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LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT

JCOM 472: PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGNS
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

Driving Connection: A Strategic Plan to Boost Engagement and Ridership with LTD

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Image credit: Lane Transit District



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Eric Breitenstein, Director of Marketing

Brandon Melton, Senior Planner

This report represents original student work and recommendations prepared by students in the University of Oregon's Sustainable City Year Program for Lane Transit District. Text and images contained in this report may not be used without permission from the University of Oregon.

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About SCI

The Sustainable Cities Institute (SCI) is an applied think tank focusing on sustainability and cities through applied research, teaching, and community partnerships. We work across disciplines that match the complexity of cities to address sustainability challenges, from regional planning to building design and from enhancing engagement of diverse communities to understanding the impacts on municipal budgets from disruptive technologies and many issues in between.

SCI focuses on sustainability-based research and teaching opportunities through two primary efforts:

1. Our Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP), a massively scaled university-community partnership program that matches the resources of the University with one Oregon community each year to help advance that community's sustainability goals; and

2. Our Urbanism Next Center, which focuses on how autonomous vehicles, e-commerce, and the sharing economy will impact the form and function of cities.

In all cases, we share our expertise and experiences with scholars, policymakers, community leaders, and project partners. We further extend our impact via an annual Expert-in-Residence Program, SCI China visiting scholars program, study abroad course on redesigning cities for people on bicycle, and through our co-leadership of the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities Network (EPIC-N), which is transferring SCYP to universities and communities across the globe. Our work connects student passion, faculty experience, and community needs to produce innovative, tangible solutions for the creation of a sustainable society.

About SCYP

The Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) is a yearlong partnership between SCI and a partner in Oregon, in which students and faculty in courses from across the university collaborate with a public entity on sustainability and livability projects. SCYP faculty and students work in collaboration with staff from the partner agency through a variety of studio projects and service-learning courses to provide students with real-world projects to investigate. Students bring energy, enthusiasm, and innovative approaches

to difficult, persistent problems. SCYP's primary value derives from collaborations that result in on-the-ground impact and expanded conversations for a community ready to transition to a more sustainable and livable future.

Community partnerships are possible in part due to support from U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, as well as former Congressman Peter DeFazio, who secured federal funding for SCYP through Congressionally Directed Spending.

About Lane Transit District

Lane Transit District (LTD) is a special district of the State of Oregon led by a seven-member volunteer board of directors appointed by Oregon’s governor. LTD’s budget is funded through a combination of fares, taxes paid by local employers and employees, and from state and federal sources. LTD lives its mission to connect our community by delivering more than six million annual passenger boardings from 30-fixed bus routes and two EmX Bus Rapid Transit lines. LTD’s paratransit service, RideSource, provides more than 360,000 trips annually for people with disabilities and Medicaid recipients.

<h3>MISSION</h3> <p>Connecting our Community.</p>	<h3>VISION</h3> <p>In all that we do, we are committed to creating a more connected, sustainable, and equitable community.</p>	<h3>VALUES</h3> <p>Respect, Integrity, Innovation, Equity, Safety, and Collaboration.</p>
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Image credit: Lane Transit District

