

BRT QUARTERLY

Spring 2004



AC Transit Markets the Rapid

Marketing efforts for the San Pablo Rapid Bus corridor (the "Rapid") in Oakland, California, have proven to be a significant factor in the system's success. The 14-mile route travels through seven cities, from Contra Costa College to downtown Oakland. Service on the Rapid began in June 2003. Since then, preliminary results of ridership and running time have shown improvement for the corridor. Ridership on the route has increased 22 percent while running time samples indicate improvements of 17 percent.

A portion of federal funds for the service was designated for marketing. AC Transit hired a marketing professional to assist the marketing team, which began development of a plan in April 2003 in preparation for the opening of the system in June. Five goals were the center of the marketing efforts:

- Increase the number of choice riders
- Increase the number of transfer riders

- Increase ridership along the corridor
- Develop business partners
- Increase the number of vendors along the corridor



New VanHool buses with the Rapid logo provide service along the San Pablo corridor.

Marketing activities included the following.

- A Rapid logo was developed to differentiate from local service, and AC Transit distributed hats, pins, and shirts imprinted with the logo among employees, the public, and planners and operators of AC Transit.

- Four months after service began, a lively "Whistle Stop" tour was held, with Rapid buses stopping amid band music and refreshments along the corridor in each city to present plaques in appreciation for their participation.

- Media outlets were used to market the Rapid, including a commercial with the theme "Live Your Life in the Fast Lane" airing on local cable stations and advertisements showing in movie theaters.
- Multilingual door hangers with free ride tickets attached were distributed in locations within ¼ mile of the route.
- A business partner plan was developed to encourage local businesses to promote the Rapid. Three commitment levels—the Gazelle,

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Silver Line's On-board Survey Results Available

In July 2002, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) launched service on the Silver Line, the first BRT line in Boston. The Silver Line's 60-foot-long, low-floor vehicles are powered by compressed natural gas and equipped with intelligent transportation systems and, by traveling in reserved bus lanes and employing Global Positioning Satellite technology, the buses provide frequent and reliable service.

In contrast to the bus route that previously served Washington Street, ridership was high by the time of the first ridecheck in the fall of 2002. In its first months of service, there was a noticeable increase, and, by summer 2003, ridership had doubled to more than 14,100 daily boardings, and Sunday ridership was up by 127%. Marking the first anniversary of service, a customer survey was conducted to determine, among other things, who the new riders were, how they traveled before, and what aspects of the Silver Line they found particularly attractive.

The Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) and staff from MBTA developed the survey, and CTPS administered it. Included were standard questions related to origin and destination, trip purpose, access/egress to

the service, gender, and income, as well as previous method of travel, attitude towards the amenities, and method of payment.

Results indicated that the largest percentage of trips was home-based work trips, accounting for 45% of all



60-foot articulated buses were added to the Silver Line in summer 2003.

trips for both directions. Women outnumbered men, accounting for 63% of riders. A total of 63% of customers accessed the Silver Line by walking to it, and 72% used walking as their egress mode. The survey results indicated that 52% of the riders used Route 49 prior to the Silver Line service. Rail transit or other bus routes had provided an alternate means of transport for many. 15% might have walked; however, only 6%

indicated walking as their only prior mode of travel. Some other alternatives included trips that were not made and some people drove.

In contrast to previous Route 49 riders, a larger percentage of new riders were between 18 and 24 (15% in 2003 versus 3% in 1995). Approximately 26% of riders were from households with incomes below \$20,000 (the lowest income category), and 15% were from households with incomes over \$80,000 (the highest income category listed). A total of 91% indicated that speed and convenience were among the reasons for using the Silver Line.

"The survey results make it clear that transit services do not necessarily have to be delivered on rails to be efficient and reliable," said MBTA General Manager Michael H. Mulhern. "The Silver Line has

proven to be the dependable alternative for people who seek a safe and affordable mode for commuting."

For more information, contact Maureen Trainor at mtrainor@mbta.com.

For updated information on BRT and to subscribe to the BRT Quarterly newsletter, visit the National Bus Rapid Transit Institute (NBRTI) website at www.nbrti.org



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Our Mission

The mission of the National Bus Rapid Transit Institute is to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and innovation for increasing the speed, efficiency, and reliability of high-capacity bus service through the implementation of BRT systems in the United States.

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FTA Evaluates BRT Systems in the U.S.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA's) Bus Rapid Transit Demonstration Initiative is supporting demonstrations of BRT systems across the U.S. To determine what aspects of BRT are most effective, FTA is conducting evaluations of systems in several cities. Evaluations have been completed in Honolulu, Pittsburgh, Miami, and Orlando, and two are under way in Las Vegas and Oakland; an evaluation of Boston will begin soon.

