

STAFF REPORT



MEETING DATE:	December 15, 2020
SUBJECT:	Consider Development of an Intercity Passenger Rail Study (Public Comment) and Receive Update on Salmon Runner Intercity Bus Service
AGENDA ITEM:	11
STAFF CONTACT:	Jennifer Pollom, Senior Transportation Planner

SUMMARY:

SRTA is committed to improving intercity transportation options to meet the business and personal needs of the people living in the Shasta Region. Initial work led to the anticipated Salmon Runner bus service between Redding and Sacramento. As a next step, staff recommends partnering with Caltrans and the North State Super Region to seek additional funding to study challenges and opportunities concerning daytime intercity passenger rail service. A Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning grant application for a North State passenger rail study would require a minimum planning match of 11.47 percent.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

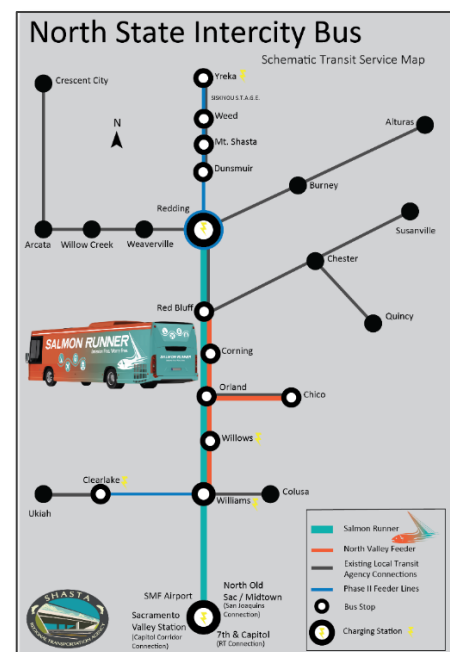
It is recommended that the board of directors:

1. Accept public comments on and consider the development of an intercity passenger rail study and provide direction to staff; and
2. Receive an update on the Salmon Runner intercity bus service.

DISCUSSION:

Background – SRTA is working together with local, regional, and state partners to improve intercity transportation options by connecting North State communities to state, national, and international markets. A history of related SRTA Board of Director's agenda items is attached. In addition to improving mobility for the general public, reliable intercity transportation connections help grow the local economy. Initial work on the North State Intercity Bus System led to the anticipated Salmon Runner bus service between Redding and Sacramento along the Interstate 5 Corridor, with a connecting valley feeder service.

Existing intercity connections (e.g., passenger rail and bus service) have limitations, including unreliability, limited destinations, inconvenient schedules, poor on-time service, confusing ticket purchasing, lack of station services, frequent stops, indirect routes, need for transfers, and prohibitive costs. Options became even more limited since October of 2019 with service cuts, including:



- Amtrak Thruway Bus service between Redding and Sacramento was cut in October 2019 to twice daily, down from four times daily. Tickets are still only available as part of a rail trip.
- Air service for Redding was cut in March 2020 to once daily to San Francisco International Airport, down from three daily San Francisco trips and one daily Los Angeles trip.
- Amtrak nationally funded passenger rail service—the Coast Starlight—was cut in October 2020 to three days a week with northbound at 3:14 a.m. and southbound at 2:21 a.m., down from once daily trips.
- Greyhound service was cut to once daily with northbound at 11:40 p.m. and southbound at 4:40 a.m., down from four daily trips.

Important progress has been made on the anticipated Salmon Runner bus service between Redding and Sacramento along the Interstate 5 Corridor, including a valley feeder service that connects the cities of Corning, Orland, Willows, and Chico (see update discussed below). SRTA is seeking out opportunities and is coordinating with both Caltrans and the North State Super Region on incremental improvements so that additional effort and resources are committed to a well-connected North State system that reaches more communities and delivers a convenient service. One such opportunity is to evaluate the potential future of daytime passenger rail service to the North State along existing railroad infrastructure and the regional governance structure needed to eventually administer passenger rail service in the North State.

Passenger Rail Study – As the Salmon Runner bus operation plan develops, complementary rail service should be examined also. Current passenger rail service through Redding’s Amtrak Station occurs in the middle of the night between 2-4 a.m., serving the national passenger rail market, but not the business, tourism, and personal needs of Shasta County residents and other North State communities. Daytime passenger rail service out of Redding would better connect the region to the state’s broader intercity rail and bus network and more readily meet North State transportation needs. A passenger rail study would conceptualize daytime rail service and analyze the likelihood of successful passenger rail service, including complementary services to intercity bus efforts.

