



Signal Failure?

How the police did not request footage from nine in ten of TFL's CCTV cameras in the past year

A Big Brother Watch report

December 2011

Key Findings

According to a Freedom of Information request made by Big Brother Watch to Transport for London,

- TFL operates at least **82,826 CCTV cameras**
- In the last twelve months, **6,972 police requests** for footage were granted by TFL
- Accordingly, **footage from 91.6%** of cameras was not used by the police

This is based on a generous assumption that footage from no camera was requested more than once, meaning that **just 8.4% of TFL's cameras were used in the prosecution of a crime.**

Consequently, **the police did not request footage from more than 9 in 10** (91.6%) of cameras.

Big Brother Watch's position

- Further investment in CCTV will not directly reduce crime
- Retaining the current level of surveillance directs resources which will have a greater impact both preventing and solving crime

Londoners are among the most surveyed people anywhere in the world, captured by cameras in nearly every aspect of their daily lives. Some reports have estimated that Britain is home to as many as 20% of the world's total CCTV cameras.

In November 2011 Transport for London announced it was looking to spend between £20m and £60m on its CCTV capability.¹ This research casts serious doubt on whether that investment will do anything to reduce crime or improve public safety.

The significant resources being spent on surveillance are diverting money away from policing methods that could prevent crime and protect the public. CCTV is not a substitute for policing.

This research highlights that it remains extremely dubious that further investment in CCTV will result in either any real increase in either criminal convictions or meaningful public safety, and continues to represent a disproportionate intrusion into the privacy of law abiding people.

The Metropolitan Police's own research found how fewer than one crime was solved by every 1,000 cameras in the capital. Yet the British fondness for CCTV shows no sign of waning, despite a lack of any credible evidence existing that CCTV either deters or prevents crime.

¹ http://england.unitedkingdom-tenders.co.uk/9821_The_Tfl_CCTV_Products_Framework_2011_London

Academic References:

In one study, looking at the Philadelphia Police Department, criminologists [Jerry Ratcliffe](#), [Travis Taniguchi](#), and [Ralph Taylor](#) explored the impact CCTV had on crime rates between 2005 and 2007. Their research accounted for seasonal trends and long-term issues, and found that the number of locations where CCTV reduced crime was equal to the number of locations it had no impact in.

A second study in 2003 by criminologists [Brandon Welsh](#) and [David Farrington](#) examined whether CCTV deterred crime more effectively than simple streetlights. They found that in car parks, CCTV was a more effective deterrent than streetlights. However, they found that in open public spaces such as city centres, improved lighting had a greater impact on reducing crime.

Methodology:

On 20 September 2011 the following Freedom of Information Act request was sent to Transport for London:

How many CCTV cameras does TFL currently monitor?

In the past twelve months, how many times has CCTV footage been requested by the police?

In the past twelve months, how many times has CCTV footage been handed over to the police?

If you could break the data down by mode of transport that would be appreciated.

About Big Brother Watch

Big Brother Watch was set up to challenge policies that threaten our privacy, our freedoms and our civil liberties, and to expose the true scale of the surveillance state.

Founded in 2009, we have produced unique research exposing the erosion of civil liberties in the UK, looking at the dramatic expansion of surveillance powers, the growth of the database state and the misuse of personal information.

We campaign to give individuals more control over their personal data, and hold to account those who fail to respect our privacy, whether private companies, government departments or local authorities.

Protecting individual privacy and defending civil liberties, Big Brother Watch is a campaign group for the digital age.

Table One: Total cameras operated and requests for footage

	Cameras		Total Cameras	Requests Made		Requests Granted	
	Station / Street	On Transport		Station / Street	On Transport	Station / Street	On Transport

Tfl Mode of Transport

Buses	1034	57500	58534	289	Unstated	239	Unstated
London Underground	13122	4000	17122	5602	175	5267	152
Victoria Coach Station	103	0	103	100	0	98	0
London River Services	118	18	136	4	0	3	0
London Overground	2014	1516	3530	626	89	626	70
Streets	1163	0	1163	98	0	3	0
Dial - A - Ride	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Trams	47	144	191	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated
Docklands Light Railway (DLR)	0	1067	1067	0	446	0	414
London Road User Charging Schemes	980	0	980	Unstated	0	Unstated	0

Total	18,581	64,246	82,827	6,719	710	6,236	636
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Table 2: Crime statistics on Transport for London

Quarter					
	I July - 30 September 2011	1 April - 30 June 2011	1 January - 31 March 2011	1 October - 31 December 2010	Total
Buses	5,095	5,741	6,073	5,904	22,813
London Underground	3,061	3,301	3,489	3,560	13,411
Victoria Coach Station	-	-	-	-	-
London River Services	-	-	-	-	-
London Overground	261	150	165	185	761
Streets	-	-	-	-	-
Dial - A - Ride	-	-	-	-	-
Trams	99	117	82	91	389
Docklands Light Railway (DLR)	-	-	-	-	-
London Road User Charging Schemes					
Total	8,516	9,309	9,809	9,740	37,374