

Metro Riders Feel Unheard Amid Ongoing Safety Concerns

Washington- D.C residents who rely on Metro trains and buses are voicing concerns about safety, overcrowding, and lack of enforcement as incidents involving teens, fare evaders, and crime continue to rise. Despite WMATA releasing statements outlining plans to improve the system, some daily commuters say the emotional stress of using public transportation is intense, especially during peak hours.

Daily commuter Kim Segers expresses these concerns, "I'm tired of the 'special police' not doing anything about people who evade fares by getting right up behind you and shoving through the gate behind you without paying," she said. "I was literally assaulted and shoved through the gate by a young guy after I told him to back off as I was trying to go through a gate at Brookland one morning. It was witnessed by a station manager who did nothing."

Unfortunately, experiences like Segers aren't uncommon. Many Metro users describe fare evaders as frustrating and dangerous. Fare gates are continuously being bypassed by people pushing through behind those who paid. It's not just uncomfortable but sometimes physical, with reports of being shoved, followed, or harassed while entering.

Anita Reid said, "Yes, the overcrowding has affected my ride. I try to mix it up and get a Lyft now. My concerns are always the same: the young folks and teens. I have seen people jump, stabbed, and robbed on the RED line going to work, coming from work, or Happy Hour. It's very scary and unfortunate. I pay my fare just so someone can quickly walk behind me to get in or out of the system. It's insane," she said.

Overcrowding has become a consistent issue. Riders mention delays that cause packed buses and cars. Overcrowding worsens tensions and creates opportunities for disruptive behavior. It's become easier for some to adjust their schedules or use rideshare apps to avoid facing potential conflicts.

"I have witnessed countless teens crowd the trains, and then they bully each other or play fight when there is hardly any room already. I have witnessed them smoking on the trains as well," she said.

Riders' concerns aren't just regarding crime but also about public health. Passengers say they feel trapped, while others cough, sneeze, and touch surfaces without precautions. The lack of ventilation and proximity alone makes daily travel emotionally and physically draining.

"The overcrowding sometimes is due to delays which are also uncomfortable, especially when people are coughing and sneezing and touching the same surfaces," she said.

Despite WMATA releasing statements regarding preventative action, such as deploying more cameras and police, many riders feel that these efforts aren't effectively making a difference, often leading them to question whether special police are required to intervene.

“For someone to shove me in broad daylight with the staff watching for nobody to do anything, makes you feel like you're on your own.”

For longtime daily commuters, the situations they have to endure are disappointing. Although some have started relying on rideshare apps, others cannot afford the option, especially those commuting from neighborhoods where the metro is accessible and affordable.

According to WMATA's most recent press releases, the agency has committed to enhancing security and improving reliability. These enhancements include testing more substantial faregate barriers, introducing better station lighting, and piloting initiatives to reduce youth-related incidents through community outreach.

Riders say that they don't expect perfection from the Metro, but they hope to feel safe, for that to happen, they need better enforcement and consistent authority. Riders want an environment where they can focus on their destination and not be afraid whenever they are on board.

As summer approaches, platforms become more crowded, and daily rider concerns haven't shown signs of easing. Although WMATA is implementing new strategies, commuters are still asking when they will notice the difference instead of reading about it.