

# **How Redwood Coast Transit Authority Can Improve Its Service-Offering and Increase Ridership:**

**An Examination of Student, Tourist/Hospitality and  
Other Existing & Emergent Ridership Groups**

**A Research-Based Component of the  
RCTA's 2018-19  
Short-Range Transit Plan Project**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Importance of Study</b> .....	1
<b>Transformative Public Transit Planning Study Aims</b> .....	2
<b>Methodology and Goals</b> .....	2
<b>Problem Based Orientations</b> .....	3
<b>Structure of the Report</b> .....	3
<b>Strategic Data-Driven Recommendations for Redwood Coast Transit Authority</b> .....	3
<b>System Safety</b> .....	4
<b>Bus Shelters</b> .....	6
<b>Hotel Partnerships and Information Dissemination Opportunities</b> .....	6
<b>Dyadic Relationships College of the Redwoods the Parks Service and Others</b> .....	8
<b>Reaching Each Tourist Segment</b> .....	10
<b>Tourism, Branding, and Segment Interaction: Initial First Steps</b> .....	15
<b>RCTA Information Kiosks at Local Lodging Establishments</b> .....	17
<b>Prioritize Projects that should not Hurt RCTA Current Riders</b> .....	17
<b>Stout Grove Preservation</b> .....	18
<b>Consistency in Service for Wheelchair Riders</b> .....	19
<b>The Prisoner’s Family Visiting Market</b> .....	19
<b>Connecting with Airports, Train and Regional Bus Centers</b> .....	21
<b>Service to Grant Pass and/or Medford, OR</b> .....	21
<b>Support for the Homeless</b> .....	22
<b>Key Findings</b> .....	23
<b>RCTA Core Objective of Stable Core Ridership with More Coverage to Outlying</b> .....	23
<b>Desire for a Stable System: People Want More Bus Shelters</b> .....	23
<b>Branding Crescent City</b> .....	23

<b>Problems with Current Bus Shelters: Broken Glass Issues, Schedule Information .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Safety Issues at the Cultural Center.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Substance Abuse and/or Mental Illness Among Ridership.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Problematic Bus Schedules and Routing for the College of the Redwoods.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>The Prison Family Visitors Market.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>RCTA Not Fully Geared for the Tourism Sector.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Developing Recreational Usage along the Current Fixed-Route Buses Eliminate Travel ....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Stress, Provide Experiential Moment, Mindfulness, Immersion, and Safety .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Placing Information Kiosks at Crescent City Hotels.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Stout Grove: Challenges and Opportunities but for Whom? .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>RCTA and Park Administration Partnerships .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>College of the Redwoods Collaboration with RCTA: Service-Learning and Bus Passes.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Some College of the Redwood Students Transfer to Humboldt State.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Importance of Summer Season Tours with Tour Guides or Apps.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Unmet Hotel Supply.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Hotel Management’s Hesitation to Want Bus Stops by Hotels due to Homeless .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Importance of an Information Clearinghouse Media that Solves all Needs.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Methods and Modes to Promote to Tourists and European Visitors .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Tourists Typically Do Not Fly into Crescent City: They Often Arrive Tired .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Flying into Medford is Problematic: Crescent City Airport is Worse .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Visiting the Redwood Should be a Class Act: Visitors Need Integrative Array .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Consumer Challenges Navigating Greyhound from Crescent City .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Partnering with Amtrak.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Coordination between RCTA’s Website and Printed Schedule .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Nonemergency Medical Service.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>State Park’s Desire for Special Tourist Buses with Skylights, Tour guides .....</b>	<b>37</b>

State Park Media Specialists hope to Collaborate with RCTA .....	37
Del Norte County/Crescent City, RCTA: Inadequate Job Capturing European Tourists ...	37
Tourists would Feel Uncomfortable and Unsafe Crescent City Riders .....	38
Europeans Have High Awareness of the Redwoods .....	38
Lack of Charter Options within the Area.....	38
The Importance of Bus Stops and Customized Signs at the State Park Locations .....	39
Buses Have Left a Bus Stop Ahead of Schedule.....	39
Ideas Regarding the Redevelopment of Bus Passes .....	40
New RCTA Fare Structure is Appreciated.....	40
Transfers are Decreasing, Fail to Call in Transfers, and Ridership Corruption Occurs.....	40
Tricky to Enforce Disabled and Elderly Identification When Taking Fares .....	41
Service to Social Security Office Requires Walking .....	41
Perceived Lack of Dial-A-Ride Service: Change in Bus Vehicle Mode Viewed Favorably ..	41
Tracking No Show Dial-a-Ride Behavior .....	42
Helpful Drivers and Comfortable Buses: One with Steep Staircase .....	42
Some Drivers Not Accommodating Older Passengers who Request Restroom Usage .....	43
Inconsistent Service Regarding Lifts.....	43
Change Flagging Stops to Real Stops, Bus-Stop Suggestions, Place Benches at All Stops....	43
About the Researcher .....	45
Resume .....	46
Key Findings (WITH DATA SUPPORT).....	51
RCTA Core Objective of Stable Core Ridership with More Coverage to Outlying.....	51
Desire for a Stable System: People Want More Bus Shelters .....	51
Branding Crescent City .....	53
Problems with Current Bus Shelters: Broken Glass Issues, Schedule Information .....	54
Safety Issues at the Cultural Center.....	56

<b>Substance Abuse and/or Mental Illness Among Ridership .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Problematic Bus Schedules and Routing for the College of the Redwoods .....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>The Prison Family Visitors Market.....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>RCTA Not Fully Geared for the Tourism Sector.....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Developing Recreational Usage along the Current Fixed-Route Buses Eliminate Travel ....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Stress, Provide Experiential Moment, Mindfulness, Immersion, and Safety .....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Placing Information Kiosks at Crescent City Hotels .....</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>Stout Grove: Challenges and Opportunities .....</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>RCTA and Park Administration Partnerships .....</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>College of the Redwoods Collaboration with RCTA: Service-Learning and Bus Passes...</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Some College of the Redwood Students Transfer to Humboldt State.....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>Importance of Summer Season Tours with Tour Guides or Apps.....</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>Unmet Hotel Supply.....</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>Hotel Management’s Hesitation to Want Bus Stops by Hotels due to Homeless .....</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>Importance of an Information Clearinghouse Media that Solves all Needs.....</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>Methods and Modes to Promote to Tourists and European Visitors.....</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>Tourists Typically Do Not Fly into Crescent City: They Often Arrive Tired .....</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Flying into Medford is Problematic: Crescent City Airport is Worse .....</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>Visiting the Redwood Should be a Class Act: Visitors Need Integrative Array .....</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>Consumer Challenges Navigating Greyhound from Crescent City .....</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>Partnering with Amtrak.....</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>Coordination between RCTA’s Website and Printed Schedule .....</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>Nonemergency Medical Service.....</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>State Park’s Desire for Special Tourist Buses with Skylights, Tour guides .....</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>State Park Media Specialists hope to Collaborate with RCTA .....</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>Del Norte County/Crescent City, RCTA: Inadequate Job Capturing European Tourists .</b>	<b>170</b>

<b>Tourists would Feel Uncomfortable and Unsafe Crescent City Riders .....</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>Europeans Have High Awareness of the Redwoods .....</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>Lack of Charter Options within the Area.....</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>The Importance of Bus Stops and Customized Signs at the State Park Locations.....</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>Buses Have Left a Bus Stop Ahead of Schedule.....</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>Ideas Regarding the Redevelopment of Bus Passes .....</b>	<b>177</b>
<b>New RCTA Fare Structure is Appreciated.....</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>Transfers are Decreasing, Fail to Call in Transfers, and Ridership Corruption Occurs....</b>	<b>187</b>
<b>Tricky to Enforce Disabled and Elderly Identification When Taking Fares .....</b>	<b>190</b>
<b>Service to Social Security Office Requires Walking .....</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>Perceived Lack of Dial-A-Ride Service: Change in Bus Vehicle Mode Viewed Favorably</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>Tracking No Show Dial-a-Ride Behavior .....</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>Helpful Drivers and Comfortable Buses: One with Steep Staircase .....</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>Some Drivers Not Accommodating Older Passengers who Request Restroom Usage .....</b>	<b>210</b>
<b>Inconsistent Service Regarding Lifts.....</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>Change Flagging Stops to Real Stops, Bus-Stop Suggestions, Place Benches at All Stops..</b>	<b>221</b>

## **Importance of Study**

In order to guide effective strategic planning, discovering key constituencies and learning about their experiences and interactions with RCTA and transit-related decision-making processes is invaluable. This helps guide the public transit planning process and directs leadership towards addressing vital strategic issues effectively across myriad planning contexts. Illumination of markets, problems and opportunities help feed into the transit planning process and facilitate ridership satisfaction and the growth of system usage.

Students are important because they represent a large potential growth market, generally the future of the system, tend to be innovators or early adapters to public transit, but unfortunately currently do not represent a significant number within RCTA ridership. However, this group is often ignored and marginalized within transit studies and have limited political and policy-making power. RCTA currently has a modest market share among the area's students, with very few middle school and high school students, but a growing share of riders to the local community college.

The tourist market is important because the Crescent City Area has locations that are one-of-a-kind and this market has significant potential. Additionally, RCTA may facilitate a decrease in environmental impact through effective servicing of tourists. Currently few traditional tourists use RCTA services, due to both actual and perceived gaps where most tourists do not consider reaching the Crescent City area via public transit, nor taking advantage of RCTA service for travel within the area once they have arrived.

The transit dependent market is important because this makes-up the core riders currently and historically. Without good public transit access, members of this group suffer. In addition, many from this group are service industry workers and logistics to this economic sector facilitates the region's economic viability. This study touches on many of the challenges and opportunities discovered during outreach that might lead to more RCTA ridership among the local transit dependent market.

## **Transformative Public Transit Planning Study Aims**

The two central aims within the Transformative Public Transit Planning study are: (1) to gain insight designed to improve the product and service, and (2) to facilitate cultural shifts and attitudinal change in public perception regarding public transit and RCTA. Transformative Public Transit Planning implies that the achievement of the first goal of product innovation is of shallow utility without the focus on, and achievement of the second goal of facilitating cultural shifts. These two goals feed synergistically into each other.

## **Methodology and Goals**

Between November 13 and November 20, 2017, we conducted a series of five focus groups and five in-depth interviews with the aim of improving RCTA's ability to provide outstanding service and forging enhanced meaningful relationships with key constituents. The focal markets include tourism, student and transit-dependent. To learn about these groups, we interviewed students, school administrators, bus-drivers, lodging owners and managers, park administrators, visitor center leaders, and a leader within local governmental transportation policy. The RCTA General Manager participated actively with the consultant and took detailed notes at all of the focus groups and in-depth interviews with the goal of turning insight into service innovations.

