



ALTERNATIVES TO POLICING ON TRANSIT

Centering Community Models of Care in the Portland Area

Alternatives to Policing on Transit: Centering Community Models of Care in the Portland Area



AUTHORS: Natalie Cholula • Lahar Santra

PROJECT ADVISORS: Lisa Bates • Lee Helfend • Tristan Isaac • Huy Ong

EDITORS: Priscilla Wu • Maia Vásconez-Taylor



TriMet is the regional transit agency in the Portland metro area.

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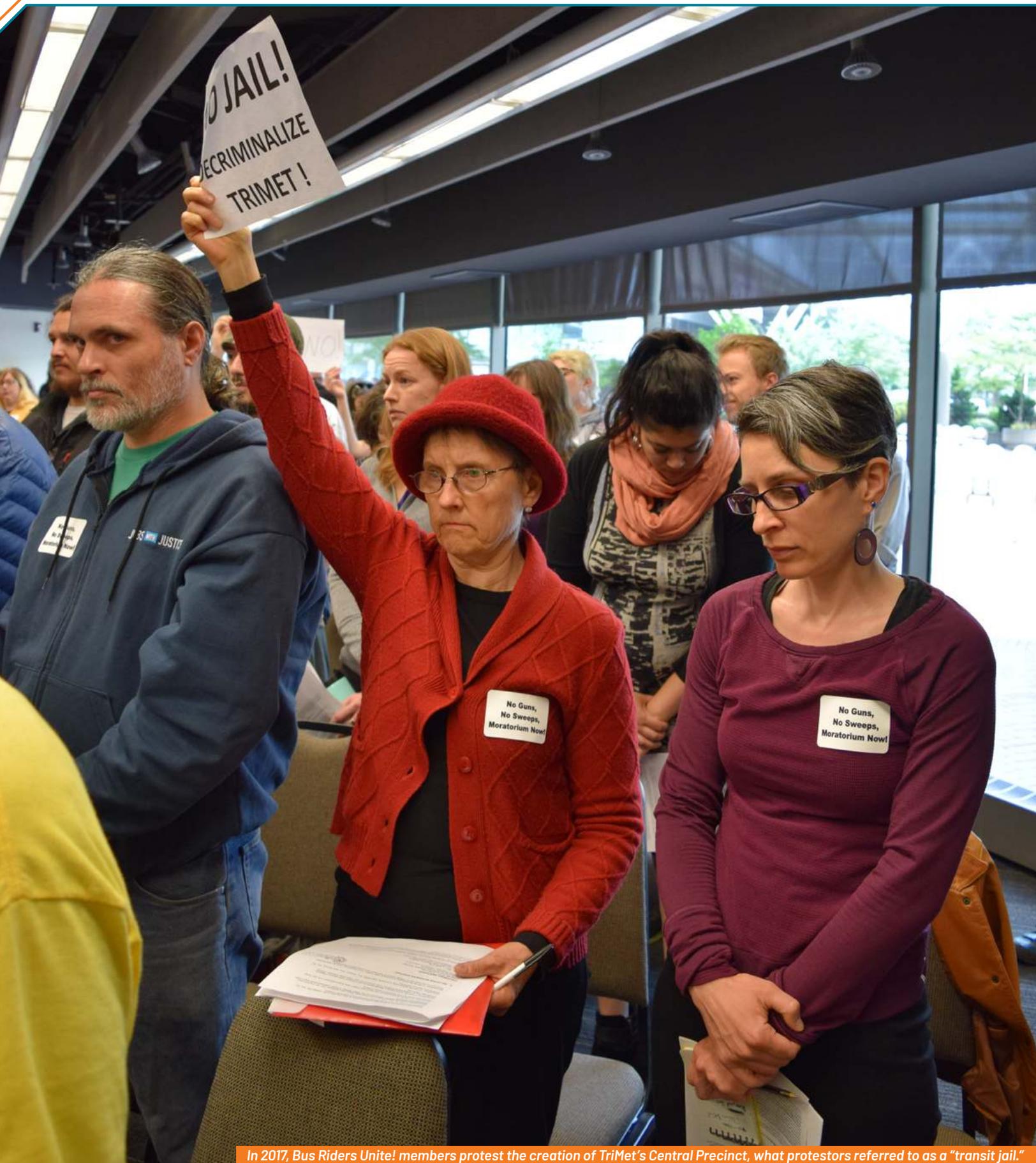
TriMet on Tilikum Crossing.

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We thank BRU members for raising the issue of policing on transit to OPAL.



In 2017, Bus Riders Unite! members protest the creation of TriMet's Central Precinct, what protestors referred to as a "transit jail."

Content Warning

This report contains detailed descriptions of violent acts, including police violence, sexual harassment, and other specific attacks of white supremacy. There is mention of police violence such as shootings that have resulted in the death of Black men and individuals perceived to be experiencing a mental health crisis.

The research team recognizes the ways policing and criminalization have impacted various communities, both historically and presently. Results from this research suggest that potential collaboration between police and community organizations may be required in order to work on community-based programs. Please see the Recommendations section for more information.

Executive Summary

OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon and Bus Riders Unite (BRU) envision a world where all people, particularly marginalized and impacted communities, can access safe, high quality transit with frequent service. We see a world where transit is a center of community building, where people don't have to live in fear of police violence – or any violence – in public spaces, and a world in which transportation is a free, public good that is understood to be a human right.

We believe that an inability to afford transit fare is never a reason for someone to come into contact with police. We understand that low wages, poverty, and houselessness are intentionally designed into the foundation of our nation, which is rooted in white supremacist, patriarchal capitalism. These systems are perpetuated by an inaccessible, unequal and violent transportation system. Although we believe our world must move towards abolition – the total abolishment of policing, of a criminalization “justice” system, and of a culture rooted in punishment rather than restoration – we understand that the steps to get there may include complicated and nuanced decisions about navigating within the current model of policing. We see fare enforcers and surveillance culture as a part of a problematic cycle of police violence, as well.

OPAL responded to community concerns about police presence on public transit by seeking to understand what interactions are like between riders and police. A group of researchers collected community members' stories to frame what an alternative response to police could look like in their communities.

Results from interviews show that riders feel fear when they see police officers with guns board trains and buses; some fear that situations will escalate.

Thirteen community members shared their personal experiences of what they have witnessed on TriMet, the Portland Metro Area's transit agency. Results from interviews show that riders feel fear when they see police officers with guns board trains and buses; some fear that situations will escalate into shootings and murder due to a history of Portland Police, in particular, responding to calls where individuals who were nonviolent or experiencing a crisis ended unjustly. Community members also share interactions with fare inspectors and how they model police-like behavior by intimidating riders, threatening to fine and force people off the bus for noncompliance, and targeting vulnerable populations such as people who are low-income and/or BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color). Lastly,

community members share the kinds of services and programs that should be made available to them, services that are not the police and instead offer support to those who are in need of treatment, housing, and care.



A camera overlooks a TriMet transit stop

To understand how other cities are responding to community needs, the research team interviewed three community leaders who currently work on alternative responses to policing. Interviews from community leaders suggest that collaboration with police may be necessary to meet housing, transportation, mental health and substance misuse treatment needs. Most importantly, organizers tell us about the importance of centering care in alternative responses that are community based and informed.

Site Selection

Finding alternatives to police on transit fits within the scope of OPAL's work on transportation, racial justice, disability justice, and improving public transit. More specifically, BRU, OPAL's transit union, is dedicated to improving public transportation to fit the needs of the community. BRU works toward increasing transit safety, demilitarization, affordability and accessibility to create change in the Portland Metro Area.

BRU members raised concerns about the discrimination against historically marginalized and targeted groups by police on transit. BRU and OPAL organizers responded by proposing a



Fare collection machines at TriMet's max stations charge and collect fares.

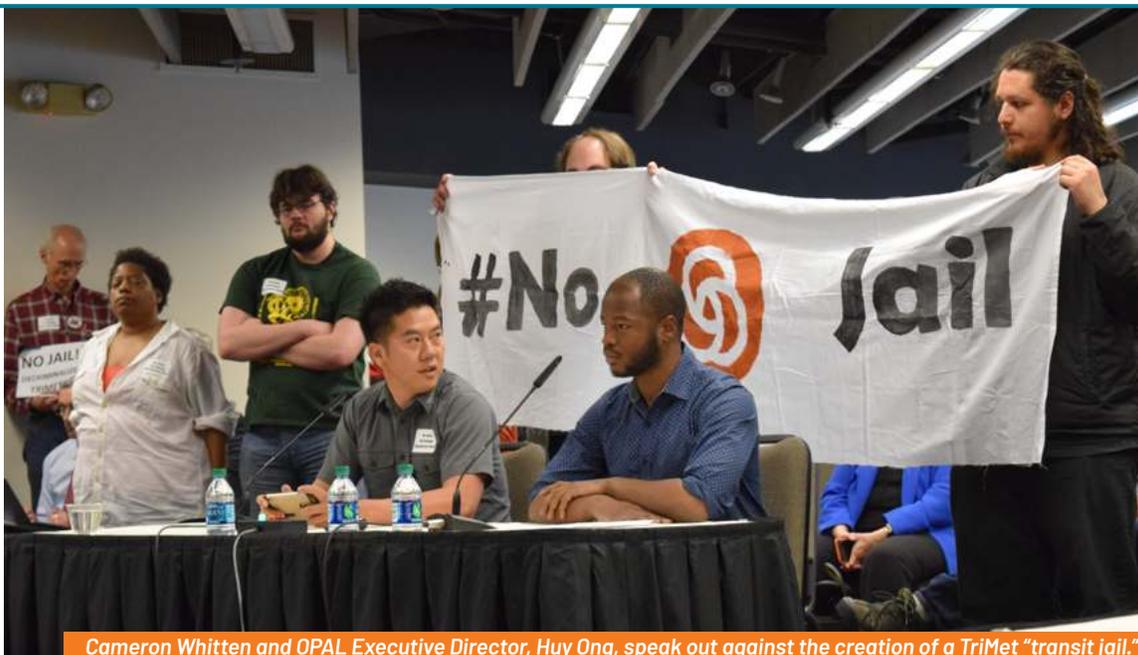
research study that sought to understand what police encounters are like on TriMet, with the end goal of implementing community-based programs that centers care and support. Continuing to explore alternative models to policing on transit in Portland, Oregon calls for a research study that involves community concerns and voices. For this reason, the researchers recruited participants who live in Portland and can tell us about their encounters with police on TriMet.

Understanding the Current Model of Safety on TriMet

TriMet employs personnel to monitor transit vehicles and other TriMet property including Police, Fare Inspectors, Customer Safety Officers, and G4S Transit Security Officers. There are also ride and customer service representatives who focus more on assisting and educating riders about the fare system. TriMet prioritizes compliance and fare enforcement over rider safety and accessibility by employing individuals who enforce, surveil and police TriMet property on a daily basis.

Contracted private security, TriMet operators, fare inspectors, and customer service staff patrol TriMet property daily with the intention to deter crime and respond to safety concerns. To support TriMet's system of surveillance, there are also security cameras on platforms, transit centers, buses, trains, and elevators, which are in place to help deter unlawful activity.¹ Regarding the infrastructure design, TriMet "benches, shelters, signs and landscaping are positioned to

¹ Adapted from TriMet. (n.d.). *Security on Trimet*. <https://trimet.org/about/security.htm>



Cameron Whitten and OPAL Executive Director, Huy Ong, speak out against the creation of a TriMet “transit jail.”

enhance visibility and avoid potential hiding places.”² From transit staff to security cameras to the architectural design of spaces the emphasis on protecting property is clear and as a result, transit can feel and be inaccessible and unwelcoming to riders.

According to TriMet, since 2018, riders issued a ticket for fare evasion no longer have to go to court. Fare violation citations can be resolved of riders over 18 years old in a few ways if paid within the 90 day window: 1) riders can pay TriMet the fine, 2) participate in community service, and 3) enroll in the Honored Citizen program (if eligible). The following is a breakdown of TriMet’s “fairer citation process.”³

FINES	COMMUNITY SERVICE	HONORED CITIZEN FARE
1st Offense: \$75	1st Offense: 4 hours	Eligible for, but not enrolled in, TriMet’s reduced fare program
2nd Offense: \$100	2nd Offense: 7 hours	Enroll within 90-day period
3rd Offense: \$150	3rd Offense: 12 hours	Load at least \$10 on the card within 90 days.
4th offense & beyond: \$175	4th offense & beyond: 15 hours	<i>Fare violation citation will be dismissed if rider meets all criteria abuse</i>

² From TriMet. (n.d.). *Security on Trimet*. <https://trimet.org/about/security.htm>

³ Adapted from *Fares and Fare Enforcement on Trimet*. <https://trimet.org/fares/fareisfair.htm>

TRIMET PERSONNEL & SECURITY STAFF ⁴	DUTIES
Ride Guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with and help riders • Educate riders about the TriMet system • Assist TriMet operators and supervisors during special events and service disruptions • Report serious concerns to police, emergency responders
Customer Service Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with and assist riders • Educate riders about the Hop Fastpass® fare system, safety and service adjustments • Assist TriMet operators and supervisors during special events and service disruptions • Report serious concerns to police, emergency responders
Fare Inspectors and Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist with TriMet operations • Enforce TriMet Code <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check for valid fare • Issue warnings, citations and exclusions for riders without valid fare • Respond to serious incidents, emergencies • Report serious concerns to police, emergency responders • Assist riders
Customer Safety Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrol the TriMet system, discourage inappropriate behavior • Assist TriMet fare inspectors and supervisors enforce TriMet Code (including fare requirement) • Report serious concerns to police, emergency responders • Assist riders • Encourage safe behavior around buses and trains
G4S Transit Security Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrol the TriMet system, discourage inappropriate behavior • Report serious concerns to police, emergency responders • Assist TriMet employees • Assist riders • Encourage safe behavior around buses and trains
Police Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrol the TriMet system, discourage inappropriate behavior • Respond to serious incidents, emergencies • Enforce local/state laws, TriMet Code • Assist riders

⁴ TriMet. (n.d.). *TriMet personnel & security staff*. <https://trimet.org/about/personnel.htm>

What's The Difference?



