

STRATEGIC MARKETING PLAN



FOR

MARIN TRANSIT

FINAL

Prepared by:

TRANSIT  marketing
LLC

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INTRODUCTION

This Marketing Plan provides a strategic approach to marketing Marin Transit's various public transit services. It identifies objectives, target markets and specific strategies for enhancing the system's image and ridership. The plan is based on the findings of the Market Assessment, which is included in the Appendix. Sources of information utilized in the development of this plan include:

- Review of Marin Transit's Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) and Systems Analysis Report.
- Review of existing passenger information and marketing materials.
- Interviews with management staff at Marin Transit, Golden Gate Transit, and Whistlestop Wheels.
- Interviews with front line staff at Marin Airporter and MV Transportation.
- Interviews with stakeholders throughout Marin County representing social service agencies, advocacy groups, businesses, and educational institutions.
- Focus groups with Marin County transit riders and potential riders.
- Evaluation of the passenger experience gained by using a wide variety of transit services within Marin County.
- Visits to all Marin County Transit Centers.
- Collection of rate and coverage information for Marin County advertising and news media.

MARKETING OBJECTIVES

Marin Transit staff has identified the overall goal for this marketing plan as “to better serve the transit dependent population, while also attracting choice riders.” With that overarching goal, the Strategic Marketing Plan has been designed to address the following set of objectives.

◆ **Build awareness among the Marin County population for the entire “family” of Marin Transit services.**

Marin Transit is an entirely new brand with little or no awareness. While two of its component services (Golden Gate Transit and Whistlestop Wheels) have specific identities and enjoy fairly high awareness, there is no relationship between these brands nor between them and Marin Transit. One of the key objectives for this plan is to establish the Marin Transit brand and educate the population about how the “family” of services tie together to meet the transportation needs of various consumer segments.

◆ **Improve the “ease” of understanding and using transit in Marin County.**

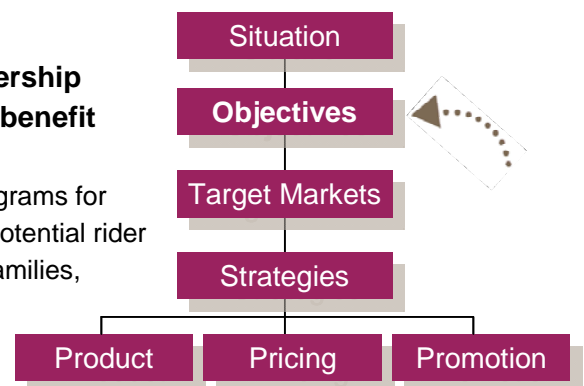
Local transit services in Marin County are perceived by potential riders, and even some riders, as difficult to understand and use. This plan will include passenger information and other strategies designed to address both the reality and perception of ease of use.

◆ **Improve the customer experience for all Marin County local transit riders.**

While some aspects of the Marin Transit customer experience are excellent, others need to be improved to attract and retain additional riders. This plan will address strategies for enhancing passenger information, signage, bus stops and fare media to improve the overall customer experience.

◆ **Conduct targeted marketing efforts to build ridership among segments with the greatest potential to benefit from transit usage.**

Finally, the plan will address specific strategies and programs for generating trial and on-going ridership among specific potential rider segments including commuters, students, low-income families, Latinos, seniors and West Marin residents and visitors.



TARGET MARKETS

Marin County's transit services are used by a heavily commute oriented, yet diverse, ridership base. Key segments among the current and potential ridership base include:

◆ **Low income workers**

This is the largest segment among the current ridership base. These riders are making daily trips to jobs throughout Marin County and contribute heavily to the system's boardings, as more than half of all trips are work trips.

◆ **Hispanic Community**

In the on-board survey conducted during development of the SRTP, 40% of all riders completed the questionnaire in Spanish. Latinos are an important ridership segment for Marin Transit. The Canal area which has 15,000 residents, 70% of whom are Hispanic, generates the highest transit usage in the County.

◆ **Commuters traveling in key corridors**

Most Marin County commuters with transportation options would be unwilling to endure the additional travel time or inconvenience required to use transit for local commute trips. However, there are specific corridors in which transit can be a relatively convenient alternative to driving: for example, Fairfax or San Anselmo to downtown San Rafael. These might provide limited target audiences among which to promote "choice" ridership.

◆ **County Employees**

County employees enjoy a \$4 per day transit subsidy...in essence they have free transit service within Marin County. Direct marketing through County channels can encourage this group to try transit. Efforts can likely be targeted based on zip-code to reach those with the greatest likelihood of finding transit a convenient way to commute.

◆ **Middle and High School Students**

Middle and high school students are an important target for supplemental routes, but also for general ridership. Approximately 16% of current trips are to/from school. Students, particularly those too young to drive, have the potential to use transit for recreation as well as commuting.



◆ **College Students**

Marin Transit provides service to College of Marin (two campuses) and Dominican University. College of Marin has about 9000 students, of whom more than 85% live in Marin County. Dominican University has about 2000 students.

◆ **Low income families**

While Marin County's population is highly affluent, about 8.5% of the population lives below the poverty level. Many of these individuals are concentrated in the Canal district of San Rafael and around Marin City. While low income families use transit heavily, they do not do so universally. There is likely room to increase ridership even among groups commonly considered transit dependent.

◆ **Seniors**

Marin County's residents are aging in place and the 65+ component of the population is growing rapidly. By 2020 it is projected that 35% of the population will be over 65. This coming wave of baby boomer seniors is referred to as Marin's Silver Tsunami. Most of this population will not come to transit easily. They are used to the convenience of driving themselves. Neither Marin County's topography (hilly), nor much of the transit system structure (freeway focused) is conducive to the use of fixed route services by seniors with declining mobility. However, there are exceptions. The three new shuttle routes, the EZ-Rider in Novato and specific segments of other fixed routes offer services that seniors can use. However, attracting them will take a very targeted, hands-on approach to marketing.

◆ **Bicyclists**

There are a large number of bicycle riders in Marin County – both individuals who bike for recreation and those who bike to commute. The bike racks on the buses are well used and the bike racks at San Rafael Transit Center were observed to be full by late morning. Bicycle advocates and users are natural allies for public transportation. Marin Transit should seek to make the system as bike friendly as possible and to work with bike advocacy groups to garner positive public relations.

◆ **Recreational Travelers**

The West Marin Stagecoach serves parks and coastal communities attractive to both Marin County and Bay Area recreational travelers. While active marketing to this sporadic, widely distributed audience would be cost prohibitive, it is an audience that can be reached with effective on-line information and targeted links from other websites (such as now exists on the Point Reyes National Seashore site).

MARKETING STRATEGIES

This section forms the core of this Strategic Marketing Plan. It identifies specific strategies and tactics to be used in pursuing the previously outlined marketing objectives and addressing the various target segments.

The strategies have been organized into a three phased approach which recognizes that Marin Transit's marketing resources – particularly staff resources – are currently limited. The three phases are based on the priority of each strategy, as well as a logical time sequence that allows later strategies to build on earlier efforts. The marketing strategies are organized as follows:

◆ **Priority 1: Essential Marketing Strategies**

Branding and Passenger Information

This phase will lay the groundwork for future marketing efforts. Branding and passenger information strategies will establish the Marin Transit identity, while enhancing both the customer experience and ease of use for the local transit services. These strategies should be in place prior to implementation of the priority 2 promotional strategies.



◆ **Priority 2: Awareness and Image Building Strategies**

Advertising and Public Relations

This phase will utilize advertising and public relations strategies to build broader awareness for Marin Transit, while positioning the local transit services as user friendly. These are strategies which can be implemented with limited internal staff, utilizing outside resources for graphic design, media placement, etc.



◆ **Priority 3: Targeted Ridership Strategies**

Community Based Marketing Programs

This phase will include very targeted, community based marketing strategies designed to build awareness and trial usage among key potential riders segments. These strategies are more labor intensive, as they are based on building and utilizing community partnerships. They will require a higher level of staff involvement.



It should be noted that the implementation of many of these strategies will require coordination with and the support of Golden Gate Transit.

PRIORITY 1: ESSENTIAL MARKETING STRATEGIES

BRANDING AND PASSENGER INFORMATION

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Branding Strategy

- Co-brand all local services as “a service of Marin Transit.”

The Market Assessment discussed three options for establishing the Marin Transit brand. The option which appears to be the most viable is to co-brand all local services operating in Marin County as “a service of Marin Transit.” This would involve adding the Marin Transit identity to vehicles, bus stop signs, passenger information and promotional materials for all services funded by Marin County. Since vehicles and bus stops are a transit system’s most visible and pervasive communications tools, the prominent use of the Marin Transit brand on these elements will be critical.

Vehicles

Transit vehicles are the “packaging” for transit services and the local transit vehicles in Marin County need to be “packaged” consistent with the County’s transit brand. Marin Transit decals should be added to all local transit vehicles – both prominently near the passenger door and on the back of the vehicle. (The photo at the right illustrates a possible placement of the co-brand decal on the Golden Gate buses serving local Marin County routes. This is just one possibility and would require the use of ContraVision type decal material to maintain visibility. There are other possible placements that can be explored, such as at the top of the vehicle above the front windows.)



Rough concept only

For the routes operated by Golden Gate Transit (GGT), this level of co-branding would require that specific vehicles be assigned to Marin Local Transit Routes. This would also eliminate remaining opportunities for interlining with regional services and may require additional equipment. This designation of vehicles, in addition to allowing for branding, would also open the door for other Marin County specific marketing strategies such as local fare media, distribution of local passenger information guides or newsletters on the bus, and posting of information specific to Marin County riders.

Marin Transit understands that there are costs associated with establishing a dedicated sub-fleet and has asked Golden Gate Transit to explore this possibility.