At the state level, intercity rail service and connecting buses are administered by three regional rail agencies, Caltrans, and the California State Transportation Agency; currently, North State connections are administered by the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA). There is no regional intercity passenger rail study for the North State, but rather North State connections are mentioned in SJJPA’s Business Plan. Similarly, the 2018 California State Rail Plan generally states that a metropolitan transportation agency—such as SRTA—contributes to state rail planning via the agency’s regional transportation plan (RTP) and future incorporation of emerging rail corridor plans into the agency’s RTP.

Data-driven regional planning research and coordination is needed to realistically assess the viability of daytime passenger rail service to the North State and to explore service concepts both near (10 years) and long-term (20 years), including:

Near-term 10 years	Outlining a North State intercity transportation (both bus and rail) governance structure among North State counties and partnering with state and existing bus and passenger rail providers (e.g., SJJPA and Capital Corridor)
	Enhancing Salmon Runner service until complementary daytime passenger rail service can be provided
	Assessing possible new bus service to add feeder services to complement/complete the North State Intercity Bus System
	Extending passenger rail service on the current SJJPA route north to Oroville with coordinated adjustments to associated bus service
Long-term 20 years	Improving the California Northern Railroad short freight rail line between Vallejo and the city of Tehama, south of Red Bluff, to accommodate passengers
	Increasing daytime passenger rail use of existing Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) line
	Expanding double-tracking in the UPRR right of way to accommodate daytime passenger rail to Redding

The concepts in the previous table would include the following analysis:

- inquiry with current rail ownership
- capital improvement needs
- funding sources for capital and operations
- cost benefit analysis
- recommended next steps

A North State passenger rail study could inform the SRTA's 2022 RTP and the next State Rail Plan, as well as provide the impetus for improved bus connections in the near-term. Results and recommended next steps from a study could be used to apply for capital and operating grants to improve intercity mobility in the near and long-term. Funding opportunities for a study, include:

- Strategic Partnership Transit option in Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program; and
- Emergent corridor funding through Caltrans State Rail Program.

Salmon Runner – In April 2018, SRTA was awarded over \$8.6 million in capital funding through the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program for a new zero-emission intercity bus service between Redding and Sacramento along the Interstate 5 Corridor, including a valley feeder that connects the cities of Corning, Orland, Willows, and Chico.

Bus Operations – Intercity bus service between Redding and Sacramento could begin in the summer of 2021 using traditional motorcoaches. Staff anticipates bringing a recommendation to the board this spring regarding the first year of operations, replacing the SJPA Amtrak Thruway Bus as planned that currently operates twice daily to Redding. Consistent with on-going communications with Caltrans, funding for Salmon Runner operations will come from \$600,000 in awarded Federal Transit Administration Intercity Bus Program (FTA 5311(f)) and the remainder from a Caltrans Bus Gap Project. Caltrans is working with SRTA to determine the Bus Gap Project funding commitment and bus service frequency for the Salmon Runner on the Interstate 5 corridor.

Bus Procurement – There has been no significant change in the availability of long-range, zero-emission motorcoaches. The timing of getting buses is still a couple of years away and might require additional funding that meets Salmon Runner operational needs. SRTA intends to submit a second grant application for additional on-route charging infrastructure through the Federal Transit Administration Bus and Bus Facilities Low-No Grant Program (FTA 5339) that, if awarded, could help zero-emission motorcoaches meet the long-range requirement. Also, SRTA continues to work with Caltrans on the potential development of a prototype hydrogen fuel cell motorcoach that could meet the operational needs of the Salmon Runner.

ALTERNATIVES:

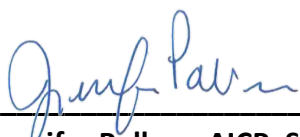
The board of directors may delay the item and request additional information from staff or choose not to study passenger rail service at this time.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

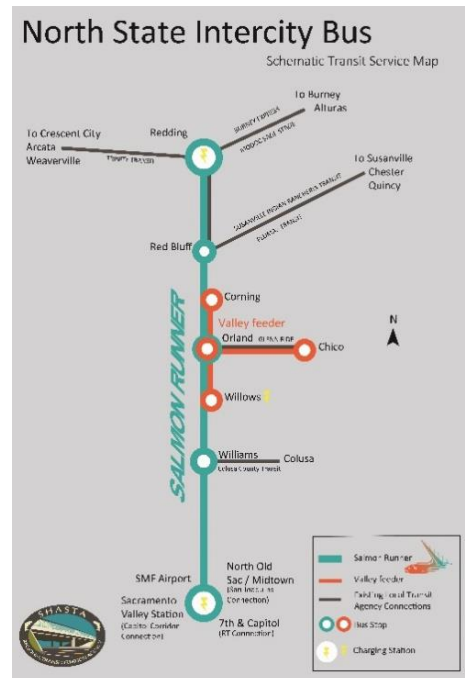
SRTA is in discussions with Caltrans regarding their level of interest in proceeding with a passenger rail study. Input from the North State Super Region