Ride Guides

- Assist TriMet operators and supervisors during special events and service disruptions
- Engage with and assist riders
- Educate riders about the TriMet system
- Encourage safe behavior around buses and trains
- Report serious concerns to TriMet's Operations Command Center, police, or emergency responders

Uniforms

- Blue vests with orange stripes
- TriMet logo and "Ride Guide" on back and left chest
- TriMet employee ID on request



Customer Service Representatives

- Engage with and assist riders
- Educate riders about the Hop Fastpass® fare system, safety and service adjustments
- Encourage safe behavior around buses and trains
- Assist TriMet operators and supervisors during special events and service disruptions
- Report serious concerns to TriMet's Operations Command Center, police, or emergency responders

Uniforms

- High-visibility yellow safety vests
- "Customer Information" on back and left chest of vest
- TriMet employee ID on request



Field Supervisors

- Assist with TriMet operations
- Assist riders and employees
- Respond to serious incidents and emergencies
- Encourage safe behavior around buses and trains
- Report serious concerns to TriMet's Operations Command Center, police, or emergency responders

Uniforms

- White or light blue TriMet shirt; navy blue or grey pants or shorts
- High-visibility yellow safety vest with "TriMet" on back and/or left chest
- May wear a navy, bright blue, black or grey coat with TriMet logo
- May wear TriMet supervisor or TriMet inspector badge
- TriMet employee ID on request



Safety Response Team

- Provide a presence on the system while assisting riders, TriMet employees and the public
- Discourage inappropriate behavior
- Assist riders, employees and others in need on or near our transit system
- Conduct social service outreach and provide referrals to health care, housing, mental health and addiction services
- Offer conflict resolution services
- Perform first aid

Uniforms

- Two-toned bright blue and black shirts and coats, black pants and high-visibility blue/yellow safety vests
- "Safety Response Team" on back
- TriMet log and "Safety Response Team" patch on sleeve

Customer Safety Officers and Supervisors

- Work together to patrol the TriMet system, discourage inappropriate behavior
- Supervisors enforce our rules (the TriMet Code), including checking to make sure riders have valid fare
- Assist riders and employees
- Report serious concerns to TriMet’s Operations Command Center, police, or emergency responders

Supervisor Uniforms

- White or light blue TriMet shirt with navy blue or grey pants or shorts
- May wear a high-visibility yellow vest or coat, or navy, royal blue or black coat with TriMet logo on left chest
- TriMet logo and “Customer Safety” printed on back of top/coat, and on sleeves
- “TriMet Customer Safety Supervisors” patch on left chest on vest and coats
- May wear a TriMet inspector badge
- Trimet employee ID on request

Officer Uniforms

- Two-toned bright blue and black shirts and coats, black pants and high-visibility blue/yellow safety vest
- TriMet logo and “Customer Safety Officer” on back of top/coat, and on sleeves



Allied Transit Security Officers

- Patrol the TriMet system, discourage inappropriate behavior
- Report serious concerns to police, emergency responders
- Assist riders and employees
- Encourage safe behavior around buses and trains

Uniforms

- Black pants and high-visibility yellow/black top or high-visibility yellow coat
- “Transit Security” on back of top or coat
- TriMet logo/Allied patch on left chest



Police Officers

- Patrol the TriMet system, discourage inappropriate behavior
- Respond to serious incidents, emergencies
- Enforce local/state laws, TriMet Code
- Assist riders and employees

Uniforms

- Police uniform and gear
- May have “Transit Police” patch
- Badge and patch of home agency (i.e., Port of Portland, Multnomah County Sheriff’s Office)
- Police ID available on request



from <https://trimet.org/about/personnel.htm>

OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon // Bus Riders Unite! // Grassroots Safety Table
 To read the full report, and for more information, please visit our website: <https://www.opalpdx.org/grst>





Background

Racism and Other Forms of Violence on Transit

Historically, highways have been bulldozed through Black neighborhoods to create segregated suburbs and destroy Black wealth, including churches, business, and homes.¹ Urban projects interested in improving “walkability” result in consequences that disproportionately harm low-income areas and result in gentrification. Similarly, larger transportation advancements like port facilities and railroads harm Black and Hispanic neighborhoods the most.² Many federally subsidized transportation construction and infrastructure projects cut wide paths through low-income and racially diverse neighborhoods, which isolate residents from institutions and businesses, subject residents to an increase of accident risks, and contribute to urban sprawl.

Race and transportation have long been intertwined, whether it is federally funded highways

1 Archer, D. (2020). Transportation policy and the underdevelopment of Black communities. *Iowa Law Review* 106, 2125-2151.

2 Christof, S. (2020, August 24). Racism has shaped public transit, and it's riddled with inequities. Rice Kinder Institute for Urban Research. <https://kinder.rice.edu/urbanedge/2020/08/24/transportation-racism-has-shaped-public-transit-america-inequalities>



A community activist holds up a sign at a TriMet meeting.

that excluded marginalized neighborhoods, Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, or segregated trolleys and streetcars. Urban planner Robert Moses demolished Black and Latino neighborhoods in the 1920s in New York to make way for parks and highways. Decades sooner, the *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court case in 1896 that upheld racial segregation came about when Homer Plessy, the plaintiff, boarded a “whites-only” train in Louisiana to protest segregation on railways.³

According to transportation scholars, racism on transportation has always been about civil rights and equity.⁴ For decades, Black people and other people of color have fought to end transportation racism. Civil rights movements from the 1950s and 1960s challenged transportation racism, and despite activists’ work, transportation continues to be an arena that creates obstacles for Black and low-income development and success.

Activists across the country continue calling on transit agencies to review the use of law enforcement on public transit networks, particularly since the U.S. transit industry has been struggling with how to pay for bus and rail services in the face of the COVID pandemic-related budget cuts. Cities in California and Pennsylvania, for example, are working with organizations in the community to rethink and plan ways to better serve riders in their community and increase accessibility. In addition to the concerns of inefficient usage of the transit police budget, the

³ Valentine, A. (2020, June 5). ‘The wrong complexion for protection.’ How race shaped America’s roadways and cities. NPR/OPB. <https://www.npr.org/2020/07/05/887386869/how-transportation-racism-shaped-america>

⁴ Bullard, R. D., Johnson, G. S., & Torres, A. O. (2004). Highway robbery: Transportation racism & new routes to equity. Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press.

dangers posed by transit police to BIPOC communities is well-documented.

The murder of Oscar Grant, a 22-year-old Black man, who was shot by a Bay Area Rapid Transit police officer in 2009, is an example of police violence on transit. The Bay Area transit police have been captured on several videos beating, tasing, and arresting individuals on buses and train stations.⁵ The enforcement of fare and sanctions associated with violating transit rules is a form of violence, including the physical force transit police are permitted to use to remove riders from transit vehicles, and the issuing of tickets by fare enforcers to individuals who cannot afford fare.

The murder of Oscar Grant, a 22-year-old Black man, who was shot by a Bay Area Rapid Transit police officer in 2009, is an example of police violence on transit.

What are “Alternatives to Policing”?

Policing creates inequalities because at the very heart of policing is the protection of property and control of communities that creates differences between people who have economic privileges and those without economic and racial privileges. It is time to think and move beyond calling out police for police brutality, and beyond simply promoting inclusive training that we hope will transform the criminal legal system.

Steps to creating a more inclusive and safe community includes disarming the police, investing in mental health resources and social workers, and moving away from punishment and criminalization. Empowering the community to rely on one another in times of crisis and special needs would take away the need for policing, surveillance, and other systems of control. Funding community resources and services, such as free public transportation, free health care, and affordable housing are directly linked to abolition. Defunding and eventually abolishing the police means providing communities with services that are often inaccessible due to costs. Access to resources and opportunities, such as employment, fosters safer neighborhoods because it discourages illegitimate activity.⁶

There are several propositions to reduce and eventually eliminate police powers, but currently no models of an alternative response that does not involve law enforcement in some capacity.

⁵ Bliss, L. (2020, June 26). *Public transit faces its own police reckoning*. Bloomberg CityLab. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2020-06-26/how-public-transit-got-overpoliced-and-underfunded>

⁶ Braithwaite, J. (1989). *Crime, shame and reintegration*. Cambridge University Press.



Transit Rider Stories from Portland, Oregon

The main question guiding the qualitative piece of this research project is what are police encounters like on TriMet? With the help of community organizers throughout Portland, Oregon, a total of thirteen community members were recruited for semi-structured interviews. During the interview, participants were first asked to share their story and experiences followed by a variety of questions related to their perceptions of safety, policing, TriMet accessibility, and community-based resources.

Eleven participants regularly use TriMet (currently and/or pre-COVID) and two no longer rely on TriMet for transportation. Participants shared a variety of identities salient to them including trans, student, racially mixed, low-income, single, abolitionist, and person with disabilities.

Learning from riders about what it means to feel and be safe while riding transit is important to consider when advocating for alternatives to policing. Several themes emerged from the thirteen community member interviews that relate to interactions with police on transit and fare inspectors, safety, and community support and resources. Pseudonyms were assigned to a few participants who did not want their name in the report. Some participants describe interactions they have personally had with police, while others describe interactions they have witnessed while on transit. Although all participants express support for resources that will make transit better and more accessible to riders, there are mixed feelings about police. Nonetheless, it is clear that in order to increase use of public transportation and improve feelings of safety, TriMet must make changes.

Intimidation and Fear: Police on Transit

One purpose of this project is to understand what police encounters are like on TriMet. While the majority of participants share stories directly related to police and their fear of police on transit, many others talk about ways fare inspectors take advantage of their authority and mistreat riders.

A community-based program would not be controlled or monitored by police or a transit agency, for example, rather the community would have complete oversight.

Interactions with police and fare inspectors describe the need for community resources that do not penalize, punish, or criminalize people. Instead of spending money on police who purposely intimidate people who ride, resources should be spent on making sure that riders feel safe. A step toward an alternative to police response would be to break all contracts between police and TriMet, including private security that coordinates with police and support fare enforcement. A community-based program would not be controlled or monitored by police or a transit agency, for example, rather the community would have complete oversight. In the following sections, we provide quotes from participants that illustrate ways riders feel toward police.

Police on TriMet

Police presence elicits different responses for different individuals, and although most participants share negative experiences with police on TriMet, some participants have mixed feelings about police's role on transit. Several participants describe feeling fear and intimidation when they see transit police. While TriMet and police continue to advocate for safety, members

of the community describe ways the police do not make them feel safe. Several participants provide detailed accounts of their interactions with police on transit.

Police officers who surveil TriMet property can be found in large numbers waiting for MAX riders to unboard the MAX train for fare checks. One participant in particular, Jennifer, describes the large group of police officers in black as intimidating:



At the Main St. [stop], [police] had a sting operation, you know, a scarier one where it's a bunch of police, TriMet police, in black. They're all in black. So intimidating, and there's a ton of them. It has to be at least ten people, maybe even more, but you know, it's just so intimidating."

Rachel's experience with transit police dates back to 2005 when Rachel was a new Portland resident. Rachel, who does not use the word "gender" to describe Rachel's identity, shares a story about the accumulation of negative interactions that resulted in fear, anxiety, and eventually disengagement from TriMet:



I know some of them were regular police officers and some of them were TriMet officers. The way the bus shelter is positioned is the back of it was facing the street, so there's only about a foot-and-a-half to two feet between that glass and the street, Grand Ave, which is a really busy travel street. They actually surrounded me, five men with guns surrounded me. Two of them on either side of me and one of them kind of wandering around, while I looked for my Medicare card and I couldn't find it, I was saying 'I don't know where it is, but I have one. I know I have one. I'll call my husband, maybe it's at home.' And I was thinking I have a ticket, and I kept saying I have a ticket and so, um, well there's one part I don't want to say cause it's very personal, but there was an instance that had occurred when I was young with a police officer ... so it was really terrifying for me to be surrounded by five men over a dollar."

Rachel's story illustrates the ways transit police are not prepared to handle situations that require support, compassion, and kindness. Over a dollar, five men surrounded one individual and cautioned against "not trying anything," Rachel said, which sends a clear message of intimidation toward and authority over community members. After all the harassment over reduced fare, the officer who fined Rachel did not appear in court; Rachel, on the other hand, would have been fined \$250 for not appearing in court. The following quote from Rachel captures the buildup

of negative interactions on TriMet where police were of no assistance that ultimately led to a C-PTSD diagnosis:



I already had PTSD when the situation with the police occurred, and I now have C-PTSD, with that incident being one of the several encounters on Trimet. I was actually threatened by other customers physically, my partner was threatened with assault by a man who was pimping a woman on the bus, and I was verbally attacked and physically intimidated by men who sat next to me, and verbally harassed countless times by men knocking themselves into my body, also group of men who banged on windows and inside walls of the bus, called me a bitch, all sorts of abuse. NONE of those times, did Trimet drivers choose to call the police. Yet for me not having an honored citizens card, and having a medical condition that was undiagnosed at that time that made it hard for me to understand what was being asked of me, 5 officers surrounded me, threatened, and then I had to miss work at my new job to show up to court or else be fined for \$250.00. I showed up, the police officer who fined me did not.”

