

**City of Santa Rosa Transportation & Public Works Department
Transit Division**

Short Range Transit Plan Update Public Involvement Plan

June 2022

A. Introduction

Short Range Transit Plans are a requirement of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). MTC mandates that transit operators in the Bay Area create an adopt a Short Range Transit Plan as a basis for receiving federal funding through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). SRTPs typically provide a ten-year planning horizon and have a three year update cycle.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic MTC postponed the submittal of SRTPs. This directly affected CityBus, which had a due date for its SRTP in September of 2020. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has changed the process from what it has required for past SRTPs in response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Bay Area transit providers. This process is more simplified focusing on scenario planning to help MTC determine the state of each transit agency in the Bay Area using the same baseline assumptions. CityBus will be following the MTC process for this SRTP but will also embark on robust service planning during the SRTP period.

CityBus plans to complete an in-depth analysis of its routes to identify efficiencies and opportunities to create a better rider experience. CityBus believes this is crucial, as demographics and travel behavior of the riding public have changed from before the pandemic. CityBus will engage the riding public as well as engage stakeholders to have a better understanding of how the transit system is and is not working for the public. This feedback will help staff prioritize where they allocate service and what the priorities are for any future improvements to the transit system.

B. Project Overview

In a typical SRTP feedback from public involvement and the resulting changes are included in the operational plan chapter of the document. As noted before the operational plan is not an explicit requirement from MTC for this SRTP. However, CityBus will be creating one due to

change the pandemic has had and is having on operating conditions. The information CityBus staff collects from their outreach efforts will help create a service plan that focus on the next three years, in addition to longer term goals. Table 1 below shows the timeline for the SRTP in its entirety with the parts relating the Public Involvement Plan (PIP) in bold.

Table 1: Short Range Transit Plan Schedule

June 2022	Council Study Session (SRTP Process Review) Complete MTC Data Request
July 2022	Create rider priorities survey Release Rider Priorities Survey Mobile Outreach Efforts Create list of stakeholders Begin stakeholder interviews Create Service Performance & Evaluation Plan End Rider Priorities Survey
August 2022	Create service scenarios Mobile Outreach Efforts (if more timed required) Complete Stakeholder Interviews Complete Narrative for MTC Scenarios
September 2022	Draft SRTP as Report Item to Council Draft due to MTC
October 2022	Focused outreach sessions, service concepts
November 2022	Focused outreach sessions (if more time required) Finalize service scenarios Public Hearing at Council
December 2022	City Council to Adopt Final document and service plan

C. Public Involvement Goals and Approach

The Transit Division is committed to active engagement with the public and involvement of the public in decision-making about the future of the transit system in Santa Rosa. To achieve this, staff has created the following goals:

Public Involvement Goals:

- 1) Conduct an interactive and collaborative public process that engages a broad spectrum of transit riders, stakeholders, and Santa Rosa residents in identifying transportation needs, priorities, opportunities, and solutions.
- 2) Actively seek and promote the involvement of individuals and groups that have been traditionally under-represented in planning processes.

- 3) Build on existing community partnerships and develop new partnerships to extend the reach and depth of our community engagement work throughout the planning process and into implementation.
- 4) Ensure that information and decision-making is transparent to the public, and it is clear CityBus staff will use public feedback to shape and select service proposals.
- 5) Maintain a two-way flow of information: as the public educates us, educate the public about transit, transit service planning, and opportunities to stay engaged as informed consumers and partners.