Overall, thirty-one informants participated within the five focus groups (group sizes were nine, six, six, five, and five). First interviewed were the owners and managers of two diverse Crescent City lodging establishments. We followed this with a focus group of College of the Redwood Crescent City Campus student riders and a top College administrator. Then we interviewed two groups of RCTA bus drivers, one group of transit-dependent RCTA riders, and a group of State and National Park administrators. We then interviewed a key Del Norte County transportation leader.

Over the following seven-weeks, the consultant engaged in data transcription and analysis. Based on one hundred and fifty transcribed pages, we developed strategic recommendations and put forth emergent themes grounded on a synthesis of the data. These recommendations and

findings aim to help guide RCTA's marketing-planning strategy and help illuminate key issues significant to RCTA, transportation and regional leadership.

The aim of this study is to generate insight in order to guide RCTA's management in making informed decisions. With discovery-based research, the goal is to understand the participant's experience and her/his relationship with the service product. Key goals included an improved understanding of the following: (1) why people are not using the service in larger numbers and more frequently, (2) how to outreach to students more effectively, (3) how to meet the transportation needs of visitors while helping businesses and natural destinations, and (4) how to offer better service to the core, transit-dependent market.

### **Problem-Based Orientations**

This type of report by definition skews the narrative towards negativity. The findings of discovery-based reports, by design, focus on gaps that constituents experience that thwart usage and/or satisfaction. Once these gaps are bridged, the product improves and ridership should be happier and more numerous. Thus, our **findings do not suggest that the present system is bad, only that management is prioritizing optimization**. It must be noted that RCTA is extremely "lean" and features very little staff. One "less than half-time" contract General Manager is hired by the RCTA Board of Directors to lead the agency, and between the tasks of grant management and operations contractor oversight leaves very little time for planning or marketing tasks. This is no doubt key to many of the system shortcomings noted during this outreach effort. All other RCTA resources are operational staff whose ability to support marketing efforts very limited.

### **Structure of the Report**

The following section introduces synthesized strategic recommendations. It is notable that RCTA is experiencing serious funding constraints today and the funding scenarios do not project to improve much in the near future. When feasible, we design many of the forthcoming recommendations to help circumvent this limitation. This subsequent section will put forth key findings, and the remaining section will provide databased support for these key assertions.

## **Strategic Data-Driven Recommendations for Redwood Coast Transit Authority (RCTA)**

**System Safety** is a vital element within RCTA or any transit system, and is always of the upmost priority. Currently, the central RCTA transfer center hub is at the Cultural Center on Front Street. Harassment and intimidation occur problematically at this locale. Some system riders feel threatened and this is a complex issue. First, many homeless people live near this transfer point and they are able to utilize this location as a place to congregate and panhandle. It is difficult to know the frequency and extent of this intimidation problem, but it appears to occur regularly. This likely thwarts potential ridership expansion, and threatens significantly the quality-of-life of many citizens. It is imperative not to categorize homeless people as one homogenous group and it is likely that some of the perceived homeless reported to be a factor at the Cultural Center are actually RCTA transit-dependent riders, waiting on buses. Additionally, it is likely not all perpetrators are homeless and some are likely not abusing drugs. **Below, are some suggested safety-related variants for RCTA.**

First, RCTA may consider **developing safety and etiquette policies, and procedures with delineation that is highly explicit, and with bite that is punitive when needed.** For instance, earlier in 2017 the RCTA Board adopted a rider's code-of-conduct, which includes detailed and defined rules against harassment and intimidation, as well as anti-social behaviors. RCTA should post the core elements of the Code of Conduct on each bus, and other locales such as the Cultural Center, and announce them on bus speakers if feasible. Implementation includes three or four steps, and/or levels of punishment ranging from a warning, to removal from the bus, suspension of ridership privileges, and expulsion from the system. For now, RCTA can utilize the camera systems installed on all buses to create digital printed images of riders who are under suspension for Code of Conduct violations and post those photos in the driver breakrooms for all to see. Eventually, RCTA might employ face-recognition technology to aid in the process so the driver would only have to press a button to contact law enforcement. There are many other options, but having a clearly communicated and implemented policy could be helpful. It is important to consider the legality and decency of such policies and gaining corresponding feedback from multiple constituencies is vital. It appears that the adoption of the 2017 Code of

Conduct will be an effective tool to improve system user behaviors but most do not know about it. Rider alert signage should be posted inside vehicles and at Cultural Center ASAP.

Second, consider **changing the location of the transfer center hub**. Even within the current environment of scarce resources, this difficult decision-making domain deserves prioritization. One option is to **move the transfer location to a busy bus stop adjacent to a major food market that already has security/policing, if such an agreement is feasible**. This change would possibly bring additional commerce to the market and provide convenience to shoppers. For example, staff is in the process of developing a sheltered bus stop on 5<sup>th</sup> Street next to the busy Safeway Shopping Center. Safeway and its neighboring (Rite Aid) shopping center already employ private security services to ensure safety and comfort for shoppers and employees of this major shopping area just off 101 near Downtown. With support from the shopping centers, their existing security could be briefed on how to manage the bus stop areas and a new and more secure transfer center would be created at little or no cost. Some altering of route alignments and timetables might be necessary also but is feasible. This would run counter to the City's long-held plans to improve the Cultural Center as a transit and tourism hub could alienate City planners, at least in the short term.

**For the Cultural Center Transit Hub to work effectively security is needed and this is expensive**. One option is **to hire full-time security during business hours**. Another alternative is to **move some of RCTA's administrative functions to the Cultural Center somehow**. This could perhaps be in the form of a mobile kiosk (trailer, like a coffee kiosk) that would allow dispatching to occur on-site at the Cultural Center rather than remotely at the RCTA Operations and Maintenance Center on Williams Drive, using existing staff. This would help facilitate information dissemination outreach while providing improved security via non-security personnel. It is likely that simply having operations staff on-site watching the activity at Cultural Center will be enough to clean up the perceived danger, without the extra operations costs of a security guard. The bulk of this cost would be capital expense for the portable workspace/kiosk that would house and shelter the operations staff and then be towed or driven back to Williams Drive each evening. While capital funding is generally more attainable than operations, there are no immediately available funds for this type of vehicle/facility. Both of these options will be costly but such change may help increase actual and perceived system safety.

## **Bus Shelters**

RCTA should prioritize adding more bus stop shelters in order to bring more protection, convenience, information and safety to riders. RCTA currently features just over a dozen bus shelters, most purchased and installed just a few years ago. However, due to the harsh winter climate, shelters with glass wind panels were chosen for rain protection, and RCTA's operations contractor assigned the responsibility of maintaining the shelters. In many cases, the shelters currently have broken glass and RCTA may consider replacing these with some form of a shatterproof Plexiglas. RCTA's operations contractor is being paid an extra monthly amount to clean and maintain the bus shelters, but this work is not being performed adequately. Ideally, each bus stop will act as a "storefront" for RCTA, and post a context and location-based graphic and text-based schedule that helps riders know, visually, how to get to key points. Each schedule should ideally have pictures of key places so it is easier for novices and new riders to figure-out trips. RCTA should consider posting links to the website and the call center and consider developing a navigation-based app that tells the riders where each bus is located and estimate-time-of-arrival and departure. Management should post policies about shelter destruction and communicate procedures to address such behavior. RCTA would benefit from strengthened communications with local law enforcement to encourage more aggressive patrol and enforcement of laws at the shelters.

## **Hotel Partnerships and Information Dissemination Opportunities**

In order to cultivate the tourism and visitors market, RCTA should consider forging relationships with area hotels. It appears that many will enthusiastically participate because excellent public transportation provides value to their guests and this can help facilitate higher and better-satisfied occupancy.

First, once RCTA makes service changes that consider main sites of interest to visitors (e.g. nature-based sites and Pelican Bay State Prison); strategic management may integrate these sites, graphically **within their system map**. Management may post these maps on the walls of the hotel lobbies using a variety of commercially available display equipment. These maps should

delineate close-by bus stops and demonstrate graphically how to get to, and from, key visitation-based destinations.

To illustrate, the hotels interviewed expressed willingness and interest in having a Plexiglas-like holder to disseminate RCTA maps to patrons. Each property may have a unique demand for how they choose to display and distribute these maps to guests, and it is important to meet their needs and work to keep these displays stocked. While sounding easy, this type of frequent tasks are a challenge to the current RCTA administration model that relies on part-time out-of-area transit manager expertise that is only “in-town” once a month or so. A travel expert who could forge relationships with these vital lodging constituents could help leverage this process. For instance, a key role-played could be the training the front desk workers on how RCTA works and how to get to the most needed destinations. This should be a dynamic process as RCTA grows its service-offerings. Additional funding for the part-time general manager could enable this.

Third, some of the hotels have expressed a willingness to post RCTA information on their websites. This poses a great opportunity. RCTA management should assist by developing a narrative regarding service. Specifically, it should discuss how RCTA usage might contribute to mindfulness within the sojourn experience. For instance, people can enjoy travel experiences much better after getting to Crescent City via a vast drive, if they consider taking public transit, simply meditate, and think. Another factor to mention is the prevalence of strong cell phone data access across some of these points of interest. This existence could aid at providing passengers trip-related geographic contextual information through addition of on-board equipment on buses that makes announcements as the buses travel their routes. The motel website should contain a simple system map that highlights venues of nature, dining, shopping and prison destinations in relation to the particular hotel. It is also vital the RCTA monitor diverse social media to make sure people are pleased with their travel experience, and actively request people to like the transit system. Crucially, monitoring complaints proactively will help provide new service ideas and serve to help circumvent client dissatisfaction. The new cameras installed on all RCTA buses can be of great help in timely and accurate complaint investigation.

## **Meeting Student Needs and Developing Dyadic Relationships with College of the Redwoods, the Parks Service and Other Key Constituents: Branding Based Content and Apps**

It appears that many College of the Redwoods (and quite possibly Del Norte High School students, who share the same campus and bus stop) students find using RCTA to be difficult. The timing of bus service often fails to align with class schedules, local routes loop through town and may take longer than simply walking or biking to school, the transfer center is frightening to some, and the commute to the southern campus (toward Arcata) via Route 20 runs infrequently and takes too long, with a huge gap during the midday. In addition, Del Norte High School has an established network of yellow school bus service that meets most student travel needs.

RCTA management may work to align the bus schedules with the beginning and end of classes proactively. Most likely, this can be accomplished simply by moving the timed-pulse at the Cultural Center a few minutes so that buses arrive and/or depart COR just before the top of the hour. This will always be challenging given the dynamic and sometimes unpredictable nature of classroom schedule changes. It makes sense to develop a strong relationship with the College of the Redwoods CC Campus Administration in order to have this information fed to RCTA in real-time. RCTA should strongly consider moving its regional route 20 closer to the campus. This will help College of the Redwood students that live outside Crescent City to reach the campus easier without a transfer to a “local” route, and avoid having to spend time at the Cultural Center transfer hub waiting to change buses. Lastly, RCTA may consider more service toward the Arcata campus (including a late morning/midday run) and coordinating with the adjacent transit operators to streamline service in order to help shorten commute times.

