Meet › Baldwin Area Rural Transportation System

Located in Robertsdale, Alabama, Baldwin Rural Area Transportation System (BRATS) is a growing demand response transportation provider delivering approximately 1,200 trips a day throughout the 1,600 square miles of Baldwin County.

Meeting New Demands

Because of its proximity to the Gulf Shores tourist areas near Orange Beach while also situated between the growing retirement communities of Mobile and Pensacola, BRATS is continually facing increased ridership demands. Technology has served as a foundation to help their operational team meet those demands as they perform an average of 750,000 passenger service miles per year for demand response and deviated fixed route services combined.

In addition to providing commuter routes, such as those servicing the hospitality and tourism industries and the government and education sectors, BRATS also coordinates transit services with the Wave Transit System of Mobile and the Baylinc of Baldwin-Mobile. The Baylinc route is able to accommodate stops and deviations to and from Mobile,

which provides riders with the ability to connect rides from one provider to another. Anywhere from 1,500 to 2,000 riders a month transfer their rides along this route.

Like many agencies, prior to switching to Routematch's solution, BRATS was using a computerized system that had been built in-house. They were having a tough time sorting and tracking their data for reporting purposes, as well as having difficulty searching their database for locations and addresses. These issues, combined with the increase in ridership made the decision to move to a more **sophisticated, automated scheduling and dispatching solution** "a no-brainer."

Recognizing the Gaps

BRATS installed Routematch's demand response software as they began transitioning away from their old mobile data computers to embrace new tablet technology. The agency has installed 47 tablets on vehicles so far and plan to add additional as funds become available.

"We were almost immediately able to see the gaps in efficiencies and view schedules based on addresses and mapping when we implemented Routematch," said Chandra Middleton, Assistant Director of Transportation at BRATS.

Once BRATS was up and running with the solutions, they were able to quickly reap cost and efficiency improvements, including a **reduced bus fleet from 60 to 51**. "We

47
tablets

1,500 – 2000
transit riders

1,200
trips a day

were able to perform more trips and serve more riders with less resources," says Taylor Rider, BRATS Director of Transportation. "We were also able to be confident that the reports we ran for reporting and billing purposes were accurate."

Another key feature of Routematch technology that immediately made life easier was the built-in geolocation capabilities which eliminated much of the manual searching for locations. This saved the staff a great deal of time and energy, as did the ability to easily search for rider information, addresses, and data.

Confidence in Routematch

The agency has already noticed a $5,000 a year cost savings with the Routematch tablets and have experienced zero operational problems due to weather-related or other technical matters. The switch to tablets has been so successful that once the remaining tablets are up and running, BRATS will be able to eliminate their second server thereby saving more money on hardware and storage maintenance fees.

"The tablets have been just great," says Middleton. "We knew that with us growing so rapidly, it would benefit our drivers tremendously to have these. Our original mobile data computers (MDCS) were aging and we could see the benefit of having everything done through Routematch and not via a third-party provider. There are just a lot of pluses regarding costs and having the mapping abilities of the tablets."

The tablets also enable BRATS to streamline its emergency management function. The agency maintains a list of subscribers, such as hotels, large corporations, and senior centers, that need to be transported to safety in emergency situations. Drivers can automatically and quickly assist these at-risk populations, coordinating closely with the local EMA office.

$5,000
yearly cost savings with the Routematch tablets

Moving forward, BRATS sees more growth and need for additional intelligent transportation technology with Routematch. "The population down here is exploding," says Rider. "The community is adding more commuter routes. The AirBus Corporation is moving to the area, and that's in addition to the huge number of festivals that we also serve on the Gulf Coast."

Indeed, last year there were over 250,000 attendees for the Gulf Shores Annual National Shrimp Festival, of which BRATS transported 30,000. With such changes on the horizon, BRATS is staying on top of the latest technology offerings, looking at new innovations down the road.

Challenges:

> Needed scheduling software upgrade and automation ability

> Outdated and unreliable reporting abilities

> Aging mobile data computers

> Reduce operational costs

Routematch Solutions:

> Routematch Demand

> Mobile Data Services and Tablets

> Automatic Vehicle Location

Results:

> Reduced size of vehicle fleet (saving on costs and fuel)

> Able to identify and eliminate gaps in operational efficiencies

> Ability to run and verify data for reporting and billing purposes

> Increased scheduling ability and ability to meet trip demands

> Saved costs on aging hardware repairs

Connected in Transit

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