



San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority

and

City of San Luis Obispo Transit Short Range Transit Plans

Working Paper 2: Goals, Objectives, and Standards

Prepared for

SLO RTA and SLO Transit

March 7, 2024

Prepared by LSC Transportation Consultants



San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority
and
City of San Luis Obispo Transit
Short Range Transit Plans

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Goals, Objectives, and Standards

Prepared for

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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, RTA and 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 2 presents initial recommendations for RTA and SLO transit goals, objectives, and standards.

RTA EXISTING POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RTA has a well-developed set of guiding policies, as summarized in the *2018-2020 Strategic Business Plan* (SBP), which was adopted in March of 2018. These policies are the latest result of a planning process that started with a joint Board, staff, and public workshop held in 2008. The 2018-2020 SBP incorporated new and revised standards recommended in the 2016 RTA Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP), as well as additional standards based on information obtained from a customer perception survey completed in October 2017 and the RTA GPS-based Intelligent Transportation System (ITS). In 2021, due primarily to the impacts on ridership caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, RTA staff recommended that the SBP update be postponed until the completion of the 2024 SRTP.

Key ongoing RTA policy elements consist of a vision statement, mission statement, overall goals, and overall objectives, as well as a series of standards.

The adopted vision statement is: *“The RTA of the future is an integral part of the ‘SLO lifestyle.’ From the vineyards in North County, to the secluded beach towns on the North Coast, to multi-faceted communities in the South County, residents and visitors use public transportation rather than relying on their cars.”*

The adopted mission statement is: *“The Mission of RTA is to provide safe, reliable, and efficient transportation services that improve and enhance the quality of life for the citizens of and visitors to San Luis Obispo County.”*

The overall goals identified in the 2018-2020 SBP are described below. The overall objectives associated with this are also provided.

1. Provide market-driven service that meets the needs of the communities that we serve but that will also attract discretionary riders.
 - 1.1 Link population centers and major traffic generators within the region.
 - 1.2 Coordinate service with all public transportation operators and services.
2. Provide transportation services that are safe, reliable, economical, and accessible in an efficient manner with innovative management practices and technological advancements.
 - 2.1 Provide safe public transportation.
 - 2.2 Provide reliable public transportation.
 - 2.3 Provide effective public transportation.
 - 2.4 Provide efficient public transportation.
 - 2.5 Provide comfortable public transportation.
3. Lead and participate in the analysis of the integration of transit operations throughout the county to ensure that customers are provided seamless transit alternatives and services that attract discretionary riders from every community that RTA serves.
 - 3.1 Achieve a highly rated level of customer satisfaction.
 - 3.2 Provide service that is supported by market demand.
 - 3.3 Manage service in a cost-effective manner.
 - 3.4 Deploy technology effectively and efficiently.

4. Promote the value of RTA and public transportation to the quality of life in San Luis Obispo County, the environmental rewards of utilizing public transportation and the reduction of vehicle miles *traveled*.

4.1 Provide accountability and transparency.

4.2 Increase use and support of public transportation in San Luis Obispo County.

4.3 Implement an annual marketing plan.

4.4 Use public funding efficiently in meeting public transportation needs of communities that RTA services.

4.5 Educate community and business leaders and the public on the value of RTA services.

The 2018-2020 SBP also details the RTA “Standards of Excellence,” presented in Tables 1.1 through 1.4. These standards are organized into the following categories: service quality and efficiency, revenue and resources, safety, human resources, fleet and facility, and leadership in relation to past service trends. Service quality and efficiency standards account for quantitative operational efficiency. Revenue and resources standards identify financial efficiencies and guidelines for the services provided. Safety standards guide service safety for operators, customers, and the general public. Human resources standards encourage employee professional development and talent retention. Fleet and facility standards identify operational and maintenance guidelines to maintain an operating fleet and functioning facilities. Leadership standards promote the successful operation of the RTA as a regional agency leader.

In Tables 1.1 through 1.4, RTA FY 2022-23 performance results are identified alongside the existing performance measure. For Table 1.1, which includes more specific quantitative standards, a peer average for each indicator is also presented. Lastly, the tables present the schedule for reviewing each standard and the staff responsible for monitoring. Recommended changes to the current RTA performance standards are discussed in Chapter 2.

