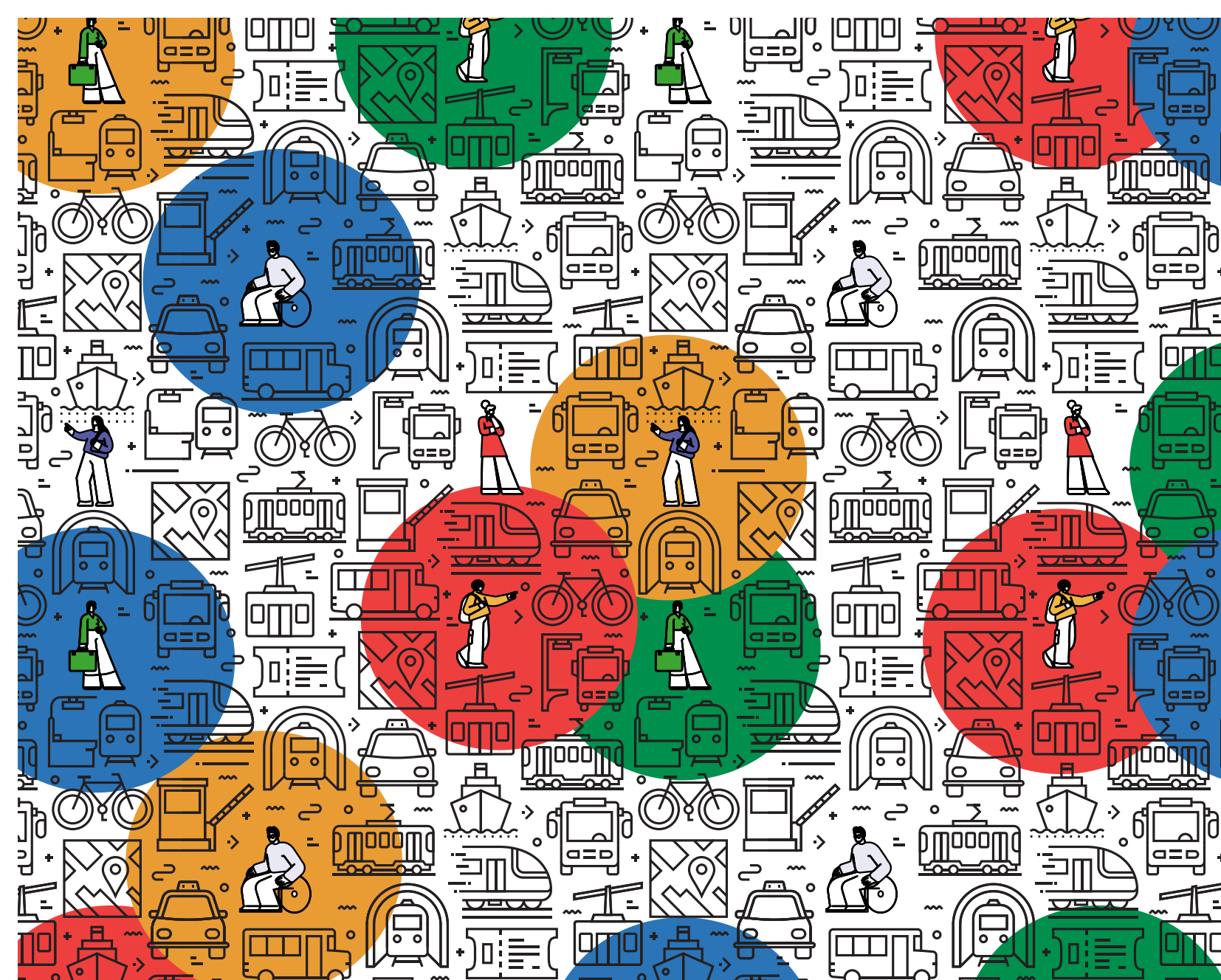




The National Transit Adaptation Strategy



SFMTA





The National Transit Adaptation Strategy

Phase II - Rider Personas

SAN FRANCISCO MUNICIPAL TRANSPORTATION AGENCY JUNE 2024

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Foreword

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated challenges that the transit industry was already facing, both in terms of ridership and financing, while also presenting new, unprecedented issues for public transportation agencies. It forced transit agencies like the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency to think deeply about public transportation, its purpose, and how to build on past success and look to the future.

With public transit ridership changing and subsequent revenues declining, the transit industry needs to identify ways to restore both trust and ridership as it turns its focus from pandemic response to economic recovery.

In 2021, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency was awarded a Federal Transit Administration competitive grant to develop a National Transit Adaptation Strategy. The primary objective for this project is the development of tools and data-supported initiatives that any U.S. transit agency may implement to rebuild confidence in public transportation and quickly drive-up ridership.

Phase II of NTAS was designed to provide insight to transit agencies across the U.S. and provide them with a tool, as the futures forecasts did in Phase I, to make decisions to sustain and grow ridership. This insight comes in the form of transit system rider personas, developed through assessment of existing public transit riders.

Simply put, public transit agencies across the country should adopt a persona-centric approach to address the diverse needs of various riders. By understanding the distinct preferences and requirements of Transit System Navigators, Versatile Travelers, Event Driven Explorers, and Transit Sympathizers, transit organizations can tailor their services and strategies to enhance the attractiveness of public transportation. In a world where individualized experiences matter more than ever, a persona-centric approach can make all the difference in the future of public transit.

Through improved reliability, fare affordability, integration with other modes, convenience, and targeted marketing, transit agencies can not only retain existing riders but also attract new ones. By providing the right service for the right persona, public transit systems can continue to play a vital role in reducing congestion, improving air quality, and ensuring sustainable mobility for urban, sub-urban and rural populations.

Acknowledgments

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency wishes to acknowledge the support and partnership of several organizations, agencies and individuals, who without this work would not be possible:

SFMTA Senior Management Team, SFMTA Staff, SFMTA Youth Transportation Advisory Board, The Federal Transit Administration, The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Transit App.

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The findings and recommendations of this report are SFMTA's and do not necessarily reflect the views of those listed below. Any errors are the authors' alone.

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Abstract

This report includes information related to the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency's (SFMTA) award of a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) national competitive grant to develop a National Transit Adaptation Strategy (NTAS). SFMTA, with its partners at the Institute for the Future (IFF), Clear Channel Outdoor, Intersection, Transit app, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and MIG/Civic Edge have developed a set of tools to support the public transportation industry's resiliency and adaptation through and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Work and travel patterns have shifted, some permanently, and as SFMTA and other transit agencies look to the future of transportation, they will need to consider a range of factors affecting transportation ridership and trust. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated challenges that the transit industry was already facing, both in terms of ridership and financing, while also presenting new, unprecedented challenges. Ridership is the key metric for any public transit organization; and national transit ridership was already falling well before the COVID-19 pandemic. With public transit ridership - and subsequent revenues - not recovering to pre-pandemic levels, the transit industry must identify ways to restore both trust and ridership as it turns its focus from pandemic response to economic recovery.

The goal of the NTAS is the development of tools and data-supported initiatives that any U.S. transit agency may implement to rebuild confidence in public transportation and quickly drive-up ridership. There are four key deliverables included in the strategy:

1. Futures report that realistically identifies what the future will bring to set a path toward the most probable future scenario.
2. Ridership profiles and personas that provide the industry with key market segments to manage their systems and support operational efficiency.
3. Specific marketing campaigns and messaging, which can be replicated and targeted to a particular rider persona and the future scenario anticipated by a transit system.
4. Ridership model for transit agencies to assess potential ridership scenarios based on a range of potential initiatives.

