Categories 5 - Best Campaign
RailFuture - Rail User Group Awards 2015 nomination

TransWilts line – to gain and retain an appropriate service

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Summary

The line from Chippenham to Trowbridge via Melksham (the 2nd, 3rd and 4th largest urban areas in Wiltshire) carried just 2 passenger trains a day each way for many years – at highly inconvenient times, unmarketed and underutilised.

Campaign steps:

1. To make people aware the service wasn't appropriate
2. To work out what would be appropriate
3. To implement that appropriate service
4. To market and cherish the service so that an appropriate service is retained

After much background work, a (minimally) appropriate service was worked out as 8 round trips a day, and in December 2013 they were introduced as a three year trial. Target was to increase passenger journeys from 18,000 per annum by 45,000 in the first year, and to 120,000 by the third year (2016).

With Council, Train Operator and community all working well together (around 70 volunteers involved in 2014), passenger numbers rose to 183,400 in the first year, and (May 2015) are currently at a run rate of around 230,000 journeys per year. Longer trains are now planned for May 2017, and more from December 2018.

Melksham Station
1994

Peak Train

Melksham Station
2014

Middle of day train

Activities last year

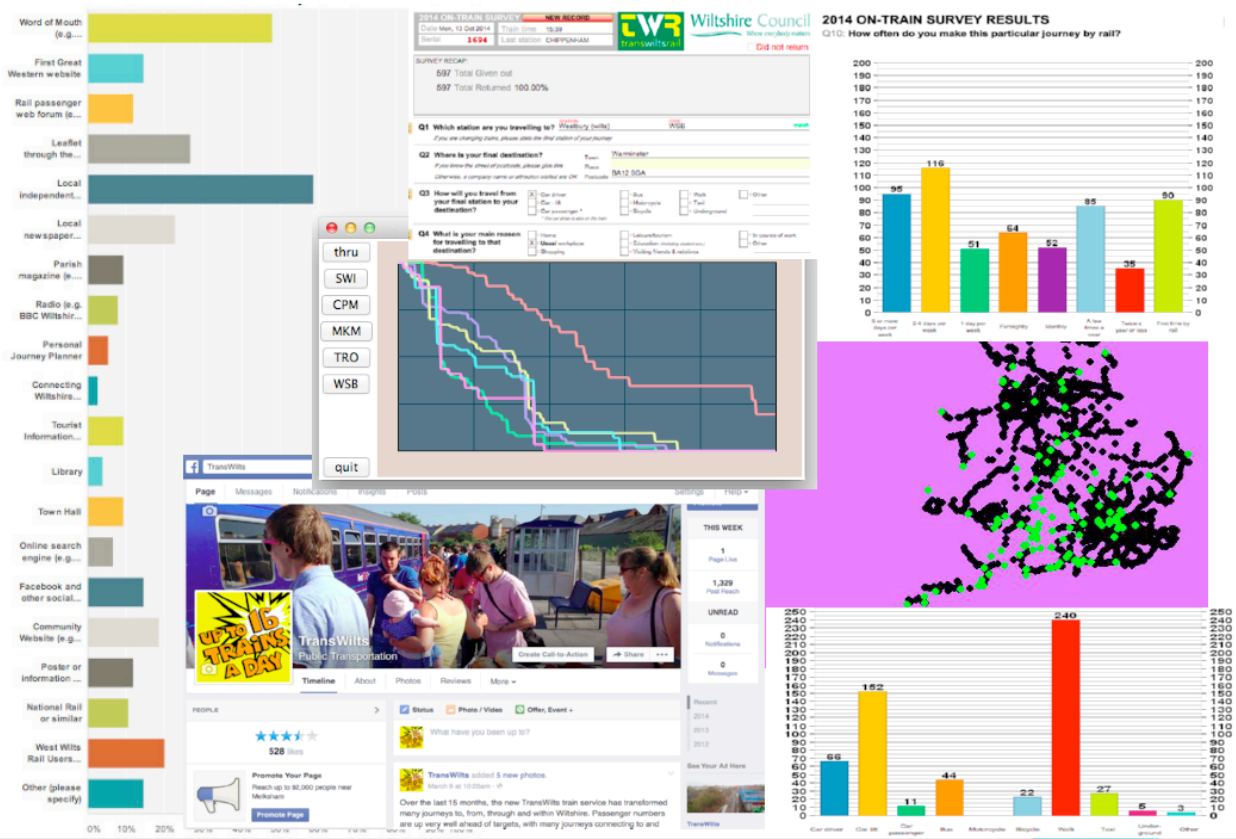
* Spring line guide production * Summer line guide production * Winter line guide production * Poster production * Updating of station notice boards * Door to door distribution (last winter) - timetables and cover letter (12.2013 / 10000) * Door to door distribution (spring) - timetables (5.2014 / 10000) * Door to door distribution (Summer) - bus maps, line guides, etc (7.2014 / 8000) * Distribution as inserts in local newspapers - spring guide (4.2014 / 20000) * Distribution as inserts in local newspapers - winter line guide (1.2015 / 23000) * Market place bus stop - clean and reposter with rail information * Press adverts in 3 local newspaper * Editorial in local newspapers and county newspapers (all stations covered) / around 50 different items * Facebook page creation / Around 100 posts / 515 likes / strong engagement / up to 3000 views on some posts * Visit by Baroness Kramer / resulting publicity * Visit by Steven Hammond / resulting publicity * Visit by Claire Perry / resulting publicity * First Great Western Coffee Shop Forum * Posts to forums such as Swindon Town, Westbury * On trains surveys 11th to 13th October 2014 - 600 responses * Survey of our marketing, May / June - 299 responses. * Radio Interviews (approx 12) * TransWilts Link (2 meetings) * TravelWatch SouthWest (2 meetings) * Santa Trains (200 people to Swindon) with MRDG * Folk Music Train * Past and Future booklet * WWRUG user group meetings * A "float" or rather walking group in the Melksham Carnival with help from FOSBR * ACoRP annual awards Networking * FGW Stakeholder Conference Networking * FGW Community Rail Conference presentation and networking * Santa's TransWilts Colouring Book * History of Wilts, Somerset and Weymouth at Melksham History Day * Informing / Feeding TICs in Chippenham, Melksham, Trowbridge and Westbury * Speaker at WI, 21st Jan * Speaker at FOSBR AGM, 23rd January * Interaction with passengers.

