Transforming the Transit Passenger Experience

High performance. Delivered.

accenture

Strategy | Digital | Technology | Operations
Reasons to Ride

Public transportation is essential. It helps residents move easily around their communities while saving money, travel time and fuel consumption. It alleviates traffic, reducing congestion and our collective carbon footprint. It is good for the economy—according to the American Public Transportation Association, every $1 invested in public transportation generates approximately $4 in economic returns. It is good for the environment—according to the International Association of Public Transport, doubling the market share of public transportation would prevent the emission of 500 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent in the year 2025.

In our digital era, most consumers expect ease and efficiency in all their transactions. If a transaction is confusing, they tend to choose other options. The protocol for hailing a cab is the same in every city around the world, yet the protocol for purchasing a train ticket is different in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Toronto, Paris, London or Singapore. Travelers, daunted by city-specific nuances and seemingly complex systems and routes, hail a cab rather than take the more affordable, and in some cases more enjoyable, option of public transportation. Likewise, residents traveling in their own cities who do not regularly use public transit are often unable to decipher train schedules, fare purchasing, trip planning and way-finding or station locations. A system originally designed for convenience is often perceived as cumbersome.

Digital solutions offer new opportunities to provide a frictionless, useful and enjoyable passenger experience—from trip planning to destination. The opportunities are immense: increasing sales, attracting new customers, building affinity among existing passengers, and delivering a better experience.

Our goal is to transform the transit passenger experience. We aim to help riders travel, commute and explore their communities with ease, efficiency and delight—giving them more and better Reasons to Ride.
Who’s on board?

Transit passengers are a highly diverse group, with a wide range of behaviors, needs and preferences:

**Daily commuters.** These transit customers may be willing to use self-service channels with flexible payment options. Many also may seek a mobile-optimized experience that can give them more potential benefits during their commute, such as GPS-enabled travel alerts, trip updates and tracking functionality. These passenger-adopters will appreciate being rewarded for their frequent use of the system with a loyalty program that allows them to build points to use for discounts on monthly passes or other rewards.

**Occasional passengers.** These riders need more assistance than daily commuters, and may be anxious about taking transit along unfamiliar routes. Easy and flexible digital payment options help the occasional rider who may not have cash or tokens at the time of travel. Other features that would enhance this passenger’s experience include frictionless boarding, navigational tools within stations, and GPS-enabled group locators for families or people traveling in large groups, such as school tours.

**First-time riders.** New riders, or visitors to a city, will be unfamiliar with transit routes, ticket purchasing processes, and locations of stations and bus stops. These individuals require more detailed assistance to find their way around the transit system and the city: mobile-optimized way-finding functionality—including trip planning, Augmented Reality (AR) maps, geo-location and iBeacons—as well as destination suggestions based on a pre-loaded traveler profile, will all help the new passenger use the transit system to explore the city easily and enjoyably.

To transform the transit passenger experience to one that is truly human centered, transit agencies must consider the excellent characteristics and diverse needs of many different passenger groups. These characteristics and requirements may include:

- Public transportation usage frequency
- Travel patterns and choices
- Income level
- Rate of technology adoption
- Payment method flexibility
- Availability of public transportation substitutes

Agencies can begin by using analytics to cull through passenger data and provide insight into behavior and expectations. For some, this has been a challenge as, historically, it has been focused on operational improvements, such as route planning or service expansions. Moreover, passenger data has been nearly impossible to capture when traditional fares such as cash, tickets, tokens and early generation magnetic-stripe fare cards do not provide information about the individual using them.

As many transit agencies move toward account-based fare management, there will be more opportunities to gather passenger insights, which can be used to target passenger segments. However, agencies first must establish the appropriate infrastructure and data security measures.
Improve the journey

While no two passengers are the same, most follow a similar fare purchasing and account management lifecycle—developing a lens into this lifecycle will allow agencies to target services that meet distinct expectations at every stage, and overcome the various obstacles that impede the passenger experience.

The complete passenger lifecycle can be broken down into six stages:

1. **Purchase.** Passengers expect seamless purchasing across all self-serve and full-serve channels. Purchase should be quick, uncomplicated and on the passenger’s terms—that can mean purchasing a monthly pass or paying as you go; creating a personal account or logging on as a guest; purchasing from a desktop, a mobile device, in person or over the phone. The passengers, not the agency, should make their own purchase-related selections.

2. **Personalize.** Passengers need an intuitive and easy process to personalize their transit experience and gain immediate access to benefits while keeping data private and secure. Personalization features include account and fare management, profile building and trip planning.

