

# SOLANO TRANSIT CONSOLIDATION STUDY

## OPTIONS REPORT

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## 1. INTRODUCTION TO STUDY AND OPTIONS

In February of 2007, the Solano Transportation Authority (STA) initiated a study to examine and evaluate options to improve the delivery and accountability of providing transit service throughout Solano County while considering and addressing local transit issues and needs. The impetus for recommending the STA conduct this study originated from the mayors of the seven cities (Benicia, Dixon, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun City, Vacaville, and Vallejo) and a member of the Board of Supervisors that serve on the STA Board on behalf of the agencies that they represent. This evaluation was initially proposed by individual members at a Board retreat in February 2005 and unanimously approved by the entire STA Board in March 2005 to be added to the STA's Overall Work Program for Fiscal Years 2006-07 and 2007-08.

The transit service for Solano County's seven cities and the County of Solano is provided by six separate transit operators. This approach for providing transit service is somewhat unique for the Bay Area, but it is not uncommon in more rural areas of California for transit service to be provided by individual cities. The transit service provided by the individual transit operators varies widely from the range of transit services provided by Vallejo Transit (Baylink Ferry, Intercity Transit, local transit, intercity and local ADA paratransit, and subsidized taxi) to the specific service provided by the City of Dixon (Dixon's Read-Ride service).

To guide this effort, the STA Board adopted a set of four goals for the consolidation study:

1. To streamline transit service, simplifying and improve access to transit use for riders.
2. To achieve service efficiencies and economics.
3. To provide a central focus on transit service for the County.
4. To create a robust transit service to meet the growing transit needs of the County.

In addition, the STA Board adopted a set of 13 criteria to evaluate the proposed consolidation options:

1. Cost effectiveness
2. Efficient use of resources – equipment, facilities, personnel
3. Service efficiency
4. Improved governance – Accountability to the public and community
5. Streamline decision-making
6. Ridership and productivity impacts
7. Service coordination
8. Recognize local community needs and priorities
9. Protect local transit service as requested by local jurisdictions
10. Flexibility to meet local changing needs
11. Capacity to deliver new service while maintain existing service
12. Ability to leverage additional funding
13. Implementation needs/requirements (e.g., legal, financial)

Due to rising gas prices and transit service costs, the STA worked with Solano County's transit operators to complete several near term studies and funding agreements to ensure the fiscal stabilization and continuity of countywide intercity transit service in 2006. Following the completion of these tasks, the STA started Phase 1 of the Transit Consolidation Study (the development of options for potential consolidation). These options were developed through an extensive 4-month interview process of Solano County local elected offices, city, county and

transit staff and discussions with several policy and technical committees. In addition, two focus group meetings were conducted with transit riders during the four month period.

This report summarizes the initial options that have emerged as part of Phase 1 of the study and is the initial step of defining how the operations would work in the various options. While some of the options involve every operator, others involve as few as two. Some options would preclude other options, but other options can be implemented in conjunction with other options.

During Phase 2 of the study, these options will be compared to the current Solano County system for delivering transit service (status quo) and details of maintenance and storage, management, administrative staff and offices, paratransit operations and policies, governance, operations of service, and financial implications will be analyzed in more detail. To oversee and provide guidance for this second phase of the study, the STA Board has formed a Steering Committee comprised of all eight members of the STA Board (seven mayors and a member of the Board of Supervisors) and the seven city managers and the County of Solano's chief administrative officer.

In this report, each option is examined for the proposed approach to several specific areas. These areas are:

- Service Delivery
- Maintenance and Storage Facilities
- Management (including accounting, funding, planning, and grants)
- Administrative Offices
- Paratransit Operations
- Governance
- Other Issues
- Potential Advantages of Option
- Potential Disadvantages of Option

## Summary of Options

Through considerable discussion, these options are proposed for further evaluation. They are:

- Option 1: South County Consolidation
- Option 2: South/Central County Consolidation
- Option 3: North County Intercity Fixed-Route and Paratransit Consolidation (no Local Consolidation)
- Option 4: All Paratransit and Intercity Fixed Route Consolidation
- Option 5: Functional Countywide Consolidation
- Option 6: Total Countywide Consolidation

## OPTION 1: SOUTH COUNTY CONSOLIDATION

The communities of Vallejo and Benicia are the ones that are mostly tied to the core of the Bay Area for commute patterns. Both cities also have significant amounts of local travel that occur between each other. The route numbering and structures are also mutually exclusive; there is no duplication.

In this consolidation option, a new operation could replace those provided by Vallejo and Benicia. This would be a comprehensive consolidation, establishing a new organization that could handle all aspects of governance, management, service delivery, accounting, funding/grants, service planning, capital projects, maintenance facilities, technology integration of fares and traveler information, and paratransit operations.

**Service Delivery.** Both bus systems today have operations contracted separately through a private operator (MV Transportation, Inc.) for all fixed-route and paratransit bus services. These could be merged into a single contract, or negotiated separately. There could be some anticipated cost savings from a merged operation, and this will be examined in the evaluation phase.

The City of Vallejo's Baylink Ferry is operated through a contract to the Blue and Gold Fleet. The Ferry and the accompanying Route 200 operations could be approached in several ways under this option. The Ferry operations can remain with the City of Vallejo, and Route 200 operations could be coordinated through the new transit operator. The ferry and Route 200 could be supervised through this new operator. It is noted that there have been regional discussions and recently drafted legislation (Senate Bill 976) to consolidate regional ferry operations (including the Baylink Ferry) with the Water Transit Authority; the Route 200 operations again could likely be coordinated with a new operator under this scenario.

