

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: North Santa Barbara County Transit Plan

MEETING DATE: September 21, 2006

AGENDA ITEM: 9

STAFF CONTACT: Michael Powers

RECOMMENDATION:

- A. Receive presentation and provide comments on draft North County Transit Plan.
- B. Release draft plan for public and agency comment.

SUMMARY:

The purpose of the North County Regional Transit Plan is to lay some groundwork to address the transit needs in Northern Santa Barbara County. The Plan's focus is to improve short and long term regional service connections, to develop a framework for administering and funding services and to recommend marketing strategies to enhance the public's awareness of local and regional transit services. The intended outcome of this study is a feasible plan to be implemented over a period of ten years. The plan provides service expansion scenarios both with and without projected revenues from the proposed renewal of Measure D. The study began in December 2005 and considerable progress has been made in the last seven months with a draft Plan now ready for your review.

A representative from the consulting team will be available to present the plan to the Board. In this report staff has provided a summary of the venues for public input on the plan, a summary of the transit service improvement strategy, organizational recommendation, and funding. Staff recommends your board approve release of the plan for formal public and agency comment. The draft plan will be revised as necessary based on comments from the committees, agencies, citizens and a final plan will be scheduled for consideration by the North County Subregional Planning Committee and the SBCAG board in October.

Stakeholder and Public Input

A technical committee composed of local transit agency representatives has helped guide the development of the plan.

An important element in developing this Plan is to obtain input from a wide range of community representatives. This was accomplished with the follow outreach efforts:

Member Agencies

Buellton ■ Carpinteria ■ Goleta ■ Guadalupe ■ Lompoc ■ Santa Barbara ■ Santa Maria ■ Solvang ■ Santa Barbara County

1. A series of interviews were conducted with stakeholders including local agency representatives, organizational and community leaders, members of the public, political leaders, and representatives of advocacy groups. The interviews were conducted between December 2005 and February 2006.
2. Surveys were conducted in February 2006 to obtain input on transit needs and major issues related to North County transportation services. It included an online survey; flyers to a broad section of agencies and organizations to encourage feedback and participation in the outreach activities; “mini-stations” at transfer locations; distributing and collecting onboard surveys on Santa Ynez Valley Transit (SYVT); and advertising in local newspapers.
3. Three public open house meetings were held during the week of June 19th as listed below:
 - a. Santa Maria - Town Center Mall Community Room, Wednesday, June 21 from 3pm to 7pm
 - b. Lompoc - City Council Chambers, Thursday, June 22, from 3pm to 7pm
 - c. Solvang - Veteran’s Hall, Friday, June 23, from 6pm – 8 pm

Approximately 40 people, both transit riders and non riders, attended the meetings over the three day period. The meetings were set up as an open house format to encourage participants to collect information about existing services and review and provide feedback on service alternatives. A PowerPoint presentation was also presented at the open house meetings

Individual meetings were also held with Marc Chytlo and Pueblo representatives to insure their concerns were identified.

4) Input was also received from SBCTAC during the times the group was briefed on the Plan, e.g., during July.

5) The North County Subregional Committee received a briefing on the Plan in February, June, and this last week. Staff will report on the most recent discussion at the board meeting.

Service Strategies

Short-term transit plan service strategies focus on improving regional and inter-county connections in the next five years. They include filling in geographic and temporal gaps in the existing transit network and addressing new and emerging markets as well as the significant population and employment growth in North County. Examples include extending the Breeze to Buellton, moving up the Guadalupe Flyer schedule so it connects with SLO RTA Route 10, adding bi-directional service on the Clean Air Express, adding trips on the Valley Express to ease overcrowding. Transit services being considered are traditional fixed route services, and new service types such as general public dial-a-ride, flexible route services sometimes called deviated fixed route services (or flexroutes), subscription or vanpool programs and volunteer driver programs. Specific projects between local agencies revolve around coordination of information and marketing so the transit user sees a seamless system, a coordinated RFP for all services, uniform ADA eligibility process, and coordinated purchasing.

Longer-term service strategies are focused on furthering coordination to provide seamless transit connectivity throughout North County into Nipomo in southern San Luis Obispo County by linking all urban cores with bi-directional frequent service during peak periods and several mid day trips.

Organizational Approach

The Plan for the interim period recommends formalization of the ongoing transit coordinating committee composed of local transit providers that has guided the development of this plan. The plan recommends that this committee also consider over time the options and preferences for a longer-term reorganized transit structure but that a centralized approach at this time is not recommended.

