



DATE: June 1, 2009
TO: STA Board
FROM: Elizabeth Richards, Director of Transit and Rideshare Services
Joe Story, DKS Associates
RE: Transit Consolidation Study - Phase 2 Analysis and Recommendations

Background:

Over the past several years, the issue of consolidating some or all of the Solano's transit services has been discussed and proposed for evaluation. This topic was discussed by STA Board members at the February 2005 Board retreat and the participants expressed interest and support for transit service becoming more convenient through a seamless system, that there should be a reasonable level of service throughout the county, and that local transit issues and needs would have to be considered and addressed. In 2005, the STA Board directed STA staff to initiate a countywide Transit Consolidation Study and approved goals, objectives and evaluation criteria to be incorporated in the scope of work for this study. After funding was secured, DKS Associates was selected to lead the Transit Consolidation Study.

Work began in early 2007. A preliminary analysis of alternatives was presented to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Consortium in June 2007. It included five (5) potential transit consolidation alternatives. During discussion at the TAC meeting, a sixth (6th) alternative was requested. This alternative suggested consideration of consolidating all intercity fixed-route service and local and intercity American for Disabilities (ADA) paratransit service.

At the July 2007 STA Board meeting, staff presented the six (6) transit consolidation alternatives to the STA Board along with the Executive Committee's recommendation and a recommendation to release the Findings Report and the Options Report once the TAC and Consortium had additional time to review. After discussion, the STA Board modified and approved the membership of the Transit Consolidation Steering Committee to include all eight (8) jurisdictions with individual Board members and City Managers and the County Administrator.

The STA Board's Transit Consolidation Steering Committee held a second meeting on December 11, 2008. At this meeting, the Committee directed staff to add Option 2 (Vallejo/Benicia/Fairfield/Suisun City consolidation) to the list of options to evaluate.

Discussion:

After the December 2008 Transit Consolidation Steering Committee meeting the Transit Operator Analysis Report was completed. This was distributed in April 2009 to the TAC and Consortium. The data collected through this effort was used to analyze the various options. The options have been analyzed based on the Board established criteria (Attachment A).

Also occurring during this time was a study of intercity paratransit services in eastern Solano County. For over ten years, the STA has managed and had an agreement with Fairfield and Suisun Transit (FAST) to operate the service known as Solano Paratransit. FAST operates the intercity service which is integrated with its own local paratransit service known as DART. The cost of Solano Paratransit service was shared by the five jurisdictions that it provided intercity paratransit service to: Fairfield, Suisun City, Dixon, Vacaville and Solano County. The STA has also allocated funds from State Transit Assistance Funds (STAF) and secured multiple 5310 grants to purchase vehicles. Due to escalating costs, the Solano Paratransit funding partners requested a study be completed this year to identify alternative service models for intercity paratransit that were financially sustainable. This study was nearing completion when based on a letter received from the City of Fairfield, was proposed that each of the Solano Paratransit funding partners provide paratransit service within their own service area and longer, multi-jurisdictional trips would be handled through transfers. The decision to dissolve Solano Paratransit was made by the STA Board on May 13, 2009. To reflect this in the Transit Consolidation Study, a third version of Option 4 has been created. Option 4c is to consolidate interregional routes and decentralize intercity paratransit services.

Other issues that have arisen since the last Transit Consolidation Steering Committee meeting include a change in transit funding policy at the State and Federal level. Long-term State transit funding has been eliminated for the foreseeable future, while short-term federal funds have become available through federal stimulus funds.

At the May 2009 Transit Consolidation Steering Committee, the consultant reviewed with the Committee the options and analysis, presented the recommendations and next steps. These are outlined on the attached draft powerpoint (Attachment B). All jurisdictions were represented at the Steering Committee which took an action to support all five recommendations.

Individual meetings have been held between STA and both Benicia and Vallejo staff and Board members. Based on these meetings, it appears there is support for Option 1 from both entities. The STA Board took action at their May Board meeting to dissolve Solano Paratransit and decentralize intercity paratransit to local transit operators which is part of Option 4c.

In late May, the five recommendations were presented to the TAC and Consortium for their input and consideration. At the Consortium, there was a discussion about recommendation 2 which had been presented in the form approved by the Transit Consolidation Steering Committee:

“2. Option 4c: Consolidation of interregional Solano transit services under one operator to be selected by the STA Board and decentralize intercity paratransit service to local transit operators;”

Consortium members from Fairfield and Vacaville raised a concern that they thought discussion at the Steering Committee suggested that the consolidation of interregional Solano transit service under one operator was an option to be studied rather than definitive direction and requested the wording be modified to reflect their understanding. Both the Benicia and Vallejo members indicated their support for Option 1. The Consortium approved the following modification to this recommendation:

“Decentralize intercity paratransit service to local transit operators and continue study of consolidation of interregional Solano transit services under one operator to be selected by the STA Board.”

The Consortium’s amended recommendation was presented to the TAC and the TAC also approved the amended recommendation. Staff presents the amended recommendation for the Board’s action.

Recommendations:

Approve the following:

1. Option 1: Consolidation of Benicia and Vallejo transit services;
2. Option 4c: Decentralize intercity paratransit service to local transit operators and continue study of consolidation of interregional Solano transit services under one operator to be selected by the STA Board;
3. Forward the STA recommended transit consolidation recommendations to the affected agencies for their consideration and participation;
4. Direct STA staff to work with the affected local transit staff to develop Implementation Plans for Option 1 and Option 4c; and
5. Report back to the STA Board by September 2009 on the status of the Implementation Plan.

Attachments:

- A. Transit Consolidation Options Evaluation Matrix
- B. Draft Phase 2 Analysis and Recommendations Powerpoint