



Legislation Text

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REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

DATE: 07/09/2024

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Community Services Department

SUBJECT:
SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN FOR FISCAL YEARS 2025 THROUGH 2027

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This staff report asks the Council to adopt the Short-Range Transit Plan for Fiscal Years 2025 through 2027. 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, the Riverside County Transportation Commission 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 2025 through 2027.
- b. Authorize the City Manager, or his designee, to submit the approved Short Range Transit Plan for Fiscal Years 2025 through 2027 to Riverside County Transportation Commission for approval.
- c. Authorize an appropriation and estimated revenue increase in the amount of \$114,869 to the Citywide Bus Stop Improvements Capital Improvement Project No. FC-2022-19 within the Transit Services Fund 577.
- d. Authorize the creation of a new Capital Improvement Project titled "Hydrogen Fueling Station" and appropriate \$10,303,948 and increase estimated revenue by the same amount within the

Transit Services Fund 577.

- e. Authorize the creation of a new Capital Improvement Project titled "Infrastructure for Battery Electric Buses" and appropriate \$2,096,052 and increase estimated revenue by the same amount within the Transit Services Fund 577.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY:

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 a fixed route service, was launched in 2001. The City contracts a private transit management company, MV Transportation, to operate both transit programs.

The Dial-A-Ride (DAR) program comprises 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 certified under the 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, the Red Line and the Blue Line. These routes provide access to local businesses, retail stores, parks, entertainment venues, municipal services, schools, and residential adjacent areas. They also 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 most of the funds needed for day-to-day operations. Therefore, CCTS is required to submit an annual Short Range Transit Plan, which includes Fiscal Years (FY) 2025, 2026, and 2027.

ANALYSIS:

In conformance with RCTC's guidelines, CCTS staff prepared the three-year Short-Range Transit Plan for FY 2025 through 2027. The Plan includes the following four chapters. A copy of the Plan is attached to this report for a complete detailed review of all the data points summarized below.

Chapter 1 - System overview and service profile

This chapter outlines the current service structure, providing information regarding Corona Cruiser fixed routes and the 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 routes that mostly stay on 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 31.2%
 - Students 36%
 - Seniors/Persons w/disabilities 30.7%
 - RTA Transfers .5%
 - Metrolink Transfers 0.1%
 - Children 1.3%
 - Dial-A-Ride
 - Seniors 35.1%
 - Person with disabilities 45.2%
 - ADA Certified 16.3%
 - Personal Care Attendants 2.3%
 - Companion .8%
 - Children .2%
- Fare Structure: The table below depicts the current fare structure, which was approved by the City Council on August 16, 2023, as part of the Comprehensive Operations Analysis service improvements plan.

Corona Cruiser					
Fare Type	Per Ride Through 12/31/23	Per Ride Effective 1/1/24	Day Pass	31 Day	15 Day
General Public	\$ 1.50	\$1.75	\$ 4.00	\$ 35.00	\$ 17.50
Student	\$ 1.50	\$1.75	\$ 4.00	\$ 24.50	\$ 12.25
Seniors (60+)	\$ 0.70	\$0.75	\$ 2.00	\$ 16.10	\$ 8.05
Persons with Disabilities	\$ 0.70	\$0.75	\$ 2.00	\$ 16.10	\$ 8.05
Medicare Card Holders	\$ 0.70	\$0.75	\$ 2.00	\$ 16.10	\$ 8.05
Children (46" tall or under)	\$ 0.25	\$0.50	-	-	-

Dial-A-Ride		
Fare Type	Per Ride Through 12/31/23	Per Ride Effective 1/1/24
Seniors (60+)	\$ 2.50	\$3.50
Persons with Disabilities/ADA Certified	\$ 2.50	\$3.50
Medicare Card Holders	\$ 2.50	\$3.50
Children (46" tall or under)	\$ 0.50	\$0.50

In anticipation of the fare increase and the free fare program's expiration, staff submitted a grant application to the State’s Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) to extend the free fare program. The grant request included free fares for the elderly, disabled, and students, and reduced fares to \$1.00 per trip for the general riders. LCTOP approved the request, and the City implemented the fare subsidy program, which is effective through June 30, 2026.

