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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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CHAPTER 1.0 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of the Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) is three-fold: objectively and comprehensively evaluate the City of Auburn’s public transit program performance, identify and quantify demand for transit service, and identify strategies for enhancing community mobility.

Moore & Associates was retained by the Placer County Transportation Planning Agency (PCTPA) in 2010 to complete SRTPs for the cities of Auburn and Roseville, and the County of Placer. By conducting the three SRTPs concurrently, PCTPA sought to improve regional coordination among the transit operators while also leveraging transportation resources within Western Placer County in an efficient and effective manner.

The City of Auburn administers Auburn Transit, a deviated fixed-route transit service. Auburn Transit consists of two route alignments which operate on weekdays (Monday through Friday) and one route on Saturday (no service is offered on Sunday). Each route has established time-points similar to a fixed-route service, yet the “deviated” component allows call-ins and deviation requests. Deviation requests are accommodated up to three-quarters of a mile from an established route alignment. In addition, some “call-in” stops, or deviation points, are incorporated into the published schedule. At the time of the Short Range Transit Plan, the service operated from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Weekdays, and from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday. Auburn Transit provides connections with four Placer County Transit routes at the Auburn Conheim Station.

Title VI Compliance

As part of the six-county region governed by the Sacramento Council of Governments, investments made by the City of Auburn must be consistent with federal Title VI requirements. Title VI prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, income, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Public outreach to and involvement of individuals in low income and minority communities covered under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and subsequent Civil Rights Restoration Act, and series federal statutes enacted pertaining to environmental justice, are critical to regional planning and programming decisions. The fundamental principles of environmental justice include:

- Avoiding, minimizing or mitigating disproportionately high and adverse health or environmental effects on minority and low-income population;
- Ensuring full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process; and
- Preventing the denial, reduction or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority populations and low-income communities.

The decision process by which new projects are selected for inclusion in the Short Range Transit Plan must consider equitable solicitation of project candidates in accordance with federal Title VI requirements.¹

Short Range Transit Plan Process

On July 15, 2010 Moore & Associates conducted a kick-off meeting with PCTPA and representatives from each public transit operators. The kick-off meeting included review of the project schedule, discussed project expectations, defined project success, and presented schedule of deliverables.

Our project team conducted customer surveys and ride checks onboard Auburn Transit between August 19 and 21, 2010. Community workshops were convened on November 2 and 3, 2010 in conjunction with PCTPA's TDA Article 8 "unmet transit needs" public process. In total, five meetings were held throughout the county: in Auburn, Lincoln, Loomis, Roseville, and Rocklin. These meetings provided an opportunity for community residents to participate in the transit service planning process.

In identifying and quantifying demand for transit service, our project team reviewed demographic and population data (Census Bureau data), economic data (California Department of Finance), rider and non-rider (community) survey data, and information gathered during community meetings. Throughout, the goal was to objectively identify mobility needs, evaluate access to public transit, and analyze community perceptions regarding Auburn Transit. In addition, operations and performance data was provided by the City and through field observations was used to assess quantitative performance based on established indicators such as Operating Cost/Passenger.

The Short Range Transit Plan report is divided into seven chapters presenting primary data, current service analysis, and recommendations for providing and enhancing future transit services. The following narrative presents a brief summary and findings of each chapter.

The Performance Measurement System serves as the foundation for crafting the Short Range Transit Plan. It provides the City with a mission statement framework for providing service throughout Auburn. In this case, it assesses the actual performance of the public transit program sponsored by the City within the framework performance standards and goals.

The cornerstone goal of the Existing Conditions chapter is to assess performance existing service conditions by quantifying actual performance while also analyzing recent data (i.e., on-time performance and boarding and alighting data) collected during ride checks and field observations. This chapter is divided into three sections: Demographic Analysis, Service Evaluation, and Ride Check Analysis. Presented below is a summary of key findings from each report section.

¹Sacramento Area Council of Governments. 2010. Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program 2011/14. September 9, 2010.

3.1 Demographic Analysis

- A high concentration of ride-dependent persons reside in the northern portion of Auburn.
- Senior and low-income populations have grown significantly since Census 2000, and are forecast to continue to increase throughout the decade ahead.
- There is a growing demand for school-related transit service.
- The majority of employed residents drive alone to work; few utilize public transit.
- Most trip generators (non-residential land-uses) are located in the southern or downtown areas of Auburn.

