



KernCOG



Eastern Sierra Public Transportation Plan

Community-Based Transportation Planning Process and Goals and Objectives

DRAFT



Chapter 1. Community-Based Transportation Planning Process

Introduction

This working paper provides an overview of the community meetings conducted throughout the Eastern Sierra study area and their outcomes. Chapter 2 identifies eight goals and several objectives to support the next phase of the transportation planning process, based on the issues outlined by community members at the public meetings.

Summary of Community Workshops

Overview

Ten community meetings were held throughout the Eastern Sierra region in October 2004.

The objectives of these public workshops were threefold:

- To present the study and its purpose;
- To share the findings from the Existing Conditions Report; and
- To seek residents' feedback for short- and long-term goals for transit in the region, identifying and prioritizing transportation markets and passenger rail priorities.

The meetings included a slide presentation followed by a discussion to identify each community's priorities, markets, interest in rail and alternative transportation options, and other topics. Two representatives from the consulting team attended each workshop and facilitated the discussion.

The 10 meetings were held all along the Highway 395 corridor, in the following locations:

- Bishop (11 attendees)
- Bridgeport (4 attendees)
- June Lake (3 attendees)
- Lee Vining (17 attendees)
- Lone Pine (10 attendees)

- Mammoth Lakes (16+ attendees)
- Mojave (4 attendees)
- Ridgecrest (14 attendees)
- Rosamond (3 attendees)
- Walker (1 attendee)

A total of 83 attendees were counted at all of the meetings. Excluding persons who attended more than one workshop, at least 65 individuals participated in the community workshops.

Publicity

In advance of the community workshops, an agenda was prepared and reviewed by Kern COG staff. In addition, a press release was developed and tailored to individual communities, as needed. The consultant distributed the press release on behalf of Kern COG, and press releases were also issued by the Inyo LTC, Mono LTC and the Town of Mammoth Lakes. The consultant prepared a flier for the buses, which Inyo-Mono Transit staff posted. The City of Ridgecrest also posted information in municipal facilities. News coverage of the workshops was found in all major daily and weekly newspapers in the Eastern Sierra region, as well as on radio stations. In Bishop, some television coverage was also provided. A copy of the press release is included in Appendix A.

Findings and Key Issues

The following pages describe major issues raised at the community workshops. More specific issues from each workshop are presented in the meeting notes, which are included as Appendix B.

Long-Term Goals

Meeting participants clearly saw transit as a means of promoting economic development and improving their community's quality of life. Often-stated goals included alleviating congestion, improving commuting options, and providing greater mobility for tourists and visitors. Attendees were aware of the area's growth potential and upcoming development projects (e.g., residential developments, new regional airport in Mammoth). Moreover, they felt that transit projects should be planned to serve these new markets and ensure that the additional growth does not diminish the area's current attributes.



A new bus shelter in Mammoth Lakes facilitates more comfortable public access to the Mammoth Mountain ski area. It also highlights local investment in transit facilities as part of a community effort to enhance the pedestrian environment, making Mammoth Lakes an appealing tourist destination.

Another goal that community members raised is that transit must address housing growth in outlying areas. Many people who work in Mammoth, where high growth and a subsequent rise in housing demand have inflated prices, are finding that housing is costly. As a result, in both Inyo and Mono Counties, many families have moved to more rural locations. Housing is needed for the region's service employees, and maintaining housing affordability and/or access to residential areas and jobs is important.

Key Markets and Important Connections

During the public meetings, two markets for public transportation services were identified as most critical to serve:

- Transit is required to move residents throughout the Eastern Sierra and beyond the region.
- Tourists rely on transit to access recreational sites and wilderness areas.

Meeting attendees felt that better, more convenient access is needed to the closest metropolitan areas for both residents and tourists. They said that travel to Reno and Los Angeles was usually for non-work purposes (e.g., medical appointments, shopping trips, airport). At the southern end of the study area, many locals go to Los Angeles for work but also for medical trips. Local and intercity service to smaller communities was considered vital as well, especially for workers, seniors, students, and youth.

Even though attendees emphasized that transit is necessary for locals, tourists were considered an important market. A suggestion to serve visitors included instituting a service that circulates around major sites, such as campgrounds, motels, and key visitor destinations like Bodie, Mammoth Lakes and the Mono Basin. Some attendees felt that a tourist-oriented circulator should be a "transit service," not a "tour operator," that runs on a regular basis. Additionally, times should be adjusted according to seasonal fluctuations.

