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@RidePSTA – A Social Experiment

As one of the leading transit agencies in social media, PSTA is always looking at new and innovating ways to engage its riders. By keeping up with national trends and viral challenges, PSTA continues to set itself apart from other transit agencies across the country.

This past March, PSTA decided to raise the bar by developing a fun, interactive way to engage riders during Pinellas County's busiest time of the year: Spring Break.

Shortly thereafter, in the walls of PSTA's Marketing department, a social media scavenger hunt was born.

The "Ticket to Spring Break" scavenger hunt encouraged riders to follow @RidePSTA on Twitter and Facebook and wait twice a day for a post on where to find Alissa, PSTA's Social Media Coordinator, somewhere out in the community. The first person to arrive on location and find her won a bus pass.

The human scavenger hunt increased PSTA's overall engagement across social media platforms and even more so strengthened PSTA's relationship with its riders.

The results were remarkable: Five days.

“Social media has done more than change the way we reach our community, it has changed the way our community reaches us.”

*Alissa Kostyk, PSTA
Social Media Coordinator*

Ten locations. 700+ online interactions.

PSTA's Facebook page had a 308% increase in reach, and a 36% increase in engagement. On Twitter, PSTA's hashtag use increased 120%, and re-Tweets and mentions went up 153%.

To PSTA, the numbers told a story: The riders want to communicate.

Since then, the marketing department hosted another scavenger hunt to kick-off the sale of PSTA's Youth Summer Haul Pass. The results were consistent: When given the opportunity to interact, PSTA's riders come to the forefront.

For now, PSTA continues to actively seek opportunities to create new relationships with riders and strengthen old ones. As for the future of PSTA scavenger hunts, you'll have to follow @RidePSTA to find out.



Bay Town Trolley Surprises Riders with Live Music

System Celebrates Dump the Pump Day with 20th Anniversary Rider Initiative

Bay Town Trolley officials celebrated Dump the Pump day by coupling free rides with a surprise musical performance on an undisclosed system bus. The initiative was hosted in conjunction with the system's 20th anniversary celebration, in which Bay Town Trolley is conducting a series of rider surprises throughout the year.

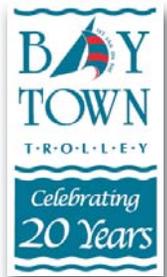
The system combined the events in hopes of bringing attention to the annual Dump the Pump day initiative, as well as increasing daily ridership by offering the added incentives.

"We were thrilled to be celebrating Dump the Pump day, and also 20 years of great service in Bay County," said Commissioner Rodney Friend, Chairman of the Bay County Transportation Planning Organization (TPO). "This initiative gave our team the perfect opportunity to show appreciation to loyal riders, and also to those hopping onboard for the first time."



The system partnered with a local musician to host the live performance on an undisclosed bus, and riders

were delightfully surprised. Passengers were visibly enjoying the performance, dancing and singing along to classic hits. Commissioner Friend was also along for the ride, offering up a Trolley Trivia game on the bus. He surprised riders by asking a variety of system-focused questions, and handing out one-month passes to those who answered correctly.



"This event was such a great way for the system to engage riders," said Vikki Garrett, Planner at West Florida Regional Planning Council and staff to the Bay County Transportation Planning Organization (TPO). "By offering free fare and live music on the bus, the system was able to attract new riders and interact with the community in a new and exciting way."

The initiative was a huge success, garnering local media coverage and boosting ridership numbers for the day. Bay Town Trolley officials plan to continue the anniversary surprises throughout the remainder of the year.

For more information about Bay Town Trolley, visit www.baytowntrolley.org or call (850) 769-0557.

Tri-Rail Introduces Second Bike Car

Less than a month after introducing its first bike car, Tri-Rail completed retrofitting and incorporating a second bike car into its regular weekday service.

Coach cars 1006 and 1007 are now part of two different four-car sets that not only make it more comfortable for travelers using bicycles on Tri-Rail, but they also add more seats on the weekday service trains for the general riding public.

