

## Examination of Passenger Assaults on Bus Transit Systems: Status Report

Florida Transit Safety Network  
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December 9, 2015  
Jacksonville, Florida



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### Research Goals

- Determine prevalence of reportable and non-reportable assaults
- Classify assaults by time of day, location, and type of service
- Identify environmental factors that may contribute to an increase in assaults
- Catalog mitigation measures agencies have employed to reduce incidence rates
- Identify measures used outside of Florida that appear to be successful in mitigating assaults



## Research Method

- Complete a review of the literature
- Conduct a comprehensive examination of bus transit safety data – NTD and Florida transit properties
- Compile a final report in the form of resource document for transportation professionals and practitioners



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## Reportable Assaults, 2008-2015

- Assault-related fatalities:
  - Nationwide – No operators, 2 transit riders
  - Florida – No fatalities due to assaults
- Assault-related injuries:
  - Nationwide – 939 operators, 1,112 transit riders
  - Florida – 16 operators, 38 transit riders
- Injuries to Florida's transit riders and bus operators have declined since 2013 – transit riders are at greater risk of injury
- Most Florida injuries (86.7%) occurred onboard the bus
- More than a fourth (29.4%) of Florida's injuries occurred on Thursdays



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## Conduct-related Incidents

- Conduct-related incidents are incidents agencies record and track that are at thresholds less than an NTD major incident requires
- **4,406** conduct-related incidents reported by 15 Florida agencies in the two-year sample
- Most common incidents:
  - Disorderly conduct/onboard disturbances = 36.0%
  - Passenger assaulted by passenger = 12.1%
  - Fare evasion/disputes = 8.7%
  - Operator assaulted by passenger = 7.9%



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## Conduct-related Incidents

- Peak month April = 9.9% (December lowest at 6.8%)
  - Higher-than-average passenger on passenger assaults, bus vandalism, and verbal threats
- Peak day Wednesday = 16.9% (Sunday lowest at 8.4%)
  - Higher-than-average passenger on passenger assaults and incidents of theft, attempted theft, and robbery
- Peak hours 3pm-11pm = 48.8% (11pm-7pm lowest with 6.2%)
  - Higher-than-average objects thrown at bus, passenger on passenger assaults, and drunkenness



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## Transit Agency Procedures and Practices

- Visited 20 agencies
- Developed overview of the following information for each agency to serve as a valuable resource:
  - Agency procedures and practices
  - Training
  - Customer service
  - Incident response
  - Investigations
  - Use of corrective actions
  - Safety campaigns
- Highlighted agency practices that enhance safety and minimize assaults



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## Conclusions

- Bus operator and passenger assaults continue to occur nationwide and in Florida
- Nationally, operators are at greater risk for major assault than riders – the reverse is true in Florida
- Frequent conduct-related incidents were documented in Florida – they impact the physical and mental well-being of passengers and drivers
- Many agencies report the involvement of two population groups in disruptive behavior – students and homeless.
- Summary conduct-related data are helpful in identifying behavior that disrupts transit service and poses a threat



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## Recommendations

1. Coordinate agency efforts to codify anti-social and disruptive behaviors and implement tracking systems that can be shared across agencies to identify trends, catalogue successful measures used to minimize impacts of the behaviors, and share findings
2. Maximize bus operator training – expand the use of de-escalation techniques, conflict resolution and avoidance, and basic body language programs to assist operators in resolving incidents in an effective way



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## Recommendations (continued)

3. Develop a guide for best training practices that describes types of suitable training and distribute to transit agencies to ensure a concerted approach to training
4. Share agency success stories that reduced anti-social behavior on buses
5. Expand educational endeavors – transit staff and police visit schools to explain the impact of anti-social behavior



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## Recommendations (continued)

6. Evaluate infrastructure improvements, including consideration of driver compartments, installation of video cameras, and incorporation of panic buttons in conjunction with a law enforcement rapid response program
7. Continue development of working partnerships with a variety of organizations, including local government, other transit agencies, law enforcement agencies, community groups, social service agencies, and Federal agencies
8. Work with local law enforcement agencies to improve response times, and target *hotspots*