Table 1: RTA Service Standards (1/4)

Section 1: Service Quality and Efficiency				
1.1 Service Efficiency & Effectiveness (Previously Passengers Per Vehicle Service Hour)				
Service Type	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Peer Average	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
Passengers Per Vehicle Hour				
Systemwide Fixed Route	--	13.5	10.0	Reviewed monthly by Operations and reported by Executive Director at each Board meeting.
Regional Intercity Fixed Routes (Routes 9, 10, 12, & 14)	22 or greater	13.6	10.0	
Route Deviation Services (Route 15)	8.0 or greater	3.3	2.0	
Local Fixed Routes (Paso Robles Routes A and B, Routes 21, 24, 27, and 28)	17 or greater	14.9	10.0	
Runabout and Other Demand Response Services	2.0 or greater	1.5	2.0	
Cost Per Vehicle Hour (adjust annually by CPI)				
Systemwide Fixed Route	--	\$174.38	\$162.98	Reviewed monthly by Operations and reported by Executive Director annually to the Board.
Regional Intercity Fixed Routes	--	\$179.11	\$162.98	
Route Deviation Services	--	\$193.15	\$162.98	
Local Fixed Routes	--	\$164.15	\$162.98	
Runabout and Other Demand Response Services	--	\$182.41	\$105.97	
Cost Per Passenger (adjust annually by CPI)				
Systemwide Fixed Route	--	\$12.94	\$18.61	Reviewed monthly by Operations and reported by Executive Director annually to the Board.
Route Deviation Services	--	\$13.16	\$18.61	
Regional Intercity Fixed Routes	--	\$58.73	\$18.61	
Local Fixed Routes	--	\$10.99	\$18.61	
Runabout and Other Demand Response Services	--	\$119.05	\$54.44	

Sources: SLORTA 2018-2020 Strategic Business Plan; RTA SBP Results Staff Report, 11/1/2023; RTA FY 22-23 Operating Data

Table 1: RTA Service Standards (2/4)

Section 1: Service Quality and Efficiency				
1.2 Service Delivery Rate				
Service Type	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
Systemwide	99% or greater	99%	No Change	Reviewed quarterly by Operations and reported by Executive Director bi-annually to the Board.
1.3 On-Time Performance ^{1,2}				
Service Type	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
Regional Intercity Fixed Routes (Routes 9, 10, 12, & 14)	85% or greater	84%	No Change	Reviewed quarterly by Operations and reported by Executive Director bi-annually to the Board.
Local Fixed Routes (Paso Robles Routes A and B, Routes 21, 24, 27, and 28)	90% or greater	87%	No Change	
Route Deviation Services (Route 15)	70% or greater	79%	No Change	
Runabout and Other Demand Response Services	95 % or greater	100%	No Change	
1.4 Service Delivery				
Standard	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
RTA will make consistent efforts to explore new service and service delivery options as well as work with regional efficiencies in the delivery of transportation to the jurisdictions	Subjective	--	No Change	Reported by the Executive Director and Division Heads annually.
1.5 Overcrowding ³				
Service Type	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
Regional Intercity and Local Fixed Routes and Deviation Services	No more than 10% of the monthly number of bus trips that exceed a load factor of 1.25 for greater than 20 minutes	< 1%	No Change	Reviewed quarterly by Operations and reported by Executive Director biannually to the Board.
6B. Express Routes	No more than 10% of the monthly number of bus trips that exceed a load factor of 1.00 for greater than 20 minutes	--	No Change	

Note 1: On-time performance defined as no later than six minutes from any timepoint in the published schedule.

Note 2: Runabout and demand response service is considered on-time if the van arrives within 30 minutes of the appointed pick-up time

Note 3: Overcrowding is defined when the number of passengers exceeds the number of seats on the bus.; i.e., 34 passengers on a 34 -seat bus = a load factor of 1.00

Sources: SLORTA 2018-2020 Strategic Business Plan; RTA SBP Results Staff Report, 11/1/2023; RTA FY 22-23 Operating Data

Table 1: RTA Service Standards (3/4)

