



## ***News Release***

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### **New research provides clear direction for SkyTrain security programs**

*-- Analysis of crime data and public opinion points way to effective measures*

An in-depth analysis of crime data gathered near SkyTrain stations and the results of a major public opinion survey have produced what TransLink believes is clear direction to more effective security programs. As a result, transit customers will see more uniformed SkyTrain staff and Transit Police at the key times and places they need reassurance, continued programs to upgrade stations plus new initiatives that will give them a greater ability to call for assistance.

Details of the research and the new programs were announced today by Doug Kelsey, president and CEO of the BC Rapid Transit Company (BCRTC), which operates SkyTrain and West Coast Express, and Ward Clapham, Chief Officer of the South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority Police Service ("Transit Police").

Kelsey says the research provided some clarity to the issues that have been driving concerns about security on SkyTrain. "Overlaying public perceptions over the crime data has revealed that there are a number of 'signal issues' that have a greater impact on the sense of security than the number of crimes taking place around a station. SkyTrain and the Transit Police are going to tackle those issues," he says.

TransLink, BCRTC and Transit Police spent much of the past several months in 2008 listening to members of the public about their perceptions of security and crime on SkyTrain and in its stations. The consultation efforts included: focus group meetings; an "unconference" in which interested members of the public set the agenda and met with TransLink officials; a video webconference with Mr. Kelsey and members of the TransLink Online Advisory Panel ("TransLink Listens"); and an extensive survey with 2,700 TransLink Listens participants. This is the most extensive review of security measures we have ever done on the system.

Kelsey notes that comparing crime data with the public's perception of security shows one doesn't always influence the other. "Waterfront is perceived as the 'safest' station on the line, yet it has the highest rate of crime going on around it in terms of incidents per 100,000 people passing through the station. Other stations have much lower crime rates and yet the anxiety level is high, due to the presence of what transit customers call 'unsavoury people' in or around stations. There are things we can and will do about that," Kelsey says.

One initiative already underway ensures SkyTrain Attendants and Transit Police officers are more visible at key stations where transit customers report feeling the least secure. There is now a full time presence of attendants and/or officers at the Surrey Central, New Westminster Broadway and Main Street locations and in the evening hours at Metrotown, locations where the public reports feeling least secure. SkyTrain staff will keep a safety watch at the stations while new Transit Police bike patrols will join local police forces in covering neighbourhoods around the stations, also identified as 'unsafe' in the public survey.

Our track record of response time to an incident is approximately 3.5-4.5 minutes on average with many being far less than that in the cases where staff are not immediately available from different locations in the stations. These are strong response times that most cities would be very pleased with.

"Two officers on bikes have the same effect as eight officers on foot because they can cover so much more ground," says Chief Officer Clapham.

He adds that drug sweeps, which have seen arrests by Transit Police officers increase 83 per cent this year over last, will also continue in partnership with jurisdictional police forces along the SkyTrain line. "The presence of the drug trade is exacting an incredible toll on some of the neighbourhoods around SkyTrain stations, both in terms of the safety and security of transit customers, but also residents and businesses, not to mention the drug users themselves.

"But the police need other tools over and above arresting people and putting them in jail. There needs to be a broad based community intervention to give drug dependent people, those with mental issues or anyone in crisis, the services they need.

"This will rescue a lot of lives, and based on what transit customers tell us, it will do more than anything else to make them feel more secure on the transit system," says Clapham.

Doug Kelsey says other SkyTrain security programs are on the way next year including:

- "SkyWatch" – in which members of the public are encouraged to report, via text messaging, things that need attention, including suspected criminal activity.
- Continuing to expand retail presence at SkyTrain stations to provide more "eyes and ears" at more times of the day
- Testing public acceptance of the use of police dogs on the SkyTrain system
- Completion of lighting upgrades at the Expo Line stations
- Testing facility improvements that will make emergency telephones and other security systems easier to locate, particularly on station platforms

Other TransLink programs, in partnership with municipalities and the federal government, will focus on improvements to streets in neighbourhoods around SkyTrain stations. They will create so-called “transit villages” in areas around Surrey Central and Broadway that will feature improved lighting, sight lines and amenities that promote safe walking and cycling. These will definitely take some time as we work with the different municipalities.

