



511 SF BAY BRAND GUIDELINES

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INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

This document serves as a reference and guide for content creators and designers working with the 511 SF Bay brand.

Regional Context

The San Francisco Bay Area encompasses the nine counties that touch San Francisco Bay: Alameda and Contra Costa in the East Bay; Marin, Napa, Solano, and Sonoma in the North Bay; San Francisco and San Mateo on the Peninsula; and Santa Clara County—the region’s most populous county—in the South Bay. Home to 101 municipalities, the Bay Area has a land mass of 7,179 square miles (bigger than several states) and is home to over 7 million people, making it the fifth-most populous metropolitan area in the country. By 2030 the region is estimated to have 8.7 million people. Whether it’s walking, bicycling, driving, or riding public transit, the region’s transportation network is key to getting the growing population around the Bay Area.

Serving the Bay Area’s Diverse Transportation Network

511 consolidates the Bay Area’s diverse transportation networks, which include approximately:

- 9,000 miles of bus routes
- 470 miles of rail transit
- 6 commuter ferry lines
- 5 public ports
- 3 major commercial airports
- 1,420 miles of highway
- 340 miles of carpool lanes
- 8 toll bridges
- 19,600 miles of local streets and roads
- 750 miles of bikeways in the regional bicycle system including the nine-county Bay Trail (and an additional 1,300 miles of new bikeways are proposed).

AUDIENCE



AUDIENCE

General Audience

The target market for the 511 SF Bay website is adult residents (ages 18–65) in the MTC coverage area (hereafter referred to as the SF Bay Area or Bay Area), which consists of nine counties:

- Alameda
- Contra Costa
- Marin
- Napa
- San Francisco
- San Mateo
- Santa Clara
- Solano
- Sonoma

Audience Segments

Further market segmentation defined the top four target audiences as the following:

- **Commuters & Travelers:** Residents and visitors in the MTC coverage area, including transit riders, cyclists, and drivers commuting for work, school, personal, and leisure activities. This includes four subtypes:
 - Drivers
 - Carpool & Vanpool Participants
 - Transit Riders
 - Cyclists
- **Open Data Consumers:** Developers, researchers, planners
- **Bay Area Employers & Employees**
- **Partners & Promoters:** Other Bay Area or California agencies or organizations interested in, and providing, transportation data, services, or information; local and state governments; media contacts, potential employees.

BRAND IDENTITY



BRAND IDENTITY

The 511 brand strikes a balance between professionalism and approachability, using a friendly, helpful, and aspirational tone, ensuring that users feel confident and supported when accessing 511's services.

Defining Our Brand

511'S BRAND IS:

- **Trustworthy:** We provide reliable, accurate, and transparent information. Users can trust that the data shared through 511 is up-to-date and dependable.
- **Fresh & Modern:** We're forward-thinking, using the latest tools to provide current information. These principles are also reflected in our clear, simple language and clean aesthetic.
- **Friendly:** Whether via web or phone, our messaging and tone should be light-hearted and approachable to provide users with a positive and welcoming experience.
- **Fun:** We use our creativity and unique design elements to create an engaging and vibrant experience while allowing key transportation information to shine through.
- **Accessible:** We ensure our information is easy to find and understand so all users can interact with 511 comfortably. We avoid jargon, using plain language to keep content clear and concise.

Core Values

511's values reflect the principles that guide the brand's operations, services, and community interactions. These values should be evident not only in the content but also in how the brand interacts with its users.

511'S CORE VALUES ARE:

- **Source Local:** 511.org prioritizes content and services that are hyper-relevant to the Bay Area. By focusing on the local community, we provide solutions that are tailored to the unique needs of the region.
- **Conscientious:** We are mindful of our role in supporting sustainable transportation options. We value thoughtful, long-term solutions that benefit both our users and the environment.
- **Community-Minded:** We are deeply connected to the Bay Area community. We strive to enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors alike by making travel easier, reducing environmental impacts, and improving access to transportation resources.
- **Green:** Sustainability is a core principle for 511.org. We actively encourage eco-friendly transportation options like carpooling, bicycling, and public transit to help reduce the region's carbon footprint.
- **Conservative:** We believe in the responsible and efficient use of resources, ensuring that our services are optimized to provide maximum value with minimal waste.

