



# 2017 APTA AdWheel Award Submission

## Who was the target audience for this entry?

Leading up to the changes our focus was **current riders**, to ensure people who relied on our system knew the changes were coming and felt comfortable with their new routes, minimizing the resistance to change. We also wanted to communicate the new benefits of the system to the **broader community**, attracting new ridership.

Our key messages were that we were building an improved system with:

- **Extended hours** (increasing service two hours each day of operation)
- **More direct routes** (routes that previously wound through neighborhoods would now be on main arterials, creating shorter trip times)
- **Increased frequencies** (buses will come to many stops every 30 minutes instead of every hour)
- **Improved Technology** (GPS locators enable a new bus tracking website and free onboard Wi-Fi)

## What was the situation/challenge for creating this entry?

More than ten years had passed since the last comprehensive service operations analysis was conducted at Ben Franklin Transit (BFT). Also, due to the loss of funding, a large service reduction was implemented in 2010. After five years of economic recovery and a new management team at BFT we were in the financial position to start reinvesting in the fixed-route system. Both BFT management and the Board of Directors were fully aware that the 2010 service cuts had a major impact on ridership. BFT looked at this improved position as an opportunity to conduct a comprehensive review of our services and respond to the needs of our growing community. We set out to design a strategic approach that is financially sound and sustainable, while addressing the needs of our region.

## What was the strategy/objective of this entry?

1. **Understand the regional demand for transit.** What is the market for transit and what type of services will best meet the mobility needs of our residents?
2. **Develop effective transit services.** Design services that cost-effectively align our offerings with the demand.
3. **Increase ridership and revenue in the system.** Design a transit system that is attractive and efficient in carrying passengers to increase productivity and return on investment.
4. **Design a multimodal approach to delivery.** Understand the history, role and utility of existing services, and design services that are integrated both in operation and fare structure.
5. **Increase equity and sustainability of the system.** Ensure our services are financially sustainable and provide equal access and cost structure to all communities.

## What results/impact did this entry have? (i.e. increased ridership, higher sales, greater public awareness, etc.)

- Increased operating hours of fixed route system by **two hours each day**
- Added approximately **26,000** revenue hours to fixed route, roughly a **19% increase**
- **Reduced trip times** between cities and to many of our highest density employment areas
- **Eliminated forced transfers** and multiple routes
- Made frequency consistent all day and created **15 minute frequencies** at transit centers and along many of our busiest corridors
- Added **Automatic Vehicle Locators** and passenger counting technology, which will improve operational efficiency and allow a more informed, data-driven transit planning process
- Increased social media followers by over **5,200 percent** and monthly reach from **11 to 149,036**

## Please tell the judges why this entry was submitted and why it should win an AdWheel Award.

This was the first major service change in 10 years at BFT. It included a comprehensive study and redesign of our entire fixed route system, which had 2,419,818 boardings in 2016. Almost every route had significant changes. Throughout the process we proactively connected with the public and with the community. We created a project website ([www.bftplan.org](http://www.bftplan.org)), held numerous open houses, and launched a very successful media, social, and advertising campaign. The launch week went very smoothly with very few complaints and lots of positive feedback from the community and employees.

**We're going places.**



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## Comprehensive Service Plan Study

In 2016, Ben Franklin Transit set out on a path to improve public transportation in the Tri-Cities. The goal was to complete an in-depth study of the current state of the system and to make recommendations that could be implemented in 2017. The process would be impossible to complete without robust input from our riders and the community. Public “open house” workshops were held throughout the year and community members provided feedback about the current transit program and helped craft a vision for the future.

Based on input from the public, as well as the expertise of nationally recognized transit consultants, a plan was developed to move BFT into the future.

Staff attended **81** partner agency meetings.



Reached out to

**108** groups

**39** schools

**5** organizations

**25** businesses



**11** open houses were held around the Tri-Cities to show the public the new routes



**We're going places.**

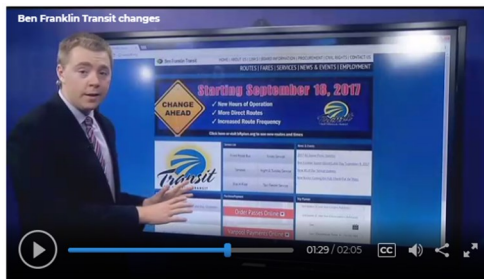


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## Current Riders

An aggressive communications campaign was planned to reach current riders. Leading up to the changes, we:

- Placed numerous media stories



- Advertised and placed fliers on the buses in English and Spanish

- Developed targeted digital ads, geofencing our transit centers to serve ads to riders
- Provided frequent updates to our project website, [www.bftplan.org](http://www.bftplan.org)
- Placed signage on affected stops
- Produced route maps showing all the individual routes and schedules in hard copy and digitally
- Set up a booth at the county fair
- Wrote a script for operators to say on all routes during county fair service and in the week before the changes

