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Attacks on Bus Operators and Passengers



Special Report

Prepared by the ST, PT and OTRB ISACs

May 4, 2015



Purpose

In light of recent violent incidents targeting transit operators in numerous areas around the globe, the Surface Transportation (ST), Public Transportation (PT), and Over the Road Bus (OTRB) ISACs are providing this special report for your general security awareness.

The application of any standards or guidance discussed herein is strictly voluntary. The practices implemented by rail, transit, and OTRB systems may be either more or less restrictive than any recommended practices or guidance given in this document. In some cases, federal and/or state regulations govern portions of public transit systems' operations. In those cases, government regulations should take precedence over the information or guidance provided herein. Organizations should consult their own Agency's/Organization's policies and guidance before taking any actions based on the information presented in these documents.

This document supplements guidance and analysis already provided in daily reports produced by the ST, PT, & OTRB ISACs. Of note, the last page of this report lists references for additional information.

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Introduction

The security of transit system and interstate bus operators has become an increasing concern for many metropolitan areas. Some attribute the perceived rise in attacks against operators as an artifact of increased reporting, but when that element of information is factored into the analysis, there still appears to be a notable surge in violent behavior targeting transit workers; particularly against bus drivers, who may remain the most vulnerable.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, there is an increased risk of workplace violence for any workers who have direct contact with the public, have mobile workplaces or deliver services, work in community settings, deliver passengers, handle money, and work in small numbers; characteristics that all exist within the transit environment.

Incidents

The past five years witnessed a dramatic increase in the level and intensity of attacks on transit and bus operators. Drivers have been punched, slapped, stabbed, shot, and have had bodily fluids thrown upon them. Moreover, they must confront these attacks trying to safely operate their vehicles through traffic and protect the lives of passengers, pedestrians, and other vehicle operators. Occasionally, other patrons have been drawn into the incidents as they attempted to defend the operators, responding law enforcement, or security personnel.

A number of recent incidents illustrate the threat:

April 17, 2015 (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma): Authorities state that a man who was reportedly causing a disturbance got off a city bus and pulled out a knife. The bus driver reportedly tried to close the doors, but the assailant was able to gain entry, punching the driver while holding the knife, resulting in two cuts to the driver's neck.

April 14, 2015 (Richmond, Virginia): Around 9:35 pm, a man on a stopped bus allegedly cut a GRTC bus driver with a knife following an argument. The driver was taken to a local hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. Richmond police found and arrested Maurice N. Mason, 25, a "few blocks away" and charged him with aggravated assault in connection with the incident.

March 27, 2015 (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania): A driver was hospitalized after being attacked by two men in North Philadelphia. Police reported that two men attacked the driver around 12:30 am Friday morning at Broad Street and Lehigh Avenue in the Glenwood section of North Philadelphia. The motive for the attack was not publicly released.



March 23, 2015 (Richmond, Virginia): Around 4:30 am a fight broke out onboard a Chinatown bus traveling from New York to North Carolina, with a scheduled stop in Richmond. When the driver did not stop in Richmond a fight broke out. According to one witness the driver was dragged out of his chair while the bus was still moving causing the bus to swerve in and out of its lane “for a half mile or so.” A rider onboard reportedly texted his mother, asking her to call 911, initiating a response from law enforcement, who used the GPS signal from his phone to locate the bus.

March 21, 2015 (Honolulu, Hawaii): A violent dispute began on the street near a bus stop. A group of individuals ran onto the bus and asked the driver to drive away to escape another group of individuals, reportedly armed with golf clubs and sticks, chasing them. The driver denied entry to the second group who began attacking the exterior of the bus; smashing “a half dozen” windows and shattering the windshield. The driver contacted the authorities and the bus operator drove a short distance down Kamehameha Highway to meet police.

March 21, 2015 (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania): According to police, the suspect, identified as 40-year-old John McMillan, pulled a knife and threatened a bus driver after he was asked to clear the aisle for oncoming passengers. McMillan was later charged with aggravated assault, simple assault, terroristic threats, and related offenses.

March 17, 2015 (Chelsea, New York): An unknown woman approached an MTA bus as it pulled away from the curb. When the driver stopped and opened the door, the woman screamed at him and then threw hot coffee at him, scalding his left eye, arm, groin, and leg. The motive behind the attack remains unknown.

