



Case Study: The Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS) – July 2009

Summary:

In January 2007, MJM Innovations was recruited by Austin, Texas-based Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS) to provide an electronic solution for fare collection and trip management. MJM Innovations worked with the CARTS team to implement its EZTransport® system to improve its operations and customer service. MJM Innovation's system was created to assist agencies to improve fare collection and transportation programs. The installation of EZTransport at CARTS enabled the administration of a card-based system to collect fares and utilize a Web-interface to manage their ground transportation services more effectively. Simultaneously, this enhanced CARTS customer service by improving customer safety and eliminating the need for riders to carry cash, vouchers or coupons.

History:

Founded in 1998 and headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland, MJM Innovations utilizes a unique blend of management and technology expertise to advance operations for both small and large agencies providing transportation via taxis, sedans, vans and buses nationwide. Their suite of Web-based products is designed to streamline manual and paper-based systems and enhance reporting and accounting capabilities, resulting in reduced costs, increased efficiencies and greater customer satisfaction. MJM Innovations specializes in providing state-of-the-art solutions to automate and improve fare collection in the transportation industry.

CARTS provides ground transportation service to more than 120 communities in a nine-county area in Austin, Texas. CARTS commands a fleet of varied transportation options including buses, vans, sedans and taxis to meet the needs of various programs including: Paratransit, Senior, Medicaid and other transportation programs. The implementation of EZTransport provided CARTS a solution where passengers could pay for fares without using cash, coupons or vouchers. The fare and trip information is managed using the EZTransport software and is accessible via the Internet.

Objective:

CARTS had a number of reasons for implementing the EZTransport system. Their goals included automating fare collection, increasing the efficiency of their services and improving passenger safety. This was accomplished by employing an electronic payment solution and a Web-application that would streamline the branches of their business to provide safer, pleasant and more efficient travel options for their customers.

CARTS also wanted to replace paper vouchers and improve data handling with automated processes. EZTransport allowed CARTS to reduce fare collection in vehicles and added the ability to electronically track payments. Finally, CARTS wished to make their service more flexible in responding to unscheduled stops, therefore reducing call response times.

**Technical Solution:**

For CARTS, MJM Innovations provided the EZTransport system as an easy-to-use fare-payment solution to eliminate the need for riders to carry cash, vouchers or coupons. Using a swipe card technology, riders' trip information and fares are tracked through the EZTransport system. MJM Innovations functioned as the systems integrator and handled the project management and integration of technology, including in-vehicle hardware, software, cards and card readers. The EZTransport system works with Mentor Engineering hardware and the Trapeze Group software, which are currently implemented in the CARTS fleet and call center operations.

CARTS customers can manage their accounts using a secure Web site, www.RideCARTS.com, to purchase RideCARTS cards, check account balances and add value to accounts. With the EZTransport solution, customers can also add value and check account balances through the use of an automated interactive voice response (IVR) system. In addition, other approved funding sources, such as caregivers and medical service providers are capable of adding funds to user accounts. For the CARTS staff, an administrative Web portal also offers the agency the ability to manage the program through MJM Innovations' robust reporting and transaction analysis tools.

Challenge:

The greatest challenge that MJM Innovations faced while implementing the EZTransport system for CARTS was to meet their need for an affordable technology that would adapt to their existing hardware and software. To overcome these challenges, the staff at MJM Innovations worked very closely with CARTS to integrate the new system and add to the capabilities of the client's current solution. They were able to accomplish this without expensive fare collection hardware or software.

End Result:

MJM Innovations was able to meet the CARTS program's needs by implementing the EZTransport system as an affordable technology solution that enhanced their existing hardware and software without replacing it. MJM Innovations provided its EZTransport system as an easy-to-use fare-payment solution to eliminate the need for riders to carry cash, vouchers, or coupons. Using magnetic swipe-card technology and a stored value processing platform, riders' fare and trip information are tracked through the MJM Innovations EZTransport system.

"In the last year since we've implemented the EZTransport solution from MJM Innovations, we have received overwhelmingly positive feedback on the RideCARTS card program from both our customers and our employees," said Pearl Jackson, deputy general manager, CARTS. "The program is especially popular with the grown children of customers who are able to keep money loaded on the cards to ensure their parents always have a ride when they need one. Work is also simpler for our employees, who like having less fare boxes to count."