MENDOCINO TRANSIT AUTHORITY
SHORT-RANGE TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2024 UPDATE

Draft Report

Prepared for the

Mendocino Transit Authority

April 23, 2024

Prepared by LSC Transportation Consultants

Mendocino Transit Authority
Short Range Transit Development Plan
2024 Update

Draft Report

Prepared for

Mendocino Transit Authority
241 Plant Road
Ukiah, CA 95482

Prepared by

LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.
2690 Lake Forest Road, Ste. C
Tahoe City, CA 96145
530-583-4053

April 23, 2024

This page intentionally blank

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

TABLES *PAGE*

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURES *PAGE*

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Mobility is an essential issue that influences the economy, environment, and overall well-being across a region. Mendocino County is large, rural, and rugged, making mobility a distinct challenge for many local residents. Public transit plays a significant role in helping mobility-limited individuals in Mendocino County get where they need to go. The Mendocino Transit Authority (MTA) is the primary public transit provider serving Mendocino County, operating both fixed route and complementary paratransit services. In addition to assisting people with transportation needs, the MTA supports a range of other benefits such as decreased road congestion, improved air quality, better community health, and more small business activity.

The MTA retained LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc., to prepare this update to the *MTA Short Range Transit Development Plan* (SRTDP). The MTA SRTDP outlines service, capital, financial, and marketing recommendations to be implemented by the MTA over the next five years. Given that public transit is vital to many local residents, the SRTDP was developed to address the needs of Mendocino County residents as well as improve service efficiencies.

The MTA SRTDP begins with a review of the study setting and existing transit services. Chapter 2 discusses factors influencing transit demand in Mendocino County, such as regional demographics and local commuting data. Existing transit providers are then summarized in Chapter 3. A performance analysis of recent MTA operations is conducted in Chapter 4 to determine the effectiveness of the current services. Chapter 5 details the various public outreach efforts conducted during the SRTDP process.

The second portion of the SRTDP discusses potential changes and recommendations for the MTA to implement over the five-year planning period. Chapter 6 reviews the MTA's current policies, and then recommends new performance standards. In Chapter 7, service options are evaluated which address 1) transit needs, as identified in Chapter 2, 2) the strengths and weaknesses of the transit program, as identified in Chapters 4 and 6, and 2) concerns identified through public outreach, as discussed in Chapter 5. The recommended performance standards presented in Chapter 6 are then used to evaluate the effectiveness of the service alternatives presented in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 discusses the MTA's five-year capital needs, Chapter 9 presents fare recommendations, and Chapter 10 identifies potential marketing strategies to strengthen the community's perception of the MTA and further increase ridership.

The MTA SRTDP is presented in Chapter 11. The SRTDP was developed based on the findings of the previous 10 chapters. The SRTDP recommends service, capital, fare, and marketing enhancements for the MTA to implement during the five years spanning Fiscal Year 2024-25 through 2028-29. Chapter 11 also includes a detailed financial plan to ensure the continued sustainability of the MTA transit program as service changes are implemented.

This page intentionally left blank.

Chapter 2
STUDY AREA CHARACTERISTICS

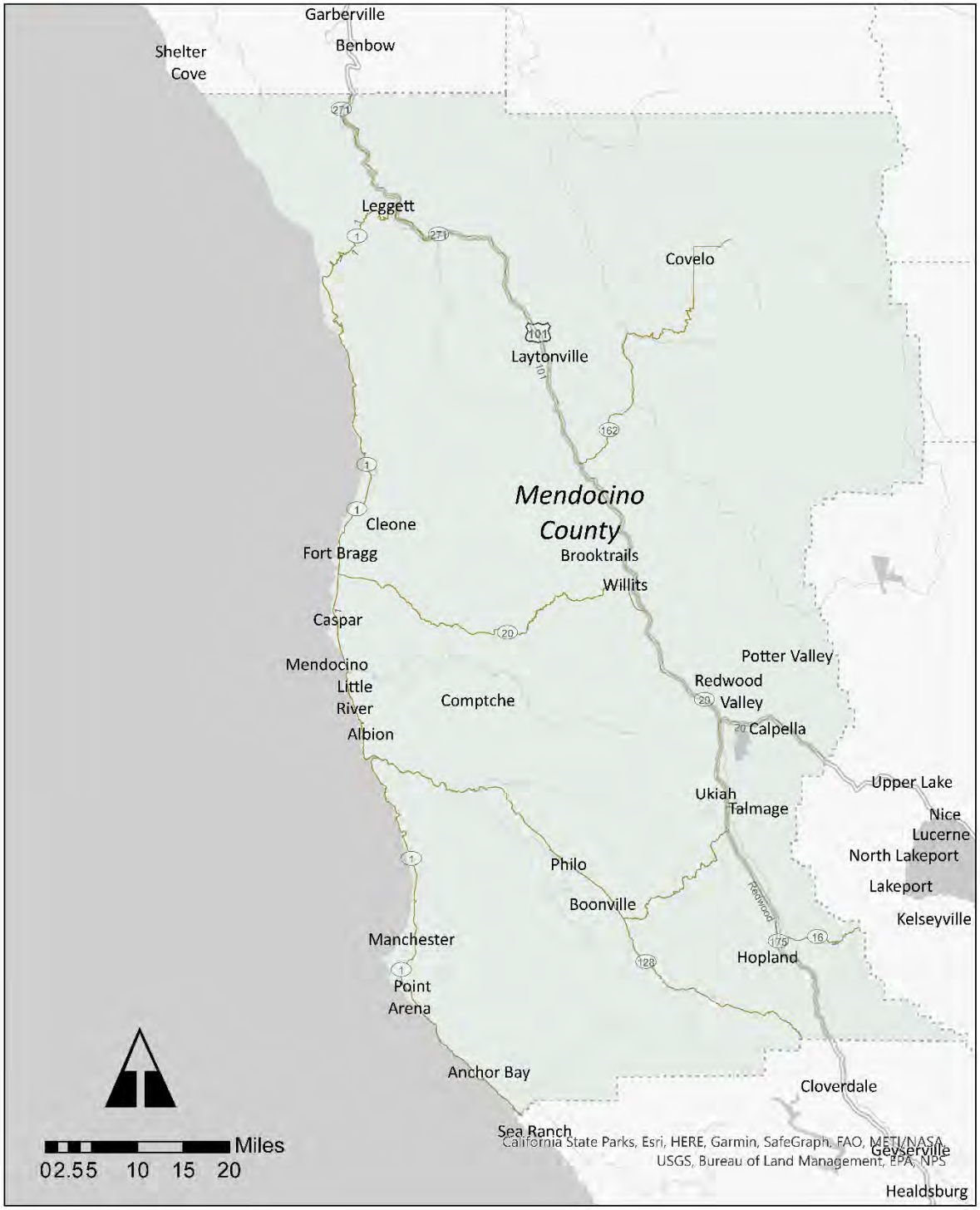
STUDY AREA

Mendocino County is located along the scenic coast of northern California, approximately 100 miles north of San Francisco. The landscape ranges from stunning coastline to dense redwood forests and picturesque vineyards. While massive in size at 3,509 square miles, Mendocino County is home to only 91,534 residents, meaning the population density is only 25 persons per square mile. Bisected by the Coastal Mountains, the county is split into distinctive inland and coastal regions, with about two-thirds of the population living within the inland region.

There are four incorporated cities and nineteen census-designated places (CDPs) in Mendocino County. The largest inland communities include the Cities of Ukiah, the county seat, Willits, the "Gateway to the Redwoods," and the CDPs of Brooktrails and Redwood Valley. Some of the larger communities along the Mendocino County coastline include the Cities of Fort Bragg and Point Arena, and the CDP of Mendocino. There are also ten registered tribal nations within Mendocino County: the Cahto Tribe, the Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians, the Guidiville Indian Rancheria, the Hopland Band of Pomo Indians, the Manchester Band of Pomo Indians, the Pinoleville Pomo Nation, the Potter Valley Tribe, the Redwood Valley Little River Band of Pomo, the Round Valley Reservation, and the Sherwood Valley Rancheria. Most local economic activity is generated by the agricultural, healthcare, tourism, and government sectors.

Figure 1 shows the study area, as well as important roadways. The Mendocino County road network includes city streets, county roads, state routes, and United States (US) highways. There are no interstates. US 1 and 101 are the major north-south roadways for the region; US 1 travels along the coastline and US 101 travels through the Russian River Valley. People can take US 101 south to Santa Rosa. Both US 1 and 101 provide connections to the San Francisco Bay Area. Major east-west roadways traversing the Coastal Mountains and providing connectivity between the inland and coastal regions of Mendocino County include California State Route (SR) 20, 128, 175, and 253, Mountain View Road, and Comptche Ukiah Road. Both SR 20 and 175 travel eastward into Lake County, from which travelers can continue onwards to Interstate 5 in the Sacramento River Valley. Given the geography of Mendocino County, a large portion of the county's roads are narrow, meandering, and difficult to navigate.

Figure 1:
Study Area



POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Historic and Projected Population

It is important when planning transit services to not only consider the current characteristics of the service area population, but also how the population will likely change with time. Historic population information, for Mendocino County and its incorporated cities (as well as unincorporated Brooktrails), sourced from the US Census Bureau, is shown in Table 1. From 2010 to 2021, the Mendocino County population grew slightly, increasing by 3,687 persons (4 percent) (Table 1). This trend differed from the State of California, however, which saw a population increase of 6 percent during the same time period. The communities that experienced the greatest growth from 2010 to 2021 were Brooktrails (28 percent) and Ukiah (5 percent), while Fort Bragg and Point Area both experienced negative population growth (Table 1). This data indicates that future growth will likely be concentrated in unincorporated areas near Ukiah and Willits (which are more difficult to serve with fixed route transit service).

Table 1: Historic and Current Population

	2010		2015		2021	
	Population	% Annual Growth	Population	% Annual Growth	Population	% Annual Growth
Mendocino County	87,847	--	87,544	-0.1%	91,534	0.9%
Brooktrails	3,495	--	3,225	-1.6%	4,462	6.5%
Fort Bragg	7,196	--	7,261	0.2%	7,049	-0.6%
Point Arena	476	--	391	-3.9%	437	2.2%
Ukiah	15,942	--	15,936	0.0%	16,728	1.0%
Willits	4,913	--	4,853	-0.2%	5,008	0.6%
Balance of the County	55,825	--	55,878	0.0%	57,850	0.7%
State of California	37,253,956	--	38,907,642	0.9%	39,455,353	0.3%

Source: US Census and California Department of Finance.

Note 1: Brooktrails is an unicorporated community but the fourth largest community in Mendocino County.

While Mendocino County's overall population size is not expected to change much in upcoming decades, the average age of residents is predicted to increase significantly. Population projections by age category for Mendocino County, based on data from the US Census Bureau and the California Department of Finance (DOF), are shown in Table 2. Highlights of the projection data include:

- Mendocino County's population will stay relatively consistent in size for the next twenty years, experiencing positive growth from 2020 to 2030 (2 percent), before declining in the decade following (-1 percent).
- The number of children ages 5 to 17 will decrease by 7 percent from 2020 levels by 2040.
- The number of college-aged adults (18 to 24) will also decrease from 2020 to 2040 (-7 percent).

Table 2: Population Projections by Age Category

Year	Total (All Ages)	Preschool (0-4 years)	School Age to Young Adult (5-17 years)	College Age (18-24 years)	Working Age (25-64 years)	Young Retirees (65-74 years)	Mature Retirees (75-84 years)	Older Seniors (85 or older)
2010	87,847	5,468	13,167	7,065	48,464	7,739	3,972	1,972
2020	91,601	5,038	13,401	7,631	44,329	13,347	5,865	1,989
2030	93,383	5,079	12,438	7,899	43,098	10,900	10,462	3,506
2040	92,421	5,107	12,451	7,126	43,535	9,056	8,697	6,449
2010 to 2020 Change								
Number	3,754	-430	234	566	-4,135	5,608	1,893	17
Percent	4.3%	-7.9%	1.8%	8.0%	-8.5%	72.5%	47.7%	0.9%
2020 to 2030 Change								
Number	1,782	41	-963	268	-1,232	-2,447	4,597	1,518
Percent	1.9%	0.8%	-7.2%	3.5%	-2.8%	-18.3%	78.4%	76.3%
2030 to 2040 Change								
Number	-963	28	13	-773	437	-1,844	-1,765	2,942
Percent	-1.0%	0.5%	0.1%	-9.8%	1.0%	-16.9%	-16.9%	83.9%

Sources: US Census Bureau, California Department of Finance. Report P-2B: Population Projections by Individual Year of Age, 2010-2060, California Counties

- Mendocino County has experienced a significant decline in the number of adults of traditional working age (25 to 64) in recent years (-9 percent), but this trend is expected to stabilize, with only a 2 percent further decrease expected from 2020 to 2040.
- From 2020 to 2040, the senior population between the ages 65 and 74 is expected to decrease in size faster than any other age bracket as Baby Boomers age (-32 percent).
- The cohort of seniors between the ages of 75 and 84 is expected to increase in size by over 78 percent between 2020 and 2030, before declining by 17 percent in the next decade.
- The older senior population (85 and older) will experience significant growth this decade (76 percent) before growing even more during the next decade (84 percent). This growth will result in the population of older seniors living in Mendocino County being more than three times the 2020 population size by 2040. This age group will be the most likely to become transit-dependent.

Overall, the population forecast for Mendocino County indicates the population will age significantly in the coming years as the number of senior adults ages 75 and older nearly doubles (93 percent increase from 2020 to 2040). It is likely the bigger senior adult population will result in increased demand for public transit. New or expanded transit services should focus on meeting the needs of this growing senior population. Examples of transit services popular among seniors are demand response, paratransit, and non-emergency medical transportation programs.

Transit Dependent Population

Transit services are often designed to meet the needs of the transit-dependent population. The group of potentially transit-dependent persons within a region is typically considered to be youths, senior adults, persons with a disability, low-income persons, and persons who live in zero-vehicle households. These groups are all less likely to be able to drive their own personal vehicles, and therefore more likely to rely on transit to get where they need to go.

Demographic data about where potentially transit-dependent persons live within Mendocino County is shown in Table 3 at the census tract level, with detailed figures depicting this data included in Appendix A. Obviously, the demographic groups considered to be transit-dependent are not exclusive from each other, and some people may fall into more than one category and therefore be double counted. Despite this technicality, the census data is still valuable in showing trends regarding where large numbers of persons who may benefit from transit live.

Highlights from Table 3 include:

- About one out of every five Mendocino County residents (21 percent) are estimated to be youth (children younger than 18), which is almost the same rate as the State of California (22 percent). El Roble, Willits, Redwood Valley, Fort Bragg, and Calpella are all home to high numbers of youth, with each community being located in a census tract that is home to 6 percent or more of the county's total youth population.

Table 3: Mendocino County Demographic Characteristics

Census Tract	Area Description	Total Persons	Total Households	Youth (Under 18 Years)		Seniors (65+)		Persons with a Disability		Persons Below Poverty Level		Zero-Vehicle Households	
				#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
101	Covelo	2,839	1,011	690	3.5%	481	2.3%	450	2.6%	773	5.4%	100	3.9%
102	Leggett, Laytonville	3,655	1,534	419	2.1%	**1,182**	**5.8%**	757	4.4%	**1,083**	**7.6%**	76	2.9%
103	Alpine, Cleone	4,329	1,719	771	3.9%	**1,410**	**6.9%**	885	5.1%	347	2.4%	25	1.0%
104	Fort Bragg / Downtown	3,116	1,423	530	2.7%	853	4.2%	800	4.6%	490	3.4%	**179**	**6.9%**
105	Fort Bragg / Noyo Harbor	4,562	1,783	**1,340**	**6.8%**	938	4.6%	826	4.8%	821	5.8%	**388**	**15.0%**
106.01	Ridgewood Park	2,555	968	422	2.2%	768	3.7%	600	3.5%	439	3.1%	11	0.4%
106.02	Brooktrails / Arnold	4,363	1,663	1,087	5.5%	904	4.4%	856	5.0%	312	2.2%	80	3.1%
107	Willits	7,019	2,889	**1,412**	**7.2%**	**1,794**	**8.8%**	**1,553**	**9.0%**	**1,245**	**8.7%**	**496**	**19.2%**
108.01	Redwood Valley	5,827	2,057	**1,333**	**6.8%**	873	4.3%	836	4.8%	758	5.3%	**129**	**5.0%**
108.02	Potter Valley	1,673	692	286	1.5%	382	1.9%	341	2.0%	172	1.2%	0	0.0%
109	Calpella	5,008	1,725	**1,175**	**6.0%**	981	4.8%	882	5.1%	455	3.2%	94	3.6%
110.01	Little River / Albion	2,070	992	156	0.8%	827	4.0%	424	2.5%	322	2.3%	18	0.7%
110.03	Fort Bragg / Caspar	4,001	1,545	596	3.0%	952	4.6%	**1,286**	**7.5%**	518	3.6%	48	1.9%
110.04	Caspar / Mendocino	2,458	1,117	332	1.7%	969	4.7%	275	1.6%	211	1.5%	0	0.0%
111.02	Point Arena / Anchor Bay	4,427	1,876	852	4.3%	**1,299**	**6.3%**	537	3.1%	432	3.0%	39	1.5%
112	Boonville / Comptche / Philo	3,353	1,040	604	3.1%	851	4.2%	397	2.3%	786	5.5%	36	1.4%
113	El Roble	6,336	1,984	**1,691**	**8.6%**	902	4.4%	**1,637**	**9.5%**	**1,116**	**7.8%**	102	3.9%
114	Ukiah (West)	4,789	1,678	1,142	5.8%	989	4.8%	728	4.2%	476	3.3%	9	0.3%
115.01	Ukiah (Northwest)	3,901	1,336	1,065	5.4%	649	3.2%	579	3.4%	550	3.9%	**285**	**11.0%**
115.02	Ukiah (Wagenseller)	3,180	910	1,063	5.4%	215	1.0%	322	1.9%	628	4.4%	93	3.6%
116	Ukiah (Downtown)	5,714	2,087	**1,342**	**6.9%**	905	4.4%	**1,126**	**6.5%**	**1,262**	**8.9%**	**356**	**13.8%**
117	Ukiah (East) / Talmage	4,472	1,488	950	4.9%	1,025	5.0%	926	5.4%	727	5.1%	20	0.8%
118	Hopland	1,887	666	329	1.7%	348	1.7%	228	1.3%	323	2.3%	5	0.2%
	Total	**91,534**	**34,183**	**19,587**	**21%**	**20,497**	**22%**	**17,251**	**19%**	**14,246**	**16%**	**2,589**	**8%**

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2021 5-Year Estimates.

X% *= (bolded) tracts with the highest percentage of population type.*

- Senior adults over the age of 65 represent 22 percent of the total Mendocino County population, which is a greater proportion compared to the State of California (15 percent). Census tracts with distinctly large senior populations include those that encompass Willits, Alpine/Cleone, Point Arena, and Laytonville/Leggett. All of these census tracts are home to over 5.5 percent of the total county senior population.
- It is estimated that 19 percent of Mendocino County residents are people with a disability, based on the definition used by the US Census Bureau. This is a greater rate of disabled persons compared to the State of California (11 percent). The census tracts which contain Willits, Fort Bragg, Caspar, El Roble, and the Wagenseller neighborhood of Ukiah are all regions home to 6.5 percent or more of the total Mendocino County disabled population.
- As defined by the US Census Bureau, 16 percent of Mendocino County residents are persons living below the federal poverty level. This equals a higher rate than the State of California (12 percent). Areas with large numbers of low-income individuals include the census tracts where Downtown Ukiah, Willits, El Roble, Laytonville, and Leggett are located, each of which is home to over 7.5 percent of the total county population of low-income persons.
- The US Census Bureau estimated there are 2,589 zero-vehicle households in Mendocino County (8 percent). This equals a rate slightly higher than the State of California as a whole (7 percent). Most of these households are located in Willits (19 percent of the total countywide zero-vehicle households), the Noyo Harbor area of Fort Bragg (15 percent), and Downtown and northwest Ukiah (14 and 11 percent, respectively).

Transit Needs Index

It is helpful to consider all five of the potentially transit-dependent groups simultaneously to better understand what areas of Mendocino County have the greatest relative transit need. To better compare the transit needs of different communities, LSC developed a Transit Needs Index (TNI) (Table 4) for Mendocino County using the demographic data presented in Table 3.

The first step in developing the TNI was to calculate the density of each transit-dependent group within each census tract (for example, there is one youth per square mile in Census Tract 101). Then, the ranges of densities for each subpopulation were divided into quintiles. Population densities in the highest quintile were assigned a score of 5 to represent the high density and resulting high transit need, while the lowest population densities were assigned a score of 1 to represent the lower need for transit. The scores for each subgroup were then summed to yield an overall transit needs index rank for each census tract (Table 4 and Figure 2). Ultimately, the TNI measures the relative demand for transit services generated by the population living in the census tract, with possible values ranging from a low of 5 to a high of 25, with 25 indicating the greatest relative need for transit services considering all five transit-dependent subgroups.

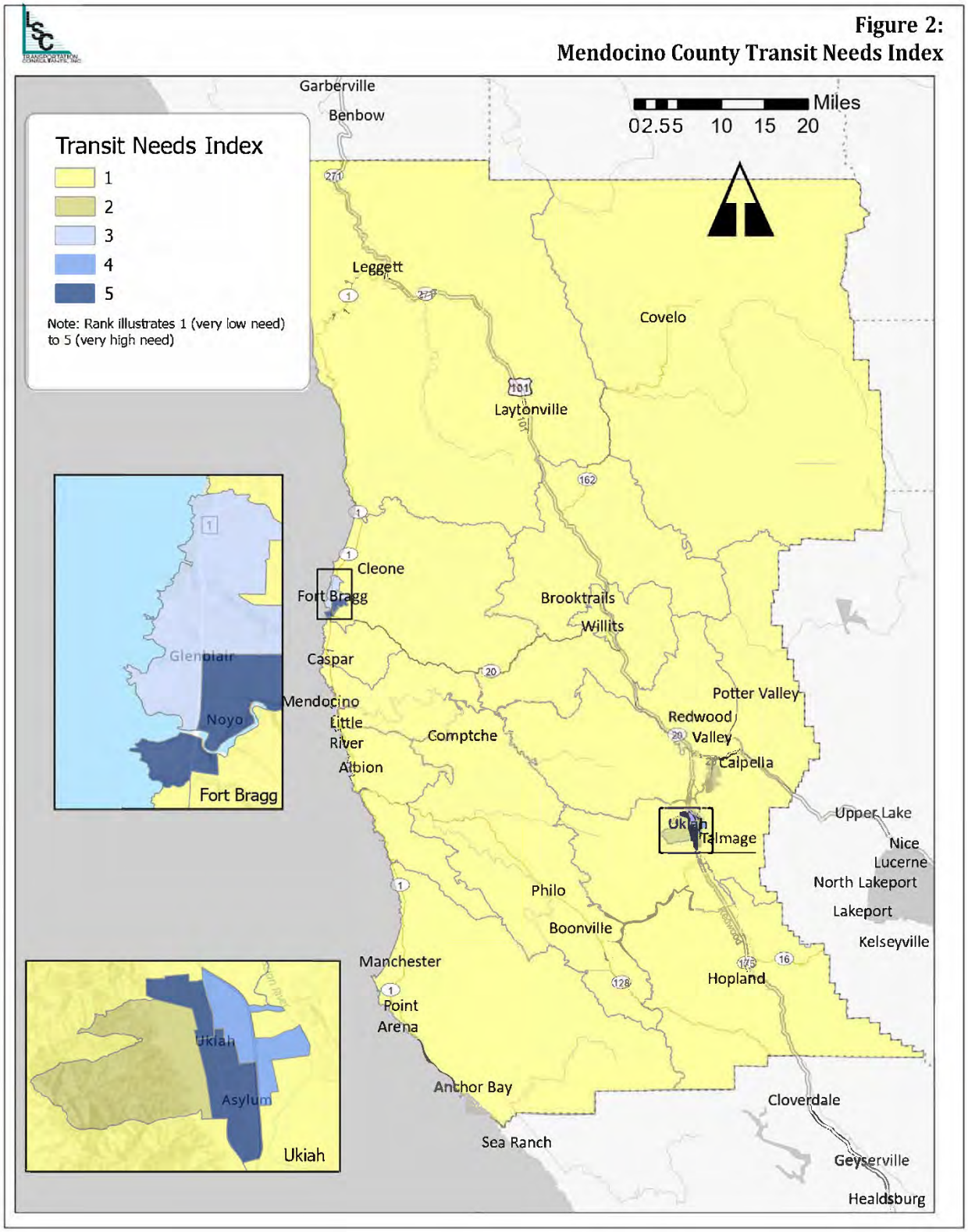
Table 4: Mendocino County Transit Needs Index

Legend	
1	Very Low Rank
2	Low Rank
3	Medium Rank
4	High Rank
5	Very High Rank

Census Tract		Rank: Youth (Under 18 Years)	Rank: Senior Adults (65+)	Rank: Persons with a Disability	Rank: Persons Below Poverty Level	Rank: Zero-Vehicle Households	Overall Transit Needs Index Rank
101	Covelo	1	1	1	1	1	5
102	Leggett, Laytonville	1	1	1	1	1	5
103	Alpine, Cleone	1	1	1	1	1	5
104	Fort Bragg / Downtown	1	2	2	2	1	8
105	Fort Bragg / Noyo Harbor	3	4	4	4	3	18
106.01	Ridgewood Park	1	1	1	1	1	5
106.02	Brooktrails / Arnold	1	1	1	1	1	5
107	Willits	1	1	1	1	1	5
108.01	Redwood Valley	1	1	1	1	1	5
108.02	Potter Valley	1	1	1	1	1	5
109	Calpella	1	1	1	1	1	5
110.01	Little River / Albion	1	1	1	1	1	5
110.03	Fort Bragg / Caspar	1	1	1	1	1	5
110.04	Caspar / Mendocino	1	1	1	1	1	5
111.02	Point Arena / Anchor Bay	1	1	1	1	1	5
112	Boonville / Comptche / Philo	1	1	1	1	1	5
113	El Roble	1	1	1	1	1	5
114	Ukiah (West)	1	2	1	1	1	6
115.01	Ukiah (Northwest)	5	5	5	5	5	25
115.02	Ukiah (Wagenseller)	3	1	2	3	1	10
116	Ukiah (Downtown)	3	3	4	5	3	18
117	Ukiah (East) / Talmage	1	1	1	1	1	5
118	Hopland	1	1	1	1	1	5

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

Figure 2:
Mendocino County Transit Needs Index



Based on the TNI, the areas of Mendocino County with the greatest need for transit services are Ukiah and Fort Bragg. In Ukiah, the Downtown, Wagenseller, and northwestern regions of the city had the highest ranks. In Fort Bragg, the census tract encompassing the southern region of the city and Noyo Harbor had the highest rank. It is important to note, however, that the total number of transit dependent persons presented in Table 3 also needs to be considered when determining areas of high transit need, as sometimes census tract boundaries can sway TNI results. For instance, Census Tract 107 is 10 square miles in size, encompassing Willits as well as adjacent forests and agricultural land. This means that while Willits is home to large numbers of transit dependent persons, the population densities of these subgroups within the census tract are low because the total tract area is much larger than the area within city limits.

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMY

Some of the most regular transit riders are those who rely on the bus for commuting to and from work. This section reviews Mendocino County economic characteristics influencing commuting, in turn influencing transit demand.

Top Employers

Major employers can be significant transit trip generators due to having many employees who need to get to and from work. Mendocino County's largest employers, according to the California Employment Development Department (2022), are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Mendocino County Major Employers

Company	Location	# Of Employees
The County of Mendocino	Ukiah	1000-1499
Adventist Health Ukiah Valley	Ukiah	500-999
Mendocino Redwood Company, LLC.	Calpella	500-999
Adventist Health Mendocino Coast	Fort Bragg	250-499
Fetzer Vineyards	Hopland	250-499
Mendocino College	Ukiah	250-499
Mendocino Community Health	Ukiah	250-499
Adventist Health Howard Memorial	Willits	100-249
CA Department of Forestry	Willits	100-249
Costco	Ukiah	100-249
Coyote Valley Casino	Redwood Valley	100-249
Dharma Realm Buddhist Association	Ukiah	100-249
Metalfx, Inc.	Willits	100-249
Pacific Coast Farm	Ukiah	100-249
Pacific Medical Resources	Fort Bragg	100-249
Safeway	Fort Bragg	100-249
Ukiah City Civic Center	Ukiah	100-249
Ukiah High School	Ukiah	100-249
Walmart	Ukiah	100-249

Source: California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Info, 2022

The largest employer is the County of Mendocino itself; most of the County offices are located in the county seat of Ukiah. Most other large employers are also located in the inland region consisting of Ukiah, Willits, and adjacent communities. The largest employers along the coastal region are all in Fort Bragg. The economic sectors most represented by the top employers are government services, healthcare, agriculture, and education.

Commuting Patterns

Table 6 presents commuting data for Mendocino County, as sourced from the US Census Longitudinal Employer Household Dynamics dataset (2020). The top portion of the table shows where employees working in Mendocino County are commuting from, while the bottom portion shows where residents of Mendocino County commute to.

Table 6: Mendocino County Local and Regional Commute Patterns
2020

Where Employees In Mendocino County Commute From

Counties	# of Jobs	% of Total	Cities/Towns	# of Jobs	% of Total
Mendocino	19,959	72.0%	**Ukiah**	4,271	15.4%
Lake	1,667	6.0%	**Fort Bragg**	2,074	7.5%
Sonoma	1,292	4.7%	**Willits**	1,380	5.0%
Humboldt	399	1.4%	**Brooktrails**	932	3.4%
Sacramento	301	1.1%	**Redwood Valley**	435	1.6%
Tehama	291	1.1%	Lakeport	410	1.5%
Alameda	264	1.0%	Santa Rosa	405	1.5%
All other locations	3,535	12.8%	**Talmage**	203	0.7%
			Calpella	190	0.7%
			Covelo	178	0.6%
			All other locations	17,230	62.2%
Total Number of Jobs	**27,708**		**Total Number of Jobs**	**27,708**	

Where Mendocino County Residents Work and Commute to

Counties	# of Jobs	% of Total	Cities and Towns	# of Jobs	% of Total
Mendocino	19,959	66.6%	**Ukiah**	6,238	20.8%
Sonoma	2,888	9.6%	**Fort Bragg**	2,708	9.0%
Lake	743	2.5%	**Willits**	2,064	6.9%
Sacramento	624	2.1%	Santa Rosa	974	3.2%
Alameda	494	1.6%	**Talmage**	615	2.1%
San Francisco	447	1.5%	San Francisco	447	1.5%
Napa	416	1.4%	**Mendocino**	436	1.5%
Contra Costa	344	1.1%	Healdsburg	328	1.1%
Santa Clara	315	1.1%	Sacramento	305	1.0%
Humboldt	285	1.0%	**Laytonville**	253	0.8%
All other locations	3,467	11.6%	All other locations	15,614	52.1%
Total Number of Jobs	**29,982**		**Total Number of Jobs**	**29,982**	

Source: US Census Bureau LEHD Database, 2020
Note: **Bold text** indicates locations within Mendocino County.

It is important to note that this table shows numbers of jobs, and not numbers of people; one person may hold multiple jobs across the study area, however this is not reflected in the data. The LEHD data also does not indicate whether a job is held by a remote worker, however some remote work patterns can be assumed. For instance, most Mendocino County residents holding jobs located in Santa Clara County are likely working remotely. Even with these caveats, the LEHD data still provides useful information about popular commute patterns that could potentially be served by transit. Currently, over 80 percent of Mendocino County workers drive alone or carpool to get to work, indicating that new transit services would likely be needed to encourage workers to choose transit for commuting.

The majority of Mendocino County jobs are held by county residents (72 percent), with most jobs being held by people who live in Ukiah (15 percent), Fort Bragg (8 percent), Willits (5 percent), Brooktrails (3 percent), or Redwood Valley (2 percent). The top out-of-county locations Mendocino County workers are commuting from are Lake (6 percent) and Sonoma Counties (5 percent). As shown in Table 6, the majority of Mendocino County residents also, as expected, hold jobs within the county (66 percent). The top place for work is Ukiah, where one out of every five Mendocino County residents is employed (20 percent). Other communities where a lot of residents commute to work include Fort Bragg (9 percent), Willits (7 percent), Santa Rosa (3 percent), and Talmage (2 percent). The top out-of-county locations residents are commuting to are also Sonoma (10 percent) and Lake Counties (3 percent). Considering the number of workers estimated to be traveling in either direction, about 4,000 people commute between Mendocino and Sonoma Counties and 2,300 people commute between Mendocino and Lake Counties. There are existing transit services between Mendocino County and both Lake and Sonoma Counties, however it is important to evaluate whether these services can actually be used by commuters.

MAJOR ACTIVITY CENTERS

A large proportion of transit trips, if not to work, are to other major activity centers such as hospitals, grocery stores, social service agencies, tribal headquarters, and schools. A transit system should serve as many major activity centers as possible. Table 7 identifies some important activity centers located in Mendocino County's larger communities. It should be noted the data presented in Table 7 is not inclusive of all activity centers in the study area.

Ukiah, as the county seat, is home to a number of activity centers including government offices for both the County of Mendocino and the City of Ukiah, the Ukiah Valley Medical Center, Walmart, Safeway, the main campus of Mendocino College, and number of grade schools. In Willits, there are also multiple government and tribal offices, the Mendocino College Willits Campus, grade schools, and multiple senior housing complexes. Fort Bragg has the most activity centers of the coastal communities and a large number of senior and affordable housing complexes, many of which are located downtown near the Adventist Health Mendocino Coast Health Center. Mendocino County residents also travel out-of-county to a variety of activity centers. Most out-of-county travel is focused southward to Sonoma County and the Bay Area beyond; however, some people also travel to destinations in Lake County to the east or Humboldt County to the north. Figures 3 through 9 in Chapter 3 show the activity centers included in Table 7 in reference to MTA services.

Table 7: Major Transit Activity Centers

Community	Type of Activity Center				
	Human Service & Tribal Agencies	Senior Services	Schools & Youth Programs	Shopping & Recreation	Medical
Covelo	Round Valley Food Pantry Round Valley Indian Tribe	--	Round Valley Unified School District	Hidden Oaks Casino Keith's Market IGA	Round Valley Tribal Health
Fort Bragg	Redwood Coast Regional Center Mendocino County Dept. of Social Services Mendocino County Food and Nutrition The Plateau	Cottages at Cyprus Moura Senior Housing Redwood Coast Senior Center Oceanside Comfort Care	Fort Bragg Unified School District Mendocino County Youth Project Mendocino College	Boatyard Shopping Center Harvest Market Safeway	Adventist Health Mendocino Coast District Hospital Mendocino Coast Clinic
Hopland	Hopland Band of Pomo Indians	--	--	Sho Ka Wa Casino	--
Laytonville	Cahto Tribe Laytonville Food Pantry	Harwood Hall and Family Resource Center	Laytonville Unified School District	Geiger's Long Valley Market	Long Valley Health Center
Point Arena	Point Arena Food Pantry Manchester Band of Pomo Indians	South Coast Seniors	Point Arena Schools	Arena Market & Cafe Garcia River Casino	Redwood Coast Medical Services
Redwood Valley	Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Redwood Valley Little River Band of Pomo	--	--	Coyote Valley Casino Redwood Valley Market	Redwood Valley Health Clinic Consolidated Tribal Health Project
Ukiah	Food Help Program Mendocino County Dept. of Social Services Pinoleville Pomo Nation Potter Valley Tribe Redwood Coast Regional Center Ukiah Food Bank	Mountain View Assisted Living & Memory Care Ukiah Senior Center Brookside Retirement Residence	Arbor Youth Resource Center Boys & Girls Club Mendocino College Mendocino County Youth Project Ukiah Unified School District	Public Library Pear Tree Center Raley's Safeway Walmart	Dora Street Health Center Hillside Health Center Ukiah Valley Medical Center
Willits	Mendocino County Dept. of Social Services Sherwood Valley Rancheria Willits Food Bank	Redwood Meadows Senior Apartments Lenore Street Senior Housing Willits Senior Center	Mendocino College Willits Kids Club Willits Unified School District	Grocery Outlet Safeway Sherwood Valley Casino Willts Shopping Center	Adventist Health Howard Memorial Little Lake Health Center
Out-of-County Destinations	Lakeport, Oakland, San Francisco, Santa Rosa				

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.; Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Plan: Mendocino County (2021)

An important trend to note from Table 7 is the concentration of resources in Mendocino County's more populated communities of Ukiah, Willits, and Fort Bragg. These three communities are home to approximately one-third of Mendocino County residents, meaning two-thirds of residents live in more rural communities and have to travel to the three forementioned places in order to attend medical appointments, buy food and necessities, and attend to personal business. This distribution of activity centers indicates the likely significance of the intercity and regional transit services offered by the MTA and other social service providers to rural residents. These services will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

RECENT PLANNING STUDIES

The SRTDP should both reflect and complement the goals and strategies presented in other related studies recently adopted in Mendocino County. Recently completed plans related to the SRTDP effort include local studies such as the *City of Ukiah 2040 General Plan*, county-wide studies such as the *Mendocino County Regional and Active Transportation Plan*, as well as regional studies such as the *California Intercity Bus Study*. These studies are reviewed in Appendix B.

Chapter 3

OVERVIEW OF EXISTING TRANSIT SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

There are a number of public, private, and non-profit organizations which operate transit and transportation services in Mendocino County. While all of these organizations help move people around, each transportation program differs in the types of services offered, availability, and passenger eligibility. This chapter primarily discusses the services and amenities of the county's public transit provider, the MTA, with other services summarized afterwards.

MENDOCINO TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Administration and Management

The MTA is a Joint Powers Agency (JPA) established in 1976 by the County of Mendocino and Cities of Ukiah, Willits, Fort Bragg, and Point Arena. The MTA has a seven-member Board of Directors consisting of one representative from each of the four respective City Councils and three representatives from, or appointed by, the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors. The Board of Directors meets monthly and oversees operational and policy issues. The General Manager is responsible for coordinating the MTA's daily operations and oversees the roughly sixty employees. Employees include operations, maintenance, and administrative staff. The MTA is the Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA) for the region and therefore receives state Transportation Development Act funding under both Article 4 (Public Transit Services) and Article 4.5 (Community Transit Services).

MTA Fixed Routes

The MTA operates nine fixed routes ranging from local to intercounty services. Most of these services begin weekday operations between 6:00 AM to 8:00 AM and end between 5:00 AM and 7:00 PM. Four routes are also available on Saturday, and one route is available on Sunday. Passengers can board fixed routes both at designated stops, as well as at flag stops. Flag stops refer to locations where a passenger can hail down the driver in order to board, as long as it is safe for the driver to pullover.

The MTA has had to reduce its service levels multiple times over the last few years due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the nationwide bus driver shortage. MTA services as of June 2023 are summarized in Table 8. More detailed descriptions are included in the following pages.

Route 1 – Willits

Route 1 provides local, hourly service within the City of Willits (Figure 3), serving important destinations such as Howard Hospital, the Willits Senior Center, the Evergreen Shopping Center, Safeway, and the Mendocino College Willits Campus, among others. Route 1 operates on weekdays between 7:12 AM and 6:08 PM, completing eleven roundtrips throughout the day.

Table 8: Summary of MTA Services and Frequency

	Service Hours[1]				Start & End Locations		Weekday Service Frequency (Minutes)
	Weekday		Saturday				
	Start	End	Start	End	Start	End	
Bus: Fixed Route							
Route 1 - Willits	7:12 AM	6:33 PM	--	--	Creekside Drive (Willits)	Same as start	60
Route 5 - BraggAbout	7:15 AM	5:23 PM	--	--	Denny's (Fort Bragg)	Same as start	60
Route 7/9 - Ukiah Jitney/Local[2]	6:15 AM	6:15 PM	8:15 AM	5:08 PM	Mendocino College (Ukiah)	Plant Rd. & So. State	30-60
Route 20 - Ukiah/Willits	6:41 AM	6:35 PM	--	--	Integrated Service Center (Willits)	Same as start	6 Round Trips
Route 60 - The Coaster	7:40 AM	5:43 PM	--	--	Boatyard (Fort Bragg)	Same as start	4 Round Trips
Route 65 - Cross County	6:30 AM	5:55 PM	6:30 AM	5:55 PM	Denny's (Fort Bragg)	Same as start	2 Round Trips
Route 75 - South Coast/Ukiah[3]	7:15 AM	6:20 PM	9:15 AM	4:15 PM	Point Arena	Same as start	2 Round Trips
Route 95 - South Coast/Santa Rosa[4]	8:00 AM	7:05 PM	8:00 AM	7:05 PM	Point Arena	Same as start	1 Round Trip
Dial-a-Ride							
Ukiah	7:00 AM	6:00 PM	10:00 AM	5:00 PM	--	--	--
Fort Bragg	8:00 AM	6:00 PM	10:00 AM	5:00 PM	--	--	--

Note 1: Summary accurate as of June, 2023.

Note 2: Route 7 provides express service within the City of Ukiah.

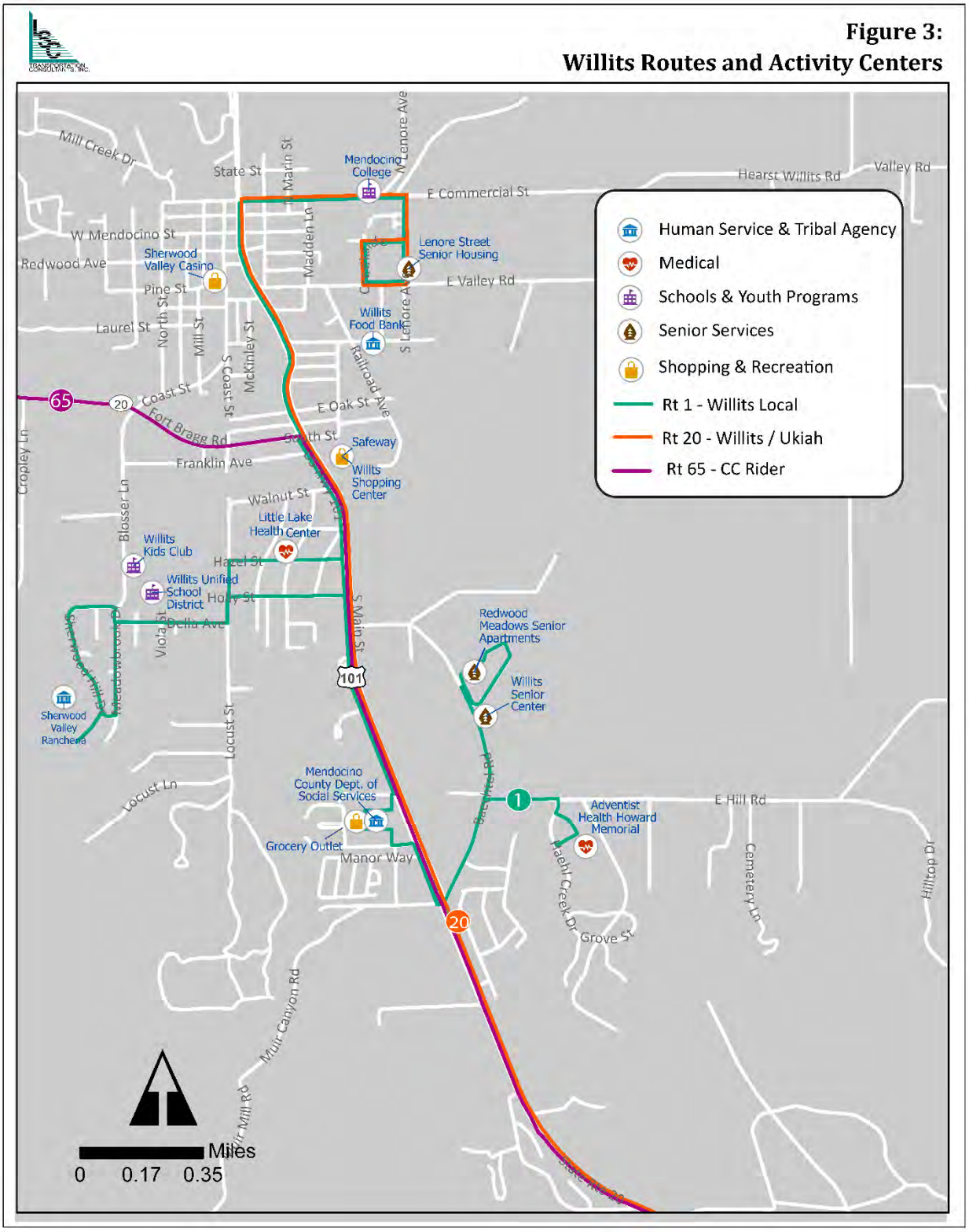
Note 3: Route 75 operates a reduced schedule on Saturdays between the Navarro Store and Ukiah.

Note 4: Route 95 operates the same schedule Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, Route 95 operates one roundtrip between 10 AM and 7:05 PM.

Note 5: No service on New Year's Day, MLK, Jr. Day, Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, or Christmas Day. Limited service on Juneteenth and the day after Thanksgiving.

Source: MTA

Figure 3:
Willits Routes and Activity Centers



Route 5 – Fort Bragg

Route 5, or the BraggAbout service, is a local route within the City of Fort Bragg (Figure 4). The BraggAbout follows a north-south route through the city, stopping at the Adventist Health Mendocino Coast Hospital, the Mendocino College Coast Center, Safeway, and Rite Aid. Route 5 is a weekday service that operates hourly between 7:15 AM and 5:00 PM.

Route 7 – Ukiah Jitney

Route 7, or the Ukiah Jitney, provides local service in Ukiah (Figure 5). Locations served by the Jitney include Mendocino College, the Ukiah Theater, Mendocino Public Health, and the Ukiah Municipal Airport. Route 7 follows a route similar to Route 9, providing more direct service with fewer stops during peak travel hours. Route 7 operates two roundtrips each weekday.

Route 9 – Ukiah Local

Route 9 is the main local service within the City of Ukiah (Figure 5), operating every 30 to 60 minutes on weekdays and every hour on Saturday. Service on weekdays begins at 6:15 AM and ends at 6:15 PM, and Saturday service begins at 8:15 AM and ends at 5:08 PM. Key stops served by Route 9 include Mendocino College, the Pear Tree Center, the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), Walmart, and the Adventist Health Ukiah Valley Hospital. Deviated fixed route service is available after 6:00 PM to destinations within 0.75 miles of the route. Passengers must schedule deviated stops in advance.

Route 20 – Willits / Ukiah

Route 20 completes six roundtrips each weekday between Willits and Ukiah, starting service in Willits at 6:41 AM and ending service back in Willits at 6:35 PM. Route 20 stops at the Integrated Service Center, Mendocino College Willits Campus, and the Willits Post Office among other locations before leaving Willits and heading south, stopping in Redwood Valley and Calpella before eventually arriving at Mendocino College in Ukiah and turning back north. Route 20 is depicted in both Figures 3 and 5.

Route 60 – The Coaster

Route 60, or the Coaster, follows a north-south route between Fort Bragg and Navarro River Junction (Figures 4 and 6). The Coaster completes four roundtrips between 7:40 AM to 5:43 PM, Monday through Friday. Additional communities served by The Coaster include Caspar, Mendocino, Little River, and Albion.

Route 65 – Cross County Rider

Route 65, or the Cross County Rider, is an important service connecting the coastal and inland regions of Mendocino County. Route 65 operates two roundtrips daily, Monday through Saturday. One roundtrip goes from Fort Bragg to Santa Rosa, passing through Willits and Ukiah along the way, while the second roundtrip goes only between Fort Bragg and Ukiah. The first south-travelling bus leaves the Denny's in Fort Bragg at 6:30 AM, and the last northbound bus arrives back in Fort Bragg at 5:55 PM. Key stops served by the Cross County Rider include the Denny's and Boatyard Drive in Fort Bragg, the Pear Tree Center in Ukiah, and the SMART Train, Sonoma County Airport, and 2nd Street Transit Mall in Santa Rosa. Route 65 is depicted in Figures 4, 5, and 6.

