

NOTICE OF REGULAR MEETING
OF THE
YOSEMITE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION
SYSTEM
(YARTS) AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Monday, January 14, 2008– 10:00 a.m.

Merced County Association of Governments
Conference Room
369 W. 18th Street
Merced, California
(209) 723-3153

**THIS MEETING WILL BE CONDUCTED BY TELECONFERENCE
AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATION:
MINARET VILLAGE MALL,
437 OLD MAMMOTH ROAD, SUITE P, MAMMOTH LAKES, CA.
MEMBERS OF THE YOSEMITE AREA REGIONAL
TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AUTHORITY ADVISORY
COMMITTEE AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC MAY ATTEND
AND PARTICIPATE IN THE MEETING AT THE
TELECONFERENCE LOCATION. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC
APPEARING AT A TELECONFERENCE LOCATION WILL BE
PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THE LEGISLATIVE
BODY DIRECTLY AS PROVIDED BY LAW.**

1. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
2. **INTRODUCTIONS**
3. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

**PERSONS WISHING TO ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS OR
COMMENT ON ANY ITEM NOT ON THE AGENDA, MAY DO
SO AT THIS TIME. COMMENTS ARE LIMITED TO FIVE
MINUTES PER PERSON. PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND
ADDRESS FOR THE RECORD.
FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA, NO ACTION WILL BE TAKEN AT
THIS TIME. IF IT REQUIRES ACTION, IT WILL BE REFERRED TO
STAFF AND/OR PLACED ON THE NEXT AGENDA.**

COPIES OF STAFF REPORTS OR OTHER WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION RELATING TO ITEMS OF BUSINESS REFERRED TO ON THE AGENDA ARE ON FILE IN THE OFFICE OF MERCED COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS. PERSONS WITH QUESTIONS CONCERNING AGENDA ITEMS MAY CALL MCAG TO INQUIRE ON THE NATURE OF THE ITEM DESCRIBED ON THE AGENDA.

ITEM

STAFF

- * **4. Minutes of the April 2, 2007 YARTS Authority
Advisory Committee Meeting**
- * **5. Minutes of the October 15, 2007 YARTS Authority
Advisory Committee Meeting**
- 6. Information/Discussion Only**
- # a. VIA Monthly Service Reports for September 2007 –
November 2007
- # b. Ridership by Fiscal Year – Hwy 140 and Hwy
395/120 East
- # c. YARTS Revenue by Fiscal Year
- * + **7. YARTS Audit - Fiscal Year 2006-2007** Dick Whittington
- Recommend the YARTS JPA accept the Fiscal Year 2006-2007 Audit Report prepared by Kemper CPA Group.
- * **8. AAC Nomination** Dick Whittington
- Recommend the YARTS JPA approve the nomination of Danna Stroud, Director, Mammoth Lakes Tourism and Recreation Office to serve on the YARTS Authority Advisory Committee.
- 9. Funding Update** Dick Whittington
- For information and discussion only.
- * # **10. FY 2007-2008 Budget Revision** Dick Whittington
- Recommend the YARTS JPA approve the FY 2007-2008 Budget revision.

11. Future Planning for YARTS

Dick Whittington

Discuss the preparation of the Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) as well as more immediate future funding and operational issues and direct staff on appropriate actions to be taken.

12. Park and Ride Lots - Update

Dick Whittington

For information and discussion only.

13. YARTS Marketing

Dick Whittington

For information and discussion only.

14. Managers' Report

Dick Whittington

For information and discussion only.

15. Oral Report – National Park Service

Tom Pimentel

* *Action*

Attachment

+ *Enclosure*

The next YARTS AAC meeting, will be held on Monday, April 7, 2008 at the Merced County Association of Governments, Merced, CA

**YOSEMITE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM
(YARTS) AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

MINUTES

APRIL 2, 2007

The regular meeting of the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) Authority Advisory Committee held Monday, April 2, 2007, at the Mariposa County Government Center, Board of Supervisors Chambers, 5100 Bullion Street, Mariposa, CA was called to order by Chair Frank Quintero at 10:04 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Scott Burns, Mono County Planning Department (via teleconference)
Tom Dumas, Caltrans
Larnold Jones, Merced County Transit, for Larry Shankland
Melyssa Laughlin, Merced Conference and Visitors Bureau
Katie Martin, Mariposa County Public Works
Candy O'Donel-Browne, Private Citizen
Tom Pimentel, National Park Service
Frank Quintero, City of Merced
Richard Wiebe, Sierra Club

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

OTHERS PRESENT

Brad Aborn, Supervisor Dist 1 Mariposa
Lou Aceto, Oakhurst resident
Denise Demery, VIA Adventures
Kenneth Gosting, Transportation Involves Everyone
Robin Lamas, YARTS staff
Marty Nielson, National Park Service
Gwen Plummer, Mono County Planning Department (via teleconference)
Curtis Riggs, VIA Adventures
Dick Whittington, YARTS Staff

- 1. Pledge of Allegiance**
- 2. Introductions**

So noted.

