

MEMORANDUM

October 13, 2009

TO: Public Safety Committee

FROM: Craig Howard, <sup>CH</sup> Legislative Analyst  
Office of Legislative Oversight

SUBJECT: **Worksession on OLO Memorandum Report 2010-1: *Data on Transit-Related Crime in Montgomery County***

On October 15th, the Public Safety Committee will hold a worksession on OLO Memorandum Report 2010-1. The Council formally received and released this report on September 15<sup>th</sup>.

The purpose of this project, requested by the late Councilmember Donald Praisner, was to provide the Council with information about the frequency, type, and location of “transit-related crime” in Montgomery County. “Transit-related crime” was defined to include crimes that occur: on public transit vehicle; at public transit stops; and in public transit parking facilities.

Representatives from the Montgomery County Government Police Department and Department of Transportation; the City of Rockville Police Department; the City of Gaithersburg Police Department; the City of Takoma Park Police Department; and the Metro Transit Police Department plan to attend the worksession.

OLO recommends the following agenda for the Committee worksession:

**A. OLO BRIEFING**

OLO staff will provide the Committee with a summary of its findings on data on transit-related crime in Montgomery County. The complete Memorandum Report is attached beginning at ©1.

**B. RECOMMENDED DISCUSSION ISSUES**

In addition to specific questions Committee members may have, OLO recommends three issues for Public Safety Committee discussion with agency representatives:

- Adequacy of data collected/reported on transit-related crime;
- Coordination of law enforcement response to transit-related crime; and
- Crime prevention efforts at public transit locations.

The recommended discussion issues are listed in the attached Memorandum Report beginning at ©14.

# OLO MEMORANDUM REPORT

September 15, 2009

TO: County Council

FROM: Craig Howard, <sup>CH</sup> Legislative Analyst  
Office of Legislative Oversight

SUBJECT: **OLO Memorandum Report 2010-1: Data on Transit-Related Crime in Montgomery County**

This memorandum report responds to the Council's request to examine data on the type, frequency, and location of crimes that occur in Montgomery County on public transit vehicles, at public transit stops, and in public transit parking facilities.

Three law enforcement agencies with jurisdiction in Montgomery County (Metro Transit Police Department, Montgomery County Police Department, and Takoma Park Police Department) separately collect transit-related crime data. This report reviews data on transit-related crimes that occurred during calendar years 2006, 2007, and 2008. In sum:

- 358 transit-related Part I crimes occurring in Montgomery County were reported to law enforcement agencies in 2008, an 11% increase over the 2006 total of 321.
- Larceny and robbery incidents represent over 80% of the transit-related (Part I) crime reported each year from 2006 through 2008.
- While transit-related crime represents a small portion of total crimes reported in Montgomery County each year, national research indicates that the public perceives a greater likelihood of crime on public transit than actually occurs and that the perception of crime can negatively influence willingness to use public transportation.

This report is organized as follows:

<b>Part A, Introduction</b> , describes the scope of OLO's assignment and the methodology used.	Page 2
<b>Part B, Overview of Public Transit and Public Safety</b> , summarizes the themes from the research literature on public transit crime data, perceptions of transit crime, and crime reporting in general.	Page 3
<b>Part C, Transit-Related Crime in Montgomery County, 2006-2008</b> , reviews the transit-related crime data for Montgomery County as maintained by the different law enforcement agencies that have jurisdiction.	Page 5
<b>Part D, Findings and Recommended Discussion Issues.</b>	Page 13

## **PART A: INTRODUCTION**

**Authority.** Council Resolution 16-673, Fiscal Year 2009 Work Program of the Office of Legislative Oversight, adopted July 29, 2008.

**Scope and Methodology.** The purpose of this project, requested by the late Councilmember Donald Praisner, was to provide the Council with information about the frequency, type, and location of “transit-related crime” in Montgomery County. “Transit-related crime” was defined to include crimes that occur:

- On public transit vehicles;
- At public transit stops; and
- In public transit parking facilities.

OLO reviewed data on transit-related crime in Montgomery County from the different law enforcement agencies that are involved in responding to incidents that occur in and around the public transit system: the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD), the Washington Metro Area Transit Authority’s (WMATA) Metro Transit Police Department, and the municipal police departments of Rockville, Gaithersburg, and Takoma Park.

