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## APTA Marketing & Communications Workshop 2020— Orlando, Florida

By: Elena Ortiz Rosado, Collier Area Transit

In February, I was given the opportunity to attend the APTA Marketing Workshop in Orlando, Florida. I was excited about the prospect of interacting with peers and industry leaders, some who traveled all the way across the country, to learn best marketing practices from various transit professionals. There were many interesting sessions that I attended and learned ideas from, but the one I took away the most useable concepts from was a presentation from a Disney executive “cast” member, who spoke about the Disney Institute’s Chain of Excellence. He stressed the importance of exceeding expectations daily, using the mindset that the customer is king and that the quality of service and the quality of the experience is the most important aspect in any type of industry. Within Disney, and within any service industry, there is a need to exceed expectations daily by creating an emotional connection. If an emotional connection is missing, then satisfaction is worthless. The concept that an emotional connection must be made is so significant. For the Disney experience, their goal is to create an intent to return. If their customer is not satisfied completely after what could be their one and only visit, then they will pass along that dissatisfaction to any one they speak with. Their goal is

to make the experience so great through excellent customer service, that the customer will return repeatedly.

To relate this concept to the public transportation industry, it is so important for transit agencies to exceed the expectations that transit riders or non-transit riders already have in place within their mindset. One great ride or one great experience with an attentive bus driver can create that emotional connection with an individual passenger, which in turn that passenger will relay to others within their community through feedback and conversations, helping to create a service that is valued and breaks the stereotype that many hold regarding public transportation. This can be accomplished through employee engagement by having systems and processes in place which solely focus on customer service and promoting brand loyalty. Today, passengers have many travel options available to them, so it is very important to create a great experience from the very first time that passenger steps on a bus or enters the bus terminal. All interactions with every staff member should be pleasant and helpful, which then creates a loyal following and a repeat customer for years to come.

*cont'd on page 2*



## APTA Marketing & Communications Workshop—cont'd from cover

By: Brigitte Stambury, Miami-Dade County's Department of Transportation and Public Works

Earlier this year, I was fortunate enough to be the recipient of a Florida Transit Marketing Network (FTMN) scholarship to attend the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) 2020 Marketing & Communications Workshop at the Grand Floridian Hotel in Orlando, Florida. It was my first time attending. As the Social Media Specialist for the Department of Transportation and Public Works (DTPW) in Miami-Dade County, part of my job consists of creating content for our channels as well as capturing images, filming and editing videos, and assisting in the planning and execution of our editorial calendar. I was excited to sit in the many workshops, such as Communicating Challenges and Opportunities, Social Media, and Technology. But one that stood out the most to me was Video Animation, with Multimedia Specialist for the San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans) Conan Low.

During his panel presentation, Low spoke about the usage of video animation to grow your agency's audience. His session was interesting, unique, and honest. I immediately

returned home and started to work on implementing some of the techniques he presented. Low spoke about video animation as an engaging form of storytelling. He emphasized creating a concise presentation while keeping audiences interested. One of the ways he did this was by creating wayfinding graphics interchange format (GIF) to help riders navigate the Caltrain system. He explained how he used Google Earth Studios to get the GPS location of the Caltrain Mountain View station and Levi's Stadium, and added a navigation animation between the two destinations using the After Effects program. Creating these short animations didn't need text or audio and can be done rather quickly. The end result is a clear and effective message.

I'm reminded of Low's presentation today, in the midst of our country facing the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. I plan to utilize the newfound skills I learned from his workshop to create some GIFs for Miami-Dade Transit to share in this time of crisis. Our agency is currently implementing rear door boardings on Metrobus, promoting social distancing, and an increase in cleaning schedules for vehicles. All of these can be portrayed using simple -- yet effective -- GIFs on our social media channels.

## PCPT Bus Driver Saves a Little Boy

On May 23, 2020 Nastiarishia (Nathy) Mejia, a Pasco County Public Transportation (PCPT) fixed route bus operator was driving her when she spotted a small boy crying and it looked like he was attempting to cross the busy intersection without adult supervision. Nathy saw a vehicle perform a U-turn to pull-up to the child, and the occupant started talking to him. The child appeared to become more distraught, causing Nathy to feel like something was wrong.

