



TRANSIT RECOVERY TASK FORCE

TO: Blue Ribbon Task Force Members

DATE: April 26, 2021

FR: Ursula Vogler, MTC Staff

RE: Blue Ribbon Research and Engagement Update

Since October 2020, MTC and Bay Area transit agencies have focused on a broad 'return to transit' research and communications effort with support from the consultant team led by EMC Research. This past work has laid the groundwork for the Return-to-Transit campaign. As the work progressed, the effort evolved to include research to focus on the Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force's (Task Force) transit transformation effort (e.g., identification of transit challenges and improvements) while continuing to work on the transit recovery effort (e.g., Return-to-Transit communications effort). This combined effort is key to increasing transit ridership as the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions are lifted, and residents return to work, school and activities. Below is an overview of the research and communications efforts.

Phase 1: Market Research

1. Transit Rider and Employer/Schools Focus Groups (January 2021)

In January, MTC's consultant team conducted eleven focus groups with Bay Area transit riders and employers/schools to understand the Bay Area's transit experience during the pandemic and to seek insight into Bay Area employers' plans to return to the office. EMC Research presented the results of the focus groups to the Task Force in January; the results will feed into the Return-to-Transit communications campaign, highlighted below.

Phase 2A: Transit Recovery (Return-to-Transit Campaign)

1. Employer Survey (April – October 2021)

The Bay Area Council is currently surveying up to 150 Bay Area employers of varying sizes and locations about their return to the office plans to assist transit operators with their service planning. The surveys (Attachment 1) will be sent to a network of approximately 150 employers monthly, from April through October.

2. Return-to-Transit Communications Campaign (Spring/Summer 2021)

Working closely with transit operator marketing staff, MTC and the communications and marketing consultant, Craft + Commerce, are developing a communications campaign aimed at encouraging Bay Area residents to return to transit when it is time. Using insights from the transit rider and employer/schools focus groups conducted in January, Craft + Commerce has begun creating a broad range of communications messaging (e.g., print, digital, social media) concepts this month. Messages will be tested in focus group



TRANSIT RECOVERY TASK FORCE

settings by EMC Research in May, and a communications tool kit will be available by the end of June. The campaign is anticipated to be promoted over the summer for an expected increase in ridership at the start of the school year. The targeted campaign will be translated into Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese and Tagalog.

Phase 2B: Transit Transformation (Task Force Research and Engagement)

1. Comprehensive Research Review (March 2021)

EMC Research has conducted a research review (Attachment 2) to compile information on key transit challenges faced by the public, reviewing over 90 transit-related studies, articles and reports from transit operators, MTC and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District conducted prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The research review provides a comprehensive overview of pre-pandemic public opinion about transit, including opportunities for improvement and identification of gaps that could be addressed in future research. EMC staff will present the summary of these findings and the gaps in research at the April Task Force meeting.

2. Blue Ribbon Poll (April/May 2021)

EMC Research is conducting a statistically valid public opinion poll (Attachment 3) targeting 1,000 Bay Area residents aimed at identifying the public's attitudes about and challenges with transit ridership. The poll is in the field now, and the results will be presented at the May Task Force meeting.

3. Regionwide Community-based Discussion Groups (April 2021)

To ensure we hear from transit dependent riders about the topics not addressed in the research review and to confirm their top priorities, we will hold four community-based discussion groups at the end of April. The four discussion groups will include residents who depend on transit (in English, Spanish and Cantonese) and persons with disabilities. The results of the discussion groups will be included with the poll results that will be presented to the Task Force next month.