



# BART Progressive Policing: Stakeholder Engagement Recommendations

JANUARY 14, 2021



# Executive Summary

Our country, our state and the Bay Area are experiencing a crisis with regard to increasing numbers of people experiencing homelessness, behavioral health issues and substance use. These national crises are visible in BART stations and on trains as unhoused people, individuals experiencing behavioral health issues and individuals using illegal substances are increasingly using BART for shelter. Rising rates of homelessness and related quality-of-life issues on BART present unique challenges for a transit system, and highlight a pressing need for action and understanding from us, our riders, and our partner agencies in the communities we serve.

During the past 6 months, BART engaged in a comprehensive stakeholder engagement effort designed to seek input on the most effective ways to address this growing challenge and build a safe and healthy response.

Key stakeholder voices contributing to this conversation included people who ride BART, frontline BART employees, sworn and non-sworn police personnel, BART Police Citizen Review Board, and other key community stakeholders. Participants were asked to share their experiences, their recommendations and their visions for a safe and healthy BART system.

Nearly every stakeholder engaged in this process noted they had seen issues of homelessness, substance use and behavioral health show up on BART trains and in the stations. Through extensive categorization of data and analysis of responses, recommendations and suggestions, the following broad categories of recommendations emerged and are listed in order of frequency:

- Increase the number and type of civilian professionals who respond to societal issues on BART.
- Establish more collaboration with human service organizations and counties.
- More enforcement and more uniformed presence.
- Engage and educate about BART rules, what BART is doing, and how to report issues.
- Provide additional training for the BART Police Department, improve hiring practices for the BART Police Department.
- Engage frontline workers in first response.

BART is heeding the call to more effectively build safety within the system, but this challenge cannot be addressed alone.

BART has initiated a number of promising practices that support implementation of an effective approach and those should be studied and scaled. In addition, there are a series of recommendations that have been developed to embed a team approach to these issues—both across the region and within the system. With safety and wellness as the goal, BART can invest in preventing further harm and intervening effectively when someone is in crisis.

This report seeks to outline the approach to this process, current efforts underway and provide a series of recommendations for next steps.

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# 1. Defining the Context



*BART Police Chief Ed Alvarez introduces the unarmed ambassador program*

At its June 25, 2020 meeting, the BART Board of Directors directed staff to conduct a stakeholder engagement process to determine alternatives to using armed police for issues of homelessness, behavioral health and substance use in the BART system.

“Recognizing that much has been done to implement progressive and equitable policing practices, we also need to consider a different model of public safety that is more effective and prevents racially biased policing,” stated the measure, which was introduced by Director Rebecca Saltzman.

The action came in the context of the Black Lives Matter movement, the

death of George Floyd under the knee of a Minneapolis police officer in May 2020, and the subsequent nationwide social justice demonstrations over disproportionate policing impacts.

The issue of policing equity has deep history at BART in light of one of the transit agency’s most painful chapters. On January 1, 2009, a white BART Police officer shot and killed a 22-year-old African-American man, Oscar Grant, on a platform at Fruitvale Station. The officer was ultimately charged and convicted of manslaughter. It was one of the first cases in the United States where cellphone video from bystanders galvanized protests and drove a call for reforms, and it changed BART in profound ways.

Since that time, the BART Police Department has seen more than a decade of significant reforms, many of which have been on the leading edge of progressive policing in America. Today, BART has more personnel dedicated to public safety—not just armed officers, but also positions such as ambassadors and fare inspectors—than it has had at any point in its 48-year-history.

These reforms include structural changes such as adding citizen oversight and reforms like the use of body-worn cameras by officers.

- The creation by the BART Board of a police review committee that engaged the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) to examine police incidents and provide greater focus on BART's police responsibilities.
- The establishment of the Office of the Independent Police Auditor and BART Police Citizen Review Board filled with a diverse range of laypeople and subject matter experts drawn from throughout the BART service area.
- Partnership with the Center for Policing Equity (CPE), a national research and action think tank that works to analyze racial disparities in data of law enforcement contacts and reduce potential police bias as a possible contributing factor. Partnership with CPE includes training and data analysis.
- Creation of the position of Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) and Community Outreach Coordinator, filled by Armando Sandoval.
- In 2013, BART Police fully implemented the use of body-worn cameras for all officers, becoming one of the first transit agencies to issue the cameras to personnel. In 2014, BPD launched the BART Watch app, which allows riders to communicate discreetly and in real time with police dispatchers and send files such as photographs or videos.



*An unarmed fare inspector checks a rider's ticket for proof of payment*

In 2015, the Office of the Independent Police Auditor, BART Citizen Review Board and BPD worked collaboratively to adopt a policy for interactions with transgender people, on the forefront of this civil rights issue.



*BART was one of the first agencies to issue body-worn cameras to its personnel*

BART PD was the first California agency to have POST-certified instructors for Fair and Impartial Policing training. Officers also receive training in bias-based policing, crisis intervention, cultural competence, and de-escalation.

BART PD also was a pilot agency for the Police Executive Research Forum's ICAT program—Integrating Communications, Assessment and Tactics.

Meanwhile, in 2017 BART PD implemented the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program in partnership with San Francisco PD and Public Health, focusing on harm reduction by allowing low-level offenders to choose treatment instead of jail. This pilot program was not renewed due to funding cuts, but it gave valuable insights into the harm reduction model.

In addition to increased outreach, on a parallel track, BART also expanded the role of fare inspection teams and piloted various “station hardening” improvements, such as higher barriers and different styles of faregates. In 2018, a Proof of Payment ordinance went into effect, and BPD created and filled civilian Fare Inspector positions.

In 2019, BART PD gained a prestigious accreditation from CALEA, the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, an accreditation that is given to fewer than 6% of agencies nationwide.

