San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority

Short Range Transit Plans

Final Plan

Prepared for

SLO RTA

June 12, 2025

Prepared by LSC Transportation Consultants

San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority

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Final Plan

Prepared for

San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority
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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

San Luis Obispo County spans 3,616 square miles on California's central coast. The majority of the County's 281,712 residents live in communities located within the United States (US) 101 or US 1 corridors.[1] The City of San Luis Obispo is the county seat and the largest city in the County, with an estimated population of 59,219 living within the urbanized area.[2] Other population centers in the County include the Cities of Paso Robles, Atascadero, Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach, Pismo Beach, and Morro Bay and the census-designated places (CDPs) of Nipomo, Los Osos, and Templeton. The California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) is located in the City of San Luis Obispo and serves as a major educational, economic, and cultural center for the region.

Note: *Overlooking Morro Rock* [Photo], by Blake Carroll, 2016, Flickr

Public transit is an important component of the San Luis Obispo County transportation system, enhancing connectivity both within and between communities. Public transit not only aids mobility-limited residents but also yields other benefits such as decreased road congestion, improved air quality, increased economic opportunity, and better access to education.

[1] United States Census Bureau. (2022). *Age and Sex, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*. Retrieved from https://data.census.gov/

[2] Federal Transit Administration. (2023). *FY 2023-2010 Census UZA Population Data.* Retrieved from https://www.transit.dot.gov/

Public transit will play an even more significant role in San Luis Obispo County as the region works to advance the goals of the *2023-2045 Regional Transportation Plan* (RTP), such as reducing single occupant vehicles, mitigating congestion on US 101 and other roadways, and limiting vehicle miles traveled. The RTP and other studies relevant to public transportation in San Luis Obispo County are summarized in Appendix A.

The San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority (RTA) and San Luis Obispo Transit (SLO Transit) are the two largest public transit providers in San Luis Obispo County. The two agencies have retained LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. to update each agency's respective Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP).

While two separate Draft Plans were developed, a series of joint interim memos were initially prepared to both coordinate services to the greatest extent possible, as well as to summarize project progress.

This document, RTA Transit Draft Short Range Transit Plan, is the compilation of a series of Working Papers.

Chapter 2 - This chapter summarizes key characteristics of RTA, including the services currently offered and the agency's capital amenities.

Chapter 3 - This chapter briefly describes other transit services operating in the region, with an emphasis on how these other services connect to RTA.

Chapter 4 - In this chapter, RTA fiscal year (FY) 2022-23 performance is presented alongside existing performance standards. Then, peer transit operators for both programs are analyzed as a means of guiding revised performance standard recommendations.

Chapter 5 - This chapter reviews the demographic and economic characteristics of both San Luis Obispo County and the City of San Luis Obispo, with a focus on data relevant to transit demand and the near-term future of RTA and SLO Transit services.

Chapter 6 - This chapter evaluates RTA operations and performance.

Chapter 7 - Service alternatives for RTA are presented. The alternatives are based on public, stakeholder and staff input.

Chapter 8 - This chapter focuses on the recommended capital improvements needed to operate transit services over the planning period, specifically the transit fleet, the bus stops, and the Government Center Transfer Point.

Chapter 9 - This chapter presents "base case" financial forecasts which were used as the basis for the financial plan.

Chapter 10 - This chapter reviews potential changes to the RTA fare structure.

Chapter 11 - Presents existing and future coordination between SLO Transit and RTA including scheduling/transfer opportunities, joint capital projects as well as a discussion of the regional ADA paratransit service, Runabout.

Chapter 12 - This chapter outlines the Short Range Transit Plan service and capital elements recommended for implementation over the seven-year planning period. A financial plan presenting revenues and expenditures for the seven years is also presented.

Appendix A - Presents recent planning studies relevant to the Short Range Transit Plan effort.

Appendix B - Presents demographic maps of San Luis Obispo.

Appendix C - Presents route profiles for RTA including boardings by hour and by stop.

Appendix D - Presents results of the on-board survey.

Appendix E - Presents the results of the community survey.

Appendix F - Presents a summary of stakeholder input.

Appendix G - Presents a review of RTA and SLO Transit schedule coordination.

Appendix H - Presents a review of RTA and SLO Transit route transfer times.

Appendix I - Presents a communication and marketing plan.

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Chapter 2

OVERVIEW OF THE SAN LUIS OBISPO REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

INTRODUCTION

The San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority (RTA) provides local, intercity, and interregional fixed route service, as well as local and countywide paratransit services, throughout San Luis Obispo County. This chapter discusses the services operated either directly or through contract by the RTA. The RTA's capital inventory, including the revenue fleet and passenger amenities, are also summarized.

HISTORY, GOVERNANCE, AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The RTA is a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) established in 1989 to manage San Luis Obispo County's regional fixed routes and paratransit services. Prior to 2009, RTA services were provided through contract by private operators. However, since 2009, the RTA has operated all of its services directly.

The RTA Board of Directors consists of representatives from all of the cities in which the RTA operates (Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, Grover Beach, Morro Bay, Paso Robles, Pismo Beach, and San Luis Obispo) and five San Luis Obispo County Supervisors. The RTA Board meets every other month and oversees operational and policy issues. Figure 1 presents the RTA organizational structure, outlining how the RTA Board relates to other staff.

The Regional Transit Advisory Committee (RTAC) meets quarterly to provide advice to the RTA Board on pertinent issues. The RTAC is comprised of representatives from the RTA, the County of San Luis Obispo, the City of San Luis Obispo Transit, Atascadero Transit, Morro Bay Transit, Cal Poly, Cuesta College, and the City of Paso Robles, as well as two at-large representatives, one of fixed route travelers and one of paratransit travelers.

RTA SERVICES

RTA Fixed Routes

The RTA operates twelve fixed routes that span local to interregional distances: five long-distance routes, two local Paso Robles routes, four local south county routes, and one seasonal trolley. Generally, RTA service hours are 6:00 AM to 9:45 PM on weekdays, 7:00 AM to 9:00 PM on Saturdays, and 7:30 AM to 7:15 PM on Sundays. Table 1 summarizes RTA services, both fixed route and paratransit, as of December 2023. Detailed descriptions of the RTA fixed routes are included on the following pages. The RTA fixed routes are also shown in Figures 2 through 4.

Figure 1:
RTA Organizational Chart

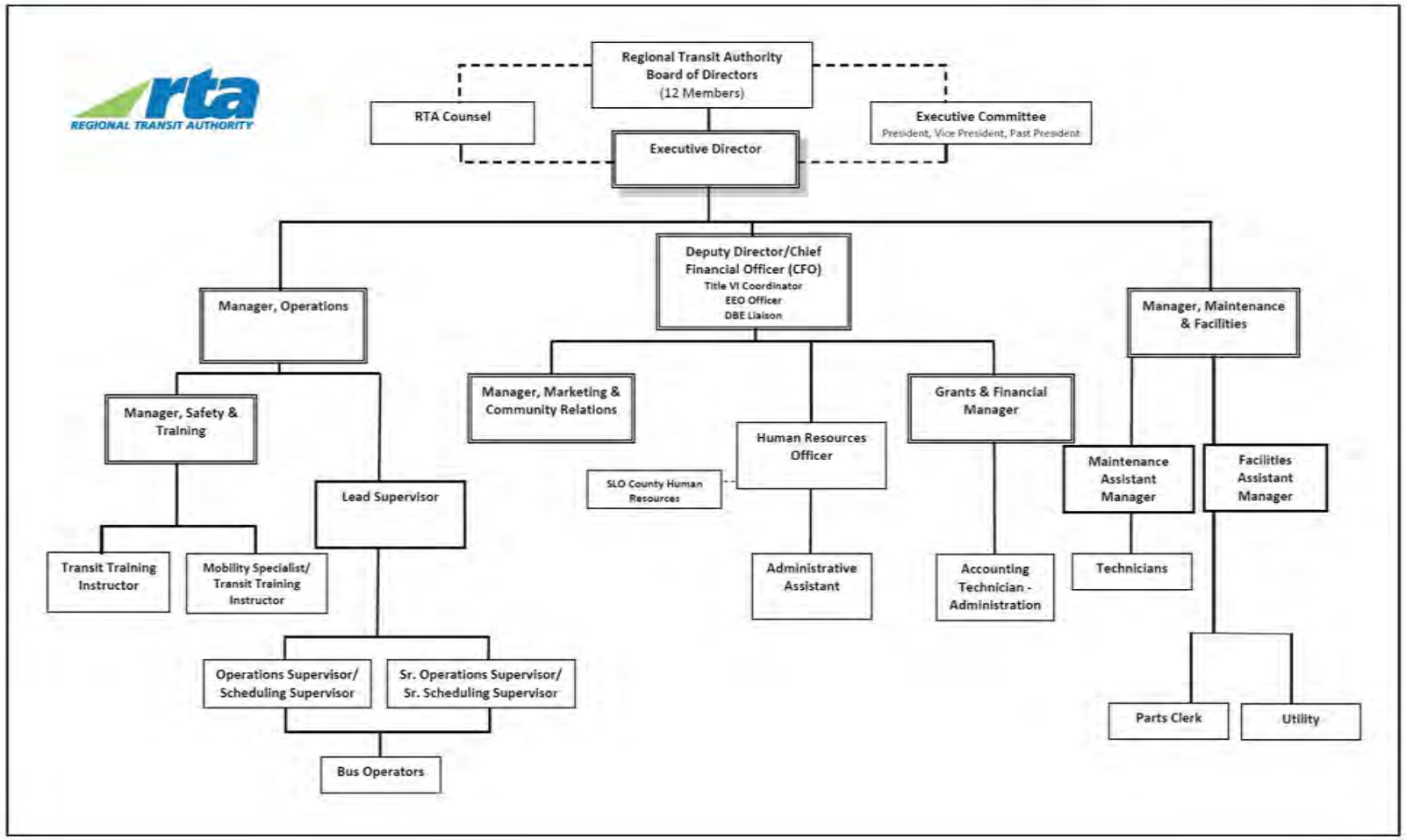


Table 1: Summary of RTA Services and Frequency

	Service Hours[1]						Start & End Locations		Weekday Service Frequency (Minutes)
	Weekday		Saturday		Sunday				
	Start	End	Start	End	Start	End	Start	End	
Bus: Fixed Route									
Route 9 - Paso Robles - SLO	6:01 AM	9:47 PM	6:56 AM	9:03 PM	7:56 AM	7:03 PM	Pine at 8th (Paso Robles)	Same as start	60
Route 10 - Santa Maria - SLO	6:14 AM	9:43 PM	7:14 AM	8:43 PM	8:14 AM	6:43 PM	Santa Maria Transit Center	Same as start	60
Route 12 - Los Osos - Morry Bay - SLO	6:10 AM	10:06 PM	7:30 AM	8:28 PM	8:30 AM	6:28 PM	Santa Ysabel at 15th (Los Osos)	SLO Government Center	60
Route 14 - Cuesta College - SLO [2]	7:30 AM	7:41 AM	--	--	--	--	SLO Government Center	Cuesta College	1 Trip
Route 15 - Morro Bay - San Simeon	6:00 AM	6:44 PM	7:05 AM	8:47 PM	8:05 AM	6:47 PM	Hearst at San Simeon	Castillo at Otter Way	5 Round Trips
Paso Robles Route A	6:45 AM	6:58 PM	--	--	--	--	Pine at 8th (Paso Robles)	Spring at 34th (Paso Robles)	60
Paso Robles Route B	6:48 AM	7:05 PM	7:55 AM	6:05 PM	--	--	Spring at 34th (Paso Robles)	Pine at 8th (Paso Robles)	60
Route 21 - Five Cities Loop Clockwise	6:29 AM	7:29 PM	7:29 AM	7:29 PM	7:29 AM	6:29 PM	Ramona Garden (Grover Beach)	Same as start	60
Route 24 - Five Cities Loop Counterclockwise	6:29 AM	7:29 PM	7:29 AM	7:29 PM	7:29 AM	6:29 PM	Ramona Garden (Grover Beach)	Same as start	60
Route 27 - Grover Beach - Arroyo Grande - Oceano	6:03 AM	9:13 PM	--	--	--	--	Elm @ The Pike (Grover Beach)	Ramona Garden (Grover Beach)	60
Route 28 - Grover Beach - Arroyo Grande - Oceano	6:20 AM	8:14 PM	7:32 AM	8:14 PM	7:32 AM	7:14 PM	Ramona Garden (Grover Beach)	Same as start	60
Avila/Pismo Trolley [3]	4:00 PM	8:50 PM	10:00 AM	8:50 PM	10:00 PM	5:50 PM	Pismo Beach Premium Outlets	Same as start	60
Dial-a-Ride									
Runabout Paratransit [4]	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Senior Go! [5]	7:00 AM	5:00 PM	10:00 AM	3:00 PM	--	--	--	--	--
Shandon - Paso Robles Dial-a-Ride [6]	8:00 AM	5:00 PM	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Templeton - Paso Robles Dial-a-Ride [7]	8:00 AM	5:00 PM	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Paso Robles Dial-a-Ride	7:00 AM	1:00 PM	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Nipomo Dial-a-Ride	7:00 AM	6:30 PM	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Note 1: Summary accurate as of December 2023. No service on Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, or New Year's Day. Saturday service schedule the weeks of Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Note 2: Route 14 service has been temporarily suspended with the exception of one morning run from the SLO Transit Center to Cuesta College.

Note 3: During the 2023 season, the Avila Pismo Trolley was only available from May 5 through September 3 on Friday evenings, Saturdays, and Sundays.

Note 4: The Runabout is available to persons with disabilities that have been certified to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Runabout service hours mirror the service hours of the fixed route which it is providing paratransit service for. Runabout registrants can call and schedule rides from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Sunday.

Note 5: Senior Go! Transportation is available to all seniors ages 65 and older in San Luis Obispo County for up to eight one-way trips per month. This service is funded by SLOCOG and the RTA provides administrative oversight.

Note 6: The Shandon-Paso Robles Dial-a-Ride is only available Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Note 7: The Templeton-Paso Robles Dial-a-Ride is only available Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Source: RTA

Route 9 – San Luis Obispo – Paso Robles

Route 9 provides intercity service from San Luis Obispo to San Miguel along the United States (US) 101 corridor, stopping in Paso Robles along the route, as shown in Figures 2 and 3. Route 9 is available seven days per week; Route 9 operates hourly on weekdays, completes five roundtrips per Saturday, and completes three roundtrips per Sunday. Important destinations served by Route 9 include Cuesta College North Campus, the North County Transit Center (adjacent to the Amtrak Station), the Atascadero Transit Center, the Twin Cities Hospital, the Cal Poly Kennedy Library, and the City of San Luis Obispo Government Center (Government Center).

Route 10 – San Luis Obispo – Santa Maria

Route 10 provides interregional service from San Luis Obispo to Santa Maria in Santa Barbara County (Figures 2 and 4). Route 10 is available seven days per week, operating every hour on weekdays, five roundtrips per Saturday, and three roundtrips per Sunday. Stops served by Route 10 include the Cal Poly Library, the Government Center, the Pismo Beach Premium Outlets, and the Santa Maria Transit Center, among others.

Route 12 – San Luis Obispo – Morro Bay

Route 12 operates between San Luis Obispo and Los Osos via Morro Bay, as shown in Figure 2. Service is available Monday through Friday on an hourly frequency. Route 12 also operates five roundtrips each Saturday and three roundtrips each Sunday. Route 12 does not serve as many timed stops on weekends compared to weekdays, however, so service timing is less regular. Key destinations served by Route 12 include the Government Center, the Cal Poly Library, Cuesta College, and Morro Bay Park.

Route 14 – San Luis Obispo – Cuesta College

Route 14 augments Route 12 service, operating as a tripper route to Cuesta College during the fall and spring semesters. Route 14 service was reduced during the COVID-19 pandemic due to Cuesta College moving most of its classes online. Currently, Route 14 service consists of just one morning run each weekday from the Government Center to Cuesta College, with only one additional stop at the SLO Apartments along the route. Route 14 is shown in Figure 2.

Route 15 – Morro Bay – San Simeon

Route 15 provides deviated fixed route service along the north coast of San Luis Obispo County, providing connectivity between Morro Bay, Cayucos, Cambria, and San Simeon (Figure 2). Riders eligible for Runabout service may request a deviation on Route 15 up to 0.75 miles from the fixed route. Route 15 completes five roundtrips Monday through Saturday and three roundtrips per Sunday. Notable Route 15 stops include Morro Bay Park, Morro Bay High School, the Cayucos Pier, the Cambria Pines Lodge, and the Cambria Library. On weekends, Route 15 also serves the Hearst Castle Visitor Center.

Figure 2:
RTA Regional Transit Services

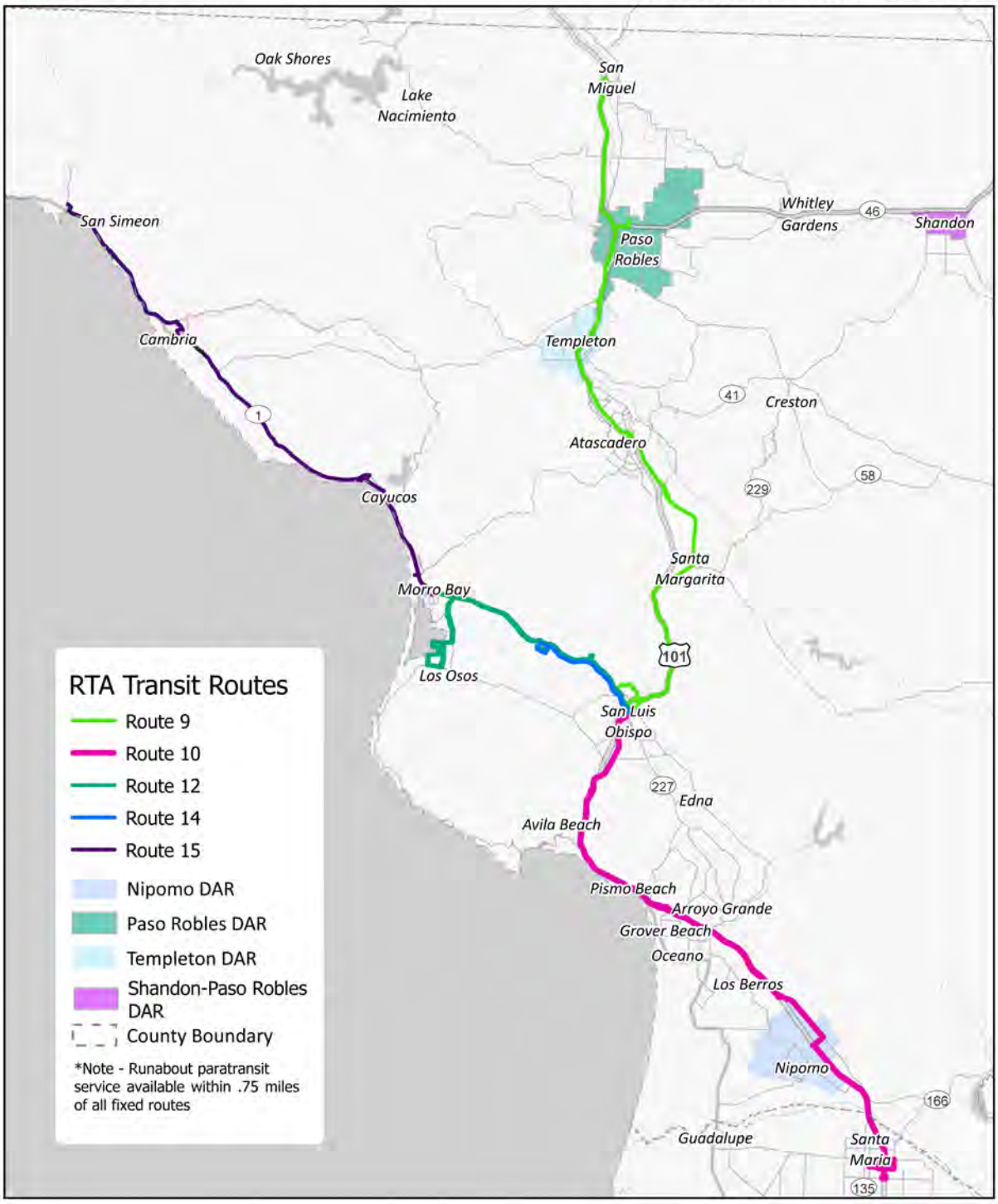


Figure 3
RTA North County Services

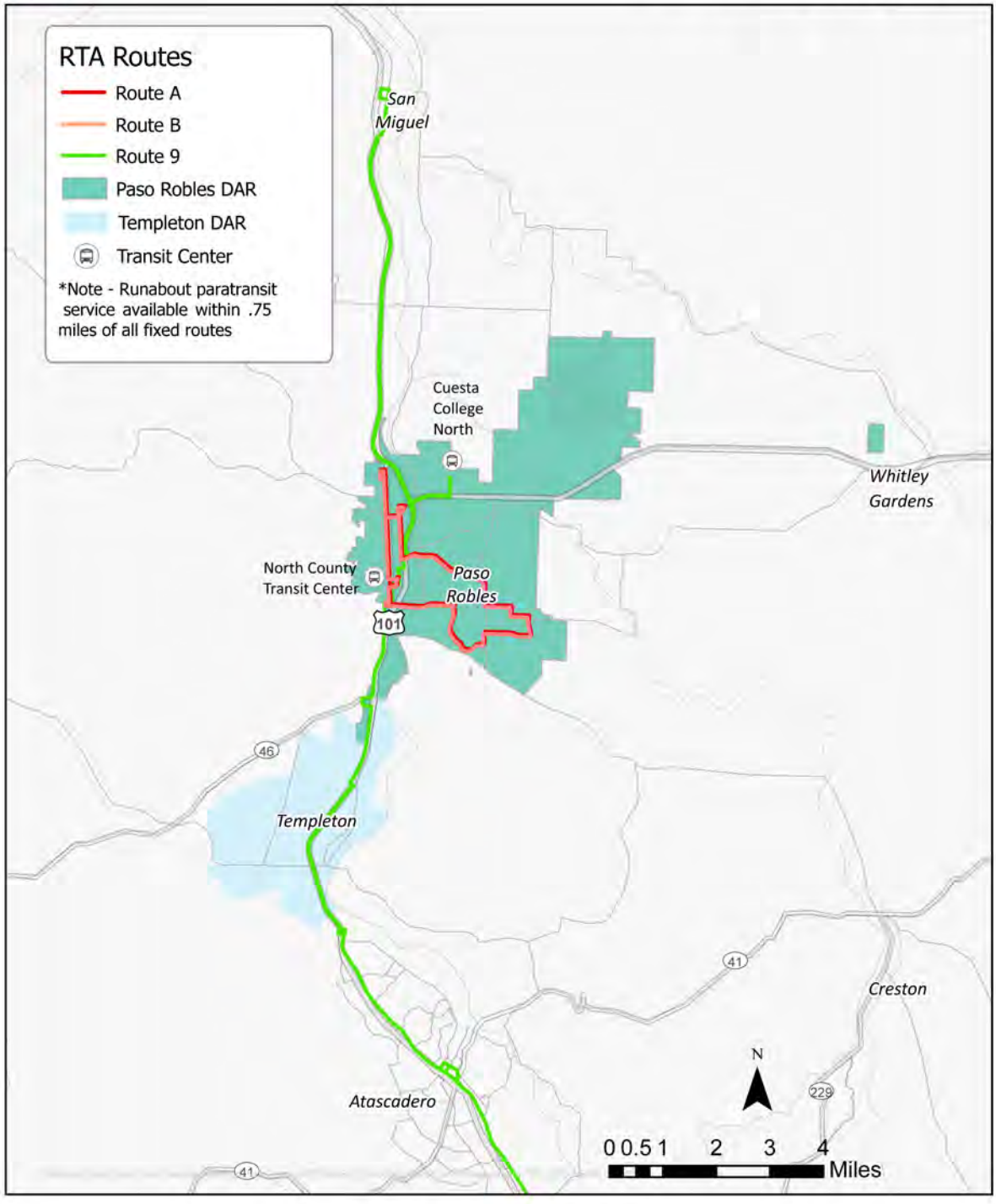
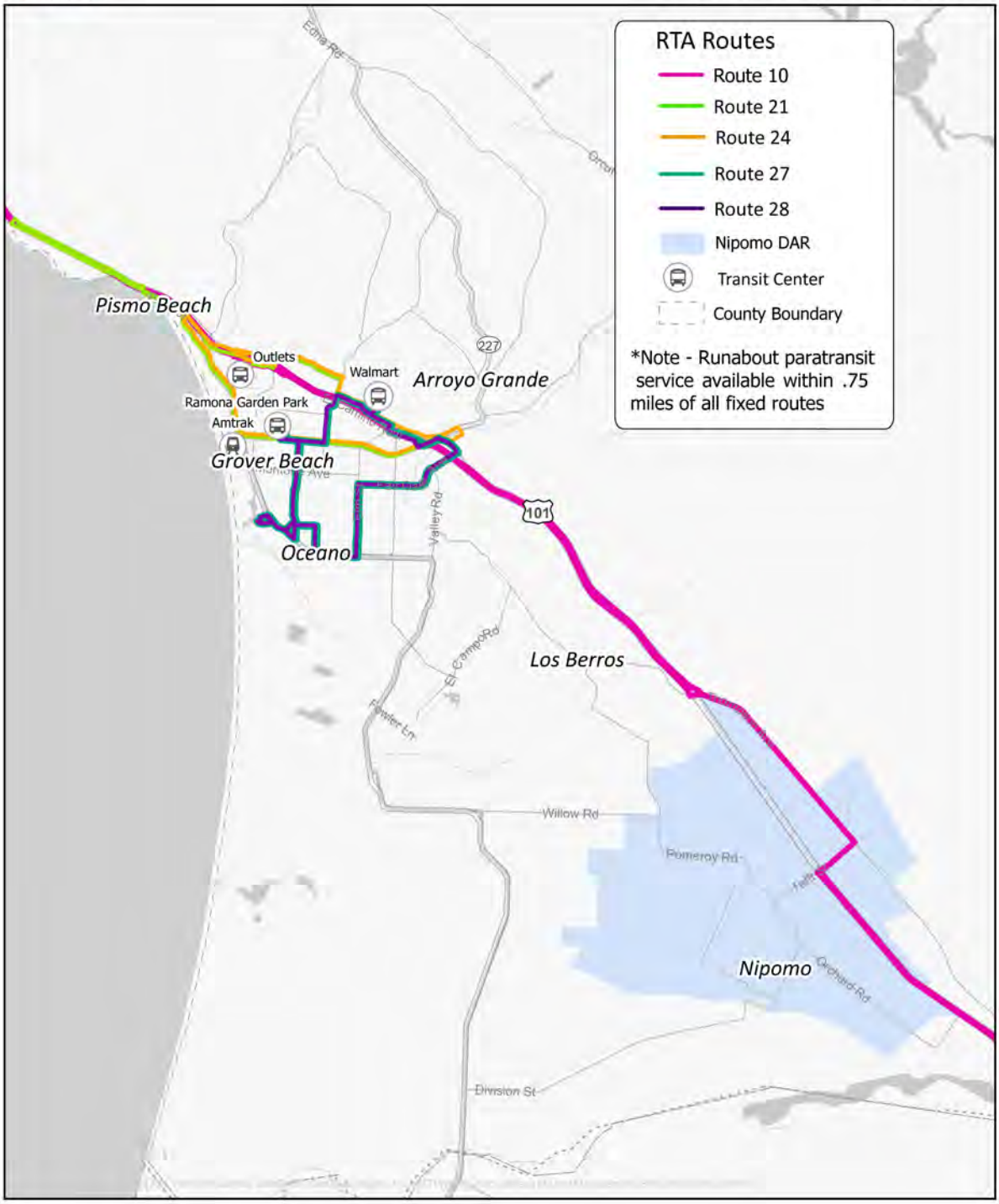


Figure 4:
RTA South County Services



Paso Robles Routes A and B

The RTA operates bidirectional, local service in Paso Robles using two vehicles. The bus operating in the clockwise direction is referred to as Route A, and the bus operating in the counterclockwise direction is referred to as Route B. Both Routes are operated on an hourly frequency and are available Monday through Friday. Route B is also available on Saturday. Stops served by the local Paso Robles routes include the North County Transit Center, the Paso Robles City Hall, and Daniel Lewis Middle School. Paso Robles Routes A and B are shown in Figure 3.

Route 21 – Five Cities Loop (Clockwise)

Route 21 provides hourly, clockwise service to Pismo Beach, Arroyo Grande, and Grover Beach and is available Monday through Friday from 6:30 AM to 7:30 PM, Saturday from 7:30 AM to 7:30 PM, and Sunday from 7:30 AM to 6:30 PM. Stops served by Route 21 include the Pismo Beach Premium Outlets, Ramona Garden Park, Grover Beach Amtrak Station, the Halcyon Park-and-Ride, and the Arroyo Grande Walmart. The stops served only by Route 21 are the Pismo Beach City Hall and Dinosaur Caves Park. Route 21 is shown in Figure 4.

Route 24 – Five Cities Loop (Counterclockwise)

Route 24 provides hourly service along mostly the same route as Route 21, as shown in Figure 4, but in the counterclockwise direction. Route 24 operates Monday through Friday from 6:30 AM to 7:30 PM, Saturday from 7:30 AM to 7:30 PM, and Sunday from 7:30 AM to 6:30 PM. Route 24 is the only route that serves the Arroyo Grande City Hall and Firefighters Memorial Park.

Route 27 – Grover Beach, Arroyo Grande, Oceano (Clockwise)

Route 27 provides hourly, clockwise service to Grover Beach, Arroyo Grande, and Oceano. Route 27 is available from 6:00 AM to 8:15 PM on weekdays only. Route 27 stops at Ramona Garden Park, the Oceano Community Center, the Oceano Senior Center, Arroyo Grande Hospital, and the Arroyo Grande High School. Figure 4 shows Route 27.

Route 28 – Grover Beach, Arroyo Grande, Oceano (Counterclockwise)

Route 28 serves the same route as Route 27, but in the counterclockwise direction. Service is provided every hour from 6:20 AM to 8:15 PM on weekdays, from 7:30 AM to 8:15 PM on Saturdays, and from 7:30 AM to 7:15 PM on Sundays. Figure 4 shows Route 28 in context to the other RTA routes in the south county area.

Avila-Pismo Beach Trolley

The Avila-Pismo Beach Trolley is a seasonal Friday through Sunday service that typically runs from May to September each year. During the 2023 summer season, the Avila-Pismo Beach Trolley was available on Fridays from 4:00 PM to 9:00 PM, on Saturdays from 10:00 AM to 9:00 PM, and on Sundays from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM. The trolley follows an hourly fixed route, stopping at the Pismo Beach Premium Outlets, Dinosaur Caves Park, the Avila Beach Farmers Market, Bob Jones Trailhead, and the Port of San Luis.

RTA Paratransit / Dial-a-Ride Services

Paratransit and Dial-a-Ride (DAR) services provided by the RTA, either directly or by contract, are summarized below.

Runabout

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires public transit operators to provide complementary paratransit service for persons with disabilities who are unable to access local fixed route services. The Runabout has been the sole complementary paratransit service for San Luis Obispo County since 2001. Administered and operated by the RTA, the Runabout serves areas within 0.75 miles of the RTA and SLO Transit regular fixed routes, the Avila-Pismo Trolley, and the Morro Bay Transit Trolley.

Passengers make Runabout reservations in advance by calling dispatch. Runabout provides origin-destination service; however, riders can request door-to-door service if they have a disability that makes origin-destination service infeasible. Every Runabout vehicle is equipped with a wheelchair lift. Runabout service is limited to only those passengers that are verified by the RTA as meeting ADA eligibility criteria.

Nipomo Dial-a-Ride

The Nipomo DAR is a general public service funded by the County of San Luis Obispo and operated by the RTA. Service is available Monday through Friday from 7:00 AM to 6:30 PM. Passengers must schedule rides in advance. Passengers can use the Nipomo DAR to get to RTA Route 10 bus stops, from which they can board the regional service. The Nipomo DAR service area is shown in Figures 2 and 4.

Paso Robles Dial-a-Ride

The Paso Robles DAR is a general public service funded by the City of Paso Robles and operated by the RTA. The service is available Monday through Friday from 7:00 AM to 1:00 PM and requires reservations. Passengers can use the Paso Robles DAR to access the Paso Robles Routes A/B and RTA Route 9. The Paso Robles DAR service area is shown in Figures 2 and 3.

Shandon-Paso Robles Dial-a-Ride

The Shandon-Paso Robles DAR is another general public DAR funded by the County of San Luis Obispo and operated by the RTA. Service is available Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Passengers must call by noon the day in advance to schedule their reservation. The Shandon-Paso Robles DAR allows passengers to connect to RTA Routes 9, A, and B if desired. The Shandon-Paso Robles DAR is shown in Figure 2.

Templeton-Paso Robles Dial-a-Ride

The Templeton-Paso Robles DAR is offered Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. The service is funded by the County and operated by the RTA. Passengers must call by noon the day before in order to schedule their ride; there is no same-day service provided. Passengers can access RTA Route 9 by scheduling rides to Las Tablas Park-and-Ride. The Templeton-Paso Robles DAR service area is shown in Figures 2 and 3.

Key Transfer Locations

Passengers can transfer both between RTA services, as well as from RTA services to other transit programs, at key transfer points. Listed below are important RTA transfer locations, as well as details regarding which services stop at the location.

- Government Center – RTA Routes 9, 10, 12; SLO Transit fixed routes.
- North County Transit Center – RTA Route 9, Paso Robles Routes A/B; Amtrak; Greyhound; Monterey-Salinas Transit services.
- Morro Bay City Park – RTA Routes 12, 15; Morro Bay Transit services.
- Pismo Beach Premium Outlets – RTA Routes 10, 21, 24, Avila-Pismo Beach Trolley.
- Ramona Garden Park – RTA Routes 21, 24, 27, 28.
- Walmart (Arroyo Grande) – RTA Routes 21, 24, 27, 28.
- Santa Maria Transit Center – RTA Route 10; Santa Maria Regional Transit services.
- Grover Beach Amtrak Station – RTA Routes 21, 24; Amtrak; Greyhound.
- Cal Poly Kennedy Library – RTA Route 9; SLO Transit Routes 3 A/B, 4 A/B.

RTA FARE STRUCTURE

Passengers can purchase RTA one-way fares and day passes with cash onboard. All other RTA physical pass products can be purchased at pass outlets or at the ticket vending machine at the Government Center. Passengers can also purchase physical fare products in advance through the RTA website; after purchasing, the passenger will receive their pass via mail. Digital passes can be purchased with the Token Transit smartphone app.

The RTA fixed route fare structure is presented in Table 2, and the paratransit and DAR fare structures are presented in Table 3. As shown, RTA fares differ slightly depending on the route; the intercity routes have one fare structure, while the local Paso Robles and south county routes have a different fare structure. On the RTA intercity routes, the regular one-way cash fare ranges from $1.75 to $3.25 depending on the trip distance. On the local Paso Robles and south county routes, the regular one-way cash fare is $1.50. The discounted cash fares for seniors, disabled, and Medicare card holders is equal to one-half the fixed route fare on all RTA fixed route services. Grade school students are eligible for discounted fares on the RTA intercity and local Paso Robles routes, however they are not eligible for discounts for fare media specific to the local south county routes (Routes 21 – 28).

The RTA offers multiple fixed route pass products that provide a discount compared to paying cash fares. For the RTA intercity and Paso Robles routes, passengers can purchase a stored value card equal to $15.00 or an RTA 31-day pass for $47.00. Discount eligible passengers can purchase the RTA 31-day pass for half price. On the local south county routes, passengers can purchase day passes, 20-ride passes, and 31-day passes specific to the local services (Routes 21 – 28). The prices for the south county-specific pass products range from $1.50 to $37.00, depending on the product and passenger type.

Additionally, Regional Pass products are accepted on all fixed route and deviated fixed route services in San Luis Obispo County, including those services operated by the RTA. The 31-day Regional Pass allows for unlimited rides on eligible services for 31 consecutive days after the pass is activated.

Table 2: RTA Fixed Route Fares

	Intercity Routes (Routes 9 - 15)	Local Routes (Paso Robles Routes A/B, Routes 21 - 28)
Cash Fares		
Regular	$1.75 - $3.25	$1.50
Seniors (65 - 79 years old)	$0.85 - $1.60	$0.75
Seniors (80+ years old)	Free with VIP Card [1]	Free with VIP Card [1]
ADA Cardholders	Free with ADA Card	Free with ADA Card
Disabled	$0.85 - $1.60	$0.75
Medicare Cardholders	$0.85 - $1.60	$0.75
Students (K - 12)	$0.85 - $1.60	$1.50
Children (44" and under)	Free with adult rider	Free with adult rider
Pass Products		
Regional Day Pass [2]	$5.50	$5.50
Day Pass	--	$1.50 - $3.00
20-Ride Pass	--	$24.00
Stored Value Pass	$15.00	$15.00
31-Day Pass - Regular	$47.00	$37.00
31-Day Pass - Discounted [3]	$23.50	$18.50
Regional 31-Day Pass [2]	$68.00	$68.00
Regional 31-Day Pass - Discounted [2,4]	$34.00	$34.00

Note 1: Seniors ages 80 and older must fill out a Basic Eligibility Form and be verified by the RTA to receive VIP Card.

Note 2: Regional Day Pass allows unlimited rides on all RTA, SLO Transit, and Morro Bay Transit routes for the date indicated. The Regional 31-Day Pass allows unlimited rides on the same services for 31 consecutive days.

Note 3: Discounted passes available for senior adults ages 65 to 79, disabled passengers, and students in grades K-12 on the RTA intercity and local Paso Robles Routes. Discounted passes available for senior adults ages 65 to 79 and disabled passengers on the local south county routes.

Note 4: Discounted Regional Pass products available for senior adults ages 65 to 79, disabled passengers, and students in grades K-12.

Source: RTA

Table 3: RTA Paratransit and Dial-a-Ride Fare Structure

	Nipomo [1]	Paso Robles	Shandon-Paso Robles	Templeton-Paso Robles	Runabout [2,3]
Cash Fares					
Regular	$2.25	$5.00	$5.00	$2.50	--
Seniors (65+ years old)	$1.75	$2.50	$5.00	$2.50	--
Disabled	$1.75	$2.50	$5.00	$2.50	$3.00+
Children	$1.75	$5.00	$5.00	$2.50	--

Note 1: Nipomo DAR 10-ride punch passes available: $20 for adults and $15 for children (K-12)

Note 2: Runabout fares cost twice the equivalent fixed route fare, with a maximum of $11 fare per one-way trip. Runabout passengers can ride fixed route services for free by showing their Runabout card.

Note 3: Runabout punch passes are available for $30 or $50 worth of rides.

Seniors, disabled, and grade school students are eligible for discounted Regional Pass products. Seniors ages 80 and older with a Regional VIP Card, ADA cardholders, and small children ride for free on all fixed route and deviated fixed route services in the county.

For the county-funded, general public DARs, the fares vary by service. Both the Shandon-Paso Robles and Templeton-Paso Robles DARs charge one fare for all passengers ($5.00 and $2.50, respectively). The regular one-way fare on the Paso Robles DAR service is $5.00, and the discounted fare for seniors and disabled passengers is $2.50. The Nipomo DAR charges $2.25 for one-way trips; seniors, disabled persons, and children are eligible for a discounted fare of $1.75. Runabout fares are twice the base cash fare of the equivalent fixed route ride, with a fare cap of $11.00 per one-way trip, which is equivalent to twice the price of the Regional Day Pass.

RTA CAPITAL ASSETS

Fleet Inventory

As of October 2023, the RTA revenue vehicle fleet consisted of sixty-nine vehicles. Detailed information for the revenue vehicle fleet is presented in Table 4. The vehicles' primary uses vary based on the vehicle type: forty of the vehicles are used for fixed route operations, twenty-seven are used for the paratransit and demand response services, and two are used for the Avila-Pismo Beach Trolley. The fixed route vehicles, on average, are 7 years old and have traveled 340,000 miles. The demand response vehicles, on average, are 4 years old and have traveled 71,000 miles. The two trolleys are 12 and 6 years old, respectively. During peak periods, up to twenty-five fixed route vehicles are in service. The RTA also has twenty-three non-revenue vehicles.

Table 4: RTA Revenue Vehicle Fleet (1/2)

Agency ID [1]	Make	Year	Mileage	Use	Est. Retirement Date [2]
167	Gillig	2008	658,069	Fixed Routes	2022
168	Gillig	2008	593,236	Fixed Routes	2022
1011	Thor	2010	338,090	Fixed Routes	2024
1012	Thor	2011	267,833	Fixed Routes	2025
1013	Double K	2011	109,364	Seasonal Trolley	2024
1101	El Dorado	2010	286,297	Fixed Routes	2024
1301	Gillig	2013	531,902	Fixed Routes	2027
1302	Gillig	2013	470,295	Fixed Routes	2027
1303	Gillig	2013	551,752	Fixed Routes	2027
1304	Gillig	2013	525,306	Fixed Routes	2027
1305	Gillig	2013	497,239	Fixed Routes	2027
1306	Gillig	2013	534,882	Fixed Routes	2027
1307	Gillig	2013	547,878	Fixed Routes	2027
1308	Gillig	2013	456,307	Fixed Routes	2027
1309	Gillig	2013	455,725	Fixed Routes	2027
1310	Gillig	2013	457,958	Fixed Routes	2027
1501	Gillig	2015	492,656	Fixed Routes	2029
1502	Gillig	2015	464,161	Fixed Routes	2029
1503	Gillig	2015	452,307	Fixed Routes	2029
1504	Gillig	2015	468,280	Fixed Routes	2029
1505	Gillig	2015	439,064	Fixed Routes	2029
1506	Gillig	2015	414,623	Fixed Routes	2029
1507	Gillig	2015	386,759	Fixed Routes	2029
1508	Gillig	2015	473,102	Fixed Routes	2029
1509	Gillig	2015	369,424	Fixed Routes	2029
1510	Ford	2015	471,752	Fixed Routes	2025
1511	Ford	2015	167,886	Fixed Routes	2025
1512	Ford	2015	479,940	Fixed Routes	2025
1608	Ford	2016	145,586	Demand Response	2026
1701	Dodge	2017	115,049	Demand Response	2025
1704	Dodge	2017	119,317	Demand Response	2025
1705	Dodge	2017	115,623	Demand Response	2025
1706	Dodge	2017	99,743	Demand Response	2025
1707	Ford	2017	58,550	Seasonal Trolley	2030
1801	Gillig	2018	281,948	Fixed Routes	2032

Note 1: Information accurate as of October 2023.

Note 2: Estimated retirement dates based off of vehicle model's Federal Transit Administration's Useful Life Benchmark.

Source: RTA

Table 4: RTA Revenue Vehicle Fleet (2/2)

Agency ID [1]	Make	Year	Mileage	Use	Est. Retirement Date [2]
1802	Gillig	2018	277,912	Fixed Routes	2032
1803	Gillig	2018	254,520	Fixed Routes	2032
1901	Ford	2019	107,878	Demand Response	2029
1902	Ford	2019	108,620	Demand Response	2029
1903	Ford	2019	116,781	Demand Response	2029
1904	Ford	2019	113,916	Demand Response	2029
1905	Ford	2019	99,466	Demand Response	2029
1906	Ford	2019	106,839	Demand Response	2029
1907	Ford	2019	108,028	Demand Response	2029
1908	Ford	2019	103,711	Demand Response	2029
1909	Ford	2019	85,485	Demand Response	2029
1910	Gillig	2019	241,271	Fixed Routes	2033
1911	Gillig	2019	239,217	Fixed Routes	2033
1912	Gillig	2019	240,056	Fixed Routes	2033
2031	Ford	2021	47,853	Demand Response	2031
2051	Dodge	2019	38,822	Demand Response	2027
2052	Dodge	2019	40,211	Demand Response	2027
2053	Dodge	2019	37,866	Demand Response	2027
2054	Dodge	2019	40,230	Demand Response	2027
2055	Dodge	2019	40,476	Demand Response	2027
2056	Dodge	2019	36,877	Demand Response	2027
2057	Dodge	2019	39,055	Demand Response	2027
2101	Gillig	2021	61,983	Fixed Routes	2035
2102	Gillig	2021	79,369	Fixed Routes	2035
2151	Dodge	2020	21,680	Demand Response	2028
2152	Dodge	2020	22,900	Demand Response	2028
2331	Chevy	2022	2,744	Fixed Routes	2032
2332	Chevy	2022	2,741	Fixed Routes	2032
2333	Chevy	2022	2,698	Fixed Routes	2032
2334	Ford	2023	5,168	Fixed Routes	2033
2335	Ford	2023	7,159	Fixed Routes	2033
2351	Chrysler	2022	6,761	Demand Response	2030
2352	Chrysler	2022	2,394	Demand Response	2030
2353	Chrysler	2022	4,213	Demand Response	2030

Note 1: Information accurate as of October 2023.

Note 2: Estimated retirement dates based off of vehicle model's Federal Transit Administration's Useful Life Benchmark.

Source: RTA

Facilities

The new RTA Bus Maintenance Facility is located at 253 Elks Lane in San Luis Obispo, and is the central location for RTA's administrative, operations, dispatch, and maintenance functions. The facility's on-site parking accommodates approximately seventy public-transit vehicles and eighty employee and visitor vehicles. The Bus Maintenance Facility has both conventional fueling capacity as well as four fast-charge direct-current (DC) bus charging stations. The RTA intends to install additional bus charging stations as the agency procures more battery-electric buses (BEBs). These charging stations will be powered in part by a solar canopy that will be installed on-site.

The RTA leases two park-out facilities, one located at 1734 Paso Robles Street in Paso Robles and the other located at 800 Rodeo Drive in Arroyo Grande. These two facilities support the north county and south county transit services, respectively. Both facilities have bus parking areas and facilities for bus operator layovers. The RTA is actively developing proposals for assistance with preparing designs for fast-charge DC charging stations at the Paso Robles and Arroyo Grande facilities. There are no actual plans to install charging stations at this time, however, as the electrical capacity of the two sites still needs to be determined.

Park-and-Rides

While the RTA serves multiple park-and-rides throughout San Luis Obispo County, the RTA does not directly own any park-and-ride facilities.

Passenger Amenities

Passenger amenities refers to infrastructure that improves the passenger experience while waiting for or getting to and from bus services. RTA's passenger amenities are briefly summarized below.

Bus Stops

The RTA serves 325 bus stops throughout the county, 87 of which have shelters and 190 of which have benches. Approximately 25 percent of RTA bus stops need ADA accessibility improvements or other upgrades. Some RTA stops are shared with SLO Transit.

Bicycle Amenities

The RTA serves twenty-one stops with bike racks and two stops with bicycle lockers (the Templeton and Halcyon Park-and-Rides).

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Chapter 3

OVERVIEW OF OTHER REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarizes other transportation programs besides the RTA and SLO Transit that operate in the San Luis Obispo County region. It is important to note that this Chapter does not discuss every transportation service in San Luis Obispo County but instead focuses on the services that provide direct connections to/from the RTA or SLO Transit.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Atascadero Dial-A-Ride

The City of Atascadero provides the Atascadero Dial-a-Ride (DAR) within city limits. The Atascadero DAR service area also extends to Trader Joe's and the medical corridor in Templeton. City staff are directly responsible for the management of the transit program and dispatch, while bus operator positions are filled by contracted staff. The City owns all of the Atascadero DAR vehicles, which are equipped with wheelchair lifts and bicycle racks.

The Atascadero DAR is a general public, door-to-door service available on weekdays from 7:30 AM to 3:30 PM. Fares vary by trip distance: the general public fare for trips within the downtown city zone is $5.00, while the general public fare for trips to the outer zone is $8.00. Seniors, disabled residents, and Medicare card holders are eligible for discounted fares. Passengers can schedule rides on the Atascadero DAR to RTA Route 9 bus stops if they need to travel to other communities in the region.

Morro Bay Transit

The City of Morro Bay provides the Morro Bay Transit service, which consists of a single, deviated fixed route available to the general public, and the Morro Bay Trolley, which operates on Saturdays and Sundays from early June through early October each year. The City contracts operations responsibilities to an outside agency.

The Morro Bay Transit fixed route operates Monday through Friday from 6:25 AM to 6:45 PM. The deviation feature of the fixed route is referred to as "Call-A-Ride"; to request a deviation up to 0.75 miles from the route, passengers must call dispatch in advance to schedule their pick-up/drop-off. The Call-A-Ride component of Morro Bay Transit is available to the general public. General public one-way fares are $1.50 for the fixed route and $2.50 for Call-A-Ride. Discounted fares are also available. Morro Bay Transit also offers day pass and punch pass products. Morro Bay Transit accepts the Regional Day and 31-Day Pass products. Runabout passengers ride for free with their Runabout card. Passengers who need to travel beyond Morro Bay can transfer to RTA Routes 12 and 15 at a few locations within the city, with the most significant transfer center being the City Park.

Monterey-Salinas Transit

The Monterey-Salinas Transit District (MST) is comprised of the Cities of Carmel, Del Rey Oaks, Gonzales, Greenfield, King City, Marina, Monterey, Pacific Grove, Salinas, Sand City, Seaside, Soledad, and the County of Monterey. MST operates thirty-four fixed routes and complementary paratransit service, referred to as MST Rides, throughout a 159-square-mile service area using a 170-vehicle fleet.

MST Route 84 provides service from King City, in Monterey County, south to Paso Robles, in San Luis Obispo County, serving San Lucas, San Ardo, Bradley, and San Miguel along the way. The service is available seven days per week and makes two round trips per day. RTA passengers can transfer to MST Route 84 by taking RTA Route 9 or Paso Robles Routes A/B to the North County Transit Center. The general public fare for Route 84 is $2.00, and the discounted fare is $1.00.

Santa Maria Regional Transit

The City of Santa Maria, in northern Santa Barbara County, operates the Santa Maria Regional Transit (SMRT) service, which consists of twelve local fixed routes, three regional fixed routes, and complementary paratransit service. The SMRT service area includes the City of Santa Maria, as well as the unincorporated communities of Orcutt, Tanglewood, New Cuyama, Lompoc, Vandenberg, Los Alamos, Buellton, Solvang, Santa Ynez, and the Chumash reservation. General public one-way fares are $1.50 for the local fixed routes and $2.00 for the regional routes. Discounted fares are available, as well as various pass products. SMRT and RTA Route 10 both serve the Santa Maria Transit Center. Of note, SMRT recently increased service frequency on most of the fixed routes to 45 minutes instead of hourly, limiting the number of timed transfer opportunities between SMRT and RTA.

Senior GO!

Senior Go! is a transportation service available to seniors ages 65 and older in San Luis Obispo County. Senior GO! is a SLOCOG program supported by Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds. SLOCOG contracts the RTA to administer the Senior GO! service and Ventura Transit Systems, Inc. to operate the service.

Senior GO! is available weekdays from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM and Saturdays from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Eligible passengers can request up to four one-way trips each month, to and from destinations within San Luis Obispo County. Fares vary based on the distance travelled; the starting one-way fare is $2.50. Passengers can use Senior GO! to access other local and regional transit services within San Luis Obispo County, including the RTA and SLO Transit, by requesting rides to active bus stops.

San Luis Obispo Regional Rideshare

The San Luis Obispo Regional Rideshare (SLO Rideshare) is a division of SLOCOG. The objective of SLO Rideshare is to reduce the need for those who live, work, and/or visit San Luis Obispo County to drive alone. While SLO Rideshare does not directly provide transit services, the program still increases regional mobility by providing trip-planning assistance, offering emergency rides, and coordinating the region's Safe Routes to School program, among other efforts. Programs offered include:

- 511 Trip Planning – people can dial 511 anywhere in San Luis Obispo County for up-to-date information on road conditions, public-transit services, ridesharing, etc.
- iRideshare – a free online ride-matching system.
- Park-and-ride map – SLO Rideshare offers an online map with information on park-and-rides available in the region.
- Emergency rides home – SLO Rideshare helps coordinate free or low-cost rides home in the case of an emergency for all participants registered with iRideshare.
- Technical assistance for developers and jurisdictions looking to reduce the vehicle miles traveled (VMTs) within the project area or community.

NONPROFIT TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS

Cambria Community Bus

The Cambria Community Council is a nonprofit organization that provides transportation assistance to seniors (ages 60 and older) and individuals with disabilities in the communities of Cambria and San Simeon. The Cambria Community Bus is a door-to-door service provided by the Cambria Community Council Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. The service relies on volunteer drivers to provide rides. Passengers must call at least one day in advance to schedule a ride. All rides are free. In addition to local trips, the Cambria Community Bus makes one roundtrip to San Luis Obispo each month for residents with specific shopping or medical needs. Cambria Community Bus passengers can transfer to RTA Route 15 by requesting service to a local bus stop and paying the required RTA fare.

SMOOTH

SMOOTH, Inc. is a private nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing transportation challenges and helping people access the services they need. SMOOTH is contracted by numerous local groups, organizations, and agencies, including the City of Guadalupe, the County of Santa Barbara, and the Tri-Counties Regional Center, to provide transportation services in northern Santa Barbara County, with occasional trips into San Luis Obispo County.

SMOOTH also operates its own Senior Dial-a-Ride (DAR) service in Santa Maria and Orcutt for adults ages 60 and older. The Senior DAR service is available Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM and serves all trip purposes. Residents must schedule rides in advance by calling SMOOTH. One-way fares for the Senior DAR service are $2.00. A personal caretaker can ride along with seniors for free if desired. San Luis Obispo County residents can take advantage of SMOOTH's Senior DAR by first taking RTA Route 10 to Santa Maria, then scheduling a ride on the Senior DAR.

Ride-On Transportation

Ride-On Transportation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving transportation services in San Luis Obispo County. All of Ride-On's proceeds support the nonprofit United Cerebral Palsy of San Luis Obispo County. Ride-On serves as a Consolidated Transportation Service Agency (CTSA) and as a Transportation Management Association (TMA) for the county.

Ride-On's CTSA division provides door-to-door shuttle services for seniors, veterans, persons with disabilities, and social-service agencies. The CTSA division also supports other social-service agencies in the area which provide their own transportation by assisting with vehicle maintenance, driver training, and other services. Ride-On's TMA division provides general public-transportation services, including vanpools, shuttles to the San Luis Obispo Airport and local Amtrak stations, medical transportation, and special event transportation, among other services. Ride-On hours vary depending on the program.

PRIVATE FOR-PROFIT REGIONAL PROVIDERS

Amtrak

San Luis Obispo County is served by two Amtrak rail lines: the Coast Starlight and the Pacific Surfliner. The Coast Starlight travels from Seattle to Los Angeles and serves San Luis Obispo County once daily in both the northbound and southbound directions, stopping at the San Luis Obispo Amtrak Station and the North County Transit Center. The Pacific Surfliner serves the southern California coast, stopping in San Diego, Orange County, Los Angeles, and Ventura before eventually arriving in San Luis Obispo. The Pacific Surfliner makes two roundtrips to/from San Luis Obispo County each day, stopping at the Grover Beach and San Luis Obispo Amtrak stations both northbound and southbound.

San Luis Obispo County is also served by Amtrak Thruway bus service, which enables timed connections to the various rail routes. At this time, Thruway bus tickets must be purchased with a train ticket. However, this policy will likely change in upcoming years. Amtrak Thruway Route 17 connects to the Pacific Surfliner train, traveling from San Francisco to Santa Barbara and stopping in Paso Robles, Atascadero, Cal Poly, and San Luis Obispo along the way. Amtrak Thruway Route 18 provides service from Santa Maria to Hanford to provide connectivity to the Capitol Corridor rail, stopping in Grover Beach, San Luis Obispo, Atascadero, and Paso Robles.

There are many different options for San Luis Obispo County residents to connect to Amtrak services via local transit routes, including multiple RTA, SLO Transit, dial-a-ride, and non-profit transportation services. There are no discounts provided to passengers transferring from local transit routes. Amtrak ticket prices, both rail and bus, vary greatly depending on the passenger's intended trip length.

American Star Tours/Flix Bus

American Star Tours and Flix Bus provide long-distance, intercity bus transportation. In San Luis Obispo County, American Star Tours and Flix Bus operate along United States (US) 101, stopping at the Grover Beach Amtrak Station, San Luis Obispo Amtrak Station, the Cal Poly Performing Arts Center, the Atascadero Amtrak Thruway bus stop, and the North County Transit Center. One-way American Star Tours/Flix Bus tickets from San Luis Obispo to San Francisco start at approximately $26.00. One-way American Star Tours/Flix Bus tickets from San Luis Obispo to Los Angeles start at approximately $25.00.

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Chapter 4
CURRENT POLICIES AND STANDARDS

INTRODUCTION

An important element in the success of any organization is a clear and concise set of goals and objectives, as well as the performance measures and standards needed to attain them. This can be particularly important for a public transit agency, for several reasons:

- Transit goals can be inherently contradictory. For instance, the goal of maximizing cost-effectiveness can tend to focus services on the largest population centers, while the goal of maximizing service availability can tend to disperse services to outlying areas. In another example, transit services can be targeted to serve those who are most in need and without automobiles, or they can be designed to be competitive with the private automobile and serve those with access to alternative transportation. To best meet its overall mission, a public transit agency must therefore continually balance the trade-offs between goals. Adopting policy statements allows for a discussion of community values regarding transit at a higher level than possible when considering case-by-case issues.
- As a public entity, a public transit organization is expending public funds and therefore has a responsibility to provide the public with transparent information on how funds are spent. The effectiveness and efficiency of spending can be evaluated by assessing how well a transit agency is meeting its adopted goals. Funding partners also have a responsibility to ensure that funds provided to the transit program are being used appropriately.
- Adopted goals and performance standards help to communicate the values of the transit program to other organizations, to the public, and to the organization staff.

Transit agencies should regularly re-evaluate goals and standards. This is especially true given service changes implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; in the wake of the pandemic, service standards may need to be modified to be more realistically measure performance. New standards may also be merited for any new services implemented in recent years.

In this chapter, RTA and SLO Transit fiscal year (FY) 2022-23 performance is presented alongside existing performance standards. Then, peer transit operators for both programs are analyzed as a means of guiding revised performance standard recommendations. Chapter 2 presents initial recommendations for RTA and SLO transit goals, objectives, and standards.

RTA EXISTING POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RTA has a well-developed set of guiding policies, as summarized in the *2018-2020 Strategic Business Plan* (SBP), which was adopted in March of 2018. These policies are the latest result of a planning process that started with a joint Board, staff, and public workshop held in 2008. The 2018-2020 SBP incorporated new and revised standards recommended in the 2016 RTA Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP), as well as additional standards based on information obtained from a customer perception survey completed in October 2017 and the RTA GPS-based Intelligent Transportation System (ITS). In 2021, due primarily to the impacts on ridership caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, RTA staff recommended that the SBP update be postponed until the completion of the 2024 SRTP.

Key ongoing RTA policy elements consist of a vision statement, mission statement, overall goals, and overall objectives, as well as a series of standards.

The adopted vision statement is: "*The RTA of the future is an integral part of the 'SLO lifestyle.' From the vineyards in North County to the secluded beach towns on the North Coast, to multi-faceted communities in the South County, residents and visitors use public transportation rather than relying on their cars.*"

The adopted mission statement is: "*The Mission of RTA is to provide safe, reliable, and efficient transportation services that improve and enhance the quality of life for the citizens of and visitors to San Luis Obispo County*."

The overall goals identified in the 2018-2020 SBP are described below. The overall objectives associated with this are also provided.

1. Provide market-driven service that meets the needs of the communities that we serve but that will also attract discretionary riders.

   1.1 Link population centers and major traffic generators within the region.
   1.2 Coordinate service with all public transportation operators and services.

2. Provide transportation services that are safe, reliable, economical, and accessible in an efficient manner with innovative management practices and technological advancements.

   2.1 Provide safe public transportation.
   2.2 Provide reliable public transportation.
   2.3 Provide effective public transportation.
   2.4 Provide efficient public transportation.
   2.5 Provide comfortable public transportation.

3. Lead and participate in the analysis of the integration of transit operations throughout the county to ensure that customers are provided with seamless transit alternatives and services that attract discretionary riders from every community that RTA serves.

   3.1 Achieve a highly rated level of customer satisfaction.
   3.2 Provide service that is supported by market demand.
   3.3 Manage service in a cost-effective manner.
   3.4 Deploy technology effectively and efficiently.

4. Promote the value of RTA and public transportation to the quality of life in San Luis Obispo County, the environmental rewards of utilizing public transportation and the reduction of vehicle miles *traveled*.

   4.1 Provide accountability and transparency.
   4.2 Increase use and support of public transportation in San Luis Obispo County.
   4.3 Implement an annual marketing plan.
   4.4 Use public funding efficiently in meeting the public transportation needs of communities that RTA services.
   4.5 Educate community and business leaders and the public on the value of RTA services.

