

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: North County Regional Transit Plan

MEETING DATE: February 23, 2005

AGENDA ITEM: 6

RECOMMENDATION:

Review and approve proposed Scope of Work for a comprehensive plan for North County regional transit services.

SUMMARY:

Preparation of a North County regional transit plan is recommended based on the need to establish a vision and define the areas future transit service.

DISCUSSION:

This item is continued from the last meeting. Matt Dobberteen, County Public Works, proposed development of a North County Transit Plan to address a number of outstanding issues. The committee requested a Scope of Work for a North County Transit Plan. This staff report outlines the reasons why a long range strategic plan is needed to address regional transit issues in the North County and provides a draft scope of work to help improve transit in north County.

Why is a long range plan needed to address North County transit services?

The North County currently lacks an overall plan for provision of regional transit services both within North County communities, and between these communities and adjacent areas such as the South Coast and southern San Luis Obispo County. Given population growth, increasing traffic congestion along commuter corridors, and increasing demands for regional transit, a long term regional transit plan would provide a mechanism to define the needs of this area and a strategy for how to build an improved system in the future.

The plan will provide information on future estimated demand for transit in the North County, the service options that could address that demand, and the funding available to deliver transit services. This is important in assessing the role all available revenues have in funding new transit services, the ability of these funds to support continuation and expansion of urban and intercommunity transit services, and, the need for supplemental funds, such as Measure D, in addressing regional transit service needs.

Having a plan in place that has buy-in from the community and local policy boards will help provide the support needed to obtain discretionary state and federal funding grants which can help preserve scarce local transportation dollars available within the region.

The plan will address the role of the transit operators in providing local, regional, and intercounty services in addressing transit service needs. North County **regional** transit services are currently provided by six different operators:

- 1) SMAT (Inter-City Service between Santa Maria, Lompoc and VAFB slated to start in June, 2005)
- 2) SMAT and San Luis Obispo Area Transit (intercity service between Santa Maria and San Luis Obispo)
- 3) MTD (Santa Ynez Valley Commuter Service)
- 4) Guadalupe Flyer (Guadalupe to Santa Maria)
- 5) County (Los Alamos to Santa Maria and Cuyama to Santa Maria), and,
- 6) SBCAG (Clean Air Express).

In addition COLT, SMAT, and Santa Ynez Valley Transit provide services within the developed regions in the North County. Is this the most cost-efficient delivery of regional transit services? How can regional services be better integrated with local services to enable riders to use access a seamless system? A comprehensive review of current transit operations can provide recommendations for the development of the most efficient system in the future.

How does this process fit into Measure D reauthorization?

A vote on the Measure D reauthorization package will likely be put before the voters in November 2006. Is there a need to allocate any future Measure D revenues to transit? Currently, Measure D funds are used specialized transportation services for the disabled and elderly, and are used for transit services as determined by the local agencies. Because intercommunity and commuter transit services in the North County do not have a dedicated funding source, would Measure D be an appropriate future funding source? To know if additional operating revenues are needed to fund transit, an overall assessment of forecasted demand and expected revenues is required.

How will this help address the transit needs assessment process?

The last few years of the annual Transit Needs Assessment indicate this process may usurp local individual transit plans. The limited viewpoint of transit that occurs from this process may blur a long term strategic vision. Transit service decision-making is often done in a reactive mode rather than according to an agreed upon plan and set of priorities. In addition, the annual assessment may be superseding short range transit planning and has the potential for influencing the direction of long term transit planning in the North County region. A North County Regional Transit Plan can help maintain local control over the priorities for transit.

The North County currently lacks an overall strategic vision for provision of regional transit services both between North County communities and between these communities and adjacent areas such as the South Coast and southern San Luis Obispo County. Given population growth, increasing traffic congestion along commuter corridors, and the twin prospects of increasing demand for regional transit and higher allocations of TDA funding for local agencies, would a long term regional transit plan help paint a more detailed picture of how to better connect North County communities?

The attached Scope of Work outlines the key tasks for the development of the plan. Staff believes the answers to the questions posed above offer a compelling case for the development of a North County Regional Transit Plan.

STAFF CONTACT:

Michael Powers, Matt Dobberteen (County of Santa Barbara, Public Works)

SCOPE OF WORK NORTH COUNTY REGIONAL TRANSIT PLAN

Objective

- Provide public agency staff and elected officials with information documenting the relationship between population growth in rural and urban areas, ridership demand, and funding.
- Assess long range transit needs in the urban areas as it relates to service expansion and integration with local and regional (intercommunity and commuter) transit services.
- Address emerging regional transit needs, including those between North County communities, from the North County to the South Coast, and between North County and San Luis Obispo County.
- Address the link between urban and rural transit services.
- Assess transit needs and programs for rural unincorporated communities.
- Provide assistance to public, transit and social service agencies in support of the development of regional transit services.
- Provide transit planning assistance to local and public transit agencies for the provision of transportation opportunities for the transit dependent and the choice rider, including a focus on the use of transit as a means to reduce traffic congestion (including commuter service).
- Assess transit funding needs in context of remaining TDA revenues and Measure D reauthorization.

Previous and Ongoing Work

- Transit Needs Assessment 2005
- Triennial Performance Audits 2004 of public transit agencies (COLT, SBMTD, SMAT and SYVT), Consolidated Transportation Agencies (Easy Lift Transportation and SMOOTH) and SBCAG
- North County Intercommunity Transit Service Implementation Plan 2004

Tasks

1. Develop coordinating committee to assist in study preparation
2. Prepare RFP for consultant services and distribute RFP under competitive bidding procedures
3. Review proposals and select contractor
4. Identify existing local and regional services by service area and region
5. Conduct preliminary data gathering on available reports, existing services, fares, equipment, costs, etc. Conduct interviews, surveys, and workshops to assess need for services
6. Prepare regional ridership forecasts by service area and region in coordination with SBCAG and other local transit forecasts in transit plans

7. Estimate service needs for urban and interregional services
8. Assess viability of transit to serve farmworker transportation needs
9. Estimate future transit funding needs and assess funding distribution options between local and regional transit services
10. Develop draft service plan to address operational parameters, service coordination, phasing, vehicle description and procurement, marketing, fare policy, funding options, budget, performance measures, service administration and coordination, and pooled maintenance, etc.
11. Provide for advisory committee review and comment on plan, report on disposition of comments, and, amend plan accordingly
12. Provide for public review of draft plan, report on disposition of comments, and amend plan accordingly
13. Present draft and final plan before SBCAG Board

Products

Date

▪ Committee Formation	6/05
▪ RFP distributed	7/05
▪ Contractor Selected	9/05
▪ Public scoping workshops	11/05
▪ Ridership forecasts	12/05
▪ Technical report on service and equipment needs	2/06
▪ Draft Plan	4/06
▪ Final Plan	5/06

Budget

Funding

SBCAG	<u>\$20,000</u>	FTA 5303	\$10,000
Consultant	\$110,000	SBCAG	<u>20,000</u>
		Local Agencies*	\$100,000
			<u>\$130,000</u>

- TDA with option to use 5311(f) funds if successful with proposed grant application to cover some of the costs.