

Impact of Marketing in Small Urban and Rural Transit Systems

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In this paper, the results of an UMTA demonstration project, The Idaho Rural/Small City Cooperative Transportation Marketing Demonstration Project, are presented. The purpose of the project was to evaluate the effectiveness of (a) using outside experts to teach local transit managers how to market their services and (b) specific marketing actions to increase ridership and improve the image of public transit in the community. The demonstration was conducted at Pocatello, Idaho Falls, and Twin Falls, in Idaho. The study found that a combination of marketing actions, if properly implemented and targeted, could achieve the desired goals. When these conditions were met in Twin Falls, an 11 percent ridership increase was achieved over a 6-month period. A radio and television advertising campaign in Twin Falls that was aimed at improving the image of the transit system stimulated demand for more specific how-to-ride service information and made people more willing to consider riding transit by choice. Public support and awareness of transit increased at both Twin Falls and Idaho Falls, whereas support increased for local government involvement in transit at all three systems. The project was also successful in teaching transit managers how to use market research techniques to identify marketing problems facing their organizations and how to develop coherent plans to solve the problems. The project did not sufficiently stress teaching the managers how to implement the specific marketing actions included in their plans, which resulted in ineffective and delayed implementation at two sites.

In this paper the findings of the Idaho Rural/Small City Cooperative Transportation Marketing Demonstration Project are presented. The main sections describe, in order, the project—its organization, its goals, and its objectives; the evaluation methodology; the implementation of project activities; the principal findings of the project evaluation; and recommendations for improving implementation of similar projects in the future.

The Idaho Rural/Small City Cooperative Transportation Marketing Demonstration Project was funded with \$85,000 under Section 6 of the Urban Mass Transportation Act. Of this amount, \$30,000 was earmarked for the conduct of marketing at three selected demonstration sites. The remaining funds were used to hire the services of professional marketing consultants who would train local transit managers in the design and conduct of marketing programs. The demonstration sites were the cities of Pocatello, Idaho Falls, and Twin Falls, and specifically their corresponding transit systems—Pocatello Urban Transit (PUT), Community and Rural Transportation (CART), and TRANS IV.

The project was part of UMTA's Service and Methods Demonstration Program. The grant recipient was the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), which subcontracted the actual

management and implementation of the project to the Marketing Department of Boise State University (BSU). BSU formed a project team that consisted of two marketing professors (with no transit experience) and a consultant with a background in transit operations and marketing. The project concept had been developed by the consultant for the BSU project team. The function of the project team was to both administer the project and to provide marketing training to the three local transit managers. The ITD helped to get the project started and introduced the BSU project team members to the three demonstration site transit managers. By choice, the ITD did not play an active role in project implementation.

Project evaluation was the responsibility of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Transportation Systems Center (TSC) and its contractor, Dynatrend Inc. The project began in December 1984 and was completed in April 1986.

The goal of the project was the development of marketing programs that could be applied at small urban and rural transit systems throughout the nation. This goal was pursued through the statement of two objectives. The first objective was to test the feasibility of using outside experts (i.e., the project team members) to teach local transit managers how to market their systems. The second objective was to actually implement specific marketing activities and test their effectiveness in achieving system goals.

Idaho is a politically conservative state with a population of slightly under 1 million people. The state limits local property taxes by law to 1 percent of assessed valuation and provides no financial assistance to local transit authorities other than through human service contracts. The state has twice provided President Reagan with his largest electoral majorities. Some 50 percent of the population resides in rural areas, and the population is 95 percent white. The natural antigovernment inclination of the people in the intermountain West is augmented by the influence of the politically conservative Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, which outside of Utah is most influential in southern Idaho. Therefore the constituency for government-subsidized services is smaller than in most states. In addition, the state has almost no tradition of public transit ridership and none of the standard motivators of transit usage—traffic congestion, air pollution, and parking shortages. During the course of the demonstration, the price of gasoline collapsed. This environment was not conducive to the conduct of a transit marketing campaign.

The three demonstration sites—Pocatello, Idaho Falls, and Twin Falls—are located across the southern tier of the state, as shown in Figure 1. They are three of only five cities in the state

