

# VIA's Safe Transit, Safe Community Program

## Background:

VIA provides regional multimodal transportation options that connect our community to opportunity, support economic vitality, and enhance quality of life throughout our region. VIA, recognized by the Texas Transit Association in 2016 and 2017 as the outstanding Metro Transit Authority of the year in the State of Texas, serves 14 member cities and the unincorporated areas of Bexar County, operating seven days a week on 90 routes. VIA provides nearly 36 million rides within 1,213 miles across our service region. As an organization, our Senior Leadership and Board of Trustees have charged us to remain innovative and steadfast to continuously find new ways to create better and safer service for our customers, community and employees. Our submission focuses on 4 key areas that have greatly contributed to our ability to do so as an organization dedicated to improved service provision. Those areas are Public Safety, Workplace Safety, System Safety and Service Enhancements.

## Public Safety: (Preventable Accident Reduction/Pedestrian Safety)

In our assessment of National Transit Database (NTD) preventable accident data over a 3-year period from 2016 to 2018, we analyzed and identified trends and root causes that revealed opportunities to improve our performance. Although our standard safety initiatives yielded/demonstrated that **56% of our Bus Operators have had zero preventable accidents during the entire 3-year period**; our preventable data review identified the 3 most common types of collisions that were occurring, the time of day those collisions occurred, and the number of years of experience that the Operator had when the collisions occurred.

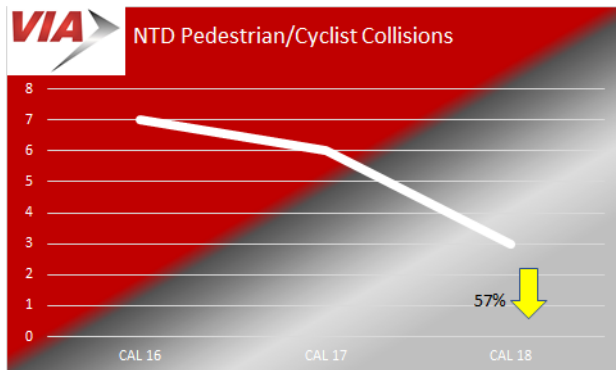
Our preventable data analysis identified 3 negative trending collision types as rear ending another vehicle (27%), side contact with vehicles, and contacting fixed objects (24% combined). We also identified that 70% of these preventables were by Operators with less than 4 years' experience and were occurring primarily at nights and on the weekend.

We deployed strategies and campaigns to address these negative trends by:

- Reinforcing Operator's safe behaviors by increasing Safety and Field Supervisor presence on routes and making direct contact with Operators at Park & Rides, the Station Foremen's Area where Operators assemble prior to pulling out on their runs, major transfer points, and intersections
- Supervisors employed strategic safety messaging efforts for Operators with less than 4-years operating experience that worked mostly nights and weekends
- Safety Trend Cards (Cards that educate/inform on current trending collisions) regularly distributed to Operators during, New Hire Qualification Training, Return-to-Work Training, Refresher Training, Special Events, ride checks and field outreach
- Training Supervisors performed follow-up, on-the-job coaching, and contact with Operators that recently completed New Hire Training within the last 4 months
- Supervisors maintained consistent safety messaging to Operators regarding Maintaining A Safe Following Distance (prevents rear-end accidents); Expect and Watch for Pedestrians; Fixed Objects are Avoidable (prevents side contacts); Using Your Better Judgement; as well as reinforcing The Smith System's 5 Keys of Defensive Driving

