

AGENDA ITEM III – A

YUBA-SUTTER TRANSIT AUTHORITY MEETING MINUTES NOVEMBER 18, 2021

I. Call to Order & Roll Call (4:02 pm)

Present: Bains, Buttacavoli, Fuhrer, Harris, Hudson, and Shaw (Chair)
Absent: Blaser and Micheli

II. Public Business from the Floor

None.

III. Consent Calendar

Director Bains made a motion to approve the consent calendar. Director Buttacavoli seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

IV. Reports

A. Replacement Bus Purchase Authorization.

Martin introduced the request for authorization for the replacement of six light-duty buses including some pictures and video of the buses under consideration. There was an on-site demonstration of these vehicles in August, and they proved to be very passenger friendly. Yuba-Sutter Transit has a fleet of 16 medium duty buses that are used for both the Dial-a-Ride and rural route services. Ten of those buses are 2019 models and six are 2014 models. These buses are typically replaced on a seven-year schedule and at an average of nearly 190,000 miles on each they already well exceed their Federal useful life standard of five years or 150,000 miles.

Martin continued that staff has been searching since before the last purchase for a low floor bus model for these services to provide easier access for riders with wheelchairs and ambulatory challenges as the current buses have four steps and a wheelchair lift. The buses being considered have a manual ramp and they load at curb height. The biggest challenge of low floor buses is that they are more expensive. Based on the 2019 bid results, the FY 2022 budget assumed a cost of approximately \$95,000 per unit including all additional post-delivery costs. While costs have since increased substantially and these same buses would now be approximately \$120,000 per unit, each comparable low floor model will be approximately \$140,000. The proposed buses are configured for 12 passengers and could include up to 14 passengers if two jump seats are added to the design. During the demonstration, both drivers and passengers liked their design and ease of use. In addition, their small profile would fit very well with any future micro-transit application as well.

Based on the assumed total price of \$960,000, this purchase would be funded with four different Federal grants and a local match of \$138,000 from available State Transit Assistance (STA) funds. Any purchase award decision would be conditional until the procurement process is approved by Caltrans and we have signed grant agreements.

Director Hudson asked at what point must the buses be replaced. Martin answered that there is no required date for replacement, but it becomes a cost factor for the repair and maintenance of buses as they age. All these buses will have over 200,000 miles by the time they are replaced. Director Hudson asked if the new buses would be diesel engines and if the buses are currently under smog regulations. Martin stated that all the buses are subject to the smog program and the new buses will be gasoline powered as there is no diesel option for this model. He noted that these lightweight vehicles will have V-6 engine and have been tested at around 12 miles per gallon compared to our existing Ford V-10 powered buses that get five or six miles to the gallon so the difference in fuel costs will more than make up for the difference in price over the life of the bus.

Director Fuhrer asked what happens to the surplus buses. Martin answered that they are sold through an online auction site. Director Fuhrer asked about the 2010 model buses. Martin answered that the 2010 buses are commuter buses with a longer useful life. Director Fuhrer asked why all the buses would be wheelchair accessible if only ten percent of riders need wheelchair access. Martin stated that all buses must be equipped with the same accessibility equipment, but wheelchair accessibility is not the only factor influencing the decision as low floor buses are better for anyone with ambulatory challenges and the Dial-A-Ride service during daytime hours is only for senior and disabled riders.

Director Buttacavoli asked why this purchase is not required to be electric vehicles. Martin stated that the current California zero-emission mandate will apply to vehicles with a GVW of over 14,000 pounds that are purchased after December 31, 2026, so these vehicles would not fall under that requirement at this time.

Director Shaw asked if there would be a possibility for some funding through ADA grants for these buses. Martin stated that since all buses must be ADA compliant by law, there are no grants for any additional cost. Director Shaw asked if the replacement buses be delivered by late summer if the inventory is available and Martin stated that this would most likely be the schedule if all of the funding is approved on a timely basis.

Renick House, General Manager for Storer Transit Systems at Yuba-Sutter Transit, stated that the Operations Team at their corporate office also tested and analyzed these buses and determined that they meet and exceed all standards. He noted that it provides a great riding experience, is attractive and that the maintenance team expects long term savings due to the design. The low floor and ramp will also eliminate a lot of safety issues for those with ambulatory challenges.

Director Bains made a motion to authorize the replacement of six 2014 model 16-passenger buses as proposed. Director Hudson seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

B. First Quarter FY 2022 Budget Report.

Martin presented the budget update for the first quarter of FY 2022. Overall, expenditures are coming in at less than 25 percent of the amount budgeted due primarily to a reduction in the number of service hours being operated from what was budgeted. This resulted from the elimination of the Route 1 Express service and less than anticipated growth in Dial-a-Ride service demand as several programs that reopened in the spring have closed again. The reduction in service hours has helped as fuel and tire expenses are up significantly. Fare revenues are higher than budgeted, mostly due to the Oroville service.

