

FILNET CASE STUDY

Metro Website Modernization & Redesign

Modernized Transit Site Includes Redesigned Trip Planner, Interactive Maps, Consolidated Status Alerts

CLIENT	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) • Metrobus & Metrorail
PROJECT	Metro Website Modernization & Redesign
WEBSITE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://www.wmata.com/ • http://www.metroopensdoors.com/
TECHNOLOGY	ColdFusion 8, AJAX, Rich Internet Applications (RIA), Accessibility Applications (508 Compliance Tools), JavaScript, JQuery, Flash, Google Maps API and other Web Technologies
DURATION	12.2007 – 12.2008

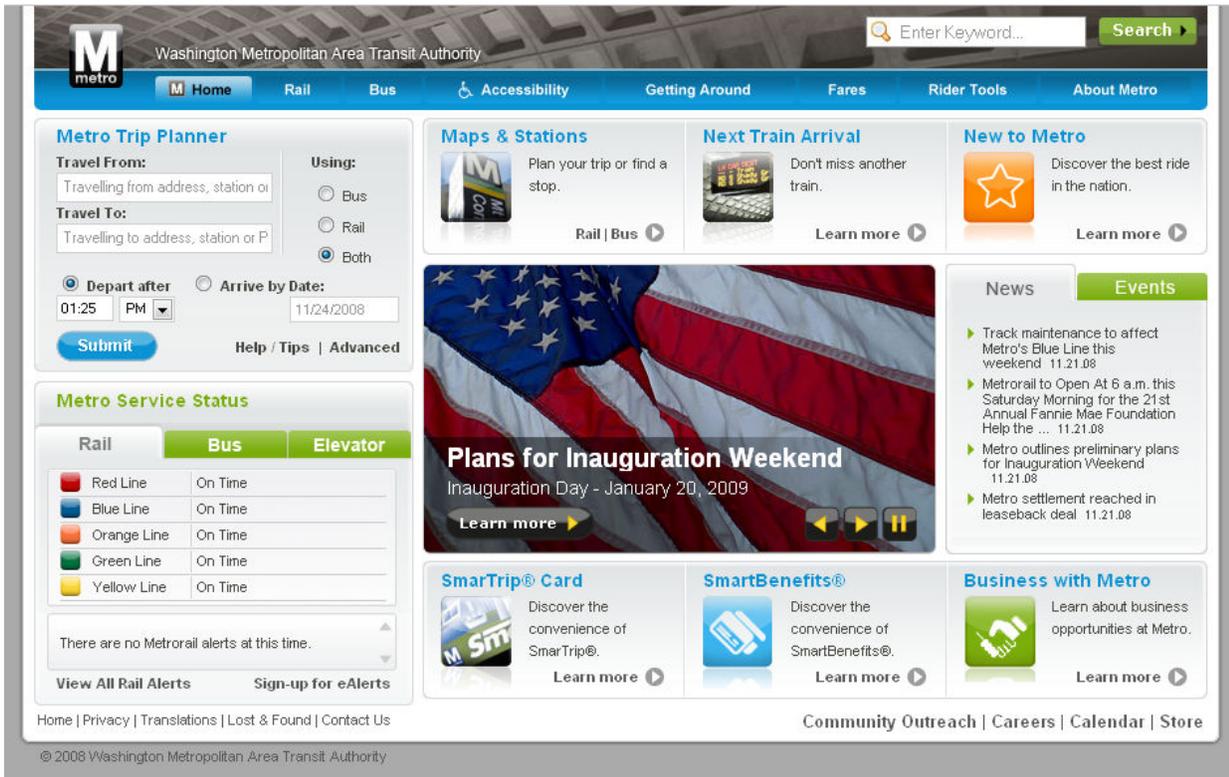
Overview

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) operates transit services of Metrorail and Metrobus throughout the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area including Northern Virginia and Suburban Maryland. Commonly referred to as Metro, the transit system is second only to the New York City Subway (MTA) in terms of ridership. Metro turned to Filnet, an award-winning interactive Web development and complete information technology (IT) firm, to develop a brand new website that is more attractive, easier to navigate and more interactive than its previous incarnation.

