

# Redwood Coast Transit - 2025 Short Range Transit Development Plan

*Technical Memorandum 2:  
Alternatives Analysis*



Redwood Coast  
Transit Authority





# *Redwood Coast Transit 2025 Short Range Transit Development Plan*

## *Technical Memorandum Two: Alternatives Analysis*

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## Chapter 1

# INTRODUCTION

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The Redwood Coast Transit Authority (RCTA) has retained LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc., to prepare an update to the Authority's Short Range Transit Development Plan (SRTDP). The first component of the SRTDP, *Technical Memorandum One: Existing Conditions* (TM1), reviewed Del Norte County demographic and economic factors affecting transit demand, as well as existing RCTA services and recent operations. Also included in TM1 were the findings of extensive outreach efforts, including an on-board survey, online community survey, and staff and stakeholder interviews. The findings of TM1 were used to develop the alternatives discussed in this memo and will help to guide the direction of future RCTA services.

This document, *Technical Memorandum Two: Alternatives Analysis* (TM2), presents an evaluation of potential changes to RCTA's services. This memo also addresses future capital needs, proposes new fare strategies, and provides an overview of marketing strategies.

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## Chapter 2

# GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STANDARDS

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Goals and objectives are important organizational tools used to guide an agency's decision-making. An agency can determine how well it is meeting its goals with performance measures. Setting goals and then developing performance standards is particularly important for public transit agencies for several reasons:

- Transit goals are often contradictory. For instance, the goal of maximizing cost effectiveness tends to focus services on the largest population centers, while the goal of maximizing service availability tends to disperse services to outlying areas. Therefore, to best meet its overall mission, a public transit agency must continually balance the tradeoffs between goals. Adopting policy statements encourages broader discussions of community values regarding transit compared to what is possible when considering issues case-by-case.
- Public transit agency revenue sources stem from taxpayer funds and therefore have a responsibility to provide transparent information on how these funds are spent and whether or not the agency is meeting community goals. Funding partners also have a responsibility to ensure funds provided to the transit program are being used appropriately.

### RCTA GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The 2019 RCTA SRTDP established RCTA's first official set of goals, objectives, and policies to guide RCTA decision-making. Unfortunately, due to the COVID pandemic, the transit landscape changed significantly, necessitating a 2022 mini-update to the SRTDP, which focused on the agency's COVID response in terms of service modifications and financing activities. The policies set forth in these two documents are summarized below, along with recommendations on how the previously adopted goals and policies should be modified for the current 2025 SRTDP.

### Mission Statement

The RCTA's mission statement is "To provide safe and cost-effective local and regional public transportation services to provide a mobility option for Del Norte County residents, students, employees, and visitors to the area."

- *Recommendation:* No change. This mission statement continues to exemplify the type of service the RCTA strives to provide.

### Goals

RCTA has five adopted goals:

1. Provide an effective level of service in response to demonstrated community market needs.
2. Provide public transportation services that are financially sustainable within existing local, state, and federal funding programs in a cost-efficient manner.

3. Ensure that all transit programs can be provided at a high quality of service.
4. Provide safe and convenient transportation services to the residents and visitors of Del Norte County.
5. Within available financial resources, develop supplemental mobility options and services that both encourage better utilization of existing fixed-route and demand response services.

## Objectives and Policies

The Del Norte Local Transportation Commission (DNLTC) outlined clear objectives and policies in the 2024 Del Norte Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) relating to regional public transportation namely RCTA services, all of its objectives support the overarching DNLTC goal of: *“Provide for the mobility needs of Del Norte residents, visitors and employees through transit services within the financial constraints of state and federal transit funding.”*

The individual objectives and policies that support them are:

**Objective 6.1:** Tailor public transportation and transit service provisions to the area’s population characteristics.

**Policy 6.1:** Implement recommendations from the Short-Range Transit Development Plan for the RCTA.

**Policy 6.2:** Implement strategies and recommendations outlined in the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (2020) to address the unmet transit needs of the public. Update the plan as necessary.

**Policy 6.3:** Consider transit services first in areas where the greatest operational efficiencies exist (i.e., dependent needs, recreational areas).

**Policy 6.4:** Include the Yurok Tribe, Elk Valley Rancheria, Pulikla Tribe of Yurok People, and Tolowa-Dee-ni’ Nation in planning processes.

**Objective 6.2:** Provide life-line transportation for transit-dependent people.

**Policy 6.5:** The DNLTC will conduct a minimum of one public hearing annually to consider and take testimony on unmet transit needs prior to expending LTF funds.

**Policy 6.6:** Ensure that public transit services are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**Objective 6.3:** As funding permits, develop transit service as an effective alternative transportation mode choice.

**Policy 6.7:** Support transit projects that serve visitors and residents for commute and recreation purposes and that enhance economic development.

**Policy 6.8:** Encourage coordination of inter- and intra-regional transit service.

**Objective 6.4:** Respond to the transit needs of disadvantaged communities, including elderly populations, minority communities, people with disabilities, and low-income communities.

**Policy 6.9:** Coordinate annual grant programs, such as Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 funding, and assist agencies in preparing applications when applicable.

**Policy 6.10:** Conduct meetings with the Social Services Transportation Advisory Committee (SSTAC) at least once a year. Involve SSTAC in transportation planning activities as appropriate.

**Objective 5:** Promote the use of renewable and alternative fuels for transit.

**Policy 6.11:** Purchase renewable and alternative fuel transit vehicles. Actively seek funding that would allow the purchase of fleet vehicles that use renewable and clean alternatives.

**Policy 6.12:** Promote the use of renewable and alternative-fueled transportation.

**Policy 6.13:** Develop partnerships with other departments and entities to expand the availability and use of alternative and renewable fuels.

## RCTA PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

RCTA's performance standards are established and updated through the SRTDP process. In the existing conditions memo, LSC recommended updates to the performance standards adopted by RCTA in the 2018-19 SRTDP. RCTA General Management prepares and submits annual performance reports to the RCTA board of Directors, and on request to the Del Norte Local Transportation Commission. RCTA FY 2023-24 performance was compared to RCTA performance standards adopted in the 2018-19 SRTDP. These performance standards were updated in the Existing Conditions Memo based on the changing public transit landscape, peer data, and current performance. The recommended performance standards are outlined below. These standards will be used to evaluate the performance of service alternatives.

### TDA-Required Performance Standards

RCTA has adopted four performance standards to measure the efficiency of transit services. These four standards are also evaluated every three years as part of the Transportation Development Act (TDA) Triennial Performance Audit. The newly recommended efficiency standards are shown in Table 1, discussed below.

- **Passenger-Trips per Vehicle Service Hour** – It is recommended that RCTA reduce its standards for passenger-trips per vehicle service hour for systemwide and DAR performance to better reflect the transit environment post-pandemic. Local and Intercity route standards are recommended to remain unchanged.
- **Operating Cost per Vehicle Service Hour** – Significant increases are recommended to the fully allocated cost standards to reflect the current conditions, as operations expenses have increased significantly since the last SRTDP and are recommended to be adjusted according to the California Consumer Price Index (CPI) into the future.

**Table 1: Performance Standards for the RCTA**

Exceeds Target

Meets Minimum

Does Not Meet Standard

Passengers Per Vehicle Service Hour					
Service Type	2019 SRTP			Recommended	
	Minimum	Target	FY 23-24 Values	Minimum	Target
Crescent City Local Routes <sup>1</sup>	9.0	12.0	9.4	9.0	12.0
Route 20 Smith River / Arcata	2.5	4	2.8	2.5	4.0
Bus Route 199 Crescent City / Gasquet	2.5	4	2.7	2.5	4.0
Dial-a-Ride	3	4.5	2.2	2.0	3.0
Systemwide	5.8	7	5.4	5.0	7.0

Cost Per Vehicle Service Hour <sup>2</sup>					
Service Type	2019 SRTP			Recommended	
	Minimum	Target	FY 23-24 Values	Minimum	Target
Crescent City Local Routes <sup>1</sup>	\$98.27	\$85.17	\$134.93	\$138.98	\$125.08
Route 20 Smith River / Arcata	\$98.27	\$89.34	\$150.76	\$155.28	\$139.75
Bus Route 199 Crescent City / Gasquet	\$98.27	\$89.34	\$147.96	\$155.28	\$139.75
Dial-a-Ride	\$98.27	\$89.34	\$134.93	\$138.98	\$125.08
System Wide	\$98.27	\$89.34	\$142.71	\$146.99	\$132.29

Total Cost Per Passenger-Trip <sup>3,4</sup>				Recommended	
Service Type	Minimum	Target	FY 23-24 Values	Minimum	Target
Crescent City Local Routes <sup>1</sup>	\$9.57	\$7.66	\$14.56	\$15.00	\$13.50
Route 20 Smith River / Arcata	\$38.29	\$25.53	\$53.88	\$55.50	\$49.95
Bus Route 199 Crescent City / Gasquet	\$38.29	\$25.53	\$54.45	\$56.08	\$50.47
Dial-a-Ride	\$38.29	\$25.53	\$62.29	\$62.29	\$45.56
System Wide	\$16.59	\$12.76	\$26.49	\$27.29	\$24.56

Marginal Cost per Trip				Recommended	
Service Type	Minimum	Target	FY 23-24 Values	Minimum	Target
Crescent City Local Routes <sup>1</sup>	--	--	\$5.97	\$6.15	\$5.53
Route 20 Smith River / Arcata	--	--	\$25.04	\$25.79	\$23.21
Bus Route 199 Crescent City / Gasquet	--	--	\$24.75	\$25.79	\$23.21
Dial-a-Ride	--	--	\$25.03	\$25.78	\$23.21
System Wide	--	--	\$11.49	\$11.83	\$10.65

Note 1: Crescent City Local routes include Routes 1, 2, 3, 4, 300

Note 2: Cost per service hour standards adjusted by 5 percent per annum for minimum standard, and 4 percent per annum per the 2019 SRTP recommendations.

Note 3: Cost per passenger trip standards adjusted by 5 percent per annum for minimum and target standards.

Note 4: The cost per passenger-trip was calculated by dividing the fully allocated cost for each service category for FY 2023-24 by total annual ridership.

Source: RCTA 2019 SRTP

- Operating Cost Per Passenger-Trip** – It is also recommended that the standards for the operating cost per vehicle service hour be increased to reflect current conditions and be adjusted according to the California CPI into the future. This SRTDP also recommends that RCTA adopt standards for the marginal operating cost per vehicle service hour. Marginal costs exclude fixed costs, which will not change if service is increased or decreased. Examples of fixed costs include administrative staff time, utilities, marketing, etc. The recommended marginal cost standards presented in Table 1 were calculated through the development of a cost model for FY 2023- 24 in TM1 (Table 14). The cost model calculated marginal expenses by breaking out RCTA expenses that are dependent on hours and miles of service. Those per-hour and mile marginal costs were multiplied by current levels of service to determine each route and type of service’s share of total marginal costs. Finally, service level marginal costs were divided by passenger trips to establish the current marginal cost per trip for each type of service. It is recommended that, moving forward, the operating cost per hour standards continue to be updated annually based on the CPI. Essential expenses such as fuel costs and contract expenses targeted at retention of operations employees, which outpace the CPI, may need to be excluded from the calculation.
- Farebox Recovery Ratio** – The California Transportation Development Act (TDA) previously required that all funding recipients achieve minimum farebox recovery standards, although this requirement was temporarily suspended during the height of COVID-19 impacts. When the farebox performance was reimplemented, significant changes to the calculation of the farebox recovery ratio were introduced. AB 149 (passed in July 2021) redefined local funds, which are allowable per TDA to supplement fare revenue to meet the minimum farebox recovery ratio requirement. Local funds are now defined as “any nonstate grant funds or other revenues generated by, earned by, or distributed to an operator.” Examples include advertising revenue, lease revenue, or funds provided by a local agency. Additionally, beginning in FY 2021-22, federal grant funds can now be classified as local funds. It is recommended that the RCTA continue to monitor system/program farebox recovery ratios to remain above the TDA-required 10 percent.

## Service Reliability Standards and Recommended Updates

RCTA adopted and tracked performance standards with the 2018-19 SRTDP update to ensure the agency is upholding its policies regarding service convenience, reliability, safety, and capital upgrades. These performance standards are summarized below.

- On-Time Performance** – RCTA has adopted standards for each type of service regarding on-time performance. LSC recommends that these standards allow more flexibility for issues outside of RCTA’s control. The current standards are:

  - The minimum standard for Local Routes is no early departures and 90 percent of scheduled timepoints are on-time, defined as one minute early to five minutes late. The target standard is that 95 percent of all timepoints are on time.

- The minimum standard for regional is no early departures and 80 percent of all runs are on-time at scheduled timepoints, defined as one minute early to five minutes late. The target standard is that 90 percent of timepoints are on time.
- **Recommended On-Time Performance Standards**
  - The recommended minimum standard for local Routes no early departures and a minimum of 85 percent on time, and a target of 90 percent on time. This recommendation is due to the high ratios of wheelchair boardings, comparable to other transit operators.
  - The recommended minimum standard for regional Routes no early departures and a minimum of 80 percent on time, and a target of 85 percent on time. This recommendation is due to road construction projects and severe weather frequently causing delays outside of RCTA's control.
- **Span of Service** – RCTA adopted span of service standards with the last SRTDP update, which was completed prior to the start of the pandemic, which changed the transit landscape significantly. RCTA's adopted standards are as follows.
  - Local Routes
    - Minimum Local Route service standard: 7:00 AM to 6:30 PM on weekdays and 8:00 AM to 6:30 PM on Saturdays
    - Target Local Route service standard: 6:30 AM to 7:30 PM on weekdays and 7:30 AM to 7:30 PM on Saturdays.
  - Route 20
    - Minimum standard: 6:00 AM to 9 PM Monday through Saturday
    - Target standard: 6:00 AM to 9 PM Monday through Saturday, and 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM on Sundays during the summer season.
  - Route 199
    - Minimum standard: 7:00 AM to 5:30 PM Monday through Saturday
    - Target standard: 6:00 AM to 9 PM Monday through Saturday, and 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM on Sundays during the summer season.
- **Recommended Span of Service** – LSC recommends considerable adjustment to these standards to reflect current passenger demand and operational capacity, given planning period budget projections. These standards should be thought of as a target span of service, but may need to be adjusted based on available revenue.
  - Local Routes
    - Minimum Local Route service standard: 7:00 AM to 5:30 PM weekdays; 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM Saturdays
    - Target Local Route service standard: 6:30 AM to 6:30 PM weekdays; 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM Saturdays
  - Route 20

- Minimum standard: 6:00 AM to 9 PM Monday through Saturday
    - Target standard: 6:00 AM to 9 PM Monday through Sunday
  - Route 199
    - Minimum standard: 7:00 AM to 5:30 PM Monday through Friday
    - Target standard: 6:30 AM to 6:30 PM Monday through Saturday.
- **Road Calls for Mechanical Failures** – RCTA’s adopted standards are a minimum of 20,000 miles between mechanical road calls, and a target standard of 30,000 miles between mechanical road calls. LSC recommends that these standards remain unchanged.
- **Preventable Vehicle Collisions** – RCTA’s adopted vehicle collision standard is a minimum of 1 per 100,000 vehicle service miles. The target standard is 1 per 250,000 vehicle service miles. LSC recommends that this standard remain unchanged.
- **Annual number of Passengers Travel Trained** – RCTA is the consolidated transportation services agency CTSA serving Del Norte County. One of the CTSA services that RCTA provides is travel training, which provides staff for the purpose of teaching individuals and groups how to utilize available public transportation options safely and independently. RCTA’s adopted performance standards are a minimum of 20 people travel trained a year, and a target of 50 people trained a year. The program has been contracted out to Transdev for implementation and has been slow to implement due to staffing challenges and other operational responsibilities, and a lack of marketing efforts. RCTA currently pays Transdev \$525 per month to provide travel training services. During FY 2023-24, four small group trainings were provided to schools and the senior center, and two individual trainings were provided as part of ADA eligibility screenings. It is recommended that this standard remain unchanged, and that RCTA explore alternative options for local contractors to provide travel training services who can more effectively market the program and are not time restricted by day-to-day operational responsibilities.

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## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents potential alternatives to modify RCTA services so that they better meet the mobility needs of Del Norte County residents and operate more efficiently. The service elements presented in this chapter are designed “a la carte”; each alternative is evaluated as a stand-alone option, though when combined, the overall impacts may vary. The combined impacts of the various service elements included in the final five-year plan will be presented in the Draft SRTDP.

The service alternatives discussed in this chapter are organized by service type. First, alternatives impacting Crescent City Local Routes are discussed. This is followed by an evaluation of potential options for RCTA intercity routes. Finally, alternatives that explore cuts to underperforming runs are evaluated in the event that RCTA financials cannot sustain current levels of service.

For each service alternative, the likely impacts on RCTA ridership and operating costs are estimated. Ridership and cost estimates are based on the following parameters:

1. To estimate operating costs, the RCTA draft operating budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-25 was used to develop an RCTA cost model, which estimates the FY 2024-25 cost per vehicle service hour and vehicle service mile. The resulting cost factors were then escalated by 3 percent to account for expected inflation to represent FY 2025-26 numbers. The resulting equation is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Change in Marginal Operating Cost} &= \$56.45 \times \text{Change in Vehicle Hours} \\ &+ \$0.72 \times \text{Change in Vehicle Miles} \end{aligned}$$

2. Status quo service levels were assumed to be similar to FY 2023-24, unless otherwise noted.
3. Ridership estimates were based on RCTA FY 2023-24 ridership, data from peer systems, and standard transit demand elasticity factors, depending on the alternative. Recent ridership data indicates a 10 percent increase in fixed route ridership from FY 2023-24 and a 16 percent increase from FY 2023-24 to FY 2024-25. Service alternative ridership projections for FY 2025-26 reflect the recent upward ridership trend.
4. Fare revenue estimates are calculated by multiplying the projected increase or decrease in ridership by the FY 2023-24 average fare revenue per passenger for the route.
5. Marginal operating subsidy is calculated by deducting the change in fare revenue from the estimated change in operating cost.

Similar to other rural transit agencies, RCTA is facing rising operating costs primarily from an increase in the transit operating contract (primarily higher labor costs, plus higher fuel costs). With little to no population growth expected and the cessation of emergency Federal Transit Administration (FTA) sources, RCTA is facing a budget deficit in FY 2025-26, given status quo funding sources.

Over the past few years, the state released a new revenue with source for transit operators through Senate Bill (SB) 125, which established two funding formula-based funding types Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) and the Zero Emission Transit Capital Program (ZETCP). These funds were provided in an effort to address the ridership and fare revenue loss to transit agencies post-COVID, as well as assist operators in complying with California Air Resources Board (CARB) Zero Emission Bus (ZEB) mandates. RCTA received its first tranche of SB 125 funding of \$1.675 million in 2023, which was utilized to supplement its electric bus charging infrastructure project. RCTA expects to receive a second tranche of \$1.675 million in FY 2025-26, which, if utilized for operations, can sustain RCTA's operations at the current status quo level through FY 2028-29. There is a possibility that additional SB 125 funds will be made available in the future.

Therefore, this service alternatives analysis focuses on new transit service options which do not increase service levels significantly unless there are associated service reductions or new funding sources available.

## **CRESCENT CITY LOCAL ROUTE SERVICE ALTERNATIVES**

Crescent City is the primary hub for RCTA operations. The RCTA facility is located on the east side of the city, just off US 101, while the Cultural Center Transit Hub—where most routes begin—is one mile south. Major transit destinations include Walmart, Sutter Coast Hospital, Del Norte Senior Center, Grocery Outlet, College of the Redwoods, Del Norte High School, and Crescent Elk Middle School. The nearby Bertch Tract, southeast of the city, is a dense residential area that includes the Elk Valley Rancheria and Elk Valley Casino.

Currently, Crescent City is served by four RCTA Local Routes, which operate 30-minute loops on hourly headways using two buses which are “interlined”. Current interline pairs are Route 1 and 3, and 2 and 4.

Routes 1 and 2 complete a similar loop in opposite directions, serving much of the key activity centers within the city, these routes are the most productive. Route 3 serves the business core along US 101 and northern portions of Northcrest Drive. Route 3 is the lowest-performing local route, but it serves important destinations for seniors and social services. Route 4 serves the Bertch Tract, connecting its residents with the rest of the RCTA transit system and downtown Crescent City. Route 4 also serves a key destination, the Elk Valley Casino. In general, hourly service is provided, but the overlap of some routes along main corridors provides for higher frequency for some stops. Crescent City Local routes each provide between 10 and 12 round trips on weekdays with service from 7 AM to 6 PM, and 9 round trips of routes 2 and 4 on Saturdays between 8 AM and 5 PM.

## **Challenges and Considerations**

RCTA's Crescent City Local Routes are generally efficient and well-utilized by residents and visitors. The service area covers most of Crescent City, with the majority of residents and activity centers located within a ¼ mile of stops. Due to the high performance of these routes, only minimal changes are discussed below.

