

Date: January 15, 2008

Committee Meeting Date: February 21, 2008

Board Meeting Date: N/A

**BOARD MEMORANDUM**

**INFORMATION ITEM**

**TO:** Transit Planning and Operations Committee  
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority  
Board of Directors

**THROUGH:** Michael T. Burns  
General Manager

**FROM:** Bernice Alaniz  
Deputy Director, Marketing and Public Affairs

**SUBJECT:** Quarterly Marketing Report and Presentation, Q2, FY 2008

---

**FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

**BACKGROUND:**

During the second quarter of FY 2008 VTA Communications & Marketing staff implemented the following ridership and public awareness initiatives:

**DISCUSSION:**

*Palo Alto Walk and Roll Challenge*  
September 28 - October 6, 2007

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority participated in the City of Palo Alto's Walk and Roll Challenge activities which ran September 28 – October 6, 2007 in an effort to promote better health, create a cleaner environment, reduce traffic congestion and increase a sense of community.

The city-wide campaign sought to increase walking, pedaling, or riding public transit to work, school and community businesses. The kick-off festivities began Friday, September 28, with the annual Moonlight Run/Walk at the Palo Alto Baylands and continued the week of October 1-6 with numerous community-wide events.

Santa Clara County Supervisor Liz Kniss and City of Palo Alto Mayor Yoriko Kishimoto brought together representatives from Stanford University, the Palo Alto School District, the Palo Alto Downtown Business Improvement District and several local employers to plan events that would promote a culture of walking, biking, and riding public transportation in Palo Alto. VTA's bus and paratransit services, links to other regional transit services, and the creation and construction

of bicycle and pedestrian-friendly facilities and projects support the City of Palo Alto's efforts to create a less car-centric community.

Community-wide events in the Palo Alto Walks and Rolls campaign included:

- Annual Palo Alto Moonlight Run/Walk – lead by County Supervisor Liz Kniss and Mayor Yoriko Kishimoto Friday, September 28, at 6:45 p.m., at the Palo Alto Baylands Athletic Center.
- Palo Alto Walks and Rolls to School, October 1 – 6, 2007.  
Neighborhood Walkability Workshops at the Mid-Peninsula (Ross Road) YMCA.
- Walk and Roll to Lunch on California Avenue and win prizes October 1 – 6, 2007.
- Ellen Fletcher Bike Boulevard Community Walk and Roll Saturday, October 6.

### **Corridor/Service Promotions**

#### *2008 New Bus Service Implementation*

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority's (VTA) new bus service plan was implemented on January 14, 2008. As part of its continuing effort to provide improved transportation service to the public, VTA entered a new era of bus service. The newly revamped system includes more frequent service on many major routes, expanded express bus service and a significant increase in low-fare community bus routes. In addition to the scheduling and/or route alterations for 57 routes, service was discontinued on seven underutilized routes so that VTA resources could be dedicated to areas of greatest demand.

Intensive marketing outreach and communications campaigns began in November 2007 and ran through January 2008 to disseminate, educate and promote the new bus service to VTA riders. A total of 220 VTA ambassadors stationed at various transit locations filled 800 shifts throughout Santa Clara County to assist riders with trip planning and general information for three weeks, beginning on January 7, during the transition period. There were an additional 110 lead ambassador shifts shared by 13 VTA staff members to provide support and assistance to all ambassadors working in their respective areas.

A total of 48 presentations were delivered throughout Santa Clara County beginning October 2007, running successively through January 2008. Presentations included trip planning sessions, information booths at shopping malls, community centers and events, and demonstrations of how to use the new VTA web page. Information was provided in alternate languages at most locations.

In December, thousands of inquiries about the new routes and requests for trip planning were received in the Customer Service Department Call Center, resulting in an 18.5% increase in calls answered by Information Service Representatives over December 2006. In addition, a new VTA web page was launched on vta.org on December 9, 2007, dedicated to the new bus service including information on new routes, schedules, maps along with the Google Trip Planner enabling customers to easily plan their local transit trips.

95,000 New Bus Service brochures were printed and distributed to customers and the general public during community outreach events, through direct mail and to 250 community organizations within Santa Clara County.

A comprehensive advertising campaign was an integral part of the outreach effort launched in December and included:

- Web banner on KCBS for 1 month equating to 340,000 impressions; Mercurynews.com and Siliconvalley.com web banners for 2 months equating to 3,905,750 impressions and Web information in the SJSU Transportation Solutions website with 7,269 web hits since 1/1/08,
- 1,078 emails were sent to SJSU students on the 181 Express Line, and 666 emails sent to students on the 168 Express Line,
- Comcast cable ads in English and Spanish; Spanish language TV ads on Telemundo and Univision including logo placement on Spanish traffic news with a total of nearly 4,000,000 impressions recorded for the campaign,
- Mercury News – One 8-page TAB section (pull out) on 12/31/07 with a distribution of 238,700; One 8-page vendor section published on 1/21/08 with a distribution of 228,663; Sticky note on front page supporting both special sections; two front page advertising strips and six half-page advertisements,
- English radio ads on KBAY/KEZR;KLIV/KRTY;KUFY/KCNL and KCBS with a total of 5.2 million impressions recorded for the campaign,
- Spanish radio ads on KRZZ and KSJO,
- Theater ads on 21 Camera Theater Screens,
- Val\*Pak ad delivered the first week of January with circulation covering approximately 390,000 residents in Santa Clara County,
- Advertisements on VTA property including: light rail station posters, bus shelter ads, interior carcards, 40 King-size ads on buses, and a web banner on vta.org.
- 200 Queen-size posters emphasizing VTA light rail's 20 year anniversary were placed on a total of 100 light rail vehicles averaging 2 ads per vehicle.

