



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION

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Major route changes, expanded information services and an extensive advertising campaign marked the recent start of the service improvement and communication phase of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration's (UMTA) Transit Marketing Project in Nashville, Tennessee.

The project, initiated in March, 1974, was designed to demonstrate how a comprehensive marketing approach can work in the transit industry. It is funded by \$750,000 from UMTA and local funds from the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) and the Tennessee Department of Transportation.

The project's service improvement phase includes a 13 percent addition to the system's service miles and modifications of 19 of the existing 37 routes.

A one-year advertising and promotional campaign, running under the slogan "Nashville's Economy Car," will be conducted through newspaper, television, radio, transit, and direct mail advertising. The ad theme is a direct result of preliminary market research that found economy to be a high priority for Nashville residents.

Redesigned schedules, a new transit map and improved telephone information services also were put into use during the current phase.

The changes were implemented in response to market data gained through consumer research that included:

- 1) A Rider Definition Study designed to identify people and trip types offering the highest volume potential, describe the market target group, establish the competitive framework and determine the need for route modification; and

2) A Rider Incentive Study designed to identify and rank the attitudes and motivations of the market target group and determine the unsatisfied needs to be addressed for those types of trips offering the greatest potential for increased volume.

The research pinpointed a number of key opportunities for expanding bus trip volume in Nashville. The best opportunities are provided by addition of new riders and increases in work and non-grocery shopping trips. The research also indicated that expansion prospects tend to favor persons with higher socio-economic characteristics and that the single-occupant car represents the primary source of competition for the Nashville MTA.

The research also indicated several barriers to ridership that must be overcome to attract potential riders to the Nashville MTA: Insufficient awareness of existing services and fares, destinations that are inadequately served, need for greater service frequency, need for improved information about the system, including more informative signs on buses and at bus stops to make the system easier to use; and a poor image of MTA service regarding security, reliability and exposure to bad weather.

The Nashville project is the first of two cities to reach the implementation stage under the Transit Marketing Project. The other city is Baltimore, where service improvement is expected to begin in a few weeks. The two were chosen to represent a typical medium-size city and large city, respectively. More than 50 cities had originally responded to a site selection questionnaire for the project.

In each city, emphasis will be on development and demonstration of techniques that can be used by other transit properties and investigation of similarities among various transit markets. Results of the demonstrations will be reported in a comprehensive transit marketing manual that also will include general guidelines for marketing at other sites.

While this project is the initial focal point for UMTA activities to improve transit marketing techniques, it represents only a part of UMTA's commitment to this important area. Seminars and workshops and a newly developed transit marketing course for marketing professionals new to the transit industry also have been implemented.

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