

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Board Action/Information Summary

Action Information

MEAD Number: 201641 Resolution:

Yes No

TITLE:

Metro Transit Police Department Youth Initiatives

PRESENTATION SUMMARY:

The Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) and the WMATA Office of Customer Service, Communications and Marketing (CSCM) partnered in 2013 to create a youth safety campaign to minimize disruptions and improve safety for all riders

PURPOSE:

The Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) and the WMATA Office of Customer Service, Communications and Marketing (CSCM) partnered in 2013 to create a youth safety campaign called "Respect Your Ride" to minimize disruptions and improve safety for all riders. The resulting campaign, and efforts to provide in-system and external communications for youth riders and other vested stakeholders, is in support of Metro's strategic goal of continuing to build a premier safety culture. This presentation provides an overview of the youth safety campaign.

DESCRIPTION:

Metrobus and Metrorail are the primary means of transportation to and from school for the District of Columbia school system. Metro began recording customer complaints through surveys and other sources that adult riders were observing disorderly behavior by school age children which was leading to an uncomfortable riding experience. The Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) and the WMATA Office of Customer Service, Communications and Marketing (CSCM) partnered in 2013 to create a youth safety campaign to minimize disruptions and improve safety for all riders.

Key Highlights:

- Surveys of Metro customers indicate that youth behavior is most apparent before and after school. Examples of disruptive behavior are: Talking loudly, loud music, or inappropriate language.
- Outreach events have been the primary activity in support of education and promotion of safe transportation behavior. Since 2013, MTPD has participated in about 107 school visits/presentations.
- The number of Disorderly Juvenile calls for service by the MTPD has increased from 2011 to 2014.
- Fare evasion accounts for about 40% of all youth offenses, and usually a summons or citation is written instead of an actual arrest.

Background and History:

The MTPD and CSCM partnered in 2013 to create a youth safety campaign to minimize disruptions and improve safety for all riders. To assist in campaign development, CSCM convened youth focus groups to hear current perspectives of our young customers about behavior on buses and trains. The focus groups generally thought that communication messages should be peer-driven. Further, the focus group members suggested that there should be more consequences for unsafe and unruly behavior. Through the 2012-2013 school year, the focus groups continued to convene, and collaborated with Metro staff to create action items that would be most effective for improving youth behavior on buses and trains. One of the primary actions included a campaign that educates and promotes safe behavior, and as a result “Respect Your Ride” was created.

Discussion:

A primary reason that MTPD and CSCM began to look at alternative means to mitigate youth disorder was that we had heard complaints from adult customers about unruly behavior for some time. And, as recent as early this year, we learned through surveys conducted by the WMATA Office of Customer Research, that our customers continue to experience unruly behavior by students on trains and buses. As reported in the survey results, from a rider’s perspective:

- Youth behavior is most apparent before and after school.
- Customer rider frequency affects the number of times disruptive behavior is observed.
- Disruptive behavior is most observed in the District of Columbia.
- Disruptive behavior is most observed on Green and Blue lines.
- Examples of disruptive behavior: Talking loudly, loud music, or inappropriate language.

Outreach events have been the primary “Respect Your Ride” activity in support of the objective to educate and promote safe behavior was outreach events at schools. Most of the schools visited were chosen because of their close proximity to Metrorail stations in the District of Columbia. MTPD personnel and Metrobus operators joined together to speak with students in both small and large groups. Occasionally, Metro personnel would be joined by a local radio personality. Sometimes, a member of the youth focus group would provide testimony of his or her own experience in seeing disorderly behavior, and the detrimental effect it had on the perceptions of the character of young riders throughout the Metro System. Other outreach activities have included youth community events, festivals and back-to-school events. Since 2013, MTPD and Metrobus operators have conducted 107 school visits/presentations, 24 community outreach events, six youth council meetings, two Metro tours for school groups, and a Mayor's Town Hall.

In preparation for the opening of the Silver Line, MTPD contacted Commonwealth of Virginia schools within close proximity to the new stations to extend the “Respect Your Ride” campaign. At Marshall High School, some teachers and students developed their own marketing campaign to teach fellow students about safe riding on Metro. The students created flyers, posters and video presentations to inform their classmates of

new destinations they can travel to on the Silver Line. Their creative taglines and youthful approach to providing safety tips will resonate with other students who may have little or no experience riding Metro.

