

TO: James L. App, City Manager
FROM: Mike Compton, Director of Administrative Services
SUBJECT: North County Transit Study
DATE: March 1, 2005

Needs: For the Council to consider a formal position on North County Transit Study implementation.

Facts:

1. The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (COG) commissioned a study of transit services in the North County.
2. LSC Transportation Consultants undertook the study with COG's guidance and administration.
3. The study was previously distributed to all councilmen for their information and review.
4. The COG and consultant presented the Study findings and recommendations to the Council at their regular meeting of December 7, 2004.
5. Additionally, the Council appointed an ad hoc committee, Mayor Frank Mecham and Councilman Duane Picanco, to review the Study and provide feedback to the Council.
6. The ad hoc committee met with staff in November and again on January 21, 2005, to formalize their recommendations.

Analysis
and
Conclusion:

Atascadero has rejected the North County Transit Study and does not propose to implement its recommendations. However, some portions of the Study recommendations have merit and should be pursued.

For example, making the CCAT Route 9 more express should be pursued. There are several options that could be considered should the Council concur. These options include:

- a. Eliminating Route 9 travel throughout Paso Robles during our operating hours.
- b. Eliminating Route 9 service to Templeton and/or San Miguel.
- c. Eliminating Route 9 service along Theatre Drive.
- d. Convert *existing* runs between SLO and Paso to one hour headways.

These options merit further discussion with participating agencies. They would however, impact to one degree or another, Paso's local transit system.

In addition to the above, the Study identifies other possibilities. Attached is a "white paper" which includes a matrix of Study recommendations and their relative pros and cons. It concludes with recommendations that are supported by the Council's ad hoc transit committee, Mayor Frank Mecham and Councilman Duane Picanco.

Fiscal
Impact:

None at this time.

Options:

- a. That the Council direct staff to prepare a communication to the Council of Governments supporting the pursuit of the following activities relative to the North County Transit Study:
 1. Continue discussions with the City of Atascadero to determine if the "super loop" option could be implemented. This entails resolving their concerns relative to fare revenues and fare counts; and
 2. Work with all other appropriate transit providers to make Route 9 more "express", including but not limited to Paso providing transit services to Templeton and/or San Miguel; and
 3. Work with all other appropriate transit providers to eliminate route redundancy; and
 4. Work with all other appropriate transit providers to develop a common fare structure; or
- b. Amend, modify, or reject the above option.



NORTH COUNTY TRANSIT STUDY

POSITION PAPER

December 2004

On November 5, copies of the Study were distributed to the Council and City Manager for your review and information (copy of Study Executive Summary attached). The Council's ad hoc transit committee, Mayor Frank Mecham and Councilman Duane Picanco met with staff to review the Study. At the request of the Mayor, a memo dated November 18, 2004 was distributed to the Council and City Manager summarizing the Study findings and recommendations in "bullet point" form (copy attached).

This paper attempts to summarize major Study recommendations and their respective pros and cons in a matrix format. The matrix is provided as follows:

RECOMMENDATION:

PROS

CONS

<p>Extend Route C to Atascadero and their shuttle to Paso Robles</p>	<p>No Additional Cost to Paso Eliminates transfers at Twin Cities Provides no transfer service to Cuesta College for Atascadero residents Adds Saturday service for Atascadero</p>	<p>Remains questionable as to whether or not ridership will improve on Route C Atascadero will NOT participate unless Cuesta College service is provided Must work out equitable distribution of rider counts and fares Would cost Atascadero about \$30,000 annually Route 9 redundancy continues w/Cuesta College service</p>
<p>Reduce Route 9 running time by reducing redundancy, restricting service to Hwy 101 corridor, and using local service to feed Route 9 at central location</p>	<p>Eliminates competition for local fares Eliminates some of the redundancy Reduces travel time from Paso/Atascadero to points south, particularly SLO City</p>	<p>May increase # of transfers between local and Route 9 service Route 9 may not be willing to eliminate Cuesta College service Must find way to service Templeton</p>

