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SURVEY OF SAN GABRIEL VALLEY
BUS IMPROVEMENT GUIDE

May, 1976

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
RAPID TRANSIT DISTRICT

Prepared by:
Marketing Research
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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The San Gabriel Valley Transit Improvement Program went into effect on April 11, 1976. The program entailed a new numbering system in addition to new routing throughout the San Gabriel area. Besides the new schedules which were printed for all the lines, a Guide of the entire program was prepared. This Guide consisted of a color keyed map of all the routes, a table showing the old line numbers and the corresponding new line numbers, as well as a section which listed all the lines in the area, their origin and termination points and their service frequencies. These Guides were distributed prior to and during the introduction of the new program.

The Marketing and Communications Department was responsible for the production and distribution of these Guides. Because of the cost differential in preparing this Guide, as opposed to the simpler materials prepared for other sector improvement programs, the Marketing and Communications Department requested a consumer study to evaluate the effectiveness of the Guide.

The study, designed with this objective in mind, was to determine:

- The usefulness of the Guide to riders in the San Gabriel area,
- The relative usefulness of each of the sections of the Guide, and
- If the Guide was sufficient for most riders as a source of information.
- Data on suggestions or ideas from riders.

Secondary data to be obtained from the study consisted of:

- Demographic characteristics of the riders.
- Determining the effectiveness of our distribution of the Guide.

METHODOLOGY

The survey universe was defined as all riders of the San Gabriel Valley lines. Using Planning Department estimates of ridership in this area, and 1975 Regional Planning Commission estimates of population in the area, it was determined that less than 10% of the population rides the bus.

Consequently, a sample size of 500 was selected to satisfy a pre-established criteria of a 95% confidence level with a $\pm 3\%$ error margin.

The study consisted of an on-board, personal interview lasting 5-7 minutes. All interviews were conducted by five Mobile Information Team members fully trained to do market research interviewing. They also received a complete briefing on this survey prior to the start of field work. Their instructions included the sample criteria which were:

- 50% males, 50% females
- 60% peak hour riders, 40% off-peak hour riders
- Respondents must have received a copy of the Guide and
- They must have looked it over.

Each interviewer also received specific line assignments.

Interviewing started on Monday, April 26 and was completed on Monday, May 3, 1976. A total of 505 valid interviews were obtained, and comprise the base for the report which follows. Results may be generalized to the San Gabriel Valley riders only.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With only 17% of San Gabriel Valley riders claiming not to have received a copy of the Guide, it appears that the District has been quite successful in reaching the primary population it aimed to reach. However, since no data on literature penetration levels were obtained for other sector improvement programs, it cannot be determined if 83% is above, below or on norm for this type of distribution.

- It is recommended that studies similar to this be conducted in other areas still to be improved, i.e. Bay Cities, North and West Los Angeles. These studies would provide normative data for future promotional activities.

Of the three main sections of the Guide, the map section was considered the most useful and the service frequency section the least useful. The reasons given for considering the various sections least useful indicate that the service frequency section is least useful in its present form, rather than because it is regarded as unnecessary. Over and over, riders indicated they wanted/needed specific times. The section which indeed appeared least needed, was the old/new lines section. This section was not used and was considered unnecessary by more than one out of four persons.

- It is suggested that, if the Guide is to be revised, the old/new line section be deleted. It is further suggested that if a similar Guide is planned for other sector improvement programs, this section may be omitted.
- The service frequency section is giving people too little information about something they badly want. Thus, it is creating unwarranted confusion and frustration. Recognizing the difficulty in including complete time tables in the space available, it may be better to eliminate this section completely on future revisions, or on future sector improvement programs.

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SURVEY FINDINGS

EFFECTIVENESS OF DISTRIBUTION

Within three weeks after the new program was implemented, more than four out of five riders had received a copy of the Guide. Only 17% of those contacted claimed not to have received one. An additional 5% of those contacted admitted to having received a Guide but stated they had not yet looked it over.

Of those who had received a Guide and had looked it over, the most frequently cited source for their copy of the Guide was off the bus. There were no significant differences by sex or hours of travel.

"Where did you get your copy of the Guide?"

	<u>All Respondents</u>
Off the bus/bus rack/bus take-one box	40%
At RTD Station/El Monte Station/ Greyhound Station	26
Handed to me on street	13
From the driver	10
From friend or acquaintance	7
Sent to me by RTD (on request)	2
All other	<u>2</u>
Total	100%

OVERALL SUFFICIENCY OF GUIDE

More than half the respondents stated that the Guide provided them with sufficient information to make a trip by bus. A significantly higher proportion of males than females found the Guide sufficient by itself.

	<u>All Respondents</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Peak Hours</u>	<u>Off-Peak Hours</u>
Guide is sufficient	58%	63%	53%	56%	60%
Need other information	<u>42</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>40</u>
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The other information most frequently referred to were schedules. RTD telephone information was mentioned by nearly one out of six respondents. Females and peak-hour riders had a significantly higher proportion of calling RTD for information than males and off-peak hour riders.

