

Sarnia Transit

Marketing & Customer Service Plan

This document is intended to serve as an outline to guide the City in preparing a final, detailed Marketing and Customer Service Plan for its transit services.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Introduction	3
1.1	<i>Agency Profile</i>	3
1.2	<i>Fleet and Facilities</i>	3
1.3	<i>Routes & Services</i>	3
1.4	<i>Customer Information Sources</i>	3
1.4.1	Printed Materials	3
1.4.2	Signs	3
1.4.3	On-board	3
1.4.4	In Person	3
1.4.5	Internet	3
1.5	<i>Major Projects</i>	3
1.6	<i>AODA requirements effective 2012</i>	4
2	The Market	4
2.1	<i>Segments</i>	4
2.2	<i>Size</i>	4
2.3	<i>Growth Estimates</i>	4
3	Best Practices	4
3.1	<i>System Scan</i>	4
3.2	<i>Features Analysis</i>	4
4	SWOT Analysis	5
4.1	<i>Strengths</i>	5
4.2	<i>Weaknesses</i>	5
4.3	<i>Market Opportunities</i>	5
4.4	<i>Market Threats</i>	5

5	Key Audit Findings	6
6	Objectives	6
7	Key Strategies	6
7.1	<i>Product</i>	6
7.1.1	Branding & Positioning	6
7.1.2	Products by Segment	7
7.1.3	Service Standards as a Product	7
7.1.4	Customer Service	7
7.2	<i>Promotion</i>	7
7.3	<i>Social Media</i>	8
7.4	<i>Community Relations and Public Relations</i>	8
8	Service Standards	8
9	Research & Reporting Plan	8
9.1	<i>Customer Satisfaction Research</i>	8
10	Schedule	8
11	Budget	8

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Agency Profile

Add general description of ST here – history, governance, key milestones. Role in community, general perception of service and agency]

ST has a strong record of community outreach with programs for schools, seniors and the community. (List the activities, i.e., Seniors Fair, Passes, Christmas Parade?, Christmas Light Tour?, Student Orientation, Welcome aboard (persons with disabilities))

1.2 Fleet and Facilities

[Add description of fleet and facilities here]

1.3 Routes & Services

[Add description of routes and services here – including special programs: Christmas Bus?, Schools Program?, Seniors Program?]

1.4 Customer Information Sources

ST customers receive information about Route and schedule information, Fare information, Temporary out of service notices, Detour notices, new fare products, and service features and services through the following channels and mediums.

1.4.1 Printed Materials

- Large Transit Map
- Route Timetables

1.4.2 Signs

- Terminal Signs re schedule/route changes - temporary
- Bus Stop signs re changes - temporary
- Bus Stop Schedule Info Posts

1.4.3 On-board

- Signs posted onboard by Maintenance; need improved system to remove once expired
- Recorded audio and video stop announcements on board

1.4.4 In Person

- Telephone
- ST employees [operators and inspectors]

1.4.5 Internet

- Website
- Email
- Future [Sarnia e-services portal]

1.5 Major Projects

1. GPS across fleet – real time information
2. Master Plan – Existing Service, Transit Operations, Future Network
3. Onboard cameras
4. RFP for new transit terminal site
5. Real Time Next Bus (if approved)

1.6 AODA requirements effective 2012

[Include short discussion of requirements and impacts on ST]

2 THE MARKET

2.1 Segments

Add short description of key segments – include specific needs, key demographics, trip purpose, trip frequency

- Lambton College Students [include brief description of schools – size, location, focus of studies]
- High school students
- Seniors
- Veterans
- Low income residents

2.2 Size

Include short discussion on size of segments – factors

2.3 Growth Estimates

Include growth forecasts here

3 BEST PRACTICES

3.1 System Scan

Include here examples from other systems

- Branding – include visuals of a number of contemporary brands
- Customer Satisfaction – on line examples
- Social marketing – examples of use of facebook and twitter in particular

3.2 Features Analysis

Create a table here that summarizes the features of small systems – intent is to demonstrate that ST is in a leadership position in regards to number of features already on the system.

Feature	Sarnia	System 2	System 3	System 4	System 5	
GPS	√					
onboard cameras	√					
Interactive smart card	√					
average fleet age <5 years	√					
accessible buses	√					
bike racks	√					
recorded audio and video stop announcements	√					

4 SWOT ANALYSIS

Add additional items for each

4.1 Strengths

- Fleet features: GPS, onboard cameras, low average fleet age, accessible buses, bike racks, recorded audio and video stop announcements
- Stable workforce
- Positive view of drivers; helpful
- Support of Council

4.2 Weaknesses

- Not accepting wheelchairs/scooters
- Tight operating conditions
- Lack of direct routes, confusing route network variations
- Limited resources to promote transit

4.3 Market Opportunities

- Number of post secondary and special needs facilities – demand and profile in support of transit
- Rising fuel prices further increase attractiveness of time/cost trade off of using transit
- Potential to negotiate space allocation of transit advertising inventory

4.4 Market Threats

- General economic climate – pressure on municipal budgets

5 KEY AUDIT FINDINGS

This section represents a guide for conducting regular audit/customer feedback surveys of Transit's performance.

