



**Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS)
Joint Powers Authority
MINUTES**

DATE

Thursday, May 24, 2018

The regular meeting of the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) Joint Powers Authority Board was held on Thursday, May 24, 2018, at the Merced County Association of Governments, Front Conference Room, 369 W. 18th Street, Merced, CA and conducted by teleconference at the Mariposa County Library, Community Resource Room, 4978 10th Street, Mariposa, CA, and Sierra Center Mall, CAO Conference Room, Third Floor, 452 Old Mammoth Road, Mammoth Lakes, CA and was called to order by Vice Chair Stacy Corless at 9:03 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Stacy Corless, Mono County Supervisor, Vice Chair (via teleconference)
Bob Gardner, Tuolumne County Supervisor (via teleconference)
Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County Supervisor
Jerry O'Banion, Merced County Supervisor
Rosemarie Smallcombe, Mariposa County Supervisor, Chair (via teleconference)

MEMBERS ABSENT

Rhonda Armstrong, Council Member, City of Kerman
John Gray, Tuolumne County Supervisor
Daron McDaniel, Merced County Supervisor
Nathan Vosburg, Council Member, City of Coalinga
Tom Wheeler, Madera County Supervisor

OTHERS PRESENT

Denise Demery, VIA Trailways
Jim Donovan, NPS
Darin Grossi, Tuolumne County Transit Agency
Curtis Riggs, VIA Trailways

STAFF PRESENT

Nav Bagri, Finance Director
Cindy Kelly, Assistant Transit Manager
Navneet Mattu, Transit Administrative Assistant
Alicia Ochoa-Jones, Purchasing and Contracts Manager
Artis Smith, Transit Director

1. Introductions

Vice Chair Corless led the introductions.

2. Public Comment

None.

3. YARTS Financial Position - Discussion of Options for Increasing Revenue and Decreasing Costs

Cindy Kelly informed the committee that YARTS is currently operating under increased financial restraints. Ms. Kelly stated that the costs of operations, fuel and maintenance continue to rise, while YARTS revenues have not increased since 2015. Ms. Kelly said that YARTS will be able to operate its current services in 2018-2019. Ms. Kelly mentioned that it will be challenging for YARTS to operate in fiscal year 2019-2020. Ms. Kelly reported that these challenges will be addressed in the upcoming Short-Range Transit Plan and informed the Directors that the YARTS Board will have to take measures to increase revenues or decrease costs in year two of the contract.

Director Gardner stated that the last option for YARTS would be to eliminate service. He was surprised with the fact that the fares have not increased for the past 10 years. Director Gardner suggested that each county may be able to increase their county contribution and would like to see an increase in fares by 10%. Director Gardner questioned if YARTS will be able to get an increase in the Cooperative Agreement with the National Park Service. Ms. Kelly informed the committee that the costs are based on hours, and those costs are from the contract in 2012.

Chair Smallcombe asked about the ground work to increase fares for YARTS. Ms. Kelly stated that it does require a public hearing, a 30-day notification period, then it must be approved by the YARTS Board. If approved, a 60-day period for implementation begins. Therefore, the process will be completed by end of this year and the earliest the fares could increase would be January 2019.

Chair Smallcombe asked about the general approach of other transit industries when it comes to increasing fares. Ms. Kelly responded that most transit industries go with the approach to make annual increases. Ms. Kelly mentioned that the smaller transit industries tend to go with smaller changes each year. Chair Smallcombe asked if YARTS Board must go thru the same process each year to increase fares. Ms. Kelly stated that to avoid the process each year, the Board can determine increase frequency in the original action.

Director Menetrey commented that Tuolumne and Madera Counties will assist with contributions if they become part of the YARTS Board. Chair Smallcombe asked how much Tuolumne and Madera County will contribute toward YARTS. Darin Grossi responded that Tuolumne County doesn't know the specific amount for contribution until the Transit Development Plan (or SRTP) is completed. Tuolumne County has planned to budget contributions for YARTS for the fiscal year 2019-2020.

Director Menetrey asked if Fresno County can be approached again for contribution.