The New Bus Service marketing effort was a tremendous success while utilizing numerous mediums to reach thousands of riders and potential new riders keeping them well informed of the changes throughout Santa Clara County.

### **Promotional Partnerships**

VTA continues to work with a number of public and private sector organizations to promote riding VTA services to community events and local popular leisure destinations. These partnerships provide additional advertising opportunities for VTA through in-kind agreements.

VTA provides exposure to the partner organization through VTA's onboard rider newsletter *VTA Take-One*, the VTA web site, and our transit advertising space in return for recognition and exposure in the partner's event collateral, and advertising. Communications & Marketing completed the following promotional partnerships during the second quarter of FY 2008:

## **Current Partnerships**

Staff has developed partnership agreements with the following local community organizations, emphasizing the convenient access that VTA provides to events from areas throughout Santa Clara County:

### **Downtown Ice**

November 16, 2007 – January 13, 2008

The San Jose Downtown Ice promotion ran from November 16, 2007 through January 13, 2008. Once more, VTA negotiated an exclusive \$2.00 discount off the regular admission for VTA riders presenting any valid VTA light rail or bus pass. There were a total of 469 redemptions for VTA. Although the VTA employee redemptions were up significantly from the previous year, the public redemptions (not including VTA employees) were down 29% from last year, due largely to ad space for Downtown Ice being diverted to the New Bus Service promotion.

### **Fantasy of Lights**

November 23 – December 31, 2007

For the second year in a row, VTA partnered with the Santa Clara County Parks & Recreation Department for the 9<sup>th</sup> annual Fantasy of Lights and was a proud sponsor of the “Fantasy Train” set in this holiday spectacle with thousands of colorful lights and animated displays. The Fantasy of Lights is a 1.5 mile drive-through light display show that ran from November 23 through December 31, 2007 at Vasona Lake County Park in Los Gatos. During this time, 27,468 cars visited Fantasy of Lights, totaling 84,404 visitors which were 1,575 more visitors than in 2006.

### **Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Train**

January 21, 2008

VTA partnered with the Dr. Martin Luther King Junior Association and Caltrain to provide special service on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Monday, January 21, to operate the 23<sup>rd</sup> annual Freedom Train. The Freedom train departed the San Jose Diridon Caltrain station at 10:00, a.m., with stops that picked up passengers at Sunnyvale, Palo Alto and San Mateo before bringing approximately 1,600 passengers to San Francisco to celebrate the life, legend and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

### **Vietnamese Spring Festival and Parade**

February 10, 2008

On February 10, 2008, VTA partnered with the Vietnamese Spring Festival and Parade, Inc., in celebration of the Lunar New Year. This colorful Lunar New Year Parade featured lion and dragon dances, decorated floats, musical marching bands, cultural groups and student associations throughout the bay area. The parade’s theme emphasized ethnic diversity highlighting Asian cultures featuring arts and crafts, live music, cultural performances, martial arts, games and Asian food. VTA entered into an in kind agreement with the Vietnamese Spring Festival and Parade in exchange for advertising and exposure of VTA services.

## **Upcoming Partnerships and Promotions**

### ***New Bus Service Marketing Campaign***

#### **Express Bus**

Marketing and advertising efforts will continue to promote the new bus service in the coming months. A direct mail piece will be sent to households in early spring highlighting the Express Bus services as well as advertisements in local and community newspapers.

Businesses will also be targeted for outreach which will include coordination with business transportation contacts as a means of filtering a target audience. Also, current partners such as 511 Rideshare and independent commute coordinators will be used as associations to reach the intended audience. In addition, free rides to passengers will be offered as a means of initial trial to market the Express Bus service.

#### **Community Bus**

The Community Bus service advertising efforts will use the advertising message “My Community Bus” as a promotional name with a secondary green message involving leaving the car behind and using the Community Bus for trips within the community and a third message “getting to know your neighbors on the bus.” This concept will be marketed to neighborhood associations promoting the Community Bus as “your bus running through your neighborhood” in an effort for residents to take ownership of their community buses. This campaign will be advertised in local newspapers with a weighty emphasis on using multilingual mediums and publications.

#### **Core Network**

VTA’s Core Network promotional campaign will involve an expansive campaign highlighting the 15 minute service on 15 core bus routes. The campaign message will be a play on the “15 on 15” theme (“A bus every 15” or “A ride every 15 minutes”). Since the campaign targets the core network, advertising vehicles with a wider reach will be utilized to deliver the message such as Comcast cable, radio stations, the San Jose Mercury News and online web ads. VTA will also partner with employer transportation coordinators to develop micro-campaigns to generate ridership.

#### **New Eco Pass Contracts**

Eco Pass renewals were completed for 2008 with 100% of residential communities renewing their Eco Passes for 2008 and 98% of employers renewed their Eco Passes. There is one new employer, Rapidform, participating in Eco Pass who enrolled 10 employees in the program.

Prepared by: Cynthia Santoro, Management Analyst