City of Santa Rosa
Council Study Session
July 28, 2026

Short Range Transit Plan:
Service Overview & Priorities

Santa Rosa CityBus

Session Agenda

1. Short-Range Transit Plan (SRTP) introduction, context, and goals
2. CityBus system performance overview
3. Transit Fund financial status update
4. Proposed SRTP planning approach
5. Next Steps
6. Council questions and feedback

What is a Short-Range Transit Plan?

- Required by MTC and responsive to regional guidelines
- Outlines 10-year service, financial, and capital plans for the transit system
- Supports grant applications and funding requests
- *Provides policymakers and transit managers with a roadmap for the transit system that is informed by in-depth analysis and public engagement*

Context for SRTP Update

- Changes in travel and traffic patterns are driving the need for **service changes to improve system performance.**
- MASCOTS implementation provides the opportunity for CityBus to **connect more powerfully with the regional transit network**.
- Local bus integration efforts enable CityBus to **plan jointly with Sonoma County Transit** and other partners.
- **Fiscal cliff is in sight:** service changes will need to be cost-neutral at best; plan should include a 10% service reduction scenario for FY28.

Goals for SRTP Update

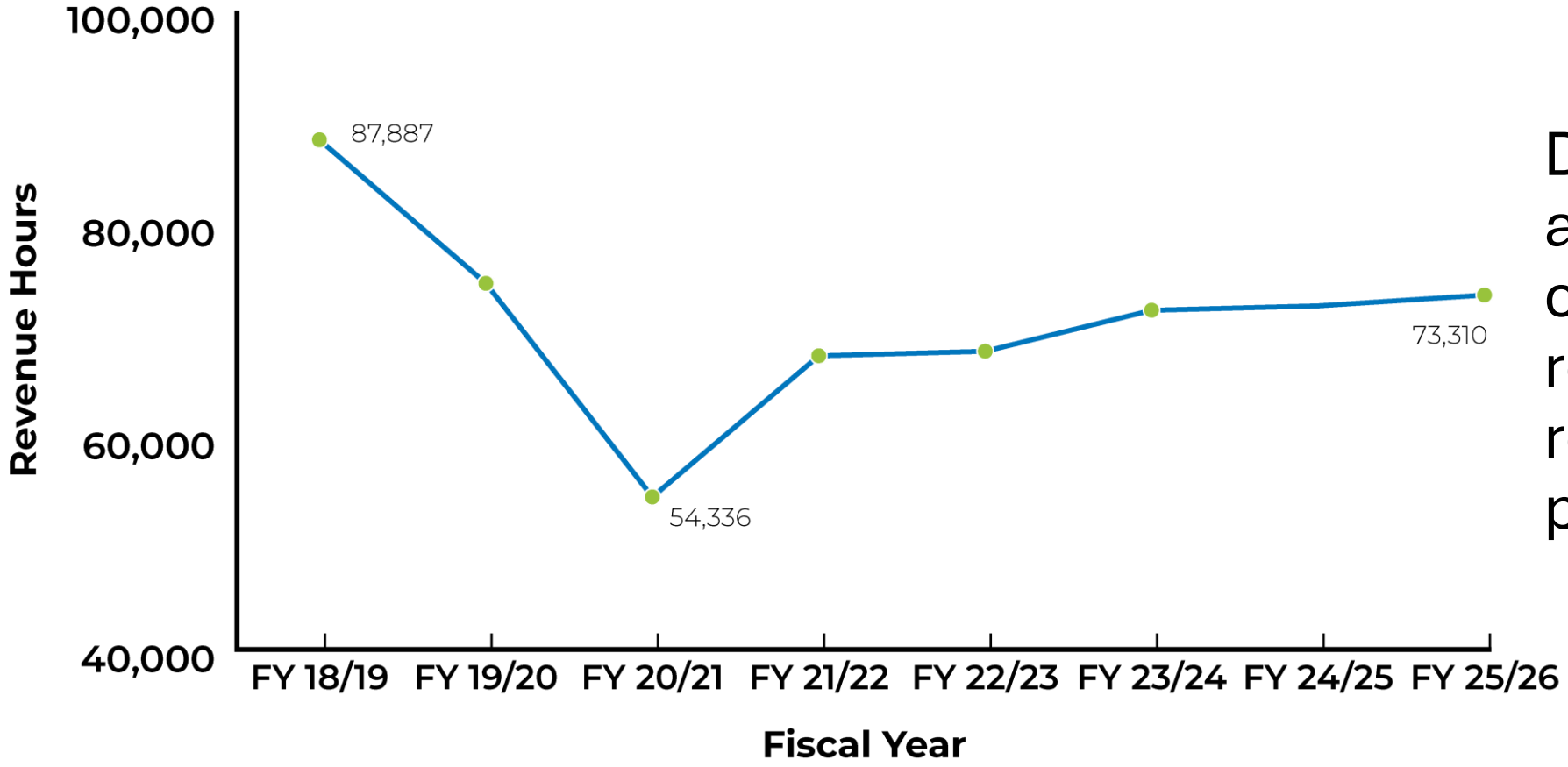
1. Address growing **service reliability issues** and ensure core system is strong

2. Build on MASCOTS by improving CityBus **connectivity to SMART** and the regional transit network, and **integration with Sonoma County Transit**

