



Source: Public Works *John*

Agenda Item No: REP 61-13

To: **City Council**
From: **City Manager and Staff** *MM*

Council Meeting Date: Apr 15, 2013

Re: Transit Report - Integrated Marketing Communications Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Staff has prepared for Council consideration a report presenting the Integrated Marketing Communications Plan.

DISCUSSION:

The Columbia Transit Integrated Marketing Communications Plan is designed with the purpose of guiding and molding the image of Columbia Transit. The intent of this plan is to keep the focus of all marketing, advertising and public relations activities on the desired Columbia Transit brand in conjunction with, and support of, the City of Columbia's mission, vision and values.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The total recommended marketing budget for this plan is estimated at \$65,000.

VISION IMPACT:

<http://www.gocolumbiamo.com/Council/Meetings/visionimpact.php>

Columbia will have diverse travel options that allow for safe and efficient travel to and through destination points. Travel options will be compatible with adjacent land uses and coordinated with the transportation timing needs of the community.

SUGGESTED COUNCIL ACTIONS:

For information only.

FISCAL and VISION NOTES:					
City Fiscal Impact Enter all that apply		Program Impact		Mandates	
City's current net FY cost	\$0.00	New Program/ Agency?	No	Federal or State mandated?	No
Amount of funds already appropriated	\$0.00	Duplicates/Expands an existing program?	No	Vision Implementation impact	
Amount of budget amendment needed	\$0.00	Fiscal Impact on any local political subdivision?	No	Enter all that apply: Refer to Web site	
Estimated 2 year net costs:		Resources Required		Vision Impact?	Yes
One Time	\$0.00	Requires add'l FTE Personnel?	No	Primary Vision, Strategy and/or Goal Item #	13.2
Operating/ Ongoing	\$0.00	Requires add'l facilities?	No	Secondary Vision, Strategy and/or Goal Item #	
		Requires add'l capital equipment?	No	Fiscal year implementation Task #	



Columbia Transit Integrated Marketing Communication Plan

2013

Overview

This Integrated Marketing Communication plan is implemented with the purpose of guiding and molding the image of Columbia Transit. Its intent is to keep the focus of all marketing, advertising and public relations activities on the desired Columbia Transit brand in conjunction with and support of the City of Columbia's mission, vision and values.

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Situation Analysis

Customer Demographics

Columbia Transit's current service population encompasses Columbia residents in need of transportation who live within ½ mile of a Columbia Transit route or are ADA eligible within the Para-Transit service area.

This includes the following target segments:

- Low income individuals with little to no access to any other form of reliable motorized transportation
- Individuals who do not have the ability to drive their own vehicle due to visual, medical, mental or legal impairments.
- Multi-person households with only one vehicle
- Individuals looking for a more economical mode of transportation
- Individuals looking for a more environmentally friendly mode of transportation

Benchmarks

Surveys have not been done regarding detailed information about our ridership to this point. However, a recommendation of this plan is to implement a biannual survey of riders to obtain baseline information and as time progresses to evaluate any patterns or changes.

Ridership data:

Total Ridership for Fiscal Year 2011- 2,252,954

Total Ridership for Fiscal Year 2012- 2,075,085

An 8% decrease in ridership was seen from FY 2011 to FY 2012. This decrease is attributed in part to the following route/service changes:

- Fare prices were increased 50% from \$1.00 to \$1.50 and subsequent changes in pass prices. Fixed route ridership decreased an average of 11%, likely due to the fare increase.
- The Black and Gold route contract rates were increased, resulting in the loss of two previously held contracts. The routes saw a 23% decrease in ridership.

