



STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Coastal Express Memorandum of Understanding

MEETING DATE: July 20, 2006

AGENDA ITEM: 6D

STAFF CONTACT: Scott Spaulding

RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize the Executive Director to sign amended MOU with Ventura County Transportation Commission for Coastal Express Transit Service to include a representative of the Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District as an ex-officio member of the Policy Committee.

DISCUSSION:

In August 2001 the Coastal Express bus service began providing daily bi-directional public transportation between Ventura and Santa Barbara/Goleta under a three year CMAQ-funded pilot project. An MOU was executed in 2000 between the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) and SBCAG to jointly fund and manage the service. VCTC manages the service contract and is the lead agency for the program, although route and schedule planning are conducted jointly by SBCAG and VCTC staff. Under Section 6 of the current MOU, a Coastal Express Policy Committee of comprised of representatives from Ventura and Santa Barbara counties meets annually to review the performance of the service and provide policy direction on service changes .

The most recent Policy Committee meeting was held on June 26, 2006 and a summary of the meeting is attached.

At the June 26 meeting, the Committee unanimously approved a recommendation to amend the Coastal Express MOU to add an MTD representative to the Policy Committee as an *ex-officio* member, providing MTD a more formal role in Coastal Express policy issues. Under the Public Utilities Code, any transit operator planning or delivering service within the jurisdiction of a transit district must receive the consent of that district. Since MTD is a statutorily created transit district and the Coastal Express provides transit services within the district boundaries, the committee and staff believe that it would be appropriate to add an MTD representative to the committee.

Member Agencies

The modified language regarding the inclusion of an MTD representative on the Policy Committee is emphasized and is located in Section 6 of the attached MOU. The MOU was approved by the VCTC board of directors on July 7, 2006. Staff is recommending that the executive director be authorized to sign the revised MOU.

COMMITTEE REVIEW:

The Coastal Express Policy Committee voted unanimously to approve the recommendation.

ATTACHMENTS:

Summary of June 26 Policy Steering Committee meeting
Revised VISTA Coastal Express MOU



**Meeting Summary
COASTAL EXPRESS POLICY COMMITTEE
Monday, June 26, 2006 9:45 AM
Carpentaria City Hall
5775 Carpentaria Ave**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The committee chose Supervisor Bennett to chair the meeting. He called the meeting to order 9:48 am.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

3. SERVICE INDICATORS

Ed Webster distributed a chart which had been accidentally omitted from the mailing. He then described the ridership and fare revenue for FY2005 and the July-December 2005 period. He noted the significant increase in ridership, in May averaging 570 weekday passengers. Councilperson Fulton asked if that was total boarding. Ed answered yes. Supervisor Bennett noted that that was good ridership on the congested corridor.

4. ON BOARD SURVEY RESULTS

Ed Webster reported on 2005-06 on-board rider survey. The survey is done each year, and is self-administered. He noted that the riders gave the Coastal Express a 94% plus satisfaction rating. In response to a question, he stated that the biggest factor which would encourage increased ridership is increased frequency of the service, which is similar to the comments received on other VISTA routes.

Mayor Blum asked if we have overcrowding on the buses. Ginger Gherardi responded that we have expanded the service whenever we reach capacity on a bus, and that we have had to add two buses, including a tripper, this year. She explained how we have added the service "on the cheap" since it was not budgeted for, but thought some innovative work with our contractor, we were able to stay within our budget. Supervisor Carbajal then asked how we pay for additional service. Ginger briefly noted the existing funding arrangement, noting the budget would be discussed during item #6. She said that we have committed all the funds that are currently available, and will need to look for additional funds in FY 2007/08. Jim Kemp added that the service first uses fares and "attributable federal funds". Once those are in the budget, the remainder is split between the two counties, with VCTC providing federal funds, and SBCAG providing Measure D funds which are needed to "match" the federal funds. SBCAG budgeted funds for the Coastal Express for a 6 year period.

Supervisor Carbajal asked if we knew the origins of the passengers. Staff responded that the survey showed about 85% begin in Ventura County. Councilperson Fulton added that the Automatic Passenger Counter data he had received showed a similar result.

5. 2006 SERVICE SCHEDULE

Ed Webster provided an update on annual service changes planned for August 2006. He noted that we will move back the start time for the morning express bus to Goleta so that it gets into Goleta at about the same time as the schedule shows when we change the schedule in August.

Councilperson Fulton stated that in the longer term, he has concerns about the downtown Ventura parking. The city is going to “push” all day parkers out of the lower two levels of the downtown parking structure, and at a future date, may charge for parking. Some Ventura Council members want to move the bus service to the fairgrounds – which the city does not control, will add time to the trip, and may not be available. Both Vic and Ginger noted that if the city starts charging for parking, it would be possible to tie it in with the smartcard. Councilperson Fulton also stated that the city is developing plans for a multi-modal transportation facility, and has identified some alternate sites (fairgrounds, near the Holiday Inn (Crown Plaza), or on Ash near the original SP terminal). He noted that all of them are out of the downtown proper, and not close to housing, shopping, or jobs, and that SCAT service is on Main Street, also a distance from all of the sites being looked at.