3. **Load.** Passengers want a simple process for loading accounts across channels, including web, mobile device, wearable device, customer service centers and third-party vendors. Today, retail transactions have set the standard for seamless and intuitive digital transactions—and all purchase activities, including transit fares, must follow suit. Frictionless loading includes intuitive and flexible fare loading and account management for individuals and groups.

4. **Ride.** This is a key lifecycle stage for delighting the passenger—from entering the station and waiting for the bus, train or subway, to the experience during the ride and exploring the surrounding environment upon arrival. All of these touch points are opportunities to extend and enhance the passenger experience. Layers of delight can include gamification, suggestions for exploration combined with special offers and coupons, group travel features, and more.

5. **Transfer.** Passengers want clear and uncomplicated inter-transit and intra-transit transfer capabilities. An innovative transit solution should provide passengers the ability to use their account at all points within the transit system and transfer seamlessly within that system.

6. **Passenger Support.** Passengers expect issues to be addressed promptly and correctly, and they want the ability to view trip and payment details, manage their account, and setup or cancel accounts across multiple platforms.
MyRide is our vision of a transformed transit passenger experience—one that goes beyond frictionless fare loading and account management to include features and functionality designed to delight the passenger. MyRide is a template within which a region-specific transit experience can be realized.

The stories below illustrate MyRide through the lens of three different transit passengers: the daily commuter, the occasional passenger, and the first-time rider.

**Story 1: Samir, the daily commuter**

A frequent passenger purchases fares, re-routes his trip and receives travel alerts, coupons and loyalty points.

At the beginning of each month, Samir refills his 30-day MyRide transit card for his daily commute to work. He logs on to the transit website and loads value to his MyRide account. His fare appears on his mobile device and his wearable wristband. Commuting has never been easier—when Samir boards his bus he simply scans his mobile device or wristband and MyRide automatically deducts the ride from his account.

One morning on his way to work, Samir’s boss calls and asks him to attend a meeting at a client site instead of reporting to the office. Samir has to quickly re-route himself to the client’s location. He accesses the MyRide app on his mobile device, which immediately geo-locates him. He enters in the client’s address, and is given several options for reaching his new destination. To take the fastest route, Samir has to use the train, which is unfamiliar to him. MyRide displays a map and identifies the path to the nearest train station, indicating that Samir should get off at the next stop and walk five blocks.

Samir is onboard his train and receives a text message alert from MyRide explaining that due to construction, his arrival time will be delayed by seven minutes. He is given a prompt to click for more detail about the nature of the construction and related delays. As an apology for the delay, Samir is also given a coupon for a free coffee at a local coffee house.

As a regular transit passenger, Samir earns Frequent Rider Miles with MyRide, which allow him to receive discounts on his monthly passes or give him the option to accrue points towards gift cards to restaurants, movie theaters and other participating vendors. The Frequent Rider Mile program also shows Samir that he is one of the most frequent riders in his neighborhood, and shows him the money he is saved by using transit. More reasons to be a loyal transit customer.

**Passenger Benefits:**
- Seamless experience across mobile device options improves customer satisfaction, increases usability
- Quick re-routing aided by geo-location technology enhances experience
- Visibility into reasons behind delays
- Frequent Rider Miles program builds affinity, rewards loyalty

**Agency Benefits:**
- Builds loyalty and regular usage among daily commuters
- Encourages use over multiple transit modalities
- Facilitates frictionless payment for customers
- Improves customer relationships through transparent information sharing
Dan and his family have tickets for the big game on Sunday. He does not typically take public transportation, but the stadium is across town and he wants to avoid driving in heavy traffic and parking in congested lots.

He purchases four train tickets online for himself, his wife, and their two sons. On the transit home page he discovers that by downloading the MyRide mobile app, he and his family can all load their tickets onto their individual mobile devices. MyRide Trip Planner feature provides a clear overview of the trip, including route details, travel time and additional points of interest along the way.

As they approach the train station, iBeacons and geo-fencing immediately engage with the MyRide apps on the family’s phones, and validate their tickets—easy, fast, gateless boarding. Standing on the platform, MyRide's Tracker shows Dan their train’s arrival time and gives him a view of maps and timers so that he can easily monitor his progress across town.

Dan’s sons use the QR code on their MyRide apps to scan movie posters displayed in the train station—movie trailers are immediately uploaded to their phones. Also, the app’s Reasons to Ride feature informs the boys on why taking public transportation is the appropriate choice for the environment, displays schedules for upcoming concerts, sporting events and summer festivals, and shows them how easy getting around their city can be. Onboard, as the boys explore the other cars of the train, Dan’s wife engages the GPS feature to easily locate them.

