



Marketing Resources for Transit and Mobility May 2023

As an agency expands the transit options available to its community or deploys an application offering quicker, simpler access to existing services, it is essential community members are made aware of what has changed. There are a number of strategies and tools to assist in marketing transit services, including offering usage instructions to potential users who might need the help.

Transit Marketing Considerations

An immediately helpful resource is the National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP)'s Marketing Toolkit, (<https://www.nationalrtap.org/Toolkits/Marketing-Toolkit/Welcome>) which supports rural and tribal agencies in developing and implementing marketing programs. The toolkit is a comprehensive resource, describing the importance of pursuing an active marketing effort integrated into day-to-day operations. Beyond a how-to-guide with steps and strategies, the linked page includes eight webinars with slides, templates for brochures, and photos and graphics to use with your system or as inspiration.

In developing a marketing plan, it is important to determine your target audience and the appropriate message to reach them. A successful marketing effort can communicate with current riders, potential riders, and even non-riding policymakers and community leaders.

A marketing plan ensures the community is aware of a transit system and how they can best access it. Finding the best way to share this information can be of particular help to riders or potential riders who might perceive potential access barriers, including older adults and people with disabilities. Transit managers and transportation practitioners in smaller communities are well acquainted with the importance of direct community engagement. A marketing plan might include preparing drivers to inform riders of a new app and assist them in making accounts, an approach that makes use of existing trust and interaction. In other circumstances, it may prove necessary to seek potential users out in different contexts, with different marketing strategies.

The Transportation Research Board has a resource which may prove useful as well, an unpublished report titled *Best Practices and Marketing to Increase Rural Transit Ridership and Investment*, available at <https://apps.trb.org/cmsfeed/TRBNetProjectDisplay.asp?ProjectID=4328>. The purpose of this report is to detail best practices an agency can adopt to increase ridership, measure a system's Return-On-Investment (ROI), and market the importance of rural transit investment. Prevailing themes of this report include the need for strengthening community awareness through marketing, with successful agencies actively managing their services; the continued relevance of "old tricks" such as free ride days, university pass systems, or regional connecting services; and the benefits that can be gained from partnerships and new technologies.

Useful Tools for Transit Marketing

Fortunately, there are a large number of resources available to assist in determining how best to develop a marketing plan or a given transit system. Some of these can be found through the aforementioned RTAP Marketing Toolkit, with templates, graphics, photos, and utilities available at <https://www.nationalrtap.org/Toolkits/Marketing-Toolkit/Marketing-Tools>

National RTAP's self-guided worksheets (<https://irp.cdn-website.com/270961f6/files/uploaded/workbook%20%281%29.pdf>) are an excellent resource to assess not only a system's visibility, but whether a passenger will be inclined to return, the agency's image in the community, what resources will be required for marketing, the plan's goals and objectives, target markets, and overall strategy. This worksheet can not only help shape a marketing plan's goals, but highlight areas where information is lacking and outreach to a nearby agency may offer helpful insight.

The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) allows users to access the Photo Gallery (<https://www.nadtc.org/gallery/>). As with the photos provided by NRTAP, these are free to use in your own transit marketing, and they may also offer ideas in taking your own photos.

The National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) offers a number of resources, including these linked pages on Outreach and Social Media (<https://nationalcenterformobilitymanagement.org/by-topic/by-topic-outreach-and-social-media/>) and Public Participation (<https://nationalcenterformobilitymanagement.org/by-topic/by-topic-public-participation/>)

The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC), beyond the previously noted photo gallery, can be searched for resources including this marketing webinar. (<https://www.nadtc.org/event/nadtc-office-hours-marketing-community-transportation-services/>)

Agencies interested in developing a website may find the National RTAP's Website Builder (<https://www.nationalrtap.org/Technology-Tools/Website-Builder>) a useful tool, as such pages can be created and hosted free of charge. As a marketing plan may involve taking photos or designing graphics such as a logo, it may also be useful to research free or cheap tools to create images and documents.

If designing a logo, images for social media marketing, or graphic materials is the goal, Canva or Adobe Express are simple to use. Other tools include Namelix, which can generate a system name, and Brandmark, which can create simple logos that stylize a system's name. Many other services exist.

About this Resource Sheet

This resource does not provide an exhaustive list of potential sources. Any mention of a specific company, product, service, or website in this publication does not constitute or imply an endorsement by the research team. This resource was authored by Graduate Fellow Danny Tomares with assistance from Associate Director Carrie Kissel and Program Manager Krishna Kunapareddy and published by the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Research Foundation with support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development through a contract to provide technical assistance to rural communities. USDA is an equal opportunity provider. Any opinions, findings and conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funding agency.

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