



*Make it look **FREE!***

Response to Declining Ridership

Lisa Rheinheimer
Director of Planning and Marketing
Monterey-Salinas Transit



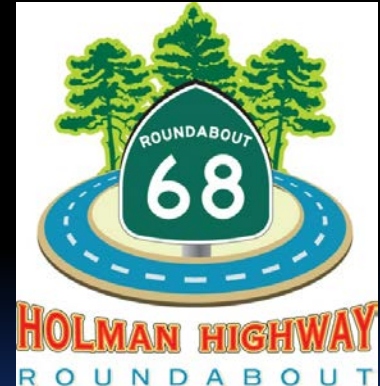
Where in the world is MST?

- Monterey-Salinas Transit
 - ▣ Central California coast
 - ▣ 4.6 M passengers
 - ▣ 295 sq. m. service area
 - ▣ \$50 M budget



Hypothesis

- Construction project pending at major gateway intersection
- Certain **CARMAGEDDON** to occur
- Public transit perceived as a solution
- Ridership would increase



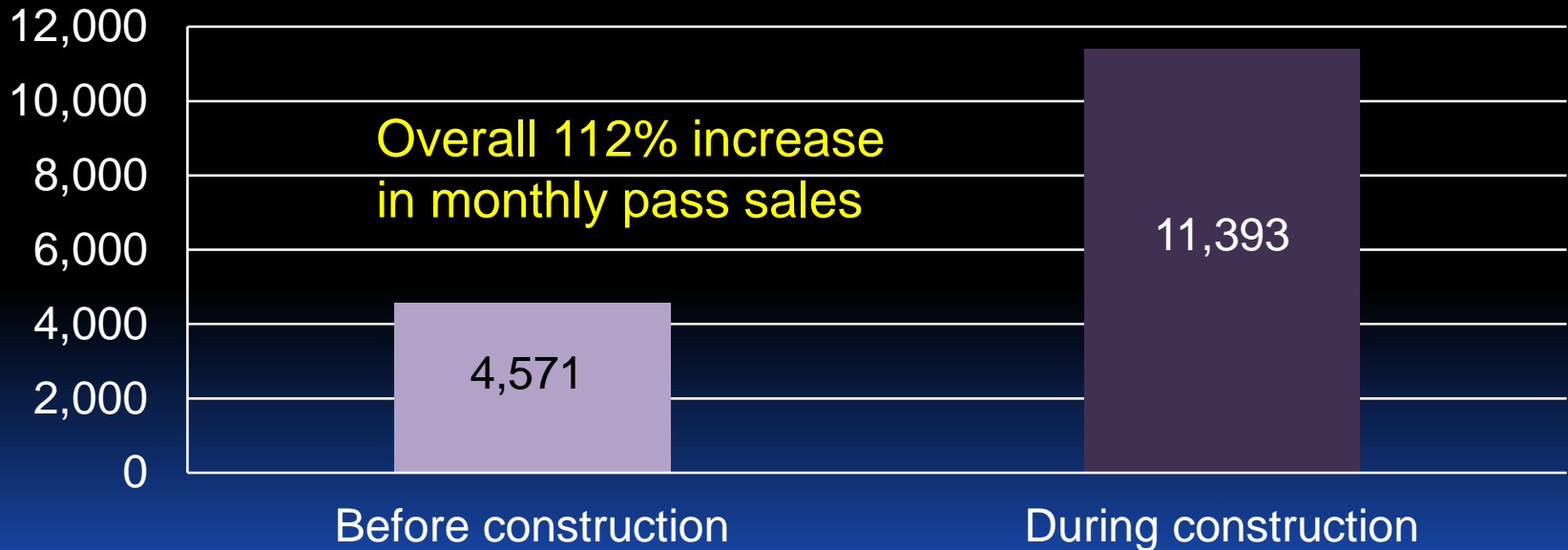


The experiment

- Deeply discounted congestion pricing introduced
 - 86% discount on regular monthly pass
 - Reduced from \$95 to \$13 per month
- Those living/working in defined geographic area impacted by construction
- Goal was to increase ridership