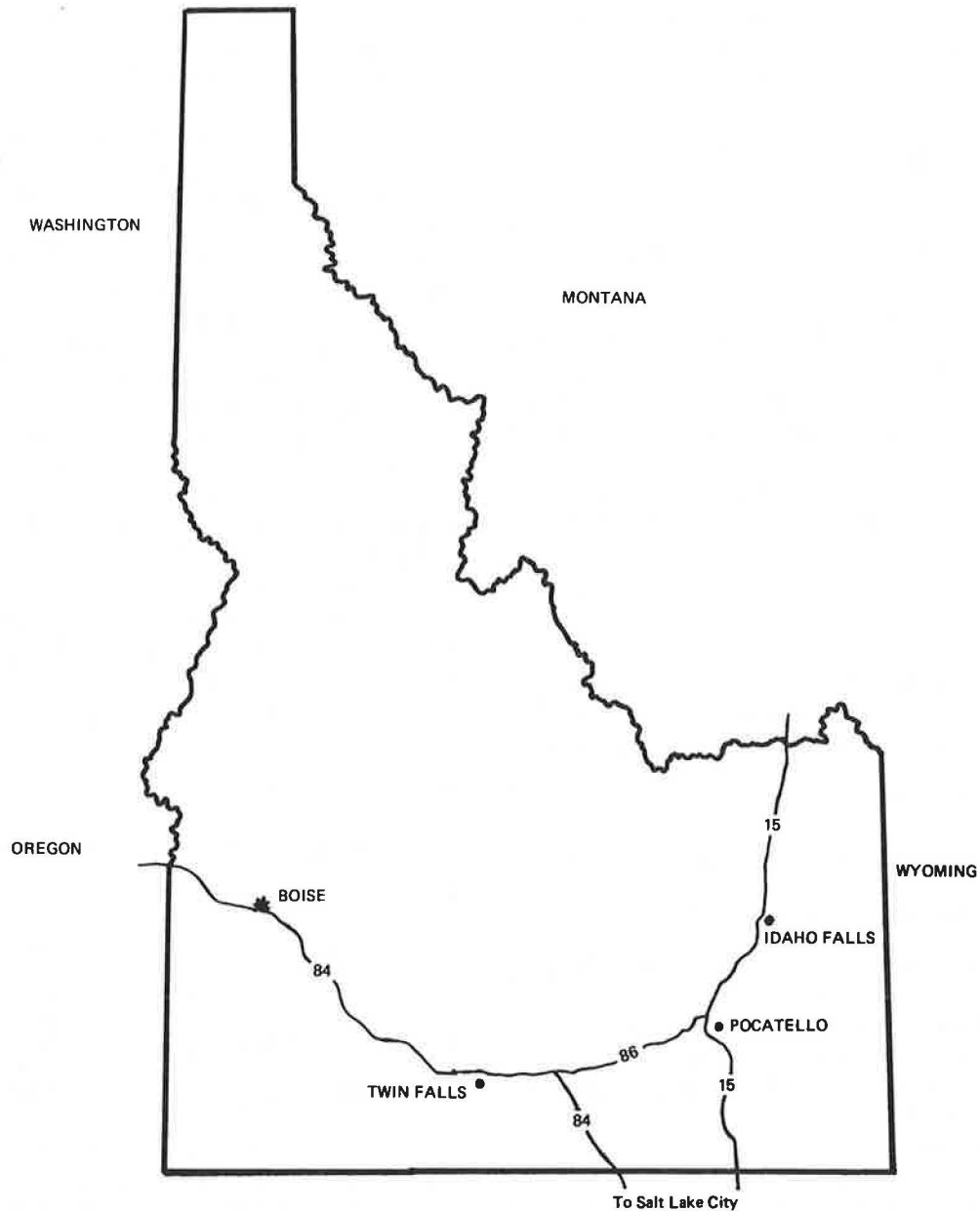


FIGURE 1 Demonstration site locations.

with populations in excess of 20,000. This region of the state is relatively flat and semiarid, with miles of sagebrush interrupted by modest Rocky Mountain ranges.

Pocatello is the most urban of the three cities, having gained official urbanized status in 1980 in conjunction with the small neighboring city of Chubbock. Idaho Falls is a smaller city of some 40,000 people, located near the eastern border of the state. Twin Falls is the smallest of the three cities, with 26,000 residents, but it is the center of a geographic region called the Magic Valley that is larger than Rhode Island. The economy of Pocatello is dominated by heavy industry, whereas the Twin Falls area is largely oriented toward agriculture and tourism. The economy of Idaho Falls is dominated by a federal nuclear energy research facility. Both Pocatello and Twin Falls have sizable student populations, ranging from 6,000 to 7,500 from Idaho State University and the College of Southern Idaho

(CSI), respectively. In general, the economy of the area, based heavily on agriculture and energy, has never fully recovered from the recession of the early 1980s.

At the start of the project, the three transit systems had the following features in common:

- Confused public images regarding their status as specialized or general public carriers;
- Lack of general institutional support within the community;
- Lack of sound local financing arrangements;
- Poor vehicle utilization, particularly in the off-peak periods;
- Managers overwhelmed by the demands of day-to-day management and pessimistic about the future of the systems; and

- Lack of many attributes of professional transit operation, such as consistent fleet appearance, driver uniforms, readily available schedules and maps, bus stop signs, and media advertisements.