3. Public Comment

Ken Gosting, Transportation Involves Everyone, asked if there was a central area for the agenda to be placed. Staff advised Mr. Gosting that there is a table by the door, which contains the agenda for the meeting. Staff also advised that the agenda is posted on the YARTS web site.

4. Minutes of the January 22, 2007 YARTS Authority Advisory Committee Meeting

The minutes of the January 22, 2007 YARTS Authority Advisory Committee were accepted by consensus.

5. Information/Discussion Only

- a. VIA Monthly Service Reports for January 2207 – February 2007
- b. Ridership by Fiscal Year – Hwy 140 and Hwy 395.120 East
- c. YARTS Revenue by Fiscal Year

6. Agreement for Services

The YARTS AAC committee moved to recommend the YARTS JPA authorize the Chair to sign an extension of the Services Agreement for a period of one year, from July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008.
Accepted by consensus.

7. New Service Contract

Dick Whittington gave a review of the Request for Proposal for the new service contract. He advised that only two parties submitted proposals. The review committee that was established to review the proposals recommended selecting VIA Adventures to provide the new service contract.

The YARTS AAC committee moved to recommend the YARTS JPA approve the selection of VIA Adventures for a new five-year contract for bus service to YARTS.
Accepted by consensus.

8. FY 07/08 YARTS Meeting Dates

The YARTS AAC committee moved to recommend the YARTS JPA establish the date and time of the regularly scheduled meetings for the YARTS AAC and JPA for the fiscal year 2007/2008.
Accepted by consensus.

9. YARTS Authority Advisory Committee Nomination Approvals

Scott Burns, Mono County, requested that himself and Gwen Plummer, Mono County, be co- AAC members. Dick Whittington stated it would be up to their supervisor to approve the co-membership.

The following nominations for AAC membership are as follows:

Tom Pimentel – NPS - Yosemite

Richard Wiebe – The Sierra Club – by NPS Yosemite

Katie Martin – Transportation Planner, Mariposa County

Candy O’Donel-Browne – private citizen – Midpines

The nominations were in addition to those who were approved at the January 22, 2007 YARTS meeting.

The YARTS AAC committee moved to recommend the YARTS JPA approve the additional members to the YARTS Authority Advisory Committee.
Accepted by consensus.

10. Election of Officers for FY 2007/2008

Scott Burns moved to recommend Frank Quintero as the YARTS AAC Chair for July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008.

Seconded by Tom Pimentel.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Richard Wiebe moved to recommend Scott Burns as the YARTS AAC Vice Chair for July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008.

Seconded by Candy O’Donel-Browne.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

11. YARTS Funding Structure

Dick Whittington gave a review of the funding structure for YARTS. After discussion Frank Quintero asked if the “One Voice” committee could present the funding issue to the Sacramento and Washington DC meetings. Sandy Hogan asked about the possibility of using corporate sponsors. These ideas will be presented to the YARTS JPA meeting being held after the AAC meeting.

12. YARTS Budget FY 2007/2008

The YARTS AAC committee moved to recommend the YARTS JPA adopt the FY 2007/2008 YARTS Operating and Capital Budget and direct staff to proceed with its implementation.

Accepted by consensus.

13. Funding from Member Counties

The YARTS AAC committee moved to recommend the YARTS JPA direct staff to proceed with the funding requests and give the Chair pre-approval to sign the agreement with Mariposa County when appropriate.

Accepted by consensus

14. Level of Service – Hwy 395/120

Scott Burns moved to recommend the YARTS JPA discuss the level of service on the Hwy 395/120 corridor and direct staff as to the appropriate schedule.

Seconded by Melyssa Laughlin.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

15. Fare Increases – Hwy 395/120 Service Corridor

Scott Burns moved to recommend the YARTS JPA approve the suggested changes to the fare structure effective with the start of service on the Hwy 395/120 service corridor.

Seconded by Tom Dumas.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

16. Oral Report - Marketing

Dick Whittington gave a brief report on the marketing for YARTS.

17. Oral Report – National Park Service Report

Tom Pimentel gave a brief report from the National Park Service.

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS OF THE YARTS AUTHORITY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE, THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 11:36 A.M.**

**YOSEMITE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM
(YARTS) AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

MINUTES

OCTOBER 15, 2007

The regular meeting of the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) Authority Advisory Committee held Monday, October 15, 2007, at the Mariposa County Government Center, Board of Supervisors Chambers, 5100 Bullion Street, Mariposa, CA was called to order by Frank Quintero at 10:13 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Barbara Carrier, Mariposa County Public Works
Gwen Plummer, Mono County Planning Department (for Scott Burns)
Candy O'Donel-Brown, Private Citizen, Midpines
Frank Quintero, City of Merced
Tom Pimentel, National Park Service
Richard Wiebe, The Sierra Club

MEMBERS ABSENT

Tom Dumas, Caltrans
Sandy Hogan, US Forrest Service, Retired
Lisa Isaacs, Mammoth Mountain
Jennifer Krumm, Greater Merced Chamber of Commerce
Melyssa Laughlin, Merced Conference & Visitor Bureau
Larry Shankland, Merced County Transit

OTHERS PRESENT

Robin Lamas, YARTS staff
Marty Nielson, National Park Service
Dick Whittington, YARTS Staff

12. Pledge of Allegiance

13. Introductions

So noted.

