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February 7th, 2022

Dear Chair Mariani and Chair Limmer,

It appears that the creation of a Violent Crime Enforcement Team (VCET) to combat criminal activity around the metropolitan transit lines has reached an impasse. Four of the five required agencies are unable to provide officers/deputies to the VCET and the statutorily named fiscal agent is reluctant to assume that role.

Authorization

Laws of Minnesota 2021, 1st Spec. Session, Chapter 11, Article 1, Section 14, Subd. 7i provided an additional \$1,000,000 each year for additional violent crime enforcement teams (VCET). The language provided that:

“The base for this is \$1,000,000 in fiscal years 2024 and 2025. Of this amount, \$250,000 each year is a onetime appropriation for a team to address criminal activities in and around metropolitan transit lines. This team must include members from the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office, the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office, the Saint Paul Police Department, the Minneapolis Police Department, and the Metropolitan Transit Police Department. The Hennepin County Sheriff's Office shall serve as the team's fiscal agent. By February 1, 2022, the commissioner shall report to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over criminal justice policy and funding on the activities of the team. The report must detail the impact the team had on reducing criminal activity in and around metropolitan transit lines and recommend whether to fund the team in the future or whether the money for this would be better directed toward other violent crime enforcement teams.”

Activity

Beginning in July 2021 through August 2021, the Minnesota Statewide VCET Coordinator met with the five named partners in an effort to establish the Metro Transit VCET. Several challenges emerged that prevented the formation of the Task Force.

- **Fiscal Agent:** A continuous effort was made to ensure that the Hennepin County Sheriff's office would become the fiscal agent per the statute requirements, but ultimately they would not agree to fulfill this obligation.
- **Staffing Shortages:**
 - Representatives from the Minneapolis PD and Saint Paul PD were not able to provide staffing to the VCET, but were able to participate as members of the governing board.

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- Initially, Ramsey County, Hennepin County and the Metro Transit PD committed to assigning at least one sworn officer / deputy to staff to the VCET, thus meeting the minimum requirement of staffing from at least three separate agencies.
- In October, Hennepin County and Metro Transit PD both withdrew from assigning personnel to the Metro VCET citing staff shortages.
- Staffing Changes:
 - In September, Metro Transit PD had personnel reassignments and changed the VCET point of contact which made coordination with the group and establishing a meeting with the partners difficult.

The Minnesota Statewide VCET Coordinator had ongoing conversation with representatives from each of the required departments and worked closely with Ramsey County Undersheriff Martin to consolidate support for the project. The partners saw the value in a VCET to combat violent crime however the challenges of staffing and supplemental funding were recurring issues.

On October 18, 2021, the Minnesota Statewide VCET Coordinator met with representatives from Ramsey County Sheriff's Office, Hennepin County Sheriff's Office, Saint Paul PD and Minneapolis PD. Metro Transit declined to attend. The attending partners confirmed they did not have personnel to commit to a new VCET. Because Ramsey County Sheriff's Office was the only agency able to commit staff, the group understood they would not meet the minimum requirements to establish a VCET and efforts ceased.

The statutorily named partners discussed several options instead:

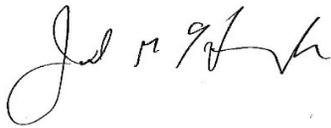
- Leaving the funds in place and the Ramsey County Sheriff would advocate to the Legislature to redirect those funds.
- Allocate the funds to already established Ramsey County Violence Crime Enforcement Team and the Hennepin County Violent Offender Task Force for them to target transit violence in coordination with the Minneapolis PD and the Metro Transit PD.
- Allowing the funds to sit for a year in hopes that the partner agencies will not be experience the level of staff shortages they are currently experiencing.

The partner agencies recommend allocating the funds to Ramsey County VCET and Hennepin County VOTF for immediate use of the funds to curb violent crime in and

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around the Metro Transit lines. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to reach out. We are submitting this letter in lieu of the report required under Laws of Minnesota 2021, 1st Spec. Session, Chapter 11, Article 1, Section 14, Subd. 7i.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. Harrington". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being the most prominent.

John M. Harrington

Commissioner, Department of Public Safety