



DATE: August 24, 2018
TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Barrow Emerson, Planning & Development Director
SUBJECT: ACCEPT AND FILE METRO PLANNING DEPARTMENT ANNUAL STATUS REPORT

I. RECOMMENDED ACTION

This report is for informational purposes only. No action is required.

II. SUMMARY

- It has been one year since the last Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) Planning Department Annual update.
- Transit industry standards suggest there is a minimum level of per trip ridership (10-15 boardings per trip), which is considered effective and not all of METRO routes achieve this level. At the same time, there are services without necessary capacity to meet demand levels comfortably.
- The METRO Planning Department has identified priorities for additional service (specific routes and increased daily span of service) when, or if, additional recurring operating funds were to become available.
- The Planning Department has established specific routes and geographic areas that will be the focus of service planning activities for the next four quarterly service changes, including consideration of limited reallocation of resources from low performing routes to ones in need of additional capacity and/or span of service.
- In addition to ongoing service modifications, the Planning Department has a number of other significant initiatives it is managing during the next fiscal year, as identified in this report.
- Staff requests the Board accept and file this Service Planning Update.

III. DISCUSSION/BACKGROUND

Current Route Performance

Quarterly, including on this August 24th Board meeting agenda, the Planning Department provides the Board with a ridership report, including an analysis of route performance as expressed by the average boardings per trip on each route. (See Attachment A)

In the transit industry, a rule of thumb is that there needs to be an average of approximately 10-15 boardings per trip for a service to be considered effective, depending on the type of service (rural, local, regional, intercity). In general, most METRO routes perform well, which suggests that generally the level of service is correct, relative to demand and financial capacity to provide service.

METRO has a small number of routes that don't achieve these transit industry standards. There are also some routes that, although they have reasonable overall boardings per trip averages, have segments with extremely limited boardings, which suggest possible realignments or truncation of the route(s). Among these are:

- Routes 33 and 34, which are school oriented trips in the San Lorenzo Valley with extremely low ridership. Today's Board agenda includes an item recommending elimination of these routes due to extremely low ridership over recent years.
- Route 79, which although it has a somewhat acceptable level of boardings per trip for a local lifeline service, has a loop segment to Pajaro that has had almost no boardings. The Route 79 alignment was modified to eliminate the Pajaro loop and add service in central Watsonville starting on June 14, 2018 and ridership will be monitored closely over the coming year.

Conversely, as shown in Exhibit A, in terms of average boardings per trip, there are three non-UCSC routes (69A, 69W, 71) that have average boardings per trip of around 30, which gets close to the seated capacity of a bus.

The five UCSC oriented routes are all strong performers, with METRO and the University constantly working together to address overcrowding and route schedule issues, which are complicated as class start times change by day of the week.

Now that the performance of METRO's routes has generally stabilized, the Planning Department sees opportunities to recommend consideration of the reallocation of trips from low performers to services in need of additional capacity.

Opportunities for Fixed-Route Service Expansion

Given METRO's limited budget growth opportunities, service enhancements are limited at this time. As part of the FY19 METRO annual budget, an additional bus operator FTE was added. However, this position, along with others, is being held in abeyance pending the outcome of Proposition 6, the November 6, 2018 ballot measure proposing repeal of SB-1. This bus operator FTE has been identified as being used to address the limited evening frequency of Route 35 in the San Lorenzo Valley area.

Priorities for Additional Service

As is standard transit industry practice, the Planning Department maintains a prioritized list of service needs, sometimes referred to as "unmet needs", so that if at anytime there is additional recurrent operating funds available for the introduction of

additional effective service, the priorities are clear. Currently, the Planning Department sees the following needs as the most important:

- Route 35/35A evening frequency – As this San Lorenzo Valley (SLV) route alternately serves two legs beyond Boulder Creek, the limited evening frequency makes for extremely poor level of service on these legs.
- There are also areas of the County that have population densities and demographics which suggest that additional services could generate additional ridership
 1. Span of service across the system - There are routes where service starts too late in the morning or ends too early in the evening, both weekdays and weekends, to meet work trip needs, particularly for those in the service industry; these limited spans also do not meet the general mobility needs of County residents. Route 68 is a prime example of this issue with weekday service ending before 7pm and weekend service span lasting only from late morning until approximately 5pm.
 2. Frequency - The additional Bus Operator, added at the Board's direction for FY18 using Measure D funds, was used to address Route 71 weekend overcrowding and has eased overcrowding on these services. In addition to the Route 35/35A noted above, there are other routes whose lack of frequency makes spontaneous use impractical. For example, Route 3, in addition to having limited span of service, has frequency of two hours at times on weekdays and all day on weekends. Another issue is reduced evening frequency on routes such as Route 66 and 69.
- Rural routes with limited daily trips.

Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Service Planning Activities

As shown in the recently adopted 5-year budget, METRO has stabilized its fixed-route service level at a financially sustainable level for the near term. Within this context of limited expansion capacity, METRO will still work to improve services where possible, through re-allocation of resources from poor performing services to those in need of additional capacity, to avoid adding additional operating costs.

METRO service changes occur four times a year; through the Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer Bids.

- Fall 2018
 - Pending Board approval of an extension of the Articulated Bus Pilot Project agenda item on today's agenda, Fall 2018 will see the return of these buses for the 2018-19 school year, which would again be funded by UCSC. There are no other significant service changes for Fall 2018 as METRO is awaiting the resolution of Proposition 6, the SB-1 repeal ballot measure.

Following are the focus areas for service planning efforts over the next year:

- Winter 2018-19
 - Pending the outcome of the public hearing on the elimination of Routes 33 and 34 on today's agenda, these services would be eliminated for the Winter service change.
 - As part of METRO's partnership with Cabrillo College, staff is working on route modifications for route(s) in Watsonville to provide service closer to the Watsonville campus for later evening classes.
- Spring/Summer 2019
 - If Proposition 6 is not successful in November 2018 and SB-1 is not repealed, METRO will look to enhance Route 35/35A evening frequency in the San Lorenzo Valley. As part of planning for this improvement, there are other issues related to San Lorenzo Valley/Scotts Valley service that staff will consider opportunities to address including:
 - Service on Scotts Valley Drive is in only one direction (outbound from Santa Cruz).
 - Opportunities related to the repopulation of the former "Borland" campus by UCSC and other increases in employment, housing, and commercial properties in the area.
- Summer/Fall 2019
 - Watsonville Circulator –METRO received a 2016 Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) grant from the State for an electric bus to operate as a Watsonville Circulator, intended to link common origins and destinations around Watsonville at a convenient frequency. Outreach for planning of this initiative will start soon with possible service launch in Fall 2019, pending delivery of the new electric bus.
 - The Monterey Bay Air Resources District awarded METRO with \$200,000 in funding for the initial year of operation of this service.
 - METRO has also received LCTOP grants in 2017 and 2018 for a total of almost \$620,000 allowing METRO to purchase a second electric bus for Watsonville services.

Other Planning Department Initiatives

In addition to the basic ongoing service modifications, the Planning Department is developing the following significant planning initiatives:

- Fare Restructure – Per Board action on March 23, 2018, METRO chose to postpone continued analysis of a Fare Restructure project until the end of 2018 to see the result of the November 6, 2018 ballot measure Proposition 6, the SB-1 repeal effort, which could seriously damage METRO's financial position. Following the November 2018 election, staff will initiate a discussion with the Board related to fare structure and opportunities for fare payment technology improvements and then work with the Board Finance, Budget and Audit Standing Committee in the first quarter of 2019 to explore fare restructuring recommendations.
- On-board survey – In October 2018, METRO will be conducting an on-board survey and ridecheck, METRO's first since 2012, to enhance its understanding of our riders, their demographics, travel patterns, satisfaction with METRO services, and preferences in the use of various technologies including fare payment methods.
- Strategic Business Plan – METRO staff, with external facilitator support, will conduct a Board retreat in October to kickoff a 10-year strategic business plan process for the agency that will address issues including establishment of midterm (10 year) priorities, a review of agency missions/goals/objectives, and analysis of financial capacity, risk, and opportunities.
- Pacific Station long-term planning – METRO, in conjunction with the City of Santa Cruz, has engaged two separate consultant teams to investigate issues related to the future of Pacific Station. The two studies, a downtown transit operations analysis and a Pacific Station conceptual layout exercise, are both underway and should have results this fall, which should inform future planning for METRO's downtown transit center.
- Microtransit and Transportation Network Companies (TNC) – Many transit districts are starting to consider microtransit, a service that offers flexible routing and/or flexible scheduling of non-fixed route vehicles. Microtransit uses instant exchange of information, enabling real-time matching of demand (trip) and supply (driven vehicle), which can extend the accessibility of the transit system. Possible pick-up/drop-off stops are usually pre-defined to allow better routes' optimization. Conceptually, microtransit fits somewhere between private individual transportation (cars or taxicabs) and public mass transit (bus). Some transit agencies are developing relationships with TNCs, such as Uber and Lyft, to supplement their fixed-route and paratransit services. Staff will investigate opportunities for METRO to use these types of services and will return to the Board in 2019 with a status report.
- Hwy 1 Bus On Shoulders – Per another item on today's Board agenda, METRO, in conjunction with Monterey-Salinas Transit, has completed an initial feasibility study of Bus On Shoulders opportunities on SR 1. Going forward, METRO will coordinate with the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) and Caltrans to attempt to institute this project in conjunction with the RTC Auxiliary Lanes project.