OLO circulated a draft of this memorandum report to staff from MCPD, the Metro Transit Police Department, and the Takoma Park Police Department. This final report incorporates the technical edits received.

OLO greatly appreciates the time and contributions made by Assistant Chief Wayne Jerman, Captain Mitch Cunningham, and Angela Lindsay of MCPD; Captain L.M.D.D. Biggs and Sheila Young of Metro Transit Police Department; and Chief Ronald Ricucci and Kyleen Luy of the Takoma Park Police Department.

## **PART B: OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC TRANSIT AND PUBLIC SAFETY**

Montgomery County has adopted multiple policies and practices that encourage residents to use public transit; citing the benefits of reduced roadway congestion, more efficient energy use, and lower vehicle emissions from fewer private automobile trips. The County's promotion of public transit includes land use decisions that concentrate development in areas accessible to transit routes; the appropriation of funds to support the operation of Metrorail, Metrobus, and Ride-On as alternatives to the private automobile; and the funding of programs that subsidize the cost of using public transit.

Studies show that crime, and equally as important, the perception of crime can deter people from using public transportation. This section reviews and summarizes the research literature on public transit-related crime.

**The Frequency, Type, and Location of Transit Crime.** A 2002 report authored by the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) summarizes five major themes from the literature on the frequency, type, and location of transit-related crime:<sup>1</sup>

- Transit crime is primarily a problem experienced in the nation's larger cities;
- The majority of transit crime incidents represent "less serious" crime, e.g., vandalism, disorderly conduct, public drunkenness, harassment, etc.;
- Crime levels vary for different parts of individual transit systems and tend to correlate to neighborhood crime rates;
- Most transit crime incidents occur in train stations or at bus stops rather than on trains or on buses; and
- The "more serious" transit crime incidents (e.g., robbery, assault, homicide, etc.) typically occur during late evening and night hours, and in settings with low pedestrian traffic and many concealed areas; the "less serious" incidents often occur during rush hour and similarly crowded situations.

**National Transit Crime Data and Trends.** In 2009, the Transportation Research Board (TRB) issued a report that reviews anticrime and counterterrorism security practices, crime and security incident trends, and other issues related to safety and security within the U.S. public transportation system.<sup>2</sup>

The TRB report reviews crime data submitted between 2002 and 2006 by transit agencies to the National Transit Database (NTD), which is maintained by the Federal Transit Administration. The TRB found that "not all transit agencies required to report crime incident data have been reporting them to the NTD, and the number of transit agencies reporting to the NTD has not been consistent."

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<sup>1</sup> Loukaitou-Sideris, Anastasia, Robin Liggett, and Hiroyuki Iseki. "The Geography of Transit Crime: Documentation and Evaluation of Crime Incidence on and around Green Line Stations in Los Angeles." *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, Vol. 22:2, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Transportation Research Board, *Transit Cooperative Research Program Synthesis 80: Transit Security Update*, 2009.

Despite these inconsistencies, the TRB was able to reach a number of general findings from the available data on transit crime. In sum, between 2002 and 2006:

- Each year, out of all reported transit crimes, Part II crimes (the “less serious” crimes) represent six to eleven times the number of Part I crimes.
- The most frequent Part I offense was larceny, accounting for 50%-60% of Part I offenses each year, followed by robbery (10%-18%), aggravated assault (10%-15%), and motor vehicle theft (8%-13%).
- The most frequent Part II offense was fare evasion, accounting for at least 90% of Part II offenses each year.

In recent years, Washington Metro Area Transit Authority officials have noted an increase in thefts tied to the number of riders carrying cell phones, portable music players, and other small electronic devices that are “easy to steal and easy to sell.”<sup>3</sup>

**Underreporting of Crime.** Another important factor relevant to the review of any crime data is “underreporting.” It is widely documented that many crimes are never reported to authorities; reasons for this include the potential stigma attached to being a crime victim, distrust of law enforcement, or simply a belief that filing a police report will not matter. The Bureau of Justice Statistics’ most recent National Crime Victimization Survey (2007) estimates that only 46% of violent crimes and 37% of property crimes that actually occur are reported to the police.<sup>4</sup>

**Perception of Transit Crime.** The 2009 TRB study also addresses the issue of the public’s perception of crime in transit systems. According to the TRB report, the public perceives a greater likelihood of crime on transit than actually occurs:

