

**Phoenix City Council
Public Safety and Justice (PSJ) Subcommittee
Summary Minutes
Wednesday, September 6, 2023**

City Council Chambers
200 W. Jefferson St.
Phoenix, Ariz.

Subcommittee Members Present
Councilwoman Ann O'Brien, Chair
Councilwoman Betty Guardado
Councilman Kevin Robinson
Councilman Jim Waring

Subcommittee Members Absent

CALL TO ORDER

Chairwoman O'Brien called the Public Safety and Justice Subcommittee to order at 10:01 a.m. with Councilwoman Betty Guardado, Councilman Kevin Robinson, and Councilman Jim Waring present.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

None.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS

1. Minutes of the Public Safety and Justice Subcommittee Meeting

Councilman Waring made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 14, 2023, Public Safety and Justice Subcommittee meeting. Councilwoman Guardado seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 4-0.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION (ITEMS 2-4)

2. Light Rail Security Update

Chairwoman O'Brien introduced Light Rail Coordinator Markus Coleman, Police Assistant Chief Sean Kennedy, and Valley Metro Chief Executive Officer Jessica Mefford-Miller to present on this item.

Mr. Coleman gave an overview of the presentation and explained it would focus on the long-standing partnership between the Police Department and Light Rail staff.

Ms. Mefford-Miller explained customer safety is Valley Metro's highest priority. She stated the presentation focused on security, which Valley Metro defines as mitigating intentional risk. Ms. Mefford-Miller explained the Allied Universal Security (AUS) program and stated they have 110 full-time positions and 4 part-time positions, with 75

percent of scheduled shifts currently filled. She stated Valley Metro was working to close the 20 percent vacancy rate for the AUS positions. Ms. Mefford-Miller explained additional security resources will be added through the Northwest Phase 2 (NWEII) set to open in early 2024. Ms. Mefford-Miller explained where AUS is deployed around the light rail system, and how they spend their time during shifts. Ms. Mefford-Miller stated the AUS vacancy rate has decreased, and Valley Metro is working on more hiring efforts. She then provided an overview of the new fare collection policies including new ticket vending machines and mobile ticketing.

Councilman Waring asked how many AUS full-time positions are filled compared to the number of budgeted full-time positions available.

Ms. Mefford-Miller confirmed there are 80 to 85 positions currently filled.

Councilman Waring asked Mr. Coleman if private security hired for the light rail was spread out across cities.

Mr. Coleman replied yes.

Councilman Waring asked how many security personnel work in the City.

Mr. Coleman explained distribution is based on miles in the system.

Ms. Mefford-Miller added more than half of security personnel are focused in the City and they match their security presence based on ridership.

Councilman Waring asked how many trains are operating in the City at any given time and the likelihood of security personnel being in close proximity to someone when an incident occurs.

Ms. Mefford-Miller said customers are likely to encounter a guard on one-third of trains.

Councilman Waring asked about the hours of operation for light rail.

Ms. Mefford-Miller said the hours are from 4:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m.

Councilman Waring expressed concern with the volume of constituent calls he receives regarding negative experiences on light rail, especially with people experiencing homelessness.

Ms. Mefford Miller stated there were 81 reported assaults on passengers in the past six months. She added it was a mischaracterization of the experience to think one would be assaulted when on light rail.

Councilman Waring clarified his comment and emphasized people who do not pay for tickets are not light rail customers. He explained he is getting negative feedback from

his constituents about the state of the light rail trains, and he is concerned that he cannot provide a solution.

Ms. Mefford-Miller explained how the AUS security personnel deployment strategy works and provided examples.

Councilman Waring reiterated his concern, noting there could be a scenario where an incident occurs on a train and there are no security personnel nearby to help. He stated he is worried about the reputation of light rail and recommended changing the goal to have security personnel on 100 percent of trains.

Mr. Coleman replied these safety concerns are the reason for the presentation and staff have heard similar concerns, and emphasized why this collaborative effort is important.

Councilman Waring asked if there was something on the ballot previously to enable the City to hire security for light rail.

Mr. Coleman explained the vote was to allow the private security company to issue civil citations.

Councilman Robinson commented he teaches at Arizona State University in Tempe, and he has students who ride light rail, and their experience has been positive.

Chief Kennedy provided an update on the Police Transit Unit, explaining the unit responds to calls for service on the light rail and buses, investigates crime involving light rail and buses, and provides a proactive presence. He provided statistics from January to July on the number of criminal reports, transit arrests, and duty shifts. He mentioned Phase 1 of the Enhanced Light Rail Security Plan is currently happening, and Phase 2 will focus on increased enforcement and citing repeat offenders, and Phase 3 will focus on community concerns and maintaining any progress achieved.

