

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF STANISLAUS
ACTION AGENDA SUMMARY

DEPT: Public Works

BOARD AGENDA # *C-3

Urgent Routine

AGENDA DATE April 8, 2014

CEO Concurs with Recommendation YES NO
(Information Attached)

4/5 Vote Required YES NO

SUBJECT:

Approval to Implement A Passenger Incentive Program to Encourage Stanislaus County's Stanislaus Regional Transit (StaRT) Public Transit Riders

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Approve implementation of a passenger incentive program to encourage passengers to ride public transit services offered in the County to improve ridership on all routes.

FISCAL IMPACT:

All funds for the proposed program are included in the Fiscal Year 2013-2014 Public Works Local Transit budget. The funding in the budget includes Local Transportation funds, Federal Transit Administration funds, State Transit Assistance funds and fare revenues. The total cost for the proposed program is estimated at \$20,250.

BOARD ACTION AS FOLLOWS:

No. 2014-159

On motion of Supervisor Withrow, Seconded by Supervisor O'Brien
and approved by the following vote,

Ayes: Supervisors: O'Brien, Chiesa, Withrow, Monteith, and Chairman De Martini

Noes: Supervisors: None

Excused or Absent: Supervisors: None

Abstaining: Supervisor: None

1) X Approved as recommended

2) _____ Denied

3) _____ Approved as amended

4) _____ Other:

MOTION:



ATTEST: CHRISTINE FERRARO TALLMAN, Clerk

File No.

Approval to Implement A Passenger Incentive Program to Encourage Stanislaus County's Stanislaus Regional Transit (StaRT) Public Transit Riders

DISCUSSION:

The Stanislaus County Public Works Transit Division oversees operation of the County's transit system, Stanislaus Regional Transit (StaRT), and as part of its responsibilities provides recommendations to the Board of Supervisors to approve marketing and promotional related activities.

Currently, the Transit Division engages in a number of activities to promote transit services offered in several communities of the County, including participation in numerous events held throughout the County each year. The events include "Earth Day" and "Beyond Earth Day" held in April each year in the cities of Modesto and Riverbank respectively and several senior events. These include the Oakdale Senior Event, Patterson Senior Fair, Dale Commons Senior Day, Samaritan Village Faire, Ceres Senior Awareness, and the Turlock SAFE Senior Event.

In addition to these events, there are other opportunities where Transit Division staff further educates the community about the County's transit services. These activities are comprised of the Stanislaus Elder Abuse Prevention Alliance Event organized by the Catholic Charities held throughout communities in Stanislaus County, Ceres Health Fair, Healthy Aging Summit, Disability Resource Fair, Diabetes Resource Fair, Stanislaus County Community Service Agency Provider Fair, Hispanic Resource Fair, California State University Stanislaus Merchant Fair as well as the Stanislaus County Probation Department Annual Open House. Participation in these activities has proven to be very beneficial and successful in educating residents about transit services provided in the County. Although, most of these events have targeted primarily seniors and disabled populations, this effort is intended to encourage and promote transit usage by all County residents.

In an effort to continue promoting the County's transit services to current riders as well as to attract "choice" riders, the Transit Division is seeking approval to initiate and implement a Passenger Incentive Program. The proposed program is intended to promote goodwill and to incentivize current passengers and future riders to use public transit for their transportation and mobility needs. The program includes a collection of packages to further enhance transit services offered to County residents and includes the following:

A. Offer Free Shuttle Rides at Select County Events:

Each year, the Transit Division participates in "Earth Day" and "Beyond Earth Day" events held by the cities of Modesto and Riverbank respectively. Earth Day is celebrated throughout the world with the goal of increasing awareness of the environment, which is a great opportunity to educate residents about transit services provided in the County and how this contributes to improving the environment. As part of this year's celebration, the Transit Division is proposing to offer free shuttle rides to participants attending the two events. The Transit Division will be partnering with both jurisdictions to implement shuttle service to take residents to and from event locations in both cities. Staff believes this is a great chance to encourage more County residents to use transit services during the events as well as educate the public about the benefits of using transit which contributes to improving the air quality in this region.

