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We began DRT service on September 16, 1974, after more than a year of planning and carried 603 riders the first day. At the end of 7 days, we had a total of 4,277 passengers. Our passenger response to DRT has been about 3 times that of other DRT operations of comparative size. We are encouraged by this.

The enthusiastic response to our initial service is the good news about our service. The bad news is the trouble people had getting through on the telephone to get a bus to provide them with door-to-door service. Part of the telephone tie-up is based on our call-back procedure. To eliminate no-show customers, control room operators are instructed to call back and get verification. We leave it to the discretion of the individual operator as to whether a call-back is needed. After the first few days of being swamped with phone calls, we installed 2 additional trunk lines for outgoing calls in order to free the regular DRT numbers.

Even with the call-back procedure, however, we experienced a sizable number of no-show customers; the first week we had some 1,200. That number has been daily declining, and we feel that the initial pranksters have gotten their tomfoolery out of their systems or, I should say, out of our system.

Statistics on numbers of people carried and numbers of telephone calls do not tell the story. The most rewarding experience for us has been the response of the people: senior citizens who call and thank us for providing them with a way to get to the doctor's office or a friend's house, housewives who can now get to and from the grocery store, unemployed people who can get to a job interview.

The area that we are serving is a 5-mile² (13-km²) district in the heart of Richmond. Some streets are narrow and have speed-control dip gutters, which make operation of a conventional bus impossible. Turns at some intersections are impossible for a 35-ft (10-m) coach.

Faced with this problem, we decided the right DRT vehicle would be a minibus, but we were not satisfied with the small buses on the market. So we took 13 of our conventional buses, cut out a 6-ft (1.8-m) section, and rejoined the ends to make coaches with a short turning radius. This included, by the way, removing the rear door. The new coaches seat 18 passengers, rather than the 45 they used to carry. We remodeled the inside with carpets, comfortable lounging chairs, tasteful paneling, and fresh paint. One of the first riders on the new coaches said, after looking at all the improvements, "This looks like the VIP room at American Airlines. Where's the bar?" We also installed a distinctive musical tape, which sounds a melody to announce the arrival of the DRT bus at a passenger's doorstep. We put a spotlight on each coach to light the way to people's doors at night and provide them with security.

The drivers bid for the DRT positions during the regular sign-up. Control room operators are screened through testing and chosen through seniority. We launched an intensive 2-week training session with drivers and control room operators in simulated DRT situations. By having control room operators ride with drivers, we derive the additional benefit of personal contact between people who will be working together.

DRT fares are 25 cents per person. At that low rate no transfers are issued or accepted on DRT buses, including the BART to AC Transit transfer.

Our marketing of DRT services received assistance from Model Cities Program employees, who made a door-to-door distribution of materials explaining what DRT is and how people can use the service. The Model Cities people also helped by contributing funds toward production and publication expenses of informational materials and by purchasing \$3,000 worth of bus tokens for free rides. The city of Richmond assisted by including an informational brochure in a direct mailing, and the local community hospital included the brochure in its employees' paychecks. Other agencies also distributed informational pamphlets.

We have not integrated DRT with conventional bus routings. Our DRT system is superimposed over the fixed-route system in Richmond, but the two operate independently.

The cost of operating DRT systems remains the most difficult problem to solve. Even though there is a social need to be fulfilled, we have to ask whether the public is willing to pay the price through taxes, higher fares, or federal or state subsidies.