The 2018-2020 SBP also details the RTA "Standards of Excellence," presented in Tables 5.1 through 5.4. These standards are organized into the following categories: service quality and efficiency, revenue and resources, safety, human resources, fleet and facility, and leadership in relation to past service trends. Service quality and efficiency standards account for quantitative operational efficiency. Revenue and resources standards identify financial efficiencies and guidelines for the services provided. Safety standards guide service safety for operators, customers, and the general public. Human resources standards encourage employee professional development and talent retention. Fleet and facility standards identify operational and maintenance guidelines to maintain an operating fleet and functioning facilities. Leadership standards promote the successful operation of the RTA as a regional agency leader.

In Tables 5.1 through 5.4, RTA FY 2022-23 performance results are identified alongside the existing performance measure. For Table 5.1, which includes more specific quantitative standards, a peer average for each indicator is also presented. Lastly, the tables present the schedule for reviewing each standard and the staff responsible for monitoring. Recommended changes to the current RTA performance standards are discussed at the end of this Chapter.

Table 5: RTA Service Standards (1/4)

Section 1: Service Quality and Efficiency

1.1 Service Efficiency & Effectiveness (Previously Passengers Per Vehicle Service Hour)

Service Type	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Peer Average	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
Passengers Per Vehicle Hour				
Systemwide Fixed Route	--	13.5	10.0	Reviewed monthly by Operations and reported by Executive Director at each Board meeting.
Regional Intercity Fixed Routes (Routes 9, 10, 12, & 14)	22 or greater	13.6	10.0	
Route Deviation Services (Route 15)	8.0 or greater	3.3	2.0	
Local Fixed Routes (Paso Robles Routes A and B, Routes 21, 24, 27, and 28)	17 or greater	14.9	10.0	
Runabout and Other Demand Response Services	2.0 or greater	1.5	2.0	
Cost Per Vehicle Hour (adjust annually by CPI)				
Systemwide Fixed Route	--	$174.38	$162.98	Reviewed monthly by Operations and reported by Executive Director annually to the Board.
Regional Intercity Fixed Routes	--	$179.11	$162.98	
Route Deviation Services	--	$193.15	$162.98	
Local Fixed Routes	--	$164.15	$162.98	
Runabout and Other Demand Response Services	--	$182.41	$105.97	
Cost Per Passenger (adjust annually by CPI)				
Systemwide Fixed Route	--	$12.94	$18.61	Reviewed monthly by Operations and reported by Executive Director annually to the Board.
Route Deviation Services	--	$13.16	$18.61	
Regional Intercity Fixed Routes	--	$58.73	$18.61	
Local Fixed Routes	--	$10.99	$18.61	
Runabout and Other Demand Response Services	--	$119.05	$54.44	

Sources: SLORTA 2018-2020 Strategic Business Plan; RTA SBP Results Staff Report, 11/1/2023; RTA FY 22-23 Operating Data

Table 5: RTA Service Standards (2/4)

Section 1: Service Quality and Efficiency

1.2 Service Delivery Rate

Service Type	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
Systemwide	99% or greater	99%	No Change	Reviewed quarterly by Operations and reported by Executive Director bi-annually to the Board.

1.3 On-Time Performance [1,2]

Service Type	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
Regional Intercity Fixed Routes (Routes 9, 10, 12, & 14)	85% or greater	84%	No Change	Reviewed quarterly by Operations and reported by Executive Director bi-annually to the Board.
Local Fixed Routes (Paso Robles Routes A and B, Routes 21, 24, 27, and 28)	90% or greater	87%	No Change	
Route Deviation Services (Route 15)	70% or greater	79%	No Change	
Runabout and Other Demand Response Services	95 % or greater	100%	No Change	

1.4 Service Delivery

Standard	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
RTA will make consistent efforts to explore new service and service delivery options as well as work with regional efficiencies in the delivery of transportation to the jurisdictions	Subjective	--	No Change	Reported by the Executive Director and Division Heads annually.

1.5 Overcrowding [3]

Service Type	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
Regional Intercity and Local Fixed Routes and Deviation Services	No more than 10% of the monthly number of bus trips that exceed a load factor of 1.25 for greater than 20 minutes	< 1%	No Change	Reviewed quarterly by Operations and reported by Executive Director biannually to the Board.
6B. Express Routes	No more than 10% of the monthly number of bus trips that exceed a load factor of 1.00 for greater than 20 minutes	--	No Change	

Note 1: On-time performance defined as no later than six minutes from any timepoint in the published schedule.
Note 2: Runabout and demand response service is considered on-time if the van arrives within 30 minutes of the appointed pick-up time
Note 3: Overcrowding is defined when the number of passengers exceeds the number of seats on the bus.; i.e., 34 passengers on a 34 -seat bus = a load factor of 1.00

Sources: SLORTA 2018-2020 Strategic Business Plan; RTA SBP Results Staff Report, 11/1/2023; RTA FY 22-23 Operating Data

Table 5: RTA Service Standards (3/4)

Section 2: Revenue and Resources				
Standard	**Existing Measure**	**FY 2022-23 Performance**	**Proposed Measure**	**Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility**
The annual operating budget will be based upon projected revenue and the total operating cost will not exceed the budget adopted by the Board.	Operating cost as a percentage of adopted budget	92%	No Change	Monthly financial statements and reported bimonthly to the RTA Board.
Systemwide farebox ratio.	20%; Greater than SLOCOG min. standard	8.7%	16% (including local support) Per SLOCOG Blended Ratio	Tracked monthly and reported bimonthly to RTA Board.
No significant financial audit findings.	Annual Fiscal Audits	No negative audit findings	No Change	Finance and Administration will report any negative audit findings.
Ensure that all capital procurements provide good value to customers and employees.	Subjective	--	No Change	Evaluated through community evaluation survey, feedback from communities, and review of the annual capital program by staff and the Board.

Section 3: Safety				
Standard	**Existing Measure**	**FY 2022-23 Performance**	**Proposed Measure**	**Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility**
Limit preventable vehicle collisions.	1 collision per 100,000 miles	1.75	No Change	Reported by Safety and Training Manager annually to the RTA Board.
Address all safety hazards identified by the Safety Resource Committee.	--	Closed 3 action items and identified 7 that remained open	No Change	Reported by Safety and Training Manager annually to the RTA Board.
Limit preventable workers compensation lost-time and medical-only claims.	Lost-time claims will not exceed 6 annually. Preventable medical-only claims will not exceed 10 annually.	7 lost-time claims; 8 medical-only claims	No Change	All work comp claims shall be duly investigated and reported by Finance and Administration to appropriate carrier.
Maintain positive customer and community perception of system safety.	90% positive survey feedback	90%	No Change	As measured by community survey, which shall be conducted at least every two years.
Total risk management costs shall not exceed industry norms.	Market survey	10.2% of operating cost	No Change	Tracked monthly by Finance and Administration and reported bimonthly to the RTA Board.

Sources: SLORTA 2018-2020 Strategic Business Plan; RTA SBP Results Staff Report, 11/1/2023; RTA FY 22-23 Operating Data

Table 5: RTA Service Standards (4/4)

Section 4: Human Resources

Standard	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
Recruit, promote and retain highly qualified employees to achieve our service standards.	Subjective	--	No Change	Annual assessment by Executive Director and Department Heads.
Provide continuous development of organizational skills through ongoing training and development programs that result in personal and professional growth.	Min. annual training requirements: 30 hours for maintenance technicians; 24 hours for Operations Supervisors; 8 Hours for Bus Operators; 16 hours for Finance and Admin.	21 hrs maintenance; 30 hours operations supervisors; bus operators exceeded 8 hours; finance and administration attended multiple trainings	No Change	Department Heads evaluate annually for achievement of training objectives.
Enable employees to achieve excellence in serving customers by building teamwork and understanding effective communication within the organization.	Subjective	--	No Change	Employees provided opportunity to provide feedback on organizational communication as part of the Executive Director's annual evaluation.
Employees will be evaluated annually in a fair and equitable way to judge performance and be provided a developmental plan for the next fiscal year.	Annual employee evaluation	--	No Change	Employee merit evaluations provided to each employee annually.

Section 5: Fleet and Facility

Standard	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
Replace 100% of all revenue vehicles no more than 40% beyond the FTA-defined useful life standard in terms of years or miles	Fleet Age/Miles	Average age of fixed route buses = 9 yrs & 386,400 mi; DR vans = 4 years & 56,532 miles	No Change	Tracked by Finance and Administration as part of grant making efforts
Road calls will not exceed 5 per 100,000 miles of vehicle service miles. A road call is defined as all failures that affect the completion of a scheduled revenue trip or the start of the next scheduled revenue trip, including failures during deadheading and layover	Vehicle Service miles driven divided by number of Road Calls	4.83 for fixed route & 0.31 for demand response	No Change	Tracked and reported by the Maintenance Department
Maintain a clean, attractive fleet. Maintain facilities so that they are safe and appealing to customers and employees.	Subjective	--	No Change	Measured by employee and customer feedback
Achieve an 80% favorable rating of bus stop appearance by customers and the communities that we serve	Survey results	82% in March, 2020 survey	No Change	Measured in the biannual Community Survey
Achieve all federal, state-mandated maintenance practices, as well as vendor recommended maintenance schedules for our fleet and facilities	CHP Annual Terminal Inspection; FTA Triennial Review; TDA Triennial Performance Audits; Maintenance Records	No negative findings in 2023 TDA TPA; no CHP findings and PM completed timely.	No Change	As tracked by the Maintenance Department, and reported annually to the RTA Board.

Section 6: Leadership

Standard	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
Maintain cooperative relationships with federal, state, and local funding agencies.	Subjective	--	No Change	Responsibility of RTA staff and RTA Board.
Develop partnerships with stakeholders, community leaders, and decision makers, keeping them well informed of the integral role of RTA and contributions to the communities served.	Subjective	--	No Change	Responsibility of Executive Director and RTA Board.
Promote effective internal communications and promote the values of the organization.	Subjective	--	No Change	Responsibility of Executive Director.
Provide effective leadership for public transportation within the County.	Subjective	--	No Change	Responsibility of Executive Director and RTA Board.

Sources: SLORTA 2018-2020 Strategic Business Plan; RTA SBP Results Staff Report, 11/1/2023; RTA FY 22-23 Operating Data

RTA Triennial TDA Performance Audit

Every three years, public transit operators in California that receive Transportation Development Act (TDA) funding are reviewed by an independent firm selected by the Regional Transportation Planning Agency. This is known as the Triennial Performance Audit (TPA).

The RTA's FY 2016-17 – FY 2018-19 TPA found that the RTA had successfully implemented two out of the four prior audit recommendations (FY 2013-14- FY 2015-16). The recommendations made in the FY 2016-17 – FY 2018-19 audit included two carried over from the audit prior, and were as follows:

1. Align organizational structure to meet the RTA's changing priorities.
2. Continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Runabout paratransit operations, including scheduling efficiencies and route optimization.
3. Enhance the Runabout customer experience through improved marketing and the deployment of one-click/one-call technology.
4. Consider supplemental services and next-generation mobility for the Runabout.

RTA's latest TDA TPA was completed in 2023 and covered FYs 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22. RTA's performance during the most recent TPA period was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The auditor once again found the RTA complied with the ten applicable TDA requirements. The RTA had also implemented one of the four recommendations made in the FY 2016-17 – FY 2018-19 TPA. The 2023 TPA made two new recommendations for the RTA:

1. Evaluate the RTA's preventable collision rates to achieve its internal standards – the RTA outlined in its most recent Strategic Business Plan that the agency intends to have a rate of preventable vehicle collision that does not exceed 1 per 100,000 miles. The RTA did not meet this internal standard during the audit period.
2. Ensure the RTA SRTP update addresses Runabout service efficiencies and business practices, including implementing a digital application system for passenger eligibility and determining the optimal amount of service consumed by subscription trip bookings.

FTA Triennial Review

Transit agencies that receive Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5307 funds are subject to a broad review by a third-party contractor selected by the FTA regional office. RTA's latest FTA Triennial Review covered the three FYs of 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22. RTA staff presented the FTA Triennial Review to the RTA Board in September of 2023. No deficiencies were found in 20 of the 23 topic areas covered in the review. The review found the deficiencies noted below.

1. Procurement – Lacking required documentation for sole-source award
2. Disadvantaged Business Enterprise – Inadequate implementation of race-neutral measures
3. Disadvantaged Business Enterprise – Small business element not implemented
4. Drug and Alcohol Program – Subrecipient drug and alcohol reporting contained inaccuracies

RTA has altered internal procedures and has submitted corrective actions to FTA to address these deficiencies.

RTA PEER COMPARISON

In the 2016 SRTP, the RTA fixed routes and demand response services were compared to seven selected transit agencies in California using National Transit Database (NTD) data. The prior peer comparisons were updated for the 2024 SRTP using data for the same seven agencies (Tables 6 and 7). The peer transit programs referenced are listed below, with the type of agency noted (municipal, county, transit district, or JPA).

- B-Line, Chico, CA (JPA)
- Monterey Salinas Transit (transit district)
- Santa Cruz Metro (transit district)
- Livermore-Amador Valley Transit (fixed route only) (JPA)
- Yolobus, Yolo County, CA (transit district)
- The Bus, Merced, CA (JPA)
- Gold Coast Transit, Ventura County, CA (transit district)

Tables 6 and 7 display operating data for seven peer transit agencies for the RTA fixed route and demand response services. These tables also provide an analysis of the RTA's performance in relation to the grouped peer statistics and rank RTA's performance in relation to all of the peers combined. The peer data shown is gathered from the NTD 2021-2022 Reporting Year. The data for the RTA represents unaudited FY 2022-2023 operating data. This peer analysis will be expanded as part of upcoming working papers.

Among the peer fixed route services for nine performance indicators, RTA has an average ranking of 4 out of 8 operators, including RTA. RTA's highest ranking is 2nd for cost per vehicle revenue mile, passengers per vehicle service hour, cost per passenger, and subsidy per passenger. RTA's lowest ranking is 7th for average fare per passenger.

Among demand response peer operators, RTA has an average ranking of 5.9 out of 7 operators, including RTA. RTA's highest ranking is 3rd for average fare revenue per passenger. RTA ranks 7th in operating cost per vehicle revenue hour, operating cost per passenger, and subsidy per passenger. RTA's Runabout service, which is provided for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) eligible passengers only, makes up 89 percent of the vehicle revenue hours for RTA demand response service. ADA paratransit service is typically more expensive to operate than general public demand response service, which could be an important factor in RTA's higher cost per unit compared to peers.

Table 6: RTA Transit Peer Group Data and Performance Indicators - Fixed Route

	Input Data [1, 2]					
Peer System	County Population	Operating Expenses	Fare Revenue	Vehicle Revenue Miles	Vehicle Revenue Hours	Unlinked Passenger Trips
B-Line	205,860	$8,162,462	$837,770	986,322	68,415	478,597
Monterey Salinas Transit	436,476	$37,040,328	$3,060,474	2,865,036	184,104	1,727,124
Santa Cruz Metro	263,101	$41,288,210	$6,792,351	2,210,921	166,287	2,659,929
Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority	1,656,037	$14,604,107	$1,525,962	1,225,468	90,069	841,343
Yolobus	220,381	$11,002,955	$1,241,237	1,387,597	73,868	672,978
The Bus - Merced, CA	285,600	$11,957,381	$957,436	1,619,710	104,292	390,723
Gold Coast Transit	825,937	$27,030,511	$1,957,337	2,071,300	184,731	2,261,605
SLO Regional Transit Authority	**280,251**	**$9,047,871**	**$791,806**	**1,210,689**	**51,885**	**699,135**

	Performance Indicators											
Peer System	Passenger Trips per Capita	Cost per Vehicle Revenue Mile	Cost per Vehicle Revenue Hour	Passenger per Vehicle Revenue Mile	Passengers per Vehicle Revenue Hour	Cost per Passenger	Average Fare	Subsidy per Passenger-Trip	Farebox Recovery Ratio	Vehicle Revenue Miles per Hour	Vehicle Revenue Hours per Capita	Vehicle Revenue Miles per Capita
B-Line	2.32	$8.28	$119.31	0.49	7.0	$17.05	$1.75	$15.30	10.3%	14.4	0.33	4.79
Monterey Salinas Transit	3.96	$12.93	$201.19	0.60	9.4	$21.45	$1.77	$19.67	8.3%	15.6	0.42	6.56
Santa Cruz Metro	10.11	$18.67	$248.29	1.20	16.0	$15.52	$2.55	$12.97	16.5%	13.3	0.63	8.40
Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority	0.51	$11.92	$162.14	0.69	9.3	$17.36	$1.81	$15.54	10.4%	13.6	0.05	0.74
Yolobus	3.05	$7.93	$148.95	0.48	9.1	$16.35	$1.84	$14.51	11.3%	18.8	0.34	6.30
The Bus - Merced, CA	1.37	$7.38	$114.65	0.24	3.7	$30.60	$2.45	$28.15	8.0%	15.5	0.37	5.67
Gold Coast Transit	2.74	$13.05	$146.32	1.09	12.2	$11.95	$0.87	$11.09	7.2%	11.2	0.22	2.51
Peer Maximum	*10.11*	*18.67*	$248.29	*1.20*	*16.00*	$30.60	$2.55	$28.15	*16.5%*	18.8	0.63	8.40
Peer Average	*3.44*	*11.45*	$162.98	*0.69*	*9.54*	$18.61	$1.86	$16.75	*10.3%*	14.6	0.34	5.00
Peer Minimum	0.51	7.38	$114.65	0.24	3.75	$11.95	$0.87	$11.09	7.2%	11.2	0.05	0.74
SLO Regional Transit Authority	**2.49**	**$7.47**	**$174.38**	**0.58**	**13.5**	**$12.94**	**$1.13**	**$11.81**	**8.8%**	**23.3**	**0.19**	**4.32**
RTA Transit % of Peer Avg.	73%	65%	107%	84%	141%	70%	61%	71%	85%	159%	55%	86%
RTA Transit Rank (1 = Best)	5	2	6	5	2	2	7	2	5	--	--	--

Source: National Transit Database; RTA FY 2023 unaudited operating data
Note 1: Peer Data for FY 2021-22; RTA Data is unaudited FY2022-23
Note 2: Data for fixed route services only.

Table 7: RTA Transit Peer Group Data and Performance Indicators -Demand Response

	Input Data					
Peer System	County Population	Operating Expenses	Fare Revenue	Vehicle Revenue Miles	Vehicle Revenue Hours	Unlinked Passenger Trips
B-Line	205,860	$2,283,587	$178,127	195,460	21,350	64,577
Monterey Salinas Transit	436,476	$5,943,656	$231,368	1,088,847	67,584	144,867
Santa Cruz Metro	263,101	$5,316,792	$210,547	367,221	32,206	62,608
Yolobus	220,381	$2,141,235	$98,208	313,913	18,860	25,540
The Bus - Merced, CA	285,600	$2,525,521	$53,368	377,194	26,946	50,155
Gold Coast Transit	825,937	$2,355,210	$122,161	562,865	34,337	75,596
SLO Regional Transit Authority	**280,251**	**$4,221,631**	**$102,092**	**321,765**	**23,144**	**35,460**

	Performance Indicators								
Peer System	Passenger Trips per Capita	Cost per Vehicle Revenue Mile	Cost per Vehicle Revenue Hour	Passenger per Vehicle Revenue Mile	Passengers per Vehicle Revenue Hour	Cost per Passenger	Average Fare	Subsidy per Passenger-Trip	Farebox Recovery Ratio
B-Line	0.31	$11.68	$106.96	0.33	3.0	$35.36	$2.76	$32.60	7.8%
Monterey Salinas Transit	0.33	$5.46	$87.94	0.13	2.1	$41.03	$1.60	$39.43	3.9%
Santa Cruz Metro	0.24	$14.48	$165.09	0.17	1.9	$84.92	$3.36	$81.56	4.0%
Yolobus	0.12	$6.82	$113.53	0.08	1.4	$83.84	$3.85	$79.99	4.6%
The Bus - Merced, CA	0.18	$6.70	$93.73	0.13	1.9	$50.35	$1.06	$49.29	2.1%
Gold Coast Transit	0.09	$4.18	$68.59	0.13	2.2	$31.16	$1.62	$29.54	5.2%
Peer Maximum	*0.33*	$14.48	$165.09	*0.33*	*3.02*	$84.92	$3.85	$81.56	*7.8%*
Peer Average	*0.21*	$8.22	$105.97	*0.16*	*2.09*	$54.44	$2.37	$52.07	*4.6%*
Peer Minimum	0.09	$4.18	$68.59	0.08	1.35	$31.16	$1.06	$29.54	2.1%
SLO Regional Transit Authority	**0.13**	**$13.12**	**$182.41**	**0.11**	**1.5**	**$119.05**	**$2.88**	**$116.17**	**2.4%**
RTA Transit % of Peer Avg.	60%	160%	172%	67%	73%	219%	121%	223%	53%
RTA Transit Rank (1 = Best)	5	6	7	6	6	7	3	7	6

Source: National Transit Database; RTA FY 2023 unaudited operating data

Note 1: Peer Data for FY 2021-22; RTA Data is unaudited FY2022-23

Note 2: Data for demand response services only.

The purpose of the peer comparison is to provide information to gauge if local transit operating statistics are reasonable on a systemwide basis, and to provide the RTA information to evaluate potential changes to services and performance measures. It should be noted that multiple factors can cause variations in ridership, costs, and revenues among public transit operations. In addition, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic impacted ridership and service delivery differently among peers, factors which were not evaluated in this comparison.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is an initial discussion of recommendations for goals, objectives, and standards. This may be updated for the draft plan based on the results of the service alternatives analysis.

RTA

The mission statement, vision statement, goals, and objectives adopted by RTA are reasonable and internally consistent. They comprehensively consider the various elements that comprise a successful transit program. RTA staff does a commendable job informing the RTA Board and the public of the progress in meeting standards. RTA implemented changes to performance standards that were recommended in the 2016 SRTP. These included 1) new and separate passenger per revenue vehicle hour standards for demand response service and route deviation service; 2) separate overcrowding standards for fixed routes and express routes; and 3) reporting preventable collision rates on an annual basis rather than monthly.

One item of note is that RTA has only one cost efficiency standard – farebox recovery ratio. Given that the farebox recovery ratio relies on the fare structure, it would be advisable to add one or two more cost-efficiency measures. It is recommended that RTA add a cost-per-passenger performance standard. Given that transit services are still regaining ridership from the years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, it would also be advisable to add a cost-per-vehicle revenue hour standard.

Different strategies could be employed to update RTA Service Quality and Efficiency standards (Table 5.1) given the impacts of COVID-19 and recent inflation. One option is to benchmark the standard based on the FY 2022-2023 actual results. This will capture changes to inflation and ridership demand that led up to and continued into FY 2022-23[3]. Another option is to use the peer averages as the standards. RTA could also retain the current standards, which are aspirational, and anticipate the return of pre-pandemic service and ridership; however, it is unlikely that RTA could meet these standards over the short term. One additional consideration is that it might be useful to break out ADA paratransit service separately for each of the efficiency measures because ADA service is more costly to operate than general public service demand response service.

The Study Team's initial recommendations are to update the Service Quality and Efficiency Standards in Table 5.1 to reflect current performance or the peer average (whichever is better) as a “minimum” standard. RTA should still retain passenger per vehicle hour standards listed in the 2016 SRTP as “target” standards, as these reflect the vision of the SBP and regional goals of increasing transit mode split. RTA

[3] The Consumer Price Index for All Consumers, West Region increased 21.2% cumulatively since December of 2018. https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/consumerpriceindex_west.htm#tableA

should develop minimum cost efficiency standards (cost per hour and cost per passenger) at the level of current performance or peer average (whichever is better). The cost efficiency measures should be updated annually based on the Consumer Price Index for All Consumers, The West Region (RTA may wish to select a different geographic region more specific to southern California and San Luis Obispo. Using the larger West Region captures more data sampling and provides less volatility in the CPI). Separate standards for the Runabout should be developed.

No changes to the existing measures presented in Tables 5.2 through 5.4 are recommended, with the exception of the farebox ratio. The systemwide farebox ratio standard should meet SLOCOG's blended farebox ratio standard of 16 percent for transit operators which serve both urbanized and non-urbanized areas. To calculate the systemwide farebox ratio, local support should be included. Local support represents all non-state funds, including FTA funds.

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Chapter 5
STUDY AREA CHARACTERISTICS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the demographic and economic characteristics of both San Luis Obispo County and the City of San Luis Obispo, with a focus on data relevant to transit demand and the near-term future of RTA and SLO Transit services.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population Projections

Population projections are useful for estimating how transit demand may change in the future; if the population grows, transit demand will likely increase as well. Population projections by age group for San Luis Obispo County, sourced from the California Department of Finance, are shown in Table 8. Overall, the San Luis Obispo County population size is expected to remain relatively consistent over the upcoming decades, growing by less than 2 percent from 2020 to 2040.

Within the current decade, the fastest-growing age group is senior adults: from 2020 to 2030, the population of mature retirees (those between 75 and 84 years old) is forecasted to grow by 61 percent and the population of older seniors (those ages 85 and older) is forecasted to grow by 24 percent. The older senior population is expected to continue growing from 2030 to 2040, meaning the older senior cohort will almost double in size from 2020 to 2040 (+98 percent). All the other age cohorts are experiencing negative growth this decade except for infants and toddlers (+3 percent). The college-aged adult population projections do not account for the many Cal Poly students who do not live in San Luis Obispo County full-time and therefore are not technically considered residents.

The forecasted growth of San Luis Obispo County's senior adult population is important, as many seniors rely on transportation services for mobility. The growing senior population will likely drive increased demand for transportation services catered to the needs of seniors, such as non-emergency medical transportation, door-through-door services, and paratransit.

Table 8: San Luis Obispo County Population Projections by Age Category

Year	Total (All Ages)	Preschool (0-4 years)	School Age to Young Adult (5-17 years)	College Age (18-24 years)	Working Age (25-64 years)	Young Retirees (65-74 years)	Mature Retirees (75-84 years)	Older Seniors (85 or older)
2020	282,639	12,638	35,703	32,797	141,676	34,410	17,428	7,987
2030	286,547	13,015	33,548	32,333	134,940	34,639	28,131	9,941
2040	287,621	15,367	34,702	25,380	142,440	25,058	28,855	15,819
2020 to 2030 Change								
Number	3,908	377	-2,155	-464	-6,736	229	10,703	1,954
Percent	1%	3%	-6%	-1%	-5%	1%	61%	24%
2030 to 2040 Change								
Number	1,074	2,352	1,154	-6,953	7,500	-9,581	724	5,878
Percent	0%	18%	3%	-22%	6%	-28%	3%	59%

Sources: US Census Bureau, California Department of Finance. Report P-2B: Population Projections by Individual Year of Age, 2010-2060, California Counties

Transit Dependent Population

A large portion of transit ridership is drawn from what is referred to as the transit-dependent population. The transit-dependent population is typically considered to comprise youths, senior adults, persons with a disability, low-income persons, and persons who live in zero-vehicle households. This section discusses where transit-dependent persons live in San Luis Obispo County and the City of San Luis Obispo, and in turn what areas of the County and City have the greatest need for transit services based on demographics. Appendix A includes additional data and maps depicting where transit-dependent persons live in both the County and City.

San Luis Obispo County

An analysis of San Luis Obispo County demographic data by census tract (Appendix A), sourced from the US Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 2022 5-Year Estimates, yielded the following takeaways:

- About 17 percent of San Luis Obispo County residents are youth younger than 18 years old, slightly lower than the rate observed across the State of California (22 percent). Communities home to large numbers of the overall countywide youth population include Paso Robles, the City of San Luis Obispo, Atascadero, Nipomo, and Arroyo Grande.
- Senior adults over the age of 65 comprise 21 percent of the total San Luis Obispo County population, a greater rate compared to the State of California (16 percent). The City of San Luis Obispo, Paso Robles, Arroyo Grande, and Los Osos are all home to significant proportions of the overall countywide senior population.

- 13 percent of San Luis Obispo County residents have a **disability**, based on the definition used by the US Census Bureau. This is a similar disability prevalence in the State of California (12 percent). Large proportions of the countywide disabled population live in the City of San Luis Obispo, Paso Robles, Arroyo Grande, and Atascadero.
- It is estimated that 12 percent of San Luis Obispo County residents are **persons living below the federal poverty level**. The San Luis Obispo County poverty rate is identical to what is observed across the State of California as a whole (12 percent). Although the City of San Luis Obispo is technically home to about half of the county's low-income population, this statistic is swayed due to the large number of full-time students living in the community. Other communities with large numbers of low-income residents include Paso Robles and Atascadero.
- The US Census Bureau estimated that 4 percent of San Luis Obispo County homes are **zero-vehicle households**. This is a lower rate than the State of California as a whole (7 percent). A third of the county's zero-vehicle households are located in the City of San Luis Obispo. Other communities with many of the county's total zero-vehicle households are Atascadero, Paso Robles, Arroyo Grande, and Nipomo. It should be noted that San Luis Obispo County has an identical rate of single-vehicle households as the State of California (31 percent).

San Luis Obispo County Transit Needs Index

The purpose of the Transit Needs Index (TNI) is to discern which areas of San Luis Obispo County have the greatest comparative need for transit services across all the transit-dependent subgroups. The TNI succinctly reveals how transit-dependent residents are distributed across San Luis Obispo County, and in turn where additional or expanded transportation services may be most warranted. The San Luis Obispo County TNI is shown in Table 9 and Figures 5 through 8.

To develop the TNI, the population density of each subgroup was calculated for each census tract. Then, the concentration values were divided into five groups. The groups were used to rank the subgroups within each community on a scale of 1 (very low need) to 5 (very high need) based on the density of said group (number of people per square mile) compared to the respective density of that demographic group in the other census tracts. The five respective rank scores for each census tract were then summed to determine an overall TNI rank.

The areas with the highest TNI ranks, and therefore the greatest assumed need for transportation services, are Grover Beach, Oceano, west and southwest Arroyo Grande, Paso Robles, Baywood Park in Los Osos, and various neighborhoods in the City of San Luis Obispo. Transit needs within the City of San Luis Obispo are discussed in greater detail in the following section. Regions of San Luis Obispo County with moderate need for transit services, based on the TNI, include northeast Morro Bay, Atascadero, and Nipomo. All the areas with high to moderate needs are already served with transit, either by the RTA, SLO Transit, or other local transit services such as Morro Bay Transit, Atascadero Dial-a-Ride, or Nipomo Dial-a-Ride.

It should be noted that while the TNI provides a useful assessment of transit needs, other factors, such as total population size and development density, also need to be considered when determining where to expand transit services. For instance, even though some areas ranked highly in the TNI due to a high concentration of potentially transit-dependent people in the area, the overall populations are small. Consequently, it may not be feasible to operate transportation services in those areas due to the high operating cost that would be required but likely very low ridership.

Table 9: San Luis Obispo County Transit Needs Index (1/2)

Legend	
1	Very Low Rank
2	Low Rank
3	Medium Rank
4	High Rank
5	Very High Rank

Census Tract		Rank: Youth (Under 18 Years)	Senior Adults (65+)	Persons with a Disability	Persons Below Poverty Level	Zero-Vehicle Households	Overall Transit Needs Index Rank
100.16	San Miguel	1	1	1	1	1	5
100.17	Lake Nacimiento	1	1	1	1	1	5
101.01	Paso Robles - West	1	1	1	1	1	5
101.03	Paso Robles - Central	1	1	1	1	1	5
101.04	Paso Robles - North	5	1	2	1	1	10
102.02	Paso Robles - South East	1	1	1	1	1	5
102.04	Paso Robles - South	5	3	2	1	1	12
102.05	Paso Robles - East	5	4	2	1	3	15
102.06	Paso Robles - Union Road	2	1	1	1	1	6
102.07	Paso Robles - North East	1	1	1	1	1	5
103.01	Shandon	1	1	1	1	1	5
103.02	Paso Robles, Templeton	1	1	1	1	1	5
103.03	Whitley Gardens	1	1	1	1	1	5
104.03	Cambria - South	1	1	1	1	1	5
104.04	Cambria - North	1	1	1	1	1	5
105.04	Cayucos	1	1	1	1	1	5
105.05	Morro Bay - North East	1	3	3	1	1	9
105.06	Morro Bay - North West	1	1	1	1	1	5
106.02	Morro Bay - South	1	2	1	1	1	6
106.03	Morro Bay - Central	1	1	1	1	1	5
107.01	Los Osos - Baywood Park	5	5	4	1	1	16
107.03	Los Osos - East	3	2	1	1	1	8
107.07	Los Osos - Cuesta-by-the-Sea	1	1	1	1	1	5
109.02	SLO - Northeast	1	1	1	5	5	13
109.03	Cal Poly SLO - South	1	1	2	4	5	13
109.04	Cal Poly SLO - North	1	1	1	1	1	5
110.01	SLO - Southeast	1	1	1	1	1	5
110.02	SLO - East	1	1	1	1	1	5
111.01	SLO - Downtown	2	1	3	3	5	14
111.03	SLO - South	1	1	1	1	1	5
111.04	SLO - Broad St	3	1	1	1	5	11
111.05	SLO - South Central	5	4	1	1	5	16
112.01	SLO - Foothill Blvd, Highland Dr	1	1	1	1	1	5
112.02	SLO - Downtown (Northwest)	1	1	1	1	1	5
113	SLO - Laguna Lake	1	1	1	1	1	5

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

Table 9: San Luis Obispo County Transit Needs Index (2/2)

Legend	
1	Very Low Rank
2	Low Rank
3	Medium Rank
4	High Rank
5	Very High Rank

Census Tract		Rank: Youth (Under 18 Years)	Rank: Senior Adults (65+)	Rank: Persons with a Disability	Rank: Persons Below Poverty Level	Rank: Zero-Vehicle Households	Overall Transit Needs Index Rank
114	CA Men's Colony	1	3	1	1	1	7
115.01	SLO - S. Higuera St.	4	2	3	1	1	11
115.05	SLO - Camp SLO, SLO Airport	1	1	1	1	1	5
116	Avila Beach, Port San Luis	1	1	1	1	1	5
117.04	Pismo Beach, Shell Beach	1	2	1	1	1	6
117.05	Pismo Beach - South	1	3	1	1	1	7
117.06	Pismo Beach - East	1	1	1	1	1	5
118	Arroyo Grande - North	1	1	1	1	1	5
119.01	Arroyo Grande - Southeast	1	1	1	1	1	5
119.03	Arroyo Grande - West	4	4	1	1	1	11
119.04	Arroyo Grande - Southwest	5	5	5	1	5	21
120.01	Grover Beach - South	5	5	5	1	1	17
120.02	Grover Beach - East	5	4	5	1	1	16
121.02	Grover Beach - West	5	3	3	1	1	13
122.01	Oceano - West	4	2	2	1	1	10
122.02	Oceano - Halcyon	4	5	4	1	4	18
123.02	Edna, Huasna	1	1	1	1	1	5
123.05	Los Berros	1	1	1	1	1	5
123.06	Black Lake, Callender	1	1	1	1	1	5
124.03	Nipomo - Southwest	2	1	1	1	1	6
124.04	Nipomo - Northwest	2	1	1	1	1	6
124.05	Nipomo - Southeast	1	1	1	1	1	5
124.06	Nipomo - Northeast	2	1	1	1	1	6
125.02	Atascadero - Northeast	4	1	1	1	1	8
125.03	Atascadero - Southeast	4	1	1	1	1	8
125.05	Atascadero - North	1	1	1	1	1	5
126.01	Atascadero - Southwest	2	1	1	1	1	6
126.02	Atascadero - Northwest	1	1	1	1	1	5
127.05	Santa Margarita	1	1	1	1	1	5
127.06	Santa Rita, Morro Toro	1	1	1	1	1	5
127.07	Templeton - West	1	1	1	1	1	5
127.08	San Luis Obispo Co. - Southeast	1	1	1	1	1	5
130	San Simeon	1	1	1	1	1	5
131	Templeton, Creston	1	1	1	1	1	5

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

Figure 5:
San Luis Obispo County Transit Needs Index

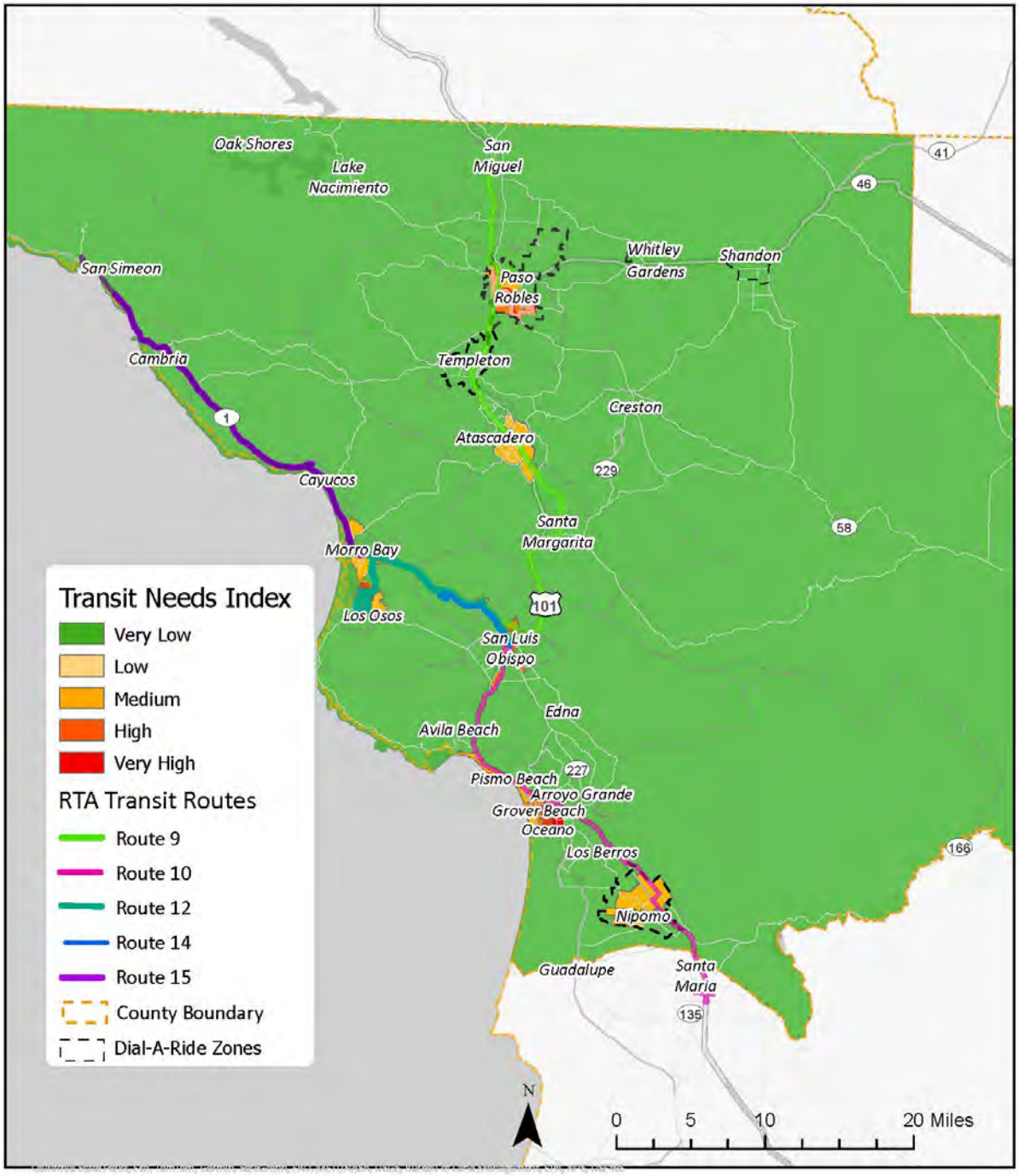


Figure 6:
North County Transit Needs Index

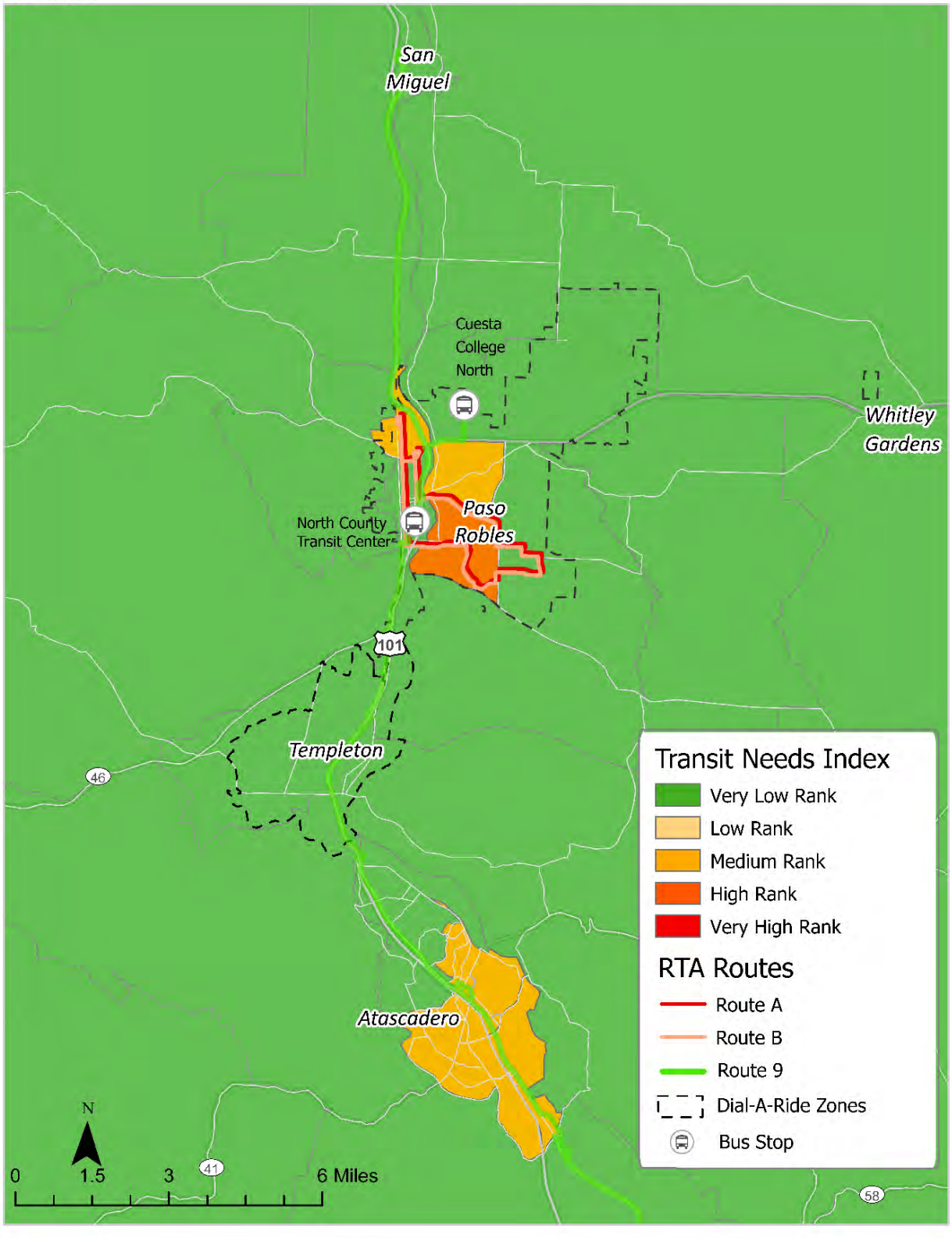


Figure 7:
South County Transit Needs Index

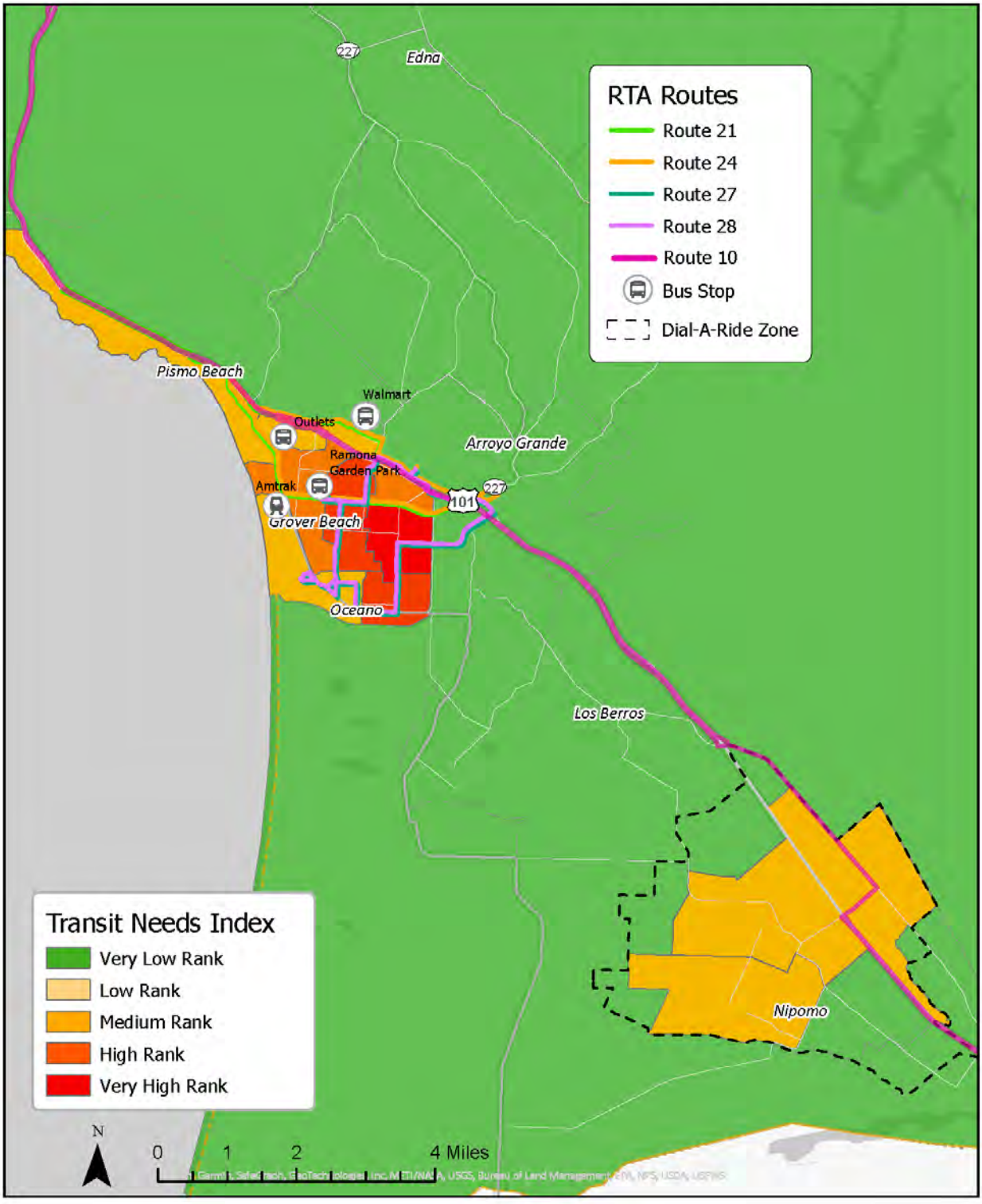
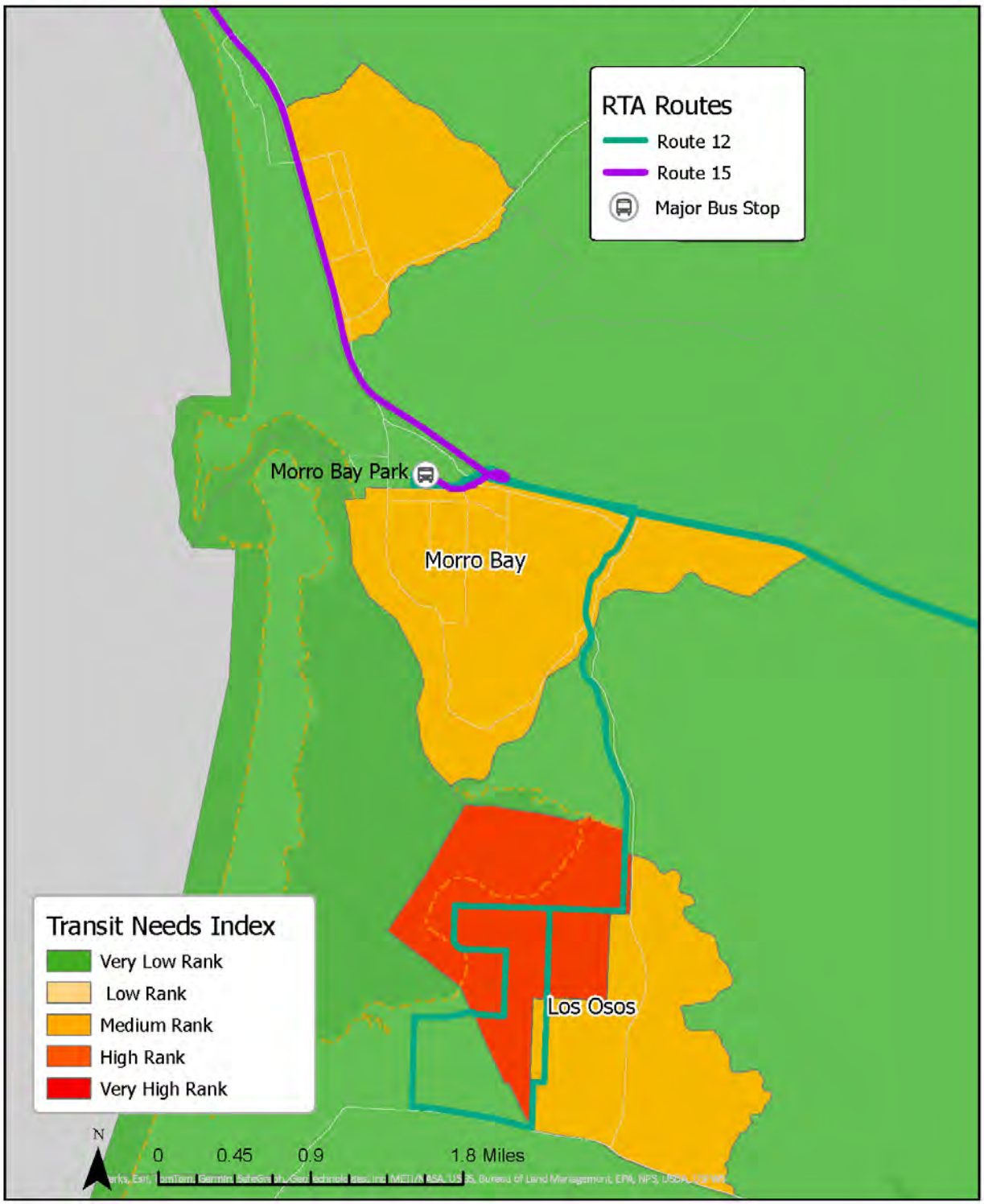


Figure 8:
Morro Bay Area Transit Needs Index



City of San Luis Obispo

City of San Luis Obispo demographic data, sourced from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) 2022 5-Year Estimates, was reviewed by the census block group to determine patterns regarding transit dependency. Key trends are listed below:

- Youths younger than 18 years old comprise 9 percent of the city's population, similar to the rate observed countywide. Block groups with large youth populations include those encompassing the southeastern and southern areas of the city, Laguna Lake, S. Higuera Street, and the area near the San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport.
- About 12 percent of the City of San Luis Obispo's residents are senior adults over the age of 65, significantly less than the countywide rate. Block groups in the southeastern, southern, and Laguna Lake areas of San Luis Obispo are home to the greatest number of senior adults.
- The City of San Luis Obispo has a low disability rate, with only 8 percent of the city's population estimated to have a disability per US Census Bureau definitions. The three block groups home to the most disabled residents are located in southern San Luis Obispo, in the northwestern area of Downtown, and along S. Higuera Street.
- A quarter of residents in the City of San Luis Obispo are estimated to be persons living below the federal poverty level, as defined by the US Census Bureau. This is significantly higher than the countywide rate (12 percent), however, this statistic is influenced by the high number of university students living in the city who do not work or only work part-time. Block groups with large numbers of low-income residents include those encompassing Downtown, Foothill Boulevard, Highland Drive, the northeastern portion of the city, and the neighborhoods directly adjacent to the Cal Poly campus.
- 7 percent of homes in the City of San Luis Obispo are zero-vehicle households, a greater proportion than what is observed countywide. Most zero-vehicle households are located in block groups encompassing Downtown, Broad Street, and neighborhoods near Cal Poly. The City has a similar rate of single-vehicle households as the State and County (32 percent).

City of San Luis Obispo Transit Needs Index

As previously mentioned, the Transit Needs Index (TNI) shows which areas have the greatest relative need for transit services based on the concentration of transit-dependent residents. The method for calculating the TNI ranks was described in the previous section discussing countywide demographics. The City of San Luis Obispo TNI is shown in Table 10 and Figure 9.

Most areas of the City of San Luis Obispo have moderate to high transit needs based on the TNI. Block groups encompassing Downtown and south-central San Luis Obispo have the overall highest TNI ranks, scoring either high or very high for the majority of demographic categories considered. Block groups with moderate transit need, based on the TNI, are found in northeastern, eastern, and southeastern San Luis Obispo, along S. Higuera Street, Foothill Boulevard, and Highland Drive, as well as near the southern portion of the Cal Poly campus. Of the aforementioned areas with high to moderate transit needs, all are served with some level of SLO Transit and/or service.

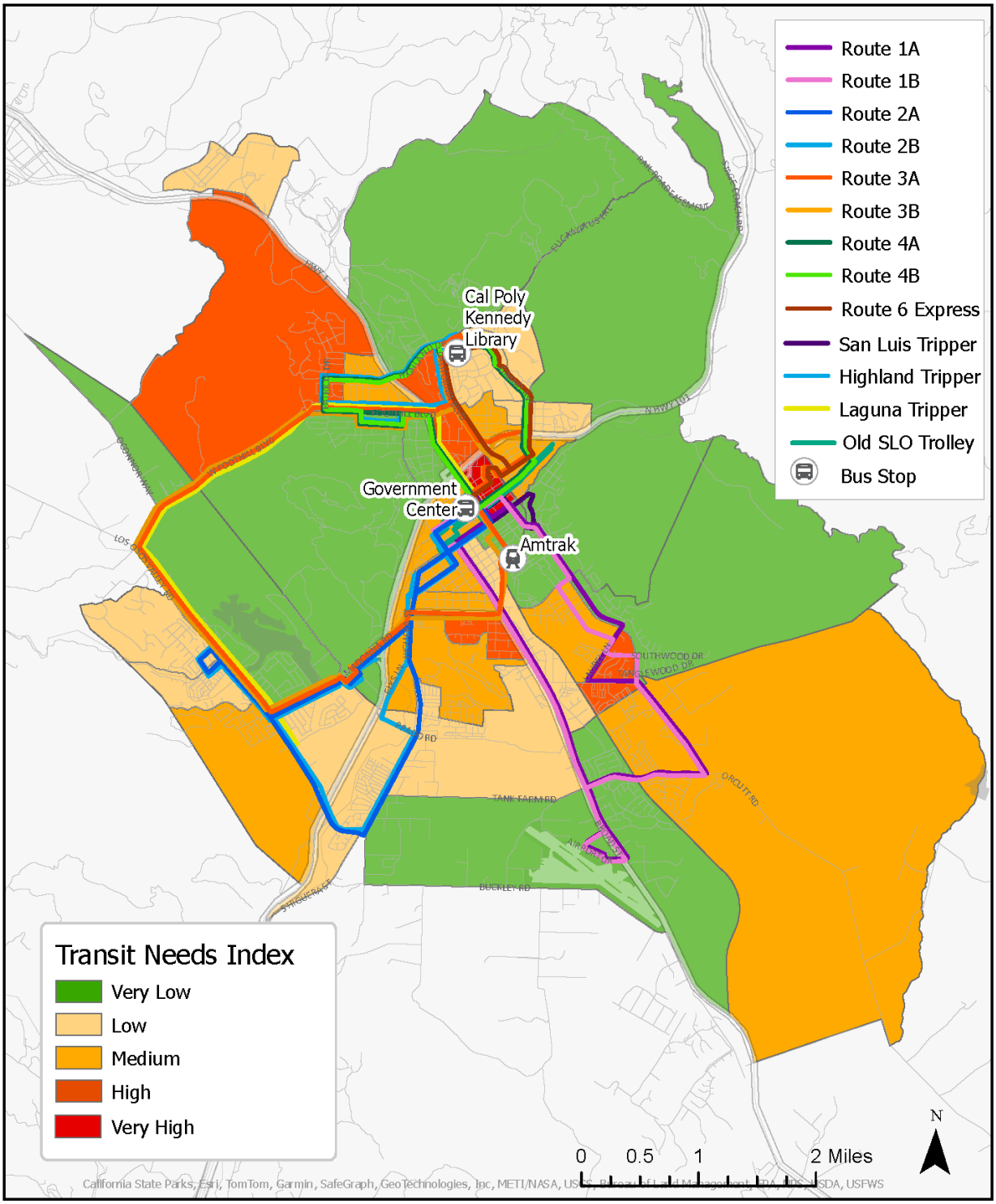
Table 10: City of San Luis Obispo Transit Needs Index

Legend	
1	Very Low Rank
2	Low Rank
3	Medium Rank
4	High Rank
5	Very High Rank

Census Tract	Block Group		Rank: Youth (Under 18 Years)	Rank: Senior Adults (65+)	Rank: Persons with a Disability	Rank: Persons Below Poverty Level	Rank: Zero-Vehicle Households	Overall Transit Needs Index Rank
109.02	1	SLO - Northeast	1	4	1	2	1	9
109.02	2	SLO - Northeast	1	1	4	5	4	15
109.02	3	SLO - Northeast	1	1	5	5	5	17
109.03	1	Cal Poly SLO - South	1	1	5	4	5	16
109.03	2	Cal Poly SLO - South	1	1	3	1	2	8
109.03	3	Cal Poly SLO - South	1	1	4	1	3	10
109.04	1	Cal Poly SLO - North	1	1	1	1	1	5
109.04	2	Cal Poly SLO - North	1	1	1	1	1	5
110.01	1	SLO - Southeast	5	5	5	1	1	17
110.01	2	SLO - Southeast	1	1	1	1	1	5
110.01	3	SLO - Southeast	3	5	4	1	1	14
110.02	1	SLO - East	1	1	1	1	1	5
110.02	2	SLO - East	1	5	5	1	2	14
111.01	1	SLO - Downtown	5	4	5	2	5	21
111.01	2	SLO - Downtown	1	3	3	1	4	12
111.01	3	SLO - Downtown	3	3	4	1	4	15
111.03	1	SLO - South	1	2	1	1	1	6
111.03	2	SLO - South	1	3	1	1	1	7
111.04	1	SLO - Broad St	3	3	3	1	4	14
111.05	1	SLO - South Central	4	5	1	1	2	13
111.05	2	SLO - South Central	5	5	4	1	5	20
111.05	3	SLO - South Central	4	5	1	1	2	13
112.01	1	SLO - Foothill Blvd, Highland Dr	3	4	5	4	1	17
112.01	2	SLO - Foothill Blvd, Highland Dr	1	1	1	1	1	5
112.02	1	SLO - Downtown (Northwest)	1	1	1	1	1	5
112.02	2	SLO - Downtown (Northwest)	1	4	3	1	3	12
113	1	SLO - Laguna Lake	1	1	1	1	1	5
113	2	SLO - Laguna Lake	1	2	1	1	1	6
113	3	SLO - Laguna Lake	3	3	2	1	1	10
113	4	SLO - Laguna Lake	3	1	1	1	1	7
113	5	SLO - Laguna Lake	1	4	2	1	1	9
114	1	CA Men's Colony	1	5	1	1	1	9
115.01	1	SLO - S. Higuera St.	4	4	4	1	1	14
115.05	1	Camp SLO, SLO Airport	1	1	1	1	1	5
115.05	2	Camp SLO, SLO Airport	1	1	1	1	1	5

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

Figure 9:
City of San Luis Obispo Transit Needs Index



The City TNI should be considered alongside other data, such as total population size, activity centers, and development density, to determine whether transit services should be increased to unserved or underserved areas.

COMMUTING PATTERNS

Commuting data for San Luis Obispo County, sourced from the US Census Longitudinal Employer Household Dynamics dataset (2021), is presented in Table 11. The top portion of the table shows where employees working in San Luis Obispo County commute from, while the bottom portion shows where residents of San Luis Obispo County commute to.

