

# Quantifying the Importance of Image and Perception to BRT

*Alasdair Cain, Senior Research Associate*

*Jennifer Flynn, Research Associate*

*National Bus Rapid Transit Institute (NBRTI)*

*Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR)*

*University of South Florida, Tampa*

# Study Purpose

- Assess the extent of the relationship between positive image and ridership gain
- Quantify the impacts of BRT system design elements in terms of image
- Provide guidelines and recommendations to assist transit agencies

# Talking Points

- Ridership and market trends
  - Focus on choice riders
- Image and perceptions
  - Auto
  - Bus
  - Rail
  - BRT
- Elements of BRT

# Ridership Trends

- Transit's Golden Age
  - Transit networks extensive, fast, convenient
  - Significant portion of the population depended on transit for mobility
- Today's transit market
  - Dispersed land uses, auto dominance
  - Phases of life related to demographics and dependence
    - Low income, elderly, young, students, new to career

# Today's Transit Market

- Many will ride during a certain life stage, few will ride for a lifetime
  - Driving becomes an option
  - Transit is no longer adequate
- Transit market is now discretionary (choice riders)
- High turnover, many new riders at any given time

# Focus on Choice Riders

Ridership growth will require attracting choice riders

- Transit-dependent riders
  - Large portion of transit users
  - Small portion of total population
- Car owners
  - Potentially large portion of transit users
  - Large portion of total population

# Focus on Customers!

- Use transit market research to:
  - Attract new riders
  - Retain current riders
- View riders as consumers that have choices (not “captive riders”)
- Recognize the importance of image and perceptions in consumer decision-making
  - More discerning market
  - Constantly appeal to new customers

# Image of Automobile

- A way to get from A to B
- Statement of prestige
- Extension of personality
- Values and lifestyle preferences
  - Mobility
  - Convenience
  - Personal freedom
  - Individuality
  - Privacy
- Promoted by being shown (design)

# Image of Automobile

- Image  $\leftrightarrow$  Functionality
  - *Sexy* sports car
  - *Refined* luxury sedan
  - *Tough* truck
- What's in a name?
  - Speed, danger, stealth, power
  - Jaguars, Spiders, Mustangs, Firebirds, Cobras, Colts
- Cars advertised in nature
  - Leisure, rural escape
  - Gliding effortlessly through wilderness landscapes



# Image of Conventional Bus Service

- Conventional bus service has a negative image relative to rail
- Reputation of bus service:
  - Unreliable
  - Lumbering
  - Inconvenient
  - Crowded
  - Dirty
  - Unsafe