March 5, 2015 (Morrow County, Ohio): A bus bound for Columbus from Cleveland pulled over on Interstate 71 in Morrow County after the driver became concerned about a female passenger's behavior and radioed for help. When a Trooper arrived, the unruly female passenger assaulted the trooper. Passengers were forced to respond to rescue the trooper and help regain control of the situation. Antoinette Taylor, 26, of Warrensville Heights, was later charged with felony charges in connection with the incident.

March 5, 2015 (The Bronx, New York): West Akpan, 33, allegedly stabbed a bus driver in the stomach in what a union official described as a sudden and unprovoked attack in the Bronx. The bus driver was rushed to North Central Bronx Hospital where he was treated for three stab wounds. His injuries were not life threatening, the union official said.

January 23, 2014 (Tonopah, Arizona): Dozens were injured when a crazed man attacked the driver of a Greyhound bus, causing it to smash into a median in the middle of the Arizona desert. Police say Maquel Donyel Morris, 25, was 'very high' when he assaulted the driver before 2 am near Tonopah and nearly caused the bus to swerve into oncoming traffic on Interstate 10 as he



screamed, 'I'm gonna flip this bus!' Passengers commended the efforts of the driver, who at no point in the ordeal took his hands off the steering wheel.

November 30, 2014 (Cleveland, Ohio): Two passengers boarded a bus and paid their fare shortly after midnight, another teen walked up to the bus swinging a sock apparently filled with rocks, hitting the driver, a 51-year-old woman three times before fleeing. The driver was taken to the hospital, where she was treated and released. Transit Police later charge four juveniles, two 17-year-olds and two 14-year-olds, with aggravated assault in relation to the incident.

February 27, 2014 (Olympia, Washington): According to local police, an extremely angry man on one of the Intercity Transit buses was threatening other passengers as the bus was traveling on the west side of Olympia. When the bus driver approached the threatening passenger and instructed him to either quiet himself or leaves the bus, the abusive passenger began punching the bus driver. The rider eventually left the bus and was found several hours later at a transit center. He was charged with third-degree assault.

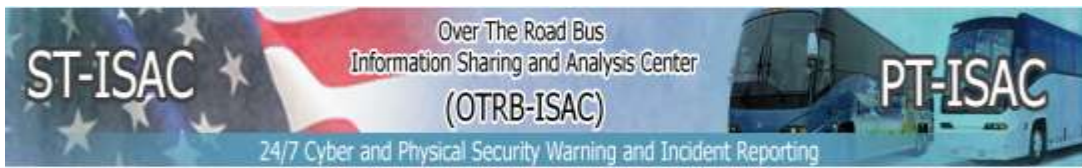
Impact

The impacts on the assaulted individuals are real, and include mental and emotional trauma, broken bones and deep puncture wounds. For the transit systems, the impact on the budget and the moral of operators is serious. The number of lost work hours is significant and absenteeism often becomes a problem in areas afflicted with persistent incidents. Ridership can also suffer when patrons rightly or wrongly develop the perception that certain modes of transportation are unsafe, resulting in financial loss for the system.

Mitigation

Although dozens of states have enacted legislation enhancing assault penalties when the victim is a bus operator and some transit systems have pursued additional countermeasures, including: awareness campaigns, operator training, process improvements, and physical and technological solutions, the number of violent incidents targeting buses and their operators in some areas of the country reveal the potential need for additional measures to protect both operators and passengers who rely on safe and reliable public transportation each day.

Nevertheless, enhanced security does not come without a cost to individuals, companies, and governments. The potential threats confronting the United States and its critical infrastructure are potentially infinite, encompassing a seemingly endless list of both natural and man-caused events, but the resources available to protect those systems are finite. The most effective strategies assess the overall risk to a system based on evaluations of threat, vulnerability, and consequence and then allocate resources to effect the greatest reduction in risk possible. This “risk-based” methodology assists managers with prioritizing threats and allocating their finite resources to most effectively and efficiently mitigate the actual risk posed to their system.



