

SANTA ROSA CITYBUS SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN

FY 2023 – FY 2028 FINANCIAL SCENARIOS NARRATIVE

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I. Pre-Pandemic State of Service

Prior to the pandemic CityBus was experiencing year-over-year ridership growth. Operations were stable with a full complement of drivers to providing the 6,700 revenue hours CityBus operated during an average month. Transit service was provided seven days a week. Frequency and span of service were lower on Saturday, and lower still for Sunday service when compared to weekday levels of service. The CityBus system consisted of sixteen fixed route services, one deviated fixed route service, and complementary ADA paratransit service. CityBus directly operates its fixed route options and contracts out its deviated fixed route and ADA paratransit services. CityBus routes operated on varying headways depending on the corridors they served. The route operating on the main corridor of Mendocino Avenue operated on fifteen-minute headways. Eight of the other sixteen fixed route services operated on thirty-minute headways, four operated on hourly headways, and one route operated every seventy-five minutes. Two of the routes operating on thirty-minute headways operated on an offset schedule creating fifteen-minute headways along Sebastopol Ave, another major corridor in the City of Santa Rosa. Table 1 to Table 4 show a route-by-route breakdown of the number of trips operated, revenue hours, revenue miles, and frequency of service per day by day of the week.

Table 1: Number of Trips Operated

Trips	Pre-Pandemic	Current	Pre-Pandemic	Current	Pre-Pandemic	Current
	Mon - Fri	Mon - Fri	Sat	Sat	Sun	Sun
Route 1	57	40	29	29	11	15
Route 2	28	27	~	~	~	~
Route 2b	28	26	28	27	10	15
Route 3	28	14	14	14	7	7
Route 4	14	13	14	14	7	7
Route 4b	14	13	~	~	~	~
Route 5	28	15	14	14	7	7
Route 6	28	26	11	11	7	6
Route 7	8	~	~	~	~	~
Route 8	28	25	14	14	7	7
Route 9	28	14	14	14	7	7
Route 10	27	14	10	10	7	7
Route 12	28	26	14	14	7	7
Route 15	14	28	8	8	7	7
Route 18	10	7	7	7	7	7
Route 19	12	~	~	~	~	~
Total	380	288	177	176	91	99

Table 2: Daily Revenue Hours Operated

Revenue Hours	Pre-Pandemic	Current	Pre-Pandemic	Current	Pre-Pandemic	Current
	Mon - Fri	Mon - Fri	Sat	Sat	Sun	Sun
Route 1	46.80	31.8	21.00	21.07	7.50	10.77
Route 2	20.83	18.52	~	~	~	~
Route 2b	20.67	18.93	20.67	20.05	7.33	10.85
Route 3	13.95	7.25	7.00	7	3.50	3.5
Route 4	13.83	12.83	13.83	13.78	6.83	6.78
Route 4b	13.67	12.67	~	~	~	~
Route 5	13.90	7.37	9.65	6.45	3.43	3.12
Route 6	34.17	26.3	17.33	13.48	8.00	7.35
Route 7	7.60	~	~	~	~	~
Route 8	27.73	23.08	13.87	13.75	6.87	6.5
Route 9	13.93	7.47	9.68	6.22	3.43	3.13
Route 10	33.28	15.75	9.85	9.87	7.00	7
Route 12	13.95	17.67	9.75	8.17	3.50	4.08
Route 15	13.83	13.82	7.83	8.83	6.83	6.83
Route 18	9.78	6.78	6.78	6.78	6.78	6.78
Route 19	7.47	~	~	~	~	~
Total	305.39	220.24	147.24	135.45	71.00	76.69