To know where the bike cars are going to be on a particular day, passengers can follow the Twitter account @TriRailAlerts, or sign up to receive VIP messages at www.tri-rail.com. The bike cars are announced each weekday morning through these channels and can also be confirmed by calling (800) TRI-RAIL.

There are still eight cars waiting to be retrofitted with bike racks, however, they will remain on-hold as the necessary materials arrive to complete this process. An announcement will be made as each new bike car is integrated into service.



Okaloosa County Transit Hosts Local Business Challenge

System Encourages Local Businesses to Dump the Pump

Okaloosa County Transit (OCT) celebrated national Dump the Pump day by offering free fares and hosting a special challenge for local businesses. The initiative encouraged Okaloosa County businesses to complete five healthy tasks, which included hopping on OCT for Dump the Pump day.



“We were excited to have an opportunity to engage local community leaders with our Dump the Pump Challenge,” said Bob Berkstresser, Program Manager of Okaloosa County Transit. “By offering this challenge, we hope to have inspired Okaloosa County businesses to live a more environmentally conscious and healthy lifestyle, starting by simply hopping on OCT.”

“Public transportation is a great way for local residents and businesses to save money and reduce CO₂ emissions in Okaloosa County,” said Vikki Garrett, Planner at West Florida Regional Planning Council and staff to the Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Planning Organization (TPO). “By offering free fares on Dump the Pump day, local transit agencies are able to attract new riders and inform the community about the many benefits of public transportation.”

In addition to free fares, the system created a dedicated web page where local businesses could sign up to participate in the challenge, with the winning office receiving a catered lunch from OCT partner Bella Donna Catering and 25 free ride passes.

The OCT team targeted local businesses using social media, community outreach, and public relations efforts, resulting in a total of 10 local businesses, and 95 participants signing up for the Dump the Pump day challenge. The initiative garnered local media coverage and participation throughout the community, enabling the system to reach its goal of increasing awareness in the area surrounding Dump the Pump day.

For information about Okaloosa County Transit, please call (850) 833-9168 or visit www.RideOCT.org.

HART Rebrands In-Town Trolley as a Gateway Experience for Transit Users!

To increase awareness of the downtown service and attract new riders, HART has vibrantly rebranded the In-Town Trolley as a gateway experience and great way to travel around Downtown Tampa.

Tampa Bay area residents will now see modern, eye-catching, blue colored trolleys traveling in Downtown Tampa, with a different name, the In-Towner. The In-Towner, which will roll out for its debut downtown on July 20, has shed the yellow exterior in favor of new vibrant colors that distinctly brand them as contemporary HART vehicles.

The In-Towner trolleys are the rubber-wheeled trolleys which provide 25-cent trips on weekdays from 6:00-8:30am and from 3:30-6:00pm. They conveniently connect Downtown Tampa and the Channel District, helping locals get back and forth to work, school, and home, while transporting tourists to key sites and shopping districts.

“We want everyone in the Tampa Bay area to know there are other travel options besides using a car,” says HART Chief Executive Officer Katharine Eagan. “We chose the modern colors and simple name to let people know that we’re here to serve them with multiple transportation choices. Whether it’s for medical appointments, shopping, entertainment, or work, we want people to be aware that they can use public transportation to take them there.”



Spotlight On...



Name: Sandra Morrison

Title: Public Information Officer

Birthplace: Queens, New York

Education: Hofstra University with a B.A. in Broadcast Journalism/ Sociology and a Minor in Spanish; and Kingsborough Community College,

A.A. in Journalism/English

Professional History: HART is the 1st public transit agency for which I have worked.

2012–2013: American College of Physician Executive (ACPE) – Marketing Communications Specialist: I was responsible for all marketing and communications activities including market research, print, online, electronic media, direct mail to ensure campaign messaging aligns with strategic goals and assisted with managing the \$8 million marketing plan for membership, live conference programs, publications and InterActs online courses, inclusive of brand and promotional campaigns, focused on promoting traffic and transactions and furthering member recruitment.

