

**SUBJECT: Customer Marketing and Readiness Campaign for Stage 2 O-Train
Extensions**

File Number ACS2023-TSD-SCER-0007

Report to Transit Commission on 29 June 2023

**Submitted on June 20, 2023 by Renée Amilcar, General Manager, Transit Services
Department**

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Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE

**OBJET : Campagne de marketing et de préparation client pour l'Étape 2 des
prolongements de l'O-Train**

Dossier : ACS2023-TSD-SCER-0007

Rapport au Commission du transport en commun

le 29 juin 2023

**Soumis le 20 juin 2023 par Renée Amilcar, directrice générale, Direction générale
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REPORT RECOMMENDATION

That the Transit Commission receive this report for information.

RECOMMANDATION DU RAPPORT

Que la Commission du transport en commun reçoive ce rapport pour information.

BACKGROUND

The Stage 2 O-Train extension project will be completed in three phases:

1. The re-opening of O-Train Line 2 and the new Line 4 airport link.
2. The eastern extension of O-Train Line 1.
3. The western extension and full opening of O-Train Lines 1 and 3.

The completion of each extension will change the way residents move around Ottawa.

Stage 2 adds 44 kilometres of rail and 24 new stations. Seventy-seven per cent of residents will live within five kilometres of rail. That means shorter commute times, cleaner air, and a stronger economy.

OC Transpo's Rail Operational Readiness (ROR) program was created to ensure that the organization is prepared to operate the newly expanded lines; this includes a Customer Marketing and Readiness project.

This project will support customers with the information they need to navigate the expanded system safely and confidently and will work to generate positive interest among residents for the opening of each of the O-Train extensions.

The project has also been built into OC Transpo's new commitment to building public trust, by improving communications with customers and residents alike.

OC Transpo has hired ACART Communications through a competitive tendering process for the Customer Marketing and Readiness project to support our communications team in project strategy and implementation.

DISCUSSION

Campaign Strategy & Objectives

This multi-year project will inform and prepare residents and generate positive interest for the launch of Lines 2 and 4, as well as for subsequent O-Train extension launches.

As the campaign will include multiple phased launches across the city, the strategy has been tailored to the geographic area of each extension and includes ongoing analysis to ensure that decisions are data-driven and responsive. As a result, the campaign will evolve as Stage 2 is implemented.

Objectives:

1. Support customers and residents by providing knowledge and information about the new system.

2. Build trust in OC Transpo by creating high quality, accurate, and user-friendly information products.
3. Increase ridership by informing and engaging residents, visitors, and stakeholders about the new services being offered.

Customer journey mapping

The campaign strategy was informed by 2021 customer journey mapping. Staff workshops were held to:

- Better understand our customers' journey on the new and expanded lines
- Identify the key changes associated with the opening of the three extensions
- Determine the information customers will need to successfully navigate their new journey

Industry best practices

An extensive audit was conducted to identify best practices of comparator transit agencies who have also expanded their systems. Certain themes were recognized across several successful campaigns both in North America and internationally, including:

- Communicating early and often to those who will be most impacted by transit system changes facilitates a good user experience
- Striking a balance between citywide messaging to generate excitement and neighbourhood-specific messaging to provide practical information for local audiences
- Building a sense of pride and ownership in the system and the city by transparently keeping residents informed about what is happening

Lessons learned from Line 1 launch

The campaign strategy incorporates lessons learned from the Ready for Rail marketing campaign for the launch of O-Train Line 1 in 2019.

That campaign began in April 2017, with the intention to be in market 18 months prior to launch, but due to project delays, was in market for an extended period. The campaign messaging, creative concept, and budget framework was not built to accommodate delays and schedule changes.

This underscores the importance of building flexibility into the campaign to respond to project realities or changes. It also emphasizes the importance of ensuring that messaging and tone set realistic expectations for operations and any potential pain

points. Finally, it highlights the need for mitigation plans to handle system disruptions and to support customers.

Target Audiences

Twelve target audience ‘personas’ have been developed to guide the marketing plan and ensure the effectiveness of campaign messages and channels.

These personas were developed based on market research, Ottawa demographics, best practices in campaign development, internal focus groups and customer journey mapping. The personas were also informed by the City of Ottawa’s Equity and Inclusion lens, and the City of Ottawa’s Anti-Racism, Gender Equity and Inclusion branch.

Personas represent certain segments of our audience and are used to ensure messages will reach and resonate with a diverse audience. Campaign personas include:

- Hybrid Workers
- Youth and Young Adults
- Families
- Students
- Suburbanites
- Seniors
- People of Colour
- Indigenous Peoples
- Low-Income Customers
- Persons with Disabilities
- New Canadians
- Tourists

Within these persona categories, other groups will be captured. This will also allow us to prioritize campaign themes and messages to ensure paid advertising is cost-effective.

Creative Concept – *Connections Move You*

The creative concept developed for the campaign is titled “Connections Move You.” The goals for the creative development are:

- Reflect transit’s role in Ottawa becoming a “big” city
- Reflect new neighbourhood connections
- Be authentic
- Have a rider-centric focus
- Represent Ottawa’s diversity

The graphic elements that have been developed will also serve the goal of gradually shifting OC Transpo's visual brand to something more contemporary.