Police presence elicits different responses for different people. Borrus, for example, describes different ways police officers respond to situations that may require “a more stern tone and that may be viewed as hostile,” he says. As a rider who spends about three hours a day riding the bus, Borrus provides examples during the interview of why he feels police presence is needed on transit. Here is one example Borrus shared:



I was on the four coming from St John’s. And I’m going to use an expletive... because it’s a direct quote. There was a lady that [said] ‘I have a motherfucking shotgun. I’m gonna kill every goddamn person on the on this bus.’ The driver called the police; they were there within three and a half minutes. And they came in, they didn’t come in guns drawn, they came in talking, they escorted her off the bus. I mean, I don’t.. I don’t see negatives on the police’s part from my own personal experience in the Portland area. And I’ve probably seen 20 interactions in the past four years.”

A resounding theme in Borrus’ story is “treating people like people,” and while there are various perspectives on policing, his story points to ways police on transit can be supported by

community-based programs where individuals trained in de-escalation can offer assistance to riders in need.

Patrick, who has been transit dependent for about 25 years, shares that he fears police after witnessing ways they interact with houseless folks in Portland. Patrick explains that Portland Police have a reputation for mistreating houseless people and mishandling situations that require care. One incident Patrick shares was when two police officers were blocking traffic in downtown Portland because they had a man handcuffed while laying on his stomach in the middle of the street. Patrick believes the reason the police officers had the man handcuffed was because he was sleeping in a tent on the sidewalk in front of a business. Patrick notes, however, that it was a weekend:



The business isn't going to be opened today so what does it matter that the guy is sleeping on the sidewalk.[...] Portland Police are pretty notorious for being rude and it was amazing to me that they were that rude, that they ignored... oh! And I remember, also, one of the officers was not from Portland, he was from a suburb. I guess the transit police have police officers from all over the area as far as TriMet goes. I remember asking him for his card, which Portland Police are required to give you if you ask for one, and he said 'I'm not a Portland Police officer.' And I asked the Portland Police officer if I could have his card and he said 'Oh, I don't have one on me,' and so they were just being jerks.'"

Drew has consistently used TriMet for the past 30 years, and his story is unique in several ways. For one, Drew remembers when it cost \$0.25 to ride on TriMet. Secondly, Drew's examples of when he received tickets highlight the way TriMet's budget could be better spent on free fare, better equipment, and better trained staff. Several years ago, Drew spent the night in jail after transit police arrested him for not having money on his Honored Citizen card. Drew makes it clear that spending the weekend in jail had detrimental consequences: "it messed my job up, messed my relationship up." The disruption of spending a weekend in jail cost Drew more than it cost TriMet.

Drew spent the night in jail after transit police arrested him for not having money on his Honored Citizen card.

Deterrence through punishment seems logical—it encourages compliance through punishment and threat of punishment. In reality, however, the threat of punishment does not deter individuals from engaging in unlawful behavior or violating rules because the need to access resources has not been met. In other words, regardless of the threat of a fine or jail, individuals still need

access to transportation for employment, school, appointments, and other activities in the city. To encourage compliance, organizations like TriMet increase the presence of police and security while failing to meet riders' needs. Arresting and detaining someone for riding without fare is not only violent, it also does nothing to address one of the core problems of TriMet—its inaccessibility to community members.

Similar to other participants, Alex does not feel safe around guns and police officers. He feels as though there is a lot of tension on the train when police officers and fare inspectors board to do fare checks:



People don't want to interact with them.[...] Literally the main reaction I see from people when police, and I'm not just talking about police, fare inspectors as well, but it's very obvious it's police. [When] they just hopped on a lot of the reactions is pretty much fearful. Ok, there's officers here, what's going on. That's all there is, tension."

Police officers on transit were not the only ones to elicit trauma or interrupt feelings of safety for riders. For some riders, interactions with fare inspectors have caused anxiety and fear when using TriMet. Rather than serving and supporting riders, participants describe fearful interactions that involve both fare inspectors and police, or the threat of police.

Replacing Fare Inspectors

When asked to share their stories, several participants described interactions with fare inspectors who abuse their authority, leaving some riders feeling anxious, fearful, and intimidated. Stories from participants provide detailed accounts of the ways fare inspectors were unhelpful, unsupportive, and lacked skills to engage with riders who needed assistance. TriMet staff who engage with individuals who have different needs and backgrounds should be trained in ways that offer support to riders, rather than humiliating and intimidating them.

...the threat of police presence was prompted by fare inspectors.

For riders like Colt and Kelly, the threat of police presence was prompted by fare inspectors. With a violent history of police abuse, it is beyond worrisome for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ folks, for example, to interact with agents that will lead to police interaction.

Colt describes their interaction with transit police and fare inspectors as traumatic. In 2021, Colt was on the way to a doctor's appointment and was one stop away from arriving at the destination when a group of fare inspectors and

police boarded the train for fare checks. The interaction with transit police and fare enforcers resulted in negative consequences for Colt that were neither helpful nor supportive:



I wasn't really doing anything wrong; they just randomly asked me 'Hey, show me your ticket.' But they didn't ask anyone else, which is really weird. I don't know why they were targeting me.

So I showed them my reduced fare and they knew it was my reduced fare because it had my picture on it, and it said Honored Citizen Pass, and then they said 'This isn't good enough. You need to give me your state ID.' And I said 'Is this really necessary?' And they wouldn't hand me my TriMet pass until I handed them my ID, my state ID.[...] I was really upset, and they not only gave me a ticket, but they made me so late for my doctor's appointment that they had to cancel my appointment. And that was an hour and a half ride on public transit and I really needed that appointment. I fell the other day, and my wound got infected and I just needed the doctor's help, but they couldn't do that over video chat so that was really frustrating.'"

Kelly, a mother and wife, has about seven years of experience as a transit rider. One morning, in the fall of 2016, Kelly noticed a fare inspector harassing a young Black woman on the train over the validity of her fare. Upon speaking up to ask the fare enforcer why he was harassing the young woman with an aggressive tone, the enforcer got angry with Kelly and demanded that she too leave the train. Kelly knew the inspector did not like being questioned because not only did he demand that she get off the train immediately, he also made a comment to the young Black woman that Kelly was making the situation worse for her, and even threatened to call the police if Kelly did not leave the train. The negative interaction with the fare inspector and police has led her to believe that there is no need for police presence on transit:



Kelly, transit rider



The police don't really have a place on [transit]. There wasn't anything dangerous or unsafe or illegal happening, and yet here we are with a fare inspector closing down the train, calling the police, like how much money did that cost just because a fare inspector had his authority questioned?'"

For Colt and Kelly, police interaction was prompted by the intention to police fares on transit—a public good which should be accessible to all. The Honored Citizen card is a reduced fare available to community members with disabilities, who are over the age of 65, and/or are low-income. Despite the attempt to make TriMet more accessible and fair, riders do not feel adequately supported by fare enforcers. The strong focus on fare checks, what Jennifer even described as an obsession to collect money from vulnerable individuals, has caused emotional harm to riders, and has even put riders in potentially dangerous situations.

Amy, who is comfortable with she/her and they/them pronouns, was transit-dependent until she had an encounter with fare inspectors that made her extremely nervous and scared. Amy showed her monthly pass and Honored Citizen card to the fare inspectors who boarded the bus to do fare checks while she was on her way home. The fare inspectors demanded she get off the bus because her Honored Citizen card expired. Amy tried to explain that she did not know the card would expire, but had her monthly pass. Amy explained that she felt scared:



They kept aggressively questioning me. I was wearing a medical face mask, exactly like everyone is wearing nowadays. But this was before COVID, so they kept asking me why. I told them I had a sensitive immune system [and] it helped me during flu season. They made me take it off and loudly demanded information [about] my health on the bus in front of other passengers. I was feeling scared and my anxiety was triggered. They forced me off the bus in an unfamiliar and unsafe feeling area. They were demanding my identification, but I refused and walked away. I didn't feel safe with them. They mocked my medical condition publicly and left a woman alone and unsafe over a simple honest mistake.”

The disregard for Amy's safety, made them feel as though TriMet's primary concern was money:



It really was stressful! How did they expect me to get home? Clearly safety wasn't their concern, money was... and they already had mine!”

Abby, a transit-dependent student, shares how an interaction with a fare inspector has had a long lasting impact on her day-to-day life. While riding on the MAX train in 2019, a fare enforcer aggressively confronted Abby about her fare. After showing proof of her fare, the fare inspector insistently asked for Abby's Honored Citizen card even after telling the inspector that she did not have one. Abby describes feeling very nervous and scared during the interaction with the fare inspector mainly because the enforcer's tone of voice sounded very aggressive. Abby

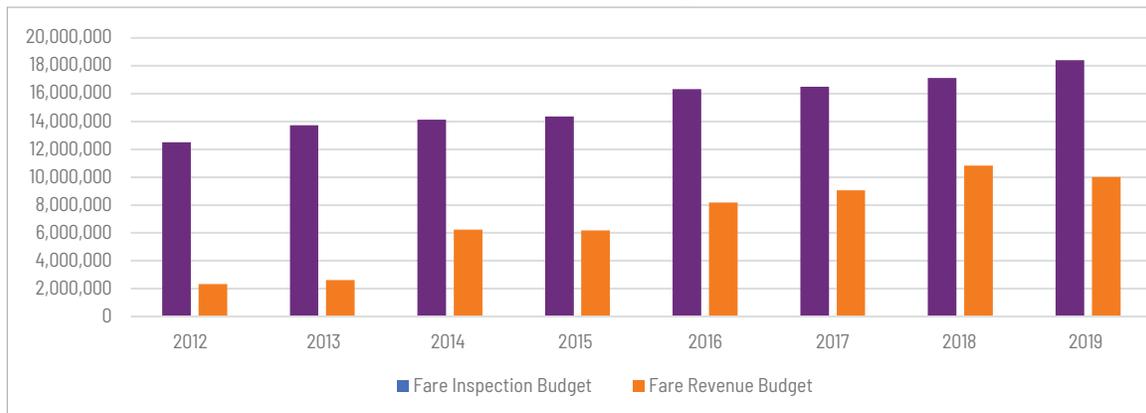
expresses uncertainty on why the enforcer asked her specifically for an Honored Citizen card because “I’m sitting down, but I’m holding my cane in front of me. I’m sure he knows that I’m blind,” she says during the interview. Years after this incident, Abby continues to feel unsafe and even describes feeling anxious: “It causes me anxiety whenever I get on TriMet, especially the train, and especially when I’m by myself.”

Fare enforcement does not make TriMet better, nor does it work for everybody because not everybody can afford fare. Since 2018, fare citations are no longer resolved in criminal court. Instead, riders can resolve citations by paying within 90 days or engaging in community service. While this fare and citation process seems fair and perhaps even normal, participants’ experiences with fare enforcement and inspectors tell a much *different* story. Rather than using force, aggression, and abuse of authority on TriMet, participants share ways public transit can be more accessible, safe, and fair.

“I’m sitting down, but I’m holding my cane in front of me. I’m sure he knows that I’m blind.”

The graph below shows that fare collection costs are an additional burden on TriMet’s budget. Appendix D, Table 3 shows the Fare Revenue Department budget and fare inspection costs between the year 2012 and 2019.

Fare Collection Budget



The fare collection cost discussed here includes the total budget for fare inspection and the Fare Revenue Department. The Fare Revenue Department in TriMet consists of fare revenue collection, processing and cash controls, sales distribution, and the Honored Citizen ID programs. The department is responsible for collection and restocking of cash and coins from light rail ticket vending machines; counting and packaging currency and coin for depositing TVM and fare box revenues; administering the Honored Citizen ID; and ordering all fare revenue ticket and pass stock.

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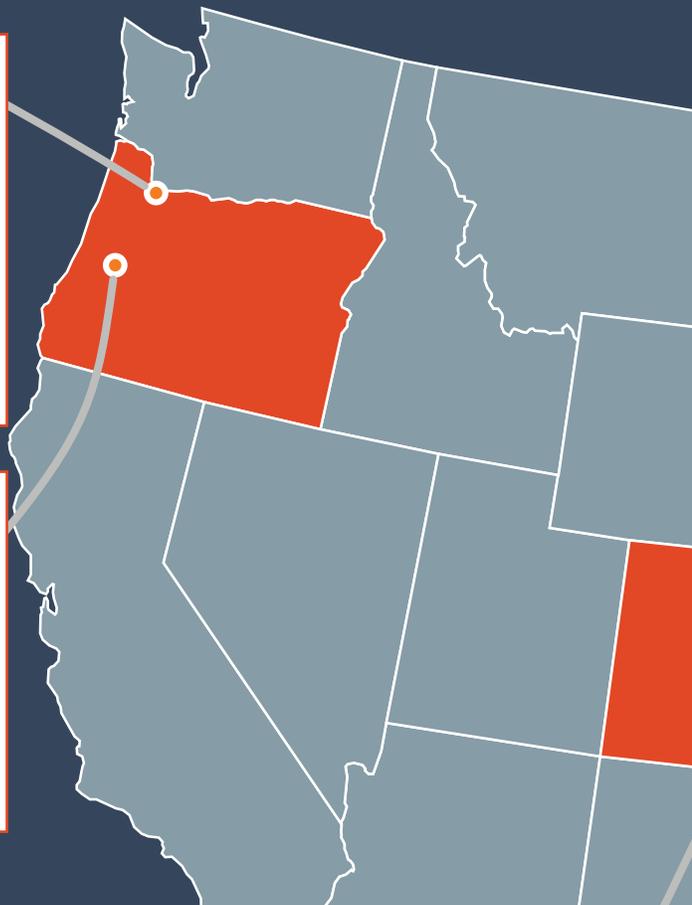
Alternatives Exist

Portland, Oregon

- Portland Street Response (PSR) is a pilot program that started in January 2021 and services the Lents neighborhood in Portland, Oregon. In April 2021, the program expanded to the greater Lents area and responds to calls outside and inside publicly accessible spaces, such as stores and public lobbies.
- PSR is staffed with EMTs, mental health crisis therapists, and community health workers who will respond to individuals experiencing homelessness or low-acuity behavioral health issues.

