

Riverside Transit Agency

Opportunities for Improving Ridership



**A Report by the Federal Transit Administration
Ridership Team**

July 2007

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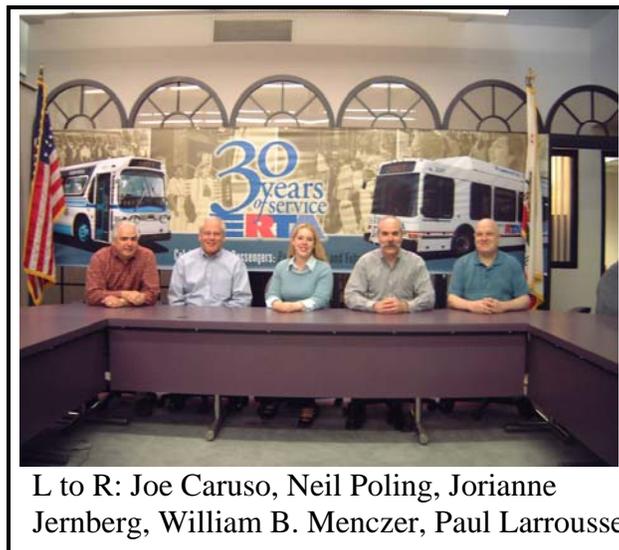
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Introduction

As part of its FY 2005 Strategic Business Plan, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) set a goal of working with its partners in the transit industry to generate an average increase in ridership among the top 150 transit agencies of at least 1.0 percent. In FY 2007, FTA increased this goal to 1.5 percent. In support of this critical and challenging goal, the FTA Office of Budget and Policy has elected to conduct pilot ridership site visits at one or two of the top 150 transit agencies each year, selected on the basis of decreasing ridership for the previous two years. These site visits are intended to identify opportunities where improvements in transit ridership could be made and to provide technical assistance to the selected transit agencies.

In FY 2005, the first site visit was conducted July 25-28, 2005 at Connecticut Transit, located in Hartford, Connecticut; the second from August 15-18, 2005 at Clark County Transit, located in Vancouver, Washington.

In FY 2006, the first site visit was conducted March 27-30, 2006 at the San Mateo County Transit District, located in San Carlos, California; the second from May 22-25, 2006 at the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), located in Troy, Michigan.

In FY 2007, FTA elected to conduct one site visit, April 16-19, 2007 at the Riverside Transit Agency (RTA) located in Riverside, California.

Members of the Ridership Team met with RTA employees, reviewed operational data, and actively observed bus operations. The team reviewed four functional areas in which ridership initiatives could be undertaken: 1) operating and service adjustments, 2) fares collection and structure, 3) marketing, promotions, and information, and 4) partnerships and coordination.

RTA has agreed to review recommendations contained in this report and select those they can implement. For those selected, RTA will develop detailed implementation plans and measurement protocols to track the recommendation's impact on ridership. Over a two year period, FTA will continue to monitor the impacts on ridership and advise RTA as needed.

The team developed 65 recommendations in the four functional areas, summarized below.

Operating and Service Adjustments

Recommendations focused on service standards, scheduling software, timed transfers, vehicle announcements, warrants, congestion monitoring, and route numbering.

Fare Collection and Structure

Recommendations focused on fare products, the regional smart card program, fare collection best practices, ridership reports, and the fare collection system.

Marketing, Promotions, and Information

Recommendations focused on call center improvements, a marketing plan, market research, bus stop enhancements, trip planner enhancements, community involvement, branding and design, web site improvements, interior advertising space, advertising and communication issues, and business and institutional sales.

Partnerships and Coordination

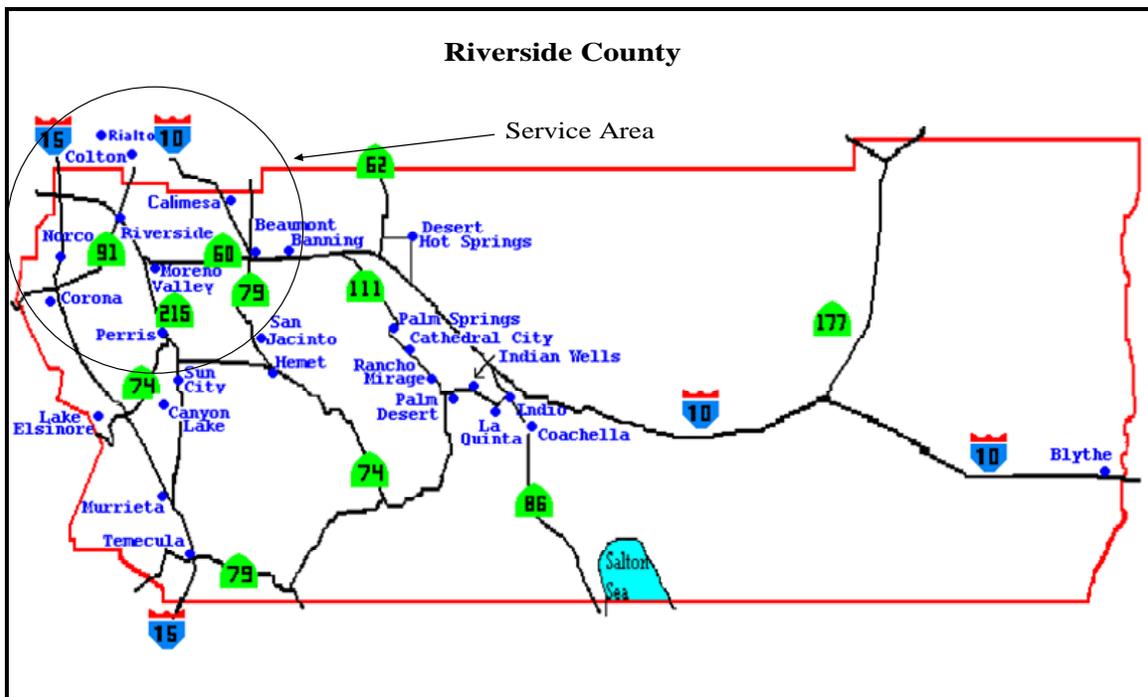
Recommendations focused on strategic planning, the university pass, an employer-provided transit benefit program, the environment, primary school passes, partnering with casinos and developers, coordination with other transit providers, and transit adjacent and transit oriented development.

Profile and Peer Group Analysis

Agency Profile

RTA serves the northwestern portion of Riverside County California. One of the major transit providers in the Inland Empire, RTA supplies service in the City of Riverside and 35 neighboring jurisdictions. This service area is approximately 60 miles from Los Angeles (LA), and although RTA does not provide commuter service to LA, several stations offer connections to Metrolink, Southern California's Regional Rail Authority.

RTA is distinguished as having the second largest service area in the United States. In order to meet the needs of area residents in this large service area, RTA operated 214 buses in 2005. This fleet consisted of 79 directly operated vehicles and 135 purchased transportation buses, of which 84 were designated for demand response service. RTA's entire fleet is run on compressed natural gas, again distinguishing the agency. It was the first in the state to convert all of its buses.

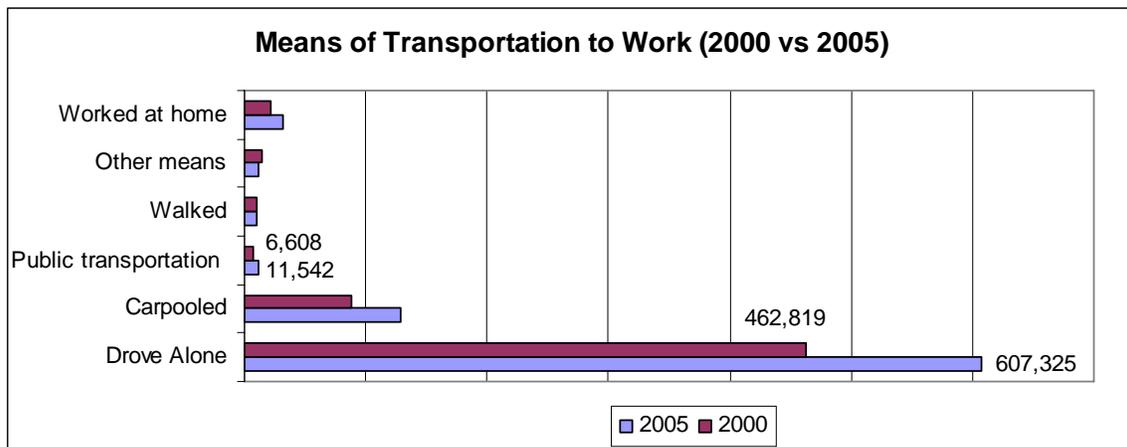


Over the years, RTA has taken steps to both expand and improve service. Technology has been a major component of service enhancements; RTA offers customers online fare card purchase options and an automated trip planner. In May 2005, RTA introduced the first commuter bus in Southern California to offer free wireless internet and satellite television. Currently, RTA is implementing a system wide network that will use digital signs to provide passengers with real time bus information.

Successful partnerships between RTA and area primary and secondary schools are another aspect of RTA’s service adjustments. RTA markets its services to students in grades 6-12 through its educational “STEP” program. The U-Pass, launched in July of 2006, allows college students to ride the bus using only their college identification, and a new trolley service now operates on the campus of the University of California, Riverside.

Demographics

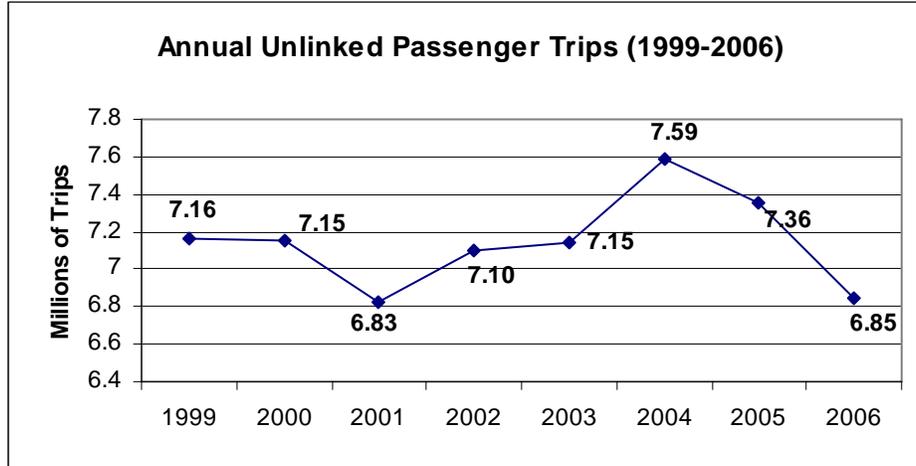
Riverside County is a rapidly growing area in southern California. Since 2000, both population and employment in this region have increased by double digits. Because use of public transportation and employment levels are closely linked, RTA’s ridership would be expected to grow by a correspondingly large amount. Comparing self-reported mode of travel to work in Census 2000 with mode of travel to work reported in the 2005 American Community Survey provides a check for this assumption. The graph below shows that those people predominantly using public transportation as a means of transportation to work in Riverside County rose 75 percent between 2000 and 2005.