### Vallejo Local Routes:

- Route 1: South Vallejo - Rancho Vallejo
- Route 2: Northeast Vallejo - Downtown
- Route 4: Tuolumne Street - Downtown
- Routes 5 & 7: Redwood Parkway - Gateway Plaza - Springs Road
- Route 6: Tennessee St - Beverly Hills - Benicia Road

### Benicia Local Routes:

- Route 15: Benicia High & Middle Schools via Western Rose Dr./Solano Drive
- Route 17: Benicia High & Middle Schools via Hastings Drive
- Route 19: Benicia Industrial Park City Ride
- Route 21: Northwest Benicia City Ride
- Route 22: Northeast Benicia City Ride

### Intercity Routes

- Route 23: Benicia to Martinez Amtrak Station
- Route 75: Pleasant Hill BART Station, Benicia-Vallejo Ferry Terminal (to be Route 70 in January 2008)
- Route 80: Vallejo - El Cerrito Del Norte BART
- Route 85: Vallejo - Fairfield - Solano College

**Maintenance and Storage.** The operations should easily be accommodated at the Storage available at current Vallejo site on Broadway. The specific maintenance and storage facilities to accommodate local, paratransit and the express bus over-the-road (MCI) coaches will be closely examined in the analysis phase.

**Management.** The operation would likely be managed by a General Manager. To assist the General Manager, there would likely be directors of contracts, finance, and grants. There could also be dedicated coordinators for local Benicia and Vallejo services, and two administrative support personnel.

**Administrative Offices.** The location of the administrative offices ideally could be in facilities at a strategically agreed-upon location near or at the Vallejo Ferry Terminal or near maintenance facilities.

**Paratransit Programs.** Both cities operate separate paratransit programs, and often people must travel to locations in another City. The systems would work with a single combined program and common service area. For trips outside of the operator's service area, participation through the Solano Paratransit Agreement is recommended.

**Other Roles.** This new organization may have the potential to serve as the primary project sponsor for purchase of new equipment and for transit capital projects, although a city may prefer to remain the project sponsor for projects currently in development.

**Governance.** The South County operation could be initially governed by a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) or through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This option will assess the results of establishment through an MOU, Joint Powers Authority, and Transit District. That agency could include a board that would contain representatives from Vallejo, Benicia, and the Solano Transportation Authority. For example, one structure could be a five-member board consisting of:

- 2 representatives from Vallejo
- 2 representatives from Benicia
- 1 representative chosen from Solano Transportation Authority board

In addition to a board, the operation could have oversight provided through a Technical Oversight Committee. This committee could consist of the STA Executive Director, both City Managers, a representative from the Vallejo Public Works Department, a representative from the Benicia Finance Department, a representative from the Solano County staff (Administrator's Office or Resource Management Agency), and the General Manager that leads the agency.

**Potential Advantages for Further Analysis.** A system such as this one has these possible advantages:

- **Optimized Route Structure.** For persons in eastern Vallejo and Benicia, the routes can possibly be restructured to connect both cities to improve transit accessibility. This could also result in some cost savings.
- **Single Application and More Leverage for Regional Transit Funds.** The agency could be better able to participate and succeed in regional funding applications and awards, as there would be a single point for coordination rather than two.
- **Direct Oversight.** The management of the system could receive direct accountability from elected officials, in addition to being managed by department heads and city managers.

- **Direct Experience with Grants and Funds.** The new agency structure could allow for a specialist position for grants and funds to be available for both operators, where today each operator must assign staff to coordinate separately. This could enable better access to take advantage of available funds, and to fully track how these resources are spent across the entire operation.
- **Paratransit Coordination.** A combined paratransit system could benefit both communities by having a larger pool of vehicles and resources to offer users, and would eliminate paratransit transfers between Vallejo and Benicia.
- **Dedicated Transit Funding.** In this option, there could be dedicated state and regional transit funding going directly to the operator, so the potential use of funds by other city departments would be limited.
- **Common Transit Operations Goals.** The combined operation could provide a common direction and identity for this part of the county in terms of setting goals for transit services, and common implementing and monitoring of the system performance.

**Potential Disadvantages for Further Analysis.** A system such as this one has these possible disadvantages:

- **Increased Dependence on Current Revenue Streams.** The creation of a separate entity includes a basic assumption that no dedicated revenue from any of the cities would be used. Agency shortfalls could not be easily backfilled.
- **Credit for Transfer of Capital Facilities.** Each city has invested in equipment and facilities. Some equitable arrangement could be required to transfer those to a new operating entity. Capital facilities are usually funded mostly or completely through Federal funds or other grants restricted for transit use, so this issue may be applicable only in a few cases.
- **Coordination Issues with Cities.** There will need to be coordination with public works staff in each city on issues such as bus stop placement, shelter installation and maintenance, street geometrics for buses, and potential transit signal priority. This can be somewhat abated through the Board and Technical Oversight Committee.
- **Potential Change in Fare Structures and Policies** Each operator has a different fare system, and ways of administering discounted fares and passes. A standardized fare structure would be needed.
- **Short-Term Operator Incompatibilities.** At least for the initial operating years, it will require administering and potentially combining service contracts, and accommodating existing fleets and fuels. These vary between operators. Through new contracts and procurements of new equipment, this disadvantage would be eliminated over time.
- **Shift in Local Contact and Control.** Even though communication channels would be in place in a new organization, the familiarity and trust gained through the current locally-based system of resources, dispatching and coordination would need to be changed. This is a shift in local control.

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## OPTION 2: SOUTH/CENTRAL COUNTY CONSOLIDATION

One variation of Option 1 is to add in the Fairfield-Suisun Transit operations with Benicia and Vallejo systems. Because these are the most-utilized transit systems in Solano County, and all currently offer intercity commuter services as well as local services, a consolidation would create the predominant transit operator in Solano County significant enough in size to represent Solano County at the regional funding table, and to have resources to begin to respond to new types of services and technologies in a comprehensive manner.

This option would also enable board participation by Suisun City. Currently, Suisun City has no direct transit operations responsibilities, and does not sit on a board for Fairfield-Suisun Transit.

In this consolidation option, a new operation would replace those offered by Vallejo Transit, Benicia Breeze and Fairfield-Suisun Transit. This could be a comprehensive consolidation, establishing a new organization that could handle all aspects of governance, management, service delivery, accounting, funding/grants, service planning, capital projects, maintenance facilities, technology integration of fares and traveler information, and paratransit operations.

