



Supplemental

DATE: July 26, 2018

TO: Transportation Authority of Marin Board of Commissioners

FROM: Dianne Steinhauser, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Response to Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report on Yellow School Bus (Action), Agenda Item No. 10

RECOMMENDATION

The TAM Board considers the response to the Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report entitled “Yellow School Bus for Traffic Congestion Relief” and authorize the Executive Director to forward the response to the Marin County Superior Court and the Marin County Grand Jury. Note that the response letter is attached. The response is due back to the Marin Grand Jury no later than September 1, 2018.

BACKGROUND

On June 8th, 2018, the Marin Civic Brand Jury released a report entitled, *Yellow School Bus for Traffic Congestion Relief*. The TAM Executive Director had been interviewed by the Civil Grand Jury for this effort.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The report states that when Marin residents are questioned about the most pressing problems in the county, traffic congestion is routinely at the top of the list. This has been TAM staff’s experience as well. The report briefly discusses a number of options to address congestion, including intelligent management of traffic signals, changing work and school starting times, and carpooling. The Grand Jury lands on mass transportation being “the only practical, achievable way to remove cars from the road.”

The report provides a Summary, Background, Approach/Methodology, Discussion, Issues and Challenges, Conclusions, and Findings. The Grand Jury concludes that school districts, transportation agencies, and municipalities should develop a cost-efficient, coordinated Yellow School Bus program serving more K-8 schools.

Attached is the report. Please note the 8 Findings on Page 12 and 10 Recommendations on Page 13 of the report. TAM has been requested, per the report section entitled “Request for Responses”, to respond to Recommendation R8.

TAM supports the overall direction of the Grand Jury’s recommendations. Over the past four years, Marin Transit has been implementing some of these recommendations in whole or in part starting with the *Coordinated Countywide School Transportation Study* completed in 2015. Through TAM’s City and Town outreach in 2018 regarding our sales tax renewal, staff heard requests from cities and towns to dedicate

funding for Yellow School Bus service in the Sales Tax Renewal Expenditure Plan. The TAM Board considered these requests and approved a Final Sales Tax Renewal Expenditure Plan at the April 2018 TAM Board meeting for circulation to cities, towns, and the County, which authorizes ongoing, dedicated school bus funding. This is a strong first step, and in concert with Yellow School Bus expansion being a priority in Marin Transit's Short-Range Transit Plan, TAM and Marin Transit are committed to identifying additional funds beyond the funds committed.

FISCAL CONSIDERATION

There is no fiscal consideration required for this item.

NEXT STEPS

TAM staff recommend the attached response to Recommendation R8 be adopted by the TAM Board and authorize it to be sent to Marin County Superior Court and the Marin County Grand Jury immediately after adoption. Note the deadline for response is September 1st, 2018.

ATTACHMENTS

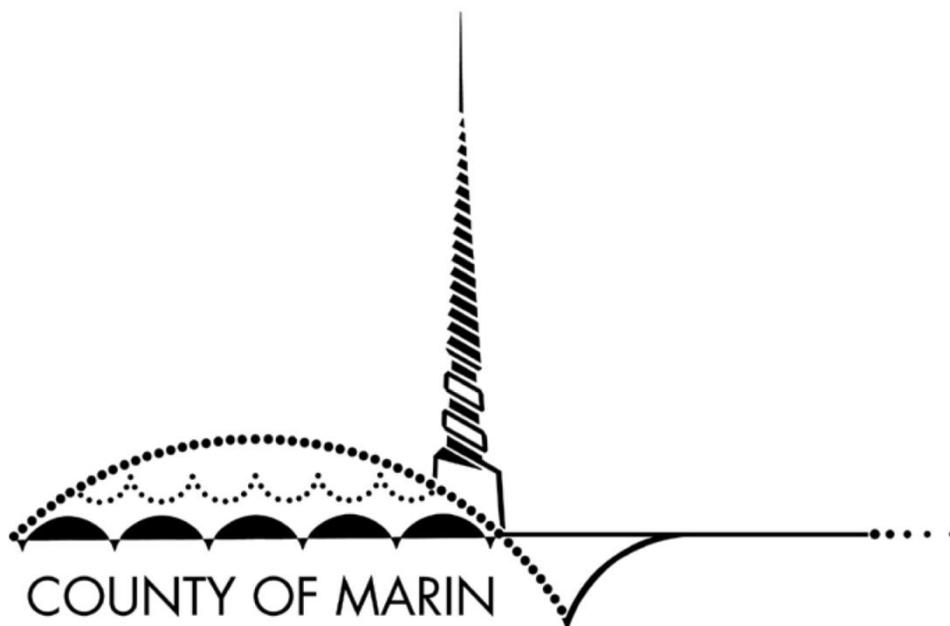
A: *Yellow School Bus for Traffic Congestion Relief - 2017-2018 Marin County Civil Grand Jury*
B: Draft Response to Grand Jury Report