RTA, however, has been unable to capture the increase in commuters. Ridership grew by only 2.84 percent between 2000 and 2005. When 2006 ridership data is factored in, RTA actually loses trips: unlinked passenger trips fell by 4.26 percent between 2000 and 2006.

Census data is based on those people living in Riverside County, and not necessarily those people riding RTA. The likely explanation for the increased use of public transportation and simultaneous sluggish growth in RTA annual unlinked passenger trips is that people are using more public transportation but from other providers, such as Metrolink.

Ridership



In fiscal year 2005¹, RTA raised fares from \$1.00 to \$1.25 for flat rate fixed route service. This helps to explain the drop in passenger trips, shown in the graph above, between 2004 and 2006. The drop in ridership is particularly noteworthy given the service improvements and innovations that were implemented during that period. RTA introduced a discounted fare card (the Ten-Tripper) a-buy-nine-get-one-free deal, and tried several promotional discount fare programs to increase ridership on certain routes. Despite these efforts, in the short term the ridership reducing effect of fare increases has not been offset.

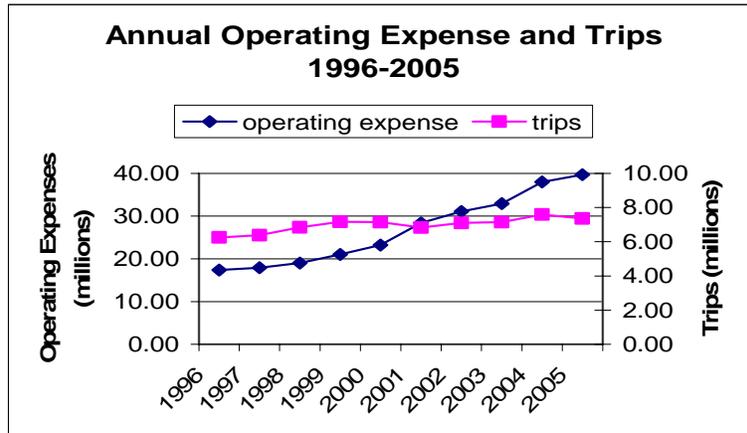
The elasticity of demand for transit ridership suggests that for every 1 percent increase in fares, ridership will drop by .43 percent. RTA increased its fares by 25 percent, thus the predicted response would be a 10.75 percent decrease in ridership, all other things being equal. However, RTA implemented simultaneous service enhancements that would be expected to mitigate the decline in ridership brought on by a fare hike. Indeed, in the first reporting year, 2005, RTA lost only 3.05 percent of its 2004 level of unlinked passenger trips.

The continued decline in ridership is more problematic. In 2006 RTA lost 6.91 percent of its 2005 unlinked passenger trips, bringing the total loss in ridership to 9.75 percent between 2004 and 2006. This decrease in unlinked passenger trips for a second year places the agency's ridership outside the normal response to a fare hike, indicating that RTA's customers may be overly sensitive to price or other factors are responsible for this decline. RTA's ability to recover its former ridership over the next two years is important. Preliminary data indicates that the agency is on the right track: ridership grew during each month in the first half of FY 2007 compared to ridership during that month in FY 2006.

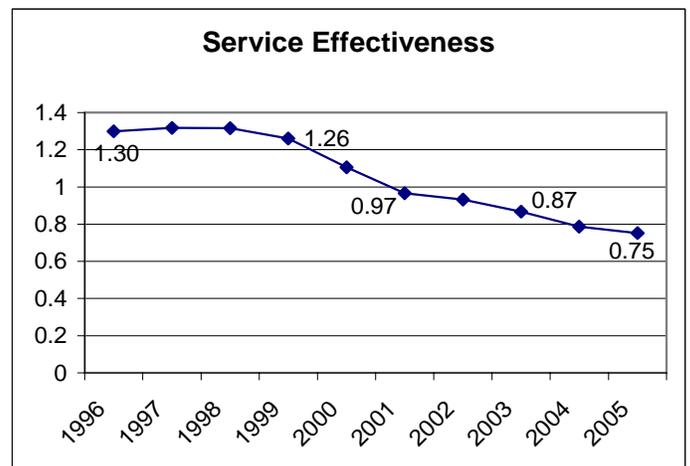
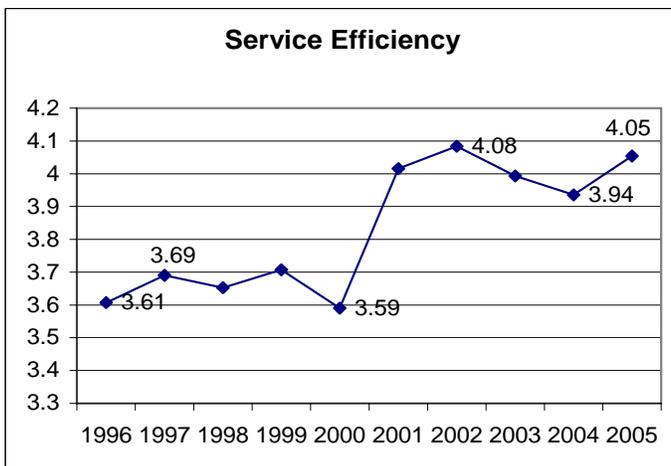
¹ RTA's FY 2005 is from July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2005.

Operating Characteristics

RTA's operating expenses have increased steadily throughout the last ten years. The graph below provides a comparison of operating expenses and passenger trips. From 2000 to 2005, RTA's operating expenses have risen by 56 percent.



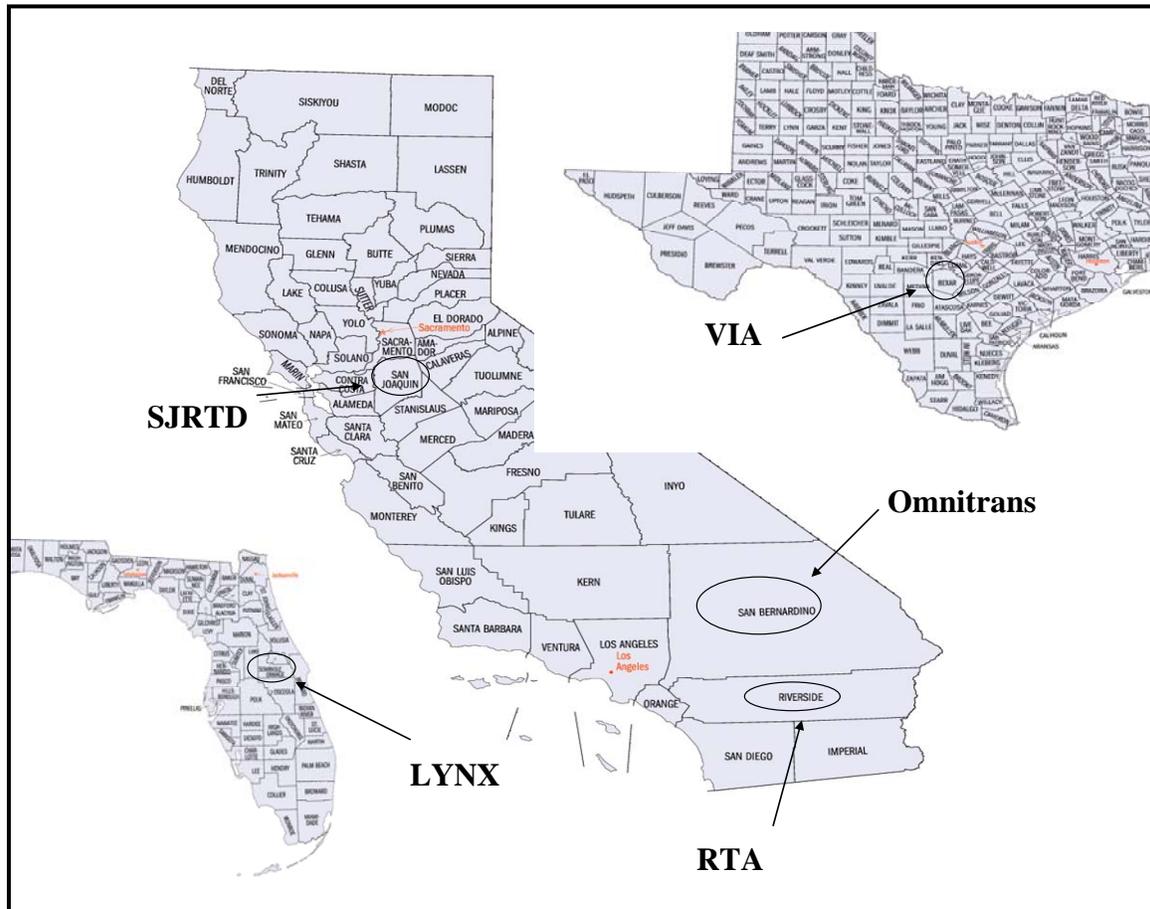
The next two graphs display RTA's service efficiency and effectiveness from 1996-2005. Based on RTA's minimal ridership growth and mounting operating costs, it is not surprising that its service efficiency is suffering as well. Service area efficiency is calculated as annual operating expenses per annual vehicle revenue miles. Since operating expenses is the numerator, lower numbers represent superior service efficiency. RTA's service efficiency was improving from 2002 to 2004, but the 2005 decline in annual passenger trips led to decreased service efficiency.



RTA's service effectiveness, which is a measure of annual unlinked passenger trips per vehicle revenue miles, has been steadily declining since 1998. Although RTA added 761 square miles of service area before the end of Fiscal Year 1997, which would be expected

to decrease service effectiveness, it was not until 1999 that service effectiveness began to decline dramatically.

