

Perceptions of Passenger Aggression and Car Supervision at Metrolink

Key Findings



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For more information see the full research paper:
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Key Findings

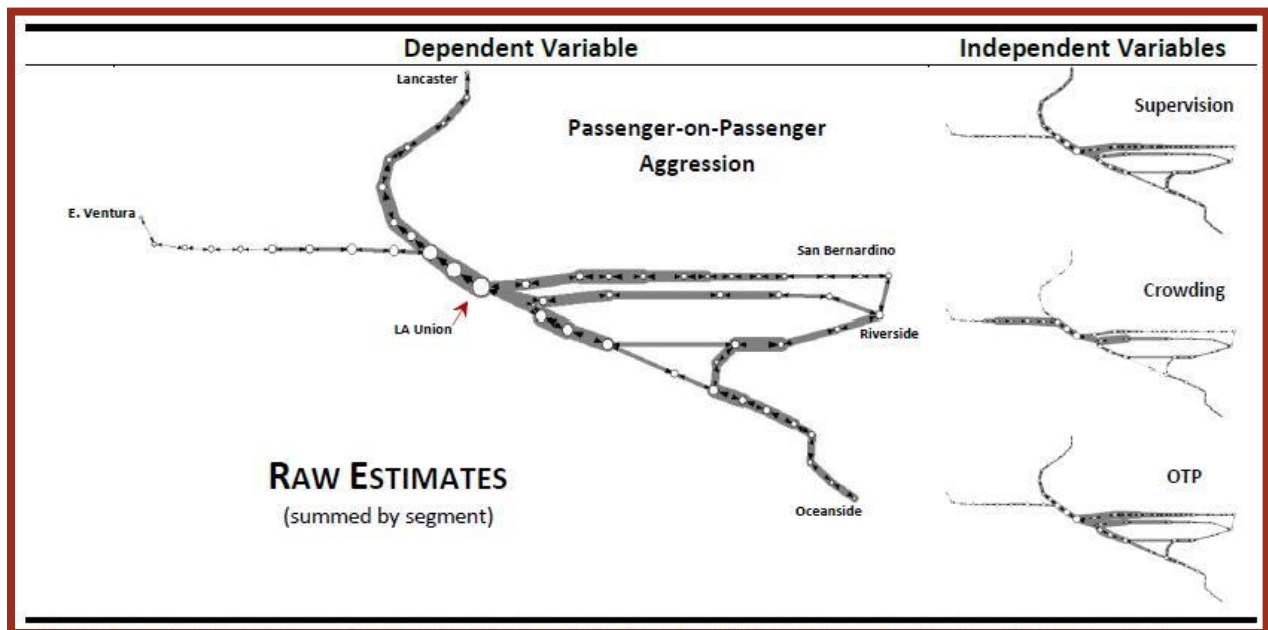
This study

Negative perceptions about the safety of a commuter rail system can act as a barrier to using public transportation. When operational issues increase rider tension (i.e., crowding or worsening on-time performance), or the management capabilities of conductors and law enforcement personnel are called into question, an upsurge in passenger-on-passenger aggression may occur. In turn, riders concerned about their safety may retreat to personal vehicles or other forms of “less risky” transit—such as express busses.

This study identifies the trip segments of the Metrolink system where rider reports and concerns about public safety concentrate, and examines whether they are associated with perceptions of car supervision (conductors and security), on-time performance and crowdedness of trains. Complaint information from August 1, 2009 to Dec 31, 2012 was extracted from an archive maintained by the Customer Engagement Department of Metrolink. Complaints from formal correspondence were used (e-mail, letters, and phone calls).

