

5/10/21 (via email)

Chair Spering, c/o Steve Kinsey:

As the sole representative of the transportation demand management (TDM) sector on the Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force, I appreciate the opportunity to communicate some thoughts that I believe my TDM colleagues in the Bay Area would support:

- We defer to the transit operators and others on the task force who have strong opinions and reasons as to what can be done on an operational basis with a network manager. The labor, funding, and governance issues are tricky and may take many years to resolve – and that may be an optimistic timeframe.
- As you know, TDM involves changing the behavior of travelers so that they choose sustainable modes as their primary modes whenever possible. In order to get travelers to change their mode and/or increase their use of the preferred modes, you first need to capture their attention. That is, in our opinion, one of the ways that a Network Manager make an immediate impact on transit ridership in the Bay Area.
- There are items in the Network Manager “wish list” that are related – branding, wayfinding, trip planning, etc. – and we support those concepts but think that it does not go far enough. Coordinated and/or centralized marketing of the entire public transit network is essential and could start almost immediately. Transit operators are good at what they do, but marketing is not their strength (in most cases) and absolutely benefits from economies of scale.
- Most of the transit agencies in the Bay Area operate in only one or two counties. The ability to reach travelers in those relatively small markets is challenging since some of the most effective tools – radio and television ads, PSA’s, and regional billboards cannot be targeted enough to be worthwhile. BART might be the only transit agency in the Bay Area that can make effective use of those mediums. Clipper and 511.org have also had some success using radio and television, but those efforts have been limited.
- A highly creative, multi-year, multi-lingual campaign is going to be necessary regardless of what happens with the nuts and bolts of the network manager role – why not get started on getting the community’s attention sooner rather than later?
- All of the agencies have marketing budgets. None of them, to my knowledge, are tied to labor agreements. This seems to be a “low hanging fruit” that would aid in the transit recovery aspect of our mission and would ultimately lead to the positive behavior that we all want to encourage.

Thanks for asking.

John

John Ford

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