Contact VTA Media Relations
408-464-7810 (no texts)
Media.Relations@VTA.org

May 25, 2023

VTA to Host First Cyber-Security Preparedness Exercise
Regional Partners Gather for Cyber Security Training

SAN JOSE, CA — Keeping public transit service and other government agencies safe from cyber criminals is the goal of a cyber-security preparedness training event that took place for the first time among the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) and other local public agencies.

In coordination with the U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA.) The "table-top" exercise focused on building the Santa Clara Valley region's cyber security defenses for public transportation infrastructure against threats, including denial-of-service ransom attacks, cyber-terrorists, "hacktivists," and cyber espionage.

In April 2021, VTA successfully fended off a cyber-attack in which the offenders threatened to release personal employee data they claimed to have. While the attack did not affect bus or light rail service, the agency was forced to proactively shut down computer systems for several days to protect against the possibility of major impacts to data. The incident led VTA to invest more in protection and preparedness with a new dedicated cyber-security team.

"Collaborating with internal and external partners will greatly enhance our operational readiness to keep our transit system safe from cyber threats that can impact our service," said Carolyn Gonot, VTA General Manager/CEO.

The training explored the challenge of Advanced Persistent Threats (APTs). It brought together multiple departments and agencies, including representatives from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Department, the San Jose Police Department, and other transit partners from the Bay Area.

VTA's executive team received a Cyber-Intelligence briefing, and senior directors and managers worked through various attack scenarios as a tool to build their resiliency and preparedness.

VTA will hold additional tabletop exercises in the months ahead to build on this training as part of a multi-year training and exercise program aimed at the prevention of cyber-attacks and the ability to protect VTA employees and customers from their impacts.

Federal authorities have issued new security directives for public transit agencies to strengthen their defenses against cyber-attacks. VTA will be the first in the nation to participate in the TSA 'Cy-BASE' program, which is a voluntary assessment of the agency toward evaluating defenses against cyber threats. These exercises will culminate in identifying best practices and solutions specific to VTA that will strengthen the agency's cyber program and build resiliency for the agency.

About VTA
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) is an independent special district that is responsible for bus, light rail and paratransit operations, transportation planning, and serves as the county's congestion management agency.