

STAFF REPORT



MEETING DATE:	December 19, 2024
SUBJECT:	Receive Update on Development of the North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan
AGENDA ITEM:	12
STAFF CONTACT:	Mehdi Moeinaddini, Associate Transportation Planner

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the board of directors receive a status update on the development of the North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan.

DISCUSSION:

SRTA was awarded a competitive Caltrans Strategic Partnership grant to develop the North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan, which focuses on improving intercity bus and rail transit options across the North State. In May SRTA awarded a contract to AECOM and work commenced in July 2024.

The project team has completed data collection and identified potential bus and rail hub locations and routes. Outreach activities include: 1) Two technical advisory committee meetings held on July 30 and November 6, 2024, with participants from North State counties, transit operators, Caltrans, and regional agencies. 2) A survey for Shasta County residents on intercity travel needs was conducted from August 22 to September 12, 2024, receiving 122 responses. 3) Similar surveys were sent to North State residents on December 1, 2024, to share their interregional travel needs. Survey responses are due December 31. A project website has been created for updates and community feedback (<https://srta.ca.gov/373/North-State-Intercity-Bus-to-Rail-Plan>).

A community workshop on January 16, 2025, will update residents and gather feedback for the draft plan, which will be presented at the February board meeting with a 30-day comment period. Staff and the AECOM team will present key findings today as well as next steps for this project (see attachment).

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Caltrans, CalSTA, Redding Area Bus Authority, San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority, transportation planning agencies, and transit operators across the North State provided technical review and input as well as sharing of community surveys.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This project is programmed in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024/25 Overall Work Program (Work Element 707.10 – North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan).

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sean Tiedgen", is written over a horizontal line.

Sean Tiedgen, AICP, Executive Director

Attachment: Presentation slides

North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan

Shasta Regional Transportation Agency Board Meeting
Thursday, December 19, 2024

Basis for Selecting Potential Hubs and Routes for Analysis

① Eugene

- 1A: via I-5 corridor
Ashland–Medford, Grants Pass, Roseburg
- 1B: via U.S. 97 corridor
Klamath Falls

② Chico (via I-5 + SR 99 corridor)

③ Sacramento (via I-5 corridor)

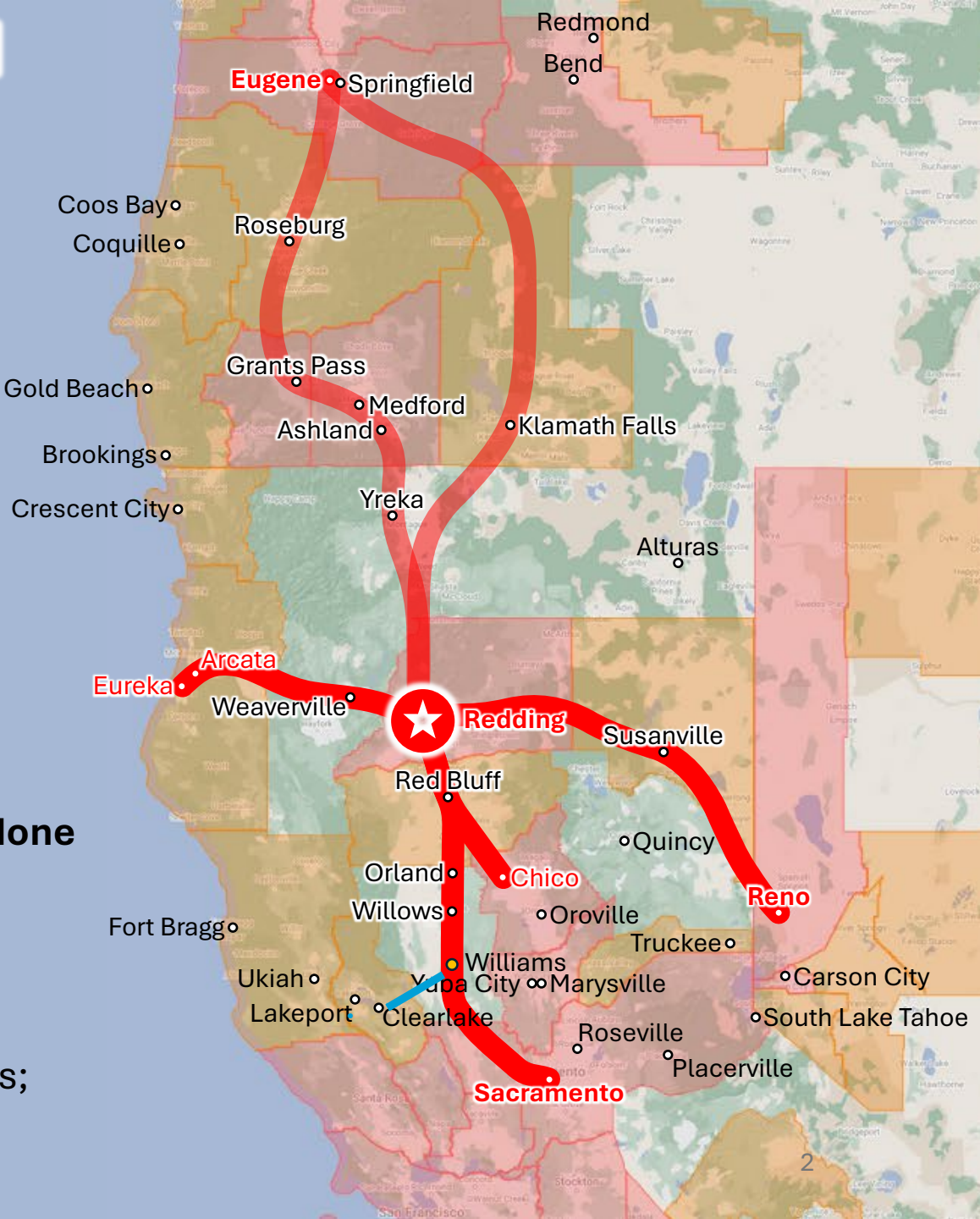
④ Reno (via Susanville)

⑤ Eureka–Arcata (via SR 299 corridor)

⑥ Ukiah/Clearlake and Williams (via SR 20)
(identified only based on initial input for future study)