3. Adopt a service plan that is **financially sustainable** and responsive to significant fiscal challenges in the Transit Fund

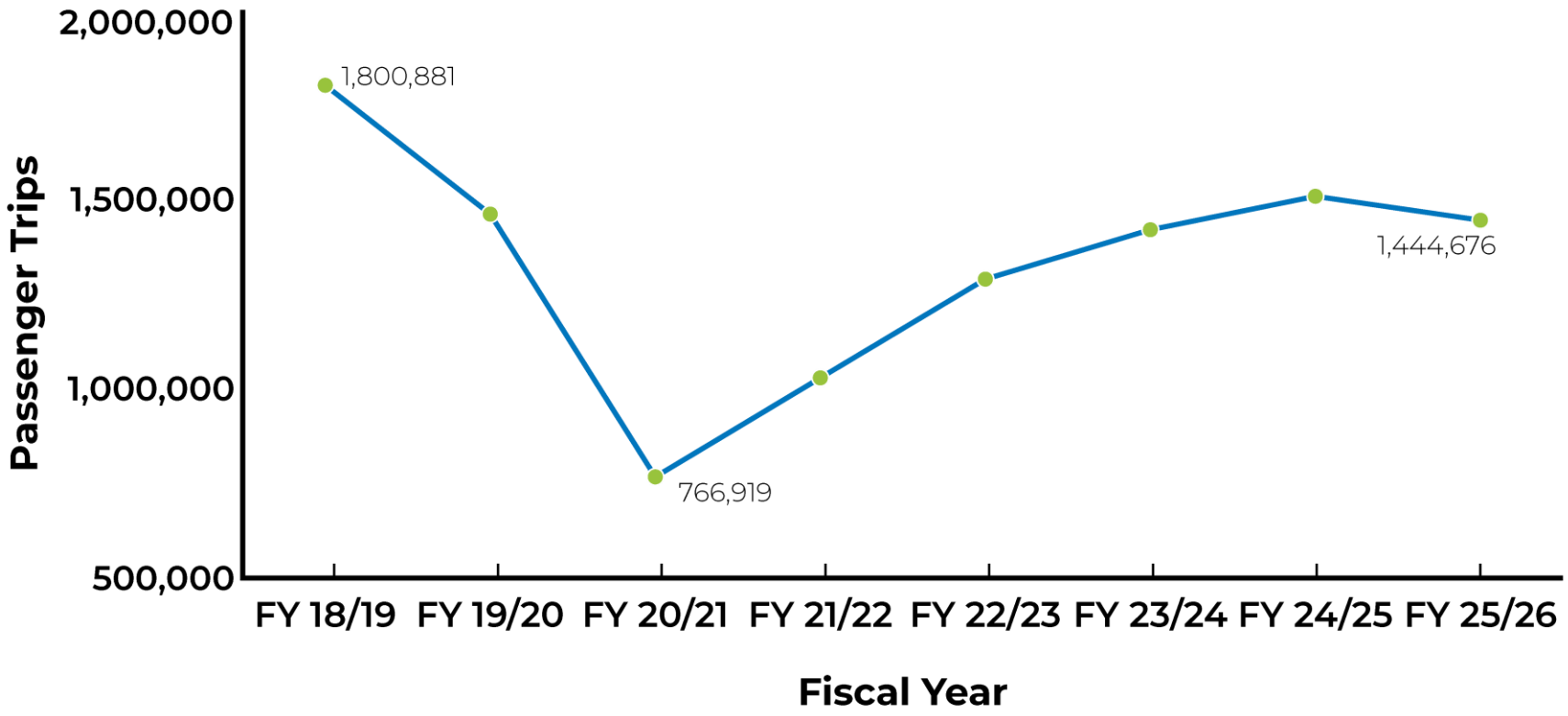
System Performance Overview

System Performance: Revenue Hours



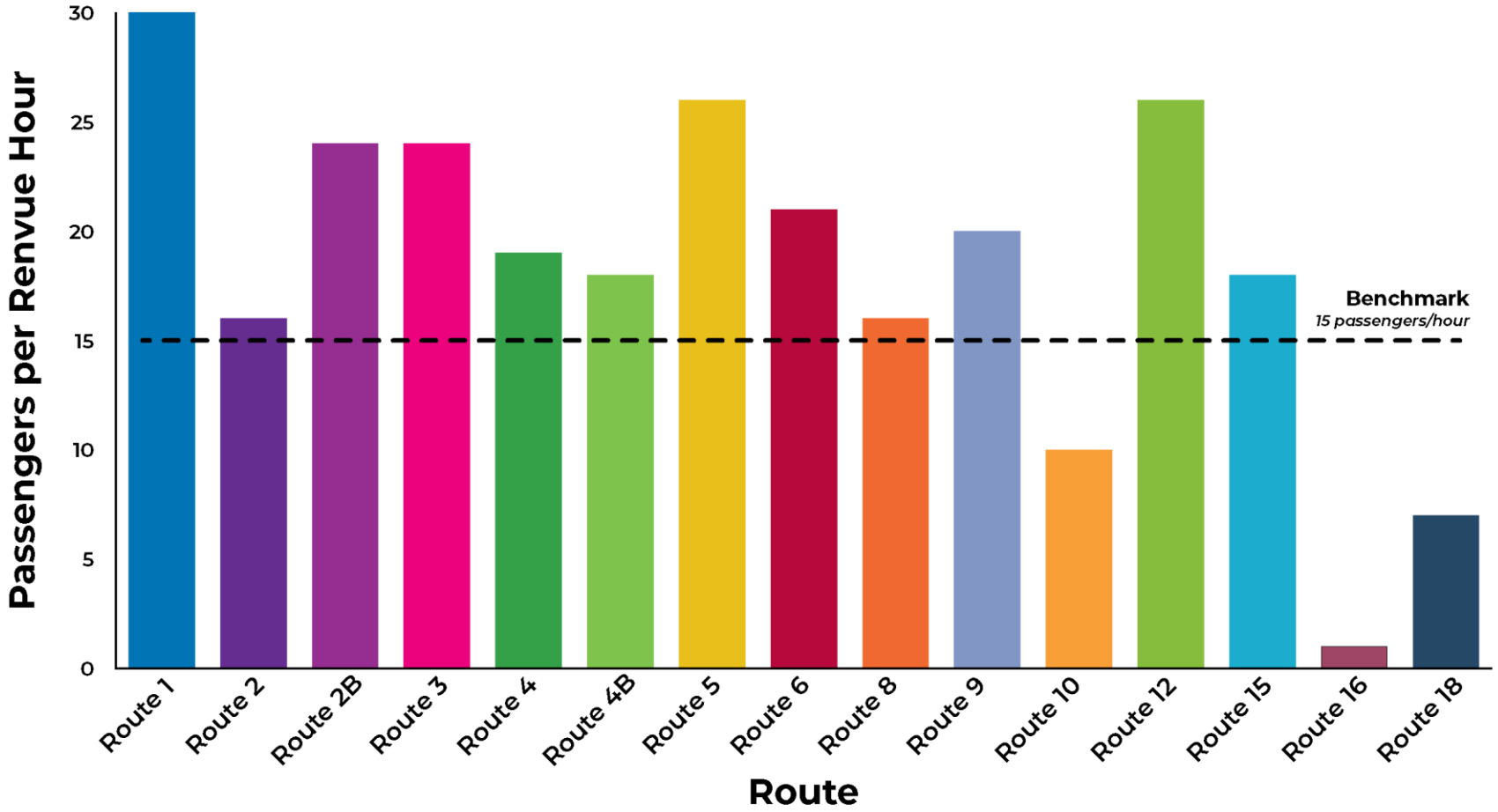
Due to operational and financial constraints, total revenue hours remain at 83% of the pre-pandemic level.

System Performance: Ridership



Ridership has recovered in tandem with restoration of service hours, with a ceiling due to reduced hours.

