

5. THE MARKETING AND IMAGE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICE ON CAPE COD

5.1 MARKETING – ITS IMPORTANCE

Critical to selling a service is making known its availability, as well as its desirability. No matter how well the product is designed, consumers will not emerge unless there is increasing information in the marketplace of its existence, and how it could positively affect the consumer's day-to-day life. Although transit (as well as other public transportation) services are not a tangible retail product or a consumer durable good, they like many services exhibit similar attributes. They provide consumers with a means to improve the quality of their lives in that they make another travel choice available.

At the same time, even though CCRTA has been operating since the 1970s, its existence is not well known among year-round residents and most seasonal visitors.³² In addition, Cape Cod's transit service market is unique in its mix of year-round and seasonal visitors, and its large percentages of elderly and individuals that are economically deprived, or in need of specialized human services. Thus, establishment of an aggressive marketing campaign is essential to achieving a five-year public transportation goal of reducing congestion and diverting more and more of the year-round and seasonal auto-users to transit.

Another critical component to successful marketing is adopting evaluation techniques that can be used to assess market demand, tailor service routes, and expand patronage. By applying them, it becomes much easier to determine which routes are under-performing, where latent demand exists, what route possibilities exist, and designing targeted promotions.

5.1.1 Current Marketing Efforts of the CCRTA

For the 2001 summer season, the CCRTA mounted a broad and aggressive marketing campaign, financed with additional funds provided by the CCRTA Advisory Board. The goal of the campaign was to raise awareness of the CCRTA's services and encourage ridership.

The campaign included publication of the first-ever CCRTA System Map & Guidebook. The *Cape Cod Times* distributed this System Map to 68,000 subscribers during the first week of June. In addition, the CCRTA produced two 30-second television commercials that were broadcast on-Cape throughout the summer on major cable TV networks.

³² Recent surveys suggest that only about 23 percent of Cape Cod residents are aware that transit services are available capewide.

Residents who live within ¼ mile of a bus route in Hyannis and Falmouth were directly mailed a system map and a free-ride coupon. Print ads - some featuring free-ride coupons - appeared regularly in the *Cape Cod Times* and the *Falmouth Enterprise*.

The CCRTA also engaged a local personality, “*Mave who Waves*” for promotional appearances throughout the Cape to promote the practice of flagging down CCRTA buses along the fixed routes. In Provincetown, the new, clean-fueled buses servicing the Provincetown-Truro Shuttle, provided by the National Park Service Cape Cod National Seashore, were rolled out with a street celebration that attracted hundreds of people and local media.



The ongoing marketing efforts for the CCRTA reflect suggestions provided at Transit Summit II, as well as creative thinking independent from the efforts of the Task Force. The direct effect of these marketing efforts was a 25 percent increase in July and August CCRTA ridership over the previous period in FY2000. The current marketing efforts and the dramatic ridership increase indicate that there is measurable and tangible value to a sustained marketing effort. The next step is to develop a comprehensive Cape-wide public transportation-marketing plan that builds on this success, and includes a wider array of public transportation providers and stakeholders.

5.2 DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A MARKETING PLAN

The following steps are suggested for developing and implementing a comprehensive Cape-wide public transportation-marketing plan:

- **Management.** One, resources must be identified and committed to development of an effective marketing plan with the understanding and cooperation of all of the public transportation providers and stakeholders. Two, a staff member must be assigned to act as an official spokesperson to promote the image and communicate the benefits of the transit service. This person would also manage the day-to-day development of the marketing plan, assist in its implementation, respond to public inquiries and complaints, track the success of the plan and its various components, and conduct program evaluations (determine what works and what does not).
- **Market Research Tools.** Market research tools that use quantitative and qualitative techniques are essential to creating and re-evaluating a marketing plan. An initial task could include examining the existing transit services to determine how well they are utilized. It is also important to identify those portions of the market that have gone untapped, and determine which segments should be targeted as potential transit users. Surveys can be used to secure information regarding travel behavior, which then can be segmented to develop discrete recommendations. Focus groups present means of assessing non-transit users' travel desires, and determining what transit attributes or fare possibilities would convert them to becoming a user. (The CCRTA conducted research in 1999 that is useful but should be updated to reflect the proposed recommendations contained in this Plan.)
- **Becoming Market Driven.** The marketing plan must be externally focused, incorporating strategies for reaching all possible market segments, including individuals who live as far away as New York City, Philadelphia or Washington, D.C. The marketing plan must primarily focus on how to better brand and promote the CCRTA specifically, and achieve greater recognition of an integrated Cape Cod-wide public transportation system for all public transportation modes.

The assessment conducted by the Volpe Center in the preliminary stages of developing this plan indicates that buses and bus stops are not well marked or known and bus shelters do not exist at key stops. This led to the development of the list of short-term implementation actions included later in this section of the plan.

