

AGENDA ITEM IV – A

**YUBA-SUTTER TRANSIT AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 19, 2024**

I. Call to Order & Roll Call (4:00 P.M.)

Present: Bains (Vice Chair), Blaser, Flores, Hudson, Kirchner (Chair) and Fuhrer
Absent: Buttacavoli and Shaw

II. Public Hearings

A. NextGen Transit Plan Phase 1 Service Changes and Fare Structure.

Executive Director Mauk restated the requested action was to hold the second formal public hearing for the recommended NextGen Transit Plan Phase 1 service changes and fare structure, planned for launch in January 2025. The first public hearing on the subject took place on July 18th.

Mauk reported that ridership on Routes 2 and 5 has recovered about 23% since the plan was finalized in May 2023, slightly behind the rest of the local fixed route system collectively. Recent data for the last three months ending in August 2024 compared to the same three-month period in 2022, shows Route 2 has gone from 8.3 passengers per revenue hour to 9.9 passenger revenue hour. Route 5 in the most recent three months averaged 10.8 passenger per hour, up from 7.3 passengers per hour at Plan adoption.

Mauk stated that the NextGen Plan was projected to increase overall ridership 20% in Phase 1 and increase the service coverage area by 60% when fully implemented. The changes were designed to reduce travel time by replacing the hourly fixed routes with a more flexible operation. The recommended Route 1 changes are designed to speed up crosstown travel and reduce layover times.

Mauk restated the recommended Phase 1 changes, including the discontinuation of local routes 2 and 5 in Yuba City, to be replaced with a general public on demand service available in an area encompassing at least the limits of Yuba City and possibly beyond in some cases. In addition, Route 1 in Yuba City would be streamlined, rerouting it off Plumas Street, Forbes Ave and Gray Ave south of Highway 20, effectively dropping fixed route service to six bidirectional stops between the Alturas and Shasta transfer point and the Yuba Sutter Marketplace. Weekday hours would be extended for all local services to approximately 8:00 pm, including the remaining local fixed routes and the new on demand service. With the extended system hours, the recommendation also includes a discontinuation of the underutilized weekday evening Dial-A-Ride.

Mauk explained the new on-demand system will be available through a phone app, desktop computer or a phone call to a scheduler. Staff anticipates 4 -5 vehicles, running Monday – Saturday in Yuba City with an average wait time of 15 – 20 minutes. This service will extend the service area beyond where routes 2 and 5 go presently, which will include the Yuba College Sutter Campus.

Mauk summarized the fare recommendations in Phase 1, including a one-way fare for the on-demand service of \$1.50 or .75 cents if you qualify for a discount (same as the fixed route), and a daily cap of three,

one-way fares. The daily cap will extend to the on-demand service and the fixed routes. Also recommended is the continuation of the discount monthly pass program on both the on-demand service and fixed routes, given that at least 60% of our riders currently use the monthly pass. As proposed, the out-of-pocket prices for monthly passes would increase to \$10 per month for discount riders and \$20 per month for general public passengers starting in January.

Mauk reported that since the last public hearing, an online survey regarding the changes was made available and heavily publicized, information cards were distributed in 3 languages, staff attended several community events, used multiple social media and email blasts, and the hearing had been publicized in the local newspaper and radio. Staff have been riding on the routes that will be affected and have done 17 pop-up events to answer questions and take passengers' comments. The online survey received 33 responses, 34% were opposed to the changes, about half were asking questions about how the new service will work and some were positive about the changes.

Mauk reported some have commented on the discontinuation of weekday evening Dial-A-Ride service. With the recommended changes, weeknight service will be extended to 8pm, which is approximately an hour and a half later than our current service. Our current weekday evening Dial-A-Ride service goes to 9:30pm, which is used by very few passengers. Mauk presented an analysis showing the cost to extend the local services one additional hour on weeknights would cost approximately \$750,000 annually for a projected 67 riders. The analysis included a second alternative of keeping the on-demand system running later, and extending services crosstown, with the suggestion of a higher fare.

Director Kirchner opened the public hearing at 4:18 pm.

