

SCSPC STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Central Coast Network Integration Study

MEETING DATE: July 14, 2021

AGENDA ITEM: 4

STAFF CONTACT: Scott Spaulding

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive presentation on the draft Central Coast Network Integration Study for the region between Moorpark and San Luis Obispo.

DISCUSSION:

In 2018 as part of the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) Cycle 3, the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) provided funding to several regional transportation agencies to develop rail and transit service Network Integration studies in key regions, including the Central Coast and Monterey. SBCAG received \$250,000 to develop a Network Integration Study for the region between Moorpark and San Luis Obispo. This funding was not requested as part of SBCAG's TIRCP grant application or even included in the grant guidelines—CalSTA awarded funding to regional agencies to support the State's broad goals of reducing Green House Gases by enhancing rail and transit connectivity.

The purpose of Network Integration funding is to evaluate how to reduce barriers facing long distance travelers throughout the state, including how to better integrate the fare collection systems of rail and transit services where they meet or overlap, to analyze how schedules can be adjusted to facilitate movement between systems, to identify gaps in regional rail and transit services and consider new services to fill those gaps, and other goals identified in the 2018 State Rail Plan. The scope of work for the Central Coast Network Integration Study, which was reviewed and approved by the State, is attached.

Work on the Study began in Spring 2019 and a stakeholder kickoff meeting was held in May. The study area stretches from Moorpark in Ventura County to San Luis Obispo, a key 150-mile long region that includes three rail services and three long distance public bus services. Distinguishing this region from other regions that were provided Network Integration funding are three characteristics: 1) the significant reduction in the level of intercity rail service (Pacific Surfliner) in the middle of the study area, with ten one-way trips serving Goleta but only four serving San Luis Obispo (Pre-COVID); 2) the operation of three distinct long distance public bus services in the region; and 3) operation of Amtrak thru-way bus service to locations not served by the Pacific Surfliner. These factors added complexity to the development of the Study and together with the onset of the COVID pandemic, extended the completion of the draft Study later than initially anticipated.

Because the scope of work included consideration of new bus and rail services to fill current and future gaps in the state network, staff included the development of a conceptual commuter rail

Member Agencies

Buellton ■ Carpinteria ■ Goleta ■ Guadalupe ■ Lompoc ■ Santa Barbara ■ Santa Maria ■ Solvang ■ Santa Barbara County

service between Camarillo and Goleta to further SBCAG's Lane and a Train 101 in Motion strategy. An overview of this component of the Network Study was presented to the Committee in June.

The draft study was provided to stakeholders on May 6, a stakeholder meeting to discuss the draft document and recommendations was held on June 7, and written stakeholder comments were requested to be provided to SBCAG by June 11. A matrix of written comments received and responses is included as an attachment. Feedback and input by both the North and South Subregional Committees will be incorporated into a revised draft and brought to the board for review and consideration in the near future.

ATTACHMENT:

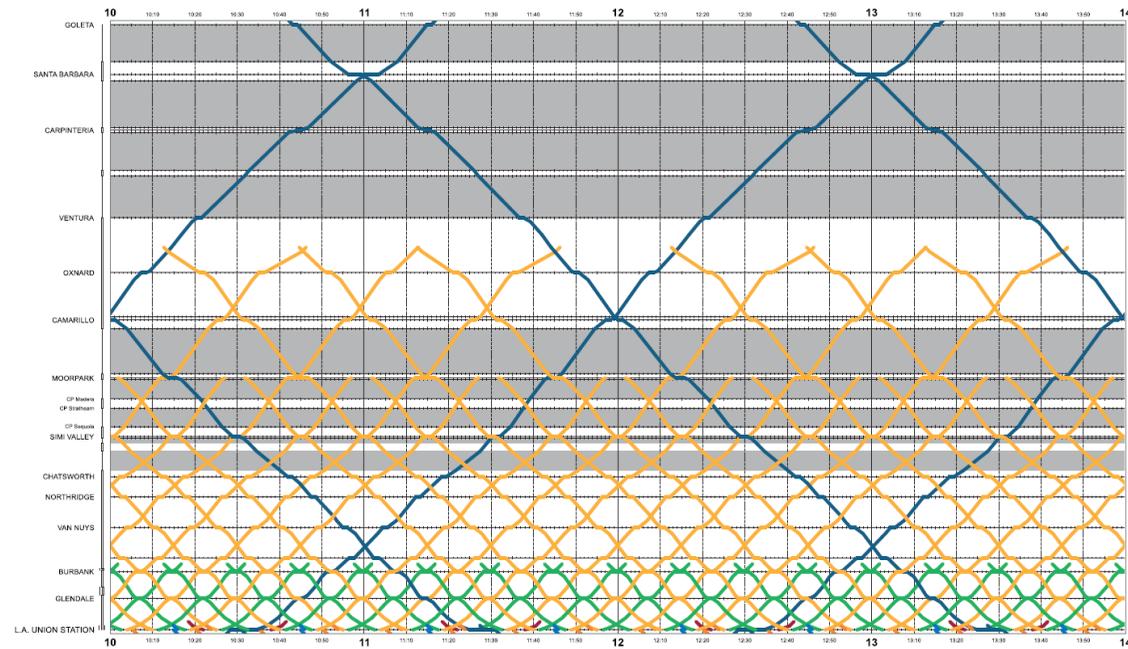
- A. SBCAG Network Integration Study (web posting only)
- B. Comments submitted to SBCAG on the draft Study
- C. Network Integration Study Scope of Work

