

# Appendix A: Public Participation Plan

## Introduction

Marin Transit's Public Participation Plan (PPP) provides a framework to guide a strategic approach to public participation. Marin Transit will use this framework to collect and consider input from riders, the general public, and other stakeholders and use it as an integral input into planning, policies, service design, and project development activities. The PPP addresses language, institutional, cultural, economic, or other barriers that may be preventing minority, low-income, and limited English proficient (LEP) populations from participating effectively in Marin Transit's decision-making process. This document complements the District's current and planned activities for reaching and improving accessibility for individuals with limited English proficiency that are described in Marin Transit's Language Assistance Plan (LAP).

### What is Marin Transit?

Marin County Transit District (Marin Transit) was formed by a vote of the people of Marin County in 1964 and was given the responsibility for providing local transit service within Marin County. Marin Transit develops and delivers a range of programs and services to meet the diverse transportation needs of community members. Marin Transit's bus and shuttle services carry over 2.4 million passenger trips each year (FY 2021-2022) and include several service types for different markets: local fixed route, community shuttle, supplemental school, rural fixed route, and the Muir Woods Shuttle. Marin Transit also offers a suite of programs and services designed for older adults and people with disabilities under the brand Marin Access.

### What is the purpose of the Public Participation Plan?

The primary purpose of the PPP is to detail Marin Transit's strategies and methods for public engagement. The PPP outlines opportunities for the community to get involved and provide input into Marin Transit's planning, service design, policies, projects, and operations.

### Summary of Plan Development

This PPP identifies existing outreach and public engagement methods that are used to provide information about Marin Transit's services and solicit input, as well as additional ways that Marin Transit can engage traditionally underrepresented or underserved groups in order to develop more inclusive plans for the future and better represent rider interests in the agencies' work.

Marin Transit selects appropriate participation methods based on a variety of factors. These include the composition of the affected population, the type of public participation process planned, the type of input needed for a project or initiative, and available staffing and financial resources. Marin Transit coordinates with community partners and other stakeholders to tailor participation methods to particular audiences and particular purposes.

Stakeholders are those who are either directly or indirectly affected by a proposed initiative, such as a change in service or fares, a proposed project, and/or a study or plan and its resulting recommendations. Those who may be adversely affected, or who may be denied the benefits of this initiative, are of particular interest in this initial identification process. Stakeholders can include many different individuals, populations, groups, or entities, including, but not limited to local residents, Marin Transit riders, minority and low-income persons, public agencies, private and non-profit organizations, or local businesses.

Once Marin Transit identifies the affected stakeholders for an initiative, staff will develop a tailored engagement plan to maximize awareness and participation opportunities for the affected stakeholders. Ultimately, Marin Transit seeks to use the input collected to address community concerns, meet community needs, and accomplish the goals of the initiative.

The PPP is developed as part of Marin Transit's Title VI Language Assistance Plan (LAP) and incorporates language considerations for safe harbor languages as defined in the LAP including Spanish, Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), and Vietnamese.

## Who do we engage?

Marin Transit is committed to engaging and collecting input from a range of stakeholders. Primary audiences include the following:

- **General Public** – All residents of, employees of, and visitors to Marin County, including existing riders and potential riders. The general public is comprised of various groups that may have specific needs and warrant special consideration, including:
  - **Youth and Students** – Marin Transit engages this population to get feedback on service offerings related to school service, supplemental service, youth fare products, and yellow bus support.
  - **Older Adults** – Marin Transit engages this population to get feedback on the needs of older adults and to inform efforts to update and improve Marin Access programs and services.
  - **People with Disabilities** - Marin Transit engages this population to get feedback on ADA-mandated paratransit, to understand the needs of people with disabilities, to inform efforts to update and improve Marin Access programs and services, and to ensure that all Marin Transit services are accessible for all.
  - **Community Members with Limited Incomes** – Marin Transit engages this population to understand the needs of community members with limited incomes and ensure that these community members are aware of fare assistance programs available to them.
  - **Community Members with Limited English Proficiency** – Marin Transit engages this population to understand the needs of community members with limited English proficiency and to ensure that community members are familiar with opportunities to receive information in their primary language.

