



Title:	Employee Social Media Policy
Number:	1003
Effective:	September 17, 2019; REVISED January 20, 2016
Prepared by:	Danette Brannin, General Manager
Approved by:	Board Authority Resolution No. 2016-05; 2019-19

POL-1003 EMPLOYEE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

This policy applies to all Mason Transit Authority (MTA) representatives.

1.0 Purpose

This policy establishes the rules and expectations for MTA representatives' appropriate use of social media and professional representation of/relationship with MTA, whether the use is personal or part of MTA-related responsibilities. This policy is not intended to restrict communications or actions protected or required by law.

2.0 Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- 2.1 **Social Media:** All means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the Internet, including to usage across multiple platforms, such as, Facebook, Twitter, Nixel, blogs, YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, Vine, chat room, affinity websites, and other forms of electronic communication.
- 2.2 **Content:** Any text, metadata, Quick Response (QR) codes, digital recordings, videos, graphics, images, photos, depictions, or links.
- 2.3 **Comment:** A response to an article or social media content submitted by a commenter.
- 2.4 **MTA Representative:** An employee, board member, agent, volunteer, contractor, or vendor that is identifiable as working for or on behalf of MTA.

3.0 Policy

All MTA representatives must maintain the highest standards of propriety, professionalism, and respect in their creation or use of social media content, and are accountable for the form, content, and substance of all information they post, publish, or otherwise share on social media.

4.0 MTA Use of Social Media

The following principles and expectations apply to professional use of social media on behalf of MTA, as well as personal use of social media involving work or subjects associated with MTA.

- 4.1 All MTA-related social media content and activities must comply with MTA Social Media Communications Policy (POL-1002), including prior approval of social media content by the General Manager or his/her designee(s) before it is posted, published, or otherwise shared.

See Also: Employee Handbook, POL-1002



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- 4.2 MTA representatives must adhere to the MTA Code of Conduct as outlined in the Employee Handbook, and other MTA policies when using social media related to MTA.
- 4.3 MTA representatives need to be aware of the effect their actions may have on their images as well as MTA's image. The information that MTA representatives post, publish, or otherwise share may be public information for a long time, and/or subject to public record laws.
- 4.4 MTA representatives need to be aware that MTA may observe content and information made available by MTA representatives through social media. MTA representatives must use their best judgment and post material that is neither inappropriate nor harmful to MTA, MTA representatives, MTA system, customers, or the general public.
- 4.5 Although not an exclusive list, some specific examples of prohibited social media conduct include posting commentary, content, or images that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous, or that can create a hostile work environment, or violate any part of MTA's Social Media Communications Policy (POL-1002).
- 4.6 MTA representatives are not to publish, post, release, or otherwise share any information that is considered proprietary, confidential or private. If there are questions about what is considered confidential, MTA representatives should check with the General Manager or designee(s).
- 4.7 Social media content sometimes generates press and media attention or legal questions. MTA representatives will refer these inquiries to the General Manager or designee(s).
- 4.8 If an MTA representative encounters a situation while using social media that may become antagonistic, the MTA representative should disengage from the dialogue in a polite and respectful manner and immediately notify the General Manager or designee(s).
- 4.9 MTA representatives must receive permission before referring to or posting images of current or former MTA representatives. Additionally, MTA representatives must get appropriate permission to use a third party's copyrighted material, trademarks, service marks or other intellectual property.
- 4.10 Social media use must not interfere with the employee's other responsibilities at MTA. Using MTA computer systems or electronic devices to manage social media for MTA-related purposes is permitted (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, MTA blogs, and LinkedIn), but personal use of social media platforms is prohibited and may result in discipline, up to and including discharge.



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5.0 Personal Use of Social Media

MTA does not seek to censor MTA representatives who are active on social media on their own time and using their own electronic devices. However, there are situations in which MTA representatives may be held accountable or disciplined, up to and including discharge, for their social media activity, even when that activity occurs on their own time. Based on current law interpretations regarding free speech rights of public employees, the following principles and guidelines apply to personal use of social media.

- 5.1 Subject to applicable law, off-duty conduct that violates MTA’s Code of Conduct or any other MTA policy may subject an employee to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.
- 5.2 If an MTA representative publishes content while off-duty but involves work or subjects associated with MTA, a disclaimer must be used to distinguish activity made in his/her individual capacity versus an MTA-related capacity, such as: “The postings on this site are my own and do not represent MTA’s positions, strategies or opinions.”
- 5.3 MTA representatives must keep MTA-related social media accounts separate from their personal accounts. MTA representatives must adhere to the same ethical obligations that govern their conduct while on the job/officially acting on behalf of MTA. For example, confidential MTA information or documents must not be discussed, disclosed, or otherwise shared.
- 5.4 MTA representatives must exercise discretion and good judgment when commenting upon employees, either professionally or personally. This is particularly true when the comments are derogatory and derisive, or constitute name calling or slurs. This is also true when the comments are on publicly available social media platforms likely to be seen by other coworkers or the target of the comments.
- 5.5 MTA representatives must not post, share, or support comments or other content that negatively affects the MTA’s operations or ability to serve the public. Prohibited content includes:
 - 5.5.1 Any posting that includes harassment, threats of violence, or similar inappropriate conduct;
 - 5.5.2 Any posting that ridicules, maligns, disparages, expresses bias, negative connotations, or disrespect toward any race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or any other protected class of individuals;



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- 5.5.3 Any posting that suggests that MTA personnel are engaged in behavior reasonably considered to be unlawful or reckless toward public interests;
- 5.5.4 Any posting that otherwise violates any law or MTA policy.
- 5.5.5 Public employers such as MTA may lawfully impose disciplinary action for speech, even when such speech touches on a matter of public concern, when such speech also impairs discipline or control by supervisors; disrupts coworker relations; erodes close working relationships premised on personal loyalty and confidentiality; interferes with the speaker's performance of duties; or obstructs operations. Employees may be subject to discipline up to and including discharge for social media activity that violates these standards or otherwise violates MTA policy.
- 5.5.6 MTA maintains various policies that are intended to encourage employees to report workplace concerns, including our policies addressing unlawful harassment and whistleblower protections. Nothing in this policy is meant to prevent an employee from exercising his or her right to make a complaint of discrimination or other workplace misconduct, engage in lawful collective bargaining activity, or to express an opinion on a matter of public concern. If an employee has concerns about workplace issues, MTA encourages employees to raise those concerns through the appropriate channels. It is generally more effective to address work-related complaints by speaking directly with co-workers or by using one of the reporting mechanisms designed to address such concerns rather than by posting complaints to a social media platform. Nevertheless, if an employee decides to post complaints or criticism, that person should avoid using statements that are, or could be reasonably construed to be malicious, obscene, threatening or intimidating, or meant to defame, disparage others, or that might constitute harassment. Examples of such conduct might include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or any other status protected by law or MTA policy.