



Title: Social Media Communications Policy
Number: 1002
Effective: August 18, 2015
Prepared by: Christina Kramer, Outreach Manager
Approved by: Authority Board
Resolution No. 2015-13

POL-1002

This policy applies to social media maintained by Mason Transit Authority.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 Recognizing that Internet based social media tools can provide opportunities for enhanced communication with customers, employees, and other stakeholders; Mason Transit Authority (MTA) supports the use of social media by authorized personnel to support its mission in an ongoing and proactive manner. Mason Transit Authority has an interest in ensuring that content subject to this policy is accurate and authorized by MTA. This policy establishes guidelines for the use of such social media tools and sites.

2.0 Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- 2.1 **Social Media or social networking:** Social media is broadly defined as internet-based communications technology that provides immediacy, interactivity, and the sharing of information across multiple platforms, such as, Facebook, Twitter, Nixel, blogs, YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, Vine and other web tools.
- 2.2 **Content:** Any text, metadata, Quick Response (QR) codes, digital recordings, videos, graphics, photos, and links on approved sites.
- 2.3 **Comment:** A response to an article or social media content submitted by a commenter.
- 2.4 **SMC:** Social Media Coordinator that is the authorized team representative responsible for managing the content of the social media sites used by that team. A coordinator must be identified before a team can publish content on social media.
- 2.5 **PSA:** A public service announcement (PSA) or public service ad, are messages in the public interest disseminated without charge, with the objective of raising awareness and educating the public.

3.0 Policy

3.1 It is the policy of MTA to allow use of social media in a manner that is consistent with the policies governing the use of MTA's other communications and technological resources. MTA employees, volunteers, and contractors are accountable for the form and substance of all information they post or otherwise relay for MTA purposes using these forms of media. All employees, volunteers, and



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contractors using social media for MTA purposes must maintain the highest standards of propriety and professionalism in their postings.

4.0 Guidelines & Responsibilities

4.1 **Authorization for Use:** Internet websites other than MTA’s official website, including social media sites, shall not be created or used by MTA employees or teams to post MTA related information or content without review and/or prior approval of the General Manager and/or Outreach Manager, or their designee.

- 4.1.1 The Outreach Manager, their designee, or a team’s SMC will read this policy and have a signed copy of this policy on file.
- 4.1.2 The Outreach Manager, their designee, or a team’s SMC shall be responsible for the content, approval of content proposed for posting, and upkeep of MTA social media sites.

4.2 Approval of Social Media Sites and Revocation of Approval

- 4.2.1 Before social media is created or used, MTA’s legal counsel or designee shall review the “Terms of Service” for that site. Authority Board approval of these Terms of Service may be required.
- 4.2.2 Approval for use may be revoked if whomever is designated as responsible to maintain and monitor social media (1) fails to keep the site current; (2) fails to comply with the posting approval process; (3) fails to comply with other requirements specified by the Outreach Manager; or (4) violates MTA’s standards of propriety or professionalism as determined by the General Manager or Outreach Manager, or their designee.
- 4.2.3 In compliance with sections 4.0, 5.0, and 6.0 of this policy, whomever is designated as responsible to maintain and monitor social media is responsible for regularly posting information, monitoring comments, removing any prohibited content as set forth in section 6.0, and saving content required under the Public Records Act as described in section 7.0.

4.3 **MTA Website is Primary Internet Presence:** MTA’s website is its primary internet presence. A link to www.masontransit.org shall be included on the first page of each MTA social media site. Where applicable, content posted on MTA social media sites shall include hyperlinks to the MTA website, which shall be the primary record for



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social media postings.

4.4 **General Purpose:** MTA's use of social media shall be for the general purposes of creating community and trust through the following:

- 4.4.1 Quick dissemination of emergency information.
- 4.4.2 Promotion of MTA sponsored events, or events in which MTA is a participant.
- 4.4.3 Communication of marketing or promotional messages to enhance MTA programs.
- 4.4.4 Employee recruitment and recognition.
- 4.4.5 Referring followers to information posted on MTA's website at www.masontransit.org
- 4.4.6 Promotion of transit-related PSAs that are generated by federal, state, or local governments and non-profits or other content directly related to public transit.

4.5 **State Open Public Meetings Act:** Authority Board Members and other officials should not comment or otherwise communicate on MTA's social media site with information related to their official duties; participating in online discussions may constitute a meeting under the State Open Public Meetings Act.

