



MEDIA RELEASE

VICTOR VALLEY TRANSIT AUTHORITY

VVTA empowers passengers with ‘VVTA Watch’ mobile safety app

Hesperia, Calif. (July 19, 2017) – Victor Valley Transit Authority today launched VVTA Watch, the mobile safety app that empowers passengers to immediately report safety or security concerns, using their mobile phones or tablets.

Identifying a trend for heightened passenger safety and transit security, VVTA Board Member and Town of Apple Valley Council Member Barb Stanton introduced the concept of the app to VVTA staff and its board.

“Passenger and driver safety is paramount to maintaining an effective transit system,” said VVTA Director and Town of Apple Valley Council Member Barb Stanton. “We have a great track record for safety and security. The launch of VVTA Watch helps enhance that record and transit’s value to the community.”

The app enables crowd-sourced passenger reporting via the mobile smartphone app or text messaging, providing immediate situational awareness to the transit agency. VVTA Watch is now available for download on [Google Play Store for Android devices](http://vvta.org/watch-android) (<http://vvta.org/watch-android>) and [Apple App Store \(iTunes\) for iOS devices](http://vvta.org/watch-apple) (<http://vvta.org/watch-apple>).

With a click on the app, passengers may directly call 911, discretely call police, or discretely submit a report with an attached photo or video, an incident description, and the GPS location of the passenger. When taking a photo, the app automatically disables the camera flash to not draw attention. Passengers may also choose to submit a report anonymously. Alternatively, passengers may submit a report by text message to 760-201-1440. This may be useful for those who have standard mobile phones or those in rural areas that do not have an internet connection.

Once a report is initiated, two-way communication between the passenger and VVTA is established, enabling a dispatcher to request more detail about the situation or provide instruction to the passenger, as needed. The app allows passengers to report disruptive behavior, crime in progress, security or safety issue, as well as immediately threatening situations such as an assault or fighting among passengers or with the bus operator.

