

TRI-MET INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 8, 1994
TO: Catherine Merten
FROM: Deborah Middleton
SUBJECT: Hispanic Outreach Research

INTRODUCTION

During the last two months I have interviewed Tri-Met staff and individuals in the Hispanic community to determine how we might serve Hispanics more effectively. Because my service area is the westside of our district, the majority of those interviewed and the suggestions provided may specifically apply to this area. The following includes some examples of what we are doing, what barriers exist to future ridership and suggestions of ways we can eliminate barriers and encourage Hispanic ridership through partnerships between the community and Tri-Met.

WHAT WE ARE DOING NOW

There is a growing concern within agency staff to communicate more effectively with the Hispanic community and encourage their participation in our services. Outreach to Hispanics are agenda topics at appropriate Line by Line meetings. The Marketing Department recently arranged for page 2 & 10 of the transit guide to be translated in Spanish, indicating how to read a schedule and an explanation of the transfer slip. Various other efforts have been made in the past by staff to provide interpretation and translation service of outreach materials. Staff interviewed indicate agreement that we needed to increase activities directed towards Hispanics. All agreed that a key element to Hispanic ridership begins first with communication with Hispanic community leaders and organizations.

BARRIERS TO RIDERSHIP

It is obvious that language is one of the largest barriers to ridership in that many customers may not understand instructions or information given to them by operators or other customers. Literacy is a problem when the customer cannot read English and/or may have no written language in their country of origin. Cultural barriers continue to exist. An example of how nonverbal cues can cause customers to feel intimidated and lead to a lack of understanding by the Tri-Met driver could include when a Hispanic person gets on the bus for the first time, not realizing that the holster on the drivers belt contains a hole punch and not a weapon. The driver's uniform may be of similar color and design of the police in their

county of origin which may also be perceived as threatening. This is not to suggest that operators need to remove their punch holster or the uniform colors be changed. It is important however to create an awareness that perceptions by riders are different. The lack of understanding of cultural values and language by employees continue to create barriers for Hispanic ridership.

ELIMINATING BARRIERS AND MOBILIZING RESOURCES

Members of the community interviewed had a wide variety of suggestions for increasing Hispanic ridership. The following are some examples of their ideas:

- Focus marketing efforts on Hispanic junior high and senior high school youth because they represent the highest number of future Hispanic riders.
- Directed outreach at communities including high Hispanic populations such as Aloha, Hillsboro and the Forest Grove area.
- Appoint a blue ribbon Hispanic advisory committee to provide advice on how to improve outreach services to Hispanic customers in culturally appropriate ways.
- Including a Hispanic rider on the line 57 to answer questions and provide information such as how to transfer to get to a certain destination.
- A Spanish speaking telephone operator available to take customer service calls is needed. This should include an option for voice mail to hear and leave a message in Spanish.
- Trip planning kiosks should offer Spanish as an option similar to automatic teller machines at banks.
- Marketing advertising in Hispanic newspapers and T.V. stations would reach a large number of possible customers.
- Offer at least one Tri-Met public workshop for the Hispanic community. Because of the lack of trust of governments, hold the meeting in a nongovernment owned building. A church, business or community center would be a more appropriate facility.
- Provide cultural awareness training to all new drivers and make it available to current drivers on an ongoing basis.
- Turn off the sound on the advocacy video and tape the narration in Spanish on a recorder. It could then be shown at any meeting where Spanish is spoken. A Hispanic organization would be glad to do the narration at no charge and volunteered to have interpreters at any community meetings in their facilities when Tri-Met wanted make presentations or solicit public input.
- It is estimated from the migrant camp census that between 20 and 30,000 migrants come into Washington County each season. Tri-Met needs to provide shuttle bus service during the farm worker season to the line 57 at least three times a day, if possible. This would meet a chronic transportation need and could dramatically increase ridership.
- Tri-Met would be welcome as a member of the Hispanic Family Resource Coalition. Tri-met's participation in this organization would provide a positive way to communicate with the community and help address their transportation needs.