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**Item No. 13.1.2**  
**Transportation Standing Committee**  
**November 23, 2023**

**TO:** Chair and Members of Transportation Standing Committee

**SUBMITTED BY:** **Original Signed**

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Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** October 3, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Halifax Transit Safety Program

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**ORIGIN**

August 25, 2022, Transportation Standing Committee motion, item 12.3.1:

MOVED by Councillor Mancini, seconded by Councillor Kent

THAT the Transportation Standing Committee request the Chief Administrative Officer prepare a staff report that outlines opportunities and challenges related to public safety in the Halifax Transit system and options to mitigate these challenges.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Section 7A of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* provides that:

- 7A** The purposes of the Municipality are to
- (a) provide good government;
  - (b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and
  - (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

Section 69 of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* provides that:

- 69** (1) The Municipality may provide a public transportation service by
- (a) the purchase of vehicles or vessels and operation of the service;
  - (b) providing financial assistance to a person who will undertake to provide the service; or
  - (c) a combination of these methods.

**RECOMMENDATION ON PAGE 2**

Section 188 of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* provides that:

- 188** (1) The Council may make by-laws, for municipal purposes, respecting
- (a) the health, well being, safety and protection of persons;
  - (b) the safety and protection of property;
  - (c) persons, activities and things in, on or near a public place or place that is open to the public;
- ...

Policy T-5 of the 2014 *Regional Municipal Planning Strategy* provides that:

- T-5** Transit Service Plans shall be prepared at regular intervals for consideration by HRM. These plans will be developed in consultation with the public and other stakeholders and, upon adoption by HRM, shall provide guidance for investment in transit services.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Transportation Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to draft a plan for a Halifax Transit Safety Program for further consideration.

## **BACKGROUND**

For the year 2022, Halifax Transit recorded a daily average of 64,000 boardings across all service modes, emphasizing the role Halifax Transit plays in the daily mobility routine of the region. For public transit, service reliability, customer service, revenue, and ridership are Key Performance Indicators (KPI) to measure the health of the business. However, the perceived safety of passengers and transit employees is also extremely important and needs to be considered.

The incidents on Halifax Transit have grown by 107% from 2018 to 2022 (refer to Figure 1 in Attachment 1). Halifax Transit now has empirical evidence to show that not only the number of escalated incidents, but the severity of these incidents has also increased.

The most recent strategic step to promote public and transit personnel safety was Regional Council's approval of Halifax Transit By-law T-1200 on August 22, 2023. The By-law will streamline existing processes and allow seamless implementation of operational policies. The Regional Council also approved the hiring of four Service Supervisors responsible for enhancing customer service, providing continuous support, and augmenting the visibility of Halifax Transit staff at transit terminals. This team will optimize the passenger experience and enhance efficient operations.

As a next step in this direction, Halifax Transit will design and develop, in collaboration with internal, and external stakeholders and business partners, a comprehensive Halifax Transit Safety Program which will entail a high-level plan to address the challenges and opportunities pertinent to public and transit personnel safety.

## **DISCUSSION**

Post-pandemic offenses against riders and staff on public transit have increased across Canada. Different transit properties use different strategies to be responsive, preventative, and compassionate to mitigate or handle incidents of aggression or disorderly conduct. Anecdotally, the trend of increased violence could be attributed to post-pandemic social issues like the mental health and homelessness crises. Transit properties are partnering with organizations that specialize in mental health and societal issues. The transit system in Halifax Regional Municipality faces a similar challenge as the rest of the country i.e., an increase in non-

compliance and aggression on transit property. This report focuses on the severity and volume of the incidents, the existing framework for safety, and the proposal for the Halifax Transit Safety Program.

## **Definition and Analysis**

### Halifax Transit Incidents and Incident Type

Transit safety is about safety conditions as experienced and perceived by riders and transit staff along their trip. Transit incidents include but are not limited to safety-disturbing behavior and offenses against riders, transit staff, and transit property. Incidents also include requests for customer service, complaints, or issues. For analysis purposes, the following categories were considered: disruptive passenger, fare dispute, Halifax Regional Police requests, high priority, intoxicated passenger, passenger assistance, pending investigation, and road rage.