Section 2: Revenue and Resources				
Standard	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
The annual operating budget will be based upon projected revenue and the total operating cost will not exceed the budget adopted by the Board.	Operating cost as a percentage of adopted budget	92%	No Change	Monthly financial statements and reported bimonthly to the RTA Board.
Systemwide farebox ratio.	20%; Greater than SLOCOG min. standard	8.7%	16% (including local support) Per SLOCOG Blended Ratio	Tracked monthly and reported bimonthly to RTA Board.
No significant financial audit findings.	Annual Fiscal Audits	No negative audit findings	No Change	Finance and Administration will report any negative audit findings.
Ensure that all capital procurements provide good value to customers and employees.	Subjective	--	No Change	Evaluated through community evaluation survey, feedback from communities, and review of the annual capital program by staff and the Board.
Section 3: Safety				
Standard	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
Limit preventable vehicle collisions.	1 collision per 100,000 miles	1.75	No Change	Reported by Safety and Training Manager annually to the RTA Board.
Address all safety hazards identified by the Safety Resource Committee.	--	Closed 3 action items and identified 7 that remained open	No Change	Reported by Safety and Training Manager annually to the RTA Board.
Limit preventable workers compensation lost-time and medical-only claims.	Lost-time claims will not exceed 6 annually. Preventable medical-only claims will not exceed 10 annually.	7 lost-time claims; 8 medical-only claims	No Change	All work comp claims shall be duly investigated and reported by Finance and Administration to appropriate carrier.
Maintain positive customer and community perception of system safety.	90% positive survey feedback	90%	No Change	As measured by community survey, which shall be conducted at least every two years.
Total risk management costs shall not exceed industry norms.	Market survey	10.2% of operating cost	No Change	Tracked monthly by Finance and Administration and reported bimonthly to the RTA Board.

Sources: SLORTA 2018-2020 Strategic Business Plan; RTA SBP Results Staff Report, 11/1/2023; RTA FY 22-23 Operating Data

Table 1: RTA Service Standards (4/4)

Section 4: Human Resources				
Standard	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
Recruit, promote and retain highly qualified employees to achieve our service standards.	Subjective	--	No Change	Annual assessment by Executive Director and Department Heads.
Provide continuous development of organizational skills through ongoing training and development programs that result in personal and professional growth.	Min. annual training requirements: 30 hours for maintenance technicians; 24 hours for Operations Supervisors; 8 Hours for Bus Operators; 16 hours for Finance and Admin.	21 hrs maintenance; 30 hours operations supervisors; bus operators exceeded 8 hours; finance and administration attended multiple trainings	No Change	Department Heads evaluate annually for achievement of training objectives.
Enable employees to achieve excellence in serving customers by building teamwork and understanding effective communication within the organization.	Subjective	--	No Change	Employees provided opportunity to provide feedback on organizational communication as part of the Executive Director's annual evaluation.
Employees will be evaluated annually in a fair and equitable way to judge performance and be provided a developmental plan for the next fiscal year.	Annual employee evaluation	--	No Change	Employee merit evaluations provided to each employee annually.

Section 5: Fleet and Facility				
Standard	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
Replace 100% of all revenue vehicles no more than 40% beyond the FTA-defined useful life standard in terms of years or miles	Fleet Age/Miles	Average age of fixed route buses = 9 yrs & 386,400 mi; DR vans = 4 years & 56,532 miles	No Change	Tracked by Finance and Administration as part of grant making efforts
Road calls will not exceed 5 per 100,000 miles of vehicle service miles. A road call is defined as all failures that affect the completion of a scheduled revenue trip or the start of the next scheduled revenue trip, including failures during deadheading and layover	Vehicle Service miles driven divided by number of Road Calls	4.83 for fixed route & 0.31 for demand response	No Change	Tracked and reported by the Maintenance Department
Maintain a clean, attractive fleet. Maintain facilities so that they are safe and appealing to customers and employees.	Subjective	--	No Change	Measured by employee and customer feedback
Achieve an 80% favorable rating of bus stop appearance by customers and the communities that we serve	Survey results	82% in March, 2020 survey	No Change	Measured in the biannual Community Survey
Achieve all federal, state-mandated maintenance practices, as well as vendor recommended maintenance schedules for our fleet and facilities	CHP Annual Terminal Inspection; FTA Triennial Review; TDA Triennial Performance Audits; Maintenance Records	No negative findings in 2023 TDA TPA; no CHP findings and PM completed timely.	No Change	As tracked by the Maintenance Department, and reported annually to the RTA Board.

