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# Bring Them Back

Convincing Riders Your System is  
Clean and Safe



## Who We Are



[Cody Kraatz](#), is the owner and principal of **Road-Ready Marketing**.

He most recently led the digital marketing and communications program at the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority for nearly eight years, innovating across marketing, PR, community engagement, technology, customer service and planning. Now he builds on that experience and his MBA skillset to help transit operators of all sizes “Build Back Better.”



[Elea Carey](#), a strategic communications consultant, is the founder of Transit Happy.

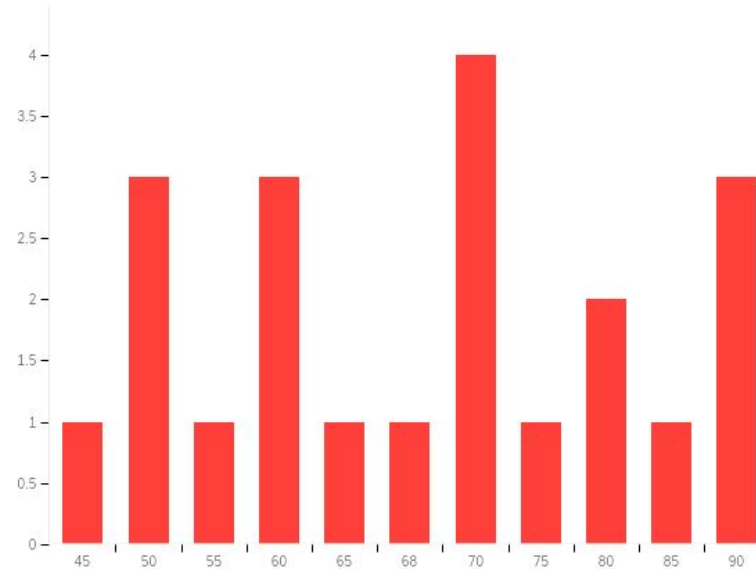
A longtime Silicon Valley advisor to venture capitalists and tech startups, she has over thirty years of experience in communications, especially with new companies, small businesses, and new initiatives. Her advice for public transit agencies is featured on the industry's leading podcast, Transit Unplugged.



## Why This Matters

**We've all directly experienced this crisis and heard the numbers, but just few quick touchpoints:**

- City of Napa 60-80% drop
- Monterey-Salinas 65%
- Fresno reported a reduction by half.

