

Minneapolis Youth Congress Midterm -Year Transportation Report

October 2011- June 2012

March 2012

BACKGROUND

In January 2011, the Minneapolis Youth Congress and Metro Transit partnered on a pilot project of 50 youth riders with “Go To” passes in Minneapolis. The project was designed to give Metro Transit insight into the youth rider experience on Minneapolis Metro Transit buses and trains. Each youth rider completed an initial survey that captured their own experience with riding public transportation and their thoughts about the public transportation system in general.

The 2011/2012 Minneapolis Youth Congress Session collected data through Initial and Mid-term surveys of youth to inform decisions about youth friendly transportation in Minneapolis.

YOUTH ORIENTATION AND DATA TRACKING

All youth riders completed orientation on public transportation rules and regulations, signed expectation forms, received maps and schedules for all routes and a tutorial of the monthly completion of the tracking form

The tracking form was completed and returned to each MYC meeting with a focused conversation around the youth rider experience.

Those questions included:

- What stood out to you about your rides in public transportation?
- What are some of the challenges for youth riding public transportation?
- What really worked for youth riders?
- How has this benefited you personally?
- What changes have you seen this month in youth ridership?

DATA ANALYSIS

Analyzing the data from each of the youth riders, similar themes emerged. The following are the 5 areas that the Minneapolis Youth Congress members reported monthly. This is the data collected Mid -term.

Evaluation Questions and Key Themes

1. Initial Findings from youth

- **Growth in youth courtesy and positive interactions;** youth giving up seats to adults, increased numbers of youth
- **Increased and diverse ridership;** more riders, diverse population, and more senior citizens
- **Increase in participation in opportunities;** more money to use on other opportunities with a Go- To card.
- **Better Interaction and hospitality of bus drivers;** friendly, speak to passengers, better customer service by most drivers
- **Punctuality of bus schedules;** timeliness depends on specific bus routes.

- **Physical condition and environment of the bus;** dirty, smelly, old cushions, broken lights; more rude, drunk, and smoking adults
- **Consistency of shelter conditions;** less heated shelters in north Minneapolis than other parts of the city.
- **Train transit officers;** more of a presence
- **Light rail convenience;** found to be more convenient than busses

Key Testimonials from MYC members

1. "Easier to get around when you don't have to worry about having enough money for the bus."
2. "Some of the bus-stops outside of the Northside have nice shelters that warm up, but others don't."
3. "Having a bus card is so convenient and nice. Especially for youth who hardly have enough money to pay for a couple bus fares a day."

2. Monthly changes observed by youth

- **Rider participation varies with different bus routes:** overall, there are more consistent youth riders; more morning, afternoon/ activities rides and more light rail rides afterschool.
- **Youth are more positive and talk to each other** instead of yelling, give up seats for elders , youth have a sense of belonging
- **Youth balancing transportation needs with life priorities** –inability to pay, choosing food over transportation, and high rush hour fares.
- **More disrespectful and loud adult riders:** Adults (drunk) riders are more disrespectful and loud on phones,
- **Better Bus driver's attitudes:** speak when youth get on bus, reprimand those being loud, driving better this winter.
- **Different experience and procedure on bus**-more Go-To cards less change, more police
- **Environment of bus affected by season(s)**—bus quieter in the winter ,calmer, more respectful and positive bus
- **Changes in bus schedules:** some buses running more often, less to suburbs, express bus not as late and frequent.

Key Testimonials from MYC members

1. "More students have a Go To card so ridership has gone up."
2. "Sometimes I have to choose between buying lunch and having money for bus fare to get home."
3. "Youth are involved in bad things because they don't have anything better to do."
4. "I have seen that the youth that usually ride the bus, ride on a daily basis."
5. "Some youth are more active in taking advantage of public transportation if they have cards and don't have to look for change or a token."
6. "Increase in people on the bus equals a less violent and disrespectful behavior."

3. Challenges experienced by youth

- **Adults not being familiar with youth culture;** tone and volume of voice(s)
- **Negative youth stereotypes;** perceived actions of a small number affect all youth
- **Insufficient Funds of youth ;** youth taking risks for transportation, can't afford bus fare, transfers, bus to train transfers, youth have to pay same fare as adults with different income
- **Negative adult interactions;** not making room on the bus for youth, rude and disrespectful adult behavior
- **Stranger Danger;** drunk, disrespectful adults trying to talk to youth (females), profanity and adult context on the bus.
- **Not feeling safe and sound at all times;** late at night, not well advertised schedules on bus stops/shelters, unfamiliar community
- **Bus over capacity;** full bus capacity, not enough seats on some routes/ times, then wait for another bus
- **Route awareness , punctuality and accessibility;** challenges with bus schedules (stops/ locations), knowing where you are when you get on the bus (announcements), less frequent busses on weekends.

4. Personal benefits to youth

- **Youth save money;** less worries about enough, correct, or wasted change, lost or expired transfers.
- **Less Stress with Go-To card;** fast, easy, helpful, unlimited and always have a way to get somewhere and get home.
- **Empowered to benefit others;** see the Go-To card as a privilege, get your voice heard, be a better person, be engaged in life.
- **Available transportation to opportunities;** get to school early, participate in after school activities, work, MYC, Gym, Job interviews, explore Minneapolis safely.
- **Reliable and independent transportation;** less gas, less stress on parents and family
- **Create positive benefits and relationships;** met new people, connect with old friends, able to listen to music

Key testimonials from MYC members

1. "Finding fare for me is no longer an obstacle for me to get around."
2. "I don't have to choose between bus fare and lunch."
3. "I'm able to go to places without having to pay the risk of getting ticketed."
4. "It makes me want to be better and show other youth they can be better."
5. "It can help get my voice heard as well as others."
6. "It makes me want to help the other who doesn't have this opportunity; I also feel like by having this opportunity that I can become a better person."
7. "Having this chance to become so acquainted with public transportation, know my city better and not feel lost."

5. Effective operations for youth

- **Appropriate fare for youth;** reduced fare bus cards, lower cost during rush hour, opportunity for free rides(tokens)
- **Go-to cards;** convenient and easy, can ride the bus anywhere, not having to find change, reduces stress of paying multiple fares per day
- **Punctuality of bus schedules;** awareness, frequency, and a clear available schedule(online or phone apps)

CONCLUSIONS:

1. Daily Ridership:

The Minneapolis Youth Congress did not use public transportation as often and some, not at all, prior to the Go- To Cards. Per Metro Transit's monthly ridership numbers, the Minneapolis Youth Congress members ride on average 1 ride per day. Starting in October 2011, the MYC members took 1050 rides to almost doubling their ridership to 1870 rides at the end of February.

2. Less stress for young people:

When youth have a Go To Card, they see themselves as a part of a community that moves through a city, taking advantage of the great opportunities available. This opportunity, allows youth to not feel the stress of choosing priorities, food vs. transportation.

3. More positive environment on the bus

Both the young people and the bus drivers shifted their attitudes and behaviors within this pilot project. Bus drivers were more friendly and communicated with passengers in a positive manner. Young people began to give up their seats and use headphones. Youth saw this opportunity as a way to have a real voice, real power and their actions affected the lives of other youth. Youth appreciated and responded favorably when Bus drivers spoke to them and answered questions, thus changing the culture the bus.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Reduced youth fare.
2. Standard rate for all schools that purchase go-to cards.
3. Unified card system that crosses jurisdictions. Ex. Student ID card, Library card, go-to card all on one ID.
4. Phone app for metro transit.
5. Drivers attitudes set tone of the environment on the bus.
6. Automated service announcing bus stops and intersections.