



Metropolitan Transportation Authority

State of New York

September 4, 2020

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Honorable Thomas P. DiNapoli
Office of the State Comptroller
59 Maiden Lane, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10038

RE: Response to Final Report #2018-S-59– Homeless Outreach Services in the New York City Subway System

Dear Governor Cuomo and Comptroller DiNapoli:

On January 16, 2020, the Office of the State Comptroller issued the above referenced audit report. As required by Section 170 of the Executive Law, I am providing you with the attached response which addresses the recommendations contained in the report.

Additionally, I will be working with staff to ensure that management is following up on and enforcing the audit's recommendations, where appropriate, and requesting regular, interim reports to that effect.

A copy of the final audit report is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pat Foye".

Patrick J. Foye
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer

c: Anni Zhu, Chief of Staff to the MTA Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Michele Woods, Auditor General, MTA Audit Services

Attachment

The agencies of the MTA

MTA New York City Transit
MTA Long Island Rail Road

MTA Metro-North Railroad
MTA Bridges and Tunnels

MTA Construction & Development
MTA Bus Company

Memorandum



Metropolitan Transportation Authority

State of New York

Date September 1, 2020

To Patrick Foye, Chairman, MTA

From Patrick T. Warren, MTA Chief Safety Officer 

Re Response to the Office of the State Comptroller Final Report of the Homeless Outreach Services in New York City Subway System, OSC #2018-S-059

On January 16, 2020, the Office of the State Comptroller ("OSC") audit team issued a Final Report, "Homeless Outreach Services in the New York City Subway System", OSC #2108-S-059, to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority ("MTA"). The service program is embodied in a contract for homeless outreach and social services between the NYC Department of Homeless Services ("DHS") and the Bowery Residents' Committee ("BRC"), with a Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") between DHS and the MTA.

In compliance with Section 170 of the Executive Law, the MTA provides OSC with the steps it has taken to implement three recommendations contained in the Report. The MTA takes very seriously our commitment to our customers and the communities we serve. As part of that commitment, we look to help those experiencing homelessness by moving them out of the MTA's transportation system into more appropriate shelter and services to improve their level of safety and improve their lives.

Recommendation Comments

Recognizing the importance of helping transition those experiencing homelessness from the inadequate shelter of the MTA transportation system to appropriate shelters that provide security and social services, the MTA continues its drive to provide improved homeless outreach. Together with the DHS and other stakeholders, the MTA has developed a team of analysts to provide support to the Homeless Program Office (HPO). These analysts observe, direct, and support homeless outreach teams working on MTA property. They document and report back on their findings, recommend improvements and identify areas of weakness (e.g., staffing or process issues, problematic response times). This new plan includes reassessing and amending performance metrics, rebalancing resources, and introducing a heightened level of command and control over the various elements of the homeless outreach program.

Recommendation 7:

Ensure DHS complies with the terms of the MOU.

MTA Response:

Concur: In-Progress. The MTA participates in routine, periodic meetings with the DHS to establish outreach priorities and evaluate progress towards goals, as outlined in the DHS contract with BRC and the MOU. Further, the MTA, as part of its organizational transformation, established a Homeless Program Office, which is responsible for monitoring MOU compliance. As the MTA's HPO negotiates the renewal of its MOU with NYC DHS, part of the MTA HPO's proposal includes census reductions based on the NYC DHS Homeless Census (HOPE Count) and performance measures and goals that will allow us to facilitate, track and monitor the diversion of engaged individuals experiencing homelessness off MTA property. Further the New York State Office of Temporary Disability and Assistance (OTDA) conducts weekly meetings with the MTA and DHS which further supports achieving compliance with the MOU.

Recommendation 8:

Monitor 311 complaint calls related to homelessness in the New York City subway system.

MTA Response:

Partially Concur: In-Progress. 311 calls are currently forwarded to the New York City Police Department, MTA Police Department and BRC for homelessness-related issues. These agencies are responsible for reacting to calls to this system that pertain to homeless conditions. The MTA does not recognize a purpose in having the MTA HPO monitoring 311 calls. The HPO is currently working with NYC DHS to negotiate the renewal of the MOU for NYCT Subways and has proposed verification of 311 calls.

Recommendation 9:

Work together (with DHS) to develop and establish census reduction targets.

MTA Response:

Concur: In-Progress. As stated above, HPO is currently working with NYC DHS to negotiate the renewal of the MOU for NYCT Subways and has proposed census reductions based on the HOPE Count. While DHS has thus far declined to adopt reduction targets for homeless people sheltering in the transit system, the MTA intends to include these performance measures and goals as part of its MOU contract negotiations. Of note, the MTA has established a survey team to conduct assessments of the number of people experiencing homelessness traveling in the NYCT subway system every two weeks. These frequent and routine assessments provide a more accurate and current understanding of the number of people experiencing homelessness who shelter on subway trains. Recent assessment show very low numbers of individuals experiencing homelessness on trains (1-2 per train).