Section 6: Leadership				
Standard	Existing Measure	FY 2022-23 Performance	Proposed Measure	Monitoring Schedule/ Responsibility
Maintain cooperative relationships with federal, state, and local funding agencies.	Subjective	--	No Change	Responsibility of RTA staff and RTA Board.
Develop partnerships with stakeholders, community leaders, and decision makers, keeping them well informed of the integral role of RTA and contributions to the communities served.	Subjective	--	No Change	Responsibility of Executive Director and RTA Board.
Promote effective internal communications and promote the values of the organization.	Subjective	--	No Change	Responsibility of Executive Director.
Provide effective leadership for public transportation within the County.	Subjective	--	No Change	Responsibility of Executive Director and RTA Board.

Sources: SLORTA 2018-2020 Strategic Business Plan; RTA SBP Results Staff Report, 11/1/2023; RTA FY 22-23 Operating Data

RTA Triennial TDA Performance Audit

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

The RTA's FY 2016-17 – FY 2018-19 TPA found that the RTA had successfully implemented two out of the four prior audit recommendations (FY 2013-14- FY 2015-16). The recommendations made in the FY 2016-17 – FY 2018-19 audit included two carried over from the audit prior, and were as follows:

1. Align organizational structure to meet the RTA's changing priorities.
2. Continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Runabout paratransit operations, including scheduling efficiencies and route optimization.
3. Enhance the Runabout customer experience through improved marketing and the deployment of one-click/one-call technology.
4. Consider supplemental services and next-generation mobility for the Runabout.

RTA's latest TDA TPA was completed in 2023 and covered FYs 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22. RTA's performance during the most recent TPA period was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The auditor once again found the RTA complied with the ten applicable TDA requirements. The RTA had also implemented one of the four recommendations made in the FY 2016-17 – FY 2018-19 TPA. The 2023 TPA made two new recommendations for the RTA:

1. Evaluate the RTA's preventable collision rates to achieve its internal standards – the RTA outlined in its most recent Strategic Business Plan that the agency intends to have a rate of preventable vehicle collision that does not exceed 1 per 100,000 miles. The RTA did not meet this internal standard during the audit period.
2. Ensure the RTA SRTP update addresses Runabout service efficiencies and business practices, including implementing a digital application system for passenger eligibility and determining the optimal amount of service consumed by subscription trip bookings.

FTA Triennial Review

Transit agencies that receive Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5307 funds are subject to a broad review by a third-party contractor selected by the FTA regional office. RTA's latest FTA Triennial Review covered the three FYs of 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22. RTA staff presented the FTA Triennial Review to the RTA Board in September of 2023. No deficiencies were found in 20 of the 23 topic areas covered in the review. The review found the deficiencies noted below.

1. Procurement – Lacking required documentation for sole-source award
2. Disadvantaged Business Enterprise – Inadequate implementation of race-neutral measures
3. Disadvantaged Business Enterprise – Small business element not implemented
4. Drug and Alcohol Program – Subrecipient drug and alcohol reporting contained inaccuracies

RTA has altered internal procedures and has submitted corrective actions to FTA to address these deficiencies.

RTA PEER COMPARISON

In the 2016 SRTP, the RTA fixed routes and demand response services were compared to seven selected transit agencies in California using National Transit Database (NTD) data. The prior peer comparisons were updated for the 2024 SRTP using data for the same seven agencies (Tables 2 and 3). The peer transit programs referenced are listed below, with the type of agency noted (municipal, county, transit district, or JPA).

- B-Line, Chico, CA (JPA)
- Monterey Salinas Transit (transit district)
- Santa Cruz Metro (transit district)
- Livermore-Amador Valley Transit (fixed route only) (JPA)
- Yolobus, Yolo County, CA (transit district)
- The Bus, Merced, CA (JPA)
- Gold Coast Transit, Ventura County, CA (transit district)

Tables 2 and 3 display operating data for seven peer transit agencies for the RTA fixed route and demand response services. These tables also provide an analysis of the RTA's performance in relation to the grouped peer statistics and rank RTA's performance in relation to all of the peers combined. The peer data shown is gathered from the NTD 2021-2022 Reporting Year. The data for the RTA represents unaudited FY 2022-2023 operating data. This peer analysis will be expanded as part of upcoming working papers.

