

# **SPECIAL EVENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICE PLANNING AND OPERATIONS STRATEGIES FOR TRANSIT**

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Special events range from very large events such as the Olympics to very small events such as local community parades. Unlike regular transit service planning, service for special events presents a challenge for service providers in that they are non-recurring events without a predictable transit demand, they require transit agencies to work cooperatively with other stakeholders, and services must be provided in addition to normal transit services. Special event services are one of the biggest attractors of non-regular riders, which provides a unique opportunity to market the transit agency's services to the community.

Unfortunately, service for special events is often subject to ad hoc planning and is designed based on tradition rather than with a systematic approach to meet the transit agency's goals. Often, the inherent benefits of providing special event services are never realized by the transit agency, and costs are not minimized.

The delivery of transportation services during special events often requires the cooperation of agencies that do not usually work together. However, cooperative planning during periods of increased travel demand offers a unique opportunity to pursue innovative operational practices and apply technologies to improve the performance of the overall transportation system through more effective utilization of available roadway and service capacity.

Given the existing and growing potential for special events in various urban areas of Florida, and the growing need for transit agencies to attract new riders, it is vital that transit agencies have an operations reference resource to ensure effective planning and efficient service delivery.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The objective of this project was to document information and best practices that would be useful in providing any type of special event transit service. Service guides were developed to provide the following: strategies for coordination within and among relevant agencies, key considerations before undertaking special event transportation services, and a framework to enable service providers to proactively plan and successfully deliver these services.

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Included in the final report for this research is an overview of transportation planning and management for special events. Researchers also provide discussion of recent research efforts that deal with issues that include (1) public agency efforts to raise the awareness of the importance of continuously improving how travel is managed for planned special events and (2) the important role coordinated planning plays in mobility and travel reliability across various transportation modes.

Researchers investigated the extent to which Florida public transit systems are involved in supporting special events in their communities, particularly with regard to the amounts and types of special event services provided, the level of coordination with other stakeholders, and the degree to which written policies and procedures are used.

The research showed that the ability and willingness of public transit agencies to participate in special event transportation services are greatly influenced by the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA's) charter regulations. The overview of FTA charter regulations, included in the developed guidebook includes an overview of the regulations, a procedure for compliance, and a summary of recent pertinent FTA cases and rulings related to charter service provision and special events.

Researchers summarized current practices related to the provision of special event transportation services. These findings were based on field observations, discussions, and interviews with agency staff involved in special event services and a review of existing literature on this subject. Best practices in planning guidelines and strategies were presented for use by transit agencies to enhance their involvement in their respective community's planned special events.

## **BENEFITS**

The research findings are presented in a simple format and will be made available to all of Florida public transportation agencies and their community partners. Preliminary findings were presented at the 2005 Annual Florida Public Transportation Association meeting, which facilitated an exchange of information among Florida public transportation agencies.

The research documents the benefits that the Florida transit agencies and their community partners will realize by developing positive relationships and networking while working together on planned special events. These relationships will prove beneficial in a number of other areas, including improved coordination for emergency response efforts.

Implementation of the findings and best practices provided in the developed guidebook will foster relationships between various entities that should, ultimately, not only contribute to the planning and operations of special events, but to improved relationships that could promote transit services and, ultimately, increase ridership.

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