Executive Summary

In FY 2020, the Federal Transit Administration issued a NOFO “The Public Transportation COVID-19 Research Demonstration Grant Program,” and in FY 2021 awarded the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency funding (Grant # CA-2021-183/SFMTA Project C19) for a National Transit Adaptation Strategy. A summary of the Personas phase of this project is provided in this report.

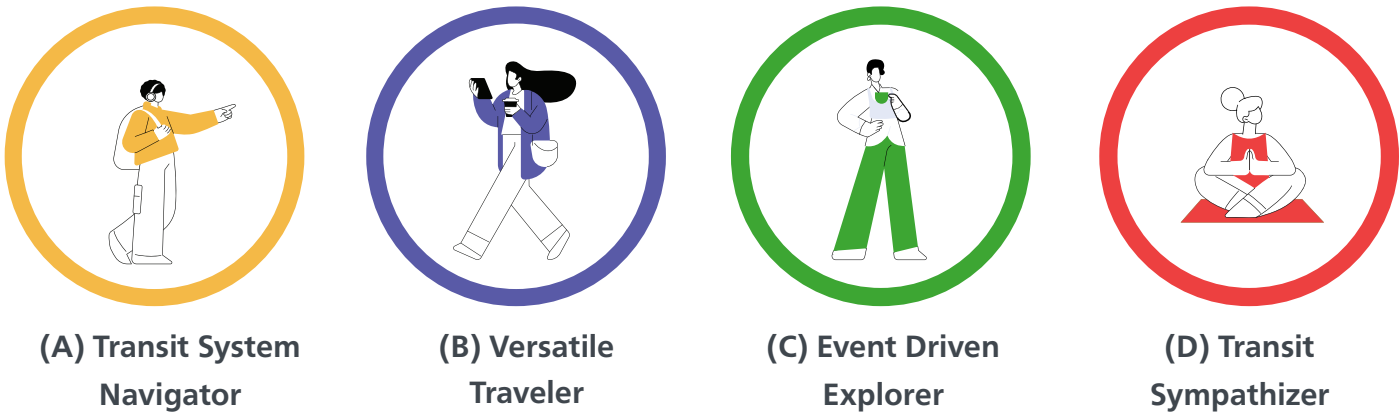


Figure 1.1 NTAS Personas

Public transportation is a vital part of American society, providing essential mobility services to millions of people each day. It is especially important in cities, where it can provide alternatives to driving, help to reduce road congestion, improve air quality, and make cities more livable. However, public transportation is also important in rural areas, where it can provide access to jobs, education, and healthcare for people who live in isolated or remote communities and face barriers to driving or car ownership.

The Value of Public Transportation

Public transportation offers many benefits, both to individuals and to society. Benefits to individuals include:

- **Affordability:** Public transportation is often more affordable than driving, especially when factoring in the cost of fuel, parking, and vehicle maintenance. For example, a study by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) found that the average American household can save an average of \$13,218 per year by using public transit instead of driving.¹
- **Convenience:** Public transportation can offer a more convenient way to travel than driving, especially in congested areas. For example, a study by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute found that the average driver in a large urban area spends 54 hours (about 2 and a half days) per year in traffic congestion.²
- **Sustainability:** Public transportation is more sustainable than driving because it reduces air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. For example, a study by the Federal Transit Administration found that public transportation on average produces 50% fewer carbon dioxide emissions per passenger mile than driving.³

Benefits to society include:

- **Reduced traffic congestion:** Public transportation helps to reduce traffic congestion providing an alternative to traveling by car. For example, a study by researchers at the National Bureau of Economic Research found a 47% increase in average traffic delays when public transit was not available during a 2003 operator strike.⁴
- **Improved air quality:** Public transportation helps to improve air quality by reducing air pollution from vehicles. For example, a report by the Natural Resources Defense Board estimated that the health costs associated with climate change and fossil fuel pollution cost over \$820 billion in 2020,⁵ costs that could be offset significantly by reducing emissions from the transportation sector which accounts for 38% of carbon dioxide emissions in 2023.⁶
- **An alternative to vehicle ownership:** Public transportation provides an option to navigate an area outside of the constraints that are associated with personal vehicles – like traffic, parking, storage, maintenance, and cost.
- **Reduced greenhouse gas emissions:** Public transportation helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the number of cars on the road. For example, an article by the UN identified that shifting from cars to public transportation can reduce carbon emissions by up to 2.2 tons per year per individual.⁷

Different public transportation users have different needs and preferences. Some riders rely on public transportation for their daily commute, while others use it for occasional trips to events or destinations. Some riders need to access specific amenities, such as schools, hospitals, or job centers, while others simply want to get around in a convenient and affordable way.

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1. American Public Transportation Association, "APTA Policy Brief: Transit Savings Grow As Auto Costs and Gas Prices Increase," September 27, 2023, 4.
 2. David Schrank et al., "2023 Urban Mobility Report" (The Texas A&M Transportation Institute, June 2024), 1, <https://mobility.tamu.edu/umr/report/>
 3. Federal Transit Administration, "Public Transportation's Role in Responding to Climate Change" (U.S. Department of Transportation, January 2010), 2, <https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/PublicTransportationsRoleInRespondingToClimateChange2010.pdf>.
 4. Michael L Anderson, "Subways, Strikes, and Slowdowns: The Impacts of Public Transit on Traffic Congestion," n.d., 15.
 5. "Report: Health Costs from Climate Change and Fossil Fuel Pollution Tops \$820 Billion a Year," May 20, 2021, <https://www.nrdc.org/press-releases/report-health-costs-climate-change-and-fossil-fuel-pollution-tops-820-billion-year>.
 6. "U.S. Energy Information Administration - EIA - Independent Statistics and Analysis," accessed June 11, 2024, <https://www.eia.gov/environment/emissions/carbon/>.
 7. United Nations, "Your Guide to Climate Action: Transport," United Nations (United Nations), accessed June 11, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/actnow/transport>.

Four Public Transportation Personas

Based on their needs and preferences, post-COVID-19 public transportation users can be grouped into four personas:

Transit System Navigator:

- **Characteristics:** The Transit System Navigator is an individual who relies on public transportation for their daily activities. They may not have access to a personal vehicle or may choose not to, and / or be unable to, drive. Transit System Navigators are experts in navigating the public transportation system and use it for a variety of purposes, including commuting to work, running errands, and socializing.
- **Needs:** Transit System Navigators need reliable and affordable service, as well as real-time arrival and departure information. They may also need discounted fares for low-income riders and seniors.

Event-Driven Explorer:

- **Characteristics:** The Event-Driven Explorer is a person who primarily uses public transportation for events and destinations where it is more convenient or efficient than driving. This may include sporting events, concerts, festivals, or destinations with limited parking. Event-Driven Explorers are typically familiar with how to use the public transportation system for a specific event. For this persona, an event is defined as a destination-driven trip and is inclusive of social and public occasions as well as daily commuters who use transit to get to and from work.
- **Needs:** Event-Driven Explorers need special services or promotions for events. They may also need real-time information and trip planning tools on how to get to and from events using public transportation.

Versatile Traveler:

- **Characteristics:** The Versatile Traveler is a flexible and adaptable person who utilizes a variety of transportation modes based on their specific needs and preferences. They may use public transit for some trips, cycling or walking for others, and ride-hailing services or car rentals for occasional trips. Versatile Travelers value convenience and efficiency, and they are always looking for the best way to get around.
- **Needs:** Versatile Travelers need convenient and efficient options, such as express buses or dedicated bike lanes. They seek information on which options best meet their needs at a specific time. They may also be interested in partnerships with other transportation providers, such as ride-hailing services.

Transit Sympathizer:

- **Characteristics:** The Transit Sympathizer is a person who rarely, if ever, uses public transportation. They may support public transportation in principle, but they prefer to drive for their transportation needs. Transit Sympathizers may use public transit for specific occasions, such as business trips or journeys to airports, but they do not see it as a viable option for their daily commute or leisure activities.
- **Needs:** Transit Sympathizers need to be educated about the benefits of using public transportation. They may also need incentives to try public transportation, such as free rides or discounted fares.

