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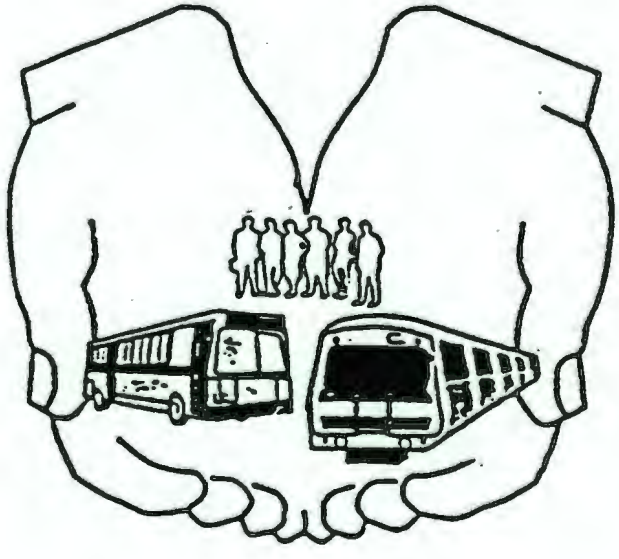
Administration

TRANSIT SECURITY: EXPLORING NEW CONCEPTS IN MANAGING SOCIAL PROBLEMS WORKSHOP

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS



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TRANSIT SECURITY:
EXPLORING NEW CONCEPTS IN MANAGING SOCIAL PROBLEMS

September 16, 17, & 18, 1992

Parc Oakland Hotel, Oakland, California

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1

BACKGROUND 2

MODULE A: CAN THE TRANSIT SYSTEM BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN ADDRESSING INTERGENERATIONAL, ETHNIC, AND CULTURAL CONFLICTS? 3

The Transit System and the Younger User 3
Ethnic and Racial Conflict - Perception vs. Reality 6
Recommendations 6

MODULE B: CAN THE TRANSIT SYSTEM AND THE LARGER COMMUNITY WORK AS PARTNERS IN MAINTAINING SAFE AND DRUG-FREE ENVIRONMENTS? 7

Have We Identified the Problems? 7
Consensus Building 7
Consensus Building in the Community 7
Consensus Building in the Transit Agency 9
Action Plan 9
Recommendations 10

MODULE C: WHAT CAN THE TRANSIT SYSTEM DO TO ALLEVIATE THE PROBLEM OF HOMELESSNESS? 10

Should the Transit System Do Anything about Homelessness? 11
Who are the Transit Homeless? 11
What Can the Transit System Do? 12
The New York Experiment 12
What to Do When Budgets Are Tight 12
Lobby 12
Form Partnerships 13
Go Public 13
Recommendations 14

MODULE D: HOW DO ORDER AND CLEANLINESS CONTRIBUTE TO A SAFE AND CIVIL TRANSIT ENVIRONMENT? 14

Order and Cleanliness Encourage Respect 14
The System's Approach to Order and Cleanliness 15
People 15
Management 15
Drivers/Operators 16
Riders 16

Procedures 17
Equipment and Facilities 17
Environment 17
Other Agencies 17
Community Outreach 18
Recommendations 18

CLOSING SESSION 18

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Federal Transit Administration's Transit Security Committee, comprised of several security chiefs from public transit systems throughout the country, has recently become concerned about social problems that are spilling over onto the transit system. As a response to this concern, the committee recommended this workshop, which was funded by the Federal Transit Administration. Workshop participants explored topics as varied as ethnic and intergenerational conflicts on transit, the need to work with the community to provide a safe and drug-free environment, the impact of homelessness on transit systems, and how order and cleanliness contribute to a safe and civil transit environment. A number of significant cross-cutting themes emerged from the small-group, problem-solving sessions.

A major workshop theme was that there is no such thing as a "transit crime" or a transit "social problem." These problems have their roots in the communities the transit systems serve. Therefore, if transit systems want to be proactive and prevent incidents rather than respond reactively to them, it is necessary to become involved with the communities that the systems serve.

There is a widespread lack of knowledge of the high costs of social problems on the transit system. Transit's top management may not realize the impact of social problems on employee morale, ridership, and the system's budget. Community members do not understand how the entire community relies on the transit system for economic and social well-being, and how social problems contribute to higher fares and reduced service. Transit security professionals have a major educational job to do both within the transit community and in the larger community.

Policymakers should be a major target of these educational efforts. Transit boards, school boards, city and county officials, and community and business leaders need to understand how the community and the transit system can become partners in finding solutions to shared problems, and how the lack of solutions to these problems translates into higher fares and/or reduced transit service.