- **Community Members in Equity Priority Communities** – Marin Transit engages this population to ensure that these historically-underserved communities have equitable access to transportation.
- **West Marin residents** – Marin Transit engages this population to ensure that lifeline services are available to residents in rural areas of the county.
- **Community Partners** – Community-based organizations that serve users and potential users of Marin Transit and Marin Access programs and services. Community partners include a wide range of organizations including special interest nonprofit organizations, advocacy groups, and business associations. Marin Transit engages these organizations to identify shared interests, areas for coordination, and to further our reach into the community. *Appendix B* contains a sample list of community partners with whom Marin Transit collaborates.
- **Peer Agencies** – Other transportation agencies like the Transportation Authority of Marin, Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART), the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District, and public transit operators in Sonoma County and beyond. Marin Transit engages these agencies to identify shared interests, areas for coordination, and advocacy priorities to ensure that riders have a seamless experience traveling in Marin County and beyond. Relationships with peer agencies can also be leveraged to better reach riders and potential riders and enhance the effectiveness of public engagement efforts.
- **Local Governments** – Local governments and jurisdictions in Marin County. Examples of ongoing coordination efforts include participation in the Marin County Public Works and Marin County Planning Directors monthly meetings. Marin Transit engages these entities to identify shared interests and areas for coordination. Relationships with local governments can also be leveraged to better reach riders and potential riders and enhance the effectiveness of public engagement efforts.

## Goals for Public Engagement

Marin Transit takes an expansive approach to public engagement and seeks to engage with and address the needs of a wide range of people across the County. Agency goals for public engagement are aimed at amplifying the voices that have been historically underrepresented and left out of the decision-making process in particular.

Marin Transit’s goals for public engagement are to:

1. **Educate and Inform** – Marin Transit seeks to facilitate broad community awareness of public transportation options that are available in Marin County. Effective community education involves investing in relationship building to allow Marin Transit to be seen as a trusted source of information.
2. **Encourage Broad Participation** – Marin Transit seeks to encourage participation from all members of the community, to provide a range of opportunities to provide input, and to use a variety of methods to access different audiences and “meet people where they are at.” Marin Transit seeks to provide two-way communication channels in order to learn from the

experiences of community members and partners across the County and integrate that learning into service and project development.

3. **Ensure Engagement Activities are Inclusive and Accessible for All** – Marin Transit seeks to create an inclusive environment throughout the engagement process and to ensure that all activities are accessible to all. Staff recognize that public engagement activities must include clear communication that is appropriate, in both content and format, for the intended audience. Staff tailor methods and provides accommodations to meet the needs of vulnerable populations and those that have been historically underrepresented or left out of the decision-making process.
4. **Evaluate the Effectiveness & Impact of Engagement Activities** – Marin Transit seeks to engage in efforts to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of engagement activities. A focus on ongoing monitoring allows staff to identify opportunities for improvement for future activities.

## Opportunities for Ongoing Participation

To meet the above goals, Marin Transit uses a range of strategies and methods. This section describes tools and methods that Marin Transit uses on an ongoing basis to engage riders and the general public. Methods that are specifically targeted to reach residents who speak Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese are briefly described here, more detail is provided in the LAP. For specific initiatives (e.g., plans, studies, campaigns, projects, service or fare changes), Marin Transit will design and implement tailored, more-detailed public participation plans that take into account the targeted audiences, affected stakeholders and unique subject matter.

Pursuant to Federal Title VI regulatory guidance, Marin Transit will continue to ensure that underserved populations have meaningful access to public participation processes through tailored engagement methods. This includes efforts to improve access for low-income, minority and LEP populations, using the methods shown here and in the LAP.

### Marin Transit Board of Directors

Stakeholders are invited to engage with Marin Transit’s Board of Directors at regularly scheduled monthly Board meetings, public hearings, and issue-specific convenings of the Board of Directors. Regular Board meetings are generally held on the first Monday of the month; agendas are available at least 72 hours prior to Board meetings and are posted at Marin Transit’s office in San Rafael and on Marin Transit’s website. Additional Board information is available at <https://marintransit.org/board>. Board agendas and materials are available in languages other than English by request.

