San Luis Obispo Transit

Short Range Transit Plans

Draft Plan

Prepared for the

City of San Luis Obispo

January 8, 2025

Prepared by LSC Transportation Consultants

TRANSPORTATION CONSULTANTS, INC.

San Luis Obispo Transit

Short Range Transit Plans

Draft Plan

Prepared for
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER *PAGE*

LIST OF TABLES

TABLES *PAGE*

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURES *PAGE*

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

San Luis Obispo County spans 3,616 square miles on California's central coast. The majority of the County's 281,712 residents live in communities located within the United States (US) 101 or US 1 corridors.[1] The City of San Luis Obispo is the county seat and the largest city in the County, with an estimated population of 59,219 living within the urbanized area.[2] Other population centers in the County include the Cities of Paso Robles, Atascadero, Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach, Pismo Beach, and Morro Bay and the census-designated places (CDPs) of Nipomo, Los Osos, and Templeton. The California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) is located in the City of San Luis Obispo and serves as a major educational, economic, and cultural center for the region.

Note: *Overlooking Morro Rock* [Photo], by Blake Carroll, 2016, Flickr

Public transit is an important component of the San Luis Obispo County transportation system, enhancing connectivity both within and between communities. Public transit not only aids mobility-limited residents, but also yields other benefits such as decreased road congestion, improved air quality, increased economic opportunity, and better access to education.

[1] United States Census Bureau. (2022). *Age and Sex, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*. Retrieved from https://data.census.gov/

[2] Federal Transit Administration. (2023). *FY 2023-2010 Census UZA Population Data.* Retrieved from https://www.transit.dot.gov/

Public transit will play an even more significant role in San Luis Obispo County as the region works to advance the goals of the *2023-2045 Regional Transportation Plan* (RTP), such as reducing single-occupant vehicles, mitigating congestion on US 101 and other roadways, and limiting vehicle miles traveled. The RTP and other studies relevant to public transportation in San Luis Obispo County are summarized in Appendix A.

The San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority (RTA) and San Luis Obispo Transit (SLO Transit) are the two largest public transit providers in San Luis Obispo County. The two agencies have retained LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. to update each agency's respective Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) as part of a joint effort. While two separate Draft Plans were developed, a series of joint interim memos were initially prepared to both coordinate services to the greatest extent possible, as well as to summarize project progress.

This document, SLO Transit Draft Short Range Transit Plan, is the compilation of a series of Working Papers. Although this document focuses on the City of San Luis Obispo and its transit services, some background information is provided at a more regional level.

Chapter 2 summarizes key characteristics of SLO Transit, including the services currently offered and the agency's capital amenities.

Chapter 3 briefly describes other transit services operating in the region, with an emphasis on how these other services connect to SLO Transit.

Chapter 4 - In this chapter, SLO Transit fiscal year (FY) 2022-23 performance is presented alongside existing performance standards. Then, peer transit operators for both programs are analyzed as a means of guiding revised performance standard recommendations.

Chapter 5 - This chapter reviews the demographic and economic characteristics of both San Luis Obispo County and the City of San Luis Obispo, with a focus on data relevant to transit demand and the near-term future of RTA and SLO Transit services.

Chapter 6 - This chapter evaluates SLO Transit operations and performance.

Chapter 7 - Service alternatives for SLO Transit are presented. The alternatives are based on public input and the recommendations of related studies, including the recent *SLO Transit Innovations* (Transit Innovations) *Study* (2024).

Chapter 8 - This chapter focuses on the recommended capital improvements needed to operate transit services over the planning period, specifically the transit fleet, the bus stops, and the Downtown Transit Center.

Chapter 9 - This chapter presents "base case" financial forecasts which were used as the basis for the financial plan.

Chapter 10 - This chapter reviews potential changes to the SLO Transit fare structure.

Chapter 11 - This chapter outlines the Short-Range Transit Plan service and capital elements recommended for implementation over the seven-year planning period. A financial plan presenting revenues and expenditures for the seven years is also presented.

Appendix A - Presents recent planning studies relevant to the Short-Range Transit Plan effort.

Appendix B - Presents demographic maps of San Luis Obispo.

Appendix C - Presents route profiles for SLO Transit including boardings by hour and by stop.

Appendix D - Presents results of the on-board survey.

Appendix E - Presents the results of the community survey.

Appendix F - Presents a summary of stakeholder input.

Appendix G – Presents existing and future coordination between SLO Transit and RTA including scheduling/transfer opportunities, joint capital projects as well as a discussion of the regional ADA paratransit service, Runabout.

Appendix H – Presents a review of marketing strategies.

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Chapter 2

OVERVIEW OF CITY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO TRANSIT SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

The City of San Luis Obispo Transit (SLO Transit) provides local fixed route service for the City of San Luis Obispo and Cal Poly. This chapter discusses SLO Transit services, as well as how SLO Transit connects to other regional transit programs. SLO Transit fares, vehicles, and amenities are also described.

HISTORY, GOVERNANCE, AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

SLO Transit has provided local transit service to the City of San Luis Obispo and Cal Poly since 1974. SLO Transit is administered by the Mobility Services Division, a branch of the City's Department of Public Works. The transit program is managed by the Mobility Services Business Manager and the Transit Coordinator. The Mobility Services Business Manager reports to the Deputy Director of Mobility Services. The City contracts operations and maintenance functions to a purchased transportation contractor, Transdev North America. The SLO Transit organizational chart is shown in Figure 1.

The Mass Transportation Committee (MTC) advises the City Council regarding public transit programs. The MTC has seven members: one Cal Poly designated employee, one Cal Poly student representative designated by the Associated Students, Inc., one senior citizen 62 years or older, one person from the business community, one person with technical transportation planning experience, one disability community representative, and one member at-large. Depending on interest, two members from the general public can be appointed as well.

SLO TRANSIT SERVICES

SLO Transit Fixed Routes

Table 1 presents key SLO Transit service characteristics. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, SLO Transit operated eight fixed routes, three tripper services, one evening express service, and one seasonal trolley. During the COVID-19 pandemic, two of the tripper services and the evening express service were suspended due to staffing difficulties stemming from the nationwide bus operator shortage. While the three suspended services have not yet resumed operations as of the time of writing, they are summarized in Table 1 alongside the active SLO Transit services.

SLO Transit service hours vary depending on the time of year, with SLO Transit operating extended service hours when Cal Poly is in session. During the academic year, SLO Transit service hours are generally 6:00 AM to 11:10 PM on weekdays and 8:15 AM to 8:10 PM on weekends. During the summer, service hours are generally 6:00 AM to 8:00 PM on weekdays and 8:15 AM to 8:10 PM on weekends. SLO Transit services are described individually on the following pages and depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 1:
SLO Transit Organizational Chart

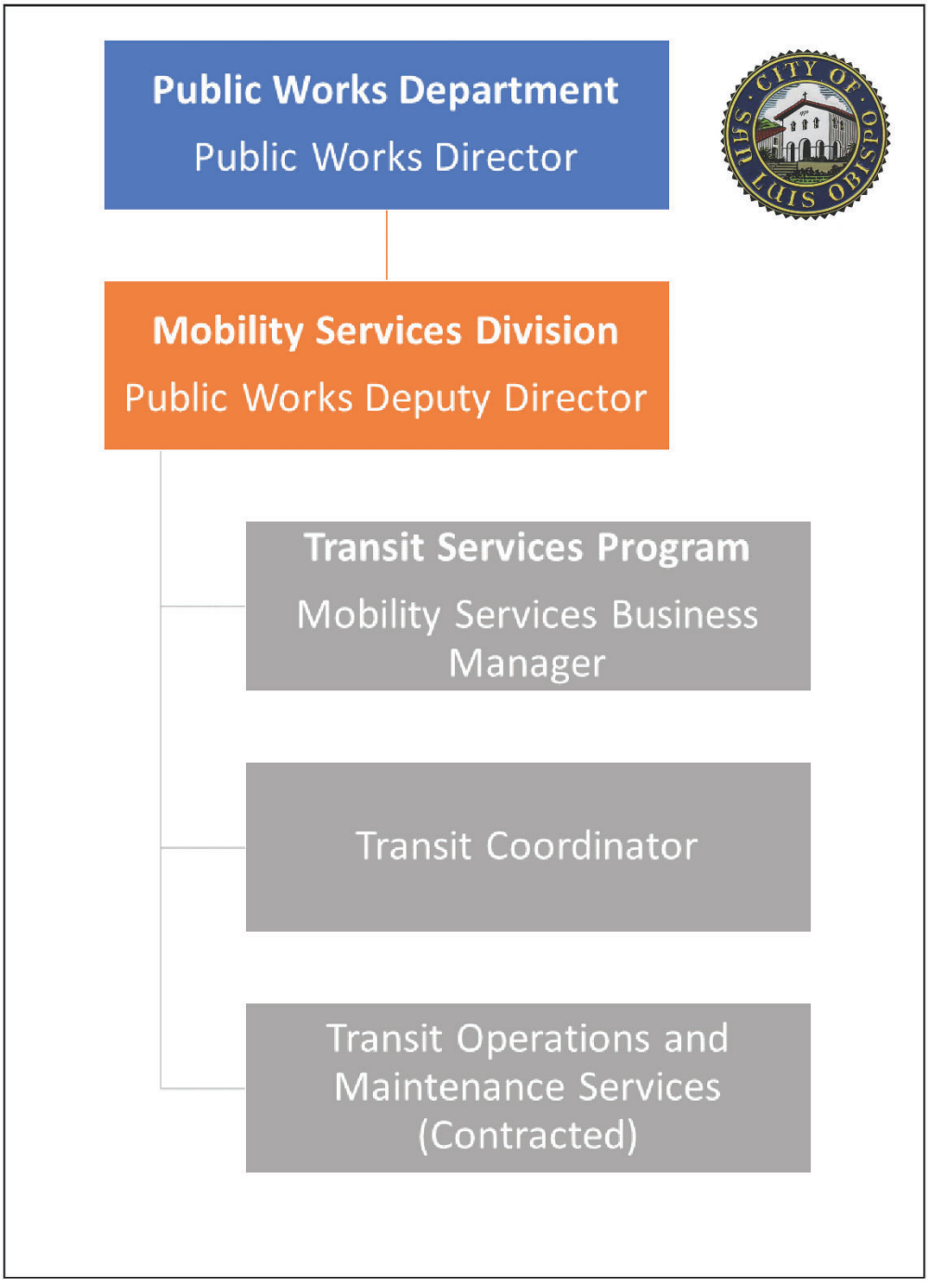


Table 1: Summary of SLO Transit Services and Frequency

	Service Hours [1, 2]				Start & End Locations		Weekday Service Frequency (Minutes)
	Weekday		Weekend				
	Start	End	Start	End	Start	End	
Bus: Fixed Route							
Route 1A - Johnson, Tank Farm, Airport	6:15 AM	10:00 PM	8:15 AM	8:00 PM	SLO Government Center	Same as start	60
Route 1B - Broad, Airport, Johnson	6:45 AM	6:30 PM	--	--	SLO Government Center	Same as start	60
Route 2A - Higuera, LOVR [3], Madonna	6:15 AM	10:00 PM	8:15 AM	8:05 PM	SLO Government Center	Same as start	60
Route 2B - Madonna, LOVR [3], Higuera	6:45 AM	6:35 PM	--	--	SLO Government Center	Same as start	60
Route 3A - Promenade, LOVR [3], Cal Poly	6:20 AM	11:10 PM	8:20 AM	8:10 PM	SLO Government Center	Same as start	30 - 60
Route 3B - Cal Poly, LOVR [3], Amtrak Station	6:45 AM	10:35 PM	--	--	SLO Government Center	Same as start	30 - 60
Route 4A - Foothill, Cal Poly, Monterey	6:00 AM	11:05 PM	8:15 AM	8:05 PM	SLO Government Center	Same as start	45
Route 4B - Monterey, Cal Poly, Ramona Dr	6:15 AM	10:30 PM	--	--	SLO Government Center	Same as start	45
San Luis Tripper [4, 5]	7:15 AM	4:00 PM	--	--	SLO Government Center	Same as start	4 Round Trips
Laguna Tripper [4]	7:35 AM	3:40 PM	--	--	SLO Government Center	Same as start	1 Round Trip
Highland Tripper [5]	7:45 AM	9:00 AM	--	--	Ramona at Palomar	Kennedy Library	30
6 Express [5]	6:00 PM	9:20 PM	--	--	Cal Poly Performing Arts Center	Same as start	30
Old SLO Trolley [6]	5:00 PM	9:10 PM	--	--	La Cuesta Inn	Same as start	20

Note 1: Summary accurate as of December, 2023. No service on Thanksgiving and Christmas. SLO Transit operates the weekend service schedule on New Year's Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, the Friday after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve.

Note 2: Service hours presented represent academic year schedule. Hours are reduced during the summer.

Note 3: LOVR stands for Los Osos Valley Road.

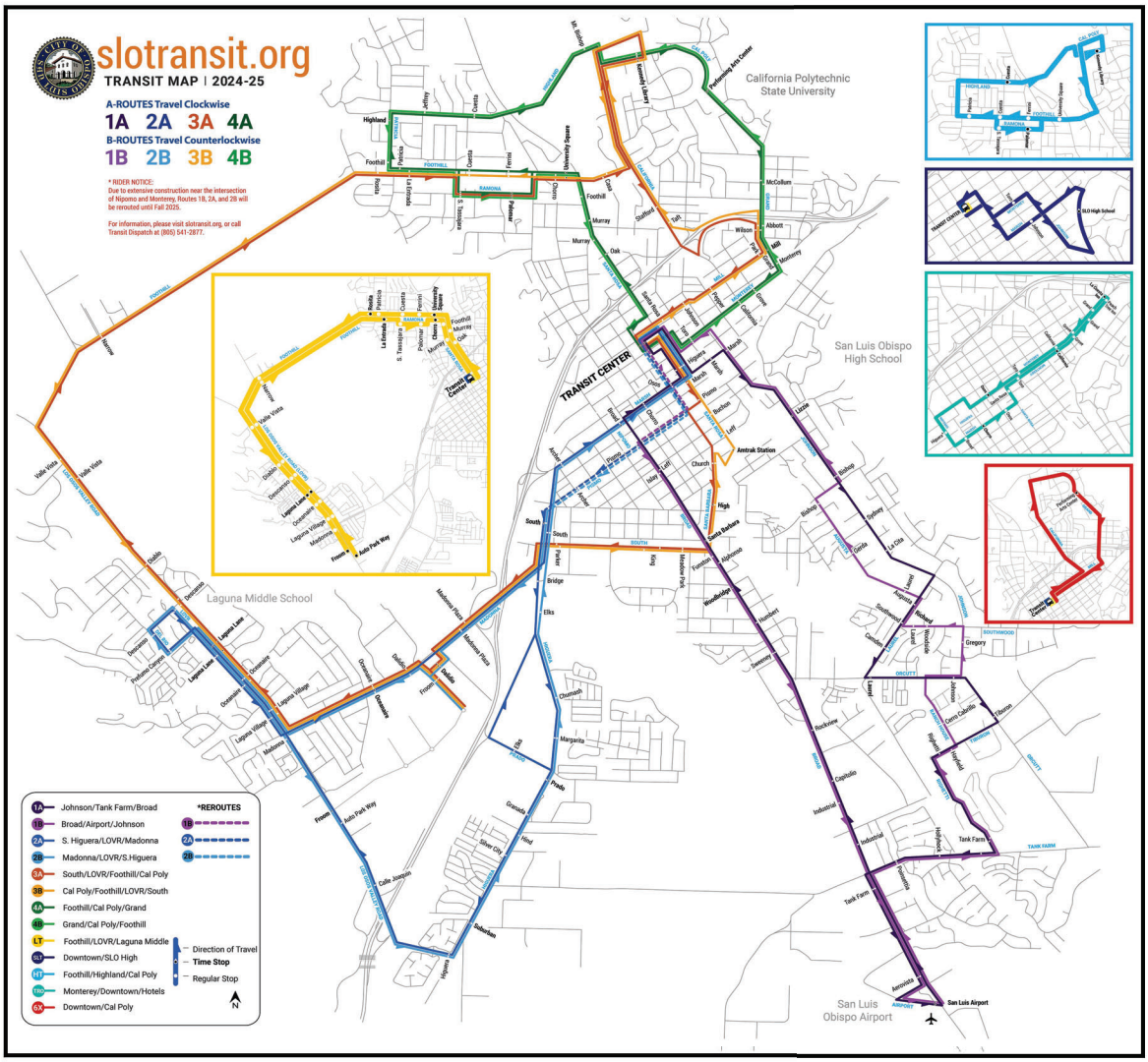
Note 4: On Mondays, San Luis Tripper service starts at 8:45 AM and Laguna Tripper service starts at 8:50 AM.

Note 5: The San Luis Tripper, Highland Tripper, and 6 Express are currently suspended.

Note 6: The Old SLO Trolley operates on Thursdays during the summer and fall. The Old SLO Trolley provides Holiday Trolley service on Fridays and Saturdays in December.

Source: SLO Transit

Figure 2:
SLO Transit Services



Routes 1A & 1B

Routes 1A and 1B provide bidirectional service to southeast San Luis Obispo, with Route 1A operating in the clockwise direction and Route 1B operating in the counterclockwise direction. Both Routes 1A and 1B operate on an hourly frequency; Route 1A departs the Government Center at 15 minutes after the hour and Route 1B departs at 45 minutes after the hour. During the academic year, Route 1A operates from 6:15 AM to 10:00 PM on weekdays and from 8:15 AM to 10:00 PM on weekends. Route 1B operates the same schedule year-round, operating from 6:45 AM to 6:30 PM on weekdays only. Stops served by Routes 1A and 1B include the Dignity Health French Hospital Medical Center, the San Luis Airport, Tank Farm, Broad Street, and Johnson Avenue.

Route 2A & Route 2B

Routes 2A and 2B are bidirectional routes that serve southwest San Luis Obispo, with Route 2A operating in the clockwise direction and Route 2B operating in the counterclockwise direction. Routes 2A and 2B provide hourly service; Route 2A departs the Government Center at 15 minutes after the hour and Route 2B departs at 45 minutes after the hour. Route 2A operates from 6:15 AM to 10:00 PM on weekdays and from 8:15 AM to 8:05 PM on weekends during the academic year. Route 2B follows the same schedule year-round, running from 6:45 AM to 6:35 PM on weekdays. Areas served by Routes 2A and 2B include Social Services, the Department of Motor Vehicles, Laguna Middle School, and Madonna Plaza.

Route 3A & Route 3B

Routes 3A and 3B provide bidirectional service from Cal Poly to commercial centers in San Luis Obispo, with Route 3A running in the clockwise direction and Route 3B running in the counterclockwise direction. During the academic year, Route 3A is available from 6:20 AM to 11:10 PM on weekdays and from 8:20 AM to 8:10 PM on weekends. Route 3B runs from 6:45 AM to 10:35 PM on weekdays year-round. Routes 3A and 3B typically run hourly, but service frequency is increased during the academic year; when Cal Poly is in session, Route 3A runs twice per hour during the morning and Route 3B runs twice per hour in the afternoon. Currently, the first 6:00 AM run of Route 3A is not operating due to a lack of bus operators. Routes 3A and 3B both stop at the Cal Poly Kennedy Library, the San Luis Obispo Amtrak Station, the Promenade, Madonna Plaza, and Laguna Middle school, among other locations.

Route 4A & Route 4B

Routes 4A and 4B are bidirectional routes which serve downtown San Luis Obispo and Cal Poly, with Route 4A operating in the clockwise direction and Route 4B operating in the counterclockwise direction. Both Routes 4A and 4B run every 45 minutes; Route 4B always leaves the Government Center 15 minutes after Route 4A. Route 4A runs from 6:00 AM to 11:05 PM on weekdays during the academic year, and from 8:15 AM to 8:05 PM on weekends year-round. Route 4B only runs on weekdays, operating from 6:15 AM to 10:30 PM during the academic year and from 6:15 AM to 6:50 PM when Cal Poly is out of session. Key stops served by Routes 4A and 4B include the Cal Poly Kennedy Library, the Cal Poly Performing Arts Center, Santa Rosa Park, and residential neighborhoods northwest of downtown.

Laguna Tripper

The Laguna Tripper is a supplemental service for students traveling to and from Laguna Middle School. The Laguna Tripper only runs on weekdays during the school year. Daily service consists of one morning run from the Government Center to Laguna Middle School and one afternoon return trip. The schedule varies depending on the day due to variations in the school schedule.

Old San Luis Obispo (SLO) Trolley

The Old SLO Trolley is a seasonal service in downtown San Luis Obispo. In 2023, the Old SLO Trolley ran on Thursdays from 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM from June 6 through November 30. Service was then extended through December 2023 as the "Holiday Trolley." Holiday Trolley service was provided on Fridays and Saturdays in December from 12:00 PM to 8:00 PM.

The Old SLO Trolley starts at La Cuesta Inn and runs a fixed route through downtown along Monterey Street, completing one loop every half hour. The service stops at sixteen stops throughout downtown, with four timed stops: La Cuesta Inn, Monterey at Osos, Marsh at Chorro, and Monterey at California.

San Luis Tripper

The San Luis Tripper is a supplemental service for students traveling to and from San Luis Obispo High School. When in service, the San Luis Tripper runs on weekdays during the school year, providing two trips each morning from the Government Center to San Luis Obispo High School and then two reverse trips in the afternoon. The San Luis Tripper is not currently running due to a lack of bus operators.

Highland Tripper

The Highland Tripper is a supplemental school-year service for students traveling to and from Cal Poly. When in service, the Highland Tripper completes three round trips each weekday morning between the stop at Ramona Drive and Palomar Avenue and Cal Poly via Highland Drive and Foothill Boulevard. The Highland Tripper is not currently in service due to a lack of operators.

Route 6x

Route 6x provides half-hourly service from the Cal Poly Performing Arts Center and the Government Center on Thursdays from 6:00 PM to 9:20 PM during the school year.

Key Transfer Locations

SLO Transit services have been designed so that passengers can transfer between local routes, as well as to other regional transit services. Important SLO Transit transfer locations, and the services that stop at each, are listed below.

- Government Center – SLO Transit fixed routes; RTA Routes 9, 10, 12, 14.
- Cal Poly Kennedy Library – SLO Transit Routes 3 A/B, 4 A/B; RTA Route 9.
- The Promenade – SLO Transit Routes 2 A/B, 3 A/B.
- San Luis Obispo Amtrak Station – SLO Transit Route 3B; Amtrak; Greyhound.

SLO TRANSIT FARE STRUCTURE

The SLO Transit fare structure is shown in Table 2. Cash fares and multi-day passes can be purchased onboard. Pass products can also be purchased at the City of San Luis Obispo City Hall Finance Counter and the San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce.

The regular, one-way cash fare is $1.50. Senior adults ages 65 to 79, disabled passengers, and Medicare card holders are eligible for the discounted fare of $0.75, or 50 percent of the regular fare. Seniors ages 80 and older ride SLO Transit for free by receiving a VIP card from the SLO Regional Rideshare office. Children ages 4 and younger also can ride for free with a fare-paying adult. Cal Poly and the City have currently negotiated a prepaid fare agreement that allows Cal Poly students, faculty, and staff to ride SLO Transit for no additional fare.

SLO Transit offers multiple pass products. The 31-day pass costs $40.00 for regular passengers and $20.00 for discount-eligible passengers. Grade-school students can purchase the 31-day pass for $25.00. SLO Transit also offers 1-day, 3-day, 5-day, and 7-day passes that range in cost from $3.25 to $15.00. Additionally, SLO Transit has a 16-ride pass that can be purchased for $24.00 and a 15-ride pass for discount-eligible passengers that can be purchased for $11.25. Passengers can board SLO Transit with Regional Pass products, as well: passengers can purchase a Regional Day Pass for $5.50 and 31-Day Pass for $68.00 (or $34.00 for discounted passengers).

Table 2: SLO Transit Fare Structure

Fare Type	Regular	Senior/ Disabled [1]	VIP [2]	Children [3]	Student [4]
One-Way Fare	$1.50	$0.75	Free	Free	--
31-Day Pass	$40.00	$20.00	--	--	$25.00
16-Ride Pass	$24.00	--	--	--	--
15-Ride Pass	--	$11.25	--	--	--
7-Day Pass	$15.00	--	--	--	--
5-Day Pass	$12.00	--	--	--	--
3-Day Pass	$7.00	--	--	--	--
1-Day Pass	$3.25	--	--	--	--
Regional 31-Day Pass [5]	$68.00	$34.00			
Regional Day Pass [5]	$5.50	--	--	--	--

Note 1: Discounts are for seniors ages 65 to 79, disabled, and Medicare card holders.

Note 2: Seniors ages 80 and older are eligible for a VIP card that allows them to board all fixed route services in SLO County for free. To receive the VIP card, eligible seniors must go to the Regional Rideshare office and provide valid identification.

Note 3: Children 4 and under ride for free with a fare-paying caretaker.

Note 4: Students include all youth in grades K-12 with student ID.

Note 5: Regional 31-Day and Day Pass allows unlimited rides on all RTA, SLO Transit, and Morro Bay routes for the dates indicated.

Source: SLO Transit

SLO TRANSIT CAPITAL ASSETS

Fleet Inventory

SLO Transit's current revenue vehicle fleet is detailed in Table 3. The revenue fleet consists of seventeen vehicles; fourteen of the vehicles are low-floor transit buses, one is a double-decker bus, one is a trolley, and one is a cutaway. Of note, SLO Transit procured its first two battery-electric buses (BEBs), a low-floor Proterra and a low-floor New Flyer, in 2023. The City has also issued a purchase order for six additional BEBs and is working on approval to procure another two.

The average age of the low-floor vehicles is 12 years, and the average mileage is 338,234. Currently, SLO Transit operates nine vehicles at peak times. SLO Transit has two support vehicles in addition to its revenue fleet.

Table 3: SLO Transit Revenue Vehicle Fleet

Agency ID [1]	Make	Model	Year	Mileage [2]	Est. Retirement Date [3]
754	Gillig	Low Floor	2007	300,899	2019
755	Gillig	Low Floor	2007	313,874	2019
856	Double K	Trolley	2008	71,219	2020
857	Gillig	Low Floor	2008	480,498	2020
858	Gillig	Low Floor	2008	475,880	2020
859	Gillig	Low Floor	2008	481,177	2020
860	Gillig	Low Floor	2008	454,148	2020
861	Gillig	Low Floor	2008	445,314	2020
862	Gillig	Low Floor	2008	448,708	2020
963	--	Double Deck	2009	131,903	2022
1264	Gillig	Low Floor	2012	292,711	2024
1365	Gillig	Low Floor	2013	311,994	2025
1366	Gillig	Low Floor	2013	302,951	2025
1167	El Dorado	Cut-Away	2011	128,865	2016
1768	Gillig	Low Floor	2017	136,818	2029
1769	Gillig	Low Floor	2017	150,304	2029
1770	Gillig	Low Floor	2017	140,006	2029
2371 [4]	Proterra	Low Floor	2022	--	2034
2372 [4]	New Flyer	Low Floor	2022	--	2034

Note 1: Information accurate as of December 2023.

Note 2: Mileage data accurate as of 4/8/2021 or 2/23/2022, depending on the vehicle.

Note 3: Estimated retirement dates based off of vehicle model's Federal Transit Administration's Useful Life Benchmark.

Note 4: Indicates electric vehicles.

Source: SLO Transit

Facilities

The SLO Transit Operations and Maintenance Facility is located at 29 Prado Road in San Luis Obispo, and houses all operations, maintenance, and dispatch functions. The facility is located adjacent to the City's Water Department. The facility will eventually host fourteen chargers for BEBs. The 2023 RTP recommended that a new, stand-alone maintenance facility be developed for SLO Transit in the next few years to provide increased vehicle storage capacity and improved amenities for staff.

Park-and-Rides

The City of San Luis Obispo finished developing the Calle Joaquin Park-and-Ride lot in 2018, however, the facility is not currently served by SLO Transit. The spot contains 31 parking spaces, two motorcycle spaces, and a bus turnout.

Passenger Amenities

SLO Transit's passenger amenities help keep passengers safe and comfortable while waiting for the bus. Amenities catered towards bicyclists, such as bike racks, help increase connectivity to the transit system by encouraging bicycling for first/last mile travel. SLO Transit's large passenger amenities are described briefly in this section.

Bus Stops

SLO Transit serves 166 bus stops within San Luis Obispo and the nearby Cal Poly Campus. Of these stops, 50 have shelters and 111 have benches. Solar lights are installed at 23 stops and electronic, real-time schedule signs are installed at 3 stops. Almost all of the SLO Transit bus stops have an information kiosk as well (96 percent). The two largest SLO Transit bus stops are the Government Center transit center and the Cal Poly Kennedy Library. Some SLO Transit stops are shared with the RTA.

Bicycle Amenities

SLO Transit has five bus stops with bicycle racks: the Government Center, Marsh Street at Osos Street, Marsh Street at Chorro Street, the San Luis Obispo Amtrak Station, and Santa Rosa Street at Leff Street.

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Chapter 3

OVERVIEW OF OTHER REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarizes other transportation programs besides the RTA and SLO Transit that operate in the San Luis Obispo County region. It is important to note that this Chapter does not discuss every transportation service in San Luis Obispo County, but instead focuses on the services that provide direct connections to/from the RTA or SLO Transit.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Atascadero Dial-A-Ride

The City of Atascadero provides the Atascadero Dial-a-Ride (DAR) within city limits. The Atascadero DAR service area also extends to the Trader Joe's and medical corridor in Templeton. City staff are directly responsible for management of the transit program and dispatch, while bus operator positions are filled by contracted staff. The City owns all of the Atascadero DAR vehicles, which are equipped with wheelchair lifts and bicycle racks.

The Atascadero DAR is a general public, door-to-door service available on weekdays from 7:30 AM to 3:30 PM. Fares vary by trip distance: the general public fare for trips within the downtown city zone is $5.00, while the general public fare for trips to the outer zone is $8.00. Seniors, disabled residents, and Medicare card holders are eligible for discounted fares. Passengers can schedule rides on the Atascadero DAR to RTA Route 9 bus stops if they need to travel to other communities in the region.

Morro Bay Transit

The City of Morro Bay provides the Morro Bay Transit service, which consists of a single, deviated fixed route available to the general public and the Morro Bay Trolley, which operates on Saturdays and Sundays from early June through early October each year. The City contracts operations responsibilities to an outside agency.

The Morro Bay Transit fixed route operates Monday through Friday from 6:25 AM to 6:45 PM. The deviation feature of the fixed route is referred to as "Call-A-Ride"; to request a deviation up to 0.75 miles from the route, passengers must call dispatch in advance to schedule their pick-up/drop-off. The Call-A-Ride component of Morro Bay Transit is available to the general public. General public one-way fares are $1.50 for the fixed route and $2.50 for Call-A-Ride. Discounted fares are also available. Morro Bay Transit also offers day pass and punch pass products. Morro Bay Transit accepts the Regional Day and 31-Day Pass products. Runabout passengers ride for free with their Runabout card. Passengers who need to travel beyond Morro Bay can transfer to RTA Routes 12 and 15 at a few locations within the city, with the most significant transfer center being the City Park.

Monterey-Salinas Transit

The Monterey-Salinas Transit District (MST) is comprised of the Cities of Carmel, Del Rey Oaks, Gonzales, Greenfield, King City, Marina, Monterey, Pacific Grove, Salinas, Sand City, Seaside, Soledad, and the County of Monterey. MST operates thirty-four fixed routes and complementary paratransit service, referred to as MST Rides, throughout a 159-square-mile service area using a 170-vehicle fleet.

MST Route 84 provides service from King City, in Monterey County, south to Paso Robles, in San Luis Obispo County, serving San Lucas, San Ardo, Bradley, and San Miguel along the way. The service is available seven days per week and makes two roundtrips per day. RTA passengers can transfer to MST Route 84 by taking RTA Route 9 or Paso Robles Routes A/B to the North County Transit Center. The general public fare for Route 84 is $2.00, and the discounted fare is $1.00.

Santa Maria Regional Transit

The City of Santa Maria, in northern Santa Barbara County, operates the Santa Maria Regional Transit (SMRT) service, which consists of twelve local fixed routes, three regional fixed routes, and complementary paratransit service. The SMRT service area includes the City of Santa Maria, as well as the unincorporated communities of Orcutt, Tanglewood, New Cuyama, Lompoc, Vandenberg, Los Alamos, Buellton, Solvang, Santa Ynez, and the Chumash reservation. General public one-way fares are $1.50 for the local fixed routes and $2.00 for the regional routes. Discounted fares are available, as well as various pass products. SMRT and RTA Route 10 both serve the Santa Maria Transit Center. Of note, SMRT recently increased service frequency on most of the fixed routes to 45 minutes instead of hourly, limiting the number of timed-transfer opportunities between SMRT and RTA.

Senior GO!

Senior Go! is a transportation service available to seniors ages 65 and older in San Luis Obispo County. Senior GO! is a SLOCOG program supported by Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds. SLOCOG contracts the RTA to administer the Senior GO! service and Ventura Transit Systems, Inc. to operate the service.

Senior GO! is available weekdays from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM and Saturdays from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Eligible passengers can request up to four one-way trips each month, to and from destinations within San Luis Obispo County. Fares vary based on the distance travelled; the starting one-way fare is $2.50. Passengers can use Senior GO! to access other local and regional transit services within San Luis Obispo County, including the RTA and SLO Transit, by requesting rides to active bus stops.

San Luis Obispo Regional Rideshare

The San Luis Obispo Regional Rideshare (SLO Rideshare) is a division of SLOCOG. The objective of SLO Rideshare is to reduce the need for those who live, work, and/or visit San Luis Obispo County to drive alone. While SLO Rideshare does not directly provide transit services, the program still increases regional mobility by providing trip-planning assistance, offering emergency rides, and coordinating the region's Safe Routes to School program, among other efforts. Programs offered include:

- 511 Trip Planning – people can dial 511 anywhere in San Luis Obispo County for up-to-date information on road conditions, public-transit services, ridesharing, etc.
- iRideshare – a free online ride-matching system.
- Park-and-ride map – SLO Rideshare offers an online map with information on park-and-rides available in the region.
- Emergency rides home – SLO Rideshare helps coordinate free or low-cost rides home in the case of an emergency for all participants registered with iRideshare.
- Technical assistance for developers and jurisdictions looking to reduce the vehicle miles traveled (VMTs) within the project area or community.

NONPROFIT TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS

Cambria Community Bus

The Cambria Community Council is a nonprofit organization that provides transportation assistance to seniors (ages 60 and older) and individuals with disabilities in the communities of Cambria and San Simeon. The Cambria Community Bus is a door-to-door service provided by the Cambria Community Council Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. The service relies on volunteer drivers to provide rides. Passengers must call at least one day in advance to schedule a ride. All rides are free. In addition to local trips, the Cambria Community Bus makes one roundtrip to San Luis Obispo each month for residents with specific shopping or medical needs. Cambria Community Bus passengers can transfer to RTA Route 15 by requesting service to a local bus stop and paying the required RTA fare.

SMOOTH

SMOOTH, Inc. is a private nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing transportation challenges and helping people access the services they need. SMOOTH is contracted by numerous local groups, organizations, and agencies, including the City of Guadulupe, the County of Santa Barbara, and the Tri-Counties Regional Center, to provide transportation services in northern Santa Barbara County, with occasional trips into San Luis Obispo County.

SMOOTH also operates its own Senior Dial-a-Ride (DAR) service in Santa Maria and Orcutt for adults ages 60 and older. The Senior DAR service is available Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM and serves all trip purposes. Residents must schedule rides in advance by calling SMOOTH. One-way fares for the Senior DAR service are $2.00. A personal caretaker can ride along with seniors for free if desired. San Luis Obispo County residents can take advantage of SMOOTH's Senior DAR by first taking RTA Route 10 to Santa Maria, then scheduling a ride on the Senior DAR.

Ride-On Transportation

Ride-On Transportation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving transportation services in San Luis Obispo County. All of Ride-On's proceeds support the nonprofit United Cerebral Palsy of San Luis Obispo County. Ride-On serves as a Consolidated Transportation Service Agency (CTSA) and as a Transportation Management Association (TMA) for the county.

Ride-On's CTSA division provides door-to-door shuttle services for seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, and social-service agencies. The CTSA division also supports other social-service agencies in the area which provide their own transportation by assisting with vehicle maintenance, driver training, and other services. Ride-On's TMA division provides general public-transportation services, including vanpools, shuttles to the San Luis Obispo Airport and local Amtrak stations, medical transportation, and special event transportation, among other services. Ride-On hours vary depending on the program.

PRIVATE FOR-PROFIT REGIONAL PROVIDERS

Amtrak

San Luis Obispo County is served by two Amtrak rail lines: the Coast Starlight and the Pacific Surfliner. The Coast Starlight travels from Seattle to Los Angeles and serves San Luis Obispo County once daily in both the northbound and southbound directions, stopping at the San Luis Obispo Amtrak Station and the North County Transit Center. The Pacific Surfliner serves the southern California coast, stopping in San Diego, Orange County, Los Angeles, and Ventura before eventually arriving in San Luis Obispo. The Pacific Surfliner makes two roundtrips to/from San Luis Obispo County each day, stopping at the Grover Beach and San Luis Obispo Amtrak stations both northbound and southbound.

San Luis Obispo County is also served by Amtrak Thruway bus service, which enables timed connections to the various rail routes. At this time, Thruway bus tickets must be purchased with a train ticket. However, this policy will likely change in upcoming years. Amtrak Thruway Route 17 connects to the Pacific Surfliner train, traveling from San Francisco to Santa Barbara and stopping in Paso Robles, Atascadero, Cal Poly, and San Luis Obispo along the way. Amtrak Thruway Route 18 provides service from Santa Maria to Hanford to provide connectivity to the Capitol Corridor rail, stopping in Grover Beach, San Luis Obispo, Atascadero, and Paso Robles.

There are many different options for San Luis Obispo County residents to connect to Amtrak services via local transit routes, including multiple RTA, SLO Transit, dial-a-ride, and non-profit transportation services. There are no discounts provided to passengers transferring from local transit routes. Amtrak ticket prices, both rail and bus, vary greatly depending on the passenger's intended trip length.

American Star Tours/Flix Bus

American Star Tours and Flix Bus provide long-distance, intercity bus transportation. In San Luis Obispo County, American Star Tours and Flix Bus operate along United States (US) 101, stopping at the Grover Beach Amtrak Station, San Luis Obispo Amtrak Station, the Cal Poly Performing Arts Center, the Atascadero Amtrak Thruway bus stop, and the North County Transit Center. One-way American Star Tours/Flix Bus tickets from San Luis Obispo to San Francisco start at approximately $26.00. One-way American Star Tours/Flix Bus tickets from San Luis Obispo to Los Angeles start at approximately $25.00.