14. Public Comment

Frank Quintero stated that there was not a quorum at the meeting therefore no action would be taken on any action items.

15. Minutes of the July 23, 2007 YARTS Authority Advisory Committee Meeting

This item was tabled until the next meeting due to a lack of a quorum.

16. Information/Discussion Only

- a. VIA Monthly Service Reports for July 2007 – August 2007
- b. Ridership History by Fiscal Year – Hwy 140 and Hwy 395/120 East
- c. YARTS Revenue by Fiscal Year

So noted.

17. Midpines Park and Ride Update

Dick Whittington reviewed the staff report. He stated the Midpines Planning Advisory Committee initiated contact with YARTS riders who currently use the Midpines Park for parking to commute to Yosemite, seeking their input and support for YARTS being allowed to continue to use the Midpines Park for commuter parking.

18. YARTS Annual Audits – FY 2004/2005 and 2005/2006

Dick Whittington gave a brief review of the YARTS Annual Audits for FY 2004/2005 and 2005/2006. Due to a lack of a quorum, no action was taken on this item.

19. YARTS Grant Funding Update

So noted.

20. Merced Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB)

Dick Whittington gave a brief report on the Merced Convention and Visitor Bureau. He stated that they had been the top ticket-selling vendor on the YARTS system however through mutual agreement they will no longer be selling tickets. YARTS bus riders will be able to purchase tickets directly from the YARTS drives at the Merced Transportation Center bus stop.

21. Electronic Fare Boxes - Update

Dick Whittington stated that when the new contract was initiated with VIA Adventures, Curtis Riggs stated he would like to pursue the idea of electronic fare boxes on the YARTS buses.

Mr. Riggs received an original quote of \$80,000 but since that meeting the vendor has come back with a new bid for a reconfigured system at the cost of \$175,000.

Mr. Riggs is now in the process of looking for other vendors who might be able to provide the Electronic Fare Box System at a more competitive price.

11. Managers Report

So noted.

12. Oral Report - Marketing

So noted.

13. Oral Report – National Park Service Report

Tom Pimentel gave a brief report from the National Park Service.

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS OF THE YARTS AUTHORITY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE, THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 11:07 A.M.**

ITEM 6b

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 4, 2009

TO: YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER

**RE: RIDERSHIP HISTORY BY FISCAL YEAR - HWY 140 AND
 HWY 395/120 EAST**

Attached for your review is the ridership history for YARTS through November 2007. We should have December numbers by the time of the January 15, 2008 meeting.

This fiscal year's numbers reflect a cumulative increase of almost 30% through November. Given the problems of last year, we should be showing increases, but it is rewarding to see them anyway.

In trying to find a way to more accurately evaluate the ridership we are experiencing, I have been using the 2004-2005 fiscal year for comparison. It was the last year that was anywhere near "normal".

The 2005-2006 FY was extraordinary, with 15% cumulative increases going into May, when the rockslide changed everything. Even with the rockslide, it was the best ridership year in the history of the service. The 2006-2007 FY was extraordinarily bad, again because of the effects of the rockslide and the reduced capacity imposed by the vehicle-size restrictive detour.

Using 04-05 to make the comparison, YARTS is showing a less than 1% decrease (-.001509) and the trend is headed up. We won't hit the 05-06 numbers this year, but we should see an increase for the year comparing to 04-05. To date, we are only 14.2% below the 05-06 record year numbers.

While we will not see YARTS true potential return until Hwy 140 is restored to full-sized buses, the increase in capacity brought by the new buses, of which all six were finally in service in October, will allow YARTS to continue to make gains.

Also on the horizon is the potential to increase the number of runs operating during the critical peak tourism months. A grant from the Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands (ATPPL) will help to fund the added runs, which will increase the overall capacity of the system during that important period of the year.

The grant application calls for the adding of two runs during the peak months. At present, the intent is to add one run to serve park employees and one to serve tourists. Both categories will offer potential for increased ridership during the summer months and both need to improve.

Getting back to the levels that were achieved in FY 2005-2006 is a matter of providing the capacity to match the demand. In the current situation, capacity and funding are directly related. Staff remains optimistic about the direction that ridership is headed and believes that, with the appropriate funding support, the effects of the rockslide can be mitigated to a large degree.

REQUESTED ACTION

For information and discussion.

Attachment: YARTS Ridership History by Fiscal Year

ITEM 7

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 4, 2008

TO: YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER

RE: YARTS AUDIT - FISCAL YEAR 2006-2007

Enclosed for your review is the annual YARTS audit for fiscal Year 2006-2007. As promised at your last meeting, this audit document brings YARTS current and on time in this process.

