

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
FROM: ANITA WINKLER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR - TRANSIT  
TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT  
SUBJECT: RAILROAD SQUARE – DOWNTOWN SHUTTLE

AGENDA ACTION: STUDY SESSION

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RECOMMENDATION

This item is presented for City Council's information and comments. No action is requested.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City Council directed staff to develop plans for a circulator shuttle linking Railroad Square and Downtown, and to provide a connection between the Santa Rosa Downtown SMART Station and a parking garage in the downtown. Staff have developed a proposal which will be presented for the Council's consideration.

This item relates to Council Goal 3.1 "Improve transportation network to reduce vehicle miles traveled and promote multi-modal transportation."

BACKGROUND

1. The City Council expressed interest in a circulator shuttle that would link Railroad Square, including the Santa Rosa Downtown SMART Station, with the Downtown and Courthouse Square, operating on a 15 minute frequency. Additionally, with SMART service scheduled to start in December this year and with the limited parking around the Downtown Santa Rosa SMART station, staff was also asked to explore options for using one of the City's downtown parking garages for SMART parking.
2. Industry research has identified key characteristics of successful shuttle systems like the suggested circulator shuttle and a shuttle between a train station and parking facility.

- ◆ *Circulator shuttle between Railroad Square and Downtown.* The shuttle should:
  - operate every 15 minutes or more frequently
  - take no longer to travel between the points of interest than it would take to walk between them, and
  - be convenient
  
- ◆ *Parking shuttle between the Santa Rosa Downtown SMART Station and Garage 1 (7<sup>th</sup> Street).* Train passengers want:
  - parking to be within a short walking distance to the rail station
  - certainty that they will be able to find a parking space quickly when they drive to the station, and
  - the least amount of time possible getting from parking to the station

### PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

None

### ANALYSIS

1. While the ideal situation for parking to serve SMART riders would be to have the parking adjacent to or very near the SMART station, the parking around the Downtown Santa Rosa Station is limited to the parking lot around the Depot, a couple of small lots within two or three blocks of the Station, and on-street parking in Railroad Square or in the residential neighborhoods surrounding Railroad Square.
2. Business owners in Railroad Square and residents in the neighborhoods have expressed their concern that SMART riders will drive to the Station and park in the spaces needed for customers of the Railroad Square businesses or on the residential streets surrounding the Station. The Convention and Visitors' Bureau also has contractual obligations for some of the parking spaces in the lot at the Depot that must be met.
3. The nearest City owned parking garage to the Santa Rosa Downtown SMART station is Garage 1 located on Seventh Street between Mendocino Avenue and B Street. Based on recent occupancy counts, Garage 1 has a significant amount of daily capacity and can accommodate a large number of additional vehicles.
4. The circulator shuttle between Railroad Square and Downtown Circulator can operate with a 15 minutes frequency service schedule.
5. The SMART trains run on half-hour frequencies during the peak periods and only run every two hours or three hours mid-days. On weekdays, the first southbound SMART train will leave the Santa Rosa Downtown Station at 5:01 a.m.; the first northbound train will arrive at the Station at 7:24 a.m. The last southbound train will leave the Station at 6:10 p.m. and the last northbound train will arrive at the Station at 8:24 p.m. In order to fully serve the SMART trains and provide

transportation to and from the parking garage, the shuttle would need to start service at 4:45 a.m. and run until 8:40 p.m.; a total of 16 service hours. The request was for staff to develop a schedule with service every 15 minutes.

6. The circulator shuttle and SMART parking shuttle interests can be met with some creative scheduling and design. The criteria for the design are:
  - short, straight, direct rides
  - stops which are convenient (i.e., at the front of the parking garage, close to the SMART station, central location in the Downtown)

A map showing the proposed routing is attached.

7. Preliminary estimates for operating the shuttle 16 hours a day every 15 minutes, including some additional time traveling from the bus yard to the start of the route and the associated return, on weekdays only not including holidays, is approximately \$200,000 - \$230,000 per year.

A “cutaway” bus approximately the size of the City’s paratransit vehicles that are ADA accessible with a capacity of 16-20 seated passengers and one wheelchair tiedown would cost around \$66,000, including tax and delivery. There may be used vehicles available to purchase in the market. Another option for a one year pilot project would be to lease the vehicles; however, staff has not been able to find a company that would lease these vehicles.

The shuttle service requires two vehicles to ensure there is a vehicle to cover downtime for maintenance, repairs, etc.

8. There are two options for operating the shuttle service: (1) City operation of the service with City employees and (2) contract service.

Using a contractor for the first year of the shuttle has several advantages. It will provide the opportunity to evaluate the sustainability of the shuttle service without facing layoffs of employees if the Council decides not to continue the service. Additionally, the City could avoid the costs of purchasing two buses for the shuttle service by including the provision of the buses in the RFP for the shuttle service.

## FISCAL IMPACT

This item is informational only; however, should Council wish to pursue providing these shuttles, the annual cost could run between \$200,000 - \$230,000 plus the need to use one-time funds to purchase two vehicles for the service. The additional funds needed for this service would not be a qualified expenditure under current transit fund grants and would require a General Fund commitment or another source of funding.

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guideline section 15378.

## BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

## NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

## ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Railroad Square – Downtown Shuttle map

## CONTACT

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