



Case Study

University of Memphis

There are only a handful of buses that serve the students and faculty at the University of Memphis campus in Memphis, Tennessee. When an app was introduced in 2009 that provided students arrival times for incoming shuttles, ridership began to flourish. The response from the students was so great from this small upgrade, that the university began to explore other improvements to its shuttle service. Tommy Miller, Director of Transportation at the University of Memphis, began searching for an Intelligent Transit System that could build on the momentum of the rider app. He strongly felt that on-board announcements would be a welcome addition to the core service, and the inclusion of Automatic Passenger Counters (APCs) would help track and justify the increased ridership of these technological improvements.

He was right.

The solutions provided by ETA Transit and their SPOT® Intelligent Transit System (ITS) was able to offer a proposal and pricing option that gave University of Memphis everything on its wish list—and well within its stated budget. All the integrated tools for vehicle tracking and data gathering—which were once thought to be reserved for the largest transit agencies—were soon being installed on the UM buses and in campus shelters.

“Once we learned that this type of technology could fall within my budgets the next most important thing to our team was finding a group to deliver the technology that can help me use the technology effectively,” says Miller. “While ETA’s technology is great, the way they help me interpret data the system collects really sets them apart. The weekly manager reports they provide are a godsend, and gives me the detailed analysis that I need to make informed decisions about our operations.”

Not only was Memphis able to evaluate improvements to its service by analyzing patterns and trends in ridership, they also improved its rider experience by providing shelter signage that integrated with its existing phone app and on-board vehicle announcements.

University of Memphis student Trevor Stack says of his new passenger experience. “It’s nice to be working in the lab and look at my phone and know exactly when I can get up and stop working to head to the bus shelter. Once there, the arrival time is shown on the station signs so I know just how long I’ll be waiting. I’ve seen this stuff in big cities, but I never thought we would have something like this here.”

Adding to the UM shuttle experience are on-board announcements of major stops and intersections which helps to deliver an ADA-compliant environment that provides equal access for all passengers.

With a student population of 22,500 and only a handful of shuttle buses, Memphis required a budget-conscious and effective technology-driven solution. With its new SPOT ITS and ETA customer advocates, UM is now able to analyze service at a far higher level.