



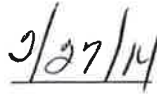
AMERICAN
PUBLIC
TRANSPORTATION
ASSOCIATION

2014 BUS SAFETY & SECURITY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

The information Contained Herein is Accurate and Verifiable.



Robert Smith, MTA Administrator



Date

Maryland Transit
Administration's
Service Safety Task
Force Reduces
Assaults on
Operators





**American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Award Nomination for Maryland
Transit Administration (MTA)**

Program Name: MTA's Service Safety Task Force

MTA Maryland

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) is one of the largest multi-modal transit systems in the United States. MTA operates Local and Commuter Buses, Light Rail, Metro Subway, Maryland Area Regional Commuter Train Service, and a comprehensive Paratransit system. The Local Bus system serves Baltimore City and the surrounding counties and is the 9th largest system in the United States with a daily ridership of over ¼ million. MTA currently operates 57 local bus routes and has over 5000 stops in the system.

Executive Summary

MTA created the Service Safety Task Force (SSTF) to tackle the issue of reducing assaults on operators head on. The SSTF's charter was simple; develop comprehensive mitigation strategies that will help to eliminate or minimize operator and passenger assaults. Their work included an examination of our organization's policies, procedures, safety culture, and operating environment. It developed pragmatic solutions, which involved changes to existing procedures; new safety initiatives; technical and engineering solutions; and innovative media and marketing solutions. The outcome of these solutions has been a 40% reduction in aggravated assaults on operators and a significant reduction in associated workers compensations costs.

The Safety Issue – Passenger Assaults on Bus Operators

The issue of operator and passenger assaults is a national issue, with assaults occurring on a near weekly basis around the country. The underlying causes of these incidents are very complex and there is no "silver bullet" available to address them. Factors such as socioeconomic status, mental health, and other environmental conditions must be considered along with the typical challenges affecting many US public transportation agencies, such as limited funding, shrinking operating budgets, and low staff morale. Singularly, these issues serve to undermine the ability of an agency to ensure safe and reliable transportation service. Together however, they set the stage for what may be considered a highly volatile operating environment. As such, many of the nation's transportation officials are perplexed about what can be done to better protect their employees and passengers from these kinds of incidents.





MTA's Response – The Service Safety Task Force

In response to this growing issue, the MTA created the Service Safety Task Force to develop comprehensive mitigation strategies to help eliminate or minimize operator and passenger assaults on MTA's system. The SSTF is comprised of internal MTA staff and external stakeholders who worked together to examine a host of elements intrinsic to the safe operation of any public transportation system including organizational policies, procedures, and processes, engineering and technology factors, human factors, public outreach, community involvement, safety and security awareness, recruiting, and training. The SSTF was directed by the MTA Administrator to "leave no stone unturned" to develop pragmatic solutions to this problem.

The purpose of the SSTF was to determine the most effective methods for the MTA to minimize the occurrence of passenger and operator assaults. These types of events negatively affect MTA customers, employees, passengers, facilities and equipment. It was therefore critical for the MTA to take a proactive approach and make concentrated efforts to stymie the tide of assaults occurring within the system

Clear Objectives

The SSTF had several clear objectives, which included the following:

- Review internal policies and procedures to determine where enhancements can contribute to reducing assaults.
- Examine the state of the agency's safety culture and employee perception of how well the agency ensures their safety and security is the highest priority.
- Improve the effectiveness of the agency's communication and public involvement efforts.
- Evaluate the latest vehicle safety design features and other technologies that can be used to enhance operator safety.
- Evaluate MTA training programs to determine if there are ways to better equip employees for the operating environment.
- Evaluate MTA recruiting programs to determine what methods can be used to better assess whether potential candidates have the right temperament for working with the public.
- Identify best practices used by other transportation agencies to address operator and passenger assaults

Wide Ranging Participation

When the MTA Administrator created this Task Force it was of importance to him to include senior management (e.g. Chief Safety Officer), staff on the ground (e.g. Bus Operator) and external stakeholders (e.g. Baltimore City DOT). All of those members had valuable perspectives and a common interest in enhancing the safety and security of MTA's transit

service. The full membership roster of the SSTF is provided in Appendix A. The group met once per month and was chaired by the MTA Chief Safety Officer and co-chaired by its Deputy Chief of Emergency Preparedness.