In February 2020, BART launched a pilot project of 10 unarmed Ambassadors, with the goal of increasing the presence of uniformed personnel on trains, focusing on education and outreach. Ambassadors wear easily identifiable uniforms distinct from those of Community Service Officers or Fare Inspectors. They are equipped with radios to report safety and security concerns or biohazards. The Ambassadors are also trained to respond to customers’ questions, complaints or requests for service. They also observe and report and call upon an officer when enforcement is needed.



*A new, harder-to-evade style of faregate shown at Concord Station, part of parallel “station hardening” efforts for greater safety and security*

During the pilot program, customer surveys showed an increase in the perception of uniformed presence aboard trains. The Ambassadors conducted over 5,700 platform checks and were contacted by over 6,700 customers.

Especially important during the pandemic, Ambassadors conducted over 7,300 additional educational contacts, serving as an important component of BART’s educational campaign to encourage compliance with mandated face coverings.

The Ambassador program was formalized and expanded upon in October 2020 using \$1.8 million in funds identified for pandemic response including staff to encourage physical distancing and mask compliance.

Also, in 2020, BPD Chief Ed Alvarez established a new Community Engagement and Progressive Policing Bureau to be headed by Deputy Chief Angela Averiett. Averiett will be in charge of the expanded non-sworn personnel, which will include one Community Outreach Specialist Supervisor and 10 social-work trained Crisis Intervention Specialists. Recruitment for the new positions will be at [www.bart.gov/jobs](http://www.bart.gov/jobs).

The Progressive Policing and Community Engagement Bureau personnel will build upon the work done for the past several years by dedicated BPD staff, like Sandoval, and crisis-intervention/homeless outreach focused police officers.



*Sonja Hagins Perry was reunited with her son with help from BART Police*

The officers work with social-resource partners to connect those in need with services. For example, BART Police have helped countless people struggling with homelessness, mental illness and drug addiction to reunite with family members, get treatment and begin to restore their lives.

Over the coming weeks, BART will finalize our Strategic Action Plan on Homelessness. It will be a road map for how BART moves forward in dealing with societal issues, and will be informed by this public outreach process.

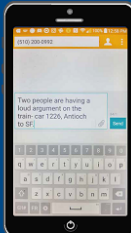
To improve information sharing, BART is working on a pilot with OpenLattice to create a specialized CARE app (Coordination, Assessment, Responses, Engagement) for internal use. The CARE app will include a HIPAA-compliant database of homeless services across the Bay Area region. It will be available to frontline officers or other personnel who engage with homeless individuals within BART's system, allowing them to track contacts and share changes in an individual's resource needs. BART understands that many service providers and shelters are at capacity due to the region's homelessness crisis. By engaging with the full range of available services and documenting outcomes of referrals, BART will improve its outreach and help facilitate better support for its transit homeless.

BART is and always has been centered around its customers. Their safety is BART's number one priority. BART has created multiple ways that customers can contact BPD Dispatchers directly and discreetly. Dispatchers are trained to ask the right questions to assess what type of response may be needed, including sending staff to check on the welfare of individuals who may be in crisis.

BART has an ongoing public awareness campaign that includes a website with information to educate BART's passengers on ways to report issues. The public can also utilize the Official BART app or the BART Watch app (both available for free in the App store) to send in reports in real time. The more eyes and ears on the system, the better positioned BART can be in supporting those in need of services. It is also important that BART customers understand the homeless have civil rights protections; it is not illegal to be homeless, to have a mental illness or to suffer from addiction.


## You Can Now Text BART Police

**Text  
(510) 200-0992**




- Available 24/7
- Include station name or train car number
- Save the number in your contacts

**We Still Offer the  
BART Watch App**



**For Non-emergencies Only.**  
For emergencies dial 911 or call BART Police at (510) 464-7000



## 2. Overview of the Stakeholder Engagement Process

The stakeholder engagement process included seeking input from a variety of internal and external stakeholder groups through two primary methodologies: stakeholder discussion sessions and a survey.

**Stakeholder Sessions.** Stakeholder sessions utilized an interactive discussion design where participants had the opportunity to think collectively about the issues of drug use, unhoused riders, and behavioral health on BART. Participants began by envisioning what individual and community safety could and should look like on BART, followed by brainstorming responses to three scenarios. Through the discussion of the scenarios and who should respond to them, participants could also provide examples from their own experiences in which situations were handled well or, conversely, when they escalated.

- Scenario 1: "Imagine there is a person using drugs while on the BART train."
- Scenario 2: "Imagine there is an unhoused person on the train with their belongings spread out across several seats. The person appears to be either asleep or passed out."
- Scenario 3: "Imagine there is an individual who is acting erratically in the train."

Follow up questions for each scenario included some or all of the following, time permitting

- "What issues of individual and community safety are at play in this scenario?"
- "Who should respond?"
- "What should their response be?"
- "In your experience, what are some examples of when a scenario like this was handled really well?"
- "In your experience what are some examples of when a scenario like this escalated?"
- "What additional interventions, supports or resources could have helped in this case?"

After discussion of the scenarios, the sessions moved into open discussion/public comment and also allowed time for participants to fill out a survey where their anonymous feedback could be collected. Stakeholder sessions were conducted primarily on Zoom (a few internal sessions were held in person with participants wearing masks) and lasted approximately 1.5-2 hours each.

The process began in mid-September through early October with internal stakeholders including

- the BART Police Citizen Review Board
- members of the BART Police Department including BART Police Officers, Community Service Officers (CSOs), Fare Inspection Officers (FIOs), Police Administrative Specialists and Ambassadors
- frontline workers such as Train Operators, System Service Workers and Station Agents;
- union leadership for the BART Police Department
- union leadership for frontline workers

External stakeholder sessions began in early October and continued into November. Stakeholder sessions were conducted in each of the 9 BART Directors district's with BART Directors present as well as a few meetings with targeted groups to gain further feedback (one with LGBTQ+ advocates and mental health/social service providers).



