

**MBTA Transit Police: *Stop Watch*
Table of Contents**

Summary..... 2

Scanning.....3

Analysis.....3

Response.....5

Assessment.....8

Appendix:

Column by Shenandoah Titus

Juvenile Justice Center Letter of Support

Crime Analysis

MBTA Transit Police: *Stop Watch*

Summary

In the Plan of Action promulgated by Chief Joseph C. Carter in June 2003, the unique challenges of policing an urban transit system are noted. Our department is responsible for a jurisdiction covering *175 cities and towns*, including Boston, and over *one million* riders each weekday. In addition to grappling with urban crime and terrorism concerns, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Transit Police Department, a recently state and nationally accredited agency, interacts during the school year with over fifty thousand youth each weekday. We accomplish this monumental task with a dedicated force of approximately 250 sworn officers. The SARA model has proven invaluable in facilitating our efforts to scan the nature of the problems we face, engage in thoughtful analysis, offer a prudent and effective response and introspectively assess our progress, all with the aid of strong community partnerships!

The problems presented by urban youth are not to be taken lightly, as evidenced by the fact that there have been several noted acts of youth violence associated with MBTA property over the past several months, to wit: two shootings on crowded MBTA busses during broad daylight; a severe assault and battery upon an adolescent female by four or more teens – mostly female, who, after the beating, attempted to drag the victim unto train tracks – again in broad daylight. While the Transit Police Department characteristically handled these crimes swiftly and effectively, there is also a more subtle situation that we attempt to address in our *Stop Watch* initiative.

There is a tendency for youth to congregate in the transit environment. Often these youth, while not normally personally threatening, make it intimidating for other users of the transit system, especially seniors, disabled persons, and families with small children. Intervening in these situations provides a major challenge for transit police officers and requires substantial de-escalation skills, as well as a thorough comprehension of youth behavior. We promote the development of these skills and knowledge base through intense two-day youth trainings in collaboration with the Juvenile Justice Center of Suffolk University.

In essence, *Stop Watch* brings together public and private sector partners in efforts to provide officer skill enhancement and positive youth intervention, thus significantly reducing the need for youth arrests while enhancing our referral resources. Our *Stop Watch* initiative embodies our Plan of Action's mantra: "Working Together to Protect Us All."



Scanning

Stop Watch did not occur upon a whim, but rather entailed considerable thought and negotiations with our public and private sector partners. We went about choosing this project as a result of numerous discussions with our partners, as well as focus groups involving our police personnel. We recognized that we shared similar frustrations for the most part, as well as similar wishes to address the problem of interacting with youth within our service areas without having to resort to law enforcement means that would adversely impact the futures of our youth constituents.

The problem of policing a major urban transit system and concerns about police/youth interactions is not novel. Indeed, we have attended numerous community meetings and elicited the input of our constituents. We have availed ourselves to diverse communities across the service area, as well as sought input from youth workers and youth themselves.

We are satisfied that *Stop Watch* is clearly defined. Initiatives that are too ambitious tend to cause participants to feel overwhelmed and fatigued, soon abandoning the project due to despondency. Conversely, those endeavors that are too modest tend to prove unchallenging and thus results in a lack of excitement and enthusiasm for the project, which predictably ends prematurely due to a lack of interest. Our efforts in the *Stop Watch* program have proven to be neither overreaching nor too modest. The proper balance, therefore, has been achieved.

The MBTA Transit Police Department is the sole transit police agency within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Thus in terms of benchmarking, we are without peer locally as to the unique challenges we face as a transit police agency. Yet this fact simply means that we must be innovative in our approach to problem solving. We accomplish this by actively soliciting advice, feedback and guidance from the community. Once the community at large is brought in as stakeholders, they take ownership – and pride – in working with us toward reaching acceptable solutions. Our efforts in *Stop Watch* have proven quite successful in this regard.

Our objectives in the *Stop Watch* initiative are to reduce anonymity between youth and police, provide a safe and structured transit environment for all of our constituents, while simultaneously improving upon our conflict resolution and intervention skills with youth.

