

# Overview of TCRP Project A-31 on Transit and 511 Systems

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Trans/Tech 2010  
Westin Beach Resort  
Fort Lauderdale, FL

February 25, 2010

## TCRP REPORT 134

**Transit, Call Centers, and 511:  
A Guide for Decision Makers**

TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH BOARD  
OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES

TRANSIT  
COOPERATIVE  
RESEARCH  
PROGRAM

Sponsored by  
the Federal  
Transit Administration

# Background

## □ National 511 Deployment Coalition:

- In 2000, FCC Designated “511” As The National Telephone Traveler Information Number
- Locally Implemented And Operated
- No Mandated Way To Pay For 511 Deployments

## □ Agency Concerns:

- They’d Be Overwhelmed By Call Volumes
- They’d Be Out Of Alignment With Current Technologies
- They Wouldn’t Be Prepared For The Costs Of The Necessary Adjustments

## □ Study Objectives:

- Develop Recommended Models / Approaches
- Assess Costs, Benefits And Risks Associated With Transit Agency Participation In 511 Phone Systems
- Create Tools / Guidance To Assist Transit Agency 511 Decisions
- Document Transit Agency, 511 System Administrators’ And Passenger Experiences With Transit Information On 511 Phone Systems

# 511 Deployment Coalition

*“Collective wisdom is that 511 access could increase the number of callers seeking public transportation information. If 511 were merely designated as a shorter number to access the service center, this could significantly increase total calls to the customer service center.”*

## ❑ Recommended Minimum Transit Content For Each Agency In Region:

- Service Area
- Schedule And Fare
- Service Disruptions
- Transfer To Transit

“...511 systems can and should...provide automated messages...that will answer many callers’ questions prior to seeking assistance from customer service operators.”

## ❑ Additional Recommended Data: Arrival Times; Corridor-Specific Info

- Supports And Advances The General Principals Of Interagency, Multi-Modal Coordination
- Value To Those Few Travelers In Most Regions Who Value Consolidated Traffic And Transit Multi-agency Transit Information



# Transit Interview Topics



- ❑ Overall Customer Information Practices
  - Information Provided, Methods Used, etc.
- ❑ Call Center Operations
  - Staffing, Technologies, Rationale For Technology Investments, etc.
- ❑ Performance Monitoring / Metrics
  - Inventory Metrics Tracked, Methods For Monitoring, etc.
- ❑ 511 Participation (Yes / No)
- ❑ 511 Statistics Tracked
- ❑ Impacts Of Participation
- ❑ Pros And Cons Considered In 511 Decision
- ❑ Planned Changes