After the game, MyRide suggests a restaurant for dinner near the stadium, and offers the family a coupon for 10 percent off their meal. Dan is pleased that he and his family were able to travel to the game so easily, enjoyably and safely. He’ll be looking for more reasons to ride in the near future.

**Passenger Benefits:**
- Easy group fare purchase and management of multiple tickets
- Helpful navigation tools and frictionless travel features
- Visibility to train arrival and departure times
- Suggestions for additional entertainment options

**Agency Benefits:**
- Captures customers that might otherwise choose alternative travel options
- Cross-selling opportunity with entertainment organizations to increase revenue streams
- Informs passengers about the many reasons to ride public transportation, engendering loyalty and repeat usage

---

**Story 2: Dan, the occasional passenger**

An occasional passenger manages group tickets, enjoys iBeacon-enabled gateless boarding, and finds his way across town along unfamiliar routes.
Story 3: Angela, the first-time rider

When Angela visits a new city she prefers to get around using public transportation. Angela is visiting the city for the first time. She wants to use the subway to navigate, explore and locate the tourist attractions and restaurants she’s read about. Before her trip, she downloaded the MyRide mobile app onto her mobile device and linked it to her credit card. Rather than value loading in advance, Angela chose the “pay as you go” option.

She leaves her hotel and walks to the subway station. As she approaches the platform, iBeacons and geo-fencing engage with MyRide, automatically activating Angela’s first ticket of the day. Based on the brief profile she filled out when downloading her app, MyRide knows that Angela is new to the city and is interested in well-known attractions and hot new restaurants. MyRide immediately gives her a Top 20 list of best places to visit, based on her profile preferences. Angela scrolls through and chooses a few—MyRide integrates them into her trip plan and begins suggesting optimal routes and ways to plan her day.

At the next station, the iBeacons not only activate Angela’s ticket, deducting the amount from her pre-loaded credit card, they also push information to Angela about the tourist attractions and sites she will see at her next stop and give her coupons for nearby restaurants and coffee houses.

The following day, Angela decides to take the bus instead of the train. MyRide shows her an overview of the city with all the bus stops highlighted. As she approaches the nearest one, MyRide tells her that the next bus will arrive in 10 minutes and will be at 75 percent capacity.

Angela feels totally at home in the city and is happy that she can use public transportation to navigate and explore.

Passenger Benefits:
• Unfettered, economical access to the community
• Planning support puts travelers at ease
• Convenient fare management options
• Automatic fare payment through iBeacon technology
• Personalized travel experience

Agency Benefits:
• Appeals to new riders among both residents and tourists
• Cross-selling opportunities with local restaurants and other vendors
• Frictionless payment increases back-office efficiencies
Surpassing passenger expectations

Surveys indicate that technology influences passenger expectations and behaviors. Accenture research shows that 89 percent of consumers surveyed use at least one online channel (such as a company website or review site) when prospecting products or services. Approximately one in three of these consumers access these sources at least half of the time through mobile phone or tablet device. Transit agencies are beginning to improve the mobile channel. A global scan of 19 transit agencies serving major metropolitan areas revealed that 11 have an official mobile app.

According to Accenture’s Transit Fare Systems Survey, many public transit agencies are also exploring open payment and mobile solutions because of passenger experience impact. Providing passengers with additional channels and payment options increases convenience at every stage of their experience—from registration, to loading value, to managing their account.

Seamless experiences. Part of giving passengers Reasons to Ride includes a fully integrated and personalized experience that is consistent across traveler touch points. Agencies can seek to achieve this by integrating with partner organizations, such as restaurants, coffee houses, shops and tourist attractions, and with other tools that can influence a passenger’s ride, such as personal calendar, weather updates and traffic alerts.

With this integrated data, the agency can perform a higher level of relevance, and eventually greater affinity, among passengers. For example, passengers who are able to customize the type of alerts they wish to see, or the special offers and coupons they receive, will be more likely to use the system more regularly—they know they will be rewarded in ways that are meaningful to them. This level of personalization can be based on a pre-loaded profile, or from data gleaned from the passenger’s travel history.

Social media. In the digital era, social media can be a friend and a foe. It can also be an effective channel for attracting passengers. According to Accenture research, 23 percent of consumers are more likely to do business with a company that they know can interact within a social media environment. Conversely, issues affecting transit agencies are often amplified in social media, and 28 percent of consumers say that they strongly agree that comments posted on social media sites contribute to their buying decision.