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Chapter 4
CURRENT POLICIES AND STANDARDS

INTRODUCTION

An important element in the success of any organization is a clear and concise set of goals and objectives, as well as the performance measures and standards needed to attain them. This can be particularly important for a public transit agency, for several reasons:

- Transit goals can be inherently contradictory. For instance, the goal of maximizing cost-effectiveness can tend to focus services on the largest population centers, while the goal of maximizing service availability can tend to disperse services to outlying areas. In another example, transit services can be targeted to serve those who are most in need and without automobiles, or they can be designed to be competitive with the private automobile and serve those with access to alternative transportation. To best meet its overall mission, a public transit agency must therefore continually balance the trade-offs between goals. Adopting policy statements allows for a discussion of community values regarding transit at a higher level than possible when considering case-by-case issues.
- As a public entity, a public transit organization is expending public funds and therefore has a responsibility to provide the public with transparent information on how funds are spent. The effectiveness and efficiency of spending can be evaluated by assessing how well a transit agency is meeting its adopted goals. Funding partners also have a responsibility to ensure that funds provided to the transit program are being used appropriately.
- Adopted goals and performance standards help to communicate the values of the transit program to other organizations, to the public, and the organization staff.

Transit agencies should regularly reevaluate goals and standards. This is especially true given service changes implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; in the wake of the pandemic, service standards may need to be modified to be more realistically measure performance. New standards may also be merited for any new services implemented in recent years.

In this chapter, SLO Transit fiscal year (FY) 2022-23 performance is presented alongside existing performance standards. Then, peer transit operators for both programs are analyzed as a means of guiding revised performance standard recommendations.

CITY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO EXISTING POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As the public transit operator for the City of San Luis Obispo, SLO Transit is guided by the transportation policies defined in the City's General Plan. In addition, the City develops transit program goals as part of the biannual budgeting process. Performance standards were developed as part of the 2009 SRTP effort and updated in the 2016 SRTP.

As stated in the *City of San Luis Obispo 2023-2025 Financial Plan*, the SLO Transit Core Service Objectives are as follows:

- Quality transportation for transit-dependent people.
- Convenient transportation for all community members.
- An attractive alternative to driving, which can reduce traffic congestion and air pollution.

SLO Transit Innovation Study

The *SLO Transit Innovation Study* was conducted on behalf of the City by Arcadis (Formerly IBI Group) in 2023. The City Council received a report from staff on the study on January 23, 2024. The dramatic loss in ridership that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic was a motivation for initiating the *Transit Innovation Study*. The *Transit Innovation Study* restates the City of SLO Climate Action Plan objectives of a 7 percent transit mode split, or the proportion of all trips made by transit, by 2030 and a 12 percent transit mode split by 2035.

The *Transit Innovation Study* provides actionable recommendations to improve fixed route service, explore alternative service modes, and broadly enhance transit as a viable alternative to the private automobile to meet the City's adopted mode split objectives. The study recommends 17 transit innovations that are categorized into the following five themes:

- Critical Upgrades that Support Ongoing Operations
- Technologies that Improve Rider's User Experience
- Fare Program Updates to Increase Transit Accessibility
- Enhanced Service and Alternative Transit Options
- Bus Shelter and Street Improvements for Rider Safety and Comfort

The Transit Innovation Study identified the need for improved fixed route service as one of the most critical needs. Specifically, the study recommended that the City consider increasing weekday headways on Routes 3 and 4 to 15-minute headways during the academic year. In addition, the Transit Innovation Study identifies the following strategies for improving fixed route service:

- **Optimize Existing Routes**: The study notes this can include better aligning service with peak demand, reducing travel times, and improving transfers between routes. This "fine-tuning" of routes to meet passenger needs can be done in phases.
- **Establish Express Bus Service**: Express service means establishing limited stops along a route to reduce travel times. One potential option recommended by the study was to explore express bus service to downtown San Luis Obispo.

- **Increase Available Fleet and Drivers**: Adding more buses and drivers would be necessary to increase frequency. Of course, budget constraints may have to involve trade-offs between more frequent service and route coverage throughout the City.
- **Expanding Service Operating Hours**: Expanding service span to begin earlier in the morning and run later at night is another common improvement to fixed route service and another alternative that will be considered in the SRTP. While additional buses are not needed for expanded operating hours, it would require more driver shifts and increased bus mileage.

In addition to fixed route service improvements, the Transit Innovation Study recommends pursuing micromobility services. This would involve implementing one or more app-based on-demand services within specific zones. This is known generally as microtransit, and it could be a strategy to supplement or, in some cases, replace fixed routes to allow for fixed route resources to be relocated to increase fixed route frequency.

The core effort in an SRTP is the evaluation and recommendation of transit service alternatives, along with an assessment of the likely impact on ridership and costs. The 2024 SLO Transit SRTP will incorporate the recommended transit innovations into the service alternatives for SLO Transit as appropriate. In the meantime, City staff have noted that there are a few recommendations from the *Transit Innovation Study* that can be implemented in the short term while the SRTP is underway. Expanded fare options for K-12 students, a recommended innovation, were already implemented in February of 2024: the City Council approved a pilot program to offer K-12 students single-ride fares for $1.00 and 15-ride passes for $15.00. This pilot program will last through June 5, 2025. The other improvements that staff believe can be implemented in the short term are:

- **Open-Loop Fare Payment Technology** – In December 2023, SLOCOG approved $2.6 million in TIRCP funds to implement the open-loop contactless payment system. The City will coordinate with RTA and SLOCOG to introduce this technology.
- **Pursue Grant Funding for Technology Upgrades** – In November 2023, staff submitted projects to SLOCOG for both TIRCP and ZETCP funding for Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) and on-board surveillance cameras for buses. These requests have been submitted to the California State Transportation Agency for review.
- **Upgrades to the Downtown Access Pass (DAP) Program** – Policy changes to simplify this program can be done administratively with minimal cost. The *Transit Innovation Study* recommended replacing the 90-day re-verification requirement with an annual re-verification. Also, it was recommended that enrolling in the program be simplified by completing an easy-to-access form.

San Luis Obispo General Plan

An updated City General Plan Land Use and Circulation Element (LUCE) was adopted by the San Luis Obispo City Council on December 9, 2014. The Circulation Element was amended in 2017 and includes the following key policy and program statements regarding transit:

1.6.1 Transportation Goals- Goal #2 Reduce people's use of their cars by supporting and promoting alternatives such as walking, riding buses and bicycles, and using carpools. (Note that this goal is quantified in the document by setting a goal of 12 percent transit mode split).

1.7.1 Encourage Better Transportation Habits - San Luis Obispo should: 1. Increase the use of alternative forms of transportation and depend less on the single-occupant use of vehicles; and 2. Ask the RTA to establish an objective similar to #1 and support programs that reduce the interregional use of single-occupant vehicles and increase the use of alternative forms of transportation.

1.7.2 Promote Alternative Forms of Transportation - San Luis Obispo should: 2. Complete improvements to the city's transit system serving existing developed areas by 2035 and provide service to new growth areas.

1.7.4 Support Environmentally Sound Technological Advancement – 1B. When replacing any City vehicle or expanding the City's vehicle fleet, the City will consider purchasing alternative fuel vehicles that reduce air pollution.

1.7.5 Support a Shift in Modes of Transportation – San Luis Obispo will: 1. Physically monitor the achievement of the modal shift [of 12% transit], and bi-annually review and adjust transportation programs if necessary.

Traffic Reduction

2.2.4 Incentives for Educational Institutions - The City shall continue to work with Cal Poly, Cuesta College, and other educational institutions to provide incentives to all students, faculty, and staff to use alternative forms of transportation.

Transit Service Policies

3.1.1 Transit Development - The City shall encourage transit accessibility, development, expansion, coordination, and marketing throughout San Luis Obispo County to serve a broad range of local and regional transportation needs.

3.1.2 City Bus Service - The City shall improve and expand the city bus service to make the system more convenient and accessible for everyone. Transit services owned and operated by the City shall endeavor to maintain and improve all systemwide transit standards identified in the City' SRTP.

3.1.3 Paratransit Service – The City shall continue to support paratransit service for seniors and persons with disabilities by public, private, and volunteer transportation providers.

3.1.4 Campus Service - The City shall continue to work with Cal Poly to maintain and expand the "free fare subsidy program" for campus affiliates. The City shall work with Cuesta College and other schools to establish similar programs.

3.1.5 Unmet Transit Needs - The City shall work with SLOCOG to identify and address Unmet Transit Needs.

3.1.6 Service Standards - The City shall implement the following service standards for its transit system and for development that is proximate to the transit network:

A. Routes, schedules, and transfer procedures of the City and regional transit systems should be coordinated to encourage commuter use of buses.

B. In existing developed areas, transit routes should be located within 1/4 mile of existing businesses or dwellings.

C. In City expansion areas, employment-intensive uses or medium, medium-high, or high-density residential uses should be located within 1/8 mile of a transit route.

D. The spacing of stops should balance patron convenience and speed of operation.

3.1.7 Transit Service Access - New developments should be designed to facilitate access to transit service.

Transit Service Programs

3.2.1 Transit Plans - The City shall continue to implement the SRTP (5-year time frame) and coordinate with SLOCOG on implementing the Long-Range Transit Plan (20-year time frame). The Plans shall consider funding partnerships to continue the Downtown Trolley service as part of the overall transit system as funding permits.

3.2.2 Bulk Rate Transit Passes - The City shall make available bulk rate transit passes to all groups.

3.2.3 Commuter Bus Service - The City of San Luis Obispo shall work with the RTA to maintain and expand commuter bus service to and from the City of San Luis Obispo during peak demand periods consistent with the SRTP and Long-Range Transit Plan.

3.2.4 Transit Service Evaluation - The City shall coordinate with the RTA to evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of consolidated service.

3.2.5 Marketing and Promotion - The City shall develop and maintain a comprehensive marketing and promotion program to reach individual target audiences.

3.2.6 - The City shall update its SRTP to evaluate adding mass transit stops at the high school and the middle school.

3.2.7 - When evaluating transportation impacts, the City shall use a Multimodal Level of Service analysis.

3.2.8 Regional Transit Center - The City shall work with other agencies to develop a regional transit center downtown.

Air Transportation Policies

11.1.3 Public Transit Service - The City shall encourage improved public transit service to the County airport as soon as practical.

City of San Luis Obispo Climate Action Plan for Community Recovery (2020)

The City of San Luis Obispo adopted the Climate Action Plan for Community Recovery (CAP) in 2020. The CAP provides a work program to help the City reach carbon neutrality by 2035. A high-functioning transit system is a key component of the CAP and for reducing vehicle miles traveled. The CAP calls for electrifying transit fleets, reducing service headways, and for exploring new transit alternatives, such as microtransit, Bus Rapid Transit, and Transit Signal Priority, in the *2024 SLO Transit SRTP*. CAP also recommends assessing the feasibility of a no-cost transit membership program. Some projects recommended in the CAP, such as updating the City's Active Transportation Plan and developing a transit electrification plan, have since been completed.

Volume 2 of the CAP is the Technical Foundation and Work Program, which includes the following actions related to transit:

Connected Community Action 4.1: Develop a transit electrification strategic plan and begin implementing it in 2020.

Connected Community Action 4.2: Shorten transit headways through accelerated implementation of the existing SRTP.

Connected Community Action 4.3: Explore additional innovative transit options in the 2024 SRTP (e.g., on-demand deviated routes, electric fleet expansion, microtransit, Bus Rapid Transit, and Transit Signal Priority).

Connected Community Action 4.3: Assess the feasibility of a "free to the user" transit ridership program.

Volume 3 of the CAP is the 2023-2027 Work Program, which includes the following near-term actions:

Connected Community Action 4.1.A: Continue to electrify the SLO Transit bus fleet.

Connected Community Action 4.2.A: Incorporate recommendations from the *Transit Innovation Study* into the SRTP and begin implementation immediately.

Biennial Budgeting Process

The City has developed an integrated process that ties goal setting with the bi-annual budget development. SLO Transit has a crucial role in the Major City Goal (MCG) for Climate Action, Open Space & Sustainable Transportation. The key strategies to support the City's goal related to transit, and therefore relevant to the 2024 SRTP, are included below.

Major City Goal (MCG) Strategic Approach 4.3-

"Preserve and Enhance Convenient and Equitable Alternative and Sustainable Transportation Options: The City will continue to implement actions in support of General Plan mode share targets (e.g., 50 percent of trips occurring outside of a single occupancy vehicle). This will occur through continued disciplined focus on the implementation of the highest priority ("Tier 1") Active Transportation projects, innovations and improvements to transit service, and supportive programming. For those that need to drive, the City will focus on enabling and deploying publicly accessible electric vehicle charging infrastructure."

Task K – "Transit Innovation Study implementation: Begin Planning implementation of strategies recommended in the Final Transit Innovation Study, including the incorporation of near-term strategies as part of the SLO Transit/RTA Short Range Transit Plan update, as called for in CAP Connected Community Task 4.2.A and the APMP Strategies 1.C."

Within the Department of Public Works, the strategic goal to support the citywide MCGs is the following:

"Create a new division within the Public Works Department that will lead Parking, Transit, and Active Transportation with the goal of creating a cohesive team that will increase mobility within the City focusing on bridging gaps between transit, active transportation, and parking programs. Implement

objectives from the Active Transportation Plan including trail, pedestrian, and bicycle improvements and street enhancements to uphold traffic safety".

This new division has been named the Mobility Services Division of Public Works which aims to further the organizational effectiveness of transit, parking, and active transportation under one umbrella division.

2016 Short Range Transit Plan

The last SRTP Update for the City of San Luis Obispo was completed in 2016 by LSC Transportation Consultants and AECOM, Inc. The 2016 SRTP included SLO Transit Service Standards, which were updated and carried over from the 2009 SRTP. Some of the key performance standards were based on the average of peer systems in the last SRTP update. The peer analysis conducted in the 2016 SRTP has been updated, as shown in Table 5, using the most recently available NTD annual reporting data (FY 2021-2022)

SLO Transit Triennial TDA Performance Audit

Every three years public transit operators in California that receive Transportation Development Act funding are reviewed by an independent firm selected by the Regional Transportation Planning Agency. This is known as the Triennial Performance Audit (TPA).

For the FY 2013-14 through FY 2016-17 TDA TPA, SLO Transit was found to comply with all applicable TDA requirements. SLO Transit was also found to have partially implemented or to have been in the process of implementing two of the four recommendations made in the previous audit. The recommendations made in the audit were as follows:

1. "*Revise revenue and cash handling practices to be compliant with industry best practices for an operation the size and scope of SLO Transit.*
2. *Provide consistent and accurate performance measures on all transit reporting, including State Controllers Reports, National Transit Database, and SLOCOG.*
3. *Take positive steps, in cooperation with the new operations manager, to develop an esprit de corps among SLO Transit operators and contractor staff.*
4. *Complete a full outside maintenance audit.*
5. *Enhance SLO Transit's website to improve usability.*
6. *Add Grants and Reporting Coordinator position and reallocate duties among four (4) Transit Service positions."*

During the most recent audit period (FY 2017-18 – FY 2019-20), SLO Transit fully complied with six out of the nine applicable TDA requirements. SLO Transit was in partial compliance with submitting reports to the State Controller on time, calculating full-time employee equivalent data, and meeting farebox recovery ratio standards. SLO Transit had implemented three of the six previous audit recommendations (recommendations 3, 4, and 6, as numbered above), was in the process of implementing one recommendation (recommendation 1), and had partially implemented one recommendation (recommendation 2). The TPA provided three new recommendations for SLO Transit:

1. *"Ensure that full-time-employee-equivalent data reported are consistent with the TDA definition.*
2. *Pursue the negotiation of a new transit-services agreement with Cal Poly that reflects the new operating environment.*
3. *Continue advocacy for funding a transit-grants coordinator."*

FTA Triennial Review

SLO Transit's latest FTA Triennial Review covered the three FYs of 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22. No deficiencies were found in 18 of the 23 topic areas covered in the review. The review found the deficiencies noted below.

1. *Financial Management and Capacity – ECHO Documentation Deficient.*
2. *Financial Management and Capacity – Inadequate procedures for identifying federally assisted buildings in special flood hazard area and for determining sufficient levels of insurance*
3. *Financial Management and Capacity – No Evidence of physical inventory or reconciliation*
4. *Procurement – Lacking independent cost estimate*
5. *Procurement – Missing FTA Clauses*
6. *Procurement – Lobbying certifications not included in procurement solicitations or signed by bidders*
7. *Procurement – Contract files lacking signed Buy America certifications*
8. *Procurement – Missing documentation of bus model testing*
9. *Disadvantaged Business Enterprise – DBE Uniform reports contain inaccuracies and/or are missing required information*
10. *Disadvantaged Business Enterprise – Unreported transit vehicle purchases*
11. *ADA Complementary Paratransit – Insufficient oversight of contractors providing ADA complementary paratransit*

The staff has addressed each of the deficiencies and will submit corrective actions to FTA in March of 2024.

SLO Transit Service Standards

Table 4 presents the existing SLO Transit service standards, FY 2022-23 performance for each metric, and recommended changes to the performance measures. In past SRTPs, SLO Transit's fiscal condition standards of farebox recovery ratio, passengers per vehicle revenue hour, cost per passenger, and cost per vehicle revenue hour were tied to the performance of peer agencies. Because the City's goals for transit are unique and ambitious, this SRTP proposes no longer linking SLO Transit performance standards to peers. Instead, peer agency performance should be used simply as a gauge to understand if SLO Transit is performing within industry norms.

The Standard for farebox recovery ratio is set at 20 percent based on SLOCOG requirements. A minimum standard and a higher-performing target are being set for productivity, cost-effectiveness, and cost-efficiency standards. The recommended measures in these categories are as follows:

- **Passengers per Vehicle Revenue Hour** is set at a minimum of 11.5 based on the peer average, and a target standard of 36 based on the highest ridership year of FY 2015-16.
- **Cost per Passenger** is set at a maximum of $11.23 based on the peer average, and a target standard of $3.85 based on current system costs and the ridership in FY 2015-16.
- **Cost per Vehicle Revenue Hour** is set at a maximum of $145 based on the FY 2022-23 actuals with 5 percent allowed for inflation of labor, services, and supplies. This may need to be reevaluated based on future operating contract renewals. The target standard is set at $137.04 based on increasing vehicle revenue hours and miles back to the level provided in FY 2015-16 at current system costs.

Table 4: SLO Transit Service Standards (1/2)

Service Delivery and Coverage				
Standard	**Existing Measure**	**FY 2022-23 Performance**	**Proposed Measure**	**Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility**
Residential Availability	90% of population within ¼ mile of a bus route	66%	No Change	Reported by Mobility Services Division Annually to the City Council
Fixed Route Transit Availability to Major Activity Centers	Employment concentrations of 200 or more employees	Substantially served by transit	No Change	Reported by Mobility Services Division Annually to the City Council
	Health Centers	Substantially served by transit	No Change	
	Middle and High Schools	Substantially served by transit	No Change	
	Colleges/Universities	Substantially served by transit	No Change	
	Shopping Centers over 25 stores or 100,000 SF of retail space	Substantially served by transit	No Change	
	Social Service/Government Center	Substantially served by transit	No Change	
Bus Stop Spacing	5 to 7 stops per mile in core (every other block)	Data to be verified	Provide 5 to7 stops per mile in core service area (every other block)	Reported by Mobility Services Division Annually to the City Council
	Fringe 4 to 5 per mile, as needed based on land uses	Data to be verified	Provide 4 to 5 stops per mile outside of core service area based on land uses	Reported by Mobility Services Division Annually to the City Council
Frequency	30 minute peak 60 minute off peak	Route 1AB = 60min; Route 2= 60min; Route 3AB=30&60min; Route 4AB=45min; San Luis Tripper= 4 round trips; Laguna Tripper=1 round trip; 6X=30min; Trolley=20min	15 minute peak 30 minute off peak (as feasible within budget constraints and service availability goals) 60 minute minimum	Reported by Mobility Services Division Annually to the City Council
Span	5 AM to 10 PM on weekdays	6:15 AM-11:10 PM Weekdays	Will modify based on service alternatives	
	6 AM to 7 PM on weekends	8:15 AM - 8:10 PM Weekends	8:15 AM - Midnight on Friday/Saturday	
Directness	Maximum 25% of passengers transferring	Per October, 2023 on-board survey 20% of SLO Transit passengers transferred	Maximum 20% of passengers transferring	
Dependability	95% on-time service (not early and no more than 5 minutes late)	Data to be verified	No Change	
Service Delivery Rate	-- New Standard --	To begin measuring in FY 2024/24 or earlier if possible	99% or greater	

Patron Convenience				
Standard	**Existing Measure**	**FY 2022-23 Performance**	**Proposed Measure**	**Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility**
Speed	Regular routes maximum of 15 MPH	Systemwide operating speed is 11.1 MPH. Route 3A is highest MPH @ 13.7; Route 4B is lowest MPH @ 8.3	Regular routes will operate at maximum of 15 MPH and a Minimum of 8 MPH	Reported by Mobility Services Division Annually to the City Council
Loading	25% standees for short periods acceptable	Data to be verified	No more than 25% standees for 15 minute periods	Reported by Mobility Services Division Annually to the City Council
Public Information	Timetable, maps, advertising	Public Information is widely available in all formats.	Website, Social Media, Timetable, maps, advertising shall be kept current and widely available. Adhere to the adopted public notice policy.	Reported by Mobility Services Division Annually to the City Council

Sources: 2016 Short Range Transit Plan; 2022 National Transit Database; FY 2022-2023 SLO Operating Data

Table 4: SLO Transit Service Standards (2/2)

Fiscal Condition

Standard	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
No significant financial audit findings.	-- New Standard --	No negative audit findings	No Change	Finance and Administration will report any negative audit findings.
Fare Structure	Fare Structure -Qualitative criteria	Base one-way fare is $1.50 with discounts to senior and disabled. Multiple fare products available to passengers. CalPoly students ride free of charge	Offer a Fare Structure that serves varied ridership markets and is simple for patrons to understand and use, and is up to date with current with technology	Mobility Services Staff with City Council Approval of Fare Structure Modifications
Farebox Recovery	Farebox Recovery - Significantly alter routes less than 60% of peer group average	19.1%	TDA minimum farebox ratio of 20% systemwide including local support	Track Quarterly by Mobility Services Staff and report annually to City Council
	Review and modify routes between 60% and 80% peer group average	--	Review and modify routes that are less than the systemwide required TDA farebox ratio	
Productivity	Significantly alter routes less than 60% of peer group average	Passengers per Vehicle Revenue Hour = 16.7	Px/VRH Min= 11.5 SRTP Target = 36.0	Track Quarterly by Mobility Services Staff and report annually to City Council
	Review and modify routes between 60% and 80% peer group average	--	Review and modify routes that are less than the minimum	
Cost Effectiveness and Efficiency	Significantly alter routes more than 140% of peer group average, or SLO system average cost per passenger	Cost per Pax= $8.26 Cost per VRH = $137.74	**Cost Per Passenger** Max = $11.23 SRTP Target = $3.85 **Cost per VRH** Max = $145 SRTP Target = $137.04	Track Quarterly by Mobility Services Staff and report annually to City Council
	Review and modify routes between 120% and 140% average	--	Review and modify routes that exceed the the maximum	

Safety

Standard	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
Collisions	--	Begin tracking on an annual basis	Rate of preventable vehicle collisions will not exceed 1 per 100,000 vehicle miles	Reported by Mobility Services Division Annually to the City Council

Fleet and Facilities

Standard	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
Waiting Shelters	25 or More Boardings	Data to be verified	Provide passenger shelters, seating and lighting for bus stops with 20 or more boardings per day	Reported by Mobility Services Division Annually to the City Council
	--	--	Provide lighting at 100% of bus stops	Reported by Mobility Services Division Annually to the City Council
Bus Stop Signs	Denote SLO Transit, contact information, and route	Bus stop sign information denotes route and contact information	100% of signs are accurate, readable and in good condition	Reported by Mobility Services Division Annually to the City Council
Revenue Equipment	Clean and good condition	Bus appearance is clean and in good condition	100% of preventive maintenance will be performed within 10% of the scheduled mileage interval, or every 3 months	Reported by Mobility Services Division Annually to the City Council
	--	--	Replace 100% of all revenue vehicles no more than 40% beyond the FTA-defined useful life standard in terms of years or miles	Reported by Mobility Services Division Annually to the City Council
Road Call Ratio	4,000 to 6,000 miles per road call	Data to be verified	No more than 5 road calls per 100,000 vehicle revenue miles	Reported by Mobility Services Division Annually to the City Council

Sources: 2016 Short Range Transit Plan; 2022 National Transit Database; FY 2022-2023 SLO Operating Data

SLO TRANSIT PEER COMPARISON

The purpose of this peer comparison is to provide information to gauge if local transit operating statistics are reasonable on a systemwide basis and to provide the agency information to evaluate potential changes to services and performance measures. The 2016 SRTP included a focused peer analysis to quantify SLO Transit's fiscal and productivity standards. In addition, the 2016 SRTP included a more expanded peer analysis which was used to inform the creation of service alternatives. For this Working Paper #2, the peers from the prior SRTP were reviewed and narrowed down to the six peer transit systems below. These peers were selected, in consultation with City staff, based on university campus enrollment, city population, and number of buses in maximum fixed route service being within the same order of magnitude as San Luis Obispo. Also, for this comparison, zero-fare systems were not selected. The peer agencies are as follows:

- Bloomington-Normal, IL
- Bowling Green, KY
- St. Cloud, MN
- Pocatello, ID
- Flagstaff, AZ
- Pueblo, CO

The peer data shown is gathered from the National Transit Database 2021-2022 Reporting Year. It should be noted that multiple factors can cause variations in ridership, costs, and revenues among public transit operations. In addition, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic impacted ridership and service delivery differently among peers, factors which were not evaluated in this comparison.

Table 5 displays the performance indicators for the six peer transit agencies provides an analysis of SLO Transit's performance indicators in relation to the grouped peer statistics and ranks SLO Transit's performance indicators in relation to all peers combined.

For this peer comparison, an additional metric of Passenger Trips per Capita has been added. Among the peer fixed route services for 9 performance indicators, SLO has an average ranking of 3 out of 7 operators, including SLO Transit. SLO Transit's highest ranking is 1st for average fare per passenger and farebox recovery ratio. SLO Transit's lowest ranking is 7th for operating cost per vehicle revenue mile. It is notable that SLO Transit has the second-ranked farebox recovery ratio and is 248 percent of the peer average in that category. The passenger trips per capita among the peer agencies vary significantly from 1 passenger per capita in Bowling Green, KY to 33 in Bloomington-Normal, IL. The peer average is 11 passenger trips per capita. SLO Transit ranks 3rd with 10 passengers per capita. This peer comparison does not include a comparison of demand response peers because the City of SLO does not operate ADA paratransit service.

Table 5: SLO Transit Peer Group Data and Performance Indicators

	Input Data [1, 2]								
Peer System	**University**	**Fall 2022 Enrollement**	**City Population 2022**	**Fixed Route Buses in Service**	**Operating Expenses**	**Fare Revenue**	**Vehicle Revenue Miles**	**Vehicle Revenue Hours**	**Unlinked Passenger Trips**
Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System	Illinois State University	20,683	52,838	26	$10,627,212	$1,180,732	1,215,890	100,154	1,718,364
City of Bowling Green	Western Kentucky University	16,495	74,926	10	$1,176,202	$12,579	175,435	14,595	54,157
City of Pocatello, dba: Pocatello Regional Transit	Idaho State University	12,319	57,730	11	$1,112,945	$143,879	258,832	16,245	126,544
Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority, dba: Mountain Line public transit	Northern Arizona University	23,207	75,907	19	$9,129,849	$1,129,816	912,707	73,569	1,298,670
City of Pueblo, dba: Pueblo Transit	Colorado State University Pueblo	33,648	111,456	14	$4,013,846	$308,974	482,040	34,791	497,528
St. Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission, dba: Metro Bus	St. Cloud State University	10,093	69,568	20	$9,338,001	$578,880	980,663	72,238	598,396
City of San Luis Obispo, CA	Cal Poly San Luis Obispo	21,778	48,341	15	$3,348,735	$710,758	330,244	28,144	468,945

	Performance Indicators								
Peer System	**Passenger Trips per Capita**	**Cost per Vehicle Revenue Mile**	**Cost per Vehicle Revenue Hour**	**Passenger per Vehicle Revenue Mile**	**Passengers per Vehicle Revenue Hour**	**Cost per Passenger**	**Average Fare**	**Subsidy per Passenger-Trip**	**Farebox Recovery Ratio**
Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System	33	$8.74	$106.11	1.41	17.2	$6.18	$0.69	$5.50	11.1%
City of Bowling Green	1	$6.70	$80.59	0.31	3.7	$21.72	$0.23	$21.49	1.1%
City of Pocatello, dba: Pocatello Regional Transit	2	$4.30	$68.51	0.49	7.8	$8.79	$1.14	$7.66	12.9%
Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority, dba: Mountain Line public transit	17	$10.00	$124.10	1.42	17.7	$7.03	$0.87	$6.16	12.4%
City of Pueblo, dba: Pueblo Transit	4	$8.33	$115.37	1.03	14.3	$8.07	$0.62	$7.45	7.7%
St. Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission, dba: Metro Bus	9	$9.52	$129.27	0.61	8.3	$15.61	$0.97	$14.64	6.2%
Peer Maximum	*33*	*$10.00*	*$129.27*	*1.42*	*17.7*	*$21.72*	*$1.14*	*$21.49*	21.2%
Peer Average	*11*	*$7.93*	*$103.99*	*0.88*	*11.5*	*$11.23*	*$0.75*	*$10.48*	10.4%
Peer Minimum	*1*	*$4.30*	*$68.51*	*0.31*	*3.7*	*$6.18*	*$0.23*	*$5.50*	1.1%
City of San Luis Obispo, CA	**10**	**$10.14**	**$118.99**	**1.42**	**16.7**	**$7.14**	**$1.52**	**$5.63**	**21.2%**
SLO Transit % of Peer Avg.	89%	128%	114%	161%	145%	64%	201%	54%	205%
SLO Transit Rank (1 = Best)	3	7	5	2	3	3	1	2	1

Note 1: Peer Data for FY 2021-22

Note 2: Data for fixed route services only.

Source: National Transit Database; US Census

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (SLOCOG)

As the Regional Transportation Planning Agency and the Metropolitan Planning Organization, SLOCOG is integral in the funding allocation and planning process for transportation projects and programs including public transit. As such, it is worthwhile to review SLOCOG policies and monitoring efforts. As discussed below, the primary policy document that directly addresses transit policy, funding, and projects is the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

SLOCOG 2023-2045 RTP

SLOCOG's 2023 – 2045 Regional *Transportation Plan,* adopted in June of 2023, provides an important regionwide planning and policy document. The Vision Statement of the RTP is *"A fully integrated, intermodal transportation system that facilitates the safe and efficient movement of people, goods, and information within and through the region."* To support the vision the RTP identifies the seven "Pillars" of Infrastructure, Mobility, Economy, Safety, Healthy Communities, Environment, and Fiscal Responsibility that are supported by Goals and Policy Objectives. The RTP identifies 28 Action Strategies specifically for public transportation[3].

EXISTING MONITORING AND ONGOING SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PROCESSES

RTA

RTA staff conducts the following data collection and evaluation regularly:

- Ridership by service/route
- Service quantities
- Productivity
- Costs and budget tracking
- Farebox recovery ratio
- Preventable collisions
- Road calls

The following data is reviewed quarterly (and reported to the board semi-annually):

- Service delivery rate
- On-time performance by route and by service
- Passenger loads (crowding) by route

Other standards are reviewed on an annual or biennial basis.

[3] SLOCOG 2023-2045 Regional Transportation Plan Final, Adopted June 7, 2023 – Chapter 3: Vision, Goals Policies

City of San Luis Obispo

Monthly, the contractor (Transdev) provides a summary report that details the following:

- Ridership by route by fare category
- Total passenger revenue by fare category
- Revenue and non-revenue vehicle hours and miles, by route and by weekday/Saturday/Sunday
- Ridership per revenue vehicle-miles and revenue vehicle-hour, by route
- Costs and budget tracking

A "Performance Measures Report" is prepared by SLO Transit staff quarterly. This summarizes the following data:

- Passengers by mode (fixed route daytime, trolley, fixed route evening)
- Revenue-hours and revenue-miles by mode
- Productivity (passengers per revenue hour) by mode
- Contractor operating costs by mode
- Fare revenues by mode
- Farebox ratio by mode
- Average fare by mode
- Cost and subsidy per rider, by mode
- Year-over-year trends in ridership by fare type, revenue hours, and revenue miles, by weekday/Saturday/Sunday

GOALS AND POLICIES DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is an initial discussion of recommendations for goals, objectives, and standards. This may be updated for the draft plan based on the results of the service alternatives analysis.

CITY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

The City's *General Plan* provides a reasonable set of goals for the transit program. It bears noting that if the City is to achieve the General Plan and Climate Action Plan goal of a 12 percent transit mode split by 2035, it would require a substantial expansion of transit ridership. SLO Transit achieved its highest ridership in FY 2015-2016 at just over 1.2 million boardings. In the first full fiscal year of the COVID-19 pandemic – FY 2020-2021 – ridership fell to 179,456. Ridership increased to 515,002 in FY 2022-2023 and continues to increase. City staff recently reported that a comparison of existing transit ridership with total travel demand indicates that at present approximately 2 percent of travel is via transit[4]. SLO Transit would need to double its current ridership to return to the 2016 peak ridership of 1.2 million. At that time, staff reported a calculated mode share of 7 percent for transit. It also may well require some combination of "auto disincentives" such as expanded paid parking programs and restrictions on parking availability to achieve the 2030 goal of 7 percent and the 2035 goal of 12 percent.

It would be beneficial to the transit program to develop and adopt its own Mission Statement separate from the City's. This key policy element can help focus the organization on those ideals that are most important and can also help create a sense of common purpose within the staff of the Mobility Division of DPW. A reasonable starting point would be "*To enhance the mobility and environment of San Luis Obispo through effective and safe public transit services."*

Recommended standards for SLO Transit services are identified in Table 4. Specific considerations regarding the performance standards are as follows:

- The service span standards for weekends (6:00 AM to 7:00 PM) may be too broad, as it exceeds the current AM span (8:15 AM to 8:10 PM). The service span for weekdays (5:00 AM to 10:00 PM) is exceeded by existing service at night, which is 11:10 PM for Route 3A. However, morning service begins at 6:15 AM, which is 1 hour and 15 minutes after the stated standard. Service to the Cal Poly campus later into the night has been discussed in recent public forums as being a priority transit improvement. This SRTP process will evaluate expanded span of service as part of the potential service alternatives.
- The road call ratio shown in the 2009 and 2016 SRTP (4,000 to 6,000 miles per road call) would better be stated as "no less than X road calls per 100,000 vehicle service miles". In the FY 2021-2022 National Transit Data Report, SLO Transit reported an average of 4,234 miles between major mechanical failures. The median number of miles between major mechanical failures (similar definition to "road call") for similar-size fixed route operators in California was 27,000 miles[5]. Given that the current minimum standard of 4,000 miles is relatively low compared to

[4] 2019 City Transportation Survey as reported by City staff in January 23, 2024 Council Agenda Report for the Transit Innovation Study Review

[5] FY 2022 NTD Annual Data – Using California operators with 75 or fewer vehicles in maximum service for motor bus mode only.

the transit industry's typical standards, it is recommended that a standard of “no more than 5 road calls per 100,000 vehicle revenue miles” be added. In addition, it is recommended that transit staff review the incidents reported as major mechanical failures that fit the definition provided in the NTD reporting guidelines to ensure that mechanical failures are not being over-reported.

- The operating speed standard is stated as a maximum of 15 MPH. It is recommended that a minimum route operating speed be established as well. Given the current range of operating speeds between 8.3 and 13.7 MPH among SLO Transit routes, the recommended measure is “Regular routes will operate at a maximum of 15 MPH and a minimum of 8 MPH”.
- The recommended changes to the Farebox Recovery Ratio, Passengers per Vehicle Hour, Cost per Passenger, and Cost per Vehicle Revenue Hour are discussed in the introduction to Table 4 above. The quantification of these standards is based on a review of peers, current year costs, and the maximum ridership in FY 15/16.

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Chapter 5
STUDY AREA CHARACTERISTICS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the demographic and economic characteristics of both San Luis Obispo County and the City of San Luis Obispo, with a focus on data relevant to transit demand and the near-term future of RTA and SLO Transit services.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population Projections

Population projections are useful for estimating how transit demand may change in the future; if the population grows, transit demand will likely increase as well. Population projections by age group for San Luis Obispo County, sourced from the California Department of Finance, are shown in Table 6. Overall, the San Luis Obispo County population size is expected to remain relatively consistent over the upcoming decades, growing by less than 2 percent from 2020 to 2040.

Within the current decade, the fastest-growing age group is senior adults: from 2020 to 2030, the population of mature retirees (those between 75 and 84 years old) is forecasted to grow by 61 percent and the population of older seniors (those ages 85 and older) is forecasted to grow by 24 percent. The older senior population is expected to continue growing from 2030 to 2040, meaning the older senior cohort will almost double in size from 2020 to 2040 (+98 percent). All the other age cohorts are experiencing negative growth this decade except for infants and toddlers (+3 percent). The college-aged adult population projections do not account for the many Cal Poly students who do not live in San Luis Obispo County full-time and therefore are not technically considered residents.

The forecasted growth of San Luis Obispo County's senior adult population is important, as many seniors rely on transportation services for mobility. The growing senior population will likely drive increased demand for transportation services catered to the needs of seniors, such as non-emergency medical transportation, door-through-door services, and paratransit.