Transportation Options

The consultant presented 10 transportation options to meeting attendees and asked community members to talk about their interest in each. The options showcased several traditional and nontraditional transit modes or transportation programs. The table distributed to meeting attendees is included in Figure 1-1. This was accompanied by a slide presentation of these options.

Figure 1-1 Examples of Transit Modes and Transportation Programs (Presented at Community Workshops)

Option	Description	Examples
Fixed Route (Public) Local Service / Shuttle Intercity	Service that operates on a schedule and along a fixed route. Service hours and levels may fluctuate throughout the week or operate seasonally. There is usually a base fare for local service with reduced fares for seniors, disabled riders and youth. Fare on intercity service is often based on distance.	Mammoth Transit, IMT (including CREST line), KRT, Reds Meadow Shuttle (Seasonal), YARTS (Seasonal)
Fixed Route (Private) Intercity; Airport Shuttle	Similar to public fixed route except usually does not operate locally. Fares are based on distance traveled.	Greyhound, Amtrak bus, VIA Adventures (Yosemite)
Flexible Route	Similar to fixed route but the vehicle can deviate to provide on-demand service off of fixed route. Standard fares are charged for general public, usually with reduced fares for seniors, disabled riders and youth. Usually operated by a transit agency.	Stanislaus Runabout (Modesto)
Tour Operator	Specialized tour bus/van service to and from a tourist destination. Fares are generally based on the length of the tour. Services are usually operated by a private company.	VIA Adventures, Gray Line
Demand Response Senior/ADA General Public	Flexible transit service that provides door-to-door or curb-to-curb service on an appointment basis. Senior and ADA compliant service often requires passengers to be registered. A standard fare is charged for all riders. Can be operated by a transit authority or social service agency.	California City Transit, IMT, KRT, Mammoth Transit, Ridgecrest Transit System
Subscription Bus/Van Senior Center/Meals Programs Medical Appointments Employers	A service operated on a reservation basis from a specific origin (or area) to a specific destination. Fares are based on distance or subsidized. Can be operated by a public or private organization.	Dialysis service, Major employers
Rideshare (Carpool/Vanpool) Volunteer Employer/Employee based	Volunteer or employer/employee sponsored transportation program designed to encourage trip sharing. Volunteer programs usually match two or more people together who wish to make the same trip. Employer-based programs are sponsored by the employer rather than individuals. People can use their own private vehicle, or a program sponsor (such as a Council of Governments) can provide vans for larger groups.	Project Clean Air (Kern County)
Volunteer Driver Program Senior Center/Meals Programs Medical Appointments Church/Social Events	Program that organizes and arranges volunteers to provide transportation for medical appointments, senior meal programs or social events (such as church). May provide free trips or be funded on a donation basis. Drivers may use their own vehicle or vehicles purchased/maintained/insured by the volunteer driver program. May be sponsored by a public agency, transit authority or other social service organization (e.g., senior center).	Inyo-Mono Area Agency on Aging (Bishop)
Goods Delivery Services Groceries, Prescription Drugs, etc.	Volunteer or business-sponsored program that delivers goods from larger activity centers to smaller communities. The goal of these programs is to save trips by bringing goods to areas with out them. These goods are typically delivered on fixed-route services that are making the trip anyway, but may be provided by volunteer drivers. Programs may be organized by a social service agency, medical facility, transit authority or private business.	Trinity Transit (CA), Paul Bunyan Transit (MN)
Private Transportation Taxi Rental car	Transportation that is provided by private providers for specialized trips. The cost of this type of transportation is usually high and services are generally concentrated in larger communities.	Starr Yellow Cab (Ridgecrest), U-Save Auto Rental (Mammoth Lakes), Sierra Express (Mammoth Lakes)
Car Sharing Program	A private system in which a company or group of individuals share vehicles on a reservation basis and pay for the use on the basis of time or mileage.	Aspen (CO), Kitsap County (WA)

Attendees at the workshops in the smallest communities expressed interest in a goods delivery program, especially from major grocery stores or drug stores. A rideshare program was seen as a viable option for people working within the region. Casual carpooling, as it is conducted in the San Francisco Bay Area, whereby people line up and wait for a driver to pick them up at locations throughout the Bay Area, was seen as a workable option if it could capitalize on existing community networks and be supplemented by technology to make it “real-time.” The vast majority of participants,



Inyo-Mono Transit’s very personalized service means that residents of Inyo and Mono County’s smallest communities are able to enjoy a goods delivery service upon request. The transit system does not market the availability of this service.

however, expressed interest in having a service similar to the former Greyhound service but with better hours (not in the middle of the night).

