e-Transit: Electronic Business Strategies for Public Transportation

Volume 4

Advanced Features of Transit Websites
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e-Transit: Electronic Business
Strategies for Public Transportation
Volume 4

Advanced Features of Transit Websites

MULTISYSTEMS, INC.
Cambridge, MA

and

MATTHEW A. COOGAN
White River Junction, VT

SUBJECT AREAS
Public Transit

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Task Order 4, “Advanced Features of Transit Web Sites,” of TCRP Project J-09 was performed by Multisystems, Inc., and Matthew Coogan. Multisystems served as the primary contractor for the study. Buck Marks of Multisystems served as Principal Investigator of the study and was thus responsible for the overall supervision of the research. Joana Conklin had primary responsibility for conducting the case study interviews and aided in preparation of the final report. Mike Bolton and Dan Fleishman served as Senior Advisors for this study. Rich Juster helped in editing the final report. Matthew Coogan provided input throughout the study process and aided in preparation of the final report.

The project team would like to express special thanks to the 16 organizations that participated in the research and made the project possible. The guidance of Stephan Parker and Gwen Chisholm, the TCRP Program Officers for the project, and the J-09 Project Panel is also acknowledged and appreciated.
The nation’s growth and the need to meet mobility, environmental, and energy objectives place demands on public transit systems. Current systems, some of which are old and in need of upgrading, must expand service area, increase service frequency, and improve efficiency to serve these demands. Research is necessary to solve operating problems, to adapt appropriate new technologies from other industries, and to introduce innovations into the transit industry. The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) serves as one of the principal means by which the transit industry can develop innovative near-term solutions to meet demands placed on it.

The need for TCRP was originally identified in TRB Special Report 213—Research for Public Transit: New Directions, published in 1987 and based on a study sponsored by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration—now the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). A report by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), Transportation 2000, also recognized the need for local, problem-solving research. TCRP, modeled after the longstanding and successful National Cooperative Highway Research Program, undertakes research and other technical activities in response to the needs of transit service providers. The scope of TCRP includes a variety of transit research fields including planning, service configuration, equipment, facilities, operations, human resources, maintenance, policy, and administrative practices.

TCRP was established under FTA sponsorship in July 1992. Proposed by the U.S. Department of Transportation, TCRP was authorized as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). On May 13, 1992, a memorandum agreement outlining TCRP operating procedures was executed by the three cooperating organizations: FTA; the National Academies, acting through the Transportation Research Board (TRB); and the Transit Development Corporation, Inc. (TDC), a nonprofit educational and research organization established by APTA. TDC is responsible for forming the independent governing board, designated as the TCRP Oversight and Project Selection (TOPS) Committee.

Research problem statements for TCRP are solicited periodically but may be submitted to TRB by anyone at any time. It is the responsibility of the TOPS Committee to formulate the research program by identifying the highest priority projects. As part of the evaluation, the TOPS Committee defines funding levels and expected products.

Once selected, each project is assigned to an expert panel, appointed by the Transportation Research Board. The panels prepare project statements (requests for proposals), select contractors, and provide technical guidance and counsel throughout the life of the project. The process for developing research problem statements and selecting research agencies has been used by TRB in managing cooperative research programs since 1962. As in other TRB activities, TCRP project panels serve voluntarily without compensation.

Because research cannot have the desired impact if products fail to reach the intended audience, special emphasis is placed on disseminating TCRP results to the intended end users of the research: transit agencies, service providers, and suppliers. TRB provides a series of research reports, syntheses of transit practice, and other supporting material developed by TCRP research. APTA will arrange for workshops, training aids, field visits, and other activities to ensure that results are implemented by urban and rural transit industry practitioners.

The TCRP provides a forum where transit agencies can cooperatively address common operational problems. The TCRP results support and complement other ongoing transit research and training programs.
THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES
Advisers to the Nation on Science, Engineering, and Medicine

The National Academy of Sciences is a private, nonprofit, self-perpetuating society of distinguished scholars engaged in scientific and engineering research, dedicated to the furtherance of science and technology and to their use for the general welfare. On the authority of the charter granted to it by the Congress in 1863, the Academy has a mandate that requires it to advise the federal government on scientific and technical matters. Dr. Bruce M. Alberts is president of the National Academy of Sciences.

