


# Case Study

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## The Wave Transit in Mobile, Alabama

*The City of Mobile is a mid-sized metropolitan area with a population of 187,000 that features a diverse mix of communities, a bustling port and shipyards, a sizable population of short-term residents, colleges and universities, and hospitals. The Wave Transit (The Wave) in Mobile, AL is an average size agency with thirty buses, looking to upgrade their fare collection system to make their city a better place to live, work, and ride. Much like agencies serving dozens of other mid-sized cities, The Wave wants to increase ridership, deliver better, more rider-oriented services, and not only bring their tech to current standards, but also to anticipate future needs. In addition, The Wave wanted riders to be able to pay with whatever was in their wallets – cash, coin, smart card, or via a mobile app – an integral component of equitable mobility.*





## Genfare's Solution for The Wave Transit

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Equitable mobility gets right to the heart of both Genfare and our agency partners. Building and supporting solutions that are fundamentally fair and equally beneficial to as many riders and agencies as possible represents our collective work in equitable mobility. Achieving equitable mobility requires fare collection solutions to accept all payment methods and provide for measures like fare capping and account management for the unbanked. Delivering solutions that reduce barriers to improve ridership is challenging, but it's what we're focused on, and we believe it is work worth doing.

One of the strengths of any Genfare solution is the degree to which it's customizable, scalable, and vertically integrated, meaning that even the most complex configurations work together seamlessly. For the City of Mobile, the Genfare solution includes Fast Fare<sup>®</sup> fareboxes, along with software and services that give The Wave a complete fare collection system upgrade. Genfare Link<sup>®</sup>, a cloud-hosted fare collection-as-a-service platform, is the backbone of the solution supporting all the other elements. Mobile Link<sup>®</sup>, the mobile ticketing application, allows riders to plan trips, purchase fare products and present mobile tickets for validation. The Organizations component of Genfare Link allows agency partners to manage transit benefits for their constituents. An Administrative Point of Sale (APOS) terminal, installed at The Wave transit center, gives riders another way to manage their account and purchase fare products. The services Genfare provides include a User Acceptance Testing environment (UAT) for testing and training agency personnel on the new solution, a service level agreement for dedicated software support, and warranty and maintenance support for hardware.

The Genfare solution, implemented over the course of a three-year contract, brings The Wave Transit to 2021 technology and well beyond. The Wave now has the ability to accept any kind of payment riders have in their pocket, along with effortless payment processing. What does any kind of payment mean? It means cash, coin, smartcard, and a mobile app with open payments coming soon. Most of the time, fare collection technology means electronic currency, but The Wave didn't want a separate system for cash and coin. Consequently, Genfare devised an all-in-one solution. The Wave can also make data-driven decisions guided by powerful analytics, all while implementing measures like fare capping that help make transit affordable and equitable.

Genfare's solutions have been designed from the ground up to be modular; each agency can choose which components and features to implement. The solutions are also configurable, so the implementation process tailors each feature and product to suit an individual agency's needs. The flexibility inherent in Genfare's fare collection solutions means that solutions can be successfully implemented, even given challenging timelines.

# The Implementation Timeline and Process

The Wave awarded Genfare the contract for their upgrade in October 2020. The kickoff meeting was held in mid-November, and the design configuration was completed in early February 2021. Training was completed by mid-March, and UAT approvals issued the following month. Hardware was installed in late April, and the system went live before the end of April. Project management handed the implementation off to Customer Care in September 2021. Given the complexity and scope of the City of Mobile's needs, delivering a successful solution within this timeline was a major accomplishment for both the teams at Genfare and The Wave.

Once the sales team helped The Wave Transit determine which modular options fit the city's needs and the contract was awarded, the responsibility shifted to the project management team. Like every city, every Genfare implementation is unique, with its own intricacies and demands. That said, one of the reasons it's possible to configure and implement such complex solutions in such a short period of time is the way Genfare has conceived and designed the implementation process.

