

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Rebranding Project Update
FROM: Tony McCaulay, Marketing Manager
DATE: April 24, 2017

Action Requested

Review the proposed new logo and vehicle design concepts for Wheels bus service and forward a recommendation to the Board of Directors to adopt these designs.

Background

In April 2016, LAVTA entered into a contract with the advertising agency PAVLOV out of Ft. Worth, Texas to conduct research and explore opportunities for rebranding LAVTA and Wheels. In June, PAVLOV presented the findings of their brand discovery and strategy research to the Board suggesting a “Ridercentric” strategy, focused on continual improvement designed around people and their mobility needs.

The next phase of PAVLOV’s work was to explore potential new names to replace Wheels. A list of potential names was developed and presented to two focus groups and to the general public through an electronic community survey.

In October, PAVLOV presented to the LAVTA Board a recommendation to replace the Wheels brand name with TRI-GO. The minutes of that meeting suggest there was limited enthusiasm for the TRI-GO name. A number of Board members indicated that they were either not fond of the TRI-GO name or were more interested in updated the image, look and feel of the Wheels brand and logo.

Discussion

Wheels enjoys very favorable name recognition in the Tri-Valley area. In the September 2015 community survey conducted as part of the Comprehensive Operational Analysis, unaided awareness of Wheels was at 53 percent for Livermore, Dublin and Pleasanton residents. Aided awareness was 69 percent from the same group. PAVLOV’s community survey began with the question “What does “WHEELS” mean to you?” 77 percent of respondents said either “Bus service” or “A way of transportation”.

Another question in the PAVLOV survey offered respondents 12 possible options for names, asking “which of these possible brand names feels like the best fit?” Wheels was the overwhelming favorite of those surveyed, receiving a 44 percent response rate. The next closest response was “None of the above” at 13 percent. TRI-GO received a 10 percent response rate.

Based on the feedback from the LAVTA Board and the public, staff has focused on a possible modernization of the Wheels logo and the look and feel of the Wheels fleet design. It is important to note that an agency’s brand identity is more than just a modern logo and design, it represents the image the organization desires to portray to the community and includes the expectations our customers should have with regard to quality, reliability and service.

LAVTA’s Rapid service already has a strong brand identity. External communication regarding the Rapid service contains a consistent message that riders can expect 15 minute weekday frequency, convenient connections to BART, and upgraded amenities for passenger comfort both on board the vehicle and at bus stops. The vehicles also have a modern looking design and logo. The Rapid represents the premium offering in the LAVTA service family.

By comparison, Wheels service represents traditional local transit service with typical weekday vehicle headways of 30-60 minutes. While many of the same core agency values such as safe, clean, and reliable transportation apply to both the Rapid and Wheels services, the Wheels logo and vehicle design do not have the same modern look as the Rapid. The staff recommendation is to make the two fleets look similar enough, both in logo appearance and vehicle design, to be recognizable as being from the same family of services yet different enough to be distinguishable as two distinct types of service.

It is also proposed that both the Wheels and Rapid services would fall under the LAVTA agency name. In the past few years, LAVTA has become known for more than just operating Wheels bus service. The Shared Autonomous Vehicle project is a LAVTA project. The regional rail project is a LAVTA project. Currently the rear and passenger sides of the Rapid buses have a decal that reads “A SERVICE OF WHEELS”. It is proposed that both Wheels and Rapid buses would have decals reading “A SERVICE OF LAVTA” to increase visibility and recognition of the agency name.

The proposed new Wheels logo and vehicle design concepts will be presented at the Projects and Services Committee meeting.

Budget

The approved FY2017 Budget included \$60,000 for new bus stops signs with the new logo. Rebranding of the website and social media sites was also included in the FY2017 budget in the amount of \$8,000. There are currently 13 buses in the Wheels fleet that came from the manufacturer with a plain white exterior. The cost of completing the exterior of those vehicles with the new design was already included in the original purchase price of the vehicles.

Other expenses associated with the adoption of a new Wheels logo would be a media event to unveil the new look, promotional items, collateral materials and operator uniforms. Many of these items could be changed over a period of time, for example as printed materials are being revised or reprinted. These expenses will come from existing line items in the FY 2017 budget or will be included in the proposed FY 2018 budget.

Next Steps

Should the Board of Directors approve the proposed logo and design, staff will begin the process of wrapping the existing 13 Wheels buses in the fleet that have plain white exteriors with the new vehicle design and logo. Simultaneously, work will begin on planning an event to unveil the new look. Promo items will be ordered to be available at the unveiling. Our bus manufacturer Gillig will be notified to incorporate the design on the vehicles currently in production and expected to be delivered beginning in August.

Recommendation

It is requested that the Projects and Services Committee review the proposed new logo and vehicle design concepts for Wheels bus service and forward a recommendation to the Board of Directors to adopt these designs.