Many of these problems can be traced to the systems' uneven evolution from special purpose to general public providers during the late 1970s and early 1980s, a situation typical of UMTA's Section 18 Rural Public Transit Assistance Program. Of the three systems, PUT had made the most complete transition. PUT operated three fixed routes with some full-sized buses and received local tax revenues as match to UMTA Section 9 assistance. TRANS IV in Twin Falls was something of a hybrid, operating fixed routes, commuter subscription services, and dial-a-ride. CART in Idaho Falls remained closest to the human service provider model, operating only a dial-a-ride service that was only theoretically open to the general public and subscription services for programs such as Head Start.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching transit managers how to market focused on three skills that are critical in learning how to market. These skills include being able to

- Identify the marketing problem confronting the organization,
- Develop systematic strategies or plans for alleviating the problem, and
- Implement the specific activities included in the plan.

This phase of the evaluation was largely qualitative in nature and was based on interviews conducted by the evaluation contractor with the managers of the three demonstration site transit systems and with members of the project team. On-site interviews were conducted at the beginning and end of the project, and telephone interviews were conducted at several points in the interim.

Evaluation of the impact of the marketing activities focused on quantitative measurements of changes in system ridership and in the public's perception of transit. Ridership increases would, of course, immediately benefit the transit systems, and attitudinal changes might pave the way for long-term ridership increases as well as a more supportive public and institutional environment. Other possible goals, such as reduced traffic congestion or improved air quality, were not perceived as serious problems.

Monthly ridership data were supplied by the transit systems for the period of the demonstration and for the comparable time period in the previous year. These data were collected by bus drivers using mechanical counters as part of their routine operating procedures. Because ridership at all three sites undergoes regular seasonal fluctuations, all comparisons were made between the same months in different years.

Public attitudes toward local transit were measured by means of a telephone survey conducted before and after the implementation of marketing activities in March and April of 1985 and 1986. These surveys were developed by the project team in consultation with the evaluation contractor, TSC, and the local

transit managers. The surveys were administered by a professional market research firm under the direction of the project team. By using random digit dialing, a statistically independent sample of 200 male and 200 female respondents was obtained for both the before and after surveys. Survey questions focused on awareness and knowledge of transit services, attitudes toward the service, use of the service, and sociodemographic characteristics of respondents.

The market research firm coded the data for computer analysis. Data were validated by calling back a small sample of households. The project team used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences to summarize results and prepare frequency distributions in percentage and histogram form for each question. In addition, cross tabulations were conducted on selected question pairs at the request of the evaluation contractor. The purposes of the cross tabulations were to measure the impact of specific marketing activities on attitudes toward public transit and to determine whether more significant changes took place among certain sociodemographic groups.

The evaluation contractor used χ^2 to measure the significance of the change in responses on both individual questions and cross tabulations between the before and after surveys. Changes were considered statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

IMPLEMENTATION

The following is a schedule of the major project events:

<i>Event</i>	<i>Date</i>
Commencement	December 1984
On-site interviews	January 1985
Predemonstration market research	March and April 1985
Training session	May 1985
Implementation of marketing actions	July 1985 to April 1986
Follow-up on-site interviews	April 1986
Postdemonstration market research	April 1986

The initial on-site interviews involved having the project team and evaluation contractor spend 1 day at each site interviewing the transit manager and other system employees and community leaders in the fields of government, business, and human service. The purpose of the visits was twofold: (a) to establish a qualitative baseline for the evaluation, and (b) to begin the process of identifying marketing strategies.

After the completion of the market research, the transit managers were brought to Boise for a 1-day training session with the project team. This session focused on the first two objectives in learning how to market—problem identification and strategy development.

The findings of the market research were used by the project team members to help the transit managers identify the problems facing their organizations. The transit operators had little or no experience in the evaluation of survey results. The project team led the operators through the survey findings, instructing them how to interpret the data and then discussing the implications of the findings.

The second half of the Boise meeting was devoted to the development of marketing plans. The project team distributed an outline that included the relationships among the parts of a

marketing plan, the format of a marketing plan, lists of marketing activities, and a sample marketing plan. Using this outline and the definition of the problem obtained from the survey analysis, the project team asked the operators to define marketing objectives for their systems. The operators were then asked to identify generic solutions that would accomplish these objectives, regardless of their practicality. The generic solutions (or wish lists) were refined into specific solutions and action items and then assigned a priority by using the objectives. Each project team member was assigned to one operator to facilitate this process.

The result of this process was three marketing plans that incorporated the ideas of the transit managers but were written by the project team members. Each plan contained a large number of activities, but on the basis of estimated funding levels, certain priorities were clear. PUT assigned the highest priority to street signage, bus repainting, advertisements on bookmarks, and new driver uniforms. In addition, funding in PUT's regular operating budget was reprogrammed for schedule printing and distribution. CART attached the highest priority to bus repainting, the hiring of a marketing assistant, instituting a shopper shuttle service to be called the Shopping CART, and developing a new marketing brochure. At TRANS IV, the highest priorities were media advertising, acquiring new driver uniforms, target marketing college students and major employment sites, hiring a marketing assistant, and printing new schedules and brochures.