Director Corless urged the YARTS Board to take action in July's JPA meeting to increase fares.

Cindy Kelly informed the committee that as of June 1st, 2018, the gate fee will increase for Yosemite National Park. Also, she mentioned that YARTS fares will be less than the gate fee.

Director Gardner suggested YARTS staff to bring the action item to increase fares to the July JPA meeting.

Darin Grossi commented that he agrees with the fare increase plan and suggested that YARTS should not dismiss any of the options. Mr. Grossi suggested YARTS staff break down subsidies by each run and have data available for the Transit Development Plan (or SRTP). Chair Smallcombe stated that she had a previous conversation with Mr. Whittington and Ms. Kelly to evaluate the runs that could be eliminated from YARTS service. Ms. Kelly informed the committee that the hourly rate that YARTS pays the contractor will increase if some of the runs are eliminated.

Director Corless asked about the immediate short-term step that can be taken to make sure YARTS keep running.

Chair Smallcombe commented that the Short-Range Transit Plan will assist YARTS with additional actions, if necessary.

Denise Demery stated that when YARTS gives out the fares to the public, people are shocked to hear such a low rate. Ms. Demery stated that there will not be an issue to increase fares. Chair Smallcombe thanked Ms. Demery for the great input from a customer viewpoint.

Director Menetrey asked if there could be a split for operations and capital. Director O'Banion suggested that there be a 60%/40% split after the first year and he would like to see options. He stated that since this was not an action item, he would like the chair to provide guidance to staff to bring this item back as an action item in July to start the process. Ms. Kelly mentioned that if fares are increased YARTS could use some of the funds for capital.

Darin Grossi suggested that the low-income and reduced fares remain the same because some people might not be able to absorb a fare increase. Chair Smallcombe requested that the staff bring a fare increase item back for action vote in July with fare increase options, the process for an increase and a timeline of when the increase would start.

Jim Donovan asked how YARTS interacts with Amtrak and Greyhound. Ms. Kelly responded that Amtrak pays YARTS a set daily rate in Merced and a per passenger rate in Fresno. Greyhound pays a per passenger rate.

4. YARTS Operations, Maintenance and Fuel Contract 2018-2020

Cindy Kelly informed the committee of the attached proposed service contract that was negotiated between VIA Trailways and YARTS. Ms. Kelly mentioned that if the contract is approved then it will commence on November 1, 2018, and terminate on October 31, 2020, and contains two optional one-year extensions.

Director O'Banion asked if the current contractor is aware of the budget constraints. Alicia Ochoa-Jones stated that VIA Trailways, the current contractor for YARTS, is aware of the budget constraints and the contract is agreeable to all the partners. Ms. Ochoa-Jones mentioned that the attached contract is a draft contract and it is pending until the results of this meeting and Caltrans review.

Director O'Banion commented that Merced County provides a huge contribution towards YARTS. Director O'Banion stated that YARTS should not give false hopes to VIA Trailways if they cannot afford service in year two of the contract. Director O'Banion asked about an "opt" out clause so that there was protection for YARTS and the contractor. He also stated that changing the contractor will not be beneficial to YARTS. Ms. Ochoa-Jones clarified that the drafted contract was approved by the legal counsel. Ms. Ochoa-Jones commented that she has been in constant contact with VIA Trailways and they are aware of YARTS challenges.

Curtis Riggs commented that VIA Trailways appreciates the vote to continue with the contract. Mr. Riggs stated that increasing fares will be a great opportunity for YARTS and the increase in the contract rates allow VIA to provide continued service to YARTS.

Director Gardner moved to authorize the Executive Director to execute the Operations, Maintenance and Fuel Contract between YARTS and VIA Trailways, for a period of two years, commencing on November 1, 2018, and terminating on October 31, 2020, (with two optional one-year extensions).
Seconded by Director O'Banion.

Ayes - Directors Smallcombe, Corless, Menetrey, Gardner, O'Banion

Noes - None

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. Adjournment

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS OF THE YARTS JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY THE MEETING WAS
ADJOURNED AT 9:55 a.m.**