Council of Fresno County Governments

Public Transportation Regional Agency Formation Study

Final Report

May, 2007
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Chapter 1. Executive Summary

Introduction

This report represents the culmination of the Public Transit Regional Agency Formation Study undertaken by Nelson Nygaard Consulting Associates for the Council of Fresno County Governments (COFCG). The study has analyzed the current transit systems in Fresno County, and explored the opportunities and challenges of coordinating transit services in the county and in the longer-term to move toward a consolidated regional agency. The study concludes with recommendations for both short-term and longer-term coordination projects and a longer term vision to consolidate services.

The Study Process

This study was initiated in January 2006. It consists of both a technical analysis and a stakeholder input process. The technical analysis considered transit service performance, and an evaluation of transit funding and organizational relationships. To obtain input on transit coordination and consolidation from a broad spectrum of interests, several steps were taken to ensure agency staff and stakeholder participation was included during the study process. A series of interviews were conducted with stakeholders including local agency representatives, organizational and community leaders, political leaders, and policymakers.

A Project Oversight Committee was formed to work with COFCG and the consultant throughout the study process. This committee met periodically to provide guidance and direction in developing this Regional Formation Study.

Existing Transit Services

General public transit service in Fresno County is provided by three transit agencies: the Fresno Area Express (FAX), Clovis Transit, and Fresno County Rural Transit Agency (FCRTA). FAX and Clovis Transit also provide complementary Americans with Disabilities (ADA) paratransit service in their service areas, as required by law. FAX provides service within the City of Fresno, in certain adjacent sections of the County, and also provides trunkline service in the City of Clovis. FAX carries over eleven million passenger trips per year, constituting the vast majority of all transit trips in the county. The City of Clovis operates two transit services: Clovis Stageline and Roundup. Stageline is the fixed route system for the city and operates four regular general service bus lines and one additional line that that provides limited service to the Reagan Education Center. The Fresno County Rural Transit Agency (FCRTA) is a joint powers agency and operates rural transit services in Fresno County. FCRTA, through contract public and private operators, and in coordination with the CTSA provides intra city and inter city service to rural communities and
downtown Fresno. Inter city service to Fresno is provided via municipal providers and through Greyhound and Orange Belt Stages. The inter-city systems connect with FAX at the Downtown Transit Mall.

The services and system characteristics of the three transit services are quite different as demonstrated in Figure ES-1 below.

**Figure ES-1**  
System Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operator</th>
<th>Fresno</th>
<th>Clovis Transit</th>
<th>FCRTA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FAX</td>
<td>HandyRide</td>
<td>Stageline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passengers</td>
<td>11,241,838</td>
<td>192,556</td>
<td>119,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Operating Hours</td>
<td>309,980</td>
<td>81,510</td>
<td>16,678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routes (fixed routes only)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of Operation: Weekdays</td>
<td>5:30am-10pm</td>
<td>Same as FAX</td>
<td>6am-6:30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of Operation: Weekends</td>
<td>6:30am-7pm</td>
<td>Same as FAX</td>
<td>no weekend service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Headway</td>
<td>15-30 minutes</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fares</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: COFCG, FCRTA, FAX; all data is FY 2004/05

The day-to-day administrative functions are handled by three different agencies that assume responsibility for planning, marketing, budgeting, service provision or contractor oversight, and other day-to-day duties. Oversight is provided by various policy boards or city councils. Figure ES-2 outlines the administrative structure of the three transit services in Fresno County.
Figure ES-2  Administrative Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Fresno Area Express</th>
<th>Clovis Transit</th>
<th>FCRTA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency Status</td>
<td>City Department</td>
<td>City Division</td>
<td>Joint Powers Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Board</td>
<td>City Council</td>
<td>City Council</td>
<td>JPA Board of Directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Structure</td>
<td>General Manager, reports to City Council</td>
<td>Transit Supervisor, reports to Department Head, report to City Council</td>
<td>General Manager, reports to Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Employees</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Employees (FTE)</td>
<td>235*</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44 (staff and contract)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union status</td>
<td>Unionize public workforce</td>
<td>Bargaining unit, non-union</td>
<td>Non-union</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Does not include employees of MV Transportation (private operator of Handyride)

**Stakeholder Interviews**

The stakeholder interviews revealed that transit has an important and growing role in Fresno County. As Fresno County’s population continues to grow, transit must be improved to increase mobility options for residents and decrease potential environmental impacts.

Stakeholders were generally very positive on proceeding with further coordination and consolidation of Fresno County transit services. While some stakeholders, particularly those with direct transit agency experience, pointed out some of the political and financial pitfalls of consolidation, most stakeholders felt that proceeding with consolidation is a worthy goal, and that most obstacles can be worked out through the political process. In the absence of full consolidation, stakeholders felt the most important way to improve the experience of the transit rider is to provide a coordinated seamless countywide system. Most respondents feel that consolidation within Fresno County is a significant challenge, and the short-term goal should be to improve coordination with a longer-term vision to consolidate services.

**Short-Term Recommendations**

This report identifies short-term coordination recommendations to be implemented in the next two to five years.

**Coordination Projects**

The transit services in Fresno County currently cooperate on key issues and a few coordination projects are already underway. It is recommended that these activities and other coordination projects be pursued in the next couple of years. It is valuable to begin...
with small scale projects that are relatively easy to implement, to demonstrate real opportunities for coordination that will build momentum for longer-term coordination projects and potential consolidation.

The Project Oversight Committee formed to provide guidance and direction to this study should be formalized as a Transit Coordinating Council (TCC) that continues to meet quarterly to address issues of common concern, and to pursue further coordination and consolidation efforts in Fresno County. Establishing a formal council would acknowledge that this collaborative relationship is crucial to the promotion of regional coordination and for the implementation of the recommendations contained in this study.

Other short-term coordination projects to further explore include:

- Centralized Call Center
- Regional Fare Coordination - Coordinated farebox procurement and revenue sharing agreements
- Coordinated Marketing and Information

These coordination opportunities are further described in Chapter 6.

**Longer-Term Vision**

The long-term vision is to consolidate transit services in Fresno County. A long term vision for a consolidated transit system in Fresno County assumes at a minimum the coordination of transit services in the form of both route planning and schedule synchronization. It assumes a common fare structure throughout the county and/or a unique fare media, as well as a common identity, branding and marketing strategy for the entire system. In other words, though the system can be operated by different agencies, have separate planning functions, and have non-centralized sources of funding, it still should be perceived as one entity by the general public.

The strategic vision for a consolidated system is based on the following objectives for transit service in Fresno County:

- Ease of Use
- Service Branding
- Unique Fare Structure.
- Route & Structure Simplification
- Eliminate Duplication of Services
- Schedule Simplification and Coordination
- Effective Use of Transit Centers
- Maintain Service to Important Markets
The conceptual consolidated transit service strategy is to define a service network structured upon four layers of service that complement each other to provide a broad range of travel demand and mobility needs. These service mode layers would include Regional Connection services or Commuter services, Intercity Connection services, Rural Community Circulation services, and Urban Fixed-Route services. A complete explanation of this service strategy including a map to visually display the concepts is presented in Chapter 7.
Chapter 2. Review of Existing Transit Services and Funding

Introduction

The first section of this chapter reviews the existing transit services in the County including a comparative analysis of operating statistics and administrative structure. The second half of the chapter reviews funding of transit services and TDA expenditures in Fresno County.

General public transit service in Fresno County is provided by three transit agencies: the Fresno Area Express (FAX), Clovis Transit, and Fresno County Rural Transit Agency (FCRTA). FAX and Clovis Transit also provide complementary Americans with Disabilities (ADA) paratransit service in their service areas, as required by law.

Additional specialized social service transportation services are provided by the Fresno Urban and Rural Area Consolidated Transportation Services Agencies (CTSAs). The CTSAs are not the subject of this consolidation study, as they fulfill a specialized purpose and are already consolidated with local services. Therefore; this section does not address CTSAs.

Transportation is also provided for students by many of the thirty-four school districts in Fresno County, either on their own or in coordination with other school districts. The 2002/3 Grand Jury Report, which inspired this study, requested that consolidation of school transportation be addressed.

Overview of Existing Transit Services

This section reviews the three general public transit services in Fresno County that are the main focus of the consolidation study: FAX, Clovis Transit and FCRTA. The three transit services serve distinct but overlapping markets in Fresno County. FAX primarily serves the City of Fresno, Clovis Transit serves the City of Clovis, and FCRTA serves the smaller cities and unincorporated areas of Fresno County. The following section reviews each service, followed by a basic comparison of the three services.

Fresno Area Express

Fresno Area Express (FAX) is a department of the City of Fresno and is governed by the Fresno City Council. FAX provides service within the City of Fresno, in certain adjacent sections of the County, and also provides trunkline service in the City of Clovis. FAX carries over eleven million passenger trips per year, constituting the vast majority of all transit trips in the county. The FAX fixed route network consists of 19 bus lines following a modified grid pattern with intersecting north south and east west (cross-town) bus lines (see Figure 2.1). Most lines serve one of three transit centers (Downtown Transit Mall, the
Manchester Transit Center, and Market Place at Riverpark) and provide fast, convenient connections to other FAX lines. The Downtown Transit Mall also offers connections with other bus systems like Fresno County Rural Transit. In addition to the transit centers, FAX route 28 provides service into Clovis where passengers can transfer to Clovis Stageline.

Most bus lines are scheduled every 30 minutes on weekdays with two of the most popular lines, routes 28 and 30, scheduled every 15 minutes during the day. A newer service, the Downtown Trolley, circulates through the Downtown area every 10 to 20 minutes providing free service to passengers. Weekday service varies by route but generally runs from 5:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

FAX operates weekend service on a majority of bus lines from 6:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. The same service is offered on Saturdays and Sundays. Service frequencies are decreased during the weekend and range from 30 to 60 minutes.

FAX operates two bus lines in partnership with local organizations. Route 18E is subsidized by the Fresno Regional Occupational Program (ROP) and provides transportation between the Downtown Transit Mall and the ROP facility at Teilman and Nielson to coincide with class times. Route 58E is operated in partnership with Children’s Hospital located on the northern edge of Fresno. The route runs hourly between the hospital and the Riverpark transit center. In addition, FAX Route 28 is subject to a cost sharing agreement with the City of Clovis.
## Figure 2-1  FAX Routes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weekday Freq</th>
<th>Weekend Freq</th>
<th>Weekday</th>
<th>End</th>
<th>Weekend</th>
<th>Transit Center</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Start</td>
<td>End</td>
<td>Start</td>
<td>End</td>
<td>Start</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Downtown Trolley</td>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Downtown Transit Mall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Shaw Ave Crosstown</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5:40</td>
<td>9:35</td>
<td>6:35</td>
<td>6:35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Southeast Corridor</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18E</td>
<td>Fresno ROP Express</td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7:30</td>
<td>4:00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>N. Hughes/N. Marks/E. Olive</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5:10</td>
<td>9:45</td>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>6:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>N. West Ave./E. Tulare Ave.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5:30</td>
<td>9:15</td>
<td>6:15</td>
<td>6:00</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>N. Palm/Peach Ave</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>7:15</td>
<td>7:00</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<td>5:45</td>
<td>10:30</td>
<td>6:15</td>
<td>6:45</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Pinedale/N. Blackstone/W. Fresno</td>
<td>15/30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5:45</td>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>6:15</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>N. Fresno/Manchester Center/W. Fresno</td>
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<td>9:30</td>
<td>6:15</td>
<td>6:00</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Olive/Belmont Crosstown</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>7:30</td>
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<td>6:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>NE Fresno/N. First/W. Fresno</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5:45</td>
<td>9:15</td>
<td>6:45</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Olive Crosstown</td>
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<td>5:45</td>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>7:00</td>
<td>6:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>N. Cedar/Jensen/Hinton Center</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5:45</td>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>6:45</td>
<td>6:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Clinton Ave Crosstown</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5:30</td>
<td>10:30</td>
<td>7:30</td>
<td>6:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>N. Marks Ave/Shields Ave/VMC</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5:30</td>
<td>9:15</td>
<td>7:00</td>
<td>6:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Ashlan Crosstown</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>7:40</td>
<td>9:40</td>
<td>5:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>NE Regular Service</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>7:00</td>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>11:00</td>
<td>6:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58E</td>
<td>Valley Children's Hospital Express</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>11:30</td>
<td>5:45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fresno Area Express website (http://www.ci.fresno.ca.us/fax/)
Handy Ride

In addition to the fixed route service, FAX also provides a general demand response, curb-to-curb service, Handy Ride. Handy Ride service is oriented toward providing a high level of service to ADA certified persons who are unable to ride the fixed route system. Handy Ride also allows the general public to ride if space is available after all ADA appointments are scheduled. Handy Ride is operated under contract with the City of Fresno with MV Transportation. All Handy Ride vehicles and maintenance facilities are owned by the City of Fresno.

Service hours for Handy Ride mirror those of FAX fixed route service. Advanced, same day, and subscription reservations are available by calling Handy Ride. Handy Ride’s service area is bounded by Copper Street to the north, Central Avenue to the south, Temperance Avenue to the east, and Polk Avenue to the west.

Fresno County reimburses FAX to partially offset operating costs for fixed route and Handy Ride services in the unincorporated urbanized area. As of January 1, 2002, an estimated 45,000 unincorporated area residents lived within one half mile of a FAX route.

Clovis Transit

The City of Clovis is located in the northeast quadrant of the Fresno metropolitan area. The city operates two transit services: Clovis Stageline and Roundup. Stageline is the fixed route system for the city and operates four regular general service bus lines and one additional line that provides limited service to the Reagan Education Center (see Figure 2-2). The bus service started in 1980 as a demand response shuttle replacing Fresno Area Express service in the city. In 1991 the service was transformed into a fixed route bus system with a contractor operating the service. The City of Clovis took over the transit service in 1999, which has allowed the city to have greater control over the service and increase coordination. Clovis Transit operates as a Division within the General Services Department, and the Clovis City Council governs the transit system.

Stageline service is offered on weekdays from 6:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. every 30 minutes. There is no weekend or holiday service. Past weekend trials have shown that weekend service is unproductive. The base fare is $1.00 per ride. Additional service in Clovis is offered by FAX route 28; all Clovis Stageline routes intersect with this route, allowing Clovis passengers to transfer to Fresno bound service. Passengers can transfer to other FAX routes at the Manchester and Downtown transit centers. Clovis compensates FAX for providing service in the City of Clovis.
Figure 2-2  Clovis Stageline Routes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weekday Freq</th>
<th>Weekday Start</th>
<th>Weekday End</th>
<th>Transit Center</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clovis Stageline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Fresno State University/NW Clinic</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>NE Clovis/SW Clovis</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Clovis Community Hospital/Sierra Vista Mall</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6:50</td>
<td>6:50</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>SE Clovis Circulator</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Reagan Education Center Express</td>
<td>1 morning trip/1 afternoon trip</td>
<td>7:00</td>
<td>3:00</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City of Clovis

Clovis Roundup provides curb-to-curb paratransit service to the City of Clovis for the same $1 per ride fee as Stageline. For an additional $1 fee, Roundup will provide door-to-door service for passengers including carrying a limited number of packages. Service is offered on weekdays from 6:15 a.m. to 6:15 p.m. and also on weekends from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. In addition to providing trips within Clovis, Roundup will take passengers into Fresno on weekdays from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Fares outside of Clovis are more expensive. All riders must complete an ADA application and either be over 55 years old or disabled to use the service. Rides may be requested from 14 days to 24 hours in advance. Roundup also serves as the Consolidated Transportation Services Agency for Clovis. When Roundup is not operating, ADA certified passengers can use taxi vouchers to make essential trips within Clovis and to specified areas in Fresno. Taxi voucher trips require pre-approval before being used and cost $2.50 each.

Fresno County Rural Transit Agency (FCRTA)

In August 1979, a joint powers agency was created to coordinate and operate rural transit services in Fresno County. FCRTA, through contract public and private operators, and in coordination with the CTSA provides intra city and inter city service to rural communities and downtown Fresno. Inter city service to Fresno is provided via municipal providers and through Greyhound and Orange Belt Stages. The inter-city systems connect with FAX at the Downtown Transit Mall.

Due to the low density and rural characteristic of the communities served by FCRTA, most local transit service is provided by general demand response, dial-a-ride shuttles. Only the intercity services use standard buses on fixed routes. Service hours vary depending on subsystem but are generally weekdays from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm. Limited Saturday service
is offered on a few carriers. Fares are set to make transit affordable to the entire community and to encourage frequent trips. Local fares range from $0.35 for elderly and disabled passengers to $0.50 for the general public. Intercity fares range from $0.75 to $6.50 depending on the distance traveled.

FCRTA consists of a total of 19 transit subsystems. Transit Programs operated through the FCRTA include:

**Intercity Services**

- **Southeast Transit**: Fixed route service connecting Kingsburg, Selma, and Fowler to Fresno. Three weekday roundtrips are offered to/from Fresno.
- **Westside Transit**: Fixed route service connecting Firebaugh, Mendota, and Kerman to Fresno. Two weekday roundtrips are offered to/from Fresno.
- **Orange Cove Transit**: Fixed route service connecting Reedley, Parlier, Sanger, and Orange Cove to Fresno. Two roundtrips are scheduled on weekdays. A weekday demand response service is also available in Orange Cove.
- **Coalinga Transit**: Fixed route service to Fresno from Coalinga and Huron on weekdays and Saturdays.
- **Laton Transit**: Fixed route service between Laton and Hanford (Kings County), one round-trip weekdays. Operated by Kings Area Regional Transit (KART) under contract.