### Halifax Transit Incidents Trend

The data analysis from January 1, 2018, to September 30, 2023, shows an increase in incidents over time, although the resources to address these incidents remained the same (refer to Figures 1 and 2 in Attachment 1). In 2018, Halifax Transit was handling 96 incidents per month and as of 2023, it is averaging 248 incidents. From May 1, 2023, to September 30, 2023, the records show 258 verbal and 75 physical assaults, 22 incidents had weapon threats, and 138 incidents had police involvement (refer to figures 3 and 4 in Attachment 1).

## **Enhancements to the Halifax Transit Safety Framework**

Halifax Transit is working towards enhancing and improving the existing safety framework that promotes a secure and healthy work environment for employees and ensures safety to the public. The framework encompasses a range of regulations, protocols, and practices aimed at mitigating risk and enabling incident prevention.

Following is the list of elements that are under review and in the process of enhancing the existing safety framework:

- Review of Standard Operation Policies and Procedures
- Revamping Data Collection and Analysis Protocol
- Operator shields (Driver protection system) installations
- Recruitment of Terminal Supervisors

The current safety framework includes the following tools, techniques, and resources to triage, monitor, and respond to incidents:

- Team of Network and Mobile supervisors
- Surveillance cameras on buses and transit terminals
- Payphone(coin-operated) at transit terminal to report an incident
- Halifax Regional Police Extra Duty Officer
- Contracted security on transit terminals
- Alternative communication system for staff, including security protocols

## **Halifax Transit Safety Program**

While acknowledging the existence of a comprehensive safety framework, it is evident that both the frequency and severity of incidents on Halifax Transit are alarming. Staff are proposing this strategic initiative as it will allow Halifax Transit to proactively address these challenges and not only rely on contingency measures by implementing a mitigation plan termed the 'Halifax Transit Safety Program'.

It will be developed utilizing existing experience within HRM, community organizations, policing partners, and transit industry best practices. The program will focus on staff and community support, equipped with a proactive incident management framework for addressing, preventing, and responding to the incidents.

The program will follow a phased and multifaceted approach relying not only on quantitative data but also considering the expertise and experience of transit personnel and partnering bodies to make decisions.

**Business Goals and Objectives**

The goals and objectives of the program will aim to address key focus areas of transit like enhancing passenger and employee safety, fostering a positive passenger experience, ensuring efficient transit Operations, and protecting Transit property with a defined set of clear and brief targets for areas of improvement. The goals and objectives of the program will align with the core values of Halifax Transit: Pride, Respect, Safe, and Teamwork.

**Stakeholders and Engagement**

Halifax Transit is working on stakeholder analysis to identify the stakeholders to participate in the safety program. As Transit engages with these stakeholders and business partners, the program will have diverse and inclusive perspectives to look through an issue and come up with an optimal solution, making the program agile and robust. The list of stakeholders and business partners includes but is not limited to HRP/RCMP, Legal Services, Community Safety, Corporate Safety, Corporate Communications, Diversity and Inclusion, and Regional Council’s advisory committees (Women’s Advisory Committee, Youth Advisory Committee, Accessibility Advisory Committee, etc.). Public engagement will be an integral component of the program and will include reaching out to various stakeholders and demographics to create a broad and inclusive strategy. The communication and collaboration plan will incorporate the method of engagement and format of communication depending on the stakeholder.

**Program Phases and Timeline**

As Halifax Transit has identified the need for an increased focus on safety, Halifax Transit is working towards defining the goals and objectives of the program, identification, and recruitment of additional resources for the project initiation phase would be the next step for the development of the safety program. Should the Halifax Transit Safety program receive approval through the 2024/25 budget process, the below table provides the activities and estimated timeline for the various phases of the program.