The training session in Boise did not provide specific how-to-instruction in the implementation of marketing activities. An activity such as writing news releases was discussed in the context of when and why to do such an activity, but no instruction was provided in how to do it.

Once the implementation of marketing activities began, the Idaho project team manager maintained contact with the transit managers at each site by means of monthly telephone calls. The other project team members, including the consultant, who was the only member of the team with public transit experience, were less actively involved in this phase. The project manager focused on the progress being made in implementing the marketing plans. Although the project team members responded to questions raised by the transit managers about how to implement specific marketing actions, the team had no formal, coordinated approach to providing technical assistance. There was no other formal in-person contact between the project team members and transit managers until the follow-up site visits after the completion of all marketing activity.

The original schedule called for implementation to be initiated in July 1985 and completed by December 1985. The deadline for completion was eventually pushed back to February 1986, and some activities remained incomplete at the conclusion of the evaluation in April 1986.

In general, more activities were completed as defined in a timely fashion by TRANS IV than by either PUT or CART, although all three were slow in starting. PUT's major activities were repainting one bus (November 1985), placing approximately 100 service information posters around the community (February 1986), and installing 100 bus stop signs (March 1986). PUT also conducted a radio advertising campaign in January 1986, using its own funds. CART repainted four vehicles and ran paid and public service announcements on the

radio and in the newspaper during fall 1985. Most of TRANS IV's marketing activities were undertaken in the period of August to October 1985. During this time, TRANS IV introduced new driver uniforms, ran newspaper advertisements, put up bus stop signs, distributed new schedules and maps, painted vehicles, and conducted a promotion with a radio station to transport riders to the Twin Falls Fair. The bus stop signs, newspaper advertisements, schedules, and maps were targeted to students at CSI. In addition, TRANS IV had an informational insert included in the college's fall registration material and staffed an information booth at registration. In February 1986, TRANS IV began airing public service announcements (PSAs) on radio and television.

Both PUT and CART experienced management and service disruptions. In Pocatello, a new city administration elected on July 1, 1986, cut PUT's budget by 20 percent, forcing comparable service reductions that went into effect on September 1. Further implementation delays were experienced as the general manager of PUT spent September and November contemplating other job offers. The assistant general manager left during this period and for budgetary reasons was not replaced.

In Idaho Falls, the administrator of CART resigned in August 1985 and was replaced in September. The new administrator needed to familiarize himself with the project, and in the process significantly altered the emphasis of CART's marketing plan. CART raised fares on March 1, 1986, and began planning to convert offpeak dial-a-ride service to fixed-route deviation. TRANS IV, on the other hand, had managerial stability throughout the project and initiated no service changes.

PROJECT IMPACTS

In this section, the effectiveness of the project in teaching transit managers how to market and in applying specific marketing strategies in rural and small urban settings are evaluated.

Teaching Transit Managers How to Market

As discussed at the outset, learning how to market means learning how to (a) evaluate the problem confronting the organization, (b) develop a plan to solve the problem, and (c) implement the activities of the plan. This project was fairly successful in achieving the first two objectives but less successful in achieving the third.

Interviews with the transit managers indicated that the review of survey data with the project team was useful in that it used numbers to demonstrate problems and opportunities that the operators had previously only suspected might be the case. The operators had always found it difficult to act on their perceptions because there was neither data nor documentation to support their beliefs. In addition to defining the problems facing their systems, the surveys also indicated that public support for transit was higher than the operators had believed. These findings encouraged the operators to believe that marketing activities might actually be worthwhile, a possibility that they had doubted at the outset of the project.

Thus this phase of the project exposed the managers to survey techniques, showed them how to analyze survey results, and demonstrated how to use these results to formulate and

undertake specific action plans. The managers did not become experts in the design and administration of public opinion surveys, but they did learn that it is possible to quantify and define the problems facing an organization, and they became aware of the techniques that are available for doing so.

The second objective was to learn how to develop a marketing plan. None of the operators had ever approached marketing in a systematic fashion. Most thought of marketing in terms of media advertising or one-shot promotional gimmicks. At the Boise training session, the operators learned how to move from problem definition to strategic definition and to develop an organized coherent approach to marketing. They also learned the importance of targeting marketing activities to specific market segments, rather than using a scattershot approach.

This process might have been more successful if the project team had taken a stronger role in helping the managers to define the contents of their marketing plans. In attempting to obtain the managers' support for the goals of the project, a vast array of ideas was included in the marketing plans. This proved to be counterproductive in the implementation phase because the managers became overwhelmed by the large number of separate tasks with which they were confronted.

It appeared likely that the managers would continue to apply these lessons in the future, although planning will always be secondary to the pressures of day-to-day management at small transit systems. Future marketing plans are likely to be much less elaborate than the plans developed for this project, but that would be a positive development if the managers learn to focus their attention on a few critical objectives.

The implementation of marketing activities was the least successful aspect of the project due to several extraneous factors outside the control of the participants, as well as to certain aspects of the demonstration itself. The lessons learned from this failure were significant, however.