Eugene, Oregon

- CAHOOTS is a mobile crisis intervention team that has been designed as an alternative to police response for any non-violent crises.
- The Cahoots teams handle a lot of mental health-related crises, which includes conflict resolution, welfare checks, and substance abuse, relying on trauma-informed de-escalation techniques.

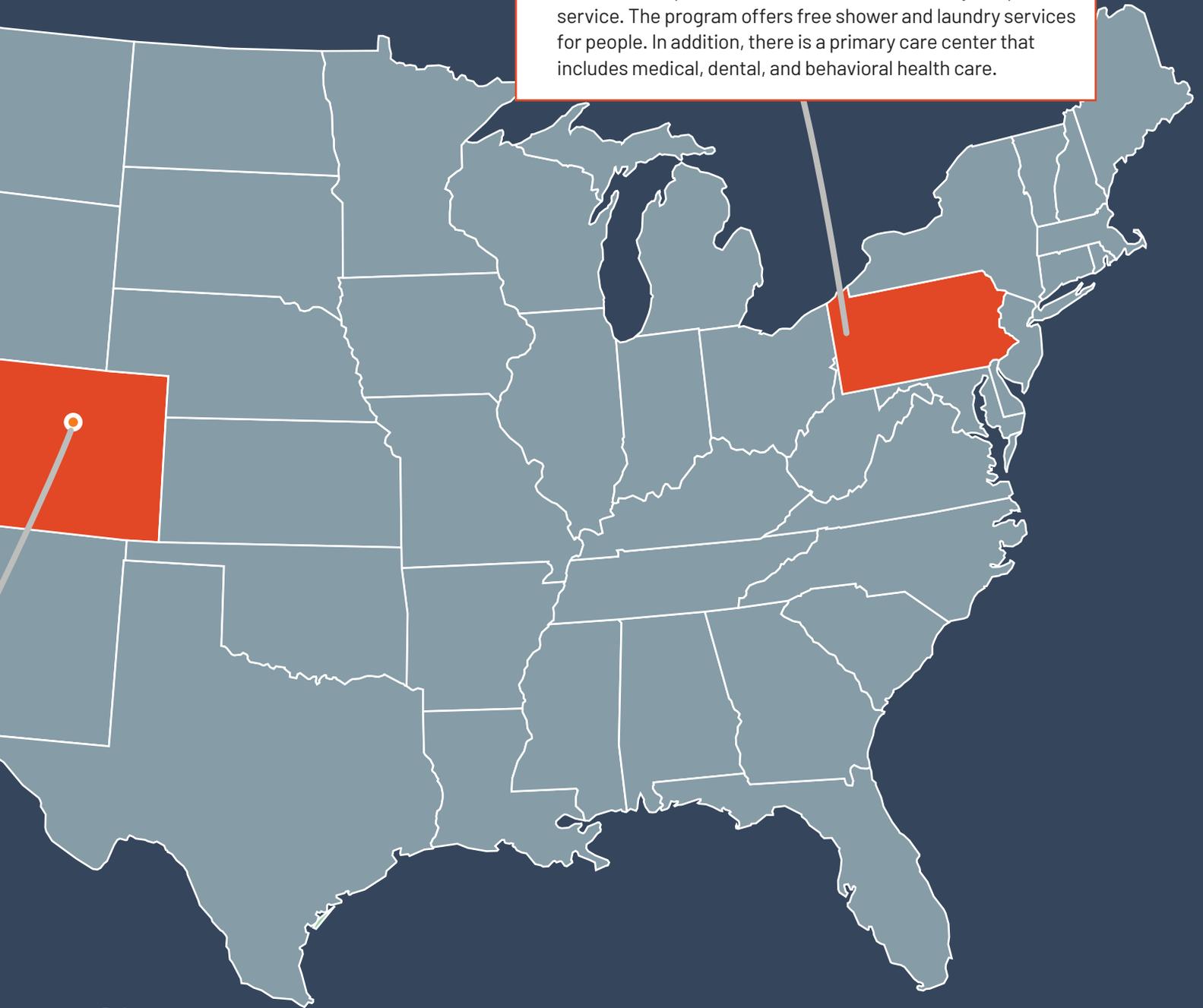


Denver, Colorado

- The Support Team Assisted Response (STAR) dispatches mental health professionals and paramedics in the place of police officers to handle nonviolent crisis situations.
- The Colorado Department of Human Services started a program called Colorado Crisis Services (CCS) as a program for people suffering from anxiety, depression, and domestic abuse. Trained mental health professionals and peer specialists offer services (such as clinical evaluations and crisis beds for treatment) 24/7 at the CCS locations.
- The Caring for Denver Foundation advances community-focused solutions for mental health and substance misuse needs in their city. Their Alternatives to Jail initiative seeks to prevent individuals struggling with substance misuse and mental health distress from entering or reentering the criminal justice system with the help of city partnerships, community-led support, and increased housing stability.
- The Work and Gain Employment and Education Skills (WAGEES) program is another initiative by the Empowerment Group that provides re-entry services to people who have been released from a correctional facility. In this program, the Empowerment Program staff and Stout Street Health Center work together to provide medical, behavioral health, vocational support.
- The Empowerment Program is a community-based agency dedicated to empowering and uplifting cisgender and transgender women.

Pennsylvania

- In 2012, SEPTA partnered with Project Home (a local non-profit) to build a safe space for unhoused groups over a 9,000 square-foot Project Home space.
- The Hub of Hope works as a first-come, same day, drop-in service. The program offers free shower and laundry services for people. In addition, there is a primary care center that includes medical, dental, and behavioral health care.



References:

Dembo, M. (2020). *Off the Rails: Alternatives to policing on transit*. UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies. <https://doi.org/doi:10.17610/T6XK56>.

For further information on RISE, see <http://www.empowermentprogram.org/rise>

To see a map that outlines the Lents area serviced by PSR, go to <https://www.portland.gov/streetresponse/news/2021/4/7/portland-street-response-pilot-adds-increased-areas-service-adds-more>

Portland Street Response Frequently Asked Questions (n.d.): <https://www.portland.gov/streetresponse>

If we compare the fare collection budget with the passenger revenue that TriMet gains, we can say that the fare collection budget is almost 14–25% of the passenger fare revenue between the years 2012 and 2019 (Appendix D, table 3). TriMet’s argument that passenger revenue is one of their biggest sources of operation costs seems a little bleak considering the costs that go into fare revenue collection and fare inspection.

TriMet’s argument that passenger revenue is one of their biggest sources of operation costs seems a little bleak considering the costs that go into fare revenue collection and fare inspection.

The burden of fare inspection lies not only on riders and their engagement with fare inspectors, but also on TriMet’s budget. TriMet spokesperson Roberta Altstadt says **“TriMet will continue to oppose legislation that prevents police from assisting in our fare enforcement efforts.”** (Please see the “UPDATES” section for the latest on TriMet policy.) Rather than considering a decrease in surveillance, TriMet plans to increase surveillance with “more eyes and ears” on the system. Legislation that proposes police be prohibited from fare enforcement is a step that would take power away from police and even though TriMet continues to insist on “reimagining” safety and security, they oppose legislation that prevents law enforcement from conducting fare checks. We call on TriMet to respond to community concerns about fare enforcement

by supporting the implementation of community based programs and breaking contracts with police departments that assist with fare inspection.

By the Community and for Community

In addition to capturing what police encounters are like on TriMet, this project also sought to understand what community members want and need from public transit. Learning from riders about what it means to feel and be safe while riding transit is important to consider when advocating for alternatives to policing. When asked what kind of improvements TriMet can make to help riders feel more safe, participant Sorine shared the following: **“Building shelters that are not hostile toward homeless people and are helpful to riders; a program like Rider Advocates and going fareless.”**

Kelly believes that police should be replaced with a support system that is community based rather than punitive and intimidating. Additionally, instead of spending millions of dollars on police and security, Kelly suggests “making buses more frequent” and having “transit stations where people live” to make riders feel safer while using transit. Resources should also focus on supporting people who cannot afford to ride transit by **“giving [fare] passes to people who don’t have money and need to get somewhere and creating a culture of teamwork that helps people ride transit,”** adds Kelly.

Community support and resources are important to participants, and as individuals who know what public transit is like on a daily basis, they are in the best position to be part of the process that moves toward more accessible and equitable transportation.

Re-implementing a Program like Rider Advocates

After describing the Rider Advocates program to participants, they were asked to share their thoughts on re-implementing a similar program on TriMet. With a program like Rider Advocates or **“social workers that are experienced with helping people with different kinds of specific issues,”** Colt believes that TriMet should take a step in the right direction and move away from transit police.

Currently, TriMet does not employ individuals who could provide support to riders experiencing a crisis. According to TriMet Customer Safety Officers “patrol the TriMet system, discourage inappropriate behavior” and “assist TriMet fare inspectors and supervisors [to] enforce TriMet Code (including fare requirement).” By assisting fare inspectors and patrolling TriMet property, Customer Safety Officers are not fully dedicated to supporting riders nor creating safe spaces.

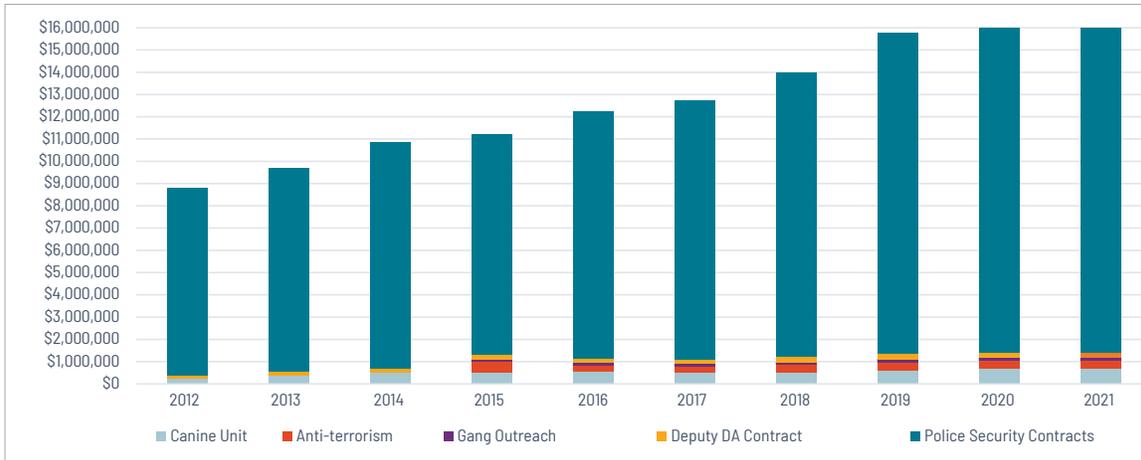
When asked to share his thoughts on programs such as Rider Advocates and CAHOOTS, Borrus says **“You know if there are, if there are methods that will elicit a response in a positive way by varying methods, hell yeah let’s give it a shot. I mean if there’s a way to do things better, I’m down, yeah.”** Although Borrus does not share experiences where police or fare inspectors have been hostile or negative toward riders, he believes it is a good idea to implement programs that can support police and offer assistance to individuals experiencing a crisis. Getting rid of police all together, however, **“is a recipe for disaster,”** he says.

When it comes to feeling safe, Drew and Abby both feel more safe riding TriMet when they see other people of color. Abby believes that staff on TriMet should be trained to understand trauma and anxiety so that they are not uplifting traumas or triggering riders over fare checks. Drew does not necessarily believe that transit police should be completely removed from TriMet, he supports a community-centered program similar to Rider Advocates where individuals from the community are supporting other community members, which will help make riders feel comfortable and safe. Feeling comfortable and safe also has to do with how accessible TriMet is to individuals with low-incomes.