2010-2012: Hoyu America Co.–Marketing & Communications Manager: I was responsible for all media relations activities, public relations programs, market research, strategic alliances and point of sale merchandising supporting \$46 million in annual sales. Managed social media campaigns (Facebook and Twitter) and day-to-day activities, including community-outreach efforts and promotions. Increased Facebook following from 1k to 29k+ in 8 months, creating a larger base for marketing. Developed and managed approximately 12 annual trade shows and events along with marketing plans and timelines.

2005-2010: Bay News 9/Bay News 9 en Español: Researched and developed news stories and interest pieces including exclusives focused on viewer demographics. Produced daily news package as a one-man-band reporter, then translated and tracked story into English for Baynews 9, sister station of Baynews 9 en Español.

Years Working In Transit Industry: Since 2013

Years Working with HART: 2.5 years

Biggest Surprise in Marketing Transit: Everyone understands each other's challenges, regardless of the size of the transit system. Everyone is always willing to help when you ask them for advice. It is wonderful to know

there's a support group willing to lend a helping hand at any moment. I've noticed in my two and half years at HART that most folks working in public transportation are passionate about what they do and genuinely want to serve the community with a smile on their faces.

Biggest Challenge in Marketing Transit: Trying to convince those folks that have not ridden public transit to try it and what it's all about. In addition, getting our elected officials to try riding the bus at least once, since no amount of marketing or public relations can replace the on board experience of riding the local transit system. By riding local transit elected officials get the opportunity to experience for themselves what our riders experience firsthand.

Community Involvement: I'm a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. The whole family volunteers at our church Grace Family Church. This is a monthly outreach opportunity to serve the Tampa Bay Community. You get to serve in a variety of areas from in-house on the GFC campus, to local ministry and helping hands at the children's homes in Tampa.

Personal Background: I have been married to my awesome husband Scott about 2 years. Our lovely daughter, Kayla is 14 years-old and loves playing soccer. Our family has one cute tuxedo cat.

In my spare time, I enjoy traveling, going to the beach, running, trying out new restaurants, and spending time with family and friends.

Childhood Ambition: Since I was about 6 years old, I knew I wanted to be a TV news reporter. While growing up in Queens, I would sit with my father around 5:00 p.m. and watch an English newscast followed by a Spanish newscast. It was a tradition for us.

Inspiration: My parents and my family. They always work hard and never give up. I'm passionate about what I do. I'm committed to working at HART because I consider it more than just a job, rather a lifestyle of serving others and being part of the community.

Favorite Book: The Bible

Favorite Color: Pink, Green, and Navy

Any other response or question: My thoughts are I will continue to make a mark on this world, my mantra being, "Don't let the easy breezy style fool you. There are no excuses."

HART Readies its Robust VOC scorecard to continually measure customer satisfaction.

The agency uses the voice of the customer to prepare for a more inclusive customer experience.

With more than 50,000 passenger trips on an average weekday, HART has enjoyed a 20 percent ridership growth in the last 5 years.

An on-board survey team from TransPro Consulting will be traveling the HART system talking with riders and asking questions about how they use HART services and its performance.

Members of the survey team will be identifiable by name badges and will select riders at random. The information collected as part of the HART 2015 Customer Service Satisfaction Survey will be used to better understand its customers' opinions of existing service and areas of priority that need improvement.

"We know that people are busy these days, but we really hope they take the time to talk to the members of the survey team and take the survey," said HART Chief Financial Officer Jeff Seward. "The more input we get from the public on different transit issues, the better job we can do in meeting passenger needs."

In addition, to gain rider feedback, HART hosted a focus group of riders who represent different types of use: commuters, HARTPlus customers, university students, disabled patrons, seniors, cash-paying riders and fare card-paying riders. The focus group met on August 19; data from this focus group was used to formulate a targeted survey for passengers to gauge the current customer satisfaction levels and overall opinions of HART service.

