

---

# TransitCenter

## Request for Proposal for Transit Choices Study, Phase I May 2017

### **Purpose:**

TransitCenter seeks a qualified public opinion research firm to help us develop a survey of transit riders and former transit riders in multiple cities, aimed at understanding the motivations of Americans who have significantly changed how often they use public transportation.

### **Background:**

TransitCenter is an independent, civic philanthropy that works to improve urban mobility. We commission research, organize events and convenings, and fund programming in support of this mission. (For more, see [transitcenter.org](http://transitcenter.org).)

While U.S. public transit ridership remains at historically high levels, in recent years ridership has declined in many areas.<sup>1</sup> Since 2013, TransitCenter has commissioned survey research to better understand the motivations and attitudes of travelers and transit users. Our *Who's On Board* reports, released in [2014](#) and [2016](#), have been widely cited in national, local, and transportation media.

Existing research suggests that people change travel behavior for a number of reasons including life events, moving home or work, and changes in transportation cost and service

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, see "[What's Behind Declining Transit Ridership Nationwide?](#)" by CityLab's Laura Bliss, Feb. 17 2017

quality.<sup>2</sup> However, few studies have attempted to compare the influence of these factors against each other. Furthermore, relatively few studies look at *ex-transit* riders.<sup>3</sup>

We propose to survey people who have significantly *decreased* transit use (including ex-transit riders), and people who have significantly *increased* transit use (including brand new riders), to better understand the factors influencing travel behavior and use of public transportation. We hope to assess the impact of:

- Life events such as having children, co-habiting, and changes in physical ability.
- Moving home and work.
- Perceived changes in the relative cost of transit and alternatives (i.e. changes in gas prices, parking price, fare hikes).
- Perceived changes in service quality (such as the opening of a new transit line or cuts to transit service).
- Education and incentive programs designed to make people aware of transit service.

This study aims to benefit practice by:

- Giving journalists, decisionmakers, and advocates context for changes in transit ridership.
- Reinforcing good transit practice by showing the relative extents to which certain kinds of transit failure drive riders away.
- Supporting adoption of certain kinds of policy incentives (like transit information targeting new residents), and
- Informing how public agencies respond to changes in transit ridership trends and how they examine their own data to identify factors driving ridership change.

### **Phase I Scope of Work, Budget, and Timeline:**

We seek a qualified firm to work with TransitCenter staff to develop a sampling plan, questionnaire, and analysis plan for a survey that provides insights into former transit riders, new transit riders, and people who have significantly changed the frequency of their transit use; and the factors that contribute to these changes in travel behavior (outlined above). Optionally, the firm could conduct focus groups or other qualitative research to help inform the survey design. TransitCenter has a budget of \$45,000 to \$65,000 for the Phase I deliverables.

---

<sup>2</sup> Recent studies include:

- (on the role of life events) "[Travel pattern transitions: A study on the effects of life events on changes in travel patterns](#)," by TU Delft's M.C. De Haas, Sept. 22 2016;
- (on the role of work location) "[Assessing the Impacts of Office Relocation on Travel Behavior and the Organization of Activities within Households](#)," by Karlsruhe Institute of Technology's Sascha von Behren et al., 2017; and
- (on the importance of service quality) "[Understanding transit ridership demand for a multi-destination, multimodal transit network in an American metropolitan area](#)" by Mineta Transportation Institute's Gregory Thompson et al., 2012.

<sup>3</sup> One agency-commissioned analysis that included a survey of past riders is the 2015 Orange County Transportation Authority's [Bus Market Research Study](#).

We highly value intellectual partnership. The ideal project team will include people with subject-matter expertise, who bring informed opinions into the research planning process and are comfortable challenging our ideas at times.

This project demands creative thinking to inform the sampling plan, questionnaire design, and analysis plan. We want your ideas on the best ways to sample former transit riders (one possibility is partnering with transit and transportation agencies). We also want a sample that is geographically diverse and adequately represents low-income and immigrant respondents.

The questionnaire will likely require complex logic. For example, one common reason people say they stop using transit is that they purchased a car. In such a case, we need to understand the reasons respondents chose to purchase a car.

The Phase I deliverables will inform our decision on whether to proceed with a subsequent phase of the project (i.e. administering the survey and analyzing the results, with the aim of publishing a report and releasing an open-source dataset in 2018). Should TransitCenter proceed with this subsequent phase, the firm chosen for Phase I would receive preference for the work.

The Phase I timeline is as follows:

1. RFP released – May 26
2. TransitCenter available to answer questions (via email and phone) – May 30-June 9
  - a. Answers to submitted questions posted online – June 19
3. RFP submissions due – June 26 (at 11:59 pm Eastern time)
4. Finalist interviews – July 5-12
5. Selection of firm announced – July 26
6. Project kickoff meeting – Week of August 14 (at the earliest; to be discussed with selected firm)

#### **Requirements for Proposal:**

1. Approach to Scope of Work: Provide a detailed description of your approach to the Scope of Work, including your interest in and ability to perform a subsequent phase of the study (i.e. administering the survey and analyzing the results).
2. Qualifications and Experience: Provide a description of the history, experience, and qualifications of your firm/company/corporation and any proposed subcontractors to perform the Scope of Work. Please include:
  - a. Resumes and biographies of principals assigned to the project.
  - b. List of capabilities corresponding to the scope of work.
  - c. List of similar/relevant projects your firm has undertaken in the field of public transit or urban affairs including results achieved.
  - d. References from similar projects your firm has undertaken.
3. Project Timeline
4. Project Price

- a. Please include a budget in line-item format.

We will assess the proposals we receive based on the four criteria above.

**We will be available to answer questions about this RFP between May 30 and June 9. Questions should be directed to Steven Higashide at [shigashide@transitcenter.org](mailto:shigashide@transitcenter.org) or 646-435-0658.** Respondents can submit questions after June 9 with the understanding that they may go unanswered.

**Send all proposals in digital format to [shigashide@transitcenter.org](mailto:shigashide@transitcenter.org) by 11:59 pm Eastern time on June 26, 2017.**