

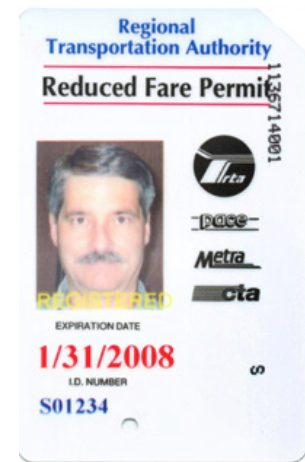
ID Card Service Bureau : Case Study

Chicago's RTA Saves Money, Boosts Efficiencies by Outsourcing ID Card Program to Polaroid Commercial ID's Service Bureau

Overview

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) in Chicago is responsible for funding, regional planning, and fiscal oversight of all public transportation in six Northeastern Illinois counties. Since 1975, the Authority has issued reduced fare permit ID cards to senior citizens and disabled passengers, entitling them to 50% off regular fares for bus, rapid transit service, and commuter rail.

From the outset, the RTA outsourced the management of its reduced fare ID card program, conducting an open bid process for providers every four or five years. By outsourcing the entire program—from database management to card production and distribution—the RTA avoids significant capital investment and personnel costs. The Authority also ensures that the process is managed efficiently by a vendor whose core expertise is ID card systems and solutions.



In 1998, the RTA awarded the reduced fare program contract to Polaroid Commercial ID Systems for the period of 1999-2003. In 2003, Polaroid successfully renewed the contract following a competitive bid process, and will continue managing the RTA's reduced fare ID card program through 2008.

Execution

Current Process

The RTA Customer Service Department and a network of 200 volunteer registration centers help senior citizens and people with disabilities apply for a reduced fare permit. To be issued a card, seniors must visit one of the centers, bringing with them a government-issued picture ID or passport along with a photograph to be used for the RTA card. Persons with disabilities may visit a Key Center, where staff has special training to register disabled individuals, or mail their applications, photo, ID, and proof of disability directly to the Polaroid Commercial ID processing center. Those customers without a usable photograph may have their photo taken (with a Polaroid camera) at most centers.

All new applications and photos are mailed to Polaroid Commercial ID's headquarters in Ft. Wayne, Indiana on a daily or weekly schedule. Polaroid reviews the applications for accuracy, enters the information into a database, and produces the ID cards. Polaroid then mails the ID card directly to the customer. Polaroid assumes complete responsibility for the ID card process, freeing the RTA staff to focus on other management concerns.

Future Process

In 2004, the RTA will migrate to an automated process using a Web-enabled system. Polaroid is collaborating with RTA to develop a fully customized solution, offering its database management expertise in the new system's design. RTA expects the automated system to further streamline the application, production, and card distribution process.

Results

Each month, Polaroid processes an average of 8,300 RTA ID cards, for an annual total of 91,900 cards. According to Vickie Bradley, RTA's customer service supervisor, Polaroid's process is "very fast and efficient," resulting in favorable customer response.

According to Bradley, "Polaroid's ability to provide a low-cost solution with rapid distribution response has allowed the RTA to manage its program without capital equipment cost or additional personnel."