Figure 4:
Fort Bragg Routes and Activity Centers

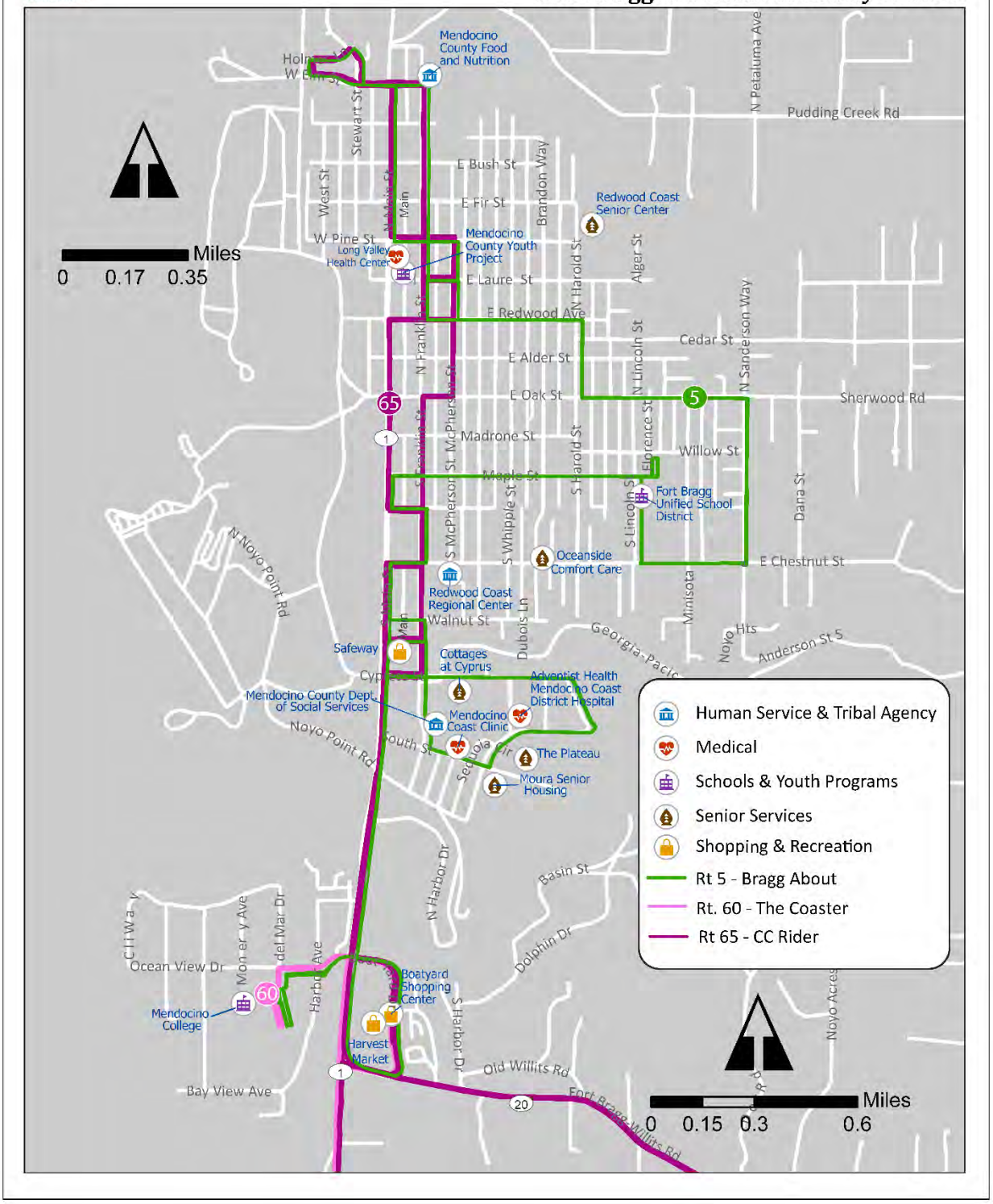


Figure 5:
Ukiah Routes and Activity Centers

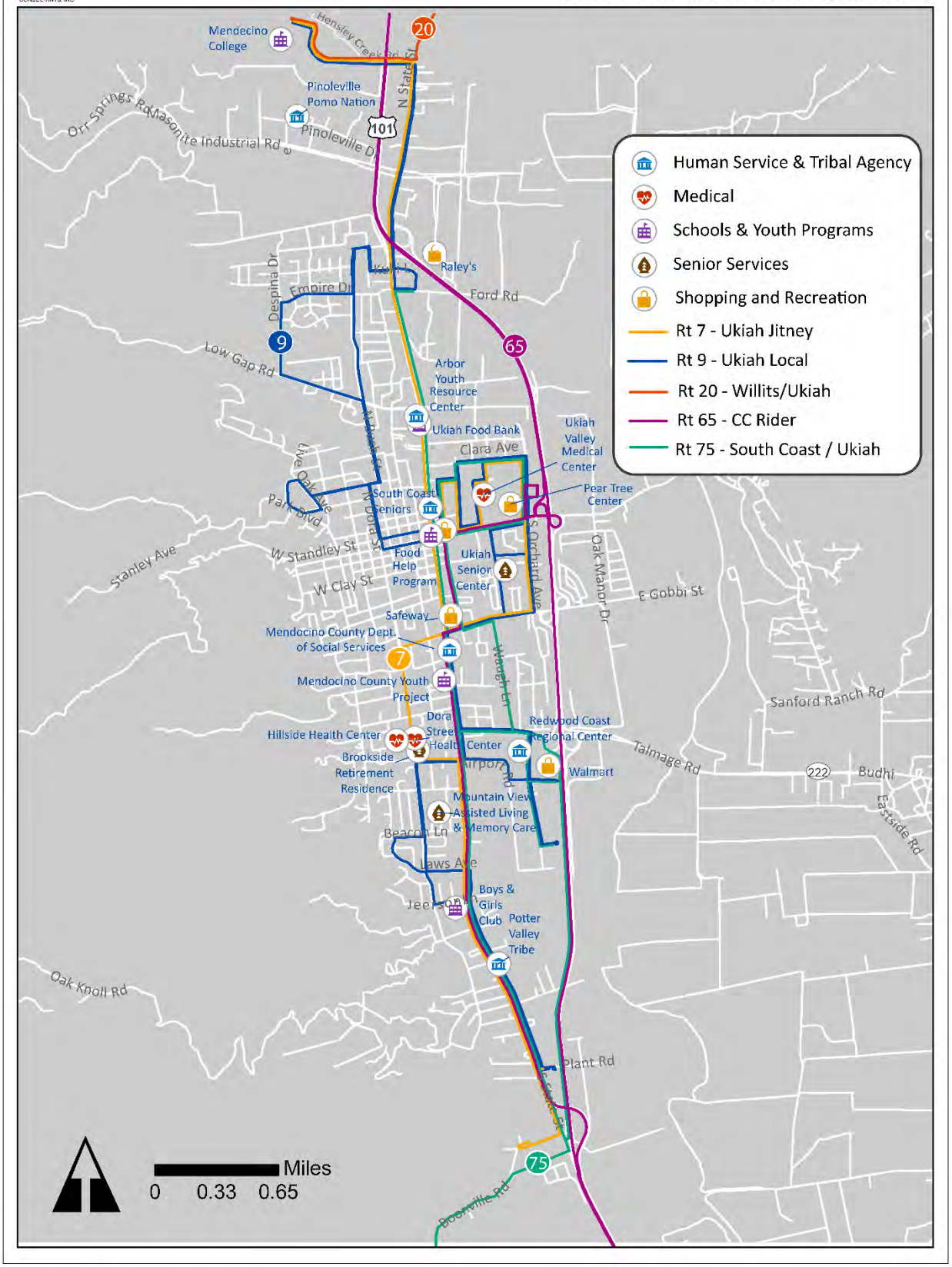
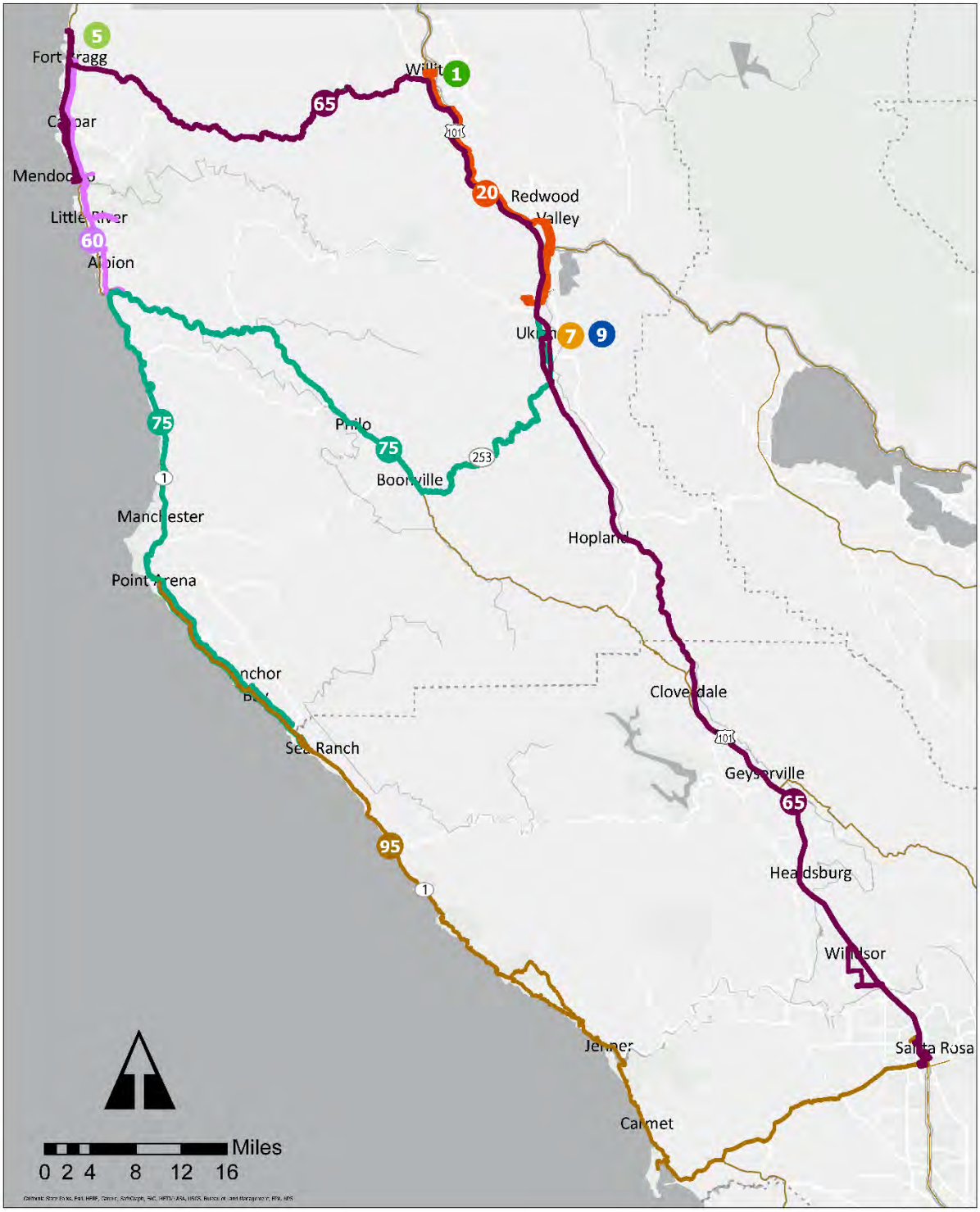


Figure 6:
MTA Regional Route Map



Route 75 – South Coast / Ukiah

Route 75 begins in Point Arena, first going south along the coast to Gualala, and then back north again to Point Arena and Navarro River Junction before traversing east across the county on CA 128 and 253 to Ukiah, connecting coastal residents to the inland region (Figure 6). One Route 75 roundtrip is provided daily Monday through Saturday. On weekdays, the bus leaves Gualala at 7:45 AM and arrives at the Ukiah Library at 10:35 AM. The bus then leaves the Raley's in Ukiah to head back to the coast at 2:50 PM, arriving in Gualala at 6:00 PM. On Saturdays, Route 75 only operates between Navarro and Ukiah.

Route 95 – South Coast / Santa Rosa

Route 95 operates one roundtrip between Point Arena and Santa Rosa seven days per week. The schedule is the same Monday through Saturday, but on Sundays, the morning southbound trip leaves a bit later in the day. Each leg of the trip takes approximately three hours to complete. In Mendocino County, Route 95 serves the communities of Point Arena, Anchor Bay, and Gualala. In Sonoma County, the bus stops in Sea Ranch, Stewart's Point, Fort Ross, Bodega Bay, and Sebastopol before arriving in Santa Rosa. In Santa Rosa, Route 95 stops at the 2nd Street Transit Mall and the Sonoma County Airport. Route 95 is shown in Figure 6 along with the other regional MTA routes.

MTA Dial-a-Ride Services

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires that public transit agencies provide paratransit services to eligible passengers within 0.75 miles of local fixed route services. MTA operates paratransit services in both Ukiah and Fort Bragg. Passengers must call and reserve their rides at least 24 hours in advance. Personal Care Attendants are allowed to accompany passengers for free.

Local senior centers in Ukiah, Fort Bragg, Willits, Point Arena, and Anderson also provide demand response services with Transportation Development Act (TDA) funding allocated to their organizations by the MTA. These services are explained further in the section discussing social service transportation providers.

Ukiah

The Ukiah Dial-a-Ride (DAR) is available for people with disabilities and senior adults ages 62 or older Monday through Friday from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM and Saturday from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM. The Ukiah DAR service area consists of five zones, as shown in Figure 7. Passengers can schedule rides between any two destinations within the overall service area, but pay additional for trips outside of the central, downtown zone.

Fort Bragg

The Fort Bragg DAR is available to the general public as well as ADA and senior passengers on weekdays from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM and on Saturdays from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM. The service area and various zones are shown in Figure 8. Similar to Ukiah, rides can be scheduled between any zones, with additional fares added for rides outside of the central zone.

Figure 7:
Ukiah Dial-A-Ride

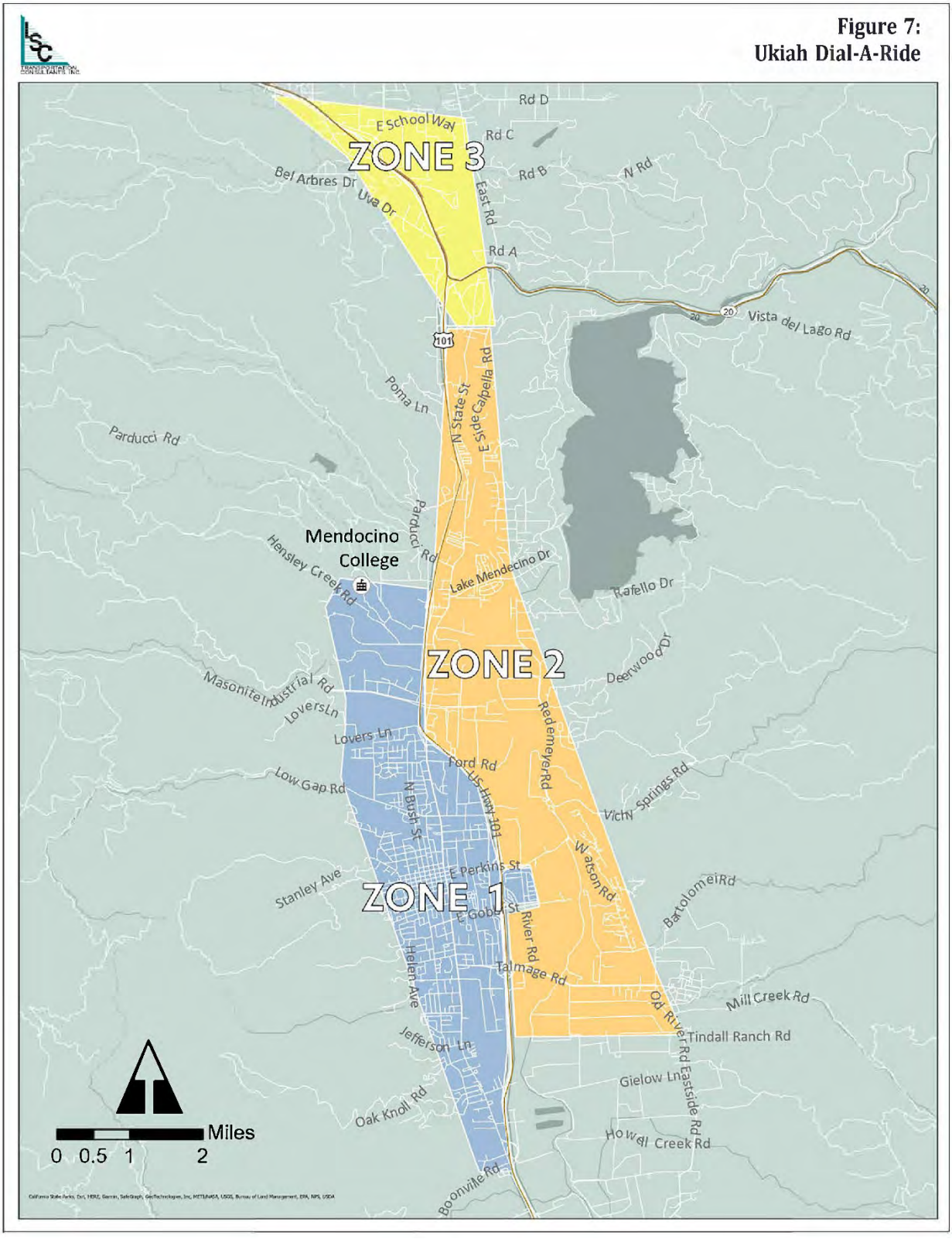
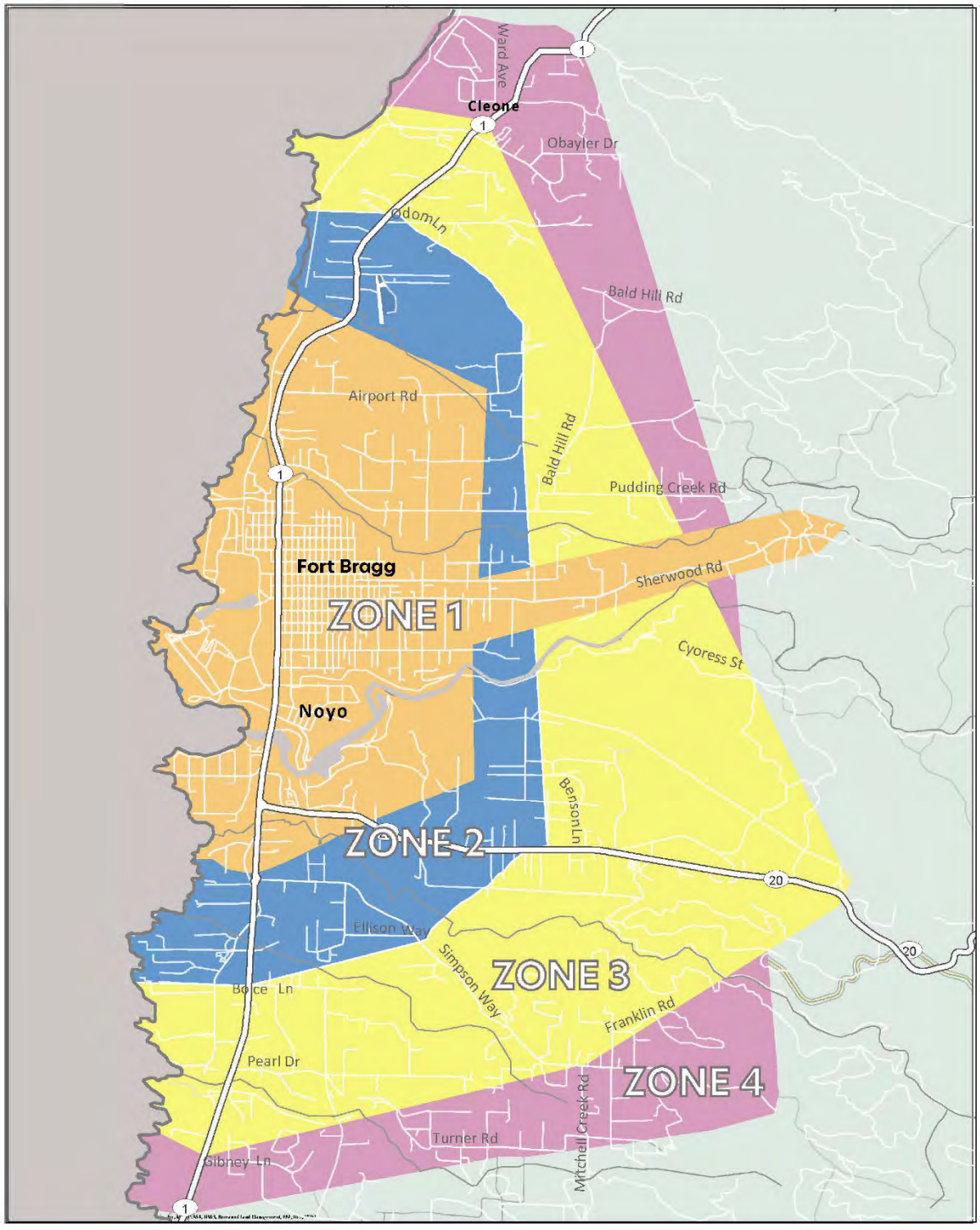


Figure 8:
Fort Bragg Dial-A-Ride



Redwood Coast Regional Center Contract Service

The Redwood Coast Regional Center (RCRC) is one of twenty-one private, non-profit regional centers across the State of California dedicated to serving people with disabilities. The MTA has a contract with the RCRC to provide door-to-door ride service for clients in Ukiah who need assistance to get to appointments and programs. The MTA provides RCRC clients with rides in the morning and afternoon, Monday through Friday using paratransit vehicles.

Transfer Opportunities

MTA routes and services extend throughout Mendocino County, resulting in an expansive public transit network. Some key MTA transfer locations and the routes served at each, include:

- Fort Bragg Boatyard & Mendocino College Coast Center – Routes 5, 60, and 65
- Navarro River Junction – Routes 60 and 75
- Point Arena & Anchor Bay – Routes 75 and 95
- Pear Tree Center – Routes 9, 20, and 65
- Walmart (Ukiah) – Routes 9, 20, and 75
- Babcock Park & Alder Lane (Lumber Jacks) – Routes 1, 20, and 65

Transfers to other regional transit providers are also possible. Other regional services that MTA passengers can transfer to are listed below, as well as the stops where these transfers are possible:

- Lake Transit Authority – Mendocino College, Pear Tree Center, Ukiah Valley Medical Center, and the Ukiah Airport
- Amtrak San Joaquins – Pear Tree Center
- Greyhound – Ukiah Airport, Taco Bell (Willits)
- Golden Gate Transit – 2nd St Transit Mall (Santa Rosa)
- Santa Rosa CityBus – 2nd Street Transit Mall, Sonoma County Airport, Coddingtown (Santa Rosa)
- Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit – SMART Train Terminal (Santa Rosa)
- Sonoma County Airport Express – Sonoma County Airport (Santa Rosa)
- Sonoma County Transit – 2nd Street Transit Mall, Sonoma County Airport, SMART Train Terminal, Coddingtown (Santa Rosa)

MTA CAPITAL ASSETS

Facilities and Maintenance

The MTA has facilities in Ukiah, Willits, Fort Bragg, and Point Arena. In Ukiah, the Bruce Richard Maintenance Facility is located at 241 Plant Road. Completed in 2012, the facility was built to Silver Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) standards and is powered by solar panels, which mitigate electric costs and offset the emissions produced by the buses. Other energy features include heated floors and electric vehicle (EV) charging.

The Bruce Richard Maintenance Facility is the main operations base for the inland routes and houses the MTA's maintenance staff. Twenty-four vehicles are typically stored at the facility. MTA administrative and dispatch functions are hosted in a separate, dated building at the same site.

The other MTA facilities are smaller, serving as the operations bases for the regional services. The MTA regional facilities also store vehicles to minimize "dead head" time, or time the bus is operating with only the driver on-board. The Willits facility is located at 380 Commercial Street and stores four vehicles. The Diana Stuart Fort Bragg Division of the MTA is located at 190 E. Spruce Street and stores eight vehicles. The Fort Bragg facility has a small office in addition to the bus barn. Lastly, the MTA also has a facility at 282 Lake Street in Point Arena, where three vehicles are stored.

Fleet Inventory

The MTA has a fleet of forty vehicles as of April 2024 (Table 9). Vehicles range in size from fifteen-passenger cutaways to forty-passenger low-floor Gilligs. Twenty-five of these vehicles will be due to be replaced within the five-year planning period. Vehicle replacement needs will require the MTA to secure a large amount of funding to meet local match requirements for capital grants.

The California Air Resources Board's Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) regulation will come into effect during this planning period. Beginning in 2026, the ICT regulation will require that 25 percent of vehicles purchased each year by small transit agencies, such as the MTA, be zero emissions vehicles (ZEVs). By 2029, all new vehicles will need to be ZEVs. The MTA has already begun to convert its fleet to ZEVs; the MTA purchased two electric cutaways in 2022 and one in 2024 that is has since used to operate local fixed route service. The MTA also has plans to purchase three more electric cutaways and one electric coach bus in the next few years. These new ZEVs will be used to operate Route 5 in Fort Bragg and Route 9 in Ukiah.

Passenger Amenities

Passenger amenities include features such as benches and shelters that enhance a person's experience while waiting for the bus. Benches and shelters are located at stops all throughout the MTA system, with more concentrated at highly trafficked stops in the denser community centers. Most stops have signs. The MTA completed a Bus Stop Review study in FY 2015-16 to assess the quality and distribution of signs, benches, and shelters across its various stops.

Currently, the MTA does not have a central transit center. The Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG) and MTA initiated the *Ukiah Transit Center Feasibility Study* in 2022 to assess the feasibility and optimal design of a new transit center in Ukiah. This study will be completed in 2024. Progress so far is summarized in Appendix B.

Table 9: MTA Vehicle Fleet

Agency ID	Make	Model	Year	Mileage	Capacity	Est. Retirement Date
620	Ford	E350	2011	69,263	15	FY 25/26
621	Ford	E350	2011	115,661	15	FY 25/26
622	Ford	E350	2011	125,053	15	-- --
623	Ford	E350	2011	140,671	15	FY 26/27
624	Ford	E350	2013	91,445	15	FY 26/27
625	Ford	E350	2013	102,813	15	-- --
626	Ford	E350	2013	123,881	15	-- --
627	Ford	E350	2013	93,015	15	-- --
628	Ford	E350	2013	139,370	15	-- --
723	Ford	E450	2010	218,359	24	FY 24/25
727	Ford	E450	2011	262,203	24	FY 23/24
728	Ford	E450	2011	154,311	24	FY 22/23
729	Ford	E450	2013	162,727	24	FY 25/26
730	Ford	E450	2013	235,195	24	FY 22/23
731	Ford	E450	2013	293,089	24	FY 22/23
732	Ford	E450	2015	317,990	24	-- --
733	Ford	E450	2015	152,570	24	FY 25/26
734	Ford	E450	2015	160,294	24	FY 25/26
735	Ford	E450	2015	230,951	24	FY 26/27
736	Ford	E450	2015	126,492	24	FY 26/27
737	Ford	E450	2018	116,749	24	-- --
738	Ford	E450	2018	115,176	24	-- --
739	Ford	E450	2018	54,462	24	-- --
740	Ford	E450	2019	140,734	24	-- --
741	Ford	E450	2019	65,493	24	-- --
742*	Ford	E450	2022	15,068	24	-- --
743*	Ford	E450	2021	18,037	24	-- --
805	Ford	Trolley	2008	66,180	30	-- --
808	Freightliner	S2C	2016	326,464	34	FY 24/25
809	Freightliner	S2C	2016	251,953	34	FY 25/26
810	Freightliner	S2C	2016	291,515	34	FY 26/27
910	Gillig	Low Floor	2013	242,353	36	FY 24/25
911	Gillig	Low Floor	2013	272,652	36	FY 24/25
912	Gillig	Low Floor	2013	186,504	36	FY 24/25
913	Gillig	Low Floor	2013	233,158	36	FY 25/26
914	Gillig	Low Floor	2013	257,799	36	FY 25/26
915	Gillig	Low Floor	2013	238,024	36	FY 25/26
916	Gillig	Low Floor	2013	221,151	36	FY 26/27
917	Gillig	Low Floor	2013	227,414	36	FY 26/27
918*	Gillig	Low Floor	2024	-	36	-- --

Source: Mendocino Transit Authority
Note 1: Information accurate as of 5/19/2023
Note 2: Electric vehicles noted with *.

MTA FARE STRUCTURE

The MTA has a complicated fare structure with varying prices depending on a passenger's age, disability status, and trip length. A simplified summary of the fare structure is presented in Table 10. Generally, the regular, one-way fare for a local trip is $1.50, and the discounted fare is $0.75. Fares grow progressively with the trip length, with the most expensive regular one-way fare being $23.00 for a trip from Fort Bragg to Santa Rosa on Route 65. DAR fares increase by zone, with one-way trips in the central zones in both Ukiah and Fort Bragg costing $3.00 and one-way trips to or from destinations in the outer zones costing $6.00.

Passengers can pay for fares with cash or passes. Passes are sold by drivers onboard and at the MTA offices in Ukiah and Fort Bragg. The monthly passes offer a significant discount for passengers who ride the bus frequently. The MTA also offers specialized pass products, such as the Youth Summer Pass.

Table 10: Mendocino Transit Authority Fares

Fare Type	Regular (7 -61)	Discounted[1]	Students[2]	Children[3]
One-Way Fares				
Inland Services (Routes 1, 7, 9, and 20)	$1.50 - $3.00	$0.75 - $1.50	--	Free
Coastal Services (Routes 5, 60, and 75)	$1.50 - $6.75	$0.75 - $3.35	--	Free
Route 65	$1.50 - $23.00	$0.75 - $11.50	--	Free
Route 95	$1.50 - $8.25	$0.75 - $4.10	$1.05 - $6.00	Free
Monthly Passes				
One-Zone Pass	$35.00	$17.50	--	Free
Two-Zone Pass	$57.00	$28.50	--	Free
Three-Zone Pass	$85.00	$42.50	--	Free
Other Passes				
Youth Summer Pass[4]	--	--	--	$45.00
16-Ride Punch Pass	$17.00	--	--	--
Ukiah DAR [5]				
Zone 1	--	$3.00	--	--
Zones 2-4	--	$4.00	--	--
Zone 5	--	$6.00	--	--
Fort Bragg DAR [5]				
Zone 1	$6.00	$3.00	--	$1.25
Additional Zones	$6.00	$6.00	--	$6.00

Source: MTA

Note 1: Discounts are for seniors (62+), and disabled with a valid ID card.

Note 2: Mendocino College students are eligible for free fares with a student ID. Other students are eligible for discounted fares on Route 95.

Note 3: Children 6 and under ride for free with a fare-paying caretaker.

Note 4: The Youth Pass is available for all youth 18 years old and younger.

Note 5: ADA Attendants can accompany DAR passengers for free. ADA Companions can ride for the discounted fare.

MTA MARKETING

Effective marketing can improve current passenger satisfaction as well as recruit new people to the transit system. This MTA utilizes multiple different marketing methods to communicate with passengers and advertise available services. The MTA's existing marketing methods are described in Chapter 9, along with recommendations for how to improve marketing over the five-year planning period.

OTHER TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS

There are multiple other transportation providers that operate in Mendocino County besides the MTA. These services are described below.

Regional Providers

Amtrak San Joaquins

Amtrak San Joaquins Route 7 provides "Thruway" bus service between Arcata in Humboldt County and Martinez in Contra Costa County, passing through Mendocino County along the way. Local stops in Mendocino County include Willits, Ukiah, Laytonville, and Leggett. Southbound departures from Ukiah leave the stop, which is north of the McDonalds, at 11:20 AM and 2:05 PM each day. Northbound buses arrive in Ukiah at 2:10 PM and 5:20 PM. One-way fares range from $10.00 for short trips (such as Leggett to Ukiah) to upwards of $20.00 for longer trips (such as Ukiah to Martinez). The previous requirement to purchase a train ticket along with the Route 7 bus ticket has been eliminated, allowing passengers to purchase just bus tickets.

Greyhound

Greyhound operates a line along US 101 between the Bay Area and Arcata that provides service to Mendocino County. Passengers can board Greyhound at the Ukiah Airport or the Taco Bell in Willits. Destinations served by the Greyhound to the north include Eureka and Arcata. Destinations served to the south include Santa Rosa and San Francisco. Southbound Greyhound buses depart Ukiah at 12:45 PM, arriving in San Francisco at 4:15 PM. A one-way ticket to San Francisco costs around $26.00. Northbound buses arrive in Ukiah at 4:00 PM before traveling onwards to Humboldt County, arriving in Eureka at 8:00 PM. Tickets from Ukiah to Arcata tend to cost around $39.00. Currently, Greyhound serves Mendocino County Thursday through Monday.

Humboldt Transit Authority

The Humboldt Transit Authority (HTA) is the primary public transit provider in Humboldt County, to the north of Mendocino County. The HTA operates multiple local and intercity services. In January 2024, the HTA began operating the new Redwood Coast Express service between Eureka and Ukiah. The Redwood Coast Express operate one roundtrip a day, Monday through Friday. The Redwood Coast Express schedule has been designed so passengers can transfer between the service and MTA Routes 9, 20, and 65. A six-month trial one-way fare is $2.00 has been established.

Lake Transit Authority

The Lake Transit Authority (LTA) is the public transit provider for Lake County, Mendocino County's neighbor to the east. The LTA's Route 7 provides intercounty service between Lakeport and Ukiah, operating four roundtrips on weekdays and three roundtrips on Saturdays. Each round trip from Lakeport to Ukiah and back takes about three and a half hours. Mendocino County residents can board Lake Transit's Route 7 at the Ukiah Airport, Ukiah Valley Medical Center, Pear Tree Center, and Mendocino College. Route 7 fares to Lake County are $5.00 for a one-way ticket, but MTA passengers transferring to the LTA receive a $1.00 discount.

Social Service Providers

Anderson Valley Senior Center

The Anderson Valley Senior Center provides transportation assistance on a reservation-basis to and from the Center's lunch program on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The Anderson Valley Senior Center also provides rides on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays on a reservation-basis to destinations around Anderson Valley to help people get to medical appointments or errands. The transportation service is available to senior adults and low-income people. On Fridays, the Center provides trips to Ukiah to help people get to medical appointments. Special trips are sometimes planned based on client feedback. It is suggested that passengers donate $1.00 for rides within Anderson Valley and $5.00 for rides to Ukiah. The Anderson Valley Senior Center receives TDA funding from the MTA.

Coastal Seniors

Coastal Seniors is a nonprofit organization in Point Arena that provides programs to promote the well-being of seniors in Mendocino County's coastal region. Coastal Seniors' services are available for seniors ages 60 or older and their spouses or caregivers, regardless of age. Disabled people who live with seniors can also use Coastal Seniors programs. On Tuesday, Coastal Seniors provides a reservation-required transportation service to and from senior lunches and for errands trips. One-way fares range from $1.00 to $4.00 depending on the trip length. On Thursdays and Fridays, Coastal Seniors also provides trips on a reservation-basis to Santa Rosa, Fort Bragg, and Ukiah for errands and other appointments. Round-trip fares for out-of-town trips are $10.00. The Coastal Seniors transportation service is funded in part through a contract with the MTA.

Consolidated Tribal Health Project

The Consolidated Tribal Health Project (CTHP) is a nonprofit community health clinic governed by eight federally recognized tribes in the Mendocino County region. CTHP offers transportation assistance for eligible patients either by providing arranged rides or reimbursing travel costs. Patients can determine their eligibility for transportation assistance with CTHP staff.

Mendocino County Department of Social Services

The Mendocino County Department of Social Services (DSS) provides transportation from Fort Bragg to the Ukiah Veterans Affairs (VA) Clinic on Mondays and Wednesdays. The bus leaves Fort Bragg at 7:30 AM and arrives at the VA clinic at 10:00 AM. The bus then leaves the clinic at 2:00 PM in the afternoon and arrives back at the DSS office in Fort Bragg at 4:00 PM.

Redwood Coast Regional Center

As previously mentioned, the Redwood Coast Regional Center (RCRC) is dedicated to serving persons with disabilities. In addition to its contract with the MTA, the RCRC also assists clients with transportation by providing financial aid to pay for both public and private transportation to and from the center.

Redwood Coast Senior Center

The Redwood Coast Senior Center (RCSC) is located in Fort Bragg. The RCSC provides a door-to-door demand response service for seniors ages 60 and older and disabled persons in Fort Bragg between Cleone and Gibney Lane, extending four miles inland. Rides can be scheduled weekdays between 8:00 AM and 3:00 PM. Fares range from $1.00 to $4.00 for a one-way trip depending on the distance. The RCRC also receives TDA funding through a contract with the MTA.

Round Valley Indian Health Center

The Round Valley Indian Health Center, located in Covelo, provides free rides to patients for diabetes-related appointments, homebound seniors over the age of 55 with no means of transportation, and for children with no other means of transportation to immunization appointments. Whether a ride can be scheduled depends on staff and vehicle availability. The Round Valley Indian Health Center occasionally provide out-of-town rides for dialysis depending on capacity. Patients can schedule rides Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Rides must be scheduled at least 72 hours in advance.

Ukiah Senior Center

The Ukiah Senior Center provides demand response services on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM. Eligible riders include seniors ages 55 and older and persons with disabilities. The Ukiah Senior Center can occasionally accommodate same-day trip requests but recommends clients schedule rides in advance. Rides can be requested to destinations in Ukiah, Forks, Calpella, Rogina Heights, Deerwood, Talmage, and the Redwood Valley. One-way fares range from $3.00 to $6.00 depending on the trip length. The Ukiah Senior Center is another one of the local senior centers that receives TDA funding through a contract with the MTA to provide specialized door-through-door demand response service to seniors.

Veterans Affairs Shuttle

The Veterans Affairs (VA) Department runs shuttles throughout northern California to help patients get to the San Francisco VA Clinic. Four roundtrips are made between the Ukiah and San Francisco VA Clinics each weekday. The first morning trip is direct, while the other three trips stop in Santa Rosa. The Shuttle leaves Ukiah at 7:00 AM, 8:50 AM, 10:30 AM, and 2:30 PM. Veterans must reserve their rides in advance.

Willits Senior Center

The Willits Harrah Senior Center provides door-through-door DAR service for adults ages 55 and older and disabled people in the City of Willits. The service is available Monday through Friday, 8:15 AM to 3:30 PM. Rides can be scheduled to destinations in Willits, Brooktrails, and Pine Mountain.

Fares vary depending on trip length. Passengers can also schedule out-of-town rides to Ukiah, Santa Rosa, and other destinations in Lake, Sonoma, Napa, Marin, and San Francisco Counties for additional costs. The Willits Harrah Senior Center provides service with two vans, one of which has a wheelchair lift. The program is funded through a contract with the MTA.

Private Providers

Mendocino Wine Tours & Limousine

Mendocino Wine Tours & Limousine offers private limousine services as well as non-emergency medical transportation and general ride services. Mendocino Wine Tours & Limousine is available throughout the North Coast region of California, including Mendocino, Lake, southern Humboldt, and northern Sonoma Counties. Rates range from $65.00 to $105.00 per hour depending on the vehicle, with a three-hour minimum.

Obar 11 Enterprises

Obar 11 Enterprises (Obar 11) is a private ride service available from 8:00 AM to 10:00 PM on Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays and from 8:00 AM to 12:00 AM on Fridays and Saturdays. Obar 11 operates primarily in Fort Bragg and along the Mendocino Coast, but rides can be scheduled to further destinations such as Santa Rosa if needed. Rates depend on the ride.

Redwood Taxi

Redwood Taxi provides taxis, non-emergency medical transportation, and delivery services in Ukiah and Willits. Services are available seven days per week. Rides can be scheduled both via phone as well as by phone application.

Taxi 707

Taxi 707 provides on-demand taxi services 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Rates start at $3.00, and then increase by $3.00 per mile traveled. Rides can be scheduled both locally as well to out-of-county destinations such as the San Francisco and Sacramento International Airports.

Chapter 4

RECENT MTA OPERATIONS AND PERFORMANCE

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, MTA's recent operational and financial histories are discussed, revealing the clear impacts of both the pandemic and nationwide driver shortage on the MTA, as well as the evident recovery of ridership post-pandemic. The operations data is then used to conduct a performance assessment of the MTA as a whole, as well as by service.

MTA OPERATIONS

Ridership

Annual Ridership

Much like other transit systems, MTA's ridership was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As seen in Table 11, MTA had been carrying upwards of 260,000 passenger-trips annually prior to the pandemic. The pandemic began in March 2020, causing Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-20 ridership to decrease by 25 percent over the previous FY as people were forced to stay home and social distance (Table 11). Ridership then decreased another 66 percent from FY 2019-20 to FY 2020-21, reflecting the continuing impacts of the pandemic on activities that normally drive transit use such as work, school, recreational travel, and medical appointments.

As pandemic restrictions began to lift in FY 2021-22, MTA ridership began to significantly rebound, increasing 50 percent over the previous year (Table 11). While it is unlikely that systemwide ridership will reach the levels seen in FY 2018-19 in the near future due to the increased prevalence of remote/hybrid work and schooling, FY 2022-23 ridership levels were 35 percent greater than FY 2021-22, indicating the continued importance of MTA to local residents.

Ridership by service information is shown in both Table 11 and Figure 9. While the MTA has been experiencing a rebound in ridership as a whole, Figure 9 makes it evident that not all routes have seen the same relative return of ridership. Routes 5, 9, 60, 65, and 95 saw annual ridership numbers in FY 2022-23 that were 40 to 90 percent greater than FY 2021-22 levels, or rates that were greater than systemwide average. Comparatively, Routes 20, 75, Ukiah DAR, and Fort Bragg DAR saw less significant ridership rebounds in FY 2022-23, and Route 1 actually carried slightly less passenger-trips compared to the previous year. Route 9 (Ukiah Local) is the most utilized MTA service, accounting for approximately 40 percent of MTA's total annual ridership each year (Route 9 ridership was 41 percent of total ridership in FY 2022-23).

Table 11: MTA Historical Ridership
FY 2018-19 - FY 2022-23

Routes [1]	Fiscal Year					Change (2018-19 to 2022-23)	
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	#	%
Route 1- Willits	10,286	9,729	4,297	5,860	5,694	-4,592	-44.6%
Route 5 - Fort Bragg	17,416	13,238	5,712	5,153	8,086	-9,330	-53.6%
Route 7 - Ukiah (Jitney)	3,537	921	0	0	0	-3,537	-100.0%
Route 8 - Ukiah (Evening)	12,510	9,170	0	0	0	-12,510	-100.0%
Route 9 - (Local)	116,386	88,865	28,618	39,225	57,270	-59,116	-50.8%
Route 20 - Ukiah / Willits	30,958	25,292	8,255	14,930	18,196	-12,762	-41.2%
Route 60 - The Coaster	11,433	7,941	2,671	3,410	6,417	-5,016	-43.9%
Route 65 - Cross County	11,367	9,410	0	5,553	9,051	-2,316	-20.4%
Route 65a - New Route	7,146	4,068	0	0	0	-7,146	-100.0%
Route 75 - South Coast / Ukiah	8,517	6,942	3,257	5,305	6,261	-2,256	-26.5%
Route 95 - South Coast / Santa Rosa	4,911	3,456	1,001	2,453	3,789	-1,122	-22.8%
Ukiah Dial-a-Ride	16,576	11,590	8,751	11,344	13,244	-3,332	-20.1%
Fort Bragg Dial-a-Ride	14,879	10,927	6,122	6,759	9,064	-5,815	-39.1%
RCRC Contract Service	3,065	3,065	3,065	3,065	2,555	-510	-16.6%
Fixed Route Subtotal	234,467	179,032	53,811	81,889	114,764	-119,703	-51.1%
DAR Subtotal	31,455	22,517	14,873	18,103	22,308	-9,147	-29.1%
Total Systemwide	**268,987**	**201,549**	**68,684**	**103,057**	**139,627**	**-129,360**	**-48.1%**

Source: MTA

Note 1: Routes 7, 8, 64, and 65a were suspended in FY 2020-21 and have not resumed since. Route 97 was suspended and then temporarily resumed, but has since been suspended again. Route 65 was temporarily suspended but operations have since resumed.

Ridership by Month

Many transit systems experience fluctuations in ridership throughout the year. Figure 10 depicts MTA monthly ridership by route for FY 2022-23. While monthly ridership totals fluctuated throughout the year, the Figure shows an obvious upwards trend in ridership as people returned to transit post-pandemic; the MTA has completed over 10,500 passenger-trips per month ever since August 2022. Ridership had been continuously increasing through December 2022 before experiencing increased variability during the first half of 2023. Based on Figure 10, MTA monthly ridership may be somewhat impacted by student travel patterns, as ridership is lowest from May to July. However, it is likely that ridership patterns are still stabilizing post-pandemic and monthly trends will be more discernable in FY 2023-24.