Routes 1 and 2 effectively serve the city's main commercial and residential areas. Route 2, in particular, faces on-time performance challenges. On-time performance is hindered by high passenger volume,

frequent bike and wheelchair boardings, and traffic congestion at busy intersections. During the afternoons of the on-board survey effort (September 18–21, 2024), Routes 2 and 4 ran 15–20 minutes behind schedule, while Routes 1 and 3 maintained stronger on-time performance, with no stops served more than 10 minutes late. Due to the high ridership and cohesive coverage network that RCTA’s local routes provide, minimal changes to routing have been considered in order to improve on-time performance. Consistency of services retains existing riders, and any routing changes need to have a strong potential to improve performance to warrant any changes to already productive routes.

Passenger feedback collected during the on-board survey indicates strong interest in expanding the span of RCTA services on weekday evenings, Saturdays, and introducing Sunday service. To address current challenges and accommodate survey requests, several service alternatives are analyzed below, including extending service hours and implementing micro-transit to complement fixed routes. Table 2 outlines these alternatives, along with their potential impacts on service levels, operating costs, and ridership. Any increases in the Local Fixed Route span of service are legally required to be matched by expanded DAR span of service.

## **Improve On-time Performance**

According to on-board survey data, 45 percent of runs on Route 2 were more than 10 minutes late, and half of Route 4 runs were more than 10 minutes late. These two routes interline. On the day of the survey, Routes 1 and 3 did not have any runs 10 minutes or more late. On-time performance data collected by the operator for a four-month period showed a similar trend, although the percent of runs late was not as significant when averaged over the longer period.

According to research, an improvement in on-time reliability can have a significant impact on ridership, as passengers (and potential passengers) have been proven to be very sensitive to poor service reliability. The document Valuing Transit Service Quality Improvements (Victoria Transport Policy Institute, 2023) indicates that “Increased transit travel speeds can be valued based on average time costs, but reliability improvements should be valued at a higher rate, reflecting the high costs of unexpected delay. Each minute of delay beyond a “normal” two or three-minute delay should be valued at 3-5 times the standard in-vehicle travel time.” As such, a few options were reviewed to improve on-time performance for Routes 2 and 4.

### ***Change Interline to Improve On-time Performance***

One option would be to change the bus interlining for the Crescent City Fixed Routes by pairing routes which take more time with routes which take less time. This limits the time an “on-time” route needs to wait for a “late” route at the transit center to make transfers. On-time performance surveys conducted as part of the on-board survey effort show that on average, Routes 2 and 4 take 28 – 30 minutes to complete, while Routes 1 and 3 take 24 – 25 minutes to complete. For example, pairing Route 1 with Route 2 and Route 3 with Route 4 would allow five minutes of cushion, which could be used for a driver break or to catch up time in case of traffic or wheelchair boarding.

On-board survey data shows that there are a similar number of transfers between all the routes, so that the new interline pairing would have a negligible impact on ridership with respect to transfer patterns. Given the high transit dependency of local route riders, the increase in ridership resulting from improved

reliability would be relatively small, on the order of a five percent increase or around 3,130 trips per year, while having little to no impact on operating costs.

RCTA may want to delay the implementation of a change in interlining due to the relocation of the Cultural Center Transfer Hub. To make way for the City's Front Street Improvements project, RCTA will abandon its current transfer hub stop (eastbound on Front, between K and US 101) in the summer of 2025 for a period of at least 2 years until the TIRCP-funded Downtown Transit Center project is completed. RCTA will use its existing bus stop on the 3rd, westbound between K and US 101 (Grocery Outlet) as the temporary transfer hub for 2-3 years. One benefit of these new locations (both the temporary 2025-27 and permanent transit center 2027-28 locations) is quicker access to westbound trips, which should benefit Route 2 more than any other route. Currently, Route 2 endures high levels of traffic delays before reaching its first stop due to having to cross US 101 (traffic signal), then make a left onto 3<sup>rd</sup> and cross US 101 again (unsignalized) before finally reaching its first stop at the Grocery Outlet (3<sup>rd</sup> and K). Starting the route at Grocery Outlet will save 2-3 minutes per trip, which is expected to improve on-time performance in the short term. RCTA should assess on-time performance following the construction of the new Downtown Transit Center and consider optimizing interline pairs for on-time performance.

**Table 2: Local Route Service Alternatives Analysis**

FY 2025-26

	Run Parameters		Daily Service		Days per Year	Change in Annual Service							
						Annual		Annual Marginal Cost	Annual Ridership	Fare Revenues	Marginal Operating Subsidy	Additional bus/ driver required	
	Hours	Miles	Runs	Hours	Miles	Hours	Miles						
<b>Status Quo</b>													
Route 1 - Parkway / El Dorado	0.5	6.69	12	6	80.28	249	1,500	20,600	\$99,600	16,400	\$8,500	\$91,100	
Route 2 - A/Inyo/Washington							1,600	23,600	\$107,400	20,400	\$10,500	\$96,900	
Route 3 - Northcrest	0.5	7.65	10	5	76.5	249	1,300	20,100	\$87,900	10,300	\$5,600	\$82,300	
Route 4 - Bertsch							1,600	24,600	\$108,100	15,500	\$8,900	\$99,200	
Route 300 - CEMS & DNHS School Tripper	0.65	9.77	1	0.65	9.77	180	140	1,830	\$9,200	5,010	\$550	\$8,650	
Crescent City DAR	--	--					2,040						
<b>Total</b>							<b>6,140</b>	<b>90,730</b>	<b>\$412,200</b>	<b>67,610</b>	<b>\$34,050</b>	<b>\$378,150</b>	
<b>30 minute Headways Crescent City Routes 1 and 2 - Weekdays 11 AM to 4 PM</b>													
Route 1 - Add 5 runs between 11 AM - 4 PM	0.5	6.69	5	2.5	33.45	166	415	5,553	\$27,400	3,680	\$1,910	\$25,490	
Route 2 - Add 5 runs between 11 AM - 4 PM	0.5	7.35	5	2.5	36.75	166	415	6,101	\$27,800	4,160	\$2,140	\$25,660	
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>830</b>	<b>11,653</b>	<b>\$55,200</b>	<b>7,840</b>	<b>\$4,050</b>	<b>\$51,150</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Add one additional PM run on Route 2</b>													
Route 2 - 6:00 PM - 6:30 PM Weekday Run	0.5	7.4	1	0.5	7.4	249	125	1,830	\$8,400	1,320	\$690	\$7,710	
DAR - 6:00 PM - 6:30 PM Weekday Expansion	--	--	--	0.5	12.1	249	125	3,018	\$9,200	270	\$200	\$9,000	
Route 2 - 5:00-5:30 Saturday Run	0.5	7.4	1	0.5	7.4	56	28	412	\$1,900	450	\$330	\$1,570	
DAR - 6:00 PM - 6:30 PM Weekday Expansion				0.5	12.1	56	28	679	\$2,100	50	\$40	\$2,060	
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>305</b>	<b>5,938</b>	<b>\$21,600</b>	<b>2,090</b>	<b>\$1,260</b>	<b>\$20,340</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Extend hours of Saturday Service(Weekday schedule for Routes 2/4)</b>													
Route 2 - A / Inyo / Washington (Add 1 AM and 1 PM RT)	0.5	7.4	2	1.0	14.7	56	56	823	\$3,800	440	\$230	\$3,570	
Route 4 - Bertsch (Add 1 AM and 1 PM RT)	0.5	7.7	2	1.0	15.3	56	56	859	\$3,800	100	\$60	\$3,740	
DAR - 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM Saturday / Holiday Expansion	--	--	--	2.0	48.5	56	112	2,715	\$8,300	190	\$140	\$8,160	
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>224</b>	<b>4,397</b>	<b>\$15,900</b>	<b>730</b>	<b>\$430</b>	<b>\$15,470</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Saturday Service (Add Routes 1 and 3)</b>													
Route 1 - Parkway / El Dorado (8 AM - 5 PM)	0.5	6.7	9	4.5	60.2	56	252	3,372	\$16,700	1,160	\$600	\$16,100	
Route 3 - Northcrest (8 AM - 5 PM)	0.5	7.7	9	4.5	68.9	56	252	3,856	\$17,000	910	\$490	\$16,510	
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>504</b>	<b>7227.4</b>	<b>\$33,700.00</b>	<b>2,070</b>	<b>\$1,090</b>	<b>\$32,610</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Fixed Route Sunday Service (With Existing Saturday Schedule)</b>													
Route 2 - A / Inyo / Washington	0.5	7.4	9	4.5	66.15	51	229.5	3373.65	\$15,400	2010	\$1,030	\$14,370	
Route 4 - Bertsch	0.5	7.7	9	4.5	69.03	51	229.5	3520.53	\$15,500	1150	\$660	\$14,840	
DAR				9	218.166	51	459	11126.5	\$34,000	350	\$260	\$33,740	
Sunday Dispatch Staffing (Estimated) <sup>1</sup>									\$20,655			\$20,655	
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>918</b>	<b>18,021</b>	<b>\$85,555</b>	<b>3,510</b>	<b>\$1,950</b>	<b>\$83,605</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Evening Microtransit Service Monday - Saturday</b>													
Weekdays 6 PM - 8 PM	2.0	12	1	2	12	249	498	2,988	\$30,300	1,990	\$5,970	\$24,330	
Saturdays 5 PM- 8 PM	3.0	18	1	3	18	56	168	1,008	\$10,200	450	\$1,350	\$8,850	
One Active Vehicle Software Cost Estimate <sup>2</sup>									\$25,000			\$25,000	
<b>Net Impact (1 Vehicle)</b>							<b>666</b>	<b>3,996</b>	<b>\$65,500</b>	<b>2,440</b>	<b>\$7,320</b>	<b>\$58,180</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Microtransit Service Sunday</b>													
Sunday Microtransit (8 AM - 5 PM) - 1 vehicle	9.0	54	1	9	54	51	459	2,754	\$27,900	1,840	\$5,520	\$22,380	
Sunday Dispatch Staffing (Estimated) <sup>1</sup>									\$20,655			\$20,655	
One Active Vehicle Software Cost Estimate <sup>2</sup>									\$25,000			\$25,000	
<b>Total Net Impact Sunday Microtransit 8 AM to 5 PM</b>									<b>\$73,555</b>	<b>1,840</b>		<b>\$68,035</b>	
Sunday Evening Microtransit to extend span of Sunday Service 5 PM- 8 PM	3.0	18	1	3	18	51	153	918	\$9,300	320	\$960	\$8,340	
<b>Total Net Impact Sunday Microtransit 8 AM to 8 PM</b>							<b>612</b>	<b>3,672</b>	<b>\$82,855</b>	<b>2,160</b>	<b>\$6,480</b>	<b>\$76,375</b>	<b>1</b>

Note 1: Estimated based on FY 2025-26 cost per day of week of current operations contract dispatch services.

Note 2: Estimated annual cost to licence one active vehicle at a time based on microtransit cost proposals received by other transit operators. Does not include one time start up costs estimated to be \$700 for onboard hardware, and \$3000 for onsite technology training.

## **Increase Frequency on Route 1 and 2 headways to 30 Minutes During Peak Summer Season Hours**

Reducing headways from one hour to 30 minutes typically adds significant ridership due to the convenience factor for passengers. Routes 1 and 2 are the highest-performing local routes and serve around 10 passengers per vehicle service hour in FY 2023-24, much higher than many rural transit systems. Increasing the number of runs operated could also help mitigate on-time performance issues for Route 2.

A cost-effective option would be to provide 30-minute service on weekdays during times of highest boarding, generally between 11 AM and 4 PM (according to on-board surveys), instead of for the entire service day.

Under this alternative, one additional bus would interline between Routes 1 and 2, operating five additional runs per route per service day. A potential drawback of this approach is that riders who are accustomed to remaining onboard to transfer to Route 3 or 4 would need to exit the bus to transfer for the runs added by this alternative. This could cause confusion or inconvenience. This option would add one additional bus and driver shift. It is estimated that this alternative would increase operating costs by \$55,200 and ridership by 7,840 annually, totaling an annual marginal operating subsidy of \$51,150.

## **Increase Route 2 Span of Service to Include One Additional Evening Run**

Route 2 is RCTA's most productive route, with strong boarding activity during afternoon and evening runs throughout the survey period. Extending its service span by one additional evening run—from 6 PM to 6:30 PM on weekdays and from 5:00 PM to 5:30 PM on Saturdays—would give transit-dependent residents and visitors more time to complete errands and social activities. This extension would be a cost-efficient way to serve more passengers and activity centers compared to increasing service on all Crescent City Local Routes. Due to the increase in the span of local fixed route service, DAR service hours would also need to be expanded as well to remain in compliance with ADA requirements.

This alternative is associated with a \$21,600 increase in annual operating costs. Based on ridership by hour trends on peer transit systems and the average of RCTA DAR passengers per hour, it is estimated that an additional 1,770 passenger-trips would occur, contributing to a marginal operating subsidy of \$20,340.

## **Increase Saturday Service Span on Routes 2,4, and DAR**

“More Saturday Service (Like Weekdays)” was the most frequently selected survey response as to desired RCTA improvements. This answer can be interpreted to mean increased hours on the currently offered Route 2 and 4, and/or the operation of Route 1 and 3 on Saturday. For this reason, both options are analyzed.

Currently, the only Crescent City local routes which operate on Saturdays are Routes 2 and 4. Compared to the weekday service schedule, the span of service on Saturday begins 1 hour later in the morning and ends 1 hour earlier in the afternoon. Given the seven-day-a-week economy, which is heavily service industry-based, especially in the summer months, increasing service would allow transit-dependent individuals additional time to get to and from work, go shopping, or enjoy the many beautiful beaches

and parks that are present around Crescent City. This alternative is the most cost-effective way to increase RCTA's Local Route services on Saturdays. Due to the increase in the span of service, DAR service would also need to be expanded to the same time span.

If one more loop of both Routes 2 and 4 were operated in the morning beginning at 7 AM and in the evening at 5 PM, and DAR service were expanded to the same hours, it would cost on the order of \$15,900 annually. Ridership by hour data for other small transit systems indicates that approximately 730 additional one-way passenger trips could be gained from this additional service, totaling an annual marginal operating subsidy of \$15,470.

### **Increase Saturday Service Scope by Offering Routes 1 and 3**

Currently, Routes 1 and 3 (which interline) do not operate on Saturdays. Many of the destinations served by Route 1 are also served by Route 2 (which does operate on Saturdays). However, Routes 1 and 2 run in opposite directions, generally providing bi-directional service. Route 3 services the portion of Northcrest Drive, north of Washington Boulevard, and other unique stops which are not served by any other Local Routes. This means no Saturday service to the Northcrest Trailer City RV Park, Pinegrove RV Park, or direct service to the Crescent Cove Senior Apartments, all of which are home to many transit-dependent individuals. Therefore, Saturday service between 8 AM and 5 PM was considered for Routes 1 and 3. Additional complimentary paratransit service is not required for this option.


The annual operating cost of this alternative is estimated at \$33,700. Ridership was estimated based on the proportion of Saturday to weekday ridership for Routes 2 and 4, then adjusted to reflect a shorter service day. Consideration was also given to the fact that most Route 1 and 3 riders are served by Routes 2 and 4; however, having all four routes operating on Saturdays would increase frequency and reduce travel time for some passengers. Ridership would be increased by 2,070 one-way passenger trips, for an annual operating subsidy of \$32,610.

### **Sunday Service on Routes 2, 4, and DAR**

Sunday Service was the second most popular desired improvement selected by participants during the onboard survey, receiving 19 percent or 29 of the 153 responses. RCTA does not operate services on Sunday currently. Most transit agencies operating Sunday service experience limited ridership, which is generally about 50 percent of Saturday ridership levels. Given the non-traditional 7-day-a-week economy of Del Norte County and RCTA has strong Saturday ridership. Routes 2 and 4 average Saturday ridership was 89 percent of the average weekday ridership during the first five months of FY 2024-25.

Sunday service would mirror the existing local route Saturday service levels, with Route 2 and 4 in operation between the hours of 8 AM and 5 PM. Due to the increase in the span of services, DAR service would need to be offered on Sunday as well, during the same 8 AM to 5 PM span of service.

A dispatcher would need to be available for Sunday service, and hiring additional staff may be required. This may also mean RCTA's operations contract would need to be amended. Assuming a loaded rate of \$45 per hour for a dispatcher, Sunday dispatch services would add around \$20,655 per year.

The annual operating cost of this alternative is estimated at \$85,555; annual ridership is estimated to increase by 3,510 one-way passenger trips based on 50 percent of the projected FY 2025-26 Saturday ridership. Requiring an estimated additional marginal operating subsidy of \$83,605 


## Crescent City Microtransit Service

Microtransit has become an increasingly popular service option for providing transit coverage over areas not served efficiently by fixed routes. Microtransit has also been found to be an effective service option in areas with high demand for short trips.

Microtransit applies the app-based technology developed for transportation network companies (such as Uber and Lyft) to provide real-time, on-demand service. Most microtransit passengers typically request rides and pay their fares through an app downloaded on their smartphone or computer. Once a ride has been requested, a routing algorithm assigns the ride request to a specific driver/vehicle, and the passenger is provided with an estimated service time. Microtransit is a shared-ride service, therefore, multiple passengers may ride the vehicle at the same time.

To ensure equitable accommodation, most agencies allow microtransit rides to be requested directly over the phone as well. Requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are met by ensuring enough accessible vehicles are available to serve those who need them. Microtransit can be operated as a “comingled” service, with the general public and paratransit passengers sharing rides in the same vehicles. Comingling can reduce costs by serving additional people in periods when paratransit demand is low, like evenings. Comingling meets the requirements of the ADA by prioritizing persons with disabilities, yet allows for the expansion of general public service without the cost of operating a separate service. The micro transit service would operate as a curb-to-curb service and be provided with the current DAR vehicles, which are accessible, and ADA rides could be prioritized and provided with door-to-door service through advanced booking requirements, which would allow for the expansions in service span without the need to add paratransit-specific service as well.

For the RCTA, the cost of obtaining and maintaining microtransit software would be determined through an RFP process. Based on other programs, it is estimated that offering microtransit would incur upfront costs of about \$3000 for staff training and \$700 per vehicle in hardware costs, in addition to a software license fee. Typically, software licensing fees have a fixed component as well as a per-vehicle component (software is tethered to tablets, which can be readily transferred between vehicles). To account for the annual cost of the individual vehicle license and other fees, an additional \$25,000 has been added to each alternative marginal operating cost estimates of all alternatives considering microtransit. It is estimated to cost around \$4,500 per each additional microtransit vehicle in peak service. Other microtransit start-up costs will be accounted for in the five-year RCTA financial plan if microtransit is recommended for the SRTDP.

As microtransit is a demand-response curb-to-curb service, it is inherently not as productive as a fixed route service, which requires passengers to group at bus stops. The number of passenger-trips per vehicle hour carried on existing microtransit services varies depending on the agency. A high rate of productivity for microtransit in an area such as Crescent City would be on the order of 4 passenger-trips per vehicle hour. On average, Crescent City fixed routes carry 8 – 10 passenger trips per vehicle ho 

Therefore, microtransit is not considered an efficient mode of public transit during the day in Crescent City. However, microtransit can often be effective during the evening hours when demand for public transit is lower, yet some residents may still require transportation home from work or other business. RCTA is positioned to provide microtransit service without significant capital start-up costs, as RCTA has acquired a fleet of 4 gas-powered sedans/minivans that are of an appropriate size to provide microtransit and can comingle with complementary paratransit using the same vehicles. In the future, small electric vehicles can be procured to replace the current gasoline DAR fleet and provide both DAR and microtransit.

The Crescent City micro transit service would have the following characteristics:

- The recommended service area, which would be the same as the current DAR zone. This area covers nearly all major developments and neighborhoods in Crescent City.
- Reservations would be placed through a phone app or through a call to dispatch.
- It would be reasonable to charge a general public fare of \$3.00 per trip, which is higher than the fixed route fare but lower than the general public DAR fare, which would not be operating at the time. The discounted fare for senior adults ages 65 and older and passengers with disabilities would be \$1.50. No free fare programs like the one currently in place for fixed routes would be implemented for this service to ensure the availability of rides for all who need the service. App-based reservations could pay fares digitally, while those who reserved over the phone would pay in cash, DAR punch pass, or via the contactless card readers RCT has introduced on its fixed route buses.


### ***Monday – Saturday Micro transit Service to Extend Span of Service to 8 PM***

A frequent survey request was for extended evening service hours, microtransit provides an operational model that allows for the full coverage of the Crescent City area for all riders, even those with mobility impairments, with a single vehicle. Service hours would be from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM on weekdays and 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM on Saturdays.

An RCTA dispatcher is currently available as late as 8 PM, due to Route 20 operations; therefore, additional dispatch staff would not be required to operate the later service. It is estimated that evening microtransit service would cost on the order of \$65,500 annually. This includes the annual cost of the technology license, which is estimated to be \$25,000. This cost would be slightly offset by the higher fare rate for microtransit, bringing the required operating subsidy to \$58,180.

In an effort to keep costs low, only one vehicle would be used both on weekdays and Saturdays. This effectively limits the ridership the service can carry. Assuming a maximum productivity of four passenger-trips per vehicle hour, the maximum annual ridership would be roughly 2,440.

