

Transit Agency Practices in Interacting with People Who Are Homeless

DETAILS

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TCRP

SYNTHESIS 121

TRANSIT
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PROGRAM

Transit Agency Practices in Interacting with People Who Are Homeless

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A Synthesis of Transit Practice

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TCRP SYNTHESIS 121

**Transit Agency Practices in Interacting with
People Who Are Homeless**

A Synthesis of Transit Practice

CONSULTANT

DANIEL K. BOYLE
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The nation's growth and the need to meet mobility, environmental, and energy objectives place demands on public transit systems. Current systems, some of which are old and in need of upgrading, must expand service area, increase service frequency, and improve efficiency to serve these demands. Research is necessary to solve operating problems, adapt appropriate new technologies from other industries, and introduce innovations into the transit industry. The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) serves as one of the principal means by which the transit industry can develop innovative near-term solutions to meet demands placed on it.

The need for TCRP was originally identified in *TRB Special Report 213—Research for Public Transit: New Directions*, published in 1987 and based on a study sponsored by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration—now the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). A report by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), *Transportation 2000*, also recognized the need for local, problem-solving research. TCRP, modeled after the longstanding and successful National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP), undertakes research and other technical activities in response to the needs of transit service providers. The scope of TCRP includes various transit research fields including planning, service configuration, equipment, facilities, operations, human resources, maintenance, policy, and administrative practices.

TCRP was established under FTA sponsorship in July 1992. Proposed by the U.S. Department of Transportation, TCRP was authorized as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). On May 13, 1992, a memorandum agreement outlining TCRP operating procedures was executed by the three cooperating organizations: FTA; the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, acting through the Transportation Research Board (TRB); and the Transit Development Corporation, Inc. (TDC), a nonprofit educational and research organization established by APTA. TDC is responsible for forming the independent governing board, designated as the TCRP Oversight and Project Selection (TOPS) Committee.

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Because research cannot have the desired effect if products fail to reach the intended audience, special emphasis is placed on disseminating TCRP results to the intended users of the research: transit agencies, service providers, and suppliers. TRB provides a series of research reports, syntheses of transit practice, and other supporting material developed by TCRP research. APTA will arrange for workshops, training aids, field visits, and other activities to ensure that results are implemented by urban and rural transit industry practitioners.

TCRP provides a forum where transit agencies can cooperatively address common operational problems. TCRP results support and complement other ongoing transit research and training programs.

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Cover figure: Project HOME's Hub of Hope at SEPTA's Suburban Station.
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FOREWORD

Transit administrators, engineers, and researchers often face problems for which information already exists, either in documented form or as undocumented experience and practice. This information may be fragmented, scattered, and unevaluated. As a consequence, full knowledge of what has been learned about a problem may not be brought to bear on its solution. Costly research findings may go unused, valuable experience may be overlooked, and due consideration may not be given to recommended practices for solving or alleviating the problem.

There is information on nearly every subject of concern to the transit industry. Much of it derives from research or from the work of practitioners faced with problems in their day-to-day work. To provide a systematic means for assembling and evaluating such useful information and to make it available to the entire transit community, the Transit Cooperative Research Program Oversight and Project Selection (TOPS) Committee authorized the Transportation Research Board to undertake a continuing study. This study, TCRP Project J-7, "Synthesis of Information Related to Transit Problems," searches out and synthesizes useful knowledge from all available sources and prepares concise, documented reports on specific topics. Reports from this endeavor constitute a TCRP report series, *Synthesis of Transit Practice*.

This synthesis series reports on current knowledge and practice, in a compact format, without the detailed directions usually found in handbooks or design manuals. Each report in the series provides a compendium of the best knowledge available on those measures found to be the most successful in resolving specific problems.

PREFACE

*By Donna L. Vlasak
Senior Program Officer
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Research Board*

This synthesis reports on effective practices, approaches, and outcomes regarding interactions within the transit industry with people who are homeless. A literature review summarizes reports that span the time frame from the early days to today. Because public libraries are similar to public transportation in offering services to all members of the general public and in being viewed as a safe haven for people who are homeless, the literature review also examines library policies and procedures related to people who are homeless.

A web-based survey resulted in 55 completed surveys from the 65 agencies in the sample, a response rate of 85 percent. Six detailed case examples profile innovative and successful practices.

Daniel K. Boyle, Dan Boyle & Associates, Inc, San Diego, California, collected and synthesized the information and wrote the report, under the guidance of a panel of experts in the subject area. The members of the topic panel are acknowledged on the preceding page. This synthesis is an immediately useful document that records the practices that were acceptable within the limitations of the knowledge available at the time of its preparation. As progress in research and practice continues, new knowledge will be added to that now at hand.

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Note: Many of the photographs, figures, and tables in this report have been converted from color to grayscale for printing. The electronic version of the report (posted on the web at www.trb.org) retains the color versions.

TRANSIT AGENCY PRACTICES IN INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

SUMMARY People who are homeless often use public transit vehicles or facilities as shelters to stay out of the weather and to be safe. For various reasons, many transit passengers do not feel comfortable around people who are homeless. Transit agencies attempt to manage this population and its impacts to preserve the quality of the transit environment.

A trajectory of responses and activity can be seen in how transit agencies interact over time with people who are homeless (shown in Figure 1):

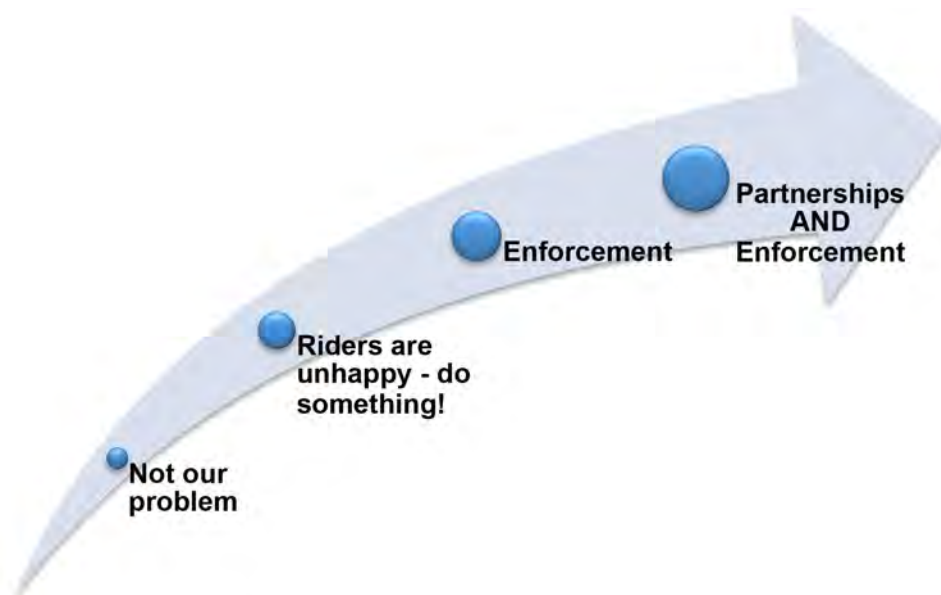


FIGURE 1 Trajectory of transit agency responses and activity with respect to interactions with people who are homeless.

- The initial reaction is a reluctance to expend resources on a problem that clearly goes beyond the transit agency.
- Next is a realization that customers are unhappy and something needs to be done.
- The most obvious action is enforcement.
- When enforcement alone does not solve the problem, agencies move toward partnerships with social service and nonprofit agencies.

The purpose of this synthesis is to report on effective practices, approaches, and outcomes within the transit industry regarding interactions with people who are homeless. A literature review summarizes reports that span the time frame from the early days, when homelessness emerged as an issue for transit agencies, to the present. Because public libraries are similar to public transportation in offering services to all members of the general public and in being viewed as a safe haven for people who are homeless, the literature review also examines library policies and procedures related to people who are homeless.

A web-based survey on agency interactions with people who are homeless resulted in 55 completed surveys from the 65 agencies in the sample, a response rate of 85%. Six detailed case examples based on interviews with key personnel at selected agencies describe innovative and successful practices.

Results of the survey of transit agencies in North America document current issues and practices regarding transit agency interactions with people who are homeless. The survey included transit agency assessments of factors contributing to the success or failure of various strategies. This synthesis describes lessons learned and offers guidance for communities and transit agencies, especially general managers; law enforcement chiefs; directors of safety, security, and operations departments; and board members.

Case examples provide additional details on challenges, solutions, partnerships, and lessons learned at six agencies:

- Fort Worth, Texas: Fort Worth Transportation Authority
- Madison, Wisconsin: Metro Transit
- Oakland, California: Bay Area Rapid Transit
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority
- Phoenix, Arizona: Valley Metro
- Washington, D.C.: Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

Findings suggest that people who are homeless are an issue for transit agencies regardless of size, although larger agencies are more likely to characterize homelessness as a major issue. Successful policies target *behavior* rather than *groups or individuals*. Codes of conduct and consistent enforcement clarify agency expectations.

Findings also suggest that partnerships are essential and that enforcement is necessary but not sufficient. People who are homeless are often incorrectly viewed as a homogeneous group. Case workers and others at social service and nonprofit agencies have a much greater understanding of people who are homeless and they can persuade these individuals, who may initially be service-resistant, to accept services. Among survey respondents, law enforcement personnel from transit police or security departments consistently emphasized the need for partnerships and the options these partnerships offered to their police officers. Transit agencies reported that partnerships result in enhanced customer security and perceptions, provision of help for those who need it, and increased sensitivity to the people and issues involved.

Leadership and a willingness to be proactive are important. If you do not know where to begin to establish partnerships, start with the local (city or county) human services agency. Staff will direct you to agencies that work with people who are homeless and will provide contacts within those agencies.

Transit agencies and their social service and nonprofit partners are experimenting with new approaches to interactions with people who are homeless. One promising practice is to set up drop-in centers staffed by social workers in transit facilities and stations. Initial results suggest that the ability to do client intake onsite at the transit station or center is very effective in persuading people who are homeless to seek and accept help.

Transit agencies will never solve the problem of homelessness alone or even in partnership with others. This is important to remember when frustration sets in as issues related to homelessness remain challenging. Actions taken by transit agencies have resulted in enhanced safety and comfort for all customers. In addition, many respondents and nearly all case examples reported successful outcomes for specific individuals who are homeless, along with improved customer satisfaction. In the absence of a broader societal fix for homelessness, agencies can (and deserve to) acknowledge their role in these success stories.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION**PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES**

People who are struggling with homelessness often use public transit vehicles or facilities as shelters to stay warm or cool, depending on weather conditions, and to stay safe. However, owing to various issues, many transit passengers do not feel comfortable around people who are homeless, which can discourage them from using transit and damage the image of public transit. This situation is a very real problem and challenge for all transit systems.

To preserve the quality of the transit environment, transit agencies attempt to manage the homeless population and its impacts. Some agencies have developed partnerships with law enforcement, social service agencies, and others to approach this issue in a more positive way. FHWA has taken some encouraging steps in working with people who live in transient communities in the public rights-of-way. This synthesis focuses on the transit perspective, policies, and procedures, and identifies effective practices, approaches, and outcomes within the transit industry.

This synthesis explores:

1. Agency policies and their effectiveness
2. Measures implemented
3. Results and outcomes
4. Identification of various populations—families, veterans, young people, etc.
5. Resource requirements—funding, staffing, training, etc.
6. Collaborative efforts and multidisciplinary approaches
7. Challenges—vocal and silent presence
8. Community education and awareness.

Results of an online survey of a cross-section of transit agencies in North America document current issues and practices regarding transit agency interactions with

people who are homeless. Fifty-five completed surveys were received from the 65 agencies in the sample, a response rate of 85% (55/65). This synthesis offers guidance for transit agencies and communities based on these survey responses.

The literature review summarizes reports that span the time frame from the early days, when homelessness emerged as an issue for transit agencies, to the present. The review includes recent studies that approach the issues from the perspective of people who are homeless, including examples of an emerging field of study focused on social exclusion. The literature review also examines library policies and procedures related to people who are homeless.

Detailed case examples based on interviews with key personnel at selected agencies are an important element of this synthesis. The case examples profile innovative and successful practices. The concluding chapter reports lessons learned, identifies gaps in information and knowledge, and summarizes emerging research needs.

TECHNICAL APPROACH

The approach to this synthesis included the following:

1. A literature review. A Transportation Research Information Database (TRID) search using “homeless” as a keyword was conducted to aid the literature review.
2. A survey of 65 transit agencies, described in the following paragraphs.
3. Telephone interviews with six agencies selected as case examples.

The survey on agency interactions with people who are homeless was designed to solicit information on the extent to which these people are a challenge for transit agencies, as well as on agency policies and procedures, actions implemented and their effects, responsibilities and resources, partnerships, community education, challenges, and lessons learned. Once finalized by the panel, the survey was posted on the Survey Monkey website and pretested. The pretest resulted in minor changes to survey structure, logic, and flow.



FIGURE 2 Survey respondents and case examples.

Fifty-five completed surveys were received from the 65 transit agencies in the sample, a response rate of 85%. Table 1 shows the distribution of the 55 responding agencies by the size of their operations; 60% operate fewer than 250 vehicles at peak service.

TABLE 1
TRANSIT AGENCIES BY SIZE

No. Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Fewer than 250	33	60
250 to 999	14	25
1,000 or more	8	15
Total Agencies Responding	55	100

Source: Survey results.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of survey respondents and case examples across the United States and Canada. Appendix A includes a complete list of survey respondents.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT

Subsequent chapters are organized as follows. Chapter two summarizes the findings of the literature review. Chapter

three (the first of two chapters that present the results of the survey) examines the extent to which people who are homeless are a challenge for transit agencies, as well as agency policies and procedures, actions implemented and their effects, responsibilities and resources, partnerships, community education, and specific challenges.

Chapter four discusses the responding agencies’ assessment of actions taken. This chapter describes agencies’ assessment of the success of their efforts to interact with people who are homeless, benefits and drawbacks, potential improvements, and lessons learned.

Chapter five provides detailed findings from each of the six case examples. The selection process for case examples used several criteria for inclusion, including (1) transit agencies of various sizes in different parts of North America, (2) agencies that have taken innovative steps in their interactions with people who are homeless, and (3) agencies that provided detailed survey responses and interesting observations.

Chapter six summarizes the findings, presents conclusions from this synthesis project, and suggests areas for possible future study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW**INTRODUCTION**

This chapter summarizes findings from a literature review related to transit agency interactions with people who are homeless. A TRID search was conducted using “homeless” as the keyword. Reports are grouped into three categories: (1) older studies from the 1980s and early 1990s, when homelessness first emerged as a societal issue; (2) more recent studies that report on successful strategies; and (3) studies that approach the issues from the perspective of people who are homeless, including examples of an emerging field of study focused on social exclusion. The final section of this chapter reviews policies and practices at public libraries regarding interaction with people who are homeless.

OLDER STUDIES

Among the reports and articles from the 1980s and early 1990s, most were in response to the increasing numbers of homeless people congregating in public transportation facilities. These reports and articles tend to emphasize the broader nature of the issue and its causes as well as how transit facilities—as public spaces that provide shelter from the elements—were especially affected.

Many of the early studies addressed issues in New York City. Sullivan (1986) cited statistics concerning the homeless population, the number who sought shelter in transportation facilities, and the extent of alcoholism or mental illness. The report suggested a reevaluation of the role of the New York state hospital system and its deinstitutionalization policies. Schwartz (1988, 1989, 1995) identified issues related to the presence of homeless people in transportation facilities, reviewed experiences and strategies elsewhere, and reported on Operation Alternative, a program developed by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey at its midtown Manhattan Bus Terminal (described in detail later).

The effects of homeless people congregating in public transportation facilities may have been more obvious in a large city such as New York during the 1980s and early 1990s, but similar effects were being experienced across the country. Keeney (1990) summarized issues associated with people who are homeless from the transit agency perspective: passenger complaints, low worker morale, increased

safety and security needs, health concerns, and increased costs to the transportation system. The article also cited transit agency strategies ranging from enforcement to provision of alternatives to partnerships with social service agencies.

An article by Ryan (1991) reported on a survey of 45 transportation systems and 100 airports in 15 cities. The study found that all were affected to some degree by the presence of homeless people in and around their facilities. The article recognized the need for a satisfactory policy to treat this plight that has no simple cure.

Later in the 1990s, two books examined various aspects of policing at transportation facilities. DeGeneste and Sullivan (1994) provided strategies for dealing with security issues across modes and promoted awareness of possible future security risks, with special consideration of the homeless and mentally ill populations in transportation facilities. Nelson (1999) offered a systematic approach to bus, light rail, and station security requirements. This book addressed specific topics—including terrorism, gangs, and the homeless—in the overall context of security needs.

Two papers at a 1995 conference are worth relating in detail as examples of transit agency programs to combat homelessness at this time. Schwartz (1995) described Operation Alternative, a program designed by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey that offered persons in need an alternative to staying in the agency’s Manhattan Bus Terminal through two onsite social service providers. The service-resistant segment of the homeless population presented the most difficult challenges. Operation Alternative was an attempt to balance the needs of the traveling public, vendors, and people who are homeless. The program combined clear rules and regulations regarding conduct for everyone who uses the terminal, training for all personnel from maintenance workers to police, consistent enforcement, and referrals to skilled outreach workers at onsite social service agencies. As part of this paper, Schwartz reviewed a federal demonstration project addressing homelessness in transportation facilities in three cities. The findings supported the lessons from Operation Alternative: although a transportation agency cannot by itself solve the problem of homelessness, its willingness to use its own funds and to collaborate with social service providers onsite can improve both the lives of people who are homeless and the attractiveness and security of its transportation facilities for all customers.

Mason-Ailey (1995) described MTA/Connections, a program implemented by the New York City Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) in two commuter rail stations and the subway system in New York City. Staffed by 22 persons, 18 of whom were trained clinicians, the program's major functions were outreach to people who are homeless and case management. Outreach evolved over time into a referral-based activity in which transit police and other employees referred specific individuals to clinicians. Case management involved monitoring the progress of homeless people referred to offsite social service agencies and of those who refused referrals. The success of the program was reflected in the finding that less than 1% of homeless people placed offsite returned to MTA property. Customer surveys indicated that homelessness and panhandling were perceived as less prevalent and the sense of customers' personal security was improved. The report acknowledged the limits to what a single program can accomplish but noted that a key element in its success was that it addressed some of the root causes of homelessness.

2000 AND BEYOND

After an interval during which very few articles on the topic of homelessness appeared in the transportation literature, more recent studies have reported on successful strategies and programs. Many studies in the post-9/11 period saw an intermingling of security needs with concerns about the impacts of people who are homeless on public transit facilities and operations.

Rudy and Delgado (2006) described a collaboration among transit, police, and social service agencies in the formation of a homeless outreach team in Orange County, California. The impetus for this collaboration was an increasing number of disruptive incidents by homeless and possibly mentally ill persons on Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) buses. The team, consisting of two deputies and one mental health clinician (with active involvement by bus operators), identified problem locations and bus routes and focused on developing a trusting relationship with members of this high-risk population, with the goal of linking them to the available resources to end their continuing cycle of problematic homelessness, mental illness, and personal health care issues. The outreach team made more than 200 contacts in slightly more than a year, and many of these contacts led to placement in county programs. OCTA experienced a decrease in customer complaints related to homelessness.

Turner et al. (2010) illustrated the complexity of communicating with vulnerable populations in emergency evacuations through a critical review of the existing literature and state-of-the-practice information gathered from transportation and emergency management agency personnel. The paper was presented as a foundation for developing a framework for

effective communication strategies, policies, and practices that focus on vulnerable populations before, during, and after all-hazards emergencies. These strategies can also be applied in communicating with vulnerable populations, such as people who are homeless, in nonemergency situations.

Bassett et al. (2012) investigated responses to homeless encampments on rights-of-way owned by departments of transportation (DOTs). Of 69 responses to the survey (representing 25 U.S. states and British Columbia), 48 respondents (70%) reported that they or others at their agency had encountered homelessness, and 27 (40%) indicated that their agency "considers homelessness an operational challenge." The most successful approaches—the ones that resolved property maintenance issues and had the fewest negative effects on the homeless population—typically involved collaboration among transportation agencies, law enforcement agencies, and human services/housing/homelessness agencies. Successful responses fell into three main categories: (1) humane displacement, (2) short-term accommodations, and (3) long-term arrangements. Successful strategies typically included both a "push" element (from law enforcement and other criminal justice agencies) and a "pull" element (from human services, housing, or homelessness agencies). Flexibility and a willingness to consider the human dimensions of the issue were key ingredients for success.

Some transit agencies are using buses as overnight shelters for people who are homeless. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) deploys "warming buses" at various locations as part of a larger effort to get people who are homeless to safety during extremely bitter weather ("DC Metro Dispatches Buses to Warm Homeless Residents," 2014). Food and water are available on the buses, and portable restrooms are placed nearby. More than 200 homeless people were reported to have used the buses during one frigid winter night (Klinger 2014).

The Hub of Hope project in Philadelphia (Project HOME 2014) was designed to serve people where they already were, co-locating physical and behavioral health services (integrated health services) with housing-focused case management. The Hub of Hope began in 2012 as a walk-in engagement center located under Two Penn Center in downtown, providing social and health services to people who were experiencing long-term homelessness and living in and around the subway concourses from January through early April each year. Goals of the project were to (1) transition people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing; (2) provide easy, centralized access to integrated health care services and connect people to ongoing primary care; and (3) deepen the understanding of necessary, strategic, and effective tools and methods to better assist and end homelessness for people who were living in the subway concourses. Lessons learned included these:

- A centralized, convenient location promoted initial access and follow-up—connecting disconnected individuals and bolstering support systems already in place.
- A strategy was required that acknowledged the reality of large crowds of homeless people gathering in the concourse in the morning after they were dismissed from overnight shelters and had nowhere to go, especially in inclement weather.
- A strong collaboration among Philadelphia Outreach teams, Mental Health Association Peer Ahead, Pathways to Housing, Southeastern Philadelphia Transportation Authority (SEPTA) police, and other case managers to collaborate and assess, engage, plan, and follow up with people living in and around the concourse made for a strong project.

King County–Seattle in Washington State, King County Transit, the sheriff’s office, and other first responders occasionally use the Crisis Solution Center to help people struggling with mental health and homelessness issues (Jutilla 2014). The Crisis Solution Center includes (1) a crisis diversion facility (CDF), a 16-bed facility where police and other first responders can refer/bring individuals in crisis for evaluation, crisis resolution, and linkage to appropriate community-based care; (2) mobile crisis teams, each consisting of two mental health professionals, that can help first responders find appropriate resources or transport individuals to the CDF; and (3) interim respite housing for individuals who are ready to leave the CDF but in need of temporary housing while permanent supported housing is being arranged. The intent of this diversion program is to reduce the cycling of people with mental health or substance use disorders through the criminal and crisis systems and facilitate links to appropriate services. Individuals who are stopped for various misdemeanor offenses (including unlawful bus/transit conduct) may be diverted by law enforcement officers through these crisis diversion services programs if they agree to participate in services to avoid facing any potential criminal charges.

A recent article by Sneider (2015) discussed efforts by the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) in San Francisco and the Société de transport de Montréal (STM) in Montreal, Quebec, to connect homeless individuals with community services that can help them improve their lives. In 2013, BART’s police department hired a full-time crisis intervention training coordinator and community outreach liaison to train BART police officers in how to identify and interact with people who are homeless without having the contact escalate into a threatening confrontation. The coordinator (one of only a few full-time U.S. transit agency staffers whose job is dedicated to addressing the homelessness problem) also helps connect transients with the appropriate social and health service providers.

The hiring of this coordinator is part of a broader initiative to provide an alternative to BART facilities for people

who are homeless when they are not using the system for transportation. Each day, BART police give the coordinator a priority case list of individuals found in the BART system who are chronically homeless. The coordinator reviews the cases and communicates with social service and mental health/addiction treatment professionals in the counties served by BART to coordinate services for these priority cases. Sometimes the coordinator is able to locate individuals on the list, talk with them directly, learn more about their personal situation, and offer assistance. About half refuse help. The coordinator tries to build rapport and trust with as many as possible. There have been several successes, but BART believes that this will be a long-term process.

The STM in Montreal developed a pilot project that uses some of its Metro subway stations as service points for people living on the streets. Under the program, an outreach person meets individuals who are homeless in Metro stations and tries to put them in touch with needed social, medical, or mental health care. After launching the project at one Metro station two years ago, STM expanded it to five other stations last year.

Not every community takes a sympathetic approach to the presence in transportation facilities of people who are homeless. At the time of this review, officials from the city of Lancaster, California, claimed that the number of people who are homeless in their city grows daily because of an alleged migration through Metrolink commuter rail from Los Angeles (Cuevas 2014). To curb this apparent surge of homelessness, the city has considered closing the sole commuter train station linking Lancaster to Los Angeles.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION STUDIES

Recent studies have examined the problem from the perspective of people who are homeless rather than from the viewpoint of transit or law enforcement agencies. These studies are examples of an emerging field of study focused on social exclusion (Popay et al. 2008).

Mooi (2009) reports on a needs assessment conducted in Ontario, Canada, by the York Region Alliance to End Homelessness. Data were collected through health and human service agency and community organization questionnaires, as well as from a series of focus groups. Bus tickets (71%) were the main forms of transportation support that agencies offered. Most agencies (64%) said that they had no data on transportation needs or services provided to their clients. The most common agency-identified barrier to accessing adequate transportation was the cost of transportation and a related lack of resources (71%), followed by infrequent, inadequate, or inconsistent transit service schedules (57%). Half of agencies that responded did not identify any existing partnerships with transportation agencies. On the basis

of these data, the report concluded that the lack of affordable, accessible, and safe transportation is a major barrier to the ability of homeless and at-risk men, women, and youth to access resources such as housing, education, employment, and health care. Priority recommendations included (1) coordinating a collaborative approach to developing sustainable options for improved transportation in the York Region; (2) ensuring that frontline staff are trained in how to help clients navigate the transit network; (3) supporting a 50% reduced York Region Transit fare rate (in line with best practices from other regions for people who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless); and (4) installing a bus stop with a shelter at each homeless shelter location served by an existing bus route.

Jocoy and Del Casino (2010) examined the mobility patterns and public transit use by people who are homeless in Long Beach, California, in the context of “spaces of containment”—sites in which marginalized populations, such as the homeless, are maintained through the creation of social and spatial barriers to their mobility. The study evaluated the extent to which the mobility provided by public transit constrains or enables the ability of people who are homeless to navigate between stigmatized and nonstigmatized places. Relevant findings included the following: (1) public transportation is a primary source of mobility for people who are homeless; (2) 74% of the homeless people surveyed reported an experience in which bus or train operators were helpful, 37% reported an unhelpful experience, and 12% had been harassed by other passengers; (3) travel for medical care and social services comprised almost half of transit trips taken by homeless people; (4) cost is a major constraint on transit use by people who are homeless (fare structures provide discounts for those who can afford more expensive daily and monthly passes); and (5) the lack of integrated cost structures among the transit agencies operating in and around Long Beach creates an additional financial constraint.

