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A Case Study:

How Gateway Cities Handled Cancellation of 'The Nanny Express'

(Jan. 7, 2004) The Gateway Cities sector staff went to extraordinary lengths to ensure the public was notified about the proposal to eliminate Line 576 – the “Nanny Express” – and to encourage participation in the public hearing process.

The effort involved emails, letters and phone calls. All literature was printed in both Spanish and English.

The sector staff notified Line 576 customers, elected officials and city staff about the proposed change. Written notice of the proposed cancellation and the public hearing dates was sent to numerous local, state, county and federal officials, and to agencies and organizations.

Notice was also provided in many local and regional newspapers serving the Los Angeles region, including foreign language newspapers. Special English- and Spanish-language rider notices were placed on all Metro Buses, Metro Rail trains and at customer service centers.

Ensured proper notification

Once the sector governance council approved the line cancellation, the sector staff worked with several departments to ensure customers would be properly notified.

The Board of Directors, members of the Los Angeles City Council and Mayor James Hahn's office received notification about the cancellation, and the reasoning behind the decision.

The Gateway Cities' staff worked with the Westside/Central sector to notify elected officials, neighborhood councils, homeowners associations and others that may have been impacted by the cancellation.

Notification included the reason for the cancellation, a map of alternative service available and a phone number to call for more information – including an offer to personally customize alternative service options for existing Line 576 customers.

Distributed special brochure

The Gateway Cities sector staff distributed a special service change brochure that included a list of alternate bus routes on Line 576 buses.

In addition, the staff – many of them bilingual – rode Line 576 buses two weeks before the service change, and on the last day of operation, to make doubly sure that customers were aware of the cancellation and their alternate service options.

The sector staff also met with Metro Media Relations and Marketing representatives to ensure that all notification elements were coordinated. Information on the cancellation and alternative service was posted on Metro's website, accessible through several links.

Media Relations issued a news release to LA County media outlets, including foreign language publications, regarding upcoming service changes and provided contact information on alternative service options to Line 576.

Extensive news coverage

A number of media outlets, including KNBC-TV, the Los Angeles Times, Telemundo and a local National Public Radio station, ran stories about the Line 576 cancellation. Senior Public Communications Officer Jose Ubaldo met reporters on some of Line 576's early morning runs.

Gateway Cities General Manager Alex Clifford and Community Relations Manager David Hershenson were at Central City Division 1 to greet the buses carrying news reporters and were available to answer questions.

Public Relations Deputy Executive Officer Marc Littman anticipated the media's interest in covering the Line 576 story.

"Early on, Media Relations met with Alex and his staff and we all agreed we should bring this story forward and alert the media, particularly those who had covered the Nanny Express in the past," said Littman. "It was a prime example of how Metro acted with compassion and took steps to ease the transition for the nannies and other domestic workers that use Metro Bus service. Kudos to Alex and his staff for going the extra mile."

-- From David Hershenson