3.2 Service Evaluation

- Operating Cost/VSM and VSH declined modestly in FY 2009/10.
- Operating Cost/Passenger increased 11 percent in FY 2009/10.
- Passengers/VSH increased across the evaluation period until FY 2009/10, at which time it declined 12 percent.
- Passengers/VSM fluctuated throughout the evaluation period.
- Farebox Recovery peaked in FY 2009/10 at approximately 14 percent slightly below the PCTPA threshold (15 percent).
- Fare/Passenger increased in FY 2007/08. Thereafter this metric declined due to decreasing ridership and fare revenue.

3.3 Ride Check Analysis

- On-time performance was gauged using the following metrics:
 - **On-time**, defined as trip departure occurring within five minutes after the published schedule time.
 - **Early**, defined as any departure from an established time-point occurring in advance of the published schedule time.
 - **Late**, defined as any departure from an established time-point occurring five or more minutes after the published schedule time.
- On-time performance data reveals 16.2 percent of surveyed trips “ran hot” (early), while 18 percent departed after than the published schedule time.
- More than 14 percent of surveyed trips were deviations (i.e., flag stops or rider requested trips).
- Highest boarding and alighting activity occurred during the early-morning and late-afternoon day-parts.
- Only six published “call-in” stops were requested throughout the ride check.
- Bowman Elementary and Boys & Girls Club had the highest number of deviations requests.
- The greatest boarding and alighting activity occurred at the Auburn Conheim Station.
- Requests to 39 unique locations occurred during the ride check.
- The greatest incidence of boardings (deviation) occurred at South McDaniel Street.
- The greatest incidence of alightings (deviation) occurred at the Boys & Girls Club.

The Public Input chapter includes findings from various outreach methods. The chapter is divided into the three sections: Onboard Survey Analysis, Community Survey Analysis, and Public Workshops. The following presents the key findings from each outreach activity.

4.1 Onboard Survey Analysis

The onboard surveys revealed customer perceptions, desired service changes, customer travel patterns, and customer demographics. The following is a summary of key findings:

- Most survey respondents are ride-dependent (low-income and/or limited access to personal vehicle).
- Majority of trip purposes were for non-work related activities such as accessing healthcare and shopping.
- Most survey respondents ride Auburn Transit at least twice per week.
- Most respondents are ride-dependent and state they would either walk, bike, or not make the trip if Auburn Transit was not available.
- The vast majority of respondents have been riding Auburn Transit for at least one year.
- Nearly 60 percent of respondents use cash or pay their fare versus a multiple-ride pass.
- Respondents who indicated being employed full-time ride the bus more frequently than any other employment category.
- Auburn Transit received extremely high marks with respect to customer satisfaction.
- Expanded evening service was the most popular (potential) service enhancement.
- Nearly 56 percent of respondents would support a fare increase of twenty-five cents to realize their preferred service enhancement.

4.2 Community Survey Analysis

- Public transit attracts a relatively small share of total trips made within the city of Auburn. Few respondents indicate riding the bus for shopping.
- Among Auburn Transit riders, *work* was usually the top destination with the exception of those respondents who indicated riding *less often than one to three times per week*.
- Nearly 60 percent of respondents indicated an excellent experience on Auburn Transit. This mirrors the findings from the Onboard Survey.
- The most popular reason cited for using Auburn Transit was *saving money* (about 47 percent).
- Respondents categorized as “most-frequent” riders were split evenly (i.e., 50-50) regarding *saving money* and lack of *access to a personal vehicle* as their main reason for using Auburn Transit.
- Nearly 51 percent of those respondents who cited not riding transit indicated the primary barrier as “prefer to drive”.
- Riders and non-riders alike indicated expansion of transit to currently un-served locations as an “enhancement opportunity” (aka opportunity to grow ridership).

4.3 Public Workshop

The workshops revealed several important findings specific to Auburn Transit operations and services including:

- Recommend “after care” bus stop/service at Boys & Girls Club.
- New Mercy Housing 62-unit senior living complex located on the Sisters of Mercy property will need access to transit - construction anticipated to begin March 2011.
- Desire for bus stop at Bell Rd. and Rock Creek Rd. (Note: it is not feasible to serve this stop given it lies outside the current Auburn Transit service boundaries).

5.0 Service Plan

The Service Plan chapter presents our recommendations reflective of the above cited findings as well as various public involvement activities. The Service Plan chapter is divided into four sections: highlighting proposed service enhancement alternatives, capital and financial implications of each, funding scenarios, and implementation tactics. Four service alternatives were developed including the status quo along with minor improvements (Alternative A), operational and capital improvements to the current transit program (Alternative B), and two alternatives wherein the service is completely restructured (Alternatives C and D). Each alternative includes varying degrees of operational, administrative, capital, and marketing enhancements.

