10   TRANSIT SAFETY AND SECURITY

A major concern for users and would-be-users of public transportation is their security and safety. However, available data shows that transit riders face a much lower risk of crash related injury. While there is no significant increase in crime due to transit, a lack of ridership and social stigma create the perception that utilizing transit is unsafe. Increased safety measures will improve this perceived safety and increase ridership.

10.1 TRANSIT RIDER SAFETY

CRASHES

Nationwide, transit users are significantly safer on a per-mile-traveled basis than drivers and passengers in private vehicles. According to the National Safety Council, in 2019, per 100,000,000 miles, there were 0.45 passenger vehicle deaths, compared to 0.05 bus deaths, and 0.005 railroad passenger deaths. Additionally, empirical evidence shows that these safety statistics improve, for users and non-users alike, the higher the proportion of the population that uses transit. As has been noted elsewhere in this plan, the rate of transportation related fatalities is on the rise nationwide. But, in cities where public transit has been on the rise, the trend has been mitigated or reversed. A recent analysis performed by the American Public Transit Association, _Public Transit Is Key Strategy in Advancing Vision Zero, Eliminating Traffic Fatalities_, shows that metro areas with more than 40 annual trips per capita, have half the traffic fatality rates compared to metro areas with fewer than 20 trips per capita. This data underscores the need for increased frequency and reliability of transit services within the NVCOG region as defined in section.

TRANSIT RELATED CRASHES

Within the region, there were 414 crashes involving buses from the years of 2019 to 2021. Of these crashes, none were fatal. Additionally, two crashes were recorded involving buses and pedestrians which is less than 1% of total bus-involved crashes. There were no fatalities from these crashes as well. For passenger vehicles and other motorized traffic, including light trucks, commercial vehicles and full-sized trucks, there were 36,889 vehicle crashes within the region including 94 fatalities. Of the vehicle crashes, 403 involved pedestrians which is around 1.1% of total vehicle crashes. The pedestrian-vehicle crashes resulted in 18 fatalities. This data shows that buses are a significantly safer way to travel.

Additionally, there were no crashes involving Metro North Railroad from 2019 to 2021 within the NVCOG region. This can be attributed to a lack of grade crossings along the Waterbury Branch Line (WBL). The only public grade crossing is located at Division Street in Ansonia. This grade crossing should be investigated for removal to further improve safety along the WBL.

The perception of unsafe transit systems within the region is a significant barrier for high transit ridership. Transit systems that are perceived to be unsafe will experience less ridership even if they are statistically safe to ride. A lack of riders will then cause the public to think the system is unsafe, creating a negative feedback loop. The best way to address this issue is to create a transit system that strives to be as safe as possible at its boarding locations and on its equipment. To ensure the security of their riders, each transit operator within the region is taking steps to prevent or mitigate risk on their facilities.

CT*transit* promotes the *See Something, Say Something* campaign, a program meant to benefit from many daily users being able to recognize something that is suspicious. The slogan was created by an advertising agency hired by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks.

On their web site, CT*transit* urges riders:

Stay alert around buses, trains, bridges, and roadways. If something doesn't look right, tell the nearest authority or transit employee.

Bags, boxes, or other packages left unattended on buses and trains, in stations or on train tracks.

- *People entering unauthorized areas at train or bus stations.*
- *Exposed wiring, leaks, strange smells, or other signs of potential tampering on buses and trains.*
- *People videotaping, sketching, or taking notes on transit equipment or facilities.*
- *Placing a package or luggage in a different compartment than the one being occupied.*
- *People who stay at bus or train stations for long periods without getting on.*

For security on the buses, CT*transit* has video recording devices onboard all of its full sized buses and para-transit vans in case of an incident.

