

# 1. Introduction

This chapter starts out describing the objectives of the Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP). It then provides a historical perspective of the development of Yuba-Sutter Transit services. Finally, it describes the focus areas of the SRTP effort.

## Short Range Transit Plan Objectives

This document is an update of the FY 2002/03 Yuba-Sutter Transit Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP). The study area consists of the urbanized and rural areas of Yuba and Sutter Counties. The SRTP is intended to guide the development of public transportation services in Yuba and Sutter counties over the next ten years.

- Provides opportunities for public input into the future of public transit services in urbanized and rural areas of the Yuba-Sutter Transit service area
- Establishes goals, objectives and performance standards
- Documents transit needs
- Provides service plan and fare recommendations
- Plans for facility development
- Establishes a detailed operating and capital financial plan

The Sacramento Area Council of Government guidelines state: “In addition to the development of a more traditional and detailed five-year Short Range Transit Plan, the plan should also include secondary recommendations for a ten year horizon. The ten year visioning analysis should consider the changing economic and demographic characteristics of the Yuba-Sutter area and assist in planning for the longer term positioning of Yuba-Sutter Transit, including capital and financial plans.”

## Historical Perspective

Yuba-Sutter Transit has a very strong foundation to build upon. The development of public transit services over the next ten years should take advantage of the successes and lessons learned over the past 33 years. The following historical perspective is taken directly from the 2008 Annual Report to the Yuba-Sutter Transit Board.

Yuba-Sutter Transit, which was known as the Hub Area Transit Authority (HATA) until January 1993, was formed in 1975 by Sutter and Yuba counties and the cities of Marysville and Yuba City as a joint powers agency (JPA) for the provision of public transit services. Throughout its history, this charge has been carried out by contracting with private transportation companies for the operation of all services.

From 1975 to 1979, service was provided exclusively to seniors and persons with disabilities through a contract with the local taxi-company for the operation of the "Our Car" taxi subsidy program. As part of a legal settlement with California Rural Legal

Assistance (CRLA), this service was replaced and expanded in 1979 with the purchase of thirteen minibuses to implement a general public dial-a-ride (demand response) service. The system expanded again in 1982 to add a network of local fixed routes. Since 1979, a national transportation provider (currently Veolia Transportation Services, Inc.) has operated the agency's services.

In January 1988, following an independent operational analysis prompted by poor system performance, the service was significantly reduced through the elimination of the fixed route system, Sunday service and most rural area service, while creating a general public zonal dial-a-ride system for the urban area. At the same time, Sutter County withdrew from the Authority to establish their own taxi subsidy program which provided transit service to the unincorporated urban areas of the county until January 1991 when Sutter County rejoined the JPA.

In response to the 1988 operational and organizational changes, CRLA again filed a lawsuit against the Authority, the four jurisdictions and the Sacramento Area Council of Governments. The resulting settlement in 1990 led to the completion of both a fixed route feasibility study and a comprehensive marketing plan in 1992. Based on the recommendations of these studies, fixed route service was reinstated and the agency name was changed to the Yuba-Sutter Transit, effective January 1, 1993.

## **Services Provided and Historical Performance**

Yuba-Sutter Transit operates a wide range of services with its current fleet of 40 buses that range in capacity from 14 to 45 passengers. In FY 2008, 56 percent of the operation will be provided as urban fixed route service and 28 percent as urban Dial-A-Ride service. The local fixed route system now provides service every 30 to 60 minutes on six routes with twelve buses in peak service Monday through Saturday in Yuba City, Marysville, Linda and Olivehurst. Local fixed route service is provided each weekday from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Saturdays.

Fixed route ridership has grown rapidly over the years beginning with a 47 percent increase in FY 1996 followed by annual increases of 28, 17 and 18 percent through FY 1999. After slowing to a 4 percent growth rate in FY 2000, due in part to capacity constraints, fixed route ridership increased by 10 percent in FY 2001 and another 13 percent in FY 2002 after a significant service increase in April 2001. In the next four years, ridership continued to grow at a robust average annual rate of more than 5 percent despite only minor service changes. Following the addition of Route 6 and half hour Saturday service on Routes 1 and 3 in October 2006, local fixed route ridership jumped by 13 percent in 2007 and is projected to increase by another 11 percent or more to a total of 715,000 passenger trips in FY 2008.

This strong long-term growth trend in local fixed route ridership is a reflection of the many service improvements that have been made to this system over the years. These include the introduction of larger and more easily identified fixed route buses along with a Marysville route in 1995; the expansion of the Marysville route and the start of

Saturday fixed route service in 1998; the addition of half-hour service frequencies on two routes along with the initiation of a route in southwest Yuba City in 2001; the October 2006 addition of Route 6 in Linda and the extension of weekday service frequencies on Saturdays; the continued expansion of the bus stop shelter and bus stop bench programs; the provision of bike racks on all buses; and, successful discount summer and monthly youth pass programs.

Dial-A-Ride service is provided to all of the urban areas during the same weekday and Saturday hours as the fixed route operation. During this period, Dial-A-Ride service is available by reservation to seniors age 62 and over, persons with disabilities and those with an origin or destination more than one-half mile from a fixed route. Since August 1999, the Dial-A-Ride service is also open to the general public each weekday evening from 6:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. The weekday evening service was established with financial support from a federal Job Access grant. Dial-A-Ride ridership is projected at 21,500 passenger trips in FY 2008.

Fifteen percent of the Yuba-Sutter Transit operation is now provided as service between Marysville/Yuba City and downtown Sacramento, primarily as weekday commuter service. This service, which began in July 1990 with two 15-passenger buses, now provides nine morning and nine afternoon schedules operated during the peak commuter hours, with another three schedules operated during the midday. This service is provided with a fleet of eleven specially equipped 41 and 45 passenger buses. The midday schedules are used by many daily or occasional commuters, but they are also popular with those traveling to Sacramento for medical, school and other non-work purposes. These combined Sacramento services are projected to provide 125,000 passenger trips in FY 2008.

Limited route deviation services to the Yuba County foothills and the Cities of Live Oak and Wheatland account for the remainder of the operation. The Foothill Route provides two round trips every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday between the foothill communities from Challenge and Brownsville down to Marysville. The Live Oak Route provides one round trip every Monday, Wednesday and Friday into Yuba City and Marysville. The Wheatland Route now offers two round trips each Tuesday and Thursday. The Live Oak and Wheatland Routes operate under a fully-allocated cost reimbursement contract with those cities.

From September 1999 through January 2004, Yuba-Sutter Transit operated a commuter service in the Highway 65 corridor of southern Placer County, serving what once was a major regional employment center of high technology employers in the Lincoln Airport Industrial Park. Like the weekday evening Dial-A-Ride program, this service was funded in part through a federal Job Access Grant. The Lincoln service, which enjoyed considerable early success, was ultimately terminated due to prolonged poor performance brought on by dramatic employee reductions at the industrial park over a period of about two years. Initially offering a high level of service including a late night schedule, the service was gradually reduced to provide just one round trip each weekday before it ceased operation.

In FY 2008, Yuba-Sutter Transit will operate a projected 80,000 vehicle service hours systemwide. While this is a 16 percent increase over the 68,855 operated in FY 2003, vehicle service hours were relatively unchanged until the last two years of these five years. During the same five year period, systemwide ridership will have increased by 44 percent from 627,770 passenger trips in FY 2003 to a projected 905,000 in FY 2008. From a long-term perspective, systemwide ridership has increased by 390 percent since FY 1993 following the reintroduction of fixed route service in January 1993, while systemwide service hours have increased by only 145 percent over the same 15 year period.

Fare revenues have also increased dramatically in the last five years from \$658,795 in FY 2003 to a projected figure of \$1,025,000 in FY 2008 - an increase of 56 percent. During this period, passenger fares were increased on the Sacramento services in August 2002 and July 2007; on the Dial-A-Ride service in July 2004; and, on the weekday evening Dial-A-Ride service in July 2005. During this period, a monthly local fixed route youth pass was first offered in September 2003 when the price for fixed route monthly passes for the general public, seniors and persons with disabilities was actually reduced by nearly 17 percent. Also, since September 2005, the regular \$15 monthly youth pass has been discounted to just \$5 using a series of grants from the Feather River Air Quality Management District (FRAQMD) to off-set the lost fare revenue.

Figure 1-1 provides a chart showing the historical development of Yuba-Sutter Transit ridership by service mode. Major milestones are shown.

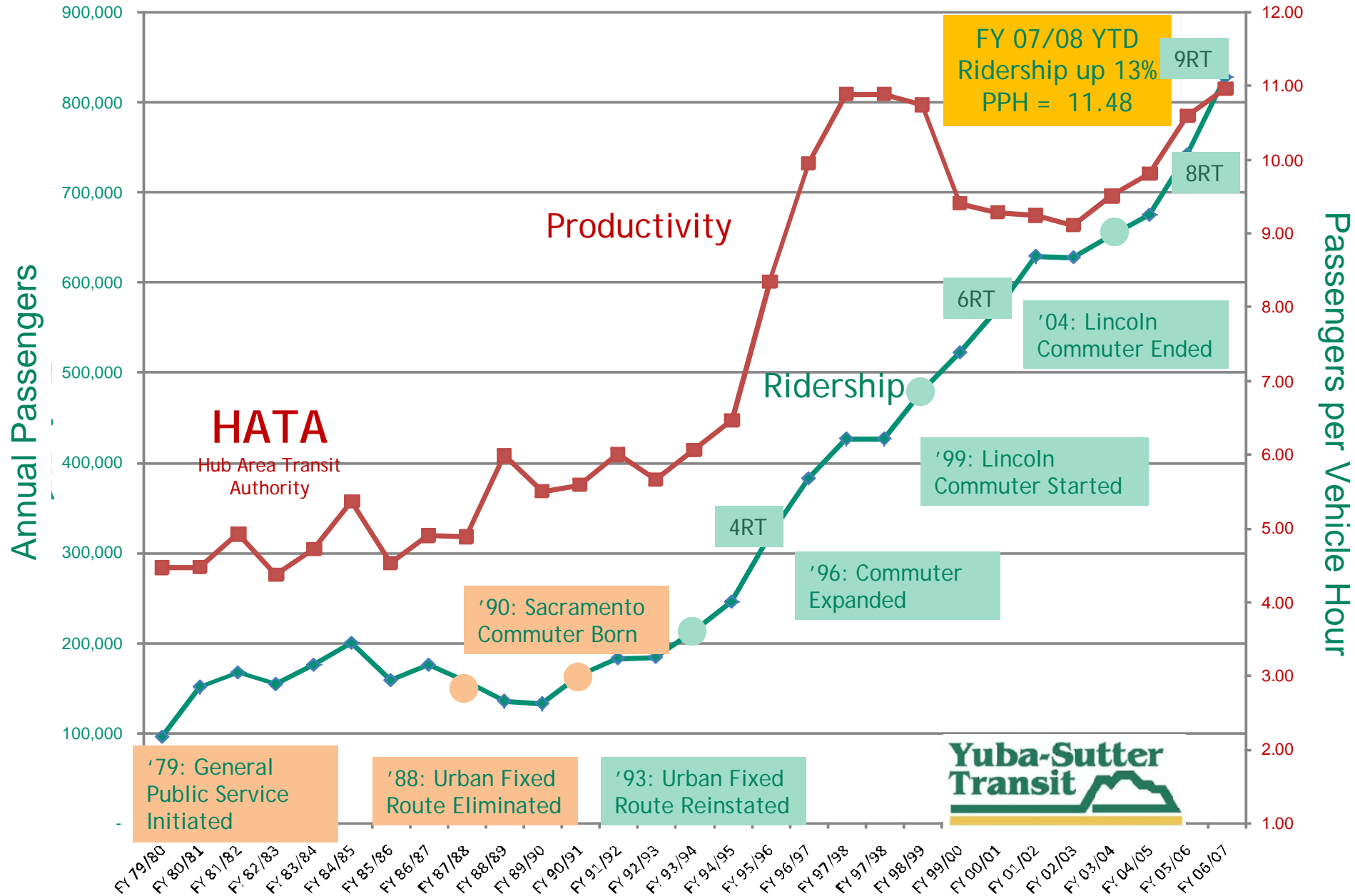
## **Focus Areas of Short Range Transit Plan**

As the above discussion summarizes, service development over the past 15 years has been extremely productive. However, the development of adequate facilities has not kept pace with rapid development of transit services. Overall, while there are recommendations for service expansion and improvements, the focus of the SRTP is on physical and human infrastructure development.

The current Yuba-Sutter Transit operations, maintenance and administrative facility was originally a beverage bottling plant, purchased by Yuba-Sutter Transit in 1995. Several modifications were made to the facility at that time to accommodate up to 30 buses, with part of the site leased to 7-Up to January 1, 2010. However, the fleet will consist of 44 buses by spring of 2008. Planning for the expansion of the current facility is a major priority of the Short Range Transit Plan. The following was the recommendation of the August 2007 performance audit by JKaplan & Associates:

“Undertake a facility evaluation study to develop a short and longer term plan to address the increasingly crowded conditions for bus storage, fueling and maintenance bays. Include a plan for office expansion to accommodate an expected increase in future administrative and contractor staffing.”