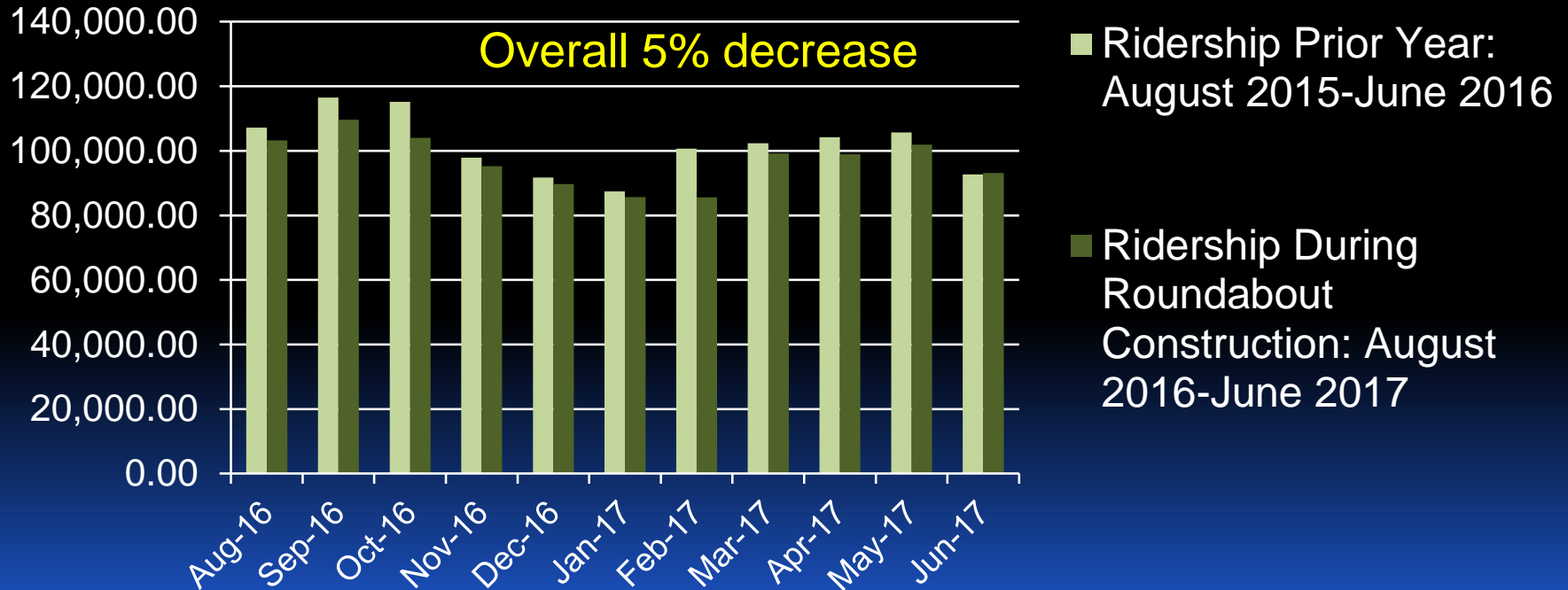
The result: cash to pass

Total Monthly Pass Sales



Overall decrease in ridership

Ridership Comparison by Month




MST “Free” Services

Service	Who Pays Fare?	FY 2014 Riders	FY 2018 Riders	Change
Total Boardings	Mix of free and passengers	4,392,764	4,576,286	4.2%
MST Trolley	City Parking Fees and Aquarium	177,397	219,130	23.5%
CSU Monterey Bay	Student Fees and University Funds	209,149	281,604	34.6%
Military	Federal Transit Benefit	680,062	863,732	27.0%
Regular Fixed Route	Passenger	3,154,627	3,028,298	-4.1%



What happened to “regular” riders?

- ▣ Since 2010:
 - Single occupant commuters increased 6.8%
 - Low income households decreased 10.3%
 - ▣ California Assembly Bill 60 (2014) – driver licenses issued in county increased 14.2%
- 

Lower vs “free” fares: which are better at increasing ridership?

- Discount fares effective 2016 - 2017
- “Free 40s” fares began in 2017 and continue