RCTA has developed a partnership with College of the Redwoods (COR) that originally sold COR Administration monthly bus passes at a discount rate to help improve access to the college among the transit dependent of the region. This has proven modestly successful and ridership has grown some. However, the fact that the regional routes do not stop at COR, forcing a transfer situation and backtracking (in many cases) plus the fact that only a small subset of the COR enrollment has been eligible for COR-subsidized passes likely conspire to dampen usage. RCTA has recently obtained grant funding that can be programmed to “backfill” fares for COR students

which can expand and improve the RCTA/COR partnership so that all COR students can ride RCTA free with their student ID cards. This grant funding (LCTOP) seems stable and permanent, and a great fit for this ongoing, long-term partnership that can be easily expanded to include Humboldt State University in Arcata.

The Dean at the College of the Redwoods expressed an interest in collaborating with the RCTA in the implementation of both the free fare and service-learning projects. COR students and faculty will create much of the marketing materials needed to promote the students ride free program. In order to facilitate effective branding for both Crescent City and for RCTA, management may collaborate with the College of the Redwoods on projects to develop multimedia narratives pertaining to core natural and cultural spots. This multimedia approach should include, at the least, photographs, videos, narratives, music, and poems. It is recommended that each location-based natural element (e.g., photograph) be connected to an exact geolocation coordinate so this material can potentially be integrated into virtual tours and future virtual reality geo-tours.

Another, subsequent project is that of developing tour bus type application. When visitors are on a bus, car, or walking, this app would provide natural, historical and cultural definitions and recommend future settings as well. This project may aim to develop these applications in multiple languages including English, German, French, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. These languages do a good job covering key current and future visitation-based language understanding segments. The State Park administration expressed interest in working on such a project and has immense expertise. The outcome of such an app may be that of better environmental and cultural education, and enriched visitor's experience, better ecological outcomes, more visitors, and increased ridership. RCTA may develop a taskforce with Park Administration, The College of the Redwoods, RCTA, Hotel Managers and the Chamber of Commerce. The current consultant is willing and able to assist as needed.

Overall, inordinate dyadic opportunities exist to develop a Del Norte/Crescent City Area "Tourism app" to aid within the branding process. The focus should be on the factors that make the area unique to visitors including the Redwood Forests, Rivers, Beaches, Lighthouses, and Surfing. Of course, this will ideally be connected to transportation, dining/eating, and lodging (both motel and camping) options. Simplicity and navigability are key elements. In order to

reach visitors effectively, it is vital to consider how differing segments and cultures perceive and frame information. The next section will provide a detailed consideration of these factors within a strategic context. It may prove that some expansion of hours and routes may be needed to truly capture more tourist trips, but with growing ridership from these first steps in the process, incremental funding increases are possible (fare box revenues rise as ridership rises).

## **Reaching Each Tourist Segment**

A key focus within this study is how to reach out effectively to tourists from out-of-state and internationally. A significant number of Crescent City's visitors are international. After Canada and Mexico, the greatest number come from Germany, Switzerland, the U.K, and France. During this stay, through chance, we met visitors from Lapland, Siberia, and Iceland and spoke with each group informally. Moreover, the Asian market is of enormous potential. Perhaps, the biggest trend in tourism is the blooming diversity of places from which tourists originate, which is a function of the precipitously widening middle-class globally.

First, however, given the number of European tourists currently visiting, we put forth recommendations based upon theoretical literature, in-depth interviews with a lodging manager, and informal discussions with European visitors. Three issues we will discuss include, (1) what types of messages are likely to resonate, (2) how to reach visitors before and during trips, and (3) what types of service are likely to create ridership utility.

## **Group and Messages**

Based upon a small sample size of visitors, European visitors tend to prioritize mindfulness and are extremely comfortable using public transportation. They have high expectations in terms of product quality given that their home-countries tend to provide clean, reliable, safe, and frequent public transit services. They lean towards being price inelastic, or price insensitive, within a reasonable range. Generally, they are spending a great deal of money to come to the United States, and transportation expenses represent a proportionately small sum. Crescent City is half-way between Portland and San Francisco. Travelers typically visit Crescent City for one-to-two days on their way along the Coast, and visit attractions within 50 miles of town.

For many, this is a trip-of-a-lifetime and seeing the Redwoods is on their life-long bucket list. They want a convenient and life-altering experience, in a positive way. Mindfulness is a significant theme. They want to have a direct connection to their experience, almost invariably. They do not want inconvenient service but would jump at the change for easy to navigate service. As mentioned by the State Park administrator and others, they are typically exhausted driving to Crescent City and the promotional theme of not having to drive, so the experience is real, less stressful, more mindful, safer, environmental, and more focused would resonate, but *only if the service was able to actually deliver these benefits*. This poses a big challenge to RCTA, as its current service level (regional routes every few hours), even with some attainable modifications, may not be adequate to entice the tourist market. It is important that any promotion that targets this group truthfully portray the actual service a visitor will get. European riders have high self-efficacy, almost invariably when it comes to trying new public transit systems. Although, European travelers tend to have less inertia, they only want to take this plunge if the steps are simple, and the riding experience is great, with a lack of uncertainty regarding logistical dimensions. Technology should help play an integral role within this solution as this group is accustomed to utilizing state-of-the-art applications when navigating their public transit systems.

Promotions targeted to visitors should only take place only after RCTA implements service changes designed to meet these markets' needs. Thus, these promotions are likely not short-term recommendations. The promotional theme should integrate the following benefits to reflect RCTA's unique selling propositions: the (1) the ability to experience desired sites without the stress of driving, (2) the benefit of gaining more knowledge about the site(s) natural and cultural perspectives, (3) helping to preserve the Redwood ecology, (4) facilitating safety on the road for others and themselves, (5) the ability to meditate and enjoy the natural/cultural settings on one's own terms, and (6) the ease of navigating the new and improved RCTA public transit system. Once a theme is developed, RCTA should use it consistently within the scheduling, the website, mobile messages and social media. The next section considers how European tourist may differ than that of domestic United States market.

This aforementioned communications approach is based on Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) three central cultural orientation dimensions: (1) relation to broad environment, (2) space, and

(3) relations among people. We postulate that compared with the domestic United States market, many Europeans tend to (1) strive to maintain a balance among environmental elements, (2) believe that the surrounding space belongs to everyone and may be used by everyone, and (3) people feel responsible for a larger extended group of people within society (Maznevski et al. 2002). We recommend that RCTA management integrate these cultural dimensions within their entire integrated marketing communications approach, as key decision-driving values.

Within the theme and promotional messages, RCTA might stress service provides a better connection to the nature, to the cultural environment they are visiting, and that they are embarking on a genuine travel experience, that they can share with their family, friends, and community.

### **Ways to Reach Visitors**

In order to reach international or out-of-town visitors effectively, managers may consider the decision-making process and examine where people obtain information, and how people frame this information. The objective of each promotional campaign step should lead to the utilization of dissimilar media-based tools. In other words, information framing will affect the nature of the media optimal for accurate message decoding.

Based on the hierarchy-of-effects model, the three key objectives are cognition, affect, and conative. For cognition, it is important to make people aware of Crescent City, its connection to nature, and the feasibility of utilizing RCTA to navigate the environment. The second stage, will involve the development of affect. Here, it becomes vital to create an emotional bond. To reach this, we advise that RCTA develop **transformational advertising messages that connect the traveler with the place to their mindful experiences**. For instance, the focus is on the dream that you can experience this special place with 100% connection and immersion because you do not have to drive, can stay focused on the experience, and recharge yourself after a lot of long, tedious driving in your rental car. For many visitors, it is challenging to reach the Del Norte area, and almost all (even international) visitors arrive by car. For international visitors these automobiles are typically rentals acquired at distant airports.

In terms of connotation, or behavioral intentions, this third phase may consider sales promotion. Some ideas include, having a tourist family special discount for larger groups, have motels distribute one-day, and three-day, bus passes for a discount, and link RCTA service to discounts on hotels, restaurants, and local craft and service establishments (e.g., the surf/fashion shop). Management may put onto their own and constituent's websites one, two, and three-day planners that guide visitors toward semi-structured experiences, in order to entice them to come to Crescent City and ride RCTA.

Overall, key new media to consider include, local motels websites (and their national chain sites), the National and State Park Websites, Trip Advisor, other key travel sites, YouTube, search engine optimization, and RCTA's website and social media pages. When people search for Redwood Forest experiences, Crescent City with RCTA links should come up at the top. We recommend that the College of the Redwoods work to help develop some of these links. Locally, RCTA should display its key information at airport hotels and at all of the local, Crescent City hotels, visitor centers, and restaurants. RCTA schedules should be available at all hotels and they should be viewable upon check-in. Along with a promotional theme, RCTA should develop a succinct narrative and imbed this within the plastic on the containers that hold these RCTA maps. The narrative should entice visitors to step onto the bus and take this chance for all of the reasons previously mentioned.

As RCTA reaches more people through mobile and social media, it becomes paramount to monitor complaints proactively. At that point in time, RCTA's contract management will need to spend more time monitoring forums and comments within these areas. RCTA should cover all social media sites, inclusively. It is critical to comment back and fix problems before negative social media publicity becomes a problem within itself. This will also service as a means to obtain feedback on how to improve both RCTA service and communications to key constituency networks.

### **Type of Service**

The challenge is providing adequately frequent, safe, and reliable service that visitors understand. Global visitors tend to be concerned about United States' crime so assuring safety is important. Overall, price matters but local transportation costs are small in relation to the entire

trip. Thus, many visitors would consider paying for such service if it met their needs. Given that Europeans often travel in groups, we recommend that RCTA offer family tourist discounts and form partnerships with key restaurants, Parks, and eating establishments and markets to make the purchase of the bus tickets more desirable.

The central RCTA goal should be to provide great service initially without raising its cost structure. It is imperative to identify, three or four natural and cultural sites along the current routing that rank among the best for visitors to experience. At each of these sites, RCTA should place great bus stops with shelters. It should be simple to get from the hotel bus stops to these key locations, and the schedule should be clear, simple, succinct, and both graphical and verbal. Having an app that guides visitors once at a stop or certainly on the bus could add great value to the experience. Optimizing frequency of service and matching it to the time people, most likely want to come and go also makes sense. Having a geolocation app, where people see where the buses are, in real time, would be amazing.

Within the last 5 years, the United States National Park system has suffered from a severe funding gap. The overall ability for leadership to protect local forests is threatened. Automobile usage has led to road quality deterioration and automobile bottlenecks are increasingly problematic. Currently, there exists no usable public transit to navigate the airports, hotels and Redwood Parks. Once this first step (developing tourist destinations within existing routes), shows success, the next move should be to expand the quality of service to tourists. This will require partnerships with other constituents and clear evidence that tourists are open to using RCTA service. RCTA will have to reconsider certain routing adjustments. On the regional routes, this will not require much alteration of alignments, only insertion of new bus stops on existing paths of travel. However, the Crescent City “local” bus routes (1-4) are classic “coverage” routes that loop around town, and may have to be modified significantly to ever attract tourist ridership. Sadly, many of the key lodging and hospitality destinations in Crescent City have inadequate or no local route service nearby. This is caused by the current route network which developed under (and still exists under) limited funding and dispersed activity centers. The biggest single example are the rows of popular hotels south of Front Street in Crescent City. RCTA Route 4 does serve this area, but only in one direction once hourly.

