

Follow Up Summary

Report: Senior Transportation: On the Road Again

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SUMMARY: The Grand Jury convened focus groups throughout the County to examine the transportation needs of Marin's growing population of seniors. The findings and recommendations of the Senior Transportation report are based on these interviews. Focus group participants indicated that, with the exception of schedule delays and underserved areas, the paratransit needs of physically challenged older citizens have been adequately met. However, existing transportation options for active seniors were deemed inadequate. Non-driving but able-bodied seniors concerned about social isolation and a corresponding loss of independence, noted the lack of available services for shopping, attending civic events, visiting and so on. Steps are needed to provide viable and suitable transit alternatives for this group.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Grand Jury's recommendations are the result of the focus group findings. Many responses initially provided by Marin Transit were not adequate (link to responses). Some failed to satisfy the legal requirements mandated by Penal Code Section 933.05(c). Others either avoided or misconstrued the issue. Consequently, the IRC followed up with requests for clarification for one Finding and twelve Recommendations.

Finding #6: Difficulty in shopping for groceries and providing adequately for their nutritional needs adversely affect the health of seniors.

Marin Transit's Initial Response: Partially disagree. For active seniors, fixed route transit can be an excellent way to get around for shopping and other life activities, and can even promote good health through walking to and from the bus stop. For less active seniors, Marin Transit provides other transportation options as described in this report. However, for the most frail elderly...better option.

Clarification Request: Good health may be promoted in better ways other than asking active seniors to walk home from a bus stop loaded with groceries. Moreover, this response fails to account for those active seniors living on secluded hillsides who must trudge up and downhill to the nearest bus stop. Follow up needed for justification of these questionable assertions.

Marin Transit's Response: Transportation Isolation Survey of Agencies Project: The Mobility Action Subcommittee of the Marin Mobility Consortium, Marin Transit's community stakeholder group, with the assistance of staff, completed the Transportation Isolation Survey of Agencies Project. This survey found that most agencies that serve seniors and persons with disabilities in other capacities are willing to assist the Consortium and Marin transit in reaching out

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to their isolated clients to inform them about Marin Transit's mobility programs. This focus will be added to Marin Transit's Travel Training Program.

The two volunteer driver programs that Marin Transit funds with Measure B continue to provide a combined total of 1,000 rides per month to seniors and persons with disabilities. These two programs are based on the "Riverside TRIP Model" which pays a mileage reimbursement and has riders finding their own drivers. (Note that the West Marin program, operated by West Marin Senior Services uses a hybrid type of the TRIP model and the "Traditional Model," which dispatches a pool of screened and trained volunteer drivers to provide rides requested by eligible riders.) With the Traditional Model, the payment of mileage reimbursement to drivers is optional. As part of the survey described above, Marin Transit added a question describing the two basic types of volunteer driver programs (TRIP and Traditional) and asked the agencies to rate which model would best meet the transportation needs of their isolated populations. 65% of the responding agencies indicated that the Traditional Model was their preference. Based on this finding and the concern that with the TRIP Model, truly isolated individuals have difficulty in finding their own drivers and with the paperwork necessary to process the drivers' mileage reimbursements, Marin Transit applied for Cycle 5 New Freedom funds to test a one-year pilot of the Traditional volunteer driver program model. This component of the grant also has received tentative approval, and if finalized, the funding for this pilot will become available in fall 2014.

Recommendation #1: Whistlestop Wheels reduce the time spent waiting for Whistlestop service by using more reliable and accommodating scheduling.

Marin Transit's Initial Response: Will not be implemented—Marin Transit uses a state of the art scheduling program for its paratransit program (provided through a contract with Whistlestop Wheels), however, the shared ride nature of the service and the ADA mandate to accommodate all eligible ride requests inevitably results in some waiting time.

Clarification Request: This response fails to distinguish between "some" waiting time that inevitably results from a shared-ride service, and the oft-expressed "excessive" waiting time. A more complete justification is needed for continued use of this "state of the art" scheduling program.

Marin Transit's Response: Paratransit Scheduling Software Improvements: Marin Transit is in the process of upgrading its paratransit scheduling software to the latest version and this will include training in the contractor's (Whistlestop) staff on the new features. This upgrade is expected to improve system efficiency. It should be noted that Marin Transit's Marin Access Paratransit service already exceeds the Federal Transit Administration's standard for performance, with a greater than 90% on-time pick-up record.