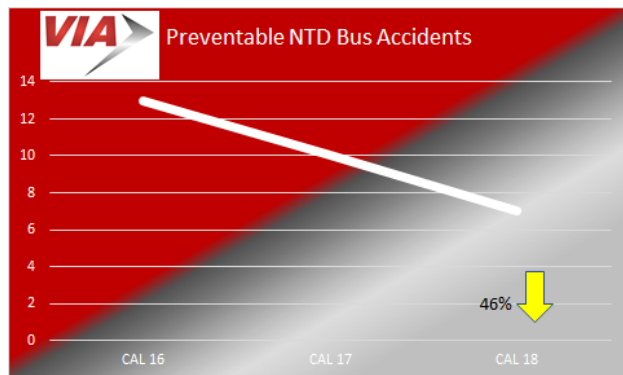
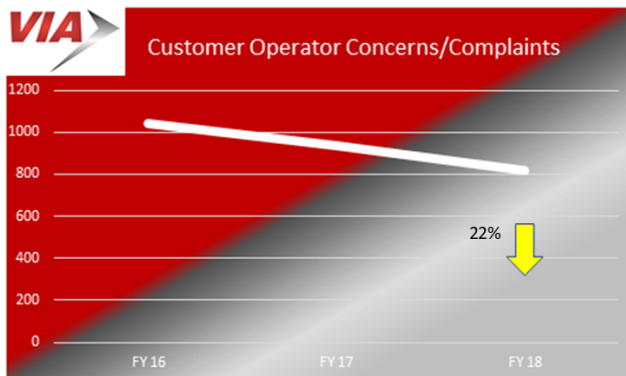
We continued our efforts to create both better and safer service by identifying additional outreach opportunities to improve our pedestrian safety performance:

- VIA identified pedestrian safety as a significant opportunity to eliminate NTD Major Event Collisions through our “Be Safe, Don’t Chase” program which calls attention to the danger of chasing the bus and promoting VIA’s ongoing community awareness of safe travel practices
- In Summer 2018, VIA implemented a pilot technology project to provide Operators with an electronic collision avoidance and an early warning detection system to further protect vulnerable road users (VRUs) (pedestrian/cyclist). The system provides real-time data on dangerous intersection behaviors and identifies exact geo-locations of potential near-miss preventable incidents. This technology pilot included lane departure warning, speed limit indicator, headway monitoring (vehicle following distance) and forward collision warning (imminent rear-ending collisions). We used the data to identify potential hot spots on routes and identified root cause behaviors and conditions (unmarked bike lanes, jaywalking, mid-block crossing etc.) of alerts or detection at these locations and contacted Operators ahead of time to inform them of pedestrian activity in the area and guidance on what counter measures to use. **This data allowed us to focus our efforts at locations that have the highest probability of a collision and has resulted in a 57% decrease in NTD Pedestrian/Cyclist Collisions**
- Additional pedestrian/cyclist awareness campaigns included the installation of an actual pedestrian crosswalk in the main hallway that leads to the Operator’s daily reporting area. This keeps pedestrian safety/awareness in forefront of their minds each day prior to reporting for duty
- Monthly Operator Safety Meetings foster two-way communication on trending safety hazards that Operators are experiencing, as well as provide the opportunity to improve and expedite solutions on emerging concerns identified by Operators in the field



The implementation of these public safety strategies throughout the 3-year period, yielded the following results:

- Reduced Preventable NTD Collisions by 46%
- Reduced Pedestrian/Cyclist collisions by 57%
- Reduced Customer Complaints on Operator safety behavior by 22% (regarding speeding, disobeying traffic signs/lights, distracted, drowsy, etc.)

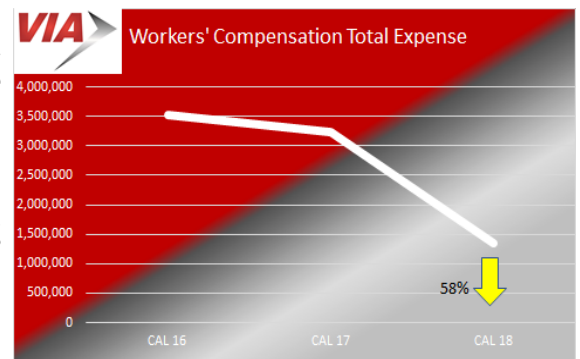


# Work Place Safety: (Workers' Compensation)

VIA is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment while managing its resources in the best interest of the public. In Fall 2015, VIA realized that the cost of Workers' Compensation and the increasing number of lost-time cases was becoming unsustainable and a challenge to budget. At the time, VIA was using in-house staff and case management services to self-administer the Workers' Compensation Program. After assessing the growing trend, VIA obtained a Workers' Compensation Support Services Consultant to perform a comprehensive review of its Workers' Compensation program to identify cost containment opportunities and best practices. In August 2016, VIA Senior Executive Management reviewed and approved the findings from the consultant.

