



TCTA Marketing Plan 2017/2018



Introduction

Tuolumne County Transit Agency is excited to enter into Fiscal Year 2017/2018 with a clear marketing strategy for effectively communicating its Family of Services.

The Mission Statement of the Tuolumne County Transit Agency is to “Provide safe, efficient, reliable, high quality and effective public transportation for residents and visitors, which enhances the community and ensures viable mobility options”, this is a tall order, but we take pride in doing our best to make it so.

This is the 41th year of providing public transportation services for our community. Tuolumne County Transit recently added its first major infrastructure project to its system in the construction of the Tuolumne Transit Center, which opened on November 1, 2017.



Aerial photo, Tuolumne Transit Center, October 2017

Overview of the Family of Services

Fixed Route Service

The Tuolumne County Transit Fixed Route Service operates Monday through Friday between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. The fixed route system connects residents of Sonora, Columbia, Jamestown, Tuolumne, Twain Harte and Sierra Village with one another, shopping and entertainment venues, medical facilities, employers, community centers, recreation and Columbia Community College, among other destinations. Interregional travel opportunities are provided through connections with Calaveras Transit at Columbia College. The fare for this service is \$2.00 each way. Discounts are currently available for Seniors (62+), Veterans, Students and persons with disabilities.

Demand Response Services

Tuolumne County Transit's Dial-A-Ride (DAR) and Saturday general public DAR are complementary services which meet Americans with Disabilities requirements for those not able to access fixed routes services. These are specialized demand response service is provided mainly to persons with disabilities and seniors (60+).



Yosemite Bus- provided by YARTS

Through a collaborative effort between TCTA, Yosemite National Park, and the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) provide public transportation between Sonora and Yosemite Valley. Additional partners in the project include Chambers of Commerce, the Visitors Bureau, and Lodging establishments. As many as three daily round trips are provided from Sonora to Yosemite Valley during peak season. Although Tuolumne County Transit is not involved in the day to day delivery of the service, staff works closely with those involved to create schedules, pricing, and marketing for the service.



Separately, the TCTA is involved with the Gateway Marketing group which receives grant funding annually from the Park to help reduce congestion and improve the visitor experience in Yosemite. This includes marketing of transportation alternatives into the Park, among other visitation strategies.

SkiBUS

Tuolumne County Transit partners with Dodge Ridge Ski Resort and the Lodging Association to offer winter service from Sonora to the high country. SkiBUS service is on weekends and holidays primarily, during the winter months when Dodge Ridge Ski Resort is open, typically December through late March, early April.



Special Events Services

Special event services are offered to help offset transportation impacts from community events sponsored by local organizations for events open to the public. Special events must submit a request to the Transit Agency to be considered for service along with meeting criteria for service as established by the board. Services typically are one day or weekend events, but may be approved with additional service days.

Marketing Objectives

Tuolumne County Transit Agency has three primary marketing goals. The over-arching goal is always to provide safe, efficient, reliable, high quality and effective public transportation for residents and visitors, which enhances the community and ensures viable mobility options, from an operations perspective. However, our marketing efforts are aimed at

The following emphasis areas are the primary focus for staff in 2017-2018.

1. Build awareness of the Tuolumne County Transit Family of Services within the community

The TCT family has grown considerably since transit was first established in the County, in the early 1970's. With a larger selection of services offered to the public, comes increased marketing effort to ensure riders have the information they need to access TCT and their destinations.

2. Enrich residents lives through meaningful and effective transit connections

The relationship between where we live and how we transport ourselves can be an especially challenging dilemma in small communities. Public transit can be a critical option for residents to reach critical services and resources within the City and County. These destinations include higher education (Columbia College), Employment resources (Mother Lode Job Connections, major employers {Walmart, Casinos}, Medical facilities (Adventist Health, clinics, dentists, physical therapy) and social outlets (Senior Center, Library, parks and playgrounds).

3. Use social media and video more effectively

Tuolumne County Transit has a new website. This is a step in the right direction. Communication between TCT riders and staff has become much more regular as a result of this change. Additional and more consistent presence in the social media and video content marketplace is seen as necessary in order to further increase this dialogue with current and potential (future) riders.

Marketing Plan

Marketing Objective #1: *Build awareness of the Tuolumne County Transit Family of Services to the community*

Fixed Route: Route service consists of buses and trolleys running Routes 1-5, and the general public DAR serving Phoenix Lake-Sonora Meadows-Crystal Falls. The buses and trolleys self-advertise when traveling throughout the service area.

Target Market: General public

Mediums to reach target markets-

What's new?

Commercials



Staff will make several commercials, using its contractor, and buy air time with Comcast. Staff has not used this outlet in many years and looks forward to increased exposure that comes through a presence on television

Social Media outreach, Facebook and Instagram

Staff will refocus its effort on this important communication platform by working with local experts to increase its reach using its Facebook account along with adding Instagram, which is not currently used by Tuolumne County Transit

What will continue?