Funding

Assumptions were made for the development of a financial plan. One scenario assumes the renewal of Measure D; another assumes this supplemental funding is not available. The financial analysis emphasizes the importance of ongoing traditional sources of transit funding such as Section 5307, 5311, and Transportation Development Act Funds to maintain existing transit services. Significant expansion of regional transit is very dependent on the renewal of Measure D with its dedicated funds for local and regional transit services. In the discussion with local transit providers it became apparent that most of the TDA Funds that may become available for transit over the forecast period will likely be needed to improve local transit services based on the needs that will develop in the local jurisdictions. Funding for regional transit service continuation and expansion is very problematic without Measure D renewal since TDA is the only major viable and reliable alternative funding source available. It is possible that expansion of regional services will likely be in competition with expanding local services for future funding unless some alternative revenue source is identified. Without funds from Measure D renewal, financial projections in the plan indicated that it is likely that maintaining local transit services will be increasingly reliant on TDA funds and that service needs will eventually require that TDA funds now spent by north county agencies on street and road repair and maintenance be spent on transit.

Next Steps

The Plan will be subject to review by SBCAG advisory committees and interested parties. Formal public review will follow the SBCAG meeting. The availability of the plan will be noticed in the newspaper and on the SBCAG web site. Staff proposes public presentations before the City of Santa Maria, City of Lompoc, the SBMTD board and others upon request. Comments will be due by October 6 to enable changes before final approval by the SBCAG Board on October 19. Implementation of the Plan will occur as funding becomes available.

COMMITTEE REVIEW

The North County Subregional Committee received a briefing on the Plan in February, June, and this last week. Staff will report on the most recent discussion at the board meeting.

Attachment

Executive Summary, Draft North Santa Barbara County Transit Plan, August, 2006

Full copies of the draft plan are being distributed to board members.

Public members may request a CD of the plan or download the plan from the SBCAG web site: www.sbcag.org

North Santa Barbara County

Transit Plan

DRAFT

August 2006



Submitted by:



Executive Summary

Background

North Santa Barbara County has seen rapid growth in recent years and significant growth is projected in the long-term. According to the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments regional growth forecast projections, the county's population is projected to increase by 30% between 2000 and 2030 from 399,000 to 521,000. These growth levels will result not only in the need for more jobs and services, but also in greater demands on the county's transportation network. Demographics are also changing: the total number of seniors (age 60 and over) in the county is expected to nearly double over the same period. As a result, more seniors will reside in North County — often in places that are difficult to serve by traditional public transportation.

Even as the population grows and ages, new job centers are being created, more housing is being built and traditional urban boundaries are being blurred. At one time, it was relatively easy for Santa Barbara County's transit providers to focus on providing trips for residents within their local community. Today, jurisdictions recognize that residents need to travel beyond their community and across county lines.

Although growth is taking place, Santa Barbara County still has a number of rural characteristics, including an agricultural sector. While getting commuters to population centers is important, rural travel needs are also critical. These include short trips within communities not served by local transit, long-distance travel to medical facilities, airports, Amtrak train stations, out-of-county destinations, and transportation for farm workers.

The study, culminating in a Ten-Year Transit Plan for North Santa Barbara County, addresses the transit needs in growing Northern Santa Barbara County. The Plan recommends short and long term regional and inter-county service connections, a framework for administering and funding services and strategies to enhance the public's awareness of local and regional transit services. The Plan identifies a series of recommendations to be implemented over a period of ten years.

The Study Process and Schedule

This study was initiated in December 2005. It consists of both a technical analysis and a public input process. The technical analysis considered projected growth in Northern Santa Barbara County, transit ridership and trends, an assessment of transit needs from a variety of sources and an evaluation of transit funding and organizational relationships. To ensure the Plan was developed with input from a broad spectrum of interests, several steps were taken to ensure public and stakeholder participation throughout the study process. A series of interviews were conducted with stakeholders including local agency representatives, organizational and community leaders, members of the public, political leaders, and representatives of advocacy groups. A public outreach process was

conducted in two phases. The first phase obtained input on transit needs and major issues related to North County transportation services. It included an online survey; “mini-stations” at transfer locations; distributing and collecting onboard surveys on SYVT; and advertising in local newspapers. The second phase of the public outreach consisted of three public open house meetings in June 2006 and focused meetings with identified community groups to obtain feedback on preliminary alternatives.