The first speaker, Dr. Veronica Anderson, is a parent of a disabled student attending the Yuba College Sutter Campus, who was disappointed to see the Route 5 will be eliminated and is concerned how her daughter will get around. She finds it unacceptable that her daughter would have to wait at least an hour for one of her parents to pick her up if Route 5 is eliminated. Dr. Anderson stated that closed or reduced Dial-A-Ride services will make getting around harder for her daughter and other disabled students. These changes will take away their independence. Dr. Anderson stated that Yuba College disabilities services are located at the Marysville campus, and students must use Route 5 to get to the campus to use their services.

The next speaker, identified as Tracy, stated she is disabled and has been riding our buses daily for 24 years. She is concerned for the people who don't speak English, the hearing impaired, those in wheelchairs, or people who just don't know where they are, and taking away Routes 2 and 5, they will not have a way to get to their doctors. She stated a lot of these people are scared and don't know how they are going to get around.

The next speaker, Grace Ford, depends on Route 2 to get her across town to get to Sutter North, or to hook up with Route 1 to get to Linda. She expressed concern that not all people have cell phones to call in or if their cell phone goes dead, how you can call in to schedule their trip. She does not agree with Routes 2 and 5 shutting down and Dial-A-Ride shutting down early.

The next speaker, identified as Sherry, uses Route 2 most of the time and catches the bus across from her apartment and is concerned if Route 2 is taken away because she can't walk to Gray Ave to catch Route 1. She stated she takes Dial-A-Ride for her medical appointments, which has been good up until four months ago when they started picking her up late and she cannot make her appointments on time. She is worried that if Dial-A-Ride cannot get her to appointment on time when you call 14 days in advance, then how is the new system going to work any better?

The next speaker identified herself as Jennique Lee, Program Manager at the Freed Center for Independent Living in Yuba City. Ms. Lee stated she has concerns with the changes, having to use smartphone or computer is going to cause some problems for some people with disabilities who have mobility issues and for some it's a cost issue to have a phone or a computer. Another issue is that the people that have to use Dial-A-Ride because of disabilities have to pay more for a one-way ride than the cap for a day on the micro transit, which is inequitable because the services are very similar. Therefore, people with disabilities are paying higher amount. Another concern is that their understanding is there are two wheelchair spots on the on-demand buses, and if they are feeding into Route 1 bus and multiple on-demand buses have people in wheel chairs, and they all come to the same Route 1, how do you prioritize who gets the two spots on the Route 1 bus, and who has to wait?

The next speaker (unidentified) stated they had come to speak on behalf of friends that live on Arboga who couldn't make the meeting because they wouldn't be able to get home in time, and stated they want to us to keep the Route 5. The speaker also expressed concern about a friend that uses Dial-A-Ride every day and can't get rides because they are told Dial-A-Ride is overbooked.

Director Kirchner closed the public hearing at 4:27 pm.

Director Bains asked Executive Director Mauk to explain what the services are going to look like and address as many of the comments made during the public hearing as possible.

Mauk addressed the apparent misunderstanding that if Routes 2 and 5 are discontinued, there would be no alternative. Mauk stated that there will be an alternative and that every location that is currently serviced by Routes 2 and 5 will be within the new microtransit service area. Mauk stated that any current Route 2 and 5 bus stops can be used for accessing the new on-demand system. If riders currently walk 15 minutes to get to a bus stop, it's highly likely the microtransit vehicle will be able to meet them much closer to where they started. By design, it could meet riders in front of their location, the closest cross street, or at the end of the block. Mauk stated the on-demand service would cover everywhere Routes 2 and 5 are currently serving, and beyond.

Speaker Dr. Anderson restated that Dial-A-ride is not picking up people on time now, and there is no guarantee that her daughter will be able to get to school on time four days a week. Mauk stated that with the addition of microtransit as recommended, we are effectively increasing the capacity of the current demand response services.

Director Kirchner thanked the members of the public who participated in the discussion and expressed their concerns, and reminded attendees that changes will not occur until January 2025.

Director Flores thanked the residents that attended and expressed his appreciation for the feedback. Director Flores directed staff to prioritize public education, so residents understand how it works, adding the new system does seem a lot more convenient if it works out as planned.

Director Blaser asked if we are in an early transition phase. Mauk stated that this will be a new roll out and we do anticipate a few technical hitches. However, there will be opportunities to tweak the system. Mauk stated that there is no guarantee we will meet our goals as projected but committed to complete transparency throughout the implementation. Mauk stated that our goal is to provide better service to the public and if the new service doesn't work or doesn't perform as anticipated, we will recommend changes.

