Shuttle Bug: Linking Workers to Public Transportation in Northern Cook and Southern Lake Counties
University of Illinois-Chicago

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About TMAs

- TMA = Transportation Management Association
- 126 exist in the United States as of 2012
- 40 in Pacific Coast states
- Many in East Coast states
- Facilitate public/private partnerships to improve mobility and air quality
- TMA of Lake Cook is one of 2 Chicago area TMAs
  - TMA of Lake Cook was founded in 1989
TMA of Lake-Cook

- Mission to “improve employees’ commute to work” in Cook & Lake Counties”
- Represents over 40 firms, 42,000 employees
- Advocates for highway and transit service improvements
TMA Members Include Well Known Companies

Walgreens, Baxter, UL, Allstate, Discover
Shuttle Bug Program
Shuttle Bug Program

- 13 Pace shuttle routes link 1 CTA & 7 Metra stations with 4 suburban employment centers
- 1,000 daily passenger trips
- Public-private partnership between Pace/Metra and participating firms since 1996
- Employers & public sector share cost 50/50
Shuttle Bug address “last mile” issues
Service Planning: Basic Elements

- Operates weekday rush hour service
- Offers shuttle connections between Metra station and one or more workplaces
- Provides Ventra passes so employees can ride free
- Serves building entrances at locations where pedestrian infrastructure is missing or incomplete
Community Benefits of Shuttle Bug Program

- Improve area quality of life
- Offers commute option to driving alone
- Can improve area’s economic development
- Helps reduce area traffic congestion
- Addresses air quality issues
Employer Benefits

- Employers
  - Shared expenses & minimal company administration
  - Attract and retain quality workforce from wider geographic area
  - Can assist in corporate diversity efforts
  - Reduces parking needs
  - Helps LEED designation/Promotes Green Commute
Benefits to Employees

- Free Blue Ventra pass to ride Shuttle
- Lower travel costs taking transit
- Less stressful commute
- Some companies offer pretax commuting benefit
What makes for a successful shuttle program

- Employer concentration in corridor
  - 2-4 employers with sizable employee headcounts (3,000-5000 employees total)
  - Employees commute long distances (>20 miles one way)
  - Live along nearby Metra line
  - 60% + are reverse commute riders
- Frequent Metra service
  - Milwaukee North/UP North vs North Central
- Employers financially support & see value in program
- Partnership with Pace & Metra
Current Initiatives

- Route 640: Braeside Metra to Northbrook
- Route 465: Belmont Metra to Esplanade (Downers Grove)
- Route 638: Arlington Park Metra to HSBC (Arlington Heights)
- Oak Brook: Investigate demand for shuttles
- Bannockburn: Develop new routes near I-94/Rt. 22
RTA Grant to Expand Shuttle Bug Model

- TMA receives grant to test Shuttle Bug model in other Chicago suburban markets
- Grant begins October 2013
- Expires March 2017
Route 465 Belmont Station-Esplanade

- Began April 2015
- Two year demonstration
- First Du Page County Shuttle Bug
- Challenges with ridership
Oak Brook Shuttle

- TMA works with OakBrook Chamber, Pace, and RTA on investigating shuttle market
- Pace operated shuttle in late 80s/early 90s
- Many infrastructure challenges
- Market development underway
- Potential start date-Sometime in 2017
Rt. 640 Braeside Metra-Commercial Ave

- Provides connection from UP North to Walgreens in Northbrook
- Planned extension of some trips to Baxter (Deerfield) in 2017
- “New” version of a previous route
Route 638: Arlington Park to HSBC

- Service begins June 2016
- HSBC relocates from Mettawa to Arlington Heights
- Service operated by 12 passenger vehicles
Bannockburn

- Village interested in reviving Shuttle Bug service
- Shuttle Bug routes existed from 2000-2012
- Discontinued due to low ridership/changing company support
- Market may support new service
Challenges to Expansion

• While there is interest in expanding service, the TMA faces many challenges in doing so.
• Significant efforts in Service Development
• TMA takes lead in these efforts
Vehicle Availability & Capacity

- Vehicle shortage impacts expansion plans.
- Limited capacity, especially if service becomes popular.
Private Carriers

- More expensive than Shuttle Bug
- More flexible
- Proprietary service
- Not subject to Transit Authority regulations
The World of Work has changed

- Trend to relocate from suburban Chicago to downtown Chicago
- More people work remotely or hoteling
- Jobs moved out of state, or out of the country, or don’t exist
Corporate Relocations are Big News! But the trend has changed!

Sears Plans Move to Site Near Chicago
By ISADORE BARMASH
Published: June 27, 1989, New York Times
Sears, Roebuck & Company said yesterday that it would move 6,000 employees to a Chicago suburb

Companies Say Goodbye to the 'Burbs
Young Talent Wants to Live in Chicago, Not Libertyville; Dilemma for Older Workers
(Wall Street Journal, Dec 4, 2013)

Plans for a 100-bed psychiatric hospital at the former CDW/Allstate building at 300 N. Milwaukee Ave. in Vernon Hills have been presented to village officials
(Daily Herald, October 26, 2016)
Low Gasoline Prices Impact Shuttle Use

- Average gas prices for the first six months of 2016 were 16% lower than 2015 levels.
- 3.3% increase in the number of miles driven from 2015 to 2016.
- Illinois has seen a 24% increase in fatalities since 2014 (Courtesy: National Safety Council).
- Daily Shuttle Ridership has been impacted by lower gasoline prices.
Metra Fare Increases Impact Ridership

• 11% fare hike in February 2015
• Overall ridership dropped 2.2% from 2014 to 2015
• Ridership impacted by multiple issues
• In 2016, fares increase .09% to 2.7%
• 6% fare hike proposed for 2017
Transportation Network Companies (TNC’s)

- TNC’s such as Uber and Lyft have expanded to the suburbs
- Impact on shuttle ridership unclear
- Role in “last mile” issues to be determined
- Possible solution for low density markets
Lessons Learned

- Shuttle market in the suburbs is alive and well
- How that market will be served in the future is still evolving
- Organizations need to evaluate how to react to evolving market conditions
- Stay current on trends-things change!
Thank you!

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