Research can support transit's efforts to become more proactive in addressing social problems. Data about programs that work can be gathered and disseminated. Research can help determine the barriers that vehicle operators confront in coping with behavioral problems, and can help identify possible approaches for operators and security officials to work together more effectively.

Transit systems should become more effective lobbyists, both in their local communities and at the federal level. Transit systems also need to market themselves more effectively and collect and disseminate data about the safety and convenience of transit systems as compared to the private automobile.

Transit systems need to establish partnerships with school systems, major employers, other public agencies, and community groups to confront shared problems. By training operators to watch for and report illegal activities, the transit system can be a community's "eyes and ears." Transit officials can join with community groups and

institutions to influence policy and can help community members understand how to approach other public agencies for assistance in solving community problems.

Taking this proactive stance requires a commitment from every level of the transit organization. The transit system must develop an internal vision of new ways to work with the community. Much of this vision can be accomplished without new funds, through the reallocation of current resources. Top management must be knowledgeable about innovative possibilities and be committed to making the transit system a community partner.

Transit systems need to refocus their attention on the rights of the user, and every employee needs to send the same message: misbehavior on the system will not be tolerated. Passengers and community institutions also need to be involved in sending the message that the transit system is a valuable community asset that must be respected by all patrons.

BACKGROUND

For the past several years, the Federal Transit Administration, the Transportation Safety Institute, and the John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center have supported the activities of a transit security advisory committee. Committee members include several security chiefs from public transit systems throughout the country who meet periodically to discuss transit security issues and to recommend courses for the transit safety and security training program at the Transportation Safety Institute in Oklahoma City.

In 1990, the committee met and discussed what it considers to be current major social problems having a direct effect on public transit systems in the United States.[1] Committee members agreed that social problems that originate in the community are spilling over onto the transit system and having an adverse effect on both transit systems and their patrons. Fiscal constraints limit the ability to increase the number of transit police and security personnel. Transit management is now looking for creative methods to resolve some of these problems without substantially increasing their budgets.

It was the consensus of the committee that traditional methods of transit policing could be improved. A workshop format was suggested that would bring together social practitioners, community representatives, persons from academia, and transit security administrators to discuss the issues and seek methods for new and innovative approaches to managing the problems.

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[1]Participants were Thomas C. Lambert, Chief of Transit Police, Houston, Texas; Michael O'Connor, Chief, New York City Transit Authority Police, New York; Charles Richardson, Chief of Protective Services, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, California; Eugene Simmons, Chief of Protective Services, Santa Clara County Transportation Agency, California; and William B. Rumford, Jr., Ph.D., Chief of Security, Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District, San Francisco, California.

As a result, a workshop entitled, "Transit Security: Exploring New Concepts In Managing Social Problems," was held at the Parc Oakland Hotel, Oakland, California, September 16-18, 1992.[2]

The workshop was designed to maximize opportunities for interaction. Four workshop modules, each repeated four times, allowed an opportunity for the eighty participants to engage in small-group discussions. Each module was co-facilitated by a transit security administrator and an expert who has done extensive professional work on the kinds of social problems that impact transit systems. The sessions gave the participants—transit professionals, academics, social practitioners, and community representatives—an opportunity to exchange information about strategies that are working and to consider and critique new ideas. The following questions were explored in the workshop modules:

Module A: Can the transit system be more effective in addressing intergenerational, ethnic, and cultural conflicts?

Module B: Can the transit system and the larger community work as partners in maintaining safe and drug-free environments?

Module C: What can the transit system do to alleviate the problem of homelessness?

Module D: How do order and cleanliness contribute to a safe and civil transit environment?

This report, which is based on written notes and audiotapes, provides an overview and summary of the discussions and recommendations from the workshop modules and the concluding session.

MODULE A: CAN THE TRANSIT SYSTEM BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN ADDRESSING INTERGENERATIONAL, ETHNIC, AND CULTURAL CONFLICTS?

Facilitators: Michael O'Connor, Chief, New York City Transit Authority Police, New York

Donald Neuwirth, Conservation Corps Planning Consultant, San Francisco, California

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[2]Sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration, the workshop was managed by Larrine Watson and William Hathaway of the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, Cambridge, Massachusetts; and hosted by William B. Rumford, Jr., Ph.D., Chief of Security, Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District, San Francisco, California. Panel sessions were planned and coordinated by William B. Rumford, Jr., Ph.D., and Frances Cooper, Vice President, Communication Technologies, San Francisco, California. John Balog, Vice President of Transportation Planning and Operations, KETRON Division of the Bionetics Corporation, Malvern, Pennsylvania, provided logistical support.

The Transit System and the Younger User

Teenagers and pre-teenagers are heavy users of transit systems, and young people often do not realize that boisterous behavior, which is acceptable to their peers, may be unacceptable and even frightening to other transit users, especially senior citizens. Young people need to be educated about appropriate transit behavior, and this education should be reinforced by the school system, parents, and other community institutions. Participants in the workshop modules discussed whether and how the transit system can undertake this kind of education.