Table 11: San Luis Obispo County Commute Patterns

Where Employees In San Luis Obispo County Commute From

Counties	# of Jobs	% of Total	Cities/Towns	# of Jobs	% of Total
San Luis Obispo	71,112	68.0%	**San Luis Obipo**	11,977	11.5%
Santa Barbara	11,633	11.1%	**Paso Robles**	9,661	9.2%
Los Angeles	3,310	3.2%	**Atascadero**	9,285	8.9%
Kern	1,608	1.5%	Santa Maria	6,077	5.8%
Fresno	1,511	1.4%	**Arroyo Grande**	4,540	4.3%
Monterey	1,490	1.4%	**Los Osos**	3,933	3.8%
Orange	1,204	1.2%	**Nipomo**	3,648	3.5%
Ventura	1,046	1.0%	**Grover Beach**	3,487	3.3%
San Diego	910	0.9%	**Morro Bay**	2,978	2.8%
Tulare	907	0.9%	**Templeton**	2,453	2.3%
All Other Locations	9,862	9.4%	All Other Locations	46,554	44.5%
Total Number of Jobs	**104,593**		**Total Number of Jobs**	**104,593**	

Where San Luis Obispo County Residents Commute to

Counties	# of Jobs	% of Total	Cities and Towns	# of Jobs	% of Total
San Luis Obispo	71,112	64.8%	**San Luis Obipo**	20,635	18.8%
Santa Barbara	10,911	9.9%	**Paso Robles**	9,444	8.6%
Los Angeles	7,630	7.0%	**Atascadero**	7,097	6.5%
Orange	2,227	2.0%	Santa Maria	6,330	5.8%
Kern	2,121	1.9%	**Arroyo Grande**	3,669	3.3%
Monterey	1,663	1.5%	Los Angeles	3,467	3.2%
Fresno	1,656	1.5%	**Templeton**	3,298	3.0%
Ventura	1,521	1.4%	**Pismo Beach**	2,776	2.5%
Santa Clara	1,399	1.3%	**Morro Beach**	2,665	2.4%
San Diego	1,119	1.0%	**Grover Beach**	1,904	1.7%
All Other Locations	8,385	7.6%	All other locations	48,459	44.2%
Total Number of Jobs	**109,744**		**Total Number of Jobs**	**109,744**	

Source: US Census Bureau LEHD Database, 2021.
Note: **Bold text** indicates locations within San Luis Obispo County.

It is important to note that the data represents the number of jobs and not the number of people; one person may hold multiple jobs across the study area, however, this is not reflected in the LEHD data. Another caveat is that the LEHD data does not indicate whether a job is held by a remote worker, however, some remote work patterns can be assumed. For instance, likely, most San Luis Obispo County residents with jobs located in Los Angeles County are working remotely at least part of the time. Even with these caveats, the LEHD data still provides useful information about popular commute patterns that could potentially be served by transit.

Most San Luis Obispo County jobs are held by county residents (68 percent). The San Luis Obispo County communities that supply the greatest number of employees are the Cities of San Luis Obispo (12 percent of county jobs), Paso Robles (9 percent), and Atascadero (9 percent). Notably, 11 percent of San Luis Obispo County jobs are held by residents of Santa Barbara County, and about 6 percent are held by residents of Santa Maria specifically. In the City of San Luis Obispo, 38 percent of jobs held by employed residents are located within the City itself (6,700).

As expected, the majority of San Luis Obispo County residents' jobs are also within the county (65 percent). Nearly one out of every five positions held by San Luis Obispo County residents are located in the City of San Luis Obispo (19 percent). Other places where large numbers of San Luis Obispo County residents work include Paso Robles (9 percent of jobs held by county residents), Atascadero (7 percent), and Arroyo Grande (3 percent). The top out-of-county location where San Luis Obispo County residents are employed is Santa Barbara County (10 percent of jobs held by San Luis Obispo County residents). More specifically, 6 percent of jobs held by San Luis Obispo County residents are located in Santa Maria. According to a study conducted by the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments, the residents commuting south to Santa Barbara County tend to live in Nipomo, Arroyo Grande, and Grover Beach.[4]

Considering the number of workers estimated to be traveling in either direction, the LEHD data suggests about 11,000 people are commuting between San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties regularly. This trip is currently served by RTA Route 10; however, it is important to evaluate whether the RTA 10 schedule can be improved to maximize commuter ridership.

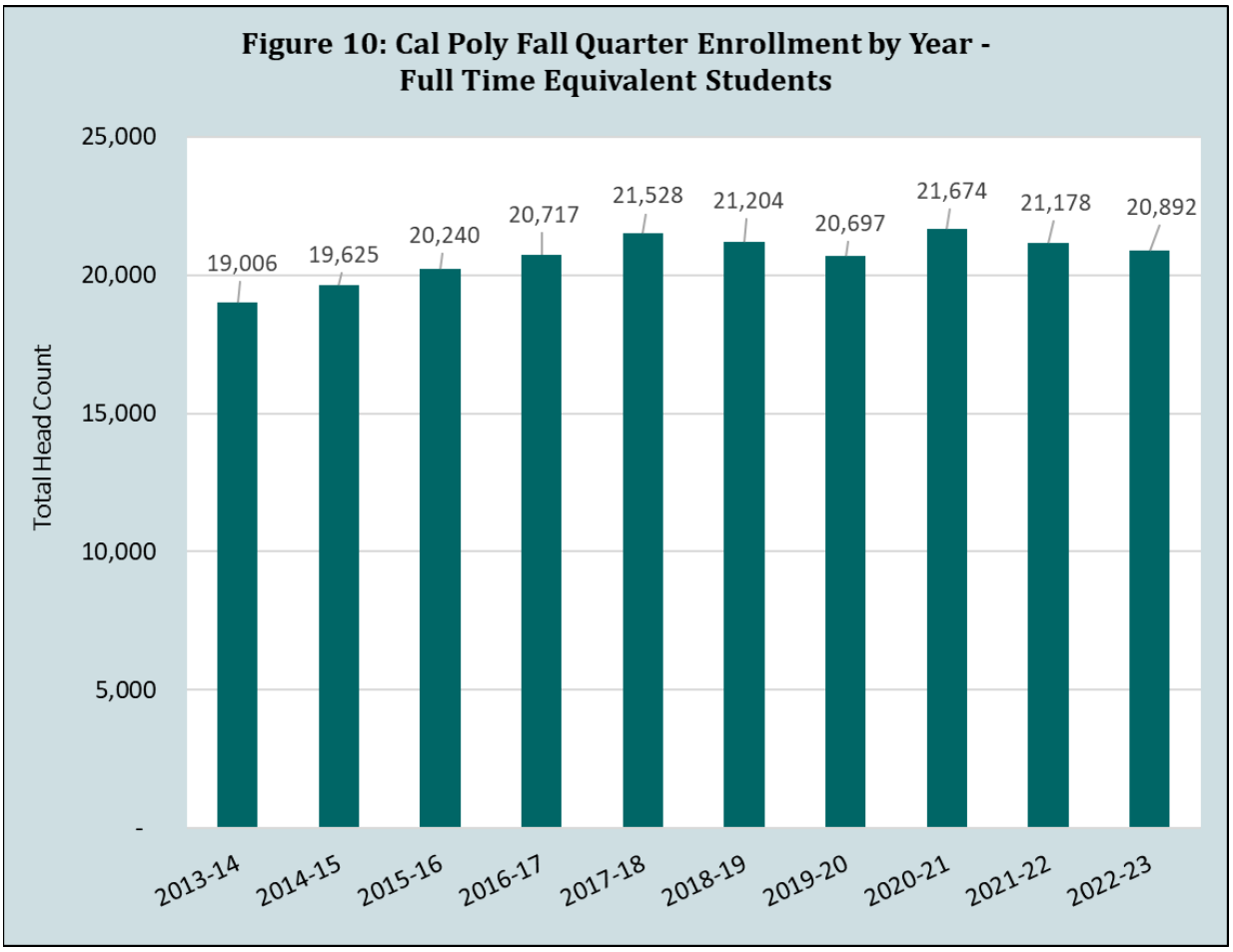
Looking at the potential for transit to serve popular commutes, it is necessary to consider how commuting patterns have changed since the COVID-19 pandemic. The widespread implementation of remote and hybrid work policies in the wake of the pandemic has resulted in many people commuting less frequently in 2024 than in 2019, therefore reducing the need for transit services designed for commuters. This trend was noted in a recent report by the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments, which found through an analysis of Replica data that about 15 percent of Santa Barbara County resident workers were working from home on any given day in 2022, up from 6 percent in 2019. Interestingly, the same report found that the shift to working from home only occurred for Santa Barabara County residents with an annual income of $75,000 to $100,000 or more. As lower-income workers are more likely to use the bus, this indicates a continued need for transit service for work purposes.

[4] Santa Barbara County Association of Governments. (2023). *Understanding Regional Travel Patterns – Draft* [PDF].

CAL POLY ENROLLMENT

The California Polytechnic University (Cal Poly) is a four-year California State University in the City of San Luis Obispo. Cal Poly is a major transit trip generator for both the RTA and SLO Transit, as many students and staff rely on transit for their transportation needs. Cal Poly has had 20,000 to 21,500 full-time equivalent students enrolled during the Fall Quarter since the 2015-16 school year. Cal Poly's historical enrollment, based on the Fall Quarter Census, is shown in Figure 10.

Per the *Cal Poly Campus Master Plan* (2019), Cal Poly intends to increase the student headcount to 25,000 by 2035, an increase of about 4,000 students compared to 2022. The growing student body will likely drive increased demand for transit services within the City of San Luis Obispo as well as the greater region. Another factor that may influence Cal Poly transit ridership in the future is that Cal Poly is undertaking multiple capital projects that will increase the total number of students living on campus from 8,000 to 15,000 by 2030. This increase in Cal Poly's on-campus residential capacity will be correlated to an increase in staff to manage the new facilities. The planned shift towards more students living on campus may alter SLO Transit travel patterns in particular, with peak hourly ridership likely changing as a result of more students starting their day on campus.



Chapter 6

EVALUATION OF THE SAN LUIS OBISPO REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, RTA operations and performance are evaluated. First, ten-year operations are considered by service type. Second, FY 2022-23 performance is analyzed by individual service. Runabout operations are then explored in more detail at the end of the chapter. Additional RTA fixed route operating data is featured in the route profiles presented in Appendix C.

To understand how effectively RTA services meet community needs, as well as what service improvements are most desired, LSC gathered feedback from passengers, community members, stakeholders, and bus operators. This input was collected through an onboard survey, an online community survey, stakeholder meetings, and bus operator interviews. Data generated by these efforts are summarized in Appendices D (onboard survey), E (community survey), and F (stakeholder and bus operator input).

The operations and performance data presented in this Chapter and Appendix C, as well as the public and stakeholder feedback detailed in Appendices D, E, and F, will inform the development of potential service and capital alternatives for the RTA.

RTA TEN-YEAR TRENDS

RTA operations were impacted by two major events during the last ten years: the COVID-19 pandemic and the nationwide bus operator shortage. The widespread implementation of stay-at-home orders and remote work policies at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020) caused a significant decline in transit ridership. Many transit agencies, including the RTA, were forced to reduce service levels in response to the decreased demand.

The nationwide bus operator shortage that has occurred in the years since the COVID-19 pandemic is due to two factors: 1) a large number of bus operators have retired; and 2) many bus operators have left their positions in pursuit of higher-paying roles with less public exposure. The high cost of living in San Luis Obispo County and the City of San Luis Obispo has limited the number of potential bus operators even further. The bus operator shortage has made it incredibly difficult for the RTA to retain enough staff to resume pre-pandemic service levels.

Operations

RTA operations data for the last ten years (FY 2013-14 through FY 2022-23) are shown in Tables 12 (regional routes), 13 (local South County fixed routes), 14 (Paso Robles Routes A and B), and 15 (the Runabout and rural DARs). Paso Robles Routes A and B operating data is only shown starting in FY 2014-15 because that is the year RTA assumed operational responsibility for the service.

Table 12: RTA Regional Routes - Operations Data

FY 2013-14 - FY 2022-23

Fiscal Year	Service Parameters [1] Passenger-Trips	Service Hours	Service Miles	Operating Expenses [2]	Fare Revenue
2013-14	762,796	31,964	997,271	$3,951,819	$1,244,764
2014-15	765,559	31,444	982,913	$4,170,142	$1,152,169
2015-16	703,146	31,802	968,787	$4,131,601	$1,102,283
2016-17	652,327	36,312	1,050,965	$4,671,014	$1,003,303
2017-18	595,558	35,870	1,034,554	$5,318,245	$1,096,922
2018-19	605,178	36,256	1,040,700	$5,702,031	$1,031,700
2019-20	416,349	31,133	907,043	$5,895,295	$763,066
2020-21	301,312	30,416	878,876	$6,367,091	$197,491
2021-22	372,568	31,553	899,568	$6,685,979	$602,766
2022-23	409,936	32,516	913,099	$5,868,600	$529,240
% Change FY 13-14 to FY 22-23	**-46%**	**2%**	**-8%**	**49%**	**-57%**

Sources: National Transit Database, RTA Financial Audits, RTA Performance Reports

Note 1: Service data includes Routes 9, 10, 12, 14, 15.

Note 2: Operating expenses include depreciation.

Table 13: RTA South County Fixed Routes - Operations Data

FY 2013-14 - FY 2022-23

Fiscal Year	Service Parameters [1] Passenger-Trips	Service Hours	Service Miles	Operating Expenses [2]	Fare Revenue
2013-14	249,867	13,772	216,380	$1,116,796	$146,060
2014-15	232,326	13,533	220,293	$1,105,306	$149,222
2015-16	211,692	13,492	222,872	$1,256,415	$139,508
2016-17	192,290	14,032	230,985	$1,430,539	$145,021
2017-18	185,513	14,416	229,892	$1,528,896	$162,511
2018-19	168,875	14,708	234,123	$1,564,886	$153,140
2019-20	117,324	13,114	209,793	$1,443,070	$104,686
2020-21	130,804	13,305	210,337	$1,517,501	$46,973
2021-22	139,393	13,462	209,292	$2,035,439	$93,181
2022-23	168,392	13,632	217,569	$2,245,791	$135,478
% Change FY 13-14 to FY 22-23	**-33%**	**-1%**	**1%**	**101%**	**-7%**

Sources: National Transit Database, RTA Financial Audits, RTA Performance Reports

Note 1: Service data includes Routes 21, 24, 27, 28.

Note 2: Operating expenses exclude depreciation.

Table 14: RTA Paso Robles Routes A and B - Operations Data

FY 2014-15 - FY 2022-23

Fiscal Year	Service Parameters [1] Passenger-Trips	Service Hours	Service Miles	Operating Expenses [2]	Fare Revenue
2014-15	107,122	7,129	94,615	$665,760	$124,556
2015-16	107,485	7,191	96,700	$696,376	$143,323
2016-17	108,167	6,649	89,636	$669,146	$138,519
2017-18	101,578	6,256	86,860	$698,731	$137,891
2018-19	103,561	6,168	85,888	$707,777	$136,762
2019-20	60,812	5,840	82,564	$856,711	$97,527
2020-21	69,840	6,076	87,072	$826,964	$66,473
2021-22	106,647	5,843	83,881	$857,019	$101,999
2022-23	120,806	5,839	81,815	$933,480	$126,788
% Change FY 13-14 to FY 22-23	**13%**	**-18%**	**-14%**	**40%**	**2%**

Sources: National Transit Database, RTA Financial Audits, RTA Performance Reports

Note 1: Service data includes Paso Robles Routes A and B.

Note 2: Operating expenses exclude depreciation.

Table 15: Runabout, Dial-a-Rides, and RTA Contract Services - Operations Data

FY 2013-14 - FY 2022-23

Fiscal Year	Service Parameters [1] Passenger-Trips	Service Hours	Service Miles	Operating Expenses [2]	Fare Revenue
2013-14	57,695	34,763	600,888	$3,330,807	$146,517
2014-15	60,659	35,139	565,641	$3,622,146	$166,665
2015-16	58,901	33,742	523,524	$3,681,230	$176,962
2016-17	56,236	33,391	506,908	$3,680,951	$182,950
2017-18	58,242	32,970	511,984	$3,777,223	$203,041
2018-19	56,546	31,857	482,764	$3,948,377	$199,102
2019-20	43,898	26,246	402,798	$3,915,620	$237,797
2020-21	24,268	18,631	242,526	$3,286,300	$75,752
2021-22	33,817	21,535	291,002	$3,624,231	$88,283
2022-23	40,229	23,526	329,799	$4,300,377	$109,491
% Change FY 13-14 to FY 22-23	**-30%**	**-32%**	**-45%**	**29%**	**-25%**

Sources: National Transit Database, RTA Financial Audits, RTA Performance Reports

Note 1: Service data includes Runabout, Paso Robles DAR, Nipomo DAR, Shandon/Templeton DAR, Avila Trolley, and Cambria Trolley.

Note 2: Operating expenses include depreciation.

Ridership

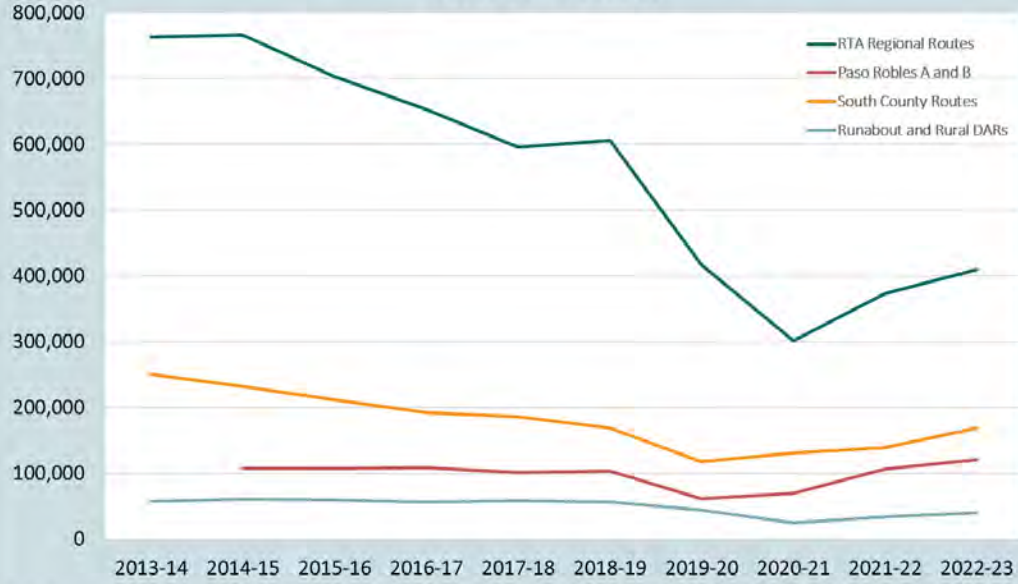
RTA's ten-year ridership is shown in Figure 11 in addition to the above tables. As shown, RTA regional ridership peaked in FY 2014-15 at 765,559 passenger-trips. Ridership then declined by 21 percent from FY 2014-15 to FY 2018-19, likely due to external factors such as cheap fuel prices and low interest rates which made it more feasible for many to purchase and maintain personal vehicles. The COVID-19 pandemic caused ridership on the regional routes to decrease by another 50 percent from FY 2018-19 to FY 2020-21. In FY 2022-23, ridership on the regional routes (409,936 passenger-trips) was up 36 percent higher from the pandemic low.

Ridership on the local Paso Robles routes also decreased in the years pre-pandemic (-3 percent), albeit not as significantly. Unlike the other RTA service categories, ridership on the local Paso Robles routes has progressively increased since FY 2019-20. Ridership in FY 2022-23 (120,806 passenger-trips) actually surpassed FY 2018-19 ridership by 17 percent, in large part due to the cessation of school bus services in Paso Robles, which prompted many local students to begin utilizing RTA to get to and from school.

Ridership on the local South County routes followed a similar pattern to the other service categories pre-pandemic; ten-year ridership peaked in FY 2014-15 (232,326 passenger-trips) before then declining in the years leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic (-27 percent). Ridership on the local South County routes has increased year-over-year since the pandemic low observed in FY 2019-20. In FY 2022-23, South County fixed route ridership (168,392 passenger-trips) was nearly identical to FY 2018-19; however, ridership was still below the FY 2014-15 peak (-28 percent).

Runabout/DAR ridership also peaked in FY 2014-15 (60,659 passenger-trips). Ridership declined by 7 percent from FY 2014-15 to FY 2018-19, then decreased by 57 percent from FY 2018-19 to FY 2020-21 due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. FY 2022-23 ridership (40,229 passenger-trips) was up 66 percent from the FY 2020-21 low.

Figure 11: RTA Historical Ridership
FY 2013-14 - FY 2022-23



Service Levels

The regional routes' service levels, or the number of vehicle service hours and miles operated, increased from FY 2013-14 to FY 2018-19 due to the introduction of additional express and evening service. The regional routes' operating requirements then decreased during the pandemic as the RTA cut service in response to lower ridership (both vehicle service hours and miles decreased by 16 percent from FY 2018-19 to FY 2020-21). Service reductions implemented during the pandemic included the elimination of all but one Route 9 express trip and the suspension of Route 14 in response to Cuesta College moving most classes online. The RTA has slowly increased service in the years since the pandemic.

Service levels on both the local Paso Robles and South County routes were also reduced in FY 2019-20 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As of FY 2022-23, the Paso Robles routes' service levels remain below pre-COVID levels (both vehicle service hours and miles are down 5 percent from FY 2018-19), as Saturday service has yet to be reinstated on Route A. FY 2022-23 service levels on the South County routes were also below FY 2018-19 (both vehicle service hours and miles are down 7 percent).

Runabout and DAR service levels are not determined by regular schedules and are therefore dependent on ridership and the legal requirement that paratransit service be available during the same hours and days as nearby fixed routes. This relationship is evident in Table 15, which shows how Runabout and DAR service levels plummeted during the COVID-19 pandemic alongside ridership; from FY 2018-19 to FY 2020-21, vehicle service hours decreased by 42 percent and vehicle service miles decreased by 50 percent. While service levels have increased in the years since the pandemic, FY 2022-23 service levels remained below FY 2013-14. It should be noted that the decline in Runabout service levels can also be attributed to intentional policies implemented as a result of the 2016 SRTP; to encourage Runabout passengers to use local fixed routes when able, Runabout passengers are offered free fares on all local fixed routes in San Luis Obispo County. Additionally, RTA now partners with SLOCOG to fund the Senior Go! service to reduce Runabout demand. Both of these measures have helped to lower Runabout service levels, and in turn provide the RTA with cost savings.

Operating Costs

Operating costs for all four RTA service categories increased from FY 2013-14 to FY 2022-23. The local South County fixed routes' operating costs increased most significantly (+101 percent) while the Runabout/DAR operating costs increased the least (+29 percent). The increase in operating costs observed over the last five years, despite service levels either decreasing or remaining unchanged on most of the services, can be attributed in large part to record-high inflation in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the need to offer competitive job offers to recruit more employees.

Fare Revenues

The only RTA service category that saw fare revenues increase over the last ten years was the local Paso Robles routes (+2 percent), in large part because ridership increased. Fare revenues received on the local South County routes decreased by 7 percent over the last ten years. The decrease in fares on the regional routes and Runabout/DARs more closely mirrored the decline in ridership; from FY 2013-14 to FY 2022-23, RTA regional fares decreased by 57 percent (slightly more than ridership) and Runabout/DAR fares decreased by 25 percent (slightly less than ridership). To increase fare revenues, RTA will need to increase ridership.

Performance

The ten-year RTA operating data presented previously was used to analyze performance, as shown in Tables 16 through 19. Takeaways from the performance analyses include:

- The number of passenger-trips per vehicle service hour is a good indicator of transit productivity. Over the last ten years, this metric decreased on the regional (-47 percent) and local South County routes (-32 percent) and increased on the local Paso Robles routes (+38 percent) and Runabout/DARs (+3 percent). Over the last five years (FY 2018-29 to FY 2022-23), the number of passenger-trips provided per service hour increased on the local Paso Robles (+23 percent) and South County routes (+8 percent) and decreased on the regional routes (-24 percent) and Runabout/DARs (-3 percent). In FY 2022-23, the local Paso Robles routes carried the most passenger-trips per hour (20.7).
- Passenger-trips per vehicle service mile is another measure to assess transit productivity. Overall, this measure followed similar ten-year trends as the number of passenger-trips carried per service hour: the greatest ten-year growth was observed on the local Paso Robles routes (+30 percent) and the greatest decrease was observed on the regional routes (-41 percent). In FY 2022-23, the local Paso Robles routes carried the most passenger-trips per mile (1.5).
- The operating cost per passenger-trip is an indicator of cost efficiency. Over the last ten years, this metric increased by 24 percent (local Paso Robles routes) to 198 percent (local South County routes) depending on the service category. Generally, these increases can be attributed to the decline in ridership and simultaneous increase in operating costs that occurred during the pandemic years.
- The operating cost per vehicle service hour also reflects the relative cost efficiency of transit services. All RTA services saw their respective operating costs per service hour increase from FY 2013-14 to FY 2022-23 due to rapidly increasing costs. From FY 2018-19 to FY 2022-23, the regional routes saw the smallest increase (+15 percent) while the local South County routes saw the highest (+55 percent).

In sum, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted RTA productivity and cost efficiency trends; decreased ridership and increased costs negatively impacted both productivity and cost performance. Since the peak of the pandemic, all the RTA service categories have seen productivity and cost efficiency improve to some extent. The only large exception to these overall trends were the local Paso Robles routes, which saw productivity increase significantly over the last ten years due to ridership surpassing pre-COVID levels.

Table 16: RTA Regional Routes - Performance Analysis

FY 2013-14 - FY 2022-23

	Performance			
	Passengers Per			
Fiscal Year	Hour	Mile	Operating Cost per Passenger-Trip	Operating Cost per Service Hour
2013-14	23.9	0.8	$5.18	$123.64
2014-15	24.3	0.8	$5.45	$132.62
2015-16	22.1	0.7	$5.88	$129.92
2016-17	18.0	0.6	$7.16	$128.63
2017-18	16.6	0.6	$8.93	$148.26
2018-19	16.7	0.6	$9.42	$157.27
2019-20	13.4	0.5	$14.16	$189.36
2020-21	9.9	0.3	$21.13	$209.33
2021-22	11.8	0.4	$17.95	$211.89
2022-23	12.6	0.4	$14.32	$180.48
% Change FY 13-14 to FY 22-23	**-47%**	**-41%**	**176%**	**46%**

Sources: National Transit Database, RTA Financial Audits, RTA Performance Reports

Note 1: Data includes Routes 9, 10, 12, 14, and 15.

Table 17: RTA Paso Robles Routes A and B - Performance Analysis

FY 2014-15 - FY 2022-23

	Performance			
	Passengers Per			
Fiscal Year	Hour	Mile	Operating Cost per Passenger-Trip	Operating Cost per Service Hour
2014-15	15.0	1.1	$6.21	$93.38
2015-16	14.9	1.1	$6.48	$96.84
2016-17	16.3	1.2	$6.19	$100.64
2017-18	16.2	1.2	$6.88	$111.69
2018-19	16.8	1.2	$6.83	$114.76
2019-20	10.4	0.7	$14.09	$146.71
2020-21	11.5	0.8	$11.84	$136.10
2021-22	18.3	1.3	$8.04	$146.67
2022-23	20.7	1.5	$7.73	$159.87
% Change FY 13-14 to FY 22-23	**38%**	**30%**	**24%**	**71%**

Sources: National Transit Database, RTA Financial Audits, RTA Performance Reports

Note 1: Service data includes Paso Robles Routes A and B.

Table 18: RTA South County Fixed Routes - Performance Analysis

FY 2013-14 - FY 2022-23

	Performance			
	Passengers Per			
Fiscal Year	Hour	Mile	Operating Cost per Passenger-Trip	Operating Cost per Service Hour
2013-14	18.1	1.2	$4.47	$81.09
2014-15	17.2	1.1	$4.76	$81.68
2015-16	15.7	0.9	$5.94	$93.12
2016-17	13.7	0.8	$7.44	$101.95
2017-18	12.9	0.8	$8.24	$106.06
2018-19	11.5	0.7	$9.27	$106.40
2019-20	8.9	0.6	$12.30	$110.04
2020-21	9.8	0.6	$11.60	$114.05
2021-22	10.4	0.7	$14.60	$151.20
2022-23	12.4	0.8	$13.34	$164.74
% Change FY 13-14 to FY 22-23	**-32%**	**-33%**	**198%**	**103%**

Sources: National Transit Database, RTA Financial Audits, RTA Performance Reports

Note 1: Data includes Routes 21, 24, 27, and 28.

Table 19: Runabout, Dial-a-Rides, and RTA Contract Services - Performance Analysis

FY 2013-14 - FY 2022-23

	Performance			
	Passengers Per			
Fiscal Year	Hour	Mile	Operating Cost per Passenger-Trip	Operating Cost per Service Hour
2013-14	1.7	0.10	$57.73	$95.81
2014-15	1.7	0.11	$59.71	$103.08
2015-16	1.7	0.11	$62.50	$109.10
2016-17	1.7	0.11	$65.46	$110.24
2017-18	1.8	0.11	$64.85	$114.56
2018-19	1.8	0.12	$69.83	$123.94
2019-20	1.7	0.11	$89.20	$149.19
2020-21	1.3	0.10	$135.42	$176.39
2021-22	1.6	0.12	$107.17	$168.29
2022-23	1.7	0.12	$106.90	$182.79
% Change FY 13-14 to FY 22-23	**3%**	**27%**	**85%**	**91%**

Sources: National Transit Database, RTA Financial Audits, RTA Performance Reports

Note 1: Data includes the Runabout, Paso Robles DAR, Nipomo DAR, Shandon/Templeton DAR, Avila Trolley, and Cambria Trolley.

RTA FY 22-23 OPERATIONS AND PERFORMANCE

Operations

Table 20 summarizes RTA FY 2022-23 operations by service. Fixed route and Runabout/DAR subtotals are provided in addition to systemwide totals for each metric.

Table 20: RTA Operations by Service - FY 2022-23

	Service Parameters				
Service	Passenger-Trips	Service Hours	Service Miles	Marginal Operating Cost	Fare Revenue
Route 9	150,387	12,118	314,160	$1,801,376	$183,520
Route 10	139,293	10,070	312,964	$1,594,780	$218,282
Route 12	106,963	6,998	185,008	$1,013,775	$112,407
Route 14	2,876	162	3,746	$24,279	$1,094
Route 15	10,420	3,169	97,222	$524,550	$14,237
Paso Robles Route A	56,619	2,700	37,579	$412,398	$67,193
Paso Robles Route B	64,188	3,139	44,236	$478,748	$59,594
Route 21	48,195	3,674	71,299	$594,016	$34,011
Route 24	47,282	3,560	54,960	$553,758	$38,169
Route 27	24,317	2,657	37,571	$406,852	$22,180
Route 28	48,595	3,638	51,944	$560,230	$41,118
Avila/Pismo Trolley [1]	4,562	366	7,740	$174,871	$7,100
Runabout	22,963	18,139	281,936	$2,713,438	$79,437
Templeton/Shandon DARs [1]	7	4	17	$268	$11
Paso Robles DAR	2,736	1,463	13,902	$196,371	$7,465
Nipomo DAR [1]	9,754	3,538	25,910	$373,892	$15,179
Cambria Community Bus [1,2]	207	16	294	$7,935	$322
Fixed Route Subtotal	703,697	52,267	1,218,722	$8,147,567	$799,227
Paratransit and DAR Subtotal	35,667	23,144	321,765	$3,283,969	$102,092
Systemwide	**739,364**	**75,411**	**1,540,487**	**$11,431,536**	**$901,319**

Sources: RTA FY 2022-23 Financial Statement, RTA FY 2022-23 Performance Reports

Note 1: For the county-sponsored services, the total annual operating cost and fare revenues were allocated to each service based on the proportion of total county service hours operated on each service.

Note 2: The RTA provides administrative support for the Cambria Community Bus, a volunteer driver service operated by the Cambria Community Council, Inc.

Ridership

RTA carried 739,364 passenger-trips across all services in FY 2022-23. Over half of RTA's annual ridership was carried by Routes 9 (150,387 passenger-trips), 10 (139,293 passenger-trips), and 12 (106,963 passenger-trips). In Paso Robles, Route B carried more passenger-trips than Route A because it runs on Saturdays. In the South County area, Routes 21, 24, and 28 all saw similar annual ridership (around 37,000 weekday passenger-trips and 10,000 weekend passenger-trips); the weekday-only Route 27 had lower annual ridership comparatively (about 24,000 passenger-trips). The Runabout had the greatest ridership of the paratransit/demand response services (22,963), followed by the Nipomo DAR (9,754 passenger-trips).

RTA FY 2022-23 fixed route ridership by month is shown in Figure 12. As shown, ridership remained relatively consistent month-to-month except for a sharp drop in December 2022. This drop may have been caused by a decrease in student (both K-12 and college) ridership during the holidays. Ridership was also lower in the summer months of July 2022 and June 2023, further suggesting that RTA monthly ridership is impacted by student ridership patterns. The summer dip is likely caused more so by a decrease in college student and staff ridership, many of whom leave the region for extended periods during the summer months.

RTA fixed route ridership by day of the week for the month of October 2023 is shown in Figure 13. While this data technically represents FY 2023-24 ridership, it can still be interpreted as reflective of recent RTA ridership trends. Overall, weekday ridership was lowest on Mondays and highest on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. All three service categories saw the most ridership on Tuesday (3,057 passenger-trips on average). Saturday and Sunday ridership was lower than weekday ridership due to both lower demand as well as more limited service options.

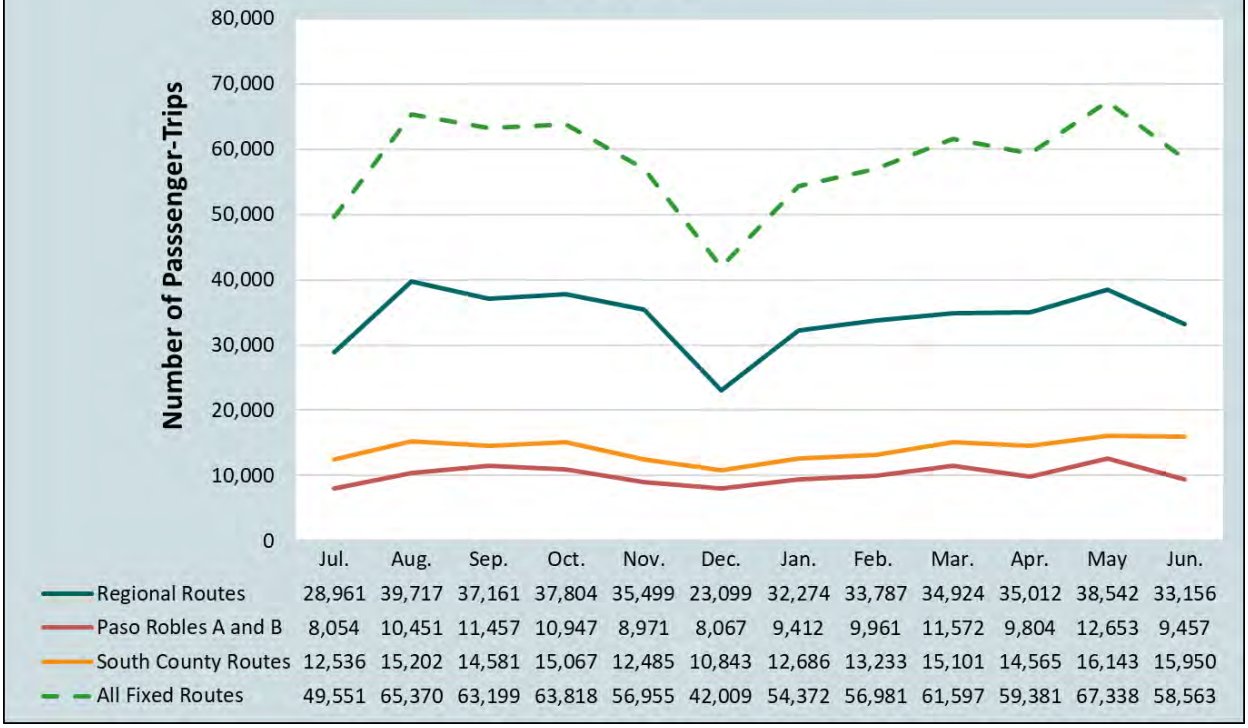
Service Levels

In FY 2022-23, RTA operated 75,411 vehicle service hours and 1,540,487 vehicle service miles across all services. The RTA regional routes generally required more vehicle service hours and miles than the other fixed routes due to the long hours and distances spanned. The Runabout required the most vehicle service hours (18,139) and the third most vehicle service miles (281,936) of the RTA-operated services.

Operating Costs

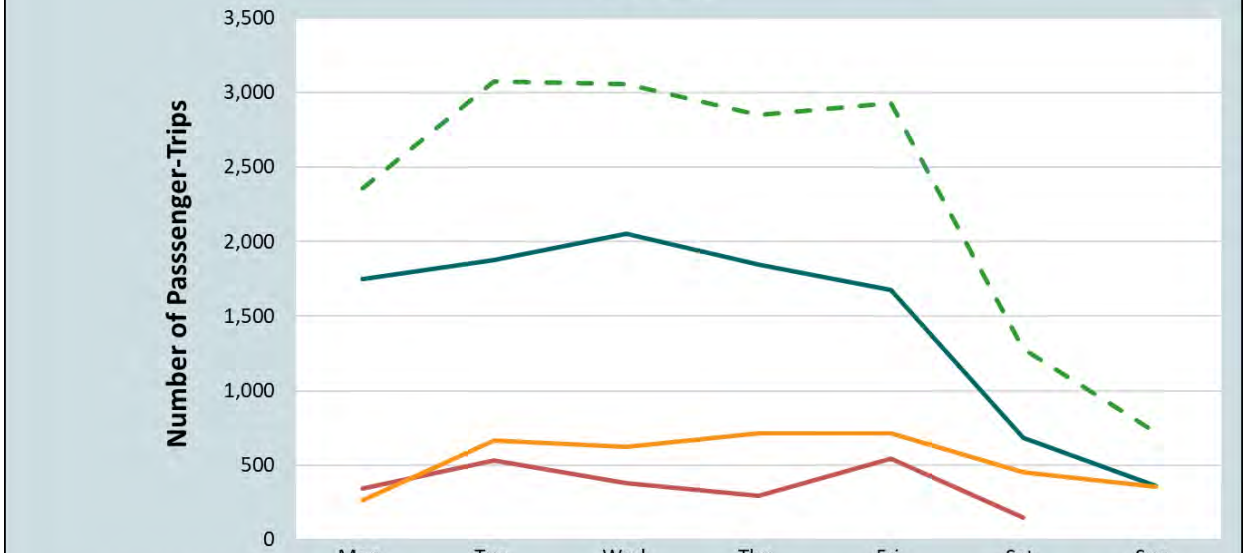
Marginal operating cost values include costs dependent on service levels, such as bus operator salaries, fuel, and vehicle insurance. Administrative staff time and other fixed costs such as utilities are not included in marginal operating costs. RTA marginal costs by service, as presented in Table 20, are sourced from RTA financial statements and reports. Overall, the RTA systemwide FY 2022-23 marginal operating cost was $11.4 million. Over 71 percent of the costs were spent on fixed route service, however, the costliest individual RTA service was the Runabout, which alone required $2.7 million. The regional routes were the most expensive of the fixed routes due to the greater level of service provided. The local South County routes were generally more expensive than the Paso Robles routes. The least expensive services were the Templeton/Shandon DAR and the Cambria Trolley, as they do not operate daily.

Figure 12: RTA Fixed Route Ridership by Month
FY 2022-23



	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.
Regional Routes	28,961	39,717	37,161	37,804	35,499	23,099	32,274	33,787	34,924	35,012	38,542	33,156
Paso Robles A and B	8,054	10,451	11,457	10,947	8,971	8,067	9,412	9,961	11,572	9,804	12,653	9,457
South County Routes	12,536	15,202	14,581	15,067	12,485	10,843	12,686	13,233	15,101	14,565	16,143	15,950
All Fixed Routes	49,551	65,370	63,199	63,818	56,955	42,009	54,372	56,981	61,597	59,381	67,338	58,563

Figure 13: RTA Fixed Route Average Ridership by Day of Week
Oct. 2023



	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
Regional Routes	1,751	1,877	2,052	1,844	1,674	682	365
Paso Robles A and B	345	529	383	293	542	148	
South County Routes	262	666	622	713	712	451	358
All Fixed Routes	2,358	3,072	3,057	2,849	2,928	1,281	722

Performance Analysis

RTA FY 2022-23 performance by service is presented in Table 21 and Figures 14 through 16. Findings from the performance analysis are discussed below:

- RTA carried 9.8 passenger-trips per vehicle service hour across all services in FY 2022-23. The most productive routes were Paso Robles Routes A (21.0 passenger-trips per hour) and B (20.5). Route 14, which provides supplemental service to Cuesta College's San Luis Obispo campus, also carried a large number of passenger-trips on its limited runs (17.7 passenger-trips per hour). Route 12 was the only other RTA service to surpass 15 passenger-trips per hour. The Nipomo DAR was the most productive demand response service (2.8 passenger-trips per service hour) while the Runabout was the least (1.3).
- In FY 2022-23, RTA carried an average of 0.5 passenger-trips per vehicle service mile. Paso Robles Routes A and B were the most productive (both carried 1.5 passenger-trips per mile), followed by Routes 24 and 28 (both 0.9). Routes 10, 15, the Runabout, and the general public DARs all served fewer passenger-trips per vehicle service mile than the systemwide average.
- The RTA marginal operating cost per passenger-trip was $18.05 in FY 2022-23. Of the RTA fixed route services, the local Paso Robles routes had the lowest costs per passenger-trip (less than $8.00) and Route 15 had the highest cost per passenger-trip ($58.73). Of the demand response services, the Runabout was the most expensive per passenger-trip ($149.57), not counting the fare-free trips provided to Runabout passengers on fixed routes in the county.
- The RTA marginal operating cost per vehicle service hour was $151.59 in FY 2022-23. Of the fixed routes, the most cost-efficient were Routes 9, 12, and 14 (less than $150 per vehicle service hour), and the least cost-efficient were Routes 15 and 21 (both more than $160 per vehicle service hour). The Runabout and the Paso Robles, Nipomo, and Templeton/Shandon DARs all cost less than $150 per hour.

The RTA FY 2022-23 performance analysis indicates the most productive and cost-efficient RTA services are Paso Robles Routes A and B. Other services that were productive and had low relative costs given ridership and service levels were the regional Routes 12 and 14 and the local South County Routes 24 and 28. The worst-performing RTA fixed route was Route 15, which unlike the other RTA routes functions as a rural lifeline service. Looking at the Runabout and DARs, the Nipomo DAR was the most productive. The Runabout, notably, was the least productive RTA service, in regard to the number of passenger-trips carried per vehicle service hour and mile, as well as the most expensive per vehicle service hour. The poor productivity of the Runabout compared to the other DARs can be attributed to the much longer average trip lengths (12.3 miles versus 2.7 on the Nipomo DAR and 5.1 on the Paso Robles DAR).

Fixed Route On-Time Performance

For passengers to feel comfortable taking transit, they need to feel confident that the bus will show up when they expect. RTA fixed route on-time performance, as recorded by RTA, for FY 2018-19 through FY 2022-23, is shown in Figure 17. During the last five years, RTA's on-time performance peaked in FY 2020-21. The great on-time performance in FY 2020-21 was likely due to low ridership during the pandemic; it is easier for the bus to stick to schedule when there are less passengers that need to be picked up.

Table 21: RTA Performance by Service - FY 2022-23

	Performance			
	Passengers Per			
Fiscal Year	Hour	Mile	Marginal Operating Cost per Passenger-Trip	Marginal Operating Cost per Service Hour
Route 9	12.4	0.5	$14.27	$148.66
Route 10	13.8	0.4	$13.46	$158.37
Route 12	15.3	0.6	$11.28	$144.86
Route 14	17.7	0.8	$10.01	$149.69
Route 15	3.3	0.1	$58.73	$165.55
Paso Robles Route A	21.0	1.5	$7.63	$152.72
Paso Robles Route B	20.5	1.5	$7.81	$152.53
Route 21	13.1	0.7	$13.07	$161.66
Route 24	13.3	0.9	$12.44	$155.54
Route 27	9.2	0.6	$17.78	$153.12
Route 28	13.4	0.9	$12.25	$154.00
Avila/Pismo Trolley [1]	12.5	0.6	$45.40	$477.75
Runabout	1.3	0.1	$149.57	$149.59
Templeton/Shandon DARs [1]	1.7	0.4	$45.40	$65.45
Paso Robles DAR	1.9	0.2	$75.62	$134.19
Nipomo DAR [1]	2.8	0.4	$45.40	$105.69
Cambria Community Bus [1]	12.9	0.7	$45.40	$495.92
Fixed Route Subtotal	13.5	0.6	$13.17	$155.88
Paratransit and DAR Subtotal	1.5	0.1	$114.52	$141.89
Systemwide	**9.8**	**0.5**	**$18.05**	**$151.59**

Sources: RTA FY 2022-23 Financial Statement, RTA FY 2022-23 Performance Reports

Note 1: For the county-sponsored services, the total annual operating cost and fare revenues were allocated to each service based on the proportion of total county service hours operated on each service.

Note 2: The RTA provides administrative support for the Cambria Community Bus, a volunteer driver service operated by the Cambria Community Council, Inc.

Figure 14: RTA Passenger-Trips per Service Hour

FY 22-23

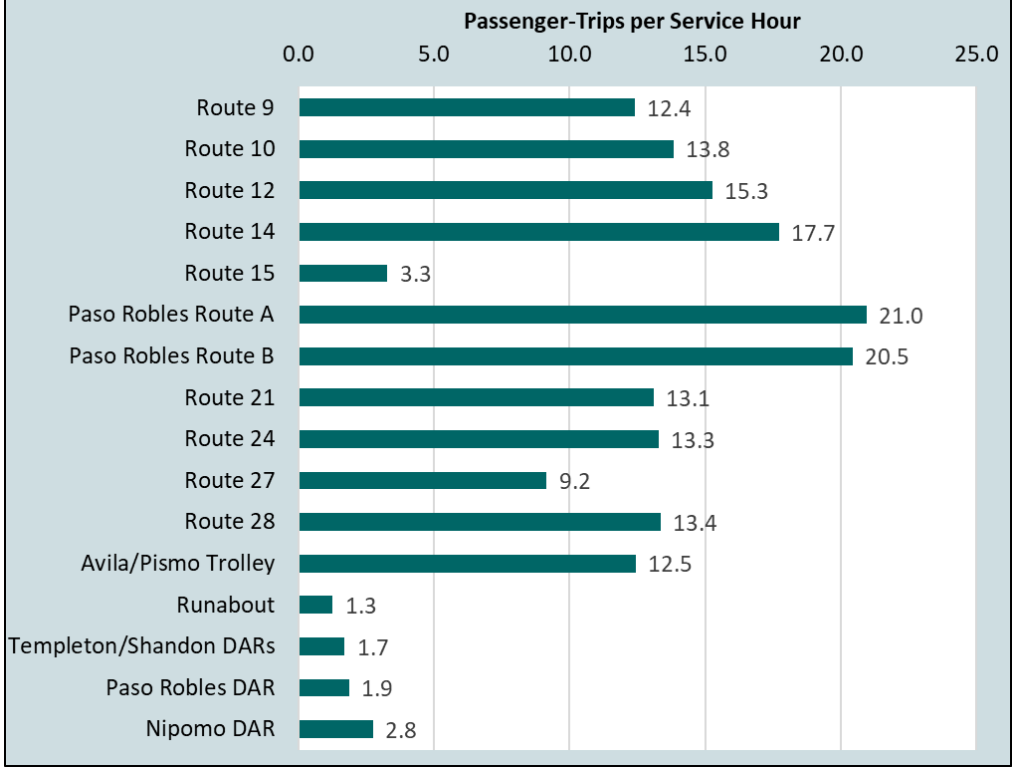
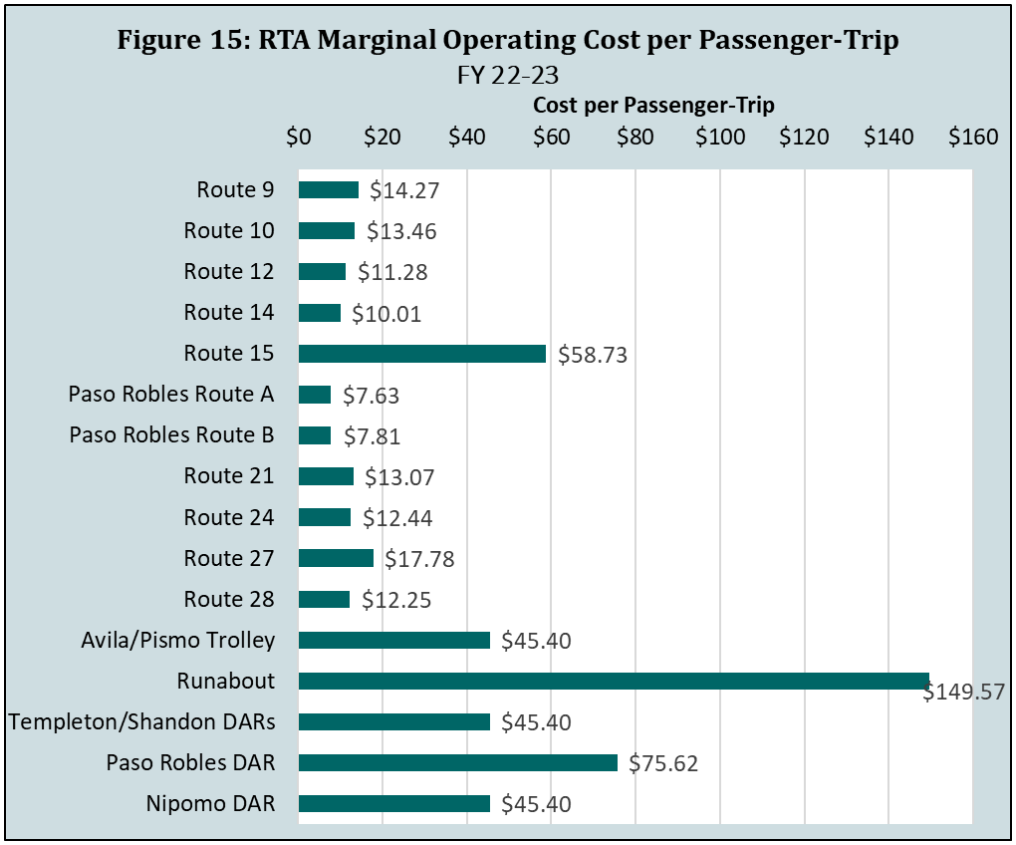


Figure 15: RTA Marginal Operating Cost per Passenger-Trip

FY 22-23



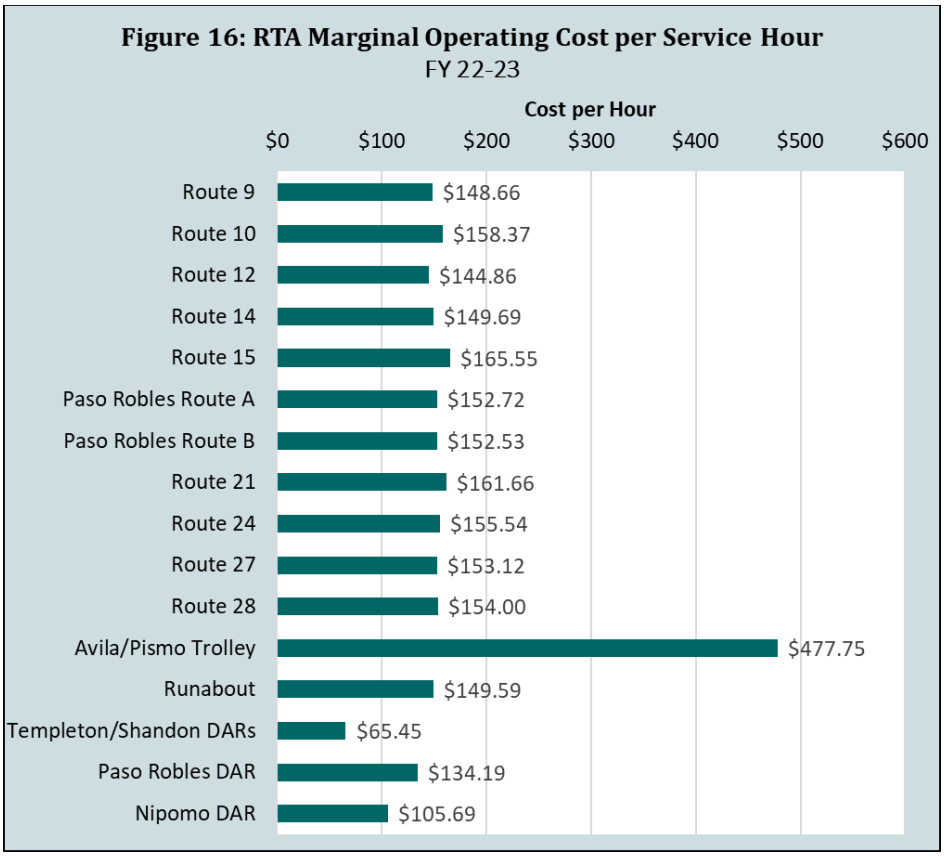


Figure 16: RTA Marginal Operating Cost per Service Hour
FY 22-23
Cost per Hour
$0
$100
$200
$300
$400
$500
$600
Route 9 $148.66
Route 10 $158.37
Route 12 $144.86
Route 14 $149.69
Route 15 $165.55
Paso Robles Route A $152.72
Paso Robles Route B $152.53
Route 21 $161.66
Route 24 $155.54
Route 27 $153.12
Route 28 $154.00
Avila/Pismo Trolley $477.75
Runabout $149.59
Templeton/Shandon DARs $65.45
Paso Robles DAR $134.19
Nipomo DAR $105.69

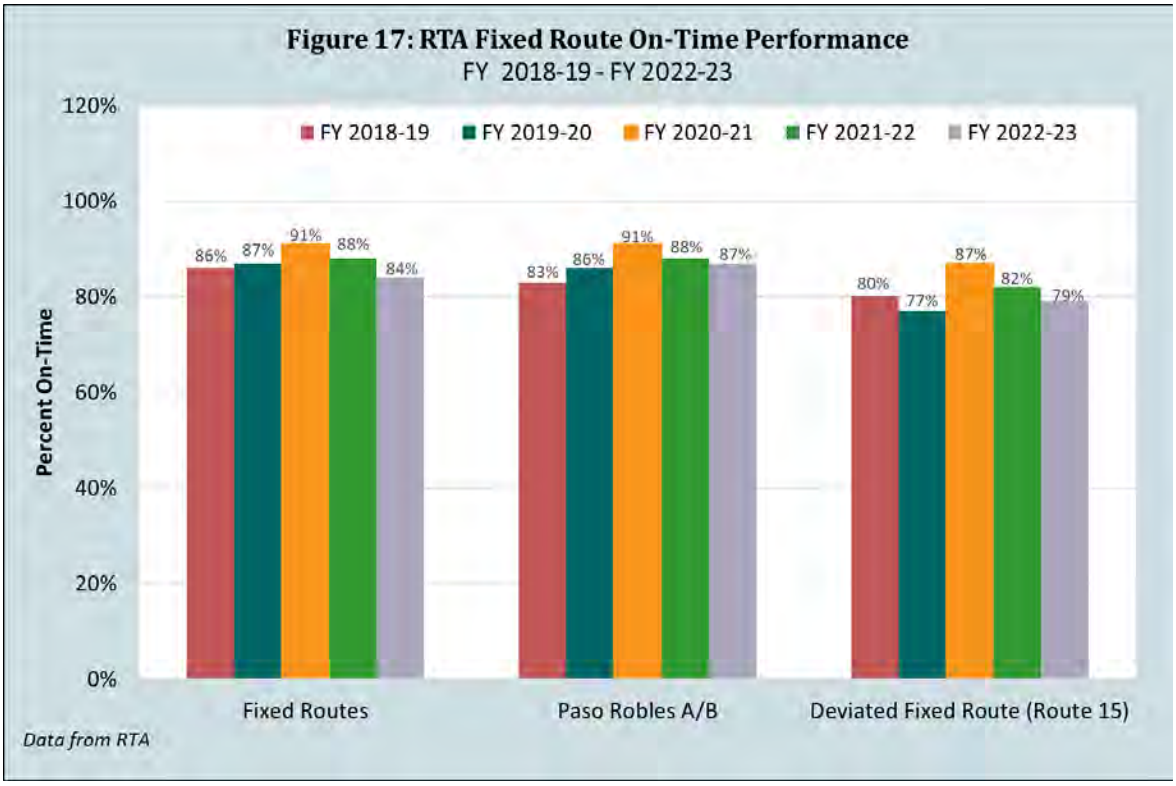
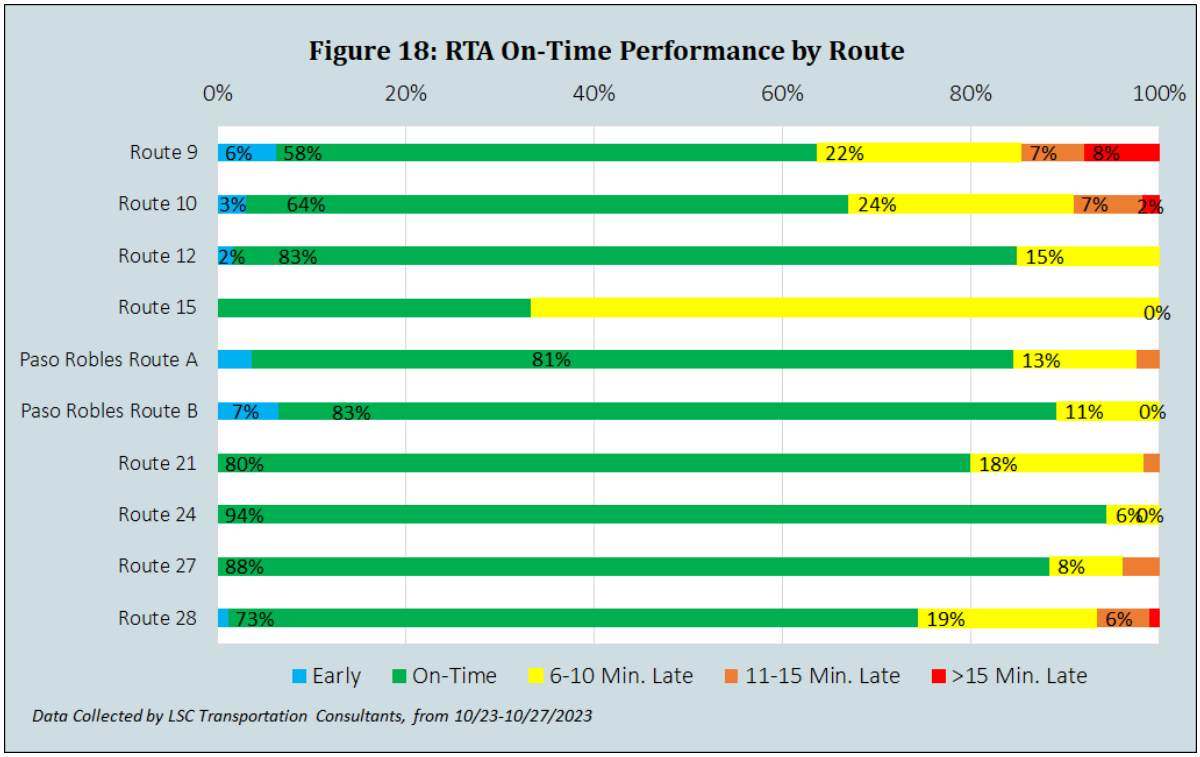


Figure 17: RTA Fixed Route On-Time Performance
FY 2018-19 - FY 2022-23
FY 2018-19
FY 2019-20
FY 2020-21
FY 2021-22
FY 2022-23
120%
100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%
Percent On-Time
86%
87%
91%
88%
84%
83%
86%
91%
88%
87%
80%
77%
87%
82%
79%
Fixed Routes
Paso Robles A/B
Deviated Fixed Route (Route 15)
Data from RTA

Fixed route on-time performance was also assessed by LSC during October 2023 as a part of the greater onboard passenger survey effort conducted for the SRTP (Appendix C). Figure 18 shows the proportion of timepoint stops, as measured by LSC, that the bus departed early, on time, 6 to 10 minutes late, 11 to 15 minutes late, or more than 15 minutes late. The on-time performance data was collected during the equivalent of one weekday of service, so Figure 18 reflects a smaller sample size than Figure 17. The only exception is Route 15; the Route 15 data was collected during less than one full day of service, meaning the data is less likely to be representative of typical performance.



Of the data collected by LSC, Route 12, Paso Robles Routes A and B, and the South County Routes 21, 24, and 27 were all on-time for 80 percent or more of the timepoint stops. The bus was recorded as leaving timepoints early for a small proportion of runs on Routes 9, 10, 12, Paso Robles Routes A and B, and the South County Route 28. The routes recorded as most frequently leaving timepoints 6 or more minutes late were Routes 15 (67 percent), 9 (36 percent), and 10 (33 percent). While many factors influence on-time performance on any given day or run, the data shown in Figure 18 suggests that on-time performance is a greater challenge on the RTA regional routes compared to the other fixed routes. This makes sense as they have longer distances to travel and more opportunities to encounter traffic, road construction, or other slowdowns out of the control of the bus system. The issue of on-time performance was brought up during the driver drop-in sessions, particularly with Routes 9 and 10. Delays on the regional routes can impact on-time performance with connecting services such as the Paso Robles Routes, the South County Routes, and SLO Transit.

