Improving Integration Among Multiple Transit Providers

TCRP Report 173

November 17, 2016
Goals of TCRP Report 173

- Identify and document motivations, benefits, and barriers to public transportation coordination and integration that facilitates seamless travel.
- Provide guidance on how to integrate and coordinate delivery of a public transportation system in a multi-service region.
In Depth Case Studies

1. ORCA Fare Card, Puget Sound, WA

2. Valley Metro unified brand, Phoenix, AZ

3. B-Line Transit Consolidation, Butte County, CA

4. McAllen Central Station, TX

5. Research Triangle Coordination/Consolidation Efforts, NC

6. Coordination Mandates in Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN
Continuum of Integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing information—acting independently, but establishing a regular forum for communication as opportunities arise.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Coordination</th>
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<td>Acting jointly (on an informal basis)—working together on selected functions by non-binding action.</td>
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<th>Collaboration</th>
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<td>Acting jointly (on a formal basis)—working together on selected functions by binding action (interlocal agreements, memoranda of understanding).</td>
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<th>Consolidation</th>
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<td>Total integration—merging selected (or all) functions by mutual consent and legal transfer of authority to a single legal entity.</td>
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Why Integrate?

- Reduce costs (sometimes)
- Improve service efficiency
- Expand service area
- Increase ridership
- Eliminate redundancies
- Offer better customer information
- Increase political/public support
- Provide seamless services
- Expand scope of services
- Maximize capital investments
- It’s the right thing to do
What is to be Gained for the Customer?

- Improved customer service/ seamlessness
  - Information
  - Fares
  - Connections

- Increased transportation availability
  - Service area
  - Service span
  - Coordinated services
What is to be Gained for Agencies/Organizations?

- Ridership increases
- Cost effectiveness improvements
  - Cost savings (sometimes)
  - Enhanced buying power
- Economic development/facilities development
  - Scale of development
  - Regionalism
- Relationships among organizations
  - Governance
  - Public and political support
Agency Challenges

- Leadership challenges
- Accepting incremental progress
- Lack of trust among stakeholders
- Loss of local control
- Revenue and cost sharing
- Determining the costs is not easy
- Dissimilar business and operations practices
- Disagreement on strategies/solutions

Nearly all advanced transit integration projects require sharing costs

Integration might actually increase costs
Process

1. **Generate an idea**

2. **Find a project leader or champion**
   - Not the right champion? Try again

3. **Convene** potential stakeholders, partners, and decision-makers to discuss idea

4. **Generate** new or complementary ideas

5. **Develop a process to address the idea**
   - Formal meetings
   - Integration goals
   - Decision-making tools
   - Assessment of outcomes

6. **Execute**
Marketing/Public Information/Branding

Valley Metro
Phoenix, Arizona Metro Region

- Regional brand for multiple services, consistent design
- Consolidated public information
- Unified information and marketing tools
Advice

- Focus on prioritizing the customer experience: made it easy for stakeholders to support.
- Build support for regionalization by assuming responsibility for some of the less attractive and/or most challenging projects.
Fare Integration

ORCA
Puget Sound, Washington Region

- Puget Pass
- Development of a Transit Integration Group
  - Goals:
    • Increase ridership and customer convenience
    • Increase agency revenues
    • Reduce operating costs, or provide demonstrable added value for cost increases
- Implementation of ORCA

ORCA was a “grassroots” effort involving seven agencies, which was its greatest strength and weakness.
Advice

- Consider an approach of “one agency, one vote” and build a “grassroots” process
- Streamline decision making and have a single point of contact
- Allow for local control on key issues
- Take a phased approach
- Need a strong leader who recognizes benefits of project
- Keep expansion in mind
Service Coordination

Met Council
Minneapolis-St. Paul, Region

- Unified route numbering scheme
- Regional vehicle fleet and procurement program
- Coordinated operations at transit facilities
  - Marquette and 2nd Avenue corridors
  - Mall of America and elsewhere
- AVL System
- Coordinating committees and planning work groups
Service Coordination

Advice

- Centralized, top-down coordination can be very effective
- Meaningful participation from collaborating agencies can help avoid conflict or resentment
- Personal relationships matter
- Keep the customer as the priority
Lessons Learned

1. Prioritize the customer experience
2. Collaboration succeeds when implementation is incremental
3. Local leadership is necessary to sustain an integration effort
4. Broadening the pool of stakeholders leads to more widespread acceptance
5. Create processes that develop trust among stakeholders
6. Maintain a level of local control
7. Integration projects may not result in cost savings – and may incur additional costs – but benefits are perceived to outweigh any additional costs
8. Set goals and document anticipated outcomes at the outset of the integration process
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or
www.nelsonnygaard.com/publication