Figure 9: MTA Ridership by Service

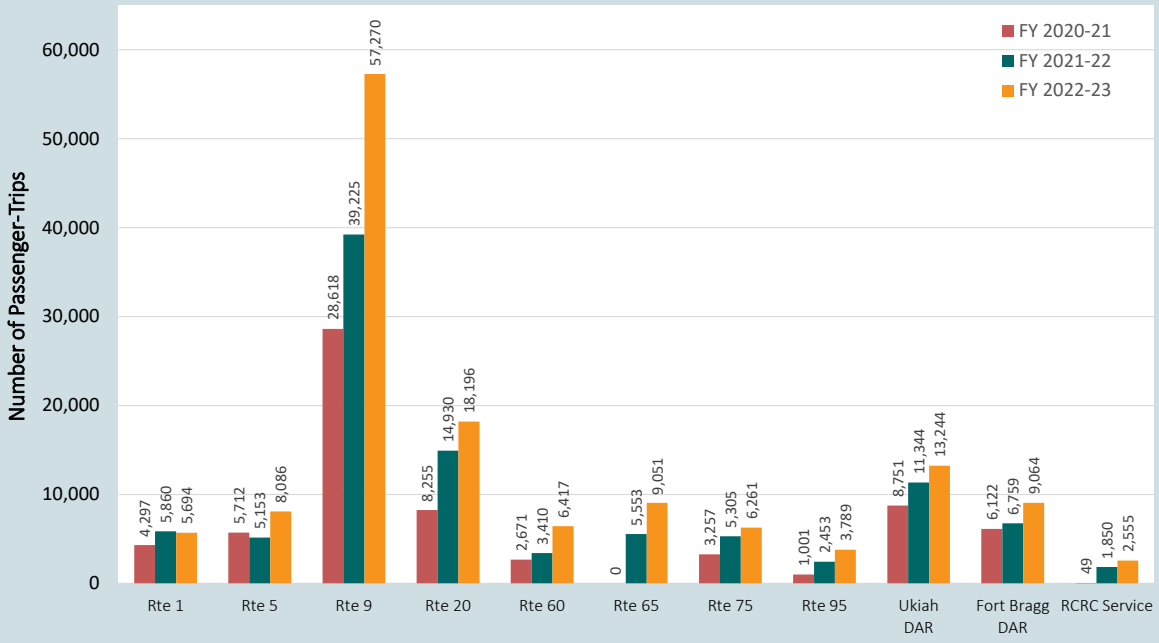
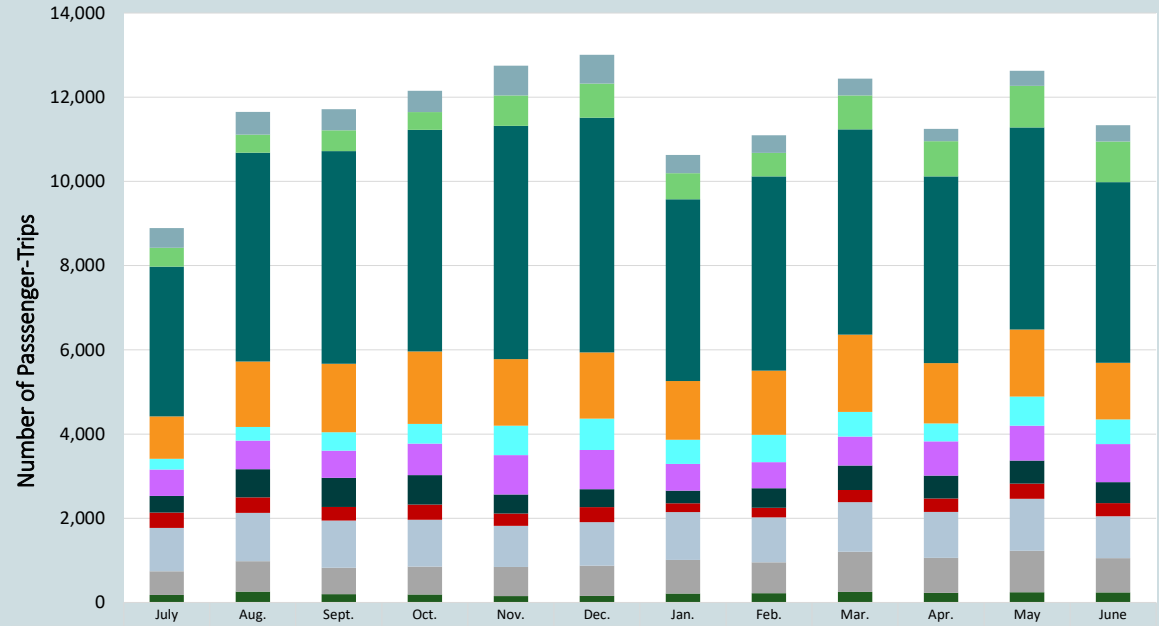


Figure 10: MTA Monthly Ridership by Service Type
July 2022 - June 2023

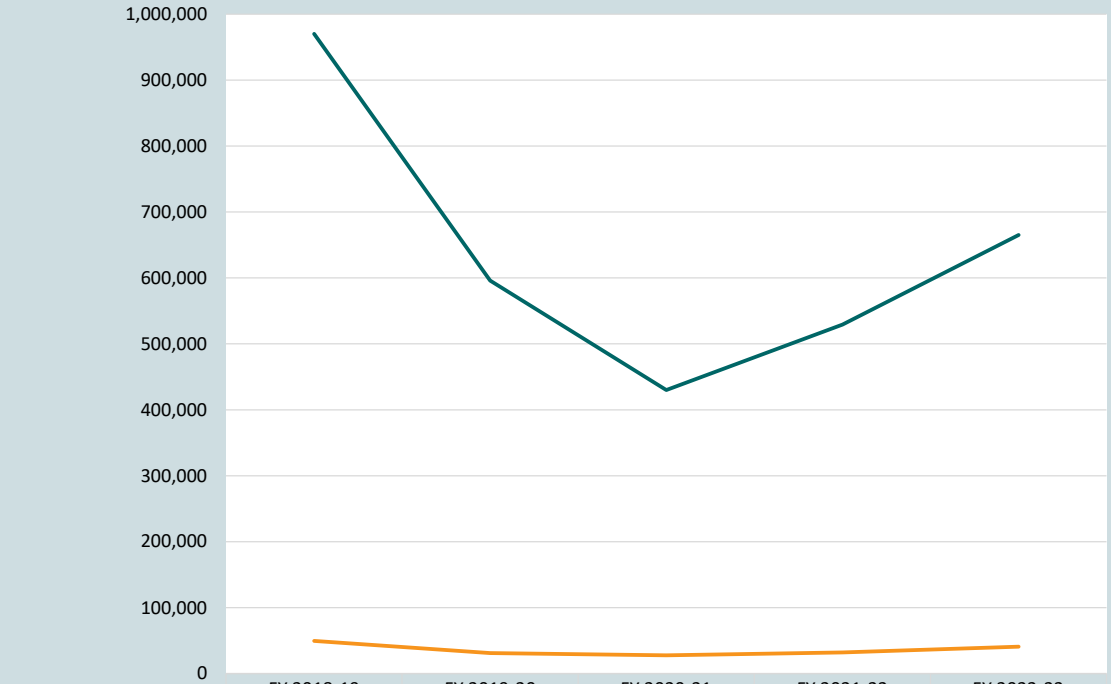


	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June
Rte 1	467	539	503	509	707	684	432	416	395	295	359	388
Rte 5	445	429	493	419	722	805	620	560	806	835	989	963
Rte 9	3,555	4,960	5,051	5,261	5,541	5576	4316	4611	4877	4435	4798	4290
Rte 20	1,012	1,552	1,627	1,724	1,582	1572	1396	1525	1833	1433	1594	1346
Rte 60	250	322	437	467	698	742	573	648	583	422	691	584
Rte 65	628	679	642	748	934	933	636	620	693	815	824	903
Route 75	398	670	694	698	451	426	296	465	578	539	551	497
Rte 95	366	371	320	363	294	360	208	229	289	319	359	311
Ukiah DAR	1,027	1,148	1,120	1,112	976	1035	1138	1065	1178	1095	1237	998
Fort Bragg DAR	564	717	627	658	690	716	800	734	953	831	979	810
RCRC Service	178	262	202	194	154	156	213	222	253	229	248	244

Vehicle Service Miles and Hours

Recent years have seen the MTA's service levels impacted by schedule changes due to the pandemic and driver shortage. In the last five years, weekday service levels were highest in FY 2018-19, when the MTA was operating additional services such as Route 8 (Ukiah Evening) and Route 64 (Ukiah to Fort Bragg) (Figure 11). MTA operated 56 percent less vehicle service miles and 44 percent less vehicle service hours in FY 2020-21 compared to FY 2018-19 due to widespread schedule reductions during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since FY 2020-21, service levels have been increasing as MTA has resumed more routes and recruited more drivers; MTA operated 26 percent more vehicle service miles and 28 percent more vehicle service hours in FY 2022-23 compared to FY 2021-22. Besides annual fluctuations, Figure 11 also shows the consistently large number of vehicle service miles operated by MTA in order to provide service to Mendocino County's dispersed population. High mileage routes often result in vehicles needing to be maintained and replaced more frequently.

Figure 11: Annual Weekday Service Quantities



	FY 2018-19	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23
Vehicle Service Miles	969,940	596,058	429,917	528,997	664,778
Vehicle Service Hours	49,610	31,139	27,904	32,051	40,960

MTA TRAVEL TIME ANALYSIS

Research has found that after fares, there are three trip characteristics that influence passenger's opinions of fixed routes: travel time, frequency of service, and whether or not a transfer is needed. This section explores travel time on MTA fixed routes, and then compares transit travel times to auto travel times for the same trips.

Travel Time Matrix

Table 12 shows an analysis of trips between six bus stop locations, representing different areas within Mendocino County. The fastest travel time for each trip pair was determined using existing bus schedules. LSC then recorded the service frequency and whether a transfer would be required based on what routes serve each trip pair the fastest. 10-minute penalties were added to the overall travel times if a transfer is required to reflect the inconvenience.

Note that actual travel times for each trip would likely vary from the times shown in Table 12 based on when someone actually began their trip; for instance, leaving early for the bus would increase the amount of time a passenger has to wait and add to their overall travel time. It is also important to recognize that Table 12 presents the fastest transit travel time between each origin/destination pair assuming optimal conditions and no traffic. Findings from Table 12 include:

- Trip times range from 20 minutes to 635 minutes, or over 10 hours.
- Trips that require transfers are on average almost two times longer than trips without transfers.
- Unsurprisingly, intercity trips take longer. The longest intercity trips are either to or between communities along the Mendocino County coast (average trip time of 3 hours and 44 minutes).
- Transfers are required for most trips, indicating a need for central transfer points.
- The average trip time to the Sonoma County Airport is only 2 hours and 31 minutes due to the express nature of the MTA's intercounty services.

Table 12: MTA Sample Trips: Travel Times, Transfers, and Frequency

Frequency		
35 - 60 Min.	61 - 120 Min.	More than 2 Hrs.

Travel Time in Minutes
T = Transfer Required

Origin Stop (Specific Stops)	Destination Stop: Pear Tree Center (Ukiah)	Mendocino College (Ukiah)	Integrated Service Center (Willits)	Denny's (Fort Bragg)	Point Arena Pharmacy	Sonoma County Airport
Pear Tree Center (Ukiah)		20	63 T	136	165 T	64
Mendocino College (Ukiah)	25		48	190 T	195 T	144 T
Integrated Service Center (Willits)	78	51		130 T	331 T	147
Denny's (Fort Bragg)	105	135 T	93		635 T	168
Point Arena Pharmacy	153 T	195 T	263 T	153 T		195
Sonoma County Airport	99	115 T	146	235	200	

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

Comparison of Auto and Travel Times

The long transit travel times in Table 12 are due in large part to the long distances covered by each trip. Therefore, it is valuable to compare transit and auto travel times to see how much additional time traveling on MTA requires compared to cars. Table 13 presents a comparison of auto and transit travel times for the same trips analyzed in Table 12. The top portion of each cell shows the auto travel time during off-peak hours as calculated by Google Maps.

The transit travel times shown in Table 12 were divided by the auto travel times to calculate a ratio. Low ratios, such as 1.6 for the trip between Denny's in Fort Bragg and the Pear Tree Center in Ukiah, are preferred as it indicates the transit trip does not take much more travel time compared to traveling by car. High ratios, such as 9.9 for the trip between Denny's in Fort Bragg and the Point Arena Pharmacy, indicate the trip is far less convenient by bus, making transit a less desirable alternative for those with travel options.

Table 13: Comparison of Auto and Transit Travel Times

LEGEND	10	Typical Auto Travel Times in Minutes[1]
	2.0	Ratio of Auto Travel Time to Transit Travel Time

Origin Stop \ Destination Stop	Pear Tree Center (Ukiah)	Mendocino College (Ukiah)	Integrated Service Center (Willits)	Denny's (Fort Bragg)	Point Arena Pharmacy	Sonoma County Airport
Pear Tree Center (Ukiah)		10	27	80	*87*	55
		2.0	*2.3*	*1.7*	*1.9*	*1.2*
Mendocino College (Ukiah)	*8*		*28*	*80*	*92*	*60*
	3.1		*1.7*	*2.4*	*2.1*	*2.4*
Integrated Service Center (Willits)	27	*29*		57	*113*	78
	2.9	*1.8*		*2.3*	*2.9*	*1.9*
Denny's (Fort Bragg)	64	*80*	57		*64*	132
	1.6	*1.7*	*1.6*		*9.9*	*1.3*
Point Arena Pharmacy	*86*	*92*	*114*	*65*		*122*
	1.8	*2.1*	*2.3*	*2.4*		*1.6*
Sonoma County Airport	57	*63*	81	137	*125*	
	1.7	*1.8*	*1.8*	*1.7*	*1.6*	

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

Note 1: Typical auto travel times calculated by using Google Maps

MTA FINANCIAL REVIEW

The sustainability of transit services is dependent on the balance between revenues and costs. The MTA's budget is reviewed in this section, then a cost model is developed to analyze performance by service.

Revenue Sources

The MTA earns revenues from a number of sources (Table 14). Local revenue sources include fares, the MTA's contract with the RCRC, the MTA's contract with Sonoma County to operate Route 95, and advertising, among others. Local revenues were the most impacted by ridership declines during the pandemic. The MTA is expecting only 4 percent of its total revenues to be from fares in FY 2023-24.

The majority of MTA's operating revenues come from state sources ($5.1 million or 76 percent). State funding has also been the only revenue category to increase over the last three years, increasing by 29 percent from FY 2021-22 to FY 2023-24. State transit funding in CA is primarily derived from two sources of formula funding, both of which are generated by provisions of the Transit Development Act (TDA): the Local Transportation Fund (LTF) (sales tax) and State Transit Assistance (STA) funds (fuel tax).

Table 14: MTA Operating Revenues

	Fiscal Years		
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
MTA Revenues	Final	Approved	Draft
Operating Revenues	**$702,200**	**$706,000**	**$541,000**
Farebox Revenue	$460,000	$460,000	$295,000
Redwood Coast Regional Center Contract	$65,000	$65,000	$65,000
Sonoma County Contract	$177,200	$181,000	$181,000
Other Local Revenues	**$206,000**	**$182,000**	**$173,000**
Advertising Contract	$100,000	$110,000	$125,000
Ag. Van Leases	$45,000	$0	$0
Senior Center Administration	$26,500	$26,500	$26,500
Maintenance Fuel Revenue	$23,000	$24,000	$0
Investment Income	$7,500	$7,500	$7,500
Other (Fuel Rebates, etc.)	$4,000	$14,000	$14,000
State Revenues	**$3,979,512**	**$4,695,462**	**$5,115,353**
STA	$455,221	$967,375	$1,443,571
LTF & LTF Unmet Needs	$3,434,291	$3,728,087	$3,671,782
LCTOP	$90,000	For Capital	$0
Federal Revenues	**$1,502,134**	**$1,342,774**	**$1,442,774**
CARES - 5311	$550,000	$200,000	$200,000
CARES - 5311 (f)	$100,000	$75,000	$75,000
FTA 5310	$0	$150,000	$150,000
FTA 5311	$552,134	$717,774	$717,774
FTA 5311 (f)	$300,000	$200,000	$300,000
Total Revenues	**$6,389,846**	**$6,926,236**	**$7,272,127**

Source: MTA FY 23/24 First Draft Budget

Another CA funding source is the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP). LCTOP funds are grant awards intended to provide operational and capital assistance to transit agencies for projects that will ultimately lower greenhouse gas emissions, with a focus on helping disadvantaged communities. In FY 2023-24, MTA plans to use their allocation of LCTOP funds to help finance the transition of the vehicle fleet to ZEVs.

Revenues from federal sources such as Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grants and the Coronavirus Air, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Acts represent approximately one-fifth of MTA's operating revenues. These funding sources are available for both operations and capital needs. It should be noted, however, that CARES Act funding will no longer be available after FY 2023-24. Overall, federal revenues are expected to decrease by 4 percent in FY 2023-24 from FY 2021-22, even with some CARES act funding still available.

Expenses and Cost Allocation

Over the last three years, MTA's operating budget has grown from $5.8 to $6.9 million, representing a 19 percent increase (Table 15). The increase has been in part due to the high rates of inflation experienced in recent years, as well as the need to offer competitive job offers to recruit more employees.

The top annual expense for MTA is salaries and benefits. The last three fiscal years, salaries and benefits for operators, maintenance and facilities staff, and administrative employees have been over 70 percent of MTA's annual operating expenses. Materials and supplies are expected to be 11 percent of MTA's operating expenses in FY 2023-24, with most funds going to fuel, tires, and lubricants (8 percent of total budget). Service/user fees account for 7 percent of MTA's budgeted FY 2023-24 operating expenses.

To develop a cost model for FY 2022-23, each MTA operating expense was allocated to the service quantity (vehicle service hours or vehicle service miles) upon which it is most dependent. The costs not dependent on service levels, such as printing or legal counsel, were designated as fixed costs. The cost model divided these costs by the FY 2022-23 annual service levels. Table 16 details how the cost model was developed, with the resulting formula being:

FY 2022-23 MTA Operating Cost Model = $72.06 x annual vehicle service hours +

$2.43 x annual vehicle service miles +

$2,393,361 in fixed costs

The cost model is used to calculate the marginal and fully allocated operating costs of each MTA service in Table 16.

Table 15: MTA Operating Expenses

MTA Operating Expenses	Fiscal Years 2021/22 Final	2022/23 Approved	2023/24 Draft
Salaries & Benefits	**$4,391,663**	**$4,839,094**	**$5,046,061**
Salaries - Operators	$1,756,789	$1,888,549	$1,964,089
Salaries - Maintenance & Facilities	$475,299	$510,946	$531,384
Salaries - Administrative	$702,744	$765,808	$796,440
Benefits - Operators	$872,058	$995,072	$1,042,873
Benefits - Maintenance & Facilities	$235,935	$269,216	$282,149
Benefits - Administrative	$348,837	$403,503	$422,886
Longevity Bonuses	$0	$6,000	$6,240
Service/User Fees	**$305,530**	**$487,100**	**$471,300**
Vehicle Technical Services, Towing	$17,500	$13,700	$12,400
Property Maintenance & Facility Security System	$4,250	$6,000	$6,000
Legal Counsel	$25,000	$30,000	$30,000
Purchased Transportation (Willits ADA)	$2,400	$2,400	$2,400
Marketing, Advertising, & Legal Notices	$26,000	$52,000	$60,000
Accident/Incident Payables	$15,000	$25,000	$25,000
Professional & Technical Services, IT, Outside Labor	$164,380	$290,000	$282,000
Computer & Software Maintenance	$45,000	$60,000	$45,000
Drug & Alcohol Services	$6,000	$8,000	$8,500
Materials & Supplies	**$621,000**	**$944,750**	**$773,125**
Fuel, Tires, & Lubricants	$460,000	$727,000	$577,000
Vehicle Maintenance & Repair Parts	$50,000	$62,500	$62,500
Expense Parts, Tools, Shop Supplies	$24,000	$30,000	$16,625
Facilities Maintenance & Janitorial	$35,000	$43,750	$45,000
Computer & Office Supplies/Programs, Printing	$36,500	$57,000	$47,000
Safety & Emergency Supplies	$1,500	$7,000	$5,000
Other Materials & Supplies	$14,000	$17,500	$20,000
Utilities	**$86,700**	**$118,000**	**$121,500**
Casuality & Liability Costs	**$360,000**	**$365,000**	**$375,000**
Taxes	**$2,300**	**$2,300**	**$2,300**
Leases & Rentals	**$2,400**	**$9,000**	**$9,000**
Miscellaneous (Travel, Training, etc.)	**$55,500**	**$97,500**	**$115,000**
Total Operating Requirements	**$5,825,093**	**$6,862,744**	**$6,913,286**

Table 16: MTA FY 2023 Operating/Admin. Cost Model

Expense Category	FY 22/23	Variable		
		Hour	Mile	Fixed
Salaries - Operators	$1,888,549	$1,888,549		
Salaries - Maintenance & Facilities	$510,946		$510,946	
Salaries - Administrative	$765,808			$765,808
Benefits - Operators	$995,072	$995,072		
Benefits - Maintenance & Facilities	$269,216		$269,216	
Benefits - Administrative	$403,503			$403,503
Longevity Bonuses	$6,000			$6,000
Service/User Fees	$471,000			$471,000
Vehicle Technical Services, Towing	$13,700		$13,700	
Purchased Transportation (Willits ADA)	$2,400	$2,400		
Fuel, Tires, & Lubricants	$727,000		$727,000	
Vehicle Maintenance & Repair Parts	$62,500		$62,500	
Other Materials & Supplies	$155,250			$155,250
Utilities	$118,000			$118,000
Casuality & Liability Costs	$365,000			$365,000
Taxes	$2,300			$2,300
Leases & Rentals	$9,000			$9,000
Miscellaneous (Travel, Training, etc.)	$97,500			$97,500
Total	**$6,862,744**	**$2,886,021**	**$1,583,362**	**$2,393,361**
Annual Service Quantity		40,048	650,984	--
Cost per Unit by Variable (Cost Model)		**$72.06**	**$2.43**	**$2,393,361**

Source: MTA 2023/24 Draft Budget

Note 1: Total costs are based on approved values for FY 2022-23.

Note 2: Annual service quantities estimated based on average monthly service levels from July through April.

MTA PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

To analyze MTA performance for FY 2022-23, the cost model was applied to operations data to calculate metrics such as passenger-trips per hour and subsidy per passenger-trip. The service parameters used in the performance analysis are summarized in Table 17.

The FY 2022-23 performance analysis looks at the MTA system as a whole, five service categories, as well as each specific MTA service. The performance analysis is shown in Table 18 and Figures 12 through 17. Table 19 details MCOG's most recently adopted performance standards for the MTA and compares FY 2022-23 performance to these standards.

Table 17: MTA Service Parameters FY 2022-23

Routes	Service Parameters: Passenger-Trips	Service Hours	Service Miles	Fully Allocated Operating Cost	Marginal Operating Cost [1]	Fare Revenue
Local Routes	71,050	15,906	206,086	$2,548,374	$1,694,580	$230,371
1 Willits	5,694	2,895	32,184	$450,472	$295,087	$18,462
5 Fort Bragg	8,086	2,077	25,054	$328,075	$216,606	$26,218
7 / 9 Ukiah	57,270	10,935	148,848	$1,769,828	$1,182,887	$185,691
Intercity Routes	30,874	8,101	178,489	$1,481,887	$1,047,029	$108,470
20 Willits / Ukiah	18,196	4,340	79,388	$753,233	$520,286	$63,928
60 The Coaster	6,417	1,730	36,623	$312,704	$219,847	$22,545
75 South Coast / Ukiah	6,261	2,032	62,478	$415,949	$306,896	$21,997
Intercounty Routes	12,840	6,633	200,784	$1,350,069	$994,003	$226,111
65 Crosscounty	9,051	4,109	125,990	$840,285	$619,743	$31,799
95 South Coast / Santa Rosa	3,789	2,525	74,794	$509,784	$374,260	$194,312
DAR Services	22,308	9,404	78,505	1,398,243	893,458	$71,122
Ukiah DAR	13,244	5,830	48,296	$865,901	$552,962	$42,224
Fort Bragg DAR	9,064	3,574	30,209	$532,342	$340,496	$28,898
RCRC Contract Service	2,555	915	6,527	$133,300	$84,171	$63,012
Fixed Route Total	114,764	30,641	585,359	$5,380,329	$3,735,612	$564,952
MTA Total	**139,627**	**40,045**	**663,864**	**$6,862,744**	**$4,713,241**	**$699,086**

Sources: MTA, LSC

Note 1: Marginal operating costs are based on the calculations shown in Table 16 and do not include fixed costs.

The values in Table 19 were calculated according to the route categories used by MCOG. The performance of the local senior center paratransit services is discussed in more detail towards the end of this chapter. The current goals and performance standards used by MCOG and the MTA are evaluated in Chapter 6, with revisions recommended as appropriate.

Passenger-Trips per Hour

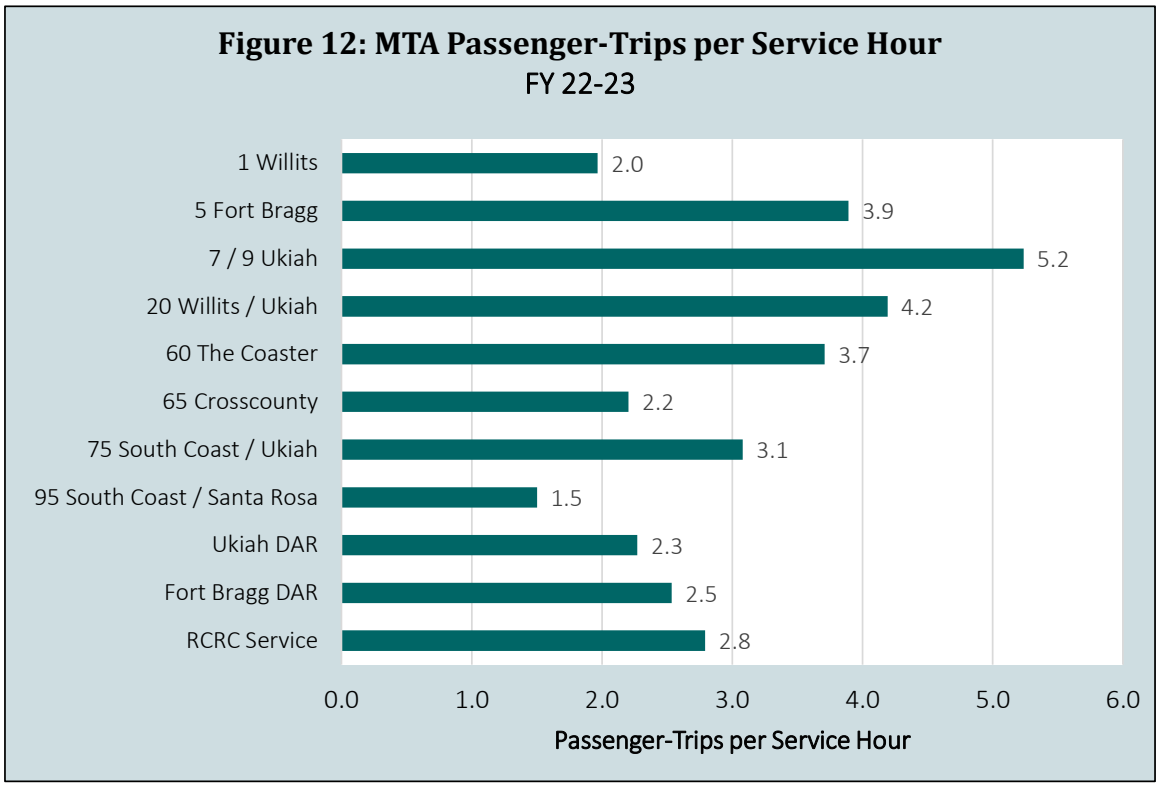
The relative productivity of a transit service can be assessed by calculating the average number of passenger-trips completed per vehicle service hour. Based on this metric, the most productive MTA service is Route 9 in Ukiah, a local route with high ridership that carried 5.2 passenger-trips per hour on average in FY 2022-23 (Table 18). Other routes that carried high numbers of passengers per hour include Route 20 (4.2 passenger-trips), Route 60 (3.7 passenger-trips), and Route 5 (3.9 passenger-trips) (Figure 12). The routes that carried the least passenger-trips per hour were the inter-county routes. The DAR services carried an average of 2.4 passenger-trips per hour in FY 2022-23, which is typical for paratransit services. As seen in Table 19, none of the service categories met the MCOG standards for passenger-trips per vehicle service hour in FY 2022-23.

Table 18: MTA Performance FY 2022-23

Routes	Service Performance: Passengers per... Hour	Passengers per... Mile	Operating Cost per Passenger-Trip	Operating Subsidy per Passenger-Trip	Operating Cost per Service Hour	Farebox Ratio [1]
Local Routes	4.5	0.34	$35.87	$32.62	$160.22	9.0%
1 Willits	2.0	0.18	$79.11	$75.87	$155.62	4.1%
5 Fort Bragg	3.9	0.32	$40.57	$37.33	$157.98	8.0%
7 / 9 Ukiah	5.2	0.38	$30.90	$27.66	$161.86	10.5%
Intercity Routes	3.8	0.17	$48.00	$44.48	$182.92	7.3%
20 Willits / Ukiah	4.2	0.23	$41.40	$37.88	$173.57	8.5%
60 The Coaster	3.7	0.18	$48.73	$45.22	$180.77	7.2%
75 South Coast / Ukiah	3.1	0.10	$66.43	$62.92	$204.74	5.3%
Intercounty Routes	1.9	0.06	$105.15	$87.54	$203.53	16.7%
65 Crosscounty	2.2	0.07	$92.84	$89.33	$204.52	3.8%
95 South Coast / Santa Rosa	1.5	0.05	$134.54	$83.26	$201.91	38.1%
DAR Services	2.4	0.28	$62.68	$59.49	$148.69	5.1%
Ukiah DAR	2.3	0.27	$65.38	$62.19	$148.53	4.9%
Fort Bragg DAR	2.5	0.30	$58.73	$55.54	$148.95	5.4%
RCRC Contract Service	2.8	0.39	$52.17	$27.51	$145.64	47.3%
Fixed Route Total	3.7	0.20	$46.88	$41.96	$175.59	10.5%
MTA Total	**3.5**	**0.21**	**$49.15**	**$44.14**	**$171.38**	10.2%

Sources: MTA, LSC

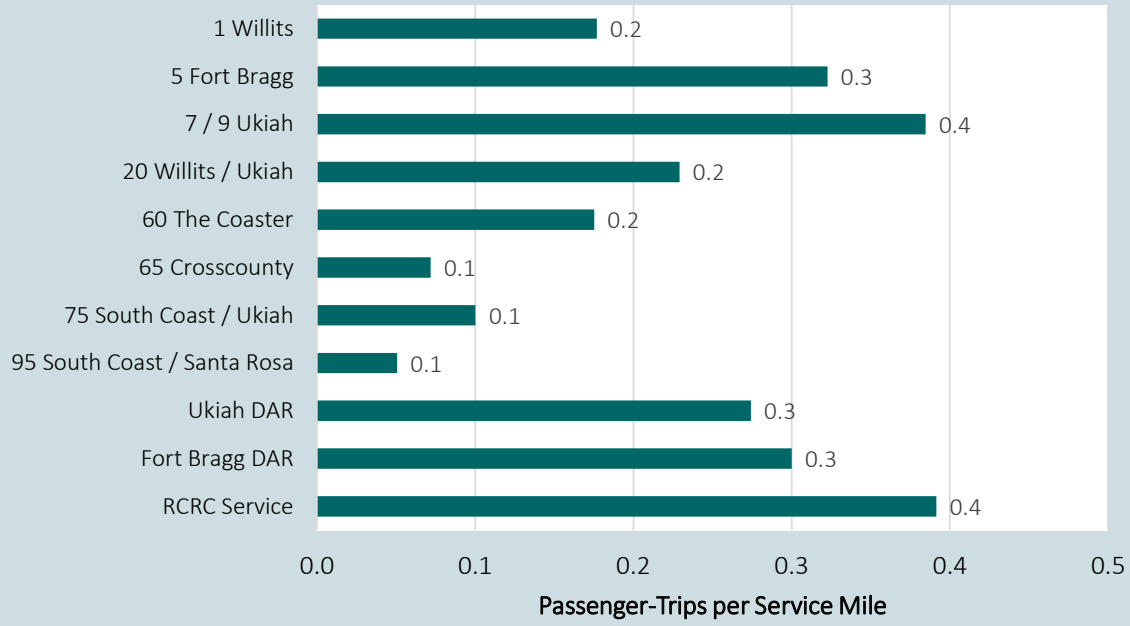
Note 1: Farebox calculations do not represent official calculations for TDA eligibility.



Passenger-Trips per Mile

The number of passenger-trips carried per vehicle service mile is another indicator of transit productivity. Low mileage services, such as the local routes, tend to carry more passenger-trips per mile compared to high mileage services, such as the intercity or intercounty routes (Table 18). On average, the local routes carried 0.34 passengers per mile in FY 2022-23, with Route 9 carrying the most passengers per mile out of any fixed route (0.38 passenger trips) (Figure 13). Route 9 also carried over six times more passenger-trips per mile compared to the intercounty routes, which only carried an average of 0.06 passengers per mile.

Figure 13: MTA Passenger-Trips per Service Mile
FY 22-23



Operating Cost per Passenger-Trip

One of the metrics monitored by MCOG is the operating cost per passenger-trip. Each year, MCOG evaluates this metric to see how MTA financial performance has changed in comparison to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The standards in Table 19 are CPI Adjusted Rolling Averages that were calculated with data from calendar years 2020, 2021, and 2022 (not FYs). These values will therefore be higher once inflation for 2023 is considered. The operating cost per passenger-trip includes not only direct operating costs such as driver salaries and fuel, but also other fixed costs included in Tables 15 and 16 such as marketing, computer supplies, and legal counsel, etc. The additional costs are allocated to each route based on the proportion of the total systemwide vehicle service hours operated by said service.

Systemwide, the operating cost per passenger-trip in FY 2022-23 was $49.15. The lowest average operating cost per passenger-trip was seen on the local routes ($35.87), however performance was not consistent among these services; Route 9 had the lowest cost per passenger-trip of any MTA service ($30.90), but Route 1 had one of the highest ($79.11).

Table 19: MCOG Performance Standards for the MTA

Does Not Meet Standard
Meets Standard

Passengers Per Vehicle Service Hour		
Service Type	**Standard**	**FY 22-23 Performance**
Short Distance Bus Routes	10.2	4.5
Long Distance Bus Routes	3.2	3.0
Senior Centers	2.2	1.4
Dial-a-Ride	3.3	2.4

Cost Per Passenger-Trip		
Service Type	**Standard**	**FY 22-23 Values**
Short Distance Bus Routes	$38.65	$35.87
Long Distance Bus Routes	$60.86	$64.78
Senior Centers	$46.03	$36.53
Dial-a-Ride	$37.60	$62.68

Cost Per Vehicle Service Hour		
Service Type	**Standard**	**FY 22-23 Values**
Short Distance Bus Routes	$176.53	$160.22
Long Distance Bus Routes	$194.76	$192.20
Senior Centers	$86.02	$51.44
Dial-a-Ride	$124.08	$148.69

Farebox Recovery Ratio		
Service Type	**Standard**	**FY 22-23 Performance**
Short Distance Bus Routes	10%	9.0%
Long Distance Bus Routes	10%	11.8%
Senior Centers	10%	13.7%
Dial-a-Ride	10%	5.1%

Note 1: FY 2022-23 Senior Center data represents projections based on operations from July through April.

Note 2: Short distance routes include Routes 1, 5, 7, and 9.

Note 3: Long distance routes include Routes 20, 60, 65, 75, and 95.

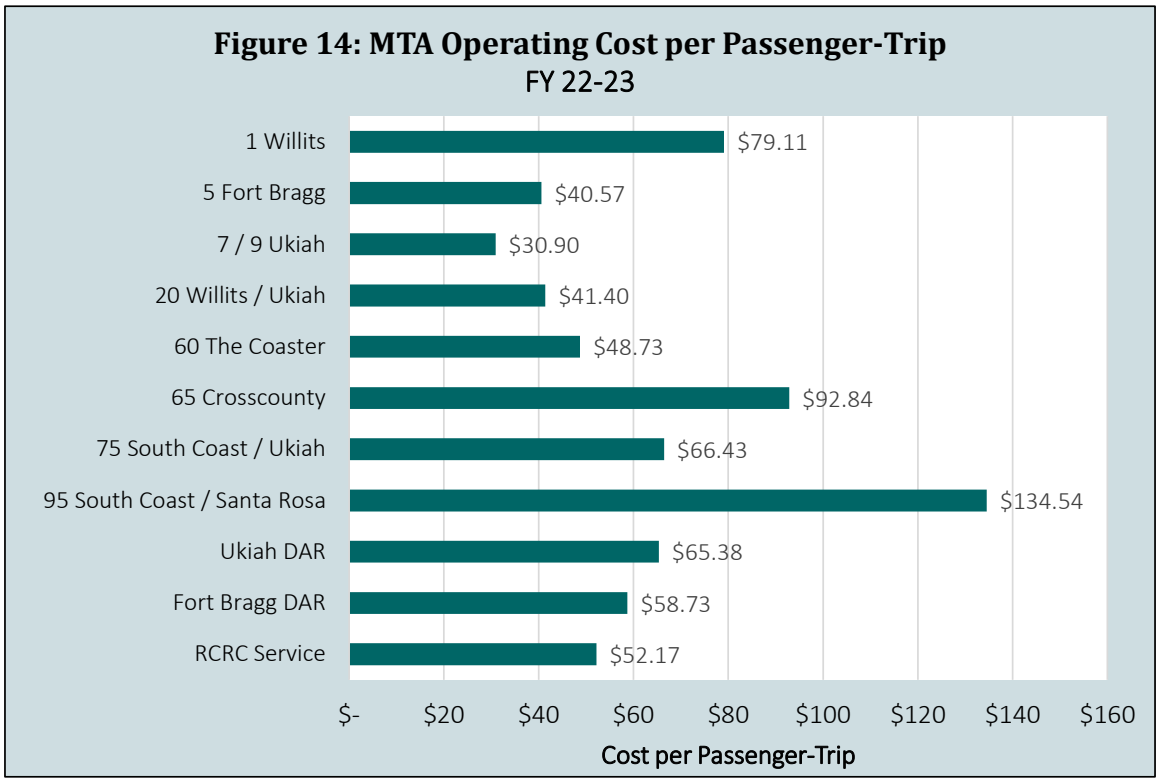
Note 4: Senior Centers refers to the paratransit services operated by local senior centers using TDA funding.

Note 5: MCOG uses "CPI Adjusted Rolling Average" figures for financial performance standards. The CPI Adjusted Rolling Average is calculated using the Consumer Price Index Annual Average, All Urban Consumers, California. In this table, the standards for the cost per vehicle service hour and cost per passenger-trip include inflation data through December 2022.

Note 6: The cost per passenger-trip was calculated by dividing the fully allocated cost for each service category for FY 2022-23 by total projected annual ridership.

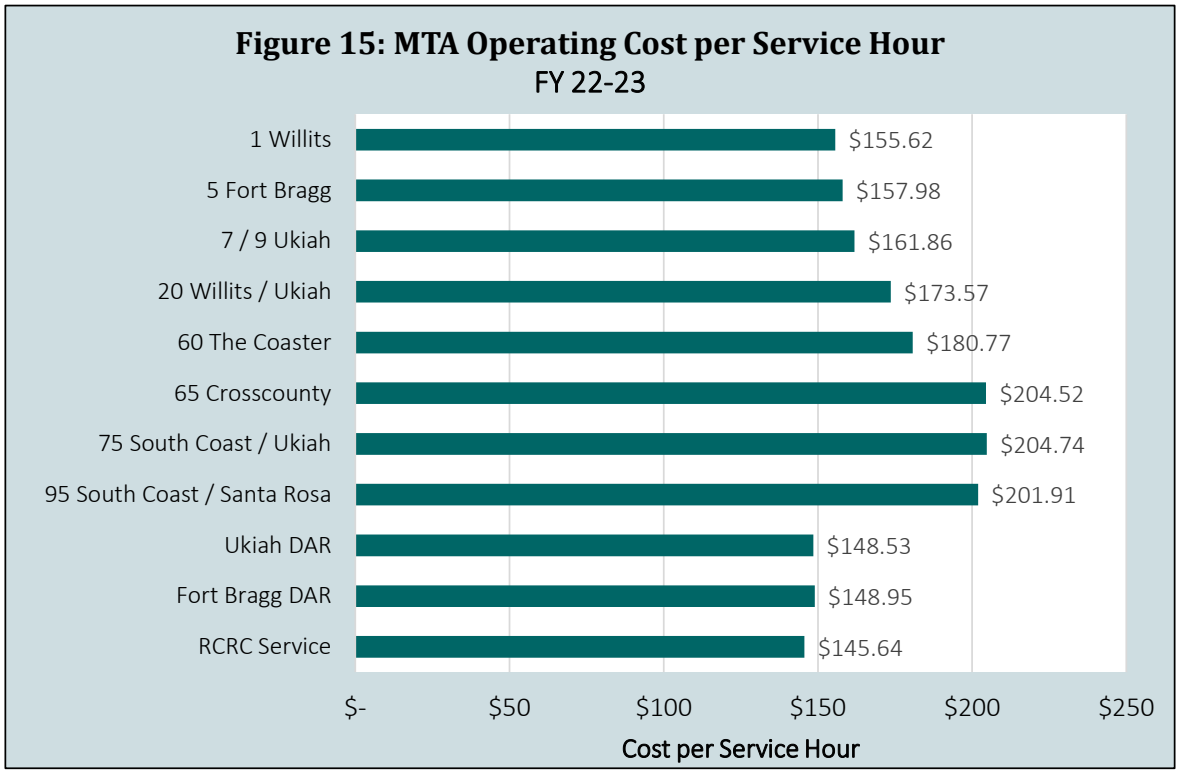
Source: MCOG, MTA

Operating cost per passenger-trip was higher on the intercity services ($48.00), and even higher on the intercounty routes ($105.15) (Figure 14). This trend is largely due to the longer distances operated by the intercity and intercounty routes. The two DAR services had an average operating cost of $62.68 per passenger-trip. In FY 2022-23, the short distance, or local routes, met MCOG's most recently adopted performance standards. Using MCOG's system, a service meets the standard if the operating cost per passenger-trip is below the CPI Adjusted Rolling Average.



Operating Cost per Hour

Another metric traditionally monitored by MCOG when evaluating MTA performance has been the total operating cost per vehicle service hour (Table 19). Similar to the total costs per passenger-trip, the operating costs per vehicle service hour for each service were calculated using the total MTA operating expenses for FY 2022-23. Based on these calculations, the total operating cost per service hour for MTA was $171.38 (Table 18). The DAR and RCRC services had the lowest cost per service hour (near $145), while the intercounty routes had the highest ($203.53). For the fixed routes, the total cost per service hour ranged from $155.62 on Route 1 to $204.74 on Route 75. As evidenced by Figure 15, the operating cost per vehicle service hour is influenced by the service type; the routes within each service category saw similar costs per hour. Both the local and long-distance routes met the MCOG performance standard in FY 2022-23 based on the CPI Adjusted Rolling Average, as calculated through December 2022. MCOG considers a service to have met the performance standard if the operating cost per vehicle service hour is lower than the CPI Adjusted Rolling Average.

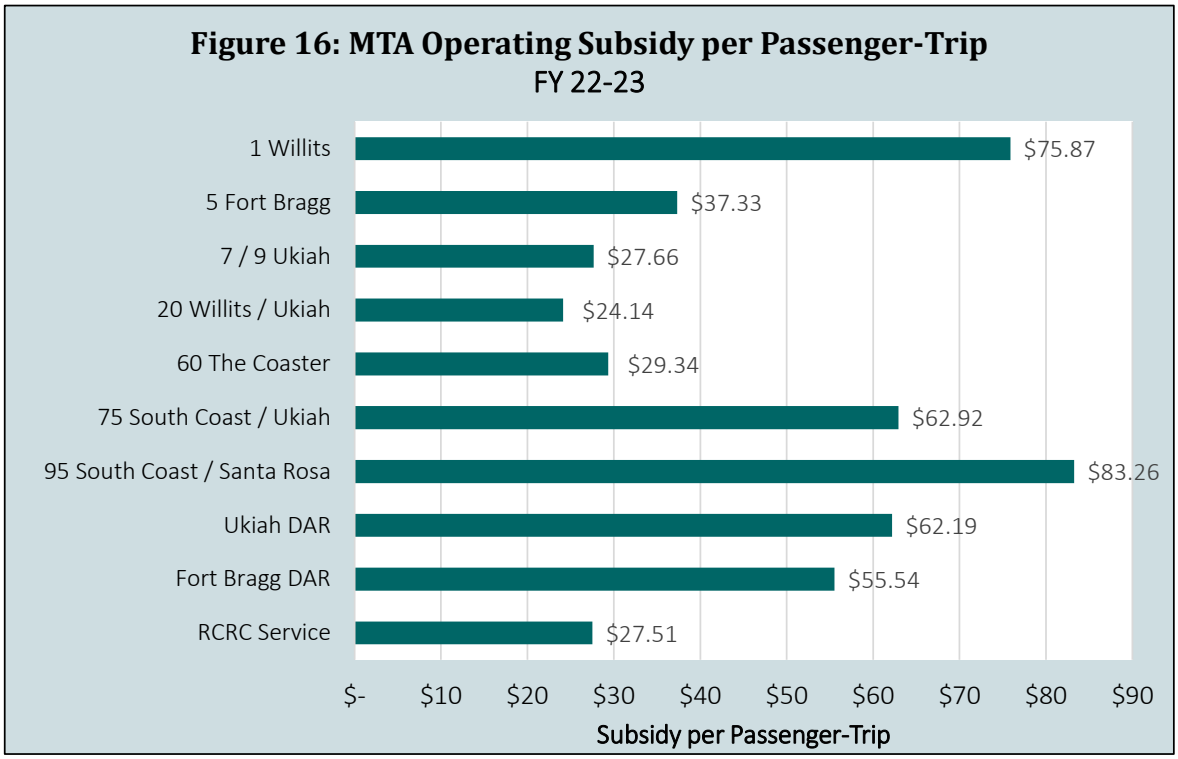


Operating Subsidy per Passenger-Trip

The operating subsidy (operating costs minus fare revenue) per passenger-trip represents the amount of tax-payer subsidy per passenger-trip required to operate the transit system and is an excellent measure of cost efficiency. The MTA averaged an operating subsidy of $44.14 per passenger-trip in FY 2022-23 (Table 18). The local routes saw the lowest operating subsidy per passenger-trip ($32.62) and the intercounty routes saw the highest ($87.54). Route 9 had the lowest subsidy per passenger trip of any MTA service given its high ridership ($27.66) (Figure 16). On the other end of the spectrum, Route 65 had the highest operating subsidy per passenger trip ($89.33). While also an intercounty route, Route 95 cost less than Route 65 because it is partially paid for by Sonoma County. For the RCRC contract service, the subsidy per passenger trip represents the cost per passenger trip after the RCRC funds are applied. Based on FY 2022-23 operations, the operating subsidy per trip is $27.51 on the RCRC contract service.

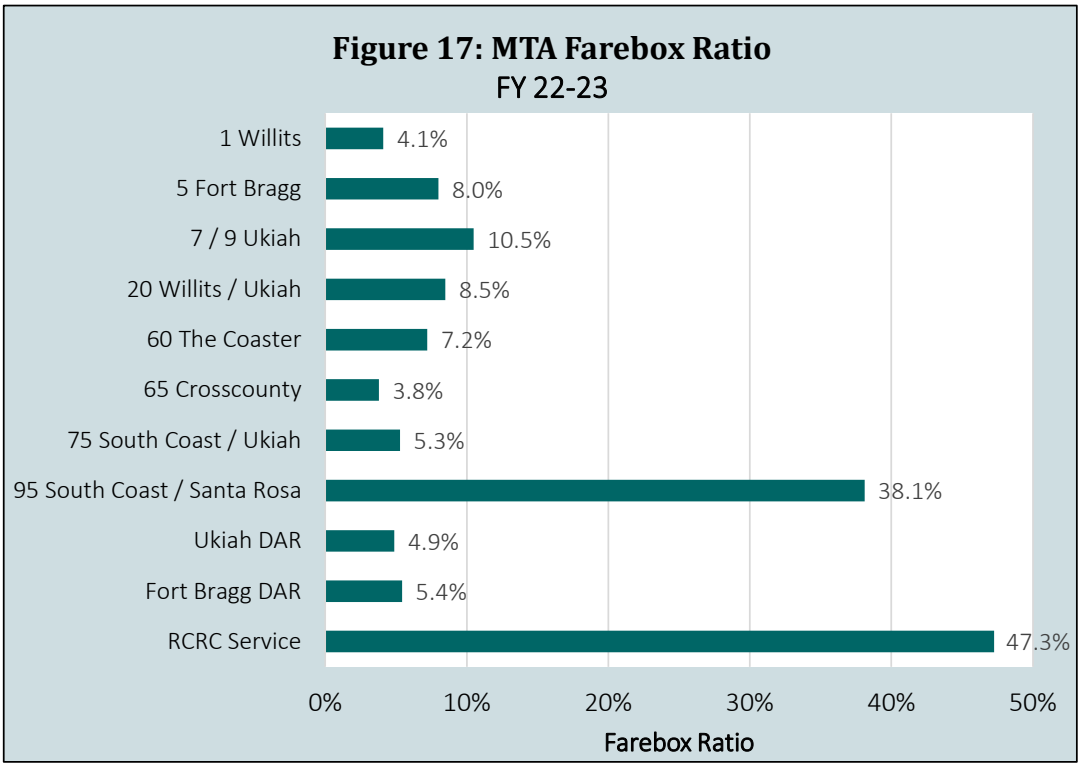
Farebox Ratio

The farebox ratio represents the proportion of operating costs paid for by fare revenues. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the California TDA required rural transit agencies (such as Mendocino County) to have a farebox ratio of at least 10 percent (or to make up the difference using local funds). If the 10 percent farebox ratio were not attained, the difference between the amount of actual fare revenue collected and the required amount of fare revenue needed to meet the 10 percent ratio would be assessed as a penalty. One grace year was allowed per TDA.



Beginning in FY 2019-20, transit operators who do not meet the required minimum farebox recovery ratio requirement could not be penalized (per Assembly Bill 90). This temporary relief was extended through FY 2022-23, per Assembly Bill (AB) 149. AB 149 also set forth additional allowances for calculating the official farebox ratio. These include categorizing federal funds as "local funds" to boost the revenue side of the equation and adding several exemptions on the cost side of the equation. Although farebox ratio may have less significance going forward in terms of TDA eligibility, the simple ratio of fare revenues to operating costs is still useful for transit planning purposes and therefore discussed here. MCOG standards state all service categories should have farebox ratios of at least 10 percent (Table 19). The long-distance routes are the only MTA service category that met this standard in FY 2022-23.

The MTA systemwide farebox ratio in FY 2022-23 was 10.2 percent (Table 18). This farebox would meet the TDA requirements even without the new allowances on both the revenue and cost side discussed above. The RCRC service and Route 95 have the highest farebox values due to being subsidized by contracts with other agencies. Of the routes only collecting local passenger fares, Route 9 was the best performing route in terms of farebox (10.5 percent), followed by Route 20 (8.5 percent) and Route 5 (8 percent). Both the Fort Bragg and Ukiah DAR services have farebox ratios near 5 percent, which is on par for paratransit. It should be noted that according to the FY 2022-23 farebox value, the RCRC contract is only paying for about half of the total operating cost of the service MTA provides for its clients. This is shown in Figure 17.

