OFFICE *of* INSPECTOR GENERAL
NATIONAL RAILROAD PASSENGER CORPORATION

Amtrak OIG Information Report:
Key Practices for Rail Police Management

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PREFACE

In July 2020, our office issued a report on Amtrak's management of its police department.[1] Our objective was to evaluate the extent to which Amtrak employed key practices to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of its police force. When we initiated our assessment, there were no agreed-upon best practices for rail policing in the relevant literature or from discussions with professional organizations and researchers, and there was no commonly accepted list of the top performers. Therefore, we conducted extensive research to develop a list of key practices to assess Amtrak.

To determine these practices, we reviewed and compiled information from a range of public- and private-sector sources. This included information from semi-structured interviews and site visits with 14 of the 16 largest rail organizations in the United States, which cover 90 percent of the nation's ridership.[2] We also visited national rail police and security departments in Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, and Italy. We chose these based on expert opinion about high-quality rail police departments and comparable track miles to Amtrak. We then combined the results of our research with commonly accepted management standards.[3]

This guide is intended to share the results of our work by providing the key practices for police management that we identified, which may be applicable to other rail and transit organizations.

Sincerely,

Kevin H. Winters
Inspector General

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[1] *Safety and Security: Management of the Police Department Has Recently Improved, but Foundational Decisions Are Needed on its Role and Priorities* (OIG-A-2020-012), July 1, 2020.

[2] We selected the 16 rail organizations based on ridership to capture organizations with reasonably similar risks to Amtrak. We interviewed 14 police chiefs and 10 executives with budget authority over those police departments. Two police chiefs and four executives did not respond to our request for an interview.

[3] Government Accountability Office, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* (GAO-14-704G), September 2014; and Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission, *Internal Control—Integrated Framework*, May 2013.

SUMMARY

We identified eight key practices that domestic and international rail and police organizations use to effectively manage their police departments and that are grounded in common standards of private-sector program management. These practices apply to organizations' decisions about the policing model they implement, the priorities they set for it, the size and composition of the workforce they determine it needs to meet these priorities, how it allocates this workforce, and how it sets goals and metrics to measure its performance and relative return on investment, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Eight Key Practices for Rail Police Management

	1.	Use a policing model that aligns with the organization's security needs
	2.	Coordinate between executive and police leadership to establish the department's priorities in providing police and security services
	3.	Use a data-driven, risk-based, decision-making process to determine the police department's optimal size
	4.	Use a data-driven, risk-based, decision-making process to geographically allocate resources
	5.	Identify targeted opportunities to use alternatives to sworn officers and partner with local law enforcement agencies
	6.	Collect and analyze detailed data on officers' daily activities to identify actual workload
	7.	Develop clear and measurable goals for the department
	8.	Establish performance metrics to measure what the department is accomplishing

Source: OIG analysis of interviews with other rail police departments and commonly accepted management standards.

We discuss each of these key practices in greater detail below, including our analysis of additional information we collected during our interviews with the domestic and international rail and police organizations. For more information about our scope and methodology, see Appendix A.

Key Practice 1

Use a policing model that aligns with the organization's security needs. In doing so, consider the specialized units needed.

Most Others Prefer to Have Their Own Rail Police Department

Most domestic rail organizations we reviewed have their own police departments.[4] Nine of the 14 domestic organizations have their own departments with sworn officers and specialized units. None of these organizations' officials stated that they would prefer to contract out their entire departments. The remaining five contract—in whole or in part—with local departments for policing services. Notably, officials from two of the organizations that contract out told us they would prefer to have their own police department or a combination of their own officers and a contract with local police.

We found the following variations in department practice:

- *9 had their own police department,* allowing them to prioritize their own interests and maintain better control over police and security operations. This approach, however, increases costs, liability, and administrative burden.

- *4 contracted out all functions,* resulting in less or no liability from officer injuries or risky behavior and enhanced relationships with local authorities. Challenges included less control over contracted officers and a limited ability for the organization to investigate its own crimes.

- *1 had a hybrid model,*[5] resulting in less officer liability, enhanced relationships with local authorities, and increased flexibility and visible presence, but less control over contracted officers.