Subcommittees were formed for each key focus area; each having a lead person to ensure the overall SSTF objectives would be met. One subcommittee of note was the Student Issues subcommittee. In Baltimore City the majority of public school high school students ride the MTA and some assaults on operators have involved those students. The Baltimore City School System does not provide 'yellow bus' services and instead has a contract with MTA to provide transportation services for its students. Due to this, the SSTF included student issues in the scope of work and school system participation in the Task Force. The full list of subcommittees is presented in Appendix B. In addition, the SSTF conducted an Operator and Passenger Assault survey to 10 transit agencies around the country to solicit ideas for industry best practices.

Implementing Engineering and Technology Solutions on Buses

The SSTF examined the existing safety and security features of its bus fleet and future technologies that could be used to improve service. There are several existing systems on each bus that work towards ensuring the safe operation and maintenance of the MTA fleet. These systems either intelligently monitor the operation and environment of the bus or produce data that allows MTA personnel to do the same.

All buses are equipped with a panic button emergency switch and CCTV cameras, some with audio enabled, and voice radio to help deter or react to an assault on an operator. The MTA had implemented a pilot program for the design and installation of bus operator compartment shields. The industry research showed that these have been effective in both physically preventing attacks and deterring bus operators from leaving their seats. The SSTF recommended that the MTA should install them on its entire fleet of buses. This recommendation was accepted by the MTA and is now in the process of implementation. The cost of each shatterproof Lexan Plastic shield is \$2,000-\$2,500 per bus.



Communicating the Importance of the Issue to Passengers

The SSTF explored several ways that the MTA could better communicate the message of operator and passenger safety to the public. It was learned that many of the past programs

utilized by the MTA to engage the public had been discontinued. To reverse this trend the MTA produced new vehicle signage that will highlight the penalties to be imposed for assaulting an operator.



The MTA Commuter Connections TV show was also used as a venue for speaking to the public about operator and passenger assaults. The MTA produced a segment that featured the Chief Safety Officer and a Bus Operator discussing the importance of keeping drivers safe.

To communicate this issue directly to students and parents the MTA issued a letter to parents of school students who utilize our service advising them of the “rules of conduct” when riding our system.

Enhancing Common Practices

Another recommendation from the SSTF was to initiate improvements in communication between Operations Control Center staff, Operators, and the MTA Police. The MTA Police respond to incidents of operator assaults and had some issues with the clarity of the information they were receiving from the Bus Operations Control Center. The SSTF provided the forum for improved communications between the two. To help facilitate communication even further the MTA is increasing the amount of Street Supervisor staff to assist in these situations.

Enhancing MTA’s operator training programs was also recommended by the SSTF. MTA Bus Operator training curriculum now includes, among other topics, De-escalation, Conflict Resolution, and Maintaining a Peaceful Bus Environment.

The SSTF issued new safety and security awareness brochures to all operators highlighting the MTA’s policies including a 17-page ‘Guide to Personal Safety for Bus Operators’ that was specifically targeted to assist in assault reduction (See Appendix C). It also issued safety-centric messages into all employee paychecks that reinforce our core safety beliefs and principles.

An Effective and Beneficial Program

As a result of the concerted efforts of the MTA and the SSTF over the past three years MTA has reduced aggravated assaults on operators by 40% from 15 in 2011 to 9 in 2013 (See Figure 1). Aggravated Assaults are the most serious type of assaults on operators. In Maryland, the crime of aggravated assault, a felony, includes those assaults in which the

defendant intentionally causes or attempts to cause serious physical injury or uses a firearm.

