

FREE AND LOW-COST TRANSIT MARKETING IDEAS

(Earned, Shared, Owned in the PESO Model)

MPTA Conference Panel with A.T. Stoddard, Jill Brown, Jill Cahoon, Oct. 5, 2020

EARNED MEDIA

Networking

- Partner with local businesses by giving out coupons for their products. In exchange, place a transit poster at their business or give them coupons to distribute for free or reduced bus fares.
- In-kind advertising includes approaching broadcast or print media with an offer to trade ad space inside or outside the bus in return for advertising with them.
- Join the Chamber or another community organization. Referrals come when people learn to trust you. Send written thank you notes to people who refer you; let them know what happened to the referral; reconnect with next steps to keep building your network.
- Offer to speak about transit to community groups.
- Be mindful of word of mouth advertising. Number one source of info for new riders is often friends, family.

Newsworthy (Send a news release)

- Participating in community services that transit would traditionally not do, such as Meals on Wheels during COVID.
- Offering a ride along to a reporter.
- Celebrating a new bus, anniversary or milestone.
- Announcing a change in services.
- Write a letter to the editor for Try Transit Week.
- Promote free rides to events or for special days.
- Share information on how your system observes Earth Day, Public Transit Week, etc.

OWNED

- Website. Consider hosting a blog. Offer information others will want to link to. Post testimonials.
- Utility stuffer. Emphasize topics transit can impact, such as back to school or summer activities. Announce changes in service.
- Collateral materials. Include your brochure in welcome packets for new residents. Offer posters to popular transit destinations. Print contact info on giveaways.

SHARED

- People are looking for you. Claim your Google My Business. Do the free listing in Yelp, Have social media channels, like Facebook, with activity.
- Social media content ideas:
 - Free rides for service members on Veteran's Day, or pick a day for healthcare workers, seniors, students, etc. Buddy day is two for one. Rider appreciation day.
 - Driver appreciation luncheon. Take a group photo.
 - Photo contests. Encourage selfies on the bus by offering drawings. Give prizes for people submitting photos of spotting the bus around town.

Buying Giveaway Promotional Items—Guidance from MnDOT

For the pilot marketing project that is funded solely with state funds, giveaway promotional items may be purchased provided the individual unit value is not more than nominal. Nominal is defined for this purpose as \$5 or less. Projects funded with any combination of federal dollars must abide by 2 CFR 200.421, which disallows costs of promotional items and memorabilia, including models, gifts and souvenirs provided to customers or the public.

MARKETING TOOLS TO CONSIDER

- Polco is a survey tool that allows engaging with your audience in more meaningful ways. CARES Act dollars are being used by some to upgrade from a free account. See Jill Brown for info.
- Reveaio is an augmented reality tool that brings images to life for as little as \$27/month. See Jill Brown.
- Digital advertising options include low cost social media ads, geo-targeting and more. Call Jill Brown to talk about your campaign idea.
- Hemmingway app for testing reading level of your text. Low cost. <http://www.hemingwayapp.com>

Excerpts from MnDOT-funded Pilot Marketing Plans for Greater MN Transit Services. Contributions from Sue Roe, MnDOT project manager, and Jill C. Brown Public Relations, contractor.

EXAMPLE TRANSIT AGENCY NEWSLETTERS

<http://catchthecometsc.gov/whats-new/the-comet-newsletters/>

<https://www.dakotatransit.org/newsletter/>

<http://www.ridewta.com/types-of-service/paratransit/newsletter>

TOOLS AVAILABLE

APTA Health and Safety Commitments Toolkit

<https://www.apta.com/covid-19-resource-hub/health-safety-commitments-program/>

National Rural Technical Assistance Program

<https://www.nationalrtap.org/Resource-Center/COVID-19-Information>

<https://www.nationalrtap.org/Toolkits/Marketing-Toolkit/Welcome>

<https://www.nationalrtap.org/Toolkits/Transit-Managers-Toolkit/Welcome>

National Aging and Disability Transportation Center

<https://www.nadtc.org/everyridecounts/>

<https://www.nadtc.org/covid-19-resource-center/>

<https://www.nadtc.org/gallery/> (photo gallery; free, requires sign-up)

Easy-to-Use Design Websites (some free):

Piktochart (<https://piktochart.com/>)

Poster My Wall (<https://www.postermywall.com/>)

Canva (<https://www.canva.com/>)

Cardstock Flyers Delivered to Every Residential and/or Business Address in a Zip Code:

<https://eddm.usps.com/eddm/customer/routeSearch.action>



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