



Social Media Can Derail Transit Agencies

Messages posted on social media by riders are often not actionable and can permanently damage a transit's reputation.



Transit riders want to travel free of problems. Yet, problems do occasionally happen, and unhappy passengers feel the need to vent their frustration.

Where do they turn to? More often than not, passengers turn to social media, unless they have an easy-to-use alternative way to express themselves directly to the transit agency.

How a transit agency receives complaints and incident reports from passengers matters exponentially how the riders view their outcome, and how they rate their customer experience.

Phone calls are not preferred, as talking to an operator can be costly, time-consuming and generally unsatisfying. Hearing the generic, "Press two if you know the party's extension, press three if you want to use our web site", etc. often leads to premature hang ups and problems left unresolved.

When using ELERTS communication system, complaints and incident reports are labeled as incoming messages to the transit agency. As a vehicle to receive **incoming messages** from the public, social media is labeled as mostly horrible.

Below are a few of the problematic issues with transit agencies receiving negative messages through social media:

- Everyone has the ability to see the complaint, inevitably causing damage to the transit agency's reputation.
- Negative comments posted on social media are permanent, damaging the transit's reputation for years after the incident.
- The negative perception of a transit agency leads to lower ridership; more readily available ground transportation alternatives exist now than ever before.
- An embarrassing social media post can go viral, with the potential for the agency to be in the headlines.
- Journalists comb social media for story ideas. Yikes! A negative social media post can easily become a PR nightmare.
- The transit agency cannot control the conversation on social media; it is in the public eye for everyone reading to judge.
- When a passenger posts a safety incident on social media, it usually is not actionable; social media posts do not include the GPS location of the incident.

Every negative comment or complaint kept off social media is a WIN for any transit agency.

Is there anything good about social media for transit agencies?

Outbound messaging. It is a cheap tool to have a transit agency's employee broadcast a message to their followers. For instance, social media can work like a mass notification system to inform riders about a service disruption.

However, people can see ALL of the transit service disruptions. Posting many service disruptions can make a transit agency appear unreliable. Further, it is fairly random who will see it, given the vast number of messages flowing through the river of social media.

What is BAD about social media for transit agencies?

1. Passengers who see or experience a problem while in transit want to vent. Social media makes it easy to vent publicly.
2. News reporters monitor social media because it is easy to find something negative to write about, and unfortunately, bad news sells. When riders post a transit agency gripe or problem to social media, the whole world can see it, including the media.
3. A transit agency's dirty laundry, reported on social media, can hit the 6 o'clock news, catching the transit agency spokesperson off guard.
4. **Social media information is usually "not actionable".** Social media messages do not include the GPS location where the original message came from. To respond to an incident, the dispatcher needs to know exactly where the problem or incident has occurred; a transit agency cannot fix a problem before knowing where it is.





Get your Transit back on track

The Solution

Transit agencies benefit immensely when passengers have an easy way to privately vent by reporting incidents directly to the agency without the whole world seeing the problem. Providing passengers with a quick incident reporting system via a mobile app, Text-A-Tip or a web-app, does the job effectively and efficiently.

Knowing where to resolve a problem is the first issue dispatchers face when something reported needs a solution. By utilizing an incident report sent from a mobile app, the problem's GPS location is provided, informing a dispatcher of exactly where to go to rectify the issue. Photos and video clips can be sent with incident reports, granting greater clues as to what is going on. A dispatcher or customer service person can engage in real-time two-way chat with the passenger, to learn more or to provide the passenger with instructions. In doing this, the passenger feels like his problems are being heard, resulting in greater satisfaction than they would get from a social media post.

Dozens of transportation agencies depend on ELERTS communication platform to receive important messages from their passengers. Contact ELERTS to learn how to reduce harmful social media complaints, while improving customer satisfaction.



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