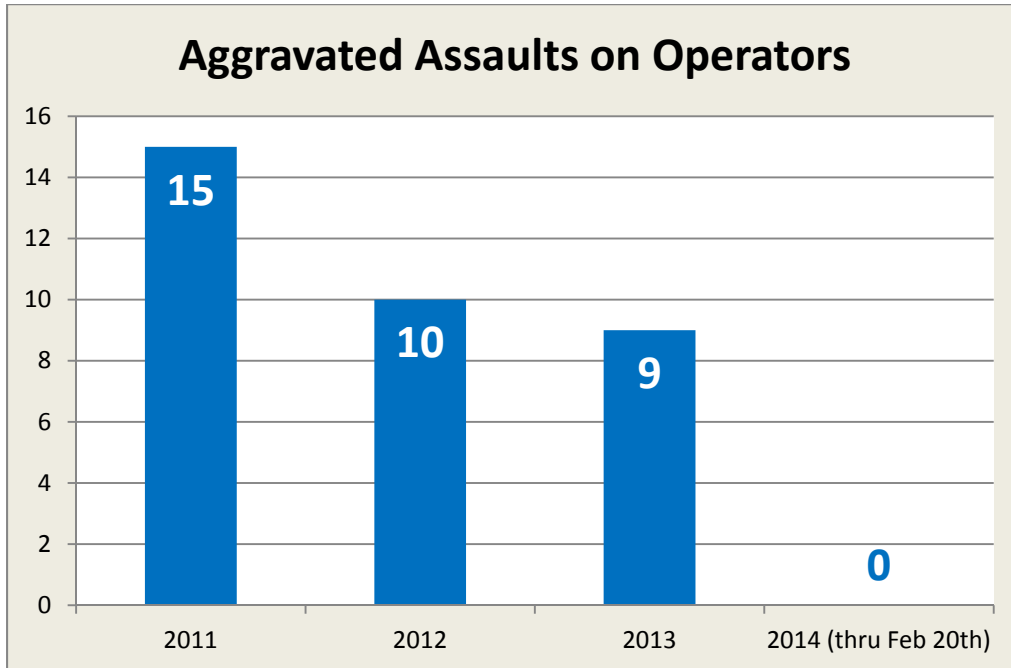


Figure 1. Aggravated Assaults on MTA Bus Operators 2011 to 2014

Physical assaults on bus operators have led to workers compensation claims being filed. These assaults are tracked as the operator being ‘struck by a third party’. There was a reduction in costs for these types of claims between fiscal year 2012 and 2013 from \$391,762 to \$298,883. This is a reduction of over \$92,000. See Appendix 4 for detailed data. Preliminary data from FY 2014 suggests that there are to be further reductions based on the reductions of assaults on operators.

Conclusion

Assaults on operators are significant to all transit agencies that provide bus service. A Task Force such as this is practical to implement in all transit agencies of a similar size providing the program has the support of the Administration and has a team of departments working together. Other transit providers who implement a Task Force of this scope will yield significant improvements in their system.

MTA saw considerable positive results because the SSTF outcomes were broad reaching, well supported, and had the aim of both preventing and mitigating this multifaceted problem. MTA is seeking to continue the important reductions in assaults on operators and associated worker’s compensation costs as all the recommendations of the SSTF are fully implemented.



APPENDIX A – SSTF Membership

Name	Organization & Title
Bernadette Bridges	MTA Chief Safety Officer
R. Earl Lewis	MTA Deputy Chief, Emergency Preparedness
Brenda Johnson	MTA Bus Safety Officer
David Varner	MTA Director, Bus Maintenance
James Means	MTA Deputy Director, Bus Operations
Tom Burgess	MTA Director, Office of Compliance and Investigation
Andrew Dubose	MTA Bus Operator
Denise Coates	MTA Deputy Director, Operations and Training
Vernon Hartsock	MTA Director, Systems Engineering
Fred Damron	MTA Deputy Chief of Police
Janiece Timmons	MTA Acting Director, Communications and Marketing
Terry Owens	MTA Chief Public Information Officer
Steve Silva	MTA Chief Engineer
Brian Williams	MTA Director, Labor Relations
Mike Walk	MTA Acting Director, Service Development
Jack Cooper	IWIF Risk Management Consultant
Dontee Cosby	ATU
Olivia Whetstone	Recording Secretary, ATU
Kahlil Allen	ADS System Safety Consulting/Safety Consultant
Marshall Goodwin	Baltimore City Schools, Chief of Police
Sarah Hasin	Charm City Circulator, Transportation Coordinator
Barry Robinson	Baltimore City DOT, Chief Transit and Marine Services