Participants agreed that it is difficult for transit systems to develop partnerships with the educational system. Especially in urban areas, schools confront such serious problems that misbehavior on buses and trains often seems trivial to educators. Participants also agreed, however, that the effort to establish transit/school partnerships can result in more positive interactions between young people and other transit users and can lead to reduced costs and improved service on transit systems.

School/transit partnerships are most likely to succeed if transit officials educate school system decisionmakers about the inconvenience and possible danger to other passengers of inappropriate behavior by young people on the transit system. School policymakers are also often unaware of the high economic costs of these behaviors, and they do not realize that these costs are borne by the entire community through higher transit fares. Transit officials could seek opportunities to make presentations to school boards, administrative sessions, and teachers' unions.

Workshop participants pointed out that parents are often unaware that boisterous behavior, fare evasion, graffiti, and vandalism are problems on transit systems. Presentations to PTAs and other community organizations can educate parents about the need to teach their children appropriate transit behavior.

Schools generally welcome transit system personnel to explain the rules and operation of the system. Transit employees who participate in these programs should, if possible, be of the same ethnicity and race as the majority of students in the school. In addition to explaining the operation of the system and standards for appropriate behavior, transit officials should focus on the transit system as a community resource. They should also involve other respected members of the community in these presentations.

Although teenagers present most problems on the transit system, workshop participants also spoke about the importance of educating younger children to think of the transit system as a part of the community that expects certain standards of behavior from all patrons. Workshop participants, therefore, recommended that transit systems consider developing age-appropriate programs for elementary, junior high, and high school students.

One approach to working with young people is to develop peer-led programs, where teenagers explain to their peers and to younger children why it is important to maintain behavioral standards on public transit. Senior citizens can also be recruited to educate students about how much senior citizens rely on public transit and how important it is to them to have a peaceful ride. Participants in the workshop said that it is important to

teach teenagers to see old people on the bus as "a lot like their grandmother" instead of "that slow old lady."

Another successful approach described in the workshop is to recruit teenage volunteers to work with the transit system. These teenagers can be trained by the transit system to serve as bus monitors and to help educate others about the importance of behavioral standards. Schools, local merchants, and the transit system can cooperate to develop incentive programs for participation and to reward the teenagers' successful efforts to encourage high behavioral standards on the transit system.

Assigning a transit employee to work with the schools in developing joint programs may be a useful strategy for both the transit system and the school system. For example, students who cut classes often rely on the transit system, so it may be possible to develop partnerships with the schools to help them identify students who should be in school. School funding is based on average daily attendance, so truancy is an important budgetary issue for the schools. The school system will be more willing to work with the transit system to solve mutual problems when school officials begin to see the advantages for both institutions.

Transit systems should include alternative schools—vocational schools and special schools for young mothers, for students who have been convicted of crimes, or for those who have dropped out of more traditional schools—in their community outreach programs. Many students in these schools are heavy transit users.

The transit system and the school system need to cooperate on their joint responsibilities to transport children safely. Some transit systems have experimented with "safe passage buses," or buses set aside for the exclusive use of school children during the time that they are going to and from school.

Many young people, especially in large metropolitan areas, are school dropouts, so the transit system should investigate partnerships with job training programs, YMCAs, and other organizations that provide services to these young people. Some programs provide transit vouchers; the transit system can request that all young people who receive vouchers also receive instruction about appropriate use of the system.

Several transit systems represented in the workshop have established outreach programs for the schools. The most successful of these programs have targeted schools where students have been heavily involved in problems in the transit system. These programs range from presentations in the schools by transit employees who are from the same community, to distributing coloring books explaining why the transit system is a community resource and must be treated with respect.

Participants stressed that occasional, informal presentations in classrooms will not have a significant effect on the behavior of young people on the transit system. Coordinated and on-going efforts with multiple points of contact with decisionmakers, teachers, parents, and students are required to make a substantial difference in the behavior of young people on transit systems.

Ethnic and Racial Conflict - Perception vs. Reality

There was general agreement among workshop participants that the risk of either being annoyed by or actually injured from a racially or ethnically motivated incident on a transit system is sometimes exaggerated by both users and non-users, and may be offered as a "reason" for avoiding transit, especially buses. There was also the opinion that transit officials themselves often contribute to this problem by portraying the attitude that "trains are for commuters" and "buses are for the underclass."

One of the most important strategies for reducing the ethnic and racial conflict that does occur on transit systems is to have a transit work force that reflects the ethnic make-up of the communities that the system serves. Employees who reflect the community will know how to resolve most problems effectively, and they will also demonstrate that the transit system is a part of the community.