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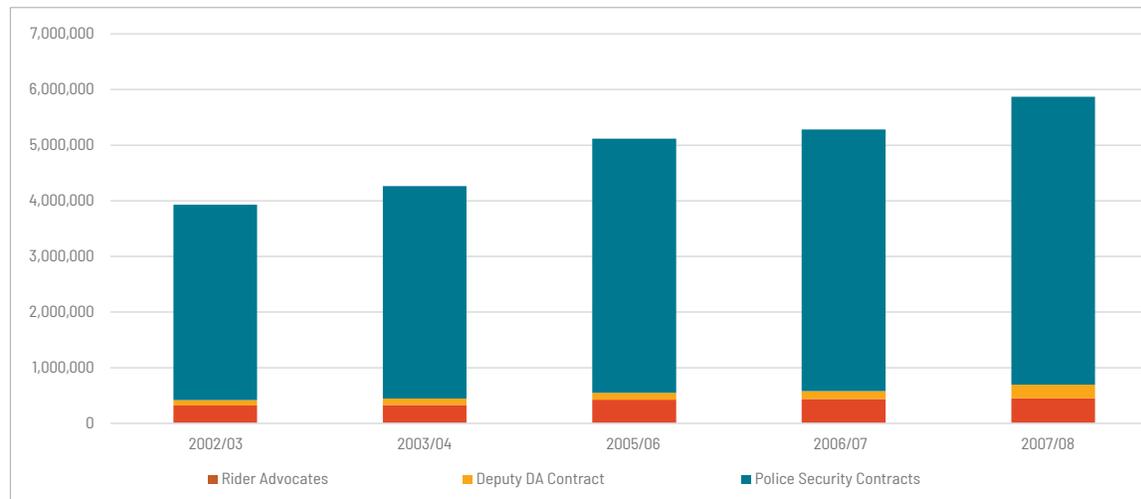
In addition to participants supporting a community-centered program like Rider Advocates, the charts below give us an explanation of the differences in TriMet’s security budget between the Rider Advocates program and non-Rider Advocates era (2009 until present). We have captured the budget data for years 2002–2008 and 2012–2021 (Appendix D, Tables 1 & 2).

TriMet’s Security Budget from 2012–2021



Source: TriMet’s Adopted Budget from 2012 to 2019. See <https://trimet.org/about/accountability.htm#financial> for more information

TriMet’s Security Budget from 2002–2008 (during the Rider Advocates Program)



Source: TriMet’s Adopted Budget from 2012 to 2019. See <https://trimet.org/about/accountability.htm#financial> for more information

There is almost a fifty percent increase in the security and safety budget of TriMet from 2015 until 2021. Currently, TriMet’s security budget is over \$16 million for 2021, with about \$15 million

being spent on security services (the largest share within security).

Between 2002 and 2008, transit security services included Transit Police, Transit Security Officers, and Rider Advocates to identify, assess, and resolve transit security threats.

TriMet supplements law enforcement officers with contracted security services. The budget for contracted security services increased in the 2008–2009 fiscal year. Around this time, the services expanded with additional Wackenhut security officers and a contract with Rider Advocates who work with youth to prevent gang activity on the MAX system. The total annual cost for safety and security improvements in the 2009 fiscal year budget was \$3.12 million. This year witnessed an expanded transit security service with an additional seventeen police officers, Rider Advocates, and fifteen service employees. It is interesting to note that there was an increase of 37% in the Police security contract from 2008 to 2009, it was an increase of exactly \$1,920,624 in the Police security contract budget. Since this was the year when the Rider Advocate program was abolished due to a massive budget cut in operations (additionally, this was the Great Recession period), we can assume that budget cut was not the reason for removal of the Rider Advocates.

Interestingly, TriMet added Street Level Gang Outreach in 2015 after doing away with the Rider Advocates program in 2009. TriMet officials back in 2009 explained that the decision to cut off the Rider Advocates program was budget-driven. The Gang Outreach services began five years after the abolition of the Rider Advocates program, and TriMet spent about \$833,561 on the Gang Outreach program between 2015 and 2021. In addition to the Gang Outreach program and the Anti-Terrorism Team, TriMet started their Canine Team in 2009 and spent about \$5 million between 2012 and 2021 (table 1, Appendix A). The budget for the Canine Team and the Gang Outreach program was within the range of \$600,000–\$800,000 every year between 2015 and 2021, while the Rider Advocates budget was about \$300,000–\$400,000 yearly between 2002 and 2008.

A community-based program would not be controlled or monitored by police or a transit agency, for example, rather the community would have complete oversight.

No Fare, No Fare Inspectors

For others, community support looks like TriMet moving toward a fareless system. Sorine and Sasha in particular describe ways a fareless system would be helpful to riders. When asked to share her thoughts on members from a community providing support and promoting safety in their own community, Sorine's explanation highlights the importance of care and community investment:



I'm always going to be in favor of people coming together and helping out rather than relying on someone else, like private contractors or the police to do it for them. I have opinions on the way the police or private contractors... it feels like a bit of an occupation, like they have no investment in that space and keeping it safe. So, they're not going to help people, they're going to do exactly what it takes to get their paycheck."

Sorine's explanation centers on community care and suggests that members of communities are in the best position to promote safety and offer support because they are directly invested in that space. Other ways to center community care includes implementing a program like Rider Advocates, making TriMet fareless, and building shelters useful to riders with various needs rather than building architecturally hostile structures that do not allow for people to rest in their community.

"At the very least, Honored Citizen fare should be free," because it should not cost people to prove their eligibility for free or reduced fare.

As a firm believer in and supporter of public transit, Sasha supports the idea of TriMet moving toward a fareless system. **"At the very least,"** Sasha says **"Honored Citizen fare should be free,"** because it should not cost people to prove their eligibility for free or reduced fare. Sasha recalled witnessing an interaction between an elderly person and fare enforcer who was harassing the rider for failing to provide proof of eligibility for reduced fare. Rather than spending money on fare inspectors and transit police, Sasha believes TriMet should work on making transit more accessible to community members.

When asked to share their thoughts on police getting mental health and de-escalation training, Sasha shares that it is not enough to wait for the police to reform themselves. Moreover, Sasha supports the implementation of a program similar to Rider Advocates and other systems of support including:



Somebody who can help that person. Someone who can guide them to care, give care to them directly and can administer medicine if necessary, advice if anything, and most of the time I think that people just need to be helped, you know, they need a bed or a meal, medical care. They don't need to be handcuffed and dragged down to the police station."

Sorine and Sasha's experiences with public transit point to structural and cultural changes that need to occur within TriMet. From building better shelters, to going fareless, to moving away from police and violence, their stories are helpful in framing alternatives to policing on transit.

To make public transit more accessible to all, Jennifer also believes TriMet should move to a fareless system. A fareless system would encourage individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds to ride TriMet, which Jennifer believes would increase feelings of safety and accessibility. TriMet's focus on validating and checking fare hurts individuals struggling financially, and ticketing riders for invalid fare reproduces economic inequalities in Portland. In a time when individuals desperately needed compassion and support, TriMet failed to consider the impact of their policies during a global pandemic. Jennifer shares the following:

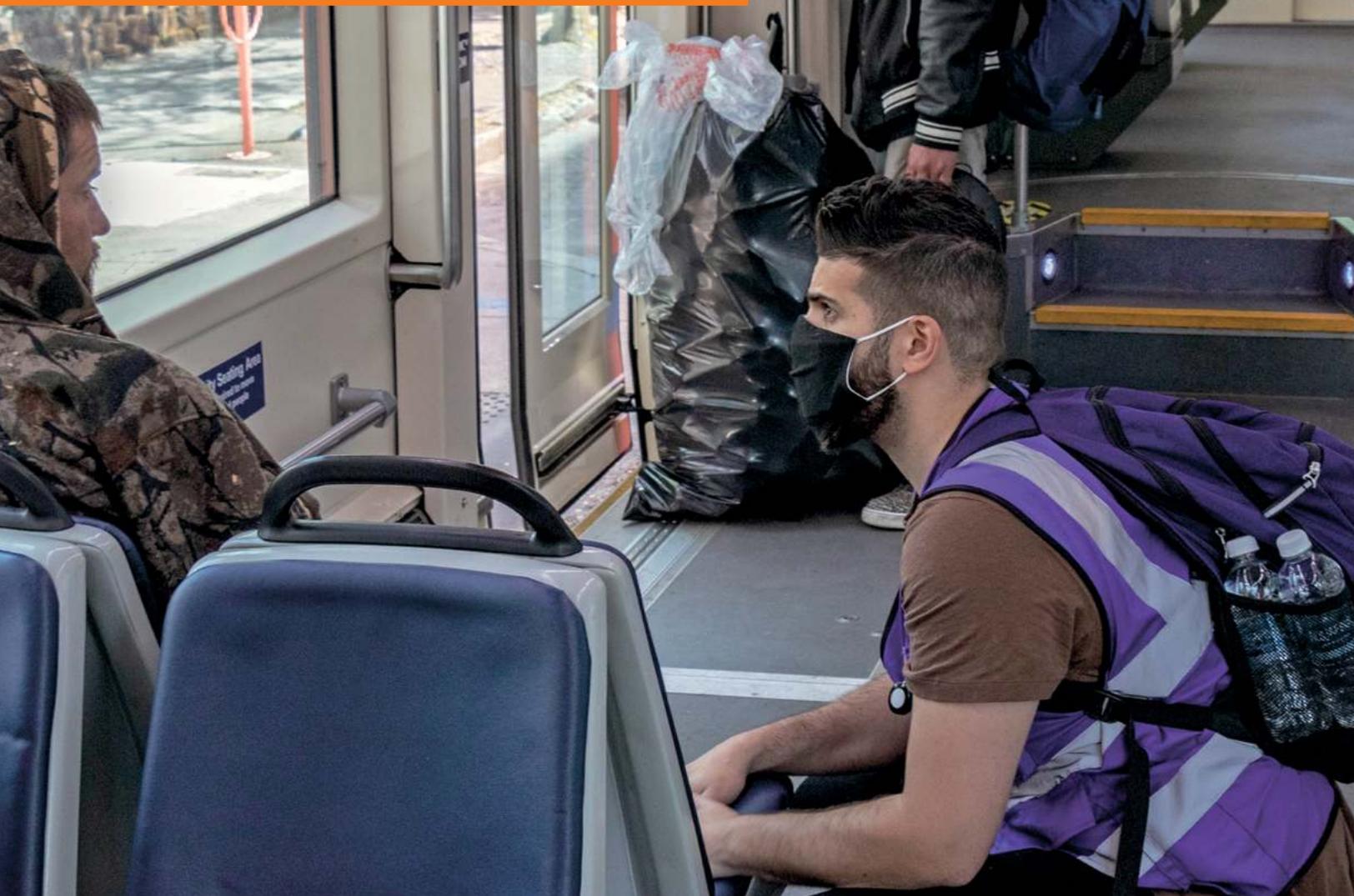


One of the [encounters] that's a smaller incident but still I think shows the bigger picture is right after the pandemic hit, they did the thing... they weren't in black, they were in different colored uniforms, but it was still a swarm thing where a bunch of them come on a train checking that you've paid. I think that kind of shows the mentality, I mean a freaking asteroid could hit the Earth and they're still going to try to get their little bit of money out of people who are already struggling, you know what I mean? It's just so disgusting... That's like their standard, like nothing extra was happening there, except I think the timing was really gross."

A fareless system eliminates the need for fare inspectors. Without fare inspectors, interactions between police and riders would decrease, which is suggested by police interactions that were prompted by fare enforcement. Additionally, with the implementation of a program like Rider Advocates, individuals trained in de-escalation and other methods of support would encourage riders to seek assistance from people without guns. The presence of community leaders on TriMet vehicles would also discourage riders from engaging in inappropriate behavior because, as Sorine mentioned, there is a sense of investment in the community and there is someone modeling appropriate behavior. Lastly, public transportation should be free. As a public good, transit should be available to all.

A fareless system eliminates the need for fare inspectors.

New Rider Ambassador Positions Seek to Ensure All Riders Have the Support They Need



The Rider Ambassador is the face of the Portland Streetcar and warmly welcomes riders while promoting the importance of transit, increasing a sense of safety and community, and assisting wherever needed. The Rider Ambassador ensures all riders are able to travel safely and with the support they require.

The Rider Ambassador also understands that transit plays a key role in reducing rides taken through other modes of transportation that are more harmful to the environment, such as single-occupancy vehicles, and will help create a welcoming atmosphere that will increase ridership. The Rider Ambassador will be offered ongoing training and professional development as available to better serve riders and the Portland community.

“Fares Don’t Need Policing”: Alternative Responses

In addition to advocating for and supporting the implementation of programs that honor community needs, participants also express the dire need for a response to crises that are not police or criminal justice related. Police receiving mental health and de-escalation training is not enough. While there are different opinions on law enforcement and the role of police, it is clear that community members are calling for the implementation of something other than police.

The previous section on policing covered experiences with police. In this section, quotes from participants tell us why policing is not the appropriate response. With an understanding of community-based programs and experiences with police and fare inspectors, we can begin to frame a response that is beneficial to police, TriMet staff, and community leaders and members. The following quotes from participants show that in order to promote feelings of safety and address community needs, there needs to be an alternative response to police.

Rather than spending millions on policing and surveillance, Amy explains that more resources should be available for people experiencing substance misuse, houselessness, and seeking mental health treatment. More importantly, Amy explains that police presence is not needed on transit:



Fares don’t need policing. Track the issue, look for the source and handle it with policy, not guns. The TriMet police didn’t stop the TriMet Barber or Jeremy Christian... I’ve never seen or even read about them doing anything for safety... only bill collecting. If we had a team of trauma-informed persons equipped to help people, that would be nice. But guns wouldn’t be necessary for that. If someone is riding the bus or train for warmth because they don’t have a home, this team can help them access a shelter. If someone is in a mental health crisis and shouting at passengers, this team could help diffuse the situation before it gets worse. If someone is riding without a fare because they are unemployed but heading to an interview, they can get a day pass by showing their ID to prevent repeat offenders. Most issues can be handled with conversations and an organized administrative team.”