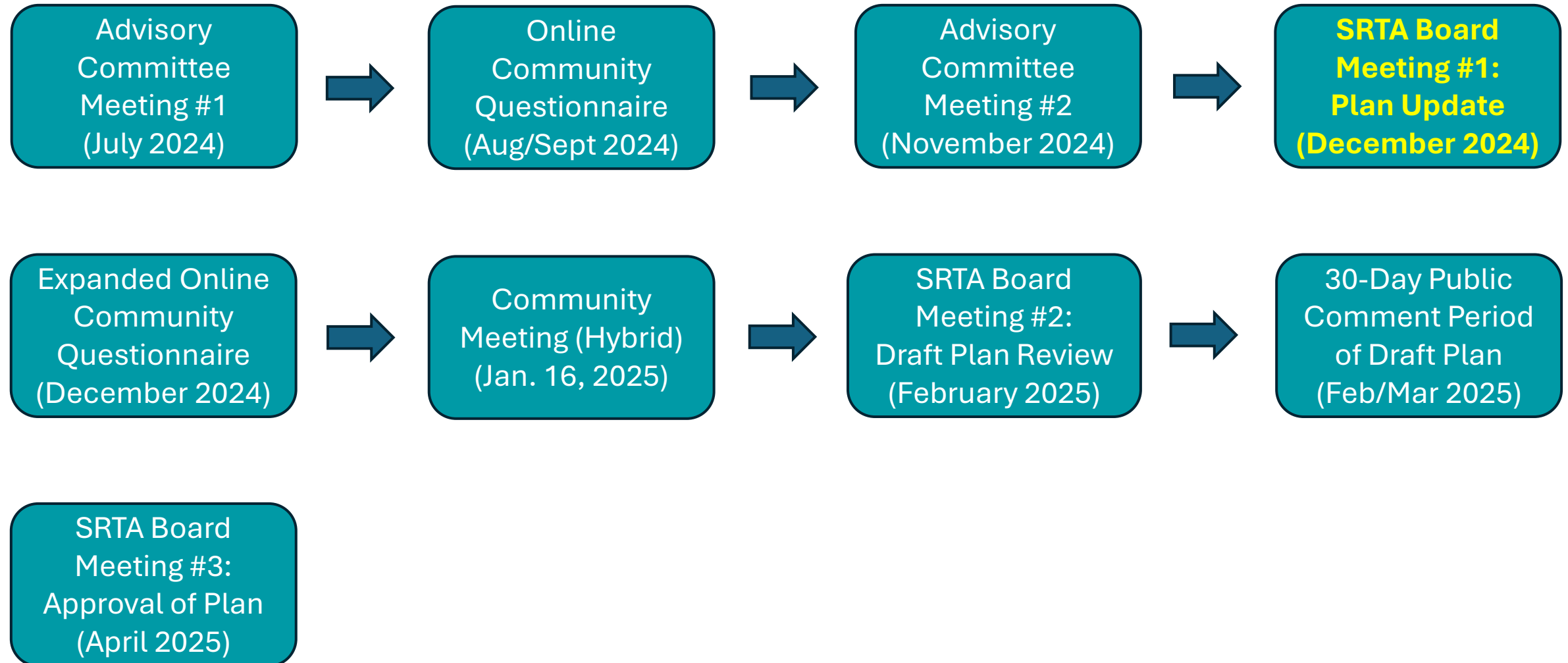
Routes/hubs were selected for analysis based initial analysis done as part of data collection:

- Demand (Highway traffic levels; visitor data)
- Population and employment
- Hub connectivity (air and rail)
- Key destinations (Major colleges and universities; major hospitals; major sports and entertainment venues)
- Key markets (tourism; recreation; business trips)