Peer Group Analysis



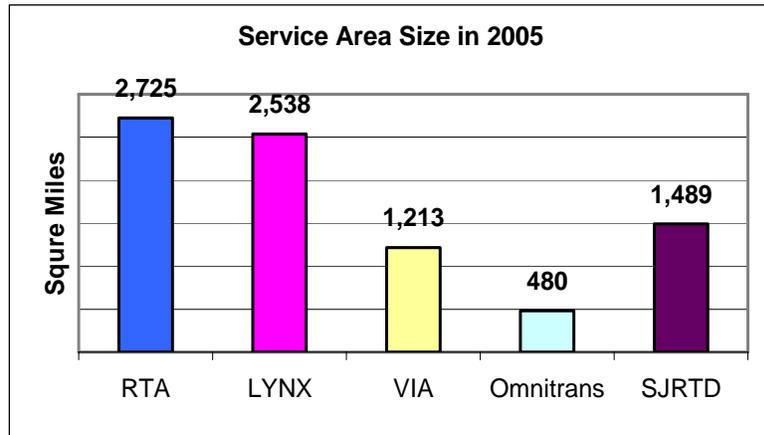
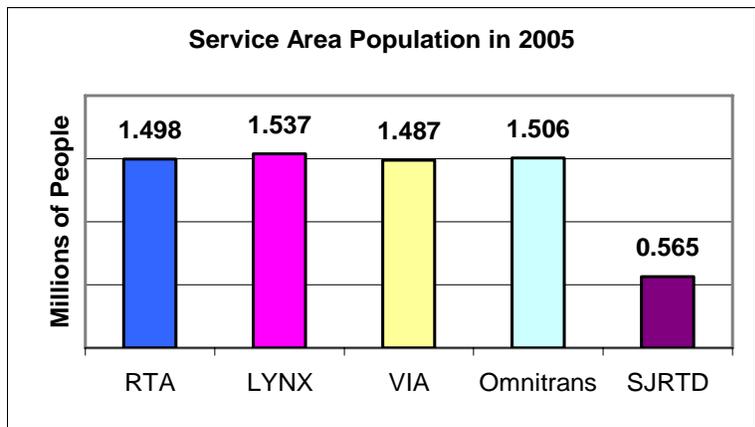
Examining a transit agency’s operations is beneficial, but it does not provide a complete picture. By comparing RTA to several peer transit agencies, RTA’s performance is gauged against the performance of others. The map above provides a view of the geographic areas in which RTA, serving Riverside County, California and its peer group operate. Central Florida Regional Transit Authority (LYNX) in the Orlando-Kissimmee Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) of Florida; VIA Metropolitan Transit (VIA) in Bexar County, Texas; Omnitrans in San Bernardino County, California; and San Joaquin Regional Transit District (SJRTD) in San Joaquin County, California were chosen as peer transit systems. Census data at the county level for RTA, VIA, Omnitrans, and SJRTD was used for the comparison, while data at the metropolitan statistical area level was used for LYNX. In the case of LYNX, the transit agency’s operation includes multiple counties. Therefore, the metropolitan statistical area was used because service area statistics would have been truncated at the county level.

Peer systems were chosen based on comparable service area size, service area population, operating funds expended by the transit provider annually, and population density.

Because external factors beyond the transit agencies' control often affect ridership more significantly than internal factors, an importance was placed on finding cities with comparable demographic and economic characteristics. However, RTA is distinguished by its large service area size and rather low operating expenditures, so finding cities that matched across the board was difficult. In the end, the peer group represents an amalgamation of the different criteria. SJRTD, for example, has a similar operating budget but a much smaller service area population. Conversely, VIA Metropolitan Transit, which serves the city of San Antonio, expends significantly more operating funds but matches Riverside County's demographic statistics more closely.

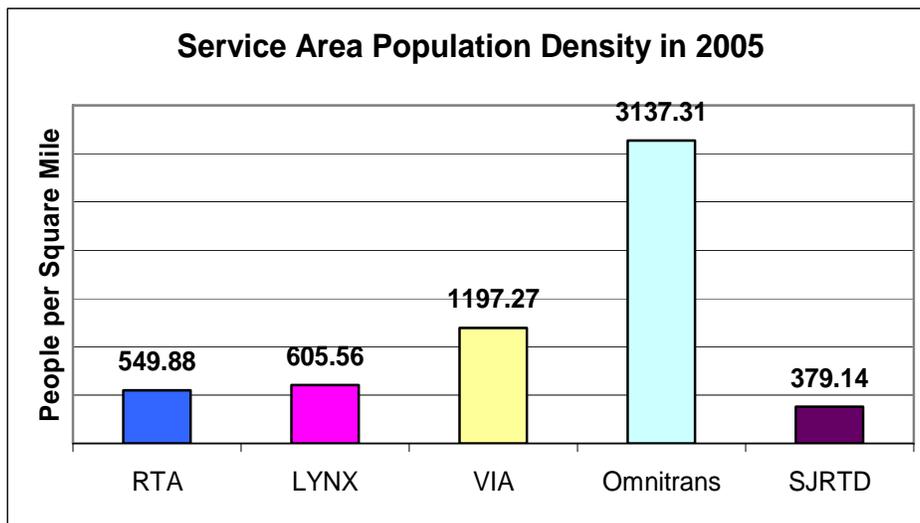
Service Area Characteristics

The graphs below display RTA's service area population and service area size compared with its peer systems. RTA, with a service area population of 1.498 million people is similar to the service area populations of LYNX, VIA, and Omnitrans. SJRTD has about one-third of the population of the peer group. RTA's service area size is comparable only to LYNX.



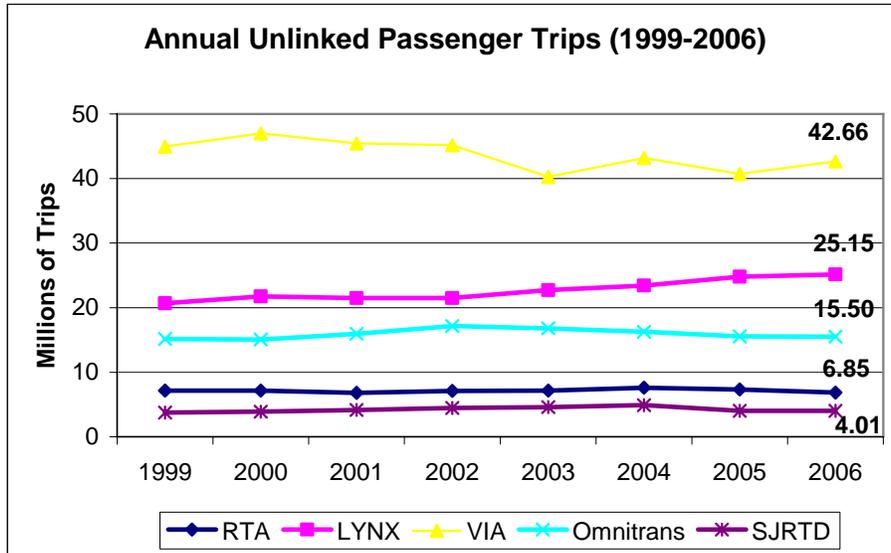
Population density is one of the most important external factors affecting transit ridership, because as the population becomes more dispersed, it is increasingly less efficient to provide transit services for an area. RTA, with its large service area size is a quintessential example of an agency that must work within these confines. Much of the population RTA serves is spread over an expansive service area.

Measured as persons per square mile and shown in the following graph, RTA's service area population density is parallel only to LYNX. Omnitrans, in the neighboring City of San Bernardino has a service area population density almost six times that of RTA's. Omnitrans, unlike RTA, has not extended its service area outside of the most populous cities in San Bernardino County.



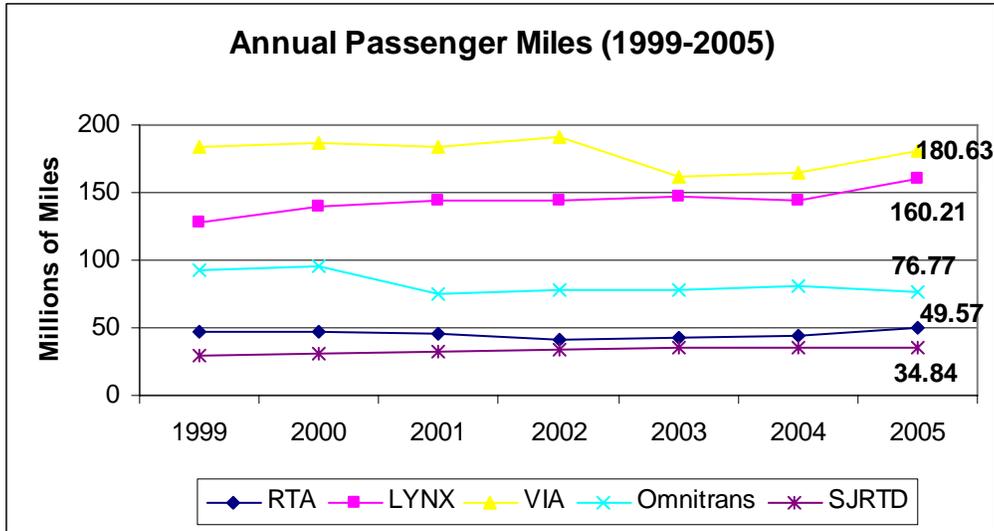
Ridership

The graph below displays annual unlinked passenger trips in Riverside and its peer cities from 1999 to 2006. RTA's ridership is significantly below three out of four of its peer systems for this entire period. With annual unlinked passenger trips of 6.85 million, RTA's ridership is above that of lowest performing SJRTD, but it is well under half of the next highest performing Omnitrans, whose ridership was 15.50 million, measured in unlinked passenger trips during 2005. LYNX had 25.15 million unlinked trips, and VIA reported 42.66 million unlinked passenger trips.



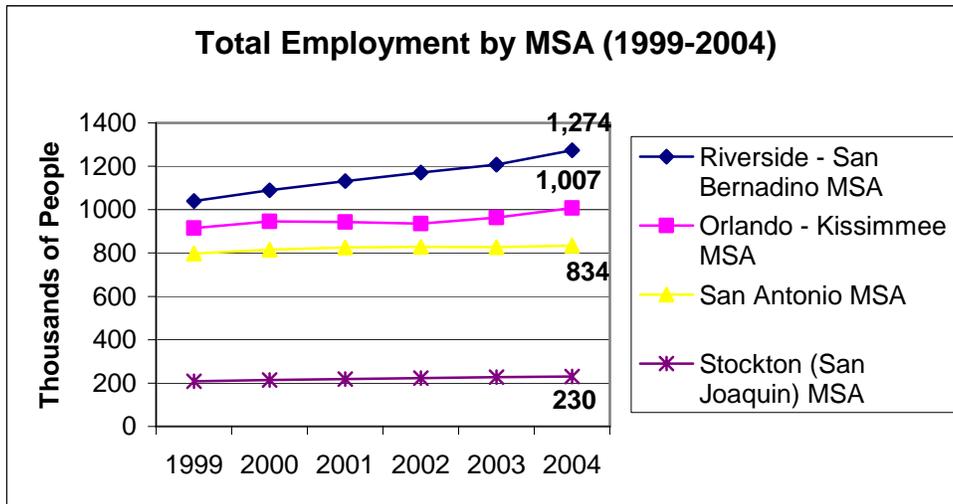
There is no clear trend in ridership across all five systems. However, the transit providers in California have all experienced declines in annual unlinked passenger trips over the last several years. Ridership fell at RTA and SJRTD between 2004 and 2006, while Omnitrans has gradually lost passenger trips since 2003.