General Public riders will continue to have the option to purchase the multi-day pass (15-day and 31-day). Air Quality Management District (AQMD) funds subsidize the Cruiser multi-day passes and allow riders to purchase passes at a 30% reduced price.

- Fleet: CCTS has a current fleet of 20 buses, including 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 was conducted as part of the COA, and it was determined that 86% of the stops had signage and seating, and 47% of the stops had shelters. In October 2023, 21 of the dimly lit stops had solar lights installed, which included push-button activation. Staff will continue to program funds for future bus stop improvements to be implemented as part of the COA improvement plan.

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. It 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 nine 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. During FY21 through FY23, due to COVID-19, AB-90 and AB 149 Transportation Bills provided a reprieve from this requirement. Starting in FY23, the fare box recovery requirement resumed, and CCTS was able to meet the required farebox recovery ratios by utilizing exclusions and inclusions available under AB149 and will continue to utilize them as permitted for future years. However, if there is a gap in funding at the end of the fiscal year, general funds will need to be utilized to meet the mandated farebox recovery ratio. In the past, on average, the general fund financed three percent of the total farebox recovery ratio mandate.
- **Areas of Improvement:**
 - Monitor bus stop amenities for cleanliness.
 - Increase customer satisfaction.
 - Continued sanitization of buses and bus stop shelters and equipment.
 - Continue to provide hand sanitizer on board the buses.
- **Summary of Service:** As previously reported, the pandemic significantly impacted ridership for both transit systems. Fortunately, systemwide ridership for the current fiscal year shows a positive trajectory of 18% increase from the previous fiscal year to date. Corona Cruiser has seen a steady increase in ridership and is expected to surpass pre-pandemic numbers by the end of this fiscal year. Dial-A-Ride services have also experienced upticks and are expected to recover in the coming fiscal year fully. To maintain momentum on the Corona Cruiser and get DAR ridership to surpass pre-pandemic numbers, CCTS staff is working on an outreach plan for FY25. Efforts will include boots on the ground at City and private events and at the Senior Center, direct outreach to senior housing complexes, participation in City events, 'thank you' gifts for DAR participants, etc.
- **Productivity Measures (# of riders per revenue hour/mile):** Systemwide ridership suffered losses in 2015 due to the 91/I-15 freeway expansion project. As street congestion impacts improved, ridership returned. Staff had projected to return to normal ridership in 2020. Unfortunately, as the system was recovering, the pandemic struck, further aggravating productivity while simultaneously operating costs continued to rise. Fortunately, as mentioned above, productivity has been steadily increasing since 2021. This trend is expected to continue into the coming fiscal year. CCTS' current passenger per revenue hour on the Corona Cruiser is 9.87 compared to 8.34 the previous year. Per the COA, the City's goal is to reach 10 passengers per revenue hour under the new system of services. It is worth noting that CCTS

has nearly reached the goal under existing conditions.

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

This chapter overviews future service planning, outlining planned service enhancements, marketing and promotion efforts, and capital improvement planning. Service enhancements include increasing bus frequency, providing service to areas not currently served, and exploring alternate transit options as part of the COA. In November 2022, staff presented to City Council service level changes and followed that effort with public outreach to seek input from riders and the public. On August 6, 2023, the City Council approved Scenario Two (2) of the proposed service recommendation as outlined in the final report of the Comprehensive Operational Analysis. The COA Plan includes an implementation guide to assist staff with its planning and execution. Further, CCTS' marketing strategies are to increase ridership and awareness of Corona's transit services. Finally, the capital improvement plan includes various projects, and this section briefly describes those projects. Chapter 3 highlights are summarized below.