A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was formed to work with SBCAG and the consultant throughout the study process. The TAC met monthly to provide guidance and direction in developing this North Santa Barbara County Transit Plan. In addition, policy direction was provided by the North County Subregional Planning Committee of the SBCAG Board.

Existing Transit Services

Northern Santa Barbara County residents have access to a wide array of local, regional and inter-county transit services. Local fixed route services are provided in Santa Maria, Lompoc and Guadalupe. There are a number of regional and inter-county services connecting cities and communities within Northern Santa Barbara County and services with connections to South County and neighboring Ventura and San Luis Obispo counties.

Throughout this Plan, services in Northern Santa Barbara County are grouped into three categories as listed below.

- Local Services**
 - Colt
 - Guadalupe Shuttle
 - SMAT
 - SYVT
- Regional Services**
 - Breeze Bus
 - Clean Air Express
 - Los Alamos Shuttle
 - New Cuyama Shuttle
 - Valley Express
 - SBMTD
- Inter-County Services**
 - Coastal Express
 - RTA Route 19

There are also private carriers serving Northern Santa Barbara County. Figure ES-1 presents the days and hours of operation and number of daily trips or frequencies for public services and private carriers serving Northern Santa Barbara County.

Figure ES-1: Transit Services Summary

	Days and Hours of Operation	Monday - Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Number of Trips/Day or Headway
Local Services	COLT	6:30 AM - 8:00 PM	9:00 AM - 5:00 PM	No Service	30 minute headways
	SMAT	6:15 AM - 10:30 PM	8:15 AM - 5:45 PM	9:15 AM - 5:45 PM	30 minute headways
	Guadalupe Shuttle	10:00 AM - 4:00 PM	No Service	No Service	Demand response
	SYVT	7:00 AM - 6:50 PM	7:00 AM - 6:50 PM	No Service	90 minute headways (45 minute headways in Solvang and Buellton)
Regional Services	Los Alamos Shuttle	Tuesdays only 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM	8:00 AM - 4:00 PM	No Service	1 trip
	New Cuyama Shuttle	Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM	No Service	No Service	1 trip
	Guadalupe Flyer	6:15 AM - 6:00 PM	8:15 AM - 5:00 PM	No Service	60 minute headways
	Breeze Bus	5:45 AM - 6:30 PM	No Service	No Service	Bi-directional round trips concentrated during commute times
	Clean Air Express	5:15 AM - 8:00 AM & 3:30 PM - 6:30 PM	No Service	No Service	6 roundtrips to/from Lompoc; 5 roundtrips to/from Santa Maria
	Valley Express	6:15 AM - 8:00 AM & 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM	No Service	No Service	4 roundtrips during commute times
	SBMTD	5:25 AM - 12:00 AM	6:00 AM - 11:20 PM	6:20 AM - 10:00 PM	15-30 weekday headways on most routes, 30-60 minute weekend headways
	Amtrak Bus	4:45 AM - 12:00 AM	4:45 AM - 12:00 AM	4:45 AM - 12:00 AM	1-3 daily northbound and southbound trips depending on location
Intercountry	RTA Route 10	6:00 AM - 9:15 PM	7:15 AM - 6:45 PM	New Sunday service to start Sept. 2006 on a demonstration basis	2 hour weekday headways; 3 trips on Saturday
	Coastal Express	6:00 AM - 7:00 PM	7:30 AM - 7:00 PM	7:30 AM - 7:00 PM	13 roundtrips concentrated during commute times
Private Services	Greyhound	5:35 AM - 10:30 PM	5:35 AM - 10:30 PM	5:35 AM - 10:30 PM	4 daily northbound and southbound trips
	Chumash Casino Shuttle	24-hour	24-hour	24-hour	1-2 hour headways to Santa Maria, Lompoc, and SYV; 3 daily trips to Santa Barbara and Goleta
	Central Coast Shuttle	4:00 AM - 10:00 PM	4:00 AM - 10:00 PM	4:00 AM - 10:00 PM	5 daily trips
	Roadrunner Shuttle	24-hour	24-hour	24-hour	Demand response
	SuperRide Airport Shuttle	3:00 AM - 12:00 AM	3:00 AM - 12:00 AM	3:00 AM - 12:00 AM	Demand response

There is no consistent pattern of how transit services are currently administered in Northern Santa Barbara County. The day-to-day administrative functions are handled by several different agencies that assume responsibility for planning, marketing, budgeting, service provision or contractor oversight, and other day-to-day duties. Oversight is provided by various policy boards or city councils. Figure ES-2 outlines the administrative structure of the North County transit services.

