Befriending Government: How Transit Agencies Are Using Social Media

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Rail-Volution | 31 October 2009
We spoke to some agencies to see what they were doing.
Some saw an opportunity to learn from their riders...and others saw a better way to tell their own story.
CDTA posts rider videos.
Ride Connection builds community support.
BART keeps it casual with a blog.
Some key questions

Why are you doing this?
What do you want to say?
And how do you want to say it?
Who’s in charge?
Can you turn on a dime?
How will you measure success?
Are you prepared for the worst?
Establish clear goals

Why are you doing this?
Does it fit with other agency messages?
Do you have a social media policy?

“Don’t put your agency on Twitter just because some celebrity is there.”
What do you want to say?

- Service status updates
- Marketing and promotion
- Agency activities
- New stories
- Recruitment
- Customer service
- Upcoming events

“Successful blogs have a voice.”
Is it a two-way street?

Some say yes -- It’s a great tool for understanding riders

Some say no -- It’s an opportunity to communicate directly without filters

And some say maybe -- Still figuring out what subscribers want

“If you’re not going to respond, what’s the point?”
AC Transit has a mix of updates and chat.

Metro posts automated updates only.
Can you turn on a dime?

How often do you post updates?
Do you have enough staff?

“We don’t need 20 levels of approval.”

“The site requires care and feeding on a constant basis.”
Who’s in charge?

Marketing
Communications
External affairs

“The executives have lost interest.”

“IT is out of the loop.”
Do you know who’s using it?

Track friends, fans, and followers.
And who’s not?

Is there a digital divide?
Or a generational disconnect?
Can people with disabilities use the site?

“Wake up – It’s the twenty-first century.”
What’s the worst that can happen?

Are there cyber-security risks?
What if Facebook disappears?
Is this on the record?

“We’re not the state department of Twittering.”
Build support

Reach customers

Humanize your agency

Get feedback

So what's the big deal?

Control your message

It's cheap and easy
Manage your expectations

Then expect the unexpected.
“Just do it.”
Questions?

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