Partnerships of Note

- Federal Transportation Administration (FTA)- Columbia Transit receives grant funds from the FTA for operational and capital costs. There are regulations the system must follow to qualify for these funds.
- Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) Vendor- There is a request-for-proposal (RFP) in progress to choose a vendor that will provide AVL solutions related to real-time bus tracking and arrival information via a customer interface. The vendor will also provide technology and hardware to increase the amount and improve the quality of data Columbia Transit can collect about rider use of the system.
- Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT)- Columbia Transit works with MoDOT in several ways.
 - Receiving a small amount of state funds through a grant
 - Compliance to regulations set forth by the state
 - As an intermediary to some FTA requirements and regulations

Service Description

Fixed Route Service

The fixed routes are designed in an orbital-pulse system in which the Wabash station is the hub where each route meets. Routes run on a 40 minute headway during peak service and 80 minute head-ways during off peak service (mid-day [10:00am-2:00pm], extended evening [Thursdays and Fridays], Saturdays). An exception to the fixed route model is the 107 FastCAT Express. This route is an express loop with a 15 minute headway through the downtown Columbia area, University of Missouri (MU) and Stephens College campuses. This route runs extended hours, seven days a week and does not stop at the Wabash station.

Seasonal and Special Service

- **Black and Gold Contracted Routes**
These routes are only in service Monday through Friday while the MU is in regular session. These routes travel to and from large student-centric housing to the MU Student Center on 30 minute head-ways. Each apartment complex on the route must pay per bed for shuttle service. This is not a charter service, anyone may board at the apartment complex bus stops as long as they have the fare or a bus pass.
- **Spirit Bus- Football Shuttles**
Three shuttle routes are operated on days of Mizzou Tigers home football games. This service is funded in part by fares and the rest by the Columbia Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- **Farmers' Market Shuttle**
This shuttle is in service from April through October and runs a route around central Columbia to the Farmers' Market. It is funded by the Farmers' Market through a grant from the USDA.
- **Other Special Event Shuttles and Service**
Other events have limited shuttle service in accordance with City ordinance. Events include First Night Celebration, Special Olympics, True/False Film Festival (new) and Roots 'n' Blues 'n' BBQ Festival (new, pending).

Para-Transit Service

Offers schedule-ahead, door-to-door service to individuals with disabilities that prevent them from riding the fixed route buses. Riders of the para-transit system must fill out an application and be certified. Para-transit riders may be accompanied by a certified personal care attendant at no charge.

Tiger Line- MU shuttle service

The University of Missouri (MU) contracts shuttle service from Columbia Transit, called Tiger Line. Multiple routes are operated and differ during the day and evening. MU students ride these shuttles free-at-the-farebox. These routes run only when MU is in regular session.

Target Markets

- Fixed Routes, General service:
 - Low income with no other form of transportation
 - Multi-person households with only one vehicle
 - Individuals looking for a more economical mode of transportation
 - Avoiding the cost of gas, increased vehicle maintenance, and parking fees
 - Pertains primarily to those with a fairly routine schedule/commute
 - Individuals looking for a more environmentally friendly mode of transportation
 - Individuals interested in park and ride or parking alternative options.
- Seasonal fixed route service:
 - Black and Gold routes-
 - Students- Living in areas served or near the Black and Gold routes
 - Apartment Complexes- Student centric off campus housing and new developments
 - Individuals interested in park and ride or parking alternative options.
 - Spirit Bus, football shuttles-
 - Individuals and families attending MU home games who are staying in the hotels along the routes
 - Individuals and families attending MU home games who are wanting to avoid parking at or very near the stadium
 - Individuals and families attending MU home games who are looking for transportation from The District to the stadium and vice versa
 - Farmers' Market shuttle-
 - Individuals and families living along the route looking for transportation to and from the Columbia Farmers' Market, particularly those considered to be in a food desert area.
- Para-Transit, ADA service:
 - Individuals unable to drive due to impairments covered by ADA guidelines.
- Tiger Line:
 - Students at the University of Missouri
 - Total enrollment for 2012: 34,255

Competition

Direct: There are no other forms of mass or public transit in the area serving the general public. However, the FastCAT express route is very similar to that of one of the evening Tiger Line routes. Another direct competitor specific to the student-centric apartment complexes served by the black and gold seasonal routes is a private shuttle company, Greenway Shuttles. The service offered by Greenway is a more limited service with lower capacity than that offered by Columbia Transit, but it is offered at a lower cost to the apartment complexes.

Indirect: Columbia Transit's indirect competition is any other form of transportation citizens take instead of a bus (i.e. drive individual cars, taxis, carpool, walk, bike).

Challenges: Direct and indirect competition and an existing car-culture are challenges Columbia Transit must overcome to gain ridership, support and revenue.