Table 6: San Luis Obispo County Population Projections by Age Category

Year	Total (All Ages)	Preschool (0-4 years)	School Age to Young Adult (5-17 years)	College Age (18-24 years)	Working Age (25-64 years)	Young Retirees (65-74 years)	Mature Retirees (75-84 years)	Older Seniors (85 or older)
2020	282,639	12,638	35,703	32,797	141,676	34,410	17,428	7,987
2030	286,547	13,015	33,548	32,333	134,940	34,639	28,131	9,941
2040	287,621	15,367	34,702	25,380	142,440	25,058	28,855	15,819
2020 to 2030 Change								
Number	3,908	377	-2,155	-464	-6,736	229	10,703	1,954
Percent	1%	3%	-6%	-1%	-5%	1%	61%	24%
2030 to 2040 Change								
Number	1,074	2,352	1,154	-6,953	7,500	-9,581	724	5,878
Percent	0%	18%	3%	-22%	6%	-28%	3%	59%

Sources: US Census Bureau, California Department of Finance. Report P-2B: Population Projections by Individual Year of Age, 2010-2060, California Counties

Transit Dependent Population

A large portion of transit ridership is drawn from what is referred to as the transit-dependent population. The transit-dependent population is typically considered to comprise youths, senior adults, persons with a disability, low-income persons, and persons who live in zero-vehicle households. This section discusses where transit-dependent persons live in San Luis Obispo County and the City of San Luis Obispo, and in turn what areas of the County and City have the greatest need for transit services based on demographics. Appendix B includes additional data and maps depicting where transit-dependent persons live in both the County and City.

San Luis Obispo County

An analysis of San Luis Obispo County demographic data by census tract (Appendix B), sourced from the US Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 2022 5-Year Estimates, yielded the following takeaways:

About 17 percent of San Luis Obispo County residents are **youth** younger than 18 years old, slightly lower than the rate observed across the State of California (22 percent). Communities home to large numbers of the overall countywide youth population include Paso Robles, the City of San Luis Obispo, Atascadero, Nipomo, and Arroyo Grande.

Senior adults over the age of 65 comprise 21 percent of the total San Luis Obispo County population, a greater rate compared to the State of California (16 percent). The City of San Luis Obispo, Paso Robles, Arroyo Grande, and Los Osos are all home to significant proportions of the overall countywide senior population.

13 percent of San Luis Obispo County residents have a **disability**, based on the definition used by the US Census Bureau. This is a similar disability prevalence in the State of California (12 percent). Large proportions of the countywide disabled population live in the City of San Luis Obispo, Paso Robles, Arroyo Grande, and Atascadero.

It is estimated that 12 percent of San Luis Obispo County residents are **persons living below the federal poverty level**. The San Luis Obispo County poverty rate is identical to what is observed across the State of California as a whole (12 percent). Although the City of San Luis Obispo is technically home to about half of the county's low-income population, this statistic is swayed due to the large number of full-time students living in the community. Other communities with large numbers of low-income residents include Paso Robles and Atascadero.

The US Census Bureau estimated that 4 percent of San Luis Obispo County homes are **zero-vehicle households**. This is a lower rate than the State of California as a whole (7 percent). A third of the county's zero-vehicle households are located in the City of San Luis Obispo. Other communities with many of the county's total zero-vehicle households are Atascadero, Paso Robles, Arroyo Grande, and Nipomo. It should be noted that San Luis Obispo County has an identical rate of single-vehicle households as the State of California (31 percent).

San Luis Obispo County Transit Needs Index

The purpose of the Transit Needs Index (TNI) is to discern which areas of San Luis Obispo County have the greatest comparative need for transit services across all of the transit-dependent subgroups. The TNI succinctly reveals how transit-dependent residents are distributed across San Luis Obispo County, and in turn where additional or expanded transportation services may be most warranted. The San Luis Obispo County TNI is shown in Table 7 and Figures 3 through 6.

To develop the TNI, the population density of each subgroup was calculated for each census tract. Then, the concentration values were divided into five groups. The groups were used to rank the subgroups within each community on a scale of 1 (very low need) to 5 (very high need) based on the density of said group (number of people per square mile) compared to the respective density of that demographic group in the other census tracts. The five respective rank scores for each census tract were then summed to determine an overall TNI rank.

The areas with the highest TNI ranks, and therefore the greatest assumed need for transportation services, are Grover Beach, Oceano, west and southwest Arroyo Grande, Paso Robles, Baywood Park in Los Osos, and various neighborhoods in the City of San Luis Obispo. Transit needs within the City of San Luis Obispo are discussed in greater detail in the following section. Regions of San Luis Obispo County with moderate need for transit services, based on the TNI, include northeast Morro Bay, Atascadero, and Nipomo. All of the areas with high to moderate needs are already served with transit, either by the RTA, SLO Transit, or other local transit services such as Morro Bay Transit, Atascadero Dial-a-Ride, or Nipomo Dial-a-Ride.

It should be noted that while the TNI provides a useful assessment of transit needs, other factors, such as total population size and development density, also need to be considered when determining where to expand transit services. For instance, even though some areas ranked highly in the TNI due to a high concentration of potentially transit-dependent persons in the area, the overall populations are small. Consequently, it may not be feasible to operate transportation services in those areas due to the high operating cost that would be required but likely very low ridership.

Note: *View from Pismo Preserve* [Photo]. Sourced from Highway 1 Roadtrip, 2023.

Table 7: San Luis Obispo County Transit Needs Index (1/2)

Legend	
1	Very Low Rank
2	Low Rank
3	Medium Rank
4	High Rank
5	Very High Rank

Census Tract		Rank: Youth (Under 18 Years)	Rank: Senior Adults (65+)	Rank: Persons with a Disability	Rank: Persons Below Poverty Level	Rank: Zero-Vehicle Households	Overall Transit Needs Index Rank
100.16	San Miguel	1	1	1	1	1	5
100.17	Lake Nacimiento	1	1	1	1	1	5
101.01	Paso Robles - West	1	1	1	1	1	5
101.03	Paso Robles - Central	1	1	1	1	1	5
101.04	Paso Robles - North	5	1	2	1	1	10
102.02	Paso Robles - South East	1	1	1	1	1	5
102.04	Paso Robles - South	5	3	2	1	1	12
102.05	Paso Robles - East	5	4	2	1	3	15
102.06	Paso Robles - Union Road	2	1	1	1	1	6
102.07	Paso Robles - North East	1	1	1	1	1	5
103.01	Shandon	1	1	1	1	1	5
103.02	Paso Robles, Templeton	1	1	1	1	1	5
103.03	Whitley Gardens	1	1	1	1	1	5
104.03	Cambria - South	1	1	1	1	1	5
104.04	Cambria - North	1	1	1	1	1	5
105.04	Cayucos	1	1	1	1	1	5
105.05	Morro Bay - North East	1	3	3	1	1	9
105.06	Morro Bay - North West	1	1	1	1	1	5
106.02	Morro Bay - South	1	2	1	1	1	6
106.03	Morro Bay - Central	1	1	1	1	1	5
107.01	Los Osos - Baywood Park	5	5	4	1	1	16
107.03	Los Osos - East	3	2	1	1	1	8
107.07	Los Osos - Cuesta-by-the-Sea	1	1	1	1	1	5
109.02	SLO - Northeast	1	1	1	5	5	13
109.03	Cal Poly SLO - South	1	1	2	4	5	13
109.04	Cal Poly SLO - North	1	1	1	1	1	5
110.01	SLO - Southeast	1	1	1	1	1	5
110.02	SLO - East	1	1	1	1	1	5
111.01	SLO - Downtown	2	1	3	3	5	14
111.03	SLO - South	1	1	1	1	1	5
111.04	SLO - Broad St	3	1	1	1	5	11
111.05	SLO - South Central	5	4	1	1	5	16
112.01	SLO - Foothill Blvd, Highland D	1	1	1	1	1	5
112.02	SLO - Downtown (Northwest)	1	1	1	1	1	5
113	SLO - Laguna Lake	1	1	1	1	1	5

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

Table 7: San Luis Obispo County Transit Needs Index (2/2)

Legend	
1	Very Low Rank
2	Low Rank
3	Medium Rank
4	High Rank
5	Very High Rank

	Census Tract	Rank: Youth (Under 18 Years)	Rank: Senior Adults (65+)	Rank: Persons with a Disability	Rank: Persons Below Poverty Level	Rank: Zero-Vehicle Households	Overall Transit Needs Index Rank
114	CA Men's Colony	1	3	1	1	1	7
115	SLO - S. Higuera St.	4	2	3	1	1	11
115.1	SLO - Camp SLO, SLO Airport	1	1	1	1	1	5
116	Avila Beach, Port San Luis	1	1	1	1	1	5
117	Pismo Beach, Shell Beach	1	2	1	1	1	6
117.1	Pismo Beach - South	1	3	1	1	1	7
117.1	Pismo Beach - East	1	1	1	1	1	5
118	Arroyo Grande - North	1	1	1	1	1	5
119	Arroyo Grande - Southeast	1	1	1	1	1	5
119	Arroyo Grande - West	4	4	1	1	1	11
119	Arroyo Grande - Southwest	5	5	5	1	5	21
120	Grover Beach - South	5	5	5	1	1	17
120	Grover Beach - East	5	4	5	1	1	16
121	Grover Beach - West	5	3	3	1	1	13
122	Oceano - West	4	2	2	1	1	10
122	Oceano - Halcyon	4	5	4	1	4	18
123	Edna, Huasna	1	1	1	1	1	5
123.1	Los Berros	1	1	1	1	1	5
123.1	Black Lake, Callender	1	1	1	1	1	5
124	Nipomo - Southwest	2	1	1	1	1	6
124	Nipomo - Northwest	2	1	1	1	1	6
124.1	Nipomo - Southeast	1	1	1	1	1	5
124.1	Nipomo - Northeast	2	1	1	1	1	6
125	Atascadero - Northeast	4	1	1	1	1	8
125	Atascadero - Southeast	4	1	1	1	1	8
125.1	Atascadero - North	1	1	1	1	1	5
126	Atascadero - Southwest	2	1	1	1	1	6
126	Atascadero - Northwest	1	1	1	1	1	5
127.1	Santa Margarita	1	1	1	1	1	5
127.1	Santa Rita, Morro Toro	1	1	1	1	1	5
127.1	Templeton - West	1	1	1	1	1	5
127.1	San Luis Obispo Co. - Southeast	1	1	1	1	1	5
130	San Simeon	1	1	1	1	1	5
131	Templeton, Creston	1	1	1	1	1	5

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

Figure 3:
San Luis Obispo County Transit Needs Index

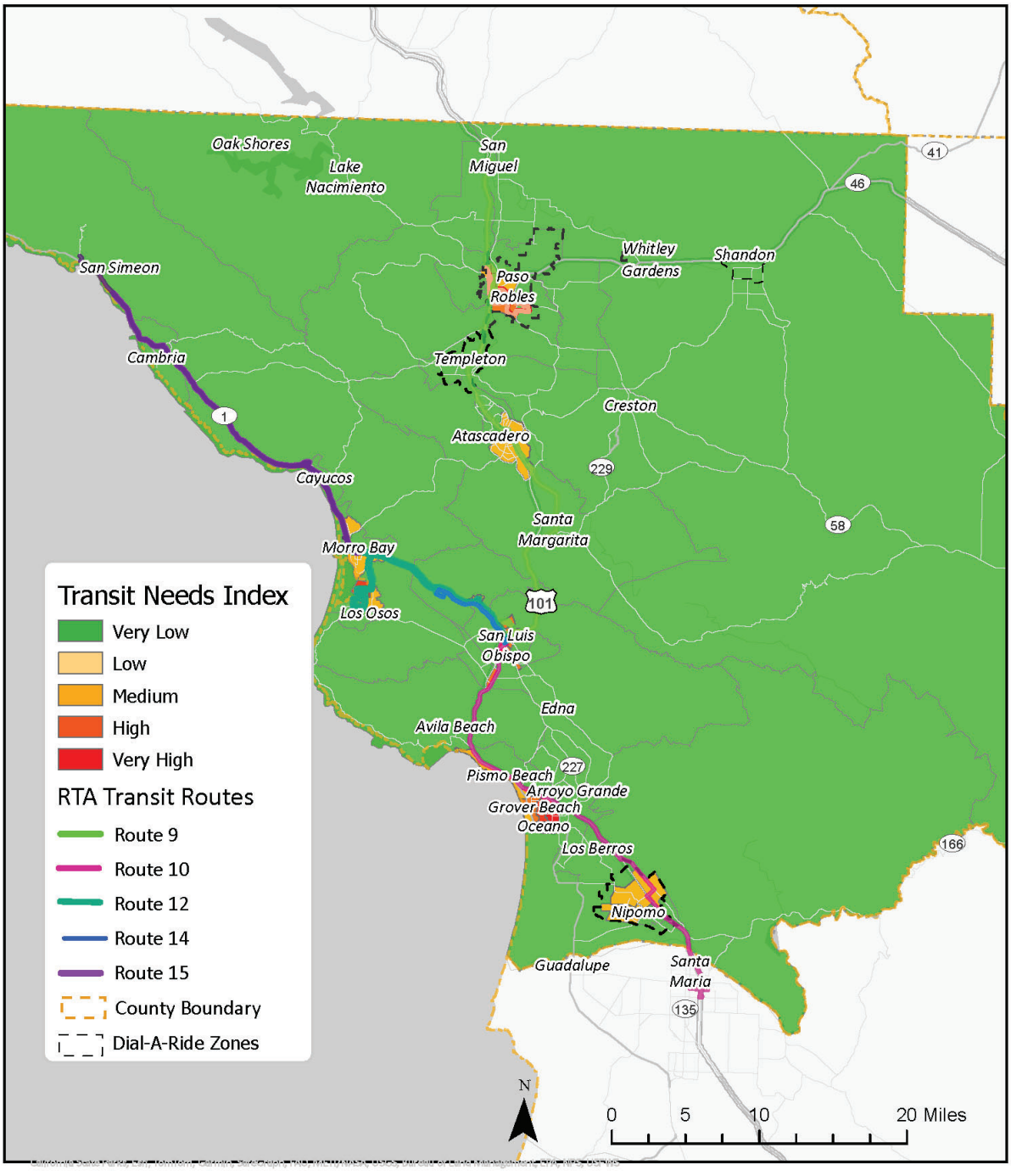


Figure 4:
North County Transit Needs Index

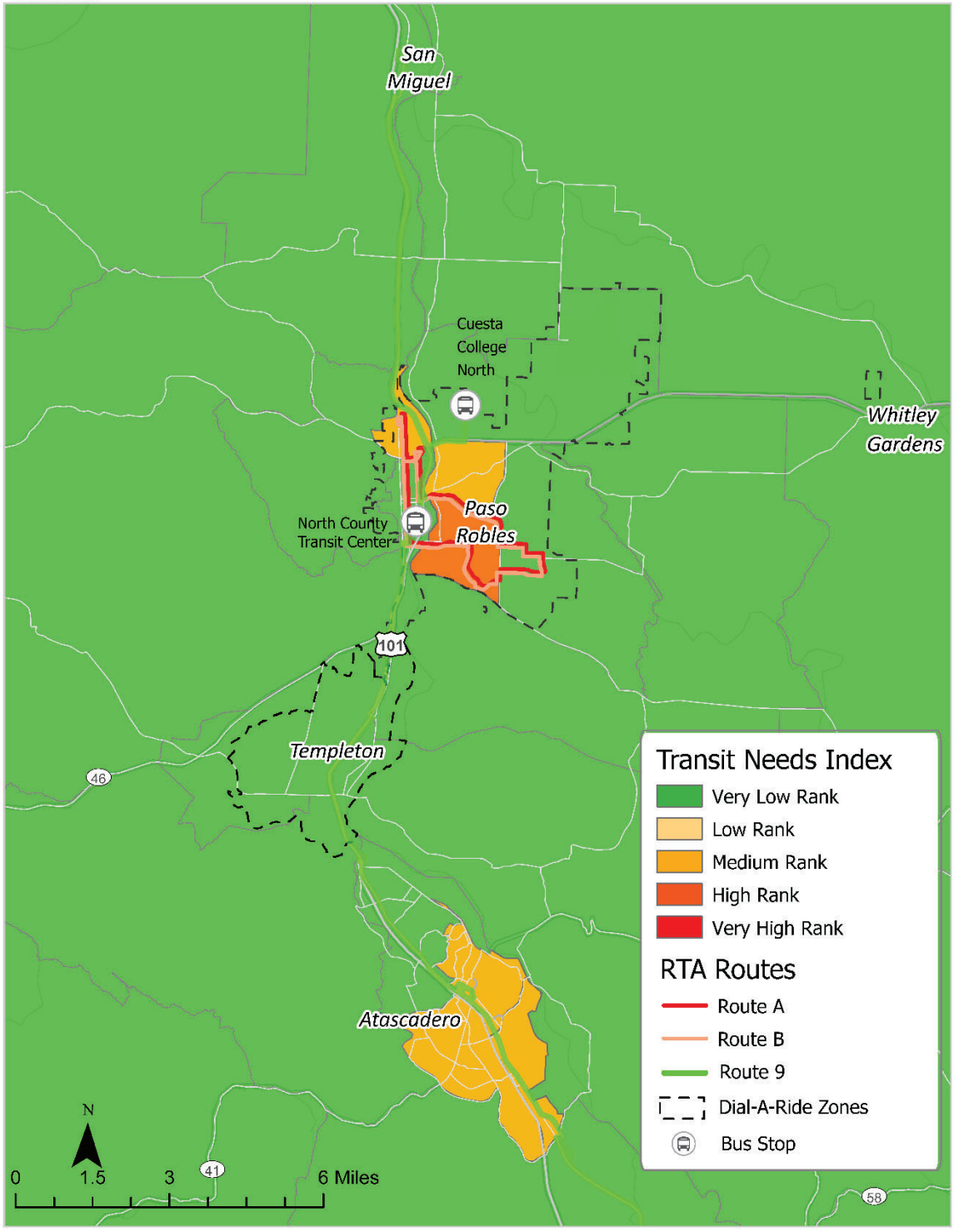


Figure 5:
South County Transit Needs Index

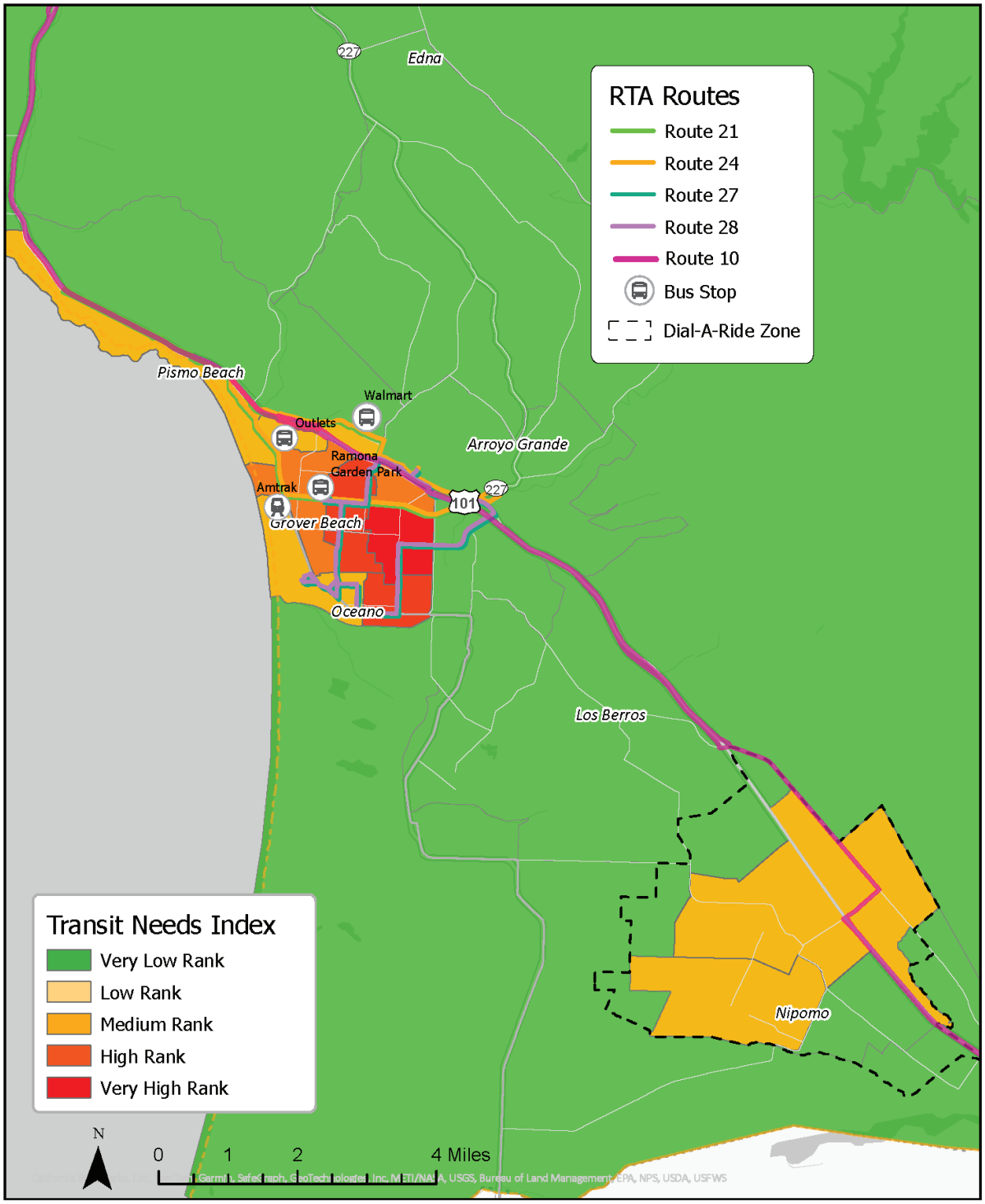
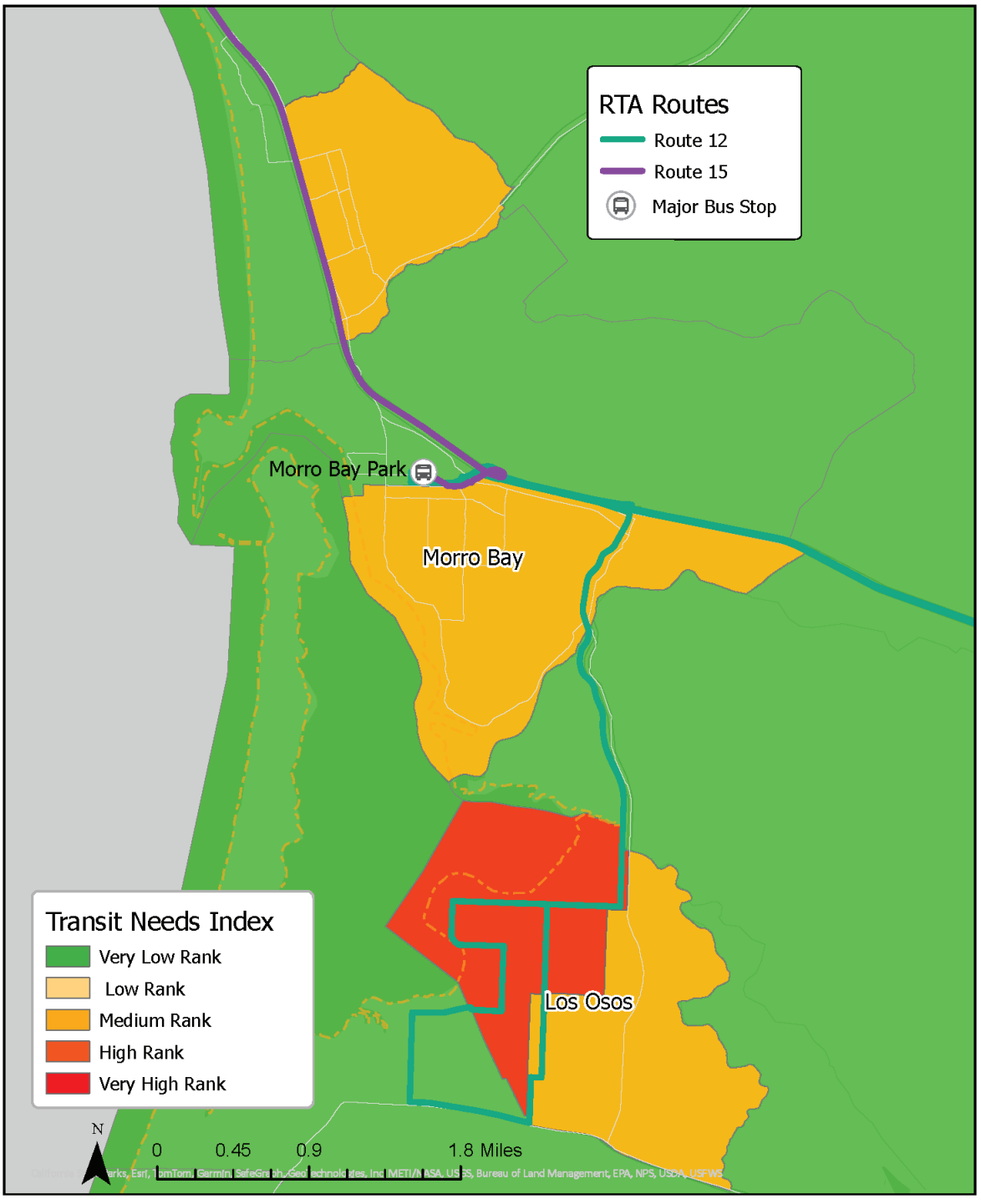


Figure 6:
Morro Bay Area Transit Needs Index



City of San Luis Obispo

City of San Luis Obispo demographic data, sourced from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) 2022 5-Year Estimates, was reviewed by the census block group to determine patterns regarding transit dependency. Key trends are listed below:

Youths younger than 18 years old comprise 9 percent of the city's population, similar to the rate observed countywide. Block groups with large youth populations include those encompassing the southeastern and southern areas of the city, Laguna Lake, S. Higuera Street, and the area near the San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport.

About 12 percent of the City of San Luis Obispo's residents are **senior adults** over the age of 65, significantly less than the countywide rate. Block groups in the southeastern, southern, and Laguna Lake areas of San Luis Obispo are home to the greatest number of senior adults.

The City of San Luis Obispo has a low disability rate, with only 8 percent of the city's population estimated to have a **disability** per US Census Bureau definitions. The three block groups home to the most disabled residents are located in southern San Luis Obispo, in the northwestern area of Downtown, and along S. Higuera Street.

A quarter of residents in the City of San Luis Obispo are estimated to be **persons living below the federal poverty level**, as defined by the US Census Bureau. This is significantly higher than the countywide rate (12 percent), however, this statistic is influenced by the high number of university students living in the city who do not work or only work part-time. Block groups with large numbers of low-income residents include those encompassing Downtown, Foothill Boulevard, Highland Drive, the northeastern portion of the city, and the neighborhoods directly adjacent to the Cal Poly campus.

7 percent of homes in the City of San Luis Obispo are **zero-vehicle households**, a greater proportion than what is observed countywide. Most zero-vehicle households are located in block groups encompassing Downtown, Broad Street, and neighborhoods near Cal Poly. The City has a similar rate of single-vehicle households as the State and County (32 percent).

City of San Luis Obispo Transit Needs Index

As previously mentioned, the Transit Needs Index (TNI) shows which areas have the greatest relative need for transit services based on the concentration of transit-dependent residents. The method for calculating the TNI ranks was described in the previous section discussing countywide demographics. The City of San Luis Obispo TNI is shown in Table 8 and Figure 7.

Most areas of the City of San Luis Obispo have moderate to high transit needs based on the TNI. Block groups encompassing Downtown and south-central San Luis Obispo have the overall highest TNI ranks, scoring either high or very high for the majority of demographic categories considered. Block groups with moderate transit need, based on the TNI, are found in northeastern, eastern, and southeastern San Luis Obispo, along S. Higuera Street, Foothill Boulevard, and Highland Drive, as well as near the southern portion of the Cal Poly campus. Of the aforementioned areas with high to moderate transit needs, all are served with some level of SLO Transit and/or service.

Table 8: City of San Luis Obispo Transit Needs Index

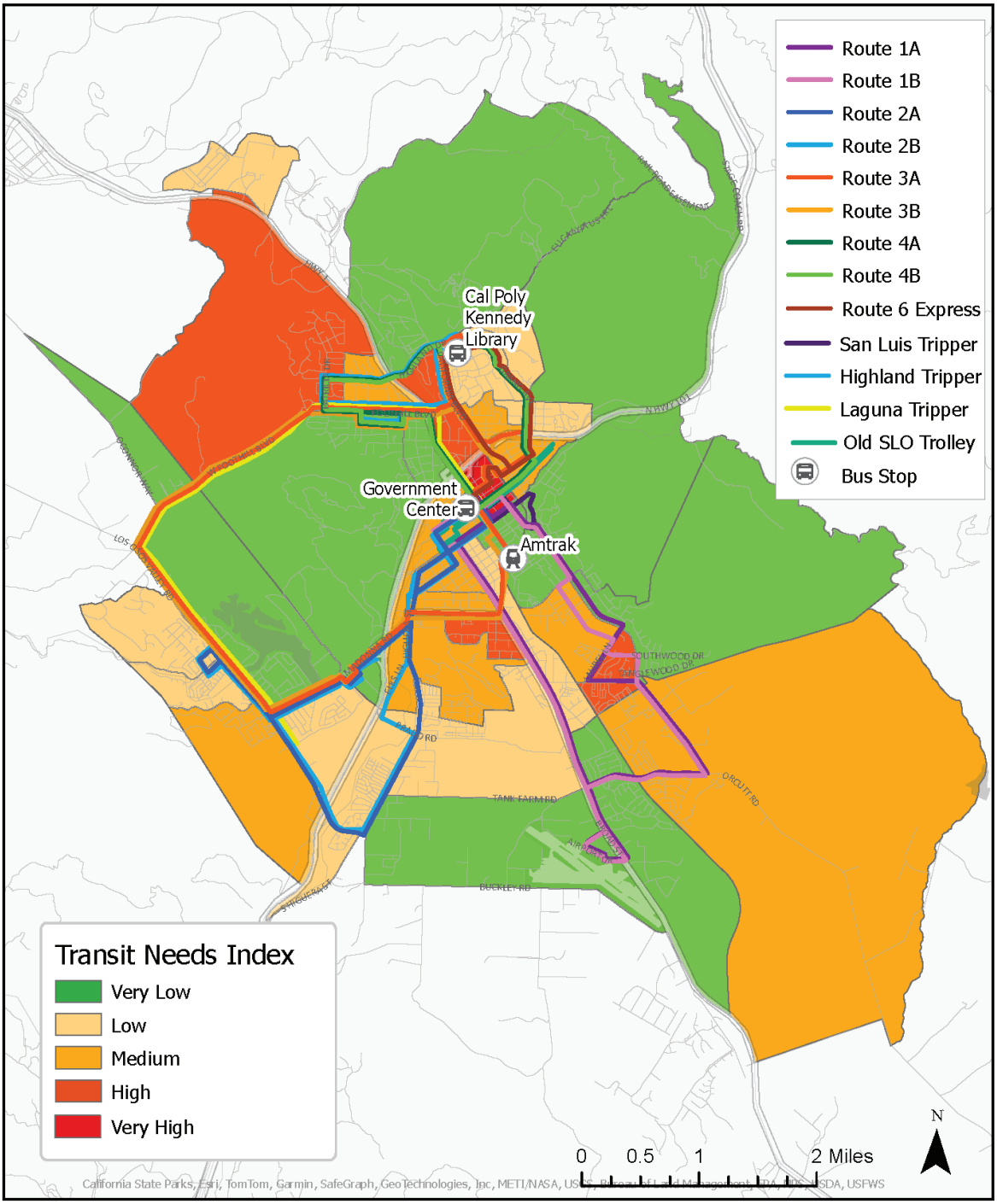
Legend	
1	Very Low Rank
2	Low Rank
3	Medium Rank
4	High Rank
5	Very High Rank

Census Tract	Block Group		Rank: Youth (Under 18 Years)	Rank: Senior Adults (65+)	Rank: Persons with a Disability	Rank: Persons Below Poverty Level	Rank: Zero-Vehicle Households	Overall Transit Needs Index Rank
109.02	1	SLO - Northeast	1	4	1	2	1	9
109.02	2	SLO - Northeast	1	1	4	5	4	15
109.02	3	SLO - Northeast	1	1	5	5	5	17
109.03	1	Cal Poly SLO - South	1	1	5	4	5	16
109.03	2	Cal Poly SLO - South	1	1	3	1	2	8
109.03	3	Cal Poly SLO - South	1	1	4	1	3	10
109.04	1	Cal Poly SLO - North	1	1	1	1	1	5
109.04	2	Cal Poly SLO - North	1	1	1	1	1	5
110.01	1	SLO - Southeast	5	5	5	1	1	17
110.01	2	SLO - Southeast	1	1	1	1	1	5
110.01	3	SLO - Southeast	3	5	4	1	1	14
110.02	1	SLO - East	1	1	1	1	1	5
110.02	2	SLO - East	1	5	5	1	2	14
111.01	1	SLO - Downtown	5	4	5	2	5	21
111.01	2	SLO - Downtown	1	3	3	1	4	12
111.01	3	SLO - Downtown	3	3	4	1	4	15
111.03	1	SLO - South	1	2	1	1	1	6
111.03	2	SLO - South	1	3	1	1	1	7
111.04	1	SLO - Broad St	3	3	3	1	4	14
111.05	1	SLO - South Central	4	5	1	1	2	13
111.05	2	SLO - South Central	5	5	4	1	5	20
111.05	3	SLO - South Central	4	5	1	1	2	13
112.01	1	SLO - Foothill Blvd, Highland D	3	4	5	4	1	17
112.01	2	SLO - Foothill Blvd, Highland D	1	1	1	1	1	5
112.02	1	SLO - Downtown (Northwest)	1	1	1	1	1	5
112.02	2	SLO - Downtown (Northwest)	1	4	3	1	3	12
113	1	SLO - Laguna Lake	1	1	1	1	1	5
113	2	SLO - Laguna Lake	1	2	1	1	1	6
113	3	SLO - Laguna Lake	3	3	2	1	1	10
113	4	SLO - Laguna Lake	3	1	1	1	1	7
113	5	SLO - Laguna Lake	1	4	2	1	1	9
114	1	CA Men's Colony	1	5	1	1	1	9
115.01	1	SLO - S. Higuera St.	4	4	4	1	1	14
115.05	1	Camp SLO, SLO Airport	1	1	1	1	1	5
115.05	2	Camp SLO, SLO Airport	1	1	1	1	1	5

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

Route Map Outdated. Will be Updated in Final Plan

Figure 7:
City of San Luis Obispo Transit Needs Index



The City TNI should be considered alongside other data, such as total population size, activity centers, and development density, to determine whether transit services should be increased to unserved or underserved areas.

COMMUTING PATTERNS

Commuting data for San Luis Obispo County, sourced from the US Census Longitudinal Employer Household Dynamics dataset (2021), is presented in Table 9. The top portion of the table shows where employees working in San Luis Obispo County commute from, while the bottom portion shows where residents of San Luis Obispo County commute to.

Table 9: San Luis Obispo County Commute Patterns

Where Employees In San Luis Obispo County Commute From

Counties	# of Jobs	% of Total	Cities/Towns	# of Jobs	% of Total
San Luis Obispo	71,112	68.0%	**San Luis Obipo**	11,977	11.5%
Santa Barbara	11,633	11.1%	**Paso Robles**	9,661	9.2%
Los Angeles	3,310	3.2%	**Atascadero**	9,285	8.9%
Kern	1,608	1.5%	Santa Maria	6,077	5.8%
Fresno	1,511	1.4%	**Arroyo Grande**	4,540	4.3%
Monterey	1,490	1.4%	**Los Osos**	3,933	3.8%
Orange	1,204	1.2%	**Nipomo**	3,648	3.5%
Ventura	1,046	1.0%	**Grover Beach**	3,487	3.3%
San Diego	910	0.9%	**Morro Bay**	2,978	2.8%
Tulare	907	0.9%	**Templeton**	2,453	2.3%
All Other Locations	9,862	9.4%	All Other Locations	46,554	44.5%
Total Number of Jobs	**104,593**		**Total Number of Jobs**	**104,593**	

Where San Luis Obispo County Residents Commute to

Counties	# of Jobs	% of Total	Cities and Towns	# of Jobs	% of Total
San Luis Obispo	71,112	64.8%	**San Luis Obipo**	20,635	18.8%
Santa Barbara	10,911	9.9%	**Paso Robles**	9,444	8.6%
Los Angeles	7,630	7.0%	**Atascadero**	7,097	6.5%
Orange	2,227	2.0%	Santa Maria	6,330	5.8%
Kern	2,121	1.9%	**Arroyo Grande**	3,669	3.3%
Monterey	1,663	1.5%	Los Angeles	3,467	3.2%
Fresno	1,656	1.5%	**Templeton**	3,298	3.0%
Ventura	1,521	1.4%	**Pismo Beach**	2,776	2.5%
Santa Clara	1,399	1.3%	**Morro Beach**	2,665	2.4%
San Diego	1,119	1.0%	**Grover Beach**	1,904	1.7%
All Other Locations	8,385	7.6%	All Other Locations	48,459	44.2%
Total Number of Jobs	**109,744**		**Total Number of Jobs**	**109,744**	

Note: Bold text indicates locations within San Luis Obispo County.

Source: US Census Bureau LEHD Database, 2021.

It is important to note that the data represents a; number of jobs and not the number of people; one person may hold multiple jobs across the study area, however, this is not reflected in the LEHD data. Another caveat is that the LEHD data does not indicate whether a job is held by a remote worker, however, some remote work patterns can be assumed. For instance, likely, most San Luis Obispo County residents with jobs located in Los Angeles County are working remotely at least part of the time. Even with these caveats, the LEHD data still provides useful information about popular commute patterns that could potentially be served by transit.

Most San Luis Obispo County jobs are held by county residents (68 percent). The San Luis Obispo County communities that supply the greatest number of employees are the Cities of San Luis Obispo (12 percent of county jobs), Paso Robles (9 percent), and Atascadero (9 percent). Notably, 11 percent of San Luis Obispo County jobs are held by residents of Santa Barbara County, and about 6 percent are held by residents of Santa Maria specifically. In the City of San Luis Obispo, 38 percent of jobs held by employed residents are located within the City itself (6,700).

