

ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 9/8/2021

Staff Report No. 21-380

TO: AC Transit Board of Directors
FROM: Michael A. Hursh, General Manager
SUBJECT: External Affairs, Marketing & Communications FY21 Annual Report

BRIEFING ITEM

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Consider receiving FY21 Annual Report on the Activities of the External Affairs, Marketing & Communications Department.

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:

Goal - Strong Public and Policymaker Support
Initiative - Service Quality

The FY 21 Annual External Affairs, Marketing & Communications (EAMC) Report provides an overview of the programs and projects to support the District's strategic goals and initiatives of Strong Public and Policymaker Support, Safe and Secure Operations, Financial Stability and Resiliency, Convenient and Reliable Service, Employee Recruitment, Retention and Training, and Zero Emission Programs.

BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:

There are no budgetary or fiscal impacts related to this report.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

The External Affairs, Marketing & Communications Department focuses on the the Marketing, Communications, Customer Service, Print, Legislative Affairs and Community Relations functions.

During the FY 21 year, the Department achieved significant goals and accomplishments in communicating with riders, constituents, key stakeholders, community based organizations, businesses, and federal, state, municipal, and local elected officials. Strategic rider and employee communications this year included pandemic COVID related materials.

Major achievements and accomplishments for this year include launching the TEMPO service, responding to the COVID crisis, increasing visibility for the Zero Emission Bus program, advocating for funding, initiating legislation, managing the call center, and the Transit Talks Program.

Launched *TEMPO* Service

On August 9, 2020, AC Transit launched the *TEMPO* Service. *TEMPO* was the culmination of years of research, outreach and promotion. The extensive launch campaign was multilingual and encouraged trial by new riders with a fare free period which also provided showed the District's appreciation to existing riders that had been waiting for the new service. Staff, Outreach Consultants, and Ambassadors provided in-person outreach along the 9.5 mile corridor. The multifaceted advertising campaign was composed of print, radio, and extensive social media. Staff trained Platform Agents about the communities along the corridor to strengthen the District being able to communicate with its constituents. The Marketing & Communications Departments developed award winning collateral, the ticket vending machines, and branding of the distinctive coaches. The Legislative Affairs & Community Relations Departments worked closely with the cities of Oakland and San Leandro, Alameda County and the State of California to make the launch a success.

COVID - 19 Response

EAMC launched the reNEW Plan, a comprehensive COVID-19 action plan which used approachable language to inform our riders and the general public about important precautions and commitments AC Transit had taken to keep the East Bay safe and healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic. EAMC created a comprehensive communications and engagement campaign that mobilized all existing assets including bus stops, bus shelters, Tempo Line 1T stations, transit hubs, and customer service, plus our entire fleet, the Divisions that house them, and all digital communication platforms. Our objective was to nurture trust, provide transparency, and engage in ongoing social listening and public education, aligned with guidance from public health officials. The campaign included the creation of designated artwork that incorporated AC Transit's primary brand colors to foster affinity while counting on brand recognition to ensure easy absorption and theme-based messaging. Hashtags and taglines, including *#ACTransitStrong*, were created to foster engagement and better evaluate results.

Zero Emission Bus Program

AC Transit has been building a position of leadership in the "zero emission" segment of public transit for over 18 years. The Marketing & Communications Department has developed a preliminary outreach plan for the District's broader zero emission program to key stakeholders, including policy makers, funders, regulatory agencies, industry counterparts, community-based organizations, and the public. Promoting our achievements and current initiatives will elevate AC Transit's profile and likely make it more competitive for funding As we embark on the pathway to a 100% emission-free fleet, the department has developed a livery for the ZEB fleet.

Funding and Legislative Advocacy

The Legislative Affairs & Community Relations Department has advocated federal sources for funding during this COVID financial crisis. The District has received \$114 million in CARES funding and \$56 million in CRRSA funding during this period. Additionally, the department worked with the California Special District Association to carve out 5% in unspent funds for special districts. Additionally, the department initiated AB 917 to provide video imaging for enforcement of parking violations including those at bus stops, AB 784 to modify Transit District Law, and has worked with legislators on AB 455 to decrease bay bridge congestion for public transit.

Managing the Call Center

During the COVID - 19 period, call center volumes have decreased by about 50%, however the District accepted over 26,000 calls. Those calls were received within the goal time - approximately 85% of calls were received within 20 seconds and 99% of all calls were received within 3 minutes. The average call time has been about 3.5 minutes. The top three reasons for calls are for travel information, trip planning, and commendations / complaints. The top three feedback channels are phone, app, and website.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:

It is advantageous to the District to clearly convey its service, programs, and goals to riders, constituents, key stakeholders, community based organization partners, businesses, and federal, state, and local elected officials.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:

There is no alternative analysis associated with the staff report.

PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:

There are no prior relevant Board actions or policies.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. External Affairs, Marketing & Communications FY21 Activities Report

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