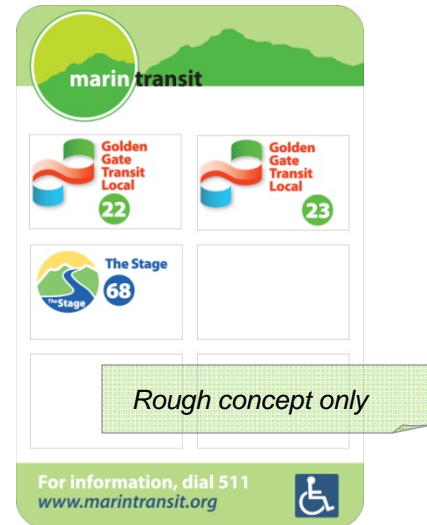
Bus Stops

Bus stops also provide an extremely visible and pervasive channel for communicating the Marin Transit Brand. Stops that are used for local service should be branded with the Marin Transit Identity. One way to accomplish this would be with a sign, such as the rough concept shown at the right, which uses the Marin Transit brand dominantly, but also communicates the brands of the relevant service providers for local routes. Note: The actual design of the sign and the route decals would need to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and local signage standards.

For regional stops, this sign would be in addition to the existing Golden Gate bus stop sign. Adding Marin Transit signage to local and regional stops would be a cost born by Marin Transit. (As an alternative, the two agencies could work together to create co-branded signage that clearly communicates the roles of Golden Gate and Marin Transit. This will be a topic for future discussion and negotiation between Marin Transit and GGT.)

Passenger Guides and Promotional Materials

The Marin Transit identity should be dominant in all ads, promotional materials and passenger literature related specifically to local transit services. It should also be included in regional materials which address Marin County services (e.g. the GGT schedule book.)



Passenger Information Strategies

Develop and introduce a Marin County Transit Guide.

There are two distinct transit markets in Marin County: Individuals wishing to travel regionally to San Francisco or Sonoma County and individuals wishing to travel strictly within Marin County. While there is some crossover between these two groups, they have distinctly different needs.

For the potential rider simply wishing to make a trip within Marin County, the Golden Gate Schedule Book can be quite intimidating. The only map is the system map at the back of the guide. It includes a great deal of information about both regional and local services in a very compact (hence difficult to read) format. Figuring out which local route or routes connect two points in Marin County is a challenge. Even if one knows which route is relevant, the schedules do little to inform the novice user about how to use the service. The schedules include only a few major bus stops as time points, and there are no individual route maps to indicate the location of additional stops.

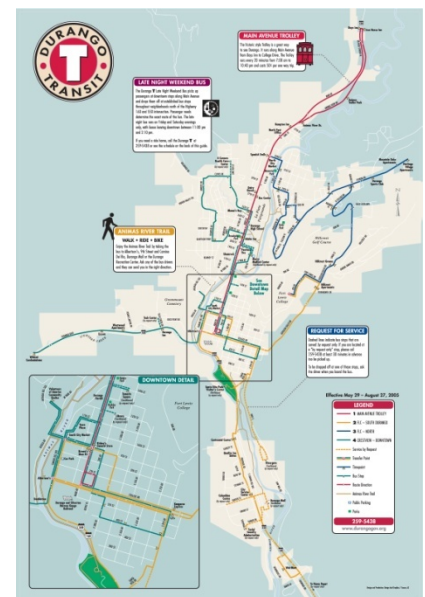
A Separate Local Transit Guide

While the schedule book is quite adequate for experienced riders, it is not a very effective sales tool for potential new users. In fact, it likely contributes to the perception that Marin County transit services are difficult to understand and use. It is recommended that the current GGT guide be split into two companion pieces: a GGT commuter guide and a local Marin Transit guide. The local Marin Transit guide should be designed with the needs of novice transit users in mind. Following are recommendations for content and format of the local Marin Transit guide.

Content of Guide

The Marin County Transit Guide would include complete, easy to use information about all local transit services (including local segments of Routes 10, 40, 42, 70, and 80), in a bilingual format. It would include the following elements:

- Easier to read, full color system map showing all local/regular services within Marin County. The guide would include:
 - 12 Local Routes
 - 3 Shuttle Routes
 - Section of Routes 70 and 80 serving the Hwy 101 Corridor
 - West Marin Routes
 - Supplemental School Services



The guide would not include commuter routes. While the guide would include route maps and schedules for the supplemental services which operate only on school days, it is recommended that these not be shown on the system map. Instead, there will be a separate map for supplemental school service routes.

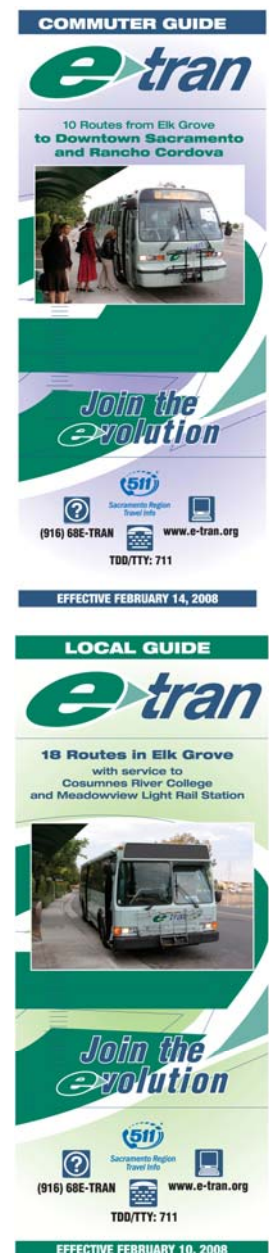
- Individual route maps for each local route, showing the locations of bus stops and key destinations along the route. These maps will include detail insets showing how to access key bus stops, such as the freeway stop.
- Schedules would be provided for each route (side by side with the route map). These schedules will be designed to be easy to read and use in conjunction with the route maps. At the right is an example of such a route map/schedule display.
- *How to Ride* information including details about fares, passes, transfers, customer service, etc. This information would be provided in both English and Spanish.
- Cross promotion of other transit services available in Marin County (commuter routes, supplemental routes, paratransit) with directions regarding where to access detailed information about these services.

Format for Guide

The recommended format for the local guide is a booklet with fold-out or inserted system map. This format would be very similar to the GGT schedule book but with a more limited scope. It would include the local route maps, schedules, and *How to Ride* information bound in a booklet of a size that can be easily distributed in brochure racks, as a companion to the commuter guide. It will be accompanied by a larger sized color system overview map that could be a fold-out or a separate folded piece inserted into the booklet.

While printing and distributing two companion booklets will be somewhat more costly than the current single schedule book, it will not be duplicative, as only the regular regional routes (10, 40, 42, 70, and 80) would need to be included in both guides. This will allow each guide to be more compact and less intimidating. The two guides can be designed and co-branded such that they continue to convey the message that these services provide seamless connections within Marin County. An example of such an approach is shown at the right.

Route	Departure Times
10	6:00, 6:30, 7:00, 7:30, 8:00, 8:30, 9:00, 9:30, 10:00, 10:30, 11:00
40	6:00, 6:30, 7:00, 7:30, 8:00, 8:30, 9:00, 9:30, 10:00, 10:30, 11:00
42	6:00, 6:30, 7:00, 7:30, 8:00, 8:30, 9:00, 9:30, 10:00, 10:30, 11:00
70	6:00, 6:30, 7:00, 7:30, 8:00, 8:30, 9:00, 9:30, 10:00, 10:30, 11:00
80	6:00, 6:30, 7:00, 7:30, 8:00, 8:30, 9:00, 9:30, 10:00, 10:30, 11:00



Note: Having a single guide for all local Marin Transit services does not preclude having individual route guides for targeted services (West Marin Stagecoach, Shuttle Routes, and Supplemental Services) that can be used for localized promotional efforts. However, the overall guide would be the primary information tool distributed, in conjunction with the commuter guide, throughout the service area.

Enhance bus stop signage and information

In addition to being an opportunity for branding, bus stops are an important channel for providing passengers with route and schedule information. Information at the bus stops was one of the lowest rated service aspects in the 2005 on-board survey. In addition, it was a significant cause of complaint in the recent focus groups.

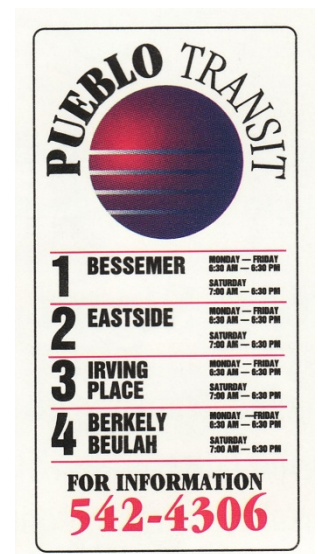
Most bus stops are currently signed with the basic Golden Gate Transit sign shown at the right which includes only a logo and the word BUS. Many of the bus stops also include a custom sign showing which routes serve that stop. However, these signs include neither hours of service nor a schedule.



Riders would like to know not only what routes serve a stop, but during what hours and on what schedule. There are a number of ways to provide this information.

- *Standard metal sign with decals for each route serving the specific stop.*

Under “Branding” this plan discussed the addition of Marin Transit signs to local and shared stops. At a minimum, these signs would include the logo, phone number, and web address. In addition, they can be designed like the concept sign shown on page 7 to include decals for each route serving the stop. The decal can include the route number plus additional information such as destination, days and hours of service, and frequency (if possible). A sample of such a sign is shown at the right. The decals are generally applied when the signs are installed at each stop and can be removed or covered over when changes are made without changing the entire sign. Note that the route numbers in this sample are quite large, in compliance with ADA requirements.




- *Changeable information panel (such as currently used by GGT) but with a higher level of information.*

The picture above shows the current information panels found at many GGT stops, which shows the route number and name for routes serving the stop. This information could be enhanced with a list of the times that each route serves the specific stop. An example of such an approach is shown on the next page.

- *Larger information panel with complete schedules.*

By using larger information panels, or multiple panels, at stops served by multiple routes, Marin Transit could include the complete directional schedule for each route serving a key stop. This approach requires less production time (since standard schedules can be sized and used rather than having to create a custom panel for each stop). However, it is not as easy for the waiting passenger to reference, as the rider must determine where their stop is in relation to the time points on the schedule.