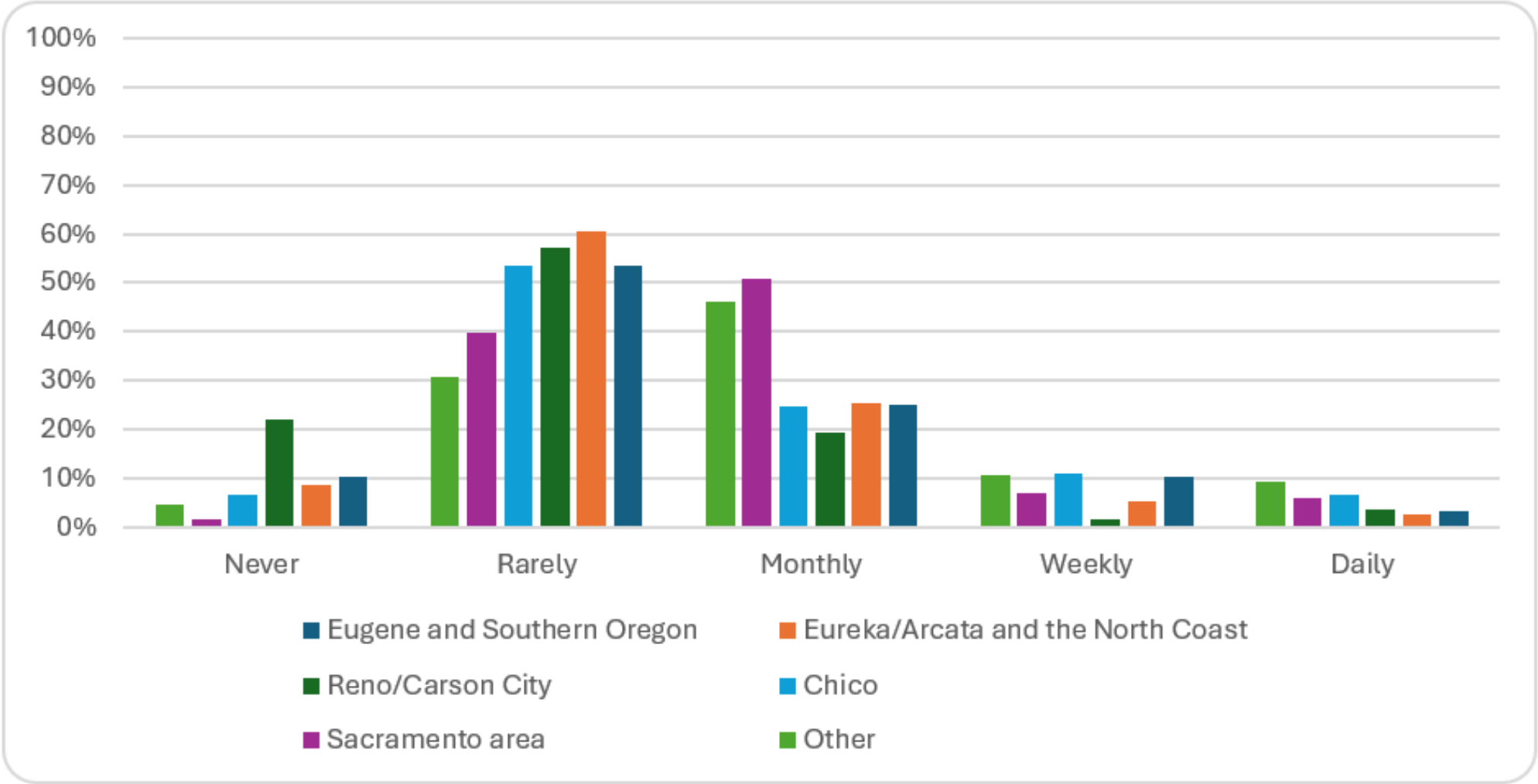


Review of the Stakeholder and Public Engagement Process

Review of the Engagement Process



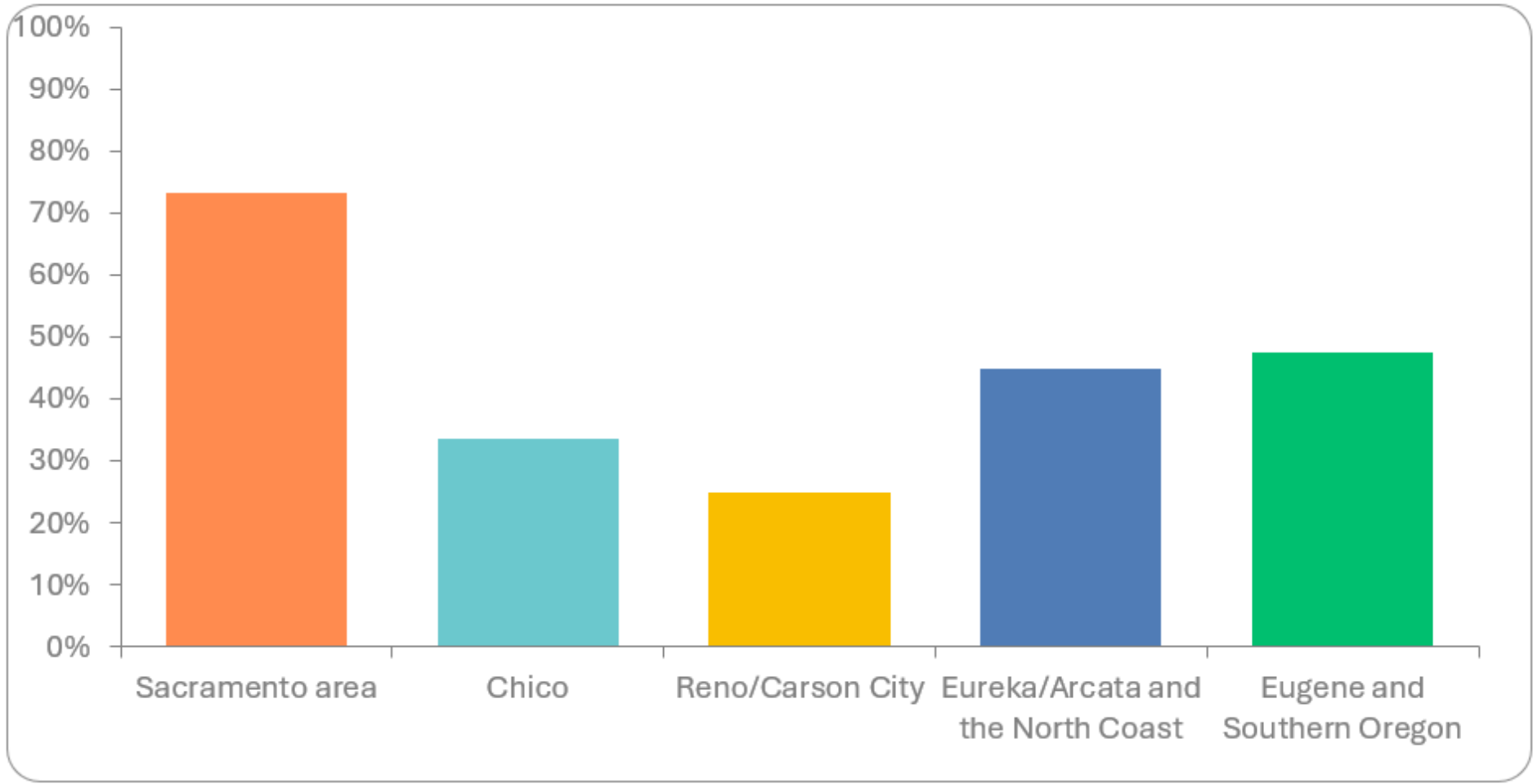
Summary of Results from the Community Questionnaire



Existing Travel frequency by destination
(generally from Shasta County respondents)

Note: Sacramento area ranks #1 for monthly travel. Chico ranks #1 for weekly travel, though weekly travel is much lower than monthly travel

Summary of Results from the Community Questionnaire



Ranking of destinations desired for improved bus or rail connections
(generally from Shasta County respondents)

Summary of Results from the Community Questionnaire

Answer Choices	0 (least likely)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 (most likely)
Eugene and Southern Oregon	26	7	2	5	4	27	5	9	8	3	18
Eureka/Arcata and the North Coast	26	4	5	5	6	18	7	7	10	7	19
Reno/Carson City	27	6	2	9	3	20	9	5	10	6	11
Chico	24	6	1	5	3	16	8	11	12	6	20
Sacramento area	15	3	3	4	2	19	3	8	21	8	32
Other	17	2	2	0	1	5	1	3	11	5	21

Likelihood of taking a bus as the primary mode of travel to destinations with bus service improvements

(generally from Shasta County respondents)

Note: Sacramento was identified as the highest likelihood for using bus as primary mode with bus improvements.

Summary of Results from the Community Questionnaire

Other Results

- Leisure was identified as the primary reason for travel to intercity destinations
 - Eureka/Arcata #1, Eugene/Southern Oregon #2 and Reno/Carson City #3
- Sacramento is the top work and healthcare visits.
- Chico is top for education-related travel.
- Respondents called for better schedules and more bus and rail options.
- Expanding services to neighboring counties like Siskiyou is also a priority.

Demographic Information of Respondents

- Respondents were generally from Shasta County (initial questionnaire only targeted the one county).
- There were a few other respondents from outside the County

Answer Choices	Responses	Total
18-29	9.24%	11
30-39	14.29%	17
40-49	25.21%	30
50-59	16.81%	20
60 older	36.13%	43

Total responses and breakdown of respondents' age groups by percentage

Evaluation Criteria and Findings of Potential Demand

Connectivity

- Passenger Rail Connections
- Intercity Bus Connections
- Air Connections

Market Assessment

- Providing Access to Employment and Business Centers
- Medical Care
- Higher Education
- Sports/Entertainment and Recreation
- Historic/Current Ridership of Existing Transit Services along proposed Routes
- Online Community Questionnaire Results

Potential Demand by Hub/Route

Preliminary Connectivity Assessment

(Note: Connectivity is measured at the destination hub stations/stops and not in Redding/Shasta County)

Hub*	Intercity Rail	Intercity Bus	Air	Sum	Ranking 6 = Highest 1 = Lowest
1A/1B. Eugene	4	1	3	8	4 (tie)
1A/1B. Eugene	4	1	3	8	4 (tie)
2. Chico**	3	3	1	7	2 (tie)
3. Sacramento	5	1	5	11	6
4. Reno	3	3	4	10	5
5. Arcata/Eureka	1	4	2	7	2 (tie)