The following provides highlights of the methods utilized to ensure the public has meaningful access to information presented to the Board and the decision-making processes:

- All Marin Transit Board meetings reserve time for public comments on every item and for items not on the agenda, and translators are available on request at least 72 business hours in advance of the meeting.
- Meetings are held in the Marin County Civic Center, which is easily accessible by public transit, and are streamed on the Internet and archived on the District’s website [www.marintransit.org](http://www.marintransit.org).

- Board agendas, staff reports, and meeting minutes are available at: [www.marintransit.org/board](http://www.marintransit.org/board).
- All Board meeting agendas include information about opportunities to comment on agenda items in all safe harbor languages, including Spanish, Chinese (Written Simplified Chinese), and Vietnamese.
- Board meetings that discuss major service changes and fare changes (non-promotional) are advertised on a broader scale and include a public hearing (see below).
- Community members that require Translation Assistance, American Sign Language Interpreters, Assistive Listening Devices, or other accommodations to participate in a meeting may request them by calling 415-226-0855 (voice) or contact the California Relay Service by dialing 711 to connect to the telephone listed above. Requests must be received no less than five working days prior to the meeting to help ensure availability.

## Public Hearings

The public hearing process is one method that Marin Transit Board of Directors uses to solicit and receive public comments about decisions affecting the community and Marin Transit riders. A public hearing is warranted when the matter under consideration is significant enough that it warrants extra effort to ensure public awareness of the matter and solicit public input. Details on the topics that warrant a public hearing and the methods for public hearings can be found in the Board-adopted Public Hearing Policy ([Appendix J](#)).

## Marin Transit Advisory Committees

Riders and community members are invited to participate in Marin Transit's Advisory Committees: the Marin Paratransit Coordinating Council (PCC) and the Marin Mobility Consortium (MMC). The PCC provides an ongoing forum for riders and other stakeholders to provide input and receive updates about the District's ADA-mandated paratransit program. The MMC provides an ongoing forum for community partners and stakeholders to provide input and receive updates about the District's efforts toward expanding mobility for all community members, particularly as they relate to the Marin Access suite of programs.

As of March 2023, the PCC is held in-person with a remote option for non-voting members. Marin Transit's PCC meetings are held at the Marin Transit Administrative Office in San Rafael; a location that is both transit and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible. The MMC is held virtually via Zoom. Information about the meetings is published on the Marin Transit website at <https://marintransit.org/meetings>.

All materials are presented in English with translation assistance provided upon request. Accessibility accommodations are made in accordance with those described in the Marin Transit Board of Directors section.

## Partner Agency Meeting Participation

Staff also provide regular updates at peer agency and community partner forums including: Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District's Bus Passenger Advisory Committee and the Advisory Committee on Accessibility, the Transportation Authority of Marin's Citizens Oversight Committee, and the Marin County Commission on Aging's Housing & Transportation Committee.

## Customer Service

Customer service includes support for complaints, commendations, service inquiries, or service suggestions as related to the programs and services offered by Marin Transit. Community members can seek and receive customer service support in a variety of ways. Community members can engage directly with Marin Transit staff members; contact information for all staff is available at <https://marintransit.org/contact>. Additionally, community members can call the Marin Transit Administrative office at 415-226-0855 (voice) or contact the California Relay Service by dialing 711. Support is available in English and Spanish with support in additional languages available by use of an on-demand translation service, the Language Line.

Additional customer service support is available at the San Rafael Transit Center Customer Service center weekdays from 7am – 6pm and the Marin Access Travel Navigator Customer Service center weekdays from 8am – 5pm. Community members can seek support in both locations via email, phone, or in person during scheduled business hours. Support is available in English and Spanish with support in additional languages available by use of an on-demand translation service, the Language Line.

## Direct Rider Engagement

Marin Transit staff initiate and perform direct rider engagement through surveys, focus groups, direct engagement at transit hubs or bus stops, community meetings and events, and travel training.

