

STAFF REPORT



MEETING DATE:	October 26, 2023
SUBJECT:	Approve Redding Area Bus Authority State Transit Assistance Reserve Request of up to \$200,000 to Fund RABA Vanpool, First Mile-Last Mile Connection with Redding Bikeshare, and Marketing
AGENDA ITEM:	7-6
STAFF CONTACT:	Jessica Carlson, Chief Fiscal Officer

SUMMARY

The Redding Area Bus Authority (RABA) is requesting up to \$200,000 in State Transit Assistance (STA) regional reserve funds, to fund three projects: a regional RABA Vanpool pilot, first mile-last mile connections with Redding Bikeshare, and regional transit marketing. Staff recommends the board of directors approve to fund the vanpool as expenses are incurred, and the bikeshare and marketing projects in full.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the board of directors approve the following disbursements of reserve State Transit Assistance (STA) funding to RABA:

1. Reimburse RABA's incurred expenses up to \$100,000 to implement a pilot vanpool program;
2. A one-time payment of \$25,000 to implement a cooperative partnership between RABA and Shasta Living Streets for the purpose of a first mile-last mile connection for RABA riders in the Downtown Redding area; and
3. A one-time payment of \$75,000 to cover the marketing consultant costs and augment existing RABA budget to implement new actions increasing passenger trips throughout Shasta County.

DISCUSSION:

RABA is requesting up to \$200,000 in STA regional reserve funds, to fund three projects: a regional RABA Vanpool pilot, first mile-last mile connections, and regional transit marketing.

RABA Pilot Vanpool Program – RABA is requesting up to \$100,000 to implement a pilot vanpool program for all Shasta County residents whose trips originate or end within Shasta County for the purposes of commuting to and from work or school. RABA would engage a contractor (i.e., Enterprise Rent-A-Car) to provide this service, including the vehicles, insurance, emergency ride home program, associated marketing, and grow the program. The contractor would be responsible for group formation and there would be very minimal RABA or SRTA effort in the management of this program.

RABA proposes the program provide a monthly subsidy of \$500 per vanpool per month, up to a maximum of 16 vans per month (max of \$8,000 per month). The \$100,000 request would cover

a full fleet of 16 vans for a year, but the pilot will likely extend longer depending on how many vanpools are generated after the pilot commences, around December 1, 2023. The contractor would provide the monthly subsidy to the formed group and the group would share in the operational costs, including vehicle leasing, fuel, and washing.

A benefit of the program is that the vanpool trips can be counted towards overall regional ridership, which would be reported by RABA, potentially increasing the amount of federal transit formula funding provided to the region. The additional funds could be used to offset operational costs for the bus and paratransit system. See Attachment B for more details.

First Mile-Last Mile Connection with Redding Bikeshare – RABA requests \$25,000 to implement a pilot cooperative partnership between RABA and Shasta Living Streets for the purpose of a first mile-last mile connection for RABA riders in the Downtown Redding area. RABA riders would be provided subsidized use of the Redding Bikeshare system for one-hour rides throughout the day by requesting a one-time code from a RABA bus operator.

The program would provide better connectivity to destinations throughout Downtown Redding that are not directly served by a RABA bus route, further extending the reach of availability of alternative transportation to the overall riding public. RABA estimates a potential 3% increase in transit ridership for routes that serve downtown Redding (RABA routes 2,3,5,6,11,12,14,15,17,18 and 299X). See Attachment C for more details.

RABA Marketing – RABA is requesting \$75,000 to engage a consultant to prepare a marketing/branding plan that would include development of a brand name for the family of services that RABA operates, a tagline for advertising purposes, and other marketing strategies. The \$75,000 would cover consultant costs and augment RABA's budget of \$35,000 to implement new actions to increase passenger trips. See Attachment D for more details.

ALTERNATIVES:

The board of directors may choose to decline RABA's requests. The board of directors may choose to fund all or some of RABA's requests or may incorporate RABA's requests into the FY 2023/24 TDA Budget, subjecting the funds to future true-up and adjustment.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

SRTA staff consulted with RABA and the Shasta County Auditor-Controller to review requests and current TDA policies. The Technical Advisory Committee met on October 11, 2023, to review and discuss the proposed projects and concurs with staff recommendations.