FISCAL IMPACT

A Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning grant application for a North State passenger rail study would require a minimum planning match of 11.47 percent. The cost of a study, depending on the approved scope, would likely range from \$200,000 to \$300,000. If a resulting study recommends near and long-term passenger rail service goals that the board of directors wishes to pursue, then development of any capital improvement grant applications would likely require local match.



Jennifer Pollom, AICP, Senior Transportation Planner



Attachment: History of Related SRTA Board of Directors Agenda Items

HISTORY OF RELATED SRTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS AGENDA ITEMS

2015

MEETING ON APRIL 28, 2015, [AGENDA ITEM #11](#)

ADOPT RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING SUBMITTAL OF 2015 FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION SECTION 5311(F) INTERCITY BUS PROGRAM GRANT APPLICATION(S)

It is recommended that the board of directors:

1. ...; and
2. Adopt Resolution 15-06 authorizing SRTA to submit a 2015 FTA Section 5311(f) application to study public transportation services to Sacramento, the Sacramento International Airport, and to possibly connect to major ground transit and airport facilities in the Bay Area.

The staff recommendations passed unanimously.

MEETING ON OCTOBER 13, 2015, [AGENDA ITEM #5-9](#)

AUTHORIZE TECHNICAL SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH CONSULTANT FOR SHASTA INTERCITY TRANSPORTATION TO SACRAMENTO AND BAY AREA STUDY

It is recommended that the board of directors authorize the executive director to sign a technical services agreement (attached) with The Center for Business and Policy Research at the University of the Pacific to prepare the *Shasta Intercity Transportation to Sacramento and the Bay Area Study*, for a term ending June 30, 2016, not to exceed \$26,700.

The consent calendar was approved.

2016

MEETING ON FEBRUARY 23, 2016, [AGENDA ITEM #21](#)

UPDATE REGARDING TRANSIT AND INTERCITY RAIL CAPITAL PROGRAM GRANT APPLICATION – REVIEW AND POSSIBLE ACTION

It is recommended that the board of directors receive an update on the development of a FY 2016/17 TIRCP grant application and provide further direction, if any, to staff.

The board gave no further direction to staff.

MEETING ON APRIL 26, 2016, [AGENDA ITEM #8](#)

APPROVE THE TRANSIT AND INTERCITY RAIL CAPITAL PROGRAM GRANT APPLICATION FOR BUS SERVICE BETWEEN REDDING AND SACRAMENTO

It is recommended that the board of directors approve the attached 2016/17 TIRCP grant application.

The staff recommendation passed unanimously.

MEETING ON DECEMBER 13, 2016, [AGENDA ITEM #9](#)

ACCEPT SHASTA INTERCITY TRANSPORTATION TO SACRAMENTO AND THE BAY AREA STUDY FINAL REPORT

It is recommended that the board of directors accept the *Shasta Intercity Transportation to Sacramento and the Bay Area Study* final report (attached).

The staff recommendation passed unanimously.

2017

MEETING ON APRIL 25, 2017, [AGENDA ITEM #14](#)

AUTHORIZE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE NORTH STATE EXPRESS CONNECT BUSINESS PLAN FOR INTERCITY BUS SERVICE BETWEEN REDDING AND SACRAMENTO

It is recommended that the board of directors authorize the executive director to issue an RFP for the *North State Express Connect Business Plan* (attached), pending award of a Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant.

The staff recommendation passed unanimously.

MEETING ON JUNE 27, 2017, [AGENDA ITEM #14](#)

AUTHORIZE TECHNICAL SERVICES AGREEMENT FOR NORTH STATE EXPRESS CONNECT BUSINESS PLAN FOR INTERCITY BUS SERVICE BETWEEN REDDING AND SACRAMENTO

It is recommended that the board of directors authorize the chair to sign a technical services agreement (TSA) with Green DOT Transportation Solutions (Green DOT) to complete the *North State Express Connect Business Plan*, for a term ending June 30, 2020, not to exceed \$205,852.

The staff recommendation passed unanimously.

