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Case Study: Lassen Rural Bus



Submitted by ETA Transit Systems

7700 Congress Avenue, Suite 3212

Boca Raton, FL 33487

(719) 453-0250

www.etatransit.com



Lassen Rural Bus

In Lassen County California, Lassen Rural Bus (LRB) only has a handful of fixed route buses—12 to be exact. What's different about this community is that its ridership primarily consists of commuters —many of whom are elderly. In this scenario, a smartphone app and tracking website would be a feature that would often go unused—at least that's what Kelly Mumper, Transportation Planner for Lassen Rural Bus, thought. "I was surprised to learn the Lassen buses didn't utilize some of the transit technology options I'm familiar with."

When Lassen was awarded funding that could be allocated toward adopting some advanced technology, it was extremely important that the solution helped the community LRB served—and not become a distraction.

The first breakthrough in the system was discovered before ETA's SPOT® Intelligent Transit System (ITS) was installed. It was during a meeting of the transportation commission where a member of the Office of Emergency Services helped the community understand just how SPOT could be used to relay important service information to the public in real time. "The benefit of being able to use a 'service announcement module' was a real game-changer. Not only can we communicate real-time bus status, schedules, and delays to our riders, but we to also deliver important information directly to the community," says Mumper. "All it takes is any Internet-connected device."

The screenshot displays the SPOT ITS web interface. On the left is a navigation menu with options like Map, Reports, Administration, Route Planner, Service Messages, Users, Schedule Manager, Announcements, Live Media View, and Create Bundle. The main area shows a table of service messages with columns for Message Type, Start Date, End Date, and Message. A modal window titled 'New Service Message' is open, allowing users to enter a message, select a priority, and choose a date range. A calendar for July 2015 is also visible, showing the selected date range.

Message Type	Start Date	End Date	Message
High	2014-11-24 00:00:00	2014-11-26 00:00:00	12/24: All routes operating from 6:30 AM to 7:00 PM.
High	2014-02-13 00:00:00	2014-02-13 00:00:00	System is back! Thank you for your patience.
High	2014-04-21 00:00:00	2014-04-21 00:00:00	Website is experiencing technical difficulties, we are fixing it.Sorry for inconveniences.
High	2014-04-25 00:00:00	2014-04-25 00:00:00	Expect delays at Brickell and Biscayne Routes. Sorry for the inconveniences.
High	2015-05-13 07:00:00	2015-05-13 07:00:00	Commencement Ceremonies this week.
Normal	2013-12-23 00:00:00	2013-12-23 00:00:00	Happy Holidays!
High	2014-11-24 00:00:00	2014-11-26 00:00:00	12/24: All routes operating from 6:30 AM to 7:00 PM.
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High	2015-05-13 07:00:00	2015-05-13 07:00:00	Commencement Ceremonies this week.
Normal	2013-12-23 00:00:00	2014-01-04 00:00:00	Happy Holidays!

As residents became familiar with the new tools in 2015, another benefit was revealed. The Office of Health and Social Services discovered the importance of knowing the real-time location of vehicles. Typically, the office would dispatch a county van to pick up a rider in need, but now with access to Lassen's new SPOT ITS, they can view the location and status of vehicles nearer to the customer and re-route to assist riders far more quickly. It's a service that had delivered direct returns to Lassen County in the form of fuel



savings, depreciation, and payroll expenditures. In previous instances, a solution using transit would never be considered because of the long chain of events of approvals and communications from management to approve and coordinate the change, would result in system-wide delays.

Additionally, with the new SPOT system in place, Lassen Rural Bus has added a non-public facing route to the console to view and collect data on drivers training with the DMV for their commercial license. In previous years, Lassen drivers would be forced to drive 106 miles to Red Bluff, CA to ride on a DMV-approved training route. This new functionality has allowed Lassen will cut training hours, training staff, and fuel costs, while adding a feature that had never been present on prior DMV course routes—accountability.

The improvements for Lassen's operations do not end there. LRB can now monitor their own operations by utilizing ETA's GPS analytic software, which provides records of speed, location, idle, arrival times, and more. It's a powerful new set of metrics that not only will help improve driver behavior, but ultimately guide changes in its training process.

Lassen Rural Bus is a prime example of how the capabilities of an AVL product can be extended in smaller (and larger) communities to better leverage the investment cost, make better use of resources, and save money. Mumper adds, "ETA went above and beyond the call of duty. We are constantly finding interesting and new ways to utilize their product. They are immediately responsive to my needs; they're like family."