RUNABOUT

The following section provides a more detailed analysis of Runabout operations, such as service quality and ridership patterns.

Operations and Performance

Runabout FY 2022-23 operations are summarized in detail in Table 22. A review indicates the following:

- The Runabout required 331,475 vehicle miles, 85 percent of which were operated when vehicles were in service and 66 percent of which were operated when passengers were on board. 33 percent of hours were operated when the vehicles were empty due to the large service area and significant distance between activity centers.
- The Runabout required 21,967 vehicle hours, 83 percent of which were operated when vehicles were in service and 37 percent of which were operated when passengers were on board. The large service area is the primary reason why the majority of miles (63 percent) are operated when vehicles are empty.
- The average group size was 1.3 passengers.
- The Runabout carried 1.3 passenger-trips per vehicle service hour and 0.08 passenger-trips per vehicle service mile.
- Cancellations represented 8 percent of total reservations, up 3 percent compared to FY 2014-15 (the year analyzed in the previous RTA SRTP update), when cancellations represented only 5 percent of reservations.
- No-shows, or passengers who reserved rides but did not show up for their reservation, accounted for 2 percent of reservations. This value was the same in FY 2014-15.

Origin/Destination Patterns

Given the vast size of the Runabout service area, and therefore the potential for long trips, where people travel is a key factor affecting Runabout service efficiency. Runabout origin/destination data for October 1 through 14, 2023, is shown in Table 23. The origin/destination data is summarized by major service area in Table 24. Important takeaways from the origin/destination data include:

- Over a quarter of Runabout trips both started and ended in San Luis Obispo (26 percent). A significant proportion of trips also started and ended in Paso Robles (12 percent).
- The most common Runabout trip origins were San Luis Obispo (37 percent), Paso Robles (23 percent), Atascadero (8 percent), and Arroyo Grande (7 percent). The most common Runabout trip destinations were San Luis Obispo (37 percent), Paso Robles (22 percent), Atascadero (8 percent), Arroyo Grande (6 percent), and Templeton (6 percent).

Table 22: Runabout Service Review

FY 2022-23

Operating Characteristics	#	% of Total
Vehicle Miles	**331,475**	
Service	*281,934*	*85%*
Non-Service	*49,540*	*15%*
Passenger	*218,862*	*66%*
No-Show	*16*	*0%*
Vehicle Hours	**21,967**	
Service	*18,139*	*83%*
Non-Service	*3,829*	*17%*
Passenger	*8,057*	*37%*
No-Show	*1*	*0%*
Ridership	**22,963**	
Wheelchair Trips	*5,777*	
Attendants	*4,704*	
Guests	*81*	
Total One-Way Trips	**18,178**	

Measure	#	% of Total One-Way Trips
Average Group Size	**1.3**	
Passenger-Trips per Hour	**1.3**	
Passenger-Trips per Mile	**0.08**	
Cancellations	**1,378**	**8%**
No-Shows	**279**	**2%**

Source: RTA

Table 23: Runabout Origin and Destination Patterns

October 1 to October 14, 2023 [1]

Origin	Destination															% of Total Origins
	Arroyo Grande	Atascadero	Cayucos	Cuesta Area	Grover Beach	Los Osos	Morro Bay	Nipomo	Oceano	Paso Robles	Pismo Beach	San Luis Obispo	San Simeon	Santa Maria	Templeton	
Arroyo Grande	1.5%	0.1%	0.0%	0.8%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.1%	0.6%	0.9%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	6.7%
Atascadero	0.1%	1.6%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.7%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	8.2%
Caycuos	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
Cuesta Area	0.8%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.5%
Grover Beach	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.6%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.0%
Los Osos	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.4%
Morro Bay	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.3%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	0.1%	0.8%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	3.3%
Nipomo	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.9%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	1.3%
Oceano	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
Paso Robles	0.7%	4.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%	2.2%	0.2%	0.0%	1.5%	23.3%
Pismo Beach	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.1%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.0%
San Luis Obispo	0.6%	0.5%	0.3%	0.2%	1.3%	2.2%	0.8%	0.1%	0.0%	2.1%	1.2%	26.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	36.6%
San Simeon	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
Santa Maria	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
Templeton	0.2%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	4.5%
% of Total Destinations	5.9%	8.4%	0.3%	1.9%	3.1%	5.3%	3.4%	1.8%	0.3%	22.1%	4.0%	37.4%	0.2%	0.2%	5.6%	100.0%

Source: RTA

Note 1: Total sample size was 963 trips.

Table 24: Runabout Origin and Destination Patterns by Major Service Area
October 1 to October 14, 2023 [1]

Origin	Destination: North US 101 Corridor	Destination: North Coast Corridor	Destination: San Luis Obispo	Destination: South US 101 Corridor	Destination: Santa Maria	% of Total Origins
North US 101 Corridor	28.2%	3.1%	3.5%	1.0%	0.0%	36%
North Coast Corridor	3.2%	3.4%	4.0%	0.9%	0.1%	12%
San Luis Obispo	3.5%	3.5%	26.2%	3.3%	0.0%	37%
South US 101 Corridor	1.1%	0.9%	3.5%	9.8%	0.1%	15%
Santa Maria	0.0%	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.6%
% of Total Destinations	36%	11%	37%	15%	0.2%	100%

Source: RTA
Note 1: Total sample size was 963 trips.

- Based on the analysis of trip origins/destinations by major service area, San Luis Obispo and the North US 101 Corridor generated the most Runabout ridership activity. Santa Maria was the only major service area considered that accounted for less than 1 percent of Runabout trip origins or destinations.
- Internal trips were common in both the North US 101 corridor (28 percent of all trips) and San Luis Obispo (26 percent). Comparatively, only 10 percent of South US 101 Corridor trips and 3 percent of North Coast Corridor trips were internal, meaning far more passengers from these service areas used the Runabout to travel longer distances.
- 11 percent of the Runabout trips passed through San Luis Obispo, such as trips from the North Coast or the North US 101 Corridor to Santa Maria or the South US 101 Corridor.

Runabout and DARs On-Time Performance

On-time performance data for the Runabout/DARs, sourced from Routematch, was reviewed for the last three FYs. For the RTA's demand response services, rides are considered "on-time" if the pick-up is made within 15 minutes either before or after the scheduled pick-up time. As evidenced by Figure 19, Runabout/DAR's on-time performance was good in all three years considered, with 90 percent or more trips served on time on all services in FYs 2020-21 and FY 2021-22. Figure 20 further breaks down FY 2022-23 on-time performance, showing what proportion of runs were early, on-time, and late for each service. The Runabout and Paso Robles DAR both had more trips that were early than late, while the Nipomo DAR had equal numbers of trips that were early and late.

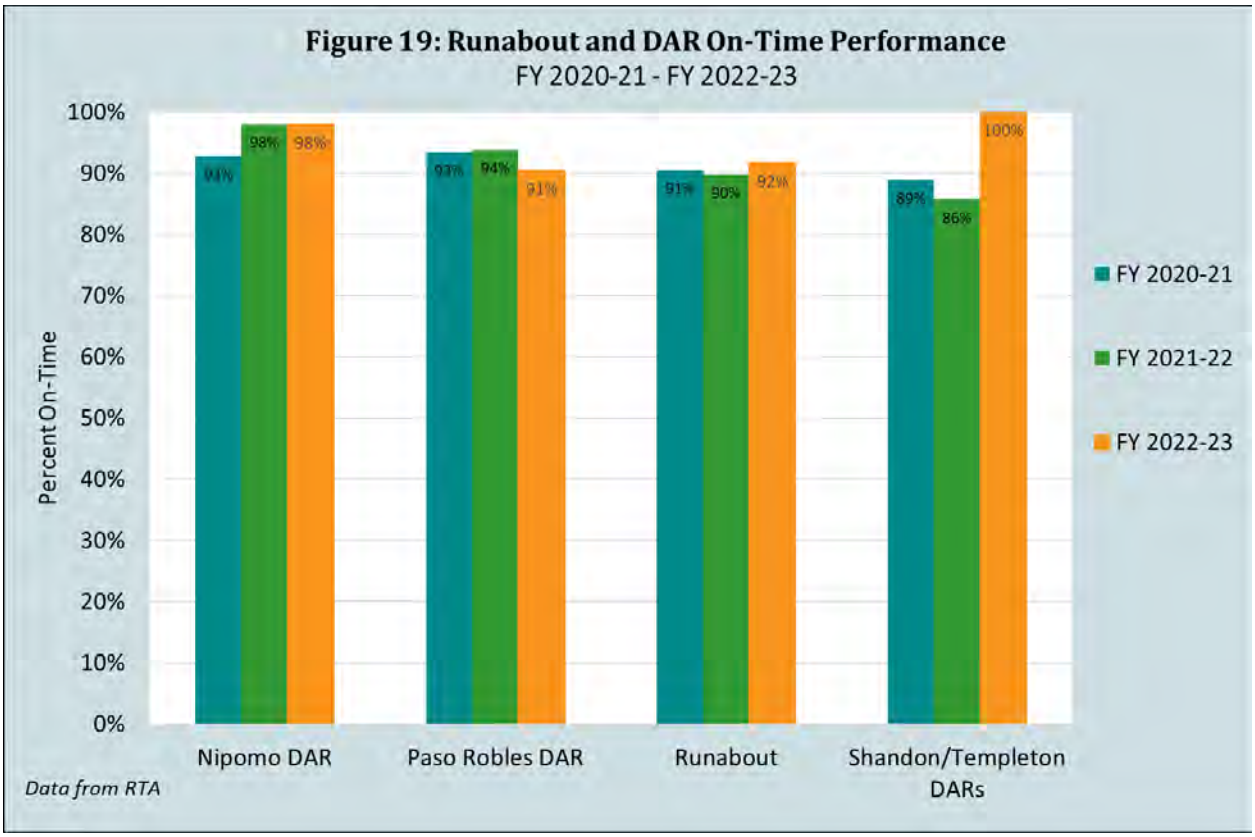


Figure 19: Runabout and DAR On-Time Performance
FY 2020-21 - FY 2022-23
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
Percent On-Time
94%
98%
98%
93%
94%
91%
91%
90%
92%
89%
86%
100%
Nipomo DAR
Paso Robles DAR
Runabout
Shandon/Templeton DARs
FY 2020-21
FY 2021-22
FY 2022-23
Data from RTA

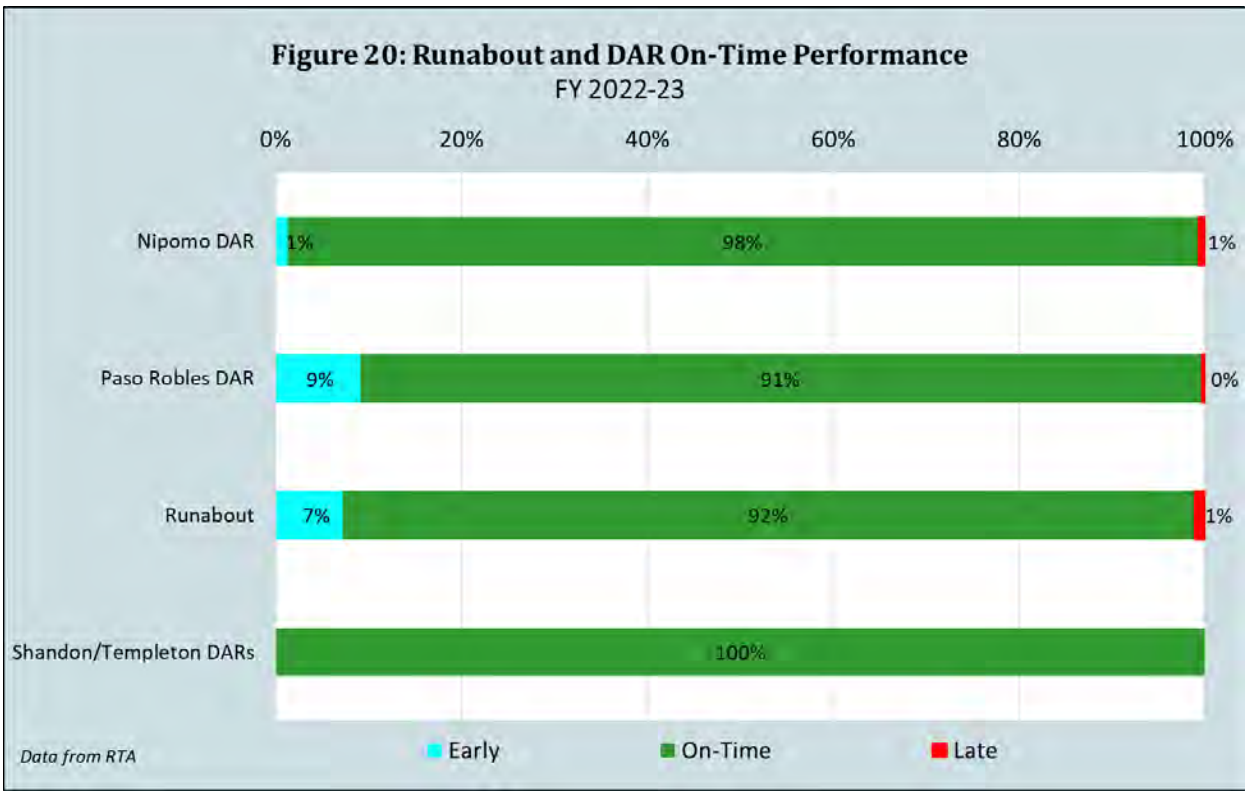


Figure 20: Runabout and DAR On-Time Performance
FY 2022-23
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Nipomo DAR
1%
98%
1%
Paso Robles DAR
9%
91%
0%
Runabout
7%
92%
1%
Shandon/Templeton DARs
100%
Early
On-Time
Late
Data from RTA

FINDINGS

The COVID-19 pandemic had a clear impact on the RTA's ten-year operations and performance. The widespread implementation of remote work and school structures caused ridership to drop on all RTA services, which in turn prompted RTA to reduce service levels. The subsequent nationwide bus operator shortage has made it difficult to reinstate service in the following years. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic spurred multiple years of high inflation, causing RTA operating costs to increase. All of these factors combined negatively impacted productivity and cost efficiency on nearly every RTA service.

RTA operations have been slowly recovering in the years since the peak of the pandemic. RTA-operated services provided 739,364 passenger-trips in FY 2022-23, which equated to 9.8 passenger-trips per vehicle service hour and 0.5 passenger-trips per vehicle service mile. In FY 2022-23, the best performing RTA services were the local Paso Robles Routes A and B. Results of the onboard passenger survey, presented in Appendix C, indicate that the growing ridership on the local Paso Robles routes has been driven in large part by K-12 students and seniors.

Other services with either good productivity or cost efficiency were the regional Routes 12 and 14 and the local South County Routes 24 and 28. The Runabout carried very few passengers per hour or mile of service, for a very high cost per passenger-trip, due to the large amount of time and miles required per individual trip. Looking at on-time performance, the local fixed routes had generally better on-time performance than the regional routes. The Runabout and DARs all had good on-time performance.

A key issue underlying RTA performance in recent years, and that has been discussed throughout the evaluation presented in this chapter, has been the loss of ridership that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. The different rate of ridership recovery on the various RTA services suggests that travel patterns have shifted into a new normal. Potential RTA service modifications should consider how to best allocate limited financial resources towards service improvements that will make services more useful for both existing passengers as well as discretionary ridership. The community and stakeholder feedback summarized in Appendices C, E, and F provides more detail about RTA service improvements most desired by local residents.

Chapter 7
RTA SERVICE ALTERNATIVES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers potential service alternatives for the RTA to implement over the next five to seven years. The service elements presented in this chapter are designed "a la carte"; each alternative is evaluated as a stand-alone option, though when combined, the overall impacts may vary. The combined impacts of the elements included in the final service plan will be presented in the Draft RTA SRTP.

Note: *RTA Bus* [Photo], sourced from Transit.Wiki.

The discussion of RTA alternatives is generally organized by service area. First, alternatives for the RTA regional routes are presented. This is followed by options for the local Paso Robles services. Alternatives for the local South County services are presented thereafter. Strategies to improve Runabout will be included in a separate memo (Coordination between RTA and SLO Transit). For each alternative, the potential impacts on ridership, service levels, and marginal operating costs are estimated. At the end of the chapter, the alternatives are assessed using the newly recommended performance standards developed in WP2.

Ridership and cost estimates for the various alternatives assume implementation in FY 2025-26, and are based on the following parameters:

1. The projected RTA FY 2025-26 operating budget and service levels were used to estimate the marginal (not including fixed costs) operating costs of each existing service assuming no change to service levels ("status quo" scenario). The per-hour and per-mile costs were then used to estimate the cost impacts of the alternatives per the following equation:

   Change in RTA Marginal Operating Cost = $71.53 X Change in Vehicle Revenue Service Hours + $2.09 X Change in Vehicle Service Miles

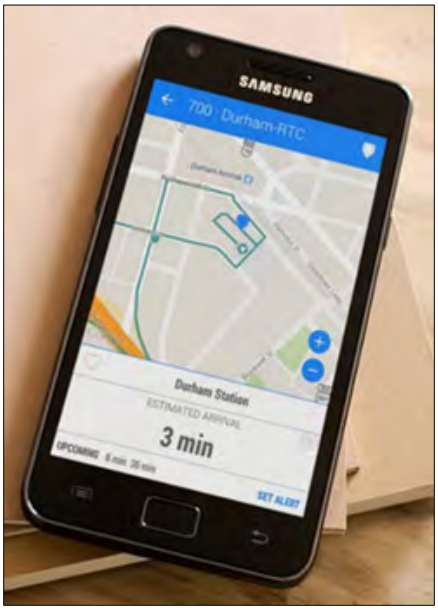
   Note that fixed costs are not included in the alternative analysis as operating costs such as administrative staff salaries and utilities will not change if transit service is increased or decreased. Fixed costs will be added back into "Total Operating Costs" in the service and financial plan.

2. Ridership estimates are based on projected full-year FY 2023-24 ridership, expected population growth in San Luis Obispo County during the next two years, ridership data from peer systems, and standard transit demand elasticity factors, depending on the alternative. Elasticity is an economic term which measures the change in behavior of one variable in response to the change in a related variable. For example, if service levels are doubled, historical data has shown that ridership will not double but rather increase by around 47 percent. Elasticity factors vary for different variables such as headways, total travel time, or transfer time. Variation has also been

found in urban areas vs. suburban areas or during peak or non-peak periods. *The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Report 95 Traveler Response to Transportation System Changes Chapter 9 – Transit Scheduling and Frequency* is a good resource for transit elasticity factors.

3. Service was assumed to include 180 academic year weekdays, 81 non-academic year weekdays, 52 Saturdays, and 52 Sundays unless otherwise noted.

BACKGROUND ON MICROTRANSIT



Several of the alternatives considered in this chapter propose microtransit. Microtransit utilizes the app-based technology developed for transportation network companies (such as Uber and Lyft) to provide real-time, on-demand transit service. In recent years, many public transit agencies have begun using microtransit to provide transit coverage over areas not served efficiently by fixed routes. Microtransit has also been found to be effective in areas with high demand for short trips.

Most microtransit passengers request rides and pay fares through an app downloaded on their smartphone or computer. To ensure equitable accommodation, most agencies typically allow rides to be requested directly over the phone as well. Unlike traditional dial-a-ride services, microtransit does not require 24-hour or more advance reservations; passengers can request microtransit rides whenever they like during service hours. Once a ride has been requested, a routing algorithm assigns the request to a specific bus operator/vehicle, and the passenger is provided with an estimated service time. Requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are met by ensuring enough accessible vehicles are available for those who need them. Microtransit is a shared-ride service, therefore multiple passengers may ride together at the same time.

For RTA and SLO Transit, the cost of obtaining and maintaining microtransit software would be determined through an RFP process. The annual cost of microtransit technology would vary depending on the number of vehicle licenses procured, however, it is estimated the annual cost would be $4,500 per vehicle based on available data. This annual per-vehicle fee has been added to the marginal operating cost estimates of all microtransit alternatives considered in this report.

REGIONAL SERVICE ALTERNATIVES

The potential impacts of the RTA regional service alternatives are summarized in Table 25. The analyses assume an average fare of $1.29 per passenger-trip. Service alternatives for the RTA regional routes (9, 10, 12, 14, and 15) were designed to increase ridership, improve service quality, and maximize cost efficiencies. Alternatives were also developed to address passenger requests; regional passengers indicated in the onboard survey a strong desire for additional weekend service, later evening service, and more frequent service.

Express Service During Peak Hours

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, RTA operated express runs of Routes 9 and 10 to reduce travel times for people commuting to and from San Luis Obispo. Additionally, Route 14 functioned as an express alternative for passengers traveling between San Luis Obispo and Cuesta College, which also had the intended effect of improving Route 12 on-time performance. RTA has significantly cut back express service in the last few years due to low ridership and the nationwide bus operator shortage, which has made it difficult to meet staffing requirements. This section presents alternatives for reinstating express runs on Routes 9 and 10.

Route 9

Currently, RTA operates one Route 9 express run each weekday (the 6:21 southbound departure from San Miguel). The express run serves the following stops:

- Mission at 14th in San Miguel
- North County Transit Center in Paso Robles
- Las Tablas Park-and-Ride in Templeton
- Atascadero Transit Center
- Kennedy Library at Cal Poly
- Government Center in San Luis Obispo

This run provides a travel time between Paso Robles (Pine at 8th) and San Luis Obispo (Government Center) of 52 minutes, compared with 1 hour 13 minutes for the non-express runs (Adding one additional southbound express run from Paso Robles to San Luis Obispo in the morning and one northbound express run back to Paso Robles in the afternoon would increase RTA service levels by 500 vehicle service hours and 16,300 vehicle service miles per year based on the route length and run time). The two express runs would also require RTA to deploy one additional bus during peak hours.

It is estimated that adding two Route 9 express runs would increase weekday ridership by 3,600 passenger-trips per year. This value was derived by first determining the proportion of Route 9 weekday ridership that occurs at the express stops during the peak travel periods of 6:00 AM to 8:00 AM and 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Then, elasticity analyses were conducted to determine how increasing service frequency and reduced in-vehicle travel time through the addition of express runs would impact ridership in both the southbound and northbound directions. As there is greater ridership during the afternoon compared to the morning, adding an afternoon express run would have a greater ridership impact (an increase of 3,200 passenger-trips per year) compared to adding another morning express run (an increase of 400 passenger-trips per year). The additional ridership served by the two runs would generate $4,700 in fare revenue, therefore the marginal operating subsidy of the new Route 9 express runs would be $66,300.

Route 10

RTA is not currently operating any Route 10 express runs. When RTA previously provided Route 10 express runs, the following stops were served:

- Santa Maria Transit Center
- Tefft at Carrillo, Nipomo
- El Camino Real at Halcyon, Arroyo Grande
- Pismo Beach Premium Outlets
- Government Center, San Luis Obispo
- Kennedy Library, Cal Poly

It is assumed that if Route 10 express service were reinstated, the same stops would be served. This would provide a running time between the Santa Maria Transit Center and the Government Center in San Luis Obispo of 55 minutes, compared with the typical run time of 1 hour 14 minutes. Given the route length and run time, adding one morning express run and one afternoon express run on weekdays would increase service levels by 600 vehicle service hours and 18,100 vehicle service miles per year. Similar to the Route 9 express service alternative discussed previously, reinstating Route 10 express service would require RTA to deploy an additional vehicle during peak hours.

Route 10 express ridership was estimated using the same methodology as the Route 9 express service alternative; based on existing ridership patterns and the proposed increase to service frequency and reduced travel time, it is expected that operating two Route 10 express runs per weekday would increase annual ridership by 3,100 passenger-trips. The afternoon run would carry more passenger-trips per year (2,300) compared to the morning run (800). The increases in both service levels and fare revenue mean the annual marginal operating subsidy of Route 10 express service would be $78,800 per year.

Table 25: RTA Regional Routes - Service Alternatives Summary

	Annual Impacts						
	Ridership	Service Hours	Service Miles	Marginal Operating Cost	Fare Revenues [2]	Operating Subsidy	Additional In-service Bus Needed
Status Quo[1]							
Route 9	161,700	13,100	329,700	$1,627,100	$208,800	$1,418,300	
Route 10	152,100	11,300	318,100	$1,474,100	$196,400	$1,277,700	
Route 12	119,100	7,100	187,700	$900,700	$153,800	$746,900	
Route 14	1,500	130	3,000	$15,600	$600	$15,000	
Route 15	12,600	3,200	99,600	$437,400	$16,300	$421,100	
Regional Service Alternatives - Change from Status Quo [3]							
Implement Express Service During Peak Hours							
Route 9 - One Additional AM Run, One PM Run	3,600	500	16,300	$69,900	$4,600	$65,300	1
Route 10 - One AM Run, One PM Run	3,100	600	18,100	$80,800	$4,000	$76,800	1
Increase Weekday Service Frequency							
Route 9 - 6:00 AM - 9:00 AM, 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM	16,600	3,900	90,400	$468,200	$21,400	$446,800	3
Route 10 - 6:00 AM - 9:00 AM, 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM	23,300	3,800	116,700	$516,100	$30,100	$486,000	3
Route 12 - 30 Min Frequency 7:00 AM - 6:30 PM	34,700	5,700	121,400	$661,800	$44,800	$617,000	2
Route 12 - Addl Run Every 2 Hrs 6:03 AM - 6:03 PM	21,200	3,700	77,300	$426,500	$27,400	$399,100	1
Re-Establish Route 14 Service on School Weekdays							
Route 14 - 8:25 AM - 4:25 PM	18,400	2,100	55,500	$266,400	$7,400	$259,000	1
Increase Saturday Service							
Route 9 - Add 1 RT	1,700	200	3,300	$21,200	$2,200	$19,000	1
Route 10 - Add 1 RT	1,700	200	3,900	$22,500	$2,200	$20,300	1
Route 12 - 1 Hr. Frequency	2,600	400	12,400	$54,600	$3,400	$51,200	1
Increase Sunday Service							
Route 9 - 5 Round Trips / Day	700	300	6,600	$35,300	$900	$34,400	0
Route 10 - 5 Round Trips / Day	700	300	7,700	$37,600	$900	$36,700	0
Route 12 - Operate Sat. Schedule	200	50	800	$5,300	$300	$5,000	0
Route 9 Mid-Day Service to Cal Poly	400	0	800	$1,700	$500	$1,200	0
New Regional Route to Santa Maria - Guadalupe - Grover Beach - Price Canyon - SLO							
New Regional Route - 2 Round Trips / Day	4,300	1,800	44,300	$221,500	$5,600	$215,900	1
New Direct Express Runs between Los Osos and San Luis Obispo Weekdays	900	500	17,330	$72,000	$1,200	$70,800	1
SLO - Los Osos - Morro Bay Bidirectional Loop	14,500	5,133	99,600	$575,700	$18,700	$557,000	2

Note 1: Status Quo operations are based on projected FY 2025-26 operating parameters per the RTA FY 2024-25 Budget Assumptions Report, FY 2023-24 ridership, and expected population growth.
Note 2: Assumes an average fare per boarding of $1.29 on Routes 9, 10, 11, 12, and 15. Route 14 based on average fare paid for limited service in FY 22-23 and does not include fare agreement with Cuesta College.
Note 3: Parameters and costs represent change over existing services. Estimates represent marginal costs and do not include fixed costs.

Increase Service Frequency

Research has verified that increasing service frequency positively impacts transit ridership. Additionally, many regional passengers (30 percent) requested more frequent service during the onboard passenger survey, further suggesting that increasing service frequency would benefit ridership. Given the desire to grow ridership, options for increasing service frequency along the Route 9, Route 10, and Route 12 service corridors were considered. The following alternatives do not propose any additional express runs.

Route 9

On weekdays, Route 9 runs hourly except for the first hour of the service day. RTA could operate Route 9 every half-hour during peak travel periods (6:00 AM to 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM) to increase ridership. This alternative would increase service frequency only to regular stops between Cuesta College North and San Luis Obispo; service to San Miguel and Cal Poly would remain unchanged.

To provide half-hourly service, RTA would need to operate five additional southbound runs and six additional northbound runs per day and deploy three additional buses. This would result in service levels increasing by 3,900 vehicle service hours and 90,400 vehicle service miles per year. Ridership would grow by 16,600 passenger-trips annually based on the proportion of ridership activity that occurs during peak weekday travel periods and standard elasticity factors. The net financial impact of running half-hourly service during peak periods would be a $446,800 increase to the Route 9 marginal operating subsidy.

Route 10

Route 10 runs hourly on weekdays. If the RTA were to provide half-hourly service on Route 10 during peak travel periods (6:00 AM to 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM), six additional runs would be required in both the northbound and southbound directions each day. The extra runs would require three additional vehicles in operation, causing service levels to increase by 3,800 vehicle service hours and 116,700 vehicle service miles per year. Given the proportion of Route 10 ridership activity that occurs during peak weekday travel periods and standard elasticity factors, ridership would increase by about 23,300 passenger-trips annually. The financial impact would be a net increase to the Route 10 marginal operating subsidy of $486,000.

Route 12 – 30 Minute Frequency on Weekdays

Route 12 service could be improved to 30-minute headways during the portion of the day with the greatest ridership between approximately 7:00 AM and 6:30 PM on weekdays (throughout the year) to grow ridership. This would require 11 additional daily departures from the Government Center (hourly from 7:03 AM through 5:03 PM). An elasticity analysis on current weekday ridership indicates that the improved frequency would generate a ridership increase of approximately 34,700 passenger-trips per year. The running time of the route is 1 hour 27 minutes per round-trip, requiring 2 hours of bus operator time per round-trip including layover. This improvement would require two additional buses in operation and incur an annual operating subsidy of $617,000.

Route 12 – Additional Run Every 2 Hours on Weekdays

Given the high cost of providing consistent half-hourly service on Route 12, another option was considered that would operate one additional bus providing departures every 2 hours. While ridership is busy early and late in the day (with ridership of 40 passengers on the 6:33 AM run and 33 on the 6:33 PM run), it is also high during the middle of the day, with all runs between 10:33 AM and 2:33 PM departures carrying at least 32 passengers. This indicates a need for service improvement throughout the day, rather than one focused solely on the traditional AM and PM commute periods. One option that provides this improvement would be to add a third bus to Route 12 service that operates round trips every other hour, specifically at 6:07 AM, 8:07 AM, 10:07 AM, 12:07 PM, 2:07 PM, 4:07 PM, and 6:07 PM. While this would not provide convenient connections with other RTA routes, it would provide good connections from SLO Transit Routes 1A and 2A, as well as good connections to SLO Transit Routes 1B, 2B, and 3B.

Considering existing Route 12 ridership during this weekday service period and the benefits of increasing frequency from two departures every two hours to three departures every two hours, this option would increase ridership by 21,200 annually. The total operating subsidy would be increased by $399,100.

New Direct "Express" service between Los Osos and SLO

A common on-board survey request was a more direct transit connection between Los Osos and SLO. According to Census data for 2021, approximately 21 percent of employed residents living in Los Osos work in the City of San Luis Obispo, and 10 percent work in Morro Bay. Travel time by car is around 20 minutes. Route 12 makes the connection between these two communities on an hourly basis between 6:30 AM and 8:30 PM. However, the bus stops in Morro Bay and Questa College along the way, making a one-way trip from Los Osos to the Government Center take around 39 minutes.

One option to consider, while limiting costs and duplication with other services, is to implement two "Express Runs" per day during commute periods on weekdays only which provide a direct connection between Los Osos and the Government Center. Using a separate bus and driver from Route 12, the new service would begin at the Government Center at 6:50 AM and reach Santa Ysabel & 15th in Los Osos at 7:15 AM. The bus would travel along LOVR and arrive at the Government Center at 7:44 AM with a potential stop on South Higuera Street. This will allow for a timed connection to SLO Transit Route 4B to access Cal Poly. The return trip would depart the Government Center at 5:06 PM to allow for transferring SLO Transit passengers and reach Santa Ysabel & 15 at 5:31 PM. This option would save around 10 minutes in travel time between Santa Ysabel & 15th and the Government Center over Route 12.

According to the on-board surveys roughly 12% of Route 12 riders travel between Los Osos and San Luis Obispo. This factor was applied to the average daily ridership on Route 12 generated from Los Osos during peak commute periods in order to estimate the increase in ridership. It is estimated that this alternative would carry an additional 900 trips per year for an annual operating subsidy of $70,000. This option would require an additional in-service vehicle and driver.

Convert Route 12 to a Bi-Directional Loop Configuration

At present, Route 12 consists of a two-way route along the SR 1 corridor from San Luis Obispo to Morro Bay, followed by a backtrack to Los Osos where a small loop is operated before returning to San Luis Obispo via Morro Bay. This has the advantage of serving both Morro Bay and Los Osos with each run but results in longer travel times for Los Osos residents to downtown San Luis Obispo and even longer travel times to the commercial centers in south San Luis Obispo.

An alternative route option would be to convert Route 12 into a large bi-directional loop connecting downtown San Luis Obispo, Morro Bay, Los Osos, and south San Luis Obispo in both directions. Figure 21 shows a conceptual route configuration. Note that Morro Bay would be served in both directions (in order to continue to provide direct service to and from San Luis Obispo). This route is 35.8 miles in length, which is 6.1 miles shorter than the current route. Consideration was given to not serving Morro Bay in one direction. However, this would substantially increase travel times between Morro Bay and other destinations in one direction and is not considered viable.

Table 26 presents an example schedule, providing the current hourly headways on weekdays. On Saturdays, five daily round-trips would be operated in each direction, while Sunday service would be limited to the five round-trips in the clockwise direction only. Note that four buses would need to be in service on weekdays and two on Saturdays, compared with the existing two weekdays and one Saturday bus.

Table 27 presents the resulting annual service quantities. As shown, vehicle-hours of service would be increased by 70 percent over the current levels, while vehicle-miles of service would be increased by 61 percent. As a result, the annual operating cost of Route 12 would be increased by $616,100.

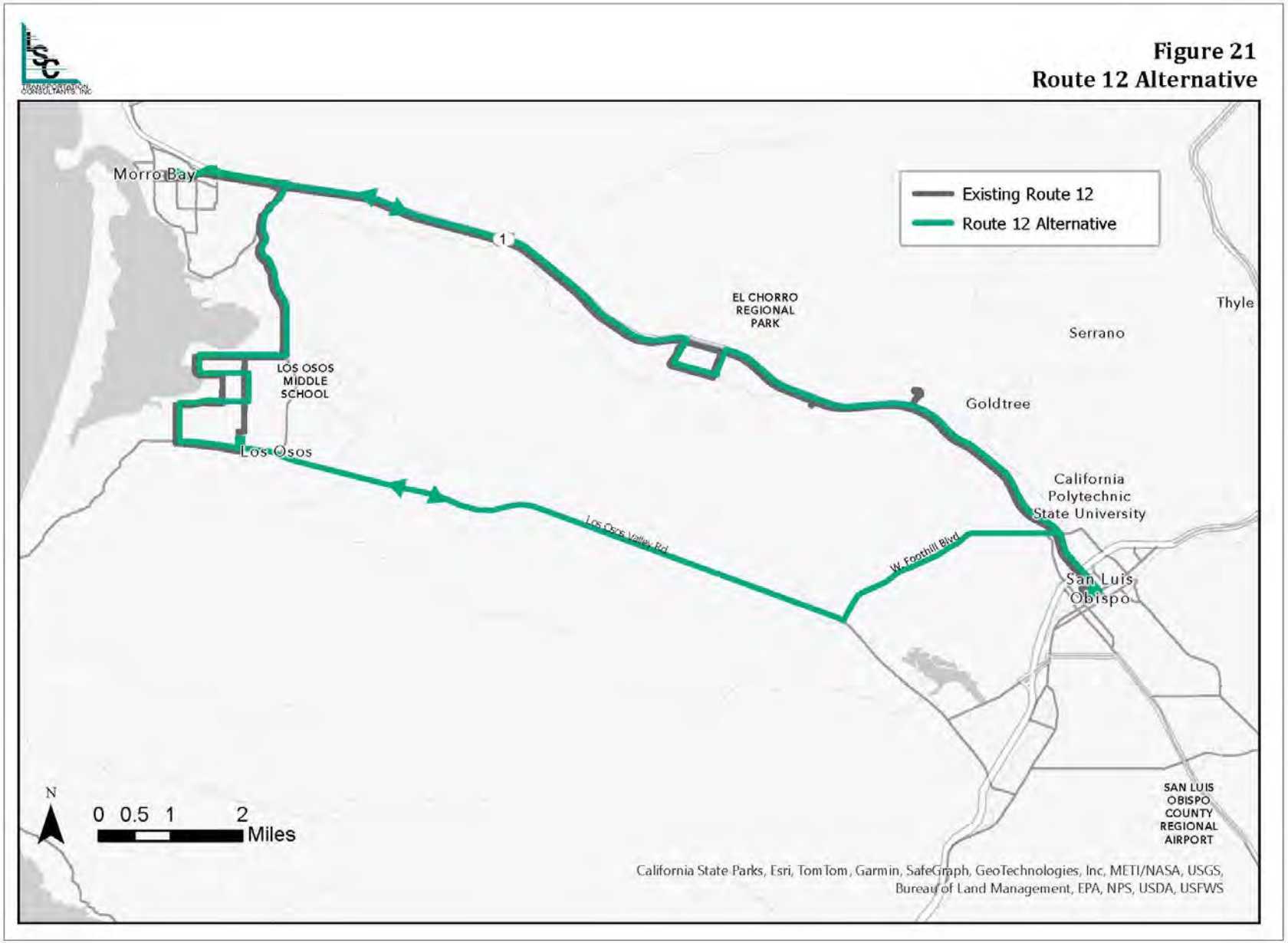


Figure 21
Route 12 Alternative
Existing Route 12
Route 12 Alternative
Morro Bay
1
EL CHORRO REGIONAL PARK
Thyle
Serrano
LOS OSOS MIDDLE SCHOOL
Goldtree
Los Osos
California Polytechnic State University
Los Osos Valley Rd
W. Foothill Blvd
San Luis Obispo
SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY REGIONAL AIRPORT
N
0 0.5 1 2
Miles
California State Parks, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, Bureau of Land Management, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS

Table 26: Route 12 Loop Alternative Example Schedule

Timed Stops Only | **Saturday/Sunday Runs Shown Shaded. Sunday Service Clockwise Only**

Clockwise

San Luis Obispo		Los Osos		Morro Bay	San Luis Obispo		
Govt Center	LOVR / Foothill	LOVR / 10th	Santa Ysabel / 15th	MB Park	Cuesta College	Cal Poly	Govt Center
		6:13 AM	6:30 AM	6:42 AM	6:51 AM	7:03 AM	7:12 AM
6:33 AM	6:46 AM	7:00 AM	7:17 AM	7:29 AM	7:38 AM	--	7:56 AM
7:33 AM	7:46 AM	8:00 AM	8:17 AM	8:29 AM	8:38 AM	--	8:56 AM
8:33 AM	8:46 AM	9:00 AM	9:17 AM	9:29 AM	9:38 AM	--	9:56 AM
9:33 AM	9:46 AM	10:00 AM	10:17 AM	10:29 AM	10:38 AM	--	10:56 AM
10:33 AM	10:46 AM	11:00 AM	11:17 AM	11:29 AM	11:38 AM	--	11:56 AM
11:33 AM	11:46 AM	12:00 PM	12:17 PM	12:29 PM	12:38 PM	--	12:56 PM
12:33 PM	12:46 PM	1:00 PM	1:17 PM	1:29 PM	1:38 PM	--	1:56 PM
1:33 PM	1:46 PM	2:00 PM	2:17 PM	2:29 PM	2:38 PM	--	2:56 PM
2:33 PM	2:46 PM	3:00 PM	3:17 PM	3:29 PM	3:38 PM	--	3:56 PM
3:33 PM	3:46 PM	4:00 PM	4:17 PM	4:29 PM	4:38 PM	--	4:56 PM
4:33 PM	4:46 PM	5:00 PM	5:17 PM	5:29 PM	5:38 PM	--	5:56 PM
5:33 PM	5:46 PM	6:00 PM	6:17 PM	6:29 PM	6:38 PM	--	6:56 PM
6:33 PM	6:46 PM	7:00 PM	7:17 PM	7:29 PM	7:38 PM	--	7:56 PM
7:33 PM	7:46 PM	8:00 PM	8:17 PM	8:29 PM	8:38 PM	--	8:56 PM
8:33 PM	8:46 PM	9:00 PM	9:17 PM	9:29 PM	9:38 PM	--	9:56 PM

Counterclockwise

San Luis Obispo		Morro Bay	Los Osos		San Luis Obispo	
Govt Center	Cuesta College	MB Park	Santa Ysabel / 15th	LOVR/10th	LOVR / Foothill	Govt Center
6:33 AM	6:46 AM	6:59 AM	7:07 AM	7:24 AM	7:38 AM	7:51 AM
7:33 AM	7:46 AM	7:59 AM	8:07 AM	8:24 AM	8:38 AM	8:51 AM
8:33 AM	8:46 AM	8:59 AM	9:07 AM	9:24 AM	9:38 AM	9:51 AM
9:33 AM	9:46 AM	9:59 AM	10:07 AM	10:24 AM	10:38 AM	10:51 AM
10:33 AM	10:46 AM	10:59 AM	11:07 AM	11:24 AM	11:38 AM	11:51 AM
11:33 AM	11:46 AM	11:59 AM	12:07 PM	12:24 PM	12:38 PM	12:51 PM
12:33 PM	12:46 PM	12:59 PM	1:07 PM	1:24 PM	1:38 PM	1:51 PM
1:33 PM	1:46 PM	1:59 PM	2:07 PM	2:24 PM	2:38 PM	2:51 PM
2:33 PM	2:46 PM	2:59 PM	3:07 PM	3:24 PM	3:38 PM	3:51 PM
3:33 PM	3:46 PM	3:59 PM	4:07 PM	4:24 PM	4:38 PM	4:51 PM
4:33 PM	4:46 PM	4:59 PM	5:07 PM	5:24 PM	5:38 PM	5:51 PM
5:33 PM	5:46 PM	5:59 PM	6:07 PM	6:24 PM	6:38 PM	6:51 PM
6:33 PM	6:46 PM	6:59 PM	7:07 PM	7:24 PM	7:38 PM	7:51 PM
7:33 PM	7:46 PM	7:59 PM	8:07 PM	8:24 PM	8:38 PM	8:51 PM
8:33 PM	8:46 PM	8:59 PM	9:07 PM	9:24 PM	9:38 PM	9:51 PM

Table 27: Los Osos Loop Alternative Service Quantities

		Weekday	Sat	Sun	Total Annual	
Existing						
Route Length	41.9 Miles					
Route Travel Time	93 Minutes					
Hrs/Run		1.55	1.97	1.58		
Miles/Run		41.9	46.3	41.9		
Existing Runs		15.7	5.0	5.8		
Hrs/Day		24.3	9.8	9.2		
Miles/Day		656	232	244		
Days/Year		261	52	52		
Hours/Year		6,338	511	480	7,330	
Miles/Year		171,300	12,000	12,700	196,000	
Loop Alternative						
Route Length	33.6 Miles					
Route Travel Time	83 Minutes					
Hrs/Run		1.42	1.42	1.42		
Miles/Run		33.6	33.6	33.6		
Runs/Day		30.7	10.0	5.0		
Hrs/Day		43.5	14.2	7.1		
Miles/Day		1,032	336	168		
Days/Year		261	52	52		
Hours/Year		11,358	737	368	12,463	
Miles/Year		269,400	17,500	8,700	295,600	
Net Change						
Route Length	-8.3 Miles					
Route Travel Time	-10 Minutes					
Hours/Year		5,020	225	-112	5,133	70%
Miles/Year		98,100	5,500	-4,000	99,600	51%

As a basis for assessing the ridership impacts of this alternative, the onboard survey collected on Route 12 was evaluated to identify trip patterns. As shown in Table 28, much of the Route 12 ridership is traveling between Cuesta and downtown San Luis Obispo and between Morro Bay and downtown San Luis Obispo. Focusing on Los Osos trips, 13 percent of all Route 12 trips are between Los Osos and downtown San Luis Obispo, followed by 8 percent each who are traveling between Los Osos and Cal Poly and between Los Osos and Morro Bay. None of the passengers surveyed were traveling between Los Osos and southern San Luis Obispo, and only one passenger was traveling between Los Osos and points south on Route 10 (Santa Maria).

Table 28: Origin/Destination of Trips on Route 12

Between	And	Percent of Psgr-Trips	Percent of Los Osos Psgr-Trips
Los Osos	Downtown SLO	13%	34%
	CalPoly/N SLO	8%	21%
	Cuesta	4%	11%
	Morro Bay	8%	22%
	Los Osos	4%	10%
	Santa Maria	1%	2%
Morro Bay	Cuesta	1%	
	Downtown SLO	22%	
	CalPoly/N SLO	3%	
Cuesta	Downtown SLO	30%	
	South SLO	1%	
	CalPoly/N SLO	3%	
Cambria	CalPoly/N SLO	1%	

Source: Onboard Survey conducted October 2023 (N=69)

This alternative would have the following key impacts on ridership:

- The most significant benefit would be a reduction in travel time between Los Osos and downtown San Luis Obispo, which would be reduced from the current 50 to 29 minutes, a savings of 21 minutes or 42 percent. 34 percent of existing Los Osos passengers travel to and from downtown San Luis Obispo, while an additional 21 percent travel to/from northern San Luis Obispo and could also benefit by reducing travel times via connections.
- Los Osos residents would be provided with a short roughly 14-minute trip to and from the shopping and employment centers in south San Luis Obispo, including Target, Costco, etc. While the survey data indicates little existing demand, the provision of a more convenient service would generate some new ridership.
- Connections between Routes 12 and 15 (to provide trips between Los Osos and points south) would not be significantly improved from current connections at Government Center. In the northbound direction, Route 15 arrives at S. Higuera/Suburban 12 minutes after the hour, which would then require a 29-minute wait for the clockwise Route 12 bus. In the opposite direction,

the counterclockwise Route 12 bus arriving at 45 minutes after just misses the southbound Route 15 bus at 41 minutes after the hour.

- Travel time for other trips would not be significantly impacted.

Considering these factors and ridership patterns, it is estimated that this alternative would generate 5,600 new riders per year to/from downtown and northern San Luis Obispo along with 7,600 to/from southern San Luis Obispo. This total of 13,200 additional boarding would generate approximately $17,000 in new fare revenues, yielding an annual increase in operating subsidy of $599,100.

Re-Establish Route 14 Service on Weekdays During the School Year

A way to expand service along the Route 12 corridor and to help improve Route 12 on-time performance would be to re-establish a more consistent Route 14 service between the Government Center and Cuesta College. Increasing Route 14 service would be an efficient use of resources, as the portion of Route 12 between the Government Center and Cuesta College serves higher passenger-loads compared to other portions of the route. Route 14 was suspended due to the shift to online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, except for a single daily northbound run departing the Government Center at 7:30 AM and arriving at Cuesta College at 7:48 AM[5].

Potential ridership was evaluated by assessing existing ridership on Route 12 deboarding on northbound runs between Santa Rosa and Murray (the first stop north of Government Center) and Cuesta College or boarding in the southbound directions at the stops from Cuesta College to Santa Rosa and Murray. This indicated that 33 percent of total Route 12 ridership (during the school year) consists of passengers riding only within the segment between Government Center and Cuesta College.

A single bus could provide two half-hour round trips each hour between the Government Center and Cuesta College, which along with existing Route 12 runs would provide three departures per hour in each direction. A review of existing ridership indicates that an eight-hour span of service (from 8:25 AM to 4:25 PM) would be most effective, as 81 percent of ridership occurs during this period. An elasticity analysis indicates that overall ridership would increase by 18,400 passenger-trips per year. RTA's operating subsidy requirements would increase by $243,100 annually. Note that if Cuesta College shifts to more in-person classes in the future, ridership could potentially grow further.

Expand Weekend Service

RTA currently provides limited weekend regional service; in general, five roundtrips are offered on Saturdays and three on Sundays. Additional weekend service was one of the top requested service improvements during public outreach and was the most requested improvement by regional passengers who participated in the onboard survey. One of the challenges in providing weekend service is finding additional bus operators. Weekend shifts can be seen as less desirable and therefore, RTA has recently offered a $4 per hour bonus for weekend shifts. This section explores options to expand regional service on both Saturdays and Sundays.

[5] This run is operated as part of a bus operator shift after completing a southbound Route 9 run to help meet the travel needs of Achievement House clients in lieu of using Runabout services.

Route 9

Saturday

Route 9 Saturday service consists of five daily roundtrips operated every two to three hours. If Saturday service were increased to every two hours, with the first southbound bus leaving San Miguel at 7:16 AM and the last northbound bus arriving in Paso Robles at 9:03 PM, RTA would need to operate one additional roundtrip per day. The switch to a more general two-hour headway would cause Route 9 Saturday ridership to increase by 1,700 passenger-trips per year. Additionally, 200 vehicle service hours and 3,300 vehicle service miles would be required annually. The growth in fare revenue combined with the increase in marginal operating cost would result in the Route 9 marginal operating subsidy increasing by $19,000.

Sunday

Route 9, Sunday service currently consists of three daily roundtrips. Operating the current Saturday service schedule (five roundtrips per day) on Sundays would cause ridership to grow by 700 passenger-trips per year. The additional trips would require 300 vehicle service hours and 6,600 vehicle service miles annually, requiring an annual marginal operating subsidy of $34,400.

Route 10

Saturday

Currently, five Route 10 roundtrips are provided each Saturday, with service provided on a two- to three-hour frequency depending on the time of day. Increasing Route 10 Saturday service to be every two hours, with the first northbound bus leaving Santa Maria at 8:14 AM and the final southbound bus arriving back in Santa Maria at 8:43 PM, would require one additional Route 10 roundtrip to be operated per day. This additional Saturday service would cause ridership to grow by 1,700 passenger-trips annually. The service enhancement would require a marginal operating subsidy of $20,300 based on the increases to both passenger fares and service levels.

Sunday

Similar to Route 9, RTA operates three roundtrips of Route 10 on Sundays. If RTA were to instead operate the current Route 10 Saturday service schedule (five roundtrips per day) on Sundays, ridership would increase by 700 passenger-trips per year. The marginal operating subsidy for Route 10 Sunday service would increase by $36,700 per year given the increases to both service levels and passenger fare revenue.

Route 12

Saturday

Similar to Route 9 and 10 Saturday schedule, Route 12 has five round-trips per day. However, in order to better direct connection with Route 15 in both directions, the Route 12 bus makes an additional loop around Los Osos before traveling back to Morro Bay and SLO. As part of an alternative to increase frequency on Saturdays, the Route 12 Saturday schedule could be modified to provide hourly service along the whole route from 8:33 AM to 9:06 PM, similar to the weekday schedule but for a shorter service span. This would equate to twelve full loops being operated per Saturday, or an increase of seven

roundtrips between San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay and two runs of the Los Osos Loop per day. This modification would increase service levels by 400 vehicle service hours and 12,400 vehicle service miles per year. Analysis indicates Saturday ridership would increase by 2,600 passenger-trips per year given the different increases to service frequency along the different route segments and the proportion of ridership activity that typically occurs along each segment. Operating Route 12 hourly on Saturdays would require $51,200 in marginal operating subsidy.

Sunday

On Sundays, Route 12 completes five roundtrips between San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay and serves the Los Osos Loop six times. RTA could instead operate the existing Route 12 Saturday schedule on Sundays. This alternative would not impact service frequency between San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay but would increase service to the Los Osos Loop from six trips to ten trips per day. The impact on service levels would be minimal; service hours would increase by only 50 and service miles by only 800 per year. As service would be increased along only one segment of Route 12, ridership would increase by only 200 passenger-trips per year. The Route 12 marginal operating subsidy would increase by $5,000 annually based on the expected increases to both service levels and fare revenues.

Increase Route 9 Service to Cal Poly

Direct RTA service to the Cal Poly campus from North County is currently limited: southbound service is provided to Cal Poly on three morning runs (arriving at 7:12 AM, 7:18 AM, and 8:12 AM) and on four afternoon runs (arriving at 2:17 PM, 3:17 PM, 4:17 PM, and 6:17 PM). These runs all serve Cal Poly before continuing to the Government Center. In the northbound direction, only one run (the last run of the day) serves Cal Poly, departing the Government Center at 8:33 PM and serving Cal Poly at 8:40 PM. Other than this last run, passengers departing Cal Poly and traveling north to Atascadero and Paso Robles must catch the previous southbound RTA run at the campus before heading northbound. This adds 14 minutes of travel time that would be avoided if more direct Route 9 northbound service was provided to the campus. Given the importance of Cal Poly as a transit generator, it is worth considering different means of expanding Route 9 service to the campus.

Boarding and alighting counts, conducted by LSC during the onboard survey effort, indicate that typical weekday, Route 9 ridership activity at Cal Poly consists of 10 morning alightings and 11 afternoon boardings, all on southbound runs. This is equal to 3.8 percent of all Route 9 daily boardings during the Cal Poly academic year, which is equivalent to approximately 4,500 passengers per year.

Adding a southbound stop at Cal Poly adds 10 minutes of running time, while adding a northbound stop adds 11 minutes of running time. Existing bus operator schedules were reviewed to consider possible additional runs that could serve Cal Poly:

- One option would be to add a Cal Poly stop at 1:40 PM on the northbound run departing Government Center at 1:33 PM. This would increase the travel time by 11 minutes for 3,000 existing annual riders on this run. It would also result in arrival at the North County Transit Center at 2:51 PM, missing the departure of the Route A run at 2:45 PM, as well as breaking up the regular clock headway of Route 9. For these reasons, this option is not considered further.

- A stop could be provided on Bus Operator Shift 95 at 10:16 AM on the southbound departing Cuesta College in Paso Robles at 8:55 AM. As this run is operated by a bus operator shift that then transitions to the extra board, there is no issue with layover times. This would increase travel times for 1,700 existing passengers by 10 minutes, which is estimated to reduce existing ridership by 200 boardings per year. Based on existing Cal Poly ridership patterns, 400 new passengers would be served, yielding a net increase of 200 passengers per year.

- Another option would be to include a stop at 12:17 PM on the southbound trip departing Cuesta College in Paso Robles at 10:55 AM (Driver Shift 94). This would delay the arrival at the Government Center to 12:28 PM, providing a layover of 5 minutes before the 12:33 PM Route 9 northbound departure. As this would reduce the layover time that is already included in the existing vehicle service hours, there would be no change in operating costs. A loss of 200 existing passengers would result due to the longer travel time, but the additional Cal Poly ridership is expected to be slightly higher (600 additional boardings per year), yielding a net increase of 400 passenger-trips per year.

- A final option would be to add a 7:40 PM stop at Cal Poly on the northbound run departing the Government Center at 7:33 PM. Given the low ridership at Cal Poly on the existing evening run at 8:40 PM, this option would yield a net reduction in total ridership.

In sum, the best potential option to expand direct service to the Cal Poly campus would be to add a southbound stop at 12:17 PM. This would provide mid-day service between the 8:12 AM service time and the 2:17 PM service time. The additional vehicle mileage would increase annual operating costs by $1,700, while the additional $500 in passenger fare revenue would result in a net increase in operating subsidy of $1,200 per year.

New Route 16 Regional Service (Santa Maria- Guadalupe – Grover Beach – Price Canyon – San Luis Obispo)

The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) has indicated there is a need for direct transit connections from Guadalupe, in Santa Barbara County, to San Luis Obispo County. To meet this need, RTA could operate a new, regional route between Santa Maria and San Luis Obispo. The new route, referred to as Route 16, would serve a different corridor than Route 10, traveling through southwest San Luis Obispo County, Grover Beach, and Price Canyon enroute to San Luis Obispo, as shown in Figure 22.
A sample schedule for this service is presented in Table 29.

Figure 22
Potential RTA Regional Route 16

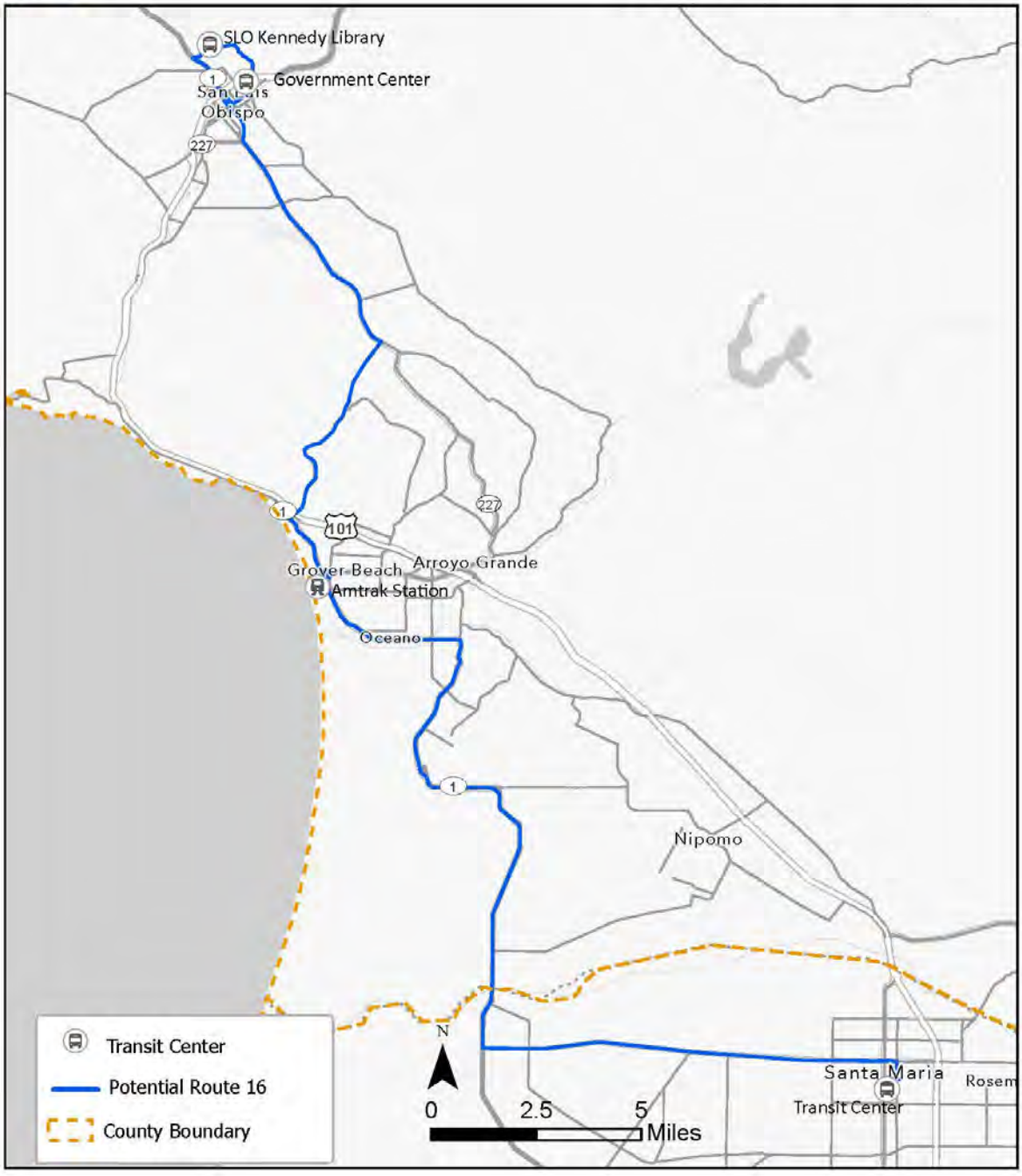


Table 29: Example New RTA Route 16 Schedule

Northbound		Southbound	
Bus Stops	Time Points (Minutes After the Hour)	Bus Stops	Time Points (Minutes After the Hour)
Santa Maria Transit Center	0:00	**SLO Government Center**	0:00
Guadalupe Amtrak Station	0:18	San Luis Airport	0:14
Guadalupe St and Olivera Street	0:20	Edna Road and Los Ranchos Road	0:18
Ralcoa Way (Callender)	0:28	Edna	0:21
The Treasure Barn Vintage	0:33	Price Canyon Road and Lemoore Ave	0:29
Highway 1 and 25th (Oceano)	0:38	Dolliver and Frady (Pismo Beach)	0:34
Highway 1 and 21st (Oceano)	0:39	Highway 1 and Le Sage (Grover Beach)	0:35
Grover Beach Amtrak Station	0:45	Grover Beach Amtrak Station	0:36
Highway 1 and Le Sage (Grover Beach)	0:46	Highway 1 and 21st (Oceano)	0:42
Dolliver and Frady (Pismo Beach)	0:47	Highway 1 and 25th (Oceano)	0:43
Price Canyon Road and Lemoore Ave	0:52	The Treasure Barn Vintage	0:48
Edna	1:00	Ralcoa Way (Callender)	0:53
Edna Road and Los Ranchos Road	1:04	Guadalupe St and Olivera Street	1:01
San Luis Airport	1:10	Guadalupe Amtrak Station	1:03
SLO Government Center	1:25		
Cal Poly Kennedy Library	1:32		
SLO Government Center	1:42	**Santa Maria Transit Center**	1:21
13-Minute Layover		13-Minute Layover	

To determine potential ridership, first, the number of new households within 0.25 miles of fixed route service was identified. Then, the average number of rides completed on the RTA regional routes per San Luis Obispo County household per year was applied to the number of houses newly being served by transit to estimate the annual ridership generated by expanding the RTA service area. Then, to determine potential commuter ridership, the number of residents commuting between San Luis Obispo County and Guadalupe was identified from a recent Santa Barbara County Association of Governments report.[6] As there is no direct connection between Routes 27/28 and Route 10 in Oceano, commuters between Oceano – SLO and Oceano and Santa Maria were also considered. The total number of work trips between jurisdictions per year was determined by multiplying the number of commuting residents by two work trips per day and 261 weekdays per year. It was assumed based on typical transit mode split factors and the characteristics of the service that 1 percent of the total work trips would be served by the new Route 16. Finally, the two values (ridership generated by expanding the service area and potential commuter ridership) were summed to project full-year Route 16 ridership. The total estimate was factored down to account for service only being provided twice per day. In sum, calculations suggest that the new RTA Route 16 would serve 4,300 passenger-trips per year.