<b>Phases of the Security Program</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Duration</b>
<b>Initiation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define SMART goals with time and budget constraints.</li> <li>Studying best industry practices from other municipalities</li> <li>Compling project scope and charter</li> <li>Defining team size, roles, and responsibilities of stakeholders</li> </ul>	0 – 5 months
<b>Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program design and budgeting</li> <li>Defining time-bound milestones and tasks</li> <li>Risk, mitigation, and contingency plan</li> <li>Engagement and Communication plan</li> <li>Acquiring staff, equipment, and resources</li> </ul>	5 – 9 months
<b>Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training, assessment, and development plan</li> <li>Track the progress of implementation.</li> <li>Status meeting and Quality assurance</li> <li>Recording cost and responding to risk</li> </ul>	9 – 20 months
<b>Monitoring and controlling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance measurement</li> <li>Communication management</li> <li>Risk, schedule, and cost monitoring</li> </ul>	20 months and onwards

Program Asset and Resource Allocation

To successfully initiate and plan the program, Halifax Transit would solicit the following combination of temporary and permanent staff. Please find the details of the same in the table below:

Designation Name	Number of positions	Role and Responsibility
Program Manager (temporary)	1	To keep the program on track in terms of timelines, cost, resources, etc.
Business Analyst (permanent)	1	To perform data and spatial analysis, business process flow and documentation, recommendations, etc.
Project Controller (permanent)	1	To perform administrative tasks for the program

*Table 1: Staffing resources estimate for initiation and planning phase*

To ensure the successful execution of the multifaceted Halifax Transit Safety Program, the table below provides an estimate of the required resources. The Program Manager would be able to provide an appropriate and refined estimate of the resources and assets required to keep the program operational.

Designation Name	Role and Responsibility
Transit Safety Officers	To build relationships with transit staff and community and provide high visibility and presence on the transit system
Supervisors	Manager of Transit Safety Officer responsible for implementing organizational strategy into actionable plans at an operational level
Security Monitors	To monitor different transit properties and deploy mobile and community officers to the incident location

*Table 2: Staffing resources estimate for the execution phase*

Also, five additional vehicles will be required by the Transit Safety Officers from transportation from one terminal to the other depending upon the time and day of the week.

Total Cost from the Initiation and Execution Phase

The table below provides an estimate of the staffing requirements for the initiation and planning phase:

Role	FTE required	Individual Salary	Individual Salary & Benefits	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Program Manager	1	86,000	103,000	43,000	104,000	60,000	-	-
Business Analyst	1	86,000	103,000	-	104,000	105,000	106,000	108,000
Project Controller	1	54,000	64,000	27,000	64,000	65,000	66,000	67,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>226,000</b>	<b>270,000</b>	<b>70,000</b>	<b>272,000</b>	<b>230,000</b>	<b>172,000</b>	<b>175,000</b>

*Table 3: Resource estimate for the initiation and planning phase*

The table below provides an estimate of the staffing requirements for the execution phase:

Role	FTE required	Individual Salary	Individual Salary & Benefits	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Transit Safety Officer	18	68,000	82,000	-	1,470,000	1,490,000	1,500,000	1,540,000
Supervisors	3	86,000	103,000	-	310,000	314,000	319,000	323,000
Security Monitors	4	53,000	64,000	-	257,000	257,000	257,000	257,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>207,000</b>	<b>249,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,037,000</b>	<b>2,061,000</b>	<b>2,076,000</b>	<b>2,120,000</b>

*Table 4: Resource estimate for the implementation phase*

**Advancements in Halifax Transit Safety Program Initiative**

As a step in this direction, Halifax Transit is doing the groundwork for the safety program by identifying the need, engaging with initial stakeholders, and identifying the resources required. This planned approach will allow for a smoother launch of the program when additional resources are available.

Jurisdiction Scan and Best Practices

Halifax Transit has initiated and embarked on a review of safety programs and practices being followed, developed, and implemented at other transit properties across Canada. This will allow staff to draw and harvest practices followed elsewhere, customizing, and adapting them to align with the specific requirements and challenges of Halifax Transit. Staff are currently studying transit properties that are similarly sized or have higher population densities, the challenges faced by them while implementing strategic initiatives for the safety program and the course of action taken to revisit strategic initiatives along with the corrective actions considered and implemented.

As mentioned above, Halifax Transit would need a Program Manager, Business Analyst, and Project Controller to initiate and build the safety program from scratch. The funding for these positions will be brought forward through the upcoming 2024/2025 budget process.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications at this time.

**RISK CONSIDERATION**

This section highlights the assessment of risk associated with the Halifax Transit Safety Program. The below table showcases the risk if the Transit Safety Program is not approved.

