

AGENDA ITEM IV – A
STAFF REPORT

NEXTGEN TRANSIT PLAN PHASE 1 IMPLEMENTATION ALTERNATIVE

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) Direct staff as to a preferred alternative for the NextGen Transit Plan Phase 1 local service implementation.
- 2) If necessary, set a public hearing for 4:05 p.m. on Thursday, December 19, 2024, to receive public comments on an alternative Phase 1 local service plan.
- 3) If necessary, direct staff to prepare a formal NextGen Transit Plan update for future Board consideration.

Background

The Yuba-Sutter NextGen Transit Plan (NextGen Plan) adopted in May 2023 includes operational and financial recommendations to address transit needs over the next five to ten years in a post-pandemic environment. While the NextGen Plan is intended to serve as the local blueprint for transit development and operations in the short-term, adoption of the NextGen Plan does not signify approval of all listed recommendations or prevent future implementation of alternatives. As time progresses and conditions change, each recommendation is individually evaluated and approved as appropriate prior to implementation.

Several NextGen Plan proposals have been undertaken to date as originally recommended or with modifications. Most recently, the Board heard public comment and approved the following elements recommended under Phase 1 of the NextGen Plan, to be effective on or after January 2025:

- Launch of the first on-demand (microtransit) zone to replace local fixed Routes 2 and 5 in Yuba City.
- Streamlining of Route 1 from west Yuba City to Yuba College in Linda.
- Introduction of later weekday evening fixed route service and elimination of the weekday evening Dial-A-Ride service.
- New fare structure adopting the same local route one-way fares for the new on-demand service, maintaining the discount monthly pass program, and increasing the daily cap on local one-way fares.

Discussion

Due to consistent ridership gains and current operational constraints, staff is now requesting Board consideration of alternatives to certain elements of the Phase 1 service plan adopted on September 19, 2024. Specifically, staff is contending the efficacy of microtransit service as a cost neutral replacement for fixed routes, considering the relative capacity of the on-demand service model. Instead, it is recommended that microtransit be employed as a complement (i.e., feeder service) to the existing fixed routes. This strategy leaves the fixed routes in place and better leverages the benefits of on-demand service to enhance the responsiveness and reach of the local system. In addition, this approach better aligns with the scope and potential capacity of the available resources.

The attached Comparative Microtransit Service Plan Analysis (analysis) compares two (2) alternative microtransit deployment strategies for Board consideration. For discussion purposes, it is assumed that the existing fixed routes will continue to be operated in each study area (Yuba City or Linda/Olivehurst). The analysis indicates that

prioritizing a single microtransit zone in Linda and Olivehurst in the initial deployment (Phase 1) offers substantial advantages, including comparative cost savings, enhanced productivity, and significant community impact.

With the requested action(s), staff is recommending Board acceptance of a preferred alternative microtransit deployment strategy, and if necessary, set a public hearing for the next regularly scheduled meeting to receive comment and develop a formal update to the NextGen Transit Plan for future consideration. Alternatively, the Board may direct staff to proceed with the previously approved implementation plans.

Staff will be prepared at the meeting to discuss the implementation alternatives and next steps in detail.

Fiscal Impact

The attached Comparative Microtransit Service Plan Analysis (analysis) includes incremental cost estimates for two (2) microtransit deployment strategies ranging from \$236,240 to \$481,947 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025. Both options are projected to be within approved FY 2025 Operating Budget expenditure levels.

Attachments:

Comparative Microtransit Service Plan Analysis, November 15, 2024

Comparative Microtransit Service Plan Analysis: Linda and Yuba City Zones

1. Introduction

This report compares two alternative microtransit service plans for Yuba-Sutter Transit: one focusing on the Linda zone (serving Linda and portions of Olivehurst) and the other on Yuba City. Both zones demonstrate distinct needs and potential benefits from increased microtransit services. The analysis assumes launch of microtransit in early calendar year 2025, and considers the following:

- Ridership forecasts for half of FY 2025 and full years for FY 2026 onward
- Service productivity (measured in riders per hour)
- Incremental cost per hour (using a variable operating cost of \$61.14 per hour)
- Community impact and accessibility improvements in each area

This comparison aims to guide decisions regarding the prioritization of services and assess the benefits of launching microtransit in each zone.

2. Ridership Projections and Demand Impact

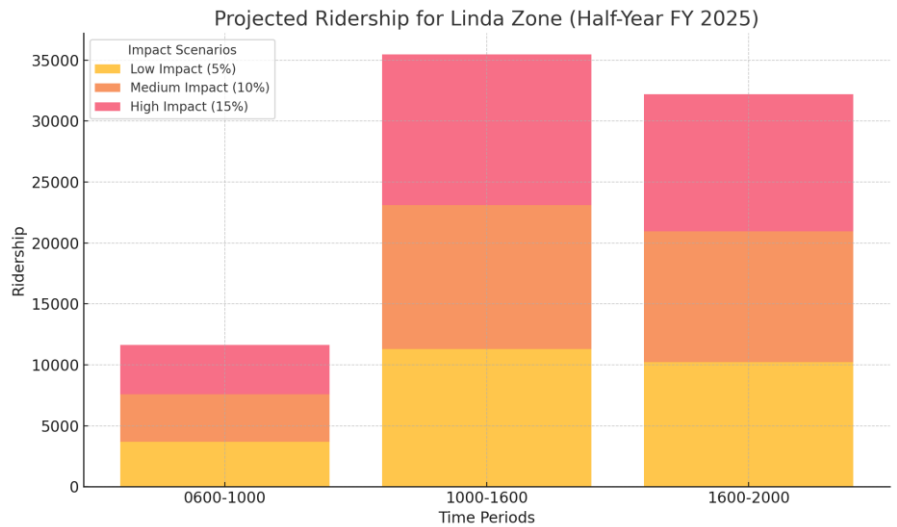
Forecast Methodology:

Ridership projections for Linda are based on a range of growth scenarios reflecting potential demand increases from improved transit availability.