Course Participants

UNDERGRADUATE PUBLIC RELATIONS STUDENTS

Kate Kundahl

Rosie Martin

Max Higgins

Matthew Crowley

Maya Miller

Course Description

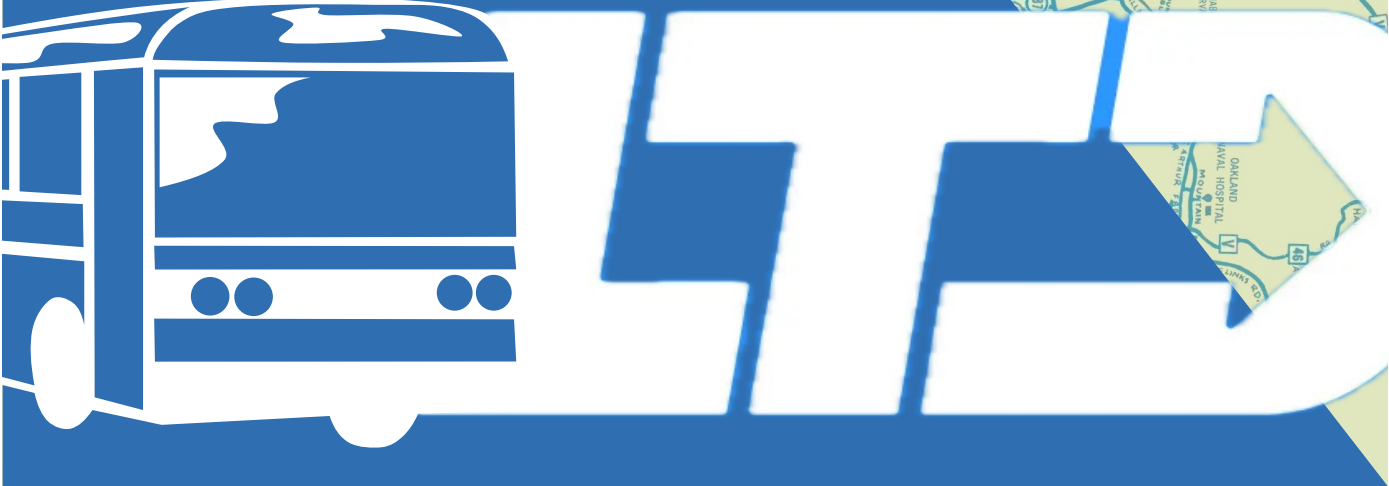
JCOM 472: PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGNS

Public Relations Campaigns is the capstone course in the sequence of instruction offered in public relations. It provides students with an opportunity to apply the fundamentals of what they have learned over their course of study to actual client work and business problems. The course is designed to build professional experience and prepare students for the world after graduation.



FINAL PR PLAN

BY KATE KUNDAHL, ROSIE MARTIN, MAX HIGGINS,
MATTHEW CROWLEY & MAYA MILLER



MEET OUR TEAM!



Kate Kundahl

Kate Kundahl, from Denver, Colorado, is a senior at the University of Oregon majoring in Public Relations with a minor in Business. She is the President of the UO Alpine Ski Team and is the CFO of IR Futures. Kate hopes to move to Austin, TX, and pursue a career in creative branding for small CPG food brands.



Rosie Martin

A PR major from California, Rosie has served as a communications associate for the University of Oregon's Advancement team since 2023, where she has written and edited numerous published articles. She was drawn to PR because it combined her love of writing with the ability to craft strategic, impactful stories.



Max Higgins

Max Higgins, who is from California, is currently wrapping up his last year at University of Oregon with a Bachelor of Science in Public Relations with strong academic background in PR, marketing, and business administration. He hopes to use his academic background to lead him into the strategic corporate PR field. His dream destination after college is Japan.



Matthew Crowley

Matthew Crowley, Oregon, is a senior at the University of Oregon majoring in Public Relations with a minor In Business Administration. He currently works as a project manager for a local electrical contractor and hopes to further his career, utilizing his degree and real-world experiences in the world of business and entrepreneurship.



Maya Miller

Maya is from Mililani, Hawaii, and is a senior majoring in public relations with a minor in Japanese. During her studies, she has been recognized for strong writing and research skills, and has used strategic communications to advance sustainability initiatives with investors while interning with the Portland People of Color Outdoors.



SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Lane Transit District's mission is to connect the community by delivering passengers and show how healthy transportation systems result in positive outcomes for the community as a whole.

LTD is in the planning stage of its Long Range Mobility Plan, also known as Connect 2045, which will guide investments and development over the next twenty years. LTD's Community Engagement Framework is central to the development of Connect 2045's outreach efforts to connect the community to this new initiative.