Hui and Habib (2014) focus on transportation-related exclusion of the at-risk community in Toronto, with emphasis on access to public transportation services in the city. Their research relies on a sample survey conducted among low-income people and people who are homeless in Toronto, in which the frequency of public transit services is identified as the key factor defining transport-related social exclusion experienced by the at-risk community. Among the interesting findings are that half of the homeless people surveyed rated their experience with bus and train operators as good or very good, 25% reported satisfactory experience, and 25% reported unsatisfactory experience. Among the social service agencies surveyed, 57% provide some financial assistance for their clients to use transit and 85% have criteria to determine eligibility, but the number of tokens and passes provided is low. The report recommends policy changes to increase inclusion of the at-risk community in transportation planning processes, increase transit accessibility for low-

income neighborhoods, discount transit fares for particular groups in the community, and increase policy integration among the different levels of government.

LIBRARIES

Libraries are similar to public transportation agencies in offering services to all members of the general public, including people who are homeless. Like transit centers and rail stations, libraries are often seen as a safe haven by such people, especially in inclement weather. This section of the literature review examines library policies and procedures related to people who are homeless.

Libraries have refrained from policies targeting a specific group in favor of policies targeting specific behavior. The American Library Association (ALA) has developed guidelines for the development of policies and procedures regarding user behavior (ALA 1993/2005). Section 8.d of the guidelines states:

Policies and regulations that impose restrictions on library access should be based solely upon actual behavior and not upon arbitrary distinctions between individuals or classes of individuals. Policies should not target specific users or groups of users based upon an assumption or expectation that such users might engage in behaviors that could disrupt library service.

The guidelines also note the need for evenhanded enforcement of all policies and regulations.

Many libraries have relied on these guidelines in drafting rules of behavior. A typical example requests that library patrons refrain from 15 specific behaviors to allow all patrons and staff to use the library’s facilities without disturbance or undue interference and to provide a clean, pleasant, and safe environment (City of San Diego 2011).

The ALA has also developed a toolkit to help librarians and library staff create meaningful library services for people who are experiencing homelessness (ALA n.d.). The toolkit includes a “Steps to Getting Started” section and notes that libraries can play a key role as resource providers, community centers, and facilitators for collaborations and partnerships. Several model programs are listed at the end of the toolkit.

A presentation at the 2013 ALA conference highlighted innovative approaches that libraries have taken with regard to people who are homeless (ALA 2013). Three examples are discussed in greater detail in the following paragraphs.

The San Francisco, California, Public Library (SFPL) partners with the San Francisco Police Department, the Department of Public Works, and the Department of Pub-

lic Health to enhance access for individuals who are homeless to existing resources, including shelter, food, clothing, showers and laundry facilities, storage, legal aid, and medical and mental health care. Inspired by the Free Library of Philadelphia's collaboration with Project HOME, the SFPL hired a social worker at its main library to reach out to patrons who are homeless to connect or reconnect them with social services and to train, supervise, and mentor health and safety associates. All of these associates have experienced and overcome homelessness and are former or current clients of the San Francisco Homeless Outreach Team. Their duties include monitoring the bathrooms for illegal activity, providing resources, and reporting illegal activities to security staff. SFPL combines outreach with behavioral guidelines that set clear expectations, a process of uniform enforcement with consistent consequences for violations, and a fair appeals process. The partnership has resulted in permanent housing for 100 library patrons, assistance to more than 1,000 patrons, a decrease in inappropriate use of public bathrooms at the library, and assistance to library staff with patrons in need of social services.

The San Jose, California, Public Library initiated a panel discussion that brought together library professionals, students, and social workers. The library has also provided small group training, hosted neighborhood discussions on homelessness issues, and started a Social Worker in the Library program.

The Richland Public Library in Columbia, South Carolina, sought out agencies that help people who are homeless and offered space in the library for case workers to meet privately with their clients. The library also began a partnership with Transitions, a homeless recovery center that provides people who are homeless with a place to stay as they transition from the streets to permanent housing. The partnership established a library at Transitions to provide educational and entertainment opportunities, teach 21st century job skills as well as timeless life skills, and connect the residents with job training.

SUMMARY

The literature review spans a 40-year time frame, from the early days when homelessness was first recognized as a significant issue for transit agencies to current approaches that include new, successful strategies. The review includes recent studies that approach the issues from the perspective of people who are homeless, including examples of an emerging field of study focused on social exclusion. Because public libraries are similar to public transportation in offering services to all members of the general public and in being viewed as a safe place for people who are homeless, this literature review also examined library policies and procedures related to people who are homeless.

The review reveals that transit agencies and public libraries have taken care to draft policies and procedures that target behavior as opposed to a specific group of individuals. The literature review also suggests an evolution in how transit agencies interact with people who are homeless. The initial reaction is a reluctance to expend resources on a problem that clearly goes beyond the transit agency. Next is a realization that customers are unhappy and something needs to be done. The most obvious action is enforcement. When enforcement alone does not solve the problem, agencies move toward partnerships with social service and nonprofit agencies.

The literature review was used in the development of a survey instrument to gather input from transit agencies. Results are generally in accord with literature findings. The conclusions in chapter six reflect the literature review as well as the survey and case examples. Further research needs have been developed based in part on unclear or conflicting information.

The next two chapters present the results of a survey of transit agencies regarding their interactions with people who are homeless. Survey results provide a snapshot of the current state of the practice.

CHAPTER THREE

SURVEY RESULTS: TRANSIT AGENCY INTERACTIONS WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

INTRODUCTION

This is the first of two chapters that present the results of a survey of transit agencies regarding their interactions with people who are homeless. The survey solicited information on policies, actions implemented and their effects, challenges, lessons learned, and guidance for other agencies. Chapter four focuses on agencies' evaluations of their efforts. This chapter addresses the following:

- The extent to which homelessness is a challenge for transit agencies
- Agency policies and procedures
- Actions taken
- Responsibilities and resources
- Partnerships and community education
- Challenges.

Thirty-four completed surveys were received from the 40 agencies in the sample, a response rate of 85%. Transit agencies listed in APTA's directory were then offered the opportunity to participate in the survey; we received responses from 21 additional agencies, bringing the total to 55 agencies. Appendix A lists the 55 responding agencies.

People who are homeless are often viewed as a homogeneous group, but the National Coalition of the Homeless defines three categories of homelessness (National Coalition for the Homeless 2015):

- **Chronic homelessness** includes persons such as the stereotyped profile of the "skid row" homeless, for whom shelters are essentially long-term housing rather than an emergency arrangement. These individuals are likely to be older and part of the "hard-core unemployed," and many of them suffer from disabilities and substance abuse problems.
- **Transitional homelessness** includes individuals who enter the shelter system for one short stay. Such persons are typically younger and may be recent members of the precariously housed population. Many of them have become homeless as the result of a catastrophic event and spend a short time in a homeless shelter before making a transition into more stable housing. Transitionally homeless individuals account for the majority of people experiencing homelessness over time.

- **Episodic homelessness** includes persons who frequently shuttle in and out of homelessness. They are most likely to be young, but unlike those in transitional homelessness, many episodically homeless individuals are chronically unemployed and experience medical, mental health, and substance abuse problems.

Some survey respondents acknowledged differences among people who are homeless, whereas others did not. The perception of a homogeneous versus heterogeneous population appeared to influence choices regarding strategies and actions.

IS THIS AN ISSUE FOR TRANSIT AGENCIES?

To what extent is the homeless population an issue for transit agencies? The study was undertaken with the assumption that interacting with people who are homeless was challenging for transit agencies, but is that assumption true? The literature review included many studies and reports from large transit systems in big cities; are there issues in smaller cities as well?

Table 2 shows that 91% of responding agencies perceive people who are homeless as either a minor or major issue. Table 3 breaks down responses by agency size. All the large agencies (1,000+ peak vehicles) cite people who are homeless as a major issue; 93% of mid-sized agencies (250 to 999 peak vehicles) and 88% of small agencies (less than 250 peak vehicles) report that people who are homeless are either a major or minor issue.

TABLE 2
EXTENT TO WHICH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS ARE AN ISSUE FOR TRANSIT AGENCIES

Extent	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Minor issue	33	60
Major issue	17	31
Not an issue	5	9
Total Agencies Responding	55	100

Source: Survey results.

To gauge the extent of homelessness, respondents were asked to estimate the approximate size of the homeless popula-

tion that affects their transit system daily. Table 4 shows that many respondents had difficulty making this estimation. Transit agencies in larger metropolitan areas made higher estimates.

TABLE 3
EXTENT TO WHICH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS ARE AN ISSUE FOR TRANSIT AGENCIES BY AGENCY SIZE

Extent	Small Agencies (<250 peak vehicles)		Mid-size Agencies (250–999 peak vehicles)		Large Agencies (1,000+ peak vehicles)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Minor issue	23	70	10	72	0	0
Major issue	6	18	3	21	8	100
Not an issue	4	12	1	7	0	0
Total Agencies Responding	33	100	14	100	8	100

Source: Survey results.

TABLE 4
NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS IMPACTING THE TRANSIT SYSTEM DAILY

Number of Persons	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Not sure	17	39
Fewer than 100	12	27
100–499	8	18
500–999	4	9
1,000+	3	7
Total Agencies Responding	44	100

Source: Survey results.

AGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Most responding agencies have developed informal policies and procedures for interacting with people who are homeless, as shown in Table 5, but only five agencies post their policies and procedures on their websites. One agency indicated that it does not share informal policies with the public because some of these bend formal rules (e.g., softening the no-loitering policy to allow a person to take shelter in a facility as long as he or she is peaceful).

Table 6 shows that most agencies’ policies and procedures do not differ for the various groups (e.g., veterans or families) that make up the homeless population. This reflects a consistent theme throughout the survey: policies, procedures, and actions target behaviors rather than status. “Other” responses include special rules for youth, placements for families and some veterans, involuntary removal for individuals at risk to themselves or others, and free travel to extreme weather shelters.

TABLE 5
AGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

Policies and Procedures	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Informal	28	57
Formal	14	29
None	7	14
Total Agencies Responding	49	100

Source: Survey results.

TABLE 6
DIFFERENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR DIFFERENT HOMELESS POPULATIONS

Difference	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
None	28	70.0
For people appearing to have mental illness or substance abuse issues	6	15.0
For veterans	2	5.0
For youth	2	5.0
For families	1	2.5
For older persons	1	2.5
Other	4	10.0
Total Agencies Responding	40	100

Source: Survey results.

Note: Multiple responses allowed; percentages do not add to 100%.

Table 7 shows that policies and procedures are more likely to differ based on the behavior of people who are homeless. A majority of respondents indicate no difference, but 37% note that there are different rules for loud or disruptive people who are homeless. “Other” responses include a written policy for people with mental health or behavioral issues (whether homeless or not) and differences in enforcement (as opposed to policies and procedures) for customers who are causing a disturbance.

TABLE 7
DIFFERENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES BY THE WAY PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS PRESENT THEMSELVES

Difference	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
None	23	56
Yes, for loud or disruptive behavior	15	37
Other	3	7
Total Agencies Responding	41	100

Source: Survey results.

ACTIONS TAKEN

Table 8 summarizes the types of actions taken by transit agencies with regard to people who are homeless. The responses

echo the dual approach that emerged as an ongoing theme throughout the literature review: transit agencies pursue partnerships with social service agencies while enforcing laws and agency rules. “Other” responses include distribution of discounted passes through social service or nonprofit agencies, a “three-end-of-line” policy that requires an additional fare after reaching the end of the line three times, a focus on prevention of disruptive behavior, and an awareness that, while enforcement is necessary, enforcement alone cannot solve the problems associated with homelessness.

TABLE 8
ACTIONS TAKEN BY TRANSIT AGENCIES WITH REGARD TO PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

Action	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Partnerships with social service or nonprofit agencies to encourage people who are homeless to seek assistance	32	71
Partnerships with local law enforcement agencies	31	69
Enforcement of anti-loitering laws	28	63
Additional cleaning of transit vehicles and facilities	23	51
Periodic sweeps of areas where people who are homeless are known to congregate	18	40
Requirement that riders exit the bus or train at the last stop and pay an additional fare to reboard	16	36
Discounted fares for people who are homeless	13	29
No specific actions undertaken	3	7
Other	13	29
Total Agencies Responding	45	100

Source: Survey results.

Note: Multiple responses allowed; percentages do not add to 100%.

The majority of respondents reported that interaction with people who are homeless is relatively constant year-round, as shown in Table 9. Thirty percent of the agencies indicated more extensive interaction in cold winter months. Surprisingly, only one of the agencies that reported more extensive interaction in hot summer months is in the Sunbelt.

Table 10 shows the extent to which interaction with people who are homeless varies by mode. The bus mode includes on the bus and at bus stops. One respondent noted issues in the rail right-of-way.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESOURCES

Table 11 shows which departments have responsibility for implementing agency policies and procedures regarding people who are homeless. Multiple answers were allowed,

because responsibility is generally spread over more than one department. Operations supervisors were named by a majority of respondents, followed by city or county police and transit police. Transit police were cited by all agencies that have their own police force. “Other” included bus operators, contracted security forces, management, maintenance workers, other city departments, and customer service.

TABLE 9
SEASONAL CHANGES IN EXTENT OF INTERACTION WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

Extent	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Constant year-round	28	62
More extensive in cold winter weather	13	29
More extensive in inclement weather (snow, heavy rain)	7	16
More extensive in hot summer weather	5	11
Total Agencies Responding	45	100

Source: Survey results.

Note: Multiple responses allowed; percentages do not add to 100%.

TABLE 10
EXTENT OF INTERACTION WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS BY MODE

Extent	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
We only operate one mode	15	35
No difference by mode	9	21
More extensive on bus	9	21
More extensive in bus transit centers	8	19
More extensive on rail	8	19
More extensive in rail stations	3	7
More extensive on paratransit	0	0
Total Agencies Responding	43	100

Source: Survey results.

Note: Multiple responses allowed; percentages do not add to 100%.

TABLE 11
RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES REGARDING PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

Responsible Party	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Operations supervisors	32	73
City or county police	18	41
Transit police	17	39
Other	18	41
Total Agencies Responding	43	100

Source: Survey results.

Note: Multiple responses allowed; percentages do not add to 100%.

Sixty percent of respondents indicated that responsibilities are shared among multiple parties. Among the 40% that reported that one group has the lead role, transit police were named most often. Table 12 summarizes responses.

TABLE 12
LEAD ROLE AMONG AGENCIES REPORTING ONE PARTY WITH PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY

Lead Responsibility	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Transit police	6	35
Security	3	18
City or county police	2	12
Operations department	2	12
Other agency departments	3	18
Other city departments	1	6
Total Agencies Responding	17	100

Source: Survey results.
Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 13 indicates a fairly even split regarding the perceived need for training related to interactions with people who are homeless. Forty-one percent of respondents conduct or sponsor training for first-line employees (bus operators, customer service personnel, and transit police), and 41% do not offer any training. Large agencies are much more likely to conduct training. Seven agencies reported that their employee training addresses conflict resolution or disruptive passengers but is not specifically targeted to people who are homeless, and one agency trains all employees on this subject.

TABLE 13
TRAINING FOR INTERACTIONS WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

Training	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
For first-line employees	18	41
No	18	41
Not specific to homeless	7	16
For all employees	1	2
Total Agencies Responding	44	100

Source: Survey results.

The literature review indicated that when homelessness first emerged as an issue, transit agencies were very concerned about bearing the costs of a problem that was not solely theirs to address. This concern prompted the inclusion of a question about whether agencies have defined the budget impacts related to interacting with people who are homeless. Table 14 indicates that most have not done so, although about one-quarter of respondents were not certain.

TABLE 14
DEFINING BUDGET IMPACTS RELATED TO INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

Budget Impacts Defined?	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
No	28	64
Not sure	10	23
Yes	6	14
Total Agencies Responding	44	100

Source: Survey results.
Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Only one of the six agencies that had defined budget impacts reported an annual total of more than a million dollars. Two reported a total between \$250,000 and \$500,000, and two reported a total under \$250,000. One agency did not provide a figure. Three of these six agencies indicated that the funds were spent to provide free or reduced-cost fares; the other three agencies used these funds for extra cleaning crews, outreach services, added staff at the transit center, and a crisis intervention training program.

Only seven agencies (16%) have dedicated staff to interact with people who are homeless, as shown in Table 15. Four of the six respondents with dedicated internal staff are large agencies.

TABLE 15
DEDICATED STAFF TO INTERACT WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

No. Staff Positions	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
0	38	84
1	3	7
2	2	4
3	1	2
Contractor provides staff	1	2
Total Agencies Responding	45	100

Source: Survey results.
Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

The literature review revealed that, even more than 20 years ago, transit agencies had discovered the benefits of partnerships to address homelessness in transit facilities. Table 16 shows that 75% of respondents currently partner with others in their interactions with people who are homeless.

Table 17 indicates that partnerships with social service agencies, nonprofit agencies serving the homeless, city police, and homeless shelters are most common for the 33 agencies that reported some type of collaborative effort. There may be some overlap among the agency types listed

in Table 17. Social service agencies are units of local government, nonprofit agencies are nongovernmental organizations, and private-sector agencies are businesses or business groups such as chambers of commerce or downtown associations. “Other” includes mental health providers, local churches, syringe-exchange programs, and university students.

TABLE 16
COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS WITH OTHERS

Partnerships	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Yes	33	75
No	11	25
Total Agencies Responding	43	100

Source: Survey results.

TABLE 17
PARTNERS IN COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

Partners	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Social service agencies serving people who are homeless	28	85
Nonprofit agencies serving people who are homeless	26	79
City police/county sheriffs	26	79
Homeless shelters	21	64
Private-sector agencies serving people who are homeless	8	24
Other	3	9
Total Agencies Responding	33	100

Source: Survey results.

Note: Multiple responses allowed; percentages do not add to 100%.

Agencies were asked to describe the nature of these collaborations, including how they began and how they work. Table 18 summarizes the responses by category.

TABLE 18
NATURE OF COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

Category of Response	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Process/beginning	13	46
City police	10	36
Social service/mental health groups	10	36
Fares	10	36
Homeless shelters	8	29
Winter transportation	4	14
Local communities	4	14
Total Agencies Responding	28	100

Source: Survey results.

Note: Multiple responses allowed; percentages do not add to 100%.

Transit agencies described the beginning of a partnership in many different ways. Several noted that a specific incident triggered the partnership. In one case, the collaboration began around enforcement and then expanded to include social service agencies. Another agency hired a social worker who coordinated all needed services. Often the first step was a willingness to partner with anyone who could provide assistance. Some agencies were asked to partner with a specific group, while others sought out partnerships with agencies that deal with people who are homeless. One agency asked key officers in local police departments throughout its service area to invite the transit agency to committee meetings or forums concerning people who are homeless. However the partnerships began, a common element was ongoing contact among all partners to identify issues and assess progress.

Police departments are a natural partner for transit agencies, even for those with their own police forces. One agency stated that a purpose of the partnership was to adopt “soft-handed” tactics. An agency with a transit police department noted that its officers could make voluntary rotations with the city police department’s Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) program. Each team includes a mental health professional, and the transit police officers become familiar with the various social service agencies that partner with the HOT program.

Transit agencies also collaborate with social service and mental health agencies. Partnerships are a two-way street, with the transit agency educating others about its services and obtaining new perspectives on people who are homeless from those who work with them most closely. The shared information can lead to collaboration on action plans.

Many transit agencies offer reduced fares for people who are homeless and conduct outreach with social service agencies to ensure broad awareness of these programs. A typical arrangement is for social service agencies to purchase discounted passes or tickets and then to distribute these to their clients. The social service agency and not the transit agency is responsible for identifying qualified recipients. One transit agency has had a program of free rides for people who are homeless; it is facing resistance from its partners to implementing a shared-cost approach.

Several transit agencies work directly with homeless shelters. This can involve provision of discounted tickets, tracking the number of people who are homeless housed each day, and providing transportation between a central location and homeless shelters or between day and night shelters. One agency noted that it provides an early morning trip from an overnight shelter (clients must leave early in the morning) to its transit center, where connections to other locations can be made. The agency commented that many people who are homeless wait in the transit center until the main library opens.

Severe winter weather is an inducement to collaboration. In cities with winter-only homeless shelters, the transit agencies provide service to these shelters. In other cases, connecting services between day and night shelters is provided only during winter months. One agency provides free rides for people who are homeless on nights when the temperature drops below freezing. Another sends modified buses to specific locations to serve as overnight shelters during especially cold nights.

Many agencies reported formal and informal contact with local cities on a regular basis to discuss issues and strategies. These discussions are based on the recognition that homelessness is a challenge that extends beyond transit.

Table 19 shows that most transit agencies do not participate in community educational efforts related to the challenge of homelessness; however, more than 85% (6 out of 7) of the large agencies participate in such efforts. No transit agency in the survey took the lead in these efforts.

TABLE 19
TRANSIT AGENCY PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS

Participation	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
None	26	58
As a participating agency	19	42
As the lead agency	0	0
Total Agencies Responding	45	100

Source: Survey results.

Table 20 shows the types of community educational efforts in which transit agencies participate. Some cities have homelessness committees, and transit agency representatives describe their services and pass programs. Other cities host summits or workshops on homelessness, and transit is often invited to participate. Transit agencies are asked to assist in outreach efforts. Some agencies work with veterans' groups or social service agencies. "Other" includes emergency responders, service organizations, and job fairs. One agency makes announcements encouraging its customers to contribute to homeless organizations in lieu of giving money directly to people who are homeless.

"COFFEE WITH A COP"

One particularly interesting community outreach program is Coffee with a Cop. The Utah Transit Authority (UTA) Police Department has adapted this national program (Coffee with a Cop 2015) in partnership with the Salt Lake City Police Department as a means to engage individuals who are homeless. The intent of Coffee with a Cop is to replace the crisis situations that typically define interactions between law enforcement officials and community members with a

friendly atmosphere for relaxed, informal one-on-one conversations. Transit and city police in Salt Lake City serve coffee and hand out donuts to people who are homeless. As conversations occur, tension eases and people who are homeless speak about their concerns. UTA police were able to answer transit-related questions. People who are homeless offered ideas for future Coffee with a Cop get-togethers, including handing out personal hygiene products or socks instead of donuts. The one-on-one connections begin the process of building trust between police officers and individuals who are homeless.

TABLE 20
TYPES OF COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS

Type of Effort	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Homeless committees	3	20
Summits/workshops/seminars	3	20
Outreach efforts	3	20
Veterans Administration/veterans' groups	2	13
Social service agency initiatives	2	13
City/downtown associations	2	13
Other	3	20
Total Agencies Responding	15	100

Source: Survey results.

Note: Multiple responses allowed; percentages do not add to 100%.

CHALLENGES IN AGENCY INTERACTIONS

Respondents described various challenges in agency interactions with people who are homeless. Table 21 displays the results. Funding and the extent of homelessness were the only challenges rated as "major" by at least 25% of respondents. Large agencies were more likely than mid-sized or small agencies to rate various challenges as "major." At least half of all respondents reported legal issues, unclear policies and procedures, ability to develop effective partnerships, lack of emphasis, and opposition from community activists as "not a challenge." Other factors mentioned included security, difficulty in determining whether someone is homeless, and inadequate alternatives.

Respondents also answered an open-ended question asking them to describe the major challenge in agency interactions with people who are homeless. Table 22 summarizes the responses. Verbatim examples of specific responses are shown here:

The lack of public restrooms. They relieve themselves at bus stops and on the grounds of nearby businesses and even on buses. Some stops have to be (or should be) cleaned daily for this reason and some business owners have felt aggrieved for long periods of time.

TABLE 21
RATINGS OF POTENTIAL CHALLENGES IN TRANSIT AGENCY INTERACTIONS WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

Potential Challenge	Major Challenge	Minor Challenge	Not a Challenge	No. Agencies Responding
Extent of homelessness	27%	59%	14%	49
Balancing customer concerns with humane actions	10%	63%	27%	48
Funding to support programs	34%	34%	32%	47
Support from city/county	13%	44%	44%	48
Training of agency personnel	9%	46%	46%	46
Legal issues	6%	44%	50%	48
Unclear policies and procedures	10%	39%	51%	49
Ability to develop effective partnerships with social service or other agencies	4%	40%	56%	48
Lack of emphasis within transit agency	6%	26%	68%	47
Opposition from community activists	9%	20%	72%	46

Source: Survey results.

Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 22
ONE MAJOR CHALLENGE IN TRANSIT AGENCY INTERACTIONS WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

Challenge	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Behavioral issues	12	28
People who are homeless congregating on vehicles or in transit centers/terminals	11	26
Misleading perceptions	4	9
Limited alternatives	4	9
Lack of information (agency or others)	3	7
Unwillingness to accept help	3	7
Conflicts with municipalities	3	7
Cost	2	5
Fare payment	1	2
Total Agencies Responding	43	100

Source: Survey results.

Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Hostile, aggressive, loud, and disruptive segment of homeless population who use the public transit system create fear and apprehension in other riders and transit staff.

We run a public service that does not question the customer's purpose of travel. If they can pay the fare they can ride. While on the vehicle and property, they must follow the same code of conduct that applies to all other customers. Transit staff are compassionate and want to help, so we have information printed and available on board the vehicles about how someone can obtain social services and connect to housing options. Unfortunately, many of the homeless have been turned away from shelters because of a lack of space available or rules unique to the shelter. It is difficult to convince someone they should try the system again if they believe it has failed them in the past.

Our largest transfer facility is also a large building with public toilet access. It is just a few blocks away from a recently closed (by the city) informal homeless encampment. When the site was closed, many migrated to the transfer station and have tried to set up semi-permanent camps in the area. The city is actively reaching out to the homeless and trying to connect them to other services. We have to protect our property for our tenants and customers. Finding an alternative for the homeless is challenging at best.

Homeless folks will camp out in a corner of the convention center which is immediately adjacent to our busiest downtown stop. The excuse offered when they are asked to move is that they are waiting on the bus. The bus comes and goes and they are still there. This is a major turnoff to convention goers and visitors to our city.

Homeless individuals use transit facilities for bathing, washing, and sleeping on a frequent basis. Bus stops have also become used by homeless for sleeping/living; while we do not own the bus stop, this affects the passengers wishing to use the stop to access our service, and cities often request that we address the issue even though they own the actual stop.

Funding to support programs for homeless individuals is a major factor in our community. There is a strong recognition of the need and most agencies are doing a great job with what they have. However, the need far exceeds the resources and the result is an overflow of individuals lacking the support they need to make a lasting impact on their homeless condition.

Table 23 summarizes strategies or tactics used to address major challenges. The primary agency strategies are partnerships and consistent enforcement. Partners include social service agencies, local police departments, other municipal departments, courts, college students (through programs or internships for outreach), and any alternative to enforcement alone. Two agencies mentioned partnerships with homeless coalitions in their cities and noted that the coalitions' approach was more thorough and achieved more permanent results than simply calling the police.

CHALLENGES IN CUSTOMER REACTIONS

Respondents described various challenges in terms of customer reactions to people who are homeless. Table 24 displays the results. Personal hygiene issues were cited by a majority of respondents as a major challenge. Issues related

to customer reactions were much more likely to be rated as challenges than issues surrounding agency interactions with people who are homeless (shown in Table 21). The percentage of “not a challenge” responses ranged from zero to 21% for elements regarding customer reactions in Table 24, compared with the percentage of “not a challenge” responses ranging from 14% to 72% for elements regarding agency interactions with homeless persons in Table 21. Other comments noted that these were not an issue for most riders and that the issues were greatest at night, at certain locations, or on certain routes.

TABLE 23
AGENCY STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME MAJOR CHALLENGES

Strategy	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Partnerships	16	39
Consistent enforcement	14	34
Training	4	10
Empower staff	4	10
Communication/outreach	4	10
Treat homeless person like any other customer	4	10
Changes to fares/fare media	3	7
Provide/modify restrooms	2	5
Total Agencies Responding	41	100

Source: Survey results.
Note: Multiple responses allowed; percentages do not add to 100%.

