

Murfreesboro Service Assessment Summary Report



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Prepared by:



Prepared for:



Executive Summary

Purpose

Desiring to take a proactive approach to service planning, Rover asked for assistance evaluating its service. The goals of the study are to:

- Understand the needs of current riders
- Identify opportunities to attract more riders
- Identify if the current service is meeting rider needs
- Identify unmet rider needs
- Measure current levels of customer service delivery, including service quality, cleanliness, timeliness, etc.

Key Findings

An on-board survey was conducted to learn more about Rover customers, how they ride Rover, and what would encourage them to ride more often. Survey analysis revealed:

- Rover passengers are very satisfied with the service and likely to continue riding.
- A majority of passengers use Rover to travel to and from work and ride frequently.
- Almost all of the customers do not have a car available for these trips.
- Passengers wish Rover went further west on Old Fort Parkway, served Cason Lane, and went further south on Church Street.
- Evening service until 9:00 p.m. and weekend service ranked the highest of the elements that may encourage customers to ride more frequently.
- Increasing the availability of shelters could contribute to an overall increase in satisfaction.

Stakeholder interviews were conducted to gain an understanding of the current and projected conditions in Murfreesboro. Overall, stakeholders had a positive view of Rover. The most common comments during interviews were:

- Extend service on weekdays
- Start operating service on Saturdays
- Add service on MTSU campus
- Install shelters and benches

A fixed route assessment was conducted. This assessment included an analysis of ridership data and on-board ridechecks to determine stop-level passenger activity. Rover is doing the following items well:

- Increasing ridership – Three routes (Mercury, Highland, Medical Center) continue to have ridership growth. Ridership on the remaining routes is stable.
- Frequency of service – Four of eight routes operate every 30 minutes. This level of frequency makes the service more attractive, especially to choice riders as it allows them the flexibility to travel when they want to travel.
- Better productivity than in-state peers – Rover's overall productivity (passengers per revenue hour) is 10.2. This slightly exceeds the average productivity of Rover's in-state peers¹ of 9.0 passengers per revenue hour.
- Service coverage – The eight routes provide good geographic coverage of Murfreesboro

¹ Bristol (8.6), Clarksville (12.9), Franklin (5.1), Jackson (11.8), and Kingsport (6.6)

- Disabled use – Several passengers with disabilities routinely use the fixed-routes. It is less expensive to transport these passengers on fixed route service than on paratransit service.

Recommended Service Changes

Two short-term service improvements are recommended:

1. The extension of every other trip on S Church to Innsbrooke Boulevard near the frequently requested Barfield Crescent area.
2. Creation of a taxi subsidy program to provide evening trips, Saturday trips, and serve areas of Murfreesboro not served by Rover. In a subsidized taxi program, eligible individuals can purchase discount coupons to use as taxi fare.

Three long-term service improvements are recommended for implementation after the taxi subsidy program has established demand for each service and funding is available:

1. Westside route restructuring
2. Evening demand response service
3. Saturday fixed-route service

Other Issues

Other issues identified during the service assessment include:

- The 30 minute frequency may not be sustainable as congestion, ridership, and lift usage increase.
- Much of the new development in Murfreesboro is on the edge of town and the existing routes do not have any running time available to extend the routes.
- Murfreesboro lacks sidewalks in many areas. Sidewalks provide safe and easy access to Rover buses.
- The lack of shelters was a common complaint on the survey and stakeholder interviews. Rover has recently secured funding to purchase shelters.
- Middle Tennessee Medical Center will be relocated from Highland to Medical Center on October 2, 2010. Rover is planning on entering MTMC's property to serve a bus stop.
- Since people in wheelchairs use Rover for their travel needs, Rover should consider low-floor vehicles with ramps which helps expedite boarding.
- MTSU is working with the City to plan for installing a traffic signal at the intersection of Lytle and Middle Tennessee Boulevard. This intersection will serve as the entrance to a network of gated and dedicated bus lanes on MTSU's campus. MTSU will allow Rover to use these lanes. Rover should work with MTSU to jointly fund a new route connecting MTSU campus to the transit center.
- The current transit center needs amenity upgrades, including:
 - Shelters with benches
 - Passenger information signs
 - Trash receptacles
 - Better lighting
 - Cigarette depositories
 - Restroom for drivers