**Local Services**

FCRTA provides local service in many smaller communities in Fresno County, with some variation in service hours and type between communities. Most provide local demand response service on weekdays. Demand response service is also available on Saturdays in Kingsburg and Selma. In addition to local demand response service, Auberry also operates a shuttle to Fresno once a week. A volunteer drive program operates in South Sierra, though no demand response service is available. Figure 2-3 lists these communities and the services available.
Figure 2-3 Services available in Other Fresno Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Demand Response Service</th>
<th>Other Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auberry Transit</td>
<td>Yes, for local residents</td>
<td>Shuttle to Fresno once a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalinga Transit</td>
<td>Monday-Friday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Del Rey Transit</td>
<td>Monday-Friday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firebaugh Transit</td>
<td>Monday-Friday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fowler Transit</td>
<td>Monday-Friday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huron Transit</td>
<td>Monday-Friday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerman Transit</td>
<td>Monday-Friday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingsburg Transit</td>
<td>Monday-Friday and Saturday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendota Transit</td>
<td>Monday-Friday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parlier Transit</td>
<td>Monday-Friday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reedley Transit</td>
<td>Monday-Friday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanger Transit</td>
<td>Monday-Friday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Joaquin Transit</td>
<td>Monday-Friday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selma Transit</td>
<td>Monday-Friday and Saturday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sierra Transit</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Volunteer driver program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparison of FAX, Clovis Transit, and FCRTA services

As seen in the descriptions above, it is clear that the services provided by the three agencies are distinctly different, by design. FAX provides an urban level of service, with many routes, high capacity buses, high frequencies (at least in some corridors), and full weekly service. Clovis Transit, on the other hand, provides a more modest, suburban level of service with only a few routes and no weekend service. FCRTA fixed-route service is extremely limited to a few inter-city corridors, some of which operate only once or twice a week, while intra-community service is ordinarily provided by demand-respond systems. Figure 2-4 illustrates some of the major differences between services.
Figure 2-4 System Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operator</th>
<th>Fresno</th>
<th>Clovis Transit</th>
<th>FCRTA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FAX</td>
<td>HandyRide</td>
<td>Stageline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passengers</td>
<td>11,241,838</td>
<td>192,556</td>
<td>119,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Operating Hours</td>
<td>309,980</td>
<td>81,510</td>
<td>16,678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routes (fixed routes only)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of Operation: Weekdays</td>
<td>5:30am-10pm</td>
<td>Same as FAX</td>
<td>6am-6:30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of Operation: Weekends</td>
<td>6:30am-7pm</td>
<td>Same as FAX</td>
<td>no weekend service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Headway</td>
<td>15-30 minutes</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fares</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: COFCG, FCRTA, FAX; all data is FY 2004/05

Productivity

As expected by the differences in the levels and types of service provided, standard transit productivity measures also differ between services. Figure 2-5, below, presents productivity statistics for each of the three systems. General public fixed route and paratransit dial-a-ride systems naturally have different productivity measures, with per passenger costs for paratransit usually much higher than fixed route systems.

While FAX cost per (vehicle) hour is the highest of any service, due in part to the higher salaries of its unionized workforce, the system also carries five times as many passengers per vehicle-hour and per vehicle-mile, reflecting the much greater productivity of this urban system. Similarly, FAX’s operating cost per passenger is about 1/3 that of Clovis or FCRTA.

In contrast, Clovis Stageline does not carry enough passengers to meet the 20% farebox return required by the state for urban transit systems receiving TDA funds. In order to be in compliance, Clovis must dedicate Measure C funds to make up the difference.
Public Transportation Regional Agency Formation Study Final Report
COUNCIL OF FRESNO COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

FRCTA’s productivity figures are typical for a rural service that relies heavily on a demand response system to provide general public transit. While FRCTA tracks most measures for its total service, it’s possible to calculate some productivity measures for intercity vs. local service. It is notable that its local demand response service is much more productive than its intercity service; intercity transit must transport relatively few people over long distances while absorbing large fixed costs. FRCTA’s farebox includes some social service income that bolsters the farebox ratio compared to Fresno and Clovis.

**Figure 2-5  Productivity Measure Comparisons**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fresno Area Express</th>
<th>Clovis Transit</th>
<th>FRCTA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FAX</td>
<td>HandyRide</td>
<td>Stageline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passengers/hour</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passengers/mile</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost/hour</td>
<td>$93.24</td>
<td>$48.93</td>
<td>$63.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost/passenger</td>
<td>$2.57</td>
<td>$20.71</td>
<td>$8.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farebox Ratio</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These measures for total FRCTA service
Source: Transit Productivity Evaluation, FY 2004/05 (COFCG); FCRTA Operating Report

**Administration**

Figure 2-6 summarizes the administrative structure of the three services and is reviewed in further detail below.

**Figure 2-6  Administrative Comparison**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Fresno Area Express</th>
<th>Clovis Transit</th>
<th>FRCTA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency Status</td>
<td>City Department</td>
<td>City Division</td>
<td>Joint Powers Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Board</td>
<td>City Council</td>
<td>City Council</td>
<td>JPA Board of Directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Structure</td>
<td>General Manager, reports to City Council</td>
<td>Transit Supervisor, reports to Department Head, report to City Council</td>
<td>General Manager, reports to Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Employees</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Employees (FTE)</td>
<td>235*</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44 (staff and contract)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union status</td>
<td>Unionize public workforce</td>
<td>Bargaining unit, non-union</td>
<td>Non-union</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Does not include employees of MV Transportation (private operator of HandyRide)
Fresno Area Express

FAX is operated by the City of Fresno under the Transportation Division and is led by the Director of Transportation. The Transportation Division consists of four separate divisions: operations, planning, administration, and maintenance. The Planning Division is the only division not under the City. Since 1987 the City has contracted with the County of Fresno Council of Governments (COFCG) to perform service planning, evaluation, development, and public outreach. Each of the divisions is led by a manager and answers to the Transportation Director.

The Administration Division is responsible for intergovernmental coordination, budgets, grant management, data collection, computer services, personnel, contract administration and policy development. The Administration Division employed 22 persons as of June 2005.

The Operations Division is responsible for managing the day to day operations of transit service, including driver training. As of June 2005, FAX vehicle operations consisted of 195 permanent bus driver positions and eighteen field supervisor positions. Weekday service currently requires an average of 150 drivers with Saturday and Sunday service requiring 90 drivers. The remaining drivers are designated for the extra board, vacation and sick relief. 246 persons worked for Operations as of June 2005.

Maintenance is responsible for maintaining the fixed route vehicles, monitoring the maintenance of Handy Ride vehicles, and maintaining bus stops and shelters. 66 persons worked in maintenance as of June 2005. Both operations and maintenance personnel at FAX are unionized.

The Planning Division prepares transit related documents such as the Short Range Transit Plan and Regional Transportation Plan and develops routes and scheduling of transit service. Planning staff analyze performance figures, such as ridership and productivity to evaluate existing service and explore opportunities for improvement. The FAX Planning Division is also responsible for public information and outreach. The Council of Fresno County Governments (COFCG) employed 6 people in their planning division in June 2005.

The City of Fresno contracts with MV Transportation (MV), a private operator, to provide complementary paratransit service to the fixed route service. MV Transportation succeeded the previous contractor, Laidlaw, in 2005. The FAX Director of Transportation oversees the contract, which extends through 2010.

The City of Fresno leases a maintenance and storage facility and the 36 vans used to provide the paratransit service to MV, at a nominal rate. MV provides all operating and maintenance personnel required for performance of the contract.
Clovis Transit Administration

Clovis Stageline and Roundup are operated by the City of Clovis. The Transportation Division is under the General Services Department. A Transit Supervisor manages the day-to-day operations of the transit system and answers to the Director of General Services. Additional services are provided by an administrative aid. The planning function is minimal, and is provided by the transit supervisor. Other city staff provides services, as needed, in areas such as human resources, financial reporting, and legal issues.

The Transportation Division includes approximately 26 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, including the two administrative staff, a dispatcher, and drivers for Stageline and Roundup. All maintenance of Clovis Transit vehicles is performed in-house by city maintenance staff, which also maintains other fleet vehicles for the City of Clovis. An FTE breakdown is not available for these positions.

Fresno County Rural Transportation Agency Administration

Due to the small size of FCRTA, and the fact that all services are contracted out with private and public operators, FCRTA currently requires only two staff to administer their services – a general manager and administrative assistant. FCRTA is located within the Council of Fresno County Governments office in Fresno. Fresno COG staff performs many functions such as planning and finance. In each of the local services, there is an administrative role played by a transit supervisor employed by the contracting transit provider. A total of 43.6 FTE operating staff (both public and contract) are required to fully administer and operate the FCRTA systems. Local garages perform maintenance and these personnel are not counted in the agency’s staff size.

FCRTA is structured as a joint powers authority, with representation from the cities and County. The governing board of the FCRTA consists of one Fresno County supervisor and a mayor or councilperson from each of the thirteen cities that are a part of the JPA. The County representative gets six votes; while city representatives get one vote each, for a total of 19 votes. The board appoints the General Manager of the organization. Jeff Webster has held this position since the agency was formed.

The FCRTA also operates as the Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA) for rural Fresno County jointly with the Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission (FCEOC). Three board members from each agency serve as the board members of the CTSA. The two agencies coordinate program efforts, record keeping, and other operations. FCRTA contracts with FCEOC to operate many of the local transit services.
Transit Funding

Funding for transit services in Fresno County are provided by a mix of local, state and federal funding sources, as well as fare revenues. Each of the transit agencies uses a different mix of funding sources. Figure 2-6, below, summarizes the funding sources and amounts available to each agency for annual operations. It does not include funding used for one-time capital purchases.

Figure 2-7 Funding Sources, FY 2004/05

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>FAX (budget)</th>
<th>Clovis Transit (actual)</th>
<th>FCRTA (budget)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Category</td>
<td>(000's)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(000's)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Formula</td>
<td>$6,190</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDA LTF and STA</td>
<td>$12,923</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>$1,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure C</td>
<td>$1,400</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>$352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fares</td>
<td>$9,766</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>$130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other *(Advertising, Interest, Carryover, etc)</td>
<td>$115</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>$41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$30,396</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>$2,402</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Advertising, Interest, etc.
Source: 2005 Short Range Transit Plan, FCRTA budget, City of Clovis

Federal Funds

Federal funding sources include Section 5307 Urban formula grants (used by FAX), and Section 5311 Rural formula grants (used by FCRTA). These formula funds are typically an important source of operating support for transit agencies. Clovis Transit is the only local agency that does not receive ongoing formula funds to support transit operations; it would qualify for Section 5307 urban formula funding flowing to the Fresno urbanized area, but would need to take on federal reporting requirements to do so. Other federal sources include grants that can be used to initiate service on a demonstration basis, such as Jobs Access Reverse Commute (JARC) funds, and Congestion Management and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds.

Local – Measure C

Local funds include Measure C, the Fresno County twenty-year half-cent sales tax for transportation. Twenty-five percent of the proceeds are distributed on a population basis to individual cities and the county to fund local transportation projects, while the remaining
75% of funds support highway projects countywide. Clovis and Fresno use a portion of their Measure C funds to support the operating costs of transit. In November 2006, 78% of Fresno County voters passed an extension to the Measure C program. Approximately 25% of the reauthorized Measure C are directed for enhanced public transit services including funds to move forward with implementation of consolidated transit services in the County.

**State – Transportation Development Act Funds**

State Funds include two main sources that are jointly referred to as Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds: State Transit Assistance (STA) and Local Transportation Funds (LTF). For transit agencies throughout California, TDA is a primary funding source, often the single greatest source. This is particularly true for smaller agencies and is the case in Fresno County.

STA funds are derived from gas tax receipts and the LTF (by far the larger of the two) is derived from a quarter-cent of the general sales tax collected statewide. The LTF is returned to each county, whereas STA funds are distributed by county according to both population and transit operating revenues. Most LTF funds are “transit first” funds, but if all local transit needs are determined to be funded by the unmet transit needs process, excess LTF may be used for local street and road projects. Comparatively, as the name implies, all STA funds must be devoted to transit purposes.¹

In Fresno County and many other counties in California, the LTF is more likely to be fully utilized for transit services in urban areas with large and complex transit systems, but not so in smaller cities and rural areas that have smaller transit systems, more barriers to expand their service, and compelling demand to maintain rural road networks.

As shown in Figures 2-8 and 2-9, there is significant variation in usage of the LTF within Fresno County. The City of Fresno devotes 100% of its LTF to support FAX, Clovis devotes nearly 75% of its LTF for Clovis Transit, and the percentage of the LTF dedicated to transit in small cities and the unincorporated-County service sub-areas ranges from 0% (Coalinga) to 77% (Huron). Overall, outside the two largest cities of Fresno and Clovis, 39% of the LTF is spent on transit, to support both FCRTA and FAX service to small cities and unincorporated areas. Countywide, 74% of the LTF flowing to Fresno County funds transit services, with the remaining 26% funding streets and roads. The significant differences between cities in LTF expenditures illustrates that jurisdictions have very different priorities for the use of these funds.

¹ “Transportation Development Act (TDA) – Statutes and California Codes of Regulations,” California Department of Transportation (January 2005).
Figure 2-8  LTF Spending in incorporated cities and Fresno County, 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Total LTF</th>
<th>Transit</th>
<th>Streets</th>
<th>% for Transit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fresno</td>
<td>$13,002,203</td>
<td>$13,002,203</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huron</td>
<td>$196,295</td>
<td>$150,317</td>
<td>$45,978</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clovis</td>
<td>$2,406,541</td>
<td>$1,737,364</td>
<td>$669,177</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fowler</td>
<td>$132,309</td>
<td>$93,679</td>
<td>$38,630</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingsburg</td>
<td>$314,391</td>
<td>$207,695</td>
<td>$106,696</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firebaugh</td>
<td>$188,601</td>
<td>$123,477</td>
<td>$65,124</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selma</td>
<td>$627,018</td>
<td>$406,765</td>
<td>$220,253</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reedley</td>
<td>$632,278</td>
<td>$339,761</td>
<td>$292,517</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendota</td>
<td>$244,501</td>
<td>$118,525</td>
<td>$125,976</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Joaquin</td>
<td>$101,365</td>
<td>$43,347</td>
<td>$58,018</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Cove</td>
<td>$260,113</td>
<td>$107,375</td>
<td>$152,738</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanger</td>
<td>$618,457</td>
<td>$243,087</td>
<td>$375,370</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresno County</td>
<td>$4,841,732</td>
<td>$1,645,128</td>
<td>$3,196,604</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerman</td>
<td>$320,490</td>
<td>$93,795</td>
<td>$226,695</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parlier</td>
<td>$355,574</td>
<td>$92,359</td>
<td>$263,215</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalinga*</td>
<td>$477,867</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$477,867</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$24,719,735</strong></td>
<td><strong>$18,404,877</strong></td>
<td><strong>$6,314,858</strong></td>
<td><strong>74%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Coalinga spent 100% on streets and roads because it reduced transit services during 2004/5 and ended the year with a surplus reserved for transit. It therefore did not need to draw on LTF in 2005 to fund its remaining transit services. In future years Coalinga will spend TDF on transit.
Cost sharing among Transit Agencies

Cost sharing is used between agencies for services provided within another agency’s service area. The City of Clovis compensates FAX annually for providing service on Route 28 through Clovis. The amount is calculated annually according to an Agreement between the two cities signed in 1994. In 2004/5 the compensation totaled $165,395. The County also compensates FAX for providing service to unincorporated areas within FAX’s service area.

School Transportation

Fresno County has thirty-four separate school districts. These districts include seventeen unified (K-12) districts, fifteen elementary school districts, and two high school districts. Most districts run some sort of yellow school bus program.

The largest district in the County, Fresno Unified, buses approximately 15,000 of its 80,000 students on an annual basis, and also provides FAX tickets for special situations. Many students within the Fresno Unified School District live within walking distance of school, which is defined as one mile for elementary school and two miles for middle and high school. Students living in rural areas, however, tend to be much further from school and are much more dependent on yellow school buses. Most districts run their own school bus
transportation systems, but five small school districts in rural Fresno County formed the Southwest Transportation Agency as a JPA to consolidate this function under one roof.

Funding for school busing comes from three main sources: California State Department of Education funds, local school district funds, and student fares. Providing “free of charge” school transportation is not required by the state, and the state provides less than half of the funds required for school bus transportation statewide. The formula to fund school bus service has not been adjusted since 1982, leading to a severe shortage of state funding for school bus service. Furthermore, this funding is not distributed equitably. Fresno County Unified School District, for instance, covers approximately half of its operating budget for school transportation through state aid.

The lack of state funding, combined with the difficulty in raising local taxes, has led to California having the lowest proportion, nationwide, of school children who ride a school bus to get to school (17% versus a national average of 57%). California also has the oldest school bus fleet in the nation.\(^2\)

To raise additional funds for school buses, school districts have two main options: devote a proportion of their general fund educational budget to school transportation (possibly at the expense of books and teachers), and/or imposing fares on students and their families. Many school districts in California now charge for student busing, often at a rate of several hundred dollars per semester. Fresno Unified, however, is one district that provides its students with free busing, covering the gap with its own General Fund. The District recognizes that bus fees would be a major impediment to attending school, especially for the low-income student population.

