

TRANSIT COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM

Sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration

Subject Area: VI Public Transit

Responsible Senior Program Officer: Christopher W. Jenks

Research Results Digest 80

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 suggestions at <http://www4.trb.org/trb/synthrep.nsf>, under **Synthesis Topic Submittals**. Topics suggested must be accompanied by a brief scope statement, including a discussion of the problem (a paragraph or two). A title (preferably 10 words or less) and the name and affiliation of the submitter are also necessary. Identification of information sources is appreciated. Suggestions for updates of published syntheses would also be appreciated. If a topic is not selected, the problem statement 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

Table 1 TCRP PROJECT PANEL J-7

	Name	Affiliation
Chair	Frank T. Martin	PBS&J, Tallahassee, FL
Member	Debra W. Alexander	Capital Area Transportation Authority, Lansing, MI
Member	Dwight Ferrell	Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Austin, TX
Member	Mark W. Fuhrmann	Metro Transit, Minneapolis, 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	Wade Lawson	South Jersey Transportation Authority, Atlantic City, NJ
Member	David A. Lee	Connecticut Transit, Hartford, CT
Member	David Phelps	Consultant, Moneta, VA
Member	Hayward M. Seymore, III	Q Straint, University Place, WA
Member	Pam Ward	Ottumwa Transit Authority, Ottumwa, IA
Member	Joel R. Washington	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, Washington, D.C.
Liaison	Peter L. Shaw	Transportation Research Board, Washington, D.C.
Liaison	Karen Facen	Federal Transit Administration, Washington, D.C.

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 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 2007

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/trb/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 2007

No.	Title
SA-16	Uses of Higher Capacity Buses in Transit Service
SA-17	AVL Systems for Bus Transit Update
SB-15	Practices for Effectively and Efficiently Meeting ADA Paratransit Demand
SC-08	Use of Mobile Data Terminals in Transit
SC-09	Use of Biodiesel in a Transit Fleet
SE-04	Track Maintenance Costs on Rail Transit Properties
SF-12	Paratransit Managers' Skills, Qualifications, and Needs

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 Electronic (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) In Press
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) In Press

Table 4 INDEX TO TCRP SYNTHESSES AND STUDIES

Absenteeism	33, 52	– Bicycle Integration with	4, 62
Advertising		– Cleaning	12
– Buses/Trains, on	32, 51	– College and University Campuses	39
– Stations/Stops	32, 51	– Driver Availability	33, 40, 52
– Websites	43	– Electronic Equipment	44
Alternative Fuels	1	– Fare Collection	26
– Safe Operating Procedures, Buses	1	– Field Supervisors	16
Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) Systems	24, 34, 48, 53, 55	– Fuel and Fluid Storage	7
Automatic Passenger Counters (APC)	29, 66	– Low-Floor	2
Automatic Vehicle Monitoring	24, 34, 48, 53, 55	– Maintenance	SE-02
Bicycles		– Maintenance Facilities	7, 9, 12
– Integration with Buses	4, 62	– Natural Gas	58
– Integration with Ferries	4, 62	– Occupant Safety	18, 38, 50, 58
– Integration with Rail	4, 62	– Passenger Transfer	19
Buff Load (see Compression Requirements)		– Retrofitting	8
Buses		– Route Evaluation Standards	10
– Alternative Fuels	1	– Service Line and Cleaning	12
☐ Compressed Natural Gas	1	– Shoulders	64
☐ Ethanol	1	– Small Buses	41
☐ Liquefied Natural Gas	1	– Stops, Customer Information at	17, 37, 48
☐ Liquefied Petroleum Gas	1	– Suburb-to-Suburb Service	14
☐ Methanol	1	– System-Specific Spare Ratios	11
– Automated Vehicle Location Systems	24, 34, 48, 53, 55	– Traffic Operations	49
		– Waste Control at Maintenance Facilities	9
		Bus Field Supervisors	
		– Changing Roles and Practices	16

