

Marketing Plan

Napa County Transportation and Planning Agency
Napa, California

May 2011

ILIUM 600 108th Avenue NE, Suite 660, Bellevue, WA 98004 | www.ilium.com

P 425.646.6525 F 425.646.6522

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Situation Summary	2
VINE Marketing Plan	27
• Introduction	27
• Goals/Objectives	32
• Target Markets	34
• Positioning/Messaging	35
• Marketing Program Year 1	37
• Marketing Program Year 2	43
• Marketing Program Evaluation	47
NCTPA Community Education Program	48
• Introduction	48
• Goals/Objectives	51
• Target Markets	52
• Messaging	52
• NCTPA Community Education Program Year 1 and 2	53
• Measurement	59

Introduction

The purpose of the NCTPA Marketing Plan is to present an annual and longer-term (5 years) program for achieving marketing goals for NCTPA and VINE bus service. The foundation for the plan's development was a comprehensive assessment of the market based on three formal consumer research activities (Market Segmentation Survey, Youth Intercept Survey, Focus Groups), review of documents and operating statistics presented in the NCTPA Strategic Plan and 2008-2017 Short Range Transit Plan, and a review of VINE service, communications, signage and passenger facilities.

The result of this assessment is an interesting and diverse mix of marketing challenges, not unusual for a transportation planning or transit organization. The needs relate to generating greater public understanding and support for increased transportation development, and for increasing ridership on a transit service where service availability is limited, local travel is relatively quick and easy, and parking is free. What makes achieving NCTPA and VINE marketing objectives such an interesting challenge is the unique character of Napa County presented by its linear geography and limited road network, relatively small full-time resident population coupled with a large number of visitors, a high cost of living, wine growing as the single industry, large span of household incomes, its location adjacent to a major metropolitan area and more. It is a beautiful, mostly rural place where many people value the quality of life and want to keep it that way.

There is also the challenge of marketing a transit service and transportation planning organization as one entity. It may be efficient in terms of keeping administrative costs low but it is not effective in terms of serving the marketing needs of either VINE or NCTPA. The current arrangement of integrated marketing is the least effective arrangement for both. It presents a confusing and muddled message to the public. The result is neither entity has a strong public presence, and neither is well known or highly valued.

VINE marketing needs to concentrate on increasing ridership, improving the customer experience and improving its image and appeal. The marketing for NCTPA needs to focus on the future and be educational and informative. NCTPA needs to educate the public on the opportunities and the alternatives, financial needs and strategies, and on the impact of transportation choices on the quality of life in Napa.

This is not a recommendation to change the current organization and separate it into two, add staff or the like. Those decisions are not in the scope of this plan. This is a recommendation to separate and distinguish the marketing of the two entities to the public. The marketing of each entity needs to look, feel and be different. There needs to be two distinct identities, separate communication channels (including two websites) and two marketing plans.

Following this recommendation two plans have been prepared. Since they were developed based on one market assessment the first section is the presentation of the Situational Summary used as the basis for developing each plan.

Situation Summary

The foundation of an effective marketing plan is recent and well-executed information about consumers. Transit and transportation marketing plans are about motivating behavior and educating the public, so understanding the opinions of the general public and those using transit services is vital to the preparation of a plan. Three consumer research projects were completed for the preparation of the NCTPA and VINE Marketing Plans. These were a large scale Market Segmentation Study, a Youth Intercept survey and focus group research. In addition, a large number of agency documents were reviewed including service and strategic plans, program descriptions and operating statistics. The last component was an examination of agency passenger facilities, bus fleet, signage and user information, service access and general operation.

The Situation Summary presents the key findings from the research and field observations that influenced the preparation of the marketing recommendations presented in this document. The findings can relate to either NCTPA marketing or VINE marketing, and are not prioritized. As key findings they were all important in some way in the development of the two plans.

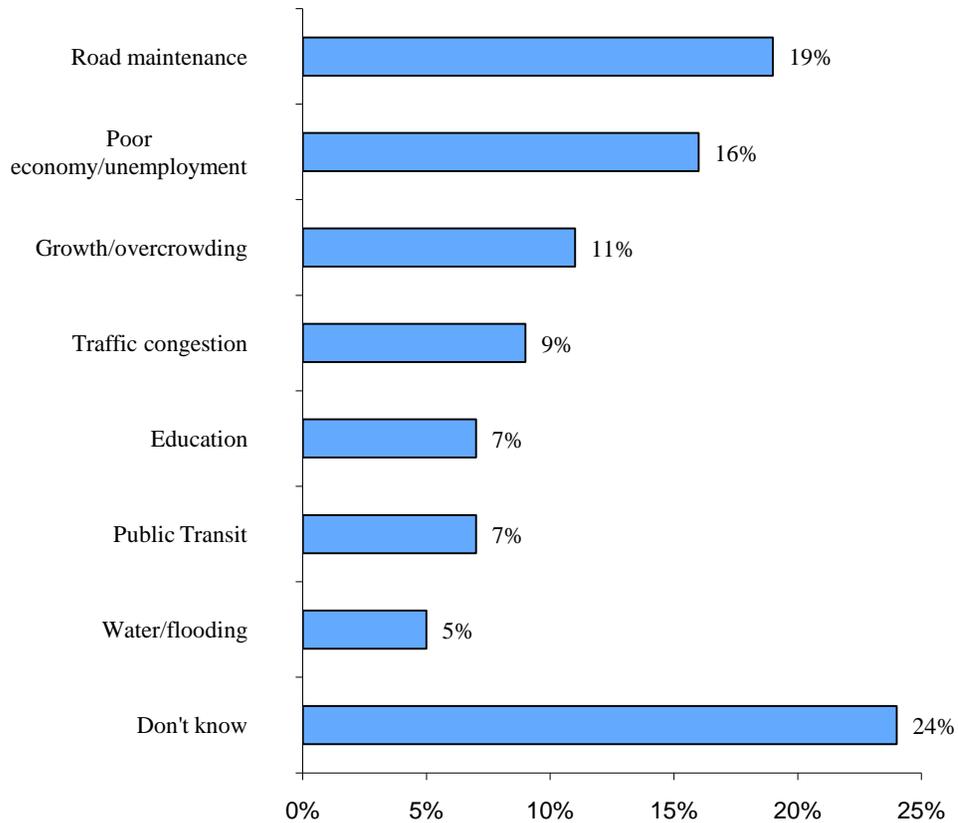
The presentation of this information begins with a statement of the finding, then descriptive information and finally the potential implication(s) on the development of the marketing plan.

Road Maintenance is the Number One Concern Now, but Opinions on the Future are About Maintaining Quality of Life.

When asked to state the most important issues facing Napa County in 2010, road maintenance was the number one issue mentioned, with 19% of the public providing this response. This was true for nearly every group examined including seniors, the employed, City of Napa residents, most income groups (under \$15,000 a year through \$49,999 a year), people who believe traffic congestion is an issue all of the time, and both men and women.

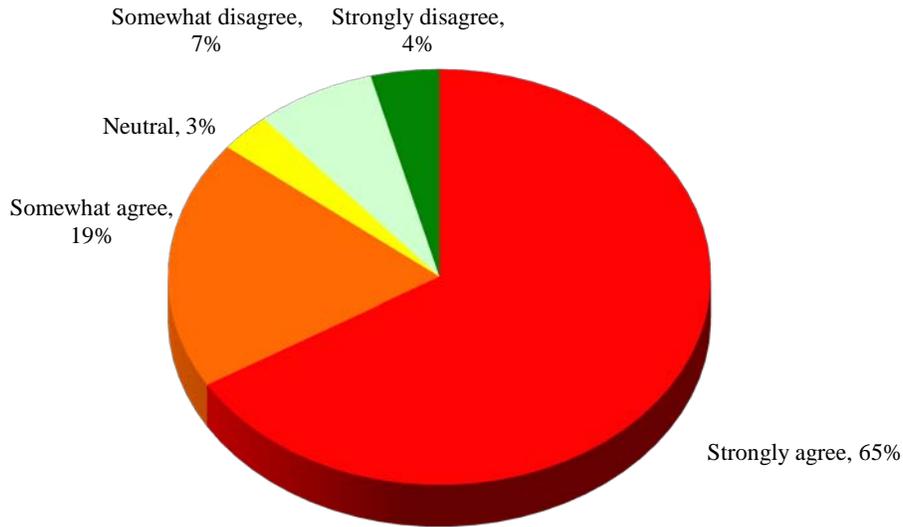
Also of interest was one-in-four (24%) County residents could not name a most important issue, an important finding by itself as people seemingly always have some issue they feel strongly about. Those who were most 'satisfied' (as judged by not being able to name an issue) were seniors.

Most Important Issues Facing County in 2010.



When opinions about the future are examined, there is strong agreement that a key issue is managing growth in a way that maintains the quality of life currently enjoyed by County residents. Two-of-three (65%) residents including 66% of those 65 or older strongly agreed with the statement “If we don’t manage growth properly the quality of life in this area will decline”. Only 11% had any disagreement with this statement.

“If we don’t manage growth properly the quality of life in this area will decline”, All Residents, 2010.



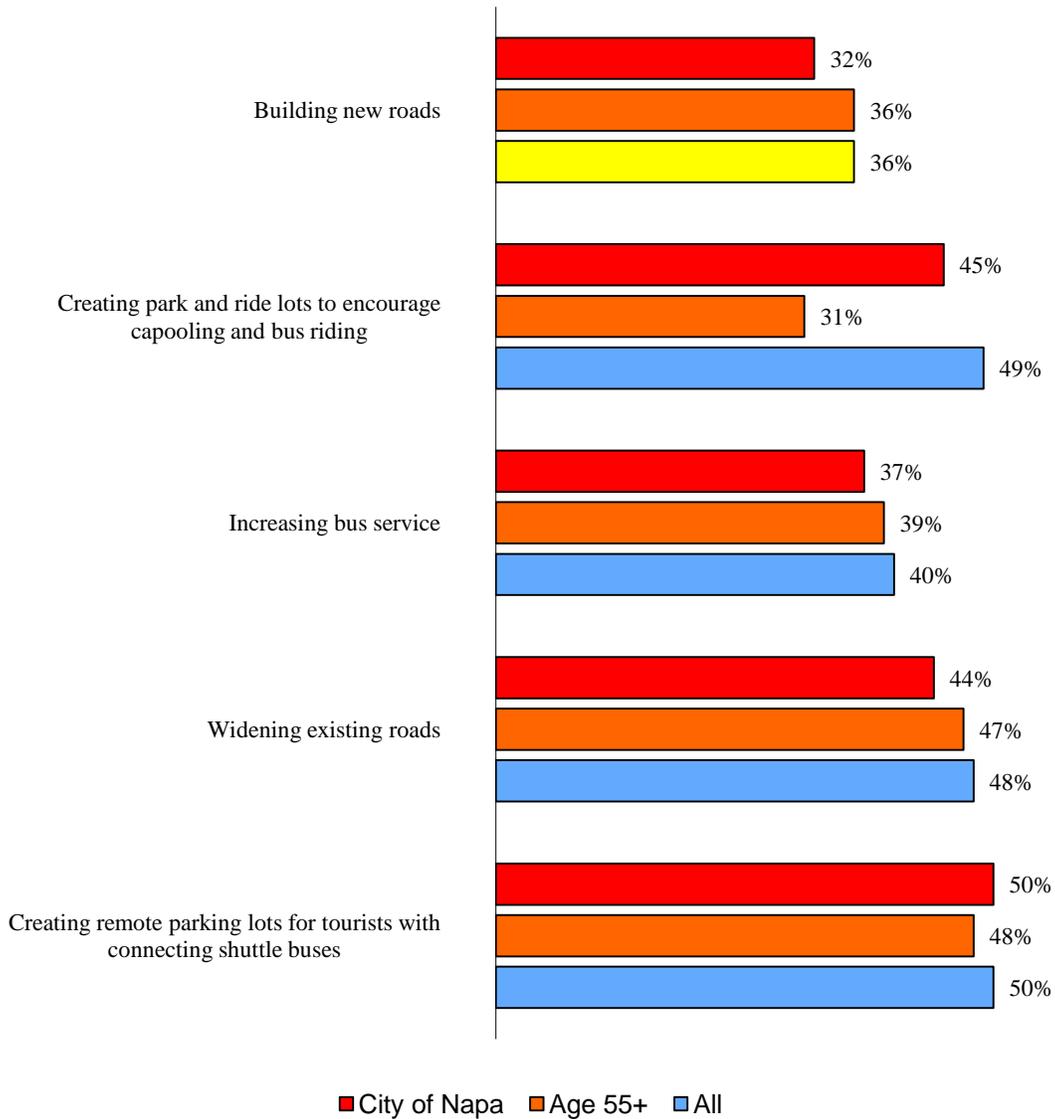
Implications

- NCTPA communications that aim to educate the public about transportation needs and value must make a strong link between quality of life and increased transportation investment.

No Transportation Options Generates a Majority of Public Support.

When asked to prioritize different transportation options for combating traffic congestion, no single option gains support by a majority of the public, or by people over 55 years of age or by City of Napa residents. The highest rated concept was creating remote parking lots for tourists, with connecting bus service. Increasing bus service is not a high priority, nor is building new roads.

Proposed Improvements (Highest Priority)



Implications

- Any proposal for improving transportation will need to be a package of improvements, crafted together to generate the most support and enthusiasm.
- Increasing transit service should not be promoted as a major component of the package.
- Even though most of the current transit service is in the City of Napa, city residents do not place a higher priority on more service (for reducing traffic congestion).

Residents May Not Trust a Transportation Improvement Proposal From a Local Government Entity.

The focus group with non-riders revealed a significant distrust of local government (elected representatives and public agencies) for tax proposals promising to fund local improvement projects. Many in the group recounted levies approved in the past and then used for another purpose than the one intended.

While results from a focus group are not representative of the opinions of all citizens, it was surprising that many in the group held this view and could remember the specifics of the situation. If this opinion is held by more than a few it significantly impacts how any proposal is developed and presented to the public.