Among the peer fixed route services for nine performance indicators, RTA has an average ranking of 4 out of 8 operators, including RTA. RTA's highest ranking is 2nd for cost per vehicle revenue mile, passengers per vehicle service hour, cost per passenger, and subsidy per passenger. RTA's lowest ranking is 7th for average fare per passenger.

Among demand response peer operators, RTA has an average ranking of 5.9 out of 7 operators, including RTA. RTA's highest ranking is 3rd for average fare revenue per passenger. RTA ranks 7th in operating cost per vehicle revenue hour, operating cost per passenger, and subsidy per passenger. RTA's Runabout service, which is provided for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) eligible passengers only, makes up 89 percent of the vehicle revenue hours for RTA demand response service. ADA paratransit service is typically more expensive to operate than general public demand response service, which could be an important factor in RTA's higher cost per unit compared to peers.

Table 2: RTA Transit Peer Group Data and Performance Indicators - Fixed Route

Peer System	Input Data ^{1, 2}					
	County Population	Operating Expenses	Fare Revenue	Vehicle Revenue Miles	Vehicle Revenue Hours	Unlinked Passenger Trips
B-Line	205,860	\$8,162,462	\$837,770	986,322	68,415	478,597
Monterey Salinas Transit	436,476	\$37,040,328	\$3,060,474	2,865,036	184,104	1,727,124
Santa Cruz Metro	263,101	\$41,288,210	\$6,792,351	2,210,921	166,287	2,659,929
Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority	1,656,037	\$14,604,107	\$1,525,962	1,225,468	90,069	841,343
Yolobus	220,381	\$11,002,955	\$1,241,237	1,387,597	73,868	672,978
The Bus - Merced, CA	285,600	\$11,957,381	\$957,436	1,619,710	104,292	390,723
Gold Coast Transit	825,937	\$27,030,511	\$1,957,337	2,071,300	184,731	2,261,605

SLO Regional Transit Authority	280,251	\$9,047,871	\$791,806	1,210,689	51,885	699,135
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Peer System	Performance Indicators											
	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	Vehicle Revenue Miles per Hour	Vehicle Revenue Hours per Capita	Vehicle Revenue Miles per Capita
B-Line	2.32	\$8.28	\$119.31	0.49	7.0	\$17.05	\$1.75	\$15.30	10.3%	14.4	0.33	4.79
Monterey Salinas Transit	3.96	\$12.93	\$201.19	0.60	9.4	\$21.45	\$1.77	\$19.67	8.3%	15.6	0.42	6.56
Santa Cruz Metro	10.11	\$18.67	\$248.29	1.20	16.0	\$15.52	\$2.55	\$12.97	16.5%	13.3	0.63	8.40
Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority	0.51	\$11.92	\$162.14	0.69	9.3	\$17.36	\$1.81	\$15.54	10.4%	13.6	0.05	0.74
Yolobus	3.05	\$7.93	\$148.95	0.48	9.1	\$16.35	\$1.84	\$14.51	11.3%	18.8	0.34	6.30
The Bus - Merced, CA	1.37	\$7.38	\$114.65	0.24	3.7	\$30.60	\$2.45	\$28.15	8.0%	15.5	0.37	5.67
Gold Coast Transit	2.74	\$13.05	\$146.32	1.09	12.2	\$11.95	\$0.87	\$11.09	7.2%	11.2	0.22	2.51
<i>Peer Maximum</i>	<i>10.11</i>	<i>18.67</i>	<i>\$248.29</i>	<i>1.20</i>	<i>16.00</i>	<i>\$30.60</i>	<i>\$2.55</i>	<i>\$28.15</i>	<i>16.5%</i>	<i>18.8</i>	<i>0.63</i>	<i>8.40</i>
<i>Peer Average</i>	<i>3.44</i>	<i>11.45</i>	<i>\$162.98</i>	<i>0.69</i>	<i>9.54</i>	<i>\$18.61</i>	<i>\$1.86</i>	<i>\$16.75</i>	<i>10.3%</i>	<i>14.6</i>	<i>0.34</i>	<i>5.00</i>
<i>Peer Minimum</i>	<i>0.51</i>	<i>7.38</i>	<i>\$114.65</i>	<i>0.24</i>	<i>3.75</i>	<i>\$11.95</i>	<i>\$0.87</i>	<i>\$11.09</i>	<i>7.2%</i>	<i>11.2</i>	<i>0.05</i>	<i>0.74</i>
SLO Regional Transit Authority	2.49	\$7.47	\$174.38	0.58	13.5	\$12.94	\$1.13	\$11.81	8.8%	23.3	0.19	4.32
RTA Transit % of Peer Avg.	73%	65%	107%	84%	141%	70%	61%	71%	85%	159%	55%	86%
RTA Transit Rank (1 = Best)	5	2	6	5	2	2	7	2	5	--	--	--