- Ongoing coordination with UCSC and Cabrillo – In spite of the failure of the UCSC student transportation fee ballot measure in May 2018, UCSC and METRO will extended their contractual arrangement, pending approval by the Board of another item today, for bus services through the 2018-19 school year. METRO and Cabrillo have executed a three-year (2018-19 through 2020-21 school year) contract (plus an option for two additional years) to extend the two-year initial student bus pass program. METRO will continue to coordinate with Cabrillo to provide the optimum bus service to meet student needs.
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) – Staff is working with the City of Santa Cruz on concepts for a downtown employee bus pass as part of a TDM program.
- Marketing – Staff will promote growing initiatives, including the employer/employee commute tax benefit program.
- Unified Corridor Study – Staff will continue to participate in this critically important planning analysis, led by the RTC, on the future transportation uses of State Route 1, the Soquel/Freedom corridor, and the rail right-of-way.
- Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) and Automatic Passenger Counter(APC) – METRO has received grant funding from the State of California to implement an AVL system. The Planning and Information Technology (IT) Departments will coordinate to introduce this technology to improve operational efficiency, data gathering and analysis, and provide a customer facing Predictive Arrival and Departure System (PADS).

IV. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS/IMPACT

There is no financial impact related to this status report

V. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

There are no alternatives to consider.

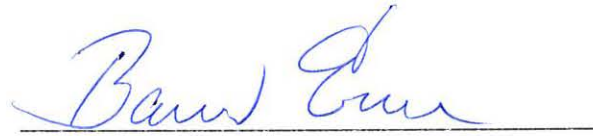
VI. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Quarterly Average Ridership by Route

Prepared by: Barrow Emerson, Planning & Development Director

VII. APPROVALS

Barrow Emerson,
Planning and Development Director

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Approved as to fiscal impact:
Angela Aitken, CFO

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Alex Clifford, CEO/General Manager

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Quarterly Average Ridership by Route Report

April 1, 2018 - June 30, 2018		Average Weekday Ridership per Trip					Average Weekend Ridership per Trip				
Route	Corridor	Riders	UCSC Riders	Cabrillo Riders	Discount Fares and Passes	Regular Passes	Riders	UCSC Riders	Cabrillo Riders	Discount Fares and Passes	Regular Passes
UCSC											
10	UCSC via High St.	49	47	0	1	1	54	50	0	2	1
15	UCSC via Laurel West	60	57	0	1	1					
16	UCSC via Laurel East	63	60	0	1	1	75	70	0	1	1
16ST	UCSC via Laurel East Supp.						80	77	0	1	1
19	UCSC via Lower Bay	52	48	0	2	1	61	56	0	2	1
20	UCSC via West Side	55	47	1	2	3	68	61	1	2	2
20D	UCSC via West Side Supp.	40	39	0	0	0					
22	UCSC/Coastal Science Campus	41	41	0	0	0					
Intercity											
35/35A	Santa Cruz/Scotts Valley/SLV	16	1	1	4	5	21	1	1	6	5
69A	Capitola Road/Watsonville	28	2	2	9	5	24	2	1	7	3
69W	Cap. Road/Cabrillo/Watsonville	30	2	6	7	5	26	2	2	7	4
71	Santa Cruz to Watsonville	30	2	5	8	6	26	1	2	8	4
91X	Santa Cruz/Watsonville Express	16	1	7	3	2					
Rural											
33	Lompico SLV/Felton Faire	6	0	0	0	4					
34	South Felton	1	0	0	0	0					
40	Davenport/North Coast	20	0	0	2	8					
41	Bonny Doon	11	3	1	1	2					
42	Davenport/Bonny Doon	15	3	1	2	3	14	2	1	4	2
Local											
3	Mission/Beach	10	2	1	3	2	10	4	0	3	1
4	Harvey West/Emeline	17	1	1	8	5					
55	Rio Del Mar	14	0	6	4	2	9	0	1	4	2
66	Live Oak via 17th	15	2	1	4	3	13	2	1	5	2
68	Like Oak via Broadway/Portola	13	2	1	4	2	11	2	1	4	1
72	Watsonville Hospital/Pinto Lake	15	0	1	5	2	9	0	0	4	1
74S	PVHS/Watsonville Hospital	15	0	0	1	2					
75	Green Valley Road	17	0	1	7	2	15	0	1	7	2
79	Pajaro/East Lake	6	0	1	2	1	5	0	0	2	1
Highway 17											
Hwy 17	Hwy 17 Express	16	-	-	1	6	22	-	-	2	2
System-wide Avg. Riders per Trip		25	13	1	3	3	30	18	1	4	2

25 Calendar School Days of SJSU

40 Calendar School Days of Cabrillo

53 Calendar School Days of UCSC

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