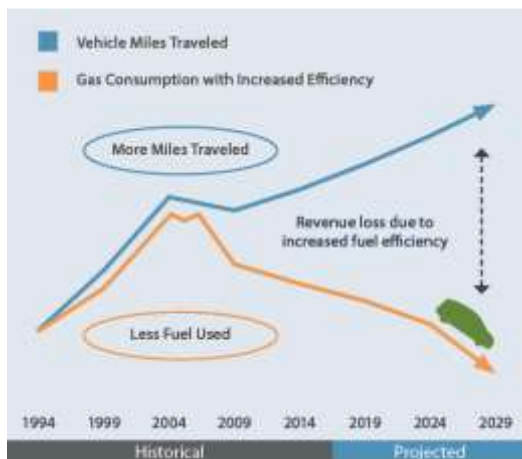


## OVERVIEW

The California Road Charge Pilot Program is a mechanism where drivers fund road improvements based on miles driven rather than the amount of gasoline purchased. Revenues for highways and local roads currently come primarily from gasoline excise taxes and are insufficient. In 2014, SB 1077 established the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The California Transportation Commission oversees the TAC. The desired outcomes of the pilot was to collect data highlighting the advantages, disadvantages, challenges and opportunities of road charging. More



than 5,000 volunteers were recruited for the nine-month study.



## COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

- The communication implementation plan included four phases for program outreach:

- **Phase 1** — Public Outreach Drives TAC Process
    - Public meetings, Road Charge work group, internal program website, focus groups, telephone surveys and stakeholder conferences and workshops.
  - **Phase 2** — Public Outreach & Recruitment
    - Update program website regularly, digital

marketing campaign, DMV insert and public service announcement and monthly newsletters.

- **Phase 3** — Increase Public Outreach
    - Monthly email communications, program website updates, promoting participant facing landing pages, participant surveys, and creating/promoting incentives and rewards.
  - **Phase 4** — Final Report Outreach
    - Building on the success of stakeholder engagement, message development, elected officials engagement, media outreach, and media tracking and monitoring.
- The Program closed its Facebook account for the pilot during Phase 2 due to overwhelming questions and negative comments and switched to Twitter.

## ORGANIZATIONAL INTEGRATION

- Vendors provided customer service to the volunteers and provided valuable information to the participants. The Road Charge Pilot Program partnered with two commercial management services and a state account manager for low technology options.
- Mass emails were sent to nearly 20,000 staffers who became the program's greatest ambassadors.
- Public Affairs produced a "News Flash" video on the program which was launched shortly after the pilot began.

## COMMUNICATIONS IMPLEMENTATION

- *The Mile Marker: A Caltrans Performance Report* featured two articles about the Road Charge Program in two different issues.
- Caltrans used social media to post key messages about the pilot program.
  - Road Charge posts on Twitter and Facebook earned over 37,000 impressions from November 2016 through January 2017.
- Caltrans also sent out news releases to generate media attention.
  - The news releases ranged from calls for volunteers, information about the launch, while explaining the mileage reporting and recording options.
  - Public Affairs organized numerous media interviews with volunteers—lined up beforehand—and the pilot has been covered by over 75 different media outlets.
- Caltrans' Director and local District Directors assisted in the outreach by incorporating the message in their everyday speaking points.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- The Road Charge Pilot Program quickly realized that Facebook wasn't the appropriate medium because the page was flooded with negative comments and questions. Switched to Twitter.
  - We found Twitter was a better social media platform than Facebook because tweets were announcements and discouraged debates.
  - Caltrans discovered that if you focus the message more about how the program and its benefits to the public rather than focusing on what the department needs, there was less push back.
- Successful stakeholder relationships were imperative.
- Two million inserts distributed by the Department of Motor Vehicles in vehicle registration renewals and a public service announcement, shown at over 130 DMV offices, were huge for outreach, engagement, awareness and recruitment.
- The rewards program hooked the volunteers and we only had a 4% drop out rate (reasons: death, purchased a new car, moving out of state).
- We missed the mark when the pre-pilot was only for a week.
  - The program feels a month would have been better to find the glitches and better coordinate with the Account Managers.
- We also missed the mark by not making the website a one stop shop.
  - The Account Managers were posting information on their websites, when really all information should be on one website — the Road Charge Pilot Program website.
    - That caused confusion and volunteers didn't like having multiple people communicating with them but preferred one voice.
- Graphics were a key element of messaging.
- The program learned a lot of people do not know how road maintenance and repairs are funded in California, and determined outreach on this topic is needed.