Making use of up to 70 volunteers, each with their own strength

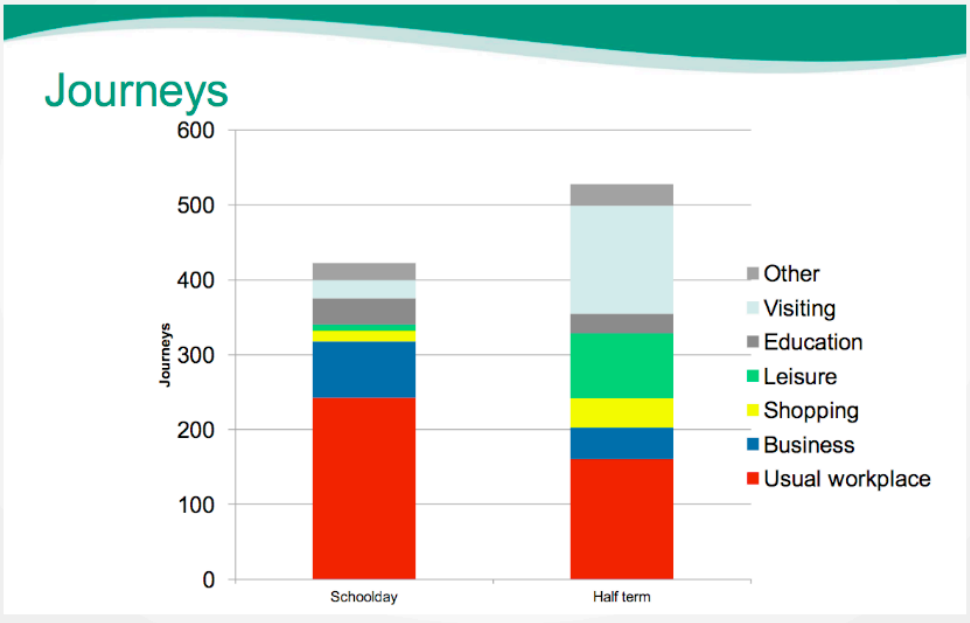
Understanding our line and feedback

Some 2014 pictures

Learning about customers



Numbers of journeys and types



2013, 2014, 2015

Conclusion

- The line has done well
- Each train on an hourly service would be busier than each current train is on two-hourly
- There is a significant long distance flows and local
- Our customers are making total journeys not just a ride on the TransWilts
- Growth can continue for many years to come just to equal other services, but ducks need to remain in a row