Implication

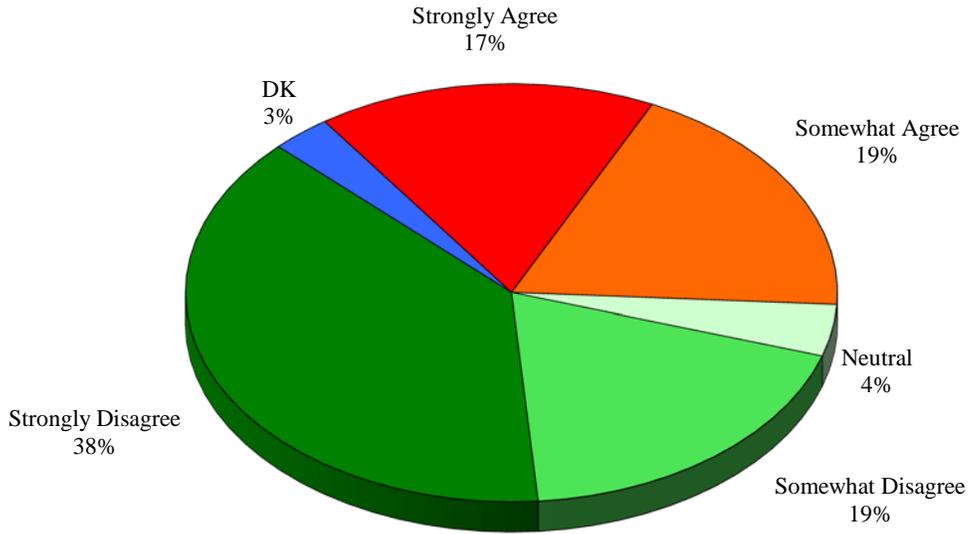
- An existing community group that has credibility among the public, or a new group created for the purpose of a recommendation should be involved in any effort to ask the public for increased support.

A Sizable Number of Seniors See Transit as Just for Those Without Cars or Those Who Cannot Drive.

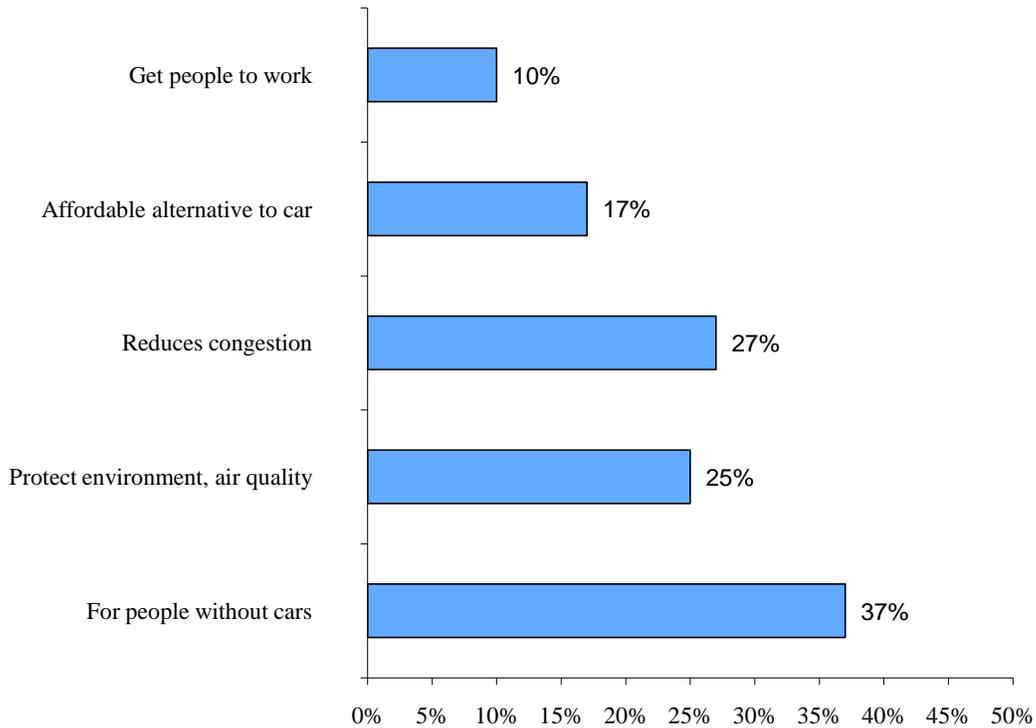
The results from seniors on two questions infer about four-in-ten have a limited view of transit's role and benefit, while about six-in-ten see a range of benefits.

When asked to name the greatest benefits of public transit, 44% stated 'for people without cars', the highest mention of 20 different responses. When asked to agree or disagree with the statement "Public transit is just for those who cannot afford a car or who cannot drive", a total of 36% indicated they agree with the statement. These responses indicate while many seniors do understand a larger role and benefits for public transit, these opinions are far from unanimous.

“Public transit is just for those who cannot afford a car or who cannot drive”, Seniors, 2010.



Greatest Benefits of Public Transit, Seniors, 2010.



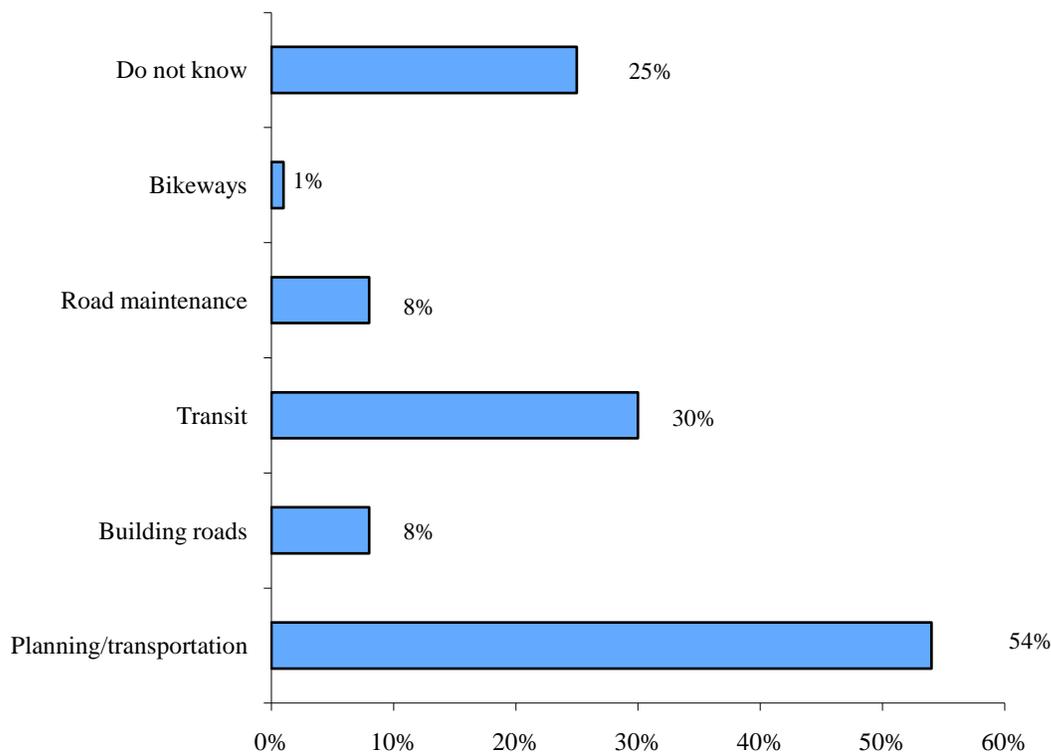
Implications

- More seniors need to understand that most VINE riders are traveling to work or school, and the service has value beyond serving those with no other travel alternative.

Only 40% of County Residents Have Heard of NCTPA.

NCTPA has low name awareness among all county residents, and all segments of the population including seniors, long-time residents, City of Napa residents, people who view traffic congestion as ‘all of the time’ and others. Even among those who have heard of the agency, many do not have any idea what the agency is responsible for. Few see the agency as involved in roads and only 30% associate NCTPA with VINE service.

“What is Napa County Transportation Agency Responsible for? (Among those that have heard of the agency), 2010.



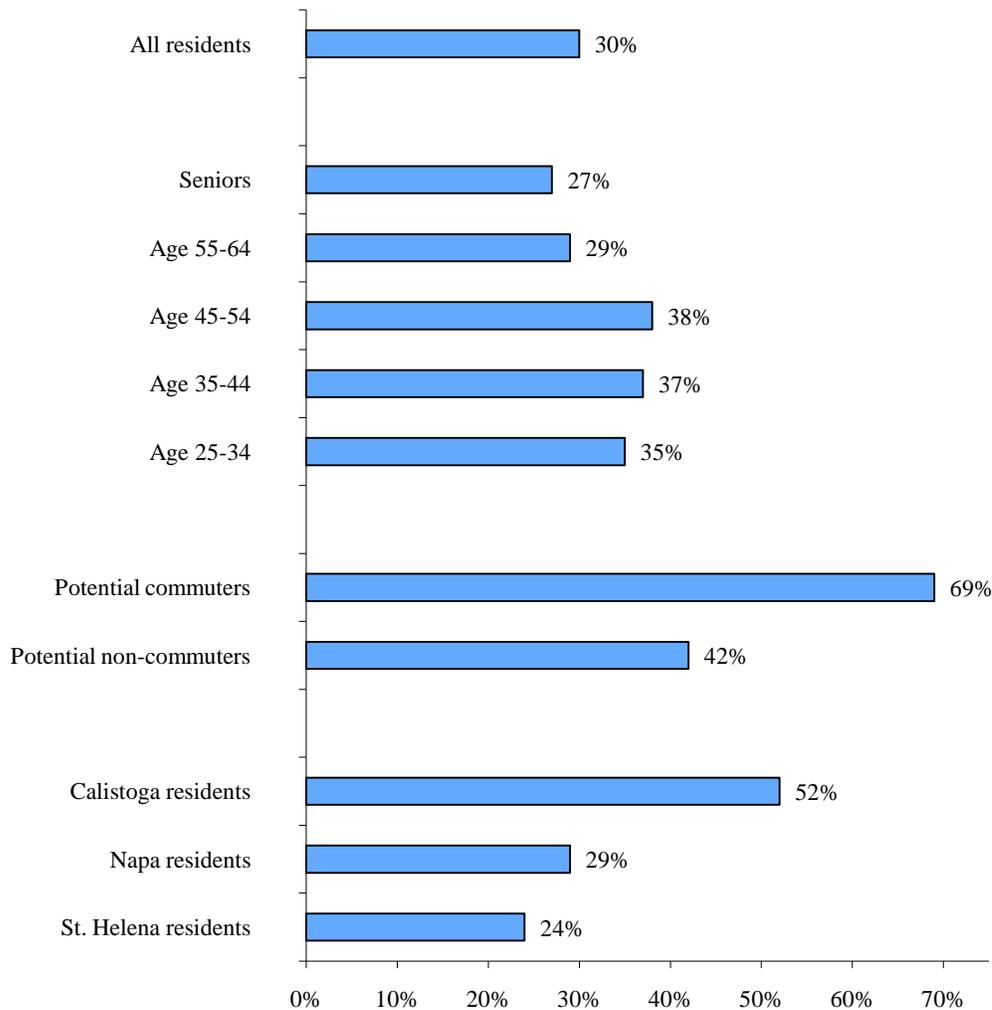
Implications

- With so few people having heard of the agency or knowing what it does, the first inclination is for part of the marketing program to boost agency name awareness. But, generating name awareness is expensive and would compete with what is truly most important, generating increased understanding for the need to make a community investment in transportation infrastructure. Stated another way, the marketing focus should be on the message and not the messenger.
- With few residents understanding the linkage between NCTPA and VINE, there is an opportunity to separate the two and let each establish their own public image and personality. This would clarify roles in the public’s mind, even if the administrative and organizational function changed little.

There is Sizable Interest in Riding.

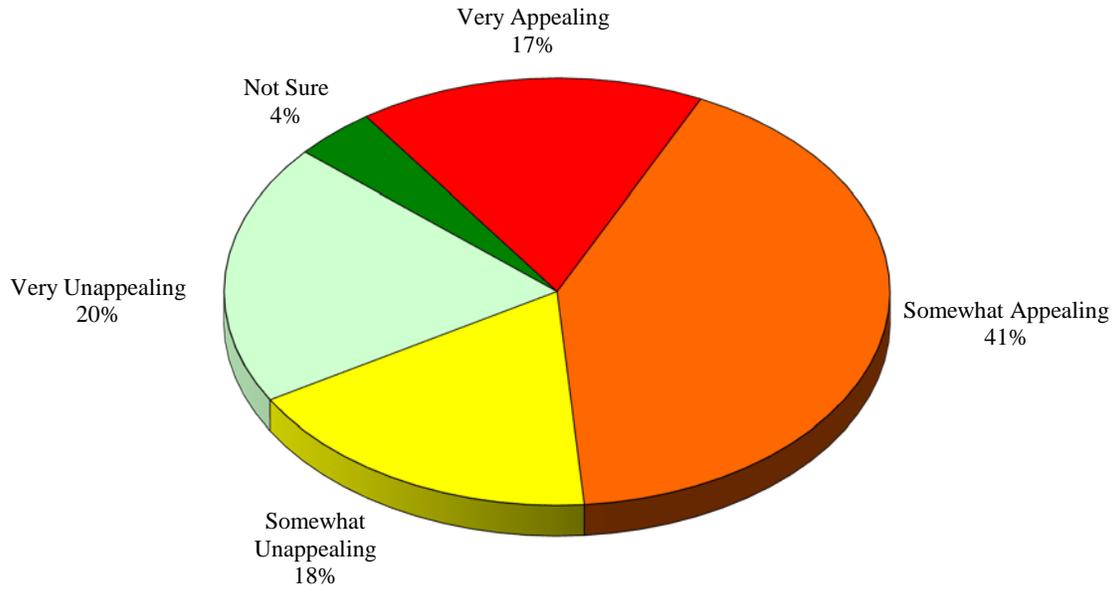
A large number of county residents (30%) have considered riding the bus (for any purpose) in the past year. By far, most of the riding consideration was by people commuting to work (69%). There was considerable interest in riding by Calistoga residents (52%), and by people age 35 to 44 and 45-54 years of age. Although the number of interviews was small (14), 50% of the American Canyon residents had considered riding in the past year.

Riding Consideration, 2010.



Another indicator of riding interest is how residents view the possibility of riding in the future. While not a specific, directed inquiry about riding intent, the question ‘how appealing is the idea of riding in the future’ helps define the size of the total possible market. The results, for all residents, is positive with 58% stating riding the bus at some time in the future is either somewhat (41%) or very appealing (17%).

Service Appeal, All Residents, 2010.



