

AGENDA ITEM V – B
STAFF REPORT

YUBA-SUTTER NEXTGEN TRANSIT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION: Information only.

Background

The Yuba-Sutter NextGen Transit Plan (Plan) adopted in May 2023 includes operational, capital, staffing, and financial recommendations to effectively address transit needs over the five-year planning horizon in a financially constrained, post-pandemic environment. While the NextGen Plan is intended to serve as the local blueprint for transit deployment and operations in the short-term, each recommendation is still individually evaluated as appropriate prior to approval and implementation.

Discussion

As Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 approaches, several initiatives recommended in the Plan have been undertaken as originally recommended, or with modifications as a result of changing conditions. The following outlines the recommendations and implementation measures taken to date:

- Consolidation of existing commuter services to permanently remove the trips that were suspended during the pandemic. After the public process, those changes were ultimately expanded with the elimination of three additional trips from the former schedule effective November 2023. Status: **Completed**
- Creating a Transit Technology Manager position to address the agency's expanding information technology (IT) needs in-house. With Board approval, staff pursued an alternative approach, awarding a professional services agreement to a local private IT contractor to provide the additional support needed for significant cost savings. Status: **Completed**
- Creating a Community Relations Manager position. Similarly, the Board supported staff's recommended alternatives to addressing the increased community relations needs by, 1) retaining a qualified marketing and public outreach consultant, and 2) hiring an additional staff person into the existing Program Analyst I/II classification with a focus on marketing and public outreach. Status: **Completed**
- Procurement of the dispatching/scheduling technology necessary to support the launch of new on-demand services. As suggested, this process began with a competitive procurement resulting in award of the project to VIA Mobility in September 2024. At the time of writing, the system parameters have been set, and the software and mobile applications are being configured in preparation for a May 2025 service launch. Status: **Completed**
- Branding and marketing initiatives to address diverse target markets. Following Board approval in March 2024, the staff worked with the selected marketing firm to fully develop and begin implementing several marketing strategies building on the recommendations in the Plan. To date, efforts include increased public outreach field work and social media presence, sub-branding of new services, adoption of an updated logo and branding guide, design of new passenger materials and bus stop signage, website development, and new branding on transit buses. Status: **Ongoing**.
- Expanded hours of service for all local fixed routes and paratransit services from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. on weekdays. This service expansion was made effective in January 2025. Status: **Completed**
- Elimination of evening Dial-A-Ride service. This change was also made effective in January 2025, with the minor addition of later service on Friday nights to accommodate patrons of a long-standing senior center program. Status: **Completed**

- Replacement of local Routes 2 and 5 with on-demand (microtransit) services. As originally proposed, a zonal, community on-demand service would have replaced the existing fixed Routes 2 and 5 in Yuba City in FY 2025. Plans were for 4-5 vehicles, operating Monday through Saturday, with demand-response connections to new areas north of Butte House (including the Yuba College Sutter Center), west of Harter, and south of Bogue. Due to steadily increasing local fixed route productivity and resource constraints, the Board approved a recommendation from staff in December to retain local route service in Yuba City and instead deploy microtransit first in Linda and Olivehurst as a complement (i.e., feeder service) to the existing fixed routes. This strategy better leverages the benefits of on-demand service by combining them with a productive fixed route service to enhance the overall responsiveness and reach of the entire local transit system. In addition, this sequencing of the rollout is expected to have significant community impact and better aligns with current capacities and existing resources. Status: **Deferred**
- Streamline of Route 1 in Yuba City. This proposed rerouting and shortening of the primary cross-town local fixed route between Yuba City and Yuba College assumed the discontinuation of Routes 2 and 5 and launch of replacement microtransit services in Yuba City discussed previously. With the deferral of those corresponding changes in Yuba City, these Route 1 changes were also postponed. Status: **Deferred**
- Fare Changes (Phase 1). After subsequent analysis and Board review, a suite of alternative fare changes was made effective in January that included adoption of a \$1.50/\$0.75 one-way fare for new on-demand services, maintaining the discount monthly pass program with minor cost increases, and increasing the daily cap threshold for local one-way fares. By adopting a consistent fare structure for all local public services and continuing to offer a monthly pass option for use on both the new on-demand services and remaining fixed routes, these changes lessened the financial impact on passengers while still increasing fare revenues. Under the original Plan, further fare increases are recommended for FY 2027, but it is assumed that grant funds will still be utilized to reduce the out-of-pocket costs for riders for the foreseeable future. Status: **Completed**
- Launch of Linda and Marysville microtransit zones and cancelation of Routes 4 and 6. The latter phases of the original Plan call for expansion of microtransit services to Marysville and Linda (assuming Yuba City deployment first) as a replacement for the existing fixed route system. Given the increasing local fixed route productivity and resource constraints discussed earlier, and the resulting pivot to deploying microtransit first in Linda and Olivehurst as a feeder service, staff will be returning these recommendations to the Board for future consideration. Status: **Deferred**
- New service to the Roseville Galleria that would connect Marysville with southern Placer County. Initially envisioned as two round trips (one AM and one PM) each weekday to be funded by the savings from earlier consolidation of the Sacramento service, adequate grant funding is now programmed for the service under the FY 2025 Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) cycle. It was originally recommended that this service commence in September 2024. However, discussions with Placer County transit partners on their ongoing planning of expanded services to the Lincoln area, indicate that a retooling of that service design and launch schedule was warranted. Per staff's recommendation, the Board supported postponing the rollout of the Marysville/Roseville service until at least 2025 to allow for additional planning to be completed in coordination with those regional partners. Status: **Deferred**
- Support a Volunteer Driver Program in the Foothills. The Plan reviewed the current rural services in detail and identified the need for administration of a volunteer driver program in Challenge and Dobbins. To date, staff have engaged with a local non-profit that is providing mobility services in the Yuba County Foothills to discuss their needs and will continue exploring opportunities to support and potentially augment these existing community-based transportation programs. Status: **Ongoing**

Staff anticipates bringing the following deferred and/or pending elements of the Plan for public input and Board consideration at future meetings:

- Deployment of microtransit zones in Marysville and/or Yuba City, either as a complement or replacement for existing local fixed route services.
- The scope, schedule, and routing of the proposed Roseville service.
- Comingling of microtransit and traditional Dial-A-Ride services across the entire service area to increase efficiency and productivity.
- Responding to potential increased demand for Sacramento commuter service as more employees are required to return to work in-person.
- Capital investments and staffing resources to support and sustain services.

Next steps toward potential deployment of these or alternative service initiatives will be the subject of discussion at the May Board meeting during consideration of the final operating and capital budgets for FY 2026.

Staff will be prepared at the meeting to discuss the issue and the next steps in the process in detail. For reference, the entire adopted NextGen Plan is available on the agency's website at www.yubasuttertransit.com/nextgen-transit-plan.

Fiscal Impact

None.