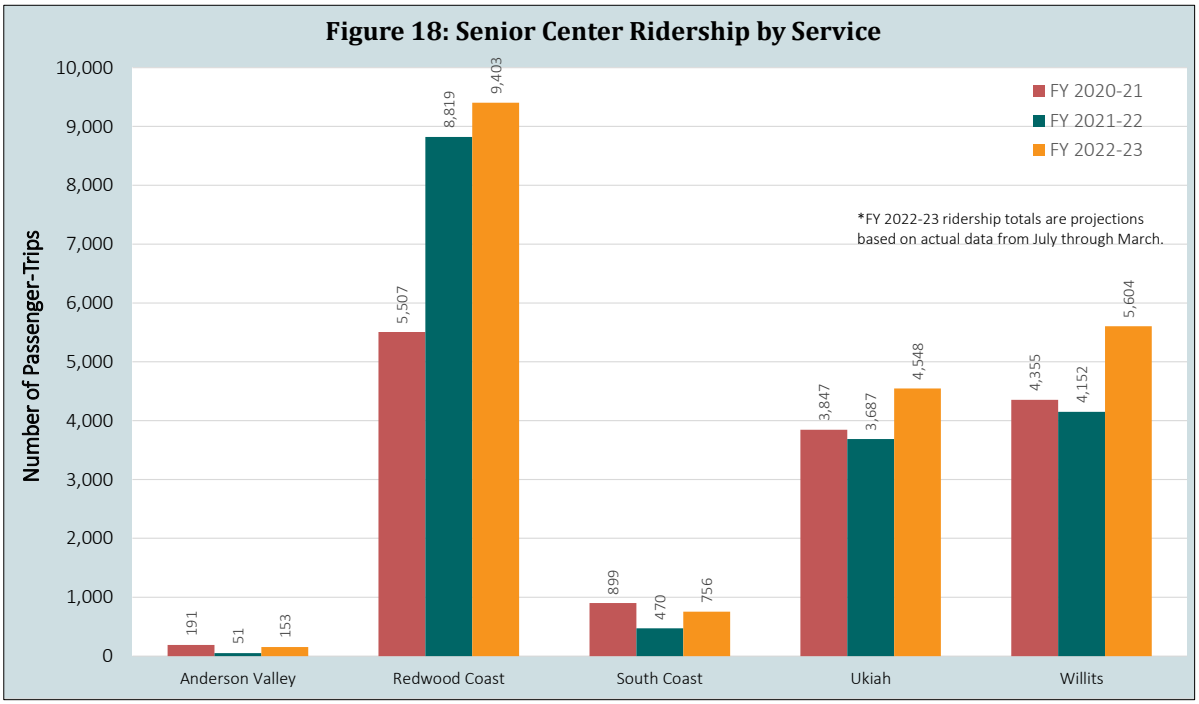


SENIOR CENTER TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS PERFORMANCE

MTA contracts with five local senior centers to operate door-to-door transportation services: the Anderson Valley, Redwood Coast, South Coast, Ukiah, and Willits Senior Centers. The senior centers receive a portion of MTA's TDA funding for their transportation programs through contracts with the MTA. The details of the specific programs are discussed in Chapter 3 in the section describing social service transportation providers.

MCOG and the MTA approved a new TDA funding formula for the senior center programs in 2021 to be implemented beginning in FY 2022-23. The agreement distributes funding to the various senior centers based on service levels, with 40 percent of funding being distributed based on the number of passenger-trips, 30 percent based on the number of vehicle service hours, and 30 percent based on the number of vehicle service miles. The formula will be updated every three years to reflect changes in operating levels. Based on the current funding agreement, the South Coast and Ukiah Senior Center each receive 27 percent of the TDA funds allocated for the senior centers, the Willits Senior Center receives 24 percent, the Redwood Coast Senior Center receives 16 percent, and the Anderson Valley Senior Center receives 6 percent. It should be noted that the senior centers do not rely exclusively on the TDA funding allocated to them by MCOG and the MTA, as they can generate revenues from other sources such as fares, donations, and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 grants.

Ridership for the senior center programs is shown in Figure 18 for the last three FYs. FY 2022-23 ridership totals were projected based on operations data from July through March. The Redwood Coast Senior Center's transportation program serves the most riders annually and is expected to complete over 9,000 passenger-trips in FY 2022-23. The Ukiah and Willits Senior Centers both serve upwards of 3,500 passenger-trips annually. The Anderson Valley and South Coast Senior Centers carry fewer passenger-trips per year compared to the other three centers.



A performance analysis was conducted for the senior center transportation programs. The parameters used for this analysis are shown in Table 20. Full year FY 2022-23 data was projected based on operations from July through March. Operating costs are projected based on the actual costs recorded by the senior centers during the first nine months of the FY. Subsidy values represent the funding the senior centers received from MCOG and the MTA (or TDA funds), insurance, and FTA Section 5310 to support the programs' operating costs. Revenues represent how much funding the senior centers received from fares, donations, and other locally generated sources.

The performance analysis is shown in Table 21. The senior centers' performance is also summarized in Table 19 compared to the performance standards set by MCOG. Overall, the senior center transportation programs perform well. In FY 2022-23, the five senior centers collectively met the MCOG standards for operating cost per vehicle service hour, operating cost per passenger-trip, and farebox recovery ratio. The only standard the services were not projected to meet was passenger-trips per hour.

The best performing programs in terms of productivity (passenger-trips per hour and passenger-trips per mile) were the Willits, Ukiah, and Redwood Coast Senior Centers. The Willits Senior Center was the most productive, meeting the MCOG performance standard of 2.2 passenger-trips per hour in FY 2022-23 (2.5 passenger-trips), and carrying 0.3 passenger-trips per mile. The Anderson Valley Senior Center was the least productive of the senior center transportation programs, carrying only 0.3 passenger-trips per hour and 0.02 per mile.

The operating cost per passenger-trip ranged from nearly $20 on the Redwood Coast and Willits services to upwards of $215 on the Anderson Valley and South Coast services. The Redwood Coast, Willits, and Ukiah senior centers all had lower operating costs than the MTA DAR services, even though they provide more specialized services. The operating cost per passenger-trip is influenced by each program's funding levels. The majority of funding for the senior center transportation programs come from MTA's contract, however some centers contribute other funding, and some receive FTA 5310 funds.

Table 20: Projected Senior Center Transportation Programs Service Parameters FY 2022-23

	Service Parameters				
Senior Center	Passenger-Trips	Service Hours	Service Miles	Operating Costs	Revenues [2]
Anderson Valley	153	543	8,503	$33,593	$3,045
Redwood Coast	9,403	7,669	32,297	$200,593	$18,337
South Coast	756	1,145	14,200	$164,700	$56,799
Ukiah	4,548	2,891	23,505	$214,615	$11,356
Willits	5,604	2,284	20,160	$134,053	$13,169
Senior Center Total	**20,464**	**14,532**	**98,666**	**$747,554**	**$102,706**

Sources: MCOG, MTA, LSC

Note 1: Projections were made based on operations data from July 2022 through March 2023.
Note 2: Fare revenues include passenger fares, agency contributions, donations, and other local revenues.

Table 21: Projected Senior Center Transportation Programs Performance FY 2022-23

	Service Performance				
	Passengers per...				
Senior Center	Hour	Mile	Cost per Passenger-Trip	Cost per Service Hour	Farebox Ratio [2]
Anderson Valley	0.3	0.02	$219.09	$61.87	9.1%
Redwood Coast	1.2	0.29	$21.33	$26.16	9.1%
South Coast	0.7	0.05	$217.86	$143.82	34.5%
Ukiah	1.6	0.19	$47.19	$74.24	5.3%
Willits	2.5	0.28	$23.92	$58.69	9.8%
Senior Center Total	**1.4**	**0.21**	**$36.53**	**$51.44**	**13.7%**

Sources: MCOG, MTA, LSC

Note 1: Projections were made based on operations data from July 2022 through March 2023.
Note 2: Farebox calculations do not represent official calculations for TDA eligibility.

Chapter 5
SUMMARY OF PUBLIC OUTREACH

INTRODUCTION

Multiple public outreach efforts were conducted during the development of the MTA SRTDP in order to collect meaningful data and feedback regarding MTA services, as well as to learn more about community perceptions of the MTA and opinions on proposed service changes. This chapter summarizes each outreach effort in brief.

ONBOARD PASSENGER SURVEY

An onboard passenger survey was conducted on MTA fixed route and DAR services during the week of May 15, 2023. Trained survey staff were available on most fixed routes to assist passengers with completing surveys. Drivers were willing and available to answer questions if staff were not present. On the DAR services, surveys were available for passengers to self-administer. The DAR drivers were also provided with instructions on how to assist passengers in completing surveys. The onboard passenger survey gathered data about how current riders utilize the bus system, as well as passengers' opinions of MTA services. In all, 272 passenger surveys were collected across the various MTA services. Highlights of the onboard survey results are presented in this section, with detailed results included in Appendix C.

The onboard survey results are compared to the results of the 2014 onboard passenger surveys conducted for the MTA by LSC as part of the *Countywide Transit Ridership Survey*. The 2014 onboard surveys were conducted in the fall and summer. To provide the most accurate comparison between the two survey results, the fall 2014 survey results are compared to the 2023 survey results, as school was in session for both of the respective survey efforts. It should be noted that the fall 2014 survey effort did not include the DARs, therefore, no comparison is made between the 2023 and 2014 DAR survey results.

Fixed Route Survey

Passenger Profile

- While survey respondents ranged from under 18 years of age to 75 and older, the largest percentage of respondents were 41 to 61 years of age (27 percent). In 2014, the highest percentage of respondents were under the age of 19 (23 percent).
- Slightly less than half of the respondents (44 percent) were employed. 26 percent of the passengers surveyed were students, half of whom were students that attend Mendocino College. The percentage of survey respondents who were employed increased compared to 2014.
- Only 15 percent of respondents had a car available to them the day they were surveyed. This is lower than 2014, when 28 percent had a vehicle available to them.
- The most common trip purposes were work (28 percent) and personal errands (26 percent). This is different from 2014 when most respondents were traveling for school (25 percent).
- The majority of survey respondents use MTA services either daily (37 percent of respondents) or 2 to 4 days per week (35 percent). This equates to 72 percent of respondents using MTA services at least 1 to 4 days per week. This is similar to 2014 when 75 percent of respondents indicated that they rode at least 2 days per week.

Travel Patterns

- Most respondents (60 percent) were riding Route 7/9 at the time of taking the survey.
- Boarding and alighting data collected by surveyors shows that the most boardings happened at Frank Zeek School and Mendocino College (Table 22). The most alightings occurred at the Ukiah Library and Mendocino College (Table 23).
- The majority of passengers surveyed walk both to and from the bus stop (87 and 80 percent, respectively).
- Respondents were most interested in expanded transit service to Sonoma County/East Bay Area.

Opinions of MTA Service

In general, survey participants held a very high opinion of the MTA. Figure 19 shows how respondents rated ten aspects of MTA on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'very poor' and 5 being 'excellent'. Key findings are summarized below.

- Survey participants rated the overall service very highly, with 63 percent rating it as excellent.
- Over 80 percent of respondents rated the friendliness of drivers as excellent.
- Survey respondents were the least enthusiastic about the hours of operation, with 32 percent rating this service aspect a 1, 2, or 3.

Respondents have maintained extremely positive opinions of drivers over time, as driver courtesy was the highest-ranked service element in 2014. At the other end of the ranking scale, "schedule meets need" was the lowest-ranked service element in 2014, not unlike hours of operation during the 2023 survey.

Desired Improvements

Survey respondents identified a wide range of improvements that they wish to see. These findings are summarized below and in Figure 20.

- The most popular improvement among survey respondents was later weekday service, followed by later Saturday service.
- Over 30 percent of respondents identified new routes as a desired improvement.
- Over 20 percent of respondents wanted to see improvements to bus stops.
- A majority of respondents (63 percent) expressed interest in on-demand transportation.

Dial-a-Ride and Paratransit Survey

Passenger Profile

- DAR and Paratransit riders are generally older than fixed route passengers, with the largest percentage of respondents being 75 years of age or older (34 percent), followed by those 41 to 60 years of age (22 percent) and 61 to 74 years of age (22 percent).
- Only 19 percent of respondents had a car available to them the day they were surveyed.
- The most common purposes for why survey respondents were using DAR or Paratransit services were medical/dental (39 percent) and shopping (30 percent).

Table 22: MTA Stops with Most Boardings

Bus Stop	Number of Boardings*	Percent of Total
Frank Zeek School	64	11%
Mendocino College	52	9%
Pear Tree Center	50	8%
Ukiah Library	45	8%
Walmart/FoodMaxx	28	5%
Gobbi St & Main St	25	4%
Feedlot Ln & Bush St	19	3%
Boatyard Drive	19	3%
Alder Ln - Lumber Jacks	13	2%
Willits City Park	12	2%
State St & Blue Bonnet Dr	12	2%
Washington Ave & Dora St	11	2%
Adventist Health Ukiah Valley	9	2%
State St & Gobbi St (Safeway)	9	2%
Main St & Lansing St	9	2%
Total Boardings	590	100%

*Includes boarding data for Saturday runs

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. Based on limited runs in May, 2023

Table 23: MTA Stops with Most Alightings

Bus Stop	Number of Alightings*	Percent of Total
Ukiah Library	75	14%
Mendocino College	55	10%
Pear Tree Center	35	6%
Frank Zeek School	34	6%
Walmart/FoodMaxx	31	6%
Boatyard Drive	22	4%
Gobbi St & Main St	19	3%
Bush St & Cypress St/Ave	16	3%
Feedlot Ln & Bush St	16	3%
Bush St & Low Gap Rd	15	3%
Express Mart	12	2%
Gobbi St & Leslie St	11	2%
Pacific Pride	11	2%
Willits City Hall	11	2%
Navarro River Junction	9	2%
Total Alightings	552	100%

*Includes alighting data for Saturday runs

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. Based on limited runs in May, 2023

Figure 19: Passengers' Opinions of MTA Fixed Routes

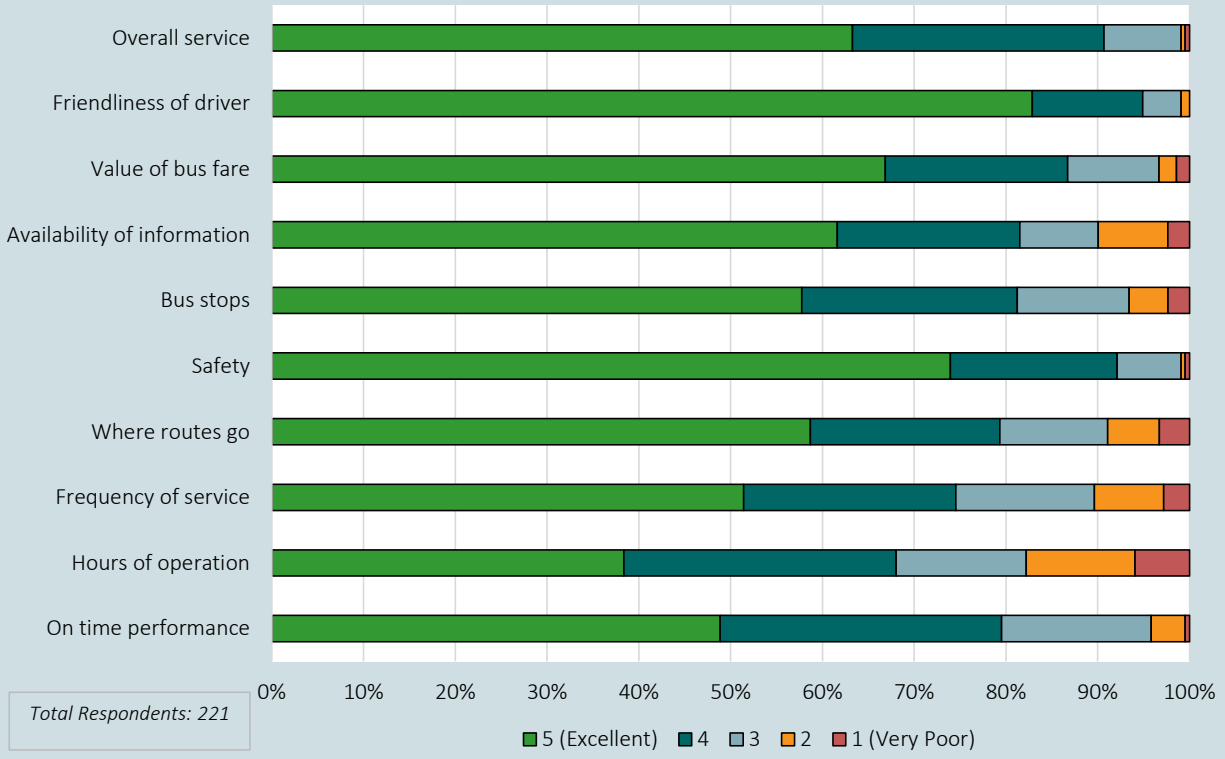
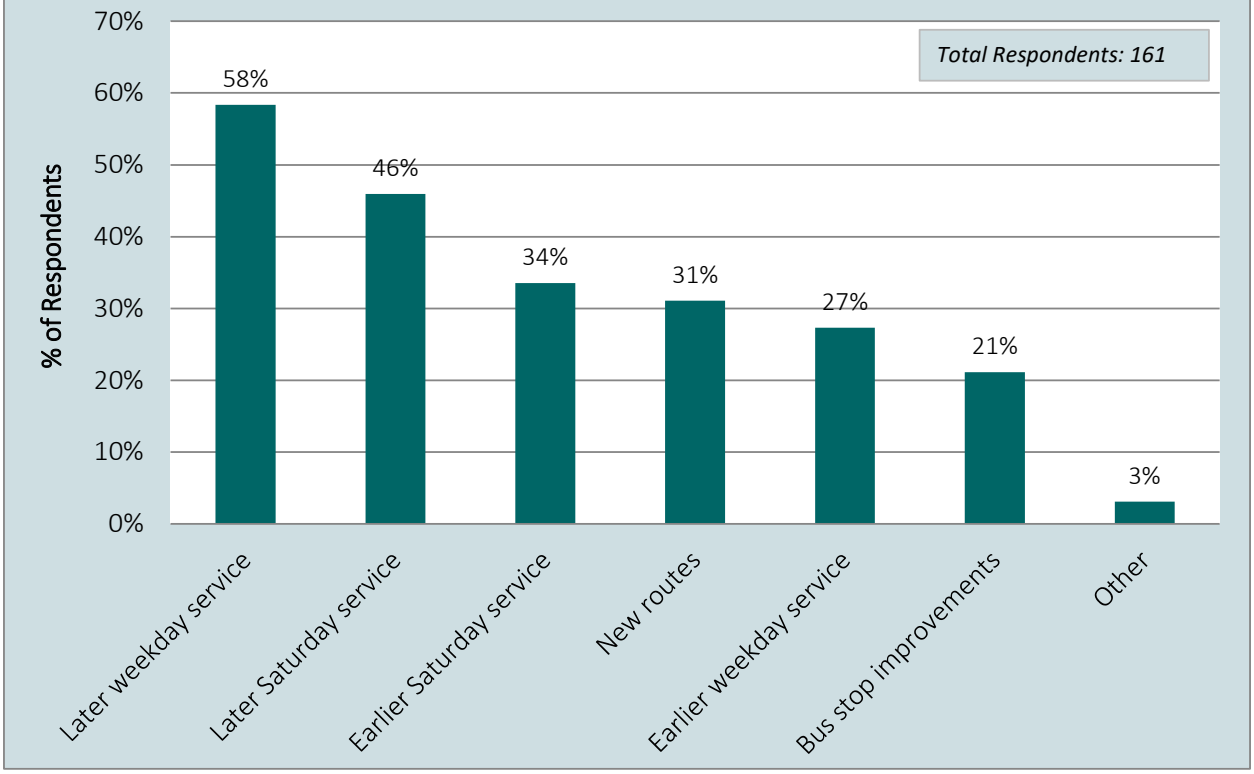


Figure 20: Most Popular Improvements



Travel Patterns

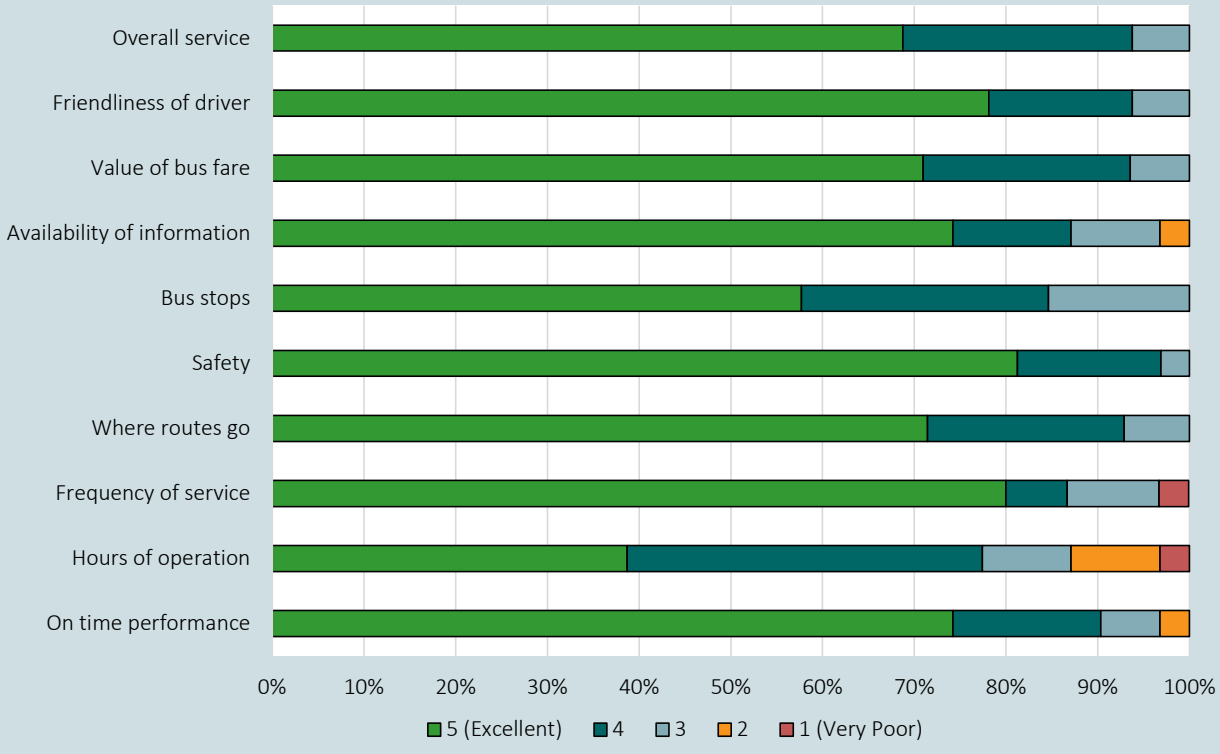
- Most respondents (82 percent) were riding on Ukiah DAR when they took the survey.
- A quarter of respondents were riding a repeating reservation, and a quarter made their trip reservation the day of.
- Most respondents (65 percent) were not going to transfer as part of their transit ride.

Opinions of MTA Service

Generally, DAR respondents thought MTA services were very good. Figure 21 shows how respondents rated ten aspects of MTA on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'very poor' and 5 being 'excellent'. Key findings include:

- Survey participants rated overall service very highly with 69 percent rating it as excellent.
- Respondents rated both safety and the friendliness of drivers very highly, with 80 percent of responses rating each as excellent.
- Respondents were least enthusiastic about the hours of operation, with only 39 percent rating this service aspect as excellent.

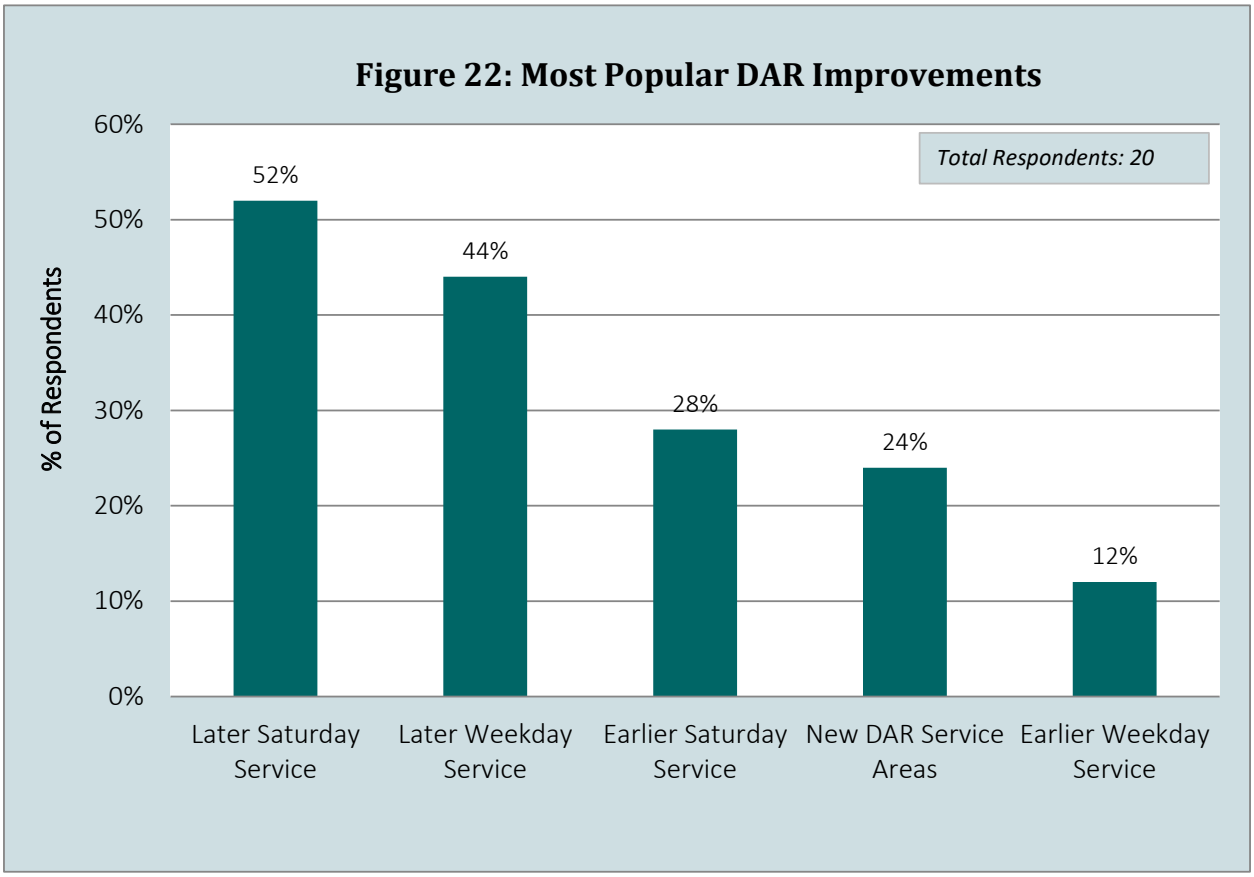
Figure 21: DAR Passengers' Opinions of MTA



Desired Improvements

Survey respondents identified a wide range of improvements that they wish to see. These findings are summarized below and in Figure 22.

- The most popular improvement among survey respondents was later Saturday service.
- Interest in Sunday service was specifically identified by 15 percent of respondents.



STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

A total of 60 stakeholders were identified during the course of the study. The project stakeholders included representatives from transit and transportation providers, Native American tribal organizations, human and social service providers, and senior centers. A stakeholder survey was shared with the project stakeholders to gain feedback about transit needs and desired transit improvements three times during the month of August 2023 through email notifications and individual phone calls. Of the 60 stakeholders notified, the following 13 organizations participated in the survey:

- Cahto Tribe
- Redwood Community Services
- Coastal Seniors
- Willits Seniors Inc.
- Happy Rides Inc.

- County of Mendocino Dept of Public Health
- Adventist Health Howard Memorial
- Ukiah Senior Center
- Adventist Health Mendocino Coast
- Mendocino Food & Nutrition Program DBA Fort Bragg Food Bank
- Boys & Girls Club of Ukiah
- Anderson Valley Senior Center
- Fort Bragg Food Bank

Detailed tables indicating each stakeholder's response are included in Appendix D. The stakeholder survey responses are briefly discussed in this section as well.

General Information

The majority of the organizations indicated that their services were intended for people living with disabilities, seniors, and low-income communities. The organizations surveyed mostly operate in Ukiah, Willits, and Fort Bragg. Some stakeholders indicated their organizations provide services in other communities also, including Laytonville, Irish Beach, Timber Cove, and Anderson.

The stakeholders surveyed represent organizations which provide social, transportation, and education services. Most of those participating in the questionnaire provide transportation with either their own vehicles and drivers or through the purchase and distribution of bus passes. An overwhelming majority indicated that their program participants and clients prefer printed materials for communication regarding transit services, followed by websites.

Major Transportation Needs

When asked what the most critical transportation needs are for each organization's constituents, almost all indicated the need for medical and dental transportation services, followed by transportation for shopping and personal errands. Other transportation needs identified included:

- Well-being classes and social events.
- Door-to-Door services for Medicare recipients.
- Services for pregnant women having to travel to Ukiah for medical appointments.

Origin and Destinations

Stakeholders were asked to describe where their clients live (origin) and where they typically need transportation to (destination). Some of the origins listed included Holy Spirit Assisted Living, Cypress Ridge Senior Housing, Duncan Place Senior Housing, Plateau, River Gardens, and the Walnut Street Apartments. Frequently named destinations included Adventist Health, Mendocino Health Community Center, Pear Tree Shopping Center, Department of Social Services, and Walmart.

Trip Time and Frequency

As could be anticipated, most stakeholders indicated that their clients need transportation services in the mornings between 7:30 and 9:00 AM, with many needing return trips in the mid and later afternoons between noon and 8:00 PM. Most stakeholders indicated their clients need transportation services Monday through Friday, with only a few indicating their clients need services on weekends. Half of the respondents indicated that their clients need services 1 to 3 days a week while the other half indicated a transportation need of 3 to 5 days per week.

Transportation Barriers

Most respondents indicated that their clients use MTA services at least some of the time. Of those who know their clients are unsatisfied with MTA services, the following issues were described:

- Lack of services to Laytonville and other Mendocino County communities.
- Lack of ability to use services due to physical disability.

The largest barrier the stakeholders' clients experience in getting to their destinations in Mendocino County is not owning a personal vehicle, followed by living too far from a bus stop.

Community Challenges and Recommendations

Stakeholders were asked about future changes in the community that may impact the need for public transportation. The following two themes emerged:

- Continued poverty in rural parts of the county will result in less vehicle ownership over time due to rising costs of living.
- Difficult terrain and distance continue to impact people's ability to age in place.

Specific suggestions and recommendations for MTA included:

- Resume service to the Laytonville area to provide connections to Willits and Ukiah.
- Explore alternative options such as ride-sharing, vans, jitneys, etc.
- Implement additional services to rural areas of the county.
- Implement free-fare policies.
- Provide free or discounted bus passes to social service organizations to distribute to clients most in need.

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

LSC and AIM Consulting held two in-person workshops to discuss the SRTDP findings and to gather public feedback. These workshops were held in July, 2023, and January, 2024. The January workshop was held both in-person as well as virtually to encourage as many residents to attend as possible. Details on the public workshops, including structure, content, and discussion points, are summarized in Appendix E.

Chapter 6
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STANDARDS

Goals and objectives are important organizational tools used to guide an agency's decision-making. An agency can determine how well it is meeting its goals with performance measures. Setting goals, and then developing performance standards, is particularly important for public transit agencies for several reasons:

- Transit goals are often contradictory. For instance, the goal of maximizing cost effectiveness tends to focus services on the largest population centers, while the goal of maximizing service availability tends to disperse services to outlying areas. Therefore, to best meet its overall mission, a public transit agency must continually balance the trade-offs between goals. Adopting policy statements encourages broader discussions of community values regarding transit compared to what is possible when considering issues case-by-case.
- Public transit agencies expend public funds and therefore have a responsibility to provide transparent information on how funds are being spent and whether or not the agency is meeting community goals. Funding partners also have a responsibility to ensure funds provided to the transit program are being used appropriately.

Note: MTA vehicle [Photo], sourced from MTA

MTA GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The 2016 MTA SRTDP set forth goals, objectives, and policies to guide MTA decision-making. These policies are summarized below, along with recommendations on how the previously adopted goals and policies should be modified for the current 2024 SRTDP. If nothing is listed below the goal, then no changes are recommended at this time.

Mission Statement

The MTA's mission statement is "To provide, safe, courteous, reliable, affordable and carbon-neutral transportation service."

- *Recommendation:* No change. This mission statement continues to exemplify the type of service the MTA strives to provide.

Goals

MTA has five adopted goals:

1. Provide affordable, reliable, efficient, and user-friendly transit service that effectively meets the local mobility needs of those residents of, or visitors to, the MTA service area who have limited mobility options. Where practical, also serve the needs of those who choose mobility for some, or all, of their local travel needs for environmental or lifestyle reasons.
2. Provide a regional link to local destinations as well as to intercity transportation alternatives and destinations outside Mendocino County.
3. Operate as efficiently, economically, and environmentally friendly as possible, so as to maximize the amount of service provided in a carbon-neutral manner. Ensure the financial stability of MTA.
4. Adopt procurement, management, and building practices that minimize environmental impacts and achieve a carbon-neutral operation, with a long-term fleet goal of zero emissions.

   - *Recommendation:* Rephrase the goal to say, "*Adopt procurement, management, and building practices that minimize environmental impacts and achieve a carbon-neutral operation. Continue to implement the vehicle procurement plan presented in the MTA Zero-Emission Bus Rollout Plan so as to achieve a 100 percent zero-emissions fleet by 2040 or earlier.*"

5. Strongly support:
   - County and local land use planning that encourages compact growth and transit access;
   - Local economic development that provides good-paying jobs without long commutes;
   - Travel demand management that minimizes the carbon footprint of Mendocino County's mobility system;
   - Congestion mitigation that reduces idling; and
   - Environmental goals that support sustainable living.

Objectives and Policies

The MTA has ten adopted objectives. Each of the objectives has related policies to help the MTA achieve its objectives. This section lists the MTA's objectives and policies, with any recommended changes mentioned below the specific policy.

Objective A: Maximize service availability, reliability, and convenience.

- Policies:

1. Priority should be given to serving the general mobility needs of low-income households, youth, seniors, students, and persons with disabilities. These are the primary transit markets that currently, and will in the future, use public transit in Mendocino County.

2. In Mendocino County communities where fixed route, flex route, and Dial-a-Ride services cannot maintain minimum productivity and farebox recovery standards, mobility management strategies such as e-Ride (volunteer driver program), vanpools, carpools, taxi ride subsidies will be considered to provide needed mobility options for both priority target market segments and riders desiring an alternative to driving as a means of saving money or reducing their carbon footprint.

➢ *Recommendation:* Add microtransit to the list of mobility management strategies.

3. In Mendocino County communities where fixed route or demand response services are meeting productivity and farebox recovery standards, mobility management strategies may be implemented if they complement existing mobility services, are not in competition with MTA routes or services, and do not deteriorate the productivity and farebox recovery standards of existing services.

➢ *Recommendation:* Delete service-specific farebox recovery standards.

4. Increase visibility and awareness of available transit services through effective branding and signage on vehicles and at bus stops.

5. Enhance ease of use for new and existing riders by ensuring that information about services and how to use them is provided in easy-to-understand, easily accessible formats – in printed materials, on the internet, and at bus stops. Passenger information will be available in Spanish, as well as English.

6. Actively market fixed route services to Mendocino County populations with high levels of potential for transit ridership, including college and secondary students, the Latino Community, low-income families and workers, seniors, and persons with disabilities.

7. Ensure sufficient capacity to maximize service availability to all priority transit markets throughout the service day. Although service capacity is ultimately determined by funding, ensure that a reasonable level of service is available.

8. Adopt a zero-tolerance policy for the cancellation of scheduled service due to a lack of in-service vehicles or driver availability.

- *Recommendation:* Add a service delivery standard of 100 percent of scheduled trips for paratransit and on-demand services.

9. Provide an adequate number of vehicles in each overnight vehicle storage location to meet all bus pullout requirements.

10. Ensure the availability of sufficient bus capacity to avoid passenger pass-ups on each fixed route. This can be accomplished by increasing bus size or service frequencies.

11. Ensure adequate bus capacity to accommodate passenger loads within the adopted maximum load standards established for MTA services.

12. Ensure sufficient round-trip travel time for all fixed route services to facilitate on-time performance within an adopted on-time performance standard.

13. Ensure on-time performance by scheduling adequate recovery time into all fixed route and flex route schedules.

14. Establish timed transfers between local South Coast, North Coast, and Inland services and MTA regional services.

15. Establish schedules around critical arrival or departure times for the customers served by MTA local fixed routes and regional routes, where possible.

16. Operate clock face schedules on local fixed routes and intercity services, where practical.

- *Recommendation:* Re-word to: "*Operate fixed route and intercity services on regular time intervals (i.e. same minutes every hour).*"

17. Scheduled fixed route buses will not depart a time point before the published departure time in the schedule.

18. Ensure adequate ADA complementary paratransit wheelchair and ambulatory capacity to meet all confirmed ADA-eligible trips within the adopted ADA service area, wait time, maximum travel, and on-time performance standards and with a zero-trip denial rate. ADA Paratransit Dial-a-Ride trips have priority over non-ADA Paratransit Dial-a-Ride trips. Reservation policies should be clear that individuals who are not ADA Paratransit individuals can be bumped by a registered ADA Paratransit individual.

- *Recommendation:* Replace "*bumped*" with "*re-scheduled in favor of*."

19. MTA can exceed ADA Paratransit service criteria for service area, wait time, hours of operation, and reservation policies if financial resources allow. MTA can also reduce the service area, wait time, hours of operation, and reservation policies if financial conditions require such reductions.

Objective B: Maximize operating efficiency without negatively impacting service quality.

- Policies:

1. Establish minimum productivity performance policies for fixed route transit, flex route, and Dial-a-Ride services. A minimum fixed route productivity standard as measured by the number of passengers carried per revenue hour should be based on achieving an MTA systemwide 15 percent farebox recovery ratio. Minimum productivity policies are established by MCOG as part of the Transit Productivity Committee process and shall be incorporated in MTA service performance and design standards and be subject to annual review as operating costs change. Services that fall below minimum productivity standards should be considered for cancellation, reduction, or adjustment when funding is insufficient to meet full program requirements.

- *Recommendation:* Modify farebox recovery ratio to 10 percent systemwide, <u>including local support.</u>

2. Evaluate and consider requests for the extension of service hours, the expansion of service area coverage, and the introduction of additional services based on the potential of the new services to achieve minimum productivity performance policies. MTA shall introduce or implement new services on a pilot project basis for a trial period not to exceed 24 months. During this period the new service will be evaluated and adjusted to improve performance. Productivity expectations shall be established for the evaluation of new services during the pilot project period.

3. Bus specifications will be developed with input from both operating and maintenance staff. The Management/Supervisory Committee provides a good forum for the review and development of bus specifications, based on driver and mechanic feedback.

4. Maximize ride-sharing, linked trip, and productive Dial-a-Ride vehicle utilization by using scheduled trip assignment parameters and procedures that ensure the achievement of the minimum productivity policy for Dial-a-Ride service.

Objective C: Operate a productive service that remains affordable to the priority transit markets.

- Policies:

1. Maintain adopted farebox recovery ratio standards by operating productive and efficient services to minimize fare increases.

2. Maintain affordable fares for youth, seniors, and persons with disabilities on fixed route services. MTA shall provide discounted fare media for procurement by social service agencies.

3. Fare discount percentages for fare media should increase the longer time commitment a passenger makes in procuring a fare media (e.g. a month pass should have a higher discount percentage than a 16-ride punch pass).

4. Offer lower fixed route fares than Dial-a-Ride fares to encourage a shift in ridership to fixed route service. Maintain a base Dial-a-Ride fare for ADA-eligible registrants that is double the base adult cash fare for local fixed route service to comply with ADA regulations. This fare policy should also apply to seniors and disabled persons who, while not ADA certified, are eligible for MTA senior and disabled Dial-a-Ride. The general public Dial-a-Ride fare shall be at least four times the base adult cash fare for local fixed service.

5. For individuals who can utilize fixed route or flex route services, discourage the utilization of Dial-a-Ride through fare incentives and reservation policies.

- *Recommendation:* Eliminate # 4 and 5. Maintain a fare structure which is easy to understand, equitable and encourages ridership.

Objective D: Promote the coordination of service with other intercounty and intercity transportation services.

- Policies:

1. Maintain good connections with Lake County Transit in Ukiah (currently Pear Tree Mall and Mendocino College), where feasible.

2. Maintain good connections with Greyhound in Willits, Ukiah, and at the Santa Rosa Greyhound depot, where feasible.

3. Maintain good connections with the SFO Airporter at the Sonoma County Airport, where feasible.

4. Maintain good connections with the Amtrak Thruway Bus at the Santa Rosa Courtyard by Marriott, where feasible.

5. Provide riders with user-friendly information about connecting transit services in printed materials, at transfer points, and on the Internet.

➢ *Recommendation:* Adopt a new standard of "*Maintain good connections with the Humboldt Transit Authority Redwood Coast Express at the Pear Tree Center and other Ukiah locations, where feasible.*"

Objective E: Promote public/private partnerships to increase transit revenues and ridership thereby reducing the carbon footprint of Mendocino County transit users who choose to utilize MTA for their mobility needs.

- Policies:

1. Continue to foster partnerships with Mendocino County's Senior Centers to provide door-through-door transportation where cost-effective to do so. Coordinate with Senior Centers on the provision of Dial-a-Ride services to ensure overall mobility service delivery meets the needs of seniors and the disabled in the most cost-effective manner possible.

2. Provide technical assistance to Senior Center Transportation Programs as needed to assist in meeting farebox recovery, passengers per hour, cost per passenger, and cost per hour performance standards.

3. Leverage available demand response financial resources such that efforts are made to provide needed demand response services, including ADA paratransit services, most effectively.

4. Explore joint promotions and partnerships with retailers and services for the production of MTA information brochures, and weekend and evening service hour sponsorship.

5. Assist major employers, tribal councils, or community organizations in seeking and/or establishing mobility services for needs that MTA cannot effectively serve within the approved minimum service productivity standards.

6. Provide capital procurement support to partners if feasible.

7. Partner with gatekeeper organizations including colleges, schools, social service agencies, employment agencies, and other community organizations to educate and promote transit usage among specific target constituencies.

Objective F: Ensure ongoing service monitoring, evaluation, and planning.

- Policies:

    1. MTA will actively monitor service performance through the monthly and quarterly review of operating and cost performance reports, and regular field spot checks.

    2. MTA will continue to coordinate a management, maintenance, and operations staff forum for the ongoing review and resolution of operations and service quality issues; monitoring achievement of carbon neutral operations; the development and amendment of vehicle specifications that reduce emissions below the 2008 baseline with the trend line towards the long-term goal of zero fleet emissions.

➢ *Recommendation:* Rephrase the goal to say, "*…. the review of progress towards implementing the MTA Zero Emission Bus Rollout Plan, with the goal being a 100 percent zero-emissions fleet by 2040 or earlier.*"

    3. MTA management and supervisor staff will regularly ride service in their respective service areas to develop a firsthand understanding of who uses the service, operating issues, and key destinations.

    4. MTA will work with Mendocino County to join ICLEI and adopt their measurement tool to annually measure the impacts of MTA operations on carbon emissions, measuring the impacts of fleet, office, and facility practices as well as the net benefit of new riders that were previously utilizing an automobile for the trips that are now taken on MTA.

Objective G: Establish a formal role in the local and county development process.

- Policies:

    1. MTA should actively participate in the development review process to ensure that transit operations are considered as part of new developments at the initial planning stages.

    2. Actively participate and attend working sessions and provide comments on city and County general plan updates and specific plans and development proposals in order to achieve the carbon-neutral MTA goal.

Objective H: Adhere to prudent budgeting and financial practices.

- Policies:

    1. Develop and maintain a five-year financial plan covering operating and capital financial needs and revenue sources preceding the annual budget process.

    2. Use realistic and fiscally conservative estimates of costs and revenues in preparing the five-year financial service plan. Utilize a range of financial scenario assumptions to account for the uncertainty of financial outcomes.

3. When feasible, MTA shall accumulate a minimum of a 3-month cash reserve and a target of a 6-month cash reserve. This will facilitate a planned and strategic response to sudden drops in revenue and minimize a "reactive" response.

4. Develop balanced annual budgets. Report financial performance and anticipated service adjustments to the MTA Board of Directors every month.

5. Deficit spending should be avoided. Unforeseen overruns should be offset by reserve funds.

Objective I: Adopt fleet procurement practices that contribute to a carbon-neutral goal and meet CARB Fleet Rule for Transit Agencies.

- *Recommendation:* Rephrase goal to say, "*…. and meets the minimum standards set forth in the CARB Innovative Clean Transit regulation.*"

- Policies:

1. Conduct a life cycle benefit/life cycle cost assessment of future fleet procurements to determine the cost per unit of emissions reduced compared to a 2009 fleet baseline. Purchase vehicles that are cost-effective and move MTA towards a zero-emissions fleet, and at a minimum meet CARB fleet rules for emissions.

- *Recommendation:* Rephrase goal to say, "*…. and meets the minimum standards set forth in the CARB Innovative Clean Transit regulation.*"

2. The MTA vehicle retirement program shall recognize the effective life cycle of the various MTA vehicle types according to Federal Transit Administration standards. Adopt a five-year or 150,000-mile life cycle for light-duty buses, a seven-year or 200,000-mile life cycle for medium duty, and a 12-year or 500,000-mile life cycle for heavy-duty buses.

3. Consider bus refurbishment before bus replacement as part of environmental and financial sustainability policies.

4. Procure fuels that minimize carbon dioxide, particulate matter, nitrogen oxide, and sulfur emissions.

- *Recommendation:* Add a standard to maintain a systemwide fleet spare ratio of 40 percent.
- *Recommendation:* Add a fleet preventive maintenance policy of 80 percent of preventive maintenance performed within 10 percent of the scheduled mileage interval, or at least every 3 months.

Objective J: Adopt site development practices that contribute to a carbon-neutral goal.

- Policy:

  1. Future site and facility development should achieve LEED sustainable building practices and LEED certification should be considered in the early stages of development. MTA can go through the LEED certification process or decide to design facilities to LEED sustainable building standards, practices, and principles without going through the formal certification process.

MTA PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

MTA's performance standards are established by MCOG through the Transit Productivity Committee (TPC). The TPC meets annually to review and amend performance standards. MTA prepares and submits monthly, quarterly, and annual reports to MTA and MCOG staff, the MTA Board, and the MCOG Board to monitor performance. MTA FY 2022-23 performance was analyzed using the current MCOG performance standards in Chapter 4.

This section presents recommended performance standards for both the MTA and the senior center DAR programs to be used for the SRTDP planning period (FY 2024-25 through FY 2028-29). Any proposed changes to the current performance standards are explained briefly. The performance standards are meant to be adaptable and should be revised if merited.

TDA-Required Performance Standards

MCOG has adopted four performance standards to measure the efficiency of transit services. These four standards are also evaluated every three years as part of the TDA Triennial Performance Audit. The newly recommended efficiency standards are shown in Table 24 and discussed below.

- Passenger-Trips per Vehicle Service Hour – It is recommended that the MTA reduce its standards for passenger-trips per vehicle service hour to better reflect the transit environment post-pandemic. The standards presented in Table 24 are based on standards recently adopted by peer transit systems in northern California as well as recent MTA performance.
- Operating Cost per Vehicle Service Hour – Table 24 presents recommended standards for operating cost per vehicle service hour. No changes are recommended to the fully allocated cost standards, however, it is recommended that MTA also adopt standards for the marginal operating cost per vehicle service hour. Marginal costs exclude fixed costs, such as administrative staff time, utilities, marketing, etc., which will not change if service is increased or decreased. The recommended marginal cost standards presented in Table 24 were calculated by multiplying the fully allocated standards by 50.9 percent (50.9 percent is equal to the ratio of the systemwide marginal cost per hour to the systemwide fully allocated cost per hour). It is recommended that the operating cost per hour standards continue to be updated annually based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) Adjusted Rolling Average.

Table 24: Recommended MTA Performance Standards - Productivity and Efficiency

Passenger-Trips Per Vehicle Service Hour			
Service Type	Current MCOG Standard	Recommended Standards	
		Minimum	Target
Short Distance Bus Routes	10.2	6.0	8.0
Long Distance Bus Routes	3.2	3.0	4.0
Senior Centers	2.2	1.5	2.0
Dial-a-Ride / On-Demand	3.3	2.0	2.5

Cost Per Vehicle Service Hour			
Service Type	Current MCOG Standard	Recommended Standards	
		Fully Allocated	Marginal
Short Distance Bus Routes	$176.53	$176.53	$89.92
Long Distance Bus Routes	$194.76	$194.76	$99.21
Senior Centers	$86.02	$86.02	--
Dial-a-Ride / On-Demand	$124.08	$124.08	$63.20

Cost Per Passenger-Trip			
Service Type	Current MCOG Standard	Recommended Standards	
		Fully Allocated	Marginal
Short Distance Bus Routes	$38.65	$38.65	$19.38
Long Distance Bus Routes	$60.86	$60.86	$30.51
Senior Centers	$46.03	$46.03	--
Dial-a-Ride / On-Demand	$37.60	$37.60	$18.85

Farebox Recovery Ratio		
Service Type	Current MCOG Standard	Recommended Standards
Short Distance Bus Routes	10%	--
Long Distance Bus Routes	10%	--
Senior Centers	10%	10%
Dial-a-Ride / On-Demand	10%	--
MTA Systemwide	--	10% with local support

Note 1: Short distance routes include Routes 1, 5, 7, and 9.