RISK	LIKELIHOOD	IMPACT	RISK LEVEL
Incidents on Halifax Transit keep increasing continuously	Almost Certain	Major	Very High
Increase in staff assault and casualties	Almost certain	Moderate	Very High
Low employee morale and reduced work drive	Likely	Minor	High
Unfavorable public perception of transit	Possible	Minor	Low

*Table 5: Risk assessment (Program not approved)*

The following list demonstrates the risk implications if Halifax Transit decides to design the program. Further risk treatment and mitigation would be identified by the Program Manager during the planning phase of the Program.

RISK	LIKELIHOOD	IMPACT	RISK LEVEL
There could be budget constraints that prevent the program from being fully resourced and effectively implemented.	Unlikely	Minor	Low
There is a change in the direction of the program and an additional budget is required to support the program.	Unlikely	Minor	Low

*Table 6: Risk Assessment (Program Approval)*

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Should Regional Council approve the creation of a transit safety program, Halifax Transit would work with a diverse set of community groups to understand their needs for a safety program and understand the definition of safety from their perspective. The strategy for the program will be designed, developed, implemented, and evaluated keeping in mind a diverse set of communities and staff who interact or work with public transit on a day-to-day basis and their expectations for a positive transit experience.

The community engagement would be a periodic and ongoing effort, with a provision to provide feedback to Halifax Transit about the program. Halifax Transit would learn from the feedback provided by the community groups and staff and, accordingly would make modifications to the program wherever possible.

Halifax Transit has already started the groundwork for community engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

No environmental implications were identified.

**ALTERNATIVES**

The Transportation Standing Committee could choose not to recommend that Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to create a Halifax Transit Safety Program.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 - Halifax Transit Incident Analysis

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

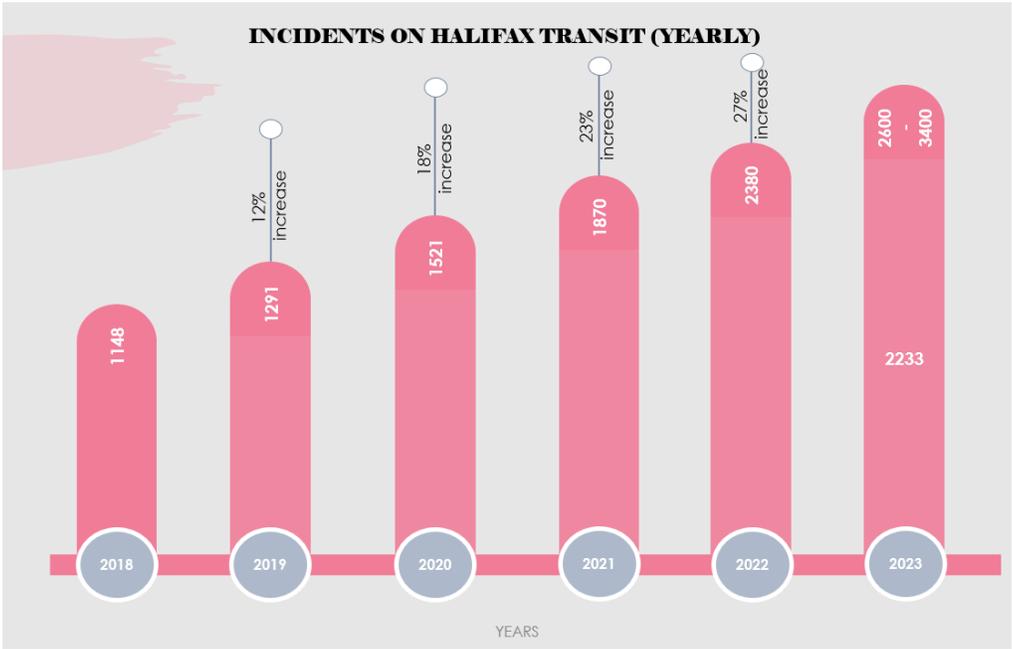
Report Prepared by: Abhishek Singh, Business Analyst, Halifax Transit, 902.490.6614

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### Halifax Transit Incident Analysis