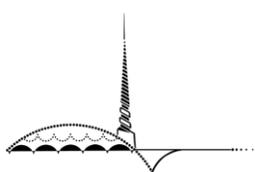
2017-2018 MARIN COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

Yellow School Bus for Traffic Congestion Relief

Report Date: June 1, 2018

Public Release Date: June 8, 2018





Yellow School Bus for Traffic Congestion Relief

SUMMARY

Traffic congestion is consistently cited as the number one problem in Marin County and school-related traffic is a significant contributor. In the past, schools had the resources to provide bus service to a high proportion of their students. With the funding limitations imposed by Proposition 13, along with other funding constraints, most school districts are not able to afford school bus programs.

Marin Transit, the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM) and the Marin County Office of Education (MCOE) produced the Coordinated County Student Transportation Study¹ in December 2015. The focus of the study was to identify options to relieve roadway congestion, encourage healthy ways to get to school and improve the coordination of resources dedicated to providing school transportation. The study found significant opportunity for school buses but no feasible method of funding.

A district-by-district approach to Yellow School Bus (YSB) programs has been undertaken for traffic relief. These programs were initiated, funded, and managed in different ways. Existing YSB programs in Marin lack the coordination and consistent funding that could maximize efficiency. There are some school districts with no YSB service. Other school districts have limited service, while still others have comprehensive programs. This lack of coordination exists because no organization has the authority to coordinate and manage a YSB program.

Mill Valley and Tiburon/Belvedere began YSB programs for students in kindergarten through 8th grade (K-8), with the County and those municipalities contributing funds to reduce the cost of bus passes. These are two examples where cooperation and collaboration between the cities/County and school districts have created YSB programs that are popular with school families and have been documented to be effective in reducing traffic during morning and mid-afternoon commute times.

School districts, transportation agencies, and municipalities should develop a cost-efficient, coordinated YSB program serving more K-8 schools. Marin Transit is well positioned to manage such a program. They have the expertise to negotiate contracts and manage operations resulting in economies of scale and a more efficiently run program. Under this proposed YSB program, the management would be overseen by a committee representing Marin County, participating municipalities, the MCOE and those school districts that choose to participate.

A YSB parking and maintenance facility is essential for this program to be fully realized. The County and municipalities should place a high priority on supporting Marin Transit in their efforts to locate and acquire a suitable facility.

¹ [“Coordinated County Student Transportation Study.”](#) Marin Transit, Transportation Authority of Marin & Marin County Office of Education. Dec. 2015.

BACKGROUND

When Marin residents are asked about the most pressing problems in the county, traffic congestion is routinely at the top.² What, if anything, can be done?

The option of increasing road capacity is limited. Most of the problem areas are bounded on all sides by natural barriers or prohibitively expensive private property and cannot be physically widened. Moreover, studies show that increasing road capacity does not decrease congestion significantly because added traffic fills up the extra space.³

Intelligent management of traffic signals is another option. Unfortunately, optimizing traffic signals for one direction may result in reducing flow in the competing direction. For this reason, signal optimization is always a compromise. Traffic engineers are trying various strategies, but the improvements in traffic flow realizable by signal management are constrained by the practical necessity of keeping traffic moving.

Changing work and school starting times has been studied and showed some promise. However, adjusting work hours by enough to make a significant impact on traffic would likely not be acceptable to most workers — or their employers. The same situation applies to school hours. These have been adjusted to some extent, with some school districts staggering starting times. Although this is helpful, the problem of too many cars on Marin's finite road capacity remains.

Carpooling has been encouraged for years through dedicated lanes, free or reduced tolls, and employer incentives. Some students get from home to school via carpool, and there is probably some room for improvement. However, due to differences in individual schedules and routines, it is difficult to increase carpool use much beyond what it is now. Short of a breakthrough technology or some unforeseeable change in driving habits, there is only one way to reduce congestion significantly: remove cars from the road.