The audit is fairly self-explanatory, but staff would be happy to try to answer any questions you may have.

REQUESTED ACTION

Recommend the YARTS JPA accept the Fiscal Year 2006-2007 Audit Report prepared by Kemper CPA Group.

Enclosure: YARTS Audit 2006-2007 (mailed under separate cover)

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 4, 2008

TO: YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER

RE: AAC NOMINATION

Chairperson Bauer is proposing to fill a vacancy on the YARTS Authority Advisory Committee (AAC) representing Mono County with the following person:

Danna Stroud, Director
Mammoth Lakes Tourism and Recreation Office

Following is the current makeup of the 13-member YARTS AAC:

Mono County (3)

Scott Burns, Director, Mono County Public Works
Sandy Hogan, U.S. Forest Service, Retired
Danna Stroud – Proposed

Mariposa County (3)

Candy O'Donel-Browne – Private Citizen
Barbara Carrier – Mariposa County Transportation Planner
Vacancy – Nomination Pending

Merced County (3)

Frank Quintero – Development Manager, City of Merced Office of Economic Development
Jennifer Krumm –COO, Greater Merced Chamber of Commerce
Vacancy – Nomination Pending

NPS – Yosemite (2)

Tom Pimentel – NPS Budget Analyst
Richard Wiebe – The Sierra Club

YARTS Executive Director (2)

Larry Shankland – Manager, Merced County Transit

Tom Dumas – Chief of Intermodal Planning - Caltrans Dist. 10

REQUESTED ACTION

Recommend the YARTS JPA approve the nomination of Danna Stroud, Director, Mammoth Lakes Tourism and Recreation Office to the YARTS Authority Advisory Committee.

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 4, 2008

TO: YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER

RE: FUNDING UPDATE

5311(f) – Intercity Bus Program Grant

In March of 2007, YARTS filed an application with Caltrans for 5311(f) operating funding in the amount of \$400,000. The established limit on such applications is \$200,000 per request, however, because of the particular plight of YARTS in responding to the rockslide, and the fact that last FY a \$400,000 request was granted, the 2007 application sought the increased amount.

On July 26, 2007 staff was informed that Caltrans had approved \$200,000 for YARTS, but that the 2nd \$200,000 was still under discussion. Following that, much information passed between Caltrans and YARTS.

On October 11, 2007 Supervisor Nelson and I met in Stockton with Caltrans representatives from District 10 and Caltrans HQ, from Sacramento, to discuss the issue further. Neither he nor I were optimistic about additional funding from this program after the meeting.

On November 20, 2007 we received news that Caltrans HQ “supported the full amount requested until the construction funds become available to support the YARTS route”, but that additional information was needed. That information has been provided.

On December 19, 2007 we received confirmation that YARTS would receive the entire amount requested in our application and that contracts would be forthcoming. The contracts were received on December 24, 2007 and over-nighted back to Sacramento, signed, on December 26, 2007.

The construction of the final solution around the rockslide is anticipated to begin in Summer/Fall of 2008. With that funding, there may be “mitigation” funding that would transfer the obligation for the additional funding YARTS needs to the District rather than having it come from the 5311(f) program.

5311(f) funding is fiscal year specific, meaning it must be spent in the fiscal year it is approved. Staff uses this funding first in meeting operating expenses because of the time limits on spending and as it has the lowest match required among the current funding sources available to YARTS. 5311(f) funding requires a 44.6% match in FY 2007-2008 (down from 50%) and does not allow the use of farebox as match.

5320 - Alternative Transportation in Parks in Public Lands (ATPPL) (2)

2006 – In February of 2006, YARTS filed for a grant under this program requesting \$587,000 to fund the construction of two Park and Ride lots in Mariposa County. One of the facilities was planned for the Midpines community, directly adjacent to the Post Office and the other was in the town of Mariposa on Joe Howard Street.

In August of 2006 staff received notice that the grant had been approved. No actual application was filed at that time to receive the funding, as the planning process was still ongoing with the Mariposa Planning Dept.

In June of 2007, the Mariposa County Planning Commission turned down the Midpines project and in July 2007 the YARTS Board directed staff to abandon an appeal on the Post Office site and work with the Midpines community in securing a location that would be acceptable to the community. That location ended up being the Midpines County Park.

Calls to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in San Francisco to let them know that there had been a minor change in the plan eventually prompted the FTA in Washington D.C. Headquarters to arbitrarily rule that the grant was now deemed ineligible because of the relocation of one of the project sites.

Staff has contacted members of the FTA HQ staff and pled our case for the return of the funding eligibility. We received an understanding ear and a promise to give the matter a full re-evaluation, but do not have a final decision yet.

