



# West Contra Costa High-Capacity Study

## FINAL TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM #3 Strategic Communications and Outreach Plan

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## Document Version Control

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## Document Sign-off

Name	Date	Signature
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## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

CCTA	Contra Costa Transportation Authority
I-80	Interstate 80
ICM	Integrated Corridor Mobility project
TEP	Transportation Expenditure Plan
WCCTAC	West Contra Costa Transportation Advisory Committee
WCCTAC TAC	Technical Advisory Committee for West Contra Costa Transportation Advisory Committee



# 1 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH PLAN

## 1.1 Purpose and Goal

Strategic communications will facilitate public input during the West Contra Costa High-Capacity Transit Study to strengthen its recommendations and help achieve broad regional support for the final proposed set of projects. The purpose of this Strategic Communications and Outreach Plan is to provide a communications “blueprint” for the activities that will educate and inform the public about the study and help garner broad public input during its development.

## 1.2 Approach

The communications activities will entail a multi-pronged approach to educate the public about the purpose of the study as well as to solicit public input at key milestones of its development:

- During the assessment phase, to understand what the public sees as transportation issues and where they would like to focus investments;
- To assist in the refinement of alternatives; and
- To provide feedback on the final recommendation for a transit investment.

As part of this multi-pronged approach, we will leverage the existing communications channels of partner agencies (through the Study Management Group), the WCCTAC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and the WCCTAC Board of Directors to broaden the scope of our outreach activities and to obtain public input from a broad cross-section of West County constituents. Coordination with these entities will also help to ensure clear, uniform, and consistent communications. We will also communicate directly with cities and community organizations throughout the process.

The communications activities are timed to coordinate with and leverage outreach activities by the Contra Costa Transportation Authority’s (CCTA) concurrent countywide Transportation Expenditure Plan (TEP) to maximize West County public participation and to ensure that these activities are complementary rather than competitive. Additionally, public input opportunities will be scheduled ahead of WCCTAC Board meetings so that an accurate summary of “what we heard” (public input) can be reported to the WCCTAC Board and inform their decisions regarding the study.

## 1.3 Messaging

Below is an overview of the key messaging that will educate the public about the study and to obtain public input.

### **1.3.1 Conceptual Messaging and Project Boilerplate**

As a first step, the study team will develop conceptual messages that will be used to help educate and inform the public about the purpose and goals of the study as well as to identify the study area, development process and opportunities for public input, and other key study parameters. This will become the “boilerplate” message about the study that is applied to all informational and outreach materials, including the study’s dedicated website, fact sheets, e-blasts, the online survey, and public notice materials.

### **1.3.2 Messaging to Educate, Encourage Public Participation, and Focus Public Input**

Detailed messaging will serve as a method of educating the public further about the study. It will be designed to spur public understanding about West County transportation and to motivate broad public participation to help identify a set of potential transit investments. Variations of this messaging will be used in discussions with key stakeholders (see Section 1.4), in introductory remarks at public workshops, the telephone town hall, and other public forums. It may also be used in electronic and print materials.

Below are preliminary messaging concepts.

#### **1.3.2.1 To Educate**

Providing context about the current and projected conditions for transit in West County will explain why WCCTAC is developing a plan for future high-capacity transit investments:

- A key element of West County congestion is the I-80 corridor, which is already at capacity. Travel forecasting shows congestion will increase along this corridor as well as other parts of West County. Since options for widening freeways and roadways are extremely limited, reducing travel times and accommodating future growth require more efficient use of the freeways, roadways, and other transportation facilities in the study area.
- Transit – especially transit that can move large numbers of people – is key to addressing the congestion. High-capacity transit – which includes services such as express buses, ferries, BART, inter-city or commuter rail, or Santa Clara County’s light rail – provides substantially higher levels of passenger capacity with typically fewer stops, higher speeds, and/or more frequent service than local public bus services. High-capacity transit is the type of transit that people often use for their daily commute to work.
- Historically, there has not been enough investment in transit to keep up with demand or future growth. The study is being conducted to plan for projected growth in West County and reduce its impacts on congestion.

### **1.3.2.2 To Encourage Public Participation**

To help encourage broad public participation, the messaging will explain the longer-term desired outcomes and why public input is important:

- The study will identify, from a set of possible projects, one final proposal (or set of projects) that may be included in the 2016 Contra Costa County Sales Tax Measure. Since transit choices are made within the context of limited resources, WCCTAC needs public input to ensure that the highest-impact project will make it to the ballot.

### **1.3.2.3 To Help Focus and Obtain Meaningful Public Input**

The public will be asked to provide input on these kinds of questions through the telephone town hall, online survey, and at public meetings:

- What kind of high-capacity transit improvements would you like to see in West County?
- How can WCCTAC and project partners make transit more convenient for you?
- Where do you need to get to that current commuter transit doesn't serve?
- How do we accommodate future changes in land use?

