

Maybe Cheaper Makes More Sense

Some political wags have suggested (with tongue in cheek) that the MTA would have saved money and had a more effective security program if it had hired local art students to do sketch renditions.

Seriously, “high tech” can be nice but if “regular tech” works why re-invent the wheel. Especially when the “high tech” finds itself mired in delays. Anyone recall the implementation – if that phrase even applied – of the E9-1-1? Is there some prohibition on installing cost-effective cameras that can be in place in a matter of months?

<http://www.amny.com/urbanite-1.812039/mta-spent-20m-on-cameras-that-don-t-work-but-a-cheaper-system-have-functioned-for-years-1.1851584>

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MTA spent \$20M on cameras that don't work, but a cheaper system have functioned for years

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The Astoria Ditmars Blvd Subway Station in Astoria, Queens has less expensive and operable surveillance cameras. (Andrew Hinderaker)

While hundreds of high-tech cameras that cost the MTA \$20 million are broken, cheaper models installed a few years back are doing their job pretty well, amNewYork has learned.

The simpler cameras, costing roughly half as much as the high-tech models that were contracted out, took about six months to install and have been used by police dozens of times to catch bank robbers and other criminals, elected officials say.

“It’s a no brainer,” said Assemb. Michael Gianaris, (D-Astoria), who secured \$288,000 to hang cameras at the Astoria-Ditmars Blvd. station on the N line in 2007.

In 2006, the MTA signed a \$20 million contract to install 900 high-tech cameras in 32 stations, including 14 in Manhattan. Those cameras were supposed to start rolling in 2008, but a key contractor went belly up that year, delaying the project, MTA spokesman Kevin Ortiz confirmed.

“Since that time, the MTA ... has continued to work to get the cameras online and all the locations will be fully operational by June of this year,” Ortiz said.

Ortiz did not elaborate on why the MTA chose the system they did in 2006.

But the simpler system designed and maintained in-house has been nabbing criminals for years. In 2005, Assemb. Dov Hikind, (D-Brooklyn), allocated \$1.2 million to get 120 closed-circuit cameras up in nine borough stations on the D, F and N lines. The system features \$400 Panasonic closed circuit cameras on the platforms, mezzanines and stairways, capturing more angles than the other MTA devices, which point at entrances and turnstiles, union officials say. The recording device costs about \$15,000 at each station.

“The cameras work well and saved the MTA lots of money by doing the work in-house,” said Pete Foley, a union official.

Workers pull footage from the cameras at least weekly, and helped nab a Brooklyn robber several years ago who menaced riders and slashed a woman on her wrist when she resisted handing over her purse, union officials say.

“It’s unquestionably been a deterrent,” Hikind said. “By this time, I thought the entire system would be wired.”

Subway safety has been in the spotlight recently after the Moscow bombing that killed more than 30 people, the MTA’s decision to cut 600 station agents, and the March 28 double slay that unfolded at the Christopher Street No. 1 station.

That station — like roughly 380 others in the system — doesn’t have a camera pointed at the turnstiles. And nearly half of the 4,313 security cameras that installed aren’t working, according to MTA figures.

System cameras:
4,313 cameras are in the stations
1,100 suffer from network problems
900 can’t record

Of the remaining 2,313 that work:
Several hundred cover 54 stations at entrances and turnstiles, including 30 Manhattan locations
130 are throughout 10 stations in Astoria and Brooklyn, including the Fort Hamilton Parkway and Ditmas Avenue stops in the F

Source: MTA, TWU Local 100