Source: National Transit Database; RTA FY 2023 unaudited operating data

Note 1: Peer Data for FY 2021-22; RTA Data is unaudited FY2022-23

Note 2: Data for fixed route services only.

Table 3: RTA Transit Peer Group Data and Performance Indicators -Demand Response

Input Data						
Peer System	County Population	Operating Expenses	Fare Revenue	Vehicle Revenue Miles	Vehicle Revenue Hours	Unlinked Passenger Trips
B-Line	205,860	\$2,283,587	\$178,127	195,460	21,350	64,577
Monterey Salinas Transit	436,476	\$5,943,656	\$231,368	1,088,847	67,584	144,867
Santa Cruz Metro	263,101	\$5,316,792	\$210,547	367,221	32,206	62,608
Yolobus	220,381	\$2,141,235	\$98,208	313,913	18,860	25,540
The Bus - Merced, CA	285,600	\$2,525,521	\$53,368	377,194	26,946	50,155
Gold Coast Transit	825,937	\$2,355,210	\$122,161	562,865	34,337	75,596
SLO Regional Transit Authority	280,251	\$4,221,631	\$102,092	321,765	23,144	35,460

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
B-Line	0.31	\$11.68	\$106.96	0.33	3.0	\$35.36	\$2.76	\$32.60	7.8%
Monterey Salinas Transit	0.33	\$5.46	\$87.94	0.13	2.1	\$41.03	\$1.60	\$39.43	3.9%
Santa Cruz Metro	0.24	\$14.48	\$165.09	0.17	1.9	\$84.92	\$3.36	\$81.56	4.0%
Yolobus	0.12	\$6.82	\$113.53	0.08	1.4	\$83.84	\$3.85	\$79.99	4.6%
The Bus - Merced, CA	0.18	\$6.70	\$93.73	0.13	1.9	\$50.35	\$1.06	\$49.29	2.1%
Gold Coast Transit	0.09	\$4.18	\$68.59	0.13	2.2	\$31.16	\$1.62	\$29.54	5.2%
<i>Peer Maximum</i>	<i>0.33</i>	<i>\$14.48</i>	<i>\$165.09</i>	<i>0.33</i>	<i>3.02</i>	<i>\$84.92</i>	<i>\$3.85</i>	<i>\$81.56</i>	<i>7.8%</i>
<i>Peer Average</i>	<i>0.21</i>	<i>\$8.22</i>	<i>\$105.97</i>	<i>0.16</i>	<i>2.09</i>	<i>\$54.44</i>	<i>\$2.37</i>	<i>\$52.07</i>	<i>4.6%</i>
<i>Peer Minimum</i>	<i>0.09</i>	<i>\$4.18</i>	<i>\$68.59</i>	<i>0.08</i>	<i>1.35</i>	<i>\$31.16</i>	<i>\$1.06</i>	<i>\$29.54</i>	<i>2.1%</i>
SLO Regional Transit Authority	0.13	\$13.12	\$182.41	0.11	1.5	\$119.05	\$2.88	\$116.17	2.4%
RTA Transit % of Peer Avg.	60%	160%	172%	67%	73%	219%	121%	223%	53%
RTA Transit Rank (1 = Best)	5	6	7	6	6	7	3	7	6

Source: National Transit Database; RTA FY 2023 unaudited operating data

Note 1: Peer Data for FY 2021-22; RTA Data is unaudited FY2022-23

Note 2: Data for demand response services only.