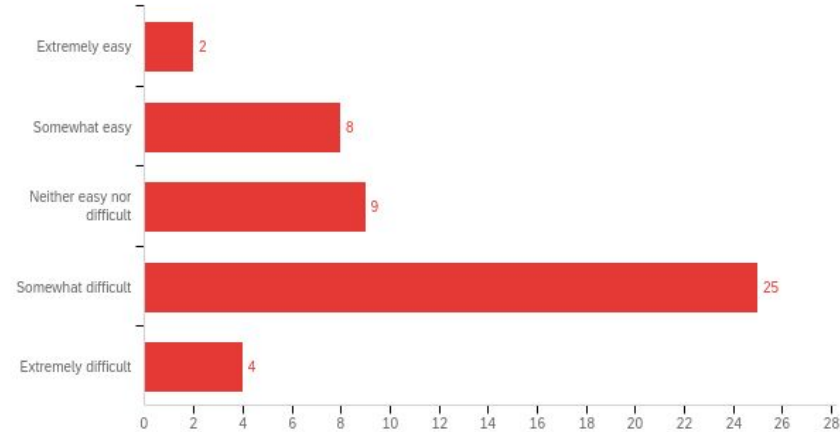


***COVID Ridership Declines Reported by CalACT Spring Conference Attendees***

## Why This Matters

**Perceptions of cleanliness and safety were a challenge before COVID-19.**

**It's much harder now.**



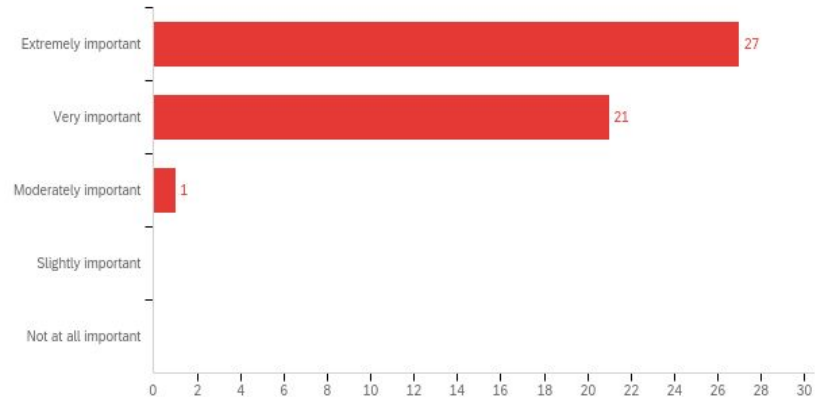
***How easy or difficult will it be to convince people transit is safe?***  
**- CalACT Spring Conference Attendees**

## Poll: What safety and cleanliness concerns are you hearing from your riders or community?



"The **public was satisfied that we were doing *something***, that seemed to help, but now we're getting 'That's nice, but your buses are out there for twelve hours.' They want to know what we're doing with our **filtration system, our HVAC.**"

- Greg Pratt, General Manager, Humboldt Transit Authority



***How important is vehicle cleanliness to your riders?***

- ***CalACT Spring Conference Attendees***

Right now



**“Early on in the pandemic, people didn’t have a lot of information about anything, and were quite honestly scared. Scared to leave the house, scared to go shopping, and scared to ride our buses. They needed information** to help them understand how clean our buses were and to help them make informed decisions and feel good about those decisions.”

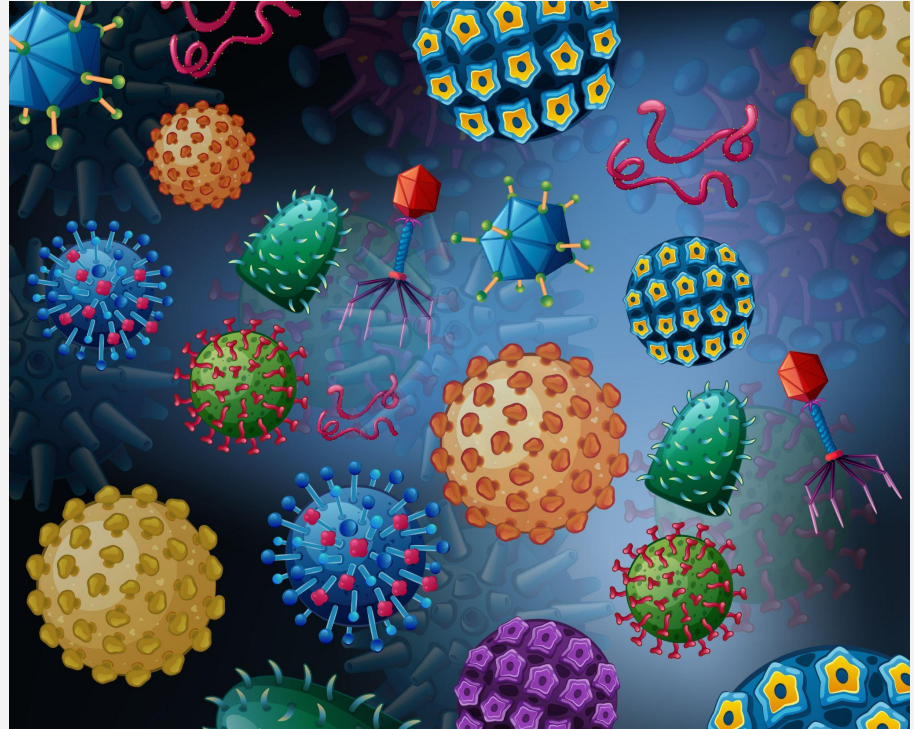
- Carl Sedoryk, CEO/General Manager, Monterey-Salinas Transit



## The Future

### This isn't the last pandemic.

Our effect on the climate, encroachment on wildlife habitats and global travel have helped circulate animal-borne diseases. And it's certainly not the last time we'll need to show riders that systems are safe.