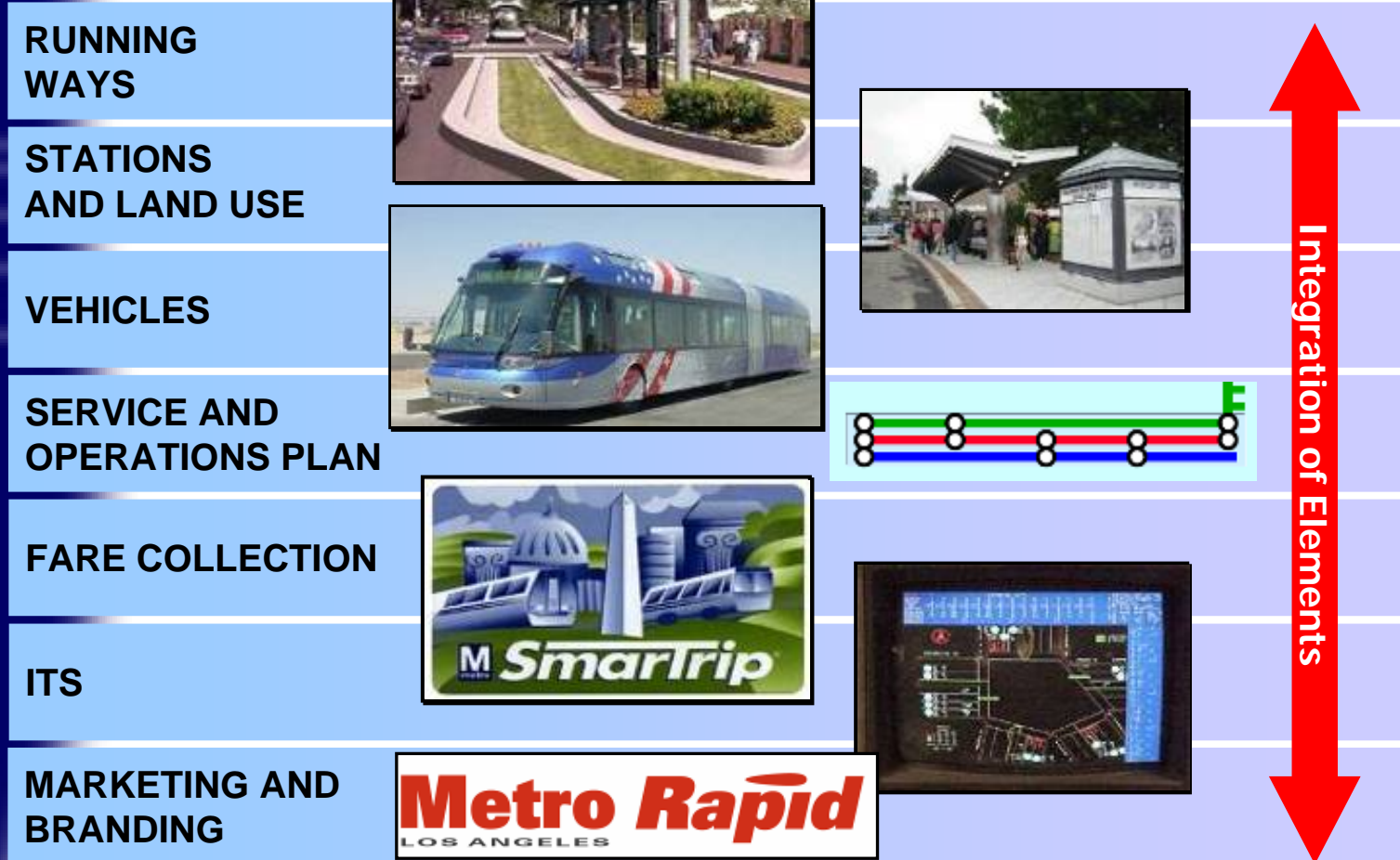
# Image of Light Rail

- Image benefits
  - Clear, understandable routes
  - World class city reputation
  - Economic growth (permanence)
  - Greater livability
- Perceptions of choice riders?
  - Rail
    - High quality service
    - Urbane lifestyle
    - Contemporary professional
  - Bus
    - Low quality service
    - Transportation of last resort

# Image of BRT

- Services- intangible, high risk purchases
- Image is highly important
  - Confidence
  - Security
  - Quality guarantee
- Strong, integrated image
  - Distinguish BRT from regular bus service
  - Convey important user information
  - Provide tangibility

# BRT: an Integrated System of Elements



# Service Quality

- Increased convenience
  - Advanced fare collection
  - Real time information
  - Multiple doors
  - Precision docking
- Ride quality
  - Automated guidance
  - Clean propulsion



# Service Quality

- Reliability
  - Exclusive ROW
  - Signal priority
- Permanence
  - Running ways
  - Stations



*Source: Lane Transit District*

# Branding

- Close the gap between existing and desired image
- Brand BRT as innovative new “mode”
- Solidify identity of BRT system
- Logo and color scheme
  - Vehicles
  - Stations
  - Signs and maps
- Way finding
- Confidence to consumer