FISCAL IMPACT:

RABA is requesting disbursements up to \$200,000 from SRTA's STA reserve account. As of the end of August 2023, the STA reserve balance is \$1,152,607. Approval of all of RABA's requests will leave an STA reserve of approximately \$952,607. These three requests are in addition to

RABA's previously approved FY 2023/24 TDA budget claim of \$2,380,424 in STA allocations and the \$90,000 paid to RABA in STA reserve funds for the VA Clinic-Knighton Road Route 15 pilot.

If approved, staff recommends one-time payments from the STA reserve account to fund the \$25,000 for the bikeshare project and the \$75,000 for transit marketing efforts. For the vanpool project, staff recommends reimbursement of RABA's incurred expenses, via SRTA's invoicing process for subrecipients, up to \$100,000. Funding distributed by these methods would lessen SRTA's administrative tasks throughout the year. The funding would also not be subject to an installment of payments throughout FY 2023/24, nor a future adjustment in a subsequent true-up, as with other TDA allocations. Any costs of the services beyond RABA's estimate would be paid by RABA.



Sean Tiedgen, AICP, Executive Director

Attachments:

- A. RABA Request Letter to SRTA - Vanpool Request
- B. RABA Request Letter to SRTA - First Mile Last Mile Connection on Redding Bikeshare-Revised
- C. RABA Request Letter to SRTA - Marketing



July 27, 2023

Sean Tiedgen, AICP, Executive Director
Shasta Regional Transportation Agency (SRTA)
1255 East Street, Suite 202
Redding, CA 96001

Re: Request for State Transit Assistance Reserve Funding for RABA Pilot Vanpool Program

Dear Mr. Tiedgen,

Many public transit agencies are entering the space related to the implementation of commuter vanpool programs as another means of moving passengers throughout their service areas. The California Public Utilities Code Section 99268.16 allows for the exclusion of rideshare costs from operational costs calculations in the purposes of operating rideshare based programs such as a vanpool program.

The Redding Area Bus Authority (RABA) is proposing to implement a pilot vanpool program called RABA Vanpool. This program would be available to all Shasta County residents whom trips originate or end within Shasta County for the purposes of commuting to and from work or school. RABA would engage a contractor to provide this service. This contractor would provide the vehicles, insurance, emergency ride home program, associated marketing and would grow the program. The contractor would also be responsible for collecting National Transit Database (NTD) data, which includes unlinked passenger trips and vehicle revenue miles which could be applied to RABA's overall performance measures. With the inclusion of a vanpool program, RABA could increase the level of federal funding support to the Redding Urbanized Area which could be used to offset operational costs for the bus and paratransit system.

In order to implement this pilot, RABA is requesting \$100,000 in State Transit Assistance (STA) reserve funding to cover the monthly subsidy cost of \$500.00 per month times an estimated formation of approximately 16 vans. This funding would be requested as vans are created and invoiced to SRTA on a monthly basis.

The contractor, of which RABA would engage would provide the monthly subsidy to the formed group and the group would share in the operational costs of van, including leasing, fuel and washing. The contractor would be responsible for group formation and there would be very minimal effort of RABA or SRTA in the management and operation of this program.

REDDING AREA BUS AUTHORITY

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BOARD MEMBERS: MARK MEZZANO - CHAIR, JUSTIN JONES - VICE CHAIR

MICHAEL DACQUISTO, TENESSA AUDETTE, JACK MUNNS, JULIE WINTER, PATRICK JONES, MIKE GALLAGHER

EXECUTIVE STAFF: STEVE BADE - EXECUTIVE OFFICER, JOHN C. ANDOH, CCTM, CPM – TRANSIT GENERAL MANAGER

We respectfully request your consideration of this request and for placement of this matter on the next SRTA Board of Directors meeting.

Should you have any questions regarding this request, please contact me at 530.245.7116 or email jandoh@cityofredding.org.