ATTACHMENT B

Stakeholder Input and Comments

ID	Comment	Location/Page	Response
DOT 1	Caltrans appreciates the cataloging of existing regional and intercity bus service in the study. Working with SBCAG, these inputs will provide important planning parameters for the now underway California Intercity Bus Study (CIBS) and integrated bus planning for the 2022 State Rail Plan. Caltrans supports efforts to fill in gaps and evolve service in the region into a regularized pulse schedule aligned to the statewide service network. Caltrans extends the offer to provide Technical Service Planning assistance as part of the 2022 SRP Update. Caltrans will reach out to schedule a time for this workshop.	General	Noted. Thank you for scheduling the workshop.
DOT 2	The identified additional passenger rail slots identified in figures 44 and 45 appear problematic in that they conflict with slots identified for existing Pacific Surfliner trains. Separately, the Caltrans' Vision for the statewide network is composed of regularized all-day pulse services designed to make timed connections at hubs around the state. Traditional commuter-rail style operating plans with irregular peak-hour/peak-direction service are generally misaligned to that vision for integrated service and equitable investments in the transport network. Caltrans expects increased peak-hour service or peak-overlays have a role to play in the future statewide service network, but investment priorities will increasingly shift to favor increased regularized services and capital projects that support those operations (like the second track and platform project at Carpinteria) over stand-alone peak-only services.	Pages 63, 85, and 86	Noted. Following our recent discussions, the SBCAG report will be revised to incorporate the regularized pulse scheduling vision and adapt the commuter rail concept as an overlay.
DOT 3	Can you provide the details of the Camarillo –Pedestrian Undercrossing project mentioned on page 63?	Page 63	
DOT 4	How do you prioritize Tier 1, 2, and 3? It is unclear why Tier 2 comes before Tier 3 as a priority. Please clarify?	General	Based on this and other comments received, the opportunities section will be reoriented to address intercity bus concepts (tiers 1 and 3), and commuter rail concepts (tier 2), in that order. The idea of a sequential approach with commuter rail in the "middle" will be removed.
DOT 5	The 2022 California State Rail Plan intends to maintain service goals identified in the 2018 California State Rail Plan for hourly service to Santa Barbara with bi-hourly service extended to SLO. The stringline below is from the LOSSAN Optimization study, which identifies technical slots for a 2030s horizon with half-hourly service to Ventura County with bi-hourly service to SLO. If aligned to regional goals, Caltrans would support additional hourly service between Ventura County and Santa Barbara; either as an extension of trains to/from Los Angeles or separate runs utilizing the same technical slots. Caltrans would recommend coordinating with the technical work performed by LOSSAN in its optimization study as an example for articulating future technical service slots and integration of regional services into the statewide network.	General	Noted. Adaptations to the report will be made as mentioned above.

Goleta—Los Angeles Union Station



DOT 5

SLOCOG
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Your approach to the network integration topic is quite different than ours and TAMC's, too, I think. I actually like that it tackles it from a different perspective and that it is more locally-driven. I think the fact all three of ours vary so much will actually be helpful for the state – it'll give them a few things to think about and different ways to tackle connectivity and increased frequencies through our part of the Central Coast.

