

6. Rural Routes

Description of Current Services

Yuba-Sutter Transit operates three rural routes in Yuba and Sutter Counties:

- Foothill Route between the Yuba County foothills and Yuba County Government Center
- Live Oak Route between Live Oak and the Yuba County Government Center
- Wheatland Route for service between Wheatland and the Yuba County Government Center

Foothill Route

Service is provided anywhere within ¼ mile of the route from the Yuba County Government Center, Highway 20, Loma Rica Road (Iowa City and Loma Rica), Fruitland Rd, Marysville Rd (Red Hill, Oregon House), Frenchtown-Dobbins Road, Frenchtown Road (Frenchtown), La Porte Road (Brownsville) to the Challenge Market (Challenge).

The Foothill Route is operated on a reservation basis only on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursdays only with two inbound and two outbound trips. If there are no reservations by 6:00 pm the previous day, then the trips are not operated.

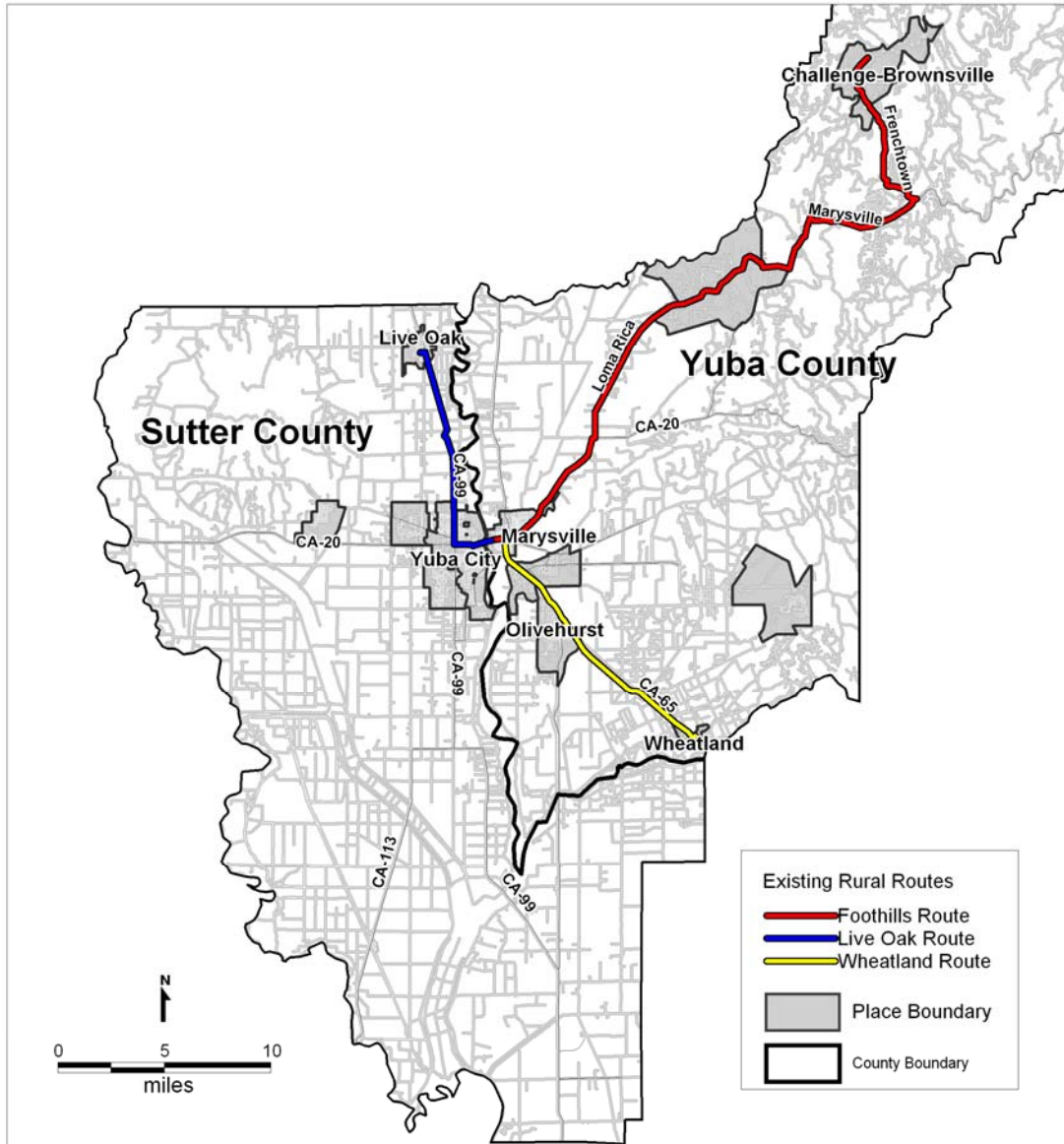
Wheatland

The Wheatland Route operates on Tuesdays and Thursdays with two inbound trips and two outbound trips. There are five stops that the bus serves without an advanced reservation, on both the inbound and outbound trips, but an advanced reservation dial-a-ride service can be made for service anywhere within the Wheatland city limits.

This service was recently expanded on January 3, 2008. Previously, service was only provided on Tuesdays, with just one inbound and one outbound trip. The expansion was based on a well-attended October 2007 public hearing sponsored by SACOG.

The expansion of service was based on a new service agreement between Yuba-Sutter Transit and the City of Wheatland. The planning function for all service for Wheatland was transferred to Yuba-Sutter Transit effective July 1, 2007. In exchange, Yuba-Sutter Transit is now the claimant for all State Transit Assistance (STA) funds available to Wheatland for the purpose of funding that service.

Figure 6-1
Existing Rural Routes



In addition to the expansion of service, the expansion offers a choice of full-day or half-day trips, predictable transfer to the local fixed route service and the opportunity to transfer to downtown Sacramento.

Live Oak Route

The Live Oak Route operates on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday with one trip inbound in the morning from three designated stops and any dial-a-ride reservation from Live Oak to the Yuba County Government Center and one trip outbound in the afternoon returning to the three designated stops in the afternoon and dropping off dial-a-ride reservations in the Live Oak area. The service is provided regardless of whether there is a dial-a-ride reservation.

Similar to Wheatland, Yuba-Sutter transit has recently signed an agreement with the City of Live Oak to take over the planning function in return for the balance of STA funds. Potential expansion of service is awaiting the recommendations of the Short Range Transit Plan.

Fares

The current fare structure is:

Basic one-way fare, general public:	\$2.00
Senior/Disabled (with Photo ID)	\$1.00
Youth (Age 5-12)	\$1.00
Children (Age 4 and under)	Free

Recent Performance

Table 6-2 provides a composite summary of the three rural routes operated by Yuba-Sutter Transit. On a per passenger basis, this lifeline service is costly to operate, averaging \$24.62 per passenger carried in FY 2006/07. Yuba-Sutter Transit management estimates that for the first six months of operation in FY 2007/08, the farebox recovery ratio was 4.3% for the Foothill Route, 6.7% for the Live Oak Route, and 6.5% for the Wheatland Route.

**Figure 6-2
Recent Rural Route Performance**

	FY 2003/04 Actual	FY 2004/05 Actual	FY 2005/06 Actual	FY 2006/07 Actual	FY 2007/08 Projected**
Base Statistics					
Passengers	2,146	1,949	1,983	1,736	1,994
Vehicle Revenue Hours	739	715	757	689	727
Annual Operating Cost*	\$35,625	\$39,168	\$43,528	\$42,746	\$45,612
System Performance Indicators					
Operating cost/revenue vehicle hour	\$48.21	\$54.78	\$57.50	\$62.04	\$62.74
Operating cost/passenger	\$16.60	\$20.10	\$21.95	\$24.62	\$22.87
Passengers/ revenue service hour	2.9	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.7

* Based on performance audit methodology of allocating cost based on revenue service hours

** Based on the first six months of the year

In FY 2006/20007, there was significant variance in the number of passengers served and productivity as measured by passengers per vehicle revenue hours among the three existing rural services as shown in Figure 6-3.

**Figure 6-3
Annual Passengers and Productivity by
Rural Route**

Service Type	Passengers	Passengers/ vehicle revenue hour
Wheatland: 1 day, 1 RT w/reservation	156	4.6
Live Oak: 3 days, 1 RT	795	3.7
Foothills: 3 days, 2 RT w/reservation	1,043	2.2

With its service concentrated in a single day, there were only 156 annual passenger trips to and from Wheatland. However, when the service did operate, it had a relatively high productivity of 4.6 passengers per hour. The long Foothills Route, operating on three weekdays, had 1,043 annual trips or approximately 20 passengers per week at a productivity of 2.2 passengers per hour.

Projected Growth Trends

As was discussed in Chapter 2, Needs Analysis, there is significant growth expected in five rural areas of Yuba and Sutter counties. Figure 6-4 shows the expected population growth in key rural areas in Yuba and Sutter counties.

**Figure 6-4
Expected Rural Growth**

Rural Area*	Year			Net Inc. 2005-2018	% increase 2005-2018
	2005	2013	2018		
Wheatland	4,502	7,573	9,862	5,360	119%
Plumas	4,463	14,240	15,214	10,751	241%
Foothills**	15,076	19,104	29,776	14,700	98%
Live Oak	7,848	10,182	10,508	2,660	34%
South Sutter	2,457	3,686	7,586	5,129	209%

* SACOG Regional Analysis District

** Includes the Beale Regional Analysis District

Source: Draft Projections, SACOG February 2008

The three areas with existing Rural Routes are expected to experience substantial population growth between 2005 and 2018, according to SACOG draft population projections. The Foothills area is expected to increase by 14,700 between 2005 and 2018, almost a 100% increase over 2005 population levels. The Wheatland area is expected to increase by about 119% to almost 10,000 by 2018. The Live Oak area is expected to have more modest growth with a 34% increase. Except within the city limits of Wheatland and Live Oak, much of this growth will be low density, and will be difficult to serve efficiently with transit.

Fare Policy

For the Wheatland and Live Oak rural routes, the adult cash fare would increase from \$2.00 to \$2.50 in FY 2009/10. The discounted rate for seniors, disabled, and youth would increase from \$1.00 to \$1.25.

In 2009/2010, a two-zone system would be implemented for the Foothills route. To areas west of Loma Rica, the fare increase described above for Wheatland and Live Oak would be implemented. East of Loma Rica, the second zone adult cash fare would be \$3.50, and the discount cash for seniors, disabled, and youth would be \$1.75.

In FY 2011/12, the one zone adult cash fare for Wheatland, Live Oak, and Foothills route would be increased from \$2.50 to \$2.75. The discounted rate for seniors, disabled, and youth would increase from \$1.25 to \$1.35. The second zone, east of Loma Rica on the Foothills route, would increase from \$3.50 to \$3.75 and the discounted fares would increase to \$1.85.

Potential Alternatives for Expanding Existing Rural Routes

There are three logical next steps in the development of the current rural services.

1. *Expansion of the Live Oak service from one round trip a day to two round trips a day.* This would meet the target objectives recommended in Chapter 3. This service expansion is recommended for January 2009.
2. *Operation of the Foothill service as a scheduled service on all three weekdays.* Certain stops would be served on a set schedule and would be served without a reservation as currently required. It would continue to allow for dial-a-ride service within a ¼ mile of the route. This “checkpoint” schedule would need to be developed similar to the Live Oak and Wheatland rural route schedule. This service expansion is also recommended for implementation in January 2009. With guaranteed service three days a week with ongoing marketing efforts, productivity should continue to improve. If productivity drops below 2 passengers per hour, however, the service should be scaled back to 2 days a week.
3. *Expansion of the Wheatland Route to three days a week.* An expanded schedule to two round trips, two days a week with checkpoint DAR service in Wheatland was recently implemented, effective January 2008. Continued Wheatland growth and good marketing in Wheatland should continue to expand the market for transit service to Marysville and Yuba City. Service should be expanded to three days a week when the service approaches or exceeds 4 passengers per hour. For planning purposes, we are recommending this expansion in FY 2011/12.

As Wheatland and other areas currently served by the existing rural routes continue to grow, there may be a need to continue the development of transit services in these rural areas. Options include expansion from three to four or five days a week or increasing runs from two round trips to three or four round trips per day. In general, passengers would prefer a greater degree of choice on both inbound and outbound trips, so a general rule of thumb would be to increase the number of round trips from two to three before expanding the number of weekdays. This assumption should be confirmed in the recommended on-board passenger survey. This expansion should only take place if a particular route exceeds productivity of 3.5 passengers per hour for an entire fiscal year.

Figure 6-5 provides the costs, in 2007 dollar of various rural service options. For Wheatland, the annual cost would increase from just \$3,333 in 2006/07 to \$26,889 in 2011/12 when service is expanded to three days a week. For Live Oak, the annual cost would increase to \$29,863 when service is also improved to three days a week with two round trips.

Figure 6-5
Costs* of Rural Route Options

Rural Route Option	Wheatland	Live Oak	Foothills
1 day, 1 RT, w/ reservation	\$ 3,333	N/A	N/A
2 days, 2 RT	\$ 17,575	N/A	N/A
3 days, 1 RT	N/A	\$ 14,932	N/A
3 days, 2 RT, w/reservation	N/A	N/A	\$ 36,138
3 days, 2 RT	\$ 26,889	\$ 29,863	\$ 55,696
3 days, 3 RT	\$ 40,334	\$ 44,795	\$ 83,544

*2007 dollars

For the Foothills service, the guaranteed service three days a week with two round trips would have an annual cost of \$55,696.

Finally, between now and 2018, there may be a demand for dial-a-ride service within the communities of Wheatland, Live Oak, and Plumas Lake. The criteria for considering this dedicated service is discussed in Chapter 5, Dial-A-Ride Services.

Potential Expansion to New Growth Areas

With the expected growth in the Foothills area, there may be a need to provide a second Foothills route if the area around Beale Air Force Base develops further. While the Yuba Highlands project was recently rejected by voters, a lower intensity development may occur. A placeholder route expansion is provided in 2015 for financial planning purposes.

Two developing rural areas are expected to grow substantially, but are expected to generate low levels of transit demand. The Plumas area is expected to mushroom according to recently released SACOG draft population projections to 10,571, a 241% increase over 2005 levels. It is well known that the sub-prime loan real estate crisis has had a major impact on the Plumas Lake area, and how much this may slow these growth projections is unknown. The second area not currently served by Yuba-Sutter Transit is the South Sutter area.

There are essentially three alternatives for providing service in these areas:

1. *Yuba-Sutter Transit does not provide public transportation services due to the cost of providing such service.* This is essentially an equity policy decision. Since Yuba-Sutter Transit is currently providing services to Wheatland, Live Oak and the Foothills, the policy argument would be to provide minimal levels of transit service to Plumas Lake in the short term, and South Sutter in the long term. A lifeline level of service can be provided for under \$20,000 per year.

2. *Independent rural routes are established for Plumas Lake and South Sutter, with direct connections to Marysville and Yuba City, similar to the three existing routes.* This is the recommended alternative for Plumas Lake, effective January 1, 2010. A rural route would start with service two days a week, with two round trips, but would operate only if a reservation is made. The annual cost in 2008 dollars is estimated at approximately \$14,000. After two years of operation, the service levels would be evaluated. If service productivity, as measured by passengers per vehicle revenue hour, does not achieve the minimum standard of 2.0 passengers per revenue service hour, the service would be cut. If the productivity is at 3.5 passenger revenue vehicle hour or above, then the service levels would be increased to a checkpoint DAR with guaranteed service three days a week and two daily round trips.

A similar progression of service would be considered in the South Sutter area, when population levels reach 5,000.

3. *Service is provided as stops on the Midday Sacramento routes.* Under this alternative, a dedicated dial-a-ride service would be provided in the Plumas Lake area five days a week. The dial-a-ride would provide transfer to the Midday Sacramento Route in both directions for service to Marysville and Yuba City. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.