Clean Commute

Best Marketing & Communications on the COVID-19 Pandemic, Social Media

**Target Audience:** The net we cast for audience targeting was rather wide – not only did we want to connect with our riders, current and lapsed due to the pandemic, but we also sought to reach out to former Metrolink riders, our own employees and contractors at Metrolink, key stakeholders (Board Members, member agencies, etc.), state and local elected officials, and other transportation agencies across Southern California.

**Situation/Challenge:**We needed to communicate to riders that we heard their COVID-19 concerns and were addressing them in a variety of ways. These demonstrative actions needed to be made clear to provide riders with peace of mind that they will have a safe and comfortable travel experience aboard our trains. When we surveyed current and former riders on April 23, 2020, we received over 11,000 responses. The good news: 81% of riders told us that they are likely to ride with us again, and 75% of those riders would ride the same or more often than before the stay-at-home order. When we asked riders what we could do to help them transition to our “new normal,” social distancing and cleanliness were the top two concerns (72% and 51%, respectively).

**Strategy/Objective:**Our objective was to rebuild our fallen ridership by building (or restoring) trust in Metrolink and its cleaning and safety protocols. Our strategy to achieve this was to demonstrate our commitment to the health and safety of riders in the “new normal” by educating the public about these protocols. We aimed to present packaged video and image content sculpted from utilizing the information and data gathered from our surveys as well as government reports. The use of Twitter threads to become fully transparent and granular about the science behind health and safety processes would further reinforce our health and safety narrative. More content would be curated and added upon the completion of the installation of microbial air filters on every train.

**Results/Impact:**Refreshing our campaign art throughout 2020 kept the content from becoming stale. The transition to photo-forward art raised Facebook reach by 20.66%, engagement by 63.73% and engagement rate by 35.51%. On Twitter, it raised reach by 0.89%, engagement by 88.24% and engagement rate 86.21%. The videos delivered 5.1% and 6.5% CTR respectively, with the second video raising CTR by 27.45%. The first video delivered the best engagement on Instagram with an engagement rate of 7.93%. The second was deployed in late December and is currently delivering the highest engagement on Facebook with an engagement rate of 9.28%. When we began to leverage content to direct riders to our new health and safety website page, social media efforts accounted for 32.7% of the traffic – the top source.

**Why Submit:** For our Clean Commute campaign, we had to collaborate closely with our operations partners so we didn’t make promises to our ridership that we’d fail to keep. If the two departments don’t work seamlessly in tandem, the riders do not get what they need. If operations doesn’t deliver what marketing promises in their external messaging, the agency appears dishonest. Capturing operations’ enhancements to our cleaning protocols allowed us to show our riders firsthand that we were doing everything we could to prioritize their health and safety. With this campaign, we made it clear to our riders that we heard what they were saying and that we were responding to the needs they expressed to combat the uncertainty and dangers the COVID-19 pandemic presented.