

## PT Tomorrow Public Involvement Phase 4 Report

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## Phase 4 Executive Summary

In the fall of 2010 the Public Involvement Team entered phase 4 of the PT Tomorrow project. This phase of public involvement was very different from previous phases. The purpose of phase 4 was to educate Pierce County residents about Pierce Transit's Proposition 1 with balanced and factual information. Proposition 1 was on the February 2011 ballot to let registered voters of the Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA) determine the direction of the agency.

A team of people met with the Pierce County Auditor's office in early fall to discuss the necessary steps and deadlines for the ballot proposition. At the meeting staff from the auditor's office commended PT for being proactive and for coming in to meet with them early. Not only was this helpful for PT, it was also beneficial to the auditor's office for planning purposes. A PT project schedule was built and well managed to ensure all deadlines were met in a timely fashion.

Phase 4 was not open to public comment on the System Redesign plans; we did however receive comments through the PT Tomorrow email and through the Customer Services phone number. The comments were logged and staff responded to questions about the plans in a timely fashion. The amount of comments received was very small compared to previous phases. Most people had specific questions about how their routes may be affected in the future. We continued to hear the common theme of "provide more service across the entire service area". The Public Involvement team continued to give presentations when asked by community groups. Staff visited City Councils around the service area to provide an update on the PT Tomorrow process and provided factual information on both plans. Some of the small cities in our PTBA were not supportive of the ballot measure, however some cities have continued to be supportive.

Throughout phase 4 outreach a large effort went into educating the members of the disabled community or those that work with the disabled community. Because of the possible reductions in SHUTTLE service, it was vital to reach out to these groups and educate them on the plans. PT was featured in several newsletters and invited to speak at department meetings for VADIS, Good Samaritan Behavioral Health, Multicare, Transition Options for Developmentally Disabled, and Goodwill Industries. These groups were very concerned about the possible reductions in service and were appreciative of the outreach effort made to educate them.

In January of 2011, PT hosted Open House meetings to be available to answer questions about the plans. The open house meetings were well attended. In Alternative 1 Reduction Plan, we continued to hear concerns about the reductions from our riders, especially regarding the loss of trips in the morning and evening. In Alternative 2 Preservation Plan, many community members responded positively to the changes made to the plans such as more direct routes and buses that come more often. Majority of the attendees at the open houses were supportive of the ballot measure.

At the February 1, 2011 Pierce County Council meeting, PT supporters showed up to testify in support of Pierce Transit. There was a resolution on the agenda against Pierce Transit's Prop. 1. After seeing that over 30 people had showed to testify at the meeting, the resolution was withdrawn from the agenda. The room was full and spilled into the hallway.

The effort of phase 4 was truly an educational opportunity to speak to our community members about the plans and answer questions. During this phase we spoke to over 2,500 people. We received a letter of support from the Tacoma Ministerial Alliance and verbal support from many groups throughout the county. The Public Involvement team has had over 30,000 face-to-face interactions overall during the past 18 months.

## Phase 4 By the Numbers

Open House: 6 meetings, 77 attendees

Community Presentations: 50 groups, 1946 attendees

PT Tomorrow Website Visitors (Sept. 2010 to Feb. 2011): 12,472 site visits

Comments Received: 40 via customer services, email, and open house meetings

Transit Center Outreach on December 1, 2010 (Snow Plan Outreach): 2500 brochures

Employees Participating in Public Involvement: 54

PT Tomorrow Class – Are you on the Bus #2: 189 participants

Public Disclosure Classes: 197 participants

Over 2,500 Face-to-Face Interactions

## Community Organization Presentations

Pierce Transit staff continued visiting community organizations. Following up with groups we had met with previously, staff reported on the current and future financial situation and educated the public about both service plans that have been moved forward to the February 2011 ballot. This was also an opportunity to extend an invitation to the open house meetings. In part, this was accomplished by following up with those organizations that welcomed us in the first 3 rounds of community outreach.

After the presentations, the members of these organizations generally expressed concern with the Alternative 1 Reduction Plan, and for the most part supported Alternative 2 Preservation Plan. We heard again that most were concerned with how this would impact a student's ability to get to school and the unacceptable situation of having people with disabilities not able to leave their homes because of the possible reduction in SHUTTLE services.