Any type of signage which includes actual schedule information (highly desired by passengers) would need to be created and replaced when schedule changes are made. Schedule changes are made up to four times per year. For this reason, Marin Transit may wish to limit this strategy to only those stops with the highest level of boarding activity.



Elk Grove Blvd. at Elk Grove Florin Rd.

Commuter Route: 59 – Old Town Elk Grove Express

Monday through Friday Only:
PM Southbound to Elk Grove
E. Stockton Blvd. at Bond Rd.

4:20	4:50	5:35	6:05
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Local Route: 156 – Brockville/Elk Grove Blvd.

Monday through Friday Only:
Northbound to Cosumnes River College

5:30	6:00	6:30	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30
9:10	9:40	10:10	10:40	11:10	11:40	12:10
12:40	1:10	1:40	2:10	2:30	3:00	3:30
4:00	4:30	5:00	5:45	6:30	7:30	8:30

Saturday Only:
Northbound to Cosumnes River College

6:30	7:15	8:00	8:45	9:30	10:15	11:00
11:45	12:30	1:15	2:00	2:45	3:30	4:15
5:00	5:45	6:30	7:30	8:00		

Sundays and Holidays Only:
Northbound to Cosumnes River College

8:54	9:54	10:54	11:54	12:54	1:54	2:54
3:54	4:54	5:54				

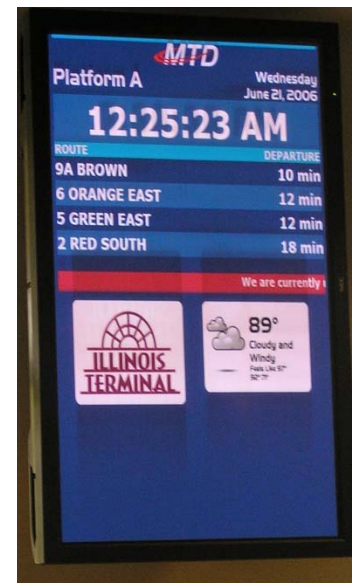
Information
For travel information, call (916) 68E-TRAN or visit www.e-tran.org
Press button below to signal bus to stop

Transfer Center Displays and Real Time Information

The Transfer Centers are particularly important locations for providing route and schedule information since they are the primary or interim boarding points for a large segment of the ridership. The San Rafael Transit Center and San Anselmo Transit Hub are the only of the transit centers in Marin County that provide posted schedule information. Marin Transit staff are currently working on a capital project at the Marin City Transit Hub that will include signage and schedule display improvements.

Even if schedule information cannot be provided at other bus stops, it should, at a minimum, be provided at all of the transfer centers. In addition to the need for basic schedule information, the transit centers would also benefit from:

- A posted system map display to allow riders to see where they are in relation to the overall Marin Transit system.
Many bus shelters can be equipped with locking information panels in the back which allow for such displays.
- Real time bus arrival information.
Golden Gate Transit is currently working to install automatic vehicle locator technology (AVL) on its fleet. Once AVL is fully implemented, the transit centers will be key locations for real time information displays. Real time information significantly increases the passengers' confidence with using transit. Passengers and potential passengers have seen real time displays in other Bay Area cities and specifically asked for these in focus groups.



Wayfinding Signage for Freeway Stops

The freeway bus stops are a particular challenge, as described in the market assessment. Simply finding these stops can be difficult for novice riders. Golden Gate Transit has expressed willingness to work with Marin Transit to improve wayfinding signage though has no funds budgeted for this activity. Three strategies described below would enhance the usability of these stops.

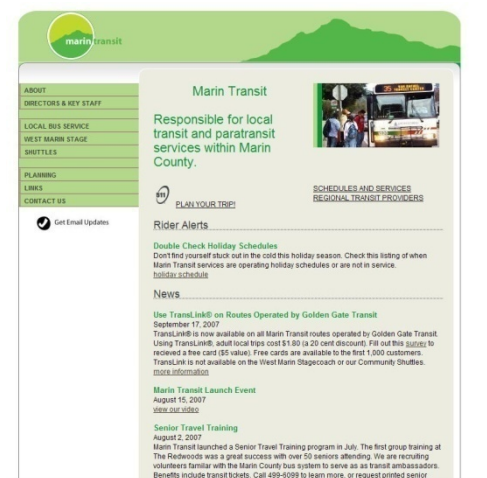
- Wayfinding signs to direct passengers to the stops, which are often “invisible” and may even look like non-pedestrian areas. The wayfinding signs should specifically say Hwy 101 Bus Stop and be easily visible from major streets near the access point.
- Destination identifiers on the freeway bus shelters. When you are on the freeway buses, it is easy to lose track of where you are and one freeway shelter looks very much like another. Signs on the front of the shelters should clearly identify each stop using the names used in the passenger guide (e.g. Terra Linda Bus Pad) - like train station signs.
- Detailed maps in passenger guides showing passengers how to access the specific freeway stops.

Enhance Marin Transit website to be “the” source for transit travel info within Marin County

The internet is an increasingly important source of information for transit users. Most of the potential riders and many of the riders who participated in the focus groups said they have used or tried to use the web to get transit information.

Both Golden Gate Transit and Marin Transit maintain websites which provide passenger information about Marin County transit services. Both of the sites are quite functional and provide access to a great deal of information. Neither of them is a particularly strong tool for giving potential riders quick easy access to information that will encourage them to try transit.

The Marin Transit website should be redesigned with the Marin County transit user as the primary target audience. It should be designed to provide the information users are most likely looking for (how to get where I am going) right up front with a minimum of searching. The information should be provided in formats appropriate for both current



and new users. Specific strategies for achieving this include the following:

- ***Trip Planner.***

The easiest way for those unfamiliar with the transit system to get transit information is with an on-line trip planner...or as one focus group participant referred to it, a “trip optimizer.” The 511 trip planner does not work well for trips on Marin Transit services. Therefore a customized software solution or participation in Google Transit may be better options. The Trip Planner window should be included right on the home page for easy access, such as is illustrated in the sample website at the right.



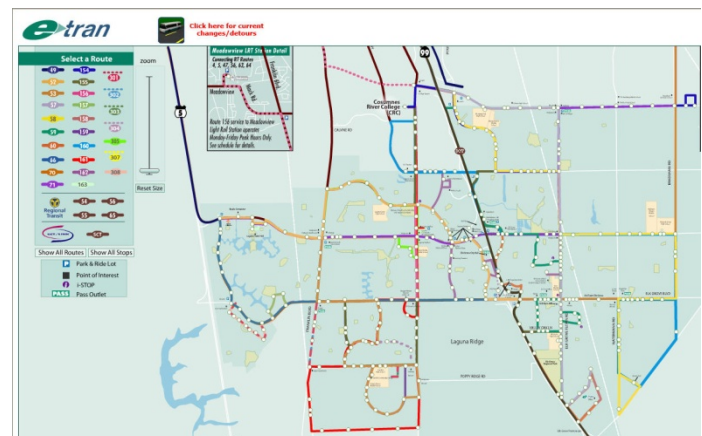
- ***Interactive Map.***

Another effective tool for passengers is an interactive system map that can help riders determine which route or routes serve their origin and destination, and then provide easy access to those schedules with a single click. Examples of interactive maps can be found at www.e-tran.org or www.vta.org.



- ***Organize information by destination, not provider.***

Currently information on the Marin Transit Website is organized by provider (Golden Gate, West Marin Stage, Shuttle Routes). However, this format is not very useful for the passenger. Rather, information should be organized by destination...e.g. travel within eastern Marin County, travel to/from West Marin, regional travel to/from San Francisco or Sonoma County. Quick access drop down menus should allow riders to access the information they need quickly.



- ***Menu driven quick access to all routes and schedules.***

The menus should be expanded to provide quick access to key information for regular users. For example, a drop down menu could take you to the schedule for specific Golden Gate routes rather than having to go thru the main schedule page. The menus should also allow for easy access to information about fares, passes, transfers, and other *How to Ride* topics.

- ***Easy access to commuter route information.***

If customers are looking for regional route information, they should be linked to the Golden Gate website. However, they should not be sent directly to the Transit Schedules Home Page, which can be

quite confusing. Rather, they should be given the choice of choosing a commuter route from a drop down menu, then go directly to that schedule on GGT's website. Alternately, they should be able to choose from a list of commuter routes with descriptions, and then be linked directly to that schedule. As another option, they could be linked to an interactive commuter route map, which might be a component of the Golden Gate Transit website.

■ *Multi-lingual Information.*

Forty percent of Marin County local transit users are Hispanic. The website should provide key information in Spanish, and possibly in other target languages. Increasingly, even low-income populations have internet access, either at home, work, school, or the library. A recent survey of riders in Central Contra Costa County found that 90% of riders used the internet.

The Capital Metro website shown at the right includes links, as part of its primary tool bar, for Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese. Clicking on these links takes the viewer to a page of basic information in the designated language. This page includes links to additional pages in the target language.



■ *Real Time Information on the Website*

Once AVL is fully functional, the website is a natural way to make the real time schedule information available to riders. This generally involves assigning a bus stop number to each stop which can be easily referenced to secure "next bus" arrival information. A good example of this can be found on the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District website, shown at right.

■ *Rider Registration*

The internet provides an excellent tool for building on the relationship that transit has with its riders. Many transit agency websites allow riders to register, thus signing up for transit updates and special offers. Some sites allow the rider to include information about the route and trip they use so that they can be notified (via text message) if there is a delay or other disruption of service.

■ *Other Functions*

Other functions that can be built into the website include: opportunity for customer questions and comments via e-mail, fare media sales, easy download of all passenger information materials as PDFs, how-



to video clips (such as how to load a bicycle), or even a customer blog for riders to share information with each other.

Once the enhanced website is complete, Marin Transit should work to get transit links (using the new Marin Transit logo) on the websites of area organizations including social service agencies, schools, colleges, and businesses.

Ensure that high quality trip planning assistance by telephone is available for all local transit services.