School transportation is a complex issue and funding sources and the regulations associated with school transportation make true consolidation very difficult. For instance, state funding support for student transportation can only support student (yellow school bus) systems, and cannot be used, for instance, to buy tickets on local public transit. Similarly, while public transit agencies may certainly serve students and school sites, if they accept Federal Transit Agency funds they cannot run trips that do not allow general public boardings.

\(^2\) Cited in Can’t Get There From Here: The Declining Independent Mobility of California’s Children and Youth, Surface Transportation Policy Project, September 2003.
Chapter 3. Stakeholder Interviews

Summary of Stakeholder Interviews

As an initial step in this study, telephone interviews were held with a wide range of community representatives.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the array of concerns and issues expressed by local agency representatives, organizational and community leaders, and political leaders. In the summary below, we review general stakeholder opinion, and, where relevant, we discuss the reactions of particular classes of stakeholders such as elected officials or transit agency staff.

The interviews were conducted in March and April 2006. Representatives from the following agencies and cities were included in the stakeholder interview process:

- City of Clovis
- City of Fresno
- Fresno County Board of Supervisors
- Fresno Unified School District
- Fresno Area Express (FAX)
- Clovis Transit
- Fresno County Rural Transit Agency

Major Strengths and Weaknesses

When asked to discuss strengths and weaknesses, most respondents focused on weaknesses. This is perhaps an indication of the general concern for the state of public transit in Fresno County. The themes and an overview of each follow. Figure 3-1 presents a sample of comments from each category from a cross section of stakeholders.

Strengths

The existence of a transit system was the most common “strength” noted by stakeholders. Overall, stakeholders were modestly positive about the quality of service for transit dependent populations in their communities. Every respondent in the FCRTA area listed the provision of ANY transit as positive, recognizing the tenuous services that exist for the smaller communities in Fresno County. In Fresno and Clovis, respondents recognized that more pervasive transit systems provide a decent level of service for the transit dependent, but that few riders are lured out of their cars to ride transit. Some stakeholders noted recent improvements to FAX that are increasing frequency on some routes.
Weaknesses

The weaknesses were in several categories.

The most common weaknesses were in the general category of service levels. Stakeholders feel that service is not frequent enough, fast enough, or pervasive enough to provide a level of service that is useful to any but the truly transit dependent population.

Several stakeholders mentioned the lack of specialized services that might attract “choice” riders who prefer to use their cars. In particular, these services might include “express” or “commute” service that could traverse the metropolitan area more quickly than current bus routes. These included services within Fresno, and services connecting growing cities outside of Fresno to central locations in Fresno. Elected officials were most likely to mention this issue as a weakness.

Several stakeholders noted the difficulties in getting between particular locations. These include trips from small outlying communities such as Firebaugh or Kerman to locations in Fresno and Clovis, and trips from Clovis to Fresno.
## Figure 3-1 Sample Comments on Strengths and Weaknesses of Existing Transit Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Quality</td>
<td>Services exist; it is possible to get to most communities via transit&lt;br&gt;Transit provides reasonable service for elderly, particularly within communities&lt;br&gt;Clovis and FRCTA drivers tend to know their customers, and vice versa, due to small size of services&lt;br&gt;Clovis service is controlled locally; there is pride in managing fleet, designing routes, operating service&lt;br&gt;FAX has some lines with frequent (15 minute) service, and is working to add more&lt;br&gt;Good but limited service within small cities; cities get what they want because they determine local investment&lt;br&gt;Service in small cities is very limited on nights and weekends</td>
<td>Intercity service from outlying communities is very sparse – once or twice a day service to Fresno&lt;br&gt;Ridership is low on Clovis service&lt;br&gt;FAX drivers are not perceived to be friendly by some patrons&lt;br&gt;All service is designed for transit dependent. There is a lack of fast, direct service that can compete with the automobile. Service is not a “commute alternative”&lt;br&gt;Routes do not keep up with population growth/development; some areas have no service&lt;br&gt;HandyRide sometimes gets bad press&lt;br&gt;Huge demand for school transportation, but demand response system can’t handle it&lt;br&gt;Transit routes aren’t keeping up with development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>FAX has a reasonable frequency on most lines</td>
<td>FCRTA fixed routes are very infrequent&lt;br&gt;Clovis is infrequent, and only generally useful to the transit dependent (seniors and students)&lt;br&gt;Except for a few FAX Routes, there are no routes with 15 minute service in the Fresno region, making connections difficult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connectivity between services</td>
<td>All FCRTA fixed routes feed into downtown Fresno, with connections to FAX&lt;br&gt;All Clovis Transit feeds into FAX Route 28</td>
<td>Local services aren’t well integrated with regional services, particularly in small cities&lt;br&gt;Need better schedule coordination between transit agencies&lt;br&gt;Much too difficult and time consuming to traverse metro area, particularly from small city to somewhere other than downtown Fresno&lt;br&gt;Information on connections is not good; few people understand more than one service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Cost effective service for small cities; non-unionized workforce</td>
<td>Hard to provide cost effective service as Fresno continues to sprawl&lt;br&gt;Cost to rider is high when they need to transfer&lt;br&gt;Can’t provide the service/frequency we’d like with existing resources&lt;br&gt;Intercity service is difficult to provide cost-effectively, but it is a lifeline for small cities&lt;br&gt;Clovis service has a high subsidy per trip&lt;br&gt;Clovis depends on Measure C to subsidize transit; this source may disappear next year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Comments</td>
<td>Have a high degree of local control over transit services&lt;br&gt;There is widespread community support for transit, even if most people don’t ride it. This translates into political support</td>
<td>Farm workers are not well served by public transit&lt;br&gt;Discontinuing Greyhound service is a loss, particularly for smaller communities and intercounty travelers&lt;br&gt;Buses sometimes block traffic/ FAX buses are too big for the number of passengers they carry&lt;br&gt;For rural services, there seems to be little focus on determining what people want and need. Whole system needs a marketing study&lt;br&gt;Transit suffers from the stigma that “only poor people ride the bus”&lt;br&gt;Current land use doesn’t support transit; Fresno and Clovis need to look at density if they want to support transit and get away from reliance on SOV’s, and help with air quality.&lt;br&gt;As city departments, FAX and Clovis don’t have dedicated policy boards. City Councils don’t always pay much attention to transit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transportation Needs

Stakeholders were asked of their perceptions of the transportation needs in their community, and Fresno County as a whole, both now and in the future. Most respondents noted that rapid population growth, as well as the expansion of the Fresno metropolitan area, is overwhelming the capacity of local roadways and creating transportation challenges for the future. Many saw a need for enhanced transit as a part of the solution, but there were considerable differences in what kind of transit services were perceived as important.

Opinions split largely along the lines of whether Fresno County should do a better job providing for the transit dependent (seniors/youth/poor), or whether an increased investment needed to be made to serve commuting adults who might have a “choice” to ride transit or use their cars. Many mentioned the difficulty in providing truly competitive transit given the lack of centralized job sites and the free parking available even in downtown Fresno. This is seen as a particular challenge for outlying cities. Elected officials were more likely to advocate for both choice riders and the transit dependent, while agency staff generally highlighted the needs of the transit dependent. However, there is the widespread desire to move transit towards more universal use over time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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</table>
| General Transportation Needs           | Fresno County will remain auto dependent; the study needs to acknowledge that “We like our cars”  
Fresno County is growing, and more and more areas are urbanizing. All of these people need to move around the county  
The County has to do something about air pollution, and more cars are making this ever more important  
Key corridors such as Highway 99 and 180 need significant investment. Need more roads and freeways to handle auto congestion. Need funding for streets and roads; not enough to take care of current needs  
Fresno is getting closer to gridlock; we need transportation alternatives  
Need to get children to school  
Better use of impact fees to fund transportation/transit infrastructure                                                                                               |
| Transit Needs – “transit dependent”    | Transit will remain mostly geared to “transit dependent”; we need to do a better job for disabled/senior/poor constituents  
Need better school transportation; students often have to walk great distances  
Better regional connections to Greyhound and Amtrak  
There is/will be limited demand for intercity service, but it’s an important lifeline for small cities  
There is a demand for increased transit frequency in urban areas  
Need more farm worker vanpools, modeled on King County program  
Rural areas need medical transportation and lifeline services, both can be very expensive to provide                                                                                                                                 |
| Transit needs – “commuter/choice”      | Use Vanpools more, perhaps as first step in developing a commute service in fixed route.  
It is important to start developing transit infrastructure, including a network of express and commute buses, to provide a real transportation alternative in Fresno County  
Must have greater frequency; half hour service does not provide service people can use  
Transit trips need to be faster, more competitive with cars  
Improved train service  
Need better regional connections to Airport  
Need more and better connections to Fresno from outlying communities, particularly up and down the 99 Corridor                                                                                                                                 |
| Other Comments                         | Politicians don’t hear from constituents who ride transit about their transit needs; they hear from organized groups like the League of Women Voters and the League of Conservation Voters.  
There is a lot of confusion about how “smart growth” and transit actually work together, and how big a role transit can play.  |
Coordination

Stakeholders were queried on their experience in coordination between services, and asked about how coordination could be improved. Coordination in this discussion was not simply service coordination, but cooperation and communication between agencies. In general, stakeholders think that communication between jurisdictions and agencies is reasonable. Stakeholders, particularly agency staff, feel that on-going communication between agencies occurs through both formal and informal networks, and routes and schedules are usually coordinated.

Where stakeholders felt that coordination is not ideal is from the rider’s perspective. Many stakeholders mentioned that a regional farebox that allowed one bus pass or ticket would improve the passenger experience on transit, regardless of how many separate agencies they use to complete a trip. Uniform information about all services would also help in trip planning, and this information could be in print, on the web, and via telephone. Several stakeholders said that if this level of coordination could be established, true consolidation may not be so important.

Some stakeholders, particularly elected officials, also felt that more cooperation between agencies could potentially “leverage more transit dollars” by coordinating more closely in such areas as administration, finance and reporting and fleet purchases.

Figure 3-3 Existing and Suggested Coordination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing Coordination</th>
<th>Suggested Improvements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Route, schedule and common transfer locations</td>
<td>Regional Farebox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer Policy between FAX and Clovis</td>
<td>Regional Trip Planning Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countywide participation in Welfare to Work programs</td>
<td>Coordinated information generally: schedules, websites, telephone information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrative coordination where practical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joint fleet purchases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consolidation

Stakeholders were asked several questions about consolidation of transit services in Fresno County. They were asked what they (or their communities) would hope to gain by consolidating transit services, and also what they could potentially lose. Most of the respondents were “for” consolidation, and assumed that any concerns could be worked out in the process of consolidation. Elected officials in general, and County Supervisors in particular, were for consolidation, while there was somewhat more hesitancy among local electeds and particularly among agency staff. The specific suggestions under each category are summarized in Figure 3-4.

Interestingly, several stakeholders felt that a consolidated agency would help support passage of a ½ cent sales tax, feeling that a consolidated transit system would help sway Fresno County voters. On the other side of the funding issue, however, some worried that local control over TDA funds would be a difficult issue in implementing a consolidated system. Currently, many smaller cities use a portion of their TDA funds for Streets and Roads while FAX devotes it all to transit. Some stakeholders (particularly small city elected officials and staff) worry that under a consolidated system all of the TDA would be “sucked up” by transit, and that might not be politically acceptable.

Several stakeholders also advocated a “phased” consolidation, with FAX and Clovis the logical first step, as they are both “urban” services with significant overlap. A next phase could be integrating FCRTA intercity routes, particularly along the Highway 99 corridor. Local demand response services in outlying cities could be the last to consolidate, if at all.

Finally, several stakeholders highlighted turf issues as an impediment to consolidation, but they were often speaking of other’s assumed opinions, and not their own. The City of Clovis was often identified as a likely opponent of consolidation, yet no policymaker or agency representative interviewed from Clovis was against consolidation as a concept worthy of consideration.
### Figure 3-4 Opinions on Consolidation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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</table>
| Potential Gains | Likely that a consolidated system could provide more service to small communities, with better access across region  
Would hope for route and scheduling efficiencies  
Could free up some administrative resources  
Potential for better school transportation; a consolidated agency could better serve school transportation needs than the multiple school districts currently do  
Would hope for an increased ability to raise funds, pass a 1⁄2 cent sales tax  
Transit agency could have one board of directors, with more potential for cohesive policy than today, and more regular oversight  
Consolidated agency could be a strong regional advocate  
Transit District could potentially be a separate government entity with taxing authority |
| Concerns    | Some people could feel their “turf” is threatened. Locals are used to making local decisions about routes and service levels; this could be lost in a consolidated system  
Many in Clovis believe their system provides a high level of service quality to their patrons (if not frequency), and that could be lost in consolidation  
Individual cities have different attitudes towards transit; this could cause dissention in planning services  
Some small cities use a large portion of their TDA for Streets and Roads; there will likely be resistance to claiming those funds for transit in a consolidated system  
Clovis and FCRTA worry about losing good relations with operating staff; FAX is characterized by a more adversarial labor/management relationship. Also, likely that union pay scales would go countywide, increasing operating costs, particularly in FCRTA area.  
Will be difficult to balance needs of urban centers vs. rural communities. Small cities need a “lifeline” service to Fresno, but it may not be seen as cost-effective in a consolidated agency. |
| Other Comments | No issues with consolidation; checks and balances can be built in to safeguard positions of small communities  
If we only create a new bureaucracy with no cost savings, that will be unacceptable  
Most important to consolidate Fresno/Clovis, where overlap currently exists |
Essential Elements to Support Plan
Stakeholders were asked to identify the necessary elements to support consolidation of transit services in Fresno County. Responses to this question reveal several distinct areas:

1. **Cost Savings/Revenue Neutrality**
   For many stakeholders, it is expected that consolidation would result in some cost savings. While no respondents identified this potential savings as significant, most indicated that consolidation would HAVE to be at least revenue neutral, and should hopefully demonstrate some level of cost savings. Elected officials were more likely than staff to feel that cost savings were likely.

2. **Service Improvements/Maintenance of existing service levels**
   Paired with the need to be revenue neutral, many stakeholders indicated that service levels and quality should stay the same or, hopefully get better. Specifically, service not only includes frequency, but perceptions of service quality. There was some concern from residents of smaller cities that in an effort to streamline and rationalize service, the individual needs of smaller communities could be lost.

3. **Local Control of Funding**
   Some stakeholders recognized that funding would be a significant issue, particularly concerning use of TDA funds. FAX currently uses all TDA funds for transit, while smaller communities use a portion for streets and roads. Stakeholders who were familiar with system funding (particularly agency staff) acknowledged that the control of localities would need to be negotiated in any consolidation. None of the stakeholders felt that maintaining local control of funding would present a critical issue for them; however some thought it would be a critical issue for OTHER policy makers or agencies.

4. **Political Representation**
   Similar to funding, stakeholders recognize that the policy board of a consolidated agency will need to balance the needs of Fresno with smaller communities and unincorporated county. Most felt this could be accomplished in the structure of the policy board and the structure of decision making within a consolidated agency.

5. **Personnel**
   Finally, it was assumed by all stakeholders who mentioned employment, that all current operating personnel would be offered jobs in a consolidated agency, and that seniority would also be preserved. Most assume that all operating personnel would become unionized in a consolidated system.
Figure 3-5 Conditions for Approval of Consolidation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost Savings</td>
<td>Show that the system would be revenue neutral would be required. Don’t know if there will be cost savings; drivers for Clovis and FCRTA will have to be paid at higher rates. Our community would have to have similar or better service at reduced cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Funding</td>
<td>Assure locals that their funding needs will be met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Representation</td>
<td>Can be worked out/open minded on the ultimate structure. Ultimately, the structure must be something people can trust. Start with FRCOG model as basis Assure that Fresno can’t dominate; require that a majority of cities approve major actions. Include a mix of elected officials, representatives of interest groups, appointed citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>Job protections must be in place. Not certain that drivers for smaller systems (Clovis, FCRTA) will want to work for a larger agency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inter-regional Services

While the main topic of this investigation is transit within Fresno County, stakeholders were also asked about potential need for service beyond County limits. Most stakeholders felt that this issue is not as pressing as greater coordination/consolidation of Fresno County services, but many were supportive of implementing routes to nearby counties if there is sufficient demand and joint financial support. In general though, stakeholders suggested improving Fresno County transit services before reaching out to other counties. Stakeholders acknowledge that Fresno is the central city for medical, shopping, and culture for a broad area and that transit demands are stretching beyond these limits now and in the future. In particular, the following location or routes were mentioned:

- Southern Madera County – increasingly tied into Fresno County, with significant future development forecast.
- Southeast on Highway 99 towards Visalia in Tulare County is also developing.
- Firebaugh to/from Madera
- Hanford and Kings County to Coalinga/Selma/Fresno

When asked how to pay for increased inter-regional service, most stakeholders felt that would have to be negotiated between the two counties. Most felt that inter-county service cannot be provided by Fresno alone, and several mentioned that the lack of funding cooperation with other counties is a reason why there is not more inter-county service now. One stakeholder felt that development fees in fast growing areas outside Fresno County should provide some of the funding required to support these services, because many of the residents of new subdivisions will work in Fresno County.
School Transportation Issues

Several stakeholders mentioned school transportation issues as a particular concern, and a possible subject of consolidation. There is widespread frustration that school transportation is not universally provided and that there are often very large walk distances assumed (meaning that parents often have to provide transportation directly). Some stakeholders advocated consolidation of school transportation resources among school districts, on the theory that fleets could be operated more efficiently that way. Others advocated more coordination/consolidation with public transit operators. However, several stakeholders pointed out that there is lot of misinformation about school transportation issues. Contrary to the beliefs of some, they point out, complete consolidation of school transportation with public transportation is not really possible due to federally imposed constraints that come along with federal funding. There are different requirements for equipment and for how the system is operated that are not easily merged.