Implications

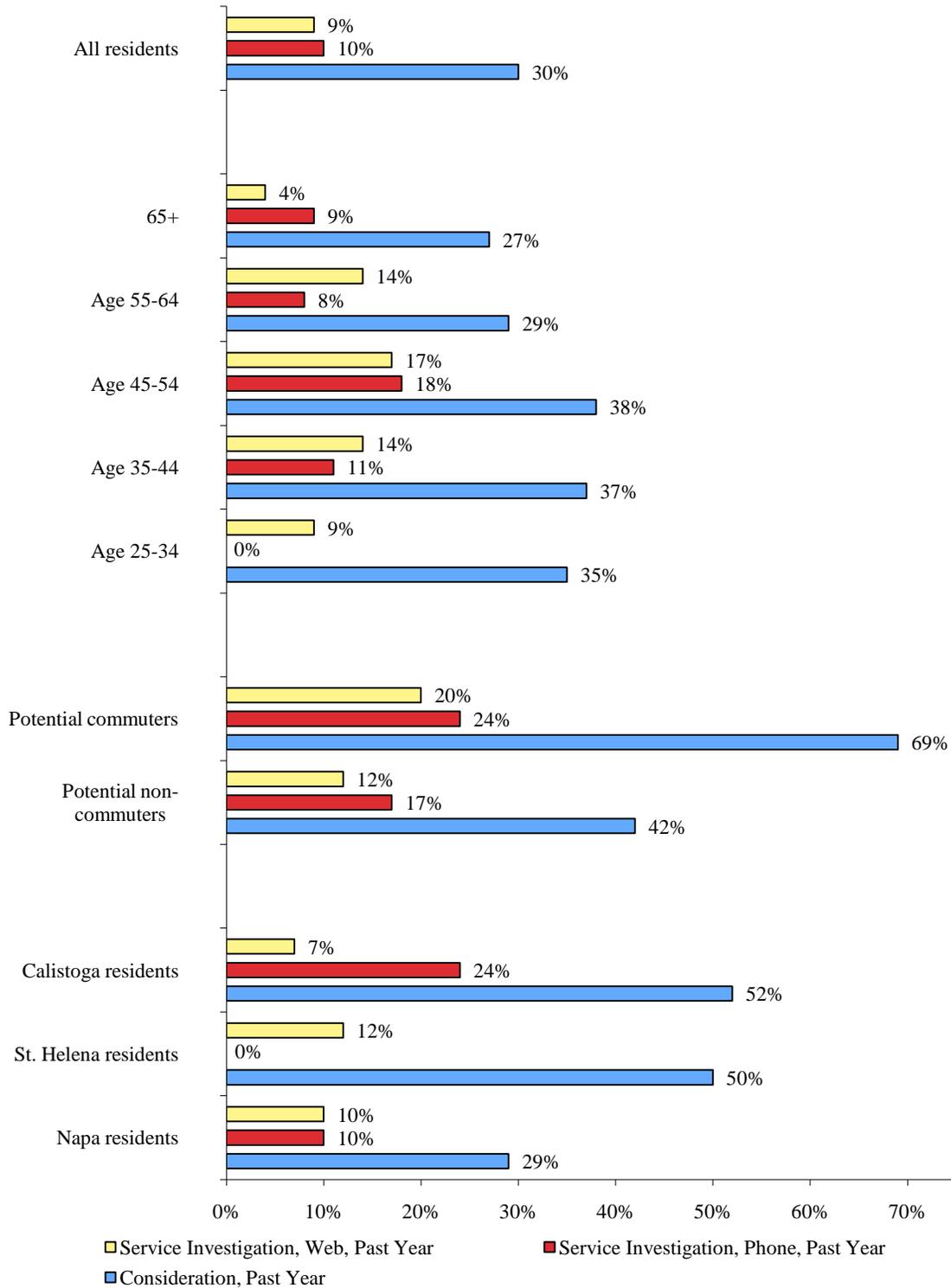
- The relatively high percentage for riding consideration provides a degree of assurance that if improvements are made in service and communicated to the target markets, service investigation and ridership will rise.
- More commuters have considered riding than non-commuters. This is an indicator that commuters are a target market, and possibly that the market for increasing non-commuter trips is relatively small.
- While a 58% rate for riding appeal is positive, most is in the somewhat appealing category. The very appealing group is closest to becoming riders in the future, and a rate under 20% is an indicator that improvements in service appeal should be part of the marketing program.

While Interest is High, Service Investigation is Low.

While 30% of the residents say they have considered riding the bus in the past year, far fewer have taken the next step and investigated the service by either calling the VINE or checking the website. The following chart displays the percentages for both service consideration and investigation. Overall, one-in-ten county residents have investigated VINE service in the past year.

One other interesting note is the group age 25-34 had a 9% rate for web inquires and 0% for phone.

Service Investigation, Phone, Web, Past Year, 2010.



Implications

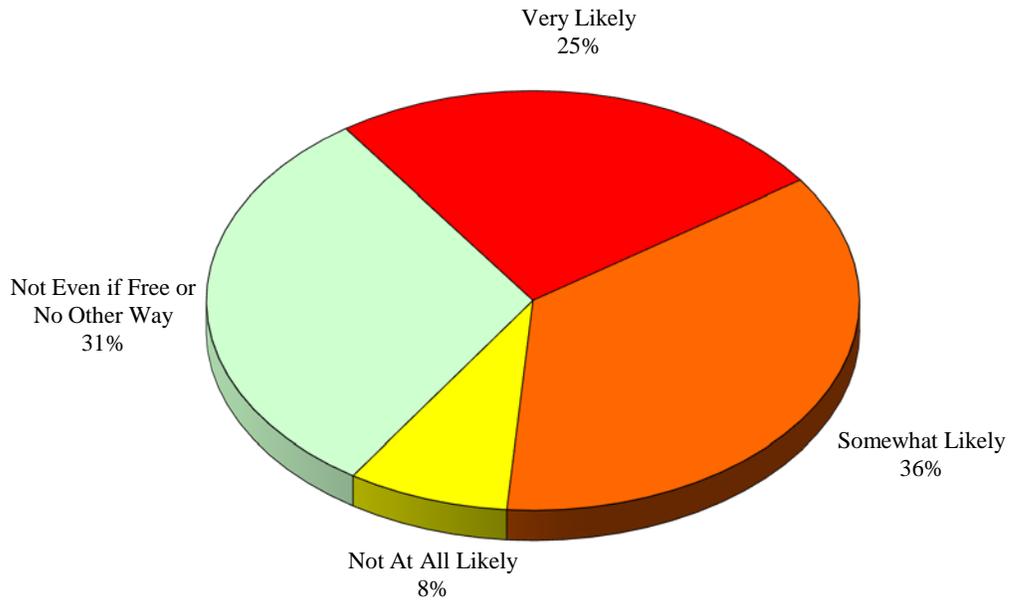
- Some part of the marketing communications program for VINE should have an objective to increase inquires, by phone or web.
- Prior to any effort to increase web traffic the website must be easy to navigate and geared to younger consumers.

Significant Numbers of Commuters Indicate They Will Ride

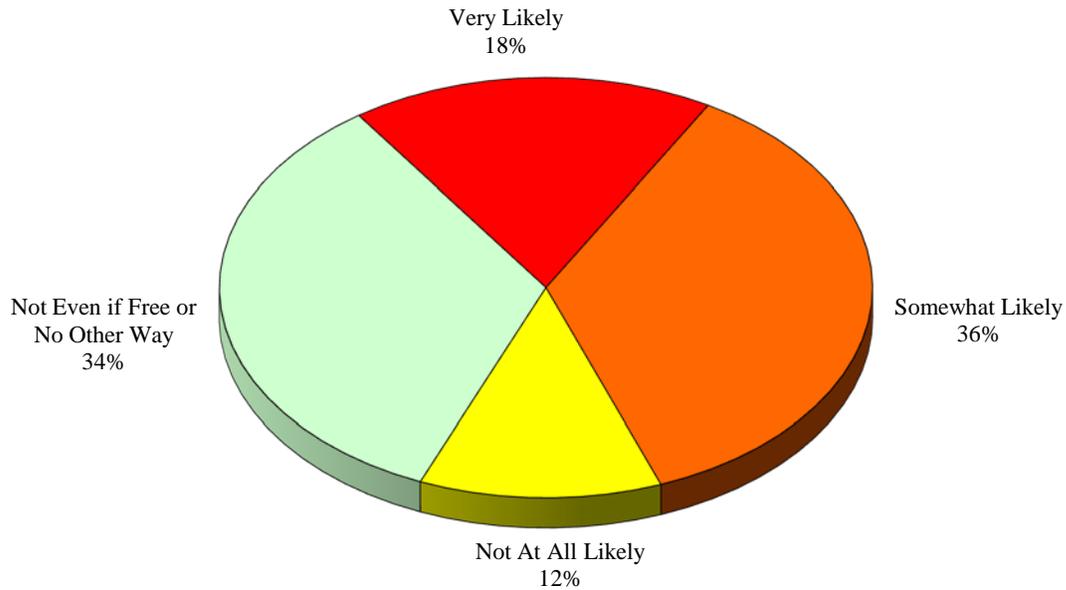
Commuters represent the largest potential market for increasing VINE ridership. A total of 25% of all commuters (defined as traveling to work or school three or more days a week) indicate they will very likely ride VINE service if improvements are made. This compares to 18% of all non-commuters.

The significance of the difference between 25% and 18% is further enhanced by the number of workers in the County as compared to non-commuters, and the number of trips a new commuter produces as compared to a non-commuter. According to the U.S. census, 57% of the County population 16 years or older are traveling to work. This does not include travel to school, which would make the size of the commute market more than 60% of the total. In addition, one new commuter rider typically produces 30 more transit trips per month than a new non-commuter rider and generates hundreds of dollars in revenue per year. Once a commuter is convinced to ride they will typically continue riding month after month. Non-commuters need to be convinced to ride as time passes because their travel needs are much more likely to change. They are also more likely traveling at a discounted fare.

Riding Potential, Commuters, 2010.



Riding Potential, Non-Commuters, 2010.



Implications

- The size of the potential market is large, with one-in-four commuters being very likely riding candidates.
- Setting commuters as the primary target market has significant implications on service design and delivery, service appeal and marketing. Commuters are a much more demanding audience than non-commuters; time is important to commuters, specifically service frequency and on-time performance. Commuters

have a broader definition of the concept of service. For commuters the entire riding experience is important, from the boarding area to interior cleanliness, customer service to ease of paying fares. The overall appearance of the service counts, as commuters need to feel comfortable in their choice of using the service. Marketing communications cannot over-promise and then have the service under-deliver. You will lose a customer and never get them back.

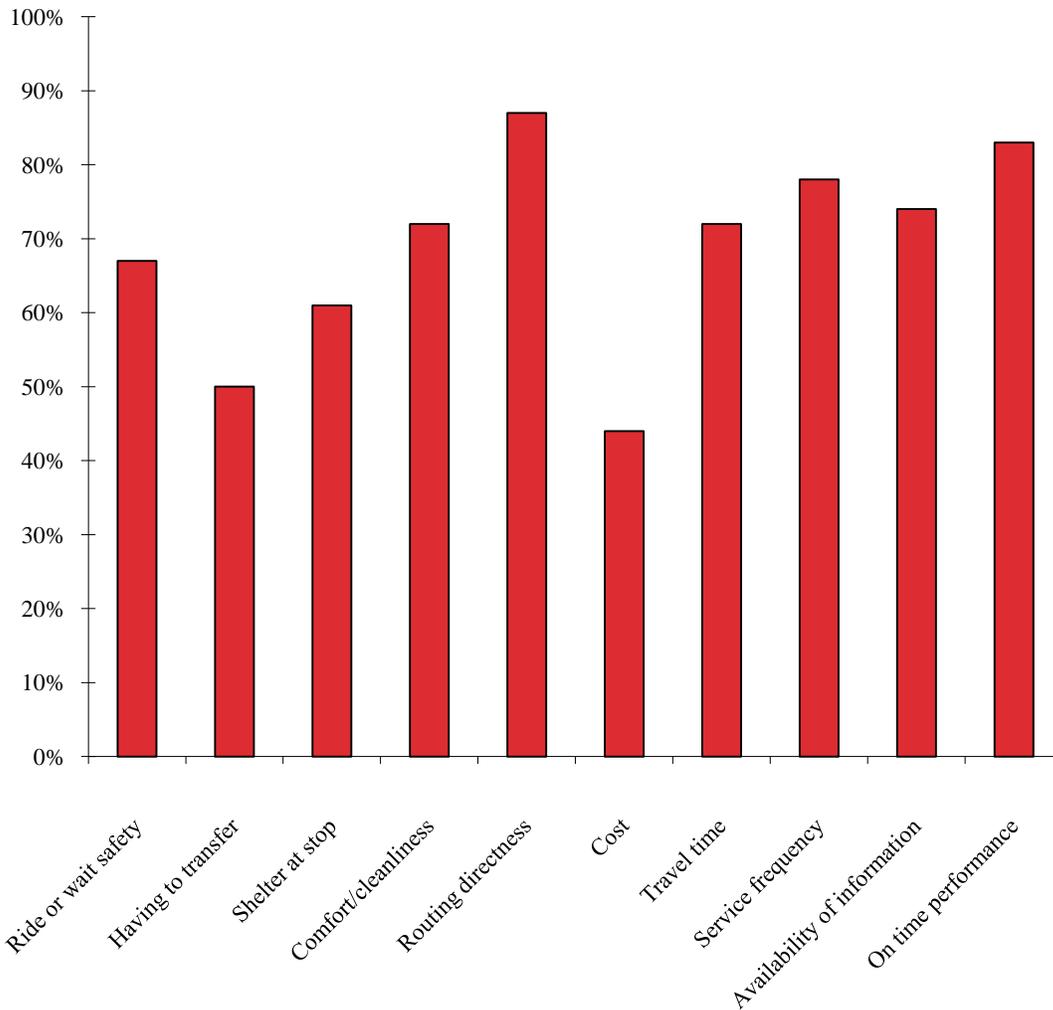
- Targeting the commuter rider implies that the agency will emphasize quality over quantity, making decisions that often translate to operating less service miles or having less service coverage, but operating more frequent service and expending more dollars on shelters, boarding areas, facility cleanliness, signage and other features.

Routing Directness and Being on Time are the Two Most Important Factors in the Riding Decision for Commuters.

Very likely commuter riders were asked to rate the importance of a number of transit service characteristics, based on how they influence their decision to begin riding VINE service. The results show routing (directness of travel to/from the destination) and on-time performance as the two highest rated characteristics. More than eight-in-ten commuters rated both characteristics as very important in their decision to begin riding. The third highest rated was service frequency at 78%.

Lowest rated was cost and having to transfer.

Importance Rating for Decision to Ride (Very Important), Very Likely Commuters, 2010.