Nearly all of the services rely on Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds consisting of Local Transportation Funds (LTF) and State Transit Assistance (STA) funds. Two of the regional transit services (Breeze and Valley Express) rely on federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) demonstration funds that will expire in June 2008. CMAQ funds for the Clean Air Express expired in June 2006 and the service is relying on Measure D funds in FY 2006-07 to fill in the gap. Measure D provides funding mainly for paratransit and demonstration services. Federal formula funding –Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Sections 5307 and 5311 and discretionary 5311(f) provide operating support to the majority of services.

**Figure ES-2 Administrative Structure –
Transit Services in Northern Santa Barbara County**

Service	Lead City/Agency	Staff	Policy Board	Public or Private Operation?	Interagency Memorandum of Understanding?
COLT	City of Lompoc Transportation & Aviation Division	Aviation/Transportation Administrator, one Staff Assistant and one Maintenance Assistant (under the MOU agreement)	Lompoc City Council	Private (American Star)	No
SMAT	City of Santa Maria Public Works Department	Transit Services Manager, Transit Coordinator and support positions	Santa Maria City Council	Private (MV Transportation)	No
SMOOTH	SMOOTH (CTSA for North County)	Smooth staff	SMOOTH Board of Directors	Provides own transportation	Agreements with social service agencies
Guadalupe Shuttle/Flyer	City of Guadalupe	City Administrator and support positions	Guadalupe City Council	Contract with SMOOTH	No
SYVT	City of Solvang	Public Works Director/City Engineer	Solvang City Council	Private (American Star)	Yes, MOU between Cities of Solvang and Buellton and the County of Santa Barbara
Los Alamos Shuttle	County of Santa Barbara	Program Manager	Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors	Contract with SMOOTH	No
New Cuyama Shuttle	County of Santa Barbara	Cuyama Valley Recreation Department Staff	Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors	Private (MV Transportation)	No
Breeze Bus	City of Santa Maria Public Works Dept.	Transit Services Manager, Transit Coordinator and support positions	Policy Committee oversees service during demonstration period ¹	Private (MV Transportation)	Yes, MOU between Cities of Santa Maria, Lompoc, County of Santa Barbara and SBCAG
Clean Air Express	SBCAG	SBCAG Staff	SBCAG Board of Directors	Private (Santa Barbara Air Bus)	No
Coastal Express	VCTC	VCTC Staff	Executive Directors of SBCAG and VCTC, two SCBAG Board members, a Ventura City Council member, the Ventura County 1 st District supervisor, and an ex-officio member selected by the MTD Board.	Private	Yes, MOU between SBCAG and VCTC
RTA Route 10	San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority	Regional Transit Manager and support positions	San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority (SLORTA)	Public	Yes, MOU between RTA, SLOCOG, SBCAG and SMAT for one-year extension ²
Valley Express	SBMTD	SBMTD Staff	SBMTD and SBCAG Board of Directors during three-year demonstration	Public	No
SBMTD	SBMTD	SBMTD Staff	SBMTD Board of Directors	Public	Ad Hoc Committee exploring longer-term options

Notes:

(1) Policy committee representatives include 2 Santa Barbara County Supervisors (Districts # 4 & 5), Lompoc City Council, Santa Maria City Council and ex-officio representatives from VAFB and Caltrans.

(2) MOU covers one-year extension for additional runs on RTA Route 10 to Santa Maria

Short-Term Recommendations

This report identifies a series of short-term coordination, organizational and service recommendations to be phased in during the next five years.

Coordination Projects

Several jurisdictions in North County have illustrated that they already cooperate and coordinate well. The Technical Advisory Committee established for this North Santa Barbara County Transit Plan and the cooperative arrangements established to implement new regional services are evidence that many of the players are motivated to improve transit coordination in North County. Other examples of existing and ongoing coordination activities include a coordinated Request for Proposals (RFP) between two transit services for day-to-day operations, free transfer arrangements between select connecting operators, and coordinated public information and marketing. Several coordination strategies are identified to build upon and expand transit coordination in Northern Santa Barbara County. These strategies, listed below, are further described in Chapter 7.

