STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE:	**February 26, 2019**
SUBJECT:	**Approve Sunday Transit Services Business Plan**
AGENDA ITEM:	**14**
STAFF CONTACT:	**Sean Tiedgen, AICP, Senior Transportation Planner**

SUMMARY:

Transit services on Sundays has been requested for several years. SRTA has explored options for providing Sunday transit service with input from regional partners and through direct engagement with transit riders. The resultant business plan proposes a 24-month pilot project that provides free "on-demand" transit services initially within the city of Redding. Total project costs are estimated at $611,416. A final budget will be presented for board of directors' approval at the April meeting.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the board of directors approve the ShastaConnect Sunday On-Demand Transit Service Business Plan and direct staff to take initial steps to begin the service this summer.

DISCUSSION:

Background – For several years SRTA has received requests for transit services on Sundays as part of our annual Unmet Transit Needs process. In 2016, the SRTA Board of Director's directed staff to explore options for providing a pilot program. Since then, staff has been developing a plan that addresses community needs and overcome challenges related to funding, hours of operation, service area, and the type of transit service to provide (fixed-routes vs on-demand). Two working papers were prepared that summarize these efforts (see attachments).

On-Demand public transit is a paradigm shift in how services are typically provided. Typical transit services have fixed routes and schedules which run regardless of demand. The on-demand service adjusts to real-time conditions using mobile phone technology and software. The rider experience is similar to that of Uber or Lyft, except rides are shared to promote efficiency. On-demand transit options are also being reviewed in the city of Shasta Lake as a daily alternative to fixed route. Lessons learned from this pilot program may present a solution to RABA's rising fixed-route costs and declining ridership.

Key SRTA Board of Directors actions supporting this effort include:

- **December 2016** – Approved using SRTA's regional planning funds for a feasibility study.
- **February 2017** – Awarded contract to Mobility Planners to conduct studies.
- **April 2018** – Approved using LCTOP funds for the project.
- **June 2018** – Approved development of a business plan for Sunday transit service.

This effort has concluded with a business plan (see attachment) to implement free "on-demand" transit services on Sundays for an initial 24-month period. The service will be free for riders because LCTOP funds are subsidizing the operation and administration costs. Pending approval of the business plan, the service is anticipated to start in the summer of 2019.

Business Plan Overview – Key elements of the business plan are summarized below.

- **Management and Operations** – SRTA will provide overall project guidance and direction, manage project contracts, and implement a marketing and outreach plan. Dignity Health Connected Living (DHCL) will manage the day-to-day operations of the service. Major service changes will be presented to the SRTA Board of Directors for approval.
- **Capital, Vehicles, and Staffing** – DHCL will provide the vehicles, maintenance, facilities and staffing necessary to carry out the service. Services will be provided with 8-12 passenger vehicles, which are all equipped to accommodate two wheelchair riders. SRTA, with prior board of directors' approval, will pay for some new vehicles from State of Good Repair funds.
- **Software/Hardware** – SRTA has contracted with Routematch to provide the software platform for managing the transit service. They will develop a mobile app, which allows riders to create an account and make trip requests. Riders will also be able to make trip requests via website or by phone.
- **Service Area** – The business plan presents a preliminary service area centered around the most populated housing areas and destinations in the city of Redding. Staff is reviewing the preliminary service area and is considering expanding the boundary possibly up to the RABA service area within the city of Redding. The goal is to provide a service area easily understood by the public, but small enough to be managed as a pilot with limited resources.
- **Fares** – During the 24-month pilot, the service will be free to riders because LCTOP funds are subsidizing the operation and administration costs of the service.

Next Steps – Pending board of directors' approval to implement the project, staff has identified the following next steps required before service can be implemented:

- SRTA, DHCL and Routematch staff will review and refine a final service area and other aspects of the business plan.
- Budget approved in April as part of 2019/20 transit needs process.
- SRTA will proceed with marketing and public outreach efforts per the business plan. This includes a new website, branding, new vehicle wraps on DHCL vehicles, and distribution of service ride guides and informational materials.
- Finalize the software platform with Routematch, including development of a mobile app and software testing before starting service.
- DHCL to hire and train drivers and dispatchers to operate the service.

Once service has been implemented, staff will regularly track and report back to the board of directors on the performance of the Sunday transit service. Before completion of the pilot service, staff will present ridership and service information to the board of directors to consider whether to end the pilot or explore options for continuing the service.

ALTERNATIVES:

The board of directors may request more information before deciding to move forward with the project and delay a decision until the April board of directors meeting.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

SRTA and DHCL have partnered throughout development of the project. The Redding Area Bus Authority (RABA) provided current ridership information and other technical support. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) concurs with the staff recommendation.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The business plan estimates project costs of $611,416 for the 24-month pilot service. This includes start-up costs and two years of operations. See Chapter 4 and Exhibit 4-1 of the business plan for more details.

SRTA administration, software costs and DHCL's operations and maintenance of the project will be funded by the region's annual LCTOP allocations ($548,036). Currently, $231,865 in FY 2017/18 LCTOP funding has been allocated. LCTOP funds totaling $329,232 are available in FY 2018/19 and another $280,500 is estimated to be available in FY 2019/20.

Staff recently learned from LCTOP administrators that costs for website development and marketing may not be eligible for LCTOP funding. These items are estimated at $63,380. Staff is discussing this new development with LCTOP staff and will provide an update at the April meeting. SRTA may need to use other funds, which may include federal planning funds, Planning Programming and Monitoring Funds, or Local Transportation Funds (LTF) for CTSA services or from SRTA's allocation.

Funding beyond the pilot project, if continued, will be determined by the board of directors as part of the 2021/22 Unmet Transit Needs review.

Daniel S. Little, AICP, Executive Director

Attachments:

The Shasta Connect Sunday Demonstration Project Business Plan, Working Paper #1, and Working Paper #2 are available online at https://www.srta.ca.gov/298/Sunday-Transit-Service