

Orange County Opts for Turnkey Solution



Video Surveillance Helps Ensure Safe Public Transportation System for Passengers and Employees

The award winning Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) has a well-deserved reputation as one of the leading public transit systems in the U.S. Winner of the American Public Transportation Association's 2005 Outstanding Public Transportation Achievement Award, the OCTA excels in safety, reliability and customer satisfaction.

Providing the three million residents of Orange County with a consistently high level of transportation service is made possible in part by focusing on the core competencies associated with the efficient operation of a public transit system.

When a decision was made in 2004 to deploy video surveillance on its bus fleet, OCTA executives decided against burdening their maintenance personnel with video retrieval, equipment inspections and system management. They opted for a turnkey solution that would provide them with all of the benefits of video surveillance without spreading themselves too thin.

The OCTA set itself up for success initially by engaging a video security consultant to help identify its needs and provide an overview of the state of video security technology.

“One of our key requirements was to be able to wirelessly download one-half hour of video in less than 10 minutes,” says Brian Champion, OCTA Manager of Operations Analysis.

“We invited five vendors to install their systems on three buses, so we had a total of 15 buses equipped,” says Champion. “We ran them in service for six months, evaluated their performance, shortlisted three of them and then, based on performance and value, went with March Networks™.”

Participating in the evaluation and the ultimate decision were technical services personnel, field supervision and information systems staff.

“We have a very safe system, and the decision to acquire video surveillance capability is a proactive step to ensure that we continue providing a safe public transportation system for our employees and passengers.”

- Art Leahy, OCTA CEO

Turnkey

As part of the turnkey approach preferred by the OCTA, the administration and maintenance of the system was contracted out to March Networks. Using the system’s powerful Enterprise Service Manager software, March Networks staff remotely monitor the health of the system, including the wireless networks and storage devices, perform system upgrades and present OCTA management with video clips of incidents to be reviewed.

March Networks 24/7 Network Operations Center staff are able to identify and initiate action on system issues before they can affect performance, thereby minimizing downtime and helping to ensure that video is available when it is needed.

The recorders are equipped with 150 hours of onboard storage, providing the OCTA with sufficient time to download video to a central server for longer-term storage following a reported incident.

Over the next three years, the OCTA plans to equip approximately 500 new buses with March Networks 5308 mobile recorders. The deployment of video surveillance systems began in December 2006 with the delivery of 32 paratransit vehicles and the first of 299 fixed route buses to join the authority’s fleet.

“We are planning to replace almost all of our buses within the next 10 years, so we decided on timing the deployment of video →



Photography by Dennis Davis

surveillance to coincide with the delivery of our new vehicles,” says Champion.

Each 40-foot, New Flyer bus joining the fleet will be equipped with seven cameras, two microphones and two impact sensors. Video can be flagged for automatic downloading by a bus driver pressing a button on the vehicle’s instrument panel or by a March Networks managed services technician scheduling a download by specifying a time, date, and vehicle number in response to an incident report. Video will also be flagged for downloading by impact sensors in the event of a collision.

Two microphones – one located at the front of the vehicle, the other in the wheelchair securement area near the back door – capture audio to provide transit management with a more complete record of any incident.

Ruggedized

The ruggedized, IP65-compliant recorders are designed to withstand the harsh mobile environment and come equipped with a climate controlled chassis and built-in back-up battery.

The OCTA configuration also features motion detectors that power up the recording system if motion is detected while the bus is not running. Two day/night cameras on each vehicle ensure that quality video is captured under any lighting conditions.

An integrated global positioning system allows OCTA staff reviewing video to see the exact location of a bus on a map adjacent to the video playback window in the user interface.

The OCTA decided to equip its fleet with video surveillance capability to enhance passenger and employee safety and to provide objective evidence of any incidents.

“We have been very fortunate in Orange County,” said OCTA CEO Art Leahy. “We have a very safe system, and the decision to acquire video surveillance capability is a proactive step to ensure that we continue providing a safe public transportation system for our employees and passengers.” ❀



Compartment behind driver's seat houses recorders and other electronic systems

Orange County Transportation Authority

The Orange County Transportation Authority (www.octa.net) provides a broad spectrum of transportation services within a 798-square mile region south of Los Angeles. It operates a fleet of 896 buses on 77 routes, recording approximately 67 million boardings per year. The Authority is also responsible for funding, planning and construction management of highways and is one of five counties responsible for the management and operation of the Metrolink commuter rail system in the greater Los Angeles region.