



Board Report

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**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 21, 2021**

SUBJECT: PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN FOR ENHANCED LIFE PROGRAM, HALF-PRICED PASSES AND FARE RESUMPTION

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE the Communications plan update supporting LIFE program expansion, half-priced passes and fare resumption.

ISSUE

Metro developed a 90-day Public Education Strategic Communications and Marketing Plan (Attachment A) in collaboration with external partners as directed by the Metro Board at the September 2021 meeting (Attachment B). The plan supports the roll-out of discounted passes, enhancements to the Low-Income is Easy Fare (LIFE) Program, and the return to fare collection.

BACKGROUND

At its May 2020 meeting, the Board approved Motion 36 reducing the cost of Metro full-price passes by 50% upon fare resumption.

In September 2021, the Board approved the Fareless Systems Initiative (FSI) funding plan for Phase I (K-14) and Motion 40 revamping the LIFE Program. Expanding and enhancing the LIFE Program will alleviate the impact of fares on low-income riders while Metro continues to seek funding to implement FSI Phase 2 (low-income adults)

Phase I implementation began on October 1, 2021, allowing students in participating K-12 districts and community colleges in LA County the ability to board Metro and participating transit agencies with a special pass that requires no fare payment at boarding. Metro is preparing a streamlined LIFE application process that enables on-the-spot enrollment, allows applicants to self-certify, and provides three months of fareless transit to new enrollees. Specifically, since the last Board meeting, staff has completed or advanced the following:

- Simplified the LIFE application to streamline enrollment and add the option of self-certification (complete);

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- LA County Workforce Development, Aging, and Community Services distributed 11,000 LIFE informational flyers to clients receiving meal delivery and at 14 Community and Senior Centers throughout the region;
 - Updated the LIFE webpage (in progress); and
 - Created online LIFE application portal with self-certification feature (in progress).

. In collaboration with community-based organizations (CBO's), Metro will launch a coordinated and proactive outreach effort around the enhanced LIFE program and discounted fares with grassroots and boots on the ground tactics in advance of resuming fare collection on January 10, 2022.

DISCUSSION

Coordinated efforts are in progress to ensure a comprehensive, multi-platform, and community-centered outreach and public engagement strategy. Metro communications is leading the efforts with Strategic Financial Management (formerly Office of Management and Budget), TAP, including Operations, and the Office of the Chief Executive Officer in partnership with community-based organizations. Metro secured the services of an external multicultural marketing firm to assist in developing a comprehensive public education campaign. The consultant firm will develop creative concepts and key messaging to educate and inform the public about Metro's enhancements to the LIFE program, the promotion of half-off passes, and the resumption of fare collection.

The public education campaign launched October 12, 2021, and includes a complement of strategies leveraging social media, print and online advertising in local and community publications, in-person outreach, and engagement through community-based organizations over the next 90 days. The plan includes the following outreach strategies:

- Earned, owned, and paid media channels, including ethnic and hyper-focused local media (print, radio, electronic)
- Utilization of Metro's digital and static assets.
- Disseminate information using community-based organizations at highly-trafficked areas throughout the county, including high-frequency transit stops and stations and community locations where people gather and engage in social discourse, such as barbershops, hair salons, community centers, and local shopping centers.
- Utilize government social service partners to distribute information to mutual clients.
 - Staff is in discussions with the Los Angeles County Community Development Authority to distribute information to Section 8 and Public Housing clients.
 - Staff continues to work with the Los Angeles County Department of Social Services to distribute information through their programs such as, General Relief and CalFresh clients.
- Leverage existing Metro resources to inform customers of promotional and discount programs and fare collection resumption, including the deployment of ambassadors and signage at bus stops and Point of Sales (POS) locations such as ticket vending machines (TVM) and Metro Customer Centers.

- Enlist the support of community partners, including faith-based organizations, to help amplify the Agency’s messages through notices to their stakeholders via social media channels.
- Ensure Metro employees are informed of the programs to act as ambassadors within their spheres of influence.

The public education tactics, in three phases, are aligned with the 90-day promotional campaign and the 45-day LIFE Program self-attestation enrollment period. The following is a high-level overview of the three phases:

Public Engagement and Outreach: Early October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch public education campaign with public relations tactics (blogs, press release, internal communications) • Contract with a multicultural marketing agency.
Strategic Communications: Mid October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop messaging matrix and creative concepts • Support the launch of LIFE Program enhancements and enrollments
Community-Based Organizations Engagement: Late October thru January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage CBO partners for expanded community outreach • Launch systemwide campaign ads and paid media advertising - online banners, print, radio, direct mail • Continue outreach and public engagement tactics leading to fare resumption

Communications initiated focused tactics at the onset of the promotional period, including a press release, features on Metro blogs The Source and El Pasajero (Attachment C), e-blast to 88 cities, countywide faith-based leaders, and CBOs (Attachment D) and an initial LIFE card distribution to over 2000 riders, (Attachment E)

EQUITY PLATFORM

The communications plan and public education campaign is a multi-pronged outreach effort that includes partnering and procuring CBOs with extensive experience engaging a broad range of stakeholders within Los Angeles County's diverse communities and specific geographic areas to build awareness and support overall outreach efforts. The communications plan commits to providing non-English translation and multilingual, culturally appropriate materials. Additionally, the plan seeks to meet community members where they are to reduce barriers to Metro updates and information. These efforts will target messaging to economically vulnerable people in our communities and improve access to transit through discounted passes and the enhanced LIFE Program.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The communications plan and public education campaign supports strategic goal #3 “Enhancing communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity” by providing financial relief by reducing the cost of riding transit for all riders, especially the most economically vulnerable people in our communities.

NEXT STEPS

Over the next two weeks staff will utilize the services of a multicultural marketing firm to develop specific messaging and marketing materials. The new online portal will be user-tested the week of October 25th and will be live October 31st. Additionally, staff will collaborate with the County's Social Service providers and network to distribute information to mutual clients. Finally, staff will continue outreach and public engagement of LIFE Program enhancements, such as self-certification and enrollments through pop-up events in partnership with CBOs. Staff will return to the Board in November with an update.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - 90-Day Public Education Strategic Communications Pla

Attachment B - Motion 40 - FSI

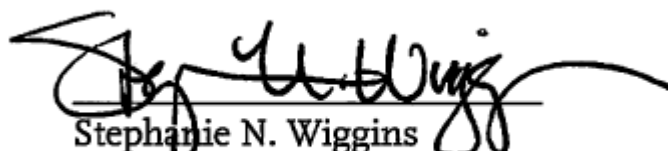
Attachment C - October 12 Fares Update Source post

Attachment D - E-Blast

Attachment E - LIFE card

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