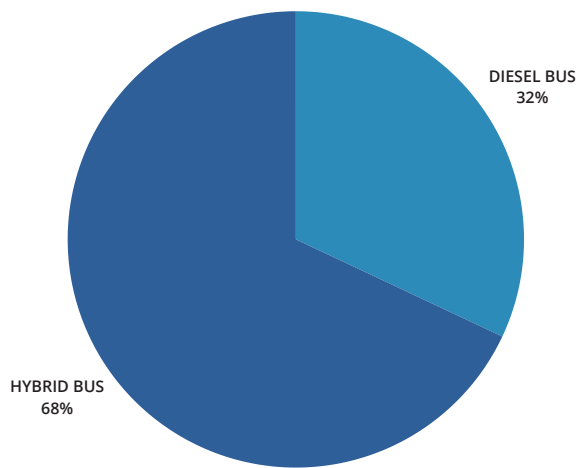
While LTD is a government entity funded by tax payers and state and federal resources, many community members are underutilizing or unaware of LTD transportation services

Our organization is searching for ways to engage demographics underutilizing LTD's services and involve the Lane County community in the development process for Connect 2045.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Lane Transit District (LTD) was established in 1970 to act as a transportation service for the public of Lane County, Oregon. LTD is funded through fares, state and federal grants, and payroll taxes. It is classified as a special district of the state. According to the latest count, LTD has over 100 operational buses; 59 buses are hybrid and 28 are diesel. Bus routes run through Eugene, Springfield, and more.

LTD BUS TYPES



LTD's goal is to make sure the community has safe, reliable and sustainable ways of transportation. It prioritizes sustainability, accessibility, and new innovations like contactless pay or real-time updates on buses. LTD has around 300 staff members currently employed. Some of the jobs consist of operations, maintenance, and administration.

Even with current challenges like ridership decline due to post-pandemic influence and competitors like Uber and personal vehicles, LTD finds ways to continue to grow by enhancing their Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), taking advantage of sustainable initiatives and nurturing beneficial partnerships. Through these actions, LTD hopes to enhance their services and create a more desirable service for riders.

INDUSTRY CONTEXT

Public transportation agencies in the United States operate and manage regional passenger transportation systems, providing millions of Americans with reliable and affordable mobility options. These agencies oversee transit networks with regular routes and fixed schedules, with the most popular modes of public transit being commuter trains, light rail, subways, ferries, and bus services. In 2024, the U.S. public transportation industry generated \$83.3 billion in total revenue, with small transit agencies dominating the market and accounting for over 90% of the industry's share. Still, two major players: the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro) and New York City's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) stand out as market leaders. Together, the agencies hold 8% of the total market share managing the largest and most intricate transit systems nationwide.

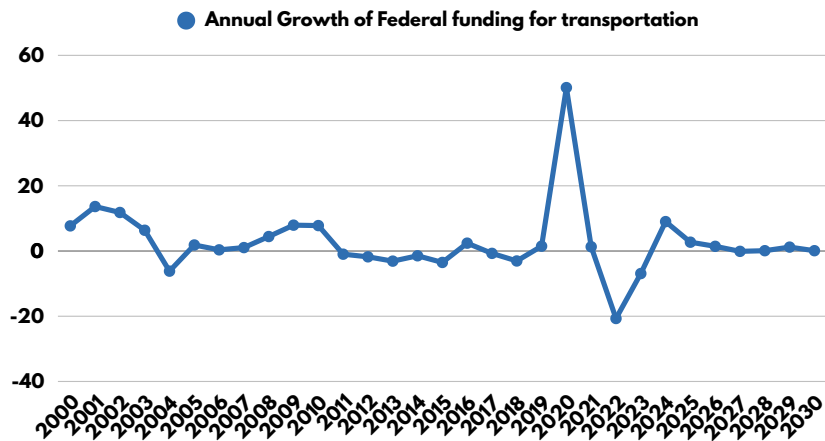
With urban populations growing and traffic congestion intensifying, the current industry trend is to implement Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) systems. Users in the public transportation market are expected to increase to 5.17 billion users by 2029, with a projected user penetration rate of 64.2% by 2029. MRT is designed to move large numbers of passengers quickly and efficiently in densely populated areas. These systems operate on exclusive rights-of-way, such as underground tunnels, elevated tracks, or dedicated bus lanes, and offer off-board fare collection, and signal priority to improve travel speeds and reliability. Subways, light rails, and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) are key forms of MRT that cities are increasingly adopting. Specifically, BRT systems like LTD's Emerald Express have emerged as a cost-effective and scalable solution that offers the same benefits of rail transit for a fraction of the cost.

