

# PBA decries plan to increase

BY RICHARD KHAVKINE

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Police union leaders and others have pilloried the plan to redeploy officers in and around subway stations to combat rising crime underground as unworkable and politically motivated.

The plan, announced last week by Mayor Eric Adams and Governor Kathy Hochul, calls for giving MTA Police, for the first time, primary responsibility for patrolling the city's commuter rail hubs — Penn Station, Grand Central, Atlantic Terminal, and Jamaica Station — thereby freeing up NYPD cops to cover more ground.

The NYPD will also up its presence in the subway system by increasing officer overtime by about 1,200 shifts and 10,000 hours a day in an effort to achieve what Adams has called “omnipresence.”

The president of the Police Benevolent Association, though, called the initiative “unsustainable” given, in part, that the department is more than 1,000 officers below its budgeted headcount and that there are significantly fewer cops underground than two years ago.

“The increased workload is crushing the cops who remain. The answer is not to squeeze them for more forced OT. It's not to pass off responsibilities to the better-paid but smaller MTA Police Department. And it definitely isn't replacing them with unarmed security guards,” he said in a statement, alluding to the proposal to station uniformed guards near subway turnstiles to deter fare evasion and other criminal activity.

“Our city must immediately boost pay and improve working conditions in order to recruit and retain enough police officers. That is the only way to provide real safety in the subway, rather than the illusion of ‘omnipresence,’” Lynch said.

Crime on the city transit system is up more than 41 percent than at the same point last year and more



The NYPD is increasing officer presence in the subway system due to the rapid and persistent underground, including several violent incidents recently.

than 25 percent than in 2020.

There also have been several deadly incidents both on platforms and inside subway cars in recent weeks. Earlier this month, a 15-year-old boy was shot to death on a southbound A train in Far Rockaway, the third killing in the subway in just a few weeks. Fatal incidents on platforms have also occurred, most recently the death of a 48-year-old man who fell onto the tracks in front of an oncoming train during a fight at the Jackson Heights-Roosevelt Avenue station in Jackson Heights.

According to the plan, MTA and NYPD officers, together with FDNY personnel, also will get training on how to best deal with people with mental-health issues. The train-

ing will include de-escalation techniques and also inform officers on how to ensure people get needed help, the governor said.

Overall, Hochul said the plan dovetails with the announcement earlier this year that the MTA would install cameras in every subway car. She called the initiative “cops, cameras and care.”

Hochul said the state would continue to work with city officials “to find a dedicated revenue source going forward.”

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ing on CNN, he noted that the 1,800 crimes — the number recorded by police — in the subway so far this year amounted to about six a day on a transit system that carries 3.5 million people each weekday. Still, he said, “even if it is less than six crimes a day, that is too many for me and I’m clear on that.”

Paul DiGiacomo, the head of the Detectives’ Endowment Association, did not comment on the Hochul-Adams plan itself but again called for the tightening of bail and other criminal-justice provisions as a way to stem the rise in crime underground.

Until prosecutors and judges more forcefully prosecute felonies and lower-level offenses “and there are consequences, crime will not go

down,” he said.

DiGiacomo was adamant that none of the justice reforms enacted in the last few years, including changes in bail laws and in the prosecution of younger offenders, had resulted in less crime. “Nothing that they have implemented is working,” he said of state legislators.

Alluding to the union’s recent endorsement, he insisted that the DEA’s backing of U.S. Representative Lee Zeldin, a Republican, in the governor’s race against Hochul, a Democrat, was not based on party affiliation. “The safety of my members and of the public is what’s most important,” he said.

In a WABC-TV interview aired Monday, Lynch said officer ranks were stretched thin enough that the redeployments would shift cops from precinct beats, which he said were “already short-staffed.”

Lynch said some cops were already working massive amounts of overtime, which he said was taking a toll. “We need decompression time,” he said. “We’re in a very violent time in our city. The police officers are on the front line.”

Lynch used the occasion to call for “investing” by the city into its rank and file cop corps. The union and city officials are in contract arbitration regarding an agreement to replace a pact that expired more than five years ago.

Advocates have also criticized the plan, although for vastly different reasons than Lynch and others. In a statement, Communities United for Police Reform spokesperson Sala Cyril said that New Yorkers would be better served by investments in subway infrastructure, affordable housing and comprehensive mental health services than by what she called “surveillance and broken windows policing tactics.” “The Mayor and Governor must prioritize solutions that work — not expand the city’s already overly-invasive surveillance systems and police presence which only cause more harm and violence in our communities, not prevent it,” Cyril said.