Summary of Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholders generally feel that transit has a very important and growing role in Fresno County. However, they feel that transit doesn’t adequately meet the existing needs, and as Fresno County continues to grow, the consensus was that transit must be improved to increase mobility options of residents and decrease the environmental impacts of growth.

Stakeholders were generally very positive on proceeding with further coordination and consolidation of Fresno County transit services. While some stakeholders, particularly those with direct transit agency experience, pointed out some of the political and financial pitfalls of consolidation, most respondents felt that proceeding with consolidation is a worthy goal, and that most obstacles can be worked out through the political process. In the absence of full consolidation, stakeholders felt the most important way to improve the experience of the transit rider is to provide a coordinated seamless countywide system. Most respondents feel that consolidation within Fresno County is a large enough challenge, and that consolidation over county boundaries should not be addressed at this time. However, many identified potential transit markets that suggest coordination with neighboring counties is worthy of further consideration.

Finally, some respondents mentioned school issues, but there was little consensus on whether transit consolidation should incorporate school transportation, or whether school transportation is really a different issue entirely. Some mentioned consolidation between school districts as a worthy goal.
Chapter 4. Peer Review

This chapter provides a review of the experiences of five agencies that have pursued consolidation of transit services in operating environments similar to Fresno County. The review provides insight into opportunities for consolidation in Fresno County and strategies to overcome challenges of consolidation. The review includes an examination of each agency’s consolidation process, the transit services they provide, arrangements for staffing and governance, and funding formulas. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of coordination and consolidation alternatives presented by the peer review, with a comparison of their potential advantages and disadvantages.

The peer agencies included in this chapter were selected because they operate a mix of local and intercity services, include both small urban and rural areas, have consolidation experience in forming a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) or a transit district, and are generally located in the Central or San Joaquin Valley. A description of transit services before consolidation is provided for each case study. Three agencies have undergone relatively recent consolidation, while two agencies have had longer experiences with consolidation, having formed as JPAs in 1975 and 1981 respectively. Figure 4-1 provides an overview of the selected peer agencies.

**Figure 4-1  Peer Review Agencies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Types of Service</th>
<th>Private vs. Public Operation</th>
<th>Governance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kings Area Rural Transit (Kings County)</td>
<td>Rural, small urban, intercity</td>
<td>Privately contracted for operations and maintenance</td>
<td>JPA between County and cities, with one local transit system operating independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Joaquin Regional Transit District</td>
<td>Rural, small urban, intercity and interregional</td>
<td>Public operation</td>
<td>Transit District formed through consolidation of metropolitan and county services, with small local systems operating independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuba-Sutter Transit Authority</td>
<td>Small urban, limited rural service, commuter service</td>
<td>Privately contracted for operations and maintenance</td>
<td>Fully-consolidated JPA between two counties and two cities (one in each county)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merced County Transit (&quot;The Bus&quot;)</td>
<td>Rural, small urban, intercity</td>
<td>Privately contracted for operations and maintenance</td>
<td>Fully-consolidated JPA between County and cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butte County (B-Line)</td>
<td>Rural, small urban, intercity</td>
<td>Privately contracted for operations and maintenance</td>
<td>Fully-consolidated JPA between County and cities (administrative consolidation was achieved as an interim step toward full consolidation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the end of the chapter, peer agencies’ operating and consolidation characteristics are provided in table form for the purpose of comparisons (Figures 4-2 and 4-3).

**Peer Agency Consolidation History and Experience**

**Kings Area Rural Transit**

Kings Area Rural Transit (KART) is managed by the Kings County Area Public Transit Agency (KCAPTA), a JPA consisting of Kings County and the cities of Avenal, Hanford, and Lemoore. KART began operations in 1981. At the time of JPA formation, no separate administrative entity was created; KART’s two original employees were employees of the Kings County Public Works Department. KART’s staff has grown considerably over the years, and employees were transitioned to the JPA in July 2005. Day-to-day KART service always has been operated by a private contractor. KART operates separately from the City of Corcoran, which provides service within its boundaries and adjacent unincorporated areas.

KCAPTA’s policy board is made up of one representative from each of the three municipal jurisdictions and two from Kings County. Board members are City Council or Board of Supervisors members appointed to serve on the KCAPTA Board. The Board is responsible for establishing policy, operational parameters, budgeting process and capital programming for KART management.

The only change to the structure of the original JPA since its formation was the departure of the City of Corcoran as a member jurisdiction in the mid-1980s. According to KART’s Transit Manager, the City of Corcoran’s decision to leave the JPA related to the City’s desire to have more local control over funds, and its belief that services could be provided locally at lower cost. While there has been discussion of the possibility of the City of Corcoran rejoining the JPA, with potential efficiencies to be gained by having KART provide Corcoran’s public transit service, it appears that for the foreseeable future these services will remain separate. Barriers to consolidation cited by the KART Transit Manager include the necessity of laying off City of Corcoran staff (if consolidation were to occur), and the integration of LTF funded activities in support of transit with other city functions. While KART does provide transit service to Corcoran, no transfer agreements are in place.

KART services include intra- and intercity fixed-routes, Dial-a-Ride, and commuter and vanpool services. KART fixed-routes serve the urbanized areas and several rural communities of Kings County as well as Visalia in Tulare County and Laton in Fresno County. Fixed routes include the intra-city Hanford service and several inter-city routes. KART’s Dial-a-Ride service is available in Hanford, Lemoore, and Avenal for ADA eligible residents or those traveling more than ½ mile from a bus route. Commuter service is provided from Hanford to the State Prison facility at Corcoran, and medical transportation to Fresno is provided two days each week.
The funding formula used to determine shares of LTF funds from each member jurisdiction are based on 50% population and 50% on the hours of transit service provided within that jurisdiction. The JPA receives STA funds directly, as does the City of Corcoran. KART’s funding is rounded out by federal 5307 funds, fare revenues, and advertising revenues.

While KART provides transit services to areas outside of JPA jurisdiction, such as Visalia and the City of Corcoran, no funding agreements with these communities are in place. These services target specific groups traveling to these communities (e.g. College of the Sequoias students and corrections officers working at the state prison in Corcoran). An exception is service between Hanford and Laton in Fresno County, for which the funding agreement with FCRTA covers KART’s hard costs to provide this service. KART also receives reimbursements from local agencies for a portion of its medical transport services to Fresno.

While no changes to the JPA structure and current funding formula are foreseen in the short term, the KART Transit Manager acknowledged that the current funding agreement will only work until the first jurisdiction falls short of LTF to meet their required share. In the case of KART, member jurisdictions’ LTF funds have increased at a rate that has kept this from being an immediate issue, but it remains a concern as there is no agreement in place to provide for this contingency. The Yuba-Sutter Transit Authority has also faced the challenge of long-term financial stability of the JPA’s funding formula, and has a revised cost-sharing agreement in place to address this issue (discussed below).

**San Joaquin Regional Transit District**

The San Joaquin Regional Transit District (SJRTD) consolidated transit services formerly provided by the Stockton Metropolitan Transit District (SMTD) and dial-a-ride services provided by San Joaquin County. Also included in this consolidation were intercity and interregional transit services developed in the early 1990s. At the time of consolidation, the only other transit service operating in San Joaquin County was the City of Lodi’s local service.

The passage of Measure K in November 1990\(^1\) established a half-cent sales tax countywide for transportation projects. One-third of the tax is guaranteed to transit services. Measure K funding for transit was largely focused on intercity and interregional transit service as well as multi-modal transportation service. Coinciding with the implementation of the Measure K program, SMTD leaders decided that their agency would be the most appropriate to provide intercity/interregional services because it was already providing urban service. However, SMTD needed to change its enabling act as well as the composition of the Board of Directors to include regional representation. Already a transit district at the time of consolidation, SMTD chose to maintain this form of governance. This

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\(^1\) Measure K was renewed for another 30 years by San Joaquin County voters in November 2006.
resulted in the creation of the San Joaquin Regional Transit District (SJRTD). San Joaquin County transferred operation of its elderly and disabled services to SJRTD, along with its share of TDA funds.

Once Measure K funds for intercity service were guaranteed, it took about one and one-half years of planning and preparation before SJRTD began operating intercity/interregional service. Currently, SJRTD operates 50 different routes throughout the county: 18 Metro routes in Stockton and 32 intercity, interregional or intercity deviated fixed routes (called the “Hopper” routes). Most Hopper routes deviate up to ¾ mile for ADA certified passengers.

SJRTD is governed by a Board of Directors composed of two members appointed by the Stockton City Council, two members appointed by San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors, and one member appointed directly by five members of the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors and five members of the Stockton City Council. Administrative staff and drivers work for SJRTD, and service is directly operated with the exception of one contract held for very limited service in Escalon. Despite its status as a transit district, SJRTD has not used its taxing authority, and its primary revenue sources (in addition to fare revenues) include STA and LTF funds, Measure K revenues, and federal 5307 and 5311 grants.

SJRTD receives all of Stockton’s TDA funds and 76% of the County’s TDA funds to pay for fixed route and “Hopper” service (described below). This distribution of TDA funds has remained stable since the early 1990s, with 76% of County TDA funds allocated to SJRTD and 24% to Altamont Commuter Express (ACE). As of this year, ACE will receive TDA funds directly (often referred to as “Off the top”), so discussions are ongoing regarding the disposition of the remaining 24% of TDA funds which will now return to the County. Measure K funds are received subject to cooperative agreements for a set number of service hours to be provided each day for intercity, interregional, and some deviated fixed-route services.

At time the SJTRD was formed, local jurisdictions were given the option of joining the consolidation effort, but chose to remain independent and maintain local control of current or anticipated future transit systems. Today, three local intra-city systems operate independently of the transit district: the City of Lodi (already operating at the time of SJRTD formation), the City of Tracy and the City of Manteca.

SJRTD intercity routes connect with local San Joaquin County transit services, as well as services in Stanislaus County. SJRTD has ongoing informal communication with the San Joaquin Council of Governments (which administers Measure K) and the Transit Operator Working Group (TOWG). The TOWG, which focuses on improving coordination and communication between the transit agencies, has decided on two specific goals for the coming year: (1) to develop a countywide American with Disabilities Act (ADA) certification system; and (2) to discuss the feasibility of implementing a regional fare system.
Yuba-Sutter Transit Authority

The Yuba-Sutter Transit Authority was formed in 1975 as a JPA between Sutter and Yuba Counties, and the Cities of Marysville, and Yuba City. The JPA was formed in response to the TDA Act and the desire to find a low cost and “low impact” local structure for delivering transit services in the area. Yuba and Sutter Counties have a shared urban area and economic center, making a bi-county approach to service delivery desirable. Since 1975, the only change to the structure of the JPA has been Sutter County’s departure in the late 1980s and subsequent rejoining in 1991. At the time of the formation of the JPA, the jurisdictions were not interested in hiring new public employees, and consequently chose to work with private contractors for service delivery. An evaluation addressing converting to a public operation was completed in the early 1980s. A decision was made to maintain the current service delivery structure, and services continue to be operated by a private contractor.

The Authority is governed by a Board of Directors composed of two representatives from each of the four member jurisdictions. These representatives are city council members or county supervisors, and are appointed by their respective bodies. The JPA functions as a separate administrative entity from the member city and county jurisdictions. The Authority’s three staff members have concurrently served as administrative staff for the Regional Waste Management Authority since 1988, at one-quarter of their time.

Yuba-Sutter Transit began service as a taxi subsidy program for seniors and persons with disabilities, and has undergone a series of changes in the mix of services provided over the years. Currently Yuba-Sutter Transit provides local fixed-route services in the urban areas of Yuba City, Marysville, Linda and Olivehurst (in both Yuba and Sutter Counties), dial-a-ride services also operate in these urban areas, commuter and midday services are provided between Marysville/Yuba City and Sacramento, and there are services to the rural areas of the Yuba City foothills, Live Oak and Wheatland. Service to Live Oak and Wheatland is arranged through a fully-allocated cost reimbursement contract between Yuba-Sutter Transit and these communities.

Yuba-Sutter transit receives federal 5307, 5311, and JARC funds, and is a direct recipient of STA funding. Aside from occasional local funding for specific projects, fare revenues, and miscellaneous income, the Authority’s remaining funding is derived from the LTF contributions of member jurisdictions.

According to Yuba-Sutter Transit’s Transit Manager, the funding formula used to determine the LTF shares of each member jurisdiction was hard-fought. At the time Sutter County left the JPA, the feeling of County representatives was that Sutter County was overpaying relative to services received, and that there was too much emphasis in the formula on “ability to pay” factors, and not enough on population. The formula was reworked at that time to include four components balancing factors for population, ability to pay, and services received. Sutter County rejoined the JPA under the new formula.
The current formula incorporates four components that are together designed to balance measures that avoids a perceived winner or loser (in the eyes of JPA members), so that the overall outcome of the formula is equitable to all parties. The components of the formula are:

- Amount of LTF funds available to each jurisdiction
- Service area population
- Fixed-route service miles in each jurisdiction
- Dial-a-ride trip boardings in each jurisdiction, based on a system-wide trip survey conducted 1 day per month

The case of Marysville serves as an example of the balancing effects of this overall formula. While Marysville has the smallest population, and receives the least LTF of all the JPA jurisdictions, it is the center of the service area. Accordingly, Marysville pays less under population and LTF factors, but more under service received factors.

The Transit Manager emphasized that an additional component of the funding approach is crucial to maintaining the viability of the JPA: a provision for maintaining system funding in the event that one party’s required share under the funding formula exceeds that jurisdiction’s LTF allocation. In 2005-06 Marysville’s required funding share exceeded 100% of its LTF receipts. With no way to compel a general fund allocation to make up the difference, the JPA would have experienced a funding shortfall. However, Authority staff had foreseen this issue, and worked to put an agreement in place under which a shortfall would be reallocated among the other jurisdictions. In 2006-07, Marysville’s LTF allocation was increased and the jurisdiction was again able to cover its funding share. The Transit Manager emphasized that any funding formula that does not take this contingency into account leaves the JPA vulnerable to future problems in long-term financial sustainability.

**Merced County Transit**

Merced County Transit (MCT) was officially created in January 1995 with the adoption of a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) between Merced County and the Cities of Merced, Los Banos, Atwater, Dos Palos, Gustine and Livingston. The JPA also serves as the local council of governments. The policy board consists of five representatives from the County Board of Supervisors and one representative from each of the six cities.

The consolidation process began in 1991 with a fare coordination study followed by a more in-depth study to explore consolidation options. The Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG), in cooperation with all of the jurisdictions in the County, moved forward to consolidate three separate services: the former Merced County Regional Transit System, the Merced City Shuttle, and a dial-a-ride service in Los Banos. The consolidated system, locally referred to as “The Bus,” includes local and intercity fixed routes, a dial-a-ride service available in outlying communities, and ADA-compliant services.
The two primary reasons for consolidating services in Merced County were (1) severe funding constraints and (2) the Cities of Merced and Los Banos were no longer interested in operating local services. There was strong support from elected officials for transit consolidation, including active support from two members of the Merced City Council and two members of the County Board of Supervisors. With elected officials serving as the champions for transit consolidation, the process moved ahead smoothly with minimal conflict, according to the MCT Transportation Manager.

When the transit agencies consolidated, no new administrative agency was created. The County Department of Public Works was assigned responsibility for administration, operations management, and oversight of vehicle maintenance. The County transportation manager continued his role of managing the service. An assistant position was created and the transportation coordinator from the City of Merced was transferred from the City to the County. In addition to these two dedicated employees, Merced County Transit “purchases” administrative services from the County for purchasing, finance, and other functions as needed.

Prior to consolidation, the County had been operating the regional service with a private contractor and the City of Merced was operating a municipal union operation. All of the City drivers were offered a job at their current rate of pay when a new contractor was retained for the newly consolidated transit service. As a result, there was no loss of jobs for operators or administrative personnel.

Transit consolidation is considered successful in Merced County. The primary measure of success was a 40% increase in ridership during the first year of operation compared to the level of investment. This enormous growth in ridership is attributed to improved service and scheduling, integrated timed transfers, and eliminating passenger confusion about separate services and different fare structures.

A key to success is the agreed-upon level of service for each entity. Each jurisdiction has agreed to a minimum level of service and a corresponding level of TDA funds to pay for this service. The cost-sharing strategy for local and intercity services is based on the number of service hours. That is, each city has agreed to the number of service hours operating in its jurisdiction and is required to pay for those service hours based on the system’s hourly cost of operation. For this minimum level of service hours, each jurisdiction is required to contribute a guaranteed amount of TDA funds. A jurisdiction is entitled to increase this service given two conditions: (1) equipment availability and (2) they have the financial capacity to contribute the funds needed to operate this service.

