Section IV

PRACTICAL FIELD TESTS

WHY PRACTICAL FIELD TESTS?

As part of the research project, six Practical Field Tests were conducted to explore various aspects of transit policing. Each test addresses concerns expressed by transit police and security managers over the paucity of research addressing their specific needs. While transit police and security managers are faced with the full range of problems facing all police executives, they are hampered by the scarcity of experimental research that is transit-specific.

The case studies were undertaken to provide baseline data in areas where none currently exists. They are also meant to serve as catalysts for additional research by helping transit agencies learn what others are doing and providing impetus for replicating or building upon the initial findings. Thus, in addition to their research value, each of the Practical Field Tests can also act as a networking guide. Transit police and security managers can share information and learn from one another, particularly in situations where unique problems may require modification of deployment tactics normally used by municipal, county, or state police agencies with whom jurisdiction may be shared or overlapping.

These case studies provide benefits that rarely accrue from single-site, single-problem experiments. Single-site findings often represent a particular problem in policing: for more than two decades municipal police managers have complained that experiments conducted at one site under unique, site-specific conditions are almost never replicated at another site, making it virtually impossible to judge the worth of a particular strategy anywhere other than at the original site.

Because of the historical failure to replicate virtually all police experiments, or to approach similar problems with more than one tactic, findings are always open to question as to their applicability to all but the cities in which they were conducted. Transit police managers, not wanting to be faced with similar questions, have been asking for research that they can translate for their own properties.

The aim of these case studies is not to tell agencies: "Do this exactly as it was done here!" but rather to tell them, "Agencies like yours have tried this, see if it works for you," or, even more important, "An agency that is quite different from yours tried this;

maybe you can modify it to meet your needs." To meet this goal, case studies are to be seen as "best practice" suggestions that may be used in toto or in part as local conditions require.

These case studies address a number of deployment issues. They provide geographic, system size, and system type balance and can easily be transferred to other venues. They were devised with the goal of producing a range of possible solutions for effective use of police and security personnel.

While each case study describes a particular problem and a specific agency's response to it, conclusions do not preclude modifications. Were each case study to present merely one solution to each problem, it would not be providing guidelines, but rather it would be mandating action that might be incompatible with the needs or abilities of a large number of agencies. The aim is not to set policy for agencies, but to educate them so that they are capable of making their own deployment decisions based on interventions undertaken in comparable settings.

The three general areas represented in these case studies are:

- **Effects of uniformed and plainclothes deployment on patron perception of safety and on reported crimes.** Field tests measure the impact of strategies in a number of environments. While patrons like to see uniformed officers patrolling areas (it often makes them feel safe), police managers often view uniformed officers as merely displacing crime to another location or as addressing cosmetic rather than substantive security issues.

- **Parking lot security techniques.** Parking lot security affects not only police and security managers but customer relations, marketing, and risk management personnel. It is especially important for newer systems seeking to lure potential patrons out of their personal vehicles and for systems where trip drive-time and destination parking-space allocation do not result in captive riders. In such systems, riders may easily be turned away from mass transit if they believe their vehicles will be stolen or vandalized while parked or if the patrons feel personally unsafe in unprotected parking facilities.

- **Community policing in a transit environment.** Use of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), community education programs, storefront offices, and riding equipment on a regular or irregular basis are only some of the community policing strategies that transit agencies can bring into their arsenal of proactive techniques. Despite the vast amount of physical territory that many transit agencies are responsible for, there are methods to avoid having all officers respond in vehicles (or on foot in large stations) to reports of past crimes.

THE PRACTICAL FIELD TESTS

Based on analyses of bibliographic items and the surveys of transit systems, areas of experimentation were selected that address common problems in transit security. The experiments provide geographic, system size, and system-type balance, thereby providing a range of possible solutions to practical problems facing transit managers.

The goal of producing a range of possible solutions was inherent in the project's aim of providing guidelines for effective use of police and security personnel. To present merely one solution to each problem, would not have provided guidelines but would have been a mandate for action that might be incompatible with the needs or abilities of a large number of agencies. The project's goal was not to set policy for agencies but to educate them so that they would be capable of making their own policies based on interventions undertaken in comparable settings.

- **Bicycle patrol: responding to park-n-ride crime.** The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) instituted bike patrols as a way to enhance visibility of officers at Lindbergh Station, a heavy rail station that has 1,167 parking spaces in its open lot and 306 spaces in its parking deck. In addition, the station is a bus transfer point. The station was the scene of a large number of thefts of and from autos. The strategy of assigning two uniformed officers on bike patrol resulted in a 58.3 percent drop in Part I crimes during the test period. Based on the results, MARTA envisions adding six bikes in 1997 and doubling that number by fiscal year 1998.

- **The Auto Crime Unit: a response to parking lot crime.** In 1994, the Long Island Rail Road, which serves the greater New York metropolitan area, developed a team of plainclothes officers to respond to escalating problems of auto theft. This apprehension-oriented unit of police officers makes use of surveillance teams and borrowed vehicles to preclude easy recognition. It also uses such problem-oriented techniques as commuter education and a Combat Auto Theft program to confront thefts. Despite major decreases in thefts and increases in apprehensions, commuter awareness of the program continues to be lower than hoped for or anticipated.

- **Local police response to park-n-ride crime.** Metrolink, the Los Angeles metropolitan area's commuter rail system, is policed by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Patrolling parking lots, though, is the responsibility of individual, local police departments. When residents exhibited alarm over a small amount of crime, the Claremont Police Department responded by assigning a non-sworn, uniformed officer with a marked patrol car in the lot adjoining its historic rail station. Crime dropped to zero. Claremont is planning to experiment further with fencing the lot and altering the hours that an officer will be assigned to the parking facility, which is also a bus transfer point.

- **Comparing security perceptions and storefront patrol.** Faced with concerns by citizens that extension of the San Diego Trolley to Santee would result in increased crime and disorder in their town, city managers contracted with the San Diego Sheriff's Department to staff a storefront substation and incorporated numerous Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) elements into the station. The absence of crime and disorder is contrasted with the El Cajon Station, an older facility that suffers visible blight and that received no special attention at the time of its opening. At one station, quality-of-life enforcement began the day the facility opened; at the other station, disorder was allowed to prevail and the station must now be "recaptured" for the benefit of patrons. This study also describes the arrangement for policing the Trolley, which relies on a combination of proprietary fare inspectors and contract security officers, supplemented with limited use of off-duty police officers.

- **Uniformed officers board buses.** Uniformed New York City police officers rode or boarded buses in two boroughs to test the effects of this uncommon tactic on this very large system. A comparison of the three-month test periods with the two previous years yielded a drop in both criminal and non-criminal reported incidents. Although uniformed police officers are a rare sight on New York City buses, this test of police officer visibility attracted neither patron nor media comment. The small amount of actual crime on the two bus routes, one in Brooklyn, the other in the Bronx, reinforces earlier findings that rider perceptions of crime are often far in excess of actual criminal activity even in the largest cities.

- **Riding the bus: community policing for transit.** How can one of the basic strategies of community policing—foot patrol—meet the needs of a transit agency? Houston's METRO Police assigned an officer to ride two bus lines sharing the same transfer point for three hours each week day. Crime and disorderly behavior were reduced substantially, but, more important, the officer's interactions with operators, patrons, teenagers, school officials, and business people along the routes are classic examples of the philosophy of community policing. This study presents a specific methodology for incorporating proactive patrol into the transit environment.

OBSERVATIONS, RESULTS, AND CONCLUSIONS

All interventions seem to have had a positive effect on reducing crime, although they were not as successful at reducing patrons' perceptions of transit facilities as crime-prone. It may be easier to explain the first of these two observations.

Despite the oft-portrayed picture of transit environments that are out of control and teeming with criminal activity, the amount of crime that occurs on transit systems is actually quite small and, except in the few cases of violent crimes that attract wide media attention, is most often limited to quality-of-life and other, non-violent offenses. In addition, other than quality-of-life offenses, the most serious crime that occurs regularly on transit systems is auto theft and the related crime of theft from autos.

Parking Facilities

The three PFTs describing interventions aimed at reducing auto-related crimes indicate that the decision to address this problem proactively may be as important as the actual intervention tactic employed. Because parking lots are frequently (although not always) contained spaces and because the activities of legitimate users of the facilities follow a predictable pattern of parking quickly at the first available space and rushing for a bus or train, officers assigned to parking facilities can easily spot behavior that does not conform with this predictable pattern.

Patterns of behavior by the criminals are equally predictable and are distinctive from the behavior of the commuters; in fact, they are virtually the opposite. Commuters rush to find a spot; potential thieves drive or walk casually looking for a likely target. Commuters take the first available space, having usually left themselves only enough time to park and catch their bus or train; potential thieves linger to assure that rush-hour commuters have departed. Commuters arrive primarily one to a vehicle; potential thieves often arrive in groups.

With this knowledge, a police or security manager can be fairly confident that staff assignments to parking facilities will result in lower theft rates within the lots. Answering another important question, the MARTA experiment provided indications that crime will not merely be displaced to parking facilities at adjoining stations, an oft-voiced concern of security and operations managers.