Some ethnic groups distrust all government representatives, including the police, so it is important that transit police be approachable. Their attitude and demeanor should reflect that their purpose is to protect passengers, not to guard the system from the riders. Transit employees need training in understanding diverse cultures and training in conflict resolution. Transit systems need to recruit multilingual employees.

Recommendations

In addition to the programs and strategies that can be undertaken by local transit systems, the workshop participants recommended activities that could best be undertaken regionally or nationally to help transit systems address intergenerational, ethnic, and cultural conflicts. Research was a major interest.

Participants recommended collecting and disseminating information about programs that work. This could best be achieved by surveying transit systems for innovative approaches and inviting representatives of these programs to share their experiences with other transit officials. Participants strongly favored small, interactive, problem-solving sessions over presentations, lectures, large group sessions, written materials, or videos.

Since participants agreed that part of the problem is perceptual, they recommended a national marketing campaign focusing on the safety and convenience of public transit. A national campaign would be much less expensive than multiple local efforts, and public service announcements could be tagged with local phone numbers where people could get more information about their local transit options.

Participants had a final recommendation that was only tangentially related to the subject of the workshop, but which they nonetheless felt was important. Participants were not aware of statistics about the number of actual problems that occur on public transit and the relative safety of transit as compared to the private automobile. Specifically, they wanted to know what the likelihood is of being injured in an accident or being a victim of a crime if a commuter relied on public transit as opposed to relying on a private automobile. Participants recommended that if these statistics are not available, they be gathered, and if they are available, they be disseminated.

MODULE B: CAN THE TRANSIT SYSTEM AND THE LARGER COMMUNITY WORK AS PARTNERS IN MAINTAINING SAFE AND DRUG-FREE ENVIRONMENTS?

Facilitators: Thomas C. Lambert, Chief of Transit Police, Metropolitan Transit Authority, Houston, Texas

Michael Parker, Manager, Long Beach Neighborhood Services Bureau, City of Long Beach, California

Have We Identified the Problems?

Workshop participants and the facilitators agreed that transit systems have, in the past, taken a reactive approach to security problems. Operators and security personnel respond when there is an incident. This reactive stance means that transit systems may not have accurate information about the roots of these problems, both on the system and in the larger community. This lack of information may keep the system from responding appropriately.

No more than sixty percent of crime is ever reported, and transit systems have difficulty in convincing passengers to report what they have seen during an incident on the system. Part of the problem is building community trust. Workshop leaders encouraged participants to begin involving themselves in neighborhoods in new ways. Transit employees are often invited to attend PTA meetings or to visit Rotary Clubs, settings wherein there is a tradition of community leadership and participation. However, the communities which really need help and can most help the transit system are poorer, less well-organized, more culturally diverse, and harder to reach than middle-class communities.

Generally, transit employees reach out to the community through presentations that explain the routine problems that occur on the system and how the community can help solve them. The transit system also interacts with the community after transit incidents, when the environment is not conducive to building long-term relationships. Participants suggested an entirely different approach to community relations, an approach the facilitators called "consensus building."

Consensus Building

Consensus Building in the Community

Participants discussed the fact that a single transit system typically operates in a number of different communities, and that it is usually not feasible to develop community-relations efforts in each. They recommended that consensus-building efforts be focused in the community where most of the system's patrons reside.

Consensus building begins by identifying the most trusted and respected members of the community. An initial approach would be to meet with all transit employees who are from the target community or who are members of the dominant ethnic

and cultural groups in that community. These employees could be asked to identify important individuals and institutions in the community and to volunteer for outreach activities.

The process continues by bringing together community leaders to identify the most urgent community problems. Participants in this workshop agreed that, in their experience, community leaders identify the same problems that the transit system experiences—drug abuse, graffiti, personal safety, etc. Community leaders, however, see these problems from a ***community*** perspective, and they want the transit system's help in dealing with the issues as ***community*** problems.

Communities will also bring up problems that are not transit issues, such as sanitation or building code violations. Transit systems must be prepared for these issues. Workshop participants recommended that transit employees develop working relationships with other public agencies in that jurisdiction so that the transit system can serve as a resource to help the community address non-transit-related concerns. One thing that transit systems can do fairly easily and inexpensively is to serve as the community's "eyes and ears," by training operators to watch for illegal activity and trouble spots in the neighborhood.

One participant pointed out that community leaders do not expect the transit system to be able to solve all of the community's problems. What they appreciate is sincerity, a good faith effort, and listening. One of the benefits of close community involvement is educating the community about the budgetary limitations of the transit system.