In addition to patrol units, the nine domestic rail organizations with their own police departments maintained three specialized functions, which allowed them to prioritize their own needs and respond more quickly than if they relied on other police

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[4] We included only domestic rail organizations in the police model analysis. Of the five countries whose rail organizations we reviewed, four relied on their national rail police rather than an organization-owned police department.

[5] An organization with a hybrid model has a contingent of its own sworn officers and a contract with at least one other police department to provide additional policing services.

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departments. These departments cited significant benefits and, other than increased costs, cited few or no drawbacks in maintaining these functions:

- *Detectives* allowed them to prioritize their own crimes and respond faster.

- *A special operations unit* resulted in faster response times and greater flexibility to move officers around the system.

- *An intelligence unit* provided access to transit-specific information and conducted analysis that helped them make informed, data-driven decisions, which made them more efficient.

Benefits of Having a Police Department and Unique Aspects of the Rail Environment

The domestic organizations we interviewed cited the following benefits of having their own police departments, as well as distinctive aspects of the rail environment:

- *Prioritizing the organization's interests.* Some departments told us that local police do not prioritize the types of lower-level crimes that impact rail organizations, such as cell phone theft, vandalism, and fare evasion. Some also noted that local police may respond to their own needs first in a serious incident.[6] For example, one international organization that relied on local police was unable to get police service during a significant terrorism event, which prompted it to create its own police department. Organizations with rail police departments also maintain better control and accountability over their policing activities than those that contract out their policing needs.

- *Focusing on customers.* Rail police and security staff have a particular focus on maintaining a customer-friendly environment, which is generally different than municipal police. Rail organizations place a premium on customer perceptions of safety—if customers do not feel safe and the organization's reputation suffers, customers can switch to a different mode of transportation, which impacts ridership and revenue.

- *Keeping the trains moving.* Rail police recognize that train delays negatively impact operations, customer satisfaction, and revenue. Therefore, they understand the importance of keeping the rail system moving after a security incident. According to other organizations, local police do not have the same considerations. For example, some chiefs of police told us it took local police significantly longer to reopen train

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[6] This example includes one international rail organization.

traffic when they were the first responders to a security incident, which can negatively impact rail organizations.

- *Ensuring knowledge of the rail system.* Rail police know how to operate safely and efficiently in a rail environment, including knowing how to handle security incidents on the tracks, on trains, in tunnels, and around electrified catenary lines. Without this specialized knowledge, police officers could inadvertently endanger themselves, passengers, and other responding officers. For example, one organization told us about an incident during which local police chased a suspect into a tunnel, putting their own lives at risk.

- *Overcoming challenges of policing an open system.* The rail environment generally does not have access controls to prevent or deter bad actors—for example, persons entering onto facilities to do harm. This is contrary to controls found in the airline industry, for example, and thereby poses an inherent security risk to rail passengers, employees, and infrastructure. Rail police officials acknowledge that the open system is one of their organizations' biggest security risks.

- *Hiring rail police officers.* Rail police departments face challenges competing with municipal police forces for new officers because of pay, the type of policing, and other factors.

The domestic organizations we interviewed also recognized some drawbacks of having a police department but did not think they outweighed the benefits. For example, officials from other organizations stated that having a police department with specialized units creates an administrative burden, increases an organization's liability from factors such as officer misconduct, and can be expensive. Any cost calculation, however, depends on the organization's unique circumstances. For example, one rail organization that currently contracts with local police analyzed its model against other models and determined that obtaining its own department could cost less.

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Key Practice 2

Coordinate between executive and police leadership to establish the department's priorities in providing police and security services for the organization, and use these priorities to inform all other policing decisions—including decisions about model, size, allocation, staffing composition, goals, and metrics.

Twelve of the 21 domestic and international rail and police organizations aligned their policing priorities with the overall organizational priorities; for example, one organization focused on fare evasion, and aligned its police department to meet that priority. These organizations also made decisions about the police department's goals and metrics, model, size, staffing, and resource allocation to align with their organizational priorities. Examples of alignment include the following:

- All 12 had goals that aligned the police department with the organization's priorities for reducing delays, reducing fare evasion, maintaining a visible presence on trains and in stations, helping vulnerable populations,[7] conducting counterterrorism operations, prioritizing customer service, and improving customer perceptions of safety.

