Making Transit Count: Countering False Narratives with Performance Measures

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Measuring the Street
Data, data everywhere...
What do we measure?

Moving Vehicles

Reducing Collisions

Minimizing Delay
The Guidance Gap
Making Transit Count

Tell a better story about streets & transit.

Good data powers transit programs. Cities that succeed at implementing transit improvements, and make their streets safer and more efficient for people, do so because they prioritize collecting and leveraging data that emphasizes rider experience and service quality. Performance measures should reflect the daily experience of people riding the bus. This will help cities make better designs, better projects, and better management of systems.

While every agency has an embedded set of practices for performance reporting, many agencies struggle at collecting standardized, vehicle-based data points that are enabling many of the recent positive results for riders. Metrics that prioritize the movement of people—rather than just car traffic—enable cities and operators to reframe investments on improving service for customers and rebalancing streets to move more people. New metrics also allow agencies to tell a better story: rather than simply using existing data in new ways. Drawing from case studies and best practices in North American cities, this document offers example performance metrics and proposes ways to use these metrics to connect technical solutions to the daily bus trip.
3 False Narratives
1. “But Traffic is already bad.”
2. “It Will Hurt Small Business.”
“Nobody Takes The Bus”

“AVs Will Take Over”

“Transit Ridership is Dropping Anyway”

“The Bus Lane is Always Empty”

“It’s Impossible”
3. “We don’t need to invest in transit.”
Answering hard questions.

“Will it get safer or more dangerous?”

“What kinds of traffic pattern changes should we anticipate?”

“What about all our other goals?”
Answering the Hard Questions
What can we measure?

Moving People

Systemic Safety

Reliable Travel
What can we measure?

Walk & Bike Access   Vibrant Public Space   Economic Vitality
1. “But Traffic is Already Bad”
“You’re taking away a lane???”
Buses are moving faster now.

- All-Door Boarding
- Bus Lanes & TSP
The Street Moves More People Now

Source: Seattle Department of Transportation and King County Metro
Traffic Still Moves Reliably
Fewer vehicles are speeding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direction</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NB</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>-80.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>-72.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Seattle Department of Transportation*
2. “It Will Destroy My Small Business”
Transit sustains Main Street ...
... when more people can arrive.
... when more people can arrive.
“Nobody Takes The Bus”

“Transit Ridership is Dropping Anyway”

“AVs Will Take Over”

“The Bus Lane is Always Empty”

“It’s Impossible”
Ridership increases when service improves
Ridership increases when service improves.
Riders Care About Reliability, Not The Schedule*

*On frequent routes

*On frequent routes
Riders Care About Reliability, Not The Schedule*

*On frequent routes

VS.

On-time performance: 95%
The big picture of reliability
Thanks!

nacto.org/tsdg/making-transit-count