Participants repeatedly stressed that the consensus-building process will be slow. There is a history of neglect in many communities that has led to feelings of resentment and suspicion toward "the establishment," which the transit system represents. There are also diverse cultures in most of these communities, and people will need time to learn about each other's communication styles and cultural customs.

There are multiple benefits, however, for the transit system. Community partnerships encourage people to begin to think of the transit system as a neighborhood institution, just as they think of the school or the fire station. As community members develop pride in the system, they will help to enforce its rules.

Also, transit systems cannot solve security problems without addressing the fact that there is no such thing as "transit crime." There is only "community crime" that occurs on the transit system. As the transit system becomes a partner with the community, positive results will spill over onto the transit system.

Community consensus building can also help to improve employee morale. Workshop participants reported that they are sometimes frustrated because they see community deterioration that affects the transit system, but feel helpless to do anything. If employees assist with community outreach, learn to be the community's "eyes and ears," and are able to refer community members to other community resources, their morale will improve.

As consensus-building efforts continue and grow, the community's perception of the transit system may shift from negative to positive. When incidents do occur on the system and the agency receives bad press, the neighborhood may be an ally not an enemy.

Consensus Building in the Transit Agency

Community consensus building requires prior consensus building in the agency, and transit systems are not ready to develop community partnerships until the internal consensus-building process occurs. Working effectively with the community requires an organization-wide commitment to transform the organizational culture from reactive to proactive, from a culture that responds to incidents to one that solves problems. The transit system must develop an internal vision of new ways of working with the community.

Although resources are certainly needed for this transition, it can also be initiated through resource reallocation. What is needed most is a change in attitude, but these changes must be throughout the organization, beginning at the top. For example, community consensus building requires changes in training procedures, passenger relations, staffing, and management and staff communication.

Action Plan

Participants suggested that transit professionals may want to seek help from local universities or professional consulting groups to assist them with the complex community organizing and group process skills required for community consensus building. Though transit employees should implement these efforts themselves, it may be useful to identify professionals outside the transit system who can help with the design and facilitation of consensus building efforts.

One inexpensive way to begin community consensus building, and a technique that will not require outside consultation, is to involve community members in painting murals either at bus shelters or in stations. The mural is a community monument; it cuts down on graffiti and builds positive relationships in the neighborhood.

Another easy way to begin working with the community is to talk with the beat cops about what they see happening. One workshop participant tried this strategy and found that what he had believed was a transit security problem was actually a problem with prostitutes and drug dealers using the pay phone next to the station. Moving the phone cut down on security problems in the station.

Transit systems that do not have the resources to develop a full-scale community consensus building strategy can begin on a smaller scale. Workshop participants suggested that transit officials speak with the leaders of neighborhood watch groups and ethnic organizations about the problems they are trying to address and explore ways that the transit system may become involved in their efforts.

A public information kiosk can be used to give out information of community-wide interest and to inform the community about the benefits of public transit. Brochures should encourage people to think of the system as a community resource.

Recommendations

Workshop participants were concerned about the perception which exists in many communities that increased transit also increases the incidence of crime. Many participants questioned the validity of this belief, and suggested that a research project to investigate this perception would be useful.

Participants also felt that many Executive Directors and General Managers of transit systems do not understand how social problems in the larger community influence the long-term economic viability of the transit system, nor do they understand the benefits of becoming proactive with communities in their service area. There was strong agreement in the workshop that executive directors and general managers should be better informed about these issues and should participate in efforts to address them. Participants suggested that workshops similar to the one in Oakland be held for executive directors and general managers.

Participants were very interested in transit/community demonstration projects. There was significant discussion about how these might be funded, and participants felt that a number of systems would be interested in experimenting with these techniques if funding could be provided.

The participants in this workshop module strongly supported research to determine if potential transit users, especially commuters, avoid transit because of unfounded fears about the risks of transit crime. If research showed this to be the case, transit systems could undertake marketing campaigns to counteract these false beliefs.

Like the participants in the workshop module on intergenerational conflict, participants in this workshop supported the idea of gathering and disseminating data on innovative programs that work. These participants also favored small, interactive workshops as an appropriate vehicle for disseminating this information.

MODULE C: WHAT CAN THE TRANSIT SYSTEM DO TO ALLEVIATE THE PROBLEM OF HOMELESSNESS?

Facilitators: Charles O. Lacy, Chief of Protective Services/Investigations, AC Transit, Oakland, California

Rita Schwartz, Supervisor of Government and Community Affairs, Port Authority of New York & New Jersey

Should the Transit System Do Anything about Homelessness?

Some participants argued that transit should not be involved with homelessness. They took the position that transit systems are not in the business of providing food, shelter, or counseling. Further, they argued that transit systems—whose budgets are already stretched beyond their limits—must find ways to comply with the requirements of the Clean Air Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act before they consider allocating resources to social problems such as homelessness.