The purpose of the peer comparison is to provide information to gauge if local transit operating statistics are reasonable on a systemwide basis, and to provide the RTA information to evaluate potential changes to services and performance measures. 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.

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 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 the 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 to 7 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%
<i>Peer Maximum</i>	33	\$10.00	\$129.27	1.42	17.7	\$21.72	\$1.14	\$21.49	21.2%
<i>Peer Average</i>	11	\$7.93	\$103.99	0.88	11.5	\$11.23	\$0.75	\$10.48	10.4%
<i>Peer Minimum</i>	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

Source: National Transit Database; US Census

Note 1: Peer Data for FY 2021-22

Note 2: Data for fixed route services only.

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 transportation¹.

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.

¹ SLOCOG 2023-2045 Regional Transportation Plan Final, Adopted June 7, 2023 – Chapter 3: Vision, Goals Policies
SLO RTA and SLO Transit 2024 SRTPs

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

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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.

RTA

The mission statement, vision statement, goals, and objectives adopted by RTA are reasonable and internally consistent. They comprehensively consider the various elements that comprise a successful transit program. RTA staff does a commendable job informing the RTA Board and the public of the progress in meeting standards. RTA implemented changes to performance standards that were recommended in the 2016 SRTP. These included 1) new and separate passenger per revenue vehicle hour standards for demand response service and route deviation service; 2) separate overcrowding standards for fixed routes and express routes; and 3) reporting preventable collision rates on an annual basis rather than monthly.

One item of note is that RTA has only one cost efficiency standard – farebox recovery ratio. Given that the farebox recovery ratio relies on the fare structure, it would be advisable to add one or two more cost-efficiency measures. It is recommended that RTA add a cost-per-passenger performance standard. Given that transit services are still regaining ridership from the years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, it would also be advisable to add a cost-per-vehicle revenue hour standard.

Different strategies could be employed to update RTA Service Quality and Efficiency standards (Table 1.1) given the impacts of COVID-19 and recent inflation. One option is to benchmark the standard based on the FY 2022-2023 actual results. This will capture changes to inflation and ridership demand that led up to and continued into FY 2022-23². Another option is to use the peer averages as the standards. RTA could also retain the current standards, which are aspirational, and anticipate the return of pre-pandemic service and ridership; however, it is unlikely that RTA could meet these standards over the short term. One additional consideration is that it might be useful to break out ADA paratransit service separately for each of the efficiency measures because ADA service is more costly to operate than general public service demand response service.

The Study Team's initial recommendations are to update the Service Quality and Efficiency Standards in Table 1.1 to reflect current performance or the peer average (whichever is better) as a “minimum” standard. RTA should still retain passenger per vehicle hour standards listed in the 2016 SRTP as “target” standards, as these reflect the vision of the SBP and regional goals of increasing transit mode split. RTA should develop minimum cost efficiency standards (cost per hour and cost per passenger) at the level of current performance or peer average (whichever is better). The cost efficiency measures should be updated annually based on the Consumer Price Index for All Consumers, The West Region (RTA may wish to select a different geographic region more specific to southern California and San Luis Obispo. Using the

² The Consumer Price Index for All Consumers, West Region increased 21.2% cumulatively since December of 2018. https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/consumerpriceindex_west.htm#tableA

larger West Region captures more data sampling and provides less volatility in the CPI). Separate standards for the Runabout should be developed.

No changes to the existing measures presented in Tables 1.2 through 1.4 are recommended, with the exception of the farebox ratio. The systemwide farebox ratio standard should meet SLOCOG's blended farebox ratio standard of 16 percent for transit operators which serve both urbanized and non-urbanized areas. To calculate the systemwide farebox ratio, local support should be included. Local support represents all non-state funds, including FTA funds.

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 transit³. SLO Transit would need to double 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 Tables 4.1 and 4.2. 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

³ 2019 City Transportation Survey as reported by City staff in January 23, 2024 Council Agenda Report for the Transit Innovation Study Review

(similar definition to “road call”) for similar-size fixed route operators in California was 27,000 miles⁴. Given that the current minimum standard of 4,000 miles is relatively low compared to 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.

⁴ FY 2022 NTD Annual Data – Using California operators with 75 or fewer vehicles in maximum service for motor bus mode only.