The crime analysis, coupled with the public perception research conducted through TransLink Listens and ongoing customer service research, identified four key ‘themes’ that will shape programs to improve security for transit customers:

- **REASSURANCE** – making sure SkyTrain Attendants and police officers are more visible in stations, particularly at stations identified by the public as the “least safe”
- **ENGAGEMENT** – more contact with members of the public as new ways in which they can participate in improving security conditions on the system
- **INFRASTRUCTURE** – measures such as upgraded lighting and video monitoring and renovations such as the work currently underway at Broadway station
- **INTERVENTION** – taking public security beyond the realm of law enforcement and attacking the root causes of crime through an integrated approach with health, social and mental health services

“We know that we could have the most efficient rapid transit system in the world,” Mr. Kelsey said, “but if people don’t *feel* safe about the trains and the stations, they won’t ride that system.”

Mr. Kelsey and Transit Police Chief Ward Clapham made their announcement at Broadway Station, where a significant upgrading project – another safety and security initiative – got underway in October.

“Just as our studies have confirmed that crime is a ‘people’ issue, so is the prevention and cure,” says Chief Clapham. “Everyone has a role to play, from Transit Police, SkyTrain, TransLink, our colleagues in the jurisdictional police departments and anyone who rides the system. The information we’ve gathered will help us determine clearly what those roles are.”

"The vision of the Vancouver Police Department is to make Vancouver the safest major city in the country," says Vancouver Police Chief Constable Jim Chu. "Having the safest transportation system is a major part of that vision and we will work side by side with the Transit Police and TransLink to achieve that goal."

Adds Chief Superintendent Fraser McRae of the Surrey RCMP detachment, “The Surrey RCMP value the positive relationship that exists with the Transit Police as we seek to collaboratively engage in strategies that will address those issues surrounding transit centers and SkyTrain stations that impact transit users.”

“As a transit system, SkyTrain is safe, and is one of the safer places to be in an emergency,” Mr. Kelsey says, “but we know we are not immune to situations and recognize that we have a responsibility to work with the people who live in the neighbourhoods we serve.” Our vision is that SkyTrain is the place where people go to be safe.

Three reports were produced over the summer. *SkyTrain Safety and Security Perceptions – Fall 2008* (TransLink market research), gathered responses to an online survey through the TransLink Advisory panel, while the *LMD SkyTrain Analysis Pilot Project* and *Lower Mainland SkyTrain Analysis Report* (Transit Police) take Transit Police data and that provided by local Jurisdictional Police Departments (JPDs) and develop a first-of-its-kind comparison of the crime picture along the system with that of cities served by SkyTrain.

Together, they give a detailed picture of how safe the public believes SkyTrain is and how safe it really is. The full reports are posted on TransLink's web site at: [www.translink.bc.ca](http://www.translink.bc.ca)

This is the first time crime levels at or near SkyTrain stations have been compared with crime patterns in the rest of the cities in which they were located. The *Pilot Project* took data from a 28-day period in the summer of 2007, plotted the location of each incident within 250m (approximately three blocks) of a SkyTrain station and compared those patterns with crime patterns in the rest of the cities in question. The *Analysis Report* looked specifically at incidents within 100m of each station over a one year period. Among the findings:

- 11 per cent of crimes occur within 250m of a SkyTrain station
- SkyTrain stations with the higher crime rates are located in areas where certain “attractants” exist, such as the consistent presence of drug dealers, in some cases certain types of pubs and nightclubs or agencies, facilities and services serving drug dependent people or those with mental challenges
- SkyTrain stations near shopping centres also showed higher rates of crime within 250m
- In addition to mapping crime incidents near existing SkyTrain station, the LMD SkyTrain Analysis Pilot Project also reviewed crime data along the Canada Line corridor in Richmond, and found that six per cent of the city's incidents occur within 250m of the future stations

The studies show that perceptions of insecurity at SkyTrain stations are not necessarily driven by the levels of crime around the stations. For example, people indicate they feel safer at downtown Vancouver stations because there are more people around, yet the combined number of incidents around those four stations is higher than in Surrey, where people say they feel least safe. Metrotown station was listed in the top five safest *and* least safe stations (its incident rate is 20<sup>th</sup> on the list: 19.25); Main Street-Science World tied with Broadway as third-least-safe station, yet the Transit Police report finds Main Street had the 11<sup>th</sup> lowest rate per 100,000 boardings of the 33 stations on the system.

Most importantly, though, these studies are helping SkyTrain and Transit Police develop strategies, which not only deal with crime and the perception of crime in the immediate vicinity of SkyTrain stations, but which use a variety of disciplines to prevent crime in the first place.