



Staff Report

File #: 23-0487

REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

DATE: 06/07/2023

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Community Services Department

SUBJECT:
SHORT-RANGE TRANSIT PLAN FOR FISCAL YEARS 2023/2024 THROUGH 2025/2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This staff report asks the City Council to adopt the short-range transit plan for fiscal years 2024 through 2026. Each fiscal year, the Riverside County Transportation Commission requires transit operators to submit the Short-Range Transit Plan, in compliance with the Transportation Development Act, to continue eligibility as a recipient of federal and state transit funds. The Plan summarizes the City's local transit planning and financial activities, including fund requests for operating and capital needs. Although the Plan is a three-year document, RCTC only funds the initial year, with the remaining years provided for planning purposes.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the City Council:

- a. Adopt the proposed Short-Range Transit Plan for fiscal years 2024 through 2026.
- b. Direct staff to submit the approved Short Range Transit Plan for fiscal years 2024 through 2026 to Riverside County Transportation Commission for approval.
- c. Authorize the City Manager, or his designee, to revise the City's Fiscal Year 2024 Transit Service Fund 577 revenue and expense budget following approval by the Riverside County Transportation Commission.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY:

The City's transit services, known as the City of Corona Transit Service, operate public transit services under the Dial-A-Ride and Corona Cruiser fixed-route programs. Dial-A-Ride services were launched in 1977, and the Corona Cruiser, fixed route service, in 2001. The City contracts a private

transit management company, MV Transportation, to operate both transit program operations.

The Dial-A-Ride (DAR) program is comprised of specialized demand response and ADA complementary paratransit service. This service provides curb-to-curb transportation to qualified individuals, seniors 60 and older, and persons with disabilities, while door to door service is available to those who are certified under ADA. The DAR service area includes the City of Corona, satellite locations in the City of Norco, and the unincorporated Riverside County areas of Coronita, El Cerrito, and Home Gardens.

The Corona Cruiser, fixed route, program is a network of two fixed routes known as the Red Line and the Blue Line. The routes provide access to local businesses, retail stores, parks, entertainment venues, municipal services, schools, and residential adjacent areas. These fixed routes connect with the Riverside Transit Agency regional bus routes, the Corona Transit Center, and the North Main Corona Metrolink Train Station.

Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) is the designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency with fiduciary and administrative oversight of transit operators in Riverside County. Each year, RCTC reviews and approves the Short-Range Transit Plan (SRTP) and allocates local, state, and federal funding. The SRTP must provide data points under four categories, 1) System Overview and Service Profile, 2) Existing Service and Route Performance, 3) Future Service Plans, Fare Changes Capital Planning and Marketing, and 4) Financial Planning.

The City of Corona Transit Service (CCTS) is a participating transit agency in the region and relies on RCTC to provide the majority of funds needed for day-to-day operations. Therefore, CCTS is required to submit an annual update of the of the Short-Range Transit Plan, which includes Fiscal Years 2024, 2025 and 2026.

ANALYSIS:

In conformance with RCTC's guidelines, CCTS staff prepared the three-year Short-Range Transit Plan for fiscal 2024 through 2026. The Plan includes the following four chapters. For a complete detailed review of all the data points summarized below, a copy of the Plan is attached to this report.

Chapter 1 - System overview and service profile

This chapter outlines the current service structure providing information regarding Corona Cruiser fixed routes and Dial-A-Ride/paratransit program including a description of the service area, population and demographic served, current fare structure, transit fleet, facilities, and bus stop amenities. In addition, this chapter covers coordination efforts between CCTS and other transit agencies, i.e., Riverside Transit Agency & RCTC Metrolink. Further, this chapter provides operating data relating to the current fiscal year and year-end estimates regarding operating expenses, passenger trips, fare revenues, and vehicle miles/hours.

Chapter 1 highlights are summarized below.

- Description of Service Area:
 - Corona Cruiser Red and Blue lines provide transit along main arteries, such as East and West Sixth Street, portions of West and East Grand Boulevard, the entirety of North and South Main Street, the entirety of Magnolia Avenue, McKinley Street to Promenade,

portions of Rimpau Avenue, Ontario Avenue, and Temescal Canyon.