- 2 used policing models that aligned the police department with the organization's priority for visible presence.

- 5 made decisions on size and resource allocation that aligned the police department with the organization's priorities for fare evasion, visible presence, and counterterrorism.

- 8 used performance metrics that aligned the police department with the organization's priorities for reducing delays, fare evasion, vulnerable populations, visible presence, and customer perceptions of safety.

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[7] Vulnerable populations include people who are mentally ill, homeless, or battling drug addiction.

Key Practice 3

Use a data-driven, risk-based, decision-making process coordinated with executives to determine the police department's optimal size. In the process, balance the benefits, costs, and risks—including security, financial, operational, and brand risks.

We identified the following three elements in an effective process for determining workforce size:

Figure 1. Three Elements to Determine Workforce Size
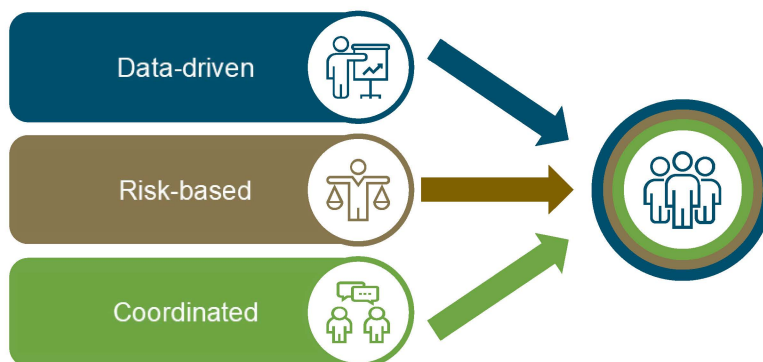
Source: OIG analysis of interviews with other rail police departments

- **Data-driven**. Three quarters of the organizations we reviewed (16 of 21) had rational, systematic, data-driven processes for determining the optimum size of their police force. The level of sophistication of each process to analyze optimal size varied by the number of factors used as follows:
    - *Highly sophisticated:* 3 of the 16 had a highly sophisticated process to determine the optimal size of the police force, using a sophisticated data model that considered various factors such as crime, calls for service, and paid time off.
    - *Moderately sophisticated:* 6 of the 16 had a moderately sophisticated process to determine the optimal size of the police force—not using a fully developed model, but using more than two factors, such as crime and calls for service.
    - *Least sophisticated:* 7 of the 16 had a less sophisticated process to determine the optimal size of the police force, using only one or two factors, such as ridership or calls for service.

Two organizations with the most sophisticated processes used data such as crime, time spent on calls for service, and non-working time like vacation, sick leave, compensatory time, family leave, and training. One of these organizations also determined its actual workload using "unmet demand"—the time that neighboring law enforcement agencies spent responding to calls that the organization preferred to cover. Other organizations also used factors like ridership by station, the number of trains in service by hour and day, vulnerability assessments, incident response time, visible presence, and budget.

- **Risk-based**. Many organizations told us they did not have as many police as they wanted. Instead, some attempted to balance the size of their police departments against the risks they were willing to accept, consistent with common management standards. For example, executives from two rail organizations told us it was important to ensure that their organizations' decisions about police department size are reasonable—both in fact and in appearance—to guard against reputational damage in a serious security incident. If a serious security incident occurs and the public perceives that the police department is too small, this can negatively impact ridership and revenue. Another department noted that the long-term financial costs of a major terrorist attack or active shooter incident—in insurance deductibles, increased premiums, and decreased ridership—could outweigh the costs of adding more officers to deter or stop such an attack. Organizations therefore balance their decisions about size against those costs and risks.

- **Department and executive-level coordination on size.** Common management standards suggest that coordination among various levels of the organization is necessary to ensure that a rail police department is achieving the organization's objectives. At several rail organizations we reviewed, we found enhanced coordination between the police department and executive leadership to ensure that decisions about the total number of officers aligned with the organizations' security needs. For example, one police department worked closely with executives to develop a budget and to set priorities for the police department.

