

Muni crime slowing after crackdown

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SAN FRANCISCO — On July 27, a man hopped off a Muni bus at 30th and Mission streets and was blinded after being sprayed with a chemical before being robbed. The same week, a man near a T-Third Street platform in the Bayview district was stabbed. Service was halted after the suspect was thought to have fled on the light-rail vehicle.

During the first four months of the year, there were more than 100 criminal incidents reported each month on Muni. Crimes include assault, robbery and graffiti or other types of vandalism.

Crime dropped off in May and June, with 62 incidents recorded each month following a broad effort to deter violent acts on Muni lines and near the transit stops, but between January and June 29 there were a total of 569 incidents reported.

The decrease in crime on Muni is attributed to more-aggressive and targeted deployment of public safety resources, which includes targeting the most-dangerous lines and stations during times when crimes are occurring. In March, police considered the 14-Mission, 38-Geary and 9-San Bruno bus routes the most problematic.

But in addition to adding more police, the Board of Supervisors is expected to approve legislation today that would increase the penalties for two crimes, “aggressive pursuit” — defined as “the willful, malicious or repeated following or harassment of another person” — and loitering while carrying a concealed weapon.

Fines would increase from \$500 to \$1,000, the maximum allowed under state law, for such crimes on Muni vehicles, platforms or within 25 feet of a bus zone. Also, offenders could face up to six months in jail.

Supervisor Carmen Chu, who introduced the legislation, said increased penalties will send a message: “Crime on Muni, violence on Muni, is something that is simply not acceptable and not tolerable.”

Deputy police Chief John Murphy, who’s in charge of cracking down on Muni crime, said the legislation “gives us another tool which we can use to enforce the law strictly.”

“We really believe that rigorous enforcement is a viable deterrent,” Murphy said. “We want to focus on the crimes that create that atmosphere of crime. If people feel that the other passengers may be armed or may harm them, then they’re the people that are creating the atmosphere where crime may be committed.”

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