

AGENDA ITEM 6 A
Action Item

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 3, 2008

TO: El Dorado County Transit Authority

FROM: Mindy Jackson, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Adoption of Western El Dorado County 2008 Short Range Transit Plan

REQUESTED ACTION:

BY MOTION, Adopt Western El Dorado County 2008 Short Range Transit Plan, May 7, 2008

BACKGROUND

The El Dorado County Transportation Commission (EDCTC) received a CalTrans Transit Technical Planning Assistance grant to develop the Western El Dorado County 2008 Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP). The EDCTC awarded LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. (LSC) a contract on September 6, 2007 to prepare the SRTP.

The development of a SRTP lays the groundwork necessary to identify and plan for the implementation of service improvements. The detailed five-year plan covers fiscal years 2007/2008 through 2012/2013 including year-by-year recommendations for implementation strategies using projected capital and operating funds. This fiscally constrained SRTP reflects changes in population demographics, evaluates existing services, reviews and recommends goals and objectives, responds to gaps in transportation systems and analyzes potential cost-effective service revisions.

DISCUSSION

The draft SRTP received public oversight with opportunities for participation in workshops and advisory committee meetings. The draft SRTP was presented to the El Dorado Transit board and the El Dorado County Transportation Commission on June 5, 2008 to accept comments from members of the public and board members.

If adopted by the El Dorado Transit board, the detailed five-year SRTP schedule for

implementation; financial plans for operating and capital funding and institutional management plan will be the framework for improving public transit services on the western slope of El Dorado County. The SRTP is fiscally constrained therefore; service alternatives will be implemented when and if appropriate funding levels are available.

During the five-year period 2008/2009 – 2012/2013 El Dorado Transit will plan for implementation of the following service alternatives:

- Establish a deviated fixed-route in El Dorado Hills
- Convert to a “Community-Express” route system
- Combine Placerville Express and Pollock Pines routes
- Provide service to new developments in the Placerville area
- Shift Iron Point Connector to better service commuter trips
- Initiate a stop at the Red Hawk Casino with the Iron Point Connector
- Continue to provide downtown Sacramento commuter service
- Consider a Rancho Cordova stop on limited Sacramento commuter runs when local Rancho Cordova routes are improved
- Eliminate South County route
- Expand Dial-A-Ride
- Consider contracting one-day-a-week service from Georgetown/Cool/Pilot Hill to Auburn

The short range institutional and management plan includes:

- Improve Security Procedures
- Review Local Route Transit Policy
- Revise the Sacramento RT Transfer Agreement
- Improve Marketing Efforts
- Revise Minimum Farebox Requirement

The component to revise the minimum farebox recovery ratio (FBR) from 10% to 11.5% is a requirement under state Transit Development Act (TDA) and discussed in detail on page 208 of SRTP. The SRTP includes a recommendation that the El Dorado County Transportation Commission (EDCTC) as the regional transportation planning agency, submit the recommended change of the minimum FBR to the California Department of Transportation.

The complete SRTP will be available on the EDCTC webpage (www.edctc.org) no later than June 19, 2008 or by contacting Matt Mauk, Transit Services Assistant at (530) 642-5383 ext. 201. The SRTP if accepted by the El Dorado County Transportation Commission (EDCTC) would be included as the underpinning of the transit element of the El Dorado County Regional Transportation Plan.

Executive Summary

The El Dorado County Transportation Commission (EDCTC) retained LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. to prepare a 5-Year Short Range Transit Plan to improve and enhance transit services for Fiscal Years (FY) 2008/09 to 2012/13, through June 30, 2013. This plan document first presents and reviews the characteristics of the study area, including demographic factors. A thorough review of existing land use and transportation plans is then presented. The operating history of transit services is reviewed, and demand for transit services in the study area evaluated. Finally, a detailed, financially constrained Short Range Transit Plan is presented for the future improvement in El Dorado County Transit Authority (EDCTA) services.

Study Area

This study considers the portion of El Dorado County to the west of the Sierra Crest. Population of the area in 2006 is estimated based on U.S. Census data as 144,000. Of this total, 17 percent was elderly (age 60 or above), 2.1 percent was mobility-limited, 6.8 percent were low-income, while 2.8 percent of households did not own a private vehicle. Population from 2000 to 2006 grew at 2.2 percent per year countywide. Sacramento Council of Governments (SACOG) projections identify future population growth of 56.0 percent by 2025. The study presents detailed information on travel and commute patterns.

