SARTA
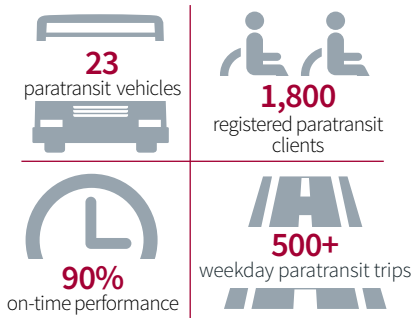
HOW SARTA INCREASED PARATRANSIT ON-TIME PERFORMANCE TO ABOVE 90%

Stark Area Regional Transit Authority

23
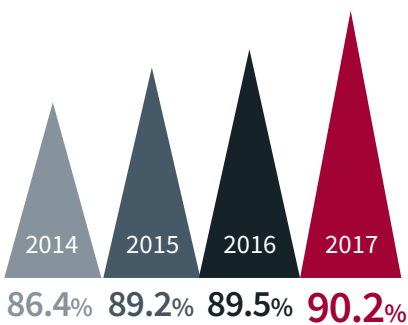paratransit vehicles

1,800
registered paratransit clients

90%
on-time performance

500+
weekday paratransit trips

Industry

Paratransit

Products

PASS-Web

PASS-IVR

PASS-SUS

PASS-MON

Results

ON-TIME PERFORMANCE

2014	2015	2016	2017
86.4%	89.2%	89.5%	90.2%

Stark Area Regional Transit Authority reduced paratransit costs, enhanced the customer service experience and coach operator morale, and improved on-time performance (OTP) to above 90%.

Background: Stark Area Regional Transit Authority (SARTA) has been using Trapeze paratransit (PASS) software since 2002. For over 16 years, they continued to add more modules to solve their key challenges.

Challenges: Prior to 2013, SARTA's demand response coach operators would fill out pick-up and drop-off times manually on paper manifests. The next day, SARTA customer service representatives would enter the data into PASS. The result? Reported OTP numbers were based on estimated times rather than actual data.

Many coach operators would come in 60 minutes before their shift to review their paper manifest and how they could best navigate to their locations. Drivers would evaluate and adjust their manifests to improve routing. This would not always yield positive results and effectively bypass parameter settings.

Without a real-time Computer Aided Dispatch/Automatic Vehicle Location (CAD/AVL) system, SARTA dispatchers could not effectively monitor the location of their fleet or navigate road supervisors/maintenance to the location of buses in need of assistance or driving directions. This led to driver concerns, a stressful dispatching center, and diminished OTP.

Solutions: In November 2013, SARTA installed CAD/AVL on-board mobile data terminals (MDTs) which provided coach operators with electronic manifests. Turn-by-turn directions made navigation much easier. The CAD/AVL system allowed for actual GPS time-stamped arrival and pick-up data into the Trapeze system.

"Prior to installing our MDTs, all the times going in were estimated. All of a sudden, we're getting real data and could see what was truly happening rather than the broad generalizations from drivers that they're behind," said Nick Davidson, Transportation Planning Manager, SARTA.

Implementing PASS-IVR allowed paratransit users to schedule, confirm, or cancel rides with a touch-tone phone. SARTA could also send them imminent arrival phone calls and next day reminder calls. These calls helped reduce no-shows and late cancellations considerably.

Next, SARTA implemented PASS-WEB, branded as SARTA Go-Line. This enabled paratransit users to log in by computer, smartphone, or tablet to schedule, confirm, or cancel their rides without calling Customer Service. This reduced the call volume that

> *Prior to installing our MDTs, all the times going in were estimated. All of a sudden, we're getting real data and could see what was truly happening."*
>
> *Nick Davidson*
> *Transportation Planning Manager, SARTA*

passengers and Customer Service Representatives experienced and dramatically reduced chances that passengers will no show or late cancel.

Having gone through significant staff changes since Trapeze was installed, many employees who had been originally trained to make changes to the Trapeze system had retired or left. By 2012, the remaining staff members were instructed not to make any alterations to PASS. The staff had limited knowledge of the PASS parameter settings and no one wanted to be responsible for disabling or damaging the system. In 2013, SARTA sent staff to the ThinkTransit Conference which significantly improved the employees' understanding of the system.

Results: SARTA has come a long way since the health check and the training from Trapeze in July 2014. SARTA's administrative staff has become much savvier and experienced regarding their knowledge of parameter settings in PASS. The administrative staff is no longer apprehensive about making changes to the system.

The results can also be seen directly with OTP which increased from 82% in September 2014 to above 90% in September 2017. "Not only did I want the overall average OTP to increase, but I also wanted the variance to decrease to improve consistency," said Davidson, noting that the consistent performance now allows them to spend more time planning proactively rather than reacting to that day's events.

SARTA credits their progress to taking these steps of installing a CAD/AVL system, completing a health check, and staying up-to-date on the latest tools by attending the ThinkTransit Conference.

SARTA's dedication to continuous improvement helped increase efficiency, on-time performance, customer service, and are a direct result of the organization embracing technology and exploring all of its features.

Trapeze™