Analysis

Our *Stop Watch* initiative provides several layers of analysis. On the youth interaction training component, we ask officers to submit an anonymous survey prior to commencing the training so that we can have an appreciation of the personal perspectives police participants bring to the milieu. We recognize that everyone comes to the profession with a different frame of reference. Some of our officer participants come from suburban and rural areas and have very little if any experience with urban youth. Some may come from family backgrounds that held views inconsistent with diversity and tolerance for difference. Therefore, the confidential surveys enable us to develop an understanding for how much instruction we may need to provide in a given

area, as well as helps prepare us for certain views that may be expressed during the training.

Another analysis technique employed is the use of anonymous evaluations following the conclusion of each training. These evaluations assist us in identifying problems and issues and serve to keep us on focus as to our training objectives. We have discovered that our officer participants are very candid in these evaluations and their feedback is a strong means of holding us accountable for doing what we said we would do in the trainings.

In the field component of *Stop Watch*, we meet regularly with our community and law enforcement partners, both formally and informally, to assess and review our progress. This also provides a powerful tool of analysis because the feedback is coming from busy professionals who have little downtime. If the sense is that *Stop Watch* is not the most valuable use of their time, then our partners would be inclined to cease volunteering their participation in the project. Yet based on our analyses to date, we are encouraged to forge ahead with this magnificent program.

We also have in place a Transit Police Community Advisory Committee comprised of civilian partners who come from diverse professional and personal backgrounds, as well as perspectives. This independent board meets with us regularly and provides an objective review of our activities. Our interactions with youth and the public perception thereof provide for serious and candid discussions.

The Juvenile Justice Center, our key partner in the police/youth interaction trainings, provides daily monitoring of our *Stop Watch* initiative. As a youth advocacy agency, headed by an attorney, the Juvenile Justice Center is committed to assuring that the principles of reasonable police intervention that are taught in the trainings are actually practiced by us in the field.

As well, we have within our department a full-time crime analyst who helps us quantify our claims to the public. We are able to review our data, which we gladly share with the public, and ascertain whether or not the numbers are consistent with our stated objectives in the *Stop Watch* initiative.

With the establishment of our five Transit Police Service Areas (TPSA), which is a decentralization philosophy, we gain further analysis from the direct feedback of our constituents. The premise of the TPSA endeavor is to develop lasting relationships with each respective community and to empower the Area Commander – a Lieutenant, and TPSA officers, to problem-solve in partnership with the community. Yet a key component of the Area Commander's empowerment is the requisite accountability to the respective community.

If *Stop Watch*, among other initiatives, is not meeting our stated objectives, then the Area Commander will be made aware of this via the TPSA Community Advisory Committee – which each of the five Transit Police Service Areas will have – or via attendance at community meetings within that locale.

We are also instituting a CompStat program which will allow for peer review of departmental initiatives, including *Stop Watch*. In essence, we have in place sufficient means of analysis and reflection to keep us true to our *Stop Watch* mission.

Response

We are absolutely convinced that our *Stop Watch* program, both the training and field component thereof, is the most viable solution to the unique problems that we as transit police face regarding our youth constituency. While some may argue that a so-called zero tolerance policy is the most efficacious means of meeting the challenges posed by urban youth, history throughout greater Boston has shown that such a policy has considerable flaws. Not only are such policies subject to legal attacks and charges of racial and ethnic profiling, but they tend to alienate the community rather than bring the community to the table as problem-solving partners.

Most importantly, zero tolerance policies result in high volume youth arrests that, at least in some instances, might not have been necessary had alternative conflict resolution skills been taught and employed by the arresting officer. We have a serious appreciation of the short and long-term consequences of making juvenile arrests, especially in regards to that individual's future employment and education prospects. When teens are arrested, notwithstanding the lawfulness of the arrest, when alternative problem solving interventions could have been attempted, then no one wins – not the police department, not society, and certainly not the youth arrestee.

We, at the MBTA Transit Police Department, seek a win – win situation whenever possible. Yet we are not 'soft on crime.' Our public stance is clear, we will educate where possible and enforce where necessary.