If it is so easy to curtail parking lot crimes, why not merely assign officers to parking facilities? The answer, of course, is not as simple as the question. The PFTs have shown that there are a number of deployments available, ranging from the apprehension-oriented, plainclothes Auto Crime Unit of the Long Island Rail Road to the "eyes and ears" tactic of an unsworn, but visibly placed officer at Metrolink's Claremont Station. MARTA's bike patrol fits somewhere between these two deployment options. Another important aspect of solving parking lot crime is that transit systems often share jurisdiction for the lots with surrounding agencies. In a large number of locales, the transit system is not legally responsible for the parking facility in any way except in the minds of commuters. For this reason, the partnership approach exemplified by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Metrolink Bureau and the Claremont Police Department can serve as a guide for transit agencies relying on local police to safeguard parking facilities.

Passenger perceptions of parking lot crime seem harder to change than does the actual level of crime itself. Again, there are a number of possible explanations. Plainclothes units are invisible to patrons. As the Long Island Rail Road discovered, even when officers handed out crime-prevention information and received considerable local press coverage, their activities went virtually unnoticed by the public. Perceptions of safety in parking lots also seem to be determined by other than thefts or even the few violent crimes that occur; if the lot is dark, poorly marked, and littered with debris, no amount of police or security effort will convince patrons it is safe.

In addition, patrons contribute to a lingering sense of fear by discussing whose vehicle was stolen or broken into, rather than whose was left untouched. To counter this, police and security directors should work with customer relations and public affairs personnel to remind commuters of the small amount of crime that actually occurs in parking lots and in transportation facilities generally.

Transit-related Crime

A major concern voiced by all transit police and security managers, and one commented upon in each of the PFTs, was a system's inability to collect accurate crime data. Studies in the mid-1980s by Ned Levine and Martin Wachs at three bus stops in the Southern California RTD operating area were among the first to raise issues pertaining to the accuracy of crime data obtained by transit agencies. Little has been done in this area since then. These authors' estimates of the amount of victimization of transit passengers were far in excess of that reported by the transit agency. While several factors could account for the differences, Levine and Wachs pointed out that reported transit crime rates may be particularly unreliable due to the "leakage" that occurs when transit police or security officers are not around to take reports and investigate crimes.

Local police reporting mechanisms, as all the PFTs mentioned, rarely specify that a crime is transit-related, hence, a statistic is lost to transit managers interested in deploying their forces effectively. The problem is intensified for agencies that have no police force of their own, relying on driver or dispatcher reports and patron complaints for crime analysis.

One of the most basic issues facing transit policing managers is how to develop deployment priorities in the face of this loss of data, which is primarily a result of multi-

jurisdictional crime reporting. This issue has an increased immediacy amid the growing trend toward contract policing and employing a series of technological innovations in response to perceptions of a growing crime problem even when reports do not indicate such growth. If managers lack mechanisms to collect and quantify data and pinpoint crime-prone locations, it becomes impossible to assure the most cost- and security-effective deployment of the limited numbers of personnel usually available.

Recently, former New York City Police Commissioner William J. Bratton, who served for two years as head of New York's Transit Police, asked: "Can you imagine running a bank if you couldn't look at your bottom line every day?" He defined his bottom line as daily crime statistics. Using his definition—and his analogy—today's transit police and security managers are often dependent on monthly bottom lines that are only rough estimates of where they ought to invest their resources.

Officer Involvement and Morale

Officers who participated in each of these Practical Field Tests displayed high levels of interest in their projects and in the outcomes, resulting in high morale. Officers who interacted regularly with the public were the most positive, reinforcing the view that an affirmative response from patrons and other system employees is more important to officers than many managers may realize. Whether in the field or collating statistics, all officers and support personnel involved with each of the PFTs completed all tasks on deadline, did more than was asked of them, and indicated a hope that their agencies would be included in future research projects. It was this high level of enthusiasm that played a role in the decision to make available as part of the Guidelines the training manual prepared for participating agencies. It is included as Appendix A as a means of encouraging future study of transit-specific responses to actual crime and disorder and to patron perceptions of both on transit systems around the nation.

Chapter 1

PRACTICAL FIELD TEST AT MARTA
Bicycle Patrol: Responding to Park-N-Ride Crime

The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, known as MARTA, was established in 1972. MARTA provides bus and rail services to the Atlanta, Georgia, metropolitan area, which encompasses the city of Atlanta, as well as Fulton and DeKalb counties. Atlanta is Georgia's state capital and home to a diverse range of businesses and services, including the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and many major universities. MARTA is a regional transportation system that seeks to ease congestion and stimulate travel mobility within the Atlanta area. Over 700 buses transverse 1,500 route miles serving 50 individual routes. The rail system extends over 40 miles and services 36 passenger stations with 240 rail cars. Like many transit systems serving multiple jurisdictions, MARTA maintains its own police department—MARTA Police Services.

THE MARTA RAIL SYSTEM AND ITS POLICE

MARTA's rail system provides heavy rail service to an 804-square mile area inhabited by 1,241,000 people. The rail system operates from 5:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m., Monday through Friday and from 6:00 a.m. to 12:30 a.m., weekends and holidays. Buses, many of which provide connecting and feeder service to the rail stations, operate on a similar schedule, generally running from 5:00 a.m. to 1:30 a.m. weekdays and from 5:30 a.m. weekends and holidays.

At the time of this Practical Field Test (PFT), designed to assess the practicality and effectiveness of utilizing police bicycle patrols, the system served 33 passenger stations,[1] and had 23,000 parking spaces for commuters. System usage totaled an average of 185,000 weekly trips measured through rail station entries. MARTA Police Services, responsible for policing both the bus and rail systems, has a strength of 290

[1] Three additional stations, bringing the total to 36, became operational with the opening of the first leg of MARTA's North Line extension on June 8, 1996.

personnel, including 261 sworn police officers. The annual police budget is $10 million—a significant increase from its initial allocation of $381,000 for the four person force established in 1972.

The MARTA Police are accredited by the Commission for the Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA),[2] and are the eighth largest police agency in the state of Georgia. MARTA officers are armed, have the same rights and powers as other Georgia law enforcement officers, and are certified by the Georgia Peace Officers Standards and Training Council (POST). The majority of officers are deployed on foot. Uniformed and plainclothes officers patrol the system either in regular, directed assignments or on random beats.

While MARTA Police also are responsible for police services for the region's buses, the vast majority of officers are assigned to uniformed patrol of the rail lines. MARTA's security posture places an emphasis on uniformed presence and crime prevention to deter crime and promote ridership. The system is well-known for its zero-tolerance policy, which forbids eating, drinking, littering, or loitering in stations, on platforms, or in rail cars.

MARTA officers focus on train patrols, with a uniformed officer patrolling every train in service, Sunday through Friday between 3:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. and on Saturday between 5:00 p.m. and 1:00 a.m. This train patrol posture is widely advertised on passenger information guides and is even posted on MARTA's informational web site on the Internet's World Wide Web.

In addition to police presence, the system utilizes a variety of technological adjuncts. These include closed circuit television (CCTV), passenger intercoms, emergency phones, anti-passback fare gates, and restricted access doors monitored by personnel at the control center. MARTA's emergency phone system, which relies on a variety of color coded phones, is more extensive than that utilized by most rail systems. White phones are designated for passenger assistance; blue phones are linked to zone centers where personnel monitor CCTV; and red phones are designated as fire phones. Each rail car is also equipped with an intercom allowing passengers to contact the train operator.

[2] CALEA is an independent accrediting entity which evaluates law enforcement agencies according to an impartial set of standards. MARTA, initially accredited in March 1996, is one of the few transit police agencies to receive this status.

SECURITY CHALLENGES: A FOCUS ON PARK-N-RIDES

While the MARTA rail system, like many of its North American counterparts, enjoys a relatively secure, crime-free environment, passenger perceptions of risk and typical transit crime issues are an important operational concern. Like many other systems, parking facilities such as park-n-ride lots or parking decks offer criminals viable targets for exploitation. Vehicles parked for long, predictable time periods are a soft and attractive target. Cars are sometimes stolen; more often their contents (particularly radios and cellular phones) are removed.

MARTA has a number of parking facilities attached to several of its stations, with a total of about 25,000 parking spaces for commuters systemwide. The majority of the lots provide free access to parking, with the exception of secured overnight parking with 24-hour security at the Brookhaven/Oglethorpe University Station (for $3.00 per night) and the parking decks at the Lennox and Lindbergh Center stations (for $1.00 per day) between 5:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. weekdays.[3] Parking at the secured lots is marketed to both commuters and persons traveling to the Hartsfield International Airport via MARTA's direct rail link. Obviously, enhanced expectations of security are expected in these premium lots.

Potential crimes against persons—while less likely than on the street or surrounding neighborhoods—must be minimized to ensure safety on the system. Anti-social activity, which diminishes quality-of-life and enhances fear on the system, must also be corrected. To do this, officers must be visible to riders. This need for high visibility, which addresses patron concerns, requires officers to maintain public contact on-board trains and at the stations. Foot patrols, either train patrol, fixed patrol at large stations or lots, or random foot patrol of a group of stations, is generally the response to these needs. MARTA's reliance on foot patrol, though, results in limited mobility for its officers in and around large stations.