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Recommendation #3: Marin Transit and the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM) support additional medical appointment shuttles by partnering with Marin General and Greenbrae-area medical clinics.

Marin Transit's Initial Response: Requires further analysis—Marin Transit has previously, unsuccessfully, partnered with Marin General to request grant funding for medical shuttles. Marin Transit will continue to work with medical facilities to identify new partnership and funding opportunities. Current financial resources are not available for such program.

Clarification Request: According to Penal Code 933.05(c), a response indicating that further analysis is needed must include an explanation, scope and parameters of the study and a time frame for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the head of the department or agency under investigation or review. The time frame shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury report. Please provide the requisite details about how Marin Transit will continue to work with medical facilities to indentify new partnership and funding opportunities.

Marin Transit's Response: Rider Category Trend data indicate that users of Marin Access Paratransit rely on this service for transportation to medical facilities, dialysis treatment, senior centers, day programs, grocery shopping and other services necessary for them to continue to live in the community.

Recommendation #5: Marin Transit and TAM provide vans to support a weekend shuttle service transporting seniors to social, cultural and entertainment functions.

Marin Transit's Initial Response: Requires further analysis—many weekend social, cultural and entertainment functions are accessible on Marin Transit's existing family of services including the Community Shuttle program. Marin Transit staff is available to provide information and individual training to help seniors learn about and use these services. If specific venues are not accessible through the existing services, Marin Transit would have to evaluate whether existing services can or should be expanded to serve these locations based on ridership projections, the suitability of the street network for shuttle service, and the overall interest in the neighborhood for new bus service. It is important to note that as a recipient of federal funding, Marin Transit is prohibited from providing charter service, even free charter service, and service to small groups of seniors as described above may not be allowable under federal regulations.

Clarification Request: Please provide the specific details mandated by Penal Code 933.05(c) described above with respect to the evaluation of existing services.

Marin Transit's Response: See response to recommendation #3 above.

Recommendation #6: Marin Transit and TAM partner with area supermarkets to provide neighborhood shopping shuttles.

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Marin Transit's Initial Response: Requires further analysis—Marin Transit provides a limited number of shopping shuttles already. Current financial resources are not available for such programs.

Clarification Request: Please provide the specific details required by Penal Code 933.05(c) described above with respect to the need for shopping shuttles.

Marin Transit's Response: See response to recommendation #3 above.

Recommendation #7: Marin Transit and TAM collaborate with Northgate shopping center, Town Center, the Village and other large shopping malls to provide senior shopping shuttles.

Marin Transit's Initial Response: Requires further analysis—Marin Transit provides a limited number of shopping shuttles currently. Northgate mall is served by four fixed route bus lines with service every 15 minutes during the weekday and every 30 minutes during the weekend and is one of the most heavily used stops in the County. Town Center, including the Paradise bus pad, is served by seven fixed route bus lines with service every 10-15 minutes during the weekday and every 30 minutes during the weekend. The Village interior parking lot had been historically served with two shuttle routes but ridership did not warrant continuation of these services to this location. However, two routes continue to provide access to the Village along Tamalpais Drive.

Clarification Request: Please provide the specific details required by Penal Code 933.05 (c) described above. In addition, this response avoids the issue of dedicated senior shopping shuttles by discussing fixed-route bus service instead. Moreover, Marin Transit has failed to follow up with the Town Center manager who indicated an interest in pursuing a partnership. Please respond to these issues.

Marin Transit's Response: No response

Recommendation #8: Marin Transit and TAM supply fixed-route or on-call vans to transport seniors living in central and southern Marin's isolated hillside neighborhoods to the nearest bus stop or transit hub.

Marin Transit's Initial Response: Requires further analysis—funding for public transit is limited and consequently, Marin Transit evaluates requests for new transit service based on: the potential ridership, the appropriateness of the area for bus service, and the overall desire of a neighborhood to have bus service. The existing Volunteer Driver and Catch-A-Ride subsidized taxi program currently perform this function and will continue to do so to meet the needs of seniors living in central and southern Marin's hillside neighborhoods who wish to get rides to the nearest bus stop. Marin Transit and TAM planning staffs have ongoing discussions on similar transportation options and ideas and will continue to study the feasibility and explore possible funding sources.

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Clarification Request: Please provide the specific details required by Penal Code 933.05(c) described above, especially with respect to similar transportation options and the feasibility of finding possible funding sources.