Table 4 (Continued)

Bus Garages (see Bus Maintenance Facilities)	Dispatch 57
Bus Maintenance Facilities	– Bus 53, 60,
– Cleaning 12	Diversity
– Regulations on Design and Retrofit of 7	– Training 46
– Waste Control 9	Driver
Bus Route Evaluation Standards 10, 14	– Health and Wellness 52
Bus Stops	– Hiring 40
– Information at 17, 37, 48	– Performance Evaluation 40
– Locations 53	– Retention 40
– Safety Design 18	– Training 40, 44, 45, 49, 57
– Signs 17, 37	
Claims (see Liability)	Electronic Surveillance 38
Codes (see Regulations, Standards)	Emergency Procedures
College and University Campuses 39	– Bus 58
Communications	Employee Assistance Programs 16, 52
– Riders 68	Environment, The
Compression Requirements	– Clean Air Act 1, 7, 8
– Light Rail Vehicles 25	– Waste Control 9
Construction Contract Claims 28	
Contracts	Fare Collection
– Advertising 32, 51	– Bus 26, 34
– Disputes and Resolution 28	– Electronic Registering Fareboxes (ERFs) 29
– Information Technology Services 35	– Unlimited Access Systems 39
– Maintenance SE-02	Ferries
– Paratransit Services 31	– Bicycles, Integration with 4, 62
Customer Service 43, 45	Fleet Management 15, 24, 35
– Awareness 43, 45, 48, 49, 68	Flexible Transit Service 53
– Bicycles on Transit 62	Fixed-Route Transit 66
– Complaint Resolution 38	Fraudulent Claims 36
– Computer-Aided Scheduling and Dispatch 57	Funding Allocation
– Geographic Information Systems 55	– Bicycle Services 62
– Information at Bus Stops 17, 48	– Maintenance 53
– Management Role 16, 47	– Medicaid Transportation Programs 65
– Passengers with Disabilities 30, 31, 37, 50, 53, 60	– Performance-Based 56
– Service Line and Cleaning 12	– Role of Performance-Based Measures 6
– Surveys 63, 69	– Spare Bus Ratios, System-Specific 11
– Transfers 19	– Spare Rail Vehicle Ratios 15
	– Systems Costs 48
Design	– Under ISTEA and TEA-21 42
– Bicycle Storage and Transport 62	Funding, Flexible 42
– Bus	
□ Clean Air Regulations, to Meet 8	Geographic Information Systems 55
□ Low-Floor Transit Buses 2	Global Positioning Systems (GPS)
□ Safety 18, 50, 58	– Bus 24, 53
– Bus Maintenance Facilities 7	
– Bus Stops 18	Incentive Programs
– Engines 7, 8	– Employee 3, 33, 52
– Regulatory Impacts on 7, 8	Information Technology (IT) 5, 35, 43, 57
– Small Buses 41	– Geographic Information Systems 55
– Surveillance Technology 38	– Supervisors, Impact on 16
– Survey Questionnaires 63, 69	– Web-Based Surveys 69
– Tunnels 23	Inspection
– Websites 43	– Rail Tunnels and Underground Structures 23

Table 4 (Continued)