2007 – YARTS filed a successful application for funding under this program seeking \$264,000. We received notice of the approval in October. The funding may be used only for the leasing of buses, and cannot be used for the expense of drivers, fuel, or maintenance, etc. Staff has not been able to access these funds, as the FTA is yet to post the appropriate information on their “TEAM” web site. Staff was informed by FTA personnel in Washington D.C. that it should be forthcoming soon.

The application also asked for funding for each of the following three years, at the same level, with a projected CPI adjustment for each of the subsequent years. Our NPS partner/contact says that the first year approval bodes well for the following years, but that it will be necessary for YARTS to file a new application

each year. Notice of the availability of funding for 2008 and application deadlines was received at the YARTS offices on December 14, 2007 and the deadline for filing is February 29, 2008. Staff has started the process to file for the 2008 funding.

The stated intent of the application is to add two more runs to the schedule during the peak tourist months of the year, adding capacity to this important and busy time. The funding will pay for the leasing of buses for the entire year, which will set existing funding free to add the runs.

5309 (Earmarks)

YARTS currently has two 5309 grants available for use. This type of funding is typically used for capital costs, but can be used for the cost of contracting for buses, which is how YARTS has used it and how it was designated to YARTS.

If used for the cost of contracting, the required match is 60%. If used for capital costs, the match is only 20%.

The two available earmark grants are:

\$388,711 with a balance of \$388,711 – filed July 2005.

\$247,500 with a balance of \$247,500 – Not yet filed.

Because of the onerous match that is required for this funding, YARTS has used it as a last resort, favoring other forms of funding that have a lower match requirement.

This funding has also been very useful in carrying YARTS through times when the other forms of funding, even though approved, have not been made available in a timely way. This year is an example of that type of problem.

REQUESTED ACTION

For information and discussion only.

ITEM 10

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 4, 2008

TO: YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER

RE: FY 2007-2008 BUDGET REVISION

In April of 2007 you approved a budget for the FY 2007-2008. Since the time of that approval, a number of things have changed. Most all were anticipated, but the working budget needs to be revised to reflect current reality.

To highlight the changes:

The operating costs of contracting increased significantly. This is due 1) to the new contract that was signed in June with VIA Adventures and reflects higher per hour rates than were previously billed, and 2) the addition of Runs 5 and 9 to the operating costs. Previously YARTS did not pay for Runs 5 & 9 as they were actually operated by VIA to provide Amtrak Thruway service to Yosemite. They were not billed to YARTS, even though they appeared on the YARTS schedule.

On the revenue side, the largest changes are 1) the inclusion of the contract with Amtrak, which has been annualized for the budget, 2) corrections to the farebox calculations, 3) a reduction in the amount of 5309 funding being used, and 4) an increase in the 5311(f) funding being received.

Under the heading of Capital, there was a mathematical error that was corrected.

This almost certainly will not be the last amendment to the budget this FY, but is necessary to insure that the budget document reflects current appropriations and anticipated expenses.

REQUESTED ACTION

Recommend the YARTS JPA approve the FY 2007-2008 Budget revision.

Attachments: Budget document approved in April 2007
FY 07-08 Budget Revision

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 4, 2008

TO: YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER

RE: FUTURE PLANNING FOR YARTS

YARTS JPA Chairperson Bauer asked staff to prepare a memo to ask the YARTS Board to consider planning for funding and operational direction for the future. Her concern comes out of comments made recently by Caltrans when evaluating a YARTS grant application and from the many changes that have taken place since the preparation of the previous Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) and particularly over the last two years.

The YARTS Board approved the YARTS Short-Range Transit Plan (SRTP), for the period 2004-2009, in October of 2003. Since that time the cost of fuel has gone up dramatically, contracting costs have increased significantly, bus technology has changed and the rockslide on Hwy 140 changed almost everything else.

Issues:

Funding

YARTS seating capacity is down because of the smaller buses now in use, so ridership is down due to the capacity issues. The only way to add capacity, at this time, is with additional funding for more buses.

Added funding, if found, will come with requirements for matching local funds and it will be harder to do if the funding from government sources increases. Caltrans has suggested that more local funding (which can be used for match) needs to come from YARTS member counties.

At least one current funding source, Cost of Contracting in the 5309 program, is proposed by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to be eliminated from that program.

Supervisor Bauer also expressed interest in reaching out to the Boards from each of the member counties, possibly by members of the YARTS Board, to renew their interest in the system and bring them current on YARTS.

Necessary and required planning

The Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) is a five-year comprehensive plan required of all transit operators by federal and regional transportation funding agencies. The SRTP becomes the transit agency's guide to future decision-making and a measure of progress toward the approved goals.

The SRTP contains segments on Evaluations of the Service, Future Service Needs, System Goals and Objectives, Service Levels, Operations and Budget/Funding, Capital Improvements, Air Quality Issues, and an Action Plan for implementing the SRTP, etc.

Because of the many changes and challenges facing YARTS, Jesse Brown, MCAG Executive Director, has suggested that the YARTS Board consider seeking a grant to be able to hire a consultant to prepare the next YARTS SRTP.