[6] Santa Barbara County Association of Governments. (January 2024). *Understanding Regional Travel Patterns.* [PDF]. https://www.sbcag.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/UnderstandingRegionalTravelPatterns.pdf

Operating two roundtrips per weekday would require 1,800 vehicle service hours and 44,300 vehicle service miles annually. Assuming that Route 16 would have the same average fare as the other RTA regional routes, ridership would generate $5,600 in fare revenue per year, therefore the annual marginal operating subsidy would be $215,900. The service would require RTA to deploy an additional vehicle on weekdays.

Cal Poly Academic Schedule Changes

Cal Poly classes generally begin at 10 minutes or 40 minutes past the hour and end at the top of the hour or bottom of the hour. This is referred to as "Cal Poly" time. In conjunction with the move from a quarter system to a semester system, Cal Poly will be "sunsetting" Cal Poly time beginning Fall of 2026. As this change will occur within the time period of this transit plan, it is worth a discussion of how this might affect public transit.

RTA Route 9 arrives at Cal Poly from North County at :17 or :12 minutes past the hour. As the class schedule is currently, students arrive just after some classes begin, 10 minutes later. Therefore, transit connections in this direction will improve with the sunset of Cal Poly Time. For the return trip, there is also sufficient time to catch southbound Route 9 at the Cal Poly library before it travels to the Government Center and switches to the Northbound direction.

Route 10 does not travel directly to Cal Poly but has reasonable connections with SLO Transit Routes 3 and 4, the most direct routes to/from campus. SLO Transit is discussed below.

Route 12 serves Cal Poly once in the morning at 7:03 AM. This would not give a student sufficient time to get to class at the top of the hour after the sunset of Cal Poly time. If this run is shifted 10 minutes earlier, then Questa College students would be arriving at Questa at 6:43 AM instead of 6:53 AM. This is a reasonable cushion before a class which begins at the top of the hour. However, this would increase driver layover time at the Government Center at the end of this run each weekday by 10 minutes or roughly $3,000 per year.

SLO Transit routes have greater frequency with arrival/departure times at the Cal Poly Campus as follows:

Kennedy Library

:00 and :40 in the morning, and :55 in the afternoon (Route 3A)

:56 after in the morning, and :56 and :11 after in the afternoon (Route 3B)

Performing Arts Center

:06, :21, :36, and :51 (Route 4A)

:07, :22, :37, and :52 (Route 4B)

With the sunset of Cal Poly time, Route 3B passengers will have difficulty getting to a class on time which begins at the top of the hour in the morning. However, it is more likely that students use Route 3B for their return trip home, in which case :11 after the hour is appropriate. Otherwise, with multiple arrivals/departures at Cal Poly during one given hour, connections to classes beginning at the top or bottom of the hour can be made.

Because most students do not attend the university for all 4 quarters, the move to a semester system will likely increase the number of days which most students are on campus. This will increase vehicle hours and miles for routes which have greater frequency during the academic year. Ridership projections in the Draft Plan will take this change into account.

Additional Route 10 Service Alternatives

Historically, the City of Santa Maria has helped subsidize Route 10 service with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307 funds. The Santa Maria City Council voted in April 2024 to stop providing funds for Route 10 operations and instead directed staff to operate SMRT services between the cities of Santa Maria and San Luis Obispo. In FY23-24, the city authorized a pass-through of $255,090 in FTA Section 5307 funds. Given this funding reduction, multiple alternatives to reduce Route 10's operating costs are considered. These alternatives are detailed in Table 30.

Table 30: RTA Route 10 - Service Alternatives Summary

	Annual Service						
	Ridership	Service Hours	Service Miles	Marginal Operating Cost	Fare Revenues [2]	Operating Subsidy	Additional Buses Needed
Status Quo[1]							
Route 9	161,700	13,100	329,700	$1,627,100	$197,300	$1,429,800	
Route 10	152,100	11,300	318,100	$1,474,100	$238,400	$1,235,700	
Route 12	119,100	7,100	264,200	$1,060,900	$125,200	$935,700	
Route 14	1,500	130	165,100	$354,900	$600	$354,300	
Route 15	12,600	3,200	99,600	$437,400	$17,200	$420,200	
Regional Service Alternatives - Change from Status Quo [3]							
Provide Route 10 Southbound 6:03 AM Run	3,600	213	2,140	$19,700	$5,600	$14,100	
End Route 10 Southbound Service in Nipomo	-27,500	-3,200	-93,400	-$424,400	-$43,100	-$381,300	
Streamline Route 10 in Santa Maria - All Runs	-2,200	--	-13,700	-$28,700	-$3,400	-$25,300	
Streamline Route 10 in Santa Maria - All But 2 Weekday Runs	-1,700	--	-12,900	-$27,000	-$2,700	-$24,300	
Eliminate Route 10 8:33 PM Southbound Trip	-3,500	-460	-17,900	-$70,400	-$5,500	-$64,900	
End Route 10 7:33 PM and 8:33 PM Southbound Trips in Nipomo	-3,300	-200	-6,200	-$27,300	-$5,200	-$22,100	

Note 1: Status Quo operations are based on FY 2025-26 projected operating parameters detailed in Table 1.

Note 2: Assumes an average fare per boarding of $1.29 on Routes 10.

Note 3: Parameters and costs represent change over existing services. Estimates represent marginal costs and do not include fixed costs.

Provide Route 10 Service on Earlier Weekday Southbound Run

The first daily weekday southbound Route 10 run under the current schedule departs San Luis Obispo at 6:33 AM and arrives at the Santa Maria Transit Center at 7:43 AM. While this may be early enough for San Luis Obispo County residents reporting to work at 8:00 AM in downtown Santa Maria, it does not serve earlier work start times in downtown or access for 8:00 AM start times for those needing to transfer to SMRT routes to reach other work locations.

RTA currently "deadheads" two buses from the operations facility in San Luis Obispo to Santa Maria to start the first two northbound Route 10 runs (at 6:14 AM and 7:14 AM). One option would be to operate the latter of these runs in passenger service. Rather than leaving the operations facility at 6:34 AM to deadhead to Santa Maria, the bus operator would instead depart at 5:45 AM and travel to the SLO Government Center to start a southbound scheduled run at 6:03 AM. This run would serve all Route 10 stops, including service to Arroyo Grande at 6:36 AM and Nipomo at 6:49 AM, before arriving at the Santa Maria Transit Center at 7:13 AM. If the new departure were delayed by 25 minutes until 6:28 AM, there could be a direct connection to Routes 21 and 24 at the Pismo Outlets at 6:55 AM; however, this would only allow 18 minutes for the bus to get to the Santa Maria Transit Center in time to turn around and start the 7:14 AM northbound departure. This would not be sufficient time.

This option would add 49 minutes of bus operator time to each run, as well as 8.2 miles of travel distance. Over the course of a year, this would result in an increase in operating costs of $19,700. Considering the hourly ridership for earlier transit services in the region and adjusting for the fact no connections would be made with South County Routes or SLO Transit, this earlier run would serve approximately 3,600 additional passenger-trips annually. Subtracting the $5,600 in increased fare revenue generated, this option would increase the annual operating subsidy by $14,100.

As an aside, consideration was also given to operating the first deadhead run in passenger service. However, this would result in a southbound departure from San Luis Obispo at 5:03 AM, arriving in Santa Maria at 6:13 AM. Considering hourly ridership demand in the region, ridership on this very early run would be low and not warrant the additional operating cost. As a result, this option is not considered further.

End Route 10 in Nipomo

Route 10 could be truncated to provide service only between San Luis Obispo and Nipomo, as depicted in Figure 23. Eliminating service between Nipomo and Santa Maria would negatively impact ridership; based on boarding by stop data and the proportion of ridership that typically occurs on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, it is estimated that cutting service to Santa Maria would cause Route 10 ridership to decline by 27,500 passenger-trips per year (or 18 percent), prompting a loss of $43,100 in fare revenue. Despite the loss in fare revenue, ending Route 10 service in Nipomo would still significantly reduce the annual marginal operating subsidy (-$381,300) due to the sharp cut in service levels.

Streamline Route 10 in Santa Maria

A more moderate approach to reducing Route 10's operating requirements would be to streamline service within Santa Maria, as shown in Figure 24. As depicted, Route 10 would continue to serve Allan Hancock College en route to the Santa Maria Transit Center, however, service to Marian Medical Center and the Amtrak bus stop would be cut. The routing change would yield marginal operating subsidy savings on the order of $25,700 per year due to the reductions to route length. It would reduce route running time by approximately 4 minutes. As this is not enough of a reduction to reduce the schedule (while providing convenient hourly headways), it would not reduce overall vehicle-hours of service. It is likely that some passengers who currently utilize the Marian Medical Center and Amtrak stops would switch to another Route 10 stop in Santa Maria, therefore it is estimated that this alternative would cause ridership to decline by only 2,200 passenger-trips per year.

Streamline Route 10 in Santa Maria Except for Two Runs Each Weekday

Alternatively, some runs on weekdays could retain service to Marian Regional Medical Center and the Cypress/Nicholson stops in order to allow some direct access to the medical center for San Luis Obispo County residents as well as serve residents of the adjacent neighborhoods who may work in San Luis Obispo County. While the specific runs to be retained would need to be defined by more extensive passenger boarding counts, a reasonable scenario would be to provide service to these two stops along the existing route on the southbound run departing Santa Maria northbound at 8:14 AM and the southbound run departing San Luis Obispo at 5:33 PM. This is estimated to reduce the ridership loss to 1,700 passenger-trips per year, while still generating $24,300 in annual operating subsidy savings.

Eliminate Route 10 8:33 PM Southbound Trip

As is typical with many transit services, Route 10 ridership activity wanes throughout the evening; the final Route 10 southbound trip (8:33 PM departure from the Government Center) serves an average of 13 passenger-trips, far fewer than earlier departures which serve upwards of 30 passenger-trips. Cutting the weekday 8:33 PM southbound departure would eliminate 300 vehicle service hours and 9,800 vehicle service miles annually. As this bus deadheads back to San Luis Obispo from Santa Maria, including this long deadhead run results in a total reduction of 460 vehicle-hours and 12,900 vehicle-miles. Ridership would decline by 3,500 passenger-trips, as it is likely about half of the riders typically served on the final southbound run would not be able to shift their schedules and would instead find an alternative mode of transportation. Eliminating the one run would yield $64,900 in marginal operating subsidy savings by reducing service levels more than fare revenues.

End Route 10 7:33 PM and 8:33 PM Southbound Trips in Nipomo

One factor behind the drop in Route 10 ridership activity during the later evening hours is that the final two southbound departures (7:33 PM and 8:33 PM) do not arrive at the Santa Maria Transit Center until 8:43 PM and 9:43 PM, well after Santa Maria Regional Transit (SMRT) fixed route operations have ceased for the day, and thus making it impossible for passengers who rely on SMRT to get to their final destinations. As the final two Route 10 southbound departures do not provide meaningful connections to SMRT, RTA could instead terminate the runs in Nipomo. This would eliminate 200 vehicle service hours and 6,200 vehicle service miles per year.

Ending the 7:33 PM and 8:33 PM southbound trips in Nipomo would cause ridership to decrease by 3,300 passenger trips per year. This estimate is derived from boarding and alighting data by stop, which indicates that there are typically 12 passengers who alight in Santa Maria on the final two southbound runs. It is assumed that half of these riders would be unable to shift their schedules and therefore would be unlikely to ride Route 10 to or from San Luis Obispo. The net impact of this alternative would be a $22,100 reduction to the RTA marginal operating subsidy.

Figure 23
Route 10 Ending in Nipomo

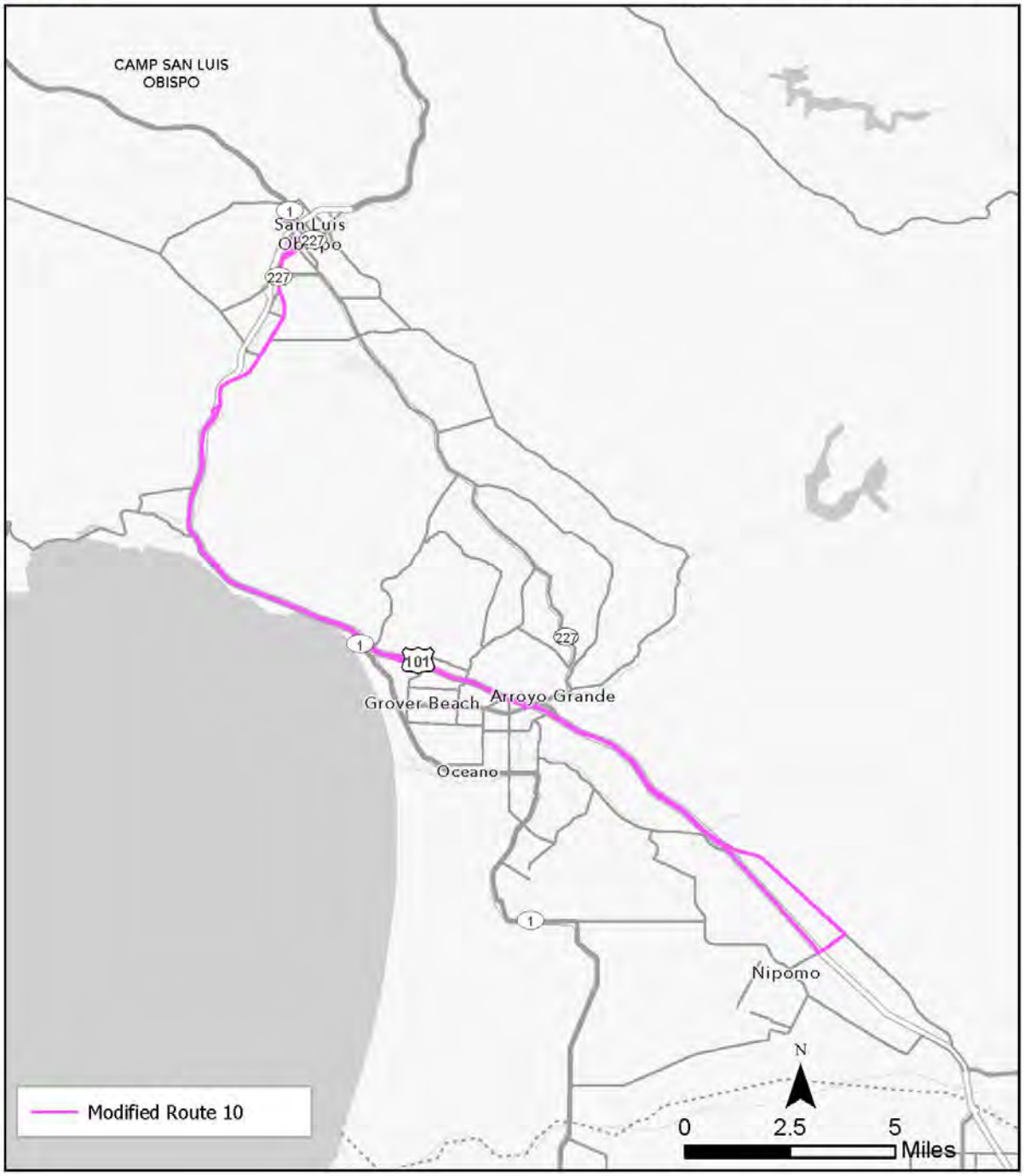
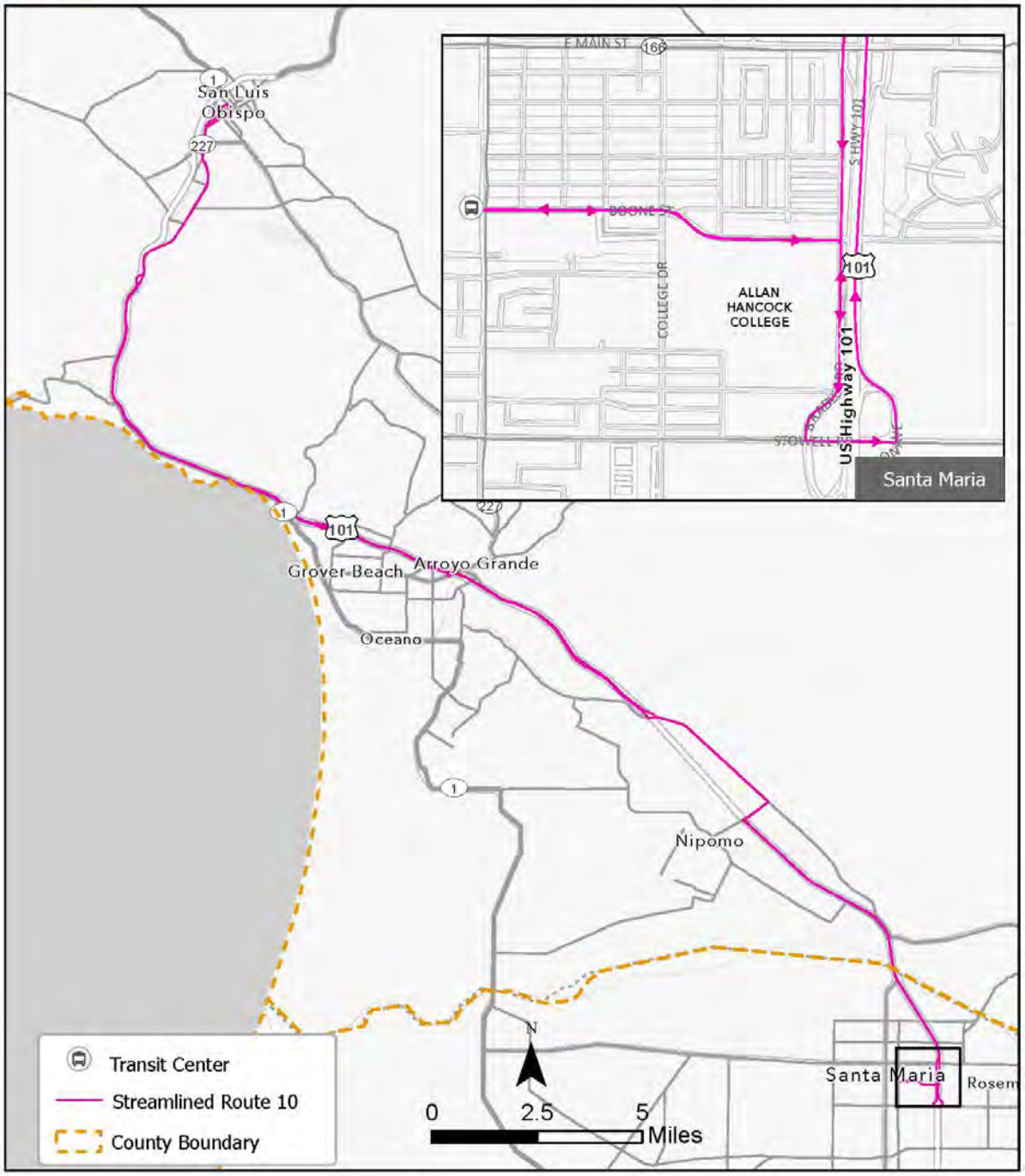


Figure 24
Streamlined Route 10 in Santa Maria



PASO ROBLES ALTERNATIVES

RTA operates multiple local transit services within and around Paso Robles, including the bidirectional Routes A and B, the Paso Robles DAR, and the Templeton/Shandon DAR. The local Paso Robles fixed routes have experienced significant ridership increases in recent years; Routes A and B were the most productive RTA services in FY 2022-23, carrying about 21 passenger-trips per hour. While the Paso Robles services perform well, there are still alternatives that could further increase ridership and address passenger needs. In particular, the Paso Robles passengers who participated in the onboard survey requested additional Sunday service (48 percent of surveyed passengers), additional Saturday service (37 percent), and later evening service (21 percent). Additionally, Paso Robles has several planned development projects on the horizon, mainly in the eastern portion of the city.

This section discusses alternatives focused on the local Paso Robles transit services. The impacts of the various service alternatives are summarized in Table 31 and assume the following average fares per boarding: $1.05 on Paso Robles Routes A and B, $2,73 on the Paso Robles DAR, and $1.56 on the Templeton/Shandon DAR.

Table 31: RTA Paso Robles Services - Service Alternatives Summary

	Change In Annual Service						
	Ridership	Service Hours	Service Miles	Marginal Operating Cost	Fare Revenues [2]	Operating Subsidy	Additional Buses Needed
Status Quo[1]							
Paso Robles Route A	59,400	2,700	35,600	$267,600	$62,300	$205,300	
Paso Robles Route B	64,100	3,100	41,900	$309,400	$67,300	$242,100	
Paso Robles DAR	2,200	1,500	12,200	$132,800	$6,000	$126,800	
Shandon/Templeton DAR	20	15	80	$1,500	$30	$1,470	
Paso Robles Service Alternatives - Change from Status Quo [3]							
New Paso Robles Route C							
Mon - Fri, 7:15 AM - 6:35 PM	7,000	3,100	38,800	$303,000	$7,300	$295,700	1
Paso Robles High School and Daniel Lewis Middle School Tripper							
One AM Trip and One PM Trip, Mon - Fri - Academic Year	2,300	200	2,600	$19,700	$2,400	$17,300	1
Expand Weekend Service							
Add Saturday Route A Service, 7:45 AM - 5:45 PM	5,700	500	6,700	$49,800	$6,000	$43,800	1
Add Sunday Route B Service, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM	4,400	400	5,300	$39,700	$4,600	$35,100	1
Extend Route B until 9:00 PM on Weekdays	2,300	500	6,600	$49,600	$2,400	$47,200	0
Convert Paso Robles DAR to Microtransit [4]	200	-	1,100	$6,800	$500	$6,300	0
Convert Shandon/Templeton DAR to Microtransit [4]	1	-	-	$4,500	$2	$4,500	0

Note 1: Status Quo operations are based on FY 2025-26 projected operating parameters detailed in Table 1.

Note 2: Assumes an average fare per boarding of $1.05 per passenger on Paso Robles Routes A and B, $2.73 per passenger on the Paso Robles DAR, and $1.56 per passenger on the Shandon/Templeton DAR.

Note 3: Parameters and costs represent change over existing services. Estimates represent marginal costs and do not include fixed costs.

Note 4: Assumes same fare as existing DAR. Costs include $4,500/year for app license for one vehicle.

Paso Robles Route C

There are several developments within Paso Robles which are not served by Routes A/B, including communities in northeast Paso Robles and the future Olsen South-Chandler Ranch development. While northeast Paso Robles is served by the Paso Robles DAR, the DAR service capacity is limited. To expand transit access and meet the transit needs of a growing community, RTA could introduce a new fixed route (Route C) to serve northeastern Paso Robles and the Olsen South-Chandler Ranch development, as shown in Figure 25. Route C would start and end at the North County Transit Center (NCTC) like the other local Paso Robles fixed routes. A sample schedule for Route C, designed to facilitate transfers between Routes B and C, is shown in Table 32.

If RTA initiated a new Route C service with the routing structure and schedule presented and provided service from 7:15 AM to 7:02 PM, Route C would require 3,100 vehicle service hours and 38,800 vehicle service miles per year at a marginal operating cost of $303,000. Once the Olsen South-Chandler Ranch development is built out, there will be about 760 homes within 0.25 miles of Route C bus stops that are not within 0.25 miles of Routes A/B. To determine the potential ridership that would be generated by these homes, the per capita ridership rate observed on Routes A/B was applied to the population living within the new service area. A factor was then applied to reflect that the population within the expanded service area is less transit-dependent compared to other areas of Paso Robles. These calculations yielded a ridership estimate of 7,000 passenger-trips provided per year. Assuming that the Route C average fare per boarding would be similar to what is observed on Routes A/B, fare revenue would increase by $7,300 per year, meaning the annual marginal operating subsidy for the new Route C would be $295,700. RTA would need to deploy an additional vehicle to operate the new route.

Airport Area Development Project

The City of Paso Robles has plans to develop the area northeast of SR 46 at Union St. near the airport. There is the potential for 4,000,000 square feet of commercial/industrial uses that would provide 3,000 jobs. RTA does not currently serve this area. In order to access the new development, RTA buses would need to cross SR 46 at Union Road, which is an unsignalized intersection at a divided highway. The City has applied for Trade Corridor Enhancement Program (TCEP) grant funds to build an overpass at this intersection. Until this improvement is constructed, RTA buses cannot safely cross SR 46.

It is not likely that new development and roadway improvements would be constructed during this transit planning period. Additionally, airport developments with a significant amount of industrial uses are not typically large transit generators. For example, land uses near the San Luis Obispo Airport generate anywhere from 0 to 5 average daily boardings. Therefore, service to the area is not recommended until roadway improvements and a significant level of development has occurred. RTA should continue to monitor the progress of development near the Paso Robles Airport for the need for transit service.

Figure 25
Potential Paso Robles Route C

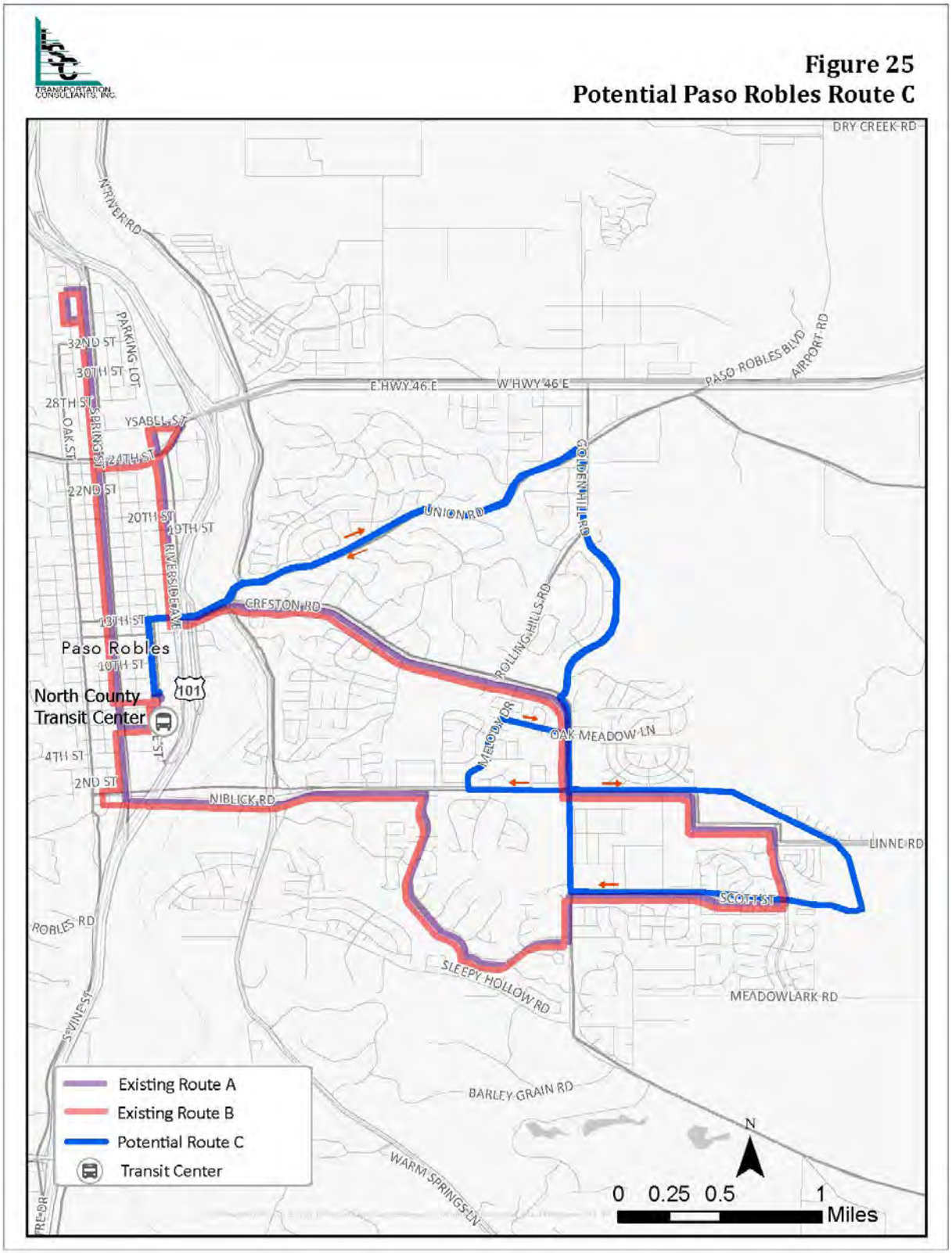


Table 32: Example Paso Robles Route C Schedule

New Route C	
Bus Stops	Time Points (Minutes After the Hour)
North County Transit Center	0:15
Pine St at 13th St	0:19
Union Rd at Riverglen Dr	0:23
Union Rd at Skyview Dr	0:24
Union Rd at Kleck Rd	0:25
Union Rd at Montebello Oaks Dr	0:27
Golden Hill Rd at Almendra Ct	0:29
Golden Hill Rd at Rolling Hills Rd	0:30
Golden Hill Rd at Vista Cerro Dr	0:31
Golden Hills Road at Williams Plaza	0:33
Creston Rd at Oak Meadow Ln	0:34
Sherwood Rd at Creston Rd	0:36
Sherwood Rd at Quail Run	0:37
Scott St at Westfield Rd	0:41
Scott St at Paso Robles Senior Center	0:42
Niblick Rd at Melody Dr	0:45
Melody Dr at Lana St	0:47
Creston Rd at Oak Meadow Ln	0:48
Golden Hill Rd at Red River Dr	0:49
Golden Hill Rd at Vista Cerro Dr	0:50
Golden Hill Rd at Rolling Hills Rd	0:51
Golden Hill Rd at Ardmore Rd	0:52
Union Rd at Montebello Oaks Dr	0:54
Union Rd at Kleck Rd	0:55
Union Rd at Skyview Dr	0:56
Union Rd at Riverglen Dr	0:58
Pine St at 13th St	1:00
North County Transit Center	1:02
13-Minute Layover	

Paso Robles High School and Daniel Lewis Middle School Tripper Service

Ridership on Routes A and B drastically increased after the City suspended school bus service in 2021. Schools start and end at specific times, therefore most student ridership is concentrated on the trips that occur right before and after the school day. The concentration of student ridership on just a few runs throughout the day can result in overcrowding conditions onboard. This can discourage general public passengers. Bus operators also often need to turn people away on these runs due to crowding, forcing people to either wait for the next bus or find another transportation alternative.

To alleviate overcrowding concerns and to better serve both student and non-student passengers alike, RTA could implement a supplemental tripper service to Paso Robles High School and Daniel Lewis Middle School. A sample school tripper schedule, designed to serve the two schools on regular bell schedule days, is detailed in Table 33. The schedule would need to be modified depending on the day of the week to align with the various bell schedules at the two schools.

Operating two tripper runs per school day would increase RTA service levels by 200 vehicle service hours and 2,600 vehicle service miles annually. The additional capacity that would result from operating the tripper service would prompt a small increase in ridership of about 9 passenger-trips per day. Another 4 trips per day could result from the addition of another run. This equates to 2,300 passenger-trips per year, across Routes A, B, and the trippers. The marginal operating subsidy for the service would be $17,300. RTA would need to deploy an additional vehicle to operate the school tripper.

Table 33: Example Paso Robles School Tripper Schedule

		Tripper
Morning	Spring at 34th	7:55 AM
	Creston at Nickerson: Daniel Lewis Middle School	8:05 AM
	Creston at Sherwood	8:09 AM
	Fontana at Linne	8:11 AM
	Stoney Creek at Creston: Dry Creek Apartments	8:18 AM
	Niblick at Bearcat: Paso Robles High School	8:23 AM
		Tripper
Afternoon	Creston at Nickerson: Daniel Lewis Middle School	3:17 PM
	Creston at Sherwood	3:21 PM
	Fontana at Linne	3:23 PM
	Stoney Creek at Creston: Dry Creek Apartments	3:30 PM
	Niblick at Bearcat: Paso Robles High School	3:35 PM
	North County Transit Center	3:42 PM

AM Miles	7.65
PM Miles	6.81
AM Hours	0.5
PM Hours	0.5
Daily Miles	14.46
Daily Hours	1
School Year Miles	2602.8
School Year Hours	180

Note: Schedule presented is designed to serve Daniel Lewis Middle School and Paso Robles High School on regular bell schedule days. Schedule would need to be modified depending on bell schedules.

Expand Weekend Service

Reinstate Route A Saturday Service – 7:45 AM – 5:35 PM

Saturday service is currently limited to Route B, which can result in long in-vehicle travel times for travel in the clockwise direction. To expand weekend service, RTA could reinstate Route A on Saturdays during similar hours as Route B (from 7:45 AM to 5:35 PM) to match pre-pandemic service levels. This would increase service levels by 500 vehicle service hours and 6,600 vehicle service miles annually. Based on Route A's weekday ridership, the proportion of Route A trips that occur during the proposed service hours, and the ratio of Saturday to weekday ridership on Route B, it is expected that operating Route A on Saturdays would increase ridership by 5,700 passenger-trips per year. The marginal operating subsidy would be $74,100 based on the expected service levels and fare revenues.

Route B Sunday Service – 9:15 AM – 5:05 PM

RTA could begin providing Sunday service in Paso Robles by operating Route B from 9:15 AM to 5:05 PM. Based on the proposed hours, this alternative would require 400 vehicle service hours and 5,300 vehicle service miles per year. It is estimated that the Route B Sunday service would provide about 4,400 passenger-trips per year based on current Route B weekday ridership and the ratio of Sunday to weekday ridership observed on other RTA services. This alternative would require a $59,900 annual marginal operating subsidy due to the increase in service levels and fare revenues.

Extend Route B Service Until 9:00 PM on Weekdays

One of the most common requests made by Paso Robles passengers during public outreach was for later service. To meet this need, Route B could be extended until 9:00 PM, or the equivalent of two extra round trips, on weekday nights. Annually, this would require 500 vehicle service hours and 6,600 vehicle service miles. The additional evening service would serve about 2,200 passenger-trips per year based on existing Route B weekday ridership and the ratio of daytime to evening ridership observed on other transit services in California. Extending Route B to 9:00 PM on weekdays would require an annual marginal operating subsidy of $77,600.

Introduce Microtransit Technology to Existing DARs

RTA already operates general public demand response services in the Paso Robles area: the Paso Robles DAR is available from 7:00 AM to 1:00 PM on weekdays, and the Templeton/Shandon DAR is available from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays in Shandon and Tuesdays and Thursdays in Templeton. The Paso Robles DAR serves about 2,200 passenger-trips per year, while the Templeton/Shandon DAR serves only 20 passenger-trips per year.

In recent years, many public transit agencies have introduced microtransit to provide a real-time, on-demand transit option. Depending on the agency, microtransit is either introduced as an entirely new service or it is introduced as an improvement to an existing service. Placer County Transit recently implemented this type of technology upgrade; Placer County Transit rebranded the existing DAR as “GO South Placer” with the rollout of the new microtransit phone app. Since the introduction of microtransit technology, the GO South Placer zones have seen, on average, ridership increase by an additional 7 percent over the systemwide average ridership growth.

RTA could procure microtransit software and convert the existing Paso Robles and Templeton/Shandon DARs into microtransit services. In this scenario, the microtransit app would allow passengers to request trips whenever they want during service hours, but passengers would potentially have to wait longer for a ride depending on the volume of requests. It is expected the Paso Robles DAR annual ridership would increase at a similar rate to what has been observed in Placer County, or by about 200 passenger-trips, during the first year of operations. It should be noted that ridership would likely increase further the following year, as research has found there is often greater ridership growth during the second year of operating a new transit service due to increased public awareness. Service would continue to be provided with one vehicle, therefore adding microtransit technology would not increase vehicle service hours. The increase in ridership would require an additional 1,100 vehicle service miles per year. The cost of the microtransit license and the increase in vehicle service miles would cause the marginal operating subsidy to increase by $6,300. This assumes the same fare structure as the current Paso Robles DAR: $5 for the general public and $2.50 for seniors and the disabled.

As previously mentioned, the Templeton/Shandon DAR provides very few passenger-trips per year. Given the low utilization, adding microtransit technology is expected to have negligible impacts on ridership or service levels, therefore the marginal operating subsidy would be equal to the cost of the microtransit license, or $4,500.

SOUTH COUNTY ALTERNATIVES

In south San Luis Obispo County, RTA operates four local fixed routes (21, 24, 27, and 28) in the Five Cities area and the Nipomo DAR. Service alternatives for the South County area are presented in this section, with the various impacts summarized in Table 34. The service alternatives were developed to increase the productivity of existing services and address passenger needs as identified during public outreach. Of the South County fixed route passengers who participated in the onboard survey, the top requested improvements were later evening service (39 percent of respondents), additional Saturday service (36 percent), and additional Sunday service (29 percent). The Nipomo DAR passengers surveyed indicated high satisfaction with the service and did not request any specific improvements, however, alternatives are considered to grow ridership even further. The analyses presented in this section assume an average fare per boarding of $0.80 on the South County fixed routes and $1.56 on the Nipomo DAR.

Realign Fixed Routes to Serve Grover Beach Train Station as Primary Transfer Point

The previous South County SRTP (2019) considered realigning the local fixed routes to instead serve the Grover Beach Train Station as the main transfer point. The benefits of this routing shift would be improved access to the train station and regional Amtrak services, as well as to the commercial area along the western end of Grand Avenue. Before the routes could be realigned, however, the train station parking lot may need to undergo upgrades to provide for easy ingress/egress of the four RTA buses and Amtrak Thruway bus. Currently, the Grover Beach Train Station bus loading area consists of approximately 200 feet of straight curb. While this may technically allow enough space for the five buses, the vehicles would need to pull in fairly close behind one another. As such, it would be difficult for a vehicle to depart prior to the one in front of it.

As discussed in the 2019 SRTP, making the Grover Beach Train Station the primary fixed route transfer point in the South County area would require Routes 21 and 24 to extend from Highway 1/Grand Avenue

south to the station, an extension of only 0.3 miles. The 2019 SRTP recommended that Routes 27 and 28 serve the station using Farroll Avenue and 4th Street between Farroll/13th and Grand Avenue. This realignment would add 1.1 miles to Route 27 and 1.1 miles to Route 28. Despite the extra distance required per run, the modifications would still allow all four routes to complete one run per hour, meaning there would be no impact to vehicle service hours. In all, switching the main transfer hub to Grover Beach Train Station would increase annual vehicle service miles by 12,000, increasing the RTA marginal operating cost by $25,100.

Table 34: RTA South County Services - Service Alternatives Summary

	Change In Annual Service						
	Ridership	Service Hours	Service Miles	Marginal Operating Cost	Fare Revenues [2]	Operating Subsidy	Additional Buses Needed
Status Quo[1]							
Route 21	50,100	3,800	74,100	$426,900	$35,400	$391,500	
Route 24	50,800	3,900	57,100	$398,500	$41,000	$357,500	
Route 27	26,800	3,000	39,600	$297,500	$24,400	$273,100	
Route 28	56,600	3,900	53,400	$390,700	$47,900	$342,800	
Nipomo DAR	9,100	3,500	25,900	$366,000	$14,200	$351,800	
South County Service Alternatives - Change from Status Quo [3]							
Realign Routes to Serve Grover Beach Train Station as Primary Transfer Point							
Route 21	-	-	1,400	$2,900	-	-	
Route 24	-	-	1,400	$2,900	-	-	
Route 27	-	-	3,800	$8,000	-	-	
Route 28	-	-	5,400	$11,300	-	-	
Net Impact	*-1,600*	*0*	*12,000*	*$25,100*	*-$1,300*	*$26,400*	*0*
Realign Routes to Serve Walmart as Primary Transfer Point							
Route 21	-200	-	0	$0	-$141	-	0
Route 24	-300	-	0	$0	-$242	-	0
Route 27	-	-	0	$0	-	-	0
Route 28	-	-	0	$0	-	-	0
Route 10	0	-	-400	-$800	$0	-	0
Net Impact	*-500*	*0*	*-400*	*-$800*	*-$400*	*-$400*	*0*
Arroyo Grande High School Tripper Service							
One AM Trip and One PM Trip, Mon - Fri - Academic Year	1,100	300	2,200	$26,100	$900	$25,200	1
Operate Route 27 on Saturdays - 7:30 AM - 8:15 PM	4,200	500	5,100	$46,400	$3,400	$43,000	1
Extend Routes 21 and 28 until 9:00 PM on Weekdays							
Route 21	700	400	5,900	$41,000	$600	$40,400	
Route 28	900	300	2,800	$27,300	$700	$26,600	
Net Impact	*1,600*	*700*	*8,700*	*$68,300*	*$1,300*	*$67,000*	*0*
Evening "Five Cities" Microtransit Service [4]							
Mon - Fri, 6:00 PM - 10:00 PM	-3,200	1,300	16,250	$145,000	-$5,100	$150,100	0
Mon - Fri, 7:00 PM - 10:00 PM	1,500	1,300	16,250	$145,000	$2,400	$142,600	0
Convert Nipomo DAR to Microtransit [4]	600	-	1,700	$13,500	$1,000	$12,500	0

Note 1: Status Quo operations are based on FY 2022-23 parameters and projected FY 2025-26 ridership. This table only includes status quo data for the RTA services in the south county area.

Note 2: Assumes an average fare per boarding of $0.80 on Routes 21 - 28 and $1.56 on the Nipomo DAR.

Note 3: Parameters and costs represent change over existing services. Estimates represent marginal costs and do not include fixed costs.

Note 4: Assumes a general microtransit fare of $3.00 per one-way trip, or an average fare of $1.61 per passenger. Costs include $4,500/year for app license for one vehicle.

Another key point is that Routes 21 and 24 are timed to provide direct connections to Route 10 at Pismo Beach Premium Outlets at the top of the hour. To maintain this timed transfer opportunity and shift the routes to Grover Beach Train Station, Route 24 would need to be shifted 4 minutes later so that the bus arrived at the outlets 59 minutes after the hour and departed the outlets 14 minutes after the hour. The slight change to the Route 24 schedule and shifts to the other three schedules would result in the routes serving Grover Beach Train Station at the following times: Route 21 would arrive 33 minutes after the hour, Route 24 at 29 minutes, and Routes 27 and 28 at 20 minutes. Routes 27 and 28 would depart the hub 35 minutes after the hour to provide an adequate bus operator break and connections to both Routes 21 and 24. Routes 21 and 24 would depart the Grover Beach Train Station at 36 minutes after the hour.

The proposed routing changes would eliminate service to a few stops along 13th in Grover Beach, however, the eliminated ridership would be offset by new ridership in the area west of 9th Street and south of Seabright Avenue. Ridership would still be negatively impacted by the routing change, however, as the Grover Beach Train Station is not as accessible as Ramona Garden Park; there are approximately 800 residences within a five-minute walk of Ramona Garden, and the commercial businesses along Grand Avenue between 7th and 12th Streets are also nearby. Comparatively, Grover Beach Train Station is surrounded by the Grand Junction and Beach Place multiuse areas along the south side of Grand Avenue and west of 4th Street, low-density commercial uses on the north side of Grand Avenue, a few residences behind the commercial uses, and a hotel. The less convenient location of Grover Beach Train Station compared to Ramona Garden Park would prompt a loss of 1,600 passenger-trips per year.

Realign Fixed Routes to Serve Walmart as Primary Transfer Point

While all four local South County fixed routes serve the Walmart in Arroyo Grande, the routes serve the Walmart at different times: Route 28 serves Walmart at 4 minutes after the hour, Route 21 at 13 minutes, Route 27 at 43 minutes, and Route 24 at 46 minutes. Stakeholders have suggested RTA shift the South County fixed routes so that Walmart is the primary transfer point instead of Ramona Garden. Walmart is a major transit generator and employment location for residents regionwide. As such, shifting the transfer point to Walmart was considered as part of this alternative. Table 35 shows how all four route schedules could be shifted so that the buses depart from Walmart at the top of the hour.

Currently, Routes 21 and 24 provide timed transfer opportunities to regional Route 10, both southbound and northbound, at the Pismo Beach Premium Outlets at the top of the hour. Route 10 does not currently serve Walmart. Shifting the schedules to have Walmart be the main transfer hub would eliminate an important timed connection; passenger survey data indicated a significant number of passengers transfer between Routes 21 and 24 and Route 10 at the outlets. To ensure South County passengers can continue to make a seamless connection to Route 10, Route 10 could be modified to serve Walmart instead of the Pismo Beach Outlets. Shifting Route 10 service to Walmart would have differing impacts depending on the direction of travel due to the configuration of access to and from US 101: serving Walmart in the northbound direction would eliminate 1 minute and 0.3 miles per run, but in the southbound direction would add 4 minutes and 0.3 miles.

Table 35: Example South County Fixed Route Schedules with Walmart as Primary Transfer Point

	Local South County Routes			
	21	24	27	28
Walmart	***12:00 PM***	***12:00 PM***	--	--
Grand at Elm	12:08 PM	--	--	--
Ramona Garden	12:16 PM	12:28 PM	--	--
Dolliver at Pomeroy	12:22 PM	--	--	--
Pismo Beach City Hall	12:26 PM	--	--	--
Premium Outlets	12:38 PM	12:09 PM	--	--
Arroyo Grande City Hall	--	12:39 PM	--	--
Walmart	***12:46 PM***	***12:46 PM***	--	--
Walmart	***--***	***--***	***12:00 PM***	***12:00 PM***
Arroyo Grande High School	--	--	12:07 PM	12:34 PM
Elm at The Pike	--	--	12:13 PM	12:28 PM
19th at Wilmar	--	--	12:17 PM	12:23 PM
Air Park Drive/Oceano Airport	--	--	12:21 PM	12:19 PM
Ramona Garden	--	--	12:30 PM	12:10 PM
Walmart	***--***	***--***	***12:41 PM***	***12:42 PM***

Given the expected impacts on travel time and distance, it is assumed that Route 10 northbound service could shift to serve Walmart at the top of the hour with no other schedule changes required. Route 10 southbound service schedule, however, would need to be shifted. Route 10's schedule has been designed to provide timed connections with the other RTA regional routes in San Luis Obispo during a five-minute layover period. This means that shifting the Route 10 schedule to accommodate the four extra minutes of travel time in the southbound direction would require either reducing the layover in San Luis Obispo from the current 5 minutes (which would reduce the service's ability to maintain the schedule) or reduce the layover in Santa Maria from the existing 31 minutes to 27 minutes (which is preferable).

Modifying the South County local fixed routes so that Walmart serves as the primary transfer point would have no impact on service levels, and therefore no impact on marginal operating costs. The routing shift would impact transfer wait times from Routes 21/24 to Route 10 slightly. Additionally, this option relocates the transfer hubs to an area with less residential density. In all, the negative impacts on service quality and access would cause RTA ridership to decline by 500 passenger-trips per year. The loss in ridership would trigger a subsequent loss in fare revenue that would negate the cost savings from reducing Route 10 northbound mileage, meaning the net cost impact of shifting the South County transfer hub to Walmart would be a $800 increase to the marginal operating subsidy.

The bus stop at Walmart also does not have adequate curb space to accommodate five buses, therefore capital upgrades would be necessary before the routes could be modified.

Arroyo Grande High School Tripper Service

Previously, RTA operated supplemental tripper runs during the school year to serve Arroyo Grande High School (AGHS) at the regular bell times. The tripper service consisted of one morning run of Route 28 and one afternoon run of Route 27, and both runs typically served upwards of 25 passenger-trips. While productive, as well as successful at reducing crowding on normal runs, the AGHS trippers were suspended in March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The trippers have yet to be reinstated due to a lack of bus operators.

If RTA reinstated the tripper runs, the schedule would be similar to that shown in Table 36. The exact schedule would vary by day depending on the AGHS bell times. Operating two tripper runs per weekday during the academic year would increase service levels by 300 vehicle service hours and 2,200 vehicle service miles annually. RTA would serve an additional 1,100 passenger-trips annually across the trippers, Route 27, and Route 28 by increasing service capacity onboard. This equates to an additional 6 passenger-trips per school day. The marginal operating subsidy for the AGHS trippers would be $25,200 based on anticipated service levels, ridership, and fare revenue.

Table 36: Example Arroyo Grande High School Tripper Schedule

		Route 28 Tripper	
		Mon	Tues - Fri
Morning	Ramona Garden	8:40 AM	8:00 AM
	Air Park Drive / Oceano Airport	8:49 AM	8:09 AM
	Wilmar at 18th	8:53 AM	8:13 AM
	Elm at The Pike	8:57 AM	8:17 AM
	Arroyo Grande High School	9:03 AM	8:23 AM
		Route 27 Tripper	
		Mon - Fri	
Afternoon	Arroyo Grande High School	3:35 PM	-
	Elm at The Pike	3:55 PM	-
	19th at Wilmar	4:01 PM	-
	Air Park Drive/Oceano Airport	4:06 PM	-
	Ramona Garden	4:14 PM	-

Note: Schedule presented has been updated from previous Arroyo Grande High School Tripper service based on the 2023-24 bell schedule.

Additional Weekday Evening Service

The service improvement most requested by local South County fixed route passengers was later evening service. In this section, options for providing later evening transit service in the South County area are presented.

Extend Routes 21 and 28 Until 9:00 PM

RTA could extend Route 21 and 28 operations until 9:00 PM on weekdays to provide a regular, later-evening transit option for residents. In this scenario, Route 21 would complete an extra run and a half per day, ending service at 8:51 PM at the Pismo Beach Premium Outlets. Route 28 would have one extra run per day, ending service at 9:14 PM at Ramona Garden. Extending both Routes 21 and 28 would cause service levels to increase by a combined 700 vehicle service hours and 8,700 vehicle service miles per year. The extra evening runs would serve 1,600 passenger-trips based on typical ridership during the 7:00 PM hour on the two routes and the average change in ridership observed between the 7:00 PM and 8:00 PM hours on other transit systems. Extending operations on Routes 21 and 28 would require an annual marginal operating subsidy of $67,000.

"Five Cities" Microtransit Service

RTA could operate an evening microtransit service throughout the Five Cities area to help residents with later work shifts or other commitments get where they need to go. The potential Five Cities microtransit service area is shown in Figure 26. Two possible microtransit service spans were evaluated: 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM and 7:00 PM to 10:00 PM. In both scenarios, it is assumed that fixed route service would end before microtransit service operations began. It is also assumed that the microtransit vehicles would serve an average of four passenger-trips per hour, based on the typical productivity of demand response services and microtransit performance data from other regions in California.

Figure 26
Five Cities Evening Microtransit Service Area

To estimate ridership, the ratio of daytime ridership to evening ridership was calculated for peer systems which offer evening services from 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM. Then, the ratio was applied to the typical daytime ridership observed on Routes 21, 24, 27, and 28. Ridership estimates were constrained based on the assumed hourly capacity per van of four passenger-trips. As this alternative considers replacing fixed route service for either the final one or two hours of the service day, the microtransit ridership estimates were also compared to the existing fixed route ridership by hour to determine whether operating an evening microtransit service would have a net positive or negative impacts on ridership.

To ensure costs remain constrained, RTA would only operate a maximum of four microtransit vehicles per hour, or the same number of vehicles as currently utilized by the four local South County fixed routes. Ridership estimates by hour indicate that to meet demand and ensure reasonable wait times, RTA would need to operate four vehicles in the 6:00 PM and 7:00 PM hours. Service could then taper off in the last two hours of the service day; only three vehicles would be needed for the 8:00 PM hour, and only two vehicles would be needed for the final hour of the day. However, because microtransit vehicles can only serve about 4 passenger-trips per hour, replacing the existing fixed routes with microtransit beginning at 6:00 PM would cause a loss in ridership of -3,200 passenger-trips per year. Operating microtransit from 7:00 PM to 10:00 would cause ridership to increase by a net of 1,500 passenger-trips per year by adding more additional riders in the 8:00 PM and 9:00 PM hours than riders eliminated in the 7:00 PM hour.

Both options would increase RTA service levels by 1,300 vehicle service hours and 16,250 vehicle service miles per year. These estimates assume the previously described phase-down in the number of vehicles in service throughout the evening and an average travel speed of 12.5 miles per hour. The marginal operating subsidy for the 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM microtransit service would be $150,100 while the subsidy for the 7:00 PM to 10:00 PM option would be $142,600 due to the differing impacts on ridership and fares. Runabout and Nipomo DAR vehicles could be used for this service.

Introduce Microtransit Technology to Nipomo DAR

To enhance the existing Nipomo DAR, RTA could add microtransit technology. The impacts of adding microtransit technology would be similar to those previously mentioned under the discussion about adding microtransit technology to the Paso Robles or Shandon/Templeton DARs: Nipomo passengers would be able to request rides on-demand, however, they may end up needing to wait longer for a ride depending on the volume of ride requests at the time. Ridership would grow slightly during the first year of operations (+600 passenger-trips) thanks to the increased convenience. There would be no impact to vehicle service hours, as the small increase in ridership could be accommodated by the existing bus operators. Vehicle service miles would increase by 1,700 per year due to the increased ridership. Based on the impacts to passenger fares and service levels, as well as the cost of one microtransit license, converting the Nipomo DAR to a microtransit service would increase the annual marginal operating subsidy by $12,500. If demand increased to the point where an additional vehicle was required, the subsidy increase would be much more substantial. For example, the marginal operating cost of adding another vehicle for 8 hours a day on weekdays would be over $200,000.

Expand Weekend Service

Additional weekend service was one of the most popular requests during the onboard passenger survey. As Routes 21, 24, and 28 already operate on both Saturdays and Sundays, adding Route 27 weekend service was considered.

Route 27 Saturday Service – 7:30 AM – 8:15 PM

If Route 27 was operating on Saturdays during similar hours as Route 28 (7:30 AM to 8:15 PM), RTA service levels would increase by 500 vehicle service hours and 5,100 vehicle service miles annually. The Saturday Route 27 service would provide approximately 4,200 passenger-trips per year based on average Route 27 weekday ridership and the average ratio of weekday to Saturday ridership observed on the other South County routes. The additional ridership would generate $3,400 in fare revenue; therefore, the annual marginal operating subsidy would be $43,000. Route 27 Saturday service would require an additional bus operator and vehicle.

ALTERNATIVES PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

To evaluate the relative performance of the RTA service alternatives, each alternative's impacts on ridership, marginal operating cost, passengers carried per vehicle service hour, and marginal operating cost per passenger were compared. The following performance analysis is grouped generally by RTA service area. Analysis findings are summarized in Tables 37 through 39 and Figures 27 through 30. Alternatives with performance that would meet standards are highlighted in green.

Table 37: RTA Regional Routes - Service Alternatives Performance Analysis

	Net Impact					
	Annual Ridership	Service hours	Service Miles	Annual Marginal Operating Cost [1]	Passenger-Trips per Vehicle Service Hour	Marginal Op. Cost per Passenger-Trip
Implement Express Service During Peak Hours						
Route 9 - One Additional AM Run, One PM Run	3,600	500	16,300	$69,900	7.2	$19.42
Route 10 - One AM Run, One PM Run	3,100	600	18,100	$80,800	5.2	$26.06
Increase Weekday Service Frequency						
Route 9 - 6:00 AM - 9:00 AM, 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM	16,600	3,900	90,400	$468,200	4.3	$28.20
Route 10 - 6:00 AM - 9:00 AM, 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM	23,300	3,800	116,700	$516,100	6.1	$22.15
Route 12 - 30 Min Frequency 7:00 AM - 6:30 PM	34,700	5,700	121,400	$661,800	6.1	$19.07
Route 12 - Addl Run Every 2 Hrs 6:03 AM - 6:03 PM	21,200	3,700	77,300	$426,500	5.7	$20.12
Re-Establish Route 14 Service on School Weekdays	18,400	2,100	55,500	$266,400	8.8	$14.48
Increase Saturday Service						
Route 9 - Add 1 RT	1,700	200	3,300	$21,200	8.5	$12.47
Route 10 - Add 1 RT	1,700	200	3,900	$22,500	8.5	$13.24
Route 12 - 1 Hr. Frequency	2,600	400	12,400	$54,600	6.5	$21.00
Increase Sunday Service						
Route 9 - 5 Round Trips / Day	700	300	6,600	$35,300	2.3	$50.43
Route 10 - 5 Round Trips / Day	700	300	7,700	$37,600	2.3	$53.71
Route 12 - Operate Sat. Schedule	200	50	800	$5,300	4.0	$26.50
Route 9 Mid-Day Service to Cal Poly	400	0	800	$1,700	--	$4.25
New Regional Route to Santa Maria - Guadalupe - Grover Beach - Price Canyon - SLO	4,300	1,800	44,300	$221,500	2.4	$51.51
Provide Route 10 Southbound 6:03 AM Run	3,600	213	2,140	$19,700	16.9	$5.47
End Route 10 Southbound Service in Nipomo	-27,500	-3,200	-93,400	-$424,400	8.6	$15.43
Streamline Route 10 in Santa Maria - All Runs	-2,200	0	-13,700	-$28,700	--	$13.05
Streamline Route 10 in Santa Maria - All But 2 Weekday Runs	-1,700	0	-12,900	-$27,000	--	$15.88
Eliminate Route 10 8:33 PM Southbound Trip	-3,500	-460	-17,900	-$70,400	7.6	$20.11
End Route 10 7:33 PM and 8:33 PM Southbound Trips in Nipomo	-3,300	-200	-6,200	-$27,300	16.5	$8.27
New Direct Express Runs between Los Osos and San Luis Obispo Weekdays	900	500	17,330	$72,000	1.8	$80.00
SLO - Los Osos - Morro Bay Bidirectional Loop	14,500	5,133	99,600	$575,700	2.8	$39.70
Alternatives meeting performance standards shaded in green. Note that alternatives meet standards by increasing ridership at a greater rate than costs, eliminating a service not meeting standards, or increasing ridership while decreasing costs.				Recommended Performance Standards	13.6	$13.55

Note 1: Does not include fixed costs

Table 38: RTA Paso Robles Services - Service Alternatives Performance Analysis

	Net Impact					
	Annual Ridership	Service hours	Service Miles	Annual Marginal Operating Cost [1]	Passenger-Trips per Vehicle Service Hour	Marginal Op. Cost per Passenger-Trip
New Paso Robles Route C	7,000	3,100	38,800	$303,000	2.3	$43.29
Paso Robles High School and Daniel Lewis Middle School Tripper	2,300	200	2,600	$19,700	11.5	$8.57
Expand Weekend Service						
Add Saturday Route A Service, 8:00 AM - 8:00 PM	5,700	500	6,700	$49,800	11.4	$8.74
Add Sunday Route B Service, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM	4,400	400	5,300	$39,700	11.0	$9.02
Extend Route B until 9:00 PM on Weekdays	2,300	500	6,600	$49,600	4.6	$21.57
Convert Paso Robles DAR to Microtransit	200	-	1,100	$6,800	-	$34.00
Convert Shandon/Templeton DAR to Microtransit	1	-	-	$4,500	-	$4,500.00
Alternatives meeting performance standards shaded in green. Note that alternatives meet standards by increasing ridership at a greater rate than costs, eliminating a service not meeting standards, or increasing ridership while decreasing costs.				Recommended Performance Standards	14.9	$11.32

Note 1: Does not include fixed costs

Note 2: Alternatives meet standards by eliminating a service not meeting standards, increasing ridership a greater rate than costs, or increasing ridership while decreasing costs.