However, just as cities were expanding their transit infrastructure to meet rising demand, the COVID-19 pandemic abruptly halted progress. During the pandemic, public transit agencies across the U.S., including LTD, faced a sharp decline in ridership due to remote work policies, business closures, and health concerns. While this led to a significant reduction of fare revenue in 2020, the 50.1% upsurge in federal grants during the year helped to offset major losses. Additionally, in 2021, the Biden administration signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), allocating \$1.0 trillion for infrastructure and transportation initiatives over the next decade. The economic and health crisis required extensive federal aid to prop up the industry, which is an integral part of funding the overall industry. The IIJA will continue to drive development until 2026 by assisting funding service expansions, technology upgrades, and sustainability initiatives within the industry.

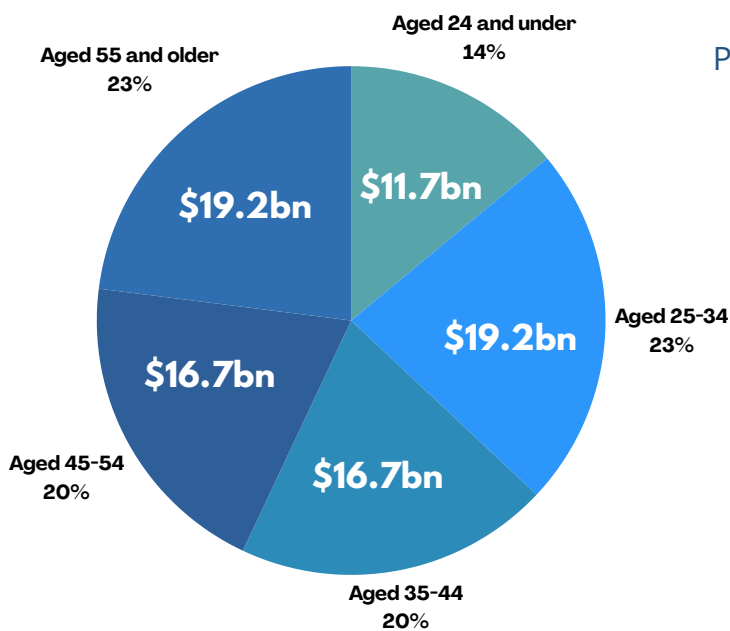
Even as transit systems recover, lingering concerns about sanitation and safety from the pandemic contribute to the preference for alternatives to public transport. This shift is reflected in Uber's 14.8% revenue increase in the first quarter of 2024, as more commuters opt for private, on-demand transportation over traditional transit systems. In contrast, the public transportation industry is projected to see a 2.0% revenue decline by the end of 2024 and will need to adopt technological advancements to remain competitive. Some public transit agencies are exploring rewards programs, where passengers can earn points or incentives for using public transit. Rewards can be redeemed for discounts, exclusive experiences, or even partnerships with local businesses to add an element of gamification that'll enhance user engagement. Additionally, enhanced safety and security features such as artificial intelligence (AI) powered camera surveillance, emergency communication systems, and crowd management technology are helping address post-pandemic safety concerns regarding perceived passenger safety. AI is also being used for traffic signal priority, real-time tracking, and predictive analytics to provide live arrival times and increase reliability.