[3] These rates are for 1995-96. A parking permit can also be purchased for the covered parking decks for $15.00 per month. In 1994, 24-hour secured overnight parking was available at the Brookhaven/Oglethorpe Station and the Kensington Station for $2.00 per night.

Figure 1.1: A train enters the Lindbergh Station.
Figure 1.2: Bike patrol officers ride between cars in the Station's parking lot.

BICYCLE PATROLS AND THE LINDBERGH PFT

In an effort to better protect the public, police administrators welcome new methods and tactics to enhance the effectiveness of the patrol function. Bicycle patrols are one tactic many police agencies have instituted to meet this goal. Use of bike patrols initially came into vogue as part of the early steps toward implementing community policing strategies. Many agencies, seeking to provide closer relations with the communities they serve, shifted some officers from their patrol cars to bikes. Advocates of bike patrol saw this as a way to heighten visibility and maximize officer-citizen contacts while retaining a degree of mobility to respond to proximate emergencies or crimes in progress.

Despite the association of bicycle patrols with community policing strategies, only 4.4 percent of the law enforcement agencies recently surveyed about community policing tactics utilize bike patrols as the primary mode of transportation for their community police officers. Nevertheless, by 1993, 38 percent of county police, 40 percent of municipal police, 9 percent of sheriff's departments, and 6 percent of specialized police agencies reported using bike patrols.[4] Bicycle patrols are utilized by the Atlanta Police Department and by other metropolitan Atlanta communities. They are also utilized by transit police in Washington, D.C. California's Santa Clara Transit initiated a sheriff's bike patrol as early as 1991. The Vancouver, British Columbia, Police Department also uses bike patrols in a joint police-transit security effort.[5]

Against this background, MARTA Police Services became interested in assessing the viability of bike patrols to augment park-n-ride patrol efforts. The mix of heightened visibility, and a greater mobility than could be achieved with traditional foot patrols appeared an attractive means of focusing police resources. Toward this end, MARTA Police sought to develop a pilot bicycle deployment program.

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[4] Community police officers were considered officers primarily engaged in community policing efforts as opposed to traditional response to calls for service. See Robert J. Trojanowicz, *et al*, Community Policing: A Survey of Police Departments in the United States (Washington, DC: Department of Justice, and Michigan State University National Center for Community Policing, Michigan State University, 1994). Figures for use of bike patrol come from Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (Washington, DC: Department of Justice, 1993); and from Data for Individual State and Local Agencies with 100 or More Officers (Washington, DC: Department of Justice, 1995, NCJ-148825).

[5] See "The Rail Thing," Law Enforcement News, April 30, 1996, p. 4, about bikes at the Washington Metropolitan Transportation Authority and "Santa Clara Sheriff Initiates Bike Patrol," Transit Policing Vol. 2, no. 1, Summer/Fall 1992, p. 11. A Canadian effort is reported in "Vancouver Begins Bike Patrol: Joint Police/Transit Effort," Passenger Transport, July 20, 1992, p. 4.

ASSEMBLING THE BICYCLE PATROL PROGRAM

MARTA embraced bike patrols as a way to enhance visibility of officers on the system. Bike patrols were envisioned as an adjunct to traditional patrol methods with an anticipated focus on protecting system park-n-ride facilities and minimizing patron fears of isolation. MARTA initially employed bike patrols on a pilot basis after a two-year pre-assessment. At the onset of the assessment, police planners felt bike patrols would provide patrol officers the advantage of getting around more quickly than on foot, thereby bringing greater effectiveness to transit policing efforts.

The pre-assessment looked at bicycle patrol experiences throughout the United States. These included programs at transit systems in Las Vegas and Seattle, as well as local police programs in the metropolitan Atlanta cities of Atlanta, Chamblee, Doraville, East Point, and Dekalb County. MARTA Police chose 21-speed Trek mountain bikes for the program, with planned deployment targeted for the system's North Line. The focus of the patrols would be major parking lots. Once the bikes were selected, MARTA Police were faced with the task of selecting and training officers for participation in the pilot program.

The officers were chosen from a pool of volunteers. Once selected, the new bike patrol officers attended the Basic Bicycle Operations Course offered by the Georgia Peace Officers Standards and Training Council. The police bike operations course addresses a number of topics, including:

- General bike riding and how to ride in traffic
- Patrol procedures
- Bike maintenance
- Traffic laws related to bikes
- Clearing obstacles
- Hazard recognition and dealing with crashes
- Tactical maneuvers and managing suspect contact

The bike patrols were initiated as soon as the volunteer officers completed training. Two officers were deployed on bicycles between 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The presence of bike patrols on the system was highly publicized. For

example, MARTA's rider's guide "How to Ride" advises passengers of the bicycle patrols stating, "Police officers on bikes offer additional security in rail station parking lots and adjacent properties."

LINDBERGH STATION

Lindbergh Station is located north of downtown Atlanta, on MARTA's North Line, at 2424 Piedmont Road at the intersection of Lindbergh Drive. The station, designated N-6 according to MARTA's mapping system, has 1,167 parking spaces in its open lot and 306 spaces in its parking deck. Total vehicle capacity at the site is 1,473; average weekday usage exceeds nominal capacity at 1,482 vehicles. While four system lots have a larger capacity, only one has a greater average usage. The lots are open twenty-four hours per day, seven days a week.

Trains travel through the station between 4:30 a.m. and 1:30 a.m. At the time of this Practical Field Test, rail cars ran through the station at eight minute intervals. (They now operate every four minutes from Lindbergh Station to the Airport Station.) Each weekday, an average of 10,065 persons enter the station. In addition to rail usage, eleven bus lines operate from the station.

In 1995, 144 criminal incidents were reported at Lindbergh Station. These resulted in 50 arrests. In addition, MARTA Police handled 1,914 calls for service at the station and initiated 2,298 patrols of the area.

Lindbergh Station's level of usage made it an ideal site to test the effectiveness of bicycle patrols at MARTA. To do so, MARTA Police closely monitored the impact of the bike patrol at Lindbergh Station over a three-month period: February, March, and April 1996. Evaluation criteria included the number of Part I and Part II crimes reported, and the number of arrests, calls for service, and patrols initiated. This data would be contrasted with that collected during the same time period in the preceding year (1995).

In February 1996, three Part I crimes were reported. All of these were vehicle crimes: one auto theft, one attempted auto theft, and one vehicle vandalized. In March 1996, the two Part I crimes were also vehicle crimes: two auto thefts. Weekday usage of the station (as measured by rail entries) was 10,055 patrons in February, 8,795 in March, and 9,982 in April. (See Table 1.1.)

Table 1.1: Police Activity and Reported Crimes at Lindbergh Station; February - April 1996

	February	March	April
Crimes			
Part I	3	2	2
Part II	6	0	0
Total	9	2	2
Activity			
Arrests	3	6	5
Calls for Service	205	166	148
Patrols Initiated	121	125	128

A larger number of both Part I and vehicle crimes occurred at the station in the year prior to the bike patrol in 1995. (See Table 1.2.) In February 1995, for example, there were three Part I crimes and one vehicle crime, a case of vandalism. In March 1995,

Table 1.2: Police Activity and Reported Crimes at Lindbergh Station; February - April 1995

	February	March	April
Crimes			
Part I	3	4	8
Part II	5	1	4
Total	8	5	12
Activity			
Arrests	3	1	3
Calls for Service	158	152	148
Patrols Initiated	142	162	204

there were four Part I crimes and a total of five vehicle crimes. The vehicle crimes were: one larceny from a vehicle, two auto thefts, one attempted auto theft, and one case of vehicle vandalism. April 1995 accounted for eight Part I crimes, of which seven were vehicle crimes, in this case auto theft.

Table 1.3 describes the distribution of Part I crimes by location at Lindbergh Station during the months of February, March, and April for both 1995 and 1996.

Table 1.3: Part I Crimes by Location (Station v. Parking Lot); February - April 1995 v. February - April 1996

	Total Part I	Part I on Station	Part I in Parking Lot
1995	15	3	12
1996	7	2	5

In addition, activity at Lindbergh Station was compared with the experience at two other MARTA Stations. These stations were Lennox, one station north (see Table 1.3); and the Arts Center, one station south (see Table 1.4). The experience at these stations were also categorized in terms of Part I crimes reported during the three-month study period and the prior year.

Table 1.4: Part I Crimes at Arts Center Station; February - April 1995 v. February - April 1996

	February	March	April
1995 Part I	4	3	1
1996 Part I	0	1	0

Table 1.5: Part I Crimes at Lennox Station;
February - April 1995 v. February - April 1996

	February	March	April
1995 Part I	1	3	7
1996 Part I	5	11	0

In neither case did it appear that enhanced patrol activity resulting from bicycle patrols at Lindbergh Station had displaced criminal activity to either adjacent station.

CATEGORIZING THE IMPACT OF BIKE PATROL

MARTA Police found that bicycle patrol is a useful and cost-effective tactic in the transit environment. At MARTA, for example, the typical patrol car costs about $23,000 versus $2,300 for a police mountain bike. Simply stated, at one-tenth the cost, with high visibility and relative speed compared to a foot officer, MARTA was able to support a preventive approach to policing that is complementary to its community policing posture.

