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\$20M Video System Improves Houston Transit Authority's Efficiency

Jun 26, 2006, HOUSTON -- When the Metropolitan Transit Authority canceled its security guard contract for Park & Ride lots in January 2005, it replaced the on-site guards with roving Metro police and a promise to add surveillance cameras. Now those officers are about to get the long-awaited helping hand they were promised.

The Metro board recently voted to buy a \$20 million wireless video system for surveillance and traffic signal control.

With the new system, one officer in the Houston TranStar traffic control center can monitor activity at all 25 Park & Ride lots as well as the Hillcroft Transit Center. The equipment, purchased from Pfeiffer & Son Inc. of La Porte, Texas, is slated for final installation by early next year.

The life expectancy for the system is estimated to be 10 years. The MetroNet system will include 343 cameras, including pan-and-zoom and ultra-wide-angle fisheye models; 150 remote-controllable security gates; 110 emergency "blue phones"; 22 public address systems; and the software needed to operate them in an integrated manner.

The integrated software will enable a single person to monitor the entire 343 cameras. Intelligent video technology, available through software programming, is designed to recognize various kinds of suspicious activity. When such an event takes place, the software will flag the event for the operator, calling his or her attention. The software will recognize movement of various kinds, as well as colors and specific occurrences, such as a person walking from car to car in the parking lot.

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