

To: Marketing, Planning & Legislative Committee

Date: 02/24/2022

From: Melody Reeb, Director of Planning, Marketing, & Innovation

Reviewed by: *Ref*

SUBJECT: FY 2023 Marketing Plan

Background:

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has continued to impact public transit usage, as many people are still working from home. County Connection's upcoming Marketing Plan will focus on encouraging riders to return to public transit and will involve collaborating on campaigns with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and other Bay Area transit operators. In addition, staff plans to conduct extensive outreach to better understand the community's needs, which may have changed as a result of the pandemic. The plan also includes ongoing efforts to increase engagement through social media and other digital channels. Other tasks that have become routine include the Class Pass Program, Summer Youth Program, partnering with 511 Contra Costa on promotions, and participating in outreach opportunities at schools, colleges/universities, senior centers, employment sites, and community events.

Special Promotions:

The following special promotional campaigns are currently planned for FY 2023:

- Post-COVID Recovery: As COVID cases decline, staff anticipates that more businesses will begin to reopen, and workers will return to offices. Many riders who have not been taking transit over the past two years will need to be informed of service levels and schedules, which have changed significantly since before the pandemic. Also, based on the success of the September Free Rides promotion last fall, staff plans to offer a similar promotion this year (period to be determined) to encourage transit use. In addition, staff will be seeking opportunities to again partner with other Bay Area transit agencies on these return to transit efforts.
- Clipper Discount Programs: The Clipper START and youth fare discounts were implemented in January 2021. However, minimal promotion took place until last fall when schools returned to in-person instruction and staff launched the "mobile lobby". As ridership demand returns, staff plans to conduct a more robust marketing and outreach campaign to promote the discounts, which will include collaborating with local cities, schools, and community-based organizations.
- Rider Outreach/Surveys: The pandemic has caused significant shifts in transportation needs and travel patterns, and some of these changes are likely to continue post-pandemic. Staff intends to

conduct various surveys in the coming year to gauge the local community's needs and expectations for transit as we plan for future service changes. In addition to gathering input from current riders, this will also include outreach to those who do not typically use transit or former riders who are hesitant to return to using transit.

Total expense: \$100,000

Website and Social Media:

Riders are increasingly using the internet and social media to access transit information, stay informed, and interact with County Connection. A portion of the promotions budget will go towards general website maintenance and enhancements, as well as increasing the agency's involvement with social media. The pandemic has made online interactions even more critical as many people have been working from home and have been harder to reach through more traditional communication channels. Last fall, staff worked with a marketing contractor to run a digital ad campaign, which proved to be an effective method of reaching potential riders.

Total expense: \$35,000

Routine Promotion:

Ongoing promotion expenses include the cost for chamber dues and event fees, materials for outreach events, printing brochures for accessible services and bikes on buses, and promoting the summer youth pass. Due to the pandemic, the front lobby has been closed to the public, so staff has been conducting outreach through the "mobile lobby" and by attending various community events.

Total expense: \$20,000

Miscellaneous Promotion:

The miscellaneous promotions budget is intended to cover campaigns or new services that have not yet been identified. Particularly as we recover from COVID-19, there will likely be other promotional opportunities and/or outreach needs.

Total expense: \$15,000

Promotions Budget Summary:

Special Promotions	\$100,000
Website and Social Media	\$35,000
Routine Promotion	\$20,000
Miscellaneous Promotion	\$15,000
TOTAL	\$170,000

Financial Implications:

Staff has budgeted \$170,000 to cover the expenses associated with the Marketing Plan.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the MP&L Committee approve the proposed Marketing Plan for FY 2023.

Action Requested:

Staff requests that the MP&L Committee forward the proposed Marketing Plan to the Board for approval.

Attachments:

None