Public Involvement Approach:

- 1) Implement a diverse set of outreach and public involvement strategies that enable the Transit Division to reach and involve a broad representation of transit users, residents, and stakeholders.
- 2) Make it accessible: Conduct outreach at times and in locations that are easily accessible for transit riders and other members of the public, ensure accessibility for people with disabilities and advertise the availability of ADA accommodations, implement strategies for effectively engaging limited English speakers and advertise the availability of language assistance, and use outreach strategies that “bring the meeting to the people”.
- 3) Ensure there are opportunities for meaningful participation at all stages of the process.
- 4) Seek out a wide variety of perspectives by working through existing community partnerships and developing new partnerships and networks that represent the range of needs and viewpoints in Santa Rosa.
- 5) Maintain a feedback loop for those who take part in the process so they can see and understand how staff documents feedback and considers it in decision-making.
- 6) Clearly document the process and make project documentation available to the public
- 7) Allow the Public Involvement Plan to evolve as the project proceeds--stay flexible and nimble to take advantage of opportunities to engage with the public in new and more effective ways.
- 8) Coordinate Short Range Transit Plan public involvement activities with those conducted by City departments and partner agencies.
- 9) Use technology to engage the public. Staff will endeavor to make meetings available in-person and online.
- 10) Make it fun! We can take the work seriously while also using innovative and fun public engagement approaches that can draw people in who might not otherwise take part in a transit planning process.

D. Public Outreach/Involvement Strategies

This section details the public outreach and involvement strategies staff is proposing for the SRTP outreach efforts. The exact mix of outreach strategies may evolve over the course of the project dependent on the level of feedback CityBus is able to receive.

1) Surveys

CityBus staff will administer a survey at the beginning of the outreach process. The survey will be available online as well as in the field, and both online and hard copy versions will be available in English and Spanish. Staff will distribute the link to the online survey via the CityBus outreach email list, stakeholders and other partners, and social media. CityBus staff will administer hard copy surveys during mobile outreach (including at the Transit Mall, Coddington, and other high-ridership locations), meetings, and via community partners.

The purpose of the survey is to help CityBus staff understand riders' current priorities. Due to the limiting factor of available drivers to operate the system at present, staff will need to engage the public in trade-off scenarios. In addition, to trade-offs staff will ask riders "wish list" items once CityBus overcomes the current limiting factors. Finally, staff will also work with the riding public on what forms of communication work best for them. This will be part of an effort to keep riders informed of changes to the service.

2) Stakeholder Outreach

The Transit Division will conduct stakeholder interviews with representatives of agencies, organizations, and institutions that have knowledge of the transit needs of the community and/or involved with large numbers of current or potential future transit riders. Staff will hold stakeholder interviews with social services agencies, community organizations, medical institutions, educational institutions, business organizations, major employers, and civic organizations. Staff will conduct stakeholder interviews in such a way to solicit feedback on current needs, opportunities, and priorities for the transit system, as well as identify potential partnerships and the best methods for involving each entity's constituents in the SRTP process. In some cases, due to the nature of the organization, stakeholder interviews may take the form of small group meetings.

3) Community Group Meetings

The Transit Division has long-standing partnerships in the community and seeks to develop additional long-term partnerships during the SRTP process. The Transit Division will inform a wide range of partners or potential partners about the planning effort and will identify opportunities to attend meetings or events where Transit Division staff can seek feedback from

group members and invite them to participate in other components of the public involvement program.

This part of the public involvement strategy may also take the form of focus groups organized in concert with community partners to gain feedback on specific issues or from specific groups. The Transit Division has found that focus groups can be very valuable for asking for detailed information about riders' needs, priorities, and reactions to potential service changes—particularly in the case of groups that may be under-represented at public meetings and other more traditional outreach activities, such as limited English speakers and youth.

The Transit Division will collaborate with its partners to identify the best ways to keep group members informed and involved in the process. This outreach will occur throughout the project and may take a more focused approach in later stages as services scenarios are more concrete.

4) Mobile Outreach

The mobile outreach strategy will bring the conversation about the future of the transit system into the community at a range of venues. The benefit of mobile outreach is staff can quickly move surveys, boards, maps, and activities from one location to another at events, at transit hubs such as the Transit Mall and Coddington transfer center, and on street corners. During the SRTP process, staff will use mobile outreach to raise awareness about the project and process, administer surveys in the field. Staff believe this form of outreach is the most effective and equitable way to connect with riders.