Radio Spots—Clarke Broadcasting

TCTA website

Buses serving as rolling advertisements for the service

Participation in community events (such as- Health/Senior Fairs)

Printing and distribution of schedules/system maps

Publications:

Union Democrat



Demand Response Services (Dial-A-Ride): Tuolumne County Transit’s Dial-A-Ride (DAR) and Saturday general public DAR are complementary services which meet Americans with Disabilities requirements for those not able to access fixed routes services.

Target Market: clients with a disability (ADA certified and non-ADA certified), Seniors and Veterans. In Tuolumne County those 55 and older constitute 41% of the population. This is much higher than the State average and is a growing cohort within the community. Tuolumne County Transit considers anyone 62 years and older a Senior. Non-ADA certified Seniors are eligible to ride DAR, but may be bumped by ADA certified passengers. This is an expensive service to operate, so the goal is to serve as many folks as need the service and running the service efficiently as opposed to actively trying to grow the service

Mediums to reach target markets-

- Clarke Broadcasting Website trade- TCT ads
- Hosting booths at Health Fair/Friends and Neighbors Expo
- Participation with Commission on Aging
- Distribution of info/marketing through Social Service Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC)
- TCT website
- Social Media
- Participation with Senior Network
- Video content specific to service
- Develop informational flyer (brochure)

Yosemite Transit Service: TCTA has partnered heavily with the Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau and Gateway Marketing group to promote public transportation into the Park.

Target Market: Local, Regional and International visitors to YNP

Mediums to reach target markets-

- Clarke Broadcasting Radio/Website trade
- Amplified Story-telling
- YosemiteGateways.com
- TCT/YARTS/YNP websites
- TCVB Visitors Guide
- Local Lodging establishments
- Video content
- Print Collateral
- Presentation to YGP, Visit CA, Tourism Summit (TC)
- Television Advertising
- Social Media



SkiBus: TCTA partners with Dodge Ridge and local lodging establishments to promote the SkiBUS. Dodge Ridge features the service on their website and offers dedicated space near the lodge for unloading and loading of passengers. SkiBUS tickets may be purchased online for the convenience of the rider. This feature is great for any demographic of rider.

Target Market: Skiers, snowboarders, season pass holders, Lodging guests, Youth (no license), Day-trippers who don't want to drive in inclement weather

Advertising: Radio advertisements, printed materials, social Media blasts

Mediums to reach target markets-

- Clarke Broadcasting Radio/Website trade
- SkiBUS Wrap
- Social Media Blasts (performed by Dodge Ridge)
- TCVB Visitors Guide
- Graphic design and material production (rack cards, posters, tickets)
- TCT/Dodge Ridge website



Special Event Transit Service: Special events are a great way for the general public to try transit for the very first time in many cases. Special routes are set up to meet the community's transportation needs to various events. This service aids in congestion relief and offers a safe route to the events. Attracting new riders to transit with a positive and fun image will be a priority when planning and serving events. Special event service is provided free of charge. Clarke Broadcasting Radio Special Events helps with personalized advertisements for the events that are served.

Target Market: Event Attendees and community members

Marketing Objective #2: *Enrich residents lives through meaningful and effective transit connections*

Housing and community destinations may be located many miles from one another, and the option of a personal automobile may not be available to a great number of residents for various reasons. In light of this reality, a goal of TCT is to highlight opportunities for residents and guests to use its services to reach destinations that enrich lives.

These destinations include higher education (Columbia College), Employment resources (Mother Lode Job Connections, major employers {Walmart, Casinos}, Medical facilities (Adventist Health, clinics, dentists, physical therapy) and social outlets (Senior Center, Library, parks and playgrounds).

The Tuolumne County Transit Agency promotes bicycle accessible transit trips. All fixed route TCT vehicles have bike racks on them and they are simple to operate. Recreational destination can be accessed with bike friendly transit to locations such as Dragoon Gulch, Columbia College, Tuolumne West Side Trail, Sonora/Summerville High Schools and Eproson Park.

Beyond recreational activities TCT can be a practical choice for residents living beyond fixed routes, too far to walk but achievable on bike. This option will not work for many, we realize, but there is still likely to be a percentage of potential riders who can accomplish their trips in this manner.

Target Audience: Employees, Employers, Students, Health Care users

Mediums to reach target markets-

- Clarke Broadcasting Website trade- TCT ads
- Hosting booths at Health Fair/Friends and Neighbors Expo
- TCT website
- Social Media targeted Ad buys
- Video content specific to service
- Develop informational flyers (brochures)
- Commercials
- Facebook/Instagram

Participation/coordination with Columbia College at student orientations, registrations, student services and dormitory events

Coordination with Adventist Health administration, community outreach efforts

Participation/coordination with area job fairs, employer recruitment events, Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority (TCEDA) activities/distribution materials.

Marketing Objective#3: *Use Social Media and video more effectively*

Tuolumne County Transit Agency has been positioning itself over the last couple years to more effectively communicate with its passengers. The Tuolumne County Transit website was updated to a more user and administrator friendly platform which allows for quick, efficient updates for the user and cost effective management for the agency allowing staff to make changes on an as needed basis.