Sheri Fisher stated that the SBMTD is cooperating with the VISTA program, and currently hoping to implement a long term transfer demonstration, incorporate the Coastal Express and Clean Air Express into their plan for a new downtown transit center, and they are currently providing Coastal Express information at their customer service center. She asked if VISTA was providing or planning service to the Santa Barbara Community College. Victor responded that we expected passengers to transfer to the service that SBMTD has from the downtown terminal to the college.

Ginger commented that VCTC is upgrading the smartcard equipment this year, in part with funds obtained by Congressperson Capps. VCTC is looking to work with SBMTD to try and get them linked to the smartcard program and the nextbus program.

There was then a discussion about the future of Coastal Express service improvements. Councilperson Fulton stated that the City of Ventura might want to pay for additional service as a part of their “vision”. He noted that the city is building medium density housing in the downtown area which is being used by people commuting to Santa Barbara. While the desire may be there, he was unsure about the source of any funding. Supervisor Bennett stated that he thought over the next year the staff work with the policy committee to develop additional funding options. Supervisor Carbajal felt that the service should be moved to the “next level”.

The Committee also discussed the possible improvements on Highway 101. Ginger noted that part of it could get funding from the State’s Interregional Road funding pot. She felt that a bigger issue was getting past the environmental document until the La Conchita slide had been addressed. Supervisor Bennett noted that with an HOV lane the same number of buses not only provided faster service, but could make additional trips for the same cost (the contract is per hour). He suggested that in some area we might consider taking a lane to create a longer HOV facility.

Supervisor Carbajal moved, and Councilperson Fulton seconded a motion that staff work with the Committee over the next year on how to move the service to the next level, and develop funding options. The motion was unanimously approved.

6. FINANCIAL REPORT

Ed Webster gave an update on operating expenditures and revenue for FY2006 and projections for FY2007. He noted that there were three sources of cost increase- increased due to added service, those due to the contract annual adjustment, and a one time adjustment being recommended due to the huge cost increases in fuel costs. The FY 2007 funding was approved on a motion by Supervisor Carbajal, seconded by Mayor Blum.

7. RFP SCHEDULE FOR 2006/07 – 2011/12

Ginger reported that the current contract for service ends in July 2007. VCTC will be issuing an RFP late in 2006 or early 2007 for future service, and awarding in the spring of 2007.

Supervisor Bennett suggested the Committee get together in the spring of 2007 to discuss the future changes to the service.

8. MOU UPDATES

Jim Kemp noted that the Coastal Express operates partially within the SBMTD service area, and while they have been very cooperative, their status give them the responsibility to review and approve transit service changes within their service area as a transit district. He suggested that it would be appropriate to add them to the Committee to facilitate continued coordination. Supervisor Bennett suggested adding SBMTD as an ex-officio (non-voting) committee member. Councilperson Fulton moved, and Supervisor Carbajal seconded a motion to add SBMTD as an ex-officio member, and directed staff to draft language and present it to the VCTC and SBCAG. The motion was unanimously approved.

9. ADJOURN

Supervisor Bennett asked staff to mail out the meeting summary from the 2003 Coastal Express policy meeting. He then adjourned the meeting at 10:51 am.

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN
THE VENTURA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
AND
THE SANTA BARBARA COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS**

Regarding Coordination of Intercity, Fixed Route Public Transportation Service between Ventura and Santa Barbara/Goleta.

Originally approved: August 15, 2000
Amended: August 21, 2003
Amended: May 7, 2004
Amended: July 20, 2006

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is entered into between the Ventura County Transportation Commission, hereinafter referred to as "VCTC", and the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments, hereinafter referred to as "SBCAG", for the purpose of defining agency roles, responsibilities and commitments in conjunction with the operation of intercity fixed-route public transportation service in the US 101 corridor between Ventura and Santa Barbara/Goleta.

This document reflects the intent of both parties to proceed with implementation of the public transportation service as described below.

1. Project Description

The project will consist of regularly-scheduled, fixed-route, intercity express bus service between Ventura and Santa Barbara/Goleta. The service will be open to the public, for all trip purposes, and will be fully accessible to persons with disabilities. The service will be on-going, with an annual review to include service modifications and budget adjustments based on direction received from the Policy Committee.

2. Lead Agency

VCTC will be designated as the lead agency for administration of the project, and will be responsible for service contracting and compliance with all federal and state requirements, including reporting requirements pursuant to the National Transit Database.

3. Cooperative Agreements/Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

This MOU defines in general terms the expected service level, budget, funding obligations, and performance requirements for the service.

