

2007

Crime at Transit Stations

The FasTracks team's mission is to "provide a reliable and safe transit system that enhances mobility, responds to the growing transportation needs within the Regional Transportation District, and creates a legacy for current and future generations." Safety plays an important role in the design and operations of the FasTracks corridors. There have been concerns expressed by local communities that will be affected by FasTracks that the implementation of the program could lead to an increase in crime in and around the transit stations. Unfortunately, new development, whether it is commercial development, new roadways, etc., can cause an increase crime in an area. However, crime can be stopped and better yet, prevented before it happens if agencies and the public work together in creating safe transportation for everyone. This fact sheet summarizes the findings of studies done around the country in relation to crime and transit, including a study performed in Denver.

GENERAL CRIME STUDIES

Numerous reports have been written and studies conducted around the country in regard to general crime patterns and criminal behaviors. The following is a list of some findings of these reports:

- As the distance between the criminal's origin and the potential target increases, it is less likely that the criminal will commit a crime in that potential target area.¹
- Criminals generally commit crimes close to their own homes, however, generally not within one block of their homes for fear of being recognized.²
- Criminals that are unfamiliar with an area are less likely to commit crimes in that area.³
- Residential areas rank the lowest in regard to crime, especially single-family homes, as compared to commercial and industrial areas.³
- A study in Cleveland revealed that the average distance between the origin of the criminal and the destination of the crime was less than two miles for crimes against persons, and 2.3 miles for crimes against property.⁴
- Stations that have high crime rates are generally located in neighborhoods with high crime rates.⁵

*Denver*⁶

A technical memorandum was prepared in 2006 by RTD on neighborhood crime compared to station crime. The crime study specifically analyzed the 30th and Downing station along the Central Corridor light rail transit (LRT) line in Denver, which opened in 1994. The study objective was to analyze crime statistics for areas before and after the construction of transit. The study of the 30th and Downing station analyzed the following types of crimes from 1992 to 2005:

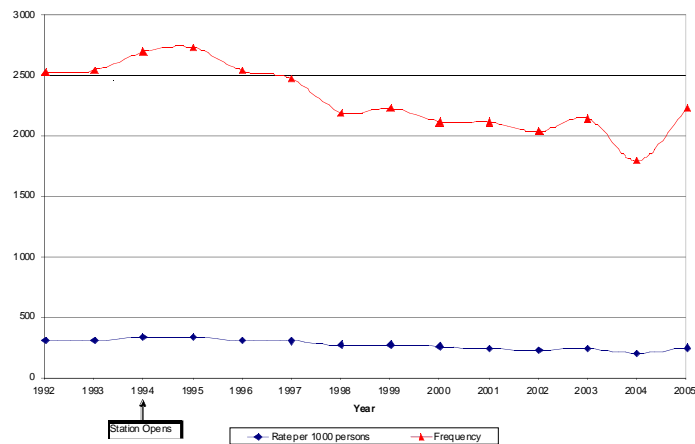
- Homicides
- Sex Assault
- Robberies
- Auto theft
- Arson
- Aggravated Assaults
- All Other Offenses

The study findings revealed that none of the crimes listed above increased after the construction of the station. For example, in 1992, there were eight homicides in the neighborhood, which stayed the same in 1994 when the station opened and dropped to a low of three in 2005.

Sexual assaults peaked in 1993 and 1994 with 30 and 32 assaults, respectively, and has generally decreased and had a low of 10 assaults in 2002 and 2004.

The graph below shows the frequency and rate per 1000 persons for total crime (all of the categories listed above) in the neighborhood around the station.

Total Crime in the Neighborhood around the 30th and Downing Station



In addition, the crime rates at the stations directly correlated to the amount of crime in the surrounding neighborhood. This finding supports other studies that have been completed around the country, which are summarized below.

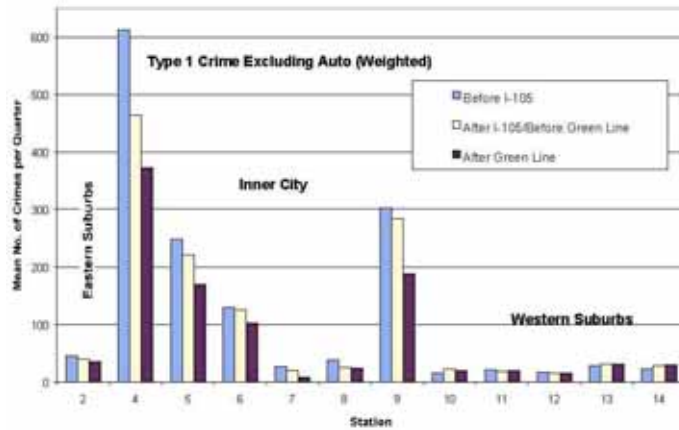
Los Angeles⁷

A study was completed that analyzed the Los Angeles Green Line, which includes both the inner city and more affluent western neighborhoods. The Green Line operates in the middle of the I-105 Freeway for most of the alignment. Twelve station areas along the line were analyzed for crime rates over a 10-year period, from 1990 to 1999, in order to determine if there was an increase in crime after the construction of the transit line, which was built in 1995. The study also examined the effect of the construction of I-105, which was built before the Green Line, on crime. The findings were as follows:

- The inner city stations showed a decrease in crime that generally followed a decrease in crime throughout Los Angeles County.
- Type 1 crime, excluding auto crime, (homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, larceny theft, burglary, and arson), which increased after I-105 was built, has decreased about 50% since the opening of the Green Line.
- Crime in the more affluent western suburbs did not increase after the Green Line was built.
- Auto-related crime did increase slightly by one western station, but the increase began with the construction of I-105 before the Green Line was built, and is attributed to an increase in commercial growth near the station.
- Crime at one station in the western suburbs actually decreased.

The graph below shows the mean number of Type 1 crimes committed per quarter for all the station areas studied along the Green Line.

Type 1 Crime Occurrences Along the Green Line



Baltimore⁸

Three stations for the Baltimore Metro located in suburban Baltimore County, Maryland were studied to determine if crime rates in the Baltimore County Crime Reporting Areas around the stations increased with the inception of transit and transit stations. The study compared data from 1984 to 1990; however, the data from 1986 was incomplete and is therefore not accurate for that year. The stations opened in 1987. The results are summarized below.

- The types of crimes that were analyzed were as follows:
 - Homicide
 - Rape
 - Robbery
 - Aggravated Assault
 - Burglary
 - Theft
 - Auto Theft
 - Arson
- The area surrounding the Milford Mill Station, which is located less than 1/4 mile from a middle school and less than 1/2 mile from an elementary school, did not show an increase in homicide, burglary, theft, and auto theft and saw a decrease in rape. In the last two years that were analyzed, crime rates for robbery, aggravated assault and arson increased, but that mirrored the increase in crime rates in the county.
- The area surrounding the Old Court Road Station, which is located near single-family residential neighborhoods with some light industrial and neighborhood retail, saw an increase in auto theft but remained steady for the other types of crime.
- The area surrounding the Owings Mill Station, which includes Owings Mill Mall, saw a dramatic increase in theft and auto theft, which also mirrors the statistics in the surrounding areas that do not include the station itself.
- While some types of crime such as aggravated assault, theft and auto theft did increase over time, crime in the entire county also increased.

The chart below shows the crime summary for the first and last two years of the study for the Milford Mill Station Area. This station area was chosen because of its proximity to schools.

AT A GLANCE: Crime Summary for Milford Mill Station Area

Type of Crime	1984	1985	1989	1990
Homicide	1	0	0	0
Rape	2	0	0	1
Robbery	13	10	24	22
Aggravated Assault	21	26	33	30
Burglary	72	58	71	81
Theft	89	135	110	118
Auto Theft	30	45	33	51
Arson	0	1	1	1

References & Notes

- ¹ Brantingham, Paul J. and Brantingham, Patricia L., *Environmental Criminology*, Sage Publications, London, England, 1981.
- ² Turner, S., "Selected Studies", in M.E. Wolfgang and T. Sellin (eds.), *Delinquency: Selected Studies*, John Wiley, New York, NY, 1969.
- ³ Rhodes, William M. and Conly, Catherine, "Crime and Mobility: An Empirical Study", *Environmental Criminology*, Paul J. and Patricia L. Brantingham Sage Publications, Inc, London, England, 1981.
- ⁴ Pyle, G. F., 1976, "Spatial and Temporal Aspects of Crime in Cleveland, Ohio", *American Behavioral Scientist*, 20 (2), 175-197.
- ⁵ U.S. Department of Transportation, Urban Mass Transportation Administration. *Transit Security: A Description of Problems and Countermeasures*. Mauri, Ronald et al. October 1984/Reprint May 1985.
- ⁶ Denver Regional Transportation District, *Technical Memorandum: Neighborhood vs. Station Crime Myths and Facts*. November 16, 2006.
- ⁷ Liggett, R., Loukaitou-Sideris, A., and Iseki, H. *Journeys to Crime: Assessing the Effects of a Light Rail Line on Crime in the Neighborhoods*, 2002.
- ⁸ Plano, Stephen L., *Transit Generated Crime: Perception vs. Reality - A Socio-geographic Study of the Neighborhoods Adjacent to Section B of the Baltimore Metro*, 1993.