Indeed, part of our youth education efforts is to introduce a 'consequences card,' which officers will provide at-risk youth as an opportunity for reflection on their conduct. This card, which we are developing in partnership with our Juvenile Justice Center partners, will, we anticipate, give pause to those youth who are critically close to the point of arrest but have not completely crossed the line. Where we can, we wish to allow for self-corrective behavior, which we feel is consistent with our commitment to maintaining the public's trust and confidence. Moreover, *Stop Watch* meets each of the following response goals:

Continual Improvement of Services to the Community:

Our transit community consists of over one million persons each weekday, including students, parents, schools, business owners, tourists, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, political leaders, law enforcement peers, and others. Our customers seek and deserve to utilize the transit system without fear, intimidation, or obstruction of their pathways. *Stop Watch* has effectively addressed these concerns and continues to do so on behalf of the transit community.

Strengthening of Police Relations and Promotion of Community Participation:

Stop Watch strengthens both interrelations with our law enforcement peers – Boston Police, Boston School Police, Departments of Youth Services and Juvenile Probation, and others, by fostering an atmosphere of collegiality and shared problem-solving. Intra-relations within the Transit Police Department are also enhanced due to increased internal communication and team pride. Moreover, *Stop Watch* promotes community participation, which is the very foundation of the program.

Effective Use of Resources:

The MBTA Transit Police Department consists of approximately 250 officers, yet our jurisdiction extends throughout 175 municipalities that comprise the MBTA service area. We simply do not have the resources to effectively meet the challenges posed by youth during these peak school hours without the vital partnerships formed by *Stop Watch*. By engaging our public and private partners in *Stop Watch*, both in the training and field components, we maximize our limited resources in the interests of the public. Furthermore, we have created a community resource data base whereby we utilize non-profit services such as mental health crisis intervention, rape crisis counseling, emergency shelters, runaway shelters, etc., to assist us in our youth referral activities.

Enhancement of Communication Within and Cooperation Among Agencies:

Communication and cooperation are the founding principles of *Stop Watch*. We communicate with our partners on a regular basis, indeed daily during the school year, as to problems, concerns and ideas. Gone are the days of turf battles in so far as our agency is concerned. We actively solicit the cooperation and collaboration of our partners within the public and private sector. Note the following partners:

Boston Asian Youth Essential Services
Boston Center for Youth & Families
Boston College High School
Boston Plan for Excellence
Boston Police Department
Boston Public Schools
Boston School Police
Catholic Memorial High School
City Year – Boston
Department of Social Services (DSS)
Department of Youth Services (DYS)
Dom Savio High School
Dorchester Youth Collaborative
Harbor Point Youth and Administration
Juvenile Probation Department
Quincy Police Department
Quincy Public Schools
Showdown Youth Development Organization
Suffolk County District Attorney's Office – Juvenile Division
Suffolk University – Juvenile Justice Center
Teen Empowerment

Development of Creative and Innovative Approaches that Promote Quality and Excellence in Law Enforcement.

The MBTA Transit Police Department is on the cutting edge of police innovation, as *Stop Watch* attests. Through this initiative, we not only encourage our officers to be creative in their conflict resolution experiences with youth, but we also provide two-day intense trainings on police/youth interactions, which is an integral component of *Stop Watch*. In these trainings, entitled *New Directions in Police and Youth Interactions*, a noted child psychologist instructs officers on adolescent development, which offers valuable insight as to the mental, emotional and physiological distinctions between adolescents and adults and why oftentimes irrational choices are made by youth. Officers are also instructed by an attorney on youth and the law, and given a chance to explore the issue of stressors – their own and those of youth, which is a session led by a certified crisis counselor.

Clearly the most intriguing component of the training, and for many officers the most personally challenging, involves the role-plays between officers and urban youth participants. This is the session wherein personal values, socialization, and socio-economic dynamics come to the forefront. While tensions often surface during this component, after completing four sessions to date, it can be said with confidence that we always leave the trainings having developed a greater understanding of urban youth, as well as increased mutual respect between officers and the young people we serve.

Our objective is to promote quality and excellence in law enforcement, such that only those who violate the law with reckless abandon need fear the criminal justice system and the overall public supports and trusts us. Since *Stop Watch* is a highly visible initiative, we recognize that we are under the public's watchful eye and indeed view this scrutiny not as a threat but rather an opportunity to demonstrate our skills and commitment to our constituents.