**Table 1: Stakeholder Engagement Sessions**

Session	Date	# Attendees
BART Police Citizen Review Board	08/10/20	11
BART Police Department	09/28/20	14
BART Police Department	09/29/20	12
BART Police Union Leadership	09/30/20	5
BART Frontline Workers	10/01/20	10
BART Police Department	10/02/20	12
Frontline Union Leadership	10/06/20	6
BART District #6	10/19/20	3
BART District #3	10/20/20	15
BART District #4	10/26/20	17
BART District #5	10/27/20	15
BART District #2	10/28/20	15
BART District #7	10/29/20	30
LGBTQ+ Advocates Session	10/30/20	11
Mental Health/Social Service	11/05/20	19
Joint Session 1: BART Districts #8 & 9	11/05/20	51
BART District #6 (Makeup)	11/09/20	21
BART District #1	11/09/20	17
Joint Session 2: BART Districts #8 & 9	11/21/20	5

## Survey

The survey was open-ended and designed to collect respondent perspectives on how to address the issues of drug use, unhoused riders, and behavioral health in the BART system, mirroring the questions/scenarios raised in the stakeholder sessions. During each stakeholder session, participants were provided the survey link to offer further ideas and recommendations related to what was discussed in the session.

Additionally, a survey link was sent to 5,000 riders from the BART Research database from across the 9 BART Districts and areas served in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. A survey link was provided on the bart.gov website so other interested parties could provide feedback. 1,000 total surveys were completed by the following groups:

### Internal Stakeholders (n=56)

- These respondents included members of the BART Police Department, BART Accessibility Task Force, BART Police Union Leaders, BART Frontline Workers, Frontline Workers’ Union Leaders & Members of the BART Police Citizen Review Board.

### External Stakeholders (n=944)

- Riders (n=441): Riders who are part of BART’s Research database.
- Session Participants (n=54) & General Public (n=449): these included participants in stakeholder sessions who were directed to the survey during the discussion and those who encountered it on the bart.gov website or via Twitter.

The survey started with collection of demographic data and then offered respondents the opportunity to provide answers to three sets of questions:

- “What do you think BART should do to address drug use? What type of personnel, interventions, tactics, etc.?”
- “What do you think BART should do to address unhoused riders? What type of personnel, interventions, tactics, etc.?”
- “What do you think BART should do to address riders experiencing behavioral health issues? What type of personnel, interventions, tactics, etc.?”

**Table 2: Timeline & Methodology for Stakeholder Process**

	September	October	November
<b>Internal Stakeholder Feedback Sessions</b> (7 sessions in total)	✓	✓	
<b>External Stakeholder Feedback Sessions</b> (12 sessions in total)		✓	✓
<b>Survey Collection</b> (56 Internal + 944 External) 1000 total surveys collected	✓	✓	✓

At each stakeholder session, extensive notes were taken and reviewed afterwards on a weekly basis for representative themes emerging from the discussions. Ideas for how to deal with issues of drug use, unhoused riders, and behavioral health given by participants in the sessions were placed into a list of emerging recommendations that were organized by categories (e.g., collaboration with counties and agencies, better training, hiring of new personnel to address issues, etc.). The surveys were also reviewed for themes and suggestions that were factored into the analysis and the development of the recommendations.

### 3. Key Findings from Stakeholder Engagement Process

Nearly every stakeholder engaged in this process noted that they had seen issues such as drug use, the presence of the unhoused, and behavioral health issues on BART trains and in stations. Participants converged in their desire for more presence of BART personnel and/or social service providers to address such issues; where respondents differed was in who should constitute that presence. Responses ranged from advocating for (a) more law enforcement; to (b) BART hiring more ambassadors; to (c) more engagement with organizational partners who can access BART to provide services or referrals; to (d) BART undertaking initiatives to provide direct service to those in need; to other suggestions.

#### Existing Partnerships

One key finding across stakeholder groups was the efficacy of partnerships that exist at present, and the need for scaling up such efforts. BART has an extensive network of partnerships, some formal and some informal, with community-based organizations and other partners in the counties it serves to deal with quality-of-life issues. Some of the partnerships mentioned in the listening sessions included:

- In **San Francisco County**: Swords to Plowshares, for veteran outreach; San Francisco Homeless Outreach Teams (SFHOT); the Syringe Access and Disposal Project; Salvation Army Homeless Outreach Teams (HOT); Pit Stop public restrooms; and Urban Alchemy for elevator attendants.
- In **Contra Costa County**, this includes the CORE (Coordinated Outreach, Referral, & Engagement) homeless outreach program;
- In **Alameda County**, these include: Mobile Crisis, Everyone Home, Swords to Plowshares Operation Dignity, Abode, and La Familia;
- In **San Mateo County**, these include Lifemoves; PERT (Psychiatric Emergency Response Team); SMART mobile psychiatric evaluation vehicle;
- In **Santa Clara County**, the newest service area, this includes Lifemoves;
- In all counties, BART participates in **Forensic Multidisciplinary Teams (FMDT)**, which work with the homeless, mentally ill, and those struggling with drug dependency.

In the stakeholder sessions and surveys, respondents made repeated mention of these programs and their efficacy, as excerpted in Table 3.