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)	
– Advanced Public Transportation Systems (APTS)	35
– Automated Vehicle Location Systems	24, 34, 48, 53, 55
– Automated Vehicle Monitoring (AVM)	24, 34, 48, 53, 55
– Automatic Passenger Counters	29, 34
– Global Positioning Systems (GPS)	24, 53
– Transfer Automation	19
Internet	43
Liability	
– Construction Contract Claims	28
– Fraudulent Third Party Claims	36
– Institutional	49
– Risk Management	13
Light Rail Vehicles (LRV)	
– Compression Requirements	25
– System-Specific Spare Ratios	15
Light Rail Transit	61
Low-Floor Buses	2
Maintenance	
– Bus Maintenance Facilities	7, 9
– Line and Cleaning Functions	12
– Light Rail Transit	61
– Monitoring Performance	22, 44
– Productivity	53, 54
Management	44, 47, 59
Management Information Systems (see Information Technology)	
Marketing	
– Bicycles on Transit	62
Monitoring Maintenance Performance	22, 54
Non-Emergency Medical Transportation	65
Paratransit Services	30, 31, 60, 65
Parking and Storage	
– Bicycles	62
Partnerships,	65
Passengers	
– Comfort	12
– Communicating with	37, 68
– Ridership Counts	29, 34
– Safety	18, 21, 50, 58
– 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
– Safe Operation for Alternative Fuel Buses	1
Productivity	
– Employee	3, 16, 22, 33, 54
– Transit System	54, 56, 60
Rail	
– Bicycle Integration with	4, 62
– Light Rail Vehicle Compression Requirements	25
– Passenger Transfers	19
– Security	21
– Station Area Development	20
– Suburb-to-Suburb Service	14
– System-Specific Spare Ratios	15
– Tunnel and Underground Structures	23
Recruitment	
– Bus Drivers	16, 33, 40
– Management	47
– Security Personnel	21
– Supervisors	16
Regulations	
– Air Quality	1, 7, 8
– Alternative Fuel Buses	1
– Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	2, 7, 16, 17, 24, 30, 31, 37, 50, 53, 60, 65
– Buses on Shoulders	64
– Drugs and Alcohol	16
– EPA	7
– Family Leave Medical Act	33
– Leave Policies	33
– Local and State	7
– Occupational Safety and Health Administration	7, 52
– Resource Conservation and Recovery Act	9
– Retrofitting	7, 8
– Suburb-to-Suburb Service	14
– Waste Management	9
Retrofitting	
– Bus	8, 49
– Bus Maintenance Facilities	7
– Engine	7, 8
– Regulatory Impacts on	7
Revenues	
– Advertising	51
Ridership	63
– Forecasting	66

Table 4 (Continued)

Risk Management	
– Medium Agencies	13
– Small Agencies	13
Safety	
– Alternative Fuel Bus Operation	1
– Bus Occupant	18, 38, 50, 64
– Bus Route Evaluation	10
– Communications	68
– Light Rail Vehicle Compression Resistance	25
– Traffic Operations	49
Scheduling	
– Adherence	49
– Automatic Vehicle Location Systems	24, 48, 53, 55
– Bus Driver Availability	33
– Bus Route Evaluation	10
– Bus Stop Information	17, 48
– Bus Transfers	19
– Computer-Aided	57
– Demand-Responsive	53, 57
– Flexible Route	53
– Point Deviation	53
– Ridership Data Collection	29, 34, 63
– Small Buses	41
– Suburb-to-Suburb	14
Security	
– Bus Drivers, for	33
– Crime Prevention	21, 38
– Technology Systems	35, 38
– Terrorism	27
– Violence Reduction	21
Service	
– Planning	66
– Quality	15, 45, 53, 57
– Small Buses	41
Service Line and Cleaning	12
Spare Ratios	
– System-Specific Buses	11
– System-Specific Rail Vehicles	15
Standards	
– Alternative Fuels	1
– Bus Route Evaluation	10, 14
– Maintenance	54
Suburb-to-Suburb Commuting	14
Supervisors	
– Bus Field	16
– Relations with Drivers	33
Surveys,	
– On-Line and Intercept	63
– Web-Based	69
Terrorism	27
Tort Claims	36
Traffic Congestion	64
Training	
– Bus Drivers	18, 30, 40
– Diversity Training	46
– Information Technology	35, 44
– Supervisors	16
Transfers	19
Transit-Focused Development	20
Transportation Demand Management	39
Tunnels	23
Underground Structures	23
Unions	54
Violence (see Security)	
Waste Control	
– 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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