



## Florida Department of Transportation Research

### Regional Fare Policy and Fare Allocation, Innovations in Fare Equipment and Data Collection

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Traditionally, transit agencies have operated on a business model that restricted their planning and services to within their jurisdictional boundaries. However, changing demographic, land use, and social characteristics are prompting transit agencies to rethink the basic model. The number of commuters working outside their county of residence has grown steadily, from 20 million in 1980 to 34 million in 2000. An even stronger indicator of this trend is that over half of new workers during the '90s took jobs outside their county of residence. In addition, public transit, often viewed as a means to access the city, is increasingly used for trips between suburbs.

Transit agencies have responded by developing fare structures and payment methods that facilitate trips across jurisdictional boundaries, and the number of local transit agencies cooperating in such efforts continues to increase. According to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), in 2008, of 216 U.S. reporting transit agencies who operate fixed-route service, nearly 50 percent participate in some type of interagency fare agreement.

Researchers at the University of South Florida's Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) were tasked with investigating and documenting recent experiences with regional fare programs, emphasizing five areas of interest, including organization, technology, customer-related issues, data acquisition, and costs and benefits.

Work began with a comprehensive literature review to identify articles and reports in the areas of interest. The result was an overview of the state of the industry as regards interagency cooperation and services. The researchers found that increasing standards, such as the APTA Universal Transit Farecard Standards, have reduced interoperability barriers, but individual agencies must still address financial, customer, managerial, and political issues. The widespread ownership of cell phones and increasing consumer



*The EASY Card replaced twelve different types of fare media in the Miami-Dade Transit system. The card contains a microchip that can recognize discounts and multiple fare products.*

acceptance of wireless data services could make cell phones a means of fare payment that would reduce costs for agencies costs and facilitate trips for riders. However, wireless data requires careful planning for data security.

Five case studies were drawn from four regions: Delaware-Southeastern Pennsylvania; San Luis Obispo, California; Miami-Dade/South Florida; and King County, Washington. Drawing on the examinations of these systems as well as the literature review, the researchers developed a summary of best practices. Some key concepts behind the detailed discussion of these practices were the need for a carefully planned process, honest assessment of the needs, costs, and benefits of a regional approach, and a list of likely participants. Because the process of interagency cooperation can be a long and challenging one, the researchers recommended that a "Project Champion" should be identified, an individual or agency that can bring participants together and keep the project on track.

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For more information, visit <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/research-center>