**TIGGER Marketing Plan**

**Objective: Create a sense of community and involvement in the TIGGER project through education and two-way communication so that all stakeholders are aware of its benefits, effect on their commute, and other facets of the project.**

**Project Summary:**

The Blacksburg Transit service goes through several peak periods in the day. For example, after every class change there are numerous people trying to exit campus. However, sometimes demand shifts, and BT currently has no way of knowing how many people will be at a stop (aside from historical data). The shift could be because of exams, or because of a football game. We want to be able to tell when the demand has changed from what we expect it to be, so that we can route the buses more efficiently. We hope to engage in a proactive versus reactive method of dealing with passenger demand, which will promote a better passenger experience with BT.

**Jimmy and John Take a Ride:**

Jimmy rides Blacksburg Transit every day, like he has since freshmen year. The bus system works for him, most of the time. He usually enjoys his commute to and from campus, but today while standing at his Hethwood stop, he sees two buses with “Bus Full” flashing across the front of them drive right past him. Seeing the bus drive away creates a feeling of irritation in Jimmy, especially since his class takes attendance at the beginning of each class. Luckily, a tripper has been waiting and will get him to campus. Jimmy is happy to finally be on a bus, but agitated that he is going to be late for class.

John, Jimmy’s friend, had a completely different experience. He went to his stop on campus at an “off-time” while classes were in session. The bus came to his stop exactly on time, and he boarded the bus. After showing his passport, John looked up and noticed that he was the only one on the bus. While, it was nice to have a private bus trip, John felt like it was a waste of resources. On his ride home from Burruss to Hethwood, only two more people got on. John thought, “There has to be a better way.”

The goal of TIGGER is to find out if Jimmy’s and John’s situations are preventable. BT wants to find out if it is possible to gauge passenger demand by using various technologies. The TIGGER project hopes to use technology such as thumbprint scanners, cameras, apps, and other consumer-input to know which buses need to be where, and at what time. BT envisions Jimmy having the ability to let us know he is at a stop, either through active or passive measures. That way Jimmy makes it to class on time, and the John doesn’t ride on an empty bus. Along with knowing where passengers are boarding, BT wants to know where passengers are *going*. If their destination is known, BT can better determine the demand for other parts of the system. TIGGER hopes to produce a notification system where we can alert passengers to changes in service level for unforeseen circumstances (e.g. inclement weather). As part of the application, Blacksburg Transit also wants passengers to let us know if the bus is to their expectations (clean, courteous operator, etc.).

Having the ability to change how buses run *could* result in lower greenhouse gas emissions and increased efficiency. It is our goal with TIGGER to discover if the consumer experience can be enhanced by engaging them, having them tell us what it is like to ride the buses every day, and how we can make it better.

**Primary Target Audience:**

1. Residents of Hethwood Apartment Complex
2. Riders located in the Corporate Research Center
3. Virginia Tech
4. BT Employees
5. Town Employees

**Secondary Target Audience:**

1. Elected Officials
2. Town Council
3. General Public
4. MPO
5. DRPT
6. FTA

**Key Messages (for Primary and Secondary Audience):**

1. The Dynamic Routing and Scheduling Study aims to find out if dynamic schedules are viable. We don’t know what the outcomes will be. This is a learning process for all.
2. During the study, a service change might be noticed. We may decide to hold a bus at a stop for few minutes longer, or have a bus show up unscheduled (if the demand is present).
3. This project is a partnership between VTTI and Blacksburg Transit. We are working together to find out if changing buses to fit demand is a feasible option.
4. We want passengers to give their opinions and feedback. Knowing how the changes are affecting passengers is part of the study.

**Potential Benefits (for Primary Audience):**

1. Passengers may arrive at their location sooner, or know if they are going to arrive later.
2. There will be a potential reduction in greenhouse gases, which provides for a cleaner community (both locally and globally).
3. The resources saved through this project can be reallocated to other areas (e.g. if we spend less time driving buses that are not being used to capacity the buses may need to be replaced less often).

**Potential Benefits (for Secondary Audience):**

1. Increased customer service for those using our service
2. Saved resources (i.e. fuel use reduction and fewer unnecessary miles on the buses)

**Strategies (for Primary Audience):**

* Create awareness of the project, primarily in Hethwood neighborhood.
  + Work with HHHunt to contact residents and spread awareness.
* Create awareness for the service, secondarily in CRC market.
* Educate those involved and affected by the study.
* Communicate throughout the process to make sure we keep everyone on the same page.