Marin Transit's Response: Marin transit's voucherless discount taxi program for seniors and persons with disabilities, Marin Catch-A-Ride, has shown phenomenal growth in rides in the past months. In October 2013, 852 rides were provided, increasing by 30% to 1,111 rides in January 2013. Nearly 50% of those rides were provided to individuals qualifying for the additional low-income discount. In addition, as part of the Cycle 5 New Freedom Grant for which we have received tentative approval, we will be developing a "senior/disabled friendly" taxi driver training and certification program and incentives for drivers to participate in the driving. This will include sensitivity training, first aid and CPR and defensive training among other topics.

Recommendation #9: Marin Transit and TAM provide fixed-route or on-call vans to enable seniors living in Marin City's housing projects to travel to Sausalito and connect to other parts of the county.

Marin Transit's Initial Response: Requires further analysis—Marin Transit currently provides fixed route service from the Marin City transit hub to Sausalito. The existing Volunteer Driver and Catch-A-Ride subsidized taxi program can currently meet the needs of seniors living in housing projects who wish to get rides to the nearest bus stop or transit hub. Marin Transit would be interested in working with a volunteer driver to provide on-call van service to seniors in Marin City.

Clarification Request: Please provide the specific details required by Penal Code 933.05(c) described above, especially with respect to finding an on-call volunteer driver.

Marin Transit's Response: Community Based Transportation Plans for Marin City and Novato (TAM): In February, 2014, Marin Transit staff assisted the Transportation Authority of Marin in the selection of the consultant for these studies, which will be focused on improving transportation for low-income residents of these communities. Marin Transit staff will serve on the technical advisory committees for these studies. In addition, the two volunteer driver programs that Marin Transit funds with Measure B continue to provide a combined total of 1,000 rides per month to seniors and persons with disabilities. These two programs are based on the "Riverside TRIP Model" which pays a mileage reimbursement and has riders finding their own drivers. (Note that the West Marin program, operated by West Marin Senior Services uses a hybrid of the TRIP model and the "Traditional Model," which dispatches a pool of screened and trained volunteer drivers to provide rides requested by eligible riders.) With the Traditional Model, the payment of mileage reimbursement to drivers is optional.

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Recommendation #10: Marin Transit and TAM furnish fixed-route or on-call vans to enable West Marin and Northwest Marin seniors to connect more easily to transit hubs in Fairfax, central San Rafael, and Petaluma.

Marin Transit's Initial Response: Requires further analysis—funding for public transit is limited and consequently, Marin Transit evaluates requests for new transit services based on: the potential ridership, the appropriateness of the area for bus service, and the overall desire of a neighborhood to have bus service. Marin Transit's West Marin Volunteer Driver program currently has the ability to provide rides to transit hubs. Marin Transit would be interested in exploring a partnership with a volunteer driver to provide on-call van service to seniors in West and Northwest Marin. Fixed-route service between West Marin and Petaluma is pending funding through a current grant application.

Clarification Request: Please provide the specific details mandated by Penal Code 933.05(c) described above, especially with respect to Northwest Marin.

Marin Transit's Response:

1) Tomales/Dillon Beach Pilot Stage Route: Marin Transit is currently working with the communities of Tomales and Dillon Beach to develop a one-day per week West Marin Stage Route between these communities and Petaluma. This pilot service is tentatively scheduled for launch in June, 2014.

2) West Marin Stage Expansion: In June, 2014 Marin Transit expects to begin a one-year pilot program for expansion of fixed route rural transit services. This expansion would include a 7% increase in service on Stagecoach Route 61 (South Route) and a 55% increase on Stagecoach Route 68 (North Route).

3) Gap Grant Project—Pt. Reyes Station to Novato Shopping Shuttle: In December, 2013, Marin Transit awarded a Measure B Gap Grant to West Marin Senior Services to fund a one-year pilot program to operate a once-weekly senior shopping shuttle between Pt. Reyes Station and Novato. This service began in January, 2014 and has proved to be very popular.

Recommendation #11: Marin Transit extend Novato's Dial-A-Ride model to other areas of Marin in addition to the Tiburon route currently under consideration.

Marin Transit's Initial Response: Requires further analysis—funding for public transit is limited and consequently, Marin Transit evaluates requests for new transit services based on: the potential ridership, the appropriateness of the area for bus service, and the overall desire of a neighborhood to have bus service.

