



Synthesis of Information Related to Transit Problems: 2009

DETAILS

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TRANSIT COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM

Sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration

Subject Area: VI Public Transit

Responsible Senior Program Officer: Gwen Chisholm Smith

Research Results Digest 91

SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION RELATED TO TRANSIT PROBLEMS

This is a staff digest of the progress and status of TCRP Project J-7, "Synthesis of Information Related to Transit Problems," for which the Transportation Research Board is the agency conducting the research. Individual studies for the project are managed by Donna L. Vlasak, Senior Program Officer, with assistance from Jon Williams, Manager, Synthesis Studies, serving under the Studies and Special Programs Division of the Transportation Research Board, Stephen R. Godwin, Director.

BACKGROUND

The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) was established in 1992. The U.S. Department of Transportation proposed the TCRP, and it was authorized in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991. The program was reauthorized in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). On May 13, 1992, a memorandum agreement outlining operating procedures was executed by three cooperating organizations: the Federal Transit Administration (FTA); the National Academies, acting through the Transportation Research Board (TRB); and the Transit Development Corporation, Inc. (TDC), a non-profit educational and research organization established by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). The memorandum agreement was updated on January 12, 1999.

INTRODUCTION

Transit administrators, engineers, and researchers often face problems for which

Suggestions for synthesis topics may be sent to the TCRP Manager or Synthesis Staff at any time (see address on back). You can submit your recommendation at: <http://www.trb.org/Studies/Synthesis/SynthesesSubmittal.asp> under "Submit Topics." Topics suggested must be accompanied by a brief (one or two paragraphs) scope statement, including a discussion of the problem. A title (preferably 10 words or less) and the name and affiliation of the submitter are also necessary. Identification of information sources is appreciated. If a topic is not selected, it must be resubmitted the following year to be considered. Annually, synthesis topics are typically due by the end of March. The TCRP Oversight Panel for the project meets in May/June to select new topics based on funding available.

Interested in writing a synthesis? For details contact Donna L. Vlasak by e-mail at dvlasak@nas.edu or by phone at 202/334-2974 or Jon Williams at jwilliams@nas.edu or by phone at 202/334-3245.

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

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

THE SYNTHESIS PROGRAM

This synthesis series reports on current knowledge and practice, in a compact format, without the detailed directions usually found in handbooks or design manuals. Each report in the series provides a compendium of the best knowledge available on those measures found to be the most successful in resolving specific problems. To develop these syntheses in a comprehensive manner and to ensure inclusion of significant knowledge, TRB employs a consultant to gather and analyze available information from numerous sources, including a large number of transit agencies. A panel of experts in the subject area is established to guide the consultants in organizing and evaluating data collected on each topic and to review the synthesis report.

For each topic, the project objectives are (1) to locate and assemble documented information; (2) to learn what practice has been used for solving or alleviating problems; (3) to identify all ongoing research; (4) to learn what problems remain largely unsolved; and (5) to organize, evaluate, and document the useful information that is acquired.

Each synthesis is an immediately useful document that records practices that were acceptable within the

limitations of the knowledge available at the time of its preparation. As the processes of advancement continue, new knowledge can be expected to be added to that which is now on hand; eventually the synthesis may need to be updated or redone. If you believe that a synthesis should be updated, it would be appreciated if you would contact TRB and let us know.

Selection of Topics

TCRP Project Panel J-7 meets each year (typically in May) to select topics for study using funds from the upcoming fiscal year. The membership of this committee is given in Table 1. Current funding allows for initiation of approximately six syntheses per year.

The following factors are considered in the selection process for synthesis topics:

- The problem should be widespread enough to generate broad interest in the synthesis.
- The topic should be timely and critical with respect to economic impact, safety, or social impact.
- The topic is appropriate if current practice is nonuniform or inconsistent from agency to agency, or if the validity of some practices appears to be questionable.
- The quality and quantity of useful available information should indicate a need to organize and compress that which has already been learned and written on the topic.
- The topic should not be one where ongoing research or other activities in progress might be expected to render the synthesis obsolete shortly after completion.

The continued success of this project depends on a constant supply of worthy synthesis topics solicited annually from a variety of sources, including transit officials, equipment and service suppliers, research organizations, FTA, APTA, and TRB committees. The interest of those who have recommended topics is sincerely appreciated, and they are urged to continue.

