Final Report

Name: Oliver Konkel
Position: Student Transportation Coordinator
Academic Year 2014-15
Date: 5/12/2015

Introduction

The goal of the Student Transportation Coordinator’s job is to provide for student transportation based on the budgets passed by the SFC. At present, this specifically includes three primary services: the CLEveland Shuttle (weekly airport shuttle), the Shopping Shuttle (weekend shuttle to Oberlin businesses), and the Academic Break Shuttle (providing service to the airport for breaks). Key to the work is maintaining these services, but the job should also include doing further research on future transportation possibilities and presenting additional options to the Student Senate and SFC. Overall, the idea is to help make the campus a place where you don’t need a car in order to get to most of the places that are important.

Accomplishments

This year I successfully transitioned the services to a model that should be much more sustainable. While there were no specific goals at the beginning of the year, the goals that came up were as follows:

- Meeting the budgetary constraints imposed on this year’s operations, which included successfully reducing the amount spent on services provided from approximately $70,000 for service in FY14 to approximately $45,000 in FY15
- Restructuring service to bring next year’s budget into line with previous expenditure. This includes cutting shopping shuttle service by 50% from the middle of the semester forward, reducing the daily shuttles paid for by OPASS to three days each week from 5, and setting flat rates for AOS-operated break shuttles.
- Rebranding and advertising the services to increase ridership, making their expense in line with their use. This includes rebranding the daily shuttle to the CLEveland Shuttle and rescheduling it to operate on Friday, Sunday, and Monday instead of Monday-Friday. This reduces cost, increases ridership on those runs that do operate by bringing them more in line with demand, and highlights connecting services to provide transportation all the way into the center of Cleveland.
- Clarifying our process for working with AOS in order to reduce cost overruns and make the process of scheduling and operating break shuttles simpler

Challenges
There were several significant challenges throughout this year. They centered primarily on the two issues of working with AOS and catching up with the problems remaining from FY14. Following last year, there was a BRT invoice that was open for $14,520 that had to be paid out of the FY15 budget, causing a significant strain to the budget. Having this come through in the wrong year was very difficult to work around, requiring an ad hoc request as well. The budget for FY15 was also rather low, because the request to SFC was not made clearly and the budget allocated was not followed up on. Working with AOS has also presented a continuous issue. One way to potentially ameliorate this would be to create a more explicit cost estimating stage, with AOS providing an itemized and explicit estimate before services are operated. It may be worthwhile to explore working with other transportation providers in the future. Other issues were more role-based. I entered the role without very much training, so I felt like I spent most of the year catching up on what my job entailed. I think that having this document for the next person will do a lot to prevent that from happening. There was also very little formal procedure for how to make schedules, which would have been made easier with a method as well as guidelines on how to use data and what data to incorporate into creating schedules that are actually useful.

Key Stakeholders

- Joseph Pirapakaran, Owner, Airport Oberlin Shuttle; e: oberlinshuttle@att.net, p: (216) 322-4464
- David James, Owner, Brecksville Road Transit; e: david.j@brtcharter.com
- Danielle Hale and Jessica Marquez, Reservations, Brecksville Road Transit; e: danielle@brtcharter.com and jessica@brtcharter.com
- Christine (Chris) Sayler, Confidential Assistant to the Vice President for Finance and Administration, Oberlin College; e: chris.sayler@oberlin.edu, p: (440) 775-8460, receives and pays all invoices for OPASS
- Mary Jo Diekman, Director of Financial Planning in the VP of Finance Office; e: mdiekman@oberlin.edu, Mary Jo has a finance background and oversees budget expenditures and might be able to help advise or oversee budget.
- Sharon Pearson, Program Coordinator, Oberlin Project and Oberlin City Councilor; e: spearson@oberlinproject.org, runs the Sustainable Transportation Coalition and is an excellent resource on town, county, and state political wrangling as regards transportation and other issues

Deliverables

FY16 OPASS Budget
OPASS/AOS Service Agreement for remainder of FY15
FY15 and FY16 budgeting documents

Recommendations
The vast majority of the projects I have worked on are simply continuations of previous services. I think that the service changes put into place during Spring ’15 should be followed up on with further analysis of ridership on the updated services, and possibly adjusted in the coming years to better reflect new ridership counts. Better advertising is also a must: early postering and placement on the OnCampus home page will undoubtedly help ridership immensely. It could also be effective to work with other providers, including possibly Lorain County Transit (who can get federal matching funds to subsidize service), in order to find a better deal on the same services we already have.

**Unanswered Questions**

The big unanswered question in my mind is “are we doing this right?” I think it would be excellent to look at the possibility of contracting with a different provider, whether that be BRT, LCT, or someone completely new, to get a more consistent service, an easier group to work with, and more expertise in scheduling and developing a transit system.

**Conclusion**

This year has been quite a process. I’m glad to have been able to work through this important part of the history of OPASS, and I think that the system has come out the better for it. I’ve learned a lot about how to negotiate, how to schedule, and how to deal with people. It is my hope that I have had at least as much of an effect on the system as it has had on me.