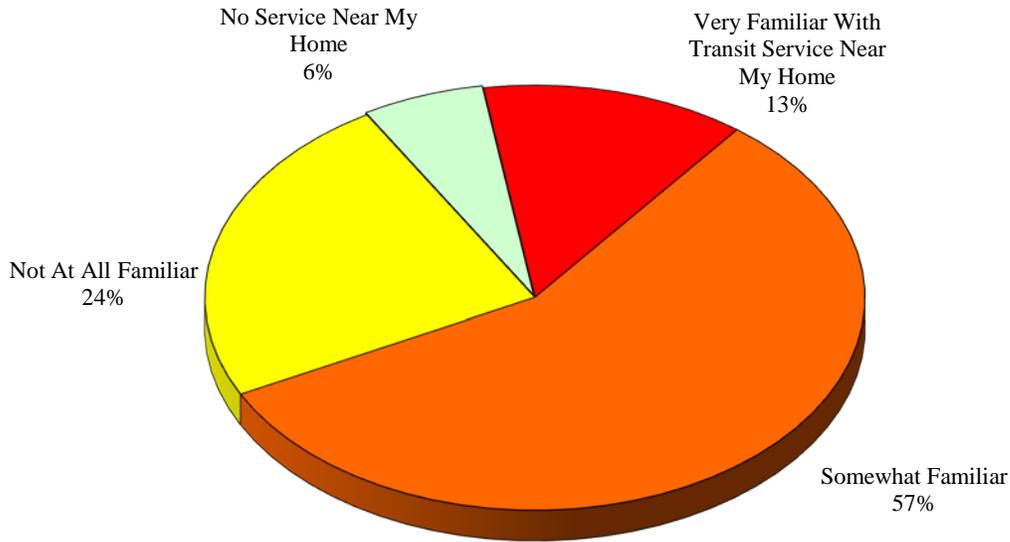
Implications

- The fact that very likely commuters differentiated their opinions among the various characteristics is important. It is an indicator of their seriousness in wanting to ride. When groups do not care they tend to rate every item high.
- For commuters, time is important and this is reflected in the high scores for directness of travel, being on time and service frequency.

Seven-in-Ten Very Likely Commuters have Some Knowledge of Current Service.

Most (but not all) of the very likely commuter group has some knowledge of the service. Since between 20% and 25% of this same group have investigated the service (via phone or web) in the past year, the perception they have may be old and incorrect.

Service Familiarity, Very Likely Commuters, 2010.



Implications

- If improvements are made in VINE service there should be marketing communications targeting this group, and encouraging them to investigate the service once again.

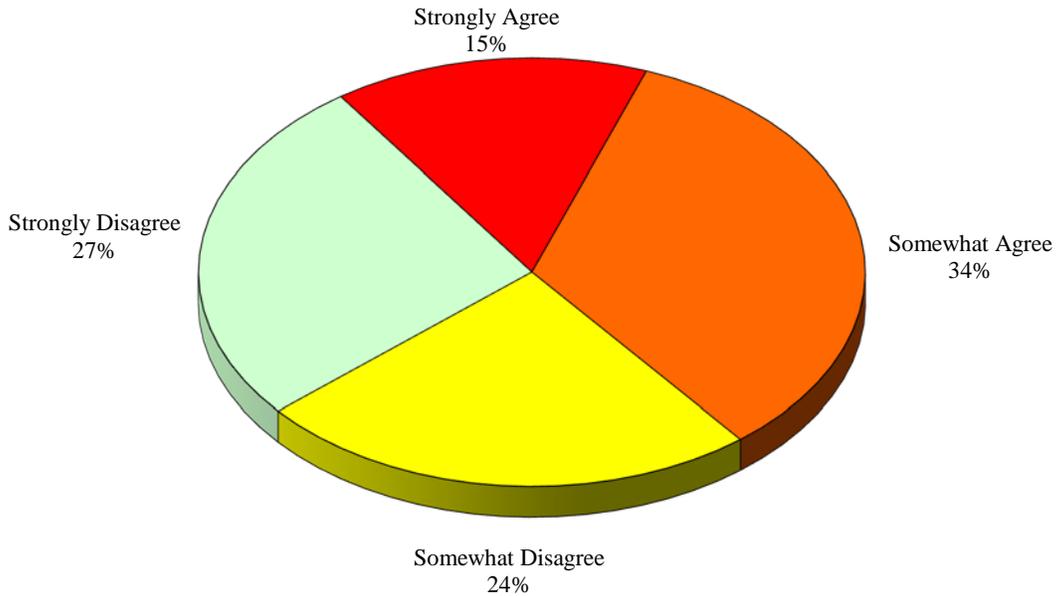
Two Groups of Very Likely Commuters Emerge from the Analysis.

The analysis of how the Very Likely commuter group responded to a number of questions indicates the group may actually be two groups. One indicator of this finding was the response to the question ‘People Like Me Ride the Bus’. The Very Likely commuter group split into two nearly identically sized groups in their responses. Half agreed with the statement and half did not. In the short term it would be far easier to concentrate marketing to the group that agreed with the statement than those that disagreed.

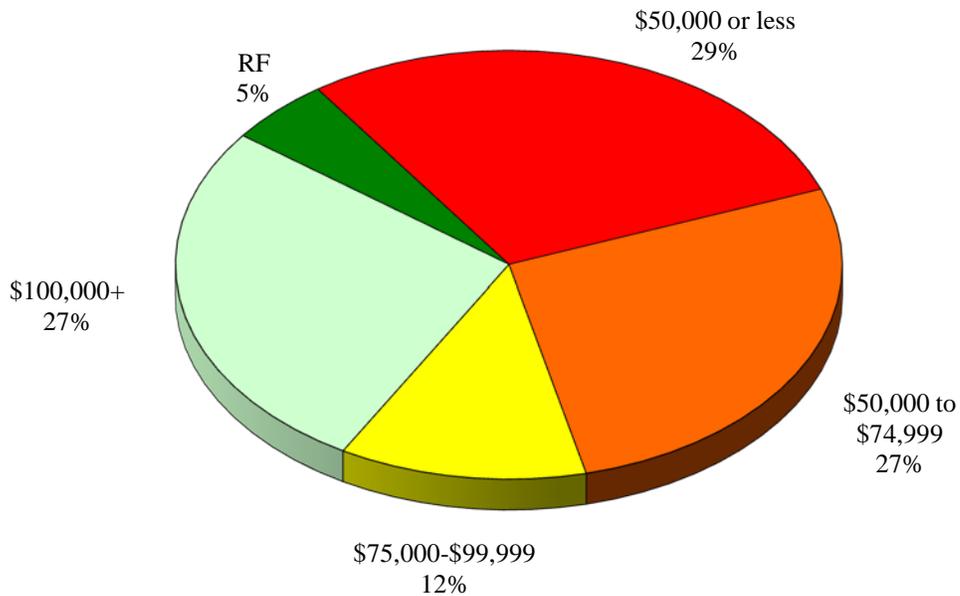
A second indicator was the response to two questions regarding highway improvements and new construction. People were asked for a priority ranking (high to low) for a number of options to reduce traffic congestion. One of the options was ‘Build new roads and freeways’ and another ‘Widening existing roads and highways’. The responses to both of these questions also showed a split among the Very Likely commuter group. For example, on the question ‘Building new roads and freeways’ 26% of the Very Likely commuter group rated the option the highest priority while 30% rated it the lowest priority. For ‘Widening existing roads and highways’ 26% rated it the highest priority and 22% as the lowest priority. When the group responded to transit-type options, such as ‘Increasing bus service’ and ‘creating Park and Ride lots to encourage carpooling and bus riding’ there was no split among the Very Likely commuter group.

The final clue was income (shown next). One quarter of the group (27%) have incomes of \$100,000 and above, and slightly more than one-quarter (29%) have incomes at \$50,000 and lower.

People Like Me Ride the Bus, Very Likely Commuters, 2010.



Income, Very Likely Commuters*, 2010.



*People who did not know are excluded

Implications

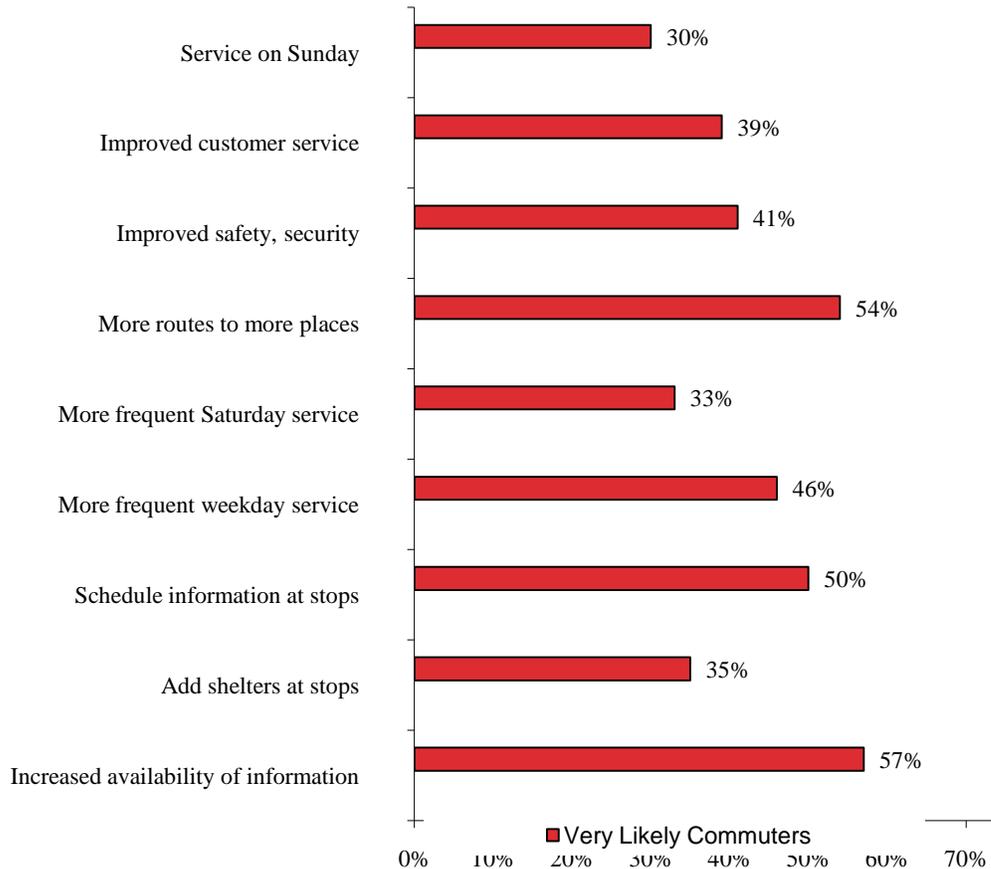
- The priority target market can now be more accurately defined: the target market is a commuter who will have some similar characteristics to current commuting riders. They will be younger, definitely under 44 years of age and half of that under 24 years of age. They will be equally split between Hispanics and Caucasians. They will have incomes under \$75,000 and that implies messages about saving money by riding the bus should resonate with this group.

Increased Availability of Information Should Motivate Riding by Potential Commuters.

When Very Likely commuters are asked to provide a priority rating for different improvement options, two of the top three rated improvements are related to information availability.

Among nine improvements tested, increased availability of information was rated first at 57% and information at bus stops was rated third at 50%. The high scores for improving information access would indicate improvements in this area will generate new riders.

Proposed Improvements, Very Likely Commuters, Highest Priority, 2010.



Implications

- Increasing rider information (access, presentation/clarity) should be high priority action items for the Marketing Plan.

Very Likely Commuters are Seeing VINE Advertising and are Seeking Information.

Among the general public, 29% have recently seen advertising for VINE service. This jumps to 44% for the Very Likely commuter group. For those that can recall the source of the ad, 29% remember seeing the ad in the newspaper, 21% on TV and 21% heard it on radio. A total of 17% indicated billboard.

Implications

- The target market is noticing VINE advertising. When improvements are made and communicated the target market will see them and make a new assessment on whether to ride.
- These findings indicate a portion of the Very Likely commuter group is actively looking for an alternative, and should respond to special offers to try the service.
- A common message from VINE about improvement will generate repeat investigation by the likely commuter group, and increase the likelihood of service trial.

Very Likely Commuters are Media Consumers.

The Very Likely commuter group reads the newspaper; listens to local radio and are on Facebook. The *Napa Valley Register* is the newspaper of choice for 87% of the Very Likely commuter group, with 71% reading the print version, 8% exclusive to on-line and the remaining 21% reading both. For radio listeners, 44% are tuning in to 99.3 The Vine and 28% to KVON. All of the other stations only received one response. For those Very Likely commuters using Facebook, 76% are daily users or almost daily.

Implications

- These findings are for all Very Likely commuters and not for the group previously described with the highest potential. This group is younger with slightly lower incomes and equally Hispanic and Caucasian. Their media habits would not necessarily align with the description above.

Very Likely Commuters Have Very Positive Attitudes Toward Public Transit.

By their responses to a number of different attitudinal questions, Very Likely commuters strongly believe in the importance, impact and value of public transit, and strongly

support public transit development. Their attitudes are notably more positive than those of the general public.

- 61% strongly agree with the statement ‘Money spent on public transit services in Napa County is a good investment’. This compares to 39% among the general public (excluding the Very Likely group), a positive score but not of the magnitude of the Very Likely commuter group.
- 70% strongly agree with the statement ‘People who ride public transit are helping the environment’. This compares to 57% among the general public (excluding the Very Likely group), again a positive score but not of the magnitude of the Very Likely commuter group.
- 78% believe public transit should appeal to all citizens, not ‘just people who cannot afford a car or who cannot drive’. This is nearly double the 41% score among the general public.
- 46% rate ‘increasing bus service’ as the highest priority for reducing traffic congestion. Only 18% of the remainder of the public rated increasing bus service so high.
- 24% identified public transportation as one of the most important issues facing Napa County in 2010; only 3% of the general public did so.

Implications

- With positive attitudes about public transit and riding, advertising can avoid messages designed to raise awareness and focus on messages that communicate improvements being made, and motivating service investigation and trial.

VINE Brand is Dull and Unimaginative.

The name VINE for the public bus service in Napa County is a perfect fit with the area it serves. The name is short, easy to remember and reinforces the character of the county. The name is the best part of the brand; the other parts of the brand are not presented effectively or designed for maximum impact. The result is a great name and an image that appears second-class, not clean and somewhat unfriendly. The buses are look old and even when clean are not clean looking. The typography of the VINE logo does not match the fluidity of the image of a vine. There is no one consistent image as presented on buses, in signage, in print and on the web.

The result is an older looking, not quite clean, unappealing image.

Implications

- The VINE brand needs to be upgraded in appearance and visual appeal.
- A design standard must be established and adhered to for a consistent presentation across all communications to the public.
- Image is important as it communicates a message to prospective riders and the general public that the service is well managed and convenient to use.

Bus Stops Along Highway 29 Need to Be Significantly Upgraded.

VINE service along highway 29 between Napa and Calistoga is the only public bus service for a vast part of the county and represents the only non-car alternative for people travelling long distances along the highway 29 corridor. The bus stops along this route are simply stops along the road. They have a sign and some have a stop signal light but they are not particularly visible or inviting and not a pleasant place to wait for the bus.