MARTA also found the bikes to be highly reliable. Bike officers typically rode their bikes between 25 and 35 miles each day for a total distance of about 3,300 miles per bike. During this period, officers experienced only one flat tire and one broken toe clip.

In terms of crime suppression, MARTA Police were equally satisfied. During the three month PFT, Part I crimes at Lindbergh Station dropped from 15 in 1995 to 7 during the study period, a 53.3 percent decrease. The greatest impact was felt in the parking lot areas, where Part I crimes fell from 12 in 1995 to 5 during the PFT, a 58.3 percent drop. The largest decrease at the parking lot was experienced in April, when Part I crimes experienced an 87.5 percent decrease.

Parking lot usage and arrests at the station also increased during the study period. Average weekly parking lot usage rose 11.9 percent from 3,938 vehicles in 1995 to 4,408 in 1996. During the same time period, arrests rose from 6 in 1995 to 14 in 1996. While a slight (6.5 percent) decrease in ridership occurred, with average weekly

station entries dropping from 30,862 in 1995 to 28,842 in 1996, MARTA officials felt this decrease to be too small to account for the drop in crime.

CONCLUSIONS

This Practical Field Test of bike patrols was conducted at Atlanta's Lindbergh Station over a three-month period. At the conclusion of this PFT, MARTA Police feel that bikes are highly effective. As a result of their evaluation, MARTA Police are confident that bicycle patrol has a place in their transit patrol program. Consequently, they envision adding six additional bikes in 1997, and are considering doubling this number by fiscal year 1998.

This finding should be of great interest to transit police commanders seeking to heighten visibility at their systems. Bike patrols offer an effective method of bolstering patrol efforts, particularly in parking areas, where transit patrons and their vehicles are somewhat vulnerable due to the predictable nature of parking lot usage.

Broader applications can also be suggested, such as use of bike patrol along rights-of-way or between closely grouped stations. Bike patrol may also be considered at stations or transfer points used by large numbers of students, many of whom are more willing to talk to an officer riding a bike than on foot patrol or in a marked police car. The bike itself and the need to maintain top physical condition to ride it, breaks the barriers that often exist between youths and police officers, opening up an avenue for conversation that does not otherwise exist.

This examination of bike patrols in a transit setting not only demonstrates the effectiveness of bike patrols at this site but appears to confirm the effectiveness of bike patrols already utilized in such similar parking facilities at shopping malls, at universities, and in communities.

SOURCES

This case study recounts a Practical Field Test conducted by MARTA Police Services to assess the effectiveness of transit bicycle patrol. The case study was constructed after site visits to the MARTA system, including site assessments of the Lindbergh Station and parking area, visits to the adjacent Lennox and Arts Center stations, assessment of MARTA Police statistics, and interviews with key MARTA Police personnel.

Interviews

Eugene M. Wilson, Director of Police Services (Chief of Police), Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA Police Services)
Captain Tim Callahan, North Precinct Commander, MARTA Police Services
Lieutenant Bernard King, MARTA Police Services
Lieutenant Joe McKinney, MARTA Police Services
Stan Martin, Criminal Justice Analyst, MARTA Police Services

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Chapter 2

PRACTICAL FIELD TEST AT LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD
The Auto Crime Unit: A Response to Parking Lot Crime

The Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) is a high-volume commuter railway serving the greater New York metropolitan area. The nation's largest commuter rail system, it serves an area of nearly 4,000 square miles containing a population of 12 million. Each week, the LIRR makes 318,000 trips on over 700 route miles of track, almost 400 of which are electrified. About 75,000,000 passengers use the system each year. An average of 700,000 passengers use the 134 train stations each day. In suburban Long Island, 403 parking lots adjacent to passenger stations allow patrons in Nassau and Suffolk counties to drive to the LIRR in order to board a train to New York City.

Since 1904, the Long Island Rail Road has maintained its own police department to insure a dedicated police function to protect the commuters who utilize the system. Officers are designated "police officers" and are empowered pursuant to Section 1.20, paragraph 34 (L) of the New York State Criminal Procedure Law. Prior to changes in the Criminal Procedure Law in 1970, which specifically listed individual agencies whose employees are police officers, LIRR officers were empowered under Section 88 of the New York State Railroad Law, which authorizes railroads to employ police officers and to apply for state-sanctioned police authorization on behalf of those employees. Officers, who receive their training either with the New York City, Nassau, or Suffolk County Police Departments, receive far in excess of the New York State Municipal Police Training Council's minimum of 520 hours of basic training.

The New York City Police Department, as well as either the Nassau and Suffolk County police departments have primary (or original) and concurrent jurisdiction with the Long Island Rail Road Police Department along various parts of the system. A number of smaller municipal police agencies also serve portions of the system and share jurisdiction on railroad property within their communities.

The Long Island Rail Road Police Department (LIRR Police) has a current strength of 220 sworn police officers. The annual police budget is $19 million. Uniformed patrols

are employed to meet trains and to monitor stations and railway facilities. Vehicle patrols are used to respond to incidents. A number of plainclothes operations address vandalism, graffiti, pickpocketing, and illegal dumping on LIRR right-of-way. The LIRR Police Department also maintains a detective bureau which conducts criminal investigations in support of the overall system security and crime control mission.

COMMUTER CONCERN ABOUT PARKING LOT CRIME

Auto theft and vehicle burglaries at parking facilities are a concern at transit facilities throughout the United States. Parking lot crime, in fact, can influence patron acceptance of a transit system. As a result, patron perceptions of parking lot security are an important indicator of overall system performance.

One of the ways the LIRR discovers what its customers are concerned about is through the administration of annual Customer Satisfaction Surveys. These surveys cover a wide range of topics from cleanliness of facilities and availability of timetables to lighting at the stations and personal security. On average, ten thousand commuters respond to these surveys, providing information that facilitates the LIRR's efforts to effectively focus its resources.

As early as 1991, customers were beginning to express concern about parking lot security and auto-related thefts. As a result of this input, the LIRR Police began to deploy officers to selected parking lots, making a substantial number of arrests (65 in 1991 and 125 in 1992). The overwhelming majority of these arrests were for auto-related crimes, specifically either theft of the auto itself (Grand Larceny-Auto) or thefts from parked vehicles. Although police activity to combat auto-related crimes was increasing, the volume of this form of crime was also increasing. By 1993, it was determined that a separate, dedicated Auto Crime Unit should be established to address parking lot crime.

The December 7, 1993 shooting on a Long Island Rail Road train that resulted in six deaths and a number of injuries[1] focused public concern on commuter safety and

[1] As a crowded LIRR train approached Merillon Avenue on December 7, 1993, Colin Ferguson began shooting at passengers in the rail car in which he had been riding. The rampage resulted in the deaths of 6 passengers and the injury of 17 on board the 5:33 p.m. train from Penn Station to Port Jefferson. A LIRR police officer who happened to be at that station to pick up his wife was assisted by passengers in subduing Ferguson. The incident attracted widespread media attention and highlighted the random nature of such crimes and the inability of any police agency to anticipate the actions of an emotionally disturbed individual.

security at the LIRR. During legislative hearings held in the shooting's aftermath, public concern shifted from on-board crime to security at parking lots. According to LIRR Police Chief John J. O'Connor, parking lot safety and security is an important element in improving passenger perceptions of safety.

Recent surveys have also shown that the stereotypical "Dashing Dan," is no longer the primary customer. Ridership is now 40 percent female. As a result, parking lot safety becomes a more important issue since women frequently report feeling less safe than do male commuters in these areas.

This Practical Field Test describes the creation of the Auto Crime Unit, explains its combined apprehension-oriented and commuter-education-oriented activities, and discusses why, despite decreasing criminal incidents, patrons seem unaware of the unit's operational successes.

THE AUTO CRIME UNIT

The LIRR Police established the Auto Crime Unit (ACU) in January 1994. With an initial complement of one sergeant and four police officers, a continuing focus on parking lot security was initiated. Charles Hoppe, then President of the LIRR, endorsed the unit, stating, "Serving our customers means providing a strong deterrent to auto crime in the parking lots at our stations, as well as other critical aspects of improving our service."

From its inception, the ACU recognized that it must have a dual mission if it was going to be effective in reducing parking lot crime. Law enforcement was the obvious approach, but ACU members believed this would prove most effective if paired with commuter education.

The primary law enforcement activity adopted by the ACU is an arrest-oriented tactic—the plainclothes surveillance of parking lots by teams of officers. The educational aspect includes providing crime awareness and prevention presentations to community and commuter groups. Members of the unit also distribute pamphlets to passengers at a number of rail stations, providing crime prevention tips to reduce auto crime in parking lots.

Figure 2.1: The Ronkonkoma parking lot is the largest on the LIRR.
Figure 2.2: Plainclothes members of the Auto Crime Unit make an apprehension.