The 2008-2009 FY grant applications are currently being accepted by Caltrans for Transportation Planning Grants (FTA Section 5304). The deadline for the Planning Grants was January 11, 2008 so staff has submitted the grant application to Caltrans. The application seeks \$100,000 and will require an 11.47% match from YARTS. Should the grant application be unsuccessful, the Board should have a viable plan to fall back on to proceed with their look at the future of YARTS. Should the Board wish to take another direction now for the preparation of the SRTP, it will be simple enough to withdraw the grant application.

Approval time on the grant is an uncertainty. Completion of the SRTP is anticipated to take approximately four to six months using the consultant method. Consultant costs are estimated to be between \$40,000 and \$65,000 not counting local staff time.

REQUESTED ACTION

Discuss the preparation of the Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) as well as more immediate future funding and operational issues and direct staff on appropriate actions to be taken.

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 4, 2008

TO: YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER

RE: PARK AND RIDE LOTS – UPDATE

Construction Funding

In recent conversations with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), it was learned that our inquiry to the FTA (San Francisco) about relocating the Midpines Park and Ride project to a different location (in Midpines) had prompted the FTA Washington, D.C. Headquarters to determine that the projects no longer qualified for funding under the Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands (ATPPL) grant program. Staff made a concerted effort to plead our case for a restatement of the funding by informing them that 1) the application did not make the sites specific beyond calling out the names of the communities, 2) the proposed new location (in Midpines) could well be an improvement over the prior one, and 3) the project in the town of Mariposa was essentially unchanged.

As of this time, the status of the grant application has moved from being ineligible to under consideration. Staff will continue to press for a positive outcome to this situation.

Midpines

After conversations with Mariposa County Supervisors Fritz and Aborn and Mariposa County Counsel, a letter was sent to the Chairperson of the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors, seeking a long-term commitment from Mariposa County for YARTS to use the Midpines County Park as a Park and Ride facility. The letter asked for the opportunity to address the Board of Supervisors to discuss the issue. A copy of a letter from the Midpines Planning Advisory Committee was attached to the YARTS letter. (Both letters are attached.)

Staff is currently waiting for a response from Mariposa County to be scheduled on the Supervisor's agenda.

Mariposa

Going to bid on the construction of the Park and Ride facility in the town of Mariposa on Joe Howard Street was delayed by staff pending the outcome of the public hearing on the Midpines project. It had been hoped that the two could go to bid together, and possibly reduce the cost of the smaller, but more technically difficult, project in Midpines at the Post Office.

When it was clear that the Post Office location in Midpines was not going to move forward, staff started the process to prepare a bid package for the town of Mariposa. During that process, it was learned that there were still unresolved issues that the Planning Department required before the project could move ahead.

Further review of the plans revealed that they were not fully ADA compliant and would have to be redone to bring them into compliance. This was not one of the Planning Department issues.

The plans are currently being redrawn. When finished and approved by Mariposa County Planning, a bid packet will be prepared and we will move forward toward construction, assuming an FTA ruling to re-establish the grant funding for that purpose.

REQUESTED ACTION

For information and discussion only.

Attachments: YARTS letter to Mariposa County Supervisors
Letter from Midpines PAC to Supervisors

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 4, 2008

TO: YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER

RE: YARTS MARKETING

Google Alerts

Google Alerts is a function of the Google Search site and brings email notices of items that appear on the Internet on whatever subject the applicant asks about. Staff has a Google Alert registered for items that have to do with YARTS.

Recently, an article that ran in the Miami Herald came up on the alert, written by the Travel Editor of the San Francisco Chronicle, which was less than stellar in its view of our service. His main complaint was that the buses were uncomfortable.

Staff contacted the writer and engaged in a useful conversation, via email, about the changes that we have been forced into because of the Ferguson rockslide, including the rush to the use of smaller buses. Turns out that he used the service when we were still using the older model 18-passenger buses and we encouraged him to give us another try with our new larger (small) buses. He promised that he would.

It was a good exchange and illustrates the importance of knowing what is being said out in the world. In some cases there is the opportunity to actually respond on a blog and set the story straight, if necessary.

We asked before that you provide us with any information you encounter in the public realm about YARTS so we can react if necessary or start a dialog with the author of the information for future benefit. We would like to reaffirm that request.

News Articles

News releases regarding the fall schedule change, which included photos, produced some excellent exposure for YARTS in local papers in Mariposa and Merced County. The Sierra Sun Times, an electronic newspaper, also picked up the article and ran an abbreviated version that included useful links to the YARTS web site. Copies of the two printed articles are attached.

HAR Radios

The Highway Advisory Radios (HAR) operated by Caltrans along the state's highways, advise drivers on all kinds of issues, from road blockages to hazardous driving conditions. YARTS is allowed to submit messages to play on the HAR radios in the Yosemite region, where YARTS operates. Staff recently did a review of all those messages and updated them to reflect changes that have taken place since the last review.