Table 39: RTA South County Services - Service Alternatives Performance Analysis

	Net Impact					
	Annual Ridership	Service hours	Service Miles	Annual Marginal Operating Cost [1]	Passenger-Trips per Vehicle Service Hour	Marginal Op. Cost per Passenger-Trip
Realign Routes to Serve Grover Beach Train Station as Primary Transfer Point	-1,600	-	12,000	$25,100	-	-$15.69
Realign Routes to Serve Walmart as Primary Transfer Point	-500	-	-400	-$800	-	$1.60
Arroyo Grande High School Tripper Service	1,100	300	2,200	$26,100	3.7	$23.73
Operate Route 27 on Saturdays	4,200	500	5,100	$46,400	8.4	$11.05
Extend Routes 21 and 28 until 9:00 PM on Weekdays						
Route 21	700	400	5,900	$41,000	1.8	$58.57
Route 28	900	300	2,800	$27,300	3.0	$30.33
Evening "Five Cities" Microtransit Service						
Mon - Fri, 6:00 PM - 10:00 PM	-3,200	1,300	16,250	$145,000	-2.5	-$45.31
Mon - Fri, 7:00 PM - 10:00 PM	1,500	1,300	16,250	$145,000	1.2	$96.67
Convert Nipomo DAR to Microtransit	600	-	1,700	$13,500	-	$22.50
Alternatives meeting performance standards shaded in green. Note that alternatives meet standards by increasing ridership at a greater rate than costs, eliminating a service not meeting standards, or increasing ridership while decreasing costs.				Recommended Performance Standards	14.9	$11.66

Note 1: Does not include fixed costs

Figure 27: RTA Service Alternatives - Impact on Annual Ridership

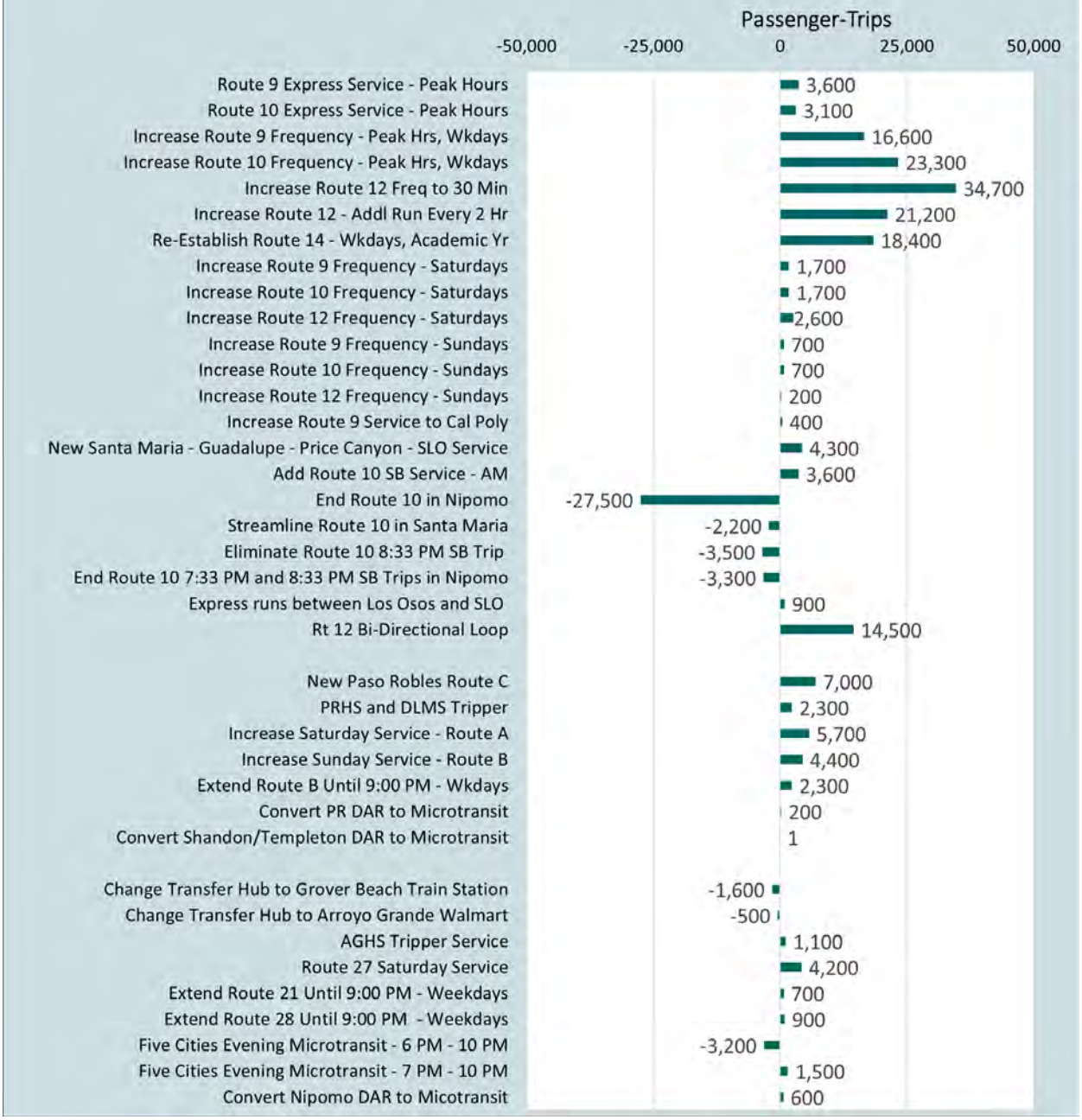


Figure 28: RTA Service Alternatives - Impact on Annual Marginal Operating Cost

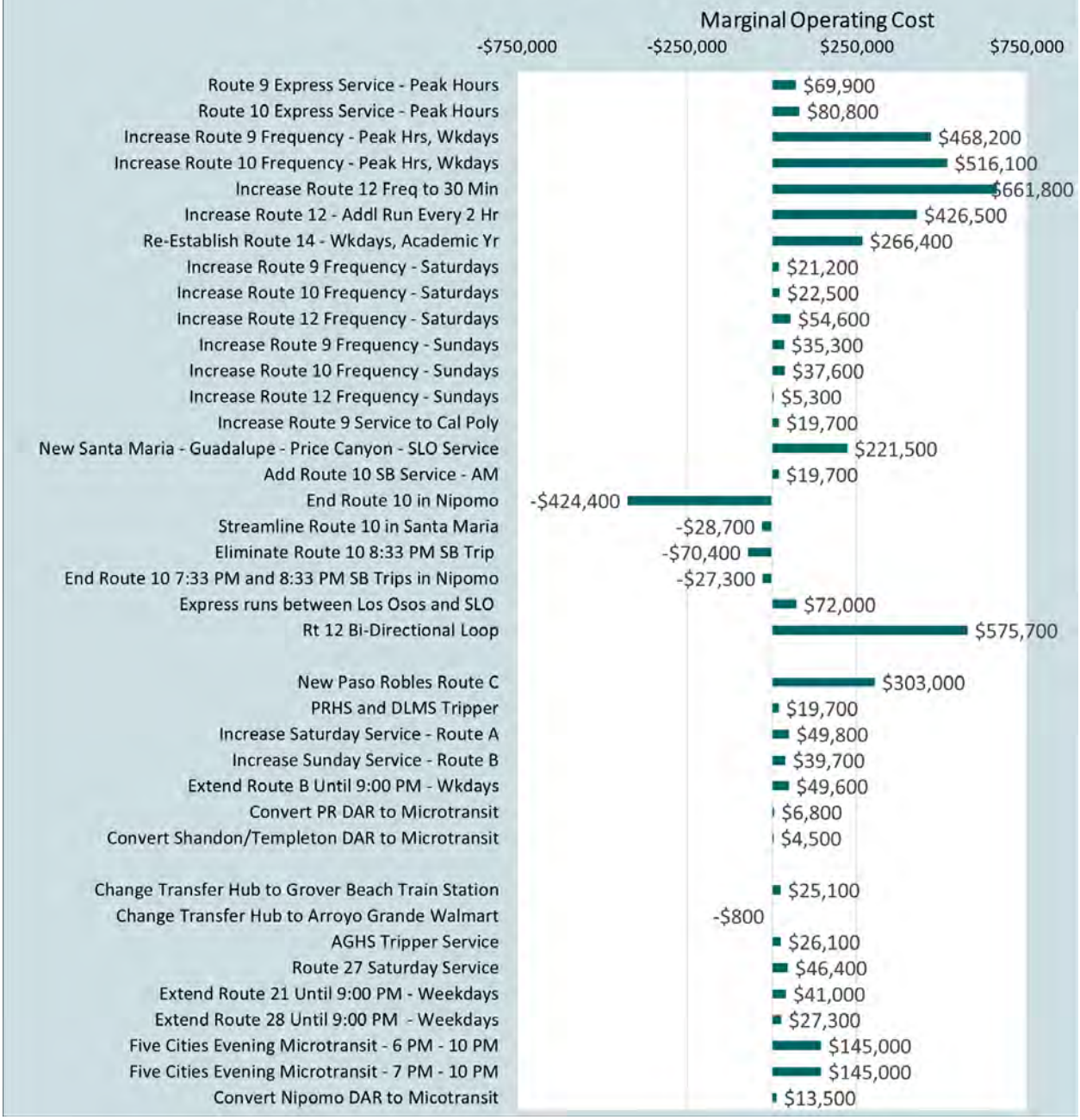


Figure 29: RTA Service Alternatives - Passenger-Trips per Vehicle Service Hour

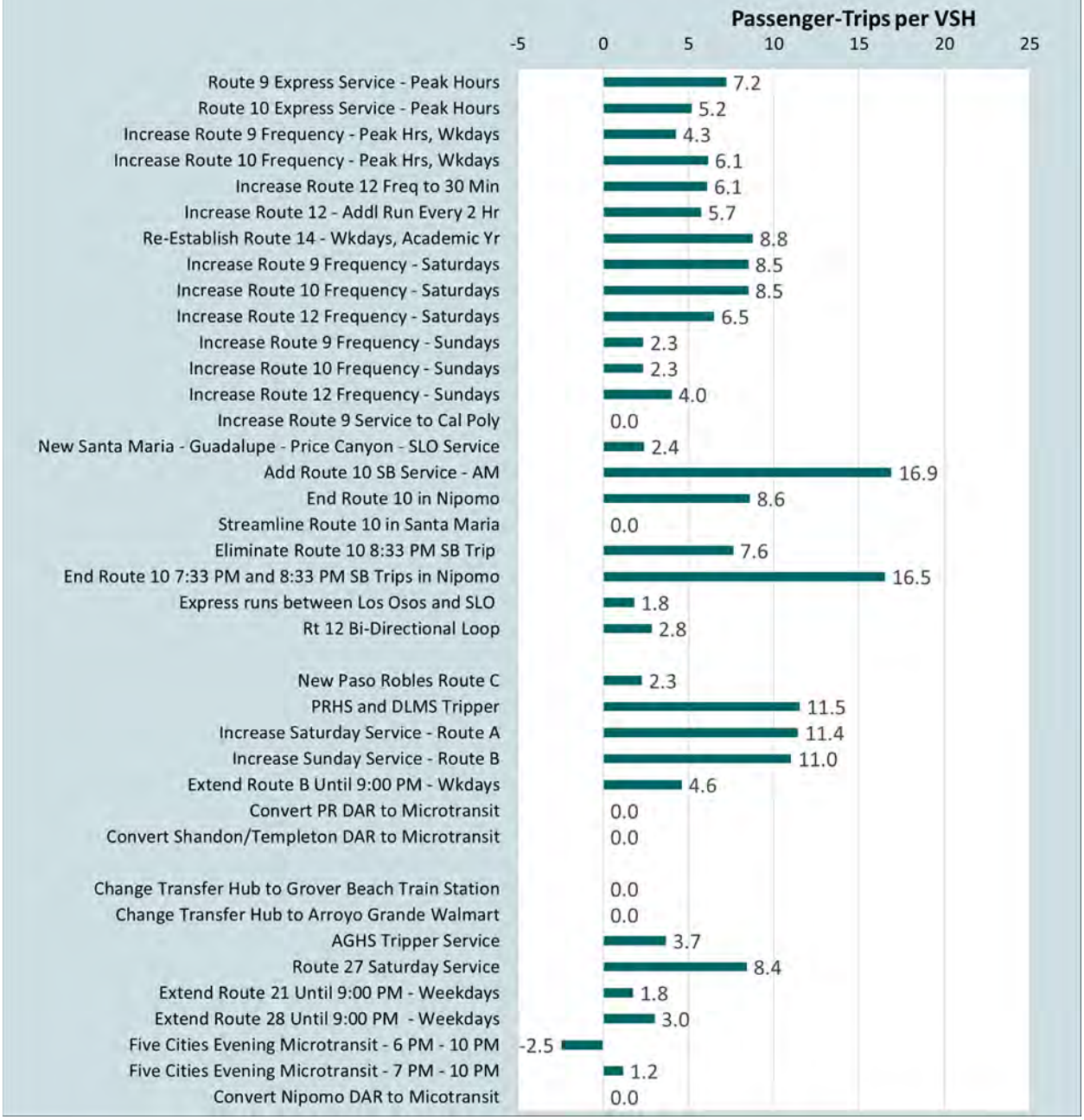
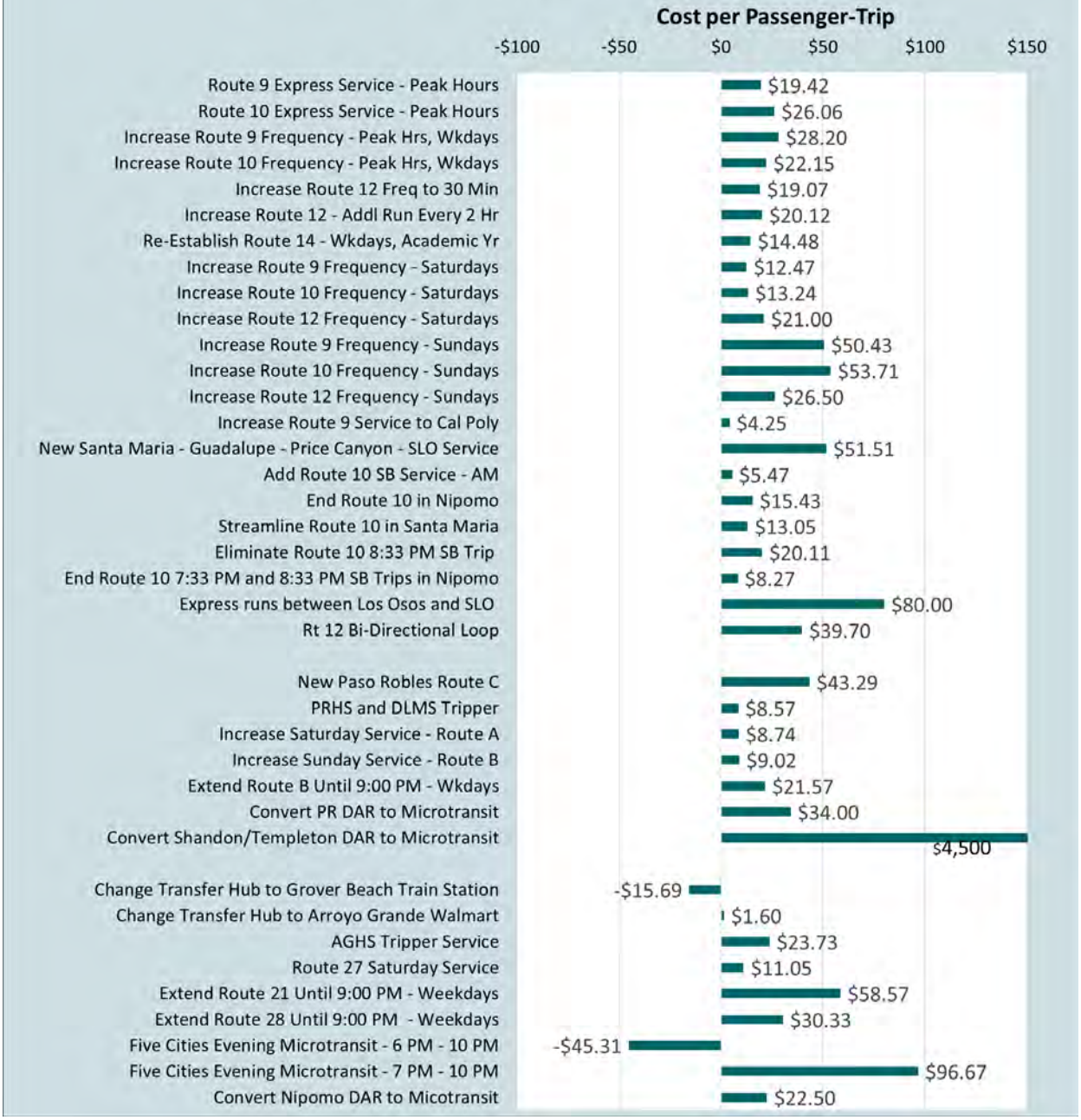


Figure 30: RTA Service Alternatives - Marginal Operating Cost per Passenger-Trip



Comparison of Regional Service Alternatives

Table 34 and Figures 27 through 30 show the relative performance of the regional service alternatives. The ridership impacts range from an increase of 34,700 passenger-trips (increasing Route 12 weekday service frequency) to a loss of 27,500 passenger-trips (ending Route 10 service in Nipomo). Other alternatives which would result in relatively large ridership increases include increasing Route 10 peak-period frequency on weekdays (23,300), operating additional Route 12 runs every other hour (21,200), re-establishing Route 14 (18,400), and increasing Route 9's peak-period frequency on weekdays (16,600).

The cost impacts also would range significantly, with the option to end Route 10 service in Nipomo providing the greatest annual cost savings (-$424,400) and the options to increase weekday service frequency on Routes 9, 10, and 12 requiring the greatest cost increases (upwards of $468,000). Converting Route 12 to a bi-directional loop would also be relatively expensive ($616,100)

The marginal number of passenger-trips provided per hour of service is a good indicator of the relative productivity of the different alternatives. Based on this metric, adding an earlier Route 10 southbound run is the most productive (16.9)[7] followed by re-establishing Route 14 service (8.8). Implementing a two-hour headway on Routes 9 and 10 on Saturdays would also be productive. Ending Route 10 service in Nipomo and eliminating the 8:33 PM Route 10 southbound trip would meet standards by eliminating unproductive service hours. Adding mid-day Route 9 service to Cal Poly and streamlining Route 10 in Nipomo would not impact service hours, therefore this metric does not apply.

Alternatives that would meet performance standards by increasing ridership at a relatively low cost include increasing Saturday service frequency on Routes 9 and 10 and adding mid-day Route 9 service to Cal Poly. The options that would be most expensive per passenger-trip added would be implementing the new, regional Route 16 ($105.48) and express runs between Los Osos and SLO ($90).

Comparison of Paso Robles Service Alternatives

The service alternatives considered for the local Paso Robles services are compared in Table 38 and Figures 27 through 30. As shown, converting the Paso Robles and Shandon/Templeton DARs into microtransit services would have the smallest impact on ridership (1 to 200 additional passenger-trips), while implementing a new Route C service would have the greatest impact (+7,000 passenger-trips). Similarly, adding microtransit technology to the two DARs would have the least impact on costs (an increase of $4,500 to $6,800 annually), while operating Route C would have the greatest cost impact (+$303,000).

Expanding local weekend service would be the most productive service enhancement: Route A would serve 11.4 passenger-trips per hour on Saturdays, and Route B would serve 11.0 passenger-trips per hour on Sundays. While these new weekend services would not technically meet standards, they would still be rather productive for weekend services. Adding new weekend service options would also be cost-efficient service enhancements, as the cost would be less than $11.32 per passenger-trip added. A School Tripper would also be cost-effective ($8.57). While none of the other alternatives would likely meet productivity or cost standards during the first year of operations, it is important to consider other benefits that are provided, such as transit access.

[7] This result is in part due to the fact that RTA currently operates a deadhead southbound run.

Comparison of South County Service Alternatives

The performance of the South County service alternatives is presented in Table 39 and Figures 27 to 30. The best options in regard to ridership would be to operate Route 27 on Saturdays (+4,200 passenger-trips per year), operating an evening microtransit service from 7:00 PM to 10:00 PM (+1,500 passenger-trips), and reinstating the AGHS tripper service (+1,100 passenger-trips). Moving the South County transfer hub from Ramona Garden Park to either Grover Beach Train Station or Walmart and operating microtransit from 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM would negatively impact ridership. Operating an evening microtransit service would add the most costs per year ($145,000) while moving the primary South County transfer hub would result in slight cost savings. All the other alternatives would have more moderate impact on costs.

As route realignments would not impact vehicle service hours, there is no way to assess ridership changes per hour of service impacted. Of the alternatives that would increase service levels, running Route 27 on Saturdays would be the most productive alternative (8.4 passenger-trips per hour). Operating microtransit from 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM would be the least productive alternative, as the net impact would be a reduction in ridership despite increasing service levels.

The significance of the marginal cost per passenger-trip varies depending on the alternatives. Realigning the routes to serve Grover Beach Train Station as the primary transfer point and operating an evening microtransit service from 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM would increase costs but cause a loss in ridership. Realigning the routes to serve Walmart would result in slight savings of $1.60 per passenger-trip lost. All the other alternatives would increase both costs and ridership, therefore the values shown represent additional costs required per new passenger-trip. Of these options, the most cost-effective would be operating Route 27 on Saturdays ($11.05 per passenger-trip) and converting the Nipomo DAR into a microtransit service ($22.50). Although none of the alternatives are projected to meet either productivity or cost performance standards in the first year of operations, there are other benefits, such as expanded hours, more direct service options, and improved onboard safety that should still be considered when evaluating the different alternatives.

Comparison with Performance Standards / Conclusions

The results of the performance analysis can be compared with the standards identified in Working Paper 2 as a guideline to define those service alternatives that meet or exceed standards. Those results shaded in Table 34 indicate service alternatives that meet the standard of at least 13.6 passenger-trips per vehicle-hour of service or a maximum of $11.66 in operating subsidy per passenger-trip. A review of these results as well as other considerations as discussed above yields the following list of alternatives that clearly merit consideration in the plan development:

- Provide a mid-day stop at Cal Poly on Route 9.
- Convert one of the existing Route 10 southbound deadhead runs into a 6:03 AM southbound Route 10 scheduled run.
- Increase Route 9 Saturday service frequency.
- Increase Route 10 Saturday service frequency.
- Provide Paso Robles Route A service on Saturdays.
- Provide Paso Robles Route B service on Sundays.

- Provide tripper service to Paso Robles High School and Daniel Lewis Middle School.
- Provide Route 27 service on Saturdays.

In addition, there are some other service alternatives that could be considered in the plan pending further discussion and evaluation of overall funding availability:

- Re-establish Route 14 service.
- Streamline Route 10 service in Santa Maria, all but 2 weekday runs.
- Eliminate Route 10, 8:33 PM southbound run.

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Chapter 8
RTA CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

FLEET REPLACEMENT PLAN

Transit vehicles must be regularly replaced to maintain a safe and reliable fleet. RTA's Strategic Business Plan states that "We will operate and maintain a modern and clean fleet and facilities that will be pleasing to our customers and a source of pride for our employees and our communities". The standard set by the business plan is to match the SLO Transit standard of replacing revenue vehicles when they reach their useful life. However, if funding is constrained, the minimum allowable standard is to not exceed 40% of revenue vehicle fleet beyond the FTA defined useful life. RTA's 2024 Transit Asset Management Plan sets a target to allow no more than 18.18% of heavy-duty buses, 25% of cutaway buses, and 20% of ADA Minivans to exceed the FTA defined useful life standard in terms of years or miles. RTA exceeded those targets for heavy duty buses and cutaway buses. The target was not met for minivans; however, replacement of the ADA minivans is currently in progress and is addressed in this working paper.

As the vehicle procurement process can take multiple years, transit agencies must identify their vehicle needs well in advance. Additionally, the State of California's (CA) Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) regulation will begin impacting transit vehicle procurement in 2026, at which point 25 percent of small transit agency fleet bus purchases will be required to be Zero Emission Buses (ZEBs). By 2029, this purchasing requirement will increase to 100 percent. By 2040, all vehicles in the fleet will need to be ZEBs. To meet these standards, transit agencies can purchase either battery-electric buses (BEBs) or fuel-cell electric buses (FCEBs) or seek waivers from the California Air Resources Board if current ZEB technologies cannot meet the transit agency's needs.

Currently, ZEBs are considerably more expensive than gasoline or diesel vehicles, meaning RTA will need to secure additional funding to meet local match requirements for capital grants. While ZEBs are more expensive at this point, the market is constantly changing as new models are released and older models are improved, making it hard to predict future pricing. The seven-year RTA vehicle replacement schedule presented in this report is subject to change as new ZEB technologies become available, and costs stabilize.

RTA has 69 vehicles that are 2 to 16 years old. RTA has 40 fixed route buses, 27 demand response buses, and two replica trolleys that are used seasonally. Table 40 presents RTA's anticipated vehicle needs and purchasing schedule based on the agency's current fleet, RTA Zero Emission Bus Rollout Plan (2023), and the Useful Life Benchmark (ULB) of the different vehicle models, as identified by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Table 40 does not include any expansion vehicle purchases required to support the recommended service plan presented in this SRTP. RTA has chosen BEB as their zero-emission bus technology.

RTA took delivery of three Gillig buses in May of 2024 –Two BEB and one Diesel. In addition, RTA took delivery of one cutaway and three ADA minivans in Fall of 2024.

Based on the schedule shown in Table 40, RTA will need to procure 34 fixed-route buses and 40 demand response vehicles during the next seven years through Fiscal Year 2031/32. It should be noted that the

capital projects shown in the Plan tables depict the year that the purchase order should be placed after securing the various funding sources necessary to implement the projects. This is important since a heavy-duty fixed-route bus takes 18-24 months from the time the purchase order is issued until the bus is delivered and capital infrastructure projects can take up to three years once funding is secured. This replacement of 74 vehicles includes 15 cutaways and vans purchased in the last two years of the plan to replace 15 vehicles purchased in the first three years of the plan. The replacement plan requires that 12 minivans in the existing fleet be replaced. These vans are under 14,000 GVWR and are therefore not subject to the current CARB ICT regulations. Within the first two years of the replacement plan, nine of the minivans need to be replaced. It is recommended The RTA could consider replacing some of the minivans with Ford Transit vans rather than the Chrysler Minivans that are currently in the fleet. The two models of Ford Transit Class V 350 vans in the CalACT in the purchasing cooperative contract have a wheelbase of 148 inches with an overall length of 235.5 to 263.9 inches. The interior height is 68 to 77 inches. The Chrysler Minivan has a wheelbase of 121.6 inches, an overall length of 204 inches, and an interior height of 60 inches. Based on September 2024 pricing provided to the CalACT bus purchasing cooperative, the Chrysler minivan has increased in cost by 14% in two years making it comparable to the larger and higher gross vehicle weight rated (GVWR) Ford Class V 350 vans. The base price of the Ford Class V 350 vans ranges from roughly $74,000 to $82,000 depending on the model. The base price of the Crysler minivan is $75,000.

Given current market costs and anticipated inflation, it is expected that vehicle replacement needs will cost RTA a total of $37.7 million over seven years. The schedule shown in Table 40 reflects RTA's intention to phase BEBs into the fleet. Of the 34 fixed route buses, 14 will be BEB by the end of the Plan period. As shown, 24 of the 40 demand response buses will be BEB. This will allow RTA to operate a mixed fleet as long as possible while battery charging infrastructure develops and the battery technology improves.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Table 41 presents a seven-year capital improvement plan for all items outside of revenue fleet replacement. This includes the replacement of support vehicles, maintenance equipment, technology, bus stop improvements, and BEB charging infrastructure.

This seven-year capital improvement program totals nearly $17 million and will be funded primarily through the California Senate Bill 125 (SB 125) program and Federal Transit Administration grants. The major components are discussed below.

Transit Facilities

The new RTA Bus Maintenance Facility (BMF) is located at 253 Elks Lane in San Luis Obispo, and is the central location for RTA's administrative, operations, dispatch, and maintenance functions. The facility's on-site parking accommodates approximately seventy public transit vehicles and eighty employee and visitor vehicles. No liquid or gaseous fuel is delivered by pipe to the facility; diesel fuel is "wet hosed" delivered by a fuel truck each night to each bus, while gasoline-powered vans are fueled at card lock facilities by the Bus Operator each day. The Bus Maintenance Facility has four fast-charge direct-current (DC) bus charging stations. As noted above, the RTA intends to install additional bus charging stations as the agency procures more BEBs. Another significant improvement to the BMF is the addition of

photovoltaic solar panels and energy storage to help power the facility. This addition is planned for funding in fiscal year 2024-25 and completion in fiscal year 2026/27

The RTA leases two park-out facilities, one located at 1734 Paso Robles Street in Paso Robles and the other located at 800 Rodeo Drive in Arroyo Grande. These two facilities support the north county and south county transit services, respectively. Both facilities have bus parking areas and facilities for bus operator breaks. The RTA is actively developing proposals for assistance with preparing designs for fast-charge DC charging stations at the Paso Robles and Arroyo Grande facilities. The RTA has secured TIRCP funding through the SB 125 funding process to develop BEB charging at these locations.

Charging Infrastructure

The RTA Bus Maintenance Facility has four fast-charge direct-current (DC) charging dispensers. RTA received its first two BEBs in May of 2024–two fixed-route GILLIG buses with 686 kWh battery packs–and has five more due for delivery in October 2025. The RTA BEB fleet will expand significantly with seven 40' BEBs scheduled to be ordered in FY 25/26. With an 18-to-24-month lead time for delivery, these buses will begin operating in daily service in 2027.

RTA has several bus charging projects that will move forward, primarily with discretionary funding from the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCIP) and the Zero Emission Transit Capital Program (ZETCP) program funded through SB 125 and FTA funds. These projects include two additional phases of charging station improvements at the Bus Maintenance Facility along with the bus yards in Paso Robles and Arroyo Grande. Opportunity charging facilities for on-route charging are also being considered in San Luis Obispo, Paso Robles, Morro Bay and Santa Maria, since currently available ZEBs do not have the range necessary for the RTA's intercity fixed-routes.

Table 40: RTA Vehicle Replacement Schedule - By Year of Purchase Order

Estimated Current Cost of Vehicles	
Low-Floor Cutaways	$258,800
Diesel - 40' Buses	$670,400
Gasoline Trolleys	$266,500
Gasoline Cutaways	$161,300
Battery Electric - Cutaways	$345,000
Battery Electric - 40' Buses	$1,499,700

	Plan Period (by Fiscal Year) [2]								7-Year Plan Total
	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	30/31	31/32	
Fixed Route Buses									
Number of Buses (Low-Floor Cutaway)				1					1
Number of Buses (40' Diesel)			3	3	3				9
Number of Buses (Trolley Replica)		1		1					2
Number of Buses (20-px Cutaway)				1					1
Number of Vans (BEB Cutaways)									0
Number of Buses (40' BEB)	4	3	2	1	1	2	0	2	15
Total Number of Vehicles	**4**	**4**	**5**	**7**	**4**	**2**	**0**	**2**	28
Total Cost [1]	*$5,998,800*	*$4,908,600*	*$5,315,700*	*$4,586,700*	*$3,951,500*	*$3,477,100*	*$0*	*$3,688,900*	$31,927,300

Estimated Current Cost of Vehicles	
Gasoline - Cutaways	$150,000
Gasoline Small Vans	$87,500
Battery Electric - Cutaways [3]	$345,000
Battery Electric - Small Vans	$125,000

Demand Response/Cutaway Vehicles									
Number of Vans (Gas Cutaways)	5	3		0					8
Number of Vans (Gas Small)		7	2		3				12
Number of Vans (EV Cutaways)		1		0	1		1	5	8
Number of Vans (EV Small)						3	7	2	12
Total Number of Vehicles	5	11	2	0	4	3	8	7	40
Total Cost [1]	*$750,000*	*$1,449,700*	*$185,700*	*$0*	*$683,700*	*$434,700*	*$1,456,700*	*$2,429,000*	$7,389,500
Total Vehicle Needs	$6,748,800	$6,358,300	$5,501,400	$4,586,700	$4,635,200	$3,911,800	$1,456,700	$6,117,900	$39,316,800

Note 1: All costs assume 3.0 percent annual inflation.

Note 2: Starting in 2026, 25% of new vehicle purchases must be ZEBs.

Note 3: No Altoona tested electric cutaways are available as of the time of writing (October 2024).

Note 4: Presented schedule is based on the RTA Zero Emission Bus Rollout Plan (2023) and the Federal Transit Administration's Useful Life Benchmark. Future vehicle purchases are subject to change. Additional vehicle purchases necessary to implement service elements included in this SRTP are not included in this table. Does not include existing bus orders.

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

Table 41: RTA Transit Capital Projects -By Year of Contract Award or Purchase Order

Category	Project	Plan Period (by Fiscal Year) 24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	30/31	31/32	7-Year Plan Total
Non-Revenue Vehicles	Support Vehicles	175,600	$176,600	$76,900	$37,800	$80,750	$58,390	$59,270	$60,160	$549,870
Technology	Computer System Maintenance/Upgrades	393,260	$111,570	$117,150	$123,010	$129,160	$131,100	$133,070	$135,070	$880,130
Capital Maintenance	Maintenance Equipment	48,800	$49,600	$50,400	$51,200	$51,970	$52,750	$53,540	$54,340	$363,800
Technology	Vehicle ITS/Camera System		$430,000					$150,890		$580,890
Passenger Amenities	Bus Stop Improvements	106,400	$108,000	$109,700	$111,400	$113,070	$114,800	$116,500	$118,200	$791,670
Capital Maintenance	Engine Replacements on Gillig Fixed Route Buses	375,000	$375,000							$375,000
Technology	BMF TIFIA Loan Repayment	472,140	$458,060	$458,060	$458,060	$458,060	$458,060	$458,060	$458,060	$3,206,420
Facility Improvement	Photovoltaic Solar Panels & Energy Storage System at BMF	1,359,700								$-
ZEB Charging	Implement BMF Phase II of BEB Direct-Current fast-charging system	500,000								$-
ZEB Charging	BEB Charging at Paso and Arroyo Grande Yards		$2,000,000							$2,000,000
ZEB Charging	Final engineering/design for BEB Phase 3 & Master Plan for off-site BEB fast-charging systems	200,000								$-
ZEB Charging	Opportunity Charging - Santa Maria		$550,000							$550,000
ZEB Charging	Opportunity Charging - San Luis Obispo		$566,000							$566,000
ZEB Charging	Opportunity Charging - Paso Robles		$600,000							$600,000
ZEB Charging	BEB Charging Phase 3 at BMF			$4,000,000						$4,000,000
ZEB Charging	Opportunity Charging - Morro Bay		$550,000							$550,000
	TOTAL	$ 3,630,900	$ 5,974,830	$ 4,812,210	$ 781,470	$ 833,010	$ 815,100	$ 971,330	$ 825,830	$15,013,780

Source: SLOCOG 2025 FTIP; RTA FY 24 25 Capital Budget; TIRCP Project List, 2023

Park-and-Ride Lots

While the RTA serves multiple park-and-rides throughout San Luis Obispo County, the RTA does not directly own any park-and-ride facilities nor are any planned for the seven-year planning period.

Passenger Amenities

Passenger amenities refer to infrastructure that improves the passenger experience while waiting for or getting to and from bus services. RTA's passenger amenities are briefly summarized below.

Bus Stops

The RTA Capital Improvement Program includes an annual budget for bus stop improvements. In Table 42, bus stop improvements total $791,000 over the seven-year planning period. Bus stop improvements are made with the goal of improving the overall transit experience for passengers by increasing the comfort, safety, and accessibility of the system.

The RTA serves 325 bus stops throughout the county, 87 of which have shelters and 190 of which have benches. Approximately 25 percent of RTA bus stops need ADA access improvements that are under the control of the city or county (i.e., extended sidewalk or larger ADA landing pad), or would benefit from other passenger amenity upgrades. Some RTA stops are shared with SLO Transit, Morro Bay Transit, Santa Maria Area Transit, and Monterey-Salinas Transit.

During the On-Board Survey effort which took place October 23rd through October 27th, 2023, surveyors riding buses recorded boarding and alighting activity on RTA fixed routes. Despite this survey taking place over multiple days its goal was to capture service equivalent to a full weekday service across all routes in service at the time surveying took place. This data provides a useful approximation of daily boarding activity at individual stops, which can be used to plan for bus stop amenities improvements.

Boardings at individual stops that were shared between multiple routes were added together to estimate daily boardings across routes for individual stops. Stops with over 10 estimated daily boardings were then cross-referenced with the RTA bus stop master list finalized in April of 2023 to identify stops with 10 or more boardings and no bench, or 25 or more boardings and no shelter. Identified stops were then explored in Google Maps Street View to verify the lack of those amenities. In some instances, stops were removed from the list of identified stops due to the addition of the completion of the bus stop master list. The RTA has developed a new Bus Stop Improvement Plan which is currently in draft form and is expected for consideration of approval at the November 2024 RTA Board meeting.

There were 5 stops served by RTA routes that had 10 or more combined boardings and no bench. There were 3stops served by RTA routes that had 25 or more combined boardings and no shelter. Space for improved bus stop amenities is lacking at some of these stops. A full listing of stops that meet the recommended threshold for benches and shelters is provided in Table 42 below.

The current bus shelter pricing in the CalACT pricing cooperative (RFP #20-01) ranges from $8,286 for a 9-foot shelter to $12,356 for a 21-foot shelter. This is base pricing and does not include options such as trash receptacles and map cases. Installation costs will vary depending on site characteristics. The shelter contract also includes solar-powered real-time information displays for $8,183 which includes a 5-year data plan.

Table 42: RTA Transit Stop Amenity Concerns

Route and Stop	Stop ID	Routes Served	Shelter	Bench	Combined Boardings Across Routes	Space for Improved ammenities
Stops With 25 or More Daily Boardings and No Shelter						
Santa Rosa and Foothill (NB	3542	9N, 12N, 14N	No	No	29	No
Nipomo High School	3705	10N	No	Yes	29	Yes
Fair Oaks @ Traffic Way	3816	27	No	No	29	No
Stops with 10-24 Daily Boardings and No Bench						
Wilmar @ 19th	3824	28	No	No	20	Yes
Airport at Parkview	3662	B	No	No	14	Yes
Elm @ Fair Oaks	3827	28	No	No	14	No
Cienega/Hwy1 @ 21st	3887	28	No	No	13	Yes
Dolliver @ Hinds	3875	24	No	No	10	Yes

Source: LSC Boarding and Alighting Counts, RTA Transit Stop Amenities Database, Google Maps

Deterring Loitering at Bus Stops

Passenger amenities at bus stops are important to enhance a person's experience while waiting for the bus. In addition to being safe, convenient, comfortable, and accessible for pedestrians waiting for the bus, bus stop amenities need to be designed with features to discourage long-term occupancy and sleeping. Features meant to deter this activity include vertical bars to segment benches into smaller seating areas, sloped benches, partial enclosure of the shelter, and perforated panels rather than solid panels. Passenger shelter lighting that is illuminated during all hours of darkness can also act as a deterrent and security measure. These types of preventive measures have been incorporated by the RTA at recent passenger facility improvement projects, most notably at the Government Center (2020) and Ramona Garden (2024) passenger facilities, as well as the installation of 42 push on-demand solar lights at locations deemed high priority in the last Bus Stop Improvement Plan.

Bicycle Amenities

The RTA serves 21 stops with bike racks and two stops with bicycle lockers (the Templeton and Halcyon Park-and-Rides).

Government Center Passenger Facility

The 2016 SRTP noted that a significant constraint to the regional San Luis Obispo public transit network is the existing transit hub in downtown San Luis Obispo. The primary passenger transfer hub in San Luis Obispo is centered on the intersection of Osos Street and Palm Street. RTA buses stop on the east side of Osos Street south of Palm Street on approximately 200 feet of straight curb. This is identified as the Government Center by RTA. Up to three RTA buses board and alight passengers there. There is room for a fourth RTA bus around the corner on the south side of Palm Street. In 2020, RTA completed significant improvements to their portion of the Government Center facility adding a passenger waiting area, two additional shelters, lighting, a ticket vending machine, display boards, real-time bus arrival digital displays and a bicycle repair station.

The SLO Transit buses stop in five sawtooth bays on the west side of Osos Street north of Palm Street. Each bay is assigned to a specific route. There are four shelter structures with built-in benches and additional bench seating alongside the shelters. Two digital display signs are installed in the passenger waiting area along with signage and route and schedule information. This is identified as the Transit Center by SLO Transit.

The following deficiencies remain:

- There is inadequate space for all RTA buses to independently ingress and egress, which results in non-assigned bus bays and requires passengers to search out their bus along the steep incline of Osos Street.
- The five bays available for SLO Transit limit the ability to schedule a true pulse schedule to maximize direct bus-to-bus transfers.
- While there are public restrooms available at nearby buildings (City Hall, Library, and County Public Works), these are only available during operating hours.
- Transferring between the SLO Transit and RTA systems requires walking across two streets of the same intersection.

Long Term Plan for Relocated Transit Center

The SLO Transit Innovation Study includes the concept of Mobility Hubs, which brings together public transit, bikeshare, carshare, scooter share, and other first-last mile solutions without the use of a private vehicle. The study notes that a location of interest for a future Mobility Hub is the Downtown Transit Center.

The 2016 SRTP noted that SLOCOG was leading an effort to construct a new enhanced transit center on Higuera Street between Santa Rosa Street and Toro Street. In 2012 the Coordinated Downtown San Luis Obispo Transit Center Study recommended a facility consisting of up to 16 bus bays, indoor/outdoor passenger waiting areas, driver break areas, restrooms and a transit information counter. The larger transit center would allow for more buses to be able to pulse in and out of the transit center, which would enable enhanced route timing coordination. In 2017 the SLO City Council adopted the Downtown Concept Plan which also envisions a relocated transit center on Higuera Street between Santa Rosa Street and Toro Street. In November of 2023 the SLO City Council approved the purchase of a property in this block on the northwest corner of Higuera Street and Toro Street (1166 Higuera Street). This is the same property identified in the 2012 Coordinated Downtown San Luis Obispo Transit Center Study as the preferred alternative to advance into environmental review (Alternative 6). Initially this site is envisioned for parking. A transit center would require using the northern part of Higuera Street which is currently striped for parking and a bike lane and was previously one of three one-way travel lanes and parking.

Project development for a relocated transit center would need to involve close coordination between the City of SLO and RTA along with SLOCOG. This would include the development of joint funding applications, environmental clearance, design, project phasing and construction. A key feature not fully envisioned in the 2012 study is the addition of bus charging at bus bays. This will be important to support the transition to a BEB fleet by both SLO Transit and RTA.

OTHER PLANNED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Technology

RTA contracts with the transit technology firm Connexionz to supply Computer Aided Dispatch/Automatic Vehicle Location (CAD/AVL) which integrates real-time bus arrival information, stop annunciation, Automatic Passenger Counting data, destination sign route assignment, Wi-Fi, and vehicle diagnostics on every RTA fixed-route bus. This system connects through the Genfare operator control unit on the bus.

The contract with Connexionz expires in May 2026. RTA will need to either extend the current contract or enter into a new contract with the current provider or a new one through a procurement process. In addition, the demand response CAD/AVL, which is separate from the system used for fixed-routes, is provided through a contract with RouteMatch that expires in 2025. RTA intends to conduct a procurement for demand response CAD/AVL services in early 2025.

As part of the technology updates for RTA, real-time arrival digital display signs should be considered for high boarding locations. Signs can be solar-powered or hardwired. Data is transmitted and displayed via a cellular connection.

Non-Revenue Vehicles

RTA owns 20 non-revenue vehicles used to support bus operations, administration, and maintenance. While the replacement of revenue vehicles is a priority for RTA, an annual budget for non-revenue vehicle replacement is in place and included in Table 41. RTA replaced seven support vehicles with fully electric Chevrolet Bolt EUV sedans in 2024 and is on target to replace two maintenance trucks and one support vehicle in 2025. The support vehicle and one maintenance pick-up truck will be replaced with an electric vehicle.

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EXISTING OPERATING COSTS (FY 2025-26)

Table 43 presents FY 2025-26 RTA cost formula factors used to calculate marginal operating costs by type of service. Costs and service levels are based on RTA FY 2024-25 budget projections for FY 2025-26. At a systemwide level, the marginal operating costs for any changes to RTA services are approximately $72.16 per vehicle service hour and $2.10 per vehicle service mile; no impacts to fixed costs are presented in Table 43.

Table 43: RTA Marginal Operating Cost Formula Factors
FY 2025-26

	Regional Routes	Paso Robles Services	South County Routes	County-Funded Services [1]	Runabout	**Total**
Hourly Costs [2]	$2,487,890	$512,880	$1,040,790	$334,200	$1,817,630	**$6,193,390**
Mileage Costs [3]	$2,462,880	$187,790	$469,320	$89,000	$845,200	**$4,054,190**
Vehicle Service Hours [4]	34,780	7,170	14,550	3,924	25,410	**85,834**
Vehicle Service Miles [4]	1,176,710	89,720	224,230	33,961	403,820	**1,928,441**
Marginal Cost per Vehicle Service Hour	$71.53	$71.53	$71.53	$85.17	$71.53	**$72.16**
Marginal Cost per Vehicle Service Mile	$2.09	$2.09	$2.09	$2.62	$2.09	**$2.10**

Source: RTA FY 2024-25 Budget Assumptions
Note 1: Includes the Avila/Pismo Trolley, Nipomo DAR, Cambria Trolley, and Shandon/Templeton DARs.
Note 2: Includes operations labor costs and cost of workers compensation.
Note 3: Includes fuel, insurance, maintenance parts and supplies, and maintenance contract costs.
Note 4: Based on projected FY 2025-26 operations totals per RTA FY 2024-25 Budget Assumptions. County Services vehicle service hours and miles based on FY 2022-23 operations.

Table 41 projects the total operating costs for RTA services over the seven-year planning period, assuming existing service levels. FY 2025-26 figures are based on the expenses from the RTA budget as noted above. Fixed costs are included to show a total projected operating cost of $18.2 million for FY 2025-26. An inflation escalator of 3 percent is applied to FY 2025-26 operating costs to project operations budget requirements for RTA services in a "status quo" or baseline scenario.

OPERATING REVENUES

Table 44 presents RTA's projected operating revenue for the 7-year planning period. FY 2025-26 revenues were obtained from the RTA FY 2024-25 budget. Revenue projection assumptions applied in Table 45 are as follows:

- Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) projections were based on SLOCOG projections for these revenue sources (0 – 1 percent annual growth rate).
- Transportation Development Act (TDA) forecasts based on budgeted need for FY 2025-26 and status quo scenario. The amount of TDA Local Transportation Funds (LTF) claimed for operating purposes varies from year to year and is dependent on funding from other sources.

Table 44: RTA Base Case Operating Costs

	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29	FY 29-30	FY 30-31	FY 31-32
Base Case Marginal Operating Cost[1]							
Regional Routes							
Hourly Costs	$2,487,890	$2,562,500	$2,639,400	$2,718,600	$2,800,200	$2,970,700	$3,059,800
Mileage Costs	$2,462,880	$2,536,800	$2,612,900	$2,691,300	$2,772,000	$2,940,900	$3,029,100
Fixed Operations Costs	$2,292,830	$2,361,600	$2,432,400	$2,505,400	$2,580,600	$2,737,700	$2,819,800
Subtotal Regional Routes	*$7,243,600*	*$7,460,900*	*$7,684,700*	*$7,915,300*	*$8,152,800*	*$8,649,300*	*$8,908,700*
Paso Robles Services							
Hourly Costs	$512,880	$528,300	$544,100	$560,400	$577,200	$612,300	$630,700
Mileage Costs	$187,790	$193,400	$199,200	$205,200	$211,400	$224,200	$230,900
Fixed Operations Costs	$308,690	$318,000	$327,500	$337,300	$347,400	$368,500	$379,600
Subtotal Paso Robles	*$1,009,360*	*$1,039,700*	*$1,070,800*	*$1,102,900*	*$1,136,000*	*$1,205,000*	*$1,241,200*
South County Routes							
Hourly Costs	$1,040,790	$1,072,000	$1,104,200	$1,137,300	$1,171,400	$1,242,700	$1,280,000
Mileage Costs	$469,320	$483,400	$497,900	$512,800	$528,200	$560,300	$577,100
Fixed Operations Costs	$671,650	$691,800	$712,600	$734,000	$756,000	$802,100	$826,200
Subtotal South County	*$2,181,760*	*$2,247,200*	*$2,314,700*	*$2,384,100*	*$2,455,600*	*$2,605,100*	*$2,683,300*
County Funded Services[2]							
Hourly Costs	$334,200	$344,200	$354,500	$365,100	$376,100	$399,000	$411,000
Mileage Costs	$89,000	$91,700	$94,500	$97,300	$100,200	$106,300	$109,500
Fixed Operations Costs	$289,530	$298,200	$307,100	$316,300	$325,800	$345,700	$356,100
Subtotal County Services	*$712,730*	*$734,100*	*$756,100*	*$778,700*	*$802,100*	*$851,000*	*$876,600*
Runabout							
Hourly Costs	$1,817,630	$1,872,200	$1,928,400	$1,986,300	$2,045,900	$2,170,500	$2,235,600
Mileage Costs	$845,200	$870,600	$896,700	$923,600	$951,300	$1,009,200	$1,039,500
Fixed Operations Costs	$1,186,080	$1,221,700	$1,258,400	$1,296,200	$1,335,100	$1,416,500	$1,459,000
Subtotal Runabout Services	*$3,848,910*	*$3,964,500*	*$4,083,500*	*$4,206,100*	*$4,332,300*	*$4,596,200*	*$4,734,100*
RTA Administration Costs	**$2,527,380**	**$2,603,200**	**$2,681,300**	**$2,761,700**	**$2,844,600**	**$3,017,800**	**$3,108,300**
Contingency and Other Fixed Costs[3]	**$728,820**	**$750,700**	**$773,200**	**$796,400**	**$820,300**	**$870,200**	**$896,300**
Total Operating Costs	**$18,252,560**	**$18,800,300**	**$19,364,300**	**$19,945,200**	**$20,543,700**	**$21,794,600**	**$22,448,500**
Projected Annual Service Hours	85,834						
Projected Annual Service Miles	1,928,441						

Note 1: Base Case costs based upon FY 2025-26 Budget Assumes 3% annual inflation rate for the planning period. This is a decrease from the rate of inflation in prior years.

Note 2: Includes the Avila/Pismo Trolley, Nipomo DAR, Cambria Trolley, and Shandon/Templeton DARs.

Note 3:Includes contingency, PERS buyout and management contracts

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

- Roughly half of RTA's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5307 allocation allocated for operating purposes and half for capital purposes. The growth of total FTA 5307 revenues were based on SLOCOG Regional Transportation Plan Projections (less than one percent annually).
- Management contracts RTA holds with other jurisdictions to operate public transit in their region are assumed to increase at the projected rate of inflation (3 percent annually).
- The contribution Cuesta College makes to the RTA program in exchange for students riding fare free was also anticipated to remain the same over the planning period.
- Interest is increased at the rate of 2 percent annually.
- Special Events/Revenue Other and Rural Transit Fund administration are projected to remain flat over the planning period.

OPERATING REVENUE TO EXPENDITURE COMPARISON

The bottom of Table 45 compares projected revenue during the planning period with projected total operating costs from Table 44 (status quo scenario). As shown, RTA services as operated today are funded throughout the planning period.

Capital Revenues

Capital revenues for the planning period are presented in Table 46. As shown, the amount of capital revenue RTA receives varies by year and what projects are implemented. Recurring capital revenue sources are shown separately from competitive sources. A significant amount of funding ($17 million over a four-year period) has been allocated by SLOCOG through the SB 125 Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program TIRCP/ Zero Emission Transit Capital Program (ZETCP) for the transition of the diesel fleet to zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs).

CAPITAL REVENUE TO EXPENDITURE COMPARISON

Capital program costs (described in more detail in Chapter 8) are compared to projected capital revenues at the bottom of Table 46. As shown, RTA's capital plan is funded. However, as progression to ZEV continues, capital costs may expand. Additionally, large projects such as a Downtown Transit Center (with SLO Transit) will require a large amount of capital funding.

Table 45: RTA Base Case Operating Revenues

	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29	FY 29-30	FY 30-31	FY 31-32
TDA LTF Allocation [1]	$9,357,560	$10,269,990	$10,808,520	$11,325,120	$11,861,820	$12,435,120	$13,025,920
Passenger Fares[2]	$1,124,050	$1,129,700	$1,135,300	$1,141,000	$1,146,700	$1,152,400	$1,158,200
SoCo Management Contract[3]	$149,210	$153,700	$158,300	$163,000	$167,900	$172,900	$178,100
County Management Contract[3]	$128,610	$132,500	$136,500	$140,600	$144,800	$149,100	$153,600
North County Management Contract[3]	$62,400	$64,300	$66,200	$68,200	$70,200	$72,300	$74,500
Interest[4]	$60,000	$61,200	$62,400	$63,600	$64,900	$66,200	$67,500
State Transit Assistance (STA) Including SB 1[5]	$1,497,060	$1,497,100	$1,497,100	$1,497,100	$1,497,100	$1,497,100	$1,497,100
Rural Transit Fund (Administration)	$30,000	$30,000	$30,000	$30,000	$30,000	$30,000	$30,000
Rural Transit Fund (Operating Funds)[6]	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Federal Transit ADM (FTA) (Section 5311) - Operating [6]	$816,700	$837,200	$837,200	$844,700	$850,400	$853,000	$855,600
Federal Transit Administration (FTA) (Section 5307) - San Luis Obispo	$850,500	$867,600	$867,600	$867,600	$873,400	$875,900	$878,400
FTA (Section 5307-N. County) - Operating	$1,519,300	$1,549,700	$1,549,700	$1,563,500	$1,574,100	$1,578,800	$1,583,600
FTA) (Section 5307-Santa Maria) - Operating	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
FTA(Section 5307) - S. County Operating	$2,006,500	$1,893,700	$1,893,700	$1,910,600	$1,923,500	$1,929,300	$1,935,100
Total Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5307[7]	$4,376,300	$4,311,000	$4,311,000	$4,341,700	$4,371,000	$4,384,000	$4,397,100
Cuesta Contribution for Route 12 and 14[3]	$155,060	$159,700	$164,500	$169,400	$174,500	$179,700	$185,100
Cuesta Contribution North County	$40,580	$40,580	$40,580	$40,580	$40,580	$40,580	$40,580
Special Events/Revenue Other[3]	$110,000	$113,300	$116,700	$120,200	$123,800	$127,500	$131,300
Subtotal	*$17,907,530*	*$18,800,270*	*$19,364,300*	*$19,945,200*	*$20,543,700*	*$21,159,900*	*$21,794,600*
Fund Balance	$345,060	$30	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Total	**$18,252,590**	**$18,800,300**	**$19,364,300**	**$19,945,200**	**$20,543,700**	**$21,159,900**	**$21,794,600**
Total Operating Costs from Table 2	**$18,252,560**	**$18,800,300**	**$19,364,300**	**$19,945,200**	**$20,543,700**	**$21,159,900**	**$21,794,600**
Balance available for Capital Projects and SRTP Plan Elements	*$30*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*

Source: RTA FY 2024-25 budget.

Note 1: TDA LTF revenue based on budgeted need for FY 25-26 . LTF revenue available for transit operations varies each year and is dependent on the level of funding from other sources.

Note 2: Passenger fares escalated at the SLOCOG projected countywide population growth rate of 0.5% annually.

Note 3: FY 2025-26 budgeted revenues projected at the assumed rate of inflation, 3% annually.

Note 4: Interest escalated at 2% annually.

Note 5: STA revenue growth based on SLOCOG projections of flat growth

Note 6: Based on SLOCOG FTA 5311 revenue projections (-.05% to 3%).

Note 7: Based on SLOCOG FTA 5307 revenue projections (-.05% to 3%).

Table 46: Base Case Capital Revenues

	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29	FY 29-30	FY 30-31	FY 31-32	Total
Estimated Capital Fund Balance	$986,200	$1,097,050	$1,142,450	$1,464,150	$1,464,150	$1,464,150	$1,464,150	**$9,082,300**
Capital Projects Reserve Cost	$1,097,050	$1,142,450	$1,464,150	$1,464,150	$1,464,150	$1,464,150	$986,200	**$9,082,300**
Fund Balance Available	*-$110,850*	*-$45,400*	*-$321,700*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$477,950*	**$0**
Recurring Revenue Sources								
State Transit Assistance (STA) with SB1 Augmentation[(1)]	$523,210	$201,350	$326,110	$655,440	$508,660	$621,210	$477,250	**$3,313,230**
State of Good Repair[(1)]	$430,000	$442,400	$479,300	$450,000	$450,000	$0	$450,000	**$2,701,700**
FTA 5307 - Capital	$1,694,060	$4,380,200	$3,210,100	$3,904,710	$3,310,180	$1,348,760	$5,080,470	**$22,928,480**
FTA 5339 - Bus and Bus Facilities	$300,000	$0	$373,300	$0	$0	$0	$0	**$673,300**
Subtotal	*$2,947,270*	*$5,023,950*	*$4,388,810*	*$5,010,150*	*$4,268,840*	*$1,969,970*	*$6,007,720*	***$29,616,710***
Competitive/Non-Recurring Revenue Sources								
SB 125 (TIRCP/ZETB)[(3)]	$8,941,000	$4,877,000	$843,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	**$14,661,000**
Rural Transit Fund (Capital)	$97,650	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	**$97,650**
Hybrid and Zero-Emission Truck and Bus Voucher Incentive Project (HVIP) and Volkswagon (VW) funding	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	**$0**
Subtotal	*$9,038,650*	*$4,877,000*	*$843,000*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	***$14,758,650***
TDA Funding (Capital)	$458,060	$458,060	$458,060	$458,060	$458,060	$458,060	$458,060	**$3,206,420**
Total Revenue Available for Capital Projects	**$12,333,130**	**$10,313,610**	**$5,368,170**	**$5,468,210**	**$4,726,900**	**$2,428,030**	**$6,943,730**	**$47,581,780**
Capital Costs (From Working Paper 7)	**$12,333,130**	**$10,313,610**	**$5,368,170**	**$5,468,210**	**$4,726,900**	**$2,428,030**	**$6,943,730**	**$47,581,780**
Net Balance	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**

Source: RTA 2024-25 Budget

Note 1: Flat growth assumed per SLOCOG projections.

Note 2: Based on SLOCOG FTA 5311 revenue projections (-.05% to 3%).

Note 3: Per SLOCOG SB 125 Funding Recommendations

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Chapter 10
FARE ALTERNATIVES

RTA

RTA Fare Structure Overview

One-Trip Cash Fares

South County (SoCo) Transit System, the Paso Robles Route A/B, and the regional RTA routes currently have varying fare structures. RTA regular fares for fixed routes 9, 10, 12, 14, and 15 begin at $1.75 and progressively go up to $3.25 as trip length increases. Seniors (65-79), riders with disabilities, Medicare cardholders, and K-12 students are eligible for reduced fare rates which range from $0.85 to $1.60 depending upon trip length. Seniors over the age of 80 and ADA cardholders with valid ID ride free as part of a VIP Pass program. Children who are under 44" tall and accompanied by an adult rider also ride free. A one-way general public fare on Routes A and B is $1.50, and $0.75 for seniors, disabled, and youth K-12. SoCo Transit's fare structure is the same as the Paso Robles routes with the exception that K-12 students must pay the full general public fare.

RTA Fare Passes

For frequent riders, RTA offers unlimited rides daily, weekly, and monthly passes. Physical passes are available for purchase at the RTA office and numerous other government offices in the area. Passes can also be purchased online and obtained in a physical format via USPS or electronically through Token Transit.

A helpful fare option for passengers occasionally traveling long distances across jurisdictional boundaries is the Regional Day Pass. This includes unlimited rides on all RTA, SoCo Transit, SLO Transit, Paso Robles Routes A & B, and Morro Bay Transit routes for the price of $5.50. Day passes are also available for just SoCo Transit routes for the price of $3.00 (general public) and $1.50 (discount). Note there is no day pass option for just RTA regional routes and/or Paso Robles routes.

The following multi-day discount pass options are available for riders who use the services on a more frequent basis:

- RTA 31-Day Pass
- SoCo Transit 31-Day Pass
- SoCo Transit 20-Ride Pass
- RTA 7 Day Pass
- Regional 31-Day Pass (SoCo, RTA, Paso Robles, Morro Bay Transit and SLO Transit)

Stored value cards are also available for purchase at outlets and online.

RTA Peer Fare Review

Earlier working papers included a peer review of RTA operating data and performance as a way to help gauge the efficiency of RTA services. The same peer systems (as used in the general peer analysis) were used here to review RTA's fare structure.

