

To: Marketing, Planning, & Legislative Committee

Date: March 28, 2012

From: Mary Burdick, Sr. Manager of Marketing

Reviewed by:

SUBJECT: FY2013 Draft Marketing & Communications Plan

Summary of Issues:

County Connection marketing staff prepares a marketing plan to guide the activities of the department in promoting CCCTA services. The plan identifies opportunities, objectives and strategies to target various market segments.

Recommendation:

Review and discuss the plan. Staff will incorporate any changes and present a final draft in May for approval.

Financial Implications:

The FY2013 Promotions Budget will require \$180,000 to implement, which represents 0.66% of the proposed fixed-route operating budget.

Attachment:

FY2013 Draft Marketing & Communications Plan



FY2013 Draft Marketing & Communication Plan

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I. SITUATION OVERVIEW

The Central Contra Costa Transit Authority was established in March of 1980, under a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement (JEPA). The County Connection's service area encompasses nearly 200 square miles in the county. The service area includes the cities of Clayton, Concord, Lafayette, Martinez, Orinda, Pleasant Hill, San Ramon, Walnut Creek, the Town of Danville, the Town of Moraga, and unincorporated areas of central Contra Costa County.

The Authority currently operates twenty four weekday local routes, seven express routes, and a series of routes targeted to school bell times. CCCTA bus service connects riders to seven BART stations, Martinez Amtrak, the ACE rail station, business centers, schools, medical facilities, social services, and recreation venues. One hundred and twenty one accessible buses are used to provide this service. Service is currently provided weekdays between the approximate hours of 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., on weekends from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Public/Private Partnerships

County Connection, maintains a number of public and private funding partnerships that allow for enhanced service throughout the service area.

Sunset Development/Chevron
Routes 96X and 97X are partially subsidized by Sunset Development and ChevronTexaco which allow CCCTA to provide additional commute service. Employees are allowed to ride CCCTA buses at no charge.



City of Walnut Creek

In partnership with the City of Walnut Creek, County Connection operates the Free Shuttle throughout downtown Walnut Creek seven days a week.

Airport Plaza

County Connection operates a special contract service route for the Airport Plaza, Chevron, and Galaxy Office Park in Concord. Route 91X is provided to and from the Concord BART station, and employees in the office complexes ride this route at no charge.

Altamont Commuter Express

County Connection operates Route 92X, the ACE Shuttle, between Walnut Creek and the Pleasanton ACE train station. Funds to operate the service are provided by the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission, the Southwest Area Transportation Committee (SWAT), and Measure C. Ticketed ACE Train riders ride at no charge.

College Services

Through separate funding agreements, students at St. Mary's College, JFK University, and Cal State East Bay can use designated County Connection services free of charge during the school year. In addition, shuttles from the nearby BART station to St. Mary's and Cal State East Bay are paid for by the colleges.

Passenger Profile

The most accurate way to analyze passenger demographics is through the use of an on-board survey. The last onboard survey was done in 2007. It was quite extensive and revealed the following information about County Connection riders.

- 77% were transit dependent – defined as not having a vehicle or driver's license
- 66% were regular riders – using the bus at least four times per week
- 46% were using the bus to get to work
- 27% were using the bus to go to school

MTC will be conducting another rider survey on behalf of the transit operators and CCCTA's survey will be done this spring. Results of this work will be incorporated in the 2012 Short Range Transit Plan.

Another way to evaluate the rider demographics is to use the information collected by the driver about how passengers pay their fare. The following table shows ridership by fare payment category.

FY 2010-11 Fare Payment	
Category	Passengers
Adult Cash	684,891
Bus Transfer + Free	935,223
12 Ride	177,942
Monthly Pass	140,237
Youth Cash	164,742
Youth 12 Ride	169,136
Youth Monthly	18,155
College Pass	27,206
Senior Cash	205,855
Senior 20 Ride	126,286
Senior BART Transfer	15,025
BART Transfer	313,154
Commuter Card	28,232
BART Plus	36,826
Employer Pass	201,580
Express Bus Cash	59,965
	3,304,456

Based on this information we can see that 28% of riders are paying with multi ride fare media and thus extrapolate that they are regular riders. The following table shows how non cash riders can be aggregated into senior, commuter and student categories. Because 49% of the riders pay cash, and thus we can't determine whether they are students or commuters, the percentage of riders in these categories shown below is underestimated.