Many countermeasures, particularly those that improve overall communication, coordination, awareness, response, or physical security can harden the system to a wide-range of both man-caused and/or natural threats. This “all-hazard” approach to managing risk can provide significant return on investment, improving the system as a whole. Other, more targeted solutions can also provide a tangible benefit with relatively minimal cost and should be considered.

To mitigate the potential threat posed to bus operators and passengers, several security countermeasures have already been implemented successfully. These measures include legislative efforts, awareness campaigns, increased patrolling by law enforcement and/or security, operator training, process improvements, and physical and technological solutions. Most common solutions involve enhancing closed circuit television (CCTV) monitoring on and around buses, installing physical barriers to help protect drivers, and developing smartphone applications and fitting vehicles with silent switches or devices that allow passengers and operators to quietly report suspicious or dangerous behavior without alerting the perpetrator(s).

Enhancing the penalties for violence against bus drivers could be an effective deterrent and numerous localities and states have enacted stiffer penalties for violent incidents targeting transit operators and passengers. However, increased legal consequences likely will not influence cases involving assailants who are mentally disturbed or under the influence of alcohol or drugs. They also will not have the intended effect, if the public is unaware of these strengthened penalties. The passage of more stringent measures should be accompanied by increased public awareness campaigns, using signs, radio and television advertisements, and/or direct community outreach to build awareness to the new laws.

Many transit entities indicate that passenger violence against operators is often triggered over fare disputes. In one major U.S. metropolitan city attacks on transit employees are up about 20 percent this year, according to the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU). "Bus drivers are really curbside tax collectors, and in economic times like this, the problems that bus drivers face with fare collection are going up," said Lawrence Hanley, international president of the ATU. "They represent the government, and they're not armed. We're seeing increased assaults." In response, some transit systems have developed outreach programs that humanize operators and creative programs for passenger payment and transit access that reduce the potential for disputes. Payments systems include automated fare announcement and payment systems.

One of the most effective methods to ensure that transit operators are properly protected against physical assaults is to install a physical barrier between them and the passengers. Most other forms of public transportation and most taxis provide this protection assurance for their drivers. Indeed, intercity and commuter train operators and commercial pilots who work in enclosed cabs and secure cockpits, yet public transit drivers in many areas remain vulnerable. This may not be a necessary mitigation measure in all locations, but in those areas where the risk of assault is



significant, these polycarbonate barriers may present the most effective means of protection for the operators. Driver shields typically cost from \$1,500 to \$2,000 per barrier. Still, they will not necessarily protect other riders from unruly or violent passengers.

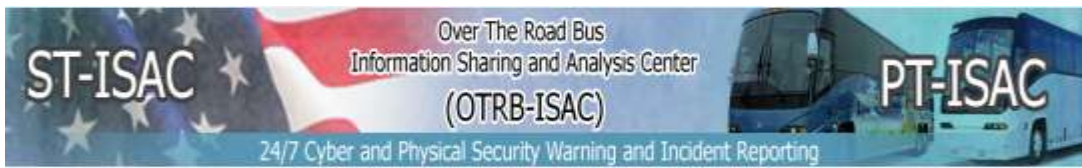
Yet another solution that can provide enormous benefit is the installation of CCTV surveillance systems. These systems help reduce the risk associated with a number of threats, including other forms of criminal activity and some types of terrorism, they also assist with the response to incidents and improve the likelihood of the apprehension and conviction of suspected perpetrators. Newer systems often incorporate live feeds that can be observed from a central station and the buses themselves often have two monitors, one showing riders boarding the vehicle and another showing the seating area. Smart software solutions can also be applied to immediately identify certain activity and alert law enforcement. The intent is for passengers to see what is being recorded, which is believed to deter illegal behavior. Some areas report a significant drop in all forms of criminal activity on buses equipped with these modern CCTV solutions.

In certain “hot spots” of criminal and violent activity, expanding both the visible and hidden presence of law enforcement and security aboard buses and trains also has a proven positive effect on the safety and security of passengers and operators alike. Performing random patrols throughout the system can maximize the benefits drawn from limited resources.

