

has successfully been demonstrated in Regina.

The Rochester system was entirely locally financed, and rather high fares (\$1) had to be established. We, therefore, developed a flexible fare policy:

<u>Service</u>	<u>Single Trip, 1-Way Fare</u>	<u>Discounted Weekly Passes</u>
Dial-a-bus	1.00	
Home-to-work	0.80	7.00
Home-to-school	0.65	5.00
Feed-a-bus	0.85	7.50

Passes are purchased on Mondays from drivers; the necessary amount (bills and change) is deposited directly in the fare box.

In addition, groups of 2 or more persons have the opportunity to ride for even less. The only qualification is that everyone in the group have a common origin and destination. The fare for the first person is the regular 1-way fare, but all others pay just 25 cents each. For a group of 4 going to a shopping plaza, for example, the total fare of \$1.75 averages just 44 cents/person. Families, senior citizens, and employee groups of as many as 25 persons have taken advantage of this reduced fare.

Other promotional fares included Rider Appreciation Week, when home-to-work passes were reduced to \$5; 50-50 Week, when the regular \$1 fare was lowered to 50 cents; and shopping plaza promotions in which retail stores aid a shopper's return-trip fare. All of these reduced-fare programs materially increased ridership during the promotion. More important, in the days and weeks following, a percentage of the newly acquired passengers continued to use the service.

Another successful fare promotion, which was called "Let's Split," was designed to introduce DRT to residents of a new service area by splitting the \$1 fare with them. Personalized checks that were valued at 50 cents were mailed to all homes. Some newspaper and radio advertising was used, but the major part of each marketing effort consisted of direct mail pieces. All promotions were not successful. One promotion I recall really bombed. The idea was to offer a free week's pass for home-to-work service for every person talking a nonrider into purchasing a pass at the regular rate of \$7. We had only 1 taker.

The Regional Transportation District in Denver has committed itself to what is probably the most ambitious DRT service yet planned for the elderly and handicapped. Newly designed buses have lower floors, wheelchair lifts and tie downs, and an extending entrance step. Fares for this highly specialized door-to-door service will be the same as those charged on regular transit routes: 35 cents during peak periods, 25 cents during off-peak periods, and 15 cents for an additional zone. Our purpose is to make possible job and educational opportunities and increased mobility to the 11 percent of our population who are handicapped. We expect to have a flexible fare policy to make this new service a meaningful success to the greater Denver area.

*Warren H. Frank, Central New York Regional Transportation Authority*

Since my appointment as executive director of the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority, my goals and the goals of our subsidiary company, CNY Centro, Inc., of which I am president, are to zero in on special transportation services and to implement marketing programs to improve the image of the total transit system. Our initial target has been the isolated, vulnerable elderly and handicapped who reside in

central New York. Our objective is to increase their mobility and decrease their isolation so that they can get to and from employment, shopping, health services, entertainment, recreation, and social and cultural activities.

This objective is being met through Call-a-Bus, a door-to-door bus service for the elderly and disabled residents who live in Syracuse and Onondaga County and who find it difficult or impossible to use regular transit service. This project is made possible by a grant to the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration. Through the diligent efforts of the authority, Syracuse was chosen as 1 of only 3 sites in the country for this extensive project demonstration. With this privilege came a responsibility for the authority to market and promote the finest demand-responsive system in the nation.

We are proud of the progress we have made. Our marketing strategy goes beyond the usual buttons used for identification of DRT riders and umbrellas used to keep elderly and disabled patrons dry during inclement weather. From the very beginning of Call-a-Bus, our marketing functions included the following.

1. Marketing research. Our intention is to have a definite positive impact on the lives of the people who use the Call-a-Bus system. A survey of transportation needs of the elderly and disabled was completed. Group transportation needs were researched. A great deal of latent demand had been uncovered as a result of this research. Some 60 social service agencies are continually surveyed to assess the need for special transportation services. The results are overwhelming: Most agency programs are operating below capacity. With this vital information, we can adjust our service to allow the handicapped to again become participating members of society, to give the elderly a feeling of independence, and to improve the efficiencies of the social service agencies.