Clarification Request: Please provide the specific details mandated by Penal Code 933.05(c) described above, especially with respect to evaluating the criteria for new services (e.g., the appropriateness of an area for bus service).

Marin Transit's Response: No response.

Recommendation #12: Marin Transit publicize senior transit information, including Catch-A-Ride taxi brochures and the list of senior transportation options listed

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in this Grand Jury report, in a variety of locations in addition to retirement homes and traditional senior centers. Other venues might include shopping centers, adult education classes, recreational facilities and farmers' markets.

Marin Transit's Initial Response: Not yet implemented—Marin Transit will expand its outreach to include those locations above that are not yet included.

Clarification Request: According to Penal Code 933.05(c), a response indicating future implementation of a recommendation must have a time frame for that implementation. Please provide that information.

Marin Transit's Response: County-wide Transportation Guide Publication: Marin Transit is now compiling the grant-funded county-wide transportation guide, which is designed to provide information about all mobility programs in Marin available to seniors and persons with disabilities. This guide will be published and distributed in both English and Spanish and will also be available to download from Marin Transit's website. The anticipated publication date is early summer, 2014.

Report Recommendation #14: Marin Transit translate all transit information, whether in print, on the website, or available by phone, into Spanish and other languages. As the non-English speaking population continues to increase, so does the number of older immigrants in need of transportation services. Outreach efforts need to be diversified to connect with this growing population.

Marin Transit's Initial Response: Partially implemented—Marin Transit has recently received a grant to include and involve limited English and non-English speaking Hispanic and Vietnamese seniors and persons with disabilities into the planning process as well as reaching out to these communities in their own language and in culturally appropriate ways to facilitate increased usage of Marin Transit's programs and services. Marin Transit website text is available in 14 languages through a translation option in the right hand corner of each website page.

Clarification Request: Currently, only the home page of Marin Transit's website provides translations. Important links to brochures, paratransit riders' guide, paratransit eligibility applications, etc. remain untranslated. Follow-up action is needed to ensure translation of all important links on the website. Please provide a time frame for that implementation. Verification of implementation is also needed.

Marin Transit's Response: Inclusive Transportation Planning Grant Project: Outreach to Spanish speaking and Vietnamese speaking seniors to educate them to participate in transportation services and to encourage them to participate in transportation planning. This grant also funded translations of most of the District's outreach materials (brochures, rider guides and power point presentations) into Spanish and Vietnamese. In addition, Marin Transit has received tentative approval for a Cycle 5 New Freedom Grant, which among other components (see sections on Volunteer Driver Programs and Marin

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Catch-a-Ride), includes funding to continue targeted outreach to Marin's non-English speakers and persons with disabilities.

Report Recommendation #16: Marin Transit simplify the application process for the Catch-A-Ride subsidized taxi program by including an application form, both in Spanish and other languages, with each brochure rather than requiring seniors to either download an application or to call Marin Transit to request one.

Marin Transit's Initial Response: Not yet implemented.

Clarification Request: According to Penal Code 933.05(c), a response indicating future implementation of a recommendation must have a time frame for that implementation. Verification of implementation is also needed.

Marin Transit's Response: Implemented on July 1, 2013, the Marin Access Travel Navigator Program, brought together in one place and with one phone number, the information and eligibility for all of Marin Transit's mobility management programs: Marin Access Paratransit, Marin-Catch-A-Ride and volunteer driver programs. What previously had required contacting three separate offices and completing three different applications can now be done in one phone call. Marin Transit developed a customer intake/eligibility software that the Travel Navigators use when interviewing a customer. As they ask the customer about their travel needs and situations, the Navigators enter the information into the program, and the program then tells them the services for which the customer is potentially eligible and prints out the application for the customer's signature. This process enables the Navigators to educate callers about other services that may better suit their needs. In addition, the Travel Navigators have been trained to provide information about all resources available in Marin and surrounding counties. For example, if a customer asks for information about where to catch an Amtrak train to Sacramento, the Travel Navigators can give them the transit information to connect to the closest Amtrak stations.

Along with the Travel Training Program described above, the Travel Navigator Program is a key part of Marin Transit's customer-centered approach to make it easy for consumers to learn about, understand and utilize the various transit and mobility management services provided by Marin Transit. Since its inception in July of 2013, usage of the Travel Navigator Program has grown significantly and it has received praise as an effective model.

REPORT STATUS:

Follow up needed for verification of implementation.