Scoring for Each Connectivity Category

- Very High = 5
- High = 4
- Moderate = 3
- Low = 2
- Very Low = 1

**For the connectivity assessment, only hub stops/stations were examined, as intermediate bus stops and rail stations between Redding and Hubs are generally smaller communities with only local transit connections.*

***The Chico Hub intercity rail connectivity ranking is based on assumption that North Valley Rail will be implemented. However, one point was deducted given this service is not confirmed.*

Potential Demand by Hub/Route

Preliminary Market Assessment

Hub/Route	Employment and Business Centers	Sports/Entertainment and Tourism/Recreation	Medical Care	Higher Education	Historical and Current Ridership	Online Questionnaire	Sum	Ranking <i>6 = Highest 1 = Lowest</i>
1A. Redding – Eugene (Bus, I-5)	3	3	3	3	3	3	18	4 (tie)
1B. Redding – Eugene (Rail, Amtrak Corridor)	2	2	1	3	3	3	14	1
2. Redding – Chico (Rail)	3	4	2	4	3	3	19	5
3. Redding – Sacramento (Bus)	5	5	5	5	5	5	30	6
4. Redding – Reno (Bus)	3	4	3	3	2	1	16	2
5. Redding – Arcata/Eureka (Bus)	2	4	2	4	3	3	18	4 (tie)

Scoring for Each Market Assessment Category

- Very High = 5
- High = 4
- Moderate = 3
- Low = 2
- Very Low = 1

Potential Demand by Hub/Route

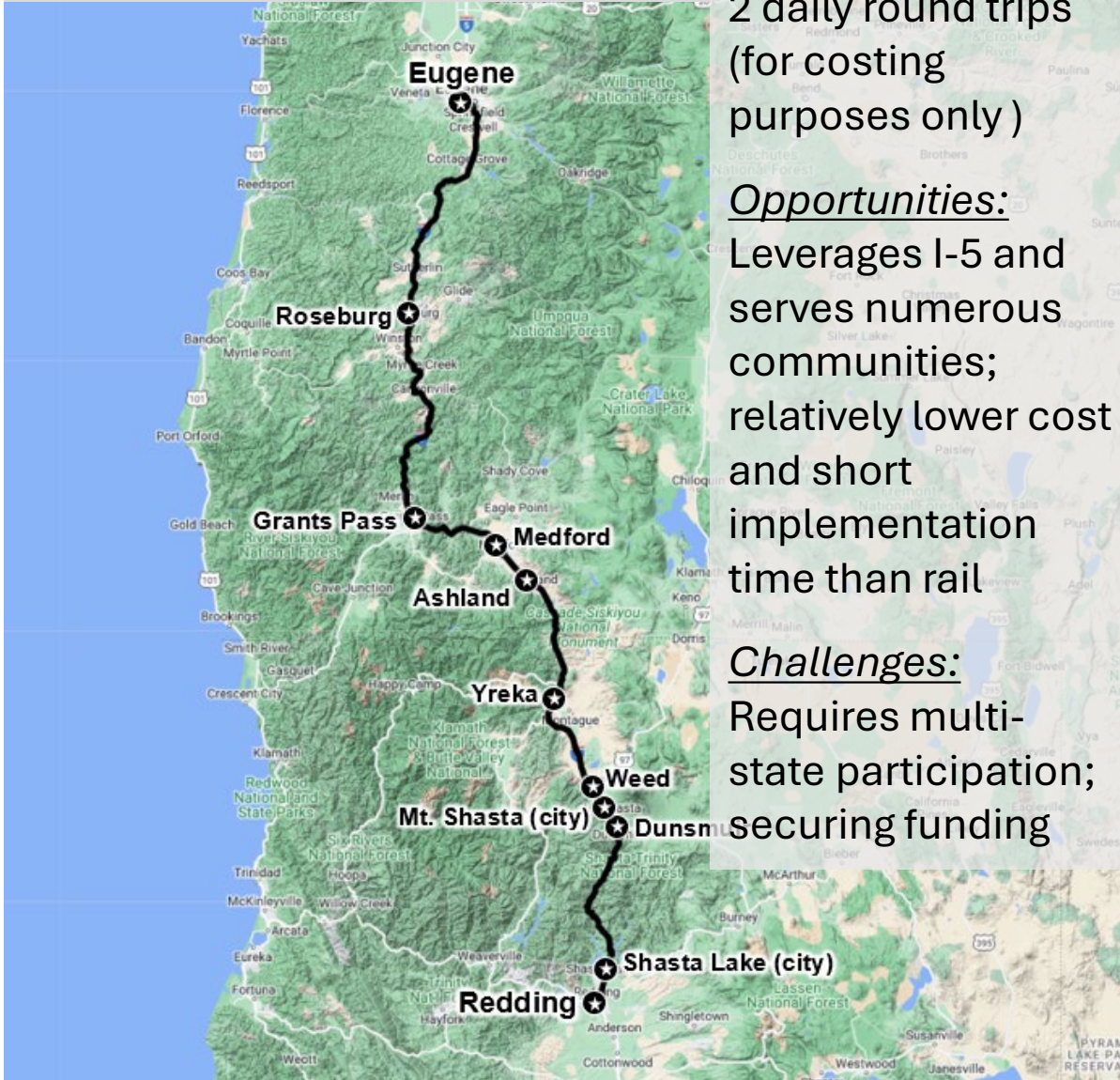
Preliminary Time Travel Ranking + Overall Ranking Ranking

Hub/Route	Connectivity (Ranking Score) <i>6 = Highest 1 = Lowest</i>	Market Assessment (Ranking Score) <i>6 = Highest 1 = Lowest</i>	Travel Times from Redding Hub (Ranking Score) <i>6 = Highest 1 = Lowest</i>	Sum	Overall Ranking <i>6 = Highest 1 = Lowest</i>
1A. Redding – Eugene (Bus, I-5)	4 (tie)	4 (tie)	2 (7hr 30min) ¹	10	3 (tie)
1B. Redding – Eugene (Rail, Amtrak Corridor)	4 (tie)	1	1 (9hr 30mi/n) ²	6	1
2. Redding – Chico (Rail)	2 (tie)	5	6 (1hr 15min) ³	13	5
3. Redding – Sacramento (Bus)	6	6	4 (3hr 30min) ⁴	14	6
4. Redding – Reno (Bus)	5	2	3 (3hr 50min) ⁵	10	3 (tie)
5. Redding – Arcata/Eureka (Bus)	2 (tie)	4 (tie)	5 (3hr 15min) ⁶	11	4

Notes:

1. Estimated travel times are preliminary and based on FlixBus schedule in the corridor and adding time for more intermediate stops.
2. Estimated travel times are preliminary and based on Amtrak Timetable for the Coast Starlight service. One extra point was given for the ranking due to the higher level of comfort of the rail v. bus.
3. Based on based on time estimates from North Valley Rail (distance in miles for North Valley Rail from Natomas to Chico station is essential the same distance as Chico to Redding, as well as the same number of intermediate stops).
4. Estimated travel times are preliminary and based the scheduled developed for the Salmon Runner service per the Salmon Runner service business plan concepts.
5. Estimated travel times are preliminary and based analysis of existing bus services, bus operations standards, and utilization of Google Maps estimates for driving.
6. See #5

1A. Redding – Eugene (Bus)



Frequency:

2 daily round trips
(for costing
purposes only)

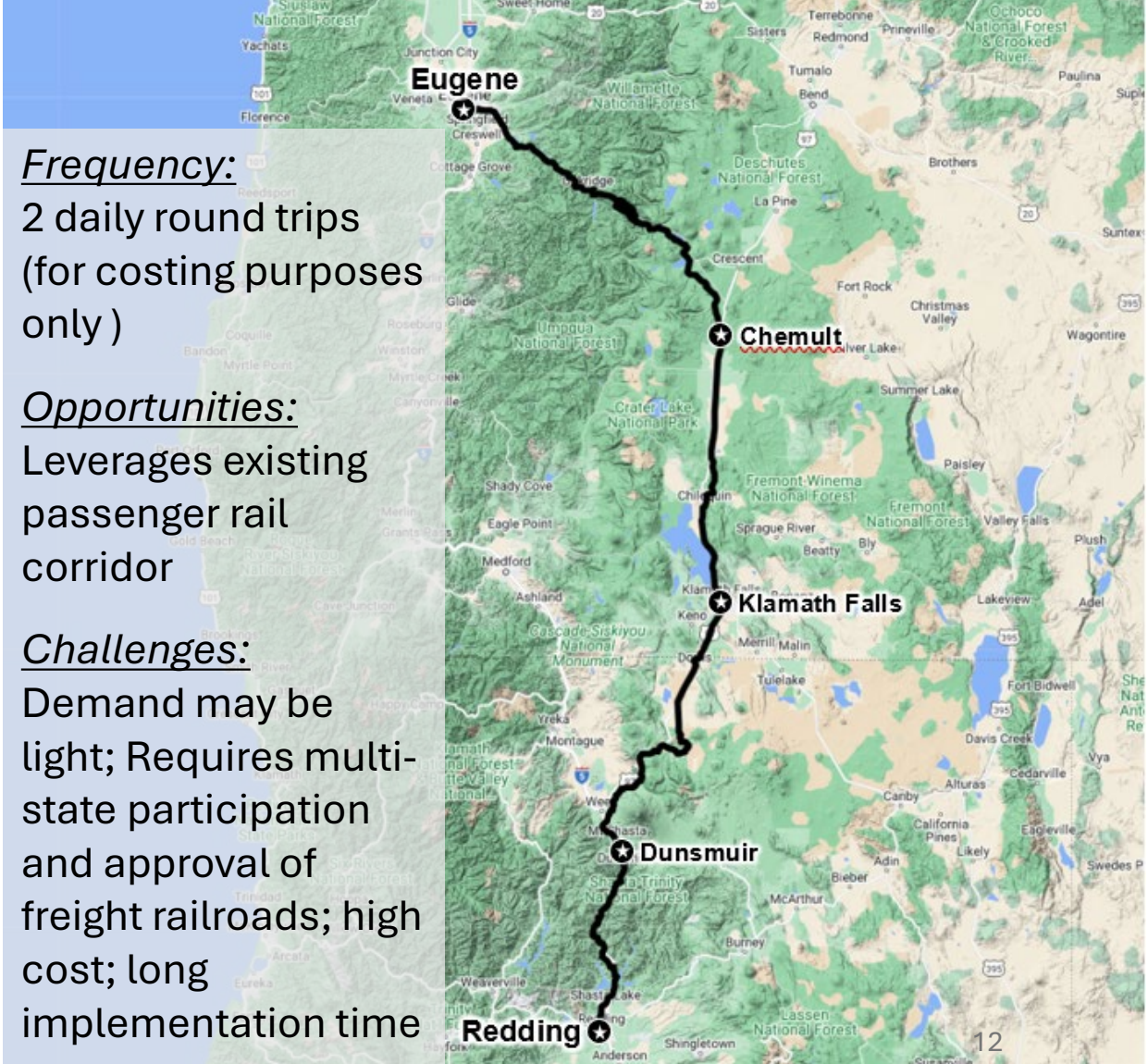
Opportunities:

Leverages I-5 and serves numerous communities; relatively lower cost and short implementation time than rail

Challenges:

Requires multi-state participation;
securing funding

1B. Redding – Eugene (Rail)



Frequency:

2 daily round trips
(for costing purposes
only)

Opportunities:

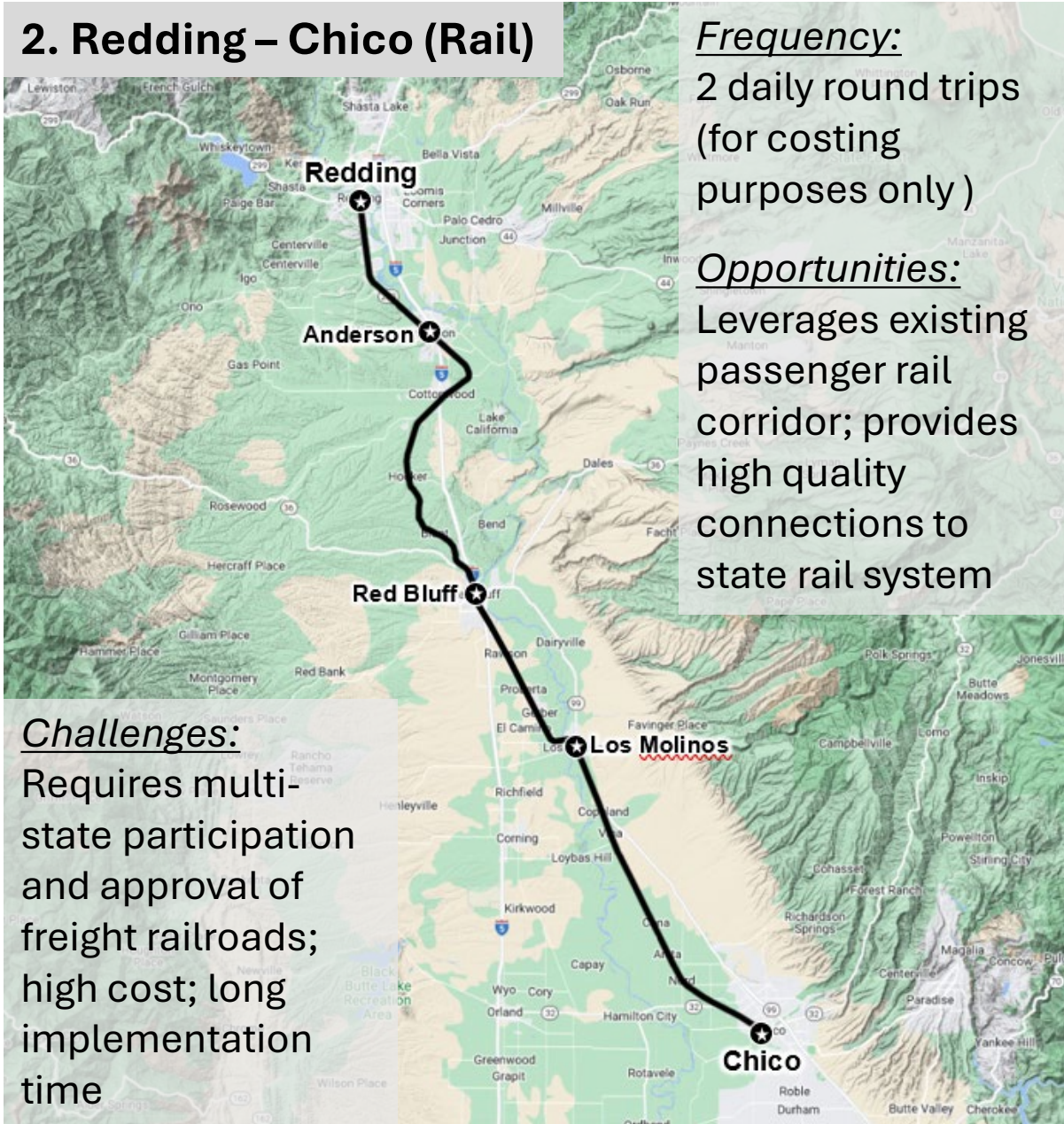
Leverages existing passenger rail corridor

