

Agenda Item 7 – Strategic Marketing Communications and Public Outreach Plan October 18, 2023



Marin Civil Grand Jury – Responses to Recommendations

Recommendation #2

"By December 1, 2023, SMART's Board of Directors should direct staff to develop a written strategic marketing communications and public outreach plan and budget focused on educating voters in Marin County about the community benefits derived from the continued operation of the SMART rail system."

- SMART's Board of Directors agreed with this recommendation
- Staff developed a draft marketing communications and public outreach plan

Elements of the Draft Marketing and Public Outreach Plan

Main objective of the Plan is to inform taxpayers in Marin and Sonoma counties about the benefits SMART brings to the North Bay community.

The Plan outlines:

- Target audiences and messaging
- Branding and positioning
- Communication channels
- Metrics to measure effectiveness
- Analysis of budgetary and staffing resources



A Living Document

Marketing plans are designed to be regularly reviewed & refined, based on performance data and changing market conditions.

Other opportunities to refine the Plan

- A. **Quality of Life and Economic Impact Assessment** *(Caltrans grant)*
comprehensive assessment of economic, social, and environmental advantages passenger rail service offers the North Bay.

- B. **Marin County Civil Grand Jury Recommendation #3**
Consultant who will provide an analysis of messaging and communications channels for an effective marketing plan.

Current Marketing Activities

Marketing activities are conducted year-round

Primary objective is to **grow ridership**—social media, events, newsletter, and content marketing are continuous and ongoing

Current Staffing Resources (3.0 FTE)

- Communications and Marketing Manager
- Community Outreach and Customer Service Manager
- Community Outreach and Marketing Coordinator

Current 2023-2024 Budget allocated to Growing Ridership

Print Materials	\$50,000
Participation in Community Fairs	\$40,000
Paid Advertising	\$200,000*
Photography/Videography	\$8,000
SMART Sponsored Events	\$30,000

**Advertising graphic design & copywriting are done in-house.*



Large Regional Audience

Large regional audience. Social media reaches a small % of the population.

Platform	Followers
Facebook	14,500
Instagram	3,400
X (Twitter)	4,400
LinkedIn	785
YouTube	371
Newsletter	9,500

Paid Ads	Average Impressions Per Month
Newsprint	700,600

Community Events	People Reached
15 events in 2023	250 -2,500



Marketing activities to inform residents of Sonoma & Marin Counties about benefits of SMART

Recommend

1. Allow work to be completed on the
 - Quality of Life and Economic Impact Assessment
 - Consultant studying effective messaging and marketing plan
2. Develop a comprehensive budget for the Marketing Plan to effectively reach a large audience in Sonoma and Marin counties
3. Consider marketing activities that can be initiated in current fiscal year

Marketing activities in current fiscal year

Investment	
\$175,000	Direct Mail: Send a mailer to all business and residential addresses in Sonoma and Marin counties, with content updating the community about District activities, and highlighting the economic, environmental, and sustainable transportation benefits of SMART.
\$50,000	Video production: hire a professional videographer to produce informational videos in 15- 30- and 60-second lengths to meet specs for paid ads on cable, streaming and social media channels.
\$76,800	Paid advertising on cable television, streaming, digital platforms, and social media.



Questions?

Connect with us:

www.SonomaMarinTrain.org



Customer Service:

CustomerService@SonomaMarinTrain.org

(707) 794- 3330