Using annual passenger miles as a measure instead of unlinked passenger trips, RTA performs slightly better. Although its position at second to the bottom does not change, it is evident from the next graph that RTA has steadily increased its annual passenger miles since 2003. Given RTA's large service area, this increase in passenger miles and simultaneous decline in unlinked passenger trips is likely because customers are taking longer rides. Alternatively, since it is unlinked passenger trips that are used to measure ridership, if RTA modified its routes to decrease passenger transfers, its ridership would appear to decline.

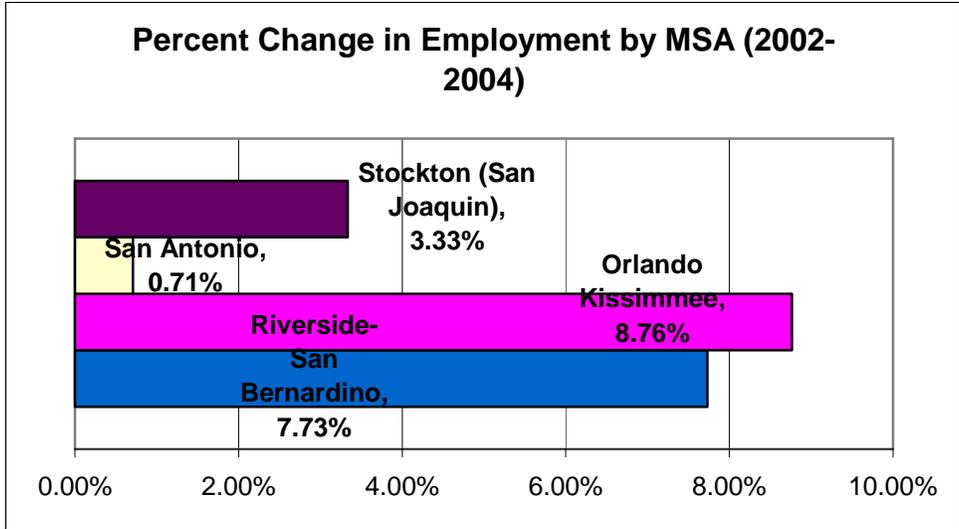


Demographics

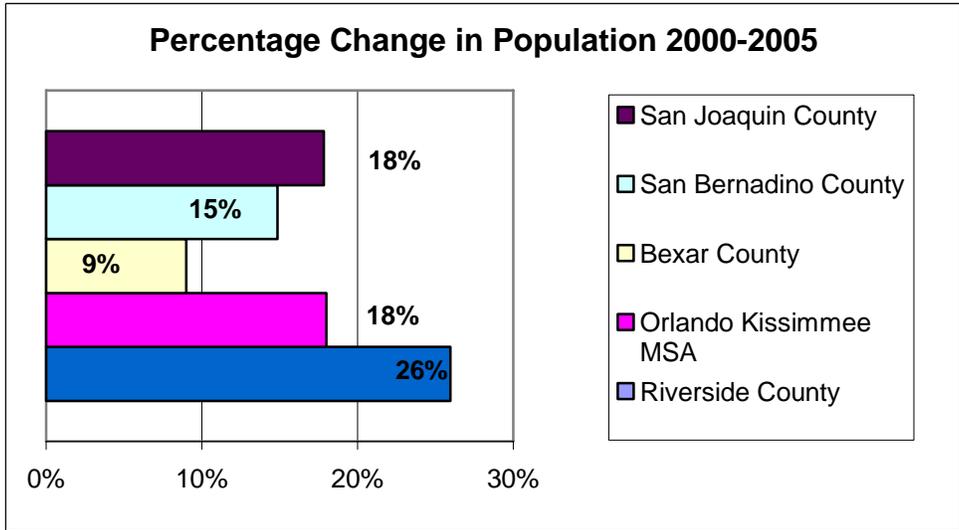
The reasons why RTA's performance (defined by annual unlinked passenger trips) is less than its peers requires examination of further data. The subsequent graph shows employment growth at the metropolitan statistical area (MSA) level from 1999 to 2004. Note that Riverside and San Bernardino, as neighboring counties, are in the same MSA.



Just as growth in employment in Riverside County did not correlate to increased ridership at RTA, employment seems to explain little in the way of ridership trends in this peer group. The Riverside-San Bernardino MSA saw dramatic employment growth from 2002 through 2004, while ridership increased overall at RTA and declined at Omnitrans. In San Antonio, like in San Joaquin, employment grew comparatively little, but ridership varied substantially at VIA and fell at SJRTD. This is further illustrated in the following graph, which depicts percentage change in employment from 2002 to 2004.

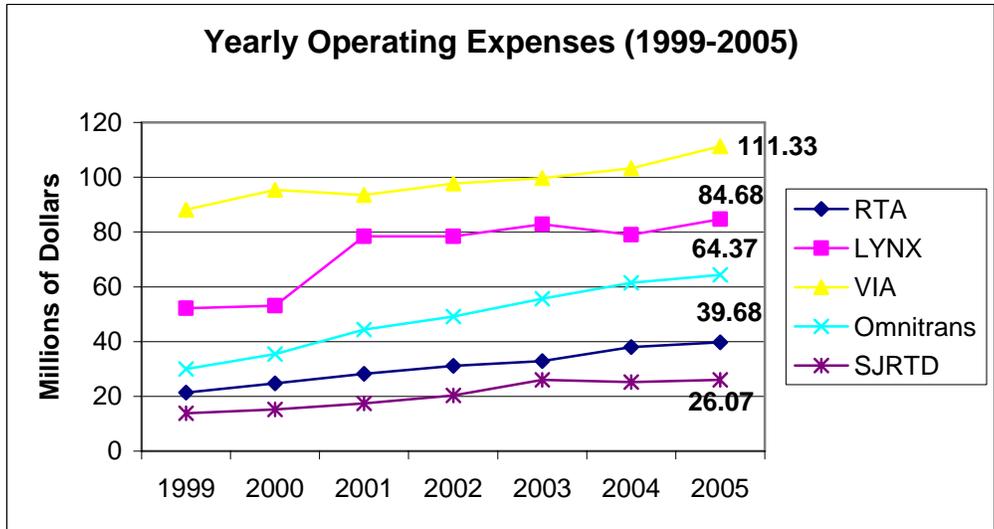


Both employment and population growth in a service area are considered important external variables affecting ridership. Percentage change in population between 2000 and 2004 is shown in the following graph. Riverside County experienced a 26 percent increase in population which is substantially larger than the counties of RTA's peer systems.



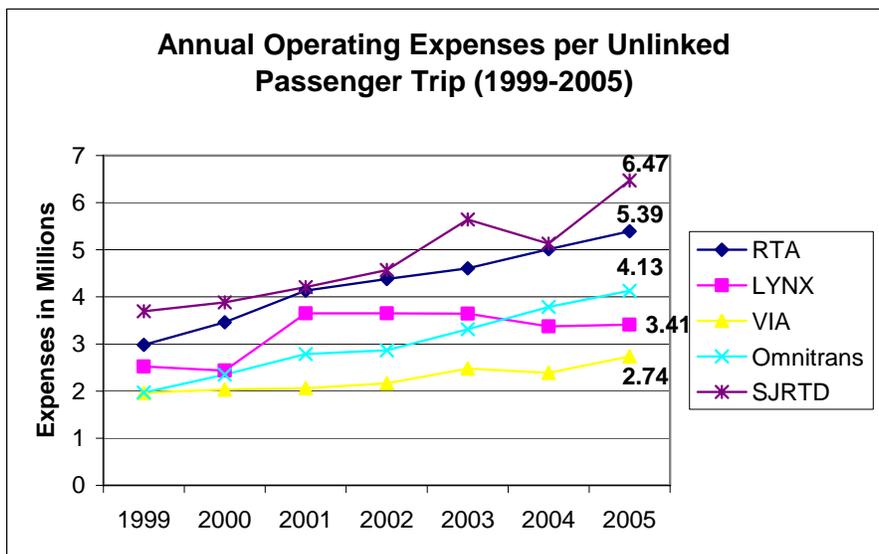
Operating Characteristics

Another important variable, one that was used when selecting peer systems, is yearly operating expenses. Operating expenses correspond to an agency's budget, which in turn limits the amount of money available for innovations. High expenses necessitate fare increases or other revenue enhancements.



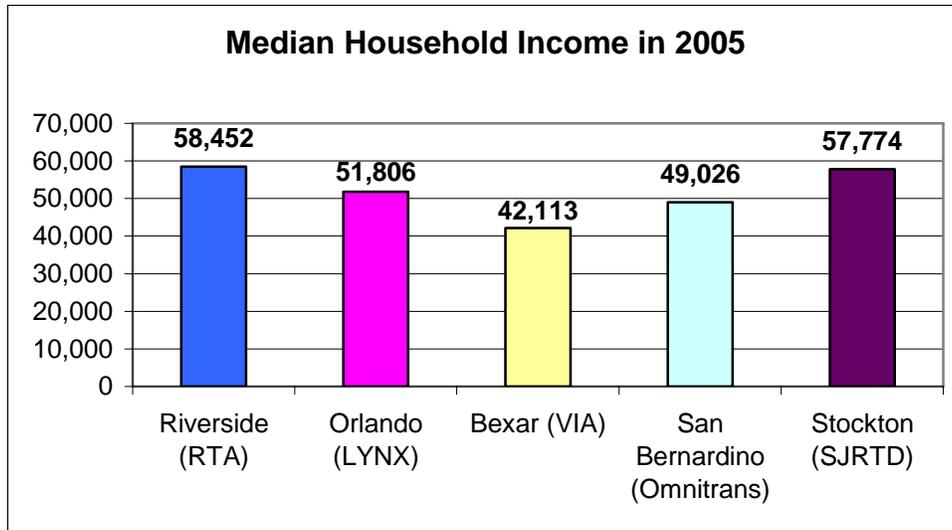
As shown in the graph above, RTA's operating expenses are second to the lowest. RTA's operating expenses reached \$39.68 million in 2005, compared to \$84.68 million at LYNX, \$64.37 million at Omnitrans, and \$26.07 million at SJRTD. VIA's operating expenses, at \$111.33 million in 2005, were much higher than the rest of the peer group.