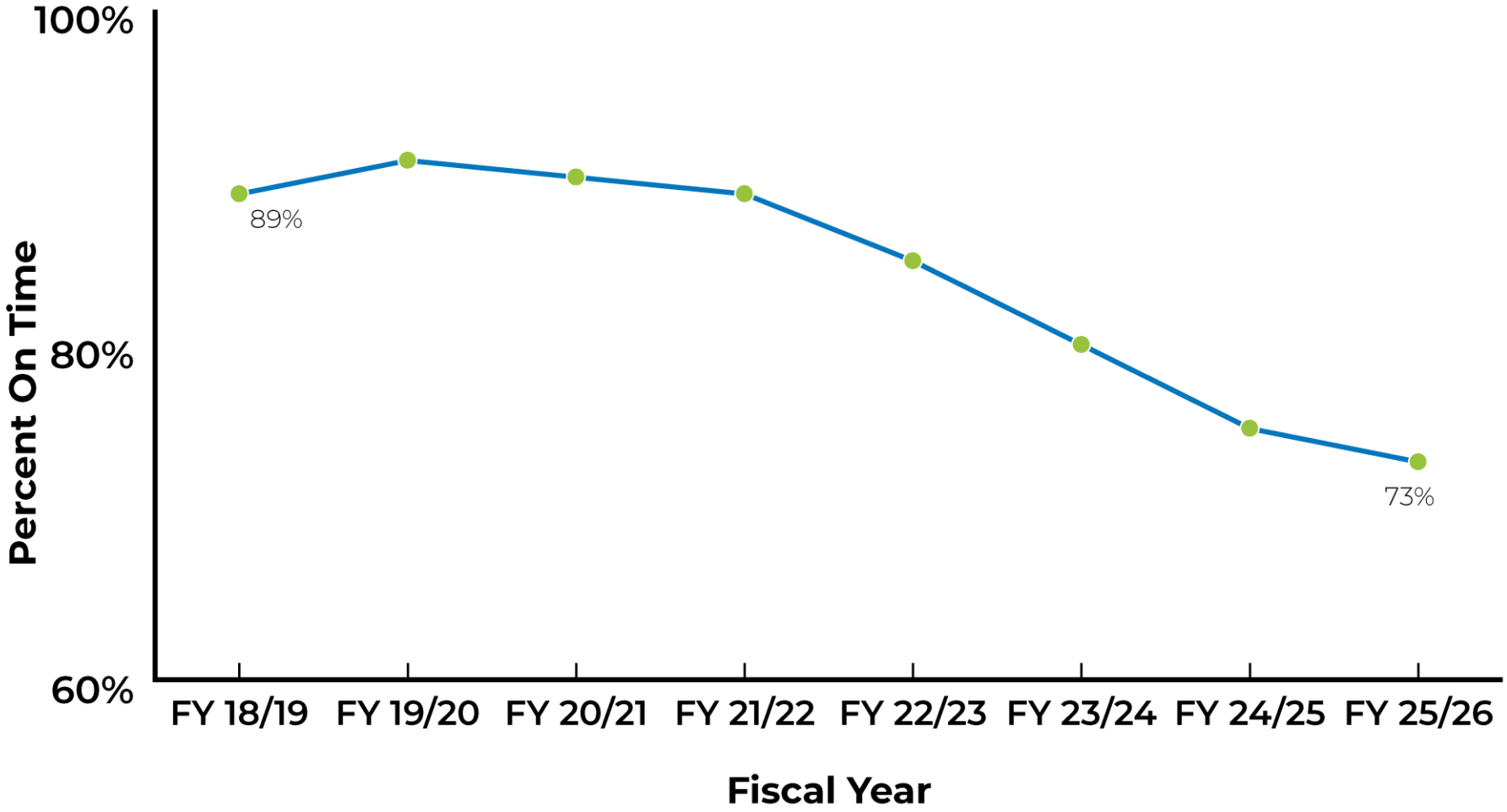
System Performance: Productivity



Productivity is good overall, with most routes carrying more than 15 passengers per hour on average.

During peak periods CityBus can serve as many as 100 passengers on a single trip.

System Performance: On-time Performance



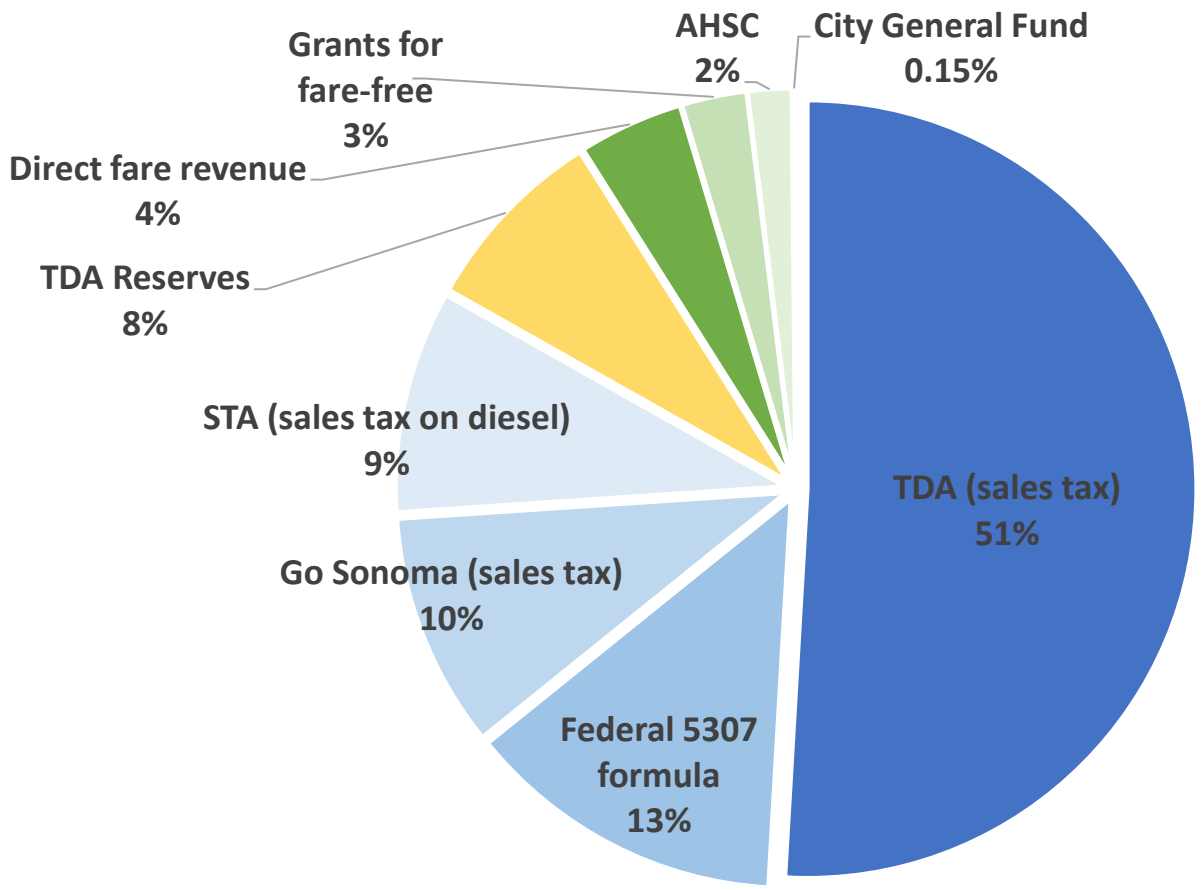
Schedule adherence is below standards, and getting worse.

