

Kizoom in the news

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An integrated approach to rail passenger security

Jennie Martin reports on the ITS United Kingdom and Swedish Rail Administration joint seminar at the 2008 European ITS Congress, Geneva, where the focus was on security and passenger services for unmanned rail stations.

There is high demand for low-cost security and information services designed to make rail passengers feel safer and more secure. Research has shown that this perception of safety is very important to passenger comfort, and while the passenger's perception of the level of threat can often be shown to be exaggerated, it is important to tackle these perceptions, not just address actual threats, in order to give passengers the best experience.

80% of passengers use just 20% of railway stations, which can be taken to mean that security measures are best employed at these 20% of stations. However, the 80% of stations which have low passenger footfall, and of course are often staffed to a lesser extent, can feel less safe for travellers, who equate the lack of other people present with higher risk. So, these stations also need well thought out but not too expensive security systems.

British Transport Police have identified several low cost measures which have high impact in terms of actual and perceived safety and security. These include good lighting, clear and frequent signage, a clean environment in good repair, and good availability of information via digital signs, announcements, and interactive information points.

CitySpace gave a couple of relevant examples of their recent projects; one on Merseyrail in north-western England, and one on First Transpennine Express in the Lancashire and Yorkshire area of northern England. Merseyrail implemented a pilot scheme using hand held terminals to collect penalty fares, which grew into wider efforts to make the rail environment more controlled in terms of restricted to paying passengers, and more pleasant and secure for everybody who used it. The network's stations are manned as far as possible, but they also provide

interactive travel information points which connect passengers to emergency assistance, timetable information, and journey planning capability, as well as to the usual real time travel updates. These work using wireless networks which cover the whole station, connecting staff and passengers to information without the need for hard wiring which would be a target for vandals, as well as expensive to install and maintain.

First Transpennine Express began by considering the installation of help points, which then expanded to include touch button screen access to local taxi information, maps, timetables, weather information, as well as real time travel information. These are maintained on a weekly visit basis, to make sure that they are always in working order and of good appearance, and enhance rather than degrade the station environment.

These two implementations are examples of considering security more widely – addressing the perceptions of passengers as well as the statistically proved threats to safety. The goal is to make rail travel an attractive modal choice, by removing any security fears the traveller may have, as well as any actual threats.

The case for Intelligent Surveillance
Tony Lacy of Atos Origin reported that there was increasing demand from the many owners and operators of CCTV systems set in a transport environment, for systems which would enable them to use their cameras with strategic intent. The original reasons for installing the cameras had usually been to act as a deterrent to a variety of transgressions in transport-related locations, not just for the benefit of travellers, but also for the workforce. The

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