**Strategies (for Secondary Audience):**

* Conduct quarterly meetings to provide project update.
* Provide handouts on project
* Create a dialogue where the secondary audience can communicate thoughts about the TIGGER project.

**Tactics:**

**Prior to Technology Deployment April 2013-August 2013:**

* Use various media to educate and engage stakeholders to create awareness about the project
  + BT4U- Use the service to disseminate information. Provide links to various resources (i.e. website,
  + BT Website- Much like the BT4U service, this will work to provide schedule information
  + E-mail
  + Interior bus cards
  + Exterior ads
  + Collegiate Times Article
  + Dining Hall cards
  + Utilize Assets of Community Relations Office
* Conduct a public meeting to collect opinions and concerns prior to deployment
* Conduct Focus groups to engage existing participants, and also attract/educate new passengers
* Work with CSR to engage consumers with a survey asking opinions on potential technologies.
  + How the study works, what it entails, benefits/drawbacks of project.
  + Follow up with riders via focus groups

**During Technology Deployment September 2013-May 2014:**

* Conduct Focus groups to engage existing participants, and also attract/educate new ones
* Use advertising mediums to keep stakeholders informed of new changes, and progress being made throughout the study. (i.e. Bus ads, CT article/advertisements, dining hall cards)
* Focus groups to keep stakeholders aware of progression. Encourage App Usage/awareness.

**Post Technology Deployment June 2014-August 2014:**

* Focus group to collect final thoughts on study (collect suggestions and comments)
* Use the same methods as mentioned about to alert stakeholders of the project’s conclusion.
* Finish up analysis and release results through predetermined methods

**Project Timeline:**

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| Task: | To be completed by: |
| Develop Draft Project Management Plan | April 2013 |
| Develop Draft Concept of Operations | April 2013 |
| Determine bus routes to be studied | April 2013-June 2013 |
| Develop route data needs/straw man | April 2013- June 2013 |
| Develop functional requirements for mobile application | April 2013- July 2013 |
| Develop data requirements for on-board data needs and methodology for system evaluation | April 2013- July 2013 |
| Develop data requirements for demand assessment | April 2013-July 2013 |
| Finalize Project Management Plan | May 2013 |
| Determine most appropriate means of communication for field devices | May 2013-June 2013 |
| Determine data collection equipment needs | May 2013- July 2013 |
| Finalize Concept of Operations | May 2013-August 2013 |
| Procure/lease on-board data collection equipment | June 2013- August 2013 |
| Coordinate with power companies for provision of power for field devices | June 2013-September 2013 |
| Procure communications test equipment | July 2013- August 2013 |
| Perform research to determine most appropriate technology offerings for demand assessment | August 2013 |
| Develop demand assessment procurement document | August 2013 |
| Perform public education/surveys regarding technology offerings for demand assessment | August 2013-September 2013 |
| Procure Mobile Application Vendor | August 2013- November 2013 |
| Communications testing | September 2013-October 2013 |
| Procure equipment for demand assessment | September 2013-November 2013 |
| Install data collection equipment on buses | October 2013 |
| Install power service | October 2013- December 2013 |
| Develop Beta Mobile Application | November 2013- December 2013 |
| Procurement of remaining communications equipment | November 2013-December 2013 |
| Install/integrate demand assessment equipment | November 2013- January 2014 |
| Installation of remaining communications equipment | December 2013 |
| Deploy Beta Mobile Application | January 2014 |
| Develop Final Mobile Application | January 2014-February 2014 |
| Perform system evaluation/tests | January 2014- April 2014 |
| Deploy Final Mobile Application | March 2014 |
| Provide evaluation/testing results and develop report documenting the project | May 2014- August 2014 |

**Outcomes/Goals/Expectations:**

1. When the project is complete, we will be able to look at App Usage. This will tell us how many people are reporting their information to us.
2. We can also gauge consumer interest and feelings, by using the survey we will be sending out in early Fall 2013.
3. The equipment we use to collect information on the bus will return bus conditions to us. Such as, how much gas was used, number of passengers, etc. We can use this information to see how the bus efficiency changes based on changing variables.
4. The demand assessment at the stop level will give us measurable information about which stops are busiest and when (on the study routes).