However, the majority of workshop participants favored transit involvement with the homeless and countered these arguments by saying that homeless people living in transit facilities affect ridership, employee morale, relationships with vendors, and the communities that rely on the transit system. Homeless people in transit facilities damage the infrastructure, impose on the traveling public, make cleaning difficult, and are a danger to themselves and others. Social service budgets are not adequate to address the problem, so transit officials have no choice but to become involved.

Although the homeless impact transit systems in multiple ways—living along the right-of-way, panhandling outside turnstiles, sleeping on the system—this workshop focused almost exclusively on the problem of homeless people who live in transit facilities. Workshop participants from the major metropolitan areas urged participants from smaller systems to address the problem early; before, as a participant said, "You have to do what we have had to do in New York—take back your facility, and it costs us $600,000 a year."

Who are the Transit Homeless?

The homeless range from middle class families where the wage-earners have lost their employment to seriously ill people with multiple medical and mental health problems. People who live in transit facilities usually fall into the latter category.

In many areas of the country, there are not enough shelter beds for the homeless, and shelters often provide nothing more than "a hot (meal) and a cot." All shelters have rules, and people who live in transit facilities often do so because they are unwilling or unable to abide by the rules of a shelter. Rules generally include no drugs, no alcohol, no weapons, no disruptive behavior, check-in and check-out times, and sometimes attendance at a religious service. People who are seriously mentally ill or chemically dependent are often not able to abide by these rules, and, since they are not allowed in shelters, take refuge in transit facilities. In other cases, homeless people gravitate to transit facilities because there are simply no other alternatives.

Some participants argued that homeless people like transit facilities because they are safer than shelters. Moreover, transit facilities are open; homeless people can come and go at will. Transit facilities also provide good opportunities for panhandling and the anonymity of crowds.

What Can the Transit System Do?

The New York Experiment

New York sponsors a program called Operation Alternative which, according to a workshop leader, has had the involvement of "everyone from the executive director to the washroom attendant." It includes a two-day training program for security personnel. It also includes drop-in centers (near, but not in, the transit facility), where the homeless are provided assistance and referrals to other agencies, reserved beds in local shelters, and a system of outreach and cooperation with the social service system.

When homeless people violate transit rules, which are carefully defined and strictly enforced, they are given an alternative of going to an appropriate social service agency (de-tox, mental health), going to a shelter, or immediately leaving the facility. Although there are recurring problems and difficult cases, the program is an overall success. The environment in the facility has dramatically improved; staff and ridership are regaining trust in the system. Robberies and larcenies are also down by over fifty percent.

Undertaking a project similar to the New York experiment is not appropriate for many transit systems. The political and social service environment in New York, which includes a "right to shelter law," provides an array of social service support which is not available in many other metropolitan areas. In many areas, there are few or no services to support the needs of the homeless. The comprehensive New York program is also expensive. However, there may be elements of it that could be successfully duplicated by other transit agencies.

What to Do When Budgets Are Tight

There was a great deal of concern in this workshop about the combined forces of declining budgets and increasing regulatory demands which are creating fiscal hardship for transit systems. Participants concentrated on practical, low-cost approaches to the problem of homelessness.

Lobby

One strategy that received strong workshop support was to lobby for additional resources. A number of approaches were suggested, and some overall guidelines for successful lobbying were recommended:

- Visual presentations are far more effective than verbal ones. Slide shows, videos, and photographs of the situation at your system and in your community make powerful demonstrations of the need for attention to the problem.

- In addition to presenting the problem, present viable solutions. Learn about programs that have worked in other communities. The U.S. Department of Transportation is funding three demonstration projects:

one in Baltimore, one in New York, and one in San Francisco. Contact DOT for information on the Interagency Council on Homelessness.

- Focus on the economic impact of homelessness. Find out about how much it is costing your system and your community. Workshop participants suggested that cost/benefit analysis would be helpful for transit systems that are trying to decide whether it is appropriate for them to allocate transit resources to address the problem of homelessness.

- Join others in your community to lobby for social service spending. Be sure someone from your agency is present when social service budgets are considered. The transit agency can be a powerful voice at the table because transit represents the economic viability of the entire community.

- Educate your board, management, and union about the costs of homelessness. Treat this as a full-time, all-day, all-week, every year problem.

Workshop participants suggested a number of places where lobbying might be successful. An organized effort to lobby Congress through the American Public Transit Association and other professional organizations and associations was recommended. Several participants recommended seeking the release of some flexible funds from highway monies to help address the problem of homelessness.

Form Partnerships

- Take the lead in helping the community understand that homelessness is everyone's responsibility. Meet with other organizations in your community that are involved with, or impacted by, homelessness. Among these are Volunteers of America, Traveller's Aid, Red Cross, Chamber of Commerce, merchants, and business and professional organizations. Find out what they are doing already, where the gaps are, and form a coalition to address the problem collectively.