Participants advised that to some degree, agencies and organizations are already implementing some of the nontraditional transportation options shown in Figure 1-1. These include the County Health Departments, IMACA, Inyo-Mono Transit’s informal prescription drug delivery, and agencies that rent cars for medical trips. Transit operators may be able to partner with these groups or provide some kind of support to expand their efforts.

Passenger Rail

Passenger rail appealed to many of the meeting attendees. They saw it as a way to avoid congestion and bad weather, and to travel via a mode that was fast and more comfortable than the bus. Many participants also felt that rail could be a way to attract tourists to the region.

However, concerns also were expressed about the costs, especially if trade-offs result in reductions in the current transit service. Another important concern for residents was that passenger rail service would have to be economical and that a trip to the Los Angeles area via rail would have to be competitive with the time it takes to travel by car. In order for rail to be successful, residents said a train must make convenient stops, operate at daytime and evening hours (especially to facilitate weekend travel), and at least be linked to local transit. Some participants worried that a passenger train would bypass smaller communities altogether.

Marketing Coordination

Meeting participants identified several opportunities to improve the marketing of public transit. This included enhancing Inyo-Mono Transit’s web site and providing more information about travel to Los Angeles and connections to parks via YARTS and the Reds

Meadow shuttle. User-friendly trip-planning software was suggested as a handy tool for both residents and visitors.

Because of the frequent intercity travel that takes place in the Eastern Sierra region, regional coordination was seen as critical to improving overall marketing efforts. According to attendees at the community workshops, transit operators should have a relatively thorough knowledge of other operators' services or service areas, and should be able to respond to callers' inquiries. Trip-planning software, if implemented, would necessitate inter-agency cooperation.

Other marketing venues mentioned during the meetings included partnering with tour operators, web sites for parks and recreation areas, and providing information to visitors' centers and their staff.

Conclusion

As a follow-up to the stakeholder interviews and bus/telephone surveys, the community workshops provided a forum for continued public participation in the Eastern Sierra Public Transportation Plan process.

Community participation in public transit planning is a challenge in any rural community. Although it would have been better to have a higher level of public involvement in the workshops, the consultant determined that the overall level of interest was appropriate given the scope of the project and the lack of any significant "controversial element" in this study. Many participants said informally that they appreciated the opportunity to share their opinions and learn about the progress of the study. Participants at the workshops who signed in with their name and address will be added to a contact database for the study and will be informed of recommendations in the next phase of the study process.

Chapter 2. Public Transportation Goals and Objectives for the Eastern Sierra Region

Vision for Transit in the Eastern Sierra

Developing a vision for transit service when existing services are fiscally constrained is challenging. While some people in the Eastern Sierra have said they would like to see public bus routes operating at a higher frequency and later into the evening, the reality is that resources are limited. Opportunities may exist for securing additional funds from untapped funding sources, through partnerships with private businesses, or if services are operated by private enterprises. In the short term, this Eastern Sierra Public Transportation Plan will proceed under the assumption that funding will remain at current levels and thus an attainable short-term vision for transit in the Eastern Sierra region must be constrained.

What is the Role of Transit Services in the Eastern Sierra Region?

Two key areas of focus were identified in the Existing Conditions Analysis: transit should serve tourists and transit should address the local and regional transportation needs of Eastern Sierra residents.

At the public meetings, a significant focus was on tourists, but the potential tourist market for public transportation is highly dependent on “supportive policies” and effective marketing. The region plays host to many recreational tourists, both international and from out-of-state, during the summer, while a large proportion of winter recreational visitors come from southern California. People driving a car to the region are unlikely to opt for transit once they arrive, unless parking limitations reduce access to places they want to go. Experience from peer systems suggest that where car access is allowed into a recreational area and a fare is charged, there is very low transit usage.



A billboard in Lone Pine beckons to passing tourists while a smaller sign points the way to a local medial clinic. Transit in the Eastern Sierra must address the needs of rural residents with limited transportation options as well as visitors to the region.

Public transit services in the Eastern Sierra must primarily meet the needs of individuals with limited mobility options. Secondly, public transit services should afford mobility to both visitors to the region and persons opting to use the service because it provides a convenient and efficient alternative to driving or relying on others.

Development densities are usually strong indicators of potential transit usage. Given the small population of the communities and cities within the study area, no significant residential densities exist that could support extensive resident-oriented transit service. On the other hand, employment sites such as hotels and other tourist-oriented services, as well as shopping and services are concentrated in Mammoth, Bishop, and Ridgecrest. In these communities, land-use patterns favor some form of local transit service. Traditional transit users also exist in the region, such as seniors or renters, but many of these individuals live in lower density areas or outside of the larger communities.