## **1.4 Direct Stakeholder Outreach**

The purpose of stakeholder outreach is to inform key decision makers and community leaders about the purpose and benefit of the study and to identify key issues and concerns early on in the process. For this reason, the PB communications team will reach out to five city managers in West County, their staff, and WCCTAC TAC members early in the study development process, to request these groups' participation in the study and identify key issues, concerns, and desired study outcomes. Additionally, we will enlist their support in sharing project information with their own networks and constituencies and promoting public participation at public meetings, online surveys, and the telephone town hall. During the meetings, we will also inquire about interest groups that they recommend speaking with to confirm and augment the list of stakeholders, including with any groups that could help garner public participation and input in the study.

The resulting list of stakeholders will be brought to the WCCTAC TAC for review and approval prior to any public meetings. With WCCTAC approval, the expanded stakeholder list may include neighborhood organizations, environmental organizations, transportation advocacy organizations, multi-cultural communities, and others.

## 1.5 Key Considerations

### 1.5.1 Study Communications Challenges

We anticipate several potential study communications challenges. It will therefore be important to balance communications about the purpose and benefits of the study with communications underlining the realities of potential project costs, timelines for implementation, and other key factors. During the public involvement process, the study team will also need to clearly explain how the proposed alternatives were screened and the list of potential projects narrowed to engender public understanding and acceptance as the development of the study progresses.

- A large geographic area means not all West County commuters can be served by one transportation mode. Historically, there has been a lack of consensus in West County about the priorities for transit investment. The identified proposal (which could be a suite of projects) may be controversial.
- Communications must clearly outline the variety of options and define their diverse costs and benefits so as to minimize public confusion and/or concern about the multiplicity of options.
- It will be important to demonstrate that there will be tangible outcomes from the study.
- Solutions to congestion within the study area will need to account for both through travel and travel that begins or ends in West Contra Costa County.
- Study alternatives will need to be coordinated and be consistent with local jurisdictions' transportation planning efforts. For example:
  - Richmond leaders are concerned with a possible BART extension reducing service to the Richmond BART station.
  - Hercules leaders have their own plans for ferry and rail service.

### 1.5.2 Other Challenges

- A large geographic area presents challenges in getting the word out.
- The concurrent TEP process and implementation of the I-80 Integrated Corridor Mobility (ICM) project could confuse the public.

## 1.6 Key Target Audiences

Target audiences for the study's strategic communications and outreach are listed below. Communications to all audiences will include the request that audiences share information about the study with their own networks and/or constituents.

- WCCTAC Board, WCCTAC TAC, Study Management Group
- CCTA staff and decision-makers
- Elected officials and policy makers

- City Managers and staff in cities in the study area
- Commuters in West County
- Concerned citizens, grassroots and interest groups, and residents within West County who are not commuters
- Existing and potential transit riders

## 1.7 Key Communication Tools

The following outreach tools will serve to (a) inform the public about the study, (b) receive public input regarding the Study alternatives, (c) report back out to the public on input received, so as to maintain a high level of public awareness. The tools are listed in approximate chronological order.

- Project fact sheets
  - One fact sheet will be developed in advance of each round of meetings, for a total of two fact sheets. The fact sheets will provide an overview of the study goals, boundaries, and public input process, briefly describe the different transportation modes to be considered, and include an update of the study's status or progress.
  - Both fact sheets will include the project boilerplate, as described earlier.
- Project website
  - The project website will be a single page with information similar to the fact sheets.
  - In addition to being mailed/distributed through partner agencies and other channels, meeting notices and meeting materials will be posted here.
  - The website will also host two separate online surveys in conjunction with the two rounds of public workshops.
  - Additional content will also be made available for download from the site, such as technical memos or maps.
- Direct outreach to key stakeholders
  - Early in the study, the communications team will coordinate in-person meetings with City Managers and staff, including Public Works, Planning and Traffic Engineers, in one meeting with each City (i.e., El Cerrito, Hercules, Pinole, Richmond, and San Pablo) and one meeting with representatives of unincorporated areas in coordination with Supervisor Gioia's office, for six total meetings. The meetings will provide information about the project, approach, timeline, etc. A preliminary list of community stakeholders will be reviewed before each meeting and refined based on input received.
  - The communications team will coordinate outreach activities with the City staff outlined above as well as 511 Contra Costa, AC Transit, BART, Caltrans, Capitol Corridor, and WestCAT. These organizations will also provide input on the

- preliminary list of community stakeholders and an inventory of agency communications tools for reaching transit riders, shuttle services, and other target audiences. These communications tools may include flyers for transit stations, electronic sign announcements at transit stations (if appropriate and supported by partner agencies), car cards for buses, and other communications vehicles.
- E-blasts/press releases, newsletter updates, and social media posts
    - E-blasts and social media and newsletter posts will be used to get the word out about the study and notify the public of upcoming opportunities to provide input (including online methods).
    - Pre-written materials will be provided to the WCCTAC Board and TAC members and partner agencies for review and redistribution through all channels available to them.
    - The communications team will also send a press release announcing each meeting to local news outlets no later than one week in advance of the meeting.
    - Quarterly e-blasts (and occasional updates directly to elected officials and key agency staff) regarding study details, progress, and preliminary conclusions will be sent to maintain public interest inbetween the two rounds of public meetings.
    - All e-blasts will be coordinated with the TEP outreach process.
  - Direct mailer notice of telephone town hall
    - CCTA will cover the cost of a direct mailer to 50,000 households in West County that include registered voters. The notice will include the study boilerplate described above and the WCCTAC logo, emphasizing WCCTAC's role as a partner in the telephone town hall.