# Bus and Rail

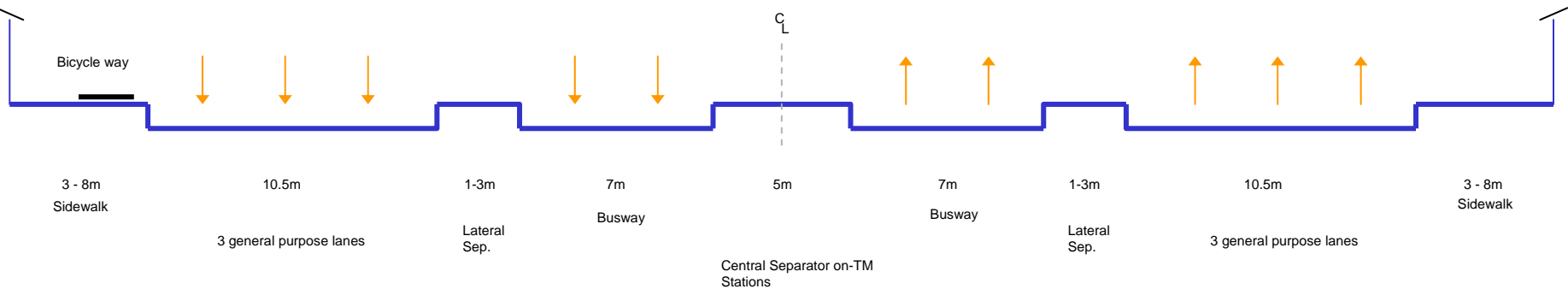


Source: The Mission Group © 2006

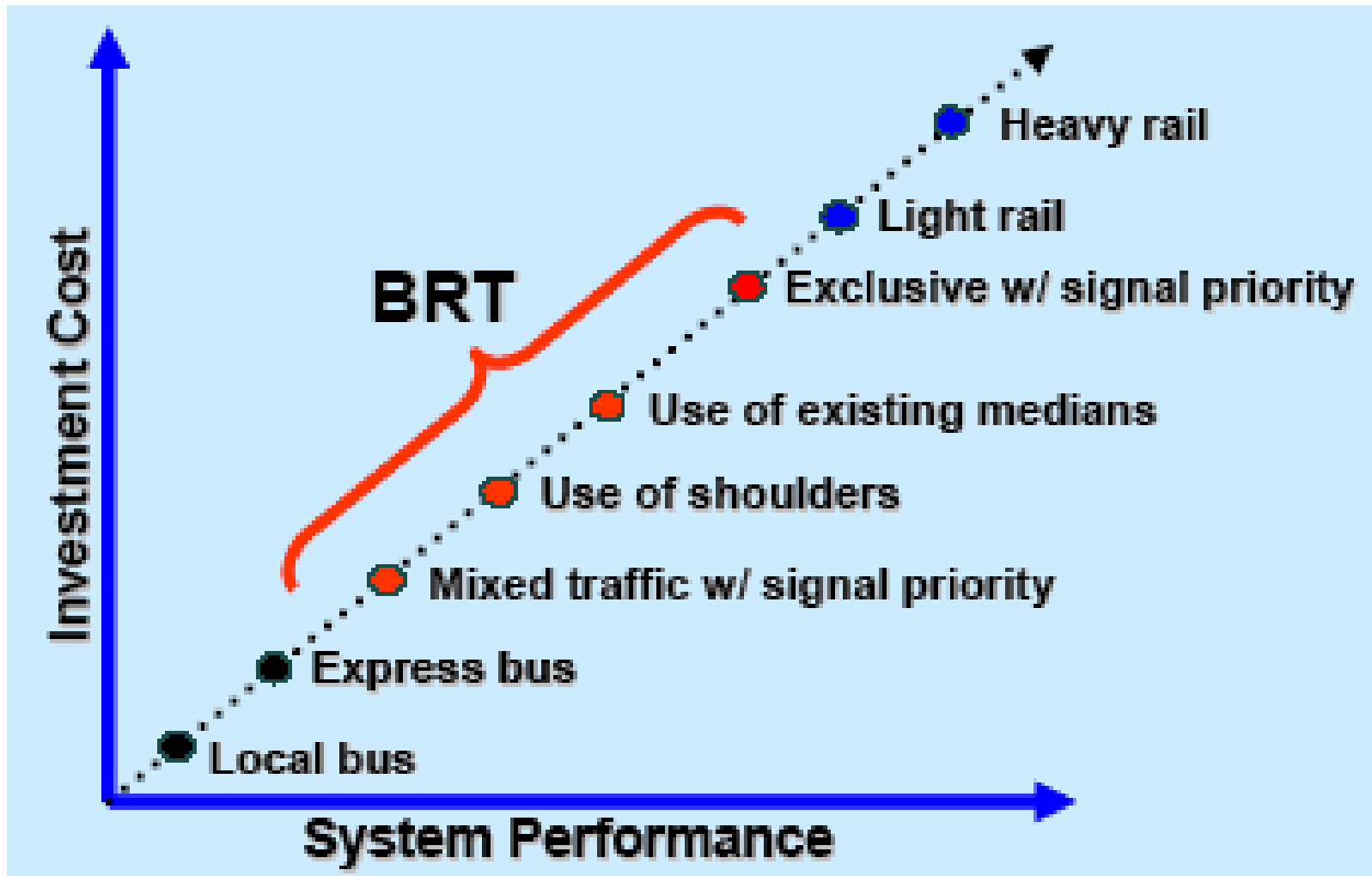
# BRT and LRT



# TransMilenio Infrastructure

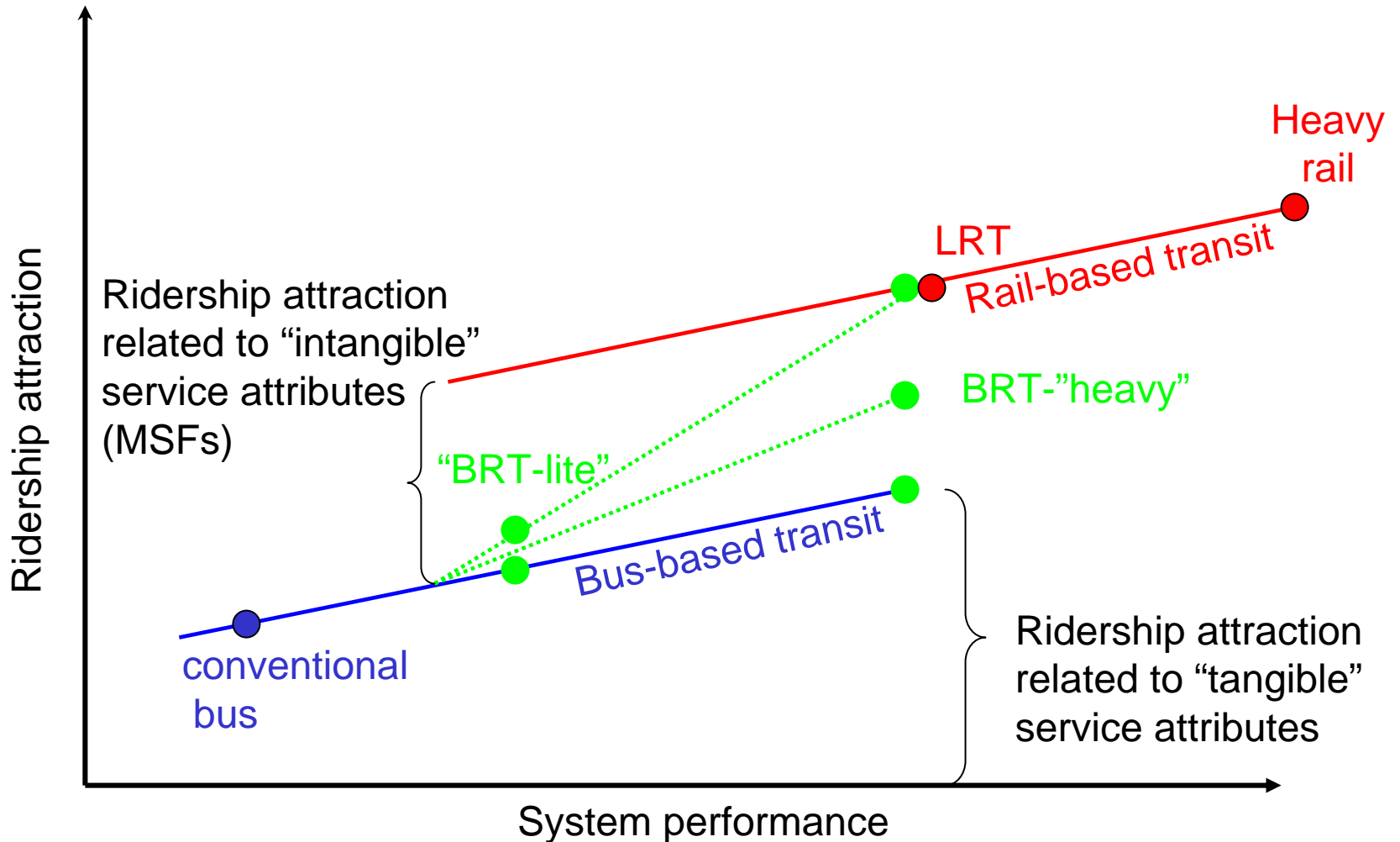


# Transit Mode Performance and Cost



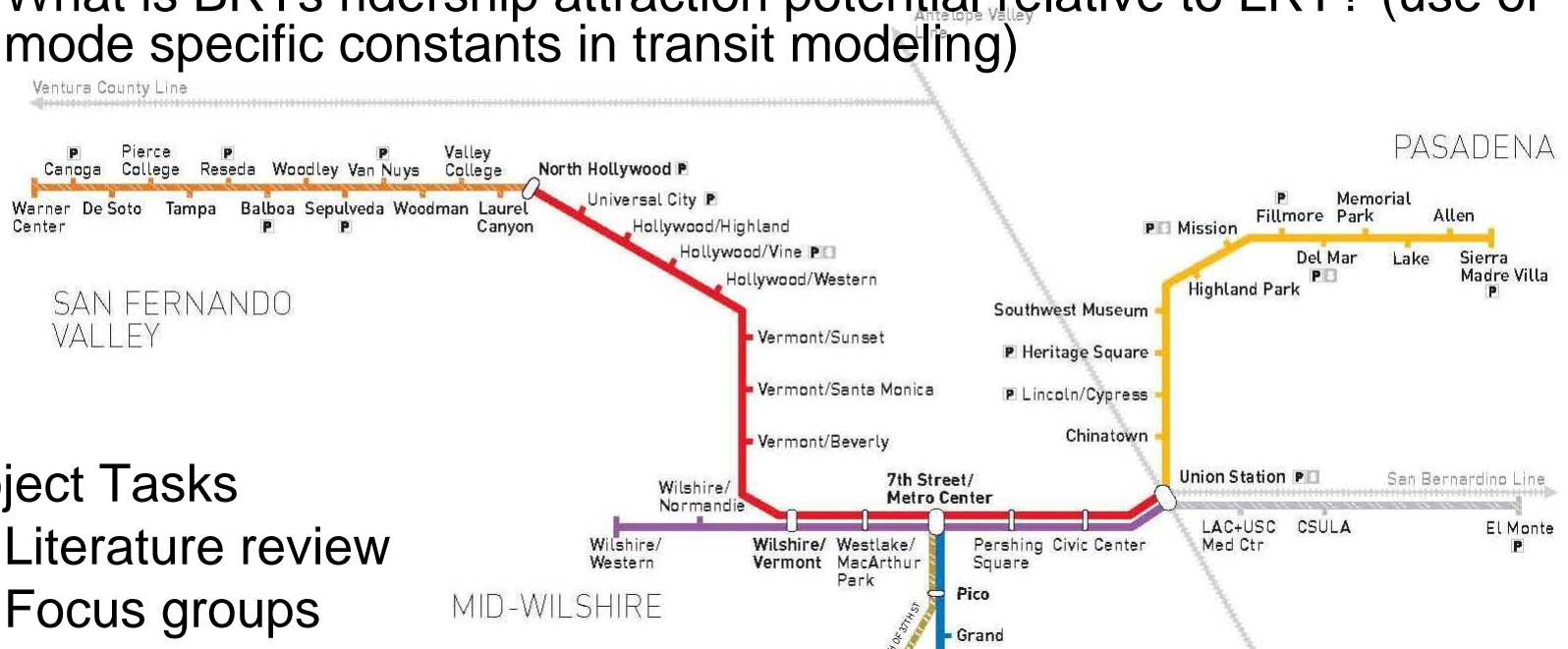
Source: Tindale Oliver

# Ridership Attraction – Tangible and Intangible Service Attributes



# Our Study

- Issues to investigate:
  - Do people perceive BRT and LRT differently?
  - How do public perceptions of different types of BRT compare to rail?
  - How do the different BRT elements contribute to the mode's overall "image"?
  - What is BRT's ridership attraction potential relative to LRT? (use of mode specific constants in transit modeling)



- Project Tasks
  - Literature review
  - Focus groups
  - Stated preference survey
- Scheduled for completion December 2007

# Thank you for your attention

Alasdair Cain  
Senior Research Associate  
[cain@cutr.usf.edu](mailto:cain@cutr.usf.edu)  
Tel: +1-813-974-5036

Jennifer Flynn  
Research Associate  
[flynn@cutr.usf.edu](mailto:flynn@cutr.usf.edu)  
Tel: +1-813-974-6529

National Bus Rapid Transit Institute  
[www.nbrti.org](http://www.nbrti.org)

Center for Urban Transportation Research  
[www.cutr.usf.edu](http://www.cutr.usf.edu)

University of South Florida  
Tampa, Florida, USA

**National**  
**BRT**  
**Institute**

