

## STAFF REPORT

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**DATE:** April 28, 2025  
**TO:** Sacramento Regional Transit Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Lisa Hinz, VP, Security, Safety, Customer Satisfaction & Facilities  
**SUBJ:** DECLARING BUS OPERATOR ASSAULTS AN EMERGENCY,  
AUTHORIZING THE SUSPENSION OF COMPETITIVE BIDDING,  
AND DELEGATING AUTHORITY TO THE GENERAL  
MANAGER/CEO TO EXECUTE CONTRACTS FOR BUS  
OPERATOR BARRIERS AS NECESSARY TO MITIGATE THE  
EMERGENCY

### RECOMMENDATION

Adopt the Attached Resolution. (Requires 4/5 Vote)

### RESULT OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

The proposed Resolution will declare an operator safety emergency and delegate authority to the General Manager/CEO, or their designee, to authorize the procurement of retrofit bus barriers to support the emergency condition due to the increased severity of assaults on operators.

### FISCAL IMPACT

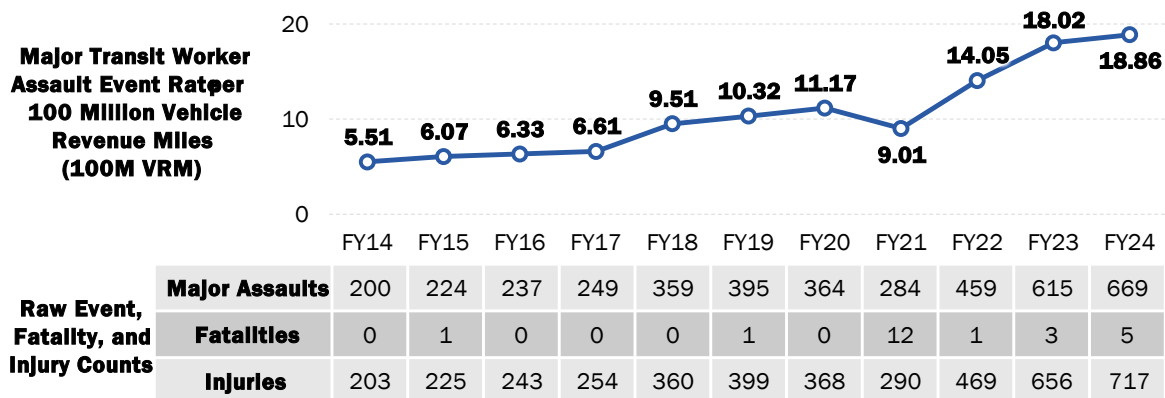
Funding in the amount of \$1,034,522.50, which is inclusive of sales tax, is needed to purchase parts to retrofit 162 forty-foot buses with operator barriers. Staff has secured \$544,289.00 in Measure A funds and is actively pursuing additional funding to cover the balance. SacRT staff will complete the installation in-house. The remaining bus fleet is scheduled for replacement over the next two years and will be equipped with barriers at the time of purchase.

### DISCUSSION

Bus operator assaults have increased nationwide, and SacRT is experiencing similar trends. According to the National Transit Database (NTD), from 2014 to 2024, there was an average of 405 assaults against transit workers that occurred annually in transit vehicles. Alarming, major assaults on transit workers, which the FTA defines as an event resulting in a fatality or injury requiring medical transport, tripled between 2014 and 2024. In fact, major assaults alone on transit workers went up 86% from just 2018 to 2024. Despite current efforts to eliminate bus operator assaults through strategies such as de-escalation training, video monitoring, and campaigns to respect operators, assaults are still rapidly increasing.

Under Public Utilities Code section 102222(a), SacRT contracts for the purchase of supplies, equipment, and materials in excess of one hundred twenty-five thousand dollars (\$125,000) must be awarded to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder or, in SacRT's discretion, to the responsive and responsible bidder that submitted a proposal that provides the best value on the basis of the factors identified in the solicitation. With the identification of a prototype to fully enclose the operator seating area, a Board declaration that an emergency situation has arisen resulting in a need to secure bus barrier equipment to protect SacRT's bus operators without conducting a formal solicitation as authorized under Public Utilities Code section 102222(b) is required to accelerate purchase and installation of the barriers to protect the health and safety of SacRT's bus operators.