Advertising

Very little advertising has been done since the rockslide and the ensuing capacity problems. Now, with the new larger buses and the possibility of adding a couple of extra runs in the busiest summer months, we have started to actively advertise again.

VIA/Westways Magazines

The first ads will run in the March/April editions of the VIA and Westways Magazines. Between the two they go into over 6.5 million homes principally in California, but also in Nevada and Arizona.

Yosemite.com

YARTS has maintained an ad on the home page of Yosemite.com, the Yosemite region tourist information site, throughout the rockslide crisis. The YARTS ad is the only ad on the Yosemite.com home page.

California State Official Visitor's Guide and Travel Planner

For the third consecutive year, YARTS will have an ad in the Yosemite Region special "pull-out" section in the State's Visitor Guide, which includes an additional ad in the book in the "Regional Listings". Included with the cost of the ad is a linked listing on the State of California tourist information web site. The Visitor's Guide is mailed to those who request information on visiting California and is also given out at California Welcome Centers and other tourist information locations. The Office of Tourism publishes 500,000 of these books for distribution to all outlets. The Visitor's Guide website gets around 100,000 hits each year as well.

YARTS.COM

The YARTS web site continues to be a useful marketing tool for the service. Staff regularly takes email enquiries generated by the site from all over the world. With the proper use, the site provides nearly every bit of information that a traveler might need to make travel decisions, from schedules and fare costs to a section of "frequently asked questions".

Despite the fact that the YARTS web presence, the YARTS.com site is seriously in need of a remodel. The last major update of the site was at least eight years ago, a lifetime in web-life terms. Staff will be working with Tracy McMahan, the MCAG Webmaster, to remodel the site during FY 2008. When we finish, we expect the site to be not only more attractive but easier to get information from and get around on.

REQUESTED ACTION

For information and discussion.

Attachments: Newspaper articles regarding YARTS

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 4, 2008

TO: YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER

RE: MANAGERS' REPORT

Yosemite Facelift

YARTS contributed two sets of two tickets to a raffle sponsored by the Yosemite Climbing Association (YCA), a main sponsor of the Yosemite Facelift cleanup effort in Yosemite Park. The effort removed tons of debris from the park and was reported as a big success. The YCA letter of appreciation is attached.

Mariposa SSTAC

I was invited to serve as a member of the Mariposa County Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) and the first meeting was held on December 12, 2007 in Mariposa. Mariposa County is reviving the SSTAC function after a brief layoff and the committee has been newly membered. While only required to meet annually, the committee has decided to meet quarterly because of the layoff period and the surprisingly large amount of information that was shared during this first meeting.

The meeting included a presentation by a team from Nelson/Nygaard Consulting, which is contracted with Caltrans under the Rural Master Contract preparing the Coordinated Transportation Plans for all small counties. Nelson/Nygaard will be returning to at least one subsequent meeting as the plan progresses.

YARTS's SSTAC affiliation should be useful to the County of Mariposa and to YARTS as the rural transit planning process moves forward and, possibly, when grant opportunities present themselves in areas the SSTAC seeks to serve and YARTS is an eligible applicant. A transit system must be a part of a Coordinated Plan to be eligible to receive funding from certain transit funding programs.

According to Caltrans staff, YARTS is also a part of the Mono County Coordinated Plan.

Yosemite Road Repairs

A significant road repair job is taking place in the Park on the El Portal Road at “the narrows”, the area where Hwy 140 and Big Oak Flat Road meet. Concern for a catastrophic failure of the road has prompted an all out effort to get the repairs finished prior to the spring runoff in 2008. The contractor has provision in its contract to cause periodic delays of up to 30-minutes on the road during the construction. They also are/will be working at night and closing the road completely except for a single opening time around 11:00 PM to allow park shift workers to exit the park.

The road construction has caused some delays in the YARTS schedule, but has provoked few complaints from riders. YARTS posted cautionary notes on all fall schedules and drivers have been informing riders of the potential for delays so riders can plan accordingly. Because of the randomness of the timing of the delays, the YARTS schedule was not altered from established times. It is anticipated that this construction project will be completed by May 23, 2008.

A second project that has been affecting YARTS is the installation of culverts on both North and Southside Drives (alternatively). This project has cause rerouting of traffic, but has not had significant affect on the YARTS schedule.

Mariposa Christmas Parade

Thanks to a timely tip from Supervisor Fritz, laminated flyers were printed and posted at Mariposa bus stops a week before the December 8 Mariposa Christmas Parade. The flyers cautioned riders of the changes the parade would bring to the YARTS route and schedule. We did not get any reports of riders having problems because of the parade-invoked changes.

YARTS/UC Merced Connection

The connection with the CarLess Commute for UC Merced employee riders on YARTS has gone through some adjustments. Originally, the riders made a transfer in the morning at The Fruit Barn, on Hwy 140, and in the evening at the Merced Transpo Center. Working with the riders and Merced County Transit, both locations were changed to provide for more efficient routes for both transit agencies and better accommodations for the riders.

