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Public Comments for June 3rd, 2020 RTA Special Board of Directors Meeting

Below are comments received verbatim if by email, or summarized if verbally provided by telephone. Note that the sender's email address has been redacted. These comments will be posted on the RTA website as soon as possible. Any additional comments received after June 2nd, 2020 at 11 AM, will be read aloud at the teleconference meeting.

Comments received as of June 2nd, 2020 11 AM:

From: Eric Greening <**REDACTED**>
Sent: Thursday, May 28, 2020 at 3:15 PM
To: Info <Info@slorta.org>
Subject: Correspondence from Eric Greening for special RTA Board meeting of June 3rd

I would very much appreciate if the RTA Board could approve of the proposed budget amendments WITHOUT the 5% service reduction, due to the lack of the public outreach and process that would normally precede such a reduction. While recognizing that these are extraordinary times, and that transit ridership has fallen drastically during the present "stay at home" order, and that, given the present reduced service, a return to 5% below the previous normal would not technically be a reduction compared to the present level of service. Nonetheless, I believe it is too soon for us to know what the "new normal" will be, and given the availability of the federal funds, I would prefer to see any service reduction, be it at the 5% level or any other level, deferred to a midyear course-correction if needed, rather than have it be assumed at a time when the future still looks so clouded. If there is to be a service reduction, the public needs the opportunity to weigh in on the specifics of how any given percentage of reduction could be achieved with the least impact to the fewest riders. The main scenario I have seen has been that it would at least partially achieved through elimination of the last weekday run. This would not only move the last evening departure from SLO from 8:33 to 7:33, but it would also move the last evening departure from Paso Robles from 7:10 to 6:10, with comparable losses of span of service from other points on all inbound lines.

The best sequence of events as we emerge from the acute phase of the present pandemic would be to start by co-ordinating with Dr. Borenstein on determining when it is safe to step away from the current practices that limit and ration seats to enable "social distancing," and that waive fares to allow passengers to board through the rear door. If this ultra-busy physician were available, it would be useful to have her at the July 8th Board meeting to inform the Board and to aid in the setting of benchmarks for the restoration of more normal practices, be it piecemeal or more comprehensively. If she is not available, I trust Geoff Straw to seek, and make use of, her expert advice. Another item that could be

The Regional Transit Authority is a Joint Powers Agency serving residents and visitors of:

Arroyo Grande Atascadero Grover Beach Morro Bay Paso Robles Pismo Beach San Luis Obispo and The County of San Luis Obispo

discussed at the July 8th meeting could be the benchmarks to inform a decision on when to ramp up the level of service in the direction of what had previously been normal.

Once service has been fully restored, which will require not only the reality but the public PERCEPTION of safety, we should give the public a couple of months to demonstrate with their actions what the needed level of service is. It may be that ridership will remain significantly lower than it had been before the pandemic hit. Should that be the case, there would probably be little resistance to the 5% cut. Several factors may depress ridership: continued fear of shared public facilities and spaces; fewer commuters due to fewer jobs, and more telecommuting to jobs that can accommodate it; low gasoline prices. Factors that could increase ridership include economic hardship that prevents drivers from replacing clunker vehicles, or potential drivers from acquiring them, and pent-up demand for services and activities that had been unavailable during the more acute phases of the pandemic. Until we see how things play out under the novel and unpredictable circumstances, we can't accurately forecast the economic and cultural factors behind future transportation choices and transportation needs.

Although I continue to "shelter at home" and am unable to personally testify to the quality of present service, I completely trust the RTA family to maintain their ethic and practice of safe and responsive public service, and wish to convey to everyone who works for the RTA my greatest respect.