Within transit systems, both serious and minor crimes affect passenger perceptions of security. Serious crimes are exaggerated by the media and intensify passenger fears. Minor offenses and disorder are also disconcerting to passengers and provide the perception that the transit agency is not in control of its transit system.<sup>5</sup>

The 2002 UCLA study notes that “in general, transit stations are no more unsafe than city streets or other public places. However, a few highly publicized crimes in the nation’s subway stations have attracted popular attention and concern.”<sup>6</sup> The study also notes that minor quality of life violations (i.e., disorderly conduct, public drunkenness, use of obscene language) can intimidate transit patrons. In sum, the UCLA study observes that “transit crime affects people’s decisions to use public transportation. Acts and perceptions of violence cause loss of ridership and revenue.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sun, Lena H. “Robberies Spike in Metro System” *Washington Post*, June 23, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, *Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin: Criminal Victimization, 2007*. NCJ 224390. December 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Transportation Research Board, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2002

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## **PART C: TRANSIT-RELATED CRIME IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, 2006-2008**

Three different law enforcement agencies - the Metro Transit Police Department, the Montgomery County Police Department, and the Takoma Park Police Department – maintain data on transit-related crime in Montgomery County. The Montgomery County Police Department crime statistics include data on incidents that occur in the City of Rockville and City of Gaithersburg.

The available transit-related crime data from these three sources primarily covers Part I crimes, which (as defined by the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting system) are considered the more serious crimes, e.g., homicide, rape, aggravated assault, motor vehicle theft, burglary, robbery, and larceny. The FBI's crime reporting system classifies offenses that are considered to be less serious as Part II crimes, e.g., vandalism, destruction of property, simple assault.

This chapter presents data and information on reported transit-related crimes that occurred in Montgomery County for calendar years 2006, 2007, and 2008. The first section totals the transit-related crime statistics collected by the Metro Transit Police Department, the Montgomery County Police Department, and the Takoma Park Police Department. The rest of the chapter provides a more detailed breakdown of the data and information maintained by the different law enforcement agencies.

### **I. Transit-Related Crime in Montgomery County: Data Totals for 2006-2008**

Table 1 (on the next page) totals the reported Part I crime data collected by the Metro Transit Police Department, Montgomery County Police Department, and Takoma Park Police Department. The data show that the total number of transit-related Part I crimes reported in Montgomery County increased 3% between 2006 and 2007; and increased another 8% between 2007 and 2008.

The data show that larceny is the most common type of transit-related Part I crime reported to law enforcement in Montgomery County, followed by robbery. Together, larceny and robbery represent over 80% of the reported transit crimes. Notably, the data indicate that only two transit-related homicides and two transit-related rapes occurred in Montgomery County between 2006 and 2008.

**Table 1: Total Reported Transit-Related Crime in Montgomery County, 2006-2008**

Crime Type	2006		2007		2008	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>All Part I Crimes</b>						
Larceny	150	47%	164	50%	214	60%
Robbery	112	35%	114	35%	94	26%
Motor Vehicle Theft	38	12%	29	9%	34	9%
Aggravated Assault	19	6%	21	6%	16	5%
Homicide	1	<1%	1	<1%	0	--
Rape	1	<1%	1	<1%	0	--
Burglary	0	--	0	--	0	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>321</b>		<b>330</b>		<b>358</b>	
<b>Annual % Change</b>	<b>--</b>		<b>3%</b>		<b>8%</b>	

Sources: Metro Transit Police Department, Montgomery County Police Department, and Takoma Park Police Department.

For several reasons, the number of transit-related crimes shown in Table 1 does not capture the total number of transit-related crimes actually committed. First, the data do not include Part II crimes; which the research consistently shows occur more frequently than Part I crimes. Second, as noted in the previous chapter, the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that only 46% of violent crimes and 37% of property crimes that actually occur are reported to the police.

Even taking the reality of underreporting into account, transit-related crime represents a relatively small portion of the 70,000+ crimes reported annually in Montgomery County in recent years. However, this perspective should not diminish the significance of the crimes that are committed. Both the Transportation Research Board and UCLA studies referenced in the previous chapter found that transit-related crime (whether actual or perceived) has a negative impact on residents' willingness to utilize public transit.