Transit System Types

In this report and for NTAS overall, SFMTA considers three main transit system types to support the identification of personas and the refinement of interventions that could be used to rebuild trust in transit.

1. Legacy transit systems to be those operating in major U.S. metropolitan areas since before 1955 and historically based upon a streetcar system or pre-existing rail network.

2. Emerging and transformative transit systems exist in mid-size and major U.S. metropolitan areas, began operating after 1955, and have seen significant growth and system expansion in the last 20 years.

3. Rural and connector transit systems are not in mid or major metropolitan areas but instead are a transit system that operates as a connector service, began operating after 1955, and serves less than 500,000 riders annually.

This classification was developed in partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Using information from the APTA Fact Book,⁸ FTA National Transit Database⁹ and ridership survey data from Transit App, SFMTA and MIT sorted transit agencies to further refine and test personas.¹⁰

Classification of public transit systems in the USA

Not all systems will neatly fit into these categories. These categories allow a way to understand a given transit system and evaluate its needs and opportunities.

Legacy	Transformative	Rural and Connector
A transit system operating +/- 1950	A transit system operating after 1955.	A transit system operating after 1955.
A transit system that historically was based on a streetcar or pre-existing rail	A transit system that is in a mid or major U. S. metropolitan area	A transit system that is not in a major U.S. metropolitan area or is a regional connector within a major metropolitan area
A system in a U.S major metropolitan area	A system that has seen significant system expansion or growth over the last 20 years	A system that serves less than 500,00 riders annually

Figure 1.2 Transit System Types: Legacy, Transformative, Rural and Connector

8. American Public Transportation Association, "2023 APTA Fact Book: Appendix A," Excel Spreadsheet, March 2024, <https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/2023-APTA-Fact-Book-Appendix-A-03.27.2024.xlsx>.

9. Federal Transit Administration, "2019 Metrics | FTA," 2019, <https://www.transit.dot.gov/ntd/data-product/2019-metrics>. Note: Information for metropolitan area size and ridership are from 2019, pre-COVID, as it is unclear if these have or when they will reset post-COVID3. Federal Transit Administration, "Public Transportation's Role in Responding to Climate Change" (U.S. Department of Transportation, January 2010), 2, <https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/PublicTransportationsRoleInRespondingToClimateChange2010.pdf>.

10. The authors acknowledge that not all systems will neatly fit into the categories used in this project. These categories provide a way to understand the differences among transit systems and evaluate its riders needs and opportunities to grow ridership.

How Any Transit System Can Use Personas to Attract Riders

Transit systems—whether they serve long established urban areas, growing regions, or more rural areas—can use personas to attract riders by focusing on improving the customer experience in a way that responds to the needs for each of the personas. Actions such as developing specific services and marketing campaigns tailored to the specific needs and preferences of each persona can go a long way to attracting lapsed or new transit riders.

Based on the agency type, transit agencies have a range of actions they can take to grow ridership among the different persona types.

Legacy and Transforming Transit systems can use personas to attract riders in the following ways:

- **Transit System Navigator:** City transit systems can attract Transit System Navigators by providing reliable and affordable service, as well as real-time arrival and departure information. They can also offer discounted fares for low-income riders, youth and seniors.
- **Versatile Traveler:** City transit systems can attract Versatile Travelers by offering convenient and efficient options, such as express buses or dedicated bike and transit lanes. They can also partner with other transportation providers, such as ride-hailing services, to offer seamless travel experiences.
- **Event Driven Explorer:** City transit systems can attract Event Driven Explorers by promoting special services or promotions for events. They can also partner with event organizers to make it easy for attendees to purchase tickets and travel to the event via public transportation.
- **Transit Sympathizer:** City transit systems can provide educational information to Transit Sympathizers about the benefits of using public transportation, such as reduced traffic congestion and improved air quality. They can also offer incentives to try public transportation, such as free rides or employer provided transit passes.

Rural transit systems can use personas to attract riders in the following ways:

- **Transit System Navigator:** Rural transit systems can attract Transit System Navigators by offering convenient and reliable service to key destinations, such as hospitals, job centers, and shopping centers. They can also offer discounted fares for low-income riders, youth and seniors.
- **Versatile Traveler:** Rural transit systems can attract Versatile Travelers by offering flexible and affordable transportation options. For example, they could offer on-demand transportation services or discounted fares for multiple riders.
- **Event Driven Explorer:** Rural transit systems can attract Event Driven Explorers by offering special services or promotions for events. They can also partner with event organizers to make it easy for attendees to purchase tickets and travel to the event via public transportation.
- **Transit Sympathizer:** Rural transit systems can provide educational information to Transit Sympathizers about the benefits of using public transportation, such as reduced travel costs and improved access to jobs, education, and healthcare. They can also offer incentives to try public transportation, such as free rides, discounted fares, or employer provided transit passes.

By understanding the needs and preferences of each public transportation persona, transit agencies can develop more effective services and marketing campaigns to attract and retain riders. This will help to ensure that public transportation remains a viable and sustainable option for everyone.

Report Background

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly exacerbated the existing challenges facing the U.S. transit industry, including declining ridership and financial constraints, while introducing unprecedented obstacles.

Ridership is a pivotal metric for any public transit organization, and national transit ridership was already on a downward trend before the pandemic. Factors such as low gas prices, aging infrastructure, and the emergence of ride-hailing services like Uber and Lyft had led to a continuous decline in ridership across the United States beginning in 2014. This decline in ridership has had a direct impact on revenues, making it imperative for the transit industry to regain both public trust and ridership as it shifts its focus from pandemic response to economic recovery. With shifts in work and travel patterns that may include permanent changes, transit agencies like the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) need to adapt and anticipate the future of public transit. The industry must explore innovative approaches to boost ridership and revenues, invest in long-term infrastructure renewal, and prioritize providing efficient public service.

In response to these challenges, SFMTA was awarded a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) national competitive grant to create the National Transit Adaptation Strategy (NTAS). Collaborating with partners including the Institute for the Future (ITF), Clear Channel Outdoor, Intersection, Transit app, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), SFMTA aims to develop a comprehensive strategic understanding and framework designed to help the public transportation industry navigate the ongoing pandemic and plan for the post-pandemic era.

The primary objective of this project is to equip U.S. transit agencies with tools and data-supported initiatives that will help rebuild public confidence in public transportation with a goal of sustaining and increasing ridership. The NTAS will deliver several critical components, including:

1. A futures report that offers a realistic outlook on the future, allowing transit agencies to prepare for the most probable future scenarios.
2. Ridership profiles and personas that identify key market segments for managing transit systems effectively, thereby enhancing operational efficiency. This report goes into the background, approach, and key findings from this phase.
3. Specific marketing campaign and messaging for a possible future scenario
4. A data-based ridership model that provides a quantitative intervention analysis on transit ridership enabling transit agencies to evaluate the impact of transit interventions on ridership.

The NTAS aims to empower transit agencies across the United States with the knowledge, tools, and strategies needed to rebuild ridership, increase public trust, and adapt to the changing landscape of public transportation.

Personas Development Background

SFMTA's research was initially based on a report titled "Public Transit: Rebuild Ridership by Rebuilding Trust," published by the international professional services consultant Accenture in July 2021. Accenture conducted their research during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2021 and was developed in response to the challenges that transit agencies were facing. The report intended to provide insight into the needs and concerns of public transportation riders and to develop recommendations for how transit operators can rebuild both ridership and public trust.