5.0 Content Posted by MTA Employees, Volunteers, and Contractors

5.1 **Style:** Departments will use proper grammar. Social media is more casual than most other communication tools, but should demonstrate a professional presence of MTA to its customers.

5.2 **Frequency:** As a general rule social media sites should be monitored daily and at least updated once a week.

5.3 **Disclaimer for Non-MTA Ads on Commercial Social Media Sites:** Ads may appear on social media websites that are beyond the MTA's control. Therefore, the following text should be included if possible: "Reference to any specific commercial products, processes or services, or the use of any trade, firm or corporation name does not constitute endorsement or recommendation by MTA or its employees."



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5.4 **Acceptable Use:** Proprietary, confidential, sensitive or unauthorized information for MTA may not be posted or released on social media websites.

Acceptable use guidelines shall be available via hyperlink. MTA reserves the right to restrict or remove any content deemed in violation of this social media policy or any applicable law. The guidelines shall forbid the following forms of content:

- 5.4.1 Comments not topically related to the particular social medium article being commented upon;
- 5.4.2 Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures;
- 5.4.3 Profane language or content;
- 5.4.4 Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation or any other legally protected class; or
- 5.4.5 Sexual content or links to sexual content;
- 5.4.6 Solicitations of commerce, with exception of solicitations of MTA's own business needs;
- 5.4.7 Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
- 5.4.8 Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or
- 5.4.9 Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.

5.5 Facebook & Twitter Restrictions & Disclaimer

- 5.5.1 If comments are enabled, the Facebook page should include a link to a Comment Policy tab with the following disclaimer: "Comments posted to this page will be monitored. Through the Mason Transit Authority social media policy, MTA reserves the right to remove inappropriate comments including those that have obscene language or sexual content, threaten or defame any person or organization, violate the legal ownership interest of another party, support or oppose political candidates or ballot propositions, promote illegal activity, promote commercial services or products or are not topically related to the particular posting or otherwise fail to comply with MTA's Social Media Communications Policy as now existing or as subsequently amended."
- 5.5.2 The MTA Twitter bio will read: "MTA comments and list of followers subject to public disclosure (RCW 42.56). This site is not monitored 24/7."



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6.0 Information Posted by the Public

- 6.1 For all MTA social media sites that allow posts, those sites are limited public forums, moderated by MTA staff to ensure content posted by outsiders is appropriate.
- 6.2 Posted content, including comments, photos, and links must be related to the topic posted by MTA to be considered appropriate.
- 6.3 Inappropriate and prohibited content subject to immediate removal from the site, and deletion/blocking of a user includes content that:
- 6.3.1 Is not topically related to the particular content being commented upon;
 - 6.3.2 Promotes or advertises commercial service, entities, or products;
 - 6.3.3 Supports or opposes political candidates or ballot propositions.
 - 6.3.4 Profane or obscene language or content;
 - 6.3.5 Discusses or encourages illegal activity;
 - 6.3.6 Promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation or any other legally protected class;
 - 6.3.7 Sexual content or links to sexual content;
 - 6.3.8 Solicitations of commerce;
 - 6.3.9 Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or
 - 6.3.10 Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
 - 6.3.11 Is libelous or slanderous; and
 - 6.3.12 Violates an individual's right to privacy.
- 6.4 Any content removed based on these restrictions must be retained, including the time and date of the posting and the identity of the person who posted it (if available).

7.0 Records Retention and Disclosure

- 7.1 The use of social media tools by Mason Transit Authority is subject to the public records laws of Washington State.
- 7.2 All content published and received by Mason Transit Authority in the use of social media in connection with the transaction of the MTA's public business are



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considered public records for the purposes of Chapter 40.14 RCW (Preservation and destruction of public records).

- 7.3 MTA is responsible for capturing electronic copies of its public records made or received using social media, including those records made or received using third-party websites.
- 7.4 MTA shall establish mechanisms/procedures to capture and retain public records made or received using social media.
- 7.5 MTA shall retain social media public records and disposes (destroys or transfers to Washington State Archives) social media public records only in accordance with records retention schedules approved by the State Records Committee under RCW 40.14.050.
- 7.6 MTA applies records retention schedules to social media public records consistent with the application to non-social-media public records, based on the function and content of the public record. For example, comments received via social media are retained for the same period as they would have been if they had been received by MTA via email or non-electronic means.