By 1996, the ACU had expanded to eight police officers, two detectives and a detective sergeant. It is headed by a detective lieutenant. Prior to the establishment of the ACU, LIRR officers had no specialized training or equipment to support their effectiveness. Once the unit was established, each officer and supervisor attended the New York City Police Department Auto Crime School. Each officer was also trained in utilizing LOJACK (a commercial stolen vehicle recovery system), mobile digital terminal (MDT) operations, plainclothes officer safety, and emergency vehicle operation.

Auto Crime Unit officers are equipped with multi-channel radios to speed interagency communications. Two laptop computers are assigned to the unit to serve as MDTs which provide direct access to the New York State Police Information Network (NYSPIN). This allows officers to conduct rapid vehicle checks and wanted person inquiries directly, avoiding the need to route checks through headquarters personnel, potentially delaying the inquiry process.

In order to conduct surveillance undetected by auto thieves, members of the unit needed to have cars that were not obviously police vehicles. Insurance companies were called upon to support ACU efforts in this regard. As part of this approach, insurance carriers agreed to provide a variety of vehicles to the unit for use in countertheft operations. These vehicles had been reported stolen, were later recovered, and the owners had already been compensated for their loss.

Insurance companies enlisted by the ACU include Allstate, GEICO, Travelers, Liberty Mutual, Utica Mutual, Commercial Union, Metropolitan, Nationwide, and U.S. Capital. Each had a "vehicle lender program" which enabled the company to provide vehicles to the ACU for a one-year period. The vehicles could be replaced or renewals extended if both the ACU and insurance company agreed. As of the summer of 1996, thirteen vehicles have been obtained by the Auto Crime Unit. Two of these have been permanently donated to the LIRR Police.

IDENTIFYING THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

One of the most vexing problems faced by ACU officers at the inception of their effort was understanding the extent and type of crimes they were facing. Criminal complaints and arrests are generally not made directly to the LIRR Police, but rather to the police agency (county or municipal police) where the crime occurred. While these other police agencies record and tabulate crime statistics for their own departments,

they generally did not segregate crime committed on LIRR property or advise LIRR Police of these incidents. Members of the ACU recognized the need to identify and then develop a rapport with their colleagues at these external police agencies in order to acquire the data needed to effectively contain parking lot crime affecting the system.

With the cooperation of these often overlapping agencies, LIRR officers can now not only get the data they need, but they can get it on a weekly basis—previously less detailed data had been provided only monthly. The external agencies were quite willing to assist LIRR Police data collection efforts, since reducing crime at parking lots translates into reduced crime in their policing area and fewer complaints from members of the communities they serve. In order to maintain and strengthen rapport with these other police agencies, joint auto theft operations are periodically conducted by members of the LIRR Auto Crime Unit and their counterparts at these agencies.

IMPACT OF THE AUTO CRIME UNIT

Armed with the necessary crime statistics, the Auto Crime Unit was able to establish priorities and monitor the impact of its deployment strategies. Chief O'Connor places the results of ACU efforts into the following context: "Anytime in police work that you make a 10 percent impact, you've accomplished something."

For the calendar year 1993 (the year prior to the formation of the Auto Crime Unit), the LIRR experienced 676 vehicle thefts and police made 94 arrests. In 1994, vehicle thefts dropped 30 percent to 474, while arrests rose 71 percent to 161. This trend continued for 1995 when vehicle thefts dropped another 29 percent to 335 and arrests rose an additional 8 percent to 174. (See Table 2.1; all crime data have been provided by the LIRR Police Department, Auto Crime Unit.)

Table 2.1: Vehicle Theft - Nassau and Suffolk Counties; 1992 - 1995

COUNTY	1992	1993	1994	1995
Nassau	367	269	217	174
Suffolk	441	407	257	161
TOTALS	808	676	474	335

Since the Auto Crime Unit's inception, vehicle thefts have dropped 50 percent, while arrests have risen 85 percent. (See Table 2.2.)

Table 2.2: Arrests - By County;
1993 - 1995

COUNTY	1993	1994	1995
Nassau	29	41	63
Suffolk	65	120	111
TOTAL	94	161	174

Just as prior to the inception of the specialized unit, arrests continue to be overwhelmingly auto-crime related. Unit members, though, have found that a number of suspects taken into custody for these crimes were found to be wanted for previous crimes or to have information about other serious crimes in the immediate area. The ability to focus on the target crime, to become familiar with a number of the offenders' patterns, and to work more closely with local police have resulted in some suspects being charged with other, non-railroad related crimes or in those with knowledge of other crimes providing information to local police in return for consideration on their current charges.

Thus, although the ACU does not keep these as separate statistics, targeted police efforts have resulted in related arrests and have opened new lines of communication with police departments whose jurisdictions overlap that of the LIRR officers. Clearly the Auto Crime Unit was doing something right and meeting Chief O'Connor's definition of accomplishment.

EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

Until problem-oriented policing and community policing began to be embraced by police agencies, the typical response to rising auto theft was generally an increased deployment of officers to parking lots with the mandate to make more arrests. There is no doubt that this is a useful strategy, and one that the LIRR Police Department certainly employs. Yet this approach does not involve the potential victims in the process. Individuals are unlikely to think of target hardening on their own. All that

most commuters want to do at a train station is find parking spaces for their cars and catch their trains on time. Their focus is on the train, not the car.

To assist commuters in target hardening, the ACU officers analyzed criminal complaints. Their research indicated that the most frequently stolen items from cars were AM/FM cassette players, cellular phones, airbags, valuables such as cameras left in plain sight, and license plates. A thief cannot covet what he does not see.

ACU officers prepared a brief guide of auto theft prevention tips, which they handed out at train stations in the morning hours to commuters as they boarded their trains. This also provided ACU officers with the opportunity to interact briefly with commuters, providing visible indication that the railroad was responding to commuter concerns about parking lot safety in general and auto-related thefts in particular.

Officers also attended community meetings, distributing the prevention tips and discussing other issues of concern to commuters. Moreover, they advised members of the public to lock their cars (13 percent of stolen vehicles have the keys in the car)[2] and to hide valuables from sight (but not under the seat which is one of the first places a thief will check). In addition, they recommended that members of the public not leave a license, registration, or title inside the vehicle since this facilitates the sale of a stolen car. Finally, officers suggested that a car should be parked with its wheels turned sharply to the right or left and the emergency brake applied to make it difficult to tow the car away.

ACU officers walked up and down the aisles of parking lots looking into cars to see if valuables were visible or if the car door was open. When they encountered such cars (some of which had change or dollar bills in plain sight), they left their business cards on the car advising the owner on the back of the card that this time it was a police officer who had observed the crime-prone condition, but it could just as easily have been a thief.

The ACU has also incorporated a "Combat Auto Theft" (CAT) program into its overall prevention strategy. The CAT program was initially started by the New York City

[2] Information on the percentage of vehicles stolen with the keys in the car is included in the LIRR's Auto Theft Prevention Tips information card created by the Police Department and distributed to commuters as part of its community education program.

Police Department in a pilot program instituted in the borough of Queens almost a decade ago. Designed to combat a dramatic rise in auto larcenies, the NYPD program was initially geared to thefts that occurred during overnight hours, but it has recently been expanded to include cars parked in the street during daylight hours.

The LIRR Police CAT program involves a car owner signing a statement that the car is parked at a commuter lot Monday through Friday between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. and giving law enforcement officers consent to stop the vehicle if it is observed being operated during those hours. By signing up for CAT, the vehicle owner provides police with probable cause to stop the vehicle even though no infraction has been observed. Vehicles in the CAT program display a special sticker so police know the car is enrolled in the program.

VIN etching is another voluntary program in which the public can participate to reduce the likelihood of their vehicles being stolen. In this program, a car's 17-character vehicle identification number (VIN) is etched (using acids and stencils) into the major glass components of the vehicle. While the street value of an average stolen vehicle is about $300 or $400, a vehicle that has been VIN etched drops in value to approximately $100.

The Auto Crime Unit has also developed a program known as "Adopt a Station" in which ACU officers are individually assigned to stations experiencing the highest levels of crime. This deployment is based on detailed analysis of current crime activity at all commuter parking lots. As part of this precision targeting, each officer monitors crime patterns and plays a key role in devising problem-solving strategies aimed at reducing crime.

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Even with its current enhanced staffing, the ACU has only ten officers and detectives assigned to prevent or reduce crime in the one hundred plus parking lots spread throughout two of the nation's most populous counties. The railroad right-of-way transverses 701 miles over 11 branches; travelling through three counties of New York City (Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens) and Nassau and Suffolk counties.

Some of the parking lots are small to moderate in size, accommodating one or two hundred vehicles. Others, such as Ronkonkoma Station, have parking for several

thousand cars. For example, there are four separate entrances to the Ronkonkoma complex of lots, and some of these are isolated from the station itself.

In total, nearly 50,000 cars are parked in Long Island Rail Road lots in Nassau and Suffolk counties on a typical, non-holiday weekday. To cope with this volume, the ACU also occasionally deploys an unmarked surveillance van capable of covertly observing and recording criminal activity. At some stations, the unit also has mounted covert cameras at the top of utility poles, which are monitored from remote locations. Despite these high-tech tools, most monitoring is carried out by an officer equipped with nothing more technically advanced than binoculars and a radio.

