

TRANSIT RIDERSHIP AND THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

RECENT STUDY FINDS WEAK RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRANSIT RIDERSHIP AND THE STRENGTH OF THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT (CBD) - SYSTEM COVERAGE AND FREQUENCY REMAIN IMPORTANT DETERMINANTS

Traditionally, transit ridership studies have focused on the weakening of a city's central business district (CBD), due to decentralization, as a major factor contributing to decreased transit ridership across the country. However, a new study by Jeffrey R. Brown, of Florida State University, and Dristi Neog, of Sushant School of Art and Architecture, published in the *Journal of Public Transportation* in 2012 concluded that the relationship between transit ridership and the CBD may not be as important as the traditional view asserts. In fact, the authors found no relationship between the strength of the CBD and transit ridership (p. 1). These findings may shift transit managers' focus when implementing strategies to increase ridership locally, regionally, and nationally.

Though the authors found no relationship between transit commute ridership and CBD strength when other factors were considered, they found that four of the studied factors did have statistically-significant relationships with how many people use transit to commute: service frequency, service coverage, percent of Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) households that do not own an automobile, and unemployment rate (in some MSA



settings¹) (p. 11-12, 16). Their results showed that service frequency has a stronger effect on transit ridership than service coverage, but that the percentage of carless households in the MSA has the strongest effect on commute method, such that the larger the percentage of carless households, the higher the share of transit commuters (p. 12).

Two of these factors (service frequency and service coverage) are considered "internal factors," over which transit managers have some control, while the other two (unemployment and percent of carless households) are "external factors," which include urban structure, the

economy, population change, etc., over which transit managers have no control (p. 2).

To reach these conclusions, the authors studied the relationship between CBD strength and transit ridership in all U.S. MSAs with more than 500,000 persons according to the 2000 census (82 MSAs in total). They then separated these MSAs into three groups: Small (population between 500,000 and 1 million; 20 total), Medium (population between 1 million and 5 million; 43 total), All (Small, Medium, and Large) (population between 5 million and 10 million; 8 total), and Very Large (population exceeding 10 million; 2 total). They used the "All" group to examine the 10 largest MSAs in a roundabout way (p. 5).

¹ Unemployment was not a significant factor influencing transit ridership in the Small and Medium MSA models (p. 12, 16).

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NOTES FROM THE TOP

BY DONNA LAVIGNE



Hello, we're back.....

It's been another busy year in the DOTD Public Transportation Section. As always, we have completed our reviews of the FTA Programs Applications, as well as:

- Conducted workshops
- Performed site visits
- Prepared contracts
- Readied for hurricane season
- Prepared for new fiscal year
- Implemented new MAP-21 regulations

We are excited about the success of the Statewide Transit Tracking and Reporting System (STARS) and the amount of reportable data that is available to DOTD and the transit agencies statewide.

We continue to move forward with our statewide coordination efforts, and are appreciative of the work that the Metropolitan Planning Organizations are doing to support the FTA's coordination requirements. Please make an effort to attend the coordination meetings in your district.

Our next Annual Public Transportation Conference is scheduled for November 20-22, 2013, in New Orleans, Louisiana at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. The theme for the conference this year is "**Louisiana Transit: We Go the Distance.**" More information on registration and hotel accommodations will be available soon on our website at www.dotd.la.gov/intermodal/transit.

Finally, we would like to encourage you to send topics or articles for future newsletter editions to Krystal Kaufman, RTAP Program Manager, at **Krystal.Kaufman@LA.gov**. If you would like to highlight your transit system or recognize one of your staff members, we will provide a forum to do so. We encourage you to share innovative ideas, techniques and uplifting stories about your transit system and/or a special client. We want the transit newsletter to be an informative publication that addresses issues of interest to you and others.

Thanks for your continued support of public transit. We look forward to working with your transit agency this fiscal year. Please let me or my staff know if you have any specific training needs or know of any training opportunities you would like us to sponsor.



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ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS

From all of us here at the DOTD Public Transportation Section, we hope you have a wonderful and productive Summer and we look forward to seeing you at the annual Public Transportation Conference in New Orleans, November 20 - 22, 2013.



APTA CONFERENCES

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: www.apta.com

JUL 20 - 23	Transit Board Members Seminar & Board Support Employee Development Workshop Austin, TX
JUL 28 - 30	Sustainability & Public Transportation Workshop San Francisco, CA
JUL 29 - 31	Multimodal Operations Planning Workshop San Francisco, CA
SEPT 29 - OCT 2	Annual Meeting Seattle, WA

NTI COURSES

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: www.ntionline.com

JUL 17 - 18	Bus Procurement Workshop Dallas, TX
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TSI COURSES

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: www.tsi.dot.gov

ONGOING	Courses are offered around the country on various topics throughout the year.
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LADOTD CONFERENCE

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: www.dotd.la.gov/intermodal/transit

NOV 20 - 22	LADOTD Annual Public Transportation Conference New Orleans, LA Hyatt Regency New Orleans, Registration begins Monday, July 29, 2013
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SPOTLIGHT ON...

AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT OF 2009



WEST OUACHITA PUBLIC TRANSIT'S OVERVIEW OF ARRA PROJECTS

The West Ouachita Public Transit (WOPT) System has successfully operated a safe, reliable, and affordable 531 Rural Public Transit service for over 25 years. This rural public transit service was developed to encourage public transit as an alternative to private vehicle use, promote business, and enhance the mobility options for the transit-dependent members of the local west Ouachita community.

WOPT's staff has faithfully attended all of DOTD's transit training and certification classes annually. Our transit administrator is actively involved in the development of emergency preparedness policies and the development of a Business Disaster Continuity Plan. Every transit employee is properly trained

in the procedures for his/her areas of responsibility, as well as all transit policies and procedures for drivers and passengers.

However, our system and staff has needed an influx of capital investment to improve, modernize, and economize its services. ARRA funding provided an opportunity to make these investments and upgrade transportation services in our area. Without ARRA funding, these following improvements to our transit quality of service would not have been possible:

Computer and GPS/Video Cameras

ARRA funding was invested in a new computer and 10 GPS/video cameras. The computer and GPS/video cameras are being used to promote accountability and safety in our transportation services. Being able to track the movements of our transportation fleet helps WOPT guarantee that our drivers are doing their jobs efficiently and cost effectively. Cameras on our buses also allow WOPT to monitor our drivers' adherence to proper safety practices. Video evidence has helped to review a passenger's claim that proper safety practices were not followed; in addition, the videos provide important evidence of passenger or vehicle accidents/incidents.

New Vehicles

Through ARRA funding, WOPT received 3 new 12/2W passenger buses. These new vehicles increased the capacity of our transit service and lowered the average age of our fleet, which improved our ridership, service, and lessened our maintenance costs.

Vehicle Garage

ARRA funding was invested in the construction of a 4,200 square foot vehicle garage for WOPT. The garage does have parking for 8 vehicles, a locker room, a storage room, a driver's education room, and restrooms. It also has a covered passenger drop-off area connecting it to WOPT's offices and the West Ouachita Senior Center. The drop-off area does allow for protection from the weather for passengers being dropped-off or picked up at the facility by our buses.

A vehicle garage was a major need for WOPT ever since its inception. A vehicle garage provided protection for our vehicles, shelter for drivers performing daily vehicle

maintenance, space for briefing/training drivers, and a work area for drivers to perform their daily data entry. This has resulted in the following benefits: lower maintenance costs for our fleet, better life expectancy for our fleet, improved efficiency and productivity for our drivers, and reduced risk of vehicle vandalism.

Transit Office Addition

ARRA funding was invested in adding 939 square feet of space to WOPT's offices. The new space included the building of one new office, the expansion of two other offices, and the creation of new storage space for the transit program. The new and expanded office space has allowed the transit administrator, coordinator, and dispatcher to have more room to carry out their duties, including room to meet privately with clients (including those in wheelchairs). A new transit archive storage space provided secure and easier access to transit records.

Generator

ARRA funding was invested in a new generator to be used by WOPT. The generator will provide backup power for both our 5311 public transit offices and the new



vehicle garage.

Jobs Created by Stimulus/ARRA construction/capital projects

ARRA funding was invested in securing vehicles and in construction of capital projects. As a result, 31 new jobs were created and 27 jobs were retained for a total job impact of 58 jobs.

WOPT could not have earned the 2012-13 DOTD "Extra Mile Award for the highest percentage of ridership" without ARRA funding. All of the transit capital purchases and

construction projects described above has improved the quality of WOPT's service and lifted the moral of all of the transit staff. WOPT is extremely grateful for the invaluable guidance and continued support of DOTD staff throughout the ARRA projects.

IMPACT OF ARRA ON WOPT JOBS

	TOTAL JOBS	HOURS WORKED	INCOME EARNED
JOBS CREATED	31	2,424	\$31,802
JOBS RETAINED	27	828	\$16,766
TOTAL JOB IMPACT	58	3,252	\$48,568

DOTD ON THE GO...