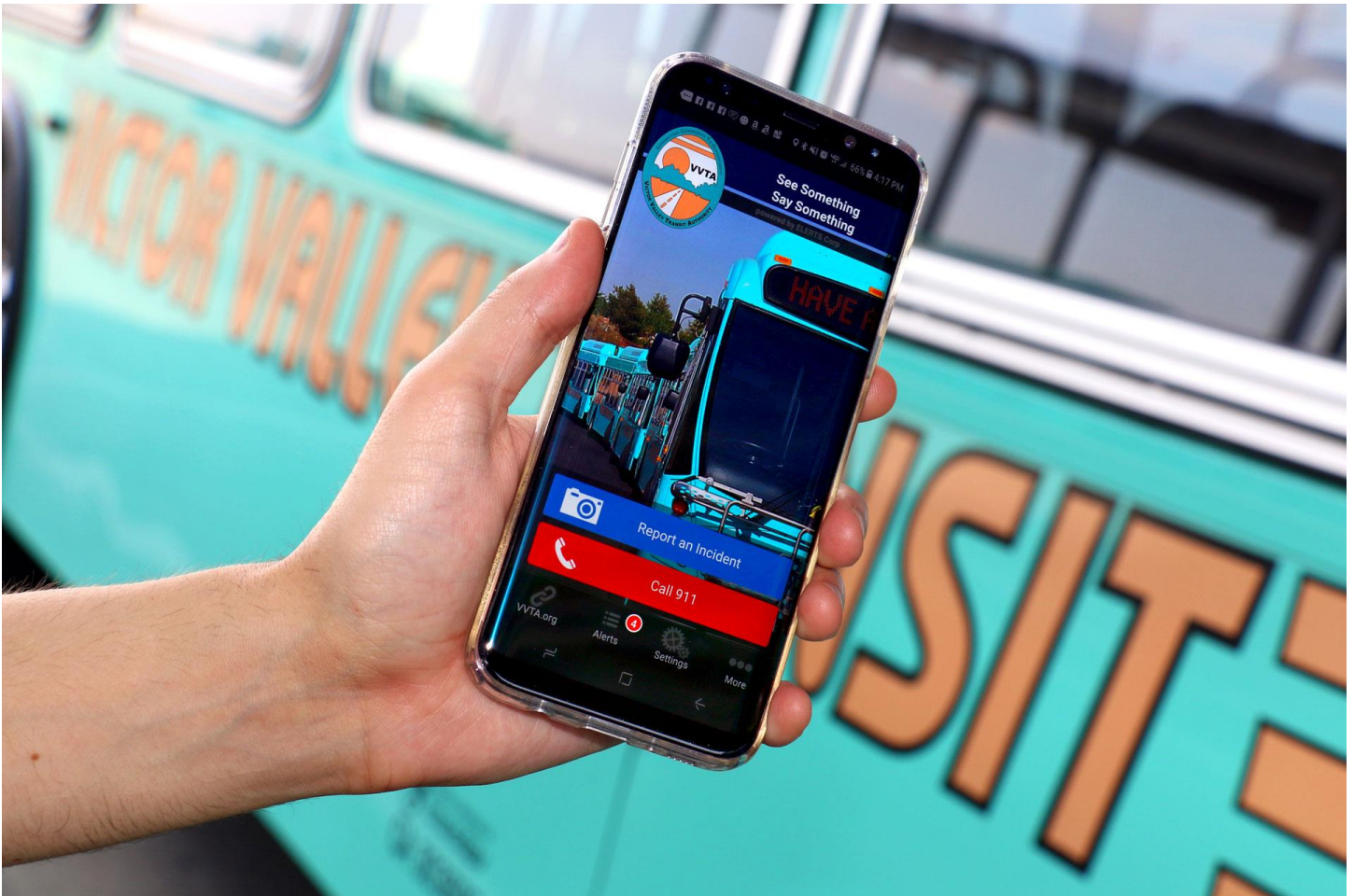
In addition to receiving messages from passengers, VVTA can use the communication system to broadcast service alerts and BOLO (Be On the Look Out) alerts to passengers and staff. Missing persons, dementia patients and criminal suspects can be more quickly located by asking passengers to help. Other transit agencies using this mobile app have had great success locating persons of interest by broadcasting a BOLO to passengers, often including a photo along with the details.

The mobile app developer, ELERTS, has deployed the off-the-shelf solution at major transit systems throughout the United States, including Atlanta MARTA, Boston MBTA, Buffalo/Niagara NFTA, Charlotte CATS, San Francisco BART and Santa Clara VTA. VVTA is the first small agency to deploy the passenger safety solution.

“ELERTS is excited to deliver its crowd-sourced incident reporting service to VVTA and its riders,” said Ed English, ELERTS’ chief executive officer. “We look forward to working closely with VVTA to help riders improve the overall safety of the transit system and be able to easily communicate with personnel. The voice of the rider is an important source of information for transit agencies.”

About Victor Valley Transit Authority

Victor Valley Transit Authority (VVTA) is a public transit agency and Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA), providing bus, ADA paratransit, and vanpool service to California's High Desert. VVTA's service area spans nearly 1,000 square miles, featuring service to Adelanto, Apple Valley, Barstow, Hesperia, Needles, Victorville and unincorporated San Bernardino County, including Daggett, Helendale, Hinkley, Lucerne Valley, Newberry Springs, Oak Hills, Oro Grande, Phelan, Pinon Hills, Wrightwood, and Yermo. Commuter service to Fort Irwin National Training Center (NTC) and connecting service from the High Desert to the Inland Empire is also provided. Additional information and service alerts are available at VVTA.org and [Twitter.com/VVTransit](https://twitter.com/VVTransit).



Victor Valley Transit Authority's mobile safety app, VVTA Watch, empowers passengers to immediately report safety or security concerns, using their mobile phones or tablets. VVTA Watch is available for free on the Google Play Store for Android devices and Apple App Store for iOS devices. PHOTO: Fidel Gonzales, VVTA

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

PDF & HIGH-RESOLUTION GRAPHICS: <http://vvta.org/2017/07/vvta-empowers-passengers-vvta-watch-mobile-safety-app/>