As expected, the majority of San Luis Obispo County residents' jobs are also within the county (65 percent). Nearly one out of every five positions held by San Luis Obispo County residents are located in the City of San Luis Obispo (19 percent). Other places where large numbers of San Luis Obispo County residents work include Paso Robles (9 percent of jobs held by county residents), Atascadero (7 percent), and Arroyo Grande (3 percent). The top out-of-county location where San Luis Obispo County residents are employed is Santa Barbara County (10 percent of jobs held by San Luis Obispo County residents). More specifically, 6 percent of jobs held by San Luis Obispo County residents are located in Santa Maria. According to a study conducted by the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments, the residents commuting south to Santa Barbara County tend to live in Nipomo, Arroyo Grande, and Grover Beach.[6]

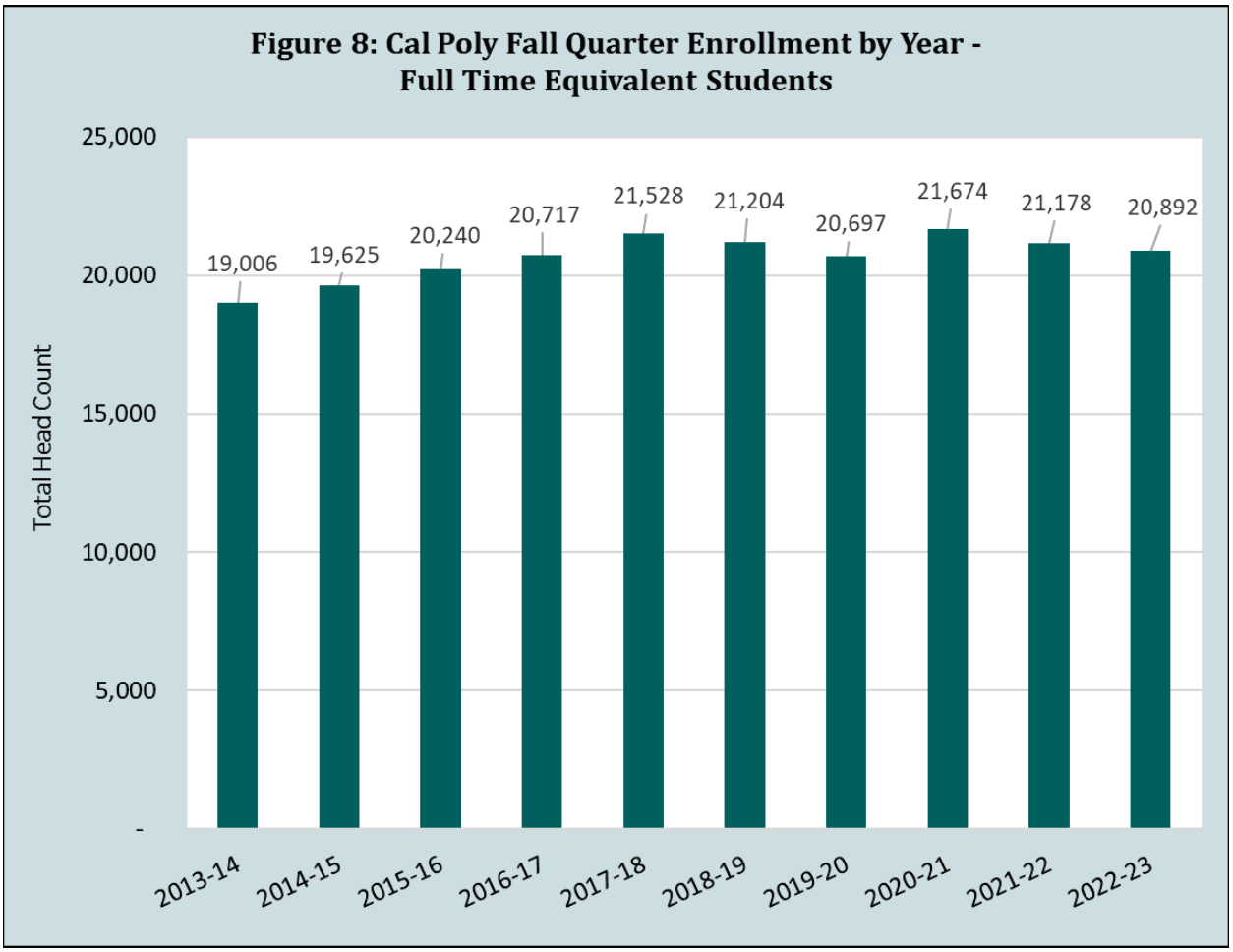
Considering the number of workers estimated to be traveling in either direction, the LEHD data suggests about 11,000 people are commuting between San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties regularly. This trip is currently served by RTA Route 10; however, it is important to evaluate whether the RTA 10 schedule can be improved to maximize commuter ridership.

Looking at the potential for transit to serve popular commutes, it is necessary to consider how commuting patterns have changed since the COVID-19 pandemic. The widespread implementation of remote and hybrid work policies in the wake of the pandemic has resulted in many people commuting less frequently in 2024 than in 2019, therefore reducing the need for transit services designed for commuters. This trend was noted in a recent report by the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments, which found through an analysis of Replica data that about 15 percent of Santa Barbara County resident workers were working from home on any given day in 2022, up from 6 percent in 2019. Interestingly, the same report found that the shift to working from home only occurred for Santa Barabara County residents with an annual income of $75,000 to $100,000 or more. As lower-income workers are more likely to use the bus, this indicates a continued need for transit service for work purposes and Cal poly enrollment.

[6] Santa Barbara County Association of Governments. (2023). *Understanding Regional Travel Patterns – Draft* [PDF].

The California Polytechnic University (Cal Poly) is a four-year California State University in the City of San Luis Obispo. Cal Poly is a major transit trip generator for both the RTA and SLO Transit, as many students and staff rely on transit for their transportation needs. Cal Poly has had 20,000 to 21,500 full-time equivalent students enrolled during the Fall Quarter since the 2015-16 school year. Cal Poly's historical enrollment, based on the Fall Quarter Census, is shown in Figure 8.

Per the *Cal Poly Campus Master Plan* (2019), Cal Poly intends to increase the student headcount to 25,000 by 2035, an increase of about 4,000 students compared to 2022. The growing student body will likely drive increased demand for transit services within the City of San Luis Obispo as well as the greater region. Another factor that may influence Cal Poly transit ridership in the future is that Cal Poly is undertaking multiple capital projects that will increase the total number of students living on campus from 8,000 to 15,000 by 2030. This increase in Cal Poly's on-campus residential capacity will be correlated to an increase in staff to manage the new facilities. The planned shift towards more students living on campus may alter SLO Transit travel patterns in particular, with peak hourly ridership likely changing as a result of more students starting their day on campus.



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Chapter 6

EVALUATION OF SAN LUIS OBISPO TRANSIT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter evaluates SLO Transit operations and performance. First, ten-year operating trends are discussed. Then, a more detailed performance assessment by service is presented for FY 2022-23. Additional route-specific data is incorporated into the route profiles included in Appendix C.

In addition to reviewing operations data, LSC solicited public, stakeholder, and bus operator feedback to learn how SLO Transit services are utilized and perceived by both passengers and community members alike, as well as to determine short-term service improvements to help SLO Transit better meet local transportation needs. Input regarding SLO Transit was gathered through an onboard survey, an online community survey, stakeholder meetings, and drop-in bus operator interviews. These efforts are summarized in Appendices D (onboard survey), E (community survey), and F (stakeholder and bus operator input).

SLO TRANSIT TEN-YEAR TRENDS

Two major events influenced SLO Transit operations in the last ten years: the COVID-19 pandemic and the nationwide bus operator shortage. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted many businesses and schools to institute remote work policies to encourage people to comply with regional stay-at-home orders. The widespread adoption of remote work/school policies caused SLO Transit ridership to plummet, and this ridership decline in turn caused SLO Transit to reduce service levels.

In the years since the COVID-19 pandemic, many bus operators have either retired or left their positions in pursuit of higher-paying roles with less public exposure. This trend has resulted in a nationwide bus operator shortage. Locally, the high cost of living in San Luis Obispo County and the City of San Luis Obispo has limited the number of potential bus operators even further. The bus operator shortage has made it incredibly difficult for SLO Transit to resume pre-pandemic service levels.

Operations

SLO Transit's ten-year (FY 2013-14 through FY 2022-23) operations data are shown in Table 10. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and bus operator shortage are evident in the data; SLO Transit ridership declined significantly in FY 2019-20 as local businesses and schools, including Cal Poly, moved to remote formats. While most businesses and schools are operating in-person once again as of 2024, SLO Transit has not returned to pre-pandemic service levels due to several factors, including staffing levels and lower ridership.

Table 10: SLO Transit Operations - FY 2013-14 - FY 2022-23

Fiscal Year	Service Parameters				
	Passenger-Trips	Service Hours	Service Miles	Operating Costs	Local Revenue
2013-14	1,142,749	32,983	399,892	$3,235,378	$650,800
2014-15	1,099,547	33,016	396,269	$3,445,334	$656,115
2015-16	1,209,707	33,963	412,377	$3,450,953	$721,541
2016-17	1,131,879	34,698	437,145	$3,701,634	$702,644
2017-18	945,288	37,535	382,799	$3,532,310	$771,861
2018-19	981,995	39,599	441,483	$3,533,504	$703,061
2019-20	715,383	32,882	372,376	$3,283,817	$643,776
2020-21	179,456	29,994	330,124	$3,116,232	$323,759
2021-22	468,945	28,144	330,244	$3,348,735	$710,758
2022-23	515,002	30,870	343,103	$4,252,122	$742,743
% Change FY 13-14 to FY 22-23	**-55%**	**-6%**	**-14%**	**31%**	**14%**

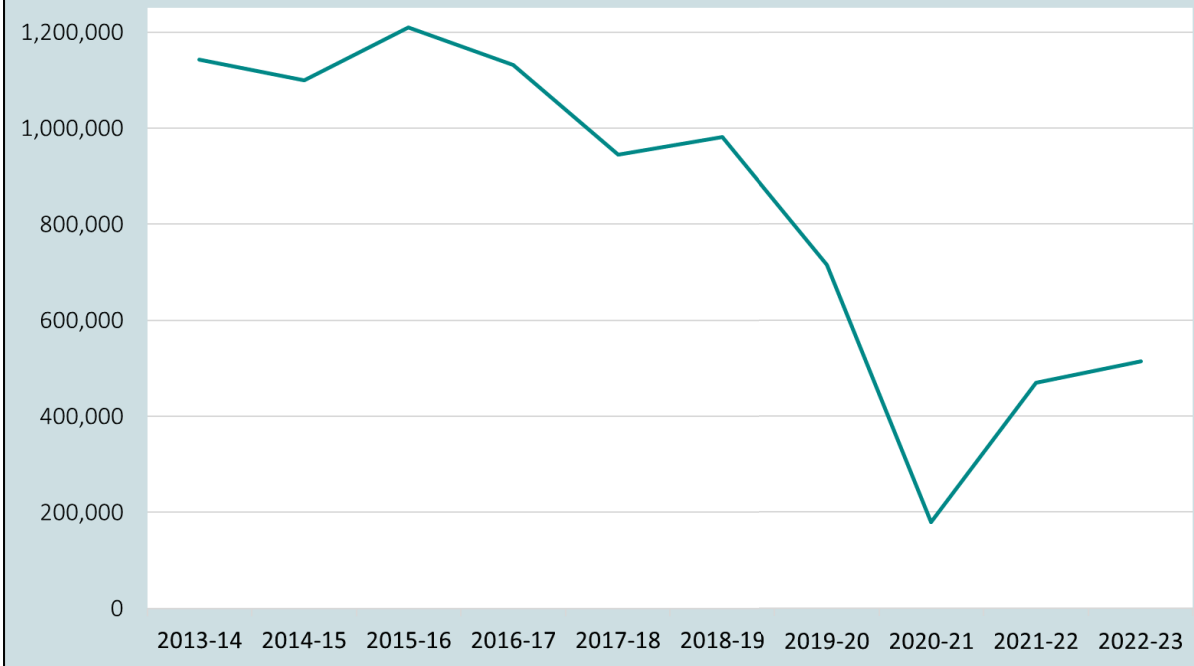
Source: National Transit Database

Ridership

SLO Transit ridership for FY 2013-14 through FY 2022-23 is shown in Table 10 and Figure 9. Of the ten years considered, ridership peaked in FY 2015-16 at 1,209,707 passenger-trips. Ridership had already been declining from this peak before the pandemic, decreasing by 19 percent from FY 2015-16 to FY 2018-19. This pre-pandemic transit ridership decline was a trend observed nationwide and can be attributed to factors such as low fuel costs and low interest rates that made it easier for many people to purchase and use personal vehicles. This ridership decline was then exacerbated by the pandemic; from FY 2018-19 to FY 2020-21, SLO Transit ridership decreased by 82 percent.

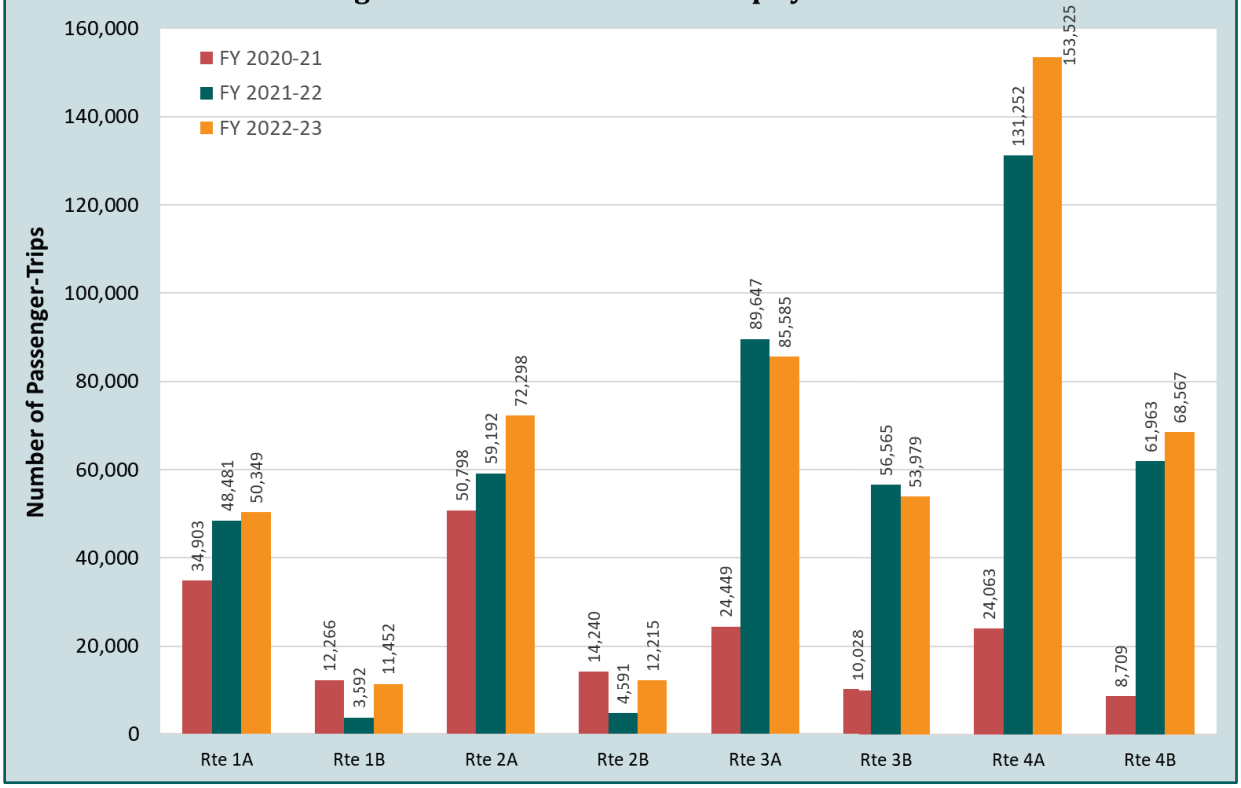
SLO Transit ridership has slowly recovered since the lows experienced during the pandemic. Systemwide, SLO Transit served 515,002 passenger-trips in FY 2022-23, an increase of 186 percent over FY 2020-21. Figure 10 shows how the recovery of ridership has varied by service by year. As shown, the SLO Transit routes that serve Cal Poly (Routes 3A, 3B, 4A, and 4B) have seen the greatest growth in ridership since the pandemic. This growth can be attributed to the large number of students who ride these services; ridership decreased when Cal Poly shifted to primarily remote instruction in the spring of 2020 and subsequently increased when Cal Poly returned to primarily in-person instruction during the 2021-22 school year. Ridership recovery on Routes 1B and 2B has been less consistent due to multiple service reductions resulting from the bus operator shortage.

Figure 9: SLO Transit Historical Ridership
FY 2013-14 - FY 2022-23



Data from SLO Transit

Figure 10: SLO Transit Ridership by Service



Service Levels

From FY 2013-14 to FY 2018-19, SLO Transit annual service levels increased, with the number of vehicle service hours increasing by 20 percent and the number of vehicle service miles increasing by 10 percent. These increases can be attributed to service changes implemented as a result of recommendations made in the 2016 update of the SLO Transit SRTP, including changes to the routing structure.

SLO Transit service levels have been lower in the years since the pandemic due to service reductions resulting from low ridership and the bus operator shortage. In particular, San Luis Tripper, Highland Tripper, and Route 6x operations have been suspended since the pandemic, and the Old SLO Trolley only resumed operations in FY 2023-24. As of FY 2022-23, SLO Transit vehicle service hours have decreased by 6 percent from FY 2013-14 and by 22 percent from FY 2018-19. SLO Transit vehicle service miles have decreased by 14 percent from FY 2013-14 and by 22 percent from FY 2018-19.

Operating Costs

SLO Transit's operating costs increased from $3.24 million in FY 2013-14 to $4.25 million in FY 2022-23 (+31 percent). Operating costs first increased by 9 percent from FY 2013-14 to FY 2018-19, then costs rapidly increased by 20 percent from FY 2018-19 to FY 2022-23. The significant increase in costs observed over the last 5 years in particular is largely due to record-high inflation and the need to offer competitive job offers to recruit more employees. However, it is worth noting that the consumer price index (CPI) increased by a similar amount (30 percent) during this ten-year time period, indicating SLO Transit operating costs have not increased much more than inflation.

Local Revenues

SLO Transit's local revenues, which include passenger fares and funding from Cal Poly, increased by 14 percent over the last ten years, growing from $650,800 in FY 2013-14 to $742,743 in FY 2022-23. Revenues declined during the pandemic as a result of the drop in ridership, however, revenues have grown in the years following. Of the ten years considered, SLO Transit's local revenues peaked in FY 2018-19 at $771,861.

Performance

The SLO Transit's ten-year operating data was used to calculate several performance indicators, detailed in Table 11. Trends evident from the data include:

The number of **passenger-trips per vehicle service hour** is an indicator of the relative productivity of transit service. This measure decreased by 52 percent over the last 10 years and by 33 percent over the last 5 years.

Passenger-trips per vehicle service mile is another indicator of productivity. This measure decreased by 47 percent over the last 10 years and by 33 percent over the last 5 years.

The **operating cost per passenger-trip** has increased by 192 percent over the last 10 years. This measure peaked in FY 2020-21 when the pandemic was in full swing and SLO Transit ridership was at its lowest but has since dropped 52 percent as ridership returned.

Table 11: SLO Transit Performance - FY 2013-14 - FY 2022-23

Fiscal Year	Performance			
	Passengers Per		Operating Cost per Passenger-Trip	Operating Cost per Service Hour
	Hour	Mile		
2013-14	34.6	2.9	$2.83	$98.09
2014-15	33.3	2.8	$3.13	$104.35
2015-16	35.6	2.9	$2.85	$101.61
2016-17	32.6	2.6	$3.27	$106.68
2017-18	25.2	2.5	$3.74	$94.11
2018-19	24.8	2.2	$3.60	$89.23
2019-20	21.8	1.9	$4.59	$99.87
2020-21	6.0	0.5	$17.36	$103.90
2021-22	16.7	1.4	$7.14	$118.99
2022-23	16.7	1.5	$8.26	$137.74
% Change FY 13-14 to FY 22-23	**-52%**	**-47%**	**192%**	**40%**
% Change FY 18-19 to FY 22-23	**-33%**	**-33%**	**129%**	**54%**

Source: National Transit Database

The SLO Transit **operating cost per vehicle service hour** increased by 40 percent over the last 10 years and 54 percent over the last 5 years.

Overall, the ten-year performance trends reflect the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic; SLO Transit ridership decreased, and operating costs increased as a result of the pandemic, causing negative impacts to SLO Transit's productivity and cost efficiency.

SLO TRANSIT FY 22-23 OPERATIONS AND PERFORMANCE

Operations

Table 12 details SLO Transit operating data by service for FY 2022-23. The Old SLO Trolley, San Luis Tripper, Highland Tripper, and Route 6x did not operate in FY 2022-23, therefore these services are not included.

Table 12: SLO Transit Operations by Service - FY 2022-23

Service	Service Parameters			
	Passenger-Trips	Service Hours	Service Miles	Marginal Operating Cost
Route 1A	50,349	5,179	52,857	$572,119
Route 1B	11,452	1,922	20,006	$212,958
Route 2A	72,298	5,208	61,899	$589,598
Route 2B	12,215	1,647	19,175	$185,804
Route 3A	85,585	5,208	71,402	$605,108
Route 3B	53,979	3,016	40,655	$349,290
Route 4A	153,525	5,322	48,625	$578,627
Route 4B	68,567	3,183	26,477	$341,816
Laguna Tripper	7,032	185	2,007	$20,631
Systemwide	**515,002**	**30,870**	**343,103**	**$3,455,950**

Sources: City of San Luis Obispo, LSC.

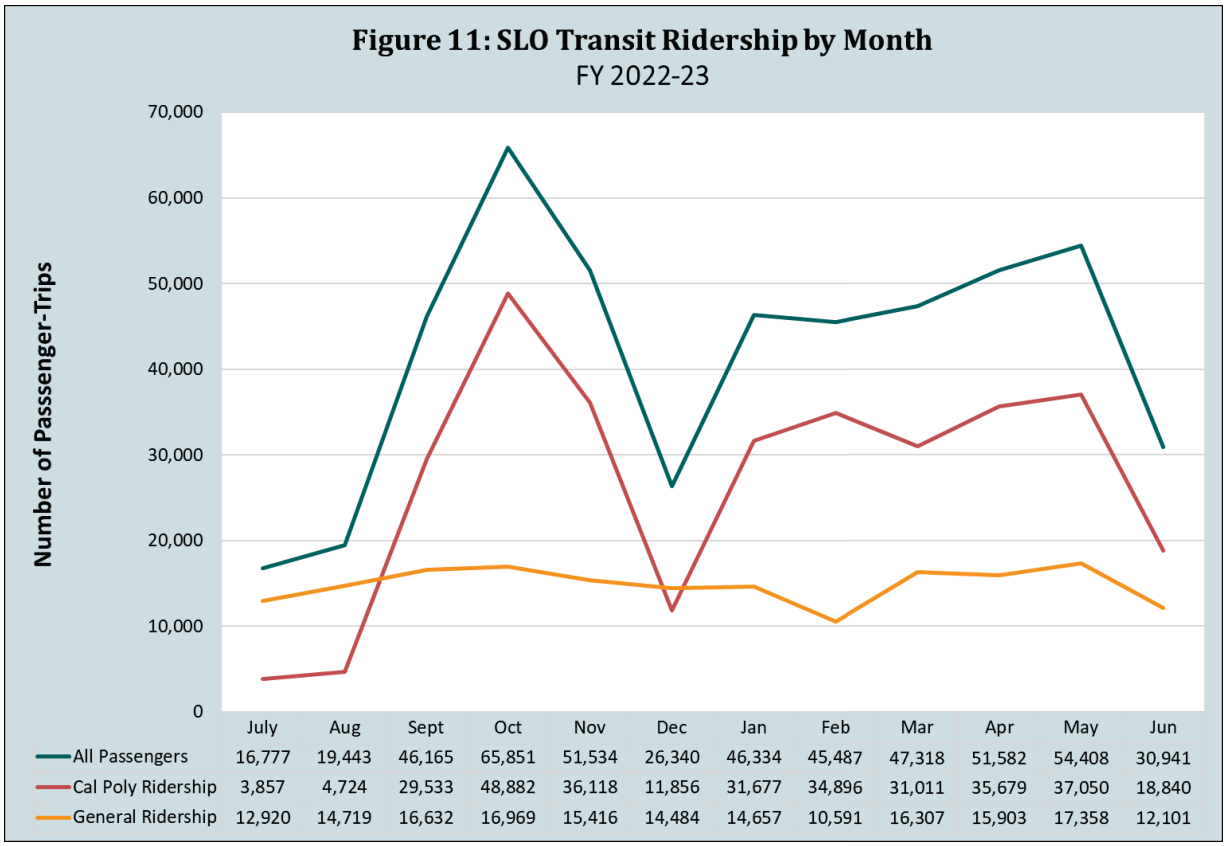
Ridership

SLO Transit served 515,002 passenger-trips in FY 2022-23. Route 4A had the greatest ridership, carrying 153,525 passenger-trips, or 30 percent of all annual ridership. Other routes with high ridership included Routes 3A (85,585 passenger-trips), 2A (72,298 passenger-trips), and 4B (68,567 passenger-trips). It should be noted that the generally higher ridership observed on the A routes versus the B routes is due to the A routes operating on more days of the week and for longer hours.

Figure 11 depicts how SLO Transit ridership by passenger-type varied by month. Given that such a large proportion of SLO Transit ridership is comprised of Cal Poly students and staff, SLO Transit ridership fluctuates depending on when Cal Poly is in session; in FY 2022-23, ridership was highest from September through November (Fall Quarter) and January through June (Winter and Spring Quarters). Ridership clearly dipped when the school had vacations or breaks, such as during the summer months, December, and March. General public ridership stayed relatively consistent throughout the year.

Service Levels

SLO Transit operated 30,870 vehicle service hours and 343,103 vehicle service miles in FY 2022-23. The A Routes required greater service levels due to having longer weekday service spans and operating on weekends. Looking at mileage, Route 3A operated the most vehicle service miles (21 percent of the systemwide total) due to the longer service span, higher service frequency during the school year, and longer route length compared to many of the other SLO Transit routes.



Operating Costs

To determine the SLO Transit operating cost by service, the FY 2022-23 adopted budget was used to develop an operating cost model. Each SLO Transit operating expense was allocated to the service quantity (vehicle service hours or vehicle service miles) upon which it is most dependent. The costs not dependent on service levels were designated as fixed costs. The costs were then divided by FY 2022-23 service levels to yield the following formula:

FY 2022-23 SLO Transit Operating Cost Model = $93.81 x annual vehicle service hours +

$1.63 x annual vehicle service miles +

$796,172 in fixed costs

The cost model was used to calculate the marginal operating costs of each SLO transit route, as shown in Table 12. Overall, the A Routes were more expensive than the B Routes or Laguna Tripper due to the greater service levels. Route 3A was the most expensive SLO Transit service in FY 2022-23 ($605,108) because of the large number of vehicle service hours and miles required for operations. The Laguna Tripper was the least expensive service ($20,631), as the service consisted of only two trips per weekday during the school year.

Performance Analysis

Table 13 and Figures 12 through 14 show FY 2022-23 performance indicators for each SLO Transit service. Important trends to note from the service-specific performance analysis are as follows:

Table 13: SLO Transit Performance by Service - FY 2022-23

Service	Performance			
	Passengers Per		Marginal Operating Cost per Passenger-Trip	Marginal Operating Cost per Service Hour
	Hour	Mile		
Route 1A	9.7	1.0	$11.36	$110.47
Route 1B	6.0	0.6	$18.60	$110.80
Route 2A	13.9	1.2	$8.16	$113.21
Route 2B	7.4	0.6	$15.21	$112.81
Route 3A	16.4	1.2	$7.07	$116.19
Route 3B	17.9	1.3	$6.47	$115.81
Route 4A	28.8	3.2	$3.77	$108.72
Route 4B	21.5	2.6	$4.99	$107.39
Laguna Tripper	38.0	3.5	$2.93	$111.52
Systemwide	**16.7**	**1.5**	**$6.71**	**$111.95**

Sources: City of San Luis Obispo, LSC.

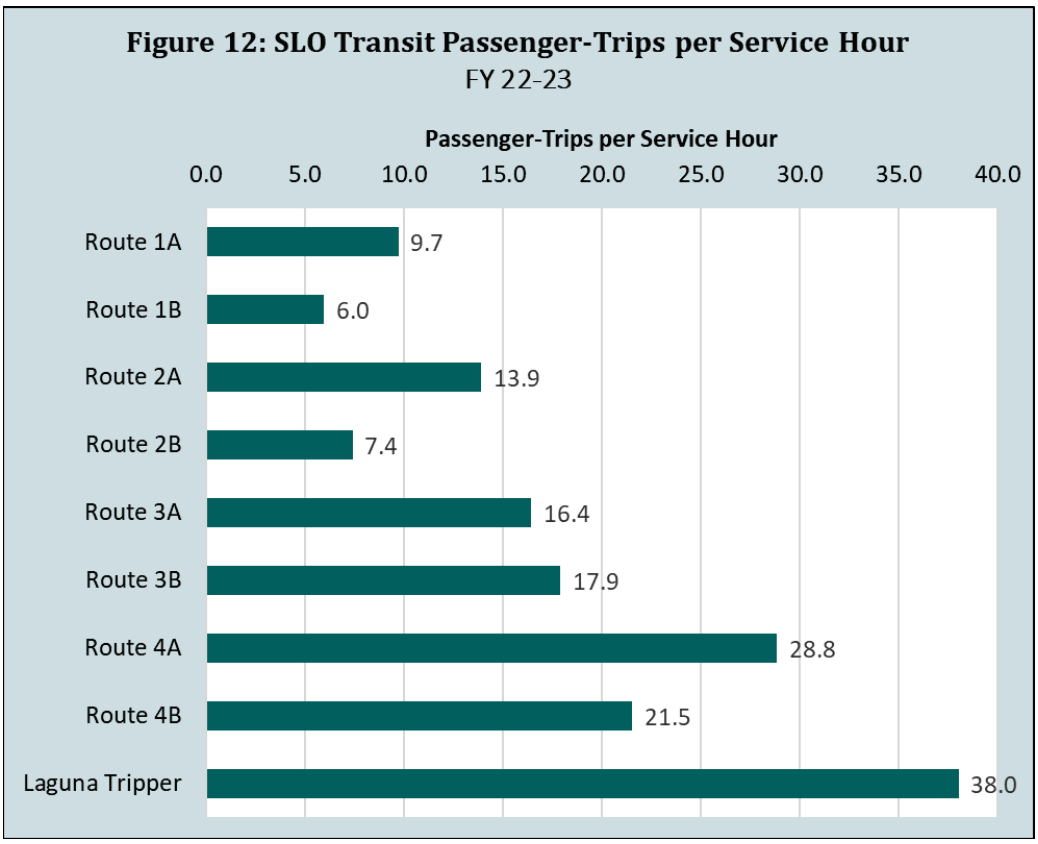


Figure 13: SLO Transit Marginal Operating Cost per Passsenger-Trip
FY 22-23

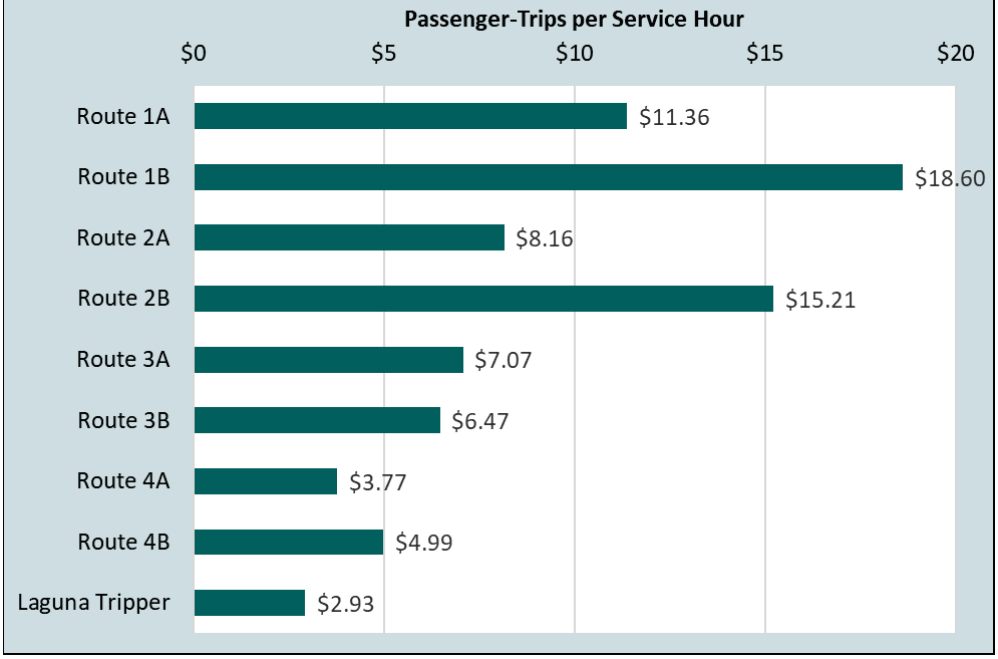
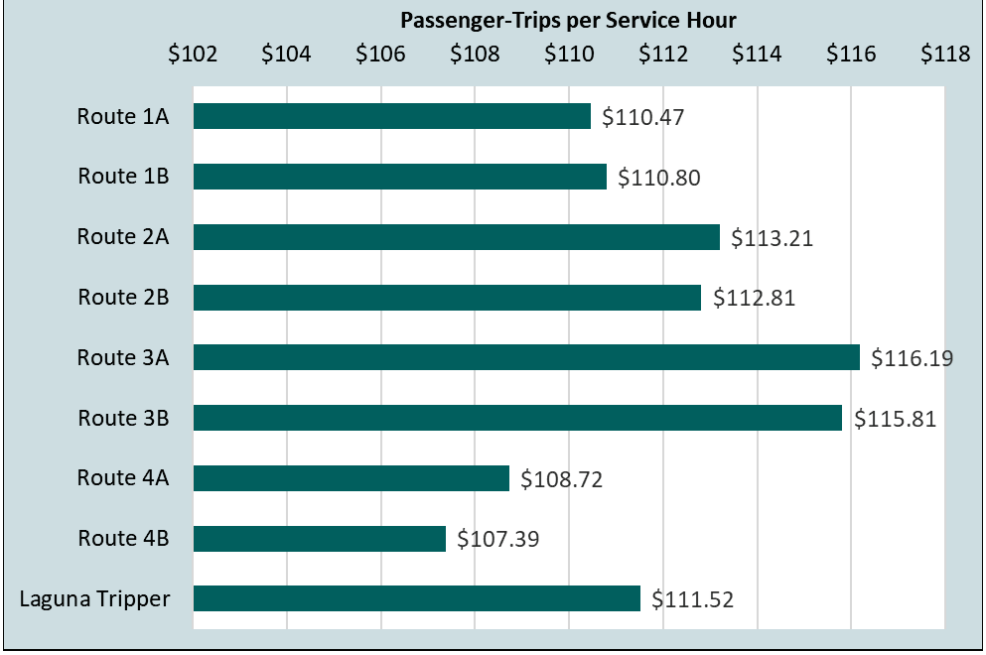


Figure 14: SLO Transit Marginal Operating Cost per Service Hour
FY 22-23



Systemwide, SLO Transit served 16.7 **passenger-trips per vehicle service hour** in FY 2022-23. The most productive routes, based on this metric, were the Laguna Tripper (38.0 passenger-trips per hour), Route 4A (28.8), and Route 4B (21.5), three services that are all highly utilized by students. The least productive routes were Routes 1B (6.0 passenger-trips per hour) and 2B (7.4).

SLO Transit carried 1.5 **passenger-trips per vehicle service mile** in FY 2022-23. The Laguna Tripper, Route 4A, and Route 4B all served more passenger-trips per vehicle service mile than the systemwide total. Considering this performance measure, Routes 1B (0.6 passenger-trips per mile) and 2B (0.6) were also the least productive services.

The SLO Transit FY 2022-23 **marginal operating cost per passenger-trip** was $6.71. The Laguna Tripper was the most cost-efficient service ($2.93 per passenger-trip), followed by Route 4A ($3.77) and Route 4B ($4.99). The most expensive service per passenger-trip was Route 1B ($18.60), followed by Route 2B ($15.21) and Route 1A ($11.26).

The **marginal operating cost per vehicle service hour** was similar across the various SLO Transit services, ranging from $107.39 on Route 4B to a high of $116.19 on Route 3A. Generally, this measure was lower on the low-mileage routes (Routes 4 A/B, 1 A/B, and the Laguna Tripper) and higher on the high-mileage routes (Routes 3 A/B and 2 A/B).

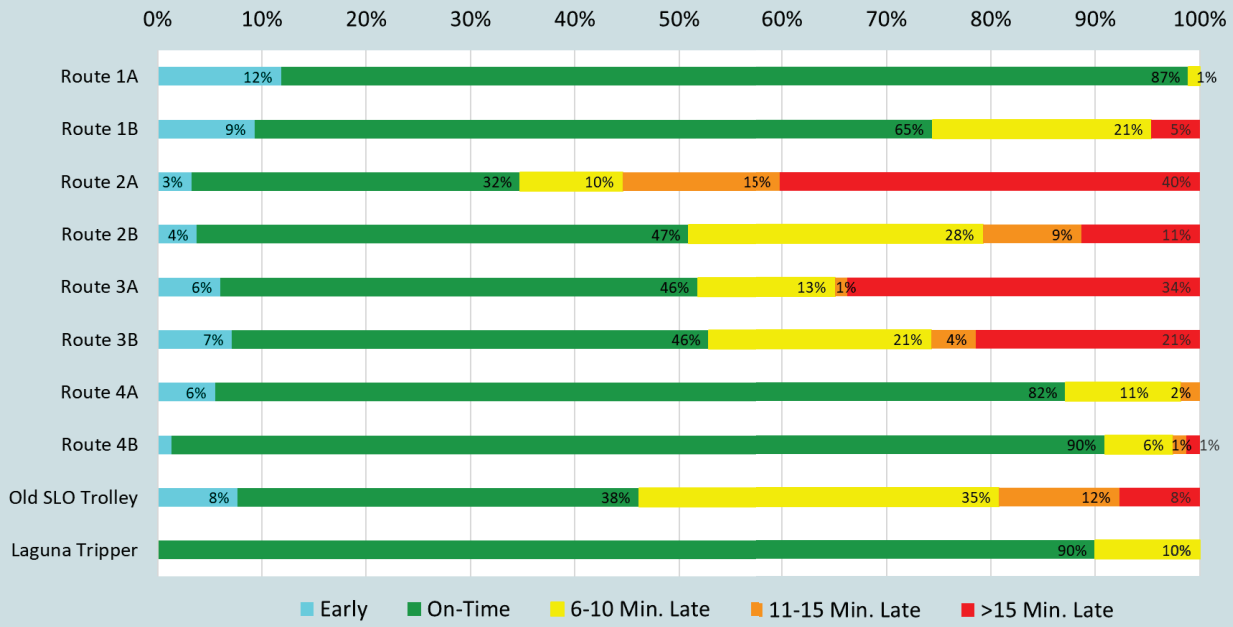
In sum, the SLO Transit services which are catered to Cal Poly and local K-12 students (Routes 3 A/B, 4 A/B, and the Laguna Tripper) were more productive and cost-efficient compared to other services.