- Dial-A-Ride provides service citywide, including service into neighboring county areas of Coronita, El Cerrito, Home Gardens, and satellite locations in the City of Norco such as the Department of Motor Vehicles, Public Services, and Norco College.

 - Demographic Served:
 - Corona Cruiser
 - General Public 33%
 - Students 30.2%
 - Seniors/Persons w/disabilities 34.7%
 - RTA Transfers .9%
 - Metrolink Transfers 0.1%
 - Children 1.1%
 - Dial-A-Ride
 - Seniors 30.4%
 - Person with disabilities 45.7%
 - ADA Certified 21.6%
 - Personal Care Attendants 2.0%
 - Metrolink Transfers .2%
 - Children 0.1%

 - Fare Structure: The fare structure reported in the previous and current Plan has been in effect for a decade. The fare structure is currently under review and will return to the Council for further discussion. For the purposes of this Plan, the fee structure will remain; but if changed in the future, a Plan amendment may need to be processed.
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Fare Type	Fare Price
Corona Cruiser	
Cash - General Public	\$1.50
Cash - Seniors / Persons with Disabilities / Medicare Card Holders	\$0.70
Cash - Children (46" tall or under)	\$0.25
Day Pass - General Public	\$4.00
Day Pass - Seniors / Persons with Disabilities / Medicare Card Holders	\$2.00
15-day Pass - General Public	\$17.50
15-day Pass - Seniors / Persons with Disabilities / Medicare Card Holders	\$8.05
15-day Pass - Students	\$12.25
31-day Pass - General Public	\$35.00
31-day Pass - Seniors / Persons with Disabilities / Medicare Card Holders	\$16.10
31-day Pass - Students	\$24.50
Dial-A-Ride	
Seniors / Persons with Disabilities / Medicare Card Holders	\$2.50
Buddy Fare	\$1.25
Children	\$0.50

To incentivize the use of public transit, grant funds will continue to be used to subsidize Corona Cruiser multi-day (15-day and 31-day) passes. These funds allow riders to purchase multi-day passes at a 30% reduced price. On average, riders save 18-22% with the purchase of multi-day passes, and with the addition of these funds, riders save an average of 50% on fares.

Currently, passengers ride for free on both the Cruiser and DAR. CCTS staff has been utilizing prior year grant allocation funds from the State of California’s Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) to subsidize the free fares and is working to extend the program. In April, staff obtained Council approval to submit an application into LCTOP for an allocation request to continue free fares for all DAR passengers, free fares for students, and reduced fares to the general public from \$1.50 to \$1.00; this application has been endorsed by RCTC and awaits approval. If approved, the program will be funded for an additional three (3) years.

- Fleet: CCTS has a current fleet of 20 buses. There are seven (7) Corona Cruiser buses and 13 Dial-A-Ride buses.

- **Bus Stop Amenities:** Amenities may include shelters (lit and unlit), benches, trash receptacles, and signage. An assessment of all 187 stops is currently under review and will be included in future budgets for improvements.

Chapter 2 - Existing service and route performance

This chapter further details the performance of the current service compared to the plan provided in the prior approved year. This chapter summarizes the year-to-date operating data and compares it to the performance targets set by RCTC. It further provides year-end estimates based on the performance of the first 9 months of the fiscal year. Lastly, this chapter highlights improvement efforts to increase productivity and maintain service to major trip generators. Chapter 2 highlights are summarized below.