MEETING ON OCTOBER 10, 2017, [AGENDA ITEM #9](#)

APPROVE SUBMITTAL OF A TRANSIT AND INTERCITY RAIL CAPITAL PROGRAM GRANT APPLICATION FOR BUS SERVICE BETWEEN REDDING AND SACRAMENTO AND AUTHORIZE SOLICITATION OF PROJECT PARTNERSHIPS

It is recommended that the board of directors:

1. Authorize the executive director to issue multiple requests for proposals (RFPs) for intercity buses, charging facilities, and passenger and bus parking; and
2. Approve submittal of a Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program grant application utilizing results from the RFP process.

The staff recommendation passed unanimously.

2018

MEETING ON JUNE 19, 2018, [AGENDA ITEM #12](#)

APPROVE THE NORTH STATE INTERCITY BUS SYSTEM BUSINESS PLAN AND DELEGATE AUTHORITY TO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO PERFORM RELATED ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS

It is recommended that the board of directors:

1. Approve the North State Intercity Bus System Business Plan;
2. Adopt Resolution #18-11 delegating authority the executive director to perform all administrative actions necessary to obtain Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) funds, including agreements with Caltrans and other project partners of the North State Intercity Bus System.

The staff recommendation passed unanimously.

2019

MEETING ON FEBRUARY 26, 2019, [AGENDA ITEM #15](#)

NORTH STATE INTERCITY BUS PROGRESS REPORT

It is recommended that the board of directors receive an update on the North State Intercity Bus Project, and provide any additional comments and/or direction to staff.

By motion made and seconded (Winter/Rickert), the staff recommendation passed unanimously.

MEETING ON JUNE 25, 2019, [AGENDA ITEM #16](#)

CANCEL EXISTING SALMON RUNNER BUS PROCUREMENT, DEVELOP AND RELEASE NEW BUS PROCUREMENT, AND AMEND CONTRACT WITH CENTER FOR TRANSPORTATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

It is recommended that the board of directors:

1. Cancel Procurement 2019-01 – Request for Proposals for Battery-Electric Vehicle Procurement for Salmon Runner and North Valley Feeder;
2. Authorize the executive director to release a new zero-emission bus procurement for the Salmon Runner intercity bus service, including the valley feeder service; and
3. Authorize the executive director to amend contract #2018-06 with Center for Transportation and the Environment (CTE) for Project Management for Procurement of Battery-Electric Buses and Charging Stations, increasing the budget by \$12,500, for a total amount of \$62,500 to assist SRTA with the new procurement.

By motion made and seconded (Moty/Winter), the staff recommendation passed unanimously.

MEETING ON DECEMBER 10, 2019, [AGENDA ITEM #12](#)

RECEIVE INTERCITY BUS UPDATE AND AUTHORIZE TRANSIT AND INTERCITY RAIL CAPITAL PROGRAM (TIRCP) GRANT APPLICATION

It is recommended that the board of directors authorize submittal of a TIRCP grant application to partner with 1) a manufacturer for the design, engineering, and building of one or more prototype fuel cell motorcoaches and 2) a vendor for related hydrogen fueling infrastructure in Redding and Sacramento.

By motion made and seconded (Moty/Rickert), the staff recommendation passed unanimously.

MEETING ON FEBRUARY 25, 2020, [AGENDA ITEM #12](#)

ADOPT RESOLUTION APPROVING A FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION SECTION 5311(F) INTERCITY BUS PROGRAM APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2020 BY THE SHASTA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AGENCY TO OPERATE THE SALMON RUNNER

It is recommended that the board of directors:

1. Adopt Resolution 20-02 (attached) approving a FTA Section 5311(f) Intercity Bus Program application for Federal Fiscal Year 2020 by SRTA to operate the Salmon Runner; and
2. Authorize the executive director to provide certifications, assurances, and other requested information to Caltrans and FTA.

By motion made and seconded (Rickert/Schreder), the staff recommendation passed unanimously.

MEETING ON APRIL 28, 2020, [AGENDA ITEM #5-5](#)

ADOPT RESOLUTION APPROVING A 5339(C) LOW OR NO EMISSION PROGRAM APPLICATION TO CONSTRUCT CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE NORTH STATE INTERCITY BUS SYSTEM

It is recommended that the board of directors:

1. Adopt Resolution 20-05 (attached) approving an FTA Section 5339(c) Low or No Emission Program application by SRTA for charging infrastructure for the North State Intercity Bus System; and
2. Authorize the executive director to provide certifications, assurances, and other requested information to Caltrans and FTA.

By motion made, seconded (Watkins/Chimenti), and unanimously carried by roll call vote, the consent calendar was approved.