Innovative Rail Safety Outreach for a New Rail Transit Service in Austin, Texas

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Introduction

• Purpose
  – To share the implementation process and lessons learned from CapMetro’s Rail Safety Education Program

• Take Away
  – “Hey! We could do that at our agency or in our city/region!”

• Agenda
  – Background of the rail project
  – Strategies used for our regional rail safety education program
  – Outcomes of program
  – Lessons learned
Background & Timeline
Capital MetroRail Project

- **2004:** Austin Votes on MetroRail with projected start up of 2008

- **Feb 2007:** CapMetro begins rail safety education – Hire Alissa under the assumption that 1 year is left until start up

- **Fall 2008:** MetroRail testing begins

- **Early 2010:** Actual start date of MetroRail passenger service, coinciding with an intense 1 month Rail Safety Outreach blitz
Issues to Consider

- 32 miles on existing freight tracks from Leander to downtown
- 9 stations planned
- Sleek and quieter than typical commuter trains
- Quieter, faster, & more frequent than freight trains
- One of the area’s busiest traffic corridors
- Need for Fencing?
- Enforcement of Trespassing Laws
- Quad Gates = Quiet Zones
- Useful signage at each intersection
Standard Outreach Efforts Used

- Operation Lifesaver Presentations
- Collateral Development: Bookcovers, Magnets, Posters, Flyers
- Local and OL TV and Radio PSAs
- Neighborhood Presentations
- Rail safety on CapMetro’s website
Our Foundation:
Operation Lifesaver Presentations

• 2007-2010 Operation Lifesaver Presentations to over 65,000 students and Central Texas Residents
• Approx. 220 presentations to ISD schools within 2 mile of tracks. Started Feb 21, 2008. In third year of rail safety presentations, targeting all schools.
• PTA presentations
• Flyers/Video/Morning announcements for schools that decline a presentation in 2008-2010
• Nursing Homes, Rotary Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, Professional Networking Associations, Libraries, Rec Centers, Senior Centers, ongoing
• Neighborhood Associations, ongoing
• Crossing Guards, 2008-2009
• Professional Drivers (Yellow Cab, FedEx, etc), 2009
• ISD & CapMetro Drivers, 2009-2010
• All Austin Energy Workers 2009
• Local News Stations: KXAN, KVUE, FOX, KEYE, 2010
  – Encourage them to set good example
• Driver’s Ed schools, 2009-2010
• Police Commander’s Forums, ongoing
• Extend-a-Care and YMCA Summer Camps 2009-2010
Operation Lifesaver
Targeted Groups

- Hybrid OL & Commuter Rail Presentation
- 41 Schools within 1 mile
- 80 within 2 miles
The Art of War: Operation Lifesaver meets Innovative Outreach
Innovative Approach: Who’s Involved

GROW (Grassroots Rail Outreach Working) Group

A grassroots support team of existing organizations and campaigns:

- AAA
- Alliance for Public Transportation
- Amtrak
- Austin American Statesman
- Austin Asian Chamber of Commerce
- Austin Children’s Museum
- Austin Independent School District
- Austin Fire Department
- Austin Police Department
- Austin Public Library
- Austin School of Film
- Babies’ R’ Us
- Border Media Partners
- Boy Scouts of America
- Boys and Girls Clubs of the Capital Area
- Dell Children’s Hospital
- City of Austin Child Safety Program
- City of Leander Community Action Network
- ECHO (End Chronic Homelessness Organizing Committee)
- Federal Railroad Administration
- Girl Scouts of America
- Housing Authority of the City of Austin
- KLRU (PBS)
- Light Rail Now! .org
- Media outlets
- Milkshake Media
- Mobiliti
- Operation Lifesaver
- Partners in Education
- Safe Kids Austin
- Tate Austin Hahn
- Texas Bicycle Coalition
- Travis County Attorney’s Office
- Travis County EMS
- Travis County Sheriff’s Office
- TxDOT
- Veolia
- Univision
- Youth InterACTIVE
Innovative Efforts

- Bus Radio
- Girl Scouts
- Boy Scouts
- Website: [www.stayoffthetracks.com](http://www.stayoffthetracks.com)
- Yard signs at ever rail/grade intersection 2008-2010
- Earl cartoon aired on local access TV, 2009
- Message in AISD Report Cards, 2009
- PSA Competition for Youth hosted by local film school, 2008
- Poster competition for students within ½ mile of tracks 2009
- Cyclist and pedi-cab education via newsletters, Bicycle rodeos, listservs
- Blockwalking to homes within ¼ mile of the tracks 2009
- Large Rail Safety component of Austin Children’s Museum “On the Go MetroRail exhibit”
- Yearly outreach to homeless population through ECHO, Austin’s Homelessness prevention and assistance organization, and during the yearly homeless community count in January
- Flyers in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Mandarin
- New Media: Facebook, Blog, Twitter
- Driver education via AAA
Boiler Plate Concepts

- Webinars
- Podcasting
- Comic Book/Fotonovela
- Bus Wrap
- Billboards
TRACKS ARE FOR TRAINS! NOT FOR PLAYING GAMES!
¡EL RIEL ES PARA EL TREN! ¡NO PARA JUGAR!

