



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF COUNCILMEMBER BROOKE PINTO
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W., SUITE 106
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

September 18, 2023

Nyasha Smith, Secretary
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Secretary Smith,

Today, I, along with Councilmembers Matthew Frumin and Anita Bonds, am introducing the “Improving Safety and Emergency Response on Transit Corridors Act of 2023.” This bill would establish a demonstration project focused on improving the safety of transit corridors and public spaces using emergency communication stations and video surveillance technology to improve access to emergency response and identify violators of District law. It would also require the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice (DMPSJ) to collect data and report on the demonstration project to the Council. Please find attached a signed copy of the legislation.

The Improving Safety and Emergency Response on Transit Corridors Act of 2023 would help increase safety for District residents and those we see are disproportionately impacted by safety issues along public transit corridors in the District—women, seniors, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community. In 2022 alone, Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) reported that 960 thefts and violent offenses occurred on or near transit corridors — including 4 incidents of rape, 195 incidents of aggravated assault, 227 robberies, and 442 incidents of larceny.

The potential for experiencing crime and violence on public transit prevents some residents and visitors from using public transit, while others continue to use public transit but do so feeling unsafe at times. The threat of violence is particularly tangible for women who report feeling more unsafe than their male counterparts while riding on or waiting for trains and buses. Out of that subset, transgender women in particular worry about facing harassment or violence in those public spaces. For persons who feel unsafe riding public transportation, especially late at night, alternative modes of transportation may create added expenses, while those who cannot afford an alternative may feel they have no choice but to take on additional risk.

In February 2023, in response to a shooting and the death of a Metro employee at the Potomac Avenue Metro station, the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) announced that it would provide additional support to the transit police by stationing MPD officers at select Metro stations. MPD and MTPD however cannot be physically present at all times along all of our transit corridors. The implementation of emergency communication and video surveillance systems, which do not require additional field staffing, can help to prevent crime and, where crime does occur, to identify perpetrators.

This bill would require DMPSJ, in consultation with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), MPD, and MTPD, to establish a two-year demonstration program of emergency communication and video surveillance systems across the city, starting with at least one station in each ward. At each site,

DMPSJ will install an emergency communication station (often known as “blue lights”) and video surveillance technology at various locations at or near bus stops, streetcar stops, train stations, or other public spaces along transit corridors. The emergency communication station will have a bright blue or other colored light to increase visibility of the station and a call button to allow a user to directly connect with emergency response services. Continuous video surveillance technology will also be affixed to the station or placed in close proximity to allow for video to be captured so as to both prevent offenses and to aid in the identification of any perpetrators of criminal offenses.

DMPSJ will collect and compile data on the project for a report to the Council at the end of the two-year demonstration. DMPSJ will also prepare a comprehensive study and strategy for improving safety along transit corridors in the District.

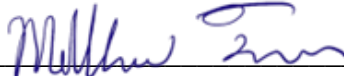
Should you have any questions about this legislation, please contact my Legislative Director, Linn Groft, at lgroft@dccouncil.gov or (205)440-7600.

Thank you.

Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "BE R" followed by a stylized flourish.

Brooke Pinto


Councilmember Matthew Frumin


Councilmember Brooke Pinto


Councilmember Anita Bonds

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A BILL

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To establish a demonstration project focused on improving the safety of transit corridors and public spaces using emergency communication stations and video surveillance technology to improve access to emergency response and identify violators of District civil and criminal law, and to require reporting on the demonstration project to the Council.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this act may be cited as the “Improving Safety and Emergency Response on Transit Corridors Amendment Act of 2023”.

Sec. 2. Definitions.

For the purposes of this act, the term:

(1) “Emergency communication station” means a fixed station, illuminated by a bright blue or other colored light beacon, that features an alarm button that, when pressed, connects directly via audio with emergency services dispatch.

(2) “Emergency communication and video surveillance system” means an emergency communication station affixed with or in close proximity to continuous video surveillance technology operated by or accessible to the Metropolitan Police Department.

(3) “Operator of an emergency communication and video surveillance system” means a natural or legal person authorized to set up, test, or operate the emergency communication and video surveillance system described herein.

(3) “Public transportation” means any bus, train, or streetcar within the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, DC Circulator, or Streetcar transit systems operated in the District.

31 (4) “Bus stop” means any stop, either permanent or temporary, that is part of the
32 Metrobus, DC Circulator, or Streetcar lines within the bounds of the District.

33 (5) “Train station” means any stop, either permanent or temporary, that is part of the
34 Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority train matrix in the District.

35 (6) “Public space” means any location that is open and accessible to the general public
36 including public parks, train stations, and District sidewalks and streets.

37 Sec. 3. Transit Corridor Safety and Emergency Response program established.

38 (a) The Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice (“DMPSJ”), in consultation with the District
39 Department of Transportation (“DDOT”), Metropolitan Police Department (“MPD”), and the Metro
40 Transit Police Department (“MTPD”), shall establish a two-year demonstration program of emergency
41 communication and video surveillance systems to increase safety along transit routes in the District.