Alternative A presents a low-cost, status quo scenario, reflecting minor changes to the Auburn Transit’s schedule and/or route alignments, includes minor operational, administrative, and marketing enhancements intended to address the customer and community input and staff/consultant recommendations. Alternative A recommendations include:

- Implement a fare increase,
- Adopt a policy limiting the number of “call-in” requests per run,
- Establish turn-by-turn directions to guide Auburn Transit drivers,
- Enhanced marketing of fare passes/media, and
- Develop a marketing campaign with new and improved marketing collateral (i.e., brochures and bus stop signs) and the redesign of the City’s transit webpage.

There are advantages and disadvantages to every change implemented within a transit program. Disadvantages typically include the cost of the enhancement and the possibility of short-term ridership decline. For this alternative, the disadvantages are chiefly an increase in marketing and short-term administrative costs. Anticipated advantages include:

- Increased community awareness of Auburn Transit,
- Improved on-time performance,
- Increase in fare revenue,
- High probability of ridership growth,
- Low-cost in comparison with the other service scenarios, and
- Increased customer satisfaction.

All in all, we believe the advantages clearly outweigh potential disadvantages.

Alternative B is more capital-intensive than Alternative A. This alternative incorporates the recommendations proposed within Alternative A plus additional capital/infrastructure and schedule improvements. This alternative seeks to enhance bus stops through more visible and identifiable signage. Improvements would be made based on priority, addressing high activity stops first, and then completing stops in which signs are poorly placed minimizing visibility from the street. Alternative B recommendations include:

- Implement a fare increase,
- Adopt a policy limiting the number of “call-in” requests per run,
- Establish turn-by-turn directions for all drivers to follow,
- Enhanced and more visible marketing of fare passes/media,
- Develop a marketing campaign with new and improved marketing collateral (i.e., brochures and bus stop signs) and the redesign of the City’s transit webpage,
- Designate under-utilized published stops as “call-ins”,
- Undertake transit infrastructure improvements such as bus stop enhancements,
- Add two new evening service stops,
- Expand weekday evening service hours to mirror Placer County Transit lines connecting at Auburn Conheim Station, and
- Modify of published schedule.

Similar to Alternative A, the short-term disadvantages include increased marketing cost, increased short-term administrative costs, increased operating costs (i.e., Vehicle Service Hours).

The advantages of Alternative B include:

- High probability of ridership growth, especially during the evening;
- Increased community awareness of Auburn Transit,
- Improved on-time performance,
- Increase in fare revenue,
- Increase in service connectivity and coordination,
- Increased customer satisfaction, and
- Possible decrease in annual Vehicle Service Miles.

Alternative C addresses system growth and recommends a service restructure to the fixed-route service along with a separate ADA-complementary demand-response service. Alternative C is the most capital-intensive and addresses the perceived need (via rider and community survey) for an expanded level of transit service. This alternative is aimed at increasing not only the usage by current riders, but also expanding Auburn Transit’s customer base to include “non-dependent” riders. The alternative also includes all recommendations presented in Alternative B.

Alternative D closely resembles Alternative C, the primary difference being the two new fixed routes are interlined to reduce cost. This alternative is aimed at increasing not only the usage by current

riders, but also expanding Auburn Transit’s customer base to include “non-dependent” riders. The alternative includes all recommendations presented in Alternative B.

6.0 Preferred Alternative

Following decision with the community, stakeholders, and staff at the City and PCTPA, Moore & Associates developed a Preferred Alternative representing the most desirable elements from the service alternatives detailed in Section 5.1. The following feedback was received:

- The route structure detailed in Alternative C represents an improvement over existing alignments,
- The cost associated with Alternative C is too high, and
- The transition to a true two-tiered system with a fixed-route service and complementary Dial-A-Ride represents too drastic a change for the City at this time, though such a change could be feasible in the future.

As a result, a new alternative, the Preferred Alternative, was developed to address these concerns. It maintains the existing deviated fixed-route structure, but realigns the route alignments to reflect those in Alternatives C and D.

7.0 Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan provides a schedule of those tasks anticipated to support introduction of the service recommendations provided in the Preferred Alternative chapter (Chapter 6). Each step offers a brief narrative detailing the required resources and probable allocation of the resources. The proposed implementation plan only provides the steps to be taken during the first three years of implementation. Implementation of the Preferred Alternative would occur in FY 2013/14.

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