



A Journey to the New Normal for Public Transportation

PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

In these times of uncertainty, transit agencies need to restore public confidence in their systems. Riders are worried about unsanitary conditions and being near potentially contagious people. Coronavirus has caused riders to feel unsafe in a way they will not soon forget. It's more important than ever for agencies to stay in touch with passengers and to continuously learn what's on their mind. To get citizens back onboard, mass transit must be perceived as safe to use again.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Grouping people together on transit vehicles and moving them safely to their destination doesn't work in a pandemic. Experts promote social-distancing as the best-known strategy to keep safe from coronavirus and for now, the government recommends avoiding public transportation. The result? Ridership has plummeted, with some transits reporting a 90% decline in riders and farebox revenue. Things will get better but **how will transits get these riders to return?**

Transit agencies had ridership declines before the pandemic. Between 2016 and 2017, ridership declined in 31 of the nation's 35 largest metropolitan areas. Uber and other travel options are often cited as to why people were leaving public transportation. But the perception of safety also played an important role.

SAFETY MATTERS

LA Metro conducts extensive surveys with passengers, such as their Summer 2017 survey. Participants identified safety as one of their top concerns about Metro rail and buses. Concerns about safety appeared to stem from a combination of their personal experiences, and stories about crime passed from person-to-person by word of mouth. Previous bus & rail riders who no longer use the service reported safety on buses and safety on rail as unsatisfactory.

COMMUNICATION COUNTS

When riders are unhappy they want to tell someone, but how will they communicate their fears and complaints? People don't want to make phone calls; calls are indiscrete and time-consuming. If passengers publicly post to social media, the reputation of the transit agency gets damaged. It's best to provide a way for riders to submit concerns immediately and privately to the transit agency. Using a See Something Say Something app or similar functionality built into an e-ticketing app on their phone is ideal. Making it easy for riders to communicate concerns directly to the agency is an essential part of the journey toward restoring confidence, ridership, and farebox revenue.

WHAT'S ON RIDER'S MINDS?

(Actual reports submitted with ELERTS See Say app):

Coughing

■ The bus driver is coughing and may be infected to coronavirus. His coughs are dry and he does not feel well. Please care about patrons health.

■ In regards to COVID-19, what is ■ doing to prevent the spread of this virus? Will you hire more staff to clean? Put sanitizer in the cars?

Sanitation

Homelessness

■ The amount of homeless people on the train is becoming a problem, this morning 3/18/2020 there were over 30 people sleeping on the train. With the COVID VIRUS being such a huge problem, it is becoming a very large concern with all of these people coughing, sneezing all over chairs, seats and handrails, people riding the train to work every day are at a very high risk of getting sic. If it is not going to be addressed, myself and a lot of my coworkers and friends that work at ■ will be strongly considering abandoning the ■ system altogether.

Crime

■ Assault on car ■ around 5:30 pm on ■ line. 2 men with skateboards attacked a man wearing a lace mask (common with coronavirus). They beat him and pushed him out of the car around ■. Many passengers pressed the intercom for help and none came. The assaulters got off at ■ station a few minutes later.

■ The victim reported this at the station he got off at, thank you for your report.

■ Blue line to ■ car ■ Driver has everyone touching the yellow button to operate doors. BAD idea for COVID-19. She should be operating the doors!!

Bio-Hazards

■ Restroom at ■ is filthy, and smells horrible, seems as if it hasn't been touched all day long. What happens to keeping ■ extra clean with all that is going on out here with the coronavirus

Cleanliness

■ It's Wednesday ■ at 10:30 pm and the ■ line headed to ■ (car ■) is disgusting! It smells like vomit and urine, seats and windows are filthy! Trash everywhere! I'm in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, you would think cleaning efforts would be amped up, but another day another filthy ■ vehicle. ■ has claimed to increase sanitizing efforts, but honestly I've seen no change whatsoever.