On-Time Performance

LSC recorded SLO Transit's on-time performance by service during October 2023 as a part of the greater onboard passenger survey effort conducted for the SRTP (Appendix D). Figure 15 shows the proportion of timepoint stops that were early, on-time, 6 to 10 minutes late, 11 to 15 minutes late, or more than 15 minutes late as measured by what time the bus departed from established timepoints. The on-time performance data shown was collected during the equivalent of one weekday of service, so the data reflects a limited number of runs.

Based on the data collected by LSC, Routes 1A, 4A, 4B, and the Laguna Tripper had the best on-time performance, as they were on-time for 80 percent or more of the timepoint stops. Routes 1A and 1B left the timepoints early more frequently than any other services. Route 2A (65 percent) and the Old SLO Trolley (54 percent) had the largest proportions of timepoints for which the bus left late. Routes 2A (40 percent), 3A (34 percent), and 3B (21 percent) had the largest proportions of timepoints for which the bus left more than 15 minutes late. While this data is based on limited runs, it suggests that on-time performance is a challenge for SLO Transit, especially on Routes 2 A/B and 3 A/B. On-time performance is an important aspect of service quality and reliability, therefore the SLO Transit SRTP will consider service modifications to improve on-time performance.

Figure 15: SLO Transit On-Time Performance by Route



Data Collected by LSC Transportation Consultants, from 10/23-10/27/2023 and based on limited runs.

FINDINGS

During the last ten years, SLO Transit operations and performance were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as by the subsequent nationwide bus operator shortage and rise in inflation. SLO Transit ridership declined during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the widespread implementation of remote work and school structures across the region, including at Cal Poly. SLO Transit reduced service levels in response to the reduced demand, however, the shortage of bus operators has made it difficult to reinstate pre-COVID service levels. Multiple years of high inflation rates also resulted in SLO Transit operating costs increasing at a rapid rate.

Since the peak of the pandemic in FY 2020-21, SLO Transit systemwide performance has slowly improved with the return of both local and Cal Poly ridership. In FY 2022-23, SLO Transit served 515,002 passenger-trips. Productivity increased to 16.7 passenger-trips per vehicle service hour and 1.5 passenger-trips per vehicle service mile. The best-performing SLO Transit services in FY 2022-23, in terms of productivity and cost-efficiency, were Routes 4A/B, Routes 3A/B, and the Laguna Tripper. In regard to on-time performance, Routes 1A, 4A, 4B, and the Laguna Tripper were the best performing.

Looking forward, it is likely that more than minor service modifications will be needed to increase SLO Transit ridership to the levels necessary to achieve the City of San Luis Obispo's adopted goal of a 12 percent transit mode split. The analyses presented in this Chapter highlight service inefficiencies that should be addressed to increase the reliability and utility of the service for both existing passengers as well as potentially new passengers. The public and stakeholder input summarized in Appendices C, D, and E provides additional insight beyond the analyses presented in this Chapter about how SLO Transit could potentially improve to further attract discretionary ridership.

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Chapter 7

SLO TRANSIT SERVICE ALTERNATIVES

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, service alternatives for SLO Transit are presented. The alternatives are based on public input and the recommendations of related studies, including the recent *SLO Transit Innovations* (Transit Innovations) *Study* (2024). Given the City's goal of achieving a 7 percent transit mode split by 2030 and 12 percent transit mode split by 2035, many of the service alternatives are designed to increase ridership. Each alternative is evaluated as a stand-alone option in this chapter; the combined impacts of the recommended plan elements will be detailed in the Draft SLO Transit SRTP.

The following discussion of SLO Transit service alternatives is organized by the type of change proposed. Changes to service frequency are discussed first, followed by potential changes to service hours. Then, options for introducing microtransit service to San Luis Obispo are presented, followed by routing alternatives. The various alternatives are then compared using the new performance standards recommended in WP2. For each alternative, the impacts on ridership and operating costs are estimated. Ridership and cost estimates assume implementation in FY 2025-26 and are based on the following parameters:

1. The projected SLO Transit FY 2025-26 operating budget, as presented in the City of San Luis Obispo 2023-25 Financial Plan Supplement, was used to estimate the operating costs of each existing service assuming no change to service levels ("status quo" scenario). The per-hour and per-mile costs were then used to estimate the cost impacts of the various alternatives, per the following equation:

   Change in SLO Transit Marginal Operating Cost = $50.22 X Change in Vehicle Service Hours
   + $2.23 X Change in Vehicle Service Miles

   For the alternatives evaluations which follow, operating cost estimates represent "marginal" costs. In other words, fixed costs are excluded from the analysis unless identified specifically. The reason for looking at marginal costs of potential changes or improvements is that fixed costs (such as administrative staff salaries, utilities, and supplies) will not change if service levels are increased or decreased. However, fuel/maintenance costs (cost per mile) and driver salary costs (costs per hour) will increase incrementally as vehicle hours and miles are increased. Fixed costs and capital costs will be included in the discussion when the Draft Financial Plan is prepared.

2. Ridership estimates are based on projected full-year SLO Transit FY 2023-24 ridership, expected population growth in San Luis Obispo County during the next two years, ridership data from peer systems, and standard transit demand elasticity factors, depending on the alternative. Elasticity is an economic term which measures the change in behavior of one variable in response to the change in a related variable. For example, if service levels are doubled, historical data has shown that ridership will not double, but rather increase by around 47 percent. Elasticity factors vary for different variables such as headways, total travel time or transfer time. Variation has also been found in urban areas vs. suburban areas or during peak or non-peak periods. *The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Report 95 Traveler Response to*

Transportation System Changes Chapter 9 – Transit Scheduling and Frequency is a good resource for transit elasticity factors.

3. Service was assumed to include 180 academic year weekdays, 81 non-academic year weekdays, 52 Saturdays/holidays, and 52 Sundays, unless otherwise noted.
4. The assumed average cash fares received per boarding on each route are shown in Table 14. The average cash fare values were calculated by dividing the total annual cash fare revenue received on the route during FY 2022-23 by total annual boardings. The average cash fare estimates do not account for fees received from Cal Poly.

Table 14 : SLO Transit Average Cash Fare per Boarding by Route
FY 2022-23

	Boardings	Cash Fares	Average Cash Fare per Boarding
Route 1A	50,349	$51,823.37	$1.03
Route 1B	11,452	$9,381.51	$0.82
Route 2A	72,298	$72,317.92	$1.00
Route 2B	12,215	$12,348.40	$1.01
Route 3A	85,585	$27,594.63	$0.32
Route 3B	53,979	$14,563.33	$0.27
Route 4A	153,525	$11,662.94	$0.08
Route 4B	68,567	$4,780.27	$0.07
Laguna Tripper	7,032	$2,048.69	$0.29
Systemwide	**515,002**	**$206,521**	**$0.40**

Source: SLO Transit

SERVICE FREQUENCY ALTERNATIVES

The Transit Innovations Study recommended increasing service frequency to improve service quality and increase ridership. Additionally, more frequent service was one of the most requested improvements during the onboard passenger survey (42 percent of respondents), corroborating that improving service frequency would likely benefit SLO Transit ridership. This section considers alternatives to increase SLO Transit service frequency. The options discussed demonstrate the wide range of potential impacts that can result from increasing service frequency to differing extents. The service frequency alternatives are summarized in Table 15.

Table 15: SLO Transit - Service Frequency and Span Alternatives

	Change in Annual Service						
	Ridership	Service Hours	Service Miles	Marginal Operating Cost	Cash Fare Revenues [2]	Operating Subsidy	Additional Buses Needed
Status Quo[1]							
Route 1A	55,900	5,300	50,700	$379,100	$57,500	$321,600	
Route 1B	20,000	3,100	29,900	$222,300	$16,400	$205,900	
Route 2A	80,300	5,300	57,900	$395,100	$80,300	$314,800	
Route 2B	22,100	3,100	33,200	$229,600	$22,300	$207,300	
Route 3A	94,700	6,300	82,400	$499,900	$30,500	$469,400	
Route 3B	65,700	4,900	61,700	$383,500	$17,700	$365,800	
Route 4A	152,800	5,500	47,800	$382,600	$11,600	$371,000	
Route 4B	70,900	4,000	31,000	$269,900	$4,900	$265,000	
Laguna Tripper	10,100	200	2,000	$14,500	$2,900	$11,600	
Old SLO Trolley	1,600	300	1,800	$19,100	$600	$18,500	
System Total	*574,100*	*38,000*	*398,400*	*$2,795,600*	*$244,700*	*$2,550,900*	
Service Frequency and Span Alternatives - Change from Status Quo [3]							
Increase Route 4 Frequency During Academic Year							
Increase Route 4A Frequency - 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM	4,200	300	2,300	$20,200	$300	$19,900	1
Increase Route 4B Frequency - 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM	3,900	300	2,100	$19,700	$300	$19,400	1
Net Impact (Combined 4A and 4B)	*8,100*	*600*	*4,400*	*$39,900*	*$600*	*$39,300*	*1*
Double Service Frequency on Routes 1, 2, 3, 4 (A & B)							
Full Service Day, Year-Round	208,300	33,500	347,000	$2,455,000	$83,500	$2,371,500	8
8:00 AM to 6:00 PM, Weekdays, Year-Round	119,700	19,600	234,200	$1,505,800	$48,000	$1,457,800	8
Full Service Day, Weekdays, Academic Year	153,600	20,900	231,700	$1,565,500	$61,600	$1,503,900	8
Double Service Frequency on Rts 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A							
Full Service Day, Weekdays, Academic Year	89,600	11,300	133,800	$865,400	$35,900	$829,500	4
Double Service Frequency on Routes 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B							
Full Service Day, Weekdays, Academic Year	101,200	11,600	136,100	$885,600	$40,600	$845,000	4
Extend Weekday Evening Service on A Routes							
Extend Service to 12:00 AM - Academic Year	5,100	1,000	10,900	$74,500	$2,000	$72,500	0
Extend Service to 10:00 PM - Non-Academic Year	2,200	700	7,000	$50,700	$900	$49,800	0
Expand Service on B Routes							
Operate B Routes on Weekends - 7:45 AM - 8:00 PM	39,600	3,200	46,000	$263,100	$15,900	$247,200	0
Operate 3B and 4B on Weekends	29,400	1,600	25,300	$136,700	$11,800	$124,900	0
Extend Routes 1B and 2B until 10:00 PM - Weekdays, Academic Year	4,000	1,400	14,500	$102,600	$1,600	$101,000	0
Provide Academic Year Service Levels Year-Round	16,300	2,300	26,400	$174,300	$6,500	$167,800	0

Note 1: Status quo operations are based on FY 2023-24 ridership through 3/31/24 and expected annual population growth. Service estimates are based on FY 2022-23 operating parameters. Cost estimates are based on the projected FY 2025-26 SLO Transit budget and the SLO Transit cost model.

Note 2: The average cash fare per boarding by route is detailed in Table 13.

Note 3: Parameters and costs represent change over existing services. Estimates represent marginal costs and do not include fixed costs.

Increase Route 4 Frequency During Academic Year

Routes 4A and 4B serve northeast San Luis Obispo, connecting downtown and the Cal Poly campus with residential areas along Foothill Boulevard, Highland Drive, and Grand Avenue. Service is operated on a 45-minute loop, using one bus in each direction. Route 4 is the most popular SLO Transit service; Route 4A is projected to provide upwards of 152,000 passenger-trips in FY 2025-26, and Route 4B is projected to provide 70,000 passenger-trips. Increasing service frequency during peak travel periods would likely further benefit ridership and improve connectivity between downtown and Cal Poly.

Increase Route 4A Frequency – 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Ridership is quite high on Route 4A (clockwise direction), particularly on the runs departing the Government Center at 8:15 AM, 10:30 AM, and 11:15 AM, all of which were observed to carry more than 50 passengers. Given this high demand, the City could increase service frequency on weekday mornings during the academic year by adding two new runs departing the Government Center at 8:30 AM and 9:15 AM.

Operating the two additional Route 4A runs would increase the City's marginal operating cost by $20,200 per year. An elasticity analysis based on existing ridership during this service period indicates that ridership would be increased by an estimated 4,200 boardings per year, generating $300 in additional cash fares (not accounting for the fare revenue agreement with Cal Poly). Note that there could be additional ridership generated by potential passengers who currently do not use the existing service due to crowding. This alternative would require an additional peak bus.

Increase Route 4B Frequency – 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Route 4B, which operates in the counterclockwise direction, carries particularly high passenger loads on the 4:00 PM and 4:45 PM runs (50 passengers each). Adding two additional runs departing the Government Center at 4:15 PM and 5:00 PM on weekdays in the academic year could expand capacity and improve convenience during the afternoon peak ridership period. The annual marginal operating subsidy for the two runs would be $19,400 per year, based on the increase to service levels and fare revenue. Adding Route 4B service in the afternoon would require an additional peak bus (though this could be the same bus added for the 4A additional runs in the morning). It is estimated the runs would provide 3,900 passenger-trips per year.

Double Service Frequency on All Regular Routes

A more substantial service increase would be to double service frequency on all regular SLO Transit fixed routes (Routes 1 A/B, 2 A/B, 3 A/B, and 4 A/B). At present, SLO Transit service frequencies are relatively low for an urban transit system, consisting of hourly service on Routes 1, 2, and 3 and service every 45 minutes on Route 4. Doubling service would result in bus service every 30 minutes on Routes 1, 2, and 3A and every 22.5 minutes on Route 4. The increase in ridership would help to achieve sustainability goals, including the Transit Innovations Study goal to increase transit mode split to 7 percent by 2030. As discussed below, three options for doubling service frequency were considered.

Full Day, Year-Round

Doubling service frequency on all regular SLO Transit routes for the full-service day, year-round would result in a significant increase to the City's marginal operating cost; service levels would increase by 33,500 vehicle service hours and 347,000 vehicle service miles per year, requiring $2.45 million in operating funds. Eight additional vehicles would also be needed throughout the entire service day, which would require the City to expand its existing fleet and hire more bus operators. The drastic increase to service frequency would also have a significant impact on ridership, as elasticity analyses indicate that systemwide ridership would grow by 208,300 passenger-trips per year, equal to a 40 percent increase in ridership on Routes 1 through 4.

The additional fleet would also expand the required capacity of the SLO Transit maintenance facility, with regard to bus storage, charging, and maintenance work bays. Accommodating a doubling of frequency could also exceed the capacity of the Downtown Transit Center. At present, the 5-bus capacity of the DTC is adequate to serve the hourly service on Routes 1, 2, and 3 (as well as the other services) by offsetting the "A" buses 30 minutes from the "B" buses. Simply adding new runs 30 minutes off of the existing service times (to provide desirable consistent 30-minute headways) would result in six buses onsite for Routes 1 through 3, as well as up to two buses for Route 4, as well as less frequent buses for the tripper and express services. While the peak number of buses at the DTC could be reduced by changing the schedules for some or all of the additional services, this would result in unbalanced service times and a loss in transfer opportunities.

8:00 AM – 6:00 PM, Weekdays, Year-Round

SLO Transit ridership, like many transit systems, is lower in the early morning and later evening. To ensure the more effective use of resources, the City could double the service frequency from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM on weekdays only. This service enhancement would increase service levels by 19,600 vehicle service hours and 234,200 vehicle service miles annually at a marginal operating cost of $1.5 million. To estimate the ridership impact, elasticity analyses for each route on the proportion of ridership that occurs from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM. In sum, doubling service frequency during the weekday daytime hours would increase systemwide ridership by 119,700 passenger-trips per year, equal to a 23 percent increase in ridership on Routes 1 through 4. The implications on capital needs discussed for the first of these options would be the same for this option.

Full Day, Weekdays, Academic Year

Most SLO Transit ridership occurs during the Cal Poly academic year. Another means to double service frequency but concentrate resources during periods of high ridership would be to double service frequency on weekdays during the academic year. Annual service levels would increase by 20,900 vehicle service hours and 231,700 vehicle service miles. Elasticity analyses indicate that annual ridership would increase by 153,600 passenger-trips (a 30 percent increase in total ridership for Routes 1 through 4), therefore the net financial impact would be a $1.56 million increase to the SLO Transit marginal operating subsidy. The capital needs to expand the fleet, fleet facilities and passenger facilities would be the same as discussed for the previous alternatives.

Double Service Frequency on All A Routes, Full Weekdays, Academic Year

In consideration of the high operating cost and capital impacts of full doubling of frequency, another option was evaluated that focuses on doubling the frequency of the four "A" routes, leaving the "B" routes unchanged. This has the advantage of providing equitable improvement of service across the SLO Transit service area. This option focuses the service improvement across the full weekday span of service, within the academic year only. Ridership impacts were evaluated based on an elasticity analysis of the A routes only, with a reduction included to reflect the proportion of existing A route ridership that transfers to and from the B routes (based on the onboard survey). This option would require an additional 11,300 vehicle-hours and 133,800 vehicle miles of service annually. Ridership would be increased by 89,800 boardings per year. The total operating subsidy would be increased by $829,500 annually, and four additional buses would need to be operated.

Double Service Frequency on Routes 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, Full Weekdays, Academic Year

Another approach to a partial increase in service frequency would be to focus additional service on the two best performing of the four main routes, specifically Routes 3 and 4 (both A and B directions), for the full span of service in the academic year. This option would increase service by 11,600 vehicle-hours and 136,100 vehicle-miles per year. Considering the impact of no availability of direct transfers between Routes 3 and 4 and Routes 1 and 2, ridership would be increased by 101,200 boardings per year. Operating subsidies would be increased by $845,000 annually, and four additional buses would need to be in operation at peak times.

SPAN OF SERVICE ALTERNATIVES

The next set of SLO Transit alternatives focuses on the "span of service," or the hours that transit services operate. Passengers requested multiple changes to the SLO Transit span of service during the onboard passenger survey; the most requested service improvements were later evening service (54 percent of respondents), more frequent service (42 percent), additional Saturday service (39 percent), and additional Sunday service (32 percent). The span of service alternatives is also summarized in Table 15.

Extend Weekday Evening Service on A Routes

To provide residents with a later-night transit option, two alternatives for extending service on Routes 1A, 2A, 3A, and 4A were considered.

Extend Service to 12:00 AM – Academic Year

Currently, the last departures on weekdays during the academic year on the A Routes occur at 9:15 PM (Routes 1A and 2A), 10:15 PM (Route 3A), and 10:30 (Route 4A), terminating the last runs 45 minutes later. Extending service on all four A Routes until midnight would add Route 1A and Route 2A departures at 10:15 PM and 11:15 PM and Route 3A and 3B departures at 11:15 PM. Based on late evening ridership on transit services at other California universities, this additional service is estimated to increase ridership by 5,100 boardings per year. While it would not require additional vehicles to

operate, the increase in service hours and miles would result in an increase in operating costs of $74,500 per year.

Extend Service to 10:00 PM – Non-Academic Year

During the non-academic year, the last runs start at 7:15 PM on Routes 1A, 2A, and 3A and 7:30 PM on Route 4A. Extending service until roughly 10:00 PM would require operating two additional runs on Routes 1A, 2A, and 3A, and three additional runs on Route 4A. An evaluation of ridership by hour in the academic versus non-academic year as well as ridership patterns in typical small urban areas indicates that these additional runs would generate 2,200 passenger-trips per year. Annual operating costs would be increased by $50,700. No additional buses would be required.

Expand Service on B Routes

Operate B Routes on Weekends – 7:45 AM – 8:00 PM

The four counterclockwise B routes do not operate on weekends. As a result, service is limited to the large one-way A routes. While the fact that some key corridors are served by more than one A route (such as DTC – Foothill Boulevard or DTC – Madonna Road) still provides some direct bi-directional service, other trips can require a long travel time around the majority of the one-way A loop. As an example, a trip between the DTC and Broad/Santa Barbara requires a 34-minute in-vehicle travel time on Route 4A, compared to only seven minutes when Route 4B is operating. In addition, some stops (such as the Amtrak Station) are served only on B routes and thus do not have any service on weekends. The reduction in service also effectively reduces the available frequency of service.

Operating all four B routes on Saturdays and Sundays (as well as holidays on which weekend service is provided) would incur an annual operating cost of $263,100. An evaluation of the weekday versus weekend ridership on the A routes during the same service span as well as the existing weekday B ridership by route indicates that overall ridership would increase by 39,600 passenger-trips per year. Note that no additional buses would be required to provide this service expansion.

Operate Routes 3B and 4B on Weekends

Another option would be to focus the additional B Route weekend service on Routes 3 and 4, which have the highest ridership. This would result in an annual marginal operating cost increase of $136,700 and an increase in annual ridership of 29,400. This option performs the best out of all the weekend options.

Extend Routes 1B and 2B until 10:00 PM – Weekdays, Academic Year

While Routes 3A and 4B provide departures up until 10:00 PM on weekdays during the academic year, the last Route 1B and Route 2B departures of the day currently are provided at 5:45 PM, reducing the convenience of transit services for the southern portions of San Luis Obispo by increasing travel times, reducing frequency and eliminating service to some stops. Consistent B route service could be provided

throughout the city by operating an additional 4 daily trips of Routes 1B and 2B on academic weekdays, with the last departures at 9:45 PM.

An analysis of ridership on existing services on weekday evenings during the academic year indicates that operating these additional runs would serve approximately 4,000 additional passenger-trips per year. While additional buses would not be required, annual operating costs would be increased by $102,600 annually.

Provide Existing Academic Year Span of Service Year Round

Cal Poly administration has indicated plans to expand class offerings and associated student activity levels in the summer. While specific details have yet to be defined, it is worthwhile to evaluate the cost and baseline ridership impacts of providing the same span and level of service currently offered in the academic year over the entire year. This would increase annual vehicle-hours by approximately 2,400 and annual vehicle-miles by approximately 26,400. Baseline additional ridership is estimated based on existing average productivity in the non-academic year (7.1 passenger-trips per vehicle service hour), yielding a total increase of 16,300. Note that there may be additional increases in ridership generated by an increase in summer Cal Poly activity. Overall, annual operating costs would be increased by $174,300. No additional fleet would be required. This option also has the benefit of providing more consistent year-round driver schedules, which has the potential to increase driver retention.

ROUTING AND MICROTRANSIT ALTERNATIVES

Another set of alternatives were considered regarding route realignments and the provision of microtransit service. These alternatives are summarized in Table 16.

Implement Evening Microtransit Pilot in Southeast San Luis Obispo

Microtransit is a relatively new form of demand response public transit. Through the use of technology and phone apps, it is possible for a passenger to request a ride “on-demand” within certain areas and certain times. The benefit of microtransit is that it is not limited to a set route with set stops, but rather passengers can be picked up at their curb and dropped off at the curb of their destination. This allows homes on the outlying edges of neighborhoods to be served more directly. The disadvantage of microtransit is that if there is high demand for service, there could be a 30-minute or longer wait for a ride. Passengers who depend on public transit to travel to work or appointments at specific times may find microtransit less convenient.

Microtransit has been successful in areas that are not easily served by a fixed route, low productive fixed routes or during the evenings and weekends, when there is less demand. Generally, SLO Transit Routes are very productive and therefore, it is not cost effective to replace the fixed routes with on-demand microtransit. However, the option of microtransit in the evening, when demand is typically lower, was explored.

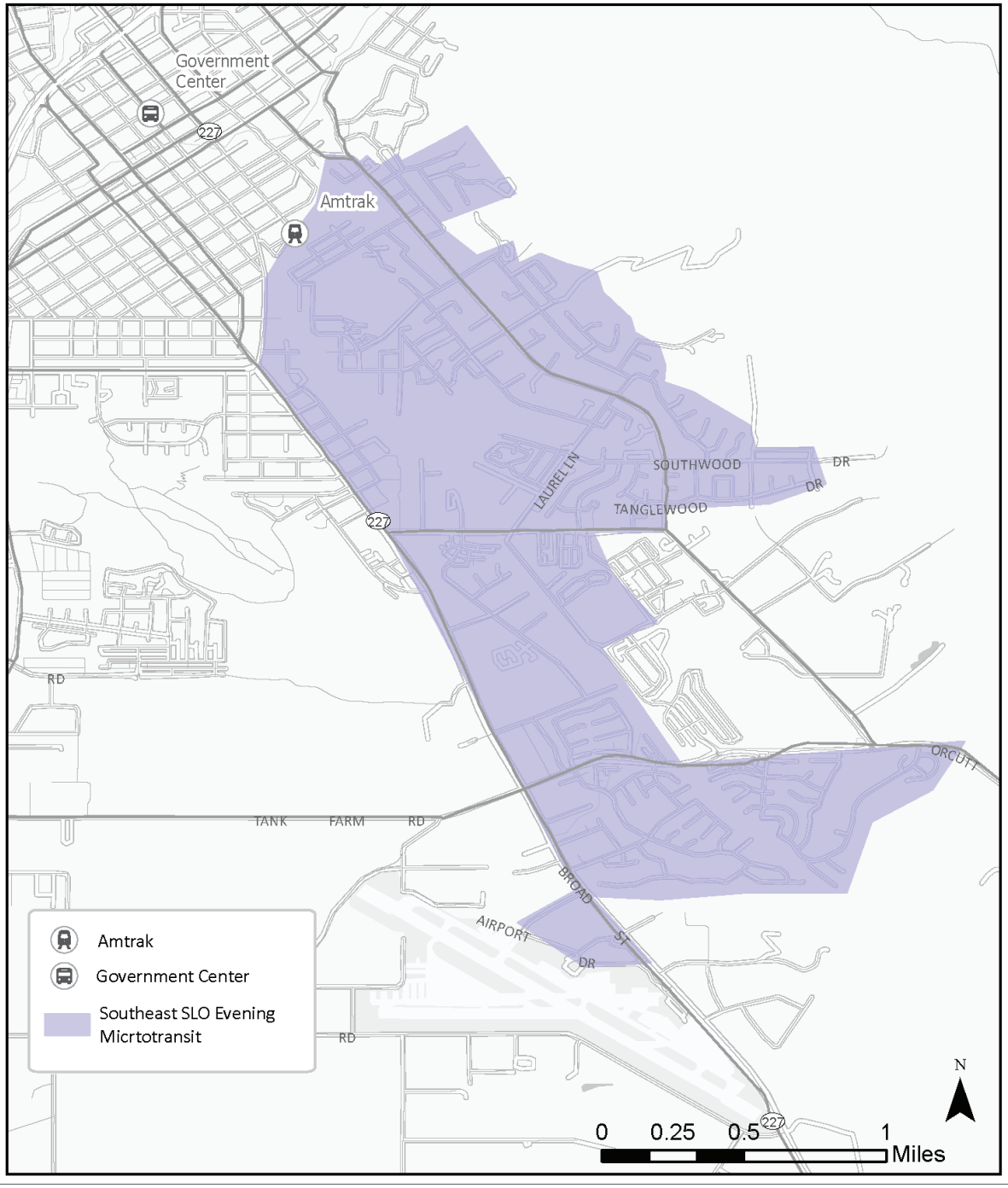
As part of this alternative, replacing Route 1A with microtransit service between the hours of 7 PM and 9 PM on a year-round basis was reviewed. Currently, Route 1B ends service at 6:30 PM. Therefore, hourly service is only available in the clockwise direction between 7 PM and 9 PM. Routes 1A and 1B

serve residences in southeast San Luis Obispo as well as the San Luis Airport. Figure 16 presents an example microtransit service area.

In order to serve the level of transit demand currently seen on Route 1A during the evening hours, two vehicles would be needed to provide service between 7 PM and 9 PM and only one vehicle would be needed during the 9 PM hour. This would cost an additional $33,600 annually in operating costs (including the costs of the annual technology license). As SLO Transit does not currently have small vehicles in its fleet, two vans would also need to be procured to operate this service.

Given the fact that curb to curb service would be available, around 250 more homes could be served directly with microtransit than with the fixed route. Therefore, there would be a small increase in ridership over the existing Route 1A evening ridership by around 100 trips per year. As development progresses along Tank Farm Road, this microtransit service area could be expanded. However, as demand for service increases, another vehicle would be required, further increasing costs.

Figure 16
Southeast SLO Evening Microtransit



Implement Late Night Microtransit Pilot - Academic Year

Microtransit could be more widely applied to the entire city as a "Late Night" service. SLO Transit services are not available past 11 PM and only Routes 3 and 4 operate this late during the academic year. The general geographic extent of a potential city-wide late night microtransit service area is displayed in Figure 17. As part of this alternative, microtransit would be available between 10 PM and midnight during the academic year. In order to maintain a reasonable level of cost, this alternative assumes that three vans would be used for an annual operating cost of $122,800 if service is provided only on weekdays during the academic year and $160,600 if service is provided 7 days a week during the academic year (only two peak vehicles would be required). Ridership was estimated by reviewing ridership by hour on other microtransit services. For the weekday scenario around 4,700 trips are estimated. If late night microtransit were operated 7 days/week, roughly 7,100 trips could be carried.

If implemented, this should be a one-to-two-year pilot program. Again, three vans would need to be procured, if the current contractor is used. Alternatively, some areas have had success in procuring a separate contractor who specializes in microtransit to operate as a "turnkey" service. Under this scenario, the City would not have to purchase new vehicles or the microtransit software, as it would be included in the total cost of the contract.

Reinstate Route 6X

Prior to COVID, Route 6X was operated on Thursday evenings during the academic year, connecting the Cal Poly Campus with the Downtown Transit Center on Thursday evenings (which the Farmers Market is in operation) from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM. One bus was used to operate a loop route every half hour. Ridership averaged 2,600 passenger-trips per year. Considering the historic ridership and the changes in overall transit ridership since 2020, a reinstated service is estimated to serve 2,200 passenger-trips per year. The annual operating cost would be relatively modest, at $7,200 annually.

Reinstate SLO Tripper

Prior to the pandemic, the SLO Tripper route consisted of 2 AM and 2 PM runs per school day connecting the Transit Center with SLO High School. If this route were reinstated, the current operating cost would be $18,500 per year. San Luis Coastal Unified School District data indicates that the High School enrollment has increased by 3 percent since 2019. Applying this factor to the 2019 ridership, this service would carry approximately 7,100 passenger-trips per year and require an operating cost of $17,200. An additional bus would need to be operated.

Figure 17
SLO Full City Microtransit

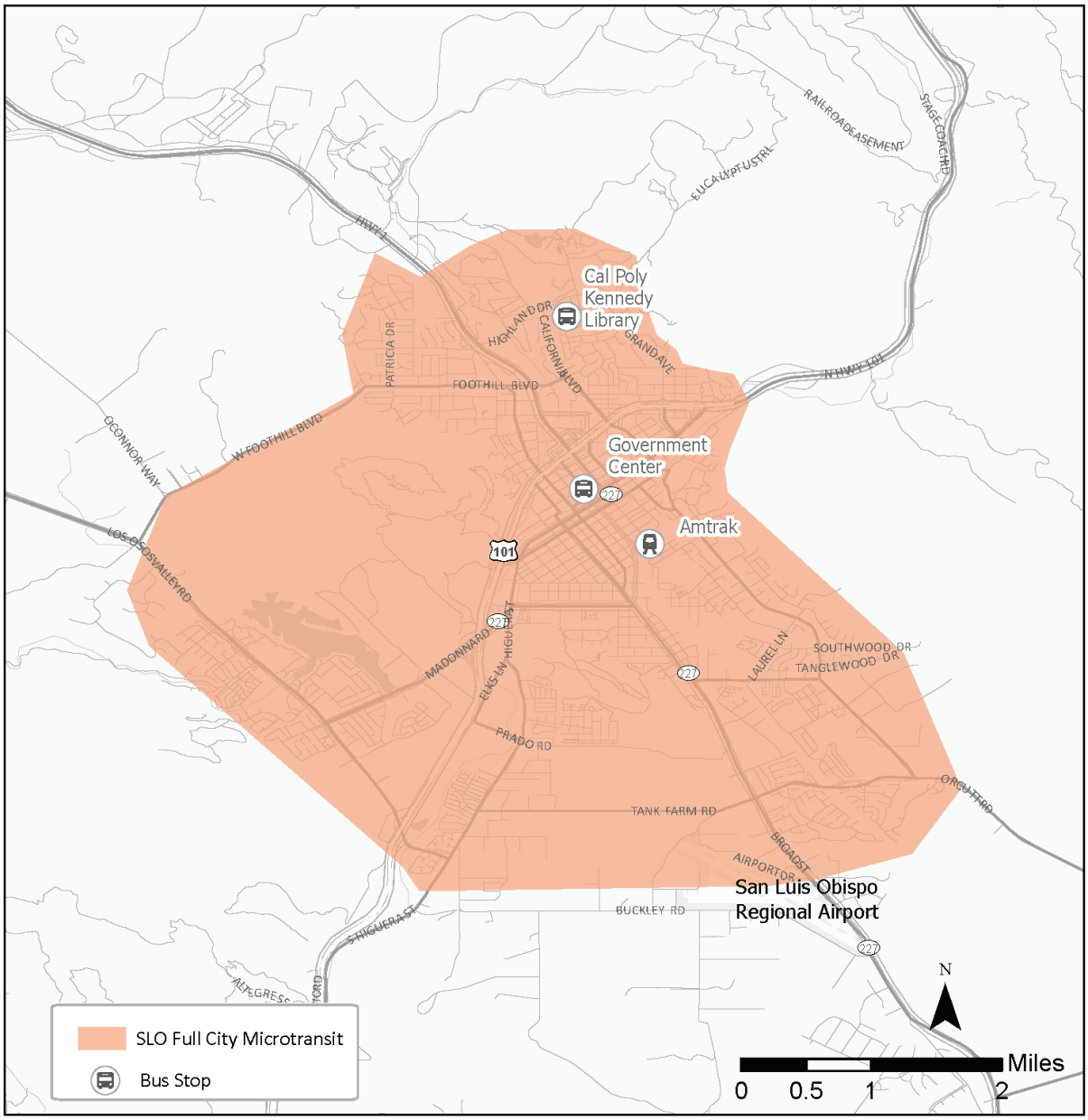


Table 16: SLO Transit - Routing and Microtransit Alternatives

	Change in Annual Service[2]						
	Ridership	Service Hours	Service Miles	Marginal Operating Cost	Cash Fare Revenues [3]	Operating Subsidy	Additional Vehicles Needed
Status Quo[1]							
Route 1A	55,900	5,300	50,700	$379,100	$57,500	$321,600	
Route 1B	20,000	3,100	29,900	$222,300	$16,400	$205,900	
Route 2A	80,300	5,300	57,900	$395,100	$80,300	$314,800	
Route 2B	22,100	3,100	33,200	$229,600	$22,300	$207,300	
Route 3A	94,700	6,300	82,400	$499,900	$30,500	$469,400	
Route 3B	65,700	4,900	61,700	$383,500	$17,700	$365,800	
Route 4A	152,800	5,500	47,800	$382,600	$11,600	$371,000	
Route 4B	70,900	4,000	31,000	$269,900	$4,900	$265,000	
Laguna Tripper	10,100	200	2,000	$14,500	$2,900	$11,600	
Old SLO Trolley	1,600	300	1,800	$19,100	$600	$18,500	
System Total	*574,100*	*38,000*	*398,400*	*$2,795,600*	*$244,700*	*$2,550,900*	
Routing and Microtransit Alternatives - Change from Status Quo[2]							
Implement Evening Microtransit Pilot in Southeast SLO [4]							
7:00 PM - 10:00 PM, Weekdays, Year-Round	100	500	8,800	$33,600	$200	$33,400	2
Implement Late Night Microtransit Pilot - Weekdays, Academic Year [4]							
10:00 PM - 12:00 AM, Weekdays, Academic Year	4,700	1,400	17,500	$122,800	$11,100	$111,700	3
10:00 PM - 12:00 AM, 7 Days/Week, Academic Year	7,100	1,700	21,625	$160,600	$11,100	$149,500	3
Reinstate Route 6X	2,200	100	1,000	$7,200	$900	$6,300	1
Reinstate SLO Tripper	7,100	280	1,430	$17,200	$2,800	$14,400	1
Reinstate Highland Tripper	6,600	230	2,430	$17,000	$2,600	$14,400	1
Revise Routes 1 and 3 in Downtown SLO							
Route 1A	*3,200*	*0*	*1,600*	*$3,500*	*$3,300*	*$200*	*0*
Route 1B	*3,600*	*0*	*-600*	*-$1,400*	*$3,000*	*-$4,400*	*0*
Route 3A	*6,900*	*0*	*0*	*$0*	*$2,200*	*-$2,200*	*0*
Route 3B	*4,000*	*0*	*-3,500*	*-$7,700*	*$1,100*	*-$8,800*	*0*
Total	17,700	0	-2,500	-$5,600	$9,600	-$15,200	*0*

2022-23 operating parameters. Cost estimates are based on the projected FY 2025-26 SLO Transit budget and the SLO Transit cost model.
Note 2: Parameters and costs represent change over existing services. Estimates represent marginal costs and do not include fixed costs.
Note 3: The average cash fare per boarding by route is detailed in Table 13.
Note 4: Assumes a general microtransit fare of $4.00 per one-way trip, or an average fare of $2.36 per passenger. Costs include $4,500/year for app license for one vehicle.

Reinstate Highland Tripper

An additional tripper that has not been operated since the pandemic is the Highland Tripper. This is a short loop route connecting the Cal Poly campus with the housing areas to the west with three round-trips per school day, and provides additional capacity and service times in the peak AM travel period. Considering the previous ridership and the overall change in Cal Poly ridership since the pandemic, this service would currently carry roughly 6,600 annual passenger-trips. Reinstating this service would increase operating cost needs by $17,000, and would require the operation of an additional bus.

Revised Routes 1 and 3 in Downtown San Luis Obispo

As discussed in Technical Memorandum 3, the on-time performance of Routes 2 and 3 is poor. Over a total of 298 runs observed as part of this study, 65 percent of Route 2A runs were more than 5 minutes behind schedule, along with 49 percent of Route 2B runs, 48 percent of Route 3A runs and 47 percent of Route 3B runs. In addition to adding uncertainty to service times on each route, this low level of dependability results in missed transfers to/from other routes.
The following options were evaluated to potentially reduce running time and improve on-time performance:
Both Route 2A and 2B in the outbound direction could be streamlined somewhat by traveling along Higuera Street between Higuera/Nipomo and Higuera/Pismo, rather than using Nipomo Street and Pismo Street. This would reduce the route length by 0.2 miles and save roughly 1 minute of travel time. It would eliminate service to two existing stops (Nipomo at Pismo and Pismo at Archer, that serve 6 passenger-trips per day, or approximately 2,000 passengers per year. Given the limited reduction in travel time, this option is not considered further.