- Coordinated Information and Marketing
- Coordinated RFP for All Services Employing a Private Contractor
- Uniform ADA Eligibility Process
- Fare Coordination
- Coordinated Purchasing

Organizational Structure

Two recommendations are presented to address the complex transit organizational structure in Northern Santa Barbara County. These recommendations maintain the current autonomy of existing transit services.

The first recommendation is to establish a formal transit coordinating committee to advance the coordination efforts that are already underway in Northern Santa Barbara County. The recommended composition of this committee includes staff representatives from all of the transit services operating in North County. The committee could be facilitated by SBCAG staff that would also assume responsibility for preparing agendas and meeting summaries and handle all meeting logistics. There would be minimal costs associated with this new committee. No new staff would be required because existing SBCAG staff and transit agency representatives would add these responsibilities to their current duties. One of the first tasks would be to prepare an annual work plan outlining the major projects to be undertaken in the first year.

The second recommendation is to develop a detailed transition plan to transfer management of the Clean Air Express from SBCAG to the Cities of Santa Maria and Lompoc. SBCAG is currently administering the Clean Air Express. There is no long-term plan to fund the service and without a dedicated source of funds, there is no guarantee for maintaining current service levels or continued operation. The Cities of Santa Maria and Lompoc have expressed strong interest in the management of the Clean Air Express beginning in FY 2007/08. It is recommended that the Clean Air Express Working Group continue to meet to negotiate and further clarify their respective roles and responsibilities. The goal is to develop and execute a MOU for implementation at the start of the 2007/08 fiscal year.

Service Recommendations

Short-term service recommendations are presented in two phases. The first phase is to establish the highest priority connections, beginning in FY2007/2008. The second phase involves enhancements to the short-term service recommendations, beginning in FY2010/2011. These service recommendations assume operations for 24 to 36 months in order to build ridership before enhancing services in subsequent phases.

Short-term service recommendations allow for better coordination between services without having to make any major route overhauls. Schedule adjustments on several routes and other minor changes would help make the North County transit service more efficient and better connected for the passengers.

The enhanced short-term recommendations provide several key service improvements that should be introduced during year four of the plan. These improvements are meant to build on the already established framework of the Recommended Short-Term Plan by adding weekday service to provide better connections within the region and by introducing Saturday service on two important routes. A summary of the service recommendations and phasing are illustrated in Figure ES-3.

In addition to the recommended changes to regional transit routes, other services can be implemented to enhance mobility in North Santa Barbara County. One important program is Farmworker Vanpool Transportation. Traditional vanpool programs have been successfully adapted to offer farmworker transportation in some communities. Because this is a significant challenge for North County, a vanpool program alternative is presented as the best strategy for this difficult-to-serve commuter group. Why is this market such a challenge? Agricultural workers do not have a consistent worksite (it can change weekly, or sometimes day to day). In addition, they usually work early hours, or sometimes variable hours, and work is seasonal, so employment may not be year-round. . The most successful example in California is the large program in Kings County, which incorporated some smaller programs in other counties, including one in Fresno County that was overseen by Enterprise Rent-A-Car's subsidiary Enterprise Rideshare. The City of Santa Maria and Santa Barbara County currently have plans to implement a farmworker vanpool pilot program in the northern portion of the county. It will be evaluated and if successful, the program may be expanded.

Figure ES-3 Summary of Short-Term Service Alternatives for Transit Services Operating in North Santa Barbara County