Three impact scenarios were developed:

- Low Impact: 5% growth
- Medium Impact: 10% growth
- High Impact: 15% growth

All three scenarios envision existing fixed route coverage remaining.



The projections also account for the half-year service start in FY 2025, with full-year forecasts for FY 2026.

Time Period	Low Impact (5%)	Medium Impact (10%)	High Impact (15%)
0600-1000	3701	3877	4053
1000-1600	11282	11819	12356
1600-2000	10204	10739	11275

Key Findings:

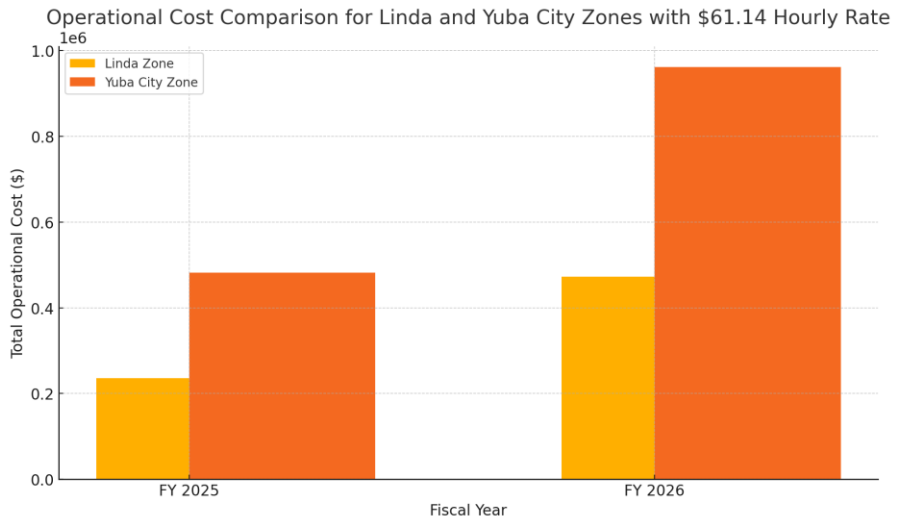
- Linda Zone: The ridership in Linda could grow significantly with early service prioritization. Under a

medium-impact scenario, Linda’s half-year ridership could reach approximately 26,435 riders by end-FY 2025. For FY 2026, full-year projections reach up to 52,870 riders, offering considerable potential to address transit needs.

- Yuba City Zone: Ridership projections assume Yuba City’s demand remains consistent. Without prioritization, Yuba City may experience stable ridership around 163,248 riders annually starting in FY 2026.

3. Service Productivity and Cost Efficiency

This section assesses the productivity and cost efficiency of each zone’s services. Cost calculations apply an operational rate of \$61.14 per hour, and productivity is measured by riders per hour.



Zone	Time Period	Annual Hours (FY 2025)	Annual Cost (FY 2025 ½ Year)
Linda	0600-1000	1104	\$67,497
Linda	1000-1600	1656	\$101,246
Linda	1600-2000	1104	\$67,497
Yuba City	All Periods	7872	\$481,947

Key Findings:

- Cost Per Hour: The Linda zone offers a cost-effective solution at approximately half the annual cost of Yuba City for FY 2026, with a total projected cost of \$472,297 compared to Yuba City’s \$961,342.

- Service Productivity: Linda’s productivity varies by time period, peaking at 9.2 riders per hour during 1600-2000. Yuba City demonstrates consistent productivity, with peak productivity in midday (11.1 riders per hour).

4. Community Impact and Accessibility

The Linda zone encompasses Linda and Olivehurst, areas with a higher need for reliable public transportation due to limited access and lower average income levels compared to Yuba City. The proposed service prioritization addresses critical mobility and equity concerns in this region.

- Linda and Olivehurst:

- Population: Combined population of approximately 35,000, with significant recent growth.

- Economic Factors: These communities show a higher proportion of low-income households and limited access to vehicle ownership.

- Community Impact: Prioritizing Linda's microtransit service directly addresses the transportation needs of these underserved communities, providing essential access to employment, education, healthcare, and local amenities.

- Yuba City:

- Population: Approximately 68,000, with a more robust infrastructure.
- Impact of Delayed Service: Yuba City residents would still benefit from eventual microtransit services, though the immediate need is comparatively lower. Phasing Yuba City's service would support longer-term growth and regional mobility improvements.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The analysis indicates that prioritizing Linda and Olivehurst microtransit services offers substantial advantages, including cost savings, enhanced productivity, and significant community impact.

Recommendation: Launching Linda's microtransit service first is recommended, given its relative cost efficiency, potential for productivity, and immediate community impact. The Yuba City rollout can be phased in second to support overall regional development and address long-term demand. This alternative implementation approach employs a sound resource utilization strategy and better supports Yuba-Sutter Transit's broader mobility goals.