



## Highlights:

*The online revolution has produced several innovative forms of new media that should be a part of any transit agency's marketing mix:*

- Today, over 215 million people (71.4% of the population) are online in the United States. There are approximately 1,464 million (21.9% of the world's population) online globally.
- Facebook, an online networking tool, has over 110 million active members to date.
- If your riders cannot find your ride guide or route schedules in the first 30 seconds, your website needs to be revamped.

## Majic Consulting Group:

*Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of public transportation through improved marketing, planning and management.*

## Maximizing Exposure Using Online Media

*The internet heralded the inception of several new platforms of advertising and promotions. In these uncertain economic times, choosing a mix of newer and traditional media avenues will not only garner greater brand recognition, it will mean increased ridership as well. With a new crop of increasingly user friendly tools such as Google Transit, industry exposure and networking have become easier and more cost effective than ever before for the public transit industry.*

### 1. E-Networking 101

A good rule of thumb when considering new media is that it costs less than traditional media channels for the same amount of exposure. Several services are free and won't burden your agency's tight promotions budget.

Websites such as *Twitter* and *Facebook* represent a new trend with particularly high-reach potential for increasing ridership. The biggest reason why these services produce results is because they mirror

the way your agency acquires riders offline.

About 80% of any agency's business comes via word-of-mouth, so it pays to invest in technologies created purely for networking and public relations.

Riders of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) have formed a Twitter group to exchange updates - including delays and service changes concerning the Bay Area transit system. These updates can also be delivered to circles of friends or group members. The creation of an online community not only keeps riders up-to-date, but also fosters a collective investment in the agency's services.

### 2. Outsourcing

Having other professionals take care of your technical needs is a good thing. It's worthwhile to outsource technical design for media promotions so that your agency can keep on top of the newest trends, while concentrating on what it does best: providing effective and efficient transit to its riders.

Outsourcing doesn't mean that you lose creative control of the final product; it just means that others complete the legwork for you.

For example, our agency recently produced a site for San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority's SRTP ([www.rta4tomorrow.com](http://www.rta4tomorrow.com)). Using the site design format from RTA's agency site, an *effective* website was created to keep riders and stake holders up-to-date on plan progress. Users are also able to provide feedback online.



### 3. Your Agency Website

Your transit system's

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## Using Online Media *(continued)*

website is considered to be the virtual reflection of your actual service, and thus, the presentation and quality of your agency's homepage needs to reflect your agency's brand. Many transit agencies have fallen into the trap of having too much information in too little space, confusing potential riders.

*If your passengers cannot find your ride guide or route schedules in the first 30 seconds, your website needs to be revamped.*

An effective site doesn't need fancy graphics or animations – just easy navigation and a clear layout. Majic Consulting's website for Santa Maria's Breeze Bus ([www.breezibus.com](http://www.breezibus.com)) garnered several industry awards for its crisp, clean design.

### 4. Online Customer Relations

Linking a *Trip Planner* or

*Commuter Comparison Calculator* on your homepage will increase your agency website's ability to attract new riders. *Google Transit*, a universal trip planner, lets riders get step-by-step transit directions, view route maps and schedules, as well as a 3D image of the transit station or bus stop.



Uploading videos of your service is also extremely effective. Portland's TriMet Max light rail system ([www.trimet.org/max](http://www.trimet.org/max)) recently placed a video online of "a day in the life" of one of its rail operators.

Ensure that promotions,

discount programs, TV commercials or service changes are clearly displayed on your site. Customers returning to your website will be provided with a steady stream of information, giving your agency a modern edge.

### 5. Bringing It All Together

You're reading this article, which shows that time-honored methods of media distribution still work. Don't abandon proven techniques such as direct mail, schedule distribution, and print and broadcast media. Many demographic segments still rely on traditional media to stay informed. Choosing new media doesn't mean that you have to abandon old methods of communication with current and potential clients. Rather, investing in new media means that your agency will not be left behind in today's increasingly challenging marketplace.

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