Conduct of the Studies

Throughout the year, following the J-7 project panel’s selection of topics, studies are initiated in the order of priority assigned by the committee. A panel consisting of practitioners and researchers is formed for each topic. At its first meeting, this topic panel thoroughly discusses the topic, refines the tentative scope, suggests sources of information, and selects the

Table 1 TCRP PROJECT PANEL J-7

	Name	Affiliation
Chair	Dwight Ferrell	Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, Atlanta, GA
Member	Debra W. Alexander	Capital Area Transportation Authority, Lansing, MI
Member	Mark W. Fuhrmann	Metro Transit, Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN
Member	Robert H. Irwin	Consultant, Calgary, AB, Canada
Member	Donna Kelsay	San Joaquin Regional Transit District, Stockton, CA
Member	Paul J. Larrousse	National Transit Institute, New Brunswick, NJ
Member	David A. Lee	Connecticut Transit, Hartford, CT
Member	David Phelps	LTK Engineering Services, Moneta, VA
Member	Hayward M. Seymore, III	Q Straint, University Place, WA
Member	Pam Ward	Ottumwa Transit Authority, Ottumwa, IA
Liaison	Lisa Colbert	Federal Transit Administration, Washington, D.C.
Liaison	Peter L. Shaw	Transportation Research Board, Washington, D.C.

consultant based on expression of interest received in response to an industry-wide solicitation.

Following this meeting, an agreement is negotiated with the consultant to gather information on the topic, synthesize it, and draft a report. Typically, the agreement covers a period of 6 months. Information gathering and preparation of the first draft of the synthesis report usually takes 4 months. This draft is then reviewed by the topic panel with the consultant, often at a second panel meeting. Subsequent drafts and a meeting are scheduled if needed, although this rarely occurs.

After the staff is substantially satisfied with the report, a final draft is sent to the members of the TCRP Project Panel J-7 for their approval. At the same time, members from the topic panel have their last chance to review the report. Comments from these reviews are incorporated into the final report, which is usually published as a TCRP Synthesis of Transit Practice.

Studies in Progress as of January 2009

Work is currently under way on the topics listed in Table 2. Questions on these topics should be addressed to the Project Study Manager, Donna L. Vlasak (e-mail: dvlasak@nas.edu and 202/334-2974) or the Synthesis Studies Manager, Jon Williams (e-mail: jwilliams@nas.edu and 202/334-3245).

Available Publications

The Syntheses of Transit Practice that have been completed under this project are listed in Table 3. Copies of these syntheses can be obtained from the

Publications Office, Transportation Research Board, 500 Fifth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20001; by calling 202/334-3213; and through the Internet at: <http://www.trb.org/bookstore>. Please send check orders to: TRB, Lockbox 289, Washington, D.C., 20055 or fax to: 202/334-2519.

Index of Topic Studies

Table 4 is a key word index of published syntheses and studies currently in progress.

Table 2 SYNTHESIS STUDIES—In Progress as of January 2009

No.	Title
SA-22	Bus Arterial and Light Rail Transit Preferential Treatments
SB-17	Innovative Rural Transit Routes
SE-05	Preventive Maintenance Intervals for Transit Buses
SH-09	Greenhouse Gas Emissions Savings from Transit
SH-10	Effective Use of Citizen Advisory Committees for Transit Planning and Operations
SH-11	Pass Fare Arrangements for Public Employees
SH-12	Exploring the Relationship Between Streetcars and Trolleys on the Built Environment