5) City Council Reports

The City Council will be engaged in each phase of the process to guide the project from a policy standpoint, and to ensure that the steps in the decision-making process are transparent to the public. Staff will meet with council members as part of the stakeholder outreach process. Staff has already engaged in a preliminary study session with Council and will return to council with the draft report before its submission to MTC. Finally, staff will hold a public hearing when the Transit Division ask the City Council to officially adopt the SRTP.

6) Public Hearing

CityBus will request to hold a public hearing for the final SRTP document. Staff plans to have the public hearing one month in advance of when the City Council will adopt the final plan. The purpose of separating the public hearing and the adoption is to allow staff to act on any comments that come from the public hearing and edit the final plan. This will only be the case if the process results in a service plan that calls for modification affecting 25% or more of a single

route, or 25% or more of all routes. This process is consistent with City Council Policy 000-20 and FTA Circular 9030.1D.

Prior to the public hearing CityBus will provide all public comment to date for the Council to review in addition to comments at the public hearing. In addition, staff will provide a summary of comments in the staff report.

Staff will advertise the public hearing through the City's website, the Transit Division's citywide outreach mailing list, through email, social media, the *Press Democrat*, and posters and flyers at the Santa Rosa Transit Mall, at major transfer centers, on buses, and at bus stops. Staff will also advertise the hearing through stakeholders and community partners. Notices will be in both English and Spanish and will include information about the availability of language assistance.

E. Information and Notification

Staff will use various methods will during the project to provide information and notifications relating to the project. These include:

- Updates to the Transit section of the City's website.
- Print materials in English and Spanish, e.g., public notices, rider alerts, fact sheets
- Email updates through the Transit Division's outreach mailing list (which includes diverse stakeholders throughout the community), as well as a GovDelivery email alert. Participants at meetings will have the option to subscribe to an email alerts list.
- Informational pieces and notifications via social media outlets, e.g., Facebook and Twitter
- Notifications and information provided through the networks and to the constituents of a wide range of partner agencies and organizations

F. Documenting the Public Involvement Process

The Transit Division will retain all public comment received through any of the channels discussed above in a database established for the project. A summary of public comments with staff response and recommendations will be included in staff reports to the City Council. The Transit Division will also maintain a log of all outreach activities, including information about organizations participating and the number of participants.

G. Internal Outreach

While not explicitly “public” involvement, the Transit Division recognizes the importance of engaging Bus Operators, Field Supervisors, Transit Service Representatives, and Customer Service staff in providing feedback throughout the project. These members of the Transit Division team have the most direct daily contact with transit users and a depth of knowledge of the strengths and limitations of the current transit system, common requests made by bus riders, and sources of frustration for riders and operations staff. For this reason, planning and administrative staff will conduct meetings at key points in the process to engage the Transit Division team in the process.

H. Technical Review

Transit staff will consult with other transit agencies for peer review of any plans staff is proposing. This review can range from simple discussion to potential coordination with surrounding operators.

I. Policy and Regulatory Requirements

This Public Involvement Plan is consistent with the Transit Division’s Council-adopted Policy on Public Participation and Comment and responds to several local and Federal policies and regulations. These include:

- City Council Policy 000-20 on Citizen Participation: Calls for providing an open and visible decision-making process to which Santa Rosa residents have equal access, and actively soliciting the involvement of citizens in the public decision-making process.
- Federal Transit Administration Circular 4702.1B (Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration Recipients”) and Executive Order 13166 on access for individuals with Limited English Proficiency: Requires the Transit Division to offer early and continuous opportunities for the public to be involved in the identification of social, economic, and environmental impacts of proposed transportation decisions, and to seek out and consider the viewpoints of minority, low-income, and limited English proficiency (LEP) populations in the course of conducting public outreach activities.
- Federal Transit Administration Circular 9030.1D: Requires the Transit Division to solicit public opinion and consider public comment before implementing a major service change.