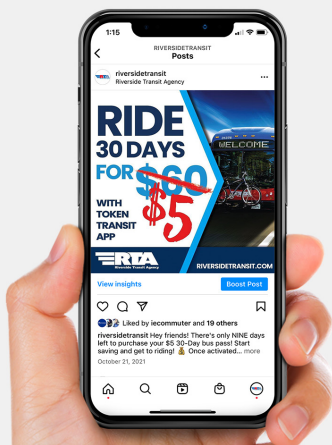


Riverside Transit Agency's

\$5 Promo

Boosts Sluggish Ridership



2022 APTA AdWheel Awards

Category: Best Marketing and Communications
to Support Ridership or Sales | Shoestring Tactic

Company Summary

The Riverside Transit Agency provides public transportation for Western Riverside County, operating 33 fixed routes, four express routes and Dial-A-Ride service. RTA's service area spans 2,500 square miles, among the largest in the nation. During 2021, RTA buses had 3.3 million boardings and operated over 529,000 revenue hours and eight million revenue miles under an annual operating budget of \$85 million. RTA employs approximately 650 employees including administrative, maintenance, operational and contracted operations staff. A total of 224 vehicles compose the fixed-route fleet with another 110 dedicated to paratransit services.

Project Abstract

Sometimes the best campaigns are the cheapest. That was case for the Riverside Transit Agency (RTA), which spent less than \$10,000 on a marketing and social media campaign that boosted sluggish ridership by nearly 20 percent and 40 percent in October and November, respectively.

Statement of Need/Opportunity

Public transit took a major hit during the pandemic when businesses shuttered, students stayed home and public safety awareness reached new levels. RTA was no exception. During the pandemic, ridership dropped to historic lows with our buses carrying just 30 percent of our normal passenger loads. During the fall of 2021, with signs of the pandemic thawing due to vaccination administration, RTA knew it was time to recoup some of that lost ridership. That's when we developed a promotion that offered customers 30-Day passes for just \$5. This was a major discount



WITH TOKEN TRANSIT APP

RIDE 30 DAYS FOR \$60

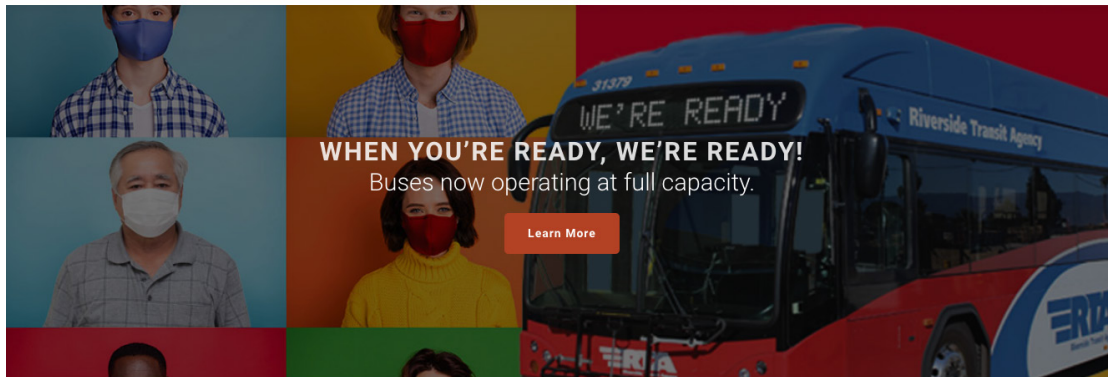
~~\$60~~
\$5

31376
WELCOME

Now through October 30, you can get a 30-Day Pass for just \$5 using the Token Transit app. Passes and tickets are also available on the RTA website. Dial-A-Ride customers can purchase a 10-ticket book for just \$5.

RiversideTransit.com/Five | (951) 565-5002

considering our general 30-Day passes are \$60 and the cost of a 30-Day pass for our express buses is as high as \$95. The primary goal of the campaign was to increase ridership among the general public, bringing back regular riders and introducing new customers to the benefits of riding the bus. We also have a mobile ticketing app, Token Transit, that we wanted to connect with the campaign to boost its usage. We are pleased to announce that our efforts were successful as we saw a 146 percent increase in pass sales, more usage of the Token Transit app, and a 19 percent gain in overall ridership during the campaign.



