



U.S. Federal Transit Administration



Our experts worked with the FTA to identify vulnerabilities in urban transit systems and to develop countermeasures



Prior to September 11, 2001, transit officials' primary security concern was preventing petty crimes like fare evasion and vagrancy. The attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., changed that overnight—creating an acute awareness of the vulnerability of urban transit systems, which carry more passengers throughout the U.S. each day than all of the nation's airlines combined. Intelligence gathering and incidents from Europe to Israel and Asia confirmed that subways,

buses, and other public transit systems are terrorist targets.

With that awareness, the U.S. federal government knew it had to move quickly to determine the vulnerabilities of transit systems and implement changes to protect passengers and employees. The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) reached out to Booz Allen Hamilton to assemble a team of experts in security, transportation, and counterterrorism. Working with federal authorities and 35 of the largest local transit authorities around the nation, the team was charged with identifying transit system threats and vulnerabilities

and recommending countermeasures. "This assignment exemplifies the new realities of terrorism," agree Booz Allen Vice Presidents Ghassan Salameh, Gary Schulman, and Don Vincent, the officers in charge of the project. "We were asked to predict vulnerabilities to attack from an unpredictable threat and to develop countermeasures that would enable authorities to deter, detect, respond, and recover—all without impeding the flow of passengers, the progress of commerce, or free access to the institutions and

facilities that the public expects.”

The first task was to develop a methodology and conduct pilot assessments at the Utah Transit Authority—before the fast-approaching Winter Olympic Games—and at the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. Based on the outcome of the Utah assessment, the federal government quickly put resources in place to implement the Booz Allen strategies before the Olympic athletes arrived in Salt Lake City.

“Following the September 11 attacks, the FTA recognized an urgent need to secure major transit assets against terrorism and protect the riding public,” says Robert Jamison, FTA deputy administrator. “In just 30 days, Booz Allen developed a threat and vulnerability assessment tool—something that had never been done in the transit industry—and

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had teams applying the tool at transit agencies nationwide.”

The FTA is a policy and funding agency and does not have operational responsibility for transit systems; those responsibilities lie with hundreds of state and local agencies across the country. With such a diverse footprint, the FTA knew the solution would have to be pragmatic and “local”—not a Washington, D.C., desk solution. The Booz Allen team partnered with the FTA and the final end-users, the 35 regional transit agencies, throughout the process.

“Although they welcomed our help, we had to gain the confidence of local transit authorities,” says Nicholas Bahr, a senior associate in Booz Allen’s McLean, Virginia, office who served as the deputy program manager and project technical leader. “This was particularly true in New York City, where everyone was just beginning to recover from the trauma of the attacks.”

After determining that the attacks of 9/11 revealed that the existing approach to transit security was no longer viable, Booz Allen designed a new framework for transit agency security encompassing four elements:

- Deter—to prevent an attempted attack
- Detect—to identify terrorist activity
- Respond—to take action following an attack
- Recover—to restore services and public confidence after an attack

The positive results of this project will be felt for many years to come, both within the FTA and

throughout the transit industry. As a result of Booz Allen’s findings and recommendations, the FTA adopted a 20-point counterterrorism strategy for transit agencies and has tied the implementation of this strategy to the FTA Regional Administrator’s performance goals.

One recent project initiated by the FTA was to identify the top-100 most critical transit industry assets and determine the individual costs to help protect these assets from terrorist attacks. This information will be used as a basis for FTA’s fiscal budget submittal. Also as part of this initiative, Booz Allen identified key transit security research areas for the next five years. These initiatives will have a long-term, perhaps even permanent, effect on the safety and security of U.S. transit systems.

“The security assessments proved to be an effective tool for both the FTA and the participating transit agencies,” said Jennifer Dorn, the FTA administrator, in testimony before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Housing and Transportation on September 18, 2002. “We identified important concerns at even the most well-prepared agencies, and have recommended solutions to manage those risks. The assessments were critical in our efforts to develop appropriate system-wide programs to help the transit industry prevent and mitigate the potential effects of a terrorist attack.”