Table 3 PUBLISHED TCRP SYNTHESSES

No.	Title/Pages/Price
1	Safe Operating Procedures for Alternative Fuel Buses (1993) 48 pp., \$16.00
2	Low-Floor Transit Buses (1994) 43 pp., \$12.00
3	Incentive Programs to Improve Transit Employee Performance (1994) 44 pp., \$12.00
4	Integration of Bicycles and Transit (1994) 58 pp., \$12.00
5	Management Information Systems (1994) 77 pp., \$19.00
6	The Role of Performance-Based Measures in Allocating Funding for Transit Operations (1994) 52 pp., \$11.00
7	Regulatory Impacts on Design and Retrofit of Bus Maintenance Facilities (1994) 50 pp., \$12.00
8	Retrofit of Buses to Meet Clean Air Regulations (1994) 48 pp., \$12.00
9	Waste Control Practices at Bus Maintenance Facilities (1995) 26 pp., \$10.00
10	Bus Route Evaluation Standards (1995) 54 pp., \$12.00
11	System-Specific Spare Bus Ratios (1995) 46 pp., \$12.00
12	Transit Bus Service Line and Cleaning Functions (1995) 48 pp., \$14.00
13	Risk Management for Small and Medium Transit Agencies (1995) 31 pp., \$13.00
14	Innovative Suburb-to-Suburb Transit Practices (1995) 50 pp., \$14.00
15	System-Specific Spare Rail Vehicle Ratios (1995) 43 pp., \$13.00
16	Changing Roles and Practices of Bus Field Supervisors (1996) 45 pp., \$13.00
17	Customer Information at Bus Stops (1996) 64 pp., \$18.00
18	Bus Occupant Safety (1996) 55 pp., \$15.00
19	Passenger Transfer System Review (1996) 37 pp., \$14.00
20	Transit-Focused Development (1997) 55 pp., \$16.00
21	Improving Transit Security (1997) 36 pp., \$15.00
22	Monitoring Bus Maintenance Performance (1997) 48 pp., \$16.00
23	Inspection Policy and Procedures for Rail Transit Tunnels and Underground Structures (1997) 95 pp., \$25.00
24	AVL Systems for Bus Transit (1997) 47 pp., \$16.00
25	Light Rail Vehicle Compression Requirements (1997) 34 pp., \$15.00
26	Bus Transit Fare Collection Practices (1997) 29 pp., \$14.00
27	Emergency Preparedness for Transit Terrorism (1997) 73 pp., \$21.00
28	Managing Transit Construction Contract Claims (1998) 50 pp., \$17.00
29	Passenger Counting Technologies and Procedures (1998) 50 pp., \$23.00
30	ADA Paratransit Eligibility Certification Practices (1998) 38 pp., \$16.00
31	Paratransit Contracting and Service Delivery Methods (1998) 35 pp., \$16.00
32	Transit Advertising Revenue: Traditional and New Sources and Structures (1998) 58 pp., \$20.00
33	Practices in Assuring Employee Availability (1999) 69 pp., \$27.00
34	Data Analysis for Bus Planning and Monitoring (2000) 62 pp., \$27.00
35	Information Technology Update for Transit (2000) 98 pp., \$31.00
36	Identifying and Reducing Fraudulent Third Party Tort Claims Against Public Transit Agencies (2000) 58 pp., \$25.00
37	Communicating with Persons with Disabilities in a Multimodal Environment (2001) 48 pp., \$26.00
38	Electronic Surveillance Technology on Transit Vehicles (2001) 57 pp., \$28.00
39	Transportation on College and University Campuses (2001) 62 pp., \$28.00
40	A Challenged Employment System: Hiring, Training, Performance Evaluation, and Retention of Bus Operators (2001) 72 pp., \$29.00
41	The Use of Small Buses in Transit Service (2002) 72 pp., \$15.00
42	Use of Flexible Funds for Transit Under ISTEA and TEA-21 (2002) 40 pp., \$15.00
43	Effective Use of Transit Websites (2002) 79 pp., \$16.00
44	Training for On-Board Bus Electronics (2002) 63 pp., \$15.00
45	Customer-Focused Transit (2002) 100 pp., \$17.00
46	Diversity Training Initiatives (2003) 59 pp., \$15.00
47	Corporate Culture as the Driver of Transit Leadership Practices (2003) 91 pp., \$17.00
48	Real-Time Bus Arrival Information Systems (2003) 61 pp., \$15.00

Table 3 (Continued)

