



Exploring the Effectiveness of Transit Security Awareness Campaigns in the San Francisco Bay Area

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Due to its openness and accessibility, public transit is considerably more vulnerable than airports, seaports, and other transportation modes. In addition to relatively open access points, transit systems often have large numbers of passengers during commute hours, accessible schedules and timetables, and are critical pieces of infrastructure for urban areas. Public involvement in alerting officials to suspicious and potentially harmful activity is critical to the overall security of a transit system. As part of an effort to get passengers and the public involved, many transit agencies have created security awareness campaigns. The objective of this research project was to determine how transit agencies seek to make security awareness campaigns effective and to explore ways in which to measure the effectiveness of such campaigns.

Study Method

Data from case studies of five major transit agencies in the San Francisco, California Bay Area region was examined. The case study data are comprised of descriptions of the types of security awareness campaigns the agencies have implemented, the goals of the campaigns, and how they seek to make their campaigns effective, as well as whether and how these agencies measure and determine the effectiveness of their campaigns.

Findings

A positive finding of this research is the consistency with which Bay Area transit organizations address the need for passenger awareness as part of their overall security program. However, none of the five agencies analyzed for this study measured the effectiveness of their campaigns. Whereas they all have a similar goal—to increase passenger awareness about security issues—little evidence exists confirming to what extent they are achieving this goal. It is challenging to find good indicators of whether a campaign is effective and further exploration and testing of indicators is required. The report concludes with suggestions for using outcome measurements to provide a reasonable indication of a campaign's effectiveness by capturing the public's response to a campaign.

Policy Recommendations

Transit agencies should work towards making the most of their campaign by using messaging that is simple yet actionable and by branding the campaign so that it is consistent and easily recognizable by passengers. The subject matter demands it. Furthermore, transit agencies should use multiple forms of media to reach a broader audience and use successful strategies

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of other agencies to save time and energy. These recommendations are derived from industry best practices, so implementing actual measurements to prove whether the campaigns are truly effective is necessary.

Using tracking mechanisms already in place at the agencies may be the most convenient and cost-effective solution for tracking expected effects of the campaigns. Most agency security departments, customer service centers, or dispatch centers already categorize comments and concerns received by the public for tracking purposes. By analyzing the data for the period before a campaign starts and then for the first few weeks of a new campaign some useful outcome data could be developed. In order to capture the public's response to the campaign and to understand whether they are achieving their campaign goals of increasing awareness, providing tools for action, and encouraging passenger involvement, agencies should implement a combination of output and outcome measurements. At a minimum, agencies should track the level of marketing activities and strive to capture at least one set of meaningful data that captures passenger behavior and comprehension by using internal tracking mechanisms or surveys.



About the Principal Investigators

Nina Rohlich is the project manager for the San Francisco Bay Area Freeway Service Patrol at the Metropolitan Transportation Commission Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways. Dr. Peter Haas is Director of MTI's Education program and Dr. Frances Edwards is Deputy Director of MTI's National Transportation Security Center of Excellence and Director of the Master of Public Administration program and Professor of Political Science at San Jose State University.

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For more details about the study, download the full report at transweb.sjsu.edu/project/2914.html