"On time" is defined as the bus arriving at each major stop within 5 minutes of the scheduled time

Financial Status Update

Transit Fund Operating Revenue

- Transit Fund supported by federal, state, and local grants
- Heavily reliant on sales tax-based revenue sources: 70% of operating budget
- State Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds are last dollar in
  - TDA balance (held at MTC) functions as capital and operating reserve



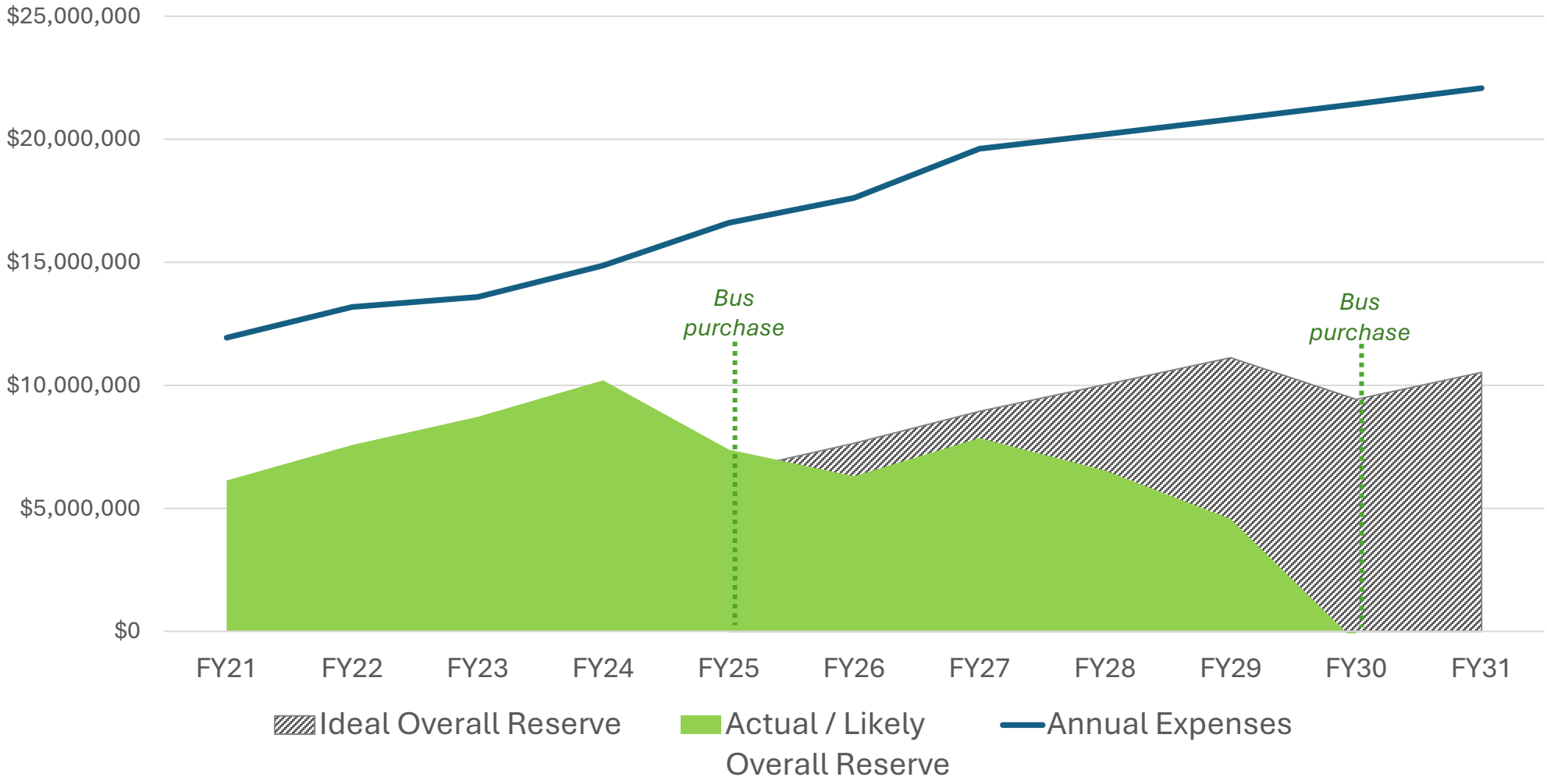
Recent Revenue and Cost Impacts

- Remaining COVID-relief funding expended in FY24
- Staff Salaries and Benefits make up 65% of Transit operating budget; salary/benefits costs increased by 22% between FY23 and FY26
- 25% increase in paratransit costs with new contract in FY25
- ZEV transition has been expensive; higher than expected costs for vehicles, charging, maintenance of facilities and equipment
- Transit operating grants have not kept up with costs
  - Sales tax revenues have plateaued
  - 16% drop in value of TDA sales tax since 2000

Transit Fund Reserves

- Transit reserves are TDA dollars held at MTC
  - **Operating reserve:** at least 15% of operating budget
  - **Capital fund:** TDA banked over time for capital projects and local match for federal/state grants
- Current pressures on reserves:
  - Expect to use reserves for operations in FY27 and subsequent years based on revenue trends
  - FY27 is the second year that no TDA will be banked for the capital fund (goal is to set aside $1M/year)