Comparing annual operating expenses per annual unlinked passenger trips provides an alternate perspective of each agency's performance. RTA's operating expenses have grown throughout the period in question, 1999 through 2005, while its ridership has fluctuated. As shown in the following graph, the result is steadily increasing operating expenses even when adjusted for ridership. Omnitrans and SJRTD, like RTA, both have operating expenses clearly outpacing any increase in ridership. VIA and LYNX, who had the highest total annual operating expenses, have the lowest overall expenses per passenger trip, because their ridership is proportionally higher than their operating costs.



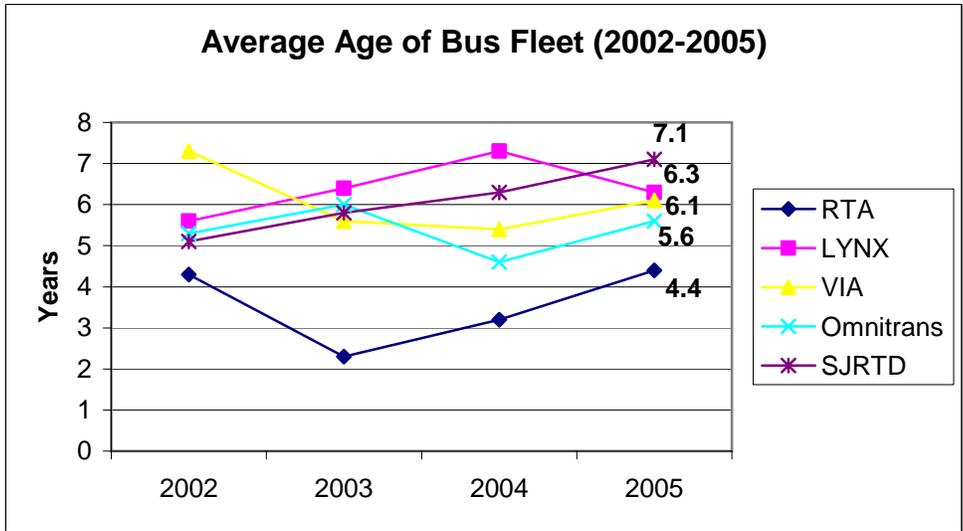
Income

Median household income correlates to use of public transportation. The following graph shows median household income in Riverside County and its peer system locations. Riverside and San Joaquin Counties, which have the highest and second highest median household income, \$58,452 and \$57,774, respectively, reported the lowest number of annual unlinked passenger trips. This suggested relationship between household income and use of public transit is in keeping with prior research which indicates that as income increases, use of public transit declines.

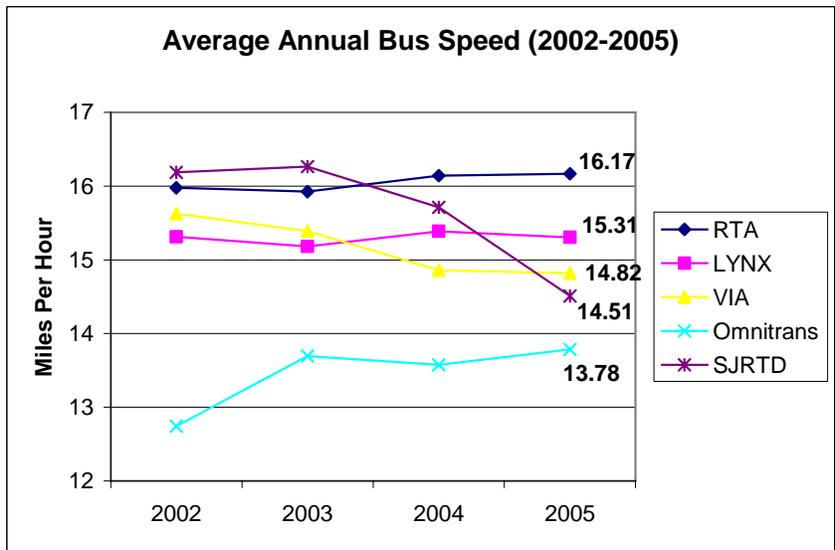


Service Factors

The high median household income in Riverside County indicates that RTA has a large percentage of choice riders, those riders with a relatively high income who have alternatives to transit use at their disposal. Operational improvements are important in attracting choice riders. The age of an agency's bus fleet is one variable in this category, because newer buses are perceived to be cleaner, more reliable, and generally more desirable to ride. The average age of RTA's and each peer agency's bus fleet from 2002 to 2005 is shown in the graph that follows. RTA has the newest bus fleet, with an average bus age of 4.3 years. This compares to next most recent Omnitrans' average age of 5.6 years, and the oldest average age at SJRTD of 7.1 years. RTA is well positioned, in terms of its fleet, to grow its ridership.



Bus speed is another principal internal variable in both increasing and maintaining ridership. Shown in the graph below, RTA has consistently maintained one of the highest average annual bus speeds from 2002 to 2005. In 2005, RTA's average speed was 16.17 miles per hour, compared to 15.31 miles per hour at the next fastest provider, LYNX. RTA's large service area and routes serving less densely populated areas are likely major contributing factors to RTA's bus speeds.



Omnitrans in neighboring San Bernardino County had a significantly lower average annual bus speed than the rest of the peer group, under 14 miles per hour between 2002 and 2005. Population density may explain why. San Bernardino County's population density is much higher than the rest of the peer group. Another factor to consider is the area's congestion index.

| Urban Area | Key Mobility Measures, 2003 | | Travel Time Index | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------|-------------------|------|
| | Annual Delay per Traveler | | Travel Time Index | |
| | Hours | Rank | Values | Rank |
| Riverside-San Bernardino | 55 | 9 | 1.37 | 14 |
| Orlando | 55 | 9 | 1.3 | 28 |
| San Antonio | 33 | 33 | 1.22 | 35 |

In a 2005 report, the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) measured the level of congestion in 85 urban areas. The Riverside-San Bernardino Urban Area, Orlando Urban Area, and San Antonio Urban Area were all included in this report and categorized as large urban areas; Stockton/San Joaquin was not ranked. According to TTI, in 2003 an average traveler in Riverside-San Bernardino experienced 55 hours of delay due to congestion. A trip that should have taken 1 hour under free flow traffic conditions took 1.37 hours during peak travel time in Riverside-San Bernardino. Congestion levels in Orlando were similar, while San Antonio was slightly less congested.

It appears inconsistent that Riverside-San Bernardino is so congested, and yet RTA's average bus speed is comparatively high. One possible explanation is that all of the congestion is in San Bernardino County; Riverside County only appears congested because it is included in the same geographic area in the TTI Report. Given San Bernardino County's population density, there is some merit to this hypothesis. Another possibility is that RTA is not running a sufficient number of buses during peak travel times or on peak travel routes. Buses are not impeded by traffic, and they might not be taking people where they want to go. This alternative supposition would help to explain why RTA's ridership has not grown with increases in either employment or population in the county.

Conclusion

RTA is likely still suffering from its customers' response to the fare hike during fiscal year 2005. However, the agency must find ways to attract customers who are less likely to abandon transit due to an increase in fares. RTA has taken many positive steps, using technology to bring customers service innovations and forming partnerships with the local school district and university. Now RTA must effectively leverage its strengths and improve operations to increase transit ridership.

Specific ideas as to how RTA might improve ridership are found in the next sections of this report.

Observations and Recommendations

Operating and Service Adjustments

RTA faces major challenges in providing service to the second largest area and one of the fastest growing areas in the country. The northwest portion of the service area contains the densest urban developments. This includes the cities of Corona, Riverside, and Moreno Valley. Service is also provided to the communities of Hemet, Perris, Beaumont, Lake Elsinore, and Temecula. RTA provides service in the developed portions of the service area and provides regional connections between the developed areas. However, there are vast stretches of land with limited or no development. This presents a large challenge to operate service effectively and efficiently.

The market that RTA serves is diverse. At least 50 percent of the service area residents leave the service area for work. Their market is a bedroom community for Los Angeles, Orange County, and now San Diego. This limits the market for work trips as well as other trips throughout the day. The service area also does not have major employers nor is there a concentration of employers that RTA can use to anchor service. This complicates RTA's service mission compared with most other transit systems.

Despite the challenges that RTA faces, they have made wise service deployment decisions. RTA meets many demands and provides essential services. RTA is the lifeline and basic mobility for many service area residents. With increasing development, however, they must be careful not to become all things to all people. This would lead to service inefficiency and have a negative impact on ridership.

One key RTA initiative underway that will impact ridership is their Comprehensive Operation Analysis (COA). The COA will provide a wealth of trip, customer and ridership data. This data can be used to evaluate the current system's effectiveness. A COA generally results in recommendations for route restructuring. Properly done, this could result in more effective deployment of resources and result in increased ridership. Toward this end, this report will not evaluate the current route structure since changes to the service are anticipated. Rather, recommendations will be made on how to effectively use the data derived from the COA, implement service changes, begin several key monitoring initiatives, and address future requests for service.

RTA is also upgrading its automatic vehicle locator system. This will provide RTA with an enhanced system to improve customer service and information. As part of the upgrade, RTA will provide real time bus information at 28 locations. After this initial deployment, the real time bus information system will be expanded to another 32 locations. This can increase ridership by making transit more user-friendly and predictable.



A review of RTA vehicles found them to be in excellent condition and well maintained. The vehicles are clean and inviting to passengers.

RTA provides many passenger amenities at bus stops. There is schedule information at the bus stops which are well marked, properly located, and easily accessible. There are shelters and benches throughout the system and the number of these amenities is being increased. Graffiti removal is a priority and observation indicates that it is removed quickly.

Security cameras are provided on all buses purchased since 2000. A review of on board incidents indicates the number is low and therefore not a ridership

deterrent. Customer complaints do not indicate that service quality is deterring ridership.

RTA operators maintain a professional appearance. They are well dressed and wore uniforms that readily identified them as RTA operators. They were courteous and polite based on field observations. Operators also interacted professionally with people with disabilities while assisting boarding and unloading of passengers who were using wheelchairs.

The operators are well trained. They receive an initial 6 weeks of training; 2 weeks in the classroom and 4 weeks of on-line skill training. Operator refresher training classes are provided during the year and all operators are required to participate. The refresher training consists of safety and customer related training.

RTA uses a Performance Improvement Program that monitors the performance of individual routes using performance indicator statistics. This is used to determine if a route is operating efficiently and effectively. If a route does not meet RTA's standards, it is reviewed to determine how it can be made effective.