Many potential transit users still turn to the telephone for trip planning assistance when they make the decision to try transit. Telephone information for each of Marin Transit's services is currently provided by the service operator, with mixed results. While Golden Gate Transit provides dedicated telephone information personnel who can help potential riders with trip planning, MV Transportation and Marin Airporter do not. It would be far preferable, from a promotion and passenger convenience standpoint, to have a single phone number that can be used to access information about all Marin Transit services. The number can then be included consistently on bus stops, in transit guides and in promotional ads and materials. There are a number of ways this might be accomplished:

- Have the West Marin Stagecoach and Shuttle services added to the 511 system, such that people selecting these options would be forwarded to the providers.
- Contract with Golden Gate to provide schedule and route information for these routes via their telephone information function which supports all other Marin Routes (in Phoenix, AZ for example, Valley Metro operates a valley-wide telephone information center, even though services are provided by a number of operators.)
- Have a dedicated Marin Transit phone number which gives the caller three options (e.g. For information about Shuttle Routes 221, 233 and 259 press 1, for information about West Marin Routes press 2, for information about all other bus routes in Marin County press 3). The caller would be automatically transferred to the appropriate provider call center.
- A final but significantly more costly option would be to station customer service staff at the San Rafael Transit Center to assist passengers with information, sell tickets, and possibly take over the telephone information function for the non-GGT services.

Fare Media

Implement additional fare media options to address the needs of local riders.

Most transit riders in Marin County pay their fare in cash, despite the fact that they use the system intensively, often several times a day. The market assessment found that riders are not satisfied with the current fare options. They do not like the fact that the Marin Local tickets expire, they distrust the Translink system which requires you to tag when leaving the bus in order to avoid being overcharged on regional routes, and they feel that a transfer should be good on any bus for a set period of time (as it is in many systems).

While the current fare media have the potential to effectively meet the needs of “riders by choice,” they are not well suited for the transit dependent population which primarily uses the local services. In pursuit of its goal of better serving the transit dependent population, Marin Transit could provide additional fare options targeted to the needs and travel characteristics of local riders. Three new fare options are described below. These options will be attractive to current users and encourage increased ridership frequency and retention.

■ *Revised Transfer Policy - Two-hour ticket*

The current flat fare policy of \$2.00 with transfers good only for one-way travel discourages riders from making very short trips by transit, or from making stops along the route of a trip (as you would in a car). One strategy for addressing this is to change the transfer policy such that the \$2.00 fare buys the customer a “two-hour ticket” which is good on any local bus. This will facilitate both transfers and short round trips, and will increase satisfaction among current users.

■ *Day Pass*

Many transit agencies have had excellent success with an unlimited ride Day Pass. This type of pass is purchased from the farebox and allows unlimited boarding throughout the day it is purchased. Day passes can help to achieve the objectives of increasing ridership frequency, providing a discount to intensive transit users (who generally cannot afford longer term fare media), and reducing transfer conflicts. They are typically implemented and priced in one of two ways:

- Day Pass available in addition to free transfers
In this option, the Day Pass is simply a new fare media available in addition to free transfers. It is generally priced at about 2.5 to 3 times the base fare. This is the option recommended for Marin



During the stakeholder interviews for this project the concept of low cost or free fares for low income was brought up by social service providers. Specifically the suggestions included:

- *Free fixed route rides for persons who are ADA eligible.*
- *Reduced cost monthly pass for persons on public assistance which requires a means test. (Passes such as this are offered in some communities including Tucson and Calgary.)*
- *Volume sale of discounted bus tickets to social service agencies.*

Transit. A price of \$5.00 would make the pass easy to promote and pay for.

- Day Pass available in lieu of free transfers
In this option, the Day Pass takes the place of transfers which are no longer issued. The Day Pass is priced at 2 to 2.5 times the base fare. Anyone using more than one bus to complete their trip must buy the Day Pass to avoid paying a second fare. This is disadvantageous for people making one-way trips.

While there are low-tech solutions, such as punch passes, most systems that utilize day passes have them issued by the farebox. They are very much like a farebox issued transfer, but include the words "day pass" along with the date.

■ Weekly or Monthly Pass

Another fare option for consideration is a weekly or monthly unlimited ride pass for local Marin Transit services. Given the demographics of the ridership, a weekly or 7-day pass is likely to be most viable as it will coincide with the pay period for lower income workers. Participants in the focus groups liked the idea of a monthly pass, until they were made aware that it would likely cost \$70-80. This price would put it out of reach for many intensive users. A 7-day pass priced at \$20 would be affordable for a much larger number of riders.

7-day passes can be sold through outlets, just as the current ticket books are. To be reasonably easy to implement, the passes must be activated at the first use either electronically by the farebox or by being punched by the bus operator. This eliminates the need to print different passes for each week. It also allows the pass to be good for seven days rather than for a calendar week, ensuring that the purchaser gets full value no matter what day they buy the pass.

Introduction of any of these fare options will require the assistance of Golden Gate Transit in several ways:

- Provision of fare equipment that can issue and accept the day pass and/or activate the weekly pass.
Golden Gate Transit is currently equipping its vehicles with fareboxes with magnetic strip readers that will allow for the introduction of new types of fare media. Marin Transit also plans to equip its Shuttle and West Marin Stagecoach vehicles with comparable fareboxes.
- A revenue-sharing agreement



*Day Passes
can be
manual or
electronic*



If local Marin fare media are to be accepted on the local portions of the Regional Routes 10, 40, 42, 70, and 80, as would be desirable, the two agencies must establish a revenue-sharing policy. Golden Gate Regional Commute Routes could also be included in such a policy.

- Driver training to implement the revised policies.

If new fare media are introduced, they should be marketed aggressively to existing riders using a combination of bi-lingual communication methods including:

- On-board transit advertising signs and flyers
- Posters at the San Rafael Transit Center and other transfer centers if possible
- Ads in the Marin Transit Local Guide

The key message of these promotions should be that the new fare media make using Marin Transit services easier and more affordable. The promotions will need to clearly communicate where to buy and how to use the new passes.

Customer Experience

Further enhance the overall customer experience with bus stop improvements.

Attracting and retaining transit customers is the result of providing a positive customer experience from start to finish. Some aspects of the customer experience on Marin Transit's services are already quite positive – particularly the quality and cleanliness of vehicles and the helpfulness of the drivers. The previous strategies have addressed enhancing the experience of getting information and paying the fare.

One final aspect of the customer experience that needs to be addressed is the quality of the boarding locations. Some boarding locations are acceptable (such as San Anselmo Hub and San Rafael Transit Center), in that they are well marked, offer shelter, seating, trash receptacles and a sense of security. However, many boarding locations offer none or few of these features. Focus group participants noted that seeing riders waiting along the road at stops with few or no amenities does not encourage them to consider using transit.

While bus stop improvements and maintenance are beyond the scope of a communications plan, they certainly impact the marketability of the system. In addition to implementation of the previous bus stop information and signage strategies, bus stops could be improved in the following ways.

- *Branding, Identification, Appearance.*

Bus stops are as much a part of a transit system's brand as the vehicles themselves. They communicate the availability of transit service in a specific corridor and demonstrate the quality of that service. Bus stops, like buses, need to have a consistent look that clearly defines them as part of the Marin Transit system.

- *Comfort and Amenities.*

The amenities provided at bus stops (shelters, seating, trash receptacles) both enhance the quality of the experience for existing customers and communicate a positive message to potential users who see the stops every day as they travel through a corridor.

- *Cleanliness and Maintenance.*

Just as a dirty bus sends a poor quality message, so does a dirty or poorly maintained bus stop.

A bus stop inventory can be used to identify priority stops as the focus for improvement efforts. Marin Transit is currently working with local

jurisdictions to develop a policy with regards to local bus stops. This policy will identify standards for amenities at stops and could result in an agreement that Marin Transit contract for bus stop and shelter maintenance.

PRIORITY 2: AWARENESS AND IMAGE BUILDING

ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

This section outlines advertising and public relations strategies to build broader awareness for Marin Transit, while positioning local transit services as user friendly. These are promotional strategies that can be implemented with limited internal staff, utilizing outside resources for graphic design, media placement, etc.

Advertising

Implement a media advertising campaign to “introduce” Marin Transit as an easy to use option for local travel.

Once the strategies described in Priority 1 are in place, an introductory advertising campaign should be implemented to build awareness for Marin Transit among the general population and to encourage trial ridership, particularly in corridors with “convenient” local service.

Marin County residents are very aware of the issues of traffic congestion, air pollution and high fuel costs....the reasons to use transit. They simply don't see local transit services as a solution, because they believe these services are too difficult to understand and use.

Therefore the overall theme of this campaign should be that using transit for local trips in Marin County is not as difficult or confusing as most people think. This message should be fulfilled by:

- Providing targeted information to residents in corridors with service levels likely to be attractive to potential riders.
- Steering people to the new, easier to use passenger information tools developed in Phase 1, including the Marin Transit Guide and Website.
- Offering a trial ride incentive to encourage potential riders to experience Marin Transit.
- Each effort would generally promote a specific route or set of routes. In some cases this would be a GGT-operated route, while in others it might be a shuttle route.

*Marin Transit...It's
Easier Than You Think*

Advertising Media

The campaign should use a combination of advertising media, with an emphasis on local media that allow targeted messages to be delivered to residents in specific travel corridors. The media which provide this type of targeting include:

- Local community newspapers

There are local community newspapers for most of the cities in Marin County. These include.

- Marin Scope Newspapers (Ross Valley Reporter, Twin Cities Times, Marinscope, Mill Valley Herald, San Rafael News Pointer)
- Pt. Reyes Light
- West Marin Citizen
- Novato Advance

- Direct Mail

Direct mailings can deliver very localized information, including route maps and schedules, to the residents of a specific corridor. It can also include incentives such as free ride passes. Direct mail lists can be customized based not only on geography, but on age or other demographic factors, allowing Marin Transit to, for example, mail to homes with working age adults or senior citizens.