Sincerely,



John C. Andoh
Transit General Manager
Redding Area Bus Authority

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September 13, 2023

Sean Tiedgen, AICP, Executive Director
Shasta Regional Transportation Agency (SRTA)
1255 East Street, Suite 202
Redding, CA 96001

Re: Request for Funding from the Non-Motorized Program For First Mile – Last Mile Connection On Redding Bikeshare (REVISED)

Dear Mr. Tiedgen,

The Redding Area Bus Authority (RABA) would like to request \$25,000 from State Transit Assistance (STA) reserve or spillover funding to implement a cooperative partnership between RABA and Shasta Living Streets for the purpose of a first mile/ last mile connection for RABA riders in the Downtown Redding area.

The intent of this program is to subsidize trips made by RABA riders using Redding Bikeshare system by providing unlimited 60 minute rides throughout the day by requesting a code from the RABA bus operator. The overall goal of this program is to provide better connectivity to destinations throughout Downtown Redding that is not directly served by a RABA bus route which will further extend the reach of availability of alternative transportation to the overall riding public. This program will be open all ages and abilities, it provides an alternative to motor vehicle trips and provides availability of bicycles to more of population coming to Downtown Redding. The program will also be available to the unbanked community through an application process to ensure equal access to all. In addition, the bikeshare stations will be linked to RABA's apps so that passengers have a multi-modal experience using bikeshare and transit.

The proposed initiative does meet the GoShasta themes of:

1. Increase active transportation mode share;
2. Increase safety and comfort of active transportation users; and
3. Invest in healthy, vibrant, sustainable, and people-centered communities.

RABA is prepared to provide monthly reports to SRTA on the effectiveness of this program. RABA intends to enter into an agreement with Shasta Living Streets for implementation.

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Sincerely,



John C. Andoh
Transit General Manager
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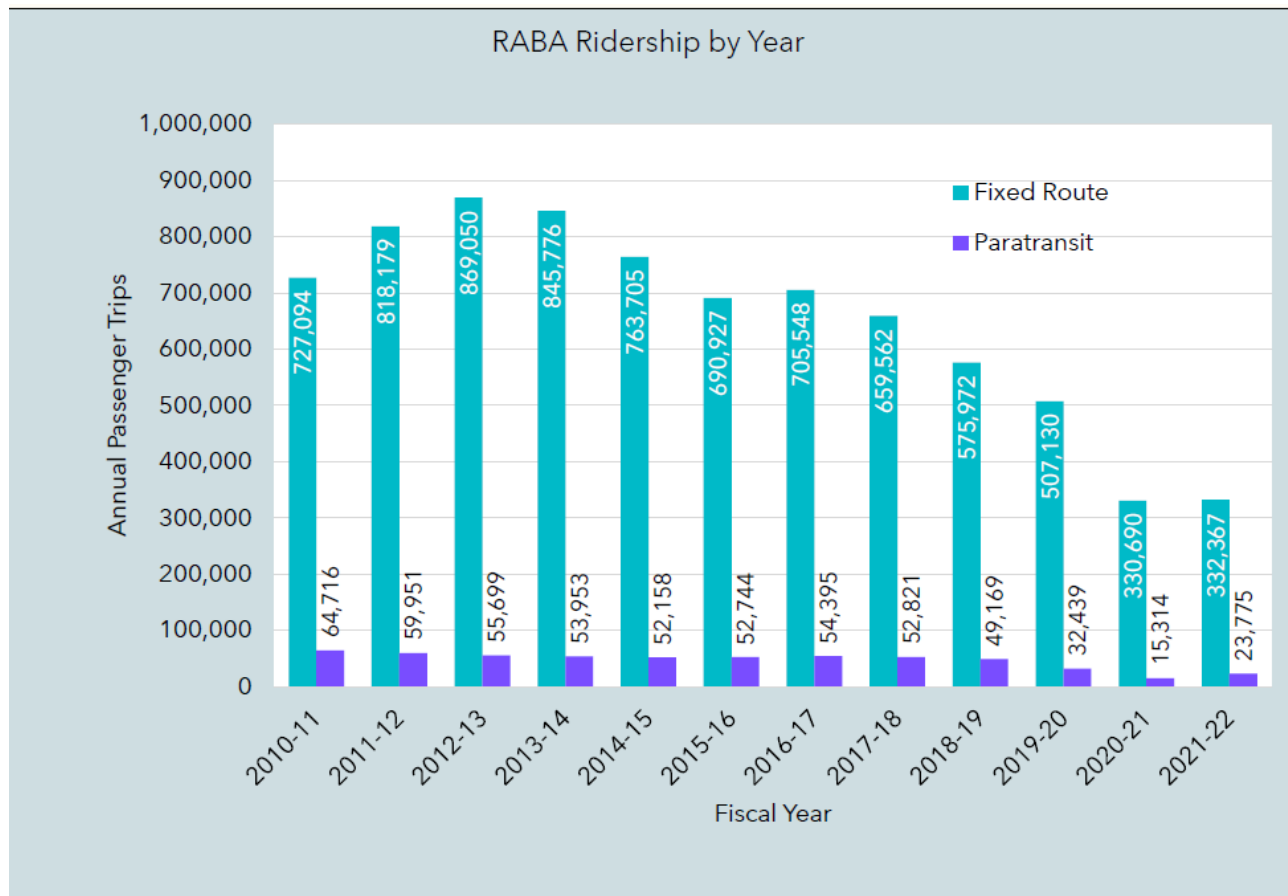
July 27, 2023