Respondents also answered an open-ended question asking them to describe the major challenge in terms of customer reactions to people who are homeless. Table 25 summarizes detailed responses. Fear and reaction to personal hygiene issues were mentioned most often.

Table 26 summarizes strategies or tactics used to address any major challenges. The primary agency strategies are enforcement/police presence, coordination, and training of frontline agency personnel. “Other” responses included employing a social worker on staff, more frequent cleaning, rebuilding the worst location, a low-income pass, and making restrooms available at the discretion of staff.

SUMMARY

This section summarizes the key findings of the agency survey regarding the extent to which homelessness is perceived to be an issue, policies and procedures related to people who are homeless, actions taken, responsibilities and resources, and challenges.

TABLE 24
RATINGS OF POTENTIAL CHALLENGES REGARDING CUSTOMER REACTIONS

Potential Challenge	Major Challenge	Minor Challenge	Not a Challenge	No. Agencies Responding
Personal hygiene issues	55%	45%	0%	44
Discomfort in the presence of people who are homeless	30%	66%	5%	44
Cleanliness of transit facilities/vehicles/seats	43%	48%	9%	44
Fear	25%	66%	9%	44
Experience of aggressive/disruptive behavior	27%	61%	11%	44
Effect on willingness of customers to use transit	21%	58%	21%	43

Source: Survey results.
Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 25
ONE MAJOR CHALLENGE IN CUSTOMER REACTIONS TO PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

Challenge	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Reaction due to personal hygiene issues	12	30
Fear	10	25
Less willing to ride	5	13
Sense of discomfort	4	10
Nothing specific/very few complaints	4	10
Homeless take up too much space	3	8
Lack of compassion/confusing mental health and drug issues with homelessness	3	8
Total Agencies Responding	41	100

Source: Survey results.
Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Is homelessness an issue? Ninety-one percent of responding agencies perceive impacts related to homelessness as either a minor or major issue. The issue is not confined to large transit systems; 93% of mid-sized agencies and 88% of small agencies view homelessness as a major or minor issue. Many agencies had difficulty estimating the size of the homeless population that affects their transit systems daily. Among those who offered estimates, transit agencies in larger metropolitan areas reported higher numbers of people who are homeless.

TABLE 26
AGENCY STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME MAJOR
CHALLENGES REGARDING CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS

Strategy	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Enforcement/police presence	11	29
Collaborations with police and/or social service agencies	9	24
Training of operators/supervisors to defuse situation	7	18
Streamlined complaint process plus immediate response	5	13
Public education	4	11
Nothing specific	4	11
Media support	2	5
Other	5	13
Total Agencies Responding	38	100

Source: Survey results.

Note: Multiple responses allowed; percentages do not add to 100%.

Agency policies and procedures. Most responding agencies have developed informal policies and procedures for interacting with people who are homeless, but very few agencies post their policies and procedures on their websites. These policies and procedures do not differ for different homeless populations, reflecting a consistent theme throughout the survey that policies, procedures, and actions target behaviors rather than status. Loud and disruptive behavior by any customer, not only people who are homeless, is not tolerated.

Actions taken. Actions taken by transit agencies with regard to people who are homeless echo the dual approach that emerged as an ongoing theme throughout the literature review: transit agencies pursue partnerships with social service agencies while enforcing laws and agency rules. The majority of respondents reported that the extent of interaction with people who are homeless is constant year-round, although 30% indicated more extensive interaction in cold winter months.

Responsibilities and resources. The operations department, specifically operations supervisors, was named by a majority of respondents as having responsibility for implementing agency policies and procedures regarding people who are homeless, followed by city or county police and transit police. Multiple jurisdictions can be a complicating factor: 60% percent of respondents indicated that responsibilities are shared among multiple parties. Among the 40% that reported that one group had the lead role, transit police were named most often. Forty-one percent of agencies conduct or sponsor training for first-line employees (bus operators, customer service personnel, and transit police) related to interactions with people who are homeless, whereas 41% do not. Some agencies reported that their employee training addresses conflict resolution or disruptive passengers but is not specifically targeted to people who are homeless.

The literature review indicated that when homelessness first emerged as an issue, transit agencies were very concerned about bearing the costs of a problem that was not solely theirs to address. Most responding agencies have not defined the budget impacts related to interacting with people who are homeless, although one-quarter of respondents were not sure whether their agencies had defined these or not. Only one of the six agencies that had defined budget impacts reported an annual total of over a million dollars. Three of these six agencies indicated that the funds were spent to provide free or reduced-cost fares, whereas the other three agencies used these funds for extra cleaning crews, outreach services, added staff at the transit center, and a crisis intervention training program. Only seven agencies (16%) have dedicated staff to interact with people who are homeless.

Partnerships and community education. Seventy-five percent of respondents partner with others. The partnership might have been triggered by a specific incident or simply by the agency's willingness to partner with anyone who could provide assistance. In one case, the collaboration began around enforcement and then expanded to include social service agencies. Another agency hired a social worker who coordinated all needed services. Some agencies were asked to partner with a specific group, whereas others sought out partnerships with agencies that deal with people who are homeless. One agency asked key officers in local police departments throughout its service area to invite the transit agency to committee meetings or forums concerning people who are homeless. One transit police department joins with the city police department to host Coffee with a Cop. However the partnerships began, a common element was ongoing contact among all partners to identify issues and assess progress.

City police departments are a natural partner for transit agencies, even for those with their own police forces. Transit agencies also collaborate with social service and mental health agencies regarding homelessness. Several transit agencies work directly with homeless shelters. Partnerships are a two-way street, with the transit agency educating others about its services and obtaining new perspectives on people who are homeless from those who work with them most closely. The shared information can lead to collaboration on action plans.

Many transit agencies offer reduced fares for people who are homeless and conduct outreach with social service agencies to ensure broad awareness of these programs.

Severe winter weather is an inducement to collaboration. In cities with winter-only homeless shelters, the transit agencies provide service to these shelters. In other cases, connecting services between day and night shelters might be provided only during winter months. One agency provides free rides for people who are homeless on nights when the temperature drops below freezing. Another sends modified

buses to specific locations to serve as overnight shelters during especially cold nights.

Most responding agencies (58%) do not participate in community educational efforts related to the problem of homelessness. Among the 42% that are involved in community education, many work with homeless committees in the cities to describe their services and pass programs. Some cities host summits or workshops on homelessness, and transit is often invited to participate or asked to assist in other outreach efforts.

Challenges in interactions. Funding and the extent of homelessness were the only challenges rated as “major” by at least 25% of respondents. When asked to describe the major challenge in agency interactions with people who are homeless, agencies cited behavioral issues and people who are homeless congregating on vehicles or in transit centers/terminals. The primary agency strategies to address these challenges are partnerships and consistent enforcement. Partners include social service agencies, local police departments, cities, courts, college students, and any alternative

to enforcement alone. Two agencies mentioned partnerships with homeless coalitions in their cities and noted that the coalitions’ approach was more thorough and achieved more permanent results than simply calling the police.

Challenges in customer reactions. Agencies were more likely to characterize challenges in customer reactions (compared with challenges in interactions with people who are homeless) as “major.” Personal hygiene issues were cited by a majority of respondents as a major challenge, followed by cleanliness of transit facilities/vehicles/seats and rider discomfort in the presence of people who are homeless. Additional comments noted that these were not issues for all riders and that the issues were greatest at night, at certain locations, or on certain routes. Fear and reaction to personal hygiene issues were mentioned most often as the major challenges in customer reactions to people who are homeless. Primary agency strategies to address these challenges are enforcement/police presence, coordination with police or social service agencies, and training of frontline agency personnel.

CHAPTER FOUR

SURVEY RESULTS: ASSESSMENT OF TRANSIT AGENCY INTERACTIONS WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

INTRODUCTION

This is the second of two chapters that present the results of a survey of transit agencies' interactions with people who are homeless. The previous chapter addressed survey results related to the extent to which people who are homeless are an issue, agency policies and procedures, actions taken, responsibilities and resources, partnerships and community education, and challenges. This chapter focuses on agencies' evaluations of their efforts. Specific topics include agency assessment of the success of actions taken, benefits and drawbacks, potential improvements, and lessons learned.

AGENCY ASSESSMENT OF EFFORTS TO INTERACT WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

Table 27 shows transit agencies' ratings of their own efforts to interact with people who are homeless. A majority of respondents (53%) rated their efforts as "somewhat successful," and 40% rated their efforts as "neutral." Interestingly, the seven large transit agencies surveyed rated their efforts as "somewhat successful" (86%) or "very successful" (14%).

TABLE 27
AGENCY RATING OF EFFORTS TO INTERACT WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

Agency Rating	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Very successful	1	2
Somewhat successful	25	53
Neutral	19	40
Somewhat unsuccessful	2	4
Very unsuccessful	0	0
Total Agencies Responding	47	100

Source: Survey results.

Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

The survey included a question asking for the reasons behind these ratings. The wide variety of responses received are shown for agencies rating their interactions as successful (Table 28) or neutral/unsuccessful (Table 29). Positives in Table 28 include good relationships with agencies that specialize in dealing with individuals who are homeless, clear rules, effective enforcement, and not singling out people who

are homeless. Responses reflect frustrations among transit agencies with limited resources and the seemingly intractable nature of the homelessness issue and its underlying factors. One of the "other" responses voiced a common theme: "We are doing a reasonable job with the available resources."

TABLE 28
REASONS FOR CHOOSING A SUCCESSFUL RATING

Reason	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Treatment and expectations of people who are homeless same as those of all customers	7	29
Good relationships with social service/nonprofit agencies and cities	4	17
Limitations on resources available	4	17
Not a problem/only isolated incidents	3	13
Societal issues bigger than transit	2	8
Passes for homeless or low-income persons enhance mobility	2	8
Able to defuse threatening situations	2	8
Clear, consistent rules for riding	2	8
Refusal to seek help	2	8
Success in linking individuals with assistance	2	8
Success with enforcement	2	8
Other	6	25
Total Agencies Responding	24	100

Source: Survey results.

Note: Multiple responses allowed; percentages do not add to 100%.

Table 30 summarizes the responses to an open-ended question on the primary benefits of these efforts. The most-cited benefit was the ability to connect those in need with services that can help them; these respondents had formed partnerships with social service agencies. Impacts on customers and the transit environment, improved (less adversarial) interactions with people who are homeless, and effective enforcement were other benefits mentioned by at least 10% of respondents.

Table 31 summarizes the responses to an open-ended question on the drawbacks of efforts to interact with people who are homeless. The most frequently mentioned drawback was insufficient resources at both the transit agency and social service agencies. Other drawbacks cited by at least

10% of respondents included aspects of the homeless population (appearance, personal hygiene, and unwillingness or inability to accept help) and the difficulty of addressing issues underlying homelessness. Fifteen percent of respondents stated that there were no drawbacks to their efforts. Two agencies noted that their efforts created a perception that the transit agency was somehow part of the problem.

TABLE 29
REASONS FOR CHOOSING A NEUTRAL OR UNSUCCESSFUL RATING

Reason	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Not a problem/only isolated incidents	4	24
Good relationships with social service/nonprofit agencies and cities	3	18
Disruptive behavior continues	3	18
Limitations on resources available	2	12
Hygiene issues very difficult to address	2	12
Temporary fixes less effective in		
long term	2	12
Other	5	29
Total Agencies Responding	17	100

Source: Survey results.
Note: Multiple responses allowed; percentages do not add to 100%.

TABLE 30
PRIMARY BENEFITS OF EFFORTS TO INTERACT WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

Benefit	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Connect those in need with services	11	30
Customer comfort, safety, and understanding	7	19
Pleasant environment/more user-friendly transit system	5	14
Improved interactions with people who are homeless	5	14
Effective enforcement	4	11
Clear customer expectations	3	8
Relationships with social service agencies	3	8
Everyone treated fairly	2	5
Operators feel they are supported	2	5
Unknown	2	5
Clear understanding of city's obligations	1	3
Nothing can be done about hygiene, but other factors have improved	1	3
Reduction in incidents	1	3
Short-term solutions	1	3
Total Agencies Responding	37	100

Source: Survey results.
Note: Multiple responses allowed; percentages do not add to 100%.

TABLE 31
DRAWBACKS OF EFFORTS TO INTERACT WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

Drawback	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Funding/insufficient resources	9	27
Homeless person's appearance/personal hygiene/unwillingness to accept help	8	24
Temporary fix; does not address underlying issues	6	18
None	5	15
Impact on customers/discourages ridership	3	9
Time involved	3	9
Perception that transit agency is the problem or encourages homeless to ride	2	6
Lack of support or inconsistent efforts by local governments	2	6
Safety/security issues	2	6
Total Agencies Responding	33	100

Source: Survey results.
Note: Multiple responses allowed; percentages do not add to 100%.

Table 32 lists the most successful (as defined by the respondents) actions taken. Partnerships/outreach leads the list, followed by consistent enforcement, training for agency staff (especially frontline staff), and fare policies (including low-income passes, reduced-price passes for social service agencies, and elimination of free fares). Eleven of the 15 agencies (73%) that identified partnerships/outreach as the most successful action taken rated their overall efforts as successful, compared with 55% of all agencies that rated their overall efforts as successful or very successful.

TABLE 32
THE MOST SUCCESSFUL ACTIONS TAKEN

Action	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Partnerships/outreach	15	48
Consistent enforcement	5	16
Fare policies	3	10
Training for agency staff	3	10
Banning passengers for multiple offenses	2	6
Clear procedures	2	6
Enhanced maintenance	1	3
Total Agencies Responding	31	100

Source: Survey results.
Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

The following are some of the specific successful actions reported by respondents:

- Our collaboration with the university students/social workers for outreach, the county-issued pass to participants in case-managed services, and our Good Karma Bike partnership have all been great. Through our collaborations, we have been able to help needy customers connect with services/support.
- Project Homeless Connect provides free access to dental, pet care, haircuts— anything thing a person living on the street might need at one place on a specific day. Agency workers make contact and can begin to follow up and try to place the homeless person in appropriate housing.
- We support a local homeless emergency housing project whereby homeless are sheltered during extreme cold. The transit agency provides free rides to the centers and supplies day passes for the following day when these folks leave the shelters. I think the homeless who participate in this program recognize the part the transit agency plays in keeping them safe.
- Homeless hearings are held in our space across from the homeless court, and the shelter has allowed us to gain more compliance from the homeless and mentally ill.
- Specific action plans designed for an individual especially when other branches of the agency and necessary community resources assist. When we tailor our activity to deal with the needs of one person and we focus several people or resources on those tasks there is always some level of success.
- Initially, development of an outreach program with professional outreach workers. More recently, partnering with the city to increase outreach capabilities.
- The partnership with the coalition whereby we are seen as a community partner and part of the solution. We can act to bring folks together to combat a community problem.
- Increased presence of supervisors, police, and security personnel. This has ensured that our facilities remain clean and customers feel safe.
- Discounts for social service agencies for transit tickets and passes. The homeless have access to our system, and this is often necessary if they are to improve their situation. For example, they can use our system to get to a job interview. For the agency, we get more ridership and we provide benefit to the community, which are measures of our success.
- Operator training on how to interact with customers has been very successful. This includes training on how to de-escalate confrontations. We do refresher training for each operator, which requires 8 hours each year (specified in union contract).
- Banning passengers for multiple offenses. Operators become more involved when they believe they have some support.
- Keeping everything clean. If it is allowed to stay dirty, then that is what people will expect and they will treat it as such.

Table 33 shows that a slight majority of respondents assess the balance between positive and punitive actions as appropriate. However, 44% report that more positive actions would be helpful.

TABLE 33
BALANCE BETWEEN POSITIVE AND PUNITIVE ACTIONS

Balance	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Current balance is about right	22	51
Could use more positive actions (such as vouchers for services, partnerships with other agencies, etc.)	19	44
Could use more enforcement	2	5
Total Agencies Responding	43	100

Source: Survey results.

Respondents were asked, “If you could change ONE aspect in the process of your agency’s interactions with people who are homeless, what would you change?” Table 34 summarizes the results. Strengthened partnerships with social service and nonprofit agencies and internal training programs were most frequently mentioned. Sixteen percent of respondents would not change anything.

TABLE 34
ONE CHANGE IN THE PROCESS OF TRANSIT AGENCY INTERACTIONS WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

Change	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Stronger partnerships/improved communication with social service and non-profit agencies	11	30
No changes	6	16
Training and awareness among agency managers and staff	4	11
Ability to act when people who are homeless refuse help or trespass	3	8
More resources	2	5
Transit agency takes the lead in its role as mobility provider	2	5
Overcoming passenger discomfort/ addressing hygiene issues	2	5
Extended hours for emergency shelters/ other places for people who are homeless to congregate	2	5
Clear policies on inappropriate behavior and reinstatement of riding privileges	2	5
Build and maintain public restrooms	1	3
Central clearinghouse for agency-distributed passes	1	3
Greater understanding of transit’s needs	1	3
Total Agencies Responding	37	100

Source: Survey results.

Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons learned that would benefit other agencies are shown in Table 35. Consistent enforcement and partnerships with agencies that work with people who are homeless are very helpful. Respondents reported that consistent and ongoing community outreach to individuals who are homeless yields benefits that are worth the time and resources. Training frontline staff in conflict resolution and in treating all customers, including the homeless, with respect is important, along with hiring “the right staff” and establishing a dialogue across departments within the agency.

TABLE 35
LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons Learned	No. Agencies Responding	% Agencies Responding
Consistent enforcement	7	22
Work with homeless agencies and community leaders	7	22
Commit resources to outreach to people who are homeless	5	16
Respect the humanity of individuals who are homeless	4	13
Training/hiring/internal discussion	4	13
None/still learning	4	13
No free fares	2	6
Efforts to reconstruct a safer and more secure transit facility can be viewed with hostility by anti-development activists	1	3
Total Agencies Responding	32	100

Source: Survey results.
Note: Multiple responses allowed; percentages do not add to 100%.

Lessons learned (reported verbatim except for minor grammatical changes) are presented by category.

Consistent Enforcement

- Enforcing a code of conduct is of major importance in order to provide a safe environment for the traveling public.
- Be consistent with application and enforcement of rules of conduct on buses and at facilities. Homeless does not mean stupid or ignorant, and we should not presume to think they will tolerate an overly zealous application of the rules any more than any other customer. Partner with local law enforcement. You can’t manage this alone.
- Need to be firm and consistent with interactions.
- Keep the encampment clear at all times; do not let them stay.
- Coordination with various city law enforcement agencies. Homelessness is a seasonal issue; be prepared to implement your plan. As mayors change, hopefully there is enough continuity in senior management at the transit agency.

- Assess and understand gateway crimes and understand the ramifications if those gateway crimes (such as loitering, urinating, trespassing, littering, and open containers) are not addressed.
- Being sure the transit agency has regular interactions and provides good information regarding the transit system’s expectations is very helpful.

Partnerships with Homeless Agencies and Community Leaders

- The goal is to successfully get homeless folks the help that they need immediately.
- Working with the homeless agencies has assisted us in removing some homeless from the buses during cold weather.
- Encourage dialogue with city/county agencies that have resources to address the issue. These are hard to find and, unless there is a champion among the local elected officials, it is difficult to have any traction on resolving the issues that are created by the homeless population.
- Partner with community leaders who can have a positive impact.
- Regularly interacting with your city’s human rights organizations. Our city has a commission that is part of the city’s structure, and sometimes they only hear from folks who feel disenfranchised.
- Positive interactions garner greater results than just enforcement. Enforcement is a short-term and temporary solution at best. Elevate the issue to government and nongovernment organizational bodies that can have an impact on the problem as a whole. Share as much information as possible with other stakeholders who might be able to effect change in the community.
- Develop a positive and consistent relationship with resources, outreach services, and the court system (mental health court, alcohol or drug court, veterans’ court).

Commit Resources to Outreach to People Who Are Homeless

- There is a definite benefit in committing full-time resources to assist homeless and mentally ill people. The time expended on intervention and prevention pays off exponentially, and success is always dependent on knowledge and relationships built over time.
- Community outreach is worth the time and resources.
- Willingness to fund a robust outreach program has been critical in our city. Because parts of the system provide warmth in the winter and air conditioning in the summer, and it is open 24/7, it becomes a de facto shelter to many of the city’s less fortunate residents. Dedicated outreach teams who get to know the clients and establish relationships can often be successful in getting these individuals, who may initially be service-resistant, to accept services.

- It takes patience and endurance. You have to keep doing the right thing.
- Be patient and empathetic with the homeless and make it clear that you are here to help them as well.

Respect the Humanity of Individuals Who Are Homeless

- Years ago we had a poor experience with a homeless man named Val. For years he would sit on the side of the road across from our downtown platforms and cuss and swear at the transit police officers, until one day an officer went over to him and chatted him up and eventually took him to lunch. We learned that Val had been an alcoholic before, he was sober now. He had held a job as the head of facilities for a local school district and was on a pension. We changed our view of Val and he followed suit; he is now one of our cheerleaders in the homeless community. Our officers, demonstrating their compassion for him, have kept in him in winter clothing and gear for the past several years. He is too proud to stay at the shelter or even with family. We see him almost every day near our main police headquarters.
- Respect the humanity of the person, look for ways to connect them to appropriate resources, and always keep safety first.
- When our agency staff treats homeless persons with respect, customers get the message that they are not violent or unwanted, and in turn, the customers do not disrespect homeless persons riding on our system, for the most part.
- We sort of operate with a soft hand, given that our issue is not a major one when it comes to homeless.

Training/Hiring/Internal Discussion

- Operator and supervisor training for working and interacting with customers.
- We have recently provided mental health training and refresher training of operators and support staff.
- Hiring the right staff to deal with homeless concerns.
- Keep senior management aware of issues related to homeless people that impact transit.

None/Still Learning

- Difficult to say.
- None
- Haven't had any significant incidents that have generated lessons learned.
- We're still learning.

No Free Fares

- Charge fares.
- Free fares will exacerbate any potential problems.

Other

- Even projects to improve safety and reduce crime can be viewed with hostility by anti-development activists.

SUMMARY

This chapter has described transit agency assessments of the actions they have taken to improve their interaction with people who are homeless. Key findings include the following:

- **Assessments of the success of actions taken are neutral to positive.** Most respondents (53%) rate their actions as “somewhat successful” and 40% rate their actions as “neutral.”
- **Reasons for these ratings varied.** On the positive side, respondents reported good relationships with agencies that specialize in dealing with individuals who are homeless, clear rules, effective enforcement, and a focus on behavior as opposed to social status. Respondents were frustrated by limited resources and the seemingly intractable nature of the “homelessness issue” and the underlying factors. One response summarized a common theme: “We are doing a reasonable job with the available resources.”
- **The primary benefits of these actions are connecting those in need with services and enhancing customer comfort, safety, and understanding.** Other benefits include a pleasant environment for transit, improved interactions with people who are homeless, effective enforcement, clear customer expectations, relationships with social service agencies, fair treatment for all customers, and bus operators who feel supported by the transit agency.
- **The major drawbacks of these actions are insufficient resources, aspects of the homeless population (personal hygiene, unwillingness to accept assistance), and the difficulty in addressing the issues underlying homelessness.** Insufficient resources were seen at both the transit agency and social service agencies. Fifteen percent of respondents reported no drawbacks to their efforts.
- **Partnerships and outreach were most frequently mentioned as successful actions,** followed by consistent enforcement, training for agency staff (especially frontline staff), and fare policies (including low-income passes, reduced-price passes for social service agencies, and elimination of free fares).
- **Strengthened partnerships with social service and nonprofit agencies and internal training programs were most frequently mentioned** in response to the question “If you could change ONE aspect in the process of your agency’s interactions with people who are homeless, what would you change?” Sixteen percent of respondents would not change any aspect of their efforts.

- **Lessons learned emphasized consistent enforcement and partnerships with agencies that work with people who are homeless.** Respondents reported that ongoing community outreach to individuals who are homeless is worth the time and resources. Training frontline staff in

conflict resolution and in treating all customers, including the homeless, with respect is important, along with hiring the right staff and establishing a dialogue across departments within the agency.

CHAPTER FIVE

CASE EXAMPLES

INTRODUCTION

Synthesis survey results provide an overview of transit agency efforts to interact with people who are homeless. Following a review of these results, six agencies were chosen as case examples. Personnel directly involved with policies and outreach to individuals who are homeless were interviewed by telephone. The case examples provide additional details on challenges, solutions, partnerships, and lessons learned.

The selection process for case examples had several criteria: (1) transit agencies of various sizes in different parts of North America, (2) agencies that have taken innovative approaches in their interactions with people who are homeless, and (3) agencies that provided detailed survey responses and interesting observations. Almost 75% of responding agencies offered to serve as a case example. The six agencies chosen provide an overview of current strategies to improve transit agency interaction with people who are homeless.

Figure 2 in chapter one showed the location of the case example cities. The six case example cities and agencies are—

- Fort Worth, Texas: Fort Worth Transportation Authority
- Madison, Wisconsin: Metro Transit
- Oakland, California: Bay Area Rapid Transit

- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority
- Phoenix, Arizona: Valley Metro
- Washington, D.C.: Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Table 36 provides a basic description of the transit agencies included in the case examples, including ridership, service area population, and peak bus requirements. Figure 3 presents this information in graphic form, with peak vehicles on the x-axis, service area population on the y-axis, and annual ridership reflected by the size of the bubble for each case example agency. Sources are the FY 2013 National Transit Database (NTD) reports and data provided by the agencies.

The case examples are reported in each agency’s own words and summarize survey responses and interview observations from each agency. The interviews explored issues raised by the survey responses in greater depth.

FORT WORTH TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (THE T, FORT WORTH, TEXAS)



The T is the transit provider in Fort Worth, Texas. The service area population of Fort Worth and Tar-

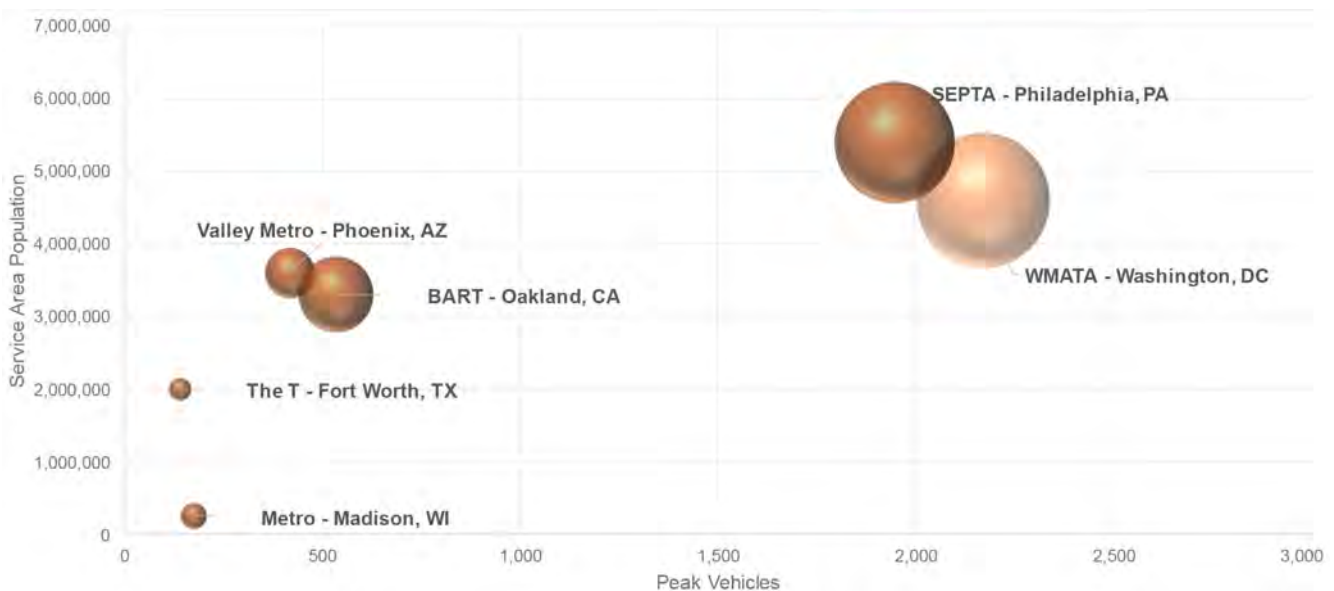


FIGURE 3 Ridership, service area population, and peak vehicles for case example agencies.

rant County is 2 million in a region of 7 million people that includes Dallas and other nearby counties. The T operates 140 fixed-route buses. Ridership in FY 2014 was 11 million, with 2 million of those trips taken on the Trinity Railway Express, a commuter rail line that connects Fort Worth and Dallas and is co-owned and operated with Dallas Area Rapid Transit.