Pricing

Regular Fares:	
Per Ride	\$1.50
Semester Pass Valid from August 1 to December 1 Or from January 1 to May 1	\$100.00 when purchased individually \$62.50 when purchased in groups of 20 or more
30 Day Full Fare Pass	\$55.00
25 Ride Full Fare Pass	\$30.00
Half Fares:	Eligible: Disabled, elderly, medicare or medicaid recipient, income eligible, and junior*
Per Ride	\$0.75
30 Day Half Fare Pass	\$25.00
25 Ride Half Fare Pass	\$15.00
Children under 5	Free
Para-Transit Services:	Certified ADA eligible persons or companion
Per Ride	\$2.00
Registered personal care attendant accompanying a certified ADA eligible person	Free

*Junior is defined as children age 5-17. Middle School or older children should show a valid school ID to receive a reduced fare.

Service contracts with student-centric apartment complexes for the black and gold routes are set at a rate of \$62.50 per bed and requires complexes to pay for all their beds.

Positioning

Competitor Pricing

Drive:

The average annual cost of owning, maintaining and purchasing fuel for sedans is \$8,946 yearly, 59.6 cents per mile; SUV costs up to \$11,360 yearly, 75.7 cents per mile, according to recent AAA study.

Taxi Cab:

Taking a taxi can cost anywhere from \$5 to \$30 per trip depending on the length of the journey and which taxi company is used.

Walk:

Walking is essentially free, however, during inclement weather it can be impractical. Walking also has its limitations, namely distance and travel time.

Bike:

Biking can decrease some of the limitations of walking, however, it can still be impractical during inclement weather. Biking is substantially less costly than driving, but is more costly than walking.

Private Shuttle Companies:

The estimated pricing for private shuttle service being offered to apartment complexes is \$10,000 per semester per bus for buses with approximate capacity of 30-40 riders.

Communication Strategy

The communications campaign strategy for Columbia Transit has three primary goals:

1. Increase awareness and understanding of Columbia Transit
2. Get more riders (particularly Bus Pass holders, i.e. sell more passes)
3. Create a Brand (Define or redefine the market's perception of public transit)

Each goal has tactics and tools that best serve its purpose. Those tactics are outlined in the following section.

Increase Awareness and Understanding

Develop more user-friendly, accessible, and consistent communication infrastructure

- Online Media
 - Acquire specialized domain (Example: columbiabus.com, or ridect.com)
 - Design website with usability, accessibility and customer interaction in mind
 - Mobile friendly version available
 - Ability to integrate with the pending AVL platform
 - Updated frequently and promoted as an extension of Columbia Transit's customer service resources.
 - Integrate tools to make planning trips, purchasing passes and introduction to public transit easier for users.
- Application(s) for smart phones and tablets
 - Design and implement an app for iOS and Android platforms that incorporates tools for trip planning, bus arrival times, real time bus tracking and detour/delay information updates.
- Physical maps and schedules
 - Redesign the physical maps to be:
 - More user-friendly and intuitive
 - To coordinate in design and look to our digital offerings
 - To work well as independent route cards or a system wide booklet
 - To include more information about the system
- Signage
 - On-board Signage
 - Route information
 - System information
 - Brand supporting information
 - Bus Stops
 - Designed to coordinate with the new Columbia Transit brand
 - Integrated into the AVL suite with code # for retrieving arrival time information and trip planning tools
 - Station Signage
 - Screen in the Wabash Station displaying arrival times, rider alerts, and brand information
 - Signage holder for individual route cards with map and schedule info.

Communication Strategy

Increase Awareness and Understanding, cont.

- Social Media Presence
 - Utilize current social media following to disseminate information about the system while integrating into the rest of our online and physical presence to continue building the social media on the following networks.
 - Twitter
 - Facebook
 - YouTube
- “Transit Tips” Video Series
 - A series of short informational videos to help individuals navigate public transportation and the Columbia Transit system
 - This video series will be available on a Columbia Transit YouTube Channel along with all other Columbia Transit related videos.
 - The series and the YouTube Channel will be promoted via Columbia Transit’s other social media networks and the website.

