

Metro Transit Police Department Community Service Officers

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Metro Transit Police Department's Community Service Officers (CSOs) program helps young adults, who are studying for law enforcement careers, gain experience by working in a department focused on the safety and security of the state's largest transit system. Until now, the department has had up to 20 CSOs whose duties consisted of mainly administrative tasks. In the coming weeks, CSOs also will begin work to enhance the customer experience for Metro Transit's riders.

The CSO program, started in 2008, now has 15 CSOs of whom four are women and 73% are people of color.

By year's end, the MTPD expects to increase the team to 30 CSOs. Within a year, the goal is to have a full complement of 70 CSOs helping with various tasks on Metro Transit's system, including:

- Creating a welcoming presence on trains to assist commuters as well as helping to address any quality-of-life issues that may be present
- Working on trains with full-time officers to educate customers on how the fare system works
- Working with riders to direct them to resources to help them navigate the system (Transit Information Center, metrotransit.org, mobile app, etc.)
- Assisting MTPD sworn officers with fare inspection. CSOs will not write citations, but will help educate riders on the system, issuing warnings when needed. Their sworn officer partners may issue citations.
- Helping to monitor conduct on our vehicles and at our facilities
- CSOs will work to connect anyone experiencing homelessness and in need of services to the MTPD's Homeless Action Team

Training: CSOs receive 80 hours of classroom instruction where they learn about the Metro Transit system, including standards for customer service, how to handle traffic and crowd control during special events, best practices in responding to people in mental health crisis, and how to conduct fare inspection equitably. In addition, they use scenario-based learning for de-escalation techniques. Once classroom instruction is complete, a CSO spends at least 100 hours on the light rail system with a sworn officer who ultimately verifies that the CSO is ready for duty.

While working on Metro Transit vehicles, CSOs will be recognizable in their blue polo shirts, matching baseball caps, and cargo-style navy pants. They will be equipped with radios so that they are able to contact an officer if an emergency occurs or additional help is needed. They also wear the same body-worn cameras as MTPD's sworn officers.

Administrative tasks for CSOs can include squad car maintenance, transporting evidence and paperwork to places such as prosecutor's offices, crime labs, the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, and taking police reports that do not require a sworn officer to complete.

CSOs are enrolled in an accredited law enforcement program and working toward a two- or four-year degree in law enforcement. Upon graduation, they may apply to become full-time police officers with the MTPD.