#### Pros

- Dispatch is already in operation until beyond 8 PM due to Route 20 Operations.
- Existing DAR Vehicles can be utilized for this service.
- Top survey requests for improvement were increased weekend service 

- Can legally offer expanded service hours without the need to match with DAR service span expansions, which is a notable advantage.
- Introduces a new form of public transit to Crescent City

### Cons

- Potential need for an additional driver shifts.
- Need to purchase app-based microtransit software, which increases operating costs.
- Initially, potential increased demand on dispatch staff who would need to schedule rides for individuals not competent with app-based ride scheduling. However, this would likely improve with time.

## ***Crescent City Microtransit on Sundays***

### *Sunday Microtransit 8 AM to 5 PM*

Offering microtransit service on Sundays is a potential way to meet public demand for increased weekend transit. However, projected ridership under this model is 1,840 (as ridership is limited by the fact that only one vehicle is assigned to the service). The estimated demand for Sunday micro transit service is estimated to exceed the operational capacity of one microtransit vehicle, which could lead to long wait times and not all rides being met within the preferred 30-minute window.

ADA riders would schedule rides in advance to receive priority, and other users could request rides through the app, which would mitigate increased demand on dispatch staff. As noted earlier in this report, implementing Sunday service of any type would require an operations contract amendment that should be expected to increase operating costs by a minimum of \$20,655 annually to staff dispatchers on Sundays. It is estimated that operating one microtransit vehicle on Sundays from 8 AM to 5 PM would result in an additional operating subsidy of \$73,555.

### *Sunday Microtransit 8 AM to 8 PM*

To maintain consistency with weekday and Saturday service, it may be worth expanding Sunday microtransit hours to run until 8 PM. If an 8 AM to 8 PM Sunday service is implemented with one vehicle in daytime service, operating costs are projected to increase by an additional \$9,300 compared to the Sunday 8 AM to 5 PM service, with an estimated ridership gain of 320. In total, for 8 AM to 8 PM Sunday microtransit service with one vehicle, operating costs would be \$82,855, with an estimated ridership gain of 2,160. This equates to an additional marginal operating subsidy of \$76,375 for 8 AM to 8 PM Sunday microtransit service.

## **LOCAL ROUTE ALTERNATIVES PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS**

To evaluate the relative performance of the alternatives above, key impacts of each alternative were compared. The performance analysis considers impacts on ridership, marginal operating costs, the number of passengers carried per vehicle hour, and marginal operating costs per passenger trip. The performance evaluation gives insight into the relative benefits of the various alternatives.

## Comparison of Crescent City Service Alternatives

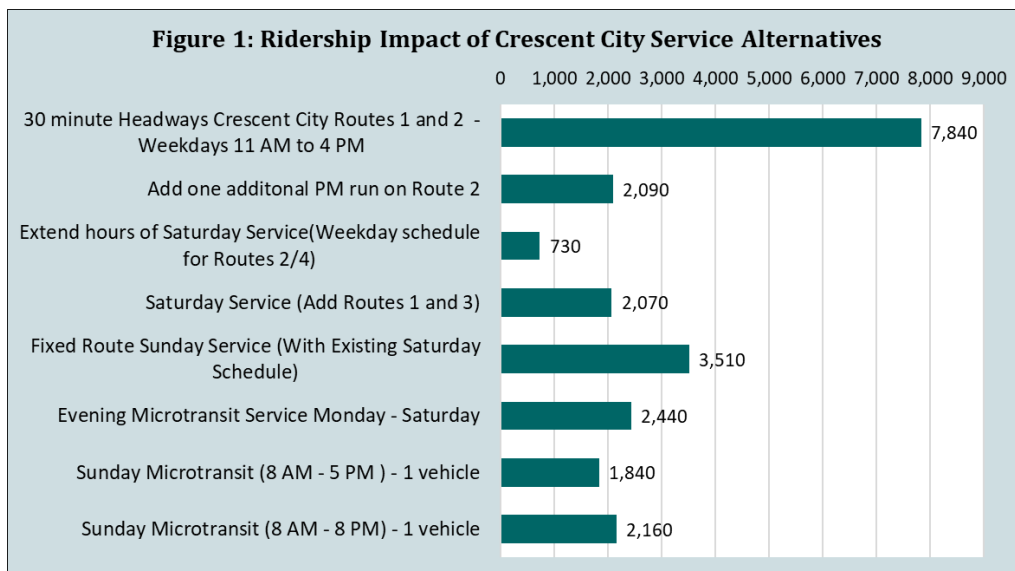
Table 3 and Figures 1 - 3 show the relative performance of the service alternatives considered for Crescent City local services. As shown:

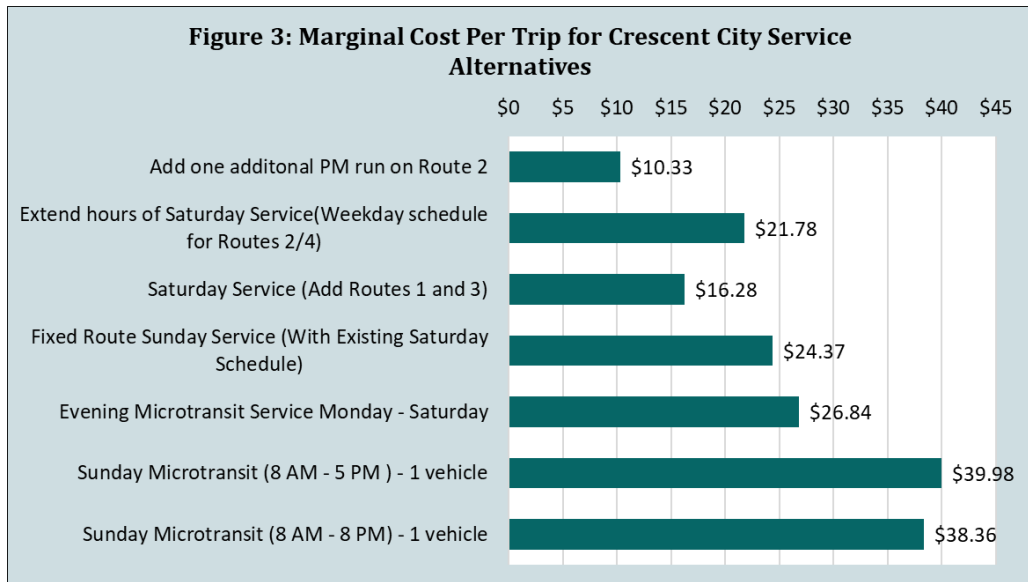
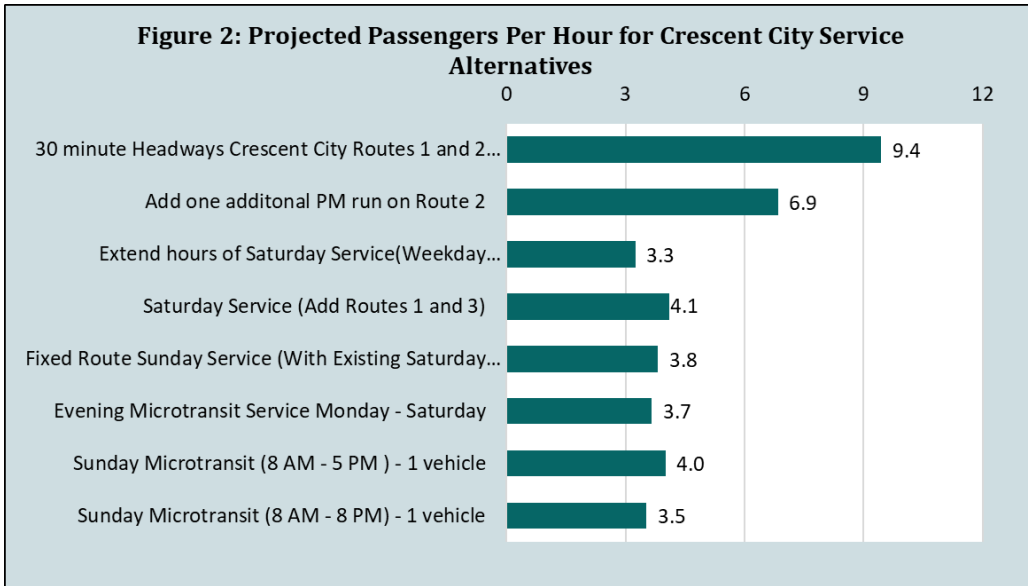
- In terms of ridership, 30-minute headways for Routes 1 and 2 on Weekdays between 11 AM and 4 PM would increase ridership the most (7,840 trips). This is followed by “Add one additional PM run on Route 2” (2,090). The option with the smallest ridership projection is “Extend hours of Saturday service on routes 2 and 4” (730 trips annually).
- In terms of the net increase in marginal operating cost, Sunday Microtransit Service is the most expensive option (\$90,750), while extending Saturday Service for Routes 2 and 4 is the least expensive (\$15,900).
- Currently, Crescent City fixed routes carry around 9.4 passenger-trips per vehicle hour, and this SRTDP recommends a productivity standard of 9.0 trips per hour. Alternatives with a passenger-trip per hour ratio greater than this would increase the overall productivity of the system. Only 30-minute headways on Routes 1 and 2 on weekdays between 11 AM and 4 PM meets this standard.
- Dial-a-Ride carries on average 2.2 trips per vehicle hour. The same performance metric is applied to the microtransit options in Table 3. All of the microtransit options are projected to carry 3.5 to 3.7 trips per hour.
- The marginal operating cost per trip standard for local fixed routes is \$6.52. None of the proposed fixed route service alternatives meets this standard.
- When comparing all the local service alternative options, Evening and Sunday Microtransit is the only alternative that meets both passenger per hour and cost per trip standards (demand response standards are applied).
- Another question to consider: Is Sunday Service better provided by fixed route or microtransit? The Sunday Service microtransit option is projected to carry fewer passengers than the Sunday fixed-route option. However, the overall costs would be lower as separate complementary paratransit would not be required. The cost per trip performance indicator would be better with the fixed route option (\$26.62 per trip vs. \$39.98 per trip). Given that RCTA’s budget is constrained, implementing microtransit on Sundays may be the preferred option only if Monday–Saturday evening microtransit is also considered. Implementing on-demand service for Sundays only has seen low ridership in other areas.

**Table 3: RCTA Alternatives Performance - Crescent City Local Routes**  
FY 2025-26

Service Alternative	Net Impact				
	Annual Ridership	Annual Service Hours	Annual Marginal Operating Cost <sup>1</sup>	Passenger-trips per Hour	Marginal Cost per Trip
<b>Alternatives Meeting Minimum Standard Shaded in Green <sup>2</sup></b>					
30 minute Headways Crescent City Routes 1 and 2 - Weekdays 11 AM to 4 PM	7,840	830	\$55,200	9.4	\$7.04
Add one additional PM run on Route 2	2,090	305	\$21,600	6.9	\$10.33
Extend hours of Saturday Service(Weekday schedule for Routes 2/4)	730	224	\$15,900	3.3	\$21.78
Saturday Service (Add Routes 1 and 3)	2,070	504	\$33,700	4.1	\$16.28
Fixed Route Sunday Service (With Existing Saturday Schedule)	3,510	918	\$85,555	3.8	\$24.37
Evening Microtransit Service Monday - Saturday	2,440	666	\$65,500	3.7	\$26.84
Sunday Microtransit (8 AM - 5 PM ) - 1 vehicle	1,840	459	\$73,555	4.0	\$39.98
Sunday Microtransit (8 AM - 8 PM) - 1 vehicle	2,160	612	\$82,855	3.5	\$38.36
Recommended Minimum Performance Standards >	Local Routes (1, 2, 3, 4)			9.0	\$6.52
	Dial-a-Ride / Microtransit			2.0	\$27.35

Note 1: Does not include fixed costs, includes fare revenue offset.  
Note 2: All alternatives increase service





## INTERCITY ROUTE SERVICE ALTERNATIVES

### Challenges and Considerations

RCTA’s Intercity Routes 20 and 199 connect residents in Del Norte County’s outlying areas with Crescent City key destinations such as schools, workplaces, shopping centers, social services, and medical facilities. Route 20 provides an important intercity connection to Arcata/Eureka in Humboldt County and to Curry Public Transit Coastal Express (4x per day) for travel to neighboring Brookings, Oregon.

When considering changes to RCTA’s intercity routes, it is important to note the differences in funding sources between Route 20 and Route 199. Route 20 receives a significant annual apportionment of competitive statewide 5311(f) (intercity bus) funding; in recent years, receiving the Caltrans-maximum per route funding of \$300,000/year. RCTA Route 20 service levels provide far more service than the

5311(f) funds cover, creating an “overmatch”. RCTA is working with Caltrans and its regional transit partners to seek additional funding for Route 20. To date, no new funding has been secured. In contrast to Route 20, Route 199 is wholly funded by RCTA operating funds with no competitive grant support.

There are several service alternatives considered for RCTA Intercity Routes, including small routing changes, added trips, and the introduction of a new regional route between Crescent City and Medford. Table 4 presents Intercity Service alternatives, as well as the anticipated impacts of each alternative on service levels, operating costs, and ridership.

## **Route 20**

Route 20 primarily follows the US 101 corridor, connecting Smith River in the north to Eureka in Humboldt County to the south. It serves key Crescent City destinations, including the College of the Redwood, Safeway, and the Cultural Center Transit Hub. This route is important for residents of Smith River and Klamath, in providing access to Crescent City destinations. Route 20 also provides access to trailheads in the Redwood State/National Parks.

Ridership on Route 20 fluctuates seasonally, with higher demand between May and October, likely driven by tourism workers and recreational visitors. Service levels are reduced in the winter months.

Route 20 offers strong connectivity with RCTA’s transit partners, including Curry Transit to the north and Humboldt Transit Authority (HTA) to the south. Connections to Amtrak are also possible in Arcata. Connections with HTA are particularly important, as the combined services from RCTA, HTA, and Mendocino Transit Authority (MTA) form the new North State Express (NSX), enabling public transit travel from Smith River to Santa Rosa to replace Greyhound service that terminated in 2024. In Santa Rosa, the southern end of MTA’s service area, there are transportation connections to the greater Bay Area and beyond. Because of Route 20’s connection to intercity transit services, roughly half of Route 20’s current operating cost is eligible to be funded through an FTA 5311(f) Intercity Bus grant. The remaining half of the Route 20 operating costs NOT reimbursed by 5311(f) is considered “overmatch”.

Additionally, the Yurok Tribe Transit Service (YTTS) operates within Del Norte County, with some overlap with Route 20. Although YTTS services are open to the public, schedule information can be challenging to find. RCTA should continue efforts to collaborate with YTTS to ensure comprehensive, efficient transit coverage for all residents of Del Norte County and the Yurok Reservation.

## **Route 199**

Route 199 provides service between Hiouchi and Gasquet in the Smith River Canyon and Crescent City. Like Route 20, it stops at key Crescent City destinations such as Walmart, Schools, Safeway, and the Cultural Center Transit Hub, where transfers to all other RCTA routes are available. Ridership on Route 199 also fluctuates seasonally, with higher demand from May to September, and service levels are adjusted down during the winter months to reflect reduced demand.

**Table 4: Intercity Service Alternatives Analysis**

FY 2025-26

	Parameters		Daily Service		Days per Year	Annual		Annual	Annual Ridership	Fare Revenues	Marginal Operating Subsidy	Operating Subsidy with 5311(f) grant	Additional bus/ driver required
	Hours	Miles	Runs	Hours		Miles	Hours	Miles					
<b>Status Quo</b>													
Route 20 - Smith River / Eureka (June-September) <sup>1</sup>	--	--	--	21.75	722	102	2219	73,657	\$178,500	7274	\$28,229	\$150,271	
Route 20 - Smith River / Eureka (October - May) <sup>1</sup>	--	--	--	16.25	540	203	3,299	109,523	\$265,400	12,222	\$47,435	\$217,965	
<b>Route 20 Total</b>							<b>5,517</b>	<b>183,180</b>	<b>\$443,900</b>	<b>19,496</b>	<b>\$75,664</b>	<b>\$368,236</b>	
Route 199 - Crescent City - Gasquet (June-September)	1.5	43.5	3	4.5	131	102	459	13,311	\$35,500	1,314	\$1,386	\$34,114	
Route 199 - Crescent City - Gasquet (October - May)	1.5	43.5	2	3	87	166	498	14,442	\$38,600	1,562	\$1,647	\$36,953	
<b>Route 199 - Crescent City - Gasquet Total</b>							<b>908</b>	<b>26,797</b>	<b>\$74,100</b>	<b>2,877</b>	<b>\$3,033</b>	<b>\$71,067</b>	
<b>Total</b>							<b>6,425</b>	<b>209,977</b>	<b>\$518,000</b>	<b>22,372</b>	<b>\$78,696</b>	<b>\$439,304</b>	
<b>Route 20 Morning Klamath Commuter Trip Year Round</b>													
6:45 AM Cultural Center to 7:30 AM Klamath Glenn Trip	0.75	24.3	1	0.75	24.3	305	229	7,412	\$18,300	620	\$2,410	\$15,890	
7:30 AM Klamath Glenn to 8:15 AM Cultural Center Trip	0.75	24.3	1	0.75	24.3	305	229	7,412	\$18,300	570	\$2,210	\$16,090	
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>458</b>	<b>14,823</b>	<b>\$36,600</b>	<b>1,190</b>	<b>\$4,620</b>	<b>\$31,980</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Route 20 Add Stops at Sutter Health, and Walmart</b>													
Reroute Route 20 to serve Walmart and Sutter Health	0.3	3.4	4	1.2	13.6	305	366	4148	\$23,700	610	\$2,370	\$21,330	
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>366</b>	<b>4148</b>	<b>\$23,700</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>\$2,370</b>	<b>\$21,330</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Increase Route 20 Service</b>													
Route 20 Winter Service Expansion to Summer Service Levels	6	187	1	6	187	203	1,218	37,961	\$96,200	2,030	\$7,880	\$88,320	\$44,160
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>1218</b>	<b>37,961</b>	<b>\$96,200</b>	<b>2,030</b>	<b>\$7,880</b>	<b>\$88,320</b>	<b>\$44,160</b>
<b>Sunday Service NSX Connecting Runs (2 Round Trips)</b>													
Two Round Trips to Eureka	--	--	--	14.5	440	51	740	22,440	\$58,000	1,090	\$4,230	\$53,770	\$26,885
Sunday Dispatch Staffing (Estimated) <sup>2</sup>									\$20,655			\$20,655	\$10,328
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>740</b>	<b>22,440</b>	<b>\$78,655</b>	<b>1,090</b>	<b>\$4,230</b>	<b>\$74,425</b>	<b>\$37,213</b>
<b>Southern Oregon Medical Shuttle as an Intercity Fixed Route</b>													
Intercity Route 2 days per week	8.5	231.0	1	8.5	231	75	638	17,325	\$48,500	860	\$8,600		
Replace Current Southern Oregon Medical Shuttle <sup>3</sup>	8.5	231.0	1	8.5	231	20	-170	-4,620	-\$12,900	-40	-\$400		
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>467.5</b>	<b>12,705</b>	<b>\$35,600</b>	<b>820</b>	<b>\$8,200</b>	<b>\$27,400</b>	<b>\$13,700</b>

Note 1: Due to the intricacies of Route 20's many partial runs no run-level service quantities have been provided.  
 Note 1: Estimated based on FY 2025-26 cost per day of week of current operations contract dispatch services.  
 Note 3: Southern Oregon Medical Shuttle operating expenses shown represent 20 days of service, similar to recent levels.

Route 199 is RCTA's lowest-performing route across various metrics. Despite this, it provides crucial lifeline services for residents of Hiouchi and Gasquet, who have limited transportation alternatives. Stakeholder feedback highlighted that these areas are home to many low-income residents with little to no transportation available. It was suggested that additional public outreach and travel training be conducted to educate residents on the financial and environmental benefits of using public transit, as well as how to navigate the system independently. Due to Route 199's low performance in recent years, no service expansion alternatives are considered; but rather, service reduction in the next section.

## **Route 20 Service Alternatives**

### ***Route 20 Morning Klamath Commuter Trip***

Survey findings indicate a need for early morning transportation from Klamath to Crescent City. Currently, with Route 20, the first trip from Klamath doesn't arrive in Crescent City until 1:30 PM, limiting the ability of transit-dependent residents to access the city for work or school. However, there is a Route 20 return trip to Klamath leaving the Cultural Center at 5:45 PM and arriving at Klamath Glen at 6:26 PM.

Previously, RCTA operated a commuter service to address this need, but it was suspended in 2017 when the YTTS introduced a similar route with lower fares, reducing RCTA ridership to unsustainable levels. Currently, YTTS operates a fixed route that departs the Yurok Tribal Offices at 8:30 AM, arriving at Crescent City Safeway at 9:00 AM, with a return trip at 9:05 AM; however, the route and schedule are not well-marketed, which may limit public knowledge about this service.

RCTA could start the second Route 20 bus earlier to serve a commuter loop between Crescent City and Klamath so that that passengers could arrive in either Klamath or Crescent City earlier in the morning hours, which would allow commuters to utilize the service to get to work or school. The trip would be offered at a time that would act as a schedule extension to the second Route 20 bus in service, provided it does not impact driver FTA time regulations. This would require an additional annual operating subsidy of \$36,600 and could generate an additional 1,190 passenger-trips per year contributing to an estimated marginal subsidy increase of \$31,980.

This option should not be implemented unless there is clear communication between RCTA and YTTS that the two services would complement not compete with each other.