VOICE AND TONE



VOICE AND TONE

At 511, our voice connects us with our audience, and our tone adapts to fit different situations. This flexibility allows us to communicate effectively while staying true to our brand.

511's Voice

511's voice is the way we communicate with our users. It reflects our brand identity, using a blend of professionalism, friendliness, and helpfulness that demonstrates our commitment to providing reliable and accessible transportation information.

511'S VOICE IS:

- **Engaging and Direct:** 511 speaks directly to the user, addressing them as "you" to foster a personal connection. The tone is user-focused, ensuring that content is relevant, helpful, and interactive.
- **Familiar, Local and "In the Know":** As a trusted Bay Area service, speak with the confidence and familiarity of someone who understands the unique aspects of the region's transportation system and culture. Show that 511 is part of the community and in tune with the local experience.
- **Clear, Accessible and Consistent:** 511 avoids unnecessary jargon, following plain language guidelines to ensure all content is easy to understand. When technical terms are needed, provide definitions and/or context to ensure clarity across all content.
- **Personable and Approachable:** When writing for social media or blogs/articles, 511 uses a conversational tone that is informative, but also warm, fun, and relatable.

Understanding your audience is crucial for effective communication. Consider who you're writing for, their needs, and what they want to achieve when visiting 511.org. Tailor your content to their level of expertise and focus on addressing their specific needs.

511's Tone

While our voice remains consistent, our tone can adapt to different situations and messages. We may use a more serious tone when discussing safety information, a friendly tone when offering assistance, and a lighthearted tone when sharing interesting facts about the Bay Area.

Together, our voice and tone ensure that whether we're providing critical updates or sharing local insights, our communication always feels authentically 511.

WRITING AND TALKING ABOUT 511



WRITING AND TALKING ABOUT 511

The way 511 is referenced in both spoken and written formats should reflect its ease of use, simplicity, and local relevance.

Referencing 511 in Spoken and Written Communications

- In all spoken mediums, 511 should always be referred to as “five-one-one” and “five-one-one dot org,” never “five-eleven.”
- In spoken or written contexts, never use the “www.” before “511.org.” It is unnecessary and adds clutter.
- Whenever possible, emphasize that 511 is a free Bay Area service. Not just toll-free, it’s completely free for users and available 24/7 across the Bay Area.
- While the use of “511 SF Bay” is accurate, this is more commonly used on first reference to differentiate us from similar services and reinforces our official identity.

511 IS...

The following are examples of standardized language that should be used consistently across all brand collateral to ensure a unified voice and clear communication of 511’s purpose.

Standard-Length Description

“511 is a free phone and web service that provides Bay Area transportation information. Call 511 or visit 511.org to get information about traffic, transit, carpool, vanpool, or bicycling.”

Abbreviated Description

“511 is a free phone and web service that provides Bay Area transportation information. Call 511 or visit 511.org.”

Guiding Users to 511 Services

A significant amount of 511’s content involves directing users to its services, whether by phone or online. It’s important to consistently format these services, and provide clear, concise instructions to ensure users can easily access the information they need.

511 MODES

511 has five modes: Traffic, Transit, Carpool, Vanpool, and Bicycling.

Modes, phone menu names, and web page names should always be capitalized, e.g., “call 511 and say Carpool.”

PHONE INSTRUCTIONS

511 provides information via a speech recognition system. After calling 511, the caller is connected to the Main Menu. Callers should always be instructed to call 511 and then say the appropriate menu choice or mode.

→ **EXAMPLE:** “Call 511 and say Driving Times.”

WEB INSTRUCTIONS

When directing users to visit a page on 511.org, ensure the instructions are easy to follow, guiding users to the appropriate sections of the website.

→ **EXAMPLE:** “Go to 511.org and click For Employers.”

CONTENT STYLE AND GRAMMAR



CONTENT STYLE AND GRAMMAR

This section outlines best practices for formatting content and key elements such as hyperlinks, phone numbers, dates, times and addresses across the 511 SF Bay website. Following these guidelines ensures consistency and clarity throughout the site.