Extraneous factors that hindered implementation involved managerial and service disruptions. As discussed, managerial instability at PUT and CART significantly delayed implementation. Drastic budget and service cutbacks at PUT also distracted the attention of the manager. At CART, budgetary pressures led to a fare increase and the shifting of management's attention late in the project to a restructuring of services. Given these factors, it is not surprising that TRANS IV, which had managerial and service stability, also had the most successful implementation.

In addition to these independent factors, several factors inherent in the project may have hindered implementation. First, the project was administered by individuals who had no prior professional relationship with the transit managers. The managers were skeptical at the outset about the potential impact of the project. They did not really believe in marketing and feared that the demands of project administration would distract them from the day-to-day management of their systems. They all feared, to some extent, that the systems would never be fully reimbursed for expenses. The approach taken to project administration by both the ITD and the project team contributed to this situation. The project had been initiated by the transit consultant to the project, who essentially marketed the idea to both the ITD and UMTA. The ITD's role was thus passive from the start. The ITD accepted no project funds for administration

and viewed the project as an opportunity to develop other community resources (i.e., academia) to support transit activities.

This approach might have been successful if not combined with the approach of the project team, which viewed the project as a high-level planning exercise for which they would provide free consulting in market research and in the development of marketing strategies but for which it would be up to the transit managers themselves to implement the plans. The ITD also strongly believed that responsibility for implementation lay with the transit managers. Although the long-term goal of a demonstration project is to transfer skills and responsibility to the appropriate operating agencies, it proved unrealistic to expect such a transfer to take place during the course of a short-term demonstration.

The transit managers believed that they needed a more structured approach, with an implementation schedule imposed and enforced from the outside, and more technical assistance on how to implement specific actions. For both types of intervention to have been effective, either frequent in-person contact between the project team members and operators or a stronger state presence would have been required.

Even if the operators had been held to a rigid schedule, they simply did not possess the skills and experience to successfully implement many of the actions on their own. By the end of the project, the project team members realized that they had overestimated the skills of the operators. Although the operators had limited experiences in conducting marketing activities, they did not have expertise. The operators, for their part, were frustrated that they had not received more detailed instructions on how to implement the actions in the marketing plans. They believed that the burden of obtaining more assistance had been placed on them, instead of having assistance vigorously offered by the project team. As mentioned, they were also overwhelmed by the large number of proposed actions in the marketing plans and had difficulty focusing on what was critical to their central objectives.

The reasons for TRANS IV's relatively successful implementation are again clear in this context. The TRANS IV manager was the most aggressive in seeking out help from the project team and also had the most prior marketing experience. In addition, the TRANS IV manager hired a local marketing consultant on a part-time basis. The consultant was particularly valuable in teaching the manager how to interact with the local technical community in such areas as securing PSA time on local television or laying out and printing a brochure. These were the kind of skills that the project team took for granted that all of the operators already possessed.

Despite all of these problems, many actions did get implemented, although often too late to generate changes that could be quantifiably measured during the second phase of the evaluation. Through this difficult process of trial and error, the operators, particularly the manager of TRANS IV, picked up valuable marketing skills. The managers also learned which types of marketing activities they thought were effective and were comfortable implementing. All of the managers came to appreciate that marketing is a science, not an art, and that certain skills must either be learned or acquired.

The Impact of Marketing Activities

In this section, the effect of the marketing activities undertaken by the three transit systems is evaluated.

Ridership

Major ridership changes were not expected to result from this project. Small urban and rural transit system ridership tends to be drawn from captive market segments. Most riders already have no choice but to ride because of income levels, lack of automobile availability, or personal disability. Among the public as a whole, these systems had low market penetration (2.5 to 7 percent), as indicated by the predemonstration telephone survey. It is particularly difficult to increase general public ridership in communities in which the major incentives to transit use do not exist, that is, in which there are no significant traffic, parking, or air pollution problems, the price of gasoline is falling, and there is little tradition of transit ridership.

On the basis of the predemonstration on-site interviews and surveys, it was hypothesized that ridership levels would be most responsive to marketing activity at PUT. PUT was better known in the community than either TRANS IV or CART. The system had made a transition from special needs to general public carrier several years earlier and had more of the attributes of a general public system, such as fixed routes, full-sized buses, published schedules, and uniformed drivers. As indicated by the predemonstration telephone survey, PUT had already achieved much higher market penetration (7 percent) than either TRANS IV (4.5 percent) or CART (2.5 percent). The hypothesis was that because PUT was already somewhat accepted as a general public provider, it would be relatively easy to increase its market share.