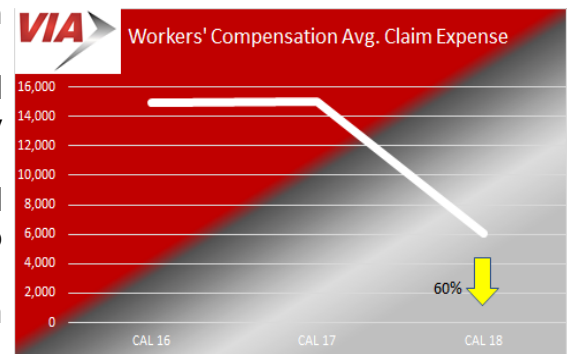
Based on this assessment, VIA began the process to implement these recommendations.

- In October 2017, the VIA Board of Trustees approved the use of a Workers' Compensation Third Party Administrator (TPA) and Related Services to manage claim submittals by managing workers' compensation related exposures and quickly returning injured employees back to productive work
- In January 2018, VIA began utilizing a Workers' Compensation Health Care Network (HCN) to assist employees with obtaining prompt and appropriate medical treatment aimed at early return to work when medically safe by contracting with providers that used nationally recognized evidence-based guidelines, assigning Case Managers to all cases, and coordinating prompt services
- In Summer 2018, VIA implemented and manages an in-house Transitional Duty Program to return injured employees to productive work as soon as possible following an on-the-job injury. A Transitional Duty Job Bank was established to match job tasks that meet medically indicated restrictions while allowing the employee to work safely, gainfully and productively during recovery
- VIA has established an Occupational Review Committee to identify trends and corrective actions to minimize or eliminate hazards that have resulted in workplace injuries



The implementation of these strategies, has yielded the following improvements:

- **Decreased over-utilization of Workers' Compensation cases by 64.10%**
- **For the first time, Transitional Duty cases exceeded Lost-Time cases in October 2018 and continue to show vast improvement**
- **A reduction of \$1.89 million dollars has been realized in total incurred costs from calendar year 2017 to 2018**
- **Average cost per claim has decreased by \$9,002 from calendar year 2017 to 2018**

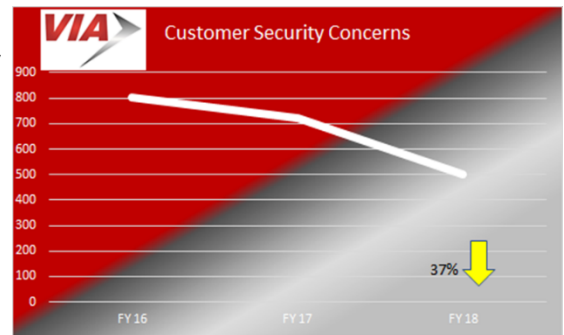


# System Safety: (Operator/Customer Safety)

The safety, care and concern of our Operators and customers is paramount to VIA's overall Safety and Security efforts. In the years leading up to 2016, we analyzed security related data and identified specific security incidents on the rise. The data review pinpointed our top 4 incidents as Alcohol Related Offenses, Disturbances between customers on and off the bus, loitering, and patrons sleeping on buses/transit property (bus stops and transit facilities). As part of our analysis we identified customer concerns/complaints as a key indicator to gage the success of improvement programs and campaigns.

We focused our efforts on measures that not only enabled faster information sharing, but greater visibility, deterrence and partnerships among employees and external agencies.