	Passengers	Percent Share
Cash and Bus Transfers	1,620,115	49%
Multi Ride Bus Passes	318,179	10%
Youth	379,239	11%
Senior	347,166	11%
BART Related	378,212	11%
Employer and Express Bus	261,545	8%
	3,304,456	

No matter what method is used to analyze rider demographics it is still the case that CCCTA riders fall into four major categories; students, commuters, seniors, and other transit dependents.

II. MARKETING OBJECTIVES

The FY2013 Marketing Plan is intended to meet the following objectives:

- Strengthen Brand Identity - Increase name awareness and familiarity with the services that County Connection provides. Promote the benefits that County Connection offers to various market segments, and build upon our reputation for providing efficient, friendly service with equipment that is clean, safe, and well maintained
- Retain Current Riders – Retain current riders through effective passenger information, quality service delivery, and excellent customer service. Reward loyal customers through customer appreciation activities, and well-priced discount fare media options.
- Expand Ridership Base – Encourage trial ridership among the targeted market segments. Identify potential riders that have a high likelihood of trying County Connection to increase ridership and fare revenue.
- Determine Market Awareness and Penetration – Conduct survey to determine awareness level and market penetration.



III. TARGET MARKETS

Local & Long Distance Commuters

The commute market has always been the cornerstone of County Connection service, as commuters tend to use the service on a regular basis. Forty-six percent of those responding to the 2007 on-board passenger survey were using the bus to travel to or from work.

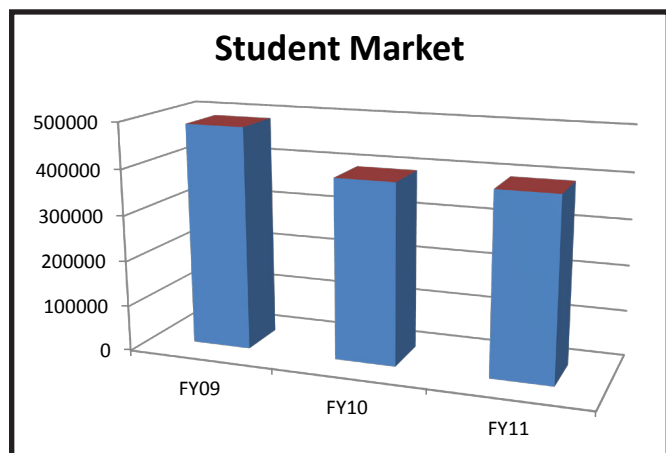
This segment of our ridership has also been impacted in the past several years, beginning with the significant service reduction that took place in 2009, followed by a declining economy and high unemployment. During this time marketing staff has relied on attending events sponsored by employers and by organization such as 511 Contra Costa, the Contra Costa Centre Association, and the Bishop Ranch Transportation Center to reach commuters. A more effective outreach program would include more expensive mass media messages delivered consistently throughout the year.

The commute market will be impacted by the implementation of real-time bus information which will “add value” to transit. In addition, this market is particularly affected by changes in gas prices and with rising gasoline prices, County Connection expects ridership gains in this category.

Marketing staff will continue to support the employee events sponsored by 511 Contra Costa, SWAT, Contra Costa Centre Association, the Bishop Ranch Business Park, and any other business needing our assistance in furthering their commute alternative programs.

Students

The youth market is an area where County Connection has experienced a decline in total ridership despite the elimination of bus service in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District. While youth ridership totals have fallen since FY09, student ridership as a share of the total has remained stable, representing approximately 12% of system ridership.



The student market is one best influenced at an early age. County Connection has had greater success capturing the 10-14 year old student population as they transition from using district sponsored school bus service to the public services provided by County Connection. The marketing department supports the elementary, middle and high school students through the Class Pass Program and the Summer Youth Program.

The Class Pass Program invites teachers to use County Connection fixed route buses during off-peak hours for class field trips. The bus trip is organized through the Marketing Department, and is provided free of charge. A small package containing age appropriate

promotional items is provided to the teacher for the class. Information is provided that explains bus safety, places to go, and CCCTA's partnership with the Safe Place program.