### ***Reroute 20 SB to Serve Walmart and Sutter Coast Hospital***

Curry Public Transit (CPT) operates the Coastal Express Route between Smith River and North Bend, OR, and has maintained a strong working relationship with RCTA. The two organizations have historically coordinated schedules to enable seamless transfers at the Lucky 7 Stop at the north end of Route 20.

CPT recently completed a Transit Development Plan (TDP), which identified the need to coordinate with RCTA to assess the feasibility of adjusting Route 20 to serve Walmart and Sutter Coast Hospital in Crescent City. These are the closest major stores and regional hospitals for most Curry County residents. Making this adjustment would require minimal changes to the Route 20 schedule and would not affect transfers with HTA in Eureka, an important connection for the NSE.

It is estimated that to service Walmart would add around 9 minutes to each run. In rural counties, Walmart is often one of the largest trip generators and represents up to 15 percent of average daily boardings on Routes 1 and 2. This is the second-highest number of boardings after the Cultural Center. Therefore, it is estimated that serving Walmart could generate an additional 610 trips per year.

For years, Route 20 has maintained a stop at the Lucky 7 Casino and Gas Station. However, this stop is located on private property. In April of 2025, during the writing of this report, RCTA and Curry Transit were asked by the property owners to discontinue service due to issues with people loitering on the property when not actively waiting for the bus. In response, RCTA has established a new transfer point with Curry Transit at the La Joya market (roughly 5 miles south of Lucky 7 in the community of Smith River). As there is still a need to serve the communities of the Tolowa Nation, RCTA has created new stops along Highway 101 between La Joya Market and the former route terminus at Lucky 7. As of April 2025, this recommendation has been implemented and is operating well so far.

### ***Summer Schedule Year Round***

As mentioned above, RCTA's Route 20 is a key part of the North State Express (NSX), ultimately connecting travelers from the Oregon border to the Bay Area with coordinated services by RCTA, HTA, and MTA being an integral part of the journey. The goal of the project is to expand. Currently, RCTA connects with HTA's portion of the NSX in Eureka at the Eureka Transit Center (3<sup>rd</sup> and H) at 9:39 AM for southbound travelers and at 6:07 PM for northbound travelers.

RCTA has historically ended the second southbound Route 20 trip in Crescent City instead of Eureka during the winter service schedule (October through May). This means there are only two times a day when RCTA passengers can travel as far as Eureka, instead of three times a day in the summer. The third (mid-day) run does not currently have a connection to NSX. However, the NSX partners are exploring options for funding to operate additional express runs. In the event that additional grant funding is acquired, it is worthwhile analyzing the cost and ridership impacts of maintaining the summer schedule year-round to connect with an additional NSX trip. Additionally, this option would improve regional connections between Del Norte and Humboldt counties. In this scenario, the Route 20 mid-day trip could become a bi-directional component of the NSX, allowing southbound trips from Smith River (9:20 AM) to Santa Rosa (6:45 PM) and northbound trips from Santa Rosa (8:30 AM) to Smith River (6:25 PM). A simplified sample Route 20 schedule is depicted and compared to the current October-May Schedule in Table 5. Should this bi-directional trip be facilitated by all partners it would warrant some minor adjustments to the Route 20 schedule in order to streamline travel for NSX passengers.

This alternative is associated with an estimated \$96,200 increase in annual operating subsidy. Based on data collected during the onboard survey, it is estimated that an additional 2,030 annual passenger-trips would occur, contributing to a marginal operating subsidy of \$88,320. It should be noted that to complete the NSX mid-day connections, HTA and MTA would need to provide additional services on their end, which could be costly.

### ***Route 20 Sunday Service***

Currently, the North State Express (NSX) operates Monday through Saturday. A potential service expansion would be to introduce the NSX service on Sundays. This expansion would offer more travel

options for North Coast residents and college students, making weekend trips to the San Francisco Bay Area. Conversely, it would also enable Bay Area visitors to access the North Coast via public transit on weekends. Prior to Greyhound pulling out of the US 101 Corridor, Sundays were one of their most productive days of the week. NSX expects a strong Sunday ridership if funding can be obtained.

However, implementing Sunday NSX service depends on all NSX partner agencies extending their services to support necessary connections. At present, MTA is the only NSX partner offering any level of Sunday service. However, the current MTA-operated Sunday service does not include NSX connections. For the Redwood Coast Transit Authority (RCTA) to support Sunday Route 20 service, staffing levels would need to be increased, requiring additional driver shifts and dispatch shifts.

### *Sunday Route 20 Service with only NSX connecting Runs*

In an effort to take advantage of potential FTA 5311(f) funds, Route 20 Sunday service would only include runs which are part of NSX connecting trips. This equates to roughly two round trips per day. The bus would begin at the Cultural Center at 6:00 AM and arrive in Smith River at 6:45 AM, then make the first southbound trip to Eureka and back to Smith River. In the afternoon, Route 20 would depart Smith River at 2:15 PM, arrive in Eureka at 5:40 PM, and return to Crescent City by 8:31 PM. This would allow for connections with NSX in Eureka at 9:55 AM and 5:48 PM (assuming a Sunday schedule would be similar to the Monday–Saturday schedule). A simplified timetable is presented in Table 5.

Sunday Service is projected to increase annual operating costs by \$58,000 annually. Ridership was projected based on the proportion of passengers boarding the NSX connecting runs obtained from boarding and alighting counts, and applying the ratio of Sunday to Saturday intercity ridership observed on MTA. It is estimated that 1,160 passenger-trips would be generated by this alternative. The fares collected from this increase would slightly offset the operating costs, contributing to an estimated additional annual required operating subsidy of \$53,500.

### *Rebrand Southern Oregon Medical Shuttle as an Intercity Fixed Route*

A key finding from the online community survey was the demand for public transportation between Crescent City and Medford, OR, primarily to access the Rogue Valley International Airport. Medford is the nearest major city to Del Norte County and provides essential services, including the Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center, which offers specialized care unavailable in Crescent City or Eureka.

Currently, service between Crescent City and Medford is provided by the RCTA Southern Oregon Medical Shuttle and the SouthWest (SW) Oregon Point bus. The Southern Oregon Medical Shuttle operates only on Tuesdays and Thursdays with limited timing, restricting medical appointments to an 11 AM–2 PM window and trips must be booked in advance. The SW Oregon Point bus, operating daily year-round, departs Crescent City at 11:25 AM and arrives in Medford at 2:55 PM. To make a round trip using this service requires an overnight stay, as the return trip departs Medford at 12:20 PM. This schedule was implemented by SW POINT just prior to the pandemic, and has reduced travel options for Del Norte County residents. The old SW POINT schedule featured an early AM departure from Crescent City and an afternoon return trip, much like the RCTA Southern Oregon Medical Shuttle, which did allow for day trips if errands and appointments could be clustered in the middle of the day.

**Table 5: Route 20 Schedule Comparison**

Table 5: Route 20 Schedule Comparison										
Key										
Current NSX Connection					Potential Route 20 Expansion					
Northbound					Southbound					
Eureka	Arcata	Klamath	Crescent City	Smith River	Smith River	Crescent City	Klamath	Arcata	Eureka	
<b>Current Route 20 - October to May Schedule (Winter)</b>										
Trip 1	--	--	--	6:00 AM	6:38 AM	Trip 1	6:45 AM	7:30 AM	8:00 AM	9:19 AM 9:39 AM
Trip 2	--	--	--	8:20 AM	9:05 AM	Trip 2	9:20 AM	10:00 AM	--	-- --
Trip 3	10:58 AM	11:18 AM	12:54 PM	1:25 PM	2:10 PM	Trip 3	2:15 PM	3:00 PM	3:30 PM	4:49 PM 5:09 PM
Trip 4	--	--	--	5:45 PM	6:25 PM	Trip 4	--	5:40 PM	6:25 PM	-- --
Trip 5	6:07 PM	6:27 PM	8:03 PM	8:33 PM	--	Trip 5	6:35 PM	7:12 PM	--	-- --
<b>Proposed Summer Schedule to be extended Year Round if additional NSX connections can be facilitated with HTA and MTA</b>										
Trip 1	--	--	--	6:00 AM	6:38 AM	Trip 1	6:45 AM	7:30 AM	8:00 AM	9:19 AM 9:39 AM
Trip 2	--	--	--	8:20 AM	9:05 AM	Trip 2	9:20 AM	10:00 AM	10:30 AM	11:49 PM 12:09 PM
Trip 3	10:58 AM	11:18 AM	12:54 PM	1:25 PM	2:10 PM	Trip 3	2:15 PM	3:00 PM	3:30 PM	4:49 PM 5:09 PM
Trip 4	1:48 PM	2:08 PM	3:26 PM	4:01 PM	--	Trip 4	--	5:40 PM	6:25 PM	-- --
Trip 5	--	--	--	5:45 PM	6:25 PM	Trip 5	6:35 PM	7:12 PM	--	-- --
Trip 6	6:07 PM	6:27 PM	8:03 PM	8:33 PM	--					
<b>Sunday Alternative NSX Connecting Trips Only</b>										
Trip 1	--	--	--	6:00 AM	6:38 AM	Trip 1	6:45 AM	7:30 AM	8:00 AM	9:19 AM 9:39 AM
Trip 2	10:58 AM	11:18 AM	12:54 PM	1:25 PM	2:10 PM	Trip 2	2:15 PM	3:00 PM	3:30 PM	4:49 PM 5:09 PM
Trip 3	6:07 PM	6:27 PM	8:03 PM	8:31 PM	--	--	--	--	--	-- --

Note: Only the primary stop in each community has been listed.  
**Eureka**- (H St & 3rd St, HTA Transfer Point), **Arcata** - (Cal Poly Humboldt Library Circle) , **Klamath** (Pem-Mey Fuel Stop), **Crescent City** (Cultural Center Transit Hub), **Smith River** (La Joya Market, Curry Transit Transfer Point)  
 Source: RCTA Current, and Winter 2024-25 Schedules

The RCTA Southern Oregon Medical Shuttle is currently operated utilizing RCTA CTSA TDA Section 4.5 funding, which is ideal for uses that fulfill the transportation needs of seniors and those with disabilities and who are transit dependent. While the RCTA Southern Oregon Medical Shuttle allows for non-medical trip purposes, the branding is such that many potential riders do not know they can utilize the service.

One option would be for RCTA to rebrand and design the Medical Shuttle as an Intercity Route. The new service would augment SouthWest Oregon Point intercity service between Crescent City and Medford by providing one round trip, two days a week, departing Crescent City at 8 AM with a return trip departing Medford at 2 PM. As long as meaningful intercity connections are made at the airport and Amtrak/Greyhound, this alternative would have the benefit of being eligible for competitive FTA 5311(f) funding, which could potentially subsidize half of the operating costs. It would also allow for Crescent City residents to make a day trip to Medford. Lastly, this intercity route would serve the SR 199 corridor and provide a connection to urbanized services in Grants Pass and Medford for residents of Gasquet and Hiouchi.

The new intercity service could continue to operate only if advance reservations were made. Sage Stage in Modoc County has a similar policy for their intercity routes. However, to be eligible for FTA 5311 (f) funding the service would need to have published stops at the Rogue Valley Medford Airport and

Medford Front Street Station to facilitate intercity transit service connections. Demand response service within Medford could be provided for an additional fee.

Currently, data specific to the Southern Oregon Medical Shuttle is not collected. It is estimated from the CTSA budget that the Southern Oregon Medical Shuttle operates around 20 days per year. This is what is assumed in Table 4. It is also assumed that the new intercity service would operate more frequently at around 75 days per year. (Still less than the possible two days per week). A small DAR vehicle or bus could be used for the service, at least until demand warrants a larger bus.

A very ballpark ridership estimate for this service was projected based on ridership per capita rates for similar intercity services to a major airport and medical services operated by Sage Stage in Modoc County. This intercity service to Medford has the potential to carry 860 passenger-trips per year. A similar fare structure to Route 20 and Sage Stage would be reasonable, such as a \$15 per trip fare for general public passengers, with a discount available for eligible passengers. Assuming an average fare of \$10 per trip, the marginal operating subsidy would be \$27,400 over the cost of the current Southern Oregon Medical Shuttle. This could be reduced by half if FTA 5311(f) funding was secured.

#### **Pros of Rebranding**

- Estimated to generate more ridership and increases access to Medford for all travelers.
- Frees up CTSA funding for other programs such as those discussed in the following section.
- Eligible for FTA 5311 (f) funding.

#### **Cons of Rebranding**

- Would require passengers making medical trips to plan around fixed stops and timetables or pay an additional fare for door-to-door service.
- Much higher marginal operating subsidy if FTA 5311 (f) funding cannot be secured..

## **INTERCITY ROUTE ALTERNATIVES PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS**

To evaluate the relative performance of the alternatives above, key impacts of each alternative were compared. The performance analysis considers impacts on ridership, marginal operating costs, the number of passengers carried per vehicle hour, and marginal operating costs per passenger trip. The performance evaluation gives insight into the relative benefits of the various alternatives.

### **Comparison of Intercity Service Alternatives**

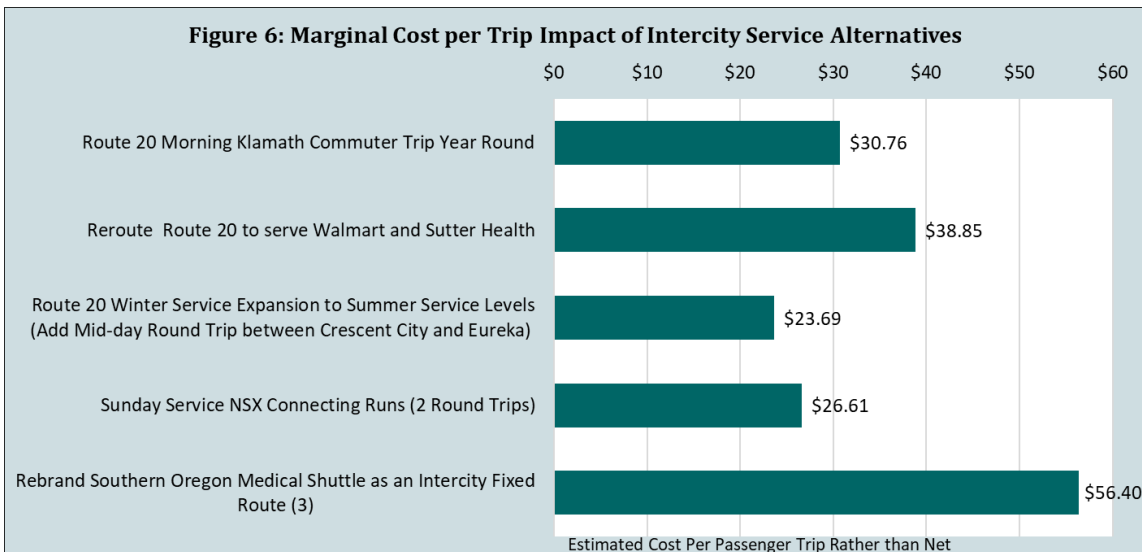
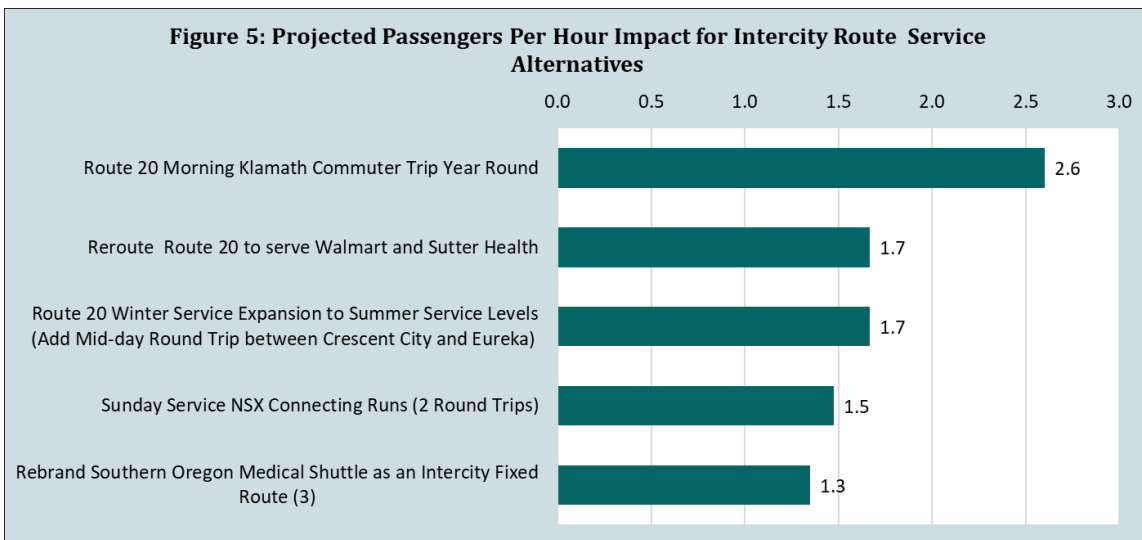
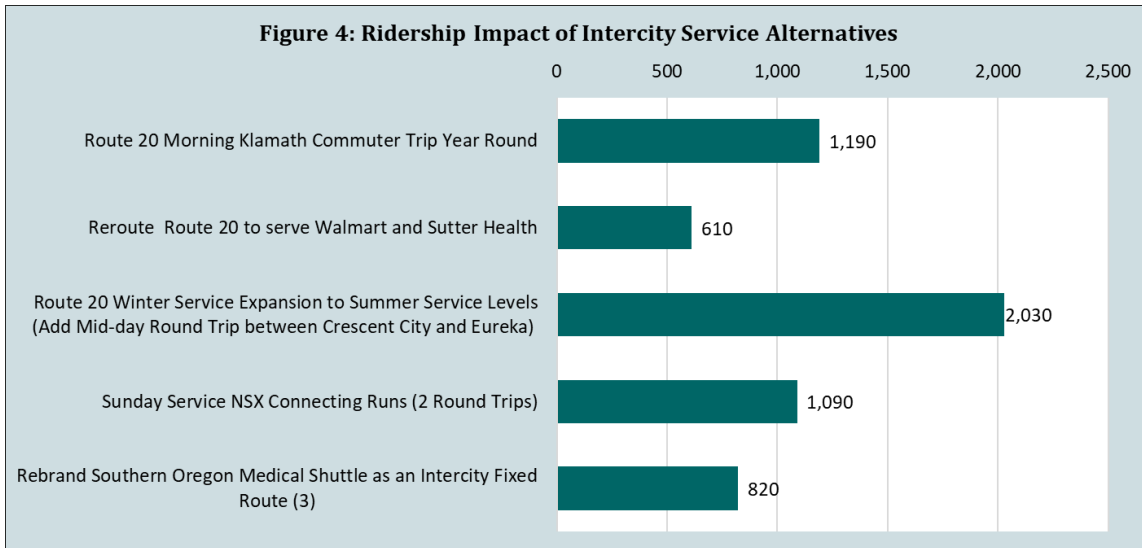
Table 6 and Figures 4 - 6 show the relative performance of the service alternatives considered for Crescent City local services. As shown:

- In terms of ridership, expanding Route 20 wintertime service to 3 round trips to Eureka would increase ridership the most (2,030 trips). This is followed by offering Sunday service at the same historical summer service levels (1,590). The option with the smallest ridership projection is the Southern Oregon Intercity Service (820).
- The alternatives which are eligible for FTA 5311(f) funding are the most cost-effective, as 50 percent of costs could be offset by grant funding if acquired.

- The recommended minimum productivity standard for RCTA Intercity Routes is 2.5 passenger-trips per hour. Only the morning Klamath run meets this standard. However, actual ridership for this service would depend on coordination with the YTTS.

When compared to local route alternatives, only the intercity options which can be subsidized with FTA 5311(f) funds are as cost effective, in terms of marginal cost per trip, as the local route alternatives.

<b>Table 6: RCTA Alternatives Performance - Intercity Routes</b>					
FY 2025-26					
Service Alternative	Net Impact				
	Annual Ridership	Annual Service Hours	Annual Marginal Operating Cost <sup>1</sup>	Passenger-trips per Hour	Marginal Cost per Trip
<b>Alternatives Meeting Minimum Standard Shaded in Green <sup>2</sup></b>					
Route 20 Morning Klamath Commuter Trip Year Round	1,190	458	\$36,600	2.6	\$30.76
Reroute Route 20 to serve Walmart and Sutter Health	610	366	\$23,700	1.7	\$38.85
Route 20 Winter Service Expansion to Summer Service Levels (Add Mid-day Round Trip between Crescent City and Eureka)	2,030	1,218	\$48,100	1.7	\$23.69
Sunday Service NSX Connecting Runs (2 Round Trips)	1,090	740	\$29,000	1.5	\$26.61
Rebrand Southern Oregon Medical Shuttle as an Intercity Fixed Route <sup>(3)</sup>	820	468	\$35,600	1.3	\$56.40
Recommended Minimum Performance Standards >	Route 20			2.5	\$27.36
	Route 199			2.5	\$27.36
Note 1: Does not include fixed costs, includes fare revenue offset. Accounts for competitive 5311 (f) funding.					
Note 2: Meets standards by eliminating a service not meeting the standard, or by increasing ridership while decreasing costs.					
Note 3: No change in Annual Service Hours or Marginal Operating Cost Compared to Southren Oregon Medical Shuttle, Passengers per hour and Marginal Cost per Trip represents route level performance rather than net change, as Southren Oregon Medical Shuttle Data is estimated.					