## Major Transit Worker Assaults: FY 2014 /24



• **Source:** National Transit Database (NTD)  
FY 2024 data are preliminary.



The primary methods for attacks on operators have consistently been physical assaults with hands or spitting, with assailants exploiting the absence of adequate barriers to commit the act.

### Implemented Strategies to Prevent Operator Assaults

SacRT staff has been proactive in our efforts in the research of best practices and analysis of data to implement safety strategies to protect our employees. In collaboration with its Employee Assault Mitigation Task Force, SacRT has been implementing prevention strategies to reduce the risk of safety incidents and create a safer environment for all SacRT employees to safely perform their jobs:

- SacRT buses have up to nine on-board cameras and a DVR
- SacRT buses have emergency buttons

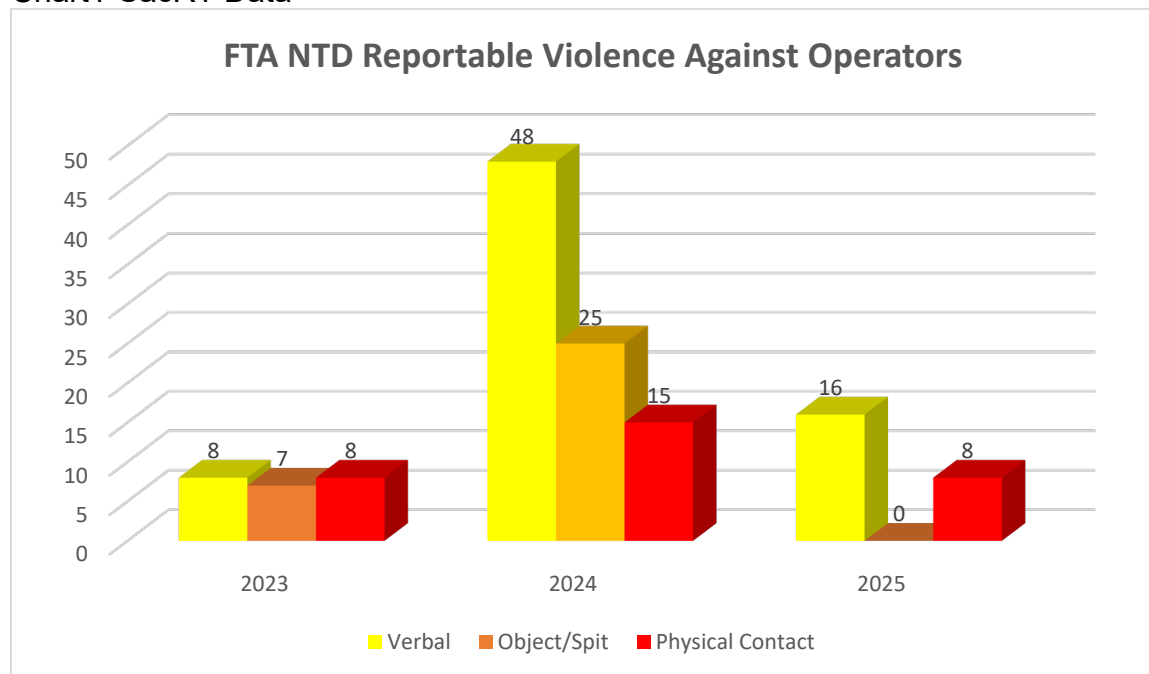
- Clear signage will be posted about legal penalties for assaults on operators (“Let’s Respect Operators...injuring an operator is punishable by up to three years in prison or up to 10,000 fine, or both.” Penal Code 243.3”)
- Operators are currently receiving de-escalation training
- SacRT has a “See Something, Say Something” campaign and a “Respect the Ride, Respect the Employee” campaign has recently launched highlighting how to treat operators.