TABLE 36
CHARACTERISTICS OF CASE EXAMPLE AGENCIES

Agency	Annual Ridership (million)	Service Area Population (million)	Number of Peak Vehicles
Fort Worth Transportation Authority, Fort Worth, TX	11.0	2.0	140
Metro, Madison, WI	15.0	0.25	175
Bay Area Rapid Transit, Oakland, CA	126.5	3.3	534
Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, Philadelphia, PA	330.2	5.4	1,948
Valley Metro, Phoenix, AZ	55.1	3.6	418
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, Washington, DC	413.6	4.6	2,171

Source: FY 2013 NTD reports and agency data.

Issues

The T views several factors related to people who are homeless as major challenges. The primary challenge is who pays for the rides of clients of the social service agencies, including individuals who are homeless. In the past, the transit agency gave away 100,000 free day passes per year to 140 social service agencies at a cost to the agency of up to \$350,000 in annual lost revenue and with no accounting for the use of these passes. In the most recent budget preparation process, The T realized that it cannot afford to continue this practice.

Complicating this issue was the fact that some nonprofit agencies were buying passes at a reduced cost. The policy was inconsistent and unfair to those who did pay.

Transit in Fort Worth has been perceived as a social service agency rather than a transportation agency, and the free fares for social service agency clients reinforce this perception. Until the agency dispels this image, it will have a hard time attracting new riders. A free service is often seen as having no value, and some in the community see a free service as only for “losers.”

This issue is not directly related to interactions with people who are homeless. The transit agency stated that its interactions with individuals who are homeless are no more challenging than interactions with the community at large.

Solutions

The T notified all nonprofit agencies a year in advance that the free fare program would not be continued beyond September 30,

2015, and it is actively pursuing dialogue with the community to dispel its image as a social service agency. Forcing the nonprofit community to buy their passes helps create the impression that The T is managing its system in a businesslike fashion and encourages more residents and visitors to try the service.

Training for operators does not focus on dealing with people who are homeless but addresses relationships with all customers. Like many transit agencies, The T has lots of rules. Dealing with belligerent customers is part of the training. Operators are taught to understand situations in which common sense and compassion are more important than strict observance of the rules; for example, when a mother cannot fold up a stroller on an uncrowded bus.

One person on The T staff is assigned as liaison with the city’s Homeless Commission. The agency also works with nonprofit and social service agencies to ensure that any new facility is on a bus route.

The primary benefit from the agency’s efforts to improve interactions with people who are homeless is a generally pleasant environment on all of its vehicles. The agency selects supervisors and security staff carefully to ensure that enforcement of rules and regulations for behavior is balanced with compassion.

If The T could change one aspect of its interactions with people who are homeless (more specifically, with the agencies that serve this population), it would be that these agencies would take a greater role in and responsibility for funding and supporting transit services.

Advice to Other Agencies

The T offers the following lessons learned from its interactions with people who are homeless:

- Examine your entire ridership base and develop programs that benefit all riders.
- Be aware that riders who are homeless are not that much different from other riders. The percentage of problem riders among people who are homeless is similar to the overall percentage.
- Establish a consistent fare policy. The T’s fare structure needs to address how to price tickets/fares fairly for all bulk-purchase customers, whether for-profit or nonprofit.

METRO TRANSIT SYSTEM (METRO, MADISON, WISCONSIN)



Metro is the transit provider in Madison, Wisconsin, with a service area population of 253,000 (FY 2013 National Tran-

sit Database). Metro directly operates 175 buses in maximum service. Ridership in 2013 was 15 million.

Issues

Metro noted that the extent of homelessness in Madison is a major challenge. Cold winters raise particular concerns about the physical safety of people who are homeless. Both candidates in the recent mayoral election listed equity, transportation, and the homeless population as key issues.

As a city, Madison embraces the “Wisconsin idea” of benefiting the lives of everyone in the state and looking constantly for ways to improve. In that vein, the City Council was concerned in 2009 when a fare increase was proposed for Metro that the burden would fall disproportionately on low-income persons.

Solutions

The City Council approved the fare increase in 2009, along with a low-income pass program that provides half-price monthly passes for low-income individuals. At the beginning of each month, 300 low-income passes are available for purchase at Metro, City Hall, and the Dane County Human Services Job Center (100 at each location). An additional 150 passes are available at mid-month. Low-income persons self-certify as eligible.

The low-income bus pass has been a helpful way to encourage customers, homeless or not, to access transportation. One concern is differences between the county and city in the way they fund the low-income bus pass. This is a topic of ongoing discussions. Cost-sharing arrangements that are consistent and fair to all parties are necessary if the program is to be expanded.

Metro provides transportation between overnight and day homeless shelters when the wind chill factor drops below minus 35 degrees and school is canceled. Buses are freed up to provide this service when schools are not in session.

Metro has developed a partnership with Porchlight, a very active nonprofit organization that serves as a coordinating group for homelessness-related issues. Both agencies work with other nonprofits, city departments, and downtown business groups to ensure that homelessness issues are addressed and that the safety/security issues are not unattended. Porchlight can steer people who are homeless toward treatment for mental health and addiction issues, and other needed social services.

People who are homeless usually do not cause public safety/security issues: Metro reports that 99% of individuals who are homeless are like any other customers. Interacting with people who are homeless is covered in the training

program for all Metro bus operators, with an emphasis on treating every customer with respect.

Customer complaints about people who are homeless are relatively rare and occur only when an individual is exhibiting belligerent or otherwise unacceptable behavior. Metro typically hears about these incidents first from bus operators. Passengers inform bus operators about issues at a bus stop. The biggest customer safety/security issue is with students, not with people who are homeless.

Metro has a partnership with the Madison Police Department and credits the Police Department for its skill at working with the community to build respect. Metro established a program in which police officers who are willing to work overtime are trained for special duty at transfer points within the system at busy or challenging times of the day. The Police Department trains on the enforcement aspects and Metro trains on the bus-related aspects, such as how to determine whether an individual is a real transit rider. Every few months, Metro and the Police Department review issues and how they are being addressed. For example, when a zero-tolerance program for policy violations on Metro buses was proposed, the Police Department and the school district—after reviewing national efforts—persuaded Metro not to institute the program. The key point regarding partnership with the police is that the officers get to know Metro’s drivers and passengers through daily interaction.

According to Metro, the primary benefit of these efforts is progress: Metro is better suited to deal with people who are homeless now than it was 10 years ago. However, the number of individuals who are homeless is growing.

If Metro could change one aspect of its interactions with people who are homeless, it would improve communications with county human services and nonprofit agencies. The communications are good, but they could be better.

Advice to Other Agencies

Metro offers the following lessons learned from its interactions with people who are homeless:

- Build relationships with social service and nonprofit agencies. If you do not know where to begin, start with the local (city or county) human services agency. Staff will direct you to agencies that work with people who are homeless and will provide contacts within those agencies.
- Join committees that deal with homelessness issues. This is a way to understand the issues from an outside perspective and to share the agency’s perspective with others.
- Develop partnerships with the local police department(s).

BAY AREA RAPID TRANSIT (BART, OAKLAND/SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA)



BART is the heavy rail transit provider in the San Francisco Bay Area in northern California. The service area population is 3.3 million. BART directly operates 534 heavy rail cars in maximum service. Ridership in 2013 was 126.5 million.

Issues

BART identified the extent of homelessness as a major challenge. The agency perceives three major issues related to people who are homeless on its system:

1. *Effect on customers.* The riding public wants the areas within the stations clean, with no encampments of people who are homeless, and expects any issues to be resolved immediately by means of enforcement.
2. *Engagement between law enforcement and people who are homeless.* The BART Police Department follows the engage-identify-connect model in its outreach to individuals who are homeless. The availability of resources is a challenge, temporally outside the hours of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and physically with a lack of sufficient beds/shelters. Individuals who are homeless are often not willing to accept offers of shelter and assistance.
3. *Political pressure.* Stakeholders want the “problem” solved with no negative repercussions.

The lack of training to identify and respond appropriately in dealing with difficult and challenged individuals has been a major problem for BART in its interactions with people who are homeless.

Solutions

The BART Police Department implemented crisis intervention team (CIT) training, philosophy, policies, and procedures for all populations, not only for people who are homeless. The agency hired a CIT coordinator and established a Multi-Disciplinary Forensic Team (MDFT) and a support system. MDFT is a collaborative work group that identifies individuals who have multiple contacts with law enforcement (“high calls for service”). These individuals are likely to have psychiatric issues and are in danger of slipping through the cracks in the system. The MDFT work group collectively shares the responsibility of addressing and assisting those in need of services and outreach.

The MDFT is a voluntary coalition of Alameda County law enforcement agencies, Alameda County Behavioral Health Care, and allied service providers who agree to meet for the purpose of assisting those individuals with mental illness, substance abuse, and co-occurring disorders who are at high risk of frequent welfare checks or involuntary hospitalization, or who are arrested for behaviors and activities related to their disabilities. The MDFT is committed to helping these individuals obtain evaluation, treatment, and ongoing services leading toward recovery and reducing recidivism for the benefit of both the individual and the community.

The BART system serves a four-county area. Each county has its own court system, which presents a unique challenge when dealing with a multi-county offender/transient. A critical collaboration has been to have the district attorney or designee participate in each county with the MDFT work group. Each county has its own version of a mobile support team, homeless outreach team, or crisis response team, with clinically trained outreach workers who work directly with officers in the field. The MDFT is an excellent forum for constructive venting about issues and concerns that law enforcement has to address day in and day out, which leads to the development of strategies to address these challenges.

What happens in a specific case depends on the perspective of the individual. If the person is receptive to help, he or she is committed (or recommitted) to a program. This approach is successful with a combination of willingness and the right resources. If the person is resistant, the officer is a little more persistent in attempts to persuade the individual to accept help. If the person is threatening with no regard for others, the officer will arrest him or her. Throughout the process, the goal is to encourage the individual to get help voluntarily, which reduces recidivism. The MDFT provides an effective support system for law enforcement.

CIT training is provided for all law enforcement personnel at BART, including dispatch, community service officers, and administrative personnel. CIT is also offered to other first responder agencies (fire, emergency medical transport, psychiatric hospital security, and college security). Mental Health First Aid is an excellent training that is also offered to other agency professionals (station agents, train operators, system service workers, trainers, and administrative personnel). The integration of training across agencies and departments has been very helpful and effective. BART recognizes how important it is for operations personnel and police to work together to address these systemwide challenges.

The benefits of these efforts include the following:

- Establishing rapport with at-risk populations through persistent outreach efforts.

- Developing a support system in each county, consistent collaboration, education, and training.
- Reducing repeat incarcerations and hospital visits among those individuals who have a history of multiple contacts with law enforcement officials.

The primary drawback is the inconsistency of collaborative efforts with individual counties within the BART service area. If BART could change one aspect of its interactions with people who are homeless, it would update and increase training—especially in the areas of homeless and mental illness awareness and de-escalation skills—for personnel who deal with difficult and challenging individuals.

Advice to Other Agencies

BART offers the following lessons learned from its interactions with people who are homeless:

- Leadership is a critical element. The department leader is the one who implements and follows through on CIT coordination and outreach liaison, and encourages other law enforcement agencies to participate.
- CIT coordination provides a direct support system to line staff.
- CIT and MDFT provide a peer support system for law enforcement officers.

SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (SEPTA, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA)



SEPTA is the primary transit provider in the five-county southeastern Pennsylvania metropolitan area. SEPTA operates multiple modes, including bus, light rail, heavy rail, and commuter rail service. The service area population is 5.4 million. SEPTA directly operates 1,172 buses, 334 commuter rail cars, 286 heavy rail cars, 126 streetcar rail cars, and 30 trolleybuses in maximum service. Ridership in 2014 was 330.2 million.

Issues

SEPTA views the extent of homelessness as a major challenge. The response in the late 1980s and early 1990s was left to enforcement by SEPTA's Transit Police Department. Many officers were frustrated, feeling that they were only moving the homeless from place to place. Homeless people tended to congregate in the underground concourses of center city and at SEPTA's two largest rail stations, Suburban and Jefferson (formerly Market East) Stations. They would

also seek shelter in remote locations where physical security measures were weakest.

In 1995, Project HOME, a Philadelphia nonprofit organization that has been a leader in providing comprehensive and effective services to persons who experience chronic homelessness, began to evaluate a partnership with the SEPTA Police Department. In response, SEPTA launched a paradigm shift in its approach to managing the homeless populations in its transit system.

Solutions

In the initial phase of the partnership, Project HOME, the City of Philadelphia's Department of Housing, professionals from the various mental health agencies, other volunteers, and SEPTA police began to jointly canvass the stations and underground concourses frequented by homeless people. The four goals of this street assessment were—

1. To assess the conditions;
2. To identify homeless individuals and their personal needs;
3. To cultivate confidence among that population to voluntarily seek shelter and accept available services; and
4. To provide relief for law enforcement in their daily contacts.

SEPTA quickly saw an improved travel environment and noticed that permanent solutions were established for many of the people living on the streets. The canvassing endeavor was named Point in Time and is conducted four times a year. In recent efforts, more than 35 staff members from Project HOME and other social services, possessing various skills, have worked with SEPTA police to canvass several major center city stations and the connecting underground concourses.

Project HOME also worked with local churches and other private groups to open "cafes"—temporary overnight shelters located near transit stations (the SEPTA system is closed between 1:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m.). When SEPTA police encounter people who are homeless, they can direct them to these sites.

SEPTA and its partners at Project HOME continued to look for new ways to manage the homeless population and strategically direct limited resources to where they would be most effectively utilized. In the winter of 2011 a program was unveiled by Project HOME, numerous social service agencies, the city of Philadelphia, SEPTA, and local business groups that had worked together to establish a walk-in outreach center at SEPTA's largest rail center. The center, named the Hub of Hope, was located in a small retail space at the Suburban Station, just under the Two Penn Cen-

ter high-rise office complex. The Hub provides social and health services to individuals who are experiencing long-term homelessness and who are living in and around the subway concourses during the winter months, when the homeless population seeking refuge is at its highest. The area is patrolled by SEPTA police officers, who check on the well-being of outreach staff and prevent congregating of individuals who refuse services or those who seek to take wrongful advantage of homeless people trying to find help.

Establishing a walk-in center within the transit system for people who are homeless has many advantages:

1. It serves people who are homeless where they are, making access to services much more convenient and allowing for continued follow-up with individuals.
2. Project HOME staff can engage individuals who need care at a “treatable moment” when they may be more receptive to offers of help.
3. SEPTA police officers have options in their dealings with people who are homeless. Instead of repeatedly removing them from the system, they can direct them to the center.

In January and February 2014, Project HOME reported that 359 individuals were placed into shelter, treatment, and other housing options (Project HOME 2014). Of these, 232 were categorized as long-term homeless/fragile individuals.

SEPTA reports the following benefits from its efforts to improve interactions with people who are homeless:

- A reduction in the homeless population within the transit system. The Hub of Hope’s success in placing individuals who are homeless into housing and programs is a major factor in this reduction. Veterans are directed to the Veterans Administration hospital for services.
- A great partnership with Project HOME that creates opportunities to address underlying issues that contribute to homelessness along with day-to-day behavioral issues.
- A reduction in customer complaints related to people who are homeless.

One drawback is the uncertain availability of space for the Hub for Hope from year to year. In general, the center city business community has been supportive of Project HOME’s efforts, but some members of the business community are strongly opposed to providing a space for homeless outreach efforts.

Advice to Other Agencies

SEPTA offers the following lessons learned from its interactions with people who are homeless:

- *Creativity.* The transit agency cannot succeed with enforcement alone.
- *Partnerships.* By working together, the transit agency, the city, and social service agencies can meet the needs of all parties involved. Enhanced customer security and perceptions, help for those who need it, and increased sensitivity to the people and issues involved have been direct results of the SEPTA–Project HOME–city partnership.
- *Funding.* If SEPTA could change one aspect of its interactions with people who are homeless, the agency would welcome a consistent, continuing source of funding in support of the partnership’s efforts.
- *Patience.* Success does not happen overnight. Give the process time to come together.

VALLEY METRO (PHOENIX, ARIZONA)



Valley Metro is the primary transit provider in Phoenix, Arizona. It operates multiple modes, including contracted bus and rail service. The service area population is 3.6 million. Valley Metro oversees operation of 392 buses and 26 light rail cars in maximum service. Ridership in 2013 was 55.1 million on bus and rail.

Issues

Valley Metro views people who are homeless as a minor issue. For many years, persons who were homeless were arrested and cited if they did not follow the rules for conduct on the transit system. This type of enforcement was not effective and led to a revolving door: the violators were often back on the street at the same location within 4 or 5 hours, because the offense was minor. The contractor responsible for removing violators from the system was doing its job; expectations had not been established beyond that. Many homeless people were extremely resistant to accepting any type of help. Services offered were voluntary; no one could force a person to seek help.

The new director of safety and security, who came to Valley Metro from the Phoenix Police Department, suggested that the agency exclude people from its system if they did not follow the rules. Although initially unwilling to do this, Valley Metro began asking whether it should expect more from its enforcement efforts. The opening of a high-profile light rail line crystallized the need for a new approach.

Solutions

The Phoenix Police Department launched the Surface-transportation Top Offender Program (Operation STOP) in 2011 to address issues with behavior and code of conduct as well as “gateway” crimes (e.g., loitering, urinating, trespassing, littering, carrying an open container of alcohol). STOP was designed to connect people to social services and to restrict their use of the system until probationary requirements or terms of release through plea hearings were met. Acting as an agent of Valley Metro, the Police Department issues warnings for first violations; these warnings require that the person stay away from the transit system, rail stations, and bus stops for a period of 60 days. If the person returns within this period, he or she can be arrested and then is under a court order to work with a counselor from a social service agency (through the Department of Human Services) and stay away from transit until the probationary period is over. Approximately 420 persons have been in the program; 65% of the warnings and arrests were issued or made at bus stops.

Several key aspects contribute to the effectiveness of STOP:

1. It does not rely on enforcement alone. Social service agencies work with the city and Valley Metro to address the underlying problems contributing to homelessness. A key to the program’s success is the ability to gain the trust of the homeless person.
2. STOP combines real penalties (being barred from the system) with inducements (getting help for underlying problems) to encourage changes in behavior.
3. The Phoenix Police Department and Valley Metro work with the courts and the prosecutors to gain their buy-in by convincing them that the behavior is chronic and negative, the program is not simply punitive, and the penalties are necessary to encourage extremely resistant persons to seek and accept treatment for underlying issues often related to mental health and addiction.
4. The navigation model through the system provides consistent guidance to individuals identified as chronically homeless. By providing them with a “way out,” it encourages these individuals to change their behavior and seek treatment while holding them to their probation terms and hopefully working toward success and return to the public transit community.

STOP closes the gaps and avoids the previous revolving door pattern by involving law enforcement, the Department of Human Services, social service agencies, prosecutors, and the courts. There is no guarantee of success: many of the top offenders are chronically homeless and extremely resistant to any kind of aid, and there is recidivism. But there

are also successes; for example, Valley Metro’s director of safety and security is always happy to attend a “key ceremony,” where a formerly homeless person is welcomed to his or her new apartment.

The biggest obstacle to success is lack of funding: social service agencies are chronically understaffed and underfunded. Valley Metro would like to take proactive actions similar to a 90-day campaign in 2012 involving teams of social service agency personnel who sought out homeless people and encouraged them to accept assistance. The intake process was done on the spot. An additional benefit to this sort of action is that social service agency personnel know their clients and have the training to handle any situation that arises; however, staff are not always available from the social service agencies to conduct a campaign.

Another example of partnerships was a joint outreach effort with the Veterans Administration in 2012 to assess and then contact homeless veterans at stops and on vehicles. A near-term goal for Valley Metro is to conduct more outreach efforts rather than simply respond to requests from outside agencies.

The Police Department participates in crisis intervention team training, but there are no formal training programs for operators or other Valley Metro staff related to interactions with people who are homeless. Because 65% of warnings and arrests happen at bus stops and not on the bus, bus operators do not have extensive contact with people who are homeless. Operators notify dispatch if they observe a customer passed out at a bus stop.

Advice to Other Agencies

Valley Metro offers the following lessons learned from its interactions with people who are homeless:

- *Partnerships are critical to success.* The transit agency (and, more broadly, the city) cannot police its way out of the issue. Partnerships with prosecutors, the courts, and the Human Services Department through Operation STOP were essential to connecting homeless people to the help they needed.
- *A successful program has penalties as well as inducements.* It is not enough to offer assistance to people who are homeless. To change behavior, a combination of penalties and inducements is necessary.
- *Be proactive.* If Valley Metro could change one aspect of its interactions with people who are homeless, the agency would be more proactive in its approach.
- *Assess gateway crimes* (e.g., loitering, urinating, trespassing, littering, carrying open containers) *and understand the ramifications if these crimes are not addressed.* These actions have a strong effect on perceptions of the transit system.

WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY (METRO, WASHINGTON, D.C.)



Metro is the regional transit provider in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, with a service area population of 4.6 million. Metro directly operates 1,293 buses and 878 heavy rail cars in maximum service. Ridership in 2013 was 413.6 million.

Issues

Metro identified most challenges in interactions with people who are homeless as minor. Its biggest issue was fare payment. When Metro introduced its SmarTrip cards in 2011, it discontinued tokens as a fare payment medium. Metro distributed several thousand free SmarTrip cards to homeless shelters and county/city human service agencies, and Metro staff organized training for the various agencies on how to load fares onto each customer’s card. Reduced fare applications were distributed and processed so many customers with disabilities could be issued a reduced fare SmarTrip card. Full fare and reduced fare SmarTrip cards were designed to look identical.

Metro experienced a higher than anticipated number of lost and replaced reduced fare SmarTrip cards, indicating possible fraudulent use of these cards. In addition, some fare cards were empty and disagreements arose between customers and Metro staff regarding the “faulty” cards, fare evasion, and sharing or inappropriate use of customers’ SmarTrip cards. Metro staff do not want to be confrontational with any customers, but they often encountered the same individuals with the same not-able-to-pay issues on a daily basis.

Metro does receive complaints from its customers about personal hygiene of some riders and urination at certain stations and in station elevators.

Solutions

Tokens have been reinstated. Tokens can be used to pay the fare on a bus or they can be added to the SmarTrip card. In addition, the customer’s name, photograph, ID number, and expiration date are now included on the reduced fare SmarTrip card. Metro staff can ask to see any card that the customer is requesting assistance with and collect any card that appears not to belong to the holder. Metro can suspend any card with suspicious activity or that has been reported as stolen or lost.

The agency noted that people who are homeless who routinely use its system are not unlike other customers. As long

as customers who are homeless do not exhibit behaviors that are offensive or disruptive, everyone appears to coexist. To protect the rights of all customers, any person who is indulging in loud, offensive, or dangerous behavior is contacted by Metro staff or police. Anyone who refuses to pay is reported to the Metro police.

Metro has developed partnerships with 68 homeless shelters and works with indigent populations through schools, clinics, and hospitals. Travel training and train-the-trainer courses are offered. The agency conducts outreach to non-traditional housing organizations.

Metro also partners with the District of Columbia’s Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency to provide designated “warming buses” around the city in extreme winter weather conditions. Food and water are available on the buses, and portable restrooms are located nearby.

Advice to Other Agencies

Metro offers the following lessons learned from its interactions with people who are homeless:

- *The policy of opening our doors to everyone as long as they behave appropriately on our system fosters respect and appropriate behavior among most riders. Enforcement is required to deal with the small percentage of customers who do not comply with the rules, but these are not all people who are homeless.*

TABLE 37
HOW-TO MATRIX SUGGESTED BY THE CASE EXAMPLES

Question	Approach
How do I begin?	Establish policies based on behavior.
How do I enforce the policies?	Work with transit police (if existing) and local law enforcement to devise effective enforcement strategies with the goal of ensuring and enhancing the safety and comfort of all customers. Real penalties are an important aspect of enforcement.
Will enforcement alone work?	Experience suggests that inducements are needed along with penalties to make real changes in individuals’ behavior. Partnerships with social service agencies and others can yield important benefits.
How do I find partners?	If you do not know where to begin, start with the local (city or county) human services agency. Agency staff will direct you to agencies and provide contacts within those agencies.
How do I fund a program?	Funding is challenging for all parties, but partnerships help to share the cost. Seek out grant opportunities. Keep in mind that actions to address disruptive behavior are important to your customers and affect their perceptions of your agency.
Anything else?	One agency noted that training “cultivates perceptions” at all levels: agency personnel, law enforcement, customers, and the broader community.

- *Changes to fare media can have unanticipated consequences* among social service agencies that distribute fares to their clients.
- *The warming buses provide shelter for individuals who are homeless on bitterly cold winter nights.* The warming buses also provide a safe haven for people who are homeless and want help but may not know where to find it or whom to trust.

CASE EXAMPLE SUMMARY

The case studies were selected to provide examples of the wide variety of strategies used by transit agencies in their interactions with people who are homeless. Rather than summarizing the results in very different situations, Table 37 offers how-to guidelines suggested by the case examples.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this synthesis is to report on major issues and successful approaches regarding transit agency practices in interacting with people who are homeless. The literature review, survey of transit agencies, and case examples provide a snapshot of current interactions and offer a general overview of how interactions with people who are homeless have evolved.

The survey of transit agencies was important to define the current state of the practice with regard to agency interactions with individuals who are homeless. Thirty-four completed surveys were received from the 40 agencies in the sample, a response rate of 85%. Transit agencies listed in the APTA directory were also invited to participate in the survey; we received responses from 21 additional agencies, bringing the total to 55. Survey results address the extent to which people who are homeless are a challenge for transit agencies, agency policies and procedures, actions implemented and their effects, responsibilities and resources, partnerships, community education, challenges, benefits and drawbacks of actions taken, and lessons learned.