General

Noted

MTD 1	When the “advisory group” for this study was pulled together in January 2020, we looked forward to engaging as a transit stakeholder, and future meetings and outreach were promised. The next mention of the study to MTD was an email in May 2021 with the draft plan, asking for meeting availability from the group to review and provide comments.	General	We acknowledge that engagement with the Advisory Group was limited. The study launched with an advisory group kick-off meeting on July 29, 2019. A second advisory group meeting was held in January 2020 asking for input on the problem framing and potential opportunity design (hub-based system or single-line run-through). MTD was invited and present for both the July 2019 and January 2020 meetings. Given the revised focus of the study following the January 2020 stakeholder meeting, individual discussions with key stakeholders were held during the development of the study, particularly long-distance transit providers such as RTA and VCTC regarding potential new interregional bus service between Camarillo and San Luis Obispo.
MTD 2	[Theme of comments overall: Local bus services should be much more integrated in this study]	20 / General	In the funding agreement for this study, the State directed SBCAG to examine the potential to improve connectivity between regions, specifically connectivity between long-distance bus services and between these services and the Pacific Surfliner intercity rail service, given the 160-mile-long study area incorporates three counties, it was necessary to limit the study to very high-level incorporation of the 12 (or more) local bus operators. The study acknowledges the importance of local transit providers as playing an important role in expanding the reach of intercity bus and rail service.
MTD 3	In no section of the TIRCP guidelines is there a mention that a local transit district contained wholly within a UZA not be relevant to network integration....	General	TIRCP guidelines are relevant for grant applications rather than grant awards. The 2017 TIRCP cycle did not have Network Integration funding as an eligible expense, and SBCAG did not request this funding as part of its application for the Goleta train station project. Subsequent to receiving funding for Network Integration planning, SBCAG worked with Caltrans and CalSTA to develop a scope of work for this study.

MTD 4	The idea that local transit is mostly useful as a first/last mile connection is not based in fact, and the study uses this concept to wave off the fact that local transit agencies like Santa Barbara MTD are extremely relevant... If the measure is transit services operating buses on the US 101, why ignore the agency that has more transit service on 101 than any other?	General	The measure as stated in the study is not simply bus service operating on US-101, but also that it is long-distance service linking the northern, central, and southern study segments together between one urban area to another; these urban areas are defined as San Luis Obispo, Santa Maria/Guadalupe, Goleta/Santa Barbara, and Ventura/Oxnard, which are communities served unequally by the Surfliner. The study does not “wave off” the relevance of local transit service, but instead recognizes the importance of local transit services while at the same time defining a narrow focus on evaluating how travel between distant regions with limited or no connecting services can be improved. The report has been revised to incorporate the local and subregional bus services and their express/US-101-based routes more explicitly.
MTD 5	MTD is also the only agency without a reference to their SRTP.	30	MTD is not the only transit agency whose SRTP is not referenced. Of the 12 of local transit agencies in the study area, the study mentions the SRTPs of SLORTA, SBCAG, SMAT (related to the Breeze service) and VCTC, services which the study defines as intercity “backbone” service operators.
MTD 6	There isn’t a real description or quantification of the markets that the proposals would serve. Real people take rail and bus for real reasons—to get around their communities, leisure and business travel, and work and school commutes.	32	The report includes a travel market analysis which addresses the observed travel patterns across the 160-mile study area. It is not within the scope of the study to delve into an analysis of subregional (as in, geographies smaller than the three segments which make up the basis of this study) travel patterns, which is studied regularly through other local processes including agency STRPs, the MPO’s RTP/SCS updates, and other focused studies, some of which are referenced in this report. The implicit assumption of the market is to better serve people who want to travel between the three identified regions. The revised draft study adds language to make this assumption explicit.
MTD 7	The lack of integration and coordination with all transit services in the study region could mean real financial consequences for those agencies who might seek funding for future projects.	General	SBCAG and the consultant team have had regular check-in calls with Caltrans and periodic involvement with CalSTA throughout the development of the study and this draft report. Evaluating how to coordinate the 12 local transit services with the four long distance bus and rail services in the study area is not the scope of this study.
MTD 8	We request that the consultant work with Santa Barbara MTD and other local transit agencies to better understand and integrate local transit services and facilities into this study.	General	Evaluating how to coordinate the 12 local transit services with the four long distance bus and rail services in the study area is not the scope of this study.

