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ATN
GOES MOBILE WITH
GENFARE 

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By Richard Tackett

Sometimes the best solution is also the most obvious. When the Anaheim Transportation Network (ATN) began its search in 2013 for an electronic, mobile ticketing platform, it quickly became clear that the most fitting product on the market was developed by Genfare – an ATN solutions provider for more than a decade.

For more than three decades, Genfare has been an industry leader in providing intelligent fare solutions to transit agencies of all sizes throughout North America. Dedicated to meeting the constantly evolving needs of transit agencies everywhere, Genfare specializes in solutions that allow for manageable future updates and expansions—making transitions to new operating systems, hardware, or fare media much less complicated than it has been in the past.

“Since we began our relationship with Genfare, they’ve always provided state-of-the-art systems,” says Diana Kotler, executive director of ATN. “Still, we needed something that was custom-built for our very unique ridership demographics.”

RESORT RIDERS

The Anaheim Transportation Network (ATN) provides a menu of transportation services for the general public in the Orange County, CA, region. These programs include Anaheim Resort Transportation (ART), a network of 21 fixed routes that serve popular destinations within The Anaheim Resort® area.

“We obviously serve the employees and the commuters that come to The Anaheim Resort® area, as the resorts are the largest employer in Orange County,” Kotler says. “But the other side of the coin is that the resorts are the primary attraction for Orange County. We are very cognizant that many of our riders are travelers coming to ‘The Happiest Place on Earth.’ That’s the core.”

ATN rightly assumes that its average traveler is not as accustomed to urban transit as the average rider. For this reason, transit in Anaheim must be cutting-edge and unique in order to differentiate itself. A person in Idaho planning a trip to Disneyland® Resort must incorporate



ATN Board members and local elected officials cut a ribbon at an ATN event.



Pictured: The mobile ticketing application interfaces for (1) purchasing passes; (2) barcode passes; and (3) visual passes.

local, ATN-provided transportation into their decision-making process – in this situation, electronic ticketing can be instrumental to a seamless travel experience.

“The travel industry as a whole is moving in a certain direction – air fares and hotel reservations already arrive via email,” Kotler says. “Transit seems to be lagging behind, and the paper ticket is quickly becoming a dinosaur. We started the conversation with Genfare already knowing the solution we were looking for.”

Several wholesale partners expressed strong interest in working with the ATN staff to develop a mobile ticketing application for their markets, which include Get-Away Travel, Knott’s Berry Farm and BODIES...The Exhibition.

Fortuitously, Genfare had already been developing such a solution when ATN initially made a request for proposals.

“ATN asked us for a more dynamic way to help riders use public transportation without having to do a bunch of work at any given bus stop,” says Mark Mahon, director of sales, Western Region for Genfare, a division of SPX Corporation. “When we started a mobile ticketing platform, we contacted ATN because it was exactly the solution they’d been looking for.”

DEVELOPING THE PLATFORM

Genfare partnered with CooCoo, Inc., a mobile ticketing provider, in an exclusive contract to develop the new solution.

“We give customers the ability to purchase passes through a mobile application,” says Ryan Thompson, president of CooCoo. “This makes it easy and convenient for everyday riders as well as visiting tourists to purchase their pass and board a bus. Riders can also view schedules, system maps and alert-related information through the app.”

Thompson says today’s smartphone owners expect to be able to leverage their mobile phones to make life easier – and transit agencies need to accommodate this expectation.

“Riders want the ability to use their phone to plan a trip, purchase their passes and board the bus,” Thompson says. “The mobile app provides unlimited access for riders — and this allows them to leverage transit wherever they want to go.”

FAST FARE-e®

In addition to the Genfare mobile ticketing platform developed by CooCoo, Genfare provided ATN with its mobile ticketing hardware, the Fast Fare-e. The Fast Fare-e module provides fast, easy and secure processing of flexible fare media options including magnetics, smart cards, printed QR codes and mobile QR codes.

The system’s 4G capability allows connection to any available networks, and its compact size encompasses a large multicolor high resolution screen 7 inches by 11 inches, with a 4-inch depth.

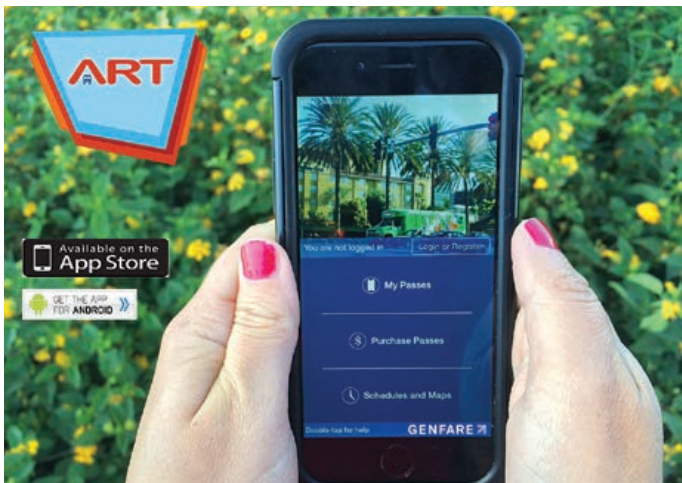
DEPLOYMENT

ATN’s initial demonstration project tests two ticket denominations (three-day adult and three-day child passes) on ATN’s core ART service involving 80 buses.

