

MEMORANDUM

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
County of Placer

TO: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS DATE: April 29, 2008
FROM: KEN GREHM / WILL GARNER 
SUBJECT: ADDED PLACER COMMUTER EXPRESS ROUTE

ACTION REQUESTED / RECOMMENDATION

Authorize the Department of Public Works to add a fourth run to the Placer Commuter Express service using \$220,000 in funding from Caltrans and Placer County Transportation Planning Agency (PCTPA).

BACKGROUND / SUMMARY

Placer Commuter Express (PCE) is a commuter bus service that runs along the I-80 corridor between Colfax and Downtown Sacramento with three round trips on weekdays. One year ago, the Board approved expanding from two to three runs due to ridership increases that lead to overcrowding on buses. Since the third route was added, ridership has grown steadily to the point where buses on certain runs are overcrowding again. In March, we began operating a backup bus on the last morning and first afternoon runs in order to pick up overloads. We also announced that we would need to put a cap on ticket sales to include existing PCE passengers only. Average daily ridership in March on the three round trips was 241.

Caltrans Director, Will Kempton took notice of the ridership increases that were the subject of some news reports. He approached the PCTPA Executive Director to offer assistance from the State. More information on this is in the attached PCTPA Board Memorandum. The result of discussions over a two-week period is that Caltrans will be able to use Intercity Rail funding to provide \$185,000 over two years to match \$35,000 from PCTPA to add a 4th bus on PCE. The idea is that this 4th bus would be the precursor to additional passenger train service on the Capitol Corridor. Because of this link to passenger rail service, the added bus service is being termed the "Temporary Train". The PCTPA Board approved the proposal in concept at their March meeting and will consider approval of funding at their April Board meeting. Caltrans Division of Mass Transit has already drawn up the agreement to pass the funding to Placer County.

ENVIRONMENTAL

The action is statutorily exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 21080(b)(10), as it is a project to provide passenger service.

FISCAL IMPACT

Placer County Transit will receive \$185,000 from Caltrans and \$35,000 from PCTPA over a two-year period. Those funds, plus fare revenue, will cover the cost of adding a 4th run on the service for two years. This will require a modification to the proposed FY 2008/09 Budget to account for the added revenue and expense.

Attachment A: March 18, 2008 PCTPA Board Memorandum



PLACER COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION
PLANNING AGENCY

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors **DATE:** March 18, 2008

FROM: Celia McAdam, Executive Director

SUBJECT: "TEMPORARY TRAIN" SERVICE PROPOSAL

ACTION REQUESTED

Direct staff to work with Caltrans, Placer Commuter Express, Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority, and other appropriate parties to implement a "temporary train" commuter transit service in the I-80 corridor.

BACKGROUND

Both the Capitol Corridor and Placer Commuter Express (PCE) buses operate in the I-80 corridor between Auburn and Sacramento. The Capitol Corridor is restricted to one round trip per day, and is 75% full. PCTPA has been working aggressively over many years to increase that service, but Union Pacific has not yet been willing to allow the additional passenger capacity.

PCE operates three round trips between Colfax and downtown Sacramento, with stops at Auburn, Penryn, Loomis, Rocklin, and Roseville. The runs are full at key times in both the morning and afternoon requiring Placer County to restrict pass sales.

DISCUSSION

In the wake of news reports of the overflow of PCE transit riders, Caltrans Director Will Kempton contacted PCTPA staff on March 13 to offer the State's help. Specifically, Caltrans would be willing to provide majority funding of additional PCE service if PCTPA could come up with some matching funds and a specific proposal of how to do it.

Such a proposal is no easy task. Transit operations funding is one of the most difficult items to fund, due to restrictions under Article XIX of the State Constitution. Moreover, Caltrans does not control any funds that can be used for traditional bus transit operations.

However, through the Intercity Rail Program, Caltrans funds bus connections to trains. The proposal, shown in Attachment 1, would be for Caltrans to fund the 4th bus on the Placer Commuter Express as a "temporary train" for two years, until additional passenger rail service could be established in the same corridor. The "temporary train" would limit stops to Rocklin, Loomis, and Auburn, and could be started using leased buses within one month of approval.

In match to the Intercity Rail funding, we would need approximately \$35,000 over the next two years. These funds could potentially be redirected from other Local Transportation Fund (LTF) programs such as Article 3 Bicycle and Pedestrian Account or Article 4.5 Community Transit.

The proposal was submitted to Director Kempton on March 17, 2008. However, the situation is proving to be dynamic as ongoing discussions with Placer Commuter Express, Caltrans Division

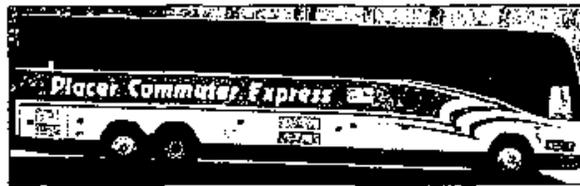
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of Rail, CCJPA, and others indicate much more work is needed to work out issues regarding requirements and constraints of Intercity Rail funding while providing the additional service that Placer residents need.

With Board direction to continue pursuing the "temporary train" concept to bring additional transit service to Placer County, staff will work to further refine the proposal. Assuming a strategy can be developed that meets legal and logistical requirements, staff will be bringing the final proposal and funding package to the TAC and Board for action.

CM:ss

Attachment 1: "Temporary Train" Funding Proposal for Placer Commuter Express



“TEMPORARY TRAIN” **PLACER COMMUTER EXPRESS** **FUNDING PROPOSAL**

The Situation

Both the Capitol Corridor and Placer Commuter Express (PCE) buses operate in the I-80 corridor between Auburn and Sacramento. The Capitol Corridor is restricted to one round trip per day, and is 75% full.

PCE operates three round trips between Colfax and downtown Sacramento, with stops at Auburn, Penryn, Loomis, Rocklin, and Roseville. The runs are full at key times in both the morning and afternoon requiring Placer County to restrict pass sales. A quick fix is needed to add a 4th bus to meet high demand at a net cost of approximately \$120,000 in the first year, and \$100,000 in year two.

The Challenge

Transit operations funding is one of the most difficult items to fund, due to restrictions under Article XIX of the State Constitution. Placer County Transit is currently funded by sales tax-based Local Transportation Funds (LTF) Article 4 funds, which has been reduced by more than 10% over the past two years.

The Proposal

Caltrans does not control any funds that can be used for traditional bus transit operations. However, through the Intercity Rail Program, Caltrans funds bus connections to trains. The proposal would be for Caltrans to fund the 4th bus on the Placer Commuter Express as a “temporary train” for two years, until additional passenger rail service could be established in the same corridor. The “temporary train” would limit stops to Rocklin, Loomis, and Auburn, and could be started using leased buses within one month of approval.

Specifically, if Caltrans can find \$100,000 in year 1 (2008/09), and \$85,000 in year 2 (2009/10) to add to the Intercity Rail Program and designate it for this “temporary train” service, PCTPA will provide the remaining funds through reallocation of LTF funds from other programs (either Article 3 or Article 4.5).

Benefits to Rail AND Transit

Caltrans is currently negotiating with Union Pacific to balance the TCIF application for goods movement with passenger rail capacity mitigations. Those negotiations should be resolved within two years to meet TCIF timelines. Once that rail capacity is realized, “temporary train” riders will be shifted to the higher capacity Capitol Corridor trains.