Accenture Research Report

Accenture noted that public transportation has been a vital part of urban transportation systems for centuries, providing essential mobility services to millions of people each day. However, they noted that the COVID-19 pandemic did have a significant impact on public transit ridership, with many people hesitant to return to using public transportation due to concerns about personal safety and health.¹¹

The study divided transit riders into four distinct groups:

- **Reliant passengers:** These passengers are anxious about using public transportation and rely on it for their commute or errands such as groceries, medical appointments, or childcare needs. They need to feel safe and have real-time information about vehicle occupancy and arrival times.
- **Reflective passengers:** These passengers are rethinking their travel patterns and want transit operators to address their health concerns. They value flexible fare options and the ability to plan and book trips easily.
- **Resilient passengers:** These passengers are infrequent transit users who are now working from home. They are looking for innovative services, such as on-demand transportation and micro transit.
- **Resigned passengers:** These passengers are likely retired or non-city dwellers who have little desire to travel. They may be interested in discounts and promotions offered through partnerships with other organizations.

The Accenture study also found that public transportation riders are more likely to use public transportation if they trust the transit operator. Trust is built through factors such as safety, reliability, and customer service.

Based on the findings of the study, Accenture recommended that transit agencies focus on the following to rebuild ridership and trust:

- **Address the concerns of riders:** Transit operators should focus on addressing the specific concerns of each type of rider. For example, they can provide enhanced safety measures, flexible fare options, and innovative new services.
- **Invest in technology:** Transit operators should invest in technology to improve the passenger experience. This could include things like real-time arrival information, mobile ticketing, and on-demand transportation services.
- **Partner with other organizations:** Transit operators can partner with other organizations to offer discounts and promotions to riders. This could help to attract new riders and encourage existing riders to use public transportation more often.

¹¹ SFMTA noted that each of the personas Accenture identified were highly sensitive to the concern around health and safety. While true during the COVID-19 pandemic, this assumption may not hold true post-pandemic.

Survey question: What future measures or technology interventions are desired by you?

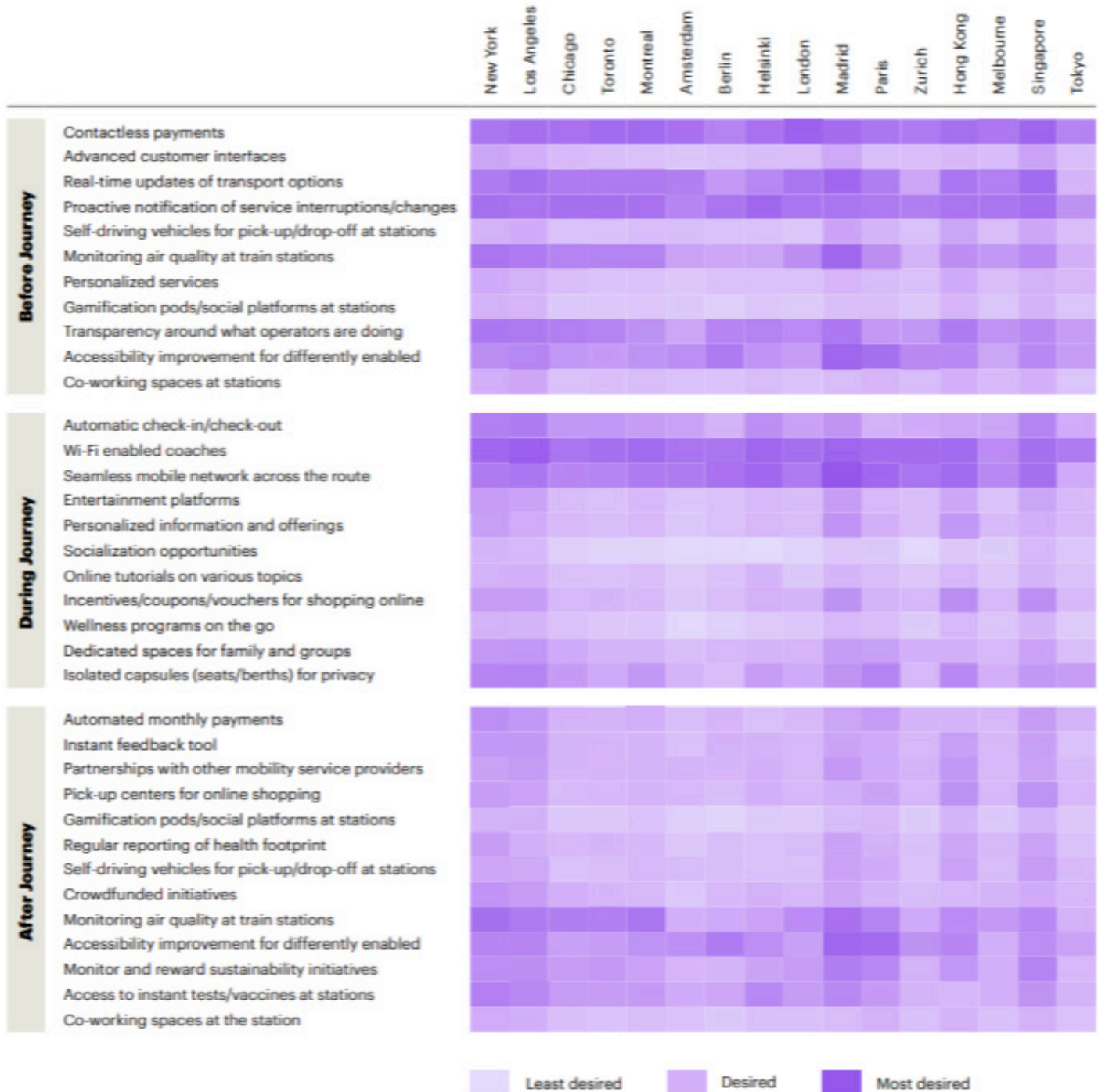


Figure 1.3 Accenture Research “Figure 5. Accenture research has revealed what public transit passengers want – and what they don’t”

By taking these steps, transit agencies can help to ensure that public transportation remains a viable and sustainable option for everyone.

In addition to the recommendations above, the Accenture report also emphasizes the importance of data and analytics. Transit agencies should collect

and analyze data on passenger usage, preferences, and concerns to better understand their riders and to develop targeted services and programs. By taking a data-driven approach to rebuilding ridership and trust, transit operators can create a more attractive and sustainable transportation system for all.

Limitations of Accenture's Research

While based on extensive data, the personas developed by Accenture were largely responsive to the pandemic and that immediate situation. SFMTA wanted to build upon this foundation to work toward a set of personas that would be responsive to the pandemic, but also to use in the long term as mobility patterns for potential ridership groups shift.

To accomplish this, the SFMTA partnered with MIT to review a national dataset of ridership data from another partner, Transit App. Using this data, MIT was able to create specific clusters of riders considering the data from numerous transit agencies across the United States. These clusters refined the Accenture personas into the final groups presented in this document. Information around these clusters by transit agency “type” are included as Appendix 6.

Persona Descriptions

Public transportation is a vital component of urban transportation systems, providing essential mobility services carrying people on over 7 billion trips a year.¹² However, not all public transportation users have common needs and wants. Different individuals have different preferences and behaviors when it comes to using public transit. Understanding these nuances is essential for transit agencies to develop effective services and marketing campaigns.

One way to categorize public transportation users is by persona. A persona is a fictional representation of a user group that private sector businesses often use to better understand their potential customers' needs, goals, and pain points. By developing personas, transit agencies can gain a deeper understanding of their customers and better tailor their services to meet their needs.