The Summer Youth Program consists of providing youth with a half price bus pass that's good during the summer months. Program materials are delivered to the schools at the end of the school year. Promotional posters are also distributed to teen centers, recreation areas, and community centers. On-screen advertising during the summer will take place at the Brendan Theater in Concord as long as the local pricing structure remains within budget.

511 Contra Costa and SWAT continue to partner with CCCTA to promote free or deeply discounted bus passes as a back-to-school incentive in the fall. County Connection works closely with schools and students to provide information on the school oriented bus routes.

Seniors & Persons With Disabilities

The senior population (age 65 and older) continues to be a strong, stable market segment, comprising over 12% of County Connection's ridership. The senior population is projected to grow more dramatically in the next ten years as "baby boomers" age. It is important for County Connection to attract seniors to the fixed-route service and to retain their patronage for as long as possible before they shift to the more expensive LINK paratransit service.

Perhaps the most effective way to market to seniors is to make sure they are knowledgeable of the service before they need it - by educating them about the public transportation options before they reach the point of giving up their driver's license.

In this effort, staff frequently meets with residents at Senior Centers and senior resource fairs. Information about CCCTA's accessible services, local bus routes, and the deep discounts offered to seniors is provided. Staff also offers hands-on training to individuals wishing to learn how to use wheelchair lifts and ramps. Volunteer bus Ambassadors are available to assist with trip planning, and will travel with individuals until they are comfortable traveling on their own.



The Marketing department updates The Guide To Accessible Services booklet which outlines all accessible features on our buses. Information is tailored to those with mobility impairments or special needs. This booklet focuses on fixed-route services and includes route descriptions, fare information, accessible features and information on the Regional Transit Connection Discount Card program.

The marketing staff coordinates with the Accessible Services department to produce the Welcome To LINK booklet, periodic newsletters, and related promotional supplies. Staff also assists as needed to produce materials targeted to seniors, physicians, and care providers which focus on fixed-route service.

Finally, as the Clipper regional fare program expands, the availability of senior/disabled paper BART tickets is limited. Senior and disabled passengers wishing to take advantage of discounts on BART must apply for the Clipper card in person. Because there are limited locations in Central Contra Costa for seniors to apply, County Connection has agreed to assist in the distribution of Senior Clipper cards.



IV. FY2013 MARKETING FOCUS & STRATEGIES

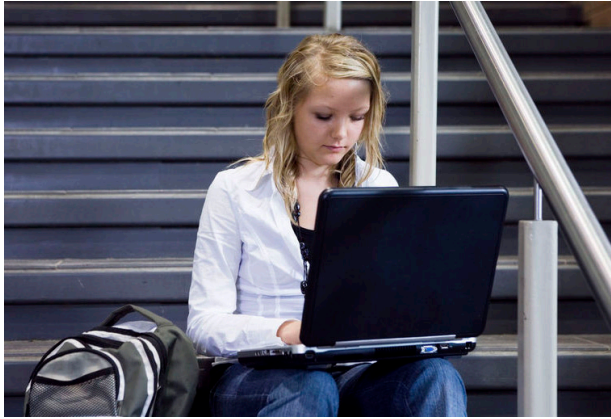
The FY2013 marketing program will emphasize the role County Connection plays as a vital part of our community in providing safe, clean, efficient, and reliable transit service. The marketing plan relies heavily on the introduction of the “Bus Tracker” real time software. Bus Tracker will make the website a more valuable tool for current and potential riders who expect and value real time information. It will be an asset to the customer service department as well. Staff will continue to focus on community outreach through staff participation in community and business events, as well as through the use mass media outlets.

BUS TRACKER

Real Time Schedule Information

The central theme of all marketing activities in FY2013 will revolve around the introduction of the real time “Bus Tracker” which will launch in the Fall of 2012. Marketing the introduction of the real time bus information presents an opportunity to attract new riders and increase system ridership by taking the uncertainty out of bus arrival times. With the advancement of real time technology, more transit riders have come to expect this level of information. Bus Tracker will be on the CCCTA website and riders can use their computers or smart phones to access it. Additionally, users will have the option of receiving “alerts” when their bus is running behind schedule, or when the bus is approaching their stop.