Sean Tiedgen, AICP, Executive Director
Shasta Regional Transportation Agency (SRTA)
1255 East Street, Suite 202
Redding, CA 96001

Re: Request for State Transit Assistance Reserve Funding for RABA Marketing

Dear Mr. Tiedgen,

For the past several years, the Redding Area Bus Authority (RABA)'s ridership has declined from approximately 1 million passenger trips in the 2000s to 332,367 ending June 30, 2022. RABA is undertaking a Short Range Transit Plan to revisit public transit services in Shasta County with the goal to increase efficiency, overall productivity and increase passenger trips which can demonstrate an effective public transit system.



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From 2009 to 2011, RABA engaged Ilium Associates to prepare two marketing plans and implement actions to increase RABA awareness. With the implementation of that plan, it shows that passenger trips increased to 869,050 before declining again.

In an effort to reverse these trends and demonstrate enhancements to the RABA system, RABA is requesting \$75,000 from the State Transit Assistance (STA) reserve funding. This amount would cover the re-engagement of Ilium Associates to prepare a marketing plan to engage RABA staff to implement additional marketing opportunities to increase ridership. This effort would also include development of strategies, development of a brand name for the family of services that RABA intends to operate and a tagline for advertising purposes. The \$75,000 would cover the marketing consultant costs, and augment the existing RABA budget of \$35,000 to implement new actions to increase passenger trips throughout Shasta County.

It is the desire to continue to partner with SRTA to include in these marketing efforts co-promotion of ShastaConnect Sunday services within the RABA service area to increase overall ridership to the public transit scene and it would be included in the scope of work with the marketing consultant to pursue this co-promotion.

We respectfully request your consideration of this request and for placement of this matter on the next SRTA Board of Directors meeting.

Should you have any questions regarding this request, please contact me at 530.245.7116 or email jandoh@cityofredding.org.

Sincerely,



John C. Andoh
Transit General Manager
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July 17, 2023

John C. Andoh, Transit General Manager
City of Redding-Redding Area Bus Authority
777 Cypress Avenue-Third Floor-City Manager's Office
Redding, California 96001

RE: Redding Area Bus Authority Marketing Plan

Via Email Only

Dear Mr. Andoh:

The pandemic and its resulting impact on the lifestyle of commuters has had a dramatic and lasting impact on public transit. Commuting to work from Monday to Friday has become a thing of the past. Even those dependent upon transit as their only means of travel have changed the amount and the ways they travel. Understanding how transit agencies can adapt their services to these changes as well as raising awareness of the environmental and economic benefits of transit have become an increasingly important tasks that Ilium Associates executes for its clients.

