

Cleaning Up Crime and Grime

Why Equitable, Purpose-Built Incident Reporting Is a Public Safety Imperative

A Public Safety Policy Brief | June 2026

The Moment That Demands a New Answer

Two stabbings and a random shooting within 2 weeks. In broad daylight. On trains that thousands of commuters, students, and families depend on every day. Large-scale media coverage ensued, graphic videos were posted to social media, and thousands of comments voiced raw fear, safety concerns, and grief. **Public confidence was seriously wounded.**

Riders who spoke to local media were blunt. One customer said simply:

It is dangerous. I do not like even riding really.

Another added: *You just have to be prepared to defend yourself.*

Police Can't Be Everywhere. Riders Are.

A sprawling transit network — cannot be staffed at a ratio of one officer per bus or train car. That is not a criticism of transit police; it is reality. The system is simply too large, too dynamic, and too resource-constrained for enforcement alone to serve as the primary safety layer.

What transit systems do have, in every vehicle, at every stop, at every hour, is riders. People with eyes on the environment, instincts about what feels wrong, and — given the right tool — the ability to alert police before a tense situation turns violent.

The logic is straightforward: when riders can report quickly and discreetly, **police gain the most valuable asset in any response scenario — time.** A two-minute head start is the difference between an officer arriving while something is still preventable and arriving to document what already happened.

Empowering riders is not a soft strategy. It is a force multiplier. And it only works if the reporting tool is actually used.

Rider Perception: The Fear Factor

Rider perception is a real operational signal. When the public feels less safe, ridership declines, fare revenue falls, and the downward spiral deepens. The time to address that perception — is

now, before it becomes a crisis of confidence that takes years to reverse.

Checking the Box Is Inadequate

Some transit agencies have responded to public safety pressure by pointing to a text-a-tip number as a way to report a concern. The implication is that some reporting function exists, therefore the need is addressed.

It is not.

Providing a phone number to report barely clears the bar. It is not enough for a robust safety program. Someone can check the box —  reporting solution provided — but **the outcome for riders is largely unchanged.**

If public safety is truly the top organizational priority — as virtually every transit authority states in its mission — then the standard for tools that support safety must match that stated priority.

What Purpose-Built Looks Like

Finely tuned incident reporting is not a feature — it is a discipline. The difference between a system that genuinely engages its community and one that performs engagement is visible in the details:

- **Speed.** A rider who sees a threat has seconds, to decide whether to act. The reporting interface needs the fewest possible taps to submit a concern.
- **Discretion.** On a crowded train or bus, pulling out a phone to report a bad actor sitting across the aisle requires that the reporting action is discreet. Design matters.
- **Channel equity.** To engage the most riders the system needs reports by text message, web form, email, voicemail and mobile app — allowing everyone to participate.
- **Operational integration.** Reports must reach the right people in real time, with enough context to respond— not sit in a queue to be reviewed the next morning.
- **Sustained promotion.** A tool that riders do not know about won't work. Active, ongoing rider communication — in stations, on vehicles — drives adoption.

These are the characteristics of systems that have been deployed, tested, and refined through more than a decade of operational experience across major transits and airports — delivering **boatloads of critical incident awareness** as a result.

Riders as Partners in Cleaning Up Crime and Grime

There is another dimension to purpose-built reporting that goes beyond violent crime: the daily, grinding quality-of-life issues that erode rider confidence and system perception over time. Graffiti. Unsanitary conditions. Aggressive panhandling. Drug use. Broken lighting that makes a platform feel unsafe at night.

These are the conditions that precede violence in the public safety research literature — and they are the conditions riders encounter every day before a stabbing makes the evening news.



A robust incident reporting platform turns riders into active participants in the safety of their transit system. They are not passive victims of a deteriorating environment; they are community members with a tool that lets them say: **this is not acceptable**, and here is where it is happening.

That kind of community engagement — riders helping to **clean up crime and grime from transit** — is both practically effective and symbolically powerful. It signals that the system takes their customer experience seriously. It builds the trust that makes riders feel ownership over their transit environment.

The Bottom Line for Transit Safety

The riders who spoke after the recent attacks were not asking for the impossible. **They were asking to feel safe.** They were asking for more security. They were asking for a transit environment that takes their concerns seriously before something terrible happens — not after.

