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June 6, 2022

Honorable Board of Directors
Marin County Transit District
3501 Civic Center Drive
San Rafael, CA 94903

**SUBJECT: Countywide Fare Free Promotional Campaign
During the 2022 Marin County Fair**

Dear Board Members:

board of directors

stephanie moulton-peters
president
supervisor district 3

katie rice
vice president
supervisor district 2

eric lucan
2nd vice president
city of novato

judy arnold
director
supervisor district 5

kate colin
director
city of san rafael

damon connolly
director
supervisor district 1

dennis rodoni
director
supervisor district 4

brian colbert
alternate
town of san anselmo

RECOMMENDATION: Authorize staff to develop and implement a Countywide campaign to offer increased service and free fares during the 2022 Marin County Fair.

SUMMARY:

Marin Transit has found fare free promotions to be an effective method to incentivize new riders to try transit and to reward existing riders. Your Board authorized staff to implement a countywide promotional campaign and offer free fares on all fixed route services during the Earth Day in 2022, national Election Day in 2020 and the Marin County Fair in 2019. Staff concluded that those campaigns succeeded and represented a token of appreciation for daily riders, attracted new riders to transit, and supported countywide goals to reduce congestion and GHG emissions.

Following those campaigns, staff evaluated several potential candidates for fare free days that were based on several considerations such as anticipated demand level, operational complications, potential overcrowding, limited bike rack availability, and consistency with the goals of campaigns of this nature. In May 2020, your Board approved staff's recommendation on potential candidates for fare free days. Those include Marin County Fair, Election Day, Earth Day, Marin County Senior Fair Day, New Year's Eve, and Bike-to-Work Day.

Staff have identified the Marin County Fair as a unique opportunity to promote local transit service. Fair parking limitations and traffic congestion continue to be the top challenges for fairgoers. Additional local transit access will improve the experience for fairgoers and reduce their overall cost for attending the event.

As part of the promotional campaign, staff is proposing to add service and offer free fares on all fixed route and Connect services during the six-day period between June 30 and July 4, 2022.

Paratransit, Catch-A-Ride, Connect and Muir Woods would be exempt from the free fare offerings. The added service will be focused on routes serving the County Fairgrounds and on the evening hours when the highest number of attendees leave the event and local transit service levels are typically lower.

Following the successful partnership in 2019, Marin County Cultural Services staff and the District will work closely on the outreach strategy and cross-promotion of the Fair and Marin Transit service. Staff recommends that your Board authorize Marin Transit to develop and implement a countywide promotional campaign to offer increased service and free fares during the 2022 Marin County Fair.

If approved by your Board, staff will develop a detailed strategy to implement the campaign and coordinate with agency and community partners to cross-promote transit services. Staff prepared a comprehensive analysis of the ridership changes, congestion levels, and operational impacts of the free fare promotion in 2019 (July 3-7, 2019). Overall, systemwide ridership increased 27 percent compared to the 2018 County Fair. Ridership on Routes 35 and 49 serving the Fairgrounds increased 43 and 81 percent, respectively. Additionally, bus drivers confirmed that the free fare campaign resulted in a smoother boarding process and reduced dwell times at bus stops with no incidents of abuse throughout the promotion period.

Staff concluded that the campaign succeeded as a token of appreciation for daily riders, attracted new riders to transit, and supported countywide goals to reduce congestion and GHG emissions. The results of this analysis support the staff recommendation to offer free fares to the County Fair in 2022, the first year the Fair will be in person since the onset of the COVID pandemic.

FISCAL/STAFFING IMPACT: Staff estimates that this promotional campaign will cost the District \$42,000. This amount includes the cost of added service, the anticipated loss in fare revenue, and administrative support. The table below shows the estimated cost for each element of the campaign.

Item	Estimated Cost
Operations Costs (added service on Route 49)	\$3,000
Fuel	\$2,000
Fare Revenue loss	\$30,000
Marketing Support and Direct Costs	\$5,000
Staff Time	\$2,000
Total	\$42,000

Respectfully submitted,



Aida Banihashemi
 Manager of Planning & Marketing