## EXPANDED DEMAND RESPONSE SERVICE AREA ALTERNATIVES

### Challenges and Considerations

More specialized services for residents living outside the DAR service area has been cited as an unmet transit need. According to the 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, there are about 3,067 households comprised of 9,605 Del Norte County residents living outside of the DAR zone. Of those residents, 22 percent are seniors over the age of 65, 18 percent are individuals with a disability, and 10 percent have incomes below the federal poverty line. If RCTA were to expand its Dial-a-Ride service to serve all of Del Norte County, it is estimated that it would cost in the order of \$450,000 annually, which is not realistic for RCTA, nor is it an industry standard for very rural counties.

RCTA is the designated Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA) for Del Norte County and is allocated up to 5 percent of Transportation Development Act (TDA) Local Transportation Funds (LTF) after off the top allocations for the purpose of providing for the transit needs of seniors, individuals with disabilities, or individuals who are unable to use conventional transit services due to other mobility restrictions. This funding is currently utilized by RCTA to administer its ADA eligibility assessment program, transit training program, and primarily to operate the Southern Oregon Medical Shuttle.

In FY 2024-25, the budgeted CTSA fund was \$58,853, but due to the limited demand for CTSA offered services, only \$13,890 had been spent as of February 2025. Because RCTA is the only public transit operator in Del Norte County, essentially all TDA funds are funneled to RCTA. However, the DNLTC could designate a new CTSA for Del Norte County if it believes that another organization would be better positioned to meet the needs of individuals who need specialized services.

### Alternative Transportation Strategies for Residents of Outlying Communities

Routes 20 and 199 are considered commuter bus services and, therefore, ADA paratransit requirements are not applicable. It is also not standard practice among rural agencies such as Mendocino or Modoc County to provide  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile deviations along long-distance commuter/intercity routes. The county of San Luis Obispo offers a countywide ADA paratransit service. However, the operating cost per trip of this service is on the order of \$150. As a comparison, RCTA DAR is \$62 per trip. Alternative strategies such as a Transportation Network Company (TNC) reimbursement project or a Mileage Reimbursement program, would likely be more cost-effective strategies for Del Norte County.

#### *Transportation Network Company (TNC) Subsidy Program*

RCTA could enter into an agreement with a Transportation Network Company such as Uber or Lyft to provide vouchers for qualified passengers (individuals with a disability or seniors over the age of 65). The challenge in rural areas for this type of program is that TNC's are not required to be available at specific times or in specific areas. Therefore, it is possible that an Uber or Lyft would not be available when needed for this program. Additionally, finding ADA accessible TNC's could be difficult.

As part of this program, RCTA would have to establish a subsidy cap which would be either a percentage of fare, or a fixed amount over a time period. As an example, the City of Escalon will subsidize up to \$10 per ride on a TNC for a \$2.00 upfront fare for travel anywhere within the Escalon, Riverbank, Oakdale or Modesto area. This represents an area of around 15 miles per trip. Washoe RCT in Nevada offers a

program that provides a monthly \$60 voucher, only rides within the designated service area are eligible for voucher use, and any costs beyond the value of the voucher are the responsibility of the passenger, Voucher value cannot be used to provide a tip to the driver which is a common courtesy for similar services.

For reference, assuming rides are available, the base case fare cost for a trip between Smith River and Crescent City is about \$30, and Gasquet/Klamath to Crescent City is about \$40. Local Taxi Service is even more expensive at about \$45 for a trip between Smith River and Crescent City; Gasquet/Klamath to Crescent City is about \$67. For this program, a \$20 maximum per ride subsidy would be reasonable. With a small amount of LTF funds, in the neighborhood of \$5,000 per year, were dedicated to this program, at least 250 trips could be provided.

### ***Mileage Reimbursement Program***

Several CTSA's and transit agencies around the state have offered mileage reimbursement programs for high need groups, which have been successful in providing for the needs of many rural residents as a ride of last resort. These programs are more cost-efficient than traditional DAR services.

As part of this model, participants are required to find their own volunteer drivers. The volunteer drivers use their own personal vehicles. Each ride is tracked by the participant, and mileage is submitted at the end of each month for reimbursement. This encourages participants to ask for help from friends, neighbors, and other community members while allowing them a means to compensate them for their help. The self-selection of drivers and the use of private vehicles eliminates the need for separate insurance for RCTA.

Program eligibility varies from program to program, as depicted in Table 7. In general, eligible participants include disabled individuals and seniors. A maximum number of miles eligible for reimbursement is established, and the mileage reimbursement rate is set at the federal mileage reimbursement rate, which is currently \$0.70 for 2025. RCTA could establish its own policies to effectively provide this service in Del Norte County while protecting against program abuse. Program performance is shown in Table 8

For many peer agencies, programs are not administered by the CTSA, and administration is contracted out to a local social service agency with oversight by the CTSA or transit agency. Administrative duties include marketing the program, determining eligibility of applicants, reviewing reimbursement requests and disbursing funds, and compiling reports to submit to the CTSA. This often leads to a more expensive program; however, trips increase.

Upsides to this type of program include a cost-effective way to provide for the needs of rural residents, limited risk for the CTSA, and lots of flexibility for riders. Similar to the TNC subsidy program, \$5,000 in LTF funds could be set aside for this program, which would be administered by RCTA staff. Roughly 5 hours a month of staff time would be required to run this program, after initial setup.

**Table 7: Reimbursement Program Policies**

Policy	Placer Rides	Lake Link (Pay-Your-Pal) <sup>1</sup>	Tuolumne (TRIP)	El Dorado (My Ride)	San Joaquin (My Ride)
<b>Eligible Users</b>	Seniors (60+), Disabled, Low-Income, Without Alternative Transportation Means.	Lake County Residents on a Case by Case Basis (Criteria: Over 55 or Disabled, Low Income, Unable to Drive, Unable to Use Traditional Public Transit.	Seniors (60+), Disabled, Persons of Limited Means, Veterans	Seniors (60+), Disabled, Veterans	Transit Agency ADA Certified
<b>Region</b>	Trips must begin and end in Placer County; out of county medical trips approved on a case by case basis.	Not Stipulated.	Trips must begin and end in Tuolumne County; out of county medical trips with pre-approval.	Trips must begin or end In Western El Dorado County (Tahoe Basin excluded from program).	Approved trips within San Joaquin County and counties that share a border.
<b>Eligible Trip Purpose</b>	Medical, essential errands, trips to connect to transit or airport for other valid trip reasons, other essential trips on a case by case basis.	Medical, Grocery Shopping, Pharmacy, Food Bank, Community Events, Religious and Spiritual Cermonies.	Health care, personal errands, shopping, social visits, school, religious activities, volunteering, dining, recreation, events.	Any.	Personal, medical, and essential trips.
<b>Reimbursement Rate</b>	IRS Standard Rate.	\$0.50	IRS Standard Rate.	IRS Standard Rate.	IRS Standard Rate.
<b>Trip Cap</b>	No	No	Sonora <sup>2</sup> : 30 miles per trip All Others : 38 miles per trip	No	No
<b>Monthly Milage Cap</b>	200 miles per month.	400 miles per month (Medical Hardship Exemptions).	Sonora <sup>2</sup> : 300 miles per month Others: 375 miles per month.	350 miles per month.	250 miles per month.
<b>Out Of County Cap</b>	N/A	No	Case By Case Approval- No More than 300 Miles per round trip.	N/A	No
<b>Other</b>	If a program participants is unable to arrange for their own volunteer driver, they are eligible to receive two "Last Resort" rides per month via a commercial provider which will be arranged for them.	Milage cap exemptions are made on a case by case basis for with those with recurring persistant medical appointments that would cause them to go over the milage cap.	Ride sharing encouraged; trips must be made during regular transit operating hours.	Drivers who receive \$600 or more in reimbursements will receive a 1099 (contractor tax document).	Participants are required to provide reimbursements to their drivers and are excluded from the program on the first instance of fraud or abuse.

Note 1: Lake Links Pay-a-Pal increased its reimbursement rate from \$0.40, and its milage cap from 300 in November 2024. I

Note 2: Tuolumne sets lower milage caps for individuals living within 10 miles of Sonora, where most services and shopping is available within the region.

Source: Transit Agency Pamphlets and Websites

**Table 8: Reimbursement Program Performance**

Performance Measures	Placer Rides (Reimbursement) <sup>1</sup>			Lake Link (Pay-Your-Pal) <sup>2</sup>			Average		
	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2024-25	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24
One-Way Passenger-Trips	3,601	5,051	7,797	1,373	6,993	19,550	2,352	6,514	14,179
% Change from Previous Year	--	40.3%	54.4%	--	409.3%	179.6%	--	101.1%	55.7%
Reimbursed Miles	35,748	33,136	58,679	34,753	177,000	300,403	25,643	79,053	142,207
% Change from Previous Year	--	-7.3%	77.1%	--	409.3%	69.7%	--	173.0%	49.1%
Operating Costs <sup>5</sup>	\$161,350	\$111,620	\$114,433	\$13,697	\$70,800	\$150,202	\$53,666	\$67,974	\$112,934
% Change from Previous Year	--	-30.8%	2.5%	--	416.9%	112.1%	--	100.1%	51.6%
Operating Cost per Passenger-Trip	\$44.81	\$22.10	\$14.68	\$9.98	\$10.12	\$7.68	\$22.56	\$17.14	\$14.68
% Change from Previous Year	--	-50.7%	-33.6%	--	1.5%	-24.1%	--	17.6%	-3.9%
Operating Cost per Mile	\$4.51	\$3.37	\$1.95	\$0.40	\$0.40	\$0.50	\$1.73	\$1.21	\$0.96
% Change from Previous Year	--	-25.4%	-42.1%	--	0.0%	25.0%	--	-16.6%	2.5%
Miles Per Passenger Trip	9.9	6.6	7.5	25.3	25.3	15.4	21	22	19
% Change from Previous Year	--	-33.9%	14.7%	--	0.0%	-39.3%	--	39.9%	-6.0%
	Tuolumne TRIP			El Dorado (My Ride) <sup>3</sup>			San Joaquin (My Ride) <sup>4</sup>		
	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23 <sup>5</sup>	FY 2023-24
One-Way Passenger-Trips	129	75	21	--	5,642	13,230	4,304	14,810	30,296
% Change from Previous Year	-24.1%	-41.9%	-72.0%	--	--	134.5%	--	244.1%	104.6%
Reimbursed Miles	5,296	4,488	1,152	--	57,143	146,429	26,774	123,499	204,373
% Change from Previous Year	-27.2%	-15.3%	-74.3%	--	--	156.3%	--	361.3%	65.5%
Operating Costs <sup>5</sup>	\$3,489	\$2,900	\$772	--	\$40,000	\$102,500	\$36,129	\$114,549	\$196,765
% Change from Previous Year	-16.8%	-16.9%	-73.4%	--	--	156.3%	--	217.1%	71.8%
Operating Cost per Passenger-Trip	\$27.05	\$38.67	\$36.78	--	\$7.09	\$7.75	\$8.39	\$7.73	\$6.49
% Change from Previous Year	9.6%	43.0%	-4.9%	--	--	9.3%	--	-7.9%	-16.0%
Operating Cost per Mile	\$0.66	\$0.65	\$0.67	--	\$0.70	\$0.70	\$1.35	\$0.93	\$0.96
% Change from Previous Year	14.3%	-1.9%	3.7%	--	--	0.0%	--	-31.3%	3.8%
Miles Per Passenger Trip	41.1	59.8	54.9	--	10.1	11.1	6.2	8.3	6.7
% Change from Previous Year	-4.1%	45.8%	-8.3%	--	--	9.3%	--	34.1%	-19.1%

Sources: Tuolumne County Transit Agency Triennial Performance Audit FY 2019-20 - 2021-22, El Dorado Transit FY 2022-23 and 2023-24 Annual Internal Reports, and Budgets. San Joaquin Annual CTSA reports, Placer Rides Monthly Invoice Database

Note 1: Program Administrative costs included, RTPA staff costs are not included.

Note 2: Lake Link 2022-23 data is estimated bases on Aril 2023 SSTAC meeting minuites "reimbursing close to 15,000 miles a month", no 2023-24 data available, 2024 -25 data estimated based on November 2024-March 2025 Actuals.

Note 3: El Dorado My Ride began service in FY 2022-23, Operating Costs reflect budgeted amounts not actuals.

Note 4: San Joaquin My Ride total operating costs for FY 2022-23 and FY 2023-24 are estimated based on actual reimbursements plus FY 2021-22 actual administrative costs per trip adjusted for inflation, and marketing and software expenses adjusted for inflation only.

Note 5: Figure Reported in San Joaquin FY 2023-24 Access Annual Report annual report was 1,481. This is assumed to be a typo and has been adjusted to 14,810 as the associated text reads "One-way trips increased considerably compared to the previous year"

Note 6: Operating costs include administrative costs for Placer, Tuolumne, San Joaquin.

## ***Volunteer Driver Program***

In nearby Lake County, the regional CTSA Lake Links offers both a mileage reimbursement program, “Pay-Your-Pal, and recently introduced a volunteer driver program, “Ride-Links”. This program essentially functions the same as the mileage reimbursement program, with the key difference being that Lake Links matches passengers with volunteer drivers rather than the passenger being required to organize their own driver.

Lake Links actively recruits drivers who need to undergo a background check, provide a clean driving record, vehicle and insurance information, and sign a confidentiality agreement. Documentation is reviewed by Link Staff before approving drivers for the program. Wheelchair accessible vehicles are not a requirement, as all passengers are required to be able to enter and exit volunteers’ vehicles without assistance.

Lake Links began the process of implementing this program in 2021 and faced several challenges along the way, primarily the need for supplemental insurance for both the organization and its volunteer drivers and the recruitment of drivers. The program soft launched with no advertising in 2023 providing a minimal number of rides due to few volunteers being available, since the program has scaled up with 6 active volunteer drivers, and 39 trips provided between November 2024 and April 2025, the program currently has a waitlist of 27 eligible participants who live in parts of the county that do not currently have a volunteer available.

Del Norte Senior Center operated a volunteer driver program with organization-owned vehicles prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program was never reinstated due to a lack of volunteer drivers. It is likely that RCTA would face a similar challenge in recruiting drivers, especially if they were required to meet stringent eligibility requirements and utilize their own personal vehicle, similar to the Lake Links program.

The total costs of Lake Links transportation programs are not available beyond the direct costs of reimbursement, but they are estimated to far exceed the \$46,967 in LTF Section 4.5 that was apportioned to Lake Links. The program relies upon an agreement with Lake Transit Authority in which FTA 5310 funds are shared between the organizations, other grants, and individual donations. Due to the limited availability of RCTA funds, high insurance cost, and limited success of similar programs, this alternative is not recommended.

## **SERVICE REDUCTION ALTERNATIVES**


Given the uncertainty in public transit funding and recent and likely future increases in operating costs, it is relevant to consider service options which reduce service. RCTA received significant financial operating assistance in recent years through the FTA Cares Act; this funding source was made available to support transit operators keeping services in place through the COVID-19 pandemic. RCTA is only able to claim \$400,000 per year from this source and has only a few years of remaining funds available for claim, which are expected to be exhausted in FY 2027-28. This operation's funding support has allowed RCTA to maintain service levels. Once those funds are exhausted, preliminary budget projections shown in Table 9 indicate that RCTA will begin to operate at a deficit in FY 2028-29 if new funding sources

cannot be secured. Therefore, this SRTDP has identified several service reduction alternatives which have a low impact on ridership and overall system functionality. Service reduction alternatives are presented in Table 10 and described below.

## Challenges and Considerations

Reducing transit service is a difficult decision for any transit agency due to the potential impacts on transit-dependent individuals. Even short-term service reductions can alter passenger travel patterns, often leading to a drop in overall ridership that is hard to recover from, even if the cuts are later reinstated.

Crescent City Local Routes (1 and 3) and (2 and 4) are interlined, meaning any cuts to one of these interlined pairs typically need to be considered as a package, with the exception of the first and last runs of the day. These early and late runs often have the lowest ridership, but could be important for commuters traveling to work or school.

Route 20 is an important and well-utilized route that is part of the recently rolled out NSX, which is a collaborative effort between RCTA, HTA, and MTA to provide a public transit connection from the Oregon border to the Bay Area. Therefore, connections with HTA in Eureka should be maintained. Additionally, up to half of Route 20's operating costs can be funded through the FTA 5311(f) Intercity Bus Grant, thereby reducing the actual operating costs of this service. Last  NSX is expanded and Route 20's portion of NSX is increased, there is the potential for more FTA 5311 (f) funding. FTA 5311 (f) currently provides up to 50 percent of Route 20 operating cost up to a \$300,000 maximum. Fully allocated operating costs for Route 20 for FY 2025-26 are estimated to be \$862,792, which indicates a significant "overmatch". Only 35 percent of Route 20 operating costs are eligible to be covered by the FTA 5311 (f) grant; about \$262,792 must be directly covered by RCTA's general operating budget.

Route 199 is RCTA's lowest-performing route, often making long and costly trips between Crescent City, Hiouchi, and Gasquet with few to no riders. However, this route serves as an important connection to these communities. Without RCTA's services, residents of Hiouchi and Gasquet, who do not have access to personal vehicles, would have significant challenges accessing medical services, social services, and essential shopping trips. The only other public transit option for these communities is SW POINT to Medford, but it requires an overnight stay.

## Table 9: Preliminary RCTA Projected Revenues vs. Costs

RCTA Revenues	Fiscal Years				
	2025/26 Draft Budget	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
<b>Operating Revenues</b>					
Passenger Fares	\$132,000	\$137,280	\$140,026	\$142,826	\$145,683
5311(f) Route 20 Passenger Fares	\$48,000	\$49,920	\$50,918	\$51,937	\$52,976
Auxilliary Transportation (Advertising) Revenue	\$17,431	\$17,954	\$18,493	\$19,047	\$19,619
TDA Article 4 Local Transportation Fund	\$700,000	\$707,000	\$714,070	\$721,211	\$728,423
State Transit Assistance	\$282,065	\$282,065	\$282,065	\$282,065	\$282,065
Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP)	\$86,632	\$89,231	\$91,908	\$94,665	\$97,505
Section 5311- Operating	\$254,998	\$257,548	\$260,123	\$262,725	\$265,352
Section 5311 - CARES Act/CRRSSA COVID Operating	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$200,000	\$0	\$0
Section 5311-F Operating	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
Carryover Balance	\$0	\$121,626	\$200,139	\$0	\$0
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<b>\$2,221,126</b>	<b>\$2,362,624</b>	<b>\$2,257,742</b>	<b>\$1,874,476</b>	<b>\$1,891,622</b>
<b>Base Case Operating Costs</b>	<b>\$2,099,500</b>	<b>\$2,162,485</b>	<b>\$2,227,360</b>	<b>\$2,294,180</b>	<b>\$2,363,006</b>
<b>Balance</b>	<b><u>\$121,626</u></b>	<b><u>\$200,139</u></b>	<b><u>\$30,382</u></b>	<b><u>-\$419,705</u></b>	<b><u>-\$471,384</u></b>
Total SB 125 (FY 2024-25 through 27-28)	\$2,011,350				
<b>Balance with SB 125</b>	<b><u>\$2,269,679</u></b>	<b><u>\$2,469,818</u></b>	<b><u>\$2,500,200</u></b>	<b><u>\$2,080,495</u></b>	<b><u>\$1,609,111</u></b>