## 2. Crime Data from the Metro Transit Police Department, 2006-2008

**Metro Transit Police Jurisdiction.** Metro Transit Police officers have jurisdiction (which includes the power to make arrests) over crimes that occur in facilities owned, controlled, or operated by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). This includes Metrorail trains, Metro stations, Metro station parking lots, Metrobus vehicles, and Metrobus stops located in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The WMATA Compact establishes the Metro Transit Police Department's jurisdiction, and Maryland law codifies the WMATA Compact in the Transportation Article of the State Code (§ 10-204).

The Metro Transit Police Department has concurrent jurisdiction with the law enforcement agencies within which a transit facility is located or transit service is provided.<sup>9</sup> “Concurrent jurisdiction” means that local (i.e., County or municipal) police departments also have jurisdiction on WMATA facilities located within that department’s boundaries.

**Metro Transit System Crime Statistics.** The Metro Transit Police Department publishes annual statistics on the number of crimes reported to the department across the entire transit system. Since the Metro Transit Police Department’s jurisdiction is limited to transit facilities, all of these incidents can be classified as transit-related crime.

Table 2 displays the total number of crimes reported to the Metro Transit Police from 2006-2008, broken down by Part I (i.e., more serious) and Part II (i.e., less serious) crimes. The data show that the total number of crimes reported to the Metro Transit Police increased each year, with a small increase in between 2006 and 2007 and a larger increase between 2007 and 2008. During this time period, the ratio of reported crime consistently remained at about 25% Part I crimes and 75% Part II crimes.

The Metro Transit Police Department also publishes data on Part I crime rates per million riders/users of the Metro rail system, bus system, and parking lots. In 2008, the Transit Police report:

- 4.40 Part I crimes occurred for every 1,000,000 users of Metro Parking Lots;
- 2.76 Part I crimes occurred for every 1,000,000 riders on Metro Rail; and
- 0.95 Part I crimes occurred for every 1,000,000 riders on Metro Bus.

**Table 2. Total Crime Reported to Metro Transit Police across Entire Transit System, 2006-2008**

Category	2006		2007		2008	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Part I Crimes	1,441	24%	1,580	26%	1,821	26%
Part II Crimes	4,531	76%	4,495	74%	5,129	74%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,972</b>		<b>6,075</b>		<b>6,950</b>	
<b>Annual % Change</b>	<b>--</b>		<b>2%</b>		<b>14%</b>	

Source: WMATA, July 2009<sup>10</sup>

**Metro Transit Crime Data for Montgomery County.** At OLO’s request, the Metro Transit Police provided additional details on the incidents that occurred in Montgomery County. Specifically, OLO requested the number, type, and location of the transit crimes reported in the County for the calendar years 2006, 2007, and 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Maryland Code, § 10-204(76)(a)

<sup>10</sup> [www.wmata.com/about\\_metro/transit\\_police/mtpd\\_crime\\_stats03.cfm](http://www.wmata.com/about_metro/transit_police/mtpd_crime_stats03.cfm)



The Montgomery County-specific data as provided by the Metro Transit Police included information on all Part I crimes and two types of Part II crimes for each year. As a result, the data represent only a subset of transit-related Part II crimes in Montgomery County that were reported to the Transit Police during this period.

The data from the Metro Transit Police show an increase in reported crimes in Montgomery County between 2006 and 2008. Specifically, the data (summarized in Table 3) indicate:

- Between 2006 and 2007, the number of reported Part I crimes increased 14% from 160 to 183 incidents; between 2007 and 2008, reported Part I crimes increased another 20% from 183 to 220 incidents.
- Larceny was the most frequently reported crime, representing between 60% and 74% of the Part I crimes each year.

Overall, the Part I crimes that occurred in Montgomery County represented 11% of all Part I crimes reported to Metro Transit Police in 2006, and 12% of the total reported in 2007 and 2008.

