Kids Ride Free Campaign

Best Marketing and Communications to Support Ridership or Sales, Social Media

**Target Audience**: Metrolink’s Kids Ride Free Campaign targeted current Metrolink riders and potential Metrolink riders living within ten miles of Metrolink station addresses. Our marketing efforts primarily focused on parents and other family members responsible for leisure travel and weekend family activities. Demographics were set for ages 25-65+ with interest targeting to include Travel + Leisure, Rail transport, Kids or Family.

**Situation/Challenge**: From March through July 2020, families had spent a great deal of time together staying safe at home and were looking for opportunities to break out of their routine. While they wanted to travel to places they could enjoy, they wanted to be careful and stay safe during their journey. With Southern California traffic congestion back to near pre-COVID levels at the time, parents looked to alternative ways to travel to avoid hearing the dreaded: “Are we there yet?” during a car trip. Metrolink offered an affordable and safe transportation solution to get from point A to point B while providing a pleasant experience that would make travel an exciting part of the trip.

**Strategy/Objective**:

The objectives for this campaign to come partly from social media engagement were to increase weekend ridership by 13,633 over six months (a projection by a fare consultant) and drive greater than 4,000 page views per week for website traffic to the Kids Ride Free page on metrolinktrains.com. Our strategy to achieve this was to develop compelling messaging and photography-centric graphics and divide and conquer among three audience segments: interest and geotargeting, those who previously engaged with Metrolink’s content (lookalike), and areas of Southern California that historically responded positively to our previous social media promotions (sentiment).

**Results/Impact**: The paid social campaign was one of our best-performing traffic campaigns of all time (since 2012) with 25,235 link clicks to the Kids Ride Free web page (counting for 93.8% of the page’s traffic during the campaign period). While the ridership goal wasn’t met due to the campaign’s unexpected early suspension, we were on the right track as children’s ridership for the first six weeks of the campaign was a 138.1% improvement over the six-week period prior to its launch. Sentiment for the campaign was high as the campaign was well-received by target audiences.

**Why Submit**: This campaign performed considerably well compared to our previous paid social ad efforts. We were excited to be able to provide an affordable and safe service for families in our region when they needed it most. We understood how challenging it was to occupy a child’s daily schedule during COVID stay-at-home orders, especially with the closure of theme parks like the Disneyland Resort. When it’s safe for non-essential travel again, we will continue to develop leisure travel opportunities for our riders living a new normal to increase weekend boardings.