



1. employer shuttles

Employer, or site specific, shuttles connect employment sites with the closest or most convenient transit stations or centers. Shuttles can provide service for employees that meets the “last mile” challenge of getting from transit station or stop that may be near but not within walking distance to their job. Employer shuttles usually operate at work shift times and can be operated by a single employer, or a combination of employers. Shuttles may be operated as a partnership between a transit agency and a major employer.

Shuttle services typically serve riders in a well-defined area or along a specific route and provide convenient and direct service to desired destinations. They function as an important first mile/last mile connection and often connect to a major transit service. If the service receives public funding, then it must be open to the general public, but routes and schedules can be customized to the needs of the employer.

How it works

If a shuttle serves a single employer, then it would typically be managed and operated by that employer. If they serve employment centers or corridors, the shuttles may be operated by a group of employers, often organized through a Transportation Management Association (TMA). TMAs can be an effective third party to design the service, allocate costs and balance needs among multiple stakeholders. TMAs, in turn, could operate the service themselves or contract with a public or private service provider. Most employer shuttles operate “fare free” as most riders are associated with the employer or institution paying for the route.

Employer shuttles are simple when they are designed to serve one site, but this approach can be more expensive than a single entity would like to pay. If shuttles serve multiple employers, operations and management are more complicated, but the cost to each organization is lower, and could service more riders.

Developing an Employer or Site Specific Shuttle service involves the following steps:

- Develop a bus service plan including operating hours, alignment/operating path, any special vehicle requirements and the frequency of service.
- Develop a management plan for implementation, including roles and responsibilities for overseeing and managing the service.
- Finalize running times for the development of accurate route schedules.
- Establish marketing, outreach and staff orientation plans.

Best Practice

The *Dallas Area Rapid Transit in DFW region, Texas*, participates in several site-specific shuttle partnerships, in partnership with universities, major employers, and retail destinations. Serving the dozens of employers scattered around DFW Airport with traditional fixed-route bus service is impractical for several reasons. The airport covers an area of more than 18,000 acres, with numerous office parks, warehouses, and industrial zones lining Airfield Drive, which forms an almost complete loop around the airport. Developments are spaced miles apart in some cases, and many are set back quite a distance from Airfield Drive. Most importantly, unlike the central terminal area where air travelers and employees combine to create a constant flow of shuttle passengers, potential ridership along airfield drive is limited to a handful of shift change times. DART’s policy allows the agency to provide up to 50% operating funding for services operated by employers or third-party private entities when the service reduces DART’s requirements for regular bus service or expands coverage to areas within the DART service area, but not served by existing routes.



Application to Mid-South

Aerotropolis

The area around the Memphis International Airport, known as the Aerotropolis is the largest concentration of jobs in the Mid-South Region. There is transit service to the Aerotropolis area, with service density and frequency concentrated at the two MATA service hubs (“terminals”) at Airways and American Way. The challenge for many workers, however, is the last mile connection from the MATA terminals to the employment site. In some cases, there is additional service that could bring workers closer to their worksite, but service is less frequent or not well timed to start or end times. Even where a MATA bus can get you close to employment sites, the connecting environment often lacks sidewalks, crosswalks and bike paths. Designed for moving traffic and freight, many of the Aerotropolis corridors operate at high vehicular speeds. To connect the many Aerotropolis employees to density of existing service, an employer shuttle could be operated from Airways and/or American Way to specific worksites.

As an order of magnitude estimate, operating a shuttle service for seven hours a day (say 6:00 am to 9:30 am and 2:30 pm to 6:00 pm) and 250 days per year, inclusive of marketing and administrative, would be on the order of \$120,000 annually¹. (Depending on the number of employers participating in shuttle operations, the cost per employer may range from \$12,000 to \$20,000 per year.)

There are several large employers at the Aerotropolis, thus a potential shuttle service could likely serve multiple organizations and employers. To get a program started, therefore, would require an entity to broker the deal and assume responsibility for finding partners, developing a cost sharing agreement and crafting an effective service plan. The process of developing a shuttle may also catalyze a TMA and other employer transportation programs.

¹ Assumes one vehicle and an hourly operating cost of \$60 per hour, estimate does not include capital costs.

Best Practice

Emery Go-Round - Emeryville, California is a small community located in the San Francisco Bay area, on the east bay between the Cities of Oakland and Berkeley. It is located near to the Bay Area Regional Transit (BART) service but is too far to walk for most people. A key part of Emeryville economic development strategy involved ensuring the community was accessible to as many people as possible.

A key part of this economic development strategy was the Emery Go-Round shuttle. The shuttle was established in 1995 and continues to operate today with three services all free. These private transportation services are open to all Emeryville residents, shoppers, visitors and employees of Emeryville businesses. The vast majority of funding for the Emery Go-Round shuttle is provided by commercial property owners in the citywide transportation business improvement district. Last year, the shuttle carried 1.5 million riders.



Service is operated by the Emeryville Transportation Management Association, a non-profit organization whose primary purpose is to increase access and mobility to, from and within Emeryville while alleviating congestion through operation of the shuttle program. The TMA Board of Directors, which also serves as the official representative of property owners for the business improvement district, sets the service parameters for the Emery Go-Round, provides fiscal oversight, approves the annual operating budget and sets organizational policy.