# Inventory of Active 511 Systems

## 511 Deployment Status

as of May 30, 2007

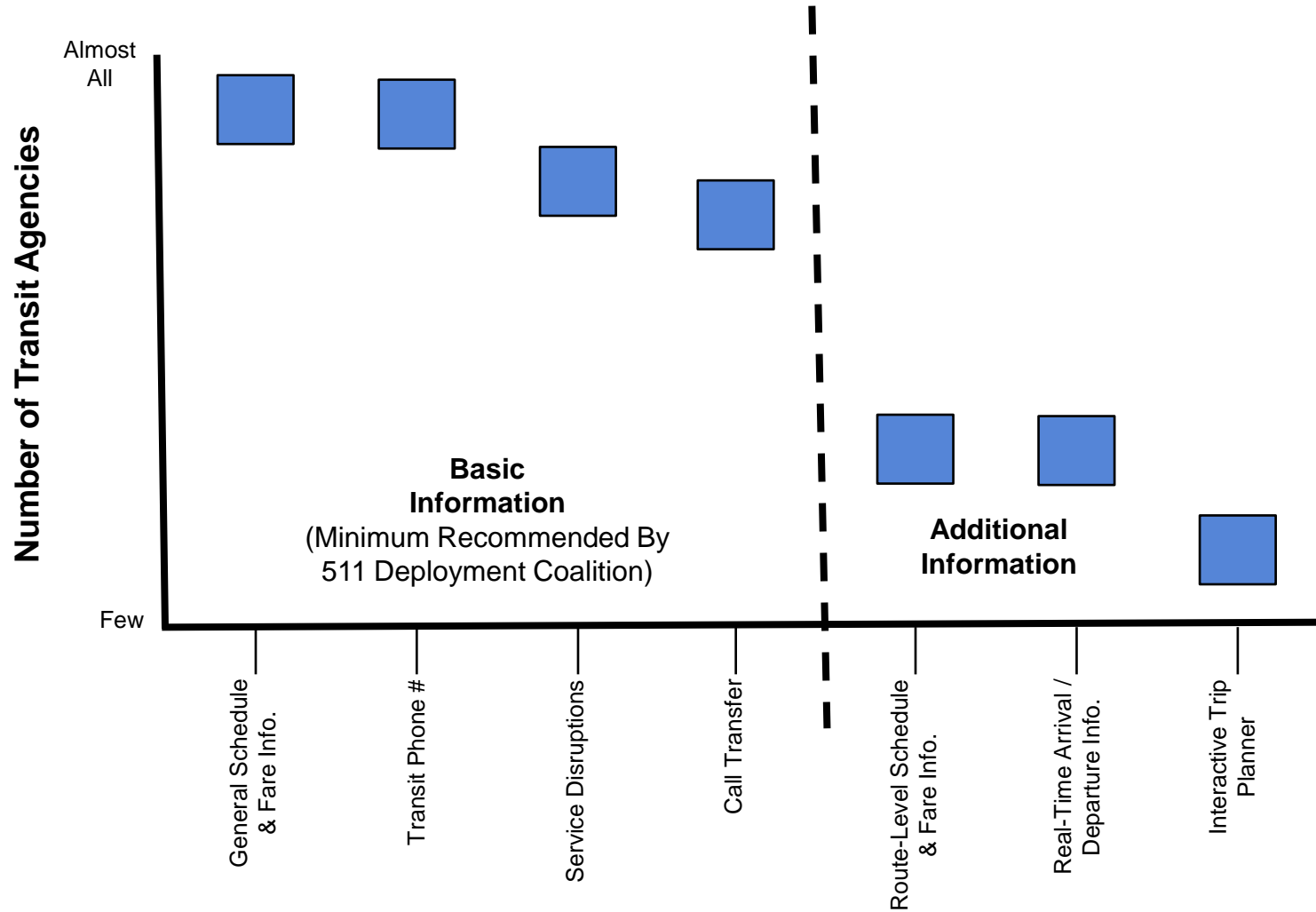
*Accessible by 38.5% of Population*

-  = 511 Operational ("Live")
-  = Expected "Live" in 2007



*Accessible by 60% of Population in 2007*

# Transit Information on 511



# Study Observations

## ❑ Transit

- Belief That Vast Majority Of Travelers Want Either Transit Or Traffic Information, But Not Both
- Belief That Information Requests Require Speaking With A Call Center Taker And Therefore Unlikely To Be Adequately Addressed By A 511 System (Trip Planning)
- Most Transit Agency Customer Service Numbers Are Well Established And Just As Easy To Remember, i.e., 555-RIDE, etc.
- Newcomers And Visitors May Find Convenient
- Rationale For Participation:
  - ✓ “Why Not?”
  - ✓ “Just Another Way To Reach My Customers”
  - ✓ “Be A Good Regional Team Player”
- None See 511 As Replacement For Their Own IVR

## ❑ Administrators

- Not All Administrators Have Bought In To The Concept Of Consolidating Transit And Traffic
- Considered Early On, But Has Not Been Reconsidered And Early Recollections Are Not Consistent Between Agencies And Administrators

## ❑ Passengers

- Correlation Between IVR And 511 (If Transit Has IVR, Less Interested In 511)
- Interest Is Greater When There Is Real-time Arrival / Departure Information
- Riders Still Want The Ability To Talk To A Customer Service Rep (Important)

# 511 Decision Factors

- ❑ 511 Administrator – Embraces National 511 Vision (Highway Only, Won't Get A Chance)
- ❑ Transit Agency Required To Contribute To 511 Costs (Benefits Don't Outweigh Costs)
- ❑ Cost Of Call Transfers From 511 To Transit Agencies (Cost Savings Might Outweigh Minor Benefits)
- ❑ Commitments To Keep Service Disruption Information, Schedules / Fare Information Accurate And Up-to-date (Minor Benefits Will Be Lost Of Information Is Not Up-to-date)
- ❑ n11 Systems As Part Of Overall Customer Service Strategy
  - 211: Social Service Agency Referral Information
  - 311: Consolidated Municipal Services Information
  - May Have Major Implications On Transit Customer Service Strategies (SFMTA And The City Of San Francisco)
  - Strongly Encouraged To Consider How These Other n11 Systems May Fit Within Their Overall Customer Service Strategy
  - Agencies That Are Part Of A Municipal Government Are Encouraged To Engage With The Municipality Early To Ensure Transit Information Is Considered