No.	Title/Pages/Price
49	Yield to Bus Programs—State of the Practice (2003) 78 pp., \$16.00
50	Use of Rear-Facing Position for Common Wheelchairs on Transit Buses (2003) 42 pp., \$14.00
51	Transit Advertising Sales Agreements (2004) 99 pp., \$18.00
52	Transit Operator Health and Wellness Programs (2004) 80 pp., \$17.00
53	Operational Experiences with Flexible Services in Transit Systems (2004) 57 pp., \$16.00
54	Maintenance Productivity Practices (2004) 92 pp., \$18.00
55	Geographic Information Systems Applications in Transit (2004) 60 pp., \$16.00
56	Performance-Based Measures in Transit Fund Allocation (2004) 74 pp., \$16.00
57	Computer-Aided Scheduling and Dispatch in Demand-Responsive Transit Services (2004) 79 pp., \$17.00
58	Emergency Response Procedures for Natural Gas Transit Vehicles (2005) 53 pp., \$15.00
59	Strategic Planning and Management in Transit Agencies (2005) 44 pp., \$15.00
60	Practices in No-Show and Late Cancellation Policies for ADA Paratransit (2005) 49 pp., \$16.00
61	Maintenance Staffing Levels for Light Rail Transit (2005) 41 pp., \$16.00
62	Integration of Bicycles and Transit (2005) 70 pp., \$17.00
63	On-Board and Intercept Transit Survey Techniques (2005) 91 pp., \$19.00
64	Bus Use of Shoulders (2006) 91 pp., \$35.00
65	Transit Agency Participation in Medicaid Transportation Programs (2006) 48 pp., \$31.00
66	Fixed-Route Transit Ridership Forecasting and Service Planning Methods (2006) 51 pp., \$31.00
67	Bus Transit Service in Land Development Planning (2006) 62 pp., \$32.00
68	Methods of Rider Communication (2006) 95 pp., \$35.00
69	Web-Based Survey Techniques (2006) 104 pp., \$35.00
70	Mobile Data Terminals (2007) 150 pp., \$47.00
71	Paratransit Manager's Skills, Qualifications, and Needs (2007) 52 pp., \$36.00
72	Use of Biodiesel in a Transit Fleet (2007) 61 pp., \$38.00
73	AVL Systems for Bus Transit Update (2007) 104 pp., \$50.00
74	Policies and Practices for Effectively and Efficiently Meeting ADA Paratransit Demand (2008) 54 pp., \$40.00
75	Uses of Higher Capacity Buses in Transit Service (2008) 72 pp., \$45.00
76	Integration of Paratransit and Fixed-Route Transit Services (2008) 48 pp., \$40.00
77	Passenger Counting Systems (2008) In Press
78	Transit Systems in College and University Communities (2008) 88 pp., \$47.00
79	Light Rail Vehicle Collisions with Vehicles at Signalized Intersections (2008) In Press
80	Track Maintenance Costs on Rail Transit Properties (2008) In Press
81	Transit Security Update (2008) In Press

Table 4 INDEX TO TCRP SYNTHESSES AND STUDIES

Absenteeism	33, 52	Automatic Passenger Counters (APCs)	29, 66, 73, 77
Accidents		Automatic Vehicle Monitoring	24, 34, 48, 53, 55, 73
– Light Rail	79	Bicycles	
Advertising		– Integration with Buses	4, 62
– Buses/Trains, on	32, 51	– Integration with Ferries	4, 62
– Stations/Stops	32, 51	– Integration with Rail	4, 62
– Websites	43	Biodiesel	72
Alternative Fuels	1	Buff Load (see Compression Requirements)	
– Safe Operating Procedures, Buses	1		
Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) Systems	24, 34, 48, 53, 55, 73, 77		

Table 4 (Continued)