**Service Delivery.** All three bus systems today have operations contracted separately through a private operator (MV Transportation, Inc.) for all fixed-route and paratransit bus services. These could be merged into a single contract, or negotiated separately. There could be some anticipated cost savings from a merged operation, and this will be examined in the evaluation phase.

The City of Vallejo's Baylink Ferry is operated through a contract to the Blue and Gold Fleet. The Ferry and the accompanying Route 200 operations could be approached in several ways under this option. The Ferry operations can remain with the City of Vallejo, and Route 200 operations could be coordinated through the new transit operator. The ferry and Route 200 could be supervised through this new operator. It is noted that there have been regional discussions and recently drafted legislation (Senate Bill 976) to consolidate regional ferry operations (including the Baylink Ferry) with the Water Transit Authority; the Route 200 operations again would likely be coordinated with a new operator under this scenario.

### Vallejo Local Routes:

- Route 1: South Vallejo - Rancho Vallejo
- Route 2: Northeast Vallejo - Downtown
- Route 4: Tuolumne Street - Downtown
- Routes 5 & 7: Redwood Parkway - Gateway Plaza - Springs Road
- Route 6: Tennessee St - Beverly Hills - Benicia Road

### Benicia Local Routes:

- Route 15: Benicia High & Middle Schools via Western Rose Dr./Solano Drive
- Route 17: Benicia High & Middle Schools via Hastings Drive
- Route 19: Benicia Industrial Park City Ride
- Route 21: Northwest Benicia City Ride
- Route 22: Northeast Benicia City Ride

**Local Routes – Fairfield:**

- Route 1A: Central Fairfield Clockwise
- Route 1B: Central Fairfield Counter Clockwise
- Route 2: To Travis Air Force Base
- Route 3A: Outer Fairfield
- Route 3B: Outer Fairfield
- Route 4: Northeast Fairfield
- Route 5: Suisun City West
- Route 6: Suisun City East
- Route 7: Cordelia Villages

**Intercity Routes**

- Route 23: Benicia to Martinez Amtrak Station
- Route 75: Pleasant Hill BART Station, Benicia-Vallejo Ferry Terminal (to be Route 70 in January 2008)
- Route 20: Fairfield - Vacaville
- Route 30: Fairfield - Davis/Sacramento
- Route 40: Vacaville - Walnut Creek BART
- Route 80: Vallejo - El Cerrito Del Norte BART
- Route 85: Vallejo - Fairfield - Solano College
- Route 90: Fairfield - El Cerrito Del Norte BART

**Maintenance and Storage.** Two operations facilities are anticipated in this scenario. One could likely be at the current Vallejo Transit site on Broadway. The other could be at the City of Fairfield maintenance site. The specific maintenance and storage facilities to accommodate local, paratransit and the express bus over-the-road (MCI) coaches will be closely examined.

**Management.** The operation would likely be managed by a General Manager. To assist the General Manager, there could be three directors of contracts, finance, and grants. Other staff positions would need to be evaluated, but one potential structure is for a dedicated coordinator for each city's local services, two additional service planners and two administrative support personnel.

**Administrative Offices.** The location of the administrative offices ideally could be in facilities separate from any city hall. Several transportation buildings in the area have been built with Federal funds, so that one possible location is within one of these (should it be an element of the capital grant requirements when the facility was built). Both the Fairfield Transportation Center and the Vallejo Ferry terminal may fall into this category. Alternatively, administration of transit services may be most strategically accomplished when adjacent to the maintenance and storage yards, so this option should also be considered.

**Paratransit Programs.** All three cities operate separate local paratransit programs, and often people must travel to locations in another City. The systems could work with a single combined program and common service area. For trips outside of the operator's service area, participation through the Solano Paratransit Agreement is recommended.

**Governance.** The South/Central County operation could be initially governed by a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) or through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This option will also assess the results of establishment through an MOU, JPA, or Transit District. That agency would likely include a board that would contain representatives from Vallejo, Fairfield, Suisun City, Benicia, the Solano Transportation Authority, and possibly Solano County. One structure

could be for each city to have one vote on non-financial matters, and weighted votes (by population or funding) for other matters as follows:

- 1 representatives from Vallejo
- 1 representatives from Fairfield
- 1 representative from Benicia
- 1 representative from Suisun City
- 1 representative from Solano Transportation Authority
- 1 representative from Solano County

A second possible structure for a board could be to assign board seats with the most populous cities having two seats rather than one, such as:

- 2 representatives from Vallejo
- 2 representatives from Fairfield
- 1 representative from Benicia
- 1 representative from Suisun City
- 1 representative from Solano Transportation Authority

In addition to a board, the operation could have oversight provided through a Technical Oversight Committee. This committee could consist of the STA Executive Director, City Managers, a representative from the public works departments in Vallejo, Fairfield and Suisun City, a representative from the Benicia Finance Department, a representative from the Solano County staff (Administrator's Office or Resource Management Agency), and the General Manager that leads the agency.

**Other Roles.** This new organization may have the potential to serve as the primary project sponsor for purchase of new equipment and for transit capital projects, although a city may prefer to remain the project sponsor for projects currently in development.

**Potential Advantages for Further Analysis.** A system such as this one has these possible advantages:

- **Optimized Route Structure.** To accommodate trips between the four cities, the routes can be restructured to connect multiple cities to improve transit accessibility. This could also result in some cost savings.
- **Single Application and More Leverage for Regional Transit Funds.** The agency could be better able to participate and succeed in regional funding applications and awards, as there could be a single point for coordination rather than three.
- **Direct Oversight.** The management of the system would receive direct accountability by elected officials, in addition to being managed by department heads and city managers.
- **Direct Experience with Grants and Funds.** The new agency structure could allow for a specialist position for grants and funds to be available for all services, where today each operator must assign staff to coordinate separately. This could provide better ways to take advantage of available funds, and to fully track how these resources are spent.
- **Paratransit Coordination.** A combined paratransit system could benefit both communities by having a larger pool of vehicles and resources to offer users.

