Seeing Is Believing: In Defense of Field Work

Mary Lawrence, Houston METRO
Jim Archer, Houston METRO
## HOUSTON

**Category** | **By The Numbers**
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Service Area | 1,303 sq. mi.
Boardings / Routes (FY2017) | 
Local Bus | 57.9M
83 routes
Park & Ride Bus | 7.7M
30 routes
Light Rail | 18.4M
3 lines
Paratransit | 1.9M
Bus Stops | 9,100
Passenger Shelters | 2,200
WHAT FIELD WORK IS NOT

- Adding figures
- Tabulating results
- Drafting reports
- Evaluating tables
- Sending e-mail / texts
- Kidding yourself that you’re the typical rider

“Get out of your…. office”
A Senior Vice President Who Shall Remain Nameless
WHAT FIELD WORK IS
HARD TO BELIEVE

- Ridership decreased by 15% in two years
- Decrease blamed on increasing numbers of homeless
- But was that the whole story?
SEEING IS BELIEVING, PART 1

March 2012

February 2018
SEEING IS BELIEVING, PART 2

How are we helping the customers when we offer a choice of no information or outdated information?

What message do we send the customer with the presence of a shopping cart and lack of painting?

When one of the platform entrances is under water, how do customers access either bus or rail?
WHO YOUR CUSTOMERS ARE

Question: Will METRO gain new riders from 248 El Dorado or will riders shift from one of the existing Gulf Freeway locations?

El Dorado Park & Ride
Opened September 2017

[Map showing the location of El Dorado Park & Ride along with nearby exits and roads.]
Question 1 – Prior to the start of the El Dorado Park & Ride service, how would you have made today’s trip? What route?

93% of respondents said that they would have used another METRO bus route for today’s trip, while 7% said they would have used a personal car. The third answer choice on the questionnaire, carpooling with others, was not chosen by any of the respondents.
AND THEY WERE RIGHT!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NEW ROUTE 248 El Dorado</th>
<th>CHANGE IN OTHER ROUTES IN CORRIDOR</th>
<th>% EXPLAINED BY NEW ROUTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sep. 2017</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>-611</td>
<td>&gt;100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 2017</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>-478</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 2017</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>-524</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 2017</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>-453</td>
<td>&gt;100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 2017</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>-598</td>
<td>&gt;100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 2017</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>-620</td>
<td>&gt;100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 2017</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>-558</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>537</strong></td>
<td><strong>-549</strong></td>
<td><strong>&gt;100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You’ve crunched the numbers but still don’t quite understand.

So let’s get on the bus and see what happens...
THERE’S A SLOW TRAIN A COMIN’
WHAT WE’VE GOT HERE IS A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE

HISPANIC POPULATION: >40% of population in METRO Service Area
HISPANIC RIDERS: 25% of all riders per FY2017 Origin – Destination Survey 9 (23% of local riders)
Houston, tenemos una problema.

Zero signs in Spanish at Magnolia Park Transit Center – March 2018
TIMELY COMMUNICATION?
JUNE 2018

Public Comments, June 2018

New Bus Network, August 2015
A relief point without a passenger shelter? OOPS!!
The assumption was that there was a shelter at this location. The Weekday, Saturday, and Sunday ridership supported a shelter. It took an operator request for us to know what was wrong.
CONCLUSION

✓ FIND TIME TO DO IT
✓ INITIATE STAFF LEVEL INVESTIGATION
✓ EDUCATE MANAGEMENT & BOARD ON FINDINGS
✓ LEVERAGE DATA FOR MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES
✓ DEMONSTRATE SUCCESS