In addition to the intense youth trainings, we have also instituted an unprecedented collaborative problem-solving workshop in partnership with the Police Executive Research Forum. The Command staff were the first to participate in this all-day training, followed by every department sergeant, and we are committed to exposing all sworn officers to the training, which will involve sessions of one and a half days for our officers. The problem-solving training exposes officers to the SARA model and allows for discussion with *Stop Watch* partners on the crucial issue of change.

This training will prove invaluable to *Stop Watch* and all of our youth initiatives, as well as resolving conflicts with adults who often exhibit immature behavior. It provides an additional level of skill development so that officers can be confident in their abilities to think through situations involving youth where arrests are not necessary. The SARA model encourages officers to move beyond one-dimensional thinking and to be flexible in their problem-solving, as youth interaction requires such. Our commitment to this collaborative problem-solving endeavor also demonstrates to officers our support for them, as they are charged with carrying out the department's vital mission of community-oriented policing.

We, at the MBTA Transit Police Department, seek a win – win situation whenever possible. Yet we are not ‘soft on crime.’ Our public stance is clear: we will educate where possible, and enforce where necessary. Indeed, part of our youth education efforts is to introduce a Consequence Card which will provide at-risk youth an opportunity for reflection on their conduct. This card, an innovative idea presented by two of our officers and produced in collaboration with our Juvenile Justice Center partners, will, we anticipate, give pause to those youth who are critically close to the point of arrest but have not completely crossed the line. Where we can, we wish to allow for self-corrective behavior, which we feel is consistent with our commitment to maintaining the public’s trust and confidence.

Stop Watch is not simply a program, but it represents a *philosophy* of youth intervention and interaction that we have adopted. We will certainly confront unruly youth conduct, and we will continue to make arrests where warranted and where there exists no viable alternatives. A key component of our *Stop Watch* initiative centers around conveying to urban youth that we do not view them as adversaries. On the contrary, we seek to help develop the potential of our youth constituents.

Accordingly, we are in the process of establishing a Youth Honors program whereby young persons will be formally recognized for their hard work and achievements and provided mentorship in hopes that some may wish to pursue law enforcement careers. We will also call upon the unique perspectives of our Honors recipients to assist us as youth advisors in efforts to improve *Stop Watch* and other youth initiatives. We believe that in every *Stop Watch* engagement during the school year, which involves many thousand students, we have in our midst numerous likely candidates for our Youth Honors program. Our job is to conduct ourselves in such a manner that youth will want to partner with us and perhaps someday join our ranks as law enforcement professionals.

Assessment

We have achieved the results that we had hoped and indeed expected to achieve with the *Stop Watch* program. What did we hope to accomplish?

First and foremost, we sought to decrease the incidents of youth arrests in such cases where alternative measures of conflict resolution might suffice. We sought as well to better train our officers in areas such as adolescent development so that we could better understand why youth behave in the manner that they do, as well as providing youth greater insight into the challenges of law enforcement.

We sought to enhance our community partnerships throughout the eastern region of Massachusetts, including relationships with fellow law enforcement, school officials, youth workers, advocacy groups, businesses, churches, and so forth. Each *Stop Watch* activity is documented and we maintain a mailing list that is sent to each of our *Stop Watch* partners informing them of the weekly schedule.

We sought to better educate youth as to the consequences of being arrested. Hopefully, this will cause some to reflect on their conduct before decisions are made that will adversely affect their future.

With great pride, we can say that all of the aforementioned objectives were met, and indeed continue to be met, as this is an on-going project. One of the key outcomes of *Stop Watch* concerns the increased public visibility of our officers. We continue to receive compliments from members of the public who express their sense of comfort and peace when they observe our uniformed officers interacting with youth while simultaneously maintaining control within the transit environment.

The positive results of *Stop Watch* are not only maintainable over time, but indeed will flourish in the years to come. While the MBTA Transit Police Department has invested considerable resources into assuring the success of *Stop Watch*, we do not own this program. Rather, *Stop Watch* belongs to our partners, both public and private, throughout the MBTA service area. The program especially belongs to the youth whom we serve, as it was created in their best interests.