For every product, the Genfare Program Manager (PM) has created a map, a workflow that delineates each piece of information that must be collected and each component that must be configured. An array of product maps govern the multitude of activities that an implementation entails, which means that Genfare doesn't have to rely on tribal or institutional knowledge that is lost when an employee retires or moves on. Genfare's high level process flow and methodology means all the edges of a given project are covered and all the steps and requirements clearly documented. In addition, Genfare has a dedicated Genfare Link implementation team that partnered with the PM and Mobile team from the initial demo/discovery through launch of the Genfare platform.

***It is Genfare's sound project management that helps prepare Genfare -- and by extension, cities like Mobile -- to navigate the inevitable challenges that arise in any implementation.***



# Challenges and Resolutions

When this upgrade began, The Wave had in place legacy Genfare Odyssey® fareboxes, which accepted and distributed magnetic fare cards. The Wave's vision was to go live with their new Genfare solution using entirely new media. One challenge was letting riders know about upcoming changes, especially since magnetic cards would no longer be accepted. The Wave deployed several marketing strategies so riders were prepared for the upcoming change in accepted media. The marketing efforts highlighted the benefits of smart cards, easing the transition away from magnetics and positioning the upgrade as a positive change enhancing the riders' transit experience.

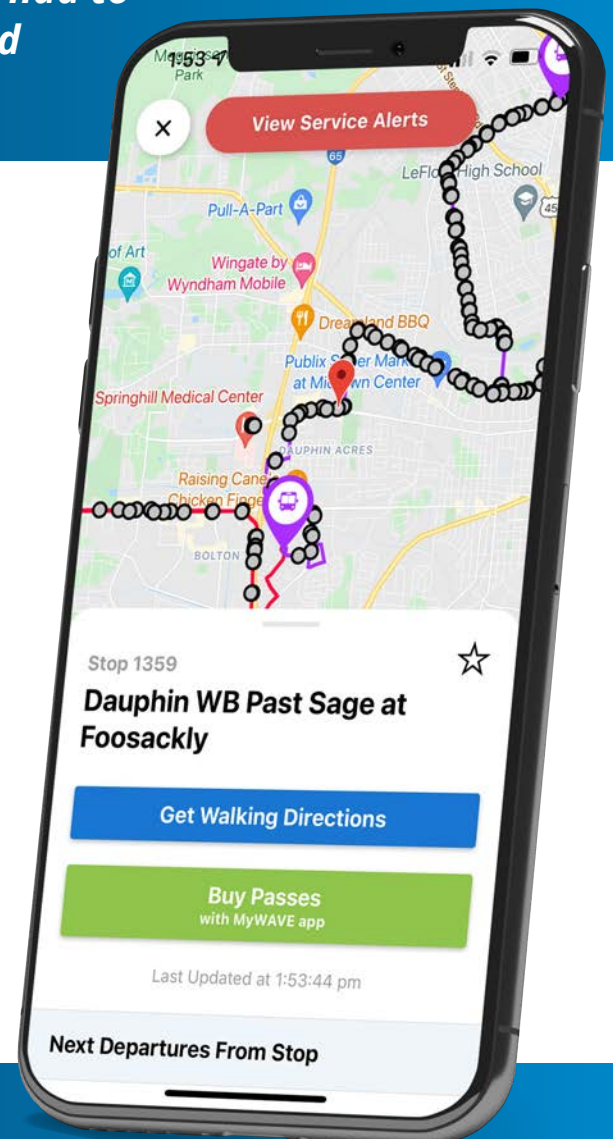
A typical implementation begins with hardware and, once hardware is in place and tested, the software installation begins. Because Mobile's implementation required new media, the only solution was to go live with a "Big Bang" approach, meaning the debut of all hardware and software at the same time. It took dedication and creativity from both The Wave and Genfare teams, but the Big Bang approach was a success.