Existing Transit Services

Western El Dorado County transit services are provided through a joint powers agreement between the EDCTA, County of El Dorado, and City of Placerville. The EDCTA is governed by a five-member Board of Directors. Existing services include local fixed-route and deviated fixed-route services (Placerville, Pollock Pines, Cameron Park, Diamond Springs, Folsom Lake College), rural routes (Grizzly Flat and South County), Commuter Services to downtown Sacramento, the Iron Point Connector serving Light Rail in Folsom, Dial-A-Ride, SAC-MED Non-Emergency Medical Appointment Transportation, and contract services. The service operates a total of 55 vehicles in passenger service. Systemwide ridership for FY 2006/07 on all EDCTA services was 360,569 one-way passenger-trips, an increase of 24 percent since FY 2001/02. Ridership growth has been particularly strong on the local routes, which grew by 41 percent over this period.

Other transit providers serving the study area consist of the Senior Shuttle, volunteer programs, the Gold Country Express airport shuttle service, taxi companies, and vanpool programs. The area is also served by Amtrak Thruway.

Short-Range Plan

Service Plan

- ♦ **Establish Deviated Fixed-Route Service in El Dorado Hills** – One vehicle will be used to operate hourly service generally along the El Dorado Hills Boulevard corridor, from Village Center on the north to Valley View Parkway on the south, from roughly 10 AM to 6 PM. This vehicle will also serve on-request stops within a three quarters of a mile distance of the route. Schedules will be coordinated with service along US 50. Future expansion of this service may be considered if demand and financial conditions allow.

- ♦ **Ultimately Convert to a “Community – Express” Route System** – When financial conditions allow and ridership levels warrant, the existing local and Iron Point Connector services will be reconfigured to provide hourly express service along the US 50 corridor making limited stops between Placerville and Folsom, with the individual communities served by “Community Routes” in Placerville, Diamond Springs/Folsom Lake College, Cameron Park/Shingle Springs, and El Dorado Hills. This route plan will provide more frequent, more consistent, and faster service throughout the corridor.
- ♦ **Combine Placerville Express and Pollock Pines Routes** – The current service plan requires passengers traveling between these two routes to transfer at Placerville Station, which is an inconvenience and source of stress. These routes will be combined to provide a “one bus” trip between Pollock Pines and Missouri Flat.
- ♦ **Provide Service to New Developments in the Placerville Area** – New on-call stops will be added to the Placerville Shuttle routes to serve “The Ridge at Orchard Hill” subdivision along Mallard Lane as well as the Eskaton Senior Community on Blairs Lane.
- ♦ **Consider Temporary Changes to Local Routes to Address Construction Delays** – EDCTA will consider strategies to temporarily modify “interlined” routes in order to minimize delays to passengers associated with major long-term construction projects.
- ♦ **Shift Iron Point Connector Schedule to Better Serve Commute Schedules** – EDCTA will shift Iron Point Connector schedules mid-day, in order to better serve eastbound commuters in the PM commute period and to increase service effectiveness.
- ♦ **Serve Red Hawk Casino on Iron Point Connector** – Reflecting that the Red Hawk Casino will be a major new employment center, the Iron Point Connector will be modified slightly to serve a stop at the casino. As impacts to operations will be minimal, this is expected to generate increases in fares that more than offset the impact on operating costs.
- ♦ **Consider Changes to Iron Point Connector in Folsom** – EDCTA will continue to work with the City of Folsom to coordinate services and improve stops, and to modify services as needed to best serve new developments (such as the new Kaiser facility).
- ♦ **Continue to Provide Downtown Sacramento Commuter Service** – While it is inequitable that all transit costs for downtown service are borne by the “residential end” of the trip, El Dorado County residents gain substantial benefits from the existing service that would be significantly degraded if services were to be curtailed to require transfers to light rail. This plan continues the current level of service to downtown Sacramento, but recognizes that this level represents the maximum that can be provided under current funding conditions.
- ♦ **Consider a Rancho Cordova Stop on Limited Sacramento Commuter Runs Once Local Rancho Cordova Services are Improved** – It is not cost effective for EDCTA to provide local services to employment sites in Rancho Cordova (as least without outside funding). However, if Rancho Cordova implements the extensive local transit network currently being planned, EDCTA will consider adding a stop on existing services to provide transfer opportunities.
- ♦ **Eliminate the South County Service** – EDCTA will discontinue the 1-day-a-week South County Route, reflecting the low ridership (150 one-way rides per year) and low effectiveness (roughly \$90 in subsidy per passenger-trip).

- ♦ **Expand Dial-A-Ride Service** – An additional 8 vehicle service-hours of Dial-A-Ride service will be provided per weekday to meet existing and potential future demand. The daily vehicle service hours will be allocated by operations staff depending on anticipated needs and observed operating patterns.
- ♦ **Contract for Provision of Weekly Georgetown/Cool/Pilot Hill Service to Auburn** – EDCTA will investigate provision of rural one-day-a-week service between Georgetown, Cool, Pilot Hill, and Auburn using a contractor based in Placer County.
- ♦ **Participate in Regional Efforts to Expand Intercity Transit Service Along US 50** – EDCTC and EDCTA should work with others in the region to expand transit services along the US 50 corridor where feasible.