One of the DOTD PT Section's mandates is to provide information and technical assistance to transit providers in Louisiana in order to assist them in meeting their requirements for FTA funding. These activities come in many different formats and venues. DOTD PT provides numbers training courses, workshops, and training materials, as well as a website and an annual conference. To keep all of our constituents up to date on DOTD PT's activities, DOTD On The Go features just a few selected items each quarter.

SITE VISITS

Part of the outreach and assistance that DOTD provides to the Rural Public Transportation (Section 5311) and Elderly and Disabled (Section 5310) providers, are site visits from the program managers. A total of 15 site visits to rural providers and 20 site visits to Elderly and Disabled providers have been conducted during FY 12-13. These visits included Plaquemines Parish, Terrebonne COA, St. Martin COA, Tangipahoa COA, Bienville COA, Evangeline COA, Sabine COA, Winn COA, Bossier COA, Humanitarian, the River Parishes Transit Authority (RPTA), and the Capital Regional Planning Commission (CRPC). Program managers also conducted a safety and security site visit for the New Orleans Fixed Guideway (Streetcar) system.

OUTREACH

As most of you know, one of DOTD's primary goals is to provide some form of public transportation in all 64 parishes. It is a goal listed in the Louisiana Vision 2020 Plan. To further this goal, DOTD has been conducting educational visits to all of the parishes in Louisiana that do not currently have some form of public transportation service. Extensive outreach was conducted in 2012 and continues in 2013. DOTD has conducted 11 outreach meetings as part of the Rural Public Transportation Program in FY 12-13. Additionally, DOTD representatives attended the Acadiana Public Transit Providers Quarterly Meeting in Lafayette on June 5th.

WORKSHOPS

DOTD hosted 15 conferences/workshops in FY 12-13, to provide ongoing training and education to public transportation providers in Louisiana.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Registration is now open for the 2013 LADOTD Annual Public Transportation Conference, "Louisiana Transit: We Go the Distance," from November 20-22 at the Hyatt Regency in New Orleans.

If your agency or someone within your agency deserves recognition for a job well done, or has already received recognition or an award, please let us know. Email or send a brief description, photos, and contact information to Donna.Lavigne@la.gov or to Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development/Public Transit Section, attn: Donna Lavigne, P.O. Box 94245, Baton Rouge, LA 70804.

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To measure CBD strength, the authors found the percent of MSA employment within the CBD, identifying Greenville, SC, as having the weakest CBD in 2000 with only 0.68 percent of MSA employment within the CBD, while New Orleans, LA, had the strongest CBD with 10.75 percent of MSA employment within the CBD. The authors chose employment, rather than population, to measure centralization because of its closer connection to transit ridership according to other recent studies, among other reasons (p.6).

The authors settled on seven variables to include in their models, and documented the following hypotheses:

- **Percent of MSA employment in the CBD:** predicted that the higher the percentage of employment within the CBD, the higher transit ridership;
- **Fare per passenger kilometer (measuring fare price):** predicted that MSAs with higher fares would have lower ridership;
- **Service frequency:** predicted that MSAs with more frequent service would have higher ridership;
- **Service coverage:** predicted that MSAs with more service coverage would have higher ridership;
- **Percent of MSA households that do not own an automobile:** predicted that MSAs with a higher percentage of carless households would have higher levels of transit ridership;
- **MSA unemployment:** predicted that MSAs with higher unemployment would have lower transit ridership (because riders have less need to use transit to reach jobs); and
- **Fuel price index:** predicted that MSAs with higher fuel prices would have higher transit ridership (p. 8, 10).

As mentioned above, the authors did not find the expected relationship between CBD strength and transit ridership; however, the factors that proved important did behave as predicted (p. 12). These results imply that higher ridership may be achieved if transit agencies increase service frequency and service coverage, though effects of policy changes cannot be assumed from this study (p. 18).

Source:
Brown, Jeffrey R., and D. Neog. 2012. "Central Business Districts and Transit Ridership: A Reexamination of the Relationship in the United States." *Journal of Public Transportation* (15, No. 4). Available at: http://www.nctr.usf.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/15.4_Brown.pdf. Accessed 6/14/13.

FROM CAPITOL HILL...

According to a memorandum from Chairman Tim Johnson, during the 113th Congress, the U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs will focus on the following subjects, among others:

- Growing public transportation demand and the benefits of transit service;
- The role of federal transit investment and the long-term solvency of the Federal Highway Trust Fund and the Mass Transit Account;
- Rural public transportation needs;
- Improving public transportation for seniors and individuals with disabilities;
- Public transportation safety;
- The condition of public transportation assets;
- Improving project delivery, including oversight of changes in MAP-21 to the "New Starts" program; and
- Public transportation emergency relief.