Officers assigned as observers scan the parking lots for indicators of potential crime, including behavior that is out of the ordinary. The parking lots fill up quite rapidly, so when an officer sees a car passing up an empty parking spot the officer takes notice. Officers also take note when a car is casually driving up and down lanes as a train is pulling into the station. This behavior is atypical, since most commuters try as quickly as possible to find a spot and catch their train. For the same reasons, a car driven slowly and containing multiple occupants also attracts heightened scrutiny.

In addition, officers look for the typical signs of parking lot crime. These include vent windows that have been blown out or side windows opened on a cold day, as well as a door lock popped or a key in the ignition. Officers also note carefully the position of any keys they observe in ignitions, since this may indicate that the key is non-functioning and that the vehicle has been hot-wired.

Adding to the challenges facing the unit is the lack of a consistent profile of offenders, who range in age from their early teens to their sixties. Arrested subjects may dress casually or in suits. Some even carry briefcases. One twelve-year-old was observed systematically walking through each row of parked cars in a lot, a radio in one hand and a screw driver in the other. When questioned by the police, he admitted that his stepfather had sent him into the lot to determine if LIRR Police were present.

There are also a variety of motives for committing crime in the lots. Some teenagers want to steal a car for a joyride or to impress their friends. Others want to steal valuables from the vehicles. Some steal cars to sell for a few hundred dollars; others steal the cars for their parts. Some have no particular car type in mind, but see what opportunity presents. Others know in advance what model and year of car they want.

With most commuters away for eight, ten, or more hours a day and thousands of cars to choose from, commuter parking lots are certainly tempting targets.

The police officers chosen for the Auto Crime Unit are hand-picked for the assignment and view their selection as an indicator of skill and competence. The unit is extremely active; high-quality arrests are made, conviction rates are high, and officers believe they are having an impact on crime.

Chief O'Connor believes that at least part of the high morale can be attributed to the policy of allowing officers to use their surveillance cars to commute to and from work, providing them with a chance to use a late model, often highly costly and popular car they would otherwise rarely get to drive. While officers may use the cars in this manner, they are not permitted to use them during their off-duty hours. He notes that this policy has not resulted in an increase in auto accidents, and that, in fact, the first accident involving a loaned vehicle did not occur until eighteen months into the program. The few accidents that have occurred are all enforcement related, with none having taken place while officers were on their own time.

The officers work as members of an elite team and start each day with a strategy briefing, determining which lots they will cover during their shift. They have learned not to broadcast that information over their radios once deployed, since some criminals monitor the police bands and could know which lots will not be frequented by the police that day.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Since the inception of the ACU there have been numerous articles about the unit's function and arrests appearing in newspapers such as New York City's Daily News, New York Newsday, and a number of Nassau and Suffolk county papers, including the Islip News, South Shore Record, South Shore Tribune, Suffolk Life, Wantaugh-Seaford Citizen, and Long Island Business News. The unit has also been featured on a number of local television news reports.

Media coverage has undoubtedly made commuters more aware of crime problems at train station parking lots. This augments the educational component of the LIRR Police Auto Crime Unit's two-pronged strategy of enforcement and education.

MEASURING PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE

One of the questions asked in the annual Customer Satisfaction Survey relates to how secure the commuter believes his or her car is while parked at the boarding station. Data exist for calendar years 1992 and 1993, prior to the establishment of the Auto Crime Unit. Data also exist for years 1994 and 1995, the first two years of the unit's operation. Mean responses for 1992 and 1993 are 5.2 and 5.1 respectively. Mean responses for 1994 and 1995 are 5.3 and 5.2 respectively. These average ratings stem from an eleven-point scale, where ten is identified as Best and zero is identified as Worst.

Clearly there has been no substantial change in customer ratings during this four-year period. This may suggest that while auto crime has significantly dropped, the commuters themselves are unaware of this fact. Feedback about the number of arrests and the number of auto crimes is not provided to commuters. It is also possible that the survey form itself is contributing to the mean ratings. Many respondents to survey questionnaires rate consistently down the middle of the rating scale. In this form that rating would be a five. The rating scale itself has anchors for each extreme rating, but the terminology chosen (Best and Worst) may be confusing to the respondents. One might ask, "Better than what?" or "Worse than what?"

Another factor that may be contributing to the static measure of the annual ratings is that, by design, the officers assigned to the parking lots wear plainclothes and ride in cars chosen so that they will not be detected by criminals. The flip side of this necessary precaution is that commuters are less likely to realize that police officers are in the lot and protecting their cars. This, of course, is part of the more general issue of plainclothes versus uniform patrol, the first aimed at apprehensions and the second aimed at patron perceptions of safety.

CONCLUSIONS

The Auto Crime Unit has achieved an impressive reduction in the number of auto and auto-related thefts in the parking lots on which it has concentrated. Despite a considerable amount of positive publicity in a media-saturated market in which it must compete for coverage with the much larger New York City and Nassau County police departments, the Long Island Rail Road has been unable to seriously alter commuter perceptions of vulnerability in its parking lots. While this has disappointed police

managers, they do point to enhanced community recognition of LIRR officers through the CAT program and related educational handouts, thus enhancing the department's profile within the community and providing it with a way in which to incorporate aspects of community policing and problem solving into its overall policing philosophy.

Chief O'Connor is also aware that ratings given to the police department generally and parking lot safety specifically are influenced by patrons' overall perception of service on the railroad. Thus, as long as patrons view other areas of the railroad as unacceptable or no better than average, the police department will be judged similarly.

While a labor-intensive, arrest-oriented program like the Auto Crime Unit cannot be duplicated by agencies that do not employ a full-service police department, aspects of this program may be transferred to other policing and security configurations.

Certainly, most transit systems could contribute to a similar city, county, or regional effort, providing observation sites, equipment, and even non-sworn personnel as observers to a multiagency task force. The CAT program and its accompanying parking lot safety education campaign is easily shifted to almost any agency.

Parking lots are a crucial component of a transit agency's ability to attract ridership. Since patron perceptions of a safer parking lot can only enhance their overall perceptions of safety during their entire commute, police and security managers must devise strategies for patrol of parking facilities. Those choosing to employ an arrest-oriented strategy could utilize specific aspects of the Auto Crime Unit's activities; those interested in commuter education programs might prefer to consider the crime prevention guidelines, CAT, and VIN etching portions of this Practical Field Test.

SOURCES

This case study was prepared after site visits to the Ronkonkoma, Brentwood, and Deerpark rail stations and parking lots. An initial meeting was held with the commanding officer of LIRR Police Zone 4 (Nassau and Suffolk counties) after which detailed questions were developed for use during ride-alongs at the above stations. The Auto Crime Unit headquarters at Oakdale station was also visited.

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Chief John J. O'Connor, Chief of Police, Long Island Rail Road
Captain Ronald Masciana, Commanding Officer, Zone 4
Lieutenant Robert Murphy, Commanding Officer, Auto Crime Unit
Detective Stan Williams, Auto Crime Unit
Police Officers Anthony D'Angelis, Robert Pattison, and John Wyckoff, Auto Crime Unit

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Chapter 3

PRACTICAL FIELD TEST AT METROLINK/CLAREMONT
Local Police Response to Park-N-Ride Crime

The Metrolink commuter rail system provides regional rail service to metropolitan Los Angeles and a large segment of Southern California. Operated by the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA), this system connects commuters living and working in six counties: Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ventura. SCRRA is a joint powers authority comprised of members from five of the six counties served (San Diego is not represented).

The Metrolink system began operations on October 26, 1992, with 12 trains covering approximately 112 miles of track on three separate lines feeding into Union Station in Los Angeles. Metrolink also connects with Coaster rail service, operated by the San Diego Northern Railway at its southern terminus in Oceanside in San Diego County.

Currently, Merolink operates 87 trains daily, serving 44 stations operating on seven separate lines, including an Inland Empire-Orange County line which directly links business centers in Orange County with Riverside and San Bernardino. When complete, the Metrolink system will cover more than 480 miles and serve 50 stations. Metrolink provides service Monday through Friday on all lines and provides Saturday service on its San Bernardino line. Average daily ridership on all lines is 19,348, and 5,691 passengers use the San Bernardino line daily.[1]

Southern California is a densely populated area that has experienced significant traffic congestion resulting in air quality concerns. As part of its focus on enhancing regional mobility, Metrolink provides parking facilities at its stations to stimulate rail usage. The Claremont park-n-ride discussed in this Practical Field Test is one such lot.

[1] In FY 95 (July 1995-June 1996), there were 4,260,353 total Metrolink riders, with 1,296,212 riders on the San Bernardino line (figures exclude May and June 1996).

THE METROLINK APPROACH TO RAIL SYSTEM SECURITY

Because the ownership of the Metrolink system was so diverse—Southern California Regional Rail Authority was to own and operate the rail right-of-way and passenger trains, while local municipalities through which the system operated would continue to hold title to and maintain the stations and their parking lots—the joint powers considered a number of options before deciding its approach to rail system security. Among those options were: developing its own police agency; developing its own non-sworn security staff; deferring policing and security issues to local agencies; or contracting with a local law enforcement security provider to supply a dedicated contract policing program.

