

STAFF REPORT



MEETING DATE:	June 24, 2026
SUBJECT:	Approve the Redding Area Bus Authority's Federal Transit Administration Section 5311(f) Intercity Bus Program Applications for Federal Fiscal Year 2026 to Operate Route 299X – Burney Express and I-5 Service Between Redding and Sacramento Pending RABA Submittal and Staff Review
AGENDA ITEM:	7-10
STAFF CONTACT:	Jennifer Pollom, AICP, Senior Transportation Planner

SUMMARY:

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides funding for rural and intercity transit operations via the Section 5311(f) program. Caltrans selects projects and administers the program for California. SRTA reviews and approves projects submitted in the Shasta Region. Redding Area Bus Authority (RABA) intends to submit three applications totaling \$900,000.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the board of directors:

1. Approve RABA's FTA Section 5311(f) Intercity Bus Program application for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2026 to operate Route 299X – Burney Express pending RABA submittal and staff review;
2. Approve RABA's FTA Section 5311(f) Intercity Bus Program applications for FFY 2026 to operate I-5 service between Redding and Sacramento pending RABA submittal and staff review; and
3. Authorize the executive director to provide certifications, assurances, and other requested information to Caltrans and FTA, and make amendments as needed for RABA to be considered for competitive grant funding.

DISCUSSION:

The FTA provides funding for rural transit services via the Section 5311 program and, specifically, intercity transit via the Section 5311(f) program. Caltrans administers 5311(f) funds through a competitive process. SRTA is responsible for reviewing and approving 5311(f) applications in the Shasta Region prior to Caltrans review for funding (SRTA's Policies and Procedures Manual available at <https://srta.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/5077/SRTA-Policies--Procedures---Amended-11625?bidId=>, Chapter 3.15, page 308).

Caltrans issued a funding opportunity on June 6, 2026. Applications are due to Caltrans on August 3, 2026. RABA has expressed intent to seek three FTA 5311(f) grants totaling \$900,000 to fund:

1. Current intercity bus service Route 299X – Burney Express service for \$300,000 (first priority); and
2. New intercity service along I-5, between Redding and Sacramento (second priority), separated into two sections that each meet the grant requirements and make the most of the \$300,000 maximum amount restriction, as shown below.
 - Between Redding and Orland for \$300,000
 - Between Orland and Sacramento for \$300,000

SRTA staff has yet to see the applications for the current 5311(f) call for projects. However, because RABA intends to submit similar applications as last year, staff anticipate little variance in the applications and recommend approving RABA's applications so Caltrans may consider funding the projects for the operating period of July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027, in a timely fashion. Should RABA's efforts change or applications be materially different, staff will bring back an item for approval at the September board meeting. It should be noted that Caltrans prioritizes awarding funding to existing services (e.g., 299X) prior to funding new services (e.g., 5X).

ALTERNATIVES:

The board of directors may choose not to approve RABA's 5311(f) applications. Doing so would require RABA to use federal and state formula funds apportioned to the region or one-time rural public transit funds for Route 299X operating costs and Senate Bil 125 (SB 125) funds for I-5 service. Potential Route 299X funds include: one-time federal COVID relief programs, annual FTA 5311 Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program, and/or Transportation Development Act (TDA) State Transit Assistance (STA). Not approving the I-5 service applications may hamper efforts to fund the services for the initial three-year plan as identified by project funding partners and reduce the region's efforts to reach board-approved Regional Transportation Plan goals.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

RABA intends to submit the applications to Caltrans by the August 3, 2026, due date. Caltrans selects projects and administers the program. Tehama County Transportation Commission (TCTC) has expressed support for I-5 service with a stop in Red Bluff and has committed funds to the effort. Additionally, the I-5 service project is consistent with the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority Business Plan. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met on June 10, 2026, and was provided a verbal update on the FTA 5311(f) call for projects.

FISCAL IMPACT:

RABA's grant application for Route 299X – Burney Express, if awarded, and combined with rider fares and local match is anticipated to fund Route 299X for the operating period of July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. RABA intends to use a combination of State Transit Assistance (STA) and Senate Bill 125 (SB125) funds for the required 44.47 percent local match. This strategy efficiently funds rural transit needs first with the use of competitive 5311(f) funds, if awarded, and allows more TDA Local Transportation Fund (LTF) amounts for other needs, including streets and roads, as long as there are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet.

RABA's \$600,000 FTA Section 5311(f) FFY 2026 applications, if funded annually, and combined with state rail funds, TCTC Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds (\$50,000 to \$100,000 annually), and rider fares, are anticipated to fully fund I-5 intercity service for three years. RABA will use a combination of state rail funds, TCTC Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds and Senate Bill 125 (SB125) funds for the required 44.47 percent local match.



Sean Tiedgen, AICP, Executive Director