Goals for Public Transportation in the Eastern Sierra

Eight goals and their associated objectives are proposed for public transportation services in the Eastern Sierra region. These are large-scale goals that will be referenced and refined in the next stages of this study. These goals were developed based on the input from participants at the community meetings, findings presented in the Existing Conditions Report, existing transportation goals in the Kern COG Destination 2030 Regional Transportation Plan, the General Plans for Inyo and Mono Counties, and several local and regional transportation studies. The following pages present each goal, a discussion of its value for the region, and a set of objectives.

Goal 1: Enhance local mobility for key existing and potential user groups in the Eastern Sierras.

Overall, residents in the Eastern Sierra tend not to be transit-dependent, with many having access to vehicles. However, with a greater number of individuals employed in the growing low wage tourist-oriented service sector, as well as many retirees moving into the area, a growing proportion of residents have relatively limited access to transportation. The phone survey found that the majority of residents feel that transit is a critical issue for the region and that it should be available to people with limited transportation options (e.g., seniors, persons with disabilities, low-income individuals, youth). By focusing their services on these markets, transit providers in the region can further make their service more appealing, building an expanded ridership base.

Objectives:

1. Connect trip generators and attractors with high proportions of seniors, commuters, persons with disabilities, and students.
2. Operate during service hours, days and frequencies that are appropriate for the markets each of the transit providers serves.
3. Connect the key attractions in the Eastern Sierras that are substantial employment sites and tourist attractions.
4. Provide innovative transportation options to capture the high percentage of commuters who travel short distances (less than 10 miles) to work.
5. Provide good information about transit services in appropriate and accessible formats. (See Goal 4.)



Many residents at the community meetings were not aware of some of the transit services available to them in the region. For example, CREST has coordinated its schedule with YARTS so transfers can be made between the two services. Nevertheless, several residents at the community meetings requested service to Yosemite.

Goal 2. Provide more efficient transit service for current users while building new markets.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, community members and stakeholders identified two obvious markets for transit in the Eastern Sierras: (1) residents of the region and (2) visitors. What is common for both markets is the need for access throughout the Eastern Sierra and to the cities of Los Angeles, Bakersfield, Reno, and to some extent, Las Vegas. Residents require access to these locations for employment, shopping, and educational and medical services. Visitors, usually coming from the larger cities, travel to resort areas or small towns in the Eastern Sierra for recreational or relaxation purposes. Both groups demand access for travel between the Eastern Sierra and the airports in Reno and Los Angeles.

More efficient service could be achieved through increasing some frequencies, identifying meaningful service policies, and better meeting service span needs of residents in some corridors. It may also include more flexible scheduling of services to meet daily “peak” hour commuter transportation needs as well as seasonal variation.

One possibility is implementing a daily service similar to the former Greyhound service or running the current CREST lines on a daily basis for a trial period. The household phone survey found that nearly 40% of respondents used the former Greyhound service at one time. Some attendees at the public meetings said that the former Greyhound bus was instrumental to meet their “everyday needs,” such as going to the bank or post office.

Objectives:

1. Provide access to major centers of demand with reliable, coordinated connections and service from small towns.
2. Higher frequency services should be provided in the relatively few areas and at the times when higher ridership service is possible.
3. For origin-destination pairs that cannot be served by one transit agency, service times and transfers should be coordinated and timed, so that route connections and transfers are easily understood and hassle-free.
4. Transit agencies should be well versed in services offered by neighboring providers, so that customer service staff can assist patrons with inquiries about intercity service and connections.
5. Design a policy that links the different transit providers’ fares to simplify fare payment or provide discounts to users (e.g., Ecopass, Smart Card, or discounted transfers when making connections).
6. Ensure vehicles are appropriate for the markets, weather, distances traveled, and cargo/baggage needs of transit users.
7. Consider premium transit services to meet the demands of visitors.

Goal 3: Identify non-traditional, innovative transportation options that will better address demands for services.

A variety of mobility options were discussed at the public meetings, including flex routes, subscription bus service, and volunteer driver programs. Many received favorable responses from participants, including a goods delivery program (whereby groceries or medication is delivered on the bus, not requiring individuals to take the bus to the store), ridesharing, and tour operators.

These various options must be reviewed for implementation or expansion. Some of these “options” are already available but are not specified in the transit policies of providers or are poorly marketed. For example, IMT already picks up and delivers prescription drugs upon request, but a formal policy is not in place to provide this service. Commuter rideshare programs are available in both Kern County and Mono County, which could be better showcased and expanded upon. Volunteer driver services of Inyo Mono Advocates for Community Action (IMACA) and other regional nonprofit organizations can be better integrated into the regional transportation network.