Director Fuhrer left the meeting at 4:50 PM.

Director Bains made a motion to approve the NextGen Transit Plan Phase 1 Service Changes and Fare Structure as proposed. Director Flores seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

III. Public Business from the Floor

None.

IV. Consent Calendar

Director Bains made a motion to approve the Consent Calendar. Director Flores seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

V. Reports

A. Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) Project Award.

Mauk stated staff's recommendation to authorize the execution of a contract with VIA Mobility in an amount not to exceed \$352,500 to provide the software application needed to dispatch our new and existing demand response services, including a customer facing app for micro transit. The initial term of the draft contract covers an eighteen-month pilot period. The contract amount stated represents total costs for the entirety of the contract term assuming exercise of three additional one-year options.

Director Flores made a motion to authorize the Executive Director to execute an agreement with VIA Mobility, in an amount not to exceed \$352,500, to provide an On-Demand Scheduling & Dispatching System, pending final approval of legal counsel. Director Bains seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

B. Feather River Air Quality Management District (FRAQMD) Blue Sky Grant Application for FY 2025.

Mauk stated that the Feather River Air Quality Management District (FRAQMD) is now accepting proposals for the current round of Blue Sky Grants. Approximately \$116,000 is available this year which is slightly less than what was available last year. Yuba-Sutter Transit has long submitted grant applications to this program and most recently received funds to support the very successful Discount Monthly Pass Program for youth, seniors, and persons with disabilities. Under this program, regular \$15 discount monthly passes are sold for just \$5 using FRAQMD funds to cover the \$10 in lost fare on each pass. Based on current discount pass sales and allowing for continued growth in the future, staff is currently projecting the sale of 7,500 passes over a proposed 9-month continuation period through calendar year 2025. With approval, the grant request will be for \$75,000 for a performance period beginning April 2025.

Director Bains made a motion to authorize submittal of a FRAQMD Blue Sky grant application for \$75,000 to continue the Discount Monthly Bus Pass Program for youth, senior, and eligible persons with disabilities, through the end of the calendar year 2025 as proposed. Director Flores seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

C. FY 2024 Annual Performance Report.

Mauk stated that systemwide ridership is up 11% in the most recent fiscal year ending June 2024. Vehicle service hours remain relatively flat and fare box recovery ratio has improved to above 10% for the first time since the pandemic.

D. Project and Program Updates.

1. Caltrans State Route 70 Binney Junction Phase 2

Mauk stated that Caltrans staff reported that HQ is still reviewing the settlement terms of our potential temporary construction easement for Binney Junction Phase 2. We are working towards the October Board meeting for possible approval of the easement agreements and the property lease of the alternate site. Construction is anticipated to begin in May 2025.

2. NextGen Transit Facility Project

Mauk reported that staff held the first, all day design workshop last week with the entire consultant team to begin the environmental and preliminary design process for the new facility.

3. Commuter Survey Results

Mauk reported survey results from an online survey conducted following requests from the public to start commuter service to the new state office complex located on Richards Blvd, north of downtown Sacramento. Mauk reported that 164 respondents took the survey with 35% stating they will be working or are already working at the new state office and 39% disagreed with us adding time to their commute.

4. FY 2024 Independent Fiscal Audit Virtual Field Work, September 23rd -27th

Mauk noted that field work for the annual fiscal audit will be conducted all next week.

5. Annual Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) Unmet Transit Needs Hearing on Tuesday October 22nd (virtual) and Thursday, October 24th (in-person)

Mauk stated that the annual Unmet Transit Needs Hearings, as required by State Transportation Development Act funding regulations, will be held virtually at 6:00pm, Tuesday, October 22nd and in-person locally at the Yuba County Government Center at 1:00pm, Monday, October 24th

6. 2024 Sikh Parade Shuttle

Mauk reported that organizers and law enforcement have requested a slight route change for this year's shuttle and staff continues to work with planning partners.

VI. Correspondence / Information

None

VII. Other Business

None

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:02 pm.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 17, 2024, at 4:00PM in the Yuba County Board of Supervisors Chambers, unless otherwise noticed.