- Transit shelters

Transit shelters along key travel corridors are an excellent, high visibility channel for communicating with commuters and others who travel regularly within a given corridor. For example, the bus shelters along Red Hill between San Anselmo and San Rafael would be an ideal medium for promoting the ease of traveling by bus between San Anselmo and downtown San Rafael.

In addition to these very localized media, if resources allow, Marin Transit may want to use broader, county-wide media to communicate the overall awareness message and direct potential riders to the new passenger information tools. For this purpose, potential media include:

- Marin Independent Journal and San Francisco Chronicle (zoned)

These daily newspapers provide county-wide newspaper coverage.

- La Voz

This Spanish language newspaper can be used to reach the Hispanic Community countywide.

- Bus Sides Advertising

If dedicated buses are committed to Marin County local services, self-advertising on the sides of these buses could be an excellent, high visibility medium for the awareness campaign.

- Cable TV Advertising

Cable TV is the most viable broadcast media alternative for Marin County. (Buying broadcast radio or television will be cost prohibitive as most stations come from the Bay Area, with Bay Area rates.) If budget allows, this would be an effective channel for reaching populations who may not be newspaper readers (younger people and minorities).

■ Movie Theater Advertising

Another option for reaching geographically targeted populations is with theater advertising. Current technology allows theater slides to be animated or even full video with sound.... like a TV commercial.

Campaign Message

As noted above, the theme of the campaign might be “Marin Transit...It’s easier than you think.” Ads would provide specific information to show riders how using transit locally might be convenient for their particularly purposes.

To the right is a potential concept for a newspaper ad that would run in a locally targeted publication (e.g. the Ross Valley Reporter).

Ads in county-wide publications would focus on broader messages, but with the same theme of ease of use. For example countywide topics might include:

- The on-line “Trip Optimizer” which makes planning your transit trip simple.
- The “fast,” direct, frequent service along Highway 101.
- The ease of getting to San Rafael from virtually anywhere in the county, and the convenience of not having to find a parking place once you do.

If desired, it would be easy to integrate promotion of regional and commuter services into this campaign. While the specifics of the messages would be different (e.g. San Anselmo to San Francisco, X times per day), the overall theme of ease and convenience would be consistent. Ads could be jointly sponsored and co-branded by Golden Gate Transit and Marin Transit.

Campaign Timing

This campaign should be implemented once the branding and passenger information strategies described in Phase 1 are in place, as they will be an important part of the message. Once initiated, this campaign can be rolled out in stages. For example, on-going use of county wide media might be combined with a local focus on one community each quarter.

Ad Concept for Community Newspaper

Headline:

San Anselmo to San Rafael: 48
Times Each Day

Primary Graphic:

Photograph of rider relaxing in a
high-backed bus seat, reading the
newspaper

Copy Points:

- Getting from San Anselmo to San Rafael is easy with direct, frequent bus service that takes only 13 minutes.
- No need to worry about traffic, parking or high gas prices
- Service from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.
- On-line Automated Trip Planning is available or just call for personal trip planning assistance
- New Marin County Transit Guide

Secondary Graphic:

Small image of Golden Gate Bus
with appropriate headsign.

Marin Transit (logo)

It’s easier than you think.

marintransit.org

Public Relations

Along with paid media advertising, maximization of earned media can help to build awareness for the new Marin Transit. Marin Transit should initiate an aggressive public relations effort to enhance public transit's visibility within Marin County. This effort can be implemented in house or with the assistance of a public relations consultant.

Develop a proactive news release calendar.

Earned media or news coverage for public transit can be increased by making sure that the news media are provided with a regular stream of information about transit, its benefits and its progress. This requires maintaining a list of local media contacts and creating and implementing a systematic news release calendar.

News Release Calendar

The calendar should identify topics for news releases during the coming 3-6 months and be updated monthly to reflect changes and new story ideas. Some news release topics will be relevant for countywide distribution; others may be of more localized interest. Possible news release topics would include:

- Putting new vehicles into service, especially alternative fuel vehicles which increase transit's environmental benefits.
- Implementation of amenity enhancements at local bus stops or transfer centers.
- Introduction of a new route or service.
- Significant changes in service aimed at better meeting the needs of residents.
- Special event service.
- Ridership growth milestones.
- Introduction of the new Marin Transit Guide and/or website which will make it easier for County residents to use transit.
- Introduction of new fare media that make transit even more cost competitive with \$3.50 per gallon gas.
- Public hearings and meetings.
- Partnership efforts with other community organizations.
- Free ride promotions.
- Tie-ins to national events such as Try Transit Day or Earth Day.

News releases should be prepared and issued in a timely manner to media in the relevant communities. When appropriate, photographs can be included with news releases to print media.

Media Contacts

In order to get your news release into print or on the air, you must know who to distribute them to. This means creating a news media list which includes local newspapers, radio stations and TV stations (if any of the Bay Area stations provide news coverage in Marin County.) Your media addresses should include, whenever possible, the name of the person you want to read your release. For community publications, this is likely to be the news editor. For publications such as the Marin Independent Journal or San Francisco Chronicle, there may be a specific reporter who is responsible for transit news. Personnel change frequently so the list will need to be updated on a regular basis.

Most news releases these days are distributed by fax or e-mail. Ask each media which is the best way to contact them and make sure you have the correct e-mail address or fax number. E-mail distribution allows for the easy inclusion of digital photos relevant to the topic.

Follow-up

Polite follow-up calls to ensure that a release was received, see if it went to the right person and offer answers to any questions can be effective in calling attention to your story.

It is important to note that not every release will be printed or aired. However, it is essential to provide the media with an on-going stream of timely and interesting information if maximum coverage is to be garnered.

Team-up

A strategy for increasing Marin Transit's news value is to join forces with other organizations that are promoting environmentally friendly travel. By collaborating with bicycle and pedestrian advocates, Marin Transit may be able to raise the overall visibility and interest in non-auto travel. There are a number of projects in the works, such as the California Park Hill tunnel, which will generate significant media coverage.

In addition, many of these organizations publish and distribute their own newsletters (either hard copy or electronic). They can disseminate information about Marin Transit to their own constituents, who are likely already open to the concept of public transportation.

PRIORITY 3: TARGETED RIDERSHIP STRATEGIES

COMMUNITY BASED MARKETING PROGRAMS

This third set of strategies requires a much higher level of staff time commitment than those discussed in Phases 1 and 2. These are strategies that rely on community partnerships and outreach efforts to achieve the objectives of increasing visibility among, educating and encouraging trial ridership by key target populations. This type of “community-based” marketing has a number of advantages.

- Opportunity to target messages and appeals very specifically.
- High information content possible – can include the details necessary to generate trial ridership.
- Low-cost delivery channels.
- Opportunity to build community partnerships that enhance service development, marketing, and public relations efforts.
- Chance for direct feedback from stakeholders.

These types of programs are highly effective and low cost, but they are staff time-intensive. Therefore most of these strategies will need to wait until Marin Transit has additional staff to commit to this effort. This section includes a wide variety of recommendations focusing on different target segments. Even with added staff, it will not be possible to implement them all at once. Rather, staff may wish to select a few priority programs for early implementation and then prioritize the others for implementation as staff time and resources allow. Programs you may wish to consider for earliest implementation include the Gatekeeper Communications Program and West Marin Stagecoach strategies.

The specific program strategies have been organized into four sets based on the transit services they promote:

- All Service: Gatekeeper Relationships and Communications
- Local and Shuttle Route Ridership
- West Marin Stagecoach Ridership
- Route Specific Marketing for New or Targeted Services

Gatekeeper Relationships and Communications

Establish Gatekeeper Communication Program

Social service agencies, schools, medical facilities, senior centers, and other community organizations are often important sources of transportation information for their clients, students, and members. Staff members at these organizations are often charged with identifying transportation options for getting people to classes or appointments. In this role, they are gatekeepers between public transit and many user groups including low-income families, persons with disabilities, seniors and students.

Interviews with several of these gatekeepers indicated that their familiarity with the transit services available in Marin County is limited. Most described the system as confusing and admitted they could not plan a transit trip for a client. Educating these gatekeepers about the services available and about trip planning aids (particularly if an effective trip planner is introduced on the website) will enhance their ability to “sell” transit to their constituents.

Two strategies for educating the gatekeepers are recommended. These efforts may become part of the responsibility of the mobility manager position Marin Transit is planning to create.

- *Conduct outreach presentations to major social service agencies at least once a year.*

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) managers indicated that they would welcome a briefing of their staff at the new location in the Canal area. Many other agencies and organizations are open to similar meetings to better inform their staff about transit services. Such presentations should be made to front line staff at agencies that work with low-income families, seniors, persons with disabilities, and youth.

- *Produce and distribute a printed or electronic newsletter (3-4 issues per year) providing updated information about transit services.*

The newsletter will maintain the channel of communication initiated with the annual outreach presentations. It should address:

- Changes or enhancements to transit and paratransit services.
- Resources for getting assistance with trip planning.
- New programs or fare media, etc. of interest to their clients.
- Articles highlighting key destinations such as medical facilities.
- Mini-posters communicating transit changes or highlighting services. These should be suitable for copying and posting on agency bulletin boards or handing out as fliers to agency clients.

Gatekeeper Starter List

- DHHS-Aging
- DHHS-Public Assistance
- DHHS-Employment & Training
- Homeward Bound
- Novato Human Needs Center
- Marin Community Clinics
- Coastal Health Alliance
- Canal Welcome Center
- Canal Alliance
- Marin Center for Independent Living
- Indoor Sports Club
- Marin Housing Authority

This strategy will require the development of a mailing or e-mailing list that can be added to as new contacts are made.

Establish Permanent Transit Information Displays

One strategy that is relevant to all of these target groups is the placement of permanent transit information displays at high traffic locations and in lobbies. A number of stakeholders interviewed expressed a willingness to have such displays in their lobbies.