Nathy pulled her bus safely out of traffic close to the child and started honking her horn, to prevent him from entering the vehicle. The vehicle left the area. Two passengers on Nathy bus helped the child board. Nathy asked the child where his parents were; the boy stated, "my mom just abandoned me", and that his mother told him to "go try to find your grandfather."

Nathy reported the incident to dispatch and requested



police assistance. She offered the child cold water and a snack, then comforted the boy until Pasco County Sheriff Department deputies arrived to help the child. Once the boy was safely with law enforcement, Nathy resumed her route. Nathy said the training she received from PCPT on Human Trafficking helped her decide to stop. She remembered if you see something, say something and she felt she had to do something. Due to her quick actions Nathy was able to get the little boy the help he needed.

PCPT Heroes!

Transit drivers are heroes. Across the county bus drivers for reporting to work and providing an essential service throughout their community. PCPT wanted to take a moment to share our appreciation for our drivers. Stay safe and continue to follow CDC recommendations.

Watch our PCPT Heroes <https://bit.ly/PCPTHeroes>

# Reaching New Ridership Demographics in times of Uncertainty

By Stacey Perkins, Lee Tran

**A**s transit marketers constantly work toward expanding their ridership audiences, it's natural to wonder if the pandemic will affect future transit ridership demographics. In this article, we explore both sides of the coin as we seek ways of fine-tuning our marketing efforts during uncertain and ever-changing circumstances.

It's no secret, U.S. transit ridership has been on a decline since 2014, even as transit agencies have shuffled to innovate by adding extra services such as on-demand and micro-mobility options. The downward trend was almost inevitable in some areas as accessibility and convenience played a major role while personal vehicles became more fuel efficient, eco-friendly and financeable, albeit still expensive. So the million dollar question is, will the Coronavirus Pandemic change the ridership game at all? Will we see a shift in rider demographics as commuters, students and the newly unemployed trade in their conveniences for affordability? Or will we see further declines in ridership as transportation becomes less necessary as unemployment rises and commuters and students conduct their business from home? Maybe history can shed some light on this question.

Following the Spanish Flu outbreak of 1918, transit use remained fairly consistent. It wasn't until the Great Depression that unemployment took its toll on transit as Americans grappled to find jobs to make ends meet<sup>1</sup>. As I write this, over 40 million Americans have filed for unemployment during the pandemic<sup>2</sup>. With unemployment at high levels, some individuals are likely feeling a financial strain on their wallets and might be seeking alternative transportation options. Optimistically thinking, there's a chance ridership could actually spike as the pandemic runs its course. Of course, if unemployed individuals don't have jobs to go to, ridership could suffer like it did during the depression. Depending on the length of time it takes for the economy to recover and businesses to get back up and running at full capacity, the popularity of transit in the coming months and years might teeter-totter.

As transit marketers, we are constantly seeking to identify new target audiences to give transit a try. Students have been a long-time group transit marketers have sought to convert. As the pandemic runs its course in our communities, perhaps we can finally reach this demographic in new and meaningful ways. One concern though might

be that as students pursue their education from home via e-learning, they will no longer require transportation to get to and from school. This would shift ridership for that demographic in the downward direction. On the other side of the coin, students also might find it less necessary or affordable to need and maintain a personal vehicle, resulting in this demographic jumping on board the transit wagon for non-school related travel.



With or without the pandemic in the equation, transit systems have consistently had to make the decision to cut service in order to lower costs or innovate and grow their service to be competitive. It's a hard decision to make because in the transit industry, demand doesn't seem drive the growth, the growth seems to drive the demand. Individuals who utilize transit for reasons other than necessity are forced to decide whether a twenty minute commute that takes an hour on a bus is worth the convenience and other touted benefits of using public transit such as safety, economic and environmental benefits.

As we continue to seek ways of expanding our user audience, we must keep the human element on the forefront of our efforts. New users must feel comfortable with the idea of changing their transportation routines. Regardless of the pandemic or any other life changing shift our world experiences, our message to current and new riders must be that of support and understanding. With that messaging we must follow through with superior service so the rider experience remains desirable. We can use this time of certainty to fine-tune our marketing methods in a long-term approach to reach new demographics.