- **Travel Training** – Travel training, also known as “transit tours,” is a hands-on training of how to use the public transit system. A Marin Transit representative provides a tour of the system including planning a trip and taking a trip with the group. These trips usually take a few hours and are ideally tailored to the area in which the group requesting a “tour” will be traveling. There is no cost for this service.
- **Surveys** – Marin Transit engages riders through surveys, conducted periodically as needed for general public riders and annually for Marin Access program participants. Generally, surveys are incentivized and are either mailed or emailed directly to riders or collected in person on-board vehicles or at key transit hubs or bus stops; survey respondents can choose to complete the survey on paper and return via US Mail or complete the survey online.
- **Transit Stops** – In-person engagement is conducted at key transit hubs or bus stops and/or other community locations to collect input for specific initiatives, as well as on a regular basis to inform service development.
- **Community Events/Workshops/Focus Groups** – Community meetings, focus groups, workshops, and events provide stakeholders an opportunity for more sustained conversations and discussions in an interactive setting, and for community discussion with multiple

stakeholders present. These may consist of brief presentations with brainstorming discussions, full project or service proposal reviews, or small informational sessions; they may use exercises or breakout groups to generate ideas and feedback. These types of in-person events may be appropriate at key decision-points in a planning effort or project and/or when major service or fare changes are proposed. Focus group participants are usually compensated for their participation and participation incentives may also be distributed at other in-person engagement events. Information about these types of events is published on the Marin Transit website at <https://marintransit.org/meetings>.

- **Partner Organization Meetings** – Marin Transit works with community partners to leverage already-scheduled meetings in low-income, minority, and LEP communities to integrate public participation efforts into existing community and neighborhood activities. Additionally, staff works with community-based organizations and other partners when scheduling these events to meet the needs of specific communities.

Focus groups and community meetings are held either in person or remotely depending on the needs and preferences of the target attendee population. Staff perform direct engagement activities at various times of the day and on weekends when possible, to accommodate working families, individuals, and seniors and to maximize opportunities for individuals to provide input. Marin Transit's in-person meetings and focus groups are held at locations that are transit and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible.

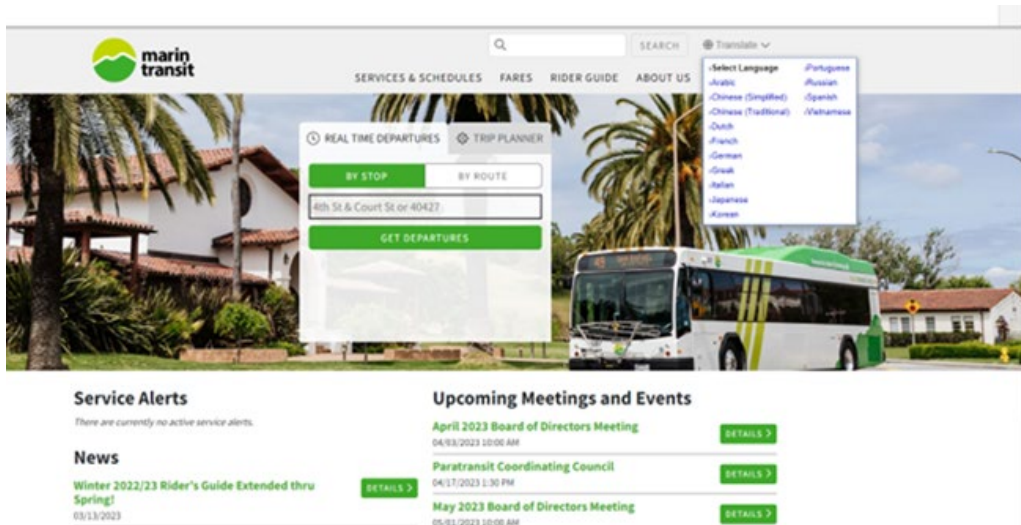
For all methods, translation assistance is provided upon request. Staff ensure all digital versions of all collateral materials are accessible and that forms can be completed by individuals with low or no vision.

Community members that require Translation Assistance, American Sign Language Interpreters, Assistive Listening Devices, or other accommodations to participate in a meeting may request them by calling 415-226-0855 (voice) or contact the California Relay Service by dialing 711 to connect to the telephone listed above. Requests must be received no less than five working days prior to the meeting to help ensure availability.