Note 2: Long distance routes include Routes 20, 60, 65, 75, and 95.

Note 3: Senior Centers refers to the paratransit services operated by local senior centers using TDA funding.

Note 4: MCOG uses "CPI Adjusted Rolling Average" figures for financial performance standards. The CPI Adjusted Rolling Average is calculated using the Consumer Price Index Annual Average, All Urban Consumers, California. In this table, the standards for the cost per vehicle service hour and cost per passenger-trip represent recommended values for FY 2023-24; these standards should be updated annually per the CPI Adjusted Rolling Average.

Note 5: Fully allocated cost values include all fixed costs (administrative costs, utilities, etc.), while marginal cost values excludes these costs .

Source: MCOG, MTA

- Operating Cost Per Passenger-Trip – Similar to the standards for the operating cost per vehicle service hour, this SRTDP also recommends the MTA adopt both fully allocated and marginal cost standards for operating cost per passenger-trip. No changes are recommended to the current fully allocated cost standards. The recommended marginal cost standards, presented in Table 24, were developed by multiplying the fully allocated cost standards by 50.1 percent, or the ratio of the systemwide marginal cost per passenger-trip to the systemwide fully allocated operating cost per passenger-trip. The standards for operating cost per passenger-trip should continue to be adjusted throughout the planning period based on the CPI Adjusted Rolling Average.
- Farebox Recovery Ratio – The California TDA previously required that all funding recipients achieve minimum farebox recovery standards, although these requirements have not been enforced since the COVID-19 pandemic. It is recommended that the MTA and senior center programs strive to achieve system/program farebox recovery ratios of 10 percent, the previous minimum standard for rural transit agencies. MTA and the senior centers should include local support (which includes FTA funds) when calculating farebox values.

Carbon Neutrality Standards

The MTA previously adopted standards to help support the agency's goal of carbon-neutral transportation operations. These standards are shown in Table 25 and listed below. No changes to the MTA's carbon neutrality standards are recommended at this time.

- Reduction in gallons of diesel fuel and gasoline consumed – MTA should strive to continuously reduce the amount of diesel fuel and gasoline consumed compared to the agency's FY 2007-08 baseline.
- Reduction in fossil fuels consumed for electricity and heating – MTA should strive to continuously reduce the number of fossil fuels used to provide electricity and heating to its various facilities compared to the agency's FY 2007-08 baseline.

Service Reliability Standards

It is recommended that MTA adopt and track seven performance standards to ensure the agency is upholding its policies regarding service reliability, safety, and capital upgrades. These performance standards are shown in Table 25 and summarized below.

- Service Delivery Rate – The MTA should strive for at least 95 percent, preferably 100 percent, of scheduled trips to be completed. Scheduled trips include fixed routes, paratransit, and on-demand trips.
- ADA Paratransit Trip Denial Rate – The MTA should continue to have a zero percent ADA paratransit trip denial rate. This means the MTA should continue to maintain enough resources to be able to complete every requested ADA trip.
- On-Time Performance – The MTA should work to achieve a minimum standard of 80 percent of trips being made on time, with a target standard of 90 percent. On-time trips, for fixed routes, refer to buses that leave timed stops at 0 to 5 minutes after the published scheduled time. On-time trips, for paratransit or on-demand, refer to pick-ups made within 30 minutes of the passenger's requested pick-up.

Table 25: Recommended MTA Performance Standards - Reliability and Carbon Neutrality

Reliability		
Measure	Recommended Standards	
	Minimum	Target
Service Delivery Rate [1]	95%	100%
ADA Paratransit Trip Denial Rate	0%	0%
On-Time Performance [2]	80%	90%
Road Calls [3]	7.5 per 100,000 vehicle service miles	<5 per 100,000 vehicle service miles
Preventable Vehicle Collisions	1 per 100,000 vehicle service miles	0 per 100,000 vehicle service miles
Fleet Preventive Maintenance Ratio [4]	80%	90%
Bus Spare Ratio [5]	40%	50%

Carbon Neutrality	
Measure	Recommended Standards
Reduce gallons of diesel and gas consumed for operations compared to FY 2007-08	No Change
Reduce fossil fuels consumed for electricity and heating for facility operations compared to FY 2007-08	No Change

Note 1: Service delivery rate refers to the percentage of scheduled trips across all services that were completed.

Note 2: On-time performance refers to the percentage of fixed route trips that leave timed stops between 0 to 5 minutes after the time shown on the published schedule and the percentage of paratransit or on-demand pick-ups made within 30 minutes of the passenger's requested ride time.

Note 3: Road Calls refer to incidents where service is interrupted longer than 5 minutes due to mechanical failure.

Note 4: Fleet preventive maintenance ratio refers to the percent of maintenance within 10% of the scheduled mileage interval, or at least every 3 months

Note 5: Bus spare ratio refers to how many spare vehicles are needed compared to the size of the active fleet.

Sources: MCOG, MTA, LSC

- Road Calls for Mechanical Failures – The recommended minimum standard for road calls, or incidents where operations are interrupted for more than five minutes due to a mechanical failure, is 7.5 per 100,000 vehicle service miles. The target standard is less than 5 per 100,000 vehicle service miles.
- Preventable Vehicle Collisions – The recommended minimum standard for preventable vehicle collisions is 1 per 100,000 vehicle service miles. The target standard is 0.
- Fleet Preventive Maintenance – It is recommended the MTA work to complete 80 percent of vehicle maintenance requirements within 10 percent of the scheduled mileage interval, or at least every 3 months. The target standard is to complete 90 percent of maintenance within the scheduled mileage intervals.
- Bus Spare Ratio – MTA should maintain a spare vehicle fleet equal in size to 40 percent of the active vehicle fleet. The target standard is 50 percent.

Chapter 7
SERVICE ALTERNATIVES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents potential alternatives to modify MTA services so that they better meet the mobility needs of Mendocino County residents, or so that efficiency is improved. The service elements presented in this chapter are designed "a la carte"; each alternative is evaluated as a stand-alone option, though when combined, the overall impacts may vary. The combined impacts of the various service elements included in the final five-year plan are presented in Chapter 11.

The service alternatives discussed in this chapter are organized by geographic area. First, alternatives impacting Ukiah are discussed. This is followed by an evaluation of potential options for Willits transit services, then a discussion of service alternatives for the rural inland communities of Brooktrails, Covelo, Hopland, Laytonville, and Potter Valley. Alternatives for the coastal communities are presented thereafter, then options for the MTA inter-county services.

Note: MTA bus in Fort Bragg [Photo]. Credit: J. Orth

For each service alternative, the likely impacts on MTA ridership and operating costs are estimated. Ridership and cost estimates are based on the following parameters:

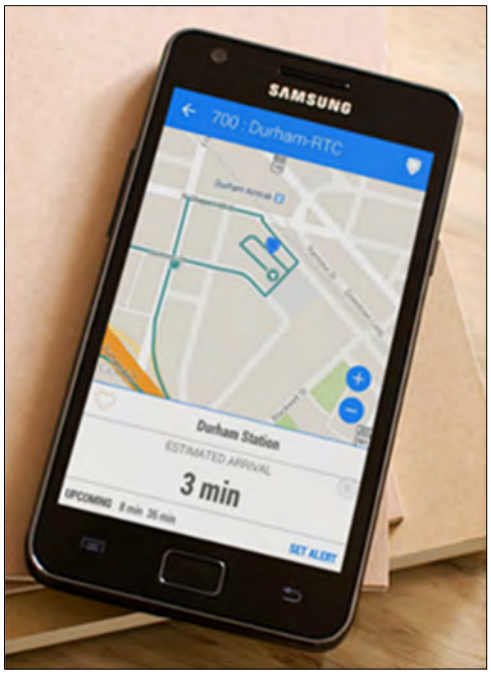
1. To estimate the likely operating costs and fare revenues, the MTA draft operating budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-24 and the MTA cost model (developed in Chapter 4) were used to estimate the FY 2023-24 cost per vehicle service hour and vehicle service mile. These costs were then increased by 4 percent to account for expected inflation by FY 2024-25, the first year covered by this SRTDP. The resulting equation to assess FY 2024-25 operating cost impacts is as follows:

   Change in Marginal Operating Cost = $78.25 X Change in Vehicle Hours
   + $2.30 X Change in Vehicle Miles

2. It is assumed that there is no significant room in the operating budget to increase service levels without associated service reductions.

3. Service was assumed to include 261 weekdays, 52 Saturdays, and 52 Sundays, unless otherwise noted.
4. Ridership estimates were based on MTA FY 2022-23 ridership (Chapter 4), data from peer systems, and standard transit demand elasticity factors, depending on the alternative.

The Concept of Microtransit



Several of the alternatives presented in this chapter propose introducing microtransit. Microtransit has become an increasingly popular service option for providing transit coverage over areas not served efficiently by fixed routes. Microtransit has also been found to be an effective service option in areas with high demand for short trips.

Microtransit applies the app-based technology developed for transportation network companies (such as Uber and Lyft) to provide real-time, on-demand service. Microtransit passengers typically request rides and pay their fares through an app downloaded on their smartphone or computer. Once a ride has been requested, a routing algorithm assigns the ride request to a specific driver/vehicle, and the passenger is provided with an estimated service time. Microtransit is a shared-ride service, therefore multiple passengers may ride in one vehicle at the same time. Examples of other microtransit programs, including operating parameters and ridership, are provided in Appendix A.

To ensure equitable accommodation, most agencies allow microtransit rides to be requested directly over the phone as well. Requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are met by ensuring there are enough accessible vehicles available for those who need them. Microtransit can be operated as a "comingled" service, with the general public and paratransit passengers sharing rides in the same vehicles. Comingling can reduce costs by serving additional people in periods when paratransit demand is low. Comingling meets the requirements of the ADA by prioritizing persons with disabilities yet allows for the expansion of general public service without the cost of operating a new, separate service. The benefits of this type of service model can be seen in Fort Bragg, where the MTA operates a general public DAR service.

For the MTA, the cost of obtaining and maintaining microtransit software would be determined through an RFP process. Based on other programs, it is estimated that offering microtransit would incur an annual cost for the MTA of $25,000 to upwards of $100,000, depending on the number of vehicle licenses. To account for the annual cost of the individual vehicle licenses, an additional $4,500 has been added per vehicle to the marginal operating cost estimates of all alternatives considering microtransit. Microtransit start-up costs are accounted for in the five-year MTA financial plan presented in Chapter 11.

UKIAH SERVICE ALTERNATIVES

The City of Ukiah runs in a mostly north/south direction and is about 2 miles across at the widest point. The MTA operations facility is at the southern end of town, while Mendocino College, a significant transit generator, is at the northern end. Other major transit generators within Ukiah include Walmart and the Pear Tree Center. The Pear Tree Center currently serves as a transfer hub for MTA local and intercommunity routes, as well as for the Lake Transit Authority's Route 7, the Humboldt Transit Authority's Redwood Coast Express, and Amtrak Thruway bus service.

Currently, Ukiah is served by two local fixed routes, Routes 7 and 9, which interline with Route 20 (Willits to Ukiah) for efficiency purposes. A total of 6 driver shifts are generally used to provide local service in Ukiah, with another 3 shifts providing service on Routes 20 and Route 1 (local Willits service). A maximum of four vehicles are in service at one time in Ukiah for Routes 7, 9, and 20. Within Ukiah, Route 7 (Jitney) is more direct and serves fewer stops, while Route 9 provides more local service, stopping at a variety of commercial, residential, and social service activity centers. With the current route configuration, half-hourly service is provided to most Ukiah stops during the majority of weekdays, and hourly service is provided on Saturdays. Some stops, however, are only served by Routes 7/9 once a day, such as the Plowshares food distribution site. Routes 7/9 have the greatest ridership of all MTA fixed routes and carry around 5.2 one-way passenger-trips per hour. Route 7 makes four roundtrips per day while Route 9 makes 20.

Challenges and Considerations

Although Routes 7/9 serve most commercial and residential transit activity centers in Ukiah, the current routing structure results in transit travel times being much longer compared to taking a private vehicle. For example, it currently takes a bus passenger 41 minutes to travel from the Montclair Apartments in the southern portion of Ukiah to Mendocino College, but the same trip takes less than 15 minutes by car. A benefit of the current routing structure, however, is the combined Routes 7/9 provide consistent half-hourly headways to most stops. Any Ukiah service alternatives that would increase headways will have a negative impact on Routes 7/9 ridership.

As Route 7 (Jitney) provides more direct service compared to Route 9, Route 7 does not serve as many activity centers. For instance, Walmart is a significant transit trip generator with 28 average daily boardings, however, it is not served by Route 7. Additionally, Route 7 only serves the Pear Tree Center once a day in each direction out of four daily roundtrips, minimizing opportunities for transfers.

Several service alternatives were considered for Ukiah, including routing changes, span of service changes, and the introduction of new service types. All of the Ukiah alternatives presented assume that routes will continue to serve the existing Pear Tree Center transfer point. Once a site is chosen for the future Ukiah Transit Center and development is underway, minor changes to the MTA fixed routes will be required to serve the new facility. Table 26 presents possible Ukiah service alternatives, as well as the anticipated impacts of each alternative on service levels, operating costs, and ridership.

Table 26: Ukiah - Service Alternatives Summary

	Change In Annual Service						
	Ridership	Service Hours	Service Miles	Marginal Operating Cost	Fare Revenues [3]	Operating Subsidy	Additional Buses Needed
Status Quo[1]							
Route 7/9	57,300	10,900	148,800	$1,194,500	$59,800	$1,134,700	
Route 20	18,200	4,340	79,400	$521,900	$19,000	$502,900	
Route 65	9,100	4,100	126,000	$610,100	$9,500	$600,600	
Route 75	6,300	2,000	62,500	$300,000	$6,600	$293,400	
Ukiah Service Alternatives - Change from Status Quo[2]							
Local Circulator Loops (Net Impact)	2,600	400	3,400	$36,900	$2,700	$34,200	
Ukiah Microtransit Service [4]							
Ukiah Microtransit Service - Mon - Fri, 6:00 AM - 6:00 PM Sat, 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM	11,200	3,500	52,500	$398,900	$26,400	$372,500	1
Ukiah Microtransit Service and Reduced Route 9 Service Hours [4]							
Ukiah Microtransit Service - Mon - Fri, 6:00 AM - 6:00 PM Sat, 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM	11,200	3,500	52,500	$398,900	$26,400	$372,500	1
Route 9 - Mon - Fri, 7:30 AM - 5:20 PM Sat, 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM	-1,500	-400	-8,700	-$51,300	-$1,600	-$49,700	0
Net Impact	*9,700*	*3,100*	*43,800*	*$347,600*	*$24,800*	*$322,800*	*1*
Ukiah Microtransit Service and 90 Minute Loop [4]							
Replace Route 7/9 with 90-Minute Loop - 2 Buses	-5,800	-5,000	-76,500	-$569,200	-$6,000	-$563,200	0
Ukiah Microtransit Service - Mon - Fri 6:00 AM - 6:00 Sat 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM	11,200	3,500	52,500	$398,900	$26,400	$372,500	0
Net Impact	*5,400*	*-1,500*	*-24,000*	*-$170,300*	*$20,400*	*-$190,700*	*0*
Deviated State Street Express	1,200	-568	-11,040	-$69,800	$1,300	-$71,100	0
Evening Service Options							
Route 9 - Mon - Fri, 6:00 PM - 11:00 PM	3,300	1,300	16,500	$139,600	$3,400	$136,200	1
Route 20 - Mon - Fri, 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM	1,600	500	13,200	$69,400	$2,500	$66,900	1
Ukiah Evening Microtransit Service - Mon -Fri, 6:00 PM - 11:00 PM [4]	2,600	1,300	19,500	$151,000	$6,100	$144,900	1
Saturday Service Options							
Route 20 - 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM	1,200	300	7,900	$41,600	$1,300	$40,300	1
Ukiah Microtransit Service - 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM [4]	600	300	4,500	$38,300	$1,400	$36,900	1

Note 1: Status Quo operations are based on 2022-23 operating parameters and the FY 2024-25 cost model. This table only includes status quo data for the routes that serve Ukiah.

Note 2: Parameters and costs represent change over existing services. Estimates represent marginal costs and do not include fixed costs.

Note 3: Assumes an average fare per boarding of $1.04 per passenger on Routes 7/9, $1.57 per passenger on Route 20, $4.76 per passenger on Route 65, and $2.21 on Route 75.

Note 4: Assumes a general microtransit fare of $4.00 per one-way trip, or an average fare of $2.36 per passenger. Costs include $4,500/year for app license for one vehicle.

Make Plowshares, River Oak School, and Ukiah High School On-Demand Stops

There are three stops in the MTA published schedules for Routes 7 and 9 which are only served once or twice a day: Plowshares, River Oak School, and the Ukiah High School. As these stops represent a food distribution site and schools, there is no need to serve them other than the particular times per day when people are actively traveling to/from these sites. Although it is desirable to know exactly when these stops are going to be served, setting a specific time for these stops has the impact of shifting the times for the following stops along that run to be different minutes after the hour than other runs. Schedule consistency could be improved if Plowshares, River Oak School, and the High School were designated as on-demand stops with the ability to be served every run. In this case, a time stop would not be identified in the schedule for these stops. In the event that a stop was requested, the bus would likely be a couple of minutes late for that particular run, but this could be made up on the next run.

Serve Walmart and the Pear Tree Center with Route 7 (Jitney)

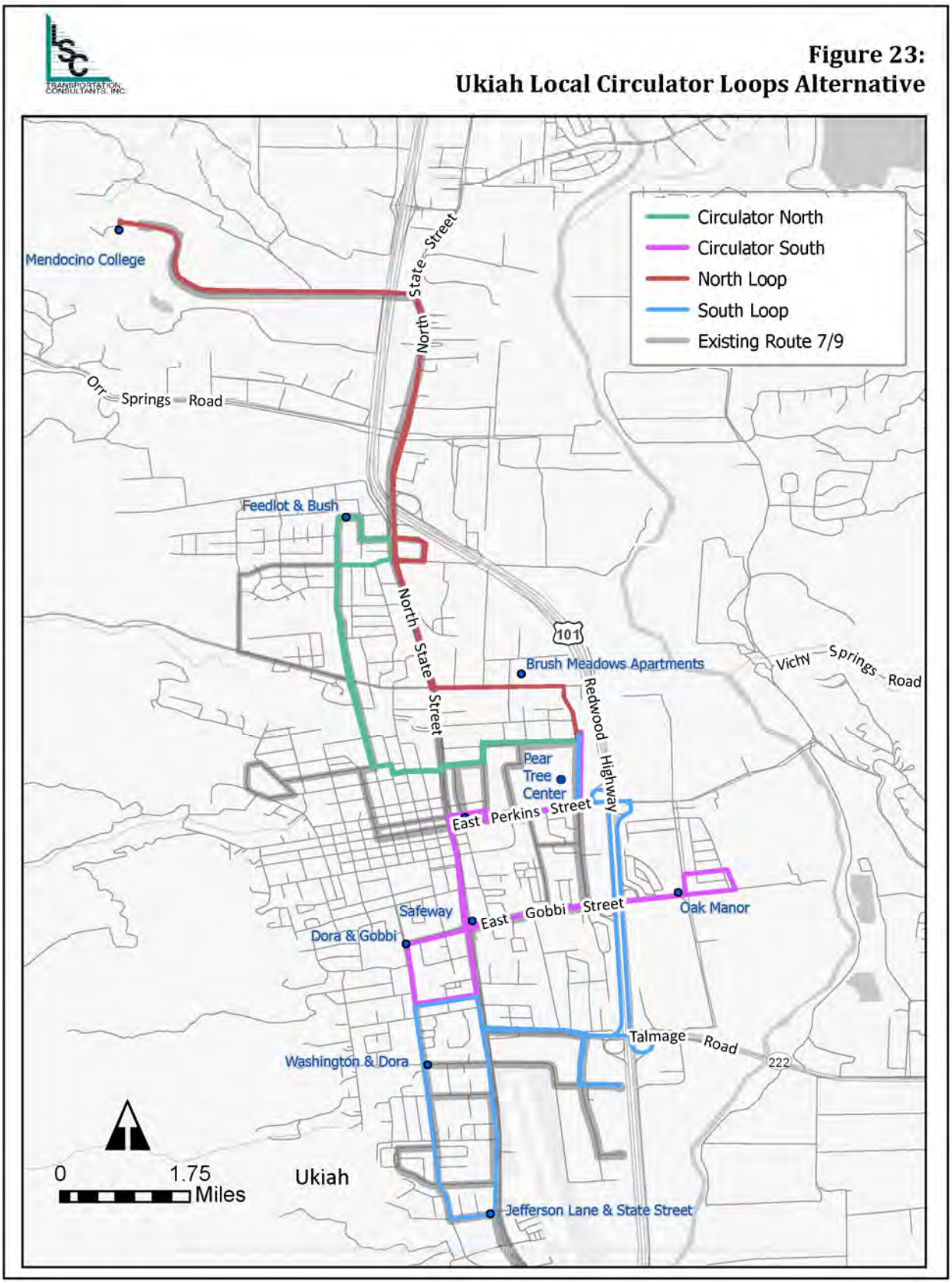
Route 7 could be redesigned to serve Walmart and a central transfer point in Ukiah (assumed to be the Pear Tree Center) each run, adding two major stops to the "express" route. Although this service change would likely cause Route 7 ridership to increase by serving popular stops, adding Walmart and the Pear Tree Center to the Jitney would add about 20 minutes per roundtrip, thereby extending Route 7's run time beyond one hour. This would have the impact of requiring additional buses to maintain the half-hourly service and would not be in line with the idea of a "Jitney" service. Therefore, this alternative was not considered any further.

Local Circulator Routes

Routes 7/9 could be redesigned to instead consist of multiple loops beginning and ending at the transit center. Smaller circulator loops have the benefit of providing shorter travel times between certain destinations as well as providing service to a larger portion of the city. The idea of circulator routes has recently been considered by MTA outside of the SRTDP effort as well. A potential circulator route network is shown in Figure 23:

- The North Loop (blue) would travel between the Pear Tree Center and Mendocino College via Brush Street and State Street with a stop at Raley's. This loop would take about 26 minutes to complete and follow the same path in both the north and south directions.
- The Circulator North (green) would exit the transit center via Clara Street and travel over to Bush Street, where it would serve the popular Feedlot & Bush stop and neighborhoods in the northwestern portion of the city. The bus would then make a loop to State Street and Empire Drive before retracing the route back to the Pear Tree Center. This loop would only take around 20 minutes to complete. This loop could also serve Todd Grove Park and the High School as on-demand stops.
- Travelling south from the Pear Tree Center, the South Loop (pink) would use US 101 and exit on Talmage to serve Walmart before driving a loop around State Street and Dora Street as far south as Jefferson Lane. The bus would return via Talmage and Walmart before getting on US 101. This loop would take around 28 minutes to complete. Note that travel time along State Street to Walmart is not significantly longer than using the freeway.

Figure 23:
Ukiah Local Circulator Loops Alternative



- The Circulator South (red) would travel west on Perkins from the Pear Tree Center and serve the library before traveling south on State Street and making a small loop on Luce, Dora, and Gobbi. Next, the bus would serve the Oak Manor neighborhood. The bus would then return to State Street and retrace the route back to the Pear Tree Center. This loop would take roughly 28 minutes to complete.

With each of these loops taking around 30 minutes to operate (except for the Circulator North, which would take 20 minutes), the total cycle length of all four loops would be 2 hours, including a 10-minute driver break after the operation of the Circulator North. 30-minute headways could be provided if 4 buses were used. With a service span of 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM, 20 round trips of the combined four loops could be offered on weekdays and 8 round trips on Saturdays. The Local Circulator Loops would increase the MTA operating subsidy by around $34,200 per year, assuming an average fare of $1.04 per passenger. Considering that the Circulator Loops would serve new areas of Ukiah, decrease travel times for some, and require timed transfers for those traveling longer distances, it is estimated that this alternative would increase ridership by a net of 2,600 passenger-trips annually, or 8 to 9 trips per day.

The impacts of the Local Circulator route configuration would be as follows:

Pros

- Reduces travel time. This reduction would be most significant for travel between the northern to the southern portion of Ukiah (up to 15 minutes faster); however, a timed transfer would be required.
- Maintains half-hourly service for all stops on a predictable schedule.
- Serves the Manor Oaks area east of US 101 and Brush Street apartments (currently unserved by transit).
- Overall increase in ridership of around 2,600 trips per year or 8 – 9 trips per day.

Cons

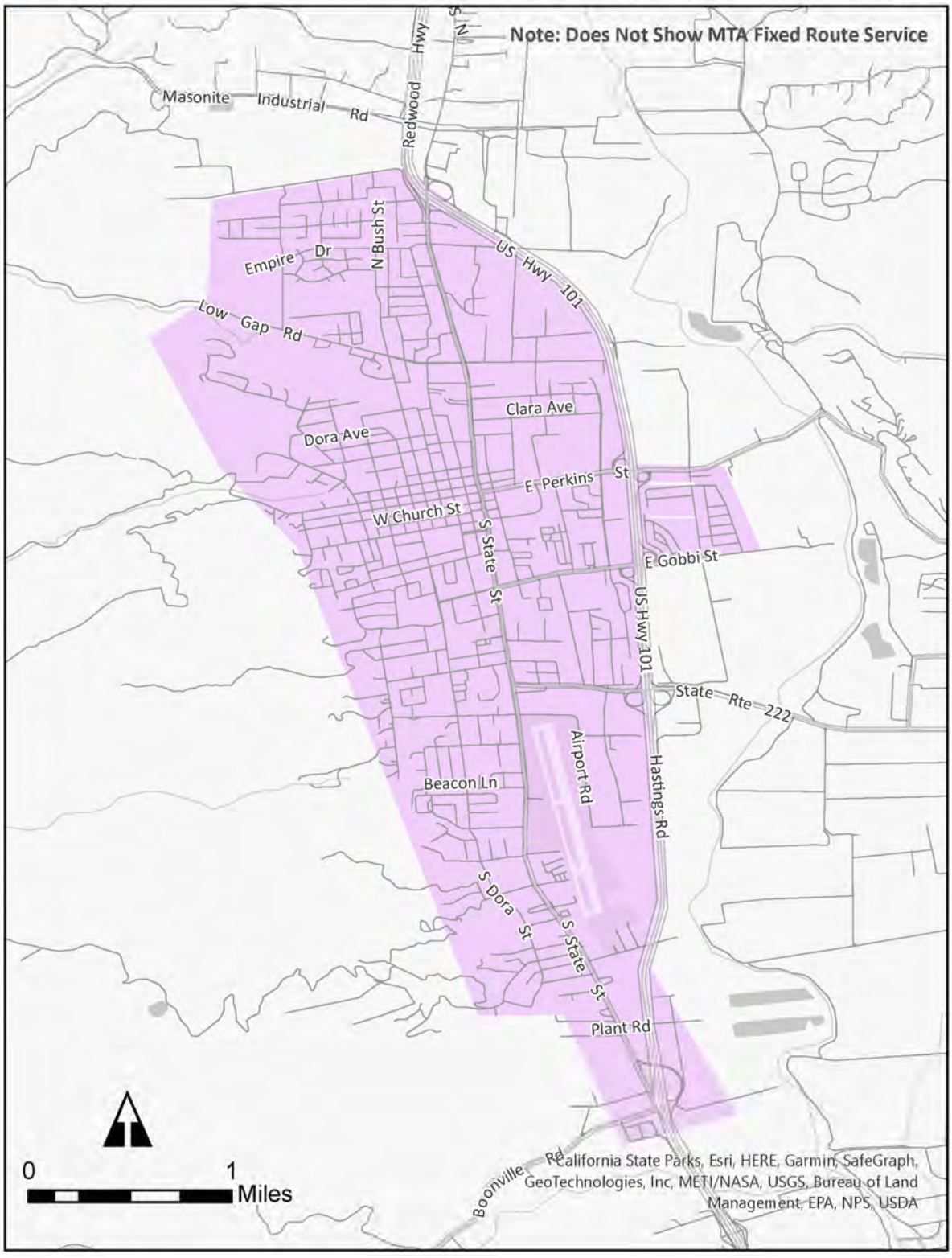
- Does not serve Costco directly (within 1/3 mile).
- Does not travel as far south as Plant Road (few boardings occur here).
- Would increase the MTA operating budget.

Ukiah Microtransit Service

Offering a citywide, Ukiah microtransit service would provide a new transit option in addition to the existing fixed route and paratransit services. The Ukiah microtransit service would have the following characteristics:

- Figure 24 shows the recommended service area. This area covers nearly all major developments and neighborhoods in Ukiah.
- Service hours would be from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM on weekdays and 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Saturdays.

Figure 24:
Potential Ukiah Microtransit Service Area



- The general public fare is assumed to be $4.00. The discounted fare for senior adults ages 62 and older and passengers with disabilities would be $2.00, or the equivalent of a 50 percent discount (consistent with the discount received for fixed route fares). Based on boardings by passenger-type during FY 2022-23 and the proposed fare values, the average fare generated per passenger would be $2.36.
- To request rides, passengers would either submit their request through a phone app, or they would call dispatch.
- As the intention of the Ukiah microtransit zone would be to complement the existing fixed route services rather than replace them, only one vehicle would be used.

Different possible scenarios for a Ukiah microtransit service are discussed below.

Ukiah Microtransit Service and No Changes to Fixed Routes

To estimate the potential ridership that would be generated by the Ukiah microtransit service, ridership data for other microtransit services was reviewed (Appendix A). This analysis found that the average number of microtransit trips completed per capita, per year, by residents within the existing microtransit zones was 0.55. Applying this per capita rate to the population of Ukiah, along with an additional factor to account for the higher relative transit dependency of Ukiah residents compared to the other areas considered, generates an annual ridership estimate for the Ukiah microtransit service of 11,200 passenger-trips (Table 26). This estimate equates to 3 passenger-trips per hour, which is a reasonable productivity level for microtransit.

The Ukiah microtransit service would operate 3,500 vehicle service hours annually based on the service hours presented above. Assuming an average travel speed of 15 miles per hour, 52,500 vehicle service miles would be operated annually. These service levels, plus $4,500 for one microtransit software license, would result in an annual marginal operating cost of $398,900. Considering fare revenues, the annual operating subsidy would be $372,500.

Ukiah Microtransit Service and Reduced Route 9 Service

Implementing the Ukiah microtransit service and simultaneously reducing Routes 7/9 service during non-peak, weekday hours would lessen the cost impact of introducing microtransit. Excluding buses that are interlined with Route 20, reducing the Routes 7/9 service schedule to 7:30 AM to 5:45 PM would eliminate three one-way trips per weekday (the 6:45 and 7:00 AM northbound buses and the 5:25 PM southbound bus).

Introducing a microtransit service to Ukiah and reducing Routes 7/9 service by three one-way trips each weekday would result in annual service levels increasing by a net of 3,100 vehicle hours and 43,800 vehicle miles. Implementing the two service modifications simultaneously would result in a subsidy increase of $322,800 per year. Although some ridership would be lost by reducing Routes 7/9 service, implementing the new microtransit service alongside the service reduction would result in a net increase in ridership of 9,700 passenger-trips per year.

Ukiah Microtransit Service and 90-Minute Loop Route Structure

Ukiah microtransit service could be paired with less frequent and streamlined versions of Routes 7/9 as a way of directly serving more homes in Ukiah with a lower impact on the operating budget. This alternative is presented in Figure 25. In this scenario, two buses would be used to operate 45-minute headways on a loop that serves all of the high-activity bus stops on the existing Routes 7/9.

To preserve 30-minute headways on weekdays, 3 buses could be operated; however, this would increase operating costs by around $170,000.

Pros

- Consistent fixed route service to all high-activity boarding stops.
- Expands transit service to new portions of Ukiah for riders not eligible for paratransit.
- Increases ridership by 5,400 trips annually, or 17 trips per day.
- Decreases annual operating subsidy by $190,700.

Cons

- Increases 30-minute fixed route headways to 45 minutes.
- Stops no longer served by the fixed route would need to use the on-demand app; however, data collected during the boarding and alighting counts and onboard survey show that there are few boardings made at these stops.
- Tight time schedule, particularly if the route were adjusted to serve the clinic on Laws Avenue.

Deviated State Street Express

One of the key downsides of microtransit is that passengers need to request a new ride every time they need to go somewhere. This could be seen as an inconvenience for passengers using the bus to go to work, school, or social service programs on a daily basis. Microtransit services also have variable wait times, making it challenging for passengers to rely on microtransit to get to regular commitments. Of the passengers who completed the on-board survey, about one-quarter were traveling to/from work and 12 percent were riding the bus to/from college, suggesting that many MTA passengers may prefer regularly scheduled transit services.

The idea of a deviated fixed route was explored to provide more direct service throughout Ukiah while following a predictable schedule. In this scenario, Route 9 would be streamlined significantly (similar to Route 7) and travel up and down State Street from Jefferson Lane to Mendocino College, with a detour to serve the transit center. Travel times from north to south Ukiah on this “State Street Express” would be only 30 minutes, compared to 45 minutes on the existing Route 9, assuming no deviation requests. Passengers would be able to request deviations to most places in the city, as shown in Figure 26. If a passenger wanted to ensure a pickup at a certain time, 24-hour advance reservations would be suggested. Otherwise, same-day requests would be accommodated on a space-available basis. At a minimum, passengers would need to call dispatch at least 10 minutes before the start of the State Street Express run for which they would like a deviation.

Figure 25:
Potential Ukiah Microtransit + 90 Minute Loop Service Scenario

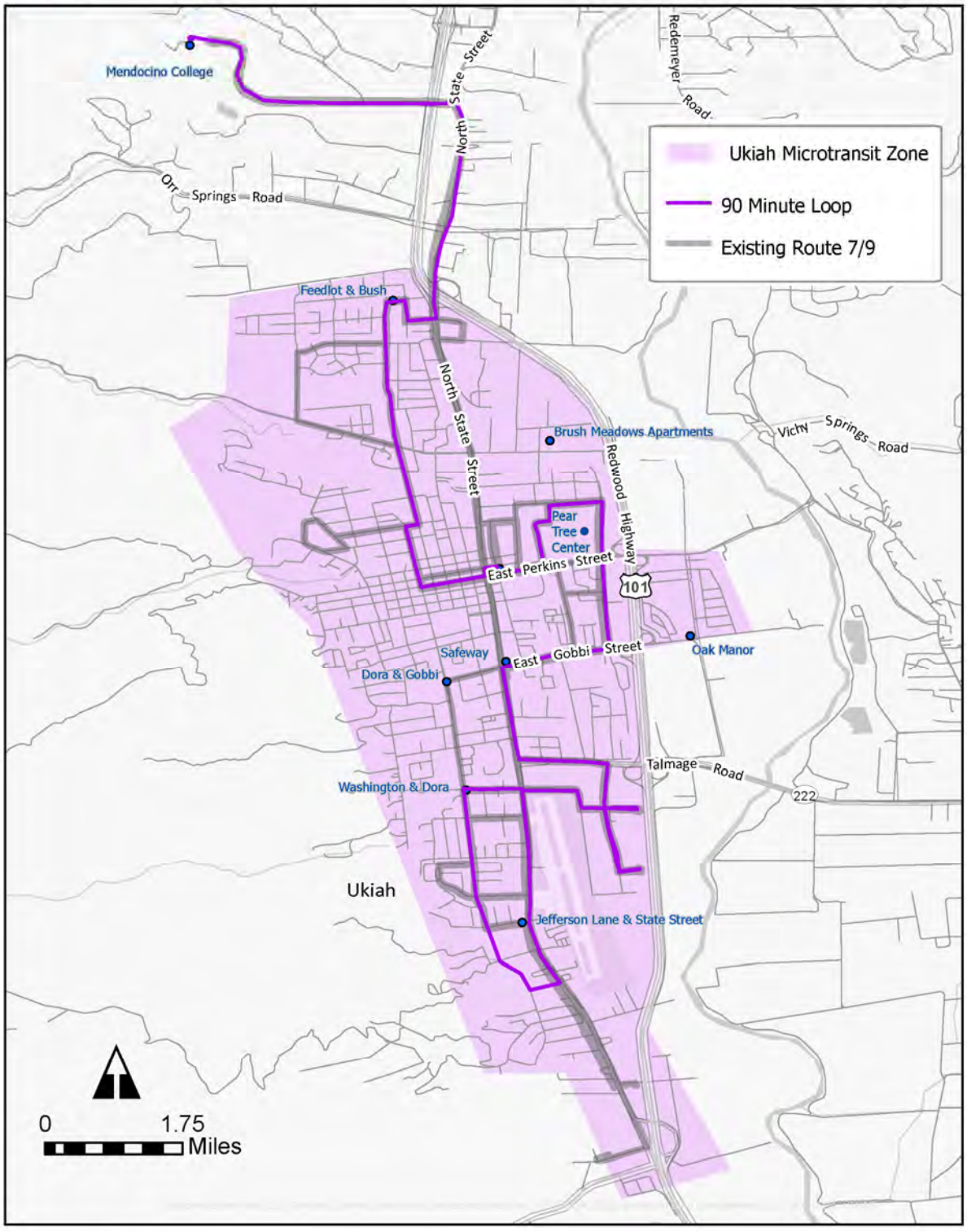
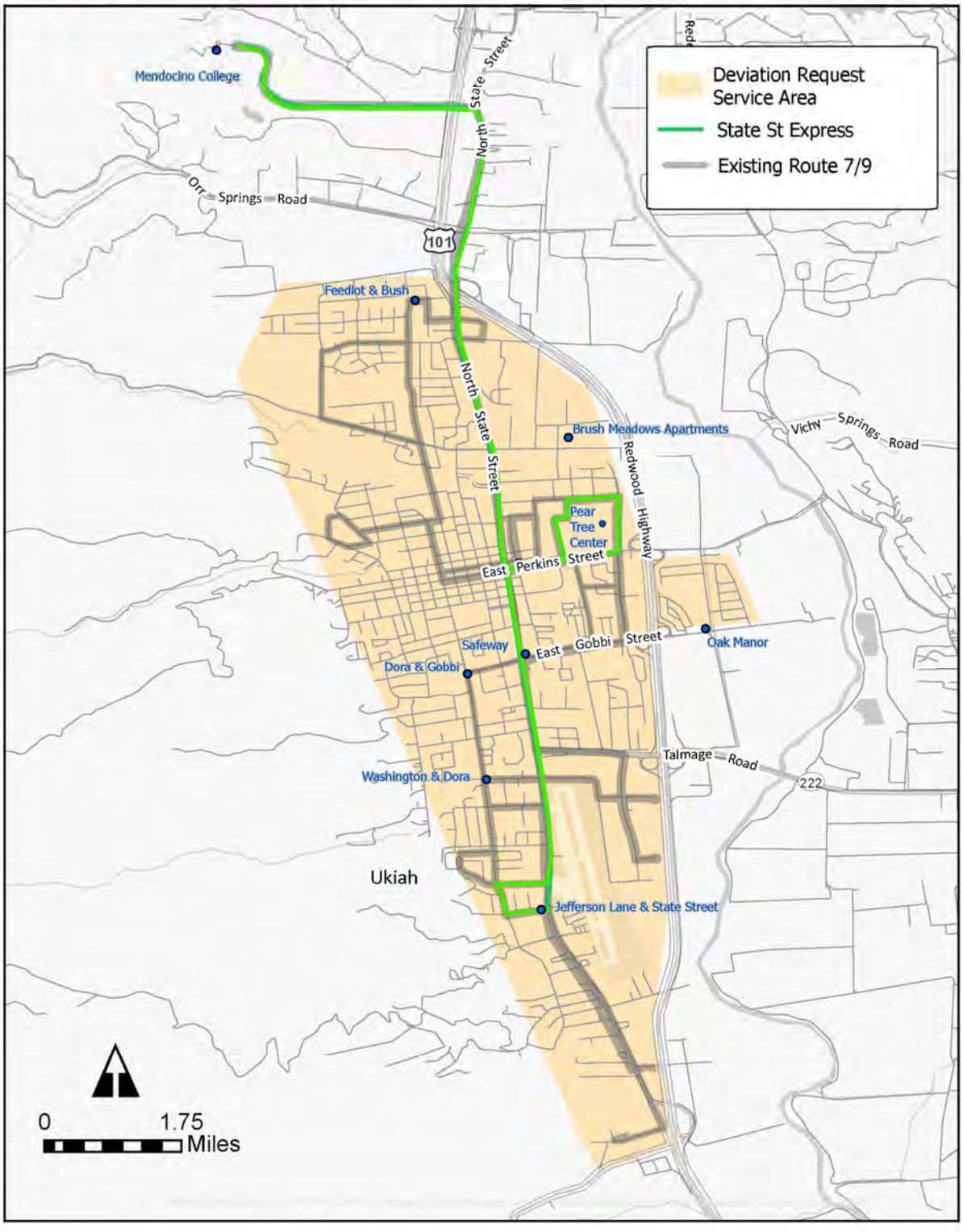


Figure 26:
Potential Deviated State Street Express



The State Street Express could provide half-hourly service from roughly 6:00 AM to 6:30 PM on weekdays. On Saturdays, one bus would operate every 45 minutes between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM. Local Ukiah ridership would likely increase due to the shorter travel time between north and south Ukiah, direct service being provided to more areas, and the increased frequency; however, the passengers who would now be required to call in advance for a pick-up/drop-off would likely ride less frequently. Overall, it is estimated that this option will increase ridership by 1,200 passenger-trips per year, but also reduce the MTA operating subsidy by $71,100.

Pros

- Maintain half-hourly service on weekdays.
- Reduced travel times.
- Slightly increased frequency on Saturday.
- A greater number of homes served directly.
- Increase in ridership.
- Decrease in operating costs.

Cons

- Requirement for advance reservations for deviations off of State Street.

Evening Service

The most popular service improvement requested during the fixed route passenger survey discussed in Chapter 5 was for later weekday service (58 percent of respondents). Based on this community input, three options for providing evening transit service in Ukiah were evaluated.

Route 9 – 6:00 PM –11:00 PM

Route 9 service could be extended from 6:00 PM to 11:00 PM each weeknight. Given reduced transit demand in the evening, service would be provided with only one bus. Based on the existing route length and service time, the bus would complete about three round trips during the five additional evening hours. Potential ridership on an evening Route 9 service was estimated by calculating the ratio of daytime ridership to evening ridership on peer transit systems that offer services during similar hours. This ratio was applied to Route 9's annual weekday ridership levels, then an elasticity factor was applied to reflect the loss of ridership that would be expected by decreasing the service frequency compared to the daytime schedule. These calculations yielded an annual ridership estimate for Route 9 evening service of 3,300 passenger-trips. Evening service would cause MTA service levels to increase by 1,300 vehicle service hours and 16,500 vehicle service miles annually, resulting in an operating subsidy increase of $136,200 (Table 26).

Route 20 – 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM

Operating one additional Route 20 roundtrip each weeknight evening would provide an extra opportunity for workers and students to get between Ukiah and Willits (and within the communities) at the end of the day. To estimate ridership on this potential evening Route 20 trip, the same methodology that was utilized to estimate ridership on an evening Route 9 service, described above, was applied to Route 20.

It is estimated that operating evening Route 20 service on weekdays would increase ridership by 1,600 passenger-trips per year (Table 26). Route 20 evening service would require 500 vehicle service hours and 13,200 vehicle service miles, increasing MTA's marginal operating cost by $69,400. Fare revenues would be expected to be $2,500, meaning the annual marginal operating subsidy would be $66,900.

Ukiah Microtransit Service – 6:00 PM – 11:00 PM

Ukiah could be served in the evening with microtransit. This evening microtransit option would be provided within the service area shown in Figure 24 from 6:00 PM to 11:00 PM, after fixed route service is completed for the day, with the parameters described previously. To estimate potential ridership for this service, the ratio of evening to daytime ridership on peer systems was applied to the estimated daytime Ukiah microtransit ridership. It is reasonable to assume, based on peer systems, that the one microtransit vehicle could carry four passenger-trips per hour, therefore the initial ridership estimate was reduced based on this productivity constraint. In all, it was estimated that 2,600 passenger-trips would be carried on a Ukiah evening microtransit service per year. The service would operate 1,300 vehicle service hours and 19,500 vehicle service miles annually, for a marginal operating cost of $151,000. The evening Ukiah microtransit service would generate $6,100 in fare revenues annually, leaving a marginal operating subsidy of $144,900.

Expanded Saturday Service

Another common request heard during public outreach was for additional Saturday service, with 34 percent of respondents requesting earlier hours and 46 percent of respondents requesting later hours. Currently, Route 9 is the only Saturday service in Ukiah, operating from approximately 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. This section discusses two alternatives for further expanding Saturday transit service in Ukiah, dependent on driver availability.

Route 20 – 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Route 20 could be operated on Saturdays from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Based on the current route structure and running time, this span of service would allow for three roundtrips between Ukiah and Willits per Saturday, resulting in MTA service levels increasing by 300 vehicle service hours and 7,900 vehicle service miles per year (Table 26). The service would carry about 1,200 passenger-trips per year, based on existing weekday ridership, the typical ratio of Saturday to weekday ridership observed on the MTA and other peer transit systems, and the typical proportion of passenger-trips occurring during the proposed service hours. The annual marginal operating cost would be $41,600, but given expected fare revenues of $1,300, the annual operating subsidy would be $40,300.

Ukiah Saturday Microtransit Service – 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

A Saturday microtransit service could be offered in Ukiah using one vehicle from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM to supplement Saturday fixed route service. Typically, Saturday transit ridership is half of weekday ridership. However, Saturday ridership on Routes 7/9 is only 10 percent of weekday ridership. Given that microtransit can serve more homes and passengers typically have more flexibility with travel time on Saturdays, it was estimated that microtransit ridership on Saturdays would be 40 percent of weekday microtransit ridership. Ridership estimates also considered the proportion of Route 9 trips typically made during the 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM window.

Based on these various considerations, is estimated that operating a Saturday Ukiah microtransit service would increase ridership by 600 passenger-trips annually. About 300 vehicle service hours and 4,500 vehicle service miles would be operated per year, for a total annual marginal operating cost of $38,300 (Table 26). The service would generate $1,400 of fare revenues per year, meaning the annual marginal operating subsidy would be $36,900.

WILLITS SERVICE ALTERNATIVES

Service alternatives designed to either improve transit access or the operational efficiency of transit services in the City of Willits are discussed in this section. The impacts of the various alternatives are presented in Table 27.

Willits/Brooktrails Microtransit Service

As a way to bring alternative forms of public transit to the region and directly serve more homes in Willits and Brooktrails (currently unserved), the MTA could operate a combined Willits/Brooktrails microtransit service with the following characteristics:

- Figure 27 shows the potential Willits microtransit service area. The Willits zone would serve nearly all residential and commercial developments within the city, including the Sherwood Rancheria. The Brooktrails zone, shown in Figure 28, would include most of the Brooktrails population.
- Service hours would be weekdays from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM.
- Like the Ukiah microtransit service, it is assumed the general public fare would be $4.00. The discounted fare for senior adults ages 62 and older and passengers with disabilities would be $2.00. The average fare revenue generated per passenger would therefore be $2.36, based on systemwide boardings by passenger-type in FY 2022-23.
- To request rides, passengers would either submit their request through a phone app, or they would call dispatch.
- Based on demand, only one vehicle would be used.
- Given the dispersed nature of Brooktrails and the potentially long travel times necessary to serve homes in the community, service to Brooktrails would be limited to the first 15 minutes of the hour. This policy would require the app to restrict ride requests either starting or ending in Brooktrails to the eligible service windows. While this policy would result in Brooktrails passengers having longer wait times, it would benefit overall service productivity.

Various alternatives for implementing microtransit in Willits/Brooktrails are discussed on the following pages.

Table 27: Willits - Service Alternatives Summary

	Change In Annual Service						
	Ridership	Service Hours	Service Miles	Marginal Operating Cost	Fare Revenues [3]	Operating Subsidy	Buses in Operation
Status Quo[1]							
Route 1	5,700	2,900	32,200	$300,800	$5,900	$294,900	
Route 20	18,200	4,340	79,400	$521,900	$19,000	$502,900	
Route 65	9,100	4,100	126,000	$610,100	$9,500	$600,600	
Total	33,000	11,340	237,600	$1,432,800	$34,400	$1,398,400	
Willits Service Alternatives - Change from Status Quo[2]							
Willits/Brooktrails Microtransit Service [4]							
Combined Willits/Brooktrails Microtransit Service - Mon - Fri, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM	5,800	1,800	34,800	$225,200	$13,700	$211,500	1
Willits/Brooktrails Microtransit and Eliminate Route 1							
Combined Willits/Brooktrails Microtransit Service - Mon - Fri, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM	5,800	1,800	34,800	$225,200	$13,700	$211,500	1
Elimate Route 1	-5,700	-2,900	-32,200	-$300,800	-$5,900	-$294,900	-1
Ridership Switch to Route 20	800	0	0	$0	$1,800	-$1,800	0
Net Impact	*900*	*-1,100*	*2,600*	*-$75,600*	*$9,600*	*-$85,200*	*0*
Evening Service Options							
Route 1 - 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM	500	500	5,900	$52,700	$500	$52,200	1
Serve the Sherwood Rancheria On-Demand							
Make the Sherwood Valley Rancheria an On-Demand Stop	0	0	-2,700	-$6,200	$0	-$6,200	0
Saturday Service Options							
Route 1 Service - 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM	440	300	2,500	$44,200	$500	$43,700	1
Combined Willits/Brooktrails Microtransit Service - 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM	500	300	5,700	$41,100	$1,200	$39,900	1

Note 1: Parameters and costs represent change over existing services. Estimates represent marginal costs and do not include fixed costs.

