

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: FY 2018 Marketing Plan  
FROM: Tony McCaulay, Marketing Manager  
DATE: June 26, 2017

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**Action Requested**

Review and recommend proposed FY 2018 Marketing Plan to the Board of Directors for approval.

**Background**

As a part of the annual planning for the upcoming fiscal year, staff has drafted the FY 2018 Marketing Plan and is presenting it to the Projects and Services Committee for feedback.

**Discussion**

The proposed FY 2018 Marketing Plan (Attachment 1) includes multiple marketing initiatives that primarily focus on the goal of increasing ridership. The initiatives include the following:

- Rapid Routes
- Las Positas College
- Affordable Student Transit Pass Pilot Students
- Go Dublin
- Existing Wheels Riders
- New Residents
- New Wheels buses, fleet design and logo
- Community Outreach

**Recommendation**

The Projects and Services Committee recommends approval of the FY2018 Wheels Marketing Plan.

Attachment:

1. FY 2018 Wheels Marketing Plan

# **FY 2018 Marketing Plan**

**June 2017**

**Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority**

## Background

During the past year, a number of improvements to service delivery were introduced by the Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority (LAVTA) to better serve the Tri-Valley region. The changes included a major service restructuring and the introduction of new services designed to be more attractive to choice riders.

In August 2016, LAVTA implemented a major service redesign and resource reallocation effort. The changes included the elimination of unproductive routes that operated in low-density areas, a reduction in duplicative services, and directing additional resources into corridors serving the two Dublin/Pleasanton BART stations.

As a result, there are now two Rapid bus routes that provide weekday service every 15 minutes serving the two Tri-Valley BART stations and other key destinations along the routes. The Community Survey conducted prior to the development of the Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA) confirmed the importance of providing convenient connections to and from BART. Nearly 90 percent of those surveyed reported having used BART for non-work related trips. Of those who indicated they rode BART for work trips, nearly 25 percent said they ride either every day or multiple times a week.

Another key part of the August 2016 service redesign was to greatly improve access to Las Positas College with the introduction of Rapid service to the campus. During the 2016/17 academic year, Las Positas College students were provided with unlimited access to all LAVTA services. As a result of these two actions, student ridership has increased by approximately 100 percent over the previous year.

The Go Dublin demonstration project was also implemented in the past year, offering a 50 percent discount, up to \$5.00, on rideshare trips taken with partners Uber, Lyft and DeSoto Cab. The Go Dublin promotion is paid for by local Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds from LAVTA and Measure BB funds from the Alameda County Transportation Commission.

In May 2017, the LAVTA Board of Directors concluded a year-long discussion of rebranding and potential new service names to replace the

“Wheels” brand as well as new vehicle designs. Ultimately, the Board voted to retain the Wheels name in part because it is well established and recognized in the community. The Board also agreed to update the Wheels fleet design and logo to more closely resemble the Rapid fleet and logo.

Another significant part of the background to this FY2018 Marketing Plan is the increased standing of the marketing function within the LAVTA administrative staff. As part of a reorganization approved by the LAVTA Board, the marketing function now reports directly to the Executive Director. A new Marketing Manager and Marketing and Communications Specialist were both hired during the first half of 2017.

## **FY 2018 Marketing Goals and Primary Target Markets**

LAVTA's primary marketing goals in FY 2018 are:

- By the end of FY 2018, increase monthly ridership figures by 5 percent compared to FY 2017 figures
- Work with Las Positas College faculty and staff to obtain a positive vote on a student fee referendum in Spring 2018 to provide a continuing funding source for the student pass program
- By the end of 2018, increase monthly visits to wheelsbus.com by 5 percent compared to FY 2017 figures

The majority of ridership based marketing activities will be focused on three primary target groups: residents and commuters along the two Rapid routes; students at Las Positas College; and students at the four Livermore schools participating in the Affordable Student Transit Pass Pilot (ASTPP).