- The (S4) Task Force (a re-imagined See Something, Say Something group) is a committee of employees that report and elevate/expedite security related concerns and trends directly to VIA's Transit Police Department S4 execution team. This task force is made up of Operators, Dispatchers, Maintenance, Field Supervisors, Safety Supervisors, Transit Police, Customer Service phone/field reps and the Executive Board of the Amalgamated Transit Union 694.
- Enhanced Security presence on routes was ramped up in late 2017 and continued thru 2018 to increase uniformed police/security visibility, decrease on-bus incidents, and remind our ridership and community that their safety is our priority. Police and Security Officers ride in full uniform and in plain clothes to address on bus matters
- VIA's Transit Police Department uses drone technology for Special Event Service, Risk/Threat assessments, Perimeter analysis and security-based data capture. Any threat level information identified is shared with our Federal, State and local law enforcement partners
- VIA's Joint Law Enforcement Center (JLEC) is located at VIA's Centro Plaza Transit Station that handles just over 1 Million boardings a year and contains 3 of VIA's top ten heaviest and highly trafficked bus stops throughout or entire system. This facility serves as a joint resource law enforcement facility where Transit Police, Federal, State and local municipal law enforcement partners share information and technology to partner in creating safer service for our customers and the community. Also operates as a field command post for the San Antonio Office of Emergency Management (SAOEM) and the Alamo Regional Command Center (ARCC) for Bexar county, in the event of crisis and incident command



The implementation of these strategies has yielded the following results:

- **The S4 Task Force was implemented in June of 2018. Since then, there have been a total of 52 arrests, 185 criminal trespass warnings, 1,130 field contacts at bus stops and 1,929 strategic patrol-bys (addressing loitering and criminal activity at bus stops and transit facilities) all directly related to information gained from the participants of the task force meetings**
- **VIA had (2) NTD major assaults in Calendar Year 2017 and none in Calendar Year 2018 due to the enhanced security initiatives and campaigns. Customer Security-based Complaints/Concerns went down 37%**

# Service Enhancements: (Service Frequency, Fuel Efficiency, Amenities, Outreach)

**Service Frequency** In January 2018 VIA began a 3-phase project to increase frequency on 18 designated routes. This plan was supported and funded by the City of San Antonio City Council through their allocation of \$4.3M from the City budget for fiscal year 2018, and an additional \$10M in 2019. The plan focus was to **Increase frequency on key routes, Reduce wait times, and provide faster connections for our customers.** VIA invested those dollars in more frequent service, not expanding the span of service.

**Phase 1 improvements increased ridership by 31%**

**Phase 2 improvements increased ridership by 41%**

**Fuel Efficiency:** In effort to provide cleaner and more sustainable service, that also provided an environmental benefit to the community. VIA contracted with Trillium/Loves to design/build/operate the **largest transit orientated CNG compression and delivery facility in the country.**



The change to cleaner and “greener” service and buses was part of VIA’s multi-year plan to significantly reduce vehicle emissions, decrease operating costs, and allow VIA to carry out planned service enhancements. The change furthered our role as an industry leader in

environmental stewardship and affirmed VIA’s focus on environmentally sustainable mobility in the region.

## **Results from the implementation of the new CNG facility:**

- A \$10.9 M CNG facility opened for full operations in Spring 2018
- Annual fuel savings of \$8.5 million
- Return on Investment (ROI) in less than 1 year
- Reducing (NOx) emissions by 97%

**Enhancing our Customer Amenities/Outreach** has been a Board and Senior Leadership priority over the past 3-years. VIA has invested resources in increasing our bus stop shelter amenities for our customers. Shelter installations are nearing 2,400 throughout our system. **The Shelter Campaign** implemented 1,000 new shelters, which included bus stop improvements and improved access and sidewalk connections for customers. In keeping with our sustainability efforts, over 200 of the new shelters operate using solar power, while providing more lighting for the safety/security of our ridership. VIA now provides 95% of all customer boardings from a sheltered stop.

- VIA’s “Beat the Heat” campaign (Summer 2018) distributed over 3,300 water bottles and fans to our patrons that were traveling and making trip connections during their day
- **The addition of Automated External Defibrillators** at 7 of our Park & ride facilities to provide an additional level of care for customers that may be in need
- **Partnering with Federal, State and County agencies** by providing buses during emergencies and cooling/heating buses to provide comfort during extreme weather conditions to citizens, customers and first responders