Just a reminder to parents and caregivers that when school is out, DON'T let your kids play anywhere near railroad tracks.
Este anuncio es para recordarles a los padres y guardianes que al final de este año escolar en adelante, NO permita que los niños jueguen cerca de las vías de tren.

FALL 2007: Capital MetroRail begins testing new, quiet, fast-moving passenger trains.
For more information visit All Systems Go Long Range Plan at http://allsystemsgo.org
OTOÑO de 2007: Capital MetroRail comienza las pruebas de los trenes nuevos, silenciosos y veloces.
Para más información visite All Systems Go Long Range Plan at http://allsystemsgo.org
TRACKS ARE FOR TRAINS! NOT FOR PLAYING GAMES!

ĐƯỜNG SẮT DÀNH CHO XE LỮA! KHÔNG PHẢI ĐỂ CHƠI ĐƯA!
Capital MetroRail is coming to a train track near you!

Remember the ACORN rules!
- Always look both ways.
- Cross only at crosswalks.
- Obey all signs and signals.
- Railroad tracks are for trains.
- Never try to outrun a train.

¡Recuerda las reglas de la NUEZ!
- Nunca cruces con mirar a ambos lados.
- Usa solo los cruces peatonales.
- ¡Evita tragedias, obedece las señales!
- ¡Son de vías son solo para el tren!

Capital MetroRail is coming to a train track near you!

¡El Capital MetroRail: Llegar pronto a un riel de tren cerca de ti!

Earl P. Nutt says,
"Use your brains! Stay away from trains!"

Earl P. Nutt dice,
"¡Usa tu cerebro, aléjate de los trenes!"

Capital MetroRail
- Quieter than a bus
- Faster than a car
- Coming to Austin in 2008
- Más silencioso que un autobús
- Más rápido que un carro
- Llega a Austin el 2008

Produced in partnership with
VEOLIA TRANSPORTATION
www.veoliatransportation.com
Be smart. Be safe. capmetro.org
Se inteligente. Sé seguro.
NEVER TRY TO OUTRUN A TRAIN YOU WON'T BE THE ONLY ONE HIT

METrorail SAFETY

512-385-0190
www.stayoffthetracks.com
Siempre mira a ambos lados antes de cruzar.

(512) 385-0190

WWW.Stayoffthetracks.com
Scouts!

- Created at a local level
- Easy to replicate and “localize”
- Low time commitment
- Earning the patch is a big incentive for participation
Stay off the tracks!
The new CapMetro MetroRail, connecting Leander to Downtown Austin (see maps below), is now being tested and begins regular service in January. These tracks are very fast and relatively quiet, and it’s critical that everyone in Central Texas understand the safety challenges that arrive with this new transportation and practice sound rail safety.

If you have children:
- NEVER let your kids play anywhere near railroads.
- Schedule a time to show your children railroad tracks and tell them to stay off the tracks.
- Talk to them about trains — teach them the importance of crossing the tracks safely — “Stay, Look, and Listen” — an important message for them to understand.
- Hold on to your child when a train is on or near the tracks.
- Make sure your teenager knows all these rules.

When you’re in a car:
- Be careful turning across train tracks - it’s where more accidents happen.
- Never race a train. You could never win, you will never have a second chance. ’Flee too fast and you’ll be sorry.
- Expect a train on any track at any time. If a changed light or a small bell rings, wait for a sign that says “This is the end of the line.”
- Always expect a train at every highway railroad intersections. Freight trains do not travel on a predictable schedule and schedules for commuter trains change.
- Don’t take shortcuts or cross off at railroad intersections — and never, ever drive across the crossing gates.

When you’re walking:
- Always stop, look, and listen for trains before crossing the tracks and be sure to look both ways.
- Don’t stand on tracks or near front of a train — the operator may not see you or be able to stop in time. Sheet the track!
- Railroad ties, tracks, posts and equipment are private property and trespassers are subject to criminal prosecution.
- Never walk down a train track, it’s illegal and it’s dangerous. If you take a walk or need to stop at a track, do so before the train arrives.
- Always remain behind the barriers, and be prepared to step back if you hear an engine coming or see a train on the tracks. This is too late. The train cannot stop quickly enough to avoid a collision.
- Cross tracks ONLY at designated pedestrian or roadway crossings and obey all warning signs and signals.
TRAIN SAFETY MESSAGES

Austin Specific:

- Hey kids in Austin, Capital MetroRail will soon be testing its new trains on a track near you. These trains are quieter and faster than freight trains, so be careful when crossing railroad tracks. And remember: Tracks are for trains, not for playing games!