Jared Walter, known as the “TriMet Barber,” is the first person to be banned from TriMet. Walter is a sex offender who has been arrested and jailed several times for harassing and assaulting women on transit, including cutting off women’s hair and touching women without their consent. In August 2021, Walter was arrested once again for taking photos of a woman in a bathroom stall in Southeast Portland. In May 2017, Jeremy Christian murdered two men and injured another on

a MAX train in Portland after he was confronted for shouting racist slurs at two Black teenage girls. In June 2020, Christian was convicted of double murder and received two life sentences with an additional 26 years for attempted murder, assault, and intimidation. Amy raises an important point—what could have police done to stop individuals like Walter and Christian from harming riders?

When it comes to policing and safety, Alex explains that police may not be in the best position to handle calls where individuals are experiencing a crisis.



Police are probably one of the number one individuals in society who also need to seek out mental health treatment on a regular basis. They are in one of the most highly-stressed jobs there is; therefore, they are probably not only existing on a plane of PTSD or potential PTSD, they are also high-strung and easily triggered into states of flight or fight, and theirs is usually fight. Officers are not the ones that need to be trained in de-escalation such as that. Honestly, in my personal view, I'd like to see a partnership of something more like the Portland Street Response, mental health crisis workers and social workers. Something along those lines... Officers make things worse. They do not make things better."

Another example from Patrick's story reaffirms why Portland is in need of a program that provides mental health and medical assistance and support. Patrick recalls the murder of Robert Delgado and expresses that that particular incident reinforces feelings of fearfulness. In April 2021, police responded to a call of a man holding what looked like a handgun in Lents Park in Portland. An OPB report describes Delgado as "agitated" as he yelled at police who were approximately 90 feet away. Four minutes after arriving at the scene, police shot Delgado, and according to news reports, the autopsy confirmed that he died of a single gunshot wound. The OPB report goes on to describe the history of Portland Police mishandling situations involving individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. Patrick describes why a police response is not the best response:



I think that every cop in Portland has training around mental illness, but they're issued a gun and they have more training with their gun than they do with de-escalation and I think that it's... you know, when you're giving someone a gun you're giving someone a hammer and you say fix that board and you give them a hammer, they're going to hammer on the board whether it needs to be sawed or whatever, and I think that often times, you know, and maybe it's us asking the wrong questions or

the wrong things of police. Maybe they need to have a gun, they need to be that force that does that, and that means they don't need to be the people dealing with mental illnesses or dealing with nonviolent crimes.”

For Sasha, an alternative response to police is a matter of urgency:



... I think it's too late to wait for the police to reform themselves. If police officers are still being sent out with guns or dogs, those options are still going to be on the table, and if the options are still on the table, the real problem is getting people to choose those options. If you have ten officers trained in de-escalation and mental health, what do you do when the other ones respond, or in another part of the city where those officers aren't available? At the end of the day there's still people walking around with murder weapons and training on how to use them, and training to see everyone in the world as a potential threat or source of harm. It's hard for me to put trust in that institution in any way, and I think that part of why I'm not supportive of just training cops, [is that] they're still going to be cops. They're still going to have qualified immunity, they're still going to have guns, they're still going to... When their de-escalation fails, they're still going to fall back on that being there, I think.”

Job-related stress and trauma can lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms and as Alex mentioned, police officers have demanding jobs, in part because they are called to handle situations they are not trained to solve. While mental health treatment is becoming less stigmatized, there may be certain professions and job cultures that discourage individuals from identifying stressors and seeking treatment. In law enforcement, job-related trauma and stress leads to the development of post-traumatic stress disorder, substance use disorder, and suicide or suicidal ideation. With the majority of police training focused on “eliminating the threat” and using force if necessary, there is little room for a response to a crisis centered on community care. Even when police are trained in mental health, that does not make them mental health professionals.

Relying on police to handle non-threatening behavior has resulted in trauma, harassment, and deaths. With continued and growing fears from many different communities of police and their use of force, it is time to rethink the role and necessity of police and punishment.

Black and Indigenous communities have been part of processes that center community support, restorative justice practices, and health without relying on police or violence. From healing circles to mutual aid, BIPOC communities have a long history of caring for one another. Moreover, with a growing understanding of mental health and increased advocacy to expand access to mental health care, new possibilities are emerging to move away from policing.



Yasha Zarrinkelk, Coalition Manager & Organizer for Transit Forward Philadelphia

Models of Alternatives to Policing in U.S. Cities

To supplement our understanding of alternative responses, the research team conducted interviews with three community leaders in Denver, Colorado and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Additionally, we investigated how Eugene and Portland, Oregon responded to community needs related to homelessness and behavioral health issues.

Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA)

SEPTA was recently highlighted as an example for best practices in addressing homelessness on transit at the American Public Transportation Association. Back in 2012, SEPTA partnered with Project Home (a local non-profit) to build a safe space for unhoused groups over a 9,000 square-foot Project Home space. Later, this initiative was further expanded in collaboration between the City of Philadelphia, SEPTA, and Project Home by creating a larger 11,000 square-foot year-round space in the city center rail concourse that had been abandoned for about 25

years. This new space, which opened up in January, 2018, is called Hub of Hope.¹

The Hub of Hope works as a first-come, same day, drop-in service. The program offers free shower and laundry services for people. In addition, there is a primary care center that includes medical, dental, and behavioral health care. The Hub sees between 300 to 450 people who drop in at their station everyday. Besides these services, the Hub has expanded their program to include weekly legal consultation and clothing mending services.²

Transit providers, often ill-equipped to address housing needs and related services, are unsure of how to react when unhoused people take shelter on transit.

Transit providers, often ill-equipped to address housing needs and related services, are unsure of how to react when unhoused people take shelter on transit. Without adequate shelter or facilities, people seek an indoor space on trains, buses, and in stations that are not built to accommodate their needs.³ However, as discussed above, the local non-profits are better equipped to provide homeless outreach services than the police. Police lack the training and expertise to engage empathetically in these situations, and use their authority to distribute citations and make arrests.⁴

Transit Forward Philadelphia (TFP) is a coalition of organizations including urbanist political action committee 5th Square, the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, and the Clean Air Council. They address transportation justice issues and advocate for a safe, accessible, and sustainable transit system in Philadelphia. Not all these groups are directly transit-related, but are transit-adjacent, addressing issues such as public housing and health care.

TFP believes that transit agencies need to work closely and together with safety net providers and community outreach services in order to supplant police intervention. Somewhat emulating how SEPTA, SEPTA police, and the City of Philadelphia worked together to create the Hub of Hope.

With regards to alternatives to policing on transit, TFP believes that a public space like a metro station or bus stop does not need the presence of police. Coalition Manager and Community Organizer of Transit Forward Philadelphia Yasha Zarrinkelk says, "Police officers need to be removed from the equation, which is central to the issue of making people feel safe on public transit. There are definitely people who feel safe on public transit with police presence, and there are definitely people who do not feel safe with police around. However, a public space like

1 Dembo, M. (2020). Off the Rails: Alternatives to policing on transit. *UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies*. <https://doi.org/doi:10.17610/T6XK56>.

2 Dembo, M. (2020). Off the Rails: Alternatives to policing on transit. *UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies*. <https://doi.org/doi:10.17610/T6XK56>.

3 Nelson, L. J. (2018, April 6). *As waves of homeless descend onto trains, L.A. tries a new strategy: Social workers on the subway*. Los Angeles Times. www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-metro-homeless-20180406-htmstory.html

4 Dembo, M. (2020). Off the Rails: Alternatives to policing on transit. *UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies*. <https://doi.org/doi:10.17610/T6XK56>.

a subway platform or a bus stop that has the opportunity to be controlled by the community, does not need the presence of police to protect it. It's protected by the community. And how the community is able to take control of that public space is up to City officials and transit agency staff. Community control is the answer, and the way the city or a transit agency allows that to happen is by building infrastructure that's welcoming, engaging, and artistic. Public space should be attractive to the community, [a place] where people feel like they can coexist with one another and share public space with a diverse group of people. For example, a stop or station could have local music, street food, art vendors or a mural art program that makes the space a protected and inviting place to hang out, where transit riders and community members feel secure to come together."



Zarrinkelk adds that "transit agencies need to do better and more in building safe, public spaces that are welcoming, inviting, and fun," while also "providing outreach services to the people who need it, in order to give the community control of the space rather than armed police officers.

In an effort to expand resources available to vulnerable populations, SEPTA's Board approved the development of SCOPE (Safety, Cleaning, Ownership, Partnership, and Engagement) in 2021, a program of team members working with SEPTA Transit Police, Operations, and System Safety personnel to connect unhoused individuals with community resources. Additionally, the one-of-a-kind partnership with local universities permits first-year medical students and undergraduates to serve as 'health navigators.' SAVE (Serving a Vulnerable Entity Unit) is another recently developed initiative that pairs SEPTA Transit Police with social workers; the teams' presence will be in specific 'hotspot' areas where the social workers can inform and connect individuals to community resources.⁵ Last fall, the SEPTA Board authorized \$3.6 million in contracts to third-party providers—including a woman-owned firm—to support the SCOPE and SAVE initiatives. According to Zarrinkelk, during 2021, SAVE and SCOPE together had nearly 5,000 engagements and made hundreds of referrals to local social service providers.

In May 2022, SEPTA introduced another component of their safety program—SEPTA Outreach Specialists. This addition to their safety programs adds eyes and ears to high-volume transit lines by increasing staff and third-party contractors to engage customers about rules for riding, contacting police, and conducting opening and closing procedures on subway stations.⁶ Specifically, the personnel will notify SEPTA Transit Police of safety and quality of life issues, engage riders to provide direction and referrals to Customer Service, advise riders of behavior rules, and connect the vulnerable population with SCOPE and SAVE resources.⁷

⁵ Tanenbaum, M. (2021, October 1). *SEPTA to deploy more social outreach workers at hotspots for vulnerable populations*. PhillyVoice. <https://www.phillyvoice.com/septa-homeless-addiction-outreach-social-workers-transit-police/>

⁶ *SEPTA outreach services*. (2022, May 5). | SEPTA Philly. Retrieved July 5, 2022 from <https://www.iseptaphilly.com/blog/outreachspecialists>

⁷ *SEPTA Board approves new program to promote safety on the system*. (2022, February 24). SEPTA. Retrieved July 5, 2022 from <https://www5.septa.org/septa-board-approves-new-program-to-promote-safety-on-the-system/>

Crisis Assistance Helping Out On the Streets (Cahoots), Eugene, Oregon

The City of Eugene, Oregon developed a community-based public safety system to provide mental health first response to crises that involve mental illness, homelessness, addiction. Back in 1989, Cahoots was started by White Bird Clinic as a community policing initiative.

The Cahoots teams handle a lot of mental health-related crises, which includes conflict resolution, welfare checks, substance abuse. They rely on trauma-informed de-escalation techniques. Cahoots team (includes a medic and a crisis worker who has training and experience in mental health issues) do not include any law enforcement officers. Their training and experience help ensure a non-violent resolution of the crises. In short, they are a mobile crisis intervention team that has been designed as an alternative to police response for any non-violent crises. Cahoots calls are directed towards Eugene's 911 system or the police non-emergency contact. Dispatchers route these calls to Cahoots, the team responds, assesses the situation and provides immediate stabilization in case of urgent medical help or psychological crisis.

The program saves the city of Eugene an estimated \$8.5 million in public safety spending annually.

The Cahoots model has also shown remarkable cost savings when compared with the combined annual budget for the Eugene and Springfield police department. Cahoots staff, with an allocated budget of about \$12 million in 2017, answered about 17% of the Eugene Police Department's overall call volume (Eugene Police Department's budget in 2017 was about \$51 million). The Eugene Police Department charges about \$800 per police response. Cahoots handles emergency calls related to suicide risks, homicide risks, welfare, and much more.

Cahoots saves the city of Eugene about \$8.5 million in public safety costs annually. In 2019, out of about 24,000 Cahoots calls, police backup was requested for only 150 such emergency calls.⁸

The Support Team Assisted Response (STAR), Denver

The STAR dispatches mental health professionals and paramedics in the place of police officers to handle nonviolent crisis situations. The STAR program is based on Oregon's CAHOOTS program. The main focus of these programs is to eliminate emergency calls to 911 for incidents that do not include any violent crime.

The Denver Justice Project, Denver Alliance for Street Health Response (DASHR), Denver Homeless Out Loud, and Caring for Denver, Safehouse Denver, and the Colorado Department of

⁸ See <https://whitebirdclinic.org/what-is-cahoots/> for more information about CAHOOT's funding vs Eugene Police Department.



Caring for Denver funded the Support Team Assisted Response (STAR pilot, which connects nonviolent 9-1-1 calls with a mobile unit that includes a mental-health clinician and a paramedic)

Human Services are some of the organizations that are working together to provide community-centered services in order to shift the handling of mental health and crisis needs away from the Denver police.

The Colorado Department of Human Services started a program called Colorado Crisis Services (CCS) as a program for people suffering from anxiety, depression, and domestic abuse. Trained mental health professionals and peer specialists offer services (such as clinical evaluations and crisis beds for treatment) 24/7 at the CCS locations.

