



King County / ***Regional Transit Safety Task Force***

King County Transportation District Meeting

June 2, 2025



LEONE
SOLUTIONS
GROUP

Contents

Introduction

Overview of the King County Regional Transit Safety Task Force formation and objectives

Progress to Date

Timeline of Task Force activities from March – June 2025

Recommendation Themes

Briefing on the challenges & proposed solutions that have surfaced through the Task Force process

Next Steps

Planned Task Force activities through 2025 and beyond



Task Force Objectives

Following the tragic death of Metro Operator Shawn Yim, transit workers, agency leaders, and elected officials recognized the need for a coordinated, region-wide approach to safety. ATU Local 587 called for immediate action, and the King County Council passed a motion in March 2025 to formally create this Task Force and lead the work ahead with intention and care.



**Improve Safety for
Transit Operators,
Staff & Riders**



**Strengthen Regional
Coordination & Unite
Stakeholders for a
Stronger Response**



**Enforce Passenger
Conduct and
Accountability &
Restore Rider
Confidence**



**Fast-Track & Invest
in Measurable
Solutions**

Regional Task Force Participants

These agencies and organizations provide a sample of the regional stakeholders who have contributed insights and expertise to the Task Force process since its inception.





Progress to Date

Analyzed kickoff & survey data, distilling key findings into 15 actionable focus areas.

Analyzing outcomes to **distill over 150 related solutions** into strategic themes.

Task Force Kickoff

Work Group Kickoff Meetings

Stakeholder Alignment & Solution Finalization

Data Analysis & Challenge Consolidation

Solution Analysis

Task Force officially launched on March 20th, **bringing together over 120 leaders and stakeholders** to identify safety challenges, gaps, and propose solutions.

Distributed tailored read-ahead briefings to guide focused discussions on each focus area.

Held 14 focused, 90-minute sessions with 60+ stakeholders, identifying 100+ targeted solutions.

Conduct **stakeholder briefings to ensure transparency & buy-in**.

Work with Implementation Teams to determine **solution feasibility, prioritization & funding needs**.

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

Recommended Solutions Themes

The King County Regional Transit Safety Task Force was established to deliver coordinated, data-informed, and community-rooted solutions to the region's most pressing transit safety challenges. Drawing from the expertise of operators, transit agencies, care providers, riders, community partners, and law enforcement, this set of recommendations consolidates over 160 proposed solutions into a structured framework for action.

**Regional
Coordination &
Incident
Response**

**Staffing
Expansion &
Field Capacity**

**Workforce
Training &
Support**

**Public
Messaging &
Campaigns**

**Care-Based
Safety
Response**

**Transit
Employee &
Rider
Reporting**

**Built
Environment &
Safety Design**

**Youth
Engagement &
Safety**

Regional Coordination & Incident Response

King County's transit system is governed by a web of overlapping jurisdictions, which leads to delays and confusion during emergencies and inconsistent safety responses. Operators frequently encounter different expectations across routes, contributing to frustration and risk. Without formal agreements and unified tools, even well-intentioned safety efforts fall short of delivering consistent protection for riders and staff.

EXAMPLES OF RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS



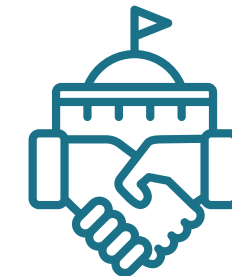
Regionwide Response Protocols & MOUs

Agencies operate with different procedures and response standards, creating friction during incidents that cross jurisdictional lines. Establishing formal MOUs and shared response protocols ensures faster, more predictable intervention across cities, counties, and transit systems.



Systemwide Code of Conduct

There is no regionwide Code of Conduct, and frontline staff report unclear enforcement guidance. A shared standard with aligned training and signage would clarify expectations and support more consistent, confident enforcement across the system.



Policy & Legislative Alignment

Current laws exclude key safety needs, from permitting Narcan and defining assault on workers to firearm bans that don't apply on transit vehicles. Regionwide action must close these gaps, support care-based approaches, and ensure consistent standards across agencies.

Care-Based Safety Response

Transit staff and riders consistently face behavioral health crises, substance use, and housing instability on the system, yet few care-based options exist to prevent escalation to law enforcement. Outreach teams are limited in number, often unavailable after hours, and rarely integrated into response plans. Operators are left to handle complex situations without support. King County needs an expanded, coordinated care infrastructure that reduces reliance on enforcement while connecting riders to appropriate services.