2. Pricing policy. Because of the subsidized nature of the project, Call-a-Bus rates vary from 50 cents to \$1, depending on the mileage of the bus ride. In the case of charter service, Centro finances half of the costs incurred by the organization that orders the service. These charters include service to local shopping centers. Our Call-a-Bus rates are so reasonable that in one case an elderly woman with failing eyesight sent a \$5 donation for gas to help with her frequent rides to the hospital.

3. Bus design and equipment. In an effort to streamline Centro, which already has the lowest operating costs of any transit system in the state, we ordered 4 specially equipped Mercedes Benz minibuses. These minibuses have been designed for the elderly and handicapped and will be equipped with a wheelchair lift, 2-way radios for prompt dispatch service, and a bottom step that lowers to 6 in. (15 cm) from the ground when the door is opened. After modification, each bus will be capable of carrying 8 passengers and 4 wheelchairs.

4. Monthly Call-a-Bus newsletter and literature. Each month a Call-a-Bus newsletter is mailed to local and county officials and all the social service agencies to keep them informed of programs and events. The newsletter articles cover special events such as free concerts or cultural programs, announcements, and introductions of Call-a-Bus staff members. In addition, the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority staff works closely with our ad agency in developing graphics, newspaper ads, and other literature.

5. Program activities. Much of the Call-a-Bus success is directly attributed to the authority's organization of the project advisory committee. This committee, composed of representatives from community agencies and elderly and disabled persons, is the major policy-making body for the project. It meets monthly to establish the major guidelines by which the project is operated. The committee provides the elderly and disabled an opportunity to play a role in guiding their own destiny. This working committee keeps the social service agencies involved and informed about the Call-a-Bus project, and it serves as a communications link among various agencies. The advisory committee aids in the coordination of project activities, the dissemination of project information, and the exchange of external information and ideas. These types of program activities result in excellent customer relations, press relations, and consumer follow through.

6. Special promotions and services. Special promotions and services are always good news for senior citizens and the disabled in these times of rising prices. For example, the authority induced a local theatre chain to offer a \$1 admission for Saturday matinees to anyone who arrives on Centro's Call-a-Bus. This is a substantial saving from the \$3 regular admission, increases Saturday Call-a-Bus ridership, and is excellent public relations. In another example, the authority convinced the Merchants' Association of a local shopping center to sponsor a Call-a-Bus shopping trip on an experimental basis. The response was so successful that the merchants have requested a continuation of this program on a regular basis.

Marketing and promoting our demand-responsive element became a catalyst to implement other marketing programs to improve the image of the total transit system. The Central New York Regional Transportation Authority is the only authority to have initiated numerous successful marketing programs improving public transportation in our region. We have not only halted the decline of transit, but we have registered real increases in ridership and revenues while other transit systems in the state have experienced declining ridership and revenues.

In its first year of operation, Centro was one of the few transit companies in the nation, and the only one in New York State, to show consistent ridership increases since the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority took over the former Syracuse Transit Corporation. The failing transit company was losing passengers at the rate of 9.5 percent per month. Centro, after stemming this decline of ridership and reversing the downward trend, boasts an impressive 4 percent increase for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1973, and a 5 percent increase for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1974. Centro has consistently increased ridership since.

The following successful projects have improved the image of our total transit system and have become responsive and responsible to the social services and commercial enterprises in our region.

