

# CASE STUDY



*"Our most important gain is in the quality of service the system will allow us to provide."*

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# Wheels of Wellness

## Mobile Computing Delivers Better Service

### BUSINESS PROBLEM

Wheels of Wellness (WHEELS), a non-profit agency provides medical and paratransit brokerage services in the Philadelphia area using vehicles and staff from seven subcontractors. Though it had streamlined its registration, booking and scheduling with Trapeze PASS, they were struggling with the huge task of managing services in real-time. "No-shows, cancellations, vehicle breakdowns and even traffic congestion can really affect the quality of service," explains Greg Ficchi, WHEELS Information Systems Manager. To maintain quality services WHEELS recognized that it required a way to exchange real-time information with vehicles and drivers.

### GOALS

WHEELS and its subcontractors needed a way to supply drivers with up-to-date, detailed itineraries generated by PASS while the vehicles were in service. They also wanted an automated system to collect data about schedule adherence and vehicle location. "Knowing where our vehicles are and what is happening at street-level would allow us to adjust our service in real time and make the best use of our resources," recalls Ficchi.

### SOLUTION

In 2002 WHEELS began installing MDCs (mobile data computers) from Mentor Engineering. The units include a GPS vehicle location feature, as well as swipe card readers and displays, both of which interface with PASS.

Using information from a swipe card, the system verifies that each Driver/Escort has the appropriate credentials for the tour and then downloads the trip assignments to the MDC.

### SNAPSHOT

<b>Type of operation:</b>	Medicaid Transportation
<b>Peak vehicles:</b>	160
<b>Trips per day</b>	5,500
<b>Registered clients</b>	10,000
<b>Trapeze products used:</b>	PASS with coordinated transportation (CT) and suspension (SUS) modules plus mobile computing interfaces (MON)
<b>Other technologies:</b>	Mentor 3.2 MDCs with swipe card readers, GPS and internal CDPD modem
<b>IT environment:</b>	Windows NT/XP on 75 workstations Citrix Frame Relay Remote support for 7 sites and 14 stations

The driver can then use the MDC to view itineraries, send updates to the dispatchers and call for help in emergency situations.

The Trapeze interface between the Mentor units and the PASS software allows WHEELS MDC Monitors to see vehicle locations on the maps, respond to cancellations, and confirm no-show requests from the drivers by phoning customers. The interface also allows WHEELS to adjust schedules to accommodate delays and to provide exact vehicle location to emergency services.

### RESULTS

Since installing the mobile computing interface and the first phase of MDCs, WHEELS has been striving for substantial productivity and efficiency gains. In addition to a drastic reduction in radio traffic for the subcontractors, the agency has increased Monitor efficiency from 25 monitored vehicles to 35-40 per person.

Drivers are saving between 15 and 30 minutes per day previously spent completing paper manifests, and the electronic data exchange of manifest information has also helped WHEELS reduce the number of

data entry clerks from six to two. Drivers and escorts can log in and out right at the vehicle with their swipe cards, saving time and ensuring that staff qualifications are in line with the day's tours.

"Our most important gain is in the quality of service the system will allow us to provide," Mr. Ficchi explains. "When a client calls to find out where their ride is, the system can pinpoint the vehicle's location and give them an accurate arrival time. When a driver reports a no-show, the system can double check that they are at the right place and our staff can quickly confirm the no-show."

### BOTTOM LINE

"As a broker of transportation services I feel for the first time we have real control over the fleet," Mr. Ficchi says. "Our drivers are safer and better informed, our staff is more productive, our customer service agents have up-to-the-minute information, and most important, we have an opportunity to provide our clients with better, more responsive services."