These stops should be developed as transit access points for the vast area of this part of the county. They should have more physical presence, places where people can be dropped off and picked-up, with a shelter and lighting, and if possible, with places to park.

There are other bus stops in the service area that also need to be upgraded in some way to improve the image of the service, the perception of waiting safety and passenger convenience. One of these stops is in Calistoga and others were seen in American Canyon.

Implications

- Ridership can be increased along the Highway 29 corridor with capital improvements to the stop.
- VINE needs to increase the number of Park and Ride locations to increase bus service access, promote Kiss and Ride, carpooling and vanpooling.

Four-in-ten VINE Riders are on Route 10.

A review of the route-by-route riding statistics shows 42% of VINE customers are riding route 10. The other 58% are on all of the other routes. This is not unusual for a transit system of the size of VINE and actually shows at least one route attracts significant use.

Implications

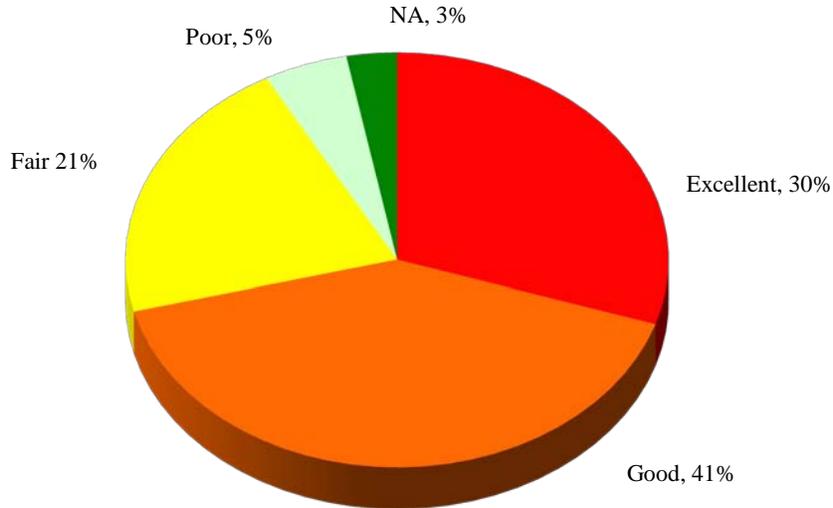
- It is common that new riders have characteristics and riding profile very close to those of current riders.
- When looking for new riders it is important to understand that 40% of the current customers are on one route and to allocate marketing promotional dollars and other resources in a similar proportion.

VINE Service is Difficult to Understand.

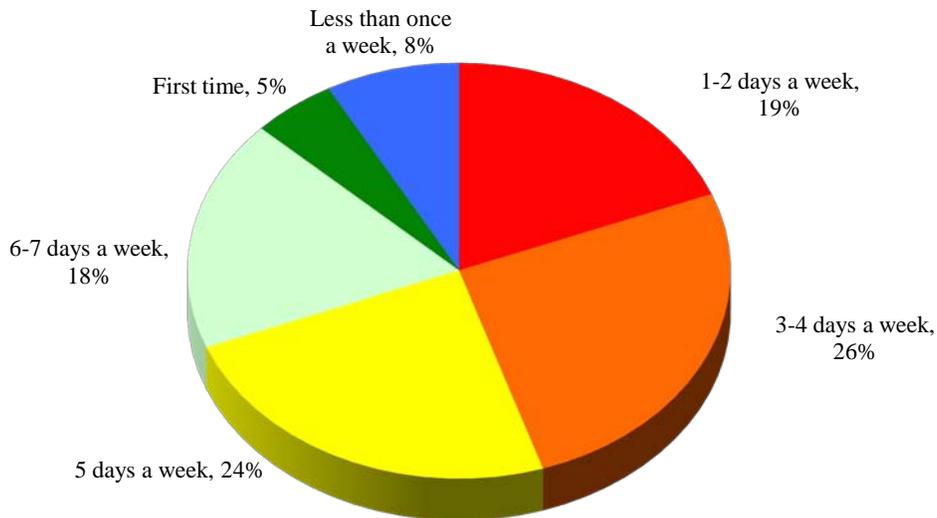
A rider survey was conducted as part of the 2008 Short Range Transit Plan, and that survey asked riders to rate twelve service characteristics on a scale from Excellent to Poor.

One-in-four (26%) riders rated the service as Fair or Poor for the criteria System Easy to Understand. One would expect that current riders would have a better understanding of the service as 87% are riding the service at least once a week.

Rating of System Understanding, Current Riders, 2010.



Frequency of Riding, Current Riders, 2010.



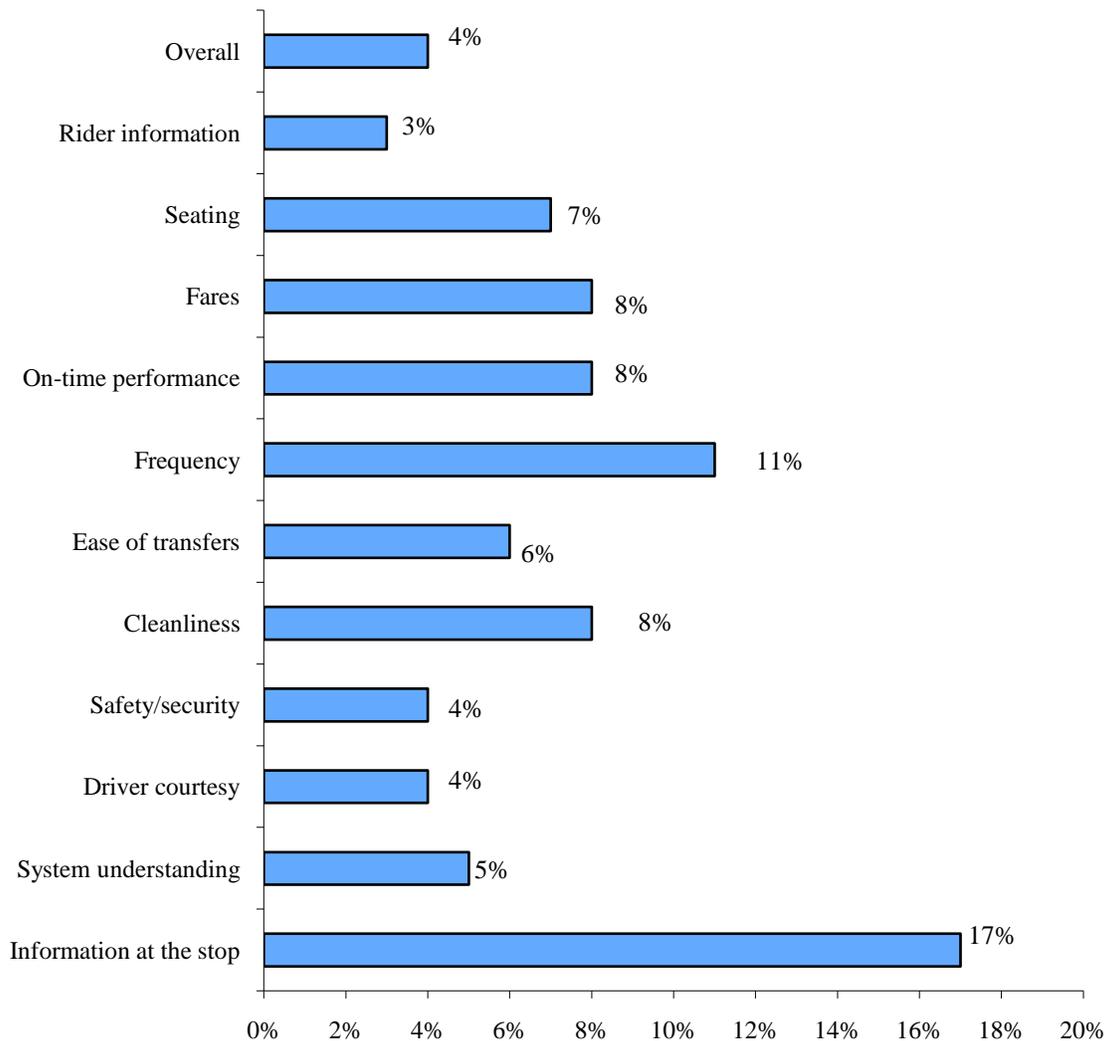
Implications

- If current riders have difficulty understanding the service how can one expect non-riders or visitors to understand it? Significant improvements need to be made in system understanding including the possibility of changing the current method of route identification.
- Marketing promotions to motivate people to try the service will end up frustrating those who investigate the service and cannot easily and quickly figure it out.

Information at the Bus Stop is a High Priority Rider Need.

Another service characteristic rating from the on-board survey clearly identified a priority need by riders. Seventeen percent of riders rated information at the bus stop as Poor. This was the largest percentage rated Poor of the twelve characteristics being rated.

Service Characteristic Ratings, Poor Scores, 2010.



Implications

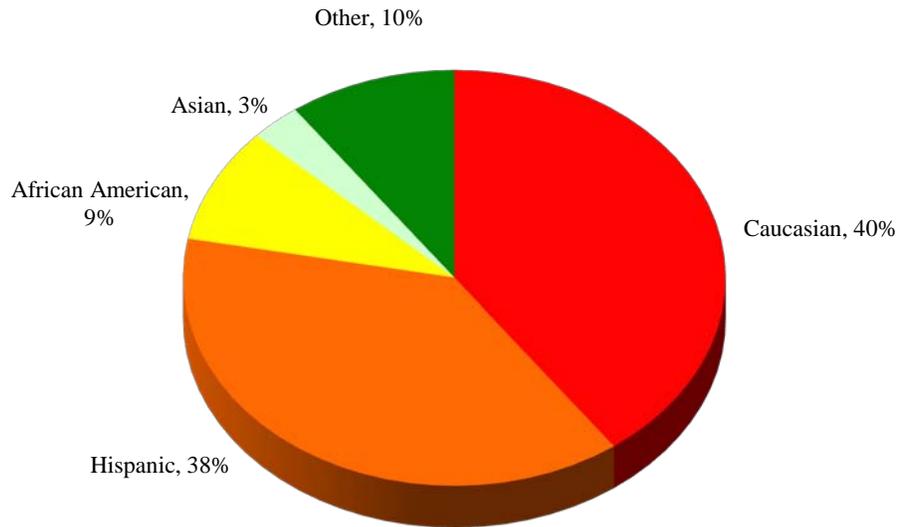
- Riders (and non-riders) see transit service as a combination of many factors, not just the most obvious such as frequency of service, on time performance, driver courtesy and vehicle cleanliness. From a riders' view, availability and access to service information is part of the quality of service being delivered by the transit agency.
- Improving information quality should also improve overall ratings of the service by riders.
- Information at the stop is a priority need among riders.

- When improvements are made to service understanding, part of that effort must include information at bus stops throughout the system.

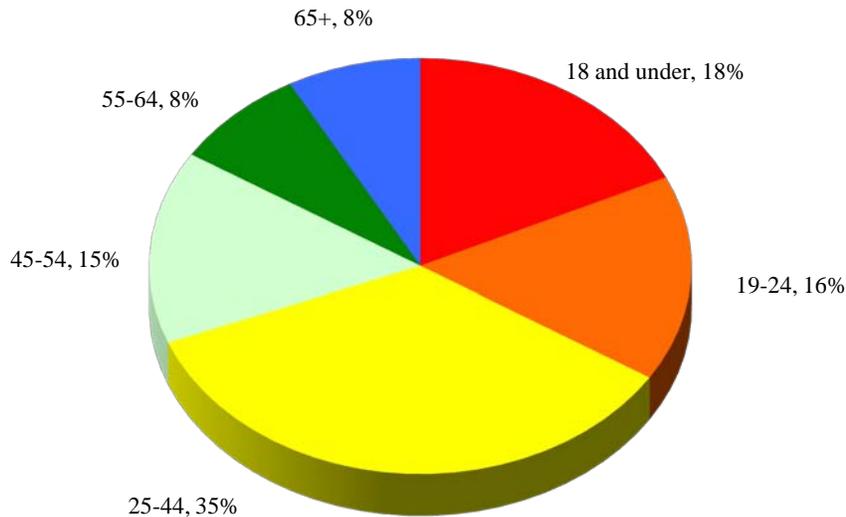
Nearly Four-in-Ten Riders are Hispanic. One-in-three are Under 25. Most are Employed or Students.

A large percentage of VINE riders are Hispanic (38%), and 25% of VINE riders completed the rider survey in Spanish. The typical VINE rider works full or part-time (32%) or is a student (17%), and few riders are over the age of 55.

VINE Rider Ethnicity, 2010.



VINE Rider Age, 2010.



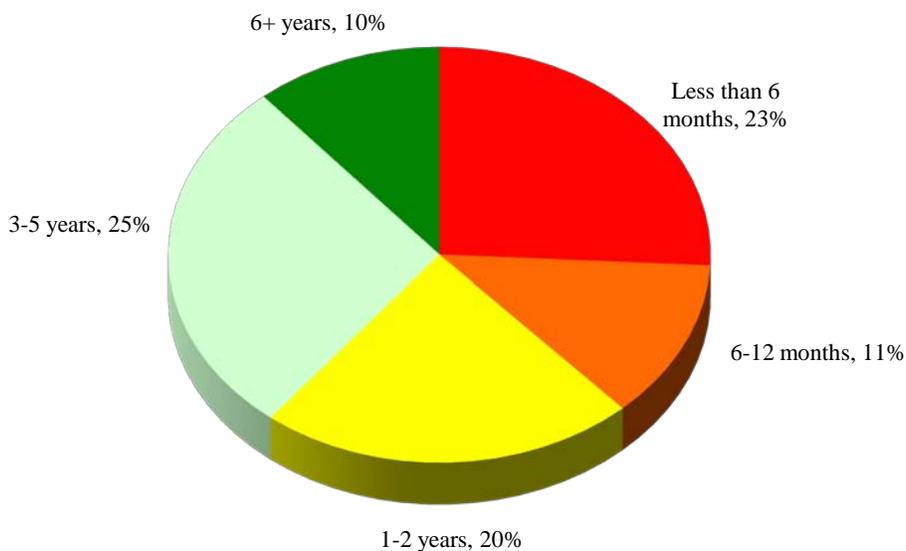
Implications

- With sizable numbers of Hispanic riders and the prospect of large numbers of new riders being Hispanic, all VINE information materials, signage and rider communications should be bi-lingual.
- The Marketing Plan must address the Hispanic and youth markets.
- For all public involvement programs especially service planning there should be special and extraordinary efforts to gain the opinions of Hispanic residents of the County. In addition, the employed, students and residents who are younger should be represented on citizen committees making recommendations on VINE service and fares.
- Any advisory committees to VINE should have a diverse membership, by ethnicity, employment, student status and age.