1. Transit Tuesday. Super Shopper's Special (April 4), Transit Tuesday (May 7), and Transit Tuesday (July 16), sponsored by Centro and the Downtown Development Council of the Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce, were the first major promotions involving Centro and the downtown merchants. Nearly every downtown business participated in the events, offering special sales and free rides home to their customers. Approximately 6,000 people took advantage of the July 16 Transit Tuesday. Centro's ridership increased 30 percent over the same Tuesday in 1973 and was up 10 percent over an average Tuesday of 1974. Centro carried 40,000 passengers on July 16, 1974, compared with 30,940 riders the same Tuesday in 1973. The enthusiasm and participation on behalf of the chamber, the newspapers, and the downtown merchants have closed the gap between private enterprise and public transit in Syracuse.

2. Farmers Market bus. The Farmers Market was inaugurated last summer by the Downtown Development Council of the Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce to bring together nearly 65 central New York farmers each Tuesday in Clinton Square to sell fresh produce, plants, and crafts. Centro provides an extremely popular free shuttle service (subsidized by the Syracuse Chamber of Commerce), looping the downtown area to accommodate office workers on limited lunch schedules who want to shop at the Farmers Market. Country music is played over a loud speaker system, and a specially signed bus loops the downtown area every 15 minutes. Again, the support of local newspapers, merchants, and the Chamber of Commerce has been phenomenal.

3. Carrols promotion. Carrols Corporation has recently agreed to work with Centro in a joint promotion to the mutual benefit of the bus rider, Centro, and Carrols. A Centro bus rider is now able to purchase a package of 10 tokens for \$3.50 at any of Centro's 44 distribution points. This token packet will include 4 coupons good at any Carrols restaurant and totaling \$1.50 in value. A total value of \$5 is, therefore, provided with the purchase of 10 tokens for \$3.50. This promotion incurs no cost to Centro or the authority. To the best of my knowledge, this exclusive 1-year arrangement is the first of its kind in New York State and the nation. I expect this promotion to substantially increase our token sales, stimulate additional ridership, and establish

a precedent in total cooperation between private enterprise and public transit.

4. Centro park-and-ride. On Monday, June 3, 1974, 5 parking lots began operating as Centro park-and-ride lots under the management of Dutch Parking Systems. Daily or monthly parking permits can be purchased along with bus-ride coupon books of 20 rides for \$1 or 5 cents/ride. This enables the automobile driver to take a bus downtown and return for only 5 cents each way. The goal of this new parking venture is to provide low-cost parking on the outskirts of the downtown business district combined with bus service for shopping and downtown employment.

5. Subscription service. A popular fuel-saving operating implemented and designed to save thousands of gallons of gasoline allows workers to board express buses in parking lots near their homes and ride directly to work and back. Fifteen of the largest corporations in Syracuse are being aided by Centro in expressing their employees to and from work. This popular mode of travel is expected to grow as gasoline becomes increasingly more expensive.

6. Technical sophistication. Major improvements in equipment and service have hurled Centro into becoming the nation's showcase transit system.

Centro's new Keene fare-box system automatically counts coins when deposited, removes them by vacuum to a holding box, sorts, recounts, and stacks them away without their being touched by human hands. The computerized Arcom system can relay information such as the speed of the bus, fuel consumed, oil used, temperatures, and any other area Centro would want to monitor.

Centro's newly installed 2-way radio system provides constant contact between drivers and the dispatcher at all times. This enables Centro to make immediate adjustments in route schedules to better serve the rider. The radio system also monitors the mechanical performance of the buses and immediately informs the dispatcher of problems in oil, water, and air pressure. The radio also features a silent alarm whereby the driver can signal the dispatcher when trouble occurs.

Run cutting and scheduling (RUCUS) and systems inventory and management (SIMS) hold the high-priority value at Centro, for they enable improvements to be made in the scheduling operations and inventory efficiency. The use of RUCUS is expected to save Centro 2 or 3 percent of its annual transportation costs, or about \$100,000/year. In addition to these cash savings, we will have the mechanical aspects of the transportation department computerized, making this department flexible and freeing the staff for supervision and design of service improvements. RUCUS and SIMS are indispensable management tools providing efficient operation of the transit system and more managerial information for decision making. Additional improvements in routes, shelters, buses, and schedules have combined to produce a higher level of service for the community's bus riders.

