

The National Transit Adaptation Strategy Messaging Framework

October 5th, 2024

San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency

Messaging Framework Introduction

Messaging Platform

The purpose of this document is to provide a messaging framework for understanding and communicating the future of transportation for public transit agencies. Based on the report [“The Future of Transportation| Five Scenarios”](#) which outlines shared futures that could shape public transportation, along with their potential impacts on markets, riders, services, risks, funding, and decision-making.

By analyzing, reflecting, and discussing these scenarios and their implications, all public transportation agencies can gain a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing public transportation to manage present and future conditions proactively.

After considering each of these scenarios via the extended [Scenarios Document](#), transit agencies can use this Messaging Platform to inform a ridership marketing campaign and help create ongoing and consistent messages that resonate with a chosen prospect audience to positively impact ridership.

What is a messaging framework?

Fundamentally, a **messaging framework** is a tool that can be used to develop and refine the way a brand is remembered and actioned. Messaging frameworks can help to create a more cohesive and effective communications strategy—one that resonates with customers and drives results.

Messaging platforms support the need to communicate with a target audience. A successful messaging framework should be simple to understand and clearly distinguish one’s brand from its competitors which can be tangible (e.g., other products or services) or intangible (e.g., time constrained, convenience).

This framework provides a structure for crafting and developing a messaging strategy and can be used in various tactics, such as social media, website content, and advertising copy. A brand messaging framework should be concise, flexible, and easy to reference anyone can easily use it. Key messages are the central guiding aspect of a messaging document; maintaining them ensures that all communications align with a campaign’s overall goals and activities.

How to use this messaging platform

The messages in this document are intended to be general enough to communicate intent yet be adaptable to varying circumstances. Every brand is different, and therefore each brand’s implementation of this messaging framework’s general concepts will need to be adapted to fit a brand’s specific needs. Messages can be adapted for brand tone and style and calibrated for

the selected communication channel (e.g., social media, newspaper, digital ads, etc.) to reach existing, lapsed, or new public transit customers.

A brand messaging framework can't be a single, one-size-fits-all strategy, but successful brand messaging strategies often have the following common elements:

1. Target Audience (personas)
2. Key Messages (enclosed)
3. Tone & Voice
4. Brand & Visuals
5. Call to Action

NTAS Messaging Overview

The Future Scenarios Report from NTAS Phase I presents five scenarios for how transportation and public transit agencies could transform over the next ten years. Each scenario explores different values and future forces such as profit, human-centeredness, resilience, equity, and regeneration offering a thought-provoking look at what the future of transportation could be. The scenarios anticipate emerging trends and uncertainties within this landscape, such as the rise of autonomous vehicles and shared mobility services.

Transit agencies can use these scenarios to prepare for a shifting mobility landscape by considering key insights and implications and adapting strategies accordingly.

The central message across all scenarios is that the future of transportation systems requires flexible and adaptable planning, collaboration between public and private stakeholders, and a focus on equity, sustainability, and innovation.

Key Messages (Shared Across All Scenarios):

1. **Resilient Cities, Thriving Communities:** Discover how public transit drives resilience by embracing shared, sustainable, and equitable mobility options.
2. **Access for All:** Experience the benefits of accessible transportation, reduced congestion, improved air quality, and an enhanced quality of life through transformative public transit solutions.
3. **Empowering Growth and Innovation:** Unleash economic potential and foster innovation by prioritizing resilient public transit systems that fuel economic growth in cities.
4. **Shaping a Sustainable Future:** Join the movement towards a greener tomorrow, where cities prioritize sustainability and prepare for the challenges of the future.

Campaign Objective

Develop a campaign based on one of the five scenarios, or potentially a blend dependent on the transit agency and their riders' needs to encourage increased transit system ridership.

Campaign Goals

1. Increase **awareness** of given public transit agency and the services offered

2. **Position** the transit agency as a leader in the transportation industry
3. **Attract** new riders and **retain** existing ones
4. **Increase** the number of trips taken on public transit
5. Promote the **benefits** of using public transit as outlined in selected scenario

Target Audience

Target Audience of a campaign will be a selection among the Transit Rider Personas identified in the NTAS Phase II Report and supporting materials. This includes the following Personas:

- A. The Transit System Navigator
- B. The Versatile Traveler
- C. The Event-Driven Explorer
- D. The Transit Sympathizer

Transit agencies are most likely to be able to increase ridership by targeting the Versatile Traveler (Persona B) and the Event-Driven Explorer (Persona B) in marketing efforts.

