

STAFF REPORT



MEETING DATE:	April 30, 2025
SUBJECT:	Adopt the North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan and Provide Direction to Staff Regarding Near-Term Activities
AGENDA ITEM:	8
STAFF CONTACT:	Jennifer Pollom, AICP, Senior Transportation Planner

SUMMARY:

The North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan (web link provided as Attachment A) was developed to coordinate and plan for better intercity bus options and improved passenger rail transportation between the Shasta Region, the North State, and large metropolitan areas. The plan is complete and presented for the board of directors' consideration.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the board of directors:

1. Receive a presentation on the final North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan;
2. Adopt the North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan; and
3. Direct staff to engage in the following near-term activities:
 - a. Work with Redding Area Bus Authority (RABA) on near-term funding – using non-regional transit funds – for the Interstate 5 (I-5) service, on implementation of the proposed service, and on interagency agreements between RABA, Tehama Rural Area eXpress (TRAX); Glenn Ride, San Joaquins Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA), and Amtrak to fund and implement the service;
 - b. Support North State regional partners in making progress on the North State Express service proposal concepts;
 - c. Provide, as needed, input on Caltrans' San Joaquin Valley federal Corridor ID project and share the plan with state and federal agencies, highlighting needs in the Shasta and North State regions; and
 - d. Communicate regional concerns on existing Amtrak passenger services, including lack of available capacity and request exploration to increase reliability and seat availability.

DISCUSSION:

Background – 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. The SRTA Board of Directors awarded a contract to AECOM in May and work commenced in July 2024.

Stakeholder and Community Involvement – A project website was created for sharing of project documents, posting questionnaire links, and community engagement throughout the project (<https://srta.ca.gov/373/North-State-Intercity-Bus-to-Rail-Plan>).

Outreach activities have included:

- Two advisory committee meetings (July 30 and November 6, 2024).
- A questionnaire for Shasta County residents on intercity travel needs. The questionnaire was initiated on August 22 and stayed open during the 30-day public comment period for the draft plan. There were 160 total responses submitted by March 24, 2025.
- Similar county-specific questionnaires were sent to North State residents on December 1, 2024, and stayed open during the 30-day public comment period. There were 100 total responses submitted by March 24, 2025.
- A community workshop was held on January 16, 2025, to update residents and gather feedback for the draft plan.
- The Draft North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan was available for a 30-day public review from February 21, 2025, through March 24, 2025. Five emails with comments were received after the community workshop and during the 30-day public review.
- The North State Intercity Bus to Rail project was presented to the RABA Board of Directors on April 21, 2025.

North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan and Recommendations – The project team has completed the final North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan after posting the draft plan for public feedback.

The final plan changes little from the draft recommendations and suggests that future efforts should focus primarily on coordination and improvement of bus-related intercity services over the near-term (within 5 years) and the mid-term (within 10 years), while supporting state efforts to improve passenger rail services in the North State for potential implementation over the long-term (10+ years), should the appropriate set of circumstances warrant. (e.g., completion of North Valley Rail service from Chico to Sacramento, increased population and job growth, etc.). The plan provides recommendations such as 1) general strategies and 2) hub and route specific strategies. Based on the strategies, a Strategic Action Plan was produced that lists specific actions for each route/hub (see following table). These actions are also delineated by near-, mid-, and long-term time horizons. Additionally, the hub/routes are listed in order of priority. All actions shown in the table (shown on page 3) would be brought back to the appropriate agency board at the appropriate time for further consideration and action.

Based on feedback from the public, board members, and regional partners, staff is seeking the board of directors' direction on four specific near-term activities at this time, which are listed in the staff report recommendations. Staff determined that these actions will have minimal impact on SRTA's workload and are in alignment with SRTA's existing federal and state responsibilities as a transportation planning agency to encourage and promote the coordination of public transportation services and to implement strategies that achieve the goals of the Regional Transportation Plan. For example, recommendation 3.a. is to continue work on near-term funding for I-5 intercity bus service connecting Redding and Sacramento; Tehama County Transportation Commission has conditionally committed \$50,000 to \$100,000 annually, as shown in Attachment B.

Table 1-North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan Strategic Action Plan