Projected “Fiscal Cliff”

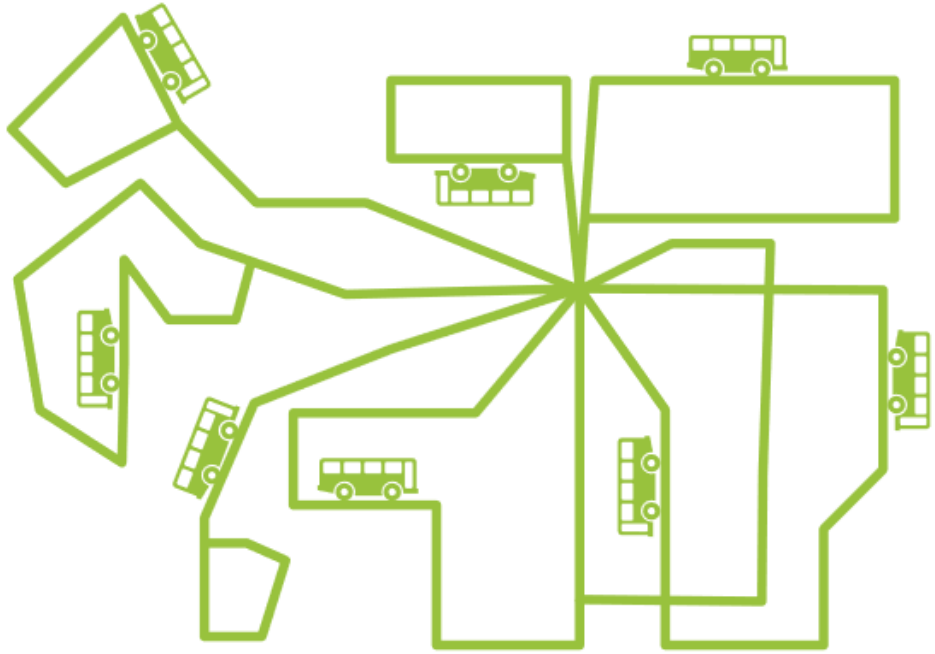


Proposed Service Planning Approach

A Key Policy Trade-off: Coverage vs. Productivity

Coverage:

Slower, lower-frequency service everywhere



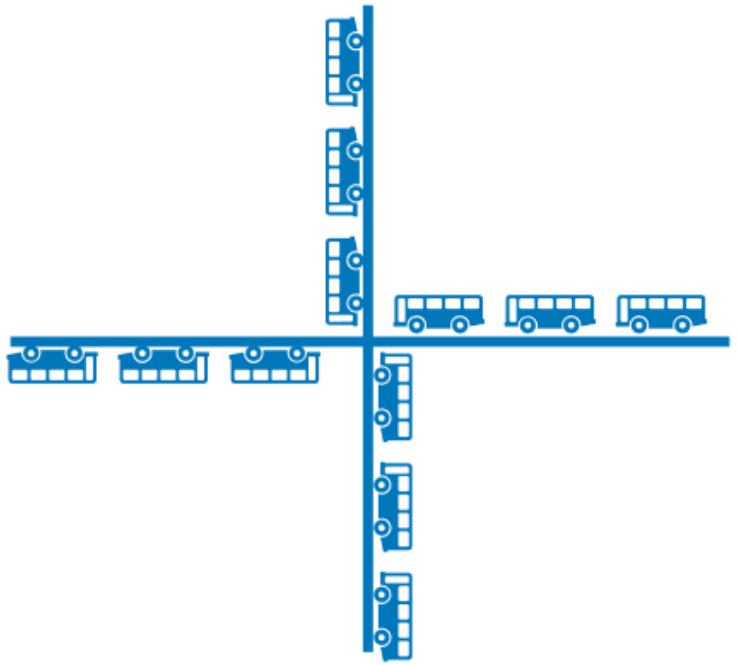
Low Ridership

but really important to the people who use it

VS

Productivity:

Frequency and speed in high-demand corridors



High Ridership

but less service across the city

Principles of Transit Service Design

- **Frequent Service**: A coherent frequent network best serves riders.
- **Direct Route Alignments:** Direct routes reduce travel time.
- **Bi-directional Service**: Long segments of one-way operation (loops) take riders out of their way.
- **Strong Anchor Points:** Routes connecting multiple ridership nodes perform well and best serve riders.
- **Spacing Between Routes**: Duplicative service ties up resources.
- **Connectivity Between Routes:** Connections should be as seamless as possible.