Case examples provide additional details on challenges, solutions, partnerships, and lessons learned. Six agencies were selected as case examples:

- Fort Worth, Texas: Fort Worth Transportation Authority
- Madison, Wisconsin: Metro Transit
- Oakland, California: Bay Area Rapid Transit
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority
- Phoenix, Arizona: Valley Metro
- Washington, D.C.: Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

This chapter summarizes key findings, presents conclusions from this synthesis project, and suggests areas for future study. Findings from the literature review, survey responses, and especially the case examples identify and assess the factors that contribute to the success of agency interactions with people who are homeless. The chapter is organized into five sections:

1. Findings from the survey and literature review

2. Agency assessments
3. Lessons learned—survey respondents
4. Lessons learned—case examples
5. Conclusions and areas for future study.

The areas suggested here for further research include actions that transit customers view as most helpful; the effectiveness of various approaches, especially with regard to the rate of recidivism; optimal training programs for frontline transit personnel; benefits of in-house social workers; the role of a “champion”; dissemination of findings; and the usefulness of an information-sharing peer work group.

FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

- **Is homelessness an issue for transit agencies?** Ninety-one percent of responding agencies perceive impacts related to homelessness as either a major or minor issue. The issue is not confined to large transit systems; 93% of mid-sized agencies and 88% of small agencies view individuals who are homeless as a major or minor issue.
- **Policies target behavior, not a specific group of individuals.** Most responding agencies have developed informal policies and procedures for interacting with people who are homeless, but very few agencies post their policies and procedures on their websites. The literature review examined library policies and procedures related to people who are homeless. Both transit agencies and public libraries have taken care to draft policies and procedures that target behavior rather than a specific group.
- **Evolution of interactions with people who are homeless.** Within the time frame of the literature review, an evolution can be seen in how transit agencies interact with people who are homeless. The initial reaction is a reluctance to expend resources on a problem that clearly goes beyond the transit agency. Next is a realization that customers are unhappy and something needs to be done. The most obvious action is enforcement. When enforcement alone does not solve the problem, agen-

cies move toward partnerships with social service and nonprofit agencies. Survey responses reflect agencies at all points along this continuum.

- **Actions taken.** Actions taken by transit agencies with regard to people who are homeless reflect the dual approach that emerged as an ongoing theme throughout the literature review: transit agencies pursue partnerships with social service agencies while enforcing laws and agency rules. The majority of respondents reported that the extent of interaction with people who are homeless is constant year-round, although 30% indicated more extensive interaction in cold winter months.
- **Responsibilities and resources.** The operations department was named by a majority of respondents as having responsibility for implementing agency policies and procedures regarding people who are homeless, followed by city or county police and transit police. Multiple jurisdictions can be a complicating factor. Sixty percent of respondents indicated that responsibilities are shared among multiple parties. Transit police were named most often among the 40% indicating that one group had the lead role. Agencies were evenly split on whether they conduct or sponsor training for first-line employees related to interactions with people who are homeless. Several agencies reported that employee training addresses conflict resolution or disruptive passengers but is not specifically targeted to people who are homeless.
- **Budget impacts.** Most responding agencies have not defined the budget impacts related to interacting with people who are homeless. Only one of the six agencies that had defined budget impacts reported an annual total of more than a million dollars. Three of these six agencies indicated that the funds were spent to provide free or reduced-cost fares, while the other three agencies used these funds for extra cleaning crews, outreach services, additional staff at the transit center, or a crisis intervention training program. Only seven agencies (16%) have dedicated staff to interact with people who are homeless.
- **Partnerships.** Seventy-five percent of respondents partner with others. One respondent specifically noted that the collaboration began around enforcement and then expanded to include social service agencies. Another agency hired a social worker who coordinates all needed services. Some agencies were asked to partner with a specific group, while others sought out partnerships with agencies that deal with people who are homeless. One agency asked key officers in local police departments throughout its service area to invite the transit agency to committee meetings or forums concerning people who are homeless. One transit police department joins with the city police department to host Coffee with a Cop. However the partnerships began, a common element was ongoing contact among all partners to identify issues and assess progress.
- **Agency partners.** City police departments are a natural partner for transit agencies, even for those with their own police forces. Transit agencies also collaborate with social service and mental health agencies regarding homelessness. Several transit agencies work directly with homeless shelters. Fares are an important area for partnerships: many transit agencies offer reduced fares for people who are homeless and conduct outreach with the social service agencies to ensure broad awareness of these programs. Partnerships are a two-way street, with the transit agency educating others about its services and obtaining new perspectives on people who are homeless from those who work with them most closely. The shared information can lead to collaboration on action plans.
- **Weather.** Severe winter weather is an inducement to collaboration. In cities with winter-only homeless shelters, the transit agencies provide service to these shelters. In other cases, connecting services between day and night shelters are provided during winter months. One agency provides free rides for people who are homeless on nights when the temperature drops below freezing. Another sends modified buses to specific locations to serve as overnight shelters during especially cold nights.
- **Community education.** Most responding agencies do not participate in community education efforts related to the problem of homelessness. Among the 42% that are involved in community education, many work with homeless committees in the cities to describe their services and pass programs. Some cities host summits or workshops on homelessness, and transit is often invited to participate in these and other outreach efforts.
- **Challenges in interactions.** Funding and the extent of homelessness were the only challenges rated as “major” by at least 25% of respondents. When asked to describe the major challenge in agency interactions with people who are homeless, agencies cited behavioral issues and homeless people congregating on vehicles or in transit centers/terminals. The primary agency strategies to address these challenges are partnerships and consistent enforcement. Two agencies that mentioned partnerships with homeless coalitions in their cities noted that the coalition’s approach was more thorough and achieved more permanent results than simply calling the police.
- **Challenges in customer reactions.** Agencies were more likely to characterize challenges in customer reactions (as opposed to challenges in interactions with people who are homeless) as “major.” Personal hygiene issues were cited by a majority of respondents as a major challenge, followed by cleanliness of transit facilities/vehicles/seats and rider discomfort in the presence of people who are homeless. At some agencies, challenges were greatest at night, at certain locations, or on certain routes. Fear and a negative reaction to personal hygiene issues were mentioned most often as the major challenges in customer reactions to people who are homeless. Primary agency strategies to

address these challenges are enforcement/police presence, coordination with police or social service agencies, and training of frontline agency personnel.

AGENCY ASSESSMENTS

- **Assessments of the success of actions taken are neutral to positive.** Most respondents (53%) rated their actions as “somewhat successful,” and 40% rated their actions as “neutral.”
- **Reasons for these ratings varied.** On the positive side, respondents reported good relationships with partners, clear rules, effective enforcement, and a focus on behavior. Respondents were frustrated by limited resources and the seemingly intractable nature of the homelessness issue and the underlying factors. One response summarized a common theme: “We are doing a reasonable job with the available resources.”
- **The primary benefits of these actions are connecting those in need with services and enhancing customer comfort, safety, and understanding.** Other benefits include a pleasant environment for transit, improved interactions with people who are homeless, effective enforcement, clear customer expectations, relationships with social service agencies, fair treatment for all customers, and bus operators who feel supported by the transit agency.
- **The major drawbacks of these actions are insufficient resources, aspects of the homeless population (personal hygiene, unwillingness to accept assistance), and the difficulty in addressing issues underlying homelessness.** Insufficient resources were seen at both the transit agency and social service agency levels. Fifteen percent of respondents reported no drawbacks to their efforts.
- **Partnerships and outreach were most frequently mentioned as successful actions,** followed by consistent enforcement, training for agency staff (especially frontline staff), and fare policies (including low-income passes, reduced-price passes for social service agencies, and elimination of free fares).
- **Strengthened partnerships with social service and nonprofit agencies and internal training programs were most frequently mentioned** in response to the question “If you could change ONE aspect in the process of your agency’s interactions with people who are homeless, what would you change?” Sixteen percent of respondents would not change any aspect of their efforts.

LESSONS LEARNED: SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Survey respondents shared lessons learned from efforts to improve agency interactions with people who are homeless. Lessons learned emphasized the following points:

- **Consistent enforcement and partnerships with agencies that work with people who are homeless.** Consistency in the application of behavior-based rules of conduct benefit all riders by clarifying what will and will not be tolerated. Transit agencies can encourage dialogue with city/county agencies that have resources to address the issue. Dedicated staff who get to know the clients and establish relationships can often be successful in getting these individuals, who may initially be service-resistant, to accept services.
- **Ongoing community outreach to individuals who are homeless.** Community outreach is worth the time and resources. Agencies report that time expended on intervention and prevention pays off exponentially and that success is always dependent on knowledge and relationships built over time. It takes patience and endurance. Be patient and empathetic with people who are homeless.
- **Training frontline staff in conflict resolution and in treating all customers, including people who are homeless, with respect.** Respect the humanity of the person. When transit agency staff treat people who are homeless with respect, customers get the message that these people are not violent or unwanted and are less likely to disrespect homeless people riding on the system.
- **Hiring the right staff and establishing a dialogue across departments within the agency.** Interpersonal skills are equally as important, if not more important, than technical skills among frontline employees. Internal communication within the transit agency helps ensure a consistent message in interactions with people who are homeless.

LESSONS LEARNED: CASE EXAMPLES

Several themes ran through the case examples in terms of lessons learned, including these:

- **Partnerships are critical to success.** Social service and nonprofit agencies have a much greater understanding than transit agencies of issues surrounding homelessness. Programs in which the intake process is done in the field at transit stops and facilities offer considerable promise. Transit agencies reported that partnerships result in enhanced customer security and perceptions, provision of help for those who need it, and increased sensitivity to the people and issues involved.
- **If you do not know where to begin to build partnerships, start with the local (city or county) human services agency.** Agency staff will direct you to agencies and provide contacts within those agencies.
- **Be creative.** Enforcement alone does not work. The transit agency cannot police its way out of the issue. Inducements are needed along with penalties.
- **Leadership is important.** Be proactive. Develop partnerships with local police departments as well as with

agencies that work directly with people who are homeless. Join committees that deal with homelessness. Implement and follow through on training, coordination, and outreach liaison, and encourage other agencies to participate.

- **Fares and fare media can be roadblocks.** Establish a consistent fare policy and be aware that changes to fare media (specifically fare media offered to social service agencies) can have unintended consequences.
- **Riders who are homeless are not that much different from other riders.** Foster an attitude of respect toward all riders through training of frontline personnel.
- **Patience is necessary.** Allow time for the partnerships to bear fruit.
- **Additional funding is needed to implement innovative efforts.** Social service agencies are chronically understaffed and underfunded.
- **Assess gateway crimes** (e.g., loitering, urinating, trespassing, littering, and carrying open containers) and understand the ramifications if these crimes are not addressed.

CONCLUSIONS AND AREAS FOR FUTURE STUDY

- **People who are homeless are a challenge regardless of transit agency size.** Larger agencies are more likely to characterize homelessness as a major issue, but small and mid-sized agencies reported homelessness as at least a minor issue on their transit systems. Customer discomfort in the presence of people who are homeless—whether because of hygiene issues, fear, or other factors—emerged as a consistent theme among survey respondents.
- **Successful policies target behavior, not specific groups.** The literature review of policies and procedures at public libraries reinforced this finding.
- **Consistent enforcement clarifies agency expectations.** Several agencies noted that individuals who are homeless are not the only or even the primary target of enforcement efforts. Codes of conduct are common at public libraries and among transit agencies.
- **Training frontline staff (at a minimum) in conflict resolution and in treating all customers, including the homeless, with respect is an important component of enforcement.**
- **People who are homeless are often viewed incorrectly as a homogeneous group.** Survey results, the literature review, and case examples reveal that this is not true, which means that a single approach will not work.
- **Leadership is important.** Be proactive. Implement and follow through on training, coordination, and outreach liaison, and encourage other agencies to participate.
- **Enforcement alone does not work.** Partnerships are essential. Case workers and others at social service and nonprofit agencies have a much greater understanding of people who are homeless and can persuade these individuals, who may initially be service-resistant, to accept services. Respondents to the survey represented many different departments within transit agencies; law enforcement personnel from transit police or security departments consistently stressed the need for partnerships and the options these partnerships offered their police officers.
- **If you do not know where to begin to build partnerships, start with the local (city or county) human services agency.** Staff will direct you to agencies that work with people who are homeless and will provide contacts within those agencies.
- **Onsite drop-in centers staffed by social service agencies and other means of offering immediate assistance to people who are homeless at transit facilities are an emerging trend.** Initial results suggest that the ability to conduct client intake onsite at the transit station or center is very effective in persuading individuals who are homeless to seek and accept help.
- **Transit agency interactions with people who are homeless will never solve the problem of homelessness in today's world.** This is important to remember when frustration sets in as issues related to homelessness remain challenging. Actions taken by transit agencies have resulted in enhanced safety and comfort for all customers. In addition, many respondents and nearly all case examples reported successful outcomes for specific individuals who are homeless, along with improved satisfaction among all customers. In the absence of a broader societal fix for homelessness, agencies can (and deserve to) acknowledge their role in these success stories.

Findings from this synthesis suggest seven areas for future study:

- **What actions do transit customers view as most helpful?** Fear and discomfort in the presence of people who are homeless are challenges for many agencies. There is a sense in the survey responses that customers prefer enforcement actions. Is this true? How do customers view more nuanced approaches involving partnerships? Does increased customer understanding of transit agency interactions with people who are homeless change perceptions? The answers are important for transit agencies.
- **Optimal training approaches for frontline personnel.** Are de-escalation skills integrated into the training program? Who receives the training—is it for supervisory personnel only, all frontline staff, all managers? Does the training focus on crisis prevention or crisis intervention? Are onsite protocols, including a clear chain of command at the scene, specified to maximize the safety of all involved in the interaction?
- **The benefits of in-house crisis intervention specialists or community outreach liaisons.** A few transit

agencies have added community resource specialists to their staff. What are the benefits of this approach? Are there any drawbacks? What is the efficacy of using the crisis intervention team model in transit?

- **Formal assessments of the success of various types of approaches in reducing homelessness.** This is not necessarily within the domain of transit agencies, but the rate of recidivism is an especially important factor from the transit perspective. Frustration over the revolving door aspects of enforcement has led transit agencies to partner with others. It would be extremely useful to know whether innovative programs (e.g., those that provide intake at transit stops and facilities) are more likely to result in reduced recidivism.
- **The role and importance of a champion within the transit agency.** What is the appropriate role for the champion? Advocate? Trainer? Facilitator of partnerships with social service agencies, law enforcement, and other municipal or county departments? Are there specific circumstances in which an in-house champion

is particularly useful or effective? For smaller agencies with limited budgets, can there be an external champion?

- **Dissemination of the findings of this report.** As noted earlier, survey responses were received from many different departments within transit agencies. A webinar may be useful to share the study's perspectives, encourage effective approaches, and gain further insight on successful strategies.
- **Peer information-sharing work groups.** Members of the panel who have been very active in this area found new approaches and strategies for interactions with homeless persons through this study. Would an ongoing peer information-sharing work group be useful, especially given the involvement of so many different departments within and outside of transit agencies? How would this group most effectively be set up? If done electronically, what platform would host the group? How could it be publicized? Are there models in other subject areas to guide the development of such a group?

ACRONYMS

ALA	American Library Association
BART	Bay Area Rapid Transit
CDF	crisis diversion facility
CIT	crisis intervention team
DOT	Department of Transportation
HOT	homeless outreach team
MDFT	multidisciplinary forensic team
MTA	Metropolitan Transportation Authority
NTD	National Transit Database
OCTA	Orange County Transportation Authority
SEPTA	Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority
SFPL	San Francisco Public Library
STM	Société de transport de Montréal
STOP	Surface-transportation Top Offender Program
TRID	Transportation Research Information Database
UTA	Utah Transit Authority
WHO	World Health Organization
WMATA	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

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APPENDIX A

Participating Transit Agencies

Transit Agency Practices in Interacting with People Who Are Homeless

1.	Akron, OH	Metro Regional Transit Authority
2.	Albany, NY	Capital District Transit Authority
3.	Allentown, PA	Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority
4.	Antioch, CA	Eastern Contra Costa Transit Authority
5.	Aspen, CO	Roaring Fork Transportation Authority
6.	Austin, TX	Capital Metro
7.	Boise, ID	Valley Regional Transit
8.	Bradenton, FL	Manatee County Area Transit
9.	Canton, OH	Stark Area Regional Transit Authority
10.	Charlotte, NC	Charlotte Area Transit System
11.	Chicago, IL	Chicago Transit Authority
12.	Cleveland, OH	Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority
13.	Cocoa, FL	Space Coast Area Transit
14.	Columbus, OH	Central Ohio Transit Authority
15.	Denver, CO	Regional Transportation District
16.	Durham, NC	Durham Area Transit Company
17.	Eugene, OR	Lane Transit District
18.	Everett, WA	City of Everett
19.	Fort Worth, TX	Fort Worth Transportation Authority
20.	Hartford, CT	Connecticut Transit
21.	Houston, TX	Houston METRO
22.	Knoxville, TN	Knoxville Area Transit
23.	Lansing, MI	Capital Area Transit Authority
24.	Louisville, KY	Transit Authority of River City

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- | | | |
|-----|--------------------|---|
| 25. | Madison, WI | Metro Transit System |
| 26. | Minneapolis, MN | Metro Transit |
| 27. | Montreal, QU | Agence Métropolitaine de Transport |
| 28. | Napa, CA | Napa County Transportation and Planning Agency (VINE) |
| 29. | Nashville, TN | Metropolitan Transportation Authority |
| 30. | Newark, NJ | New Jersey Transit |
| 31. | New York, NY | MTA-New York City Transit |
| 32. | Oakland, CA | Bay Area Rapid Transit |
| 33. | Oceanside, CA | North County Transit District |
| 34. | Olympia, WA | Intercity Transit |
| 35. | Orange, CA | Orange County Transportation Authority |
| 36. | Oxnard, CA | Gold Coast Transit District |
| 37. | Philadelphia, PA | Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority |
| 38. | Phoenix, AZ | Metro Transit |
| 39. | Portland, OR | Tri-County Metropolitan Transit District of Oregon |
| 40. | Providence, RI | Rhode Island Public Transit Authority |
| 41. | Redondo Beach, CA | Beach Cities Transit |
| 42. | Salem, OR | Salem-Keizer Transit |
| 43. | Salt Lake City, UT | Utah Transit Authority |
| 44. | San Carlos, CA | SamTrans |
| 45. | San Diego, CA | Metropolitan Transit System |
| 46. | San Jose, CA | Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority |
| 47. | San Rafael, CA | Marin Transit |
| 48. | Seattle, WA | King County Metro Transit |
| 49. | Spokane, WA | Spokane Transit Authority |
| 50. | Tampa, FL | Hillsborough Area Regional Transit |
| 51. | Vancouver, BC | TransLink |
| 52. | Vancouver, WA | C-Tran |

53. Washington, DC Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
54. West Palm Beach, FL Palm Tran
55. Woodbridge, VA Potomac Rappahannock Transit Commission

APPENDIX B

Survey Questionnaire

TRANSIT AGENCY PRACTICES IN INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

1. WELCOME

This TCRP synthesis will report on how transit agencies interact with people who are homeless. Transit agencies face the need to balance a compassionate approach with preservation of the quality of the transit environment for all of its passengers. Some transit agencies have developed partnerships with law enforcement, social service agencies, and others to approach this issue in a more positive way. The study will identify successful strategies and best-practice solutions.

The survey questions try to address as many situations as possible, but given the variety of circumstances and transit systems, not all questions may be appropriate for all agencies. We encourage you to obtain input from others in your agency as needed. If any question does not apply to your system, simply answer "N/A."

We also ask for recommendations for other agencies to be included in our sample and for your willingness to participate in a telephone interview if your agency is selected for a more detailed case example.

The final report, to be published by the Transportation Research Board, will document the current state of the practice and provide an overview to help transit agencies address the challenges presented. This report will be extremely useful to all transit agencies in assessing current policies and identifying actions that have been successful elsewhere. All survey responses will be confidential and will be edited to remove information regarding individual agencies.

Thank you for taking the time to participate.

2. Default Section

1. Today's Date

MM DD YYYY

MM/DD/YYYY / /

***2. Please list your name, agency, and contact information**

Name:

Title:

Company:

City/Town:

State/Province:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

3. System Size

<250 peak vehicles

250 to 999 peak vehicles

1000+ peak vehicles

3. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES REGARDING PERSONS WHO ARE HOMELESS

4. Are homeless persons an issue for your transit agency?

- Yes, the homeless population is a major issue
- Yes, the homeless population is a minor issue
- No, the homeless population is not an issue

4. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES 2

5. Does your agency have policies or procedures for interacting with persons who are homeless?

- Yes, we have developed policies or procedures
- No, we do not have formal policies but we have developed informal policies and procedures
- No

5. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES 3

6. Are these policies and procedures available on your agency's website?

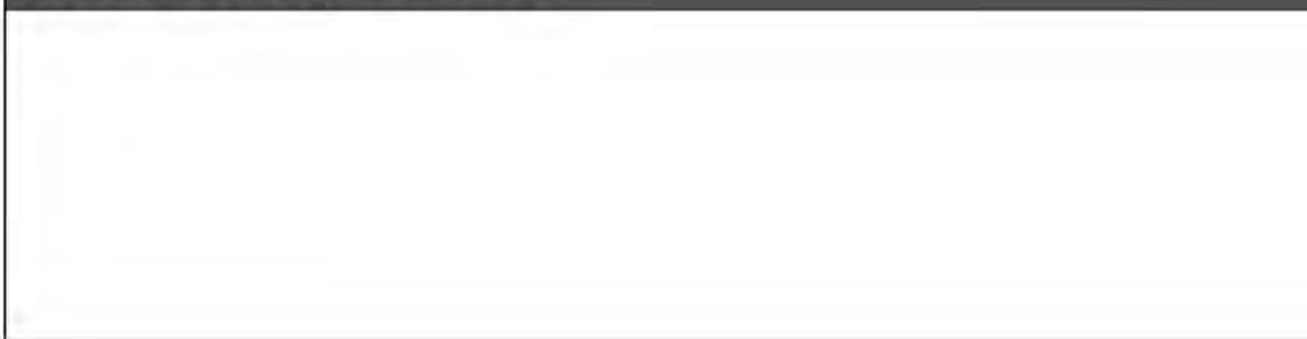
- Yes
- No

6. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES 4

7. What is the best way to obtain these policies and procedures?



7. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES 5



8. Do the policies or procedures differ for different homeless populations?

- Yes, different for families
- Yes, different for veterans
- Yes, different for younger persons
- Yes, different for older persons
- Yes, different for people appearing to have mental illness or substance abuse issues
- No
- Other (please specify)

9. Do the policies or procedures differ by the way the homeless persons present themselves?

- No
- Yes, different for loud or disruptive persons
- Yes, different for others (please specify)

8. CHALLENGES

10. Please characterize the following elements as major challenges, minor challenges, or not an issue in agency interactions with persons who are homeless.

	Major Challenge	Minor Challenge	Not an Issue
Extent of homelessness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unclear policies and procedures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support from city/county	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Legal issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opposition from community activists	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to develop effective partnerships with social service or other agencies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Balancing customer concerns with humane actions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Funding to support programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of emphasis within transit agency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training of agency personnel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

11. Please describe the one major challenge in agency interactions with persons who are homeless.

12. Please describe strategies or tactics used to overcome any major challenges with respect to agency interactions with persons who are homeless.

9. CHALLENGES 2

13. Please characterize the following elements as major challenges, minor challenges, or not an issue in terms of customer reactions to persons who are homeless

	Major Challenge	Minor Challenge	Not an Issue
Discomfort in the presence of homeless persons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Experience of aggressive/disruptive behavior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal hygiene issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cleanliness of transit facilities/vehicles/seats	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effect on willingness of customers to use transit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

14. Please describe the one major challenge in customer reactions to persons who are homeless.

15. Please describe strategies or tactics used to overcome any major challenges with regard to customer reactions to persons who are homeless.



10. ASSESSMENT

16. How would your agency rate its efforts to interact with people who are homeless?

- Very successful
- Somewhat successful
- Neutral
- Somewhat unsuccessful
- Very unsuccessful

17. Please describe the reasons why you chose this rating.



18. What have been the primary benefits of these efforts?



19. What have been the primary drawbacks of these efforts?



20. What was the most successful action taken, and why?



11. ASSESSMENT 2

21. How would your agency assess the balance between positive and punitive actions in interactions with homeless persons?

- Could use more positive actions (such as vouchers for services, partnerships with other agencies, etc.)
- Current balance is about right
- Could use more enforcement

22. If you could change ONE aspect in the process of your agency's interactions with people who are homeless, what would you change?



23. Please describe any “lessons learned” that would benefit other transit agencies.

12. ACTIONS

24. What types of actions has your agency taken with regard to people who are homeless? (check all that apply)

- Enforcement of anti-loitering laws
- Requirement that riders exit the bus or train at the last stop and pay an additional fare to re-board
- Periodic sweeps of areas where homeless persons are known to congregate
- Additional cleaning of transit vehicles and facilities
- Partnerships with local law enforcement agencies
- Partnerships with social service or non-profit agencies to encourage persons who are homeless to seek assistance
- Discounted fares for persons who are homeless
- No specific actions undertaken
- Other (please specify)

25. Does your agency undertake collaborative efforts to interact with homeless persons in partnership with others?

- Yes
- No

13. ACTIONS 2

26. Who are your partners in these collaborative efforts? (check all that apply)

- City police
- Social service agencies serving homeless persons
- Private-sector agencies serving homeless persons
- Non-profit agencies serving homeless persons
- Homeless shelters
- Other (please specify)

27. Please describe the nature of these efforts. How did they begin? How do they work?

14. ACTIONS 3

28. Does your agency's level of effort in interacting with homeless persons change by season? (check all that apply)

- Yes, more extensive in hot summer weather
- Yes, more extensive in cold winter weather
- Yes, more extensive in inclement weather (snow, heavy rain)
- No, constant year-round

Other (please specify)

29. Does your agency's interactions with homeless persons vary by mode? (check all that apply)

- We operate only one mode
- Yes, more extensive on rail
- Yes, more extensive on bus
- Yes, more extensive on paratransit
- Yes, more extensive in rail stations
- Yes, more extensive in bus transit centers
- No

Other (please specify)

15. RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESOURCES

30. What is the approximate size of the homeless population that impacts your system daily?

- 1,000 or more
- 500 – 999
- 100 – 499
- Less than 100
- Not sure

31. Who is responsible for implementing agency policies and procedures regarding people who are homeless? (Check all that apply)

- Transit police
- Operations supervisors
- City or county police
- Other agency or non-agency staff (please specify)

32. Does one group have a lead role in implementation?

- No, responsibilities are shared
- Yes (please specify)

33. Does your agency conduct or sponsor training in relation to interactions with homeless persons?

- Yes, for all employees
- Yes, for first line employees (e.g., bus operators, customer service personnel, transit police)
- No
- Other (please specify)

34. Has your agency defined budget impacts related to interacting with homeless persons?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

16. RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESOURCES 2**35. What is the approximate annual budget impact?**

- Less than \$100,000
- \$100,000 to \$499,999
- \$500,000 to \$999,999
- \$1,000,000 or more
- Not sure

36. How are these funds used?

17. RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESOURCES 3

37. Does your agency have dedicated staff to interact with homeless persons?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

18. RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESOURCES 4

38. How many staff persons are dedicated to interacting with homeless persons?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more
- Other (please specify)

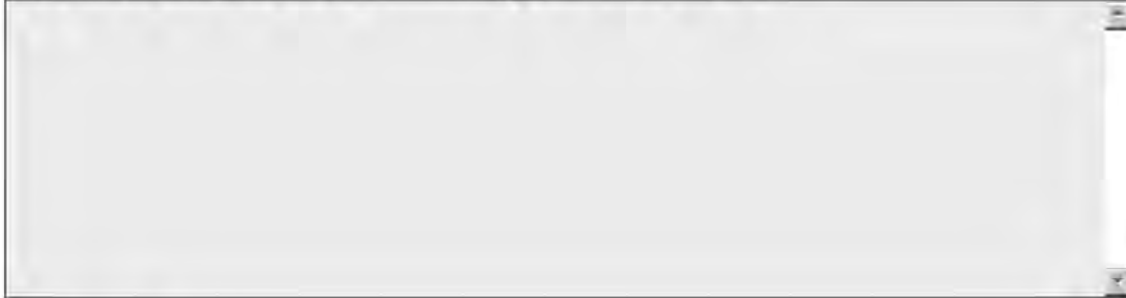
19. RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESOURCES 5

39. Does your agency conduct or participate in any community education efforts related to the problem of homelessness?

- Yes, as the lead agency
- Yes, as a participating agency
- No

20. RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESOURCES 6

40. Please describe these community education efforts.



21. OTHER

41. Are there any other aspects of your agency's interactions with persons who are homeless that would be useful for us to know and wasn't included in any of the questions?