- **Dedicated Transit Funding.** In this option, there could be dedicated state and regional transit funding going directly to the operator, so the potential use of funds by other city departments would be limited.
- **Common Transit Operations Goals.** The combined operation could provide a common direction and identity for this part of the county in terms of setting goals for transit services, and common implementing and monitoring of the system performance.
- **Governance Expanded to Include Suisun City.** This option would provide a vehicle by which Suisun City would be able to directly participate in overseeing the local transit service currently offered within their city limits.

**Potential Disadvantages for Further Analysis.** A system such as this one has these possible disadvantages:

- **Significant Dependence on Current Revenue Streams.** The creation of a separate entity includes a basic assumption that no dedicated revenue from any of the cities would be used. Agency shortfalls could not be easily backfilled.
- **Credit for Transfer of Capital Facilities.** Three of the four cities have invested in equipment and facilities. Some equitable arrangement could be required to transfer those to a new operating entity. Capital facilities are usually funded mostly or completely through Federal funds or other grants restricted for transit use, so this issue may be applicable only in a few cases.
- **Coordination Issues with Cities.** There will need to be coordination with public works staff in each city on issues such as bus stop placement, shelter installation and maintenance, street geometrics for buses, and potential transit signal priority. This can be somewhat abated through the Board and Technical Oversight Committee.
- **Potential Change in Fare Structures and Policies.** Each operator has a different fare system, and ways of administering discounted fares and passes. A standardized fare structure would be needed.
- **Short-Term Operator Incompatibilities.** At least for the initial operating years, it will require administering and potentially combining service contracts, and accommodating existing fleets and fuels. These vary between operators. Through new contracts and procurements of new equipment, this disadvantage would be eliminated over time.
- **Shift in Local Contact and Control.** Even though communication channels could be in place in a new organization, the familiarity and trust gained through the current locally-based system of resources, dispatching and coordination would need to be changed. This is a shift in local control.

## **OPTION 3: CENTRAL/NORTH COUNTY FIXED-ROUTE AND PARATRANSIT INTERCITY CONSOLIDATION (NOT LOCAL)**

Transit in the communities in central and northern Solano County – Fairfield, Suisun City, Vacaville, Dixon and Rio Vista – has primarily been focused on local-service, yet they all have intercity transit service needs. The Solano Paratransit Agreement and the existing Intercity Funding Agreement are examples where inter-city travel needs are currently addressed.

In this consolidation option, this “agreement” concept could be expanded to provide a more official consolidated oversight function for both intercity paratransit and fixed-route operations. This would be accomplished through a Memorandum of Understanding. The resulting roles of this creation could monitor, plan, negotiate operator contracts, assign maintenance facilities, pursue funding opportunities, and pursue technology integration of fares and traveler information.

**Service Delivery.** Most central and northern intercity bus routes today have operations contracted separately through a private operator (MV Transportation, Inc.) that provides services through Fairfield-Suisun Transit, with Rio Vista also operating limited inter-city service. Intercity paratransit services are provided through the Solano Paratransit Agreement, and operated by Fairfield-Suisun Transit. The impact of consolidation is expected to be minimal to cost, as the intent is to instead maximize system responsiveness.

Intercity Routes that would fall into this agreement are:

- Route 20: Fairfield - Vacaville
- Route 30: Fairfield - Davis/Sacramento
- Route 40: Vacaville - Walnut Creek BART
- Route 90: Fairfield - El Cerrito Del Norte BART

Future transit services offered into and out of Rio Vista and Napa may also be included into this option (as defined in the State Route 12 Transit Study), depending on the operator needs associated with this service.

In addition, the Solano Paratransit Agreement role would continue to be coordinated by the STA for the participating cities and the County.

**Maintenance and Storage.** The operations of the intercity fixed-route and paratransit services would likely occur as is, although option strategies could be pursued if needed as part of the on-going management of the system.

**Management.** The operation could be managed by STA, either through the Executive Director or through the Director of Transit Services. Other administrative roles could be performed by STA staff. There could also be a Transit Analyst and one administrative support personnel at STA.

**Administrative Offices.** The location of the administrative offices ideally would be in facilities adjacent to or part of the Solano Transportation Authority offices.

**Paratransit Programs.** This option could simply formalize the Solano Paratransit Agreement so that that the programs would not change as a result of this organizational arrangement.

**Governance.** The South/Central County operation could initially be governed by a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) or through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This option will also assess the results of establishment through an MOU, JPA, or Transit District. That agency would include a board that would contain representatives from Fairfield, Vacaville, Suisun City, Dixon, Rio Vista, and Solano County. The board size and potential board weighting could be negotiated through a Memorandum of Understanding.

The board size and potential board weighting could be negotiated through the Memorandum of Understanding.

In addition to a board, the operation could have oversight provided through a Technical Oversight Committee. This committee could consist of the STA Executive Director, city managers or a designated department head from the city manager's office, a representative of the Solano County Administrator's Office, and the transit manager from each of the local operations.

**Other Roles.** This new organization may have the potential to represent local operators at MTC in a variety of ways. It may be the grant sponsor, or may be the primary recipient of TDA or other regional transit funds. A Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement would need to be periodically negotiated so that the roles of this organization in relation to the local operators can be updated as appropriate.

**Potential Advantages for Further Analysis.** A system such as this one has these possible advantages:

- **Optimized Responsiveness.** Many of the intercity riders are using buses operated by other providers. As a result there is not direct accountability to the performance of the system outside of the jurisdiction operating the system.
- **Direct Oversight.** The intercity operations could receive direct accountability by elected officials, rather than just being managed individually by department heads and city managers.
- **Increased Paratransit Coordination.** The system could set the groundwork for better Paratransit Coordination for both the intercity programs and local trips.
- **Dedicated transit funding.** In this option, there would likely be dedicated state and regional transit funding going directly to the operator as a proportion of the countywide funding allocation, so the potential use of funds by other city departments could be limited.
- **Governance expanded to Suisun City of intercity service.** This option could provide a vehicle by which Suisun City would be able to directly participate in overseeing the local transit service currently offered within its jurisdictions. Suisun City currently does not have this opportunity.