The use of social media to share passenger opinion heightens the pressure on agencies to deliver efficient and passenger-friendly transport and fare management services. Agencies must embrace this medium and use it as a differentiator. Social media is a low-cost channel for building loyalty and advocacy among your passengers.

Making mobile easy for passengers

In 2013, Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) launched its GoPass mobile ticketing application, which allows passengers to buy DART passes with a credit card and hold them for up to 60 days. Smart phones display an image of the color-coded ticket to bus drivers and fare enforcement officers. The colors change to indicate the status of the ticket.

Source: Global Transit Fare Collection Systems Report

Tweeting in transit

A global scan of 19 transit agencies serving major metropolitan areas revealed that 8 of the 19 use both Facebook and Twitter to engage with passengers, and one used only Twitter. These transit agencies use social media platforms to respond to passenger inquiries, promote the fare management system and provide updates on changes to the fare management system.
Every experience takes place across multiple touch points, both human and digital; all transit stakeholders have an impact on the passenger experience, and must work in concert to help transform that experience. Third-party service providers, regional transit agencies, government workers and any others interacting with a passenger must be aware of the transit agency’s vision to transform the passenger experience. (see Figure 1).

Agencies should incentivize their two most influential stakeholder groups to rally around the transformed passenger experience:

**Agents.** Transit agents offer a powerful voice that can promote the value of self-service. It is important to help confirm that passenger service representatives understand what self-service capabilities exist and how to sell the value to passengers who call or email with questions. Agents should be educated on the benefits of the transit service, and given a conduit for questions and the preferred tools to enhance the passenger experience. This responsibility can be formalized by making it a performance measure for agents.

**Staff.** Advocacy of passenger service requirements to come from the top and span across the organization. Cross-organizational support will provide a strong foundation for the adoption of new capabilities. It is important that marketing, passenger care and IT departments are held accountable for self-service promotion across the enterprise. Aligning business processes around self-service adoption will help ensure that intake processes for new projects, products and services, and marketing campaigns all rally around a common goal.

Some agencies have even developed passenger charters. Queensland Rail, the primary rail operator in the Australian state, launched a passenger charter that stemmed from a renewed focus on passenger service at the executive level. The charter focuses on safety, timeliness, information, comfort, surroundings, personal service and passenger feedback. As a result of this charter, Queensland Rail has performed International Passenger Service Standard certification; more importantly, the charter is having a direct and positive impact on the way this transit agency conducts business, and on the passengers they serve.

---

**Figure 1: Build a community of support for the customer experience.**

- Regional Transit Agencies
- Municipal
- State/Provincial
- Federal
- Subway/train operators
- Streetcar/bus operators
- Station attendants
- Fare Management Organization
  - Independent fare management organization
  - Government agency
- Government
- Third Party Service Providers
  - Retail partners
  - Financial services providers
  - Contractors
- Customer Experience Vision
- Some agencies have even developed passenger charters. Queensland Rail, the primary rail operator in the Australian state, launched a passenger charter that stemmed from a renewed focus on passenger service at the executive level. The charter focuses on safety, timeliness, information, comfort, surroundings, personal service and passenger feedback. As a result of this charter, Queensland Rail has performed International Passenger Service Standard certification; more importantly, the charter is having a direct and positive impact on the way this transit agency conducts business, and on the passengers they serve.
At a crossroads

Transit agencies face an important challenge. The number of potential passengers continues to grow and diversify, while the rate of change in the transit experience is at a relative standstill. At the same time, expectation among consumers has evolved—they increasingly expect experiences to be enhanced by digital solutions.

Transit agencies are at a proverbial crossroads—they must decide to invest in the appropriate research and analysis of available data to understand passenger behaviors, needs and attitudes, and then they must be prepared to leap forward to deliver the next generation transit experience—giving passengers more and better Reasons to Ride.

References

3. Accenture, “Accelerating the Payback from Fare Collection Investment;” pg. 4; 2014.
For more information, please contact:

Michael Wilson
Managing Director, Public Transportation, North America
michael.j.wilson@accenture.com

John Vasilj
Public Transportation Industry Services, North America
john.vasilj@accenture.com

Jane Matsumoto
Public Transportation Industry Services, North America
jane.matsumoto@accenture.com

About Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, with more than 305,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. Combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world’s most successful companies, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. The company generated net revenues of US$30.0 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2014. Its home page is www.accenture.com.