Importance/Performance Ratings – Self Reported

	Importance	Performance
Reliability	10	
Safety	10	
Personal Security	10	
Comfort	10	
Travel Time	10	
Service Frequency	10	
Convenient Routes	10	
Courteous employees	10	
System Information [printed materials, website, signs]	10	
On board information [driver announcements /signs]	10	

Management responses indicate serious performance gaps in the areas of service reliability, travel time and service frequency. These are all areas determined by service design and will be addressed by the current Transit Master Plan. (Low scores in the areas of system information [onboard and system] or employee performance can and should be directly addressed by management.)

6 OBJECTIVES

1. Assist the community in getting around and provide support for those without access to a private vehicle
2. Increase transit use
3. Enhance profile and reputation of ST

7 KEY STRATEGIES

7.1 Product

7.1.1 Branding & Positioning

The current branding is dated; it does not communicate the contemporary tech supported fleet characteristics or of a modern transit service.

ST has a number of very attractive product features compared to like-size agencies: accessible fleet, bike racks. However, awareness of these is low and ST management is concerned there are misconceptions amongst the general public, the routes are inconvenient and the terminals are unattractive or unsafe.

1. Create new visual identity [logo and positioning line for ST]. Explore positioning around smart transit. Use contest format to invite the design community to create the new logo. Include development of sub-brands for passes and student program.

2. Complete exploration of other technology based low hanging fruit – i.e. Google aps
3. Create and brand a program aimed at visually impaired community – seek corporate sponsor to cover hard costs
4. Formalize and package a program for students – create templates using new branding; increase emphasis on digital delivery channels
5. Develop harmonized signage program incorporating new branding – shelters, terminal, point of sale

7.1.2 Products by Segment

Students, seniors and other 'captive' or semi-captive customer segments – different perception more positive, greater pre-disposition, transit is mobility. There is an opportunity to examine service and identify small ways to make the product more attractive to this segment. Build on the launch of the new bus route network and looking at how to emphasize those elements that map most closely to segment needs. Collect all the pertinent information together and package as a program.

1. Student population is a very important segment both because of size but also their ability to extend trips using active transportation [walking and cycling]
2. Visually impaired population and existing programs an opportunity for ST to take a leadership position in supporting this segment. Need to explore partnership opportunities to expand visibility and awareness of ST approaches, possibly fund other pilot programs for future transfer to other agencies.

7.1.3 Service Standards as a Product

In order to respond to perceived or actual poor on-time performance (OTP) and inconvenience of using transit, one or more routes could be selected for adjustments to running times such that very close to 100% on-time performance is consistently achievable following implementation of the recommended route network. Once this is done ST can begin to publicize on-time performance results, and may also consider offering an OTP guarantee on selected routes.

1. Identify one or two routes for OTP guarantee

7.1.4 Customer Service

Inspectors are the primary source of customer service support – through in person at the terminal and other places in system, and by telephone. At this time customer comments are not tracked. Management has identified a formal system of customer comment tracking as a priority.

1. Implement comprehensive customer service training for inspectors and operators
2. Implement automated customer comment tracking system
3. Implement ongoing customer satisfaction survey and regularly report customer satisfaction ratings

7.2 Promotion

ST has four primary customer segments: students, seniors, commuters and special needs. The annual marketing budget is approximately \$2,500. A significant increase is required as proposed in the Master Plan (\$30,000/year). In light of the available budget, a series of directed micro campaigns are recommended.

Many transit agencies negotiate a transit reserve in advertising contracts using agency vehicles and facilities. ST currently has contracts in place for Benches (X), Shelters (50) and buses (23). A typical reserve allows the agency the right to use an average of 10% of space for self promotion. In the case of ST this would represent 4 benches, 5 shelters and 3 buses. With strong creative, this space could support a meaningful awareness campaign.

1. Focus promotion efforts very tightly against specific target markets – micro marketing that is segment and route specific
2. ST should approach the three advertising contractors and initiate discussions on structure of a reasonable transit reserve

7.3 Social Media

ST needs a customer oriented website with full complement of functionality: trip planner, next bus real time, and e-commerce [if/when smart cards are adopted]. Currently there are restrictions on ability to influence layout or content of www.Sarnia.ca website pages. However, there is precedent for specialty websites. In the immediate term a separate Facebook page can be used to deliver targeted transit content – particularly to younger demographic

1. Establish partnership program with local post-secondary students to support social media channels
2. Set up Twitter account
3. Launch Facebook web page – run new logo design competition from here

7.4 Community Relations and Public Relations

The profile and goodwill created by a strong community relations program is essential to a small system. ST has done a good job of supporting traditional community relations programs, including outreach to seniors, students and special needs groups.

1. Continue community outreach including support for seniors, students and special needs with site visits and system orientation sessions
2. Explore opportunities to increase profile and awareness of special needs support

8 SERVICE STANDARDS

Technology makes very precise reporting possible – and automated. 1st priority must be to achieve good on time performance standard. Start with one route and promote the record.

9 RESEARCH & REPORTING PLAN

ST is doing a lot of things right. A formalized approach to research and reporting will add substance and credibility.

9.1 Customer Satisfaction Research

1. Include a small customer satisfaction survey on the Facebook page

10 SCHEDULE

11 BUDGET