DIGITAL CAMPAIGN PERFORMANCE MEMO

Issued August 7, 2025

project	NTAS / "Together We Go" Campaign
requested by	Parisa Safarzadeh / SFMTA

overview

SFMTA was awarded a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant to develop a National Transit Adaptation Strategy (NTAS) to raise awareness, opinion, and consideration of public transit usage among lapsed riders.

As one part of the strategy's "proof-of-concept," MIG worked with SFMTA to create a marketing campaign that aligned with the NTAS Messaging Framework and could be easily adapted by transit agencies nationwide—including legacy, emerging, and rural transit markets.

The chosen campaign concept aimed to reach two of the NTAS personas, "Versatile Traveler" and the "Event-Driven Explorer," with the "Social Cohesion" scenario in mind.

Once a concept was chosen, SFMTA reached out to numerous public transit agencies across the country to participate in the NTAS's marketing campaign pilot phase. Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) in Chicago, IL, and CapMetro in Austin, TX, opted to participate.

messaging

The awareness campaign aimed to promote the benefit, reliability, and ease of public transit and to encourage riders to take transit once again.

The messaging had to work across a variety of transit agencies, so the campaign needed to shift from agency-specific services and market-specific contexts to illustrate a universal human-centered experience—conveying social cohesion where transit connects riders to their communities as much as it does to their destinations. This was embodied in the tagline, **"Together We Go."**

media mix

The digital media buy for the San Francisco market was $14,000. Both CTA and CapMetro each had a paid social ad buy of $3,000 ($6,000 total).

The digital media mix for this campaign consisted of:
- **Digital display ads** (SFMTA only) were placed on local news publication sites.
- **Social media ads on Instagram and Facebook** (all agencies) were used to target individuals based on behaviors and interest.

(Outside of the scope of this digital marketing effort but worth mentioning—the FTA grant also included budget for exterior transit ads placed through Intersection that SFMTA managed themselves. Bus king and queen placements were included for SFMTA, CTA, and CapMetro. SFMTA print deliverables also included light rail vehicle queens and interior car cards on buses and light rail vehicles.)

Digital OOH ads included two digital transit shelter ads for SFMTA, and bike share placements for CapMetro.

	SFMTA	CTA	CapMetro
Paid Digital	X		
Paid Social	X	X	X
Bus Kings & Queens	X	X	X
Light Rail	X		
Interior Car Cards	X		
Digital Transit Shelter	X		
Bike Share			X

* The rows in yellow are SFMTA-managed touchpoints, outside the scope of this report.

targeting strategy

With the overall goal of encouraging individuals to choose public transit over other options, targeting for this campaign was highly specific to the personas outlined in the NTAS creative brief:

- Individuals who take public transportation for events and destinations where it is more convenient or efficient than driving.
- Individuals who use a variety of transportation modes based on their specific needs and preferences.

To reach these specific individuals, we included the following targeting strategies to our digital ad placements:

- **Polygonal Targeting Attribution** (PTA) (SFMTA only) was placed around transit hubs and garages throughout San Francisco to serve ads to individuals who previously opted to drive to events, etc., in the City and encourage them to take transit instead.
- **Behavioral and Contextual Targeting** (all agencies) was used target specific users on social media based on behaviors, interests, and demographics.

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key findings   The digital media campaign ran for four weeks, with a spend of $20,000. Overall, this campaign performed very well, with **1,636,241 total impressions** and **8,122 total clicks**. The breakdown by ad type and agency is as follows:

Digital Display Ads (SFMTA-only)

- **1,123,814** total impressions
- **1,188** total clicks with an overall click-through rate (CTR) of **0.11%—** higher than the average CTR for digital display ads, which is between 0.08% and 0.1%

SFMTA Paid Social Media Campaign (Instagram and Facebook)

- **176,316** total impressions
- **2,521** total clicks with an overall CTR of **1.43%—** higher than the average CTR for social media ads, which is between 0.8% and 1.0%
- **74,259 total reach** (estimated number of unique users who saw this campaign's social media ads)

CTA Paid Social Media Campaign (Instagram and Facebook)

- **167,405** total impressions
- **2,882** total clicks with an overall CTR of **1.72%**— higher than the average CTR for social media ads, which is between 0.8% and 1.0%
- **78,248 total reach** (estimated number of unique users who saw this campaign's social media ads)

**CapMetro Paid Social Media Campaign** (Instagram and Facebook)

- **168,706** total impressions
- **1,531** total clicks with an overall CTR of **0.91**%— within the average CTR rage for social media ads, which is between 0.8% and 1.0%
- **71,170 total reach** (estimated number of unique users who saw this campaign's social media ads)

campaign creative   The need to offer a universal look—not tied to a specific geography or market— MIG developed a fun, bright illustrative approach. The concept included transit modes that reflected each geographic area, with a transit-map element overlaid in the ad connecting individual segments to bring the individual elements together as a whole.

MIG created animated graphics for SFMTA, CapMetro and CTA's paid social campaigns, and static graphics for SFMTA and CapMetro's organic social media.

MIG drafted the paid and organic social media copy, which was reviewed and approved by SFMTA.