Source: RCTA FY 25/26 Preliminary Budget



**Table 10: Service Reduction Alternatives**

FY 2025-26

	Parameters		Daily Service			Days per Year	Annual		Annual Marginal Cost Savings	Annual Ridership Impact <sup>1</sup>	Fare Revenue Impact	Marginal Operating Subsidy
	Hours	Miles	Runs	Hours	Miles		Hours Cut	Miles Cut				
<b>Reduce Local Route Saturday/Holiday Service to 10 AM - 4 PM Year Round</b>												
Eliminate Route 2 ( 8 AM, 9 AM, and 5 PM Trip)	0.5	7.35	3	1.5	22.1	56	-84	-1,235	-\$5,600	-760	-\$390	-\$5,210
Eliminate Route 4 (8:30 AM, 9:30 AM, and 5:30 PM Trip)	0.5	7.67	3	1.5	23	56	-84	-1,289	-\$5,700	-440	-\$250	-\$5,450
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>-168</b>	<b>-2,523</b>	<b>-\$11,300</b>	<b>-1,200</b>	<b>-\$640</b>	<b>-\$10,660</b>
<b>Reduce Route 1 &amp; 3 Evening Service Year Round</b>												
Eliminate 5:30 PM Trip Route 1	0.5	6.7	1	0.5	6.69	249	-125	-1,666	-\$8,200	-410	-\$210	-\$7,990
Eliminate 5:00 PM Trip Route 3	0.5	7.7	1	0.5	7.65	249	-125	-1,905	-\$8,400	-60	-\$30	-\$8,370
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>-249</b>	<b>-3,571</b>	<b>-\$16,600</b>	<b>-470</b>	<b>-\$240</b>	<b>-\$16,360</b>
<b>Reduce Route 4 Evening Service Year Round</b>												
Eliminate 5:30 PM Trip Route 4	0.5	7.7	1.0	0.5	7.67	249	-125	-1,910	-\$8,400	-480	-\$280	-\$8,120
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>-125</b>	<b>-1,910</b>	<b>-\$8,400</b>	<b>-480</b>	<b>-\$280.00</b>	<b>-\$8,120</b>
<b>Reduce Route 3 and 4 Evening Service</b>												
Eliminate 5:00 PM Trip Route 3	0.5	7.7	1.0	0.5	7.7	249.0	-124.5	-1904.9	-\$8,400	-60	-30.0	-\$8,370
Eliminate 5:30 PM Trip Route 4	0.5	7.7	1.0	0.5	7.7	249.0	-124.5	-1909.8	-\$8,400	-480	-280.0	-\$8,120
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>-249</b>	<b>-3,815</b>	<b>-16,800</b>	<b>-540</b>	<b>-310</b>	<b>-\$16,490</b>
<b>Route 199- Winter Service Adjustments (3 trips per day 3 days a Week)</b>												
Add 1 RT 3 days a week	1.5	43.5	1	1.5	43.5	100	150	4,350	\$11,600	400	\$420	\$11,180
Eliminate winter service 2 days a week	1.5	43.5	2	3	87	66	-198	-5,742	-\$15,300	-720	-\$1,650	-\$13,650
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>-48</b>	<b>-1,392</b>	<b>-\$3,700</b>	<b>-320</b>	<b>-\$1,230</b>	<b>-\$2,470</b>
<b>Reduce 199 Summer Service to Current Winter Service Levels (Weekdays 2 trips per day)</b>												
Eliminate Summer Weekday 1:30 Trip Route 199 <sup>2</sup>	1.5	43.5	1	1.5	43.5	83	-125	-3,611	-\$9,600	-220	-\$230	-\$9,370
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>-125</b>	<b>-3,611</b>	<b>-9,600</b>	<b>-220</b>	<b>-\$230</b>	<b>-\$9,370</b>
<b>Reduce Route 199 Service (2 trips per day 2 days a week) Year Round</b>												
Reduce service to 2 days per week - Summer	1.5	43.5	3	4.5	130.5	69	-311	-9,005	-\$24,000	-600	-\$630	-\$23,370
Eliminate 1:30 PM Mid-day Trip - Summer <sup>3</sup>	1.5	43.5	1	1.5	43.5	14	-21	-609	-\$1,600	-40	-\$40	-\$1,560
Reduce service to 2 days per week - Winter	1.5	43.5	2	3.0	87.0	100	-300	-8,700	-\$23,200	-620	-\$650	-\$22,550
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>-632</b>	<b>-18,314</b>	<b>-\$48,800</b>	<b>-1,260</b>	<b>-\$1,320</b>	<b>-\$47,480</b>

Note 1: Assumed decline in ridership based on trip level ridership data collected during RCTA survey (September 18th to 21st, 2024)

Note 2: Calculated as a full package, does not include Saturday Mid-Day cuts as that is included in the next line. Ridership decline assumed to be a third of ridership increased by 10 percent for less convenience due ridership data constraints.

Note 3: Only represents remaining mid-day trips not cut by reducing from 6 days to 2 days of service during the summer months.

## **Service Reduction Alternatives**

### ***Reduce Local Route Saturday/Holiday Service to Peak 10-4 Time Year Round***

Most transit agencies typically experience lower ridership on Saturdays compared to weekdays, with higher demand during morning and evening commuting hours. However, Crescent City routes have relatively high ridership on Saturdays, about 85% of weekday ridership. On Saturdays, boardings peak between 10 AM and 4 PM, rather than in the early morning or evening hours.

Reducing Saturday service could be a way to cut costs without significantly impacting access to essential services like medical or social services, which are typically closed on weekends, or students' ability to get to school or after-school activities. However, this would likely be an unpopular move, as many survey respondents requested more Saturday service. The cuts would most likely affect workers in the tourism and hospitality industries who rely on RCTA to commute to work, as well as the local businesses that depend on these workers.

Under this alternative, the 8 AM, 9 AM, and 5 PM hour trips of Routes 2 and 4 would be eliminated on Saturdays. This would save around \$11,300 in operating costs, and 1,200 passenger-trips would be lost, contributing to an operating subsidy savings of \$10,660.

### ***Reduce Route 1 and 3 Evening Service Year Round***

During the survey period, ridership was very low on the 5:00 PM Route 3 trip and the 5:30 PM Route 1 trip. Since these routes are interlined, these run cuts are considered together. If these runs are eliminated, the reduction in ridership from the 5:00 PM Route 3 trip is significantly smaller than that of the 5:30 PM Route 1 trip, which serves the core area of Crescent City.

The reductions would most heavily affect traditional commuters and students attending after-school activities who rely on the bus for their trips home. Residents along Northcrest Drive north of Washington Blvd. would need to use the 4:00 PM Route 3 trip, while Route 1 commuters could take the 4:30 PM Route 1 trip or the 5:00 PM Route 2 trip, which operates in a similar but reversed direction. These reductions in service are expected to reduce operating costs by \$16,600 and ridership by 400 annual trips and contributing to a savings of \$16,390 in operating subsidies.

### ***Reduce Route 4 Weekday Evening Service Year Round***

Route 4 serves the Elk Valley Rancheria and Bertch Tract, with very few riders on the 5:30 PM trip. Cutting this trip on weekdays would force residents of the Bertch Tract to return home on the 4:30 PM trip. While this cut would slightly affect travel options, it still provides a viable alternative without significantly disrupting Route 4 service. This would save around \$8,400, and 480 passenger-trips would be lost, contributing to an operating subsidy savings of \$8,120.

### ***Eliminate the Last Run of Route 3 and Route 4***

Another combination would be to eliminate the last runs of Routes 3 and 4. In this case, the bus which operates Route 2/4 would finish the last Route 1 run instead of operating the last Route 4. Basically, switching the interlining for the final route run. Under this option, roughly 540 trips would be lost for a cost savings of \$16,490.

### ***Route 199 Winter Service Adjustments***

During the summer, Route 199 operates Monday through Friday with three trips daily: early morning, midday, and afternoon. In winter, the midday trip is suspended. This change limits convenience for riders who need to travel to Crescent City for short shopping or appointments, as they must stay in Crescent City for almost 8 hours between 8:00 AM and 4:15 PM. The current schedule does not support full-time employment in Crescent City due to the late afternoon return trip departing Crescent City a bit too early for most full-time job schedules.

Route 199 does provide school access for Del Norte High School and College of the Redwoods students. However, the yellow bus service is available for high school students in Hiouchi and Gasquet, aligning with the winter schedule's morning and afternoon trips. For College of the Redwoods, only 19 out of 30 courses in spring 2025 can be accessed by students dependent on Route 199, as many course hours extend beyond the return trip's timing. With a later return trip, more classes are accessible. A 6 PM return trip enables 6 additional classes to be attended, and a 9 PM return trip would enable all College of the Redwoods classes offered at the Crescent City Campus to be accessible to those dependent on Route 199 for their transportation.

One option is to reduce the number of days Route 199 operates per week during the winter season, but increase winter service to three trips a day from the current two trips per day. This would still allow residents of Hiouchi and Gasquet to spend less time in Crescent City for shopping or appointments, although they would need to make them on certain days of the week. This scenario could offer modest cost savings for RCTA while minimizing service disruptions. The proposed alternative would be to offer winter Route 199 service Tuesday–Thursday only, with three trips a day, as these are the days of the week that showed the strongest ridership during July 2024– November 2024. When compared relative to existing Route 199 winter services, this change in service would save around \$3,700, and 320 passenger-trips would be lost, contributing to an operating subsidy savings of \$2,470.

### ***Reduce Route 199 Summer Service***

Historically, RCTA has ramped up summer service levels for Route 199, increasing trips to three per day and adding Saturday service from June through September (Summer Saturday Service on Route 199 was discontinued effective May 2025). This expansion is driven by the popularity of the Smith River Canyon, which is a major destination for river activities and access to Jeddiah Smith State Park. As a result, Route 199 sees a 40% increase in ridership during the summer, with monthly ridership rising from an average of 193 trips in the winter to 269 in the summer.


However, the significant increase in service hours, which rises by 170% from 30 service hours per week in winter to 81 service hours per week in summer, may not be justified by the increase in ridership.

Another potential cost-saving measure is to operate the winter schedule year-round. This alternative would eliminate the need to adjust travel patterns and routines between winter and summer schedules. However, the cuts would likely impact recreational visitors to the region more than local residents, as locals are already accustomed to utilizing winter service levels. Reducing Route 199 service by one round trip per day during the summer months would contribute to a \$9,600 decrease in operating costs, and 220 passenger trips would be lost. This contributes to a \$9,370 savings in operating subsidies.

### ***Reduce Route 199 to Lifeline Service (2 Trips Per day, 2 Days a Week) Year-round***

This alternative represents the most aggressive approach to cutting Route 199 services. While it's critical for RCTA to maintain service for the communities of Hiouchi and Gasquet, which rely on public transportation to access Crescent City for essential goods and services, the route's low ridership and high operational costs make it a service where cuts could provide substantial savings. In terms of passenger-trips per vehicle hour, Route 199 is not much lower than Route 20. However, Route 20 receives FTA 5311(f) funding, which subsidizes a portion of Route 20's operating costs. Reducing Route 199 to just two days a week with two trips per day would limit access to public transportation for a disadvantaged population and recreation visitors, but it would group riders into fewer, more essential trips.

This alternative would result in a \$48,800 reduction in operating costs, while 1,260 passenger trips would be lost (about 50 percent of the 2023/24 total ridership). This would contribute to a savings of \$47,480 in annual operating subsidies.

If RCTA is successful in obtaining 5311(f) or other sustainable funding sources to support new trips to Medford through Hiouchi and Gasquet (as discussed above), much more service could be provided in this corridor without causing RCTA to operate at unsustainable service levels. Short of new funding, most likely 5311(f), RCTA may need to consider service cuts to Route 199 in order to provide this essential service at levels more in line with current demand and projected operating deficit 

## **COMPARISON OF SERVICE REDUCTION ALTERNATIVE PERFORMANCE**

This section outlines the relative performance of each service in terms of passenger-trips per hour and marginal cost per trip, and compares them against the performance standards recommended in Table 1.

### **Comparison of Service Reduction Alternatives**

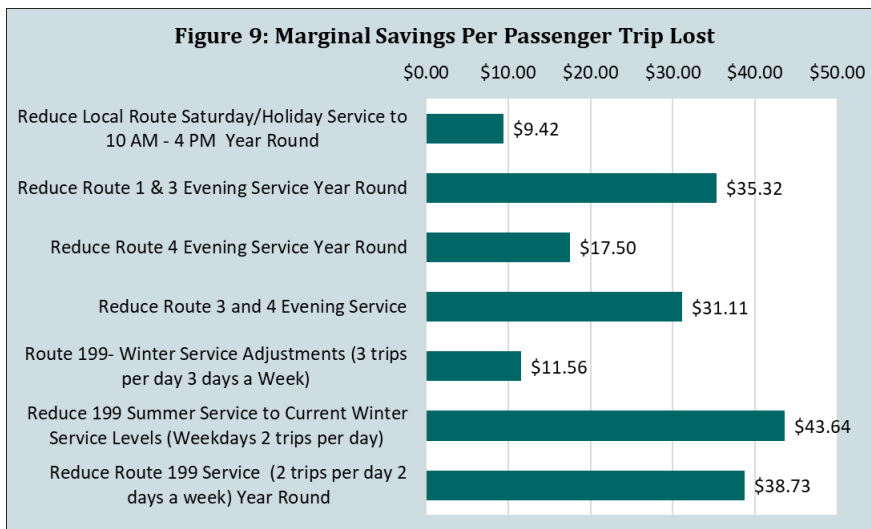
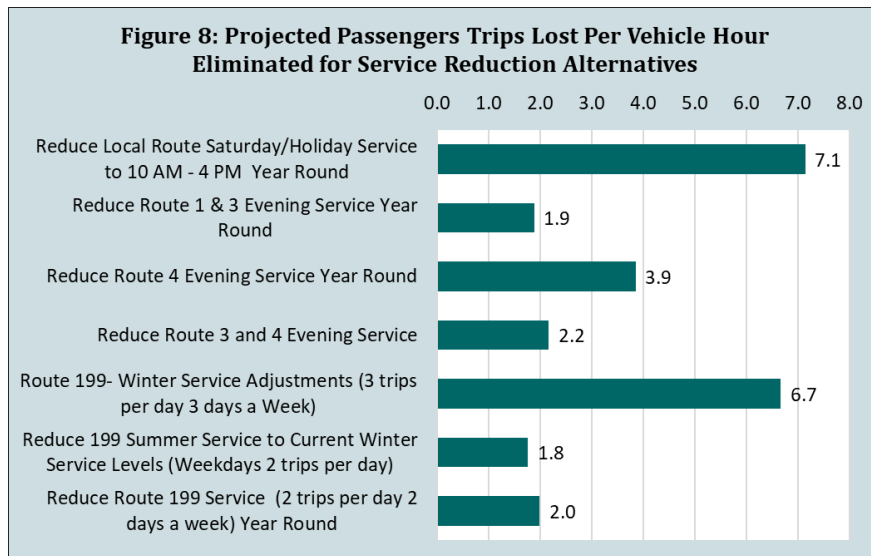
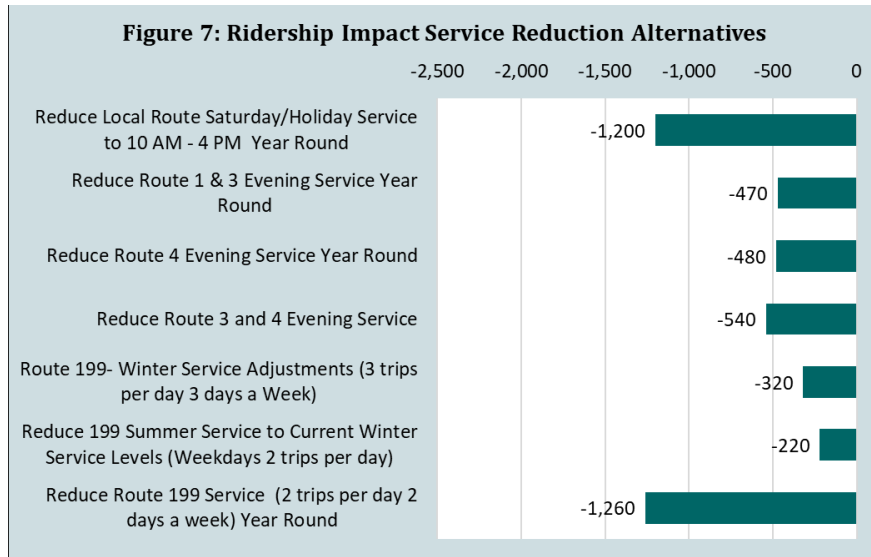
Table 11 and Figures 7- 9 show the relative performance of the service reduction alternatives.

- Reducing Route 199 Summer Service to Current Winter Levels (Weekdays 2 trips per day) offers the strongest potential to improve cost efficiency, with the lowest impact to ridership (220 trips lost) and only 1.8 passenger trips lost per service hour reduced. This option results in a marginal savings of \$43.64 per trip lost. This option would save around \$9,600 in operating costs.
- Reducing Route 1 and 3 Evening Service presents the strongest potential to improve route-level performance, with only 1.9 passenger trips lost per service hour reduced, and yields savings of \$35.32 per passenger trip lost. A total of \$16,600 in annual operating costs would be saved with a loss of 470 trips.
- Reducing Local Route Saturday/Holiday Service to 10 AM–4 PM year-round is the least favorable option for the local routes, with the highest ridership loss (1,200 annual trips), moderate cost savings of \$11,300, and the highest loss in productivity (7.1 trips per hour) along with the lowest marginal savings per trip (\$9.42).

- Reducing Route 199 Service to 2 trips per day, 2 days a week, year-round provides significant cost savings (\$48,800), but reduces the route to lifeline service levels, severely limiting mobility for transit-dependent individuals in Hiouchi and Gasquet. Ridership loss would total 1,260 trips, which is half of the existing ridership.
- Only the Route 199 Winter Service Adjustments operate service only 3 days a week, but with 3 round-trips per day does not meet standards.

**Table 11: RCTA Alternatives Performance - Service Reduction Alternatives**  
FY 2025-26

Service Alternative	Net Impact				
	Annual Ridership	Annual Service Hours	Annual Marginal Operating Cost Savings <sup>1</sup>	Passenger-trips Lost per Service Hour Reduction	Marginal Savings per Trip Lost
<b>Reduction Alternatives Meeting Minimum Standard Shaded in Green</b>					
Reduce Local Route Saturday/Holiday Service to 10 AM - 4 PM Year Round	-1,200	-168	-\$11,300	7.1	\$9.42
Reduce Route 1 & 3 Evening Service Year Round	-470	-249	-\$16,600	1.9	\$35.32
Reduce Route 4 Evening Service Year Round	-480	-125	-\$8,400	3.9	\$17.50
Reduce Route 3 and 4 Evening Service	-540	-249	-\$16,800	2.2	\$31.11
Route 199- Winter Service Adjustments (3 trips per day 3 days a Week)	-320	-48	-\$3,700	6.7	\$11.56
Reduce 199 Summer Service to Current Winter Service Levels (Weekdays 2 trips per day)	-220	-125	-\$9,600	1.8	\$43.64
Reduce Route 199 Service (2 trips per day 2 days a week) Year Round	-1,260	-632	-\$48,800	2.0	\$38.73
Recommended Minimum Performance Standards	Crescent City Local Routes (1,2,3, and 4)			9.0	\$6.52
	Route 20			2.5	\$27.36
	Route 199			2.5	\$27.36
Note 1: Does not include fixed costs, includes fare revenue offset.					



## **MICROTRANST SERVICE REPLACEMENT ALTERNATIVES**

As discussed in the local route service alternatives section, microtransit offers a means to add flexibility to services and cover areas or time periods which are low-performing. However, microtransit comes with technology costs (on the order of \$25,000 per year), and productivity (passenger-trips per vehicle hour) is limited by the demand response nature of the service. “Comingling” is the process of combining the general public on-demand microtransit with ADA paratransit. This practice can save money as two separate services are not required to operate. As discussed in general, RCTA’s local routes function well and are highly productive for the majority of the service day. Considering the need to reduce operating costs in the future, it is worth considering whether replacing a fixed route and a comingled microtransit service could offer cost savings while retaining or improving ridership.

As shown in Table 12, replacing local route services do, in some cases, provide a cost savings, but all reduce ridership due to the reduced productivity compared to fixed route services. As shown in the table, the \$25,000 annual technology fee is applied to each alternative. Figures presented in Table 12 do not include the estimated one-time hardware and training charge of \$4,000 needed to implement the technology. The options below assume that the same fixed route rate structure (instead of the \$3 fare referenced for other microtransit options above) would be charged even when microtransit is operating, as these microtransit options both replace and supplement regular fixed route service, which many transit-disadvantaged residents depend on.

### **Replace Saturday Local Service with Comingled Microtransit**

Saturday Local Services currently include Route 2 and 4, which operate as an interlined pair with one bus in service at a time, and the Crescent City DAR, which operates a smaller separate vehicle. Replacing these services with a single vehicle operating would provide microtransit service to all users within the existing Crescent City DAR zone while prioritizing DAR rides through advanced reservation requirements.

Previous Saturday DAR riders would experience little to no change in their services, aside from more of those trips may have additional riders on board than in the past. Saturday DAR ridership is assumed to be unchanged by this shift in services. Previous fixed route users would experience the increased flexibility of curb-to-curb service, but bookings would be subject to availability, and given RCTA’s historic Saturday ridership, would likely face long wait times for service during peak times. Saturday Ridership for Route 2 and 4 services is about 85 percent of weekday ridership and is estimated to be about 5,790 in FY 2025-26, which far exceeds the operational capacity of microtransit services.

Overall, replacing RCTA’s existing Crescent City Local Services with microtransit would save \$1,490 in annual operating subsidy, but also lead to a ridership loss of 3,770.