The STAR dispatches health professionals and paramedics in the place of police officers to handle nonviolent situations, such as mental health emergencies. The team involves a few community groups like Mental Health Center of Denver, Denver Justice Project, Denver Alliance for Street Health Response (DASHR), Denver Homeless Out Loud, and Caring for Denver. The STAR program is based on Oregon's CAHOOTS program. The main focus of these programs is to eliminate emergency calls to 911 for incidents that do not include any violent crime.

DASHR, Safehouse Denver, and the Colorado Department of Human Services are some of the organizations that are working together to provide community-centered services in order to shift the handling of nonviolent emergency situations away from the Denver police. While DASHR caters to unhoused people by providing services like a safehouse and medical assistance, the Colorado Department of Human Services started a program called Colorado Crisis Services (CCS) as a program for people suffering from anxiety, depression, and domestic abuse. Trained

mental health professionals and peer specialists offer services (such as clinical evaluations and crisis beds for treatment) 24/7 at the CCS locations.⁹

The Caring for Denver Foundation is another organization supported by Denver residents to advance community-focused solutions for mental health and substance misuse needs in their city. It is publicly-funded by city sales tax revenue. Their Alternatives to Jail initiative seeks to prevent individuals struggling with substance misuse and mental health distress from entering or reentering the criminal justice system with the help of city partnerships, community-led support, and increased housing stability.¹⁰

If we keep people at the center we build better systems. We collaborate with the community to really figure out what's working in the community. These alternative responses ensure that those in mental health and substance misuse crisis are diverted from the criminal justice system and toward the right care.

Caring for Denver, along with a few other organizations, collaborates with STAR to divert people away from the justice system. Caring for Denver funds STAR, which connects nonviolent 911 calls to a mobile unit that includes a mental health clinician and paramedic. During their first six months of the pilot program, Denver police received about 2,500 emergency calls that were in STAR's purview. The team responded to 750 calls over the first six months. None of those cases required further help from the police, and no individuals were arrested.

Caring for Denver collaborates with the Denver City Council and the Department of Public Health and Environment. They have also been in communication with the Denver Police because "People call them anyway," as Lorez Meinhold, Executive Director of Caring for Denver says. "To do an alternative response and a co-response, you need the city's partnership. You need the police department and public safety, because people will always call 911, and they are going to dispatch a response. So, we need to work in collaboration to dispatch the alternative response." She further explained that this program focuses on understanding the needs of the community and connecting them to care. "If we keep the people at the center, we can build better systems. We collaborate with the community to really

figure out what's working in the community. We don't use terms like 'evidence based, evidence informed.' Rather, we use 'community-informed.'" She also mentioned the importance of Peer Specialists, staff with lived experience trained to provide support to individuals seeking treatment. With training, they help people navigate care services and work with people as they go through challenges they have also experienced.

⁹ Benzschawel, C. (2021, June 20). *Alternatives to calling the Denver Police Department*. 5280. <https://www.5280.com/2021/06/alternatives-to-calling-the-denver-police-department/>

¹⁰ Caring for Denver Foundation. (2020). *Our annual report to the community*. https://caring4denver.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/C4D-2020-Annual-Report_FINAL.pdf



The Regional Transportation District, more commonly referred to as RTD, is the regional agency operating public transit services in eight out of the twelve counties in the Denver-Aurora-Boulder Combined Statistical Area in Colorado. It operates over a 2,342-square-mile area, serving 3.08 million people.
©Regional Transportation District. Used with permission.

Empowerment Program, Denver, Colorado

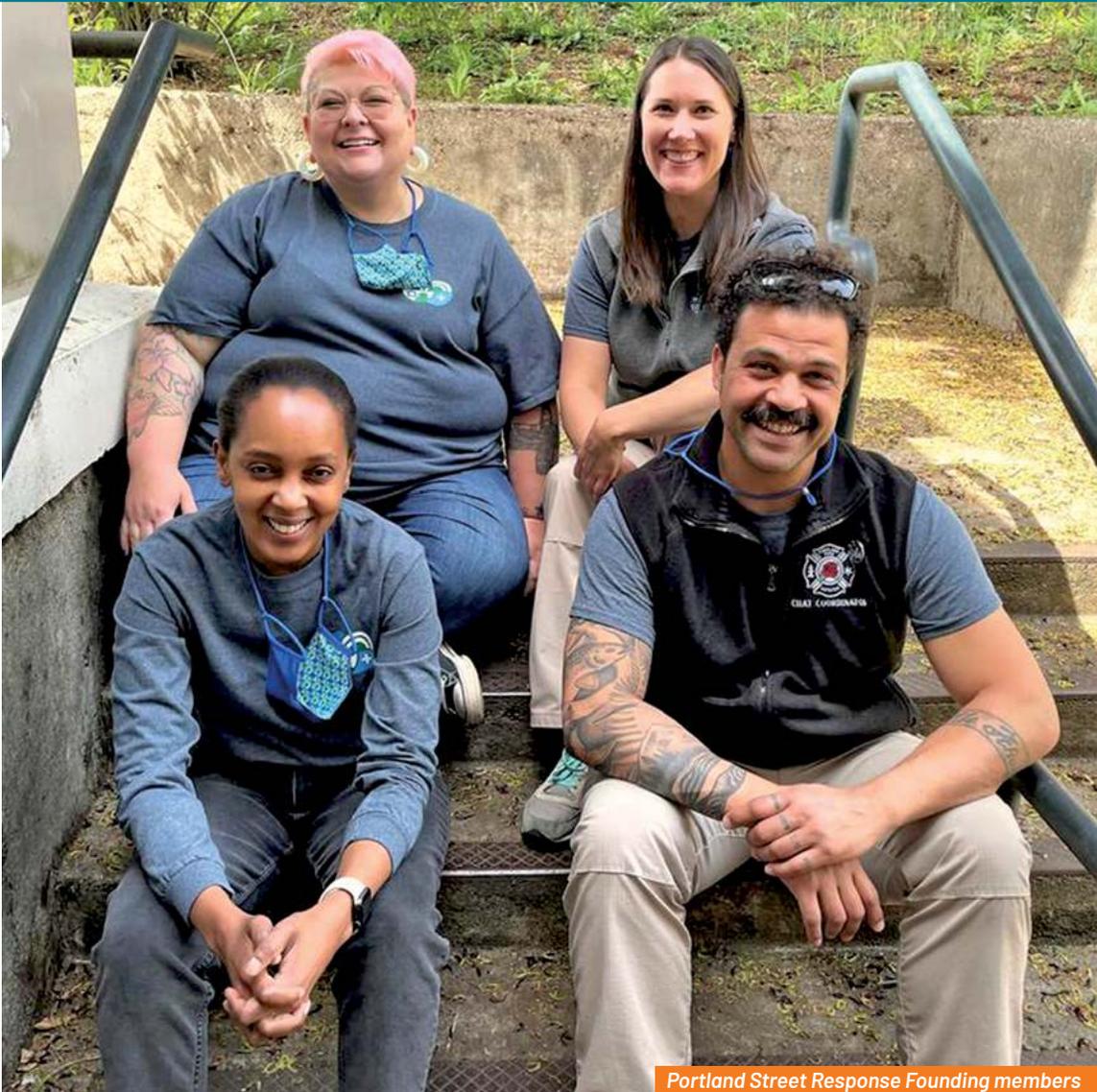
The Empowerment Program is a community-based agency dedicated to empowering and uplifting cisgender and transgender women. It has a licensed mental health and drug treatment program that provides trauma-informed outpatient services for trans women. The Empowerment Program team also leads a program called 'the Rise Program' (Recovery in a Secure Environment), which is aimed towards helping the individuals incarcerated in the Denver Sheriff Department build a foundation of recovery through substance abuse treatment, trauma education, evidenced based peer support groups.¹¹

The Work and Gain Employment and Education Skills (WAGEES) program is another initiative by the Empowerment Group that provides re-entry services to people who have been released from a correctional facility. In this program, the Empowerment Program staff and Stout Street Health Center work together to provide medical, behavioral health, vocational support.¹²

In addition to these programs, Empowerment provides housing to unhoused people as well as some limited shelter housing. They provide permanent housing for formerly unhoused people by

¹¹ See-<http://www.empowermentprogram.org/rise.html> for further information on RISE

¹² See- <http://www.empowermentprogram.org/wagees.html> for further information on WAGEES



Portland Street Response Founding members

referrals through a contract with the City and County of Denver through the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative.¹³

Regarding collaboration with other nonprofits, Julie Kiehl, the Executive Director of the Empowerment Program, says, "Collaboration is huge, I mean it really, you know the individuals that we work with, their needs are often so complex, I mean oftentimes the individuals that we provide care management services to, for example, will oftentimes be engaged with services at MHSB, at Strive. We collaborate with Second Chance Center, Harm Reduction Action Center, I mean it kind of goes on and on who we collaborate with and that's huge. It's huge and we really do recognize how important that is."

She further explained "I think it really depends on how you collaborate and because like, for instance, also with our WAGEES program, we quote unquote collaborate with the Department of

¹³ See- <http://www.empowermentprogram.org/housing.html>

Corrections, like we're not doing that, so, we can become more like them. We're doing that, so they can become more like us."

Alternatives to Policing in Portland, Oregon

Currently, two models of alternatives to policing exist in Oregon. In Eugene, Oregon, CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets), originally founded in 1968 by Dennis Ekanger, is well known for their model of care and has been successful in meeting community needs with medical and mental health assistance rather than traditional criminal justice models. CAHOOTS is a model of alternatives to policing because staff do not carry weapons and their training allows them to respond in nonviolent ways. Funding for CAHOOTS comes from the Eugene Police Department, and over the years their budget has increased with additional services added to the program such as 24-hour service assistance.¹⁴

Portland Street Response (PSR) is a pilot program that started in January 2021 and services the Lents neighborhood in Portland, Oregon. In April 2021, the program expanded to the greater Lents area and responds to calls outside and inside publicly accessible spaces, such as stores and public lobbies.¹⁵

PSR is staffed with EMTs, mental health crisis therapists, and community health workers who will respond to individuals experiencing homelessness or low-acuity behavioral health issues.¹⁶ PSR is dispatched upon request by the caller; the dispatcher asks the caller a variety of questions to help determine which response team is best—Portland Street Response, Police, Fire, or ambulance service. Responding to emergency calls that require assistance and access to services such as housing and non-urgent medical attention is a way to meet community needs, and it is a much better use of resources.

¹⁴ See <https://www.eugene-or.gov/4508/> for more information about budget increase and funding.

¹⁵ Go to <https://www.portland.gov/streetresponse/news/2021/4/7/portland-street-response-pilot-adds-increased-areas-service-adds-more> to see a map that outlines the Lents area serviced by PSR.

¹⁶ *Portland Street Response Frequently Asked Questions* (n.d.). <https://www.portland.gov/streetresponse>



Bus Riders Unite! activist, Mario Mijares

An Overview of Recommendations

Based on the information and stories shared by community members in Portland, the research team makes recommendations to OPAL and other local non-profit organizations in the area, TriMet, elected officials, police, and leaders/advocates. Safety is not just about low risk of crime or danger—it is about having access to transit without fear of harassment and intimidation. We call on TriMet to recalibrate their culture to emphasize compassion and fairness, rather than money and intimidation. To promote feelings of safety and eliminate the reproduction of inequalities in Portland, TriMet needs to be free to all. The implementation of an alternative response to police is twofold. Communities have the tools and knowledge necessary to create and execute a community-based program, however, this requires collaboration across various organizations that center voices of community members. Secondly, establishing lines of communication with the police that allow them, as an organization, to view nonviolent situations as a call for help and support, not use of force. A more detailed descriptions of recommendations is below:

Recommendations to TriMet:

- **A fareless system**—To increase use of transportation and expand accessibility, TriMet should move toward a fareless system. To measure the effectiveness and benefits of a free-fare system, TriMet can initiate a partial free-fare system by giving access to Honor Citizen card members (riders with low-income, disabilities, Medicare beneficiaries, and over the age of 65). Divest from fare enforcement to provide free access to transportation to all.
- **Prioritize community concerns**—The recommendation to center rider concerns comes from participants and their suggestions on how to improve feelings of safety when using transit. Ensuring 1) better lighting at bus stops and shelters, 2) seats available to people with different abilities and disabilities, increased frequency of public transit, and 3) sidewalks that provide access to bus stops

Recommendations to elected officials and other community leaders:

Divest from policing, criminalization, and other traditional criminal justice responses and invest in communities.

- **Funding services and resources**—We suggest local elected officials and other community leaders continue advocating and advancing for increased funding for community services and resources. Divest from policing, criminalization, and other traditional criminal justice responses and invest in communities. That means distributing money to programs that are going to serve the community, including but not limited to mental health and substance misuse treatment, after-school youth programs, providing access to free food and housing, funding programs that are culturally-specific, and financing BIPOC and LGBTQ+-owned businesses, for example, that will provide employment opportunities in low-income areas.
- **Invest and support community initiatives** such as the Rider Ambassador pilot program, which is currently being used by the Portland StreetCar and is based on the Rider Advocates program.¹

Recommendations to OPAL:

- **Collaboration**—Continue establishing relationships with other non-profit organizations working on the issue in the area and across the country.

¹ Rider Ambassadors was created by the Grassroots Safety Table, a space where community organizations in Portland, Oregon strategize ways to make transit a safe, accessible space free from policing. The Grassroot Safety Table has been working with the Portland StreetCar and created an employment description for their nonprofit that is based on Rider Advocates. OPAL will have some oversight over the project and plans to use this position to expand to the rest of the Portland Metro area.