Displays can be created using standard display fixtures available from manufacturers such as:

- www.displays2go.com
- www.display-world.com

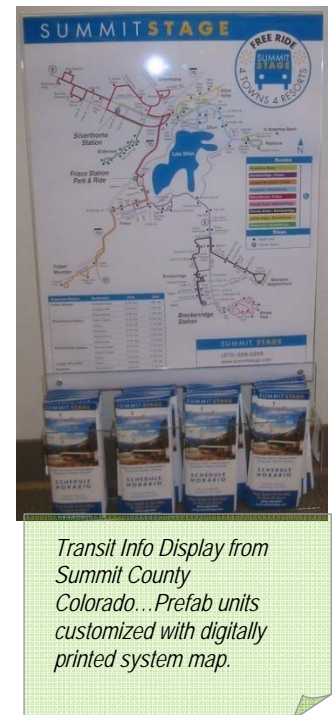
Both floor standing and wall mounted models are readily available.

The permanent display poster can be a customized version of the Marin Transit system map or other graphics created in the development of the local transit guide. Digital printing allows small quantities of such large format posters to be created economically.

The pockets below the sign will allow for easy, high-visibility distribution of the local transit guide.

Locations to target for the installation of such displays would be those that enjoy a high level of traffic among target populations. For example:

- DHHS Lobbies
- Pickleweed Community Center in the Canal and other Community Centers
- Senior Centers in the various communities
- Marin Community Clinics (Novato, San Rafael, and Greenbrae)
- College of Marin



Local and Shuttle Route Ridership

This set of targeted strategies addresses marketing the Marin Transit local system to various market segments. Communications under these strategies would focus on the local service provided by Golden Gate Transit and the Shuttle Routes. Depending on the audience, West Marin services would sometimes be included.

Target commuters who have convenient service

County workers and employees working in downtown San Rafael have specific incentives to use transit. Targeted efforts can help to encourage trial ridership based on those advantages.

Direct marketing to County employees

County employees enjoy a \$4 per day transit subsidy. In essence they have free transit service within Marin County. Clearly the County is interested in encouraging transit use and should be willing partners in promotional efforts to build ridership.

The primary recommended strategy is to utilize inter-office direct mail to reach County employees who live in Marin County with highly targeted information. This could be supported by e-mail notices, bulletin board posters, and outreach efforts.

- **Interoffice Direct Mailer.** The direct mailer should be designed to include the following information and appeals.
 - Reminder that County Employees ride transit “free” with their \$4 per day subsidy. This free ride allows commuters to avoid the costs of driving and the hassles of parking around the government center.
 - Simple map showing how to get from various communities in the county to the county offices on Marin Transit.
 - Invitation to use the “Trip Planner” for a detailed route from their home to their office.

If possible, Direct Mailers should be distributed to employees who live in a Marin County zip code served by transit and work in a county facility that is on a bus route. This will require the assistance of County Human Resources to tailor the distribution. However, this approach will reduce wasted distribution and ensure that the employees who receive the mailers will find them relevant.

- **Posters and Outreach.** The direct mail campaign could be accompanied by support efforts including:

Target: County Employees

Partner/Gatekeeper:
County Human Resources

Primary Medium: Interoffice
Direct Mail

Key Messages:

- \$4/day Subsidy
- Reduced gas costs, parking hassles
- Targeted route/schedule info
- Environmental benefits



*Sample Employee Direct Mailer
Used by Southern California
System...Included system map,
schedule and free ride tickets*

- Posters in employee break rooms that highlight the \$4 subsidy and tell employees to look for details in their office mail.
 - Outreach efforts, such as having an information table at a high traffic location (employee break room or lobby) at major county facilities.
- E-mail Notices. The County can also be asked to periodically e-mail notices to employees reminding them about the transit subsidy and directing them to www.marintransit.org for easy access to transit information.

Note that the County incentive is a pilot one-year program. Therefore, this effort may need to be implemented early in the marketing effort to ensure continuation of the incentive.

Targeted marketing to workers in downtown San Rafael

Downtown San Rafael is the daily destination for a large number of employees who work in stores, restaurants and other businesses. Those within walking distance of the San Rafael Transit Center have access to direct bus service from virtually anywhere in the County. Hence they are natural candidates for transit use. Marin Transit can offer employees the advantage of affordable transportation, while benefiting businesses by freeing up parking spaces.

Target marketing to these workers would require the participation of the downtown businesses. The San Rafael Chamber of Commerce could be a natural ally in such a project, and could help to recruit the participation of individual businesses. (The consultant has not talked with the Chamber about this recommendation.)

This program would be similar to the County Employees program described above, in that the primary media would be targeted handouts and posters. The handout would be a “commuter kit” showing how to commute by transit from throughout the county to Downtown San Rafael using Marin Transit’s network of routes. The primary appeals would be economy (avoiding the high cost of gas) and the convenience of not having to find parking. Reducing your carbon footprint might be a secondary appeal, to capitalize on the high level of environmental awareness among the Marin County population and particularly among the young adults who fill many of the restaurant and retail jobs in downtown San Rafael.

If reducing traffic and parking congestion in the downtown area is important to employers, some may be willing to subsidize transit passes or tickets for their employees. Further discussion with downtown employers will be needed to evaluate this possibility.

Target: Downtown San Rafael Workers

Partner/Gatekeeper:
Downtown Employers

Primary Medium: Handout
and Posters

Key Messages:

- Direct transit service from throughout county
- Economy – save on gas
- Convenience - no need to look for parking
- Reduce your carbon footprint

Increase Communication with the Hispanic Community

Latinos are an important ridership segment for Marin Transit. In the on-board survey conducted during development of the SRTP, 40% of all riders completed the questionnaire in Spanish. The Canal area with has 15,000 residents, 70% of whom are Hispanic, generates the highest transit usage in the County.

Spanish Language Information

A significant component of marketing to the Hispanic community is making Spanish language information available in print, by telephone, and on the internet. These strategies have been addressed in previous sections.

Also, the advertising campaign discussed in Phase 2 and on-board promotional efforts (e.g. posters to promote the new Day Pass if implemented) should include bilingual components.

Gatekeeper Outreach

Beyond Spanish language information, outreach to the Hispanic community can be enhanced by establishing relationships with gatekeepers who work with Latinos. These include:

- Pickleweed Community Center
- Canal Alliance
- Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- ESL Program at College of Marin
- Marin Literacy Program (ESL)

Discussions with these stakeholders are likely to yield opportunities for:

- Outreach presentations at classes or meetings sponsored by these groups.
- Lobby displays (discussed on page 28) or passenger guide distribution at the Canal Welcome Center, Pickleweed, and Canal Alliance.
- Opportunities for articles in organization newsletters (e.g. Canal Alliance).

Apartment Complex Targeting

The Canal area includes a large number of apartment complexes that provide another focal point for communications with residents. Ways of using the apartment complexes as a resource include:

- Bilingual posters on bulletin boards, including in the laundry rooms and next to mailboxes.

Target: Hispanic Population

Partner/Gatekeeper:
Social Service Agencies
Community Centers
ESL Program
Apartment Complexes

Primary Medium: Spanish
Language Brochures and
Posters, Outreach
Presentations

Key Messages:

- How to use transit services
- Availability of information in Spanish
- Location specific route and schedule info

- Schedule holders and/or transit information displays in complex offices.
- Asking the complex managers to provide transit information to all new residents when they move in.

These types of marketing efforts can be used with apartment complexes throughout the county. It is referenced here because the greatest concentration of very large complexes is in the Canal area, which has a heavily Hispanic population.

Educate Social Service Agencies that Work with Low Income Families and Workers

While Marin County's population is highly affluent, about 8.5% of the population lives below the poverty level. Many of these individuals are concentrated in the Canal district and around Marin City. While low-income families use transit heavily, they do not do so universally. There is likely room to increase ridership even among groups commonly considered transit dependent.

Most low-income families receive some kind of support through the Department of Health and Human Services programs, which include CalWorks, Employment Services, MediCal, food stamps and general assistance. Case workers are often responsible for helping their clients find transportation to aid appointments, training programs, medical appointments, and job search. DHHS pays transit fares for clients who are in the CalWorks program.

Other social service agencies that also work with low-income families, including Homeward Bound, Marin Housing Authority and the Marin Community Food Bank, should be included in the outreach efforts described below.

The recommended strategy for communicating with low-income families is to provide DHHS and other gatekeepers with information and tools that will make it easier for them to help their clients use transit.

"Transit Training" for Social Service and Jobs Program Gatekeepers

Gatekeepers for the low-income populations should be an important part of the focus of Gatekeeper Communication Program described on page 27. Periodic training sessions should be held with case workers to ensure that they understand the transit network and how to use it effectively for their clients. These can often be conducted at staff meetings for the various agencies. A simple letter expressing a desire to

Target: Low Income Families

Partner/Gatekeeper:
DHHS

Primary Medium: Trip
Planning Assistance, Fare
Media

Key Messages:

- How to use transit services
- Targeted route/schedule info
- Affordability

brief the agency staff, followed up by a phone call, should be effective in securing training opportunities.

In addition, each agency should be provided with a supply of passenger guides (that are replaced whenever changes are made) and with transit displays for their lobbies where appropriate.

Information Distribution and Poster Campaign at Affordable Apartment Complexes

Affordable apartment complexes where many low-income families live can be another channel of communications. They should be included in the gatekeeper newsletter mailing, should be provided with passenger guides and should be given posters for display in offices, by mailboxes, and in laundry rooms.

Low Income Fare Media

During the stakeholder interviews for this project the concept of low cost or free fares for low-income individuals was brought up by social service providers. Specifically their suggestions included:

- Reduced cost monthly pass for persons on public assistance. These types of passes are offered in some communities including Tucson and Calgary. They generally require a means test certification which is often provided by the County social services. In Marin County, DHHS would likely need to be an active partner in establishing such a program.
- Volume sale of discounted bus tickets to social service agencies. Other communities simply sell single ride tickets to social service agencies at a significant volume discount. The agencies then distribute the tickets to clients for free, based on their own criteria.

Marin Transit currently provides free tickets (good on limited services) to Homeward Bound, an agency which works with Homeless Families. Whether or not to expand into other “low-income” media would be a policy decision.

