PULLMAN TRANSIT

THE SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES OF A SMALL TRANSIT SYSTEM

WAYNE THOMPSON, TRANSIT MANAGER
Service Area
Our start: 1979

Division of City of Pullman, Public Works Department

Local Utility Tax base
Then came I-695

Lost substantial state operating funds
* Dropped routes
* Let Drivers go
* 8 years without bus purchase

Recovery relied on:
* WSU student transit fee
* FTA 5311 rural grant funding
WSU support

Pre-paid fare contract for all students, faculty, staff and retirees

* Also includes investment in “Enhanced Services” which include frequent Express route service
Water education wheels through Pullman
City adds a new hybrid aquifer-themed bus to its fixed-route service to promote water conservation

By Ellen Dennis, Moscow-Pullman Daily News  Aug 7, 2020  Updated Aug 7, 2020
“Coug” wrap

- Started in 2011
- This bus is a 1993 Gillig heavy duty coach
Best Practices Spotlight

Advertising Best Practices: Bus Wraps and In-Kind Advertising

January 2017

Advertising can be a way to generate additional revenue for your agency and/or to help get the word out about your transit services. This article will cover a few best practices and lessons learned regarding bus wraps and In-Kind advertising. For more comprehensive information about these topics and other marketing strategies, visit National RTAP’s Marketing Transit Toolkit section on Strategies for Building Awareness, Image, and Support.

Bus Wraps

Transit advertising is advertising inside buses, on the exterior of vehicles, and at bus shelters. One of the benefits of transit advertising is that the space comes free-of-charge; usually your only expenses are production costs. Utilizing the exterior of your vehicles for your logo and contact information, you can build your brand and raise awareness of the system throughout the community. It’s like a traveling billboard, as you can see in the example on the right.

Transit advertising also can be a source of revenue or a way to highlight local partnerships. Many systems sell ads in the form of full or partial bus wraps. It is important, however, to take into consideration the staff time and expenses of selling and maintaining the wraps and other ads. You may find that using your vehicles to build your own brand is a better use of the space. You also need to take your passengers’ experience into account; the making sure that they can see clearly out of the windows.

Below are some examples and tips from rural transit agencies:

Pullman Transit, in Pullman, WA implemented bus wraps displaying the local Washington State University mascot, a cougar, paid for by the university (shown in photo on the left). Wayne Thompson, Manager, said, “The bus wraps remain a big success in our system, and are recognized almost as a Pullman Transit trademark now region wide.” However, Mr. Thompson notes that visibility out of the side windows has been a concern for passengers. Also, because the window areas are perforated, they need to be washed more gently and hard water and soap build-up can occur. With new buses, he now makes sure that at least the front two windows are uncovered. He also recommends looking into material that allows for more aggressive daily washing.

Eikebus (Eikebus, Marion County Transit Authority (EMTA)) in Eikebus, WI also sells ad space on their...
FTA Charter Rule Exceptions

school bus service and fall football

Our role in the community goes beyond just regular bus service
Whatcom Transit Authority  
(Bellingham/Whatcom County) 
Population: 225,685  
2019 boardings: 4,451,508  
= 19.72 rides/capita

Pullman Transit  
Population: 34,560  
2019 boardings: 1,370,112  
= 39.64 rides/capita

Pierce Transit (Tacoma Area)  
Population: 904,980  
2019 boardings: 8,376,889  
= 9.25 rides/capita

Spokane Transit Authority  
Population: 436,000  
2019 boardings: 9,971,798  
= 22.87 rides/capita
Medium Cities

1. **Pullman, WA**: In 2011, Pullman was declared the “Best Place to Raise Kids” in Washington by Bloomberg Businessweek. Not only is it great for kids, but it’s also an easy place to get around. Many Washington State University students use the Pullman Transit buses. The Pullman Transit system was created in 1979 and now has 25 buses running regular routes.

2. **Elko, NV**: More than 32% of residents in the greater Elko region reported using green transportation. While carpooling is popular in the area for everyday travel, another eco-friendly option for vacationing is hopping on the California Zephyr. The Zephyr runs from San Francisco to Chicago every day, with stops at Elko Station. Residents who reserve a spot on the Zephyr can see the Rocky Mountains, Sierra Nevadas and more.