Revise "super loop" to serve Hwy 41W/Morro Road and eliminate El Camino shuttle service south of Hwy 41W/Morro Road	No impact on Paso Eliminates Route 9 redundancy south of Hwy 41W/Morro Road Provides service in Atascadero to Lake and zoo	Eliminates Atascadero local service south of Hwy 41W/Morro Road which is their highest fare generating area Requires local transfer (Atascadero only) to travel north or south of Hwy 41W/Morro Road Route 9 redundancy continues north of Hwy 41W/Morro Road Eliminates local service to Cuesta College
Paso to provide mid-day service to San Miguel in lieu of Route 9	Contributes to making Route 9 more "express" Continues services to SM	Paso currently unable to serve SM – lack of resources Must negotiate cost reimbursement w/County and/or Route 9
Implement 1 hour headways all day on Route 9	Provides consistent bus stop times - likely improve ridership Contributes to eliminating redundancy Further reduces travel time from Paso/Atascadero to points south, particularly SLO City	Paso and Atascadero are expected to pay for the 5 additional daily runs to provide service all day – estimated at \$220,000 annually Adding mid-day runs where service is nearly non-existent Need to provide Templeton service by Paso or Atascadero
There should be uniform fares throughout north county	Eliminates confusion and contributes to user friendly travel in north county Probably no impact on Paso	Will result in fare increase for Atascadero (may NOT be bad)

Staff Recommendations:

Paso Route C has struggled. Over the last two fiscal years, Route C only has only generated 12.5% of total fixed route ridership. Through November 2004, Route C has generated 12% of total fixed route ridership. It is possible that recent route changes due to the temporary closure of Union Road will improve ridership but it is not expected to be significant.

Route C service to North County Cuesta College has been sparse at best. This may be due to the redundancy of Route 9 service to North County Cuesta College. Route 9 serves North County Cuesta College on seven southbound runs and seven northbound runs while Route C serves North

County Cuesta College hourly from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Atascadero will not support the proposed "super loop" unless the loop serves North County Cuesta College.

Recommendation: Develop plan with Atascadero and Route 9 to provide "super loop" service between our communities including service to North County Cuesta College. Plan would include elimination of Route 9 service to North County Cuesta College and re-direct North County Cuesta College transit service funding from Route 9 to Atascadero and Paso Robles.

Route 9 currently makes eleven northbound and southbound runs daily, Monday through Friday. Only two of the runs in each direction are "express". Service to San Miguel is included with twice daily trips in both directions and service to North County Cuesta College includes seven trips in each direction. Eliminating service redundancy and moving Route 9 towards being a regional express service would potentially reduce their operating costs and improve service between North County and San Luis Obispo. It now takes eighty-three (83) minutes to travel from Paso Robles to County Government Center in San Luis Obispo.

Recommendation: Develop plan with all transit providers to eliminate redundant services; i.e. eliminate Route 9 service to North County Cuesta College, San Miguel, downtown Templeton and service on local streets during their operating hours. To be included is an alternative plan to provide service to San Miguel and downtown Templeton (see below).

As noted above, Route 9 currently makes eleven northbound and southbound runs daily, Monday through Friday and on most runs it takes eighty-three (83) minutes to travel from Paso Robles to County Government Center in San Luis Obispo. A second step to improve Route 9 service would be to convert their runs to one hour headways. This would reduce travel time from Paso Robles to County Government Center in San Luis Obispo by twenty-three (23) minutes one way and forty-six (46) minutes round trip. The Study proposes one hour headways every hour. To do so requires five additional runs at a cost of \$220,000 which is expected to come from Atascadero and Paso Robles' 5307 funding.

Recommendation: Convert existing runs to one hour headways only. Route 9 should use their own resources; i.e. annual inflationary increases in TDA and 5307 funding to add additional one hour headway runs as resources become available. Additionally, RTA should assess the efficiency of other route operations; i.e. Santa Maria service, to provide additional services to their more successful routes.