SFMTA have, with their partners, identified four key personas that emerge from the data on public transportation users in the United States:

- **Transit System Navigator:** The Transit System Navigator is an individual who relies on public transportation for their daily activities. They may not have access to a personal vehicle or may be unable to and/or choose not to drive. Transit System Navigators are experts in navigating the public transportation system and use it for a variety of purposes, including commuting to work, running errands, and socializing.
- **Event Driven Explorer:** The Event Driven Explorer is a person who primarily uses public transportation for events and destinations where it is more convenient or efficient than driving, such as a regular commute, sporting events, concerts, festivals, or destinations with limited parking and adequate public transit access. This persona uses public transit for one specific type of destination but does not typically consider transit for other destinations or trip types.
- **Versatile Traveler:** The Versatile Traveler is a person whose transportation preference is flexible and adaptable and who utilizes a variety of transportation modes based on their specific needs and preferences. They may use public transit for some trips, cycling or walking for others, and ride-hailing services or car rentals for occasional trips. Versatile Travelers value convenience and efficiency, and they are always looking for the best way to get around.
- **Transit Sympathizer:** The Transit Sympathizer is a user who rarely, if ever, uses public transportation. They may support public transit in principle, but they prefer to use a car for their transportation needs. Transit Sympathizers may use public transit for specific occasions, such as business trips or journeys to airports, but they do not see it as a viable option for their commute or leisure activities.

12. Jared Bonina, "Public Transportation Ridership Report: Fourth Quarter 2023" (American Public Transportation Association, March 4, 2024), <https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/2023-Q4-Ridership-APTA.pdf>.

Each persona demonstrates distinct characteristics and preferences when it comes to public transportation use. Understanding these differences is essential for transit agencies to tailor their services and marketing efforts effectively.

Reliance vs. Adaptability: Transit System Navigators heavily rely on public transit and have limited access to personal vehicles, while Versatile Travelers adapt to various modes based on convenience and need.

Event Driven vs. Occasional Use: Event Driven Explorers primarily use transit for specific occasions and events, whereas Transit Sympathizers rarely use transit, with their preference being personal vehicles.

Necessity vs. Choice: Transit System Navigators use transit out of necessity, while Versatile Travelers, Event Driven Explorers, and Transit Sympathizers often make choices based on preference or convenience.

Demographics: The personas encompass a wide range of demographics, with Transit System Navigators having a strong presence in urban areas, Versatile Travelers spanning middle to higher incomes, Event Driven Explorers seeking event-specific transit, and Transit sympathizers preferring car ownership.

Each of these personas has unique needs and preferences that transit agencies should consider when developing their services and marketing campaigns. For example, Transit System Navigators may be more interested in reliable and affordable service, while Versatile Travelers may be more interested in convenient and efficient options. Event Driven Explorers may be more likely to use public transportation if they are aware of special services or promotions for events, and Transit Sympathizers may need to be convinced of the benefits of using public transportation before they will consider switching from driving for some trips.

Understanding the distinct needs and behaviors of these four personas can guide transit agencies in developing tailored strategies to enhance ridership, promote sustainability, and cater to a diverse range of public transportation users.

Persona A: The Transit System Navigator

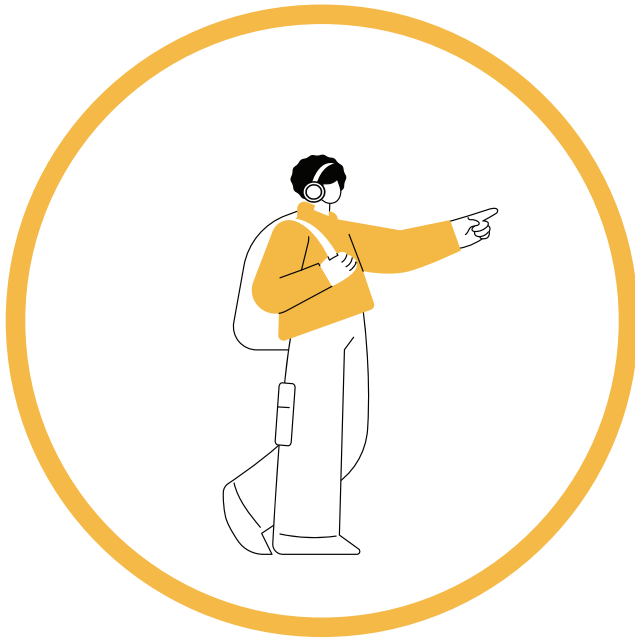


Figure 1.4 The Transit System Navigator

Persona Description

The Transit System Navigators represent a vital group of dedicated public transit riders who rely on public transportation for their daily activities due to a lack of access to a personal vehicle, the inability to drive, or the desire not to drive for some or all trips. They are skilled at navigating the transit system, making public transit their primary mode of transportation for commuting to work, running errands, and living their day-to-day lives.

Characteristics

The Transit System Navigators' connection with public transit is paramount. They rely on it for most of their trips and show expertise in navigating the transit systems they use most frequently. Research has shown that if individuals from this group gain access to a car, they may begin to use public transit less frequently,¹³ raising concerns about the continued support and usage of public transportation.

The Transit System Navigators epitomize the group who uses transit the most. Car ownership is not a part of their lives, and public transportation is a central aspect of their daily routine. Their reliance on public transit is a defining feature of their lifestyle, deeply integrated into how they navigate their community.

Demographics

The Transit System Navigators encompass a wide range of individuals from various age groups. They may include young adults in their 20s, such as college students or recent graduates, as well as individuals of all ages who prioritize public transit based on necessity rather than age.

Socio-economic class is often a key distinguishing factor for the Transit System Navigators. In areas where the cost of living is high, the ability to afford a car becomes a significant consideration. Their economic circumstances influence their decision to rely on public transportation as a more affordable option.

Role in Customer Experience Management

Transit System Navigators play a unique role in the context of customer experience management for public transit systems, as they represent a significant portion of existing riders and are the persona who use the system the most frequently and are most familiar with using transit. This group stands to benefit most from improvements to existing services and to introductions of new routes that open up options to access new destinations or to dramatically decrease journey times.

Goals

1. Reliable and affordable access to work and essential services.
2. Save on transportation costs compared to car ownership.
3. Advocate for improved public transit services to enhance convenience and efficiency.

13. Michael Manville et al., "Vehicle Access and Falling Transit Ridership: Evidence from Southern California," *Transportation* 50, no. 1 (2023): 303–29, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11116-021-10245-w>.

Importance

The Transit System Navigators are a crucial audience group for public transit services. They play a pivotal role in supporting the heart and soul of the transit system, particularly for essential workers. Their potential shift in behavior if they gain access to a car raises important considerations for public transportation systems, making this persona essential to the discussions about sustainable transit solutions.

Story

Aman is a Transit System Navigator. He lives in a big city and relies on public transportation for everything she does. He takes the train to work, runs errands by bus, and meets up with friends on the subway. Aman is an expert in navigating the public transportation system. He knows all the routes, transfer points, and fare options. He also knows how to deal with delays and cancellations.

Aman appreciates the reliability and affordability of public transportation. He knows that he can always count on the bus or train to get him where he needs to go. He also likes the fact that public transportation is a sustainable transportation option.

However, there are a few gaps that Aman faces in using public transportation. One gap is that the system can be crowded and uncomfortable during peak hours. There are additional concerns around feelings of public safety, especially at night when transit runs less frequently and there are fewer people riding. Another gap is that the system can be slow and inefficient. Aman often must spend a lot of time transferring between different modes of transportation.

Despite these gaps, Aman is a satisfied customer of public transportation. He knows that it is the most affordable way to get around his city.

How Aman's needs are reflected in public transportation systems

Public transportation systems have made significant progress in meeting the needs of Transit System Navigators. For example, many transit agencies now offer real-time arrival information and mobile ticketing.

This makes it easier for Transit System Navigators to plan their trips and be notified of delays so they can adjust their schedules to better utilize their time.

Additionally, many transit agencies are working to improve the reliability of their service. For example, some transit agencies are investing in new infrastructure and vehicles.

