

Project Description

During the coming year, SACOG and a consortium of transit agencies within the Sacramento region will be introducing a regional electronic fare card – the Connect Card – which will allow transit users to ride seven transit systems using a single fare instrument. The Connect Card will make using transit to travel throughout the region easier and more seamless. It has the potential to increase both transit ridership and rider satisfaction.

In preparation for the Connect Card introduction, SACOG wishes to contract with a consultant to conduct pre and post implementation surveys of transit users on the seven participating transit systems including El Dorado Transit commuter routes, e-tran, Folsom Stage Lines, Roseville Transit, Sacramento Regional Transit bus and light rail, Yolobus, and Yuba Sutter Transit.

The on-board passenger surveys are to be conducted in the spring of 2013 (prior to Connect Card implementation) and in the Spring of 2014 (after the introduction). Each survey will be comprehensive in nature, including all participating bus and light rail lines throughout the region.

The pre-survey will allow SACOG and the transit agencies to explore and understand a variety of issues relating to the conversion of passengers to the Connect Card.

- Profile the passengers on each system in terms of demographic make-up and transit usage characteristics.
- Explore how passengers currently pay their fare, and how fare payment varies by transit system, by mode (rail/bus), by demographic group and by travel characteristics.
- Understand the Title VI implications of the change – how will low income and minority populations be impacted.
- Understand passenger attitudes and preferences relating to fare payment.
- Provide insight to the communication effort required to convert the region's transit riders from the current array of fare products to the Connect Card.

Post survey will measure changes that have resulted from the Connect Card implementation.

- Duplicate the profile of passengers by system in order to identify changes that have occurred in the demographic make-up or the trip characteristics of the riders.
- Explore how passengers are paying their fares after the implementation, and how that varies by segment.
- Evaluate rider satisfaction with the new fare system.
- Provide data for Title VI reporting.

In addition to providing a tool for evaluating the Connect Card implementation, this project also offers the potential to provide each of the participating transit agencies with market research data to guide their other planning, marketing and operations efforts. The approach proposed for this project will provide SACOG and the Consortium with an accurate reflection of the region's ridership, while also providing each transit agency with a representative and fully-analyzed data set of their own ridership.

General Methodology

The methodology proposed for this project includes four key components:

- The basic methodology for the survey is a self-administered paper survey distributed and collected by well-trained survey staff on-board a representative sample of bus and light rail trips on each of the seven transit systems participating in the Connect Card program. Every passenger 12 or older who boards during a surveyor assignment will be asked to complete the questionnaire. Passengers will be asked to complete the questionnaire only once per transit system. However, if a passenger is surveyed on another system, they will be asked to complete a second questionnaire.
- Each transit system will be treated as a stand-alone sample, with a common questionnaire and approach, in order to insure that findings are representative of and relevant to the individual participants as well as to SACOG and the Consortium as a whole.
- A variety of proven strategies will be utilized to maximize participation among transit riders. The questionnaire will be available in English, Spanish, and any languages requested by transit operators who will pay for additional translations. Special provisions will be made for those with disabilities.
- Data will be analyzed at both the system and regional level to meet the needs of all participants. The complete data set, will be carefully weighted using route-level ridership data to create a composite sample that is representative of the region as a whole.

Transit Marketing will be responsible for all aspects of the survey planning, data collection and analysis effort. The transit agencies will be asked simply to provide operating data for use in creating the survey sample and to cooperate with their team in the data collection effort. SACOG and the Consortium will be asked to review and comment on interim and final products throughout the course of the project.