



## The Software Solution that Increased Trips per Hour



**GOBUS:**  
Urban paratransit agency



**CHALLENGE:**  
Limited notifications features, and passengers wanted self-service option.



**SOLUTION:**  
Passenger Portal and Notifications










**RESULT:**  
Increased passengers per vehicle hour and reduced no-shows.

### About St. John's GoBus

GoBus Accessible Transit is the paratransit provider for the City of St. John's and the City of Mount Pearl in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. GoBus' day-to-day service is contracted to MVT Canadian Bus Lines, while contract administration, policy development, and eligibility applications are handled by the regional transit agency, Metrobus.



Agency Stats	
 Service area: <b>St. John's and Mount Pearl, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada</b>	 Trips/month booked on Passenger Portal (2018): <b>1,400</b>
 Products: <b>NovusDR, Rangers, Passenger Portal, Notifications and TripBroker</b>	Trips/month booked on Passenger Portal (2019): <b>2,000</b>
 Using TripSpark since: <b>Since September 2017</b>	 Trips/day: <b>700</b>
 # of Vehicles: <b>18</b>	 # of Drivers: <b>35</b>

## The Problem

The initial issue that spurred GoBus to look for a new technology partner was that their previous vendor's scheduling and routing software was not reliably updating their in-vehicle mobile data terminals, TripSpark's Rangers. A customer would call in using IVR to book or cancel their trip, but scheduling changes would not be reflected in the driver's manifest, resulting in missed or unnecessary trips.

"This created quite a bit of inefficiency and wasted resources," said Donna Power, Manager of Accessible Transit Services at Metrobus. "Once we upgraded to having the same company provide both hardware and software, we were able to eliminate those errors."

The second motivating factor was the limited range of available functionality. Some riders were requesting an online option because they had experienced booking errors due to miscommunications or disability-related communication challenges when speaking with call-takers. "Customers felt that being able to control [their

trip booking] themselves through an online option would correct some of those errors and give them more independence and control over their GoBus service," said Power. Together, Notifications and Passenger Portal have led to reduced booking and 'where's the bus' calls to dispatch, while portal-users are reporting that they are able to avoid booking errors by managing their own trips.

In the end, TripSpark's **paratransit software** suite, NovusDR, gave GoBus more options and the features they needed to meet their customers' needs. GoBus purchased NovusDR scheduling and routing software, TripBroker, Notifications, and Passenger Portal; in addition to their pre-installed Rangers.

## Improved Service Metrics

GoBus began using TripSpark's software in September 2017, and by the end of 2018 were seeing improvements in key service metrics.

Passengers per vehicle hour: **2.13** in 2016 ➔ **2.26** in 2018 = **6%** increase

Trips year-over-year **↑ 17%**  
increase without impacting their consistently high level of on-time performance

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**Over the last year, we've seen a significant increase in our passengers per vehicle hour mostly related to proper scheduling, with TripSpark being able to group customers and trips together more efficiently.**

—Brenda Follett, General Manager of MVT Canada





## Passenger Portal

**Passenger Portal** is an online tool that allows customers to log in to book or cancel rides, view upcoming trips and manage their profile for notification preferences, mobility aids, required assistance and travel companion.

While Power and Follett expect the adoption rate for Passenger Portal to continue to climb, there has already been a significant jump in usage with 2,000 trips per month booked online in 2019, up from 1,400 trips per month in 2018.

For paratransit customers, the Passenger Portal leads to increased independence, more convenient trip bookings, less time spent calling dispatch to book or check trips, and fewer errors. Together, this helps give them peace of mind about upcoming trips and can help reduce anxiety about missing a pick up window, incorrect pick up or drop off locations, or unconfirmed cancellations.

Power recalls one older customer who expressed challenges with communicating clearly with their call takers, which often resulted in mixed-up bookings and no-shows. The customer said she felt a lot of frustration and anxiety having to call in her bookings, so much so that sometimes she would just opt to stay home. "When she was introduced to Passenger Portal, she was able to take full control of her bookings without going through our call center and this has made her GoBus experience much more pleasant and reliable," Power said.

## Notifications

GoBus riders can opt-in to receive a variety of convenient **notifications**, including: booking and cancellation confirmations, imminent arrival notifications, no-show notifications and night before trip reminders. Notifications can be sent via text, email or automated phone call.

Both Follett and Power have noticed an improvement in on-time pick ups thanks to the imminent arrival notification, which alerts riders that the bus is approaching for their 15 minute pick up window. "When customers get the real-time notification, they are ready and prepared for the bus to arrive," said Follett.

Another benefit of the imminent arrival notifications is the "dramatic" decrease in 'where's the bus?' calls to dispatch by riders requesting an approximate time of arrival for their pick up.

Follett said she has seen a reduction in the number of no-shows thanks to notifications.

If a customer is not ready at the door, a notification is sent confirming a no-show. With customers "aware of the amount of no-shows they're having per month, it helps to reduce the risk of them being suspended from the service," she said.

## Conclusion

Passenger Portal and Notifications have helped GoBus provide better customer service and improve their operations. **To learn more about TripSpark's paratransit solution and how it could benefit your organization, click here.**



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TripSpark Technologies is a community transportation technology company focused on helping mid-sized transit agencies and private operators increase rider satisfaction, drive revenue, and address specific operational needs. TripSpark makes this possible by nurturing strong partnerships with our customers, offering the latest technologies and providing exceptional support.

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