In the inbound direction, both Routes 2A and 2B operate a relatively direct route along Marsh Street to Santa Rosa Street, then travel west on Mill and south on Osos to the transit center. A faster option would be to enter US 101 northbound at the Marsh Street interchange and exit at Osos Street, which would reduce running time by approximately 4 minutes. However, existing stops at Marsh/Archer, Marsh/Broad, March/Osos, and Santa Rosa/Higuera would be missed. These stops serve approximately 13 passengers per day, or 6,200 per year (70 percent on Route 2A and 30 percent on Route 2B). As this option would have a substantial impact on existing ridership and would eliminate much of the service between southwest downtown San Luis Obispo and the Transit Center, it is not considered further.

Routes 3A and 3B between the downtown transit center and Higuera Street/South Street both travel along South Street and Santa Barbara Street. Route 3B also serves the Amtrak Station at the end of Santa Rosa Street, while Route 3A travels along Osos Street. Routes could be shortened by using Pismo Street between Santa Rosa Street and Higuera Street on Route 3A and using Marsh Street on Route 3B. This would reduce Route 3A route length by 0.7 miles and reduce Route 3B route length by 0.9 miles. Service would be eliminated to 7 stops on Route 3A and 8 stops on Route 3B. Total ridership at these stops is currently roughly 31 passengers per day or 7,600 per year, evenly split between the two individual routes. However, given the slower running speeds in downtown compared with High Street and the southern portion of Santa Barbara Street, only roughly 1 minute of travel time would be saved in each direction. This option is not considered further, given the substantial impact on ridership and limited benefit to running time.

Another option would be to reroute Routes 3A and 3B onto US 101 between the Downtown Transit Center and the Madonna Street interchange and shift Routes 1A and 1B onto the exiting Routes 3A/3B routes between Broad Street/High Street and the Downtown Transit Center. This would reduce the running time of Route 3A by roughly 5 minutes and Route 3B by roughly 7 minutes, which would significantly improve the on-time performance of Routes 3A and 3B.

Service would be fully eliminated from only a total of four existing stops. Setting aside those stops within a quarter mile walk of other remaining stops, those stops that lose all convenient service consists of the following:

Broad at Islay (Route 1A)
Broad at Leff (Route 1B)
South at King W (Route 3A)
South at King W (Route 3B)

The stops along Broad Street on Routes 1A/1B in total currently serve 2 passenger-trips per day or 800 per year, while the stops along South Street on Routes 3A/3B currently serve 7 passenger trips per day or 1,000 per year, for a total of 9 daily trips and 1,800 annual trips.

This realignment option would also reduce service between the downtown Transit Center and central downtown San Luis Obispo by rerouting Route 1 out of the area. However, as the current Route 1 schedule is very close to the Route 2 schedule in both directions, this would not significantly reduce the convenience of transit service. This option would also reduce the travel times between southwest San Luis Obispo and the Downtown Transit Center. Improving the dependability of Route 3A/3B would also improve the connections to other routes at the Transit Center. Running times on Route 1A/1B are not expected to change significantly; while the revised Route 1A is 0.3 miles longer than at present, it would avoid congestion in the lower downtown area.

As shown in Table 16, this strategy would not change vehicle-hours of service but would reduce annual vehicle-miles by 2,500. Ridership impact was estimated based on the ridership change associated with improvements in dependability, the changes in in-vehicle travel time, the loss of ridership at the four stops with elimination of service, as well as the shift in existing Routes 3A/3B ridership to Routes 1A/1B. Overall, annual ridership is estimated to increase by a total of 17,700 passenger boardings per year. Considering the operating costs savings generated by the reduction in mileage plus the additional passenger revenues, the net operating subsidy would be reduced by $15,200 per year. No additional buses would be required.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS OF SLO TRANSIT SERVICE ALTERNATIVES

To evaluate the relative performance of the alternatives above, key impacts of each alternative were compared. The change from the status quo ridership, marginal operating cost, passengers carried per vehicle hour, and marginal operating cost per passenger were compared. This evaluation gives insight regarding the relative advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives. Table 17 and Figures 18-20 show the relative performance of the service alternatives. The green highlight in Table 17 indicates alternatives which meet performance standards developed as part of this transit plan.

Ridership

The impact of the various alternatives on annual ridership is shown in Figure 18. As indicated, the alternatives vary widely, ranging from very little change in ridership associated with providing evening microtransit service in southeast San Luis Obispo (replacing Route 1 service) up to 208,300 passenger-trips per year generated by doubling service throughout the year across the operating day. Excluding the options of doubling frequency, the greatest ridership increase is generated by operating the B routes on weekend days (39,600) followed by operating just Route 3B and 4B on weekends (29,400) and revising Routes 1 and 3 in downtown San Luis Obispo (17,700).

Table 17: SLO Transit - Service Alternatives Performance Analysis

	Net Impact					
	Annual Ridership	Service Hours	Service Miles	Annual Marginal Operating Cost [1]	Passenger-Trips per Vehicle Service Hour	Marginal Op. Cost per Passenger-Trip
Increase Route 4 A/B Frequency During Academic Year						
Increase Route 4A Frequency - 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM	4,200	300	2,300	$20,200	14.0	$4.81
Increase Route 4B Frequency - 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM	3,900	300	2,100	$19,700	13.0	$5.05
Double Service Frequency on Routes 1, 2, 3, 4 (A & B)						
Full Service Day, Year-Round	208,300	33,500	347,000	$2,455,000	6.2	$11.79
8:00 AM to 6:00 PM, Weekdays, Year-Round	119,700	19,600	234,200	$1,505,800	6.1	$12.58
Full Service Day, Weekdays, Academic Year	153,600	20,900	231,700	$1,565,500	7.3	$10.19
Double Service Frequency on Routes 1, 2, 3, 4 (A Only)						
Full Service Day, Weekdays, Academic Year	89,600	11,300	133,800	$865,400	7.9	$9.66
Double Service Frequency on Routes 3, 4 (A & B)						
Full Service Day, Weekdays, Academic Year	101,200	11,600	136,100	$885,600	8.7	$8.75
Extend Weekday Evening Service on A Routes						
Extend Service to 12:00 AM - Academic Year	5,100	1,000	10,900	$74,500	5.1	$14.61
Extend Service to 10:00 PM - Non-Academic Year	2,200	700	7,000	$50,700	3.1	$23.05
Expand Service on B Routes						
Operate B Routes on Weekends Year Round - 7:45 AM - 8:00 PM	39,600	3,200	46,000	$263,100	12.4	$6.64
Operate 3B and 4B on Weekends	29,400	1,600	25,300	$136,700	18.4	$4.65
Extend Routes 1B and 2B until 10:00 PM - Weekdays, Academic Year	4,000	1,400	14,500	$102,600	2.9	$25.65
Provide Academic Year Service Levels Year-Round	16,300	2,300	26,400	$174,300	7.1	$10.69
Implement Evening Microtransit Service in SE SLO	100	500	8,800	$33,600	0.20	$336.00
Implement Late Night Microtransit - Weekdays	4,700	1,400	17,500	$122,800	3.4	$26.13
Implement Late Night Microtransit - 7 days/week	7,100	1,700	21,625	$160,600	4.2	$22.62
Reinstate Route 6X	2,200	100	1,000	$7,200	22.0	$3.27
Reinstate SLO Tripper	7,100	280	1,430	$17,200	25.4	$2.42
Reinstate Highland Tripper	6,600	230	2,430	$17,000	28.7	$2.58
Revise Routes 1 and 3 in Downtown SLO	17,700	0	-2,500	-5,600	NA	-$0.32
Alternatives meeting performance standards shaded in green. Note that alternatives meet standards by increasing ridership at a greater rate than costs, eliminating a service not meeting standards, or increasing ridership while decreasing costs.				Recommended Performance Standards	11.5	$11.23

Note 1: Does not include fixed costs

Figure 18: SLO Transit Service Alternatives - Impact on Annual Ridership

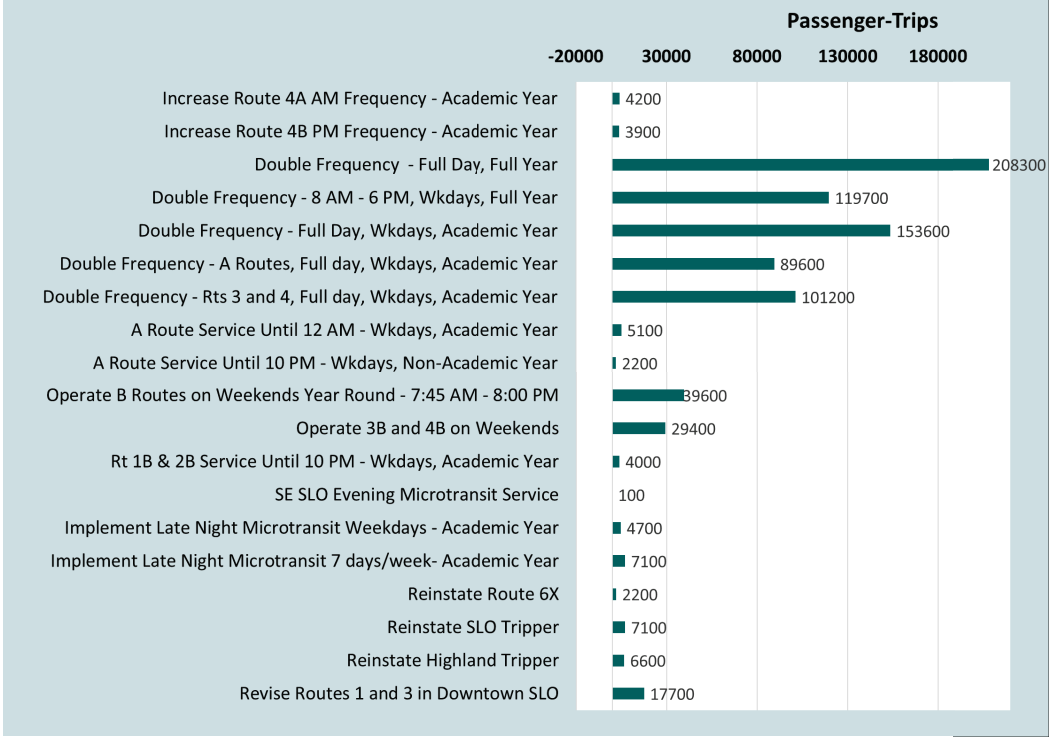


Figure 19: SLO Transit Service Alternatives - Impact on Annual Marginal Operating Cost

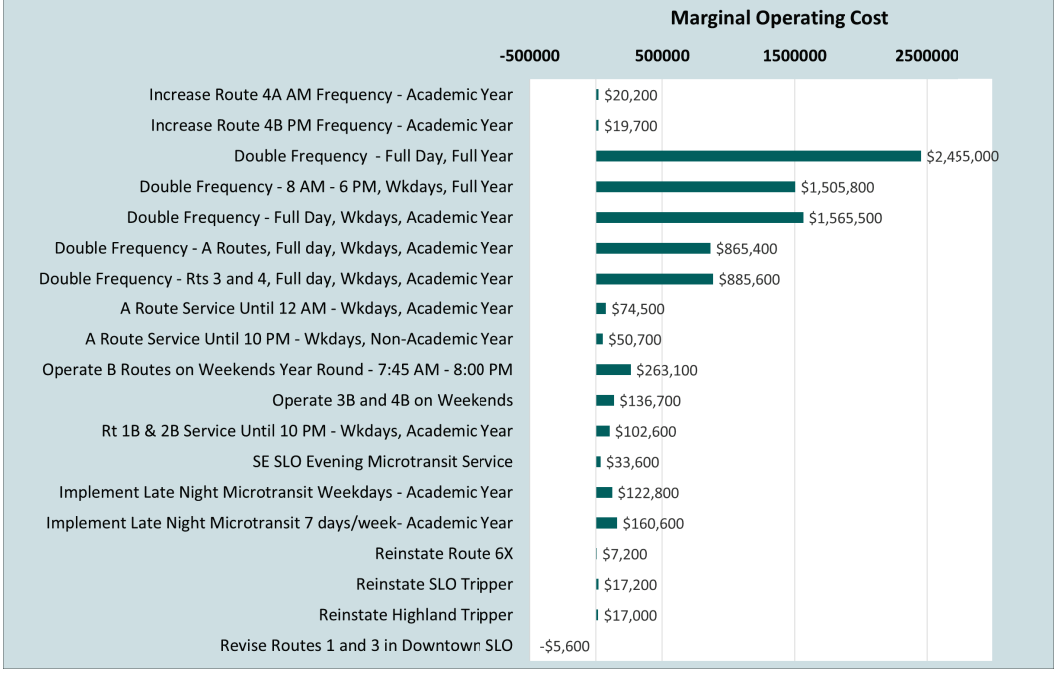


Figure 20: SLO Transit Service Alternatives - Passenger-Trips per Vehicle Service Hour

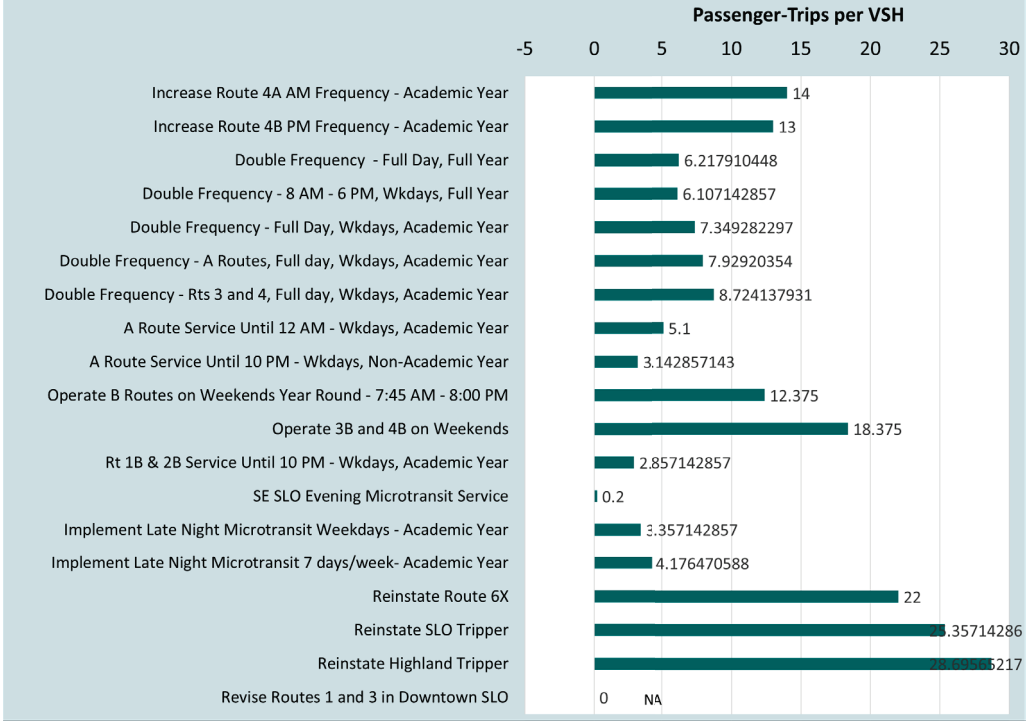
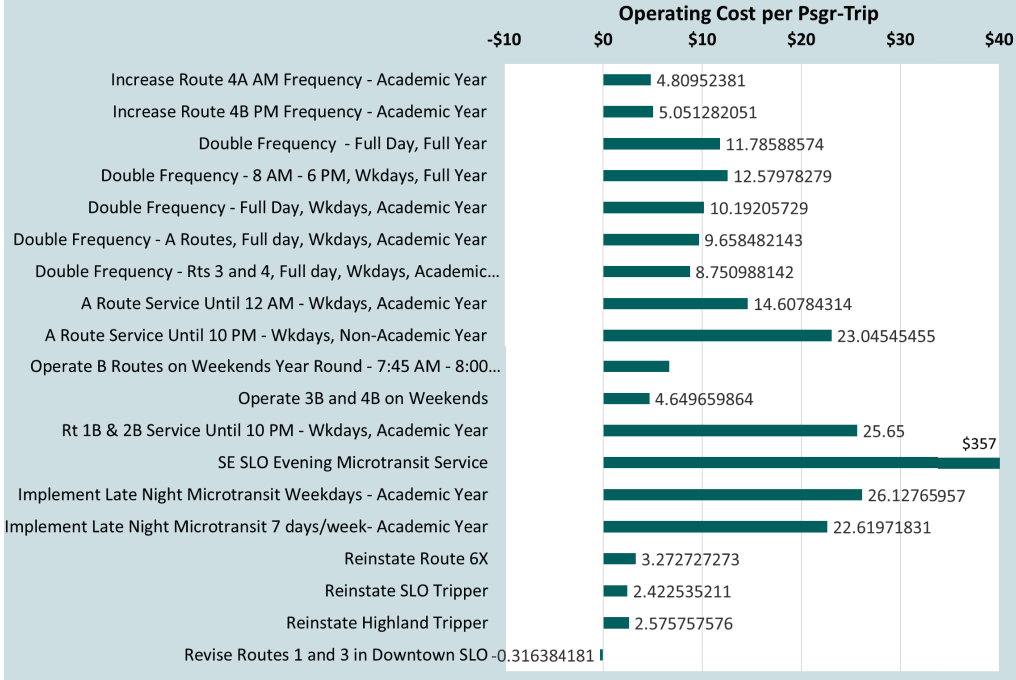


Figure 21: SLO Transit Service Alternatives - Marginal Operating Cost per Passenger-Trip



Marginal Operating Cost

Similar to the ridership impacts, the impact on annual marginal operating costs also varies widely, as shown in Figure 19. At the high end, the full doubling of transit service across all service periods over the year would increase operating costs by $2.45 Million, while limiting the doubling of service frequency to the academic year would cost $1.56 Million, and limiting to daytime hours through the full year would cost $1.5 Million. Doubling frequency on just the A Routes or Routes 3 and 4 (both A and B) would cost in the order of $865,400 and $885,600, respectively.

On the other end, revising Routes 1 and 3 in downtown San Luis Obispo would yield a small overall reduction in annual operating costs of $6,100. Beyond doubling frequency, other service alternatives that are relatively costly are operating B routes on weekends ($263,100), implementing late-night microtransit service ($122,800), and operating Routes 1B and 2B on weekday evenings in the academic year ($102,600).

Passenger-Trips per Vehicle Service Hour

A standard measure of the productivity of a transit service is the passenger-trips served per vehicle-hour of service. As shown in Figure 20, the "best" alternative by this measure is reinstating Highland Tripper, which would serve 28.7 passenger-trips per vehicle-hour. This is followed by reinstating the SLO Tripper and Route 6X. Operating Route 3B and 4B on Weekends (18.4), increasing Route 4A morning frequency in the academic year (14.0), increasing Route 4B afternoon frequency in the academic year (13.0), and operating the B routes on weekends (12.4) all meet productivity standards. The options that double service frequency range from 6.1 to 8.7 passengers per vehicle service hour, with the most productive being doubling service on Routes 3 and 4 in the academic year only. The worst option by this measure is replacing evening Route 1 service with microtransit, which adds vehicle-hours but is not forecast to change ridership very much. Note that the revision of Routes 1 and 3 in downtown San Luis Obispo cannot be evaluated by this measure, as the number of vehicle-hours is not changed.
As discussed in *Working Paper 2*, the standard for this measure is a minimum of 11.5 passenger-trips per vehicle service hour. Those alternatives that meet this standard are reinstating Route 6X, Highland Tripper, and SLO Tripper, increasing Route 4A frequency in the morning during the academic year, increasing Route 4B frequency in late afternoons during the academic year, and operating the B routes on weekends year-round, particularly 3B and 4B.

Marginal Operating Cost per Passenger-Trip

A final performance measure is the marginal operating cost per passenger-trip. This is a good measure of the financial performance of the various alternatives, with the better alternatives indicated by a lower value. Figure 21 indicates the "best" alternative by this measure is the revision of Routes 1 and 3 in downtown San Luis Obispo, which saves $0.32 for every additional passenger-trip served (as it reduces costs while increasing ridership). At the other extreme, replacing Route 1 in the evening with microtransit requires a $357 per new trip served, followed by implementing late night microtransit service ($26.13), followed by Route 1B and 2B service until 10 PM ($25.65). Considering the standard of no more than $11.23 per passenger-trip, those that achieve the standard consist of:

- Routes 1 and 3 revisions in downtown San Luis Obispo
- Reinstating pre-COVID services such as Route 6X, Highland Tripper and SLO Tripper
- Increasing Route 4A frequency in the mornings during the academic year
- Increasing Route 4B frequency in the late afternoons in the academic year
- Operating the B routes on weekends year-round, 3B and 4B in particular
- Doubling frequency on all routes for a full-service day, weekdays, during the academic year
- Doubling frequency on the A routes for a full-service day, weekdays, during the academic year
- Doubling frequency on Routes 3A, 3B, 4A, and 4B for a full-service day, weekdays during the academic year.
- Provide academic year service levels year-round

ADDITIONAL SERVICE ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

As a result of input received from the San Luis Obispo City Council, additional service alternatives were analyzed.

New Developments

There are two major projects currently under development in the southern portion of San Luis Obispo that merit consideration for expanded transit service.

San Luis Ranch

At full buildout, the San Luis Ranch development along Madonna Road will include a total of 604 dwelling units. This includes 299 high-density housing units, 34 affordable housing units, and 83 medium-density units, all of which have a higher potential to generate transit ridership. The higher-density residential development is concentrated along Madonna Road and is already served by SLO Transit. Under an agreement with Cal Poly, up to 300 students will soon be living in this area.

As an aside, the nearest existing stops to the high-density area are located along Madonna Road within a reasonable 5-minute walk distance. While the westbound stop (just west of Dalido Drive has a shelter, the eastbound stop (just east of Oceanaire Drive does not. As this will be the stop used by Cal Poly students while waiting for a bus to campus, a shelter at this stop would be beneficial.

Avila Ranch

Avila Ranch is a mixed-use residential/neighborhood commercial development under development along the north side of Buckley Road in southern San Luis Obispo. At buildout, it will include a total of 720 units, consisting of 125 higher-density units (24 units to the acre), 494 medium-density units (up to 20 units to the acre), and 101 lower-density units (7 units to the acre) as well as a small 15,000 square foot neighborhood commercial center.

The denser residential areas with the highest potential for transit ridership are in the northern portion of the site, along an extension of Eastwood Lane as well as along the east side of Horizon Lane in the northeast corner of the site. This development is at least a half-mile walk to the nearest existing SLO Transit stop (on South Higuera Street).

Service Alternatives

Alternatives are first presented that provide improved service to San Luis Ranch, as this project is farther along in the development process. Alternatives that also would serve Avila Ranch are presented next.

An important consideration in these alternatives beyond serving the new developments is addressing the existing poor service reliability of Routes 2A and 2B. LSC's observations of on-time performance indicate that a majority (65 percent) of Route 2A runs are 6 or more minutes behind schedule, with 40 percent more than 15 minutes late. While Route 2B's reliability is better, 49 percent of runs still operate at least 6 minutes land and 11 percent are more than 15 minutes late.

Revise Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch – 90 Minute Frequency

One option to serve San Luis Ranch would be to revise Routes 2A and 2B to better serve the development by traveling along Froom Ranch Way between Dalido Drive and Los Osos Valley Road, rather than Madonna Road, as shown in Figure 22. While Route 2 service to the stops near Madonna/Oceanaire would be eliminated, these stops would still be served by Route 3 (which currently generates 88 percent of the ridership at these stops). This would increase the Route 2A length by 0.8 miles while cutting 0.1 miles from Route 2B, respectively. To accommodate the additional running time as well as to solve the existing poor on-time performance, the route cycle time would be increased from 60 to 90 minutes. Operating the existing two buses would result in a 90-minute service frequency, which is typically considered a poor level of service for urban transit in mid-sized to larger urban areas.

As shown in Table 18, this option would not change the annual vehicle hours used for Route 2 service (two buses would be in operation throughout the existing span of service). The net decrease in mileage would reduce operating costs by $61,500 per year.

This alternative would have several impacts on ridership:

- Service to San Luis Ranch would be improved. However, since much of the high-density housing is already served by the stops along Madonna Street, this would be a relatively modest ridership benefit.
- The improvement in on-time reliability would increase ridership, as passengers (and potential passengers) have been proven to be very sensitive to poor service reliability. The document Valuing Transit Service Quality Improvements (Victoria Transport Policy Institute, 2023) indicates that "Increased transit travel speeds can be valued based on average time costs, but reliability improvements should be valued at a higher rate, reflecting the high costs of unexpected delay. Each minute of delay beyond a "normal" two or three-minute delay should be valued at 3-5 times the standard in-vehicle travel time." At present, Route 2A has about 10 minutes of excessive delay (on average) and Route 2B has about 5.5 minutes. This is perceived by the passenger as at least 30 minutes of travel time for Route 2A and 17 minutes for Route 2B. Providing a much more reliable transit service would therefore have a substantial ridership benefit.
- Ridership would be reduced due to the reduction in frequency from 60 minutes to 90 minutes. This can be found through elasticity analysis to have a moderate reduction in ridership.

- The resulting service would no longer provide "clockface headways" whereby the bus serves any particular stop at the same time after each hour over the day. This has been found to be a substantial benefit to riders (and thus an increase in ridership) as it is easy to learn and remember service times. In addition, the current consistent transfer opportunities at the Transit Center would no longer be provided. Direct timed transfers would vary hour by hour, with an overall increase in the need to wait between buses. One strategy would be to schedule these runs to provide direction connections at the Transit Center to Route 4B in the AM hours and Route 4A in the PM hours, allowing trips to and from Cal Poly with minimal delays at the Transit Center. Overall, however, the changed schedule would have a moderate additional reduction in ridership.

In sum, this alternative is forecast to increase Route 2 ridership by 11,000 passenger boardings per year, with the benefits of increased reliability and additional service to San Luis Ranch outweighing the reductions from reduced frequency and consistency of schedule.

Revise Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch – 45 Minute Frequency

This option would be identical to the previous alternative, except that two additional buses would be used to provide service every 45 minutes. This would avoid the reduction in ridership associated with the change in headways and provide greater opportunity for connections at the Transit Center but at a substantial operating cost. As shown in Table 18, a ridership increase of 65,000 boardings per year over existing ridership would be generated, but the annual operating cost would be increased by $462,600 and two additional buses would need to be in operation.

Revise Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch and Eliminate Descanso Street Loop – 60 Minute Frequency

Another option would be to revise Routes 2A and 2B to better serve San Luis Ranch but also eliminate the service along Los Osos Valley Road north of Froom Ranch Road to the turnabout loop using Prefumo Canyon Road, Del Rio Avenue, and Descanso Street. Eliminating service on this "Descanso Street Loop" would reduce the route length by 2.5 miles and reduce running time by approximately 7 minutes. This would solve roughly half of the existing on-time performance problem on Routes 2A and 2B if the routes are operated on the existing 60-minute cycle length. Annual operating costs would be reduced by $33,000.

All service would be eliminated to only two stops (along Del Rio Avenue at Profumo Canyon Road and at Descanso Street). Ridership at these stops is modest, totaling only roughly 7 passenger boardings per day. These passengers would need to walk at least an additional 850 feet to access the nearest stop on Los Osos Valley Road. The stops along Los Osos Valley Road would still be served by Route 3, though service frequency would be reduced from four times per hour to two times per hour. Approximately 10,200 annual boardings currently generated by Route 2A/2B in this area would be eliminated. However, considering the ridership increase resulting from more reliable service throughout Routes 2A/2B and service to San Luis Ranch, the overall impact of this alternative would be a net increase of 18,000 passenger boardings per year.

Figure 22
Route Options to Serve San Luis Ranch and Avila Ranch

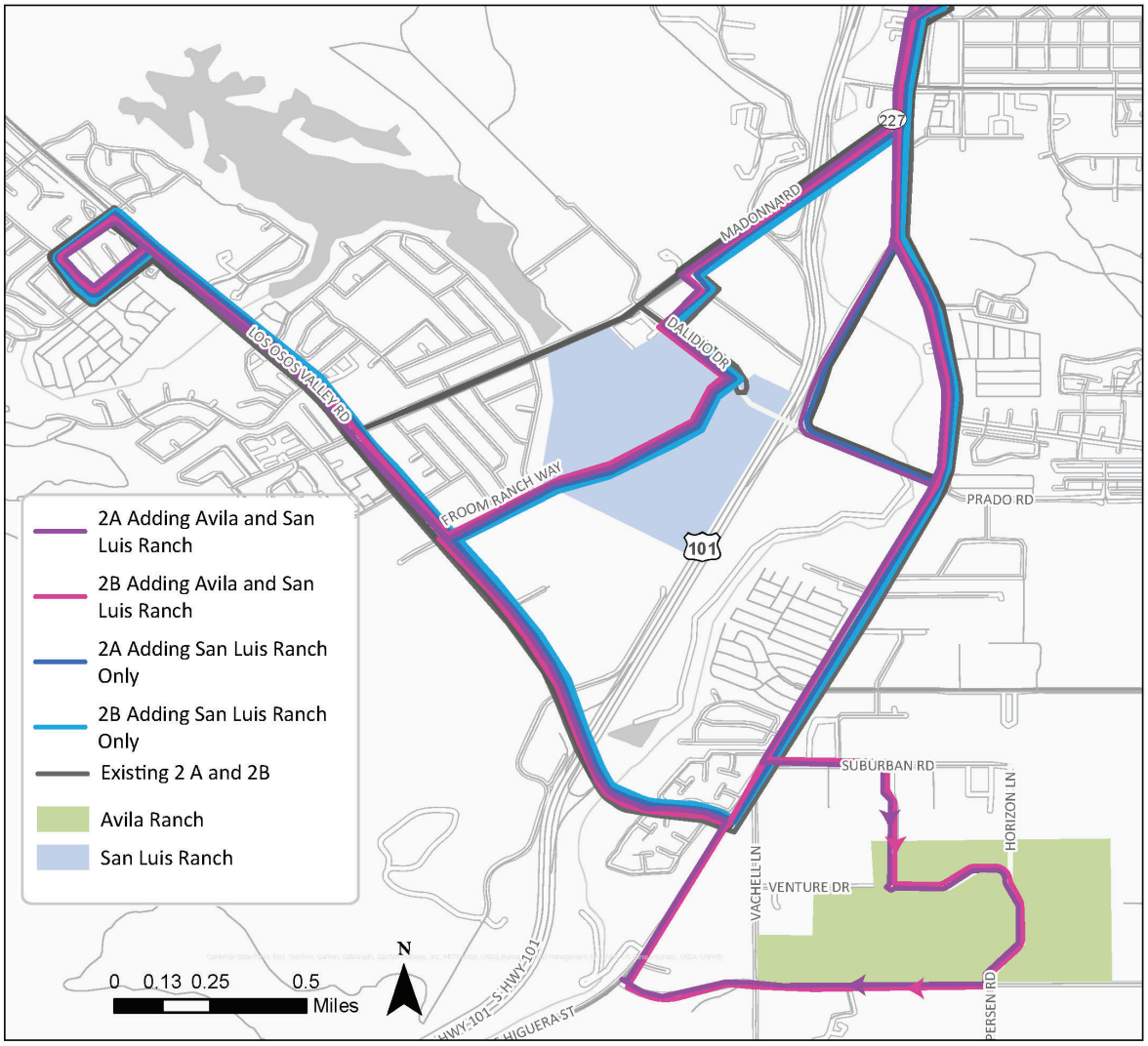


Table 18: SLO Transit - Additional Route Alternatives

	Change in Annual Service[2]						
	Ridership	Service Hours	Service Miles	Marginal Operating Cost	Cash Fare Revenues	Operating Subsidy	Additional Vehicles Needed
Revise Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch - 90 Minute Headways	11,000	0	-27,600	-$61,500	$11,000	-$72,500	0
Revise Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch - 45 Minute Headways	65,000	7,500	38,600	$462,600	$65,100	$397,500	2
Revise Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch & Cut Descanso Loop - 60 Minute Headways	18,000	0	-14,800	-$33,000	$18,000	-$51,000	0
Extend Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch and Avila Ranch - 90 Minute Headways	21,000	0	-14,300	-$31,800	$21,000	-$52,800	0
Extend Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch and Avila Ranch - 45 Minute Headways	80,000	7,500	62,000	$514,700	$80,200	$434,500	2
New Avila Ranch Direct Route -- 60 Minute Headway	34,800	5,300	49,300	$375,900	$34,900	$341,000	1
New Broad - Avila Ranch - S. Higuera Loop Route -- 60 Minute Headway	53,000	8,400	87,400	$616,400	$53,100	$563,300	2

Revise Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch and Avila Ranch – 90 Minute Frequency

By extending the Route 2 cycle length to 90 minutes, there would be more than adequate time to also extend the route to serve Avila Ranch, as shown in Figure 21. To reduce the number of stops that would need to be established, both Routes 2A and 2B would serve a clockwise loop around Suburban Road, Eastwood Lane, the extension of Ventura Drive, the extension of Horizon Lane, and Buckley Road and before returning north on South Higuera Street. Route 2A would be 14 miles in length while Route 2B would be 12.8 miles in length. This option would operate the same number of vehicle-hours of service as today, but the net effect of the fewer runs and longer route would be a reduction in annual vehicle-miles of 14,300, yielding a reduction in annual operating cost of $31,900. The net impact on ridership generated by the reduction in frequency, improved reliability, and additional service area would be an increase of 21,000 boardings per year.

Revise Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch and Avila Ranch – 45 Minute Frequency

Adding two additional buses into Route 2A/2B service would provide service along an expanded route every 45 minutes. Ridership would be increased by a substantial 80,000 boardings per year. However, annual operating costs would be increased by $514,700 and an additional two buses would be needed in operation.

Establish New Avila Ranch Direct Route – 60-Minute Frequency

Another option would be to establish a new route specifically to serve Avila Ranch. As shown in Figure 22, this route would use the existing Route 2 alignment south from downtown along South Higuera

Street and make a clockwise loop around Suburban Road, Eastwood Lane, the extension of Ventura Drive, the extension of Horizon Lane, Buckley Road, and Vachelli Lane before returning north on South Higuera Street. This route is 8.8 miles in length and can be reliably served in an hour cycle length.

In addition to providing service to Avila Ranch, this option has the benefit of doubling service along the South Higuera Street corridor which has substantial ridership (roughly 2.5 times the ridership along the Broad Street corridor along Routes 1A/1B). This route also could serve the Elks Lane/Prado Road loop off of S. Higuera Street currently served by Route 2A, thereby reducing running time and improving the on-time performance of Route 2A. Note that serving this loop in the northbound direction would require a traffic signal at Elks Lane / S. Higuera Street to allow buses to reliably turn onto S. Higuera Street northbound.

This option has the benefit of only requiring a single additional bus to serve Avila Ranch without resulting in a 90-minute service frequency. Assuming service is provided over the same span as the existing Route 2A span, annual operating costs would be increased by $375,900, while ridership would be increased by 34,800 boardings per year.

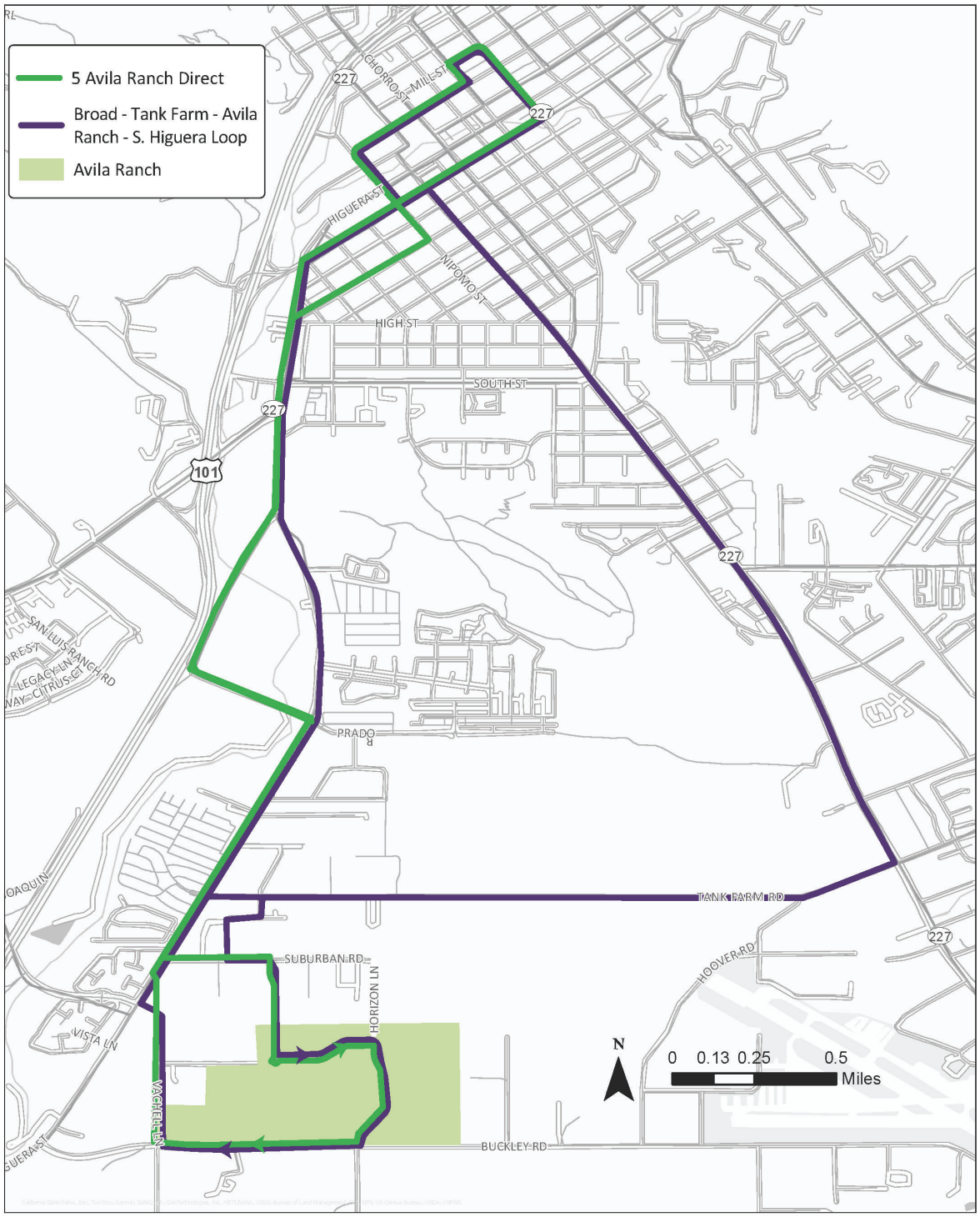
Broad Street / Tank Farm Road / S. Higuera Loop Route to Serve Avila Ranch

A final option would be to create a large bi-directional route using Broad Street between the Transit Center and Tank Farm Road, Tank Farm Road, Long Street, Cross Street, and Short Street to access the Avila Ranch area and South Higuera Street to the Transit Center. As shown in Figure 22, this route is 10.4 miles long, though the relatively high speeds along the long stretch of Tank Farm Road with no ridership potential would allow it to operate in a 60-minute cycle length.