Challenges:

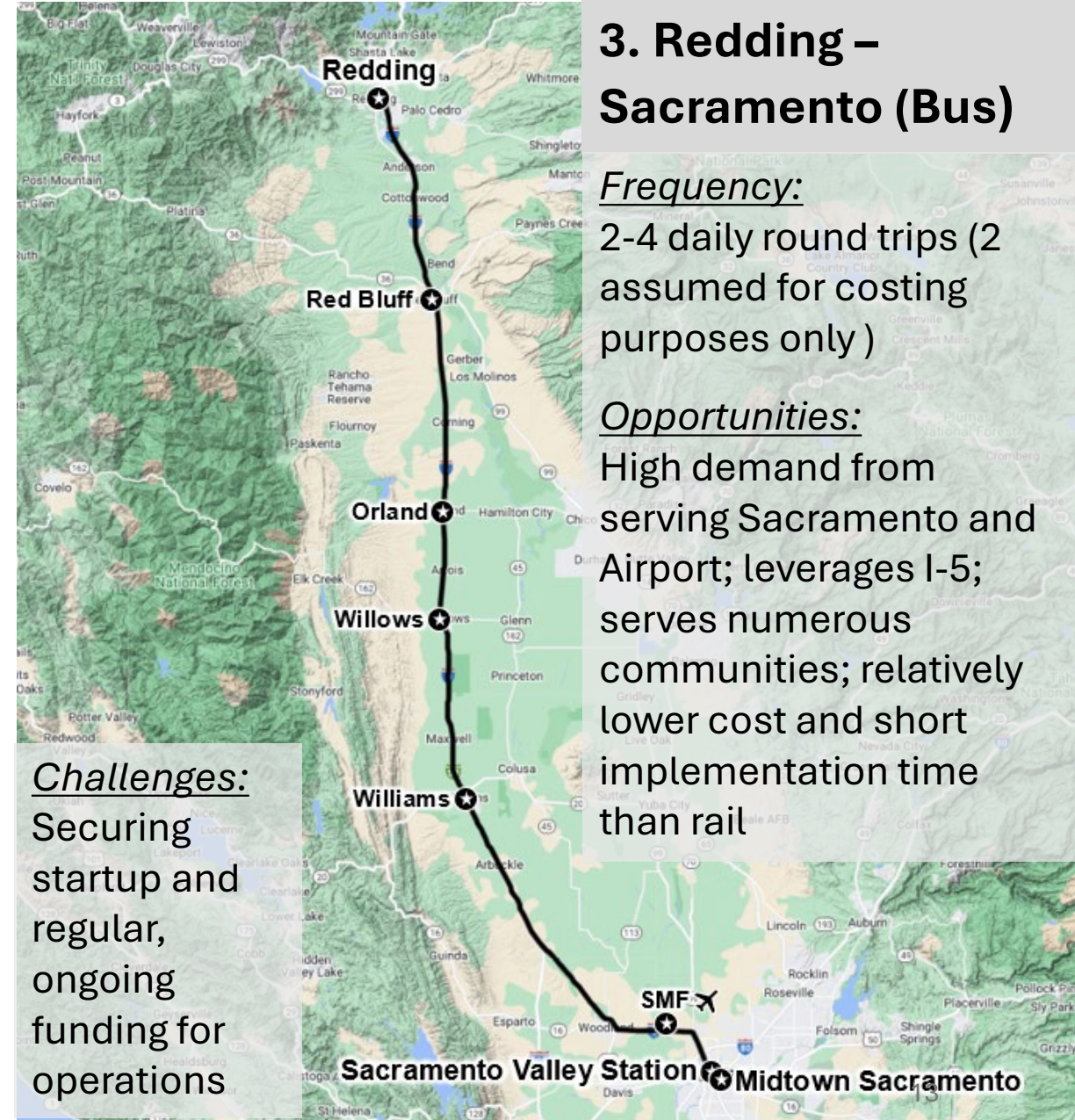
Demand may be light; Requires multi-state participation and approval of freight railroads; high cost; long implementation time