The MCT Transportation Manager believes that consolidation has worked well in Merced County because he is responsive to each city’s individual needs. By working closely with the city managers and responding to changing markets, MCT is able to accommodate the transit needs of the individual cities. Through this ongoing cooperative relationship, the cities have not experienced a “loss of control,” a commonly stated fear about consolidation.
From a cost savings perspective, MCT has benefited from transit consolidation. Prior to consolidation, administration accounted for about 12% of system costs for each of the three transit services. Administrative costs now represent about 8% of MCT’s total operating costs. Another, perhaps more significant cost savings measure has occurred through consolidation of facilities: the City of Merced moved its fleet to the County Yard, freeing up the city yard for other city owned vehicles.

**Butte County Association of Governments**

The Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG) is a Joint Powers Agency of the County of Butte, the Cities of Biggs, Chico, Gridley, Oroville, and the Town of Paradise. BCAG is governed by a ten member Board that includes the five County Supervisors and one council representative from each of the five municipalities.

In October 1999, Nelson\Nygaard conducted a transit consolidation study for BCAG. At that time, there were seven transit services operating within the County. Coordinated operations and planning efforts were limited, and each service was operating independently. Two local fixed route systems in Chico and Oroville (CATS and OATS, respectively), and one intercity fixed route system for Butte County (Butte County Transit) were serving key population centers throughout the County. There were also four dial-a-ride services in Butte County serving the elderly and disabled population: the Chico Clipper, Paradise Express, Oroville Express and the Gridley Golden Feather Flyer.

There were several major coordination activities undertaken by the transit services. One was a project to issue one joint Request for Proposals for day-to-day operations for six of the seven services in the County. This coordinated effort resulted in one private contractor for these services, although there were separate agreements with each city. While there were some variations in the contract agreements, each had the same cost structure (although hourly rates varied) and the provision of services was very similar. Another coordination task was the development and implementation of cost-sharing formulas for services that overlapped jurisdictional boundaries. Through a series of alternatives, the transit agencies decided on one formula that was applied to all cooperatively funded services.

The consolidation study explored several alternatives including a fully consolidated system, a partially consolidated system (with one small local service maintaining its independence), and administrative consolidation. The 18-month study process included a Study Advisory Committee of technical and policy-level representatives. The study concluded with a recommendation to consolidate six of the seven services. The most notable advantage to a consolidated service plan was that it eliminated duplication of services and simplified scheduling and routing. The study recommended that BCAG, the MPO, serve as the lead agency rather than establish a new agency for day-to-day administration. It also recommended a policy board structure and funding formula for sharing costs.
Although the study recommendations were unanimously supported by the Study Advisory Committee, the decision to consolidate stalled for some time because one city council feared consolidation would result in a loss of control over local services and that their interests may not be well represented on the policy board. As an interim step, the transit agencies elected to proceed with administrative consolidation, with BCAG beginning to perform administrative duties in 2001. In 2003, the initial recommendation for full consolidation of services was approved by the County and member cities and BCAG were selected to serve as the day-to-day administrator and policy body for the consolidated services. The newly consolidated transit service was re-branded as Butte Regional Transit, or “B-Line.” In 2004, BCAG worked through the details of implementation and in December issued an RFP for a single contractor to provide countywide transit services. Effective July 2005, BCAG officially became the consolidated transit agency for both administration and operations of the B-Line. The BCAG JPA was amended to consolidate all administrative and operating responsibilities under the BCAG Board of Directors.

The B-Line consolidates Butte County Transit, Chico Area Transit, and Oroville Area Transit, while B-Line Paratransit consolidates the Chico Clipper, Paradise Express, and Oroville Express services (but not the City of Gridley’s Golden Feather Flyer). Residents are eligible if they are 65 years of age and older and living farther than one-quarter mile from a bus stop, and/or they have a disability that prevents them from using the fixed-route system. There is no inter-city ADA paratransit service.

Funding shares for member jurisdictions are determined according to a formula balancing population and services received. For fixed route services, funding shares are based 50% upon population and 50% upon fixed-route service hours in the jurisdiction. For paratransit, funding shares are based upon 50% population and 50% ridership from each jurisdiction (as determined through a regular survey).

As a result of consolidation or services, inter-city routes were streamlined and local services in Paradise and Oroville were expanded. Timed transfers and consistent headways were introduced, as were a uniform fare structure and comprehensive customer service function. BCAG has seen some administrative cost savings in the aftermath of cost savings. Because BCAG had a single contractor in place providing all services prior to consolidation, operations-related savings based on economies of scale were realized in advance of consolidation. However, BCAG’s Transit Manager notes that the opportunity to eliminate duplicative services was an advantage, and did allow for resources to be shifted to other areas of the system.

**Operating and Consolidation Characteristics of Peer Agencies**

Figures 4-2 and 4-3 summarize operating and consolidation characteristics of the five peer services reviewed.
## Figure 4-2 Operating Characteristics of Peer Agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transit Service District or City Name</th>
<th>Service Area Population</th>
<th>Fixed Route</th>
<th>Dial-a-Ride</th>
<th>Sources of Operating Funds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Annual Revenue Hours</td>
<td>Annual Ridership</td>
<td>Peak Vehicles in Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresno County</td>
<td>856,948</td>
<td>339,938</td>
<td>11,433,423</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings Area Rural Transit</td>
<td>121,418</td>
<td>38,196</td>
<td>754,874</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merced County Transit</td>
<td>237,000</td>
<td>58,126</td>
<td>905,300</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Joaquin Regional Transit District</td>
<td>545,000</td>
<td>248,918</td>
<td>4,802,384</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Combines financial and operating data for FAX, Clovis Transit, and FCRTA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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## Figure 4-3 Additional Service Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transit Service District or City Name</th>
<th>Type of Agency/Organization</th>
<th>Cost-Sharing Agreement?</th>
<th>Fare Structure: Local versus Intercity</th>
<th>Lesson for Fresno County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fresno County transit systems</td>
<td>Multiple Agencies and Services</td>
<td>Clovis compensates FAX for service on Route 28 through Clovis</td>
<td>Fares vary by operator and distance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings Area Rural Transit</td>
<td>JPA</td>
<td>Based on a formula of 50% population and 50% service hours provided within each jurisdiction</td>
<td>Regular fare: Local service (within a city) is $1.25; regional service ranges from $2.50 to $4.00 depending on route and distance</td>
<td>Flexibility is necessary to changing conditions, system growth, and shifting funding realities over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Joaquin Regional Transit District</td>
<td>Transit District</td>
<td>Receives all Stockton TDA and 76% of County TDA. Cost sharing among communities is done through Measure K, which is administered by the SJCOG. Funds are distributed back on a competitive project basis, except that 50% of funds allocated for intercity / interregional services are guaranteed for SJRTD</td>
<td>Regular fare: Local service and intercity service is $1.25; Route 96 (to Modesto) is $1.60; commute service is $10-$11/round trip (subscription only)</td>
<td>A comprehensive regional system can be successful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuba-Sutter Transit Authority</td>
<td>JPA</td>
<td>Four part formula includes amount of LTF available in each jurisdiction, service area population, fixed-route service miles, and dial-a-ride boardings</td>
<td>Regular fare: Local service is $1.00; Rural service is $2.00; Service to and from Sacramento is $3.00</td>
<td>Attention to equity and effectiveness of cost-sharing formula (and willingness to adjust) is key for maintaining consolidated services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merced County Transit</td>
<td>JPA</td>
<td>Based on total service hours operating within each jurisdiction</td>
<td>Regular fare: Local service is $1.00; regional service ranges from $2.00 to $5.00 depending on route and distance.</td>
<td>Political leadership is required to champion consolidation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butte County B-Line</td>
<td>JPA</td>
<td>Based on a formula of 50% population and 50% service hours for fixed route; 50% population and 50% ridership for dial-a-ride</td>
<td>Regular fare: Local service is $1.00; regional service is $1.25</td>
<td>Consolidation should be pursued as a “bottom up” approach rather than a “top down” approach. All stakeholders should participate throughout the process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary and Conclusions

The peer agencies have a wide range of experiences with consolidation of transit services. There are distinct differences between counties, including the primary impetus for consolidation, the ultimate level of consolidation achieved, as well as the final form of the JPA or Transit District differs between counties. However, comments from interviews with staff at the peer agencies, and other information collected about these agencies, suggests some key “lessons” for successful consolidation in Fresno County:

- Consolidation should be pursued as a “bottom up” approach rather than a “top down” approach. All stakeholders should participate throughout the process.
- Political leadership is necessary to champion consolidation within individual jurisdictions.
- Small, incremental steps and demonstrated ongoing success can build support and confidence in longer-term consolidation that is more comprehensive and difficult to achieve.
- Administrative and/or partial consolidation of services may be necessary as interim steps or endpoints of a consolidation process. Consolidated services can take many forms, and benefits may be achieved through various approaches.
- Maintaining consolidated services requires ongoing work to ensure that all parties receive an equitable distribution of services based on funding shares. Funding formulas may need to be adjusted periodically in response to changing conditions.
- While the benefits of consolidation can include administrative cost savings and new operational efficiencies, consolidation will not necessarily yield major cost savings. However, the benefit to the transit riding public can be substantial.
Chapter 5. Transit Coordination and Organizational Alternatives

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the benefits and challenges of transit coordination and to identify alternative administrative options for re-organizing transit in Fresno County to support coordination projects and move toward consolidation of services in the longer term.

What is Coordination?

The concept of coordination can have vastly different meanings in a variety of different contexts. It can be narrowly applied or broad and comprehensive. Coordination is sometimes described as a strategy to manage resources in circumstances where there are duplications of effort or other inefficiencies. There are multiple reasons for transit agencies and service providers to pursue coordination. Common objectives of coordination include: cost savings, increased efficiency in operations and administration, increased service effectiveness and simplification of service from the passenger’s perspective. For example, coordination goals typically focus on results that can be achieved through cost savings or greater service efficiencies, such as better resource allocation, expanded service or longer service hours, enhanced customer service and public information, etc.

Lessons learned from more than 30 years of coordination planning have proven one universal fact: no one “best” coordination strategy exists. Just as communities vary from locale to locale, the coordination strategy that will be most effective in one community will be the one that best fits the profile of that area. This takes into account the scope and nature of existing transportation services, the needs of the community, the availability of vehicles and funding resources, and the goals and objectives established by local elected officials and/or the governing boards of local transit agencies. The most effective coordination policies are those that are not prescriptive, but allow for a range of actions that can be effective in meeting common goals shared by several agencies.

Benefits of Coordination

There are many benefits to coordination. They can generally be categorized into two groups: (1) increased cost efficiency, access and mobility and (2) improved access to funding, cost effectiveness and other economic benefits.

Increased Cost Efficiency, Access, and Mobility

Cost efficiency is not always an outcome of coordinating services, but it is possible. Greater efficiencies and productivity that coordination creates should result in a reduced cost per
trip. With a more efficient and productive service, sponsoring agencies can reduce the overall costs of providing the same number of trips, or expand service to better accommodate unmet demand (e.g. provide a new type of service, expand the existing service area, extend hours or days of operation and/or increase the frequency of service).

**Improved Access to Funding, Cost Effectiveness and Other Economic Benefits**

At the same time, it is important to recognize the broad array of other potential economic benefits associated with coordination. Economic benefits include the following:

- Coordinated transportation services often have access to more funding sources and larger proportions of funds, which can support achievements of economies of scale.
- Centralized management of resources and operations can allow for more cost-effective service (as well as a better quality of service and more accurate reporting of costs and service statistics).
- Service expansion, higher service quality, and (sometimes) lower fares can result in better access to jobs, health care, shopping and community facilities. This enhances mobility and quality of life in the community. Reduction/elimination of duplicative service can enhance air quality and other environmental benefits. Congestion Management Air Quality (CMAQ) funding is based on this premise.

Additional indirect economic benefits include those associated with increases in community development, enhanced mobility, and higher employment rates.

**Challenges to Coordination**

In discussing challenges that thwart coordination efforts and opportunities, planners often speak of a variety of obstacles rather than barriers. Obstacles are generally considered to be something that one can get around, while a barrier might be a more permanent structure. Enough evidence from around the United States exists to suggest that each one of the challenges to coordination can be overcome. TCRP Report 105, *Strategies to Increase Coordination of Transportation Services for the Transportation Disadvantaged*, highlights two challenges faced by many organizations that have been involved in recent efforts to coordinate transportation service for the transportation disadvantaged: sustainability and building trust.

**Sustainability**

It is not just important to achieve consolidation, but also ensure that the new system can sustain itself over time. Several critical factors are consistently present in successful coordination efforts:
A local champion who sees the process through and maintains the historical and institutional knowledge of the project. Once the project is stable, this knowledge gets spread to a wider group.

Both seed and ongoing funding are also necessary. Seed funding provides staffing for the implementation phase of coordination, while stable ongoing funding is needed to maintain it.

Effective planning is a necessary foundation for any coordinative initiative, with inclusion in the planning process of all prospective participants in coordination activities to ensure their needs are accommodated, and to cultivate a sense of responsibility and ownership of coordination initiatives.

**Building Trust**

Establishing trust among participants in coordination efforts is also key to success. Fears of losing local control over services provided, or inequitable distribution of funds can stall coordination efforts.

Building trust often relies strongly on a local champion. The personality, positive outlook (focusing on the potential of the effort), and leadership all relate to the personality of the local champion, whether it is an individual person or a group. Among the lessons learned from the case studies of this report were:

- Initially identify all prospective participants. If they are part of the process from the beginning, they will be more likely to support and participate in the eventual effort.
- A local council, or at the very least, group meetings, must be held to bring about an increased awareness of each others’ program, services, unmet need, and existing instances of coordination.
- Ongoing communication, including individual meetings and the collection and dissemination of accurate local data, is critical to developing good relations among the partners, and mitigating concerns about control.
- Relationships often take time to cultivate. The time spent in developing support (as well as resources and an institutional framework) for coordination will pay off in terms of stability and growth. Again, perseverance is critical.
- Maximize opportunities to educate prospective participants about the potential benefits of the coordinated effort, tailor those materials as much as possible to each individual organization, and highlight applicable examples, including how perceived obstacles were overcome, and the benefits that resulted.

Another element of trust building is to ensure that the organization that is taking the lead role in the coordination effort has the requisite management skills, leadership, political savvy, community status, financial capacity, and a sufficiently sized vehicle fleet (or access to one) to accomplish this objective.
Coordination in Fresno County

The three transit services operating in Fresno County are administered separately. Even though services are organized and structured individually does not mean that no cooperation or coordination occurs in the county. The Project Oversight Committee established for this study is evidence that transit agency staff is motivated to improve transit coordination in County. There are many different types and levels of coordination that could be implemented in Fresno County. They could be viewed as a continuum from relatively easy steps where transit services could further cooperate with each other to full consolidation. Cooperation is one relatively easy step that could result in developing and distributing coordinated marketing materials whereas consolidation would be a long-term process that could collapse several services under one new regional agency. Chapter 6 reviews some of the coordination projects current underway and reviews steps that could be taken to move these and other projects to the next level.

Organizational Alternatives

The alternatives discussed below are generally presented as a continuum, from maintaining the existing structure of three separate transit services and coordinating on select projects to full consolidation. The major advantages and disadvantages associated with each are discussed. The purpose is to promote discussion of potential organizational and governance options for Fresno County.

Generally, each lead agency is responsible for planning, marketing, budgeting, service provision or contractor oversight, and other day-to-day duties for their own transit service. To administer and manage a transit service requires a considerable level of expertise and ongoing effort. With separate services, there is some duplication in administering and managing the services while at the same time there are limited available resources to perform the myriad of administrative functions.

Transit Coordinating Council

This concept builds on the Policy Oversight Committee formed for this Regional Transit Agency Formation Study. It recognizes the importance of establishing an ongoing coordinating council (or committee) consisting of transit representatives to address issues of common concern. Establishing such a council would further develop and formalize the communication and working relationships already established between transit agency staff. This committee could meet quarterly or more frequently as needed. Formal agendas and meeting summaries should be prepared to document discussions and actions taken and to ensure that tasks are followed up by designated parties. This council could be facilitated by the Fresno COG with a chair elected annually by council members. A TCC is recommended as a short term coordination project and is further discussed in Chapter 6.
**Consortium**

A consortium brings together any number of jurisdictions and transit agencies into an organized group to cooperatively work toward transit service coordination or consolidation. The major difference between a coordinating council and a consortium is that a consortium is brought together under a common written agreement, which generally outlines how the consortium will function and what its purpose will be. Furthermore, all actions of a consortium must be agreed to unanimously. In addition, the City Councils or Boards that manage each individual service must agree to the activities of the consortium. Consortiums have been created to address specific transit service routes, unique services or special projects that benefit multiple operators. Consortiums generally do not have a formal staff. The participating agencies share responsibilities for the various tasks, often rotating them from time to time.