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The cost of providing the shuttle services is estimated at \$12,000 and is included in the current year's budget.

B. Offer Free Tickets to Passengers:

As part of the Public Works Transit Division program, the County encourages residents to bike and ride the bus for their commute. All transit buses have bike racks attached to the front-end of the buses to promote combining riding their bicycles and taking the bus. In Fiscal Year 2012-2013, bike rack usage was recorded at 23,872 with the highest use noted on Route 10 which serves residents traveling between the cities of Turlock and Modesto. This program is very popular among avid bicyclists who combine riding their bicycles and taking the bus. However, the high utilization has also created capacity related concerns; whereby, passengers are encouraged to take their bicycles inside the buses if there are no passengers with mobility devices using the wheelchair spaces.

Most often, passengers are able to travel to their destinations without any disruption; however, on some occasions, bike passengers are requested to exit the bus to allow passengers with mobility devices to use the wheelchair spaces. This has created situations where passengers riding their bicycles and taking the bus have had to exit the bus and wait for the next available bus which potentially delays their trip. Staff is seeking approval from the Board to implement a program that will offer free tickets to passengers inconvenienced as a result of being asked to exit the bus to enable passengers with mobility devices to use the wheelchair space. The cost to implement this program is estimated at \$750 per year and is included in the current year's budget.

C. Implement a Fill-the-Bus Program:

This program is intended to help County residents by partnering with social and human services agencies to collect food donations for those needing assistance. Similar to events held by other transit agencies throughout the state and the nation during the holidays, the Transit Division is seeking approval to establish a formal program to hold food drives at specific locations in various jurisdictions and through partnerships with social service agencies. The food drive to be held this year will be a pilot project and depending on how well it is received, staff may continue to organize this event annually.

Staff plans to work with other transit operators and the Consolidated Transportation Services Agency in the County on an annual basis and will also seek partnerships with businesses in the County to organize the food drive. The Transit Division staff will work with its service contractor to park one of the transit buses at a pre-determined location to enable residents to drop-off their donations, which may include non-perishable food, personal hygiene products, packaged toiletries, and other household items. Once the bus is filled, the donations will be delivered to the selected social service agency. Other logistical activities such as the time and date for the event will be developed as more information is gathered for this program. The cost is estimated at

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\$7,500 and will be included in the annual budget. In addition, staff will solicit donations from businesses to offset the cost of organizing this event.

D. Implement Additional Marketing Strategies to Promote Transit Services:

As part of our effort to increase ridership, staff will implement social media programs as a marketing strategy and tool to enhance communications with passengers. Examples of such programs are Facebook and Twitter. Social media programs are web-based applications to improve communications and interact with transit riders. This will be integrated with the Transit Division's public outreach efforts to better communicate with passengers and will provide the ability to:

- Communicate directly with passengers;
- Offer a less expensive way to communicate with riders than the traditional form such as print advertising;
- Provide information in real-time as it happens and offers the ability to "tweet" riders about service delays, service changes and/or improvements; and
- Create interactive dialogue with the riding public.

The goal of the proposed incentive programs is to encourage more County residents to use transit services on a daily basis and during highly publicized events such as Earth Day, Beyond Earth Day and National Bike to Work week, potentially leading to increased ridership on all routes. In addition to the items above, staff is in the process of reviewing the existing rate structure and anticipates returning to the Board with additional fare related incentives.

POLICY ISSUES:

Approval of this action supports the Board's priorities of Effective Partnerships and Efficient Delivery of Public Services by providing excellent community services and encouraging innovation in the promotion of transit services.

STAFFING IMPACT:

There is no staffing impact associated with this request.

CONTACT PERSON:

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EL:djd

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