

Agenda Report

September 8, 2014

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
THROUGH: Municipal Services Committee (August 12, 2014)
FROM: Department of Transportation
SUBJECT: REBRANDING OF PASADENA AREA RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM (ARTS)

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council

1. Find that the rebranding of transit vehicles is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b) (3); and
2. Direct staff to rebrand the *Pasadena Area Rapid Transit System (ARTS)* as *Pasadena Transit* and incorporate the *Connecting the dots* theme into the system brand.

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On July 24, 2014, the Transportation Advisory Commission recommended that the City Council approve rebranding the Pasadena Area Rapid Transit System (ARTS) to Pasadena Transit.

DESIGN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On October 8, 2013, the Design Commission reviewed the Pasadena Transit brand graphics and expressed support of the rebranding effort.

BACKGROUND:

The Pasadena Area Rapid Transit System (ARTS) is a fixed-route community circulator bus transit service in the City of Pasadena that has been operating since June 1994. The original brand identity for the single route shuttle service was key to the ARTS acronym and featured full bus wraps of multiple full-colored fine arts themes on white backgrounds.

The ARTS service has undergone significant development since 1994 and now serves six routes that reach most areas of the City of Pasadena. While the brand for the system has retained the fine arts theme, the brand graphics have undergone substantial change and

since 2005 consisted of six colored rectangular panels, each with a remnant of one of the original art pieces, arranged adjacent to each other in a vertically staggered formation.

Recent activities have highlighted reasons for the ARTS brand to be updated or modified. These circumstances include:

- Outreach activities for the General Plan Mobility Element update and for the ARTS Short Range Transit Plan have highlighted the confusion that the public often encounters with the ARTS name. At the simplest level this confusion is characterized as people associating the ARTS vehicles with museum shuttles. At the more nuanced level, the ARTS name, even when spelled out, is not associated by the casual user with the local circulator transit system that it is. In many instances by non-users, ARTS routes are not recognized as public transit, but are viewed as private shuttles.
- Ridership growth on the ARTS has slowed in the last two years, which places emphasis on enhancing the means through which new riders are attracted to the transit system.
- In line with a national trend, a different demographic is becoming prevalent in the Central District. That demographic (Millennials) places a premium on the legibility and utility of transit.
- The recent replacement of the original ARTS bus fleet with more-efficient and larger buses that have a larger percentage of window area has reduced the space available for the ARTS graphics.
- The City's status as a "local return" operator limits the City's access to federal funding for transit. Efforts to change that status, including allying with Glendale and LADOT, have had limited success in furthering the City's goal to become an "eligible" operator. System identity and ridership growth are areas that bolster the City's case with Metro.

At the transit system level, brand identity in transit is increasingly recognized as a major factor in how transit gains acceptance by users who have a choice of travel modes available to them. The "choice rider" is an important component not only in growing transit ridership, but also in magnifying transit's effect on overall travel since choice riders in most cases are auto drivers first. Marketing transit to appeal to the choice rider has evolved over the years to focus on a strategy of brand identity for transit that links the image of the vehicles with the type of service (Metro's use of red for rapid and orange for local is one example of this; the increasing prevalence of streamlined buses on rapid routes is another version of this concept).

The emergence of the Millennial Generation into the workforce and their propensity to favor well-connected walkable locations is placing renewed emphasis on transit systems both at the regional and at the local level. Many of these individuals are transit-dependent by choice, not by economic circumstances. Similarly, the propensity of a portion of older individuals and couples (empty nesters) to favor these same well-connected walkable locations brings an additional demographic into the transit market. While this latter group is not as inclined as the Millennials to do without a car, they do represent a new type of choice rider.

Marketing transit to appeal to these groups is placing emphasis on more than just route brand identity. These individuals are interested in system identity and clarity of message. Transit branding in these areas focuses on recognizable images such that the system brand is the bus brand is the route brand and is unique. Conceptually, the system brand is either sufficiently unique so as to be unmistakable and/or the system brand unequivocally conveys the purpose/function.

All of these factors have combined to suggest that a new, more direct brand identity would be beneficial for the City's fixed route transit system. To that end, the Department of Transportation initiated a process to explore the potential for rebranding transit in Pasadena and to develop candidate brand campaigns.

In November 2011, Department of Transportation Transit Division staff worked with the City Manager's Office to engage the Art Center College of Design to assist with the development of a new brand for the City's fixed-route transit system and the various channels through which a new brand could be applied. Transit staff worked with the Art Center Administration and Faculty to develop guidelines, key objectives and considerations to incorporate into their process. The Art Center implemented a semester-long program guided and peer-reviewed by brand development experts that generated 12 brand campaigns, each of which included design concepts, logos, key concepts that shaped their approach, and design standards that provided the brand campaigns' images, typography, colors and applications. City staff and stakeholders, including Mayor Bogaard and representatives of the Transportation Advisory Commission (TAC) participated in two reviews of the brand campaigns, once in the middle of the process and once at the end. At the conclusion of the program, the Art Center used an expert panel of industry professionals to evaluate the brand campaigns and recommend four finalists to the City for further consideration.