- Meet with other public agencies in your community to find out what they are doing—the police, city and county welfare agencies, health and mental health departments. Find out where you can support each other's efforts.

Go Public

- Publicize the need to stop street giving. Ask members of your community to "give a hand, not a handout."

- Set up kiosks where people can donate to social service agencies, not to individuals. Be sure to get positive media coverage for your efforts to involve the community in addressing the homelessness problem.

- Go to community groups and speak about the costs to the entire community of not addressing homelessness. Make clear the effects that success would have on the entire community. Explain how non-enforcement of rules increases problems. Explain how the problem will grow if it is not addressed.

Recommendations

Workshop participants recommended training for transit officials in effectively presenting the problem of homelessness to other community institutions. There was also a great deal of interest in training for transit managers in how to build community partnerships to address homelessness.

There were initial discussions in this workshop module about the leadership role transit systems might take in bringing other federal agencies' attention to the problem of homelessness. Transit systems should encourage multi-agency federal partnerships to initiate demonstration projects.

MODULE D: HOW DO ORDER AND CLEANLINESS CONTRIBUTE TO A SAFE AND CIVIL TRANSIT ENVIRONMENT?

Facilitators: John Sullivan, Deputy Sheriff, Los Angeles, California County Sheriff's Department, Transit Services Bureau; Editor, *Transit Policing*

William T. Hathaway, Research and Special Programs Administration, John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, Cambridge, Massachusetts (1st Session)

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Order and Cleanliness Encourage Respect

Broken windows in neighborhood buildings are a sign that nobody cares. If there are indications that nobody cares, criminals feel free to violate the neighborhood. Thus, disorder is a precursor to serious crime. Workshop participants agreed that this phenomenon is also true in transit facilities. If they are dirty, noisy, run-down, and full of graffiti, and if the system tolerates minor rule infractions, there is a perception that nobody cares, and serious crime is more likely to occur.

Establishing order and cleanliness requires enforcement of and community education about "quality of life" rules, including prohibitions against smoking, drinking, and eating. It also

requires community support for enforcing such infractions as disorderly conduct, loitering, graffiti, and fare evasion.

The System's Approach to Order and Cleanliness

The transit environment is really a system comprised of

- people,
- procedures,
- equipment and facilities, and
- environment.

In each element of the system, actions can be taken that will contribute to order and cleanliness and to the perception that people, both employees and riders, really care about the system.

People

Police and security personnel cannot keep order on a system without support from management, operators, other transit employees, and riders. Everyone must send the same message: misbehavior will not be tolerated.

Management

Participants suggested a number of actions that management can take to support a clean and orderly environment. One of the most important is for managers to know what is happening on the system. One general manager said that she asks each of her managers to ride the system at least once a week. She recommended this strategy as one of the most effective ways to get management's attention for the importance of cleanliness and order.

Other participants recommended surveying drivers to get their ideas about how to discourage rule infractions and having management and the union work together to implement suggestions. Management often does not understand how serious the issues of cleanliness and disorder are for employee morale.

Participants said that management sometimes resists hearing about and admitting problems because of fear that the reputation of the system will be damaged. Rather than publicly focusing on specific problems, however, management can adopt comprehensive strategies that together send the message that "passengers have rights." Regular meetings can be held with all major departments in the system (planning, marketing, security, operations, purchasing, etc.) to discuss strategies for sending a coordinated

message both to the public and to employees which supports "passenger rights."

Drivers/Operators

System operators are in a difficult position. Asking them to handle minor infractions is, as one participant said, "like asking the airline pilot to serve the food." Others said, however, that an attitude of, "All I do is drive this bus," actually encourages disorder, because passengers quickly sense that the driver will not take action to stop rule violations or to support passengers who object to rule-breaking. Participants discussed the need for effective training in "dealing with difficult people," especially training which is conducted by other operators (peer-to-peer).

Operators also need quick and reliable backup when incidents occur on their vehicles, and they need a sense that management cares about preventing problems rather than focusing on controlling problems after they occur. One participant summed it up: "Security is not just giving citations; it is problem solving. It has to be comprehensive; a fragmented approach doesn't work."

Riders

A workshop leader reminded participants that the system exists for the users. He said: "It is important to change the terms of the discussion from law enforcement to the moral rights of the system's users and employees. There is a broad consensus about minimum standards of civility. This consensus cuts across races and cultures."

Asking riders what they find annoying or disturbing is a useful strategy both for improving the system and for gaining the support of the riders. Workshop participants suggested a variety of feedback systems: complaint cards in stations, handouts distributed on the trains and buses, and security officers periodically setting up tables in stations where riders can engage them in conversations.