Service	Current Service	Summary of Proposed Short-Term Service Changes	Phasing	
			Short-Term	Enhanced
Breeze	Provides regional service from Lompoc Mission Plaza to VAFB to Santa Maria Transit Center Provides eight trips a day in each direction weekdays only Focuses primarily on peak period with one mid-day trip in each direction	Provide two peak-hour round trip extensions between Buellton/Solvang and Lompoc	X	
		Provide Saturday service between Buellton and Santa Maria via Lompoc		X
Clean Air Express	Operates weekday commuter service from Lompoc to Santa Barbara/Goleta and Santa Maria to Santa Barbara/Goleta Operate five AM and PM peak Santa Maria trips and six AM and PM peak Lompoc trips Has no stops in Santa Ynez Valley Operates Peak only service	Extend service to Santa Maria Transit Center	X	
		Provide Saturday service		X
COLT	Provides local service to Lompoc and the surrounding communities of Vandenberg Village, Mesa Oaks, and Mission Hills Operates Monday through Friday from about 6:45 AM to 8:00 PM on five fixed-routes and Saturdays from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. All routes operate on 30-minute headways except for Route 4, which has 60-minute headways	No changes to this service		
Cuyama Shuttle	Twice weekly demand response shuttle from Cuyama to Santa Maria	No changes to this service		
Guadalupe Flyer	Provides bus service weekdays from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM from Guadalupe to Santa Maria Operates every 60 minutes	Provide early morning service from Santa Maria allowing for better connections with RTA Route 10	X	
Los Alamos	Once a week demand response shuttle from Los Alamos to Santa Maria	No changes to this service		
RTA Route 10	Operates from Santa Maria to San Luis Obispo with stops in Nipomo, Arroyo Grande, Shell and Pismo Beach Provides nine northbound and southbound on weekdays approximately every two hours Provides three Saturday trips in each direction	No changes to this service		
SMAT	Provides local service to Santa Maria, Orcutt and Tanglewood seven days a week on 11 fixed-routes Routes operate from about 6:00 AM to 7:00 PM weekdays and most originate and return to the Town Center Transit Center Routes operate 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM on weekends Operate new owl service from 7:00 PM to 10:30 PM Buses operate at 30 or 60-minute headways	No changes to this service		
SYVT	Operates two fixed routes connecting the communities of Buellton, Solvang, Santa Ynez, Ballard and Los Olivos No AM peak connections to Valley Express The routes operate from about 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM Monday through Saturday every 90 minutes	Provide morning tripper to connect with Valley Express service	X	
New Service Between Santa Maria and Santa Barbara via Buellton	Clean Air Express currently operates weekday commuter service from Santa Maria to Santa Barbara/Goleta.	Provide Santa Barbara-Buellton-Santa Maria AM peak service and Santa Maria-Buellton-Santa Barbara PM peak service		X
		Provide bi-directional midday service	X	
		Provide stops in Buellton	X	
Valley Express	Operates commuter service from Solvang and Buellton to Goleta and Santa Barbara weekdays only Provide four trips in the AM peak and four trips in the PM peak No midday or reverse commuter service	Provide two peak hour trips to ease overcrowding	X	
		Provide bi-directional midday service		X

Other Short-Term Recommendations

The Plan includes two other types of recommendations; performance measures and standards for monitoring system performance; and transit supportive policies to improve the physical environment to increase transit ridership. Recommended service measures and standards are intended to shape how services are allocated and assist policymakers in identifying where additional services should be provided and where services might be eliminated. The recommended transit supportive policies address issues of land use, circulation, and urban design. Proactive land use planning can also make future transit service allocation decisions easier by creating transit-supportive environments where people can easily and efficiently access services, allowing transit to be productive and convenient.

Long-Term Recommendations

In the longer-term, the Plan identifies strategies to further enhance service and discusses options for organizing transit services in Northern Santa Barbara County.

Service Strategies

Incremental enhancements to the short-term service recommendations would remain in effect until FY2013/14. At that point, further enhancements are recommended based on the assumed successes of the short-term service strategy.

The objective of the long-term service plan is to accomplish the following:

- **Eliminate Duplication of Services.** Increased regional services means that special Santa Barbara shuttles and other trippers could be eliminated based on local preferences.
- **Schedule Simplification.** Under the long-term service strategy, it is recommended that a consistent schedule that is easy to remember be adopted and that all services are scheduled in relation to one another to maximize transferability and ease of use.
- **Route Simplification.** Looking regionally, North County intercity service should focus on linking major urban cores of Santa Maria, Santa Barbara, Lompoc, the Santa Ynez Valley, Guadalupe and Nipomo rather than serve as a mix of commuter-focused extensions between pairs of communities.
- **Ease of Use.** Under the recommended long-term service plan (and beginning in FY 2011/12), it is assumed that passengers could make a single transfer between North County services for more efficient overall connections and routing. Essentially, transfers should be able to be made between bus routes rather than between systems. This suggests easier fare instruments and payment procedures.
- **Marketing.** All jurisdictions would have “ownership” in the regional transit network. With consistent routes that provide connections, it is possible to provide

an easy-to-understand map of the system and simplified schedules. Schedules and customer service can provide countywide travel assistance.