The only practical, achievable way to remove cars from the road is mass transportation.⁴ However, most drivers appear to prefer the convenience of independent transport to using mass transport. The picture is brighter in the case of school transportation. If school buses were more widely available and used, it could make a significant, positive impact on congestion. This has already been demonstrated in Marin in the case of Tiburon.⁵ Increasing school bus usage seems to be our best chance at reducing school-associated traffic congestion.

² Prado, Mark. "[Marin poll cites Highway 101 clot as top commuter concern.](#)" *Marin Independent Journal*. 12 June 2017.

³ Duranton, Gilles and Turner, Matthew. "[The Fundamental Law of Road Congestion: Evidence from the US.](#)" *American Economic Review*. Vol. 101, No. 6, Oct. 2011, pp. 2616-52.

⁴ Anderson, Michael L. "[Subways, Strikes, and Slowdowns: The Impacts of Public Transit on Highway Congestion.](#)" *American Economic Review*. 2014. Vol. 104, No. 9, pp. 2763–2796.

⁵ Krawitt, Carl. "[Tiburon peninsula school buses are worth the investment.](#)" *Marin Independent Journal*. 18 July 2016.

APPROACH / METHODOLOGY

Research for this project included:

- Review of school bus programs and funding sources in Marin and other counties.
- Review of government support for school buses.
- Review of traffic congestion patterns affecting the County.
- Review of several school bus Joint Powers Authorities (JPAs).
- Interviews with various entities associated with traffic and transportation, municipalities and school districts.

DISCUSSION

History

"I had to walk a mile in the rain and snow to get to school" goes the old saying.

Walking to school was pretty much the way it was until the first school bus was built in 1927. The body was built to fit over the wooden frame of a Model T Ford. In 1939, Frank W. Cyr, professor emeritus of rural education at Teachers College, Columbia University, organized a conference at the school. He gathered transportation officials from all 48 states and specialists from school bus manufacturing firms to establish the first national school bus construction standards. It was also decided that the color yellow would represent school buses. Because of his leadership in the program, Mr. Cyr became known as the "Father of the Yellow School Bus."⁶

The 76-passenger, heavy-duty Crown Supercoach⁷ had the highest capacity at the time and fit the needs of California school districts that operated in terrain requiring tough vehicles. These yellow school buses were also a good fit for the hills and valleys of central and southern Marin, where narrow, winding streets made it difficult for students to walk to school safely.

Initially, the federal government provided funding for the yellow bus programs. This was especially helpful in Marin where the population was growing and citizens were coping with post-Depression economic hardships and World War II gas rationing. School buses were the norm until the 1978 passage of Proposition 13, which rolled back property taxes and capped annual tax increases. As funding dried up and many yellow school bus programs were cut back, parents were compelled to drive their children to school. From 2000 through 2015, there was a further decline in funding, and thus in service, because of the state's Local Control Funding Formula and frozen funding levels. No longer was there a stream of funding dedicated to student transportation; many districts felt newly unrestricted funds could be better used on academic or enrichment programs. Consequently, several school districts in Marin dropped their yellow bus program entirely. Major developments in the history of California's home to school transportation (HTST) programs are summarized in the table below.

⁶ "[Frank W. Cyr, 95, 'Father of the Yellow School Bus'.](#)" *Columbia University Record*, Vol. 21, No.1, 8 Sept. 1995.

⁷ Valentine, J. H. "[Crown Coach: California's Specialty Builder.](#)" *Tripod.com*.

Major Developments in the History of the HTST Program⁸

1947–48	<p>State Creates HTST Program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reimburses transportation costs on a sliding scale, covering between 50 percent and 90 percent of costs beyond certain spending thresholds. Provides additional funding for districts with lower property tax values.
1951–52	<p>State Creates a Special Education Transportation Program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reimburses 100 percent of associated costs (up to a maximum amount per pupil) for transporting students with severe disabilities.
1981–82	<p>State Revises HTST Formula (Part of State’s Larger Response to Passage of Proposition 13).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freezes funding allocations at prior-year levels. For future years, only mechanism to increase HTST allocations is through cost-of-living adjustments given to all districts. Introduces practice of making permanent, dollar-for-dollar reductions in the HTST allocation of a district failing to spend its entire allocation in a given year.
1984–85	<p>State Consolidates General HTST and Special Education Transportation Funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freezes combined allocation at 1983–84 levels.
1992–93	<p>State Establishes New HTST Spending Requirement for Students With Severe Disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires districts to split HTST allocation into two pots, one for special education transportation (students with severe disabilities) and one for all other students, each with separate spending requirements. Freezes split at 1992–93 levels.
2008–09	<p>State Makes Various Changes in Response to Budget Shortfall.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for HTST (and many other categorical programs) reduced by 20 percent. Continues requiring the HTST allocation to be spent on transportation, but waives requirements for many other categorical programs.
2011–12	<p>State Eliminates, Then Restores HTST Program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminates HTST funding when state revenues fall below projections, pursuant to “trigger cuts” included in the 2011–12 budget package. Subsequently rescinds cuts to HTST program.
2013–14	<p>State Establishes New Funding System for Schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retains HTST program as a separate funding stream, freezes allocations at 2012–13 levels. Eliminates separate HTST spending requirements for general and special education transportation. Directs LAO to review HTST program and make recommendations to address historical inequities.