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Key Practice 4

Use a data-driven, risk-based, decision-making process to geographically allocate resources efficiently and effectively. In the process, balance the benefits, costs, and risks—including security, financial, operational, and brand risks.

Eighteen of the 21 domestic and international rail and police organizations used a data-driven decision-making process to allocate officers. Ideally, a department would conduct this analysis while it analyzes the number of officers needed and would use workload data to inform these analyses. Data analyzed included crime statistics, ridership levels, calls for service, amount of time that officers are available to respond to calls, vulnerable populations, special events (such as festivals, sporting events, and concerts), incident response time, vulnerability assessments, and train schedules. The level of sophistication of each resource allocation process varied as follows:

- *Highly sophisticated:* 4 of the 18 had a highly sophisticated process to allocate resources, using a sophisticated data model that considered a variety of factors, such as crime, calls for service, and various characteristics about stations, such as ridership.

- *Moderately sophisticated:* 10 of the 18 had a somewhat sophisticated process to allocate resources, not using a fully developed model, but using more than two factors, such as crime, threats, ridership, and calls for service.

- *Least sophisticated:* 4 of the 18 had a less sophisticated process to allocate resources, using only one or two factors, such as crime and number of stations.

The two domestic rail police organizations that relied on a Strategic Patrol Staffing Plan to determine optimal size also used the plan to determine resource allocation. Their plans considered factors such as (1) the number of calls for service by station, (2) the number of back-up unit responses, (3) the amount of time spent on officer-initiated activities, and (4) paid time off.

Key Practice 5

Identify targeted opportunities to use alternatives to sworn officers and partner with local law enforcement agencies as a more cost-effective way to achieve the organization's security needs. In the process, balance the benefits, costs, and risks of the options it considers—including security, financial, operational, and brand risk.

Eighteen of the 19 domestic and international rail and police organizations with dedicated rail police[8] used alternatives to their own sworn officers as a cost-effective way to supplement their police force in targeted instances, but acknowledged the benefits and drawbacks of each.[9] The alternatives were as follows:

- *15 of the 19 used personnel without prior police or equivalent experience.* Examples of benefits and drawbacks included the following:

    o *Benefits:* a more cost-effective way to increase visible presence and deter crime; can perform tasks not requiring a sworn officer, such as protecting facilities and staffing guard booths; can address low-level crimes, like fare evasion, and help address quality of life issues, such as homelessness; if contracted, can be easily removed or relocated, thus increasing flexibility

    o *Drawbacks:* limited law enforcement capabilities; lower-quality training and standards of conduct than sworn officers; if contracted, can result in less control and accountability

- *2 of the 19 used personnel with prior police or equivalent experience.* Examples of benefits and drawbacks included the following:

    o *Benefits:* cost-effective way to increase visible presence, improve perceptions of safety, and reduce the number of incidents on the system

    o *Drawbacks:* none identified by other rail police organizations

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[8] This analysis only includes the 19 domestic and international rail and police organizations in our population with dedicated rail police.

[9] Five organizations used at least two types of alternative staff and are represented in multiple staffing categories.

- *2 of the 19 used officers from other police departments under secondary employment.* Examples of benefits and drawbacks included the following:

  o *Benefits:* a cost-effective way to increase uniformed visible presence because the rail organization is not responsible for benefits, promotes relationships with other police departments, reduces liability from officer misconduct

  o *Drawbacks:* can result in less control over officers and officer activities, and officers who are not as dedicated to the rail organization

- *6 of the 19 use partnerships with other police departments.* Examples of benefits and drawbacks included the following:

  o *Benefits*: enhances relationships with local police departments, improves intelligence-sharing between departments, and supplements the transit police force

  o *Drawbacks*: can result in less control because the police department cannot compel partners to act or respond to calls for assistance

Key Practice 6

Collect and analyze detailed data on officers' daily activities to identify actual workload and establish an evidence base to help make size and allocation decisions.

