

Allied Universal's Security Program Strengthens Message that Public Transportation is Safe

Valley Transportation Authority

Situation: The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority in California provides public transportation for more than 140,000 passengers a day. The VTA has approximately 1,700 employees supporting three bus divisions and a light rail division. The transportation system consists of about 600 low-floor buses that service 326 square miles of urbanized area daily and a light rail system which operates more than 100 low-floor light rail vehicles across 42.2 miles of rail.

Bus transportation is a prevalent way to travel in the area so it is no surprise that in 2010 there were over 30,000,000 boarding's on the VTA bus line. There are 28 bus transit centers and over 3,800 stops in the Silicon Valley.

The light rail system has 62 stops and travels the cities of San Jose, Santa Clara, Sunnyvale, Campbell, Milpitas and Mountain View. Transportation on the bus (24/7) and the light rail system are provided seven days a week to serve the Valley's around-the-clock lifestyle. The system provides links to dozens of VTA bus routes and employer shuttles, as well as with Amtrak, and the ACE and Caltrain commuter rails.

For those who drive to use either of the systems, there are 42 well-lit park-and-ride lots. If riders access the public transportation by bicycle, there are bike lockers located along the light rail line and bikes can be taken on board either system.

Challenge: Security for the VTA operates under the Protected Services Division and consists of two parts – law enforcement duties provided by the Santa Clara County Sherriff's Department and private security. "Local law enforcement and the private security provider work together to create a complete security program for the VTA," said Mark Mahaffey, Operations Manager Facilities Maintenance and Security for the VTA. "It is important that our public transportation system is safe, and that rules and regulations are enforced."

Rider and staff safety, as well as customer service, is of the utmost importance to the VTA. Security needs to have a presence throughout the transit system and be visible to riders. The VTA has years of credibility and needs a fully executed security program. Every day, thousands of people board the VTA trusting they will make it to their next stop safe and sound.

Mahaffey had another challenge that a lot of other businesses are facing – cost. "Cost and savings has been a factor for the VTA in this tough economy. We needed to keep our high level of security but also wanted to find a solution that provides us the greatest value for our funding. We were looking for a private security company to provide us with a program that focused on training and security, without having to increase our budget."

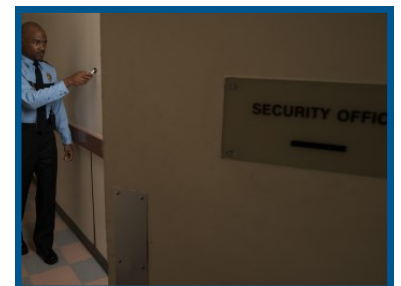
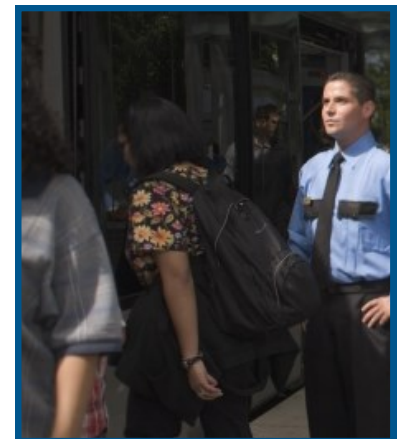
Solution: After an extensive evaluation of security providers, the VTA selected Allied Universal Security Services in March of 2009.

Location:

Santa Clara Valley, California

Statistics:

- > Bus and light rail transportation for more than 140,000 passengers a day
- > Rider and staff safety and customer service of utmost importance
- > Needed a solution that provided greatest value



“We chose Allied Universal because of their professionalism, attention to detail, high level of training, and ability to meet our financial goals,” said Mahaffey. “While many people within the VTA felt like we would not find the quality of security service we previously had, we did. Allied Universal overcame a huge hurdle in beating the competition.”

Allied Universal implemented a seamless transition and began providing around-the-clock security services with a total of 85 officers. “I am not sure most people even noticed there was a switch in companies during the transition,” explained Mahaffey. “It was when our level of security increased that the change was noticed.” Armed and unarmed Allied Universal security officers now secure the main administrative campus and four maintenance operating divisions, as well as provide roving security services for transit centers, platforms and park-and-ride lots.

Allied Universal Project Manager Greg Cullen explained that recruiting and training are very important to ensure that the right security officers are selected for this important assignment. “Security officer candidates are thoroughly screened through a detailed interview process, which incorporates a full criminal background investigation by Allied Universal and a Department of Justice Livescan background check, which utilizes fingerprinting, before becoming an Allied Universal security officer for the VTA. The armed officers have to satisfy further screening requirements. These armed officers are required to complete California State Training Certification for the carrying permits for exposed firearms, pepper spray and baton.”

Officers then completed a comprehensive training program to ensure they were ready to handle any situation on board the bus or light rail or in the VTA perimeter. In addition to state mandated training, the Allied Universal armed officers complete eight hours of semiannual Use of Force and Firearms training, and two additional four hour periods of Firearms Qualification and Driver Training. “Every quarter these officers are increasing their levels of experience and skills, allowing for a safer environment for all stakeholders,” said Cullen.

“Allied Universal provides significantly more training than required by the State of California,” said Mahaffey. “We are pleased with the high level of training all officers are receiving, and especially the armed officers who are interacting with the public.”

Armed and unarmed security officers have many levels of responsibility. Unarmed officers provide access control and general security services throughout the transit system. Armed officers patrol on foot and in vehicles, and are called upon to respond to the VTA call center’s needs. Officers can be seen patrolling the yards and areas surrounding the transit centers, and manning gates where buses enter and exit.

They are also responsible for monitoring the CCTV footage from hundreds of cameras throughout the VTA transit system, in buses and on light rail trains. This monitoring has cut security personnel costs for the VTA, and provided video surveillance for the Santa Clara County Sheriff’s Department and other municipal law enforcement agencies.

“Allied Universal security officers work in conjunction with the Santa Clara County Sheriff’s Department when law enforcement is needed,” explained Mahaffey. “Allied Universal officers have the ability to observe incidents and report misconduct that often leads to arrests. The CCTV system was a cost effective way to further our security efforts, and provide additional support to our officers on patrol.”

As part of an officer’s daily patrol, they ride the light rail trains from station to station. “They get off at each station and conduct platform patrols. They may have three large stations to patrol, so the majority of their time is off the train,” explained Cullen.

Officers also provide customer service by giving directions to those who are unfamiliar with the transit system. They have become a consistent presence and provide a safe environment for riders and staff. “Our officers may also be looked upon to provide assistance to the elderly or disabled,” said Cullen. “The VTA riders know who the security officers are and are very comfortable with them. They seem to really appreciate the added services we provide during their journey.”

Results: “The VTA and Allied Universal have a very strong partnership, and Allied Universal is not viewed as an outside company,” Mahaffey explained. “The security program and officers are well respected and liked within the community.”

The public has provided positive feedback to the VTA concerning their personal safety and the presence of the security officers throughout the transit systems.

There are also three unions within the VTA who are constantly concerned about the level of security for drivers. Union members have been pleased with security. “The union is happy with the level of response Allied Universal has provided,” said Mahaffey. “The drivers are able to make suggestions to Allied Universal on how they can assist them in less than desirable areas, and the two groups work together on security details for the early mornings and late nights.”

“The feedback I have received is that the management support that Allied Universal has provided to the VTA is unlike anything they had in the past,” Cullen stated. “We are able to properly manage the security program, and provide the necessary services to ensure the safety and security of the entire transportation system.”

Mahaffey concluded, “Allied Universal has gone above and beyond the VTA’s original expectations, and we are very pleased with all of their efforts.”