Safety perception for CT*transit* bus stops is an important aspect to increase ridership. All bus stops should have proper lighting, so additional lighting should also be installed at all the bus stops. Places that are well lit improve perceived safety for users waiting at bus stops encouraging greater usage of CT*transit* services. Bus stops with 150 or more riders each day should also have emergency blue light boxes installed. Even if these call boxes are not used for emergency calls, the presence of these boxes deter potential incidents with the ability for people to access them easily in emergency situations. Bus shelters should also be installed at these locations as the presence of a well-maintained bus shelter will help increase rider comfort and safety at these highly utilized locations. CT*transit* can create a facility security network that links their safety features together by creating a cohesive network. Additionally, the Waterbury Green, which acts as the pulse point for the system, should have regular police patrolling within the area.

Facility security addresses surveillance and sensor monitoring of bus stops, facilities, infrastructure, and vehicles. Surveillance includes both video and audio surveillance. The sensor monitoring system can include threat sensors, such as chemical agent, toxic industrial chemical, biological, explosives, thermal, acoustic, and radiological sensors, object detection sensors, motion or intrusion detection sensors, and infrastructure integrity sensors. It also includes analysis of sensor or surveillance outputs for possible threats and need for response. This connected system supports traveler or transit vehicle operator-initiated alarms and allows CT*transit* to respond to an on-board incident. The system is also capable of providing emergency information to travelers using CT*transit* by utilizing electronic signage or audio messages on-board the transit vehicle, at transit stops, or in transit facilities. This information can also be sent to users who have the CT*transit* application installed on their phones or emailed to them directory whenever an incident occurs. With the installation of the facility security system, CT*transit* can create a cohesive security system across its system to install on their vehicles, bus stops, and equipment. A comprehensive system that contains monitoring equipment that can talk to a central network increases safety across the entire system and can increase ridership.

The Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority provides security information on their web site, including an entire section on *Safety and Security*. Like CT*transit*, the site includes information about *See Something, Say Something*, but also includes safety information for riders regarding safe behavior traveling to and from a bus stop.

For security on the buses, the GBT has video recording devices onboard in case of an incident.

Like with CT*transit*, GBT should seek installation of lighting for their bus stops though coordination between GBT and the local municipalities, install emergency blue light boxes with 150 or more riders each day, ensure that there are bus shelters at these locations, and create a cohesive facility security network for its system. These features should be incorporated into the GBT system. Parts of the facility security network have already been deployed in the Greater Bridgeport planning region, primarily at the downtown Bridgeport bus terminal and rail station. These devices include emergency aid call boxes, security video cameras, voice annunciating systems and variable message signs.

The Valley Transit District has purchased 5 new paratransit vehicles in 2018. These new vehicles are all equipped with security cameras.

On Metro North's website, the MTA provides information regarding on-board train emergencies, including emergency and evacuation instructions and safety information regarding at grade crossings.

To ensure rider security, there are currently many monitoring and security features employed along Metro North lines, but there are none installed along the WBL. Security officers are present at the major Metro North stations, but oftentimes, there are no security officers at any of the WBL stations. In order to increase security and safety, part-time police presence should

be provided at all of the stations and full-time police presence should be provided at Waterbury Station, which is the busiest station within the region. Video cameras should be installed along the platforms and parking lots at all stations, in particular, at the Waterbury station to monitor activity. Additional infrastructure that should be installed at the WBL stations are emergency blue light boxes and additional lighting should also be installed at all the stations. This will increase perceived safety for users waiting at stations encouraging greater usage of the WBL. Facility security should be incorporated into the Metro North system to create a cohesive safety network for the entire Metro North system.

The replacement and upgrades of stations in Naugatuck and Derby/Shelton, as well as the potential relocation of the Seymour and Beacon Falls Station and an indoor waiting area at the Waterbury station present opportunities for CTDOT and Metro North to implement these critical security improvements. Funding has been approved for both a new Derby/Shelton station as well as funding for relocating the Naugatuck Station. Previously mentioned blue light boxes and other safety features should be included for both station projects.

Looking to the future, additional steps should be taken to ensure the security of transit users.

