

Enterprise paying nearly \$5 million to help fund MetroLink security improvements

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ST. LOUIS — Enterprise Holdings is kicking in nearly \$5 million to help fund the ongoing effort to install turnstiles at MetroLink stations and make other improvements to beef up security on the light rail line.

The financial commitment by the Clayton-based car rental giant is by far the largest on a list of private donors to the \$52 million MetroLink security effort. The list was released Tuesday by the Bi-State Development Agency, Metro Transit's parent agency.

“We’re proud to support this initiative focused on providing a safer and more secure ride for residents and visitors who use our region’s transit system,” Enterprise spokeswoman Sara Miller said in a statement.

Enterprise and its founding family, the Taylors, have been prolific large donors to a wide range of causes across the metro area over the years. Among the beneficiaries have been the St. Louis Art Museum, Forest Park Forever and renovation efforts at the Gateway Arch and Soldiers Memorial.

Also high on the list of donors to the MetroLink security effort is Centene Corp., which is giving \$2 million.

Centene’s former CEO, Michael Neidorff, who died in 2022, had been [outspoken](#) on his concerns about the region’s crime problems. Another leading donor was Edward Jones, which gave \$1 million.

The \$10.4 million private donor list also includes Express Scripts, \$500,000; Ameren Corp., Nestle Purina PetCare and Schnuck Markets, \$250,000 each; BJC HealthCare and Mercy, \$200,000 each; the St. Louis Police Foundation, \$100,000; and SSM Health, \$25,000.

St. Louis University — whose president, Fred Pestello, is on Bi-State’s board — donated \$300,000. Other education-related donors were the University of Missouri-St. Louis and St. Louis Community College, which gave \$100,000 and \$50,000, respectively.

“These leaders in our regional community understand the essential role public transit plays on a daily basis for their employees and customers,” Bi-State CEO Taulby Roach said in a statement.

The Regional Business Council played a key role in getting corporations involved in the effort and chipped in \$150,000 itself.

“Crime and public safety is a really important issue for the region,” Kathy Osborn, the business council’s president and CEO, said in an interview. “We took it on ourselves to talk to a number of companies that would be interested.”

The bulk of the \$52 million is coming from government funds, including local money, federal American Rescue Plan Act money and proceeds from Bi-State bond refinancing.

Osborn said she and other business leaders decided to get involved a few years ago when MetroLink ridership was at a low ebb because of the pandemic and growing public concern about crime on the rail line.

“Taulby had already been talking about the decrease in ridership and the perception and often the reality that it wasn’t safe,” she said. “We were in conversations with him.”

Bi-State’s board in November 2021 [voted to authorize](#) Roach to seek funding for the project, which also includes gates and improved camera monitoring.

The move also was backed by St. Louis Mayor Tishaura O. Jones, St. Louis County Executive Sam Page and St. Clair County Board Chairman Mark Kern, who head the three local governments that send millions of dollars in sales tax money to Metro every year.

It was a major change in policy for Bi-State and Metro, which had not used turnstiles since MetroLink began operating in 1993. Instead, riders have been required to produce tickets or passes when asked to do so on the trains by fare inspectors and police.

The move was made even though consultants hired by the East-West Gateway Council of Governments in 2018 to study MetroLink security **didn't recommend turnstiles**, instead focusing on increased patrols on the trains and better coordination among police agencies.

They said there wasn't much correlation between fare evasion and serious crime.

While Metro followed many of the consultants' recommendations, Roach and his security chief decided that improving the perception of safety on the 46-mile light rail system was important as well — and that fare collection gates could achieve that.

When the plan was announced in 2021, Roach said \$5.25 million in private sector funding already had been committed toward a goal of \$13 million.

That was later pared back to the \$10.4 million that was committed, most of which has since been received.

Metro earlier this month began seeking bids for fare collection gates and fencing at four MetroLink stations in East St. Louis, Washington Park and Belleville. That work is expected to be completed by next spring.

Similar installation is expected to be done by next summer at a second group of stations in St Louis.

Work at the remainder of the 38 stations will follow, with the program completed by the end of 2025. The system also will be installed at a new station at Mid-America St. Louis Airport in Mascoutah.

“MetroLink is critical to reducing barriers and increasing access to jobs, health care, and other necessities for residents in our metro,” said Jason Hall, CEO of Greater St. Louis, Inc.

“The generous investments made by St. Louis’ leading businesses to strengthen MetroLink as well as the work of the business community to spearhead efforts in the state Legislature to secure a record level of state funding are perfect examples of how public-private partnership can work to make our community safer and more prosperous,” Hall said in a statement.