To summarize, we recommend that RCTA reach out to European tourists. The key theme will focus on the bus allowing mindful experiences that allow visitors to ditch the (rental) car for part of the trip. RCTA should only implement this promotional step after they improve service to a level where visitor's needs can be plentifully satisfied. We recommend that, within this process, RCTA not divert resources away from the current ridership, who tend to be public transit dependent. This will be tricky considering the stagnant funding environment.

### **Tourism, Branding, and Segment Interaction: Initial First Steps**

A central part of this study is the focus on developing public transit offerings to help meet the tourism market's needs, and to potentially cultivate and grow this group within Crescent City. On the bright side, Crescent City has places that rival the best of anything on our planet. For instance, in no particular order, there are amazing lighthouses, dynamic beaches, surfing, clean and majestic rivers, and possibly the most amazing forests (many of them Giant Old Growth Redwood) anywhere. Furthermore, there is a great supply of varied lodging facilities, excellent restaurants, and diverse and relatively affordable camping options.

However, much of this is fragmented and the region fails to demonstrate this unique proposition upon or prior to Crescent City arrival. In other words, there lacks an effective integrated marketing communication strategy/effort that demonstrates effectively the advantages of visiting Crescent City, how to navigate key element of the experience such as getting to forests, beaches, and restaurants in both private and public transit modes. We recommend that key constituents collaborate. At the very least the City can put up signs that direct cars and walkers to key sites and provide educational posters of what they may experience as they visit Crescent City. The National and State Forests should collaborate and recommend the top five visitation sites, that might change based upon perception and demand. Based on feedback received during this study, most constituents are enthusiastically willing to participate and contribute.

RCTA should work to develop its routing and communications to leverage this synergy. Both people who live in Crescent City and visitors from other places desire connections with these special places. As a first step toward developing the tourist market within both sectors, RCTA should develop service to three or four locations that are synergistic with its current routing

structure. For example, tourist attractions are located along Route 199, as well as Route 20 and can be stopped at by RCTA buses. In this way, initial new revenue is unneeded to initiate the growth process. **RCTA should put these astounding natural spots onto a new system map** pictorially and create narratives that reach both local and global tourists. Through this step, great progress is possible as a low cost. Management may tweak this based upon emergent demand and new ideas. Currently, there is RCTA service to or close to all these attractions, but it is not marketed effectively and lacks obvious bus stops. For example, Route 199 stops at Smith River Bridge, Jedidiah Smith SP Campground and Visitors Center, and the U.S. Forest Service Visitors Center in Gasquet. Route 20 has stops at Klamath (Casino), Prairie Creek SP Visitors Center, Redwood NP Visitors Center (beach), and with some modest effort additional stops can be placed at DeMartin Beach/False Klamath, Trees of Mystery Park, Humboldt Lagoons SP, Patricks Point SP, or Little River State Beach in McKinleyville.

As part of the promotional message, the advantage of safety, lowering stress, and living in the moment belong within the theme. Helping to save the environment is another key theme. Many visitors fly and drive great distances to reach Crescent City and if they had an easy-to-navigate way to enjoy these World Heritage Site destinations and relax safely along the way, they would likely find this to be valuable and attractive.

This would have to reach visitors early on within the trip planning process through websites and social media. Search Engine Optimization is important here as well. Through travel websites such as Trip Advisor, and hotel websites, airlines, trains, buses and Chamber-of-Commerce sites, there are great places to share this newly designed service. Within this study, two of the local hotel owners or managers expressed an enthusiastic interest in such a collaboration. Leaders within the local State Parks were equally happy to collaborate. As mentioned later within this paper, the local College is enthusiastically willing to contribute within the marketing and environmental protection of Crescent City.

Should RCTA achieve success marketing to tourists, there will likely develop a tension between the local riders and visitor-based cultural norms. Likely, many tourists want their travel experience to be clean, safe, efficient and quiet. As discussed, there are behavioral problems among some of RCTA's ridership that management must address in order for visitors, and many more local clientele to ride comfortably and happily. In this time of mobile and social media,

riders generate feedback quickly and extensively, so it is imperative for RCTA to address these behavioral issues to make a new program aimed toward visitors successful.

### **RCTA Information Kiosks at Local Lodging Establishments**

Based upon interview data, at the very least some of the lodging owners and managers are willing to allow RCTA to display bus schedules and information because it adds value to their guests. RCTA may communicate proactively with each manager and identify a display kiosk that conforms to each business's needs. Some of the motel chains have corporate display rules and it is important to conform. One manager, at the Travelodge, expressed strong interest in allowing RCTA to put a context-specific map on the wall that shows where the person stands, the closest bus stops and how to get to key locations.

It is important to develop a rapport and consistently supply each motel with schedules so they do not run out. RCTA may use the top part of the kiosk to display their revamped, tourist-friendly system map. This report discusses specific ideas within the promotional-based recommendations. The themes of ease, safety, low stress, great price, and connections to the experience are germane. In addition, the interviewed motels appear willing to put information onto their websites. This link is critical. On the hotel website, management should communicate key benefits, and post downloadable system maps to facilitate the ridership adaption decision-making process.

### **Prioritize Projects that Require Zero or Low Revenue: Strategic Decisions should not Hurt RCTA Current Riders**

For RCTA, there exists many exciting public transit-related opportunities. However, it is vital to keep in mind that RCTA's limited funding is prioritized for Del Norte County's core riders, which tend to be transit-dependent and not characteristically affluent. It is imperative that strategic decision-making factors this into new service design decisions, and management does not neglect this sometimes-disempowered group of important individuals.

Similarly, within the current economic climate, any RCTA market and service expansion decision should consider new revenue sources, or the possibility of leveraging current services synergistically. Such leveraging should be revenue-neutral or not divert revenue services from RCTA's current core riders. The above examples of adding stops and creating supportive marketing materials that maximize access to recreation/tourist destinations along existing routes is a prime example of leveraging of resources to increase ridership at low cost.

### **Stout Grove Preservation**

This location receives much attention from visitors and from the Parks service. A magnificent grove of giant, old-growth redwood trees, Stout Grove is accessible via a windy, narrow, and hilly dirt road beginning at Howland Hill Road in Crescent City and ending at US Highway 199 east of Hiouchi. During peak months, the road going into this destination is crowded, often bumper-to-bumper. This creates a stressful and polluted (dust) situation for visitors and local nature. Due to tight clearances between ancient redwoods, large RV vehicles are not allowed. Tourists experience a stressful drive and their vehicles emit toxic fumes that threaten the existence of the majestic trees they esteem. This problematic situation warrants proactive strategic planning.

Developing workable solutions are likely not simple or easy for numerous reasons. First, the peak tourist season ranges from 4-6 months. During the off-season, the roads tend to be uncongested and the problem wanes. Thus, there could be a greater than 6-month period where any potentially new transit infrastructure could be unused or underutilized. Second, any public transit system into Stout Grove would require significant monetary inflows that RCTA is not in a position to invest currently. Stout Grove does not charge an entry fee, so any transit service will have a difficult time attracting patronage without very high frequencies and a long span each day. Third, unless small and specifically special vans are used, buses will not be able to access Stout Grove unless some trees are cut down, which is not recommended.

Based on project data, the State Park administration may be open to the idea of adding a park entry fee and rolling the revenue into public transit in order to fund some sort of transit route into the park and alleviate this problem. RCTA leadership may consider actively engaging the Parks

and work to collaborate on an economically and logistically feasible solution. Due to its close proximity to Crescent City, making Stout Grove more fun to visit would help Del Norte County develop a better tourism infrastructure and this could facilitate economic development through more out-of-state and global visitors. One possibility is that of the development of a privately owned service emanating from the Elk Valley Rancheria Casino on Howland Hill Road. In this case, RCTA might further develop Route 4 as a feeder route to go to the Casino where the shuttle service might be based or determine other ways to share resources if feasible and mutually beneficial. Overall, RCTA should continue to engage the State and National Park administration and see they will be able to generate revenue streams to provide new strategic directions. Optimal configurations at the minimum should consider these aforementioned benefits and constraints. Without a new funding source outside RCTA's existing array of public transit funding, this project will likely not come to fruition. A park entry fee dedicated to pay RCTA to run the shuttles seems the only way forward using the public sector. Alternatively, but also catalyzed by an entry fee to the park, the Casino could directly develop the shuttle or partner with the private sector to host a private transit operation that could seasonally serve Stout Grove.

### **Consistency in Service for Wheelchair Riders**

RCTA should put forth a process to educate and monitor each bus driver on the policies and processes regarding wheelchair-based services. Overall, wheelchair service should be consistent regardless of the bus, route or driver. RCTA management may also consider putting a sign on the bus eliciting feedback regarding this service and explaining the nature of RCTA policy. RCTA may consider setting up a generic e-mail address such as the following as a direct feedback line to management “[redwoodcoasttransit@gmail.com](mailto:redwoodcoasttransit@gmail.com)”.

### **The Prisoner's Family Visiting Market**

A key emergent finding is that there exists a prisoner's family visiting market. Pelican Bay State Prison is the only supermax state prison in California with a capacity of over 3,300 inmates. This is a sizable institution and the idea of facilitating visitations may help provide

utility to multiple stakeholders. Currently, RCTA serves Pelican Bay State Prison once per day, at the 7am prisoner release time, and only in the southbound direction. Pelican Bay purchases ride passes from RCTA and Greyhound tickets to enable released prisoners quick access back into the Bay Area. Nine trips per day (5 Northbound and 4 Southbound) pass by the Prison without stopping, five of them originating in Crescent City near lodging facilities.

There are buses of visitors, typically family members who tend to arrive from Southern California to visit Pelican Bay State Prison inmates. They tend to arrive during the off-season because lodging is more affordable. They tend to stay at a few of the lesser expensive hotels for a couple of days, minimum per visit. One of these economy hotels that hosts these visitors is the Travelodge on US 101. The Travelodge is willing to provide contact information regarding family members who arrange these buses. Typically, 20 families will arrive per tour bus from the Los Angeles area. RCTA planners might consider providing service links to the prison that accommodates the beginning and end of visiting times, which may vary by day-of-week, or by prisoner segment. Communicating with the prison will likely benefit this process.