INDUSTRY CONTEXT

Through the end of 2030, federal funding for transportation is set to scale up, however the impacts of the election may add more volatility to funding.



2024 Industry Revenue by Market



Public transportation users under age 24 are typically students motivated by its affordability and convenience, while older users aged 55 and over tend to rely on services due to health and mobility issues. In general, the cost-effectiveness of public transport is attractive to both young adults with limited disposable income and older adults on fixed incomes.

STRENGTHS

- Mature Lifecycle: Established history and experience
- Standard industry sustainability initiatives and technological integrations
- Regional coverage and connectivity
- Community-oriented services
- Eugene's growing population
- Diverse stakeholder base
- Low direct competition: High barriers to entry
- High revenue per employee

WEAKNESSES

- Branding challenges
- Internal communication barriers
- Post-pandemic ridership challenges
- Prioritization of sustainability efforts in communications
- Public Stigma: Perceived level of safety and sanitation, limited investment appeal
- Bureaucratic Constraints: Adherence to strict regulations and changes
- Reliance on federal funding
- Infrastructure limitations

OPPORTUNITIES

- Sustainability initiatives
- Advanced technology integration
- Bus rapid transit expansion
- Strategic partnerships (rewards programs, universities, businesses, etc.)
- Public engagement and value proposition
- Increasing affordability

THREATS

- Changing consumer behavior
- Alternative transportation modes (personal vehicles, ride-hailing apps, micro-mobility options and programs, etc.)
- Unexpected regulatory & legal changes
- Profitability Constraints: Contractionary monetary policies, world price of crude oil, and fare evasion



STAKEHOLDERS

PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS

- **Commuters & Riders:** Everyday public transit users, including students, seniors, low-income individuals, and commuters.
- **Employees & Unions:** LTD employees (bus drivers), maintenance workers, customer service staff, and their labor unions.
- **Local Government Agencies & Educational Institutions:** University of Oregon, Lane Community College, and local school districts.

SECONDARY STAKEHOLDERS

- **Environmental & Sustainability Advocates:** Groups focused on reducing emissions and carbon footprint.
- **Local Non-Profit & Community Organizations:** Local groups who advocate for accessibility, equity, and public transit Improvements.

KEY PUBLICS



PRIMARY PUBLIC

The identified primary public is college students, particularly those who are in their first year at the University of Oregon and are living on campus, don't have easy access to a car, and are in the 18-24 age range. This demographic is underutilizing and unaware of LTD services. The campaign goal is to educate, inform, and encourage UO students about the advantages of taking LTD more often. Additionally, the campaign aims to reduce the stigma that many students associate with public transportation.

SECONDARY PUBLIC

The secondary public is local businesses in the Eugene metro area paying the Payroll and Self Employment Tax to fund LTD services. The campaign goal is to target this demographic to encourage customers to utilize LTD services as they investing in the LTD services through taxes. This tax is part of payroll taxes, but many business are unaware of this tax and do not utilize the LTD services they are funding. Employees can utilize LTD to commute to work, and LTD services can be used to connect Lane Country residents to local businesses.

SHORT-TERM GOALS

- Increase community knowledge about LTD services and programs
- Increase community knowledge about the long-range mobility plan
- Increase general rider engagement with LTD communications
- Increase college student rider engagement with LTD communications
- Prevent community stigma about public transportation through communications initiatives

LONG TERM GOALS

- Increase LTD ridership by incorporating the short term goals into the long term 20-year plan
- Increase customer satisfaction, employee engagement, community value, financial health, and sustainability
- Shift public perception of LTD's budget from a funding requirement to a strategic investment



GOALS

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1:

Increase first-year student knowledge and ridership on LTD services.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Increase student knowledge of LTD services by 15% over a 9-month school year.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Increase ridership by 10% at bus stop locations near campus over a 9-month period.

GOAL 2:

Encourage local businesses in the Eugene Metro area to promote LTD to customers in their stores.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Increase commuter ridership within local businesses (employees) by 10% over 2-year period.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Collaborate with 50 local businesses to promote LTD to customers over a 2-year period.