Short-Range Capital Plan

- ♦ **Fleet Replacement and Expansion** – A total of 26 vehicles will need to be acquired over the coming five years: 23 for replacement of existing vehicles and 3 for expansion of services. Total cost is estimated to equal \$6,300,000.
- ♦ **Improvements to Passenger Amenities and Bus Stops** – Major projects will consist of the Central Transit Center in Diamond Springs, the Bass Lake Road Park-and-Ride, improvements to the Ponderosa Road Park-and-Ride, and a new Missouri Flat passenger transfer center and park-and-ride. New shelters with benches will be installed at 24 stops, and new benches will be installed at 3 stops. Transit schedule displays will be installed at all locations with ten or more boardings per day.
- ♦ **Improve Transit Security** – EDCTA will install alarm, video surveillance, and automatic gates at the maintenance facility, and will install mobile video surveillance systems on all commuter and local buses. Grants will also be pursued to install solar energy arrays at the maintenance facility.
- ♦ **Retired Van Donation Program** – EDCTA will implement a program to donate older (but still useable) vans to community organizations in El Dorado County.
- ♦ **Enhance the Regional Alternative Transportation Network** – Reflecting the synergy between public transit, pedestrian and bicycle travel modes, EDCTA will expand bike lockers and racks at transit stops, strive to provide expanded bicycle carrying capacity on buses, and work with local public works and planning departments to enhance bicycle and pedestrian access to bus stops.
- ♦ **Implement Advanced Public Transit Technologies** – EDCTA will participate in a Sacramento region-wide program to implement a “smart card” program to ease regional travel and increase the convenience of fare payment and processing. EDCTA will also investigate installation of mobile data terminals on buses to aid communications and security.

Short-Range Institutional and Management Plan

- ♦ **Improve Security Procedures** – EDCTA will formalize agreements with local emergency services for provision of trained transportation services as part of emergency response efforts in the region.
- ♦ **Review Local Route Transfer Policy** – EDCTA will conduct a focused study of existing transfer use on the local route system, and potential ways to address any abuse while minimizing inconvenience to passengers and drivers.

- ♦ **Revise Sacramento RT Transfer Agreement** – The existing transfer agreement will be modified to eliminate the inequitable provision by which each system provides free service to employees of the other system.
- ♦ **Improve Marketing Efforts** – Including marketing pieces to encourage additional use of connecting services to Sacramento and the Sacramento International Airport, improvements to branding and advertising, coordination with social service program managers, enhanced marketing to the Hispanic community, and developing an e-mail list that will be used to notify passengers of service changes or interruptions.
- ♦ **Revise Minimum Farebox Return Requirement** – In accordance with TDA and reflecting the mixed urban/rural status of Western El Dorado County, EDCTA will submit to Caltrans a request to change the minimum farebox return ratio from 10.0 percent to 11.5 percent.

Short-Range Financial Plan

Reflecting recent economic trends, Local Transportation Funds (LTF) are assumed to remain flat through the end of FY 2008/09, and then to increase by a relatively low rate of 3 percent per year. To address increasing costs in light of this constraint on EDCTA's most important source of operating funds and also to address current inequities in the overall fare program, the following fare increases will be implemented:

- ♦ In FY 2008/09, the Senior Day Care subscription fare will be increased from \$2.00 to \$3.00 per day (round trip).
- ♦ In FY 2008/09, the Dial-A-Ride zone fare system will be modified by increasing fares in the El Dorado Hills and Cameron Park zones to match the fares currently charged for trips of similar length (and operating cost) in other zones.
- ♦ In FY 2008/09, a \$1.25 fare will be established for elderly/disabled passengers on the Iron Point Connector, in order to allow future use of FTA Section 5307 funds on this service.
- ♦ In FY 2009/10, the Dial-A-Ride base fare will be increase from \$3.00 to \$4.00 for the general public, and from \$1.50 to \$2.00 for elderly/disabled passengers.
- ♦ In FY 2009/10, the Local Route base fare will be increased from \$1.10 to \$1.25 for the general public and from \$0.55 to \$0.60 for elderly/disabled passengers.

A FTA 5316 (Jobs Access/Reverse Commute) grant is included in the plan to implement the Community/Express plan element. Proposition 1B funds are allocated for major capital and security plan elements. Other funding sources are also assumed to change in a conservative fashion. Considering all operating and capital costs, positive fund balances can be maintained through the plan period for both the Capital Fund and the Section 5307 Fund. The Capital Fund is forecast to have a minimum balance of \$218,700 which is a reasonable level to address short-term funding needs, or changes in state or Federal funding levels. Overall, under this plan EDCTA ridership will grow by 36 percent over current levels, while still maintaining strong financial conditions.