Overall RTA has many programs in place and initiatives underway that support increased ridership. With regard to the new initiatives, it is incumbent on RTA to ensure that they have a well organized plan to support the initiatives. RTA needs to ensure that future activities, particularly the COA, do not negatively impact ridership.

Service Standards

RECOMMENDATION #1:

RTA should develop service standards as part of the implementation of the COA.

These standards should describe how the service is to be operated and structured. The standards should serve as guiding principals that the agency uses to design the final route structure. The standards should consider the following service characteristics:

1. Service frequencies: Based on the type of routes there should be standard service frequency. For example, routes should operate on an hourly (60 minute) frequency in off peak hours and half-hourly (30 minute) frequency in peak hours.
2. Clock face schedule: As far as practicable, routes should be designed to operate on standard intervals based on the clock face. This entails designing route operations so that the passenger can rely on the bus to arrive at the same time(s) each hour. For example, if the route operates on a 30 minute headway and the bus arrives at a given stop at :03 past the hour, then the next bus would arrive at :33 past the hour. This pattern would repeat itself through the span of service. From a customer's perspective, the use of clock headways allows them to travel without having to consult a timetable on a regular basis. The bus becomes predictable and can be relied on as means of transportation throughout the day for many trips and not just for selected ones.
3. Direct routing: Routes should be designed so that they operate as directly as possible, minimizing travel time, distance, and inconvenience to passengers. The route should not make multiple loops, cross itself, or double back on parallel streets. By providing as direct a routing as possible, travel times would be shortened for the rider, the route would be more understandable to users, and it may be possible to cover more operational area with the same bus. Many of the current routes are difficult to understand since they have many loops and extensions. This should be addressed as part of the COA implementation. By way of example, RTA's routes 23, 24, 30, and 33 do not appear to meet a direct routing standard.

The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Report # 100, Transit Capacity and Quality of Service Manual, provides a good resource for developing the service standards.

Scheduling Software

RECOMMENDATION # 2:

RTA should purchase its own scheduling software.

RTA currently contracts for its runcutting and operator scheduling to a third party. Owning the software will provide RTA with a tool to evaluate different operating scenarios to help them decide what services to provide and to estimate the cost impact of the various service decisions.

With regard to ridership, RTA does not have the ability to evaluate a series of scenarios regarding service decisions. RTA does not possess the scheduling software tool to help it determine the impact and to prioritize service decisions. The scheduling software provides a critical costing tool that can help RTA make service decisions. This is important if there are competing demands for service enhancements and the cost effectiveness of each scenario needs to be analyzed.

Detailed operational service knowledge lies within RTA and not within the third party. Further, it would be costly to have the contractor analyze various routing scenarios to determine level of service.

The scheduling software can also interface with the trip planning software. This may be an advantage to RTA so that the most current schedule information is always available for the trip planning software.

The purchase of scheduling software would allow RTA to directly control and monitor the quality of its runcutting efforts. Many transit systems have reported cost savings by implementing direct use of the runcutting software. This is a consideration that RTA should make when deciding whether to purchase scheduling software. The savings generated by the software and the ability to have a readily available planning tool could result in savings that pay for this investment.

Timed Transfers

RECOMMENDATION # 3:

RTA should use timed transfers to coordinate service and to expand ridership opportunities.

The use of timed transfers should be explored as part of COA implementation. It was observed that buses are not coordinated at the downtown transfer station in Riverside and at other locations. Waiting to transfer is a disincentive to ridership. Timed transfers allow passengers to have a broader selection of trip making opportunities. In essence, the service area for customers is expanded.

Timed transfers could also allow for interlining of bus routes. If the COA data shows major transfer movements between certain routes, these routes could be interlined so that the customer does not have to physically transfer to complete their trip.

Vehicle Announcements

RECOMMENDATION # 4:

RTA should expand the number and types of announcements that are made on vehicles as part of the implementation of the new automated annunciator system.

On board observation showed that RTA is making stop announcements via the automatic annunciators. RTA should consider, however, expanding the number and type of announcements that are made. For example, major trips generators such as hospitals, major public facilities, and major shopping centers. should be included in the announcements.

Courtesy announcements should also be added to the annunciators such as passenger behavior announcements (no smoking, eating and drinking) and safety announcements (remain seated until the bus stops). The annunciators can also be used to promote the use of RTA for major events (ride RTA to Orange Blossom Festival this Saturday).

Including trip generator announcements could alert customers to the broader range of trip possibilities that exist when using RTA buses.

Warrants

RECOMMENDATION #5:

RTA should develop warrants that are adopted by the Board of Directors for use in implementation of new and expanded services.

As population grows in the service area, there will be increasing demands on RTA to add service. RTA needs to develop a set of warrants that can be used to guide decisions as to when service will be provided and under what conditions. Given the unique challenges of the service area geography and the local market, these warrants are essential if RTA is to avoid adding unproductive service. TCRP Report # 100 can be used in developing these warrants. The end result will be a series of warrants that would be achieved before service is added to new developments in the service area.

The warrants should also include evaluation criteria for service that is deployed using RTA's current performance improvement program effort.

Congestion Monitoring

RECOMMENDATION # 6:

RTA should develop a method to monitor the ongoing impact of traffic and congestion growth on transit operations.

As population grows within the service area, traffic will increase. Since bus transit operates in mixed traffic, transit operations will be affected. The result may be deterioration of both on time performance and transit customer satisfaction. RTA needs to be prepared to address these concerns.

As part of the system and scheduling changes that result from the COA, RTA should consider increased layover and recovery time for transit routes. While this will result in

some short term inefficiencies, allowing for deterioration of transit travel times, particularly in peak hours, may provide RTA with the flexibility of adjusting schedules without affecting service frequencies or having to provide additional service to maintain desired service frequencies.

Route Numbering

RECOMMENDATION # 7:

RTA should revise its route numbering and identification system.

The current RTA route numbering and identification system is haphazard. It is not being used in a manner that makes the system understandable to the customer. As such, it may be a disincentive to using the system.



Many transit systems have used the route number as a means to identify the types of services provided and the sections of the service area in which service is provided. By way of example, RTA uses a 200 series to identify commuter routes.

In RTA's case, it should identify local routes using numbers under 70. The numbering scheme could then be further subdivided to indicate in what section of the service area the route is operating. As is currently the case, numbers 20 and less could identify the urban area in the northwest corner of the service area. Local routes in Hemet could be identified in the 30's, local routes in Beaumont in the 40's, etc. Regional connector routes that tie in the various areas of the service area could be numbered between 70 and 99.

In many communities, a hierarchal numbering scheme, such as what is proposed, has been helpful in building ridership by making the transit system easier to understand for passengers and potential riders. It also has the advantage of "localizing" the service area particularly in light of the fact that most bus trips are short in length and tend to be local.

There is one caveat to be taken into account in deciding when to proceed with this recommendation. Making this change on the current system could lead to confusion and would be a disincentive to ridership. If RTA proceeds with significant changes when implementing the COA, this would be an ideal time to make the route numbering change. It would serve to delineate the new or revised systems versus the current system. If the COA does not result in significant change, then this recommendation should be

implemented incrementally as route changes take place. In either case, RTA should ensure that customers are fully informed and understand the numbering and identification changes. Also, RTA should ensure that language and educational barriers are addressed when making such a change.

Fare Collection and Structure



Fare collection and structure has a direct effect on transit ridership. If fare media is too expensive, or unavailable in the desired form, ridership will suffer. Similarly, if an agency does not have the infrastructure in place to effectively and securely collect fares, agency revenue will suffer.

RTA has a wide array of fare products for customers to choose from, and has an excellent farebox collection system. RTA stands to benefit by revising fare strategies and implementing best practices in fare collection.

Fare Products

RECOMMENDATION # 8:

RTA should implement a fare product which better serves the needs of the transit dependent community.

The RTA 2007-2009 Short Range Transit Plan states that “70% of the riders have incomes of less than \$20,000 annually.” Transit agencies typically find that customers in this demographic range tend to use fare products which require minimum out of pocket expense. RTA products in this category include cash fares, the one day pass, the 10 trip pass, and the seven day pass. However the deepest discount is applied to the 31 day pass. Customers requiring transfers to complete their trips are most severely affected.

One of two fare strategies could address this problem; free transfers or a lower cost for one day passes. RTA staff indicates that the agency strategically chose to eliminate free transfers in order to lower administrative burdens, reduce fare evasion, and eliminate customer confrontations with operators regarding transfer validity. These concerns could be allayed by maximizing the capabilities of the GFI Odyssey Farebox system. In this case, the existing farebox “TRiM” unit could be used to issue time stamped transfers.

Regional Smart Card

RECOMMENDATION # 9:

RTA should actively participate in the regional Los Angeles Transit Access Pass (TAP) smart card program.

The Los Angeles region has an active project known as the Transit Access Pass using smart card fare collection technology. Approximately twenty Los Angeles area transit properties are participating in the program which seeks to use smart card technology to allow seamless transit trips across the region using a single fare card. An advantage of the system is that customers will be able to transfer from system to system without using multiple fare media. Data can be captured by the system to allow “back office” settlement of revenue and ridership data to enable reciprocal agreements.

RTA owns the Odyssey Farebox system which is compatible with the Los Angeles TAP system and with the installation of smart card readers and software in the fareboxes.

Fare Collection Best Practices

RTA should consider implementing certain fare collection best practices in order to assure that revenue control is enhanced thereby providing additional resources for ridership initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION # 10:

RTA should develop an organizational structure which separates functions such as farebox maintenance, farebox probing, and cash box inventory.

RECOMMENDATION # 11:

RTA should probe bus fareboxes upon entry to the maintenance facilities rather than waiting until evening hours.

RECOMMENDATION # 12:

RTA should hold bus farebox cashboxes in a location other than the bus parts room.

RECOMMENDATION # 13:

RTA should safely store fare media at a desk in the Durahart building rather than being in its present open environment.

RECOMMENDATION # 14:

RTA should place the fare media Printing Encoding Machine in a locked cabinet instead of at a desk in the Durahart building.

Similar units are located at the Hemet facility and at contractor locations. These units are used to encode fare products to blank fare cards.

RECOMMENDATION # 15:

RTA should lock the fare equipment maintenance room when the technician is not present.

RECOMMENDATION # 16:

RTA should conduct a “Bus Vulnerability Study” to address the implementation of best practices.

Firms capable of performing this service include J.C. Simonetti & Associates, and GFI Genfare. This study could also address the need to maximize the capability of the farebox system.