Once testing is complete, the mobile application will transition to all ATN passes and extend to all wholesale markets and local sporting venues.

“Like many first-time mobile ticketing implementations, the rollout for ATN coincided with a new website, updated routes, and a new look and feel for the public-facing side of ATN,” Thompson says. “It was important that the mobile app reflected these vital changes. After several iterations, the final solution was deployed in less than four months.”

Kotler says that setting up the back-end banking process was a very time-consuming, six month process. She attributes this more to the banking industry’s stringent security requirements than to Bank of America, ATN’s business banking partner. “Fortunately,” Kotler says, “the process works well now.” ➔



The ATN mobile ticketing app, available on the App Store and Google Play, provides unlimited access for riders, allowing them to leverage transit wherever they go.

“Getting riders accustomed to the app was another initial challenge,” Kotler says, “but it was one that was overcome with time.”

“When a person comes here for three or four days, they’re not totally thrilled about downloading yet another app,” she says. “That’s a barrier that had us starting pretty slowly – but now we are exceeding our initial expectations for the use of the app. Our in-app purchases are probably fourfold what we anticipated.”

The first phase of the rollout uses visual validation, meaning when a rider is about to board the bus they activate their pass, generating a dynamic flash pass that is presented to the driver. There are a number of security features within the flash pass such as a daily animated security token and countdown timers for the drivers to use to validate that the pass is authentic. From a fare media perspective, this phase did not require integration to the fare collection system. ATN’s schedules, maps and alerts were integrated into the application with no real challenges.

In the next phase of the rollout, electronic validators will be introduced onto the buses allowing ATN to validate mobile passes. Electronic validation allows riders to select the fare media of their choice and validate it on the same device. In this phase, ATN will be selling paper passes via their website as well as other travel agency networks. This will require integration into ATN’s distribution network as well as with the validators and existing Genfare fare collection system for complete system integration.

“CooCoo was instrumental in designing the app,” Kotler says. “They work directly with our web developer to ensure that key features are integrated into the app.”

TRAINING THE TEAM

Training is an important part of every mobile ticketing implementation. Focusing on the CooCoo and Genfare backend tool suite, ATN was quickly trained to leverage CooCoo’s customer service tools – ensuring a fast and effective response to their riders’ needs and questions. Training around CooCoo reporting tools was also provided to allow ATN access to critical sales and ridership information.

The Genfare Mobile Link by CooCoo system was designed to scale quickly and to leverage future technological innovations, as they become important to ATN’s business needs. A secure cloud-based backend system allows CooCoo to rollout features and innovations quickly to all agencies.

Kotler says that no training was required on the financial end, since the app integrates seamlessly with riders’ bank accounts. There was, however, training required for the ATN marketing team.

“In case there are technical issues, we’re training our marketing and sales team on how to respond,” she says. “On the marketing end, there’s a lot of new information that needs to go out to our customers.”

RIDER FEEDBACK

Kotler says that, as with any new technology, there are glitches. They aren’t always known until passengers point them out, but those instances are few and far between. Mostly, ATN receives requests to put more ticketing options on the app – a feature that will come with time.

“We’ve also seen positive feedback after we integrated a real-time trip planner as part of the app,” she says. “Riders appreciate that the software is not just a payment application – it provides next-bus and real-time information for their trip.”

Based on this feedback, Kotler thinks it’s only a matter of time before mobile ticketing becomes the number-one option in American transit systems.

“It may be the fact that our demographic is a little bit different than a traditional transit system,” she says. “But then I think of systems like in New York and San Francisco, where there is a more sophisticated commuter that will soon expect high-tech solutions.”

“We’re in a very early phase of this implementation,” she continues, “but in the future I think there will be a major shift. There will always be cash and paper ticketing, but I think a majority of riders will shift to mobile ticketing.”

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

The Genfare Mobile Link ticketing platform opens up a tremendous amount of opportunities for ATN, Kotler says. The platform ‘Uberizes’ ATN service, which is important not only for its unique demographic but also for transit ridership going forward.



Passengers load into an ATN bus on an Angels game-day.

“In the transit industry, we’re trying to attract a new demographic: the millennial,” she says. “They don’t ‘understand’ a paper ticket. Everything in their lives is done on the phone. To truly impress and attract that age group, transit agencies need to provide riders with tools to make transit easier. I truly think that the success of programs like Bridj, Uber and Lyft is proof of this. Riders are looking to their phone for transportation. Transit needs to catch up.” **BR**