**Table 3. Number and Type of Transit-Related Crimes Reported to the Metro Transit Police Department in Montgomery County, 2006-2008**

Crime Type	2006		2007		2008	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>All Part I Crimes</b>						
Larceny	110	69%	110	60%	162	74%
Robbery	26	16%	49	27%	33	15%
Motor Vehicle Theft*	19	12%	15	8%	18	8%
Aggravated Assault	5	3%	9	5%	7	3%
Homicide	0	--	0	--	0	--
Rape	0	--	0	--	0	--
Burglary	0	--	0	--	0	--
<b>Subtotal – Part I Crimes</b>	<b>160</b>		<b>183</b>		<b>220</b>	
<b>Part I Annual % Change</b>	<b>--</b>		<b>14%</b>		<b>20%</b>	
<b>Selected Part II Crimes</b>						
Destruction of Property	45		48		39	
Simple Assault	41		56		32	
<b>Total</b>	<b>246</b>		<b>287</b>		<b>291</b>	
<b>Total Annual % Change</b>	<b>--</b>		<b>17%</b>		<b>1%</b>	

\*Includes Attempted Motor Vehicle Thefts

Source: Metro Transit Police Department, June 2009



The Metro Transit Police also provided data on the location of the reported crimes, sorted according to the Metro station the incident occurred in or around. As shown in Table 4, crimes were reported to the Transit Police at all 12 Metro stations located in Montgomery County for each year reviewed.

From 2006 through 2008, the highest number of crimes reported to the Transit Police was at the Shady Grove Metro station, which accounted for 19% to 24% of the annual total in Montgomery County. The other Metro stations with relatively higher numbers of reported crimes were Silver Spring, Wheaton, and Glenmont.

**Table 4. Location of Transit-Related Crimes Occurring in Montgomery County Reported by the Metro Transit Police, 2006-2008**

Crime Location	2006	2007	2008
Total Reported Crimes	246	287	291
<b>% of Total by Metro Station</b>			
Shady Grove Metro	19%	24%	20%
Silver Spring Metro	15%	16%	15%
Wheaton Metro	17%	16%	13%
Glenmont Metro	14%	14%	12%
Rockville Metro	6%	6%	7%
Grosvenor Metro	7%	5%	7%
Twinbrook Metro	8%	2%	7%
Bethesda Metro	3%	7%	7%
Forest Glen Metro	5%	2%	5%
Medical Center Metro	1%	2%	3%
Friendship Heights Metro	3%	3%	2%
White Flint Metro	2%	2%	2%

Source: Metro Transit Police Department, July 2009

### **3. Transit-Related Crime Data from Montgomery County and Municipal Police Departments, 2006-2008.**

**Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) Crime Statistics.** The Montgomery County Police Department publishes annual crime statistics for the County. MCPD's crime statistics include all crimes reported to the MCPD as well as the municipal police departments of Rockville and Gaithersburg. The City of Takoma Park Police Department reports its crime data separately.

Table 5 displays the total number of crimes reported to the Montgomery County Police Department from 2006-2008, broken down by Part I (i.e., more serious) and Part II (i.e., less serious) crimes. The data show that the total number of crimes reported to MCPD remained relatively flat over this time period. About 35% of all reported incidents were classified as Part I crimes and the other 65% as Part II crimes.

**Table 5. Total Montgomery County Police Department Crime Statistics by Category, 2006-2008**

Category	2006		2007		2008	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Part I Crimes	25,312	35%	25,629	36%	26,975	37%
Part II Crimes	46,202	65%	45,862	64%	45,518	63%
<b>Total</b>	<b>71,514</b>		<b>71,491</b>		<b>72,493</b>	
<b>Annual % Change</b>	<b>--</b>		<b>-0.03%</b>		<b>1%</b>	

Sources: Montgomery County Police Department 2006, 2007, and 2008 Year-End Crime Reports

**Montgomery County and Municipal Police Department Transit-Related Crime Data.** At OLO’s request, MCPD provided a breakout of its total crime data for those incidents that could be considered transit-related crimes and that would not already be collected and/or reported by the Metro Transit Police. Specifically, OLO requested the number, type, and location of transit-related crimes reported during calendar years 2006, 2007, and 2008.

MCPD’s “tactical database” is the Department’s only data source that includes identifying codes related to public transit facilities or locations. MCPD maintains its tactical database for the primary purpose of tracking selected crime types in the short term to identify patterns, inform patrols, direct resources, etc. The tactical database only includes selected Part I crimes; it does not include information on less serious crimes such as simple assault or vandalism.<sup>11</sup>

From the tactical database, MCPD extracted information on incidents that were coded as occurring at a Metro parking garage, Metro parking lot, Metro station, Metro train, or at a bus stop. MCPD staff note that there are additional incidents that could be considered transit-related crime but are not readily identifiable as such in the database, including:

- Crimes that occur near transit but not at a transit-specific facility (e.g., a crime that occurs at a County-owned parking facility near a Metro station);
- A crime where an individual may have been followed to or from a transit site and victimized elsewhere;

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<sup>11</sup> According to MCPD staff, data from the tactical database do not comply with the FBI’s UCR guidelines for reporting crime data and statistics.