## Large Groups and Community Events

Pierce Transit staff shared information about Pierce Transit services at scheduled community events, activities, and continued to incorporate the PT Tomorrow message where ever possible. Although these contacts and communications were not as in-depth and informative as the organization presentations, they did serve the purpose of informing the community that there are financial challenges at Pierce Transit. The PT Facts and Information brochures were handed out in great numbers.

Contact was made with over 600 people at:

- Touch-a-Truck
- Chamber of Commerce Business Expo
- Shift Happens
- Local Business Showcase/BE Green South Sound Sustainability
- Tacoma Ministerial Alliance

The Tacoma Ministerial Alliance is a group of pastors and leaders from the African-American community who wholeheartedly support public transit and Proposition 1. They voted unanimously to endorse the ballot measure. In addition, they also sent three representatives to the County Council meeting to testify for Proposition 1.

## Council Presentations

Starting in mid-October Pierce Transit staff presented at 7 council meetings. The presentations focused on educating the Councils on possible service changes in their communities. Staff took this opportunity to inform them of the specific details about levels of service that could be received with each plan. The Council presentations provided an excellent opportunity to inform both the Council and interested community members. Each of the meetings had anywhere from six to thirty individuals attending. Presentations noted with an asterisk (\*) indicate that those sessions were televised on local access television or through the internet achieving additional coverage. While every effort was made to schedule a presentation at all the Councils within our service area, some cities were not able to accommodate our request for a presentation.

Presentations regarding Public Meetings were made at:

- City of Bonney Lake
- City of DuPont\*
- City of Edgewood
- City of Gig Harbor
- City of Sumner\*
- City of Tacoma
- City of University Place

## PT Tomorrow Outreach Materials

Pierce Transit relies heavily on the talent of our Marketing department. They have continually provided high quality outreach materials that are informative, easy to read, and responsive to the needs of our community whether it is brochures, posters, direct mail, Facebook posts, "Tweets," presentation boards and PowerPoint shows, A-boards, transit shelter ads, print ads, and radio ads. We proudly share the success of the outreach with this fine group of professionals.

## PT Proposition 1 Facts & Information Brochure



During Phase 4, "PT Proposition 1 Facts & Information" brochures were widely distributed in our community. Brochures were distributed through Pierce Transit's regular information outlets including all buses and SHUTTLE vans, Bus Shops, and schedule and pass outlets. Specifically, these locations included public gathering places such as libraries, government buildings, colleges, and community centers, as well as Safeway and Saar's Marketplace ORCA outlets. Facts & Information brochures were given to people attending numerous community presentations, and were also provided to every Pierce Transit employee. Finally, in January, the brochures were mailed to active registered voters within PT's service area.

## Internal Communications

In addition to the Facts & Information brochures, other materials were distributed to all PT employees. In November, flyers featuring the Preservation and Reduction Plans were given to staff and posted on IPT. In January, "Proposition 1 Key Dates and Timeline" flyers were created and provided to all employees, and posted on IPT.



## The Bus Stops Here

Both the October 2010 issue of *The Bus Stops Here* and service change Rider Alert brochure featured PT Tomorrow. The articles highlighted the agency's public involvement work and system redesign progress to date. These pieces included Preservation and Reduction Plan maps, and encouraged readers to visit PTtomorrow.org to learn more. These materials reached a tremendous number of our riders.

## Report to the Community

In November, the "Fall 2010 Report to the Community" was inserted into the News Tribune, Herald, and Gateway, reaching 95,000+ readers throughout our service area. The report featured the two System Redesign Alternative Plans, as well as articles about local bus and SHUTTLE riders who depend on PT's valuable services.



## Print Advertisements

Phase 4 open house meetings were promoted through a series of 8 colorful ad insertions, customized for various communities, in the News Tribune, Puyallup Herald, and Peninsula Gateway. A full-page ad was also placed in Pierce County Coalition for Developmental Disabilities' newsletter.

## Online

Throughout the process upcoming open houses were promoted regularly on Facebook, Twitter, piercetrips.com, PTtomorrow.org and piercetransit.org. Additionally, a paid, animated advertisement ran on the News Tribune's home page in January to raise awareness of the Phase 4 open house meetings. All online messages linked to PTtomorrow.org, which is now maintained by Marketing.