Please reference the Persona document for further information.

Tone & Voice

The tone of marketing material developed with this framework should be friendly, empowering, contemporary, and human. Government tone (like this sentence) should be avoided.

Branding & Visuals

Foundation brand elements such as typefaces, fonts, colors should be built upon existing brand style guides, and agencies should consider implementing contemporary treatments for photography and illustrations to engage and attract new riders while not alienating existing riders.

Call to Action

Specific calls to action will depend on the media channel the marketing material appears on.

For print billboards, consider using

- QR Codes (“Scan with your phone to learn more!”)

For digital advertising, consider using:

- Clickable links to Web Landing Page (“Tap/Click to learn more!”)

Overview: Understanding the Scenarios

Each scenario is based on different trends and uncertainties in the transportation landscape, such as privatization, the rise of autonomous vehicles, the growth of shared mobility services, the need for sustainability, and the potential impacts of climate change.

Shared commonalities across all scenarios provides an opportunity to develop unified and compelling narratives around the future of transportation system that puts people first, connects us to our communities, and most importantly, work for all.

The following reflects the universal themes across all five scenarios:

- **Improved Sustainability:** the need and desire to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution in transportation systems is stronger than ever. This is reflected in the focus on fleet and private auto electrification, shared mobility, and active transportation options such as biking and walking.
- **Technological Innovation:** highlight the potential for emerging technologies such as autonomous vehicles and mobility-as-a-service platforms to transform our transportation systems and improve mobility for all users
- **Public and Private Collaboration:** emphasize the need for greater partnership between public and private sector stakeholders to address the challenges facing our transportation systems, including:
 - Flexible and adaptable planning and decision-making with a focus on equity, sustainability, innovation, and affordability.
 - Investing in infrastructure improvements such as bike lanes, pedestrian walkways, and public transit.
 - Changes to government policy and public funding sources and structures to facilitate these changes.
- **Improved Public Health:** Using transportation infrastructure and services to support the health and well-being of our communities, improve air quality, and lessen traffic congestion rather than focusing exclusively on the movement of people and goods.
- **Cultural Realignment:** emphasis on the need for cultural shifts in attitudes towards transportation and mobility; any shift towards a more sustainable transportation system would require significant cultural change, dramatic increases in transportation funding, trade-offs and difficult choices, and a shift in collective behavior.
- **Demand-Based Approach:** a future where present and future transportation systems are more reliant on technological advancements to be more sustainable, equitable, and user-centered, that prioritizes the needs and preferences of users rather than simply following traditional planning approaches based on engineering or economic principles.

Scenario One: Style Meets Efficiency

Summary

The focus of this scenario envisions a future where places, large and small, prioritize environmental sustainability and clean energy, leading to a shift away from personal car ownership and towards **shared mobility options**. Public transportation is replaced by a market-based system of private mobility services and is transformed into a luxury experience and generates new and non-traditional revenue streams.

In this scenario, private companies play a larger role in providing transportation services, leading to more personalized and on-demand mobility options. The rise of autonomous vehicles and other new technologies leads to the emergence of a highly competitive and fragmented market for mobility providers which each offer a range of services tailored to different customer needs. High-end mobility services become a status symbol for wealthy urban residents, while low-income residents may be left with fewer transportation options.

Messaging Objective

Market-based mobility systems offer a more personalized, convenient, and sustainable *alternative* to traditional public transportation options by offering flexible on-demand service with a lower environmental impact than private car ownership while realizing profit over greater good.

Key Benefits

1. Increased efficiency and convenience for those who can afford access
2. Great transportation choices for those who can afford access
3. Innovation and investment due to consumer demand
4. Reduced traffic congestion and pollution from decreased vehicle ownership)

Key Messages

1. Future of Commutes: Personalized Transportation at Your Service

Elevate the commuting experience with transportation tailored to individual preferences, making each journey a delightful one due to convenience and amenities such as improved seating, quiet zones and ease of use, to name a few.

2. Unlocking New Possibilities: Embrace Innovative Revenue Streams and Cost Reduction

Discover the potential of non-traditional revenue sources and cost-saving measures that pave the way for improved public transportation services and financial viability.

3. Equity and Innovation United: Redefining Mobility Services for All

Find the perfect balance between individualized service and providing options that meet the needs of all.

4. Elevate Your Commute: High-End Mobility Services, Prestige for the Urban Lifestyle

This message positions high-end mobility services as a symbol of prestige and luxury, offering an exclusive transportation experience to urban residents who seek and prioritize convenience and comfort.