One-Third (34%) of the Rider Group is New to the Service.

While many VINE riders have been using the service for years, a significant number of riders have recently started riding (34% in past year).

VINE Rider Duration of Ridership, 2010.



Implications

- A high rider turnover (percent of new riders in past year) places a higher priority on service appeal, service information clarity and information availability. Each of these elements is vital to attract new people to the service without the benefit of promotions and advertising.
- While many new VINE riders are self-motivated because they have little or no access to a vehicle, thinking the service will attract new customers regardless of

the appeal or information quality/access is not a success strategy for increasing ridership and community support in the long term.

- Buses and signage must have visual appeal to gain a prospect rider's attention, and make a good first impression (at the most basic level, communicating the service is safe and clean).
- User information presented on the web must be easy to understand and view as most new riders will be younger and access route and schedule information via the website.
- There must be an advertising and promotional component to the Marketing Plan as large numbers of new people must be aware of the service and be motivated to try the service.

VINE Marketing Plan

The VINE Marketing Plan has been prepared to cover a five-year period from 2012 to 2017. The plan includes the goals for the five-year period, first and second year objectives, and a detailing of activities for the first two years of the plan.

Introduction

There are always many challenges in the marketing of transit service where the aim is to increase ridership and develop future markets. Four challenges were identified that were critical to the development of this marketing plan. They were identified by the analysis of the findings from the Market Segmentation Survey, and the investigation of the market by other consumer research methods.

The four challenges are not particularly unusual but overcoming them is vital to VINE's success in the future. In this section each challenge is described and strategies are proposed for overcoming the challenge. These strategies are the underpinnings of the marketing plan that follow including presentation of goals, objectives, target markets and program descriptions.

Challenge: Increasing VINE Service Consideration and Service Investigation with Few Increases in Service and Limited Marketing Resources.

- To increase ridership on VINE buses people must first consider the service, and then investigate if the service meets their travel needs. This must be done by large numbers of people at all times of the year, year after year. Few transit agencies, if any, have the marketing resources to have advertising programs that generate consideration and investigation throughout the year.
- Many residents have already considered riding the bus and made inquiries about the service. Getting these potential riders to continue to investigate the service, as their travel needs change is a challenge on a limited advertising budget.
- The current VINE brand has little appeal and projects a poor image of the service. It contributes little to generating interest and investigation.
- There is no large service increases scheduled over the next five years but other improvements (downtown center, Park and Ride lot, more new buses) are imminent.

Strategy #1: Establish a common theme of 'continual improvement'.

- To generate service investigation people need to believe improvements are being made to the service. Service is very broadly defined in this scenario encompassing changes large and small.
- Every change that is made in service including new facilities, new buses, more shelters, new maintenance techniques, schedule and routing adjustments, adding eye level displays, and new information formats are communicated (in advertising, press releases, speeches, on the web) to the public and riders as improvements.

- A new positioning statement for VINE replaces the current one and communicates a message of ‘improving to serve you better’. It is placed by the VINE logo on all marketing materials, website, communications.
- The improvement message would be used for a long time, as long as five years. It will take a long time for this message to be understood by the public, and there are few marketing dollars for advertising the message so the strategy is to use it for a very long time and always refer to it.
- The improvement message will also communicate to non-riders that VINE is fiscally responsible. They are managing to make changes even with very limited resources, and making decisions where best to spend limited resources.

Strategy #2: Develop an enhanced brand for VINE, implementing the revised brand over a five-year period.

- This is called an enhanced brand because the name is great and should not change. What needs to change is the typography, exterior design of the buses, signage and other elements representing the visual identity.
- A five-year period is a long time to implement an enhanced brand for a service but there is little choice. A revised brand is a significant investment and will only be effective as an investment if its implementation is successfully executed. VINE does not have the resources to make this change in a year or two.
- The important part is to get it right (the enhanced design) and implement it consistently across all elements. This is more difficult than it appears as a new brand represents change and there is always resistance to change from many quarters. There are also many decisions involved as each part of the brand is implemented, and these decisions will contribute to the overall success of the brand.
- The development of a revised brand is an opportunity to engage the community in a discussion about the need and value of improved transit service.

Strategy #3: Direct marketing monies to promotions and not awareness generation.

- The riding decision can be made (and is made) at any time during the year; generating awareness throughout the year is not affordable, and is soon forgotten.
- Limited monies need to be spent on motivating people to ride now, with action-oriented graphics and limited time offers.
- Be aggressive when selecting the incentives to generate trial.
- An important benefit of the new brand is generating awareness of where the service operates and how to get information via the web.

Strategy #4: Regularly use free ride offers in marketing promotions.

- Getting a person to commit to riding the bus is not an easy task. Make it a somewhat easier decision for the person by including free ride offers in marketing promotions.
- Each new VINE commuter will generate thousands of dollars in farebox revenue over the time they are a rider. It is prudent to use a more sizable incentive to attract a new commuter.
- Incentives can be tracked with the results (returns from the farebox typically), used in the planning of future promotions.

Challenge: Serving Consumers' Interest for Improved Commute-to-Work Transportation with a Limited Bus Service and a Large Geographic Area.

- There is sizable interest among Napa residents who commute to work in riding the bus to and from work. Their interest is based on saving money and they expect a high level of service convenience in order to switch from driving alone.
- A large number of commuters travel long distances to work with either an origin or destination in Napa County.
- Commute bus service is available along Highway 29 but the service has difficulty maintaining on-time performance due to varying traffic conditions.
- Employment is growing in suburban office developments not well served by regular route transit.

Strategy #1: Add vanpools to the VINE service mix and purchase vans with capital monies.

- This is a two-part recommendation involving VINE assuming a new and larger role in vanpool marketing and VINE purchasing vans and making them part of the VINE fleet. They would be branded as VINE vehicles.
- The current arrangement of vanpool marketing in the region does not well serve the needs of Napa County residents interested in a sharing a ride to work.
- With public ownership of the van, the cost of the service paid by the rider would be calculated on operating costs only, making the fare much more attractive to potential riders.
- Adding vanpools to the service mix has many benefits to VINE. It expands the availability of commute service to every area of the County and not just to those residents who live near a bus stop. It reduces the demand for new express bus routes that would be expensive to operate and appeal to a small group of commuters. It shows non-riders that VINE is more than a bus company and has a role in reducing congestion, a highly-valued need among non-riders.

Strategy #2: Add Park and Ride and Park and Pool Lots along Highway 29.

- These would be small lots using portions of church or merchant parking lots. The intent is the spaces would be donated for temporary use (during commute times, no overnight parking).

- One of these lots must be in American Canyon on Highway 29.

Strategy #3: Promote the new Park and Ride lot at Highway 29 and Trancas.

- After promoting the opening of the lot, there should be annual promotions to boost utilization (assuming it is not full).

Challenge: Generating Greater Ridership Among the Hispanic Market.

- A significant portion of the current rider market (38%) and the potential rider market (64%) was identified as Hispanic.
- Relatively little is known about this market and it is difficult to research this market.

Strategy #1: Continue efforts to publish bi-lingual user information aids, hire Spanish speaking drivers and making available Spanish speaking customer service personnel.

- Do not move away from efforts that have already been done, and if possible seek ways to improve the present practices.

Strategy #2: Hire a bi-lingual event marketing team.

- Event marketing is recognized as an effective marketing tactic for meeting and greeting new customers (whoever they are) face to face. Many companies recognize event marketing as a component in their media budget just like television, radio, direct mail, etc.
- Event marketing personnel work in teams and are typically contract employees.
- The team should represent VINE at community events and make special efforts to attend events with large Hispanic attendance.

Strategy #3: Design Hispanic specific promotions.

- Among the promotions conducted to increase VINE ridership one per year should be directed to the Hispanic market.

Challenge: Mitigating the High Rate of Rider Turnover.

- VINE has many new riders and many others leave the service each year. This is common for bus services with high numbers of student riders, and possibly communities with large numbers of people working in tourist-related service jobs.
- Given the profile of current VINE riders it may not be possible to keep them from leaving the service without significant increases in routes, schedules, days and hours of service. But, you can show your appreciation and hope they do patronize the service at some other time or some other circumstances.

Strategy #1: Improve the VINE website.

- The site must be developed for a younger audience, as the target markets for increasing ridership are younger. The site needs to be more visually interesting and stimulating, and less wordy.
- Maps and schedule information must be easier to read. If Google Travel Planning is available it needs to be added, and people need to be able to purchase fares on the site.

Strategy #2: Conduct rider appreciation events, promotions.

- Any promotion and event should be solely directed toward the rider and not part of some other transportation-related celebration such as Transportation Week. However, a rider appreciation event can be related to a celebration such as Valentine Day, where there would be a natural connection to appreciation.

VINE Goals and Objectives

Marketing Goals for 2012-2017

1. Increase VINE ridership in proportion to the percent growth of the Napa County population, forecasted for 2017.
2. Implement an enhanced brand for VINE service with application to buses, signage, user information, web, driver uniforms, communications.
3. Implement a marketing relationship with Napa College resulting in the adoption of a program where students ride free with school identification with the cost being paid for by student activity fees or the school administration.
4. Expand the availability of VINE service by adding a vanpool option to the service mix and establishing new Park and Ride lots.
5. Improve the understanding among seniors of the service available to them and that the service is improving.

Marketing Objectives for Year 1

1. Complete the development of the new VINE brand involving an approved new design for buses, signage, user information and web; and the preparation and approval of an implementation plan for brand adoption.
2. Implement three promotions designed to motivate increase VINE ridership.
 - The specific target market for each promotion would be decided based on opportunities identified for year 1 such as opening of the new Park and Ride lot, increases/improvements in VINE service, express bus service to BART.
 - A promotion that seeks to motivate a specific target group to begin riding VINE. It can include paid media, event marketing, pricing incentives, direct mail, Facebook marketing and other tactics to motivate trial. Promotions are for a limited time.
 - Target groups can include Hispanics, City of Napa residents, BART or Ferry commuters, seniors.
3. Provide marketing communication support to all changes in service or new/revised operating policies.
4. Hire and train an event marketing team that is bi-lingual, and implement at least 10 events in the year.

5. Initiate a marketing relationship with Napa College students and staff, with the intent on increasing ridership to the school and beginning discussions on a U-Pass type program.
6. Identify and adopt a positioning statement and implement a messaging strategy that supports that statement.
7. Identify new Park and Ride lot options in the Highway 29 corridor.
8. Each year develop and implement a rider appreciation promotion or event.
9. Develop and launch a new VINE website.

Marketing Objectives for Year 2

1. Begin adoption of the enhanced brand with actions to: distinguish VINE from NCTPA; deployment on the fleet; adding eye level displays at selected bus stops; and adoption of brand on user information materials and related service communications.
2. Provide marketing communication support to all changes in service and new/revised operating policies.
3. Implement three promotions a year designed to increase ridership, with one designed to increase knowledge of VINE service (route and schedule) closest to residents' homes in the City of Napa.
4. Implement a marketing program at Napa College and make progress on development of a U Pass program.
5. Define the costs and benefits of adding vanpools to the VINE fleet.
6. Complete 25 event marketing events during the year.
7. Secure and open at least one Park and Ride lot with the priority a highway 29 location in American Canyon.
8. Initiate a marketing relationship with Napa and Vintage High School seeking to increase VINE ridership to school and for after-school activities.
9. Implement a rider appreciation event.

VINE Target Markets

The target markets are the groups at which marketing programs and communications are directed.

The highest priority groups are work commuters and students. They can be the most difficult to convince to begin riding, but once they become riders they make many trips a month. This makes marketing dollars expended to attract them a very efficient use of limited marketing resources.

Hispanics were identified by the research as part of the high priority commute group and large numbers of Hispanics currently ride. This is often an indicator of additional ridership opportunity.

City of Napa residents are identified as they reside where the bulk of service is operated.

While seniors were not identified as a high potential riding group, marketing to seniors is a priority market. Seniors should be comfortable riding regular route service and be knowledgeable about routing and schedules near their homes, even if they use the bus only occasionally. If they understand the service and have some experience with the service they will be more likely to support increased transit development.

Current VINE service has a high turnover rate, with hundreds of people both leaving the service and beginning to ride each year. Efforts to retain current riders and maintain a positive relationship with riders who leave the service are important to ridership development in the short and longer term.

The target markets for VINE are:

1. Work commuters

- Younger, age 21 to 45.
- Incomes under \$75,000 a year.
- More likely female.
- More likely to reside in Napa and American Canyon.

2. Students

- Middle school, High School and College age.
- Especially schools with large student populations located near current VINE service.

3. Hispanics

- Commuting to work.
- All ages, all incomes.
- More likely female.

4. City of Napa residents.

- All residents, with special attention toward seniors, promoting their use of regular route service.

5. Current Riders.

- To reduce annual turnover.

6. Seniors

- Especially those in the City of Napa.

VINE Positioning and Messaging

An important component of this plan is the positioning and messages communicated to the public about VINE. It is important for potential riders and citizens to have some impression about VINE, even if they have no intention of riding. With paid media expensive and limited resources focused on generating new riders, having an effective message that is consistently presented among all materials and do so over a number of years will help improve public opinion about the service.

For VINE marketing the positioning should be about improvement, imparting a promise along the lines of ‘improving service to serve you better’. The exact four or five word phrase will need to be developed and appropriately placed by the VINE logo. This statement should be in place for as long as five years. The improvement theme is a promise to:

- Current riders that the service is getting better, even if slowly. The improvement message helps solidify their loyalty and, if they leave the service will return at some time.
- Prospective riders that improvements are being made and encourage them to continue to investigate the service to see if it meets their needs.
- Non-riders that improvements are being made, even with limited resources, and an improved transit service is good for the community.

The nature of what defines an improvement is purposely broad and aggressively interpreted. Almost every positive action that is made by VINE in the next five years should be presented to the public as an improvement. This includes major items like opening a new transit center in downtown Napa and more minor events such as eye-level displays being added to stops, minor schedule changes to improve on-time performance, website improvements, new bus washer (or similar type improvement), etc.

The improvement theme is used for all messaging, for marketing promotions, for earned media, on the website, communications to riders and employees, newsletters, Facebook, etc.

The long time span for using the improvement message is also by design. An improvement type message is a communication meant for the long term. It is not a promotional message that would encourage people to ride now, and would have a shorter

design life. It fits a service that currently has little appeal or convenience for people that have other means to travel, and lacks resources to fix things quickly.

