

CASE STUDY



"We're accomplishing more for our dollar. We're able to provide additional trips and reduce ride times."

Suzanne Tellechea

Transit Planner,
WSTA



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Winston-Salem Transit Authority

From Paper to Automated Dispatch

BUSINESS PROBLEM

The Trans-AID service in Winston-Salem, NC had served the city and surrounding Forsyth County for decades, but the 19 small buses were not always on time, and they rarely reached optimal capacity.

"We did it all by hand," recalls Suzanne Tellechea, a transit planner for the city. "We had a pad of paper and we took reservations until we got to the end of that pad. Then we were full for the day."

GOALS

In 1994, Winston-Salem Transit Authority (WSTA) undertook an ambitious multi-phase Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) project designed to make transportation in this small urban area integrated, efficient and user-friendly.

The authority envisioned a leading-edge technology center where schedulers and dispatchers could effortlessly switch back and forth between paratransit, fixed route and traffic systems using real-time information.

SOLUTION

Trapeze Software was selected as the systems integrator and primary contractor, with Trapeze PASS being used to automate scheduling and routing. Trapeze also handled all staff training on the new software.

RESULTS

Phase One was completed on time, and, in the first year, WSTA operating costs declined by 2.4% per passenger, 8.5% per vehicle and 8.6% per vehicle hour.

The savings enabled the WSTA to expand rural services without

SNAPSHOT

Type of operation:	Fixed route and paratransit
Number of vehicles:	21 paratransit; 54 fixed route
Paratransit passengers:	93,000 per year
Fixed route passengers:	three million per year
Trapeze products used:	PASS, FX, INFO
Additional technologies:	MDT, AVL, IVR
Time to recover capital cost:	16 months
1st year cost reductions:	8.5% per vehicle; 2.4% per passenger

the purchase of a single additional vehicle.

With the pen-and-paper reservation system gone, agents could schedule and cancel trips for clients easily by phone. WSTA recovered its capital investment in the software and related hardware in just 16 months.

Phase Two is now underway and WSTA is integrating its paratransit and fixed route computer-assisted dispatch and scheduling (CADS). Trapeze FX and Trapeze INFO are being deployed along with mobile data terminals (MDTs), automatic vehicle location (AVL), and interactive voice response (IVR) technology.

The integrated CADS solutions are already achieving significant system efficiencies by ensuring optimal routes and schedules. WSTA is also able to generate route options and assist in trip planning. Using IVR technology, paratransit and fixed route clients can now access this integrated system by telephone to schedule trips and obtain information.

Time points are downloaded to the MDTs that are installed on the fixed route vehicles. With AVL, and with real-time passenger load information

being transmitted back to the call center, paratransit dispatchers will know where vehicles are and which ones can best be deployed. In the future, this real-time information will be available to clients over the phone or broadcast on bay signs.

BOTTOM LINE

Now serving three million fixed route passengers and 93,000 paratransit passengers per year, the transit system in Winston-Salem has come a long way from taking reservations on a pad of paper.

"We're accomplishing more for our dollar. We're able to provide additional trips and reduce ride times. Trapeze has good products and good people. The trainers have done an excellent job," says Tellechea.