

Public Transit and Social Responsibility: Homelessness

Leadership APTA Graduation

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Lacy Bell
Sound Transit



Gabriel Beltran
Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART)



Elayne Berry
Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA)



Derik Calhoun
AC Transit



Tera Hankins
Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART)



Laura Hester
New Jersey Transit

Public Transit and Social Responsibility: Homelessness



- 1) Why transit systems are attractive to homeless individuals
- 2) How agencies are balancing ridership and the homelessness epidemic
- 3) Biggest challenges for transit providers
- 4) Call to Action for the industry

**WHY ARE TRANSIT
SYSTEMS ATTRACTIVE
TO HOMELESS
INDIVIDUALS?**



Transit Facilities Provide Basic Needs

- Shelters not always an option
- Police presence
- Food and clothing donations
- Public restrooms



“Homeless individuals would rather be at transit facilities because they know they are protected by the police.”

– Gary Denamen, New Jersey Transit Police Outreach Officer

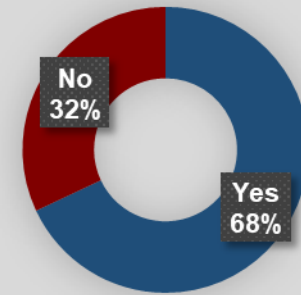
Survey and Interview Organizations



Survey Findings: Impact on Transit

- Homelessness is an issue that impacts nearly all agencies
- 78% say homelessness impacts ridership
- Desire for agencies to be a part of collective solutions

Do you believe transit agencies should play a role in addressing homelessness?



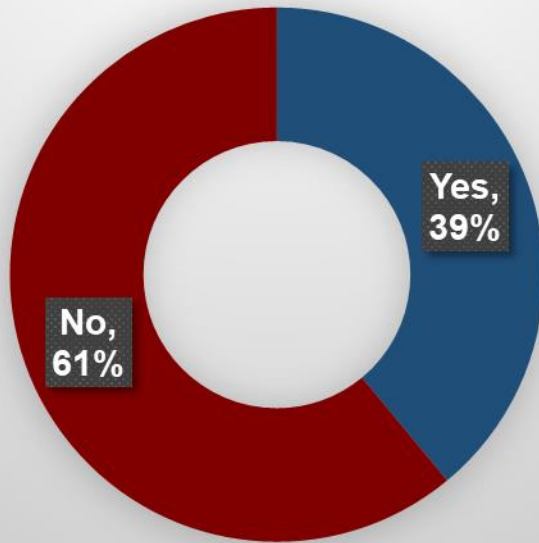
Two Different Viewpoints:

“Homeless individuals can make others feel uncomfortable, thereby deterring choice riders”

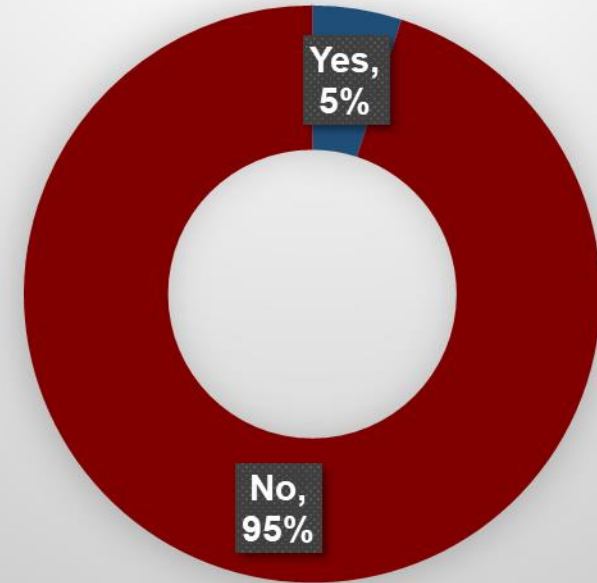
“Homeless individuals ride transit for shelter, thereby adding ridership”

Survey Findings: Resources

Does your agency have a homeless outreach program or partner with any community organizations?



Does your agency have budget allocated for issues related to homelessness?





**WHAT ARE AGENCIES
DOING TO BALANCE
RIDERSHIP AND
HOMELESSNESS?**

BART Police Crisis Intervention Training



Community Outreach Specialist Armando Sandoval providing contact information for available resources to a resident of a homeless encampment on BART property



Pit Stop Restrooms



New Jersey Transit: Crisis Intervention Officers

- New Jersey Transit Police Department (NJTPD) has two crisis intervention officers specifically to work with homeless individuals
- Partner with Volunteers of America and other social service organizations
- Includes a safe surrender partnership with the courts

New Jersey Transit: Success Stories

Ms. Lillian McRae

- Regular at the Trenton Transit Center
- Refused social services many times
- NJTPD contacted Adult Protective Services and County Social Service office
- Planned Intervention
- Resulted in housing in a long term nursing facility



Mid-Size Agency Strategies and Partnerships

TARC (Louisville, KY) and Madison Metro (Madison, WI)

- Partnerships with social service agencies and homeless shelters to provide discount fare media
- Inclement weather strategies



Source: Wisconsin State Journal



**WHAT ARE THE
BIGGEST CHALLENGES
FOR TRANSIT
PROVIDERS?**

Recognition of Responsibility: Why Should We Care as an Industry?

- Selling public transportation to areas beyond those currently served
- Ensuring the safety of customers and cleanliness of facilities
- Homelessness is projected to keep growing

Providing a System that Supports the Entire Community

- “If we’re here for just the transit dependent population, we won’t be here for long. Addressing the homeless population is a must to maximize expansion opportunities.”

Gary C. Thomas, President/Executive Director, Dallas Area Rapid Transit

- “We must collect big data to tell the story of the human experience as it relates to homelessness.”

Curtis Koleber, CEO and Executive Director, CAT (Savannah, GA)

- “Match good intentions with adequate funding.”

Chuck Kamp, General Manager, Madison Metro (Madison, WI)

Call to Action



Call to Action

- 1. Treat all individuals with dignity and respect.** Serve the entire community including homeless individuals.
- 1. Incorporate outreach officers with law enforcement to connect individuals with services.**
- 1. Align transit service with social service destinations to help ensure services are received.**

Call to Action

- 4. Partner with local municipalities & the private sector to identify funding opportunities**
- 5. Develop creative solutions that do not require funding such as hiring a homeless individual for an entry level position.**

