

APEX STRATEGIES

TO: SCCRTC Commissioners
FROM: Eileen Goodwin
DATE: June 8, 2004
RE: Public Education Effort for the Expenditure Plan

I have been asked to put together three scenarios of public education efforts to begin the discussion with the Commission on the scope of the public education effort.

For lack of better terminology I am calling them the minimum, medium and maximum scenarios. These terms will roughly correlate to both staff and Commissioner time as well as budget levels. Of course, there are other ways to mix and match a program and it is likely that the final product would reflect a mixture of these categories.

Minimum:

This scenario would rely on time-tested, mostly free outreach strategies. However, I would like to caution that while these techniques are not involving large outside expenditures they do take staff time away from other duties. This staff time could be minimized depending on how much leg work individual Commissioners wish to take upon themselves or their individual offices.

The outreach strategies could include:

- Press releases with follow up calls to reporters to cover the elements of the expenditure plan or to do a series of articles;
- Outreach and meetings with Editorial Boards of all local and some regional media regarding the Expenditure Plan elements;
- FAQ's and other support documents for a press kit for the media and also for Commisioiners to use as briefing materials;
- Staff effort and resources to research and answer community questions regarding projects, the financial plan and other aspects of the Expenditure Plan. These questions are likely to come in via the phone, the web and letters, these could take a significant amount of staff time to answer and track;

- Requests to be on public service interview shows such as radio talk shows TV Public Affairs programming, etc.;
- Continue to update the website with FAQ's and other information that will keep interested people coming back for more information on a regular basis;
- Attendance at community fairs/UCSC events (in a booth) and distribution of fact sheets;
- Signage in the community similar to how the MIS meetings were noticed (sign at the summit and take-ones on saw-horses in the neighborhoods);
- Continued discussion of Expenditure Plan related issues at SCCRTC Meetings and sub-committees especially those meetings that are televised.

Medium:

This strategy would accomplish all of the previous activities and:

- Produce a printed mailer to reach out to the community with information regarding the Expenditure Plan. The timing of the mailer/public information piece would be to produce it as soon as possible to use at outreach events and then choose an appropriate time to mail it to County residents for the highest chance of being noticed and read. The impact on staff time could be fairly minimal as much of the information already exists and it would be a question of organizing the information and graphically designing the brochure to be eye catching;
- SCCRTC could sponsor a community forum or forums to keep the issue in the press and at the forefront of community discussion during this busy election cycle. The forums while being a larger staff time commitment would not generate huge budget expenses and they would be set up so they could be broadcast on community television. It is likely these forums would generate press coverage as well.

Maximum:

This level of effort could do most or all of the other level activities as well as make a greater investment in purchased media. Such as:

- There could be a series of brochures or postcards to county residents explaining the plan and the "transportation funding situation or lack there of" statewide. This has been done by other government entities in support of their expenditure plans most recently Ventura has had a series of postcards explaining the funding crisis and as well as the projects in their expenditure plan. This option would be less expensive in staff time but would require a large part of the existing budget to accomplish.

- A longer ad (similar to a brochure or fact sheet) could be designed to be printed and distributed in the local press as an insert and over-printed for additional uses. Again, this option would be likely to require an expenditure of most of the budget for outreach on one item;
- SCCRTC could purchase radio time and smaller newspaper ads to promote the availability of the Expenditure Plan document and the web site;
- In addition to attendance at community fairs/UCSC events there could be a wide outreach through the schools and businesses fairs that the SCCRTC asks to be scheduled for this purpose i.e. transportation day at Plantronics or Gault School as an example over and above the annual bike to work/school effort. A clever gizmo could be handed out to re-enforce the themes of the outreach. This effort would take quite a bit of staff time to arrange for and run.

No matter which level of outreach is embarked on it is important to have all of the Commissioners communicating with the themes and facts related to the Expenditure Plan. Regular briefings and updated FAQ's should be produced and explained to keep all staff and Commissioners up to date.

To best help the SCCRTC staff and me craft a more complete public education plan and budget it would be important to have discussion regarding the following issues:

- What role would the Commissioners like to have in the outreach effort? Including what you would expect in support activities from the Commission staff.
- What role do you expect the Commission staff to have in this outreach effort?
- What methods should be used to reach out to the community to best reach those not already familiar with transportation issues (mailings, forums, events, press, other?)
- Are there activities you do not want to see undertaken?