From our work in Los Angeles, Toronto, New Jersey, and other markets; we are seeing more employers requiring their employees to return to the office; however, a sizeable portion of transit riders may never work a traditional work schedule again. Undoubtedly, rider needs and expectations have changed, requiring transit agencies to improve the rider experience while ensuring the quality of the services they provide.

This a pivotal time for the Redding Area Bus Authority (RABA) as the impact of the pandemic has been significant. Since your initial contact, we have reviewed RABA *National Transit Database Reporting* prior to and after the pandemic to assess the impact on ridership, revenue, and operations. That data shows that RABA ridership dropped 61% from 2019 to 2021; its farebox ratio went from 17.6% in 2019 down to 13.2% in 2021 while the agency's operating cost per revenue hour for fixed route bus service went from \$100.70 in 2019 to \$120.56 in 2021.

Our discovery work also included reviewing news coverage of the agency over that same period. We note from that coverage that RABA is experiencing some of the same homelessness and safety problems that transit agencies across the nation are experiencing. These problems pose a very real challenge to luring former riders back to transit and especially convincing new rider to try transit.

Ilium has developed solutions for other clients that have faced challenges similar to those facing RABA:

- Driver recruitment- We have helped our client's private service contractors improve the methods by which they recruit, train, and retain frontline staff by partnering with community-based organizations, technical schools, and peer government agencies.
- Understanding rider behavior- The market research that Ilium is conducting with employers, business improvement districts and social service agencies enhanced our clients' understanding of the reasons why riders are using transit less and identified how improving the rider experience can lure former riders back to transit.
- Safety and security- Onboard safety as well as security while waiting for the bus to arrive are major concerns of transit users. We have helped develop transit amenity programs that provide shelter, shade, safety, and comfort to transit riders. As onboard safety has become more important in maintaining the loyalty of existing riders, we are developing a crowdsourced mobile application that enables riders to report their concerns so that our clients can take action to respond to these concerns.
- Equity- Ilium is responsible for the development of Title VI fare and Service Equity Plans for clients as well as their Limited English Proficiency Plans. We have developed Equity Criteria that guides many of our clients service planning and delivery strategies. That criteria includes ridership, exposure to heat and other elements and Focus Community designations including minority populations, low-income households and zero-car households, proximity to trip generators (schools, hospitals, etc.).

Ilium takes a deliberate approach to our work that utilizes all the disciplines of marketing to raise awareness, portray the benefits and motivate former riders back and new riders to try transit. Advertising is only a portion of our efforts as we utilize community relations, public relations, direct sales, pricing/fare strategy, customer service, market research and brand management to achieve our clients' goals. Goals are important to Ilium as we believe that marketing dollars are an investment in the agency that should return measurable achievements in ridership, revenue, and public support.

Your request was for the development of a Marketing Plan and the creation of tag line and brand name for your service. The development of the Marketing Plan will take approximately one-two months' time to complete. Included in that work will be a site visit to Redding to interview staff, riders, and opinion leaders to create an assessment of the situation. Our review of NTD data and operating reports is best supplemented by a first-hand evaluation of what is achievable under the present conditions and with the resources

that RABA can contribute to the plan. In addition, it gives Ilium the ability to assess the direction for the development of a brand name that resonates with the public and how best to integrate a tagline for the future. Once the visit is complete, Ilium will work on both fronts—the service brand and the marketing plan. The introduction the service brand will be a critical piece within the marketing plan.

Lastly, we are aware from our previous work in Redding that RABA has a small Administrative Staff. For that reason, Ilium suggests that It may be helpful to have Ilium assist RABA staff to implement the Marketing Plan.

The approximate cost of developing the Marketing Plan, service brand and tagline will be \$55,000 exclusive of the cost of paid advertising, materials, and other on-site expenses.

In closing, we suggest that we have a preliminary call to talk through our proposed approach to the development of the plan and service brand as well as the support we will require from RABA. Thank you again for contacting us; we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,


Carolyn Perez Andersen
President


John Gobis
Vice-President