Currently, most of the prison visitors drive cars to Crescent City. This may be in part due to the difficulty of navigating Crescent City without a car and the struggle of getting to the airport and renting cars, which tends to be expensive at this locale. Currently, many family visitors must find a taxi to visit the prison or rent a car while in Crescent City. RCTA might be able to accommodate these prison visit trips frugally, simply by adding the Prison onto all trips of Route 20, in both directions and treat the stop as a regular active bus stop. Perhaps a stop can be located right on Lake Earl Drive rather than forcing the bus to turn into the Prison entrance to keep this new stop from causing the route to elongate travel times. Travelodge is willing to allow RCTA to place a bus stop on U.S. 101 in front of the motel, and help develop informational material for this market. They are also happy to post such emergent information onto their hotel websites. It is quite possible that other lodgings will share this same level of enthusiasm and are most worthy of partnership. This elevating of partnerships between RCTA and local lodging businesses is a high priority recommendation of this study. RCTA should develop a couple of “display” equipment options and approach each hotel owner/manager for permission to add an RCTA information display in the lobby areas of each hotel, where the new tourist-friendly map can be prominently displayed, along with pockets to hold RCTA schedule brochures.

## **Connecting with Airports, Train and Regional Bus Centers**

Generally, it makes sense to consider linking bus service to the destinations where tourists connect to come to Crescent City. However, this becomes tricky for political reasons. International visitors and those domestic travelers from afar may first consider distant airports such as San Francisco (SFO), Oakland, Sacramento, or Portland as an entry point to the region. Others will consider flying into one of the “closer” airports that feature daily flights, such as Medford, Oregon, Arcata, CA, or directly into Crescent City via the Del Norte County Regional Airport. These other “closer” airports may be viewed locally as a threat to the local airport, the Del Norte County Regional Airport (DNCRA) just northwest of Crescent City. Due to this support of the local airport, which historically struggles to maintain daily commercial air service, RCTA has received push-back against promoting its existing service to Arcata Airport (Route 20 will deviate to Arcata Airport upon advance request) and may encounter resistance to any expansion service that could be perceived as getting travelers to/from any airport other than DNCRA. RCTA management may consider meeting with political and public transportation leaders from these areas to determine the feasibility of forming mutually beneficial alliances. For instance, Crescent City residents expressed interest in shopping in Medford, and visiting medical facilities in Grant Pass, and visitors from Medford (including local residents and tourists who fly-in) are interested in the Redwood National and State Parks. Today, one trip per day is provided between Medford and Crescent City by ODOT’s (Oregon Department of Transportation) Southwest Point bus system. Through RCTA’s vision, leaders may forge synergistic plans that benefit multiple constituencies without having to spend inordinate amounts of money. For example, one more daily round trip between Crescent City and Medford, via Grants Pass could double the mobility at a relatively modest cost to RCTA, thus sharing the cost of providing connections in this corridor with ODOT.

## **Service to Grant Pass and/or Medford, OR**

RCTA should consider service to Grant Pass to help facilitate healthcare access and linkage to Greyhound or perhaps beyond to Medford to connect with the Medford Airport and AMTRAK. It is strongly recommended that RCTA work to collaborate with Oregon-based transit

constituencies to create economic efficiency, as much as is feasible. In addition, such coordination could provide utility for Crescent City citizens and attract Oregonians toward Crescent City-based recreational venues. Crescent City appears to lack some of the medical treatment resources needed and higher-order shopping and such a linkage could facilitate better healthcare outcomes. In addition, as expressed by RCTA bus-drivers, many of RCTA's ridership is not economically affluent, and such access may facilitate the ability to afford clothing and other locally expensive products that can be obtained cheaper in Oregon.

### **Support for the Homeless**

Crescent City has a significant homeless population. Some homeless citizens utilize RCTA buses, and many interact with other riders, and spend time at the bus stops. Most all citizens tend to suffer when others we see are in such a tough place. RCTA management might consider forging partnerships with constituencies to facilitate access to shelter, meals, healthcare, and employment. Currently, there appears to be a lack of public housing for the homeless, although a new woman's shelter is being completed, and facilitating an infrastructure for support could add utility for RCTA's homeless citizens. At the very least, people who choose not to be homeless should be given a lifeline that allows them to find a system of work and basic, dignified shelter in order to climb back into an economically-safe place.

## **Key Findings**

### **RCTA Core Objective of Stable Core Ridership with More Coverage to Outlying Communities**

RCTA's core ridership is relatively stable and most are public transit dependent. Ridership has fallen steadily in recent years, which is problematic. There exists a strategic imperative to focus on this group and improve their access to public transportation.

### **Desire for a Stable System: People Want More Bus Shelters**

Crescent City has rainy weather and citizens consistently express an interest in more bus shelters. Functional shelters serve to protect riders from the elements and serve as a conduit for RCTA awareness, and helps provide routing information. Overall, it is important that RCTA keep a stable system and obtain stable sources of funding in order to develop routes and increase the presence of shelters. Riders often mentioned that there generally are a lack of bus shelters within the RCTA system.

### **Branding Crescent City**

In order to attract and satisfy visitors Crescent City may consider letting people know about key points-of-interest, where to find worthwhile places, and provide appropriate signage to help brand the city and area. Successful branding promises to encourage potential and actual visitors to stop and stay. An effective branding approach will require optimal integrated marketing communications strategies.

## **Problems with Current Bus Shelters: Broken Glass Issues and Schedule Information Needed**

It appears that many bus stops have broken glass due to citizens breaking these structures. It was recommended to replace this material with shatterproof lexan or Plexiglas. Currently the model where contractually RCTA's operations contractor (First Transit) is responsible for fixing damaged shelters and cleaning them is failing, and appears to have been in failure mode for some time. RCTA should either 1) more effectively manage First Transit to perform this function at a high level as bid, or 2) reduce the amount of the First Transit contract by the bid amount and give this important work to another vendor who will be more responsive and proactive.

In addition, it was recommended that RCTA prioritize increasing the number of shelters to provide comfort to riders and for branding purposes so people are made more aware of prevailing service. It was recommended that RCTA place bus schedules that are graphic and context-specific to the corresponding location at every bus stop. Obviously, **it would be best to fix the shelter maintenance model prior to adding more shelters**, as they are quickly damaged and must be quickly fixed in order to avoid negatively affecting RCTA's image.

## **Safety Issues at the Cultural Center**

This is a law enforcement and social issue that threatens many of those who ride the RCTA system. At this focal transfer spot, riders often feel unsafe due to harassment. There are periods of violence, including knife fights. RCTA riders view this transfer point as being a dark and dangerous place at night. Members from the homeless population tend to congregate at this locale and some live nearby at a settlement camp. College of the Redwood students asked for buses to stop closer to their school so they could avoid this scary place and drivers expressed concern as well. Numerous ideas were discussed such as placing an RCTA service center at this locale, hiring a security guard, and changing this transfer area to a place of commerce with already existing security. RCTA drivers have worked with law enforcement, at times to report disruptive behavior and have expressed a need for safety because of these threatening behaviors. Some businesses around Crescent City have security guards and informants appreciate this. One

example is that of Grocery Warehouse. In terms of the homeless population, there is no longer a recycling center for revenue to survive, or facilities for other types of needed support. However, a woman's shelter is opening. Many homeless people panhandle at Safeway and Rite Aid Drugs. Some of this study's participants expressed a desire to see the homeless camp near the Cultural Center removed.

**Substance Abuse and/or Mental Illness Among Ridership: Some Highly Problematic Many Bus Riders are Drunk, Stoned or are Taking other Substances: Some Suffer from Paranoia and Schizophrenia**

Some bus passengers from this segment will sit behind the driver and scream mercilessly and some will intimidate other passengers, or make them feel uncomfortable. Bus drivers discussed problematic, drug-addicted riders who enter the bus incognito, when the queue is crowded and behave in a scary manner throughout the ride. This likely has huge ramifications in terms of developing bus service for tourists who would expect a calm interaction with nature. There appears to be nothing posted on the RCTA buses regarding behavior policy, and this segment is unlikely to read the website for behavioral guidance. The type of buses that RCTA features do not have many good locations for posting of information for internal consumption. There is significant variance among drivers regarding whom they allow onto the bus. As a bus-driver informant framed this issue, "it's not being wasted, but being a threat." Cameras installed on the buses appear to do little in terms of acting as a deterrent among problematic riders. On the early AM Route 20, freshly released Pelican Bay prison paroles ride the Route 20 to Arcata where it connects with a Greyhound bus that transports them back into the Bay Area.

**Problematic Bus Schedules and Routing for the College of the Redwoods Community, Facilitating Threats to Student Achievement: Fewer Overall Transfers and Shorter Bus Time between Campuses is Requested**

RCTA's schedule somewhat fails to conform to class scheduling. Buses leave the Cultural Center at :30 and :00 that arrive at COR around :40 and :15 each hour. This isn't bad service. However, it does require students to allow more time than if they were driving in a car, due to the time it may take to transfer at the Cultural Center. As a result, students can be late to class and must leave the classroom early in order to be able to get to their homes. The course schedules are dynamic and change each semester and differ each day of the week. The other challenge is that students must transfer at the Cultural Center and that the bus to Arcata (and the COR main campus in Eureka/Fortuna) takes too long to be practical or convenient.

Consequently, many students take-up suboptimal class scheduling, taking whatever classes they can get at COR Crescent City even if more attractive classes are being held in Fortuna inferior subject-matches, because the bus will not get them to school otherwise. At this point, students who must take classes at COR Fortuna (or HSU for that matter) have extreme difficulty using RCTA service. Although Crescent City is less expensive in terms of cost-of-living, students generally move to Eureka to go into Junior-level classes at HSU, and beyond. Just how much this current poor schedule of Route 20 plays into this is unknown. There is infrequent service to outlying areas such as Hiouchi, which makes higher education access problematic. The bus to Orick (Route 20) reportedly sometimes misses its connection which causes logistical hardship among the ridership. Bad road and weather conditions make following the schedule more challenging for drivers. Informants support a midday (late morning) bus to Arcata to improve the situation. Ultimately, figuring out how to make a bus go from Crescent City to Arcata more quickly is desired by this constituency. It was suggested that coordinating with Humboldt Transit could lead to positive outcomes, especially for those transferring further into Eureka/Fortuna from Arcata, such as COR Fortuna students.

## **The Prison Family Visitors Market**

This segment visits family members who are incarcerated at Pelican Bay Prison. These visitors tend to come from Southern California and some groups rent tour buses with up to 20 families per trip. Lower priced hotels are interested in this group and visitation tends to occur in the off-season when lodging prices are less expensive. One of the lodging managers offered to share the contact information of the tour facilitators. There is little service that coordinates with this group's needs. Many also rent cars and RCTA's current service to the car rental location (Del Norte County Regional Airport – DNCRA) is “on demand only” and not widely marketed.. The geographic location of the DNCRA is not advantageous to regularly scheduled fixed route service. Some prison visitor families drive their own personal vehicles and many rent cars at the Crescent City Airport. Thus, many of these visitors hire taxis to obtain car rentals, or to visit the prison. One hotel, the Travelodge, is agreeable regarding RCTA setting-up a bus shelter in front to meet this market's needs. RCTA can experiment with adding Pelican Bay as an all-day bus stop rather than driving right by the prison 9 times per day to see if ridership grows. It would be best to collaborate with the Prison to identify visiting hours prior to making this modification.

## **RCTA Not Fully Geared for the Tourism Sector**

RCTA operates using “cutaway” buses that inherently feature less creature comforts than more comfortable “over-the-road” buses commonly seen operating Greyhound or Amtrak routes. Some amenities can be added to future purchases of RCTA buses, such as wi-fi, upgraded seating, video screens but ride comfort will never rival traditional over-the-road buses. RCTA's limited (rural transit) funding for bus replacement will most likely never allow RCTA to operate over-the-road buses, or even traditional urban transit buses in its fleet. Operationally, RCTA buses today fail to provide stops at key tourist sites and do not indicate where these sites are located within any of its maps or schedule-based information. In order for bus service to meet tourists' needs, increased frequency is also needed so a visitor is not stuck at one place and has the ability to traverse the various sites within an outing. This can be extremely costly. This is especially germane to Route 20, which currently has a huge gap in service from mid-morning to the late PM commute peak. A late morning in-fill trip would go far towards fixing this

“unusable” schedule, allowing riders to go to Arcata midday or return from Arcata mid-day, avoiding the current 9-hour gap. RCTA might consider moving its unproductive late night Arcata trip to the mid-day to meet this need at little to no increase in operating costs.

## **Developing Recreational and General Tourist-Based Usage along the Current Fixed-Route with Adequate Frequency: Delineation of Key Tourism-Attractive Sites**

As an immediate step toward creating value for existing RCTA riders and residents as, well as for visitors, numerous constituents discussed how to utilize current RCTA routes, such as the 20, and place specific stops and bus shelters along the way. These may include, but are not limited to Klamath Overlook for whale watching, Fern Canyon, Klamath, and Crescent City Lighthouses. Other include the Boy Scout Tree Trailhead, Howland Hill Road. Of these ideas, the following are the most feasible, due to proximity to U.S. Hwy 101 (not in priority order):

- Kuchel Visitor Center (Redwood N.P. – Beaches, Trails) (served now)
- Stone Lagoon Red Schoolhouse/Elk Valley RV Park
- DeMartin Beach Picnic Area
- Yurok Loop Trail Rest Area
- Trees of Mystery
- Trailheads within Prairie Creek State Park (in addition to Visitor’s Center)
- Patricks Point State Park Entrance
- Trinidad (served now but only “on-demand”)
- Little River State Beach
- Clam Beach County Park
- Humboldt State University (stop at HSU Library Circle)

Adequate bus frequency and the ability to traverse across destinations is vital, based upon participants' perceptions. The State Parks Service Administrators suggested hourly service but this is likely financially impossible. The State Park administrators also recommended a focus on natural points-of-interest closer to Crescent City to lessen environmental damage. Stout Grove, accessed from Howland Hills Road, has experienced skyrocketing visitation over the last 5-years, however, local rental car contracts often state that Howland Hills Road will not be covered. Key spots include forests, beaches, rivers and lighthouses. Overall, there are locations besides Stout Grove that are amazing and promoting these at low to no cost can take pressure off the State Park system. In addition, experienced transportation leadership asserts that there are too many needs in the core community to divert any monetary resources toward public subsidy of a transit service into Stout Grove. The importance of having these current-fixed route-friendly destinations on maps and communicating these to the public appropriately through traditional and new media is germane. Suggested places for nature-related stops along Route 199 include

- Jedidiah Smith SP Campground,
- Hwy 199/197 Intersection at Smith River Swimming/Recreation Area
- Hiouchi Visitors Center at Jed Smith State Park (served now)
- Gasquet US Forest Service Visitors Center

Participants recommended that RCTA utilize public announcements on local radio as an outreach to share new routing and stop information.

### **Buses to Eliminate Travel Stress, Provide Experiential Moment, Mindfulness, Immersion, and Safety**

Many tourists arrive to Crescent City tired from long drives. Informants within this study expressed that RCTA can serve as an avenue for visitors to relax and enjoy the nature in a mindful way, while traveling safely, only if tourists are made aware of RCTA. These benefits may potentially be integrated into the promotional theme or message. It seems imperative that RCTA feature prominent point-of-sale type information displays inside the lobbies of most or

all-local hotels, to “catch” tourists as they are starting their day and still able to change from a day of driving between various tourist attractions to a more relaxing day of riding.

### **Placing Information Kiosks Inside Crescent City Hotels**

Hotel owners and managers interviewed expressed an enthusiastic willingness to display and distribute RCTA information and maps through a front desk located kiosk. It was recommended that the kiosk contain a pictorial map that shows key destinations, or points-of-interest, and is context-based. In other words, the map shows locations and closest bus stops based upon the particular location. Finding an outreach specialist/expert willing to distribute the maps and forge relationships with the hotel managers is strategically vital. If the RCTA Board is willing to expand the scope and budget of the primary General Manager contract, this duty could be handled “in-house” by the current GM.

### **Stout Grove: Challenges and Opportunities but For Whom?**

This is a focal destination for many visitors from across the United States and globally. The California State Parks service is interested in providing bus, or van service to this location in order to reduce the influence of traffic bottlenecks during the peak seasons. Both cars and RVs fill these winding roads and there is often bumper-to-bumper traffic. According to State Park administrators, the park is becoming clogged with dust due to this peak season traffic flow. This creates stress for visitors and threatens the natural environment. The Park is considering levying a car fee and this revenue may provide a source for future service. RCTA and other constituencies may find this to be an opportunity. However, it is strategically vital not to lose focus and divert resources away from the core, largely public transit-dependent market. The fact that this potential service has significant seasonal demand variability is another threat toward the viability of such implementation. In addition, the roads are too narrow for large buses and it would be highly complicated to implement and functional service system. Special vehicles that may not have much utility outside Stout Grove pose a further challenge to RCTA involvement. Importantly, according to State Park administrators, there are numerous other places to

experience the Redwood Forests other than Stout Grove and this may also be developed to divert attention away from this traffic bottleneck. The State Parks has as a goal, to eventually not to allow any cars into Stout Grove and have only bus service, although they have not signed off on this. They are clearly interested in regulating traffic, appear interested in collaborating, and are willing to work with RCTA, local hotels, the casino, and the Chamber-of-Commerce to find a workable variant. **Stakeholder Integration and Collaboration**, and its Role in Economic Development, is a key theme when speaking with the Visitor's Center leadership, and many constituencies play a vital role in the future development of this incredible area.

### **RCTA and Park Administration Partnerships: Growing Options While Protecting RCTA Core Riders**

There exists promising opportunities for RCTA and the Park System to collaborate on transit projects, including Stout Grove but also other tourist destinations. RCTA is open to a collaborative partnership on Stout Grove although it seems more appropriate for the private sector to provide this type of service. The main issue will be that of revenue and ensuring that RCTA resources are not diverted from core ridership.

### **College of the Redwoods Planning for Collaboration with RCTA: Students Ride RCTA Free, Service-Learning Projects, Disseminating Student Information, and Sharing Strategic Information**

The College of the Redwoods (COR) purchased a block of RCTA passes last year at a negotiated rate and they plan to expand this relationship with RCTA. Perhaps more importantly, RCTA has obtained grant funding that can be used to backfill the costs of **expanding the COR partnership so that every student would ride RCTA fixed route buses FREE** with a valid COR student ID card. Currently only a small group of COR students get the COR-provided bus passes. This expansion of the program should dramatically increase ridership. The ridership increase will also be more certain should RCTA modify its regional routes (20 and 199) to service COR directly

without forcing transfers onto the local routes. The College of the Redwoods is enthusiastic about conducting class projects to help RCTA develop: better promotional material for Crescent City and the local points-of-interest, travel Apps for tourists, travel-related maps, and anything that facilitates better public relations, more visitors and a better RCTA system. The Crescent City Campus Dean discussed two specific classes. Many of these College of Redwoods students are right out of high school and transportation is a pedagogically interesting substantive domain. The College of the Redwoods is willing to put up a bus information kiosk to educate students about public transit options and they are willing to collaborate on its construction if needed. Furthermore, an emergent relationship between RCTA and the College of the Redwoods may serve as a source of positive public relations.

### **Some College of the Redwood Students Transfer to Humboldt State University and Some of the College of the Redwood Programs are Only at the COR Fortuna (Eureka) Main Campus**

College of the Redwoods appears to be a feeder school into Humboldt State University and enrolling there currently means difficulty in terms of living in Crescent City, because of long drives, and longer bus commutes. Many College of the Redwood Students also must transfer to the Main COR Fortuna/Eureka campus to take certain programs such as an RN in Nursing or certain classes that are not offered in Crescent City. Overall, roughly 700 students appear to be enrolled at the College of the Redwoods Crescent City campus, while the entire institution may have as many as 10,000 students taking classes, with the majority in Fortuna (south of Eureka, which is south of Arcata). RCTA could realign Route 20 to stop at HSU directly (Library Loop), making HSU seem more accessible to Del Norte students at low cost.

### **Importance of Summer Season Tours with Tour Guides or Apps**

Peak summer season appears to be from May through October. There is a likely need for tours designed to add to the visitor's experience. A key challenge is what to do with the transit

infrastructure the rest of the year? Hotels are interested in having guides provide visitors information, and geolocation-assisted Apps may be developed to perform this task as well.

### **Unmet Hotel Supply**

This industry has been built-up and with the advent of Airbnb there is a lower-than-desired occupancy rate. This may be one reason why hotel owners are motivated to grow the tourist market and view RCTA as a potential conduit.

### **Hotel Management's Hesitation to Want Bus Stops by Hotels due to Homeless Population and Drug Use**

There appears to be a tension between the potential tourist market and that of the core transit-dependent ridership sub-segments. Both groups have needs to be safe and protected. Hotel and business owners are concerned about property and customer safety. The negative image of RCTA's hub at Cultural Center is a prime example of this situation. When placing needed new bus stops RCTA may encounter resistance if it cannot be argued that bus stops get frequent attention of law enforcement and RCTA and will not become a magnet for crime and homelessness that acutely impact surrounding businesses. RCTA should cultivate improved relations with local law enforcement in any case.

### **Importance of an Information Clearinghouse and Social Media that Solves all Needs: Lodging, Food, Transportation, and Recreation, but Parks are not in the Promotion Business**

This is a complex issue. The State and National Parks wants promotion but they cannot be a commercial sponsor, or play favorites economically. They are interested in economic development and view this as a system. This is part of the branding theme and the State and

National Parks appear to have motivation and resources to play an integral and collaborative role with RCTA but *some entity needs to take a lead role in tourism promotion*, likely not RCTA.

### **Methods and Modes to Promote to Tourists and European Visitors**

This includes using the hotel websites and Chamber of Commerce website. Owners and managers mentioned a willingness to put RCTA information, links, and maps onto their firm's websites. Other modes discussed include, search engine optimization and YouTube.