Ultimately, Metrolink chose a unique approach to managing its security issues, one that took all its options into consideration. Local police departments—such as the Claremont Police Department highlighted in this study—would retain responsibility for the stations and park-n-rides, while a dedicated, "core agency" would coordinate security efforts systemwide and provide on-board enforcement services and supplemental patrols of the right-of-way and station areas.

SCRRA selected the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD) to be its dedicated contract law enforcement services provider. The Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, the largest sheriff's department in the world, has responsibility for policing Los Angeles County's unincorporated areas. It provides regional investigative services for complex investigations (such as homicide), retains a special weapons team with hostage rescue capability, and provides contract law enforcement services to 43 individual cities in the County and to Metrolink.[2]

The Sheriff's Metrolink Bureau has 33 sworn personnel (a lieutenant who serves as commander, four sergeants, two detectives, one team leader, and twenty-five deputies assigned to patrol functions). The Metrolink Bureau secures the system in cooperation with local municipal police and area railway police agencies. Typical daily Metrolink Bureau coverage of the San Bernardino line, which includes the Claremont Station, is

[2] The Los Angeles Sheriff's Department provides dedicated contract police services through intergovernmental contract to 43 municipalities in the County; the 44th contract is with Metrolink. This scheme originated in 1956 as the "Lakewood Plan," where the newly incorporated city of Lakewood opted to retain the Sheriff rather than start its own police agency. This framework allows cities or special districts to benefit from the Sheriff's large pool of resources while tailoring police services to local needs.

one, two-deputy car per shift. These deputies are supervised by a sergeant who also oversees deputies assigned to other portions of the Metrolink system.

The LASD Metrolink Bureau maintains close liaison with local police, provides technical assistance on transit issues, administers the SCRRA contract security guard program,[3] and has entered into memoranda of understanding with law enforcement agencies serving the system in order to coordinate systemwide policing efforts. A key component of this approach is the Metrolink Incident Clearinghouse. Through this effort, local agencies report crimes and related activity at their stations to the LASD Metrolink Bureau, which collates the information. These data are used to direct the patrol activities of deputies assigned to Metrolink and are shared with the contributing police agencies.

In addition to these efforts, Metrolink relies upon its conductors for fare enforcement efforts. The Metrolink system, like many newer rail systems, employs a barrier-free, proof-of-payment fare collection system. Metrolink conductors check fares at various times throughout a train's journey and issue citations to persons without proper proof-of-fare-payment.[4] Metrolink Sheriff's deputies and local police support these efforts. Essentially, the Metrolink security approach relies upon close coordination and cooperation between local police agencies and the contracted "core" Sheriff's unit.

Because of the presence of multiple park-n-ride facilities on the Metrolink system, auto theft and vehicle burglaries at parking lots are a concern. Like many of its counterparts around the world, Metrolink defines parking lot crime as central to its crime prevention mission. Parking lots at Metrolink, like those of many North American commuter railway systems, are the responsibility of local police agencies. A cooperative approach, relying on coordinated efforts of a proactive local police agency

[3] Municipalities have the option of providing their own security arrangements or obtaining these services from the SCRRA. Metrolink has entered into cooperative agreements with many system municipalities to provide enhanced security at their stations. This program utilizes contract security officers under the functional supervision of the LASD Metrolink Bureau.

[4] Section 830.14 of the California Penal Code authorizes conductors to issue citations (known as notices to appear under California law) to fare evaders. Persons authorized under this section must attend a specialized fare compliance course. Mandated topics include: 1) an overview of barrier-free fare inspection topics; 2) the scope and limitations of inspector authority; 3) familiarization with the elements of fare-related infractions; 4) techniques for conducting fare checks, including procedures and demeanor when contacting violators; 5) citation issuance and court procedures; 6) fare media recognition; 7) handling argumentative violators and diffusing conflict; and 8) the mechanics of law enforcement support and interacting with law enforcement for effective incident resolution. In all cases, the conductors are primarily responsible for functions related to safe train operation.

as well as system police, is therefore required. This Practical Field Test recounts the approach taken by the Claremont Police Department to respond to this need.

AUTO THEFT IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY AND PARKING LOT SECURITY

Auto theft is a major concern throughout the United States. In fact, almost one-half (48 percent) of the dollar loss for all property crimes in the nation is attributed to vehicle theft. California leads the nation with approximately 300,000 vehicle thefts each year. The problem is particularly acute in Los Angeles County, where vehicle thefts have increased nearly 300 percent since 1976 and average about 130,000 vehicle thefts a year. This translates into losses of about $800 million each year. In addition, there are currently over 3,000 parolees on parole in the County for vehicle theft.[5] This situation complicates security at parking facilities throughout the County.

A recent study released by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) outlines the security issues related to parking lots. Its author, Mary S. Smith, notes that while the risk of being attacked in a parking facility is actually quite low—about 4 in one million—parking facilities are frequently the setting for violent crimes.[6] The NIJ study notes that parking facilities are more likely to become the setting for both violent or property crimes than are any type of real estate other than residences. This level of threat, a concern to all parking lot operators, is particularly daunting to municipal officials, since parking lot crime can negatively impact a community's economic viability.

In its discussion of crime in parking facilities, the NIJ study points out that parking facilities generally comprise a large area with relatively low levels of activity. As a result, parking facilities become more attractive venues for violent crime than do other commercial sites. The study explains that low activity levels isolate potential victims,

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[5] These estimates are provided by the Task Force for Regional Auto Theft (TRAP), a regional multiagency vehicle theft curtailment program coordinated by the Sheriff's Department. It focuses on interdicting career criminals and vehicle theft rings. Among its resources is the Auto Theft Investigative Network (ATIN) which serves as an investigative resource for information exchange. TRAP is authorized by Section 9240.14 of the California Vehicle Code.

[6] Mary S. Smith, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design in Parking Facilities, NIJ Research in Brief (Washington, DC: Department of Justice, 1996). Citing the 1990 NPTS Databook and Journey to Work Trends in the United States and its Major Metropolitan Areas, 1960-1990 (NPTS stands for National Personal Transportation Survey), Smith estimates that nonresidential parking facilities are utilized 175 million times per day, accounting for 350 million exposures since persons must transverse each facility twice. Smith also notes that in 1992, according to Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1992 (Washington, DC: Department of Justice, 1993) an average of about 1,400 violent crimes (rape, robbery, assault) occurred in parking facilities, making these commonly used fixtures the third most frequent venue for violent crime.

providing a location where individuals (or their vehicles) can be targeted by potential assailants. This situation can attract persons with criminal intent.

Additional parking lot features complicate the picture, enhancing risk. Parked cars afford criminals places to hide and diminish visual surveillance by users. Since most lots are open to the public and typically serve a large number of vehicles, vehicles used by criminals can easily blend into the crowd, deterring easy detection. The study also notes that while preventive measures such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) features can minimize risk, parking lot security is typically emphasized only after incidents have occurred.

The NIJ study notes a number of countermeasures which can enhance the level of security at parking facilities. These include: 1) natural surveillance, access control and perimeter security; 2) signs and graphics; 3) CCTV monitoring; and 4) security patrols. Regarding natural surveillance and fencing, Smith advises that while natural surveillance is appropriate for low-risk sites, risk levels are frequently subjected to change due to a number of external factors that have nothing to do with the sites themselves. She notes that fencing can discourage unnecessary foot traffic while retaining openness and clear site lines. Signs and graphics can advertise security measures, thus potentially dissuading perpetrators and reassuring patrons. Although Smith makes no mention of it, at transit lots adjacent to rail rights-of-way, fencing provides the added benefit of reducing trespassing on the tracks, a problem faced by all rail lines.

Closed circuit television (CCTV) can also be a useful tool affording a variety of surveillance options (including pan-tilt cameras, track-mounted cameras which afford views between cars, and cameras equipped with infrared spot lights to enable low light viewing). Cameras, of course, have drawbacks, including that they must be monitored and can fail. Thus, they must be carefully considered as a security option. Another concern is the cost associated with CCTV installation. The NIJ study points out that a comprehensive monitoring system (supplemented by emergency communications capability) can add up to $400 per parking space (in 1995 dollars), while retrofitting a facility can double this cost.

Security patrols and presence are also noted in the NIJ study as a viable means of securing a parking facility. Not surprisingly, the study points out that the visible presence of uniformed personnel is among the best crime prevention methods

possible, with particular benefit in high-risk facilities. The study notes that unscheduled patrols with varied patrol patterns appear to be the most effective.

CLAREMONT AND ITS POLICE DEPARTMENT

Claremont is a suburban community located in the San Gabriel Valley, 30 miles east of Los Angeles. Founded in 1887 as one of 30 planned communities along the Santa Fe Railroad route, it has a population of about 33,500 with a median age of 34 years. Claremont is home to the highly regarded Claremont colleges. These institutions—Pomona, Scripps, Claremont McKenna, Harvey Mudd and Pitzer Colleges—along with the Claremont Graduate School are the city's most prominent feature and largest employer. The total student population is about 5,000. The 13-square-mile city was incorporated as a general law city on October 3, 1907. By population, 42 percent of its residents have a bachelor's degree or higher. The city's 10,466 households have a median income of $53,588 (mean household income is $66,652), while the median household income for the entire county is $34,965.