The Metro Transit Police meet quarterly with the District of Columbia Public Schools and Department of Transportation. These relationships keep communication lines open and help provide valuable information such as school closings and special events. MTPD can also use that opportunity to encourage school officials to convey information to students, such as the proper use of SmarTrip® cards. The MTPD participates in a daily conference call with the Metropolitan Police Department and school officials to discuss any occurrences that may need special attention by Metro. MTPD Criminal Investigation Division gathers intelligence from interviews with students, social media, and partnering agencies to determine if there may be trouble spots at or near stations or on buses, and if there is a need to provide an enhanced presence by uniformed officers. It is not uncommon to have one-on-one conversations with school guidance counselors. Many times school guidance counselors and teachers visit Metro stations near their schools to monitor their students and help guide good behavior.

Juvenile Disorder Statistics

The MTPD has experienced an increase of about 35% in the number of Disorderly Juveniles calls for service from 2011 to 2014. In 2014 there were 1,048 Disorderly Juveniles calls for service. As the disorderly calls for service increased, the number of arrests for Disorderly Conduct was reduced from 37 to 19 (48.6%) for the same years. In general, the reason for the low number of arrests in comparison to the calls for service is because when officers arrive at the location, the subjects have dispersed, or disperse when advised by the officer. In the last four years, Fail to Pay Fare has been the most common offense by youth offenders. Fail to Pay Fares account for about 40% of all youth offenses, and most often, a summons or citation is written instead of an actual arrest. The second most common offense is robbery, and usually involves the taking of an electronic device. The number of robberies committed by youth offenders has reduced from 100 in 2011 to 45 in 2014, a reduction of 55%. Overall, crimes of all types, excluding Fail to Pay Fare, have been reduced by 20.6% for youth offenders since 2011.

The Respect Your Ride youth engagement campaign has become the key venue for MTPD to reach out and establish relationships with students and regional school officials. These outreach activities provide an opportunity to spread good will, teach important safe riding practices to our younger riders, and encourage good behavior to improve the riding experience for all Metro customers. As the school year progresses, MTPD will create outreach events to further the objectives of the program and continue meeting with school transportation agencies to ensure effective communication of program policies and procedures.

FUNDING IMPACT:

Define current or potential funding impact, including source of reimbursable funds.	
Project Manager:	Chief Ronald A. Pavlik, Jr.
Project Department/Office:	Metro Transit Police Department

The funding for this project is absorbed into the base operating budget of the MTPD.

TIMELINE:

Previous Actions	July 2012 – Youth Focus Groups/Project Research December 2012 - Conducted first Youth Forum June 2013 - Various community events & festivals August 2013 - July 2015 - Back to school events and outreach activities
Anticipated actions after presentation	July 2015 - Ongoing – Continue the Respect Your Ride outreach campaign

RECOMMENDATION:

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Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Security Report: Youth Initiatives

Safety and Security Committee

September 25, 2015



Respect Your Ride Program

Objectives:

- Educate youth on safe riding practices
- Minimize youth disruptions and crime
- Improve safety for all riders
- Strengthen relationships with schools



Respect Your Ride Activities

Youth forums, youth-driven marketing, town halls, school visits, outreach opportunities, partnering with school administrators





School Outreach Events

2014 – 15 School Year



30 School Visits

8 Community
Outreach Events



DC Kids Ride Free



- Ride FREE on Metrobus and Metrorail
- Monday – Friday
 - 5:30 - 9:00 a.m.
 - 2:00 – 8:00 p.m.
 - Early school dismissals
- Students must TAP DC One Card



Bus School Outreach

Quarterly Meetings With DCPS Chancellor's Office



Monthly Meetings With DDOT



Collaboration With Deputy Mayor for Education



Ad Hoc Conference Calls Regarding Weather, Early Dismissals, Complaints, and Special Events



Customer Research

- Youth behavior most apparent before and after school
- Customer rider frequency affects number of times disruptive behavior observed
- Disruptive behavior most observed in DC
- Disruptive behavior most observed on Green and Blue lines
- Disruptive behavior examples: talking loudly, loud music or inappropriate language