**Poll: Do you expect your rider demographics to change after the pandemic?**

**“We found out who our core riders were for sure, because no one else was riding the buses.”**

- Carl Sedoryk, CEO/General Manager  
Monterey-Salinas Transit





# Bring Them Back

## Who Is Your Post-COVID Customer?



Target Customer Persona:

### The Service Worker



Age  
35-54



High School  
Graduate



Low Household In  
\$35,000-\$75,000

#### Sources:

- 2013 and 2017 VTA on-board rider surveys
- Next Network study and plan Ridership data for bus and light rail
- U.S. Census
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
- Metropolitan Group agency rebranding research (focus groups and phone survey)
- Social Media audience data
- VTA.org web traffic data

An estimated **48,470** individuals live in/near a downtown or other dense transit-oriented neighborhood

**Works** at a service-oriented job within **1/2 mile** of VTA bus or light rail, potentially at multiple job sites throughout Santa Clara County

Preferred VTA fare products & services:

- Single Ride
- Monthly Pass or Day Pass
- Rapid & Frequent service



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Target Customer Persona:

### The Student



Age  
15-24



In high school  
or college



Low-Mid Household Income  
\$35,000-\$100,000

#### Sources:

- 2013 and 2017 VTA on-board rider surveys
- Next Network study and plan Ridership data for bus and light rail
- U.S. Census
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
- Metropolitan Group agency rebranding research (focus groups and phone survey)
- Social Media audience data
- VTA.org web traffic data

An estimated **23,100** individuals live in/near a downtown or other dense transit-oriented neighborhood

**School or part-time job** within **1/2 mile** of VTA bus or light rail

Preferred VTA fare products & services:

- Monthly Pass or Youth Pass
- SmartPass, Summer Youth Pass
- Routes serving school & shops



Target Customer Persona:

### The Millennial Professional



Age  
25-35



Bachelor's  
Degree



Low-Mid Household Income  
\$75,000-\$150,000

#### Sources:

- 2013 and 2017 VTA on-board rider surveys
- Next Network study and plan Ridership data for bus and light rail
- U.S. Census
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
- Metropolitan Group agency rebranding research (focus groups and phone survey)
- Social Media audience data
- VTA.org web traffic data

An estimated **41,000** individuals live in/near a downtown or other dense transit-oriented neighborhood

**Works** within **1/2 mile** of high frequency VTA bus or light rail

Preferred VTA fare products & services:

- Annual or Monthly Pass
- SmartPass
- Light rail
- Rapid & Frequent service



Bring Them Back

## Five-Step Strategy

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## Five-Step Strategy

Operationalize safe practices.

Social distancing, masks, airflow.

Cleaning is less important for COVID, but important nonetheless.

Help customers see “behind the scenes” and they will [value the service more](#).

Also give employees real-time visibility into the customer experience.

Use marketing communications to push out operational transparency and messaging on all the channels your audiences use.

Evidence-based influence and persuasion techniques can influence perceptions and attitudes.

Perception is reality, and shapes our behaviors.

With the right attitudes people will ride.