### **Marin Transit Website**

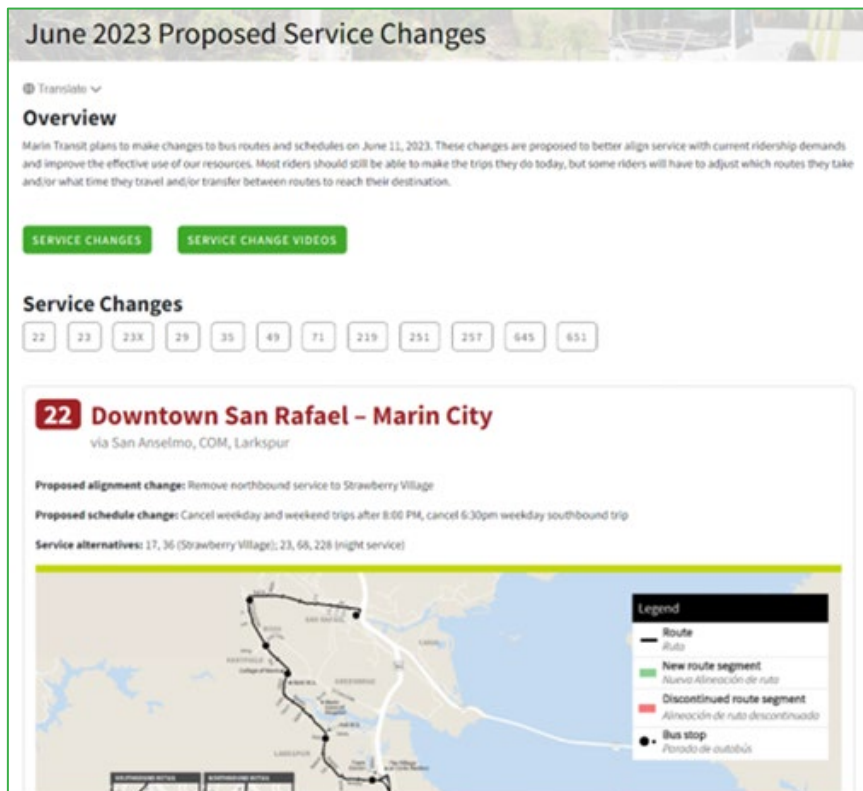
The Marin Transit website provides all information that is pertinent to the public about its services, projects, Board and Committees, and provides opportunities for input. Google Translate allows visitors to instantly translate the website content into 14 languages including Spanish, Vietnamese, Simplified Chinese and Traditional Chinese (see Figure 1, below).

Figure 1: Marin Transit Website Translation Options



For service changes and other major initiatives, Marin Transit creates special web pages with links to informational materials and calendars of upcoming participation opportunities. Links and information may also be shared via various community partner organizations’ e-newsletters. Figure 2 shows the dedicated webpage that was created to collect feedback to inform major service changes proposed for June 2023.

Figure 2: Dedicated Website for Proposed Service Changes

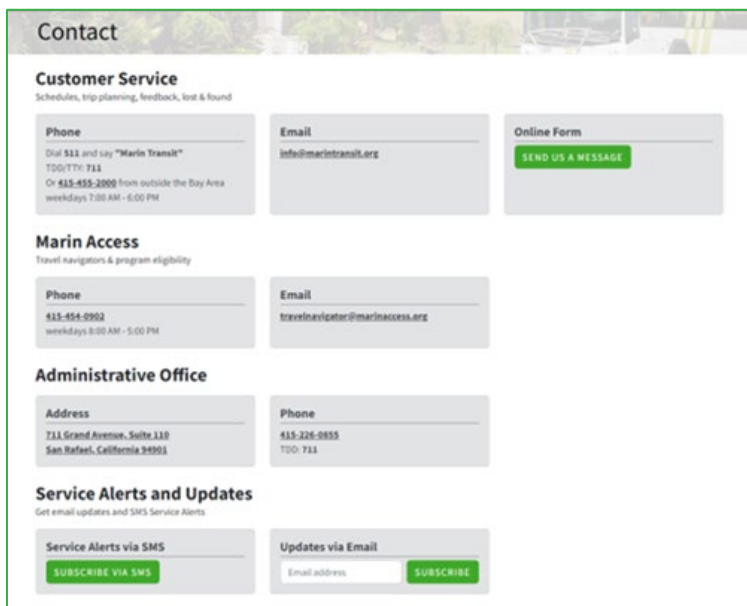




Additional information available on the Marin Transit website includes interactive route maps, a trip planner tool, real-time arrival information, rider alerts and contact information to reach Marin Transit staff. The website provides information about the District’s Title VI Program, ADA Complaint process, and Reasonable Modification Request process. A dedicated link provides direct access to information about the Marin Access suite of mobility programs and services for older adults and individuals with disabilities: [www.marinaccess.org](http://www.marinaccess.org). The purchasing page includes information and links on current and upcoming procurements, and the District’s Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program.