Buses	Compression Requirements
– Alternative Fuels 1	– Light Rail Vehicles 25
<input type="checkbox"/> Compressed Natural Gas 1	Computer-Aided Dispatch 73
<input type="checkbox"/> Ethanol 1	Construction Contract Claims 28
<input type="checkbox"/> Liquefied Natural Gas 1	Contracts
<input type="checkbox"/> Liquefied Petroleum Gas 1	– Advertising 32, 51
<input type="checkbox"/> Methanol 1	– Disputes and Resolution 28
– Automated Vehicle Location Systems 24, 34, 48, 53, 55	– Information Technology Services 35
– Bicycle Integration with 4, 62	– Maintenance 54
– Biodiesel 72	– Paratransit Services 31, 71
– Cleaning 12	Customer Service 43, 45
– College and University Campuses 39, 78	– Automatic Vehicle Location 73
– Driver Availability 33, 40, 52	– Awareness 43, 45, 48, 49, 68
– Electronic Equipment 44	– Bicycles on Transit 62
– Fare Collection 26	– Complaint Resolution 38
– Field Supervisors 16	– Computer-Aided Scheduling and Dispatch 57
– Fuel and Fluid Storage 7	– Geographic Information Systems 55
– Higher Capacity 75	– Information at Bus Stops 17, 48
– Low-Floor 2	– Management Role 16, 47
– Maintenance 54	– Passengers with Disabilities 30, 31, 37, 50, 53, 60, 74
– Maintenance Facilities 7, 9, 12	– Service Line and Cleaning 12
– Natural Gas 58	– Surveys 63, 69
– Occupant Safety 18, 38, 50, 58	– Transfers 19
– Passenger Transfer 19	
– Rapid Transit 75	Design
– Retrofitting 8	– Bicycle Storage and Transport 62
– Route Evaluation Standards 10	– Bus
– Service Line and Cleaning 12	<input type="checkbox"/> Clean Air Regulations, to Meet 8
– Shoulders 64	<input type="checkbox"/> Low-Floor Transit Buses 2
– Small Buses 41	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety 18, 50, 58
– Stops, Customer Information at 17, 37, 48	– Bus Maintenance Facilities 7
– Suburb-to-Suburb Service 14	– Bus Stops 18
– System-Specific Spare Ratios 11	– Engines 7, 8
– Traffic Operations 49	– Regulatory Impacts on 7, 8
– Waste Control at Maintenance Facilities 9	– Small Buses 41
Bus Field Supervisors	– Surveillance Technology 38
– Changing Roles and Practices 16	– Survey Questionnaires 63, 69
Bus Garages (see Bus Maintenance Facilities)	– Tunnels 23
Bus Maintenance Facilities	– Websites 43
– Cleaning 12	Dispatch 57
– Regulations on Design and Retrofit of 7	– Bus 53, 60
– Waste Control 9	Diversity
Bus Route Evaluation Standards 10, 14	– Training 46
Bus Stops	Driver
– Information at 17, 37, 48	– Health and Wellness 52
– Locations 53	– Hiring 40
– Safety Design 18	– Performance Evaluation 40
– Signs 17, 37	– Retention 40
Claims (see Liability)	– Training 40, 44, 45, 49, 57
Codes (see Regulations, Standards)	
College and University Campuses 39, 78	Electronic Surveillance 38
Communications	Emergency Procedures
– Riders 68	– Bus 58
	Employee Assistance Programs 16, 52

Table 4 (Continued)

Environment, The	
– Clean Air Act	1, 7, 8
– Emissions, Biodiesel	72
– Waste Control	9
Fare Collection	
– Bus	26, 34
– Electronic Registering Fareboxes (ERFs)	29
– Unlimited Access Systems	39
Ferries	
– Bicycles, Integration with	4, 62
Fleet Management	15, 24, 35
Flexible Transit Service	53
Fixed-Route Transit	66, 74
Fraudulent Claims	36
Fuel Systems	72
Funding Allocation	
– Bicycle Services	62
– Maintenance	53
– Medicaid Transportation Programs	65
– Performance-Based	56
– Role of Performance-Based Measures	6
– Spare Bus Ratios, System-Specific	11
– Spare Rail Vehicle Ratios	15
– Systems Costs	48
– Under ISTEA and TEA-21	42
Funding, Flexible	42
Geographic Information Systems	55
Global Positioning Systems (GPS)	
– Bus	24, 53, 73, 78
Incentive Programs	
– Employee	3, 33, 52
Information Technology (IT)	5, 35, 43, 57
– Automatic Vehicle Location	73
– Geographic Information Systems	55
– Global Positioning Systems	70
– Supervisors, Impact on	16
– Web-Based Surveys	69
Inspection	
– Rail Tunnels and Underground Structures	23
Integrated Service	76
Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)	
– Advanced Public Transportation Systems (APTS)	35
– Automated Vehicle Location Systems	24, 34, 48, 53, 55, 73, 77
– Automated Vehicle Monitoring (AVM)	24, 34, 48, 53, 55, 73
– Automatic Passenger Counters	29, 34, 77
– Global Positioning Systems (GPS)	24, 53
– Transfer Automation	19
– Mobile Data Terminals	70
Internet	43
Liability	
– Construction Contract Claims	28
– Fraudulent Third Party Claims	36
– Institutional	49
– Risk Management	13
Light Rail Vehicles (LRV)	
– Compression Requirements	25
– Operations	79
– System-Specific Spare Ratios	15
Light Rail Transit	61, 79
Low-Floor Buses	2
Maintenance	
– Bus Maintenance Facilities	7, 9
– Line and Cleaning Functions	12
– Light Rail Transit	61, 80
– Monitoring Performance	22, 44
– Productivity	53, 54
Management	44, 47, 59, 71
Management Information Systems (see Information Technology)	
Marketing	
– Bicycles on Transit	62
Mobile Data Terminals	70
Monitoring Maintenance Performance	22, 54
Non-Emergency Medical Transportation	65
Paratransit Services	30, 31, 60, 65, 71, 74, 76
Parking and Storage	
– Bicycles	62
Partnerships,	65
Passengers	
– Comfort	12
– Communicating with	37, 68
– Ridership Counts	29, 34
– Safety	18, 21, 50, 58, 81
– Satisfaction	45, 64, 69
– Transfer Systems	19
Performance-Based Measures	
– Funding Allocation	56
– Diversity Training	46
– Role in Funding Allocation	6
Performance Evaluation	
– Bus Operators	40
– Real-Time Bus Arrival Information Systems	43, 48
Planning	
– Strategic	59
Policy Development	
– No-Show and Late Cancellation	60
Policy Procedures	
– Rail Tunnel and Underground Structures Inspection	23