4. Service Plan

The bus service will operate seven days a week. Stop locations will be determined annually, but will include one or more stops in the Cities of Ventura, Goleta, Santa Barbara, and Carpinteria. Express service may be instituted on some trips to provide rapid and convenient service to various parts of the service area. Weekday morning (AM) and afternoon (PM) peak period buses will be extended to serve the Hollister Avenue corridor in Goleta and may include UCSB.

A detailed service plan will be presented to and approved by the Policy Committee annually. The service plan will include route and schedule information, revenue and expenditures, and a summary of current and future marketing efforts. Yearly performance standards will be included in the service plan and monitored to insure that acceptable performance thresholds are met.

5. Funding

VCTC and SBCAG shall share equally in the net costs associated with the service, after deducting Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5307 funds attributable to the service, all passenger fares, and any other operating revenue attributable to the service.

VCTC will contribute FTA Section 5307 funds, including both those Section 5307 funds attributed to the project, and some Section 5307 funds attributed to other services in Ventura County. SBCAG will provide the non-federal required local match for the FTA funds. In the event that funds other than local transportation funds or FTA 5307 funds are used, it will be the responsibility of the agency obtaining the funds to prepare all supporting documentation needed by the granting agency.

6. Policy and Technical Committees

A Policy Committee shall be established and consist of two elected officials from Santa Barbara County, two elected officials from Ventura County, the executive director of VCTC, and the executive director of SBCAG. The members from Santa Barbara County (or their alternates) shall be selected by the SBCAG board of directors. The Ventura County elected officials will be the Ventura County Supervisor District #1 and a representative appointed from the San Buenaventura City Council. . *A representative of the Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transportation District (SBMTD) will serve as an ex-officio member of the Policy Committee.*

The Policy Committee shall meet at least once a year to review and approve interagency agreements, budgets, and service plans for the following year. No action shall be taken by the Policy Committee without the approval of a majority of the members from each County. A quorum shall consist of a majority of the representatives from each County.

A Technical Committee shall be established and consist of staff representatives from VCTC and SBCAG. Representatives of other agencies may be asked to serve on the technical committee as needed or required.

The Technical Committee will develop detailed service plans, routes, schedules, and other service details and establish performance measures.

7. Service Contracting

Upon expiration of the Coastal Express service and vehicle contract, VCTC will prepare, in cooperation with SBCAG, a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the provision of Coastal Express service by a contractor. The RFP and new contract for services will be generally similar in format and content to those used for existing VCTC VISTA bus services within Ventura County, and shall meet all applicable federal and state requirements. SBCAG will review and provide VCTC with comments regarding the selection of a service contractor.

Coastal Express service contracts will include performance standards and penalties agreed upon by VCTC and SBCAG.

8. Fares

Fares will be subject to modification by the Policy Committee at their annual meeting or any other public meeting of the Policy Committee. Fare increases will be approved by VCTC. SBCAG may also hold one or more public hearings regarding any proposed fare increase. Any fare increase will comply with the procedural requirements and regulations promulgated by the Federal Transit Administration.

VCTC shall provide and maintain all necessary Smartcard equipment for Coastal Express buses. VCTC shall maintain its Smartcard sales outlet network in Ventura County and provide equipment for a maximum of two (2) Smartcard sales outlets in Santa Barbara County. Any sales outlet in Santa Barbara County shall be operated by local agency personnel and the hosting agency shall be responsible for maintaining a phone line connection (does not require a dedicated line) to the sales outlet equipment.

VCTC shall provide and maintain all necessary Nextbus information system equipment for Coastal Express buses. VCTC shall provide and install a maximum of two (2) standard Nextbus bus arrival signs at locations in Santa Barbara County. Providing and paying for suitable electrical power to Nextbus arrival signs are the responsibility of the local hosting agency in Santa Barbara County. VCTC, SBCAG and the local hosting agency shall mutually agree upon locations for Nextbus arrival signs.

9. Marketing

VCTC will include the Coastal Express in its VISTA system marketing activities, promotional materials, printed schedules, etc. Any marketing programs specific to the Coastal Express may be developed either cooperatively by SBCAG and VCTC, with the costs for all marketing activities and promotional materials included in the annual budget and shared equally, or by either agency as a part of its internal marketing program controlled and paid for by the sponsoring agency. The schedule and other service information shall be accessible on the VCTC VISTA website and the SBCAG Traffic

Solutions website. VCTC's existing guaranteed-ride-home and SBCAG Traffic Solutions emergency-ride-home programs will be available to users of the service.

10. Amendment

This MOU may be amended by the written consent of both parties.

11. Term of the Agreement

The term of this Agreement is on-going and will continue unless terminated or modified by amendment. This Agreement may be terminated by either party upon written notification to the other three months prior to the beginning of the next fiscal year. In that event, the Agreement will terminate at the end of the existing fiscal year.

VENTURA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR _____
Date

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

VCTC COUNSEL _____
Date

SANTA BARBARA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR _____
Date

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY COUNSEL _____
Date