Middle and High School Students

Middle and high school students are an important target for supplemental routes, but also for general ridership. Approximately 16% of current Marin Transit trips are to/from school. Students, particularly those too young to drive, have the potential to use transit for recreation as well as commuting.

Marin Transit offers a Youth Fare at 50% of the regular fare, and a six month or one-year youth pass at a discounted rate. Many low-income students received the pass at no cost.

Marin Transit staff has promoted the youth pass program through distribution of information and posters to the schools served by the supplemental routes. These efforts should definitely be continued. Marin Transit may want to implement additional targeted efforts to reach the youth market.

Back to School Mailing (with free trial ride) for all schools with bus service

In the past, Golden Gate Transit has distributed information about the supplemental services to parents of students at schools served by these routes. Marin Transit may wish to re-initiate this effort and turn these information packets into promotional packets by adding a free ride pass or tickets good during the first week or two of classes. This would encourage students (and their parents) to try transit as a way of getting to school.

Join forces with Safe Routes to School to develop Transit Training curriculum for schools

Safe Routes to School works through schools to encourage children to get to school by walking, biking or riding the bus. Golden Gate Transit has a specially painted bus that it takes out to schools to teach kids about using transit. These two efforts are natural partners and could be combined to create a more systematic approach to transit training for middle and high school students.

A number of possible approaches were discussed during the interview with Safe Routes.

- The ideal approach would be to create a 30-40 minute presentation on how to use public transportation in Marin County. This would be designed to fit into a class curriculum so that the schools would commit class time to it. Possibly it could be tied into science with a focus on global warming and how to reduce carbon emissions by using transit. The program could be presented in a number of ways.
 - Best would be individual class presentations. If Golden Gate could bring a bus to the school, several classrooms could be presented to in a single day.
 - Second best would be an assembly presentation, also with a bus on site.
 - Third would be announcements in home room, hand outs of information, and an incentive to try transit (e.g. free ride ticket for student and parent).



Sample of School Direct Mailer used by LAVTA in Livermore

- The Safe Routes to School consultant suggested giving older students the challenge or assignment of making a trip on transit and reporting back. They would be given a free bus pass or ticket to use for the trip. Perhaps their “reports” could enter them in a drawing for a prize.

Continue advertising in FastForward student newspaper

Golden Gate Transit currently advertises the 50% student fare program in FastForward (www.fastforwardweb.com), a publication “for kids...by kids...about kids” that is distributed through area schools.

Summer Promotion of Youth Fare

Since the 50% youth fare is a year-round fare, students can be encouraged to use the bus for recreation and work travel during the summer vacation. This can be accomplished through distribution of promotional literature through schools (before the summer recess) and ads in FastForward. This message could also be incorporated into the “It’s easier than you think” campaign, using targeted newspaper advertising directed at parents. The key messages would be economy (only \$1) and freedom both for the youth and the parent.

College Students

College students are traditionally heavy users of public transportation. Marin Transit provides service to College of Marin (two campuses) and Dominican University. College of Marin has about 9000 students, of whom more than 85% live in Marin County. Dominican University has about 2000 students.

It should be noted that both colleges include information about the availability of transit services to campus in their catalogue.

Numerous unsuccessful attempts were made during the research for this plan to contact someone at College of Marin or Dominican University to discuss how best to market transit to their students. Since no response was received, we cannot provide specific input about communications opportunities available to Marin Transit. However, transit agencies in markets with similar sized colleges have used a number of strategies successfully. These include:

Institute a pre-paid fare program.

Universities and community colleges throughout the US are increasingly entering into prepaid fare programs with transit agencies. Under these programs, the schools pay the transit agency a relatively small amount per student, per semester (e.g. \$10). In return, all students have unlimited access to transit services with their current student ID card. Pre-paid programs have been in place at major universities (e.g. UC Berkeley and University of Oregon) for decades. However, they are becoming increasingly common at community colleges (Rio Hondo and

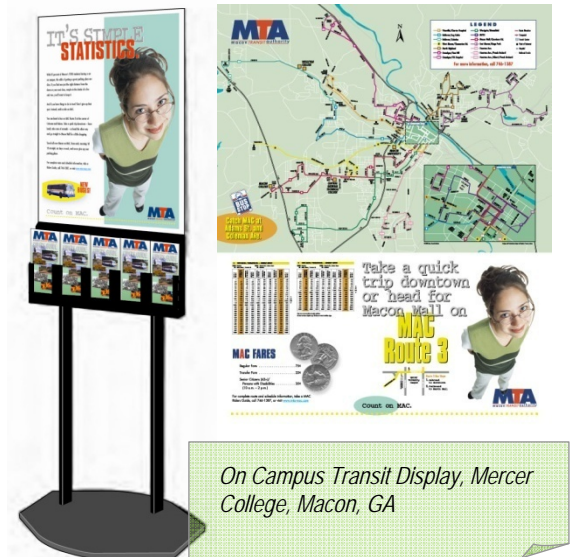
Los Rios Community Colleges, in California) and at smaller colleges (Ft. Lewis College, Durango).

These programs have been shown to significantly increase usage of transit among students.

Place permanent passenger information displays on college campuses.

One way to build visibility among students while providing easy access to transit information is to establish a permanent transit information display at a high traffic location on campus (e.g. student center). This display should provide permanent mounted information (route map and schedule) plus a supply of Rider's Guides or flyers specific to the routes serving the campus.

The photo at the right shows a display created for Mercer College to promote the transit system in Macon, Georgia. It utilized a standard display fixture and a digitally printed poster to create a customized, yet cost-effective display.



Educate new college students about their transit option.

Outreach efforts at the start of the school year can be used to educate students about their transportation options. This can be accomplished by have transit representatives on site during the registration period or by providing a customized handout for inclusion in orientation packets given to new students. The handout should highlight services to the campus and direct students to trip planning assistance via the phone or website.

Place ads and stories in student newspaper.

The *Echo Times* is the College of Marin student newspaper and would be a cost effective channel for advertising to college students.

Seniors

Marin County's residents are aging in place, and the 65+ component of the population is growing rapidly. By 2020 it is projected that 35% of the population will be over 65. This coming wave of baby boomer seniors is referred to as Marin's Silver Tsunami. Most of this population will not come to transit easily. They are used to the convenience of driving themselves. Neither Marin County's topography (hilly), nor much of the transit system structure (freeway-focused), is conducive to the use of fixed route services by seniors with declining mobility. However, there are exceptions. The three new shuttle routes, the EZ-Rider in Novato, and specific segments of other fixed routes offer services that seniors can use. However, attracting them will take a very targeted, hands-on approach to marketing.

Marin Transit staff has been active in making senior travel training presentations at residential facilities and senior centers. In addition, they are currently initiating a Senior Ambassador program that could provide some volunteer support for the outreach strategies described below.

It is recommended that marketing which targets seniors continue to be focused on senior-oriented residential complexes with easy access to a Marin Transit route. In this way, Marin Transit will be using its resources to market to potential riders who can realistically get to the bus stop.

Outreach presentations

Personal on-site presentations at senior complexes or senior centers are the most effective means of educating seniors about transit services. The presentation would include:

- A talk about how the system works, highlighting destinations of interest to seniors at that particular complex (nearby grocery stores, pharmacies, shopping centers, and medical facilities, etc.).
- An explanation of how to read the schedule.
- A trip planning session to show them how to get to the places they would want to go.
- Each participant should be left with a schedule and a free day-pass for future use.
- You may also want to work with the facility manager to plan small group trips, using the regular bus schedule, as this will allow seniors a safe way to try out the bus in the company of friends.

Senior-friendly schedules for target routes

For the routes you plan to promote to seniors, including the shuttle routes, you may want to consider creating senior friendly schedules separate from the county-wide guide. These schedules can be simple black and white publications that include the route map and schedule in a larger print format. Additional information might also be provided about how to get to locations on the route that are of particular interest to seniors.

The example at the right is from e-tran in Elk Grove, California, a suburb of Sacramento. They operate a number of neighborhood shuttle routes that serve major senior complexes. The schedule shown here is an 11" X 17" format piece that takes the graphics from their bus book and enlarges and customizes them for seniors. The outside of the piece has photos and copy that make it clear that the system is senior-friendly and highlights all of the senior-attractive locations that can be reached on this single route.

e specially easy

For Seniors at Henwick Square Apartments

Did you know that there is an **easy** line to make that will get you the services you desire without waiting in almost anywhere you want to go in LA County.

At Henwick Square, a 151-unit assisted living community, you enjoy every Monday through Friday. You receive home care services at all of the times you want them. You can choose the time of the service on the schedule. This can mean great convenience for you and your family.

If you call to order the home care 5/15 and 6/15 and pay \$171, you can wait 1 to 3 business days.

This service includes everything you need to know to live in **easy** Henwick Square. It also means you can make a schedule that works for the places you want to go.

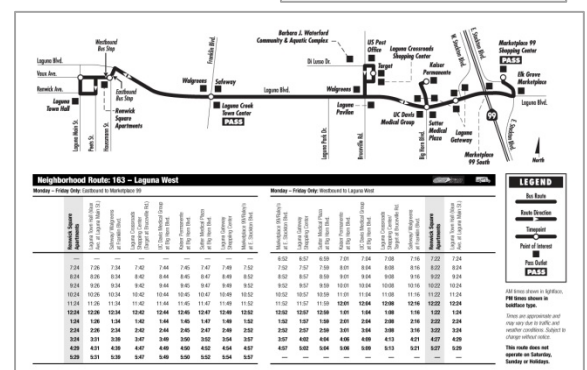
Call **(616) 687-3061** to get more information.

Just call us at 1-800-766-8322 8/25/01 for an appointment and your appointment will be at Henwick Square 11/11 by the California Policy Services.