5.3 MARKET STRATEGIES

A good marketing plan translates customers' preferences into operational improvements and/or public outreach endeavors that will produce a positive (and financially sound) response among targeted market segments. Strategies that appear promising, based on the research that has been conducted so far, include:

- **Branding**
 - Create an easily recognizable symbol that would apply to any form of public transportation on the Cape, regardless of carrier. A possible example could be a derivative of the "T" symbol used not only by the MBTA in Boston, but also by several other transit agencies throughout the U.S. The Cape version could be a blue T against a yellow background within a blue-edged square or circle. In the case of bus stops, the T symbol would appear prominently and below it, smaller decals could be applied for each carrier serving that stop.
 - Developing a new logo, color scheme and identity for RTA service that conveys the attributes of the transit services and can be applied to physical assets, used in print, electronic and broadcast media advertising, route maps and schedules.
 - Installing bus stop signs and shelters, system maps, and schedules at all bus stops.

- **Media Relations and Public Outreach**
 - Encouraging public interest pieces along with helpful hints about transit in locally and regionally focused newspapers and magazines.
 - Presenting to Cape Cod interest groups and employers, including the Chambers of Commerce, hotel groups, etc., to inform them about the extent and ease of using the transit system.
 - Enhancing the current toll-free number phone system to enable people to access up-to-date traveler information, and voice concerns.
 - Posting additional transit information on the Internet through www.capecodtransit.org.
 - Sponsoring community events.
 - Translate public transportation literature and web based information into Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole languages.

- **Advertising**
 - Developing/placing print and broadcast advertisements that feature CCRTA and promote auto-free vacations in key off-Cape markets.



- Developing/distributing transit guides, that include ferry and air schedules, and also provide visitors with total trip plans/directions between typical origins and destinations.
- Installing automated traveler information kiosks with system user oriented information in hotels/motels, campgrounds, supermarkets, town centers, laundromats and the National Seashore.
- **Media Alternatives**
 - Selecting combinations of media alternatives that best suit the message and the target audience, such as the New York Times and the Internet to reach Manhattan summer visitors, and church newsletters and advertisements on local talk radio programs to reach untapped, year-round residents.
- **Special Services**
 - Instituting integrated fare cards (smart cards) for multiple modes, dining and shopping.
- **Promotions**
 - Providing discounted advertising space on buses and in bus stop shelters to local merchants in exchange for discounts to purchases made by transit users. (This would work well in the evenings when many of the Cape's summer visitors are searching for dining options.)
 - Encouraging employers and health centers to provide discounted bus passes or smart cards to employees and patients.
 - Instituting ride-free days at key times during the year.
 - Developing a transit display with giveaways, which would be used for promotional purposes at community events and fairs.
- **Pricing**
 - All fares rounded to the nearest dollar to simplify information and change giving.
 - A reduction of current fares for intra-cape travel on P&B and Bonanza.
 - Monthly bus passes for commuters.
 - Weekly passes for vacationers for travel on intra-cape routes.
 - Family tickets that provide very cheap travel for accompanied children.
 - Half-price travel on the Cape for children under 18.
 - Stored value farecards that could be used on any carrier.
 - Allowing the use of credit/debit cards for ticket purchase.
 - Sale of transit tickets through ATM's.



5.4 LISTING OF NEAR-TERM, LOW-COST MARKETING-ORIENTED IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

These near-term action items described in Table 5.1 are based on assessments conducted by the Volpe Center team in fall 2000 through spring 2001, with an interim assessment presented to the Task Force in preparation for Transit Summit II. They represent easily deployable action items only, and could eventually become components of the long-term comprehensive marketing strategy that has been outlined above.

TABLE 5.1 Near-Term Implementation Actions

Implementation Action	Description
The Public Transportation Vehicle	Encourage CCRTA, Bonanza Bus, P&B, the Cape Cod Central Railroad, SSA, Hy-Line, bicycle organizations, and other ferries to contribute to the development of a bus, van, or RV that would visit public events to inform visitors and residents aware of public transportation options.
Local Cable, TV, and the Web	Develop Web site, radio public service announcements, and local cable public service television segments devoted to improving access and knowledge of all transportation modes. Include schedule, fare, and route information, real-time information on next buses, parking availability at National Seashore, and delays (e.g. at the bridges).
Public Transportation Displays	Develop displays, such as a stand-up poster with pockets containing bus, ferry, train schedules, bike path maps, etc., to be placed in strategic locations around the Cape.
CCRTA Branding	Develop a consistent theme - new logo, color scheme, and identity for CCRTA service that conveys the attributes of the transit services to be applied to physical assets, such as buses and bus stops, used in print, electronic and broadcast media advertising, and route maps and schedules.
Private Bus Emphasis on Off-Cape Activities	Develop flyers, displays, and posters for bus services to the Cape from Boston, New York, and Providence. Advertise via radio, commercial and local cable television, and newspapers. Distribute information packages to travel agencies, P&B and Bonanza bus depots, train stations, universities, tourist information centers, and public transit centers.
National Seashore	Install variable message signs in key places to inform visitors of parking lot conditions. Develop and distribute new brochures describing parking facilities, shuttles, bus connections, and bike facilities.
Ferries	Conduct an information dissemination blitz and piggyback on CCRTA public information activities. Develop extensive marketing and awareness of the Provincetown to Boston ferry, and the Plymouth to Provincetown ferry.
Aviation	Conduct an information dissemination campaign and piggyback on CCRTA public information activities.
Bicycles	Develop bicycle path maps highlighting CCRTA bike racks on buses, safety tips for riding in traffic, facilities along bike paths, such as restrooms, restaurants, bike shops, rentals, etc.