In addition, marketing efforts will encourage increased ridership on high productivity Wheels bus routes, target the Go Dublin service area for increased utilization there, test the effectiveness of direct marketing to new residents, and increase utilization of digital platforms to reach our target audiences.

The delivery of 20 new buses for the Wheels bus fleet, along with the introduction of a new vehicle design and logo, provides the opportunity to promote the service delivery improvements that have been made in the past year.

## Marketing Initiatives

This section forms the core of the Marketing Plan. It defines in more detail the activities proposed for each of the goals and target markets identified in the previous section.

### Rapid Routes

The primary Rapid route target markets will include residents transferring to BART, residents commuting to other locations along the route, and students along both Rapid routes. Messaging themes will include: 15 minute weekday headways; coordinated schedules with BART trains; convenience of front door service and lack of parking at BART stations; and other key destinations besides BART.

#### Tactics

1. Evaluate the strategies and tactics utilized in the SmartTrips Pleasanton Program and use lessons learned in developing a similar individualized marketing outreach effort along the Route 30R Dublin Boulevard corridor
2. Use targeted direct mail and/or door hangers to select residents within  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile walk distance of Rapid routes
3. Use targeted digital marketing in key locations along the route
4. Develop a program to solicit current non-riders to commit to ride for a designated period of time, with a financial incentive for reporting on their experience to aid future marketing activities
5. Outreach to major employers along each Rapid route, including the opportunity for employers to choose information packets for employees or, for larger employers, a transit fair
6. Outreach to select events along the routes to include having a Rapid bus on display for potential riders to learn riding basics in a relaxed environment

### Las Positas College

The primary Las Positas target will be students who can utilize the Rapid Route 30R for direct travel to and from campus, students transferring from ACE and BART, as well as Los Positas faculty and staff. Messaging

themes will include: 15 minute weekday headways; coordinated schedules with BART trains; and students ride free with their student ID.

### Tactics

1. Execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Las Positas College to clearly define what is expected from each party during the 2017-18 academic year
2. Establish a timeline of activities to be completed leading to a student fee ballot initiative in Spring 2018 to fund continuation of the Las Positas College Pass program
3. Continue on campus outreach activities on a regular basis to engage students, answer questions and encourage ridership, especially at the start of each semester
4. As part of MOU, establish in-kind marketing activities to be carried out by Las Positas including email blasts, on campus signage, website information and links, and other campus activities

### Affordable Student Transit Pass Pilot (ASTPP) Students

Four Livermore schools will be participating in the Alameda County Transportation Committee's (ACTC) ASTPP program during the 2017-18 academic year, including returning participants East Avenue Middle and Livermore High and two new schools, Christensen Middle School and Del Valle Continuation High School, bringing the total number of students with access to a free LAVTA pass to approximately 3,200 for the upcoming year. Messaging themes will include: convenience of service in proximity to the four schools; real time transit apps; use of Wheels and Rapid service for trips other than to and from school; and independence.

### Tactics

1. Coordinate outreach efforts with ACTC and consultant staff administering the program as well as faculty and staff at each of the four schools

2. Because Tri-Valley students participating in the ASTPP during the 2017-18 school year will be issued Clipper Cards for the first time, outreach efforts will include information on how to use the card on LAVTA services as well as on other Bay Area transit services
3. Encourage use of the student pass for non-school related trips, including after school sports and activities, recreational and shopping trips
4. Engage students through interactive social media activities

### Go Dublin

The Go Dublin program was implemented in early 2017. The demonstration project is intended to allow LAVTA to provide service into areas where traditional fixed route bus service does not make sense, and provide mobility to more people at a lower cost by providing a 50 percent discount on uberPOOL, Lyft Line or DeSoto Share trips. Messaging themes will include: difficulty in parking at BART stations; the availability of the 50 percent discount; and the convenience of using this service with existing rideshare apps by simply entering a coupon code.