Call (616) 687-3061
www.ez-start.org

- ✓ Make **ez-start** Route 151.
- ✓ No reservation required.
- ✓ No transportation.
- ✓ Call up to an hour ahead if you'd like to be picked up at your curbside.
- ✓ The smiling **ez-start** or family member to give you a ride.
- ✓ No traffic or parking to worry about.

ez tran



Senior Oriented Schedule for
Deviated Fixed Route in Elk Grove

These senior-friendly schedules can be used in several ways:

- Ask complex managers to distribute them to all residents at target senior complexes.
- Use them as part of the outreach presentations described above.
- Post them on bulletin boards in common areas, near mailboxes, and in laundry rooms at senior complexes, senior centers, and other senior-oriented destinations along the route.

West Marin Stagecoach Ridership

The rural west Marin County population is quite distinct from the eastern part of the county and truly requires a dedicated marketing effort. There are three populations who use the West Marin Stagecoach:

- East County residents traveling west for jobs
- West County residents traveling east
- Visitors traveling to West Marin from the East County or from the Bay Area for recreation.

The first group, those traveling to West Marin for jobs, would be addressed by strategies discussed under the Local and Shuttle Routes section. These are largely low-income workers who can be reached through county social service and employment programs, as well as by inclusion of the West Marin service in the Local Transit Guide.

The West Marin residents and visitors are addressed here.

Residents

Discussions with stakeholders in the West Marin Communities yielded a variety of recommendations for reaching the resident population. These are generally consistent with the marketing efforts currently being used for the West Marin Stagecoach. Current efforts include monthly ads in the Point Reyes Light and sponsorships on KWMR radio, as well as distribution of a schedule brochure.

Targeted information distribution.

The West Marin Routes should continue to be promoted via a schedule separate from the county-wide guide. Promotional posters along with a take-one holder of the schedules should continue to be visibly displayed at locations along the routes including:

- Post Office in each community
- Grocery Store in each community
- Coastal Health Alliance clinics
- Community Centers
- Each of the Stage Bus Stops (posted schedule)

Testimonial Ad Campaign in West Marin Newspapers.

Small, rural communities, such as those served by the West Marin Stagecoach, tend to respond well to testimonial advertising. In fact, the Coastal Health Alliance recently used a testimonial campaign featuring local residents to pass a funding measure.

"It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see the savings."
— Bill Harrold
Angels Camp

Bill commutes from Angels Camp to Arnold on Calaveras Transit. The twenty mile trip costs him \$1 each way, compared to \$3 in gas for his 69 Plymouth. Plus Bill likes the opportunity to relax while someone else watches the curves or deals with icy roads. You too can discover the economy, comfort and reliability of the new Calaveras Transit. Call today for your free First Time Riders Guide.

754-4450
Your ride is here.

Countywide public bus service connecting:

- Angels Camp
- Arnold
- Avery
- Columbia College
- Copperopolis
- Copper Cove
- Jackson
- La Grana
- Mokelumne Hill
- Mountain Ranch
- Marysville
- San Andreas
- Yuba City
- Vallecito
- Valley Springs
- West Point

CALAVERAS TRANSIT

Testimonial Ad for Calaveras Transit...this was one of a series of ads featuring workers, seniors and students

Showing real riders and how they benefit from using transit has a number of advantages. Selecting riders that represent the demographic segments you are trying to attract will send the message that “people like you” ride the bus (not just the down and out). And using real people lends credibility to your message.

A testimonial newspaper campaign can be created fairly simply. Begin by asking the bus operators to recommend and recruit participants. Then meet with each participant to interview and photograph them. (Organizing all of the interviews for a single day will allow you to affordably use a professional photographer.) Quotes from the interviews which illustrate transit's benefits can be used for headlines. The photos of the riders, along with their names, will encourage newspaper readers to stop and read the ads.

Public Relations Efforts through local newspapers and KWMR Community Radio Station

West Marin is distinct enough from the rest of the county to justify a separate public relations effort. Two newspapers (Pt. Reyes Light and West Marin Citizen) and KWMR Community Radio Station are the primary news media for the area. News releases of specific interest to West Marin residents should be regularly distributed to these media.

Visitors

Visitors to West Marin come from throughout the county, the state, and the world. Three communications efforts are recommended for making information about the West Marin Stagecoach available to them.

Distribution of information through the state and national parks.

Targeted posters and schedules for the West Marin Stagecoach can be distributed through the park facilities at Pt. Reyes Seashore, Samuel P. Taylor State Park, and Tamalpais State Park. These parks may also wish to send small supplies of the schedules to parks in neighboring counties.

Transit links on park websites.

Most travelers these days use the internet for travel planning. Therefore having information about the West Marin services on line is the most effective way of reaching travelers from outside the area. The West Marin Stagecoach and Golden Gate Transit links on the Point Reyes National Seashore Directions page are ideal. Links like this should be requested on the web pages for the other parks. You may also want to consider having these links go first to a visitor-oriented page on the website that specifically shows how you can use GGT and West Marin Stagecoach to travel from outside of Marin County to the parks. They

can then link to the West Marin Stagecoach and GGT schedule information as they do now.

Promotion of West Marin Stagecoach to other Marin Transit riders and Golden Gate Transit commuter route riders.

There is also the opportunity to cross-sell the West Marin Service to users of other Marin Transit local and Golden Gate Transit commuter riders. Ads in Passenger Guides and posters on buses can promote recreational use of the West Marin Stagecoach by riders and their families.

Route Specific Marketing for New or Targeted Routes

Conduct targeted marketing efforts to support the introduction of new or specially targeted routes.

Most of the marketing efforts outlined in this plan are designed to support Marin Transit's overall route network – GGT-operated routes, shuttle routes, and West Marin Stagecoach. However, sometimes it will be necessary to provide added support or promotion for a specific route or set of routes, particularly during the introduction of new services. Some of the strategies that might be utilized

- Customized passenger information guide and poster, designed to be appropriate for the target audience.
For example: Large type for seniors
- Distribution of the guide and display of the poster at locations frequented by targets population along the route.
- On-going communications with “gatekeepers” who work with target populations served by the route.
- Outreach presentation to the target population.
Personal presentations at senior centers or apartment complexes along the route.
- Targeted advertising in local community newspapers within the areas served by the route.

While these types of specialized efforts can be useful in helping to establish new services, it is important to recognize that they address much smaller population bases than efforts designed to promote the overall Marin Transit system and will result in smaller overall ridership gains.

IMPLEMENTATION

Following this section is an implementation schedule/budget that will be completed by the consultant in conjunction with Marin Transit staff. This table will serve as an implementation guide for the plan, assigning a timeframe and budget to each strategy chosen for implementation.

This plan will be implemented based on available resources. Many costs are yet to be fully identified, as they involve both up-front capital investments and operation expenses, in addition to annual and on-going marketing costs.

For example, there will be additional ongoing operating costs associated with having a dedicated Marin Local fleet. Marin Transit staff will need to work closely with Golden Gate Transit to forecast the financial implications, to maintain efficiencies, and to minimize additional service costs over time.

The implementation schedule for marketing activities will be adjusted in conjunction with each year's annual budget to reflect available resources.

In addition to timing and budget for each strategy, there are a number of additional implementation factors that must be considered.

Coordination with Golden Gate Transit

Implementation of most of the marketing strategies specified in this plan will require a joint effort between Marin Transit and its operating partners, particularly Golden Gate Transit. A number of the recommended strategies will require policy decisions on the part of the boards of both Marin Transit and Golden Gate Transit. These include:

- Branding on vehicles and shared bus stops
- Dedication of specific buses to Marin Transit routes
- Introduction of additional local fare media, and potential acceptance of these media for local trips on GGT regional basic routes 10, 40, 42, 70, and 80 and potentially regional commute routes. The agencies will need to develop a revenue-sharing agreement.

In addition, there will need to be decisions about Golden Gate Transit's role in production of the Marin County Transit Guide and other passenger information materials such as bus stop displays. Options include having the GGT graphics staff produce the new guide, or simply provide the schedule files in a format that can be used by a graphics firm to provide this service. There may be additional costs due to having separate transit guides.

Staff Resources

A variety of types of resources will be needed to implement the strategies contained herein. These include:

- Graphic design and production services for the creation of passenger information materials, bus stop signage, and branding implementation
- Printing of passenger and promotional materials, production of bus stop signage, and transit center displays
- Web design services to upgrade the Marin Transit website.
- Advertising services to assist with creation and placement of the Advertising Campaign
- Public relations services to write and distribute news releases.
- Staff to work with area gatekeepers to develop and implement the targeted ridership strategies outlined in Priority 3.
- Staff to conduct outreach presentations and distribute promotional materials, passenger information guides, and displays.

Given Marin Transit's small staff, it is likely that many of the services will be secured through contracts with marketing agencies or independent contractors. This will be particularly true during Phase 1 and 2 of implementation.

Market Research/Program Evaluation

As the marketing effort moves forward, it will be important to track changes in ridership, market share, composition of the customer base, and passenger satisfaction. While changes in ridership can be tracked through internal reporting, the other factors will require a program of periodic marketing research. Three types of market research would provide value to the marketing effort.

Periodic On-board Survey (every 2 years)

Marin Transit (in conjunction with Golden Gate Transit) will be conducting a passenger survey in Spring 2008. This type of survey, conducted every two years, can be used to track changes in:

- Passenger satisfaction
- Fare media usage
- Demographic profile of riders (by route)
- Website usage
- Transit dependent/discretionary ridership

Pre and Post Telephone Survey

To understand changes in perceptions of transit within the community and estimate market share, a community-wide telephone survey, conducted before and after implementation of the Phase 1 and 2 efforts, would be useful. The telephone survey could be used to explore:

- Level of transit usage and potential usage among the population
- Awareness of Marin Transit and of transit service in Marin
- Attitude towards transit usage
- Relevance of various marketing appeals

It should be noted that telephone surveys of this type are relatively costly and would require a budget separate from the established marketing budget. The pre and post survey could easily cost \$60,000.

Informal Focus Groups with Target Populations

Informal focus groups conducted either by staff or a consultant can be used to aid development of the community based programs outline in Phase 3. Participants for these groups can often be recruited through the gatekeeper, and a guided discussion with them can help to identify key appeals and messages to be included in presentations and promotional materials.