Get ready to save some money. Ride 30 Days for \$5!

Now through October 30, you can purchase one 30-Day Pass for just \$5. That's right, just five bucks! That's big-time savings. Getting your \$5 pass is easy. Just use the Token Transit app anytime to get your discount! Then, beginning October 1, you can activate the pass and you're off.

[Learn more](#)



Goals & Objectives

- To increase overall ridership by 10 percent
- To boost 30 Day pass sales
- To increase usage of our mobile ticketing Token Transit app
- To successfully promote the campaign to residents in our ridership area
- Promote the promotional fare as a positive way for people to get around
- Encourage the media to produce informative stories about the fall promotion
- Create an advertising campaign that reached out to all riders --- including Spanish-speakers

Targeted Audience

- New and existing passengers
- Spanish-speaking customers
- Media outlets
- Members of the public
- Board members and stake-holders

Solution/Project Summary

Our shoestring campaign was designed to attract riders with a simple message “Ride for 30 Days for \$5.” Bottom line, we wanted to remind riders that they were only a \$5 away from freedom to travel anywhere we go, anytime we operate. To increase usage of our mobile app, customers were required to download Token Transit to get the discounted pass. In order to

spread the word to our customers, we relied heavily on social media advertising from October 1 through 31. Ads were purchased on Facebook to promote the campaign, letting Facebook’s algorithm determine the best placement for ads on the platform. Instagram posts related to the campaign were organic.

In addition to the social media efforts, RTA posted hundreds of flyers inside buses, posted signs at our bus stops, promoted the reduced fares on our website, publications, rider alerts, and at large shelter posters across our service area.

The marketing material and events included:

- Social media organic and paid advertisements on Facebook/Instagram: Advertised the \$5 promotion on Facebook (which includes Instagram) from late September to late October.

We also did organic posts on Twitter prior to and during the October campaign.

- Marketing Fliers: Printed and distributed 6,000 “Ride 30 Day for \$5” promotional fliers, 8.5x11, English and Spanish language, 80 lb. gloss book.
- Notices were placed at bus stop with high ridership
- Shelter posters, approximately 47”x68”, at 10 major transit centers and bus stops
- Website rotator and article at RiversideTransit.com
- iAlerts (email alerts to approximately 4,400 subscribing customers)
- BusWatch alerts (text and email alerts to 2,000 subscribing customers)
- Token Transit (text messaging alerts to than 19,000 subscribing customers)
- Press release issued to several news outlets





- Transportation NOW meetings (community advocacy groups regionwide)
- Community event outreach (nine total events)
- RTA Reader (public newsletter to media, Board members, chambers of commerce, etc.)
- Internal communications via intranet and internal newsletters.

Limitations and Challenges

Part of the challenge of this shoestring campaign was limited funding to produce real results. We also wanted to identify what price point would get people back on the bus. After customer and employee surveys we determined that \$5 was an attractive price that would get people interested in riding the bus. We also wanted to successfully convince our customers to ride the bus in the wake of a pandemic that made public transit an unattractive option for people wanting to avoid crowds and public places. That's why we

simultaneously increased a safety campaign that relied on social media, website information, and rider alerts to remind customers that we regularly disinfect buses, require facemasks when boarding and ensure our drivers are healthy when they report to work.

Costs

- Half-sheet flyers (double-sided in English & Spanish): \$1,120.52
- Bus stop notices and large shelter posters: \$1,726
- Spanish translation for marketing materials: \$125
- Social media advertising: \$1,597
- Graphic design and website: \$671
- 30-Day passes: \$3,262.50
- Dial-A-Ride ticket books: \$1,284.65
- Postage: \$200.00
- Total: \$9,988.50

Evaluating Success/Lessons Learned

The ultimate success of this shoestring campaign was whether or not we boosted ridership. When the campaign ended, we were pleased with the results. During August, the month before we began teasing our promotion for the discounted passes, our ridership was around 295,000 boardings. When October ended, our ridership had skyrocketed to 350,600 boardings, a 19 percent increase. When you compare the numbers against the year before, the results are even more staggering. The total ridership for September (when we began pre-sale) was 319,063, that's a 17 percent increase from 2020. The total ridership for October was 350,608, again up 17 percent from 2020. The total ridership for

November was 328,665 a 36 percent increase from 2020.