- **Fare Box Recovery:** By statute, CCTS must recover a minimum of 20 percent of operating cost through fare revenue for fixed routes and 10 percent for Dial-A-Ride Specialized Service. Farebox revenue includes passenger fares, interest on investments, advertising revenue, local contributions, and the proceeds from the sale of surplus vehicles. The farebox recovery ratio is a mandatory performance indicator. However, during fiscal year (FY) 2021 through FY 2023, due to COVID-19, AB-90 and AB 149 Transportation Bills provided reprieve from this requirement. For FY 2024, CCTS will utilize exclusions and inclusions available under AB 149 to meet the farebox recovery ratio. However, if there is a gap in funding at the end of FY2024 to meet the farebox recovery ratio, general funds will need to be utilized. In the past, on average, the general fund financed three percent of the total farebox recovery ratio mandate.
- **Areas of Improvement, including implementation of pandemic protocols:**
 - Increase on-time performance.
 - Increased customer satisfaction by reducing the number of complaints.
 - Timely repairs and preventive maintenance of revenue vehicles to reduce road calls and missed service.
 - Continued sanitization of buses and bus stop shelters and equipment.
 - Continue to provide hand sanitizer on board the buses.
- **Summary of Service:** Corona Cruiser and Dial-A-Ride service continue to feel the impacts of the pandemic and have not returned to pre-pandemic ridership. However, the current fiscal year third quarter numbers show a positive trajectory with increases of 24% and 55%, respectively.
- **Productivity Measures (# of riders per revenue hour/mile):** Unfortunately, CCTS began suffering ridership losses due to traffic issues resulting from major transportation improvements on the 91/I-15 freeway expansion project. This trend in loss of riders dates

back to FY2015 and was expected to recover in 2020. Unfortunately, the pandemic further aggravated productivity while simultaneously operating costs, or per revenue hour/mile, have continued to rise. Currently, CCTS staff are seeing a positive trend of 8.1 passengers per revenue hour compared with 6.7 during FY 2022. Looking forward, staff anticipates that recommendations from the Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA) will rectify ridership losses in a sustainable manner.

Chapter 3 - Future service plans, fare changes, capital planning and marketing

This chapter provides an overview of future service planning, outlining planned service enhancements, marketing, and promotion efforts as well as capital improvement planning. Service enhancements include increasing bus frequency, providing service to areas not currently served, and exploration of alternate transit options. These options have been explored as part of the COA. On November 2022, staff presented to City Council service level changes and followed that effort with public outreach to seek input from riders and the general public. The study is nearly complete. The COA will include an implementation guide to assist staff with its planning and execution. Further, CCTS' marketing strategies are to increase ridership and increase awareness of Corona's transit services. Finally, the capital improvement plan includes various projects, and this section provides a brief description of those projects.

Chapter 3 highlights are summarized below.

- Fixed Route Expansion: As mentioned above, staff intends to present to the City Council a final COA report and Implementation Plan based on the selected service level changes, which was one of three scenarios. This plan will address gap in service to the following areas:
 - Green River Area
 - South Corona
 - Northwest Corona (Corona/Norco Limits)
 - Northeast Corona (McKinley Area)
 - Reinstate service at Vintage Terrace Senior Apartments
 - Extending Redline to Dos Lagos on weekdays

- Capital Improvements:
 - Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) - Features explored include computer-aided dispatching; automatic vehicle location; automated annunciators and reader boards to assist persons with disabilities; relay real-time transit information; automated passenger counter, digital fareboxes, smart card system and/or mobile ticketing applications, etc.
 - Bus Stop Improvements:
 - Redesign and replace shelters that provide advertisement opportunities to

generate revenue.

- Replace bus benches with metal benches.
- Update bus stops to improve ADA accessibility.
- Assess locations of missing amenities and where feasible install new shelters, benches and trash receptacles.
- Install newly purchased lights and push buttons for greater visibility in lowly lit areas.
- Redesign signage.

○ Fleet:

- Purchase an ADA-accessible van and thirteen replacement buses for the Dial-A-Ride program.
- Depending on COA recommendations and financial feasibility, purchase additional vehicles for the micro-transit program.

○ Bus Parking Canopies

Chapter 4 - Financial Planning

This final chapter provides the funding plan for the three years covered in the SRTP. It includes the operating and capital budget needs for FY 2024, which RCTC funds. In addition, this chapter includes the funding plan to support the two out years (FY 2025 & FY 2026). This chapter further outlines the regulatory and compliance requirements to ensure CCTS complies as a public transit operator and recipient of federal funds.