Style Tips

- Maintain 511's voice throughout.
 - Answer the questions potential visitors are asking.
 - Use phrases and words your potential visitors are looking for.
 - Include links to relevant pages on 511's website or other sites.
 - Do not overuse hyperlinks and avoid using multiple links to one site or resource.
 - Instead of using generic phrases like “click here” or “learn more,” make your hyperlinks an integral part of the sentence.
- **EXAMPLE:** “Find tips to quickly navigate 511's phone service on our [Phone Shortcuts page](#).”

Structure & Grammar

- To write for scanners and to ensure accessibility (especially for those who use screen readers), organize content using a clear hierarchy and shorten your content to make the copy easier to read:
 - Split content into subsections with clear and identifiable headings and subheadings to help screen readers and users navigate easily.
 - Use accordions to tuck away helpful information that cannot be condensed or includes several categories.
 - Use short paragraphs.
 - Use short sentences.
 - Skip unnecessary words.
 - Avoid repetition.
- MTC uses the Oxford comma, which is the final comma in a list before “and” or “or.”
 - **EXAMPLE:** You can find information on express lanes, carpooling, and bridge tolls on 511.org.

CONTENT STYLE AND GRAMMAR

(CONTINUED)

Special Formatting

PHONE NUMBERS

Phone numbers should always be formatted with parentheses around the area code, followed by a space and a hyphen between the second and third groups of digits.

→ **EXAMPLE:** (800) 555-1234

DAYS, DATES AND TIMES

Days: The day of the week can be written in full or abbreviated to the first three letters in uppercase with no punctuation.

→ **EXAMPLE:** MON-FRI, SAT-SUN

Date: When dates appear in text, the month should always be spelled out. For standalone dates, use the shortened form without punctuation.

→ **EXAMPLE:** February 21, 2024

→ **EXAMPLE:** Feb 21, 2024

Time: 511 uses a 12-hour format, with “AM” or “PM” in uppercase and a space between the time and the letters.

→ **EXAMPLE:** 8:00 AM–5:30 PM

ADDRESSES

Inline Addresses: Abbreviated street addresses will be used with NO punctuation. Commas will be used to separate the street, city and state in addresses.

→ **EXAMPLE:** 100th Main St, San Francisco, CA 90210

Stacked Addresses: When displaying an address in stacked format, abbreviations remain, but each element is placed on a separate line.

→ **EXAMPLE:** 100th Main St
San Francisco, CA 90210

LOGO



LOGO

Full Color

The 511 logo is the primary visual identifier for all 511 services and communications. It should be prominently featured in any material where 511 is the call-to-action (CTA) or a link to 511.org is provided.

To maintain brand integrity, the logo must remain unchanged and should never be altered or enhanced in any way. Please note that the colors were slightly modified in 2025.

All updated logo files can be downloaded from 511.org/about/branding-logos.

HORIZONTAL (PRIMARY)

3-color logo best displayed on white or a light background.

PRINT VS. WEB

Logo for web uses a larger registered trademark so it is easier to see on screens.



CLEAR SPACE

The height of the '5' in '511.'
When a tagline or CTA is used, the clear space starts at the edges of the logo/tagline.



SIZE

Logo should never be scaled smaller than 1.15" wide for print and 75px wide for web use.



LOGO (CONTINUED)

Variations

LOGOMARK

The 511 logomark can be used alone for certain communications. As with the full logo, there are print and web versions of the logomark. All usage specifications for the full logo apply to the logomark.



PRINT



WEB

APPLYING CTAs

The CTAs of “Call 511” and “511.org” can be paired with both the logo and the logomark. These variations are used for print communications only.



Full Logo with CTA
(Horizontal)



Logomark with CTA
(Horizontal)



Full Logo with CTA
(Vertical)

