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TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

THROUGH: ARTHUR T. LEAHY 
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SUBJECT: INFORMATION ON MITIGATING OPERATOR ASSAULTS

ISSUE

This information is provided in response to Metro Board inquiries regarding recent incidences involving assaults on Metro Operators. Specifically, these inquiries requested staff's plan of action to reduce and, if possible, mitigate these types of events.

DISCUSSION

Serious crime in transit systems is relatively rare and constitutes a small percentage of overall crime. However, Operator assault is a problem throughout the transit system and has garnered research through the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP). The results of their findings are recaptured in this document. To see the complete report, please use the following internet link:

<http://www.tcrponline.org/sitepages/productdetails.aspx?productcode=s-093>

No matter how minor, assaults on Operators cause worker absence, productivity issues and increased levels of stress for the victim and for coworkers. Therefore, it is important that Metro continue its efforts in preventing measures to address the issue of Operator assaults.

"Assault" of a Bus Operator can be broadly defined and includes acts of aggression that may or may not cause physical injury to the Operator. Assault is defined as: Overt physical and verbal acts by a customer that interfere with the mission of a Bus Operator—to complete his or her scheduled run safely—and that adversely affect the safety of the Operator and customers.

Bus Operator protection measures ranging from media campaigns, policing and training to technology and physical barricades have been used throughout the public transportation industry. Some measures are more appropriate for preventing certain types of attacks. For instance, conflict mitigation training is appropriate for reducing assaults emanating from fare disputes, whereas barriers may be more useful in protecting the Operator against spontaneous attacks. Video surveillance is useful for deterrence, identification and prosecution of assailants.

Metro places a high priority on the safety of our Operators and customers. To that extent, there is a constant focus on improving our safety efforts and seeking out innovative approaches to Operator protection. The following information describes current initiatives and programs.

Partnership with LASD

With use of on-board technology, we deploy first-hand information to the Sheriff's Desk, allowing Sheriff personnel to be dispatched immediately. Deputies throughout the system can intercept a train or bus while it is moving so revenue service is not interrupted. Moreover, the implementation of the Transit Watch App has made responding quicker and more efficient.

Transit Watch App

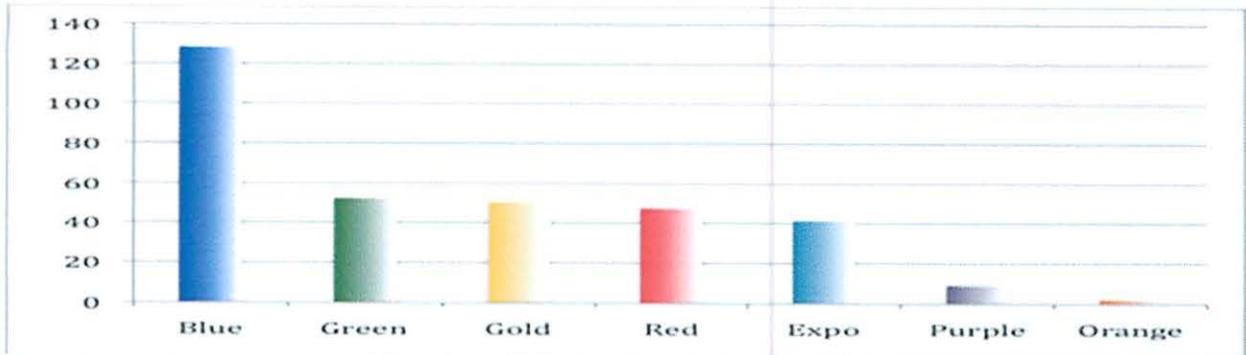
The LA Metro Transit Watch App was launched on June 25, 2013, during a media event. It has been well received with over 1,000 downloads to the iPhone and Android Smartphones that same day as a result of the news conference. Since then, there has been a steady number of downloads daily and peaked at notable events such as the anniversary of "9/11." As of February 2014, there have been over 5,323 downloads of the application.