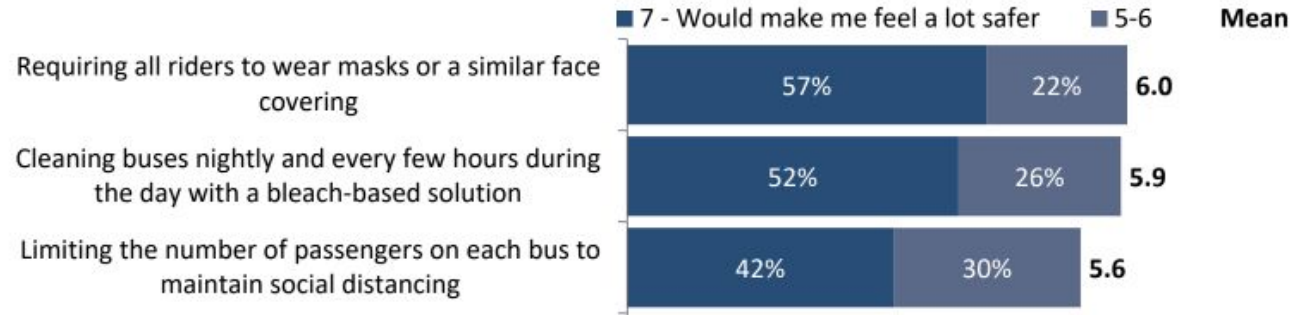
They’ll also tell others about their attitudes and actions, one way or another.



## Operations

1. **Masks**
2. **Reasonable cleaning**
3. **Prevent overcrowding**

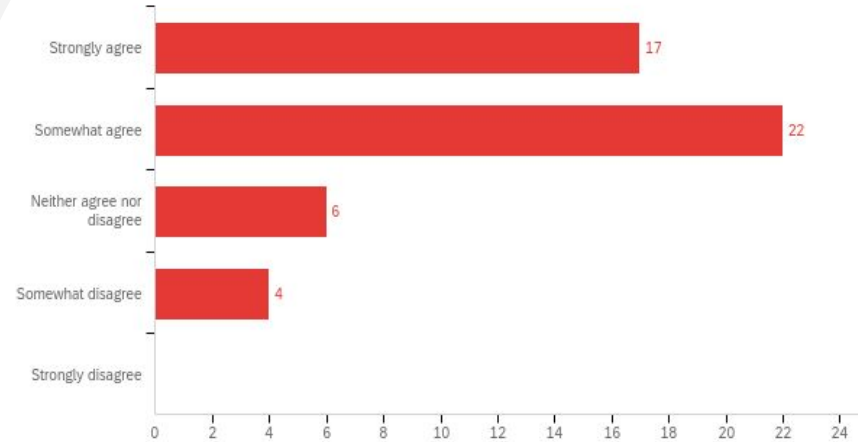
On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is would not make you feel any safer and 7 is would make you feel a lot safer, how much would each of the following measures make you feel in riding public transit?



## Operations

**Many CalACT Spring Conference attendees are considering system redesigns - are you?**

- Customers: service workers, people with disabilities, low-income communities
- Leverage technology (flexible transit, blended services)
- Marketing research
- More frequent service changes



***"We need to rethink or redesign our service after the pandemic"***

***(CalACT Spring Conference Attendees)***

## Operational Transparency

### Basic

#### Communication Upgrades

- Automated and personalized email and SMS alerts
- Add real-time data to website
- Tools for social media listening
- Digital signs

### Intermediate

#### Intermediate: Real-Time Occupancy

- Depends on your Automated Passenger Counters (APCs) and on-board technology
- Transit app, Swiftly and others can help
- Anonymized video analytics (crowding, mask compliance, cleanliness)

#### Intermediate: More Flexible Service

- Offer reservations to prevent overcrowding
- Understand and adapt to demand
- Blended services for efficiency

### Advanced

#### Advanced: Real-Time Cleaning

- How might we create digital “bus last cleaned” messaging using real-time data?
- Beacons, screens, video analytics, app
- Data standard



## Strategic Communications: Awareness

**Meet them where they are** while maintaining transparency to build trust



Surface cleaning was enough at first, then they needed to address air.

Adopted FEMA's Whole Community approach, providing their extra masks to agricultural workers. Deepened the sense of trust in the community.