<u>Other Information Referred to</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Peak Hours</u>	<u>Off-Peak Hours</u>
Schedules/specific time tables	81%	78%	78%	81%
Call RTD Information	15	23	23	13
Ask driver	4	2	1	6
All other	9	6	7	8
Total	*	*	*	*

Base: Those who "needed other information" in previous question.

*Totals add to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

RELATIVE USEFULNESS OF SECTIONS OF GUIDE

Respondents were asked to rank which section of the Guide they considered most useful and which they considered least useful. Overall, the map section was considered the most useful. Males, much more than females, considered the map section the most useful. There were also significant differences of ratings between males and females on the usefulness of the other two sections of the Guide. There were no statistically significant differences in the ratings given between peak hour and off-peak hour riders.

	<u>All</u> <u>Respondents</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
<u>Section Considered <u>Most</u> Useful</u>			
Map Section	65%	72%	57%
Old/new line section	19	16	22
Service frequency section	<u>16</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>21</u>
Total	100%	100%	100%

On the opposite end of the scale, the service frequency section of the Guide was mentioned most frequently as the least useful section. The major reason given for this was that it was too general and specific times were needed. This is consistent with the responses on the previous questions dealing with the sufficiency of the Guide.

EFFECT OF TRANSIT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

San Gabriel Valley bus riders, for the most part, feel that the changes have made it easier for them to ride the bus. Males were more favorably disposed toward the changes than were female riders. One out of four riders felt the changes had made no difference in their riding convenience.

	<u>All Respondents</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
<u>Changes in San Gabriel Valley bus lines have made it:</u>			
Easier to ride bus	45%	48%	41%
More difficult to ride bus	31%	28	34
Made no difference	<u>24</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u>
Total	100%	100%	100%

The most frequently mentioned reason for considering the old/new line section least useful was the comment that it was unnecessary or unneeded.

Section Considered Least Useful

	<u>Map</u>	<u>Old/New Lines</u>	<u>Service Frequency</u>
	<u>18%</u>	<u>37%</u>	<u>45%</u>
<u>Reasons why section is Considered least useful</u>			
Unclear/confusing	8%	4%	-
Do not use/unnecessary/ unneeded	8	27	12
Too general/need specific times	-	-	25
Don't know how to use it	-	-	10
Other reasons	2	6	1
Total	*	*	*

*May total to more than 100% due to multiple responses

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SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN GUIDE

Even though many people were at a loss when asked to make suggestions for making the Guide easier to use, more than half the respondents (54%) did suggest various ideas. One out of five found the Guide "good as it is." The most frequently voiced suggestion was to include time schedules. A third of the comments were with reference to the map section.

	<u>Percent of those having suggestion</u>
<u>Service Frequency Section</u>	<u>38%</u>
Add specific time schedules	31%
Service frequency section confusing	7
<u>Map Section</u>	<u>33%</u>
More bus numbers on map	9%
More colors to show routes	9
Need more streets/landmarks	7
Larger map size	4
Could do without map (don't know how to read map)	4
<u>Other</u>	<u>28%</u>
Too much information/too confusing	4%
Print in Spanish/English	4
Include fare information	3
Delete old/new line section	3
All other comments (less than 3% each)	14
<u>Very Good/Good as is</u>	<u>20%</u>
Total	*

*Total adds to more than 100% due to multiple comments.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF SAN GABRIEL VALLEY BUS RIDERS

Age

The average age of San Gabriel area bus riders is 37. Female riders average 40 years of age, while male riders are younger with an average age of 36. Off-peak hour riders' average age is slightly older than that of peak hour riders.

The disparity in ages between males and females is most significant in the 50 and older age group (19% of males vs. 32% of females). Significant differences between the peak hour and non-peak hour riders are in the 30-49 group and the 50 and older group.

<u>Age</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Peak Hours</u>	<u>Off-Peak Hours</u>
Under 20	9%	7%	6%	10%
20 - 29	24	19	23	21
30 - 39	31	26	(31	(24
40 - 49	17	16	50%(19	38%(14
50 - 62	(8	(17	12	13
Over 62	19%(11	32%(15	9	18
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>

Number of Automobiles

A substantial proportion (21%) of San Gabriel Valley Bus riders have no automobiles in the household. Although female riders have a slightly higher proportion of non-car households than male riders, the significant difference is among peak hour and off-peak hour riders. Twenty-six percent of off-peak hour riders have no autos in the household, compared with 17% of peak hour riders.

<u>Number of Autos in Household</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Peak Hours</u>	<u>Off-Peak Hours</u>
None	20%	23%	17	26
One	42	39	47	32
Two	26	27	24	30
Three or more	<u>12</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>12</u>
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Income

Average annual income for riders in the San Gabriel Valley was \$11,405. Again, there were observable differences by sex of rider and between peak hour and off-peak hour riders.

<u>Income</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Peak Hours</u>	<u>Off-Peak Hours</u>
Under \$5,000	20%	23%	16%	29%
\$5,000 - \$9,999	19	24	24	19
\$10,000 - \$14,999	25	25	26	23
\$25,000 - \$29,999	16	12	13	15
\$30,000 or more	<u>20</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>14</u>
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Median Income	\$12,210	\$10,600	\$12,000	\$10,600