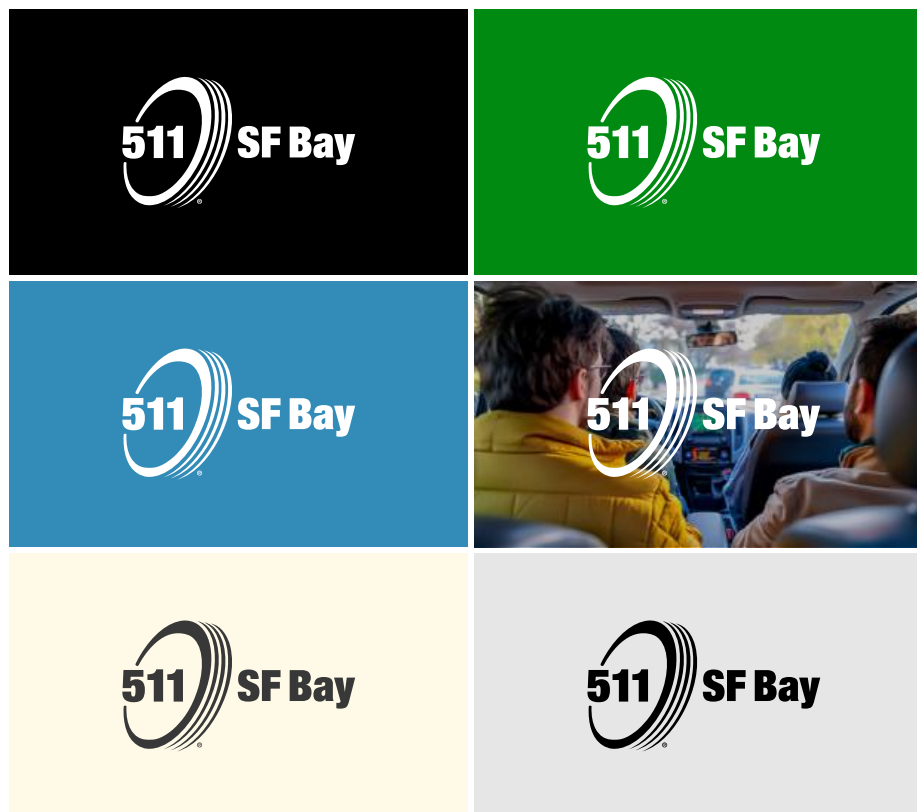


Logomark with CTA
(Vertical)

LOGO (CONTINUED)

Single Color

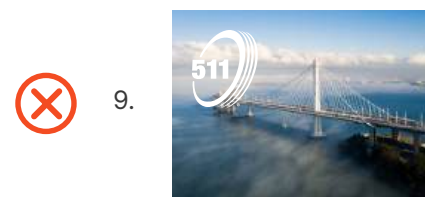
The single-color logo version should only appear in **white** or **black**. Choose the logo color based on background contrast: use the white logo over darker areas of a photo or with a dark overlay to ensure visibility and contrast.



LOGO (CONTINUED)

Misuse

1. **DO NOT** crop the logo.
2. **DO NOT** change the transparency of the logo.
3. **DO NOT** use different colors.
4. **DO NOT** distort the logo.
5. **DO NOT** rearrange elements.
6. **DO NOT** use drop shadows or any other effects.
7. **DO NOT** outline logotype.
8. **DO NOT** re-create using any other typeface.
9. **DO NOT** display over photo without ample contrast.
10. **DO NOT** display full color logo or logomark on color photo.



COLOR PALETTE



COLOR PALETTE

As part of the 2025 design renewal, we refreshed our color palette and added more variations to enhance the brand's visual identity. Use of these colors is essential for maintaining a consistent look and feel across all communications.

The primary color for 511 is **green** in an array of shades. Recent updates to the dark green provides a brighter, more saturated tone, ensuring it stands out across both digital and print formats.

Blue is the secondary brand color, which pairs well with the greens and provides a cool complement to the warmer greens.

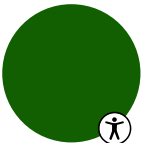
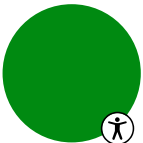
Gold provides a brightness and cheer but should be used sparingly.

Color contrast for type has a higher threshold for ADA readability compliance than general graphic elements. Consider the contrast and limitation of a color when choosing large header type, body copy, and for general graphic and typographic treatments.