***In addition to implementing all of the complex elements at the same time, The Wave also gave Genfare a very challenging timeline. Because the timeline was so short, Genfare's PM team had to be creative, adapting quickly to customize and deliver a complex solution in six months.***

Another challenge in The Wave upgrade was the level of support the IT providers in Mobile required. Because The Wave, like a number of other agencies, outsources its IT, continuity and abilities can and do vary. During the implementation, for example, the IT department at The Wave transitioned from one set of providers to an entirely new set. Genfare's PM team, committed to meeting a challenging deadline, provided support beyond what is typically required by going to Mobile to manage setup and configuration, tasks usually handled remotely.

On the software side, another challenge was that The Wave wanted their Genfare platform to integrate with a white label mobile trip-planning app, one the software team had not worked with before. It is not uncommon for agencies to bring along their preferred apps, but each new application is its own little challenge. Genfare's software team implemented a link from the Mobile Link ticketing app to the white label app to ensure riders a seamless experience between trip planning and ticketing. Riders can tap "Plan Trip" in Mobile Link or "Buy Passes" in the trip-planning app to switch between mobile applications.

Challenges encountered and overcome...but what do people in Mobile think of the Genfare upgrade?



# The Wave and Riders' Feedback

Successful equipment and software upgrades require effort on the part of the agency and of Genfare, along with significant financial investment and the all-important buy-in from riders. The Wave's team is enthusiastic about the changes they are seeing. We recently followed up with Jamon Mosley, Senior Planner, and Shandrea Spencer, Onboarding Specialist with The Wave Transit.

Shandrea reflects on the big transition her agency has made with Genfare: "It was a lot of change in a short period of time, but any questions I had and anything I needed, my Genfare PM handled it on the fly. Everything was resolved with a very fast turnaround. Some riders don't like change, but most enjoy and appreciate the upgrade. They like being able to tap their smartcards, rather than swiping magnetics. And the employers, schools, and social service agencies are ecstatic. The account-based functions make it so much easier to deploy more cards and manage balances. Even the riders love being able to replace a lost card for just four dollars, rather than losing the rest of their balance for the month."

A key element in Mobile's success was informing riders about upcoming changes. Not only were riders prepared for the upgrade; they were looking forward to useful new features and capabilities. Effective communication creates a climate in which change is welcomed, rather than met with apprehension.

Jamon and Shandrea are both excited about their next phase, which is installing validators to provide a new means of payment for riders in their paratransit vehicles. Jamon explains: "Our paratransit initiative extends mobility for riders who need additional assistance, while giving us a single solution to manage revenue collection." Shandrea also shared a new feature she's hearing riders request: "Riders would like to be able to use credit and debit cards to tap and go on buses." Genfare's Chief Revenue Officer, Daria van Engelen was delighted to let Shandrea know that contactless EMV kits will be rolled out in early 2022. Shandrea's response? "I'm on board!"



## Takeaways

Fareboxes used to be simple. Genfare produced reliable, durable hardware because that is what the transit industry required. In 2022 and beyond, it is a different story. Agencies and the devices they install require extensive connectivity and more sophisticated, integrated solutions. Implementations like the one for The Wave Transit in Mobile give us the opportunity to reflect on and refine our products and processes and to ask if we are doing everything we can to fulfill our role in promoting equitable mobility for our customers.

Working with an organization as motivated and dedicated as the team in Mobile shows the degree to which having the right partners with clear goals and the willingness to work hard at accomplishing those goals is crucial to success.

The very nature of Genfare's modular and configurable solutions allows agencies to grow, plan for, and adapt to constantly evolving needs and transit industry technology trends. People like Shandrea listen to riders about their needs, and Genfare builds the solutions that meet those needs. Our modular solutions can be implemented quickly and customized to suit every agency's particular requirements. Product and service upgrades with Genfare Link are designed so agencies can choose to enable new features as they become available. Genfare Link connects this new model of software development and program implementation with the agencies and riders who rely on public transit as a vital component of their mobility.

The future of transit lies in continuing to reduce barriers and extend equitable mobility to as many people as possible. It is through dynamic partnerships with The Wave Transit in Mobile and cities just like it that Genfare hones its role in developing mobility solutions that work for real people every day.