



STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE:	February 23, 2021
SUBJECT:	Receive Update on Grant Application for the North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan
AGENDA ITEM:	15
STAFF CONTACT:	Eamon Johnston, Assistant Transportation Planner

SUMMARY:

SRTA submitted a Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning grant application for the North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan to study improved bus connections to nearby rail hubs and evaluate the feasibility of future daytime passenger rail service.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the board of directors receive an update on the North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan grant application.

DISCUSSION:

On February 12, 2021, SRTA submitted a Strategic Partnership grant application for \$291,819 to the Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program to fund the North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan. The grant program provides competitive funding for transportation planning projects that “benefit the multi-modal transportation system” and “improve public health, social equity, environmental justice, the environment, and provide other important community benefits.” The proposed plan is focused on providing improved transportation options between Redding and Greater Sacramento and/or the Bay Area; currently, the Shasta Region is only a few hours away, but it is effectively cut off for people who do not have access to a car and those who prefer to travel by bus or train.

Service improvements could establish public transit as a convenient, affordable, and reliable way to get to and from Shasta County which will benefit a number of people in the community including but not limited to: high school and community college graduates who aspire to study at the nearby campuses of the California State University and University of California systems; Shasta County residents going to doctor’s appointments at large healthcare institutions in Sacramento and the Bay Area; visitors en route to tourism destinations in the North State; and business travelers that have to travel frequently up to Redding or down to Sacramento.

The grant application received over 25 letters of support from community stakeholders and regional partners, and the letters are attached for further review. These include: the Shasta County Office of Education, the Redding Visitors Bureau, Dignity Health Connected Living, and the Shasta Environmental Alliance. The letter from Executive Director of Shasta Living Streets Anne Wallach Thomas provided a thorough explanation of the diverse community benefits to Shasta County with a special mention of business owners and professionals, parents, transit-dependent individuals, and out of area business contacts.

The proposed plan builds on SRTA's efforts to introduce Salmon Runner intercity bus service between Redding and Sacramento along the Interstate 5 corridor by providing a list of recommended near-term (10-year) actions for improving bus connections to regional rail hubs as well as long-term (20-year) actions that may lead to future direct daytime passenger rail to Redding if determined feasible.

As noted below, the 2018 California State Rail Plan (State Rail Plan) describes several goals for expanding transportation service to Redding that have been determined to be important for the state's transportation network. In applying for this grant, SRTA will guarantee that these elements are developed in accordance with local priorities, as opposed to a top-down approach from Caltrans. Without SRTA's participation in these projects, Caltrans will proceed to plan for intercity transportation service expansions without meaningful participation from the Shasta Region. The relevant elements of the State Rail Plan are summarized below:

Transportation Network Improvements in the North State from the 2018 California State Rail Plan

Timeline	Element of the 2018 CA State Rail Plan	Status
Short-Term (2022)	"Implement integrated express bus service from Sacramento to Redding..."	Pending start of Salmon Runner operations.
	"Study the potential for regular, daytime passenger rail to Redding."	Pending award to SRTA of North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan grant.
Mid-Term (2027)	"...minimum [bus] service of every 2 hours on the core system, including Integrated Express Bus services to places like Redding and Reno."	Initial planning through the pending award to SRTA of North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan grant. Operation funds approved to start initial, less frequent express service.

Key tasks and deliverables from the grant application scope of work include:

- Developing strategies for improving bus service to nearby rail hubs, including Sacramento and Oroville/Chico;
- Assessing existing and underutilized rail infrastructure;
- Evaluating the timing of potential future daytime passenger rail to Redding and practical steps needed for this to occur; and
- Evaluating a new potential governance structure to guide planning and operation of intercity transportation services, including representation from agencies across the greater North State area.

The proposed project was developed in consultation with the Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG), which is applying for a planning grant in partnership with the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPAA) to study a North Valley Passenger Rail Extension to Butte County. BCAG's project will evaluate the potential for extending daytime passenger rail service from Sacramento to Oroville or Chico. The BCAG project is further along in the planning stages than SRTA efforts, and it could be implemented in the next 5 to 10 years.

If awarded grant funding, staff will prepare a detailed scope of work and procure consultant services and presented to the board of directors for approval. A link to SRTA's grant application on the SRTA website is attached for further review.

ALTERNATIVES:

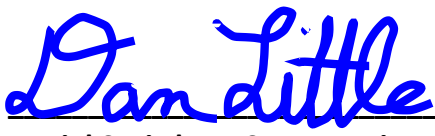
The board may choose not to accept the grant if awarded in June 2021. Similar planning efforts would continue, guided by state and SJJPA local elected officials representing the San Joaquin Valley, with limited representation from Shasta County and the North State.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Caltrans administers the grant program. The grant will require coordination with the state and current public transportation providers in the North State, with a focus on the Interstate 5 corridor between Redding and Sacramento.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The grant request is for \$291,819. An 11.47% local match (\$37,808) is required, which may be met entirely with in-kind staff time currently budgeted in the Overall Work Program (OWP). In addition, participating agencies in the corridor and in the North State Super Region will be providing in-kind staff time to support the effort.



Daniel S. Little, AICP, Executive Director

Attachments:

A: [North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan Grant Application](#) on the SRTA website

B: Additional Letters of Support Received After Grant Submission Deadline



MODOC COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

108 S. Main Street
Alturas, CA 96101
(530) 233-6410 Phone

Meets First Tuesday of
Even Numbered Months
at 1:30 p.m.

Commissioners

John Dederick
Chairman
City Representative

Kathie Rhoads
Vice Chair
County Supervisor III

Bobby Ray
Commissioner
City Representative

Elizabeth Cavasso
Commissioner
County Supervisor IV

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City Councilmember

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Ned Coe
Alternate Commissioner
County Supervisor I

Loni Lewis
Alternate Commissioner
City Councilmember

Staff

Debbie Pedersen
Executive Director

Niki Lemke
Chief Fiscal Officer

Michelle Cox
Administrative Assistant

February 10, 2021

Dan Little
Executive Director
Shasta Regional Transportation Agency
1255 East Street, Suite 202
Redding, CA 96001

**Subject: Letter of Support for SRTA North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan FY
2021-22 Caltrans Strategic Partnership Grant Application.**

Dear Mr. Little,

Modoc County Transportation Commission (MCTC) supports the Shasta Regional Transportation Agency (SRTA) in its application for the North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan. This project will take the next step to implement the 2018 California State Rail Plan in a way that is consistent with the North State region's priorities.

SRTA and MCTC work to coordinate transportation projects across Northern California that provide improved access to the region and the rest of the state. This project will work toward our shared goals for the North State by planning for enhanced bus connections to regional rail hubs and studying daytime passenger rail to Redding. The project will bridge the current transportation gap between the communities of the North State and the opportunities located in large economic centers just a few hours to the south in Greater Sacramento and the Bay Area. The project will also help many in our communities find affordable transportation options to access jobs and education and visit their friends and families.

Similar work is being done by Caltrans and the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority, and this project would guarantee that the perspectives of the North State communities are taken into consideration. MCTC supports the need for forward-thinking projects like the North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan, and we would look forward to participating in the development of the plan.

Sincerely,

Debbie Pedersen
Executive Director