Customer Service Representatives will have access to Bus Tracker, and can more accurately predict arrival times to callers over the telephone. Bus Tracker will be marketed to the general public using integrated marketing strategies that are aimed at reaching commuters, senior citizens and students. The Bus Tracker message will be included in all advertising promotions, community outreach efforts, and partnership activities throughout the year.



Strategies

Promoting the introduction Bus Tracker will be conducted in three phases - the pre-launch, a soft launch, and a system-wide launch.

The pre-launch will consist of “coming soon” information provided at business and community events. Many cities and businesses begin hosting workshops, business expos and Earth Day activities in April. Staff will attend as many as possible with “coming soon” flyers. While the

CCCTA data will not be live, staff can demonstrate the features of the system by viewing Sacramento and Chicago websites where the same real time program is operating.

The “soft launch” will take place as soon as the system is live, and will begin with the focus on existing passengers. Staff will ask Sprint to donate smart phone(s)/tablets as cooperative advertising opportunity to be used in drawings throughout the soft launch as well as the system-wide launch. Staff will also ask 511 Contra Costa to provide free CCCTA Commuter Cards to be used in the system-wide marketing effort.

The system-wide launch is expected to take place in September when school is back in session, and commute traffic is ramping up. Extensive outreach to a wide audience of new and existing riders will be conducted with the use of direct mail, newsprint, and radio advertising.

Pre-Launch Activities – Three months prior

- Produce “coming soon” flyers that can be quickly and easily updated for use in business expos, Earth Day events, and community events during the spring and summer.

Soft Launch Activities – Upon implementation

- Web Page updated to include a link to real time information.
- Flyers will be posted on all buses.
- News Releases distributed to media outlets as well as to local businesses through the Chambers of Commerce.
- News articles provided to City offices and Chambers of Commerce for use in newsletters.
- Traffic sponsorship messages on local radio station KKDV.
- Recruit testimonials from current riders for system-wide launch.
- Conduct a drawing for a free smart phone/tablet.

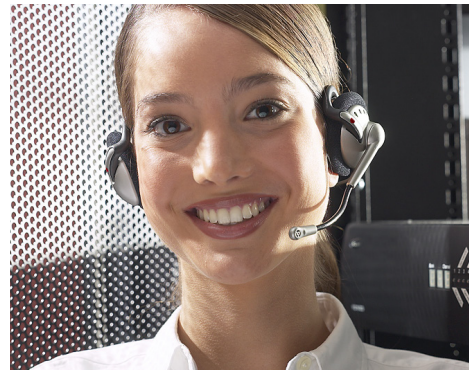
Systemwide Introduction – After implementation and schools are back in session

- News releases with testimonials
- Newsprint advertisements in local publications include testimonials and coupon for smart phone/tablet drawing
- Direct mail booklet delivered to approximately 100,000 residences along CCCTA fixed-routes that announce real time availability, include system maps, ticket sales outlets, and entry coupon for a free smart phone drawing.
- Bus Tail Advertising – produce 50 tail ads to be used on all available fixed route buses. Any unused ads will be placed on the paratransit fleet.
- Bus-To-BART – with assistance from 511 Contra Costa and BART, distribute flyers on cars in BART parking lots announcing the availability of real-time information. Flyers will describe the routes that serve the specific station and include a coupon for a free CCCTA Commuter Card.
- Radio advertising – thirty second advertising campaign on local radio station KKDV, as well as several stations in the ClearChannel broadcast network to be determined based on Arbitron ratings at that time.
- Print and electronic flyers provided to schools for inclusion in email alerts and internal postings
- Kiosk advertising at DVC

V. CUSTOMER SERVICE

Call Center

Often the initial contact by a new rider is through the Customer Service telephone staff. Greater emphasis has been placed on excellent customer service in the past year with professional call center training for all telephone representatives. To assure that performance standards are continually met, live call coaching sessions are scheduled regularly, and calls are randomly monitored and scored each month.



Customer Service agents will benefit from real time information and be able to provide better, more predictable information to callers.