There was also interest in more formal research—focus groups and surveys—to determine the practices and behaviors that are most troublesome to riders. There was agreement that transit systems too often assume that they know what riders are thinking, without confirming that these assumptions are correct.

Users also need to understand why enforcing minor rule violations is necessary for protecting the system from more serious problems. Posting the rules along with posters that explain the "broken windows" metaphor could be effective ways to gain riders' support for vigorous rule enforcement.

Procedures

Workshop participants agreed that developing procedures that guarantee quick graffiti removal is one of the most important strategies for increasing the perception of order in the transit system. Prompt graffiti removal improves the environment for riders and also discourages "taggers," who are regular graffiti offenders.

Decentralizing routine station maintenance is another strategy recommended by workshop participants. This gives the station employees a sense of ownership and improves their morale.

Equipment and Facilities

Participants were very practical about the current economic environment. They were more interested in discussing low-cost solutions that could be implemented in existing systems rather than recommending expensive design modifications or technological innovations for equipment and facilities.

Although participants agreed that technology will not solve the problems of disorder, they were enthusiastic about experimenting with hand-held computers to track previous violations when rule-breakers are apprehended. They recommended a demonstration project to gather data on the effectiveness of this approach.

Environment

A significant amount of workshop time was spent in discussing ways that the transit system could influence, educate, and build support in the larger community. The transit system is a community asset, and the health of the transit system affects the health of the entire community. Workshop participants talked extensively about how to send that message to key elements of the community, ranging from other public agencies to community organizations.

Other Agencies

It is essential to involve the court system in the importance of prosecuting persistent rule-breakers. Strategies need to be found, for example, for educating judges about how much graffiti costs taxpayers. In one community, transit officials were able to get a misdemeanor ordinance passed that holds parents directly responsible for any damage their children do to transit facilities.

One workshop participant said that in his city, transit officials attended the monthly meetings of the Court Clerks' Association and asked for their support for a proposal to the presiding judge for more vigorous enforcement of transit rules. Other workshop participants spoke about educating prosecutors and juvenile probation intake personnel about the cost to taxpayers of transit rule violations.

It is also important to work with law enforcement agencies to be sure that laws are clarified so that terms like "obstructing" have clear definitions. Security people

need to be able to cite for specific violations. Arresting and booking procedures for disorder infractions can also be streamlined.

Community Outreach

Workshop participants identified several messages that need to be carried to the larger community. The most important of these are:

- Transit is a community resource; the community is only as healthy as its transit system.
- Passengers have a right to be indignant when they are disturbed by disorderly behavior, fare evasion, graffiti, and other seemingly minor rule infractions.
- These rule infractions are not minor. They contribute to higher fares and reduced service.

One site where this education could take place is the workplace. Many employers would cooperate, participants believed, because employers are increasingly under legislative mandate to encourage their employees to take public transit to mitigate air quality problems.

Workshop participants also suggested that transit systems should reach community policymakers more effectively. Transit board members and city and county political leaders need to be educated about the cost to the entire community of minor rule violations on the transit system.

Recommendations

Participants suggested involving operators more effectively in efforts to address rule infractions. Research with operators—focus groups and surveys—were recommended to determine how operators view rule infractions and their suggestions for dealing with them.

Participants expressed interest in training for transit officials in how to put cleanliness and civility on the agenda both for their systems and for their communities. Participants were interested in learning how to build support among other agencies, the larger community, major employers, and the media for civility in the transit system. They were also interested in training transit employees how to emphasize problem-solving as well as how to issue citations.

CLOSING SESSION

The strongest recommendation from participants in the final session was that a similar workshop be conducted for general managers and executive directors. Many participants said that the ideas presented in the workshop modules cannot be fully implemented

without the support of top managers, who are in general not aware of many of the possible innovations in dealing with social problems on transit systems.

Participants, especially those from smaller transit systems, recommended that sessions be held to discuss how transit systems can develop partnerships with their local law enforcement agencies. There was also interest in learning how the concepts of community policing can be applied to the transit system. There was interest in "preventive security," efforts to work with the community to stop problems before they start.

There was interest in the final session in lobbying for laws mandating radios on buses. Participants agreed that communication between operators and transit security is a key issue in resolving many of the problems discussed in the workshops.

There was also a suggestion in the concluding session that training programs need to be modified to include many of the issues that were raised in the workshops. Agency training should also include strategies for informing the community about careers and employment opportunities in the transit system.

Participants agreed that transit systems have not adequately explored the mechanisms through which they can support the larger community and vice versa. There was interest in expanding the dialogue that began at this workshop to include more representation from youth groups, neighborhood associations, senior citizens groups, and other community organizations.