Transit police agencies across the country should be able to benefit from this best practice. Two principle elements are necessary: a firm commitment on the part of police leadership to enhance the problem solving and negotiation skills of officers, and an equally firm commitment on the part of police leadership to invest in building effective partnerships throughout the community. We are firmly committed to the path that we have embarked upon, and *Stop Watch* shall remain a guiding principle in our day-to-day interactions with the public – youth in particular.

As further evidence of our assessment, an Anthropologist from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York, conducted an independent on-site study of our May training on officer/youth interactions. The professor personally observed our training, conducted post-training interviews of participants, including youth, and observed our officers as they interacted with the public within some of our MBTA stations. We were honored to have a scholar from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, widely considered to be one of the country's top criminal justice/public administration institutions, take professional interest in our *Stop Watch* initiative, which attests to its national impact.

Notwithstanding the value of statistical analyses and data, the public represents our truest barometer of success or failure, as evidenced by the enclosed news column and a letter of support toward our national accreditation (awarded by CALEA, March 19, 2005). We have been given great confidence that we are succeeding in these unprecedented and exciting endeavors. The SARA model represents the new age of *thinking* law enforcement professionals!



MBTA Police Crime Analysis

240 Southamptton Street | Boston, MA 02118 | P- 617.222.1013 | F- 617.222.1021

To: MARK F. GILLESPIE
Lieutenant Detective

FR:

DATE: KELLIE A. YANKAUSKAS
Crime Analysis Intern

RE: Monday, March 21, 2005

Stop Watch Arrest vs. Referral Data

Lieutenant Detective Gillespie,

Per your request, I have prepared data for arrests vs. referrals comparing the 2002-2003 school year to 2003-2004 school year. In addition, this data only reflects activity on school days (Monday – Friday) during school hours (6:00 AM – 4:00 PM). Please be advised that due to data limitations, referral data has to be hand tallied and should be used with discretion.

Youth Enforcement Activity During School Hours: September 1st – June 25th

SCHOOL YEAR	2002-2003	2003-2004	% of Change
Youths Arrested	72	53	-26%
Youths Referred*	28	56	100%

**Referral data is hand tallied and should be used with discretion.*

School-Related Part I UCR Crime: School Year-to-Date (September – May)

UCR Group	UCR Sub-Group	98 - 99	99 - 00	00 - 01	01 - 02	02 - 03	03 - 04	5 YR AVG	% CHNG
Assault		83	66	67	107	90	113	83	37%
	<i>Firearms</i>	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	-100%
	<i>Hands/Fists/Feet</i>	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	UNCALC
	<i>Knife/ Cut</i>	7	8	13	7	7	4	8	-52%
	<i>Other Weapon</i>	14	8	9	9	18	11	12	-5%
	<i>Simple</i>	60	50	43	91	65	94	62	52%
Criminal Homicide		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	UNCALC
	<i>Murder/ NonNeg MNSL</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	UNCALC
Larceny-Theft		16	15	7	10	14	16	12	29%
	<i>Bikes</i>	2	1	2	1	0	1	1	-17%
	<i>From MV</i>	6	5	0	0	4	1	3	-67%
	<i>Other</i>	4	3	1	3	2	6	3	131%
	<i>Pick-Pocket</i>	3	5	3	6	8	6	5	20%
	<i>Shoplifting</i>	1	1	1	0	0	2	1	233%

MBTA Transit Police: *Stop Watch*

MTR Vehicle Theft	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	-100%
<i>Autos</i>	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	-100%
Robbery	20	38	34	24	22	48	28	74%
<i>Firearms</i>	2	5	6	2	4	2	4	-47%
<i>Knife/ Cut</i>	8	6	11	6	9	7	8	-13%
<i>Other Weapon</i>	1	3	0	0	0	2	1	150%
<i>Strong Arm</i>	9	24	17	16	9	37	15	147%
Grand Total	120	119	108	141	128	178	123	44%

*Includes offenses occurring Monday – Friday between the hours of 0600 and 1600 and where at least one youth (18 or under) was identified as either a victim or offender.

Respectfully submitted,

Kellie A. Yankauskas
Crime Analysis Intern