**Potential Disadvantages for Further Analysis.** A system such as this one has these possible disadvantages:

- **No Reduction in Operators.** The creation of this organization merely improves oversight on an existing service, but does not actually consolidate any systems.
- **Additional Coordination Required.** The new system could mean that an additional agency would be coordinating the service planning for intercity fixed-route services. The result could be additional coordination staff time.

## OPTION 4: ALL PARATRANSIT AND INTERCITY FIXED ROUTE CONSOLIDATION

Another organizational option is to consider a total consolidation of the portions of the transit systems that have the greatest need for coordination – paratransit service and intercity fixed-route service. This option would create a transit operator focused on issues that involve traveling between cities. This operation could also be able to tailor its resources to represent Solano County at the regional funding table for Regional Measure 2 and other regional programs.

Another benefit of this option is to enable more direct participation by cities in all service delivery issues for intercity routes. Today, most cities have a number of intercity bus services traveling through them and attracting riders, yet their participation in policy is limited.

In this consolidation option, a new operation could replace those paratransit and intercity fixed route offered by Vallejo Transit, Benicia Breeze, Fairfield-Suisun Transit and Vacaville City Coach. . The consolidation could be accomplished as an oversight function of types of transit service (with the operations being managed in concert with a local operation) or it could be a new operator that could handle all aspects of governance, management, service delivery, accounting, funding/grants, service planning, capital projects, maintenance facilities, technology integration of fares and traveler information, and paratransit operations.

The actual operation could be a separate agency, or it could be provided by an existing provider or by a consolidated provider as described in Options 1 or 2 of this report.

**Service Delivery.** All intercity bus systems today have operations contracted separately through a private operator (MV Transportation, Inc.). Paratransit operations are provided by local operators for trips within cities by different contractors, and the Solano Paratransit agreement governs all inter-city trips except those in Vallejo and Benicia. The intercity and paratransit services could be operated through a new single contract, or negotiated separately. The City of Vallejo's Baylink Ferry and the accompanying Route 200 operations could be approached in several ways – through the City of Vallejo, through the new transit operator, or through a regional ferry operator (possible if 2007 California Senate Bill 976 is approved).

Operations to be combined would include:

### Intercity Routes

- Route 75: Pleasant Hill BART Station, Benicia-Vallejo Ferry Terminal (to be Route 70 in January 2008)
- Route 20: Fairfield - Vacaville
- Route 30: Fairfield - Davis/Sacramento
- Route 40: Vacaville - Walnut Creek BART
- Route 80: Vallejo - El Cerrito Del Norte BART
- Route 85: Vallejo - Fairfield - Solano College
- Route 90: Fairfield - El Cerrito Del Norte BART

### All Local and Intercity Paratransit Operations

**Maintenance and Storage.** Maintenance and storage operations facilities could be determined based upon the operator arrangement implemented in this scenario. If the operation is an independent one, new facilities could need to be provided. If the operations were conducted with either an existing operator or with an operator as presented in Options 1 or 2, the maintenance and storage could be coordinated with that operator.

Paratransit maintenance and storage may need to be managed differently from the intercity operations, and facilities would be needed in several locations around the county. A joint facility for services in different areas of the County could be built.

**Management.** The operation would likely be managed by a General Manager. To assist the General Manager, there could be staff assigned for contracts, finance, grants, paratransit services and administrative support personnel.

**Administrative Offices.** The location of the administrative offices ideally would be in facilities separate from any city. Several transportation buildings in the area have been built with Federal funds, so that one possible location is on site with one of these (should it be an element of the capital grant requirements when the facility was built). Alternatively, administration of transit services may be most strategically accomplished when adjacent to the maintenance and storage yards, so this option should also be considered.

**Paratransit Programs.** The system could work with a single combined program and common service area.

**Governance.** This option can be initially governed by a new Joint Powers Authority board that could possibly meet in connection with Solano Transportation Authority board meetings. The board size and potential vote weighting could be negotiated. In addition to a board, the operation could have oversight provided through a technical oversight committee. This new organization may have the potential to represent local operators at MTC, depending on local direction. A Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement would need to be periodically negotiated so that the roles of this organization in relation to the local operators can be updated as appropriate. This board could have representation as follows:

- 1 representative from Vallejo
- 1 representative from Fairfield
- 1 representative from Vacaville
- 1 representative from Benicia
- 1 representative from Suisun City
- 1 representative from Rio Vista
- 1 representative from Dixon
- 1 representative from Solano County

One example of governance would be to use the Solano Transportation Authority board system, with single votes for non-fiscal items and weighted votes for funding decisions. A second example could be a new eleven-member board consisting of seats for every jurisdiction, and two seats for the three large cities in Solano County:

- 2 representatives from Vallejo
- 2 representatives from Fairfield
- 2 representatives from Vacaville
- 1 representative from Benicia
- 1 representative from Suisun City

- 1 representative from Rio Vista
- 1 representative from Dixon
- 1 representative from Solano County

In addition to a board, the operation could have oversight provided through a Technical Oversight Committee. This committee could consist of the STA Executive Director, city managers, department representatives from Vallejo, Fairfield, Vacaville, Rio Vista, Dixon, Suisun City and Benicia, staff from the Solano County staff (Administrator's Office or Resource Management Agency), and the General Manager that leads the agency.

**Other Roles.** This new organization may have the potential to serve as the primary project sponsor for purchase of new equipment and for transit capital projects, although a city may prefer to remain the project sponsor for projects currently in development.