Eddie Adams, who has used HART on and off since 1971, volunteered to be part of the focus group. "Very informative for both sides to be face to face and talk about what's going on," explained Adams. "The information we're providing to HART staff is important."

The information collected in both the focus group and the on-board survey will be used to inform future planning, communicate more effectively with customers and market HART to infrequent riders. Once complete, HART will have a robust voice of customer (VOC) scorecard to continually measure customer satisfaction.

StarMetro Launches Real-Time Bus Locator App

System offers new app in conjunction with route enhancements

Representatives from StarMetro announced the launch of their real-time bus locator app, a component of the existing City of Tallahassee app, DigiTally. StarMetro riders and local residents can now download the DigiTally app and use the new feature to locate buses in real-time.

The StarMetro, Find My Bus, app now makes it easier and more convenient to determine bus arrival times at stops. Users are able to display any of StarMetro's fixed routes, including weekday, Saturday, Sunday, FSU, FAMU and Rhythm routes on their smart phones. Once a route has been chosen, the page refreshes every 10 seconds, offering up-to-date route information and accurate bus locations on a map.

"We are thrilled to be able to offer this innovative feature to our riders," said Ivan Maldonado, director of



StarMetro. "Our team is constantly striving to improve and streamline the StarMetro experience, and this app will definitely serve as an asset to our system and its riders"

The new app was released in conjunction with StarMetro's recent effort to enhance the system's routes and provide better customer service. Route modifications were implemented August 1, and riders can now receive the new route information in real-time.

For more information about StarMetro services and initiatives, please call StarMetro's main office at (850) 891-5200, or visit Talgov.com/starmetro.



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ECAT Introduces Modern Upgrades

System unveils updated technology advancements

Escambia County Area Transit (ECAT) representatives announced that the newest technological advancements in transit have been introduced to help riders more efficiently streamline their commute and optimize their time. ECAT recently made the technology available to riders during an initial testing phase beginning June 2015, and the following upgrades are now in full swing and widely available to the community:

- Free Wi-Fi on all buses and at the Rosa Parks bus terminal
- ECAT Bus Tracker real-time bus locator app

These new technology upgrades offer great benefits to riders who can utilize the system's free Wi-Fi onboard all ECAT buses and at the Rosa Parks terminal, making it easy to stay connected while commuting.

"We are thrilled to be able to offer these cutting-edge features to our riders," said Tonya Ellis, Director of Marketing and Community Relations for ECAT. "These upgrades enhance their commute by utilizing tools available to effectively manage their internet browsing and e-mails, as well as easily find the arrival times of their next bus."

The other key technology update for the system is the ECAT Bus Tracker app with automatic vehicle location (AVL) capability. The app utilizes satellite and GPS technology that enables ECAT to collect location information about vehicles in real time and allows riders to see actual bus locations.

"These new system features are going to greatly improve the way that so many area residents travel on a daily basis," said Vikki Garrett, Planner at the West Florida Regional Planning Council and staff to the Florida-Alabama Transportation Planning Organization (TPO). "By introducing modern features like on board Wi-Fi and real time bus locators, ECAT is offering an updated form of transportation for Escambia County."

For more information about ECAT, please visit goecat.com or call Tonya Ellis at (850) 595-3228.

Christmas in July

On July 28 LYNX celebrated Christmas in July at LYNX Central Station.

Guests donated 3 or more non-perishable items in exchange for a free All-day bus pass. Santa took a break from his summer vacation to take photos with all of the "nice" people of Central Florida. The event also included live music from multi-instrumentalist Pat Frost who had the crowd swaying to the sounds of steel drums and food trucks Chi Phi, La Empanada and Curbside Chef. The agency collected more than 1,000 + pounds of non-perishable items to donate to the Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida.