It is assumed that one direction would be operated over the same span as Route 2A and the other over the same span as Route 2B, resulting in an annual operating cost of $616,400. Two additional buses would be required at peak times.

Ridership would be generated by providing half-hourly service along both the Broad Street and South Higuera Street corridors, by serving Avila Ranch, as well as by providing a new more convenient connection for transit travel between southwest and southeast San Luis Obispo. Overall, ridership is forecast to increase by 53,000 boardings per year.

Figure 23
New Route Options to Serve Avila Ranch



Service Alternatives Performance Analysis

Table 19 presents an evaluation of the performance of the additional service alternatives. This follows the methodology discussed in *Technical Memorandum Four: Service Alternatives* and applies the performance standards of a minimum of 11.5 passenger-trips per vehicle-hour and marginal operating costs that do not exceed $11.23 per passenger-trip. A review of these results indicates the following:

- All of these alternatives meet the cost-effectiveness standard with the exception of the Broad Street – Avila Ranch – South Higuera loop route.
- The three options that increase ridership while not adding vehicle-hours (90-minute service to San Luis Ranch, 60-minute service to San Luis Ranch and cutting the Descanso loop, and 90-minute service to San Luis Ranch and Avila Ranch) perform particularly well as they reduce costs (by reducing vehicle-miles of service) while expanding ridership. These three options also help meet overall service productivity standards by increasing ridership without adding vehicle-hours.
- Of the options that serve Avila Ranch while avoiding 90-minute service frequency, the best performance is provided by the 45-minute service on an expanded Route 2A/2B. While the productivity figure of 10.7 passenger-trips per vehicle-hour does not achieve the standard of 11.5, it is close.
- A new direct route along South Higuera Street serving Avila Ranch would have slightly better performance than the large bi-directional loop using South Higuera Street, Tank Farm Road, and Broad Street, and would be substantially less expensive. However, this cannot be implemented until a new traffic signal is in place at Elks Road and S. Higuera.

Table 19: Additional Service Alternatives Performance Analysis

	Net Impact					
	Annual Ridership	Service Hours	Service Miles	Annual Marginal Operating Cost [1]	Passenger-Trips per Vehicle Service Hour	Marginal Op. Cost per Passenger-Trip
Revise Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch - 90 Minute Headways	11,000	0	-27,600	-$61,500	*Note 2*	-$5.59
Revise Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch - 45 Minute Headways	65,000	7,500	38,600	$462,600	8.7	$7.12
Revise Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch & Cut Descanso Loop - 60 Minute Headways	18,000	0	-14,800	-$33,000	*Note 2*	-$1.83
Extend Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch and Avila Ranch - 90 Minute Headways	21,000	0	-14,300	-$31,800	*Note 2*	-$1.51
Extend Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch and Avila Ranch - 45 Minute Headways	80,000	7,500	62,000	$514,700	10.7	$6.43
New Avila Ranch Direct Route -- 60 Minute Headway	34,800	5,300	49,300	$375,900	6.6	$10.80
New Broad - Avila Ranch - S. Higuera Loop Route -- 60 Minute Headway	53,000	8,400	87,400	$616,400	6.3	$11.63
Alternatives meeting performance standards shaded in green. Note that alternatives meet standards by increasing ridership at a greater rate than costs, eliminating a service not meeting standards, or increasing ridership while decreasing costs.				Recommended Performance Standards	11.5	$11.23

Note 1: Does not include fixed costs
Note 2: As there is an increase in ridership with no change in vehicle-hours, this measure calculates as infinite.

Summary

Based on the performance analysis of all the service alternatives, the following service alternatives have the greatest potential to enhance the SLO Transit service and should be carried forward into the plan development process:

- Realigning Routes 1 and 3 in downtown San Luis Obispo.
- Providing B route service on weekend days year-round.
- Increasing Route 4A frequency on weekday mornings in the academic year.
- Increasing Route 4B frequency on weekday afternoons in the academic year.
- Reinstating pre-COVID routes: Route 6X, Highland Tripper and SLO Tripper.

While doubling service frequency would generate substantial ridership benefits, it would require significant new funding sources as well as consideration of capital fleet and facility needs. Doubling frequency on Routes 3A, 3B, 4A, and 4B would have the lowest marginal operating cost per new passenger-trip served.

Although the Revising Route 2A/2B to service San Luis Ranch with 90-minute headways meets performance standards, reducing service frequency does not improve overall transit service nor does it meet city goals of increasing frequency. Adding a second bus in each direction to have 45-minute headways would have a large increase in ridership but also a large increase in costs. Revising Route 2A/2B to serve San Luis Ranch, cut the Descanso loop to maintain 60-minute headways with good on-time performance, has good ridership and cost-saving benefits. When Avila Ranch warrants transit service, the direct route on 60-minute headways performs the best.

Chapter 8

SLO TRANSIT CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the recommended capital improvements needed to operate transit services, specifically the transit fleet, the passenger amenities, and the Downtown Transit Center.

FLEET REPLACEMENT PLAN

Transit vehicles must be regularly replaced to maintain a safe and reliable fleet. The SLO Transit Asset Management Plan sets a target to allow no more than 50% of the revenue vehicle fixed route fleet to exceed the FTA-defined useful life. As the vehicle procurement process can take multiple years, transit agencies must identify their vehicle needs well in advance. Additionally, the State of California's (CA) Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) regulation will begin impacting transit vehicle procurement in 2026, at which point 25 percent of small transit agency fleet bus purchases will be required to be ZEBs. By 2029, this purchasing requirement will increase to 100 percent. By 2040, all vehicles in the fleet will need to be ZEBs. To meet these standards, transit agencies can purchase either battery-electric buses (BEBs) or fuel-cell electric buses (FCEBs).

Currently, ZEBs are considerably more expensive than gasoline or diesel vehicles, meaning SLO Transit will need to secure additional funding to meet local match requirements for capital grants. While ZEBs are more expensive at this point, the market is constantly changing as new models are released and older models are improved, making it hard to predict future pricing. The seven-year SLO Transit vehicle replacement schedule presented in this report is subject to change as new ZEB technologies become available, and costs stabilize.

SLO Transit is actively replacing buses and has now committed fully to purchasing only BEBs. There is an order of six BEB buses expected to be in service in the Fall of 2025 and an order of two BEB's that are expected to be in service in 2026.

Table 20 presents SLO Transit's anticipated vehicle needs, and purchasing/refurbishment schedule based on the agency's current fleet, SLO Transit's Zero Emission Bus Rollout Plan (2024), and the Useful Life Benchmark (ULB) of the different vehicle models, as identified by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Table 20 lists the number of buses currently on order but does not include the costs in the seven-year bus replacement/refurbishment schedule. Only buses that have not yet been ordered and funded are included in the costs. Table 20 does not include any expansion vehicle purchases required to support the recommended service plan presented in this SRTP.

SLO Transit has 19 fixed-route vehicles that range in age from 2 to 17 years old. SLO Transit has one replica trolley that is used seasonally and a double-decker bus which is less frequently used. SLO Transit purchased two BEB's in 2022. These buses are now in service and will eventually replace two older model-year diesel buses or be used to expand the fleet for potential service expansion. For the current level of service, the base fleet size is 17, with 15 fixed-route buses. The total number of vehicles that will need to be replaced in the seven-year planning period will be 15. This does not include a potential

expanded fleet for added services. The 15 buses in the base fleet which need to be replaced or refurbished will completed as follows:

- 8 battery-electric Gillig buses currently on order
- 1 new battery-electric replica trolley
- 1 new battery-electric bus to replace the 2011 cutaway bus
- 5 refurbished model year 2007 (2), 2012 (1), and 2013 (2) Gillig diesel buses
- 1 refurbished interior on the model year 2009 double-decker bus

This results in a net addition of one fixed-route bus. This will allow for the transition to battery electric buses while charging infrastructure is being developed. It is anticipated that some buses will need to charge during the day, requiring more buses to be available for service. Given current market costs and anticipated inflation, it is expected that vehicle replacement and refurbishment needs will cost SLO Transit a total of $13 million over seven years.

Bus Refurbishment

SLO Transit has programmed funds to overhaul five buses – two in 2026, two in 2027, and one in 2028. This will extend the life of five fixed-route diesel buses that would otherwise need to be retired by 2025. These buses would have their useful life extended by at least seven years to 2033 and 2034. The work being pursued by SLO Transit is a comprehensive refurbishment of the exterior, passenger compartment, driver's area, wheelchair loading, and securement systems, electrical system, engine compartment, suspension, steering, brakes, heating/air-conditioning, radiator/cooling system, exhaust system, engine, and transmission. In addition, SLO Transit is considering overhauling the interior of the existing model year 2009 double-decker bus to have on hand for very high passenger load runs during the academic year.

This effort will position SLO Transit to manage the transition to battery electric buses and to have an expanded fleet for potential service additions. The budget for the full bus overhaul is $400,000 per bus. The city has programmed $2.5 million to cover the cost of the five buses plus contingency. The cost for the interior overhaul of the double-decker bus is budgeted at $150,000.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Table 21 presents a seven-year capital improvement plan for all items outside of revenue fleet replacement. This includes bus yard improvements, technology, bus stop improvements, BEB charging infrastructure, and rehabilitation of the Downtown Transit Center.

This seven-year capital improvement program totals $6 million and will be funded primarily through the SB 125 program and Federal Transit Administration grants. The major components are discussed below.

Table 20: SLO Vehicle Replacement/Refurbishment Schedule- By Year of Purchase Order

Estimated Current Cost of Vehicles	
Battery Electric - 35'	$1,253,700
Battery Electric - 40'	$1,279,139
Battery Electric Cutaway	$355,000
Battery Electric Trolley	$655,300

	Existing Orders Prior to FY 25/26	Plan Period (by Fiscal Year) 2							7-Year Plan Total (excluding existing bus orders prior to FY 25/26)
		25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	30/31	31/32	
Bus Replacements									
Fixed Route Buses	0								
Number of Buses (35' BEB)	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Number of Buses (40' BEB)	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of Buses (Cutaway BEB)[3]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of Buses (Replica Trolley BEB)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total Number of Vehicles	8	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Total Cost[1]	*$9,483,376*	*$1,291,300*	*$0*	*$716,100*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	$2,007,400

Estimated Current Cost of Vehicles	
Diesel Buses	$450,000
Diesel Double Decker	$150,000

Bus Refurbishments								
Fixed Route Buses								
Number of Buses Refurbished	2	2	1					5
Number of Double Deck Refurbished		1						1
Total Number of Vehicles	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	6
Total Cost[1]	*$927,000*	*$1,113,900*	*$491,700*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	$2,532,600
Total Vehicle Needs	**$2,218,300**	**$1,113,900**	**$1,207,800**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$4,540,000**

Note 1: 35-foot and 40-foot bus costs are based on recently issued purchase orders. All costs assume 3.0 percent annual inflation

Note 2: Starting in 2026, 25% of new vehicle purchases in 2026 must be ZEBs.

Note 3: No Altoona tested electric cutaways are available as of the time of writing (October 2024).

Note 4: Presented schedule is based on the City of SLO Zero Emission Bus Rollout Plan (March 2024) and the Federal Transit Administration's Useful Life Benchmark. Future vehicle purchases are subject to change. Additional vehicle purchases necessary to implement service elements included in this SRTP are not included in this table. The total costs do not include six-bus battery electric bus order authorized in July 2023, or the two-bus battery electric bus order in March 2024

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc, SLO Zero Emission Bus Rollout Plan.

Table 21: SLO Transit Capital Projects - By Year of Contract Award or Purchase Order

		Plan Period (by Fiscal Year)							
Category	**Project**	**25/26**	**26/27**	**27/28**	**28/29**	**29/30**	**30/31**	**31/32**	**7-Year Plan Total**
ZEB Charging	Transit Facility EV Charging Infrastructure		$ 699,300						$ 699,300
Passenger Amenities	Bus Shelter Replacements/Bus Stop Improvement	$ 90,000	$ 90,000	$ 90,000	$ 90,000	$ 90,000	$ 90,000	$ 90,000	$ 630,000
Capital Maintenance	Parking Lot Maintenance - Bus Yard	$ 500,000							$ 500,000
Technology	City of SLO AVL System Replacement			$ 430,000					$ 430,000
Transit Center	Downtown San Luis Obispo Transit Center Rehabilitation		$ 140,000		$ 1,500,000	$ 1,500,000			$ 3,140,000
Technology	On-Board Bus Security Camera System Replacement		$ 750,000						$ 750,000
Technology	Digital Displays at Key Bus Stops	$51,500	$53,000	$54,500	$33,600	$34,500	$35,400	$36,600	$ 299,100
Non Revenue Vehicles	Replacement of Road Supervisor Van with Battery Electric Van		$ 150,000						$ 150,000
	TOTAL	**$ 641,500**	**$ 1,183,000**	**$ 574,500**	**$ 1,623,600**	**$ 1,624,500**	**$ 125,400**	**$ 126,600**	**$ 6,598,400**

Source: SLOCOG 2025 FTIP; City of SLO 2023-2025 Financial Plan; TIRCP Project List, 2023

Charging Infrastructure

The City of SLO recently completed an expansion of charging infrastructure at the operations and maintenance facility. An additional expansion of charging infrastructure will be needed to transition to a BEB fleet. In addition to the two BEB currently in the SLO Transit fleet, six more are expected to go into service in the fall of 2025 and two more in 2026. This will be a total of ten BEBs in service by 2026.

The SLO Transit ZEB Rollout Plan notes that the buildout of the charging infrastructure at the bus yard will consist of 24 parking stalls with charging dispensers. The city is also working on a multi-site solar panel project which includes installation of panels at the bus yard to offset daytime charging needs. The project includes the installation of three solar arrays over the newly improved bus parking and maintenance area totaling 17,000 square feet of coverage. This will be completed by the Spring of 2026.

TRANSIT FACILITIES

The SLO Transit Operations and Maintenance Facility is a 2.5-acre site located at 29 Prado Road in San Luis Obispo, and houses all operations, maintenance, and dispatch functions. The facility is located adjacent to the City's Water Department. The facility will eventually host twelve dual-port chargers for BEBs. The 2023 RTP recommended that a new, stand-alone maintenance facility be developed for SLO Transit in the next few years to provide increased vehicle storage capacity and improved amenities for staff.

Passenger Amenities

Bus Stops

SLO Transit serves 166 bus stops within San Luis Obispo and the nearby Cal Poly Campus. Of these stops, 50 have shelters and 111 have benches. Solar lights are installed at 23 stops and electronic, real-time schedule signs are installed at 3 stops. Almost all the SLO Transit bus stops have an information kiosk (96 percent). The two largest SLO Transit bus stops are the Downtown transit center and the Cal Poly Kennedy Library. Some SLO Transit stops are shared with the RTA.

During the On-Board Survey effort which took place October 23rd through October 27th, 2023, surveyors riding buses recorded boarding and alighting activity on SLO Transit fixed routes. Despite this survey taking place over multiple days its goal was to capture service equivalent to a full weekday service across all routes aside from the SLO transit Highland Tripper Route. This data is subject to human error but provides a useful approximation of boarding activity at individual stops and actual boarding numbers are likely to be greater than the recorded data.

Boardings at individual stops that were shared between multiple routes were added together to estimate daily boardings across routes for individual stops. Stops with over 10 estimated daily boardings were then cross-referenced with the SLO bus stop amenity inventory finalized January 2024 to identify stops with 10 or more boardings and no bench, or 25 or more boardings and no shelter. Identified stops were then explored in Google Maps Street View to verify the lack of those amenities. In some instances,

stops were removed due to the presence of amenities not included in the organizational databases highlighting the need to ensure these databases are accurate and up to date.

As shown in Table 22, there were 2 stops served by SLO routes that had 10 or more combined boardings and no bench. There were 7 stops served by SLO routes that had 25 or more combined boardings and no shelter. Space for improved bus stop amenities is lacking at some of these stops. A full listing of stops that meet the recommended threshold for benches and buses is provided in Table 22 below.

The current bus shelter pricing in the CalACT pricing cooperative (RFP #20-01) ranges from $8,286 for a 9-foot shelter to $12,356 for a 21-foot shelter. This is base pricing and does not include options such as trash receptacles and map cases. Installation costs will vary depending on site characteristics. The shelter contract also includes solar-powered, real-time information displays for $8,183 which includes a 5-year data plan.

The SLO Transit Innovation Study included a focus on the importance of bus stops for rider safety and comfort. Lighting and shelters at bus stops are identified as priorities. In addition to adding shelters to high-boarding locations, the city is also prioritizing the replacement of older passenger shelters.

Other improvements identified in the SLO Transit Innovation Study include the addition of bus bulb-outs in the downtown area. Bus bulb-outs are extensions of the curb allowing the bus to stop and board passengers in the travel lane. In this sense, the bulb-out is the opposite of a pull-out where the bus pulls out of the travel lane to the curb. With pull-outs, the bus needs to wait for traffic to clear to pull back into the travel lane. With a bulb-out, the bus is essentially stopping in the travel lane and can proceed without waiting for traffic to clear. In addition to the efficiency of boarding passengers, the bulb-out also provides additional space for shelters, signage, seating, and passenger waiting. There are no specific bus bulb-out projects included in this plan. The addition of bulb-outs needs to be weighed against blocking the travel lane and potentially creating traffic congestion. Bus bulb-out design needs to be integrated into the overall street, intersection, parking, and sidewalk design at the bulb-out location.

Table 22: SLO Transit Stop Amenity Concerns

Route and Stop	Stop ID	Routes Served	Shelter	Bench	Combined Boardings Across Routes	Space for Improved Ammenities
Stops With 25 or More Daily Boardings and No Shelter						
LOVR at Laguna Lane (Midc	0218	2A, 3B	No	Yes	47	Yes
Ramona at S. Tassajara	0327	3A, 4B, LT	No	Yes	41	No
Foothill at Patricia	0405	3A, 4A, 4B, LT	No	No	36	No
Foothill at La Entrada	0325	2A, 2B, 3A, LT	No	Yes	28	No
Madonna Road at Madonn:	0251	3A, 4B, LT	No	Yes	26	Yes
Foothill at Rosita	0334	4A	No	No	25	No
Stops with 10-24 Daily Boardings and No Bench						
La Cuesta Inn	1	Trolly	No	No	22	Yes
Monterey at Toro	0404	4B, Trolley	No	No	22	Yes
Monterey at California	0406	4B, Trolley	No	No	20	No
Madonna Road at Madonn:	0208	2B,3A	No	No	15	No
Monterey/Osos	3	Trolley	No	No	13	Yes
Foothill at Cuesta	0332	3B,4A,LT	No	No	12	No
Grand at Monterey	0410	4B	No	No	12	No
LOVR at Laguna Lane (Midc	0226	2A,2B,3B	No	No	10	Yes

Source: LSC Boarding and Alighting Counts, SLO Transit Stop Amenities Database, Google Maps

Deterring Loitering at Bus Stops

Passenger amenities at bus stops are important to enhance a person's experience while waiting for the bus. In addition to being safe, convenient, comfortable, and accessible for pedestrians waiting for the bus, bus stop amenities need to be designed with features to discourage long-term occupancy and sleeping. Features meant to deter this activity include vertical bars to segment benches into smaller seating areas, sloped benches, partial enclosure of the shelter, and perforated panels rather than solid panels. Passenger shelter lighting that is illuminated during all hours of darkness can also act as a deterrent and security measure.

Park-and-Ride Lots

The City of San Luis Obispo finished developing the Calle Joaquin Park-and-Ride lot in 2018, however, the facility is not currently served by SLO Transit or the RTA. The spot contains 31 parking spaces, two motorcycle spaces, and a bus turnout. There are no plans for additional park-and-ride improvements in the seven-year planning period.

Bicycle Amenities

SLO Transit has five bus stops with bicycle racks: the Downtown Transit Center, Marsh Street at Osos Street, Marsh Street at Chorro Street, the San Luis Obispo Amtrak Station, and Santa Rosa Street at Leff Street. The SLO Transit Innovation Study recommends increased bike parking at or near bus stops as a first-last mile connection to transit and as a measure to reduce single-occupancy automobile trips. Bike parking can take the form of bike racks or lockers. A recent example of bike lockers with the ability to

rent by the hour are the Bike Link lockers on Morro Street north of Pacific Street where 6 lockers have been added. These lockers are close to multiple bus stops in the downtown area.

Downtown Transit Center

The 2016 SRTP noted that a significant constraint to the regional San Luis Obispo public transit network is the existing transit hub in downtown San Luis Obispo (Government Center). This currently consists of a SLO Transit facility on the west side of Osos Street between Mill Street and Palm Street, and an RTA facility on the east side of Osos Street between Monterey Street and Palm Street. The SLO Transit facility provides sawtooth bays for up to five buses along with shelter structures. The RTA facility provides approximately 200 feet of straight curb, which is adequate to accommodate up to three buses, depending on the order which individual buses arrive. There is also a drop-off-only area around the corner on Palm Street that accommodates a fourth bus. In 2020 RTA added new bus shelters, an expanded passenger waiting area, a bicycle repair station and new LED bus arrival signs, and a ticket vending machine. However, the following deficiencies remain:

- There is inadequate space for all RTA buses at peak times, resulting in buses that park around the corner on Palm (potentially conflicting with other uses), or that end up parked at an angle to the curb. This can block travel lanes on Osos Street, and increase hazards to passengers boarding/alighting the bus and preclude deployment of the wheelchair lift/ramp.
- The number of bays available for SLO Transit limits the ability to schedule services to maximize direct bus-to-bus transfers.
- While there are restrooms available at nearby public buildings (City Hall, Library), these are only available during operating hours.
- Transferring between the SLO Transit and RTA systems requires walking across two streets.
- Both blocks are on a grade that exceeds the desired maximum slope of a facility as defined by the ADA (2 percent). This creates challenges for wheelchair users transferring between buses and can also increase hazards associated with using a lift or ramp.
- Bus shelter capacity is inadequate at peak times, particularly for RTA passengers. The south-facing passenger shelters also cause passenger discomfort during afternoon periods due to inadequate shade.
- There is inadequate street lighting for night-time operations, as well as to address personal security concerns.
- The 8-foot-wide sidewalks adjacent to the RTA bus locations get congested, particularly when a wheelchair lift, or ramp is in use.

The SLO Transit Innovation Study includes the concept of Mobility Hubs, which bring together public transit, bikeshare, carshare, scooter share, and other first-last mile solutions without the use of a private vehicle. The study notes that a location of interest for a future Mobility Hub is the Downtown Transit Center.

OTHER PLANNED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Replace CAD/AVL and Automatic Passenger Counters

SLO Transit uses computer-aided dispatch/automatic vehicle location (CAD/AVL) provided by a third-party vendor that integrates on-board technology and a real-time passenger information system. The automatic passenger counting (APC) system, which is installed on the 19 SLO Transit vehicles. is part of the CAD/AVL system. The SLO Transit Innovation Study places a high priority on replacing the CAD/AVL and APC systems to incorporate more state-of-the-art technology. The capital improvement program includes funding in FY 2027/28 to replace the system on all SLO Transit fixed-route buses. There may be an opportunity to procure systems jointly with RTA, which has a CAD/AVL technology contract that expires in May 2026.

Enhance Real-time Passenger Information

A real-time passenger information system provides bus arrival times and bus locations to the public on a website, smart-phone application, real-time digital display signs at bus stops, and the on-board stop annunciators. This is commonly integrated into the CAD/AVL software package. As noted above, the SLO Transit Innovation Study sets a high priority for the replacement of the CAD/AVL system for SLO transit. An important reason for this is for SLO Transit's passengers to be able to fully rely on a reliable state-of-the-art real-time information system to assist with daily travel planning on SLO Transit.

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Chapter 9

SLO TRANSIT FINANCIAL CONDITIONS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on existing financial conditions (including fare considerations) and presents "base case" financial forecasts. This information is used as the basis for specific financial plans to support system enhancements.

PROJECTED OPERATING EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES

Table 23 presents the projected FY 2025-26 operating costs which were used to analyze service alternatives in Working Paper 4. The total operating budget is projected to be $5.7 million with $2.6 million of this amount representing fixed costs (costs that do not increase if service levels increase). Purchased transportation costs (per hour costs) amount to $1.9 million and mileage-related costs such as fuel and maintenance total to around $1 million.

Table 24 presents projected operating expenses for the seven-year planning period. An inflation escalator of three percent was applied to FY 2025-26 costs. Also presented in Table 24 is the projected operating revenue for SLO Transit. These figures are based on the City of San Luis Obispo FY 2024-25 Supplemental Budget, historical growth, and SLOCOG projections. As presented, there is sufficient operating revenue available throughout the planning period, if public transit services were to continue as is (status quo). In fact, during the early years of the planning period, there is a surplus of around $600,000 potentially available to implement some of the service alternatives discussed in Working Paper 4 or alternatively to fund capital projects.

CAPITAL REVENUES

Recurring capital revenues are presented at the bottom of Table 24. These figures are based on the City of San Luis Obispo FY 2024-25 budget and SLOCOG forecasts. Recurring revenue sources such as FTA 5307 funds are projected to amount to around $3.7 million annually.

SLO Transit capital expenditures are discussed in greater detail in Working Paper 7. Total capital plan expenditures from Working Paper 7 are compared to projected capital revenues in Table 24. As shown, sufficient funding is available for vehicle replacement and charging infrastructure projects, particularly in the latter years of the planning period when fewer capital projects are planned.

Table 23: SLO Transit Operating Costs

Expenditures and Obligations	Projected FY 2025-26	Cost Variable: Vehicle Service Hours	Cost Variable: Vehicle Service Miles	Fixed
Staffing	$345,108			$345,108
Other Contract Services	$169,680			$169,680
Purchased Transportation	$3,856,773	$1,980,814	$222,045	$1,653,914
Fuel	$365,000		$365,000	
Maintenance	$355,775		$355,775	
Other Operating Expenditures	$144,931		$144,931	
CalPERS ADP	$12,555			$12,555
Transfers Out	$474,427			$474,427
RTA, SLOCOG, and other Off-the-top contributions from the TDA	$0			
Total Operating Costs	**$5,724,249**	**$1,980,814**	**$1,087,751**	**$2,655,684**
Annual Service Quantity		**38,000**	**398,400**	
Cost per Unit by Variable (Cost Model)		**$52.13**	**$2.73**	**$2,655,684**

Source: City of SLO 2023-25 Financial Plan Supplement

Table 24: SLO Transit Revenues vs Expenditures

	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29	FY 29-30	FY 30-31	FY 31-32
Operating Revenues							
Passenger fare revenue[1]	$260,000	$265,200	$275,900	$292,800	$316,900	$349,900	$394,000
Cal Poly Transit Agreement [2]	$750,000	$750,000	$772,500	$772,500	$772,500	$795,675	$795,675
Interest	$32,815	$22,648	$43,017	$43,000	$43,000	$43,000	$43,000
Transportation Development Act (TDA) - Local Transportation Fund (LTF) [3]	$2,000,000	$2,024,000	$2,048,300	$2,072,900	$2,097,800	$2,123,000	$2,148,500
Transportation Development Act (TDA) - State Transit Assistance (STA) [3]	$725,000	$725,000	$725,000	$725,000	$725,000	$725,000	$725,000
Other State Grants	$8,722	$8,722	$8,722	$8,700	$8,700	$8,700	$8,700
FTA 5307 Preventative Maintenance[3]	$210,765	$214,980	$219,280	$223,700	$228,200	$232,800	$237,500
FTA 5307 Operating[3]	$2,357,125	$2,440,400	$2,512,250	$2,594,900	$2,676,700	$2,745,263	$2,822,763
Total Operating Revenue	**$6,344,427**	**$6,450,950**	**$6,604,969**	**$6,733,500**	**$6,868,800**	**$7,023,338**	**$7,175,138**
Available Operating Balance	$0	$620,178	$1,175,128	$1,707,197	$2,185,597	$2,611,597	$2,998,834
Status Quo Operating Expenditures	**$5,724,249**	**$5,896,000**	**$6,072,900**	**$6,255,100**	**$6,442,800**	**$6,636,100**	**$6,835,200**
Balance	**$620,178**	**$1,175,128**	**$1,707,197**	**$2,185,597**	**$2,611,597**	**$2,998,834**	**$3,338,772**
Capital Revenues							
FTA 5307 (Capital)[3]	$2,984,435	$4,503,627	$4,109,525	$4,091,994	$4,054,653	$4,005,601	$3,928,101
State of Good Repair[2]	$0	$3,000	$3,000	$3,000	$3,000	$3,000	$3,000
Capital Fund Balance	--	$124,635	$2,334,361	$4,664,586	$7,135,979	$9,569,133	$13,452,333
Total Capital Recurring Revenue	**$2,984,435**	**$4,631,261**	**$6,446,886**	**$8,759,579**	**$11,193,633**	**$13,577,733**	**$17,383,434**
Capital Plan Expenditures Status Quo	**$2,859,800**	**$2,296,900**	**$1,782,300**	**$1,623,600**	**$1,624,500**	**$125,400**	**$126,600**
Capital Balance with no Discretionary Funding	**$124,635**	**$2,334,361**	**$4,664,586**	**$7,135,979**	**$9,569,133**	**$13,452,333**	**$17,256,834**

Source: FY 2024-25 Supplemental Budget

Note 1: Passenger fares escalated at the SLOCOG projected city population growth rate of 1% annually.

Note 2: Based on City Budget

Note 3: Assumes FTA 5307 is used to pay for half of total operating expenses minus fare revenues. Total FTA 5307 projected at SLOCOG annual growth rate.

Note 4: If microtransit pilot is successful and City decides to operate their own vehicles for the service.

OTHER FUNDING SOURCES

In recent years, funding sources such as grants, tax credits, and incentives have become available to assist local jurisdictions with transitioning to a Zero-Emission fleet. These sources would add to the capital revenue estimates above. One example is the **Hybrid and Zero-Emission Truck and Bus Voucher Incentive Project (HVIP)**. Administered by CARB, this program aims to accelerate the adoption of cleaner, more efficient trucks and buses by providing fleets based in California with vouchers when they purchase zero-emission buses. The amount of the voucher depends on vehicle weight class, type of use, and whether or not it is in a disadvantaged community. For a large transit vehicle purchase, a transit agency could receive around a $150,000 voucher.

Chapter 10
FARE ALTERNATIVES

SLO Transit Fare Structure Overview

One Way Fares

SLO Transit offers one-way general public fares of $1.50 for the general public and $0.75 for seniors and persons with disabilities. The City recently launched a pilot program to extend 50 percent discount fares to K-12 students. Children under 5 (up to two children per fare-paying adult) also ride for no charge. Through the regional VIP pass, passengers eighty years and older can ride all fixed-route bus systems for free in the County.

Multi-Ride Passes

One-day passes are available for local in-network routes for $3.25, or 2.2 times the one-way trip fare. The Regional Day Pass and 31-Day Pass options discussed in the RTA section include SLO Transit. SLO Transit also sells 3, 5, and 7-day passes for local routes at $7.00, $12.00, and $15.00, respectively. No discount rate is available for those passes. Additionally, the organization sells 16 ride passes for the price of $24.00 offering a savings of $6.00 compared to paying individual one-way fares. A 15-ride pass is available to seniors, persons with disabilities, and K-12 students at a 50% discount. Thirty-one day passes are also available for local routes only, at the price of $40.00 for the general public, $25.00 for K-12 students with ID, $11.25 for 15-ride for seniors, persons with disabilities, and K-12, and $20.00 for seniors (ages 65 – 79), persons with disabilities, and Medicare cardholders with ID.

SLO Transit Peer Fare Review

As part of the San Luis Obispo Joint Short Range Transit Plan peer analysis, a fare comparison is included to gauge the SLO Transit fare levels relative to other similar transit agencies. The same peer systems (as used in the general peer analysis) were used to analyze the fares within SLO Transit.

SLO Transit Analysis

On SLO Transit, regular one-way fares are $1.50 and discounted fares are $0.75. As shown in Table 25, the average regular one-way fare among the SLO Transit peer systems is $1.44 (slightly below SLO Transit) and the average peer discounted fare is $0.75. For both SLO Transit and the peer average, the discounted fare is 50% lower than the original fare. Terre Haute Transit Utility (THTU), Billings Metropolitan Transit, and the City of Bowling Green are the three transit agencies with higher fares than SLO Transit.

Information on the pass options for SLO Transit and the peer systems is also presented in Table 25. All of the transit systems reviewed offer a day pass with the exception of THTU. The peer average price for a day pass is $3.25, which matches SLO Transit's day pass price.

The majority of systems include multi-ride punch passes in their fare structure. All of the peer systems provide multiple-day passes, including 10-day, 35-day, monthly, and semester passes. The peer monthly

(including 30-35 day) passes range from $25.00 - $45.00, averaging at $35.75. SLO Transit's local monthly pass cost of $40.00 exceeds the peer average.

Table 25: SLO Transit Fare Structure Peer Analysis

	One-Way Fares			Fare Media Types Offered			Pass Costs	
	Regular Fare	Discount Fare	% Discount	Day Pass	Punch Pass	Multiday Pass	Day Pass Fare (Reg)	Monthly Pass Fare (Reg)
City of Pocatello - Pocatello Regional Transit (PRT)	$1.00	$0.50	50%	Y	40-ride	monthly	$2.00	$25.00
Pueblo Transit System (PT)	$1.25	$0.60	52%	Y	22-ride	35-day	$3.75	$44.00
Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Public Transit Authority (NAIPTA)	$1.25	$0.60	52%	Y	--	10-day 30-day	$2.50	$34.00
Terre Haute Transit Utility (THTU)	$1.75	$0.85	51%	N	14-ride	31-day	--	$45.00
City of St. George (SunTran)	$1.00	$0.50	50%	Y	10-ride	semester monthly	$2.50	$30.00
Billings Metropolitan Transit (Billings MET Transit)	$2.00	$1.00	50%	Y	10-ride	monthly	$4.00	$28.00
The City of Bowling Green (GOBG)	$2.00	$1.00	50%	Y	4-ride 9-ride	monthly	$5.00	$40.00
Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System	$1.25	Free	100%	Y	--	monthly	$3.00	$40.00
Average Peer Fare	*$1.44*	*$0.72*	*50%*	--	--	--	*$3.25*	*$35.75*
SLO Transit	**$1.50**	**$0.75**	**50%**	**Y**	**15 ride 16-ride**	**3-day 5-day 7-day 31-day**	**$3.25 - $5.50**	**$40.00**

Source: Websites of respective transit agencies

FARE STRATEGIES

Comparison of RTA and SLO Transit Fares

RTA regional routes, Paso Robles local routes, South County Transit local routes, and SLO Transit's combined services create a cohesive transit network within San Luis Obispo County. While routes are well-connected across providers with ample transfer opportunities, the fare structures differ a bit. A summary of each provider's fare structure is illustrated in Table 25.

The base fare is $1.50 for all services with the exception of RTA's regional routes ($1.75 to $3.25). Another notable difference is the fact that RTA and Paso Robles routes do not have day pass options specific to those services, whereas South County and SLO Transit do. Simplifying and unifying fare structures across this largely cohesive transportation network would allow riders to easily make multi-ride pass purchase decisions and reduce the workload on administrative staff.

Expand Downtown Access Program (DAP) for SLO Transit

The City of San Luis Obispo currently provides free passes on SLO Transit for all persons employed in the downtown area who request a pass and fill out an application form which can be auto-renewed annually. This program was implemented in response to paid parking downtown. The qualifying area of employment locations is shown in Figure 24 and is loosely defined by Peach Street on the north, Toro Street on the east, Pismo Street on the south, and Carmel Street on the west. The *SLO Transit Innovation Study* (Arcadis IBI Group, 2023) identified several areas for potential expansion of the downtown access pass area. Two such areas were evaluated as part of this SRTP study, as also shown in Figure 24:

- An eastern extension from the downtown area to encompass all areas south of US 101, west of San Luis Obispo Creek and north of Pismo Street.
- A southern extension from the downtown area to encompass all the area south of Pismo Street, west of the Union Pacific Railroad, and north of High Street. This includes the Railroad District.