- Crimes that occur on a bus, since the database includes a code for bus stop but not a code for on the actual bus; and
- Crimes at or near a bus stop that are coded as occurring on a “street” instead of the separate “street-at a bus stop” code.

OLO also requested transit-related crime data from the City of Takoma Park Police Department that would not be collected and/or reported by the Metro Transit Police. Takoma Park identified eight Part I transit-related crimes from 2006-2008; to simplify the reporting of transit-related crime, OLO incorporated the Takoma Park Police Department’s numbers into the data received from MCPD.<sup>12</sup>

As shown in Table 6, the data indicate annual decreases in the number of transit-related crimes reported to the Montgomery County and municipal police departments from 2006 to 2008. In particular, the data show:

- Between 2006 and 2007, the number of reported Part I crimes decreased 9% from 161 to 147 incidents; between 2007 and 2008, reported Part I crimes decreased another 6% from 147 to 138 incidents.
- Robbery and larceny were the most frequently reported transit-related crime. Combined, those offenses represented between 78% and 82% of reported Part I crimes each year.

**Table 6. Number and Type of Transit-Related, Part I Crimes Reported to the Montgomery County and Municipal Police Departments, 2006-2008**

Crime Type	2006		2007		2008	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Part I Crimes</b>						
Robbery	86	53%	65	44%	61	44%
Larceny*	40	25%	54	37%	52	38%
Motor Vehicle Theft	19	12%	14	10%	16	12%
Aggravated Assault	14	9%	12	8%	9	6%
Homicide	1	<1%	1	<1%	0	--
Rape	1	<1%	1	<1%	0	--
Burglary	0	--	0	--	0	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>161</b>		<b>147</b>		<b>138</b>	
<b>Annual % Change</b>	<b>--</b>		<b>-9%</b>		<b>-6%</b>	

\*Larceny data includes thefts from vehicles, thefts of vehicle parts (excluding license tag thefts) and pickpockets. Other types of larcenies are not included in the data.  
Source: MCPD, July 2009

<sup>12</sup> Transit-related Part I crime reported to the Takoma Park Police Department includes six robberies in 2008, one robbery in 2007, and one robbery in 2006. All incidents occurred at bus stops.



In addition to the types of crime, the Montgomery County and municipal police data also included the location of crimes by the type of transit facility and the MCPD police district as shown in Table 7. The data indicate that, during the 2006-2008 timeframe:

- The majority of transit-related Part I crimes reported to County or municipal police occurred at bus stops or Metro parking facilities (either surface parking lots or parking garages).
- The County police district with the highest annual percent of reported transit-related crime was Wheaton (4<sup>th</sup> District), followed by Rockville (1<sup>st</sup> District).

**Table 7: Location of Transit-Related Crimes Reported to the the Montgomery County and Municipal Police Departments, 2006-2008**

Crime Location	2006	2007	2008
Total Transit-Related Crimes	161	147	138
<b>— % of Total by Type of Transit Facility —</b>			
Bus Stop	46%	51%	41%
Metro Parking Lot	21%	23%	37%
Metro Parking Garage	20%	16%	14%
Metro Station	12%	10%	7%
Metro Train	<1%	0%	<1%
<b>% of Total by Police District</b>			
Wheaton (4 <sup>th</sup> District)	41%	34%	34%
Rockville (1 <sup>st</sup> District)	24%	22%	33%
Montgomery Village (6 <sup>th</sup> District)	13%	13%	10%
Silver Spring (3 <sup>rd</sup> District)	8%	12%	13%
Bethesda (2 <sup>nd</sup> District)	9%	10%	9%
Germantown (5 <sup>th</sup> District)	4%	9%	1%

Source: Montgomery County Police Department, July 2009

## **PART D: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDED DISCUSSION ISSUES**

The purpose of this project, requested by the late Councilmember Donald Praisner, was to provide the Council with information about the frequency, type, and location of “transit-related crime” in Montgomery County. “Transit-related crime” was defined to include crimes that occur: on public transit vehicles; at public transit stops; and in public transit parking facilities.

