



OCTAVIO JONES | Times

**Bus driver Eddie Torain waits for passengers at the Marion Transit Center in downtown Tampa on Thursday. Hillsborough and Pinellas transit agencies have stepped up security.**

## Transit agencies unsure on attacks

Eight months after a fatal knifing, Tampa Bay agencies lack data on violence against bus drivers.

BY CAITLIN JOHNSTON  
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — The outrage came swiftly after a passenger slit the throat of a Hillsborough bus driver in May.

Transit board members on both sides of the bay called for heightened security. Bus agencies spent millions of dollars to install plastic barriers meant to protect drivers. The Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority hosted a statewide safety summit and tested the panic buttons on its fleet of 180 buses.

"Safety and security is a core item," the agency's safety and security director Colin Mulloy told the board after driver Thomas Dunn's death. "It's paramount to everything that we do."

And then it happened again: In November, another Hillsborough driver was stabbed by a passenger and hospitalized. Hillsborough and the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority stepped up their efforts to put driver shields on all buses and repeated the mantra that safety is the top priority.

But eight months after Dunn's death, Tampa Bay's two largest transit agencies still haven't reported to their board members how many driver attacks occur and how serious they are — data that could be vital to helping leaders understand the problems their drivers face and how to fix them.

Each agency struggles with the answers for different reasons.

Hillsborough relies on a paper record system where driver assault documents are stored in a filing cabinet, mixed with missing-items reports and crash data. The *Tampa Bay Times* was told it would cost almost \$800 to pull the records. The agency later dropped the charge.

Pinellas transit officials use a digital system to store, code and track their incident reports. But the agency does not separate and track driver-related assaults.

Neither agency summarizes or shares this data on a regular basis with its board, executive director or drivers.

The *Times* analyzed spreadsheets from each agency, reviewed 860 cases and read more than **See DRIVERS, 4A**

# Basketball great Kobe Bryant dead



TNS (2019)

**Gianna Bryant, 13, and her father, former NBA player Kobe Bryant, shown here at the WNBA All-Star Game in 2019, shared a love for basketball, with Bryant serving as her coach and taking her to games. For additional coverage, see Sports, 1B.**



MATT HARTMAN | Associated Press

**Fans of Bryant gather at a memorial to him in front of the Staples Center, home of the Los Angeles Lakers, on Sunday.**

## The NBA star and one of his daughters are killed in a helicopter crash.

BY BEN GOLLIVER AND MIRANDA GREEN  
Washington Post

LOS ANGELES — Basketball lost one of its greatest competitors and most accomplished players Sunday, when Los Angeles Lakers legend Kobe Bryant died in a helicopter crash in California. The five-time NBA champion and two-time Olympic gold medalist was 41.

Bryant was riding in an S-76 helicopter Sunday when it crashed just before 10 a.m. into a hillside near Calabasas, Calif., about 30 miles northwest of Los Angeles. The flight manifest listed one pilot and eight passengers on board and there were no survivors, according to local authorities. Gianna Bryant, the former player's 13-year-old daughter, was confirmed dead.

Bryant lived south of Los Angeles in coastal Orange County for much of his adult life, and he often used **See BRYANT, 8A**

# Spread of China contagion accelerates

The infection rate leaps 50 percent in a day. U.S., others prepare to leave outbreak's center.

BY KEN MORITSUGU  
Associated Press

BEIJING — A new viral illness being watched with a wary eye around the globe accelerated its spread in China on Sunday with 56 deaths so far, while the U.S. Consulate in the city at the epicenter announced it will evacuate its personnel and some private citizens aboard a charter flight.

Meanwhile, the number of

confirmed cases in the U.S. rose to five, all among people who traveled to Wuhan, the city at the center of the outbreak, health officials said Sunday. Two new cases were reported Sunday — one in Los Angeles County in California and the other in Maricopa County, Ariz.

China's health minister said the country was entering a "crucial stage" as "it seems like the ability of the virus to spread is

getting stronger."

Ma Xiaowei declined to estimate how long it would take to bring the situation under control, but said travel restrictions and other strict measures should bring results "at the lowest cost and fastest speed."

He told reporters Sunday that the virus is infectious during its incubation period, meaning that a person could spread it to others before experiencing symptoms. That's a significant difference from the SARS (severe acute respiratory syn- **See CHINA, 10A**



MARK SCHIEFELBEIN | Associated Press

**A worker in a hazardous materials suit checks the temperature Sunday of a passenger at a subway station entrance in Beijing.**

# Bloomberg in Tampa: 'I'm the un-Trump'

With a bit of wit, the billionaire Democrat on Sunday greeted 300 potential voters.

BY STEVE CONTORNO  
Times Political Editor

TAMPA — Perhaps a comedy club should've hosted Michael Bloomberg's first campaign event in Florida.

The former New York City mayor's introduction to Florida voters on Sunday was a winding, 3-minute set of one-liners. He riffed on crab claws, his bill for breakfast at Trip's Diner in Seminole Heights, the Tampa Bay Rays, Derek Jeter, Boston sportswriters, baseball's sign stealing scandal and snowbirds.



LUIS SANTANA | Times

**Candidate Michael Bloomberg said he would spend \$1 billion to defeat President Trump no matter who wins the nomination.**

"I know you might be surprised to see me here," Bloomberg deadpanned. "I'm a New Yorker in Florida in mid-winter.

It's highly unusual." That last quip, a vow to make President Donald Trump a full-time Florida resident, sent the

300 at Embarc Collective in downtown Tampa into a frenzy. Bloomberg said he is the only candidate with the experience, the message and, yes, the money, who can make that happen.

There were plenty of people in the room who believed him.

"He'll get under Trump's skin," said Clarence Peterson, a 28-year-old teacher from Bradenton and a Republican who opposes his party's leader.

Christie Fischer said she was rooting for Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and she adores former Vice President Joe Biden. He once kissed her on the cheek.

"In an ordinary election year, they would be fine. But this year **See BLOOMBERG, 7A**

## DEPUTY SHOOTS, KILLS DOG AT GASPARRILLA PARADE

The dog on Saturday attacked Romeo, a horse with the Sheriff's Mounted Unit for 14 years, the Hillsborough Sheriff's Office said. **Local, 8A**

## Report pushes call for Bolton testimony

The impeachment trial continues today and there's a new report that President Trump told former security adviser John Bolton in August that he wanted to withhold military aid to Ukraine unless it aided investigations into the Bidens. **Nation, 6A**

## With a new year, new health costs

When illness strikes, or prescriptions are needed, patients have to pay up until meeting their out-of-pocket costs. There are places to turn. **Focus: Your Money, 5A**

## A shower

8 a.m. 4 p.m. 8 p.m.

57° 66° 68° 64°

55% chance of rain  
**More, back page of Sports**

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