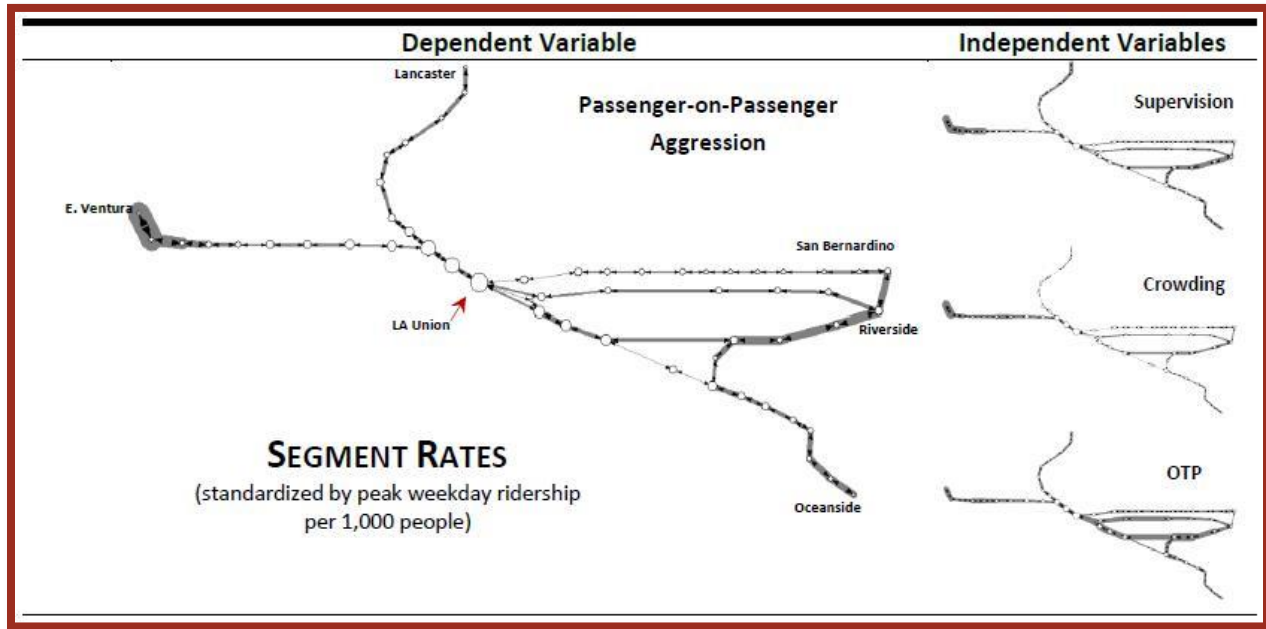
Reported incidents of passenger aggression

- Incidents concentrate in and around the center of the system, on the Antelope Valley line and on the Inland Empire-Orange County line
- Inbound: On-time performance is strongly associated with passenger aggression incidents
- Outbound: Most incidents cluster where complaints about car supervision concentrate



Concerns about safety

- Concentrate mostly at the beginning of the Ventura County Line (East Ventura), and on the Inland Empire-Orange County line
- Inbound: Greater concern about passenger aggression corresponds with complaints about car supervision
- Outbound: Crowded trains have the most impact on perceived safety



Summary and Recommendations

- Segments with a higher number of reported incidents differ from those where passengers are most concerned about their safety. Each problem requires a different set of measures. Tailored responses, focused on a few segments, stands to improve perceptions of safety, and ultimately, increase ridership.
- Car supervision is a factor associated with the number of incidents and the perception of safety. Addressing this issue will likely result in an improvement of both problems.
- Suggested strategies:
 - PREVENTION:** Directing security personnel and law enforcement to the segments with higher volume of aggressions (mostly located in and around the center of the system) could reduce the total number of aggressions happening in the system.
 - OUTREACH:** Conductors should be visible and available at the end of line stations and on the Inland Empire-Orange County line. Passengers need to be informed whom to call for safety concerns, i.e., when an altercation occurs, to prevent fear and concern from escalating.
- Further research on this topic should include direct measures of incidents of aggression and of perceived safety, using crime data and passenger surveys respectively, as well as measures of specific place management at each station.