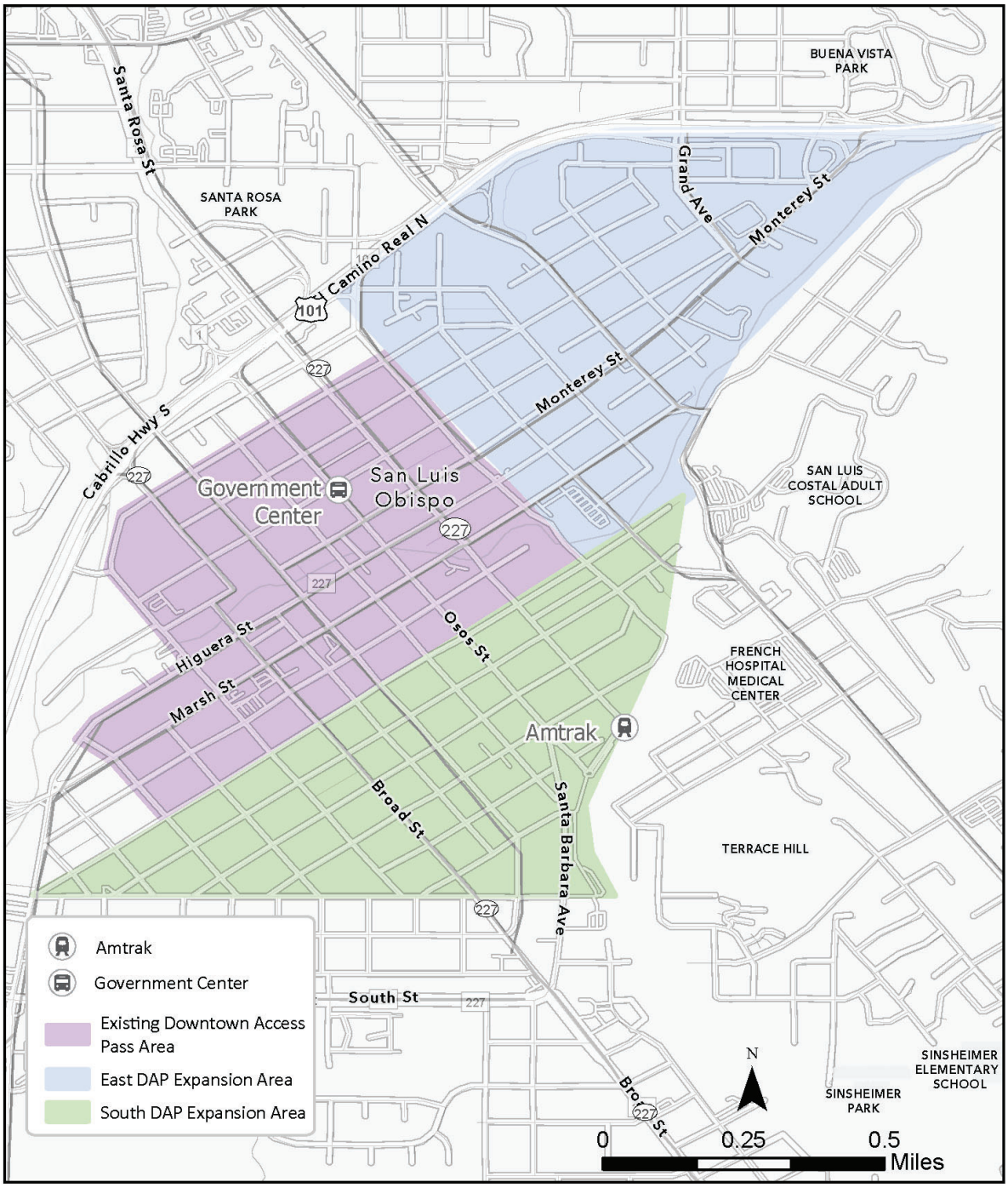
The existing DAP program participants account for a total of 4,624 annual boardings. Based on the impacts of free-fare programs in other communities, it is estimated that 40 percent of these boardings are due to the free pass program while 60 percent would have ridden anyway. The existing DAP program therefore generates approximately 1,850 boardings per year that would not otherwise have occurred. US Census data for 2021 defined through a Work Area Profile Analysis using the "onthemap" online tool (onthemap.ces.census.gov) indicates that the existing DAP area includes 5,245 employees while the eastern area has 1,528 employees and the southern area has 855 employees. Assuming these additional employees make use of the free pass program at the same rate as those in the existing DAP area, expansion in the eastern area would add approximately 500 new passenger-trips per year, while the southern area would add 300 riders per year (or a total of 800 for both). The additional passes would cost on the order of $1,700 for the eastern area and $1,100 for the southern area, or a total of $2,600 for both.

The existing DAP passes are funded through the Parking Enterprise Fund up to $20,000 annually. New funding sources would be needed beyond that amount to offset the cost of additional passes for employees in the additional areas, or existing funding (such as general funds) could be used.

Simplify Day Pass Options

Multi-day passes which provide a discounted price to the cost of buying one-trips rides are a good incentive to encourage ridership. As indicated above, SLO Transit offers 1, 3, 5, 7, and 31-day passes. Having too many fare options can be confusing to passengers as well as complicate the accounting process. A review of passes sold in Fiscal Year 2022-23 indicates that less than one percent of boardings are made with a five-day to seven-day pass. Eliminating these options simplifies the fare structure and makes riding public transit a little less complicated.

Figure 24
Downtown Access Pass Expansion



NEW FARE TECHNOLOGY

Cal-ITP Open-Loop Contactless Fare Payment System

Recent years have seen a surge in the use of contactless payment technologies, including transit fares. Studies have found that accepting contactless payments has lowered expenses for transit agencies and increased ridership. Both RTA and SLO Transit currently use the Token Transit App for fare payment. This app-based technology removes the need for passengers to go to specified locations to purchase tickets. Tickets are validated electronically, allowing the transit agencies to collect important data on ridership and boardings while also taking pressure off the already busy drivers. For passengers, the Token Transit app is free. Transit agencies must purchase on-bus validators and pay approximately annual software fees (the RTA pays approximately $18,000 per year), and transit agencies enter into an agreement with Token Transit allowing Token Transit to retain a certain percentage of fares purchased through the app up to a set limit. There is also a per transaction fee which is paid by the transit agency.

The California Integrated Travel Project (Cal-ITP) is helping transit agencies to procure contactless payment technology. This technology can accept both agency-specific passes and contactless bank card payments and digital wallets. The benefits of contactless fare payment are improved ridership through ease of use (no need to look for $1.50) and faster boarding. This strategy can help with fare "fairness" and equity objectives when contactless fare payment is paired with fare capping. Transit fare capping is a fare payment model that sets a maximum amount a rider pays for fares over a specific period, such as a day, week, or month. Once this cap is reached, the rider doesn't pay for additional trips taken during that period. The rider is also charged as you go, eliminating the need to pay for the full cost of a monthly pass in advance. One final advantage for RTA and SLO Transit is that, over the long term, the transit operators could curtail or even discontinue the use of the Genfare registering fareboxes. Some transit agencies that have implemented the Cal-ITP program have set a goal of a fully cashless fare system, including Monterey-Salinas Transit (2027). This would reduce the staff time needed for the fare counting process as well as the increasing cost of maintenance for the complicated and occasionally unreliable Genfare validating fareboxes.

In order to maintain a fare payment option for unbanked passengers, transit agencies could offer a reloadable card, which could be obtained at the transit agency office or specific outlets. Transit agencies could also continue to accept cash using a manual farebox, allowing the more costly Genfare fareboxes to be phased out.

Cal-ITP and the California Department of General Services have collaborated to establish six Master Service Agreements that allow public transit providers to purchase contactless payment hardware and software directly from vendors rather than through competitive bidding. These Master Service Agreements can be utilized by transit providers in California. The Cal-ITP program has also negotiated lower credit card processing fees, which comprise an ever-growing proportion of transit agency operating costs as more and more riders use credit cards to pay for their rides. SLOCOG has taken the lead in procuring and implementing a regionwide contactless fare payment system using SB 125 funds. It is estimated this project will cost on the order of $2.6 million over five years and includes "buy-down" of fare levels to encourage restoration of pre-pandemic ridership.

A nearby adopter of open-loop contactless fare payment with fare capping (procured through Cal-ITP) is Monterey Salinas Transit (MST). General public passengers can ride anywhere on the MST system for $2 for 2 hours. Beyond the 2-hour mark, there is a $6.00 cap for the day, a weekly cap of $20.00, and a monthly cap of $70.00. The $2 for 2 hours eliminates the need to both tap on and tap off for a two-hour period in order to be charged the correct fare. Once a passenger taps on a bus, they will only be charged $2 until they tap on after that two-hour period. The quantitative impacts of applying a $2 for 2-hour fare structure to RTA routes is discussed above and presented in Table 24.

Chapter 11

SHORT-RANGE TRANSIT PLAN

The Transit Innovation Study restates the City of SLO Climate Action Plan objective of a 7 percent transit mode split (the proportion of all trips made by transit) by 2030 and a 12 percent transit mode split by 2035. In 2016, the transit mode split in San Luis Obispo was calculated at 7 percent. At this time systemwide SLO Transit Ridership was around 1.2 million. In FY 2022-23, systemwide ridership was 515,000 or 57 percent lower. Since 2016, owning an automobile has become cheaper and COVID has changed travel patterns with more opportunities to work or learn from home. The service plan elements recommended in this short-range transit plan will increase ridership by 33 percent over base case scenario, bringing the city closer to the transit mode split objectives. The implementation of all plan elements will increase SLO Transit's operating budget by 35 percent or $2.4 million by the end of the planning period. Given the City's goals, this short-range transit plan assumes the availability of additional revenue sources beyond amounts recuring historically for operating purposes.

PLAN ASSUMPTIONS

- Forecasts of annual operating and administrative costs were developed as presented in Table 26, "Base case" or "status quo" operating and administrative cost forecasts were estimated based on the City of SLO 2023-25 Financial Plan Supplement. An annual inflation escalator of three percent was applied to FY 2025-26 costs to project operating costs for each year of the planning period.

- Ridership and corresponding fare revenue for each SRTP element was estimated as presented in Table 27. The "base case" ridership represents service levels as of the summer of 2024. Ridership is assumed to grow at a rate of 2 percent annually. This reflects both the projected population growth rate of 1 percent annually, increase in college enrollment and a continued post-covid increase in ridership.

SERVICE PLAN

Ridership, operating costs and fare revenue estimates for SLO Transit service plan elements for SLO Transit are shown in Tables 26 and 27 and described below. The reader is encouraged to review the Alternatives Chapter for more detailed information on how each plan element was developed. Figure 25 presents all plan elements graphically.

Table 26: SLO Transit Short Range Transit Development Plan Operating Costs

Plan Element	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29	FY 2029-30	FY 30-31	FY 31-32
Base Case Operating Cost[1]							
Marginal Operating Costs	$3,068,565	$3,160,600	$3,255,400	$3,353,100	$3,453,700	$3,557,300	$3,664,000
Fixed Costs	$2,655,684	$2,735,400	$2,817,500	$2,902,000	$2,989,100	$3,078,800	$3,171,200
Total	$5,724,249	$5,896,000	$6,072,900	$6,255,100	$6,442,800	$6,636,100	$6,835,200
Plan Costs							
Reinstate Pre-COVID Routes (6X, Highland Tripper and SLO Tripper)[2]	$45,100	$46,400	$47,800	$49,200	$50,700	$52,200	$53,800
Increase Route 4A/4B Frequency During the Academic Year	$39,900	$41,100	$42,300	$43,600	$44,900	$46,300	$47,600
Operate B Routes on Weekends Year Round - 7:45 AM - 8:00 PM	$0	$424,200	$436,900	$450,000	$463,500	$477,400	$491,800
Revise Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch - 45 Minute Headways	$496,300	$511,200	$526,600	$542,400	$558,600	$575,400	$592,700
Provide Academic Service Levels Year-Round	$0	$195,900	$201,800	$207,900	$214,100	$220,500	$227,100
New Avila Ranch Direct Route -- 60 Minute Headway	$0	$0	$435,900	$449,000	$462,400	$476,300	$490,600
Late Night Microtransit Pilot - 10 PM to Midnight, 7 days/week, Academic Year	$0	$0	$171,000	$176,100	$181,400	$186,800	$192,400
Total Service Plan Costs	$581,300	$1,218,800	$1,862,300	$1,918,200	$1,975,600	$2,034,900	$2,096,000
Total Operating Cost	**$6,305,549**	**$7,114,800**	**$7,935,200**	**$8,173,300**	**$8,418,400**	**$8,671,000**	**$8,931,200**

Note 1: Base Case (status quo) costs based upon FY 2024-25 City of SLO Supplemental Budget, excluding capital. Assumes 3% annual inflation rate for the planning period.

Note 2: Route 6X implemented in September 2024.

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

Table 27: SLO Transit Short Range Transit Plan Ridership and Fare Revenue (1/2)

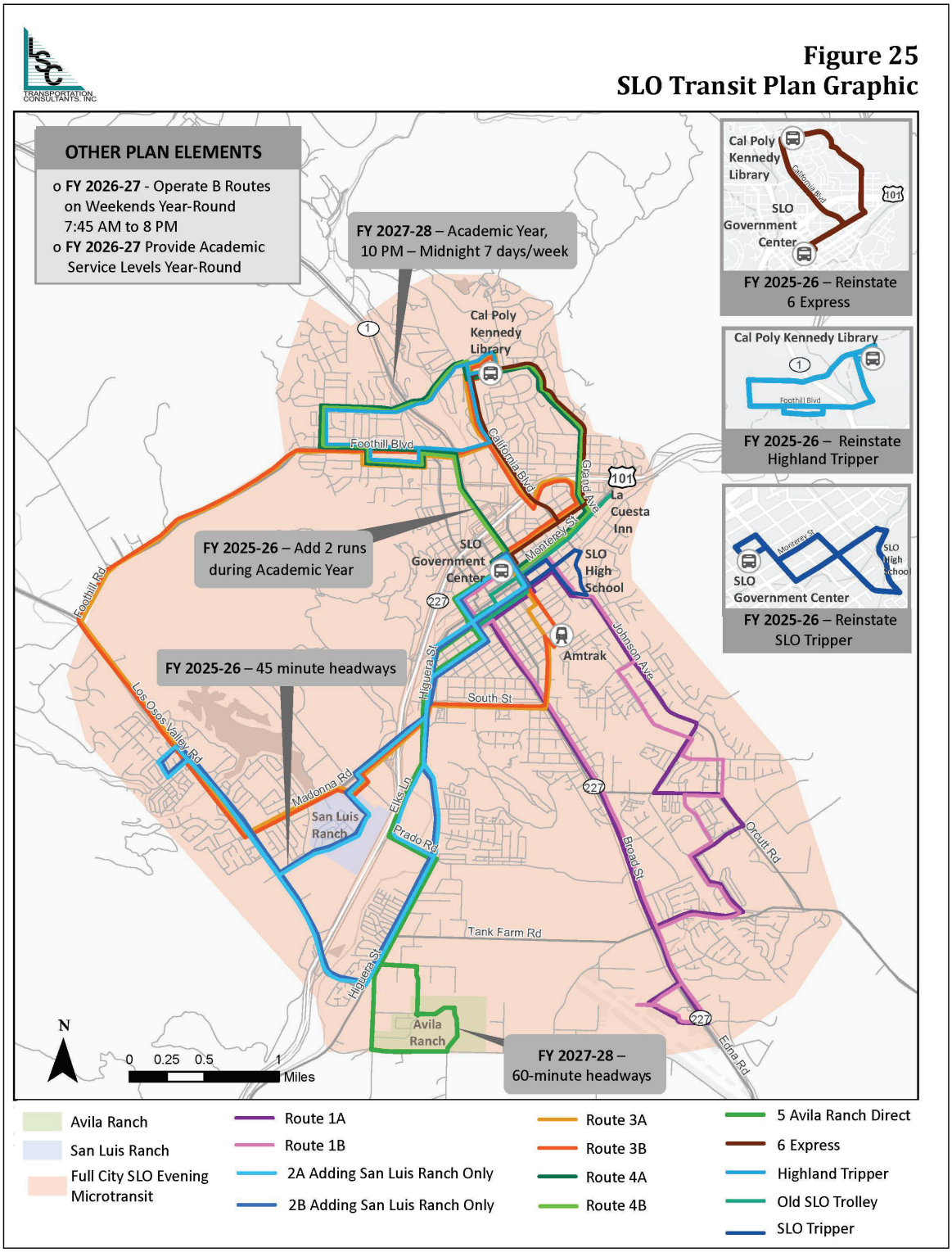
	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29	FY 2029-30	FY 30-31	FY 31-32
Annual Ridership							
Base Case	574,100	585,582	597,294	609,240	621,424	633,853	646,530
Service Plan Elements							
Reinstate Pre-COVID Routes (6X, Highland Tripper and SLO Tripper)[2]	15,900	16,200	16,500	16,900	17,200	17,600	17,900
Increase Route 4A/4B Frequency During the Academic Year	8,100	8,300	8,400	8,600	8,800	8,900	9,100
Operate B Routes on Weekends Year Round - 7:45 AM - 8:00 PM	0	40,400	41,200	42,000	42,900	43,700	44,600
Revise Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch - 45 Minute Headways	65,000	66,300	67,600	69,000	70,400	71,800	73,200
Provide Academic Service Levels Year-Round	0	16,600	17,000	17,300	17,600	18,000	18,400
New Avila Ranch Direct Route -- 60 Minute Headway	0	0	36,200	36,900	37,700	38,400	39,200
Late Night Microtransit Pilot - 10 PM to Midnight, 7 days/week, Academic Year	0	0	7,400	7,500	7,700	7,800	8,000
Subtotal Impact of Plan Service Elements	*89,000*	*147,800*	*194,300*	*198,200*	*202,300*	*206,200*	*210,400*
Impact of Fare Strategies							
Expansion of Downtown Access Program	800	800	800	800	900	900	900
Total Ridership	**663,900**	**734,182**	**792,394**	**808,240**	**824,624**	**840,953**	**857,830**

Table 27: SLO Transit Short Range Transit Plan Ridership and Fare Revenue (2/2)

	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29	FY 2029-30	FY 30-31	FY 31-32
Fare Revenues (Passenger Revenues)							
Base Case	$260,000	$265,200	$275,900	$292,800	$316,900	$349,900	$394,000
Service Plan Elements							
Reinstate Pre-COVID Routes (6X, Highland Tripper and SLO Tripper)[2]	$6,298	$6,424	$6,553	$6,684	$6,817	$6,954	$7,093
Increase Route 4A/4B Frequency During the Academic Year	$600	$600	$600	$600	$600	$700	$700
Operate B Routes on Weekends Year Round - 7:45 AM - 8:00 PM	$0	$16,200	$16,500	$16,900	$17,200	$17,600	$17,900
Revise Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch - 45 Minute Headways	$65,100	$66,400	$67,700	$69,100	$70,500	$71,900	$73,300
Provide Academic Service Levels Year-Round	$0	$6,600	$6,800	$6,900	$7,000	$7,200	$7,300
New Avila Ranch Direct Route -- 60 Minute Headway	$0	$0	$36,300	$37,000	$37,800	$38,500	$39,300
Late Night Microtransit Pilot - 10 PM to Midnight, 7 days/week, Academic Year	$0	$0	$11,500	$11,800	$12,000	$12,300	$12,500
Subtotal Impact of Plan Service Elements	*$71,998*	*$96,224*	*$145,953*	*$148,984*	*$151,917*	*$155,154*	*$158,093*
Impact of Fare Modifications							
Total Fare Revenue	**$331,998**	**$361,424**	**$421,853**	**$441,784**	**$468,817**	**$505,054**	**$552,093**

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

Figure 25
SLO Transit Plan Graphic



Reinstate Pre-COVID Routes (6X, Highland Tripper and SLO Tripper)

The first step to increasing ridership and improving service for SLO City residents and students is to reinstate routes suspended during the pandemic. Route 6X was recently reintroduced. It is also recommended that the Highland Tripper and SLO Tripper are reinstated in FY 2025-26. These services provide additional runs during peak periods for SLO High School and Cal Poly students. It is estimated that reinstating these pre-COVID Routes (including Route 6X) will increase ridership by around 15,900 annually (FY 2025-26) for an increase in operating costs over base case of $45,100 annually (FY 2025-26). This service plan element meets both productivity and cost-effectiveness performance standards. Two additional vehicles will be required for maximum service with the implementation of this alternative.

Increase Route 4A/4B Frequency During the Academic Year

The Transit Innovation Study identified increasing frequency on fixed routes as a high priority. Route 4 is the most popular SLO Transit service, particularly with Cal Poly students. Route 4A is projected to provide upwards of 152,000 passenger-trips in FY 2025-26, and Route 4B is projected to provide 70,000 passenger-trips. Increasing service frequency during peak travel periods on Route 4 would likely further benefit ridership and improve connectivity between downtown and Cal Poly.

As part of this service plan element, SLO Transit should increase service frequency on weekdays during the academic year by adding two new runs on Route 4A departing the Government Center at 8:30 AM and 9:15 AM. In the afternoons, two additional runs on Route 4B, which operates in the counterclockwise direction, should be implemented which depart the Government Center at 4:15 PM and 5:00 PM. The alternatives performance analysis showed that this plan element will cost around $5.00 per additional trip served and will improve overall productivity in terms of passenger-trips per vehicle hour.

Increasing the frequency of Route 4A/4B is anticipated to increase ridership by 8,100 passenger-trips over base case while increasing operating costs by $39,900 annually. Implementation is recommended for the next fiscal year (FY 2025-26). One additional vehicle will be required for maximum service.

Revise Route 2A/2B to Serve San Luis Ranch – 45 Minute Headways

At full buildout, the San Luis Ranch development along Madonna Road will include a total of 604 dwelling units. This includes 299 high-density housing units, 34 affordable housing units, and 83 medium-density units, all of which have a higher potential to generate transit ridership. The higher-density residential development is concentrated along Madonna Road and is already served by SLO Transit. Under an agreement with Cal Poly, up to 300 students will soon be living in this area. The nearest existing stops to the high-density area are located along Madonna Road within a reasonable 5-minute walk distance.

To better serve the San Luis Ranch development, SLO Transit should revise Routes 2A and 2B by traveling along Froom Ranch Way between Dalido Drive and Los Osos Valley Road, rather than Madonna Road, as shown in Figure 22 and 25. While Route 2 service to the stops near Madonna/Oceanaire would be eliminated, these stops would still be served by Route 3 (which currently generates 88 percent of the ridership at these stops). This would increase the length of Route 2A by 0.8 miles while cutting 0.1 miles

from Route 2B, respectively. Route 2 also has a significant on-time performance issue with 40 percent of Route 2A runs operating more than 15 minutes late and 11 percent of Route 2B runs operating more than 15 minutes late (during a survey conducted in October 2023). To address the on-time performance issue and the longer route mileage, the revised Route 2A and 2B should operate on a 90-minute cycle length (time for one bus to make a round-trip) instead of 60 minutes. In order to maintain semi-frequent headways reasonable for an urbanized area, a second bus should be added to both 2A and 2B so as to provide 45-minute headways.

An additional 66,300 one-way passenger-trips are estimated with the implementation of this plan element in FY2025-26. Operating costs will increase by approximately $500,000 annually. Two more vehicles will be required.

Other factors to consider with this plan element include capacity at the Downtown Transit Center and transfers between SLO Transit Routes. With the increase in frequency of Route 2 from hourly headways to 45-minute headways, capacity at the Downtown Transit Center will be exceeded at certain times (assuming the schedules are maintained which maximize timed transfers between routes). Appendix G includes a series of tables showing when SLO Transit and RTA buses overlap at the Downtown Transit Center. Over the short-term, buses could overflow onto Palm Street until funding for a larger transit center can be secured.

According to on-board surveys, common transfer patterns for Route 2 passengers include:

- Route 2A to Route 1A
- Route 2A to Route 4A
- Between Route 2A and Route 2B
- Route 3A to Route 2A

These transfer patterns should be taken into consideration when finalizing schedules.

Operate B Routes on Weekends Year-Round – 7:45 AM to 8:00 PM

The four counterclockwise B routes do not operate on weekends. As a result, service is limited to the large one-way A routes. While the fact that some key corridors are served by more than one A route (such as DTC – Foothill Boulevard or DTC – Madonna Road) still provides some direct bi-directional service, other trips can require a long travel time around the majority of the one-way A loop. Operating all four B routes on Saturdays and Sundays (as well as holidays on which weekend service is provided) would incur an annual operating cost of $424,200 and increase ridership by 40,400. This cost estimate takes into account the additional costs associated with revising Route 2 to serve San Luis Ranch.

Provide Academic Year Service Levels Year-Round

Cal Poly administration has indicated plans to expand class offerings and associated student activity levels in the summer. Additionally, Cal Poly will be switching to a semester based academic calendar. Currently, SLO Transit operates a higher level of service during the academic year when student ridership is greatest. Providing that higher level of service year-round not only addresses Cal Poly

schedule changes but provides the community as a whole with more frequent public transit service. This alternative met the cost-effectiveness performance standard in the alternatives analysis.

As shown in the Plan Tables, this plan element would increase ridership by 16,600 annually with an associated operating cost increase of $195,900. No additional fleet would be required. This option also has the benefit of providing more consistent year-round driver schedules, which has the potential to increase driver retention. This plan element is slated for implementation in FY 2026-27.

New Avila Ranch Direct Route – 60 Minute Headway

Avila Ranch is a mixed-use residential/neighborhood commercial development under development along the north side of Buckley Road in southern San Luis Obispo. At buildout, it will include a total of 720 units, consisting of 125 higher-density units (24 units to the acre), 494 medium-density units (up to 20 units to the acre), and 101 lower-density units (7 units to the acre) as well as a small 15,000 square foot neighborhood commercial center.

As development is constructed for Avila Ranch, a new route should be implemented specifically to serve the development. As shown in Figure 23 and 25, this route would use the existing Route 2 alignment south from downtown along South Higuera Street and make a clockwise loop around Suburban Road, Eastwood Lane, the extension of Ventura Drive, the extension of Horizon Lane, Buckley Road, and Vachelli Lane before returning north on South Higuera Street.

In addition to providing service to Avila Ranch, this option has the benefit of doubling service along the South Higuera Street corridor which has substantial ridership (roughly 2.5 times the ridership along the Broad Street corridor along Routes 1A/1B). This route also could serve the Elks Lane/Prado Road loop off of S. Higuera Street currently served by Route 2A, thereby reducing running time and improving the on-time performance of Route 2A. Note that serving this loop in the northbound direction would require a traffic signal at Elks Lane / S. Higuera Street to allow buses to reliably turn onto S. Higuera Street northbound.
As this route is not a one-way loop, only one additional bus would be needed to serve Avila Ranch with hourly headways. Assuming service is provided over the same span as the existing Route 2A span, annual operating costs would be increased by $435,900, while ridership would be increased by 36,200. This plan element should not be implemented until warranted by development of Avila Ranch.

Late Night Microtransit Pilot – 10 PM to Midnight, 7 days/week, Academic Year

Microtransit was also identified in the Transit Innovation Study as a long-term priority for the City of San Luis Obispo. Through the use of microtransit technology and phone apps, it is possible for a passenger to request a ride “on-demand” within certain areas and certain times. The benefit of microtransit is that it is not limited to a set route with set stops, but rather passengers can be picked up at their curb and dropped off at the curb of their destination. This allows homes on the outlying edges of neighborhoods to be served more directly or for passengers to make cross-town trips without transferring. The disadvantage of microtransit is that if there is high demand for service, there could be a 30-minute or longer wait for a ride. Passengers who depend on public transit to travel to work or appointments at

specific times may find microtransit less convenient, as a ride may not be available at the time they need it.

Microtransit has been successful in areas that are not easily served by a fixed route, low productive fixed routes or during the evenings and weekends, when there is less demand. Generally, SLO Transit Routes are very productive and therefore, it is not cost effective to replace the fixed routes with on-demand microtransit. However, the option of microtransit in the evening, when demand is typically lower, is recommended for consideration in FY 2027-28. Later evening service was the top requested service improvement during the SLO Transit on-board survey effort.

SLO Transit services are not available past 11 PM and only Routes 3 and 4 operate this late during the academic year. The general geographic extent of a potential city-wide late night microtransit service area is displayed in Figure 17 and 25. As part of this plan element, microtransit would be available between 10 PM and midnight during the academic year using three vans. Around 7,400 additional passenger-trips could be expected for an annual operating cost of around $171,000 annually. It is reasonable to charge a higher fare for microtransit than fixed route services. A general public fare of $4.00 with corresponding discounts for qualifying passenger-trips is recommended.

Microtransit should initially be implemented as a one-to-two-year pilot program. Three vans will need to be procured, if the current contractor is used. Alternatively, some areas have had success in procuring a separate contractor who specializes in microtransit to operate as a “turnkey” service. Under this scenario, the City would not have to purchase new vehicles or the microtransit software, as it would be included in the total cost of the contract.

If microtransit proves to be a successful form of public transit in San Luis Obispo, the city could consider expanding service to an all-day city-wide microtransit service. A ballpark cost estimate for an expanded microtransit program would be on the order of $1.7 million annually if operated from 6 AM to 10 PM. Ridership generated from other similar microtransit programs operated by California transit operators indicates a potential demand of 75,400 trips annually from an all-day city-wide microtransit program. With this level of demand, up to five vehicles would be required to operate the service at peak times while maintaining a wait time of around 30 minutes.

The fare agreement with Cal Poly, would not apply to microtransit. Therefore, students would be encouraged to continue to use the more cost-efficient fixed route, as it is free to them. This leaves microtransit available for trips which are more difficult and lengthy via fixed routes. The danger of microtransit is that the curb-to-curb/on-demand aspect can make the service quite popular. If more vehicles are added to meet the increased demand, costs will begin to rise significantly.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Transit services require ongoing capital investment in facilities and vehicles. Capital investments in both vehicles and passenger facilities can attract additional riders while improving the quality of service and safety of existing riders. Of note, California’s Innovative Clean Transit regulation will go into effect during the plan period, requiring SLO Transit to transition to zero-emission buses (ZEBs).

Fleet Replacement

Transit vehicles must be regularly replaced to maintain a safe and reliable fleet. The SLO Transit Asset Management Plan sets a target to allow no more than 50% of the revenue vehicle fixed route fleet to exceed the FTA-defined useful life. As the vehicle procurement process can take multiple years, transit agencies must identify their vehicle needs well in advance. A detailed fleet replacement table is presented in Chapter 8. In summary, SLO Transit has ordered eight BEB vehicles in FY 2025-26 to replace old diesel vehicles. During this planning period, an additional two BEB vehicles will be ordered. Additionally, SLO Transit plans to refurbish six diesel buses (including the double-decker). This is consistent with CARB rules and the ZEV Rollout Plan. This results in a net addition of one fixed-route bus. This will allow for the transition to battery electric buses while charging infrastructure is being developed. It is anticipated that some buses will need to charge during the day, requiring more buses to be available for service. Fleet replace will cost on the order of $4.5 million during the seven-year planning period.

Fleet Additions

The plan elements described above will require six more fixed-route vehicles for maximum service. Currently 11 vehicles are required for maximum service. The SLO Transit fleet consists of 17 vehicles presently, not including the trolley and double decker bus. SLO Transit has already purchased 8 new BEB vehicles which will arrive sometime next year. Instead of replacing older vehicles with the new BEB's, five of the existing vehicles will be kept in the active fleet and refurbished during the planning period. This will bring the fleet up to a total of 22 vehicles. In order to maintain an appropriate spare ratio of 25 percent for the fixed route fleet, SLO Transit should have 21 vehicles. Therefore, SLO Transit does not need to purchase new fixed route vehicles in order to implement service plan elements.

SLO Transit does not own vans which would be suitable for the microtransit pilot. If microtransit service is successful in San Luis Obispo, the City should purchase at least three new vans toward the end of the planning period. This is reflected in the financial plan table below.

Other Capital Improvements

Table 21 in Chapter 8 presents a seven-year capital improvement plan for all items outside of revenue fleet replacement. This includes bus yard improvements, technology, bus stop improvements, BEB charging infrastructure, and rehabilitation of the Downtown Transit Center.
This seven-year capital improvement program totals $6 million and will be funded primarily through the SB 125 program and Federal Transit Administration grants.

Long Term Plan for Relocated Transit Center

The SLO Transit Innovation Study includes the concept of Mobility Hubs, which brings together public transit, bikeshare, carshare, scooter share, and other first-last mile solutions without the use of a private vehicle. The study notes that a location of interest for a future Mobility Hub is the Downtown Transit Center.

The 2016 SRTP noted that SLOCOG was leading an effort to construct a new enhanced transit center on Higuera Street between Santa Rosa Street and Toro Street. In 2012 the Coordinated Downtown San Luis Obispo Transit Center Study recommended a facility consisting of up to 16 bus bays, indoor/outdoor passenger waiting areas, driver break areas, restrooms and a transit information counter. The larger transit center would allow for more buses to be able to pulse in and out of the transit center which would enable enhanced route timing coordination. Currently SLO Transit has 5 bus bays. There are multiple times of day when five buses are waiting at the transit center. With full implementation of this transit plan (particularly changes to Route 2) additional bus bays will be required. In 2017 the SLO City Council adopted the Downtown Concept Plan which also envisions a relocated transit center on Higuera Street between Santa Rosa Street and Toro Street. In November of 2023 the SLO City Council approved the purchase of a property in this block on the northwest corner of Higuera Street and Toro Street (1166 Higuera Street). This is the same property identified in the 2012 Coordinated Downtown San Luis Obispo Transit Center Study as the preferred alternative to advance into environmental review (Alternative 6). Initially this site is envisioned for parking. A transit center would require using the northern part of Higuera Street which is currently striped for parking and a bike lane and was previously one of three one-way travel lanes and parking.

Project development for a relocated transit center would need to involve close coordination between the City of SLO and RTA along with SLOCOG. This would include the development of joint funding applications, environmental clearance, design, project phasing and construction. A key feature not fully envisioned in the 2012 study is the addition of bus charging at bus bays. This will be important to support the transition to a BEB fleet by both SLO Transit and RTA.

FARE CHANGES

This SRTP does not recommend a fare increase for SLO Transit. SLO Transit fares are currently in line or above other peer agencies and a fare increase would not be consistent with the goals of the City Council to increase the transit mode split. Two fare strategies are recommended to encourage use of the transit system:

- **Expand Downtown Access Program (DAP)** – This provides free passes on SLO Transit for all people employed in the downtown area. The qualifying area should be extended to include all areas south of US 101, west of San Luis Obispo Creek, and north of Pismo Street. A southern extension from the downtown area encompasses all the area south of Pismo Street, west of the Union Pacific Railroad, and north of High Street. This includes the Railroad District. (Figure 24).
- **Simplify Day Pass Options** – Simplify the fare structure by eliminating the five and seven-day passes.
- **Cal-ITP Open-Loop Contactless Fare Payment System** – Continue to work with SLOCOG on the implementation of fare payment technology which allows users to use any credit card/debit card/phone (open-loop) to pay for their bus trip.

FINANCIAL PLAN

Table 28 presents the 5-Year Operating and Capital Financial Plan for SLO Transit. The SLO Transit service operating plan is fiscally constrained through FY 2027-28. Assuming use of reserve funds from the federal American Rescue Plan (ARPA) and flat growth of FTA funds after FY 2025-26, the service plan is funded through the planning period.

As shown in the table, sufficient revenue is available for planned capital projects including vehicle replacement and purchase with discretionary FTA grant funding. There is a small deficit in FY 2025-26 without discretionary grant funding. However, by the end of the planning period, it is anticipated that there will be a surplus of capital funds on the order of $2 million. This surplus could be put towards a new relocated transit center, replacing the refurbished buses with EV's and other charging infrastructure.

As SLO Transit transitions to a zero-emission fleet, there are other potential funding sources available for electric vehicles. The Hybrid and Zero-Emission Truck and Bus Voucher Incentive Project (HVIP), administered by CARB, provides around $120,000 vouchers for large transit vehicle purchases. This program can help mitigate the cost between diesel and electric vehicles.

Table 28: SLO Transit Financial Plan (1/2)

	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29	FY 29-30	FY 30-31	FY 31-32
Operating Revenues							
Passenger fare revenue[1]	$260,000	$265,200	$275,900	$292,800	$316,900	$349,900	$394,000
Cal Poly Transit Agreement [2]	$750,000	$750,000	$772,500	$772,500	$772,500	$795,675	$795,675
Interest	$32,815	$22,648	$43,017	$43,000	$43,000	$43,000	$43,000
Transportation Development Act (TDA) - Local Transportation Fund (LTF) [3]	$2,000,000	$2,024,000	$2,048,300	$2,072,900	$2,097,800	$2,123,000	$2,148,500
Transportation Development Act (TDA) - State Transit Assistance (STA) [3]	$725,000	$725,000	$725,000	$725,000	$725,000	$725,000	$725,000
Other State Grants	$8,722	$8,722	$8,722	$8,700	$8,700	$8,700	$8,700
FTA 5307 Preventative Maintenance[3]	$210,765	$214,980	$219,280	$223,700	$228,200	$232,800	$237,500
FTA 5307 Operating[3]	$2,647,775	$3,049,800	$3,443,400	$3,554,000	$3,664,500	$3,762,713	$3,870,763
FTA 5307 Carryover	Potential funding source						
ARPA Operating Assistance	$2,701,956	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Total Operating Revenue	**$9,337,033**	**$7,060,350**	**$7,536,119**	**$7,692,600**	**$7,856,600**	**$8,040,788**	**$8,223,138**
Available Operating Balance	$0	$3,031,484	$2,977,034	$2,577,953	$2,097,253	$1,535,453	$905,240
Status Quo Operating Expenditures	**$5,724,249**	**$5,896,000**	**$6,072,900**	**$6,255,100**	**$6,442,800**	**$6,636,100**	**$6,835,200**
SRTP Plan Elements	$581,300	$1,218,800	$1,862,300	$1,918,200	$1,975,600	$2,034,900	$2,096,000
Balance	**$3,031,484**	**$2,977,034**	**$2,577,953**	**$2,097,253**	**$1,535,453**	**$905,240**	**$197,178**

Table 28: SLO Transit Financial Plan (2/2)

	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29	FY 29-30	FY 30-31	FY 31-32
Capital Revenues							
FTA 5307 (Capital)[3]	$2,693,785	$2,452,006	$1,803,083	$1,744,077	$1,668,803	$1,586,048	$1,477,998
State of Good Repair[2]	$0	$3,000	$3,000	$3,000	$3,000	$3,000	$3,000
Capital Fund Balance	--	--	$158,106	$181,889	$305,366	$352,669	$1,441,317
Total Capital Recurring Revenue	**$2,693,785**	**$2,455,006**	**$1,964,189**	**$1,928,966**	**$1,977,169**	**$1,941,717**	**$2,922,316**
Discretionary Grant Funding	**$1,033,040**		**$572,880**			**$300,000**	
Capital Plan Expenditures Status Quo	**$2,859,800**	**$2,296,900**	**$1,782,300**	**$1,623,600**	**$1,624,500**	**$125,400**	**$126,600**
New Vehicles Required for SRTP Plan[4]						**$375,000**	
Capital Balance with no Discretionary Funding	**-$166,016**	**$158,106**	**$181,889**	**$305,366**	**$352,669**	**$1,441,317**	**$2,795,716**
Capital Balance with Discretionary Funding	**$867,025**	**$158,106**	**$754,769**	**$305,366**	**$352,669**	**$1,741,317**	**$2,795,716**

Source: FY 2024-25 Supplemental Budget

Note 1: Passenger fares escalated at the SLOCOG projected city population growth rate of 1% annually.

Note 2: Based on City Budget

Note 3: Assumes FTA 5307 is used to pay for half of total operating expenses minus fare revenues. Total FTA 5307 projected at SLOCOG annual growth rate.

Note 4: If microtransit pilot is successful and City decides to operate their own vehicles for the service.