



Office of the Chief - Chief Eddie Frizell

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Senator Warren Limmer

Chair, Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee

Minnesota Senate Office Building

Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Limmer and Committee Members:

I am writing to express my strong support for S.F. 1513, a bill that would allow the Metropolitan Council to issue administrative citations for transit fare nonpayment. As Chief of the Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD), administrative citations authority would allow our police officers to focus on public safety needs without comprising the important work of enforcing fares.

Today, riding transit without paying is a misdemeanor under Minnesota Statutes 609.855. As such, MTPD deploys sworn police officers to inspect fares and issue citations when a customer is found to be riding without proof of payment.

However, if the Metropolitan Council is granted authority to establish administrative citations for fare nonpayment, then Metro Transit would deploy staff who are not sworn police officers to enforce fares. We would train the non-sworn personnel in customer service, so in addition to inspecting fares, they would help riders navigate the system, connect people in need to our Homeless Action Team or other services, and alert police officers when they witness unlawful behavior. These non-sworn employees would increase official presence on the system, and I believe their presence could help deter harmful behaviors and improve our customers' perception of safety.

Historical policing norms have and should change. The MTPD has emerged over the last two years as a change agent. Particularly, in the implementation of the Pillars of "21st Century Policing".

The *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing* clearly articulates the mission of law enforcement is "to build trust between citizens and their peace officers so that all components of a community are treating one another fairly and justly and are invested in maintaining public safety in an atmosphere of mutual respect".

Today's status of "fare enforcement", requires sworn officers to initiate a policing action. In many cases, involving minor misbehaviors that can be appropriately addressed using non-sworn personnel. As circumstances dictate, any follow-on actions would give officers leverage to use their discretion (when possible), to minimize arrests for these low-level offenses.

Protecting our community through innovation and problem solving.



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From my perspective, administrative citations authority would complement and strengthen our work as a police department. I could deploy my officers to the places they are most needed to protect public safety and address illegal behavior while simultaneously assigning non-sworn staff to conduct fare enforcement. The fare nonpayment citations would no longer go to the courts, and the Metropolitan Council could lower the fine from about \$180 today to a level more in-line with the harm caused by riding without paying.

We must continue to build trust and legitimacy with our ridership and the communities in which we serve. This is accomplished by ensuring that there are nonenforcement opportunities for positive interaction between the public, our customers, and the police.

Realistically, at the current misdemeanor level, people who ride without paying are rarely feeling the penalty of our citations today. A review by the Metropolitan Council's Audit Department found that fewer than three percent of fare nonpayment citations issued by MTPD resulted in a paid fine. The current system requires us to use sworn officers to write citations that will rarely result in a paid fine. This is simply not an efficient or effective approach to the problem of fare nonpayment. As Metro Transit invests in new transit lines, the number of riders who will be expected to pay off-board will continue to increase. This means that over time, the fare enforcement demands on police officer resources will grow if we do not have the authority to reassign fare enforcement to non-sworn staff.

Moving to administrative citations for fare nonpayment will allow the MTPD to continue to build trust and legitimacy with our ridership and combat serious crime. A blended approach to issues on the system, utilizing sworn and non-sworn, will allow the MTPD the ability to maximize its resources, increase visibility, mitigate crime and the perception of unsafe conditions throughout the transit system.

I encourage the Senate Judiciary Committee to support S.F. 1513, so we can establish a more effective approach to enforcing fares and addressing public safety concerns on the Metro Transit system.

Sincerely,

Chief Eddie M. Frizell

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