The Marin Transit website also provides an opportunity for community members to provide feedback via an online form and detailed information about the many ways community members can contact and engage with the District (see Figure 3, below).

Figure 3: Marin Transit Website “Contact Us” Page



## Digital Communication Methods

Marin Transit aims to expand its reach to community members who are unable to attend or do not regularly participate in traditional public meetings and board hearings by utilizing various digital communication methods, such as social media and electronic communication. This approach is taken to ensure that all members of the community have access to the District's services, are aware of changes and initiatives, and are able to provide input and participate.

The District maintains a presence on social media via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube to encourage ongoing participation and dialogue with community members. An online and social media presence provides for two-way communication between meetings, strengthens the dialogue, and supports a transparent planning process. Marin Transit has a Social Media Policy, found here: <https://marintransit.org/contact>.

Email blasts facilitate communication and feedback from the public and may also be used to communicate with community-based organizations, stakeholders, advocacy groups, merchants'

organizations, neighborhood groups and other interested individuals. Marin Transit also maintains a general email list consisting of those who have indicated they wish to be notified of general Marin Transit news and activities. The public can notify Marin Transit of their interest at [www.marintransit.org](http://www.marintransit.org), by phone, in person, by mail, and at meetings.

Marin Transit's Main Social Media Channels include:

- Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/marintransit/>
- Twitter – <https://twitter.com/marintransit>
- Instagram – <https://www.instagram.com/marintransit/>
- YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/@marintransit7955>

### **Printed Materials: Guides, Brochures and Other Materials**

Marin Transit publishes guides, brochures and other information materials to provide information to riders, community partners and community members including the Marin Transit Rider's Guide and the Marin Access Rider's Guide. All vital documents, as defined in Marin Transit's Title VI Language Assistance Plan, are available in all safe harbor languages, including Spanish, Chinese (Written Simplified Chinese), and Vietnamese. Community members can access all documents via the Marin Transit website and can order paper copies to display at their location(s) at <https://marintransit.org/brochures>. Staff also proactively notify community partners of the availability of these documents and makes efforts to ensure they are distributed widely throughout Marin County and in formats that meet the needs of the various populations.

All brochures and information materials are developed to be user-friendly accessible documents, use plain language, and include maps and graphics as possible to illustrate concepts or information.

## **Assessing the Impact of Engagement**

Marin Transit is committed to educating and informing the public and collecting broad input to inform decision-making processes, in alignment with the goals described at the start of this plan. To this end, the District strives to provide the public with multiple avenues for engagement beyond traditional public meetings and hearings. Marin Transit's goal is to provide all audiences, including disadvantaged and historically underrepresented communities, with the information and perspective necessary to provide thoughtful and considered input on service and fare development, plans and studies, as well as overall system performance.

Marin Transit will measure and report on the effectiveness of its public participation activities as follows:

- Maintaining records of activities and input when soliciting public comment, particularly in low-income and limited English proficient communities, including the content and quantity of the public comment received.
- Utilizing tools available to the District including TransTrack and Sprout Social to track and report on engagement activities.

- Examining the results of engagement efforts to gauge effectiveness and engaging in a continual improvement process to use lessons learned to refine future activities.
- Comparing outreach efforts with best practices and industry peers.
- Adapting future efforts to enhance the ability of the public to participate in Marin Transit’s public engagement and outreach process.
- Providing updates on activities and effectiveness to the Marin Transit Board of Director’s via quarterly reports and an annual Board Update.

## **Recent Outreach**

Outreach undertaken since the last Title VI Program Update is included in Marin Transit’s Title VI Plan, *Appendix C*.

## **Conclusion**

Marin Transit is committed to providing comprehensive, accessible, and effective public participation processes and engaging in a continual improvement process to use lessons learned and best practices to refine future activities. Staff seek to use these activities to promote trust in the community, ensure effective use of Marin Transit resources, and ensure rider and community perspectives are considered in decision making. This document should be used in conjunction with the Language Assistance Plan to meet the needs of all members of our community.