**Potential Advantages for Further Analysis.** A system such as this one has these possible advantages:

- **Optimized Route Structure.** To accommodate trips between the different cities, the routes can be restructured to connect multiple cities to improve transit accessibility. This could also result in some cost savings.
- **Single Application and More Leverage for Some Regional Transit Funds.** The agency could be better able to participate and succeed in regional funding applications and awards that relate to paratransit and intercity fixed route services (such as Regional Measure 2 funds), as there would be a single point for coordination rather than six.
- **Direct Oversight.** The management of the system could receive direct accountability by elected officials, in addition to being managed by department heads and city managers.
- **Direct Experience with Grants and Funds.** The new agency structure could allow for a specialist position for grants and funds to be available for all services, where today each operator must assign coordinate separately. This would provide better ways to take advantage of available funds, and to fully track how these resources are spent.
- **Improved Paratransit Coordination.** A combined paratransit system could benefit both communities by having a larger pool of vehicles and resources to offer users. A common set of policies, eligibility designations, reservations systems, financial management and other functions could be designed and implemented, reducing potential confusion for drivers and reducing exposure to potential misuse.
- **Dedicated Transit Funding.** In this option, there would likely be dedicated state and regional transit funding going directly to the operator as a proportion of the countywide funding allocation, so the potential use of funds by other city departments could be limited.
- **Common Transit Operations Goals.** The combined operation could provide a common direction and identity for all of the county in terms of setting goals for transit services, and common implementing and monitoring of the system performance.
- **Governance Expanded to Include Suisun City and Solano County.** This option could provide a vehicle by which the two jurisdictions – Solano County and Suisun City -- would be able to directly participate in overseeing the local transit service currently offered within their jurisdictions. They currently do not have this opportunity.

**Potential Disadvantages for Further Analysis.** A system such as this one has these possible disadvantages:

- **Significant Dependence on Current Revenue Streams.** The creation of a separate entity includes a basic assumption that no dedicated revenue from any of the cities could be used. Agency shortfalls could not be easily backfilled.
- **Credit for Transfer of Capital Facilities.** Some equitable arrangement would be required to transfer those to a new operating entity. Capital facilities are usually funded mostly or completely through Federal funds or other grants restricted for transit use, so this issue may be applicable only in a few cases.
- **Coordination Issues with Cities.** There will need to be coordination with public works staff in each city on issues such as bus stop placement, shelter installation and maintenance, street geometrics for buses, and potential transit signal priority. This can be somewhat abated through the Board and Technical Oversight Committee.
- **Coordination with Single Operator.** Depending on the arrangement chosen, this option could introduce a new level of complexity if the service is contracted for a local operator to provide the service. This complexity could occur as the staff of this operator would have two boards to serve – one for local service, and one for the paratransit and intercity service. Any arrangement of this option would need to closely examine the preferred management structure.
- **Either No Change or Increase in the Number of Operators.** This option could consolidate some routes, but would not change the number of operators. In fact, it is possible that it could increase the number of operators if a new operator is created out of consolidation the various paratransit services and intercity routes.
- **Paratransit Eligibility Rule Standardization.** Each operator has different rules regarding complementary paratransit service. There are different ways that eligibility, reservations, service delivery and fare collection occur. These would need to be standardized.
- **Short-Term Operator Incompatibilities.** At least for the initial operating years, it will require administering and potentially combining service contracts, and accommodating existing fleets and fuels. These vary between operators. Through new contracts and procurements of new equipment, this disadvantage could be eliminated over time.
- **Shift in Local Contact and Control.** Even though communication channels would be in place in a new organization, the familiarity and trust gained through the current locally-based system of resources, dispatching and coordination would need to be changed. This is a shift in local control.
- **Increased Coordination Required Between Local and Regional Operators.** Increased coordination with local operators could be required so that the paratransit and intercity systems operate in a manner compatible with the local service. This includes resolving issues such as defined spans of service, transfer politics, local/regional timed connections. Coordinating local operators may become more difficult depending on the relationships of the local transit service provider.

## OPTION 5: FUNCTIONAL COUNTYWIDE CONSOLIDATION

One of the issues that has arisen in the canvassing of regional agency representatives and local elected officials has been a concern that some Solano operators do not have specialized skills to support their transit system well adequately. This is a result of having small operations and/or not enough full-time transit staff. The expertise required to successfully operate a transit system have been increasing significantly in recent years. Not only are there issues with the management of operations and interaction with customers and other staff, but there are increasing issues related to funding opportunities and constraints, and mandates (such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and grant restrictions). The result is that the skill base to run a transit system is complex, particularly if the staff resources allocated for the system management are small.

One potential strategy is to create a single countywide organization to handle many of the administrative, planning and financial responsibilities of the operators, so that transit service managers can focus primarily on service delivery issues. This consolidation would thus be a “functional” consolidation rather than “geographical”.

In this consolidation option, the “support staff” concept that is applied at STA could be expanded and formalized to provide a resource for serving local transit operations of all types. It would not directly operate any local transit service; it could just provide support capabilities for the local operators.

The resulting functions could be to monitor, plan, and assist where needed on accomplishing capital purchases; pursue funding opportunities; prepare and implement marketing materials; coordinate regional grants; provide assistance in SRTP development, and surveys and financial planning; and pursue technology integration of fares and traveler information. This agency could also provide assistance in times when local management transitions occur with operations.

**Service Delivery.** The current operations would not change for any local systems, although some staff responsibilities and hours could shift to the new entity. This entity could be nested within the Solano Transportation Authority, or the board could meet in conjunction with the STA board meetings. Transit responsibilities currently assigned to the Solano Transit Consortium role could likely be superseded by the technical oversight committee presented here. The operations of the intercity fixed-route and paratransit services would likely remain the same. A joint powers agreement, or MOU, could then need to be negotiated.

**Maintenance and Storage.** The operations of the intercity fixed-route and paratransit services could likely remain the same.

**Management.** This department could be managed by STA, either through the Executive Director or through the Director of Transit Services. To assist the Director, there may be the need for additional staff that specialize in finance and grants, planning, legislative policy, and marketing. Other administrative roles could be performed by STA staff, such as legal assistance. There could also be administrative support personnel.

**Administrative Offices.** The location of the administrative offices ideally could be in facilities adjacent to or part of the Solano Transportation Authority offices.

**Paratransit Programs.** This option could be assigned the coordination role for the Solano Paratransit Agreement.

**Governance.** This option is best governed by using the existing Solano Transportation Authority Board as its base. Policy items could then be discussed at Solano Transportation Authority meetings. The Board already consists of representatives from key local jurisdictions.