Ridership Reports

RECOMMENDATION # 17:

RTA should maximize the capabilities of the GFI Odyssey Farebox System for reporting. Ridership reports should be validated using a controlled methodology such as a “secret shopper” program, or a test environment, or both, rather than bus operator tallies.

RTA management has expressed the need to reconcile farebox ridership reports with manual counts, automated passenger counters, and historical data. In April 2005, RTA implemented a fare policy change which increased the base cash fare from \$1.00 to \$1.25 and increased pass prices as well. Prior to the fare increase, RTA prudently contracted for a fare elasticity study to assess the ridership impact of the fare increase. Classic fare elasticity theory predicts that for each percent increase in the fare, ridership should drop by .43%. The study predicted that with the proposed fare increase, ridership would decrease by 1.1%. According to current analysis, ridership dropped by 9.73% from April 2004 to April 2005 and dropped another 9.12% from April 2005 to April 2006.

RTA is attempting to use bus operator tallies to validate system reports. This method is difficult to control and prone to error. It is recommended that more controlled methodologies such as a controlled “secret shopper” methodology or a test environment methodology be used. In addition, the use and understanding of reports could be included in the scope of the “Bus Vulnerability Study” (Recommendation # 4). Implementation of this recommendation will help RTA to analyze success in ridership initiatives.



Fare Collection

RECOMMENDATION # 18:

RTA should procure a unified fare collection system.

RTA's fare collection equipment inventory includes three types of equipment. The inventory includes 127 GFI Odyssey fareboxes which are installed on the company operated fleet. The fleet operated by contractor McDonald and Laidlaw use Diamond brand drop boxes and the Dial-a-Ride fleet operated by Southland uses a drop bag system. The non-Odyssey equipment is aged and non-automated. This equipment exposes RTA to risk of loss of revenue. In addition, all reports are manual and data is not automatically integrated with the GFI system.

Marketing, Promotions, and Information

RTA has a talented, creative, and dedicated marketing staff. They are experienced, knowledgeable of the organization and display a great understanding of transit marketing. They are engaged in the activities needed to properly conduct a comprehensive agency marketing program. RTA has good public information systems in place that function in an understandable and reliable way. It has made good investments in marketing and public information systems, and would benefit by increasing funding to support the function.

Call Center Improvements

The RTA call center has good coverage in terms of its operating hours. The coverage could be enhanced by taking several steps to help with employee scheduling and public access to route, schedule, and fare information.

RECOMMENDATION # 19:

RTA should upgrade on-call agents to part time status.

This may enable management to have fewer employees who can work more hours each, thus establishing a dedicated work force with less turn over. It would also enable RTA to hire and keep a work force that reflects the makeup of the community, particularly in terms of the Spanish speaking population. Currently, RTA on-call employees are limited to 1000 hours each per year.

RECOMMENDATION # 20:

RTA should install an interactive voice response system (IVR) in order to provide 24/7 coverage on schedule inquiries.

An IVR can also be developed as a bilingual enhancement. In fact, the device may come with enough capacity that some of it could be offered or sold to some of the smaller municipal systems in the service area.

Marketing Plan

RTA Marketing staff is very responsive to the opportunities that arise in the course of the transit system's business year. It would be difficult, and possibly too limiting, to expect the staff to prepare and operate under a short term plan. The danger in this is that worthwhile initiatives and projects appear to be pushed back by the "line jumping" of opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION # 21:

RTA should develop and implement a long term (three year) strategic marketing plan.

Annual budget planning and appropriate tactical plans would be spun off this document.

Market Research

RTA has entered a period of great change in its service area, but has not kept up to date on basic knowledge about its riders. Several limited scope research efforts have helped the agency on a project by project basis, and certainly similar efforts need to continue. However, there is no definitive market research study that defines riders, rider segments, demographics, use patterns, longevity, satisfaction, etc. Also, there is not an established cycle for conducting market research.

RECOMMENDATION # 22:

RTA should conduct initial market research to measure customer demographics, segmentation, and customer satisfaction on key service characteristics. Once established, RTA should develop a research cycle.

RTA should design research to help determine what actions may best be used to recruit and retain customers. Ideally, due to the population changes occurring in Riverside County, this should be done with a major market segmentation study. RTA should pay particular attention to age and gender demographics that relate to media purchases and measure media habits to ascertain the best uses for mass media. RTA should conduct future research as needed especially when demographics, service area, and other major changes occur.

Bus Stop Enhancements



RTA has plans and funds to improve the bus stops throughout its service area. It is also unique in that it has the staff and systems in place to support the upkeep of those enhancements, particularly the posting of route maps and schedules.

RECOMMENDATION # 23:

RTA should continue to support the installation of the public information as well as comfort and safety enhancements such as benches and shelters.



It is also apparent that RTA and the City of Riverside are stalemated about the installation of shelters with advertising, with the City opposing advertising along public streets. From a ridership perspective, shelters provide safety and comfort for passengers who are also city residents. The ability to raise additional revenue through the sale of advertising is important to support RTA operations.

RECOMMENDATION # 24:

RTA should propose to the City implementation of a three year pilot program with a limited number of advertising-ready shelters.

RECOMMENDATION # 25:

RTA should use capital funds to purchase and strategically install advertising-ready shelters throughout the service area.

Private partners can provide the local share for the cost of the shelters. This will keep ownership, control, and content within RTA.

RECOMMENDATION # 26:

RTA should enter into a contract with a transit sales organization to sell the advertisements, and use the leverage of RTA ownership to garner a larger share of the shelter advertising revenue.

This approach will generate operating funds from capital investments. RTA has the ability with its prototype shelters to achieve a high revenue share due to the fact that most of the shelters would be solar powered and there is sufficient agency staff to maintain the shelters. The sales organization could be leaner and more focused on revenue production as a result.

RECOMMENDATION # 27:

RTA should modify the shelter design slightly to add a small, narrow information kiosk on the approach side of the shelter to be dedicated to RTA information such as route and schedules and rider alerts.

In Vehicle Information

RTA needs to completely overhaul its in-vehicle information. RTA is not effectively using the in vehicle advertising space to promote itself and to provide customer service information.



RECOMMENDATION # 28:

RTA should improve the quality of the materials provided in the interior of the vehicle.

Most materials should be presented in a standard “car card” format and all materials should be printed on more durable stock that is consistent with transit industry standards. Current displays look worn since they are printed on paper or on thin cardboard materials. Adequate clips should be used to hold the announcement on both ends.

RECOMMENDATION # 29:

RTA should provide a fare tariff card in each vehicle.

While this information is provided on the face of the fareboxes, the passenger's ability to see this is limited. By placing it in the interior of the coach, the passenger is able to see the various fare options. This may be important to get new riders to ride more frequently if they know that discounted fare media exist.

RECOMMENDATION # 30:

RTA should ensure that all materials that announce service adjustments contain the complete date (month, day and year) in the announcement.

This will aid the passenger in knowing if the announcement is current. If possible, end dates should be provided. Outdated materials should be removed promptly.

RECOMMENDATION # 31:

RTA should ensure that announcements are provided in languages other than English.

This will address the Federal Executive Order regarding Limited English Proficiency.



RECOMMENDATION # 32:

RTA should promote itself in its interior bus space.

This could include public hearing announcements, service adjustments, new services, and informing customers to use RTA to reach special events.

Trip Planner Enhancements

The service area is going through many changes as housing and retail development occur. New streets and roads will be built or realigned, while others may disappear. The agency needs to find efficient ways to help itself and its customers stay current with changes.

RECOMMENDATION # 33:

RTA should become part of the Google Trip planning initiative.

Google provides a no cost trip planner that has the advantage of Google being responsible for maintaining currency. RTA's neighbor, Orange County Transit Authority uses Google Transit. See www.google.com/transit.

Community Involvement

RTA is actively involved in the community and works hard to have a presence at most community events. Some of these events are directed at key RTA target audiences such as seniors, college students, and ethnic groups.

RECOMMENDATION # 34:

RTA should maximize its involvement in a select group of community events by becoming a sponsor through both cash and trade contributions.

Such involvements could help RTA better reach targeted audiences through free or cooperative advertising, signage at the events, and the development of closer ties to the groups and communities holding the events. This is the equivalent of a highly-targeted advertising campaign.

Branding and Design

RTA has great branding opportunities and should continue to build on and improve those opportunities. Ideally, RTA wants a high degree of brand identity. In addition, RTA produces important public information pieces that its customers and the public rely on to help them better understand RTA and its services. The following recommendations should strengthen the RTA brand identity or improve the use of key public information materials.

RECOMMENDATION # 35:

RTA should prominently display the RTA call center phone number and Web site address on the exterior of all buses.

RECOMMENDATION # 36:

RTA should redesign the system map to a conventional brochure format, and eliminate the insets by integrating them into the map.

Transit connections to other regional providers should be obvious on the map.

RECOMMENDATION # 37:

RTA should place individual route maps adjacent to weekday schedules in the Ride Guide to better take advantage of the graphic relationship between the map and schedule.

This may require interspersing more promotional pages among the routes. Be sure to feature connections to regional carriers consistent with what is done in the system map.

RECOMMENDATION # 38:

RTA should increase the size of the RTA logo, phone number, and Web address and give them a prominent position on all materials as a design standard.

Web Site Improvements

RECOMMENDATION # 39:

RTA should adopt a continuous improvement approach to the Web site to maintain current news and information.

RECOMMENDATION # 40:

RTA should create a “click and link” feature on the RTA home page to route and schedule information and ensure that this feature is prominently displayed on the page.

RECOMMENDATION # 41:

RTA should prominently display the cost calculator on the home page and emphasize passes as the preferred fare payment choice.

Interior Advertising Space Sales

The RTA board has decided not to sell advertisements for display on the outside of buses, but should allow advertisements to be sold for display inside the buses. By doing so, it makes the interior space have more value, and that value can be sold as part of a package with shelter advertising, sold solo, or traded for value as part of RTA community involvement efforts.

RECOMMENDATION # 42:

RTA should allow the shelter advertising contractor to sell interior space to enhance revenue and to provide RTA with trade value for community involvements.

Advertising and Communication Issues

Being part of the Los Angeles media market and having such an expansive service area, makes buying and using mass media difficult and expensive. The RTA staff has found ways to deal with this, but there may be opportunities available to do some highly targeted marketing and to avoid the higher costs of mass media. There may also be a need to use mass media in select instances. For example, the local daily newspaper is published in both an English and Spanish version and staff has found advertising there has been productive. However, radio is another targeted medium that has not been used, but could be used for the right target. There are also more opportunities to advertise based on service features or products (pre paid fares, commuter lines, special events,

etc.). For example, strong and consistent promotion of passes should not only increase sales, but create customer loyalty and longevity.