Gaps Aman faced in trying to use public transportation

1. Crowding: Public transportation systems can be crowded and uncomfortable during peak hours. This can be a problem for Transit System Navigators who need to commute to work or school at specific times of the day.
2. Inefficiency: Public transportation systems can be slow and inefficient when compared to a car. This is because Transit System Navigators do not always have a one seat transit option available and often have to transfer between different transportation modes or transit systems. They may also have to walk a long distance to or from transit on one or both ends of their journey.

Solutions

3. Reduce crowding: Transit agencies can reduce crowding by increasing the service capacity during peak hours, either by running larger vehicles or by running more frequent service.
4. Improve efficiency: Transit agencies can improve efficiency by timing transfers between routes and/or increasing service frequency required for riders to get to their destinations. They can also implement measures such as dedicated bus lanes and priority traffic signals to speed up bus travel.

By addressing the needs of Transit System Navigators, public transportation systems can make themselves more attractive and convenient for everyone.

See Appendix 1 – Transit System Navigator Persona (NTAS) for a one-page summary of this persona.

Persona B: The Versatile Traveler



Figure 1.5 The Versatile Traveler

Persona Description

The Versatile Traveler epitomizes individuals with an adaptable and versatile approach to transportation. They utilize various mobility options based on specific purposes and situations, making decisions that prioritize convenience, cost-effectiveness, and practicality. This persona is marked by flexibility, integrating modes such as public transit, bicycling, shared bicycle or scooters, ride-hailing services, and car rentals into their travel choices.

Characteristics

A defining characteristic of the Versatile Traveler is their ability to select the most suitable transportation mode for a given trip. They may not own a car but have access to alternatives like renting a vehicle when necessary. The decision to use a particular mode is often based on what works best for the specific purpose of the journey at that moment.

The key feature of the Versatile Traveler is their capability to meet their transportation needs efficiently. They might choose public transit for a commute one day, switch to bicycling for short trips, or use ride-hailing services when it's most convenient. This dynamic approach allows them to optimize their travel experiences based on a combination of factors such as distance, weather, cargo, time constraints, and personal preferences.

The Versatile Traveler's use of public transit is not limited to just commuting; it extends to other purposes, such as social outings or leisure activities. They have the flexibility to seamlessly switch between transit, biking, and other modes, based on the specific context of each journey. Their familiarity with multiple transportation options makes them adaptable and resourceful travelers.

Demographics

From a socio-economic perspective, the Versatile Traveler encompasses a diverse range of individuals. While they may not own a car, they may have the financial means to rent one or use ride-hailing services when needed. This group includes both middle-income individuals and those with higher incomes, particularly in urban areas, where many individuals choose transportation options other than private cars even though they could afford to own a car.

Goals

1. Complete journeys in the most efficient way possible.
2. Access as much information as possible to optimize their journeys.
3. Maintain flexibility in their mode and route choices.

Role in Customer Experience Management

An essential aspect of the Versatile Traveler is the role they play in the context of customer experience management for public transit systems. They represent a warm lead, having prior experience with the system but needing guidance on new travel paths. By prioritizing customer experience, particularly in terms of digital information and demystifying the system, transit agencies can engage this persona effectively, encouraging them to return as frequent users.

Importance

The Versatile Traveler embodies the flexible multi-modal user who makes travel decisions based on specific purposes and circumstances. Their versatility, access to various transportation modes, and willingness to switch between them enable them to optimize their journeys, contributing to the challenge of attracting users back to public transit while addressing the changing landscape of transportation needs.

Story

Brianna is a Versatile Traveler. She values convenience and efficiency, and she always looks for the best way to get around. She lives in a dense urban area, so she has a variety of transportation options available to her, including public transportation, ride-hailing services, and bike-sharing.

Brianna uses public transportation whenever it is the most convenient and efficient option. For example, she takes her city's light rail to work every day because it is faster than driving and doesn't require her to find and pay for parking. She also takes the light rail to her city's arena district when she goes to sporting events and concerts and to the airport when she travels, as both are served by the light rail network.

Brianna appreciates that public transportation in her city is generally reliable and affordable. She also likes the fact that she can use her phone to track bus and train arrival times and purchase a range of fare products, including weekly and monthly passes.

However, there are a few gaps that she faces in trying to use public transportation. One gap is that public transportation doesn't always provide the most convenient option for first-mile/last-mile travel. For example, Brianna's light rail stop is more than 15 minutes away on foot, requiring more time outside on colder and rainy days than she'd like. She also wishes that there was a bike-share docking station close to her house so that she could easily bike to and from the light rail stop. Another gap is that certain trips take significantly longer on public transportation compared to driving. For example, it would take her over an hour by bus to her parents' house, even though it is only about 10 miles away and 15 minutes by car. In this case, she usually opts to drive or take a ride-hailing service.

Despite these gaps, Brianna is a regular user of public transportation. She appreciates that it is a convenient, affordable, and sometimes faster way to get around her city.

How Brianna's needs are reflected in public transportation systems

Convenient and efficient options: Brianna appreciates that public transportation systems offer a variety of convenient and efficient options, such as express buses and bikeshare systems.

Mobile ticketing: Brianna also appreciates that she can use her phone to purchase fares and track arrival times. This makes it easy and convenient to use public transportation.

Gaps that Brianna faces in trying to use public transportation

1. First-mile/last-mile travel: Brianna would like to see more public transportation systems offer first-mile/last-mile solutions, such as micro transit or bike-sharing. This would make it easier for people like Brianna to use public transportation for more trips, not just the ones that start and end near public transportation stops.
2. Long-distance travel: Brianna would also like to see public transportation systems make it easier and more efficient to travel longer distances by public transportation.

Solutions

Transit agencies can provide discounted transfers between their routes and micro-mobility services like bike or scooter-sharing, or transit agencies can partner with ride-hailing services for more specialized journeys.

Transit agencies can introduce more express services on existing rail and bus networks, or by partnering with existing operators of express and regional services with free transfers or otherwise better integrated fares.

By addressing the gaps in first and last mile transportation options and providing more specialized service types to fit more specific needs, transit agencies can become more competitive in the transportation marketplace to attract and reattain more Versatile Travelers.

See Appendix 2 – Versatile Traveler Persona (NTAS) for a one-page summary of this persona.

Persona C: The Event Driven Explorer



Figure 1.6 The Versatile Traveler

Persona Description

The Event Driven Explorers are individuals who primarily use public transit for specific purposes, with a strong focus on attending events and reaching destinations where transit offers a more convenient and efficient option compared to driving or other modes of transportation. This persona's transit use is driven by events such as attending cultural activities, sporting events, or destinations with parking challenges, where using transit can save time and money.

Characteristics

Event Driven Explorers typically leverage public transit for event-related travel, such as attending concerts, games, or cultural activities. They understand the advantages of using transit in scenarios where parking constraints or traffic congestion would make driving a less practical and cost-effective choice.

While traditionally transit systems were designed for commuters, the Event Driven Explorers have expanded over the years to include individuals who recognize the convenience of public transit for events and specific destinations. Transit systems have also evolved to serve these travelers; new and expanding systems in Seattle, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and Denver have grown to serve airports, shopping centers, and sports stadiums in recent decades.

Cost and convenience are the two primary values that influence Event Driven Explorers' transit decisions. They carefully consider the monetary costs of driving, including parking fees, and value the time saved by choosing public transportation.

Perception of safety and cleanliness is likely to significantly impact this persona's choice of whether to use public transportation.

Demographics

From a demographic perspective, Event Driven Explorers often have higher incomes, affording them the luxury of car ownership. While they may predominantly rely on their cars for daily transportation, they readily consider transit when it offers an easy and predictable route for specific purposes.

