Quantifying the Importance of Image and Perception to BRT

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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 ↔ 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
Consumer Behavior

- Image and perceptions matter
- Functional  Perceptual
  ⟷
  Tangible  Intangible
- Image/perceptions break the tie
- How much does image matter for BRT?
  - Image- rider attraction
  - Service quality- rider retention
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

RUNNING WAYS

STATIONS AND LAND USE

VEHICLES

SERVICE AND OPERATIONS PLAN

FARE COLLECTION

ITS

MARKETING AND BRANDING
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

![Diagram showing the relationship between ridership attraction and system performance for different types of transit systems.]

- **Ridership attraction related to “intangible” service attributes (MSFs)**
- **Ridership attraction related to “tangible” service attributes**

Types of transit systems:
- Conventional bus
- Bus-based transit
- BRT-lite
- BRT-heavy
- LRT
- Rail-based transit
- Heavy rail
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 BRTs 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

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