## On-Street Signage



Passengers and the general public also learned about system redesign and open houses through on-street displays. Colorful ad shelter posters were displayed in 18 locations along bus routes, and a two-sided ad shelter display, with attached brochure rack, was placed at the Blue Gate boarding location for our Puyallup Fair Express riders. During Phase 4 outreach Denise Downs and Belinda Hernandez placed dozens of A-boards along transit routes and at PT's Transit Centers to help promote the open house meetings. Other outreach helpers placed posters and "Facts and Information brochures" at local businesses with a goal of educating people about the open house meetings so they could attend and learn more about the plans.

## Onboard Announcements (AVA SYSTEM)

Onboard, riders also learned about upcoming meetings through onboard announcements delivered by our Trax system and “Changes Ahead” and “Open House Meetings” coach posters.

## Media Coverage

We chose to use a mix of traditional media and web 2.0 technologies to reach the Pierce County community. We had newspaper coverage from the following papers: The News Tribune, The Tacoma Daily News, Sumner/Bonney Lake Courier, Tacoma Weekly, The Puyallup Herald, and The Peninsula Gateway. We were also given time on Pierce County News Television, TV Tacoma and KLAY Radio.

## Transit Center Outreach

Transit Center Outreach was limited during phase 4 because of public disclosure rules. PT staff distributed the Snow Plan brochures and talked with passengers at major transit centers and Park & Rides on Wednesday, December 1st. Approximately 2,500 brochures were delivered to our passengers.

## Pttomorrow.org and Social Networks

We continued to maintain a project website, [www.pttomorrow.org](http://www.pttomorrow.org), which provided an opportunity for the public to learn more about the process. This website was updated and enhanced throughout the process to allow visitors to compare the plans, look at individual routes, and learn historical facts about PT. The website also allowed users to sign up for updates. Along with contact information collected at meetings throughout the PT Tomorrow process, the distribution list for updates grew to over 1350 people. Web site maintenance has now been moved in-house and is handled by PT’s Marketing Department.

Pierce Transit’s Facebook and Twitter pages were continuously used to actively educate and drive traffic to the project website. Our “fan” base on Facebook is now at 798 fans, but we have a lot of people viewing our page without actually “liking” it. From January to today we’ve had 17,186 views on Facebook. On Twitter we have 726 followers and we have sent out 430 tweets.

## Open House Meetings

The meeting formats of our Open Houses were strictly to educate and inform the public of both the Preservation and the Reduction plan. Pierce Transit conducted six open house style meetings during phase 4 where 2 to 3 staff members were present with information boards and PT’s Proposition 1 Facts & Info brochure. Staff discussed with the public Pierce Transit’s financial situation and answers questions on both plans.



### Gig Harbor/Key Peninsula

An Open House meeting was held in Gig Harbor at City Hall on January 12<sup>th</sup>. Before staff was set up six people entered the room. Overall there were fourteen visitors that had very lively discussions. The majority was concerned about losing their service and said that they would support Prop 1. Two people said that they would not support anything that raised taxes. Chris Sherman, a reporter with the Tacoma News Tribune, and Jeanine Stewart, from the Peninsula Gateway interviewed everyone there, including staff. Staff felt that overall this was a worthwhile event.

### Sumner/E. Pierce County

At the request of Commissioner Johnson staff scheduled a meeting for East Pierce County residents. The meeting was held at Sumner City Hall in the Police Training Room on January 18<sup>th</sup>. The open house had eleven visitors, one of which was a SHUTTLE rider. In addition, there were three reporters from the Puyallup Herald, Bonney Lake-Sumner Patch (on-line news & events) and the Bonney Lake & Sumner Courier-Herald. Staff heard similar comments and concerns about the possible service reductions.

### Lakewood/University Place

The Lakewood/University Place Open House meeting was held at PT in the Rainier Room on January 19<sup>th</sup> and was attended by seventeen people. Most of the attendees had visited one of our Open Houses in the past. CEO Lynne Griffith, Chair of the Board Claudia Thomas and Commissioner Tim Farrell also came to the Open House. This group was very concerned about the Reduction Plan. One SHUTTLE user from the area expressed concern about access to services in the Reduction Plan.