- Fixed Route Expansion: As mentioned above, the City Council approved the final COA report and Implementation Guide. This plan will address the gap in service to the following areas:
 - Green River Area
 - South Corona
 - Northwest Corona (Corona/Norco Limits)
 - Northeast Corona along Promenade (McKinley Area)
 - Reinstate service at Vintage Terrace Senior Apartments
 - Extending Redline to Dos Lagos on weekdays
- Capital Improvement Plan:
 - 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.
 - Redesign signage.
 - Fleet:
 - Purchase an ADA-accessible van and thirteen replacement buses for the Dial-A-Ride 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 2025, which RCTC funds. In addition, this chapter includes the funding plan to support the two out years (FY 2026 & FY 2027). 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 \$3,754,492 for FY 2025. The proposed SRTP financial forecast is based on available transit funds, data from previous years, and CCTS’s projected operational needs. The budget includes the following sources to fund the Fiscal Year 2025 operating budget:

Revenue Source	\$ Amount
Local Transportation Funds (LTF)	\$1,711,105
Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307	\$ 1,677,084
Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP)	\$277,103
Other Operating Revenues*	\$89,200
General Fund**	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$3,754,492

*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 (8%) and Services-Supplies (91%). Of the \$3.75 million operating budget, contracted services constitute the largest component at 84% 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 to assist staff with various large transit projects, such as the ITS, fleet procurement, and implementation of COA service level changes. This includes preparing solicitations/scope of work, project oversight, and grant management.
- 2) 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 provides the latest radio software necessary to operate the current platform (PC radio consoles) and provides system updates and 24/7 technical support. This budget will cover the final fifth year of a five-year contract.

Capital Improvement Plan & Budget

The SRTP includes fund requests for the following capital projects:

Project	CIP#	Amount
Bus Stop Improvement	76540577	\$ 114,869
Hydrogen Fueling Station	New	\$ 10,303,948
Infrastructure for Battery Electric Buses	New	\$ 2,096,052
Total Capital Fund Request:		\$ 12,514,869

The Bus Stop Improvement CIP noted on this list is a standard operating budget item that addresses maintenance issues as needed. However, major bus stop improvement efforts will occur as part of the COA-adopted service recommendations. These efforts will include removing some bus stops, constructing new bus stop pads, relocating usable amenities, new signs to match the City’s branding efforts, new ADA-accessible stops, etc.

The two new projects noted in the table, Hydrogen Fueling Station and Infrastructure for Battery Electric Buses, are projects necessary to support future Zero-Emission Buses (ZEB) in accordance with the California Air Resources Board (CARB)’s Innovative Clean Technology (ICT) Regulation. On June 7, 2023, the Council approved a mixed-fleet source technology to provide greater redundancy and resilience benefits and less reliance on a single fuel source. These technologies include Battery Electric Bus (BEB) and Fuel Cell Electric Bus (FCEB). The City’s current transit fleet includes 20 compressed natural gas buses, seven 32’ Corona Cruiser buses, and 13 DAR cutaway buses. To support the deployment of the mixed fleet BEB and FCEB, installation of charging stations and improvements to existing electrical infrastructure and hydrogen fueling infrastructure are required. The infrastructure supporting the ZEB fleet must be completed prior to each bus delivery. These projects will be funded using the SB125 Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program and Zero Emission Transit Capital Program.

The Capital Budget also outlines past SRTP-approved projects, which consist 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. The SRTP Section 4.4 of Exhibit 1 lists prior approved projects and associated funds. These projects have all been included in the City's Transit CIP budget.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The cost of operations for transit services in Fiscal Year 2025 is \$3,754,492. In the aggregate, funding for all operating activities is available from Local Transit Funds, Federal Section 5307, State of Good Repair, Low Carbon Transit Operations Program, and farebox revenues.

RCTC's Commission approved the Fiscal Year 2025 funding allocation at the June 12, 2024, Commission Meeting, which included the City's SRTP as submitted in this staff report. Therefore, the staff requests the following:

1. An appropriation and estimated revenue increase in the amount of \$114,869 to the Citywide Bus Stop Improvements Capital Improvement Project No. FC-2022-19 within the Transit Services Fund 577.
2. Create a new Capital Improvement Project titled "Hydrogen Fueling Station," and appropriate \$10,303,948, and increase estimated revenue by the same amount within the Transit Services Fund 577.
3. Creating a new Capital Improvement Project titled "Infrastructure for Battery Electric Buses," and appropriate \$2,096,052 and increase estimated revenue by the same amount within the Transit Services Fund 577.

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, COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR

Attachments:

1. Exhibit 1 - Fiscal Year 2024/25 through Fiscal Year 2026/27 Short Range Transit Plan