

2006 Impact of Promoting Arlington to Tysons Corner Transit Services Study

SPONSORS:

[Arlington County Commuter Services](#) (ACCS)

Contact: Howard Jennings, Research Director
Arlington Transportation Partners
1735 N. Lynn Street, Suite 102, Arlington, VA 22209
703 683-6630
hjennings@transpartners.com

ACCS is a section of the Division of Transportation, Department of Environmental Services
Arlington County, Virginia

RESEARCH SUPPLIERS:

[Southeastern Institute of Research](#), Richmond, VA.

Contact: John Martin, President & CEO at Southeastern Institute of Research, Inc.
Telephone: 804-358-8981
Email: JWM@SIRresearch.com

Pulsar Advertising

Contact: Jim Wright
Telephone: (804) 255-8300
Email: jwright@pulsaradvertising.com

OVERALL STUDY PURPOSE:

- ☞ In hopes of further alleviating some of the traffic congestion on I-66, a modest marketing fund was put together to promote four transit routes connecting Arlington and Tysons Corner. These four routes serve the I-66 corridor.
 - They include the Metrobus 23A, Metrobus 24T, Fairfax Connector 425 and Fairfax Connector 427.
- ☞ Funding was directed towards a brief promotional campaign that employed both paid and PSA advertising – bus sides and bus tails – and a direct mail promotional offer (coupon for 6 free rides and a chance to win an iPod via a sweepstakes drawing). This offer was mailed to homes along the targeted transit routes.
- ☞ The PATC (Promoting Arlington to Tysons Corner) campaign ran for 30-days during July 2006.
- ☞ The goal of this research study is to assess the impact of this PATC marketing/promotional effort and, in so doing, gain additional insight into who currently uses these four transit services and how these services could be improved to attract more riders.

OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH:

- ☞ Understand who rides on the PATC routes.
- ☞ Identify what service improvements might increase ridership on PATC routes.
- ☞ Gauge awareness of the PATC promotion.
- ☞ Determine if the PATC promotion – the *6 free ride coupons/iPod sweepstakes give-a-way offer* – delivered new riders on the PATC routes.

Study Limitations:

- ☞ It should be noted that this study was implemented with a very small research budget – just enough to gather data/information to address the study's goal; but not enough to develop a comprehensive detailed profile and assessment of riders or service delivery challenges and opportunities. The extent to which a detailed analysis can be performed and reported is severely limited given the data collection scope and process.
- ☞ This study includes self-reported information from nine contest entrants (via telephone) and 259 riders (via bus top intercepts). The intercepts were collected at eight bus stops over two days during morning and evening times on four routes. It is acknowledged that this sampling approach was not matched to or weighted by actual ridership statistics by route, by stop or by time of day.
- ☞ All interviews were conducted in November 2006, four months after the PATC promotion. Thus, the study's findings are measuring residents' residual awareness of the promotion.

METHODOLOGY: Telephone Survey

Mode of Data Collection	Telephone Survey of Contest Entrants
Completed Surveys	9 Respondents Total: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 17 working numbers called from list of 37- 13 emails sent to respondents with non-working numbers- 7 entrants not contactable by mail, phone, or email
Survey Instrument	Short 2-minute survey
Criteria for Participation	- Contest entrant in the PATC promotion

METHODOLOGY: On-route Intercept Survey

Mode of Data Collection	In-person intercepts conducted at 8 bus stops over 2 days during morning and evening times on 4 routes
Completed Surveys	259 Respondents Total: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Fairfax Connector 427: 75- Metrobus 23A: 72- Fairfax Connector 425: 58- Metrobus 24T: 50
Survey Instrument	Short 2-minute survey
Criteria for Participation	- Riding one of the 4 routes.

KEY FINDINGS

Bus Service Usage:

- ☞ Half had been taking the PATC bus for less than a year.
- ☞ Over half of the riders used PATC transit service 5+ days a week.
 - The two Fairfax Connector PATC routes had more consistent “5 day a week” type riders than did the other routes.
- ☞ The majority (88%) used the 4 PATC transit services to commute to work.
 - Those whose purpose for riding the bus was shopping were more likely to take the Metrobus 23A route.
- ☞ PATC bus routes attracted travelers previously driving alone on roads between Arlington and Tysons Corner
 - Before using the service, almost two-thirds drove alone; another 22% previously carpooled and 18% took other bus routes.
 - 5 of the 9 contest entrants said they were driving alone before they tried this service (it should be noted that this question was not tied to PATC promotion).
- ☞ One-third said they were using I-66 regularly before they started to use the Arlington to Tysons Bus service.
 - Those who rode on the Metrobus 23A route were more likely than other route users to have taken I-66.
 - The 9 contest entrants said they used I-66 even less.
- ☞ The four transit routes impact I-66 SOV traffic
 - An estimated 16% of the riders going to Tysons Corner (on these 4 bus routes) from Arlington to Tysons Corner may have been formerly driving alone on I-66.
- ☞ Word of mouth drives ridership but signage and employer have an impact too (26% of those aware said they learned of the promotion from a bus sign and 17% from their employer).

Potential Service Improvements:

- ☞ Riders liked most that the PATC buses are convenient, reliable, fast and easy.
- ☞ Riders liked least that the PATC buses can be infrequent (waiting time) and crowded.
- ☞ Most riders wanted more buses and increased frequency to reduce crowds.

Free Ride/iPod Give-A-Way Promotional Impact:

- ☞ 9% of all riders surveyed were aware of the promotion (6 free rides/iPod contest)
- ☞ The PATC promotional campaign played a role in increasing awareness of the promotion.
 - 41% (4% of all riders) of those aware learned about it by word of mouth, 32% of those aware (3% of all riders) learned about it from a flyer and 18% of those aware (almost 2% of all riders) learned about it from bus signs.
 - 6 out of 9 contest entrants heard about the PATC promotion through the mailer.
- ☞ Based on survey information, the PATC promotion had little impact in creating new riders.

OTHER RELATED STUDIES, PLANS & DOCUMENTS:

Arlington Pilot Carshare Program 2003 Arlington County "Pike Ride" Transit Service Study

2004 Arlington County Public Perceptions of Transit Study
2005 Arlington County Public Perceptions of Transit Study

AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS:

Questionnaire
Data Tables
PowerPoint Presentation
Final Report

KEY WORDS:

Arlington County, Fairfax County, Tysons Corner, bus, commute, Fairfax Connector, Metrobus