The proof of concept is already documented. On May 10, 2026, a rider at DART's Victory Station **used the See Say app to report a man concealing a long gun** on the platform — with enough detail for officers to locate and engage the suspect, before a single bystander was harmed. That time-advantage window was opened by one engaged rider with the right tool.

Riders want to communicate with their transit. ELERTS' set of proven, purpose-built tools that give riders a real voice, give police the time advantage they need, and signal — clearly and credibly — that public safety is a top priority.

Riders are the network. When they are equipped, engaged, and trusted as partners in safety, the system is safer for everyone.

Your surveillance stack sees what it's pointed at.
Your citizens see everything else.

Cameras, license plate readers, gunshot detection, drones — your surveillance stack covers the areas it's deployed. ELERTS PROTECT captures intelligence from the source that covers everywhere else: the citizens already there.

THE GAP

Your CCTV records what happened. Your LPR logs plates that passed. Your gunshot detection fires after bullets fly. **None of them hear the argument escalating on the platform. None see the person slumped at the bus stop. None see the van circling the block.** Your citizens do. They just don't have a channel.

THE EVOLUTION OF TRIGGER TECHNOLOGY — AND THE MISSING LAYER

ERA 1 CCTV Triggered by activity only where cameras are pointed. Most cameras record-only. Video analytics are limited.	ERA 2 LPR Triggered when a camera pointed at vehicles matches a license plate to a database entry.	ERA 3 Gunshot Detection Triggered by acoustic events. 100% reactive, notify police after bullets fired.	ERA 4 DFR Triggered to fly after an incident is reported. Drones as First Responders need to be told where to go.	THE MISSING LAYER ELERTS PROTECT Triggered by human observation. Pre-incident. Contextual. Community-powered.
---	--	---	---	---

THE PROBLEM

911 is an emergency line. Not a prevention tool.

The threshold for calling 911 is high by design. Most citizens won't call until something has already happened. By then, the prevention window has closed. Social media is noise. Tip lines go unmonitored. Communities are watching — and have nowhere to send what they see.

THE SOLUTION

A direct line from citizen to dispatcher.

ELERTS PROTECT gives every citizen a structured, app-based channel to report what they see — with photo, location, and context — routed directly to your operations center. Reports arrive before incidents escalate. Dispatchers get ground-level intelligence no camera can match. Two-way acknowledgment closes the loop.

THE ADVANTAGE

Politically durable. Budget friendly. Community welcomed.

As cities debate rules for machine surveillance, ELERTS PROTECT works in every governance climate. Voluntary. Transparent. No passive population monitoring. No infrastructure. No maintenance contracts. Covers every block, park, transit stop, and garage — not just certain neighborhoods.

DEPLOYMENT RECORD

Transit · Aviation · Smart Cities

40+

Transit Agencies Deployed

Including Boston MBTA and Philadelphia SEPTA — the incumbent platform for the nation's 5th and 7th largest systems. Dallas DART, Trinity Metro, TRE, and the FIFA World Cup 2026 North Texas corridor.

5 of 15

Nation's Busiest Airports

Deployed across 5 of the nation's busiest 15 airports — including DFW — where operational tempo, liability exposure, and reputational stakes are highest.

Millions

of Reports Received

Millions of structured incident reports processed across transit, aviation, and smart city deployments — actionable intelligence, not noise.

30 sec

Report Submitted. Discreetly.

A high-quality report — photo, location, incident type — in under 30 seconds. No login required. Easy to use in any environment without drawing attention.

Smart Cities

Beyond Transit & Aviation

Deployed in municipalities, universities, healthcare facilities, and smart cities — any community where citizens should be part of the public safety solution, not just subject to it.

\$0

Hardware. Zero Infrastructure.

No cameras. No poles. No installation crews. Software only — deployable in days, not quarters. The quickest time-to-value of any tool in your public safety stack.

*"Every trigger-based system you've purchased records what happened. **ELERTS captures what citizens saw before it did.** That's where prevention lives."*

ELERTS Corp. · elerts.com

LEARN MORE

Add the human sensor layer to your public safety stack.

elerts.com/protect