The improvement theme should be used as a key message for marketing promotions and can be augmented by messages about saving money by riding the bus. Messages about relaxing while commuting or saving the environment will not motivate people to try the service.

VINE Marketing Program Year 1

This section presents the major components for the year 1 VINE marketing program. It is organized by the presentation of each marketing objective and the description of program elements that are designed to accomplish the objective.

Objective #1: Complete the development of the new VINE brand involving an approved new design for buses, signage, user information and web, as well as the preparation and approval of an implementation plan for brand adoption.

Program Elements

1. Development of revised, enhanced brand for VINE including logo, bus fleet, user information, signage, web, rider communications.
2. Preparation of five-year implementation plan detailing schedule and costs, by year, of every element in the application of the new brand.

Purpose

- Upgrade the visual appeal of VINE service to residents and visitors.
- Increase awareness of service availability and service consideration.
- Increase likelihood that parents will allow their children to ride the bus.
- Improve public opinion of bus service being well managed and efficient.

Priority

- Highest.

Deliverables

- Concept alternatives of the new brand for review.
- Final artwork of the new brand for logo, buses, signage, user information, website, rider communications.
- Brand Implementation Plan.

Description

- The review of the design alternatives for the enhanced brand is an opportunity for VINE to engage the community, riders and employees. One part of this engagement is a review of the alternatives and another part is to communicate to these audiences the message that VINE service is improving (the new brand is one part of the improvement) and will continue to improve to attract more riders and community support.
- Bus operators and customer service representatives are a key audience for the successful adoption by the public and riders of the new brand. Brand reviews should involve both of these groups, and the selected new brand should be launched first to the employees.
- Part of the development of the brand must include input from people responsible for maintaining the brand. This includes maintenance personnel and marketing.

- Newspaper and other media must understand the rationale behind the development of the new brand; how an enhanced brand is a long-term investment for increasing ridership.
- The intent of the preparation of the deployment plan is to ensure the successful adoption of the brand across all elements, and the programming of costs for the adoption in future year capital and operating budgets.

Objective #2: Implement three promotions designed to increase VINE ridership.

Program Elements

1. Three promotions directed at specific audience and developed to increase ridership.

Purpose

- Increase VINE ridership.

Deliverables

- Three promotions during the year.

Priority

- High.

Description

- These promotions are different than the marketing support proposed for service/facility improvements.
- A promotion seeks to motivate a specific target group to immediately begin riding VINE. It can include paid media, event marketing, pricing incentives, direct mail, Facebook marketing and other tactics to motivate trial. Promotions are for a limited time.
- There are many target markets for increasing ridership by executing a promotion. They include Hispanics, City of Napa residents, BART or Ferry commuters, seniors, youth (summer).

Comment

- An option to consider is using Facebook as a marketing media for a promotion. Facebook offers the opportunity to send specific marketing messages and offers to people using Facebook, and to segment the target audience by factors such as geography, age, gender, income and interests.

Objective #3: Provide marketing communication support to all changes in service or new/revised operating policies.

Program Elements

1. Marketing communications for system and service improvements.

Purpose

- Increase VINE ridership.
- Generate community awareness that bus service is improving, and is worthy of additional support.

Priority

- Highest.

Deliverables

- Advertising program and other media support for the improvement.

Description

- This program provides marketing support for service improvements (new routes, better frequency, improved schedule connections, easier ways to pay), for the opening of new passenger facilities (Park and Ride lot, downtown transit center) or for other changes that improve the overall riding experience. This could include new ways of doing things or new equipment purchased that result in improved cleanliness, better on-time performance, less road calls, etc.
- The size and components of the program would be based on the improvement. The opening of a new Park and Ride lot, for example, is a major event as it is designed to serve new riders and needs to be seen as being well used; such a program may include television, radio and direct mail. A route improvement could involve a direct mail to households along the route, or the use of door hangers, or simply communications to riders.
- The target markets for these communications may be potential riders, current riders or seniors who may not be in the prior two groups but are important for community support.

Objective #4: Hire and train an event marketing team that is bi-lingual, and implement at least 10 events in the year.

Program Elements

1. Hiring and training a marketing team to represent VINE service at community events.
2. Preparation of training manual and event procedure for new hires.

Purpose

- Meet present and potential customers face to face to better understand the needs and opinions.
- Respond to potential riders' concerns about riding the bus.
- Provide travel planning information and how to ride information.
- Generate awareness of the service in the community.

Priority

- High.

Deliverables

- A team leader and group of people trained to represent VINE at community events and other places.
- Participation at least 10 events the first year.

Description

- Marketing managers consider event marketing as a media, and the decision as to the number of events, the size of the team and the giveaways is a media decision; that is, the costs for the team are part of paid media and compete with other media (newspaper, TV, direct mail, radio, Facebook) for the available dollars.
- The team is a group of independent contractors paid by the hour. The team is organized and trained by a team leader. The team leader is responsible for identifying events in coordination with the VINE marketing personnel, scheduling the events and all team-related coordination for conducting the event. The team leader is an independent contractor.
- The team leader is responsible for all staffing related issues, including hiring and firing, and payment. They prepare a monthly report to VINE detailing the activities and including the invoice.
- Once trained the team leader may be assigned the task of completing a training manual, for the training of future team members.
- The purpose of the event team is to increase ridership. Also part of their function is development of new markets, specifically Hispanic and seniors. A number of the events scheduled should have large attendance by seniors or Hispanics.

Other

- A Spanish speaker must be part of the team at all events.
- The team must wear VINE shirts at all events.
- Giveaways should be provided by VINE, or be purchased by the event team leader with prior approval by VINE.

Objective #5: Initiate a marketing relationship with Napa College students and staff, with the intent on increasing ridership to the school and beginning discussions on a U-Pass type program.

Program Elements

1. Annual promotional program to increase VINE ridership to and from the school.
2. Relationship with the college with the intent of developing a program where all students, faculty and staff ride VINE free, with the payment an annual amount paid by the school or a student activity fee.

Purpose

- Increase ridership among a key target market.
- Work toward the approval of an incentive that will encourage riding year after year.

Priority

- Medium (year 1), High (year 2 and beyond).

Deliverables

- Implementation of promotional program targeting the college (main campus).
- Evidence of progress toward the adoption of a U-Pass style program.

Description

- The intent of the promotional program would target new students either at or prior to the time of registration. The program may include advertising, event marketing, free ride offers, direct mailings, posters, banners on campus facilities, sports sponsorships and other opportunities available for marketing to students.
- Based on budget the program may focus on fall registration or include marketing throughout the school year.
- For the development of a U-Pass type program it will be important to understand what is important to the school and who would make the decision. In some situations the school administration would be the decision makers and in others it may be elected student representatives.

Objective #6: Identify and adopt a positioning statement and implement a messaging strategy that supports that statement.

Program Elements

1. Preparation of new positioning statement.
2. Adoption of messaging that supports the new positioning statement.

Purpose

- Communicate to current riders, potential riders and staunch non-riders a consistent message about VINE service to increase public support for transit improvements.

Priority

- Highest.

Deliverables

- Approved and adopted positioning statement.
- Messaging in VINE communications that support the positioning statement.

Description

- The new positioning statement for VINE must communicate a sense of on-going improvement to serve the community better.
- The development of the statement may or may not be part of the work done for the development of the brand. This would depend on the capabilities of the firm hired to complete the brand work.
- The success of the positioning will be a function of how well it is infused into a range of communications. Some of this messaging will be subtle.
- The positioning statement must work in Spanish.

Objective #7: Identify new Park and Ride lot options in the Highway 29 corridor.

Program Elements

1. Identification of prime locations for a Park and Ride lot donated by a merchant or owner.
2. Investigation of legal issues with donated Park and Ride lots.

Purpose

- Increase access to the service without adding routes.
- Increase ridership.
- Expand service convenience.

Priority

- Medium (year 1); high (subsequent years).

Deliverables

- Potential locations and an assessment as to the opportunity for gaining a use agreement, with particular attention on locations in American Canyon.

Description

- This type of Park and Ride lot uses underutilized spaces in parking lots of churches, shopping centers or commercial entities. These spaces are donated; there is no payment for the space. They are agreed to as a public service or a means to generate business from commuters.
- The legal requirements for VINE being able to make such an arrangement needs to be determined.
- While this specific activity may be a medium priority, improved access to VINE service along Highway 29 is a high priority to increase ridership.

Objective #8: Each year develop and implement a rider appreciation promotion or event.

Program Elements

1. Promotion directed toward riders with a theme of appreciation.

Purpose

- Increase rider retention.
- Increase likelihood that person who leaves the service will return to it someday.
- Increase word-of-mouth referral.

Priority

- High.

Deliverables

- Successfully executed event.

Description

- This is a promotion that is directed toward riders that shows appreciation for their riding. It may also provide them an incentive to continue riding, and generate goodwill so if they do leave the service they may return to it someday.
- A promotional partner may extend the perceived value of the promotion, such as free movie tickets or a free large soda at a fast food restaurant with proof of riding VINE.

Objective #9: Develop and launch new VINE website.

Program Elements

1. New website for VINE, separate from NCTPA website.

Purpose

- Increase ease of obtaining route and schedule information
- Promote riding the bus.
- Increase clarity of route and schedule information.
- Enhance image and appeal of VINE service.

Priority

- Highest.

Deliverables

- New website with new look (incorporating new brand) and new functions.

Description

- New site dedicated to VINE service and new web address. Site needs to be designed to serve the needs of VINE potential and current customers with travel planning, up-to-date detour and service change information, fare media purchase, maps and schedules with zoom features and in the future real time bus arrival information.

- The look and feel of the site must be developed using the new enhanced brand and new positioning/messaging for VINE.

VINE Marketing Program Year 2

The second year of the five-year plan is a combination of implementing multi-year activities that were developed in year one (branding enhancement, Park and Ride lot identification), conducting activities that should be done every year (promotions, service support, college marketing, event marketing) and undertaking two new initiatives. The new initiatives are high school marketing and adding vanpools as a VINE service option and are presented next.

Define the costs and benefits of adding vanpools to the VINE fleet.

Program Elements

1. Memo identifying the issues and financial impact of adding vanpools to the service mix.
2. If approved, preparing an implementation plan.

Purpose

- Expands service offered to the public at low cost.
- Offers service option for commuters, the key target market for increasing ridership.
- Communicates to community that VINE is market-driven, providing a range of services to meet a range of transportation demand.

Priority

- High.

Deliverables

- Memo and recommendation to the Board of Directors.

Description

- Currently vanpooling is promoted by an organization (SNCI) that markets the service to Solano and Napa residents and employers. Vans are available by leasing one from VPSI or Enterprise.
- The largest target market for increasing VINE ridership is people commuting to work. They are very interested in an alternative to driving and if they become riders will generate a large number of trips month after month. These potential customers value convenience and service dependability.
- Current bus service available to these potential commuters is limited in scope (routes, access) and frequency. The one express service operates along a highway that has frequent and irregular congestion making on-time performance an issue on some days.
- A number of transit agencies offer vanpool service and have branded the vehicles as one of the services offered to the public. They purchase the vehicles with capital monies and have them maintained by outside contractors or their own staff. They count the vanpool riders in similar fashion as bus riders, and qualify for revenue from FTA's 5307 program.

- With the vehicle cost paid by the transit agency, the vanpool riders pay less and the service becomes more appealing to a larger commuting audience.
- Adding vanpools to the service mix improves public perception of the agency. It shows the agency as market-driven, not just operating a service where ‘one size fits all’. It also has the impact of reducing demand for express or commuter bus service in areas where demand does not warrant the investment.
- Marketing responsibilities including van formation and retention can be shared or be the responsibility of one entity.

Initiate a marketing relationship with Napa and Vintage High School seeking to increase VINE ridership to school and for after-school activities.

Program Elements

- Marketing program for Napa and Vintage High School.

Purpose

- Increase ridership at the two largest high schools in the county.

Priority

- Medium.

Deliverables

- In-school promotions at the areas two largest high schools, Napa and Vintage.
- On-going marketing relationship with schools

Description

- High school students travel extensively and can have limited access to a vehicle or no driver’s license. They travel to and from school, to after-school activities and to visit friends on weekends and summertime.
- VINE service offers an option that can meet many of their travel needs.
- High school marketing is a version of college marketing. The marketing needs include gaining access to students while at school with the school administration controlling the access. Schools may have limited parking availability, traffic congestion and be looking for ways to reduce their impact on the environment.
- Access to students can be gained by working with the administration, parent organizations, sport team booster clubs, individual teachers or all.
- The intent is to build an on-going relationship that will work year after year, and change to meet the changing needs of the school and students.

VINE Marketing Program Evaluation

There is no one common measurement of marketing performance, and the best method for evaluation is using a combination of factors. Ridership is often used as one criterion as it represents the one measure of success people understand. But increasing ridership from one year to the next is a function of many things not controlled by marketing including economic conditions, service availability, service quality and more. Marketing a service such as transit also involves service appeal, service knowledge and public support for service improvements. These are measured by consumer research similar to the work conducted as part of the Market Segmentation Survey.

In addition to ridership a number of other factors form the basis for program evaluation.

- Recognition by stakeholders that VINE service is improving.
- Success penetrating the college and high school markets, as evidenced by the establishment of a relationship with the college and two high schools and the implementation of marketing communications directed to these two groups.
- Success in penetrating the Hispanic market as defined by events attended, information distribution, advertising in Hispanic publications.
- Number of cars parked at the new Park and Ride lot opening at Highway 29 and Trancas, after 6 months of operation.
- Public response to promotional offers; percent returns for coupons and free ride offers.
- Creation and operation of an event marketing team.
- Community response to the enhanced brand, comments by stakeholders and citizens about the new look of the buses, signs, user information.
- Getting a new website developed and launched, and having positive response on its ease of use and clarity of information presentation.
- Execution of a rider appreciation event.

The remainder of the marketing evaluation is successful execution of projects in a timely manner, budget adherence, preparation of the Park and Ride and vanpool recommendations, and making changes to the Plan as circumstances in the market or resources change.

NCTPA Community Education Plan

Introduction

The NCTPA Marketing Plan has been renamed as a Community Education Plan. While marketing is defined in many ways, it generally implies some degree of sales and promotional techniques to motivate people to change a behavior or make a purchase. These attributes do not fit the NCTPA's primary functions of transportation/transit planning, forecasting, analysis and evaluation.

While a sales function does not fit NCTPA's role and responsibilities, a role of educating the public on transportation issues and choices is a vital responsibility. Decisions about transportation impact the quality of life of every Napa resident and taking a proactive stance on educating the public will greatly benefit the community especially in the long term.

The NCTPA Community Education Plan is prepared in the same format as the VINE Marketing Plan. The first section is the presentation of marketing challenges. In this case there are only three, but they are significant in terms of size.