"I haven't heard much from riders about not riding our buses because of fears about cleanliness – but this hasn't changed the way we go about cleaning the buses."

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## Strategic Communications: Awareness

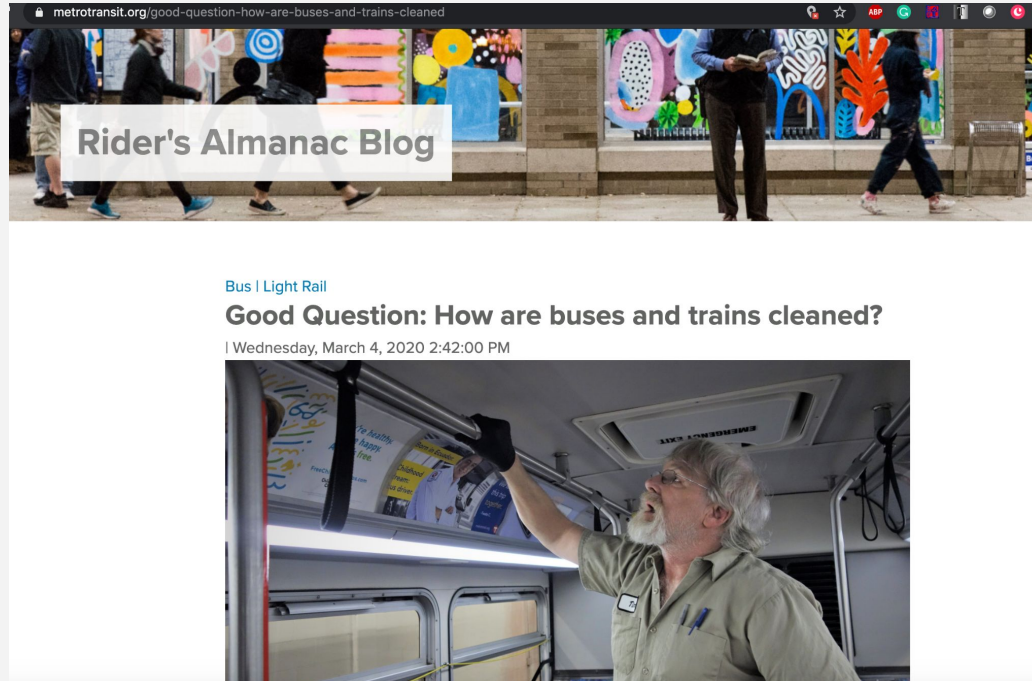
Be honest. Don't dismiss concerns.



"We keep us safe." The vehicle is the operator's home.

