



## PROJECT TITLE: HOW SOCIAL MEDIA MOVES NEW YORK

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: DR. MITCHELL L. MOSS, SARAH M. KAUFMAN

INSTITUTION: NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

COMPLETION DATE: DECEMBER 2012

SPONSOR: RESEARCH AND INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY ADMINISTRATION / USDOT

Social media networks are valuable tools for the public outreach needs of transportation providers: they are free, instantaneous, reach large numbers of people simultaneously, and allow for sideline discussions. The goals of social media in transportation are to inform (alert riders of a situation), motivate (to opt for an alternate route), and engage (amplify the message to their friends and neighbors).

This report analyzes the use of social media tools by the New York region's major transportation providers. It is focused on the effectiveness of their Twitter feeds, which were chosen for their immediacy and simplicity in messaging, and provided a common denominator for comparison between the various transportation providers considered, both public and private. Based on this analysis, recommendations are outlined for improving social media outreach.

### Key Findings

- Private sector transportation providers reach far more customers, proportionately, than those in the public sector: For example, for every 1,000 subway passengers NYCT receives a single Facebook "Like," while for every 1 JetBlue passenger, there are 7.58 Likes. Similarly, while PATH has approximately 1 Twitter follow for every 20 riders, American Airlines has more than three times that ratio. These numbers are important because they show audience engagement and amplification of the message, which help travelers to move more efficiently and safely.

- Few transportation providers maximized Twitter's potential with hashtags, dialogues, and dynamic content, which adds substance to the conversation and improves customer feedback. Furthermore, most transportation agencies over-marketed and under-informed, resulting in limited value of their social media presence.

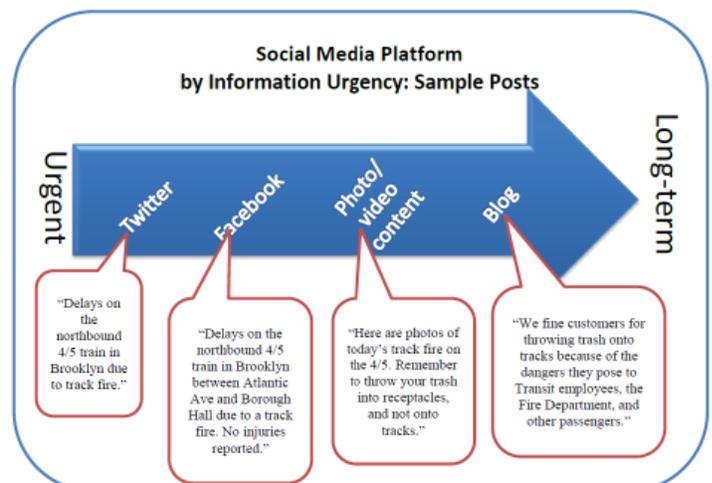
- A focus on non-English speakers is lacking: Only two public transportation providers tweeted in non-English (6 tweets total), even though nearly half of all New Yorkers speak a language other than English

at home. Clearly transportation providers should pay more attention to the non-English speaking population.

- Public transportation providers lagged far behind private providers in terms of accountability; specifically, the airlines apologized substantially more than public transportation providers for delays and cancellations, while the public transportation providers accepted 'thanks' at a greater rate than they issued apologies (on average 17.7 "thanks" versus 12.6 "sorry").

In order to communicate effectively using social media, transportation providers must be:

- Accessible: Easily discovered through multiple channels and targeted information campaigns
- Informative: Disseminating service information at rush hour and with longer-form discussions on blogs as needed
- Engaging: Responding directly to customers, marketing new services, and building community
- Responsive: Soliciting and internalizing feedback and self-evaluating in a continuous cycle.



This report was presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) in October, 2012.