



# VIA TRANSIT POLICE DEPARTMENT Standard Operating Procedures



## Section 205 Community Outreach

Office with Primary Responsibility:	COP	Effective Date:	May 17, 2019
		Prior Revision Date:	New
Office(s) with Secondary Responsibilities:		Number of Pages:	2
Forms Referenced in Procedure:		Related Procedures:	

### .01 POLICY

- A. The VIA Transit Police Department is committed to include the community in decisions on policy and practice. The VIA Metropolitan Transit Authority in general, and the VIA Transit Police Department in particular accomplishes this commitment through community outreach and involvement. This outreach includes many sponsored events that promote community interaction where community input and feedback are gathered.
- B. This policy outlines the requirements, goals and objectives for all the Department’s members as well as each community outreach program.

### .02 OUTREACH PROGRAMS

- A. **Elementary School Career Day Presentations:** Officers with the Transit Police Department participate in Career Day presentations at several Bexar County Schools. Presentations include members of the Patrol Division, Investigations and K-9 Details. Officers interact with the students at an age where they are still impressionable about police officers and creates a positive interaction with younger children in a learning environment.
- B. **National Night Out:** VIA Metropolitan Transit in general and The Transit Police Department in particular participate in Night Out activities. National Night Out (NNO) is an event in October each year that encourages officer’s interaction with the community they serve during a nationally recognized community and law enforcement event.
  - 1. VIA Transit Administrative Representative Teams travel to NNO festivities at the smaller jurisdictions throughout Bexar County. A Transit Police Officer to include the Chief of Transit Police travel with each team.
  - 2. VIA Metropolitan Transit also hosts their own NNO function on the Centro Plaza grounds. The Plaza event has entertainment and food booths. The Transit Police Department sets up a table at this function. All on-duty officers including the Chief of Transit Police are scheduled to come to the Plaza event at some point during the night.
- C. **Community Outreach Officers:** The Chief of Transit Police has designated two Transit Police Officers to positions of community liaisons. These officers who have volunteered for the position routinely reach out to agencies and organizations that represent charity organizations, etc. Examples of the agencies Transit Police have worked with include but are not limited to:
  - 1. Haven for Hope: Haven for Hope is a partnership of governmental, charity, religious and business organizations that create a safe environment for the city’s homeless population. The main campus is within blocks of VIA’s Centro Plaza. Transit officers interact with the Haven and its clients in a non-law enforcement environment.
  - 2. Big Brothers and Big Sisters: Big Brothers and Big Sisters is an organization that pair volunteer mentors with at-risk juveniles in the San Antonio and surrounding communities. Transit Police officers have volunteered and signed up to be assigned as a “Big”.
  - 3. Roy Maas Youth Alternatives (RMYA): RMYA is a non-profit organization that hosts at risk youths and runaway teens in an effort to decrease delinquency and human trafficking. RMYA is a location where law enforcement officers may take a youth that is awaiting to be released to a parent, allowing the officer to return to service.
- D. **Social Media:** The VIA Transit Police Department monitors social media and maintains a presence on Social Media outlets in conjunction with the VIA Metropolitan Transit Authority to ensure citizens are kept up to date on department-sponsored functions, local incidents and department news.



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- E. **No-Shave November / December:** Since 2017, Officers with the Transit Police Department participate in the yearly No-Shave November / December initiative where uniformed officers are allowed to grow facial hair during the month if they donate the money they would have spent on shaving products to charity. Officers who are asked about their facial hair during the time period are instructed to speak about the chosen charity in order to raise awareness of the organization. Officers have raised several thousand dollars each year and are recognized by the VIA Metropolitan Transit Executive Board and the Boards of the respective charities. Charities have included Roy Maas Christmas Toy Drives and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.
  
- F. **Customer Service Hotline:** VIA Transit Police Officers and all VIA employees are directed to refer any complaint, comment or commendation to our Customer Service Hotline 210-362-2020. The Hotline is manned on a 24/7 basis and routes the concern or comment of the caller to the proper department within the agency. All calls to the hotline are recorded and tracked for a response as well as for statistical purposes. All Hotline entries must be answered by the department's authorized contact within seven (7) days from the citizen's call. The Chief of Transit Police is the only authorized contact and response authority for the Transit Police Department.