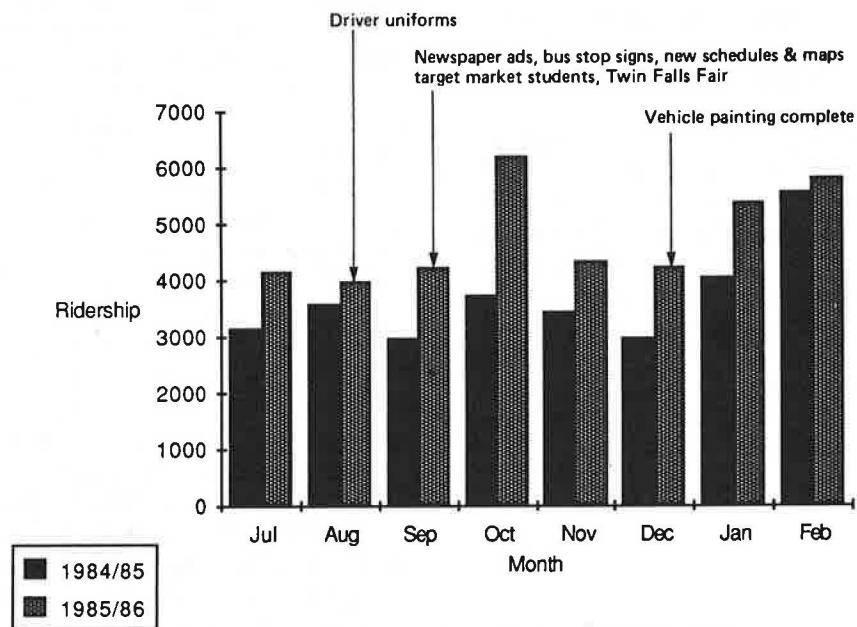
On the other hand, TRANS IV and CART needed to either increase ridership among captive groups, in which there was

presumably less room for growth than among the general public, or break into the general public market in a significant way. TRANS IV targeted much of its marketing activities at college students. College students have some of the attributes of captive transit markets, such as low income and automobile availability. However, they are not completely captive because they have many more travel options (such as bicycle riding, hitchhiking, or walking) than do true captive groups like the elderly and disabled. Although the college student population in Twin Falls was only 20 percent smaller than in Pocatello, TRANS IV carried only about 1,000 monthly student trips compared to 3,500 by PUT (according to data provided by the transit managers). Expectations for ridership growth at CART were lowest because almost all of CART's ridership was concentrated among traditionally captive transit markets.

The service disruptions and implementation delays made it impossible to adequately test this hypothesis with regard to PUT. Ridership dropped by 20 percent upon initiation of service cutbacks in September 1985 and remained at this level throughout the demonstration. PUT did not begin aggressive marketing activities until January 1986, and no impact was apparent at the completion of the evaluation in April 1986.

As expected, there was no ridership impact as a result of the formal marketing activities undertaken by CART. However, involvement in the project did convince the new manager of the need to reach out into the community more aggressively. As a result of these efforts, the manager obtained two new human service contracts for the system, which increased ridership by some 27 percent.

TRANS IV was the only system that appeared to have increased ridership directly as a result of its marketing activities. As shown in Figure 2, between September 1985 and February 1986, TRANS IV ridership grew at an average rate of 25 percent, with a low of 5 percent in February and a high of 40 percent in October. As shown in Figure 3, this growth rate



Source: C. Chambers, General Manager, TRANS IV, 4/86

FIGURE 2 TRANS IV ridership.

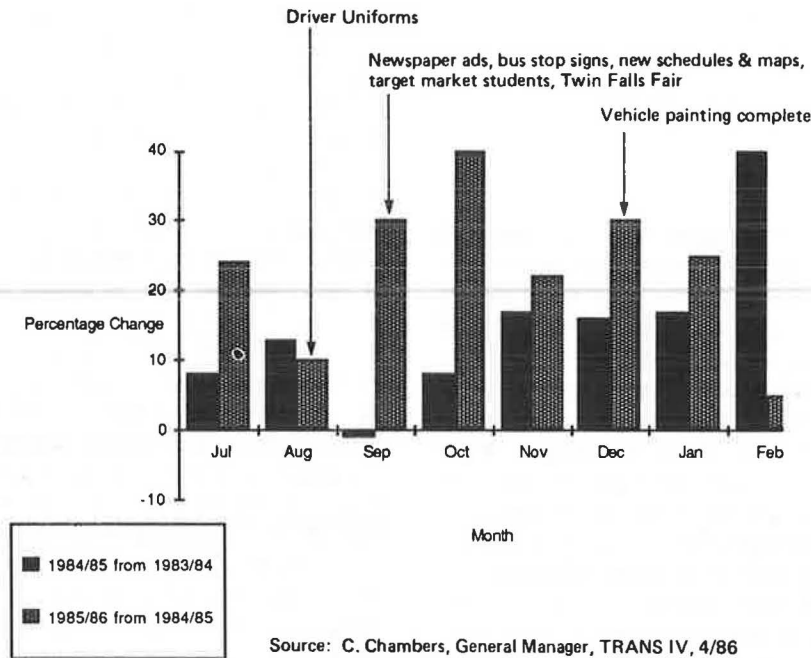


FIGURE 3 Percentage change in TRANS IV ridership.

contrasted with a growth rate of only 14 percent during the same period in the preceding year. If one assumes that the 14 percent growth of the previous year represented TRANS IV's underlying growth rate, then there was an additional 11 percent growth during the period of the demonstration. During the 6 months of the demonstration, TRANS IV initiated no significant service changes.

