

St. Joseph Area Transportation Study Organization:

A Case Study for Transit Security

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The St. Joseph Area Transportation Study Organization (SJATSO) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in the St. Joseph, Missouri Urbanized Area and develops transportation plans and programs in conjunction with the states of Missouri and Kansas. The St. Joseph Urbanized Area includes three counties and five cities in both Kansas and Missouri, and is mainly a rural, agricultural region. The region, which has a population of approximately 108,000, is within close proximity to several military installations and has become known for its high-tech animal health industry. SJATSO's mission is to develop an efficient, multi-modal transportation system that minimizes fuel consumption and pollution across their region. The organization also strives to provide pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities within its continuing, cooperative and comprehensive planning efforts.

In 2005, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act:



A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) created a separate and distinct "security" planning factor, however little is known about small and mid-sized MPOs successes and challenges in integrating this planning factor into their transportation plans. SJATSO recognizes that transit is an integral component to the St. Joseph Urbanized Area's local emergency response plan that is administered by existing programs and administrators within the urban area; the Local Emergency Committee (LEC) works diligently to be prepared on all fronts. According to federal guidelines, LECs must include representatives from law enforcement, emergency management, transportation, fire fighting, first aid, health, media, community and environmental groups, as well as local, state and federal elected officials, hospitals and owners and operators of key facilities. LECs are responsible for developing and distributing an emergency plan annually, as well as evaluating local needs and making recommendations for additional resources required for local emergency response and recovery. While LEC's

relationships with their military installations results in some confidential details of their plans, SJATSO's focus on transit security addresses both passenger, coach and facility safety. Major homeland security risks SJATSO has identified within the region include flooding, the nearby New Madrid Fault, hazardous materials from major manufacturing plants and agri-terrorism. Examples of integration typically focus upon evacuation support in response to various scenarios and the corresponding levels of possible events.

St. Joseph Transit, "The Ride," is the second oldest transit system in the U.S. and serves the St. Joseph Urbanized Area. The Ride operates eight fixed bus routes throughout the City of St. Joseph, including three overnight routes, Monday through Saturday. In 2007, The Ride served approximately 417,906 passengers. SJATSO and The Ride work closely together on short- and long-term transit planning, as well as special projects, often collaborating in securing funding for joint work. SJATSO and The Ride address their homeland security needs through regular meetings and cooperative work between their staffs.

Through a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) pilot program, SJATSO and The Ride were recently selected to work with an FTA contractor for a regional safety and security review. The goal of this assessment was to obtain the perspective of an expert in the area of transit security and to communicate with the transit operator areas in which they are succeeding and areas where improvement is possible, as well as to provide the tools with which they may better their processes. Given SJATSO's current level of knowledge on the topic of transit security, the pilot program helped them expand their intellectual capacity in that area. The pilot program conducted by FTA was also helpful in providing smaller MPOs, like SJATSO, with information and emergency planning expertise that was not previously available for MPOs with their level of resources. As a result

of the review, SJATSO and The Ride have identified issues in the areas of operations, training, best practices and capital investments. The entire process has been beneficial for both improving SJATSO's knowledge of transit issues and improving The Ride's transit operations. Additionally, operational issues, involving training and identifying facility vulnerability, are being examined and addressed as funding becomes available.

In SJATSO's 2009-2012 Transportation Improvement Plan, two transit security related projects were prioritized.

The first project, scheduled for 2009, is to implement a new, web-based security system and "Next Stop" passenger information system that will track transit service with Global Positioning System. The second project, slated for 2011 and 2012, will improve the administrative and maintenance facilities access security systems through "Smart Card" access that is integrated with a photo identification system. These specific projects don't relate to urban-wide emergency planning, but instead

relate to system security. Both projects were identified as investments previous to the security review and were confirmed as sound technology enhancements thereafter. The projects are consistent with the recommended framework of an overall security plan recognized by transit staff and confirmed through the MPO review.

In terms of additional homeland security planning, SJATSO does not have primary responsibility for the region. SJATSO members participate as members of the LEC; however, the majority of the work is done by the City of St. Joseph's Emergency Management Coordinator and the Buchanan County Emergency Management Coordinator, with additional support from surrounding urban area coordinators. In their role with this Committee, SJATSO provides technical assistance and contributes information regarding St. Joseph's critical infrastructure. SJATSO feels that this role is fitting, helps to avoid redundancy and maximizes the use of scarce resources.



About SAFETEA-LU Regulations

The passage of the 2005 Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act - a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) increased the number of federally required planning factors that Metropolitan Planning Organizations must include in their Transportation Improvement Programs. Whereas under the previous authorization of the Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century, MPOs were required to account for a "safety and security" planning factor, SAFETEA-LU broke apart this singular factor into "safety" and "security." The separation of this singular planning factor into two separate and distinct factors was an attempt to address concerns as to the lack of preparedness of localities to the attacks of September 11, 2001. One lesson learned from September 11th is that effective coordination and communication among the different operating agencies in a region is paramount. This type of coordination is needed to allow enforcement, security and safety responses to occur expeditiously, while concurrently permitting the transportation system to handle a potentially overwhelming public response to the incident, and providing the public with clear and concise information about the situation and any actions that should be taken.

About MPO Responsibilities

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are responsible for administering federal funds, though the duties performed vary by state law and other mandates as directed by their MPO board. The Metropolitan Transportation Plan or Long-Range Transportation Plan, which visualizes the MPO's region 20 years into the future, forms the basis of all activities. From this 20-year plan, a shorter term priority list of projects is maintained in the TIP, identifying projects of the greatest importance for construction, upgrade or maintenance. MPOs may also be required, depending on their region, to prepare plans for non-motorized transportation, public transit or air quality.

About the National Association of Regional Councils

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) serves as the national voice for regionalism by advocating for regional cooperation as the most effective way to address a variety of community planning and development opportunities and issues. NARC's member organizations are composed of multiple local governments that work together to serve American communities - large and small, urban and rural. In 2008, NARC launched the first of four public awareness campaigns - Green Regions, Mobile Regions, Build Regions and Secure Regions. For additional information, please visit www.NARC.org.



About the St. Joseph Area Transportation Study Organization

The St. Joseph Area Transportation Study, in cooperation with the states of Missouri and Kansas, develops transportation plans and programs for the St. Joseph, Missouri Urbanized Area (UZA), in order to encourage and promote the development of a transportation system embracing various modes of transportation in a manner which will efficiently maximize mobility of people and goods within and through the urbanized area, as well as to minimize transportation-related fuel consumption and air pollution. For additional information, please visit www.ci.st-joseph.mo.us/publicworks/mpo.cfm.



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