Opportunities

- **Significantly improve systemwide on-time performance**
  - Re-time routes to reflect current traffic conditions and travel time
  - Make changes to improve schedule adherence:
    - Adjust route alignments
    - Connect routes that are “tight” with routes that have extra time
    - Address sources of delay (bus stop placement, signal timing, etc.)
    - Add cycle time to routes—***at an additional cost***

☑ **Keeps system reliable for riders; prevents downward spiral of ridership loss**

☑ **Supports effective transfers to regional transit network**

Opportunities

- **Re-invest in Route 1 as the backbone of the CityBus system**
  - Add cycle time on weekday afternoons (45 min.→ 60 min.)
  - Re-establish weekday 15-minute frequency

- ☑ **Addresses rider pass-ups during peak periods**
- ☑ **Ensures strong connections to key destinations**
- ☑ **Rationalizes service for future integration with SCT**

Opportunities

➢ **Use strategic route connections (interlines) to significantly expand one-seat access to SMART and crosstown connectivity**

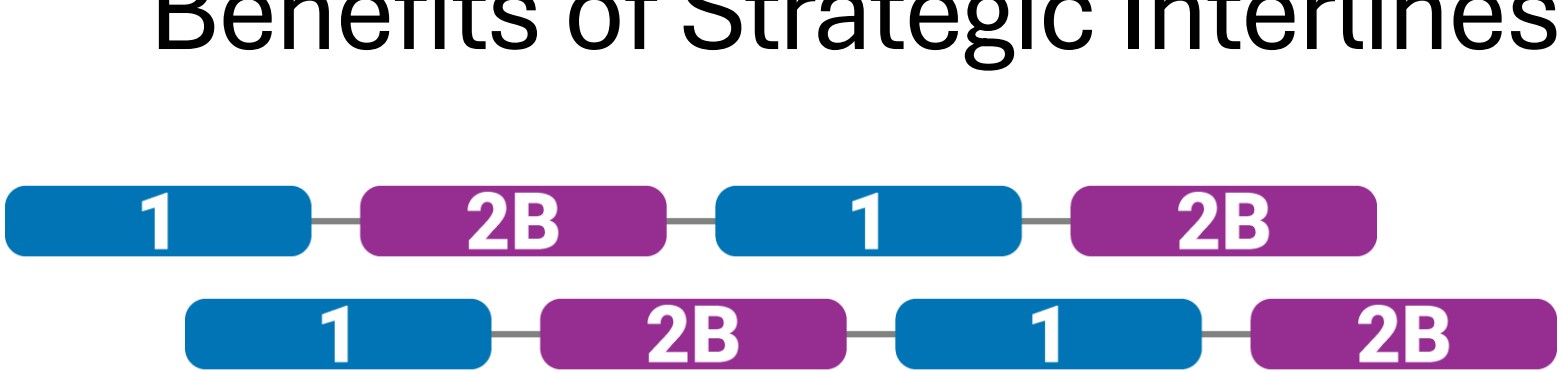
- Riders can count on consistently-connected route pairs throughout the service day
- Eliminates need to transfer at the Transit Mall
- Isolates delays to ensure they do not cascade through the system

☑ **Builds on MASCOTS to provide integrated local and regional transit network**

☑ **Improves connectivity and access for all riders, regardless of whether they are traveling to SMART**