### Tacoma

Staff felt it was important to host two Open House meetings in Tacoma because of the amount of service that could be affected depending on the outcome of the ballot measure.

On January 24<sup>th</sup>, PT hosted the Tacoma Open House meeting at The Evergreen State College Tacoma Campus in the Commons area. Thirteen people came by the Open House to view the plans and visited with staff. Attendees were generally supportive of the plans and asked specific questions about the potential impacts for routes that they utilize. A group of approximately three passengers had attended previous PT Tomorrow open houses and were expecting a formal presentation instead of the informal open house format that was provided. These same attendees indicated that they supported Proposition 1, but were not registered voters so they could not vote. Another attendee was interested in bike policies specific to both Pierce Transit and Sound Transit. His general concerns however were with regional bike connections.

PT hosted the first open house at The Goodwill Industries in downtown Tacoma on January 25<sup>th</sup>. Eleven people attended and the attendees were generally supportive of the Preservation Plan. Individuals were interested in the plans and some had specific route questions for services they utilized. About half of the attendees represented disabled users and were concerned about the potential loss of SHUTTLE service. Some patrons from this group commented on concerns regarding Operator conduct. The questions were followed up with Transit Services and people received responses to their questions by email. Overall, these patrons were supportive of Pierce Transit and Proposition 1 but one was struggling with her decision based on her limited income.

## Puyallup/Sumner

The Open House meeting was held at the Puyallup Public Library on January 26<sup>th</sup> and was attended by over 30 people. Unlike previous open house events, where people would get the information they're looking for and then leave, almost everyone stayed for the entire two hours. The group was very charged about reductions to routes in their area. They asked pointed questions about our overall finances, employee wages and benefits, the Union contract, etc. Some people came with print outs of our budget from the web site and asked specific questions about many items. It was obvious there was some strong opposition in the room from a few individuals. Staff took turns responding to questions. As the meeting ended, the person that had the budget print outs was impressed and satisfied with our responses and said he was voting "yes".

## UWT Open Houses

For the first time, Pierce Transit was invited to host an open house for the students, staff, and faculty at University of Washington - Tacoma (UWT). UWT Student Senators requested that Pierce Transit provide two open house events on their campus. They asked for a noon-time meeting and an evening meeting. They made the arrangements for the room and publicized the meetings around campus; a total of twenty-four attendees were at the UWT Open House meetings.

The afternoon meeting had fifteen people come through. There were a number of questions regarding the reduction plan and impact to those who commute to UWT. Also, a number of people were interested in the change to route 402. There was a mix of regular riders, occasional riders, and non-riders all who came by to check out the facts.

The evening meeting had nine guests, many of whom were Student Senators. Most questions were specific to bus routes/service around the UWT campus. Most of the attendees verbalized their support of transit.

## 2010 Customer Satisfaction Survey Executive Summary

### *Background and Methodology*

Pierce Transit has used statistically representative survey research to track customer satisfaction among Riders since 1998. The 2010 research builds on the previous research efforts but also included new questions to address new services and programs as well as current issues. The research provides detailed information on customer satisfaction with more than 58 elements of transit service.

This survey of 570 Pierce Transit Riders provides local system-wide representation proportionate to weekday ridership by time of day on Pierce Transit's fixed routes. Respondents were initially intercepted at major transfer and boarding locations as well as onboard key routes and asked to provide contact information in order to participate in a telephone survey. A total of 2,294 Riders were recruited for the telephone survey and surveys were completed with 570 respondents. The maximum margin of error for a sample of 570 is plus or minus 4.1 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. That is, in 95 out of 100 cases, the survey result will not differ from the general population by more than 4.1 percentage points in either direction.

Data collection occurred from October 14 to November 18, 2010. Fares increased on November 1 during data collection but there were no significant differences in survey results observed due to the increase.

## Key Findings

### Rider Profile

As in previous surveys, Pierce Transit's Riders have disproportionately lower incomes, come from larger households, and are more ethnically diverse and younger on average than the Pierce County population.<sup>1</sup>

There has been a steady decrease in the number of licensed drivers and vehicles per household since 2004, suggesting that Pierce Transit customers are becoming increasingly transit dependent.