3. **Arcadia, FL**: Arcadia is in DeSoto County, Florida. One of the easiest ways to get around the county is using the DART (DeSoto-Arcadia Regional Transit). The bus routes go from Arcadia to Nocatee from Monday through Saturday. More than 17% of residents in the area carpool, which is another great way to save gas and save money.

4. **Juneau, AK**: The unique geography of Juneau has made it essential for residents to use green methods of transportation. There are no roads directly connecting Juneau to the rest of Alaska. Ferries are available to get people to the city. In Juneau, 16% of people reported carpooling and almost 7% reported walking.

5. **Laramie, WY**: This overall green city is also ranked third for biking and fifth for walking on our medium cities lists. Laramie is home to the University of Wyoming, where many students bike to class. Laramie BikeNet helps make the city friendly for riding, and the downtown area is compact enough to make walking easy and efficient for residents.

6. **Glenwood Springs, CO**: Walking Magazine recognized Glenwood Springs as one of the most walkable towns in America. Garfield County as a whole is a great place for visitors and residents to enjoy natural scenery. Glenwood Springs is also home to a busy Amtrak station for the California Zephyr. The Amtrak route goes along the Colorado River, away from major roads.

7. **Moscow, ID**: Moscow sits in northern Idaho on the Washington border. Approximately
Dial-A-Ride

- Pullman’s ADA-required “paratransit” service is called Dial-A-Ride
- Six vans in the fleet
- Four daily van/driver shifts
- Wheelchair lifts
- Door-to-door pickup and dropoff
- More than 20,000 rides annually
- Service is 20% of total operating budget
- Anyone age 65 or more is eligible, or younger with a qualifying disability
National Safety Council

Rocky Finley

Bob Sanders

Ken Williams

Randy Wendt

(2 Million)
Heroes do work here:

Virus response:
- Fares
- Spacing/capacity
- Cleaning
COVID-19 RESPONSE

- Enforced 10 person capacity in buses
- Restricted seating in vans
- Offices turned into “PPE” storerooms for masks, gloves & sanitizer
COVID-19 RESPONSE

Regular employee communication

No fares collected

Rear door boarding

CITY OF PULLMAN
Pullman Transit and Dial-A-Ride
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Transit (509) 332-6535  Dial-A-Ride (509) 332-3471
Fax (509) 332-6390  www.pullmantransit.com

Date: June 3, 2020
To: All Employees
From: Wayne Thompson, Transit Manager
Re: Transit coronavirus response update

Since mid-March we have been making changes in how we operate, in order to continue to provide a reliable service but protect system patrons and employees. To date, some of these changes have included:

- Daily application of the hospital grade disinfectant Viraplex to all vehicles and facilities.
- Temporarily not requiring fares, to minimize money handling on both buses and vans.
- Promoting “social distancing” through signage and raised seats in wheelchair-recreament area.
- The white “stand line” has been moved to a point six feet behind the driver.
- ERD has installed the flexible shower curtains to guard against direct patron cough, but not block view of side mirror.
- Continuing to provide hand sanitizer and masks on each revenue vehicle.
- Providing gloves for employee use.
- We are working with Gillig to replace the “baseplate” modules in all of our post-2017 buses, so that rear-door-entry-only is an option.
Our contribution to the 2018 Pullman Police Department “Lip Sync Challenge”
Challenges
Just Time and Money

- With WSU in session
  - We must continue to meet capacity at peak times (more Expresses)
  - More frequent service throughout the community (currently 35 minute loops)
  - More weekend/evening service (currently just two buses)

- When WSU is not in session, our public is asking for
  - Later weekday service
  - Later and more weekend/evening service

- General
  - Airport service
  - Expand Dial-A-Ride as needed (small, high-priority service is 20% of budget)

- Aging Fleet replacement
  - One-quarter of fleet dates to 1990s
  - Diesel to hybrid to electric transition will continue

- Funding Source
  - Will there be a return to consistent state funding for transit operations?
  - Federal grant assistance has been regular, but is it wise to plan with all eggs in one basket?
  - Local options
    - Recently doubled fares
    - WSU already covers nearly half of our operating budget

Questions?