RECOMMENDATION # 43:

RTA should use direct mail to deliver detailed schedule and route information to new and existing customers.

RTA can also include incentives to try RTA regular or special event service, to stimulate the purchase of passes, or to promote products and transit connections.

RECOMMENDATION # 44:

RTA should use outdoor advertising selectively for creating higher awareness of commuter lines, passes, new or revised routes, branding in expanding areas, and phone number and Web address awareness.

RECOMMENDATION # 45:

RTA should continue to aggressively promote passes, and where appropriate, emphasize the savings in more direct terms.

For example, the Day Pass saves 25 percent when compared to cash fare.

RECOMMENDATION # 46:

RTA should link the Power Pass program to pass sales promotion and a version of the Power Pass program should be offered with the U-Pass and any future employer pass program.

RECOMMENDATION # 47:

RTA should use email blasts to communicate with university students using U-Pass.

These messages could be in the form of electronic versions of RTA newsletters or other targeted communications.

Business and Institutional Sales

It is evident that RTA staff has aggressively pursued external relationships that have or may yet prove to provide ridership building opportunities. These relationships are not just with community organizations and events, but with businesses and institutions. It would be in the best interest of RTA to focus more on these relationships in a sales and client service sense. Many of these relationships are managed by the Community Relations Specialist, who also has other internal duties. She also has an extensive sales background that matches the agency's external needs.

RECOMMENDATION # 48:

RTA management should relieve the Community Relations Specialist of her internal duties, and then focus her activities on selling RTA products such as U-Pass, employer passes, setting up sales outlets, and coordinating RTA involvement in special events.

The position should be the manager and the first point of contact for these external community relationships.

Marketing Budget

RTA's total marketing budget is about two percent of the agency's operating budget, but less than half goes to advertising and promotional programs. It is understood that agency management has been flexible on providing additional funds, but current and future needs for investing in marketing related programs may be limited under this scenario.

RECOMMENDATION # 49:

RTA should increase the marketing budget particularly for advertising and promotion.

Partnerships and Coordination

Partnerships are an important component to increasing transit ridership because they facilitate the leveraging of existing resources and maximize agency efficiency.

RTA is exceptionally responsive to opportunities as they arise to form partnerships. This is evidenced by the fact that many of the recommendations for this partnership and coordination section concern broadening the scope of existing relationships rather than establishing entirely new ones.

Strategic Planning

RECOMMENDATION # 50:

RTA should develop a strategic partnership plan.

Strengthening partnerships requires a focused and agency-wide coordinated effort. A long-range strategic partnership plan would enhance interagency coordination, and direct efforts towards the areas identified as being most important.

University Pass

During 2006, RTA partnered with the University of California at Riverside (UCR) to offer U-Pass service. Under the arrangement, RTA allows university students to ride the

bus using only their college identification cards. In turn, the university reimburses RTA for each student ride, up to a maximum amount but not below a minimum amount set in the contract.



The U-Pass program encourages students to ride the bus, and is an opportunity for RTA to develop future transit customers. There are two community colleges, a city college, and two private colleges in RTA's service area that do not currently have a U-Pass partnership with RTA. This program needs to be expanded to these five other educational institutions in RTA's service area.

RECOMMENDATION # 51:

RTA should give priority to developing a U-Pass partnership with Riverside Community College for its three branch campuses in Riverside, Moreno Valley, and Norco; Riverside City College; Mount Santa Jacinto Community College; California Baptist University; and La Sierra University.

Employer-Provided Transit Benefit Program

RTA has already developed strong relationships with many area businesses. Through the Power Pass program, RTA customers who have a valid 7-Day, 10-Tripper, or 31-Day pass receive discounts at over fifty local companies. RTA can build similar, mutually beneficial relationships with local businesses to provide employer sponsored passes.

In an employer-provided transit benefit program, the employer purchases RTA 7-Day, 10-Tripper, or 31-Day passes from RTA either at full fare or at a negotiated discount. The employer then provides these passes to employees for free.

RECOMMENDATION # 52:

RTA should partner with local businesses, such as Flexsteel or Stater Brothers., to establish an employer-provided transit benefits program.

The advantages of this program for RTA are clear: RTA gains customers who would not have ridden the bus without a subsidy. The advantages for the employer are numerous as well. Chiefly, the employer gains a means of dependability to transport employees to and from work at a marginal cost per hour increase.

RTA has the additional leverage of the mandated Southern California Air Quality Management District (AQMD) Rideshare Plan. In order to regulate air pollution, the AQMD requires that businesses with more than one-hundred employees develop a plan to

decrease employee automobile use. Promotion of transit use through employer sponsored passes fulfills this requirement.

RECOMMENDATION # 53:

RTA should use area Chambers of Commerce to introduce the employer-provided transit benefit program.

Area Chambers of Commerce are possible forums where the employer-provided transit benefit program could be introduced. RTA has already established a presence at the chambers, and the agency may find the audience receptive to a business case for the employer pass program.

RECOMMENDATION # 54:

RTA should convince the County of Riverside, the City and Riverside, and other area local governments to enroll in RTA's employer-provided transit benefits program.

Riverside County is the major employer in the service area, and the county's participation can be used, much as RTA is now leveraging its U-Pass partnership with UCR, to introduce other employers to the program.

The Environment

RECOMMENDATION # 55:

RTA should market itself as an environmentally friendly alternative to automobile operation, and partner with environmental groups to enhance this image and encourage solo drivers to ride the bus.

Automobile emissions are a major contributing factor to Southern California's poor air quality. Not only does riding the bus decrease individual vehicle use, but RTA's buses are run on compressed natural gas. The environmental benefits of riding RTA buses instead of driving suggest a clear and logical partnership between RTA and the AQMD or other environmental groups.

Primary School Passes

RTA provides fixed route service used by primary school students. Riding RTA is the way many students get to and from school. Indeed, RTA's peak ridership is during the afternoon when schools adjourn, and not during the evening commute. Over the last year, RTA has significantly increased the number of schools that sell RTA bus passes to students. These positive efforts should be expanded. A partnership between RTA and local public schools should be established, so that RTA passes are sold at every primary school. As an additional incentive, RTA might consider offering passes to students at a discounted rate.

RECOMMENDATION # 56:

RTA should partner with the school district so that bus passes are sold at every primary school, possibly at a discounted rate.

Casinos

There are several casinos in Riverside County on existing RTA bus routes. However, because of the nature of the Casino business, RTA buses may not operate when employees are commuting to or from work. Recognizing this, RTA has approached casino owners about partnering in the past but to no avail. A partnership between RTA and casino operators offers significant potential benefits for both parties that justify increased efforts to collaborate. More importantly, it would benefit RTA customers and casino employees.

RECOMMENDATION # 57:

RTA should use Job Access and Reverse Commute funds and partner with casinos to ensure employees have transportation to get to and from work.

One potential avenue through which expanded service could be established is by applying for Federal Job Access and Reverse Commute program funding under 49 U.S.C. 5316. Job Access and Reverse Commute funding may be used to provide transportation to work sites that have historically not been well served by existing transit services. These gaps in job access may be either geographical, physical areas not served by existing routes, or temporal, such as shift change times that are either before or after regular transit service.

Job Access and Reverse Commute funding would bolster RTA funds with added Federal dollars, and the casinos could supply the required local matching funds.

RECOMMENDATION # 58:

RTA should explore the use of Job Access and Reverse Commute funds to provide transportation for other employees who have nontraditional schedules, such as workers in warehouses or manufacturing plants.

RECOMMENDATION # 59:

RTA should approach the Soboba Casino and Pechanga Resort and Casino with the possibility of subsidizing fixed route service used by customers traveling to and from their facilities.

Another potential partnership between RTA and area casinos would be for expanded fixed route service used by casinos along the route. A flexible arrangement could be negotiated under which RTA provides more frequent fixed route service, and, in turn, the casino either provides advertising for RTA or subsidizes part of its fixed route service.

Developers

The Riverside-San Bernardino MSA is one of the fastest growing regions in the United States. However, new housing growth is highly dispersed. Development clusters spring up amidst farmland, and RTA has the challenge of providing transit service to cluster communities separated by areas with low population density.

RECOMMENDATION # 60:

RTA should explore the use of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program funds to introduce new commuter service for communities where there is an appropriate population density.

Housing developments bring tremendous opportunity for RTA to attract new transit customers. Whether inhabitants of these communities drive or use transit depends on the accessibility and availability of public transportation.



RECOMMENDATION # 61:

RTA should partner with real-estate developers to ensure that new communities are pedestrian and transit friendly.

By establishing relationships with construction companies, RTA could also secure transit amenities in these locations.

RECOMMENDATION # 62:

RTA should partner with developers to ensure commercial development is pedestrian and transit friendly.

Riverside County's commercial and industrial development is expanding as well. Shopping plazas with sidewalks and bus shelters enhance the livability of the community and increase convenience for both existing and future RTA customers.

Coordination with other Transit Providers

RTA's service area is large, and abuts several other counties which have their own transit providers. Metrolink and Amtrak offer train service to downtown Riverside. RTA provides regional service to two cities that operate their own local bus service. Necessarily, RTA must coordinate with these partners.

RTA's commuter buses are time coordinated with Metrolink trains. RTA and Metrolink also have a transfer agreement. There is a memorandum of understanding between RTA and the Orange County Transit Authority, through which each agency credits and reimburses the other for a portion of the ridership on inter-county routes. Omnitrans, the transit agency in neighboring San Bernardino, and RTA each run one bus route into the other's service area. The agencies have an agreement to honor each others fare media for one transfer.

RECOMMENDATION # 63:

RTA should coordinate with Omnitrans so that the most effective routes are run between the two counties.

Despite the relatively high ridership on Omnitrans' Route 90 into downtown Riverside, the agency is considering cuts due to budget constraints. Through increased coordination or by revamping their transfer arrangement, RTA and Omnitrans may be able to realign service to best meet the needs of their shared customers. The Omnitrans Route 90 bus should not be cut during the day leaving only the commuter route to run between the two counties.

RECOMMENDATION # 64:

RTA should coordinate its commuter buses with Amtrak trains, just as it coordinates with Metrolink.

Transit Adjacent and Transit Oriented Development

There are six new transit centers planned throughout RTA's service area. Since many of the centers are adjacent to Metrolink facilities there is a potential for transit adjacent or transit oriented development. Without local buy-in, transit oriented development is unlikely. RTA must establish an agenda that includes re-zoning for higher density mixed-use development. Strong partnerships between RTA, local governments, and developers are a prerequisite for success.

RECOMMENDATION # 65:

RTA should work with local municipalities to ensure that zoning ordinances are compatible with and encourage public transit use.