**Table 3: Selected Responses on Existing BART Partnerships**

“Initiatives that are not just the police make a huge difference here in BART. We started partnering with **Urban Alchemy** (UA) to provide elevator attendants. It completely changed the dynamic of what was happening in stations. People coming out of jail and in UA’s program were working at BART in our elevators. They helped us take our stations back. They helped with fare evasion and difficult people coming into stations too. I want it to get healthier. I want these kinds of initiatives.” (Station Agent)

“The BART Police Department (BPD) has someone who meets with **HOT teams** in different counties to help them call for the services they need. It is so important that BPD is taking that initiative. They are already doing a lot. I’ve seen homeless people come back after getting the services they need. We need more homeless outreach teams. The work BPD is doing is so important in the counties in which BART operates.” (Frontline Worker)

“A progressive engagement model would be more effective than a one-size-fits-all approach with a de-escalation attempt first. It’s tricky when there’s a matter that police get involved, when is that actually necessary? Who else can enforce the rules besides police? We have a **CORE outreach team** (5pm–1am; M–F) working at end of the line stations; this partnership has been super beneficial. These community members are routinized, and we can know what they need if we take a multi-pronged approach to serving them.” (External Stakeholder Session Participant)

“You guys are doing good with the **ambassadors**; I’ve seen them walking around, making sure that everything’s okay, and they’re very friendly. That is a major good thing for BART... It lets us know that ‘we’re watching you and we see you. ... we need more substations for ambassadors.” (External Stakeholder Session participant)

In stakeholder sessions, participants noted that some existing programs and partnerships were only for certain counties and that they should be scaled up across the five counties BART serves. For example, internal and external stakeholders in Alameda county who were aware of initiatives underway—particularly those led primarily in San Francisco by BART’s Crisis Intervention Training Coordinator and Community Outreach Liaison Armando Sandoval--repeatedly mentioned wanting those efforts to be scaled system-wide across the five counties.

## Internal Stakeholders

Internal stakeholders had distinct perspectives about addressing the issues of drug use, unhoused riders and behavioral health. In Table 4, the key concerns and themes of each discussion are listed from both the stakeholder session and the survey that was completed by members of each stakeholder group.

**Table 4: Internal Stakeholders’ Key Concerns/Themes**

Stakeholder Group	Key Concerns/Themes
<b>BART Police Department</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlighted innovations that are working: e.g., BPD have crisis intervention training, carry NARCAN, ambassadors program, fare inspectors at some stations</li> <li>Fare evasion is a key concern; increased presence of fare inspectors needed.</li> <li>Use a centralized intake process to direct calls for help, dispatching police for issues where their skills in de-escalation and intervention will be most effective, and leveraging other partnerships for less extreme needs.</li> </ul>
<b>BPD Union Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased violence in society in recent years is impacting BART</li> <li>Fare evasion is a principal cause of issues</li> <li>Need for hardening the system</li> <li>Lack of support/appreciation for the risks BPD takes</li> </ul>
<b>BART Police Citizen Review Board</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ambassadors as first responders who can de-escalate, police as back up</li> <li>More collaboration with professionals in counties/organizations</li> <li>Secure BART for paid riders; direct people in need to social services</li> </ul>
<b>Frontline Workers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Threats of violence that workers face &amp; concerns for safety is an issue</li> <li>Hire other professionals to work with BPD as partners</li> <li>Increase training for BPD to ensure greater cultural competency</li> <li>Maintain uniformed presence often a deterrent for illegal and/or dangerous behaviors</li> </ul>
<b>Frontline Union Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve communication internally among BART divisions</li> <li>Increase community involvement (i.e., more collaborations with organizations)</li> <li>Integrate other partners to call besides BPD to deal with issues of drug use, unhoused &amp; behavioral health</li> <li>Train frontline workers to respond to issues</li> </ul>

Three BART Police Department sessions were held that included sworn officers and non-sworn personnel including CSOs, FIOs and Ambassadors. The themes and concerns that emerged from these sessions included the need to address fare evasion and the “porousness” of the stations that participants felt increased the presence of drug use, unhoused riders, and behavioral health issues on BART. While some participants advocated for an increase in the number of sworn officers, others suggested a “layered approach.” In the words of one stakeholder session participant, when responding to mental and behavioral health issues, “The police officer would be accompanied by a second set of eyes, possibly a mental health person... ideally it would be a layered approach that consists also of a clinician.”

The BPD Union Leadership stakeholder session echoed the themes and concerns laid out by members of BPD. Participants added that society is becoming increasingly violent (examples were given of the number of armed incidents increasing) and this enters into the BART system. Participants echoed the calls for “hardening the system” as well as expressing skepticism in the ability of “civilians” to effectively handle the issues that BPD addresses such as drug use and behavioral health issues.

The BART Police Department Citizen Review Board advocated for a mix of sworn and non-sworn personnel and others to respond to the issues raised. For example, one participant noted that BART should “use unarmed personnel to assess the issue and provide them resources and information that they can refer to this population; they can also... determine if law enforcement needs to be deployed (of course this requires training).” Certain Citizen Review Board members also advocated for securing BART by enhancing entry barriers, more referrals to social service providers or to make BART more accessible by eliminating fares altogether.

Frontline workers and their union leadership expressed concerns about workers’ safety: arriving to work at early hours and fearing for their safety while walking through an empty BART parking lot, having to clean up used syringes or finding themselves inadvertently inhaling toxic fentanyl while doing their job. One system service worker noted, “It’s scary not knowing if someone is coming up from behind. Finding needles. Having to clean it up, it’s my job but it’s hazardous. You never know what is going to happen. I had an instance of someone going at me on a platform; BPD showed up and told me to be careful because that person hit someone with an axe before.”

Frontline workers and their union leadership did note that often they will try to address an issue (and some advocated for more training to be able to intervene more effectively) but that it often doesn’t get resolved until a sworn officer arrives and can enforce a resolution with more punitive measures; this resulted in some participants noting that uniformed personnel (whether sworn or non-sworn) presented a deterrent for illegal behavior such as drug use or erratic actions. A participant gave the recent example of a man loudly cursing and exposing himself to riders, getting on and off the train at different stations, and that multiple frontline workers attempted to address; nothing worked until a uniformed officer showed up and the person complied with their directions to exit the station. Frontline workers also noted that their only option is to call BPD and there should be other resources for issues that do not warrant a police response. There were also sentiments that better communication among BART entities as well as better training for BPD for cultural competency in addition to hiring more BPD personnel from local communities of color. One frontline worker shared, “The officers who I see do really well know their community. That makes a world of difference. Our police need some education about the community they are working in.”