Alternative funding for such programs must also be considered, so that residents do not feel that current transit services are being sacrificed for untested programs.

Objectives:

1. Partner with relevant local entities (e.g., pharmacies, grocery stores, employers, etc.) in the planning process of any new program. Ally with or provide support to groups that already have a transportation component as part of their overall service (e.g., Mono County Health Department or Salvation Army).
2. Launch pilot projects in a limited region to determine the likelihood of patronage and success.
3. Roll out comprehensive and appealing public information programs to publicize new services in appropriate and accessible formats.
4. Create incentive or reward programs that publicly honor individuals and/or employers that participate in or implement programs that reduce single-occupancy vehicle usage.

Goal 4: Enhance each service’s public information tools and ensure that all providers’ marketing activities are integrated.

While the household telephone survey found that more than half of the region’s residents are aware of their local transit service, many of them do not use it because they have no need for the service or they do not know enough about the service. Even attendees at the public meetings mentioned that they would like to know how to access Los Angeles and Reno on transit or how to make connections between different transit services.

Objectives:

1. Provide useful, positive public information about the public transportation services in the Eastern Sierra.
2. Improve basic information tools, including printed materials, to more effectively market services.
3. Strengthen providers’ web sites by improving each site’s usability and “friendliness,” possibly utilizing trip-planning software.
4. Incorporate information about connections to major regional destinations on all providers’ marketing materials.
5. Identify strategies for transit operators to work with tour operators and others in the business community to inform visitors about the public transit services available in the Eastern Sierra region.



Internet Web pages for Kern Regional Transit, YARTS, and Inyo-Mono Transit (left to right) all provide basic transit information. Each has a different interface and offers a different description about connecting services.

Goal 5: Develop an infrastructure for regional coordination.

The Eastern Sierra Expanded Transit System Study recommends increased frequencies and better coordination to provide dependable, year-round interregional transit service. To implement the recommendations of the study, significant coordination enhancements would be required.

While the benefits of coordination are clear and desirable, it may be difficult for agencies to agree on how this can be done. Thus some type of formal arrangement needs to be established, as well as incentives to draw them in and compel them to be a part of a regional, coordinated effort. Both YARTS and the services operated by IMT, and to some extent KRT, represent regional coordinated transit service. Bringing these services together and improving coordination throughout the study region will enhance overall mobility in the Eastern Sierra.

Objectives:

1. Explore the possibility of forming a regional Transportation Management Authority, Joint Powers Authority, or a similar intra-jurisdictional body to coordinate and plan transit in the region.
2. Identify the tools necessary for effective regional coordination. These may include passenger amenities, capital needs and public information needs.
3. Organize and facilitate scheduled discussions of regional coordination with policymakers in Inyo, Mono and Kern Counties.
4. Develop incentives for regional cooperation, or tie funding to programs that most effectively provide for coordinated transit services in the Eastern Sierra region.

Goal 6: Develop supportive policies to enhance the value and utility of transit services in the region.

Free transit services, buses with storage for skis and bicycles, bus passes that provide discounts at local merchants, charges for parking, mandatory transit services for areas with fragile ecosystems — these are examples of supportive policies that can boost ridership and enhance the effectiveness of public transit services and programs. While these types of strategies would not be successful in all portions of the Eastern Sierra, some of these or other supportive policies would improve the effectiveness of the services that are currently provided and may be applicable to alternatives developed in the next phase of this study.

Objectives:

1. Identify and evaluate potential supportive policies for the Eastern Sierra region.
2. Develop a program of supportive policies for each sector of the study region and prioritize those policies that are likely to have the greatest impact on the effectiveness of the transit programs.

A coupon for a free Valleywide one-day bus pass from the City of Tempe Transit. The coupon is titled "Ride the bus for free!" and contains the following text: "If you've never ridden the bus before, we'll give you a chance to try it. Just complete this coupon and mail it to us for a free Valleywide, one-day pass: City of Tempe Transit, P.O. Box 5002, Tempe, AZ 85280". Below the text are several lines for personal information: "Name _____", "Address _____ Apt. # _____", "City _____ Tempe _____ State AZ Zip Code _____", "Phone Number (____) _____ Age _____". At the bottom, there is a small asterisk: "*Excludes express routes. Must be a Tempe resident to redeem coupon. 78".