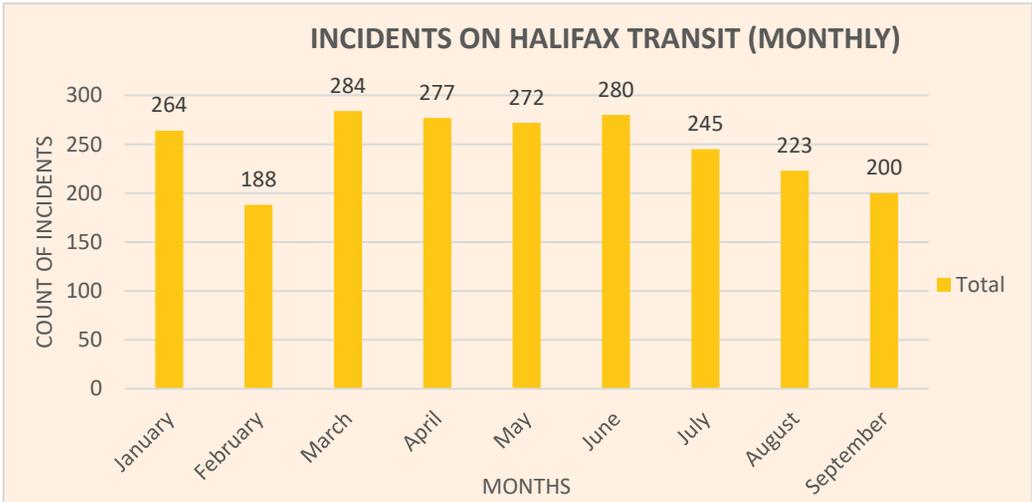
The below graphs provide detail about the incidents and types of incidents happening on Halifax Transit buses, terminal, and properties.

Figure 1: Incidents on Halifax Transit by year



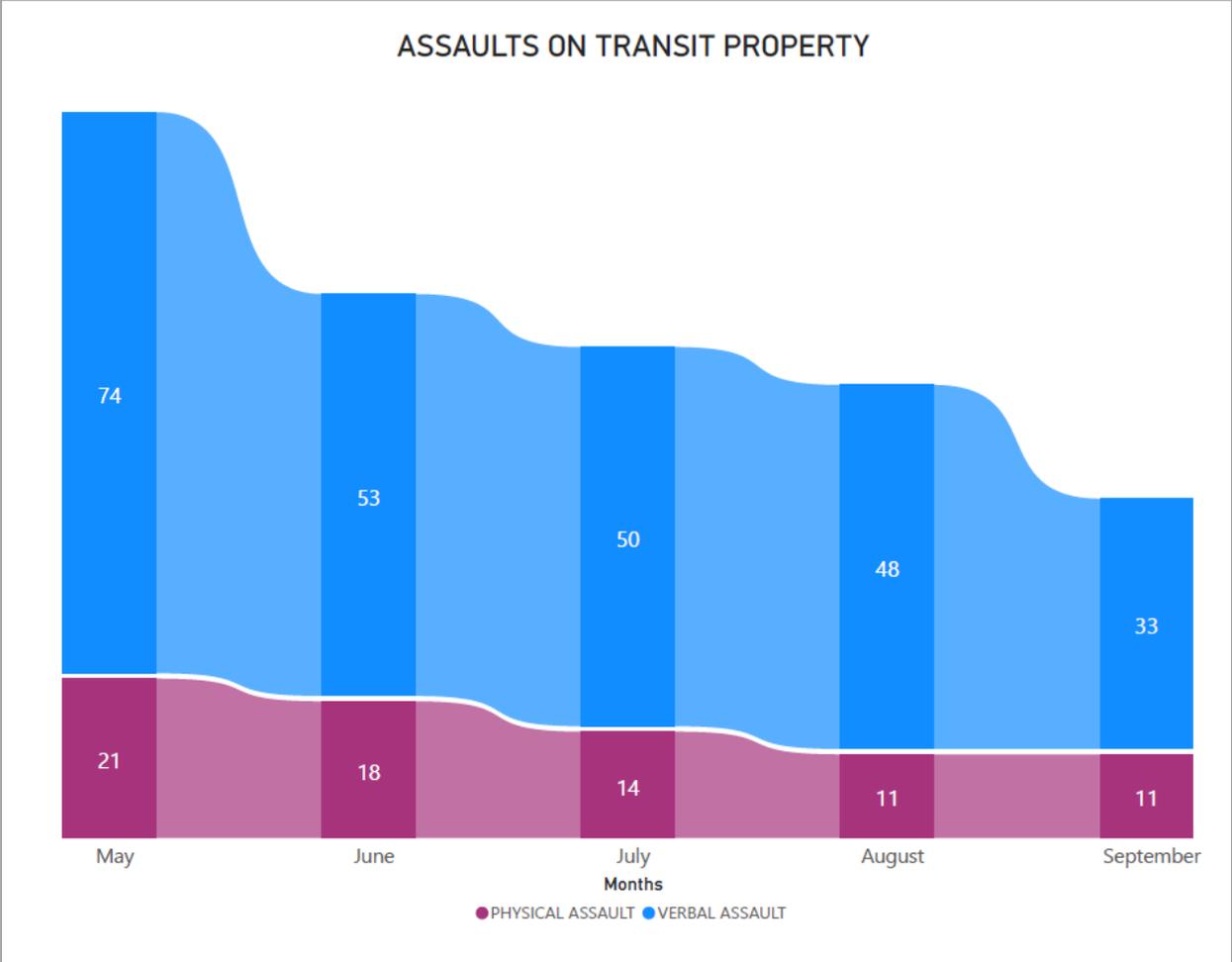
Note: The above graph uses data from January 1, 2018, to September 30, 2023. From January 1, 2023, to September 30, 2023 a total 2,233 incidents have been reported. Halifax Transit expects the incidents to be between 2600 – 3400 by the end of the year.