## External Stakeholders

External stakeholders included community advocates as well as riders and the general public.

### Riders & General Public

For the riders who were surveyed (n=441), a majority of respondents wanted more enforcement of drug use on BART, especially given the health risks posed to riders and especially children of exposure drugs such as fentanyl or through exposure to a used syringe. A majority of riders also advocated for greater support by BART staff or external partners who could provide social services to the unhoused and those experiencing behavioral health crises. For example, one rider noted they would like to see more “Mental health workers who are trained in de-escalation and can provide on-the-spot assessments and treatment if necessary.”

Surveys completed through the bart.gov homepage also suggested similar attitudes towards drug use, unhoused riders, and behavioral health issues on BART. Suggestions ranged from more secure fare barriers to prevent entry to the provision of more resources such as trained mental health professionals and social service providers, and bathrooms with needle disposal facilities.

## Director Sessions

Spanning community input from across the BART system’s nine districts, these listening sessions included invited representatives of community-based organizations advocating for their members who rely on the BART transit system. Participants attending each Director listening session were offered the scenario prompts detailed above, and asked to offer responses that were germane to their respective Director’s geographical constituency. Participants represented city and county government, not-for-profit organizations that cater to the needs of marginalized populations (e.g., Black, trans, disabled, immigrant, and youth populations) and unaffiliated riders and community members. Many of the emergent themes that surfaced across district constituents did overlap. However, District Directors heard distinct and localized perspectives about addressing the issues of drug use, unhoused riders and behavioral health in their district’s transit hubs. In Table 6, the key concerns and themes of each discussion are listed from both the stakeholder session and the survey that was completed by members of each stakeholder group.

**Table 5: Director Session Stakeholders’ Key Concerns/Themes**

Stakeholder Group	Key Concerns/Themes
District #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A large proportion of riders rely on the system for their commute to work in SF, but opt out of using the system for recreational travel (reasons cited: safety, cleanliness, expense)</li> <li>• The Millbrae stop absorbs a disproportionate share of the end-of-the-line vulnerabilities of unhoused riders</li> <li>• BART must address its failure to manage fare evasion</li> </ul>
District #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women-identified respondents reported a range from verbal harassment to physical assault; one person reported BART police instrumental in de-escalating an unsafe moment. Interventions must include non-violent, noncoercive, and harm reduction approaches</li> <li>• In the moment of COVID-19, “safe” transit has become an even tougher goal post to meet</li> </ul>
District #3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety amounts to using the system without anticipation of harassment or imminent threat</li> <li>• BART must pursue equal enforcement of punitive policies and extend equally lenient decisions of discretion</li> <li>• Riders need a much more accessible infrastructure (i.e., costs and architecture)</li> <li>• Community safety might be more achievable if riders and BART frontline workers were more familiar with one another—de-escalation responses are possible when we are less foreign to one another</li> </ul>
District #4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A meaningful and productive partnership between BART and its customer base is entirely possible—union interference could undermine these police reform efforts, however</li> <li>• Gender-based discrimination and harassment are persistent threats for women and girls relying on the system</li> <li>• A safe and community-driven system will include a workforce that represents the riders and proceeds in ways consistent with the community’s values</li> <li>• Collaborating with organizations like La Familia and Unity Council would assist BART in connecting riders with behavioral health and social service support</li> </ul>
District #5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BART’s essential workers require support in this moment of COVID</li> <li>• Parking lots are not adequately staffed/patrolled; parking lot usage is also cost-prohibitive for some, who must then walk further to and from a station that is already under-served</li> <li>• Commuting students rely on this system heavily—it must be safe and affordable</li> </ul>

<p><b>District #6</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unhoused riders travel from Richmond to Warm Springs; support from initiatives like Armando Sandoval’s should be expanded</li> <li>• Establishing proactive collaborations with the county Departments of Health will help to address public health challenges like those listed in the hypothetical scenarios</li> <li>• Safety requires thoughtful collaboration between BART and city/county officials</li> <li>• Stations need more lighting and surveillance technology</li> </ul>
<p><b>District #7</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riders need non-violent approaches to social problems, that prioritize care and empathy; different uniforms for these personnel</li> <li>• Vulnerable folks with diminished mobility (e.g. elderly and disabled) have even fewer options to ensure their safety than other riders—when technology fails (call button malfunctions, etc.) they’re in big trouble relative to other riders</li> <li>• disproportionate harassment of young Black men must stop; explicit and implicit bias against this demographic needs addressing</li> <li>• BART should rely on the expertise of community organizations who know this work and know the people who are in need; localized stakeholders could collaborate to triage the needs of riders at certain stops or neighborhoods</li> <li>• stations should be lit and clean and present as accessible for all of its riders (examples: safe, clean, and reliable restroom access; multilingual signage; messages of respect and inclusion)</li> <li>• de-escalation training doesn’t include cultural competency -- BART personnel would benefit from spending time with the community members that they’re charged with policing</li> <li>• bolster service referral knowledge and execution protocols</li> </ul>
<p><b>District #8 &amp; 9</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Millbrae stop absorbs a disproportionate share of the end-of-the-line vulnerabilities of unhoused riders</li> <li>• System is too porous, frontline workers are not preventing unpaid ridership, and system is unclean</li> <li>• Fares are cost-prohibitive for many working-class commuters and preclude weekend/family/recreational use of the system</li> <li>• Short of shuttling unhoused riders back to SF and Oakland to get the resources they need, BART PD will not provide a value add to the system</li> </ul>

Many District session participants offered policy suggestions for both local and system-wide implementation. One participant offered the following post-session survey response, which captures the overlapping concerns and desires expressed by riders:



“No one should be criminalized for being poor and unhoused. And pushing unhoused riders off of BART for sleeping in the chairs or staying on for too long isn't a sustainable solution. I think that if there was a model of intervention that included peers, clinicians, and service providers that work together who can respond and intervene for unhoused riders, offering them resources and referrals. If I were to dream big, I would love to see BART have "line ambassadors" on each train line that just really get to know every commuter and frequent rider on a particular ride. They would get to know all the stations, all the drivers, and become familiar to the riders. They could be trained in de-escalation so that they knew when someone like an unhoused person was a frequent rider, they could get to know some of the background of that person, like if they are already receiving social services through some agency, and could help to build partnerships”

—Post-Session Stakeholder Survey

### Focused Sessions with Advocates

Additional sessions were held to gather information pertaining to the specific experiences of LGBTQ+ communities, the perspectives of mental health and social service providers working with issues of drug use, homelessness and behavioral health across the Bay Area, and advocates. From these sessions, several themes emerged as salient to the reforms under consideration. Advocates discussed (a) the need for specific approaches/training/accessibility for distinct populations such as the adverse experiences that gender non-conforming individuals face on BART, and the fact that some LGBTQ+ youth leave home due to family conflicts and may end up unhoused. Advocates also noted that (b) evening hours are particularly risky and expose riders to sexual violence and harassment (especially women, gender non-conforming individuals, and unhoused riders). Advocates suggested that BART (c) assume a harm reduction approach that could include safe syringe disposal, welfare checks, open gender-neutral bathrooms and a reframing of encountering “erratic” individuals to not assume they are always dangerous. Advocates also mentioned that for individuals with mental illness who are on medication, the use of tasers could adversely affect them physiologically and interrupt the efficacy of their psychiatric medications.

Tailored recommendations from advocates included to:

- Hire community stewards/peer counselors especially persons with lived experience to form mobile community crisis teams to ride the BART frequently.
- Update visual messaging by adding numbers and resources for community members to assist others and themselves, if needed. Ensuring that disabled riders can access whatever public information and resources (such as the BARTWatch app or emergency call buttons to train operators) exist.
- Explore marketing campaigns combined with education (via social media or other platforms) to humanize people experiencing homelessness in the BART and people experiencing mental health symptoms. This will help riders not be as scared of people who are generally not a safety issue.
- Fund programs within BART or partner with community organizations to assist in leading trauma-informed responses on BART.

## 4. Recommendations for BART

Over the past several years, BART has built a foundation of programs and partnerships that are working well to improve quality-of-life concerns. For example, the elevator attendant program in downtown San Francisco has been hugely popular with the public, and could be a model for future partnerships. Customer complaints about cleanliness and inappropriate use of elevators went to nearly zero since the attendants have been in place.

Tim Chan, BART's Group Manager for Station Planning, has taken the lead on BART's quality-of-life partnerships. "We will be looking for any and all opportunities to partner on funding these programs," he said. "We will be continuing our advocacy work with the counties, the state and the federal government. We desperately need it because this is not a problem BART alone can solve."

BART's quality-of-life funding umbrella has included the areas of fare evasion, homelessness, cleanliness, safety and security. Over the past seven years, BART has allocated more than \$59 million and has increased staffing by more than 90 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees dedicated to these areas. While there can be overlap between program areas, there has nonetheless been significant financial support for these priorities.

Other examples of BART's longstanding commitment to quality-of-life issues include elements of the Station Modernization Program, which has been revised and refined over time to address security, fare evasion and homelessness. As knowledge is gained, BART Facilities Standards (BFS) have been updated to reflect the design standards necessary to reduce fare evasion.

The BART system was conceived, designed and built under a guiding philosophy of creating a positive customer experience within a safe environment. BART will continue to pursue a better customer experience through improvements in existing operating practices, implementation of new programs, and incorporation of best-practice design procedures. These will continue to be funded through targeted and general grant programs, existing operating budget allocations, and annual operating initiatives, where feasible.

### **Increase the number and type of professionals who respond to societal issues on BART.**

Issues of homelessness, substance abuse and behavioral health are not unique to BART and therefore any solution must recognize that a meaningful response requires the right people and agencies at the table. BART has begun leveraging partnerships to expand the non-sworn presence to assist riders and staff. Based on the emerging success of these efforts, they must scale proven strategies to improve the efficacy of interventions and pilot promising practices to more effectively intervene.

*"BART personnel and non-profit partners that are on call and who can actually provide resources should respond. The response should be one of love and compassion. Bring someone in who can provide someplace to go"*

*—Director Session Participant*

## Recommendations:

Expand effective models of intervention that begin with non-sworn personnel, are centered on the humanity of the individuals in crisis and take a humane but firm approach to resolving issues with people experiencing these issues.

- **Ambassador Program:** Make permanent the Ambassador pilot program and expand it. The Ambassadors wear easily identifiable uniforms distinct from those of Community Service Officers or Fare Inspectors. They are equipped with radios to report safety and security concerns or biohazards. The ambassadors are also trained to respond to customers' questions, complaints or requests for service. They observe and report and call upon an officer when enforcement is needed.
- **Urban Alchemy:** Expand partnership with Urban Alchemy to expand their role to one that works specifically on the initial contact with people experiencing behavioral health issues, using substances or experiencing homelessness. Their firm but humane approach has worked well in the Elevator Attendant program and could round out the team approach to initial intervention in these areas.
- **Salvation Army:** Expand existing partnership between BART and the Salvation Army to better address quality of life issues in and around the stations the Salvation Army can serve.
- **CORE in CoCo County:** CORE stands for Coordinated Outreach, Referral, & Engagement and their role is to engage unhoused individuals seeking refuge in the BART stations and on board trains or under aerial tracks and connect them with available services and shelters in this county. This work needs to be supported and expanded.
- **Homeless Outreach teams:** Survey data reveals that there is an interest in expanding these roles to having HOT team members ride the trains most impacted and intervene outside of the stations. BART currently funds a partnership between BART, MUNI and the City of San Francisco's Department of Homelessness to provide full-time Homelessness Outreach Team (HOT) employees focusing on particular stations. However, these roles are currently only funded for 4 days a week and must be expanded.

Partner with service providers to better address issues of safety for women, girls and trans folks within the BART system.

- Due to COVID-19, the full implementation of the BART Board of Directors resolution in support of partnering with the Alliance for Girls to launch a sexual harassment prevention campaign has been delayed. However, it is critical to take steps to form a working group who is able to make recommendations to advance a gender-equity safety action plan for transit spaces.

## Establish more collaboration with human service organizations and counties.

A common theme that emerged from the data was that BART is a means for individuals to travel from county to county but there isn't a regional approach to tackling the issues that are presenting themselves on the train and in the stations. As a result, if the behavior was happening in Contra Costa or Alameda County, there would be a local county intervention. However, when someone in crisis is riding the BART train through these jurisdictions, there is a gap in services.

To address this gap, BART needs to more deeply engage the five counties it serves to build a collaborative 5 county protocol for prevention, intervention and restoration. This protocol will recognize the fact that these issues are not confined to one county, but are experienced by people across our 5 counties and when these issues present themselves on BART, it is an opportunity for meaningful system wide intervention and restoration.

“We need more HOT teams, they are trained to handle these social issues that we experience. We need them in all counties, more participation from cities and counties. BART can’t handle all of this by themselves. We are serving the cities and counties that we go through and we need more help than what we can budget-wise do. Right now, only BPD can respond, but we service the whole Bay Area.”

—Frontline Workers 10/1

### Recommendations:

**Convene a Regional Task Force Across 5 Counties:** BART should convene a regional task force that consists of public health officials from all 5 counties, representatives of police agencies and social service organizations in each county that address the issues of substance abuse, behavioral health and assisting our unhoused riders. This joint effort will focus on identifying the key strategies to address the public health crisis, prioritize identifying local, state and federal funding streams to support joint efforts and set up standard methods of regular communication amongst agencies and service providers.

### More enforcement and more uniformed presence.

While respondents did not all agree on the best approach to take, the vast majority, preferred to see a non-sworn initial approach to issues that arise from these three areas. Others preferred to see more enforcement by the police and zero tolerance of these activities. A common theme throughout the data is a desire for a greater presence of people trained and able to help address issues that arise from homelessness, substance use and behavioral health, whether those are sworn officers with appropriate training for dealing with such issues or non-sworn personnel with expertise in social service provision.

“I think the best solution is a hybrid team of Law Enforcement and clinicians to work as a team to address these issues. A lot of issues around behavioral issues sometimes involve criminal activities, but having an additional expert available to address the health issues that might be used to de-escalate and or provide resources. All BPD personnel are trained in CIT, so are experts in some capacity.”

—BPD survey

### Recommendations:

Build a team protocol that applies to dispatch, BPD and all non-sworn responders that outlines how BART will respond to calls for service regarding issues involving people experiencing homelessness, using illegal substances or experiencing a behavioral health issue.

- The protocol must clearly outline how to code calls for service, who to dispatch, under what circumstances a non-sworn approach is appropriate, under what circumstances a sworn approach is needed and when to have the initial approach be by non-sworn officers with a sworn team prepared to provide back up if needed.

Create a clear policy with procedures and tactics for who responds to specific calls for service, how the non-sworn staff can quickly call for BPD backup and how BPD can transfer calls that are more appropriate for non-sworn staff. In dynamic situations, a scenario can escalate quickly and it’s critical that the BPD and non-sworn staff have the training backed by clear policy so that everyone understands their role and how to give and get assistance quickly and safely.

- A recommendation that emerged was to offer the Force Option Simulator training for all Civilians responding to these three issues, so they are prepared for escalating circumstances and are prepared to seek back up if needed.

Implement Data Driven Staffing Models to Increase Presence When/Where Most Needed: Using data as the guiding force, categorize the type and volume of calls for support by station and time of day. Modify staffing levels and approaches to ensure tailored sworn and non-sworn response. Sworn and Non-Sworn Staff should publish detailed calls for service data permitting analyses of type and volume of responses needed.

Increase presence of non-sworn Ambassadors, community service officers and Elevator Attendants at stations and on trains to be the initial contact for de-escalating people in crisis.

### **Promoting education and awareness about BART rules, what BART is doing, and how to report issues.**

There are a number of existing programs that allow riders to request assistance, notify BART of problems and seek follow up on particular issues happening on trains and in the stations. However, these existing programs are not widely understood either by the ridership or the existing communities that BART currently serves. As a result, it is critical that BART invest in a significant public awareness campaign geared to riders, staff and the larger community to ensure everyone knows how to seek and get help when needed.

“We can do a lot of things like services, and partnerships, but we need to educate everyone about what those resources are. People should know what’s there. You don’t need to call the police if someone is trying to get a few hours of sleep. We can do marketing, educating the community, providing information, 1-800 numbers, creating partnerships and networks. That’s what BART stands for and that’s what this community has asked for. We should be educating the ridership about alternative options; educating the staff on what they can do and building partnerships with other organizations to see how they can help.”

—Director Session Participant

### **Recommendation:**

Launch an internal and external communications campaign. BART has implemented internal communication tools that work when used. A clear need exists for both employees and riders to better understand how to leverage these options to seek help when they see someone in crisis. This campaign must provide options for the public to describe the issue so that an internal dispatcher can decide if a police, non-police, or combined response is most appropriate. Campaigns must take into account BART’s multi-lingual ridership and ensure accessibility for riders with disabilities.

- A theme that emerged from the data was the concern that riders had with calling the police to respond to an issue that had to do with homelessness, substance use or mental illness. Stakeholders overwhelmingly want to see an appropriate initial intervention with the option of seeking back up from a sworn BART police officer if the situation warrants such a response. In order to create these teams, BART will need to deepen its investment in hiring and training Ambassadors, community service officers and expanding partnerships with organizations like Urban Alchemy, Salvation Army and others.

## Additional training for the BART Police Department, better hiring practices for the BART Police Department.

The data showed that communities most impacted by the criminal justice system, including members of the BIPOC community, LGBTQ+, Trans Community believe that BART PD would benefit from additional training to address issues of biased policing and criminalization of people of color. Some segments of the community believe that BART PD would benefit from reviewing their hiring practices making changes to prioritize hiring a police force that represents the rich diversity of the Bay Area.

“The officers who I see do really well in these situations really know their community. They’ve been working in their community, they volunteer, they’re not scared of their community. That makes a world of difference. Our police need some education about the community in which they are working. Sometimes I see the look in their eyes that they don’t really understand working here—they have this job, but they have never come to East Oakland before. ... They really need that help and understanding and not being fearful.”

—Frontline Workers Session 10/1

### Recommendations:

- Invest in team building and training for BPD, Ambassadors and Community Service Officers to train them on the new policy on responding to people experiencing homelessness, using substances or having a behavioral health issue.
- Review current hiring, recruitment and retention practices at BPD and bring recommendations to the BART Board with ways to improve the recruitment and retention of BIPOC, women and members of the LGBTQ+ communities.
- Identify focal group populations that experience disproportional criminalization (LGBTQ communities, BIPOC, Youth) to transform this dynamic and build trust.
- Create Police Advisory Boards to supplement existing Civilian Oversight efforts to provide community members with direct access to the Chief of Police and BPD leaders to discuss issues occurring that are impacting trust between BPD and riders and develop strategies in partnership to address them.

### Engage frontline workers in first response.

Frontline workers at BART play a critical role in building safety. They are often the first person to observe or interact with a person in crisis and must be fully trained on what options are available to them to appropriately deal with whatever behavior they are witnessing.

“Your most accessible resource is the frontline employees. You’ll get the quickest response from them, I see a blend between having a team of professionals that are somehow accessible by phone or by radio, “I have this situation.” The frontline workers could be our first responders so to speak, obviously with their consent and on a volunteer basis.”

—Frontline Union 10/6

## Recommendations:

- Train everyone in the system—train operators, station agents, transportation managers, operations supervisors and maintenance crews—on effective interventions with people experiencing behavioral health issues, using substances or experiencing homelessness. Frontline staff need to get properly trained to understand these issues and fully understand the resources BART makes available for someone in crisis to ensure they know how to get help in all situations.
- Ensure frontline staff understands how to request assistance from non-sworn teams who are trained to address various behaviors and de-escalate situations effectively.

## BART to explore creative ways to leverage their facilities to meet needs.

BART is a transit system that specializes in transportation. However, given the fact that BART is operating amidst a public health crisis involving homelessness, behavioral health and substance abuse, BART plays a role in directing people to services to more effectively cycle people out of crisis.

“There should be a crisis response team on board. If we can have BART police at every station, we can have a team of social workers at every station. Pretty much, we use our common sense most of the time to deal with emergencies. You can get someone off the train but what about after that? After they leave, they’ll get back on the train again because we are not addressing the problem. There’s no follow up. We need services at every station.”

—District session Participant

## Recommendations:

- Increase lighting in and around the BART stations
- Expand partnership with Urban Alchemy, who recruits and trains formerly incarcerated individuals, to build on the success of the Elevator Attendant program. The Elevator Attendant Program places attendants in the street and platform elevators at Civic Center, Powell St., Montgomery and Embarcadero stations during BART operating hours. This program has virtually eliminated inappropriate behavior in the elevators. The attendants greet customers, operate the elevator, collect data on the number of users and their demographics and deter inappropriate behavior in the elevator. This is a model program that can be replicated in other counties by identifying community organizations working with formerly incarcerated individuals to build out this successful model in the other 4 counties.
- Pit Stop Program: BART can expand their current efforts to fund the San Francisco Public Works' Pit Stop Program to provide clean and safe public toilets, as well as used-needle receptacles and dog waste stations, in the City's most impacted neighborhoods. There are currently Pit Stop bathrooms above four BART stations (Powell St. Station, Civic Center Station, 16th and Mission St. Station and 24th and Mission St. Station).
- Explore promising practices like the Hub of Hope in Philadelphia that created an on-site drop-in service center to connect people in crisis in their transit system to appropriate county resources.
- Expand outposts at the most impacted stations where Ambassadors and community service officers are present and available to respond to people in crisis and trained to connect them to local services.

## 5. Staffing and Budget Implications

Due to the budget crisis facing BART and other transit agencies, it is crucial that any new proposals be cost-neutral as much as possible. BART will be counting on partnerships, grants and cost-sharing with local, state and national stakeholders for creative solutions that can be scaled up and which are fiscally achievable.

An analysis of the recommendations set forth found that resources in BART's FY21 budget can support the recommendations. By reallocating vacant positions and utilizing funds earmarked for COVID-19 response, both labor and non-labor costs associated with the recommendations can be met utilizing FY21 budgeted resource levels. The positions added in FY21 will be carried forward into FY22.

## 6. Conclusion

BART has answered the call to take a deeper look at how issues of homelessness, mental illness and substance abuse are impacting riders, employees and members of the larger community. This call requires engaging internal BART staff, sworn officers, union leaders, external stakeholders and riders in a robust dialogue. It is clear that BART is experiencing the impacts of a national, state and local crises involving people who are unhoused, experiencing mental health issues, or engaging in drug activity in the BART system. BART has pioneered many promising interventions and partnerships that can be augmented or expanded. BART can also build on these successes and further imbed a team approach, both regionally and in how BART responds to individual situations. BART has the opportunity to continue to lead from the front and redefine how to collaborate to build shared safety in the BART system by making the most strategic use of sworn officers and non-sworn personnel. Continuing to evolve the most strategic use of sworn officers to keep the riders safe and enforce public safety protocols will help this crucial transit system lead the way for other public entities.