In July 2012, staff proposed to the Municipal Services Committee (MSC) that a blue ribbon panel be established to revisit the brand identity for the ARTS. Per MSC's support of this recommendation, the Pasadena Transit Brand Identity Panel was formed to evaluate the four finalist brand campaigns. The panel included the following participants: Chair of MSC (Councilmember McAustin), Chair of TAC (Commissioner Higginbotham), representatives from the City Manager's office, the Pasadena Center Operating Company, the Economic Development Division, Department of Transportation, the Public Information Officer, the City's Graphic Artist, and current ARTS bus users. The Art Center faculty member who designed the program also attended each of the panel meetings and has served as a liaison between City staff and the brand campaign designers. The panel met four times between July and December 2012. The four finalist brand campaigns were evaluated by the panel and three of them were recommended for further consideration.

A marketing/communications firm (Green Street Ads, 2400 Lincoln Avenue, Altadena) was selected through a competitive process and retained to design, recruit and conduct two focus groups and an on-line survey to gauge public preferences of the three project finalists. The subsequent findings were brought back to the panel and a final selection of a preferred brand concept was made. The preferred concept included renaming the system, "*Pasadena Transit*," with a theme representing iconic places in Pasadena (e.g., City Hall, Colorado Bridge, etc.) and a tagline of "*Connecting the Dots*."

In May 2013, staff presented the recommendation of rebranding the *Pasadena Area Rapid Transit System (ARTS)* as *Pasadena Transit*, including a new designed look and theme to MSC. MSC asked that staff present the new brand as an information item to the Design Commission and to the full City Council. Staff presented this item to the Design Commission on October 8, 2013. The Design Commission received the information and expressed support of the rebranding effort.

Staff presented the brand campaign to City Council at the November 4, 2013 meeting and was directed to present the item to the Transportation Advisory Commission and return in the future with a recommendation for City Council consideration.

Work on the rebranding was interrupted as a result of staff resources being directed to the request for proposals process for the transit operator contract. Following the approval of a new transit operator contract in June 2014, the rebranding work was presented to TAC on July 24, 2014. TAC recommended proceeding with the Pasadena Transit brand.

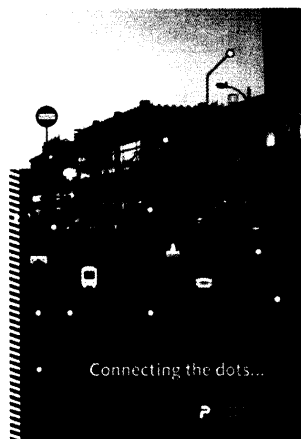
Pasadena Transit Brand Campaign:



The proposed new name and look is clear, recognizable, simple and legible. The name, "Pasadena Transit," along with the logo, directly represents the service that is provided. The need for a system name and logo that is straightforward and clear resonated strongly during all aspects of the rebranding process.

The conceptual bus stop design represents the new theme and look, while still providing a transition for customers from the current route numbering and colors. The new bus stop sign will generally retain the same dimensions and provide the same

information as the current signage thus meeting all applicable public fixed-route sign standards, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for public bus stop signs.



An essential component of this proposed brand is the theme of *Connecting the dots*.

This theme has been described as retaining a "friendly energy" and communicating the primary goal of connecting people and places in Pasadena, using thematic iconic images of Pasadena, such as the Colorado Bridge and City Hall, as part of the look. Please see Attachment 1 for a conceptual design of

how the buses will look using the proposed new name, logo, and theme.



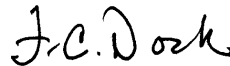
FISCAL IMPACT:

The cost of the rebranding work is estimated to be approximately \$150,000 to be expended during Fiscal Year 2015 and funded through Proposition A Sales Tax (Fund 208) and Proposition C Sales Tax (Fund 209).

The rebranding involves updating and replacing bus stop signs, bus wraps, printed schedules, bus stop information panels and shelter maps, in addition to preparation of marketing materials and updating of the website. All of these activities/materials are elements that are scheduled to be updated or replaced in the normal course of business for the fixed route transit system, if not annually, then at least once every five years depending upon the nature and scale of system operations changes and the durability of the materials involved. The rebranding may accelerate the expenditure of maintenance funds already allocated or to be allocated in future budgets for the fixed route transit system. Updating of the communications media and messaging for transit in the City is a regularly recurring activity for staff in the Transit Division of the Department of Transportation.

In addition to the recurring maintenance activities, two special projects provide opportunities for additional economies for rebranding. The Transit Vehicle Arrival Information System (a grant-funded CIP project that is nearing completion) requires modifying every bus stop panel and the Jobs Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grant which includes a marketing campaign over the next fiscal year.

Respectfully submitted,



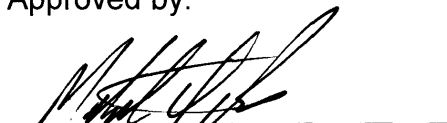
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