

Commonwealth Conversations: Transportation

March 17, 2011

Emergency Response Exercise Success



Bowdoin Station on the MBTA Blue Line looked like a huge chaotic scene on Sunday, March 6, but it was all part of a successful multiple agency drill.

MassDOT sponsored an emergency response full scale exercise aimed at improving the emergency response integration between transportation agencies and the public safety agencies and departments that provide first response actions during an emergency.

The exercise began at 8:30 AM with a simulated exchange of gunfire on the platform of the station, and the finding of explosive devices that required bomb squads. Agencies that participated in the exercise included the MBTA, MBTA Transit Police, MassDOT,

Massachusetts State Police, Boston Fire Department, Boston Police Department, Boston Emergency Medical Services and the FBI. Students from the Massachusetts Maritime Academy and Tufts University portrayed the roles of commuters and victims at the scene.

The exercise involved transportation and public safety personnel working through an emergency scenario inside the station and then making decisions and communicating those decisions in a coordinated manner. This drill was part of the Operation Hermes Exercise Series which began in December 2008 with a table top discussion and culminated in the full scale exercise. The series is funded by the U. S. Homeland Security Transit Security Grant Program.

Secretary Jeffrey Mullan observed the exercise and said, "This exercise demonstrates our commitment to ensuring we work with our partners in public safety to ensure we can respond to emergencies effectively and protect the people who utilize our transportation systems. Through this series of exercises, we have strengthened relationships, developed comprehensive notification protocols, utilized interoperable communications capabilities, and solidified our understanding of the National Incident Management System. I am extremely proud of the many men and women who participated to assess our abilities to work together to mitigate the impact of a potential terrorist attack on our transit system."

MBTA GM Rich Davey said, "This exercise recognizes that we need to be prepared to protect the public, our employees, and our critical functions, networks, assets, and systems. We will continue to look at how our plans can be improved, and to take lessons learned from our exercises to enhance our capabilities."

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