Scenario Two: Sharing is Caring

Summary

Scenario 2 envisions a future where traditional car ownership is replaced by a publicly subsidized system of shared mobility options, such as ride sharing and bike sharing. This shift towards shared mobility is driven by a desire to promote greater access and equity in transportation and reduce the environmental impact of individual car ownership.

This future requires a deep shift in cultural attitudes and social norms. There is less car centricity and public transportation is the preferred mode of transportation. Traffic congestion is reduced and people come first as public transportation is accessible, reliable, and affordable. Shared mobility services such as ride hailing, bike sharing, and scooter sharing have become the norm, leading to more efficient use of transportation resources.

Messaging Objective

Equity and access are prioritized under a transportation system designed to benefit everyone. Framing shared mobility as a positive step for the collective good and the cohesion of a city helps to build support for policies and initiatives beyond transportation for the benefit of a greater good.

Key Benefits

1. Affordable, accessible transportation
2. Reduced traffic congestion
3. Increased social connections
4. Environmental benefits
5. Improved health and wellness for the individual and more vibrant and active city streets

Key Messages

1. **Get Connected: Shared Mobility for a More Social and Inclusive City**

Emphasizes the social benefits of shared mobility options, highlighting their ability to connect people and foster a sense of community. It encourages individuals to embrace shared mobility options and be a part of a more social and inclusive city.

2. **Save Money, Go Further: Shared Mobility for Affordable Transportation**

Highlights the affordability of shared mobility options, encouraging individuals to make the switch and save money while going further. It positions shared mobility options as a solution that benefits individuals and the city.

3. **Ride for a Better City: Shared Mobility for Reduced Congestion and Cleaner Air**

This message underscores the environmental benefits of shared mobility options, such as reduced congestion and improved air quality. It encourages individuals to embrace shared mobility options and help build a better city for everyone.

4. Choose Health and Wellness: Shared Mobility for a More Active and Vibrant City

Highlights the health and wellness benefits of shared mobility options, encouraging individuals to choose more active and sustainable modes of transportation. It positions shared mobility options as a solution that benefits both individuals and the city.

5. Join the Shared Mobility Revolution: Help Build a More Sustainable and Equitable City

Positions shared mobility options as a part of a larger movement towards a more sustainable and equitable society by shifting social priority away from individualism and toward a stronger collective identity.

Scenario Three: Resilient Future - People Over Profit

Summary

A future that prioritizes people over profit leading to a more sustainable and equitable transportation system using mobility options such as electric vehicles, public transit, and modes like walking and biking. This resilient future offers an equitable transportation system allowing for transit agencies of all sizes to embrace the principles of equity, sustainability, and foresight, using public transit as a lever for ongoing resilience. This transformative approach fosters social infrastructure for all, where cities work better for everyone and prioritizes shared, sustainable, and equitable mobility options of public transit, walking, biking, electric micromobility solutions, and electrification of motor vehicles.

The focus on a “resilience revolution” reverses decades of privatization and policies favoring wealth accumulation and redefining social infrastructure as an asset that should be universally available to residents. People come first, and social infrastructure is prioritized over profit-maximization.

Messaging Objective

Building a shared mobility network designed for sustainability and equity has the benefits of improving accessibility, affordability, safety, and quality of life while promoting economic growth. A system like this would reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, spur economic growth and innovation, and improve quality of life by freeing users from the everyday stress of auto-dependency.

Key Benefits

1. Affordable, accessible transportation
2. Reduced traffic congestion
3. Environmental gains
4. Economic growth and innovation
5. Health and wellness, overall improved quality of life

Key Messages

1. Transforming Cities with Equity and Sustainability

Highlight the transformative approach of cities that prioritize equity, sustainability, and foresight in their transportation planning. Emphasize the positive impact of such cities in creating inclusive and resilient communities.

2. Public Transit Creates Resilient Communities

Showcase the role of public transit as a lever for building resilient communities. Highlight how cities that prioritize public transit empower their residents with accessible, affordable, and sustainable transportation options.

3. Embracing Shared and Sustainable Mobility Options for Healthier Communities

Promote the importance of embracing shared, sustainable, and equitable mobility options such as electric vehicles, public transit, walking, and biking. Highlight the benefits of these options in terms of reducing traffic congestion, improving air quality, and promoting a healthier lifestyle.