The second phase of this goal, to be addressed this year, is to supplement the site with social media outreach, commercials in the local television market and use of platforms for communication not currently being pursued, such as Instagram.

TCT Branding

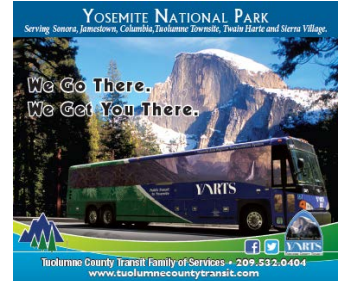
Currently Tuolumne County Transit is maintaining and promoting its new brand/image. This was developed through outreach to users, drivers, resource agencies, general public and staff.

Vehicles

Transit vehicles can be looked at as rolling billboards for the transit service. All of the vehicles have been wrapped to reflect the new brand and have received positive feedback from users, advertisers and the community at large.

Video

The TCTC has an agreement with Cole Video for marketing programs and collateral production services to address public transit services, public outreach as part of the transportation planning process, social media, agency and project branding, website development, photography, video content, graphic design, and collateral production services. The major objective of this project will be to support the marketing objectives previously outlined.



Income Generating Advertising

Bus Advertising Program

The bus advertising program is under contract with Helen Foraker Advertising. Helen has done a marvelous job of selling and managing advertising space on TCT vehicles. This arrangement is generating revenue for the Transit system that can be used to further promote services or supplement the farebox recovery ratio. All advertising spaces have been sold out and many new advertisers have been brought on board during her first year of sales. In addition to advertising revenue, this opportunity does help to raise awareness of public transit services and Tuolumne County Transit vehicles.



Clarke Broadcasting

Through the Advertising Space Trade Agreement with Clarke Broadcasting, Tuolumne County Transit receives radio spots and online ad space while Clarke receives rear window ad space in TCT vehicles.

Outlets

Clarke Broadcasting Radio & Web

Clarke Broadcasting offers three radio outlets and one website that are based in Sonora, KVML, KKBN, STAR/KZSQ and MyMotherLode.com. All four offer exposure to residents and visitors of Tuolumne County and the surrounding areas.



Union Democrat

The Union Democrat was established in 1854, and is a Mother Lode area information source. The newspaper's history began with the California gold rush and has continued on ever since. Published several times weekly, the Union Democrat reaches over 26,000 readers. The paper also has an online presence, www.uniondemocrat.com.



Facebook

Facebook is a strong social media network. Due to its vast base of users, it creates an environment to engage with current and potential clients. It is fairly convenient and straight forward to create a Facebook presence, however, to effectively communicate a commitment of staff or contractor is required to become a reliable resource for customers.



Promotional Items

Transit Logo Items

Offering give-away items to our customers is a nice way of recognizing passengers. Although the items are small and inexpensive, they are typically high use items that are helpful and an advertisement to others of our service. Promotional gifts are featured during exhibits, shows, special events and other outlets in Tuolumne County. The TCT Booth is set up at events to distribute information and promotional items.



Promotional products are a cost effective form of marketing that allows TCTA to thank riders for their loyalty towards transit. Business promotional products can be a great way to promote transit services. They are effective in creating awareness among potential and new riders.

Distribution: Miscellaneous Transit Activities and Local Events

Examples of Promo Items:

- Pens
- Mesh Backpacks
- Water Bottles
- Fanny Packs
- Plastic Mason Jars
- Magnets
- Coffee Tumblers
- Totes
- Sunglasses
- Koozie Drink Wraps



Public Outreach

Special Event Service aims to support community events through helping to mitigate traffic and congestion while providing a fun alternative to reach the event. For many of our passengers it is their first time using Tuolumne County Transit. This is considered a great way to introduce community residents to public transportation, and hopefully results in positive feelings towards the system and potentially future use by themselves or a recommendation to use to someone else.



Target Market: General public, event goers, tourists, Families

Advertising:

- Clarke Broadcasting Radio/Website (Trade Agreement)
- Social Media Blasts
- Event Co-Promotion
- Special event inserts (Union Democrat)

myMOTHERLODE.COM
YOUR GATEWAY TO CALIFORNIA'S GOLD COUNTRY

The following events have been served under this program:

Sonora Christmas Parade
49er Festival (Groveland)
Mother Lode Fair
Fathers Day Fly-In
Polar Express
Mother Lode Round Up/Rodeo



Vehicle Tracking System

Tuolumne County Transit utilizes NextBUS to offer technology that riders may use to track when their bus will arrive (in real time). The technology utilizes GPS to track vehicle locations en route along with historical data. The service provides real time predictions for the actual time the bus should arrive, not the scheduled time. This prediction may be accessed through a smartphone, TCT website, a text message, and a local automated phone messaging system.

TCTA has updated many of its bus stop signs with information on how to access Nextbus. This includes information on Nextbus stop numbers, website address, text message code, automated phone number, and other information related to the service.

The attached budget includes a funding breakdown for the various marketing activities described above. It should be noted that, the Transit Budget includes a general marketing expense account, which is offset by revenue received through the Bus Advertising Program.