Sources:

<sup>1</sup> <https://trid.trb.org/view/498371>

<sup>2</sup> <https://fortune.com/2020/05/28/us-unemployment-rate-numbers-claims-this-week-total-job-losses-may-28-2020-benefits-claims-job-losses/>

# Tri-Rail Running 5-Car Sets as it Increases Train Service on June 1

**S**FRFTA announced that Tri-Rail trains will run as 5-car sets for the time being, as the agency increased train service on June 1, following the re-opening of business in Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties.



“With businesses reopening and more people returning to work, train ridership has slightly increased,” said Steven Abrams, SFRTA Executive Director. “To keep social distancing practices in place, we are adding an extra car to each train starting this Friday, and adding four more trains into the schedule starting June 1.”

Since March 28, Tri-Rail had been running an amended schedule with 18 trains every 2 hours on weekdays and 12 trains every 3-hours on weekends, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The schedule change on June 1 adds hourly service during weekday peak hours.

“Our goal is to safely and steadily increase service as people gradually return to work and other activities,” said Abrams. “We are monitoring train ridership daily and will adjust our schedule to match demand, while continuing to do all we can to keep our passengers and crews safe.”

Tri-Rail trains typically operate as 3-car sets, but have been using four cars during the pandemic to assist with social distancing. Passengers are still being asked to wear face coverings, train seats are taped off to keep passengers at safe distances from each other and fares remain suspended, in order to continue to keep safety measures in place.

For the most updated information on Tri-Rail service, call 1-800-TRI-RAIL (874-7245), visit [www.tri-rail.com](http://www.tri-rail.com), or follow Tri-Rail’s Facebook and Twitter pages.

## JTA Partners with Miles to Offer Rewards for Riding

**A** new partnership between the Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) and Miles will reward customers for riding JTA services.

Miles is a universal rewards platform and app that delivers value for every mile traveled. Users who choose alternative modes of travel or eco-friendly forms of transportation — such as walking, biking, carpooling or JTA transportation services — are rewarded even more.

Available on iOS and Android, Miles allows anyone with a smartphone to earn miles as they travel. The app is designed to work seamlessly in the background. Miles automatically logs each trip from point A to B and the mode of transportation, while keeping data completely private. To get started, consumers simply download the Miles app. Users can easily view their miles earned per trip and receive personalized rewards that are redeemable either online or at a nearby store.

“This is a great incentive for people to leave the car at home and try transit or other modes of mobility,” said JTA Chief Executive Officer Nathaniel P. Ford Sr.

Based in Redwood City, CA, the Miles app first soft-

launched in July 2018 and has since seen rapid growth. To date, Miles users have earned more than 3 billion miles, redeeming over 500,000 rewards, with an average value of \$20 per reward. More than 200 brands offer exclusive rewards through the platform.

“At Miles, our vision is to deliver value for every mile traveled no matter how you get there while we award more sustainable forms of travel even further. Together with Jacksonville Transportation Authority, we’re excited to help incentivize greener travel and reach their goals to encourage ridership through rewards and challenges,” said Paresh Jain, Co-Founder – Head of Business Development & Strategy

Join the Miles app today to be offered exclusive challenges sponsored by JTA to earn rewards like an Amazon gift card.



# TBARTA Celebrates Telecommuters, Donates 20,000 Meals to Feeding Tampa Bay

The Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority's (TBARTA) Commute Tampa Bay successfully launched a new promotion last month, Caring Commutes, designed to raise awareness to the benefits telecommuters receive when participating in TBARTA's alternative commuter program. A record number 1241 telecommute trips were recorded in May. In recognition of that accomplishment, TBARTA donated 20,000 meals to Feeding Tampa Bay.

"We're so proud of our Tampa Bay telecommuters for participating in the Caring Commutes promotion," said Cyndi Raskin, TBARTA's Director of Commuter Services. "Working from home will be part of the 'new normal' for many people, so the TBARTA Commute Tampa Bay team is looking forward to helping employees and businesses get set for longer term telework programs."

Telework has been promoted by TBARTA as a commute alternative, long before the coronavirus crisis forced many workers to suddenly work from home. Commute Tampa Bay also supports and coordinates many other commute alternative programs, including van and carpools, public transit, biking and walking to work.