Inbound in the morning, the connection has been relocated to the Promenade Shopping Center at the corner of Yosemite Avenue and Paulson Rd. The evening connection is now at the new San Miguel Shopping Center on Yosemite Parkway.

Conversations with some of the current UC Merced riders indicate they like the changes as they were concerned about “unsavory characters” that seemed to be

attracted to the Merced Transpo in the early evening hours and the lack of protection against the weather at the Fruit Barn. They also like that their ride is just a little shorter.

Public Comment

We encourage public input on how we are doing as it makes it possible for us to highlight areas where we can make changes that improve the service. Every once in a while someone takes the time to tell us

what we are doing right. Attached are a couple of happy comments that have come our way in the last few months. The personal contact information is blacked out on the emails to protect the writer's privacy, but is available if needed.

REQUESTED ACTION

For information and discussion only.

Attachments: Letter of appreciation from Yosemite Climbing Association
Emails from YARTS riders (6)

**YOSEMITE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM
(YARTS) AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

MINUTES

JANUARY 14, 2008

The regular meeting of the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) Authority Advisory Committee held Monday, January 14, 2008, at the Merced County Association of Governments Conference Room, 369 W. 18th Street, Merced, CA was called to order by Chair Frank Quintero at 10:02 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Barbara Carrier, Mariposa County Public Works
Sandy Hogan, U.S. Forest Service, Retired (via teleconference)
Candy O'Donel-Brown, Private Citizen, Midpines
Tom Pimentel, National Park Service
Gwen Plummer, Mono County Planning Department (for Scott Burns, via teleconference)
Frank Quintero, City of Merced
Richard Wiebe, The Sierra Club

MEMBERS ABSENT

Tom Dumas, Caltrans
Jennifer Krumm, Greater Merced Chamber of Commerce
Larry Shankland, Merced County Transit

OTHERS PRESENT

Brad Aborn, Mariposa County Supervisor
Denise Demery, VIA Adventures
Ken Gosting, Transportation Involves Everyone
Lane Hendricks, National Park Service
Robin Lamas, YARTS staff
Marty Nielson, National Park Service
Liz Roberts, National Park Service
Dick Whittington, YARTS Staff

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Introductions

So noted.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Minutes of the April 2, 2007 YARTS Authority Advisory Committee Meeting

Sandy Hogan requested a correction to the April 2, 2007 minutes to show that she was present at the meeting via teleconference. Also, on Item 11 of the April 2, 2007 AAC meeting, Sandy Hogan stated she only asked if there was a written document that talked about the possibility of using corporate sponsors.

Sandy Hogan moved to approve the minutes of the April 2, 2007 YARTS Authority Advisory Committee meeting as corrected.

Seconded by Richard Wiebe.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. Minutes of the October 15, 2007 YARTS Authority Advisory Committee Meeting

The minutes of the October 15, 2007 YARTS Authority Advisory Committee meeting were accepted by consensus.

6. Information/Discussion Only

- a. VIA Monthly Service Reports for September 2007 – November 2007
- b. Ridership by Fiscal Year – Hwy 140 and Hwy 395/120 East
- c. YARTS Revenue by Fiscal Year

So noted.

7. YARTS Audit – Fiscal Year 2006-2007

Candy O'Donel-Brown moved to recommend the YARTS JPA accept the Fiscal Year 2006-2007 Audit Report prepared by Kemper CPA Group.

Seconded by Gwen Plummer.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

8. AAC Nomination

Sandy Hogan moved to recommend the YARTS JPA approve the nomination of Danna Stroud, Director, Mammoth Lakes Tourism and Recreation Office to serve on the YARTS Authority Advisory Committee.

Seconded by Gwen Plummer.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

9. Funding Update

Dick Whittington gave a review of the staff report in the agenda on the funding options for YARTS 5311 (f), 5320, and 5309 (earmarks) programs.

10. FY 2007-2008 Budget Revision

Richard Wiebe moved to recommend the YARTS JPA approve the FY 2007-2008 Budget Revision.

Seconded by Sandy Hogan.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

11. Future Planning for YARTS

Dick Whittington gave a brief review of the presented staff report.

So noted.

12. Park and Ride Lots - Update

So noted.

13. YARTS Marketing

Dick Whittington gave a review of the marketing venues that were currently being used for YARTS. Dick Whittington requested the committee to notify him if anyone came across information on YARTS in print, out in the public so he could make sure all information is correct and updated.

14. Managers' Report

Dick Whittington gave a brief Managers report.

Ken Gosting, Transportation Involves Everyone (TIE), commended Dick Whittington and YARTS for having a much more friendly attitude towards YARTS riders and with being flexible about changes during parades on the YARTS bus route. Ken Gosting also passed out a letter from TIE to Caltrans and the Mariposa Board of Supervisors.

15. Oral Report – National Park Service Report

Tom Pimentel gave a brief report from the National Park Service.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS OF THE YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE, THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 11:40 A.M.