

RIVERSIDE TRANSIT AGENCY  
1825 Third Street  
Riverside, CA 92507

March 24, 2005

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
THRU: Larry Rubio, Chief Executive Officer  
FROM: Scott Richardson, Director of Marketing  
SUBJECT: Festival of Lights Service Update

Summary:

At the September 23 meeting, the Board authorized bus service to and from the Mission Inn Festival of Lights Downtown Aglow from Calimesa and San Jacinto on Nov. 27, Hemet and Temecula on Dec. 4, Beaumont and Banning on Dec. 11, and Mead Valley and Corona on Dec. 18 with a \$2 roundtrip fare. The service used 40-passenger buses, and RTA staff greeted riders at the departure points.

RTA has provided this service for the prior two years and carried over 600 riders in 2003. The same marketing and promotion methods were used in 2004 as in 2003 (flyers, posters and press releases), but 2004 ridership was significantly below the goal of 640 passengers. Following are the ridership totals for the 2004 service:

Date	Departure	# Tickets Sold	Ridership*	Weather	Goal
11/27	Calimesa	56	56	Rain	80
11/27	San Jacinto	23	11	Rain	80
12/4	Hemet	22	22	Record Cold	80
12/4	Temecula	31	29	Record Cold	80
12/11	Beaumont	33	33	Clear	80
12/11	Banning	63	57	Clear	80
12/18	Mead Valley	9	9	Clear	80
12/18	Corona	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>	Clear	<u>80</u>
	Total	245	224		640

\*Note: Tickets were sold prior to departure and some were not used resulting in more tickets sold than riders.

## Previous Years' Ridership

### 2002

Service from: Banning, Beaumont, Calimesa, Corona, Hemet, San Jacinto and Temecula  
Date: Nov. 29 (One day only—Festival of Lights Switch-On Ceremony)  
Ridership: Over 800

### 2003

Service from: Canyon Lake, Jurupa, Norco, Lake Elsinore, Moreno Valley, Murrieta, Perris and Sun City  
Dates: Nov. 29, Dec. 6, Dec. 13 and Dec. 20.  
Ridership: Over 600

In examining 2004 ridership, staff believes that several factors may be responsible for the decrease in ridership:

- The market for this service may be diminishing as many people have seen the light displays previously and do not plan to travel to it each year.
- Local cities and organizations have their own holiday activities such as parades and ceremonies that competed with the Festival of Lights and likely decreased ridership.
- For two of the service days, weather may have been a factor (rain on Nov. 27 and temperatures that tied record cold on Dec. 4). Ridership history on our fixed routes consistently shows a major decrease in ridership during inclement weather, especially rain or extreme cold, which occurred on two of the days.

In planning possible future service to this event, staff will analyze demographics and event schedules to optimize service for maximum potential ridership. In addition, enhanced marketing activities may help to increase ridership:

- Focused targeted marketing at senior centers- Large posters, table tent cards, flyers, ads in newsletters, work with senior center staff to have them or RTA staff announce the service at a senior center meeting.
- Give-away items/goody bags on-board- Work with Riverside Downtown Association to create bags with coupons or samples that each rider would receive. Publicize goodie bags in all materials.
- Discounts for early ticket purchases or issue discount coupons for ticket purchases- Research has shown that seniors respond very

well to coupons and discounts. Offering discounts for ticket purchase by a certain date could serve as a motivator to buy a ticket.

Fiscal Impact:

Operating cost for the service was \$5,969. RTA collected \$490 in fares resulting in a farebox recovery of 8.2%. Approximately \$3,000 was spent in marketing the service, which was considered part of the general marketing program because it effectively marketed the entire bus system, confirmed RTA's commitment to involvement in community events, and offered residents the opportunity to experience RTA's service.

Committee Recommendation:

This item was discussed at the Board Operations Committee meeting of March 9, 2005. The Committee members unanimously approved recommending this item to the full Board of Directors for their consideration.

Recommendation:

Receive and file.