Generic Rail Safety:

- Remember, when walking before or after school, only cross the railroad tracks at marked crossings and NEVER use the railroad tracks as a shortcut.
- Play far away from train tracks. Some trains are so fast and quiet, you may not hear or know they are coming.
- Tracks are for trains! Not for playing games!
- Did you know that trains don’t have steering wheels? They have to follow the tracks they are on, so it’s up to us to stay out of the way.
- Walking, playing, or sitting on train tracks is dangerous and against the law!
- Always expect a train.
- Always LOOK both ways before crossing railroad tracks. A train could be coming from either direction.
- When waiting for a train to pass, always stand far away from the tracks.
- Always LISTEN for the sounds of a train.
- If we LOOK, LISTEN, and WAIT for a train, then we will LIVE!
- Stay off railroad tracks! Trespassing is dangerous and illegal, so Stay Off, Stay Away, and Stay Alive!

WEBSITES

www.oli.org

Operation Lifesaver
Yard Signs

TRAINS ARE MOVING FASTER AND QUIETER:
STAY OFF THE TRACKS!

LOS TRENES SE MUEVEN
CON MÁS RAPIDEZ Y SILENCIO:
¡MANTENTE LEJOS DE LOS RIELES!

PLEASE CALL 385-0190
WITH QUESTIONS.
**RAIL SAFETY**

**FILM CONTEST FOR YOUTH**

**KICKOFF DATE:** SATURDAY, MAY 9 @ 11AM  
**DUE DATE:** SATURDAY, MAY 24 @ 3PM

**REGISTRATION**  
Will be held on the kickoff date at the Austin School of Film. Legal guardian(s) or parent(s) must be present to sign the applications.

**ABOUT THE COMPETITION**  
This is a two-week competition, where teams of up to 4 will be challenged to create a fun and effective public service announcement (PSA) that promotes rail safety. Ages 7-18 are welcomed to be a part of this event.

**SIGN UP EARLY**  
The process will be smoother if you sign up early. Contact Maria Chavez at maria@austinfilmschool.org or by phone at 512.236.8877 and let her know your name and contact information. This will secure your spot.

**OFFICIAL RULES**  
They will be sent by e-mail to those students who sign up early by e-mail on May 8th. The rules will be discussed at the kickoff date.

**PRIZES**  
Austin School of Film and GROW will award up to a $500 film scholarship, screenings at local media outlets, one month free rail pass, certificate of recognition from Mayor Will Wynn to the winners with the most creative and effective PSAs that drive home life saving messages. Keeping kids safe and off the tracks.

Contact Maria at maria@austinfilmschool.org for more information.

www.austinfilmschool.org  
906 E. 5th St. Ste. 106  
512.236.8877
Endorsements (Highly Useful)

- Mayor Will Wynn & Lee Leffingwell
- Police Chief Art Acevedo
- EMS Director Ernie Rodriguez
- Fire Chief JJ Adame
- Mark Williams, Chairman, School Board
- Operation Lifesaver (both Texas & National)
June 27, 2007

Dear Rail Outreach Working Group,

Thank you to each of you for participating in Capital Metro’s Safety Outreach Initiative. Your involvement in the Rail Outreach Working Group demonstrates your commitment to the very important issue of our community’s safety.

The impending start of Capital Metro’s commuter rail service to our community represents an exciting change for our region. However, it will take a collective effort to ensure our citizens are able to adjust to this new transportation infrastructure safely.

Austin is nationally recognized as the safest city for child pedestrians, and with your help, it will remain that way. I appreciate that you have taken the time to ensure that the rail safety message is successful and I stand ready to support your continued work in this endeavor.

Regards,

Will Wynn
Mayor

November 14, 2007

To the Grassroots Rail Outreach Working Group volunteers,

I would like to personally thank you for your commitment to our community’s safety. Your participation on a volunteer group such as GROW is commendable and vital as Capital Metro opens new modes of transportation for this community.

Coming from a transportation city, I understand the safety concerns that accompany mass transit systems. Thanks to your dedication to keeping Central Texas safe, I feel sure that all necessary steps will be taken to inform the community and prevent unintentional incidents.

I look forward to learning what the GROW Group develops, and am ready to support you in every way the Austin Police Department can.

Best Regards,

ART ACEVEDO
Chief of Police

AA:rlc
Success

• Three years of rail safety education PRIOR to startup!
• Since testing began in 2008 and start up in March 2010…
• Trespassers
• Cars
• Incidents
What worked best?

• Volunteers
• Partnerships & Coalition
• Yard Signs
• Pester Power
• Actively Solicit Presentations
  – Neighborhood Associations, Churches, Schools, Senior and Rec Centers, Business and Professional Associations, Hospitals, Large Employers
Lessons Learned

Recommendations

• Don’t recreate the wheel!!
• Get the community to take ownership by forming coalitions/advisory groups
• Endorsements are a MUST
• Name recognition of program due to duration is a plus
• Importance of relationships built over time
• Multiple Languages
• Partner with scouts & other education programs to incorporate message into their curriculum

Suggested Changes

• Competition: Poster and PSA – fun, but not biggest bang for your buck
• Legitimacy of program in relation to reputation of agency
Thanks!

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