Policies that limit parking in certain areas, such as at trailheads on fragile lands in the study area, are examples of supportive transit policies that have been successful in similar large areas with significant publicly owned lands. Free fares or special promotional discounts for transit users represent another type of supportive policy.

Goal 7: Coordinate and align transit service planning with decisions involving land use and economic development.

Integrating land use and regional public transit services lies beyond transportation planning and decision-making. A higher degree of coordination between transportation providers and land use oversight agencies is vital to support successful transit services. Attendees at the public meetings seemed to understand the connection between land use and transportation, citing the area's development and stability as their key concerns, and noting affordable housing and economic growth as important issues for both the short- and long-term. Projects that are likely to result in additional population and employment growth — such as the planned regional airport in the Mammoth Lakes or Bishop area, the expansion of hotels in June Lake and Mammoth Lakes, new Cerro Coso College campuses — should be monitored. Involvement by transit staff on these projects' planning committees is encouraged.

A coordinated transit authority or agency may well be an important player in land-use projects during the planning process, especially if it could speak as a unified voice for transit providers in the region.

Objectives:

1. Participate in local and regional planning groups.
2. Consider co-sponsorship of transportation services with private or social service operators (e.g., car-sharing arrangement at a residential development, shuttle services at planned regional airport, etc.)
3. Enact land use controls to encourage transit use and discourage sprawl and single-occupant automobile commutes.
4. Ensure that bus stops are located in areas with a mix of uses that are pedestrian and bicycle friendly.
5. Recommend transit stops in locations that serve as a center of activity and provide access to a mix of uses in community centers.



An Inyo-Mono Transit bus stops in front of K-Mart in Bishop. Buses drive through large parking lots to provide front-door service to key activity centers.

Goal 8: Identify passenger rail alternatives that best serve the interests of Eastern Sierra residents and recreational trips to the region.

Attendees at the public meetings explained that passenger rail service to the Eastern Sierra should not only provide access to their region from the Los Angeles area, but should be the key alternative mode for travel to the airports, hospitals and shopping opportunities in the Los Angeles region for local residents and visitors. Many residents, as well as political and business leaders expressed enthusiasm about the possibility of passenger rail service between the Los Angeles area and Mammoth Lakes; a number of policymakers and planners expressed doubt about the feasibility of such a service.

Objectives:

1. Identify passenger rail options for the Eastern Sierra region and determine their financial feasibility.
2. Consider passenger rail alternatives that offer travel times competitive with private automobile travel.
3. Create a passenger rail plan that addresses the unique identity of the region.
4. Determine how passenger rail can connect to and enhance the regional intermodal transportation network (e.g., a future airport, programmed high-speed rail, Metrolink, and bus services).



For 65 years, the Ski Train has carried riders from Denver to the Winter Park Resort. Amenities of this and other rail services designed for tourists must be considered as part of the next steps of this study.

Next Steps

The objectives identified above essentially provide an outline for the development of transit service alternatives for the Eastern Sierra region. The next phase of the study will be to develop service options — based on the goals and objectives — that address the gaps and prioritize alternatives for improved transportation services in the Eastern Sierra. Alternatives will focus on both regular intercity service and the lifeline transit services offered between Eastern Sierra cities and communities. Service planning will be carried out in cooperation with Kern COG staff and representatives of the Eastern California Transportation Planning Partnership.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE



October 4, 2004
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Marilyn Beardslee, Kern Council of Governments, 661-861-2191
Joey M. Goldman, Nelson\Nygaard Associates, 415-284-1544

Public Asked to Share Ideas for Regional Bus and Passenger Rail Service in Inyo, Mono and Eastern Kern Counties

Eastern Sierra Public Transportation Plan: Community Workshops

Mono County

June Lake	Wednesday, October 13, 5:30 PM June Lake Community Center
Lee Vining	Wednesday, October 13, 7:30 PM Lee Vining Community Center
Mammoth Lakes & Long Valley	Thursday, October 14, 6:00 PM Town Offices, Suite Z, Minaret Shopping Center, Mammoth Lakes
Antelope Valley	Thursday, October 21, 5:30 PM Antelope Valley Senior Center, Walker
Bridgeport	Thursday, October 21, 7:30 PM Bridgeport Community Building

Inyo County

Bishop	Tuesday, October 26, 6:00 PM First Presbyterian Church, 585 North Main Street, Bishop
Lone Pine & Independence	Wednesday, October 27, 6:00 PM Statham Hall, 138 Jackson Street, Lone Pine

Kern County

Rosamond	Tuesday, October 19, 6:00 PM Hummel Hall, 2500 20th Street West, Rosamond
Mojave & California City	Wednesday, October 20, 6:00 PM Mojave Recreation Building, Mojave East Park, Hwy. 58 & M St., Mojave
Ridgecrest & Inyokern	Thursday, October 28, 6:30 PM Kerr McGee Center, 100 W. California Avenue in Ridgecrest

Should passenger rail service connect Los Angeles with Mammoth Lakes? What type of bus service should be available to residents to travel between Los Angeles, Ridgecrest, Bishop, Mammoth and Reno? What transportation services are needed to attract tourists?

