

PASSENGER INFORMATION DURING A CRISIS

HOW AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION BECAME A VITAL METHOD
OF COMMUNICATION DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC



When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States, our critical infrastructure was quickly put to the test. Hospitals and healthcare providers were overwhelmed, schools rapidly shifted to online learning, business leaders navigated a completely remote workforce or else shut down business temporarily, and mass transit — the backbone of our nation's transportation system — faced a challenge almost as great as keeping Americans at home: how to communicate with the public in the middle of a global crisis and keep those who must ride transit for essential trips safe?

For Capital Metropolitan Transit Authority (Capital Metro), an Austin-based public transit system that served over 80,000 riders per day prior to the pandemic, the solution came in marrying their communications with information technology. Capital Metro had long since developed a disaster preparedness plan, which when activated enabled them to work in coordination with emergency operations centers to enact a rapid response.

In the early days of the virus' spread, Capital Metro modified its route schedules, instituted enhanced cleaning measures and began managing seating capacity on vehicles to keep riders safe. As the days turned into weeks and weeks stretched into months, new information about the virus and its transmission emerged, necessitating that Capital Metro adjust its services and use smart transit technology to effectively communicate shifting schedules and safety policies to passengers throughout the entirety of the pandemic, however long that may be.

That technology was supplied by Luminator Technology Group (Luminator).

In January of 2020, Capital Metro began installing Luminator's E-paper display solution, an innovative passenger information technology that uses the same ultra-low-power LED displays as e-readers and includes ADA-accessible features.

Originally intended to enhance Capital Metro's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stops, as well as high-traffic Park-and-Ride and transit center locations, the E-paper displays were put to use as one of the primary means of communicating with a public in need of assurance.

Today, Capital Metro utilizes multiple platforms to communicate with passengers — including its website, mobile application, social media and direct passenger text message service — but, among these, Luminator's E-paper displays are unique in their combination of sleek hardware and automated software.

According to Capital Metro's Manager of Bus Service Delivery Olivia Jones, the Luminator display's easy-to-read,



Bistable reflective technology ensures minimal energy needs. The power is used only for a brief time during information updates.

user-friendly interface was a big hit in Austin. “Our customers really like that they can scroll through to a second page for more information. They have also noted that getting route information on the displays is more convenient than accessing our mobile app or the website.”

E-paper displays can be updated remotely, allowing transit agencies such as Capital Metro to push automatic updates and ensure rider access to up-to-date information while reducing labor costs associated with manually switching out paper displays.

This combination of low cost, high speed and accuracy enabled Capital Metro to provide riders with real-time information ahead of other communication platforms. For riders, an information delay of a few minutes or hours could mean the difference between an essential worker getting to work on time and not.

For Capital Metro, supporting essential workers and passengers during a global crisis is all part of its broader mission of connecting people and communities to jobs and opportunities. Reliable transit is just one part of that mission.



The optional ADA compliant text-to-speech function assists visually impaired riders.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Capital Metro realized its vehicles were uniquely suited to serve the public during the lockdown. To assist Capital Metro's paratransit clients on its MetroAccess vehicles, Capital Metro worked with H-E-B (a Texas-based supermarket chain) and the Central Texas Food Bank to deliver Help-at-Home kits containing a variety of shelf-stable foods.

By providing necessities such as food and transportation to Austin residents, Capital Metro filled a critical role in the city's infrastructure and served a vital public service. It expanded its COVID-19 response efforts by leveraging Luminator's HD video surveillance solution for another critical need: ensuring social distancing.

Using the RoadRunner on-board video security system and associated software provided by Luminator, Capital Metro reviews live video feeds on vehicles to verify that social distancing guidelines are being followed and to ensure that vehicles do not become overcrowded.



Content can be updated remotely, allowing transit agencies like Capital Metro to update information in real-time while reducing labor costs associated with manually switching out paper displays.

It remains unclear how long these operational changes will be necessary, but Capital Metro's response to the pandemic has made one thing clear: by combining the mission of public service with innovative technology solutions, transit authorities can rise to the challenge of keeping riders safe and informed in any crisis.

Whether combating a global pandemic, a local outbreak or any other crisis that could affect transportation or public safety, Capital Metro has all of the communications and information technology tools it needs to respond quickly. Together, Capital Metro and Luminator can ensure that public transit is safe and efficient both today and in the future.



E-paper displays are available in 13" and 32" and can be mounted vertically or horizontally.

INTELLIGENCE, SAFETY AND EFFICIENCY IN TRANSIT

CAPITAL METRO
TRANSIT SYSTEM

AUSTIN, TEXAS

Annual Boardings
31.2 MILLION

Bus Routes
83

Commuter Rail
9 STATIONS ALONG
32 MILES OF TRACK

Quantity of E-paper Displays
148

Solution Deployed for
BUS AND RAIL
NETWORK

Luminator Customer Since
1999



Data obtained from Capital Metro Fast Facts:
<https://www.capmetro.org/facts>

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