Table 4 (Continued)

– Safe Operation for Alternative Fuel Buses	1	– Communications	68
Productivity		– Light Rail Vehicle Compression Resistance	25
– Employee	3, 16, 22, 33, 54	– Traffic Operations	49
– Transit System	54, 56, 60	Scheduling	
		– Adherence	49
Rail		– Automatic Vehicle Location Systems	24, 48, 53, 55, 73
– Bicycle Integration with	4, 62	– Bus Driver Availability	33
– Light Rail Vehicle Compression Requirements	25	– Bus Route Evaluation	10
– Passenger Transfers	19	– Bus Stop Information	17, 48
– Security	21	– Bus Transfers	19
– Station Area Development	20	– Computer-Aided	57
– Suburb-to-Suburb Service	14	– Demand-Responsive	53, 57
– System-Specific Spare Ratios	15	– Flexible Route	53
– Tunnel and Underground Structures	23	– Paratransit	74, 76
Recruitment		– Point Deviation	53
– Bus Drivers	16, 33, 40	– Ridership Data Collection	29, 34, 63
– Management	47	– Small Buses	41
– Security Personnel	21	– Suburb-to-Suburb	14
– Supervisors	16	Security	
Regulations		– Automatic Vehicle Location	73
– Air Quality	1, 7, 8	– Bus Drivers, for	33
– Alternative Fuel Buses	1, 72	– Crime Prevention	21, 38, 81
– Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	2, 7, 16, 17, 24, 30, 31, 37, 50, 53, 60, 65, 74, 76	– Passenger Security Inspections	81
– Buses on Shoulders	64	– Technology Systems	35, 38
– Drugs and Alcohol	16	– Terrorism	27, 81
– EPA	7	– Violence Reduction	21
– Family Leave Medical Act	33	Service	
– Leave Policies	33	– Planning	66
– Local and State	7	– Quality	15, 45, 53, 57
– Occupational Safety and Health Administration	7, 52	– Small Buses	41
– Resource Conservation and Recovery Act	9	Service Line and Cleaning	12
– Retrofitting	7, 8	Spare Ratios	
– Suburb-to-Suburb Service	14	– System-Specific Buses	11
– Waste Management	9	– System-Specific Rail Vehicles	15
Retrofitting		Standards	
– Bus	8, 49	– Alternative Fuels	1
– Bus Maintenance Facilities	7	– Bus Route Evaluation	10, 14
– Engine	7, 8	– Maintenance	54
– Regulatory Impacts on	7	Suburb-to-Suburb Commuting	14
Revenues		Supervisors	
– Advertising	51	– Bus Field	16
Ridership	63	– Relations with Drivers	33
– Forecasting	66	Surveys,	
Risk Management		– On-Line and Intercept	63
– Medium Agencies	13	– Web-Based	69
– Small Agencies	13		
		Terrorism	27, 81
Safety		Tort Claims	36
– Alternative Fuel Bus Operation	1	Track Maintenance	80
– Bus Occupant	18, 38, 50, 64	Training	
– Bus Route Evaluation	10	– Bus Drivers	18, 30, 40
		– Diversity Training	46

Table 4 (Continued)

– Information Technology	35, 44	Underground Structures	23
– Management, Paratransit	71	Unions	54
– Riders, Paratransit	74	U-Pass	78
– Supervisors	16		
Transfers	19	Violence (see Security)	
Transit-Focused Development	20		
Transportation Demand Management	39	Waste Control	
Tunnels	23	– Bus Maintenance Facilities	9

These digests are issued in order to increase awareness of research results emanating from projects in the Cooperative Research Programs (CRP). Persons wanting to pursue the project subject matter in greater depth should contact the CRP Staff, Transportation Research Board of the National Academies, 500 Fifth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001.

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