User Activity:

In the past seven months, there have been almost 800 incidents reported through the app to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Rail Operations Center dispatch center. Of those, there are about 170 regular users who frequently report incidents.

Location of Incidents Reported:

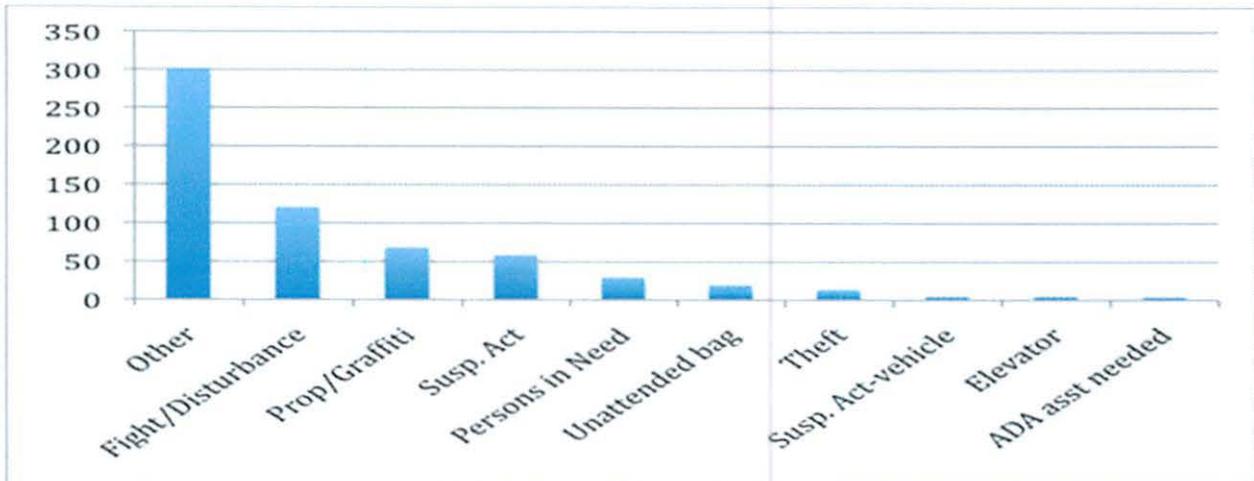
Of the incidents reported, two-thirds are related to a rail line rather than a bus. The reported rail line incidents are broken down in the following table.



Note: these do not reflect incidents reported on a station platform or vicinity.

Type of Incidents Reported:

Of the incidents reported, about half are related to quality of life or codes of conduct issues.



Incidents that are reported in the “Other” category consist of soliciting, fare evasion, apparent homeless persons, and incidents that should have been reported in one of the other categories but the user failed to do so.

The users have embraced the application as a new method of communication to report more incidents than they would have otherwise not reported if they were only able to do so over the phone. The users are able to send photographic information about suspects that would not be possible with a phone report. Users are taking photos of graffiti in progress suspects and those involved in fights and other disturbances while gathering valuable location, date and times of the events. By their reports, it is possible to gain an insight as to what the Metro rider is most concerned about on their ride.

With an increase of intelligence data like suspect photos, and incidents’ location, date and time along the Metro transit system, Metro will be able to produce a more sophisticated analysis of activity in order to deploy a more accurate number and type of

security personnel that is responsive to what the Metro patrons deem important for a safe ride.

The following tactics are being employed to help mitigate and/or reduce the number of Operator assaults.

Bus Operator Training

The theme of Operator safety is interlaced throughout the training classes offered by Operations Central Instruction in order to provide Operators with the skills and knowledge to avoid assaults. One such class is entitled "Start in Customer Service" which is offered during basic training. As a self-paced computer-based training class, it features modules on "Fare Collection" and "Customer Service" to present Operators with dispute resolution strategies relative to fare collection and overall customer service training.