This persona is likely to be familiar with the transit system and can readily access the information needed to use transit when it provides a practical solution, especially for event-related journeys.

Goals

1. Access specific pre-determined destinations using transit.
2. Reach destinations in the most convenient way possible.
3. Save money on travel; financially optimizing their mobility needs.

Role in Customer Experience Management

Event Driven Explorers play a pivotal role in the context of customer experience management for public transit systems. They represent an audience motivated primarily by convenience, and transit agencies can focus marketing on them to showcase the ease and cost savings of using public transit for event-based travel. Educating this group about the benefits of transit for events can lead to increased adoption and a more consistent engagement with public transportation.

Importance

In conclusion, the Event Driven Explorers rely on public transportation for specific purposes, especially events and destinations where parking challenges or traffic congestion make transit the preferred and hassle-free choice. Their engagement is driven by convenience and practicality, making them a valuable group for transit agencies seeking to attract users back to public transit. By addressing their needs and emphasizing the convenience of transit for event-based travel, agencies can make transit a preferred choice for this persona, contributing to a more sustainable and efficient transportation ecosystem.

Story

Camilo is an Event Driven Explorer. He loves going to concerts, sporting events, and other cultural events. He also likes to explore new neighborhoods and restaurants. Camilo usually drives to these events, but he sometimes commutes on public transit and would consider taking more trips on public transit if he feels like the service provides a better value or experience than driving.

One day, Camilo's friends with whom he typically carpools to baseball games suggest that they take a special game day ferry shuttle to the baseball stadium. Camilo visits the ferry operator's website to learn more about the service and to plan his trip. The website is easy to use and provides him with clear instructions for where to catch the ferry and what times boats will depart to the stadium.

On the day of the event, Camilo and his friends drive to the ferry terminal. They find that they can validate their parking expense if they ask ferry staff for a voucher, so they make sure to get one. They purchase paper tickets onboard and enjoy the ride. After the game, they hurried back to the ferry port to make sure they didn't miss their ride back to their car. As they prepare to board, Camilo notices some of the passengers use a reloadable card to pay their fares instead of the paper ticket. He searches online and learns that he can use this reloadable transit card on any transit system in his region, so he orders one for future use.

Camilo and his friends agree that the ferry ride to the stadium provided a much better experience and agree to use the ferry to get to baseball games going forward.

Even though Camilo had a positive experience using public transportation, there were a few gaps that he faced:

1. Camilo wasn't sure how many ferry departures there would be after the game and felt the need to rush to make sure he was on the first boat he saw. The transit agency could publish the schedule in a digital and mobile-friendly format that can be updated in real time to reflect departure times which would depend on when the baseball game ends.
2. He wasn't aware of the gameday ferry service his friends told him about it. He wishes that the transit agency had done a better job of promoting the service so he could have used the service earlier. The transit agency could partner with event organizers and promote its special services on social media and through other channels.
3. He didn't know that he could use a transit card for payment until he saw other patrons doing so. The transit agency could include instructions for available payment options more prominently on their website and could incorporate clearer signage and explanations of the fare payment options into their terminals.

How Camilo's needs are reflected in public transportation systems

- Destination access: the transit system provides an express service to a sports stadium that Camilo wanted to go to.
- Information access: an easily navigable website allows Camilo to find the information he needs to learn how to use the transit service he did.

Gaps Camilo faced in trying to use public transportation

1. Awareness of the transit service: Camilo didn't know about the service until he noticed an advertisement for the service.
2. Schedule and service comprehension: Camilo was confused by the complexity of the schedule and wasn't sure what bus to take.

Solutions

1. Transit agencies can provide discounted transfers between their routes and micro-mobility services like bike or scooter-sharing, or transit agencies can partner with ride-hailing services for more specialized journeys.
1. Transit agencies can introduce more express services on existing rail and bus networks, or by partnering with existing operators of express and regional services with free transfers or otherwise better integrated fares.

By addressing the gaps in first and last mile transportation options and providing more specialized service types to fit more specific needs, transit agencies can become more competitive in the transportation marketplace to attract and reattain more Versatile Travelers.

See Appendix 2 – Versatile Traveler Persona (NTAS) for a one-page summary of this persona.

Persona D: The Transit Sympathizer



Figure 1.7 The Transit Sympathizer

Persona Description

The Transit Sympathizers are individuals who seldom, if ever, utilize public transit for their daily needs. While they may express support for transit in surveys or other contexts, they typically explain their limited transit use by saying, “I’d like to use transit, but it doesn’t work for me – it does not go where I need to go without multiple transfers.” For example, they might opt for transit when embarking on business trips, airport journeys, or other occasional travel requirements. Nevertheless, public transit does not feature as a regular consideration for their everyday transportation.

Characteristics

Transit Sympathizers often find public transit either perplexing or perceive it as incompatible with their lifestyle. They may prefer car ownership or limit their movements to their immediate neighborhoods.

Despite their limited personal use of transit, they acknowledge the broader societal benefits of public transportation, recognizing that not everyone shares their perspective. They support public transit for the greater public good.

Within the four personas discussed, the Transit Sympathizers represent an audience that transit agencies may not actively market to due to the high cost associated with trying to change their travel behavior.

Demographics

The Transit Sympathizers form a unique group, displaying either indifference or barriers to embracing public transit more broadly. They are unlikely to transition to more active transit usage without significant agency effort or a major external event, such as a change of job location or a bridge collapse on a highway.

Role in Customer Experience Management: Given their limited motivation to change their transit behavior, the Transit Sympathizers have a minimal role in customer experience management. They do support public transit in principle, but it is not their primary mode of transportation.

Role in Customer Experience Management

Transit Sympathizers play a less significant role in the context of customer experience management for public transit systems, as they are the persona who will be the most difficult to convert to a regular transit user due to their characteristics and demographic conditions. While educating this group about the benefits of transit for events can lead to increased transit use, resources for user acquisition may be better spent on Personas B and C.

Goals

1. Reach pre-determined destinations in the fastest and most convenient way possible, which for this persona is almost always by private automobile.
2. Maintain their existing habits and patterns and not face opposition to doing so.

Importance

In summary, the Transit Sympathizers are individuals who rarely use public transit for their transportation needs. While they support public transit in theory, they do not actively incorporate it into their daily routines. This persona recognizes the societal benefits of public transit but remains a challenging audience for transit agencies to engage actively.

Story

Dana is a Transit Sympathizer. She supports public transportation in principle but rarely uses it herself. She prefers to drive, especially for her commute, where she has private space, can listen to her music, or take meetings over the phone. However, there are some occasions when public transportation is the most convenient or efficient option, such as when she is traveling to the airport or in another city on business travel.

Today, Dana needs to head into her region's downtown for an important meeting, but her car won't start properly. She doesn't have time to repair her car and ride-hail app services aren't available in her neighborhood, but she remembers that there's a commuter bus stop a 10-minute walk from her house. With limited options, she decides to walk to the bus stop. She's concerned about security during her journey, but with few options, she proceeds.

Once she finds the bus stop, she finds a sign indicating that there's a bus scheduled to arrive in the next 15 minutes. She waits and boards once the bus arrives. She realizes she doesn't have cash on hand to pay the fare or have a compatible transit payment card, but the bus operator lets her board as she downloads a mobile app that she can pay with.

Dana finds a seat on the commuter bus and appreciates how comfortable the seat is. She also notices she feels safe on the bus, as it is clean and well maintained. Initially, Dana is worried she might end up in the wrong place because she isn't in control, but the bus uses express lanes to save time and drops her off just a short walk from her destination. After the express lane and not having to park her car, her travel time on the bus was comparable to her would-be driving time.