Six of the 21 domestic and international rail and police organizations collected detailed data on officers' activities, such as calls for services, self-initiated calls, and other incident information. Organizations with the most sophisticated processes regularly collect and analyze police workload data to better understand how to efficiently meet security demands and make informed decisions about staffing size, and allocation.

Collecting detailed data on officer's daily activities allowed the organizations to do the following:

- better understand how to efficiently meet security demands and allocate their limited resources

- produce reports that helped stakeholders understand the police department's value

For example, one organization collected detailed daily activity reports and minute-by-minute data of all incidents, arrests, and stops. These data allowed the organization to justify the value of its rail security department. Another organization collected detailed data on officers' daily activities to develop a comprehensive size and allocation model. The daily data included factors such as crime, calls for service, and special events, such as concerts and sporting events.

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Key Practices 7 & 8

Coordinate between executive and police leadership to develop clear and measurable goals that align with, and ensure achievement of, the organization's priorities.

Establish performance metrics to measure what the department is accomplishing and the extent to which it is meeting the goals and priorities the organization set for the department.

Eighteen of the 21 domestic and international rail and police organizations had clear goals and used metrics to evaluate performance. The police and security departments with the clearest goals and metrics ensured that they measured what was most important to the rail organization and used those metrics to demonstrate to decision-makers the value the police department adds to the rail or police organization:

- 11 of the 21 had documented goals

- 7 of the 21 had undocumented goals

- Common documented and undocumented goals and supporting metrics included the following:

    o *Maintaining a secure and safe environment for passengers and employees*, including providing a visible presence, reducing crime, and preventing terrorism. Fourteen of the 21 used crime statistics to measure success. In addition, 9 of the 14 domestic rail organizations' police departments used the number of calls for service to measure success. To measure visible presence, for example, one department counted the number of train rides their officers took per shift, and another surveyed passengers to ask if they had seen an officer during their journey.

    o *Maintaining a customer-oriented focus*, ensuring that passengers feel safe and reducing quality-of-life issues such as homelessness. Some organizations surveyed their passengers or monitored customer feedback from sources such as a customer service complaint system, allowing them to better respond to customer needs. Five domestic rail organizations' police departments used customer surveys and customer perceptions of safety to measure their value for dollar.

o   *Addressing vulnerable populations*. Some organizations have partnered with local public health officials to provide services to vulnerable people who frequent rail stations, including those who are mentally ill, homeless, or battling drug addiction. Funneling these individuals toward relevant social services can help them and move them away from stations, which can improve customers' perceptions of safety. Some police departments measure their progress in aiding vulnerable people and the impact they have on customer perceptions of safety. For example, some calculated the number of vulnerable people who received a social service such as housing and rehabilitation.

o   *Ensuring that employees work in a safe environment*, including reducing employee injuries, protecting employees, and reducing assaults. Some rail organizations measured this by monitoring employee feedback by including relevant questions in employee surveys or by using employee focus groups. They cited employee feedback as a key source of information that enabled them to better respond to employee needs and justify the police department's value for dollar. For example, one department used employee feedback to adjust where it places its officers.

o   *Ensuring efficiency of operations*, including reducing train delays and disruptions and staying within budget. For example, one organization's priority was to quickly reopen train traffic after a security-oriented delay. This organization had a goal for the number of minutes it took the police department to safely address the security issue and allow trains to begin moving again. This organization also calculated the dollar amount the organization saved by meeting that target and reported this return-on-investment information to decision-makers.

o   *Protecting the infrastructure*, including facilities and property

- One rail police department had dozens of metrics under each of its strategic objectives, including the following:

o   *Protecting the public*, measured against response time, visible presence, the number of crimes, and customer satisfaction measured through surveys and other feedback mechanisms

o *Reducing delays,* measured against police-related delays, response time, the number of life-saving interventions, and the number of trespass incidents resulting in delays

o *Value of the police department,* measured against the cost of service, response time, visible presence, officer availability rates, and percent of budget spent on frontline resources

o *Building a skilled workforce,* measured against staff turnover, employee surveys, workforce diversity, and rates of customer complaints against staff

APPENDIX A

Methodology for Identifying Key Practices

To identify these key practices, we reviewed and compiled information from a series of public- and private-sector sources. These practices include those that other domestic and international rail and police organizations follow to determine their model, priorities, optimum size, composition, and resource allocation, and to develop goals and metrics. We then combined the results of our research with commonly accepted management standards[10] to develop the final key practices.