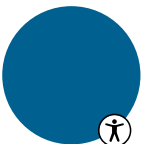
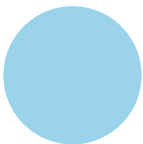
 Compliant for type

 Compliant only for large type (>19pt)

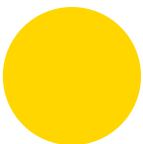
PRIMARY Green

				
DARKER 115F01 17, 95, 01 86, 37, 100, 33 357 C	DARK 008A11 00, 138, 17 86, 20, 100, 08 356 C	REGULAR 8BD085 139, 208, 133 47, 00, 64, 00 359 C	LIGHT C0E8BC 192, 232, 188 25, 00, 33, 00 —	LIGHTER F0FCED 240, 252, 237 05, 00, 08, 00 —

SECONDARY Blue

				
DARKER 106190 16, 97, 144 50, 18, 00, 44 7691 C	DARK 338CB8 51, 140, 184 77, 34, 13, 00 7689 C	REGULAR 9BD3EB 155, 211, 235 36, 04, 04, 00 2975 C	LIGHT DFF5FD 223, 245, 253 11, 00, 01, 00 —	LIGHTEST EDF9FC 237, 249, 252 05, 01, 01, 00 —

TERTIARY Gold

		
DARK FFBF00 255, 191, 00 00, 27, 100, 00 7548 C	REGULAR FFD600 255, 214, 00 01, 13, 100, 00 012 C	LIGHT FEFAE7 254, 250, 231 01, 02, 09, 00 —

COLOR PALETTE (CONTINUED)

ADDITIONAL



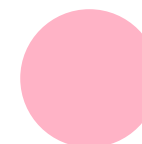
ORANGE
FA8A52
192, 232, 188
25, 00, 33, 00
164 C



LIGHT ORANGE
FEF3ED
254, 243, 237
00, 04, 04, 0
-



PINK
F0557D
240, 84, 125
00, 83, 28, 00
184 C



EVENT PINK
FFB3C6
255, 179, 198
00, 38, 06, 00
707 C



LIGHT PINK
FFF2F6
255, 242, 246
00, 05, 01, 00
-

GRADATIONS Background



FOG 1
F7F9FA
-FFFFFF



FOG 2
F7F9FA
-FFFFFF



**GREEN
-WHITE**
E5F3E7
-FFFFFF

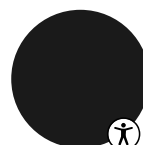


**GREEN
-YELLOW**
EEFCEB
-FEFAE7



**PEACH
-YELLOW**
FEF3ED
-FEFAE7

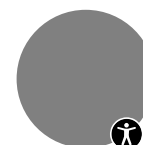
GRAYSCALE



DARKER
1A1A1A
26, 26, 26
73, 67, 65, 77
6 C



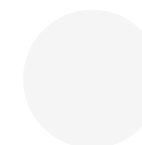
DARK
383838
56, 56, 56
69, 63, 62, 53
447 C



REGULAR
808080
128, 128, 128
51, 43, 44, 08
COOL GRAY 9

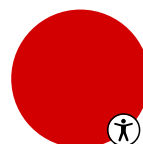


LIGHT
C9C9C9
201, 201, 201
21, 16, 16, 00
COOL GRAY 3

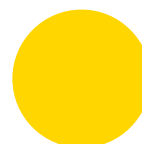


LIGHTER
F5F5F5
245, 245, 245
03, 02, 02, 00
—

SYSTEM Website



WARNING
D20000



ALERT
FFD600

TYPOGRAPHY



TYPOGRAPHY

Inter

This modern, clean typeface is designed to look great on screens of all sizes, offering excellent readability across devices. Its variable fonts also allow for a wide range of weight options, providing flexibility in creating visual hierarchy and emphasis.

Roboto Condensed

As a clean complement to Inter, Roboto Condensed should be used when narrow typesetting is needed, such as for map text, subtitles, and tables. It is important to note that Roboto Condensed is not used for general content on the 511 website and should only be applied in specific instances where space efficiency is crucial.

Fonts available with Google.

INTER

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff
Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss
Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy
Zz 0123456789

Light

Light Italic

Regular

Regular Italic

Medium

Medium Italic

SemiBold

SemiBold Italic

Bold

Bold Oblique

ExtraBold

ExtraBold Italic

Black

Black Italic

ROBOTO CONDENSED

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff
Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt
Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz
0123456789

Light

Light Italic

Regular

Regular Italic

Bold

Bold Italic

PHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTOGRAPHY

Images play a critical role in reinforcing 511's message and creating a sense of community, connection, and trust with the user. Photography should provide context to written content, while reflecting the diversity and vibrancy of the Bay Area.

