

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: RACHEL EDE, DEPUTY DIRECTOR-TRANSIT
TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
SUBJECT: SONOMA COUNTY INTEGRATED TRANSIT SERVICE PLAN

AGENDA ACTION: STUDY SESSION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Transportation and Public Works Department that the Council hold a Study Session on the Sonoma County Integrated Transit Service Plan recently completed by the Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) in coordination with Santa Rosa CityBus, Sonoma County Transit and Petaluma Transit. This item is provided for Council's information and no action will be taken except for possible direction to staff.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of the Integrated Transit Service Plan is to assess current local transit services and develop recommendations to improve the overall quality and efficiency of transit service in Sonoma County. The Plan includes evaluation of bus service operated by Sonoma County Transit, Santa Rosa CityBus, and Petaluma Transit, as well as regional transit service operated by Golden Gate Transit and Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART). The report presents 26 recommendations related to fixed-route services, paratransit, and data collection. Next steps include additional data collection, analysis, and public engagement to further evaluate adjustments to transit routes where services overlap.

BACKGROUND

In 2019, the SCTA, in collaboration with Santa Rosa CityBus, Sonoma County Transit, Petaluma Transit, and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), developed the Sonoma County Transit Integration and Efficiency Study (TIES) to identify strategies to improve the transit passenger experience, reduce operating and capital costs, and better integrate local transit systems. TIES recommendations include a wide range of actions in several functional areas to be implemented through a phased approach.

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In May 2020, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission established the Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force to advise the Commission on distribution of federal emergency relief for transit agencies and to develop a Transit Transformation Action Plan to deliver a more connected, integrated, and customer-focused transit network in the Bay Area. The Action Plan identifies recommendations in the areas of fare integration, customer information, transit priority on roadways, bus and rail network management changes, service planning, and accessibility. MTC has since developed a Regional Network Manager team and structure to implement the Transit Transformation Action Plan and is advancing programs in various areas.

In October 2020, the SCTA established the Future of Transit Ad Hoc Committee to revisit and prioritize TIES recommendations given changing conditions resulting from the pandemic and to coordinate efforts with the MTC Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force process. Working with staff from the three local transit systems, the Ad Hoc Committee developed the following goals for the Future of Transit process:

1. **Increase transit ridership** as a mechanism to reduce GHG emissions, improve access to low-cost transportation, and reduce congestion.
2. **Simplify and enhance the transit customer experience**, while maximizing resources available to transit and improving operational efficiency and service quality (reliability, frequency, and span of service).
3. Meet these outcomes through a **“unified brand”** for local bus transit in Sonoma County.

To advance these goals, transit agency and SCTA staff developed three phases of activities building integration in functional areas to provide the foundation for a future unified brand. Phase 1 tasks included offering one-seat rides on paratransit between service areas, a new customer service number that connects to all three bus agencies, customer service cross training, a new Santa Rosa CityBus website that provides the template for unified web information, synchronized schedule change dates, common fare free days, and a successful joint funding proposal for a two-year fare free youth program.

Phase 2 activities are underway, supported by a \$750,000 grant award from MTC and an \$825,000 award from the state Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program. The Integrated Transit Service Plan is a key Phase 2 task to lay the groundwork for an integrated transit network in Sonoma County in support of the goal to develop a unified brand for local transit in Sonoma County.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

On October 12, 2021, the City Council conducted a study session to review progress on implementation of TIES, and related work under the auspices of the Sonoma County Transportation Authority’s Future of Transit Ad Hoc.

ANALYSIS

Development of the Integrated Transit Service Plan fulfills the Phase 2 task to conduct a line-by-line service analysis in overlapping transit corridors with the intent of optimizing transit services through integrated service planning, schedule coordination, and market analysis. Additional Phase 2 tasks include common fare policies, simplified and common technology solutions, customer service, public information, and marketing.

The recommended near-term next steps include collecting stop-level ridership and origin-destination data, analysis of the data to refine initial concepts, and conducting public engagement to confirm public support for modifications before implementation. SCTA and transit operator staff are also participating in the Marin-Sonoma Coordinated Transit Service Analysis (MASCOTS), a related effort focused on regional service provided by SMART and Golden Gate Transit along the Highway 101 corridor in Marin and Sonoma counties. The Integrated Transit Service Plan will also inform that effort and recommendations for changes to the regional transit network or the local services feeding it.

Several other recommendations in the Plan will be used to refine the work plan for implementation of the Phase 2 transit integration work. SCTA and transit operator staff are developing a refined work plan to be attached to a Memorandum of Understanding between the three local transit operators in Sonoma County for implementation over a multi-year period. SCTA will facilitate collaboration among the transit operators to advance the work plan and identify strategies that benefit riders, while ensuring coordination with regional efforts lead by MTC's Regional Network Manager.

The final Integrated Transit Service Plan report will be available at <https://scta.ca.gov/planning/transit-integration/>.

FISCAL IMPACT

This study session does not have a fiscal impact on the General Fund or Transit Fund.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This study is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) and 15378 in that there is no possibility that this study may have significant effects on the environment, and no further environmental review is required.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

PRESENTERS

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