22. CASE STUDY

42. Would you be willing to participate further as a case study, involving a telephone interview going into further detail on your agency's experience, if selected by the TCRP panel for this project?

Yes

No

23. OTHER AGENCIES

**43. Is there another transit system that you suggest we include in this synthesis project?
Please provide the agency name and a contact.**

24. THANK YOU!

Thank you for participating! This survey is now complete. Please contact Dan Boyle at dan@danboyleandassociates.com or at 858-259-6515 if you would like any additional information about this study.

APPENDIX C

Summary of Survey Results

TRANSIT AGENCY PRACTICES IN INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

1. Date:
2. Contact Information
 Name of Respondent: _____
 Agency Name: _____
 Title of Respondent: _____
 Agency Address: _____
 Agency Size _____
 Respondent e-mail address: _____
 Respondent Telephone Number: _____

3. System size

Small (<250 peak buses)	60.7%	34
Medium (250–999 peak buses)	25.0%	14
Large (1,000+ peak buses)	14.3%	8

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES REGARDING PERSONS WHO ARE HOMELESS

4. Are homeless persons an issue for your transit agency?

Yes, the homeless population is a major issue	30.9%	17
Yes, the homeless population is a minor issue	60.0%	33
No, the homeless population is not an issue	9.1%	5

5. Does your agency have policies or procedures for interacting with persons who are homeless?

Yes, we have developed policies or procedures	28.6%	14
No, we do not have formal policies but we have developed informal policies and procedures	57.1	28
No	14.3%	7

6. Are these policies and procedures available on your website?

Yes	31.3%	5
No	68.8%	11

7. What is the best way to obtain these policies and procedures?

Typically invited to request via email or phone.

8. Do the policies or procedures differ for different homeless populations?

Yes, different for families	2.5%	1
Yes, different for veterans	5.0%	2
Yes, different for younger persons	5.0%	2
Yes, different for older persons	2.5%	1
Yes, different for persons appearing to have mental illness or substance abuse issues	15.0%	6
No	70.0%	28
Other (please specify):	17.5%	7

Other includes: (1) “Homeless” is a minor issue. What we do have are certain areas of our service district that have a large number of “transients” but they are not treated any differently from other customers. (2) Placements differ for families and some veterans. There are special requirements for minors found in the system, with or without their parents/guardians. Individuals at risk to themselves or others may be involuntarily removed, but otherwise, removal from the system is voluntary unless in violation requiring police action. (3) Our efforts focus on the behaviors of the individuals versus their societal status. Nonetheless, the homeless pose unique challenges to us in the public transit environment. We try to work with their needs within public transit, but cannot always accommodate. (4) Everyone is treated the same. (5) We have no specific policy for homeless people however we do have procedures to assist them when they require help. Example: we have a program to provide free travel to extreme weather shelters. We have policy for emotionally disturbed persons who are often employed when dealing with homeless clients. (6) NA (7) a description (*sic*)

9. Do the policies or procedures differ by the way the homeless persons present themselves?

No	56.1%	23
Yes, different for loud or disruptive persons	36.6%	15
Yes, different for others (please specify):	9.8%	4

Other includes: (1) Staff are empowered to utilize their best judgement regarding customers who are loud or disruptive. Usually the transit police are contacted. Training is provided. We have no way to actually keep count but it is very likely that we have hundreds of individuals who are/have been/may be at risk of being homeless riding our system every single day. Policies are meant to protect every customer. Customers are not questioned or singled out unless their behavior is negatively affecting other customers, presenting a safety hazard or appears to be in need medical assistance. (2) There is a distinction between a continuous rider committing fare evasion versus a customer causing a disturbance. (3) We have responses to suit people who simply require assistance traveling. If the person has mental health issues that need to be addressed then we adjust as necessary and we have written policy for emotionally disturbed people. (4) Procedures are standard for all passengers when there is a disruption on the bus regardless of the status of the passenger. We don’t scrutinize homeless individuals any more than any other passenger or treat them differently.

BARRIERS, OBSTACLES, AND CHALLENGES

10. Please characterize the following elements as major challenges, minor challenges, or not an issue in agency interactions with persons who are homeless.

	Major challenge	Minor challenge	Not an issue
Extent of homelessness	27%	59%	14%
Unclear policies and procedures	10%	39%	51%
Support from city/county	13%	44%	44%
Legal issues	6%	44%	50%
Opposition from community activists	9%	20%	72%
Ability to develop effective partnerships with social service or other agencies	4%	40%	56%
Balancing customer concerns with humane actions	10%	63%	27%
Funding to support programs	34%	34%	32%
Lack of emphasis within transit agency	6%	26%	68%
Training of agency personnel	9%	46%	46%

Comments include: (1) Homeless persons are more of a concern for local jurisdictions, social service organizations, and churches that we work with. But the community also takes an active role in supporting programs that assist with our homeless population. (2) Inadequate alternatives. (3) We provide free fare cards to the County's main homelessness service organization and have for upwards of 15 years. While they keep account of the fare cards distributed, they also give them to St. Vincent De Paul Society to distribute, and these are not accounted for. We are considering another approach to low-income fare subsidies that may mean a program that is no longer free but at a discount and that serves a broader range of individuals in need. (4) Security threats posed by homeless encampments within the Rail Road Right of Way. Negative behavioral issues associated with a subset of homeless who have challenges with mental illness, substance abuse/chemical dependence, antisocial or criminal tendencies. (5) Funding continues to be an issue. (6) The police department is working with our city partners on the homeless issue. Our Hearing Officer holds hearings at the City Homeless court, so we can streamline the process to clear citations for the homeless. (7) It is difficult to determine if someone is homeless. (8) We have two "Client Services" Sgt. positions. These are two senior Sgts. Their purpose is to connect with the numerous agencies and resources to assist mentally ill and vulnerable.

11. Please describe the nature of the one major challenge.

Responses summarized in Table 22, chapter three of report. Verbatim responses are provided here.

Major challenge in the person's personal hygiene.

The way in which they are perceived. One of the major challenges is that sometimes the individual can be disruptive by panhandling or disturbing other customers but this is not all homeless nor is it specific homeless.

Paying fares. The transit agency discontinued the availability of purchasing tokens in 2011. The agency distributed several thousand free trip cards to homeless shelters and County/City human service agencies. The idea was to have every person who had previously used "tokens" to have use of a card. Agency staff organized training for the different organizations on how they could load fare onto each customer's card. Reduced Fare Applications were disseminated and processed so many customers with disabilities could be issued a Reduced Fare card. Agencies could then load fare money onto the card, etc. The move to eliminate tokens was in partial response to the number of customers who were "out of tokens" and thus not able to pay their fare. The card allows the customer to board and even exit with a negative balance, thus making it easier on all customers who find themselves short of cash at one time or another. Prevents or at least diminishes those instances of confrontation between agency staff and those customers not able to pay. Full Fare Cards and Reduced Fare Cards look identical. We experienced a higher than anticipated number of Reduced Fare Cards that were "lost" and thus replaced often by individuals who are in the homeless populations. Fare cards were empty, disagreements between customers and agency staff regarding the "faulty" cards and upsurge of unpaid fares. Sharing or inappropriate use of customer's cards. Agency staff does not want to become confrontational with any customer but often encountered the same individuals with the same not-able-to-pay issues daily.

Intoxicated homeless create an unsafe environment by either falling on property or urinating in public.

We are limited in what we can do for the long-term homeless problems.

The primary challenge for our agency in relation to interactions with persons who are homeless is inclement weather. When temperatures are at Code Blue levels and when there is snow and sleet, we experience a significant number of homeless individuals congregating inside our primary transit center. This higher than normal volume of homeless individuals is not a major issue. However, it can present minor issues for riders, since the seating in our primary transit center is maintained by a private fast food restaurant. Also, in inclement weather, homeless individuals will often stay on the bus beyond a single ride. However, the agency has an informal policy to allow riders, whether homeless or not, to stay on the bus round trip when it is significantly cold outside. Example: If a bus passes a bus stop Westbound and there is someone at the stop who wants to catch the bus Eastbound, rather than wait 20 minutes for the bus to have reached the end of the line and return back, the rider can board and stay on the bus until after the bus reaches the end of the line and loops back going Eastbound. The agency does enforce fare policies, thus riders with All-Day passes can ride the bus all day. They would simply need to swipe the pass for each trip.

Drug use at our main transit facility restrooms (needles).

Generally, the most common issue that we deal with are homeless people sleeping in bus shelters.

Riders riding buses for a place to hang out rather than for transportation.

Convincing people to accept services. There are never enough low-demand beds for the number of homeless in our system and many homeless won't go to the "traditional" shelter with many cots set up in a large room, or with curfews and lots of rules. The homeless are protected from weather and they feel safe in our system. In addition, well-meaning individuals and groups provide money, food, blankets, etc., to homeless...thereby enabling them so there is less incentive for them to accept services. The combination of too few "quality" beds and too much help from the public makes it more difficult to entice homeless individuals to go to more appropriate housing options.

The lack of public restrooms. They relieve themselves at bus stops and on the grounds of nearby businesses and even on buses. Some stops have to be (or should be) cleaned daily for this reason and some business owners have felt aggrieved for long periods of time.

Hostile, aggressive, loud, and disruptive segment of homeless population who use the public transit system creates fear and apprehension in other riders and transit staff.

The lack of training to identify and respond appropriately in dealing with difficult and challenged individuals.

We run a public service that does not question the customer's purpose of travel. If they can pay the fare they can ride. While on the vehicle and property, they must follow the same code of conduct that applies to all other customers. Agency staff is compassionate and want to help, so we have information printed and available on board the vehicles about how someone can obtain social services and connect to housing options. Unfortunately, many of the homeless have been turned away from shelters due to lack of space available, or due to rules unique to the shelter. It is difficult to convince someone they should try the system again if they feel it has failed them in the past.

Engaging the cities in their responsibility to service the homeless. Homeless are often pushed into the transit stations to be hidden from the city and converted into a transit police issue.

Homeless individuals who sleep at our bus stops and especially in our bus shelters.

Don't know who to contact for assistance.

Operators tend to want to bypass homeless passengers based on a few problems. Tend to generalize the issue.

Our largest transfer facility is also a large building with public toilet access. It is just a few blocks away from a recently closed (by the city) informal homeless encampment. When the site was closed, many migrated to the transfer station and have tried to set up semi-permanent camps in the area. The city is actively reaching out to the homeless and trying to connect them to other services. We have to protect our property for our tenants and customers. Finding an alternative for the homeless is challenging at best.

Our county human services does not fund a low-income bus pass the way the city does. Concerns have been expressed that these passes should be both a city- and county-coordinated effort. The county does provide bus passes to individuals accessing human services for accessing jobs and other services.

Outreach to various organizations and agencies whereby all understand the different transportation programs available to their clients.

Inability to engage mentally disturbed and/or intoxicated individuals, particularly those who pose a physical threat.

Time-consuming, costly, and often requires police involvement

Body odor and hygiene issues while riding the buses (public transit). They tend to want to ride the buses all day based on weather issues.

Bringing pets on the bus as a “service animal.”

Primary service is providing transit. Front-line employees not equipped to deal with sensitivities. 75% of homeless have addiction /mental illness. 80%–85% decline offers of help. Can’t deny entry unless pose a health issue or taking up too much room. Winter months more pervasive.

Mental health issues

Resources of social service response teams to conduct in-field intakes and engage potential homeless population on public transit. It is important to have a responsive and proactive engaging team capable of assessing substance abuse, mental health, and veteran populations. In addition our Native American community is in need of engagement.

Repetitive citations for failing to pay fare. The City has a Free Fare Zone (FFZ) for light rail and bus in the central business district and the rail line runs in front of the largest homeless shelter. Needless to say, in the FFZ, riders complain of having the homeless riding. But, as noted, being homeless is not a crime; transit police officers understand and treat them fairly, even if they violate some of the agency’s ordinances.

Having employees understand/develop some compassion for the homeless. The general reaction is to treat all homeless the same, whether the person has some place to go or not.

We have a downtown circulator with a free fare, and in the winter cold there have been instances of homeless passengers boarding the bus, sleeping, drinking alcohol, etc., and not getting off the bus.

The significant geographic area we must serve. We cover the entire greater metropolitan region, including 17 different municipalities. It is a challenge to become aware of and connect with all the resources available in each community. We rely on a close relationship with key members in each police force, specifically in the area of mental health, which includes many homeless clients. We also sit on several boards and committees dealing specifically with homelessness in the various cities we serve.

Loitering and sleeping in the transfer stations.

Funding to support programs for homeless individuals is a major factor in our community. There is a strong recognition of the need and most agencies are doing a great job with what they have. However, the need far exceeds the resources and the result is an overflow of individuals lacking the support they need to make a lasting impact on their homeless condition.

People riding around and the hygiene issues.

Homeless individuals use transit facilities for bathing, washing, and sleeping on a frequent basis. Bus stops have also become used by homeless for sleeping/living; while we do not own the bus stop, this affects the passengers wishing to use the stop to access our service, and cities often request that we address the issue even though they own the actual stop.

Disruption of other customers on the bus and at the transit center.

The major issue is who pays for the rides of clients of the social service agencies, which includes the homeless. In the past, the transit agency gave away 100,000 free day passes per year to 140 social service agencies, costing the agency up to \$350,000 in annual lost revenue. The agency notified all nonprofits a year in advance that the program would not be continued beyond 9/30/15. The debate in the community is how to continue to fund these “free” passes.

We currently do not experience any major challenges when dealing with homeless persons. Issues are largely limited to homeless persons bringing an excessive number of carry-on items/bags onto the bus and also with personal hygiene and cleanliness.

Homeless folks will camp out in a corner of the convention center which is immediately adjacent to our busiest downtown stop. The excuse offered when they are asked to move is that they are waiting for the bus. The bus comes and goes and they are still there. This is a major turnoff to convention goers and visitors to our city.

Camping out on transit property.

Convincing the homeless person to leave a bus shelter due to cold weather is a huge challenge. Other than having a local group such as the Homeless Action Committee convince the person to go to a homeless shelter or a boarding house to get food and stay warm, or having the police arrest the homeless person, it is extremely hard to get them out of the bus shelter. Often the homeless person will briefly leave and come back. Many of the homeless have mental health issues and without medication they may be loud and destructive and often take over a shelter or part of a shelter with shopping carts full of their things as well as garbage. We have had a couple situations where the homeless person believes the bus shelter is theirs to live in.

During cold weather the homeless tend to ride our free downtown shuttle without getting off. This can result in an environment on the bus that puts off our regular riders, like tourists and downtown workers who are the primary markets for the free shuttle. Also, our downtown transit center has become the de facto shelter for homeless on cold days once they are asked to depart from the city's shelter. They are asked to leave the city's shelter very early, like 5:30 a.m. or 6:00 a.m. Not sure of the exact time. They migrate to our downtown transit center, which has an indoor area, to remain warm. They tend to hang out in the mornings at the center, and then disperse in the afternoon.

12. Please describe strategies or tactics used to overcome any major challenges with respect to agency interactions with persons who are homeless.

Responses summarized in Table 23, chapter three of report. Verbatim responses are provided here.

When a person who is homeless becomes a challenge for the driver, then law enforcement/Transit Police are called the location for assistance.

Training. Acknowledging that everyone has a story. Our system is involved with volunteerism with various organizations such as City Rescue Mission, City Standdown (event for homeless veterans), Urban Ministries, and the State Food Bank. We have found that this has had a positive impact on the homeless community.

Tokens have been reinstated. Tokens can be used to pay for the fare on the bus or they can be added to the fare card. If the customer has a Reduced Fare Card, the token can actually pay for two fares. The Reduced Fare Card is now printed on the Customer ID card. Having the customer's name, photo, ID number, and expiration date is believed to have instilled a sense of ownership to all individuals. Agency staff can request to see any fare card that the customer is requesting assistance with and can collect any card that appears to not belong to the holder. The agency can suspend any card with suspicious activity or that has been reported as stolen or lost. This will hopefully reduce the instances of customers who are attempting to not pay their fare.

A Code of Conduct is in place and City Police have been hired to patrol the bus transfer depot and enforce the Code of Conduct, and/or arrest individuals who have committed a crime and/or cannot take care of themselves. For cases where injury may have occurred, medical assistance is called and they are transported to the local hospital. Also, for weather-related assistance, City Police will transport the homeless to a designated shelter.

We do our best to enforce the rules, transport emergency medical, mentally ill, and inebriated persons, but our policies are more effective in the short-term.

The agency's Planning Department staff remain actively engaged with local nonprofits, government agencies, and homeless activists in seeking to provide humane access to services and ensure dissemination of service information to those in need.

Stepped up security personnel at the transit stations. They monitor the amount of time that someone is in a restroom. We have noticed that the presence of security personnel around the restrooms has reduced drug use.

Our contracted security staff has contact information for a variety of community resources and has contacted these resources if the need arises.

We introduced a fare in a previously fare-free area and basically eliminated the problem of transients, often intoxicated and disruptive, just riding around.

By partnering with the city's Department of Homeless Services we have greatly increased our outreach services, case management, and access to beds.

Not yet...but restrooms are the first logical response. The question then is who pays for them and maintains them.

Information on the use of uniformed security officers and contracted law enforcement personnel is posted and they patrol major Transit Centers and transfer points to deter loitering, panhandling, vending, petty theft, public drinking, illicit drug use, prostitution, and other "Quality of Life" issues/crimes. Removal of camps on the rail right-of-way by

maintenance of way crews. Information sharing with local governments, including local Law Enforcement, regarding challenges with homeless.

Implementing CIT training, philosophy, policies & procedures, CIT Coordinator, and a support system.

In the past, the agency has teamed up with university students and social workers at the county to leverage their professional expertise in assessing needs and helping to connect customers to services. We know it is important to have someone establish a trusting relationship with the customer before they can become open to the offer of assistance. You don't really have the time to spend doing this if you are driving the bus, or if you are responding to a field call. Our printed information flyer can be provided to someone who seems to be in need, but that might not be enough if the person has had issues with service providers in the past.

In 2011, we began the Community Intervention Project in which we employed a full-time Licensed Social Worker to provide referral and linkages to the homeless, as well as serve as an advocate on a city and state level. This program has been successful but we need to continue to have open communication and support from the government (city and county level). There is little funding to support projects, and the homeless numbers continue to rise.

Work with County Community Service Agency

Attempted outreach

Communication provides alternatives, consistent enforcement of station and bus conduct rules, and collaboration with police and social service providers.

Ongoing discussions

Outreach

We have a problem with them congregating at the transit center, which disturbs other passengers. It would be helpful to find alternative means to communicate with them other than engaging the police.

Partnering with new homeless coalition. Coordination with the City Police Department and the County Sheriff. Hired a security company to manage the transit centers. Modifying restroom facilities.

We are service providers and we are required to allow them to ride.

Strong training of operators and public safety staff with respect to the questions that can be legally asked of someone with a "service animal."

Involvement of social service agencies and police department when needed.

All customers need to re-tap at EOL. Enforcement at terminal platforms. Sisyphean task overall, especially in wintertime.

Working with social service providers, both contracted and non-contracted, is vital. Integration and continual work with the city court system and prosecutors with a mandated navigator model to personally interact with some of the more challenging groups and populations is necessary. Individuals identified as chronically homeless must be navigated consistently in the program with a desire to change the behavior, seek treatment, hold clients to their probation terms, and hopefully work toward success and returning to the public transit community.

Training for all officers on dealing with the mentally ill is mandatory. We have invited rail and bus supervisors to attend these yearly trainings.

We have several human services agencies that purchase one-ride passes that they give out to people needing rides. This has helped reduce some panhandling and made it easier for homeless to board and ride buses without hassle.

Increased police and supervisor presence on the bus, and developing a policy limiting ride to one round trip. Also developing passenger code of conduct to be posted on all buses.

The two senior Sgts. have the experience and the latitude to do whatever is necessary to get to the bottom of issues when they arise. We invest a great deal of time into building meaningful, effective relationships with policing partners and with the numerous agencies in each community. At this point we are fortunate to face little resistance, and our relationships are productive.

Active security patrols reminding persons not to sleep; then excluding for the day; then excluding for longer periods. Work with police to obtain any detox or medical services for any persons in need when contact made.

The major concern is the safety of our passengers from those who, through their behavior, seem to pose a threat to others' well-being. In these circumstances we work closely with our security personnel and the local police to address the issue. For others, if possible, staff will try to connect homeless individuals with local resources when appropriate.

Street supervisors to take people off the bus after one round trip. We work with legal, homeless shelters, police, and our security department.

Using our county sheriffs, who are under contract with us to provide transit police services, we work closely with the county and individual cities to address issues as they are identified through customer complaints.

Worked with legal counsel to prepare wording for signs regarding loitering and policy to be able to temporarily and permanently ban riding on buses or being on agency property, though the issues are not solely caused by homeless individuals.

Our interactions with individuals who are homeless are no more challenging than those with the community at large.

N/A

We have a cooperative program with the Coalition for the Homeless. We previously were being asked by a variety of nonprofit agencies for free tickets for their clients. We entered a "buy one get one free" agreement with the Coalition whereby they would coordinate with the agencies and we would coordinate with them. This provided mobility for agency clients so they could access services, jobs, etc. Over time we have been able to ask the Coalition to utilize their staff to help us by dealing with issues at various bus stops, etc. This approach has been more thorough and permanent than simply calling the police. Police are still called in immediate emergency situations, but the Coalition can help pick up the pieces afterward. This arrangement has enabled us to put various entities in touch with one another; for example, the Coalition and the Convention Center were not working with each other until we brokered a meeting.

Treat homeless just as we treat any other customer.

13. Please characterize the following elements as major challenges, minor challenges, or not an issue in terms of customer reactions to persons who are homeless.

	Major challenge	Minor challenge	Not an issue
Discomfort in the presence of homeless persons	30%	66%	5%
Fear	25%	66%	9%
Experience of aggressive/disruptive behavior	27%	61%	11%
Personal hygiene issues	55%	44%	0%
Cleanliness of transit facilities/vehicles/seats	43%	48%	9%
Effect on willingness of customers to use transit	21%	58%	21%

Comments include: (1) People who are homeless who routinely use our system are not unlike other customers. People have routines. Customers who are homeless still have appointments like medical, job services, food bank schedule, different soup kitchens...so they usually fall right into a regular routine. Not at all uncommon to see the same faces regardless of homelessness or not on the same routes during roughly the same times of the day. As long as customers who are homeless do not exhibit behaviors that are offensive or disruptive, everyone seems to coexist. Urination on trains, in elevators and on platforms is an issue at certain stations. Customers are not approached but rather the areas are cleaned immediately. Similar to any other customer who becomes sick on a train. (2) No specific knowledge in this area. (3) Note this at specific locations. (4) Assaults against operators; service interruptions associated with removal of loud, aggressive, or disruptive individuals; aggressive panhandling; public drunkenness/intoxication. (5) The responses above are based on types of complaints that we hear when we meet with customers and community. With 7,600 homeless in the county, residents/customers are not shocked to see someone homeless on our property and generally try to be very tolerant, unless they are doing something that seems threatening or unsanitary. (6) Aggressive panhandling and urinating in public are major concerns. Also, the majority of seats in our major transit hubs are taken up by homeless (as a result of homeless system failures). (7) All are major issues we deal with on a regular basis. (8) Not sure how we know what our customers think . . . we have not heard complaints. (9) A recent survey indicated that the presence of homeless people or panhandlers is more of an issue at night than during the daytime hours. (10) On select routes these are issues.

14. Please describe the one major challenge in customer reactions to persons who are homeless.

Responses summarized in Table 25, chapter three of report. Verbatim responses are provided here.

Fear toward persons who are homeless because they can be disruptive and aggressive at times.

The issue is usually with visitors coming into the city and not feeling comfortable with riding alongside an individual who is homeless. Usually you will see empty seats surrounding a person who is homeless. This is true on the bus and the trains. In really cold weather people can easily be identified as homeless with their piles of belongings bundled around them. Most of our customers who are homeless are peaceful and ride to seek warmth or because they are enroute to a destination. Many of them are known to our bus operators and station managers. Often on first name basis. Greetings exchanged. This hopefully models positive behavior for customers. Often visitors or even regular travelers will witness or hear about a homeless person who urinated or defecated on the train, an elevator or public space. One bad act by a member of a population can unfortunately color the entire population for some.

Personal hygiene, especially for intoxicated individuals.

Nothing specific.

We have received very few complaints about homeless people using our fixed-route service.

Aggressive/disruptive behavior is a major challenge but we address this issue effectively with contracted transit security officers who use security staff vehicles to respond to calls from bus operators when disruptions occur.

People get disgusted with the hygiene problem.

The public does not understand that we can't just eject people because they are homeless or because they don't smell good. We cannot force people to accept shelter, but our customers don't realize that our hands are tied until we can convince someone that things will be better for them if they come in.

Fear in some distinct locations where security is challenging.

Customers complain about the presence of homeless on the conveyance and at transit centers. They feel threatened and fearful of aberrant behaviors.

Customers feeling uncomfortable around homeless population (behavior, appearance, smells).

Most complaints are about sleepers taking up too many seats with their packages/belongings and spreading out.

The majority of customer complaints are in regard to the smell and cleanliness.

Customers have had issues being able to use benches and covered shelters at our bus stops and shelters that have regular homeless residents.

Hygiene.

Passengers tend to object to odors that while not really bad are stronger than what they would like to have in their space.

Homeless still try to secure what few possessions they may have. Usually in shopping carts or in crates with handles. This can be a deterrent for the homeless to use transit and an inconvenience to other customers.

Compassion.

Unwillingness to use the transit system on certain routes/locations.

They are fearful of them.

The homeless initiate fights with other customers on the bus.

In recent focus group interviews we heard loud and clear that many parents are uneasy allowing youth to ride the bus because of the fear of people who are homeless and have drug and alcohol issues or mental health issues.

Very tough. Lots of complaints re: odor on rail cars, number of homeless.

There are challenges with customer perceptions that all persons who appear homeless are homeless, where this may not be the case but rather a substance abuse or mental health issue exists that is not being properly addressed.

I field customer complaints regarding the homeless. Often a rider will see a homeless person sleeping and automatically assume they are intoxicated. This usually is not the case. Often the complaint of the hygiene or lack thereof of the homeless person.