Photo Styles

There are three main photo styles on 511.org:

PEOPLE PHOTOS

People photos are essential for showcasing the human side of transportation, focusing on activities that relate to everyday travel. Examples include:

- A person commuting by carpool.
- Bicyclists riding along bike paths.
- Travelers boarding public transit or waiting at stations.
- Workers repairing or maintaining transit infrastructure.

OBJECT PHOTOS

Object photos highlight the tools, vehicles, and infrastructure involved in transportation, often with the goal of illustrating key elements of the Bay Area's transportation network. Examples include:

- A close-up of a transit card being scanned.
- A detailed shot of a bicycle parked at a bike rack.
- Traffic signs or carpool lane markers.

CITY/LANDSCAPE PHOTOS

City and landscape photos offer users a sense of place, grounding 511 within the context of the Bay Area's diverse environments.

Examples include:

- A sweeping view of the Bay Bridge at sunset.
- Bicyclists riding along a path with a city skyline in the background.
- Aerial views of BART tracks.

Best Practices for Photo Imagery

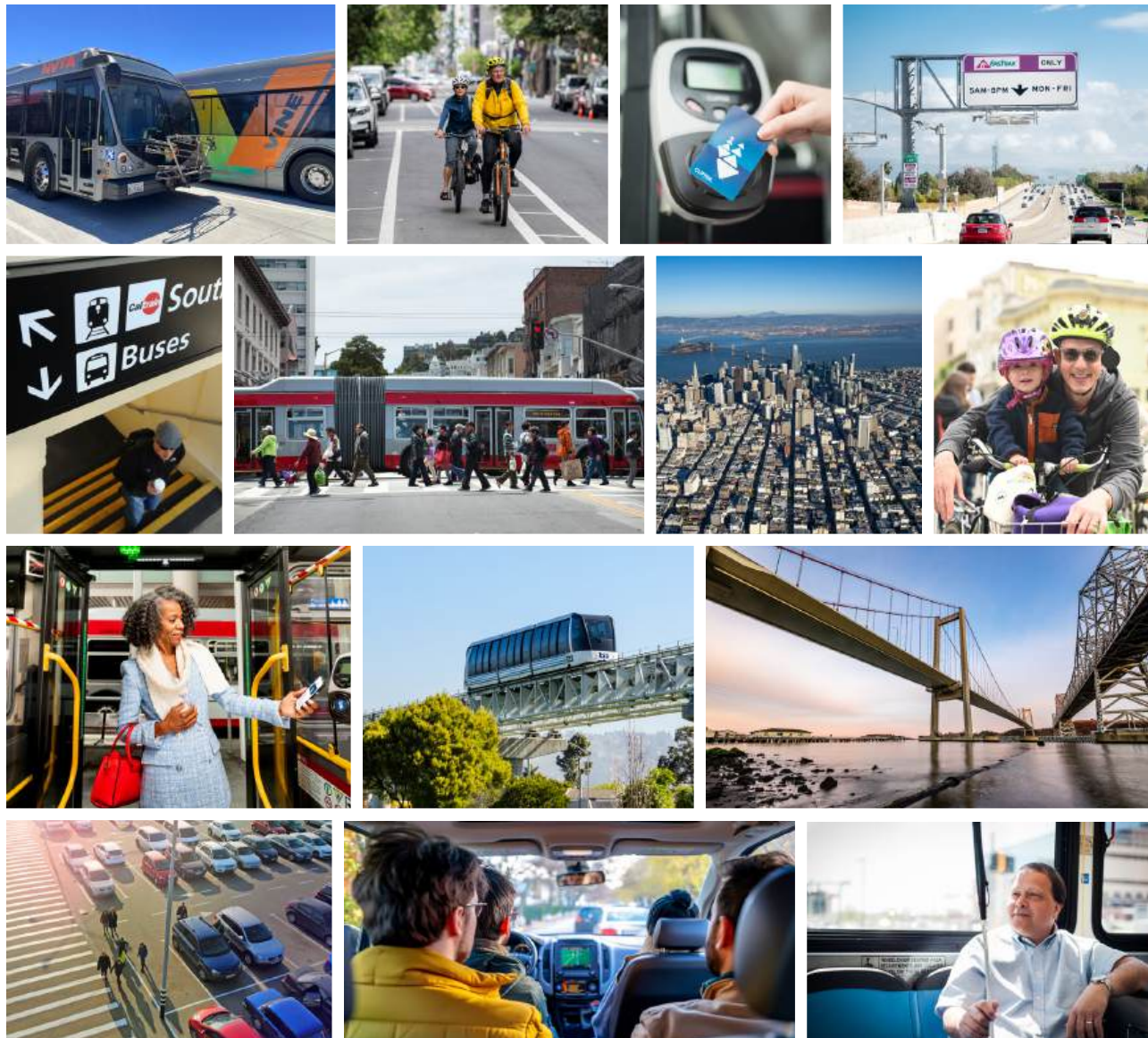
Diversity and Inclusion: Make sure to represent the full spectrum of Bay Area residents in people photos, including different age groups, ethnicities, and abilities.

