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Union boss calls for National Guard, bag checks on Chicago transit system, like in New York



By Todd Feurer
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CHICAGO (CBS) -- Two days after New York Gov. Kathy Hochul announced the deployment of National Guard troops to provide security on the New York City subway system, the head of the largest union of Chicago transit workers on Friday called for a similar effort in Chicago.

On Wednesday, Hochul said 750 National Guard troops and 250 New York State and MTA police officers would be deployed in the city's subway system to help NYPD conduct bag checks and keep weapons off trains in response to a recent rise in crime.

On Friday, Keith Hill, president of Amalgamated Transit Union 241, which represents Chicago Transit Authority bus drivers in Chicago, said he would welcome Illinois National Guard members to boost security and conduct bag checks on trains and buses.

"The police got their hands tied with everything that's going on in the city, so any assistance is more than welcome to make passengers, workers, everybody feel safe if they use the system. It's still the best way around the city, but the only way people are going to realize that is if they feel safe," Hill said.

Hill said the National Guard would bring an additional security presence on top of CPD mass transit officers and private security guards and help deter crime on the city's mass transit system.

Asked about concerns that bag checks could increase commute times when riders are already complaining about insufficient bus and train service, Hill said, "What's two minutes of having somebody's bag checked?"

"You're arriving at your destination safely. The bag checks are more than welcome because we know for a fact on the bus, people get on with weapons. They have left their weapons on the bus. While asleep, weapons fall out. So a bag check is more than welcome to me, if it makes a person feel safe, it's ensuring that the passengers can get from A to B, we welcome it," Hill said.

Hill said if Mayor Brandon Johnson and Gov. JB Pritzker want Chicago to have the world-class public transit system the city deserves, "they need to take accountability for some type of presence and bring that sense of safety to the system."

...e and safe as we move people throughout this city. So something
... he said.



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A spokesperson for Johnson's office declined to comment. CBS 2 has also reached out to Pritzker's office for a response.

It's not the first time [Hill has called for more to be done about safety on the CTA](#). Last April, Hill said violence on the city's mass transit system [was contributing to a shortage of bus drivers](#), making service less reliable.

"My drivers are often worried about who we're picking up, what we're picking up, what they might have," Hill said at the time. "We've had a large rash of people getting on the bus carrying guns because they feel the need to protect themselves."

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Todd Feurer is a web producer at CBS News Chicago. He has previously written for WBBM Newsradio, WUIS-FM, and the New City News Service.



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