Get More Riders

- Bus Pass Sales
 - Evaluate the current increment structure and make recommendations for changes based on findings.
 - Gather information from other similar systems on the success of their pass programs.
 - Gather information from riders regarding what increments would be most useful to them.
 - Evaluate pricing and the possibility of pairing parking cards and transit passes.
 - Identify and evaluate options for pass purchasing outlets and make recommendations based on findings.
- Transit Tax Benefit Program
 - Establish an employer benefit program in which Columbia Transit provides information and assistance in setting up benefit programs with employers.
- Bulk Pass Sales and Large-Scale Service Contracts
 - Court contracts with organizations and companies with a large number of members who could benefit from public transit.
 - Apartment complexes, educational institutions, hospitals, etc.
- Events
 - Attend trade shows, resource fairs, festivals, etc. that cater to Columbia Transit target markets
 - Partner with events to promote ridership and pass sales.
 - True/False Film Festival
 - Roots n’ Blues n’ BBQ Festival
 - Football Season and Homecoming
 - Bike, Walk and Wheel Week/ Try Transit Day
 - Other sustainability, “green” events

Communication Strategy

Redefine Perception- Developing a strong, positive brand

- Desired brand descriptors of Columbia Transit
 - Each of these descriptors should be supported in the image we display to the public, particularly our target markets through all marketing, advertising and public relations activities.
 - Safe
 - Reliable
 - Clean
 - Green
 - Friendly
- Brand development
 - Logo Contest- Involve the community in the re-branding of Columbia Transit through a logo artwork contest.
 - Develop a Brand Standards Guide with our primary colors, fonts, logo styles and guidelines for how our image is published digitally and in print.
 - Emphasize the benefits of public transportation through facts and figures supporting the desired brand descriptors.
 - Incorporate these facts and figures in marketing and promotional activities as well as communication infrastructure projects.
 - Example information sources: American Public Transportation Association (APTA), AAA, National Transit Database (NTD), Federal Transportation Administration (FTA)

Columbia Transit
Integrated Marketing
Communication Plan
2013

Budget

Advertising	\$10,000
Digital- Websites, digital publications, email marketing, social media, etc.	
Print- Newspaper, magazine, targeted newsletters and other publications	
Other- Specialized advertising opportunities (sponsorships, etc.)	
Community Outreach and Events	\$15,000
Event Fees- Exhibitor and other fees associated with trade shows, fair, etc.	
Collateral Materials- signage, informational pieces, promotional items, etc.	
Incentives- prizes and give aways (primarily in-kind/trade)	
Sponsorships (In-kind and monetary)	
Staffing	
Design and Printing	\$35,000
Map/schedule re-design (possibly covered by existing grant- est. cost of \$20,000)	
On-board signage	
Route, system and stop signage	
Digital Presence	\$5,000
Acquire specialized, marketable domain	
Website redesign and updates	
Application developments and updates	
Video series production	
Miscellaneous	\$5,000
Total Marketing Budget (recommended)	\$65,000

Evaluation

Each of the following metrics will be used as an evaluation of the success of this marketing communications plan and its tactics based on their return, cost and time required.

- Regular surveys of riders to evaluate their level of satisfaction with the system and what they would like to see changed.
- Surveys of participants in community outreach and events will also be utilized to measure the value gained from events as well as overall status of Columbia Transit's brand image.
- Focus groups encompassing Columbia Transit's target markets to measure their understanding and awareness of key factors related to Columbia Transit and public transportation.
- Fare revenue will be measured in relation to individual fares collected, pass sales and changes from previous months and years.
- Ridership- by system, route, date, time and in conjunction with campaigns will be measured to evaluate the efficacy of communication infrastructure and campaign effectiveness.
- Contracted services will be measured to evaluate the effectiveness of the system to recruit new large-scale groups into public transit users.
- Social media reach and impact will be measured to evaluate the efficacy of the social media strategy in use.
- Customer database reach and impact will be measured to evaluate the level of community involvement and educational outreach success.
- The transit tax benefit program will be evaluated by the number of employers and employees participating in and benefitting from the program.
- Any anecdotal information gathered by Columbia Transit staff will also be included in a report as evaluation of the system's marketing and communication improvement efforts.