SAFETY AND SECURITY ACTIONS:

- Continue to promote public transit and dense transit supported development. As we know, increased activity at bus stops, stations, and on-board transit vehicles helps to deter crime, increased transit utilization is a critical component to transit safety. The eyes on the street effect offered by dense housing and commercial uses, particularly located near public transit stops, adds an additional passive safety tool.
- Improve safety and security on all transit options. Every transit rider, regardless of their entry or exit point from the system, deserves to feel safe and comfortable while traveling, and the NVCOG will advocate for CT*transit*, Metro North, GBT, and CTDOT to implement all available tools to improve safety along our transit systems.
- Continue to fund the installation and upgrading of current infrastructure to meet safety and security needs.

10.3 EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANNING IN THE NVCOG REGION

In the scope of this plan, a discussion of transportation security extends to minimizing and responding to disruptions of the regional transportation system, and more specifically the quick, safe and efficient response to emergency situations (i.e. traffic incidents) on major expressways. The NVCOG role in the State of Connecticut's emergency management organizational structure is to foster collaborative planning by providing resources and information between local communities and State agencies.

The State of Connecticut Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) partners with other State agencies and non-Governmental organizations to coordinate emergency preparedness and response activities. The purpose of this collaboration is to support local governments and their residents in responding to disasters and emergencies. The NVCOG is one such DEMHS regional emergency management partner.

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) is an education program for the public. The program provides education about disaster preparedness and trains the public on basic disaster preparedness. Additionally, CERT members can assist others within their community after a disaster using their training. CERT members are also encouraged to support local emergency response agencies within their communities.

Transportation Incident Management (TIM) is the method to manage traffic around incident locations such as a vehicle crash. First responders are being trained so they can perform a safe and quick clearance for all traffic incidents. The goal is to reduce secondary crashes such as a vehicle colliding with a first responder vehicle while they are on scene responding to an incident. TIM training for first responders has taken place at the bed of 2022 into the beginning of 2023 at the CTDOT headquarters.

Documents which guide emergency response coordination in the State of Connecticut include:

- State of Connecticut State Response Framework Version 4.2
- Traffic Diversion Plan for I-84 and Parts of US Route 7 and CT Route 8 (2011)
- Unified Response Manual (2008)
- Regional Emergency Support Plan (RESP) for regions 2, 3 and 5

As a partner of both CTDOT and DEMHS, the NVCOG has contributed to traffic incident management in the following ways:

- Collaborated with regional agencies to develop emergency diversion plans for major expressways in DEMHS Region 5 and portions of Regions 2 and 3 (link to NVCOG website) to equip and guide state and local emergency responders before, during and after emergency situations.
- Trained on the Regional Evacuation and Shelter Plan activation and implementation.

- Trained on National Incident Management system (NIMS)/Incident Command System (ICS) protocols.
- Trained on the Regional Response Coordination Center (RCC) setup, on the regional emergency communications system setup, and on the coordination function of Transportation, RESF 1 procedures.
- Partnered with the CRCOG Transportation Incident Management Coalition, working with first responders and transportation planners from within and outside of the region
- Developed an inventory of ADA capable vehicles and qualified drivers within the region for access by FEMA in an emergency scenario

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REGIONAL EMERGENCY PLANNING TEAMS (REPT) AND EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTIONS (ESF)