42 (b) DMPSJ, in coordination and consultation with DDOT, MPD, and MTPD, shall install
43 emergency communication and video surveillance systems at various strategic locations at or near bus
44 stops, train stations, or other public spaces throughout the District.

45 (c) The emergency communication and video surveillance systems shall be set up to promptly
46 connect District residents and visitors to emergency response services and captured video and audio shall
47 be used to identify violators of District criminal law.

48 Sec. 4. Demonstration program implementation.

49 As part of the implementation of the demonstration program, DMPSJ shall:

50 (a) Evaluate various emergency communication stations to identify the most appropriate
51 device for use in the District;

52 (b) Select locations for placement of emergency communication and video surveillance
53 systems in consultation with MPD, MTPD, and DDOT, provided that:

54 (1) Priority consideration shall be given for sites with higher incidence of:

55 (A) Late-night or early morning ridership; and

56 (B) Harassment, theft, or violent offenses;

57 (2) At least one emergency communication and video surveillance system shall
58 be installed in each ward;

59 (c) Provide a report to the Chairperson for the Committee with jurisdiction over the
60 DMPSJ describing how the site for each emergency communication and video surveillance system was
61 selected;

62 (d) Install signs providing notice to District public transportation patrons and other
63 residents and visitors where an emergency communication and video surveillance system is in use; and

64 (e) Collect appropriate data on the effectiveness of the emergency communication and
65 video surveillance system, including how often the emergency communication stations were activated,
66 whether audio, video, or other information captured from the systems led to the successful identification
67 of perpetrators of criminal or civil offenses, and whether incidents of criminal or civil offenses decreased
68 at or near the emergency communication and video surveillance system locations following the
69 installation of the emergency communication and video surveillance system.

70 Sec. 5. Demonstration program reporting.

71 One year after the effective date of this act and 60 days after the conclusion of the demonstration
72 project, DDOT shall submit a report on the results of the demonstration program to the Council. The
73 report shall include:

74 (a) The locations, date, and timestamps for when the emergency communication stations were
75 used;

76 (b) The total number of criminal charges issued for violations recorded or otherwise identified by
77 the emergency communication and video surveillance systems;

78 (c) The number of violations adjudicated and the results of such adjudications, including
79 breakdowns of dispositions made for violations recorded or otherwise identified by the emergency
80 communication system and accompanying video surveillance; and

81 (d) The expenses incurred by the District to implement the demonstration program.

82 Sec. 6. Maintenance requirements for emergency communication and video surveillance system.

83 DMPSJ shall provide for routine maintenance and repair of emergency communication
84 stations and video surveillance technology in accordance with recommendations from the manufacturers.

85 Sec. 7. Operator training for emergency communication systems.

86 Operators of an emergency communication and video surveillance system shall have
87 completed training in the procedures for the installation, testing, and operation of the device.

88 Sec. 8. Use of an emergency communication and video surveillance system.

89 (a) Each emergency communication station installed during the demonstration program shall be
90 equipped with a bright blue or other colored light indicating its presence from a distance, and an alarm
91 button that, when pressed, places a call to an emergency response dispatcher.

92 (b) Continuous video surveillance technology shall be affixed to or installed in close
93 proximity to each emergency communication station.

94 (c) The demonstration program shall utilize necessary technologies to ensure to the extent
95 practicable, that photographs, microphotographs, videotape, or other recorded images produced by the
96 emergency communication and video surveillance system shall include high quality images to identify the
97 individuals involved in any situation or altercation that leads to the activation of the device, to the extent
98 allowed by District and federal law.

99 Sec. 9. Blue Light and Bus Stop Violence Prevention study and report.

100 In Fiscal Year 2024, DMPSJ, in consultation with DDOT, MPD, and MTPD, shall conduct a
101 study on the prevalence of violence and crime that occurs at bus stops, train stations, and other public
102 spaces in the District and identify and evaluate short-term and long-term strategies for reducing crime in
103 those locations. DDOT shall provide a report to the Council within one year of enactment of this Act to
104 include recommendations on the feasibility, efficacy, and environmental impact of the identified violence-
105 reducing strategies as well as a cost-benefit analysis of identified strategies.

106 Sec. 10. Rulemaking.

107 Within 180 days of the effective date of this act, the Mayor shall promulgate rules to implement
108 this act. The proposed rules shall be submitted to the Council for a 45-day period of review, excluding

109 Saturdays, Sundays, legal holidays, and days of Council recess. If the Council does not approve or
110 disapprove the proposed rules, in whole or in part, by resolution within this 45-day review period, the
111 proposed rules shall be deemed disapproved.

112 Sec. 11. Fiscal impact statement.

113 The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal impact
114 statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975, approved October 16,
115 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

116 Sec. 12. Effective date.

117 This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the Mayor,
118 action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as provided in section
119 602(c)(2) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C.
120 Official Code § 1-206.02(c)2)), and publication in the District of Columbia Register.