

Newest terror foe may hide in your MetroCard machine

THIS VENDING MACHINE not only sells MetroCards — it can alert authorities when a potential terrorist is lurking and instantly lock turnstiles.

Two companies have teamed up to develop a machine that can detect whether the straphanger who just touched the start button or screen has recently handled explosives.

Alerts — including a digital image of the person at the machine and the type of substance detected — can be quickly transmitted to law enforcement officials, company officials said.

The device can be programmed to lock turnstiles at the station — and potentially beyond.

“This explosive-detection system may be implemented as the first line of defense against explosives threats to public transit systems,” said Cubic Corp. vice president Walt Bonneau. “There’s a good chance law enforcement will already be alerted before the guy leaves the machine.”

The Metropolitan Transportation

 **EXCLUSIVE**
BY PETE DONOHUE
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Authority is eyeing the merging of bomb-detecting, MetroCard and communications technology for possible deployment in its vast network.

A pilot project to test its effectiveness in a mass transit system is expected to be launched in Baltimore in the coming weeks.

“We will await the results of the testing,” MTA spokesman Tom Kelly said.

Cubic, which has teamed with GE Security, wouldn’t detail what substances can be detected. But officials said there would be safeguards to limit it — but not completely eliminate — false alerts.

The anti-terror MetroCard machine, if approved, would be just one component of a larger security network.

The MTA already has awarded a contract with Lockheed Martin to in-

stall motion sensors, surveillance cameras and other equipment that would relay information to command centers.

Cubic, which outfitted the 468 subway stations with MetroCard machines, turnstiles and related equipment, is a subcontractor on the Lockheed Martin contract.

The major goal, Cubic spokeswoman Jae Lande said, is increasing security without delaying riders or busting public authorities’ budgets.

Current MetroCard machines can be retrofitted for anti-terror duty, which would be cheaper than buying all-new equipment, she said.

A price tag has not been set.

“If it works . . . that would be great, but it should be subject to rigorous, tough testing,” said Gene Russianoff of the Straphangers Campaign.

“There’s a lot of pressure for the MTA to move ahead in the security area,” he said. “They should only do what’s effective and cost effective.”

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