Table 3: Daily Revenue Miles Operated

Revenue Miles	Pre-Pandemic	Current	Pre-Pandemic	Current	Pre-Pandemic	Current
	Mon - Fri	Mon - Fri	Sat	Sat	Sun	Sun
Route 1	416.63	323.77	208.31	234.52	74.39	119.44
Route 2	182.00	188.91	~	~	~	~
Route 2b	200.76	203.28	200.76	211.1	71.70	117.28
Route 3	130.20	73.72	65.10	73.76	32.55	36.88
Route 4	141.54	149.89	141.54	161.42	70.77	80.71
Route 4b	142.38	149.02	~	~	~	~
Route 5	126.84	76.77	63.42	71.65	31.71	35.82
Route 6	427.14	423.18	217.42	182.41	100.87	99.5
Route 7	41.28	~	~	~	~	~
Route 8	249.48	235.24	124.74	131.73	62.37	65.87
Route 9	145.69	116.52	72.80	116.51	36.40	58.26
Route 10	281.34	163.52	93.90	103.57	65.73	72.5
Route 12	146.16	152.58	73.08	82.14	36.54	41.09
Route 15	150.22	160.3	86.80	91.6	75.95	80.15
Route 18	72.20	59.21	50.54	59.21	50.54	59.21
Route 19	82.38	~	~	~	~	~
Total	2,936.24	2,475.91	1,398.41	1,519.62	709.52	866.71

Table 4: Headways

Headways (in minutes)	Pre-Pandemic	Current	Pre-Pandemic	Current	Pre-Pandemic	Current
	Mon - Fri	Mon - Fri	Sat	Sat	Sun	Sun
Route 1	15	20	30	30	60	60
Route 2	30	30	No Service	No Service	No Service	No Service
Route 2b	30	30	30	30	60	60
Route 3	30	60	60	60	60	60
Route 4	60	60	60	60	60	60
Route 4b	60	60	No Service	No Service	No Service	No Service
Route 5	30	60	60	60	60	60
Route 6	30	30	60	60	60	60
Route 7	60	No Service	No Service	No Service	No Service	No Service
Route 8	30	30	60	60	60	60
Route 9	30	60	60	60	60	60
Route 10	30	60	60	60	60	60
Route 12	30	30	60	60	60	60
Route 15	60	60	60	60	60	60
Route 18	60	60	60	60	60	60
Route 19	75	No Service	No Service	No Service	No Service	No Service

II. Current State of Service

CityBus is currently operating 75% of its pre-pandemic levels with two routes still suspended. However, that is not the highest level of service CityBus has been able to achieve since the outset of the pandemic. Service peaked in August 2021 at 78% of pre-pandemic levels. Decreases in staffing levels and spiking COVID cases have required CityBus to make minor reductions in service. Between the outset of the pandemic and the start of FY 22-23, CityBus has undergone fourteen service changes. Prior to the pandemic changes occurred twice a year. During the first six months of the pandemic service changes were made in response to the level of “openness” being prescribed by health authorities. CityBus attempted to make service levels meet the needs of the riding community at that time. The one exception is Sunday service which increased faster than other days of the week despite having the least demand. This increase was necessary to build out a schedule that had enough pieces of work to sustain the number of drivers available and meet CityBus’s work rules. As CityBus moved forward with service restoration, service changes began to be influenced by staffing levels. Retirements, general attrition, positive COVID cases, and difficulty in retaining new recruits all played a part in the diminishing pool of drivers available for service. Maintaining staffing levels is still the predominant hurdle to CityBus’s effort to reach pre-pandemic levels of service. While recruitment efforts have improved over the last few months the time needed to onboard and train drivers is a multi-month process which has pushed out the timeline for adding more service.

Now consistent service is the main priority informing CityBus decision-making. While some routes may call for more service CityBus is prioritizing providing consistent and reliable service despite the fact that requires lower frequency on some routes. Despite the efforts to match service with staffing levels, CityBus has still consistently missed trips in the late part of FY 21-22 and early part of FY 22-23 since staffing levels leave only a slim margin for maintaining service coverage as CityBus experiences driver attrition, spikes in COVID cases, medical leaves, and scheduled vacations.

