

Allied Universal Security Services' Systematic Transition Brings Benefits to Las Vegas Public Transit System

Regional Transportation Commission

Situation: The Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) is the transit authority, transportation planning agency, and regional traffic management agency for Southern Nevada. The RTC's transit fleet consists of 36 routes served by almost 400 vehicles, which in 2009 carried nearly 60 million passengers in the Greater Las Vegas Valley. The RTC's vision is to provide a safe, convenient and effective regional transportation system that enhances mobility and air quality for citizens and visitors.

It is no secret that transit agencies nationwide are increasing security efforts as a precaution against potential terrorist acts in an effort to protect the riding public. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has created multi-agency Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) teams to make unscheduled checks on public transit vehicles in urban areas throughout the country. The RTC has been an active partner and has benefited from VIPR Team operations. Security is a key component of the RTC's day-to-day operation of its transit system.

With the selection of Allied Universal Security Services in late 2009 as the new contractor for armed and unarmed security services, access control, patrol services and vehicular patrols, several important challenges faced the national security company in its efforts to provide superior services as the RTC's new security partner.

Challenge: Perhaps the most important challenge for Allied Universal was initiating a smooth and effective transition from the previous provider to the new policies, operations, training and fulfillment of expectations it had detailed in its strategy for RTC. Allied Universal retained about 80 percent of the incumbent security officers. All of those officers had to be thoroughly trained, reoriented and, when needed, certified for firearms.

"We saw Allied Universal's challenge as getting all of their employees, both new and old, to understand what our perspective is as it relates to the security and safety of our clients, who are the people who depend on the RTC as their primary means of public transportation," said Jerry Keating, Assistant General Manager for RTC. "That may sound easy, but it hadn't been in the past. We found that it was fairly easy to express that objective to management, but getting it to the personnel on the front lines always seemed to be a little difficult."

Two other areas that presented an immediate challenge for Allied Universal:

1. Providing aggressive and effective foot and mobile patrols at the Downtown Las Vegas Transfer Center terminal.
2. Strict enforcement to ensure that bus passengers were paying their fares.

Location:

Las Vegas, NV

Statistics:

- > Pre-Assignment Training
- > Flexible Security Deployment
- > Fare Enforcement



Solution: Allied Universal's transition plan was the most systematic transition plan RTC has seen. Working from that transition plan, Allied Universal was able to quickly address RTC's challenges.

One of Allied Universal's first items of business was to review and restructure the staff by reducing, wherever possible, duplication of personnel to create a more efficient, more responsive, more effective security program.

"We broke our transition plan into several topics," said Charles Bohnenberger, Allied Universal's Vice President of Government Services. "These topics included recruiting, training, operations and administration. This allowed us to focus on each area and start building the foundation of a quality security program and developing a collaborative relationship with RTC. "

For the six weeks prior to the start of providing service to RTC, Allied Universal held training classes for all of its security officers. Training was initiated early with the goal of having the security team prepared for duty when the change to Allied Universal occurred.

During the pre-start-up phase, Allied Universal brought in its Las Vegas Regional Trainer who conducted classes for newly hired and the retained officers in the company's Security Officer Basic Training, pepper spray training, handcuffing and expandable baton training, and customer relations.

On the day of the actual transition, the entire complement of Allied Universal security officers attended a start-up orientation meeting.

"It was a joint effort between the RTC and Allied Universal," Keating noted. "It was an all-hands meeting for employees from fare enforcement officers all the way up to the district manager. We explained what our philosophy was and what we expected from them in the areas of job performance and outstanding customer service."

Keating said it is clear to him that the initial meeting with the staff had a major impact.

"It created greater communication among all levels of our security force," he said. "The culture of our company was communicated to all personnel, which is why we're having such success under Allied Universal's management. Everyone is on the same page."

Assertive, proactive security officers address instances of loitering at the Downtown Transfer Center. "Our team is proactive in a friendly manner," said Allied Universal's District Manager Adam Crandall. "Our security officers are very strict, checking on loiterers every 30 minutes. We've cleaned it up pretty well."

Keating said the RTC wants all of its venues, from transit facilities to bus shelters, to be free of problems because that is the first contact that people have with of the transit system. "We make sure the first impression our clients get of our transit system and bus shelters is that they're extremely nice and well-kept facilities. If you're a loiterer, you're trespassing – we can have you arrested. Our officers prevent that from happening by proactively managing the situation."

Allied Universal's security officers are authorized to issue a "summons in lieu of arrest" that results in a fine to the violator. This procedure is helping to keep the facilities in good condition and assures elimination of harassment incidents for passengers.

One of the changes in the public transit industry over the years is people attempting to ride without paying their fare. RTC and Allied Universal have addressed this problem with excellent results.

The operator of each RTC route vehicle maintains a count of every passenger and every violation of the fare policy. The data retrieved from the automatic counters is reviewed on a regular basis.

Allied Universal's flexible deployment system responds on a daily basis to the data by deploying security officers to routes where fare violations are most prevalent. The uniformed security officers will approach a violator on the bus and indicate that the fare has not been paid. Every violator is offered the opportunity to pay the fare. If they refuse, the security officer issues a "summons in lieu of arrest," which results in a fine for the violator.

An advertising campaign by the RTC to alert and encourage passengers to pay their fares was extremely effective. Allied Universal management is convinced that it, along with the presence of uniformed security officers, contributed to minimizing incidents. The visible presence of uniformed Allied Universal security officers on public transportation vehicles also gives passengers a sense of security and safety. While every vehicle obviously cannot have its own dedicated security officers, the latest technological programs in data collection and evaluation provided the important criteria needed for effective and efficient daily deployment.

Results: Allied Universal has established an excellent partnership with the RTC. Communication between the two entities is constant and clear. Allied Universal is an important contributor to all security meetings.

“They have a good, responsive team,” Keating said of Allied Universal’s operations for the RTC. “I look at their employees as a very important extension of our workforce.”

The public service advertising campaign by the RTC and the data-directed deployment system by Allied Universal have reduced monthly incidents of fare violations. As Keating explains, “It makes more sense to pay a \$2 fare, than a \$70 fare enforcement citation.”

Incidents of loitering at transit terminals have also been reduced. Security officers are tactful with chronic violators. The depth of training the security officers receive from Allied Universal, including conflict resolution and verbal de-escalation techniques, has proved critical to the company’s success.

The detailed transition plan, and its thorough implementation and pre-assignment training, allowed the security team to be fully operational and highly effective in very short order. This meant results were quickly noticed by RTC and the transit riding public.