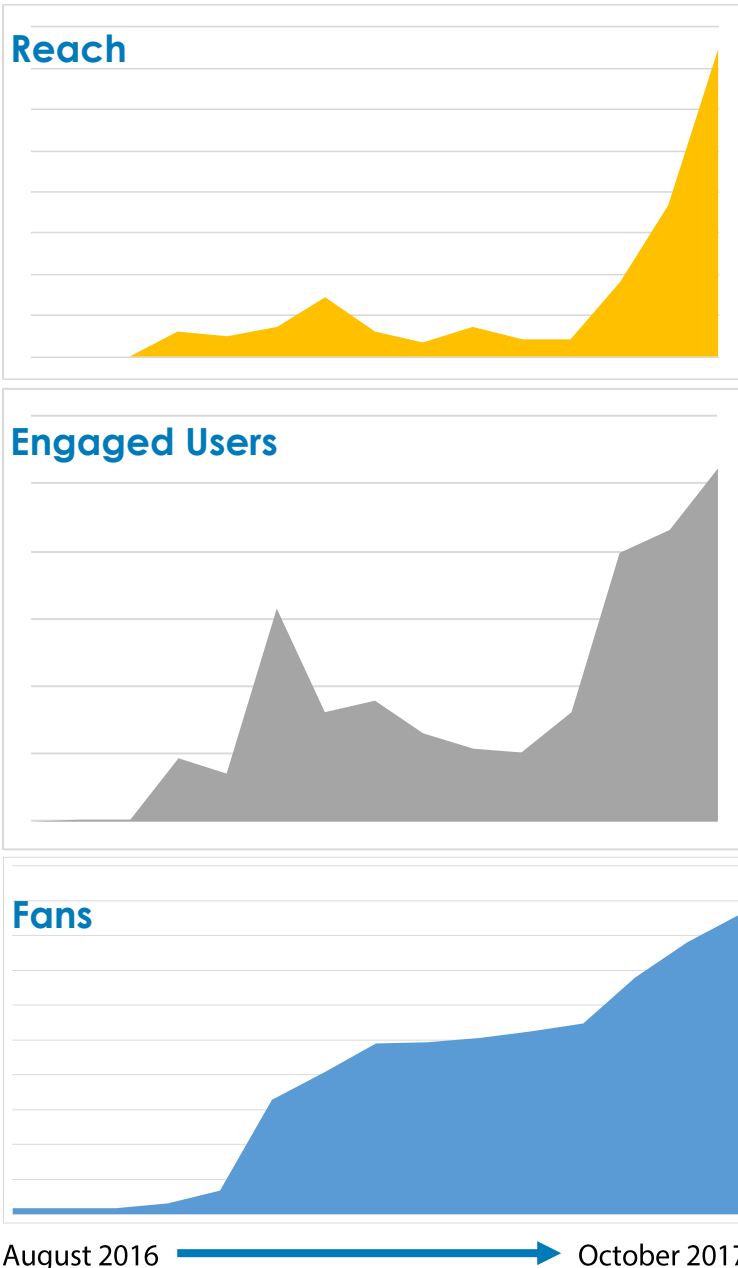
## We're going places.





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## Social Media



Social Media was used to convey all of our changes to our customers by providing weekly updates. We also used social media to push the public to our BFTplan.org website. We saw a huge increase in Social Media following both on Twitter and Facebook and saw an increase in feedback as well through these mediums.

Liked ▾

Following ▾

Share

...

**Ben Franklin Transit**  
Published by Daniel Elliott [?] · September 13 · 🌐Next week is when all of our new routes will start! We will have BFT Ambassadors at Three Rivers, Knight Street and 22nd Ave Transit Centers to help you with any questions. Riding the bus will also be FREE next week so if you need something to do, ride a route with us!  
<http://bit.ly/BFTChanges>**Changes Coming to Ben Franklin Transit**  
Many changes are coming to BFT in the next few months as part of our Comprehensive Service Change. This includes changes to our hours of operation, changes to fixed routes, and frequency of fixed r...  
BFTPLAN.ORG

2135 people reached

Like   Comment   Share

Chad DeMeyer, Amanda Tipton and 30 others   Chronological ▾

26 Shares

*“As we continue to grow, transportation access constraints are looming that will affect the growth of high-tech business clusters, agricultural production centers, and retail and entertainment districts. Ben Franklin Transit is one of the keys to ensuring the ongoing competitiveness of the region in attracting new business to Washington state.” -Carl Adrian, President & CEO Tri-City Development Council (TRIDEC)*

## We're going places.



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## Launch Week

During launch week, all BFT administrative and customer service staff were on the platforms of transit centers, helping to answer questions and guide riders to their new routes. Large-scale system maps were developed so ambassadors could easily show riders how the new system worked.