As CityBus attempts to create the most consistent level of service possible, it has been doing it in the most equitable way possible. When cuts have been necessary, CityBus has equally distributed them across its service area, and has used public outreach to inform decision-making. Service changes have predominantly been headway-based when service is either removed or added in order to maintain coverage throughout the City. The exceptions are the two routes CityBus has suspended; however, CityBus continues to offer a demand-responsive service to riders affected by this service suspension if they are unable to make their trip on another CityBus route. CityBus did prioritize vulnerable population centers when reallocating service. Those parts of the CityBus service area were the first to receive a boost in frequency and are now at pre-pandemic levels of service.

Ridership demographics have shifted from before the pandemic. During the height of the pandemic CityBus did not collect fares which made it difficult to identify ridership make up. Anecdotal evidence from drivers indicated they saw regulars on the bus, individuals who rode daily prior to the pandemic. Ridership trends followed pre-pandemic levels, meaning high ridership routes remained the highest, albeit at much lower numbers. The predominant change is the number of youth riders. This change is driven by CityBus's youth ride free program, initiated in July 2021. Youth ridership has increased significantly above pre-pandemic levels, and youth now make up a quarter of CityBus riders, where before they were 12 percent. CityBus has always strived to meet school bell times, but the increased demand is leading scheduling staff to take a more in-depth look into how CityBus can meet bell times more efficiently. Additionally demand for transit is still strong with month-to-month growth. In cases where CityBus has been able to increase frequency there has been an immediate positive response. Further when CityBus had to cut service from a lack of drivers, overall ridership did not dip significantly and continued to grow.

The CityBus operating budget is currently stable. There have been savings from being understaffed, which is the unseen benefit of CityBus's most pressing problem. CityBus staff continue to invest significant time and resources in driver recruitment, including diversifying and expanding recruitment efforts, and most recently increasing the starting wage for trainee bus operators by 22% to \$24.87 per hour. To reach pre-pandemic staffing levels CityBus will need to hire back on 13 drivers.

III. Robust Recovery

The robust recovery scenario places CityBus service at 91% of its pre-pandemic level for fixed route service in FY 23/24. Within the parameters of this scenario, CityBus would be on working back towards pre-pandemic frequencies on the routes it has operated since the outset of the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic CityBus was operating 17 fixed routes. At the outset of the pandemic to the present, CityBus has been operating 15 fixed routes. Two routes remain suspended and will remain so into the foreseeable future. There is also the potential these routes will be cut through formal City Council action dependent on the outcome of planning process of this SRTP. The primary hurdle in this scenario, despite being a "robust recovery", is the ability for CityBus to hire and retain drivers. Staffing shortages limit any service increases under this scenario. In fact, at the time this document is being written staffing levels are the limiting factor for putting more service on the road. At current hiring rates CityBus does not expect having a stable contingent of drivers that equals pre-pandemic levels until the end of this scenario's planning horizon. CityBus does expect to increase staffing levels; however, attrition and retirements may slow down the process of increasing service.

Funding levels under this scenario will allow CityBus to move towards a level of service that matches the needs of the community. However, as noted before, having drivers to operate that service will be the deciding factor in how much service CityBus can put back out on the road. If CityBus is able to hire more drivers and maintain a consistent driver pool, there are opportunities for CityBus to expand service in the latter part of the planning horizon with new funding from Sonoma County's Go Sonoma sales tax measure. If the City of Santa Rosa proceeds with annexing areas south of the

current city limits there could be a call for geographic expansion of the CityBus system to complement service provided to this area by Sonoma County Transit. This area is also seeing some of the fastest development and is made up of a demographic that is consistent with CityBus's most frequent user demographic. CityBus's riders are predominantly low-income.