### **Tourists Typically Do Not Fly into Crescent City but Arrive at San Francisco, Portland and Medford: They Often Arrive Tired By Car**

Crescent City is roughly in-between San Francisco and Portland. When tourist drivers arrive to Crescent City, they are often tired and burned-out on the driving process. Europeans typically fly into either San Francisco or Portland and drive back to their original airport. Having a functional public transit alternative would likely add value for the subgroup of visitors. Hotel ownership and management expressed a strong interest in being able to provide RCTA bus-related advice because this would add to their customer's utility. In recent years there exists very few, often two flights per day, and the commercial carrier situation at the Crescent City Airport remains unstable. A new carrier is scheduled to begin daily non-stop service to Oakland this winter, and provide direct flights to/from Oakland, rather than Portland. Local resistance to RCTA serving distant airports leads to challenges in developing any coordinating RCTA connecting service.

### **Flying into Medford is Problematic, but Navigating Crescent City Airport is Worse**

During Pen-Air's time as local carrier, flights into Crescent City were not coordinated with other locations. Thus, travelers must recheck bags at PDX (Portland), and if a plane is delayed, which happens due to bad weather, the airline is not responsible for the next connection because the

passenger ticket portfolio is not integrated. Until recently, a traveler takes PenAir to Portland and then they are on their own in terms of connecting to another airline. Once United Airlines left Crescent City, this problem became exasperated. PenAir recently ceased service to DNCRA leaving zero service.

Medford Airport is also problematic because to fly to distant locations, most tourist must leave Crescent City for Medford airport around 6a.m.. This makes it necessary to stay at a Medford hotel, or taking problematic night drives. There are differing views regarding Medford Airport service. Transit leadership is wary of extending service to Medford without further market research, although trip purposes to Medford and Grants Pass would likely include medical and shopping, as both cities feature better options than can be found in Del Norte County. Multiple hotel owners expressed a desire for some type of transit service to Medford Airport, other than rental cars. The State Park administrator stated that we should not ignore Crescent City Airport but we should service visitors from Arcata, San Francisco, Medford and Portland because this is a large proportion of the visiting population. It was also stated that the Medford area is important to the local parks. Some bus drivers recommended increased service on route 20 and to Medford for Greyhound, medical and shopping needs. Integrating service in Medford is another challenging factor, as is the constraints regarding how much baggage a rider would be able to carry. Possibly, collaborative relationships among geographically dispersed municipalities (e.g., Crescent City and Medford) could help bridge this gap. Such an arrangement would have to provide service without a loss of strategic focus onto the vital Crescent City core ridership.

### **Visiting the Redwood Should be a Class Act: Visitors Need Integration into Nature and an Integrative Array of Things to Do**

The Park System and Visitors Center envision providing guided ranger tours, and special transit vehicles that can make the visitor's experience rich. It was suggested that the natural sites be integrated with key cultural sites such as art galleries and microbreweries in order to create a total experience. As of now, whether it be due to lack of formal marketing efforts, non-descript bus stops, and/or cutaway buses that do not self-identify as public transportation, there exists a perception of lack of public transit infrastructure in the area to meet these needs effectively.

## **Consumer Challenges Navigating Greyhound from Crescent City**

There appears to be a paucity of information, and potential riders have trouble obtaining correct guidance and tickets. Passengers cannot purchase tickets or get service information at the Cultural Center and must instead go the RCTA office to purchase tickets within Crescent City. It was recommended that RCTA put up a FAQ page on its website to help alleviate this confusion. This issue with no staff at Cultural Center exacerbates this problem. For example, Arcata and Eureka both feature staffed ticket and baggage service for Greyhound at their transit centers, which allows for the printing of tickets and direct dissemination of information. If RCTA someday invested in the mobile dispatch center/ticket booth that could be hauled to and setup at Cultural Center daily that would improve the situation.

## **Partnering with Amtrak**

Amtrak serves as a natural supply chain in terms of bringing in national and global visitors and they are able to promote destinations within their website. Developing such partnerships are potentially valuable. Same constraints as noted above, with lack of staff at the Cultural Center affect any possibility to Amtrak partnership. However, RCTA can adjust their schedules on Route 20 to better service the several Amtrak buses that arrive/depart Arcata during the daytime.

## **Coordination between RCTA's Website and Printed Schedule**

It was mentioned that these two information modes are not always the same and it was recommended that alignment is important. RCTA has a professional staff of .3 FTE and frankly may never be able to do everything that other larger, well-funded and larger-staffed transit agencies can do. RCTA's administrative costs as a percentage of overall operating budget is remarkably low. RCTA Board could choose to incrementally increase the cost (billable hours) of the management contract to allow more work to be done and elevate the professionalism of the transit system, particularly in the planning, service oversight, and marketing realms.

## **Nonemergency Medical Service**

It is important that Crescent City citizens have access to specialized medical services and many of them are located outside the area. There is a small source of funding surrounding the designation of RCTA as the County's CTSA (Consolidated Transportation Service Agency) that RCTA may consider obtaining if it is strategically workable. Grants Pass and Medford appears to be a location that meets some of these medical needs, as does Arcata/Eureka.

## **State Park's Desire for Special Tourist Buses with Skylights, Tour guides, Apps and Mindful Consumer Experience**

The State Parks is interested in developing a tourist App and may consider adapting the Triplicate "Go Wild" app to better-fit riders' needs. Overall, they want to create a special experience for park visitors. State and National Parks may also be amenable to a service learning project involving College of the Redwoods to create such a tourism application.

## **State Park Media Specialists Hope to Collaborate with RCTA**

The expressed plan is to integrate RCTA service into the message they provide visitors. Many exciting opportunities exist from such collaborations if it is done without diverting resources from the RCTA core ridership.

## **Del Norte County/Crescent City and RCTA Doing Inadequate Job Capturing European Tourists**

According to State Park administrators, European visitors are not being serviced adequately. This may be related to the quality of outreach communication and product availability. Overall, Europeans have high expectations regarding public transit and these are currently unmet by RCTA and most of the other nearby public transit options in both CA and OR.

## **Tourists would Feel Uncomfortable and Unsafe with the Crescent City Bus Riding Population and Two Separate Systems May be Needed**

According to a State Park administrator, the behavior of some current riders makes for a potentially problematic experience for European Tourists who have invariably high expectations. The idea of two separate systems emerged. Behavioral issues within the RCTA system is a vital theme. RCTA management feel that this issue is acute but also involves much more than just RCTA, but the area as a whole with poverty and homelessness so visible.

## **Europeans Have High Awareness of the Redwoods and this Trip is their Bucket List as a World Heritage Site: The Importance of Social Media and the Role of Social Media**

Overall, Europeans are well educated in geography and have a high overall awareness of the Redwood Forests. Many are motivated and active travelers. The role of YouTube, Facebook, and travel sites are vital, as is other search engine and mobile media within their decision-making process. If RCTA can establish a solid presence, it can impact travel planning at the critical juncture before arrangements (and rental cars) are finalized.

## **Lack of Charter Options within the Area**

For groups wanting to travel together to a venue, this is currently not currently a viable or attractive option. This can be an opportunity for RCTA to follow FTA's stringent Charter Rules to become a local "charter" option for some travel needs. This could fill a need inside the community and potentially add an RCTA revenue source. RCTA may need to obtain additional vehicles if a robust chartering activity develops. While not likely to attract tourists per se, the changes needed within RCTA to deliver satisfactory "charter" type services would likely benefit any tourists that chose to use RCTA fixed route offerings as well. Enhanced driver and dispatch training, including ability to point out and explain local area attractions would be appreciated.

## **The Importance of Bus Stops and Customized Signs at the State Park**

### **Locations**

The State Park is extremely interested in RCTA bus stops and shelters to facilitate visitation. It is important for them to have stops that conform aesthetically to their parks and they are willing to collaborate within this process. An example is the recent initiation of bus service to Prairie Creek State Park. The park provided custom, wood carved bus stop benches at the bus stops but refused to allow RCTA to install its normal branded bus stop sign. Some folks swear there is not bus stop at the park because the wood carved bench “blends in” and doesn’t appear to be a bus stop. Concerns were raised regarding safety issues due to the transit dependent riders.

### **Buses Have Left a Bus Stop Ahead of Schedule**

This appears to be a rare occurrence among participants and an active RCTA rider shared this experience. RCTA historically lacks effective tools to monitor its service and prevent drivers from committing these types of infractions. Like most transit agencies in the “old days”, RCTA only become aware of a problem if someone takes time to call in a complaint. This issue of “running hot”, or the bus arriving and leaving ahead of printed schedule is likely a combination of a lack on managerial commitment over time. Schedules must be monitored for reality and adjusted annually or as needed. RCTA’s new managers began this process in July 2017 and now routes are running closer to the published schedules, but there is evidence that this key service planning process was not often undertaken in the past. RCTA’s operations contractor, First Transit, has pledged to provide a simple, low-budget automatic vehicle location (AVL) system as part of the new 2017 contract, but to date this system is just now being implemented. Should the First Transit product be viable, RCTA can integrate it into daily system monitoring and data collection. If the First Transit product is not implemented or does not have the features needed to be of use, then RCTA should seek funding for a commercial AVL product ASAP.

## **Feedback Regarding the Recent Expansion of Bus Passes: Many Riders Including Elderly and Disabled are Delighted, Some are Unaware of the Change**

Informants expressed gratitude regarding the increased affordability of travel. Some bus riders reported still paying the old \$30 fare for the new \$8 ride. A downside of the recent expansion of pass offerings is that some people, including drivers, think that there are too many versions of passes. Drivers find them cumbersome to process and they make exchange mistakes when selling them. It was recommended by drivers to employ only 3 passes and accompanying stickers to streamline the process.

## **New RCTA Fare Structure is Appreciated**

Informants within this study are happy with the cash fare changes. They facilitate more affordable and more frequent usage of the RCTA system. This was also expressed by senior riders. It is uncertain if the appreciation noted is also leading to additional system ridership.

## **Transfers are Decreasing, Fail to Call in Transfers, and Ridership Corruption Occurs**

There are fewer transfers put into the fare boxes due to the advent of the bus passes. Some riders cheat with transfers and use them more times than allowed, or obtain them from other passengers. Some bus drivers refuse to call ahead for transfers, while other will take this step. **First Transit should closely monitor the latter situation and apply firm discipline to any driver who refuses to call in transfers at the end of each loop.** This is a core part of the job, critical to rider satisfaction, and failure to perform this task should result in serious discipline.

## **Tricky to Enforce Disabled and Elderly Identification When Taking Fares**

Bus drivers expressed that it is embarrassing to ask someone if they are disabled, or a senior, and this should be beyond their job scope. Associated embarrassment extends to both sides of the exchange dyad, riders and drivers. It appears that there lacks an objective and streamlined process to make this determination, provide the correct fare to the corresponding segment, and it is difficult to make this determination based upon inspection. There also appears to be a significant amount of fraud where passengers incorrectly designate themselves as disabled. The problem is exacerbated by RCTA's size and governance model, as there currently is no sustainable model for requiring disabled passengers to prove a disability and receive some sort of proof card that they can show to drivers upon demand. This issue also deeply impacts RCTA Dial-A-Ride which is primarily for people whose disabilities prevent them from using fixed route. Without a process for verifying disabilities and issuing "eligibility" cards, the system is vulnerable to fraud and does put much pressure on the drivers. It is possible that the aforementioned formation of a CTSA for RCTA could provide extra funding to support a formal, professional eligibility determination program. This idea merits further consideration.