### Retrofit Barrier Background

SacRT staff worked closely with the Amalgamated Transit Union and bus operators to test three types of bus barriers. After a trial period, SacRT operators represented by ATU chose the Arrow Barrier.

On the SacRT bus system, aggravated assaults on bus operators increased by a factor of 4 between 2023 and 2024, and battery on bus operators doubled during the same period (see Chart 1). This recent trend is extremely alarming and must be addressed immediately. Data analysis revealed that 50% of incidents since 2023 occurred due to the assailant being able to access the operator.

Chart1-SacRT Data



The primary methods for attacks on operators have consistently been physical assaults with hands or spitting, with assailants exploiting the unprotected Operator’s area to commit the act.

### Current Impact on SacRT

SacRT has experienced an escalation in the type and severity of violent operator assaults over the last few years. These incidents have occurred with no provocation or warning and have created an environment of increased risk and trauma as assailants are resorting to the use of violence. The sudden, unexpected increase in the violent nature of bus operator assaults has resulted in an emergency procurement condition, giving rise to the need to immediately procure barriers to retrofit the current buses with an enclosed barrier to protect the health and safety of bus operators as soon as possible.

Safety is of the utmost importance to SacRT, and it is imperative that bus operators are protected from assaults that have been increasing nationwide. Bus operators face disproportionate safety risks as frontline staff. Their safety is necessary to ensure dependable public transportation for community members who rely on transit. The safety of bus operators will be enhanced with the streamlined procurement of the supplies necessary for the installation of fully enclosed-tempered glass protective barriers that provide a significantly higher level of protection than not having any barrier in place to separate the operator from the public. This action to authorize procurement in an expedited manner will help to ensure the safety and well-being of SacRT's bus operators.

### Next Steps

This emergency authorization will allow procurement to purchase bus barriers to be installed on all of SacRT's buses. Initial deployment of the new barriers will be on buses that operate on lines that have experienced the greatest number of operator assaults within the past year.

Upon Board approval, Staff will initiate the procurement of equipment and supplies to install enhanced operator barriers for the approval of the General Manager/CEO. Procurement staff will review to determine that the proposed equipment prices are fair and reasonable and Finance staff will determine that funding is available before the Contract is executed.

The following image is of an Arrow Bus Barrier.



RESOLUTION NO. 2025-04-031

Adopted by the Board of Directors of the Sacramento Regional Transit District on this date:

April 28, 2025

**DECLARING BUS OPERATOR ASSAULTS AN EMERGENCY, AUTHORIZING THE SUSPENSION OF COMPETITIVE BIDDING, AND DELEGATING AUTHORITY TO THE GENERAL MANAGER/CEO TO EXECUTE CONTRACTS FOR BUS OPERATOR BARRIERS AS NECESSARY TO MITIGATE THE EMERGENCY**

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SACRAMENTO REGIONAL TRANSIT DISTRICT AS FOLLOWS:

THAT, pursuant to Public Utilities Code section 102222(b), the Board declares that an emergency condition exists that could result in imminent harm to bus operations personnel, property, and essential public services, which justifies the suspension of competitive bidding to purchase the bus retrofit barriers required to mitigate the emergency.

THAT, the Board hereby suspends competitive bidding for the purchase of bus retrofit barriers and hereby delegates authority to the General Manager/CEO or his designee to execute contracts that would otherwise be in excess of his authority under the Procurement Ordinance to the extent necessary to facilitate purchase and installation of bus barriers up to a maximum aggregate amount of \$951,285.06, plus applicable sales tax.

THAT, the foregoing delegation will expire, without further action by the Board, as of April 30, 2028.

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RICK JENNINGS, Chair

A T T E S T:  
HENRY LI, Secretary

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Tabetha Smith, Assistant Secretary

Passed and adopted by a 4/5 vote of the Board Members of the Sacramento Regional Transit District Board of Directors at a regular meeting on this 28<sup>th</sup> day of April 2025 by the following vote:

AYES:  
NOES:  
ABSTENTIONS:  
ABSENT: