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METRO

Metro Board Considers the Future of Law Enforcement's Role on LA's Transit System

Metro's board is considering alternatives to armed law enforcement responses during some incidents.

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Getty

Alternatives to armed law enforcement will be considered Thursday when the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority's board of directors meets to consider appointing a committee to rethink public safety on the agency's transit system.

The discussion will include alternatives to armed law enforcement response to some incidents. Potential alternatives would include a transit ambassador program that provides staffed presence at Metro facilities and on Metro vehicles as well as social workers, mediators or mental health professionals.

The motion, co-sponsored by Los Angeles City Councilman Mike Bonin and county Supervisors Janice Hahn and Hilda Solis, urges Metro to develop policies for different responses to nonviolent crimes and other offenses.

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"Around the country and all over Los Angeles, people are re-imagining how to provide public safety," Bonin said. "Metro needs to be at the forefront of that and make changes that assure that all of its passengers feel safe. That starts by acknowledging that we cannot rely on an armed police presence for every issue and we need smarter, more effective solutions."

Bonin said jurisdictions around the country are considering similar approaches to public safety. The Los Angeles City Council is examining the possibility of a new emergency-response model that would have trained specialists, rather than police officers, respond to many types of calls, including those regarding homelessness, mental health and substance abuse issues.

The Metro motion calls for the creation of a Transit Public Safety Advisory Committee that would develop the new policies and approaches in consultation with passengers and community members representative of the agency's ridership.

The board on Thursday is also expected to consider a separate motion asking the agency to develop "clear criteria for when suspending service is necessary and appropriate." The motion was introduced in response to Metro's decision to suspend passenger service on May 30, stranding many passengers in the middle of a curfew.

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