## **Service to Social Security Office Requires Walking**

It is mentioned that RCTA stops at a relatively long walking distance (1-2 blocks) from the Social Security Office, located at 500 Hoover. Seniors and other patrons choose to walk through tall grass in order to get there quicker, or to travel to the next destination.

## **Perceived Lack of Dial-A-Ride Service: Change in Bus Vehicle Mode is Viewed Favorably**

RCTA riders expressed that there used to be more service, and it was more flexible for users with the Will Call policy. One rider assumes that it is necessary to reserve Dial-A-Ride 5 days ahead of time and a reservation will likely be canceled if one does not call each day across these 5 days to confirm the ride. Participants view the emergent use of smaller sedans as more efficient and

better than past modes. It appears that RCTA and its contractor have tightened the rules on what formerly was an “anything goes” Dial-A-Ride operation and some riders are upset with the newer procedures which were meant to control growth in DAR and steer folks back to fixed route when possible. This resistance to enforcement of industry-standard DAR operating procedures is normal and a natural byproduct of setting and enforcing rules to control costs.

### **Tracking No Show Dial-a-Ride Behavior**

Participants suggested that RCTA track no show behavior in order to allocate resources optimally. This was finally made possible in the last year with the installation of First Transit’s new automated paratransit scheduling software. All rider activity is now searchable and management can easily produce patterns of no-shows or late cancels for disciplinary action. The RCTA Board must first approve a fair but firm set of policies on use of the DAR then empower staff to enforce industry best practice standards including suspensions.

### **Helpful Drivers and Comfortable Buses: One with Steep Staircase**

RCTA drivers are generally seen as caring and helpful providers of information. Many informants think that they are great. Participants share that the buses are comfortable, once on the bus. However, many of the buses have steep staircases. This is problematic for many people with joint flexibility challenges to navigate, and they find this to be scary. This is specifically a problem with the RCTA cutaway buses deployed on the regional routes. All regional route cutaways are “high-floor” and more difficult to board and alight to/from. A trade-off is that riders love the high ride and better visibility once they are inside the bus. Riders expressed that they like the low-floor cutaway buses used on Crescent City local routes, and also the newest RCTA Dial-A-Ride bus, a small sedan custom built for accessibility. Older participants expressed this. It was suggested that bus-driving trainees drive their routes as part of the learning process before they finish training.

## **Some Drivers Not Accommodating Older Passengers who Request Restroom Usage**

RCTA serves the elderly population who need access to medical care in Eureka via the nearly 2 hour-long trip from Crescent City to Arcata. There are two spots with restrooms where drivers can, and often do stop at along the way (Klamath and Orick). However, if a route is late, drivers may not want to escalate the problem by stopping for a restroom break. Such stopping likely threatens adherence to the schedule. This is a long route to lack restroom access, especially for elderly passengers. The buses that would be the best fit for Route 20 (over the road, Greyhound type coaches) and feature restrooms are far beyond RCTA's sustained funding ability to purchase. There simply isn't enough money for "real" buses, either on the regional routes or on the Crescent City Locals, and this restroom problem on the regional routes is one symptom.

## **Inconsistent Service Regarding Lifts**

Bus drivers struggle to keep up with schedules and sometimes there are more lift requests than there is time. It was stated that wheelchairs slow-down the buses progress and adds stress to the timeliness objectives. Drivers are also in the position to have to ask people to move away, and they must prioritize among requests. There is an inconsistency in the way drivers interpret and implement such policies. Lower-floored buses are an improvement as they do NOT require drivers to get out of the bus to help service the wheelchairs, but unfortunately they do not work at all bus-stops because of the grade angles along sidewalks and curbs. This land use issue is beyond RCTA's control but impacts operations every day. RCTA should work to educate local staff at the City and County on accessibility difficulties that transit encounters.

## **Change Flagging Stops to Real Stops, Bus-Stop Suggestions and Please Place Benches at All Stops**

These suggested changes would likely add significant convenience for riders, help new riders adapt to the system, and help facilitate RCTA's branding. It is recommended that signs be put

alongside each stop. It is suggested that RCTA consider adding a stop at Inyo and Washington, between Seagull Village and Pacific Townhouses. To RCTA's credit, almost all bus stops within Crescent City have bus stop signs. However, most bus stops outside Crescent City do NOT have signs. This is likely due to the difficulty and time investment required to obtain Caltrans's approvals for bus stops in state highway right-of-way. RCTA staff is working on this project.

## **About the Researcher**

Dr. Jon M Shapiro has been an active marketing research consultant for 18 years, specializing in mass transportation. He has published in a number of top academic journals including The Journal of Consumer Research, The Journal of Relationship Marketing, The Journal of International Business Studies, The Journal of Leadership and Strategy, and The Journal of International Marketing. He earned a PhD in Marketing at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and an MBA in Finance, and an M.S. in Information Systems/Marketing at the University of Colorado. His clients include Petaluma Transit, Santa Maria Area Transit, the Metropolitan Tulsa Transit Authority, the Jamaica Bay Council and Littlefield Advertising, Inc. Dr. Shapiro is a Professor and Department Chair of Marketing at Northeastern State University, and a Lecturer at the University of Arkansas, Oklahoma State University, and the Upper Volga Institute. Dr. Shapiro's research on Transformative Mass Transportation Planning (TMTP) has helped to facilitate dynamic results within California including significant increases in ridership, improved stakeholder relationships, and enhanced ridership satisfaction. He is in the process of coauthoring a key TMTP paper.

## Resume (partial)

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### **EDUCATION**

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
Ph.D. in Marketing, May 1997  
Concentrations in Statistics and Psychology

University of Colorado at Denver  
M.S. Degree in Marketing, May 1989  
Concentration in Management Information Systems

University of Colorado at Denver  
M.B.A. Degree, May 1988  
Concentration in Finance

State University of New York at Geneseo  
B.A. Degree in Geology, December 1980  
Minor in Anthropology

### **INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE (Consulting)**

Petaluma Transit, Transformative Mass Transportation Market Research (2009-2014).  
Extended our work on TMTP research, through studies focusing on student and senior citizens. Key insights helped guide management decisions on an array of strategic issues including routing, bus services, anti-bullying processes, and integrated marketing communications, etc. Insight provided through this research helped facilitate an increase in ridership as well as enhanced stakeholder empowerment.

Santa Maria Area Transit and Petaluma Transit, Transformative Mass Transportation Market Research (2004-2010). Conducted a series of TMTP studies that focused on student and senior citizens. Gained insight into riders' service problems and facilitated new ways of service positioning. Worked with management and advertising agency

within promotional and outreach campaign. Overall, this work helped increase satisfaction, segment empowerment, and ridership numbers.

Metropolitan Tulsa Transit Authority, Marketing Research Consultant, 1997-Present. Conducted a series of qualitative studies focusing on key segments including: senior citizens, disabled riders, growing ethnic groups, and advisory board members. Conducted annual base-line survey studies to benchmark performance, and to determine how riders believe scarce resources should be allocated. Directed an innovative qualitative project called "The Ambassador Program" where riders kept journals to chronicle their lived experiences. Conducted studies to aid in the development of services to new industrial parks, neighboring cities and other new locations.

Littlefield Advertising, Inc, 1998-2001. Supervised and analyzed data designed to help determine Tulsa's position as a place for living, business and economic development.

Jamaica Bay Council, Research Coordinator, 1977-1979. Environmental group serving the City of New York. Received the "Presidents Award for Environmental Protection." Conducted research responsible for the designation of a 540 acre urban wilderness area. Supervised 40 youths in the reclamation of two parks and in the construction of a community planting garden within an urban ghetto. Conducted educational tours within a local estuary.

Boulder Center for the Visual Arts, Strategic Marketing and Research, 1987-1990. Involved with the production and sales of the Thirteenth Street Journal, an artistic/cultural monthly magazine which doubled in size during this time period. Conducted qualitative and survey studies to better determine the direction Boulder wanted this museum to go.

Baker Hughes Inc., Geological Consultant, 1987-1990. Between semesters, worked on the two deepest and most expensive wells ever drilled in North America. Brought in to evaluate key pay-zones and to manage (and program) a computerized data unit which integrated geologic, engineering and environmental information. Worked as a liaison between the companies' geology, engineering, and strategic management departments. In addition, helped to evaluate the impact of volcanic activity on oil storage facilities in Cook Inlet, Alaska during a series of major eruptions.

Stearns Well Services, Geological Consultant and Regional Sales Representative, 1981-1986. Geologist on over 100 natural gas and geothermal, wildcat wells at domestic and international locations (i.e., five continents). Clients included Amoco, Chevron, Arco, Gulf and Penzoil. Responsible for the Denver territory from 1/84 to 6/86.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

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## **COMPETITIVE PAPERS (international proceedings)**

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### **INVITED PAPERS**

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Jon M. Shapiro (2007), "Transformative Understanding of Student Riders: A Proactive Approach to Mass Transportation" at the Central California, Board of Transportation Meeting.

### **BOOK REVIEWS PUBLISHED WITHIN PEER REVIEWED JOURNALS**

"The Handbook of Qualitative Research in Marketing:, edited by Russell W. Belk. The Journal of Business to Business Marketing, 2008.

"Preparing For Electronic Commerce in Asia," by Douglas Bullis (Quorum Books, Westport, CT, 1999, 275pp)" in The Journal of Business to Business Marketing, Volume 7, Number 1, 2003, P. 73-76.

"Trust in Organizations: Frontiers of Theory and Research:, edited by Roderick M. Kramer and Tom R. Tyler, in The Journal of Business to Business Marketing, Volume 3, Number 2, 1995, P. 101-103.

## **RESEARCH GRANTS**

Metropolitan Tulsa Transit Grant (1999-2003), "Basic Research in Mass Transportation". This stipend has helped fund my students' research presentations at the AMA Conferences and to fund my mass transit research program.

Northeastern State University Mini-Grant, 1999-2001 (2-year), "Economic Development through Entrepreneurship: A Test of Key Propositions". I am collaborating with colleagues at the University of Miami where we are combining data-sets in order to address methodological issues.

Northeastern State University Mini-Grant, 1997-98, "Ethnic and Non Ethnic Entrepreneurs in Small Businesses: A Comparative Approach.

## **KEY RESEARCH IN PROGRESS**

"Transformative Mass-Transportation Planning as a Best Practice: Why this Approach is Needed" We are determining which outlet would have the best impact in terms of disseminating the knowledge within the Planning Community.

"Structural Cultural Knowledge Theory and Key Declarative Knowledge: An Examination of International Business Education and Chinese "Sea Turtles" This paper has been invited by the editor to be submitted to the Journal of Teaching in International Business.

"Economic Development Through Strategic Entrepreneurship: What is a Place?" With Gopalkrishnan R. Iyer. And Arun Sharma: positioned for the Journal of Marketing.