EXAMPLES OF RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS



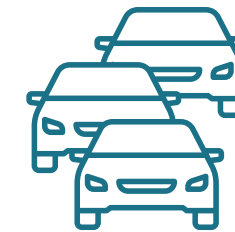
24/7 Outreach Team Deployment

After-hours incidents often leave operators unsupported, forcing them to manage behavioral health crises alone. Deploying outreach teams around the clock would provide timely, care-based alternatives and reduce reliance on enforcement.



Crisis Care Access

Outreach teams lack alternatives to jail or hospitals during behavioral health crises. A regional drop-off center would support safe, non-enforcement transfers and connect riders to care, recovery, and housing services.



Outreach Vehicle Access & Field Support Cars

Outreach teams lack access to dedicated vehicles, limiting their ability to respond quickly or reach high-need transit sites. Providing mobile field unit with necessary vehicles would expand care coverage, reduce delays, and improve safety for riders and frontline staff.

Staffing Expansion & Field Capacity

Transit operators and riders routinely experience gaps in field support, especially during evenings, on low ridership routes, or at high activity sites. Solutions must reflect the distinct roles played by different staffing types: law enforcement, care teams, and unarmed safety staff. Strategic staffing expansion requires tailoring investments to each of these roles to ensure safety presence, reduce operator burden, and build rider trust.

EXAMPLES OF RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS



Law Enforcement & Transit Security Presence

Transit-specific law enforcement coverage is limited, reducing deterrence and slowing emergency response. Expanding dedicated officers, particularly in key corridors, would support operators and complement care-based strategies.



Outreach & Care-Based Teams

Behavioral health, substance use, and housing needs are common but underserved across the system. Increasing outreach and case management staffing, particularly for high-need routes and programs like LEAD, would enhance support and reduce enforcement reliance.



Ambassadors & Non Enforcement Safety Staff

Transit lacks enough unarmed staff to de-escalate situations and assist riders. Scaling trained ambassadors would provide a visible, supportive presence across vehicles and stations, improving public safety and the perception of safety for both riders and operators.

Transit Employee & Rider Reporting

Operators across King County agencies described unclear criteria for what should be reported, limited guidance on how to file reports, and little follow-up after submission. This lack of response discouraged future use. Riders reported inconsistent signage and QR codes, limited language access, and uncertainty about where their reports go or whether they result in action. Stakeholders proposed establishing separate systems for employees and riders that are multilingual, accessible, and equipped with follow-up protocols and protections for those who report.

EXAMPLES OF RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS



Operator-Initiated Reporting Protocols & Tools

Operators use different tools and lack clear guidance on what to report. Stakeholders proposed a regionwide system with shared categories, clear criteria, and confirmation receipts to improve accuracy and consistency across agencies.



Rider-Initiated Reporting Tools

Riders noted inconsistent signage, QR codes, and access to real-time reporting. Stakeholders proposed a regionwide tool, including a mobile app and hotline options, to report concerns quickly in multiple languages and formats.



Incident Follow Up Protocols

Operators said reports are submitted but not consistently acknowledged. A shared system that tracks submissions and provides status updates was proposed to improve accountability and encourage continued use.

Workforce Training & Support

Transit workers receive baseline training, but operators consistently report gaps in preparedness for real-world incidents. Existing programs are often classroom-based and not tailored to the daily challenges operators face, including behavioral health crises, youth interactions, and conflict de-escalation. While some mentorship, training, and job aid tools exist within agencies, stakeholders identified major inconsistencies in access, content, and visibility across the region.

EXAMPLES OF RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS



Comprehensive & Ongoing Training

Operators said training lacks relevance to real-world needs. Stakeholders proposed instruction tailored to roles and covering ADA compliance, youth engagement, trauma-informed response, de-escalation, substance use, crisis recognition, and gender-based safety.



Tools & Quick Reference Aids

Operators said they lack real-time guidance while on duty. Laminated cards, mobile job aids, and clear reference tools would help guide on-the-spot decision-making and responses.



Peer Mentorship & Advancement Pathways

Some operators already coach peers, but efforts are informal or pilots and not widely implemented. Stakeholders proposed expanding formal mentorship programs and incentives for peer coaches to improve support, retention, and consistency regionwide.

Built Environment & Safety Design

Transit environments vary widely in safety, design, and usability. Poor lighting, obscured sightlines, limited accessibility, and emergency infrastructure create unsafe conditions and unequal experiences. Stakeholders emphasized the need for consistent, accessible, and safe transit environments regionwide.