Conceptual Service Plans for Selected Hubs & Routes

2. Redding – Chico (Rail)

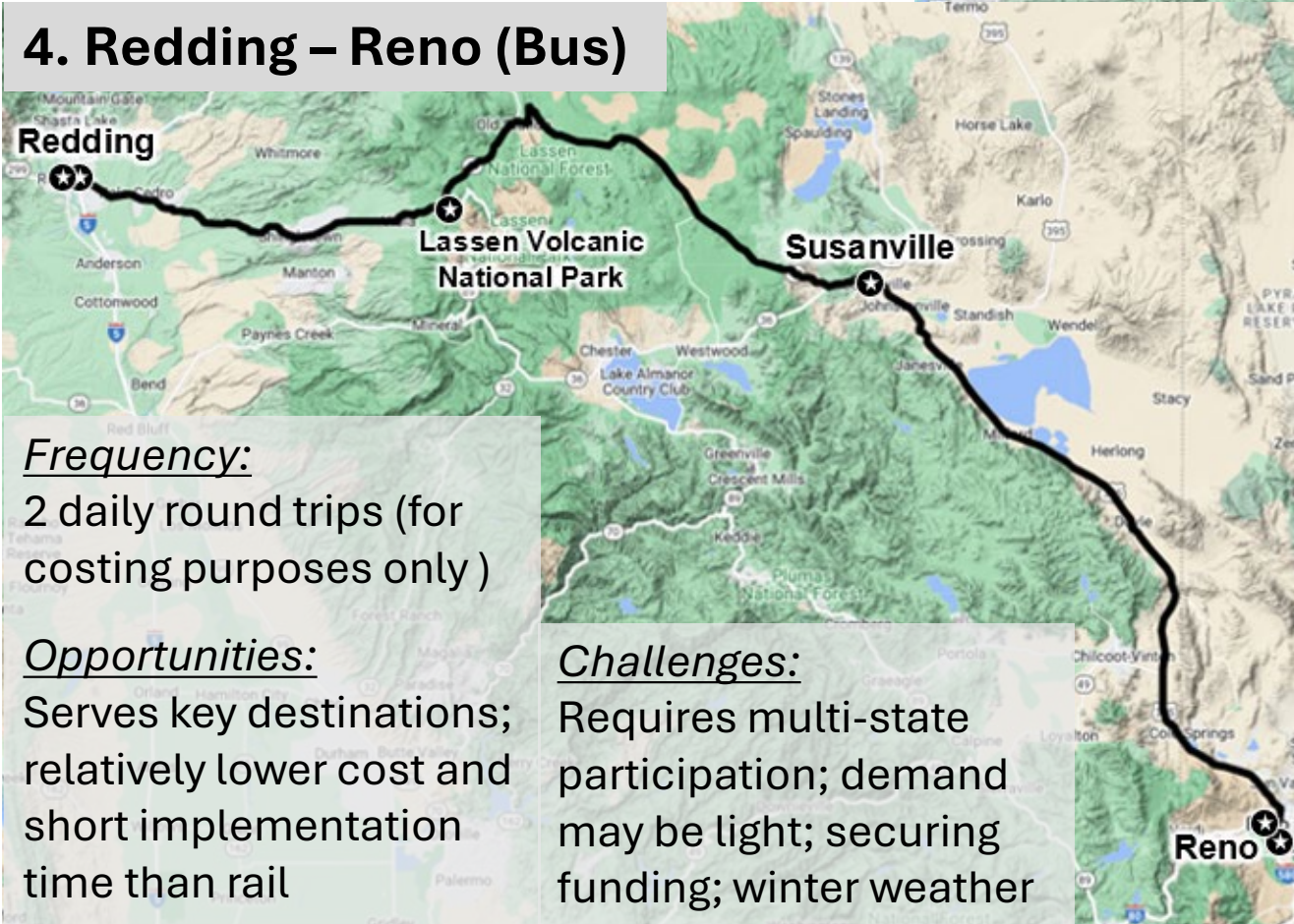


3. Redding – Sacramento (Bus)



Conceptual Service Plans for Selected Hubs & Routes

4. Redding – Reno (Bus)



5. Redding – Arcata/Eureka (Bus)



Opportunities:
Serves key destinations; relatively lower cost and short implementation time than rail; Ability to leverage existing operators in corridor (RABA, Trinity Transit, and Humboldt Transit Authority)

Potential Governance Options

Summary of Governance Analysis

Types of Governance Models Analyzed to be Managed Among Partners

- Service Coordination Agreement
- Corridor Specific Agreements
- Regional Transit Service Authority
- State Intercity Transit Management

Note: The approach assumes SRTA would not be managing any proposed services, rather SRTA would participate as a partner under the purview of one of the models listed above.

Service Coordination Agreements

Example – NW Connector (Oregon)

- Five transit agencies
- Coordinated schedules
- Joint marketing
- Uniform signage
- Tillamook Transit lead



Corridor Specific Agreements

Example - RABA Chico Service

- Agreements:
 - MOU with SJJPA (funding from SJJPA)
 - Interline agreement w/ FlixBus
 - Revenue agreement with Amtrak
- Service contract through RABA



RABA



Corridor Specific Agreements

Example – Highway 17 Express

- MOU between Santa Cruz Metro, CCJPA, SJJPA and Santa Clara VTA
- 27 daily round trips
- Serves as Thruway Bus (funding from SJJPA)
- Operated by, and largely funded, by Santa Cruz Metro

Future Example – Salmon Runner (Redding to Sacramento)



Regional Transit Service Authority

Example – Amtrak San Joaquins Service

- **San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA)**
- Legislatively est. in 2012 (AB 1779)
- 10 members including Sacramento Regional Transit & San Joaquin RRC
- **San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRC) is the managing agency** – agreements with Amtrak for service management including Thruway Bus and with state for funding
- Eligible for state & federal funding



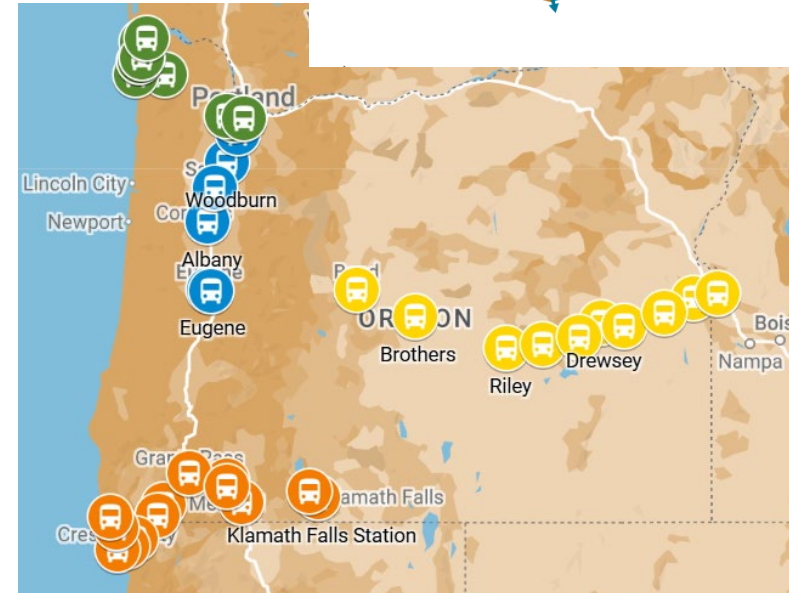
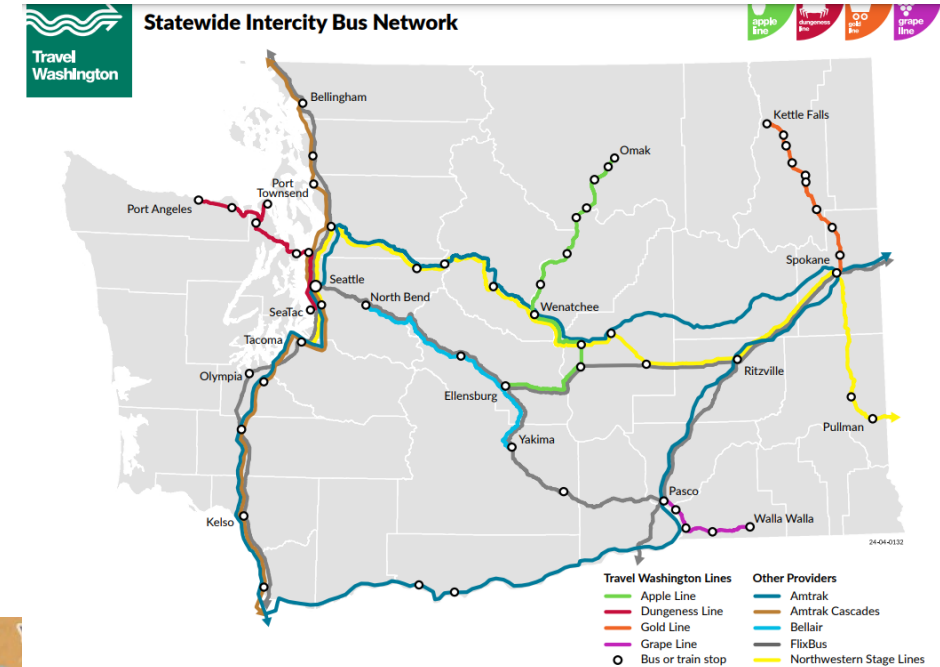
San Joaquin
Joint Powers Authority