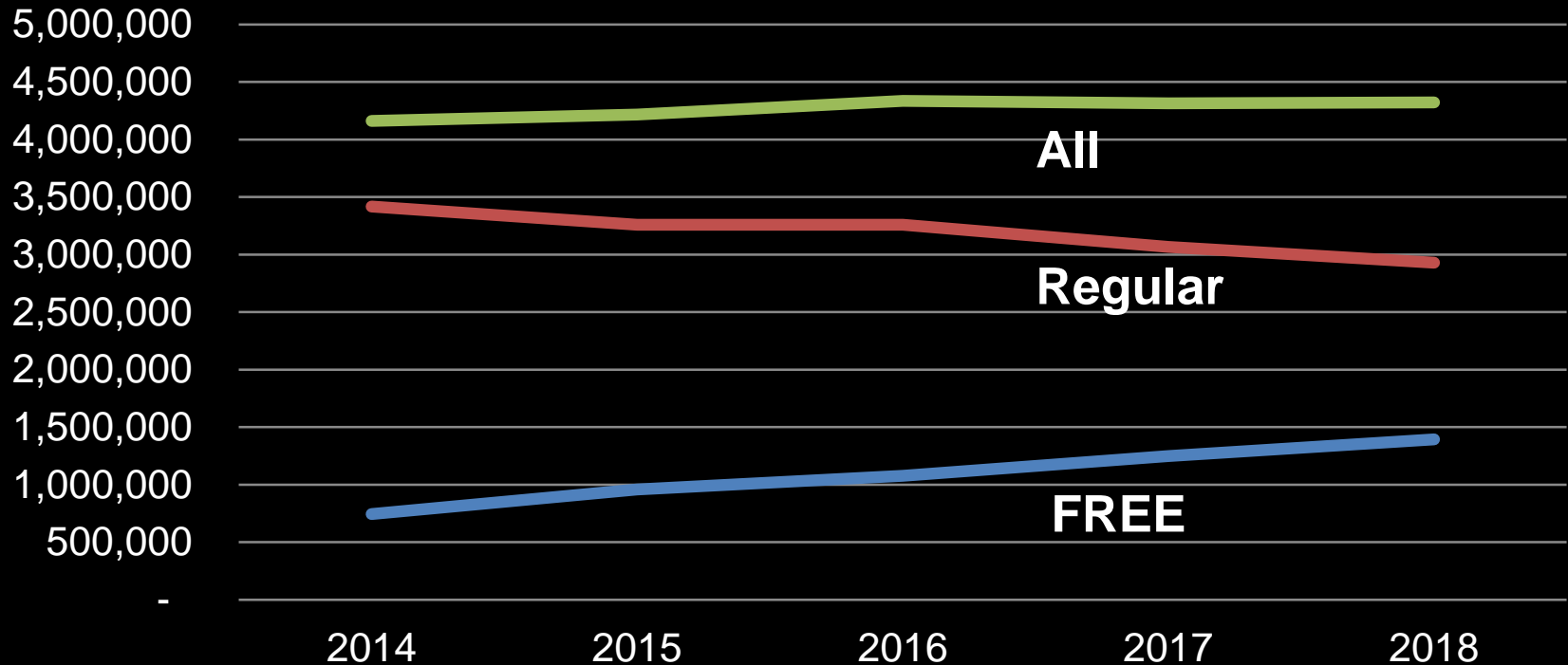
Let's try that again with a twist

- California Cap and Trade funding program
 - Restricted for transit operations and/or capital
 - Must benefit a disadvantaged community
 - Allocation of \$223,300
 - Purchase $\frac{1}{2}$ a bus?
 - Subsidize transit fares?



Ridership increases on FREE lines!

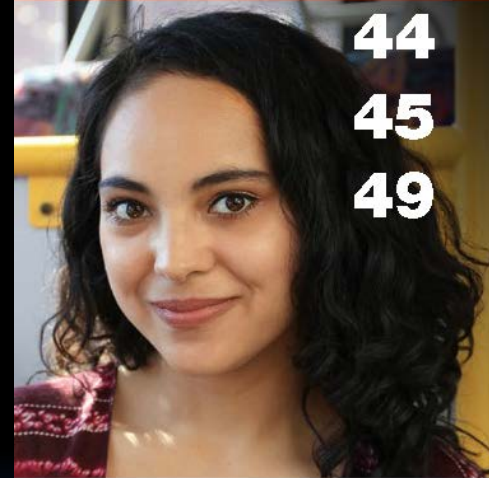
FREE vs Regular Ridership



Introducing 'Ride the 40s on Us!'

- Free bus fares on all lines in Salinas, CA
- Weekends and holidays only
- Ridership increased by **82%**
- Very well received

**Ride
the 40's
on us!** **41**
42



44
45
49

It's Free!
Weekends & Holidays

Now through August 31, 2019

Funding provided by
California Climate
Investment Grants

1-888-MST-BUS1 | www.mst.org

MST

When it's free, perceived value increases





Key takeaways?

- Make transit look **FREE** to our customers and ridership will increase!
- Increased ridership boosts formula funds to offset some farebox losses
- Be careful about impacts on ADA services



Contact info

Lisa Rheinheimer

Director of Planning and Marketing

Monterey-Salinas Transit

831.264.5874

lrheinheimer@mst.org