SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA RAPID TRANSIT DISTRICT

Memorandum

TO: Board of Directors   **DATE:** July 7, 2017

FROM: Kerry Hamill
            AGM Office of External Affairs

SUBJECT: Providing public access to crime data via CrimeMapping.com

The BART Police Department is now sharing reports of crimes with the website CrimeMapping.com. The site processes crime data with its advanced mapping engine to show where a crime has occurred within the BART system. The decision to provide crime data to CrimeMapping.com was made by BART Police Chief Carlos Rojas as part of an effort to increase public transparency as well as to bolster community oriented policing efforts. This decision was shared with Board members and with the media in early June, 2017.

CrimeMapping.com is a component of the BART Police Department's new Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. Crime data from BART is being fed to CrimeMapping.com from our Records Management System. This new technology has increased the efficiency, accuracy and transparency of our crime reporting. BART is following the lead of several large police departments in the Bay Area that already provide their crime data to CrimeMapping.com. That list includes police departments in San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose, Hayward, Richmond, and Berkeley. The website is used by law enforcement agencies across the country to provide localized and updated crime data to constituents to raise awareness and encourage prevention.

Previously, crime logs (in narrative form) had been manually entered and emailed to a small group of approximately 300 readers and local media. The data now is available to all members of the public, freely, on the internet.

Recent reports have criticized this move as a step away from transparency. All of our crimes are still being reported, simply not in the way reporters previously received them. Many reporters remain unfamiliar with the interface.

Furthermore, it is important to note that much of the criticism leveled at BART from local media on this topic was generated for the benefit of media themselves. Reporters (based on the recent phone snatching at Coliseum) repeatedly questioned why the District did not issue a press release (or would not be issuing a press release in the future) on the topic of petty crimes.

The Media Department has criteria for whether to issue a press release, and this incident did not meet them. The robbery was thwarted by the victim's fellow riders, then the assailants were all detained and identified thanks to a bolstered police presence at Coliseum station. No property was taken, and no injuries required medical attention.

There is no benefit to riders, criminal procedure, BART police investigations, or the District generally to elevate such an incident with a press release. To do so would be grossly out of step with other transit jurisdictions and municipal governments, and would paint an inaccurate picture

of the BART system as crime-ridden when incidents of crime on transit, including BART, are fewer than in the surrounding communities.

The new mapping tool presents crime in a context of what is occurring outside our stations—in the days following the recent attempted robbery, there were over 118 assaults and 33 robberies in the immediate area. All of these incidents were ignored by local media.

Furthermore, disproportionate elevation of crimes on transit interfaces with local media in such a way to unfairly affect and characterize riders of color, leading to sweeping generalizations in media reports and a high level of racially insensitive commentary directed toward the District through our social media channels, email, and call centers.

The BART Police Department has a hard copy of all the data provided to CrimeMapping.com. It is available to the public at its Lake Merritt Station headquarters. Many police agencies, according to the Police Chief, provide written versions of their police logs for public review at their offices as standard practice.

Users can access the information by going to the CrimeMapping.com website and entering a station name in the search box. The information about specific crimes at that station will be displayed on a map along with crimes that have occurred in the surrounding neighborhood if that local jurisdiction participates in the CrimeMapping system. Users can look up the time and type of crime that occurred, and organize the map by agency, e.g., if you only want to see crimes that occurred on BART, you can turn off icons for crimes that occurred under other departments' jurisdictions. CrimeMapping.com stores the data for up to 180 days.

The site can also display crime data in charts and graphs, illustrating whether there has been a recent spike or decline in criminal activity. TriTech Software Systems, the parent company behind crimemapping.com, is one of the largest vendors for tier one public safety software systems in the nation. As part of our Regional Anti-Terrorism Law Enforcement Systems (RAILS) project, we have implanted the entire TriTech Software Systems Inform suite, which includes: computer-aided dispatch, in-car mobile software, web-based records management system, IQ analytics, and crime analytics software (known as CrimeView). This has allowed us to capture and analyze data to help determine how to best deploy our resources in the field.

BART data has been live on the CrimeMapping.com site since early June. The Office of External Affairs continues to respond well within 24 hours to media inquiries requesting detail or commentary on any crime reported on the website, and continues to work with the BART Police Department to develop best practices for reporting on crime.

If you have any further questions, please contact me at 510 464-6153 or Chief Carlos Rojas at 510 464-7022.