

To: Board of Directors

Date: 03/14/2024

From: Ryan Jones, Manager of Marketing & Communication

Reviewed by: MR

SUBJECT: FY 2025 Marketing Plan

Background:

As of December 2023, County Connection has recovered approximately 80% of our ridership from our pre-pandemic numbers. Loss in ridership and other impacts, such as a loss of staff and operators due to COVID-19, are long-lasting and require the authority to continue to develop strategic engagement strategies that can withstand operational and economic fluctuations in the years ahead. The Marketing Plan for FY 2025 is intended to build upon our current marketing efforts and outlines a strategy to connect with more customers within our service area, as well as those who travel to Central Contra Costa County, and build upon our relationship with regional transit partners.

During the plan development, staff engaged the Advisory Committee, who provided ideas on what to include in the plan and then reviewed and provided comments on an initial draft. Staff incorporated those comments into the plan now being presented for approval.

Focuses of Marketing and Outreach:

General Engagement:

Staff is expanding upon channels of communication for general engagements (i.e. planned and unplanned service interruptions, schedule changes, events). Additionally, staff will look at how messages trend online, which help to provide valuable data, further shaping ongoing strategic engagement.

- **CHANNELS:** Staff will continue to lean on Facebook, Instagram, X, and Nextdoor, and explore new platforms such as TikTok, Threads, and WhatsApp. Different social media channels help staff to engage differently with audiences, particularly through paid boosts that allow for targeting demographics and regions within Central Contra Costa. There are also plans to launch an external newsletter intended for community partners and subscribers, as well as send out printed “welcome” mailers to areas with high concentrations of low-income residents.
- **PERFORMANCE:** Staff will be tracking KPIs to see how regular engagement and campaigns trend online. This will help staff better understand diverse audiences, and how far our online content is reaching and performing. When possible, staff will also be pulling ridership data to see how marketing campaigns have helped boost transit usage. For example, staff has been promoting recent fare changes (November 2023-February 2024) to Youth Clipper and is able to track data on any increases in Youth Clipper card use during the campaign period.

Events: Promotions, Recruiting, and Education:

Staff will continue to plan Mobile Lobby events and are looking to include community events that involve working with area schools, universities (DVC, Saint Mary’s), transit communities, and community

partners (511 Contra Costa, Food Bank of Solano & Contra Costa, Contra Costa Health Services) to promote new programs, recruit staff, and provide education on public transit technologies (i.e. Clipper, navigation apps). As well, we will be working more with senior care facilities and Independent Living to promote and schedule trainings for those who may need help to ride our fixed-route buses. Activities being developed include:

- **PROMOTIONS:** Staff will plan tabling events in areas where a promotion can connect with the community for which it's intended. For example, staff will coordinate activities with the Monument Crisis Center and Food Bank of Solano & Contra Costa to speak on Clipper START, or work with school administrations in the Spring/Summer to promote Summer Youth Pass and Pass2Class, and in the Fall to provide information on Youth Clipper during back-to-school events.
- **RECRUITING:** Staff is looking to hold recruiting events around local grocery stores, parking a bus in a lot and have operators and HR staff available to speak about career opportunities.
- **EDUCATION:** Staff is building a curriculum to educate potential riders on using transit. Topics might be how to load a Clipper card, use the Clipper app, trip planning through the Transit app, reading timetables, bus etiquette, and some background what goes into planning a bus route. The intent of the series is to help those who may be new to transit or require more in-person/hands-on experience. The content will be tailored for senior, youth, and when possible, Spanish-speaking/immigrant populations.

Paratransit:

Staff will work to build an identity for County Connection LINK for current ridership and actively educate on its programs (One Seat Regional Ride, Travel Training). LINK is an important resource for those in our senior and disabled community, and helping to define and promote the paratransit service as part of Central Contra Costa Transit Authority will bring visibility to the services provided throughout the county.

Youth & Family Programming:

With much of the workforce continuing to work from home, staff will put more energy into attracting youth and families to ride transit. Youth & Family Programming is for everyone and will entail content geared for families with youth (ages 3-18) living in Central Contra Costa. The primary content will focus on transit passes and promotions for youth, particularly those utilizing (or able to utilize) our 600-series school buses. Additional content will spotlight areas of interest around the region that families might visit on a County Connection fixed-route bus, such as parks, hiking trails, shopping centers, and the theater. Additionally, staff is exploring a rider rewards program for youth, a social media campaign for schools to showcase their “green” clubs and students who ride transit (tagging County Connection Instagram account), and a passport/scavenger hunt for participants to complete challenges to be eligible for prize packages (e.g. Take a picture in front of 8 public libraries within the county and tag @cccta on Instagram for a chance to win a gift bag).

Financial Implications:

Staff has budgeted \$170,000 to cover the expenses associated with the FY 2025 Marketing Plan.

General Engagement	\$75,000
Events: Promotions, Recruiting, and Education	\$45,000
Paratransit	\$15,000
Youth & Family Programming	\$35,000
TOTAL	\$170,000

Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of the proposed FY 2025 Marketing Plan.

Action Requested:

Staff requests that the MP&L Committee forward the proposed FY 2025 Marketing Plan to the Board for approval.

Attachments:

None