Chairwoman O'Brien opened the floor for public comment.

Jeff Spellman spoke in support of the partnership because he had safety and security concerns about light rail along the 19th Avenue corridor.

Jayme Mason expressed supports for the partnership but is still concerned about the safety on light rail.

Shannon McBride expressed concern about the criminal activity associated with light rail. She explained she conducted a community survey that reflected public frustration with light rail safety.

Darlene Vallo stated she conducts two daily neighborhood patrols down the 19th Avenue corridor near light rail. She expressed concern about the safety of light rail and drug-related activity happening on the platforms.

Chairwoman O'Brien closed public comment.

Councilwoman Guardado thanked staff for their work on this plan. She expressed support for this partnership, and mentioned she has heard constituent concerns about safety. She asked Ms. Mefford-Miller about the number of people patrolling and if they have enough staff for AUS to keep the area secure.

Ms. Mefford-Miller replied Valley Metro can improve their resource level through hiring more individuals for AUS.

Councilwoman Guardado asked what the budget for a fully staffed security team would be, and if Police were aware of where funds would be diverted to help pay for these efforts.

Chief Kennedy responded Phoenix Police have dedicated additional personnel to this project to help support this plan.

Councilwoman Guardado asked if she could see numbers on how much it would cost to support Valley Metro fully in this effort. She requested discussing this at a later meeting. She asked staff to find out what the budget would be for more infrastructure enhancements at light rail platforms to help with security.

Assistant City Manager Lori Bays responded staff would research the topic and bring information back to the subcommittee.

Councilwoman Guardado thanked staff for creating the plan and for their effort in finding solutions.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked how many riders there are within a certain time period.

Ms. Mefford-Miller said there are about 30,000 riders per day.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked if the data on assaults and removals were from AUS or Phoenix Police.

Valley Metro Director of Safety, Security, and Quality Assurance Adrian Ruiz responded the data on the removal of customers is from AUS security personnel.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked if AUS security personnel can require someone riding on the train to provide identification.

Ms. Ruiz stated riders are required to provide identification.

Mr. Coleman clarified the assaults reported in the AUS data provided in this presentation are not always reported to Phoenix Police.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked how many vacancies are in the Police Transit Unit.

Chief Kennedy answered historically they had 16 sworn positions in the unit, but currently they have 10 sworn detective positions.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked what the protocol is when AUS security personnel or an officer asks the train to stop because of a safety issue.

Ms. Ruiz stated AUS security personnel can alert the train operator about the issue through dispatch control or by pushing the passenger intercom button.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked if the train always stops when it is asked to stop.

Ms. Ruiz stated the train cannot stop mid-platform, but the train can be held at the closest platform to wait for Phoenix Police to arrive.

Chairwoman O'Brien expressed concern an operations employee could override a request for the train to be stopped due to a safety issue.

Ms. Mefford-Miller stated that is not something that happens, and operators stop trains for safety issues.

Chairwoman O'Brien thanked the Police Transit Unit for the work they do. She expressed concern about funding and asked how Valley Metro responds to concerns from customers.

Ms. Ruiz replied if a member of the community has a concern, staff will research the issue and pull archived videos from the train.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked about a non-compliance rate for customers who refuse to provide identification when AUS security personnel ask for it. She requested to see this data on a monthly basis. She also requested a better delineation for data on removals to understand when Phoenix Police are involved in these interactions. She asked how AUS security personnel and Police will know when someone is a first-time offender in relation to the enhanced security plan.

Chief Kennedy responded there is often a familiarity with most AUS security personnel and Phoenix Police with regular customers who repeatedly fail to pay for a ticket.

Chairwoman O'Brien recommended a public service where education is the goal until a certain date and after, people who do not pay for their fare would receive a citation or a fine. She asked if new officers would be spending time within this unit.

Chief Kennedy stated they do utilize officers with limited experience, and officers improve their skills through customer contacts.

Councilman Waring expressed concern that young people might have a different perspective on the light rail experience than someone who is riding with children. He asked Mr. Coleman to rank how important safety is compared to other concerns.

Mr. Coleman responded safety will always be the number one concern. Chairwoman O'Brien asked for the members of the public to share the results of the surveys they mentioned were conducted. She requested a data point report for the October meeting.

3. Community Assistance Program (CAP) Telehealth Program Update

Chairwoman O'Brien introduced Fire Chief Mike Duran, Battalion Chief Ray Ochoa, and Community Assistance Program (CAP) Director D.C. Ernst to present on this item.

Assistant City Manager Lori Bays introduced Deputy City Manager Ginger Spencer.

