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A Reputation of Simplicity and Reliability Puts Proven Video Surveillance Management in the Hands of Metro

In 2002, King County Metro Transit (Metro), based in Seattle, Washington, instilled its commitment to the on-board safety of its passengers and drivers by installing a video surveillance system in its transit fleet. In 2006, Metro concluded that the system, which required continuous maintenance and repair, no longer met the agency’s needs. Like many other transit agencies across the country, Metro embarked on an exhaustive quest to find a new video and audio surveillance system that would stand the test of time, providing reliable video recording and seamless migration to newer generations of the always-changing technology.

Metro serves more than 1.9 million Seattle and King County area residents and has twice been honored as the best-run large public transportation system in North America. Metro operates a fleet of about 1,400 vehicles, including standard and articulated coaches, electric trolleys, dual-powered buses, hybrid diesel-electric buses and streetcars.

Metro was looking for a new form of video technology. It wanted a system that would be easy to manage, operate and play back, while cutting back on maintenance needs over the life of the system. The first generation digital video recording system in place regularly experienced problems with the operating system and power supply that resulted in a significant number of units struggling with reliability.

After nearly four years of ongoing issues, Metro decided it was time to make a change. Its leadership sought to invest in a replacement system that would easily connect to Metro’s existing wireless infrastructure, provide clear video footage and accept upgrades as technology improved. Above all, the system needed to have an established track record for longevity.

The process to procure a system that would meet those expectations was taken very seriously across the agency, spanning a 12-month request-for-proposal (RFP) period and an evaluation of eight video surveillance systems. This review was followed by an invitation to the top three bidders to participate in a two-month demonstration.

“When Apollo Video’s equipment was installed for the demonstration period, the systems not only provided clear video and audio recordings, but they also connected to our existing wireless infrastructure,” said Roland Bradley, King County Metro program manager. “We didn’t have to do anything extra to make the systems operate in our environment and that was a really pleasant surprise.”

Bradley managed the RFP evaluation, including reviews of references and the financial stability of each potential provider, preparing contracts and providing input into the final selection.

King County Metro Statistics:

- Headquarters: Seattle, Wash.
- Annual Ridership: 100 million
- Service Area: 2,134 sq miles
- Fleet Size: 1,400 vehicles
- Honored twice as the best-run large public transportation system

in North America

About King County:

Located on Puget Sound in Washington State, King County is nearly twice as large as the average county in the United States. With more than 1.9 million people, it also ranks as the 14th most populous county in the nation.

"We were very pleased with Apollo Video during the entire process," Bradley said. "The team was easy to work with, responsive and followed through on every item they said they'd promise to do. This provided a tremendous sense of relief for us."

The contract was signed with Apollo Video in 2008 and currently 373 RoadRunner On-Board Transit Systems have been installed.

According to Terry Williams, King County Metro vehicle maintenance chief of electronics, Apollo Video's equipment integrated easily with Metro's strict network security. Connectivity was at the top of Metro's list of "must-haves." Key considerations for the agency also included working with a company with a proven history of dependable customer service, financial stability and technological reliability.

Williams, who has been with Metro for 22 years, contributed his technical expertise to the evaluation process as he was familiar with the previous system. He found that Apollo Video's system withstood the strain of its mobile surroundings and its storage capacity allowed for recording high resolution video, at high frame rates, all the time.

"We were confident that we could just let the systems run," said Williams. "It stood out that Apollo Video's equipment was doing what we asked it to do the whole time."

The easy-to-use system supports Apollo Video's reputation of flawless operation and integration allowing Metro's staff to confidently manage maintenance and installation.

The RoadRunner On-Board Transit System includes several camera models designed for interior and exterior mounting, with options to include accessories such as stand-alone microphones, wireless LAN and cellular equipment, accelerometers and more. In addition to fleet-wide software compatibility, upgrade options include GPS capabilities, providing a map display of historical route location, data and graphs of vehicle speed.

Because of Apollo Video's dedication to incorporating new features and changing technologies into its DVRs, cameras and software, agencies like Metro may benefit from an open path to upgradability and new generations of technology.

These benefits allow Apollo Video to provide agencies with systems that outlast its competitors.

The five-year contract includes full interior coverage on Metro's 40 and 60-foot buses, with an additional forward facing camera positioned at the front window. Both configurations have the option to mount additional cameras for exterior security and forward-facing views.

Metro tested, and has now converted to, Apollo Video's next generation MRH series DVR for all of its ongoing installations. Two of Metro's new RapidRide coaches are equipped with the 12-channel DVR with three additional cameras mounted on the outside of the bus.

"One of the nice features of Apollo Video's MRH series is the option to have up to 16 cameras on one bus," said Williams. "RapidRide vehicles have a third door making the expanded capability very useful to us."

King County Metro Transit is Apollo Video's largest transit contract in Washington State. Apollo Video also provides video and audio surveillance on-board Everett Transit buses, a fleet serving Snohomish County, which is 25 miles north of Seattle.



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