Some of the key elements of the concept are the use of the "O", the symbol for public transit in Ottawa, and the colours of each of O-Train Lines: Line 1 red, Line 2 green, Line 3 gold, and Line 4 blue. These elements are brought together in a dynamic concept that represents physical connections, and positive emotional customer connections, with the new system across the city and beyond. "Connections Move You" will be tested, further refined, and developed into creative for the campaign in the coming months.

Creative samples have been attached as *Document 1 – Creative content samples*.

Media Strategy

New microsite for octranspo.com

Work is underway to develop a new microsite for the Stage 2 O-Train extension project. This new website will be the focal point for the campaign. Those looking for information about Stage 2 will be directed to this space, including customers looking for information on how the future service will work, and residents looking for information on construction news and impacts. The website will look and feel different from today's octranspo.com and will be aligned with the campaign. At the same time, the user experience will ensure there are seamless connections between the two sites. We anticipate that octranspo.com will also begin incorporating these visual elements.

The new Stage 2 O-Train extension microsite for octranspo.com is planned to be launched in summer 2023.

Organic media

Organic media, or the channels that OC Transpo owns, form a critical part in reaching our current transit customers. The campaign has a targeted and measurable strategy to leverage our social media channels with content tailored to each platform. Other organic channels include printed brochures, posters on the transit system, maps, pamphlets, outreach materials, giveaway items, videos, and interactive 360-degree tours of trains and stations.

Like the launch of the microsite, marketing materials on organic channels will begin in summer 2023. The incorporation of visual elements into OC Transpo's regular

communications products will also begin at this time.

Paid advertising

The paid media campaign for the launch of Lines 2 and 4 is planned to be in market for 12 weeks, beginning several weeks before the launch of the system, and continuing for several weeks after. The plan will be flexible to allow for changes in dates based on construction schedule and launch plans. Planned activities include targeted direct mail, out-of-home advertising (ex. billboards), radio, streaming audio, digital and social media ads. Total combined reach of all paid channels is estimated to be 83% of adults 18 and over in Ottawa, delivering an estimated 42 million impressions. No-cost, City-owned advertising properties, such as digital screens in city facilities and advertisements on buses and bus shelters, will also be used to expand the reach of the campaign.

The start date of the full campaign, including paid advertising, will be based on the timing of the launch of O-Train Lines 2 and 4, currently expected sometime during Fall 2023.

Partnerships

OC Transpo will prioritize a small number of key partnerships with local organizations that have a mutual interest in the launch of the O-Train extensions. Resources will be invested in the partnerships that align best with the campaign strategy and cross-promotions to accomplish campaign goals will be explored with those partners. OC Transpo will also create a simple and creatively rich campaign toolkit that can be shared widely with many organizations, in the hopes that those organizations will share the messages across the city to reach diverse audiences. Similarly, City Councillors will also be provided with robust marketing and information kits, so they may share with their constituents and stakeholders as part of the effort to build excitement and readiness for the launches.

Launch events

The launch of Lines 2 and 4, as well as subsequent O-Train extension launches, will include a larger marquee event in advance of the public opening. Smaller scale, station-specific community events will also be explored to generate excitement and showcase the new service to residents across the city. The first event of this type was held as part of Doors Open on June 3, as residents were invited for a walkthrough of Greenboro Station and the new Stadler FLIRT train that will operate on Line 2. Plans for further events will be refined in the coming months, as the campaign is finalized.

Campaign Measurement

Metrics and KPIs will be tracked for paid and organic channels to ensure that the campaign is data-driven and adaptable. Any lessons learned from the launch of Lines 2 and 4 will inform the media strategy for subsequent launches.

Employee Communications and Engagement

Staff have been engaged in the development of the campaign strategy from the early stages. This includes journey mapping sessions, content workshops, and website user experience focus groups. As the external marketing campaign is launched, an internal campaign will also be undertaken for OC Transpo and City of Ottawa staff ensuring we are building excitement among staff and encouraging them to act as ambassadors of our service.

Budget

To develop, implement and measure the campaign for Lines 2 and 4, the total planned budget is \$1,000,000. This includes planning, creative production, paid advertising, launch events, production costs and campaign measurement. Funding for the campaign was approved by Transit Commission and Council as part of the Rail Operational Readiness (ROR) capital budget.

It is anticipated that comparable budgets will be required for the launch of subsequent O-Train extensions (Line 1 East and Lines 1 and 3 West), and these will be developed and refined based on campaign results and lessons learned from the launch of Lines 2 and 4.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding to cover the campaign costs for Line 2 and 4 is available within Capital Order # 90987, and funding for the future openings of Line 1 East and Lines 1 and 3 West will be funded within existing budgets or included in future budgets requests for consideration.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to receiving this report for information.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

All components of the Stage 2 Marketing Campaign adhere to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*. Any policy or procedural development, as well as customer communications and public engagement identified in this report – and the marketing campaign - will include the application of the City’s Equity and Inclusion Lens. Staff will continue to engage accessibility stakeholders to ensure that their perspectives are considered and incorporated, and to promote inclusion. Staff will also ensure that any applicable accessibility legislation, standards and guidelines are adhered to during the execution of the projects and initiatives identified in this report.

Supporting Documentation

Document 1 – Creative concept samples

DISPOSITION

Staff will continue to develop and implement this communications strategy in the lead up to the launch of Lines 2 and 4, to inform customers and generate excitement for the expansion of the O-Train network. The Transit Services Department will action any direction received from Transit Commission or Council as part of consideration of this information report.