The National Academy of Engineering was established in 1964, under the charter of the National Academy of Sciences, as a parallel organization of outstanding engineers. It is autonomous in its administration and in the selection of its members, sharing with the National Academy of Sciences the responsibility for advising the federal government. The National Academy of Engineering also sponsors engineering programs aimed at meeting national needs, encourages education and research, and recognizes the superior achievements of engineers. Dr. William A. Wulf is president of the National Academy of Engineering.

The Institute of Medicine was established in 1970 by the National Academy of Sciences to secure the services of eminent members of appropriate professions in the examination of policy matters pertaining to the health of the public. The Institute acts under the responsibility given to the National Academy of Sciences by its congressional charter to be an adviser to the federal government and, on its own initiative, to identify issues of medical care, research, and education. Dr. Harvey V. Fineberg is president of the Institute of Medicine.

The National Research Council was organized by the National Academy of Sciences in 1916 to associate the broad community of science and technology with the Academy’s purposes of furthering knowledge and advising the federal government. Functioning in accordance with general policies determined by the Academy, the Council has become the principal operating agency of both the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering in providing services to the government, the public, and the scientific and engineering communities. The Council is administered jointly by both the Academies and the Institute of Medicine. Dr. Bruce M. Alberts and Dr. William A. Wulf are chair and vice chair, respectively, of the National Research Council.

The Transportation Research Board is a division of the National Research Council, which serves the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering. The Board’s mission is to promote innovation and progress in transportation by stimulating and conducting research, facilitating the dissemination of information, and encouraging the implementation of research results. The Board’s varied activities annually engage more than 4,000 engineers, scientists, and other transportation researchers and practitioners from the public and private sectors and academia, all of whom contribute their expertise in the public interest. The program is supported by state transportation departments, federal agencies including the component administrations of the U.S. Department of Transportation, and other organizations and individuals interested in the development of transportation. www.TRB.org

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FOREWORD

By Gwen Chisholm
Staff Officer
Transportation Research Board

TCRP Report 84: e-Transit: Electronic Business Strategies for Public Transportation documents principles and techniques that are used in electronic business strategies for public transportation. TCRP Report 84 is being be published as multiple volumes. Volume 4: Advanced Features of Transit Websites explores the potential of the following advanced website features for the transit industry: automated itinerary planners, real-time customer information, e-mail notification systems, and customer relationship management. This report may be used by senior managers, website design managers, operations managers, and technical and other professional employees.

The Internet and other new information and communication technologies are revolutionizing the way services are delivered and organizations are structured. Electronic business processes change the ways organizations operate and conduct business. Opportunities to lower transaction costs and improve efficiency have changed relationships between transit agencies and their suppliers and customers, and electronic business processes are likely to change industry structures in the longer term. Portals for transactions in government-to-government and business-to-government marketplaces are offered through diverse organizations. Numerous transit agencies are preparing to offer customized itinerary planning and fare media purchasing over the Internet.

The declining costs of communications, data storage, and data retrieval are accelerating the opportunities spawned by the Internet and other information and communications technologies. Choosing and sequencing investments in technologies, processes, and people to reduce costs and increase productivity present challenges to the transit manager, who must weigh the costs, benefits, and risks of changing the ways services are delivered. To assist in meeting such challenges, TCRP Project J-09 is producing a multiple-volume series under TCRP Report 84. The research program will identify, develop, and provide flexible, ongoing, quick-response research designed to bring electronic business strategies to public transportation and mobility management.

Volume 4: Advanced Features of Transit Websites is the fourth volume in the TCRP Report 84 series; the report is in portable document format (pdf) on CRP-CD-34. Multisystems, Inc., prepared the report with assistance from Matthew Coogan. The objective of this task was to identify and document lessons learned regarding the potential of incorporating advanced web features into the transit industry. The focus is on automated itinerary planning systems, real-time transit information, e-mail notification, and the application of customer relationship management concepts to these services. The web features were reviewed in the context of customer relationship management. The report provides an overview of the implementation, technology, value creation, lessons learned, and best practices associated with web-based advanced features. The study findings reveal that an investment in advanced website features offers the potential to provide significant benefits to the customer and the transit industry.

Volumes issued under TCRP Report 84 may be found on the TRB website at national academies.org/trb.
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