

New Jersey Department of Transportation
Bureau of Research

Technical Brief



Benefits of Transit: Making the Case that NJ TRANSIT Brings Real Value to New Jersey's Citizens

In the current era of stagnant and even shrinking availability of funding, the ability to make the case for transportation and infrastructure financing is perhaps more important than ever. Factors of a growing and increasingly urbanized population, increasing maintenance demands, and the need to keep up with technological and safety-mandated enhancements such as positive train control (PTC), make this an especially important issue in New Jersey. The purpose of this project is to assist New Jersey Transit with developing a scope of work for a future project to quantify and document the value that NJ TRANSIT and other public transportation systems operating within the state bring to New Jersey residents and businesses.

Background

The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) Bureau of Research is working with NJ TRANSIT to document and quantify the value that NJ TRANSIT and other public transit operators bring to the State of New Jersey. Through this research, NJDOT sought to determine important measures and marketing strategies from across the United States to employ for New Jersey.

Research Objectives and Approach

The objective of this research was to identify important measures used to assess transit benefits, the stakeholder audiences these benefits are marketed to, and the methods as well as purposes for employing these measures and strategies. The research involved a literature review, interviews to identify best practices in transit benefits communication, and development of a matrix documenting common themes, quantifiable criteria, decision making, and marketing techniques related to identified benefits of transit measures. Based on this information, the Research Team developed a draft annotated outline for a future request for proposal (RFP) to quantify and document these measures within the scope of New Jersey.

Findings

- Economic Impact Measures are the Most Commonly Communicated Measures

A comprehensive scan of benefits of transit communication literature and campaigns revealed that economic impact measures were most commonly employed. Economic impact measures include job creation, increased capital, as well as government revenue. Such measures are likely the most effective because they provide a convincing argument appealing that appeals to all identified stakeholders.

- Communicating Environmental Impact Measures Alone may have Limited Impact

While economic impact measures were able to provide the most convincing impact, environmental measures were the least convincing, as evidenced by the results of some of the larger scale campaigns that were surveyed. This may be attributed to a number of factors including the largely intangible or marginal effects from any air quality improvements, and the comparatively more appealing and visible benefits of increased jobs and capital.

- The Means of Communicating Benefits of Transit Effects Campaign Quality

The primary stakeholder audiences associated with benefits of transit communication campaigns are elected officials & lawmakers, as well as the general public (including users and non-users). The best means of communicating to elected officials & lawmakers is through reports, and one-on-one meetings. The best means of communicating to the general public, regardless of whether or not they use transit, is through more interactive and personal means such as videos, graphics, and in-person events.

- Varying Costs of Communication Campaigns

The costs of conducting benefits of transit campaigns can vary significantly. This can be attributed to a number of factors including which measures are calculated, i.e. travel demand modeling for air quality and traffic congestion impacts, as well as the type of communication campaign used.

- Knowledge of Data Sources & Limitation is Important

Since an effective benefits of transit campaign encompasses multiple forms of facts and figures, a strong working knowledge of available data sources is crucial in order to establish a baseline for what can and cannot be communicated.

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A final report is available online at: <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/refdata/research/>. If you would like a copy of the full report, send an e-mail to: Research.Bureau@dot.state.nj.us.

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