The Study suggests that Paso Robles could provide service to San Miguel in order to assist Route 9 to becoming a more express service. Eliminating Route 9 service to Templeton would augment this goal. Paso Robles does not currently have sufficient resources, buses and drivers, in place to serve San Miguel and/or Templeton without impacting existing local services. To serve either community, it would be expected that the County and/or RTA would provide funding in order for Paso to deliver said service.

Recommendation: Develop plan with other transit providers to extend local service in lieu of regional services to San Miguel and Templeton on a full cost reimbursement basis.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

NORTH COUNTY TRANSIT STUDY FISCAL YEARS 2005-06 TO 2014-15

Draft Report

Prepared for the

San Luis Obispo Council of Governments
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Prepared by

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October 15, 2004

LSC #037710
NCTS Draft Report

Federal transportation statutes require that the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG), in partnership with state and local agencies, develop and periodically update a long-range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), and a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which implements the RTP by programming federal funds to transportation projects contained in the RTP. In order to effectively execute these planning and programming responsibilities, SLOCOG requires that each transit operator in its region, which receives federal funding through the TIP, prepare, adopt, and submit to SLOCOG a Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP).

The preparation of this SRTP has been funded, in part, by a grant from the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT), through Section 5303 of the Federal Transit Act. The contents of this SRTP reflect the views of the local jurisdictions, and are not necessarily those of USDOT, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), or SLOCOG. The local jurisdictions are solely responsible for the accuracy of the information presented in this SRTP.

North County Transit Study Executive Summary

The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) in partnership with the Cities of Atascadero and Paso Robles, the County of San Luis Obispo and the San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority (RTA), retained LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. to prepare a ten-year (2005-06 to 2014-15) North County Transit Study for the northern portion of San Luis Obispo County.

STUDY AREA

The study area includes that portion of the county along US Highway 101 north of the Cuesta Grade, encompassing the incorporated cities of Atascadero and Paso Robles, as well as the unincorporated communities of Santa Margarita / Garden Farms, Templeton and San Miguel.

EXISTING TRANSIT SERVICES

Existing services include:

- Countywide Dial-A-Ride service provided by the RTA Runabout program;
- Commuter service between San Luis Obispo and Cuesta College (with two runs to San Miguel) provided by RTA Route 9;
- Fixed route and Dial-A-Ride service within Paso Robles provided by PRCATS;
- Fixed route El Camino Shuttle (ECS) and Dial-A-Ride service within Atascadero provided by Atascadero Transit; and
- Subsidized taxicab service in Templeton (the "Templeton Taxi"), provided by Paso Robles Cab Company.

In Fiscal Year 2002-03 ridership levels and operating subsidy of each public transit service totaled:

<u>Service</u>	<u>One-Way Passenger-Trips</u>	<u>Operating Subsidy</u>
RTA Runabout	18,393	\$702,769
RTA Route 9	123,441	\$593,697
PRCATS Fixed Route	111,711	\$344,270
PRCATS Dial-A-Ride	7,158	\$103,237
Atascadero ECS	37,743	\$134,934
Atascadero Dial-A-Ride	29,145	\$233,205
Templeton Taxi	9,195	\$104,864

ON-BOARD PASSENGER SURVEY

In the latter part of January 2004 and early part of February 2004, LSC conducted an on-board survey of transit riders on the North County transit services. The purpose of the survey was to determine rider characteristics, trip purposes, trip origins and destinations, riding habits of the passengers, perceptions of services and potential improvements. These surveys also found that the majority of respondents use the bus system for work purposes (although there were a large

amount of students on all the services except for the Templeton Taxi program), and a large proportion of respondents stated support for increased and/or implementation of service on weekends.

SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS

A total of twelve regional transit service alternatives and six service alternative scenarios were analyzed, including analysis of annual operating data needs, ridership impacts and performance reviews. The study includes the following recommendations:

Phase I Fixed Route Service Improvements

- Combine PRCATS Route C and El Camino Shuttle Routes into a Single Local Route – This will increase the convenience of public transit as a mode for travel between Paso Robles, Templeton, and Atascadero by eliminating the current need to transfer at Twin Cities Community Hospital. It will also expand the times when services are available, as well as the areas served by the local route. Finally, it will allow Route 9 services to be improved.
- Streamline RTA Route 9 – This will reduce overall running time by approximately 10 minutes per run on most runs. As an example, the typical in-vehicle travel time between downtown Paso Robles and downtown San Luis Obispo will be reduced from 83 to 73 minutes.
- Review Efficiency of the Templeton Taxi Program – Increased reporting and oversight of the Templeton Taxi program will provide information necessary to assess future modifications to the program.

Phase II Fixed Route Service Improvements

- Implement 60-Minute All-Day Service on Route 9 – This will greatly improve the convenience of regional transit services by providing consistent service at the same time past the hour over the course of the day, and by increasing the number of weekday runs from 11 to 16 in each direction on weekdays and from 3 to 4 on Saturdays. Travel time for regional trips will be reduced by roughly 15 percent. For example, a Paso Robles resident commuting by bus to San Luis Obispo will save a total of 26 minutes per day (13 minutes in each direction) in reduced travel time, while Templeton residents will save a total of 20 minutes per day (10 minutes in each direction).
- Revise Joint Local Route to Serve New Areas – With the southern portion of El Camino Real in Atascadero served by hourly Route 9 service, the joint local route can be revised to serve Morro Road between El Camino Real and Atascadero Lake and Park. This corridor has many potential transit trip generators, including medical offices, apartment complexes, the library and the park. In Paso Robles, the joint local route can be revised to provide new service to Niblick Road between Ramboulet Road and Creston Road.
- Provide Mid-Day San Miguel Service Through PRCATS Contract – Provision of this service through PRCATS will reduce SLORTA deadhead requirements and lower contract operating costs. This element could also be expanded to serve other North County areas beyond the study area, such as Shandon.

CAPITAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- New Atascadero Transit Center – A high-priority element of the North County system will be an attractive and functional transit center in the downtown Atascadero area. The expansion of services and increased need for coordination of routes will make a new transit center in Atascadero the key transit facility in the regional network. Optimally, this facility would be shared with other public or private uses.
- Improve Passenger Amenities – This element will include bus stop improvements such as curb, gutter and sidewalk in order to allow operation of a wheelchair ramp from a low-floor bus.
- Transit Vehicles – The operating plan will not impact the number of transit vehicles required, however, it is recommended that low-floor transit buses be considered once a sufficient number of stops are improved. “Clean diesel” strategies are recommended for the North County buses, including the use of ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel. Smaller gasoline-powered vans should be replaced with same when warranted.
- Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) – Implementation of AVL technology should be pursued for the North County transit services, as this technology provides dispatchers and passengers with real-time information, drivers with a silent alarm functions, and automatic announcement of major stops.

INSTITUTIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Memorandum of Understanding Between Atascadero and Paso Robles for Joint North County Local Service – A Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Atascadero and the City of Paso Robles will be needed to establish the joint local route, including the sharing of joint costs (such as marketing and bus repainting), sharing of farebox revenues (if one set of runs generates more revenues than the other), reporting of operational and ridership data, and other operational or financial issues.
- Conduct North County Transit Marketing Study – Particularly with the establishment of the joint local route, there is a strong need for expanded marketing of North County services. The currently-proposed 5313b marketing grant for the Paso Robles marketing study should be expanded to yield a North County regional marketing plan.
- North County Transit Goals – Through a series of goal-setting exercises and ongoing discussion, the following goals were identified as appropriate for the North County transit program:
 - Provide safe, convenient, comprehensive public transit services to North County residents, so long as service can be provided in a cost-effective manner.
 - Where cost-effective, maximize the convenience of the North County public transit network by providing as direct services as possible.
 - Where cost-effective, coordinate the operations and management of transit services.

