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SEPTA Board Approves Measures to Add More Social Outreach Workers *Will Bolster Efforts to Connect Members of the Vulnerable Population to Resources*

PHILADELPHIA (September 30, 2021) – SEPTA’s Board today approved measures that will bolster the Authority’s efforts to assist members of the vulnerable population who take refuge on the system.

Under contracts approved today, SEPTA will add social outreach workers from Merakey Parkside Recovery, Eagle Staffing and One Day at a Time, Inc. These specialists will add to teams that are already deployed on the system to assist individuals experiencing homelessness, addiction and mental illness.

The new outreach workers will expand the reach of SEPTA’s SCOPE (Safety, Cleaning, Ownership, Partnerships and Engagement) program, which was launched earlier this year to help with outreach to the vulnerable population. There will also be additional resources for the SEPTA Transit Police Department’s SAVE (Serving a Vulnerable Entity Unit), which pairs Transit Police Officers with outreach workers for patrols.

“These are extremely complex societal issues, and we know that they cannot be solved by law enforcement alone,” said SEPTA Board President Pasquale T. Deon Sr. “We are committed to addressing the challenges of the vulnerable population, while also ensuring SEPTA is positioned to play its critical role in our region’s recovery.”

“We greatly appreciate the SEPTA Board’s support for additional outreach specialists,” said SEPTA General Manager and CEO Leslie S. Richards. “These efforts not only help the vulnerable population, but they also provide a healthier work environment for our employees and make our system more welcoming to our customers.”

SEPTA personnel from several different departments will continue to work closely with one another to advance the SCOPE and SAVE programs.

“The outreach workers will work in coordination with and respond to requests from SEPTA police officers, elevator attendants, station cashiers, and maintenance and custodial employees to engage members of the vulnerable population at specific locations,” said SEPTA Assistant Director for Transportation Kenneth Divers, who oversees the SCOPE program. “We will also continue to work closely with our partners in the community, city and region to connect people with the resources they need.”

“The partnership with outreach workers is allowing us to reach people who otherwise might be hesitant to accept help from police,” said SEPTA Transit Police Chief Thomas J. Nestel III. “We are encouraged by the progress we have seen so far, and we are grateful to have additional resources for this important work.”

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