Note 2: Status Quo operations are based on 2022-23 operating parameters and the FY 2024-25 cost model. This Table only includes status quo data for the routes that serve Willits.

Note 3: As there is no local Saturday transit service in Willits, an additional $50 per service hour was added to the operating cost estimates to account for additional staffing requirements

Note 4: Fare revenues are assumed to be equal to the average fare collected per passenger during FY 2022-23, or $3.24 per passenger on Route 1 and $3.51 per passenger on Routes 20 and 65.

Note 5: Assumes a general microtransit fare of $4.00 per one-way trip. Costs include $4,500/year for app license for one vehicle.

Figure 27:
Potential Willits Microtransit Service Area

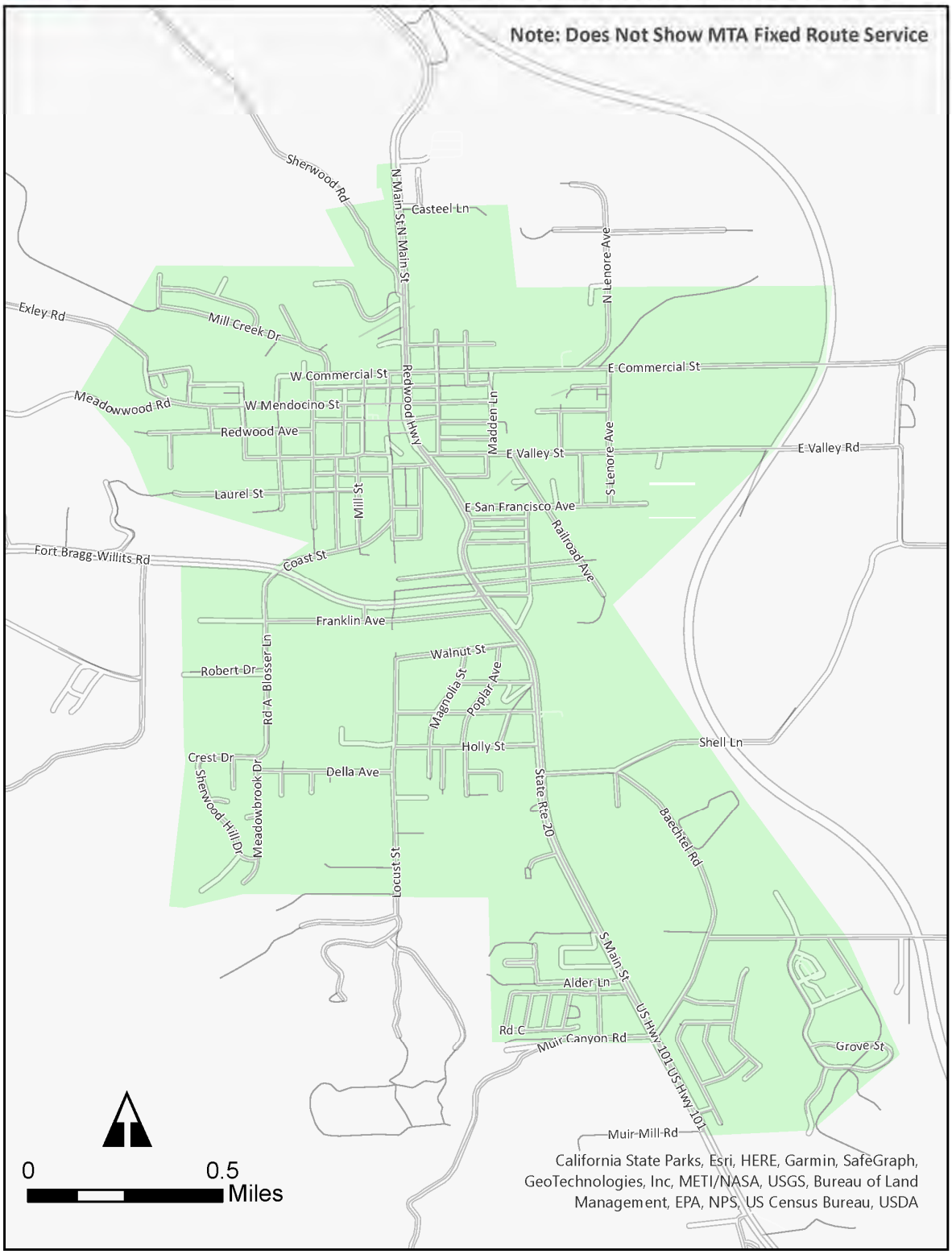
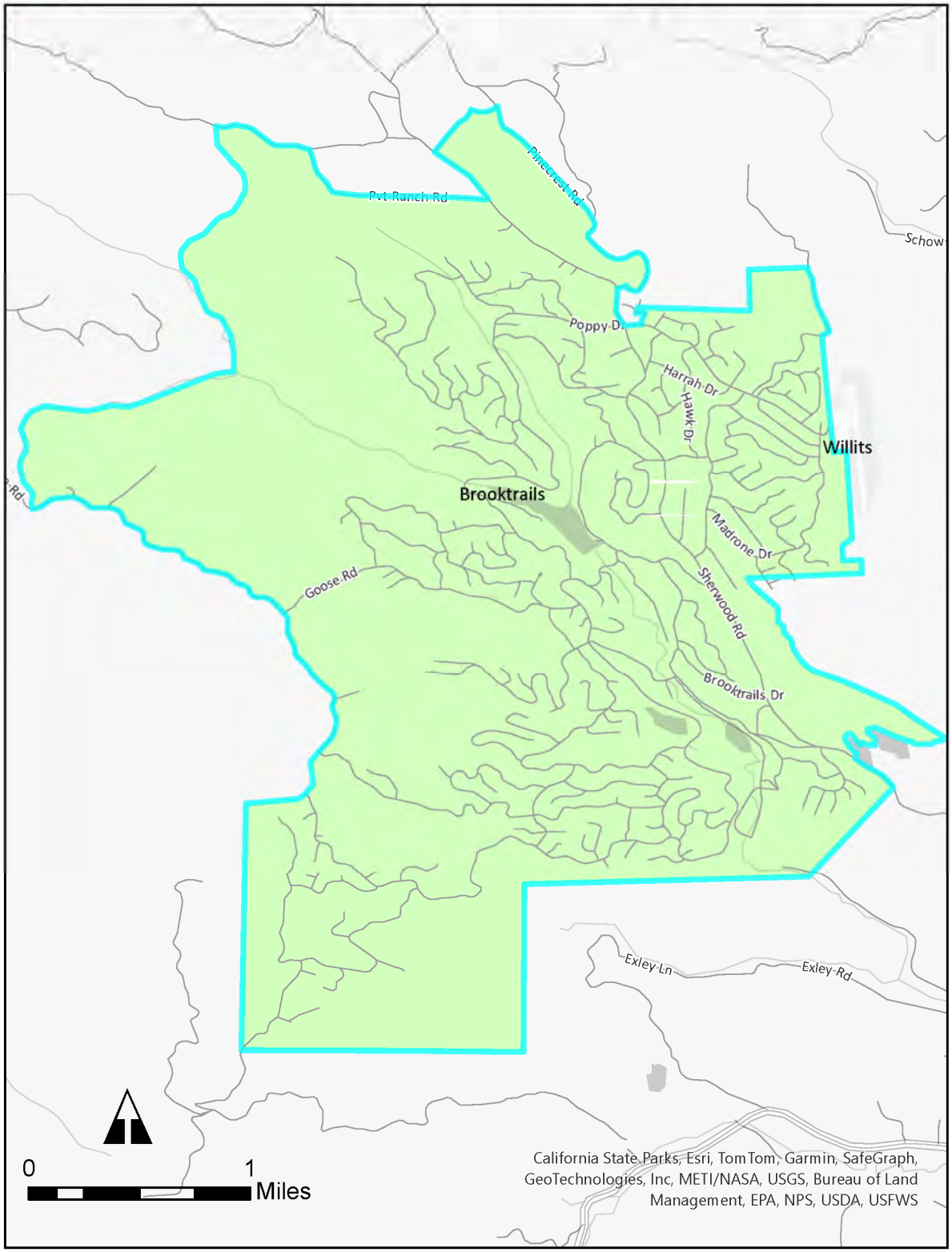


Figure 28:
Potential Brooktrails Microtransit Service Area



Willits/Brooktrails Microtransit Service and No Changes to Fixed Routes

MTA could offer the new Willits/Brooktrails microtransit service with no additional changes to its fixed routes. The potential ridership of this new service was estimated by applying the per capita microtransit ridership rate observed in peer regions (Appendix A), or 0.55 trips per resident per year, to the Willits and Brooktrails population sizes. Then, additional factors were applied to reflect the high proportion of Willits homes and the low proportion of Brooktrails homes that are likely transit-dependent. Based on this analysis, it is estimated that the Willits/Brooktrails microtransit service, if implemented with the parameters described above, would carry 5,800 passenger-trips annually (Table 27). This ridership level would yield a productivity rate of 3 passenger-trips per hour.

Operating microtransit on weekdays from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM would require 1,800 vehicle service hours per year. Assuming the vehicle maintains an average speed of 15 miles per hour (except for the trips to Brooktrails during which the vehicle travels faster), 34,800 vehicle service miles would be operated annually. These service levels would generate a marginal operating cost of $225,200 per year, including a $4,500 cost for obtaining a microtransit software license for the vehicle. Accounting for fares, the annual operating subsidy would be $211,500.

Replace Route 1 with Willits/Brooktrails Microtransit Service

Route 1, the local Willits deviated fixed route, has performed poorly in recent years, carrying only 2 passenger-trips per hour in FY 2022-23 at a high operating cost of $79.11 per passenger-trip. Rather than operating two different local services in communities with relatively low transit ridership, the introduction of a Willits/Brooktrails microtransit service could coincide with eliminating Route 1. The microtransit service would likely only require one van, meaning operating costs would not substantially increase by providing microtransit rather than fixed route service. The costs of adding a second van are addressed below. The Willits service area, as shown in Figure 27, spans only 2.1 square miles, meaning the driver would be able to respond to trip requests quickly, except for the few times daily the vehicle goes up to Brooktrails.

Under this alternative, Willits would continue to be served by Routes 20 and 65 as normal, and microtransit would be introduced. Eliminating Route 1 would reduce service levels by 2,900 vehicle service hours and 32,200 vehicle service miles annually, resulting in substantial operating cost savings of $300,800 annually. As there is some overlap between Route 1 and Route 20, it is assumed that some passengers would instead use Route 20 to meet their travel needs. Boarding-by-stop data was considered to determine what proportion of Route 1 passengers board and alight at stops served by Route 20. Then, an elasticity analysis was applied to determine how many passengers would still ride Route 20 despite the slower service frequency. This analysis found that 800 passenger-trips would switch to Route 20, therefore the net impact of eliminating Route 1 would be an annual loss of 4,900 passenger-trips.

The net impacts of implementing a new Willits/Brooktrails microtransit service, eliminating Route 1, and some Route 1 riders switching to Route 20 are presented in Table 24. As shown, the net ridership impact would be a gain of 900 passenger-trips per year. There would be a decrease of 1,100 vehicle service hours and an increase of 2,600 vehicle service miles operated each year, resulting in net savings of $75,600. The average microtransit fare would be higher than the average Route 1 fare, meaning there would be a net increase of $9,600 in fare revenues. In all, the net financial impact would be a $85,200 reduction to MTA's annual marginal operating subsidy.

Add a Second Van to Willits/Brooktrails Microtransit Service

The analysis above assumes that only one vehicle will be required to provide microtransit service in Willits and Brooktrails. According to the analysis, this service would carry around three passenger-trips per hour, which is within the capacity of one demand-response vehicle. However, a round trip from Willits to Brooktrails could take up to 30 – 40 minutes. It is estimated that there may be four trips beginning or ending in Brooktrails during one average service day. Even during times when the van travels out to Brooktrails, there would still be time during that hour to provide service within Willits, however, passengers may need to wait a little longer. If demand for this service increased, it may be necessary to add a second vehicle in order to provide rides within a 30-minute waiting time. If a second van is operated during the middle of the day between 11 AM and 3 PM, there would be an additional annual operating cost of $122,100 (including a second microtransit license fee). This would negate the cost savings of the one vehicle option listed above. Given that response times would now be quicker, there would be a small increase of around 300 trips annually.

Evening Service Options

Expanding evening transit service in Willits was considered to meet passenger needs, as expressed during public outreach (Chapter 5).

Operate Route 1 From 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM

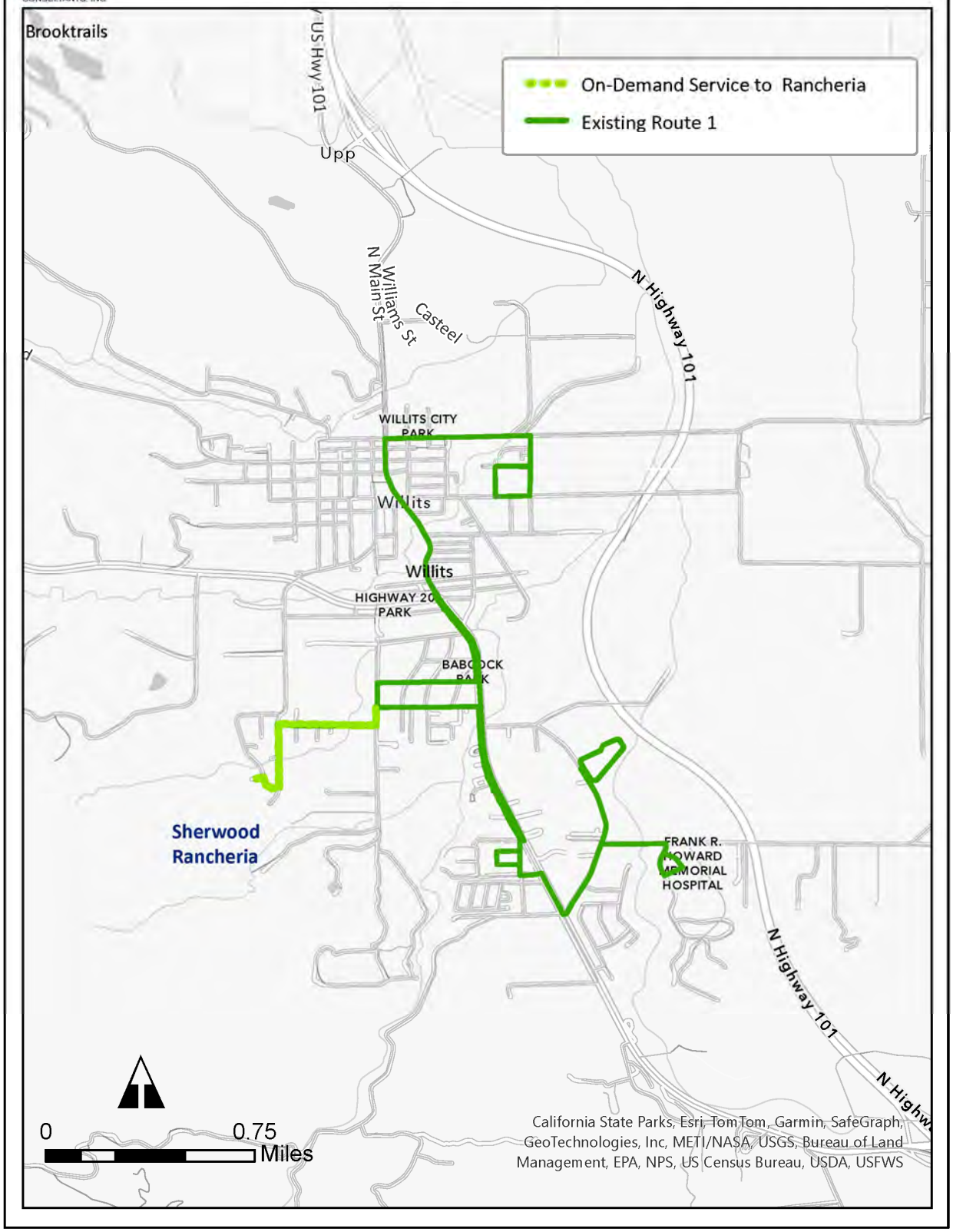
Route 1 currently ends service at 6:33 PM at the Integrated Service Center. Service could be extended by two hours, until approximately 8:30 PM. As it takes 51 minutes for Route 1 to complete a full roundtrip, two roundtrips would be completed during the extra evening hours. It is estimated that the additional Route 1 evening hours would increase ridership by 500 passenger-trips annually, based on daytime ridership levels and the ratio of daytime ridership to evening ridership on peer services. Annual service levels would increase by 500 vehicle service hours and 5,900 vehicle service miles. MTA's marginal operating subsidy would be $52,200 (Table 27).

Serve Sherwood Valley Casino On-Demand

Currently, Route 1 serves the Sherwood Valley Casino on all trips, requiring 11 minutes and 2.6 miles per roundtrip through the city. Despite the significant mileage and time required to serve the stop, ridership is typically quite low, with only one boarding and three alightings (daily) observed during the boarding and alighting counts conducted for the SRTDP. As this stop is in the middle of the route, moreover, serving it often adds unnecessary travel time to the larger majority of riders traveling past this point.

Route 1 service to the Sherwood Valley Casino could be modified to be on-demand, as shown in Figure 29. In this scenario, passengers would call dispatch to request a pickup at the location and would request a drop-off upon boarding. Based on current ridership levels, it is estimated that serving the Sherwood Valley Casino on demand would reduce ridership by 500 passengers per year at the casino stop, however, this would be offset by a similar increase in other riders generated by the shorter travel times, yielding no net change in ridership. This alternative would not change annual vehicle service hours but would reduce vehicle service miles by 5,400 per year (Table 27). This service modification would yield marginal operating cost savings of $6,200 per year, with a parallel reduction to the annual operating subsidy.

Figure 29:
Route 1 with On-Demand Service to Sherwood Rancheria



Saturday Service Options

This section discusses two alternatives for providing Saturday service in Willits.

Route 1 Service

MTA could operate Route 1 on Saturdays from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. As Route 1 completes one roundtrip per hour, six roundtrips would be completed per Saturday. Ridership would increase by 440 passenger-trips per year, resulting in $500 in additional fare revenues (Table 27). This estimate is based on Route 1 weekday ridership levels, the nationwide trend of Saturday ridership being half of weekday ridership, and the proportion of Route 1 weekday ridership that occurs within the equivalent service hours. In all, providing Route 1 Saturday service would add 300 vehicle service hours and 3,500 vehicle service miles per year at an annual cost of $44,200. Given the expected fare revenues and operating costs, the annual marginal operating subsidy would be $43,700.

Willits/Brooktrails Microtransit Service

A microtransit service could be provided on Saturdays in Willits/Brooktrails, with the parameters outlined previously, from 10:00 to 4:00 PM. Given the estimated weekday ridership levels, the typical ratio of Saturday to weekday ridership, and the proposed service hours, it is estimated that a Saturday Willits/Brooktrails microtransit service would carry 500 passenger-trips per year. Service levels would increase by 300 vehicle service hours and 5,700 vehicle service miles, increasing the MTA's annual marginal operating cost by $41,100 (Table 27). Ridership would generate $1,200 in fare revenues, meaning the annual operating subsidy would be $39,900.

RURAL INLAND COMMUNITIES SERVICE ALTERNATIVES

In 2022, MCOG and Caltrans commissioned the development of the *Mendocino County Rural Inland Communities Mobility Solutions (*Mobility Solutions) study to analyze innovative ways to improve transit service to the communities of Brooktrails, Covelo, Hopland, Laytonville, and Potter Valley. These communities are collectively home to nearly 7,500 residents and are located primarily along the US 101 corridor, as shown in Figure 30.

After extensive analysis and outreach, the Mobility Solutions study proposed a "*mix of vehicle-based service and other programs to supplement rural residents' transportation choices*." This section analyzes the estimated impacts on costs and ridership of the various transit-focused solutions recommended in the Mobility Solutions study, as shown in Table 28. Proposed programs that could be implemented by community-led groups, rather than the MTA, are discussed later in this chapter.

Brooktrails

Brooktrails is home to approximately 4,500 residents, per the American Community Survey (ACS) 2021 Five-Year Estimates, making it the fourth largest community in Mendocino County. Located about 3 miles northwest of Willits on land that previously served as a forestry operation, the current community structure consists of dispersed, single-family development along a circuitous road network.

There are no public transportation services available in Brooktrails besides the Willits Senior Center paratransit service, which is limited to senior adults and persons with disabilities. Active transportation

Figure 30:
Mendocino County Rural Inland Communities

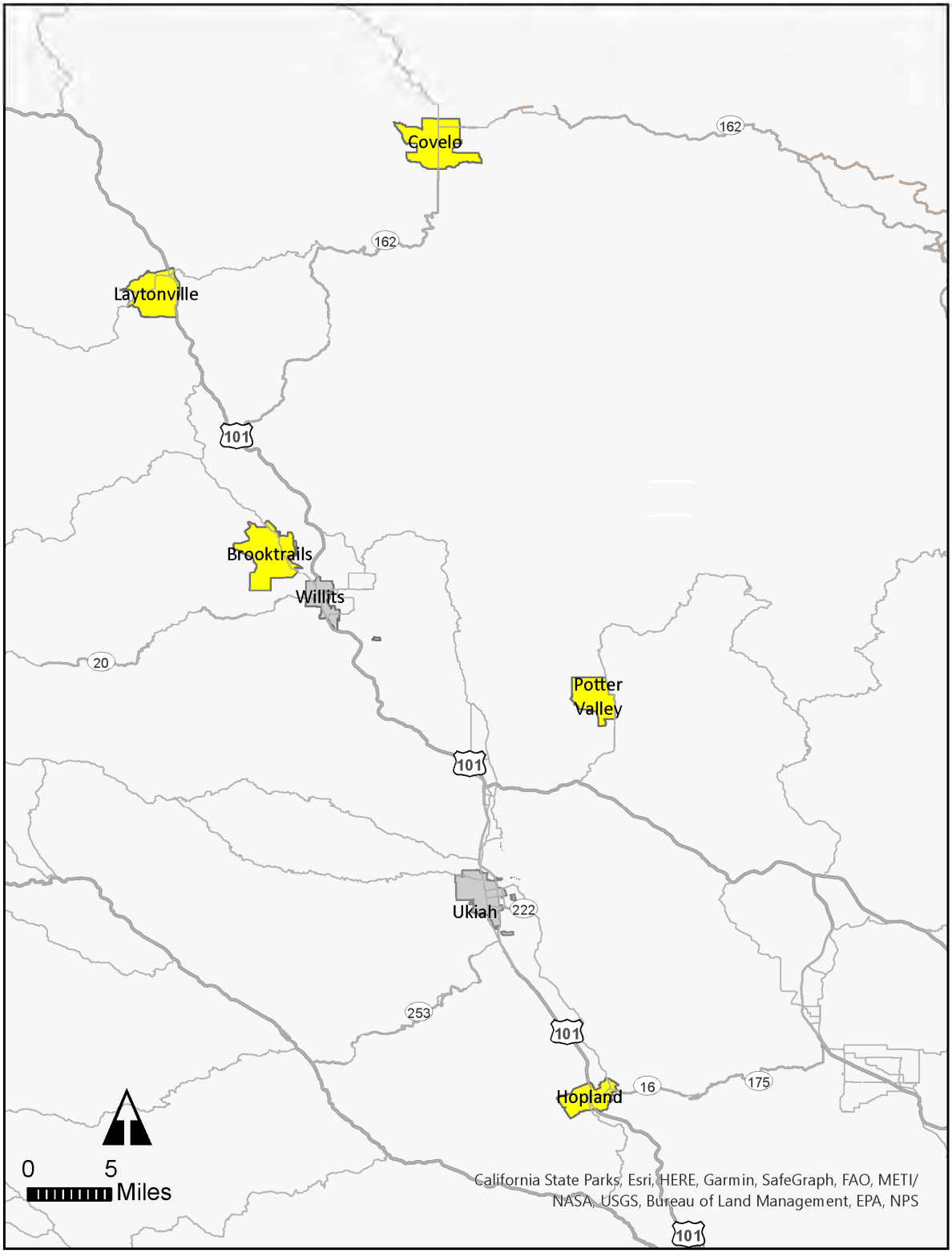


Table 28: Rural Inland Communities - Service Alternatives Summary

	Change In Annual Service						
	Ridership	Service Hours	Service Miles	Marginal Operating Cost	Fare Revenues	Operating Subsidy	Buses in Operation
Rural Inland Service Alternatives - Change from Status Quo [1,2]							
Brooktrails Alternatives							
Deviated Fixed Route Service - 2 Days/Week, 2 Trips/Day [3]	800	300	3,600	$31,700	$800	$30,900	1
Brooktrail Extension [3]	700	500	8,400	$58,400	$700	$57,700	0
Covelo Alternatives							
Deviated Fixed Route Service to Willits - 1 Day/ Week [4]	200	420	6,400	$47,600	$500	$47,100	0.5
Deviated Fixed Route Service to Ukiah - 1 Day/Week	220	500	11,390	$65,300	$500	$64,800	0.5
Hopland							
Rt 65 Hopland Tripper (2 Round Trips/day, 3 Days per Week)	200	300	6,000	$35,900	$1,000	$34,900	1
Laytonville Alternatives							
Deviated Fixed Route Service to Willits - 1 Day/ Week [4]	400	310	4,600	$34,800	$900	$33,900	0.5
Deviated Fixed Route Service to Ukiah - 1 Day/Week	430	400	7,180	$47,800	$1,000	$46,800	0.5
Potter Valley Alternatives							
Deviated Fixed Route to Ukiah - 1 Day/Week, 1 Trip/Day [4]	100	300	3,900	$32,400	$200	$32,200	0.5
Community Van Service to Ukiah Operated by the Family Resource Center	--	--	--	$7,500	--	--	0

Note 1: None of the five subject communities are currently served by the MTA, therefore all values shown in the Table represent increases over the MTA's status quo.

Note 2: Estimates represent marginal costs and do not include fixed costs.

Note 3: Average fare assumed to be equal to the average fare collected per Route 1 passenger during FY 2022-23, or $1.04 per passenger.

Note 4: Microtransit general fare assumed to be $4, or an average fare of $2.36 per passenger.

from Brooktrails into Willits is also not accessible for many residents, as it is not safe to walk or bicycle along Sherwood Road due to the lack of sidewalks and limited curb space. Brooktrails service alternatives were built off of the recommendations of the Mobility Solutions study, except for the previously discussed Willits/Brooktrails microtransit service.

Deviated Fixed Route Service

The Mobility Solutions study proposed the MTA operate a deviated fixed route service to Brooktrails two days a week, four times per day. Based on expected demand, this SRTDP study instead evaluated the potential of operating a deviated fixed route service to Brooktrails two days a week, two times per day. A possible schedule for this service is shown in Table 29. A possible route is shown in Figure 31. Per the Mobility Solutions study, three deviations up to 0.75 miles would be allowed per trip.

Table 29: Example Brooktrails Deviated Fixed Route Schedule

Tuesday, Thursday			
Safeway (Willits)	--	12:15 PM	4:15 PM
Post Office	--	12:16 PM	4:16 PM
Willits City Hall	--	12:18 PM	4:18 PM
Mendocino College (Willits Center)	--	12:20 PM	4:20 PM
Creekside Drive	--	12:23 PM	4:23 PM
Sherwood Market	--	12:33 PM	4:33 PM
Brooktrails Community Services District	8:00 AM	12:40 PM	4:40 PM
Buckeye Road and Tulip Drive	8:06 AM	12:46 PM	4:46 PM
Sherwood Market	8:25 AM	1:05 PM	5:05 PM
Mariposa Market	8:35 AM	1:15 PM	--
Safeway (Willits)	8:37 AM	1:17 PM	--

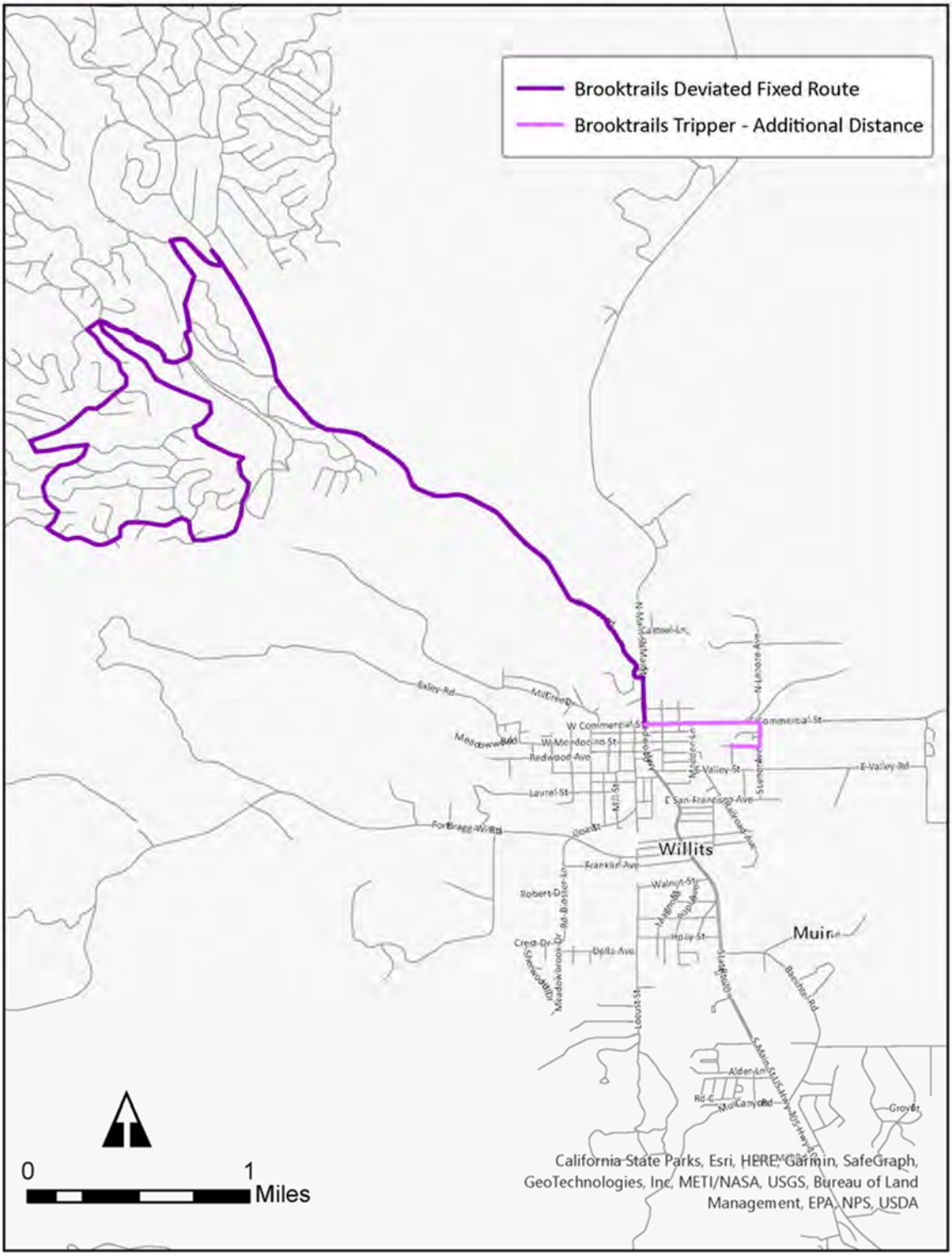
Note 1: The service would be able to make up to three deviations per trip within Brooktrails within 0.75 miles of the fixed route.

The ridership estimate for the Brooktrails deviated fixed route is based on the observed ridership on other rural lifeline transit services in California and the relative transit dependency of Brooktrails compared to the other service areas. Factors were also considered to account for the proposed service being available only two days per week. In sum, it is estimated that a Brooktrails deviated fixed route would carry 800 passenger-trips per year. Assuming a similar service schedule to what is presented in Table 29 and only three deviations being allowed per trip, 300 additional vehicle service hours and 3,600 vehicle service miles would be required per year, at a marginal operating cost of $31,700. These service level estimates account for additional driver time to deadhead the vehicle to and from the Willits operations facility. Charging the same fares as Route 1 would generate $800 in fare revenue meaning the annual operating subsidy would be $30,900.

Brooktrails Extension Service

Rather than implement a separate service for Brooktrails, Brooktrails could be served with additional runs of Route 1. These special trips could be referred to as the "Brooktrails Extension" bus. As outlined in the Mobility Solutions study, this alternative would consist of the Route 1 bus going out to Brooktrails and picking passengers up at a few key stops before starting regular service at 7:12 AM. There would then be an afternoon return trip sometime between 5:00 PM and 6:30 PM. The benefits of this service model are

Figure 31:
Potential Brooktrails Deviated Fixed Route



that no additional drivers would be required and that the service could be designed to get folks to work or school at traditional times. Service would also be provided five days a week, which is a benefit over the deviated fixed route option discussed previously. On the other hand, as there would only be two Extension buses per day, one in the morning and one in the evening, the restricted schedule may limit potential ridership, particularly for those who only need to go shopping or to appointments in Willits. There would also be no deviations, meaning passengers would have to get themselves to and from the designated stops.

Offering a Brooktrails Extension service five days per week would increase MTA's annual ridership by 500 passenger-trips per year. The service would require approximately two vehicle service hours per day, one hour per trip, meaning service levels would increase by 500 vehicle service hours per year. Assuming the bus would follow a similar route to the possible deviated fixed route service shown in Figure 31, 8,400 vehicle service miles would be operated annually. The Brooktrails Extension would likely have the same fare structure as Route 1, therefore $700 in fare revenue would be generated annually, resulting in an operating subsidy of $57,700 per year.

Covelo

Covelo is located off of State Route 162 (SR 162) in the northwest portion of Mendocino County (Figure 30) and is home to 1,394 residents (2020 Census), including most of the Round Valley Indian Reservation. Currently, there are no transit services in Covelo. The Mobility Solutions study found through public outreach that the most common transportation needs in Covelo were for transportation to shopping and medical appointments.

Deviated Fixed Route Service to Willits

The MTA is planning to implement a deviated fixed route service from Covelo to Willits one day per week. A sample schedule for this type of service is shown in Table 30. As shown, the bus would pick up passengers with reservations from their homes. The bus would then wait at the Round Valley Library for any additional passengers without reservations, then leave and head south to Willits. Once in Willits, passengers would get dropped off at their intended destination, then the bus would have a layover period. During the layover, passengers who need to visit multiple destinations could transfer to other MTA services to get around. At the end of the layover period, the bus would pick passengers up at an established stop, and then drive back to Covelo. The driver would later drop off passengers at their homes or at the library. For Covelo residents wishing to travel to Ukiah, this schedule allows for transfers to Route 20 and Route 9 with a two hour layover in Ukiah.

Given Covelo's population size, the proposed service frequency, and ridership on other rural lifeline transit services across the state, it is expected that the Covelo deviated fixed route will carry about 200 passenger-trips per year. The proposed schedule would require 400 vehicle service hours and 5,600 vehicle service miles annually at a cost of $44,200. If a $4.00 general fare was implemented, the annual operating subsidy would be $43,700. This option assumes that the driver would work a split shift and therefore not be paid during the layover period.

The MTA is planning to implement this alternative as a three-year pilot project using funding allocated to the MTA by Senate Bill (SB) 125. SB 125 funds will be used to cover both capital and operations costs.

Table 30: Example Schedules for Covelo and Laytonville Deviated Fixed Routes

Tuesday		
On Demand Service in Covelo	*Start Time*	7:15 AM
	End Time	7:45 AM
Round Valley Library		*8:00 AM*
Alder Lane - Lumber Jacks (Willits)		*9:25 AM*
Layover in Willits	*Start Time*	9:45 AM
	End Time	2:00 PM
Alder Lane - Lumber Jacks (Willits)		*2:15 PM*
Round Valley Library		*3:40 PM*
On Demand Service in Covelo	*Start Time*	3:45 PM
	End Time	4:30 PM

Thursday		
On Demand Service in Laytonville	*Start Time*	8:00 AM
	End Time	8:30 AM
Savings Bank		*8:45 AM*
Alder Lane - Lumber Jacks (Willits)		*9:25 AM*
Layover in Willits	*Start Time*	9:30 AM
	End Time	1:15 PM
Alder Lane - Lumber Jacks (Willits)		*1:45 PM*
Savings Bank		*2:35 PM*
On Demand Service in Laytonville	*Start Time*	2:35 PM
	End Time	3:05 PM

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

During the first year, the MTA intends to procure one or more zero-emission vehicles for the service. During the second and third years, the MTA will initiate the service. As the Covelo route would be operated only one day per week, the driver and vehicle will also be used to operate the pilot service to Laytonville, discussed later in this section. It should be noted that the MTA will need to secure additional funding to continue operating the Covelo deviated fixed route after the initial three-year pilot.

Deviated Fixed Route Service to Ukiah

Another option is to provide service from Covelo to Ukiah, where there are more services available. The Rural Mobility Plan recommended direct service to Ukiah, based on public input. The bus would operate out of the Willits yard and travel to Covelo fairly early in the morning with demand response service available in Covelo. After one stop in Willits the bus would drop off passengers at the Pear Tree Transit Center where they could transfer to Route 9 or seniors/disabled could reserve a Ukiah DAR ride to reach

their final destination. Passengers would have two hours in Ukiah to go to medical appointments or do shopping before the bus departed the Pear Tree Center back to Willits and Covelo. Under this option it is assumed that the driver would be paid for the layover time minus a one hour lunch break.

With the additional hours and miles of service, this alternative would cost on the order of $64,800 in annual operating subsidy. A small increase in ridership (20 trips per year) could be gained over the Willits option, as no transfers would be required in Willits. One of the challenges associated with providing service as far as Ukiah is that this would come close to the range of an electric vehicle. The vehicle would need to be charged in Ukiah during the layover.

Hopland

Hopland is located south of Ukiah along US 101 (Figure 30). Hopland was estimated to be home to 922 residents as of the ACS 2021 Five-Year Estimates. Transit demand in Hopland is generated by the high proportion of transit-dependent residents, including youth and seniors, as well as an estimated 1,000 commuters traveling south to Hopland from Ukiah. According to the US Census there are only 5 zero vehicle households in the census tract encompassing Hopland, which is significantly less than the number of zero-vehicle households in Covelo or Laytonville, suggesting there is likely less transit demand.

Increase Route 65 Frequency

Hopland is currently served by the MTA's Route 65 twice per day in both directions, Monday through Saturday. Route 65 also serves Hopland once in each direction every Sunday. The schedule is designed so that Hopland residents can get to Santa Rosa in the morning and return in the afternoon, however, the schedule does not allow Hopland residents to make a day trip to Ukiah despite Ukiah being closer. As both Ukiah and Hopland are within Mendocino County, Ukiah is an important destination for county-related services such as Health and Human Services. However, Santa Rosa is a major urban area and has more options for medical care and commercial services. The Mobility Solutions study recommended that the MTA increase service frequency on Route 65 to better serve Hopland residents, people living on the Hopland Band of Pomo Indians' tribal lands, and commuters. Any additional Route 65 service should be designed so that residents can make day round-trips to Ukiah.

In this scenario, a Route 65 Hopland Tripper would depart Ukiah around 7:00 AM and pick up passengers in Hopland around 8:00 AM. This would allow Hopland residents to be in Ukiah around 9:00 AM and transfer to Route 65 northbound to Willits at 9:25 AM. The Hopland Tripper would follow the stops of the regular Route 65 bus. In the afternoon, the last Route 65 run (Run #4) would continue beyond Ukiah at 5:00 PM to drop off passengers on request in Hopland around 5:45 PM, then deadhead back to Ukiah. As this would be a request-only service, this run would not need to be operated every day. The Hopland Tripper would only be operated three days a week, as the primary purpose would be to help Hopland residents access county-related services. On other days of the week, Hopland residents would still be able to utilize the two Route 65 round trips to Santa Rosa.

This alternative would require $34,900 in annual operating subsidy. Using similar ridership estimation techniques described above and considering the low number of zero-vehicle households in Hopland, it is estimated that this service would only carry around 200 passenger-trips per year.

Laytonville

Laytonville is located in northern Mendocino County along US 101 (Figure 30) and is home to 1,152 residents (2020 Census). Laytonville is served once per day in each direction by the Humboldt Transit Authority's Redwood Coast Express service. The Redwood Coast Express operates one round-trip per day between Eureka and Ukiah, with a 47-minute driver lunch break in Ukiah. As such, the Redwood Coast Express does not provide a useful stay in Ukiah for Laytonville residents wanting to make a one-day round-trip but does provide roughly 1 hour 50 minutes in Willits for short shopping trips or errands (but is likely not useful for other trip purposes with the need for longer stays, such as medical appointments). The Mobility Solutions study found that Laytonville residents have similar transit needs as Covelo residents, including the need for transportation to medical appointments, shopping, and colleges.

Deviated Fixed Route Service to Willits

As previously mentioned, the MTA is planning to implement a deviated fixed route service from Laytonville to Willits as a component of the larger pilot program to expand MTA's rural services using SB 125 funds. Funds will cover both capital and operations requirements. During the first year of the program, MTA will procure the vehicle, then the MTA will initiate service in the second year of the pilot. The Laytonville deviated fixed route will use the same vehicle and driver as the Covelo service. A sample schedule for the Laytonville service is included in Table 30; as evidenced by the example schedule, the Laytonville route will provide a nearly identical service to the Covelo deviated fixed route. Again, passengers could travel to Ukiah and have a two hour layover there to conduct their business.

It is estimated that the Laytonville deviated fixed route service would carry 400 passenger-trips annually, generating $900 in fare revenues. The service would operate 400 vehicle service hours and 4,600 vehicle service miles per year, resulting in a marginal operating cost of $40,000. The annual operating subsidy would be $39,100. This option assumes the driver would be paid for the layover time minus a 1 hour lunch break.

Deviated Fixed Route Service to Ukiah

Similar to the Covelo options, the Laytonville service could be extended to the Pear Tree Center in Ukiah where passengers could transfer to Route 9 for DAR (seniors and disabled only). The additional time would add roughly $12,900 in operating subsidy and carry around 30 more passenger-trips annually.

Potter Valley

Potter Valley is located northeast of Ukiah off of State Route 20. Home to approximately 600 residents (ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2021), the community has no formal transit services. The Mobility Solutions study found that the majority of Potter Valley residents travel to Ukiah for most of their needs, including groceries, work, school, and social services.

Deviated Fixed Route Service to Ukiah

Potter Valley could be served with a deviated fixed route similar to Covelo and Laytonville. A sample schedule for this service is shown in Table 31. Similar to the Covelo and Laytonville services, the route would operate one day per week. Passengers with reservations would be picked up at their homes in the morning, then the service would bring them to their destination in Ukiah. The driver would then take a layover, during which Potter Valley residents could use local Ukiah services to get between destinations.

Everyone would then re-board the service at a set stop, then travel back to Potter Valley where they would be dropped off at their homes. Due to Potter Valley's small population and the infrequent service schedule proposed, it is estimated a Potter Valley deviated fixed route would carry only 100 passenger-trips per year. The service would require 300 vehicle service hours and 3,900 vehicle service miles, increasing MTA's annual operating subsidy would be $35,100.

Table 31: Example Potter Valley Hybrid Service Schedule

Wednesday		
On Demand Service in Potter Valley	*Start Time*	8:00 AM
	End Time	8:45 AM
Potter Valley Post Office		*9:00 AM*
Pear Tree Center		*9:30 AM*
Layover in Ukiah	*Start Time*	9:30 AM
	End Time	1:30 PM
Pear Tree Center		*1:45 PM*
Potter Valley Post Office		*2:15 PM*
On Demand Service in Potter Valley	*Start Time*	2:15 PM
	End Time	3:00 PM

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

Community Van Service

In the past, the Potter Valley Family Resource Center (FRC) provided limited transportation services to local residents, however these services were unfortunately halted due to funding limitations. The Mobility Solutions study recommended reinitiating the formal FRC service. Initially, FRC staff would drive the community van, however, this responsibility could be shifted to a part-time driver position depending on resources. The MTA would develop a subcontract with the FRC to support the program by providing an accessible vehicle and limited funding for fuel, insurance, and maintenance. The Mobility Study recommended that the FRC, MTA, and MCOG evaluate the future of the program after three years, including whether the service be continued, a part-time driver be hired, or an alternative, deviated fixed route service be implemented. The Potter Valley community van, excluding the costs for the actual vehicle, would cost MTA $7,500 the first year and up to $18,000 the latter two years of the pilot.

COASTAL SERVICE ALTERNATIVES

Service alternatives focused on improving transit access and service efficiencies along the Mendocino County coast are discussed in this section. These service alternatives are presented in Table 32.

Table 32: Coastal Services - Service Alternatives Summary

	Change In Annual Service						
	Ridership	Service Hours	Service Miles	Marginal Operating Cost	Fare Revenues	Operating Subsidy	Buses in Operation
Status Quo[1]							
Route 5	8,100	2,100	25,100	$221,900	$8,500	$213,400	
Route 60	6,400	1,700	36,600	$217,000	$8,400	$208,600	
Route 65	9,100	4,100	126,000	$610,100	$11,900	$598,200	
Route 75	6,300	2,000	62,500	$300,000	$8,200	$291,800	
Route 95	3,800	2,500	74,800	$367,300	$5,000	$362,300	
Total	33,700	12,400	325,000	$1,716,300	$42,000	$1,674,300	
Coastal Service Alternatives - Change from Status Quo[2]							
Revise Route 65 Schedule							
Serve Fort Bragg after Caspar and Mendocino on southbound runs	100	40	1,000	$5,400	$500	$4,900	0
Serve Fort Bragg before Caspar and Mendocino on northbound runs	100	200	2,800	$22,100	$500	$21,600	0
Net Impact	200	240	3,800	$27,500	$1,000	$26,500	0
Saturday Service Options							
Route 5 - 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM	800	300	3,700	$32,000	$800	$31,200	1
Sunday Service Options							
Route 5 - 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM	600	300	3,700	$32,000	$600	$31,400	1

Note 1: Status Quo is based on 2022-23 operating parameters and the FY 2024-25 cost model. Only includes routes that serve Willits.

Note 2: Parameters and costs represent change over existing services. Estimates represent marginal costs and do not include fixed costs.

Note 3: Fare revenues are assumed to be equal to the average fare collected per passenger during FY 2022-23, or $1.04 per passenger on Route 5, $1.31 on Route 60, $4.76 on Route 65, $2.12 on Route 75, and $2.66 on Route 95.

Fort Bragg

Revise Route 65 Schedule to Reduce Travel Times between Willits and Fort Bragg

Route 65 vehicles are stored at the MTA facility in Fort Bragg, therefore service starts and ends in Fort Bragg. On weekdays, the first Route 65 southbound run serves Fort Bragg, then heads south to stop in the north coast communities of Caspar, Mendocino, and Caspar Beach, then heads back north to SR 20 in order to travel east to Willits. Boarding and alighting data from the onboard surveys show that few Route 65 passengers board in the Caspar and Mendocino area. The more common trip pattern is between Fort Bragg and Willits. While Fort Bragg residents could, theoretically, board Route 65 at Boatyard before the bus heads to Willits but after it has served the north coast, Route 5 does not connect with Route 65 for this first morning run. Therefore, passengers without a vehicle need to take the side trip to Mendocino. On the last two northbound Route 65 runs each weekday, Route 65 similarly bypasses Fort Bragg to serve the north coast before returning to serve local Fort Bragg stops. While this current schedule minimizes deadhead time (time that the vehicle is not available to carry passengers), it also significantly increases travel time for some Fort Bragg passengers who need to board or alight before/after Route 65 serves the north coast.

To improve travel times for Route 65 passengers traveling between inland destinations and Fort Bragg, the Route 65 schedule could be modified to instead serve the north coast first (before Fort Bragg) on southbound runs and second (after Fort Bragg) on northbound runs. This would require Route 65 to deadhead to Mendocino in the morning and deadhead from Mendocino back to the MTA facility in the evening. Sample schedules showing how this would impact both northbound and southbound Route 65 travel are presented in Tables 33 and 34.

