

9-2018

Communicating Livability: Changing Public Behavior

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Recommended Citation

Morrison, Deborah, Autumn Shafer, Rebecca Lewis and Hannah Lewman. Communicating Livability: Changing Public Behavior Project Brief NITC-RR-873. Portland, OR: Transportation Research and Education Center (TREC), 2018

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COMMUNICATING LIVABILITY: CHANGING PUBLIC BEHAVIOR

The success of public transportation depends upon public understanding of, and support for, livability. The aim of this project was to understand public perceptions of transit and livability in order to create strategic communication that can shift attitudes toward public transportation and, ultimately, change public behavior. A review of literature and past communication efforts, surveys of non-transit riders in 10 metropolitan areas across the country, brief intercept conversations, and observational data yielded several recommendations.

Key findings involving non-transit riders:

- Non-riders are already generally supportive of public transit.
- Transportation system planners and communicators should seek to draw connections among priority livability issues and public transportation.
- Non-riders recognize the positive aspects of public transportation as cutting down on traffic, being good for the environment and being efficient.
- Most non-riders think their lives would be mostly unaffected by reductions or increases in transit funding.
- Transportation communicators should take advantage of a supportive, non-riding public to highlight the benefits of transit funding and make these issues more salient to nonriders.

Key findings involving transit riders:

The research team's observations went beyond the usual binary of describing riders as either "captive" or "choice" to include an emerging category of rider: The Green Rider. The team identified this type of rider as a crucial player in creating a long-term culture of ridership among people who have the ability to drive. Reaching and expanding the base of Green Riders could build ridership and investment in transit policies. Recommended creative strategies would include stories of heroism, underscoring belief systems and narratives of self-efficacy and use of local characters to engage the Green Rider.

This study was funded by the **National Institute for Transportation and Communities (NITC)**. NITC is one of five U.S. Department of Transportation national university transportation centers. Housed at Portland State University, NITC is a program of the Transportation Research and Education Center (TREC). This Portland State-led research partnership includes the University of Oregon, Oregon Institute of Technology, University of Utah and new partners University of Arizona and University of Texas at Arlington.

Livability is a central theme in concepts around transit ridership. To develop a communication strategy to increase transit ridership, this project frames the connections between livability and transit and offers campaign examples.

Framing Livability: A Strategic Communications Approach to Improving Public Transportation in Oregon (#2018-873)

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