⁸ HTST = Home-to-School Transportation.

Traffic decreased as a result of job losses during the tech and mortgage economic downturns from 2000–2010. With the recent economic recovery and resulting job growth within the County, a tremendous influx of traffic began in Marin, clogging the freeways and side streets and making it difficult for commuters and parents transporting students. According to a survey conducted by TAM, Marin County is in an economic growth pattern that is expected to continue.

⁸ [“Review of School Transportation in California.”](#) Legislative Analyst’s Office, Table 6, 25 Feb. 2014.

The County experienced a job growth rate of 6.5% with 13,500 additional jobs created, while housing only increased 2.7% between 2010 and 2015.⁹ Marin's population and housing has increased very little in that time. The continued disparity between job and housing growth contributes to traffic congestion as out-of-county workers fill local jobs.

The growing traffic problem in Marin prompted a study addressing the transport of school children and its impact on local traffic.

Coordinated Countywide Student Transportation Study

Marin Transit, in partnership with the MCOE and TAM, conducted a study published in December of 2015 addressing the existing home-to-school transportation programs in the urbanized areas of Marin County and making suggestions for future improvement and expansion. The resulting report was guided by multiple stakeholders who formed the Technical Advisory Committee, composed of representatives from Marin Transit, TAM, MCOE, Caltrans, Marin cities and towns, Marin County, Marin County school districts located in the urbanized Highway 101 corridor, and the Marin Pupil Transportation JPA.

The study revealed that approximately half of the estimated 40,000 K-12 students travel by car to and from school during peak-hour traffic.

The report had three main goals: increasing access to schools; encouraging healthy options for getting to school (walking and biking); and traffic congestion relief. At the time of the study it was estimated that 21%-27% of the morning commute traffic involved parents taking their children to school. The study states:

As traffic and enrollment growth in Marin County has increased in recent years and roadway capacity has remained largely unchanged, the partner agencies recognized the relationship between peak hour traffic congestion and student access to school. While this concern is common across many regions, the problem is particularly acute in Marin County due to the transportation challenges presented by the geography, topography, and demographics of the region. Identifying innovative ways to address both congestion and access were the core goals of the study.¹⁰

The study focused on three modes for achieving the above-stated goals:

1. Supporting the widely-used Safe Routes to School (SR2S) program;
2. Increasing the use of supplemental transit (regular public transport that is adapted for school needs) for older students;
3. Expanding yellow school bus (YSB) programs, especially for younger students.

⁹ ["GETTING AROUND MARIN DRAFT REPORT."](#) 2017 STRATEGIC VISION PLAN, *Transportation Authority of Marin*, pg. 22, 26 July 2017 (cited 10 April 2010).

¹⁰ ["Coordinated Countywide Student Transportation Study."](#) *Marin Transit, Transportation Authority of Marin & Marin County Office of Education*. Dec. 2015, pp. 5-6.

The SR2S program, launched in Marin County and Arlington, MA and expanded nationwide, encourages walking and biking to school. Supplemental transit uses existing public transit routes for home-to-school travel by coordinating schedules to match school bell times.

At the time of the study, there were 59 public schools in 14 districts within or adjacent to urban areas of Marin. Seven schools in multiple districts in West Marin were not a part of the study. Five school districts (San Rafael, Dixie, Lagunitas, Reed Union, and Tamalpais Union) had yellow school bus programs. The Ross Valley Schools had a pre-existing program under the auspices of the Marin Transit District rather than the school district. Mill Valley added a pilot program after the completion of the study.