In most areas, emergency training is regularly provided to transit employees. While the most common situation a driver is trained to respond to is a passenger experiencing a medical emergency, it also often includes guidance on the response to accidents, terror attacks and unruly passengers. The training may also include guidance on reporting. If operators need to contact the bus’ central control center, drivers know what information to provide, including: who is involved, the description of the suspect(s), injuries and vehicles, and the direction a suspect may have fled and in what method they may have used to flee. Drivers are also trained to perpetually monitor what’s happening inside and outside of the bus; employing the numerous mirrors and/or interior and exterior cameras. Some drivers are also trained in conflict de-escalation techniques, as well as handling people who are seeking refuge on the bus from any outside harm or physical abuse. Those passengers can often board the bus for free, while the driver reports the incident to central control.

Conclusion

Serious crime remains relatively rare within transit systems overall. Nevertheless, occurrences of violent crime are both increasing in number and escalating in nature. News of a serious incident of violence targeting a transit operator or passenger can disproportionately diminish the public’s perception of security within a system and lead to worker absence, decreased productivity, and increased levels of stress for the victim and their co-workers. Though the majority of public



transit agencies report experiencing few “major assaults” and many of those who do are already implementing changes, for many major metropolitan transit agencies, assaults are increasing. Minor incidents can also indicate the potential for more serious violence or crime. Therefore, the topic of bus operator assaults remains at the forefront of transit safety discussions.

The resources available to address security will remain finite and no single security measure can prevent all acts of violence. Each transit organization faces different challenges and is governed by differing institutional, legal, and budgetary constraints. Nevertheless, a number of bus operator protection measures have been employed by various transit agencies. Although some of the solutions may be more appropriate for preventing certain types of attacks and others may only be necessary in targeted high-risk areas, by employing a thoughtful layered risk-based strategy, the benefits can be maximized. These improvements will often harden the system to a broader range of threats, including other forms of violent crime and terrorism.



Additional Resources:

Practices to Protect Bus Operators from Passenger Assault; 6/2011

<http://www.tcrponline.org/PDFDocuments/tsyn93.pdf>

Bus Operator Safety: Critical Issues Examination and Model Practices; 1/2014

<http://www.nctr.usf.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/77953-02.pdf>

Police searching for man who allegedly attacked Oklahoma City bus driver; 4/20/2015

<http://kfor.com/2015/04/20/police-searching-for-man-who-allegedly-attacked-oklahoma-city-bus-driver/>

Police: GRTC bus driver cut with knife; suspect arrested; 4/15/2015

http://www.richmond.com/news/local/city-of-richmond/article_758963e8-ad0d-5710-aaf5-e0d00ef72fe4.html

Brawl breaks out when Chinatown bus driver doesn't make Richmond stop; 3/23/2015

<http://wtvr.com/2015/03/23/passengers-attack-bus-driver-while-driving-on-i-95-1/>

NewsChannel 3 Investigation: HRT bus driver beatdown; 4/8/2015

<http://wtkr.com/2015/04/07/bus-driver-beat-down/>

Cleveland police arrest 4 in bus driver attack; 12/3/2015

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/cleveland-police-arrest-4-in-bus-driver-attack/>

Johannesburg bus driver shot on Ontdekkers Road; 4/1/2015

<http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/2015/04/01/johannesburg-bus-driver-shot-on-ontdekkers-road>

Sinn Fein councillor 'assaulted trying to stop racist attack' on Belfast bus; 4/1/2015

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/sinn-fein-councillor-assaulted-trying-to-stop-racist-attack-on-belfast-bus-31109684.html>

Police: Man Pulls Knife On SEPTA Bus Driver; 3/30/2015

<http://www.myfoxphilly.com/story/28655772/police-man-pulls-knife-on-septa-driver>

SEPTA bus driver assaulted by passenger with knife; 3/30/2015

<http://6abc.com/news/septa-bus-driver-assaulted-by-passenger-with-knife/588722/>

SEPTA bus driver punched in the face; 3/27/2015

<http://6abc.com/news/septa-bus-driver-punched-in-the-face/576495/>

Increase in bus attacks leaves drivers fearful, leaving their jobs; 3/30/2015

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/leader/south-east/increase-in-bus-attacks-leaves-drivers-fearful-leaving-their-jobs/story-fngnvmhm-1227281221740>