To identify the rail organizations for our semi-structured interviews, we selected the 16 largest rail organizations in the United States, covering 93 percent of the nation's reported ridership. We conducted semi-structured interviews with chiefs of police or chief-equivalents at 14 of the 16 rail organizations. The remaining two did not respond to our request for an interview. Of the 14 rail organizations, we also conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 executives with budgetary and oversight responsibility of the police department.[11]

To establish our criteria and develop a consolidated list of key rail policing practices, we interviewed officials from the following 14 domestic, U.S. rail organizations, which covered 90 percent of the nation's reported ridership:[12]

1. Metropolitan Transportation Authority—New York City Transit, Long Island Railroad, Metro-North Railroad, Staten Island Railway

2. Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (Boston, Massachusetts)

3. Chicago Transit Authority

4. Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Washington, D.C.)

5. Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

6. San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District

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[10] Government Accountability Office, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* (GAO-14-704G), September 2014; and Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission, *Internal Control—Integrated Framework*, May 2013.

[11] Four executives did not respond to our requests for an interview.

[12] To design the semi-structured interviews to identify common practices across domestic rail organizations, we worked with a consultant with expertise designing audit methodologies.

7. Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

8. New Jersey Transit Corporation (Newark, New Jersey)

9. Port Authority of New York and New Jersey—Port Authority Trans-Hudson Corporation (Jersey City, New Jersey)

10. Metra Rail (Chicago, Illinois)

11. Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (Portland, Oregon)

12. San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

13. Dallas Area Rapid Transit

14. Denver Regional Transportation District

To obtain more detailed examples and information, we then conducted follow-up site visits at the New Jersey Transit Corporation, San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District, Los Angeles Country Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and Denver Regional Transportation District. We selected these organizations to capture a variety of policing approaches, such as owning a police department with sworn officers and specialized units, contracting out, and using a hybrid model. We also observed how a rail police department created a mature model for determining its optimal size.

To capture a broad array of practices, we conducted site visits and in-person interviews with officials from the following international rail organizations and rail police departments in five countries:[13]

International rail organizations:

1. Via Rail Canada

2. Société nationale des chemins de fer français, SNCF (France)

3. Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane (Italy)

International rail police departments:

4. Le service national de police ferroviaire (France)

5. Bahnpolizei (Germany)

6. British Transport Police (Great Britain)

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[13] We visited two organizations in France and two organizations in Italy because each organization was responsible for a portion of the railroad's security.

7. Polizia Ferrioveria (Italy)

We selected these countries based on four factors: 1) membership in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development because these countries are more directly comparable to the United States, 2) presence of a dedicated rail police force either within the rail organization itself or as part of a national rail police force, 3) comparable track miles to Amtrak, and 4) recommendation by law enforcement professional organizations, Chiefs of Police, and Amtrak Police Department officials.

To inform our understanding of rail policing and common rail policing practices, we also conducted interviews with the following relevant professional organizations and researchers:

- RAILPOL—European Association of Railway Police Forces
- Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies
- Police Executive Research Forum
- Mineta Transportation Institute
- Dr. Eric Fritsch, Professor, University of North Texas, Criminal Justice Department

APPENDIX B

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OIG MISSION AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Mission

The Amtrak OIG's mission is to provide independent, objective oversight of Amtrak's programs and operations through audits and investigations focused on recommending improvements to Amtrak's economy, efficiency, and effectiveness; preventing and detecting fraud, waste, and abuse; and providing Congress, Amtrak management, and Amtrak's Board of Directors with timely information about problems and deficiencies relating to Amtrak's programs and operations.

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Available at our website www.amtrakoig.gov

Reporting Fraud, Waste, and Abuse
Report suspicious or illegal activities to the OIG Hotline
www.amtrakoig.gov/hotline
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