Challenge

The previous Metro website site had a few challenges and areas for improvement. For instance, the text on the site was small and hard to read especially for seniors and persons with impaired vision. Graphically the site was somewhat dreary because of its monotone color scheme. Additionally, the site lacked balance of space, content and graphics. Since the site navigation was unpredictable, readers found the transit site difficult to find information relevant to their needs. With consideration of these concerns and others, Metro

decided it was time for a change. Still, Metro wanted to make sure its brand would remain intact even after the completion of the site redesign and modernization project.



Solution

Drawing on next generation Web 2.0 design theories and tools such as AJAX and Rich Internet Applications (RIA), Filnet gave Metro's website a much needed overhaul. Filnet focused on making the site more "attractive", more interactive, easier to read and simpler to navigate.

Filnet added elements to make the site more user-focused. Every step was made to improve the way in which information is displayed on the site. For example, Filnet added a Homepage Rotator, an automated publishing tool that highlights information and special site elements. As a result, users can go forward, go backward or pause the banner rotation to access information that is most relevant to their needs. Additionally, an integrated and easy access banner located across the top of site includes a search engine, user-centric cascading navigation system and quick snapshots of each major section of the website.

For convenience of riders, Filnet added a new interactive mapping feature that allows panning and zooming area maps to help users to become more familiar with their destination locale. With this new function, riders can click on any transit location and view station information, alerts and real-time Next Train Arrivals (NTA). Filnet even added a feature where users can search nearby for shops, restaurants and businesses, and download that information to iPods or other personal digital devices. The new site also allows users to send Metro information to their mobile phones.

Yet another perk of the new website, Metrorail and Metrobus riders can now use the Proximity Address search feature to find the three closest rail stations sorted by distance. Users can even get driving directions to the stations as well as access to detailed station pages. What's more, all of the station pages have been redesigned and optimized for enhanced usability.

Since Metro is committed to providing full access to all riders including persons with disabilities and seniors, Filnet made sure that accessibility was realized by using code that adhere to all standards in Section 508 (29 U.S.C. ' 794d) of the *Rehabilitation Act*. Accessibility components used throughout the site include Skip Navigation Links, Alternative text (Alt tags), Form Labels, Title tags and Tab Order. To improve readability, the text and background were run against a color contrast analyzer. Third party accessibility software such as Deque Ramp PE 6.0 and WAVE Version 4.0 was used to analyze the code. Filnet reviewed and tested the site with JAWS for Windows Version 9.0.

The new website is compatible with various browsers including Internet Explorer (IE 6+), Mozilla Firefox 2+ and Safari 3+.

Results

Filnet met and exceeded the expectations of Metro executives and riders. Filnet gave the WMATA website a 21st century makeover that was attractive, logical and easy-to-use. With new features and streamlined legacy tools, the enhanced site allows for easier scanning of content and quick access to the most popular Metro services such as the redesigned Trip Planner, find a station function and real-time next train arrival notices.

The new site is helping Metro to reduce cost for serving Metro customers and continue their commitment to going green by decreasing the use of paper and other materials. The new site also allows for updating information quicker than ever.

Reviews of the new website are overwhelmingly positive at various online information sites. Comparing Metro's new website to New York City's MTA site, transit blogger Benjamin Kabak called the new Metro website a "clear, clean and informative home." Likewise, DC transit blogger Michael Perkins also gives the new WMATA website high marks asserting the new site "definitely fixed the biggest problem with the old site: organization."

Perhaps most important, riders are very pleased with Metro's online relaunch and are saying the site is more useful in helping them make it to their destinations easily, timely and safely as well as avoiding the dreaded Washington DC traffic gridlock.