Workers who use any of these commute alternatives and sign up with Commute Tampa Bay can start earning points toward rewards that include gift cards, discounts, and giveaways. Those incentives are offered year-round.

Participants can also take advantage of a free ride-matching service for those who want to carpool or vanpool to work, and an Emergency Ride Home program for commuters who need a safety net in the event of a family emergency.

"These incentives are available for all workers in the TBARTA region who use commute alternatives, just for doing what they are already doing," Raskin said. "It's free to sign-up and participate, so it's really a win-win for everyone."

You can download the free app for IOS or Android from the Commute Tampa Bay page. Sign up, log your commute alternatives, and you will start earning points which can be redeemed for rewards including gift cards, discounts, and giveaways.

Commute Tampa Bay also offers free services to employers looking provide a wide range of commute-alternative programs to employees. The goal is to make it as easy as possible for employers to implement programs and policies that encourage people to commute by carpool, vanpool, transit, or other alternative modes. By serving as a go-to resource and providing regular and frequent worksite support services, TBARTA's staff helps employers create a successful, sustainable program that benefits both employer and employee. More information on TBARTA's employer support services can be found on the Free Employer Support page on TBARTA.com.

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## Collier Area Transit (CAT) COVID-19 Advertising Campaign

**T**hese last few months have been challenging for the transit industry since the onset of COVID-19. Keeping staff and passengers safe on the CAT buses has been the agency's number one concern. Intense, deep-cleanings of the buses and terminals, social-distancing measures, rear boarding and exiting, waived fares, installation of hand-sanitizers and temporary driver-barriers on the buses coming soon, are just some of the measures put in place to combat the spread of coronavirus. To promote these safety measures, CAT created a COVID-19 advertising campaign which focuses on safety protocols for passengers when riding the bus. Interior bus signs, terminal signs, shelter signs and bus wraps were created with messages of washing hands often, staying home if sick, social-distancing of six-feet whenever possible and a

recommendation to wear a mask in public. To add a feel-good spin on a troubling circumstance, CAT wrapped one bus with a face mask that has garnered a lot of positive responses from the public on social media.





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## Palm Tran Wins Prestigious Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Award for its Innovative Commercial

The National Association of Government Communicators (NAGC) recently honored Palm Tran in the category of Educational and Promotional Campaigns under \$100,000 for its WPTV “Safe, Clean and Efficient” televised commercial. The entry was chosen from 250 local, state and federal government submissions. All of the award winners, including Palm Tran, were celebrated in a virtual celebration held on May 20, 2020.



The commercial illustrated to potential new riders and former riders, who had not used Palm Tran, the changes and improvements in service such as: expanded service, added Sunday service, bike racks, free WiFi, USB ports, real-time mobile apps and wheelchair friendly buses.

“Increasing public awareness of Palm Tran’s innumerable benefits is one of our top priorities,” said Palm Tran Executive Director Clinton B. Forbes. “We are honored to receive such a prestigious award that recognizes our vision of becoming the premier transportation choice in Palm Beach County.”

The commercial highlighted the convenience of riding Palm Tran amid its recent innovations launched as part of its bus system overhaul, known formerly as the Route Performance Maximization (RPM) project.

Palm Tran’s commercial was a partnership with the local West Palm Beach station WPTV. The goal of the commercial was to increase ridership and expand exposure of Palm Tran’s service to potential riders. The commercial spot ran throughout September 2019, and the campaign received additional exposure since it ran during Hurricane Dorian time in which many residents were watching television and seeking information. The TV commercial received a net reach of 1.11 million people and succeeded in increasing ridership by 2.34 percent.

“Palm Tran’s public relations section worked collaboratively with WPTV to ensure the commercial was well executed and delivered a captivating message to the public,” said Palm Tran Senior Manager of Public Relations Joe Harrington.

“In addition, we maximized exposure by marketing the commercial on all of our social media platforms, which helped us reach an audience that expanded far beyond television,” he added.

This is the first time Palm Tran has received a Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Award. For more information on Palm Tran, visit: [www.palmtran.org](http://www.palmtran.org). For more information on NAGC, visit: <https://nagc.com>.