Available data do not permit making a definitive claim that the ridership change was due to the marketing activities in general, to any one specific activity, or that it occurred among any specific group, such as college students. However, there are no readily apparent alternative explanations, and the ridership increase coincided with the bulk of TRANS IV's marketing activities, which were undertaken in early fall 1985 and which together served to create a more uniform and professional image for the system.

The most likely alternative factor is the weather, which is the major variable affecting ridership at all three systems. Ridership typically increases in the winter and declines in the summer. Winter ridership varies with the severity of the weather. During the period of the demonstration, winter weather set in unusually early, in late November and early December. However, the largest ridership increase (40 percent over the previous year) occurred in October. Any ridership increase caused by severe weather in fall 1985 was probably counterbalanced by the mild weather in February 1986, which appeared to minimize any tendencies toward increased ridership in that month.

Public Image

It was expected that marketing activities at all three systems would make the general public more aware that transit existed in their communities and more knowledgeable about how to

obtain information regarding these services. It was also expected that the activities would correct misperceptions about the systems. For example, there was a widespread belief in all three communities that the transit systems were open only to special needs groups such as elderly and handicapped riders.

Specific survey questions were selected for analysis, depending on the marketing activities undertaken at each system. These questions, as well as the anticipated direction of change in the responses, are given in Table 1.

For example, Question 1 asked people whether they were aware of a transit system in their community. It was hypothesized that in response to the increased level of marketing activity, more people would become aware that there was a transit system in the community. For a change in response from the pre- to the postdemonstration surveys to be considered statistically significant, a tolerance of 0.05 was required.

Questions 1-3 tested people's general awareness of the transit system by asking if they knew basic facts about the system. Question 6 tested people's awareness of news reports about the transit system and whether or not they thought the reports were favorable. Both TRANS IV and CART had become more active in issuing news releases.

Question 7 tested people's awareness of specific marketing activities undertaken at the three systems. When a system undertook an activity, the number of positive responses was expected to increase. Question 14 tested agreement with value statements regarding public transit. The largest change was anticipated for Question 14d, "Do you agree that people like you ride the bus?" PUT actually used this as a slogan in its media advertising, while TRANS IV stressed the general public aspect of its service. Questions 14f and 14j tested support for the concept of public transportation. It was thought that as people became more aware of the services provided by public transit through the various marketing activities, they would

TABLE 1 ANTICIPATED CHANGES IN TELEPHONE SURVEY RESPONSES

Question	Anticipated Change in Response
1. Aware of transit system?	Increase in positive responses
2. Know the name of system?	Increase in correct responses
3. Know the color of vehicles?	Increase in correct responses
6a. Aware of news reports?	Increase in positive responses
6b. Think reports are favorable?	Increase in positive responses—TRANS IV/CART
7. Aware of—	
a. Printed schedules?	Increase in positive—TRANS IV/PUT
b. Brochures?	Increase in positive—TRANS IV
c. Bus stop signs?	Increase in positive—all
d. Radio advertising?	Increase in positive—all
e. Newspaper advertising?	Increase in positive—all
f. Telephone information?	Increase in positive—TRANS IV
g. Television advertising?	Increase in positive—TRANS IV
h. Information displays?	Increase in positive—TRANS IV/PUT
i. Route maps?	Increase in positive—TRANS IV/PUT
14. Do you agree that—	
d. People like you ride the bus?	Increase in positive—TRANS IV/PUT
f. There should be more funding for transit?	Increase in positive—all
i. Transit company should provide more information?	Could go either way—all
j. Transit is not local government role?	Increase in negative—all
17. Age of respondents.	No change
18. Education level of respondents.	No change
23. Employment status of respondents.	No change
24. Income level of respondents.	No change

become more supportive of it. The demographic questions were included as a control to confirm that the sample groups in both the pre- and postdemonstration surveys reflected consistent survey populations.

The primary purpose of the cross tabulations was to measure the association between awareness of specific marketing activities and perceptions of transit. The two key variables tested were knowledge of system name and agreement that "people like you ride the bus." Cross tabulations were also used to examine the relationship between TRANS IV's marketing activities and changes in perceptions of different demographic groups, in particular college students.

Again, the most significant findings were in regard to TRANS IV, both in changes in people's awareness of transit and in their attitudes toward it. The percentage of respondents who could correctly name the system increased from 73 to 81 percent. Awareness of news reports about local transit increased from 16 to 26 percent, and the percentage of respondents who judged the reports to be favorable increased from 70 to 87 percent. Awareness of brochures increased from 5 to 10 percent, of radio ads from 24 to 37 percent, of TV ads from 16 to 37 percent, and of information displays from 16 to 28 percent.