State Intercity Transit Management

Example - Oregon & Washington DOTs

- State management of intercity bus routes (four in each state)
 - Oregon POINT
 - Travel Washington
- Coordinates service with other local and private intercity service



Interstate Transit Agreements

- Multi-state agreements for coordinated service
- Integration with other intercity transit service
- State Transportation Departments in lead
- Example – Amtrak Cascades
 - Oregon and Washington DOTs
 - Joint agreement with Amtrak
 - Thruway Bus integration

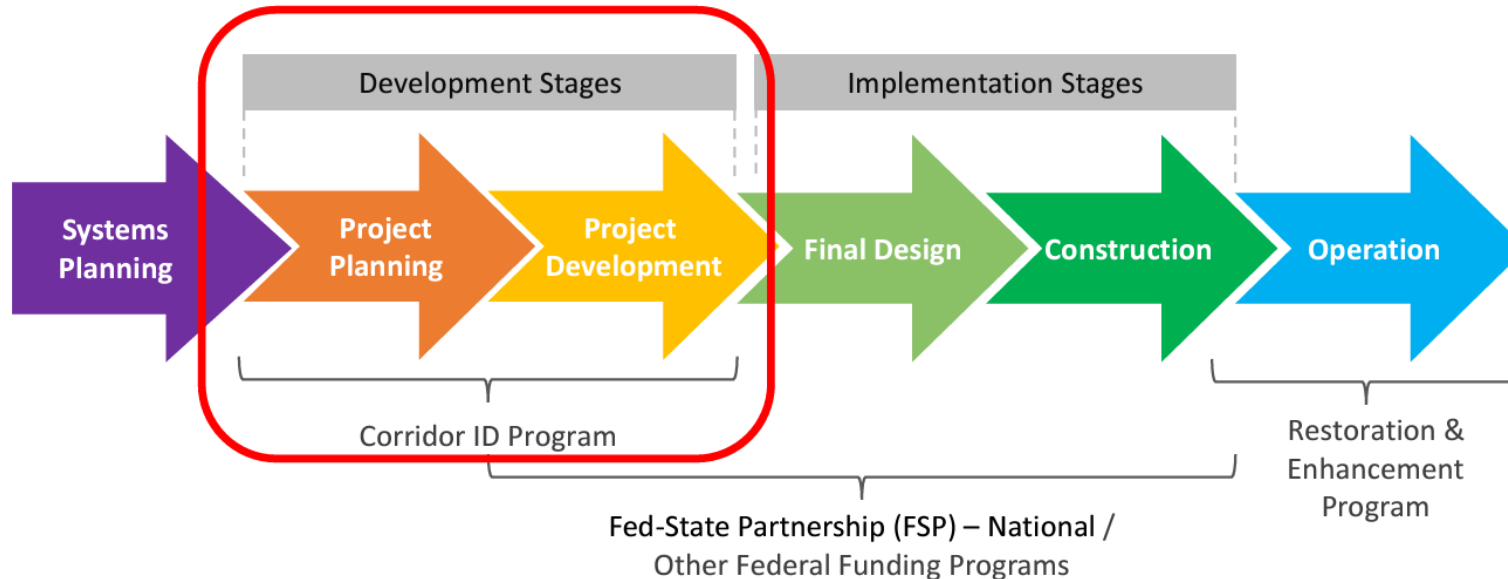


Potential Strategies

Potential Strategies

Potential General Strategies:

- Continue regular meetings of the North State Super Region Transit Working Group
- Ensure North State jurisdictions become more involved in the Federal Railroad Administration's intercity rail "Corridor ID Program" related to the Redding/Chico/Sacramento/Bakersfield corridor, which is being conducted by Caltrans (Headquarters) Division of Rail over the next 2-3 years.



Potential Strategies

Potential Service Strategies:

- Prioritize the Redding–Sacramento Route by continuing discussions with RABA and San Joaquin Joint Power Authority (SJPA) on approaches to implementing the Salmon Runner service.
- Leverage the North State Express proposal for near-term improvements along the Redding–Arcata/Eureka and Williams–Clearwater/Ukiah Routes
- Consider bus service coordination efforts and improvements to/from Siskiyou County.
- Prioritize increased access to Veteran’s Administration facilities as part of any intercity bus improvements.
- Request that Amtrak explore adding capacity and increasing reliability for the Coast Starlight service.
- For the longer-term (after 2031), explore extending North Valley Rail to Redding and new intercity service from Redding to Eugene

Potential Strategies

Potential Governance Strategies:

Near Term – Service Coordination Agreements (Bus) (e.g., North State Express)

- Interagency agreement among transit agencies to coordinate service and pursue funding for service expansion

Near and Mid Term – Individual Corridor Strategies (Bus) (e.g., Salmon Runner)

- Interagency agreements for funding, service coordination
- MOUs regarding local agency coordination, use of facilities
- State funding agreements

Mid Term (Bus and Rail) – Expanded State Administration

- Expanded state role through new agency with regional technical advisory support
- New and/or reallocated funding new to establish new service

Longer Term – Expanded State Administration (Rail)

- Expanded state role through new agency with regional technical advisory support
- New and/or reallocated funding new to establish new service

Next Steps / Questions