

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Rebranding Project Update  
FROM: Tony McCaulay, Marketing Manager  
DATE: May 22, 2017

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**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**

At the April Projects and Services Committee, staff presented proposed logo and design concepts for LAVTA's Wheels bus service. The committee members spoke favorably regarding the proposed vehicle design, which is similar to the Rapid bus design using traditional Wheels red and blue colors. The committee members also supported having the Rapid and Wheels logos have a similar appearance to make it clearer that both are operated by LAVTA.

The committee had many comments with regard to the proposed Wheels logo itself, including colors, slant of the logo as well as other design elements. Staff has worked on adjustments to the logo and will be presenting a revised recommendation at the May Projects and Services Committee.

For the benefit of the two committee members not present during the April staff presentation, the indented information that follows provides the staff report from April and contains the rationale for maintaining the Wheels name rather than adopting a new name. This report also details the staff thinking behind the proposed vehicle design and logo. Finally, a revised recommendation concludes this report.

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. LAVTA has also been associated with the regional rail 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 \$95,000 for vehicle wraps for the rebranding effort. This includes the 20 Wheels buses currently being built as well as the buses currently displaying a completely white exterior.

Other expenses associated with the adoption of a new Wheels logo would be a media event to unveil the new look, revisions to bus stop signs, the website, promotional items, collateral materials and operator uniforms. Many of these items could be revised over a period of time, for example as printed materials are being revised. Costs are estimated at \$75,000-\$100,000 and 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 have an initial bus in the existing fleet wrapped 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 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. Should the Board of Directors desire additional major revisions to the logo, staff would recommend that the Board approve the vehicle design so that work can begin on procurement and installation of the design, with the final logo approval to be done at a later date.