RTA Fixed-Route Peer Analysis

Table 47 illustrates the fare structures (regular and discounted) and pass options for RTA and the seven peer systems. As shown, the average peer one-way base fare ranges from $1.89 - $4.13. Three of the systems (including RTA) offer regular fares under $2.00. "The Bus" offers the lowest fare among the peer systems at $1.50. The highest regular fare is $7.00, on Santa Cruz Metro Route 17 which connects downtown Santa Cruz to San Jose. RTA's general public fare range of $1.75-$3.25 is slightly below that of the peer systems analyzed. Almost all of the peer systems offer discounted fares at 50% of the regular fare. The Bus offers free rides to all discount groups through a local tax measure. Peer transit agency discount fares average from $0.84 to $2.23.

Table 47: RTA Fare Structure Peer Analysis

	One-Way Fares			Fare Media Types Offered			Pass Costs	
	Regular Fare	Discount Fare	% Discount	Day Pass	Punch Pass	Multiday Pass	Day Pass Fare (Reg)	Monthly Pass Fare (Reg)
B-Line	$1.75 - $2.40	$0.85 - $1.20	51%	Y	10-ride	30-day	$5.00	$43.50
Monterey Salinas Transit	$2.00	$1.00	50%	Y	--	7-day 31-day	$6.00	$70.00
Santa Cruz Metro	$2.00 - $7.00	$1.00 - $3.50	50%	Y	15-ride	3-day 7-day 31-day	$7.00 - $14.00 (local or regional)	$65.00-145.00 (local or regional)
Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority	$2.00	$1.00	50%	Y	--	monthly	$3.75	$60.00
Yolobus	$2.00	$1.00	50%	Y	--	monthly	$7.00	$84.00 -$93.50 (local or regional)
Gold Coast Transit	$2.00	$1.00	50%	Y	15-ride	31-day	$5.00	$65.00
Peer Average	*$1.89 - $4.13*	*$0.84 - $2.23*	*56%*	--	--	--	*$5.25 - $10.00*	*$63.93 - $119.25*
RTA	**$1.75-$3.25**	**$0.85-$1.60**	**51%**	**Y**	**--**	**7-day 31-day**	**$3.00- $5.50**	**$37.00 - $68.00 (local or regional)**

Note: RTA Day Pass represents Regional Day Pass for RTA, SLO Transit and Morro Bay Transit. There are separate 31 day passes for RTA/Paso Routes and South County Routes.

Source: Websites of respective transit agencies

The pass information illustrated in Table 47 grants insight into the types and costs of passes among RTA's peers. As shown, most of the peer systems offer day passes, punch passes, and multi-day passes. All of the systems analyzed offer day passes. SLOCOG's Regional Day Pass is $5.50, falling just above the lower end of the peer average range. All TDA recipients are required to accept the Regional Pass options.

Monthly passes are available for each peer system, and some offer additional multi-day passes for a period of less than 30 days. Peer monthly/30-31-day passes range average at $63.93 - $119.25, depending on whether a pass is valid for local routes only or both local and regional routes. The cost of

RTA's 31-day passes falls below the peer average, ranging from $37.00 for South County transit services to $47.00 for RTA and Paso Robles services to $68.00 for the Regional 31-Day Pass.

RTA Runabout Peer Analysis

As shown in Table 48, the peer paratransit fares range from free to a high of $5.75. Runabout's low fare of $3.00 is therefore 7% lower than the peer average low; Runabout's high fare is 91% higher than the peer average high. Among the peers, The Bus offers the lowest paratransit fare at no charge and B-Line requires the highest paratransit fare of $12.75. Several of the peer systems require extra charges for same-day reservations or re-dispatched vehicles (surplus charges not included in table).

Table 48: Runabout Fare Structure Peer Analysis

	Lowest Fare	Highest Fare	Rider Eligibility
B-Line	$3.50	$12.75	ADA and Riders 70+
Monterey Salinas Transit	$2.00	$2.00	ADA
Santa Cruz Metro	$2.00	$6.00	ADA
Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority	$3.75	$3.75	ADA
Yolobus	$4.00	$6.00	ADA
Gold Coast Transit	$4.00	$4.00	ADA and Riders 65+
Peer Average	$3.21	*$5.75*	--
Runabout	**$3.00**	**$11.00**	**ADA**

Source: Websites of respective transit agencies

RTA Fare Strategies

The following section presents a range of fare alternatives for the RTA system. As background to this discussion, Table 49 presents the current ridership by fare type for the various routes and services. In addition to highlighting the extensive range of fare alternatives, this data reflects the difference in fare instrument use on the various services with a high reliance on cash fares in Paso Robles and on the South County routes (particularly discounted cash fares) and a high reliance on pass use on the regional routes.

Table 49: RTA Ridership by Fare Type

July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024

	Route/Service												Subtotals by Service			Proportion of Boardings by Service			
	Paso Express		Regional					SoCo Transit											
Route	A	B	9	10	12	14	15	21	24	27	28	TOTAL	Regional	Paso Robles	SoCo	Regional	Paso Robles	SoCo	TOTAL
Ridership	43,259	52,347	122,582	111,531	86,983	643	9,686	13,500	11,257	9,488	16,000	477,276	331,425	95,606	50,245				
Passenger Revenue	$31,482	$39,824	$85,831	$93,594	$48,971	$114	$10,233	$7,301	$7,149	$6,438	$12,305	$343,244	$238,743	$71,307	$33,194				
Annual Boardings by Fare Type																			
Regional Daypass Issued & Used	194	450	2,848	4,182	1,679	4	442	162	152	53	76	10,242	9,155	644	443	2.8%	0.7%	0.9%	2.1%
Free	2,110	1,674	10,259	22,253	5,682	91	343	1,226	664	1,153	917	46,372	38,628	3,784	3,960	11.7%	4.0%	7.9%	9.7%
ADA	1,474	951	2,363	2,074	633	12	464	520	425	198	636	9,750	5,546	2,425	1,779	1.7%	2.5%	3.5%	2.0%
VIP Pass	545	605	694	663	524	0	187	380	208	174	279	4,259	2,068	1,150	1,041	0.6%	1.2%	2.1%	0.9%
Short Fare	1,690	1,307	4,895	4,295	2,609	6	181	258	223	179	600	16,243	11,986	2,997	1,260	3.6%	3.1%	2.5%	3.4%
Promo Pass	2,458	2,426	3,718	2,410	1,684	35	280	413	190	392	672	14,678	8,127	4,884	1,667	2.5%	5.1%	3.3%	3.1%
Cuesta Route 9	3,792	2,285	12,482	6,152	25,738	157	317	348	276	70	139	51,756	44,846	6,077	833	13.5%	6.4%	1.7%	10.8%
Regional Daypass Used	785	852	6,724	8,510	4,601	8	292	657	590	101	316	23,436	20,135	1,637	1,664	6.1%	1.7%	3.3%	4.9%
Regional 31-Day Regular Pass	585	698	5,311	5,866	4,523	13	72	475	501	138	313	18,495	15,785	1,283	1,427	4.8%	1.3%	2.8%	3.9%
Regional 31-Day Discount Pass	2,833	3,354	15,235	11,887	7,701	33	536	1,405	1,249	351	890	45,474	35,392	6,187	3,895	10.7%	6.5%	7.8%	9.5%
RTA 31-Day Regular Pass	346	813	3,515	3,305	2,057	2	184	4	0	0	0	10,226	9,063	1,159	4	2.7%	1.2%	0.0%	2.1%
RTA 31-Day Discount Pass	8,332	5,485	9,798	2,876	2,617	8	528	5	0	0	0	29,649	15,827	13,817	5	4.8%	14.5%	0.0%	6.2%
7-Day Pass	17	20	168	333	150	0	14	15	7	1	9	734	665	37	32	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%
SoCo 31-Day Regular Pass	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	118	94	253	520	985	0	0	985	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	0.2%
SoCo 31-Day Discount Pass	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	571	379	465	782	2,197	0	0	2,197	0.0%	0.0%	4.4%	0.5%
SoCo 20-Ride Regular	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	49	186	213	462	0	0	462	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	0.1%
SoCo 30-Ride Discount	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	37	39	68	171	0	0	171	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%
Stored Value Card	28	32	334	139	433	0	110	0	22	4	12	1,114	1,016	60	38	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
Transfer	0	1	21	15	357	0	112	6	4	1	2	519	505	1	13	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Full Cash Fare	5,826	10,273	10,066	2,451	4,336	12	689	1,774	1,692	1,617	3,317	42,053	17,554	16,099	8,400	5.3%	16.8%	16.7%	8.8%
Full Cash Fare + 1 Addl Zone	1	24	5,906	8,471	1,405	8	655	7	0	0	0	16,477	16,445	25	7	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%
Full Cash Fare + 2 Addl Zones	0	3	930	3,039	4,302	3	78	3	0	0	0	8,358	8,352	3	3	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%
Full Cash Fare + 3 Addl Zones	0	6	1,185	2,608	115	1	57	1	0	0	0	3,973	3,966	6	1	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
Discount Cash Fare	10,866	20,044	11,249	4,009	3,277	7	1,125	1,391	1,037	511	1,149	54,665	19,667	30,910	4,088	5.9%	32.3%	8.1%	11.5%
Discount Cash Fare + 1 Addl Zone	4	6	3,652	5,607	722	4	983	2	0	0	0	10,980	10,968	10	2	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%
Discount Cash Fare + 2 Addl Zones	0	7	1,096	2,514	3,538	3	176	0	0	0	1	7,335	7,327	7	1	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%
Discount Cash Fare + 3 Addl Zones	0	3	1,012	1,328	413	1	185	0	0	0	0	2,942	2,939	3	0	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
Riding Through From Previous Route	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	108	16	34	10	168	0	0	168	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%
RTA Employee/Dependent	2	14	203	164	269	0	0	4	22	5	44	727	636	16	75	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%
Youth Ride Free	56	341	299	24	13	0	0	3	40	3	12	791	336	397	58	0.1%	0.4%	0.1%	0.2%
SoCo Day Pass Regular Issued & Used	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	237	307	454	562	1,560	0	0	1,560	0.0%	0.0%	3.1%	0.3%
SoCo Day Pass Discount Issued & Used	2	6	0	0	0	0	0	637	814	910	1,581	3,950	0	8	3,942	0.0%	0.0%	7.8%	0.8%
SoCo Day Pass Regular Used	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	510	428	209	526	1,673	0	0	1,673	0.0%	0.0%	3.3%	0.4%
SoCo Day Pass Discount Used	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	1,150	938	886	1,087	4,068	0	7	4,061	0.0%	0.0%	8.1%	0.9%
Amtrak Transfer	0	0	2	10	20	0	0	1	1	2	1	37	32	0	5	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: RTA EVENT_SUMMARY_(ROUTESUM)_REPORT-BY_ROUTE_(JULY_1_2023-June_30_2024).csv

Increase RTA Fares Across the Board

As discussed above, RTA fares are currently lower than the peer average, particularly for cash fares. In particular, many of the peer systems have a base fare of $2.00 per general public boarding, compared with the RTA fare of $1.50 for services in South County and Paso Robles and $1.75 for the regional services. A fare increase to $2.00 base general public fare (and corresponding increases in other fare instrument costs) would still be well within the range of peer data. This would be equivalent to a 14 percent fare increase.

RTA fares were last increased at the end of 2017 when base fares were increased by $0.25 (with corresponding increases in pass prices). An additional planned fare increase was considered in early 2020 but put on hold due to the uncertain impacts of the pandemic. Since 2017, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm) indicates that consumer price inflation has increased by 29.5 percent. This indicates that the base fare of $1.75 in 2017 dollars is equivalent to $2.27 in 2024 dollars.

Table 50 presents a summary of the cost of the various fare instruments with a roughly 14 percent increase (rounded to provide convenient values). For instance, a regional 31-day regular pass would be increased from $68 to $78. This table also presents an evaluation of the ridership and fare revenue impacts, based on an elasticity analysis. As shown, overall, this fare increase would generate a net increase in fare revenues of $29,850 per year (or 9 percent). Ridership would be reduced by an estimated 14,300 boardings per year or 5 percent. Note that no additional revenue is assumed for the re-negotiation of pass agreements spurred by the increase in fares.

Table 50: Analysis of RTA Systemwide Fare Increase

Based on Ridership July 1 2023 to June 30 2024
Excludes Fare Categories With No Change

	Fare/Cost			Annual Ridership					Annual Fare Revenue		
Annual Boardings by Fare Type	Existing	With Fare Increase	% Change	Existing	Elasticity	With Fare Increase	Change	% Change	Existing	With Fare Increase	Change
Regional Daypass	$5.50	$6.25	14%	33,700	-0.35	32,200	-1,500	-4%	$56,300	$61,100	$4,800
Regional 31-Day Regular Pass	$68.00	$78.00	15%	18,500	-0.35	17,600	-900	-5%	$23,500	$25,600	$2,100
Regional 31-Day Discount Pass	$34.00	$39.00	15%	45,500	-0.40	43,100	-2,400	-5%	$28,900	$31,400	$2,500
RTA 31-Day Regular Pass	$47.00	$54.00	15%	10,200	-0.35	9,700	-500	-5%	$8,900	$9,700	$800
RTA 31-Day Discount Pass	$23.50	$27.00	15%	29,600	-0.40	28,000	-1,600	-5%	$13,000	$14,100	$1,100
7-Day Pass	$16.00	$18.25	14%	730	-0.35	700	-30	-4%	$1,000	$1,100	$100
SoCo 31-Day Regular Pass	$37.00	$42.00	14%	990	-0.35	950	-40	-4%	$700	$800	$100
SoCo 31-Day Discount Pass	$18.50	$21.00	14%	2,200	-0.40	2,100	-100	-5%	$700	$800	$100
SoCo 20-Ride Regular	$24.00	$27.50	15%	460	-0.35	440	-20	-4%	$550	$600	$50
SoCo 20-Ride Discount	$12.00	$13.75	15%	170	-0.40	160	-10	-6%	$100	$100	$0
Full Cash Fare - RTA Regional	$1.75	$2.00	14%	17,600	-0.35	16,800	-800	-5%	$30,800	$33,600	$2,800
Full Cash Fare - Paso Robles	$1.50	$1.75	17%	16,100	-0.35	15,300	-800	-5%	$24,200	$26,800	$2,600
Full Cash Fare - SoCo	$1.50	$1.75	17%	8,400	-0.35	8,000	-400	-5%	$12,600	$14,000	$1,400
Full Cash Fare + 1 Addl Zone	$2.00	$2.25	13%	16,500	-0.35	15,800	-700	-4%	$33,000	$35,600	$2,600
Full Cash Fare + 2 Addl Zones	$2.25	$2.50	11%	8,400	-0.35	8,100	-300	-4%	$18,900	$20,300	$1,400
Full Cash Fare + 3 Addl Zones	$2.50	$2.75	10%	4,000	-0.35	3,900	-100	-3%	$10,000	$10,700	$700
Discount Cash Fare - RTA Regional	$0.85	$1.00	18%	19,700	-0.40	18,500	-1,200	-6%	$16,700	$18,500	$1,800
Discount Cash Fare - Paso Robles	$0.75	$0.85	13%	30,900	-0.40	29,400	-1,500	-5%	$23,200	$25,000	$1,800
Discount Cash Fare - SoCo	$0.75	$0.85	13%	4,100	-0.40	3,900	-200	-5%	$3,100	$3,300	$200
Discount Cash Fare + 1 Addl Zone	$1.10	$1.25	14%	11,000	-0.40	10,500	-500	-5%	$12,100	$13,100	$1,000
Discount Cash Fare + 2 Addl Zones	$1.35	$1.50	11%	7,300	-0.40	7,000	-300	-4%	$9,900	$10,500	$600
Discount Cash Fare + 3 Addl Zones	$1.60	$1.75	9%	2,900	-0.40	2,800	-100	-3%	$4,600	$4,900	$300
SoCo Day Pass Regular	$3.00	$3.50	17%	1,600	-0.35	1,500	-100	-6%	$4,700	$5,100	$400
SoCo Day Pass Discount	$1.50	$1.75	17%	4,000	-0.40	3,800	-200	-5%	$5,900	$6,500	$600
				294,550		280,250	-14,300	-5%	$343,350	$373,200	$29,850
										Percent Change	9%

Source: RTA EVENT_SUMMARY_(ROUTESUM)_REPORT-BY_ROUTE_(JULY_1_2023-June_30_2024).csv

Reduce RTA Fares to Be Consistent with SLO Transit Fares in the City of San Luis Obispo

The base cash fare for trips within San Luis Obispo is different for travel on RTA services versus travel on SLO Transit. As shown in Table 51, RTA's regional route base fare for a trip within a single community (including San Luis Obispo) is $1.75 general public / $0.80 discount, while the SLO Transit cash fare is $1.50 general public / $0.75 discount. Reducing the RTA fare for trips within San Luis Obispo to match the SLO Transit fare could be accomplished by reducing the current $1.75 cash fare for a trip within San Luis Obispo from $1.75 to $1.50 (and to $0.75 for discount passengers). RTA fares should not be lower than SLO Transit as SLO Transit is the local operator, and riders should be encouraged to use that service. Only 3 percent of riders on the RTA regional routes make trips within San Luis Obispo, based on the onboard surveys of rider boarding and alighting pairs. At present, approximately 9,400 trips are made within San Luis Obispo which generate approximately $7,800 in cash fares.

As shown in Table 51, an elasticity analysis indicates that this fare reduction would result in a modest increase of approximately 500 additional boardings per year. Between the additional ridership and the reduction in fares for all such riders, this option would reduce annual fare revenues by roughly $800 per year. This option also makes RTA fares within San Luis Obispo in line with the $1.50 base fare charged for trips within the Five Cities and within Paso Robles.

Table 51: Analysis of RTA Fare Alternatives

	Fare			Boardings				Annual Fare Revenue			
	Existing	Alternative	% Change	Existing	Alternative	Change	% Change	Existing	Alternative	Change	% Change
Reduce RTA Fare in San Luis Obispo	$1.75	$1.50	-14%	9,400	9,900	500	5%	$7,800	$7,000	-$800	-10%
Discount K-12 Student Fare on SoCo Transit	$1.50	$0.75	-50%	4,600	6,100	1,500	33%	$6,800	$4,500	-$2,300	-34%
Day Pass for RTA Only (RTA Intercity)											
Existing 2-Zone Riders Full	$5.50	$4.00	-27%	5,500	6,100	600	11%	$9,500	$7,700	-$1,800	-19%
Existing 2-Zone Riders Discount[1]	$2.75	$2.00	-27%	4,800	5,400	600	13%	$4,100	$3,400	-$700	-17%
Existing Regional Day Pass Riders	$5.50	$4.00	-27%	23,400	26,200	2,800	12%	$40,200	$32,700	-$7,500	-19%
Total						4,000				-$10,000	
Day Pass for Paso Robles (RTA Local)											
Full[2]	$3.15	$3.00	-5%	6,200	6,300	100	2%	$6,100	$5,900	-$200	-3%
Discount[2]	$1.58	$1.50	-5%	19,000	19,400	400	2%	$9,400	$9,100	-$300	-3%
Total						500				-$500	
RTA Passes for SLO City Employees	$68 / 31 Days	$0.00	-100%	3,600	5,400	1,800	50%	$3,900	$5,850	$1,950	50%

Note 1: Existing represents cash fare needed to pay currently for a one-way trip for two zones.

Note 2: Equivalent of what a Paso Robles passenger are paying now for the estimate number of trips they would take using a day pass. (Based on SCT).

Provide a Discount Fare for K-12 Students on SoCo Transit

Kindergarten through Grade 12 (K-12) students currently are eligible for half-price fares on RTA's regional routes and the Paso Robles routes. However, K-12 students on SoCo Transit pay full fares. The City of San Luis Obispo recently introduced a program to offer half-priced fares for K-12 students on SLO Transit Routes. The countywide fare system would be more consistent if K-12 students were also provided discount fares on SoCo Transit. This would apply to the cash fare (dropping to $0.75), the South County Day Pass (dropping to $1.50 for K-12), the SoCo Transit 31-Day Pass (dropping to $18.50 for K-12), and 20-Ride Pass (dropping to $12.00 for K-12). (Other fare options do not have a discount option.)

The onboard survey of passengers on the SoCo routes indicates that 9 percent of riders are K-12 students. These riders currently generate roughly 4,600 boardings and $6,800 in fare revenues per year. Giving this discount would increase ridership by an estimated 1,500 annual boardings, with a net loss of $2,300 in fare revenues.

Offer An RTA Local and Intercity Day Pass

Day passes are a convenient fare option for transit riders who make occasional trips that include multiple transfers. They are also useful for social service programs and other organizations that want to provide an individual with transportation without entrusting them with cash or a high-priced fare option like a 31-Day Pass. At present, the following day pass options are provided:

- A SLOCOG initiated Regional Day Pass that is good on all countywide fixed-route services (including RTA, SoCo Transit and Paso Robles, SLO Transit, and Morro Bay Transit). This costs $5.50, and there is no discount option.

- A South County Day Pass is good on the four SoCo Transit routes, at a cost of $3.00 for the general public and $1.50 for seniors (age 65 to 79) and persons with disabilities.

Regional Day Pass use constitutes 8.9 percent of RTA intercity service boardings, with the average Regional Day Pass purchaser making 3.2 trips over the course of the day.

An option would be to expand the day pass option to passengers using only Paso Robles Routes or RTA Regional Routes with no need to use SLO Transit or Morro Bay. It would be reasonable to have an RTA Intercity Day Pass, which is good for the RTA regional routes, at a rate lower than the existing $5.50 for a regional day pass. In an effort to maximize the ridership benefit of a day pass, this price could be set at $4.00 for the general public and $2.00 for discount passengers. Additionally, an RTA Local Day Pass could be offered which would be valid for trips on Pasos Robles and South County Routes only. The RTA Local Day Pass should be the same price as the existing South County Day Pass.

The cost of a day pass is typically set to be equal to twice the one-way base fare, or slightly higher. With the current RTA zone fare system, however, twice the base fare for a 3-zone one-way trip is $6.50, indicating that 3-zone riders (such as San Luis Obispo to Paso Robles or to Santa Maria are already benefitting from a substantial discount on a single round-trip). Providing an RTA-only day pass for $4.00 (and $2.00 for discount passengers) would also provide a reduced total fare for riders making a 2-zone round-trip (currently requiring a base fare of $5.50) and would likely generate a substantial shift from one-way fares to day pass use for 2-zone rides.

Considering both the shift in 2-zone riders as well as the reduction in fare for 3-zone RTA riders, this alternative is estimated to increase annual boardings by 4,000 per year and reduce overall fare revenue by $10,000 annually. While it would provide a 19 percent effective fare reduction for RTA longer-distance riders, it would make an already complicated RTA fare schedule even more complicated.

In order to analyze the impact of an RTA Local Day Pass for existing Paso Robles passengers, SoCo Transit data was reviewed. On SoCo Transit, day pass users make up 22.4 percent of all boardings, making 2.1 trips per pass sold. Most of the day pass users (71 percent) are seniors or persons with disabilities. This low number of trips per pass sold indicates that many passengers opt for a day pass for convenience (such as not having to have correct change for a return trip) rather than making three or more transit trips per day.

Given the observed day pass use on the SoCo Transit routes and relatively high proportion of Paso Robles ridership consisting of K-12 students, 20 percent of Paso Robles route ridership would shift to discount day passes, and 6 percent would shift to non-discounted day passes. Reflecting the low level of passengers making more than two daily trips, ridership would increase by 500 boardings per year while annual fare revenue would decrease by a modest $500 per year. This option would provide a small benefit to occasional riders on the Paso Robles routes as well as a convenience to passengers but would again add an additional complication to the RTA fare schedule.

Subsidized RTA Fares for City of San Luis Obispo Employees

A fare subsidy program could be established for employees of the City of San Luis Obispo. The City currently employs approximately 475 full-time staff, along with 200 part-time staff. (In comparison, Cal Poly's San Luis Obispo campus employs approximately 3,100 total staff.)

The *2024 Commuter Survey – City of San Luis Obispo* provides the results of a survey of 222 City employees. It indicated that 63 percent of City employees commute from outside San Luis Obispo, including 15 percent from Atascadero, 10 percent from Arroyo Grande, and 10 percent from Los Osos. By RTA regional route corridor, 25 percent live along the Route 9 corridor, 25 percent live along the Route 10 corridor and 12 percent live along the Route 12 corridor. The most prevalent commute mode is driving alone (77 percent), with only 1 percent commuting by bus. Employees indicated some interest in transit, with 17 percent indicating that a free or discounted transit pass would encourage them to use alternative transportation to get to work. However, when asked why they drive alone, the most prevalent answers reflect factors that would not be affected by a bus pass program, such as "I need a car before/after work for errands or childcare/family responsibilities" (43 percent), "The bus trip takes too long compared to driving my car" (30 percent), "I want my car in case of emergencies" (25 percent) and "The bus travels too infrequently" (18 percent). Considering these factors, the low existing transit commute mode among City employees, and the typical impact of eliminating fares (a 40 to 50 percent increase in ridership), a free pass program would increase existing transit use by 50 percent. This equals approximately 4 employees, making roughly 1,800 one-way trips per year. Including the cost of providing Regional 31-Day Passes for existing transit riders, this strategy would require the purchase of approximately $5,850 in passes per year, with a net increase in farebox revenue to RTA of $1,950.

Convert the Existing Zone Fare System to a Flat Fare Over a 2 Hour Boarding Period

With the advent of advanced "tap on" fare technologies (as discussed in detail below), public transit systems are increasingly converting to a time-period-based fare structure. Passengers using a card or their phone to tap on can board additional buses within a set period (typically two hours) without additional charges. A good example is Monterey Salinas Transit which converted in 2022 to a fare structure providing boardings within a 2-hour period for $2 full fare / $1 for discount passengers (even for the long Paso Robles – Kings City Route).

On RTA, this approach would replace the current 3-zone fare structure on the Regional Routes. With a $2 time-based fare for the general public and $1 for discount passengers, this would result in an effective fare increase for those riding within a single zone, but an effective decrease for those riding in multiple zones – particularly for those traveling through 4 zones, such as San Luis Obispo to Paso Robles. An evaluation of the impact of this change in fares on ridership currently paying cash fares is shown in Table 52. As shown, the overall existing fare per passenger varies between the various routes, but the overall average fare per passenger is not far above the time-based fares, at $2.24 for full-fare passengers and $1.06 for discount passengers. The impact of the fare changes on ridership levels was analyzed using an elasticity analysis, indicating a small net increase in ridership of 2,700 passenger boardings per year (3.1 percent). The overall impact on fare revenue (including both the change in fares and the change in ridership) is estimated to be a relatively modest reduction of $8,930 per year (6.1 percent).

The actual impact on fare revenues would depend on the potential for this fare change to increase revenue by reducing fare evasion, specifically, those passengers paying a cash fare for a single zone but then riding into additional zones. There is no data available on the extent of this pattern, but it is thought to be not insignificant. By requiring all passengers on regional routes (not using a pass or eligible for another fare reduction) to pay $2 general public / $1 discount, this strategy may well result in a net increase in fare revenues. It also has the benefit of significantly simplifying the fare structure, reducing the stress on drivers of having to handle fare issues, and reducing the administrative costs of tracking so many fare categories.

Table 52: Impact of a $2 Fare for 2 Hours on Annual RTA Fare Revenue

	Route 9	10	12	14	15	Total	
Percent of Cash Fare Boardings by # of Zones							
Full Cash Fare	56%	15%	43%	50%	47%	38%	
Full Cash Fare + 1 Addl Zone	33%	51%	14%	33%	44%	36%	
Full Cash Fare + 2 Addl Zones	5%	18%	42%	13%	5%	18%	
Full Cash Fare + 3 Addl Zones	7%	16%	1%	4%	4%	9%	
Discount Cash Fare	66%	30%	41%	47%	46%	48%	
Discount Cash Fare + 1 Addl Zone	21%	42%	9%	27%	40%	27%	Effective Change in
Discount Cash Fare + 2 Addl Zones	6%	19%	45%	20%	7%	18%	
Discount Cash Fare + 3 Addl Zones	6%	10%	5%	7%	7%	7%	Average Fare
Avg Full Fare	$ 2.06	$ 2.43	$ 2.26	$ 2.10	$ 2.08	$ 2.24	-11%
Avg Discount Fare	$ 0.98	$ 1.12	$ 1.13	$ 1.07	$ 1.04	$ 1.06	-6%
Annual Ridership							
Existing - Full Fare	18,100	16,600	10,200	20	1,500	46,420	
Existing - Discount	17,000	13,500	8,000	20	2,500	41,020	
Existing - Total	35,100	30,100	18,200	40	4,000	87,440	
$2 for 2 hours - Full Fare	18,300	17,800	10,600	20	1,500	48,220	
$1 for 2 hours - Discount	16,900	14,100	8,400	20	2,500	41,920	
$2/$1 for 2 hours - Total	35,200	31,900	19,000	40	4,000	90,140	
Impact of $2 Fare - Full Fare	200	1,200	400	0	0	1,800	
Impact of $2 Fare - Discount	-100	600	400	0	0	900	
Impact of $2 Fare - Total	**100**	**1,800**	**800**	**0**	**0**	**2,700**	
Percent Change in Annual Riders	**0.3%**	**6.0%**	**4.4%**	**0.0%**	**0.0%**	**3.1%**	
Annual Fare Revenue							
Current Revenue - Full Fare	$37,300	$40,200	$23,000	$50	$3,100	$103,600	
Current Revenue - Discount	$16,700	$15,100	$9,000	$20	$2,600	$43,400	
Current Revenue - Total	$54,000	$55,300	$32,000	$70	$5,700	$147,000	
$2 for 2 hours - Full Fare	$36,600	$35,500	$21,100	$50	$3,000	$96,250	
$1 for 2 hours - Discount	$16,900	$14,100	$8,300	$20	$2,500	$41,820	
$2/$1 for 2 hours - Total	$53,500	$49,600	$29,400	$70	$5,500	$138,070	
Impact of $2 Fare - Full Fare	-$700	-$4,700	-$1,900	$0	-$100	-$7,350	
Impact of $2 Fare - Discount	$200	-$1,000	-$700	$0	-$100	-$1,580	
Impact of $2 Fare - Total	**-$500**	**-$5,700**	**-$2,600**	**$0**	**-$200**	**-$8,930**	
Percent Change in Annual Fare Revenue	**-0.9%**	**-10.3%**	**-8.1%**	**0.0%**	**-3.5%**	**-6.1%**	

Performance Analysis of Fare Alternatives

Fare alternatives can be evaluated and compared by assessing the ratio of change in fare revenue per change in passenger-trips. As shown in Table 53, this factor can be considered in various ways depending on the specific alternative:

- Alternatives that increase fare revenues while reducing ridership yield a negative value. As shown, increasing the RTA base fare to $2 results in $2.09 in new revenue for every passenger-trip lost. In other words, this option increases fare revenue by $29,800 per year but comes at the cost of reducing ridership by 14,300 per year.

- Alternatives that result in reduced fare revenues, but increased ridership also yield a negative value. In this case, the value reflects the revenues lost for every additional passenger-trip served. A smaller absolute value reflects a "better" alternative while a larger absolute value reflects a "worse" alternative. As shown by this measure, the Paso Robles day pass is the best of these alternatives, as only $1.00 in fare revenue is lost for every new passenger-trip. On the other end, the $2 for 2 hours of boarding fare alternative loses $3.31 in fare revenue for every new passenger-trip (though this is without the potential additional fare revenues generated by reducing fare evasion). The RTA-only day pass also performs relatively poorly by this measure, reducing revenues by $2.58 for every new passenger-trip.

A final alternative is providing RTA passes for City of San Luis Obispo employees. From the RTA's perspective, this is a "win-win" – generating $1.08 in new revenues for every net new passenger-trip. From the City's perspective, the $5,850 in estimated annual pass costs is equivalent to $3.25 in cost for every additional passenger-trip.

Table 53: Performance Analysis of RTA Fare Alternatives

	Annual Change		Change in Fare Revenue Per Change in Passenger-Trips	
Fare Alternative	Fare Revenue	Ridership	Alternatives That Increase Fare Revenues While Reducing Ridership	Alternatives that Reduce Fare Revenues While Increasing Ridership
Fare Increase to $2.00 Base Fare	$29,850	-14,300	-$2.09	
Reduce RTA Fare in San Luis Obispo	-$800	500		-$1.60
Discount K-12 Student Fare on SoCo Transit	-$2,300	1,500		-$1.53
Day Pass for RTA Only (RTA Intercity)	-$10,000	4,000		-$2.50
Day Pass for Paso Robles (RTA Local)	-$500	500		-$1.00
$2/$1 for 2 Hours of Boarding	-$8,930	2,700		-$3.31

Discount Fare Verification

When RTA passengers purchase a ticket on Token Transit, the passenger has the option to choose which fare category they fall under, general public or discount. Similarly, bus operators are instructed to avoid fare-related conflicts and generally to accept the word of the rider. RTA staff have observed general public passengers paying the discounted cash fare when there is no obvious reason the person qualifies for the discounted fare. The average fare for RTA Regional Routes (9, 10, and 15) is $1.30, and general public full fare ranges from $1.75 to $3.25. Only 15% of riders responding to the on-board survey indicated they were over age 58. As such there is likely some abuse of the fare system.

A 2016 survey of 90 California public transit agencies found that 56 agencies (or 62 percent of those agencies surveyed) did not enforce fare evasion laws or agency policies. Most of the agencies that did enforce fare evasion were large agencies in major cities that had in-house transit police.

Many transit agencies issue special identification cards for passengers who are eligible for half or reduced fares. Examples include the City of Santa Rosa, BART, and San Joaquin RTD. Individuals usually need to apply for these ID cards before receiving eligibility for half-fare programs. A Medicare card can also be accepted as an ID at the time of boarding. Some agencies will honor an out-of-town fare discount identification card, while other agencies will provide a temporary fare discount card for the customer to use while visiting.

In an effort to reduce fare evasion, RTA could require the use of a discount fare card. Passengers could sign up in person at a transit office facility or through an online portal (similar to the 80+ VIP Pass), which would require an increase in staff resources – especially at the outset of the validation and subsequent enforcement process. The drawback would be that it places another hurdle in front of qualifying passengers, who likely face mobility challenges (although the process could be conducted online for those able to do so). Token Transit does allow agencies to restrict the ability of users to purchase discounted fares by providing a "good list" of passengers who qualify for discounted fares. Qualified applicants could submit their documentation via an online portal or in person at an office to be added to the "good list".

NEW FARE TECHNOLOGY

Cal-ITP Open-Loop Contactless Fare Payment System

Recent years have seen a surge in the use of contactless payment technologies, including transit fares. Studies have found that accepting contactless payments has lowered expenses for transit agencies and increased ridership. Both RTA and SLO Transit currently use the Token Transit App for fare payment. This app-based technology removes the need for passengers to go to specified locations to purchase tickets. Tickets are validated electronically, allowing the transit agencies to collect important data on ridership and boardings while also taking pressure off the already busy drivers. For passengers, the Token Transit app is free. Transit agencies must purchase on-bus validators and pay approximately annual software fees (the RTA pays approximately $18,000 per year), and transit agencies enter into an agreement with Token Transit allowing Token Transit to retain a certain percentage of fares purchased through the app up to a set limit. There is also a per transaction fee which is paid by the transit agency.

The California Integrated Travel Project (Cal-ITP) is helping transit agencies to procure contactless payment technology. This technology can accept both agency-specific passes and contactless bank card payments and digital wallets. The benefits of contactless fare payment are improved ridership through ease of use (no need to look for $1.50) and faster boarding. This strategy can help with fare "fairness" and equity objectives when contactless fare payment is paired with fare capping. Transit fare capping is a fare payment model that sets a maximum amount a rider pays for fares over a specific period, such as a day, week, or month. Once this cap is reached, the rider doesn't pay for additional trips taken during that period. The rider is also charged as you go, eliminating the need to pay for the full cost of a monthly pass in advance. One final advantage for RTA and SLO Transit is that, over the long term, the transit operators could curtail or even discontinue the use of the Genfare registering fareboxes. Some transit agencies that have implemented the Cal-ITP program have set a goal of a fully cashless fare system, including Monterey-Salinas Transit (2027). This would reduce staff time needed for the fare counting process as well as the increasing cost of maintenance for the complicated and occasionally unreliable Genfare validating fareboxes.

In order to maintain a fare payment option for unbanked passengers, transit agencies could offer a reloadable card, which could be obtained at the transit agency office or specific outlets. Transit agencies could also continue to accept cash using a manual farebox, allowing the more costly Genfare fareboxes to be phased out.

Cal-ITP and the California Department of General Services have collaborated to establish six Master Service Agreements that allow public transit providers to purchase contactless payment hardware and software directly from vendors rather than through competitive bidding. These Master Service Agreements can be utilized by transit providers in California. The Cal-ITP program has also negotiated lower credit card processing fees, which comprise an ever-growing proportion of transit agency operating costs as more and more riders use credit cards to pay for their rides. SLOCOG has taken the lead in procuring and implementing a regionwide contactless fare payment system using SB 125 funds. It is estimated this project will cost on the order of $2.6 million over five years and includes "buy-down" of fare levels to encourage restoration of pre-pandemic ridership.

A nearby adopter of open-loop contactless fare payment with fare capping (procured through Cal-ITP) is Monterey Salinas Transit (MST). General public passengers can ride anywhere on the MST system for $2 for 2 hours. Beyond the 2-hour mark, there is a $6.00 cap for the day, a weekly cap of $20.00, and a monthly cap of $70.00. The $2 for 2 hours eliminates the need to both tap on and tap off for a two-hour period in order to be charged the correct fare. Once a passenger taps on a bus, they will only be charged $2 until they tap on after that two-hour period. The quantitative impacts of applying a $2 for 2-hour fare structure to RTA routes is discussed above and presented in Table 52.

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Chapter 11

RTA/SLO TRANSIT COORDINATION OPPORTUNITIES

This chapter focuses on joint procurement opportunities and discusses intercity connections and day-to-day operational coordination. This is followed by a list of strategies to improve the effectiveness of the ADA Paratransit program, Runabout, which serves both the City and the County.

SERVICE COORDINATION

RTA Routes 9, 10, 12, and 14 operate within the City of San Luis Obispo and have some overlap with SLO Transit in order to make transfers with SLO Transit and to directly serve key locations within the City of San Luis Obispo for intercity RTA passengers. This includes 3 stops on the Cal Poly SLO campus. RTA serves 31 bus stops within the City of San Luis Obispo, 22 of which are shared with SLO Transit. RTA's main passenger transfer hub is the Government Center which is located at the opposite corner of the intersection of Palm Street and Osos Street from the SLO Downtown Transit Center. Route 14 service was reduced during the pandemic and is currently not operating (October 2024) because Cuesta College has moved many classes online.

Scheduling and Transfer Opportunities

Hours of Operation

On weekdays during the academic year, SLO Transit bi-directional loop routes begin service at the Downtown Transit Center before the first morning 6:33 AM RTA departures from the Government Center and continue service until after the 8:33 PM RTA departures. RTA Route 12 has a 10:06 PM arrival at the Government Center before it goes out of service for the night. Only SLO Routes 3B, 4A, and 4B continue operating after that last RTA arrival.

Both systems operate reduced service hours on weekends beginning later and ending earlier. SLO Transit operates only the "A" clockwise routes on the same schedule for both Saturday and Sunday. RTA operates Routes 9, 10, and 12 with five round trips on Saturday. On Sunday, Routes 9 and 10 operate three runs and Route 12 operates five runs.

Table 54 and Table 55 display the span of service for both systems. These show that the service times between both systems align reasonably well. The transfer opportunities between both systems are described below. Table 56 provides an example of schedule coordination for a two-hour period on a weekday during the academic year. Appendix A presents schedule coordination for a full-service day.

Table 54: Span of Service - SLO Transit & RTA Routes 9, 10 and 12 at Downtown Transit Center/Government Center
Academic Year - Weekend Span of Service Is Shaded

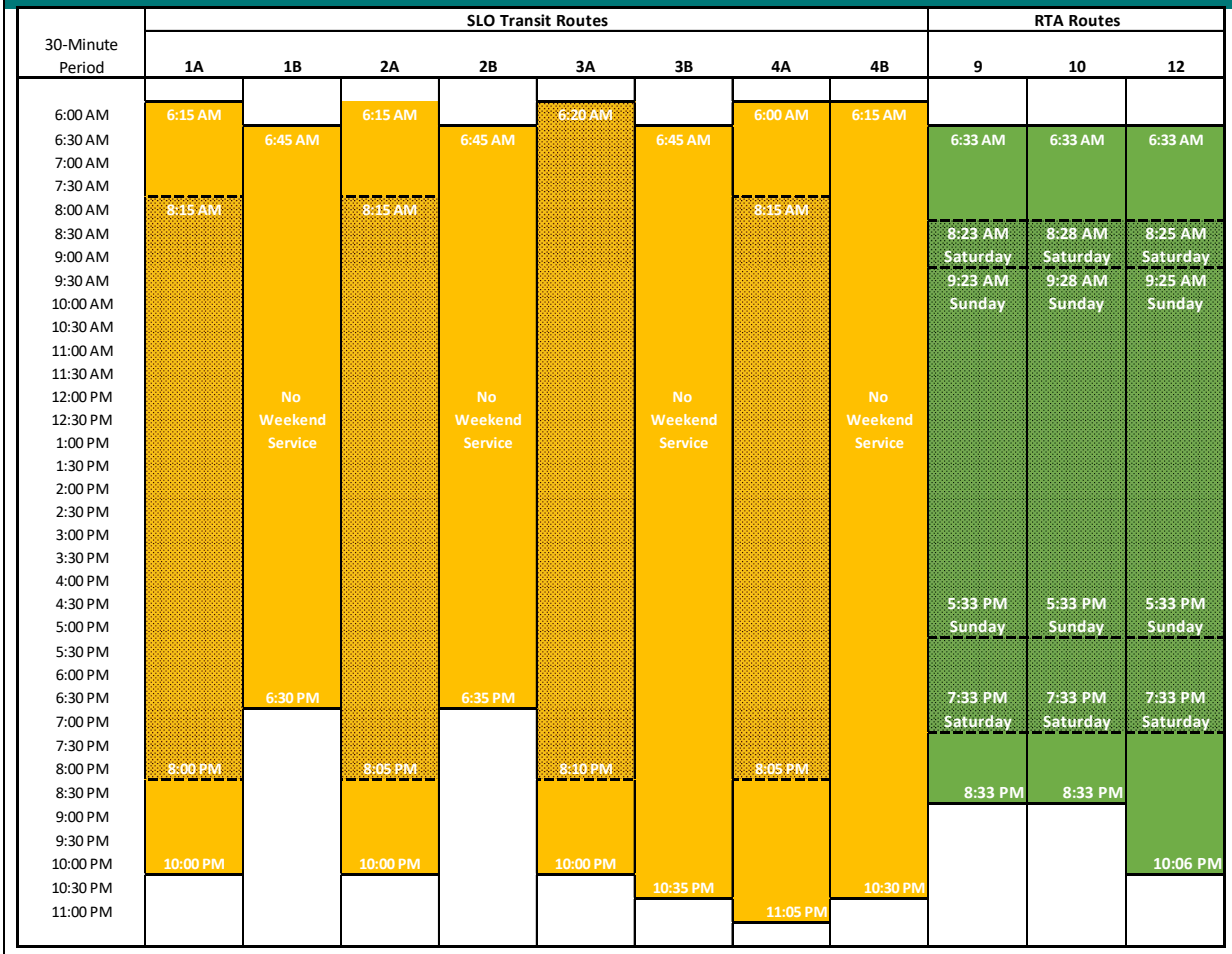
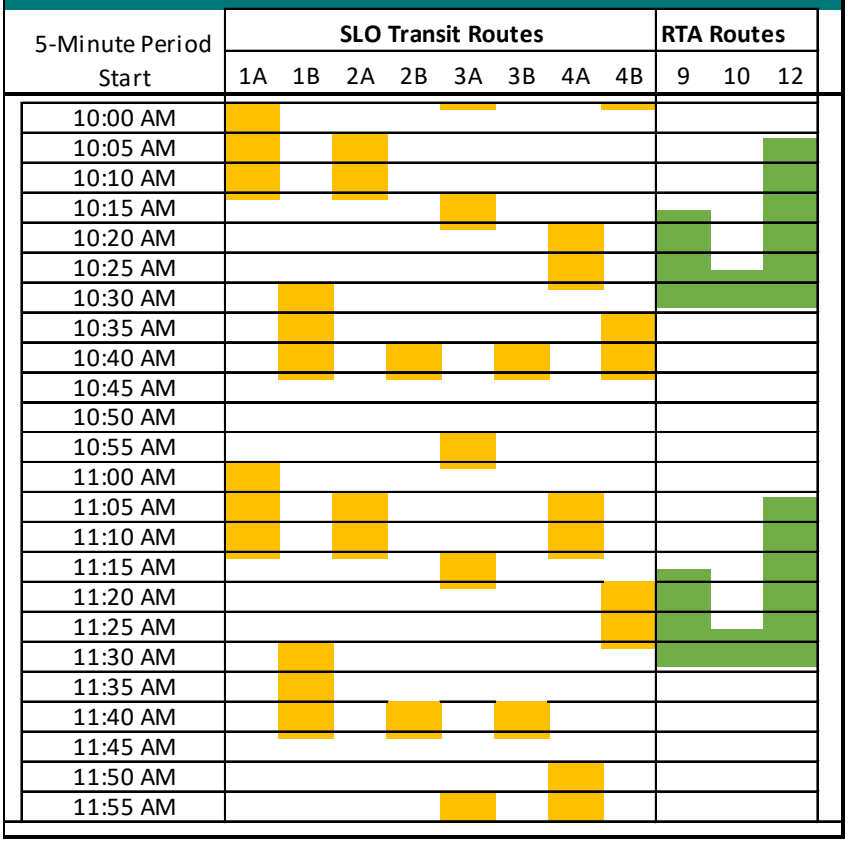


Table 55: Span of Service - SLO Transit & RTA Routes 9, 10 and 12 at Downtown Transit Center/Government Center
Academic Year

	SLO Transit Routes								RTA Routes		
Weekday	**1A**	**1B**	**2A**	**2B**	**3A**	**3B**	**4A**	**4B**	**9**	**10**	**12**
Begin	6:15 AM	6:45 AM	6:15 AM	6:45 AM	6:20 AM	6:45 AM	6:00 AM	6:15 AM	6:33 AM	6:33 AM	6:33 AM
End	10:00 PM	6:30 PM	10:00 PM	6:35 PM	10:00 PM	10:35 PM	11:05 PM	10:30 PM	8:33 PM	8:33 PM	10:06 PM
Span (Hours)	15:45	11:45	15:45	11:50	15:40	15:50	17:05	16:15	14:00	14:00	15:33
Saturday											
Begin	8:15 AM		8:15 AM		6:20 AM		8:15 AM		8:23 AM	8:28 AM	8:25 AM
End	8:00 PM		8:05 PM		8:10 PM		8:05 PM		7:33 PM	7:33 PM	7:33 PM
Span (Hours)	11:45		11:50		13:50		11:50		11:10	11:05	11:08
Sunday											
Begin	8:15 AM		8:15 AM		6:20 AM		8:15 AM		9:23 AM	9:28 AM	9:25 AM
End	8:00 PM		8:05 PM		8:10 PM		8:05 PM		5:33 PM	5:33 PM	5:33 PM
Span (Hours)	11:45		11:50		13:50		11:50		8:10	8:05	8:08

TABLE 56: Example of Existing Schedule Coordination at Government Center/Downtown Transfer Point

Weekdays During Academic Year



Transfers between SLO Transit and RTA

This review of transfer opportunities examines the coordination between RTA routes 9, 10, and 12 serving San Luis Obispo and the all-day, bi-directional SLO Transit routes (1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B). Ideally, the service schedule would enable transfers to and from all route buses. Because the combined schedules of the two systems are not designed as a pulse schedule, where timetables are coordinated to converge at the Government Center and Downtown Transit Center at the same time, passengers on an incoming bus may need to wait to transfer to the next arrival of a bus from the other system. Described below are the transfer options between RTA and SLO Transit routes. Since both systems operate on generally consistent headways throughout the day, the transfer times repeat in a similar fashion each hour. On weekdays RTA operates on 60-minute headways. SLO operates on 30-, 45- and 60-minute headways depending on the route and time of day, which can make the exact transfer times vary depending on the hour. Appendix A of this working paper displays the times that each route bus is present at the Government Center/Downtown Transit Center in 15-minute increments for full weekday service during the academic year. Appendix B provides a series of tables depicting transfer times at selected times as described below.

- Weekday Morning Service: RTA Routes 9, 10, and 12 start operations at the Government Center at 6:33 AM. SLO Transit's bi-directional routes (1, 2, 3, and 4 – A and B) begin service at the Downtown Transit Center between 6:00 AM and 6:45 AM. The first transfer opportunity between the two systems occurs before the three RTA route departures at 7:33 AM. Six of the eight SLO Transit routes complete a loop before the 7:33 AM RTA departures, allowing passengers to transfer to RTA inter-city routes. The two SLO Transit routes that do not complete a loop are 2B and 3B operating in the counter-clockwise direction, but Routes 2A and 3A do complete a clockwise loop of the same route and return to the Transit Center before the RTA 7:33 AM departures. The first morning RTA routes with passengers are scheduled to arrive at 7:12 AM (Route 12), 7:24 AM (Route 9), and 7:28 AM (Route 10) at the Government Center. Route 9 Express arrives at 7:27 AM. Shortly after, SLO Transit route 4A departs at 7:30 AM, and routes 1B, 2B, 3B, and 4B depart at 7:45 AM. Routes 1A and 2A leave at 7:15 AM, which allows for potential transfers from RTA Route 12, scheduled to arrive at 7:12 AM. Route 3A departs at 7:20 AM, providing a reasonable window for passengers transferring from Route 12. The only SLO Transit routes that facilitate transfers to and from all three RTA routes are 1B and 4A, which share dwell time at the Government Center/Downtown Transit Center hub.

One noteworthy observation is that SLO Transit Route 4A is scheduled to complete its first loop from 6:00 AM to 6:35 AM at the Downtown Transit Center, missing the scheduled transfer opportunity for the first RTA intercity departures at 6:33 AM by just two minutes. Since this is the first morning run, it may be possible to adjust the public timetable to allow Route 4A to arrive at 6:30 AM to allow passengers to transfer to the 6:33 AM RTA departures.

- Weekday Midday Service: Transfers between both systems are available for the entire day. The pattern does not repeat identically throughout the day because SLO Transit Routes 3A and 3B change headways midday. Route 3A runs more frequently during the first half of the day and Route 3B runs more frequently during the second half of the day.

The transfer pattern midday is like both the morning and late-night transfers as described in this section. One significant difference is that the five arrivals of RTA Route 9 from 2:30 PM to 6:30 PM have a much shorter scheduled layover of only three minutes versus 15 minutes earlier and later in the day. This makes transfers in both directions between Route 9 and SLO Transit routes unlikely during this 4-hour period of the day. For example, Route 4A and 4B combined have 2:30 PM, 4:30 PM, and 5:30 PM departures scheduled at the same time RTA Route 9 is scheduled to arrive. There is not enough shared dwell time on these runs to allow for transfers in both directions. The reason for the shorter layover is that RTA serves the Cal Poly Campus directly on those five runs, which also has the effect of reducing the need for those passengers to make a transfer to SLO Transit. The draft SRTP recommends one additional mid-day arrival at the Cal Poly campus on Southbound Route 9 at 12:17 PM. SLO Routes 1B and 2B are in service until 6:30 PM and 6:35 PM respectively and have transfers available at those times as they do in the morning example above.

- Weekday Night Service: The last nighttime departures for RTA Routes 9, 10, and 12 are at 8:33 PM from the Government Center. During the academic year, SLO Transit operates six of its eight routes after 8:33 PM, allowing for transfers to the RTA intercity routes. Routes 1B and 2B, which operate in the counterclockwise direction, end service at 6:30 PM and 6:35

PM, respectively. However, the clockwise counterparts—1A and 2A—operate until 10:00 PM. SLO Transit routes arrive between 8:00 PM and 8:20 PM, enabling transfers to the last RTA departures. SLO Transit Route 3B has an 8:40 PM scheduled arrival at the Downtown Transit Center after the departure of the RTA buses, meaning passengers wanting to transfer to the RTA routes need to take Route 3A, which arrives at 8:10 PM, or the earlier Route 3B that arrives at 7:40 PM. SLO Route 4B is on a layover from 8:20 PM to 8:30 PM allowing Route 4B passengers to transfer to all three RTA routes departing at 8:33 PM. RTA Route 9 has a scheduled stop at the Cal Poly SLO campus on the 8:33 departure which means that RTA passengers who are traveling to the campus do not need to transfer to a SLO Transit bus at that time. RTA Route 10 and 12 passengers can transfer to RTA Route 9 to get to the Cal Poly SLO campus for the 8:33 PM departure.

- Transfers from the last RTA arrivals at the Government Center to SLO Transit are available across the full SLO Transit system, though they are less convenient. The last scheduled RTA arrivals are at 8:18 PM for Route 9, 8:28 PM for Route 10, and 8:06 PM for Route 12. Six SLO Transit routes are in service at these arrival times during the academic year (Routes 1B and 2B end service by 6:35 PM). Four of the SLO routes (1A, 2A, 3A, 4A) have scheduled departures at 8:15 PM, allowing for transfers only from RTA Route 12. Route 4B has an 8:30 PM departure, which can accommodate transfers from all three RTA routes. The 8:28 PM arrival of Route 10 allows only two minutes for passengers to transfer to 4B, assuming everything is on schedule. Route 3B departs at 8:45 PM, providing ample time for transfers from all three RTA routes, but this results in waiting times ranging from 39 to 17 minutes. Passengers from RTA Routes 9 and 10 must wait until 9:00 PM for the next SLO route 4A departure, resulting in a 42- and 32-minute wait from the scheduled arrivals of Routes 9 and 10, respectively. SLO routes 1A, 2A, and 3A leave at 9:15 PM, resulting in a 57- and 47-minute wait for passengers arriving on Routes 9 and 10. Route 12, with its scheduled 8:06 PM arrival, shares 9 minutes of dwell time at the Government Center with SLO Routes 1A, 2A, 3A, and 4A at the Downtown Transit Center allowing for transfer in passengers between both systems between 8:06 PM and 8:15 PM.

  During the summer schedule, SLO Transit routes end service between two to four hours earlier, making transfers with the last RTA departures unavailable.

- Saturday Morning Service: The first departure of RTA Routes 9, 10, and 12 on Saturday morning is at 8:33 AM. Only SLO Transit Route 3A has completed a loop in time to bring passengers to the Downtown Transit Center in time to transfer to the three RTA Routes. The next departures of SLO Transit routes 1A, 2A, 3A, and 4A take place between 9:00 AM and 9:20 AM for intercity passengers who arrive on RTA routes and wish to transfer to SLO Transit. The wait time for passengers transferring from one of the RTA routes to SLO Transit at that time ranges from 32 to 57 minutes.

- Saturday Midday Service: RTA routes 9, 10, and 12 make only five runs on Saturday, while SLO Transit runs 60-minute headways on Routes 1A, 2A, and 3A; and 45-minute headways on Route 4A. This means there are multiple runs per day on SLO Transit where there is no transfer available to or from RTA Routes 9, 10, and 12.

- Saturday Night Service: The last Saturday nighttime departures for RTA Routes 9, 10, and 12 are at 7:33 PM from the Government Center. On Saturdays, SLO Transit Routes 1A, 2A, and 3A complete their last loops at 7:15 PM, so incoming RTA passengers are not able to transfer to those routes on the last Saturday run. Transfers in both directions are possible between RTA routes 9, 10, 12, and SLO Transit Route 4A, which has a scheduled 7:20 PM arrival and a 7:30 PM departure for its last loop of the night. The scheduled arrival time of RTA Route 10 is 7:28 PM, making the transfer to SLO Route 4A tight.
- Sunday Service: SLO Transit operates the same schedule on Saturday and Sunday. However, RTA Routes 9, and 10 operate only three runs and Route 12 operates 5 runs. Transfers between systems are similar to Saturday, but at different times because the three RTA routes start an hour later and end two hours later than on Saturday. The first RTA departure from the Government Center is 9:33 AM and the last is 5:33 PM.

Opportunities for Improvement of Transfers

As both RTA and SLO Transit adjust their routes and schedules, prioritizing convenient transfers between systems to minimize wait times should be a key consideration. However, balancing these adjustments to accommodate transfers with the needs of passengers who do not require them presents challenges. Long-distance intercity RTA routes, in particular, have scheduled transfers in other communities that must be maintained, especially when operating on 60-minute headways. In a survey conducted in October 2023, 48 percent of RTA Regional Route passengers rated the "ease of transfers/connections" as excellent, with an average score of 4.2 out of five. In comparison, 37 percent of SLO Transit passengers provided a similar rating, averaging 3.9 out of five.

According to on-board surveys from October 2023, only 5 percent of RTA passengers on Routes 9, 10, and 12 transferred to SLO Transit to complete their trip, while just under 4 percent of SLO Transit respondents required a transfer to those same RTA routes. Notably, the proportion of passengers transferring between SLO Transit and RTA has increased by 6 percent since 2015 (time period of the last SRTP). Although enhancing inter-system transfers may not be the highest priority, strategically improving connections on the most heavily utilized routes could boost rider satisfaction and expand the intercity ridership market.

Key takeaways regarding transfer opportunities between the two systems are:

- Timing Coordination: The combined schedules of RTA and SLO Transit are not designed as a pulse system, where routes are timed to arrive and depart at the Government Center and Downtown Transit Center at the same time. While service times generally align well, particularly during morning and midday hours when all eight SLO Transit routes are in operation, there are still missed opportunities for transfers between systems. For example, Route 4A misses early RTA departures by just two minutes, highlighting areas for potential improvement.
- Evening Service Gaps: Although many SLO Transit routes continue to operate after RTA's last departures, significant waiting times can occur for passengers transferring from RTA Routes 9 and 10, reducing convenience for late-night passengers. Additionally, SLO Routes 1B and 2B cease service by 6:35 PM, further limiting options.

- Seasonal Variability: The reduction in service hours during the summer schedule restricts transfer opportunities, particularly for late arrivals and departures. This inconsistency can adversely affect commuters throughout the year. This could be improved under the "Operate Academic Schedule Year-Round" alternative for SLO Transit.
- Central Transit Hub: The absence of a central transit hub capable of accommodating at least 11 full-size (40-foot) buses simultaneously poses a significant constraint on the system. As a result, SLO Transit must stagger the schedules of the eight buses in service, preventing all from pulsing into the hub at the same time.

JOINT TRANSIT FACILITIES

Operations and Maintenance Facilities

RTA and SLO Transit operate from separate facilities in San Luis Obispo that are located within one-third of a mile of one another. RTA completed the construction of their facility on Elks Lane in 2022. The City of SLO Transit facility on Prado Road was built in 1984. Both RTA and SLO Transit have capital improvements planned for battery electric bus (BEB) charging infrastructure at their facilities.

The proximity of the operations and maintenance facilities provides opportunities for coordination of parts inventory, which has been in practice for several years. In addition, vehicle charging and training can be more easily coordinated with the close proximity of the facilities. This will be particularly important as both agencies transition into battery electric bus fleets.

Relocated Transit Center

The primary passenger transfer hub in San Luis Obispo is centered on the intersection of Osos Street and Palm Street. The SLO Transit buses stop in five sawtooth bays on the west side of Osos Street north of Palm Street. This is identified as the "Transit Center" by SLO Transit. RTA buses stop on the east side of Osos Street south of Palm Street. This is identified as the "Government Center" by RTA. Up to three RTA buses board and alight passengers there at one time. There is room for a fourth RTA bus around the corner on the south side of Palm Street, which is currently used as a deboarding area during operator shift changes and for express runs. In 2020, RTA completed significant improvements to their portion of the Government Center facility adding a passenger waiting area, two additional shelters, lighting, a ticket vending machine, display boards, and real-time bus arrival digital displays.

The 2016 SRTP noted that SLOCOG was leading an effort to construct a new enhanced transit center on Higuera Street between Santa Rosa Street and Toro Street. In 2012, the Coordinated Downtown San Luis Obispo Transit Center Study envisioned a facility consisting of up to 16 bus bays, indoor/outdoor passenger waiting areas, driver break areas, restrooms, and a transit information counter. The larger transit center would allow for more buses to be able to pulse in and out of the transit center, which would enable enhanced route timing coordination. In 2017, the SLO City Council adopted the Downtown Concept Plan which also envisions a relocated transit center on Higuera Street between Santa Rosa Street and Toro Street. In November of 2023, the SLO City Council approved the purchase of a property in this block on the northwest corner of Higuera Street and Toro Street (1166 Higuera Street). This is the same

property identified in the 2012 Coordinated Downtown San Luis Obispo Transit Center Study as the preferred alternative to advance into environmental review (Alternative 6).