The existing YSB programs are providing significant and measurable traffic congestion relief.¹¹ Management of the programs varies. Some districts provide their own management but contract for the buses and drivers. Some are managed by Marin Transit, which also contracts for the actual buses and drivers. Two districts own their own buses. Funding also varies with a mixture of bus passes, city and county contributions, district funding, legacy state funding, and the 2004 transportation Measure A funds via a half-cent sales tax.

The study delineated areas around schools where walking and biking were appropriate. Areas farther away or with no safe routes for self-propelled transit were also identified. Based on this analysis, schools were grouped by their projected demand — high, medium, and low — for increased service from supplemental transit or yellow school buses.

The report explored current and future operating and capital costs in-depth and concluded that new funding would be needed to expand beyond existing programs. Essential capital investments include purchase of buses and acquiring an area for bus parking and maintenance facilities within the County.

All three modes of home-to-school transportation that were studied greatly increase the number of “green trips” and get many children out of single family cars. However, the study concluded that expanding the yellow school bus program offers the greatest chance for traffic congestion relief. “A comprehensive countywide busing program is estimated to attract nearly 5,000 additional students and to increase countywide bus usage by students from the current 13% to just over 30% of all trips.”¹² In conceiving this yellow school bus program, the report states:

This service model would be used to serve all students K-8 in Marin County. Similar to current practices, this service is envisioned to operate in one of two ways: contracted or in-house. Current in-house operations would be encouraged to continue operations and school districts that do not have this service could participate in a countywide contracted service with Marin Transit or a new entity.¹³

¹¹ [“Traffic Task Force Subcommittee Meeting.”](#) *City of Mill Valley, News* 2015.

¹² [“Coordinated Countywide Student Transportation Study.”](#) *Marin Transit, Transportation Authority of Marin & Marin County Office of Education*. Dec. 2015, pg. 51.

¹³ [Ibid](#) pg. 40

Recommended actions for yellow bus service do not necessarily call for a consolidation of providers but rather a coordinated plan for focusing resources and supporting school districts that wish to offer busing services. Aside from the actual service delivery, the study proposed a countywide data management system, a user-friendly transportation website and bus pass sales tools, and an equitable cost-sharing agreement that encourages efficiencies and cost savings.¹⁴

The study committee's number one recommendation is to:

“Develop a forum to identify and develop an appropriate organizational structure, a detailed financial plan, cost-sharing options, and a timeline for the expanded Yellow Bus service.”¹⁵

The report frequently states that an expanded yellow bus program must be managed by a lead agency with formalized input from stakeholders.

The full report can be found at “[Coordinated Countywide Student Transportation Study](#).”

While the 2015 study looked at three “green” and congestion-reducing options for home-to-school transit (SR2S, Supplemental Transit, Yellow School Buses), the Grand Jury has chosen to focus on yellow school buses for K-8 since they will have the greatest impact on traffic congestion relief. As the YSB program expands, Marin Transit may find ways to improve the supplemental transit for older students.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The yellow bus programs in Marin face many problems, including secured bus parking locations, dependable funding sources, and coordinated school bell times.

Parking and Maintenance Facility

Most existing YSB services in Marin are contracted through transportation companies based outside the County — no in-county companies exist. The lack of an in-county bus parking area and maintenance facility significantly impacts the cost and quality of bus service. The additional expenses of fuel and driver hours traveling to and from remote parking areas are passed on as increased fees. Pollution and congestion created by buses traveling the extra distance is also increased.

According to the transit officials interviewed, YSB companies are increasingly unwilling to expand service in Marin because of the lack of bus parking and maintenance facilities. Securing a parking and maintenance facility is essential for YSB expansion.

One major obstacle to securing a property for parking and maintenance appears to be local government's reluctance to allow a use that would result in the property being exempt from property tax. The Federal Transit Administration grant cannot be used to support yellow school

¹⁴ [Ibid](#) pg. 42

¹⁵ [Ibid](#) pg. 48

bus parking or maintenance; however, Marin Transit is budgeting reserved local funds for a site to park yellow buses. A dedicated parking and maintenance facility for school buses would not generate property tax revenue. A pre-existing, unused parking area would be a good option that would not involve foregoing of potential tax revenue of new building sites.

Marin Transit has obtained funding and is actively searching for a light industrial property of at least five acres. All interviewees expressed this issue as a pivotal challenge to advancing YSB programs.

