

## **POLICING MASS TRANSIT**

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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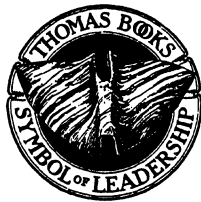
# POLICING MASS TRANSIT

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*A Comprehensive Approach to  
Designing a Safe, Secure, and  
Desirable Transit Policing and  
Management System*

*By*  
**KURT R. NELSON, M.P.A.**



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*To Sandi and Emily*



## PREFACE

This book is a comprehensive examination of the topics needed to insure the public's safety while using mass transit. Not only will law enforcement professionals and students find it a useful reference, it is also of benefit to transit managers and planners who need to incorporate safety and security design into a mass transit system.

The first section of the book discusses the foundations of creating a systematic approach to safety and security. The initial chapter establishes the community orientation needed for creating a stakeholder-vested transit system. From that foundation, an examination of information management and planning finish the discourse on the elemental portions of creating a total system.

The next section divides mass transit into its basic components of buses, light rail, and fixed locations/stations. Each component requires consideration of unique or specialized issues.

Finally, the last section covers specific topics of concern, such as terrorism, youths, gangs, mentally ill, homeless, and other pertinent areas of interest to both transit policing and system management.

*Policing Mass Transit* is a book well-suited to students, planners, transit managers, and law enforcement officers. It is a comprehensive approach to designing a safe, secure, and desirable mass transit system.

K.R.N.





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I would like to acknowledge some special individuals who have contributed significantly to my effort of either learning that which is needed to be a successful police officer on mass transit or who helped me prepare what I have learned. Al Cardwell comes to mind, not only as a police partner, but as a good cop and a great friend. I am grateful to Mike Unsworth for the chance to learn transit policing and for his valued input into the review of this book. Doug Stanley's knowledge of mass transit in general, and light rail in particular, made this work much easier. Douglas Morgan is one of the finest teachers I have known and his efforts to guide me through the MPA program and this book were greatly appreciated. But most certainly, I must acknowledge the tireless support given me by my wife, Sandi, and her willingness to repeatedly read and reread all of my work.

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## **POLICING MASS TRANSIT**

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## INTRODUCTION

Growing urban populations have increased the demands made upon all parts of modern life and nowhere is that more evident than in the interactions of large groups of people exercising the needs of daily living. Wherever people are concentrated, conflict, crime, and confrontations occur. Many agencies of government deal with the problems of modern life, each taking a role in making modern, urban living not only endurable but an attractive life style.

One component of modern life is the need for mass transit. Mass transit, or public transportation, is not merely a transportation system for those without private means, but is designed to meet larger public policy objectives. Without an effective and attractive mass transit system, urban living will devolve into a congested, mean "asphalt jungle." "Road Rage" is a symptom of the future without a mass transit system capable of attracting riders. Mass transit is an imperative element for sustaining a liveable urban community. Mass transit is used to move people while reducing air pollution, urban sprawl, highway congestion, adverse impact on the environment, and to promote a desirable urban living standard.

To meet these larger public policy ends, mass transit planners have designed systems where buses provide flexibility of scheduling and light rail the ability to move large numbers of people. The system is designed to provide an inviting environment where passengers enter into a system that welcomes and promotes the use of mass transit. Designers have moved from a system of antiquated buses toward a holistic system that is almost Walt Disney World-like in its beauty and appeal.

Systems such as San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transportation (BART) and Washington, D.C.'s Metro have created a light rail system that is easy to use in an attractive setting. New designs of buses supplement and augment light rail as a means of creating an effective network of mass transit.

One part of a mass transit system recognized as being a key to success is safety. Safety means more than eliminating hazards. It means designing a system that allows the users to feel secure as well as be safe. "In surveys of potential riders, security issues were of paramount importance. People were concerned that it wouldn't be safe to ride the rail system (Boyce, 1998)." Mass transit competes with the image of being safe and secure in the privacy of an automobile. Safety and security is an absolute for mass transit systems. It must be part of managing a transit system, not merely a delegation of security concerns to law enforcement as to allow a focus on the technical elements of routing and vehicle/mode selection.

Part of the management of safety and security is a result of conscious design by the mass transit planners to create vehicles, stations, and parking lots that are inviting to users and discouraging to criminals. Partly this is done through crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED). Safety design must include, however, law enforcement efforts. Law enforcement planners must take the safety designs of any system and add a security and law enforcement perspective. It is the combination of mass transit planning and law enforcement efforts that mass transit can be considered a safe, secure, and attractive system. Only by using the best efforts of each system's success can mass transit be considered both safe and secure.

Mass transit policing is growing as a specialized field of law enforcement requiring its own research, planning, and development. Growing recognition of this has resulted in creation of specialized publications dedicated to the study of mass transit policing methods. By studying mass transit policing as a field of specialization, transit police managers may take successful innovations and apply them to mass transit safety and security. These innovations, coupled with transit managers and planners adopting a broader definition of transit planning, can create an inviting system capable of meeting the public policy issues of urban living in the twenty-first century.

Two elements of law enforcement have come together in a timely manner that have combined to make the policing of mass transit both more effective and enhance the safety of transit systems. These two elements are community policing and professional specialization of mass transit policing.

Community policing is the recognition that the police cannot create safety for the citizenry in an isolated effort removed from daily inter-



action of the people police are sworn to protect. It goes beyond mere good police-community relations to recognize that by working together, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. When the police work with citizens, the police can do more than what they would be able to do as when they worked as remote professionals.

But community policing is more than that. First, it is empowerment. It empowers the community to be responsible for their own safety by becoming part of the solution to safety and crime deterrence/prevention. It also empowers the police officer to seek ways to better serve the people the officer is charged with protecting. It is these two elements that make community policing special: The community and the police working together. This includes the combination of transit planners into the equation of law enforcement to develop the desired end of a safe and secure transit system attractive to a broad spectrum of the populace.

Coupled with this trend has been the increased professionalism of police forces and the recognition for the need for professional specialization to meet unique needs. Just as in medicine, there will always be a need for a general practitioner of law enforcement, such as the typical urban police officer. However, there is also a need for expertise in meeting the needs of protecting society. One area of specialization that has become widely acknowledged is the need for specialized transit policing units. Many transit agencies are creating their own police departments while other police agencies are creating units within their departments to meet the challenges.

As this need for specialization has been recognized, it has been the stimulus for the creation of professional journals, focused discussion among practitioners, and the acquisition of better information. This book draws on those trends to make the case for treating transit policing as a new professional specialty as well as an integral part of transit management. Planning for transit security must be part of any mass transit system's design process. System safety and security is part of creating a user friendly transit system.

To explore this subject, this work has been divided into three major parts. First, there will be an examination of strategic concepts and planning. We will examine what the overall goals and elements of transit policing are and explore methods for determining the goals of transit policing. The second section will examine tactical considerations and approaches to transit issues. The third section will deal with

special issues that are part of a growing complexity of both modern urban life and the impact those issues have on mass transit. Together, these three parts demonstrate the unique elements of mass transit policing and the need for specialization within law enforcement.

This book addresses some of the central issues that are part of the transit policing profession. As with many issues in law enforcement, there are no absolute answers, just more questions. It is hoped that these thoughts will help direct solutions to individual problems through the sharing of common successes.

### REFERENCE

Boyce, John. "DART: A Model System." *Mass Transit*. March/April, 1998.