it has to start at our own individual agencies. As such, we recommend every transit provider to take on at least one of these strategies.

1. **Transit providers must treat all individuals with dignity and respect.** Remember, that transit is a good for the entire community including homeless individuals.
2. **Incorporate outreach officers with law enforcement to connect individuals to services.** This is something that can be started on a small scale with the addition of one or two outreach officers targeted at locations that are known locations where homeless individuals congregate.
3. **Align transit service with social service destinations.** Depending on locations of those services, consider operating a fare-free route.
4. **Partner with local municipalities and the private sector to identify funding opportunities.** There may be opportunities for funding that are not typically considered for transit service if they are sought out in partnership with social service organizations.
5. **Develop creative solutions that do not require funding** such as hiring a homeless individual for an entry level position. These positions could even be stationed at facilities to provide attended restrooms or elevators.

It is clear that many agencies have been playing an active role in serving the homeless populations in their communities for many years. However, these initiatives have primarily been initiated as a result of local requests not because there has been a concerted effort by the industry to agree that as transit providers we have a social responsibility to be a part of the solution to help solve homelessness.

"Transit is a public place....not everyone (homeless) is intending to do harm".

Elizabeth Presutti, CEO, Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority

"Private companies that come into our communities, while receiving huge tax breaks, should be building relationships with and helping the cities around them".

Paul Ballard, CEO, Trinity Metro

Appendix

A. Survey Questions for Transit Safety/Security/Operational Staff

Survey Questions for Transit Safety/Security/Operations Staff April 11, 2018

General Agency Questions

1. What is your agencies annual ridership?
2. Are there sociological issues preventing your agency from ridership or redevelopment growth?
 - a. If so, is homelessness one of those issues?
 - b. Is homelessness the biggest sociological issue impacting your agency?
 - c. List other issues
3. Do you believe that transit agencies should play an active role in addressing the homelessness issues in your region?

General Questions About Homelessness

1. Do you believe that homelessness impacts your ridership?
2. Do you believe there is an issue of concern with homeless/mentally ill individuals affecting operations of your system?
3. Is there a department, office, or group in your agency (other than transit police/security services) that is responsible for addressing homelessness? If so, what are their duties?
4. How many or what percent of crimes on your system or at your facilities are attributed to the homeless?
 - a. Of those, how many are part 1 crimes?
5. Does your transit agency have a homeless outreach program or partner with any community organizations to address the homelessness situation in transit?
 - a. If so, do any of your programs include providing social services for the homeless?

Questions About Training

1. Has your agency instituted any programs that train front line employees (operators, agents, supervisors, etc) on how to deal with a homeless or mentally ill passengers? Please describe.
2. Does your agency have specific policies that address how the homeless/mentally ill individuals are removed from your facilities or vehicles?
 - a. If so, are they different than policies for all riders?
3. Does your agency have a police department / security staff that have been certified with crisis intervention training (CIT)?

Questions About Budget / Funding to Address Homelessness

1. How is homelessness impacting your agency financially?
2. Do you have a budget allocated to specifically target the homeless/mentally ill problems at your agency?
3. Do you believe that partnerships with local agencies would help reduce the homeless population at your facilities?
 - a. Do you currently partner with any local agencies – if so have the programs been successful?

Conclusion

1. Please share any other information about how homelessness is impacting your agency and your role in addressing it.

Appendix

B. Contributors to the Project

Special Thanks

AC Transit (Oakland)

- *Michael Hursh*

BART (Oakland)

- *Grace Crunican, Armando Sandoval*

NJ Transit

- *Christopher Trucillo*

MARTA (Atlanta)

- *Rob Troup, Fred Daniels*

Sound Transit (Seattle)

- *Bonnie Todd, Ken Cummins*

Trinity Metro (Ft. Worth)

- *Paul Ballard*

Des Moines Dart

- *Elizabeth Presutti*

Lynx Orlando

- *Edward Johnson*

CTA (Chicago)

- *Laura DeCastro*

TTC (Toronto)

- *Richard Leary*

Dallas Independent School District

- *Ashley Marshall*

Goodwill

- *Keith Parker*

Austin Street Center

- *Daniel Roby*

Project Live

- *Sean Pfeifer*

Straight & Narrow/ Project Kind

- *Gary Denamen*

DART (Dallas)

- *Gary Thomas*

LA Metro

- *Alex Wiggins*

East Japan Railway Company

- *Haruo Soga*

First Transit

- *Dee Leggett*

Volunteers of America/ Serial

Inebriated Program (SIP)

- *Amanda Leeves*

Palm Tran

- *Clinton Forbes*

Hub of Hope (Philadelphia)

- *Emily Hopkins*

Metro Transit Madison

- *Chuck Kamp*

TARC (Louisville)

- *Ferdinand Risco*

Long Beach Transit

- *Lee Burner*

CAT (Savannah)

- *Curtis Koleber*

Keolis

- *Francis Julien*

APTA

- *Polly Hanson*

Dan Boyle & Associates

- *Dan Boyle*

First Step

- *Greg Block*

City of Chicago (Family Services)

- *Alisa Rodriguez*