STRATEGIES & TACTICS

Goal 1 Strategy:

Educate students about LTD services by providing information and resources on campus during their first year at UO

Goal 1 Tactics:

- Survey students' knowledge of LTD during fall term week 1 to gauge students' understanding and during week 10 of spring term to measure growth
- Put fliers in student mailboxes containing LTD information and how to ride in Eugene
- Have an LTD table in the EMU fishbowl to help students set up LTD rider accounts, understand bus routes, share LTD info and distribute merch (stickers, tote bags, pens/pencils, etc.)
- Work with UO IntroDUCKtion and first-year experience to share info about LTD services to first-year students upon move-in and highlight it as a resource

MESSAGING



Persona:

Jordan is a first-year student at the University of Oregon, excited to explore their new home in Eugene. Coming from Seattle, they're used to having plenty of public transportation options but aren't familiar with how to navigate Eugene without a car. They want to visit local cafes, hiking spots, and fun weekend activities but aren't sure how to get around efficiently.

Messaging:

For students in Jordan's shoes, LTD is a great resource! Explore Eugene with LTD—your free ticket to adventure! With your UO ID, ride LTD buses for free and easily reach downtown hotspots, hiking trails, and local markets. Whether you're grabbing coffee, hitting the trails, or discovering hidden gems, LTD gets you there—no car needed. LTD is free, safe and reliable!

DID YOU KNOW?



UO STUDENTS RIDE LTD FOR FREE

Use the link in the caption to learn more about how to access this free resource and where you ride LTD

#TrustTheBus

Instagram post for UO First Year Experience (@uo_fyec and affiliated accounts)


TRUST THE BUS



SUSTAINABLE. AFFORDABLE. RELIABLE.

Mock sticker for campus distribution

12:29



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

Are you on campus or off campus

On campus

Off campus


How do you get around Eugene?

Transportation app (like Uber or duck rides)

Qualtrics survey



Flier for dorm mailboxes

Hey, Ducks! Welcome to Eugene.

DID YOU KNOW:
UO tuition & fees include an LTD bus pas?


WHAT THIS MEANS:
Ride the bus for free in Lane County!

HOW:
Download the LTD app.
Scan upon entry.

WHY:

- Reliable and efficient service.
- Get to class on time.
- Stay dry in the rain.
- Bike racks provided.
- Ride 7 days a week.

Scan the QR code to download the LTD app and get riding!



visit LTD.org to learn more



STRATEGIES & TACTICS

Goal 2 Strategy:

Create a local business and LTD “Passport” program to encourage people in the Eugene metro area to utilize LTD services to visit local businesses

Goal 2 Tactics:

- Create a “Passport” full of discounts offered at 50+ participating local businesses for customers who took LTD transportation
- Share bus routes to each local business included to make transportation easy and accessible
- Have both LTD and all participating businesses promote the program to their customers to reach a broader audience
- Partner with UO to share the program with students and encourage them to visit local Eugene businesses and learn about LTD routes

MESSAGING

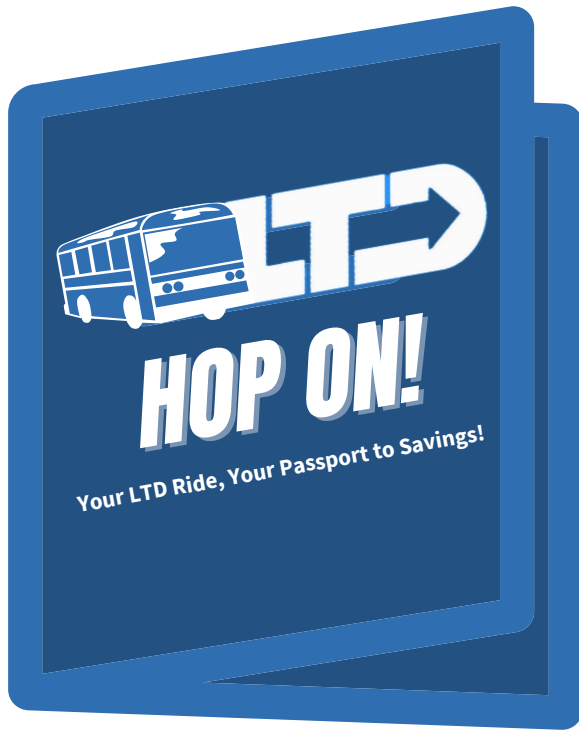
Persona:

Sarah has owned Wild River Café for six years and is passionate about sustainability, supporting local businesses, and keeping Eugene connected. She understands that LTD is crucial for employees who rely on public transit and wants to encourage them to use it more. Additionally, she wants to attract more customers who use LTD, making her café a convenient and accessible stop for those commuting or exploring Eugene.

Messaging:

Skip the stress of parking—ride LTD to work for free! As part of our commitment to sustainability and community, we encourage all employees to take advantage of LTD’s easy, reliable transit. Plus, you’re paying for it in payroll tax!

Getting to Wild River Café is easier than ever with LTD! Hop on the bus, show your pass, and enjoy 10% off your order. Convenient, eco-friendly, and a perfect way to explore Eugene—see you soon!

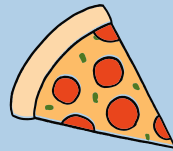


Buy One Get One 50% off Pizza Slices and Sandwiches

@ Provisions Market (All Locations)

When You Take LTD and

Show Your "Hop On!" Passport



REQUIRED RESOURCES

1. Campaign Preparation (2 months before launch)

Develop goals, design materials (fliers, merch, Passport program), and establish partnerships with UO's First-Year Experience and local businesses.

- July - August (Before school year starts)

3. Campaign Engagement (Fall - Spring Term)

Distribute materials, set up tables at campus events, promote Passport program with businesses, and collect feedback on Qualtrics.

- September - May (Throughout the academic year).

5. Post-Campaign Evaluation (May)

Conduct post-campaign Qualtrics surveys to measure knowledge gain, ridership data, and gather feedback from students and businesses.

- May (End of Spring Term).

2. Campaign Launch (Week 1 of Fall Term)

Distribute fliers and merchandise at EMU Fishbowl, set up Passport program with local businesses, and begin social media promotion.

- September (Week 1).

4. Review Benchmarks (December)

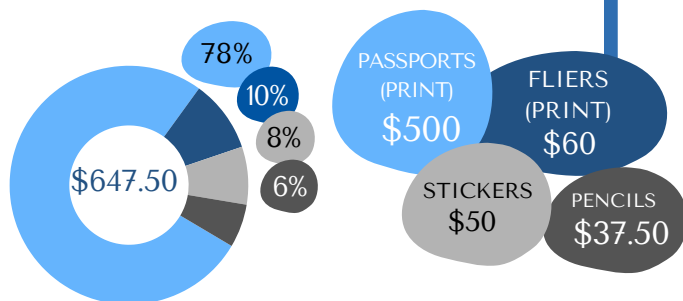
Analyze mid-term survey results, track ridership data, and assess business engagement. Adjust tactics and outreach based on feedback.

- December (End of Fall Term).

6. Impact Review (Summer)

Analyze final ridership and Qualtrics survey data, assess Passport program results, and evaluate overall campaign efficacy.

- June (Summer)



EVALUATION PLAN

Engagement

Measure the increase of LTD benefit code redemptions made through UO's Transportation Services after the EMU tabling event, and count the number of promotional items distributed.

Program Participation

Track the number of businesses enrolled in the Passport program, the number of distributed passports, and the discounts redeemed through ridership.

Survey & Ridership Data

Measure UO freshman knowledge about LTD using Qualtrics surveys, and measure ridership changes at bus stops near campus: Hilyard Station, Dads' Gates, Agate Station, and Walnut Station.



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