New York State Comptroller
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Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Selected Aspects of Safety and Security in Subway Facilities (Follow-Up)

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Prepared by the Division of State Government Accountability

Contents

Authority _____ **3**

Background, Objectives, and Scope _____ **3**

Summary Conclusions and Status of Audit Recommendations _____ **5**

Reporting Requirements _____ **9**

Authority

Pursuant to the State Comptroller's authority as set forth in Article X, Section 5 of the State Constitution and Section 2803 of the Public Authorities Law, we have followed up on the actions taken by officials of Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) – New York City Transit (Transit) to implement the recommendations contained in our initial audit report, *Selected Aspects of Safety and Security in Subway Facilities* (Report 2022-S-20).

Background, Objectives, and Scope

The MTA is North America's largest transportation network, serving a population of 15.3 million people in the 5,000-square-mile area from New York City through Long Island, southeastern New York State, and Connecticut. Transit is an MTA agency that manages, maintains, and runs subway service in New York City. Transit has 472 subway stations and operates bus service throughout New York City.

Security and safety, while managed together, have different points of focus. Security is concerned with protecting against harm caused by external factors, such as intrusion (a person entering an area where they are not wanted) or cybersecurity, while safety is focused on preventing harm caused by physical hazards, such as through the use of physical barriers to protect against building or natural disasters. An example of security is the placement of security guards at rail yards, while safety includes approaches such as building a better drainage system to prevent flooding.

At MTA Headquarters, the Chief Security and Safety Officer is mainly responsible for the policy aspect of safety and security across all MTA agencies, including Transit. MTA hires consultants or subject matter experts to conduct safety and security assessments, as well as to plan and provide guidance, to address issues such as crime and homelessness. One such assessment is the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Threat and Vulnerability Risk Assessment (TVRA) process—a tool that identifies risks to MTA assets and prioritizes their mitigation, from high to low importance.

MTA's Office of Security is responsible for protecting all MTA agencies, including Transit, with its implementation of security enhancements selected through its periodic All-Agency Electronic Security Program strategy (Security Strategy) using the TVRA. The purpose of the Security Strategy is to ensure a system-wide security program is in place, and it serves as guidance for entities including Transit's divisions, departments, and personnel. The MTA's Security Strategy also requires collaboration with subject matter experts to implement security measures in subway facilities, stations, yards, buildings, and tunnels from Transit's key stakeholders, which include the Department of Subways, Maintenance of Way, Department of Stations, Department of Security (DOS), Electronic Maintenance Division (EMD), MTA Construction & Development (formerly MTA Capital Construction), and external partners such as the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and the New York City Fire Department.

Some mitigation projects are common among subway facilities and can be bundled into one project. Projects are added to the MTA's 5-year Capital Program. As mitigations are

implemented, projects move to a lesser-risk ranking. Each phase of a project (design, award, construction, completion) is monitored by the stakeholders to ensure the project stays on schedule and within budget. Transit officials work with stakeholders to ensure adherence to the strategic plan and track project schedule and funding. The MTA also operates the Small Business Mentoring Program (SBMP), which seeks to increase, facilitate, and encourage the participation of small businesses, including minority- and women-owned business enterprises, by providing a supportive framework for eligible firms to develop and grow within the construction industry and to establish stable, long-term business relationships with the MTA.

Transit's DOS supports the MTA's day-to-day security needs and advises on managing security risks and on the use of electronic security mitigation. DOS also ensures that ongoing project activities do not impact the MTA's security during construction. MTA Construction & Development assesses the state of equipment in subway facilities and identifies required maintenance and repair work.

EMD is responsible for maintaining and repairing security equipment installed in subway facilities and replacing defective equipment that cannot be repaired. Users of security equipment or EMD electronic equipment maintainers or telephone maintainers report defects to EMD. Closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems are used to observe incidents, deter unlawful activities, and improve safety in subway facilities. Transit's Law Department, NYPD, and DOS use CCTV systems to view and retrieve footage of incidents. As of July 9, 2026, NYC Transit had 1,208 CCTV systems made up of 14,204 cameras, 1,579 monitors, and 418 recorders.

EMD's Customer Communication Services, part of EMD's Telecommunication Field Operation unit, maintains and repairs help point intercoms (HPIs). Customers use HPIs to obtain subway travel information, self-report safety and security issues, and request emergency assistance. As of June 11, 2026, NYC Transit had 3,070 HPIs installed. As of September 2026, Transit's other safety and security equipment included customer assistance intercoms, emergency alarms, emergency booth communication systems, emergency telephones, and fire alarm systems.

Laser Intrusion Detection Sensors (LIDS) are installed at the end-of-platform tunnels in subway stations to alert Security Command Center (SCC) personnel if an individual enters the subway tunnels. SCC personnel monitor and manage LIDS using the Physical Security Information Management System (PSIMS)—a software application integrated with LIDS that displays camera screens in real time and plays back videos on an SCC computer screen, along with a map of the alarm location. When an alarm is triggered, SCC has a defined process to adjudicate why the alarm was triggered and what investigatory steps to take.