Drivers

Yellow school bus drivers require special state certifications, background clearances, and ongoing training. In most cases, drivers need to commute into and out of Marin for only a few hours of work and this, along with special certification and training requirements, contributes to driver attrition. Recruiting and retaining drivers is a major problem. Efforts should be made to find creative solutions.

Funding

School districts that no longer receive state HTST funding find outside funds from cities/towns and the County with the majority paid by bus pass fees. Some of the current YSB programs receive limited funds from their towns; the County has also contributed when unincorporated areas are a part of a district. Cities, towns and the County, which all run on annual budgets, will not commit to allocating ongoing funds for YSB. Annual budgets can fluctuate depending on the economy and property tax revenue. Therefore, YSB funding from county and municipalities are temporary and inconsistent. Many school districts are no longer in the transportation business and do not consider it an educational priority.

Bell Times

Coordinating school bell times to maximize bus utilization is important to a well-functioning YSB program. The MCOE has worked with Marin Transit and school districts when developing schedules. Using buses for more than one route each morning and afternoon can significantly reduce costs.

CONCLUSIONS

Existing YSB programs in Marin lack coordination and consistent funding resulting in inefficiencies. There are school districts with no YSB service. Other school districts have limited service while still others have comprehensive programs. Funding sources vary between districts as well. The Grand Jury concludes that school districts, transportation agencies, and municipalities should develop a cost-efficient, coordinated YSB program serving more K-8 schools.

YSB Programs Managed by Marin Transit 2017/18

School District	Mill Valley	Reed Union	Ross Valley
Oversight by	City, Mill Valley School District	Tiburon Peninsula Traffic Relief, JPA*	Marin Transit
Direct Funding Sources**	A, B, C, F	A, B, C, F	B 2%, C 18%, D 24%, F 56%
Marin Transit Provides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Route planning ✓ Website development ✓ Pass sales ✓ Customer service ✓ Daily bus monitoring via GPS technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Route planning ✓ Real-time communications with "Find My Bus" App ✓ Daily bus monitoring via GPS technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Route planning ✓ Contract ownership ✓ Website development ✓ Pass sales and production ✓ Customer service ✓ Daily bus monitoring via GPS technology
Annual Pass ONE WAY	\$350 (\$375 in mid-June)	\$295	\$375
Annual Pass ROUND TRIP	\$625 (\$675 in mid-June)	\$590	\$750
Schools Serviced	3	4	3
Buses	2 Michael's Buses District Contract	7 First Student Buses JPA Contract	6 Michael's Buses Marin Transit Contract
# Routes	2 morning, 2 afternoon	12 morning, 12 afternoon	10 morning, 9 afternoon
Fare payment link	transit.mvschools.org/faq	buschallenge.org	store.marintransit.org/?q=faq

*Also known as the Yellow Bus Challenge

**Funding sources for YSB programs: A - School District Revenue, B - Municipality Assistance, C - County (General Fund) Assistance, D - Marin Transit, E - California Assistance, F - YSB Pass Sales

YSB Programs NOT Managed by Marin Transit 2017/18

School District	San Rafael Elementary	Dixie
Oversight by	School District	School District
Direct Funding Sources*	A, E, F	A, E, F
Marin Transit Provides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supplemental ✓ Procurement Support for YSB Contract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supplemental
Annual Pass ONE WAY	n/a	\$225
Annual Pass ROUND TRIP	\$420 (1st Child) or \$220 per Semester	\$399
Schools Serviced	9 K-8 in District	4
Buses	12 by First Student Contract	District Owned
# Routes	30 morning, 32 afternoon	10 morning, 10 afternoon

*Funding sources for YSB programs: A - School District Revenue, B - Municipality Assistance, C - County (General Fund) Assistance, D - Marin Transit, E - California Assistance, F - YSB pass sales

A coordinated YSB program for K-8 students clearly has benefits for Marin County residents. Most significantly, traffic congestion at peak times would be reduced. Parents would be relieved of school pickup and dropoff, which often requires workarounds for jobs and other responsibilities.

The major argument against buses has always been cost and the fear of those costs crowding out important school programs. However, the growing demand for bus service is demonstrated by the fact that several districts have taken up the challenge of starting their own programs in their areas without compromising education funds. In addition, there are families who are on a bus-pass waiting list for existing YSB service.