- **Maintains Service to Important Markets.** Local bus services within Lompoc, Santa Maria, Guadalupe and the Santa Ynez Valley are maintained. Regional services are enhanced.

Specific service recommendations include a timed-transfer system with bi-directional regional service Monday to Saturday. Weekday regional routes, such as Valley Express, Clean Air Express and Breeze will run bi-directional service during the peak periods and provide several trips during the midday. Other specific service recommendations are detailed in Chapter 8.

Organizational Structure

The transit coordinating committee recommended in the short-term, should further explore a series of longer-term alternatives for organizing transit services in Northern Santa Barbara County. The alternatives represent a continuum, from maintaining the local agency structure and coordinating on select projects to full consolidation as a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) or transit district with taxing authority. There is no correct answer or easy way to pursue longer-term organizational alternatives. To move forward with this discussion requires additional research, discussion and consensus-building at both the technical and policy level. Given the complexity of this issue and the number of agencies involved, we recommend that the transit coordinating committee take the lead on this topic, conduct further research and talk with policy-level officials to determine their interest and preferences for a longer-term reorganized transit structure in Northern Santa Barbara County.

Funding Plan

The Funding Plan projects operating and capital costs for a ten-year period based on the short and long-term serviced recommendations. The Plan assumes two basic funding scenarios. The first scenario assumes the renewal of Measure D ½ cent sales tax along with an additional ¼ cent sales tax. With renewal of Measure D, transit in North County will be well funded, and the transit enhancements proposed in this plan will be able to be realized. On a cumulative basis, by the end of the ten year projection period, there is a surplus of funds that could be available to North County to support additional capital costs or expansion of operations that may be warranted in the longer term.

The second scenario assumes that Measure D is not renewed, and that these sales tax receipts end in FY 2009/10. Without the renewal of Measure D, funding the recommended service enhancements will be very difficult as expenses are projected to will exceed revenues in most years, with the deficit increasing over time. The plan cannot be balanced simply by delaying capital projects a few years, and all the improvements recommended in this plan will not be realized. Projects will need to be scaled back,

and/or additional sources of revenue to fund on-going operations and capital costs will be required.

With the objective of balancing costs and revenues, a third “constrained funding” scenario was developed assuming Measure D is not reauthorized. It required eliminating long term improvements to regional services and some capital projects were delayed to outer years of the ten-year plan period.

It is important to note that the funding plan assumes that other than Measure D renewal, no new funds are projected during the period to help pay for service expansion. Federal funds made available through the 2005 Federal Transportation Funding Bill (SAFETEA-LU) are projected assuming a conservative annual growth rate of three percent. LTF funds have been projected at a rate of four percent per year. In recent years, a larger percentage of TDA funds have been devoted to transit to support enhanced transit services in North County. This trend is expected to continue in the next ten years. Based on the historical shift and with input from the Technical Advisory Committee, the projections assume that, gradually over the period, all LTF funds will be transitioned to transit. In Lompoc and Santa Maria, this transition period will be completed within five years (by 2011) with the vast majority of increased funding for transit dedicated to local services. The County is also expected to increase its share of LTF funds on transit with 100% devoted to this purpose in eight years (by 2014). The longer period for the County is based on relatively less demand for transit due to its rural nature.

In any funding scenario, local services will be able to maintain and expand their level of service in the future. The major question is whether regional services, which have depended on start-up funding from discretionary grants and current Measure D will be able to maintain and increase their level of service. The major issue in assessing the viability of regional services and the ultimate financial feasibility of this plan is the future of Measure D. If Measure D reauthorization passes in the November 2006 election there will be sufficient funding to transition regional services from demonstration grants and other start-up funding to stable long term funding. In fact, this analysis demonstrates that in the out-years of the plan there is opportunity for additional enhancements to local and regional services.

If Measure D is not reauthorized (in the next election or a future one), then the future of implementing all of the recommendations contained in this Plan is in doubt, and at the very least new funding sources will need to be developed to fund all of the recommended improvements.

If Measure D does not pass, North County will not only face an overall funding deficit, but it will also need to confront long term sustainable funding for regional services. Passage of Measure D would solve this problem for the foreseeable future. In the absence of this source, local governments will need to consider how TDA funds and federal formula funds are allocated because regional transit could not be sustained without relying on these sources, which are devoted to local services. In this case, it will be particularly important

to consider cost sharing arrangements between jurisdictions to preserve services that serve North County and the region as a whole.