The Board could convene as a separate agency if it was necessary to rethink the board size and potential board weighting. The final joint powers agreement or MOU could then need to be negotiated.

In addition to a board, the operation could have oversight provided through a Technical Oversight Committee. This committee would consist of designated representatives from each city (city manager, department director, Solano County Administrator's Office staff and/or transit manager), and the STA Executive Director.

**Other Roles.** This new organization could represent local operators at MTC in a variety of ways. It could be the grant sponsor, and the primary coordinator of TDA and other regionally-distributed transit funds. A Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement would need to be periodically negotiated so that the roles of this organization in relation to the local operators can be updated as appropriate.

**Potential Advantages for Further Analysis.** A system such as this one has these possible advantages:

- **Common Marketing and Coordination.** This plan could create a common place that would be more likely to focus on service coordination and marketing.
- **Optimized Skill Base.** This strategy could offer the organization to have staff more trained in specific specialized skills. These include skills in pursuing and managing capital funds, marketing, service oversight, planning, engineering, technology and finance.
- **Single Application and More Leverage for Regional Transit Funds.** The agency could be better able to participate and succeed in regional funding applications and awards, as there would be a single point for coordination rather than six, if responsibilities were shifted to a single agency.
- **Direct Oversight.** The financial performance issues could receive immediate disclosure to all elected officials, rather than only by department heads and city managers to individual city councils.
- **Governance Expanded to Include Suisun City and Solano County.** This option could provide a vehicle by which the two jurisdictions – Solano County and Suisun City -- would be able to directly participate in overseeing the local transit service currently offered within their jurisdictions. They currently do not have this opportunity.

**Potential Disadvantages for Further Analysis.** A system such as this one has these possible disadvantages:

- **No Reduction in Operators.** The creation of this organization merely improves oversight on an existing service, but does not truly consolidate any systems. A common marketing strategy and assigned representation would however work to reduce the presenting of multiple systems to the public and to regional agencies.

- **Additional Coordination Potential.** The new system could mean that an additional agency could be coordinating the service planning for intercity fixed-route services. Although additional staff time may be required for increased coordination, combining of role into a single agency could free up staff resources by the local operators.
- **Increased Coordination Required Between Local and Regional Operators.** Increased coordination with local operators could be required so that the paratransit and intercity systems operate in a manner compatible with the local service. This includes resolving issues such as defined spans of service, transfer polities, local/regional timed connections. Coordinating local operators may become more difficult depending on the relationships of the local transit service provider.

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## OPTION 6: FULL COUNTYWIDE CONSOLIDATION

A final option is to consolidate all transit systems for local and intercity fixed-route and paratransit service. This option would create a single, larger transit operator that would represent Solano County at the regional funding table, and have the resources and staff to begin to respond to new types of services and technologies in a comprehensive manner.

An added aspect of this concept is to enable more direct participation by cities in all service delivery issues. For example, Suisun City has no direct transit operations responsibilities, and does not sit on a board for Fairfield-Suisun Transit. Many cities have a number of intercity bus services traveling through them and attracting riders, yet their participation in policy is limited with those routes.

In this consolidation option, a new operation would replace all local operators -- Vallejo Transit, Benicia Breeze, Fairfield-Suisun Transit, Vacaville City Coach, Dixon Redit-Ride and Rio Vista Delta Breeze. The City of Vallejo's Baylink Ferry and the accompanying Route 200 operations could be approached in several ways – through the City of Vallejo, through the new transit operator, or through a regional ferry operator (proposed in 2007 California Senate Bill 976). This would be a comprehensive consolidation, establishing a new organization that could handle all aspects of governance, management, service delivery, accounting, funding/grants, service planning, capital projects, maintenance facilities, technology integration of fares and traveler information, and paratransit operations.

**Service Delivery.** Multiple contracts for bus systems exist today, and there is more than one contractor in use. Although a single contract could be developed for the entire system, it may be possible to have separate contracts for different types of services. There could be some anticipated cost savings from a merged operation, and this will be examined in the evaluation phase.

### Vallejo Local Routes:

- Route 1: South Vallejo - Rancho Vallejo
- Route 2: Northeast Vallejo - Downtown
- Route 4: Tuolumne Street - Downtown
- Routes 5 & 7: Redwood Parkway - Gateway Plaza - Springs Road
- Route 6: Tennessee St - Beverly Hills - Benicia Road

### Benicia Local Routes:

- Route 15: Benicia High & Middle Schools via Western Rose Dr./Solano Drive
- Route 17: Benicia High & Middle Schools via Hastings Drive
- Route 19: Benicia Industrial Park City Ride
- Route 21: Northwest Benicia City Ride
- Route 22: Northeast Benicia City Ride

### Local Routes – Fairfield:

- Route 1A: Central Fairfield Clockwise
- Route 1B: Central Fairfield Counter Clockwise
- Route 2: To Travis Air Force Base
- Route 3A: Outer Fairfield

- Route 3B: Outer Fairfield
- Route 4: Northeast Fairfield
- Route 5: Suisun City West
- Route 6: Suisun City East
- Route 7: Cordelia Villages

#### Local Routes – Vacaville:

- Route 4: Northeast Vacaville
- Route 5: South Central Vacaville
- Route 6: North Vacaville
- Route 8: South Vacaville

#### Dixon Read-Ride

#### Rio Vista Delta Service

#### Intercity Routes

- Route 23: Benicia to Martinez Amtrak Station
- Route 75: Pleasant Hill BART Station, Benicia-Vallejo Ferry Terminal (to be Route 70 in January 2008)
- Route 20: Fairfield - Vacaville
- Route 30: Fairfield - Davis/Sacramento
- Route 40: Vacaville - Walnut Creek BART
- Route 80: Vallejo - El Cerrito Del Norte BART
- Route 85: Vallejo - Fairfield - Solano College
- Route 90: Fairfield - El Cerrito Del Norte BART

#### Local and Intercity Paratransit Operations

**Maintenance and Storage.** Two to four operations facilities are anticipated in this scenario. One would likely be at the current Vallejo Transit site on Broadway. Two other could be at the maintenance sites at City of Fairfield and Vacaville. Additional facilities could be placed in Dixon or Rio Vista. A joint facility for services in the northern part of the County could be developed. The specific maintenance and storage facilities to accommodate local, paratransit, shuttle buses and the express bus over-the-road (MCI) coaches will be closely examined.