Consistency: Use a uniform style and tone across all imagery to maintain a cohesive look and feel throughout the website and other communications.

High Quality: All images should be high resolution, ensuring they appear sharp in both web and print formats.

PHOTOGRAPHY

(CONTINUED)



SOCIAL MEDIA



SOCIAL MEDIA

Our social media presence is an extension of our mission to provide accurate, reliable, and useful information for Bay Area travelers, while sharing fun and relevant content. Social channels are key touchpoints for engaging users, sharing timely updates, and building a vibrant, inclusive online community.

Active accounts include **Instagram**, **Facebook**, **Bluesky**, and **Discord** where 511's brand identity—trustworthy, modern, friendly, fun, and accessible—is always reflected. Posts should represent the diversity and energy of the Bay Area.

511 also maintains an account on X (formerly known as Twitter), dedicated exclusively to real-time traffic and transit alerts.

Voice and Tone on Social

Our social media voice should be an extension of 511's overall voice—engaging, “in the know,” clear, and personable. Every post and interaction should:

- **Be helpful.** Directly address user needs and provide clear, actionable advice.
- **Be friendly.** Maintain a welcoming and optimistic tone. Speak directly to users, using “you” to create a sense of connection.
- **Be concise.** Keep copy short and direct where possible.
- **Be adaptable.** Keep posts upbeat for general tips, warm and reassuring in response to questions, and clear and serious when sharing urgent or safety-critical information.

Content Principles

Social media content and interactions should inform, inspire, and connect the Bay Area community. The following principles guide effective content on 511's social media channels:

- **Timeliness:** Share real-time information about transit, traffic, and local events.
- **Inclusive & Accessible:** Use plain language, add alt text, and represent the Bay Area's diversity.

- **Visual Consistency:** Apply brand colors, fonts, and photography guidelines to all post graphics and images.
- **Engagement:** Encourage interaction through questions, stories, and partner tags.

Best Practices

Follow these best practices to ensure 511's social media maintains a consistent, high-quality presence and supports a safe, positive user experience.

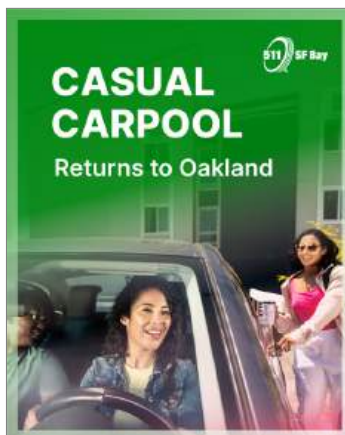
- Post regularly, focusing quality over quantity.
- Avoid political, promotional, or topics that cannot be tied to transportation.
- During emergencies, ensure posts are accurate and clear; direct users to 511.org or the appropriate channels as needed.
- Monitor comments and messages to maintain a safe, respectful environment, removing or reporting inappropriate content as necessary.

SOCIAL MEDIA

(CONTINUED)

Visual Style

Graphics created for social media should be fun yet sophisticated. Gradation should be used to help create continuity with the website's design features. To create vibrant and eye-catching posts, these graphics should take advantage of the saturated colors in the broader 511 color family. These stronger colors can be balanced using more subtle gradations—like those used for backgrounds throughout the 511 website—as a framing device or border to create a design partnership between vibrant and subdued elements. Typesetting should always be clear and easy to read for quick browsing interactions.







COLOR PALETTE



TYPOGRAPHY