Behind the Curtain of Scheduling: Interlining

Benefits of Strategic Interlines

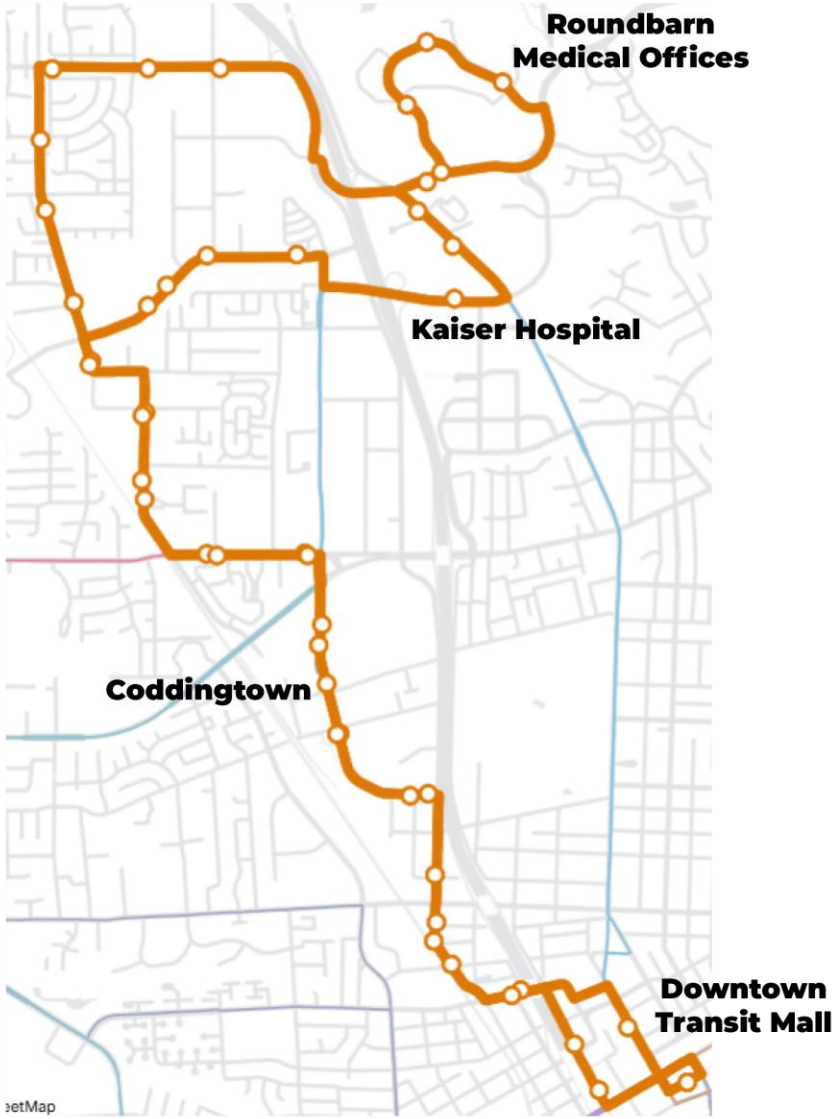


Constraints

- **Financially-constrained plan**: no additional buses can be added within existing resources; approach will incorporate planning for likely future service cuts
- **Expansion of geographic coverage not recommended** at this time
- **Hours must be reallocated within the system** to improve on-time performance without adding operating cost
  - Lowest-productivity routes (10, 16, 18) will be the first place we look
- Alternative service models (deviated fixed-route, microtransit) on the table, but not major cost-savers

Route 10: North City Connector

- Serves important destinations in northern Santa Rosa
- 60-minute frequency
- Southern segment between Transit Mall and Coddingtown has low ridership

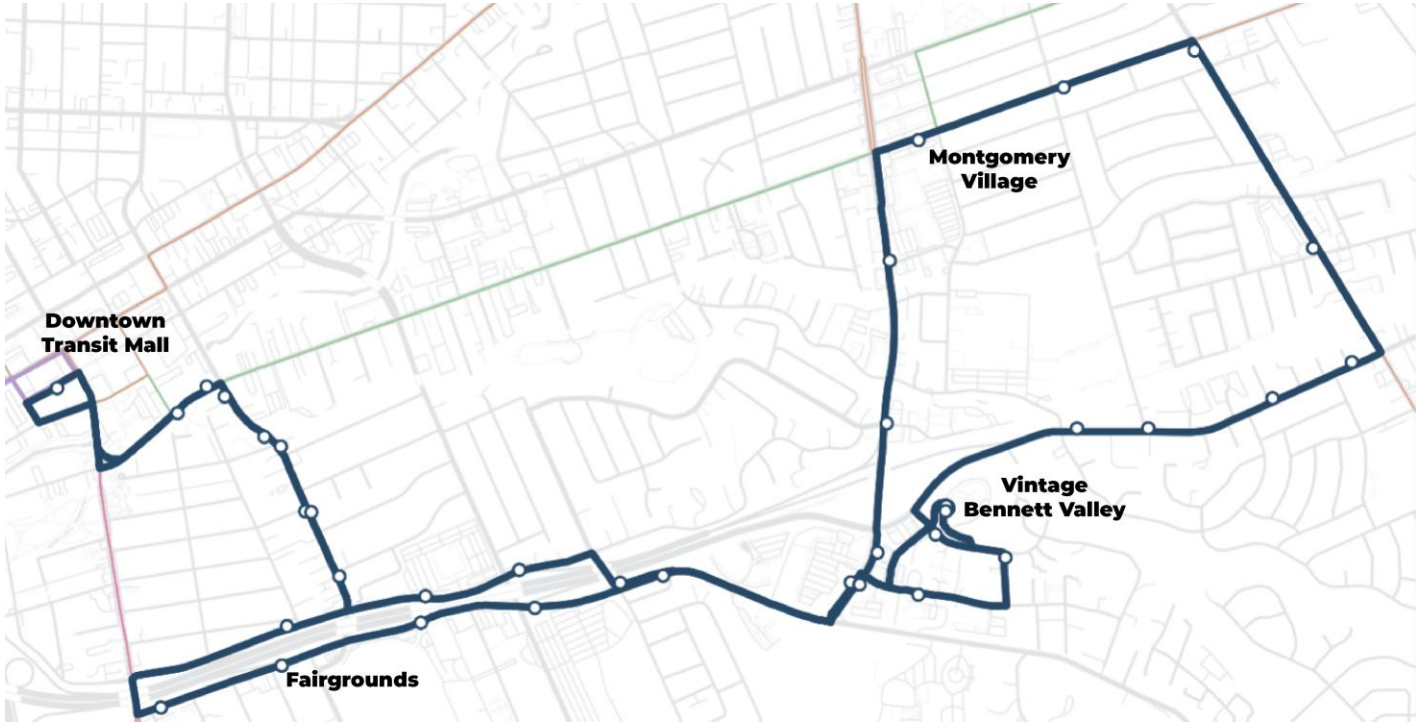


Route 16: Oakmont

- Local deviated fixed-route service with one shopping trip/weekday
- Ridership has not recovered post-COVID and is still declining
- Partner (Oakmont Village Association) exploring other options

Route 18: East Circulator

- Serves several destinations in SE Santa Rosa, but very low ridership
- Most ridership originates from Vintage at Bennett Valley senior housing and Montgomery Village
- 60-minute frequency with truncated service day



Next Steps

- Incorporate Council feedback from Study Session
- Begin public engagement in August:
  - Focus will be on routes with proposed changes
  - Range of outreach methods including targeted in-person outreach at key stops and onboard buses, online survey, stakeholder engagement and meetings
- Return to Council with initial recommendations in early Fall
- Adopt short-term service changes in October-November
- Implement short-term service changes in January 2027
  - Systemwide service reduction would not occur until FY28
- Complete full MTC SRTP update process in 2027

Questions?