



Addressing Homelessness in Transit

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Overview

- Identifying the problem
- What was our initial response
- Initial Results
- What we are doing now
- Where are we going
- Conclusion

Problem Identification

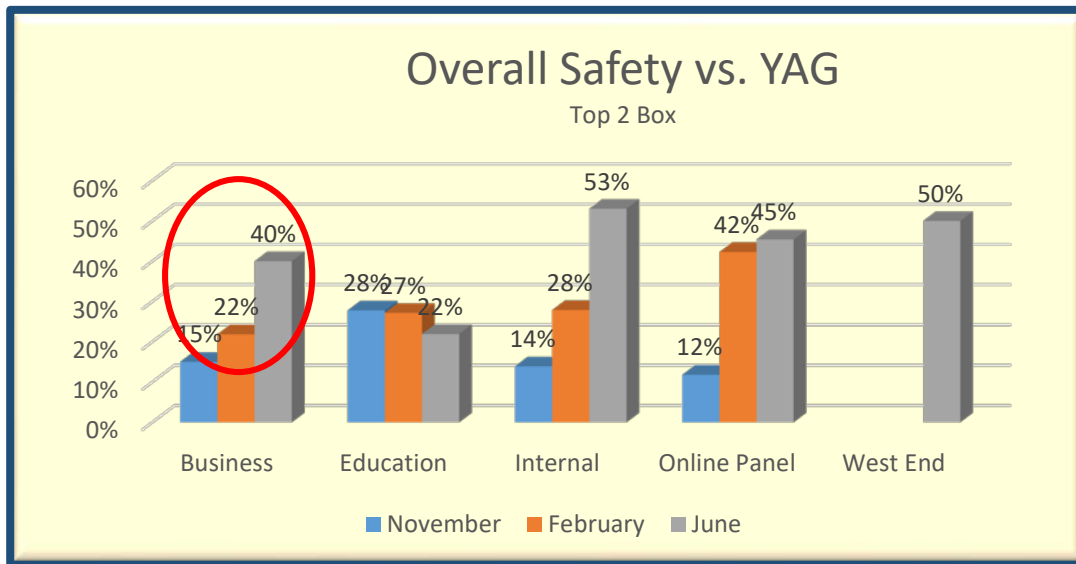
- Is there a problem?
 - Increase in homeless concentration on trains after a major homeless encampment was disbanded.
- What attributes comprise the homeless population?
 - Drug use
 - Mental illness
 - Bad decisions
- Do we even need to address this issue?
 - Patron concerns of safety were being voiced through complaints to DART executives, customer service hotline, and social media.
 - We had to act

What was our initial response?

- To address the public's "sense of security" concerns, the DART Police Department took action to counter the increase
 - Assisted rail operators in clearing trains prior to going out of service
 - Adjusted police officer work hours to address early morning concentration of homeless at train stations
 - Identified concentration using station cameras
 - Patrons' use of "Say Something" app to report concentrations
- DART Board demonstrated their support by passing a resolution to bring attention to the growing issue
 - Directed increased police presence in our downtown area
 - Directed 100% presence of police, fare enforcement, and/or contract security on trains

Initial results of our action

- Initial survey results produced positive reactions from our patrons



- Although our efforts to address homeless on trains was received positively by our patrons, we knew we had to do more

What are we doing now?

- Four major areas:
 - Research, Education, Coordination, and Outreach
- DART Police Actions:
 - Research
 - Peer reviewed LA Metro model
 - Collected data on times and places where homeless concentrate around our system using:
 - CCTV at stations to observe concentrations
 - Officer reports of concentrations
 - Patrons' communication through "Say Something" app
 - Customer service surveys

What are we doing now?

- Research continued
 - A DART Customer Improvement Team (CIT) is studying homelessness and the different causes in North Texas
 - Found mental illness, drugs, and bad decisions were the three top reasons for homelessness
 - Recommended DART enlist the participation of social service and other governmental agencies to devise a coordinated response to homelessness
- Education
 - Provided training to all police officers, fare enforcement officers and security officers who ride trains on how to respond to homeless people using de-escalation tactics
 - Conducted training of de-escalation tactics to bus operators

What are we doing now?

– Coordination

- Collaborated with Adapt Community Services for Mental Health to provide emergency mental health services to homeless persons who are in distress
- Met with District Attorney's office on establishing a jail diversion program for statutory crimes and with VA administrators to provide services for identified veterans

– Outreach

- Partnered with charity organizations who provide services to the homeless
 - Participated in feeding the homeless and providing education on ridership and safety
 - Partnered with a homeless ministry and a DART contractor to provide mid-day cleaning jobs on DART rail to the homeless

Where are we going?

- Continue to collect data on homeless trends and refine our response as the situation changes
 - Deploy our officers, fare enforcement officers, and contract security officers to new areas of concentration
- Continue to train bus operators on de-escalation tactics and expand the training to rail operators and station concierges
- Continue to work with charities, social service organizations, and local government officials in a collaborative effort to establish a long-term solution to homelessness
 - Develop memorandums of agreement, as necessary
- Implement “outreach” teams consisting of public and private agencies to engage the homeless and help them find a solution to their homelessness

Conclusion

- Homeless people on trains and station platforms presents a challenge to many transit agencies, and we were not immune
- Identifying reasons for homelessness is key to finding long-term solutions
- Developing a plan, with other social service agencies, to address homelessness is vital to providing a long-term solution

A photograph of a city street with a yellow and white bus in the center. The street is wet and reflective. Tall buildings line the sides of the street. A yellow box is superimposed over the bus, containing the word "Questions?".

Questions?