

Research at a Glance

Technical Brief

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Marketing Research for the Quantifiable Benefits of Transit in New Jersey

New Jersey boasts an extensive system of public transportation that operates statewide, serving approximately two-thirds of the State's municipalities. The many benefits of public transportation have been widely discussed and analyzed in both academic literature and popular media.

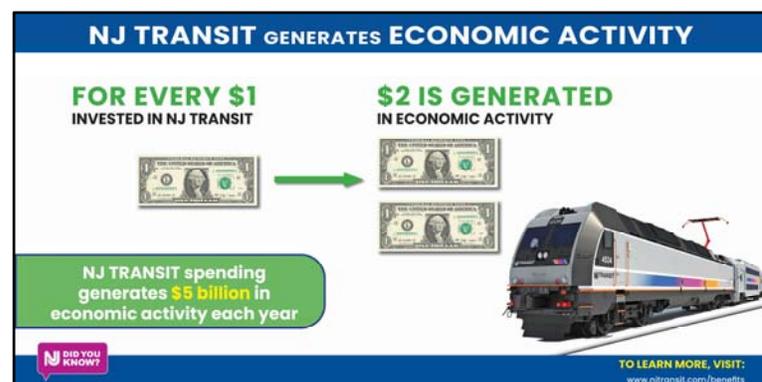
Research Problem Statement

For much of the past two decades, New Jersey policy makers have been mired in repeated debates regarding how best to fund transportation capital and operating costs in an era of significant fiscal strain. NJ TRANSIT in particular faces many challenges related to maintaining legacy infrastructure systems and assets in a state of good repair, meeting operating budget needs and paying for needed system improvements large and small, as noted in NJ TRANSIT's Capital Program. When this study began in 2019, the public narrative surrounding transit in New Jersey was that NJ TRANSIT was a system in crisis. Today, as the world emerges from the depths of the global COVID-19 pandemic, there is a renewed focus on recovery and investment.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research study were to:

- 1) quantify the economic, mobility, accessibility, environmental, and social benefits of public transportation to New Jersey;
- 2) understand better what benefits are potentially most important to transit riders, non-transit riders and other stakeholder groups;
- 3) determine how best to communicate the benefits of public transportation to these audiences; and
- 4) develop a marketing framework, communication approaches, and collateral marketing materials to support a future transit benefits marketing campaign as part of NJ TRANSIT's on-going communications strategy.



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Methodology

To achieve the research objectives, the research team implemented a multi-phase, mixed methods work plan that included both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. Phase one and two of the study focused on developing a foundational understanding of what transit benefit measures resonate most with different audiences, synthesizing available academic and grey literature on transit benefits; analyzing data from a variety of secondary sources; and performing benefit calculations as needed to compile a series of easy-to-understand facts about transit benefits in New Jersey. As part of phase three of the study, the research team developed a series of infographics and related marketing materials designed to communicate transit benefits to a lay audience using both traditional and social media approaches. These materials were market tested via four focus groups, and refined based on participant input. Finally, the research team developed a marketing framework and recommendations for using the materials as part of a comprehensive marketing campaign.

Results

The results of this research demonstrate that NJ TRANSIT services provide many benefits to New Jersey residents, businesses and communities. Key findings include:

- Investment in NJ TRANSIT provides significant direct and indirect economic benefits, including direct employment of 11,000 people and an additional 19,000 in indirect job gains.
- NJ TRANSIT services support community development and increase property values by 2.4 times per acre in areas located close to rail stations. This property value premium generates \$260 million in local taxes annually.
- NJ TRANSIT services allow customers to reach businesses and employees to travel to work. Sixty-percent of New Jersey businesses are located close to transit. These businesses employ 2.6 million people and generate sixty-two percent of all business sales in the State.
- NJ TRANSIT services connect residents and business to the region and world and support New Jersey's tourism industry.
- NJ TRANSIT services reduce vehicle trips, vehicle miles traveled, and vehicle hours of travel, which reduces congestion, saves energy, and eliminates an estimated 644,000 metrics tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year.
- NJ TRANSIT is more affordable than other modes of travel. Low- and middle-income households that use public transit spend about 24-34 percent less on transportation per year than households that do not use transit.
- NJ TRANSIT provides access to opportunity, especially for older adults, people with disabilities, college students, and veterans. These groups are eligible for reduced fares when they travel on NJ TRANSIT services.
- NJ TRANSIT services improve roadway safety by eliminating an estimated 7,000 vehicle crashes each year. Eliminating these crashes saves society an estimated \$632 million.

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