Rider Ambassadors on the Portland Streetcar

- **Collaborate with Street Roots**, who initiated Street Response, and ask ‘what OPAL can do to support what they have already started?’
- **Continue responding to needs from the community** (i.e. calling on TriMet to improve lighting at bus stops and shelters). What can OPAL do to empower the community and uplift their concerns?
- **Connect with MCSO** and strategize ways OPAL can support MCSO’s Homeless Outreach and Programs Engagement (HOPE) Team. The HOPE Team engages with houseless individuals in the Portland Metro Area to build relationships and connect folks to services. How can OPAL and other community organizations join HOPE so that individuals with guns and militarized uniforms are not the only ones connecting with unhoused communities in Portland?

Recommendations to Police

- **Community-informed practices and policies**—To MCSO, the Transit Police Division, and Portland Police, we recommend that police commit to engaging in an on-going process that works to improve policies that are community-informed and based. While initiatives such as the HOPE Team show that MCSO is engaging in processes to meet community needs, the program raises the question whether individuals with guns are the appropriate



response to communities who need services. Simply put, building relationships does not require a gun, taser, vests, and other military-style equipment.

- We suggest that MCSO connect *and* build relationships with community organizations who are better equipped to support historically underserved communities.

The research team recognizes and acknowledges the trauma and damages the police have caused in low-income, unhoused, disabled, BIPOC, immigrant, and LGBTQ+ communities. Policing and criminalization have broken spirits, families, and homes and we advocate for shifting of resources from the police to better fund community services, create a more inclusive and accessible transit system, and ultimately implement an alternative response team that does not penalize, criminalize, or harass riders. Moreover, we do not advocate for a program or initiative that will simply re-create the police image such as equipping personnel with police-like badges and uniforms and using language like “security” and “officers.” We do not suggest accepting performative actions from TriMet such as replacing police with private security or personnel that will issue fines to riders. The recommendation to engage in a process of partnership with law enforcement also comes with drawing clear boundaries around the kind of activities or operations that community organizations will not support.

Providing community members with an alternative to a police response is not only needed in Portland, Oregon. Individuals with unmet mental health needs are more likely to be killed by the police; of the 6,000 people shot and murdered by police since 2015, 23% were experiencing (or perceived to be experiencing) a mental health crisis.² An alternative response to policing is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Attempts to reform law enforcement agencies have failed.

The reality is that policing and surveillance are so common in society that it does not seem out of the ordinary to see private security and officers with guns on trains and buses. Communities who are affected most by policing need to make decisions about safety and security, not police, whose purpose is to protect property and perpetuate long-standing inequities. Communities have the answer and solution to care for their community, and it does not require the police.

Thank you to the community members who shared their stories for this report. We hope that meaningful considerations and conversations begin to move forward among community leaders, activists, law enforcement, and local elected officials to respond to the crisis of unmet mental health needs in Portland, Oregon and other regions around the nation. With the stories and information provided by Portland community members, there are several opportunities for community organizations to continue working to address racial, disability, gender, housing, and transportation justice.

² Kim, M. E., Chung, M., Hassan, S., Ritchie, A. J. (2021, May). *Defund the Police - Invest in Community Care: A Guide to Alternative to Mental Health Responses*. Interrupting Criminalization. See <https://www.interruptingcriminalization.com/non-police-crisis-response-guide>.



A purple vest and a backpack will be a new sight for regular streetcar riders. Newly-hired Rider Ambassadors are working aboard the streetcar to provide a non-security presence to help keep the system safe, supportive and comfortable.

Updates

Since this report was initially drafted, there are several important updates about transit, policing, and community models of care in the Portland region:

In their January, 2022 meeting, the TriMet Board of Directors approved Ordinance 364, which changes the TriMet code “in support of the Reimagining Public Safety efforts,” according to comments by TriMet General Manager Sam Desue. Advocates and community members are hopeful about these latest changes to TriMet policies. These changes have multiple effects, including clarifying roles and responsibilities for those who work within the transit system. Officially, police personnel will not be allowed to check for proof of fare payment.

TriMet has contracted with Portland Patrol Inc. to create a Safety Response Team (SRT). According to a posted job description, “typical duties include intervening in low level safety concerns including welfare checks, conflict resolution, basic first aid, and assisting with referrals for quality-of-life issues. SRT’s seek to help those in crisis, or those near crisis. The added layer of support is intended to connect vulnerable people with access to resources and assistance for those coping with life difficulties.” Bus Riders Unite! and other advocates will continue to listen to widespread community feedback about the impacts of this position, though there are initial concerns that SRTs are part of a larger policing force, and that this work is contracted, rather than housed under TriMet’s own employment system, where additional oversight, union representation, and community accountability might be more feasible.

The Portland Streetcar now has 5 Rider Ambassadors, based on the former Rider Advocates program described in the rest of the report, which offer help of all sorts to people riding the streetcar. BRU and OPAL were involved in the creation of this job description, providing program feedback, and continuing to engage with the program as it rolls out, while staying connected to community members about ongoing needs and effectiveness.

As of 2021, the Transit Police Division is currently made up of officers from six law enforcement agencies in jurisdictions TriMet serves. As the command agency, Multnomah County Sheriff’s Office will provide a captain to serve as TriMet Transit Chief of Police, as well as lieutenants, sergeants and deputies. Overall, the 7-year agreement will not exceed \$82.5 million, or about \$12 million a year, with TriMet reimbursing MCSO for salaries, overtime and equipment.



Appendices

A. Limitations

After requesting the budget data from 2002 to 2011 from TriMet, we managed to receive only seven years of budget documents. In addition to the budget documents, we received a few years of TriMet’s reports on demographics, which failed to be useful in terms of data on ethnicity. The report just categorized the riders in two broad groups—minority and non-minority (these reports lack any further information on who these minority groups are).

Moreover, the Portland Police Bureau’s (PPB) public records department rejected the request for TriMet-related crime data. Upon being more specific with our request for data on fare evasions, a PPB public records analyst explained that most citations for this category of offense were not written by law enforcement, and that TriMet maintains all the fare evasion citations. On contacting TriMet, we found out that TriMet doesn’t retain any crime-related data.

Overall, there was a lot of difficulty in accessing these data through public records requests. There should be more cooperation, transparency, and accountability on behalf of these public agencies to share the requested information with the public.

B. Methodology

The main question guiding the qualitative piece of this research project is *what are police encounters like on TriMet?* With the help of community organizers throughout Portland, Oregon, a total of thirteen community members were recruited for semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were appropriate for this study because interviewees have the space and opportunity to talk about their experiences to the extent they feel comfortable while being guided with questions from the interviewer. During the interview, participants were first asked to share their story and experiences followed by a variety of questions related to their perceptions of safety, policing, TriMet accessibility, and community-based resources.

The research team contacted a total of 85 local non-profit organizations in the Portland Metro Area to recruit community members interested in sharing their story.¹ Out of the 85 organizations, 55 were contacted via email; 10 organizations responded and agreed to support recruitment efforts by posting flyers on-site and sharing flyers on social media, email blasts, in staff meetings, and newsletters. The remaining 30 organizations were directly messaged on Instagram; 13 organizations responded and agreed to post the recruitment flyer on their social media profile.

In addition to the interviews, the research team conducted document analysis of about 15 years of budget data from TriMet. Few of these budget documents were available online,² while others had to be collected through a public records request to TriMet.



Participants

A total of thirteen community members shared their stories. The majority of participants were recruited via social media. Eleven of the participants knew about the project through a social media post, including an ad OPAL posted on Facebook; two participants were referred by a friend; and one participant responded to a flyer on-site. All participants were over 18 and currently live in Portland, Oregon. Eleven regularly use TriMet (currently and/or pre-COVID) and two no longer rely on TriMet for transportation. Participants shared a variety of identities salient to them including trans, racially mixed, low-income, single, abolitionist, and person with disabilities. Participants who did not want their name included in the report were assigned pseudonyms by the interviewer. All participants were compensated with a \$20 gift card for their time; they had the option to choose between an e-gift card or a regular gift card mailed to their residence.

¹ See 'Acknowledgments' section to review organizations and organizers that helped with recruitment efforts.

² <https://trimet.org/about/accountability.htm>

All interviews were virtual. Nine participants were interviewed over the phone; two via Zoom; and one via email. Interviews were recorded for accuracy and transcribed, then coded for thematic analysis. Additionally, the qualitative researcher wrote summaries of the interviews which were emailed to participants individually to ensure their stories were appropriately interpreted and analyzed.

C. Informal Consent Form

Informal Consent Form
OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon
Researcher: Natalie Cholula
natalie@OPALpdx.org

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to understand and frame interactions between police and community members on transit. We want community members to share their police encounters with OPAL and be part of the process that advocates for alternatives to policing on transit. At OPAL, we believe that community member's stories are powerful and have the chance to help shape the narrative of community safety.

Disclaimer(s)

Participants under the age of 18 will need legal guardians' express written permission to partake in the interview process.

Consent

At OPAL, we believe that your story is powerful and with your permission, we would like to share parts of your story on social media and in our final research report. You have the opportunity to decide what parts of your story and identity will be public (information may include your name, age, picture, identities such as gender, race, disability, religion, etc.)

Part of OPAL's research goal is to publish a final report that includes part of your story, TriMet budget information, and a framework of alternatives that would be widely accessible to the public. In addition, we would also like to share the final report with community organizations in the area, including TriMet. OPAL would like to include you and other participants in the final decision making process. If you choose to be involved in the final report's publicity, here are some examples of actions you could support: speaking at a TriMet board meeting, presenting your story at another community organization, and supporting OPAL or other organizations advance transportation justice or alternatives to policing.

You do not have to decide your participation past this interview right now. However, in a couple of months, I would like to contact you via email or phone to give an update on the project and ask for your participation in the tasks mentioned above. Interviews will be recorded for accuracy. Remember that you decide what part of your story is published on social media.

To thank you for your participation on this end, we offer a \$20 e-gift card.

Do you have any questions?

D. Guided Interview Questions for Community Members

Basic TriMet use

1. Do you prefer e-gift card or mailed to you?
 - a. What is your email address/ mailing address?
2. How many times a week do you use TriMet?(before & after covid)
3. What is your zip code?
4. How long have you relied on public transportation?
5. Does anyone else in your family rely on TriMet for transportation?
6. Can you share with me your gender identity and/or race, other identities?

Participant's story: tell me about your encounters with police on transit

- When did the encounter occur?
- Where did it happen?
- What did you feel during the encounter (scared, fearful, etc)?

Safety & Police

7. When using public transportation, what makes you feel safe?
 - a. examples? Why does that make you feel safe?
8. When using public transportation, what does not make you feel safe?
 - a. Examples? Why does that not make you feel safe?
9. Do you think your gender and/or race/ethnicity influence the way you feel safe?
10. What role do you think the police play on public transportation?
 - a. *Follow up questions:* Do you think someone with a gun, badge, law enforcer, etc needs to do that?
11. Can you tell me about a time you witnessed and/or experienced harassment/unequal treatment from TriMet staff, security, or police?
 - a. Tell me more about that
12. What does an alternative to policing mean and look like to you?
13. What, if any, suggestions do you have for TriMet to increase feelings of safety, security?
14. TriMet currently spends about \$23 million on transit police. Do you think this money could be spent on other areas of improvement on transit?
15. Why do you think it is important to speak out about this topic?

E. TriMet Budgets

Table 1: TriMet Security Budget between 2012–2021

Transit Police budget	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Canine Unit	224,848	400,000	509,783	518,000	531,986	500,000	505,000	618,000	697,500	697,500
Anti-terrorism		500,000	303,375	300,000	367,574	370,800	340,800	340,800		
Gang Outreach	100,000	103,000	111,470	111,470	138,371	138,350	130,900			
Deputy DA Contract	170,000	180,000	189,000	198,450	208,373	212,408	223,656	226,379	236,578	246,000
Police Security Contracts	8,415,380	9,121,912	10,178,008	9,886,908	11,111,989	11,622,804	12,754,830	14,399,475	15,119,500	15,406,300
Total	8,810,228	9,701,912	10,876,791	11,203,358	12,258,723	12,746,682	13,962,530	15,753,025	16,532,728	16,821,500

Table 2: TriMet's Security budget between 2002–2008 (Rider Advocates Program)

Budget for Rider Advocates	2002/03	2003/04	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Rider Advocates	324,000	331,980	425,000	437,750	450,000
Deputy DA Contract	93,000	115,276	122,810	143,922	245,552
Police Security Contracts	3,515,000	3,817,804	4,568,290	4,700,000	5,176,429
Total	3,932,000	4,265,060	5,116,100	5,281,672	5,871,981

Table 3: Fare Inspection Costs vs Passenger Revenue between 2012–2019

Fare Inspection Costs	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Fare Inspection Budget	12,512,572	13,732,245	14,126,087	14,351,827	16,315,720	16,494,841	17,121,758	18,394,747
Fare Revenue Budget	2,328,309	2,620,307	6,239,493	6,174,857	8,173,918	9,053,362	10,842,521	10,007,584
Passenger Revenue	104,472,899	115,100,000	119,645,098	119,441,395	119,629,072	120,700,000	120,150,000	113,100,000
Fare Revenue+ Fare Inspection	14,840,881	16,352,552	20,365,580	20,526,684	24,489,638	25,548,203	27,964,279	28,402,331



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