

To: Marketing Planning and Legislative Committee

Date: 3/31/2016

From: Anne Muzzini, Director of Planning

SUBJECT: Awareness Survey

General Public Awareness

Every 3 years County Connection conducts an on-board survey to gain insight into our riders, their method of payment, travel patterns, and demographic profiles. It's been decades since County Connection conducted research among non-users to determine the level of our brand awareness or gain insight into their thoughts and attitudes towards public transportation. The communities that make up our service area have changed dramatically in the past 30+ years, and County Connection's marketing and outreach efforts could benefit from a greater insight into non-users attitudes and perceptions.

Transit Agency Practice

Other transit agencies are investing in non-user research as a tool for growing ridership. The data is used to inform the messaging, and determine the best media for reaching non users. A variety of approaches can be used to obtain information from non-riders such as telephone surveys, focus groups, in person exit surveys, and on-line surveys.

Recently VTA, in Santa Clara, conducted extensive research among non-users, investing \$120,000 in various input methods. They'll use this information to test brand identity and to ensure that they are communicating effectively with the general population. LAVTA, the Wheels system in Livermore, is currently undergoing a service and brand identity overhaul, and is relying on data collected from non-user research to strengthen and streamline their messaging and brand awareness.

Recommendation

Staff recommends releasing an RFP for consultant services to conduct a general awareness study. The study is estimated to cost between \$40,000 and \$60,000 and would be paid for out of the FY2016-17 marketing budget. The survey would be conducted after in the fall after school is back in session. The Committee will be informed about the proposals, price, and recommendation for Board action.