

Crowd-sourced reporting provides transit agencies a valuable tool in protecting against terrorism

WEYMOUTH, MA, USA, April 28, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The reality of today's threat levels forces transit agencies to develop strategies concerning terrorism. The very nature of public transit systems—their open design, multiple access points and heavy volume of passengers—makes them hard to defend.



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*says Ed English, ELERTS
CEO.*

The string of recent terrorist plots, including the latest out of Russia, validates the need to assess how transit agencies are protecting themselves, including through utilizing a new source of valuable information: crowd-sourced reporting. Smartphones are everywhere; incoming information from smartphones makes a critical difference to responding personnel. The utilization of crowd-sourced reporting is an innovative approach to 21st-century transit policing.

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There is no better sensor for security threats than an eyewitness who sees or overhears a threat,” says Ed English, ELERTS CEO. “Transit agencies of all sizes are using ELERTS’ See Say communication platform to enhance safety.”

ANNABELLE BOYD and JOHN P.SULLIVAN Boyd, Virginia Synthesis of Transit Practice 27
Emergency Preparedness for Transit Terrorism

The changing nature of terrorism presents new challenges for U.S. public transportation agencies. A primary mission of each transit agency is to ensure, to the fullest extent possible, the security of passengers, employees, and agency property. Each year, U.S. public transportation agencies carry more than 8 billion passengers and employ almost 300,000 people. The U.S. mass transit infrastructure is currently valued at more than \$1 trillion.

Brian Michael Jenkins (February, 2017) THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING TRANSIT AND PASSENGER RAIL

Public surface transportation poses unique challenges. It is not easy to increase security without causing inconvenience, unreasonably slowing travel times, adding significant costs, and creating vulnerable queues of people waiting to pass through security checkpoints. This has compelled rail operators to explore other options: enlisting passengers and staff in alerting authorities to suspicious objects or behavior, random passenger screening, designing new stations to facilitate surveillance and reduce potential casualties from explosions or fire, and ensuring rapid intervention.

Countering Terrorism in Transportation by Mortimer L. Downey, Thomas R. Menzies
Successful transportation counterterrorism, however, will require a new strategy. There is no point in

trying to protect against or weed out every possible opening for terrorists. That is a traditional approach to transportation security, but it is expensive and demonstrably ineffective. The new strategy should rely instead on layering and interleaving various defensive measures. A layering strategy will not only protect against vulnerabilities in transportation security, it will also deter terrorists by creating uncertainties about the chances of being caught.

Threats: A Guide JOHN N. BALOG McCormick, MATTHEW G. DEVOST and JOHN P. SULLIVAN
Rapid and accurate information sharing is a critical operational need for coping with threats against public transportation systems. Emergencies arising from terrorist threats highlight the need for transportation managers to minimize the vulnerability of passengers, employees, and physical assets through incident prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. Managers are seeking to reduce the chances that transportation vehicles and facilities will be targets or instruments of terrorist attacks and to be prepared to respond to and recover from such possibilities.

Brian Michael Jenkins (February, 2017) The Challenge of Protecting Transit and Passenger Rail (Mineta Transportation Institute at San Jose State University)

Enlisting the public in security demonstrably works. One security measure that can be quantified and that appears to work in the area of surface-transportation security is enlisting staff and the public to call attention to suspicious behavior and objects. Public awareness in the United Kingdom seems to have helped in identifying explosive devices placed by the IRA. According to the MTI database, warnings by staff, on-scene security personnel, and passengers prevented 11 percent of terrorist bombings in Europe.

Brian Michael Jenkins and Bruce Butterworth (24 Mar, 2014) Says Subways Are Still in Terrorists' Sights (Mineta Transportation Institute at San Jose State University)

Meanwhile, keeping both passengers and employees alert is key. "See Something, Say Something" may sound trite and tired in the rapid transit system, but it can work. In the 3,754 attacks recorded against train, bus and other targets, there are indications that in somewhat less than 400, someone interrupted the attack. Sometimes the narratives do not specify who took the initial action (in about 170 cases). In other cases, they were interrupted by police, military, intelligence agencies, or anonymous tips. Without these interventions, the collective death toll could have been much worse.

ELERTS' See Say™ mobile phone app was developed for transit agencies to enable the crowd-sourcing of safety and security concerns from riders. When riders see a potentially threatening situation, with the click of a button, they can: 1) directly call the police or 2) discretely submit a report with a photo, video, incident description and GPS coordinates. The camera flash is disabled to avoid drawing attention to the rider. Riders may also choose to submit a report anonymously.

"Crowd-sourced reporting of security incidents works. Riders see suspicious activity before it evolves into an incident," says Ed English. "Getting actionable information to police immediately from eyewitnesses can enhance their response [times]."

Due to the participation of vigilant riders, the ELERTS mobile app converts crowd-sourced knowledge into situation awareness for the transit agency. Once a report is initiated, two-way communication is enabled. The dispatcher can ask the rider for more details about the situation or provide instructions as needed. The app allows riders to report incidents such as suspicious activity, disruptive behavior, crimes in progress and security and safety issues. Riders may also report immediately threatening situations such as assaults and attacks on drivers.

About ELERTS: ELERTS Corporation, headquartered in Weymouth, MA, develops best-in-class emergency communication software empowered by community-sourced reporting of safety and security concerns. The company's cloud-based approach leverages smartphone technologies to

provide robust, bidirectional communication between multiple parties. ELERTS mobile technology integrates video surveillance, access control and mass-notification systems. The result is actionable information for emergency situations that help first responders become faster responders.

For more information, please visit our website <http://elerts.com/solutions/transit/?terrorism>

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