

MTS is high-tech

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The Daily Aztec

Posted: 3/26/08

The Metropolitan Transit System just received a \$1.2 million grant to continue implementing high-tech security aboard its trolleys and buses. The new "Smart" monitoring system allows transit security surveillance that exceeds the capabilities of an average on-board camera.

"We're actually the first transit system on the West Coast to use this system," said Luis Gonzalez, media communications specialist for the transit system. With close to 20 percent of San Diego State faculty and staff using the transit system, Gonzalez said customers can expect a safe ride.

The newest grant from the Department of Homeland Security is only part of an ongoing effort to add security systems to the buses and trolleys operated by MTS. The grant will allow MTS to arm an additional 58 trolleys with the advanced security systems. By Fall 2008, MTS hopes to have 253 buses and 132 trolleys equipped with the high-tech monitoring systems.

"The new 'Smart' monitoring system really does give us a lot more information than the average camera would," Gonzalez said. "They have high resolution imaging, so we get an image that is a lot crisper than we would normally have."

Gonzalez said that the cameras, installed by Integrian, give an overall view of the bus or trolley. An additional feature is a programmed shock sensor that creates video markers so any event can be automatically marked on the DVR recording.

"Wireless capability gives us instant access to footage on the bus or trolley," Gonzalez said. "We can instantly identify and download an image that we need to see for safety, security or even customer service purposes."

Gonzalez said that the cameras are not a response to an increase in the crime aboard transit systems that occurred last year. There were 173 lower level crimes reported in 2007, while only 151 occurred in 2006. Psychology junior Eva Holm said she rides the trolley every day. "I always feel very safe riding the trolley, but I do not ride it at night," Holm said.

Gonzalez said that MTS would continue its efforts to increase security. "MTS is petitioning for additional grant money and those funds will be used to complete the full fleet of MTS buses and trolleys," Gonzalez said. "We are hoping that by 2010 every single one of the 140 trolleys will be armed with the high-tech security systems."

Gonzalez said the security systems are a benefit for everyone who uses the transit system. "Now we have the added eyes and ears that we need to monitor safety, customer service issues and potential crimes that may occur," he said.