MTD 9	It also doesn't take into account any local service that might connect Coastal Express passengers up with the Clean Air Express, though they certainly exist. If the idea in Tier 1 is about connecting trips, not about one seat rides, why wouldn't an express MTD service be an acceptable connecting trip?	55	The revised draft study will include a statement to clarify that with a baseline of limited single-seat service, the objective is to minimize the number of transfers required for passengers traveling through more than one study segment. As identified by the State, the goal of the study is to determine if there are any opportunities to better directly connect or interline long-distance services with one another in the study area.
MTD 10	In light of this, it would seem more prudent to embrace that expansion of Surfliner service (moving to 2-hourly and then hourly service), and move forward with the suggestions outlined in Tier 3 before considering investment in the creation a new regional commuter rail agency.	89	SBCAG continues to pursue the 101 in Motion/Lane and a Train strategy to address traffic congestion on the 101 corridor. In light of recently released information about the State's goals for "pulsed" intercity rail service, regionally-focused commuter rail can be pursued as an overlay for future two-hour Pacific Surfliner service.
MTD 11	Tier 3 discusses new intercity bus service as laid out in the CSRP 2027 vision, and makes a great deal of sense. Why wouldn't this be executed before Tier 2?	89	Given the stakeholder feedback, the Opportunities chapter will be modified to remove the "Tier" descriptions and reorient the discussion so that filling the service gaps with bus service is considered independently of the commuter rail concept. The tiers in the draft study were not intended to represent prioritization.
MTD 12	With the HOV lane almost complete, our region has the opportunity to try this. With robust and regular bus service on the 101 using the HOV lane, congestion and VMT can be reduced.	89	Comment noted.
MTD 13	It is our opinion that travelers and commuters don't care what the rail service is called or who operates it, as long as it's convenient, efficient, and affordable.	89	Comment noted.
MTD 14	The study also only mentions capital costs for implementing Tier 2 (some of which seem underestimated) and not ongoing operating costs.	88	Conceptual operating cost estimates will be incorporated in the revised draft.
MTD 15	The concept that a train would be able to efficiently move between stations less than 2 miles apart is not born out in reality.	84	Rail engineering/planning firm STV provided technical assistance on this chapter and while there are potential issues including inefficiency with traditional locomotives, there are workable alternatives with zero-emission locomotives. This is a conceptual study, not a feasibility study. There are other commuter rail operations, including Metrolink, with stations that are two or fewer miles apart.
MTD 16	The station locations mentioned do not have parking facilities, easy access on foot or by bike, or any other amenities. This portion is written as if as all travelers will work right next to the tracks.	70	The purpose of these commuter rail platforms is to serve employment locations within walking distance of the stations. This approach is common in other commuter rail services in the nation.
MTD 17	It seems that SBCAG is in the process of acquiring a facility of their own in Goleta. This should be mentioned in the study document.	General	SBCAG closed escrow on a regional transit facility on June 7, 2021; this narrative will be updated in the revised document.

MTD 18

[Governance and Oversight of Regional Integrated Services] This section needs much more work as it seems to be written in a very leading fashion, with all signs set up to point towards SBCAG. Why wouldn't VCTC be included in the list since it already manages rail and intercity bus in a portion of the corridor? Why wouldn't MTD be considered as an existing regional transit governing body?

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Although three agencies are identified in the study as potential candidates for an oversight body for new interregional rail and/or transit service, as illustrated in Tables 20 and 21, all three organizations have benefits and drawbacks for assuming this role. The study does not provide a recommendation regarding which agency may be the best positioned to provide oversight. In discussions following the dissemination of the draft study to stakeholders, SBCAG and the consultant team have identified an alternative delivery method for operating long distance bus service, which is described in the revised document.

Given the origins and terminations of potential new bus service in Camarillo and San Luis Obispo, the service area of MTD relative to the study area, and the existence of other governing bodies that already include representation from all regional stakeholders, MTD is not presently an appropriate governing body for service stretching across three counties.

ATTACHMENT C

Scope of Services

Regional Transit and Rail Planning and Integration

- Project Area: The City of San Luis Obispo to the City of Moorpark (150 miles)
- Inventory and describe existing regional rail and transit services in the project area
- Based on existing studies and current services, determine regional mobility needs within the project area
 - Review SRTPs, RTPs, Rail Plans, and other plans and studies
 - Interview stakeholders (transit managers, MPO/RTPA staff, advocacy groups, elected officials, etc.)
- Identify potential new, modified, or expanded services
 - Regional transit service
 - Regional rail service
- Identify best methods and practices for integrating regional transit and rail services
 - Scheduling
 - Fare media
 - Governance
 - Operations
- Describe how any new or modified rail and/or transit services would be consistent with the 2018 California State Rail Plan
- Prepare Final Document based on two rounds of comments and feedback from SBCAG and other stakeholders.