



High Tech Holographic Tickets help Suburban Transit to Increase Security and Revenue

Suburban Transit
Location: New Jersey

Key Challenges

- Wanted a ticketing solution that reduced fraud
- Needed a solution that did not require costly access control updates
- Required services to procure stock and design holographic image

Solution

- GTS supplied ticket stock and worked with Boca to meet customer needs
- ST and GTS joined to design and create ticket images

Business Results

- Significant savings with valid pass usage
- Easily recognizable, branded ticket media

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Assistant Controller, Suburban Transit

Suburban Transit has provided motorcoach commuter, casino and charter services in Mercer, Middlesex and Somerset counties in New Jersey since 1941. From humble beginnings as a four-bus operation in central New Jersey to a fleet of 300, Suburban Transit has become one of the largest bus companies in the United States.



Counterfeit Tickets Cutting into Revenue

With busses at 90% capacity leaving every 10-15 minutes during the peak morning and evening rush hour, and every half hour during off-peak hours, Suburban Transit should have expected revenues much higher than they were experiencing. Sanjay Arora, the Assistant Controller for Suburban Transit, noticed the gap. "In our system, customers needed to enroll in the monthly pass club program, and a photo ID was required to purchase the pass. Passes were valid for a rolling month. Enrollment in the monthly pass club was increasing but the pass sales were decreasing; this anomaly did not add up." Because the tickets were fairly non-descript and the only access control was the rider showing the ticket to the bus driver, some commuters learned they could copy their tickets and enjoy a free ride.

Transit management looked to Gateway Ticketing Systems for help. Cheryl Hillen, the Customer Service Manager at Gateway, noted, "We needed to come up with an easy, elegant answer that wouldn't involve a different access control method and wasn't cost prohibitive."

Concentrating their efforts on the tickets themselves, the team discussed safety center tickets, but discarded the idea because it required the bus drivers to tear the tickets to validate them. Because of the sheer volume of passengers and time allotted for boarding busses, this idea was quickly deemed unrealistic.

Going High Tech

Gateway's ticket supplier, Boca Systems, offers many ticket types and Hillen suspected that a hologram combined with varied ticket background color might hold the answer to Suburban Transit's fraud dilemma. A hologram would make the ticket impossible to copy, and color-coding would help drivers identify valid tickets more easily. Hillen worked with Boca and with Suburban Transit to come up with the perfect design and placement for the hologram on the ticket.

When the holographic ticket was finally designed and constructed, Suburban Transit was pleasantly surprised to learn that Gateway's competitive stock pricing made it even more enticing to continue purchasing ticket stock through Gateway. "Gateway's Customer Service team is very good, always responsive and helpful," Arora said.

Suburban Transit rolled out the new pass club program in May, 2010. Arora explained, "Now, a pass is valid for a calendar month and the photo ID requirement has been discontinued. This change enabled us to select a different pass color each month." The combination of the hologram and easily recognizable pass stock color virtually eliminates forgery.

Results: Gateway Enhances Revenue with No Additional Overhead

The investment in holographic, color-coded tickets proved to be profitable. "We have noticed a slight but consistent increase in the monthly passes sales – 3% increase year-to-year for a 6-month period," Arora explained.

Low cost and a great ROI translates into revenue for Suburban Transit. As Arora stated, "A 3% increase year-to-year for a 6-month period translates to 10-12 passes per month, at an average price of \$290. In the months with more holidays (Nov, Dec), even though pass sales dip as the pass is valid for a calendar month, sales of commuter tickets goes up, balancing the revenue. This never happened before due to lack of any kind of security feature on the passes, and customers being able to beat the system."

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