Aspects of BRT that are monitored being evaluated include the level of transit demand and the type of service and facility offered. Data will be collected to evaluate the operational performance of the system including travel time, ridership, impacts on land use, costs and productivity, and public perception. Information also will be collected to evaluate BRT system components, including data on running ways such as bus lanes on arterials, fare collection methods, the implementation of ITS technologies (where applicable), marketing and promotional efforts, and system design at stops and/or stations and on vehicles.

The results of an on-board survey will be included in the evaluation process to assess the effects of BRT on travel behavior and is intended to compare data collected along the BRT routes before system implementation to results found after. The surveys will collect information on trip origin and destination, departure time, trip purpose, fare paid, socioeconomic characteristics such as income and family size, and other aspects related to transit use in the selected area.

To generate person or vehicle trip tables, the contractor will collect cordon/screen line counts of vehicle traffic (vehicle counts that cross over a specific boundary). These counts will provide an understanding of the number of total trips traveled along the corridor. In addition, license plate surveys followed by a single mail-back origin/destination questionnaire or a survey requesting participants to fill out and return by mail may be distributed to further the results.



Results of the evaluations will be made available on the web site of the National BRT Institute, anticipated in summer 2005.

AC Transit—continued from cover

the Antelope, and the Cheetah—were available for interested businesses, each offering businesses a listing on the AC Transit webpage, 100 free tickets for employees and customers, 10 lapel pins, 2 t-shirts, and 2 hats. The higher levels additionally offered the posting of business bios on the AC Transit webpage, links to the business website, an opportunity to advertise on the NextBus electronic signs

at Rapid stops, and additional tickets, t-shirts and hats. The businesses were asked to display Rapid brochures and posters in the workplace and have employees wear Rapid apparel once a month and encourage the use of the system. To date, a total of 31 businesses have are participating in the program.

Marketing of the Rapid is a notable model for transit agencies trying to sell their system to the community.

AC Transit believes that public perception of the Rapid is greater because of these marketing efforts, estimate that 50% of its success is by of word by mouth and 50% is a result of marketing.

For more information, contact Nichele Ayers at nayers@actransit.org.



- Sunday - Wednesday, May 2-5, 2004—**APTA Bus and Paratransit Conference**, Marriott City Center, Denver, CO. For more information, visit www.apta.com/conferences_calendar/bus or contact Gloria Smith at gsmith@apta.com.
- Wednesday - Thursday, May 5-6, 2004—**TRB/APTA Bus Rapid Transit Conference**, Hyatt Regency, Denver, CO. For more information, visit www.apta.com/conferences_calendar/bus or contact Gloria Smith at gsmith@apta.com.
- Monday - Wednesday, August 9-11, 2004—**APTA Intermodal Operations Planning Workshop**, Fairmont Hotel, Vancouver, British Columbia. For more information, visit www.apta.com/conferences_calendar/intermod or contact Larry Pham at lpham@apta.com.

TECH CORNER—Electronic Fare Collection Can Improve Trip Time

Electronic fare collection incorporates different technologies and methods that provide a fast, cashless interface for the passenger. All types of fare collection require a fare media and equipment to add value to the media and to read and charge for trips taken. The use of two types, magnetic stripe and smart card technologies, have proven benefits.

Station-based or vehicle-based fare collections help reduce dwell times and increase passenger convenience. Station-based electronic fare payment utilizes electronic media in the collection of transit fare at the station. With vehicle-based electronic fare payment, fare collection occurs on the vehicle.

Electronic fare collection can be utilized in a number of fare collection environments, and four strategies can be considered for BRT systems:

Self-Service Barrier-Free (also known as Proof-of-Payment—POP) - uses electronic media to purchase a ticket or validate a farecard; may require inspectors to use hand-held readers; most common in Europe and some U.S. light rail operations.

Barrier - faregates read the farecard and deduct the value of the trip



or indicate the validity of a pass; most typical in U.S. heavy rail operations, some foreign BRT operations such as Curitiba (Brazil) and Canada, and a few in North America (Seattle).

Conductor-Validated - conductors use hand-held farecard readers/processing units; most common on commuter rail operations.

Pay on Boarding - requires ticket processing units/card; used by most U.S. bus operation.

Although each strategy offers certain advantages, the most significant factors to consider when determining which to employ are: 1) station or platform configuration and constraints, and 2) expected passenger

volume. Most current BRT research indicates that a self-service barrier-free system is preferred. However, this type of system is not typically used in North America except for in a handful of light-rail operations. Self-service, barrier-free operation provides two primary operational benefits: passholders can board through any door, and fare collection is not on the actual vehicle, which decreases station dwell time. Self-service barrier-free is preferred since BRT stations and stops will be in an environment featuring open platforms, many at or near street level.

Ultimately, the selection of fare collection strategy will be based upon the tradeoff between ITS technology, physical design, and vehicle design and service operations within the BRT operations corridor and station area. Other options include a barrier system if it is possible to install faregates and establish a clearly defined paid area, or an on-board payment method.

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