Challenge: Overcoming public distrust for increased support for transportation improvements.

- The public places their highest civic priority on a near-term transportation improvement (road maintenance). Many also recognize the need for longer-term transportation development to help reduce traffic congestion.
- The public understands the longer-term solution will be a group of related actions involving improvements in mobility whether by road, transit, bike or walking.
- For both the near and longer term their aim is the same, to protect the quality of life in Napa County.
- The need for increased public support for transportation in the County has been well documented in numerous plans and reports, and reviewed by citizen committees, community stakeholders and elected leadership.
- Some part of the public remains to be convinced and others are skeptical of any funding proposal from any public entity.
- There is evidence of distrust of public entities by the public for not spending tax dollars for the projects they were intended.

Strategy #1: The request for increased financing must be actively supported by community organizations.

- No one public organization, elected or not, will be able to make the request for increased funding and have it taken seriously without support by a diverse number of citizen/community organizations.
- These groups must have credibility and influence with the public. The support must be from the outset.
- An independent group created by the public entity to study the issue and prepare a report to the community may be effective in generating active

involvement from the outset. The purpose of the group would be to examine the funding for transportation, not to reassess the need or type of improvements. The need has been well established in numerous planning studies and the congestion people experience each day.

Strategy #2: Generate media coverage for transportation improvements that are completed on time and on budget.

- Media coverage should be generated for every transportation project or improvement that is completed.
- The message to be communicated is the project being completed on time and within budget.

Strategy #3: Publicize annual work program and construction activity of road and transit projects.

- People need to understand the process of identifying, funding and constructing transportation projects is credible and transparent.
- People need to understand there is a lot of work already being done and that these projects are beneficial to the community.

Challenge: Generating interest about the future.

- Most people have difficulty relating to the future and see little personal benefit working toward longer-term goals.
- Most people are oriented to the short term while transportation solutions/alternatives are typically about the long term.
- Some people who focus on the future believe in a technology solution like monorails or smart highways. These ideas are often very appealing to the public and can divert their attention from a realistic assessment of the future options. The reality is the solutions are based largely on the present and are common sense ideas that typically have less appeal.

Strategy #1: Begin a multi-year education program that increases public understanding of the need for an improved transportation network.

- The education program is not associated with any one planning study or long-range plan.
- The program represents NCTPA's assessment of the problems, solutions, costs and likely outcomes.
- The education program is developed for use in a wide range of communications including newspaper advertorials, event marketing, web, newsletters, e-mails to stakeholders, PowerPoint presentations to civic organizations, and materials for use in schools.

Strategy #2: Define the possible options.

- NCTPA must assume an aggressive stance in the development and presentation of the realistic options, and getting the public to focus on these alternatives.

Strategy #3: Increase the frequency of communications about transportation and the future.

- The public and stakeholders need to see a greater number of communications on the topic of transportation in Napa County.

Strategy #4: Create a single thematic/visual approach to all communications about transportation and the future.

- All of the elements of the education program should be linked with a common style, typography and look.
- The theme must relate to what citizens value, the Napa quality of life, and avoid being centered on transportation choices.

Strategy #5: Establish a writing style for public communications.

- Along with a single visual approach there must be a singular tone and style of the writing on the web, in brochures, newsletters, advertorials and other public communications.
- The style must be engaging and serious, and present technical information/results for non-technical audiences.
- This is not writing for the media or advertising copy.

Strategy #6: Link quality of life to making transportation improvements.

- More of the public must understand how mobility is a large part of the quality of life in a region, and the consequences of doing nothing.
- The problem does not go away with inaction or delay. In the selection of words for describing actions or consequences of inaction, set a more insistent tone.

Strategy #7: Present a first-step solution to the future.

- Among the various options presented and discussed about the future transportation network, there should be one that is immediate.
- The immediate solution is devised to be quickly implemented and with clear expectations regarding completion and outcomes. It should be presented as the first step toward the future and protecting the quality of life.

Challenge: Low name awareness for NCTPA.

- Relatively few people have heard of NCTPA.

Strategy #1: Focus messages/communications on the end benefit, not the messenger.

- Increasing the name awareness of the agency by itself is not a priority need.
- Residents revere the quality of life in Napa County and place a high value on maintaining that quality of life. The most important objective for NCTPA is to educate the public on the need for an increased transportation investment, not expending limited resources on increasing name awareness.

- Name awareness and agency credibility will increase when there are increased communications about transportation work being done and the end benefits, and with NCTPA being associated with these projects.

Strategy #2: Add media communications component to public involvement activities for projects.

- Most if not of all planning projects undertaken by NCTPA have requirements for public involvement and public input. Each of these represents an opportunity to educate the public and increase the awareness of NCTPA.
- Public involvement and public comment activities should include a media component, whether it is paid or earned media.
- Part of the programs can include social media communications including live chats and electronic forums, communications and discussions via Facebook.

NCTPA Community Education Goals for 2012-2017

1. Increase public understanding of the relationship between increasing transportation development and maintaining the quality of life in Napa County.
2. Increase public opinion that tax dollars spent on local transportation projects are a good investment and wisely spent.
3. Increase public opinion that NCTPA is a good communicator and an effective listener.

NCTPA Community Education Program Objectives, Year 1 and Year 2

1. Establish and provide technical and marketing support for a ‘Citizen Task Force on Transportation Financing’. This special task force would examine the financing of local transportation projects, the available resources and the priority needs. The Task Force would prepare a recommendation to the community.
2. Develop and implement a program to educate the community on the relationship between transportation and the quality of life for all citizens.
3. Generate media coverage of transportation projects being completed on time and on budget, and their benefit to the community.
4. Exceed federal or state requirements for public involvement and comment on agency plans, programs, technical assessments and budgets.

NCTPA Target Markets

While NCTPA work and projects impact the entire community, there are two groups that are the priority.

1. Residents 50 years of age or older.
 - People who are 50 or older are often active and concerned about community livability and the future.
 - This group includes all incomes, and residents in all parts of the County.
2. Community Stakeholders.
 - Individuals business, education, tourism, community organizations.

NCTPA Messaging

The messaging for NCTPA is very different than for VINE. VINE needs to generate new riders, while NCTPA has multiple roles as planner, forecaster, financier and regulator. NCTPA's communications are informative and educational while VINE is promotional. The tone and style are nearly exact opposites.

The focus for NCTPA messages is on quality of life in Napa County. This is not a question of achieving a better quality of life, as citizens already know living in Napa is special for most people. The focus is maintaining the high standard and protecting it as the county grows.

The quality of life theme works for the wide range of studies, projects, programs that the organization is responsible for. People do not have to specifically understand what NCTPA actually does; all they have to understand the overall objective of the organization which, by its messaging, is about protecting Napa's special quality of life.

The exact wording for the positioning statement will have to be crafted, as will a thematic approach to be used in communications, website, newsletters, etc.

NCTPA Community Education Program Year 1 and 2

Objective #1: Establish and provide technical and marketing support for a ‘Citizen Task Force on Transportation Financing’. This special task force would examine the financing of local transportation projects, the available resources and the priority needs. The Task Force would prepare a recommendation to the community.

Program Elements

1. Task Force on Transit Financing.

Purpose

- Study of the financial needs for transportation by a group of influential citizens who make a recommendation to the community and elected leadership.

Priority

- Highest.

Deliverables

- Task force report.
- Presentation of recommendations to elected leadership.
- Media coverage.

Description

- A task force of influential citizens who examine the mobility needs for the county over the next 20 years and the current financing available.
- NCTPA organizes the task force including member recruitment, and provides technical and media relations support to the task force.
- One intent is for a champion to emerge from the group, a person who will take on the responsibility to get the recommendations to the next stage in the approval process.

Objective #2: Develop and implement a program to educate the community on the relationship between transportation and the quality of life for all citizens.

Program Elements

1. Advertorial program.
2. Enhanced NCTPA website.
3. Event marketing/display.
4. Presentations to civic groups.
5. Editorial board presentations.

1. Advertorial Program.

Purpose

- Educate the community on the relationship between transportation investments and the quality of life, and the need for increased transportation investments.

Priority

- High.

Deliverables

- Series of editorials in an advertising format with placement in print publications.
- Content integrated into other NCTPA communications including web, presentations, media releases, and information to stakeholders.

Description

- The advertorial format presents information on an issue and, in a subtle way, presents an appropriate path for addressing the issue. The issue being addressed tends to be broad and is definitely not being voted on by an elected group or the public.
- The advertorial format is often prepared as a series of topics related to theme or issue. For NCTPA the overall theme is the relationship between transportation and quality of life.
- A common format and writing style are used. The advertorial format works best in print, but is easily adapted to web, television and radio.

2. Develop an Enhanced, Re-Designed NCTPA Website.

Purpose

- Educate the community on the relationship between transportation and the quality of life in Napa County.
- Increase public understanding of NCTPA responsibilities and work being accomplished.
- Increase opportunities for public to comment on projects.

Priority

- Highest.

Deliverables

- Enhanced website with new features, graphics, capabilities.

Description

- The most important communication tool for NCTPA is the agency website. It is the most cost-effective means for communicating to the public a wide range of information, from information on agency work to highly technical analysis.
- The website homepage needs to be re-designed to be more like a magazine cover. This would be something that is visually enticing and encourages the reader to explore the topics being promoted.
- The website should communicate project progress, have regular features on the value of transportation to the community, be a technical resource and a place for a citizen forum (which could be a blog). It could have guest editorials, articles of interest from outside Napa, a Bay area report and legislative report.

3. Event Marketing/Display.

Purpose

- Meet citizens face to face to expose them to the issues, and gain their comments on improvement priorities and willingness to fund.

Priority

- Highest.

Deliverables

- Participation at major community events.
- Display for event marketing.

Description

- Event marketing is an effective marketing tool for communicating to target customers in the same way paid media communicates a message(s) to target consumers.
- Community events with sizable attendance, especially events with sizable attendance of the target market for NCTPA communications, should have an NCTPA advertorial display, staffed by people who are trained in the messages to be delivered.

4. Presentations to Civic Groups.

Purpose

- Deliver advertorial message to local civic groups and other community organizations to generate awareness and gain feedback.

Priority

- Highest

Deliverables

- PowerPoint presentation.
- Speaker notes or speech.

Description

- This is an important means for delivering the message to people who are active in civic affairs and concerned about the community.

5. Editorial Board Presentations.

Purpose

- Gain editorial support for transportation improvements.

Priority

- Highest.

Deliverables

- Meetings with editorial board(s).

Description

- Editorial board support is paramount to generate public support.

Objective #3: Generate increased awareness of transportation projects being completed on time and on budget, and their benefit to the community.

Program Elements

1. 'Transportation Progress and Prospects'.
2. Project Signage.
3. Highlight Construction Projects on Web.
4. Increased Media Coverage of Projects.

1. 'Transportation Progress and Prospects'.

Purpose

- Improve public perception that progress is being made, that transportation projects are moving forward and being completed on time and on budget.
- Generate increased awareness and attention about transportation projects in various stages of planning, development and implementation.
- Increase public perception that transportation projects have value to the community.
- Increase public awareness and credibility of NCTPA.

Priority

- High.

Deliverables

- Six times a year, every other month, NCTPA publishes a community report on the status of current and prospective projects.

Description

- The status report is formatted as a column placed in newspapers, published on the homepage of the website, sent to the media, sent to organizations that publish information of importance to the community, and e-mailed to a list of interested citizens.
- A name for the status report is developed and the report is written in a style that is both engaging and serious, with an underlying theme that communicates progress is being made, issues are being addressed, projects are being completed and have been well managed.

2. Project Signage.

Purpose

- Increase awareness of specific project benefits and costs.

Priority

- High.

Deliverables

- Common project sign format for all projects.
- Placement at all construction sites

Description

- Project signs are typically required by funding agencies such as FTA or Caltrans. These formats of these signs do not effectively communicate an end benefit to the community or highlight the local agency responsible (NCTPA).
- A project construction sign would be designed to communicate project information of importance to local residents, such as end benefit, cost and NCTPA sponsorship.

3. Highlight Construction Projects on Web.

Purpose

- Increase awareness of projects being undertaken and completed.
- Increase awareness of project benefits to the community.

Priority

- High.

Deliverables

- Common format for construction progress and benefits with prominent placement on web home page.

Description

- Project information including benefits, costs, schedule and related features would be developed as a special feature on the NCTPA website.

4. Increase Media Coverage of Projects.

Purpose

- Increase awareness of projects being undertaken and completed.
- Increase awareness of project benefits to the community.

Priority

- High.

Deliverables

- Increased coverage by media of construction projects.

Description

- Generating press coverage at the beginning, middle and end of construction projects with focus on the end benefits to the community and the care taken to mitigate construction activity on businesses and residents.

Objective #4: Exceed federal or state requirements for public involvement and comment on agency plans, programs, technical assessments and budgets.

Program Elements

1. Paid media as part of public comment/involvement process.

Priority

- Medium.

Deliverables

- Advertising and greater media exposure for NCTPA projects with public involvement/comment components.

Description

- Most public comment and public involvement efforts are developed to meet regulatory requirements and do not maximize opportunities for the sponsoring organization to increase public awareness of transportation work being conducted, or public understanding of the issues being decided.

- Adding a media component will increase the visibility of the work and generate added exposure for NCTPA. It should increase public awareness and knowledge of transportation issues, and generate increased public comment.
- Marketing communication materials can take many forms including newspaper inserts providing project details, the issues being decided and the recommendations being made. References to how the project work relates to Napa's quality of life should be communicated.
- Ads placed in newspapers are another technique that increases the likelihood of greater public awareness and comment. This format should direct people to the NCTPA website to provide their comments.
- In addition to paid media additional effort should be made to generate earned media coverage especially by print media.
- The preparation of these materials should be the responsibility of NCTPA and not a public involvement firm part of a consultant team doing the technical work. It is important that these communications be consistent with other NCTPA communications in form and format, writing style and tone

NCTPA Community Education Program Measurement

There are both formal and informal means for assessing the effectiveness of the public education program. The formal methods involve tracking public and target market responses to a number of questions from the Market Segmentation Survey, and new questions that would be added to a new community poll that would begin tracking public opinion on a regular basis.

New questions could specifically measure understanding of the need and willingness to support increased financing for transportation, and the linkage between quality of life and transportation investment. The Segmentation survey included the question "If we don't manage growth properly the quality of life in the area will decline" that would be useful to track, as well as measuring NCTPA name awareness and ratings for NCTPA as an effective listener, 24%, and good communicator, 21%.

Informal program measurement is not statistically based like polling but it is highly effective. This measurement is simply executing in a timely manner the elements detailed in the plan, and seeing progress on resolving funding issues.