#### Tactics

1. Direct mail to select residents not served by the Rapid Route 30R
2. Tabling at BART stations
3. Direct outreach by Uber, Lyft and DeSoto Cab to their customers
4. Targeted digital marketing

### Existing Riders

Current riders have already taken the steps necessary to learn how to use Wheels or Rapid services. Many of these riders fall into the category of transit dependent. The most recent LAVTA Passenger Survey asked how riders would have made a trip if not on Wheels. Over 80 percent said they would either walk, get a ride, use a bike or just not make the trip. The



opportunity exists to encourage additional ridership by these current passengers by encouraging the use of fare media they may not be aware of. Messaging themes will include; the benefits of using the Clipper Card to obtain unlimited access for a day for less than the cost of two cash fares.

#### Tactics

1. Interior bus signs describing the unlimited access feature of the Day Pass available by using the Clipper card
2. Tabling at the downtown Transit Center to promote the Day Pass feature

#### New Residents

Individuals who are new to or have relocated within the Tri-Valley region may not be aware of the convenient transit options available. Some who move may have been motivated to their new location by proximity to BART, but may have been unaware of parking availability issues. This particular marketing effort will target individuals who have moved to a new residence located within walk distance of a Rapid bus route with less than a 15 minute travel time to a BART Station. Messaging themes will include: 15 minute weekday headways on Rapid routes; coordinated schedules with BART trains; inconvenience of parking at BART stations; other key destinations besides BART; and other LAVTA services.

#### Tactic

1. Test direct mail outreach targeting individuals who have moved to a new residence located in target area described above.

#### New Wheels buses, fleet design and logo

After considerable deliberation, the LAVTA Board decided to maintain the Wheels name, but to introduce an updated vehicles design and logo. The new look of the Wheels fleet design, the introduction of 20 new buses and service delivery improvements provide a unique opportunity to retain existing riders and encourage non-riders to give the service a try. Messaging themes include: more direct service, improved on-time

performance, comfort and cleanliness of vehicles, and a freshening of the look of the vehicles.

### Tactics

1. Introduce new vehicle design in a manner TBD as new buses being manufactured in Fall 2017 are placed into revenue service
2. Use opportunity of fresh look of vehicles to promote improvements in service delivery, including directness of service and on-time performance
3. For Wheels buses not being retired with the new vehicle order, begin process of wrapping with new vehicle design and logo
4. As timetables, brochures and on-street static inserts for bus stops are scheduled for replacement, introduce new logo to those marketing pieces
5. Design and begin installation of new Wheels bus stop signs
6. Change the Wheels logo on website, phone app, and social media tools

### Community Outreach

LAVTA will participate in selected public outreach events during FY18 to promote goodwill for the agency and to provide an opportunity to engage with the public in general about Wheels and Rapid bus services.

- Alameda County Fair – Rideo bus display - June/July 2016
- Stuff-a-bus – solicit co-sponsor to reinstitute popular program – November/December 2017
- Livermore and Pleasanton Holiday Parades – vehicles entered in both parades – December 2017
- Dublin St Patrick's Day Parade & Festival – enter vehicle in parade; staff a booth at festival – March 2018

- Bike to Work Day – co-sponsor an energizer station with Lawrence Livermore Lab; provide promotional item for BTWD participants – May 2018
- Art Shelter Program – continue successful program and introduce new art shelter at the end of the 2017-18 academic year – May/June 2018
- Livermore Rodeo Parade – Rideo vehicle in parade – June 2018

## Budget

The following line items were included in the approved FY 2018 LAVTA Budget in support of the above activities.

### Operating

#### Professional Services

- Individualized marketing \$130,000
- On-call graphic design \$ 50,000
- Translation \$ 2,000

#### Other Outside Services

- Printing \$ 50,000

#### Advertising

- Direct marketing \$ 50,000
- Digital/electronic \$ 20,000
- Print \$ 15,000

#### Miscellaneous

- Rebranded Wheels service \$ 20,000
- Promotional Items \$ 10,000
- Art shelter program \$ 5,000
- Website improvements \$ 10,000

### Capital

- New Wheels bus stop signs \$ 50,000
- Vehicle wraps – new design \$175,000