

Signals and Shifts

Analyze how local media frames a public policy debate.

12.C.4 “Examining Media Messages Defend hypotheses about an author’s underlying values, viewpoints, and purposes and reflect on how they shape the content. Analyze and critique the effectiveness of media messages by evaluating the purpose...”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline words or descriptions that frame the bus pilot positively or negatively. Circle each piece of evidence, and number the facts that are missing but would help an audience judge the message.

A Fare-Free Bus Debate

- ① On Monday, Riverton’s public radio station aired a 30-second announcement paid for by the Downtown Partnership. Over a steady train-chime sound, the narrator called the city’s new fare-free bus pilot “a bridge to work, school, and appointments.” The announcement said weekday ridership rose 18 percent during the pilot’s first month and invited listeners to “keep the bridge open.” It showed no source for the figure or comparison month. The spot ended with images, on its website version, of a nurse boarding at dawn and a restaurant employee arriving downtown. No costs or service delays were mentioned.
- ② That afternoon, CityLine, a neighborhood news site, posted a column opposing the pilot. Its headline, “Free Rides, Empty Promises,” compared the buses to “shiny lifeboats tied to a sinking pier.” The writer described one crowded route and quoted a shop owner who worried that parking revenue could fall. The column argued that city leaders were chasing applause rather than solving transportation problems. It did not identify the crowded route’s schedule, report systemwide reliability data, or quote riders who use the buses. A photo of a packed bus filled most of the page, while the headline appeared in red letters.
- ③ During the pilot’s first six weeks, Riverton’s two largest local outlets ran twelve items about it. Eight focused on the radio announcement’s access theme, and four focused on CityLine’s cost concerns. A university poll of 600 Riverton adults found support for continuing the pilot at 52 percent before the announcement week and 61 percent three weeks later. In the same period, the pilot added evening service on two routes, and gasoline prices rose statewide. The poll asked whether respondents supported continuing the pilot, but it did not ask which coverage they had seen or whether they had ridden a bus.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

- 1** Defend a hypothesis about the radio announcement’s underlying values and purpose. Cite two details from the message.

- 2** For a listener deciding whether the pilot deserves continued support, evaluate the radio announcement’s evidence and clarity. Identify one strength and two limits.

- 3** How do CityLine’s metaphor, photograph, and choice of source create a biased interpretation of the pilot? Identify one excluded viewpoint or evidence category and explain the likely effect on readers.

- 4** What conclusion about media coverage and public opinion is best supported by the passage? Distinguish the observed pattern from a causal claim, using at least two details.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Using only details from the passage, write a 75- to 95-word editor’s revision plan for either the radio announcement or the CityLine column. Identify its audience and purpose, then propose two specific changes that would make the message clearer, more balanced, and better supported.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline words or descriptions that frame the bus pilot positively or negatively. Circle each piece of evidence, and number the facts that are missing but would help an audience judge the message. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Defend a hypothesis about the radio announcement's underlying values and purpose. Cite two details from the message.	The announcement values accessible transportation and connections to work and daily life, and it aims to build support for continuing the pilot. Its "bridge" language, worker images, 18 percent ridership claim, and call to "keep the bridge open" support this hypothesis.
2	For a listener deciding whether the pilot deserves continued support, evaluate the radio announcement's evidence and clarity. Identify one strength and two limits.	A strength is that it gives a specific ridership figure and a clear connection to jobs, school, and appointments. Limits include the missing source and comparison month for the 18 percent figure, plus the omission of costs and service delays.
3	How do CityLine's metaphor, photograph, and choice of source create a biased interpretation of the pilot? Identify one excluded viewpoint or evidence category and explain the likely effect on readers.	The lifeboat metaphor and packed-bus photo portray the pilot as failing, while the shop owner's quote centers a parking-revenue concern. The column excludes bus riders' perspectives and systemwide reliability data, which may lead readers to view one crowded route as proof that the whole pilot is ineffective.
4	What conclusion about media coverage and public opinion is best supported by the passage? Distinguish the observed pattern from a causal claim, using at least two details.	Support rose from 52 percent to 61 percent while most local coverage emphasized access, so the coverage and increased support occurred together. Coverage alone cannot be identified as the cause because evening service was added, gasoline prices rose, and the poll did not measure respondents' media exposure or bus use.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Revise the radio announcement for Riverton listeners who may decide whether the pilot should continue. Its purpose is to build support for fare-free buses, but it should name the source and comparison period for the 18 percent ridership increase. It should also briefly report a cost or service-delay concern, then explain how officials will address it. Keep the nurse and restaurant-worker images, because they connect the pilot to daily access, but replace "keep the bridge open" with a direct statement about the decision being considered.

Accept defensible interpretations that connect specific language, visuals, evidence choices, or omissions to a stated purpose, audience, or viewpoint. For the public-opinion response, students must distinguish a correlation in the reported trends from proof that coverage caused the change.