Figure 2: Incidents on Halifax Transit by months



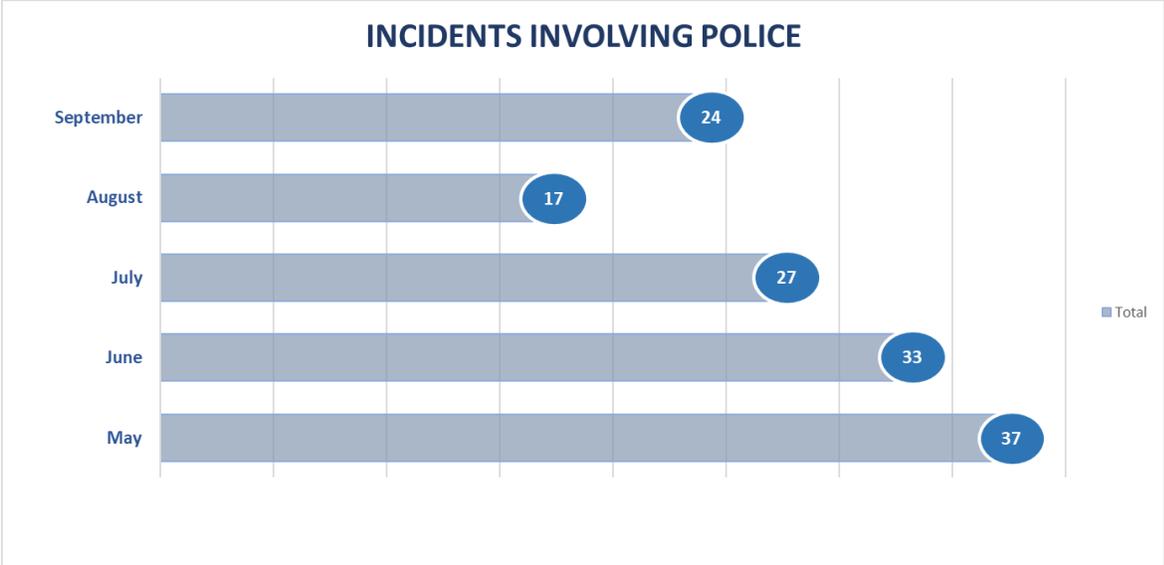
Note: The above graph uses data from Jan 1, 2023, to Sep 30, 2023.

Figure 3: Assaults on Transit Property



Note: The above graph uses data from May 1, 2023, to Sep 30, 2023. The above-mentioned assault includes both operator- passenger and passenger-passenger assaults. The data set for physical and verbal assaults are not mutually exclusive i.e., quite a few times incidents start with a verbal assault or swarming, and they translate into physical assault.

Figure 4: Incidents involving police



Note: The above graph uses data from May 1, 2023, to Sep 30, 2023.

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