The case-by-case approach to a YSB program has been undertaken by various districts for similar reasons but were initiated, funded, and managed in different ways because no organization had the authority to create and manage a YSB program. The Grand Jury strongly believes that Marin Transit is well-positioned to take on that role. They have the expertise to negotiate, manage, and use economies of scale to run the program efficiently. Under this proposed YSB program, the management would be overseen by a committee representing the County, MCOE, municipalities, and local school districts that choose to participate.

A coordinated YSB program managed by Marin Transit could also help to acquire a bus parking and maintenance facility which would not only decrease operating costs but is necessary to expand service. Acquiring a local facility could have additional benefits such as installing solar panels in partnership with MCE (formerly Marin Clean Energy). This would increase the potential for acquiring and trading for electric buses contributing to the County's goal of sustainability.

The first step in initiating the YSB program is to create and empower a committee whose members would include a representative from Marin County and each school district and municipality that is involved in the program. The YSB Committee would be chaired by the Marin Transit representative in charge of the YSB Program. Any new district that opts into the program would attain a seat on the committee, so all stakeholders would be represented.

To initiate the program, and not be sidelined by the cost issue, the YSB Committee should identify the areas that will have the most impact on traffic relief. Marin Transit would determine costs per district based upon criteria agreed to by the committee, such as distances, number of buses needed, estimated ridership, etc. Those costs can be offset by any contributions made by the respective jurisdictions. As happens now, any difference would be paid for by bus passes. Over time, bus pass prices per student will likely be reduced due to:

- Increased usage.
- Efficiency of a centralized program.
- Increased transportation funds.
- Re-allocation of transit funds to YSB from less efficient routes.

The main functions to be managed by Marin Transit, with the input from YSB Committee members, should include the following:

- **Route planning:** Ensure the most efficient use of buses and routes to maximize traffic reduction, use of buses, and customer (student/parent) satisfaction. This may include evaluation and adjustments of existing public transit routes to enhance the YSB program.
- **Contract management:** Vendor selection and contract negotiations and/or purchase or lease of buses and labor negotiations with drivers if applicable.
- **Facility and maintenance planning:** Prioritize efforts to locate and purchase a site for bus parking and maintenance and encourage the stakeholders to help with this process.
- **Financial management:** Determine costs and fees to the districts, billing and collection of bus pass fares.
- **Communication:** Create and manage online systems to provide real-time information to parents, operators and school districts.

FINDINGS

- F1. Traffic congestion is consistently cited as the number one problem in the county and school-related traffic is a significant contributor.
- F2. School buses have been shown to reduce traffic congestion.
- F3. There are school districts with no bus service and others with varying levels of service. The lack of coordination results in inefficiencies.
- F4. Current school bus funding includes bus pass sales and various municipality and county contributions. The municipal and county contributions are temporary and inconsistent.
- F5. There is demand to establish and/or expand YSB programs in the County.
- F6. Securing dedicated YSB bus parking and a maintenance facility is essential for expansion of a countywide YSB program.
- F7. The YSB programs in Marin face many challenges, including dependable funding sources, bus drivers and coordinated school bell times.
- F8. Marin Transit is the appropriate entity to efficiently manage a coordinated YSB program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to establish a coordinated YSB program to relieve associated traffic congestion the grand jury recommends the following:

- R1. The Marin County Board of Supervisors should work with Marin Transit to secure ample locations for bus parking and a location for bus maintenance by the end of 2018.
- R2. All municipalities should work with Marin Transit to secure ample locations for bus parking and a location for bus maintenance by the end of 2018.
- R3. Marin Transit should produce and make public a list of possible sites for bus parking and maintenance and the barriers to purchasing and utilizing each site by October 2018.
- R4. Marin Transit should facilitate negotiations for a financial arrangement across the full group of participants that would distribute any tax revenue lost by a municipality or the County for providing a parking or maintenance facility.
- R5. The Marin County Board of Supervisors should direct Marin Transit to establish a new standing YSB committee by September 2018.
- R6. Marin Transit should establish a new standing YSB committee that would provide guidance on YSB issues to include representatives from the County, Marin County Office of Education, and each school district and municipality in the urbanized areas of Marin. The initial meeting should be held by October of 2018.
- R7. School districts (with or without existing YSB programs) and municipalities within the urbanized area of the County should join and actively participate in the YSB committee providing guidance to Marin Transit on YSB issues, such as cost allocations, bell times and routes. The initial meeting should be held by October of 2018.
- R8. The YSB committee should work toward the establishment of a coordinated YSB for K-8 program for the urbanized areas of Marin with the goal of beginning the coordinated program by the 2019-2020 school year.
- R9. Marin Transit should manage the development and operations of the coordinated YSB program beginning immediately, with the goal of initiating operations by the 2019-2020 school year.
- R10. The County and municipalities of the urbanized corridor should make financial support of all YSB programs a part of each year's budgeting process.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal code section 933.05, the grand jury requests responses as follows:

From the following governing bodies:

- County of Marin (R1, R4, R5, R8, R10)
- Marin Transit District (R3, R4, R6, R8, R9)
- Transit Authority of Marin (R8)
- Dixie School District (R7, R8)
- Kentfield School District (R7, R8)
- Lagunitas School District (R7, R8)
- Larkspur - Corte Madera School District (R7, R8)
- Mill Valley School District (R7, R8)
- Reed Union School District (R7, R8)
- Ross School District (R7, R8)
- Ross Valley School District (R7, R8)
- San Rafael Elementary School District (R7, R8)
- Sausalito-Marín City School District (R7, R8)
- Novato Unified School District (R7, R8)
- City of Belvedere (R2, R4, R7, R8, R10)
- Town of Corte Madera (R2, R4, R7, R8, R10)
- Town of Fairfax (R2, R4, R7, R8, R10)
- City of Larkspur (R2, R4, R7, R8, R10)
- City of Mill Valley (R2, R4, R7, R8, R10)
- City of Novato (R2, R4, R7, R8, R10)
- Town of Ross (R2, R4, R7, R8, R10)
- Town of San Anselmo (R2, R4, R7, R8, R10)
- City of San Rafael (R2, R4, R7, R8, R10)
- City of Sausalito (R2, R4, R7, R8, R10)
- Town of Tiburon (R2, R4, R7, R8, R10)

The governing bodies indicated above should be aware that the comment or response of the governing body must be conducted in accordance with Penal Code section 933 (c) and subject to the notice, agenda and open meeting requirements of the Brown Act.

From the following individual:

- Marin County Superintendent of Schools (R8)

Note: At the time this report was prepared information was available at the websites listed.

Reports issued by the Civil Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code Section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Civil Grand Jury. The California State Legislature has stated that it intends the provisions of Penal Code Section 929 prohibiting disclosure of witness identities to encourage full candor in testimony in Grand Jury investigations by protecting the privacy and confidentiality of those who participate in any Civil Grand Jury investigation.

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

Report Title: Yellow School Bus for Traffic Congestion Relief

Report Date: June 1, 2018

Agenda Date: July 26, 2018

Response by: Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM)

RECOMMENDATIONS

R8. The YSB committee should work toward the establishment of a coordinated YSB for K-8 Program for the urbanized areas of Marin with the goal of beginning the coordinated program by the 2019-2020 school year.

Response: R8. The YSB committee should work toward the establishment of a coordinated YSB for K-8 program for the urbanized areas of Marin with the goal of beginning the coordinated program by the 2019-2020 school year.

Response to R8. The recommendation has not yet been implemented. It will be implemented in the future if reliable, ongoing funding for a coordinated yellow bus program is secured.

A committee may help further develop a coordinated Yellow School Bus program, assist in identifying ongoing operating funds, and help secure a parking and maintenance facility for buses. The program can be implemented once the funding plan is in place. Given that a reliable ongoing source of funds has not been identified, it is unlikely that a fully coordinated program will be in place by 2019-2020.

Please also note the following:

As a part of the "Coordinated Countywide School Transportation Study," Marin Transit has convened representatives from Marin County, Marin County Office of Education, and each school district and municipality in the urbanized areas of Marin. Letters were sent to each City Manager and each school district Superintendent inviting their participation in the study. In May 2016, the Marin Transit Board of Directors established an Ad Hoc Committee on School Transportation comprised of three Board members. The Ad Hoc Committee on School Transportation has met ten times, and interested representatives from the County, cities, and school districts have attended these meetings. Additionally, Marin Transit staff have convened smaller groups with similar interests or groups sharing similar geography and student populations. These groups have met as needed or as requested over the course of the past two years to discuss school transportation issues.

The Ad Hoc Committee has considered convening an expanded group of school transportation stakeholders. They determined that a larger stakeholder group should be convened when a reliable, ongoing funding source for yellow school bus operations is identified. If the Transportation Authority of Marin's countywide half cent transportation sales tax is renewed in November 2018, a small increase in school transportation funding will be available. The Ad Hoc Committee will consider establishing a larger advisory group at that time.