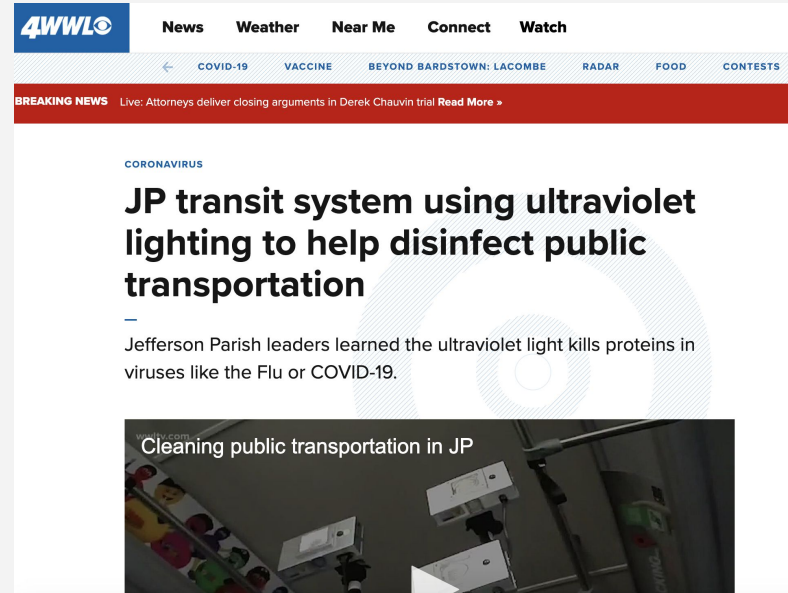
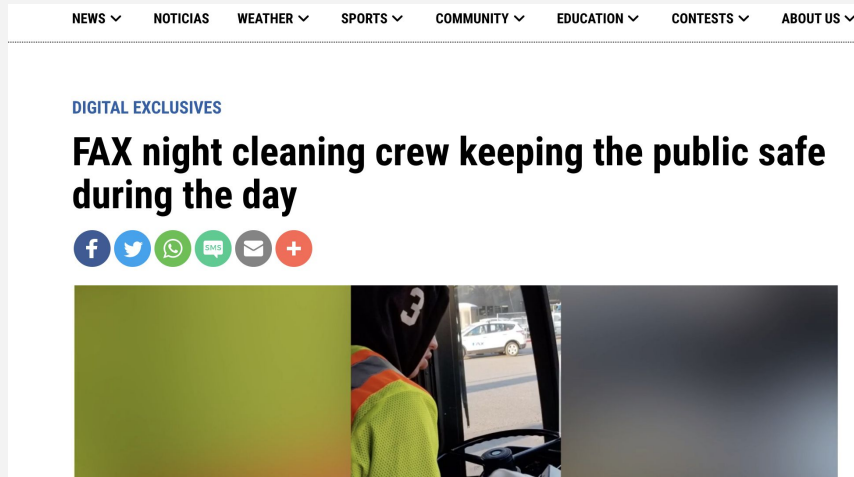


## Strategic Communications: Owned media



## Strategic Communications: Earned media

Getting out in front of the story depends on proactive media relationships.



## Shaping Perceptions and Attitudes

1. **Consensus & Social Proof** (Testimonials, visual story, micro-influencers)
2. **Authority** (Support from credible experts and authorities)
3. **Liking** (We like to like the people we like - operators, fellow passengers)
4. **Availability & Recency Bias** (Yours must be the most recent and obvious message they've seen - a tall order)
5. **Scarcity & Loss Aversion** ("Claim your FREE Welcome Back rides!")
6. **Zero-risk Bias** (We can't eliminate all risk, but we're taking precautions)



## Action and Advocacy

### Make it easy to get on board

- Improve your service
- More flexible and demand-driven service
- Use data for better fixed routes
- Improve your customer information

### Make it easy to spread your message

- Encourage user-generated content
- Customer testimonials
- Enlist micro-influencers
- Make it about **them**



# Road-Ready Marketing Package Preview

- Hollywood-level video production
- Best-in-class graphic design
- Research-based strategic messaging
- Quick and easy to launch
- Brandable
- Optional custom services
- Affordable pricing (\$250 - \$2,500 sliding scale)



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# Bring Them Back

Let's get going again.

We all need a breath of fresh air.



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## What will you need?

### Package Includes:

1. Messaging framework (English & Spanish)
2. Implementation Playbook
3. 1:00 high-production-value video
4. Graphics in multiple sizes
5. Draft copy
6. Editable working files

### Optional Add-Ons:

- Localized and resized graphics
- Localized video editing
- Localized video production
- 15-second video cuts
- Micro-Influencer campaign
- Additional languages



# Bring Them Back

**Want to give feedback or be emailed when it's ready?**

**We're looking for Design Partners - early access and a discount in exchange for feedback as we develop the campaign.**

- What value do you see in this?
- How could we make it more useful?
- What would “affordable” mean for your agency?

**[Fill out this form](http://bit.ly/calact-interest)**

**<http://bit.ly/calact-interest>**

or email

**[cody@codykraatz.com](mailto:cody@codykraatz.com)**

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# Thank You!

**Questions? Comments? Further discussion?  
We'd love to hear from you.**

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