

# Questionnaire

## “Best Practices To Increase Ridership”



### 1. Regional Office Information

**Region:** 7

**Contact Person:** Mokhtee Ahmad

**Telephone No:** 816 – 329 - 3930

### 2. Transit Authority Information

**Transit Operator:** Lawrence Transit System (City of Lawrence)

**Contact:** Karin Rexroad, Public Transit Administrator

**Address:** 933 New Hampshire, PO Box 708, Lawrence, KS 66044

**Telephone No:** 785-832-3464

**Fax:** 785-832-3462

**Email Address:** krexroad@ci.lawrence.ks.us

**URL:** www.lawrencetransit.org

### 3. Area Population Size:

**Rural Area** (under 50,000) \_\_\_\_

**Small Urbanized** (50,000 to 200,000) ☒ \_\_\_\_

**Medium Urbanized** (200,000 to 1,000,000) \_\_\_\_

**Large Urbanized** (over 1,000,000) \_\_\_\_

4. **Did ridership increase?** Yes ☒ \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

5. **How much did ridership increase?** 51% from 2001 to 2002 & an additional 14% from 2002 to 2003

---

### 6. INNOVATION TYPE:

1. ☐ Operating/Service Adjustment

6. ☐ Intermodal Activities

2. ☐ Fare Collection/Fare Structures

7. ☐ Operator Training

3. ☒ Marketing/Communications

8. ☐ Rail Systems

4. ☐ Vehicles

9. ☐ Safety/Security

5. ☐ Service Coordination and Collaboration

10. ☐ Other

### 7. INNOVATION SUBTYPE(S) (Please select from attached list at end of directions):

Combination of media advertising campaign, use of internet, education of students

### 8. PROJECT TITLE:

Communications Plan

### 9. DESCRIPTION: (Please provide any additional reports, graphics or web links)

At the same time that we implemented our scheduling and route restructuring, the Lawrence Transit System developed and implemented an aggressive communications plan. The objectives of our plan were to:

- heighten community awareness of the public transportation system;
- promote the benefits of public transportation – convenience, economical, environmentally conscious, promotes independence, and a alternative transportation.

Our plan had a three prong approach – public relations (free), advertising and special events. Public relations included the distribution of route maps, contact with schools, clubs, organizations, social service agencies, volunteer groups in Lawrence and the use of news releases. Advertising included a detailed plan utilizing print (both community and student based), radio (both community and student based) and television to target specific audiences. Our marketing categories were Fare Incentives which included development of shared passes with KU on Wheels (University of Kansas student transportation system) and free ridership days; Education which included improved signage for the system, development and refinement of the transit website, and limited

travel training opportunities; Seasonal Messaging which included kids to summer activities, back to school and weather related activities; and Cooperative Promotions which included community sidewalk sale, farmer's market, Earth Day, and the Bike Rodeo/Helmet Fair. The Communications Plan was supported part-time by transit staff with the assistance of the City of Lawrence's Communication Coordinator. We operated with a budget of approximately \$30,000 for paid advertising and \$15,000 for print materials.

By organizing communication activities into a plan, transit was able to identify audiences and target with effective public relations, advertising and special events. The plan allowed the numerous elements to be planned at one time and a cohesive message to be developed for all categories and activities. The value of the plan allowed objectives and strategies to be identified so that staff could identify and evaluate opportunities and allot resources as necessary. Prior to this plan, the marketing of the transit system was frequently disregarded while budgets, reporting and meetings occupied the majority of staff's time. Having a detailed, concise annual plan guided the year's activities and contributed to the marketing success that increased ridership.

Since the communications plan was successful in increasing ridership for our new transit system, the plan has been revised annually with additional emphasis placed on creating events that drive a first time rider to try the "T", like the "T" and continue riding. In 2004, we have brought a Marketing Coordinator on board to continue and expand our outreach efforts, including the implementation of travel training. We currently are experiencing a 22% increase in ridership over the same period in 2003.