### Transit Use

The majority of Pierce Transit customers are veteran Riders, 40 percent have been riding 10 or more years. Moreover, the percentage of veteran Riders has been increasing since 2004, from 33 percent to 40 percent, a 21 percent increase, suggesting that Pierce Transit has been increasingly successful in retaining existing Riders.

On average, Pierce Transit customers take 35 one-way trips per month. This represents an increase from 2007 and is nearly the same as in 2004. Despite the increase in the average number of trips, the distribution by category is nearly the same as in 2007. Notably, nearly two out of five (38%) customers are Infrequent Riders, taking 20 or fewer rides per month. As noted in 2007, this is a significant change from 2004 when only three out of ten (30%) Pierce Transit customers were Infrequent Riders. Also of note is the steady decrease in the percentage of customers taking 41 to 60 rides per month, from 30 percent of all customers in 2004 to 20 percent in 2010.

The majority of Pierce Transit customers also ride on the weekends, 78 percent ride on Saturday and 57 percent ride on Sunday. However, weekend ridership, notably on Saturdays, has decreased since 2001. The number of Pierce Transit customers riding on Saturday has decreased 9 percent, from 78 percent to 71 percent.

Similarly, the majority (79%) of Riders ride during the evening when it is dark.

The number of Riders using Pierce Transit for trips to and from work has dropped significantly to 23 percent. This is the lowest level yet recorded and could be a reflection of current economic conditions with the significant increase in unemployment resulting in fewer customers riding to work.

At the same time the percentage of Riders using Pierce Transit to get to or from appointments is at its highest level (22%). This increase may also be a reflection of the economy as more Riders are using Pierce Transit to travel to job interviews as they look for work.

After decreasing significantly between 2001 and 2004, the percentage of Pierce Transit Riders who transfer has remained relatively stable over the last several years. Currently 63 percent of Pierce Transit customers transfer to get to their destination. On average, those who transfer do so 1.7 times, the same as in 2007 but significantly higher than in 2004 (1.56).

### Fare Payment

The ORCA Card was introduced in 2010. As a result, fare payment questions were carefully reviewed and new questions added. Some questions were also asked in a similar study conducted by King County Metro at the same time as Pierce Transit's Customer Survey. When these findings are released, comparisons can be made across the two systems.

<sup>1</sup> Comparisons are based on 2009 population data for Pierce County from the American Community Survey.

Just over half (53%) of Pierce Transit Riders use the new ORCA Card. As would be expected, use is highest among Frequent Riders, more than two-thirds (68%) of whom use the ORCA Card. The primary reasons given for not using the ORCA Card are that the customer doesn't ride often enough, lacks awareness or knowledge of how to use, can't afford it or feels it costs too much, and has concerns about the \$5.00 purchase fee.

With the introduction of the ORCA Card, there has been a decrease in pass use and an increase in cash payments from previous years. The percentage of customers using passes has decreased from 62 percent in 2004 to 53 percent in 2010. Cash payments jumped from 20 percent in 2007 to 31 percent in 2010.

The majority (67%) of ORCA Card users began using the card when it was first introduced, thus avoiding the \$5.00 fee. Most (66%) went to a Customer Service office to obtain their card. Nearly three out of four (72%) ORCA Card users have a pass loaded on their card. One out of four (23%) have an E-purse in addition to their pass. Three out of ten (31%) ORCA Card users receive some form of subsidy.

Satisfaction with the ORCA Card is very high. Nine out of ten (91%) ORCA Card users are satisfied. Moreover, more than three times as many say they are very satisfied (70%) than somewhat satisfied (21%). Less than half (48%) report having any problems with their ORCA Card. Problems encountered most often were having to tap more than once when boarding and not having the E-purse or pass value added to the card available when they needed.

### Customer Satisfaction

While the majority (68%) of customers continues to be satisfied with riding, the percentage of satisfied customers has decreased sharply from 2007 when 88 percent were satisfied. There has been a corresponding increase in the percentage who say they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied—from 8 percent in 2007 to 21 percent currently—as well as an increase in the percentage who are dissatisfied—from 5 percent in 2007 to 11 percent in 2010. This shift may be due to the timing of the survey—after cuts in service and in advance of or during a fare increase.

As in the past, the 58 elements of service were grouped into 12 major service categories, and where comparable a composite rating was computed. Because of some significant changes in the questionnaire due to changes in service or programs, comparisons were not possible in every category.

