

For Immediate Release

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Not Just Buses: Marin Transit Debuts Menu of Options to Meet Needs of Aging Population

April 27, 2011, San Rafael, CA – With 30% of Marin County residents now over age 60 and population projections zooming to nearly 50%, Marin Transit, the local government transit agency, has been particularly challenged to develop cost-effective ways to accommodate the rapidly increasing number of riders with physical mobility issues.

This week, Marin Transit debuts Marin Access, a full-service program to meet those challenges. Qualified riders can now opt for innovations such as neighbor-to-neighbor volunteer driver service with a stipend for gas or may choose sliding scale wheelchair accessible taxi service. The goals of the new program are to better coordinate existing services, leverage cost savings whenever possible, and make it easier for mobility challenged riders to find and use all the services available to them. Marin Access also provides one-stop information and referrals via Marin Transit's newly opened Mobility Management Center. Local Measure A, approved by voters in 2004 and also a portion of last year's successful Measure B, the \$10 vehicle registration fee, will help fund the new program, along with regional monies awarded to Marin.

MARIN ACCESS VANS ROLL FORWARD

Also rolling out this week are the first of the familiar specialized transit vans sporting the new Marin Access/Marin Transit look and one-stop phone number. The vans will continue to be operated on behalf of Marin Transit by the Marin Senior Coordinating Council, know best as Whistlestop Wheels. Marin Access trips outside the county are operated for Golden Gate Transit by Marin Transit. Marin residents who are already using specialized transit service as part of their American with Disabilities Act (ADA) program will automatically continue to receive service and need not reapply.

PART OF LARGER OUTREACH EFFORT

The rebranding of the specialized vans is another step in a larger outreach effort by the transit agency to create one easily identifiable look for the family of transit services now available. The popular hybrid-electric buses were brought on line last year with the new green and white look and logo. David Rzepinski, General Manager of Marin Transit states, "What we've seen is a gap between available transit services and public perception of the availability of these same services. It's important to ensure that all County residents are aware of all the transit choices available to them right now and that their local taxes support these programs."

BUILDING A CRITICAL MASS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Facing a trifecta of challenges, an aging population, historically tight budgets and geography that includes hilly terrain and small roads, increasing overall ridership is the ultimate goal and key to creating a financially and environmentally sustainable future for transit in Marin. Marin Transit services currently include local fixed route bus service within Marin, the Muir Woods shuttle, paratransit, Novato Dial-a-Ride, and the West Marin Stagecoach, along with the new services like the volunteer driver program, website, and call center.

Marin Transit Board President, Susan Adams, states that “the new look and program improvements are an important part of the Transit District’s efforts to meet the needs of the disabled community, aging residents, and the County as a whole.”

More innovative incentives are in the works for this year including ride credits for those who choose to donate their car, an easy method for prepaying for rides, and technology-based notification features.

For more information about the specialized Marin Access transit services call the Marin Transit Mobility Management Center at 415-454-0902. For information about Marin Transit call 415-226-0855 or go to www.marintransit.org.

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