

Received
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Santa Barbara
Grand Jury

June 20, 2005

The Honorable Judge Anderson
Superior Court
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
Attention: Foreperson
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

This responds to the findings and recommendations in the 2005 Grand Jury Report titled: "You Can't Get There From Here, a Regional Transit System for Santa Barbara County" that address the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments.

Finding 1: Santa Barbara County lacks an integrated regional transit system.

SBCAG Response: SBCAG partially agrees with the finding. There are several regional transit systems that serve identified transportation needs between local communities and between Santa Barbara County and the adjoining Ventura and San Luis Obispo counties. Some of these services are integrated through common bus stops, coordinated schedules and free transfers—other services are not well integrated.

Regional transit services are provided by the following systems:

Transit Provider	Route or Service	Areas Served	Span of Service
VCTC	VISTA Coastal Express	Ventura, Carpinteria, Santa Barbara and Goleta	Weekday and weekend bi-directional commuter and mid-day service
SBMTD	Valley Express	Solvang, Buellton to Goleta and Santa Barbara	Weekday single direction commuter service
SBCAG	Clean Air Express	Lompoc, Santa Maria to Santa Barbara and Goleta	Weekday single direction commuter service
SMAT	Breeze	Lompoc and Santa Maria	Weekday bi-directional commuter and midday service
SLO RTA	Route 10	SLO to Santa Maria with stop in between	Weekday bi-directional commuter and midday service. Limited midday Saturday service
City of Guadalupe	Guadalupe Flyer	Guadalupe and Santa Maria	Weekday bi-directional commuter and midday service

The County does have interregional transit services that serve the major peak hour commuter travelers from Santa Maria, Lompoc, Santa Ynez Valley to the South Coast of Santa Barbara County, and most recently, between Santa Maria and Lompoc. The County also has all day weekday and weekend interregional service between Ventura and the South Coast. However, as the report correctly points out the County does not have interregional services between certain communities, notably Lompoc and SY Valley or the SY Valley and Santa Maria, nor regular (non-commuter) service between north county and the south coast. Currently, the fixed route transit operators have focused their services and system expansions primarily on meeting transit needs within the urbanized areas where ridership demand is greatest. COLT serves the Lompoc Region, SMAT serves Santa Maria-Orcutt, SYVT serves the Santa Ynez Valley, and MTD serves the South Coast.

With the jobs-housing imbalance that emerged the last few years and continued growth of north county communities, commuting has increased between regions and the need for an integrated system has emerged. While SBCAG partially agrees with the finding, the viability of an integrated regional transit system has yet to be resolved. Performance data on the new regional services mentioned above will, after a sufficient start up period, test the viability of these services and may point to the need to expand regional transit to serve other communities or to expand integration of existing services.

Recommendation 1: The Santa Barbara County Association of Governments should act immediately to implement an integrated regional transit system. This can be done through a Joint Powers Agreement establishing a Joint Powers Authority among County transit operators or by contracting directly for connector transit services among communities.

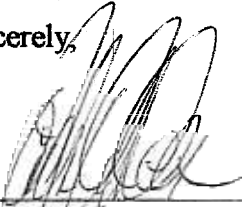
SBCAG's Response: SBCAG believes the recommendation requires further analysis. SBCAG believes the establishment of a JPA is premature. The North County currently lacks an overall plan for provision of regional transit services both within North County communities, and between these communities and adjacent areas such as the South Coast and southern San Luis Obispo County. Given population growth, increasing traffic congestion along commuter corridors, and increasing demands for regional transit, a long range regional transit plan can help paint a more detailed picture of how to better connect North County communities and provide a mechanism to define the needs of this area and develop a strategy for how to build an improved system in the future. The organizational structure to provide this new and improved transit system is an important component of a long range plan.

SBCAG in cooperation with North County transit providers will be preparing a North County Regional Transit Plan during FY 2005-06. The plan is included as a work element in SBCAG's recently adopted 2005-06 Overall Work Program. Funding for the plan will come from contributions by SBCAG, the County of Santa Barbara, and the cities of Santa Maria and Lompoc. The work element is attached for your information. The report will be completed by June 2006.

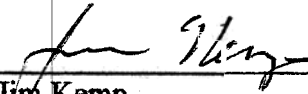
An overall assessment of forecasted demand and expected revenues is required to know if additional operating revenues are required. For example, the Plan would examine ridership growth projections for regional transit services such as the Clean Air Express, and evaluate funding options, including future Measure D revenues, for the service. As your report notes, a vote on the Measure D reauthorization package will likely be put before the voters in November 2006. Currently, Measure D funds are used for specialized transportation services for the disabled and elderly, for Clean Air Express and Coastal Express regional transit services and are used for local transit services as determined by each city and the county. Measure D provides critical funding for transit and other local transportation needs. Measure D is set to expire in 2010 and unless extended by county voters will be a loss of more than \$30 million annually for transportation. It should be noted that Measure D funds afford flexibility for transit operating expenses that is not available with most state and federal funding sources.

It was my pleasure to assist the Grand Jury in the development of the report. I thank you for the opportunity to comment on the report's finding and recommendation regarding regional transit services. If you have any questions please contact me or my Deputy Director, Michael Powers.

Sincerely,



Dick DeWees
Chair



Jim Kemp
Executive Director

Attachment: North County Regional Transit Plan Work Program