These are questions planners intend to ask residents at community workshops scheduled throughout Inyo, Mono and eastern Kern County. Everyone is invited to attend the workshop to talk about regional transportation. Residents may attend workshops in their own community or in nearby communities. Input will be used to plan public transportation.

The workshops are being held as part of the *Eastern Sierra Public Transportation Plan*. The Plan's goal is to improve bus service between cities in the region. It will also look at possible passenger rail service and other transit service alternatives.

Each workshop is scheduled to last between 1½ and two hours.* Planners will share results of recent bus rider surveys and telephone surveys. Residents will be asked to talk about bus and rail alternatives for the region and prioritize transportation needs. Several exercises are planned so community members can explore how they want to spend funds on different transit services. Refreshments will be provided.

The Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG), on behalf of Eastern California Transportation Planning Partnership, commissioned the *Eastern Sierra Public Transportation Plan* to improve transit services in Inyo, Mono, and eastern Kern Counties. An *Existing Conditions Report* was prepared in August 2004, which provides findings from a regional telephone survey; an on-board bus survey of transit riders; interviews with planners, community representatives and political leaders; an analysis of transit data; and a review of regional issues.

Nelson\Nygaard Associates, a San Francisco-based transportation-planning firm, is leading the study.

For more information about the Eastern Sierra Public Transportation Plan and the community workshops, please call Marilyn Beardslee at Kern Council of Governments, 661-861-2191, or Joey M. Goldman, Nelson\Nygaard Associates, 415-284-1544.

APPENDIX B

NOTES FROM COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Notes from Community Workshops

Antelope Valley

Thursday, October 21, 5:30 PM
Antelope Valley Senior Center, Walker

Number of attendees (excluding NN staff): 1

Staff: Keith Hartstrom

NN staff: Paul Lutey, Tam Tran

No members of the public attended this meeting.

Bishop

Tuesday, October 26, 6:00 PM

First Presbyterian Church, 585 North Main Street, Bishop

Number of attendees (excluding NN staff): 11

NN staff: Joey Goldman, Paul Lutey

Most important connections:

- Airport service
 - LAX is the most important. Reno also important
 - Weather problem
- Large metropolitan areas: Los Angeles, Reno
- Medical facilities: Reno (depends on insurance), Fresno, Bakersfield
 - Most trips are 500 miles round trip for medical and social services
- Work trips: Mammoth
- Housing shortage
- Big Pine to Bishop (both directions)
- Independence to Bishop (both directions)
- Local tours: Around the region
- Campgrounds
- Yosemite service beyond Mono County
- Bishop-Mammoth connection is important for service industry workers who are living in Inyo County or south

Markets

- Subscription bus for senior programs
- Prescription drug delivery: Done by drug store
 - IMT does this when asked
- Agencies will rent car for medical trips
 - But this is costly and person must have a driver's license
- Local school trips over 4th grade
- Round Valley School service could use public transit to better serve students
- School teachers, employees, county employees
- Sports teams to other communities
- Tourists
 - Could be difficult from outside area
 - Maybe opportunities for local circulation
 - Marketing could improve

Rail

- Train: faster, cleaner, no traffic implications
- Is this tradeoff worth millions of dollars?
- Skiers would ride train to Mammoth year round
- "Government owes this area!" (Public land ownership)

- Train would allow enjoyment of area
- Train from Los Angeles needs to go to Mammoth
- EIR for diesel unit will be a concern
- Rail service: Something different may help to get funds
 - Solar-powered train?
 - Need rail that serves goods movement through to Reno. May get funds this way
 - Need to tie service to other movement, other destinations
- Urban trains have been a priority in state. Need to look at rural areas
- State Department of Tourism: They could “latch on” to this

Other

- All services are money-driven, and there is limited funding
- A Greyhound-type service would be critical
- Not essential to have same-day return service
- Bikes
 - More bike holders on buses
 - Free bikes or bike sharing
 - Bike connections are being improved
- Crossing main streets is a problem
- Look at needs of public: Get ideas to pinpoint needs
- Should be funds for regional long-distance service using local service funds
- Local DAR service vs. regional connection: Not a fair trade-off

