

STAFF REPORT



MEETING DATE:	February 23, 2021
SUBJECT:	Receive Presentation on the Draft 2040 Long-Range Transit Plan and Provide Comment
AGENDA ITEM:	14
STAFF CONTACT:	Daniel Wayne, Senior Transportation Planner

SUMMARY:

A Draft 2040 Long-Range Transit Plan is being developed in consultation with regional partners and the public to aid in the development of future public transportation services in the Shasta Region. The draft plan will be available for review and comment beginning in mid-February. A final plan will be presented at the April SRTA Board of Directors meeting to consider for approval.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the board of directors:

1. Receive a presentation on the public Draft 2040 Long-Range Transit Plan; and
2. Provide comments and direction to staff for incorporation into the final plan.

DISCUSSION:

Background – Various public, non-profit, and private sector partners provide public transportation services in the Shasta Region, each of which plays a key role in meeting the region's diverse mobility needs. SRTA is responsible for promoting coordination among providers and supporting more effective and efficient delivery of services. Efforts to date have focused on near-term needs and opportunities as they arise, without the benefit of a holistic, long-term vision. Recent examples include Sunday On-Demand, expanded Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA), and express services. Development of a long-range transit plan was approved by the board of directors in 2019 to fill this gap and to better define SRTA and partner roles when designing, funding, and delivering future public transportation services, infrastructure, and vehicles. As a high-level document, the plan sets the stage for more detailed special studies, trial services, and ridership programs.

Draft Long-Range Transit Plan – The Draft 2040 Long-Range Transit Plan will be available on SRTA's website beginning in mid-February. The to-be-published draft is based on community and stakeholder input received to date, including comments received during the Virtual Community Workshop held December 11, 2020, through January 8, 2021. Once the Draft 2040 Long-Range Transit Plan has been published, all interested parties, including residents, community stakeholders, partner agencies, and the board of directors, will be invited to review and provide feedback on the findings and recommendations.

The Draft 2040 Long-Range Transit Plan is somewhat unconventional in that it does not offer a singular course of action. Due to the many known and unknown variables affecting the delivery and performance of public transportation services over the next 20 years, an adaptive approach was taken. As shown in the table below, three possible future scenarios have been identified (i.e., Current Trend, The Next Step, and A Giant Leap). Each scenario has different assumptions for three key areas (i.e., Funding, Land Use & Development, and Public Perspective).

FUTURE SCENARIOS TO 2040

	CURRENT TREND	THE NEXT STEP	A GIANT LEAP
Variable #1: Funding	- Funding will increase in relationship to the economy, but the relative share of funding expended to support alternative mobility options remains about the same as today. - As grant funds allow, temporary pilot projects are tested in response to unmet transit needs.	- New state and federal funding opportunities will allow for the expansion of creative and customized mobility options. - At the local/regional level, a change in funding reallocation among mobility options begins to occur, allowing for the limited but long-term implementation of new mobility alternatives where feasible.	- New funding is not only available from state and federal sources, but also local funding decisions prioritize local funds for mobility options. - Most closely aligned with assumptions and performance outcomes in the region's Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS).
Variable #2: Land Use & Development	Land use patterns and characteristics will continue as today with occasional higher-density residential developments.	- Urban centers, transit corridors, and rural town centers become more attractive and experience modest increases in population. - In these areas, market and policy factors begin to expand the number of living options, combined with some public investment in transit and other modes.	- Both market and policy factors strongly incentivize transportation-efficient development patterns. - Population growth in urban centers and corridors is substantially higher, but is still consistent with the region's growth rate and SCS assumptions.
Variable #3: Public Perspective	- General community attitude continues to be one of interest and willingness to experiment with alternatives to the automobile. - Mobility options improve for individuals who are transit dependent, but available options remain unattractive to those that are not transit dependent.	- People are actively looking for realistic options to driving an automobile. - Alternative modes are popular in certain areas where high-quality facilities and services are available.	- Access to alternative travel modes to autos is expected and demanded throughout the more urbanized areas. - Context-appropriate mobility options expected in rural and low-density areas.

The selection, timing, and degree to which transit improvement strategies are employed is intended to be flexible and responsive to evolving conditions. Five key categories of improvements are recommended for consideration based on how closely real-world conditions mirror one of the three future scenarios.

- Multi-modal accessibility – Improving first- and last-mile connections to transit using enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities; micro-transit services (e.g., electric bike share, neighborhood electric shuttles); and partnerships with transportation network companies (e.g., Uber or Lyft).
- Fixed-route transit – Realign network for future conditions and improve infrastructure.
- Policy improvement strategies – Identify, plan, implement, and evaluate pilot programs to incentivize ridership; consolidate services to reduce overlap; and other such strategies.
- Alternative mobility strategies – Identify, plan, implement, and evaluate pilot programs (e.g., expanded on-demand service or vouchers for transportation network companies) as alternatives to low-performing conventional fixed-route services, or in response to unmet needs where fixed-route services are not warranted.
- Technology – Invest in technologies that enhance the public experience (e.g., real-time rider information and integrated payment system) and develop policies and infrastructure designed to accelerate the adoption of advanced technologies (e.g., autonomous, and zero-emission vehicles).

A more detailed description of the planning process, findings, and recommendations will be provided in the Draft 2040 Long-Range Transit Plan, which will be posted online and advertised beginning in mid-February. Comments received through the end of March 2021, will be addressed in the final draft and presented to the board of directors at the April meeting for acceptance. Implementation of the plan will require effective communication, coordination, and collaboration with public, non-profit, and private sector partners throughout the region. Jointly-developed studies, projects, and programs will be presented for approval at key decision-making points in the future, such as the unmet transit needs process, grant allocations, and short-range transit plan.

ALTERNATIVES:

The board of directors may extend the public review period to allow additional time for comment. This may affect the timing of when the final plan is presented to the board of directors for acceptance.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

SRTA's Technical Advisory Committee, including RABA, local agency partners, Dignity Health Connected Living, and the Social Services Transportation Advisory Committee were consulted during the planning process. Once the Draft 2040 Long-Range Transit Plan has been reviewed by local transit providers and posted online, SRTA will send notifications to all regional partners and advertise its availability for public review.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Draft and Final 2040 Long-Range Transit Plan has no direct fiscal impact to the agency. Fiscal impacts associated with the implementation of the final approved plan will be provided as part of future board of directors agendas for discussion and direction. These actions are typically in step with the annual unmet transit needs process.

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