The service areas receiving the highest ratings in 2010 are:

- Customer information
- Bus drivers
- Service reliability
- Customer service

These are the same as in 2007. However, ratings for reliability experienced a sharp decrease in 2010 due to:

- Redistribution in ratings between those who are very versus somewhat satisfied. That is, there was a decrease in the percentage very satisfied and a generally corresponding increase in the percentage somewhat satisfied. This could be a function of the slight difference in the question format which encouraged telephone survey respondents to more clearly discriminate between these two points. At the same time, the shifts are not the same across all attributes suggesting that there has been a real change in customer satisfaction here that should be carefully monitored. The greatest potential problem areas are whether the bus leaves the stop or arrives at the stop late. This would suggest a problem with the schedules and drivers following the timed stops appropriately.

Ratings for customer service also decreased somewhat due to:

- The ease of reaching a customer service representative. This drop is due primarily to a decrease in the percentage very satisfied. However, while a small segment, the percentage dissatisfied tripled. This trend should be carefully monitored.

Those service areas receiving the lowest ratings are:

- Bus stops and shelters
- Late service
- Personal safety
- Service frequency
- Transferring
- Early service

Late service and service frequency experienced significant decreases in 2010 due to decreases in satisfaction with:

- Late-night service on Sundays and, to a lesser extent, on Saturdays
- Frequency of service on Sunday

There were also decreases in ratings for transferring and early service due to decreases in satisfaction with:

- How early the bus starts on Sundays
- The time limit allowed on transfers

On a positive note, ratings for personal safety remained stable or increased slightly in 2010. Note that questions regarding personal safety were limited to those related to the behavior of others, an attribute within Pierce Transit's control.

- Improved ratings resulted from an increase in the percentage somewhat satisfied and stable levels among those very satisfied. The increases in satisfaction were greatest for the behavior of others during evening hours.

In addition, ratings for transit centers and park-and-ride lots improved despite the addition of several measures related to personal safety.

- The increase in satisfaction with transit centers and park-and-ride lots is due primarily to an increase in satisfaction with the lighting at these sites. This most likely has contributed to the increase in satisfaction with personal and vehicle safety.
- Transit center and park-and-ride lots users are more concerned with feelings of safety related to the behavior of others than with actual personal safety. As would be expected, these concerns are greater at night than during the day.

In addition, customers are very satisfied with the new automated stop announcement system.

- With the introduction of automated stop announcements, rider satisfaction jumped to 68 percent very satisfied compared with 56 percent in 2007 when drivers announced the stops. Riders are somewhat more satisfied with the clarity than with the consistency of the announcements.

### *Conclusions and Recommendations*

Despite the difficult economic times and the impacts lower revenues have had on service, Pierce Transit has done a good job in maintaining customer satisfaction levels. Until revenues and ridership increase, Pierce Transit should focus its efforts on those areas that it can directly control. These include:

- Ensuring that drivers carefully watch schedules at the timed stops and arrive and leave according the schedules at these stops
- Continuing improvements in customer safety, focusing on drivers' ability to handle problems on the bus related to the behavior of riders
- Maintaining quality of customer service and the information available to customers

### **Phase 4 Report Conclusion**

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, Pierce Transit CEO Lynne Griffith, released the following statement following the outcome of Proposition 1, which would have authorized additional sales tax revenue.

"While I am disappointed the voters did not approve Proposition 1, I remain proud of all Pierce Transit employees. They have a well deserved national reputation of being some of the best in the public transportation industry. I am grateful for their commitment to serving our communities.

We will wait for all the votes to be counted before analyzing yesterday's election. We know current economic conditions continue to present challenges for families and businesses across the region. It was a difficult time to ask for an increase in sales tax.

Our Board of Commissioners will be meeting at the end of the month to discuss the results of the election and determine the best way to move forward at our current funding level. The reduction plan that was developed with extensive public outreach over the last year includes service cuts of approximately 35 percent.

With nearly 50,000 passenger trips on an average weekday and over 1,500 SHUTTLE rides for people with disabilities, we are committed to keeping our riders informed and involved in the coming weeks and months.

We will continue to seek further cost cutting measures, building on the nearly \$90 million we've already cut to meet the challenges of this severe economic recession."