

To: Board of Directors

Date: June 11, 2026

From: Ryan Jones, Manager of Marketing & Communications

Reviewed by: AMS

SUBJECT: Youth Ride Free

Background:

The Youth Ride Free (YRF) program is designed to boost ridership over the summer months while helping young people build familiarity and confidence in riding transit. In June and July 2025, County Connection launched and funded the YRF program, a two-month pilot that allowed riders 18 and under to travel fare-free on all fixed-route buses. Tri Delta Transit and WestCAT also participated in the regional effort, paid for with their own funding. Designed to remove barriers to access, the program required no application, special passes, or ID.

The pilot was a huge success, with 25,000 recorded youth trips across County Connection over the two-month period—a 1,600% increase in participation compared to the previous summer's youth program, Contra Costa Transportation Authority's (CCTA) Summer Youth Pass, which they discontinued later that year. Building on this success, County Connection, Tri Delta Transit, and WestCAT brought back Youth Ride Free for summer 2026. Funding for County Connection's 2026 Youth Ride Free program is being provided by Measure J contributions from TRANSPAC and SWAT. CCTA will help by providing countywide promotional support, including engagement with county school districts, city offices, and libraries.

Additional Information:

Building on last year's online engagement strategy, County Connection staff has been working to promote YRF through targeted social media ads, based on location, age, and spoken language. The primary audience for social media engagement is youth, ages 13-16, who are beginning to gain independence and are more likely to be receptive to programs like Youth Ride Free that allow them to travel on their own. For this age group, many do not yet have driver's licenses or are seeking alternatives to relying on others for rides. Our secondary audience are parents and guardians of children ages 6-12, who are key decision-makers and typically manage their children's activities and schedules.

The primary goal of early messaging was awareness, not only in making riders aware of the YRF program but also driving them to youthridefree.com for more information. Below are early engagement numbers on social media between May 20th and June 10th, which were a mix of paid advertisements and organic posts.

PLATFORM	VIEWS (English)	CLICKS (English)	VIEWS (Spanish)	CLICKS (Spanish)	NOTES
TikTok	52,427	106	49,794	85	Paid/Organic
Snapchat	245,472	994	-	-	Paid
Meta (Facebook, WhatsApp)	40,470	2,043	84,750	35	Paid/Organic
Instagram	57,683	935	19,816	294	Paid/Organic
Twitter (X)	269,372	114	49,856	40	Paid
NextDoor	17,074	-	-	-	Organic
Reddit	2,890	-	~1,000	-	Organic
TOTAL	685,388	4,192	205,216	454	

Web traffic to *youthridefree.com* has also increased; a result of County Connection, Tri Delta Transit, WestCAT, and CCTA's combined efforts to direct people to the program page via social media and QR codes on printed collateral. The data below reflects web traffic from May 20-July 10, 2026:

- Total Site Visitors: 6.8k
- Top Traffic Sources:
 - o Meta (Facebook, WhatsApp) – 2.2k
 - o Instagram – 1.3k
 - o Direct – 1.3k (this is traffic that found the page through other sources or organically)

Data Collection:

Staff will coordinate with CCTA to distribute a Youth Ride Free survey.

Financial Implications:

Any costs associated with events are included in the Promotions Budget.

Recommendation:

None, for information only.

Action Requested:

None, for information only.

Attachments:

None.