

To: Board of Directors

Date: 2/24/2021

From: Ruby Horta, Director of Planning, Marketing & Innovation

Reviewed by:



SUBJECT: FY 2022 Marketing Plan

Background:

Many of the marketing efforts planned for FY 2021 did not materialize due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which drastically impacted public transit usage as people were encouraged and/or required to stay home. Nonetheless, transit agencies around the Bay Area continued to develop programs that will hopefully promote public transit once it is safe to do so.

Staff predicts a significant amount of effort will be dedicated towards marketing County Connection's services in the coming year to ensure passengers return to transit and new riders are encouraged to try transit. There will likely be both regional (MTC-driven) and local (County Connection, CCTA and East Bay Operators) marketing campaigns that will require additional funding as compared to prior years.

Special Promotions:

County Connection's upcoming Marketing Plan will focus on COVID-19 recovery, Clipper START and youth fares and the 2021 Service Plan. The extent of our marketing efforts to promote transit will largely depend on state and federal guidelines recommending the use of transit as the economy reopens. Although our systems, both fixed route and paratransit, focused on essential workers and services in FY 2021, we expect our systems to begin the transition to encourage more riders to our services.

Post-COVID Recovery: One of the potential outcomes of the Blue-Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force efforts will likely be the development and deployment of a Bay Area wide marketing effort to promote transit ridership, as part of the COVID-19 recovery. Staff from all Bay Area transit agencies have been coordinating on a weekly basis on several fronts, including marketing efforts. Work has begun on developing a cohesive marketing plan promoting transit use, once it is safe to do so. Additionally, County Connection expects 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.

Clipper Discount Programs: County Connection has implemented Clipper START and youth fares, however, minimal promotion has taken place during the pandemic. It is our goal to conduct a more robust marketing campaign to promote these two Clipper discount programs once health officials recommend a return to transit.

2021 Service Plan: The Board is scheduled to approve the 2021 Service Plan in March, for potential implementation later this year. Although the proposed service levels are similar to what is currently in operation, a lot of our former patrons are currently not riding transit and staff must ensure the information about the service change is widely disseminating prior to implementation.

One-Seat Ride: Over the last several months, several East Bay operators have partnered to develop a service that allows paratransit riders to utilize a single operator for any multi-agency travel. Although the service is currently in operation, the outreach and promotional efforts have been minimal considering the pandemic and the need to enforce physical distancing and minimize contact with people outside of your household. In the coming fiscal year, staff expects to disseminate information about the one-seat ride program more widely and continue to expand these types of programs as East Bay Operators continue to collaborate and implement projects of regional impact.

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.

Total Expense: \$120,000

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. Due to decreased ridership and physical distancing requirements, online interactions have been more critical, and we must enhance our online presence especially as we try to reach non-essential passengers that have been working from home since early 2020.

Total Expense: \$30,000

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.

Total expense: \$10,000

Miscellaneous Promotion:

The miscellaneous promotions budget is intended to cover campaigns or new services that have not yet been identified. There will likely be a need to conduct other forms of promotion we are currently not aware of as we recover from COVID-19.

Total expense: \$15,000

Promotions Budget Summary:

Special Promotions	\$120,000
Website and Social Media	\$30,000
Routine Promotion	\$10,000
Miscellaneous Promotion	\$15,000
TOTAL	\$175,000

Recommendation:

The MP&L Committee and staff recommend approval of the proposed FY 2022 Marketing Plan.

Action Requested:

The MP&L Committee and staff request Board approval of the proposed FY 2022 Marketing Plan.

Financial Implications:

Staff has budgeted \$175,000 to cover the expenses associated with the Marketing Plan.