Marketing spoke with news directors at all TV and radio stations and the local newspaper. Media interviews were planned with our Board Chairman and all outlets covered it.

Ads were produced by BFT focusing on the new technology offered with the service change. These technology ads included social media posts, fliers, and mention in commercials.



Several members of Ben Franklin Transit's Board of Directors attended a launch event on the morning of Sept 18 with members of local businesses and community organizations.

## To help foster goodwill during the changes, launch week was also a **Free Fare Week!**

Launch day for service changes was also the launch day for our new, mobile responsive website, with improved trip planner and real-time bus tracking app.

The screenshot shows the Ben Franklin Transit website. The header includes the logo and navigation links: HOME | ABOUT US | LINKS | BOARD INFORMATION | PROCUREMENT | CIVIL RIGHTS | CONTACT US. Below the header is a banner image of a bus and a car. The main content area is divided into three columns. The left column features the logo and a 'Rider Alerts' section with links like 'Route 47 Bus Stop Movement' and 'Why Ride BFT?'. The middle column has a 'Service List' table with categories like 'Fixed Route Bus', 'Vanpool', and 'Dial-A-Ride'. The right column contains 'News & Events' with links to 'Comprehensive Service Plan - Final Route Alignments' and 'Transit Development Plan'. At the bottom, there are links for 'Order Passes Online' and 'Vanpool Payments Online'.

The screenshot shows the Ben Franklin Transit mobile app. The top section features the logo and a large banner with the text 'WHERE'S Your RIDE?' and 'Get where you're going with real-time bus tracking and route planning.' Below the banner is a 'GO TO MYRIDE BFT' button. The bottom section is divided into two main areas: 'TRIP Planner' and 'RIDER alerts'. The 'TRIP Planner' section includes input fields for 'Starting Address', 'Ending Address', 'Date', and 'Time', along with a 'Get Directions' button. The 'RIDER alerts' section lists upcoming events like 'Thanksgiving Service - 11/14/2017' and 'Veterans Day Detour - Route 120 - 11/10/2017'. At the bottom, there is a status bar showing the time as 06:50 PM.

**We're going places.**





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## We're Going Places—New Rider Campaign

For our campaign to build community support and attract new riders, we decided to convey some of the destinations the bus could take you around town as well as how our services could be utilized for families. Our focus was on local businesses, attractions and educational opportunities.

Advertisements for the post launch ridership campaign were developed with the help of BHW1 Advertising from Spokane, WA using the theme "We're Going Places." Key audiences for the campaign included students from middle school through college and working families. Ads were produced for radio and television in English and Spanish.

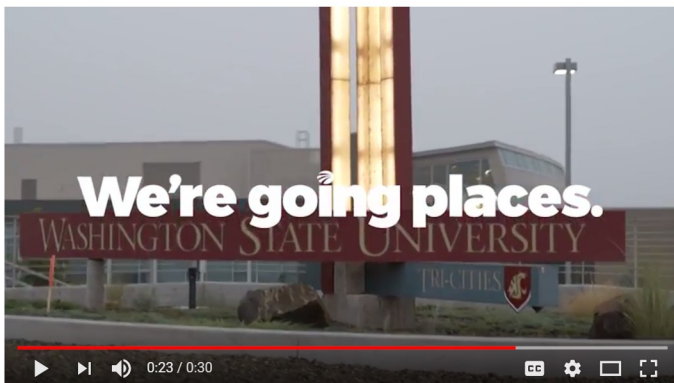


Route 225 GESA Stadium	Route 47 El Fat Cat Grill	Route 110 Tagaris Winery	Route 126 Howard Amon Park
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These are just some of the top-rated places you might want to go while you're in the Tri-Cities. That's why we made our routes more direct, added more frequent buses, and expanded our operating hours. It's easier to get where you're going on Ben Franklin Transit. Visit [www.bft.org](http://www.bft.org) for routing information.

### We're going places.

Our ad for the Tri-Cities Visitor Guide featured local businesses that had high ratings by reviewers. The businesses were excited to be part of the promotion.



Ben Franklin Transit - Joe is Going Places



Ben Franklin Transit - Llegue lejos

## TV Ads (click to view)



Ben Franklin Transit - Maria is going places

## Radio Ads



[Maria is  
Going Places](#)



[Joe is  
Going Places](#)



[The Ramirez Family  
is Going Places](#)

# We're going places.



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# We're going places.

**Ben Franklin Transit**  
1000 Columbia Park Trail  
Richland, WA 99352  
509-735-5100 | [www.bft.org](http://www.bft.org)

**Route 225**  
**Gesa Stadium**  
**Pasco**