Passengers do not want to wait at bus stops with a homeless person who has hygiene issues.

Other than some apprehension during the later hours of transit service our population is reasonably tolerant of homeless people. We have complaints when their behavior is disruptive or when they carry large amounts of belongings or their belongings are dirty.

Fear.

Cleanliness of transit facilities/vehicles/seats does have an effect on people's willingness to use transit. At times it is more of a perception, but it still impacts their decision. Our maintenance staff is diligent in keeping our facilities and vehicles clean, but the perception still lingers.

Acceptance and communication as many homeless have mental illness concerns.

Customer reactions are usually negative.

Fear/repulsion.

Transit in our city is perceived as a social service agency more than a transportation agency. Until we dispel that image, we will be challenged to market our services effectively.

Again, there are no "major" challenges. If there were any one issue to single out it would be personal hygiene and cleanliness.

When someone gets loud and argumentative on the bus, because of the enclosed space the level of discomfort soars.

Hygiene is an issue.

We often get calls that a homeless person smells bad and/or is taking up a large portion of a bus shelter. There have also been many calls regarding drinking alcohol, selling drugs, and urinating in a bus shelter.

Some regular transit riders have an issue with the lack of cleanliness of some homeless. I would not say this is a major issue. Most people are reasonable and accept the presence of the homeless to the limited degree that the homeless are on the system. If the presence of homeless on the system was more pronounced, it might be perceived as a greater problem. As it is, it is a minor problem.

- 15 Please describe strategies or tactics used to overcome any major challenges with regard to customer reactions to persons who are homeless.

Responses summarized in Table 26, chapter three of report. Verbatim responses are provided here.

Continue a police presence during operating hours to assure the traveling public that their safety and well-being are not taken for granted.

Nothing specific.

Our security staff is pretty visible and responds quickly to address issues. We also have a complaint process that allows customers to document their concerns and provides the agency with an opportunity to communicate directly with the customer.

Asked for law enforcement assistance at our stations to ask the homeless to move on and to not make our facilities their homes.

Contacting Transit Police/Local Law Enforcement to the location to assist the driver.

Periodic public education campaigns to discourage giving directly to the homeless, and to educate the public that the agency has an aggressive outreach program that offers services to all homeless in the system.

We are trying to rebuild the worst location, but do not yet have sufficient capital dollars. We have a project ready to go. At the same time, activists link any investment in transit facilities to being forced to accept affordable or high-density housing and have been fighting the improvement tooth and nail.

Provide immediate responses to their concerns and complaints and advise them that the agency is reaching out to try to address the overall problem, not just on Public Transit.

There has been a lot of media coverage of homeless issues in the county, so customers have better understanding of the situation that these individuals are facing. They have compassion for the lack of options in terms of available beds and services. They know the agency is trying to help connect needy customers to services. The agency created a mobile

app to report safety concerns while on our system. You can take pictures and send anonymous reports and based on the situation the appropriate staff are dispatched to handle the situation. We also created a campaign to reinforce positive behavior on board, reminding folks to report vandalism, keep their voices/music turned down, etc.

As discussed previously we have employed a Social Worker, who regularly engages the homeless. Keeping the stations clean when homeless are encamping is difficult and because our transit hubs are public buildings the Police Department has little recourse in moving homeless individuals.

We have worked with County Community Service Department and local police to get individuals to move from locations, especially during regular service hours.

Supervisors/security interacting with homeless at station.

We respect all our customers. 41% of our ridership makes less than \$25,000 annually so the presence of homeless is not perceived as such an issue as it might be in a more affluent system. Once a year we partner with social service and private non-profit agencies to deliver homeless to a centralized location for services. This is a great partnership. On these days our ridership nearly doubles because we remove another barrier, the fare.

The low-income bus pass has been a helpful way to encourage customers, homeless or not, to access these passes to help them get transportation. Our transit agency also has a good working relationship with a local non-profit that serves the homeless.

Driver education.

Working with social services.

Increased security at transit centers.

Contract with Tampa Police Department for police presence at major transit center.

Operators are taught to de-escalate situations when dealing with the homeless and to contact radio control when issues arise that require security.

Strong presence of public safety at the main transit centers.

Work with a social service agency, try to be proactive in terms of specific individuals but can take over a year to find even short-term housing.

Navigation and rapid assessment teams must integrate policies where they work to proactively seek out this population using public transit. We intend to work more with our homeless and mental health and substance abuse providers to allow for more active engagement.

We have worked jointly with the city police department on Coffee with a Cop program, which is an outreach to the homeless. We will continue to explore this and similar programs that help the interaction between law enforcement and the homeless.

Increased security, and supervisory staff ride the bus.

Our client services unit and general patrol teams work to identify problems or vulnerable transit users and make a concerted effort to assist them. In this endeavor we often employ the assistance of the civilian staff that operate the trains and buses as well. For example, when someone is identified as homeless and possibly at risk, we will use all available staff to help locate them, call police and connect them to resources who can assist them.

Active presence of transit security; monitoring cameras, and quick responses to calls for service.

Constant cleaning of our vehicles and facilities. If the opportunity presents itself, we also remind people that all people need access to transportation.

Training of operators to communicate effectively with all customers. Support staff (e.g., street supervisors, dispatchers) to offer assistance.

If the problem is onboard a vehicle, the coach operator tries to resolve the issue but will request assistance from transit police services to help resolve the issue if needed.

We are actively pursuing dialogue with the community to dispel our image as a social service agency. Forcing the nonprofit community to buy their passes is helping in the community to create the impression that we are managing our system in a businesslike fashion and creates the opportunity for more residents and visitors to try our service.

Don't have any.

In some extreme instances, persons can be removed from the bus or not allowed to board the bus. The justification is the health and well-being of others using the bus service. It is important to note that such a strategy applies to all passengers.

We are enhancing our conflict resolution skills. The driver will call radio who will send a road supervisor/security officer or immediately call the police. If this is a reoccurring situation or severe enough initially, we will have a security officer ride or follow in a car on subsequent days.

If a customer complains to us regarding a homeless person we will get the details from the customer and investigate the issue. If the homeless person is at the location of the customer's complaint we will speak with the homeless person and ask them to leave the bus shelter and offer them the resources of the Homeless Action Committee. If the homeless person is doing anything illegal we will call the local police.

Sometimes it more difficult for our customers to have the same sympathy and compassion that we do toward the homeless. We train our operators and supervisors to diffuse the situation and minimize the embarrassment. We hope through our community involvement that people will be more understanding.

Various staff members belong to and actively participate on boards, coalitions, committees that aim to improve services with this population. The agency really strives to provide good customer service to everyone. Urination and defecation are issues. More frequent in certain stations. Public restrooms are made available at the discretion of the station manager on duty.

ASSESSMENT

16. How would your agency rate its efforts to interact with people who are homeless?

Very successful	2.1%	1
Somewhat successful	53.2%	25
Neutral	40.4%	19
Somewhat unsuccessful	4.3%	2
Very unsuccessful	0.0%	0

17. Please describe the reasons why you chose this rating.

Responses summarized in Table 28, chapter four of report. Verbatim responses are provided here.

For Somewhat Successful or Very Successful Ratings:

Because for reasons unknown people do not want to deal with the homeless. I think we make an effort to get to know them and help their situation. I think as an organization we understand that there are number of reasons why people are homeless and that most are not homeless by choice.

Our agency for the most part has chosen to serve members of our homeless population in similar fashion to everyone else. Acceptance, but also we do expect the same responsibility as all other customers. Everyone must pay their fare (reduced fare, with a token, with a pass card that has been funded by their case manager, in cash, etc.), everyone must display behavior that does not affect others. To protect the rights of all customers, any person who is presenting loud, offensive, dangerous behavior is addressed by transit staff/police. Anyone who refuses to pay is reported to the transit police.

The homeless are dealt with in a respectful manner and they know that if they are in need of help, they can come to the bus transfer depot for assistance.

Our policies are effective in the short term, less so in the long term.

Having spoken with our staff, including representatives from Planning, Dispatch, Operations, and Customer Service, no staff could recall any problems or complaints regarding homeless individuals.

We make an effort to train our operators to respect all people, no matter their circumstance. We do have policies and training that are directed to how to handle customers who are disruptive on the bus.

We have clear "rules for riding" that address most issues that we see when dealing with homeless people.

We've had success with law enforcement and the introduction of fares.

We will never solve the problem of homelessness in our city, and as long as there are homeless, there will be homeless individuals in our system. But we have been successful in placing many into various housing options, including permanent housing.

Positive but challenging. Officers offer resources and build rapport with homeless community, but typically there are high numbers of refusal and there are limited resources to address homelessness (lack of beds/shelters).

The agency has created a special pass that helps support homeless people who are in county case managed programs to connect them to jobs, training, housing, etc. . . . This creates an incentive to go into an official program for support, and those who use the pass tell us it was critical for their success. We have also partnered with a non-profit that repairs bikes to give to needy residents. Its business model seeks to engage with homeless to teach them a skill, maintaining/repairing their bikes, and in the process of their interactions they gain their trust and help them connect with other services in the county.

Our innovative thinking in designing a Community Intervention Program has been very successful; we have linked many individuals to permanent supportive housing and other needed services. But because of system failures and lack of support from the cities/counties, we continue to see a rise in homelessness.

Based on a reduction in complaints from customers.

We show respect or at least try to, but some people are harder to help than others and some do not want our help, but they want their perceived rights of access protected. We are constantly cleaning restrooms and had to add staff just for this purpose. We find a distinct disregard for property. Damage due to vandalism is taking its toll.

1. Low-income bus pass; 2. Relationship with a non-profit that supports the homeless; 3. Our drivers, for the most part, are at the front line of all customer dealings and they've done an outstanding job overall; 4. We could always do better; i.e., county payment for more low-income passes, etc.

The public safety staff and operators are very consistent with respect to the basic rules of riding. If a customer, homeless or not, follows the rules then everyone wins.

The mindset we have toward the homeless. We understand their need for transit and are willing to work with them, even if they violate ordinances. The Transit Agency Hearing Officer works with them to clear up current or past fines by attendance at the transit PD Public Safety Class, reduced fines, and community service waivers to clear fines.

I chose this rating as in my view to be very successful we would be able to solve each problem for all of the people we encounter at least most of the time. On occasion we struggle to find appropriate resources to assist the volume and variety of issues homeless people face each shift. This is particularly so during the late hours of service. For the most part the major challenge our police force has to deal with is homeless repeatedly panhandling or being present in a way that makes other transit users uncomfortable. If we have no agency to assist them or they refuse to accept help then the problem persists. I suggest the majority of the time the real cause of the problems is not the fact that the clients are homeless, it is that they suffer from a mental illness.

Customer survey responses state that they feel safe, but comments do reflect the issue and it is a concern for local businesses.

We have active participation with local support systems as well as our awareness of the issue.

Our personnel try to interact with all of our customers with compassion. Unfortunately there will always be that tiny percentage who understand only law enforcement, handcuffs and incarceration.

Complaints are small in number and there is equal treatment provided to all users of the bus service.

By the nature of the problem, it would be difficult to claim to be very successful. But we have had success in defusing threatening situations and been able to maintain a positive community image.

We don't have a significant problem, and we do consider people without other means of transportation to be our primary customers. The homeless are typically in this category of customer. We even offer discounts to social service agencies for tickets and passes, and some of these tickets and passes make their way into the hands of homeless.

For Somewhat Unsuccessful or Neutral Ratings:

People who are homeless are sometimes uncooperative and become a safety issue for the driver and passengers.

We provide free fares at this time and have a good relationship with non-profit agencies. We are trying to raise the capital funds to reconstruct a more secure and safe transfer facility, while at the same time there is a strong anti-development push that also targets transit (as if transit investments are the Trojan Horse for wealthy developers to ruin the quality of life).

It is a very fluid and dynamic situation. The challenge of homelessness is a societal issue, not just for public transit to address. It seems to be a continuous cycle and the numbers are increasing.

We have not had large problems, only isolated incidents; most passengers tend to be forgiving but a few have been rather vocal.

Temporary fix.

Not that big a factor in our city.

Staff shortages.

We have a high volume of verbal altercations that interrupt service.

Because of security issues, customer interactions, and hygiene issues, we are not satisfied with what we are doing but we have great cooperation with the homeless agencies for taking the homeless to shelters.

As the newly assigned director, it is my goal to conduct more outreach efforts. No efforts have been made in the past unless requested by an outside partner. I would like the engagement to come from within our organization, not a reactive response; this is my vision.

We don't seem to have a major issue with homeless. Our system only has several small transfer points, all on private property, so we don't have a major terminal that allows people to congregate the entire day.

We do not actively engage homeless populations. We have discounted "agency" pass program, which offers discount passes to human service agencies to distribute to their clients.

With limited resources it is difficult to do the things that you would like to do. At the same time, we feel we are doing a reasonable job with the available resources.

We work closely with other local jurisdictions on this issue since most of the issues revolve around where they are congregating. Homeless may ride the bus service, but they have to disembark at the end of the line after one round trip, so we do not have as many onboard issues compared to those at transit centers and bus stops.

Homelessness isn't a large problem and it really only exists at our transit center, which is adjacent to a homeless shelter. I selected neutral because we continue to have occasional issues but it's not a major concern.

About the only two issues are hygiene and camping out on transit property.

There is no clear-cut way to have a homeless person removed from a bus shelter when they are causing interference with customers. If the homeless person is endangering anyone or themselves the police can be called, but the homeless person will often come back soon after they have been forced to leave the bus shelter.

18. What has been the primary benefit of these efforts?

Responses summarized in Table 29, chapter four of report. Verbatim responses are provided here.

The homeless have access to our system, and this is often necessary if they are to improve their situation. For example, they can use our system to get to a job interview. For the agency, we get more ridership and we provide benefit to the community, which are measures of our success.

The primary benefits to communicating with the homeless person in a professional and respectful manner has been to help them realize that you are there to help them and to keep the interaction civil. Some homeless are unaware of some of the options they have to better their lives and get off the streets.

Keep making them leave the encampment and nothing can be done about hygiene.

A reduction in incidents and a feeling on the part of drivers that we have their back.

The perception of a safer, cleaner, and more attractive bus service.

A generally pleasant environment on our trains and buses.

Banning certain repeat offenders from our property and bus service.

Better understanding that the cities/county are responsible for homeless encampments/issues at bus stops.

Operator and customer satisfaction with our efforts to address the concerns.

Customer understanding and tolerance.

The benefits of our focused approach on problem clients are that often we can find support for them and therefore eliminate or at least reduce the problem. When we help we also build support from the public and other agencies as they appreciate that police spend the time and effort to help these people.

We try to work with human service agencies to provide rides for people and to get people back and forth to food banks. Having a purpose to ride the bus seems to have tapped down issues.

Unknown.

Many of the homeless no longer view the police as a threat to them.

Identify a vulnerable population, work to engage them in behavior modification and connection to services, and therefore create a more user friendly public transit system.

Thursday coordinated overnight mission with transit police security—different location every Thursday. Keep track of contacts, transportation provided by one of our partners, always in CBD.

Everyone is treated fairly and the expectations are clearly understood.

No benefits for us, except good working relations with the agencies that assist the homeless population.

No benefits identified yet as we are trying new initiatives.

Our city does not have the homeless population found in most major metropolitan areas.

Our social-service agency partner connects homeless to essential life improving services.

Progress—we are better suited to deal with homeless than we were 10 years ago, but the numbers are growing.

Other passengers witnessing interactions.

Establishing rapport and persistent outreach efforts. Developing a support system in each county, consistent collaboration, education and training. This effort has reduced recidivism of high calls for service, incarceration and hospital visits with those individuals who have a history of multiple contacts.

We are able to minimize disruptive behavior and customer complaints, as well as help homeless persons connect with services/housing/jobs.

We have housed many homeless that have been homeless for 10+ years. Also, we have open communication with social service agencies to provide support.

Shelters and benches and bus stops have been freed up during regular service hours.

Short-term solutions to problems on an individual basis. Hostile and disruptive people are removed from the system on a short-term basis, but they frequently return and the problem begins again.

Helping many of those who are most needy as well as making our other customers more comfortable.

We do believe that our outreach efforts with local nonprofits and government agencies have helped to enable access to transportation and information about transportation for the homeless.

Customers who for the most part obey the rules of riding our buses.

Effective enforcement.

Effective dealings with the homeless.

We are sometimes able to get help for homeless individuals.

Assist those who are in need.

Protects each customer's rights. Everyone is treated the same with the same expectation for "good" behavior. When an individual refuses to pay the fare or is found to be using someone else's Fare Card, often they are allowed free passage with no repercussions. This may actually be creating a feeling of entitlement for some. Bad behavior gets them free

passage on the bus or train, so they repeat the behaviors. Also when our staff choose to not engage but rather defer to the customer, the customer may choose to act the same way or even escalate their behavior in the future.

Operators being more understanding of the homeless.

Safe and comfortable ride for the customers

19. What have been the primary drawbacks of these efforts?

Responses summarized in Table 30, chapter four of report. Verbatim responses are provided here.

Loss of ridership, loss of time to change out a bus or while waiting for assistance.

Sometimes they can be disruptive and we are forced to discharge them from the bus.

Urination, defecation, piles of belongings in trash bags create a dirty, unhealthy environment for everyone. More work for the bus and train maintenance crews. Impacts other customers and in some cases encourages them to investigate other transit options like car pools or commuter buses. When our staff defers to the bad behavior of some customers, the customers may feel entitled to not pay fares at all. Become increasingly aggressive when confronted by some staff but not all. Inconsistent staff responses create inconsistent expectations among customers, which may actually cause them to escalate their behavior. Many of our customers who are homeless do have psychiatric disabilities. Being homeless often impacts their ability to fill prescriptions, maintain a schedule for meds, take food with some meds, etc. Irrational behaviors may actually be a symptom of their disease and a call for help. Our staff are limited in what they can do.

Violations of the Code of Conduct.

Funding. Transit Police has zero funding available for homeless outreach. Also, one of the biggest vocal challenges faced when dealing with the homeless patrons is the continuous writing of citations to individuals who have no means of paying the fines. Transit Police has no system in place, other than the officer calling the district attorney to seek a higher charge for the habitual crime. This process would take the individual off the street with longer jail time. This is still not a permanent solution to the problem, because that person will still be homeless when released from jail.

Doesn't necessarily address the underlying cause of homelessness, just addresses the behavior.

Hasn't solved the problem of someone being homeless.

I don't think there really are any drawbacks, other than we're diverting transportation funds to social services because social service agencies would not take responsibility for this issue in the transportation system.

Potential for physical encounters that can result in injuries to the staff, passengers, or the antagonist.

Inconsistency of collaborative efforts between counties.

Some people mistakenly think that the transit agency is encouraging homeless to ride transit rather than go to a shelter. We are occasionally criticized by those who think our vehicles are being "misused" as a shelter.

Only temporary fixes.

Lack of support from the local government and little recourse on a legal level.

Individuals typically return each night or simply move to another location.

Cost.

Appearance.

Lack of an ability to handle repeat offenders.

Again the same issues mentioned above.

Not 7 days a week; engaging 400 people 12–4 at one station, how many people are you really helping? Takes a long time to build up trust with homeless persons.

People, staff, resources, money.

Often disorganization on the part of the homeless. But we keep trying to get them there.

We still have disruptive passengers, but we can't always tell if the person is homeless or not. In fact in those situations, we are more concerned with the immediate situation rather than whether the person is homeless or not.

Unknown.

It is simply the expenditure of time. We serve a very large geographic area with a significant population of mentally ill homeless people. It is not specifically a drawback; it simply takes time to get around and deal with all these people.

No.

Resources expended on the effort at all levels.

Time and budget constraints.

None, but there continues to be a lack of understanding about how to handle these situations by local elected officials who believe the responsibility lies elsewhere (like with the public transportation program), when this is a community/social service/mental health/veterans issue, not necessarily a transportation issue.

None.

None.

Never enough. Security and communication take resources, of which there are never enough.

The primary drawbacks have been when a homeless person is not being rational and will not listen to anyone who is willing to help them get off the street. A homeless person cannot be forced to take medication that could help them be rational. Unfortunately this can cause the homeless person to get arrested and be physically forced out of the bus shelter.

None really.

20. What was the most successful action taken, and why?

Responses summarized in Table 31, chapter four of report. Verbatim responses are provided here.

Careful selection of supervisors and security staff so that careful management of our customer services and rules and regulations for behavior are balanced with compassion.

Discounts for social service agencies for transit tickets and passes. The homeless have access to our system, and this is often necessary if they are to improve their situation. For example, they can use our system to get to a job interview. For the agency, we get more ridership and we provide benefit to the community, which are measures of our success.

The most successful action has been when the Homeless Action Committee convinces the person to come to the homeless shelter to get help. The Action Committee will drive the person to the location and answer their questions.

The partnership with the Coalition whereby we are seen as a community partner and part of the solution. We can act to bring folks together to combat a community problem.

Operator training and front-line supervisory training, because they know the resources available to assist the homeless.

Signage and enforcement.

Developing community partnerships with the homeless outreach teams.

Keeping everything clean. If it is allowed to stay dirty, then that is what people will expect and treat it as such.

Community outreach and interaction with the downtown business groups.

Specific action plans designed for an individual, especially when other branches of the agency and necessary community resources assist. When we tailor our activity to deal with the needs of one person and we focus several people or resources on those tasks, there is always some level of success.

Increased supervision and security in order to minimize disruptions—may or may not be homeless individuals.

Having Homeless Hearings in our space across from the homeless court and the shelter. This has allowed us to gain more compliance from the homeless and mentally ill.

Order outs, connection to social services, and behavior modification via travel restrictions.

Thursday night mission for homeless. Enforcement for our customers.

We support a local homeless emergency housing project whereby homeless are sheltered during extreme cold. The transit agency provides free rides to the centers and supplies day passes for the following day when these folks leave the

shelters. I think the homeless who participate in this program recognize the value the transit agency plays in keeping them safe.

The relationships established with the agencies.

Increased supervisor, police, and security presence. This has ensured our facilities remain clean and customers feel safe.

In my mind, the best thing was investing in the low-income passes, and this program was so successful, that an additional 50% investment occurred 2 or 3 years later to boost the number of passes available each month.

Project Homeless Connect for many years running. Free access to dental, pet care, haircuts—anything a person living on the street might need—is found at one place on a specific day. Agency workers make contact and can begin to follow up and try to place the homeless person in appropriate housing.

Banning passengers for multiple offenses. Operators become more involved when they feel they have some support.

We have worked with County Community Service Department and local police to get individuals to move from locations, especially during regular service hours.

Our most successful action was starting our Community Intervention Project.

Our collaboration with the university students/social workers for outreach, the county-issued pass to participants in case-managed services, and our bicycle partnership have all been great. Through our collaboration with the county and others in the non-profit community, we have been able to help needy customers connect with services/support.

Developing a work group to collectively share the responsibility to address and assist those in need of services and outreach.

Redirecting people to services and agencies that can provide assistance; e.g., local charities, social service agencies, churches that provide outreach and support.

Initially, developing an outreach program with professional outreach workers. More recently, partnering with the city to increase outreach capabilities.

As mentioned, the introduction of fares.

Consistent enforcement of the rules of conduct. Maintains consistent application of the policy.

Operator training on how to interact with customers has been very successful. This includes training on how to de-escalate confrontations. We do refresher training for each operator, which requires 8 h/year (union contract).

If we are informed that the person does in fact have a medical emergency, we then offer EMT or emergency transportation to get help. From there, they are transported to a local hospital to receive emergency care.

I do not have an answer for this block.

Providing Customer Service Training.

The most successful action was when the bus operator pulled into the coach stop to call for help. The customer got off the bus, therefore no time was lost. Operator needed to safely pull over and notify Radio Control and seek assistance.

21. How would your agency assess the balance between positive and punitive actions in interactions with homeless persons?

Current balance is about right	51.2%	22
Could use more positive actions (such as vouchers for services, partnerships with other agencies, etc.)	44.2%	19
Could use more enforcement	4.7%	2

22. If you could change ONE aspect in the process of your agency’s interactions with people who are homeless, what would you change?

Responses summarized in Table 32, chapter four of report. Verbatim responses are provided here.

Homeless shelter agencies to deploy task force to handle such situations in the field.

The way they are addressed.

Again, the majority of our customers who are homeless are peaceful. For those who occasionally cannot pay or become argumentative...many of our non-homeless fall into that category at one time or another. But, for those who are not peaceful but rather act aggressively, belligerently or abusively toward our staff, I would like to see that they are reprimanded or at least called on their inappropriate behaviors. Transit police respond very quickly and for the most part they defuse the situation unless there is a safety issue. I did have a chance to speak with one customer who was arrested by the transit police and handed over to the local authorities. In his words, he had been homeless on and off for years, moving between homeless shelters in our central city and a suburban county and then transitional housing in between. The customer did admit that he did not routinely follow up with his medications. My office had received many reports of this customer's inappropriate behaviors and possible animal abuse from other staff as well as other customers. Finally, a bus operator contacted the police regarding the customer's refusal to comply with ridership responsibilities. The customer later told me that although he was arrested and his dog impounded at the animal shelter (reunited upon release) he was forced into treatment at the psychiatric hospital. He credits that action to have saved his life.

None at this time.

Difficult to say.

It could be beneficial if local emergency shelters had more extended hours of operation. Part of the reason that homeless sometimes spend extended periods of time at either our transit shelter or on buses during inclement weather is that they are seeking somewhere warm to shelter themselves from winter weather. Recently, the city opened a new emergency shelter and this has helped considerably, providing the homeless a place to go in the evenings November 1st through April 30th, 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. daily.

None.

Lift up—using transit to assist in job placement, housing opportunities.

I'd have outreach teams at some of our critical (and "more popular") stations 24/7.

Really, the biggest issue is lack of bathrooms if we could afford to build and maintain them.

More direct partnerships with cities and support organizations that might be able to provide solutions at a higher level.

To increase training for personnel on homeless and community awareness.

Difficult to explain: The ability to refuse entry/reentry into transit hubs when homeless are refusing services offered to them.

Main issue has been that even when Community Service Agency provides clean environment/shelter, many individuals choose to return back to street.

More involvement from social service agencies.

Nothing at this time.

More tools than just calling the police, but I would need more resources and we can't afford them.

Improve communications with county human services and non-profits. The communications are good, but they could be better.

Dealing with the hygiene issues on the buses.

A central clearinghouse agency for passes.

We are in the process of partnering with a newly formed Homeless Coalition in an effort to provide people with a resource rather than push the problem somewhere else in the community.

Ensuring that those who do get banned from using the system are well-informed regarding their rights to get their riding privileges reinstated. Sometimes these folks don't understand and don't have advocates who can help them regain riding status. Without the bus their lives become even harder, so it's important that a good system is in place to help them in these instances.

Wonderful if we could get state grant to augment efforts.

Take the lead. We are working on this.

I wouldn't change a thing. I believe we are fair to the homeless and work with them when we can.

Overcoming passenger discomfort of the homeless.

Greater understanding of transit needs.

I believe we are on the right track now. In the past year we have increased our client services unit from one officer to two full-time people. I won't say "change" our interactions, I would say continue to expand our connection to resources that assist homeless people. We just need to work hard to inform our officers on patrol about what we can do for the homeless and how to do it. This comes from enhanced knowledge of, and relationships with, the numerous agencies in our region.

More convenient ways to connect the person with the appropriate resources.

More communication with the homeless agencies.