DOS is also responsible for monitoring access control and perimeter protection in both public and non-public subway facilities. SCC monitors detection equipment systems for unauthorized access to track areas. DOS placed locally recorded deployable cameras at subway stations with security vulnerabilities as a temporary solution until new camera systems and other security measures are implemented through the MTA Capital Program. These measures include adding passenger identification cameras to stations without them and/or supplementing stations with limited visibility. DOS also deploys Transit Property Protection Agents as part of a fixed post or patrol coverage at non-public facilities—warehouses, shops, yards, and depots—to deter

unlawful activities and detect and report security-related equipment malfunctions to repair shops and SCC.

The objectives of our initial audit, issued in August 2024, were to determine whether Transit had taken steps to implement safety and security in all its subway facilities, and whether safety and security equipment, such as cameras, HPIs, and customer assistance intercoms, was maintained (working and tested).

The audit found that four of the 30 projects reviewed related to securing Transit facilities were delayed because the MTA had an insufficient number of SBMP contractors available to perform the work. Further, five other projects were not started as planned. Also, MTA lacked formal policies and procedures for performing preventive maintenance (PM), escalating electronic work orders (tickets) to internal and external support, documenting maintenance status, documenting reasons for not completing PMs and repair tickets on time, requiring employees to comply with the entry and exit rules at LIDS locations, mechanisms regarding blank videos, opening and closing entries in the Equipment Malfunction Log, sending open and closed Equipment Malfunction Log email notifications to the required notification group, and prioritizing the repair of equipment malfunctions.

The objective of our follow-up was to assess the extent of implementation, as of September 29, 2026, of the 16 recommendations included in our initial audit report.

Summary Conclusions and Status of Audit Recommendations

The MTA made progress in addressing the problems we identified in the initial audit report. Of the initial report's 16 audit recommendations, 10 were implemented, four were partially implemented, and two were not implemented. Note: Two recommendations in the initial audit report were redacted for MTA safety and confidentiality reasons. The implementation statuses of these recommendations are listed below, and additional details were communicated confidentially.

Follow-Up Observations

Recommendation 1 – Revisit the list of SBMP contractors available to perform the work to ensure it is sufficient to meet the needs of the MTA Capital Program and address the risk to the system. If the contractor pool is not sufficient, develop an alternative plan to complete the capital projects.

Status – Implemented

Agency Action – The MTA increased the list of contractors. As of June 23, 2026, 279 SBMP contractors were available to perform the work to meet the needs of the MTA Capital Program. This represents an increase of 13 contractors, or approximately 5%, from 266 SBMP contractors as of January 3, 2025. Since our original audit, the MTA has completed three of the four projects that were delayed because of an insufficient number of SBMP contractors.

Recommendation 2 – Document the reasons PMs were not completed.

Status – Not Implemented

Agency Action – The MTA uses the Enterprise Asset Management (EAM) system to monitor the number of PM tasks completed on time, early, late, or not performed, and to document the reasons PMs were not completed on time. We reviewed a sample of 15 HPIs totaling 45 PMs to be completed for 2024, 2025, and 2026. We found that 37 PMs were completed on time, with the remaining eight not yet due. We also reviewed a sample of 20 CCTVs totaling 252 PMs that were required to be completed. However, we found that 18 PMs were not performed and the reasons were not documented. The remaining 234 PMs were completed on time.

Recommendation 3 – Develop written policies and procedures for PMs that address how often PMs should be performed and how to document maintenance status and reasons (e.g., complete, incomplete, or not completed).

Status – Implemented

Agency Action – The MTA developed written policies and procedures for HPI and CCTV PMs that specify how often PMs should be performed and how to document maintenance status and reasons, such as PM Work Orders approved, scheduled, in progress, work completed, and jobs completed.

Recommendation 4 – Document the reasons for any changes to the policy and procedures.

Status – Implemented

Agency Action – There are PM written policies and procedures for CCTV and HPI that document the reasons for changes.

Recommendation 5 – Escalate tickets that require specialist involvement within a specified number of hours of the original diagnosis/visit and/or the assistance of other EMD units. Establish goals not to exceed a predetermined number of days from reporting to repair for complex tickets.

Status – Partially Implemented

Agency Action – The MTA established goals for escalated complex tickets, from reporting to repair. We reviewed 10 CCTV tickets escalated to external support. We found that only one of the 10 tickets was completed, and it took 300 days. The remaining nine tickets, created between March 2025 and June 2026, were still open and had been outstanding from 56 to 509 days as of August 20, 2026.

According to MTA officials, they do not have information regarding escalated HPI tickets because the EAM does not allow them to track tickets escalated for internal and external support.

Recommendation 6 – Develop written policies and procedures that include a time frame for when tickets should be addressed, including when they require the assistance of a specialist or other EMD units, the order of ticket priority, reasons parts were not available in inventory, and reasons for leaving tickets open for lengthy periods.