Dana's experience was overwhelmingly positive, and this motivates her to support a regional ballot measure to fund public transportation. She also tells friends and peers about the experience and considers using that commuter bus in the future for subsequent appointments. She searches online for more information about the schedule but is disappointed to find that there are only 2 trips in the morning and 4 in the evening. She wishes she could take this bus route back home earlier in the afternoon.

How Dana's needs are reflected in public transportation systems

- Destination Access: transit networks in the USA typically provide access to downtowns and city centers from suburban areas, which happens to be Dana's trip type in this case.
- Fare Payment Options: public transit operators are working to enable users to use mobile payment options such as digital wallets or mobile apps to make their fare payments in case they don't carry cash. Dana was able to use such a mobile app to pay her fare.
- Personal Safety: public transit operators are taking strides to improve passenger safety. Some transit agencies have installed video surveillance cameras on their buses and trains.¹⁴ Other transit agencies have hired transit ambassadors or partnered with local police departments to increase security presence on the transit system. Dana felt safer once she saw that her vehicle was maintained to a high level of cleanliness.

14. Calgary Transit, "Safety on Transit," accessed September 13, 2023, <https://www.calgarytransit.com/content/transit/en/home/rider-information/safety-on-transit.html>.

Gaps Dana faced in trying to use public transportation

Dana faced several gaps in her experience:

1. Real-time Information: Dana didn't know where to look online for real-time arrival information once she got to the bus stop. The posted schedule helped her, but there was no clear direction to an online source of real-time information. A link or QR code on the sign could help.
2. Fare Payment: Dana struggled to pay her fare as a first-time rider. The bus stop didn't include information about how to pay her fare or how much the fare would cost, so she didn't know what to do once she got on the bus. Fare information at the bus stop could help.
3. Lack of trust: Transit Sympathizers may be more prone to not trust operators or routes will take them where they need to go, choosing instead to use methods that have a higher perception of agency and control. Dana feared this until her fear was disproven.

By addressing the needs of Transit Sympathizers, public transportation systems can make themselves more attractive and convenient for everyone.

See Appendix 4 – Transit Sympathizer Persona (NTAS) for a one-page summary of this persona.

Solutions

1. Transit agencies can ensure that their bus stops include QR codes or short URLs to websites or services with accurate and clear real-time information.
2. Transit agencies can make sure their mobile payment options are as streamlined as possible by implementing Open Loop RFID-based fare payments to eliminate the need for users to download anything, or by simplifying and effectively testing proprietary mobile app solutions.
3. Transit agencies can ensure that route maps are clearly legible and accessible to the general public so that route information and destinations are easy to verify. Agencies can also produce marketing campaigns which highlight positive user experiences with public transit to encourage more acceptance and support of public transit use.

Ridership Persona Journey Map

A journey map is a visualization document often used in the private sector by design teams of all sorts which describes the steps a user takes to complete a process which accomplishes a goal.¹⁵ Personas are a crucial tool for this process, and SFMTA has used the NTAS Personas to create a journey map for each Persona in an exemplary hypothetical scenario. See Appendix 5 to view this Journey Map.

Specific Examples for Transit Agencies

Here are some specific examples of how transit agencies can tailor their services and marketing campaigns to each persona:

- **Transit System Navigator:** Transit agencies can improve the Transit System Navigator experience by providing reliable and affordable service, as well as real-time arrival and departure information. They can also offer discounted fares for low-income riders, youth and seniors.
- **Versatile Traveler:** Transit agencies can appeal to the Versatile Traveler by offering convenient and efficient options, such as express transit service or dedicated bike and transit lanes. They can also partner with other transportation providers, such as ride-hailing services, to offer seamless travel experiences.
- **Event Driven Explorer:** Transit agencies can attract the Event Driven Explorer by prioritizing rider experience quality and promoting special services or promotions for events. They can also partner with event organizers to make it easy for attendees to purchase tickets and travel to the event via public transportation.
- **Transit Sympathizer:** Transit agencies can provide educational information to the Transit Sympathizer about the benefits of using public transportation, such as relief from traffic congestion and improved air quality. They can also offer incentives to encourage people to try public transportation, such as free rides or employer provided transit passes.

By understanding the needs and preferences of each persona, transit agencies can develop more effective services and marketing campaigns that will attract and retain riders. This will help to ensure that public transportation remains a viable and sustainable option for everyone.

In addition to the four transit personas outlined in this report, there are a number of other factors that can influence public transportation use, such as income, age, and disability status. Transit agencies should also consider these factors when developing their services and marketing campaigns.

For example, low-income riders may be more sensitive to fare prices, while seniors and people with disabilities may need special accommodations. Transit agencies should strive to develop services that are accessible and affordable for everyone.

Conclusion

Phase II of NTAS was designed to provide insight to transit agencies across the U.S. and provide them with a tool, as the futures forecasts did in Phase I, to make decisions to sustain and grow ridership. Simply put, public transit agencies across the country should adopt a persona-centric approach to address the diverse needs of various riders. By understanding the distinct preferences and requirements of Transit System Navigators, Versatile Travelers, Event Driven Explorers, and Transit Sympathizers, transit organizations can tailor their services and strategies to enhance the attractiveness of public transportation. In a world where individualized experiences matter more than ever, a persona-centric approach can make all the difference in the future of public transit.

Through improved reliability, fare affordability, integration with other modes, convenience, and targeted marketing, transit agencies can not only retain existing riders but also attract new ones. By providing the right service for the right persona, public transit systems can continue to play a vital role in reducing congestion, improving air quality, and ensuring sustainable mobility for urban, sub-urban and rural populations.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - NTAS Journey Map

<https://www.sfmta.com/reports/appendix-1-ntas-journey-map>

Appendix 2 - NTAS Transit System Navigator Persona

<https://www.sfmta.com/reports/appendix-2-persona-one-pager>

Appendix 3 - NTAS Versatile Traveler Persona

<https://www.sfmta.com/reports/appendix-3-persona-b-one-pager>

Appendix 4 - NTAS Event Driven Explorer Persona

<https://www.sfmta.com/reports/appendix-4-persona-c-one-pager>

Appendix 5 - NTAS Transit Sympathizer Persona

<https://www.sfmta.com/reports/appendix-5-persona-d-one-pager>

Appendix 6 - NTAS Persona Development

<https://www.sfmta.com/reports/appendix-6-ntas-persona-development>

Acronyms and Glossary

NTAS: National Transit Adaptation Strategy

APTA: American Public Transit Association

FTA: Federal Transit Administration

IFTF: The Institute for the Future

MIT: Massachusetts Institute of Technology

NOFO: Notice of Funding Opportunity

SFMTA: The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency

Transit App: A mobile app which provides real-time public transit information.

Persona: An imagined character who possesses traits and qualities of real users of a service or product, developed by designers and planners to understand the needs of real users.

Legacy transit systems: Systems in major U.S. metropolitan areas since before 1955 and historically based upon a streetcar system or pre-existing rail network designed to serve a downtown business core.

Transformative transit systems: Systems which exist in mid-size and major U.S. metropolitan areas, began operating after 1955, and have seen significant growth and system expansion in the last 20 years.

Rural and connector transit systems: Systems found outside of mid or major metropolitan areas, and which operate as a connector service, began operating after 1955, and serve less than 500,000 riders annually.

Transit System Navigator: A transit user persona who relies on public transportation for their daily activities due to a lack of access to a personal vehicle or the inability to drive, for some or all trips.

Versatile Traveler: A transit user persona with an adaptable and versatile approach to transportation who utilize various mobility options based on specific purposes and situations, making decisions that prioritize convenience, cost-effectiveness, and practicality.

Event Driven Explorer: A transit user persona who primarily uses public transportation for pre-determined events and destinations where it is more convenient, efficient, or cost-effective than driving.

Transit Sympathizer: A transit user persona who seldom, if ever, utilizes public transit for their daily needs, though they may express support for transit in surveys or other contexts.

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