

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

B. Collection of Information Employing Statistical Methods

1. Describe the Survey Procedures.

This data collection does not involve a survey. It is a “passive”, reporting of a qualifying event on a voluntary basis. Unlike a survey where all respondents are expected to respond, BTS will receive a close call report only if and when an employee experiences a close call and the affected employee decides to report it. More than one person may be eligible to provide a report for a close call incident. All incidents that meet the definition of a close call as stated in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by WMATA, Local 689, and BTS are included in the scope of this project. Thus, there is no sample selection for this data collection. All Local 689 members and frontline supervisors, an estimated total of 4000, are included in the Close Call program and will be eligible to submit close call reports to BTS whenever they experience a qualifying event. The exact frequency of close calls is unknown and, at this point, the expected employee participation rate is unknown as well. There has never been an attempt to collect information on close calls at this transit agency or any other transit agency in the United States. Based on previous experience with first time close call reporting in railroad yards, BTS is expecting to receive no more than 400 reports per year. This might be an overestimate of actual reporting and will be adjusted accordingly once BTS has received a sufficient amount of reports to make such determination.

The data collection should have no coverage bias as every single employee eligible to report will receive training on how to report close calls to BTS. Employee training will include additional information on the benefits of reporting close calls in improving safety. However, it takes employees several months to become comfortable with and build enough trust in a program that involves confidential reporting of potentially incriminating events. Therefore, initially, we do not expect employee reports received by BTS to be representative of all close calls events in a transit agency. Hopefully, as confidence in this effort grows, the reporting of close calls will become more representative of true close calls in rail operations of a transit agency.

Results and lessons learned from this effort can also be used to study the feasibility of an industry-wide voluntary reporting program and better understand key factors to consider in developing such program.

2. Description of procedures for the collection of information.

There is no sample selection for this data collection. Theoretically, the Close Call data system will contain a census of all valid close calls that Local 689 employees reported during the duration of this project. However, since this data collection is completely voluntary, it will be difficult to ascertain the size of the true population of close calls in the test facilities. Given the design of this project, we do not expect to have a “true” representative sample of the universe of

close calls; however, the reported data are still useful in our understanding of the nature of close calls without making overall inferences. Voluntary reporting of close calls to a confidential system can provide a tool to identify and correct weaknesses in WMATA's transit rail system and help prevent accidents. Employees involved in reporting a close call incident will be asked to fill out a report online and participate in a brief, confidential interview. Participants will be asked to provide information such as: (1) name and contact information; (2) time and location of the event; (3) a short description of the event; (4) contributing factors to the close call; and (5) any other information that might be useful in determining a "true" root cause of such event. Through the analysis of close call data, BTS will provide WMATA/ATU aggregate information about factors that may contribute to unsafe events and identify root causes of potentially adverse events.

3. Describe the methods to maximize response rates, and describe how the Department deals with non-responses.

Steps have been taken to increase employee participation to this voluntary project. Those include:

1. Strong support from WMATA management and ATU Local 689 leadership for the project,
2. Extensive management and employee training on the benefits of this program for improving employee safety,
3. BTS participation to assure data confidentiality, and
4. For employees: protection from discipline, if they report an event within 24 hours after its occurrence.

4. Describe any tests of procedures or methods undertaken.

The reporting form is comprised of a small number of demographic fields (name, phone number, location, time of event) and a comment field for the employee to describe the close call event in their own words. The reporting form was pilot tested by 5 individuals at the North Platte facility. Completion time was reported to range between twelve and twenty minutes. The form was developed by updating the existing data collection instrument of the C³RS rail program to include expert input from transit safety experts in WMATA and Local 689. Similarly, the interview tool was developed using expert input from the participating PRT, WMATA, Local 689, and BTS.

5. Provide the name and telephone number of individuals consulted on the statistical aspects of the design and the name of the agency unit, contractor grantee, or other persons who will actually collect and/or analyze the information for the agency.

The team involved in the development of the close call data warehouse and data analysis is as follows:

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