Appendix B – SSTF Subcommittees

SSTF Subcommittee	Lead
Training	D. Coates
Human Factors	T. Burgess
Engineering and Technology	V. Hartsock
Operator and Passenger Safety, Security, and Awareness	B. Johnson
Notification and Response	K. Bush
Communication, Media, and Public Outreach	T. Owens, J. Timmons
Student Issues	M. Walk
Industry Research	K. Allen
Maintenance	D. Varner

Appendix C – New Brochures

MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

SYSTEM SAFETY PROGRAM PLAN

OFFICE OF SAFETY, QUALITY ASSURANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT (OSQARM)




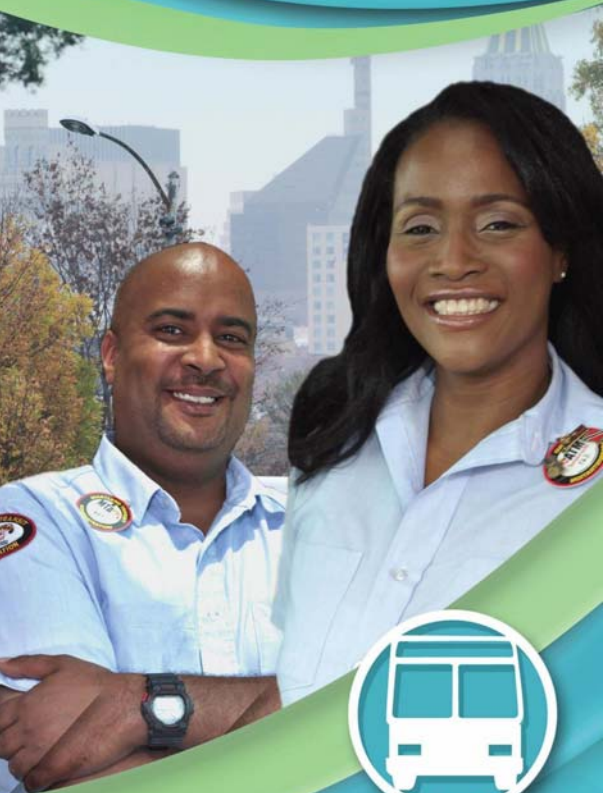


MTA Maryland

...providing quality public transit that is safe, affordable and accessible for the citizens and visitors of Maryland.



Guide to Personal Safety for Bus Operators





Appendix D – Bus Operator Workers Compensation Claims – Struck by a Third Party

DIVISION	Claims Filed		
	7/1/12 - 6/30/13	7/1/11 - 6/30/12	7/1/10 - 6/30/11
BUSH	9	12	18
EASTERN	6	4	5
KIRK	6	4	2
NORTHWEST	8	11	3
	Medical Costs		
	7/1/12 - 6/30/13	7/1/11 - 6/30/12	7/1/10 - 6/30/11
BUSH	\$36,283	\$102,443	\$99,277
EASTERN	\$19,430	\$21,508	\$34,808
KIRK	\$76,920	\$86,627	\$35,182
NORTHWEST	\$50,234	\$74,016	\$39,639
	Indemnity Costs		
	7/1/12 - 6/30/13	7/1/11 - 6/30/12	7/1/10 - 6/30/11
BUSH	\$32,489	\$102,443	\$99,277
EASTERN	\$19,430	\$21,508	\$34,808
KIRK	\$76,920	\$86,627	\$35,182
NORTHWEST	\$50,234	\$74,016	\$39,639
	Total Costs		
	7/1/12 - 6/30/13	7/1/11 - 6/30/12	7/1/10 - 6/30/11
BUSH	\$68,772	\$126,688	\$188,582
EASTERN	\$30,847	\$28,803	\$45,370
KIRK	\$114,923	\$138,669	\$51,026
NORTHWEST	\$84,341	\$97,602	\$69,165
Total	\$298,883	\$391,762	\$354,143
Total 3-Year Cumulative Cost:		<u>\$1,044,788</u>	



Appendix E – Assaults on Bus Operators 2011 - 2014

	2011	2012	2013	2014 (through Feb 20)
Part I Operator Assaults	15	10	9	0