**Table 12: Microtransit Replacement Alternatives**

FY 2025-26

	Parameters		Daily Service			Days per Year	Annual		Annual Marginal Cost Savings	Annual Ridership Impact <sup>1</sup>	Fare Revenue Impact <sup>(3)</sup>	Marginal Operating Subsidy
	Hours	Miles	Runs	Hours	Miles		Hours Changed	Miles Changed				
<b>Replace Saturday Local Service with Comingled Microtransit (8 AM - 5 PM)</b>												
Eliminate Route 2	0.5	7.35	9	4.5	66.2	56	-252	-3,704	-\$16,900	-3,670	-\$3,870	-\$13,030
Eliminate Route 4	0.5	7.67	9	4.5	69	56	-252	-3,866	-\$17,000	-2120	-\$2,240	-\$14,760
Comingled DAR				9	112	56	-504	-6,246	-\$33,000	770	\$810	-\$33,810
Replace with Saturday Microtransit				9	206	56	504	11,533	\$36,800	1250	\$1,610	\$35,190
One Active Vehicle Software Cost Estimate <sup>2</sup>									\$25,000			\$25,000
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>-504</b>	<b>-2,283</b>	<b>-\$5,100</b>	<b>-3,770</b>	<b>-\$3,690</b>	<b>-\$1,410</b>
<b>Replace Weekday Evening Local Service with Comingled Microtransit (4 PM-8PM)</b>												
Eliminate Route 1 (4:30 PM and 5:30 PM Trip)	0.5	6.7	2	1	13.4	249	-249	-3,332	-\$16,500	-750	-\$390	-\$16,110
Eliminate Route 2 (4:00 PM and 5:00 PM Trip)	0.5	7.35	2	1	14.7	249	-249	-3,660	-\$16,700	-5,480	-\$2,820	-\$13,880
Eliminate Route 3 (4:00 PM and 5:00 PM Trip)	0.5	7.7	2	1	15.3	249	-249	-3,810	-\$16,800	-1,250	-\$680	-\$16,120
Eliminate Route 4 (4:30 PM and 5:30 PM Trip)	0.5	7.67	2	1	15.3	249	-249	-3,820	-\$16,800	-1,990	-\$1,150	-\$15,650
Comingled DAR				2	24.8	249	-498	-6,172	-\$32,600	1080	\$1,140	-\$33,740
Replace with 4-8 Microtransit				4	45.8	249	996	11,396	\$64,500	2900	\$3,740	\$60,760
One Active Vehicle Software Cost Estimate <sup>2</sup>									\$25,000			\$25,000
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>-498</b>	<b>-9,397</b>	<b>-\$9,900</b>	<b>-5,490</b>	<b>-\$160</b>	<b>-\$9,740</b>
<b>Replace Weekday Evening Local Service with Comingled Microtransit (5 PM-8PM)</b>												
Eliminate Route 1 (5:30 PM Trip)	0.5	7.7	1	0.5	7.65	249	-125	-1,905	-\$8,400	-250	-\$130	-\$8,270
Eliminate Route 2 (5:00 PM Trip)	0.5	7.35	1	0.5	7.35	249	-125	-1,830	-\$8,400	-2,240	-\$1,150	-\$7,250
Eliminate Route 3 (5:00 PM Trip)	0.5	7.7	1	0.5	7.67	249	-125	-1,910	-\$8,400	-750	-\$410	-\$7,990
Eliminate Route 4 (5:30 PM Trip)	0.5	7.67	1	0.5	7.67	249	-125	-1,910	-\$8,400	-500	-\$290	-\$8,110
Comingled DAR				1	12.4	249	-249	-3,086	-\$16,300	540	\$570	-\$16,870
Replace with 5-8 Microtransit				3	22.9	249	747	5,698	\$46,300	2450	\$3,160	\$43,140
One Active Vehicle Software Cost Estimate <sup>2</sup>									\$25,000			\$25,000
<b>Net Impact</b>							<b>0</b>	<b>-4,943</b>	<b>\$21,400</b>	<b>-750</b>	<b>\$1,750</b>	<b>\$19,650</b>

Note 1: Assumed decline in ridership based on trip level ridership data collected during RCTA survey (September 18th to 21st, 2024)

Note 2: Estimated annual cost to licence one active microtransit vehicle at a time based on microtransit cost proposals received by other transit operators. Does not include one time start up costs estimated to be \$700 for onboard hardware, and \$3000 for onsite technology training. Additional vehicle costs estimated at \$5,000 per year.

Note 3: Assumes existing fare structure.

## **Replace Weekday Evening Local Service with Comingled Microtransit**

RCTA's local services ridership tends to decline late in the day on weekdays, and expanded evening service hours was a frequent request for service improvement during the survey effort. Two scenarios are laid out for evening service with microtransit. The difference being the time at which the service shifts from fixed route to comingled microtransit. Both the scenarios outlined below would extend the span of Crescent City Local services to 8 PM.

### ***Microtransit Replacement 4 PM -8 PM***

If the shift occurred at 4 PM, it would eliminate the final two weekday trips of Routes 1,2,3, and 4. This would generate a marginal operating subsidy of \$9,740 annually, while also reducing ridership significantly by 5,490 (10 percent decline).

### ***Microtransit Replacement 5 PM -8 PM***

If the shift occurred at 5 PM, it would eliminate only the final weekday trips of Routes 1,2,3, and 4. Unlike the other microtransit replacement alternatives, this would generate a marginal operating subsidy increase of \$19,650 annually. It would also have much lower impact on ridership, as ridership declines much more significantly during the 5 PM hour. Roughly 750 or 1 percent of annual weekday ridership would be lost due to the operational capacity of microtransit.

## INTRODUCTION

RCTA's fare structure was presented in Table 10 of TM1. In summary, fares for the general public adult fares are \$1.50 for local routes 1,2,3,4, and 300, and \$2.50 per zone for regional routes 20 and 199, with a maximum fare of \$14.00 for trips between Smith River and Eureka on Route 20. Fixed route monthly passes are available for \$35 for local routes only, and \$65 for all fixed route services. DAR fares are \$2.00 for ADA-certified riders, and \$6.00 for non-ADA-certified passengers and same-day service.

The most recent fare adjustment was approved by the RCTA board in June of 2024 and went into effect in October of 2024. This adjustment was a modest fare increase of \$0.25 for local routes and \$0.50 per zone for regional routes, as well as a \$0.25 increase for ADA DAR Service, and \$1.00 for non-ADA certified passengers and same day service. This fare increase was targeted at improving RCTA's farebox requirement, which is 10 percent of operating costs per Transportation Development Act (TDA) requirements, as RCTA is classified as a rural transit agency based on population. Prior to FY 2020-21, this requirement was enforced by reducing the amount of TDA available to agencies that did not achieve their TDA-established farebox recovery ratio.

All California transit agencies have been exempted from TDA farebox requirement penalties since FY 2020-21 per Assembly Bill (AB) 90, this exemption has been extended twice per AB 149 and Senate Bill (SB) 125 with current exemptions through FY 2025-26, these exemptions were put in place to help transit agencies effectively respond to the impacts of the COVID pandemic. State legislature has since considered eliminating the farebox ratio requirement penalties entirely in recent years, as it is thought to encourage counterproductive decisions that can lead to failure to provide public transit services to those who need it most. As of this writing, no permanent adjustments have been made. AB 149 also allowed for the inclusion of federal operating grant funds to be classified as local support when calculating the farebox ratio. TDA farebox ratio calculations are required to be performed annually by an independent fiscal auditor; the most recent fiscal audit was completed for FY 2022-23 and calculated to be 5 percent, which is significantly below the required ratio. However, federal operating grants were not classified as local support in this calculation, which would be expected to significantly boost the farebox ratio well above TDA requirements. RCTA's annual apportionments of FTA 5311 and 5311(f) funds amount to nearly half a million annual dollars, and inclusion of these funds in the farebox ratio calculation will more than satisfy the 10% standard. However, if this interpretation should change in the future, RCTA may again find itself needing to raise fare revenue or reduce operating costs.

Recently, RCTA has offered free fares on all fixed routes to Seniors (65+), Youth (Under 18), and Disabled individuals in recent years, made possible by funding through the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP). TDA allows transit agencies to use an amount of LCTOP funds equal to the difference between full fares and free or reduced fares as "fare revenue" in farebox ratio calculations.

## FARE ALTERNATIVES

### \$2 Flat Fare on Regional Routes

As mentioned above, the NSX is a partnership between RCTA, HTA, and MTA, which enables passengers to travel between Crescent City and Santa Rosa and ultimately to the San Francisco Bay Area on public transit. Coordination of services is important to the continued success of the partnership. The implementation of contactless payment systems across agencies has allowed greater convenience to passengers and the potential for increased ridership.

Currently, however, each agency has its own fare structure. RCTA charges as much as \$14 for the full southbound leg of its morning Route 20 NSX trip between Smith River and Eureka, and as much as \$12 for its northbound leg of the Route 20 NSX trip between Eureka and Crescent City. HTA fares are \$2 for its portion of the NSX trip between Eureka and Ukiah, and MTA fares are \$18 for its portion of the NSX between Ukiah and Santa Rosa. (MTA is currently running a limited-time promotion for \$2 trips if passengers pay via contactless card reader.) NSX partners have expressed interest in offering a consistent fare structure of \$2 for each leg of the NSX trip.

For consistency and due to the limited impact on revenue, this alternative applies the flat \$2 fare to both Route 20 and Route 199 services. Table 13 presents RCTA fare revenue by route and passenger type for FY 2023-24. Table 13 uses this data to project the impact of a \$2 flat fare on both Route 20 and Route 99. Note that Table 13 shows that the average full fare paid on Route 20 is \$5.83 and \$2.42 on Route 199. The impact of the fare changes on ridership levels was analyzed using an elasticity analysis, indicating a net increase in ridership of 2,200 passenger boardings per year (13 percent) for Route 20. The overall impact on fare revenue (including both the change in fares and the change in ridership) is estimated to be \$14,000 per year, or a 50 percent decrease for Route 20. For Route 199, ridership would only increase by 30 trips or so, equating to a loss in fare revenue of \$100.

The decrease in fare revenue could be offset by the utilization of LCTOP funds that offset reduced fare revenue for projects that increase ridership and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The alternative has the benefit of simplifying the fare structure, reducing the stress on drivers of having to handle fare issues, and reducing the administrative costs of tracking multiple fare categories.

**Table 13: Impact of a \$2 Flat Fare for Regional Routes on Annual RCTA Fare Revenue**

	Route	
	20	199
<b>Percent of Cash Fare Boardings by # of Zones</b>		
Local (Adult)	2%	8%
One Zone (Adult)	49%	92%
Two Zones (Adult)	8%	0%
Three Zones (Adult)	4%	0%
Four Zones (Adult)	14%	0%
Five Zones (Adult)	10%	0%
Humboldt Only (Adult)	8%	0%
Cash Eureka \$12	3%	0%
Cash Eureka \$6	2%	0%
<b>Avg Full Fare</b>	<b>\$5.83</b>	<b>\$2.42</b>
Effective Change in Average Fare	-66%	-17%
<b>Annual Ridership</b>		
Existing - Full Fare	4,800	400
Existing - Discount	11,900	2,100
Existing - Total	16,700	2,500
\$2 per trip - Full Fare - Projected Ridership	7,000	430
Free - Discount	11,900	2,100
\$2 Flat Fare - Total	18,900	2,530
Impact of \$2 Fare on ridership	2,200	30
Impact of \$2 Fare - Discount	0	0
<b>Impact of \$2 Fare on Ridership</b>	<b>2,200</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Percent Change in Annual Riders</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>
<b>Annual Fare Revenue</b>		
Current Revenue - Full Fare	\$28,000	\$1,000
Current Revenue - Discount	\$0	\$0
Current Revenue - Total	\$28,000	\$1,000
\$2 Flat Fare - Full Fare	\$14,000	\$900
Impact of \$2 Fare - Full Fare	-\$14,000	-\$100
<b>Impact of \$2 Fare - Total</b>	<b>-\$14,000</b>	<b>-\$100</b>
<b>Percent Change in Annual Fare Revenue</b>	<b>-50.0%</b>	<b>-10.0%</b>
Source: RCTA 2023-24 Annual Report		

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Capital investments include funding allocated for physical components of the transit system, such as vehicles, facilities, and passenger amenities. Capital investments are necessary to provide safe, dependable, and comfortable services, yet they also require substantial planning and funding on the part of the transit agency. While there is always a degree of uncertainty when planning capital improvements, as there may be unanticipated needs or product prices may change, it is still helpful to identify known capital needs to assist transit staff with securing funding.

This chapter presents capital projects for the RCTA to implement throughout the five-year planning period. Ultimately, the recommended capital improvement program included in the SRTDP will enhance the passenger experience, improve RCTA's cost efficiency, and support the deployment of zero-emission buses (ZEBs).

## **TRANSIT VEHICLES**

### **Vehicle Capacity Needs**

Table 14 presents an analysis of the minimum vehicle size needed for the various RCTA fixed route services. The analysis is based on the boarding and alighting counts collected by LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc., during September 18<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>. First, the peak passenger load recorded on each fixed route during data collection was identified (peak passenger load at peak location). The peak passenger load data for each route was then factored by the ratio of the route's peak monthly ridership during FY 2023-24 to observed September 2024 ridership. The peak passenger load data was also factored by the ratio of the peak passenger load to the average ridership per run observed across all data samples. These calculations resulted in estimates for each route for total ridership at the peak location on the peak run in the peak month. This data was then reviewed based on the following considerations: transit vehicles appropriate for RCTA typically are available with seating capacities of 5, 20, and 28. RCTA ridership may continue to rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic, and there is a desire to minimize transit vehicle size while still providing adequate seating capacity for the large majority of runs over the year. It should be noted that boarding and alighting data for the day Route 3 was surveyed appears to be an anomaly or error; therefore, Route 3 data is not included in this table.

Based on the analysis presented in Table 14, 28-passenger buses are recommended for two routes (Routes 20 and 300), and 20-passenger buses are recommended for Local Routes (1,2,4). Smaller vans are recommended for Route 199. It should be noted that this analysis shows what vehicle sizes are needed in peak ridership scenarios and may not reflect what vehicle size is appropriate for typical service days. If the vehicle is equipped with grab rails, a limited amount of standee capacity would be possible on the larger 20 and 28-passenger buses. Standee capacity is limited by the vehicle's gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR). Also, this analysis does not consider any routing changes that may be implemented as a result of the SRTDP.

## Table 14: Analysis of MTA Vehicle Size Requirements

Assuming No Change in Services

### Fleet Seating Capacities

Capacity	Example Model
5	MV - 1
20	Ford ARBOC
28	Ford F-550

Route	Peak Psgr Load - Peak Location <sup>1</sup>	Peak Month to Sample Month Ratio	Peak Run to Avg Daily Run Ratio	Psgr Load - Peak Location, Run, Month	Recommended Vehicle Size (Seating Capacity)
Route 1 - Parkway / El Dorado	4	1.0	1.3	6	20
Route 2 - A / Inyo / Washington	9	1.3	1.6	19	20
Route 4 - Bertsch	6	1.1	1.6	11	20
Route 20 - Smith River / Arcata Southbound	14	1.0	1.5	21	28
Route 199 - Crescent City - Gasquet	1	1.8	3.0	5	20
Route 300 - CEMS & DNHS School Tripper	17	1.9	1.0	33	28


Note 1: Based on boarding data collected by LSC Transportation Consultants September 18th to 21st.


## Vehicle Replacement Needs

Transit vehicles must be regularly replaced to maintain a safe and reliable fleet. As the vehicle procurement process can take multiple years, transit agencies must identify their vehicle needs well in advance. Additionally, the State of California's (CA) Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) regulation will begin impacting transit vehicle procurement in 2026, at which point 25 percent of small transit agency fleet bus purchases will be required to be ZEBs. By 2029, this purchasing requirement will increase to 100 percent. By 2040, all vehicles in the fleet will need to be ZEBs. To meet these standards, transit agencies can purchase either battery-electric buses (BEBs) or fuel-cell hydrogen electric buses (FCEBs).

### ZEB Considerations

Currently, ZEBs are more expensive than gas or diesel vehicles, meaning RCTA will need to secure additional funding to meet local match requirements for capital grants. While ZEBs are more expensive at this point, the ZEB market is constantly changing as new models are released and older models are improved, making it hard to predict future pricing. The RCTA vehicle replacement schedule presented later in this report is subject to change as new ZEB technologies become available and costs stabilize. To consider the current realities of transitioning to ZEBs, RCTA conducted the *RCTA Electric Fleet Transition Study (2021)*.

Local routes are generally served by vehicles that are comparable to 20-passenger cutaway Ford E-450 chassis-type buses. RCTA currently has a fleet of 9 of these vehicles, 7 of which are in good repair. A maximum of 3 vehicles are in service at one time for local route coverage. The *RCTA Electric Fleet Transition Study* found that to maintain current levels of service vehicles comparable to Cutaway Ford E-450 chassis vehicles, which are the core of RCTA's fleet, would need to be replaced at a 2:1 ratio. Low-floor cutaway buses are the preferred type of vehicle as they greatly reduce wheelchair loading times, which frequently occur on RCTA local routes. 

Intercity Route 199 also utilizes the same type of vehicles as local routes. The RCTA School Tripper Route 300 is typically served by the same driver shift and vehicle as the 199 trips. The ZEB study did not consider the interlining of Route 300, or the summertime level of service for three runs a day, in its battery capacity needs analysis. However, the study found that vehicles serving the route could be replaced by EVs at a 1:1 ratio, given 2 round trips a day, and time for top-up charging between runs. 

Route 20 was divided into two segments for the purpose of the ZEB study: the stretch north of Crescent City and the stretch south of Crescent City. The study assessed the same vehicle type for this route as well, though during peak runs, larger E-550 diesel buses are utilized for added capacity. The study found that buses could be replaced with ZEBs on the northern segment at a 1:1 ratio and that the southern segment of the route was not feasible to serve with ZEBs due to the distance and terrain traversed by the route. This portion of the study came with a disclaimer that further analysis would be required as to the logistical reality of serving this route with different buses based on segment.

DAR trips are generally short trips currently provided by five-passenger MV-1 vans. The CARB Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) regulation applies differently to vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) under 14,000 pounds. RCTA's DAR vehicles fall well below this threshold, with GVWRs ranging from 3,680 to 6,055 pounds. Vehicles under 14,000 GVWR are not classified as buses and are not subject to

the zero-emission bus (ZEB) purchase mandate. However, per California Code of Regulation (CCR) section 2023.5, agencies may opt in to claim one ZEB credit toward CARB's purchase requirements for every 180,000 miles collectively operated by zero-emission vehicles under the 14,000-pound threshold annually. RCTA's DAR service operates approximately 25,000 miles per year, and even if microtransit were operated using the same vehicles, it is unlikely that the 180,000-mile threshold would be met.

DAR services are only offered in the Crescent City area, while the ZEB study did not assess the feasibility of replacing these DAR vehicles with EVs, and it is not required, the service is assumed to be feasible to serve with EV vans at a 1:1 replacement ratio given its short trips, potential for mid-day top up charging, and ability to switch between vehicles if needed. This makes DAR vehicles realistic candidates for replacement by EVs; however, it is not required, and the limited mileage served by these vehicles will not assist in RCTA meeting CARB purchase percentage requirements.

### ***Vehicle Replacement Schedule***

RCTA has 17 vehicles that are 2 to 14 years old and hold 5 to 32 passengers. Table 15 presents the RCTA's anticipated vehicle needs and purchasing schedule based on the agency's current fleet. The analysis within the table is drawn from the *RCTA Electric Fleet Transition Study (2021)*, and the Useful Life Benchmark (ULB) of the different vehicle models, as identified by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and staff input. Table 15 does not include any expansion vehicle purchases required to support the recommended service plan presented in this SRTDP.

Based on the schedule shown, the RCTA will need to procure 17 vehicles during the next five years. Given current market costs and anticipated inflation, it is expected that vehicle replacement needs will cost the RCTA a total of \$3.5 million over five years (Table 15). The schedule shown in Table 15 reflects the RCTA's current un-delivered bus orders, planned bus orders, and assumed compliance with CARB zero emission bus mandates. It is important to note that buses are typically paid for upon delivery. Therefore, RCTA will have funds in place for these purchases at the time of order, but the funds will be held in reserve until delivery.

**Table 15: RCTA Vehicle Replacement Schedule**

		Plan Period (by Fiscal Year) <sup>2</sup>					5-Year Plan Total
		25/26 <sup>2</sup>	26/27 <sup>2</sup>	27/28 <sup>2</sup>	28/29 <sup>3</sup>	29/30 <sup>3</sup>	
		<u>Vehicles</u>					
Cutaway Electric	\$245,000	1	9	0	0	0	10
Low Floor Cutaway (Gas)	\$215,000	3	0	0	0	0	3
32' Diesel	\$228,000	2	1	1	0	0	4
32' Electric	\$1,020,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Number of Vehicles		6	10	1	0	0	17
Total Cost <sup>1</sup>		\$701,000	\$2,505,990	\$241,885	\$0	\$0	\$3,448,875
		<u>Demand Response Specific Vehicles</u>					
Electric - Vans <sup>4</sup>	\$240,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gas - Vans <sup>4</sup>	\$345,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Number of Vehicles		0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Cost <sup>1</sup>		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Vehicle Needs <sup>1</sup>		\$701,000	\$2,505,990	\$241,885	\$0	\$0	\$3,448,875
Percent of ZEB Purchases <sup>5</sup>		17%	90%	0%	--	--	
<p>Note 1: All costs assume 3.0 percent annual inflation.</p> <p>Note 2: Starting January 1, 2026, 25% of new vehicle purchases must be ZEBs.</p> <p>Note 3: Starting January 2029, 100% of new vehicle purchases must be ZEBs.</p> <p>Note 4: Vehicles under 14,000 GVWR are not subject to ZEB purchase requirements and cannot be counted as a ZEB for purchase percentage calculations unless conditions in CCR 2023.5 are met, which are unfeasible for RCTA to meet. RCTA vans are less than 14,000 GVWR.</p> <p>Note 5: CARB ITC vehicle purchase requirements take effect with the start of the calendar year, purchases in 25/26 represent busses which were ordered in FY 23-24 but have not yet been</p>							
Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.							