Status – Implemented

Agency Action – The Department of Subways issued written policies and procedures for escalating CCTV and HPI tickets that included a time frame for when tickets should be addressed; when they required the assistance of a specialist or other EMD units; the process workflow; and documentation of the request, follow-up actions, and related information in the ticket comments section.

Recommendation 7 – Review outstanding tickets daily to assess why they remained open longer than the established response time and what corrective actions are required to decrease the time.

Status – Implemented

Agency Action – We reviewed a sample of 32 HPI repair tickets. The 32 tickets were responded to 1 day after they were reported, and 31 were completed within 2 days. According to officials, the remaining ticket took longer to complete because the storeroom did not have the parts in stock.

Recommendation 8 – Ensure compliance with the requirement that employees use their access card to enter and exit tunnels in subway stations.

Status – Not Implemented

Agency Action – We received a listing of all LIDS alarm incidents from August 2024 through July 13, 2026, totaling 491,427 incidents, and found that 389,125 (79%) were classified as “False Alarm-Authorized Employee.” We selected a sample of 61 live LIDS alarm incidents and 40 past LIDS alarm incidents and found that 39 of the 61 (64%) and 23 of the 40 (58%), respectively, were classified as “False Alarm-Authorized Employee.” We concluded that a majority of the LIDS alarm incidents were triggered when employees did not swipe their LIDS-restricted security access cards at the LIDS proximity card reader.

Recommendation 9 – [Redacted]

Status – Implemented

Agency Action – To be reported to the MTA.

Recommendation 10 – Work with other departments to require employees to swipe their access card with LIDS.

Status – Implemented

Agency Action – On June 13, 2024, the Department of Subways issued Bulletin 24-39, “Entering/Exiting Tunnels Equipped with LIDS,” which requires all Subways employees entering and exiting the tunnel locations equipped with LIDS technology to proceed only after properly using their access cards with the LIDS proximity card reader, except in instances of life safety situations.

Recommendation 11 – [Redacted]

Status – Implemented

Agency Action – To be reported to the MTA.

Recommendation 12 – Develop a mechanism to review blank videos to ensure that unauthorized individuals did not act unlawfully.

Status – Implemented

Agency Action – The MTA issued SCC procedure "Security Operations Center – PSIMS – 'Video Unavailable' Protocol" after our initial audit was issued. We selected a sample of 40 past LIDS alarm incidents/events to determine whether the video footage of these incidents is viewable in the system as required. We found that the video footage for all 40 samples of past LIDS alarm incidents/events was available and viewable in PSIMS or the backup system where all videos can be retrieved.

Recommendation 13 – Investigate the reason alarm records were not in PSIMS within the defined period.

Status – Implemented

Agency Action – According to MTA officials, they investigated the reason alarm records were not in PSIMS during the original audit. We selected a sample of 40 past LIDS alarm incidents/events to determine whether the video footage of these incidents was recorded, available, and viewable in PSIMS. The video footage for all 40 past LIDS alarm incidents that we observed was available and viewable in the PSIMS within the defined period.

Recommendation 14 – Ensure that both open and closed email notifications are sent to the notification group.

Status – Partially Implemented

Agency Action – We reviewed a sample of 20 equipment malfunction incidents and found that 17 were closed and three were still open. Therefore, 20 open and 17 closed Equipment Malfunction Log email notifications, including information on the page and line numbers for the 17 closed incidents, must be sent to the Equipment Malfunction Email Group in accordance with SCC's procedure for Equipment Malfunction Log Tracking. However, we found that only 15 open and 16 closed Equipment Malfunction Log email notifications were sent as required.

Recommendation 15 – Ensure staff record sufficient details in the Equipment Malfunction Log and the memo book for tracking the status of equipment malfunctions.

Status – Partially Implemented

Agency Action – We sampled 20 equipment malfunction incidents; 17 were closed and three were still open. The physical Equipment Malfunction Log was provided for 14 of the 20 opening incidents and 15 of the 17 closing incidents. For 11 of the 14 opening incidents and six of the 15 closing incidents, we determined they contained sufficient details such as the dates the incident was opened and closed, a description of the incident, and the employee who reported the incident. However, the log did not have entries for three incidents when they were opened and for nine incidents when they were closed.

Recommendation 16 – Prioritize the repair of equipment malfunctions.

Status – Partially Implemented

Agency Action – The MTA has a procedure for Equipment Malfunction Log Tracking, which includes prioritization codes. While Category A Condition (Severe Priority) requires immediate equipment repair, both Category B and C are vague because they do not specify a time frame. For example, Category B Condition (High Priority) requires “expedited repair” and Category C Condition (Medium Priority) requires “as soon as possible.”

Reporting Requirements

MTA officials are requested, but not required, to provide information about any actions planned to address the unresolved issues discussed in this follow-up within 30 days of the report’s issuance. We thank the management and staff of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority for the courtesies and cooperation extended to our auditors during this follow-up.

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