

To: Marketing, Planning, & Legislative Committee

Date: January 24, 2012

From: Mary Burdick, Sr. Manager of Marketing

Reviewed by:

SUBJECT: Introducing Real Time Bus Information

Summary of Issues:

Introduction of Real Time Bus Information

It is expected that by late summer the real time bus tracking project will be complete and ready for public introduction. This is a project that CCCTA has been anticipating for several years and presents a solid opportunity to increase our ridership by offering the technological advancements that the public has come to expect.

Real time information and predicted arrival times can be accessed from computers, smart phones and other mobile devices, as well as from Customer Service Representatives. Passengers can set up text or email alerts to be notified if their route is running late, and notified of service advisories. Eliminating the uncertainty of bus schedules will increase the overall quality of the service, and presents an opportunity to increase ridership if we make an effort to reach out to the non-riding public.

New Opportunity

The introduction of real-time bus information presents the first big opportunity for County Connection to send a positive message to residents that we are an efficient, reliable organization providing the services they need and expect. This is a story that needs to be told for several reasons:

- CCCTA needs to do something. Our ridership has lagged in recent years despite the fact that we haven't cut service and have not increased fares, while other Bay Area systems are seeing increases in ridership at a time when they continue to cut service and raise fares.
- CCCTA has put a lot of work into improving our website, while marketing primarily to current riders. The non-riding public needs to know that this resource is available if we expect to get them on the bus.

Marketing Cuts

Due to serious budget constraints for the past three years, our ability to maintain a presence in the service area has been dramatically hindered in the following ways:

- Transportation Center at Walnut Creek BART was closed.
- Promotions budget reduced from \$231,000 in FY09 to \$94,000 the last three years, limiting our ability to market the agency to non-riders.
- The position of Community Relations Specialist was eliminated and that staff person was laid off.

Recommendation:

Staff will be presenting the FY2013 Marketing and Communications Plan to the MP&L Committee in April, and recommends that the introduction of real time bus information be included as the central theme. The marketing strategies that will be recommended include the use of direct mail, radio, and print advertising as key elements to drive the public to our website.

Financial Implications:

- Staff estimates that an additional \$70,000 - \$85,000 will be required in FY2013, making the FY2013 Promotions budget request close to \$200,000.
- This amount will still be well below levels approved prior to FY2010.
- When the Promotions budget was reduced to \$94,000 in FY2010, it was to be a temporary cut.
- No additional staff will be required

Action Requested:

Staff wishes to discuss this with the Committee before moving forward with the development of the FY2013 Marketing and Communications Plan.