Claremont enjoys one of the lowest crime rates in Los Angeles County. The Part I Crime Index for the city of Claremont was 1,687 in 1991; 1,769 in 1992; 1,887 in 1993; and 1,699 in 1994. The figures for 1995 were not available at the time of this test.

The Claremont Police Department is a model small agency with an authorized staff of 39 sworn and 18 non-sworn personnel. These personnel are supplemented by a complement of volunteer reserve peace officers.[7] The department also has approximately 25 volunteers in its Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). RSVP duties include vacation home checks, issuing parking citations for using disabled parking without a permit, traffic control, special details at parades or similar events, and processing daily paper work.

CLAREMONT STATION AND THE PRACTICAL FIELD TEST

The Claremont Metrolink Station is located in the landmarked Santa Fe Railroad station at the periphery of the city's historic business district known as The Village.

[7] Reserve peace officers are volunteers certified by the California Commission on Peace Officer Training and Standards (POST). They attend a POST-approved training academy and receive virtually the same training as paid officers. Reserve staffing fluctuates from year to year.

Figure 3.1: Cars at the Claremont Station park-n-ride could become easy targets for trespassers crossing the tracks.

Figure 3.2: A uniformed, non-sworn officer in a marked police car has eliminated crime during the hours the officer is present.

This area is surrounded by Old Claremont, which is composed of similarly historic Victorian houses and bungalows built in the 1890s. The station is located on Metrolink's busiest line, and is served by 23 trains per day. It is a typical commuter station; virtually all passengers use the station during peak hours in the peak direction, i.e., to Los Angeles Union Station in the morning with a return trip in the evening. The first train to Los Angeles is at 4:57 a.m. The last scheduled train in the evening arrives at the station at 9:33 p.m. Each morning an average of 183 persons board at Claremont, while 13 persons disembark.[8] The station is also served by four bus lines operated by Foothill Transit.

A small parking lot for disabled persons immediately adjoins the station. The regular Metrolink park-n-ride lot, which opened in 1993, is slightly east of the station. Six Foothill Transit bus stops are situated at the eastern portion of the park-n-ride. Approximately 150 cars use the lot each day, excluding weekends.

Based on systemwide crime patterns and local crime activity, the station was considered to have a low-risk for the crime and disorderly activities which typically challenge many transit stations. The initial security posture at Claremont included unscheduled patrols by the Claremont Police Department and the LASD Metrolink Bureau.

In addition to Claremont Police activity at the station, the LASD Metrolink Bureau has made 47 arrests in the Claremont Station area since the station opened. Of these arrests, 42 were for trespassing (typically on the rail right-of-way), 2 were for graffiti, 1 for drunk driving, 1 for rail ticket forgery, and 1 for a miscellaneous misdemeanor.

Since its opening, 17 auto thefts (Grand Theft Auto, or GTAs) and 19 vehicle burglaries (thefts from vehicles) have occurred at the lot. In 1995, thefts of autos in the parking lot accounted for 7.3 percent of all such thefts in the city, raising the awareness of vehicle crimes at the Metrolink lot.

Table 3.1 details the incidence of auto thefts in the entire city of Claremont and at the Metrolink lot from the station's opening through July 1996.

[8] Average daily boarding and alighting figures are based on peak a.m. period and direction, which accounts for 99 percent of the ridership.

Table 3.1: Auto Thefts (GTAs) at Claremont and the Claremont Metrolink Station; April 1993 - July 1996

	GTAs Citywide	GTAs at Park-n-Ride
April '93 - Dec. '93	155	5 (3.2%)
Jan. '94 - Dec. '94	184	3 (1.6%)
Jan. '95 - Dec. '95	151	11 (7.3%)
Jan. '96 - July '96	101	0

While these figures may appear low, they do not accurately reflect the level of concern over vehicle crime at the park-n-ride. A number of vehicle burglaries also raised the level of concern. Table 3.2 recounts reported vehicle burglaries at the park-n-ride. A comparison with vehicle burglaries citywide is not made since this information is not tracked separately, but rather is commingled with all reported larcenies in the city.

Table 3.2: Vehicle Burglaries at Claremont's Metrolink Park-n-Ride; April 1993 - July 1996

	Vehicle Burglaries
April '93 - Dec. '93	5
Jan. '94 - Dec. '94	6
Jan. '95 - Dec. '95	8
Jan. '96 - July '96	4

Once again, while the figures in Table 3.2 are relatively small, they represented a serious concern to Claremont residents and to the Claremont Police Department.

Although police officials in larger, more crime-prone jurisdictions may be startled by the designation of this relatively small number of vehicle-related crimes as a problem, the nature of the low crime rates of Claremont generally make this an issue locally. Furthermore, for this PFT the problem-solving policing definition of "problem" is utilized, specifically denoting a cluster of related incidents in order to define potential solutions, rather than as a description of the magnitude of the issues faced.

In order to address this problem, the Claremont Police Department opted to assign uniformed fixed-post "security officers" in marked vehicles to the parking lot in July 1995. The uniformed security officers are posted at the site twelve hours per day, from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. One officer per shift is assigned. This officer is drawn from a pool of police aides (uniformed, non-sworn personnel who typically perform support duties) and RSVP volunteers. These unarmed personnel both wear light blue shirts and dark blue pants, a uniform which is distinct from the all-dark-blue police uniform. These park-n-ride security officers are equipped with a radio and are instructed to act as "the eyes and ears" of the Police Department, reporting incidents via radio to police dispatch and acting as a visible deterrence to crime through their presence. They also have the use of a marked police car to enhance their visibility.

THE IMPACT OF FIXED SECURITY

In order to measure the effectiveness of these high-visibility fixed security personnel (and vehicle) at Claremont's commuter rail park-n-ride, this PFT compares the incidence of parking lot crime, particularly vehicle-related crimes at the parking lot, before and after the implementation of the fixed security program.

The results are dramatic. The implementation of this intervention has rendered the park-n-ride virtually crime free. Prior to the fixed security presence, 45 crimes were recorded as occurring in the park-n-ride. Once officers were assigned to the lot, the number dropped to 4, all of which occurred prior to the daily arrival of the lot's security officer.

Table 3.3 describes the incidence of reported park-n-ride crimes at the lot both pre-and post-intervention. The crimes recorded are Grand Theft Auto (GTA), Vehicle Burglaries (Larcenies), Robbery, Vandalism, and Assault with a Deadly Weapon (ADW). These crimes are also broken down by reported time of occurrence and into three time periods: 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., and 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. for additional clarity.

Table 3.3: Reported Crimes at Claremont Metrolink Park-n-Ride Before and After Implementation of Fixed Security Personnel

	Autotheft (GTA)		Vehicle Burglary		Robbery		Vandalism		Assault (ADW)	
5 a.m.-9 a.m.	1	0	1	3	0	0	1	0	0	0
10 a.m.-2 p.m.	2	0	4	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
3 p.m.-7 p.m.	14	0	14	0	2	0	4	0	1	0

Vehicle-related crimes, which are major concerns at commuter park-n-rides, were severely reduced. Similarly, crimes against persons—robberies and assault—were eliminated. These results have clearly improved patron safety and reduced risk in the park-n-ride.

This success has not diminished Claremont's willingness to test additional methods to achieve a secure commuter parking facility. As this Practical Field Test was concluded, Claremont was in the process of installing CCTV monitoring of the park-n-ride along with perimeter fencing to reduce unrestricted access to the lot. Once this security hardware is in place, Claremont anticipates testing various adjustments to the current fixed security posture in order to achieve the greatest effectiveness at the most efficient cost.

CONCLUSIONS

This test of fixed site security was conducted at Metrolink's Claremont Station over a one-year period. By integrating a fixed security component utilizing uniformed, but non-sworn, security officers into the umbrella of community police services, the Claremont Police Department was able to reduce the incidence of parking lot crime at the Claremont park-n-ride.

This study demonstrates the positive benefit that can accrue from close attention to commuter crime issues by local police agencies. Transit systems themselves may not be able to effectively address such issues due to the often small number of officers responsible for vast numbers of stations, lots, and other transit-related duties. But the active efforts of local police, when closely coordinated with transit enforcement efforts, promise to be an effective means of addressing crime issues of concern to individual communities and their transit systems.

SOURCES

This study recounts a Practical Field Test conducted by the Claremont, California Police Department to assess the effectiveness of fixed site security in limiting crimes of opportunity at a suburban commuter parking lot. The case study was constructed after site visits to the Metrolink system, including site assessments of the Claremont Station and parking area, an assessment of Claremont Police Department and Metrolink Sheriff's statistics for the Claremont Station area, and interviews with key Claremont Police Department and Metrolink Sheriff's personnel.

Interviews

Robert E. Moody, Chief of Police, Claremont Police Department
Captain Darrell Mc Gehee, Support Services Captain, Claremont Police Department
Lieutenant Marc L. Klugman, Director of Security, Southern California Regional Rail Authority; Metrolink Bureau Commander, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department
Cynthia Parker, Operations Assistant II, Metrolink Bureau, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department
Deputy Steve Smith, Metrolink Bureau, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department

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