## TRANSIT FACILITIES

Transit facilities refer to the sites and infrastructure that directly support administrative, operations, and maintenance functions. This section discusses capital improvements to RCTA facilities.

### Battery Electric Bus Charging Infrastructure

RCTA will need to install additional charging infrastructure to meet the midday and overnight charging needs of the agency's future BEB fleet. The agency has secured funding and completed the environmental review process, adopting a negative declaration. As of February 2025, the project is advancing into the design phase, with preliminary plans aimed at providing charging infrastructure for a proposed fleet of twelve to twenty electric vehicles to support local and Dial-A-Ride (DAR) services.

Due to the high mileage and rugged terrain of RCTA's intercity routes 20 and 199, along with the current technological limitations of BEBs, the agency intends to continue operating diesel-powered vehicles on these routes, Route 20 south segment in particular. However, RCTA will continue to monitor advancements in BEB technology and explore the potential adoption of fuel cell vehicles as an alternative.

At this time, it is anticipated that completing the electrical upgrades at RCTA's Williams Drive facility, and procuring the 10 TIRCP-funded BEBs will cost \$7 million in total, most of which will be paid for with new Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) funding made available through California Senate Bill (SB) 125.

### Administration, Operations, and Maintenance Facility Upgrades

The RCTA administrative offices and operations facility are located at 140 Williams Drive in Crescent City. The facility is an older structure and in need of significant upgrades.

RCTA currently leases its administration, operations, and maintenance facility site located at 140 Williams Drive in Crescent City. The facility occupies 1.34 acres on the northern end of the Del Norte County Fairgrounds from the State of California who owns the land. The most recent extension to the lease agreement was approved for a 20-year term in 2024. The FY 2025-26 budgeted expense for the land lease is \$38,192; the lease agreement allows either party to terminate the lease with 6 months' notice. The lease is being amended to add additional land on the westerly side of the lease to improve bus circulation and EV charging infrastructure spacing.

The RCTA building on the site was built in 2004 and is still generally sufficient for RCTA's needs. There are several general upgrades to the facility in progress, which are included in the ZEB charging infrastructure project, including paving, security upgrades, installation of a backup generator, and solar arrays. However, there is currently limited indoor fleet storage despite the harsh climate of Del Norte County. There is limited space to expand.

RCTA should be planning for the long-term future when the existing facility is no longer sufficient to meet its needs. With the current building being over 20 years old, coupled with CARB ZEV bus requirements in place that may require a larger fleet to maintain the same level of service due to range limitations, RCTA should consider purchasing a new site to reduce its dependence on lease costs, which

are expected rise in the long-term future. Seeking a larger site footprint would provide RCTA with room to grow and could enable indoor fleet storage, which could extend the useful life of RCTA's fleet. Not owning the facility makes it challenging and risky to make expensive upgrades such as EV infrastructure or fleet expansion. The charging equipment being planned for installation at the Williams Drive facility has an estimated 10- 12-year useful life. It is recommended that RCTA plan for the long term by building up its reserves to be able to purchase land for a new operations facility should the opportunity arise.

## **PASSENGER FACILITIES AND AMENITIES**

Passenger facilities and amenities, such as bus stop shelters, benches, signs, and transfer centers, benefit passengers by making the time spent before boarding the bus more comfortable. This section discusses projects to improve RCTA passenger amenities throughout the five-year planning period. Once implemented, these projects will improve the experience of existing passengers as well as increase public awareness of RCTA services and enhance community perceptions of the agency.

### **Cultural Center Transit Hub**

Currently, RCTA's main transfer hub is located on Front Street near the intersection with US 101; the passenger amenities are very basic; they include two small bus shelters with bench seating, and signage indicating the stop is served by RCTA and Oregon Point. The need for an improved Transit Hub was identified in the 2019 SRTP. In 2022, RCTA undertook the *Redwood Coast Transit Hub Location Study* to assess the feasibility and optimal design of a new transit center in Crescent City. This study considered existing zoning codes and parcel sizes to identify potential sites. The study ultimately identified an existing parking area across Front Street as a preferred site based on the physical characteristics of the parcel as well as public and stakeholder input.

RCTA has already secured \$4.4 million in TIRCP and SB 125 funding and is currently working to negotiate and secure a land lease for the site from the City of Crescent City, which owns the property. The project expects to complete the planning and environmental determination phase of the project in early 2026, followed by the design phase of the project, expected to be completed in 2027, and construction beginning as early as late 2027. Preliminary plans include bus bays for RCTA, other regional providers, and private tour buses, as well as a ticketing and information kiosk building where dispatching can occur, restroom facilities, real-time bus arrival signage, and ample lighting and seating.

### **Bus Stop Improvements**


For most passengers, bus stop amenities are incredibly important to improving their waiting time. The desire for better bus stops was reflected in the onboard passenger survey results, as 13 percent of passengers surveyed requested that RCTA improve its bus stops. Bus stop improvements consist of cleaning and fixing existing amenities as well as installing new amenities, such as benches, shelters, and bus stop signs. Issues with unauthorized long-term occupancy of bus shelters has led to bus shelter removal at the request of businesses and residents at some stops, namely Safeway. The priority of RCTA in recent years has been to expand seating and signage through the purchase of Simmi Seats, which fulfills the need for improved passenger seating and signage while discouraging long-term occupancy.

RCTA's 2024 -25 draft budget has a bus stop improvement fund balance of \$75,000 and an expected cost of \$60,000 to deploy Simmi Seats that it has already purchased and purchase an additional 40 Simmi Seats. It is recommended that RCTA continue to allocate a portion of its capital budget toward bus stop improvements in the future and be on the lookout for opportunities to place shelters in places with public and private support. The survey received many requests for a bus shelter in Klamath Glen. RCTA should also focus on posting updated schedules and agency contact information at its high-traffic stops in addition to the amenities already budgeted for.

### **Bus Passenger Facilities Plan**

Del Norte Local Transportation Commission (DNLTC) and RCTA, in collaboration with the Yurok Tribe, HTA, and the Humboldt County Association of Governments, could develop a Bus Passenger Facilities Plan to inventory existing bus stops throughout Del Norte County and Northern Humboldt County. Improvements would then be recommended for each stop based on the existing amenities, the condition of the existing amenities, and average boarding activity. The key benefits of the Bus Passenger Facilities Plan would be the resulting comprehensive inventory of RCTA stops, as well as prioritized project recommendations to guide how to best use limited capital funds.


## INTRODUCTION

Transit marketing is critical for attracting new riders as well as establishing a reliable and recognizable brand. As the RCTA serves the entirety of Del Norte County as well as Northern Humboldt County, multiple marketing strategies are necessary to effectively reach residents and visitors throughout the large service area. This chapter first summarizes the RCTA's existing marketing strategies, then discusses newly recommended strategies aimed at maintaining existing riders, attracting new riders, and improving awareness of available services. As the RCTA has a limited marketing budget and no dedicated marketing personnel, low-cost strategies are prioritize 

## CURRENT MARKETING STRATEGIES

### Branding

The RCTA has an attractive, well-designed logo that includes the agency's abbreviated name and a decal reflecting Del Norte County's scenic landscape. The logo is consistently included on RCTA's printed, virtual, and physical marketing materials.

One of the most important tools for marketing a transit system is the agency's physical presence in the community. Physical marketing includes branded buses, information posted at bus stops, and bus stop signage. As RCTA operates throughout Del Norte County, RCTA has a large physical presence, with the logo visible in many different communities on both passing buses and bus stop signs. Currently, RCTA signage is not present at all stop locations, especially those outside of the RCTA core area of Crescent City. Plans are in place to expand RCTA signage. Caltrans has been unreceptive to RCTA's efforts to install signage at its bus stops, which require approval in public right-of-ways. This is a major barrier as a high percentage of RCTA's bus stop needs are at locations under Caltrans jurisdiction, and 20 years into its existence, RCTA continues to struggle with the expensive and elaborate design plan submittals required by Caltrans to simply install a sign 

### Website

RCTA maintains a website with a large array of valuable information on the Del Norte public transit services. Information that can be found on the website includes:

- Real-time trip planning (by destination and time of day) with Google Maps.
- Service alerts and recent news headlines.
- A page for each fixed route, airport shuttle, and medical shuttle with schedule information and detailed route maps. Transfer opportunities to other regional providers are highlighted on the Route 20 page. Links to other regional transportation providers' websites are provided as well.

- A fare information page with local and intercity route fares, monthly pass options, transfer policies, accepted payment types, and a contactless electronic payment how-to guide. Along with information about the RCTA free rides program for seniors, students, disabled individuals, and veterans.
- A page summarizing Crescent City DAR services. The DAR page contains the schedule, eligibility, and fare information for both services. Details are also provided on how to reserve a ride.
- There is an “About” dropdown menu, which gives access to the Board of Directors page including meeting agendas and minutes which is kept up to date, a documents page with recent planning documents, a page containing procurement policies and any current requests for proposals, and pages containing ADA, and Title VI information.
- There is a “Contact Us” page with a general information link about RCTA passenger policies, along with the dispatch and general information phone line, and an email-based contact us form. RCTA dispatch staff are trained to be the one-stop shop for local transportation information, including information about other regional transportation providers.
- At the bottom left of all RCTA website pages, there is a clear button labeled “Translate.” Clicking this button makes an American and Mexican flag option appear, hovering over the Mexican flag icon brings up the label “Spanish,” and when clicked, all RCTA pages are translated into Spanish.
- Links to the RCTA Facebook, Instagram, and X pages.

Overall, RCTA’s website does an excellent job of presenting information about RCTA news, services, and policies to the public. Minor improvements to the website, like providing DAR and airport shuttle service area maps on their respective pages and updating the page's Spanish translation button to be more prominent, reading “translate/traducir” would improve the user experience.

## **Print Materials**

Printed rider guides provide directions for riding the bus in addition to being promotional tools. Passenger guides are especially valuable for people who do not have a mobile device to access service information while on the go. RCTA publishes an updated comprehensive riders guide in the spring and fall to reflect the changes between peak summer season services and off-peak season services. The rider’s guide is provided in PDF format on the RCTA website and includes a systemwide route map, and schedule and fare information. These schedule brochures are to be stocked on every bus every day, and are also distributed throughout the community to businesses, medical facilities, hotels, schools, apartments, etc.

## **Travel Training**

RCTA offers individualized training to teach residents how to utilize its services, including how to read bus schedules, pay fares, and a step-by-step walkthrough of the boarding process. The travel training program is helpful for individuals who are interested in using RCTA services but feel unsure of what services are available or how to ride. The RCTA travel training program is not well-advertised, and the

only way the general public can learn about this program is by contacting RCTA directly or through local social service organizations that are made aware of the program by RCTA. Currently, the program is administered by RCTA's operations contractor, Transdev; however, it is recommended that RCTA release a request for proposals for the administration of these services. Organizations that are not as constrained by the day-to-day operational responsibilities or are active in the local social services sector may be better positioned to advertise and provide this service.

## **Social Media**

Social media is an increasingly important part of transit marketing. A well-organized and regularly updated social media platform can effectively and quickly convey transit information to a broad audience. Transit agencies frequently use social media to provide real-time service alerts, as well as for general promotion of services and events. Social media posts can be designed to engage with the greater community or to recruit new passengers through "pushing" a post.

RCTA has multiple social media accounts, demonstrating that the agency is already utilizing social media to reach riders and provide service updates. The RCTA Facebook account has 114 followers and is kept up to date with service changes and reminders, and includes a link to the RCTA website and information on how to contact staff by phone or in person. The RCTA Instagram has only 15 followers and includes similar content to the Facebook account. RCTA also has an X account, which has only 3 followers and shares the same type of service update information that is hosted on Instagram and Facebook.

## **Phone Information**

To ensure information is accessible to everyone, including the visually impaired and seniors, transit providers must continue to offer information over the phone. RCTA has two phone numbers, both of which are answered by RCTA dispatch staff for passengers to schedule DAR reservations and make general information inquiries. RCTA dispatchers are trained to provide information not only about RCTA services but all other regional transportation providers, both public and private as well. The RCTA phone number is posted on the RCTA website in the header, within the "Contact Us" page, prominently displayed on the outside of buses, and included in each rider's guide.

## **Special Events, Promotions, and Partnerships**

Special events and promotions reward current riders and encourage new residents to try transit. Common promotional events for transit include free fare days, discounted seasonal passes, and complimentary transit to and from popular local events. These types of promotions require dedicated funding sources, one example being LCTOP funds, which RCTA already utilizes to offer free fares to seniors, youth, disabled individuals, and veterans.

RCTA currently provides Del Norte County and northern Humboldt County companies, tourist lodging providers, and local organizations with rider guides and discounted passes to promote ridership and solicitates participation in planning efforts and service feedback locally.

RCTA has developed a partnership with Redwood State and National Parks. RCTA is the primary public transit provider to the Redwood Parks system. For a short time, RCTA served a stop at the Jedediah

Smith Redwood State Park Campground, which was then discontinued due to safety concerns from the National Park. RCTA is the only public fixed route service to the Newton B. Drury Scenic Parkway, which is world-renowned for its easy access to giant redwood groves. The roadway is often congested, and parking issues persist during the peak summer season. Enhancement of this strategic partnership would benefit both organizations. RCTA should seek to work with the parks to improve parks staff knowledge about RCTA's services, which are the only existing public transit resource to these world-famous parks.

## **Active Management**

Active management refers to responsive and adaptive decision-making by transit directors/managers. A recent example of active management at RCTA was the reduction in service levels in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and then the subsequent increase as demand returned. RCTA also had to reduce services over small time periods due to the nationwide driver shortage experienced in the years since the COVID-19 pandemic, prompting staff to make important decisions about which services to prioritize, as well as how to communicate service reductions to the public. RCTA management is also responsible for communicating with neighboring transit providers and improving transfer opportunities between different systems, which are well coordinated, and the collaborative North State Express program continues to expand and streamline intercity public transportation throughout northern California. In sum, practicing active management has helped RCTA maximize its available resources to provide convenient and efficient public transportation.

## **RCTA MARKETING CHALLENGES**




Overall, RCTA does an excellent job with marketing, given limited staff time and funds. However, one area for improvement, based on the onboard survey results, would be to improve the quality and availability of service information. Low-cost strategies to improve RCTA's information resources include minor improvements to the website, providing a how-to-ride guide online, increasing access to travel training, strengthening partnership with the State and Federal Parks, providing signage at more stops, and posting schedule information at high-traffic bus stops.

Attracting new riders has become critically important for RCTA. Every transit system experiences regular turnover in ridership as students graduate, residents move, and people acquire cars and/or driver's licenses. Additionally, RCTA ridership statistics indicate that many individuals who stopped using RCTA during the COVID-19 pandemic have still not returned. Reaching new riders with marketing is a challenge, however, and will likely require RCTA to deploy targeted marketing efforts.

## **MARKETING RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following is a comprehensive list of recommended marketing strategies and improvements to be implemented by RCTA during the five-year planning period. These strategies reflect affordable options that will help maintain current ridership, attract new ridership, and improve existing information resources, ultimately benefiting existing passengers and increasing awareness of RCTA services to residents and visitors alike. Marketing strategies should be implemented incrementally, as resources allow.

## Physical Marketing

- **Bus Stop Signage:** It is recommended that the RCTA continue to maintain signage at bus stops. Signs should be updated if necessary, and new signs should be added when funding allows. Bus stop signs should be installed simultaneously with other bus stop improvements when possible. Bus stop improvements have been tough to implement due to Caltrans project requirement 
- **Bus Branding:** RCTA should continue to procure buses that clearly show the agency's logo. Both fixed route and DAR services should continue to maintain similar branding 
- **Bus Displays:** Information on vehicle head signs and onboard bulletin displays is highly visible to passengers. The information contained within these displays should be attractive, accurate, and easy to read, and printed rider guides should be on board so drivers can easily distribute schedule information to passengers.
- **Public Presentations:** Public speaking is an opportunity to personalize RCTA and further educate the community about available transit services. Public speaking efforts should be customized for a specific audience, such as seniors, students, social service program clients, or employee groups, among others. Presentations to schools and colleges, businesses, employers, social service organizations, senior residences, senior centers, and neighborhood associations would be great opportunities to promote more specific benefits of RCTA service 
- **Print Material Availability:** Providing up-to-date riders guides in print to area social service organizations, visitor lodging providers, and the numerous regional visitor centers would help to improve awareness of RCTA services and bolster ridership.

## Website

- **DAR Webpage Improvements:** RCTA should update the DAR page with a service area map so users can easily identify if their desired trip is provided.
- **Add a How to Ride Guide and Information on Travel Training:** The RCTA website does not include any how-to-ride information for prospective passengers who may have never utilized public transportation. Providing a bulleted list of how to plan a trip which includes the already used google map trip planning tool, how to identify and safely wait for a bus at a fixed route stop, board and pay your fare, and general bus rider etiquette could help to encourage use of RCTA services by timid individuals who are not familiar with utilizing a public transit service. A short video could be provided containing the same information, and a "contact us" form to request one-on-one travel training could be provided at the bottom of the page.
- **Improve Translation Access:** While the website does support translation of all materials to Spanish, a user who does not read English would have a difficult time identifying the translation button and understanding how to toggle this option.

## Print Materials

- **Continue to Update Printed Schedule Information:** The printable PDFs of the fixed route schedules should continue to be updated to reflect the most current service information when schedule changes are made and re-distributed to local partners with each update.

## Travel Training

- **Further Advertise the Travel Training Program:** RCTA's travel training program could have an even greater impact if the program were advertised on its website and social media. RCTA should also partner with local organizations, such as nonprofits focused on aiding persons with disabilities and senior centers, to easily enroll residents in the program. As mentioned above, RCTA may need to seek a new contractor, as Transdev RCTA's operations contractor currently fills this role, but day-to-day operational responsibilities, as well as recent changes in general management, have prevented this program from being appropriately marketed and administered.

## Social Media

- **Increase Presence on Social Media:** RCTA should collaborate with local partners, such as the College of the Redwoods, Cal Poly Humboldt, and the Redwoods Parks, to advertise RCTA on their social media channels. As Facebook is where RCTA is most active and has the greatest following already, RCTA should seek to provide QR codes with links to its Facebook page in its print materials and on bus bulletin boards to increase its following and relay important service information to greater audiences.
- **Social Media Campaigns:** RCTA should utilize Facebook advertising to increase awareness of the transit system among non-riders and to attract riders who may have stopped riding back to transit. These advertising campaigns should be conducted in the spring when visitors and seasonal workers are influxing to the region.

## Special Events and Promotions

- **Special Promotions:** RCTA should continue to offer free fares for seniors, youth, veterans, and disabled individuals. The program is well utilized and helps to boost ridership, and is sustainable as long as LCTOP funding continues. RCTA could consider offering a fare-free day for general public passengers on its first day of expanded summer operations and/or, in conjunction with a Redwood Parks event to bring attention to the agency's expanded summer service, and the access to the Redwood Parks system that RCTA services provide.
- **Promote New Technology and Projects:** New technologies, such as ZEBs, should be celebrated through concerted marketing efforts, including press releases, newspaper interviews, radio interviews, and social media posts. These campaigns should focus on informing the community about positive changes at RCTA and emphasizing improvements that may encourage some non-riders to reconsider using transit.
- **Testimonial Advertising:** A great way to highlight RCTA's success is to let riders tell their stories. Testimonial advertising can be done through newspaper articles, flyers or posters, social media, or the radio. The benefit of testimonials is that they inspire the public and help to eliminate poor opinions of transit held by some community members.

## Active Management

- **Regional Collaboration:** RCTA directors/managers should continue to collaborate with regional partners to improve transit connections and facilitate increased ridership.

- RCTA should continue to seek collaboration with its local partners to optimize services for local residents and visitors alike, including the Yurok Tribe, Tolawa Dee-ni' Nation, Elk Valley Rancheria, Del Norte Senior Center, Del Norte Unified School District, and Del Norte Chamber of Commerce.
- RCTA should continue to work with its North State Express partners to optimize public transit connections between operators and further market the program. RCTA will need to continue to communicate with regional partners to ensure transit connections are optimized and that accurate service information is available to both Del Norte County riders as well as transit passengers living in nearby regions.
- If RCTA considers implementing a new route that would allow day trips between Crescent City, RCTA should work with Oregon Point to carefully consider the scheduling of the route in order to make medical and other trip purposes, like air travel, possible while augmenting rather than duplicating services that Oregon Point currently offers.
- **Local Administrative Staff** – Another strategy that would make RCTA's marketing program more successful is to have a local (in Crescent City) administrative staff person available to conduct in-person marketing campaigns at community events and outreach to businesses, hotels, and tourism destinations.

## Marketing Strategies for Students

Students have historically comprised a significant portion of RCTA transit ridership. Specific strategies to attract high school and college students to transit include:

- Campus visits and presentations at the start of the school year to inform about available services.
- Creating specific promotional materials describing the transit services to each campus and highlighting the student-free rides program.
- Requesting schools and campuses share promotional materials through official email lists and social media.
- Partnering with student clubs and organizations interested in transit or that could benefit from learning more about transit services.
- Kiosks at College of the Redwoods campuses and Cal Poly Humboldt Campus with rider guides.