Metro to Raise Security on Buses; 3/26/2015

<http://egpnews.com/2015/03/metro-to-raise-security-on-buses/>

MTA Bus Driver Scalded by Hot Coffee: No Idea What Prompted Attack; 3/25/2015

<http://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/MTA-Bus-Driver-Burned-Hot-Coffee-Rider-Speaks-Exclusive-Interview-297474301.html>

Driver hailed as hero after city bus attack; KITV News; 3/23/2015

<http://www.kitv.com/news/driver-hailed-as-hero-after-city-bus-attack/31977428>

Instructor explains how bus drivers train for emergencies; 3/23/2015

<http://khon2.com/2015/03/23/instructor-explains-how-bus-drivers-train-for-emergencies/>

Greyhound bus passengers assist state trooper under attack; 3/10/2015

<http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2015/03/09/Greyhound-bus-passengers-assist-state-trooper-under-attack.html>

Ohio Highway Patrol trooper attacked on Greyhound bus; Warrensville Heights woman arrested; 3/9/2015

http://www.cleveland.com/nation/index.ssf/2015/03/ohio_highway_patrol_trooper_at.html

Deputy: Man attacks bus because daughter wearing makeup; 3/2/2015

<http://www.tennessean.com/story/news/local/sumner/2015/03/02/schools-spokesman-westmoreland-man-beats-bus-bat/24258399/>

Bee-Line bus driver stabbed by passenger in the Bronx after argument over stop; 3/5/2015

<http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nyc-crime/bee-line-bus-driver-attacked-passenger-bronx-article-1.2138880>

Palestinian man stabs Tel Aviv bus driver, passengers, police say; 1/21/2015

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/01/21/middleeast/israel-attack/>

Melbourne bus driver attacked by two women – video; 12/11/2014

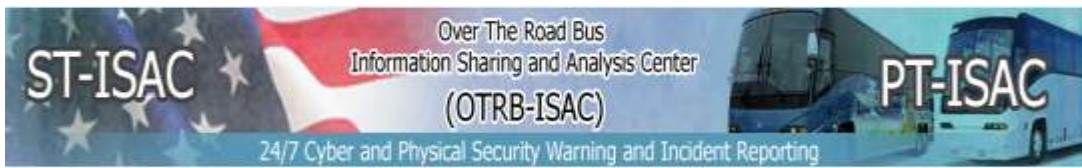
<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/video/2014/dec/12/melbourne-bus-driver-attacked-by-two-women-video>

Graphic: Four teens arrested after brutal attack on bus driver; 12/2/2014

<http://kfor.com/2014/12/02/graphic-four-teens-arrested-after-brutal-attack-on-bus-driver/>

Greyhound bus driver attacked, passenger Jeff Hawkins steps in to help; 6/20/2014

<http://www.abc15.com/news/region-southeast-valley/tempe/greyhound-bus-driver-attacked-passenger-jeff-hawkins-steps-in-to-help-video>



Caught on Camera: Passenger Attacks Bus Driver at 70mph; 6/20/2014

<http://www.nbcnews.com/watch/nbc-news/caught-on-camera-passenger-attacks-bus-driver-at-70mph-284928067735>

Ripped From the Headlines: Bus Drivers Under Attack [No Date]

http://www.atu.org/atu-pdfs/legislative/LEGIS_AssaultReport-1.pdf

Man Shot By Police After Allegedly Pointing Gun At Megabus Driver; 5/26/2014

<http://www.nbc4i.com/story/25612094/suspect-injured-after-columbus-officer-involved-shooting>

First on FOX: Video Shows RTA Bus Driver Attacked; 3/11/2014

<http://fox8.com/2014/03/11/first-on-fox-video-shows-rta-bus-driver-attacked/>

'Savage' attack on bus driver caught on video; 2/26/2015

<http://www.king5.com/story/news/crime/2014/08/05/13398484/>

Dozens Injured When Man 'Hallucinating On Meth' Attacked Greyhound Driver Causing Bus To Crash In The Desert; 1/23/14

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2544749/Im-gonna-flip-bus-Dozens-injured-hallucinating-man-attacks-Greyhound-driver-causing-bus-crash-desert.html>

Bus-Driver Shields Spreading, Mass Transit, 11/15/11

<http://www.masstransitmag.com/news/10450859/pa-bus-driver-shields-spreading-but-not-in-philadelphia>