4. Accessible, Affordable, and Quality Transportation for all

Highlight the various benefits of embracing equitable and sustainable mobility options. Showcase how these options make transportation accessible and affordable for all, contribute to economic growth and innovation, improve quality of life, and reduce stress by providing efficient and reliable transportation choices for all.

Scenario Four: Neighborhood Unity – Discover Your Community

Summary

Describes a future in which new transportation technologies and business models upend traditional transportation systems, leading to a more fragmented and unpredictable mobility landscape. Overall, a disruptive transportation environment that would be characterized by rapid innovation, new business models, and a focus on sustainability, efficiency, and affordability.

Public transit is reimagined as a purveyor of social cohesion, with all riders and neighborhoods collectively bringing the city to life. Transit agencies have shifted their focus from owning and operating vehicles to managing a network of autonomous vehicles that are shared by the public. This shift has led to a more efficient and flexible transportation system, but it has also raised concerns about job loss, data privacy, and inequality. Communities are connected through accessible and reliable public transportation with new transportation technologies and business models upending traditional transportation systems, leading to a more fragmented and unpredictable mobility landscape.

Messaging Objective

Position the transit agency as a champion of climate action and social responsibility while inspiring the community to embrace the potential of transit agencies as key players in the fight against climate change.

Key Benefits

1. Reduced traffic congestion and improved air quality
2. Improved social cohesion
3. Promotion of economic growth and innovation
4. Improved pedestrian and passenger safety
5. Improved equity and livability in cities

Key Messages

1. Connecting communities through mobility

Experience a transit system that prioritizes social cohesion, fostering stronger community connections and inclusivity. Leverages new technologies such as autonomous vehicles and personalized transportation options, a transportation system that is tailored to the unique needs and preferences of each individual resident creating a more vibrant and diverse city.

2. Reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality

By promoting more efficient and sustainable transportation options, such as autonomous ride-sharing services, we can help reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality, creating a cleaner and healthier city for all.

3. Supporting innovation and economic growth

By investing in new technologies and personalized mobility options, we can help support the growth of new businesses and innovations in the transportation industry.

4. Enhancing safety and reducing accidents

By using advanced technologies such as connected vehicles and smart infrastructure, we can help reduce the risk of accidents, minimize opportunities for antisocial behavior, and create a safer and more reliable transportation system for everyone.

5. Creating a more livable and equitable city

By prioritizing accessibility, affordability, and equity in our transportation system, we can help create a more livable and equitable city, where all residents can easily access the opportunities and resources they need to thrive.

Scenario Five: Embedding Regeneration

Summary

Outlines a future in which transit agencies are repurposed as climate action organizations with a vision to reach for recovery, healing, rewilding, and regeneration supporting a new civic responsibility as mobility becomes a force for climate and community action.

By prioritizing climate action and regeneration, transit agencies reduce their carbon emissions, improve air quality, and build more resilient communities by creating new economic opportunities, improving public health, and building a more sustainable and equitable transportation system.

Transit agencies must work together with governments, businesses, and community organizations to develop new solutions that meet the needs of all community members. They must also prioritize equity and inclusion, engaging with diverse communities and addressing systemic inequalities.

Messaging Objective

Frame regeneration as a positive step forward for the city while positioning the transit agency as a leader in climate action and regeneration. Inspire transit agency customers and stakeholders to join the transit agency in creating a more sustainable and resilient transportation system.

Key Benefits

1. Reduced carbon emissions and improved air quality
2. Increased resilience of transit systems and cities
3. Improved community health and well-being
4. Community building due to ongoing, enhanced community engagement
5. Increases in economic opportunities
6. Reduced health care costs

Key Messages

1. Sustainable transportation for a sustainable future

Embedding regeneration in our city's transportation network means investing in sustainable infrastructure and technologies that can reduce our carbon footprint and improve air quality, creating a healthier and more livable city for everyone.

2. Building stronger, more connected communities

By prioritizing accessibility, affordability, and equity in our transportation system, we can help create more connected and cohesive communities where all residents can easily access the opportunities and resources they need to thrive.

3. Resilience in the face of change

Embedding regeneration means planning and building a transportation system for the future that can adapt to changing needs and conditions, whether it's responding to population growth, natural disasters, or technological advancements.

4. Supporting local economies

By investing in sustainable transportation infrastructure and supporting local businesses, we can help create a thriving and sustainable economy that benefits all members of our community.

5. A healthier, more active lifestyle

By prioritizing active transportation options such as walking, biking, and public transit, we can help create a city where residents can enjoy a more active and healthier lifestyle, reducing rates of obesity, chronic diseases, and other health issues.