These schedule changes would benefit people traveling between Willits/Ukiah and Fort Bragg but would negatively impact people traveling to or from the north coast. It should be noted, however, that north coast residents could instead ride Route 60, which provides four roundtrips per day between north coast destinations and Fort Bragg. As shown in Tables 33 and 34, rearranging the schedule would improve travel times for Fort Bragg passengers by 34 minutes in the northbound direction and 50 minutes in the southbound direction. For residents of the north coast, Route 65 travel times would increase by at least 20 minutes in the northbound direction and by at least 43 minutes in the southbound direction.

The net Impacts of revising the Route 65 northbound and southbound schedules are presented in Table 32. Ridership would be expected to increase slightly on both northbound and southbound runs, resulting in Route 65 ridership increasing by 200 annual passenger-trips. However, the new schedule would result in increased deadhead time, increasing annual service levels by 240 vehicle service hours and 3,800 vehicle service miles. This increase in service levels would increase the MTA's annual operating subsidy would only increase by $26,500.

Table 33: Example Route 65 Northbound Schedule
Weekdays and Saturdays

		Trip 1	Trip 2	Trip 3	Trip 4
Santa Rosa	Coddingtown Mall - Amtrak	--	--	1:25 PM	3:35 PM
Santa Rosa	2nd Street Transit Mall	--	--	1:45 PM	3:55 PM
Santa Rosa	Sonoma County Airport	--	--	2:00 PM	4:10 PM
Santa Rosa	SMART Train	--	--	2:03 PM	4:13 PM
Hopland	Mendocino Savings Bank	--	--	2:50 PM	5:00 PM
Ukiah	Ukiah Municipal Airport	--	--	3:05 PM	5:15 PM
Ukiah	Pear Tree Center - Ross	9:25 AM	12:25 PM	3:39 PM	5:35 PM
Redwood Valley	West Road & Hwy 101	9:35 AM	12:35 PM	3:50 PM	5:45 PM
Willits	Alder Ln - Lumber Jacks	9:55 AM	12:55 PM	4:09 PM	6:05 PM
Willits	Hwy 101 at RR Xing	9:57 AM	12:57 PM	4:11 PM	6:07 PM
Fort Bragg	Boatyard Drive	10:57 AM	1:57 PM	5:11 PM	7:07 PM
Fort Bragg	Safeway	--	--	5:15 PM	7:11 PM
Fort Bragg	Franklin St - Rite Aid	--	--	5:16 PM	7:12 PM
Fort Bragg	FootLighters	--	--	5:19 PM	7:15 PM
Fort Bragg	Denny's	--	--	5:22 PM	7:18 PM
Fort Bragg	Boatyard Drive	--	--	5:29 PM	7:25 PM
North Coast	Caspar	--	--	5:35 PM	7:31 PM
North Coast	Caspar Beach	--	--	5:40 PM	7:36 PM
North Coast	Little Lake & Kasten St	--	--	5:45 PM	7:41 PM
North Coast	Main St & Lansing St	--	--	5:50 PM	7:46 PM

Table 34: Example Route 65 Southbound Schedule
Weekdays and Saturdays

		Trip 1	Trip 2	Trip 3	Trip 4
North Coast	Little Lake & Kasten St	6:40 AM	--	--	--
North Coast	Main St & Lansing St	6:42 AM	--	--	--
North Coast	Caspar Beach	6:47 AM	--	--	--
North Coast	Caspar	6:52 AM	--	--	--
Fort Bragg	Boatyard Drive	7:10 AM	--	--	--
Fort Bragg	Denny's	7:20 AM	10:15 AM	11:35 AM	3:05 PM
Fort Bragg	FootLighters	7:23 AM	10:18 AM	11:38 AM	3:08 PM
Fort Bragg	Rite Aid	7:27 AM	10:22 AM	11:42 AM	3:12 PM
Fort Bragg	Safeway	7:28 AM	10:23 AM	11:43 AM	3:13 PM
Fort Bragg	Boatyard Drive	7:30 AM	10:30 AM	11:50 AM	3:20 PM
Willits	Babcock Park	8:30 AM	11:30 AM	12:50 PM	4:20 PM
Willits	Alder Ln - Lumber Jacks	8:33 AM	11:33 AM	12:53 PM	4:23 PM
Redwood Valley	West Rd & Hwy 101	8:53 AM	11:53 AM	1:13 PM	4:43 PM
Ukiah	Pear Tree Center	9:20 AM	12:20 PM	1:20 PM	4:50 PM
Ukiah	Ukiah Municipal Airport	--	--	1:25 PM	4:55 PM
Hopland	Brutocao	9:38 AM	12:38 PM	--	--
Santa Rosa	2nd Street Transit Mall	10:35 AM	1:35 PM	--	--

Saturday Route 5 Service – 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the MTA operated Route 5 on Saturdays. Pending driver availability, Saturday Route 5 service could be resumed. Operating Route 5 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM would likely serve most trips, per the boarding and alighting counts conducted for the SRTDP. Considering Route 5 weekday ridership, the typical ratio of weekday to Saturday ridership observed by other transit systems, and the proportion of weekday Route 5 trips made between 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, it is estimated that providing Saturday Route 5 service would increase ridership by 800 passenger-trips per year. Service levels would increase by 300 vehicle service hours and 3,700 vehicle service miles annually at a marginal operating cost of $32,000. Assuming $800 in fare revenue, the operating subsidy would be $31,200.

Sunday Route 5 Service – 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Fort Bragg hosts large numbers of tourists, especially during the summer months. To serve both tourists as well as year-round Fort Bragg residents more effectively throughout the entire week, MTA could operate Route 5 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM on Sundays as well. Operating Route 5 on Sundays with the same service schedule as the possible Saturday service expansion would increase the MTA marginal operating cost by $32,000. Ridership would be 600 passenger-trips per year, generating $600 in fares. Considering both the expected operating cost and fares, the annual operating subsidy would be $31,400.

Add On-demand Technology to Fort Bragg Dial-A-Ride

If MTA procures microtransit software for one of the other service options discussed in this Chapter, it would be worthwhile to procure the additional licenses necessary to make the Fort Bragg general public DAR an on-demand service. Currently, MTA customers in Fort Bragg can reserve DAR up to two weeks

and a minimum of 24 hours in advance to have a guaranteed ride at their desired time. With the addition of the on-demand app, passengers would be able to request a same-day DAR trip through their mobile phone during typical service hours, however they may have to wait 30 or more minutes for a ride. A similar transition recently occurred in western Placer County for the DAR services; Placer County rebranded the DAR as "Go South Placer" with the rollout of the new on-demand phone app. The Placer DAR services have seen a small increase in ridership since the launch of the app, yet this increase could also be the result of the pandemic ending. The cost of on-demand software licenses is around $4,500 per vehicle, in addition to initial set-up costs.

Route 60

Route 60 operates on weekdays, serving Fort Bragg south to Navarro River Junction. Route 60 makes four roundtrips each service day and helps residents in the region get to Fort Bragg as well as facilitates transfers to Routes 65 and 75. This service is well-designed, and no service modifications are recommended for Route 60 at this time.

Route 75

Route 75 provides an important connection between the Mendocino coastal and inland regions, completing one roundtrip from Gualala and Point Arena to Ukiah Monday through Saturday. The Route 75 schedule has been designed to meet the needs of mobility-limited individuals along the coast as well as in the mountain towns of Boonville, Philo, and Navarro, helping people make regular medical appointments and shopping trips in Ukiah. There are no changes recommended for Route 75 at this time.

INTER-REGIONAL SERVICE ALTERNATIVES

The MTA operates two important inter-regional services: Route 65 and Route 95. Both routes serve Mendocino County as well as provide service to Santa Rosa in Sonoma County. Alternatives impacting these routes are discussed briefly in this section.

Route 65

Revise the Route 65 Schedule to Facilitate Transfers with the Redwood Coast Express

The Humboldt Transit Authority (HTA) initiated a new regional transit service, the Redwood Coast Express (RCX), to Mendocino County in January 2024. The RCX bus operates between Eureka (in Humboldt County) and Ukiah. In Ukiah, passengers can transfer to Route 65 and onward to Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) trains or Golden Gate Transit in Santa Rosa. HTA was awarded a Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) grant to eventually purchase a hydrogen fuel-cell bus to operate the service, but for now, service is being provided with conventionally-fueled vehicles.

The MTA recently updated the Route 65 schedule to facilitate transfers with the RCX. MTA will need to continue to modify the Route 65 schedule as necessary to ensure continued transfer opportunities between the RCX and Route 65, as well as between Route 65, SMART, and Golden Gate Transit, as services change. SMART currently travels only as far north as the Santa Rosa Airport, however, the service may eventually extend to Cloverdale pending funding. Redwood Coast Transit (RCT) in Del Norte County recently received a TIRCP grant to extend the RCX from Eureka northwards to Crescent City. The RCX will continue to evolve as transit services to both the south and the north expand and are designed to

improve the intercity transit network. Eventually, passengers will be able to travel from Del Norte County to San Francisco in one day using the RCX, MTA Route 65, and SMART or Golden Gate Transit.

Route 95

Route 95 serves the south coastal region of Mendocino County, completing one round-trip per day seven days per week from Point Arena to Santa Rosa and back. Other communities served along the route include Anchor Bay, Sea Ranch, Fort Ross, Bodega Bay, and Sebastopol, among others. While FY 2022-23 ridership was not very high, Route 95 continues to provide an important, interregional service for residents along the south coast of Mendocino County as well as residents in northern Sonoma County. At this time, no changes are recommended to Route 95.

OTHER MOBILITY ALTERNATIVES

Community-Wide Transportation Reimbursement

There are some unmet transportation needs, such as transportation to out-of-county medical appointments, that are not effectively met by regular public transit services. The *Mendocino County Rural Inland Communities Mobility Solutions (*Mobility Solutions) study, mentioned previously under the discussion of rural service alternatives, recommended a communitywide volunteer driver mileage reimbursement program be established for Mendocino County. This program would be modeled after Riverside County's Transportation Reimbursement and Information Project (TRIP) program: residents in need of transportation would apply to the program, and if they are deemed eligible, they would then be able to receive reimbursements for rides provided by friends or family.

The Mobility Solutions Study recommended that this program be managed by a community-based organization, such as North Coast Opportunities or the Family Resource Center Network, rather than the MTA, therefore, the MTA has no responsibilities related to the future volunteer driver reimbursement program at this time. This study recommendation reflects that MTA staff and resources would be better utilized by providing larger-scale public transportation services.

ALTERNATIVES PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

To evaluate the relative performance of the alternatives above, key impacts of each alternative were compared. The following performance analysis considers impacts on ridership, marginal operating costs, the number of passengers carried per vehicle hour, and marginal operating cost per passenger-trip. The performance analysis gives insight into the relative benefits of the various alternatives.

Comparison of Ukiah Service Alternatives

Table 35 and Figures 32 through 35 show the relative performance of the service alternatives considered for Ukiah. In terms of ridership, implementing a Ukiah microtransit service is anticipated to increase MTA ridership more than any other alternative; however, this alternative would come with a significant cost increase of nearly $400,000 per year.

The bottom portion of Table 35 shows the recommended productivity and cost efficiency standards, as presented in Table 24 of Chapter 6, for the various services operating in Ukiah. Most of the alternatives considered would meet productivity standards, including the Local Circulator Loops alternative, adding a Ukiah microtransit service, adding a Ukiah microtransit service and reducing Route 9

Table 35: Mendocino Transit Authority Service Alternatives Performance - Ukiah
FY 2024-25

Service Alternative	Net Impact: Annual Ridership	Annual Service Hours	Annual Marginal Operating Costs [1]	Passenger-trips per Hour	Marginal Cost per Trip	Reduce or Increase Service Hours?
	Alternatives Meeting Minimum Standard Shaded in Green [2]					
Local Circulator Loops	2,600	400	$36,900	6.5	$14.19	Increase
Ukiah Microtransit Service	11,200	3,500	$398,900	3.2	$35.62	Increase
Ukiah Microtransit + Reduced Route 9 Service	9,700	3,100	$347,600	3.1	$35.84	Increase
Ukiah 90 Minute Loop with Microtransit	5,400	-1,500	-$170,300	-3.6	-$31.54	Small Decrease
Deviated State Street Express	1,200	-568	-$69,800	-2.1	-$58.17	Small Decrease
Evening Service - Route 9	3,300	1,300	$139,600	2.5	$42.30	Increase
Evening Service - Route 20	1,600	500	$69,400	3.2	$43.38	Increase
Evening Service - Microtransit	2,600	1,300	$151,000	2.0	$58.08	Increase
Saturday Service - Route 20	1,200	300	$41,600	4.0	$34.67	Increase
Saturday Service - Microtransit	600	300	$38,300	2.0	$63.83	Increase

Recommended Minimum Performance Standards >	Short Distance Routes (1, 5, 7, 9)	6.0	$19.38
	Long Distance Routes (20, 60, 65, 75, 95)	3.0	$30.51
	Dial-a-Ride / On Demand	2.0	$18.85

Note 1: Does not include fixed costs

Note 2: Meets standards by eliminating a service not meeting the standard, or by increasing ridership while decreasing costs.

service, adding a Ukiah microtransit service and a 90-minute loop fixed route, evening service on Route 20, and adding Saturday service on Route 20. The 90-minute loop with a Ukiah microtransit zone and the Deviated State Street Express alternative would both meet standards by carrying more ridership than the status quo despite reducing service hours. In terms of financial performance, the recommended marginal operating cost per trip is no more than $19.38 per trip on short-distance routes and no more than $30.51 on long-distance routes. The best alternative, financially, would be the Local Circulator Loops, as the cost per added passenger-trip would be only $14.19. The Ukiah 90-Minute Loop and microtransit zone and the Deviated State Street Express alternatives would also meet the cost standards by increasing ridership while decreasing costs.

Figure 32: MTA Service Alternatives - Impact on Annual Ridership

Figure 33: MTA Service Alternatives - Impact on Annual Marginal Operating Cost

Figure 34: MTA Service Alternatives - Passenger-Trips per Vehicle Service Hour

Figure 35: MTA Service Alternatives - Operating Cost per Passenger-Trip

Comparison of Willits Service Alternatives

Table 36 and Figures 32 through 35 show the relative performance of the Willits service alternatives. Initiating a Willits/Brooktrails microtransit service would generate the greatest increase in ridership (5,800 annual passenger-trips) but at a significant cost of $225,200, which is more than the MTA budget will allow. If Route 1 is eliminated, the Willits/Brooktrails Microtransit option will save money and increase ridership. Serving the Sherwood Rancheria on-demand would not affect ridership but would reduce operating costs slightly.

Table 36: Comparison of Willits Service Alternatives
FY 2024-25

Service Alternatives	Annual Impacts: Ridership	Vehicle Service	Marginal Operating Cost [1]	Passenger-trips per Veh-Hour	Marginal Cost per Passenger-Trip
	Alternatives Meeting Standard Shown in Green[2]				
Willits/Brooktrails Microtransit Service	5,800	1,800	$225,200	3.2	$38.83
Willits/Brooktrails Microtransit Service + Eliminate Route 1	900	-1,100	-$75,600	-0.8	-$84.00
Evening Service - Route 1	500	500	$52,700	1.0	$105.40
Serve the Sherwood Valley Rancheria On-Demand	0	0	-$12,400	NA	NA
Saturday Service - Route 1	440	300	$35,400	1.5	$80.45
Saturday Service - Willits/Brooktrails Microtransit	500	300	$41,100	1.7	$82.20
Recommended Minimum Performance Standards >	Short Distance Routes (1, 5, 7, 9)			6.0	$19.38
	Long Distance Routes (20, 60, 65, 75, 95)			3.0	$30.51
	Dial-a-Ride / On Demand			2.0	$18.85

Note 1: Does not include fixed costs

Note 2: Meets standards by eliminating a service not meeting the standard, or by increasing ridership while decreasing costs.

The recommended performance standards for passenger-trips per vehicle service hour and marginal operating cost per passenger-trip are shown in the bottom portion of Table 36. As shown, two alternatives would meet standards for productivity: the Willits/Brooktrails microtransit service (3.2 passenger-trips for every additional service hour) and replacing Route 1 with the Willits/Brooktrails microtransit service (ridership would increase by 0.8 passenger-trips for every hour eliminated). The best alternative in terms of cost efficiency would be to replace Route 1 with the Willits/Brooktrails microtransit service, as this would save $84.00 for each additional passenger-trip carried. Service to the Sherwood Valley Rancheria On-Demand will also meet cost standards, as it is anticipated to reduce operating costs with no net impact on ridership.

Comparison of Rural Inland Service Alternatives

As shown in Table 37, the rural inland service alternatives do not generate significant ridership in comparison to the service levels and costs required to operate them, which is typical of rural public transit services. As such, none of the alternatives in Table 37 meet performance standards for long-distance routes. The “best” of these alternatives is the Brooktrails Deviated Fixed Route service,

generating 2.7 passenger-trips per vehicle-hour at a marginal cost of $39.63 per passenger trip. However, this is still not as effective as the microtransit options for Brooktrails service discussed above.

Table 37: Comparison of Rural Inland Service Alternatives
FY 2024-25

Service Alternatives	Annual Impacts: Ridership	Vehicle Service Hours	Marginal Operating Cost [1]	Passenger-trips per Veh-Hour	Marginal Cost per Passenger-Trip
	Alternatives Meeting Standard Shown in Green[2]				
Brooktrails Deviated Fixed Route	800	300	$31,700	2.7	$39.63
Brooktrails Extension	700	500	$58,400	1.4	$83.43
Covelo Deviated Fixed Route to Willits	200	420	$47,600	0.5	$238.00
Covelo Deviated Fixed Route to Ukiah	220	500	$65,300	0.4	$296.82
Laytonville Deviated Fixed Route to Willits	400	310	$34,800	1.3	$87.00
Laytonville Deviated Fixed Route to Ukiah	430	400	$47,800	1.1	$111.16
Potter Valley Deviated Fixed Route	100	300	$32,400	0.3	$324.00
Potter Valley Community Van	--	--	$7,500	--	--
Increase Rt 65 service Tripper Hopland to Ukiah	200	400	$35,900	0.5	$179.50
Recommended Minimum Performance Standards >	Short Distance Routes (1, 5, 7, 9)			6.0	$19.38
	Long Distance Routes (20, 60, 65, 75, 95)			3.0	$30.51
	Dial-a-Ride / On Demand			2.0	$18.85

Note 1: Does not include fixed costs
Note 2: Meets standards by eliminating a service not meeting the standard, or by increasing ridership while decreasing costs.

Comparison of Coastal Service Alternatives

Table 38 reviews the relative performance of the coastal service alternatives. All these options have relatively small impacts on MTA ridership and budget. Saturday service on Route 5 is close to the minimum marginal cost of $30.51 per trip standard for short-distance routes. Saturday service on Route 5 is overall the most effective of the alternatives considered for MTA's coastal fixed routes.

Table 38: Comparison of Coastal Service Alternatives

FY 2024-25

Service Alternatives	Annual Impacts: Ridership	Vehicle Service Hours	Marginal Operating Cost [1]	Passenger-trips per Veh-Hour	Marginal Cost per Passenger-Trip
	Alternatives Meeting Standard Shown in Green[2]				
Serve Fort Bragg directly before/after Willits on Route 65	200	240	$27,500	0.8	$137.50
Saturday Service - Route 5	800	300	$32,000	2.7	$40.00
Sunday Service - Route 5	600	300	$32,000	2.0	$53.33
Recommended Minimum Performance Standards >	Short Distance Routes (1, 5, 7, 9)			6.0	$19.38
	Long Distance Routes (20, 60, 65, 75, 95)			3.0	$30.51
	Dial-a-Ride / On Demand			2.0	$18.85

Note 1: Does not include fixed costs.

Note 2: Meets standards by eliminating a service not meeting the standard, or by increasing ridership while decreasing costs.

Chapter 8
CAPITAL ALTERNATIVES

INTRODUCTION

Capital investments include funding allocated for physical components of the transit system, such as vehicles, facilities, and passenger amenities. Capital investments are necessary to provide safe, dependable, and comfortable services, yet they also require substantial planning and funding on the part of the transit agency. While there is always a degree of uncertainty when planning capital improvements, as there may be unanticipated needs or product prices may change, it is still helpful to identify known capital needs to assist transit staff with securing funding.

This chapter presents capital projects for the MTA to implement throughout the five-year planning period. Ultimately, the recommended capital improvement program included in the SRTDP will enhance the passenger experience, improve the MTA's cost efficiency, and support the deployment of zero-emissions buses (ZEBs).

TRANSIT VEHICLES

Vehicle Capacity Needs

Table 39 presents an analysis of the minimum vehicle size needed for the various MTA fixed route services. The analysis is based on the boarding and alighting counts collected by LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc., during the week of May 15, 2023. First, the peak passenger load recorded on each fixed route was identified (peak passenger load at peak location). The peak passenger load data for each route was then factored by the ratio of the route's peak monthly ridership during FY 2022-23 to observed May 2023 ridership. The peak passenger load data was also factored by the ratio of the peak passenger load to the average ridership per run observed across all data samples. These calculations resulted in estimates for each route for total ridership at the peak location on the peak run in the peak month. This data was then reviewed based on the following considerations: transit vehicles appropriate for the MTA typically are available with seating capacities of 12, 16, 24, 30, or 36, MTA ridership may continue to rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic, and there is a desire to minimize transit vehicle size while still providing adequate seating capacity for the large majority of runs over the year.

Based on the analysis presented in Table 39, 30- to 36-passenger buses are recommended for three routes (Route 1, Route 9, and Route 20) and 24-passenger buses are recommended for three routes (Route 5, Route 60, and Route 75). Smaller vans are recommended for Routes 65 (16-passenger van) and 95 (12-passenger van). It should be noted that this analysis shows what vehicle sizes are needed in peak ridership scenarios and may not reflect what vehicle size is appropriate for typical service days. Also, this analysis does not consider any routing changes that may be implemented as a result of the SRTDP.

Table 39: Analysis of MTA Vehicle Size Requirements

Assuming No Change in Services

Fleet Seating Capacities

Capacity	*Example Model*
12	Glaval E450
16	Ford E350
24	Ford E450
30	Gillig GLFloor17
36	Gillig Low Floor

Route	Peak Psgr Load - Peak Location [1]	Peak Month to Sample Month Ratio	Peak Run to Avg Daily Run Ratio	Psgr Load - Peak Location, Run, Month	Recommended Vehicle Size (Seating Capacity)
Route 1- Willits	6	2.0	2.1	24	30
Route 5 - Fort Bragg	8	1.0	2.1	17	24
Route 9 - Local [2]	16	1.2	2.8	51	36
Route 20 - Ukiah / Willits	12	1.1	2.2	31	36
Route 60 - The Coaster	8	1.1	2.7	23	24
Route 65 - Cross County	8	1.1	1.4	13	16
Route 75 - South Coast / Ukiah	15	1.3	1.2	22	24
Route 95 - South Coast / Santa Rosa	3	1.0	1.0	3	12

Note 1: Based on boarding data collected by LSC Transportation Consultants during the week of May 15th, 2023.

Note 2: Runs carrying field trips not counted when determining peak load to avoid inflating ridership figures.

Vehicle Replacement Needs

Transit vehicles must be regularly replaced to maintain a safe and reliable fleet. As the vehicle procurement process can take multiple years, transit agencies must identify their vehicle needs well in advance. Additionally, the State of California's (CA) Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) regulation will begin impacting transit vehicle procurement in 2026, at which point 25 percent of small transit agency fleet bus purchases will be required to be ZEBs. By 2029, this purchasing requirement will increase to 100 percent. By 2040, all vehicles in the fleet will need to be ZEBs. To meet these standards, transit agencies can purchase either battery-electric buses (BEBs) or fuel-cell electric buses (FCEBs).

Currently, ZEBs are more expensive than gas or diesel vehicles, meaning the MTA will need to secure additional funding to meet local match requirements for capital grants. While ZEBs are more expensive at this point, the market is constantly changing as new models are released and older models are improved, making it hard to predict future pricing. The MTA vehicle replacement schedule presented in this report is subject to change as new ZEB technologies become available and costs stabilize.

The MTA has 39 vehicles that are 1 to 15 years old and hold 15 to 36 passengers. Table 40 presents the MTA's anticipated vehicle needs and purchasing schedule based on the agency's current fleet, the *MTA Zero Emission Bus Rollout Plan* (2023), the *Mendocino Transit Authority Five-Year Capital Plan* (2023), and the Useful Life Benchmark (ULB) of the different vehicle models, as identified by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Table 40 does not include any expansion vehicle purchases required to support the recommended service plan presented in this SRTDP.

Based on the schedule shown, the MTA will need to procure 11 fixed route buses and 19 cutaway/paratransit vehicles during the next five years. Given current market costs and anticipated inflation, it is expected that vehicle replacement needs will cost the MTA a total of $15.7 million over five years, of which the MTA will be responsible for $3.1 million in local matches (Table 40). The schedule shown in Table 40 reflects the MTA's intention to procure only BEBs beginning in FY 2023-24, as stated in the MTA ZEB Rollout Plan. While the MTA plans to procure BEBs at this time, the MTA may procure FCEBs sometime in the future depending on charging infrastructure needs and vehicle costs.

Note: *MTA Electric Bus* [Photo]. Sourced from Ukiah Daily Journal.

Table 40: MTA Vehicle Replacement Schedule

Estimated Current Cost of Vehicles	
Gas/Diesel - 30'	$553,000
Electric - 30'	$952,000
Electric - 35'	$965,000

	Plan Period (by Fiscal Year) [2]					5-Year Plan Total
	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	
Fixed Route Buses						
Number of Buses (30 ' Gas/Diesel)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of Buses (30' Electric)	1	1	1	0	0	3
Number of Buses (35' Electric)	3	3	2	0	0	8
Total Number of Vehicles	4	4	3	0	0	11
Total Cost [1]	*$3,847,000*	*$4,160,500*	*$3,210,400*	*$0*	*$0*	$11,217,900

Estimated Current Cost of Vehicles	
Gas - Vans	$107,000
Electric - Vans [3]	$240,000
Electric - Cutaways [3]	$345,000

Demand Response/Cutaway Vehicles						
Number of Buses (Gas Vans)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of Buses (Electric Vans)	0	2	2	2	4	10
Number of Buses (Electric Cutaways)	1	4	2	2	3	9
Total Number of Vehicles	**1**	**6**	**4**	**4**	**7**	19
Total Cost [1]	*$0*	*$1,972,500*	*$1,248,600*	*$1,271,700*	*$2,183,100*	$4,492,800
Total Vehicle Needs	$3,847,000	$6,133,000	$4,459,000	$1,271,700	$2,183,100	$15,710,700

Note 1: All costs assume 3.0 percent annual inflation.

Note 2: Starting in 2026, 25% of new vehicle purchases in 2026 must be ZEBs.

Note 3: No Altoona tested electric cutaways are available as of the time of writing (November 2023).

Note 4: Presented schedule is based on the Mendocino Transit Authority Five-Year Capital Plan (June 2023), the Mendocino Transit Authority Zero-Emission Bus Rollout Plan (June 2023), and the Federal Transit Administration's Useful Life Benchmark. Future vehicle purchases are subject to change. Additional vehicle purchases necessary to implement service elements included in this SRTDP are not included in this table.

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

TRANSIT FACILITIES

Transit facilities refer to the sites and infrastructure that directly support administrative, operations, and maintenance functions. This section discusses capital improvements to MTA facilities.

Battery Electric Bus Charging Infrastructure

The MTA will need to install additional charging infrastructure to meet the midday and overnight charging needs of the agency's future BEB fleet. Currently, the MTA plans to install eight charging stations at the Ukiah facility, three charging stations at the Willits facility, and four charging stations at the Fort Bragg facility, per the *MTA Zero Emission Bus Rollout Plan*. MTA will also need to install new transformers at each of its facilities to power the charging stations.

MTA has already begun the process of installing the new transformers/generators with funding from MCOG. The MTA will continue to upgrade its facilities to meet charging requirements over the next three FYs. At this time, it is anticipated that completing the electrical upgrades at the MTA's three facilities will cost $7.4 million, most of which will be paid for with TIRCP funding made available through SB 125.

New Administration Facility

The MTA administrative offices are located at the larger facility at 241 Plant Road in Ukiah. The administrative building, in particular is an older structure and in need of significant upgrades. The MTA plans to construct a new administration building to replace the current facility. As stated in the *2022 Regional Transportation Plan,* the new facility will be designed to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards and will include a solar roof and canopies. In all, designing and constructing the new MTA administrative facility will likely cost between $6.5 and $10.9 million. MTA expects to fund this project primarily with TIRCP funding, however, it is likely MTA will seek other funding sources as well.

Facility Maintenance

The MTA will need to complete regular maintenance to each of its three facilities throughout the five-year planning period. Planned projects include resealing the yards at all three facilities, procuring new wash bay pumps, and procuring new laptops, among other projects. Overall, it is anticipated that regular facility maintenance projects will cost the MTA about $120,000.

MTA Maintenance Facility. Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

PASSENGER FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

Passenger facilities and amenities, such as bus stop shelters, benches, and signs, as well as transit centers, benefit passengers by making the time spent before boarding the bus more comfortable. This section discusses projects to improve MTA passenger amenities throughout the five-year planning period. Once implemented, these projects will improve the experience of current passengers as well as increase public awareness of the MTA and enhance community perceptions of the agency.

Ukiah Transit Center

Currently, the MTA does not have a transit center. In late 2022, MCOG undertook the *Ukiah Transit Center Feasibility Study* to assess potential locations within Ukiah to construct an MTA transit center. This study considered existing zoning codes and parcel sizes to identify potential sites. The study will ultimately recommend a preferred site for the transit center based on the physical characteristics of the parcel as well as public and stakeholder input.

Once a site is selected, the MTA will need to purchase the land, and then develop the facility. It is anticipated that this project will cost the MTA $6.7 million, which the MTA plans to partially pay for with TIRCP funds. Once completed, the transit center will likely include a covered seating area, benches, landscaping, bicycle racks, bicycle lockers, and staff office space and restrooms. The MTA will need to modify both route structures and schedules to serve the new facility and facilitate transfers, impacting Routes 7/9, 20, 65, and 75.

Bus Stop Improvements

For most passengers, bus stop amenities are incredibly important. The desire for better bus stops was reflected in the onboard passenger survey results, as 21 percent of surveyed passengers requested the MTA improve its bus stops. Bus stop improvements consist of cleaning and fixing existing amenities as well as installing new amenities, such as benches, shelters, and bus stop signs.

Note: Hospital Bus Shelter [Photo]. Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

The MTA has budgeted $17,500 per year for FY 2024-25 through FY 2027-28 for bus stop upgrades, including $60,000 for shelters, $6,000 for benches, and $4,000 for signs over the four-year period. It is recommended that the MTA continue to allocate a portion of its capital budget toward bus stop improvements during the final year of the planning period (FY 2028-29). MTA should also focus on posting updated schedules and agency contact information at its stops in addition to the amenities already budgeted for. Improvements should be prioritized for stops with high boarding activity.

Bus Passenger Facilities Plan

MCOG and the MTA could develop a Bus Passenger Facilities Plan to inventory existing bus stops throughout Mendocino County. Improvements would then be recommended for each stop based on the existing amenities, the condition of the existing amenities, and average boarding activity. The key benefits of a Bus Passenger Facilities Plan would be the resulting comprehensive inventory of MTA stops, as well as prioritized project recommendations to guide how to best use limited capital funds. Nearby, the Lake Transit Authority conducted a similar study that was completed in 2019. Since the study's completion, the Lake Transit Authority has implemented almost all of the recommended stop improvements, improving passenger comfort and satisfaction.

MCOG, as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) for Mendocino County, would likely be responsible for preparing this study, which would cost about $50,000. The MTA would then be responsible for implementing the recommended improvements. As previously discussed, the MTA would continue to dedicate capital funds for both regular bus stop maintenance in addition to funding for the bus stop enhancements recommended in the study.

This Page Left Intentionally Blank.

Chapter 9
FARE ALTERNATIVES

PEER FARE ANALYSIS

The current MTA fare structure is shown in Table 10 of Chapter 3. Table 41 compares the fares for MTA Route 20 (Ukiah to Willits) to the fares for five similar-length routes operated by other small- to medium-sized California transit agencies. The MTA and peer fare data was used to calculate average values for each of the fare categories/products, as seen on the right side of Table 41. Important takeaways from the analysis include:

- MTA's base fare for Route 20 passengers traveling one-way between Ukiah and Willits is $3.00, just below the peer average of $3.05.
- The Route 20 in-town base fare is $1.50, lower than the peer average of $2.08.
- Of the six transit systems, five offer a monthly pass. While these prices vary widely (from $30.00 to $85.00), MTA's monthly pass is the most expensive at $85.00.
- The MTA's discounted monthly pass ($42.50) costs more than the peer average ($40.94).

In summary, the MTA Route 20 monthly pass and discounted monthly pass cost more than the peer average for equivalent fare products. On the other end of the spectrum, the Route 20 one-way fares, both in-town and long distance as well as both regular and discount, all cost less than the peer average. The most notable deviation of MTA's fares from the peer averages is the cost of the monthly pass, which costs 43 percent more than the average. It should also be noted that as MTA is not a recipient of FTA 5307 funds (urban area funding) that MTA is not required to offer discounted fares to certain passengers.

The bottom of Table 41 shows the base fare per route mile for each of the six services considered. This metric is calculated to compare fares charged for different-length routes and therefore allows a better determination of whether a given fare is appropriate. The base fare per route mile for MTA's Route 20 ($0.12) is 14 percent greater than the peer average ($0.10).

Overall, the peer fare data indicates that MTA's fares are comparable to other similar transit systems. Given the similarity of the MTA fares to peer systems and the negative impact increasing fares has on ridership, no fare increases are recommended at this time.

FARE TECHNOLOGY

Contactless Payment Technology

It is becoming increasingly common for transit agencies to accept contactless fare payments. Research has found that agencies that accept contactless payments often see ridership increase and administrative expenses lower. The California Integrated Travel Project (Cal-ITP) is helping transit agencies procure contactless payment technology capable of accepting agency-specific passes, contactless bank card payments, and digital wallets.

The MTA has partnered with the Humboldt Transit Authority, Lake Transit Authority, and Redwood Coast Transit Authority to procure digital payment hardware and software through Cal-ITP.

Table 41: Peer Transit System Fares Analysis

Transit Program	MTA	Lake Transit	Humboldt Transit	Sonoma County	STAGE (Siskiyou Co.)	Yuba Sutter Transit	
Service Area - Route	Ukiah to Willits (Rte 20)[1]	Clearlake to Lakeport (Rte 1)[2]	Arcata to Fortuna (RTS)	Santa Rosa to Cloverdale[3]	Yreka to Mount Shasta	Susanville to Doyle[4]	Average
Fare Structure							
Base Fare - One Way	$3.00	$2.25	$3.50[6]	$3.00	$4.00	$3.00	**$3.05**
Discount - One Way	$1.50	$1.50	$3.15	$1.50	$2.75	$1.50	**$2.08**
In-Town Fare[5]	$1.50	$1.25	$2.10	$1.50	$1.75	$1.50	**$1.60**
Discount - In-Town Fare	$0.75	$0.75	$2.10	$0.75	$1.25	$0.75	**$1.06**
Monthly Pass	$85.00	$40.00	$50.00	$62.50	--	$30.00[7]	**$59.38**
Monthly Pass Discount	$42.50	$40.00	$50.00	$31.25	--	$15.00[7]	**$40.94**
Operating Statistics							
One-way Route Mileage	26	37	26	33	37	32	**32**
Base Fare per Route Mile	$0.12	$0.06	$0.13	$0.09	$0.11	$0.09	**$0.10**

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

Note 1: Represents travel between three fare zones.

Note 2: Represents Lake County regional travel between 2 or more 'local areas'.

Note 3: Represents travel between three fare zones.

Note 4: Represents travel on rural route.

Note 5: Represents local routes or single zone fare.

Note 6: Lower fare rates offered with card purchase.

Note 7: Yuba Sutter Transit is offering monthly passes for $10 and for $5 for discount-eligible passengers until June 2024.

MTA first installed contactless payment technology on its DAR vehicles (referred to as the TAP-N-RIDE program) in early 2023 and has since installed similar technology on the fixed route vehicles.[1] Throughout the remainder of the planning period, the MTA will need to maintain, upgrade, and expand its contactless payment technology, requiring that funds be allowed towards farebox technology each year.

Token Transit

One popular form of contactless payment accepted by other transit agencies is Token Transit. This app-based technology allows passengers to purchase passes on their phones. Tickets are then validated electronically upon boarding by the passenger tapping their phone on the onboard farebox. For passengers, the Token Transit app is free. For transit agencies, there are no startup, hardware, or software costs associated with the app; to get access to the service, MTA would enter into an agreement with Token Transit allowing Token Transit to retain a certain percentage of fares purchased through the app up to a set limit.

SIMPLIFIED FARE STRUCTURES

MTA's current fare structure is complicated, with varying fares depending on the passenger's age, disability status, and trip length. This complexity can dissuade potential riders and confuse existing passengers. A complex fare structure also adds to the driver's workload as well as the administrative effort needed to track and report fare revenues. Considering that the MTA aims to increase ridership during the next five years, it is recommended that the MTA simplify its fare structure. This section presents three possible scenarios for simplifying the MTA fixed route fares.

Single Regionwide Fare

MTA could eliminate its current distance-based fare structure and instead charge one fare for all fixed route trips, regardless of the distance. To determine the potential impacts of charging the local fare, $1.50, for all trips, the FY 2022-23 average fares by route were calculated based on the proportion of fixed route boardings by passenger type, the percentage discount received by each passenger type, and the range of fares for the route. Then, the proportion of boardings by passenger type was applied to the new proposed fare of $1.50 to determine the projected average fare received per boarding by route.

As the one-way fare would be the same on all fixed routes, the average fare under the single regionwide fare scenario would also be the same ($1.04). The projected average fare would equate to a fare decrease for passengers traveling intercity or inter-regional, therefore ridership would be expected to increase on Routes 20, 60, 65, 75, and 95. However, this ridership increase would occur in turn with a fare revenue decrease. In sum, implementing a single, one-way cash fare for all the MTA fixed routes would likely cause ridership to increase by 7 percent and fare revenues to decrease by 9 percent over FY 2022-23 levels (Table 42).

[1] California Integrated Travel Project (Cal-ITP). (2023, August 18). Four Northern California transit agencies joined forces to buy contactless open-loop fare payment systems off of California's purchasing agreements [Press release]. https://mendocinotransit.org/news/four-northern-california-transit-agencies-join-forces-to-buy-contactless-open-loop-fare-payment-systems-off-of-californias-purchasing-agreements/

Table 42: MTA Simplified Fixed Route Fare Structure - Single Regionwide Fare Scenario

Service	Existing General Fare	FY 2022-23 Average Fare [1]	Alternative Fare	Average Fare Per Boarding with Alt [2]	Fixed Route Ridership With Alt	Change in Annual Ridership	Fixed Route Fare Revenue with Alt	Change in Annual Revenue
Route 1- Willits	$1.50	$1.04	$1.50	$1.04	5,700	0	$5,900	$0
Route 5 - Fort Bragg	$1.50	$1.04	$1.50	$1.04	8,100	0	$8,500	$0
Route 7/9 - Ukiah	$1.50	$1.04	$1.50	$1.04	57,300	0	$59,800	$0
Route 20 - Ukiah / Willits	$1.50 - $3.00	$1.57	$1.50	$1.04	19,500	1,300	$20,400	-$8,100
Route 60 - The Coaster	$1.50 - $2.25	$1.31	$1.50	$1.04	6,900	500	$7,200	-$1,200
Route 65 - Cross County	$1.50 - $23.00	$4.76	$1.50	$1.04	13,000	4,000	$13,600	-$29,700
Route 75 - South Coast / Ukiah	$1.50 - $6.75	$2.21	$1.50	$1.04	7,600	1,300	$7,900	-$6,000
Route 95 - South Coast / Santa Rosa	$1.50 - $8.25	$2.67	$1.50	$1.04	4,800	1,000	$5,000	-$5,100
Total Change						8,100		-$50,100
Percent Change						7%		-9%

Note 1: Average fare values calculated by analyzing boardings by passenger type and determining how many passengers received a fare discount.
Note 2: Average fare values under alternative scenario calculated by applying proportion of discounted and free boardings to proposed fare. Assumes passengers eligible for reduced fares would continue to receive a 50 percent discount.

Three-Fare System

The MTA could implement a three-fare system, with one fare charged for local trips (within a community), one fare charged for intercity trips (such as Ft. Bragg to Ukiah), and one fare charged for inter-regional trips (such as to/from Santa Rosa). Table 43 shows how implementing a three-fare system would impact MTA ridership and fare revenues, assuming the local fare was $1.50, the intercity fare was $2.50, and the inter-regional fare was $15.00. The average fare per boarding under the alternative fare structure was calculated by applying the proportion of boardings by passenger type and the estimated proportion of passengers traveling local, intercity, and inter-regional on each of the various routes to the proposed fare values. Elasticity analyses were used to determine whether the new average fare per boarding on each route would result in an increase or decrease in ridership. As shown, the three-fare scenario would cause systemwide ridership to increase by 2 percent and fare revenues to decrease by 4 percent compared to FY 2022-23 levels.

Simplified Distance-Based Fares

A more minor change would be to consolidate the MTA's existing distance-based fare tables. Tables 44 through 48 show examples of simplified fare tables for the inland services (Routes 1, 7, 9, and 20), the coastal services (Routes 5 and 60), Route 65, Route 75, and Route 95. All of the example fare tables presented have fewer fare categories compared to the current fare tables, yet still charge varying fares based on trip origin and destination. It is expected that such small changes to the MTA fixed route fares would have minimal impacts on the average fare received per boarding, and therefore minimal impacts on either ridership or fare revenues.

Table 43: MTA Simplified Fixed Route Fare Structure - Three-Fare Scenario

Local	$1.50	Intercity	$2.50	Inter-regional	$15

Service	Existing General Fare	FY 2022-23 Average Fare [1]	Alternative Fare [2]	Average Fare Per Boarding w/ Alt [3]	Fixed Route Ridership With Alt	Change in Annual Ridership	Fixed Route Fare Revenue	Change in Annual Revenue
Route 1- Willits	$1.50	$1.04	$1.50	$1.04	5,700	0	$5,900	$0
Route 5 - Fort Bragg	$1.50	$1.04	$1.50	$1.04	8,100	0	$8,500	$0
Route 7/9 - Ukiah	$1.50	$1.04	$1.50	$1.04	57,300	0	$59,800	$0
Route 20 - Ukiah / Willits	$1.50 - $3.00	$1.57	$2.00	$1.39	18,800	600	$26,200	-$2,300
Route 60 - The Coaster	$1.50 - $2.25	$1.31	$2.35	$1.64	6,300	-100	$10,300	$1,900
Route 65 - Cross County	$1.50 - $23.00	$4.76	$3.60	$2.51	10,700	1,600	$26,800	-$16,500
Route 75 - South Coast / Ukiah	$1.50 - $6.75	$2.21	$2.35	$1.64	6,900	600	$11,300	-$2,700
Route 95 - South Coast / Santa Rosa	$1.50 - $8.25	$2.67	$3.60	$2.51	3,900	100	$9,800	-$400
Total Change						2,800		-$20,000
Percent Change						2%		-4%

Note 1: Average fare values calculated by analyzing boardings by passenger type and determining how many passengers received a fare discount.
Note 2: Proposed fare represents average cost based on the proportion of local, intercity, and inter-regional boardings occurring on the route.
Note 3: Average fare values under alternative scenario calculated by applying proportion of discounted and free boardings to proposed fare. Assumes passengers eligible for reduced fares would continue to receive a 50 percent discount.

Table 44: Simplified Fare Structure for MTA Inland Services

Routes 1, 7, 9, and 20

	Ukiah / Mendocino College	Redwood Valley / Calpella	Willits
Ukiah / Mendocino College	$1.50	$2.00	$3.00
Redwood Valley / Calpella	$2.00	$1.50	$2.00
Willits	$3.00	$2.00	$1.50

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, MTA

Note 1: This table only presents the recommened regular cash fare values. Reduced fares would equal half of the regular fare.

Table 45: Simplified Fare Structure for MTA Coastal Services

Routes 5 and 60

	Fort Bragg / Mendocino	Little River / Albion / Navarro River Jctn.
Fort Bragg / Mendocino	$1.50	$2.00
Little River / Albion / Navarro River Jctn.	$2.00	$1.50

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, MTA

Note 1: This table only presents the recommened regular cash fare values. Reduced fares would equal half of the regular fare.

Table 46: Simplified Fare Structure for MTA Route 75

	Albion / Elk / Navarro River Jctn.	Navarro / Philo / Boonville	Point Arena / Manchester	Gualala / Anchor Bay	Ukiah
Albion / Elk / Navarro River Jctn.	$1.50	$3.00	$3.00	$3.50	$4.00
Navarro / Philo / Boonville	$3.00	$1.50	$3.50	$4.00	$3.00
Point Arena / Manchester	$3.00	$3.50	$1.50	$3.00	$7.00
Gualala / Anchor Bay	$3.50	$4.00	$3.00	$1.50	$7.50
Ukiah	$3.50	$3.00	$7.00	$7.50	$1.50

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, MTA

Note 1: This table only presents the recommened regular cash fare values. Reduced fares for seniors would equal half of the regular fare.

Table 47: Simplified Fare Structure for MTA Route 95

	Point Arena / Gualala / Anchor Bay / Sea Ranch	Fort Ross / Stewarts Point / Jenner	Bodega / Bodega Bay / Sebastopol / Freestone	Santa Rosa
Point Arena / Gualala / Anchor Bay / Sea Ranch	$1.50	$3.50	$6.00	$8.00
Fort Ross / Stewarts Point / Jenner	$3.50	$1.50	$3.50	$6.00
Bodega / Bodega Bay / Sebastopol / Freestone	$6.00	$3.50	$1.50	$3.50
Santa Rosa	$8.00	$6.00	$3.50	--

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, MTA

Note 1: This table only presents the recommened regular cash fare values. Reduced fares for seniors would equal half of the regular fare.

Table 48: Simplified Fare Structure for MTA Route 65

	Fort Bragg	Hwy 20 West	Hwy 20 East	Willits	Redwood Valley / Calpella	Ukiah	Hopland	Santa Rosa
Fort Bragg	$1.50	$2.00	$2.50	$3.00	$4.00	$4.50	$5.00	$20.00
Hwy 20 West	$2.00	$1.50	$2.00	$2.50	$3.50	$4.00	$4.50	$19.50
Hwy 20 East	$2.50	$2.00	$1.50	$2.00	$3.00	$3.50	$4.00	$19.00
Willits	$3.00	$2.50	$2.00	$1.50	$2.50	$3.00	$3.50	$18.50
Redwood Valley / Calpella	$4.00	$3.50	$3.00	$2.50	$1.50	$2.00	$2.50	$17.50
Ukiah	$4.50	$4.00	$3.50	$3.00	$2.00	$1.50	$2.00	$17.00
Hopland	$5.00	$4.50	$4.00	$3.50	$2.50	$2.00	$1.50	$16.50
Santa Rosa	$20.00	$19.50	$19.00	$18.50	$17.50	$17.00	$16.50	--

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, MTA

Note 1: This table only presents the recommened regular cash fare values. Reduced fares for seniors would equal half of the regular fare.

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 10
MARKETING RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Transit marketing is critical for attracting new riders as well as establishing a reliable and recognizable brand. As the MTA serves the entirety of Mendocino County, multiple marketing strategies are necessary to effectively reach residents throughout the large service area. This chapter first summarizes the MTA's existing marketing strategies, then discusses newly recommended strategies aimed at maintaining existing riders, attracting new riders, and improving awareness of available services. As the MTA has a limited marketing budget and no dedicated marketing personnel, low-cost strategies are prioritized.

CURRENT MARKETING STRATEGIES

Branding

The MTA has an attractive, well-designed logo that includes the agency's abbreviated name and a decal reflecting Mendocino County's scenic landscape. The logo is consistently included on MTA's printed, virtual, and physical marketing materials.

One of the most important tools for marketing a transit system is the agency's physical presence in the community. Physical marketing includes branded buses, information posted at bus stops, and bus stop signage. As the MTA operates throughout Mendocino County, the MTA has a large physical presence, with the logo visible in many different communities on both passing buses and bus stop signs.