We were also pleased with the response we had on social media. Facebook had a total of 39,388 accounts reached. The Facebook ad accumulated 1,671 post engagements. Results included 374 post reactions, 178 post shares, 40 comments and 1,063 clicks on the link for more information. In terms of organic reach, Instagram made up roughly 60 percent of our efforts, reaching 1,277 accounts.

The campaign was a success at increasing website traffic and increasing the number of Token Transit downloads through the website. Through the website, we received 3,143 hits entries during the one-month campaign. We sent out 3,625 emails to promote the campaign and 559 opened the email, which totals out to 18.3 percent email clicks.

The promotion was a hit among new customers. In fact, of the 2,564 passes sold as part of the campaign, 1,338 (or 52 percent) were to new accounts. More specifically, 346 new customers purchased a 30-Day pass during a September presale. During October, 992 new customers purchased a pass. Ridership remained steady into November as well.

When the campaign ended, and the results were overwhelmingly positive, RTA was thrilled to provide a great way for a new generation of customers to find a safe and affordable way to get around town. More than anything before, the \$5 passes ignited customers' interest in riding the bus and, with any luck, made them long-term customers.



RIDE 30 DAYS FOR \$60 ~~\$60~~ \$5
WITH TOKEN TRANSIT APP
RIVERSIDETRANSIT.COM

Get ready to save some money.

Now through October 30, Dial-A-Ride customers can purchase a 10-Ticket book for just \$5. That's right, just five bucks! That's a big-time savings. Simply visit RTA in person or online and get your discounted tickets today! You can start using your tickets beginning October 1.

TWO WAYS TO GET YOUR 10-TICKET BOOK FOR JUST \$5

- Buy it online at RiversideTransit.com
- Stop by RTA headquarters, 1825 Third Street in Riverside

Customers can also purchase a 30-Day Pass for just \$5 using the Token Transit app or the RTA website.

Don't wait too long to use your tickets because they are only valid through November 30. One purchase per customer. Unused tickets or passes, or partial passes, are non-refundable.

For more information, contact the Customer Information Center at (951) 966-5002 or visit RiversideTransit.com/Five.



VIAJA 30 DÍAS POR \$60 ~~\$60~~ \$5
CON LA APLICACIÓN TOKEN TRANSIT
RIVERSIDETRANSIT.COM

Prepárate para ahorrar dinero.

Desde hoy y hasta el 30 de octubre puedes comprar un pase de 30 días por solo \$5. ¡Así es, solo cinco dólares! Eso es un gran ahorro. Adquirir tu pase por \$5 es fácil. ¡Solo tienes que utilizar la aplicación de Token Transit en cualquier momento para obtener tu descuento! Después, a partir del 1 de octubre, puedes activar el pase y ya está.

AQUÍ TE EXPLICAMOS CÓMO COMPRAR Y UTILIZAR TU PASE DE \$5

- Descarga la aplicación de Token Transit en TokenTransit.com/app.
- Compra tu pase de autobús de \$5.
- Cuando subas al autobús, asegúrate de que la aplicación esté abierta y que el pase sea visible, coloca el teléfono sobre el validador y espera el pitido.

SI NO TIENES UN TELÉFONO INTELIGENTE

Si no tienes un teléfono inteligente, se puede realizar la compra a través del sitio web de la RTA o en nuestra oficina ubicada en 1825 Third Street en Riverside. Los pases con descuento no estarán disponibles para la compra en los puntos de venta de pases.

Los clientes de Dial-A-Ride también pueden aprovechar los descuentos comprando un talonario de 10 boletos por solo \$5. Los boletos de Dial-A-Ride también se pueden comprar en el sitio web o en nuestra oficina de Riverside.

NO ESPERES DEMASIADO

No esperes demasiado para activar tu pase o usar tus boletos porque solo son válidos hasta el **30 de noviembre**. Una compra por cliente. Los boletos o pases que no se utilicen, o los pases parciales, no son reembolsables.

Para más información, ponte en contacto con el Centro de Información al (951) 966-5002 o visita RiversideTransit.com/Five.