Social Media Graphics		
1080x1080	1080x1350	1080x1920
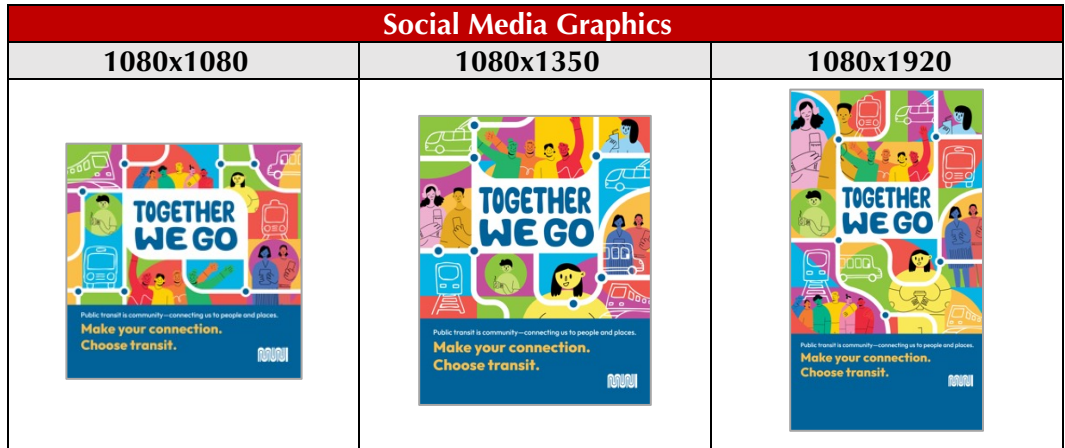
*In addition to social media placement, MIG created digital PSA ads as well as on-vehicle ads for this campaign. See appendix on page 3 for reference.

recommendations

Overall, the "Together We Go" digital awareness campaign performed very well across agencies—all sub-campaigns meeting or exceeding industry averages. If SFMTA or the other agencies would like to run a digital campaign like this again or provide direction for agencies that may run this for the first time, we would recommend the following:

- **Proactively monitor campaign performance with the project team.** As modeled through the implementation of this campaign, proactive monitoring of the performance of this campaign—reviewing each week's metrics with the project team—offered the ability to make timely adjustments, recalibrating and optimizing the digital campaign to reach more individuals and garner greater ad engagement.
- **Consider an expanded audience target.** Originally, our audience targeting was more specifically focused on the "Versatile Traveler" and "Event Driven Explorer" personas. Halfway through the campaign, we expanded the targeting to reach people more broadly/generally in the market, which increased our reach by 30% between weeks 2 and 3 and yielded a 40% jump in paid impressions and a 35% jump in clicks. We recommend working closely with digital media partners to monitor performance of the initial media plan, making adjustments to optimize performance like what we did for this campaign.

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- **Switch up campaign creative.** Social media campaigns that run for longer durations (i.e., multiple weeks) benefit from a change or variation on the campaign creative after an initial stretch, so the imagery and message are consistent but also don't go stale. Four weeks is about as long as we would want to keep one specific design in market. Along these lines, including variations specifically for in-feed ads and reels/stories, would also contribute positively to the campaign performance.

Audience Survey

Each agency's NTAS landing page—the online destination for these campaign ads—included information for visitors to learn about the NTAS campaign and also a survey link for audience respondents to record where they saw the transit ads and how the ads made them feel about transit. While the original digital campaign was not designed with the promotion or solicitation of survey responses as part of its strategy (survey responses were not a goal of the campaign), midway through the digital campaign the survey was introduced and the goals of the campaign shifted within the original creative messaging and digital strategy parameters.

MIG adjusted the campaign as best it could to achieve the new digital campaign goals—survey results. However, the best way to promote and solicit survey responses would have been to create a separate campaign focused specifically on the survey. The following recommendations provide direction for how to create and optimize a digital campaign to achieve survey responses:

- **Design the creative to promote a "take the survey" call-to-action.** The original strategy was focused on promoting transit and its social cohesion benefits—an awareness-building campaign. However, had the survey response goal been established at the outset of the campaign, the opportunity to align ad's messaging (e.g., "Share your opinion," "We want to hear from you") would have been tailored and worked harder to solicit and generate survey responses. (The original campaign messaging aligned with the original transit promotion—through social cohesion—objective.)
- **Streamline access to the online survey**. Simplifying the user experience is critical in garnering user feedback—in a digital campaign, minimizing the number of clicks to immediately capture audience engagement is essential. It already takes greater commitment (and spend) to get

individuals to click through to one link, let alone two (e.g., click through from ad to campaign landing page, from campaign landing page to online survey). For a survey -oriented campaign, creating an user experience where audiences simply click once from an ad to the survey will be most successful—and ideally, this page would be a more developed page, providing respondents with context for the survey and a reason to share the opinions being solicited.

- **Provide an incentive.** Unless there is a direct benefit to them, people are more likely to respond when there is an incentive. Offer to enter individuals into a raffle for swag is a way to prompt participation and encourage respondents to share their feedback.
- **Utilize polls in posts and stories to get more engagement.** Social media is a fantastic way to engage with an audience. Without a clear call-to-action or incentive to garner feedback, it can be hard to get individuals to interact with an ad. Adding polls to posts or stories is one way to get timely feedback and instant engagement—this also approach also offers the ability to change up the questions by the day.

appendix

Transit Shelters/Digital PSA's		Bike Share
On/In-Vehicle		
Car Card		
Bus Queen & Light Rail Vehicle		
Bus King		