The primary advantage of a consortium is that it formalizes agreements between cities and transit agencies relative to a particular service or type of service. The agreements, commonly referred to as Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), typically include goals and objectives for services, descriptions of transit operator or city roles and responsibilities, funding formulas, service standards, and triggers for service expansion or corrective action for under-performing services. Another advantage is that each transit service continues to function as an independent agency. The primary disadvantages of a consortium are that they have no formal jurisdiction. All agreements must be unanimous and require sign-off by each participating Council or Board. Although there are MOUs in Fresno County for regional services, no agreement brings all of the services together. Establishing a consortium may have some merit for bringing together many or all of the transit services to participate in special projects.

Related to the consortium option, multi-operator agreements can be implemented. Typically multi-operator agreements are for very specific purposes and address a single issue, such as cost-sharing strategies or revenue-sharing arrangements.

The agreements identify each party and their respective administrative, legal, and/or financial responsibilities in sharing the cost of transit service. The agreements can also outline broader policies, such as compliance with a set of standards, and the ramifications if they are not met. Also included in such agreements are detailed steps or procedures for terminating the relationship established within the agreement. Terms for amending the agreement are often included.

The primary advantage of a multi-operator agreement is that it maintains strong operator autonomy and limits staff resources dedicated to coordination activities and meetings. A disadvantage is that this model means each city or operator continues to function as separate entities as they do today, somewhat limiting the potential to fully identify areas where additional coordination and/or consolidation strategies could be effective.
Administrative Consolidation

The administrative function of an agency refers to the routine tasks in overseeing a system’s daily operation, as well as the planning, financing and overall performance monitoring of a system. This type of coordination occurs when more than one transit service is administered by a single entity or agency. The agency is responsible for the day-to-day administration of one or more transit services. The local city councils or the JPA Board of Directors retain control of service decision-making, but the lead agency absorbs the administrative functions, alleviating the burden on that city or the JPA. This approach to coordination is not common, although it may be possible in Fresno County, especially if Clovis or Fresno were interested in transferring its administrative responsibilities to another entity. This was the case in San Luis Obispo County where a small transit service, known as South County Area Transit (SCAT), was having difficulty performing all of the responsibilities associated with its transit service. SCAT is organized as a JPA, yet had no staff of its own to administer the service on a day-to-day basis. The JPA elected to contract with San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority to administer it service. The JPA continues to serve as the oversight policy board.

Full Consolidation

Under this option all local and regional transit services would be consolidated under one single agency. This would require a single administrative structure with a single policy board that combines all transit services in a way that allows them to operate as one system. Under a fully consolidated system, one administrative body would be responsible for management and oversight of day-to-day operations. Transit administration could be staffed by one of the existing entities or a new transit agency. A new policy board would have to be established under one consolidated system – one that provides equitable representation for all participating stakeholders.

A fully consolidated system may allow for more efficient route planning because all routes would be part of one transit system that would be planned regardless of jurisdictional boundaries. Under one system, route duplication would be eliminated, routes which currently operate within one city could be extended and expanded to provide intercity service, connections would be improved between local and regional services and system wide policies would likely allow for convenient transfers between routes.

If services were partially or fully consolidated, there are two logical models of organization, a JPA or a transit district.

Joint Powers Authority (JPA)

California Government Code provides for the joint exercise of powers of two or more public agencies, if authorized by their governing bodies. The enabling contract is called a Joint Powers agreement.
The Joint Powers agreement is relatively easy to create and provides the participating parties a tremendous amount of flexibility to meet the needs of any organization. The agreement must define how the organization will operate and how responsibilities will be divided and exercised. The agreement also identifies how it may be dissolved. Within these bounds, a joint powers agreement can establish a broad range of responsibilities between the partners to the agreement.

JPAs are decision making bodies created to provide a specific service (i.e., water service, waste management, fire protection, regional transit services, etc.). JPAs are generally very formal organizations with a voting board, ruled by majority rather than consensus voting.

The use of a Transit Authority formed by a Joint Powers agreement is extremely common in California. Most multi-jurisdictional transit systems use this form of governance. Systems vary substantially in how they organize themselves within a JPA. A JPA may have a small administrative staff, with operations contracted to either a public agency or to a private contractor. For small to mid size systems, administrative needs such as accounting and legal services tend to be performed by public agency personal or by private contract. The San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority, Mendocino County Transit Authority, and Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority (LAVTA) as well as the local JPA for rural transit services in Fresno County are examples of transit service JPAs.

The primary advantage of a JPA is that it possesses decision-making authority of its own whereas consortiums and multi-operator agreements are largely recommending bodies. JPAs are best suited to situations where very clear service provision and financial advantages can be identified and where those advantages are accrued to all of the participating agencies. Unlike special districts (described below), a JPA does not require special legislation. Participating parties are not liable for actions made exclusively by the Joint Powers Authority. JPAs can be short-term or indefinite, and voting rights can be determined by a formula.

The primary disadvantage is that JPAs can limit the autonomy of the individual agencies or jurisdictions. The JPA can apply for and administer grants. It can also receive tax revenues or other funding from participating jurisdictions.

A JPA cannot introduce tax measures for financing its work nor can it pass ordinances that assist in implementation. This constraint can be viewed as an advantage, as there may be reluctance to enter into an agency that has the power to initiate tax measures and pass ordinances. Public officials are not required by law to sit on a JPA’s governing board. Without elected official participation, a JPA board is not directly accountable to its constituents. This disadvantage can be addressed by requiring in the agreement that the JPAs governing board members be public officials or their alternates.
Transit District
A transit district is a form of special district organized under the California Public Utilities Code. A special district is defined as “any agency of the State for the local performance of governmental or proprietary functions within limited boundaries.” It therefore requires state legislative approval; a special district may not be established by local action. Once formed, special districts are considered autonomous governmental entities and are accountable only to the voters or constituents they serve, and have the same governing powers as other local governments.

Transit Districts are organized to bring together the activities of multiple transit agencies and are generally structured as JPAs, but also possess taxing authority, providing a dedicated source of funding. Formation of a transit district requires action by the State legislature and requires significant lead time.

Most transit districts are large urban districts, such as the Bay Area Rapid Transit District or the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District. Examples of some smaller urban areas with transit districts are the Santa Barbara Municipal Transit District and the San Joaquin Regional Transit District. Yolo County is the only predominantly rural transit district in the state.

Governance
Since public transit services rely on government subsidies they need to be accountable to the public. That is, a board of elected or appointed representatives must have an oversight role in the delivery of public transit services. A policy board oversees service, sets policy and serves as the final decision-making body. These responsibilities are separate and distinct from the day-to-day business of running a transit system. The major decisions that typically rest with policy or oversight boards are:

- Establishing route design and service policies
- Approving operating and capital budgets
- Setting fares and fare policy
- Conducting public hearings on service and fare changes and capital investments
- Developing legislative and advocacy positions
- Reviewing and developing policy recommendations at the local and regional level

Several different policy boards govern transit services in Fresno County. City councils serve as the policy boards for the FAX and Clovis Transit and the JPA serves as the policymaking body for the FCRTA. If transit services were to consolidate under one system, a new policy board would be required. This would raise questions such as:

- What is an equitable composition for a policy board?
What is the proper balance between local and regional interests?
How many members should sit on a policy board?
Should members be appointed or elected?

The policy board questions are often the most sensitive issues related to transit service consolidation. There is no universal approach to this issue and it can be addressed in a number of different ways.

**Policy Board Representation**

The following section presents three methodologies for determining an “equitable” composition for a policy board under a consolidated system. The policy board composition is tied to the designated lead agency for administrating a consolidated transit system. A preliminary list of policy board options is:

- Fresno County Board of Supervisors
- County of Fresno Council of Governments (COFCG)
- New Policy Board
  - Representation based on population
  - Representation based on LTF expenditures on transit
  - Representation based on transit ridership
  - Representation based on any combination of these factors

These policy board options are presented in this memo to generate discussion and receive guidance and input from the Committee before proceeding with the next steps. Based on input, potential sizes and compositions of a policy board will be further defined.

**Summary**

This section presented a series of options for reorganizing transit services in Fresno County. There is no “right” answer or easy way to select a preferred strategy. To move forward with reorganization on a county level requires negotiations and consensus building at both the technical and policy level. Given the complexity of this issue, we recommend that the cities and the JPA providing transit services in the county proceed cautiously with consolidation. To enhance coordination, it is recommended that the jurisdictions begin by establishing a coordinating council. This would include all members who currently serve on the Committee for this study who are motivated to improve transit services in the region. The positive attitude and “goodwill” suggests that there is a genuine desire to work toward improving coordination, with the ultimate goal of enhancing service quality and making it easier for passengers to navigate transit services in and around Fresno County.
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Chapter 6. Recommended Short Term Coordination Projects

Though some limited coordination currently occurs between transit services in Fresno County, there are activities underway to pursue key initial coordination projects. It is valuable to begin with small scale projects that are relatively easy to implement, to demonstrate real opportunities for coordination that will build momentum for longer-term coordination projects and potential consolidation. This chapter reviews several strategies for short-term coordination that will form the foundation for longer-term more complex projects and possible consolidation of services presented in Chapter 7.

Recommended Short-Term Coordination Projects

1. Transit Coordinating Council

The Project Oversight Committee formed to provide guidance and direction to this study should be formalized as a Transit Coordinating Council (TCC) that continues to meet quarterly to address issues of common concern, and to pursue further coordination and consolidation efforts in Fresno County. Establishing a formal council would acknowledge that this collaborative relationship is crucial to the promotion of regional coordination and for the implementation of the recommendations contained in this study.

The TCC should include both policy level and technical staff representing the cities, the County and the communities providing transit service in Fresno County. Though the specific staffing composition is to be determined, the Board and staff of Fresno COG could lead the selection process, with recommendations from individual jurisdictions as to which staff they feel would best represent their interests. It is important to include policymakers on the TCC to ensure that if enhanced coordination and possibly consolidation is pursued, then these projects benefit from policy level support from the outset. The TCC could be facilitated by Fresno COG staff, who would also assume responsibility for the handling of meeting logistics, including preparation of agendas and meeting summaries. No new staff would be required if existing staff and transit agency representatives are able to add these responsibilities to their current workloads.

One of the first tasks of the TCC would be to prepare a work plan outlining the major projects to be undertaken in the first year. This work plan would then be updated annually to include new initiatives and a summary of progress on prior and ongoing coordination efforts.
2. Centralized Call Center

Overview
This section discusses the benefits of a centralized call center, reviews two successful case studies and concludes with opportunities for Fresno County.

Consolidation of call center functions (reservations, scheduling and even dispatching) is a common fundamental coordination and partial-consolidation strategy. Each sponsoring entity (transit agency, municipality, etc.) would sponsor call center functions by purchasing service through the call center manager or broker. It would be the responsibility of the entity staffing the call center functions to schedule/assign trips to carriers under contract to provide service, whether it is multiple providers or a consolidated single provider.

A key advantage of centralized dispatch is the opportunity to coordinate trips across multiple service areas – transfers between service providers can be more easily facilitated. Furthermore, riders requesting service do not need to know which provider or providers they need to rely on to complete their trip. Rather, they can rely on the dispatch service to make this determination for them, and provide the information they need (cost, eligibility requirements, etc.) to complete the trip.

Centralized call center functions also offer distinct advantages to agencies. Cost savings can occur in administration, equipment purchases and maintenance, and training of dispatchers. In Fresno County, it is reasonable to expect that dispatchers would be able to develop a familiarity with the entire County, which is particularly helpful for trips that need to be made between Clovis and Fresno, as an example. A centralized system is also a first step towards ultimate consolidation – a centralized call center could transition from dispatching trips for several services to consolidating services under a single provider.

Case Studies:

Cleveland, Ohio
The Senior Transportation Connection (STC) in Cleveland, Ohio was established in February 2005 following a strategic planning process to address the mobility needs of the growing senior population. An infrastructure was developed that incorporates central management of paratransit services along with close coordination with the Greater Cleveland Regional Transportation Authority (GCRTA). The STC is the designated central entity to manage and coordinate countywide delivery of senior transportation services. This is accomplished by centralizing management and operational structures for senior transportation services and integrating local municipal and nonprofit providers scheduling and dispatching functions into one centralized call center using a state-of-the-art software system. STC routes trips and assigns trips to the appropriate provider. Trip orders are conveyed by fax or electronically to contract providers. This model works through a unique collaborative process between STC and GCRTA, whereby STC relies on the transit authority to provide procurement, IT, and other technical services.
Consolidated Service Delivery - DuPage County, Illinois

In DuPage County, Illinois, Pace has the responsibility for ADA paratransit and otherwise contracts with local municipalities and townships to provide Dial-A-Ride services (available to either the general public or senior/disabled residents of the sponsoring municipalities). Pace’s operations contractor, Veolia Transportation, manages the call center and operates a dedicated fleet, taking reservations for both ADA and Dial-A-Ride customers and scheduling them onto its fleet, co-mingling the trips when it is efficient to do so. Three municipalities and several public/private human service agencies also contract with Pace to provide “Ride DuPage” service. This service, also managed by Veolia Transportation, includes taking reservations from sponsored customers/clients and either scheduling them (along with ADA/DAR trips) onto Veolia-operated vehicles or assigning them to taxi cabs, whichever is more efficient.

Opportunities in Fresno County

Currently, Clovis Roundup and FCRTA rely on manual dispatch and FAX uses trapeze software for dispatching, which could be expanded to encompass other service areas in Fresno County. A particularly strong opportunity may exist to coordinate paratransit programs through centralized call center functions. A centralized information line for standard fixed-route services could also be highly desirable, to provide a simple, one-stop-shopping opportunity for people to plan for travel throughout Fresno County.

Further research will be necessary to better understand opportunities for centralization of call functions in Fresno County, including relative costs and benefits compared to the existing call center functions, and the practicality of shifting to a system with centralized administrative functions and dispatchers, who arrange trips for all services in Fresno County.

3. Regional Fare Coordination - Coordinated farebox procurement and revenue sharing agreement(s)

The basis for developing a comprehensive regional fare coordination strategy is that it would eliminate the complexity and inconvenience of different fare structures and multiple cash payments when transferring between services. The ultimate goal of coordinating fares is to create a seamless fare payment system for traveling between multiple services. In order to coordinate fare instruments or transfers, typically a revenue-sharing agreement between transit operators must be in place. Without fare coordination in Fresno County, a passenger must pay a separate fare or use a distinct fare instrument every time he or she boards a different operator’s bus.

Opportunities in Fresno County

Even though there are different fares and fare structures for FAX, Clovis Transit and FCRTA, there is some limited fare coordination. The Metro Pass sold for $40 is valid on both Clovis Stageline and FAX. The Fresno COG has taken the lead in moving fare coordination to the
next level with a coordinated procurement process to purchase fareboxes. This process was initiated early in 2007 and will require a significant effort both in terms of staff and financial resources to ultimately secure and install uniform fare collection equipment on all buses throughout the County. Some of the challenges with regional fare coordination include consensus on technology, revenue-sharing, ease of implementation, political support, staffing and resources.

An initial meeting was held in January 2007 with FAX, Clovis Transit, FCRTA and Fresno State University to discuss parameters for a regional procurement of an Automatic Farebox Collection System (AFC). Issues that were explored include interface requirements with other agencies, alternative technologies (such as electronic fare media, magnetic stripe tickets, smart card, etc.) and the potential impacts on each service, including how drivers, operators, maintenance staff, administrators and current and future passengers will be impacted by a new AFC system. At that initial meeting, the group agreed that the following system features are considered highly desirable:

- Ease of use for users
- Ease of maintenance for support staff
- Ease of operation for drivers
- Accuracy of information
- Cost effectiveness

It is crucial to recognize that an entire system of enabling services and service personnel surround these fare boxes; which is to say that the procurement of hardware is only one small part of the successful specification, selection, and implementation of a state-of-the art Automatic Farebox Collection service system.

It was acknowledged that a new AFC system must incorporate the diverse needs of each participating transit service. Developing and agreeing on a strategy for dealing with transfers between services and passes (used by FAX) versus punch cards (used by Clovis Transit) was determined to be a high priority. There are a number of examples of how other overlapping services have dealt with transfers that need to be further explored to provide insight on a workable and practicable solution for FAX, FCRTA, and Clovis Transit. The group agreed that the preferred fare media are magnetic stripe cards with the ability to migrate toward smart cards at a later date. It is prudent to move cautiously into this arena as many examples and lessons to be learned from other agencies on how to move toward an Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) fare framework. While purchasing the hardware and software are essential steps in developing a regional coordination plan, it is only one small yet important step in ultimately achieving regional fare coordination in the County. Developing common or compatible a fare structure, uniform eligibility criteria for discounted fares, and developing and reaching consensus on regional revenue—sharing agreements between agencies to ensure equitable distribution of revenues, are essential steps in the process.
4. Coordinated marketing and information

Overview
The advantage of marketing coordination is the potential to provide more information with fewer resources because the various agencies are working to reduce duplicative efforts. In addition, smaller agencies that were previously unable to develop informational materials or provide certain marketing resources benefit from the experience of and collaborative process with other larger coordinating agencies. Coordination of marketing and information can also build public support for transit services, and attract riders to use the services.

Opportunities in Fresno County
The first priority for the three transit services in Fresno County is to begin standardizing the format of information provided about individual services. A common format should be developed for websites, paper pamphlets and posters at transit centers, with information available in English and Spanish as well as accessible formats for the visually and hearing impaired. A common countywide map showing all services should be developed to accompany local maps of each of the three services. Each service provider should include contact information for other providers in the region – both phone numbers and websites. Fresno COG could further develop its website to provide more information about all services, including a map of the county showing all services and more information about travel using multiple services (locations of transfer points, transfer policies, etc.). A regular procedure for keeping information updated should also be established.