EXAMPLES OF RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS



Lighting, Visibility & Sightlines

Many stops and vehicles are poorly lit or obstructed, increasing risk and reducing perceived safety. Upgrading lighting and removing obstructions would improve visibility and prevent harm, especially during early morning and late evening hours.



Emergency Alert Infrastructure

Operators said many vehicles and stations lack functioning panic buttons or silent alarms. Installing standard emergency alert systems would allow staff to discreetly signal threats, speed up emergency response, and improve systemwide safety.



Operator Protective Partitions

Operators reported safety risks due to direct passenger exposure. Stakeholders proposed installing protective partitions on all buses and retrofitting older vehicles to reduce assault risk, improve operator safety, and standardize protections systemwide.

Youth Engagement & Safety

Youth-related violence and intimidation were cited as major concerns at specific transit locations and stakeholders noted that current responses are inconsistent and overly reliant on law enforcement, with few youth-centered prevention strategies in place. Frontline staff lack dedicated tools or plans to manage youth conflict, and temporary surge deployments have not led to sustained improvements. Members emphasized the need for visible, youth-appropriate safety strategies and called for authentic youth engagement in shaping solutions.

EXAMPLES OF RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS



Youth Transit Access

To minimize fare-related confrontations and reduce negative interactions with youth, stakeholders proposed expanding fare-free programs that integrate ORCA cards with student ID cards.



Youth Ambassador Engagement

Youth often board transit without guidance on expectations or safety. Stakeholders proposed peer-led ambassador programs and youth orientation efforts to promote awareness, build safety culture, and reduce conflict.



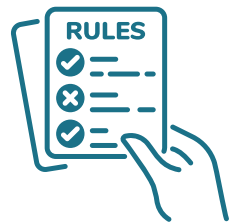
Youth-Specific Outreach & Programming

Outreach to youth on transit is limited and not coordinated across agencies. Expanding culturally relevant engagement through mentorship, pop-ups, and partnerships with schools or youth orgs would build connection and deter enforcement-heavy interventions.

Public Messaging & Campaigns

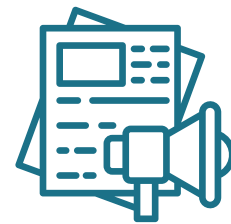
Public-facing safety communication is often disjointed, inconsistent. Riders receive unclear messaging on how to access help, what behavior is expected, and what safety initiatives are underway. Stakeholders emphasized the need for unified campaigns that speak to diverse communities, improve reporting awareness, and rebuild trust across the region.

EXAMPLES OF RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS



Rider Conduct Campaigns

Riders said safety messaging varies widely and lacks clarity on expected behavior. A unified regional campaign—across signage, announcements, and digital platforms—would reinforce conduct expectations and increase shared accountability.



Reporting Education

Many riders are unaware of how to report safety concerns. Campaigns with clear visuals, QR codes, multilingual content, and guidance on when and how to report would increase transparency and trust in the system.



Community Partnership & Amplification Channels

Community groups expressed willingness to support messaging but said they lacked tools and coordination. Equipping partners with campaign materials, translation tools, and shared distribution plans would extend reach and ensure cultural relevance.



“ We must restore order, safety, and accountability for one’s actions on public transit. All politicians, police forces, and transit leaders in King County are responsible for and must work more closely together to improve public and transit safety. ”

*Greg Woodfill, President,
ATU Local 587*



“ We recognize the need for this task force because our agency alone cannot make our communities safer. We look forward to collaborating with cities and other partners to take meaningful actions to improve safety and security for everyone in the region. ”

*Michelle Alison, General Manager,
King County Metro*



“ It is a reminder to take a holistic approach to public safety. This forum is an opportunity to make solutions that are not just effective but wise and compassionate. ”

*Dow Constantine, CEO
Sound Transit*



Task Force Next Steps

Solution Finalization

Conduct stakeholder meetings in June and July to determine solution feasibility, prioritization, funding needs and implementation strategies.

Stakeholder Alignment & Public Commitment

Host July 9 Public Commitment Event at Machinists Union Hall.

Solution Plan Implementation & Monitoring

Publish Regional Transit Safety Plan, implement & monitor solutions, key milestones and performance indicators.

Briefing to King County Council

Address requirements of the Task Force Motion via King County Council briefing by September 30, 2025.