Regional emergency partners are organized into Regional Emergency Planning Teams (REPT). There are five REPT emergency planning regions in the State of Connecticut which are overseen by The State of Connecticut Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP). Within each REPT regional resource coordination is developed through regional emergency support functions. Emergency support functions (ESF) are discipline oriented working groups standardized across the CT emergency management community. Each REPT has ESF's and a Regional Emergency Support Plan (RESP) which assist all levels of government to work in a coordinated and standardized manner.
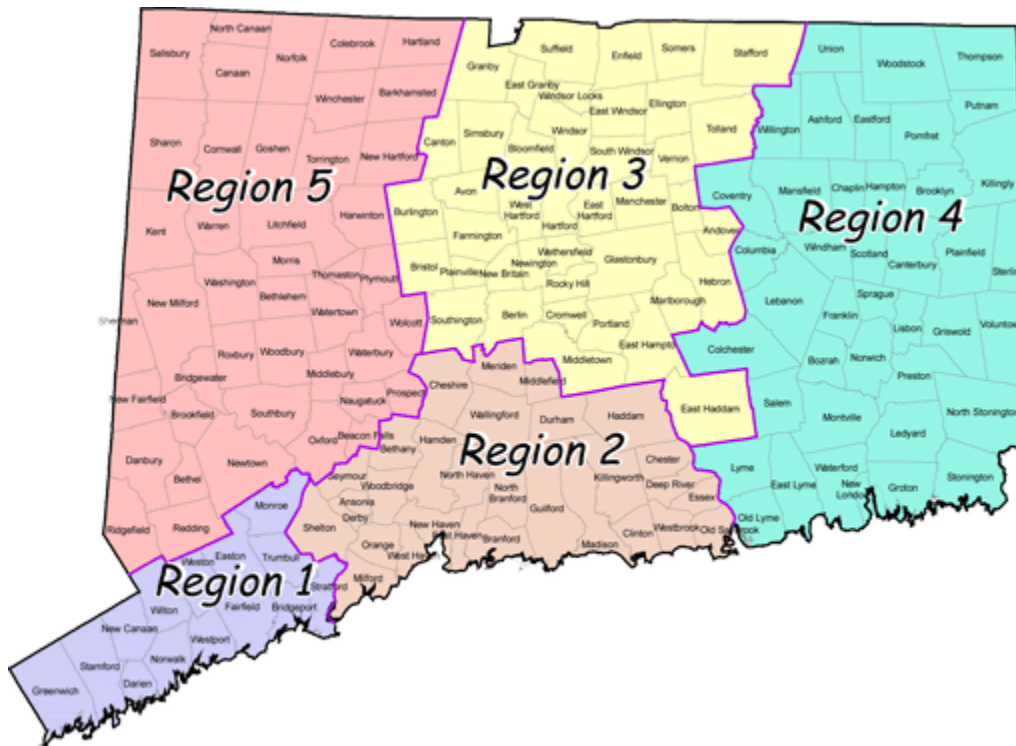
Map 1 Regional Emergency Planning Teams, Source: CTDOT

NVCOG municipalities are located across three regions of DEMHS' Regional Emergency Planning Teams (REPT), namely regions 2, 3 and 5. The NVCOG participates in these REPT regions and the ESF 1 working group which addresses transportation issues. The purpose is to develop and implement a system of resources and response capabilities that facilitates communication and coordination among regional jurisdictions and agencies. These issues can range from transportation issues to activities during a major disaster, including natural and human-made. Traffic incident management is a critical transportation issue that is required during emergency events.

TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND DIVERSION ROUTES

The State of CT DEMHS and CT DOT collaborate on traffic incident management. Traffic Incident Management Infrastructure is maintained by CT DOT and includes traffic cameras, Variable Message Signs (VMS), and a Highway Advisory Radio (HAR) system that can be employed during emergency situations. In addition, the Connecticut Highway Assistance Monitoring Patrol (CHAMP), which is a road service patrol operated by the CT DOT, offers emergency service to motorists along major highways in the state. Within the NVCOG region, there are four (4) VMS located on I-84, and another four (4) located along Route 8.

The DEMHS has provided a framework for agencies to respond to traffic incidents, which is described in the Unified Response Manual (URM) last published in 2008. As per the URM, the NVCOG's role in incident management is the dissemination of information regarding diversion routes and lessons learned from past traffic incidents.

Through the ESF 1 Transportation group, NVCOG has overseen the development of diversion and evacuation routes. The most recent diversion routes for REPT 5 were devised in 2011 by the Central Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (COGCNV). Currently, a consultant is updating diversion routes throughout the state. This information will be released within the coming years.