



# Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority



Delivering Better Operational Information for Better Decision Making

*"Trapeze has provided Capital Metro with a system that enables us to work more efficiently and also to reduce man hours. Trapeze can enhance any transportation authority's daily activities."*

Gary McCray, fixed route service dispatch coordinator  
Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Capital Metro)



## BACKGROUND

Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Capital Metro) provides more than 130,000 passenger trips per day throughout Central Texas, including Austin, the state capital. In 2004, the fixed route service had 34,000,000 boardings. To operate the fleet of 295 fixed route vehicles that provide this transportation, Capital Metro employs 555 full-time employees and 2 part-timers.

## BUSINESS CHALLENGES

Prior to 1999, dispatching daily service for the fixed route service was largely a manual process. Tasks such as monitoring operator

absences, assigning open work, managing the extraboard and the volunteer lists placed heavy demands on dispatchers.

Employees sometimes found it challenging to access the information required to make on-the-spot decisions. For example, it was not easy to get a complete picture when looking for information about operators, such as their absence records, their hours worked and their seniority.

Performing the mark up (i.e. bidding for work assignments) was another manual, paper-based process that left itself open to human error.

Furthermore, it was difficult to precisely track employee hours. Management was

looking for a new system that would make employees more accountable for the hours they submitted and help them to control operator costs.

## GOALS

Capital Metro determined that by updating their systems and computer automating some key tasks they could better manage their operations and ultimately deliver better service to the public.

Capital Metro wanted to provide dispatchers and management with better information for better decision making. As Gary McCray, dispatch coordinator at Capital Metro explained, "We wanted a system that would show dispatchers everything they needed to know on a given day. We also wanted to be able to tell dispatchers right away if they were violating a rule by assigning an operator to a piece of work."

The transit authority sought to automate many of the manual processes associated with the mark up, daily dispatch and time-keeping to improve efficiency and reduce the potential for human error. They also wanted to store and manage data for easy retrieval, analysis and reporting purposes.

## SNAPSHOT

<b>Type of Operation:</b>	fixed route and demand response
<b>Number of Fixed Routes:</b>	135
<b>Number of Peak Vehicles:</b>	215 peak veh. a.m. and 225 peak veh. p.m.
<b>Number of Operators (FT &amp; PT):</b>	557
<b>Passenger Trips per Day:</b>	130,000
<b>Trapeze Products Used:</b>	OPS, sign-in terminal, FX
<b>IT Environment:</b>	Oracle database and Windows XP workstations

## SOLUTION

In 1999, Capital Metro selected Trapeze to implement an operations management solution that included modules for work selection, daily dispatch activities, longer-term work planning, timekeeping and vehicle management.

When asked why the transit authority chose Trapeze, Mr. McCray mentioned past success working with Trapeze to implement a para-transit scheduling system.

He also focused on the competitiveness of the Trapeze offering. "Trapeze had a lot to offer compared to the other systems we demoed," said Mr. McCray. "The Trapeze solution was user friendly and included most of the features that we were specifically looking for to provide more efficient service to our customers."

Trapeze integrated the operations management solution with its fixed route scheduling software, which reduced data redundancy and simplified the process of managing timetable, block and runcut data.

In 2004 Capital Metro extended the system with remote sign-in terminals that enabled employees to sign in with a simple swipe of their employee card.

## RESULTS

The Trapeze system enabled Capital Metro to improve the availability of operational information to dispatchers and enable them to become more efficient.

According to Mr. McCray, the bidding module makes it easier to perform many tasks associated with the mark up, including assigning and deleting runs, vacation days and extra work. It prevents employees from making common mistakes and alerts them when an operator is not qualified to operate a vehicle or route.

He is equally enthusiastic about the Daily Activities module. "In addition to helping you make better decisions on the fly, it allows you to call up historical information to find out what happened on any given day last year. This is very useful when doing research connected with a grievance, for example."

"The extra board is lovely too. You can quickly assign a driver to extra board and change assignments. The system automatically warns you if you are going to violate a work rule."

The sign-in terminals have also been effective in promoting employee accountability as they enable dispatchers to reconcile the data from the swipe card sign in with the "plus slip." The return swipe helps Dispatch reconcile the time employees claim for plus slips with their actual arrival time and prevents operators from claiming additional time. Claiming just five extra minutes per day adds up to 100 minutes per month per employee—a considerable additional expense.

When a driver is late, the sign-in terminal will not let him sign in automatically. This has the effect of reducing lateness, because the driver knows that the supervisor will be aware of the situation.

Because they provide reliable evidence of exactly when drivers sign in and out, the sign-in terminals also reduce conflict between management and the union.

## BOTTOM LINE

Mr. McCray sums up the benefits of the Trapeze operations management solution thus: "Trapeze has provided Capital Metro with a system that enables us to work more efficiently and also to reduce man hours. Trapeze can enhance any transportation authority's daily activities."



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