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***30-year transit veteran responsible for 220+ security and code compliance officers***

San Diego – The San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) has named Al Stiehler as the organization's new director of transit security & passenger safety. Stiehler most recently served as chief of field operations for New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority – the largest transit system in the United States. Stiehler begins his role January 18, 2021.

"As a long time transit employee, Al Stiehler has proven progressive experience in transit enforcement, investigations, and staff supervision," said Nathan Fletcher, MTS Board Chair and San Diego County Supervisor. "I have absolute confidence in his ability to provide the leadership and expertise we need to continue improving the safety and security of our passengers and employees."

"I look forward to working closely with Mr. Stiehler in this new chapter for MTS passenger safety and security," said Monica Montgomery Steppe, MTS Boardmember and chair of the agency's Public Security Committee. "We've made significant progress to reshape the way MTS manages passenger security. And with Mr. Stiehler's help, we can continue the momentum."

MTS Chief Executive Office Sharon Cooney added, "MTS engaged in a national search to find the right candidate to continue improving how we handle security and enforcement. We had a great deal of interest in the position, in part due to the exciting changes we are implementing here in San Diego. I'm looking forward to working with Al as a member of our agency's executive leadership team."

Stiehler will oversee 64 internal MTS Code Compliance Inspectors and 158 contracted security officers. Officers work in teams of two and are responsible for patrolling 54 stations, three Trolley lines and 95 bus routes. Since July, MTS has been aggressively pursuing improvements to its security policies and procedures, including:

- Adopting many of the principles in the “8 Can’t Wait” campaign and as a guideline for its use-of-force policy
- Banning carotid restraints and choke holds, including the prohibition of using knee pressure on the neck, throat or head
- Adopting a “duty to intervene” if MTS security officers witness excessive force by another employee
- Implementing a fare citation diversion pilot program to help riders caught without a fare avoid court fees and criminal citation
- Conducting a third-party peer review of its security policies and procedures, which includes a community-based steering committee to assist with recommendations

Stiehler has been serving as the chief of field operations for the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority since 2017. He also spent 30 years in various law enforcement positions at the New Jersey Transit Police Department, including deputy chief of police and field operations.

“I am excited about this opportunity,” said Stiehler. “MTS is on a path forward with strong and engaged leadership. This proactive approach and willingness to change allows me to come in and build on the work that has already been accomplished.”

Stiehler’s selected achievements include:

- Developed and executed an innovative Homeless Assistance Program to secure permanent housing and mental health for people experiencing homelessness at Penn Station and Grand Central Terminal
- Devised, implemented and managed the fare inspection program on New Jersey Transit’s light rail system
- Created, manages and coordinates the New York MTA Police Compstat Program to ensure that all incidents are investigated to completion, certify data integrity, and maintain accountability throughout commands.
- New Jersey Transit Police Department Excellent Police Service Medal recipient
- New Jersey Transit Police Department Unit Citation Award recipient

Stiehler takes over for Manny Guaderrama, who retired in late August.

MTS operates 95 bus routes and three Trolley lines across 10 cities and unincorporated areas of San Diego county. Frequencies and spans have been restored to near-pre-COVID-19 levels. Updated schedules can be accessed on the MTS website. MTS requires people to wear face coverings at all times, and practice physical distancing when possible.

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