Website

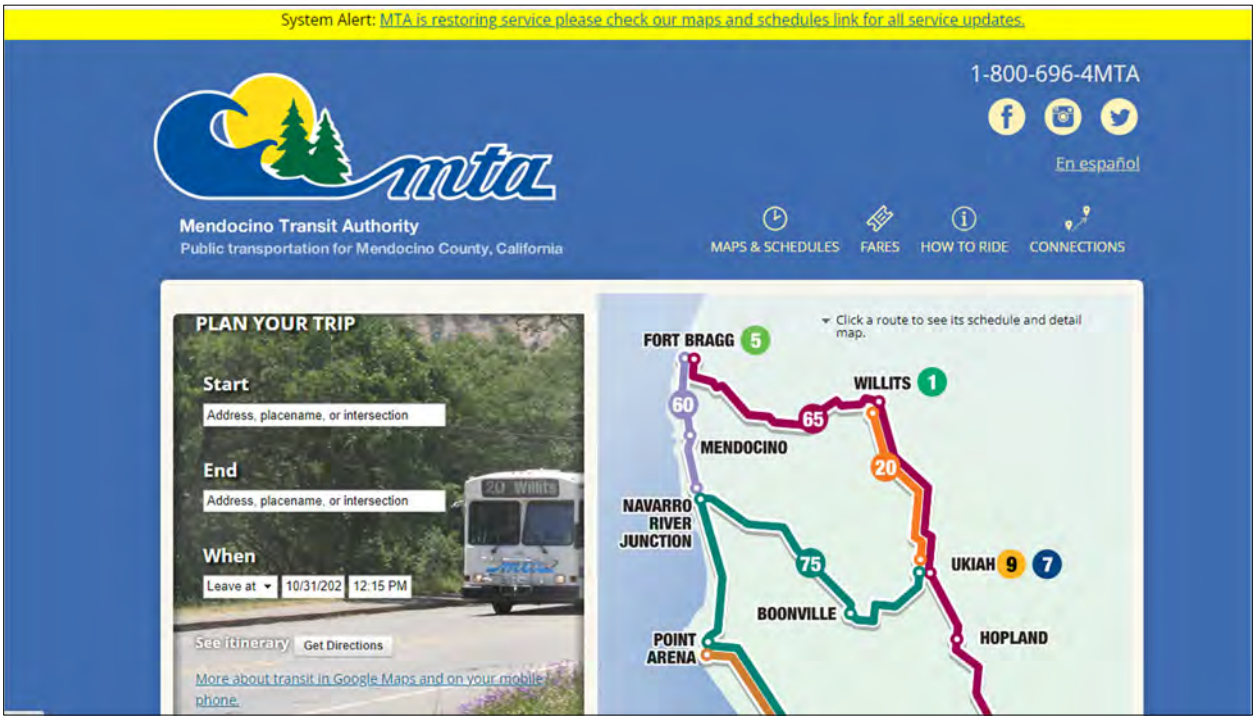
The MTA maintains a website with a large array of valuable information on the Mendocino County public transit services. Information that can be found on the website includes:

- Real-time trip planning (by destination and time of day) with Google Maps.
- Service alerts and recent news headlines.
- A page for each fixed route with schedule information and detailed route maps. Downloadable PDFs are also linked. Links are provided on the specific route pages to the route's fare Table. Transfer opportunities to other regional providers are highlighted.
- A page summarizing both the Ukiah and Fort Bragg DAR services. The DAR page contains the schedule, eligibility, and fare information for both services. Details are also provided on how to reserve a ride. Maps showing both the Ukiah and Fort Bragg DAR zones are included.
- A "How to Ride" page with instructions on passenger guidelines, paying fares, and how to use the onboard bike racks.
- A fare page that details the fare tables for each service category (inland services, coastal services, Route 65, Route 95). There is also information on the MTA fare policies for children 6 years and younger, senior adults 62 years or older, persons with disabilities, and students. Pass products are summarized. The website lists where MTA passes can be purchased too.

- A page summarizing other regional services, including Amtrak, Greyhound, Golden Gate Transit, Lake Transit, and the Santa Rosa CityBus, among others. Links are provided to each of the respective agency's websites.
- At the bottom of the main page, there is a navigation menu with links to an "About" page, the MTA's career page, a general contact form, customer service information, information on the current Board of Directors and Board meetings, the Title VI Plan, and more.
- At the top of the MTA website's home page, there is a clear link labeled "En español." Clicking this link brings the web user to a page that presents almost all of the website information in Spanish, including information on passenger conduct, fares, holidays, flag stops, and regional connections. Summaries are included for each of the individual routes in Spanish, as well as links to the appropriate website page.
- Links to the MTA Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages.

As previously mentioned, information on the MTA DAR services is available through a link at the bottom of the website homepage. The DAR page also provides limited information on the Willits paratransit service operated by Willits Seniors Inc, however, the page does not include any information on the paratransit services provided by the Anderson Valley, Redwood Coast, South Coast, or Ukiah Senior Centers.

Of note is that while the Fort Bragg DAR service is available to the general public as well as paratransit riders, this difference is not clearly highlighted on the webpage. The overlap between paratransit and general DAR can be confusing for those who do not qualify for paratransit and may hinder potential new riders from taking advantage of the service.



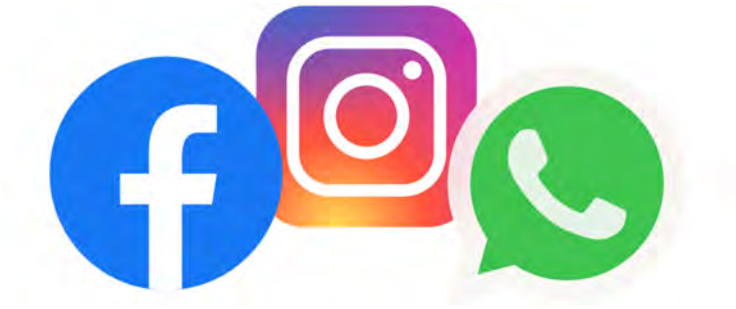
Print Materials

Printed rider's guides provide directions for riding the bus in addition to being promotional tools. Passenger guides are especially valuable for people who do not have a mobile device to access service information while on the go. The MTA does not currently have a comprehensive, printed rider's guide available. Printed maps, including schedule and fare information, are not regularly available throughout Mendocino County. That being said, people can download and print PDFs of each fixed route schedule from the website.

Travel Training

MTA offers individualized training to teach residents how to ride the MTA, including how to read bus schedules, pay fares, and a step-by-step walkthrough of the boarding process. The travel training program is helpful for individuals who are interested in using MTA but feel unsure of what services are available or how to ride. The travel training program is advertised via the News section of the MTA website and is offered in Ukiah, Willits, and Fort Bragg.

Social Media



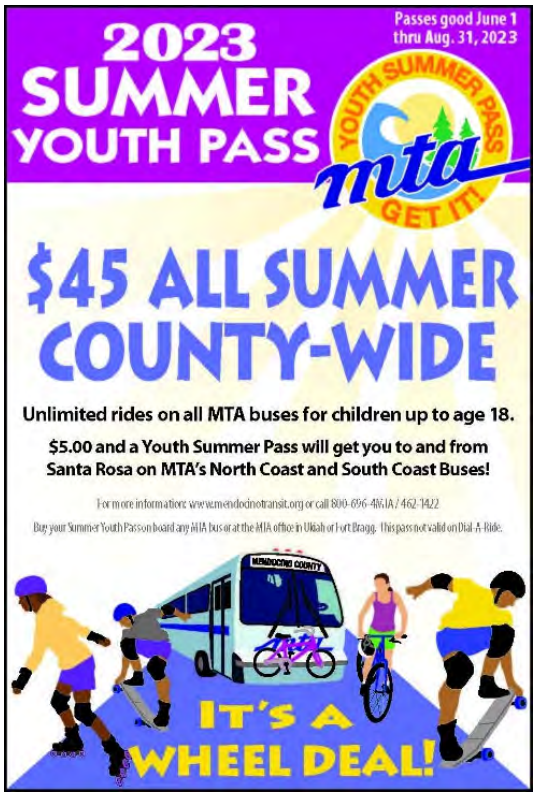
Social media is an increasingly important part of transit marketing. A well-organized and regularly updated social media platform can effectively and quickly convey transit information to a broad audience. Transit agencies frequently use social media to provide real-time service alerts, as well as for general promotion of services and events. Social media posts can be designed to engage with the greater community or to recruit new passengers through "pushing" a post.

MTA has multiple social media accounts, demonstrating that the agency is already utilizing social media to reach riders and provide service updates. The MTA Facebook account has over 1,600 followers and includes a link to the MTA website and information on how to contact staff by phone, email, or in person. The MTA uses its Facebook to post news related to service changes, holiday information, weather impacts, MTA events, and job postings. The MTA Instagram has 410 followers and includes similar content to the Facebook account. Although the MTA website provides a link to Twitter, the MTA Twitter account no longer exists.

Phone Information

To ensure information is accessible to everyone, including the visually impaired and seniors, transit providers must continue to offer information over the phone. MTA has a phone number for passengers to schedule DAR reservations and another line for customer service inquiries. These phone numbers are posted on the MTA website under the "Contact" page. A phone number to hear transit information in Spanish is also provided.

Special Events, Promotions, and Partnerships



Special events and promotions reward current riders and encourage new residents to try transit. Common promotional events for transit include free fare days, discounted seasonal passes, and complimentary transit to and from popular local events. These types of promotions require dedicated funding sources, one example being LCTOP funds. MTA has held special promotions in the past, including a Summer Youth Pass in 2023 (advertisement shown to the right) and a fare-free fixed route service in November 2022.

Another, lower-cost option for promoting the transit system is to partner with local organizations with interests relevant to transportation and transit. MTA could provide Mendocino County companies and organizations with rider's guides and discounted passes to promote ridership and participation in planning efforts among the groups' members.

One ongoing partnership that continues to be successful is the MTA's service agreement with Mendocino College. Mendocino College pays the MTA to allow students to use their student IDs as complimentary bus passes, enabling them to ride for free on MTA fixed routes. This benefit is advertised by Mendocino College and by MTA both online and on social media.

Active Management

Active management refers to responsive and adaptive decision-making by transit directors/managers. A recent example of active management at the MTA was the reduction in service levels in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and then the subsequent increase as demand returned. The MTA also had to reduce services due to the nationwide driver shortage experienced in the years since the COVID-19 pandemic, prompting staff to make important decisions about which services to prioritize, as well as how to communicate service reductions to the public. MTA management is also responsible for communicating with neighboring transit providers and improving transfer opportunities between different systems. In sum, practicing active management has helped MTA staff convey important information to the public and enhance regional connectivity.

MTA MARKETING CHALLENGES

Overall, the MTA does an excellent job with marketing given limited staff time and funds. However, one area for improvement, based on the onboard survey results, would be to improve the quality and availability of service information. Low-cost strategies to improve the MTA's information resources include clarifying existing route schedules online and in printed materials, developing a rider's guide, distributing printed information to local organizations to further distribute, and posting more information at bus stops.

Attracting new riders has become critically important for the MTA. Every transit system experiences regular turnover in ridership as students graduate, residents move, and people acquire cars and/or driver's licenses. Additionally, MTA FY 2022-23 ridership indicated that many individuals who stopped using the MTA during the COVID-19 pandemic have still not returned. Reaching new riders with marketing is a challenge, however, and will likely require the MTA to deploy targeted marketing efforts.

MARKETING RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a comprehensive list of recommended marketing strategies and improvements to be implemented by the MTA during the five-year planning period. These strategies reflect affordable options that will help maintain current ridership, attract new ridership, and improve existing information resources, ultimately benefiting existing passengers and increasing awareness of the MTA throughout the greater community. Marketing strategies should be implemented incrementally, as resources allow.

Physical Marketing

- Bus Stop Signage: It is recommended that the MTA continue to maintain signage at bus stops. Signs should be updated if necessary, and new signs should be added when funding allows. Bus stop signs should be installed simultaneously with other bus stop improvements when possible. Bus stop improvements are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.
- Bus Branding: The MTA should continue to procure buses that clearly show the agency's logo. Both fixed route and DAR services should maintain similar branding.
- Bus Displays: Information on vehicle head signs and onboard bulletin displays is highly visible to passengers. The information contained within these displays should be attractive, accurate, and easy to read.
- Public Presentations: Public speaking is an opportunity to personalize the MTA and further educate the community about available transit services. Public speaking efforts should be customized for a specific audience, such as seniors, students, social service program clients, or employee groups, among others. Presentations to schools and colleges, businesses, employers, social service organizations, senior residences, senior centers, and neighborhood associations would be great opportunities to promote more specific benefits of the MTA.

Note: *MTA Bus Shelter* [Photo]. Sourced from LSC.

Website

- DAR Webpage Improvements: The MTA should update the DAR service area maps. It would be beneficial for the MTA to update its DAR webpage to clarify eligibility requirements for the Ukiah and Fort Bragg services, prominently highlighting how the Fort Bragg DAR service is available to the general public. The DAR page should also be linked in the website's top menu for people to easily access.
- Add Information on Senior Center Services: The MTA website only has information on the Willits Seniors Inc. paratransit service. Information on the other four senior center paratransit services available in Mendocino County should be added as well.
- Modify Bottom Menu: The website's main page has a bottom menu with links to several other resources. This menu should be modified to be available on all pages of the website. If that is not possible, then the links included in the bottom menu should be made available through a drop-down menu that can be accessed at the top of the website.
- Clarify Bus Stop Location in Route Schedules: The route schedules on the MTA website provide only the bus stop name (e.g., Main St and Lansing St). Given that MTA provides transit services across many Mendocino County communities and to destinations outside of the County, the community name should be added to the stop name on the route schedules (e.g., Main St and Lansing St, Mendocino). This will alleviate confusion and provide a high-level overview of the route for riders unfamiliar with the service or locations.

Print Materials

- Update Printed Schedule Information: The printable PDFs of the fixed route schedules should be updated to reflect the most current service information. It would also be useful to include a route map on the PDF files of each route's timetable to provide a visual reference. Community names should be added to each stop name on the printed schedules as well.
- Develop a Rider's Guide: The MTA should develop a comprehensive, printed rider's guide with information on passenger policies, fares, and schedules for both the fixed routes and DARs. Once completed, the rider's guide could then be available on buses and at MTA offices. The rider's guide should also be available at the Ukiah Transit Center once the facility is developed. The MTA should distribute the guide to regional stakeholders to further share with their own clientele. The comprehensive rider's guide should be made in both English and Spanish.

Travel Training

- Further Advertise the Travel Training Program: The MTA's travel training program could have an even greater impact if the MTA further advertised the program on its website and social media. MTA should also partner with local organizations, such as nonprofits focused on aiding persons with disabilities and senior centers, to easily enroll residents in the program.

Social Media

- Increase Presence on Social Media: The MTA should collaborate with local partners, such as Mendocino College, to advertise the MTA on their own social media.

- Remove References to MTA Twitter Account: It is recommended that MTA remove any references to the previous Twitter account, including removing the link to the account from the MTA website homepage.
- Social Media Campaigns: The MTA should utilize Facebook advertising to increase awareness of the transit system among non-riders and to attract riders who may have stopped riding back to transit. These advertising campaigns should be done outside of the "holiday season" months of November and December when Facebook is flooded with advertisements.

Special Events and Promotions

- Special Promotions: When funding allows, the MTA should continue to hold promotional events as a way to thank current passengers, boost morale, and entice new riders to hop on the bus. It is recommended the MTA offer special events, such as free-fare days, and partner with local organizations to plan events, such as a "Ride the Bus to Work Day," whenever funding allows to increase ridership by both existing and new riders.
- Promote New Technology and Projects: New technologies, such as ZEBs, should be celebrated through concerted marketing efforts, including press releases, newspaper interviews, radio interviews, and social media posts. These campaigns should focus on informing the community about positive changes at MTA and emphasizing improvements that may encourage some non-riders to reconsider using transit.

LATEST HEADLINES

MTA debuts electric bus service: Two zero-emission buses now serve Willits

Dual chargers "fill the battery tank" of MTA electric buses overnight. (photos contributed)

By SUBMITTED
PUBLISHED: March 21, 2022 at 12:54 p.m. | UPDATED: March 21, 2022 at 12:55 p.m.

- Testimonial Advertising: A great way to highlight MTA's success is to let riders tell their stories. The MTA has used this strategy in the past by asking regular passengers on the transit system why they ride, what they like about the service, and how the MTA helps them, and then posting the stories on Facebook. Testimonial advertising can be done through newspaper articles, flyers or posters, social media, or the radio. The benefit of testimonials is they inspire the public and help to eliminate poor opinions of transit held by some community members.

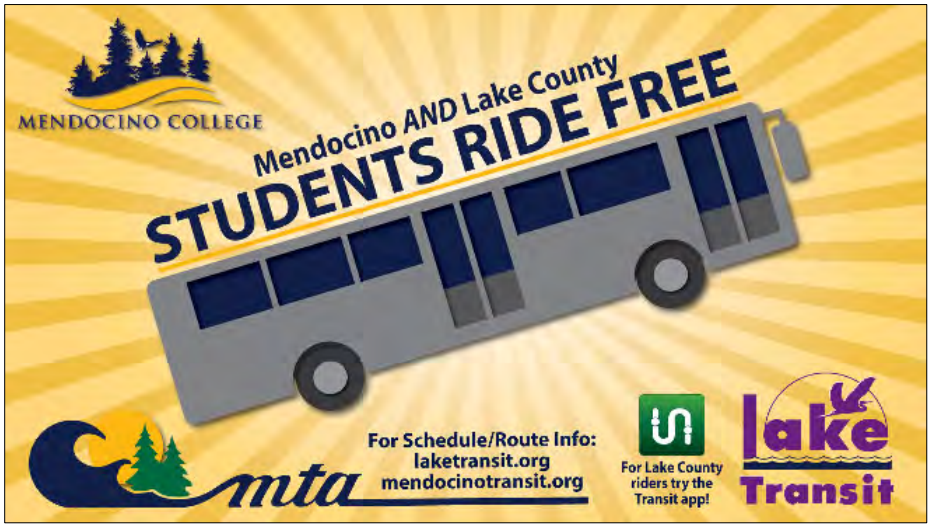
Active Management

- Regional Collaboration: MTA directors/managers should continue to collaborate with regional partners to improve transit connections and facilitate increased ridership. As new regional services are initiated, such as the Humboldt Transit Authority's Redwood Coast Express service between Ukiah and Eureka, the MTA will need to communicate with regional partners to ensure transit connections are optimized and that accurate service information is available to both Mendocino County riders as well as transit passengers living in nearby regions. Successful regional efforts should be promoted.

MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS

Students have historically comprised a significant portion of MTA transit ridership. Specific strategies to attract high school and college students to transit include:

- Campus visits and presentations at the start of the school year on what services are available.
- Creating specific promotional materials describing the transit services to each campus and highlighting the student-geared pass products, such as the Mendocino College student pass.
- Requesting schools and campuses share promotional materials, through official email list-servs and social media.
- Partnering with student clubs and organizations interested in transit or that could benefit from learning more about transit services.
- Kiosks at the various Mendocino College campuses with rider's guides.



Chapter 11

MTA SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The following MTA Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) presents service programs, capital improvements, management recommendations, and financial strategies to enhance MTA services. All plan elements presented consider the constraints of realistic funding projections. This chapter presents the individual plan elements in brief; all elements are based on the substantial discussions included in previous chapters, therefore, the reader is encouraged to refer to previous chapters for additional background.

For the FY 2024-25 year, it is anticipated that the MTA will have a $400,000 operating budget deficit due to the end of CARES Act funding. Fortunately, SB 125 (a redirection of state general fund money to the TIRCP program) has provided a short-term operating revenue source for public transit agencies that would otherwise have needed to reduce service. Although SB 125 is a short-term funding source, the expectation is there will be a longer-term funding solution available after the three years of SB 125 funding ends. As such, the following service plan assumes that SB 125 funds will be available over the entire planning period to be allocated for the following purposes:

- Fill the operating deficit for status quo service.
- Covolo Deviated Fixed Route Pilot Program (3-year Pilot Program)
- Laytonville Deviated Fixed Route Pilot Program (3-year Pilot Program)
- Route 9 Evening Service

Any other increases in service hours must be accompanied by a reduction in service hours through either improved efficiency or the elimination of service to maintain a financially constrained plan. A five-year financial plan for the MTA is outlined at the end of this chapter.

Other assumptions used to develop cost, revenue, and ridership impacts of this transit plan include:

- An inflation escalator of 3 percent per year
- Ridership growth of 4 percent between FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26 and 2 percent annual growth thereafter to account for recovery from post-pandemic transit ridership lows.

More detailed projected revenue assumptions are outlined in the notes section of the Financial Plan in Table 51.

SERVICE PLAN

The recommended MTA service enhancements for each year of the planning period are shown in Tables 49 and 50 and described below.

Table 49: MTA Short Range Transit Development Plan Operating Costs

Plan Element	FY 24-25	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29
Base Case Operating Cost [1]					
Marginal Operating Costs	$5,016,750	$5,167,252	$5,322,270	$5,481,938	$5,646,396
Fixed Costs	$2,565,616	$2,642,585	$2,721,862	$2,803,518	$2,887,624
Total	$7,582,366	$7,809,837	$8,044,132	$8,285,456	$8,534,019
Plan Costs					
Ukiah Circulator Loops	$0	$0	$0	$0	$42,800
Evening Service - Route 9	$185,000	$190,500	$196,300	$202,100	$208,200
Willits/Brooktrails Microtransit Service + Eliminate Route 1	$0	-$80,200	-$82,600	-$85,100	-$87,600
Serve Sherwood Valley Rancheria On-Demand	-$12,800	$0	$0	$0	$0
Covelo Deviated Fixed Route	$0	$50,500	$52,000	$0	$0
Laytonville Deviated Fixed Route	$0	$36,900	$38,000	$0	$0
On Demand Technology for Fort Bragg DAR	$0	$4,800	$4,900	$5,100	$5,200
Total Service Plan Costs	$172,200	$202,500	$208,600	$122,100	$168,600
Total Operating Cost	**$7,754,566**	**$8,012,337**	**$8,252,732**	**$8,407,556**	**$8,702,619**

Note 1: Base Case costs based upon FY 2023-24 Budget and FY 2022-23 service levels, excluding capital. Assumes 3% annual inflation rate for the planning period.

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

Table 50: MTA SRTDP Ridership and Fare Revenue

	FY 24-25	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29
Annual Ridership					
Base Case	162,300	168,792	175,544	179,055	182,636
Service Plan Elements					
Ukiah Circulator Loops	0	0	0	0	2,900
Evening Service - Route 9	3,300	3,400	3,600	3,600	3,700
Willits/Brooktrails Microtransit Service + Eliminate Route 1	0	900	1,000	1,000	1,000
Serve Sherwood Valley Rancheria On-Demand	0	0	0	0	0
Covelo Deviated Fixed Route	0	200	200	0	0
Laytonville Deviated Fixed Route	0	400	400	0	0
On Demand Technology for Fort Bragg DAR	0	100	200	300	300
Subtotal Impact of Plan Service Elements	*3,300*	*5,000*	*5,400*	*4,900*	*7,900*
Impact of Fare Modifications					
3 Fare Scenario	2,800	2,900	3,000	3,100	3,200
Total Ridership	**168,400**	**176,692**	**183,944**	**187,055**	**193,736**
Fare Revenues (Passenger Revenues)					
Base Case	$360,000	$374,400	$389,400	$397,200	$405,100
Service Plan Elements					
Ukiah Circulator Loops	$0	$0	$0	$0	$3,000
Evening Service - Route 9	$3,400	$3,500	$3,700	$3,800	$3,800
Willits/Brooktrails Microtransit Service + Eliminate Route 1	$0	$10,000	$10,400	$10,600	$10,800
Serve Sherwood Valley Rancheria On-Demand	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Covelo Deviated Fixed Route	$0	$500	$500	$0	$0
Laytonville Deviated Fixed Route	$0	$900	$1,000	$0	$0
On Demand Technology for Fort Bragg DAR	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Subtotal Impact of Plan Service Elements	*$3,400*	*$14,900*	*$15,600*	*$14,400*	*$17,600*
Impact of Fare Modifications					
3 Fare Scenario	-$20,000	-$20,800	-$21,600	-$22,100	-$22,500
Total Fare Revenue	**$343,400**	**$383,400**	**$399,000**	**$403,900**	**$417,800**

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

Ukiah

According to the alternatives analysis (Chapter 7), the best-performing service alternatives considered for Ukiah are as follows: Ukiah 90-Minute Loop with microtransit, Deviated State Street Express, and Local Circulator Loops. The Deviated State Street Express is not recommended for implementation because it would likely be less reliable compared to the existing Route 7/9; boarding-by-stop data indicates there would be a significant amount of deviation requests per trip, likely negatively impacting on-time performance. Implementing the Ukiah 90-Minute Loop with a microtransit alternative would save $170,000 per year and allow for the addition of Route 9 evening service, however, the 90-Minute Loop option would decrease fixed route headways to 45 minutes. This would not only be longer than the current 30-minute headways for Route 7/9 but would also prevent consistent clock headways (always:15 past the hour etc.).

Local Circulator Loops

Over the long run, the Local Circulator Loops alternative is preferred. However, an important aspect of this option is to have several loops that begin and end at a central transfer point in Ukiah. Preliminary planning work has been done to determine an appropriate site for a Ukiah transit center, as discussed in the recently completed *Ukiah Transit Center Feasibility Study* (2024). Per the Transit Center Study, the top two choices for a transit center location are on Orchard Ave near Kohl's and near the Courthouse on Main and State Street. It will likely be several years before land and funding can be obtained to advance the development of the Ukiah Transit Center, followed by another period of time for actual construction.

Although there is not currently a central transit center in Ukiah, switching the Route 7/9 service structure to instead be the 90-Minute Loop option plus microtransit, to then change to the Local Circulator Loops routing structure a few years later is not practical. Therefore, it is recommended that the MTA replace the existing Route 7/9 with Local Circulator Loops once a transit center site has been secured. For purposes of this SRTP, this is assumed to occur at the end of the five-year planning period.

The Local Circulator Loops plan element (Figure 36) consists of four circulator loops and will require four vehicles on weekdays (30-minute headways) and two vehicles on Saturdays (hourly headways). Timed transfers will be provided between each loop. The span of service will be similar to the existing Route 7/9 service, or 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM on weekdays and 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Saturdays. An example weekday schedule is shown in Table 51. The benefits of the Circulator Loops are that they will serve new areas of Ukiah and decrease travel times for some passengers. However, the new routing structure will require passengers traveling longer distances to transfer. This plan element will increase ridership by around 2,600 trips annually and cost an additional $42,800 to operate.

Route 9 Evening Service

Evening Route 9 service was a popular request received during the planning process and has also been requested during unmet transit needs discussions held by MCOG. Given the number of requests for evening service in a community with a relatively high number of zero-vehicle households, it is recommended that MTA use SB 125 funds to fund evening service in Ukiah, as long as this funding source is available.

Figure 36
Five Year MTA Service Plan

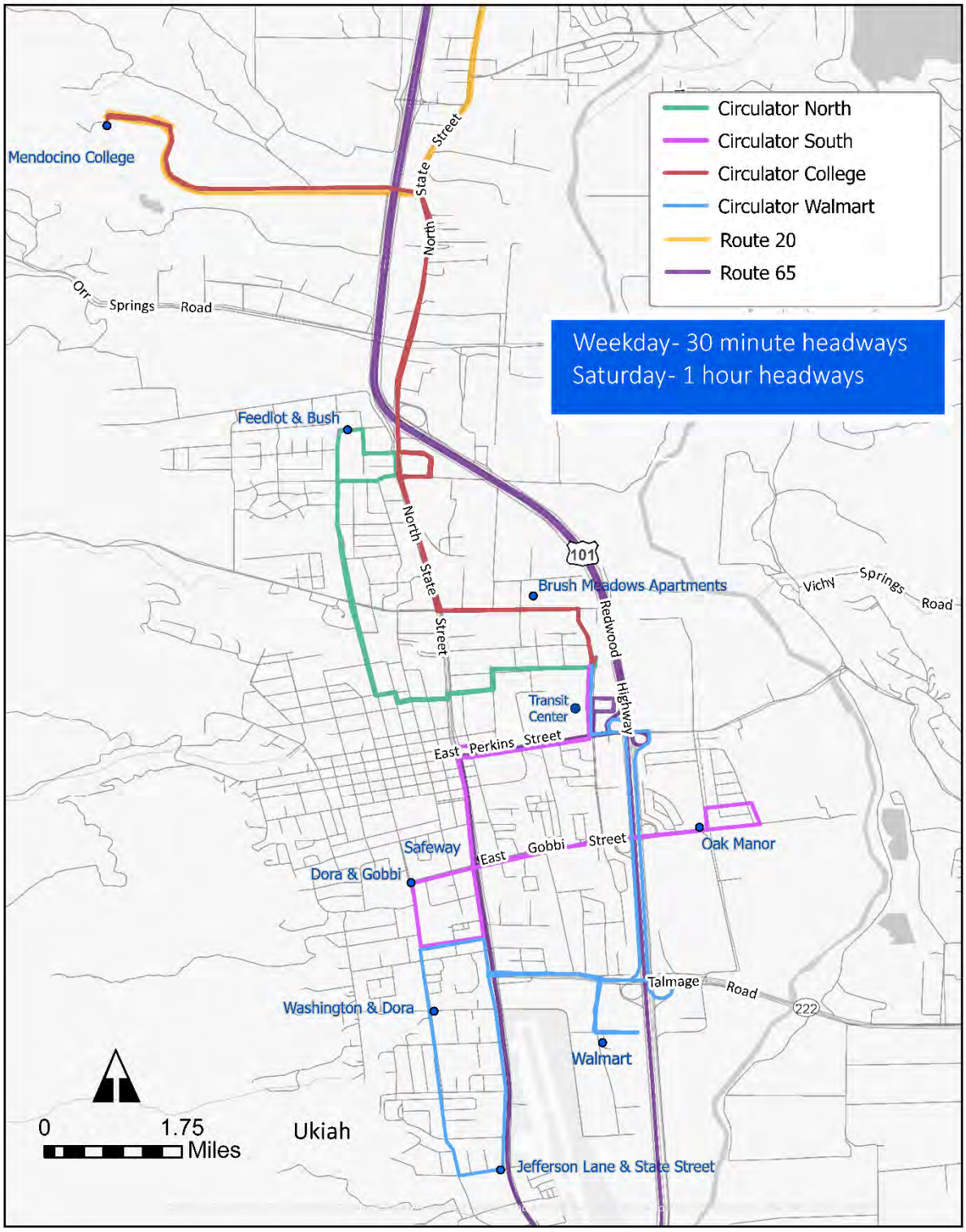


Table 51: MTA SRTDP Financial Plan

	FY 24-25	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29	5-Year Plan Costs	Notes
MTA OPERATING PLAN							
OPERATING REVENUE							
Fare Revenues (Passenger Revenues)	$343,400	$383,400	$399,000	$403,900	$417,800	$1,947,500	Reflects service enhancements, fare changes, 4% annual increase in ridership until FY 2026-27 then 2% annual increase in ridership.
Redwood Coast Regional Contract	$65,000	$65,000	$65,000	$67,600	$70,304	$332,904	Assumes new contract is negotiated in 2027
Sonoma County Contract	$180,000	$180,000	$180,000	$187,200	$194,688	$921,888	Assumes new contract is negotiated in 2027
Other Local Revenues	$496,985	$496,985	$496,985	$506,925	$517,100	$2,514,980	Advertising, Interest, Senior Center Administration Fee, Fuel rebates, Local Operating 4090
FTA 5311	$738,115	$757,500	$773,200	$792,900	$792,900	$3,854,615	Based on annual increase of total nationwide funding (BIL IIJA)
FTA 5311(f)	$300,000	$307,900	$314,300	$322,300	$322,300	$1,566,800	Based on annual increase of total nationwide funding (BIL IIJA)
FTA 5310	$150,000	$150,000	$150,000	$150,000	$150,000	$750,000	Competitive funding. Assumed flat growth.
TDA Operating LTF	$2,721,600	$2,803,248	$2,887,345	$2,973,966	$3,063,185	$14,449,344	Based on First Draft MTA Budget FY 24-25. Assumes increasing at rate of inflation (3%)
TDA Operating STA	$1,197,800	$ 1,233,700	$ 1,270,700	$ 1,308,800	$ 1,348,100	$6,359,100	Based on First Draft MTA Budget FY 24-25. Assumes increasing at rate of inflation (3%)
LCTOP for operating	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	All assumed for capital
CARES Act	$372,851	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	
SB 125 for Transit Operations	$1,189,000	$1,635,000	$1,717,000	$1,700,000	$1,820,000	$8,061,000	Assumed continued funding after FY 2027-28 at a similar level
TOTAL REVENUE	**$7,754,751**	**$ 8,012,733.0**	**$ 8,253,530.4**	**$ 8,413,590.5**	**$ 8,702,411.5**	**$41,137,016**	
TOTAL OPERATING COSTS	**$7,754,566**	**$8,012,337**	**$8,252,732**	**$8,407,556**	**$8,702,619**	**$41,129,809**	
Net Balance Operating	$185	$396	$799	$6,035	-$208	$7,207	
MTA CAPITAL PLAN							
CAPITAL REVENUE							
FTA 5339 (Low-No Bus/ Infrastructure)						$12,568,560	Assumed 80 percent of vehicle replacement costs
State of Good Repair						$650,000	Based on 2022-23 MTA capital plan
LCTOP						$750,000	Based on 2022-23 MTA capital plan
TIRCP						$13,700,000	Discretionary
SB 125 for Capital						$4,712,000	Balance after operating needs
HVVP Electric Bus Vouchers						$1,020,000	Based on 2022-23 MTA capital plan
TOTAL						**$33,400,560**	
CAPITAL PLAN COSTS							
Microtransit Software Initial Fee						$50,000	
Vehicle Replacement Costs (From Table 40)						$15,710,700	
New ZEV vehicle for Covelo/Laytonville Service						$240,000	1 ZEV van for Covelo/Laytonville service with SB 125 funds
Charging Infrastructure						$7,400,000	SB 125
New Administration Facility						$7,000,000	TIRCP
Facility Maintenance						$120,000	
Ukiah Transit Center						$6,700,000	TIRCP/SB 125
Bus Stop Improvements						$87,500	Shelters, benches and signs for 4 years
TOTAL						**$37,308,200**	
Net Balance Capital						*-$3,907,640*	

One bus would be required to extend service on Route 9 from 6:00 PM to 11:00 PM on weeknights. As shown in Table 50, annual ridership will increase by around 3,300 trips per year at a cost of $185,000 per year. Currently, night service is not operated, one dispatcher or supervisor should be on site while evening service is in operation. This staffer should be available to determine the "fitness of duty" for the driver as well as handle any emergencies. This staffer should have the ability to drive a transit vehicle in case there is a need to go out to rescue a load of passengers. During the evening shift the additional staffer could prepare the vehicles and paperwork for the next day. It is not common practice to require maintenance personnel to be on-site for an evening shift as long as a towing contract is in place. The additional cost of the dispatcher/supervisor is included in the operating cost estimates in Table 49

If the Willits/Brooktrails microtransit service outlined below is successful and proves to be a good model for the Ukiah Valley, MTA could consider a microtransit service instead of fixed route service to provide evening service in Ukiah. The operating subsidy and ridership estimates would be similar.

Make Plowshares, River Oak School, and Ukiah High School On-Demand Stops

A small operational change that is recommended on Route 7/9 is to designate Plowshares, River Oak School, and the High School as on-demand stops in the schedule with the ability to be served every run. This will keep timepoints in the schedule consistent, as well as provide more opportunities for passengers to use these stops.

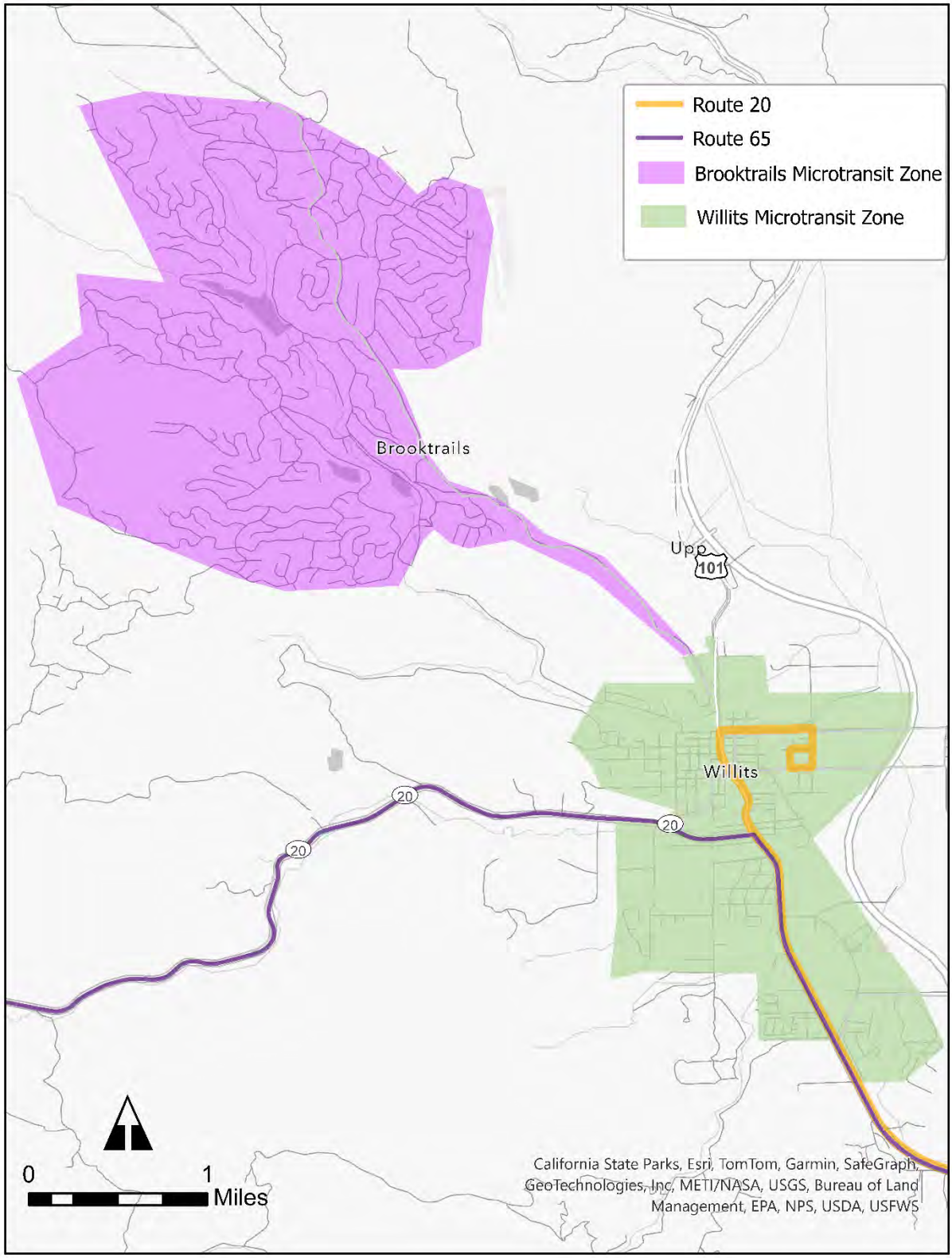
Willits/Brooktrails

The following options are recommended for the Willits/Brooktrails area.

Replace Route 1 with Willits/Brooktrails Microtransit Service

Route 1 currently provides deviated fixed route service in the City of Willits; however, this service is one of the lower-performing fixed routes, carrying only 2 passenger-trips per hour. Brooktrails is a community of around 4,000 people located roughly 3 miles northwest of Willits. Brooktrails currently has no public transit service. As part of this plan element, the existing Route 1 would be replaced with microtransit and the service area expanded to include Brooktrails (see Figure 37). One van would be required to provide service from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday. A second van may be required in the future if demand increases; however, this is not recommended at this time, as it is not cost effective. The general public fare would be $4.00 with discounted fares for seniors and passengers with disabilities. Service to Brooktrails would be limited to the first 15 minutes of the hour. As indicated in the plan tables, this element would be implemented in FY 2025-26 and save around $77,900 in operating subsidy during the first year of operation (this includes the annual microtransit vehicle license fee). As noted in the capital plan, there would be an initial start-up fee of around $50,000 for the purchase of microtransit technology

Figure 37
MTA Service Plan Willits/Brooktrails



Serve Sherwood Valley Rancheria with On-Demand

In the past, the Sherwood Valley Rancheria funded an extension of Route 1 to serve the Casino. Although this funding source was discontinued, the MTA has continued to provide Route 1 service to the Casino. Given that it takes around 11 minutes per Route 1 roundtrip to serve the Sherwood Valley Casino, and observed boarding/alighting activity was low during the onboard survey (1 boarding, 3 alightings), it is recommended that service to the Sherwood Vally Casino is provided "on-demand" only beginning in FY 2024-25. This will save roughly $12,400 in operating subsidy that year. This plan element will only be relevant until Willits/Brooktrails microtransit service is implemented, as all of Willits, including the Sherwood Valley Rancheria, will be served with on-demand service.

Rural Inland Communities

In 2022, MCOG and Caltrans commissioned the development of the *Mendocino County Rural Inland Communities Mobility Solutions Study* to analyze innovative ways to improve transit service to the communities of Brooktrails, Covelo, Hopland, Laytonville, and Potter Valley. These communities are collectively home to nearly 7,500 residents and are located primarily along the US 101 corridor.

As recommended in this SRTP, Brooktrails will be served by the Willits/Brooktrails microtransit service beginning in FY 2025-26. The other rural service alternatives analyzed in this report did not meet performance standards, primarily due to low population levels and long distances of travel that would be required. However, given that a relatively high proportion of the rural inland communities are considered disadvantaged, transit services to Covelo and Laytonville are planned as three-year pilot programs to be funded with SB 125 funds (a stop-gap post-COVID funding source allocated through the state). As the Covelo/Laytonville options to Willits are less expensive and perform slightly better than the options to Ukiah, service to/from Willits is recommended in this plan. However, it is understood that MCOG and MTA will work collaboratively to plan and implement these services, as per the SB 125 funding arrangement. The first year of the pilot will be spent acquiring vehicles and actual services will be operated during the second and third years. Funding for the Covelo and Laytonville pilot projects is not assumed beyond FY 2026-27 in this plan.

Covelo

In FY 2025-26, MTA will initiate deviated fixed route lifeline service from Covelo to Willits one day per week. A sample schedule for this type of service is shown in Table 30. As shown, the bus would pick up passengers with reservations from their homes. The bus would then wait at the Round Valley Library for any additional passengers without reservations, then leave and head south to Willits. Once in Willits, passengers would get dropped off at their intended destination, then the bus would have a layover period. During the layover, passengers who need to visit multiple destinations could transfer to other MTA services including Route 20 to Ukiah. At the end of the layover period, the bus would pick passengers up at an established stop, and then drive back to Covelo. The driver would later drop off passengers at their homes or the library. This service would cost around $47,600 annually to operate, assuming a $4 general public fare, and will make an estimated 200 trips per year.

Laytonville

Using the same vehicle and driver as the Covelo Deviated Fixed Route, MTA will operate a deviated fixed route service between Laytonville and Willits (one round trip per day) beginning in FY 2025-26. An example schedule for this service is shown in Table 30. It is estimated that the Laytonville Deviated Fixed Route will carry around 400 passenger-trips annually and cost $34,800 during the first year of operation.

Both the Covelo and Laytonville services should be reevaluated at the end of the three-year pilot period. If the pilot programs exceed ridership estimates as identified in this SRTP, MTA should consider a more permanent funding source to continue the rural lifeline services.

Fort Bragg

Add On-Demand Microtransit Technology to Fort Bragg Dial-A-Ride

When MTA implements the Willits/Brooktrails microtransit service, MTA should procure an additional vehicle license for the Fort Bragg DAR. Currently, MTA customers in Fort Bragg can reserve DAR up to two weeks in advance and a minimum of 24 hours in advance to have a guaranteed ride at the desired time. With the addition of the on-demand microtransit app, passengers would be able to request a same-day trip through their mobile phone during service hours. However, passengers may end-up having to wait 30 or more minutes for a ride. The cost of on-demand software will be around $4,500 per vehicle in addition to initial set-up costs. Adding the option to request Fort Bragg DAR service on-demand is anticipated to increase ridership slightly (2 – 3 percent) due to the added convenience. Additionally, this on-demand service model may be more appealing to tourists who frequent the area.

INTER-REGIONAL SERVICES

No changes are proposed for the MTA's inter-regional services (Routes 65, 60, 75, and 95). These routes are designed to provide residents with important connections to services in nearby urban areas and some are funded with specific funding sources designed for that purpose. The only plan recommendation related to these routes is to continue to coordinate the schedule with other regional transit services such as the newly implemented Redwood Coast Express (RCX).

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Transit services require ongoing capital investment in facilities and vehicles. Capital investments in both vehicles and passenger facilities can attract additional riders while improving the quality of service and safety of existing riders. Of note, California's Innovative Clean Transit regulation will go into effect during the plan period, requiring MTA to begin acquiring zero-emission buses (ZEBs).

New Vehicles

The MTA will need to procure only one new vehicle to implement the service plan described above; the ZEV van required for the operation of the Covelo and Laytonville Deviated Fixed Route Services. This vehicle will be funded with SB 125 funds.

Fleet Replacement

To maintain a safe transit system and reduce unnecessary maintenance costs, transit vehicles should be replaced regularly based on mileage and age. All new vehicles procured during the SRTP planning period will be ZEBs as stated in MTA's ZEB Rollout Plan. Table 40 identifies the MTA's vehicle replacement schedule for the next five years. Over the five-year planning period, it is anticipated that fleet replacement costs will total $15,700,000. The size of the vehicle required will depend on the service operated. When placing vehicle purchase orders, MTA could refer to vehicle capacity recommendations in Table 39.

Vehicle replacement has become more challenging in recent years as ZEBs are more complicated and expensive to manufacture, therefore there are very few manufacturers in the United States. As of this writing, the anticipated lead time needed to purchase a new vehicle is two years. MTA currently has 4 Gillig all-electric 35-foot coaches on the waitlist. Another 3 Endera 26-foot cutaways are scheduled for build in August of 2024.

Transit Facilities

Charging Infrastructure

The MTA will need to install additional charging infrastructure to meet the midday and overnight charging needs of the agency's future BEB fleet. Currently, the MTA plans to install eight charging stations at the Ukiah facility, three charging stations at the Willits facility, and four charging stations at the Fort Bragg facility, per the MTA Zero Emission Bus Rollout Plan. MTA will also need to install new transformers at each of its facilities to power the charging stations.

MTA has already begun the process of installing the new transformers/generators with funding from MCOG. The MTA will continue to upgrade its facilities to meet charging requirements over the next three FYs. At this time, it is anticipated that completing the electrical upgrades at the MTA's three facilities will cost $7.4 million in total, most of which will be paid for SB 125 funds.

New Administration Facility

The building used to house MTA administration is in a state of disrepair and does not meet the needs of the transit operator. MTA plans to upgrade the MTA Administration Building at 241 Plant Road. This project could cost on the order of $6.5 to 10.9 million. Construction of this project is expected to occur in 2028, pending funding availability. Potential funding is the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP).

FARE CHANGES

MTA's current fare structure is complicated, with varying fares depending on the passenger's age, disability status, and trip length. This complexity can dissuade potential riders and confuse passengers. A complex fare structure also adds to the driver's workload as well as the administrative need to track and report fare revenues. It is recommended that MTA simplifies the fixed route fares by implementing the three-fare scenario. This will not impact DAR or microtransit fares.

Under this plan element, one fare will be charged for local trips (within a community), one fare charged for intercity trips (such as Fort Bragg to Ukiah), and one fare charged for inter-regional trips (such as to/from Santa Rosa). The local fare will be $1.50, the intercity fare will be $2.50, and the inter-regional fare will be $15.00. Table 43 presents an example of a three-fare system and how it would impact MTA ridership and fare revenues. It is anticipated that the long-term ridership and operations efficiency gains that will result from a simplified fare structure would outweigh the small loss in fare revenue. Additionally, as the farebox ratio is becoming a less important performance indicator during the post-COVID era, the ridership increases should be prioritized.

FINANCIAL PLAN

Table 51 presents the 5-Year Operating and Capital Financial Plan for MTA. Given the state's greenhouse gas emission goals and how public transit is a crucial component of attaining these goals, it is assumed that SB 125 funds will be extended into the end of the five-year planning period. Additionally, the pilot programs listed above may not meet goals and are assumed to no longer operate after the three-year period. With SB 125 funding, the MTA service plan is fiscally constrained. However, in order to construct all proposed capital improvement projects, additional funding will be required, particularly for local match for vehicle replacements. This plan also assumes that MTA will successfully be able to obtain competitive TIRCP funding for the construction of the New Administration Facility and the Ukiah Transit Center.