There were no questions.

C. First Quarter Performance Report.

Martin presented the performance report for the first quarter of FY 2022. The numbers have improved significantly over the same period last fiscal year, but they started from very low numbers from the year before due to the pandemic. The farebox numbers are up primarily due to the Oroville Shuttle which included fares paid by the riders as well as the subsidy paid by the cannery.

There were no questions.

D. Project & Program Updates

1. COVID-19 Impacts & Response

Martin reported that October continued the recent year-over-year systemwide monthly ridership growth trend that started in July and really took off in August. On the major services in October, average weekday ridership was up 29 percent on the local fixed route service, 71 percent on the local Dial-a-Ride service, and 39 percent on the Sacramento Commuter service over October 2020.

While these are all encouraging numbers, they seemed to have plateaued and remain well below pre-pandemic levels as average weekday systemwide ridership is still just 48 percent of what it was in October 2019. Staff will be monitoring the numbers to see if this positive trend continues through the typically lower ridership holiday and winter months and into the spring budget season as we plan for FY 2023.

2. Unmet Transit Needs Hearing Results

The annual SACOG hearing was held on-line on November 9, 2021. Only one comment asking for more service for the City of Wheatland was received. Comments are still being accepted through November 22, 2021. SACOG staff acknowledged that other comments had been received prior to the hearing, but none were read into the record. All comments received will be reviewed by the local SSTAC on December 10th and presented to the SACOG board in January or February.

3. Sikh Parade Parking Shuttle Results

The Sunday, November 7th service went smoothly as 233 vehicle service hours were operated with 22 local fixed route buses providing 415 round trips. While ridership was down a bit from 2019, buses still carried standing or near-standing loads nearly every trip. It is estimated that total ridership was between 20,000 to 25,000 boardings for the day. Martin expressed his thanks and appreciation to Storer General Manager Renick House and his team of 47 drivers and staff for a job well done.

4. Next Generation Transit Facility Project (Grant Awards & Submissions)

The award notification for the Regional Housing Authority grant which includes \$8.5 million for Yuba-Sutter Transit was expected on October 28, 2021, but the announcement has been delayed until January. However, grant scoring sheets that were released show the local application received a score of 79 out of a possible 85 points and will likely be funded.

While the RAISE grant awards have not officially been released, they are due Monday, November 22nd and early announcements have been released this week across the country by congressional representatives, so it is almost certain that Yuba-Sutter Transit's \$20 million application was not selected. The goal is to apply

again during the 2022 cycle when more funding is expected to be available with the signing this week of the Infrastructure Investments & Jobs Act (IIJA).

A new grant application is now being submitted by Program Planning Manager, Adam Hansen for \$14 million from the Federal Buses & Bus Facilities Grant Program. Award announcements are expected in the first quarter of 2022. This is also an annual program, and an increased level of funding should also be available in this program for the next cycle if we are unsuccessful in this cycle.

5. Free Service Schedule for Thanksgiving (November 22 – 27) & Christmas (December 20 – 31) Holidays

Yuba-Sutter Transit's local and rural routes will operate fare free during the upcoming holiday periods of November 22 – 27 and December 20 – 31. This is part of the ongoing ridership promotion program with lost fares being reimbursed with State Low Carbon Transit Operating Program (LCTOP) funding. Funding for this program, which began during the 2020 Christmas season and included the Yuba-Sutter Fair Week in June, is expected to be exhausted at the end of June 2022.

Off-Agenda Item

Federal Department of Labor (DOL) Ruling Regarding Transit Funding in California

Martin stated that late last week, the Department of Labor (DOL) reversed a 2019 determination regarding the impact of the 2013 PEPRA legislation on an obscure labor protection provision of the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964. Labor protections were included in Section 13c of that Act to protect union employees when private transit operations were being taken over by public agencies. This decision would potentially hold-up federal funding for many California transit operators including Yuba-Sutter Transit just as so much new federal transit funding is being released. Yuba-Sutter Transit is a non-union operation, but our grants must be signed by the Sacramento Regional Transit District unions due to our operation in downtown Sacramento. Staff will be tracking this issue closely, but there may not be a resolution for months.

V. Correspondence/Information

None.

VI. Other Business

None.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:41 p.m.

**THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2021 AT 4:00 PM
IN THE YUBA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CHAMBERS.**