7. 1974 Fleet Owner's Maintenance Efficiency Award. Centro was recently named as the 1974 winner of the Fleet Owner's Maintenance Efficiency Award. The criteria for the award were conserving fuel, obtaining fuel, and getting maximum use from existing equipment. For 1973, maintenance costs were 11.98 cents/mile. Centro operated 6,239 miles/road failure, and fuel economy was 4.51 miles/gal.

8. Centro-go-Patrol. Special hot-line telephone numbers have been established between the previously mentioned radio dispatcher and local radio stations. In this program, drivers who belong to the Centro-go-Patrol can report over the radio system to the dispatcher traffic flow, detours, accidents, impassable routes, and other problems, which are in turn broadcast over the network during rush hours. The radio stations reward the Centro-go-Patrol driver of the month with a plaque, and Centro provides another needed service for the community.

9. Newspapers on buses. Centro has been putting entertainment into bus riding since December 1973, when it began systemwide newspaper sales. The convenience of reading the day's news, sports, and entertainment, while being spared the headache of negotiating rush-hour traffic has won the favor of the Centro riders, who have helped the buses become major distributors of Syracuse newspapers. Centro now has newspaper racks on 165 buses and is selling the Herald-Journal and Post-Standard on all routes. Centro sells more than 6,000 copies of these newspapers a month. The racks, located on the dashboard next to the driver's seat, were custom-designed by Centro's

assistant maintenance supervisor, Fred Hafner, and were built by workers at Manpower Industries. Centro is the only transit system in the state to have newspapers available on buses. Newspaper sales are a source of revenue to Centro. The availability of newspapers on all buses, including Call-a-Bus, will enhance the service for riders.

The success of any marketing promotions is best measured in terms of ridership and revenues. The Central New York Regional Transportation Authority not only has halted the decline of transit use but has registered substantial increases in ridership and revenues. The approach of other transportation systems to increase ridership and revenues has been counterproductive because they have tried to increase ridership by reducing fares.

The alternate approach to increasing revenues has been to increase fares, and that is also counterproductive because the increased fares decrease ridership. Centro has increased ridership without increasing fares.

At Centro, we are beginning to convince people that transit is essential. It aids the consumer, senior citizens, and the handicapped in times of soaring fuel costs.

*Howard W. Gates, Rochester-Genesee Regional Transportation Authority, New York*

In 1973 we began to set into motion a new form of public transit service, which we called PERT (personal transit) Dial-A-Bus. While our traditional fixed-route system was struggling to survive and facing a quickening financial crisis, we were about to offer the public a totally new transportation concept. We carried 745 people during the first week of operation. We now carry that many each day. The new system has flourished and increased ridership, while overall transit ridership has continued to decrease.

Why? The answer is simple. We offer the public a logical alternative, one that permits them to have the convenience of their automobiles without the high cost and aggravation of driving. A phone call will bring a clean, comfortable public transit vehicle to the front door and take the caller to work, to school, to shop, or to any one of a multitude of places at a fraction of the cost of driving. Acceptance and use of the PERT Dial-A-Bus, therefore, were achieved with a minimum of effort and expenditure on a marketing and promotional program.

A well-planned and carefully carried out marketing program will

1. Inform the public about how the system operates and what the advantages of its use are,
2. Motivate those persons in the service area to use the new system, and
3. Retain ridership once it has been achieved.

Several months before the projected starting date, the first phase of what has been a continual marketing effort began with the drafting of the basic marketing plan and a projected budget. The plan addressed 3 main questions:

1. Who are we attempting to reach?
2. How and when are we to do so?
3. What will the cost be?

## SERVICE AREA

The initial service area, which was defined by a team of consultants from M.I.T., encompassed approximately 10 miles<sup>2</sup> (26 km<sup>2</sup>), primarily within the large suburban town of Greece, adjacent to the northwest section of the city of Rochester. A small segment