Further coordination efforts could then move towards a single source of information about all services – a single website, brochure, and phone number to call for comprehensive countywide information about transit services. This would include provision of information to both riders and social service agencies, schools, and hospitals that need information for their clients. More advanced marketing efforts could also work towards development of a shared image and identity for transit providers.
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Chapter 7. Longer Term Considerations

Existing Service

General public transit service in Fresno County is provided by three transit agencies: the Fresno Area Express (FAX), Clovis Transit, and Fresno County Rural Transit Agency (FCRTA).

The three transit agencies serve distinct but overlapping markets in Fresno County. FAX primarily serves the City of Fresno, Clovis Transit serves the City of Clovis, and FCRTA serves the smaller cities and unincorporated areas of Fresno County.

Fresno Area Express – FAX

The FAX fixed route network consists of 20 bus lines that are centered in Downtown Fresno and follow a grid pattern with intersecting north-south and east-west (cross-town) bus lines. Most lines start/end or go through the Downtown Transit Mall, which is the primary transit center in the system.

The Downtown Transit Mall offers connections to the majority of routes in the system as well as connections with other inter-city bus systems such as Fresno County Rural Transit, Greyhound, and Orange Belt Stages. Downtown Fresno is also served by Amtrak’s San Joaquin Line.

The network also provides service to two secondary transit centers: the Manchester Transit Center, and Market Place at Riverpark. The Manchester Transit Center provides connections between several north-south and east-west lines north of downtown Fresno. The Market Place at Riverpark provides a common terminus location as well as a destination for several north-south lines in the northern edge of the system.

In addition, the system is providing service on four smaller and informal transit centers: the Wal-Mart at Shaw and Brawley (on the northwest end of the system), California State University at Fresno (on the northeast), Fresno Pacific University (on the southeast), and the Sierra Vista Mall in the City of Clovis.

FAX Route 28 provides service into Clovis Sierra Vista Mall where passengers can transfer to most Clovis Stageline routes.

Most bus lines are scheduled every 30 minutes on weekdays with the exception of three of the most popular lines, routes 28, 30, and 38, which are scheduled every 15 minutes during the day.
Two Downtown Trolley services circulate through the Downtown area every 10 and 20 minutes providing free service to passengers.

Weekday service varies by route but generally runs for over 16 hours every day, from roughly 5:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

FAX operates weekend service (Saturday and Sunday) on most bus lines from roughly 6:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m (or just over 12 hours per day). Service frequencies are reduced to 60 minutes in most cases, and to 30 minutes on those lines that operate more frequently during weekdays.

**Clovis Transit – Stageline**

The Stageline fixed route system operates four regular bus routes, and one additional route that provides peak-period tripper service to the Reagan Education Center. The Stageline network is centered around two transit centers or transfer centers: the Sierra Vista Mall and the Clovis Civic Center.

Stageline services routes do not follow a grid pattern, they are non-straight and circuitous and have an emphasis on community circulation and accessibility rather than direct connectivity.

Stageline service is offered on weekdays from 6:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. every 30 minutes with the exemption of Route 50 which operates hourly. There is no weekend or holiday service.

Additional service in Clovis is offered by FAX Route 28 which provides service to downtown Fresno and access to the Transit Mall transfer center. All Clovis Stageline routes intersect with Route 28 at Cal State University Fresno or at the Sierra Vista Mall. Clovis compensates FAX for providing service in the City of Clovis on Route 28.

Other FAX routes that connect with Stageline services are: Route 38 which connects with Stageline Route 10 at CSUF, Route 9 which connects with Stageline routes 10 and 50, and Route 45 which connects with Stageline routes 50 and 65.

**Fresno County Rural Transit Agency (FCRTA)**

FCRTA provides local service and inter-community service to rural communities in Fresno County, as well as inter-city service between rural communities and downtown Fresno. Inter-city service systems connect with the FAX network at the Downtown Transit Mall.

Due to the low density and rural characteristic of the communities served by FCRTA, most local transit service is provided by general demand response, and dial-a-ride shuttles. FCRTA consists of a total of 18 transit subsystems serving 16 different communities and organized under 5 inter-city transit services and 4 local transit services. These include:
Intercity Services

- **Coalinga Transit**: fixed route service to Fresno from Coalinga and Huron on weekdays and Saturdays (one roundtrip on weekdays and Saturdays).

- **Laton Transit**: fixed route service between Laton and Hanford (Kings County), one weekday roundtrip. Operated by Kings Area Regional Transit (KART) under contract.

- **Orange Cove Transit**: fixed route service connecting Reedley, Parlier, Sanger, and Orange Cove to Fresno. Two roundtrips are scheduled on weekdays. A weekday demand response service is also available in Orange Cove.

- **Southeast Transit**: fixed route service connecting Kingsburg, Selma, and Fowler to Fresno. Three weekday roundtrips are offered to/from Fresno.

- **Westside Transit**: fixed route service connecting Firebaugh, Mendota, and Kerman to Fresno. Two weekday roundtrips are offered to/from Fresno.

Local Transit Services

- **Coalinga**: two fixed-route services connecting Coalinga, Huron, Lassen Ranch, Harris Ranch, Avenal, and the Avenal Prison. Weekdays only on local route and Saturday service on express route.

- **Sanger**: one local circulation fixed-route within Sanger, weekdays only.

- **San Joaquin**: fixed-route service connecting Kerman, Mendota, San Joaquin, Tranquility, El Porvenir, Three Rocks, Cantua Creek, and Halfway.

- **Selma**: one local circulation fixed-route within Selma, weekdays only.

Standard buses are used on intercity services and local fixed-route services. Service hours vary depending on subsystem but are generally weekdays from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm. Limited Saturday service is offered on a few carriers.

Inter-Regional Service

Inter-regional (across county boundary lines) service is provided by Greyhound and Orange Belt Stages. Greyhound has frequent daily service to selected communities in Fresno County, including: Firebaugh, Kerman, Kingsburg, Mendota, and Selma. Orange Belt Stages has frequent daily service between Fresno, Selma and other communities in Kings County and Tulare County.

Stakeholders Perceptions

The summary of interviews with stakeholders shows that local leaders and agency representatives feel that transit service in the county is not being provided frequently enough, is slow, and is not pervasive enough to provide a level of service that would be useful to every resident of Fresno County. The current transit service is only serving the transit dependent population of the county.
Stakeholders mentioned the lack of specialized services that might attract choice-riders, in particular, services such as express buses or commuter-buses that could traverse the metropolitan area more quickly than current bus routes and provide direct connections from point-to-point. These would include services in the FAX service area to downtown Fresno, as well as services connecting cities and communities outside of Fresno to central locations in Fresno.

Moving towards management, administration, and service delivery consolidation of transit service in Fresno County, stakeholders expect that consolidation would result in operational cost savings, or at least be cost-neutral, and would result in improvements in service quality and level of service. The biggest challenge for a consolidated transit system in the county would be to balance the mobility needs of small communities against the streamlining and productivity needs of the larger urban areas.
Vision of a Consolidated System

The goal of this chapter is to present a long-term vision for consolidated transit service in Fresno County. Figure 7-1 is a map of the proposed consolidated system.

What are the issues?

Multi-Layered System

Possibly the biggest issue for consolidation of transit service in Fresno County is that existing transit agencies provide different levels of services for different markets and different mobility needs.

Based on both location and culture, the three transit agencies in Fresno County provide very different levels and types of service. FAX provides an urban level of service, with many routes, high capacity buses, high frequencies (at least in some corridors), full weekly service, and high productivity indicators. Clovis Stageline provides a suburban level of service (with only a few routes and no weekend service) that focuses on quality of experience for core users rather than quantity of service. FCRTA provides lifeline service to the truly transit dependent in the small rural communities around Fresno County. FCRTA fixed-route service is limited to a few inter-city corridors, some of which operate only once or twice a day, while intra-community service is ordinarily provided by demand-response systems.

In theory, each city and the county provide a different type of transit service that is tailored to the mobility needs of their service population. However, the amount of service provided is constrained by the availability of limited funding to run transit service and competing transportation needs for that same funding. Thus, cities in Fresno County may be running less transit service than what their populations may need or demand.

Under a consolidated transit system, different transit markets can still exist with different levels of transit service and different types of transit service. The difference is that a consolidated system not only may have more leverage in obtaining funding, but also by pooling funding sources and operations planning functions together it will introduce greater rationality in the design of the overall transit network and in determining appropriate service levels and service types throughout the network.

Existing transit services in Fresno County are multi-layered from demand response systems to local community circulation systems to bus lines serving urban corridors to intercity service. All these transit service layers are satisfying specific demands and mobility needs throughout the county, however the relative lack of coordination and integration between layers is precluding them to grow because the overall system is balkanized into individual sub-systems and as a group do not offer a seamless experience to current and potential riders.
A consolidated system has the potential to make service easy to understand and easy to use, and when coupled with the physical integration of the system, can have the advantage of providing better connections at travel decision points, and creating increased synergy throughout the network. This can bring not only more riders to the system but also more frequent riders.

**Needs of small systems versus FAX needs**

Balancing the needs of smaller systems with those of FAX appears as another significant challenge for consolidation of the system, as well as the planning and operation of the system in the near future.

Local transit routes in the City of Fresno have the highest productivities of all county transit services. The FAX network carries close to 40,000 passengers per weekday, and its passenger-per-hour productivity indicator is over 40 passengers per hour on average. This is four to five times greater than the productivity indicators of Clovis Stageline and FCRTA services.

High system productivity is an indicator of high transit demand in the service area, which is usually correlated with both high population density and a transit dependent population. Consolidated urban areas like Fresno have typically higher population densities than suburban or rural areas because of more compact development patterns and the presence of multi-family apartment buildings. Transit dependent populations are typically found in areas with a large presence of seniors or with larger households (i.e. families with children), as well as areas of low income households having limited or no accessibility to automobiles.

In this context, the FAX system has been growing, adding more routes to its network, extending routes to cover new development areas, and increasing service frequency on its core routes. The system has a mandate to increase its service network as the city grows. It also has the appropriate conditions to develop efficient and effective service. Most importantly it seems to still have untapped potential and unmet transit demand needs in its current network.

In contrast, the five routes comprising the Clovis Stageline network do not carry enough passengers to meet the 20 percent farebox recovery ratio required by the state for urban transit systems receiving TDA funds. Average weekday ridership in the system is close to 800 passengers, and system productivity is at about 11 passengers per hour. Lower population densities in the service area, circuitous and overlapping routes, and low service frequencies do not provide an optimal environment for the generation of productive service and higher ridership.

The Stageline system would benefit if it were better integrated with the long-haul lines in the FAX system, such as Route 28. The Stageline network seems to be fulfilling an
important local community circulation role and satisfying specific mobility needs of its population. However, increasing its integration with the FAX network and improving its coverage and connectivity of city residents will most likely result in a more productive system.

FRCTA’s low productivity figures are typical for a rural service that relies heavily on a demand response system to provide general public transit. It is notable however that its local demand response service is more productive than its intercity service. The intercity service transports relatively few people over long distances at greater costs. Low population densities and transit dependent populations widely dispersed in the county are not conducive of productive service. Instead they require coverage and lifeline services.

In the longer term, these two issues – a multi-layered service and balancing the transit needs of smaller communities with Fresno, should be addressed using a Long Term Strategic Vision as a starting point to further coordinate route planning and operations with the goal of moving toward a seamless countywide transit network.

**Long Term Strategic Vision**

A long term vision for a consolidated transit system in Fresno County assumes at a minimum the coordination of transit services in the form of both route planning and schedule synchronization. It assumes a common fare structure throughout the county and/or a unique fare media, as well as a common identity, branding and marketing strategy for the entire system. In other words, though the system can be operated by different agencies, have separate planning functions, and have non-centralized sources of funding, it still should be perceived as one entity by the general public.

Even though it is expected that system consolidation would likely result in cost savings, a consolidated system in Fresno County will not necessarily produce large cost savings, because there are only three transit agencies to consolidate, and because FCRTA and Clovis Transit are small in comparison to FAX, representing only a small proportion of FAX’s annual operating budget. There are limited redundant administrative functions that account for only a fraction of each transit agency costs. The most significant costs are the day-to-day labor and maintenance costs of operating a transit service.

The major benefit of a consolidated system is that it can provide a completely integrated transit service, better service quality, and improved service levels, for a similar cost or a slightly reduced cost.

**What the consolidated system should aim for**

Under a long term service plan, it is envisioned that most local fixed-route services in Fresno would remain intact. However there are opportunities to eliminate service duplication at the Manchester Transit Center, where most routes connecting to it have connections elsewhere in the network as well. Other opportunities exist throughout the
network where two routes operate together along long corridor segments generating inefficient duplications of service. Also, as is the case in any growing system, there are opportunities for adjusting the route network on the edges of the system according to new developments and evolving travel patterns.

Suburban and rural community services will continue to serve a dual purpose, that is, to provide local community circulation and connecting service to regional intercity routes. These services can continue to operate as local coordination agreements or independent municipal operations, but they would be integrated with the regional transit network in its planning, scheduling, fare structure, branding, and marketing functions. An integrated fare structure and unique fare media has the potential to facilitate understanding of the overall transit network, make service easier to use, and reduce the need for service duplication at travel decision points or transfer centers through the coordination of schedules.

The current structure of inter-city transit services focuses almost exclusively on one-way peak-hour service and does not allow for important coverage functions such as reverse commuter trips (or bi-directional travel) and mid-day connections, which generate greater system reliability and effectiveness. Discretionary travel by transit dependent populations is usually greater in the midday than on the peaks. System coverage requires both a geographic dimension as well as a temporal dimension. Thus, providing inter-city service in the midday addresses the central mission of lifeline services, which is to meet the travel needs of transit dependent populations.

There are no major changes envisioned for demand responsive services. They will continue to serve communities appropriately as demand warrants, build ridership and loyalty wherever possible and expand fixed-route local circulation service network to transition passengers from demand response to fixed-route system.

The strategic vision for a consolidated system is based on the following objectives for transit service in Fresno County:

- **Ease of Use.** Make the system easy to use and understand. Even though riders are always advised to plan trips in advance, the single biggest goal of any transit system is to design a service network that is easy to comprehend and digest by its core market segment, and by the general population. Ease of use and understanding of the system result from the coordination and integration of a variety of efforts, including establishing a clear hierarchy of services or clear service structure, developing a common service identity or brand, managing the brand through coordinated marketing and operating efforts, consolidating fare collection and distribution agreements into a single fare structure and implementing a unique fare media.

- **Service Branding.** Transit service consolidation requires not only the operational and administrative integration of a variety of services and agencies throughout the county, but also the adoption of a recognizable identity or brand. A consolidated
system should develop an overarching brand concept that represents, for example, the goals of the new transit system and the shared cultural values of communities in the county. A recognizable brand will allow people to easily identify the system as a whole unit, build a relationship of trust with it, foster use of it, ownership, and facilitate its understanding and use.

- **Unique Fare Structure.** System riders should be able to make swift transfers between local networks, urban networks, and intercity networks. Essentially, riders should be able to transfer between bus routes of any type rather than between systems. This suggests implementing a unified fare structure throughout the county, appropriate fare payment instruments and procedures for collection and distribution of revenues.

- **Marketing.** All jurisdictions would develop a sense of ownership in the regional transit network. With a consistent route structure and service types designed to meet local and regional demands, it is possible to launch an effective marketing campaign promoting the new transit system brand. Marketing efforts would include developing an easy-to-understand system map, local system maps, and neighborhood way-finding maps, as well as simplified timetables and individual route maps. Trip planning tools and customer service centers would provide countywide travel assistance.

- **Route & Structure Simplification.** The system should establish a clear and consistent structure following the multi-layer nature of transit market needs in the county. It is recommended that clear service types be developed and branded as a family of services. These could include inter-city bus, express bus, or commuter bus, community circulation shuttles, and regular fixed-route service operating in established urban corridors. It is also recommended to develop consistent and distinctive nomenclature protocols throughout the system to allow easy identification and understanding of service types. Also, a simplified service network structure will make effective and efficient use of transit centers.

- **Eliminate Duplication of Services.** The integration of service networks between several agencies and/or operators means that existing overlapping or competing transit service routes would have to be modified or eliminated based on network design objectives. The goal is to provide a consistent service structure throughout the county and appropriate service types to meet resident mobility needs and demand levels.

- **Schedule Simplification and Coordination.** Under the long-term strategic vision for consolidated transit service, it is recommended that consistent schedules be adopted to facilitate communication and retention of service frequencies on bus stops and marketing materials, to reduce dependency on timetables and make the system easy to use and understand. Service routes should be scheduled in relation to one another, particularly at transit centers, and according to service types, to maximize transferability and ease of use.
• **Effective Use of Transit Centers.** The multi-layered nature of the service network would emphasize the role of transit centers as connecting points to the larger regional network and as transit-mode decision points. The consolidated system network will aim at making efficient and effective use of transit centers. Transit users will access transit centers to make an upgrade in their service experience either by connecting to more frequent service (trunk service) or by connecting to a faster service mode.