These operating levels do not put a burden on the CityBus fleet and appropriate spare ratios can be maintained given the current number of vehicles in the fleet and the expected number of vehicles to be purchased in the future for replacement and/or expansion. However, once again staffing becomes an issue for having the required number of vehicles ready and safe to drive for service. CityBus does not have a dedicated maintenance division. The City of Santa Rosa's fleet maintenance department is responsible for all other vehicles used by the City of Santa Rosa in addition to the vehicles in the CityBus fleet. The department is also having issues with hiring and retaining mechanics which are causing delays for repairs and other maintenance activities. These delays reduce the number of available vehicles for daily operations. However, at the time this document was written CityBus has been able to make pull-out, albeit some days have come close to not having enough vehicles for service.

Given the impact of CityBus's staffing shortages on service levels and accounting for fixed and overhead costs, CityBus' current cost per hour is likely somewhat inflated. Being a directly operated service, CityBus does not have a set hourly rate so there is not a one-to-one correlation between operational costs and service hours. For this reason, along with upward pressure on wages, services, and supplies, hourly rates appear very high compared to pre-pandemic rates. As CityBus continues to staff up and restore additional revenue hours, it is anticipated that there will be some level of correction to reduce the cost per revenue hour shown in these financial scenarios.

This scenario in relation to CityBus's paratransit service would be business as usual unless service was expanded geographically, increasing costs if trip numbers grew. CityBus staff does not anticipate large jumps in use, but rather a slow growth back towards pre-pandemic levels. As CityBus moves further into the scenario there will be even greater coordination with other local operators for trips which will help spread costs and create a better user experience.

IV. Revenue Recovery, with Fewer Riders

While farebox revenue is important to operational funding, CityBus is not reliant on it in a way that could require major service cuts if those sources of funds never came back to levels close to those seen prior to the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic farebox revenue was 12% of the operational budget for fixed route. CityBus staff would approach this scenario similarly to the robust recovery, but rates of growth could not be as fast. Staffing would still be a concern as CityBus determines the best way to allocate service. Returning to pre-pandemic frequency on main corridors would still be the top priority despite lower funding levels. Main corridors in the CityBus service area serve equity priority communities. In all cases where CityBus has had the need to reduce service these locations are the last on the list of where frequency is reduced.

V. Some Progress

This scenario would require CityBus to reduce service. The level of service in this scenario is equal to what CityBus was operating in late calendar year 2021 and early 2022. Most routes would operate on an hourly headway with the exception of major corridors which would retain at least 30-minute headways. CityBus would not reduce the number of routes in service to maintain coverage across the city. The upside of this scenario is the number of drivers needed for service would be stable and at currently staffing levels CityBus would be able to provide a consistent and reliable service. Main corridors in the CityBus service area serve equity priority communities. In all cases where CityBus has had the need

to reduce service these locations are the last on the list of where frequency is reduced. In this scenario CityBus is unable to entirely predict how ADA service will react. For the purpose of this exercise CityBus estimates a reduction in demand in tandem with the decrease in service hours. However, CityBus would meet any demand for ADA service regardless of the state of the fixed route system as is required by Federal law.

VI. Conclusion

In addition to this submission in response to MTC's requirements for this SRTP cycle, CityBus is currently completing work on several elements of a traditional SRTP to provide a more robust financial plan and address service issues in the system. Staff have identified areas where route realignments are necessary to better the service and are conducting public engagement to identify other rider priorities for evaluation as part of an updated service plan. Further analysis is also necessary to potentially create more efficient schedules that may allow CityBus to boost frequency without the need for more drivers. Given the change in ridership levels CityBus will additionally need to update its performance metric goals to be more reasonable. This additional SRTP work will essentially comprise a "Scenario Four" that reflects the most recent revenue projections, budgets, and staffing levels as well as future service restoration plans. This broader SRTP will also be adopted by Santa Rosa's City Council in early 2023 and serve as the planning document CityBus will reference for all future service planning. CityBus will share this document with MTC as an addendum to the current submission.