Moreover, in May 2013, Operations Central Instruction developed a refresher training class entitled "Customer Services and Fares Training" to assist Operators in mitigating assaults at the fare box. Available at the Operating Divisions, since its inception 3,882 Operators have attended this training. Staff intends to add this class as part of an annual training requirement.

In September 2013, we reinforced what is taught during training by displaying the applicable techniques as well as Operator rules and procedures to mitigate assaults associated with non-payment of fares on LCD monitors and/or by posting them at the transportation divisions.

Communications Strategy

Metro has developed outreach campaigns to raise community awareness regarding the serious nature and steep monetary penalties imposed if one commits of this type of crime. In July 2013, "It's the Law" bus cards and 2,600 posters were displayed highlighting the fines and potential imprisonment that is associated with assaulting transit operators.

This year's Operations marketing projects include customer education/etiquette program featuring information on some common courtesy guidelines such as: giving up a seat for a disabled and/or senior customer; moving to the back of the bus and exiting through the rear door; respecting your fellow customers.

For eight weeks beginning in September 2013, the campaign "Meet Metro's Best" was disseminated via bus cards and 2,600 posters. This campaign highlighted some of Metro's outstanding Operators in an effort to show transit customers a more personal side to our employees. This campaign will be expanded this spring to include both bus and rail Operators.

Installation of interior decals notifying customers that they are being recorded by security cameras has been completed aboard all Metro buses. Staff is now working on the installation of the same signage aboard rail cars.

On-Bus Video Display

Staff is currently working on a plan to install two on-bus video monitors with video feeds from existing on-bus cameras. One monitor will be mounted directly above the Operator showing the customers as they board the bus and a second monitor near the front of the bus (facing the customers) displaying the seated and/or standing customers. Under the monitor, verbiage will be included informing the customers of the recording. These monitors will serve as stark reminders that customer actions are monitored and recorded.

Staff is awaiting a quote from the current bus supplier and is developing a second alternative for an internal installation program. We will move forward with the best alternative once all information has been compiled, which we anticipate to be completed within one month.

Protective Barriers

Other transit properties have installed partial or full barriers that enclose the operator area. Initial research into this option has netted no empirical data supporting the effectiveness of these barriers. In 2007, Metro conducted a short-term field test, outfitting 20 buses with a full barrier. After several months of field testing, the general consensus from the Operators at that time was that the enclosure caused stuffiness, ambient temperatures increased and Operators felt claustrophobic and confined. Larger Operators' shoulders pushed against the side of the enclosure and getting in and out of the Operator seat was a little more difficult. The barrier decreased the available turning radius for mobility devices, having a negative impact on customer service. Therefore, no further action was taken at the time.

This option is being considered again at the request of some Operators. Next week, staff will begin a two-week informational campaign to advise the Operators of the type of barriers available, the comments from existing agencies that have these systems and to emphasize that these barriers will not stop a determined assailant. Once this information period is completed, staff will launch a survey to gauge Operators' opinions utilizing "agree" and "disagree" statements.

Pre-recorded Fare Announcements

Staff is currently assessing the feasibility of on-bus, pre-recorded fare announcements triggered when the doors open to board customers. Items being assessed include recording capacity and internal and/or external messaging. If achievable, staff will finalize the specifications on how best to state the message and when the message should be announced.

NEXT STEPS

Security and Operations staff has formed a cross-departmental matrix team to research and address issues pertaining to Operator assaults. The purpose will be to identify areas of concern and develop protocols to mitigate these issues. This team will review all the afore mentioned items and recommend a course of action. Staff will continue on course with on-going Operator training and high-visibility media campaigns focusing on current assault legislation.

Metro will continue to use a range of methods and combinations of measures to minimize the potential of Operator assaults. During the research process, we will consider several key factors including effectiveness and cost, feasibility, versatility, liability issues, and Operator and customer perspectives. Operator safety is a priority for Metro. Staff will continue all efforts to attempt to mitigate and/or reduce Operator assaults.