• **Maintain Service to Important Markets.** A clear and consistent service structure, as well as efficient and effective use of transit centers would allow the system to more effectively balance the needs of local community circulation services, regional and express bus connections, and high demand fixed-route services along urban corridors.
Conceptual Consolidated Service Scenario

Service Strategy

The strategy for transit service in Fresno County is to define a service network structured upon four layers of service that complement each other to provide a broad range of travel demand and mobility needs. These service mode layers would include Regional Connection services or Commuter services, Intercity Connection services, Rural Community Circulation services, and Urban Fixed-Route services.

Regional Connection and Commuter Express Services

Regional commuter services provide direct connections from major rural cities or corridors to the major metropolitan center in the county (Fresno). They serve long-range distance trips of 40 miles or more, utilizing over-the-road type vehicles. They are envisioned to operate throughout the day every hour, bi-directionally, and every half-hour during the peak (in the peak direction of commute) on routes that warrant increased service levels or have sufficient demand.

Intercity Connection

Intercity connection services provide direct connections between rural cities and communities west of SR-99. Given the development patterns and distance that exist between communities on the west side of the county, this service type provides fixed-route or flex-route medium-range distance trips of 10 miles or more. Vehicle type for this service is envisioned as a shuttle van or body-on-chassis. Service would operate throughout the day every hour, bi-directionally.

Rural Fixed-Route and Community Circulation services

Rural fixed-route and community circulation services provide community circulation service within towns and rural communities on the east side of the county – east of SR-99. They serve short distance trips of 1 mile or more. Vehicle type for this service is envisioned as a cutaway or mini-bus. Service would operate throughout the day every hour or half-hour depending on demand, and would operate bi-directionally.

Urban Fixed-Route services

Fixed-route local services (mainly the FAX System) provide mass transportation services within a large urban environment of high population density, such as the one in the City of Fresno. They serve short distance trips along urban corridors and major destination points. Vehicle type is envisioned as a low-floor 40-foot bus or higher capacity bus. Service operates on multiple routes and at various frequencies, typically every 15 minutes or less. This service layer would also include service types such as Rapid Bus, Express Bus, or Limited Stop services on corridors of high demand or strong origin-destination pairs.
Paratransit Services
Paratransit services are envisioned to continue as coverage service in more sparsely populated areas of the county where there is minimal demand but high transit dependency for trips to work, medical, education, shopping, and other purposes.

Short-Term Service Improvements by Service Mode
The consolidation of services under one multi-layered and unified system is expected to bring about some changes in the short term to existing providers. Improvements and likely changes are discussed herein.

Regional Connections and Commuter Express Services
Regional connection services are currently being provided by FCRTA services along the following corridors:

- Firebaugh, Mendota, Kerman to Fresno (currently Westside Transit): connecting service to communities around San Joaquin are provided on this corridor by Intercity connections at Kerman and Mendota (currently San Joaquin Transit). In the short-term the regional connection service could be extended to Dos Palos on the county border.
- Orange Cove, Reedley, Parlier, Sanger to Fresno (currently Orange Cove Transit): connecting service within Sanger is currently provided by Sanger Transit. In the short-term a community circulation service could be developed in Reedley as well.
- Kingsburg, Selma, Fowler to Fresno (currently Southeast Transit): connecting service within Selma is currently provided by Selma Transit. In the short term a community circulation service could be developed in Kingsburg as well.
- Coalinga, Huron, Five Points to Fresno (currently Coalinga Transit): connecting service to communities around Coalinga (most notably the Avenal Prison Complex) are provided on this corridor by Intercity connections from the City of Coalinga. In the short term a new intercity connection service should be considered between Raisin City and Fowler to allow for a more direct regional connection between Coalinga and Fresno, and to allow for increased mobility and service alternatives for the communities of Raisin City and Fowler.

Additional services at this level are being provided by Greyhound along the SR-99 corridor (from Tulare to Madera) and along the SR-180 (from Fresno to Los Baños). Services are also provided by by Orange Belt Stages from Visalia to Fresno via Reedley, Parlier and Fowler.

Intercity Connections
Intercity connections are currently being provided by FCRTA on the west side of the county through San Joaquin Transit, Coalinga Transit, and Laton Transit.
Development patterns and long distances between communities require a particular service type that combines community circulation and regional connection. In the short term new intercity connection service should be considered between Raisin City and Fowler to allow for increased mobility and service opportunities for residents in this area of the county.

**Rural Fixed-Route and Community Circulation services**

Rural community circulation service is currently being provided by FCRTA on the east side of the county through Clovis Stageline, Sanger Transit, and Selma Transit.

Community circulation services are providing mobility within smaller towns in the county and are connected to the larger network through the Regional Connection service corridors to Fresno. In the short-term consideration should be given to developing community circulation service in Reedley and Kingsburg.

The Clovis Stageline service network, although larger than other single-route community services, still resembles in its design and service goals a smaller rural community service. As the system transitions from a rural community to an urban fixed-route system, circuitous non-direct alignments and homogeneous spreading of service frequency over the service area should give way to more direct alignments and concentration of service frequency into fewer and stronger corridors.

**Urban Fixed-Route Services**

Urban fixed-route services are currently being provided by the FAX system in the City of Fresno and environs. Under a consolidated county system it is not envisioned that operation of the current FAX system will change significantly except for adjustments on the fringes of the service area – service network extensions, and improvements in service frequency and optimization of operations and scheduling of routes.

It is expected that in the short-term new service modes may be developed within the system to provide increased service levels and increased service options along high demand corridors, in the form of bus rapid transit, express bus, or limited stop services. Also in the short-term, old transit centers such as the Manchester Transit Center should be evaluated for their current and future usefulness, given that the service area has grown to the north and west of it. Bus routes must deviate significantly to serve this area, adding unnecessary travel time to most riders.

Also, consolidating fixed-route services in Fresno with Clovis Stageline services could create opportunities for restructuring and better integration between the two systems. This could reduce overlapping service areas near Cal State University at Fresno and the Sierra Vista Mall, and provide more direct connections between Clovis and downtown Fresno (the current FAX Route 28 not necessarily is providing the most direct connection from Clovis to downtown Fresno).
Paratransit Services

Paratransit services are envisioned to continue their role as supplemental services within areas of very low demand and high transit need, connecting dispersed rural communities with major urban centers in the county.
Service Design and Performance Standards

Monitoring system performance and designing the “right” services remain important tasks for transit operators. Standards and measures provide a consistent framework for the effective management, evaluation and planning of public transit services. Service standards should:

- Provide criteria for the design and operation of efficient and effective transit service.
- Provide a clear rationale for service frequency and span of service increases, route extensions and network coverage expansion, and service reductions.
- Provide benchmark measures that can be written into approved service operation policies.
- Facilitate simple, straightforward service evaluation. Allow services to be monitored and evaluated with the existing staff resources and technology.
- Reflect and support community goals for transit, program objectives and service policies.
- Ensure compliance with all applicable federal, California, and local regulatory requirements.

While specific standards can vary, industry practice generally uses the following categories for service performance and design standards:

1. Performance standards (efficiency and effectiveness)
2. Service quality/reliability standards
3. Service design standards.

The sections below propose service performance, service quality/reliability, and service design standards for local fixed-route, intercity, regional, and paratransit services in Fresno County. Indicators and standards have been developed based on a combination of existing performance, TDA performance requirements, peer systems performance, and characteristics of the transit operating environment in Fresno County.

Performance Monitoring Standards

Efficiency and productivity standards use operational data and ridership data to measure the performance of a transit system. Monitoring operational efficiency and productivity requires data such as operating cost, farebox revenue, vehicle revenue miles, vehicle revenue hours and boardings (passenger trips).

Recommended efficiency and productivity measures for transit services include:
• **Passengers per Revenue Hour:** The number of passengers per hour is a good measure of service productivity and critical to the establishment of service design standards and benchmarks for the expansion of service.

• **Farebox Recovery Ratio:** The farebox recovery ratio evaluates system efficiency and productivity by comparing operating costs with passenger revenues. Farebox recovery ratio is a critical indicator to define minimum service design standards and benchmark transit service expansion.

• **Subsidy Cost per Passenger:** The subsidy cost per passenger indicator is a useful measure to benchmark service reductions across service types.

• **Operating Cost per Revenue Hour:** Operating cost per revenue hour measures systemwide efficiency and should be tracked on a monthly and annual basis. Tracking operating cost involves tracking variable costs as well as administration/fixed costs, to determine marginal costs and overhead costs of providing service.

• **Non-Revenue Hour to Total Hour Ratio (Revenue + Non-Revenue):** Non-revenue hours include deadheading between the garage and the location where the buses go in and out of service. This is a relevant measure because of some of the potential long-distance deadheading required in Fresno County. Note that non-revenue hour measurement is difficult to apply to contracted services because contractors are not normally required to track non-revenue hours of operation.

The indicators selected comply with the basic performance indicators required by the National Transit Database (NTD) and are largely consistent with operating and cost data already collected as required by TDA. Cost and productivity standards based on revenue miles were not included in the set of recommended performance standards because most transit costs as well as budget projections are based on revenue hours. All of these factors should be used in combination with one another to provide a complete picture of system performance.

**Service Quality/Reliability Standards by service type/market**

Transit service quality and reliability standards should reflect system goals and support the measurement of success in achieving specific objectives and policies. Recommended service quality and reliability standards include:

• **On-Time Performance:** Fixed-route revenue service must depart the route start point and intermediate timepoints within five minutes of the time published in the schedule, and must arrive at the end point and intermediate timepoints within one minute of scheduled time. No bus shall depart a formal time point before the time published in the schedule.

  *Benchmark* = 90 percent
Dial-a-ride demand response passenger pick-ups must be within the policy pick-up window established for the service.

*Benchmark = 90 percent*

- **Passenger Complaints**: Measured as passenger complaints over the total number of passengers carried. Typically benchmarked at no more than 0.1 percent of the total boardings.

*Benchmark = 1 complaint every 1,000 boardings.*

- **Accidents per Service Mile of Operation**: In principle, there should be no preventable accidents. Operator training efforts should increase as the number of preventable accidents increases. The curriculum can also be adjusted to address the types of accidents that occur most frequently. A typical benchmark for preventable accidents is defined at no more than 0.0005% of total revenue miles operated.

*Benchmark = 1 preventable accident every 200,000 revenue miles.*

- **Road Call per Service Mile of Operation**: A high number of road calls reflects poor bus reliability and may indicate the need for a more aggressive bus replacement program or changes to maintenance procedures and practices. The number of road calls is typically set at no more than 0.01% of total revenue miles operated.

*Benchmark = 1 roadcall every 10,000 revenue miles.*

- **Bus Trips Cancelled**: Cancelled trips usually occur at the beginning of the day if the bus pullout cannot be met or if late or absent operators are not replaced from the spare board. Cancelled trips can also occur during the service day due to breakdowns or accidents. A typical benchmark is to have zero tolerance. No scheduled bus trips shall be cancelled.

*Benchmark = zero tolerance.*

### Service Design Standards by service type/market

Service design standards are critical planning tools to justify and prioritize the expansion of service to new areas and potential markets, and to guide how the service will be delivered. Recommended service design standards include:

- **Passenger Loads**: Maximum passenger loads on local fixed-route should not exceed 150% of the average seat capacity of vehicle fleet. For all other service types, maximum passenger loads should not exceed 100% of seat capacity.
• **Service Headways**: Service headways should be such that passenger load standards are not exceeded on a continual basis. Typically 3 contiguous trips or more are indicate overcrowding and insufficient frequency of service.

• **Layover and Recovery Time**: All route schedules should include a minimum of 10% layover and recovery time, beyond route running time, to ensure on-time performance and appropriate bus operator rest time.

• **Timed Transfers**: Local fixed-routes should be designed to ensure timed transfers between low-frequency routes and other service types (such as regional, commute, and dial-a-ride) at transit centers or at bus stops with planned connections.

• **Clock Face Headways**: To facilitate use, all schedules should be designed to ensure the departure of buses from each bus stop at the same time each run (when efficient and cost effective). In particular, this should apply to service routes that operate at intervals of 15 minutes or more.

• **Introduction of New Service**: This includes the introduction of a new route, the expansion of an existing route, and/or increases in service frequency. New service should be introduced if anticipated hourly productivity will meet the productivity performance standard established for the type of service. New service should be operated on a trial basis for up to 18 months to allow ridership to develop.

• **Bus Stop Spacing**: Bus stops on local fixed-route should be spaced at a minimum of 1,200 feet or 0.2 mile along each route. For all other service types, bus stops should be located at key population concentrations and major destinations along the route. Minimum stop spacing is usually 1 to 2 miles, with many route segments between stops being several miles.

• **Minimum Bus Stop Design**: All bus stops should be clearly marked with proper signage, including the designated route number(s). Benches should be considered for individual stops where the average daily boardings exceed 40 passengers, and priority should be given to bus stops serving senior housing or activity centers and group residences designed for persons with disabilities.

• **Minimum Bus Specifications**: All buses should meet all federal, state and city safety, emissions, accessibility and mechanical fitness requirements. In addition, all buses should have sufficient capacity to meet passenger load standards and meet full service day fuel capacity requirements.

### Recommended Transit-Supportive Policies

Land use, population density, the transportation environment, and the overall design of the urban environment all impact the potential ridership of a transit system. With the implementation of service improvements, or a coordinated transit network, there is a good opportunity to establish policies and a design framework for the built environment within service areas in Fresno County.
Principles

Three principles and concepts provide a framework for the evaluation of existing policy and built environment conditions in the region, and ways to make improvements in the future:

- Support transit use at the local level and on a regional scale. Potential transit ridership and multi-modal opportunities should be considered in planning new growth areas, developing land use policies for existing developed areas, and planning for major infrastructure investments. The focus should be on improving the form of the region with particular emphasis on downtown pedestrian environments and outlying centers with mixed-uses that provide focus areas for high frequency service.

- Focus development and infrastructure on key centers and corridors. Transit ridership will be highest when it effectively serves key origins and destinations. Transit becomes an attractive alternative to the automobile when it is accessible, convenient, and efficient.

- Design streets and new developments to foster street activity and encourage transit use. Streets are the centers of activity for transit-oriented districts, they are the civic spaces where people walk to transit and support the public life of the districts. Street activity can be generated by increased land use intensity and through-street designs that provide comfortable access for all modes of travel.

Land Use

Recommended policies address issues of land use, circulation, and urban design.

- Land uses should be mixed both horizontally and vertically. Vertical mixed use, with ground floor retail in intensely developed areas, can increase the vitality of the street and provide people with the choice of walking to desired services. More importantly, mixing uses horizontally can prevent desolate single-use areas, and encourage increased pedestrian activity.

- Support and enhance major activity centers. Activity centers have a strong impact on transportation patterns as the major destinations in the city, for commercial, employment, and service uses. To make these places more transit-supportive they should be enhanced by land use decisions that diversify the mix, creating an environment that maximizes transportation choice.

- Land use intensities should be at levels that will encourage use of transit and support pedestrian and bicycle activity. A general threshold for transit-supportive residential uses is 15 units per acre for high-frequency bus transit. Commercial, institutional and corporate space with high employment densities (e.g., offices, medical centers, colleges) support more transit use than do those with lower employment densities (e.g., industrial parks or warehousing). Extensive areas of
retail use can become auto-dominated if not scaled appropriately and mixed with other uses.

- Parking requirements (and parking provision) should be compatible with compact, pedestrian and transit-supportive design and development. Requirements should account for mixed uses, transit access, and the linking of trips that reduce reliance on automobiles and total parking demand.

**Circulation and Connectivity**
Transit and transportation systems need to provide a balance of hierarchy and integration between modes.

- The transportation and circulation framework should define compact districts and corridors that are characterized by high connectivity of streets, in order to not overly concentrate traffic on major streets and to provide more direct routes for pedestrians, good access to transit, and streets that are designed for pedestrians and bicycles, as well as vehicles.
- New residential developments should include streets that provide connectivity. It is especially difficult to provide effective transit in areas with cul-de-sacs and walls enclosing residential and other areas.
- Transit improvement projects should be targeted towards areas with transit-supportive land uses (existing and planned), and towards projects that can increase pedestrian activity.

**Urban Design**
High quality urban design, including street and building design, can support increased transit use and pedestrian and bicycle activity. An important evaluation criterion is the extent to which the plans provide guidelines or standards to achieve the desired urban design character in a particular community.

- Streets should be designed to support use by multiple modes, including transit, bicycles, and pedestrians, through proper scaling and provision of lighting, landscaping, and amenities.
- Buildings should be human scaled, with a positive relationship to the street (including entries and windows facing onto public streets, and appropriate articulation, signage, etc.).
- The impact of parking on the public realm should be minimized by siting parking lots behind buildings or screening elements (walls or landscaping).
Figure 7-1: Fresno County Regional System - Strategic Vision

Regional Connection Services - provide direct connections from smaller communities to Fresno via major transportation corridors.

Intercity Connection Services - provide direct connections between rural communities west of SR-99, and connections to Regional Services.

Community Circulation Services - provide community circulation service within towns and rural communities east of SR-99, and connections to Regional Services.

Urban Fixed-Route Services - provide mass transportation service within a consolidated urban environment of higher population density (Fresno).

Amtrak Service
Greyhound Service

Fresno County Regional Transit Network

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