Working with other county/city agencies that have resources to address this issue, implement a process that could be used to address this issue proactively on behalf of special districts.

Nothing, really.

That the agencies who serve the homeless clients would take a greater role and responsibility in funding and supporting the services we provide.

Given the level of complaints and issues that arise directly from homeless persons, the process is considered appropriate.

Improve the skills of our drivers and have them realize we do have their backs.

The ability to remove them from private property with less red tape.

Have higher internal management awareness and have stronger partnerships with local Action Committees.

In my role, I don't have the ability to change it, but I would prefer that the transit center was not the de facto shelter for homeless. It would be better if there was another location where they could congregate.

23. Please describe any "lessons learned" that would benefit other transit agencies.

Responses summarized in Table 33, chapter four of report. Verbatim responses are provided here.

To successfully get homeless folks the help that they need immediately.

When our agency staff treats homeless persons with respect, customers get the message that they are not violent or unwanted, and in turn, other customers do not disrespect homeless persons riding on our system, for the most part.

In one case a customer who was homeless and used a power chair became ill at one station. The paramedics were called and the customer was taken to the hospital. An incident report was filed. The station manager, transit police and others involved did not know what to do with the customer's very large power chair. So they stored it at the station. Several days later the man was about to be released but could not be released without his power chair. The chair was powered up and taken in a transit vehicle to the hospital. While all ended well, we did learn that this was not appropriate procedure. EMTs prefer to not transport any person's wheelchair, even though the ADA states that a person's wheelchair must not be separated from him or her. Obviously the chair was not going to fit into the ambulance. In addition, while waiting for assistance the customer's power chair battery drained. While the power chair was on the transit agency's property it became our liability. If the chair had been damaged during transport the agency could have been at fault. We did learn that in the future if this happens the EMTs must be held accountable for the person's wheelchair. This is also true for a service animal.

Enforcing a Code of Conduct is of major importance in order to provide a safe environment for the traveling public.

Difficult to say.

Operator and supervisor training for working and interacting with customers.

Fares.

Willingness to fund a robust outreach program has been critical. Since parts of the system provide warmth in the winter and air conditioning in the summer, and it's open 24/7, it becomes a de facto shelter to many of the city's less fortunate residents. Dedicated outreach teams who get to know the clients and establish relationships can often be successful in getting these individuals, who may initially be service-resistant, to accept services.

Even projects to improve safety and reduce crime can be viewed with hostility by anti-development activists.

Positive interactions garner greater results than just enforcement. Enforcement is a short-term and temporary solution at best. Elevate the issue to government and NGO bodies that can have an impact on the problem as a whole. Share as much information as possible with other stakeholders who might be able to effect change in the community.

To develop a positive and consistent relationship with resources, outreach services and court system (mental health court, alcohol and other drug court, veterans court).

Hiring the right staff to deal with homeless concerns.

None.

Haven't had any significant incidents that have generated lessons learned.

Be consistent with application and enforcement of rules of conduct on buses and at facilities. Homeless does not mean stupid or ignorant and we should not presume to think they will tolerate an overly zealous application of the rules any more than any other customer. Partner with local law enforcement. You can't manage this alone.

Working with the homeless agencies has helped us remove some homeless from the buses during cold weather.

Partner with the community leaders who can have a positive impact.

Regularly interacting with your city's human rights organizations. Our city has a commission that is part of the city's structure and sometimes they only hear from folks who feel disenfranchised. Being sure the transit agency has regular interactions and provides good information regarding the transit system's expectations is very helpful.

Coordination with various city law enforcement agencies. Seasonal issue, be prepared to implement plan. As mayors change, hopefully there will be enough continuity in senior management at the transit agency.

Assess and understand gateway crimes and understand the ramification if those gateway crimes—such as loitering, urinating, trespassing, littering and open container—are not addressed.

Years ago we had a poor experience with a homeless man named Val. For years he would sit on the side of the road across from our downtown platforms and cuss and swear at the transit police officers, until one day an officer went over to him and chatted him up and eventually took him to lunch. We learned that Val had been an alcoholic before, but he was sober now. He had held a job as the head of facilities for a local school district and was on a pension. We changed our view of Val and he followed suit; he is now one of our cheerleaders in the homeless community. Our officers have demonstrated their compassion for him by keeping him in cold winter clothing and gear for the past several years. He is too proud to stay at the shelter or even with family. We see him almost every day near our main police HQ.

Free fares will exacerbate any potential problems.

There is a definite benefit in committing full-time resources to assist homeless and mentally ill people. The time expended on intervention and prevention pays off exponentially and success is always dependent on knowledge and relationships built over time.

Community outreach is worth the time and resources.

Respect the humanity of the person, look for ways to connect them to appropriate resources, and always keep safety first.

We have recently provided mental health training and refresher training of operators and support staff.

Keep senior management aware of issues related to homelessness that impact transit services and encourage dialogue with city/county agencies that have resources to address the issues. These are hard to find and unless there is a champion among the local elected officials, it is difficult to have any traction on resolving the issues that are created by the homeless population.

Need to be firm and consistent with interactions.

We're still learning.

It takes patience and endurance. You have to keep doing the right thing.

Keep the encampment clear at all times; do not let them stay.

Be patient and empathetic with the homeless and make it clear that you are here to help them as well.

We sort of operate with a soft hand, given that our issue is not a major one when it comes to homeless.

ACTIONS

24. What types of actions has your agency taken with regard to people who are homeless? (Check all that apply.)

Partnerships with social service or non-profit agencies to encourage persons who are homeless to seek assistance	71.1%	32
Partnerships with local law enforcement agencies	68.9%	31
Enforcement of anti-loitering laws	62.2%	28
Additional cleaning of transit vehicles and facilities	51.1%	23
Periodic sweeps of areas where homeless persons are known to congregate	40.0%	18
Requirement that riders exit the bus or train at the last stop and pay an additional fare to re-board	35.6%	16
Discounted fares for persons who are homeless	28.9%	13
No specific actions undertaken	6.7%	3
Other (please specify):	28.9%	13

Other includes: (1) Again, anti-loitering laws are enforced only when a customer is disruptive. All vehicles and facilities are cleaned on schedule but more so when there are reports of urination, defecation, and possible spillage of substances that they may be carrying. Partnerships with existing law enforcement exists. We do have excellent partnerships with most social services and non-profits through our ADA and Eligibility Certification Office. Discounted fares are available for people with disabilities and those over 65. Youth discounts through schools. Our Outreach offices are in contact with most homeless programs. (2) The County Conference of Churches purchases All Day bus passes from the transit agencies in bulk. The Conference of Churches administers multiple programs providing services to the homeless and other at-risk populations. (3) Transient populations that congregate around transit centers or larger shopping areas are bigger issues that affect more than just our transit system. (4) Note: The city's anti-loitering laws were stricken down some years ago, so anti-loitering enforcement is not a strategy that is available to us. (5) Providing information directly to homeless about support and assistance services. (6) Implemented the transit Police Crisis Intervention Training Coordinator & Community Outreach Liaison. (7) Employing a licensed social worker to serve the homeless and advocate in the community for their needs. (8) Offer discounted passes for distribution to homeless population through human service and non-profit agencies. (9) We use our "unlawful use of facility" ordinance to go after panhandling on transit vehicles and property. Rail and bus have a 3 EOL limit policy that requires another fare after three EOLs. (10) In some cases our client services officers have personally assisted homeless people in obtaining annual transit passes. When other agencies were unable to get results, our officers have sometimes sought out and found shelters for homeless people. When possible our force focuses on prevention. We seek to uncover the reason this person is causing a concern on our system and deal with that issue. We use enforcement, however enforcement almost never deals with the root issue that brought them to our attention. If they are panhandling to get money for food, enforcement does nothing. If we connect them to a source of food then they no longer need to panhandle. (11) County police have swept areas a couple of times. (12) We provided the Coalition for the Homeless with a retired van pool van so that they could conduct sweeps. (13) The discounted fares are through social service agencies. We don't deal directly with the homeless to provide discounted fares.

25. Does your agency undertake collaborative efforts to interact with homeless persons in partnership with others?

Yes	75.0%	33
No	25.0%	11

26. Who are your partners in these collaborative efforts? (Check all that apply.)

Social service agencies serving homeless persons	84.9%	28
Non-profit agencies serving homeless persons	78.8%	26
City police	72.7%	24
Homeless shelters	63.6%	21
Private-sector agencies serving homeless persons	24.2%	8
Other (please specify):	15.2%	5

Other includes: (1) Mental health providers, Case Managers for Employment and Training, or Day Support. (2) Local churches (different from non-profits that are more geared toward service intervention). Public Health and Social Services syringe exchange program. (3) County Sheriff's Department; City Government in the transit service area. (4) University students. (5) (County) sheriff's deputies.

27. Please describe the nature of these efforts. How did they begin? How do they work?

Responses summarized in Table 18, chapter three of report. Verbatim responses are provided here.

We have a bus trip that operates past the homeless shelter early in the morning when the homeless are required to depart the homeless shelter. This connects the homeless with other bus routes at our transit center, and they either continue on their way or they remain at the transit center until the library opens. Also, by providing passes to social service agencies at a discount, we are part of the solution for homeless who are trying to improve their situation. We are great partners with the city police, and we have partnered with them to adopt soft-handed tactics to deal with homeless on transit property and vehicles.

The City Homeless Action Committee was advertised and I have seen their vehicles throughout the area. I made contact with the Committee when we had a situation of a woman living in one of our bus shelters on and off for several weeks a few years ago. The police have been called on many occasions to assist in protecting customers from the homeless involved in illegal behavior. The efforts have varied depending on the situation.

We provided the Coalition for the Homeless with a retired van pool van so that they could conduct sweeps.

Homeless Commission meets in our board room for their regular monthly meetings. Our interactions are strained now that we are forcing the nonprofits to pay for the formerly "free" passes starting October 1st. We are having multiple opportunities to interact and share our thoughts on the issue.

Individuals without homes and others (sometimes we have no idea whether or not they're homeless) cross transit center property and loiter when the shelter is closed. We began by calling the police when individuals were belligerent, threatening (rare) or in an altered state; over time, working with legal counsel and police, we established relationships, erected signs, and consistently enforced the rules.

County mental health has a representative who can work with transit police in the field to offer services to homeless encountered at transit facilities. Transit police work with city and county law enforcement to address issues with homeless individuals at bus stops.

Referrals once contact is made with the person.

We sit on homeless committee boards, we participate in city hall-driven programs, and we partner with virtually anyone we can who can help us deal with our clientele. The genesis of these interactions is sometimes brought on by a particular incident. We make a concerted effort to reach out to all the agencies. One major way we become involved is we ask the key officers in each city police force to invite us to the committees and forums they are involved in. We work hard to contribute and thus far we have been welcomed in as everyone needs more help.

Our marketing/agency communications staff manages the human service agency pass program. Homeless shelters send emails on a daily basis to operations and scheduling staff regarding how many clients are staying at the shelter.

Coffee with a Cop. We are looking to other outreach with the City Police Department.

Began with the prosecutor's office and local law enforcement then branched to social services as a complete partnership.

City Police, a social service agency with a contract through the City, but they only work 8–4. Catholic Charities. City dept. of family support services, dept. of public health, vendors, contractors.

Through our area’s coordinated human services transportation plan we provide funding for an area clinic that supplies crisis intervention (transportation) for those experiencing drug, alcohol, and mental health related issues We offer a 50 percent discount on fares purchased by private not-for-profit agencies We provide a program offering free rides to the homeless on freezing nights.

Annual agreement with the City Police Department for scheduled presence at major transit center. Bus pass program for non-profit organizations.

Police deal with security issues, agencies taking the homeless after we pick them up from a centralized locations to shelters.

We are part of the Safe Place network for kids in partnership with the local shelter for at-risk youth. We sought out the partnership with the agency. Seems to be working well. We have Safe Place info posted on all our buses and in our transit center. The agency has seen an increase in respondents since Safe Place info was made available. Project Homeless Connect—we were asked to partner with the non-profit sponsoring the program. Works very well.

Primarily with local police for enforcement of bus rules. We also have a program with the winter shelter where we sell discounted tickets to the shelter for their clients.

We have a close relationship with police on all potential security issues, and we’ve formalized our meetings/progress over the past 5 or so years. We work with social service agencies on transportation issues and they help sell our discounted passes to low income/homeless people. They also work with the homeless on many issues that we see and don’t see, where we know transportation is a key issue. Finally, as noted earlier, we work with non-profits who regularly meet and discuss with us issues related to transportation for the homeless. An example of the latter that worked well is in the winter of 2013/14 we had several polar vortexes and we provided transportation between day and night shelters.

Our Social Worker coordinates all needed services for the homeless. We began the project in 2011 and we have had many successes in housing chronically homeless individuals.

Meet and greet law enforcement agencies, social services, homeless outreach, and shelters; establish rapport with supervisors, managers, and coordinators; develop a collaborative plan of action. Connect with other existing work groups throughout the system in other counties. The work group would collectively identify specific cases, share information, develop a plan, follow up with team, report progress and outcomes monthly, and maintain a direct and consistent communication line with team resources.

Outreach and networking. Partnerships need constant attention. Would like to bring more to the table other than awareness of the problem. It’s a work in progress.

Regular meetings with City Police and City Department of Homeless Services to discuss areas of concern. Our service provider conducts joint outreach with the Police. Beds are provided by City and not-for profit agencies (paid for by the City).

We offer a discounted “Agency fare” to local agencies to assist homeless people with transportation needs.

Most of these relationships are unfortunately fostered by incidents.

It’s been an ongoing effort throughout the communities we serve and has been in place for a number of years. The issue of homelessness typically receives attention from local groups that we interact with on a regular basis, both formally and informally.

The transit agency provides service information to various agencies, public and non-profit alike. We remain in constant contact with these agencies, promptly alerting them to any planned changes in service.

Transit Police currently entered in an interagency Memorandum of Understanding Agreement with City Police Department’s Homeless Outreach Team (HOT). HOT is composed of one sergeant, two officers, and one mental health professional from the County Mental Health/Mental Retardation Authority. The team helps the homeless with the following: • Housing • Social Security cards • Passports • Birth certificates • Shelter referrals • Medical equipment • Employment • Bus fare • Medical care • Mental health treatment. Transit police officers make voluntary rotations when the staff is available to assist and train with the City Police Department’s HOT. The City Police Department has a County counselor on their team that can pair homeless patrons with a caseworker who can help them. This partnership helps with the limited resources that are available to us. During the rotation with HOT, transit police officers are given the opportunity to have available the following resources: • SEARCH Homeless Services • Lord of the Streets • Bread of Life • Palmer Way Station • Star of Hope • Salvation Army • Healthcare for the Homeless • US Vets • Goodwill.

We have a strong outreach team that promotes our Reduced Fare Programs and our paratransit programs. In 2008 we set out to identify the non-profits, government programs, self-supporting groups, hospital therapy groups and professionals, case managers serving local and federal governments, employment and training programs, high schools, and other types of professional and volunteer groups/individuals that serve people with disabilities. We continue to add to our distribution lists. We identified most of the homeless shelters through human service agencies where they often receive funding but also through the organizations that provide day support, employment training, and even food banks to help us identify actual homeless shelters. We have created and distribute lists of shelters, food banks, donation centers where inexpensive furniture can be purchased, clothing distributors, and more. Reaching out to others encourages others to contact us as well.

There is a homeless shelter next to the bus base/yard, where they ride out and ride in during the day. They began long time ago and they work with the County programs.

28. Does your agency's level of effort in interacting with homeless persons change by season? (Check all that apply.)

No, constant year-round	62.2%	28
Yes, more extensive in cold winter weather	28.9%	13
Yes, more extensive in inclement weather (snow, heavy rain)	15.6%	7
Yes, more extensive in hot summer weather	11.1%	5

Comments include: (1) We are a beach community that draws many tourists and homeless in the summer. (2) We have an increase in summer with exposure issues. (3) There is not a great deal of difference, however we only operate the free transit pass program in times of extreme weather shelter activation, so we are more extensive in that sense in winter. (4) We allow folks to ride on "white flag" days. (5) It seems to be random times of the year.

29. Do your agency's interactions with homeless persons vary by mode? (Check all that apply.)

We only operate one mode	34.9%	15
Yes, more extensive on bus	20.9%	9
No	20.9%	9
Yes, more extensive on rail	18.6%	8
Yes, more extensive in bus transit centers	18.6%	8
Yes, more extensive in rail stations	7.0%	3
Yes, more extensive on paratransit	0.0%	0

Comments include: (1) Each mode is affected. (2) Transient populations are a bigger concern. (3) Our "Agency" pass is only applicable to local routes. Not good on regional travel or on our express bus service. (4) The interactions are greatest in the right of way, at transit centers, on the bus, then on light rail. Rarely on commuter rail. (5) Buses; the agency has other contractors that may have issues with rail, paratransit, and stations. (6) In the core city there is more of a noted issue at bus stops; on rail the issue is both on rail and on the platform. Bus is the primary location, with loitering, drinking at bus stops. (7) We are expanding our role on buses so soon I expect it will be equitable but currently we interact more with homeless on and around the trains. (8) Paratransit is only for ADA-eligible individuals—no homeless issue. Problem only affects fixed route.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESOURCES

30. What is the approximate size of the homeless population that impacts your system daily?

Not sure	38.6%	17
Less than 100	27.3%	12
100–499	18.2%	8
500–999	9.1%	4
1,000 or more	6.8%	3

31. Who is responsible for implementing agency policies and procedures regarding people who are homeless? (Check all that apply.)

Operations supervisors	72.7%	32
City or county police	40.9%	18
Other agency or non-agency staff (please specify):	40.9%	18
Transit police	30.6%	17

Other agency or non-agency staff include: (1) Day-to-day bus operators. (2) Mobile contracted security officers. (3) Contracted outreach provider, City Dept. of Homeless Services, transit agency management. (4) Only maintenance workers who have to clean, and perhaps some drivers. (5) In-house security and contract Sheriff's Deputies. (6) Transit area has multiple jurisdictions; some are better than others in responding to and dealing with issues. (7) Management. (8) Contracted security staff. (9) We also have a private security company. (10) Scheduling, operations, legal. (11) Operations. (12) Both transit police and supervisors. They work together. If there is a problem on the bus, a driver will call our call center and from there the staff will determine action needed, which could mean involving transit police or other city/county agencies. (13) Travel Trainers, Security Coordinator, and Customer Service Staff. (14) We don't have any specific policies regarding homeless. We have procedures in place to respond to disruptive passengers, fare evasion, possible biohazards. The response to these incidents usually involve road supervisors and sometimes law enforcement. (15) Director of Customer Service and Dispatch and security personnel. (16) Our security staff. (17) Management. (18) Street Amenities Manager and shelter cleaners.

32. Does one group have a lead role in implementation?

No, responsibilities are shared	60.5%	26
Yes (please specify):	39.5%	17

Lead role includes: (1) Security. (2) Transit police. (3) We generally follow the lead of law enforcement and when it gets tricky (ACLU concerns) we consult with our attorney. (4) City Dept. of Homeless Services, transit agency management staff. (5) Maintenance staff clean facilities used as bathrooms. (6) Yes, the leadership falls on the Transit Enforcement Division, which employs the security force and oversees the contract with the County Sheriff's Department. (7) Transit police department. (8) Operations. (9) Police. (10) Probably more Transit Police as first responders. (11) Operations Supervisors and Security Coordinator. (12) Transit Police. (13) Director of Customer Service and Dispatch. (14) Facilities and operations usually take the lead role. (15) Transit agency Division of Safety and Security.

33. Does your agency conduct or sponsor training in relation to interactions with homeless persons?

No	40.9%	18
Yes, for first-line employees (e.g., bus operators, customer service personnel, transit police)	31.8%	14
Yes, for all employees	2.3%	1
Other	25.0%	11

Other responses include: (1) Our training is focused on serving customers who have disabilities. Not all customers who are homeless have a disability but the belief is that most do have a disability of some kind. (2) Yes, for transit police officers. (3) Operator training is an ongoing effort as are yearly refresher classes. (4) CIT training for PD. (5) All transit police officers and bus and rail supervisors. (6) Training for operators is not exclusive for homeless individuals, but is covered based on disruptive behavior. (7) Not specifically for homeless, but we have and are expanding our training for dealing with mentally ill people. The majority of our homeless have some form of mental illness. (8) Not specifically on homeless—just how to handle difficult situations. (9) The training is not specific to homeless. (10) Provided as part of employee training for customer service, not specifically for the homeless. (11) We are in the process of enhancing our conflict resolution training for all hands.

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34. Has your agency defined budget impacts related to interacting with homeless persons?

No	63.6%	28
Not sure	22.7%	10
Yes	13.6%	6

35. What is the approximate annual budget impact?

Less than \$100,000	33.3%	2
\$100,000–\$499,999	33.3%	2
\$500,000–\$999,999	0.0%	0
\$1,000,000 or more	16.7%	1
Not sure	16.7%	1

36. How are these funds used?

Primarily for the contract for outreach services; also funding for extra cleaning crews to assist outreach at terminal stations.

The current free fare program costs upwards of \$100,000, but the maintenance costs are not calculated.

CIT Coordinator, CIT Training, Cleaning Services.

Low-income bus passes (used by homeless) and other pass programs that non-profits use for the homeless.

Additional staff at our transit station.

Free bus passes that will be discontinued on 9/30/15.

37. Does your agency have dedicated staff to interact with homeless persons?

No	84.4%	38
Yes	15.6%	7

38. How many staff persons are dedicated to interacting with homeless persons?

1	42.9%	3
2	28.6%	2
3	14.3%	1
4 or more	0.0%	0
Other (please specify):	14.3%	1

Other includes: It's not really our staff....it's the contractor's staff. They have 60–70 staff dedicated to our subway program, another 18 or so dedicated to our commuter railroads. Some are management.

39. Does your agency conduct or participate in any community education efforts related to the problem of homelessness?

No	57.8%	26
Yes, as a participating agency	42.2%	19
Yes, as the lead agency	0.0%	0

40. Please describe these community education efforts.

Responses summarized in Table 20, chapter three of report. Verbatim responses are provided here.

We do outreach to community-based organizations that serve homeless individuals.

We work with each of the local jurisdiction's emergency responders (police and fire). Participate in community outreach efforts with downtown associations and service organizations on a regular basis.

We do this both as the lead and a participating agency. Sometimes by making announcements over public address systems encouraging people to make donations to organizations that help the homeless, but not to give directly to the homeless; also, information about the fact that we are conducting outreach, and how they can contact us with concerns about a homeless individual on our property.

As part of Public Safety outreach efforts conducted by local governments.

1. Work group. 2. National Alliance on Mental Illness Workshops 3. Conferences 4. Local partners (systemwide/four counties).

1. Low-income bus pass committee—activated in 2009 until the new program was implemented; 2. Disabled Vet pass program; 3. County/city homeless committee—we have been invited to speak in the past to describe our services and pass programs.

The city hosted a multi-meeting event to educate itself and others on the extent of homelessness, possible solutions, and strategies to address. Transit was an observing participant and had opportunity to weigh in on the study. The city is now applying some of the best lessons learned. Police and social workers are working together to address the concerns, with arrest being a last resort.

We participate in community education events to help with homelessness, including a group called Project Homeless Connect, which helps to connect individuals who are homeless with resources they need.

City takes the lead. One example: Homeless youth task force, transit agency worked with city and developed a pass similar to U-pass IF proven to be attending school up to age 20.

VA outreach conducted in order to assess and then contact homeless veterans on the system.

We participate with homeless committees within the various cities and assist when we can with all their initiatives.

Utilization of Crisis Solutions Center (CSC) which provides county responders with alternative options to jail and hospitalization settings when engaging with individuals age 18 or older who are in a behavioral health crisis. The goal is to reduce the cycling of individuals with mental health or substance use disorders through the criminal and crisis systems. This may include the homeless who are experiencing one of the above issues. A mobile crisis team (two mental health professionals) can be called 24 hours per day to assist people in mental health or substance use crisis. They can be consulted with any time of the day and can place individuals in a 16-bed “crisis diversion facility.” Allows stabilization services and linkage to community-based services for help. Also there is a Crisis Diversion Interim program if an individual is homeless and there is the potential for them to go into crisis again. Can stay up to 2 weeks. Assistance for longer-term housing may be provided.

We work with a local group that provides services to the homeless and we provide free rides to homeless individuals who attend the annual resource event.

Multiple agencies have seminars and summits on the issue and we usually send a representative to participate.

We participate in job fairs and outreach sessions where we describe our services. We also emphasize appropriate behavior.

41. Are there any other aspects of your agency’s interactions with persons who are homeless that would be useful for us to know and that weren’t included in any of the questions?

None.

I do not think so.

There are not any specific classes or training for the public or employees on dealing with the homeless on our transit system; all of our employees are aware that a lot of the patrons who utilize the system are homeless and that we will be sensitive to their needs at all times. However, “If you see something, say something!” and do not be relaxed about reporting the concerns to the proper authority. The silent challenge is making commonsense and good judgment choices on when to arrest someone who is homeless and in a crisis.

None at this time.

Not really; this survey has covered a lot of territory.

No.

N/A—you covered it well on the other questions.

No.

No.

None that I can think of.

Struggle to get the right balance among needs of customers, employees, and the community at large

Desire to work with Native American community.

No.

The CSC program noted in question 37 can be used repeatedly to help come up with a plan to help with recovery. The person must be willing to engage in services and have some behavioral control to participate. Criminal history classified as violent or sex offenses may make someone ineligible. The Crisis Diversion Interim Services (CDIS) has 23 beds and takes referrals from the crisis diversion facility. Helps with stabilization and to remove barriers to treatment such as homelessness. They can stay for 2 weeks and case management services are provided to identify all housing and support options available. Outreach has been done to Transit Police and other law enforcement to facilitate referrals.

No.

No.

No.

Not at this time.

42. Would you be willing to participate further as a case study, involving a telephone interview going into further detail on your agency’s experience, if selected by the TCRP panel for this project?

Yes	74.4%	32
No	25.6%	11

43. Is there another transit system that you suggest we contact for this synthesis project? If you know of a contact at that system, please list the name also.

Various responses. 16 systems mentioned, many of which were already included in the study.

Abbreviations and acronyms used without definitions in TRB publications:

A4A	Airlines for America
AAAAE	American Association of Airport Executives
AASHO	American Association of State Highway Officials
AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
ACI-NA	Airports Council International-North America
ACRP	Airport Cooperative Research Program
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
APTA	American Public Transportation Association
ASCE	American Society of Civil Engineers
ASME	American Society of Mechanical Engineers
ASTM	American Society for Testing and Materials
ATA	American Trucking Associations
CTAA	Community Transportation Association of America
CTBSSP	Commercial Truck and Bus Safety Synthesis Program
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOE	Department of Energy
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FMCSA	Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
FRA	Federal Railroad Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
HMCRP	Hazardous Materials Cooperative Research Program
IEEE	Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991
ITE	Institute of Transportation Engineers
MAP-21	Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (2012)
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NASAO	National Association of State Aviation Officials
NCFRP	National Cooperative Freight Research Program
NCHRP	National Cooperative Highway Research Program
NHTSA	National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
NTSB	National Transportation Safety Board
PHMSA	Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
RITA	Research and Innovative Technology Administration
SAE	Society of Automotive Engineers
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (2005)
TCRP	Transit Cooperative Research Program
TDC	Transit Development Corporation
TEA-21	Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (1998)
TRB	Transportation Research Board
TSA	Transportation Security Administration
U.S.DOT	United States Department of Transportation

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