- Maximize the effectiveness of transit services by encouraging use of fixed route services where feasible.
- Provide services to help attain regional goals to expand mobility for transit dependent populations and increase access to job opportunities.
- Coordinate the SRTP Planning Process – The schedule of SRTP preparation should be adjusted to allow plans to be developed for Atascadero, Paso Robles, and the North County Region simultaneously, by delaying the next Paso Robles SRTP study until Fiscal Year 2008-09.
- Joint Service Procurement – Optimally, a single contractor would provide all services, in order to maximize service efficiency. The only true way to identify if this is also the most cost-effective way is through a joint procurement process, which in turn requires that all services be let for bid simultaneously.
- Strengthen Regional Coordination Through the North County Operators Committee – The role of the North County Operators Committee should be strengthened. In addition, the Committee should undertake joint efforts, such as joint planning, marketing and/or procurement of contractor services. It is not the recommendation of the Consultant that full consolidation of all North County transit programs (such as through establishment of a transit district) be pursued.

FINANCIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following financial plan elements have been identified:

- Provide Consistent Transit Fares in North County – At present, the fare structures provided by the individual service providers have resulted in a confusing overall set of fares. In addition to the differing fares charged by the various programs, some programs require a transfer fee while others do not. In order for the North County transit system to best function as a system, it is important that a simple and consistent fare program be established for all services.
- Share Regional Farebox Revenues with Participating Jurisdictions for Purposes of Calculating TDA Minimum Farebox Ratio – A mechanism is recommended to allocate regional farebox revenues, for purposes of calculating farebox return ratio. This strategy could substantially help in attaining new higher required farebox ratios.
- Provide Transit Services Through Existing Local, State, and Federal Funding – Existing transit funding programs will be relied upon over the plan period to fund ongoing operating costs. Additional 5307 regional funding will be required to fund the Phase 2 expansion of Route 9 services. County funds are assumed to be used to compensate Paso Robles for the subsidy requirements of the mid-day San Miguel service provided as part of Phase II of the service improvements, as well as the costs associated with joint local route service into Templeton. An FTA 5309 grant should be pursued for the Atascadero Transit Center and for bus fleet improvements.

Atascadero's LTF transit requirements are forecast to grow from \$259,000 in the current fiscal year to \$346,000 in Fiscal Year 2014-05, while Paso Robles's transit needs will grow from \$286,700 to \$374,300, respectively. Subtracting transit operating requirements, total LTF funds available for transit capital projects or for non-transit purposes are forecast to grow from a current figure of \$533,700 to a Fiscal Year 2014-15 figure of \$900,500 for the City of Atascadero, and from a current level of \$458,600 to a Fiscal Year 2014-15 level of \$930,600 for Paso Robles.

In total, the financial analysis indicates that the region can gain the substantial benefits of expanded transit services while still enjoying a substantial increase in the level of funding available for other transportation purposes. As the ridership increase generated by this plan (42 percent) substantially exceeds the increase in transit costs (26 percent), this plan will significantly improve the effectiveness of the overall transit service network serving North County.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

It is recommended that major improvements be implemented as follows:

- **Fiscal Year 2004-05** -- Establish the Memorandum of Understanding for the joint local service, and evaluate modifications to Templeton Taxi service.
- **Fiscal Year 2005-06** -- Implement Phase I of service improvements (establish joint local route, modify Route 9, modify fare structure), and conduct site selection study for Atascadero Transit Center.
- **Fiscal Year 2006-07** -- Conduct initial environmental studies for Atascadero Transit Center.
- **Fiscal Year 2007-08** -- Complete environmental studies for Atascadero Transit Center, and gain project approvals, and initiate 5309 grant request process.
- **Fiscal Year 2008-09** -- Implement Phase II of service improvements (begin hourly Route 9 service, modify joint local route to serve Morro Road corridor in Atascadero and Creston/Niblick loop in Paso Robles, provide mid-day San Miguel service through PRCATS program using County funding), and begin construction of Atascadero Transit Center.