It is recommended that the RTA, City of SLO, and SLOCOG resume project development for a relocated transit center. This would include the development of joint funding applications, environmental clearance, design, project phasing, and construction. A lead agency for environmental clearance, project approvals, and construction would need to be agreed upon to initiate the project development. Both the City of SLO and RTA are capable of being the lead agency for the project. A new Downtown Transit Center which has the capacity for a minimum of 11 buses at one time would allow for better transfers not only between SLO Transit Routes but also between SLO Transit and RTA routes. Additional bays – up to 16 per the 2012 Downtown Coordinated Downtown San Luis Obispo Transit Center Study – would allow for full transfers with express buses and other potential intercity routes. A key feature not fully envisioned in the 2012 study is the addition of bus charging at bus bays. This will be important to support the transition to a BEB fleet by both SLO Transit and RTA.

JOINT PROCUREMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A joint procurement is a method of contracting in which two or more purchasers agree from the outset to use a single solicitation document (Request for Proposals – RFP) to enter into a single contract with a vendor for the delivery of goods or services in a fixed quantity with jointly developed technical specifications. The purchasers in a joint procurement process may also enter into individual contracts. FTA and Caltrans will review joint procurements to ensure that the RFP expresses a minimum and potential maximum order based on the reasonably expected needs of the participating agencies. One agency would agree to be the lead agency for joint procurements and would take the responsibility of ensuring compliance with FTA and Caltrans requirements.

Bus Procurement

Both the City of SLO and RTA are participating agencies in the California Association of Coordinated Transportation (CalACT) transit purchasing cooperative. The procurement process for the CalACT cooperative is led by the Morongo Basin Transit Authority (MBTA). The MBTA recently completed a heavy-duty bus procurement (RFP #23-01) for the consortium. In July 2024, MBTA issued an intent to award contracts to Gillig, New Flyer, and Motor Coach Industries (MCI) for diesel, compressed natural gas, battery-electric, and fuel-cell electric buses. This procurement includes 35’ and 40’ transit buses, and 45’ commuter buses.

Bus purchases include the selection of multiple different optional features including seating, flooring, destination signs, wheelchair restraints, and many more. For shared parts and training, it would be useful for SLO Transit and RTA to coordinate on selection of optional features.

Technology

Both RTA and SLO transit have technology projects in their capital improvement programs. The SLO Transit Innovation Study places a high priority on replacing the CAD/AVL and APC systems to incorporate more state-of-the-art technology. The capital improvement program includes funding in FY 2027/28 to

replace the system. There may be an opportunity to procure systems jointly with RTA, which has a CAD/AVL technology contract that expires in 2026.

If microtransit is implemented in both systems, a joint procurement of the technology provider would be a strategic way to implement new technology for both operations. System parameters, policies, and operations can be implemented separately by both agencies under the same technology. A specific example of this is with Placer County Transit, Roseville Transit, and Auburn Transit which implemented a joint procurement in 2022. The RFP resulted in six proposals. Placer County was the lead agency for the procurement.

Having common technology vendors, software and hardware would be beneficial for parts, training, and scheduling installations, maintenance, and repairs.

Passenger Shelters

Both RTA and SLO will be improving bus stops over the seven-year planning period. This will involve the addition and replacement of passenger shelters and amenities at certain bus stops. In some cases, the improvements may be within the City of San Luis Obispo for stops served by both systems. A joint procurement of shelters and related passenger amenities would be advantageous. In addition to leading large-scale bus procurement, the CalACT transit purchasing cooperative has a contract in place with Tolar Manufacturing. The contract includes different sizes and styles of shelters, seating, lighting, map holders, and digital real-time arrival signs – among other accessories. This contract can be in place through October of 2027 if all three one-year extensions are executed. RTA has used and plans to continue to use this contract for passenger shelter purchases. This is an option and an ongoing opportunity for both RTA and SLO to jointly procure passenger shelters.

JOINT GRANT APPLICATIONS

RTA and SLO Transit recently coordinated on a joint application for discretionary FTA 5339 funds along with Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transportation District and Santa Cruz Metro. The application was titled *Electrifying the California Central Coast*. Both RTA and Santa Barbara were successful in receiving funding from this submittal. RTA will receive $2.6 million toward the purchase of four BEBs to replace aging diesel buses. Prior to this grant, the RTA submitted a FTA 5339 grant that awarded funding for five BEBs for RTA and six BEBs for SLO Transit.

When practical, RTA and SLO Transit should consider joint applications for discretionary funding at the Federal and State levels to increase competitiveness. This helps secure the support of local representatives at both levels along with support from important entities within the region. Joint applications would be particularly useful for projects and initiatives that both agencies coordinate such as joint procurement of buses, charging infrastructure, bus stop/transit center improvements, and technology.

RUNABOUT STRATEGIES

Runabout is the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) complementary paratransit service for persons with disabilities. This is the sole ADA complementary paratransit service for San Luis Obispo County. The service is operated by the RTA and meets the ADA paratransit requirements for all fixed-

route transit service operators in the County. The San Luis Obispo region has accomplished a significant coordination step by establishing this single regional ADA service.

Cost of Americans with Disabilities Paratransit Service

Runabout is an effective service meeting the needs of passengers who are not able to use fixed routes due to disabilities. RTA has continued to meet on-time performance standards for Runabout and its other demand-responsive services. Runabout service is on-time if the vehicle arrives within 30 minutes of the appointed pick-up time. The goal is 95 percent or higher. Runabout surpassed this goal in Fiscal Year 2022-23 with a 99 percent on-time average. This exceeds the on-time performance of RTA fixed routes which achieved 88 percent in fiscal year 2022-23.

The cost of operating ADA paratransit service is relatively high on a per-passenger basis compared to other general public transit services. This is true for Runabout as well. In Fiscal Year 2022/2023 the Runabout subsidy per passenger was $146 compared to $11.81 for RTA fixed route services and $5.63 for SLO Transit fixed routes. In Fiscal Year 2022/2023 the Runabout operating cost was $3.43 million which represents 26 percent of the RTA systemwide costs. The annual ridership of 22,963 represented only three percent of the systemwide ridership. The high cost and low productivity of ADA paratransit service are typical for all public transit agencies, especially those ADA paratransit systems that operate across both rural and small urban areas. As ridership continues to increase coming out of the effects of the pandemic, RTA has been able to decrease the subsidy per passenger by 20 percent to $138.73 per passenger based on pre-audited Fiscal Year 2023-24 data.

The 2016 Short Range Transit plan noted that one of the factors driving the growth of Runabout operating costs is the increasing average length of passenger trips. Factors leading to this were noted as changes in healthcare and overall greater mobility among seniors and persons with disabilities. Based on Runabout trip samples taken from October 1 to October 14, 2023, 54 percent of Runabout trips were taken between two different communities. Average trip lengths on Runabout in FY 2023-24 were 12 miles. The average trip length of all demand response peers in Working Paper #2 is 6 miles. Only one peer operator – Yolo Bus – has a demand response average trip length greater than RTA at 13 miles. Yolo Bus, like RTA, offers paratransit service within ¾ miles of all fixed routes, including long-distance intercity routes. RTA operates long-distance regional fixed routes totaling 422 directional route miles (DRM) over a very large geographic service area. The DRM of the nine peer operators in Working Paper #2 averages 312. RTA has the second highest DRM after Monterey-Salinas Transit, which has 448 DRM. These long trips can require long dead-head travel which contributes to the high subsidy per passenger and high cost per vehicle revenue hour.

Cost Reduction Measures

While rebounding ridership is bringing down the cost per passenger, the overall cost of providing Runabout service is still a concern to RTA. RTA has already implemented some substantive strategies to reduce the cost of service. It is recommended that RTA continue to monitor the service and pursue additional cost-reduction measures.

Cost Reduction Measures Implemented

RTA has implemented several measures to reduce or contain the costs of Runabout service. RTA eliminated general public service on Runabout over a decade ago. RTA has also implemented a three-year recertification process to ensure that they are only providing service to ADA-eligible passengers. A no-show policy is in place to reduce the number of riders who book trips but fail to show up for the ride. In the fiscal year 2022-23, there were only 279 no-shows on Runabout, which is only 1.2% of the Runabout ridership that year.

RTA, SLO Transit, and other fixed-route operators in the County offer rides to ADA passengers on fixed routes at no cost to the rider, although RTA reimburses SLO Transit and Morro Bay Transit for free rides as spelled out in cooperative agreements with both agencies. This is meant to encourage ADA passengers to use the fixed route services and require fewer Runabout trips. In Fiscal Year 2022-23, there were 15,695 free ADA boardings which was 68 percent of the Runabout ridership that year. In Fiscal Year 2023-24 there were 15,875 free ADA boardings which was 59 percent of Runabout ridership. Based on these relatively high levels of ADA-eligible passenger ridership on fixed routes, the program appears to be effective and should continue to be promoted as both an added benefit for ADA-eligible passengers and as a cost-reduction measure for Runabout.

Additional Cost Reduction Measures Considered

RTA has considered other measures including subsidized taxi or Transportation Network Company (TNC) rides, reducing the seven-day booking window, and instituting call-backs for next-day rides.

- TNC Subsidized Rides – Transit agencies have begun partnering with TNCs such as Uber and Lyft to supplement existing services. This is a common solution to provide passenger service outside of regular operating hours in areas where TNC service is generally available. TNC service is also a good first/last-mile solution for bus passengers. It is common for the agency to subsidize up to a certain amount of the trip cost and the rider pays the rest. This can be done by working with the TNC to establish a promotion code specific to the transit agency. For Example, Marin Transit has implemented a TNC program known as Catch-A-Ride that allows eligible riders to receive up to eight one-way rides per month at a $14 per ride discount for general riders and $18 for low-income riders.
- Reducing Booking Window – The current RTA policy for Runabout is to permit riders to schedule trips up to seven days in advance, although the ADA only requires next-day scheduling. The longer booking window of seven days is a good customer service feature but can have some disadvantages such as an increased potential for no-shows, and the need to adjust trips based on fluctuations in trip demand.
- Call-backs for next-day rides – This practice would allow schedulers to optimize scheduling for trips for the next service days. Schedulers would need to call each rider back for the next service day to tell the passenger what their scheduled pick-up is for the next day.

Coordination with Human Service Transportation

The San Luis Obispo County Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plan (CHSPTP) completed by SLOCOG in 2022 includes implementation strategies to coordinate between human service transportation programs and services operated by RTA and SLO Transit. While there are multiple non-profit and human service transportation programs (See Working Paper #1) Ride-On Transportation and Senior Go! are the services that RTA and SLO transit focus their coordination efforts with.

Ride-On serves as a Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA) in San Luis Obispo and in that role provides door-to-door shuttle service for seniors, veterans, persons with disabilities, and social service agencies. Senior Go! is a transportation service available to seniors aged 65 and older in San Luis Obispo County. Senior Go! is a SLOCOG program. SLOCOG has designated the RTA as a CTSA for the purpose of passing funding for the program through the RTA. The service is operated by Ventura Transportation Systems Inc. (VTS) and is managed by SLOGOG.

Customer Facing Technology

The CHSPTP recommends improvements to customer-facing technology for scheduling trips and fare payment among human service transportation providers. The CHSPTP also recommends adding technology to improve scheduling/dispatching, vehicle tracking, and responding to unforeseen changes in service needs. The CHSPTP recommends coordinating these efforts between transportation providers to avoid using different technology platforms.

RTA plans to conduct a procurement for a new paratransit scheduling and dispatching software contract in early 2025 for Runabout. The existing contract for paratransit scheduling and dispatch software is set to expire in 2025. The new agreement will allow RTA to implement the latest features in this technology. This may include:

- Automated Scheduling
- Automated Ride Confirmations
- Ride Status Updates
- Real-Time Tracking
- User Interface with Drivers, Dispatch, and Users
- Route Optimization
- Reporting and Analytics

The number of software vendors in this field has increased significantly in recent years. The onboard hardware and technology are advanced, reliable and widely available. This has been able to improve the user experience as well as the expectations of the public.

Ride-on recently contracted with Ecolane to implement improved scheduling software. Senior Go! scheduling and dispatching software is managed by the contractor – VTS. With RTA updating its paratransit scheduling and dispatching platform, the opportunity exists for human service transportation providers such as Ride-on and Senior Go! to piggyback with RTA to obtain and deploy the same

technology or deploy new technology that can be coordinated with existing technology. A coordinated scheduling technology would enhance the ability of agencies to coordinate with one another in providing transportation across the different demand-responsive services available.

Travel Management Coordination Center

In 2015 Ride-On was awarded a Federal Transit Administration Mobility Services for All Americans (MSAA) Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) research grant to design a Travel Management Coordination Center (TMCC) for San Luis Obispo County. The TMCC would be a single information center with shared phones and a website meant to provide the most convenient access to information on transportation services in the region with direct access to trip reservations.

As part of the process, a TMCC advisory committee was created, which included RTA, The City of San Luis Obispo, and SLOCOG along with multiple other entities with a stake in regional transportation. The final report was issued in 2018. The report provided a comprehensive review of the administrative, operational, and technical design development of the San Luis Obispo County TMCC. The project deliverables included the concept of operations, system requirements, high-level system design, and a phased implementation plan.

The CHSPTP and the 2016 Short Range Transit Plans include a recommendation for creating a one-call center for regional transportation services. The CHSPTP terms it a One Call/One-Click Center. With advances in technology since 2018 and a resumption of services, since the COVID-19 pandemic has subsided, it is recommended that the efforts to form a TMCC resume during the SRTP planning period. The 2018 TMCC Project report provides a good starting point, along with coordination between RTA and Ride-on to deploy the same paratransit reservation and dispatch software.

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Chapter 12
SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN

This Short Range Transit Plan for SLO RTA is the result of extensive analysis, outreach, and discussion with the RTA staff, stakeholders, and the public. As shown in the following tables, operating expenses for the base case scenario will increase by 19 percent over the seven-year planning period. With limited additional transit operating revenue available, this short range transit plan does not include any major service expansions. Some of the plan elements will reduce overall operating costs through gains in efficiency. Other proposed plan elements represent reinstating services which were suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although it is anticipated that ridership will continue to recover, it is not likely that RTA will reach pre-pandemic levels during this planning period.

The following service plan recommendations are divided into two categories: Financially constrained and financially unconstrained. Unconstrained plan recommendations should be considered if additional funding becomes available or as warranted through the SLOCOG unmet transit needs process.

In summary, the nine service changes presented in the financially constrained service plan will increase ridership by one percent over the planning period with a small annual operating cost increase. This plan will improve mobility for residents of San Luis Obispo County through increased frequency and school tripper service, as well as changes to the Regional Routes fare program.

PLAN ASSUMPTIONS

- Forecasts of annual operating and administrative costs were developed as presented in Table 57. "Base case" or "status quo" operating and administrative cost forecasts were estimated based on the projected RTA 2025-26 Budget. An annual inflation escalator of three percent was applied to project operating costs for each following year of the planning period. The Plan also presumes that Express trips operated prior to the pandemic will be restored as overcrowding on the regular hourly routes is encountered.

- Ridership and corresponding fare revenue for each SRTP element was estimated as presented in Tables 58 and 59. Ridership is assumed to grow at a rate of 2 percent annually between FY 2025-26 and FY 2027-28. This reflects both the projected population growth rate of 0.7 percent annually and a continued post-COVID increase in ridership. Ridership growth is assumed to slow to a growth rate of 1 percent annually after FY 2027-28.

- All fiscally constrained plan elements are recommended for implementation in FY 2025-26.

FINANCIALLY CONSTRAINED SERVICE PLAN

Operating costs, ridership, and fare revenue estimates for RTA service plan elements are shown in Tables 57, 58, and 59 described below. The reader is encouraged to review Chapter 7: RTA Service Alternatives for more detailed information on how each plan element was developed. Figures 31-33 present all plan elements graphically.

Table 57: RTA Short Range Transit Development Plan Operating Costs

Plan Element	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29	FY 2029-30	FY 30-31	FY 31-32
Base Case Operating Cost [1]							
Marginal Systemwide Operating Costs	$10,247,580	$10,555,000	$10,871,700	$11,197,900	$11,533,800	$11,879,800	$12,236,200
Fixed Costs	$4,748,780	$4,891,200	$5,037,900	$5,189,000	$5,344,700	$5,505,000	$5,670,200
RTA Administration and Contingency Costs	$3,256,200	$3,353,900	$3,454,500	$3,558,100	$3,664,800	$3,774,700	$3,887,900
Total	**$18,252,560**	**$18,800,100**	**$19,364,100**	**$19,945,000**	**$20,543,300**	**$21,159,500**	**$21,794,300**
Financially Constrained Plan Costs							
Streamline Route 10 in Santa Maria - All but 2 weekday runs	-$27,000	-$27,800	-$28,600	-$29,500	-$30,400	-$31,300	-$32,200
Provide Route 10 Southbound 6:03 AM Run	$19,700	$20,300	$20,900	$21,500	$22,100	$22,800	$23,500
End 7:33 PM Run at Nipomo and Eliminate Route 10 8:33 PM Southbound Trip	-$84,000	-$86,500	-$89,100	-$91,800	-$94,600	-$97,400	-$100,300
Route 9 Mid-Day Service to Cal Poly	$1,700	$1,800	$1,900	$2,000	$2,100	$2,200	$2,300
Paso Robles High School and Daniel Lewis Middle School Tripper	$19,700	$20,300	$20,900	$21,500	$22,100	$22,800	$23,500
Add Saturday Paso Robles Route A Service, 7:45 AM to 6 PM	$49,800	$51,300	$52,800	$54,400	$56,000	$57,700	$59,400
Arroyo Grande Tripper	$26,100	$26,900	$27,700	$28,500	$29,400	$30,300	$31,200
Fare Structure Changes - Discount Fare Verificat	$100,000	$50,000	$50,000	$50,000	$50,000	$50,000	$50,000
Financially Unconstrained Plan Costs							
Paso Robles Route B Sunday Service, 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM	$39,700	$40,900	$42,100	$43,400	$44,700	$46,000	$47,400
Rt 9 - Add 1 Roundtrip on Saturday	$21,200	$21,800	$22,500	$23,200	$23,900	$24,600	$25,300
Rt 10 - Add 1 RT on Saturday	$22,500	$23,200	$23,900	$24,600	$25,300	$26,100	$26,900
Rt 27- Add Saturday Service 7:30 AM to 8:15 PM	$46,400	$47,800	$49,200	$50,700	$52,200	$53,800	$55,400
Total Financially Constrained Marginal Service Plan Costs	**$106,000**	**$56,300**	**$56,500**	**$56,600**	**$56,700**	**$57,100**	**$57,400**
Total Financially Unconstrained Marginal Operating Costs	**$129,800**	**$133,700**	**$137,700**	**$141,900**	**$146,100**	**$150,500**	**$155,000**
Total Operating Cost for Constrained Plan	**$18,358,560**	**$18,856,400**	**$19,420,600**	**$20,001,600**	**$20,600,000**	**$21,216,600**	**$21,851,700**

Note 1: Base Case (status quo) costs based upon FY 2025-26 RTA Budget. Assumes 3% annual inflation rate for the planning period.

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

Table 58: RTA Short Range Transit Plan Ridership Projections

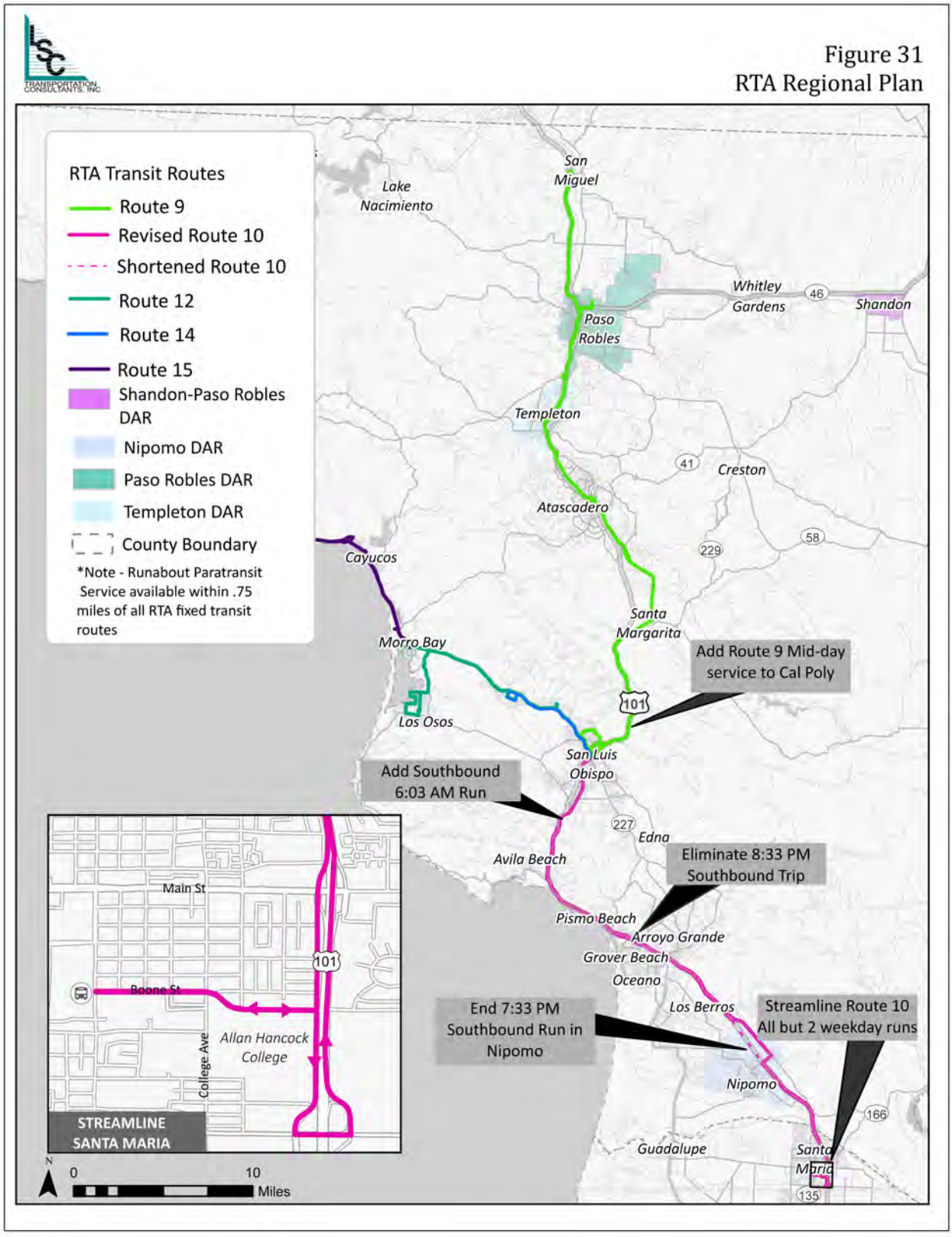
	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29	FY 2029-30	FY 30-31	FY 31-32
Annual Ridership							
Base Case	793,100	809,000	825,100	833,400	841,700	850,100	858,600
Financially Constrained Service Plan Elements							
Streamline Route 10 in Santa Maria - All but 2 weekday runs	-1,700	-1,700	-1,800	-1,900	-2,000	-2,100	-2,300
Provide Route 10 Southbound 6:03 AM Run	3,600	3,700	3,800	4,000	4,200	4,500	4,900
End 7:33 PM Run at Nipomo and Eliminate Route 10 8:33 PM Southbound Trip	-5,100	-5,200	-5,400	-5,700	-6,000	-6,400	-6,900
Route 9 Mid-Day Service to Cal Poly	400	410	430	450	480	510	550
Paso Robles High School and Daniel Lewis Middle School Tripper	2,300	2,350	2,440	2,560	2,720	2,920	3,160
Add Saturday Paso Robles Route A Service, 7:45 AM to 6 PM	5,700	5,800	6,000	6,300	6,700	7,200	7,800
Arroyo Grande Tripper	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,200	1,300	1,400	1,500
Impact of Fare Structure Changes (Flat Fare)	*2,700*	*2,800*	*2,800*	*2,800*	*2,900*	*2,900*	*2,900*
Subtotal Impact of Constrained Plan Service Elements	*9,000*	*9,260*	*9,370*	*9,710*	*10,300*	*10,930*	*11,610*
Financially Unconstrained Service Plan Elements							
Paso Robles Route B Sunday Service, 8:15 AM to 5:15 PM	4,400	4,500	4,700	4,900	5,200	5,600	6,100
Rt 9 - Add 1 Roundtrip on Saturday	1,700	1,700	1,800	1,900	2,000	2,100	2,300
Rt 10 - Add 1 RT on Saturday	1,700	1,700	1,800	1,900	2,000	2,100	2,300
Rt 27- Add Saturday Service 7:30 AM to 8:15 PM	4,200	4,300	4,500	4,700	5,000	5,400	5,800
Subtotal Impact of Unconstrained Plan Service Elements	*12,000*	*12,200*	*12,800*	*13,400*	*14,200*	*15,200*	*16,500*
Total Ridership with Constrained Service Plan	**802,100**	**818,260**	**834,470**	**843,110**	**852,000**	**861,030**	**870,210**
Total Ridership with Unconstrained Service Plan	**814,100**	**830,460**	**847,270**	**856,510**	**866,200**	**876,230**	**886,710**

Table 59: RTA Short Range Transit Plan Fare Revenue Impacts

	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29	FY 2029-30	FY 30-31	FY 31-32
Fare Revenues (Passenger Revenues)							
Base Case	$1,124,050	$1,146,500	$1,169,500	$1,181,200	$1,193,000	$1,204,900	$1,216,900
Financially Constrained Service Plan Elements							
Streamline Route 10 in Santa Maria - All but 2 weekday runs	-$2,700	-2,800	-2,900	-3,000	-3,200	-3,400	-3,700
Provide Route 10 Southbound 6:03 AM Run	$5,600	$5,700	$5,900	$6,200	$6,600	$7,100	$7,700
End 7:33 PM Run at Nipomo and Eliminate Route 10 8:33 PM Southbound Trip	-$8,000	-$8,200	-$8,500	-$8,900	-$9,400	-$10,100	-$10,900
Route 9 Mid-Day Service to Cal Poly	$500	$510	$530	$560	$590	$630	$680
Paso Robles High School and Daniel Lewis Middle School Tripper	$2,400	$2,400	$2,500	$2,600	$2,800	$3,000	$3,200
Add Saturday Paso Robles Route A Service, 7:45 AM to 6 PM	$6,000	$6,100	$6,300	$6,600	$7,000	$7,500	$8,100
Arroyo Grande Tripper	$900	$900	$900	$900	$1,000	$1,100	$1,200
Impact of Fare Structure Changes (Flat Fare)	*-$9,000*	-$9,200	-$9,600	-$10,100	-$10,700	-$11,500	-$12,500
Subtotal Fare Impact of Plan Service Elements	*-$4,300*	*-$4,590*	*-$4,870*	*-$5,140*	*-$5,310*	*-$5,670*	*-$6,220*
Financially Unconstrained Service Plan Elements							
Paso Robles Route B Sunday Service, 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM	$4,600	$4,700	$4,900	$5,100	$5,400	$5,800	$6,300
Rt 9 - Add 1 Roundtrip on Saturday	$2,200	$2,200	$2,300	$2,400	$2,500	$2,700	$2,900
Rt 10 - Add 1 RT on Saturday	$2,200	$2,200	$2,300	$2,400	$2,500	$2,700	$2,900
Rt 27- Add Saturday Service 7:30 AM to 8:15 PM	$3,400	$3,500	$3,600	$3,800	$4,000	$4,300	$4,700
Subtotal Impact of Unconstrained Plan Service Elements	*$12,400*	*$12,600*	*$13,100*	*$13,700*	*$14,400*	*$15,500*	*$16,800*
Total Fare Revenue with Constrained Service Plan	**$1,119,750**	**$1,141,910**	**$1,164,630**	**$1,176,060**	**$1,187,690**	**$1,199,230**	**$1,210,680**
Total Fare Revenue with Unconstrained Service Plan	**$1,132,150**	**$1,154,510**	**$1,177,730**	**$1,189,760**	**$1,202,090**	**$1,214,730**	**$1,227,480**

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

Figure 31
RTA Regional Plan



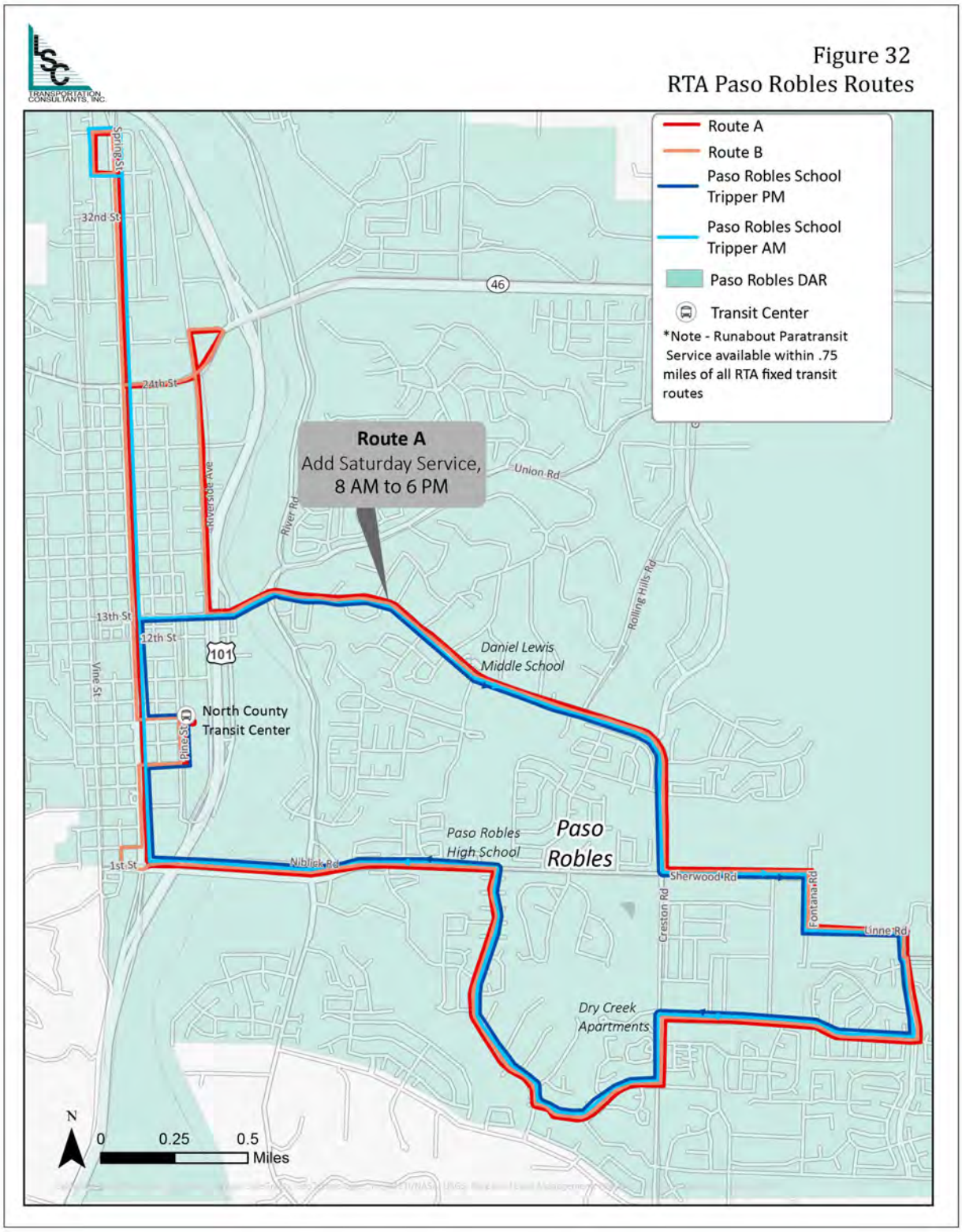
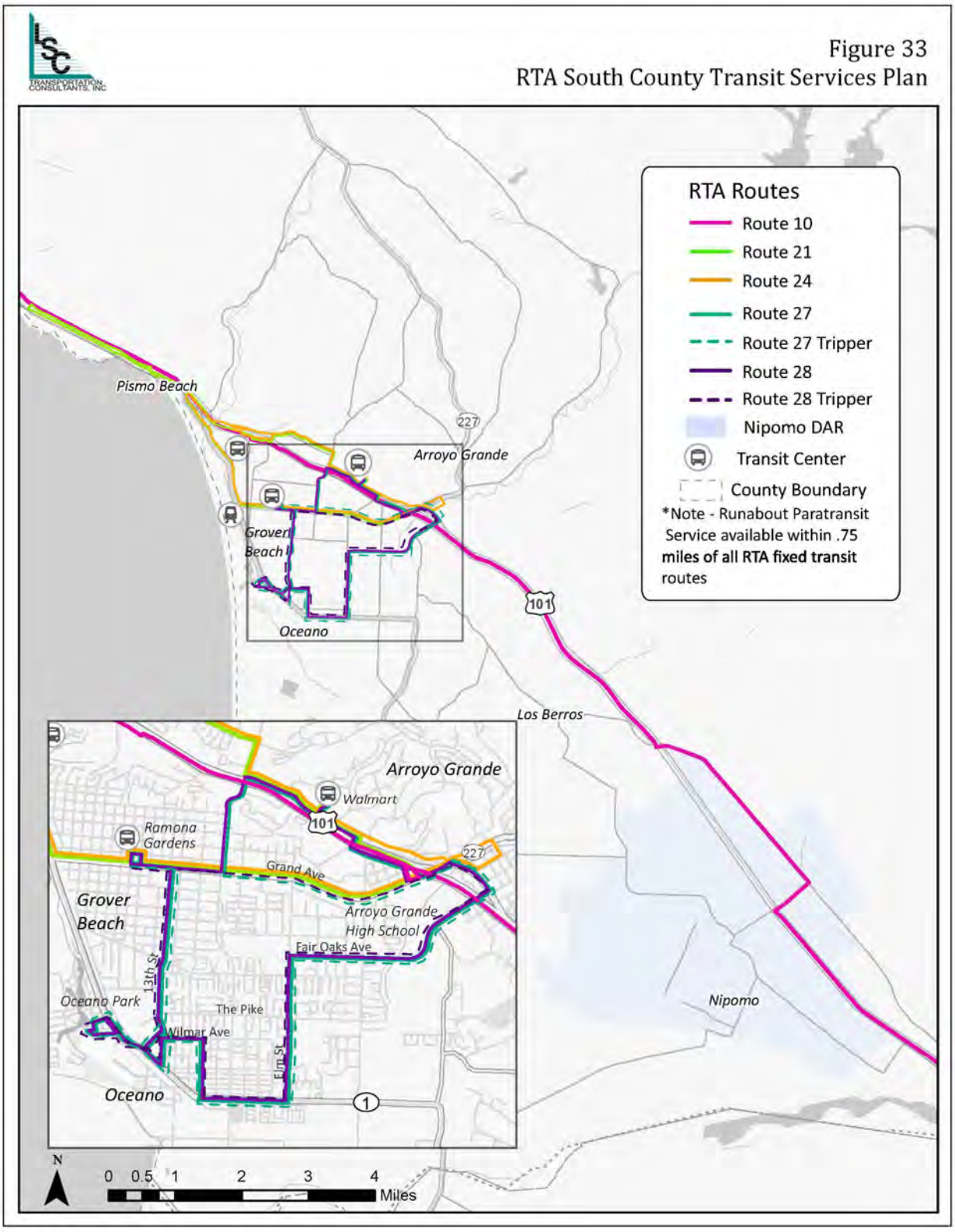


Figure 32
RTA Paso Robles Routes
Route A
Route B
Paso Robles School Tripper PM
Paso Robles School Tripper AM
Paso Robles DAR
Transit Center
*Note - Runabout Paratransit Service available within .75 miles of all RTA fixed transit routes
Route A
Add Saturday Service, 8 AM to 6 PM
Spring St
32nd St
24th St
13th St
12th St
1st St
Vine St
Pine St
River Rd
Riverside Ave
Union Rd
Rolling Hills Rd
Creston Rd
Sherwood Rd
Fontana Rd
Linne Rd
Niblick Rd
46
101
North County Transit Center
Daniel Lewis Middle School
Paso Robles High School
Paso Robles
Dry Creek Apartments
N
0
0.25
0.5
Miles

Figure 33
RTA South County Transit Services Plan



Streamline Route 10 in Santa Maria – All but 2 weekday runs

Historically, the City of Santa Maria has helped subsidize Route 10 service with (FTA) Section 5307 funds. The Santa Maria City Council voted in April 2024 to stop providing funds for Route 10 operations and instead directed staff to operate SMRT services between the cities of Santa Maria and San Luis Obispo. In order to mitigate the loss of revenue for Route 10, it is recommended that Route 10 streamline service in Santa Maria for all but two weekday runs. The revised route would eliminate the Marian Medical Center, and the Amtrak bus stop except for the southbound run departing Santa Maria northbound at 8:14 AM and the southbound run departing San Luis Obispo at 5:33 PM. By leaving these two runs in place, there still remains a connection to Route 10 for residents of the neighborhoods near the Marian Medical Center. It is estimated that this plan element will reduce annual operating costs by $27,000 annually (FY 2025-26) and lose around 1,700 passenger-trips annually.

Provide Route 10 Southbound 6:03 AM Run

The first daily weekday southbound Route 10 run under the current schedule departs San Luis Obispo at 6:33 AM and arrives at the Santa Maria Transit Center at 7:43 AM. While this may be early enough for San Luis Obispo County residents reporting to work at 8:00 AM in downtown Santa Maria, it does not serve earlier work start times in downtown or access 8:00 AM start times for those needing to transfer to SMRT routes to reach other work locations. As part of this plan element, the Route 10 bus which operates the second northbound run, currently "deadheads" to Santa Maria. Instead, this bus would begin passenger service to Santa Maria from the SLO Government Center at 6:03 AM. This run would serve all Route 10 stops, including service to Arroyo Grande at 6:36 AM and Nipomo at 6:49 AM, before arriving at the Santa Maria Transit Center at 7:13 AM.

Opening the doors for one southbound Route 10 run is anticipated to increase ridership by 3,600 passenger-trips over base-case while increasing operating costs by $19,700 annually.

End 7:33 PM Run at Nipomo and Eliminate Route 10 8:33 PM Southbound Trip

This service plan element is recommended to address both the loss of funding from Santa Maria as well as low ridership during the evening hours on Route 10. The final two southbound departures (7:33 PM and 8:33 PM) do not arrive at the Santa Maria Transit Center until 8:43 PM and 9:43 PM, well after SMRT fixed route operations have ceased for the day. Thus, making it impossible for passengers who rely on SMRT to get to their final destinations. Ridership is much lower on the Route 10 8:33 PM southbound trip than on the prior runs. If the 7:33 PM run terminates in Nipomo and the final Route 10 southbound trip (8:33 PM departure from the Government Center) is eliminated, approximately $84,000 in annual operating costs could be saved while losing around 5,100 passenger-trips per year.

Route 9 Mid-Day Service to Cal Poly

Direct RTA service to the Cal Poly campus from North County is currently limited: southbound service is provided to Cal Poly on three morning runs (arriving at 7:12 AM, 7:18 AM, and 8:12 AM) and on four afternoon runs (arriving at 2:17 PM, 3:17 PM, 4:17 PM, and 6:17 PM). These runs all serve Cal Poly before continuing to the Government Center. In the northbound direction, only one run (the last run of the day) serves Cal Poly, departing the Government Center at 8:33 PM and serving Cal Poly at 8:40 PM. Other than this last run, passengers departing Cal Poly and traveling north to Atascadero and Paso Robles must catch

the previous southbound RTA run at the campus before heading northbound. This adds 14 minutes of travel time that would be avoided if more direct Route 9 northbound service was provided to the campus. After a review of driver schedules and timed connections with other routes, it is recommended to add a stop on Route 9 at the Cal Poly campus in the southbound direction at 12:17 PM. This would provide mid-day service between the 8:12 AM service time and the 2:17 PM service time. This service plan element will increase annual operating costs by $1,700 and increase ridership by 400 trips annually.

Paso Robles High School and Daniel Lewis Middle School Tripper

Ridership on Paso Robles Routes A and B drastically increased after the City suspended school bus service in 2021. Schools start and end at specific times, therefore most student ridership is concentrated on the trips that occur right before and after the school day.

To alleviate overcrowding concerns and to better serve both student and non-student passengers alike, RTA should implement a supplemental tripper service to Paso Robles High School and Daniel Lewis Middle School with one morning and one afternoon run. This plan element is anticipated to increase ridership by 2,300 passenger-trips and increase annual operating costs by $19,700. An additional vehicle would be needed for peak service.

Arroyo Grande Tripper

It is recommended that RTA reinstate the tripper runs during the school year to serve Arroyo Grande High School (AGHS) at the regular bell times. This will consist of one morning run of Route 28 and one afternoon run of Route 27. With this plan element, RTA would serve an additional 1,100 passenger-trips and cost around $25,200 in marginal operating subsidy.

Add Saturday Paso Robles Route A Service 7:45 AM to 6:00 PM

Given the recent positive ridership growth trends on the Paso Robles Routes, it is recommended that RTA reinstate Route A Saturday Service from 7:45 AM to 6:00 PM, as funding and drivers become available. Currently, only Route B (counterclockwise one-direction loop) is operated on Saturdays, which makes for long travel times for some passengers. Adding Route A will allow for travel in either direction around the loop. The Saturday Route A schedule should follow the pre-pandemic schedule to maintain good connections with Route 9 Northbound. The service plan element would increase ridership by 5,700 trips annually and increase operating costs by $49,800. An additional bus/driver would be needed for peak Saturday service.

Another option would be to instead implement Route B service on Sunday from 8:15 AM to 5:15 PM. This would have the benefit of seven-day/week local service in Paso Robles, along with connections to Route 9 on Sundays. Annual operating costs of this option would be less than the Saturday Route A Service element ($39,700) but would yield a lower ridership increase (4,400 trips). With this service span, passengers would have a good connection with the 12:10 Route 9 departure to San Luis Obispo with a return trip arriving at Pine and 8th at 4:10 PM. Prior to increasing weekend service in Paso Robles, it is recommended that RTA conduct public outreach to determine if Sunday service is preferable to the additional Saturday service.

FINANCIALLY UNCONSTRAINED SERVICE PLAN

Increase Saturday Service on Route 9

RTA currently provides limited weekend regional service; in general, five roundtrips are offered on Saturdays and three on Sundays. Additional weekend service was one of the top requested service improvements during public outreach and was the most requested improvement by regional passengers who participated in the onboard survey. Current Route 9 Saturday service consists of five daily roundtrips operated every two to three hours. If one additional round trip were provided, service would be closer to every two hours. This would increase ridership by 1,700 trips annually and increase operating costs by $21,200. One additional vehicle/driver would be required for peak Saturday service. This financially unconstrained plan element should be considered as part of the SLOCOG unmet transit needs process. In developing this element, serving Cal Poly on at least one round trip on Saturday should be considered.

Increase Saturday Service on Route 10

Similarly, increasing Route 10 Saturday service by adding one round trip would increase ridership by 1,700 trips and operating costs by $22,500. One additional vehicle/driver would be required. This financially unconstrained plan element should be considered as part of the SLOCOG unmet transit needs process.

Add Saturday Service on Route 27 – 7:30 AM to 8:15 PM

In the South County region, Routes 21, 24, and 28 currently operate seven days per week, whereas Route 27 only operates Monday through Friday. Through the annual unmet transit needs process, the region should consider Saturday Route 27 service during similar hours as Route 28. This would have the impact of increasing annual operating costs by $46,400 and annual ridership by 4,200. One additional vehicle/driver would be required. Prior to implementing this service option, RTA should monitor ridership trends on Routes 21 and 24 to see if bi-directional Saturday service in the South County region is necessary to meet mobility needs.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Transit services require ongoing capital investment in facilities and vehicles. Capital investments in both vehicles and passenger facilities can attract additional riders while improving the quality of service and safety of existing riders. Of note, California's Innovative Clean Transit regulation will go into effect during the plan period, requiring RTA to transition to zero-emission buses (ZEBs).

Fleet Replacement

Transit vehicles must be regularly replaced to maintain a safe and reliable fleet. The RTA Transit Asset Management Plan sets a target to allow no more than 40% of the revenue vehicle fixed route fleet to exceed the FTA-defined useful life. As the vehicle procurement process can take multiple years, transit agencies must identify their vehicle needs well in advance. A detailed fleet replacement table is presented in Chapter 8. The vehicle replacement schedule is shown by year of purchase order, not year of actual expenditure. In summary, RTA will need to replace 28 fixed-route and 40 demand response/cutaway vehicles during the planning period. Fifteen of the fixed-route vehicles will be 40-foot battery electric buses (BEB), which cost on the order of $1.4 million each, while 20 of the demand

response/cutaway fleet replacement vehicles will be EVs. Fleet replacement will cost on the order of $39 million during the seven-year planning period.

Fleet Additions

The plan elements described above will require two more fixed route vehicles to be in service on weekdays (the Paso Robles Tripper and the Arroyo Grande Tripper). Additionally, four more vehicles will be required for peak Saturday service with the implementation of all financially unconstrained plan elements. Currently, 41 vehicles are needed for maximum service. The RTA fleet consists of 68 fixed route and demand response vehicles. Even with the addition of two more vehicles for maximum service on weekdays, RTA will be able to maintain a 25 percent spare ratio. Therefore, expansion of the fixed route fleet will not be required to implement fiscally constrained SRTP elements.

Other Capital Improvements

Table 41 in Chapter 8 presents a seven-year capital improvement plan for all items outside of revenue fleet replacement. This includes support vehicles, maintenance equipment, bus stop improvements, and EV charging infrastructure. This seven-year capital improvement program totals $15 million.

Long-Term Plan for Relocated Transit Center

As noted in this report, there are deficiencies with the Government Center Transfer Point. There is inadequate space for all RTA buses at peak times, resulting in buses that park around the corner on Palm Street. Transferring between the SLO Transit and RTA systems requires walking across two streets. The number of bays available for SLO Transit limits the ability to schedule services to maximize direct bus-to-bus transfers. In 2012, the Coordinated Downtown San Luis Obispo Transit Center Study recommended a facility consisting of up to 16 bus bays, indoor/outdoor passenger waiting areas, driver break areas, restrooms, and a transit information counter. The larger transit center would allow for more buses to be able to pulse in and out of the transit center, which would enable enhanced route timing coordination. In 2017 the SLO City Council adopted the Downtown Concept Plan which also envisions a relocated transit center on Higuera Street between Santa Rosa Street and Toro Street. In November of 2023, the SLO City Council approved the purchase of a property on this block on the northwest corner of Higuera Street and Toro Street (1166 Higuera Street). This is the same property identified in the 2012 Coordinated Downtown San Luis Obispo Transit Center Study as the preferred alternative to advance into environmental review (Alternative 6). Initially, this site is envisioned for parking. A transit center would require using the northern part of Higuera Street which is currently striped for parking and a bike lane and was previously one of three one-way travel lanes and parking.

Project development for a relocated transit center would need to involve close coordination between the City of SLO and RTA along with SLOCOG. This would include the development of joint funding applications, environmental clearance, design, project phasing, and construction. A key feature not fully envisioned in the 2012 study is the addition of bus charging at bus bays. This will be important to support the transition to a BEB fleet by both SLO Transit and RTA. A placeholder for the planning and construction of a new transit center in Downtown San Luis Obispo is included in the RTA financial plan below.

New South County Transfer Point

Currently, all four South County Transit fixed-routes meet at the Ramona Garden Transfer Point at around 30 minutes past the hour, allowing for timed connections. It is possible to transfer between Routes 10, 21, and 24 at the Premium Outlets but Routes 27 and 28 do not stop there. Stakeholders have expressed interest in shifting the Ramona Gardens transfer point to another location. Ideally, this location should serve all four South County Routes, as well as Route 10. The alternatives analysis reviewed two options for a potential new South County Transfer Point: Grover Beach Train Station and Walmart. The analysis showed that moving the transfer point to the Grover Beach Train Station would increase operating costs and reduce ridership. Additionally, it is not efficient to use a regional route to divert Route 10 off of the main 101 corridor to serve the Grover Beach station.

If Walmart becomes the new transfer point, time would need to be added into the Route 10 schedule, along with schedule adjustments for the South County Routes. For the Pismo Outlets to serve as a transfer point, Routes 27 and 28 would need to be realigned. Regardless of the location, capital improvements (bus bays, passenger amenities) will be required for a new South County Transfer Point. The financial plan for this SRTP includes a placeholder for New South County Transfer Point improvements.

FARE CHANGES

A fare peer review in Chapter 4 showed that RTA's fixed-route and Runabout fares are below the peer average. Additionally, RTA fares have not increased since 2017. Several fare alternatives to increase fares and change the fare structure were reviewed in earlier chapters. However, there is a trend among some regions to eliminate fares for all passengers or certain categories of passengers who may be disadvantaged, as a method of encouraging ridership. Eliminating fares for RTA could have significant impacts on vehicle capacity. The additional demand on the Runabout system could lead to large operating cost increases. Passenger fares represent roughly 11 percent of marginal operating costs. In light of all these factors, it is recommended that further study be conducted to determine a fare structure which is appropriate and financially responsible for RTA.

Implement Cal-ITP Open-Loop Contactless Fare-Capping System

As noted in Chapter 10 Fare Alternatives, the California Integrated Travel Project (Cal-ITP), and the California Department of General Services have collaborated to simplify the process for transit providers to implement a contactless fare-capping system. Cal-ITP has also negotiated lower-cost credit card processing fees than would be possible by individual agencies.

Transit fare capping is a fare payment model that sets a maximum amount a rider pays for fares over a specific period, such as a day, week, or longer. Once this cap is reached, the rider does not pay for additional trips taken during that period. The rider is also charged as you go, eliminating the need to pay for the full cost of a 31-Day Pass in advance. One final advantage for RTA and SLO Transit is that, over the long term, the transit operators could curtail or even discontinue the use of the electronic Genfare validating fareboxes. Some transit agencies that have implemented the Cal-ITP program have set a goal of a fully cashless fare system, including Monterey-Salinas Transit (2027). RTA staff has expressed a desire to

follow M-ST's example since this would reduce the staff time needed for the fare counting process as well as the increasing cost of maintenance for the complicated and occasionally unreliable Genfare fareboxes.

In 2024, SLOCOG led an effort to establish and fund the Cal-ITP system on all countywide fixed-routes using SB125 funds. This project will fund the upfront costs – including the purchase and installation of contactless payment hardware and related software – as well as fees for the first five years of operation. The RTA and SLO Transit began the contracting phase to implement the Cal-ITP system in early 2025. It is anticipated that the system will be fully operational by the end of the calendar year 2025. No operating cost or capital cost is reflected in this Plan, although relatively minor processing fees and maintenance costs will be incurred in years 6 and 7 of the Plan period.

In order to offer a fare payment option for unbanked or underbanked passengers, in the short-term the RTA will promote *BankOn* certified financial institutions in SLO County so that riders can obtain a contactless EMV chipped bank card through a low-fee and easy-entry bank account. *BankOn* is an initiative by the Cities for Financial Empowerment (CFE) Fund that works to ensure everyone has access to safe and affordable banking accounts using national account standards for low-fee banking accounts. When banks and credit unions offer accounts that meet these standards, they can receive *BankOn* certification. There are over 350 certified accounts available with 46,000 branches nationwide. Longer term, the RTA will investigate partnerships with a third party to offer a prepaid card that can be reloaded at RTA pass outlets and possibly other organizations. The target to launch a prepaid card is FY26-27.

Implement a Discount Fare Verification Process

When RTA passengers purchase a multi-ride pass on Token Transit or at pass outlets throughout the County, the passenger has the option to choose which fare category they fall under, general public or discount. Similarly, bus operators are instructed to avoid fare-related conflicts and generally to accept the word of cash-paying riders. RTA staff have observed general public passengers paying the discounted cash fare when there is no obvious reason the person qualifies for the discounted fare. As such there is likely some abuse of the fare system.

In an effort to reduce fare evasion, the RTA will implement a program to distribute a discount fare verification card in conjunction with the launch of the Cal-ITP system and the re-establishment of in-person ADA eligibility verification. Passengers can sign up in person at a pre-arranged location (possibly revolving around the county at existing pass outlets) or through an online portal, which will reduce the potential burden for qualifying passengers who may face mobility challenges. This new program will require an increase in staff resources – especially at the outset of the validation and subsequent enforcement process. The RTA should explore directly hiring a staff person or contracting with a third-party organization that has close ties to the elderly and/or disabled community. Token Transit and the Cal-ITP system allow agencies to restrict the ability of users to purchase discounted fares by providing a "good list" of passengers who qualify for discounted fares, and persons buying a discounted pass at a pass outlet would be required to show their eligibility card during purchase. Qualified applicants could submit their documentation via an online portal or in person at an office to be added to the "good list". As shown in Table 57, a total cost of $100,000 is shown in year 1 of the Plan period to launch the discount fare verification program, and $50,000 per year thereafter beginning in year 2.

Implement Flat Fare Over a 2-hour Boarding Period

With the advent of advanced "tap on" fare technologies (see Cal-ITP discussion above), public transit systems operating intercity/regional routes are increasingly converting to a time-period-based fare structure. Passengers using a card or their phone to tap on can board additional buses within a set period (typically two hours) without additional charges. A good example is Monterey-Salinas Transit which converted in 2022 to a fare structure providing boardings within a 2-hour period for $2 general public / $1 for discount-eligible passengers.

On the RTA Regional Routes, this approach would replace the current zone fare structure. With a $2 time-based fare for the general public and $1 for discount passengers, this would result in an effective fare increase for those riding within a single zone, but an effective decrease for those riding in multiple zones – particularly for those traveling through 4 zones, such as from San Luis Obispo to Paso Robles. For cash-paying riders, the $2 general public / $1 discount fare would be paid each time the passenger boards a Regional Route.

An evaluation of the impact of this change in fares on ridership currently paying cash fares was provided in Table 52 of Chapter 10. As shown, the overall existing fare per passenger varies between the various routes, but the overall average fare per passenger is not far above the time-based fares, at $2.24 for full-fare passengers and $1.06 for discount passengers. The impact of the fare changes on ridership levels was analyzed using an elasticity analysis, indicating a small net increase in ridership of 2,700 passenger boardings per year (3.1 percent). The overall impact on fare revenue (including both the change in fares and the change in ridership) is estimated to be a relatively modest reduction of $8,930 per year (6.1 percent).

Another factor to consider when making changes to the RTA fare structure is the impact on Runabout. Per ADA law, Runabout fares can not be more than twice the comparable fixed route fare. Under the flat fare model, the Runabout fare would not be increased for local trips. However, for longer trips Runabout passengers could effectively have a significant fare discount to the current fare structure under the time-based flat fare model. As the majority of Runabout trips begin and end with the City of San Luis Obispo area, the flat fare proposal would not have a significant impact on Runabout fares and corresponding demand for services.

The actual impact on fare revenues would depend on the potential for this fare change to increase revenue by reducing fare evasion, specifically, those passengers paying a cash fare for a single zone but then riding into additional zones. There is no data available on the extent of this pattern, but it is thought to be insignificant. By requiring all passengers on regional routes (not using a pass or eligible for another fare reduction) to pay $2 general public / $1 discount, this strategy may well result in a net increase in fare revenues, while also speeding the boarding process because passengers would no longer need to feed coins into the farebox. It also has the benefit of significantly simplifying the fare structure, reducing the stress on drivers of having to handle fare issues, and reducing the administrative costs of tracking so many fare categories.

Considering the large service area for both RTA regional routes and Runabout, it is recommended that RTA adopt a time-based flat fare structure of $2 for 1 hour instead of $2 for 2 hours (as discussed in Chapter 10). This would limit the loss of fare revenue, limit induced demand for long-distance Runabout

trips while still providing a more cost effective and simpler fare structure. It should be noted that the $1.50 general public / $0.75 discount fares on the local fixed-routes in South County, Paso Robles, Morro Bay, and San Luis Obispo would remain unchanged under this Plan element. This new fare program will require the RTA to seek public input using its established public participation process. The new fare program would be implemented along with the Cal-ITP launch in late 2025.

FINANCIAL PLAN

Table 60 presents the 5-Year Operating and Capital Financial Plan for RTA. The RTA service operating plan is fiscally constrained for the planning period with recurring operating funding sources.

As shown in the table, sufficient revenue is available for planned capital projects including vehicle replacement and other capital costs. Funding for a New Downtown Transit Center and New South County Transfer Point has not yet been secured. As these two projects are still in the visionary phase, competitive grants and partnerships with other agencies will need to be obtained. One of the recommendations in the Marketing Plan (Appendix I) was to limit or eliminate ad sales on transit vehicles going forward. Ad Sales are not a significant source of revenue for RTA and make the vehicles look less appealing.

Table 60: RTA Short Range Transit Development Plan Financial Plan

	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29	FY 29-30	FY 30-31	FY 31-32
Operating Revenues							
TDA LTF Allocation [1]	$9,467,830	$10,314,110	$10,812,390	$11,274,460	$11,740,330	$12,224,390	$12,704,040
Passenger Fares Base Case[2]	$1,124,050	$1,146,500	$1,192,800	$1,253,400	$1,330,200	$1,425,900	$1,543,700
SoCo Management Contract[3]	$149,210	$153,700	$158,300	$163,000	$167,900	$172,900	$178,100
County Management Contract[3]	$128,610	$132,500	$136,500	$140,600	$144,800	$149,100	$153,600
North County Management Contract[3]	$62,400	$64,300	$66,200	$68,200	$70,200	$72,300	$74,500
Interest[4]	$60,000	$61,200	$62,400	$63,600	$64,900	$66,200	$67,500
State Transit Assistance (STA) Including SB 1[5]	$1,497,060	$1,497,100	$1,497,100	$1,497,100	$1,497,100	$1,497,100	$1,497,100
Rural Transit Fund (Administration)	$30,000	$30,000	$30,000	$30,000	$30,000	$30,000	$30,000
Rural Transit Fund (Operating Funds)[6]	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Federal Transit ADM (FTA) (Section 5311) - Operating [6]	$816,700	$837,200	$837,200	$844,700	$850,400	$853,000	$855,600
Total Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5307[7]	$4,376,300	$4,311,000	$4,311,000	$4,341,700	$4,371,000	$4,384,000	$4,397,100
Cuesta Contribution for Route 12 and 14[3]	$155,060	$159,700	$164,500	$169,400	$174,500	$179,700	$185,100
Cuesta Contribution North County	$40,580	$40,580	$40,580	$40,580	$40,580	$40,580	$40,580
Special Events/Revenue Other[3]	$110,000	$113,300	$116,700	$120,200	$123,800	$127,500	$131,300
Subtotal	*$18,017,800*	*$18,861,190*	*$19,425,670*	*$20,006,940*	*$20,605,710*	*$21,222,670*	*$21,858,220*
Fund Balance	$345,060	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Total Operating Revenue	**$18,362,860**	**$18,861,190**	**$19,425,670**	**$20,006,940**	**$20,605,710**	**$21,222,670**	**$21,858,220**
Status Quo Operating Expenditures	**$18,252,560**	**$18,800,300**	**$19,364,300**	**$19,945,200**	**$20,543,700**	**$21,159,900**	**$21,794,600**
SRTP Plan Elements Operating Costs	**$106,000**	**$56,300**	**$56,500**	**$56,600**	**$56,700**	**$57,100**	**$57,400**
SRTP Plan Elements Fare Revenue	**-$4,300**	**-$4,590**	**-$4,870**	**-$5,140**	**-$5,310**	**-$5,670**	**-$6,220**
Balance	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*
Total Capital Revenue Available	**$12,333,130**	**$10,313,610**	**$5,368,170**	**$5,468,210**	**$4,726,900**	**$2,428,030**	**$6,943,730**
Fleet Replacement Costs	*$6,358,300*	*$5,501,400*	*$4,586,700*	*$4,635,200*	*$3,911,800*	*$1,456,700*	*$6,117,900*
Other Capital Costs	*$5,974,830*	*$4,812,210*	*$781,470*	*$833,010*	*$815,100*	*$971,330*	*$825,830*
New Downtown Transit Center	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$20,000,000*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*
New South County Transfer Point	*$0*	*$0*	*$10,000,000*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*
Total Capital Project Costs	**$12,333,130**	**$10,313,610**	**$15,368,170**	**$25,468,210**	**$4,726,900**	**$2,428,030**	**$6,943,730**
Balance	*$0*	*$0*	*-$10,000,000*	*-$20,000,000*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*

Source: RTA FY 2024-25 budget.

Note 1: TDA LTF revenue based on budgeted need for FY 25-26 . LTF revenue available for transit operations varies each year and is dependent on the level of funding from other sources.

Note 2: Passenger fares escalated at projected ridership increase of 2% annually through FY 2027-28 to account for small population increase and rebound from the pandemic. Passenger fares and ridership escalated by 1% annually for the remainder of the planning period.

Note 3: FY 2025-26 budgeted revenues projected at the assumed rate of inflation, 3% annually.

Note 4: Interest escalated at 2% annually.

Note 5: STA revenue growth based on SLOCOG projections of flat growth

Note 6: Based on SLOCOG FTA 5311 revenue projections (-.05% to 3%).

Note 7: Based on SLOCOG FTA 5307 revenue projections (-.05% to 3%).

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