### **1.7.1 Communications Tools to Obtain Public Input**

- telephone town hall in partnership with CCTA – November 12, 2015
  - To launch the public outreach process for the study and introduce the public to its purpose and objectives, the PB communications team will support WCCTAC with the co-hosting of a joint telephone town hall meeting with CCTA, provide logistical support and script development, and facilitate a dry run of the event..
  - The majority (approximately 40 minutes) of this 60-minute call-in meeting will be led by WCCTAC, with moderation by CCTA and messaging points provided by the communications team. John Nemeth will provide a brief introduction to WCCTAC and the study (scripted by the PB communications team in consultation with WCCTAC staff) and briefly present the high-level list of possible transit projects to be studied.

- Call-in participants would be invited to ask questions about the study and to participate in a series of short polls during the call, which will include multiple choice questions. Questions will be answered by either an elected official or WCCTAC staff.
- In the remaining time, the meeting moderator will thank the public for their input and suggestions, then segue into a high-level discussion, led by CCTA, of realistic financial constraints, priorities, and the TEP.
- The collaborative town hall would allow for greater public participation and place the High-Capacity Transit Study in the context of expanding transportation investments in Contra Costa County, encouraging voters to associate the study with real outcomes and to remain engaged throughout the study's duration.
- Messaging about upcoming opportunities for public input, including public meetings, online surveys, and other mechanisms, would be included at the end of the meeting.
- Standard vendor capabilities include performing real-time polling (multiple-choice questions), capturing and screening participant questions, capturing statistics/reporting, taping of the session (depending on vendor cost), etc. The vendor cost will be split between WCCTAC and CCTA.
- First round of meetings (two locations) – Mid-November to early December 2015
  - The first round will cover preliminary list of alternatives, travel market analysis, and study process. Both the preliminary list of four preferred alternatives, as well as the full list of eight alternatives, will be presented for public discussion.
  - The meeting format will be a hybrid open-house format with a presentation and then opportunity for participants to ask questions of project team members at displays of different modes. "Dot voting" and/or a written survey will provide an opportunity for interactive public input on both the public's preferred alternatives as well as the public's assessment of the preliminary list.
  - Meeting notices will include messaging that communicates, and makes relevant to people, the value of their participation, i.e., how their participation can change how people travel in West County. The PB communications team will draft a meeting plan that includes proposed stations (and content for each), the desired message or outcome for each station, and any hands-on or interactive activities to stimulate discussion and dialogue between members of the public and the project team.
  - Informational materials will include the project fact sheet, outlining study goals, boundaries, and overview of the development process/future opportunities for public input.
- Second round of meetings (two locations) – March/April 2016
  - The second round of meetings will focus on the analysis and evaluation of the four preferred alternatives and determination of the final proposal (set of projects) that will be carried forward for additional study.

- The meeting will have an open-house component at the beginning, but will follow a traditional format with a presentation and public question-and-answer session. A written survey will be distributed and collected to provide an opportunity for input on the selection of the preferred alternative.
- The second round of meetings will be held prior to a WCCTAC Board meeting so that the identified final proposal can be presented to the Board and submitted for approval in a timely manner.
- Online surveys
  - For each round of meetings, we will solicit input on preferred transportation modes and (potential) alternatives. Participants will rank their top three transportation preferences and provide pros/cons of each mode.
  - The online surveys will be similar to the written surveys available at the public meetings and will be online concurrently with the public meetings, so as to reach those who are not able to attend the meetings in person.
  - WCCTAC staff will review draft survey questions.
- Social media survey
  - A social media channel(s) identified by the Study Management Group, WCCTAC TAC, and WCCTAC Board will host a simple question about the alternatives and invite responses via social media.
  - Personal effort required to answer such a survey is very low, increasing the chances that people who do not (a) attend the town hall/meetings or (b) answer the online survey will provide input. While certain data, such as demographics, are not captured by a one-question survey, the intention is to capture a wide snapshot of what transit services can best meet travel needs among the followers of the identified social media channel(s). Responses will be compiled and provided to the technical team and WCCTAC for review.
- Translation and interpretation
  - Languages for materials to be translated into are Chinese, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese.
  - BART will provide translation and interpretation services for the project. All written materials to be translated will be provided to BART two weeks in advance of needing receipt of the translation. BART will be notified at least 72 hours in advance of any public meetings to provide interpretation services.