**Management.** The operation would likely be managed by a General Manager. To assist the General Manager, there could be three directors of contracts, finance, and grants. There could also be dedicated coordinators for each city's local services, additional transit service planners and two administrative support personnel.

**Administrative Offices.** The location of the administrative offices ideally would be in facilities separate from any city. Several transportation buildings in the area have been built with Federal funds, so that one possible location is on site with one of these (should it be an element of the capital grant requirements when the facility was built). Alternatively, administration of transit services may be most strategically accomplished when adjacent to the maintenance and storage yards, so this option should also be considered.

**Paratransit Programs.** All cities operate local paratransit programs. The systems could work with a single combined program and common service area.

**Governance.** This option could initially be governed by a Joint Powers Authority that would be established with a Memorandum of Understanding. That agency could likely include a board that would contain representatives from Vallejo, Fairfield, Suisun City, Benicia, Vacaville, Dixon, Rio Vista and Solano County. Vote weighting or number of board members could be developed through negotiations with the various jurisdictions.

One example of governance would be to use the Solano Transportation Authority board system, with single votes for non-fiscal items and weighted votes for funding decisions. This board could contain:

- 1 representative from Vallejo
- 1 representative from Fairfield
- 1 representative from Vacaville
- 1 representative from Benicia
- 1 representative from Suisun City
- 1 representative from Rio Vista
- 1 representative from Dixon
- 1 representative from Solano County
- 

A second example could be a new eleven-member board consisting of seats for every jurisdiction, and two seats for the three large cities in Solano County:

- 2 representatives from Vallejo
- 2 representatives from Fairfield
- 2 representatives from Vacaville
- 1 representative from Benicia
- 1 representative from Suisun City
- 1 representative from Rio Vista
- 1 representative from Dixon
- 1 representative from Solano County

In addition to a board, the operation could have oversight provided through a Technical Oversight Committee. This committee would consist of the STA Executive Director, city managers, department representatives from Vallejo, Fairfield, Vacaville, Rio Vista, Dixon, Suisun City and Benicia, staff from the Solano County Administrator's Office, and the General Manager that leads the agency.

**Other Roles.** This new organization may have the potential to serve as the primary project sponsor for purchase of new equipment and for transit capital projects, although a city may prefer to remain the project sponsor for projects currently in development.

**Potential Advantages for Further Analysis.** A system such as this one has these possible advantages:

- **Improved Allocation of Resources Through a Larger Pool of Vehicles and Operators.** There could be a significantly larger pool of vehicles available for different kinds of services, where today there are some limitations, especially with the smallest operators.

- **Optimized Route Structure.** To accommodate trips between the different cities, the routes can be restructured to connect multiple cities to improve transit accessibility. This could also result in some cost savings.
- **Single Application and More Leverage for Regional Transit Funds.** The agency could be better able to participate and succeed in regional funding applications and awards, as there would be a single point for coordination rather than six.
- **Direct Oversight.** The management of the system could receive direct accountability by elected officials, in addition to being managed by department heads and city managers.
- **Direct Experience with Grants and Funds.** The new agency structure could allow for a specialist position for grants and funds to be available for all services, where today each operator must assign staff to coordinate separately. This could provide better ways to take advantage of available funds, and to fully track how these resources are spent.
- **Improved Paratransit Coordination.** A combined paratransit system could benefit both communities by having a larger pool of vehicles and resources to offer users. A common set of policies, eligibility designations, reservations systems, financial management and other functions could be designed and implemented, reducing potential confusion for drivers and reducing exposure to potential misuse.
- **Dedicated Transit Funding.** In this option, there could be dedicated state and regional transit funding going directly to the operator, so the potential use of funds by other city departments would be limited.
- **Common Transit Operations Goals.** The combined operation could provide a common direction and identity for all of the county in terms of setting goals for transit services, and common implementing and monitoring of the system performance.
- **Governance Expanded to Include Suisun City and Solano County.** This option would provide a vehicle by which the two jurisdictions – Solano County and Suisun City - could be able to directly participate in overseeing the local transit service currently offered within their jurisdictions. They currently do not have this opportunity.

**Potential Disadvantages for Further Analysis.** A system such as this one has these possible disadvantages:

- **Significant Dependence on Current Revenue Streams.** The creation of a separate entity includes a basic assumption that no dedicated revenue from any of the cities could be used. Agency shortfalls could not be easily backfilled.
- **Credit for Transfer of Capital Facilities.** Six cities have invested in equipment and facilities. Some equitable arrangement would be required to transfer those to a new operating entity. Capital facilities are usually funded mostly or completely through Federal funds or other grants restricted for transit use, so this issue may be applicable only in a few cases.
- **Coordination Issues with Cities.** There will need to be coordination with public works staff in each city on issues such as bus stop placement, shelter installation and maintenance, street geometrics for buses, and potential transit signal priority. This can be somewhat abated through the Board and Technical Oversight Committee.
- **Paratransit Eligibility and Implementation.** Each operator has different rules regarding complementary paratransit service. There are different ways that eligibility,

reservations, service delivery and fare collection occur. These would need to be standardized.

- **Potential Change in Fare Structures and Policies.** Each operator has a different fare system, and ways of administering discounted fares and passes. A standardized fare structure would be needed.
- **Short-Term Operator Incompatibilities.** At least for the initial operating years, it will require administering and potentially combining service contracts, and accommodating existing fleets and fuels. These vary between operators. Through new contracts and procurements of new equipment, this disadvantage could be eliminated over time.
- **Significant Shift in Contact and Control from All Cities to New Countywide Agency.** Even though communication channels would be in place in a new organization, the familiarity and trust gained through the current locally-based system of resources, dispatching and coordination could need to be changed. Of all of the options, this option would entail the most significant shift in local control.

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