Website

In the past year web information has been improved with an updated website, a new trip planning feature, and access to bus stops through Google maps. Additionally, several web pages were designed for mobile device viewing. The new website design enables marketing staff to manage site content and to access user statistics, which is a valuable tool for planning and marketing purposes. Since introducing the new website in October 2010, traffic has increase by 25%. With the introduction of Bus Tracker more growth is expected.

Social Media

County Connection maintains Facebook and Twitter business pages in the mix of outreach strategies to communicate with followers. The use of social media as a business tool is a relatively new phenomenon, and the growth in followers has been slow, but consistent. All news information posted on the website is also posted on the Facebook and Twitter pages. Additionally, staff sends out short messages throughout the week about minor service delays, industry news, or takes polls to engage followers. Staff responds to comments posted on social network pages the same as any other customer contact.

Regional Customer Service Projects

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission coordinates several regional customer service projects that CCCTA staff participates in. They include the following:

- 511.org - The 511.org website provides direct links to all area transit agency web sites and includes a regional trip planner. CCCTA planning staff provides the data feed with each service bid, and marketing staff spot checks the schedules for accuracy prior to posting on the 511.org website. CCCTA will eventually feed real time information to 511.org.
- 511 Customer Service Telephone Line – Individuals calling 511 are directed by telephone prompts to the transit agency of choice. The caller is then connected to the transit agency Customer Service Center. Each agency is responsible for providing information to 511 relating to call center hours/fares.
- The Bay Area Air Quality Management District routinely sponsors low cost marketing programs targeted to specific audiences. One of the current projects, “Transit to Trails”, is being conducted in Contra Costa County. CCCTA marketing staff is serving on the resource team for this project.



V. COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- Business Expos - Participating in business and employer sponsored transportation events are excellent opportunities for County Connection to communicate directly with commuters seeking an alternative to driving. Large employers periodically sponsor events either through a Transportation Demand Management organization, or on their own. County Connection staff routinely attends such events. Many of the Chambers of Commerce also sponsor

business expos allowing members to set up displays at little or no cost. CCCTA staff attends many of these events in an effort to maintain a presence in the business community.

- Earth Day/Green Events - Sustainability, once a topic connected to Earth Day, is becoming a year-round event. Often “green” events are combined with health fairs put on by large hospitals such as John Muir Medical Center, and Kaiser. Earth Day and green events are now scheduled throughout the year in nearly every community. Because these events target a broad market, CCCTA marketing staff attends as many as possible, often bringing a bus for attendees to board. Having our product available gives staff the opportunity to talk about the environmental benefits of using public transportation, and efforts CCCTA is taking to be a responsible and environmentally friendly member of the community.
- Select Community Events – Many communities sponsor events that draw large crowds from throughout the service area. Examples include Kid Fest in Concord, the Walnut Festival in Walnut Creek, Earth Day in Martinez, and the Lafayette Art & Wine Festival. With limited staff, emphasis will be placed on attending events that have a family focus where CCCTA can have a bus on display. Young children are drawn to the bus, which provides an opportunity for staff to introduce the bus and our services to parents. Marketing staff will rely on volunteer Ambassadors to assist at these events.

The marketing department will continue to organize and promote the community based annual food drive, support training requests for Guide Dogs For The Blind, and coordinate with maintenance to support law enforcement training activities requiring the use of the buses and the facility.

FY2013 MARKETING PROMOTIONS BUDGET

I. Systemwide Promotion-Real Time	\$135,000
• Direct Mail - RT Introduction & Periodic Route Support Programs (\$75K)	
• Monthly Radio - combination of :30 and :15 announcements (\$30K)	
• Quarterly Newsprint advertising (\$15K)	
• On-Line Advertising (\$15K)	
II. Targeted Marketing Programs	\$20,000
• Senior & Disabled Marketing Programs	
• Youth Marketing	
III. Business and Community Outreach Efforts	\$10,000
• Chamber Dues	
• Business and community event fees	
• Flyer/print production	
IV. Miscellaneous Expenses	\$15,000
• Graphics Support/Translation	
• Directory Listings (Yellow pages)	
• Misc./Supplies	
TOTAL - FY2013 Expense	\$180,000