As RCTC funds the initial year of the SRTP, CCTS staff are proposing an estimated operating budget of \$3,390,291 for FY 2024. The proposed SRTP financial forecast is based on available transit funds, previous years’ data, and CCTS’s projected operational needs. The budget includes the following sources to fund Fiscal Year 2024 operating budget:

Revenue Source	\$ Amount
Local Transportation Funds (LTF)	\$1,439,981
Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307	\$ 1,624,210
State of Good Repair (SGR)	\$29,400
Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP)	\$225,350
Other Operating Revenues*	\$71,350
General Fund**	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$3,390,291

*Includes passenger fares, bus shelter advertising revenues, and AB2766 bus pass subsidy.

** Farebox Ratio Mandate requires a local contribution of 20% Cruiser and 10% DAR. If a gap exists at the end of the FY, general funds will need to be contributed to fill the gap.

Operating Budget

CCTS's operating budget supports the following expenses: Salaries-Benefits (5%) and Services-Supplies (95%). Of the \$3.39 million operating budget, contracted services constitute the largest component at 85% of the total budget. These expenses represent transportation services currently provided by MV Transportation for operating Dial-A-Ride and the Corona Cruiser. Other service & supplies expenses include fuel, printing and publications, advertising, Routematch Dispatching software, utilities, office supplies, minor office equipment, and administrative and Information Technology Services support.

Additional program activities funded from the operating budget include contracted services and projects, such as:

- 1) Consulting Services - Assist CCTS staff with various large transit projects such as the ITS, fleet procurement, and implementation of COA service level changes, including preparing solicitations/scope of work, project oversight, and grant management.
- 2) Vehicle Maintenance Oversight - In compliance with the State of Good Repair regulations, this contract aids staff to ensure MV is maintaining the City's fleet in a state of good repair; this budget will cover the 3rd year of the 3-year contract.
- 3) Support services for the Digital Land Mobile Radio (DLMR) System - The DLRM System is needed for communication between bus drivers and dispatchers. Under this service contract, CCTS is provided with the latest radio software necessary to operate the current platform (PC radio consoles), provide system updates and 24/7 technical support. This budget will cover the 4th year of the 5-year contract.

Capital Improvement Plan

The SRTP includes the Capital Improvement Plan, which outlines CCTS' past SRTP-approved projects. The Capital Improvement Plan consists of the following projects for the next three to five years:

- Intelligent Transportation System
- Purchase Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessible Van
- Digital Land Mobile Radio System
- Canopy/Roof structure for Bus Parking Area
- Bus Stop Improvements
- Replacement of two (2) older 2012 DAR buses
- Replacement of eleven (11) 2017 DAR buses

These projects were approved and funded by RCTC in prior SRTPs using State Transit Assistance, FTA Section 5307 & 5339 funds, and State of Good Repair funds. Prior approved projects and associated funds are listed in the SRTP Section 4.4 of Exhibit 1. These projects have all been included in the City's Transit CIP budget.

Staff recommend approval of the City of Corona Transit Service Short Range Transit Plan for FY2024 through FY2026. If approved by the Council, the Plan will be submitted to the Riverside County Transportation Commission in their capacity as Regional Transportation Planning Agency for ratification.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The cost of operations for transit services for Fiscal Year 2024 is \$3,390,291. Funding for all operating activities, in the aggregate, is available from LTF, Federal Section 5307, State of Good Repair, Low Carbon Transit Operations Program, and farebox revenues.

The Fiscal Year 2024 Transit Service Fund revenue and expense budget may require adjustments following RCTC approval. RCTC is expecting to go to their Commission on June 14, 2023, for approval of funding for all transit agencies.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

This action is exempt pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which states that a project is exempt from CEQA if the activity is covered by the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. Since this action approves planning documents and a financial plan there is no possibility that adopting this action will have a significant effect on the environment, therefore, no environmental analysis is required.

PREPARED BY: SUDESH PAUL, TRANSIT PROGRAM MANAGER & CYNTHIA LARA, COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE MANAGER

REVIEWED BY: DONNA FINCH, INTERIM COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR

Attachment:

1. Exhibit 1 - Fiscal Year 2023/24 through Fiscal Year 2025/26 Short Range Transit Plan