# Figure 1-1 Historical Ridership of Yuba-Sutter Transit



The expansion of commuter services has also increased the need and demand for expansion of park-and-ride facilities. The planning of these sites is also a very important focus of the Short-Range Transit Plan.

According to the recent performance audit of Yuba-Sutter Transit by JKaplan and Associates, there is a need to “evaluate administrative staffing needs in light of continued system expansion and complexity and the anticipated retirement of key staff.” JKaplan also completed a staffing review for Yuba-Sutter Transit. The results of this evaluation are incorporated into the SRTP.

In addition to physical and human infrastructure development, the ability of Yuba-Sutter Transit to respond to planned growth, mostly at the fringe or outside of the current Yuba-Sutter Transit service area, is an important challenge of the Short Range Transit Plan.

A corollary to the emphasis of responding to growth and changing demographics is the development of clear system goals, objectives and performance standards. A special Yuba-Sutter Transit Board workshop was held on this subject. A chapter of the SRTP provides guidance on recommended goals, objectives and performance standards.

## **Report Organization**

Chapter 2 provides an overview of transit needs between 2005 and 2018 in the Yuba-Sutter Transit service area, and within Sutter and Yuba counties. Information is provided on the significant growth in transit trips per capita as Yuba-Sutter Transit has gradually improved service levels to match the needs of specific market segments. Forecasts on population and employment increases between 2005 and 2018 provided by SACOG are presented. Results of the Yuba-Sutter Board workshop and stakeholder meetings are summarized. Demographic projections from the SACOG Senior and Disabled Mobility Study are highlighted.

Chapter 3 provides the Yuba-Sutter Transit mission statement, motto and recommended goals and performance standards. A semi-annual performance report that tracks performance objectives is recommended.

Chapter 4 provides an analysis of local routes in the Yuba-Sutter Transit service area. The chapter starts with a systemwide analysis of the local routes, including a review of recent performance maps of systemwide boardings and a transfer analysis. The second section includes a detailed analysis of each of the six routes and recommendations for changes to the route structure and service levels between 2008 and 2018, if applicable.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of existing eligibility, fare recommendations, and recent performance of dial-a-ride services. Recommendations are made for incremental small increases in dial-a-ride services between 2008 and 2018.

Chapter 6 describes the three existing rural routes, operating characteristics, and recent performance. Guidelines for incremental changes to the rural routes are recommended between 2008 and 2018.

Chapter 7 describes the existing Sacramento Routes, service levels and recent performance. Planned park-and-ride lots are described in addition to the transition to a 45 foot tour bus for regional route service.. Options for expanding the regional route network are discussed. An analysis of the costs of expanding the regional route network is discussed.

Chapter 8 provides marketing recommendations for Yuba-Sutter Transit. A review of recent marketing efforts is included. Marketing recommendations are provided for branding of the twelve new Optima buses, enhancing bus stop and park-and-ride lot signage, enhancing the website, redesigning promotional material, expanding public relations, improving outreach and promotional efforts, and development of advertising campaigns. Specific cost and staffing guidance is provided.

Chapter 9 is a review of Yuba-Sutter Transit staffing needs. A recommended staffing plan is provided to meet the continued expansion of Yuba-Sutter Transit services. Yuba-Sutter Transit has had a staff of 3 since 1994 despite a doubling of service hours, a doubling of the fleet and a quadrupling of ridership. A recommended staffing increase to 4.15 full-time equivalent employees is provided.

Chapter 10 provides a detailed facility analysis. The Yuba-Sutter Transit facility was originally a beverage bottling plant when purchased by Yuba-Sutter Transit in 1995. Several modifications were made to the facility at that time to accommodate up to 30 buses. However, the fleet will consist of 44 buses by Spring of 2008 and is expected to increase to 74 by 2035. Recommendations are provided for remodeling the existing facility to accommodate future need in two phases. Phase one will modify the administration areas, public access, the maintenance shop, and the cleaning area. Phase two will take place immediately after January 1, 2010 when the lease to Seven-Up expires. This phase will plan for demolition of the leased building to increase bus and employee parking and adding fueling capacity.

Chapter 11 is a detailed financial plan. A discussion is provided of existing and future revenue sources. Detailed operating costs between 2008 and 2018 are provided. A capital plan between 2008 and 2018 is also provided. The required revenues for both operating and capital are included. A discussion on fare policies and recommendations is provided.