In sum, OLO found that:

1. National research indicates that the public perceives a greater likelihood of crime on public transit than actually occurs, and further, that an individual’s perception of transit-related crime influences his or her willingness to use public transportation.
2. Three law enforcement agencies with jurisdiction in Montgomery County maintain transit-related crime data: the Metro Transit Police Department; the Montgomery County Police Department; and the Takoma Park Police Department.
3. The focus of the data collected about transit-related crime is on the “more serious” Part I crimes. No currently produced crime statistic reports compile transit-related crime data across the agencies.
4. In 2008, a total of 358 transit-related Part I crimes that occurred in Montgomery County were reported to law enforcement agencies. This represented an 8% increase over the 2007 total of 330 incidents. The 2007 total was a 3% increase over the 2006 total of 321 incidents.
5. Similar to national-level transit crime data, larceny is the most frequently reported transit-related crime in Montgomery County. Together, larceny and robbery represent over 80% of transit crime reported each year from 2006 through 2008.
6. For multiple reasons, the readily available crime statistics do not capture the total number of transit-related crimes actually committed. First, the data do not include Part II crimes; which the research shows occur more frequently than Part I crimes. Second, it is well documented that crime in general is underreported to law enforcement; according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, only 46% of violent crimes and 37% of property crimes that actually occur are reported to the police.
7. Even taking the data caveats into account; transit-related crime represents only a small portion of the 70,000+ crimes reported annually in Montgomery County. While this perspective is important, it should not diminish the significance of the crimes that are committed, especially given the effect that the public’s perception of safety has on their use of public transportation.

Based on these findings, OLO recommends three issues for Public Safety Committee discussion. OLO recommends that the Committee invite representatives from the Montgomery County Police, Metro Transit Police, and the three municipal police departments to participate in the discussion.

**DISCUSSION ISSUE #1. Adequacy of data collected/reported on transit-related crime.**

The Committee should discuss whether the current practices for collecting and reporting transit-related crime data adequately meets the Council's need for information on the frequency and type of crime that occurs in and around public transit in Montgomery County. Information on transit-related crime is especially significant given the County's policies for encouraging residents to use Metrobus, Metrorail, and Ride-On as an alternative to private cars.

Recommended discussion questions include:

- a. Does the Committee want to receive additional or different types of data on transit-related crime? For example, data on Part II crimes, different breakdowns of data by location (either geographic or transit facility-based), or arrest/case closure rates?
- b. If the Committee would like to receive additional data on transit crime, do current data practices allow for these data to be easily collected and reported?
- c. Does the Committee want to receive data on transit-related crime on a regular basis that is compiled across the different law enforcement agencies? Could this be done in conjunction with the current crime data updates received from MCPD?

**DISCUSSION ISSUE #2. Coordination of law enforcement response to transit-related crime that occurs in Montgomery County.**

The Committee should discuss with representatives from the law enforcement agencies how the agencies coordinate their response to transit-related crime. While this OLO report focused exclusively on summarizing transit-related crime data, five different law enforcement agencies have the potential to respond to a transit-related crime that occurs in Montgomery County: the Metro Transit Police Department; Montgomery County Police Department; City of Rockville Police Department; City of Gaithersburg Police Department; and City of Takoma Park Police Department.

Recommended discussion questions include:

- a. How do the law enforcement agencies coordinate, both formally and informally, the response and investigation of transit-related crimes in Montgomery County?
- b. What aspects of coordination on transit-related crime work well? Are there opportunities for improvement?

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**DISCUSSION ISSUE #3. Crime prevention efforts at public transit locations.**

Crime prevention efforts by law enforcement are one factor that may influence the transit-related crime data included in this report. The Committee should discuss with representatives from the law enforcement agencies any strategies deployed to prevent transit-related crime in Montgomery County.

Recommended discussion questions include:

- a. What do the different law enforcement agencies see as the most effective crime prevention strategies to deter transit-related crime in Montgomery County?
- b. How do the law enforcement agencies use the crime data to inform or target transit-related crime prevention efforts?
- c. Can crime prevention efforts impact the perception of transit-related crime that is well-documented in the research literature, i.e. that the public perceives a greater likelihood of crime on public transit than actually occurs?