Chief Duran summarized the presentation and indicated it will include updates on CAP and updates on telehealth services.

Ms. Ernst stated in March staff held five hiring events which resulted in hiring 48 new caseworkers for CAP. She noted the partnership with Arizona State University to provide social work interns for CAP. She provided data on increased CAP unit responses and emphasized responses increased significantly in July due to increased unit availability. She stated staff has been collaborating on locations of new CAP units.

Ms. Ernst announced the City Manager's Office is recruiting for a Community Mental Health Wellness and Safety Task Force that will consist of community members who have licenses in behavioral health, those who work in substance abuse counselling, and community members at large. Ms. Ernst provided a recap of recent CAP services and summarized next steps for CAP, including continued collaboration with Library staff and Office of Homeless Solutions (OHS) staff, continued recruitment and hiring practices, identifying other potential CAP locations, and creating a new CAP monthly report.

Battalion Chief Ochoa explained telehealth services are a good option for non-emergency calls. In February 2022, telehealth services were approved, protocols were established, and Phase 1 launched in December 2022, resulting in 296 calls transferred to telehealth services. He added Phase 2 will launch in September and will include the launch of field units in October.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked how significant the impact of diverting 296 calls to the telehealth program. She explained this question is about the state statute that requires transportation to the hospital if the patient requests it.

Battalion Chief Ochoa explained the statute allows for an alternate destination. He confirmed the telehealth program does improve emergency response times.

Chairwoman O'Brien expressed her appreciation for staff for all their efforts and for their service to the community.

4. School Safety Overview

Chairwoman O'Brien introduced Police Assistant Chief Charmane Osborn and Police Commander Sara Garza to present on this item.

Commander Garza defined School Resource Officers (SROs) as full-time positions who are assigned to precincts and keep in constant contact with those precincts. She explained School Safety Officers (SSOs) are off-duty positions, but have the same responsibilities as SROs and the main goal for both programs is to create positive relationships with students and schools.

Commander Garza provided comparative data for SROs in schools and emphasized the number has increased from 64 to 69 since the 2022-2023 school year. She explained the placement criteria and provided additional data on schools that have requested an SRO or SSO. She emphasized 95 percent of schools who have requested an SRO or SSO, or already had an assigned officer, are covered by sworn officers.

Commander Garza explained alternatives for the programs are being researched, including reserve officers, alternative sworn, part-time officers, and retirees. She summarized school safety measures and summarized next steps for this program including creating a Valley taskforce for police on these issues.

Councilman Robinson asked for clarification on exactly how many schools requested SROs in the 2022- 2023 school year.

Commander Garza responded 71 schools were covered last year. She explained the requests are often informal and collecting data is difficult, and 53 new schools formally requested SROs for this school year.

Councilman Robinson requested the data on the number of schools requesting SROs be clearer. He also asked what the response from reserve officers has been when asked to volunteer for this effort.

Commander Garza replied the reserve officer program had approximately six interested officers.

Councilman Robinson asked if the City would be eligible for repayment through the Arizona Department of Education if reserve or retired officers were utilized.

Assistant City Manager Lori Bays responded that the topic is part of ongoing research. She explained state grants would not provide compensation for civilian volunteers, and compensation for these situations are being explored.

Councilman Robinson requested all opportunities be explored.

Commander Garza replied staff is exploring all options.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked if the City is utilizing regional resource officers and if a shared SRO means the officer splits their time between schools.

Commander Garza explained SROs who are sharing schools could be categorized as regional, and this will be the model moving forward to cover more schools and added SROs could split their time between schools.

Chairwoman O'Brien clarified she understood a regional resource officer would be stationed in an area and respond to calls to schools as needed. She expressed concern that this would not allow for officers to connect with students.

Chief Osborn explained the regional models are often different when considering different areas, and some districts request different levels of service.

Chairwoman O'Brien stated she believes in the SRO model and the relationships officers form with students and schools are important. She also asked if the 95 percent of schools covered by an SRO or SSO have an officer present four to five days a week.

Chief Osborn confirmed yes.

INFORMATION ONLY (ITEM 5)

5. Phoenix Police Department Hiring, Recruitment and Attrition Report

Information only. No Councilmember requested additional information.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Shannon McBride clarified her previous comments and continued to express concern about the public safety of light rail. She suggested including community groups and other organizations that provide services to individuals in the community.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Councilman Waring requested an update on how San Diego addressed the issue of homelessness, as he observed an improvement when he visited.

Councilman Robinson requested an update on diversity outreach efforts in Police hiring.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairwoman O'Brien adjourned the meeting at 12:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chloe Baldwin
Management Fellow