The changes in attitude were even more dramatic. The percentage of those who agreed that "people like you ride the bus" increased from 34 to 50 percent. Support for more transit funding increased from 41 to 49 percent, although there was no change in support for the idea that transit is a local government responsibility. Agreement that the transit company should provide more information increased from 72 to 82 percent. Because TRANS IV provided more information, some of TRANS IV's marketing activities, most likely the media advertisements that were image- rather than information-oriented,

may have stimulated a demand for more information on how to actually ride the system.

There were also some unanticipated changes that supported the hypothesis that TRANS IV had created a demand for information. The percentage of respondents who would be more likely to ride if they understood the service increased from 55 to 68 percent, and those who would be more likely to ride if signs provided service information increased from 70 to 79 percent.

Perhaps most significantly of all, TRANS IV appeared to have attracted the attention of the discretionary (or general public) ridership market. The percentage of respondents who agreed that they would only ride the bus if they didn't have an automobile available declined from 75 to 64 percent. Thus 11 percent more people would be willing to consider riding the bus by choice! In addition, the percentage of respondents who agreed that "they prefer riding in their own car," declined from 93 to 85 percent. These results were unanticipated.

The cross tabulations indicated that the change in perceptions just described was probably due to the radio and television advertising that TRANS IV initiated in February 1986 (after the reported ridership increases). However, although this trend was pronounced, this finding did not meet the statistical test for significance. The cross tabulations also indicated that these changes were most pronounced among middle-aged groups, although again the results were not conclusive. This phenomenon was unrelated to the described ridership increase, although if TRANS IV could follow up with a "how to ride transit" marketing campaign, additional ridership increases might well be possible.

The results at PUT and CART were less dramatic. At PUT, name recognition declined from 70 to 62 percent, although this

appeared to be due to a change in the demographic composition of the two sample groups. As expected, the percentage of respondents characterizing news reports as "favorable" declined from 86 to 66 percent, reflecting the negative publicity that resulted from PUT's service cutbacks during this period. Interestingly, the percentage of respondents who agreed that "transit is not the role of local government" declined from 40 to 30 percent. Faced with the reality of local cutbacks in transit funding, more people came to see transit as a proper role of local government.

A strong impression was made by PUT's bus stop signs and information displays, the two activities that represented the sharpest departure from PUT's past marketing activities. Awareness of bus stop signs increased from 76 to 84 percent and awareness of information displays increased from 39 to 47 percent.

In Idaho Falls, knowledge of transit system name increased from 82 to 90 percent. The percentage of those who believed that news reports were favorable increased from 55 to 68 percent. Awareness of radio ads increased from 24 to 42 percent and of newspaper ads from 25 to 38 percent. The only attitudinal result that showed a significant change was the percentage of respondents who agreed that transit is not a local government responsibility; this declined from 48 to 38 percent. Thus CART's marketing activities may have created the groundwork for increased local support to transit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the experience gained through this demonstration, several recommendations can be made regarding the implementation of marketing programs at small urban and rural transit systems in the future. These recommendations fall into three categories: site selection, project supervision, and project structure.

Site Selection

A project of this type will not work well at all rural and small urban transit systems. Critical success factors include managerial and funding stability and market segments, such as college students, that may contain latent demand for transit service.

Project Supervision

Successful implementation of special-purpose projects requires a strong supervisory commitment. In this project, that role could have been played by the project team or the ITD. Although the ITD received no administrative funds from this project, its role as Section 18 administrator (for which it receives 15 percent of the state's funding allocation) could have funded a small commitment of staff time. The major failings of this project occurred in the implementation phase, in which the managers proved unable or unwilling to implement the project activities in a timely manner. The ITD could have played a credible role in alleviating the managers' fears of not being

reimbursed, in establishing and enforcing deadlines, and in bridging the gap in perceptions about the project team and transit managers.

Project Structure

Three elements of project structure need to be reconsidered, as follows:

1. **Project Focus.** Much greater emphasis should be placed on implementation of project activities. The project must be tactical as well as strategic. An implementation calendar should be established, with dates for the initiation of actions, delivery of products, and contacts between the project team and transit operators. Frequent on-site technical assistance should be provided by an independent project team, state officials, or consultants or by allocating project funds to hire support locally, as was done by TRANS IV.

2. **The Structure of Marketing Plans.** The marketing plans should be reduced to a few critical objectives and solutions.

3. **Project Team.** It is important to have people in active roles on the project team that have expertise in public transit. This project was structured so that the transit expert was a consultant to the project team and was thus less directly involved in project implementation than were the other two members of the team. The other members of the project team made significant contributions to the project due to their expertise in marketing, but greater insight into public transit management issues would also have been useful at the project team level, particularly because managers of small rural transit systems tend to have little formal training or experience in the field themselves.

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