Hub / Route (ordered by priority)	Mode	Lead agency	Key partners (not prioritized)	Near-term (within 5 years)	Mid-term (within 10 years)	Long-term (10+ years)
Redding– Sacramento	Bus	RABA	SRTA	Implement initial Redding- Sacramento bus service along I-5 (a.k.a. Salmon Runner) within two years	Expand frequency of Redding-Sacramento bus service along I-5 (a.k.a. Salmon Runner)	Modify bus service to complement increased rail service to Redding
			Caltrans Division of Rail			
			Caltrans Districts 2 and 3			
			SJJPA			
			Tehama Rural Area eXpress (TRAX)			
			Glenn Ride			
			Colusa County Transit Agency			
			Lake Transit Authority			
			County RTPAs			
Redding–Chico	Bus	RABA	SJJPA	Secure additional funding to maintain current 99X RABA service until service transitions to the Redding- Sacramento bus service along I-5 (a.k.a. Salmon Runner)	Enhance and improve Glenn Ride express bus service to support planned North Valley Rail service to Chico	Cease Glenn Ride express bus service when intercity rail service established (see below)
			SRTA			
			Caltrans Division of Rail			
			Caltrans Districts 2 and 3			
	Rail	SJJPA	SRTA	Participate in the Corridor ID planning project and advocate for inclusion of rail service to Redding	Complete Corridor ID project development phase	Implement intercity rail service by extending North Valley Rail service
			Union Pacific			
			Caltrans Division of Rail			
			Caltrans Districts 2 and 3			
Redding– Eureka/Arcata	Bus	HTA or Trinity Transit or RABA	SRTA	Implement improvements related to this corridor identified in the North State Express Plan	Develop plan to study a one-operator service between Redding and Eureka–Arcata and potentially implement one-operator service	Implement one- operator, single-seat service
			Humboldt County Association of Governments			
			Trinity County Transportation Commission			
			Caltrans Districts 1 and 2			
Redding– Ashland– Medford– Eugene	Bus	North State Super Region Agencies (single lead TBD)	SRTA	Conduct study to explore a phased implementation of intercity bus service as follows: Phase 1 (within the North State Region); Phase 2 (Redding to Ashland / Medford); and Phase 3 (to Eugene) Implement initial service phase along I-5 within the North State Region.	Implement Phase 2 intercity bus service from Redding to Ashland / Medford area	Implement Phase 3 intercity bus service from Redding to Eugene
			Caltrans Division of Rail			
			Caltrans District 2			
			Oregon DOT			
Redding–Reno	Bus	Caltrans Division of Rail	SRTA	Coordinate with Nevada DOT on implementation of new service		Pending coordination efforts
			North State Super Region Agencies			
			Nevada DOT			
			RABA			
Redding– Klamath Falls– Eugene	Rail	Caltrans Division of Rail	SRTA	Focus on improving existing Amtrak's Coast Starlight long-distance rail service in terms of seating availability, better arrival/departure times, and reliability of service (i.e., on-time performance)		Pending coordination efforts
			North State Super Region Agencies			
			Amtrak / Union Pacific			
			Caltrans District 2			
			Oregon DOT			
All corridors	Rail and bus	RABA or City of Redding	Caltrans District 2	Conduct a planning study to designate and strengthen Redding as the central hub for existing and proposed North State intercity bus and rail services and propose multi-modal improvements	Implement improvements and new development to establish an integrated multi-modal mobility hub	
			SRTA			
			SJJPA			
			Amtrak / Union Pacific			
			McConnell Foundation			

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Caltrans, CalSTA, RABA, SJJPA, transportation planning agencies and transit operators across the North State and the Oregon Department of Transportation have provided technical review, stakeholder input, and helped with community outreach. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met on April 9, 2025, and received a verbal update from staff. A presentation was provided to the RABA board of directors on April 21, 2025. The Tehama County Transportation Commission provided a conditional letter of financial support toward future I-5 intercity bus service.

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). Near-term activities can be carried out within other work elements in the FY 2025/26 Overall Work Program as needed. If significant activities are desired, SRTA may consider pursuing competitive grants with North State partners.

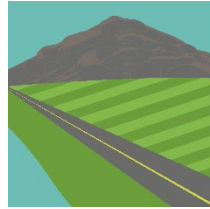


Sean Tiedgen, AICP, Executive Director

Attachments:

- A:** North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan (available on SRTA's website: <https://srta.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/9825/North-State-Intercity-Bus-to-Rail-Plan-April-2025>, and hard copies are available at SRTA's office, 1255 East Street, Redding, CA, 96001, during business hours
- B:** Tehama County Transportation Commission Conditional Letter of Commitment of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program Funds for I-5 Intercity Bus Service

JIM BACQUET, - City of Tehama
PATRICK HURTON- City of Red Bluff,
TOM WALKER - Tehama County
MATT HANSEN - Tehama County
DAVE DEMO – City of Corning
PATI NOLEN - Tehama County



TCTC
TEHAMA COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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April 24, 2025

Sean Tiedgen, AICP

Executive Director
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John C. Andoh, CCTM, CPM, TDM-CP

Transit General Manager
Redding Area Bus Authority
[Via Email: jandoh@rabaride.com]

Subject: Conditional Commitment of CMAQ Funds for I-5 Intercity Bus Service

Dear Mr. Tiedgen and Mr. Andoh:

The Tehama County Transportation Commission (TCTC) has supported efforts to improve interregional transit connectivity for many years, including early participation in SRTA's "Salmon Runner" concept and more recent discussions surrounding enhanced I-5 service.

Although our April Commission meeting was canceled due to scheduling conflicts, we are currently planning to agendize SRTA and RABA's formal funding request at our next available meeting in May. In the interim, we are providing this letter as a conditional expression of support to assist with SRTA's ongoing coordination with RABA and the broader development of funding strategy for the proposed intercity I-5 service.

TCTC intends to recommend a commitment of CMAQ funds in the amount of \$50,000 to \$100,000 (board discretion) annually, to be contributed through a flexible fund transfer to FTA upon approval. This level of support reflects the regional significance of the project, alignment with air quality goals, and our commitment to ensuring meaningful transit options along the I-5 corridor.

We appreciate the collaborative effort SRTA is leading and look forward to formalizing this commitment following Board action. Please do not hesitate to contact me if additional documentation is needed.

Sincerely,

Jessica Riske-Gomez

Deputy Director of Public Works – Transportation
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Tehama County Transit Agency Board
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