Bridgeport

Thursday, October 21, 7:30 PM

Bridgeport Community Building, Bridgeport

Number of attendees (excluding NN staff): 4 (Members of the Bridgeport Regional Planning Advisory Council)

Staff: Keith Hartstrom

NN staff: Paul Lutey, Tam Tran

Bus

- Short-term goals should focus on economic stability and growth.
- Have a service that circulates for tourists around sites, such as campgrounds, motels, and key destinations (e.g. Bodie, Mammoth, Mono Basin).
- This should be a “transit service,” not a “tour operator” that runs on a regular basis, like twice in the morning and twice in the afternoon.
- Adjust times for seasonal fluctuations.
- Long-term goals should be focused on commuters. Affordable housing is needed for commuters. If building affordable homes in Bridgeport, transit will be needed to growth areas (e.g. employment centers).

Information Dissemination

- Best way to get information to people is through the mail. Sending flyers home with kids is another option.
- There are two papers in town: *Mammoth News* (with only news about Mammoth) and a free monthly advertiser.
- There are maybe two functions a year that draw people together in Bridgeport.
- Organizations and civic groups in Bridgeport include: Chamber of Commerce, Cub Scouts, Historical Society, Library support group, Parent Teachers Association, RPAC, some church groups.
- Informal programs happen “because there’s nothing else.”

Medical Trips

- Residents head north for medical trips. They make appointments and then make a full day of the trip. They make it known to other residents that they’re going and to let them know if they need something (say, in Reno), and they will get it for them.

Travel to Reno

- Traveling to airport takes a full day. But not much demand from local residents.

Other

- Casual carpooling (like in SF Bay Area) may be an option for Bridgeport
- Is there a way to improve carpooling via rideshare (e.g. Antelope Valley to Bridgeport)?

- Participants were concerned about costs of rail and how likely Kern COG would implement this idea.

June Lake

Wednesday, October 13, 5:30 PM
June Lake Community Center, June Lake

Number of attendees (excluding NN staff): 3
Staff: Gwen Plummer
NN staff: Joey Goldman, Tam Tran

Rail

- Could look at freight to support rail
- Moving people from June Lake to Mammoth is the wrong direction
- Locals would go to Los Angeles on passenger rail
- Consider bus links to station

Commute Trips

- Employees' bus between Mammoth Mountain and June Lake
- Alternate rides: One-year-old rideshare program that a couple of people have picked up on.
- County employees who drive from city to city: What kind of tax incentives can be provided for them to use county vehicles?

Marketing

- The problem is that there is not enough service
- Need more info about Inyo-Mono Transit and travel to Bishop

Social Services

- County Health Department is very active
 - Linda Salsedo is the public health nurse
 - Carolyn Baliad (Gwen has contact info and can make introduction)
 - IMACA, Head Start, child care

Other

- Tamarack: Orange line cut resulted in large loss of users
- Need easier access to Reno

Lee Vining

Wednesday, October 13, 7:30 PM
Lee Vining Community Center, Lee Vining

Number of attendees (excluding NN staff): 17
NN staff: Joey Goldman, Tam Tran

Note: This meeting was held during one of Lee Vining's Regional RPAC's monthly meetings.

Rail

- Rail: to beat congestion or bad weather
- May be effective for Mammoth – Bishop route
- May change this region, including property values
- Every day needs can be difficult without Greyhound (e.g. going to the bank or post office)

Market

- People who commute between communities

Important connections

- June Lake
- Mammoth

Other

- Private groups are good at transporting skiers, tourists
- New or alternative vehicles or fuel technology
- Entrepreneurial: Something new to help people get jobs and to their jobs

Lone Pine and Independence

Wednesday, October 27, 6:00 PM

Statham Hall, Lone Pine

Number of attendees (excluding NN staff): 10

Staff: Jeff Jewett

NN staff: Joey Goldman, Paul Lutey

Connections

- Courthouse in Independence
- Reno and Los Angeles population centers
- How to go north beyond Mammoth
- How about a hostel for staying the night?

Markets

- Tourists
 - How do we get out of here?
 - Hikers from Sequoia National Park
 - Tourists need space for skis, backpacks, equipment
- What happens when no longer can drive? There are VAs in Reno and Los Angeles.
- Grocery shopping and medical trips, especially for senior citizens.
 - Ridgecrest will coordinate. Call 24 hours in advance.
- Goods delivery
 - Pharmacy and goods delivery could be very beneficial for mobility impaired, also low income.
 - Salvation Army buys many tickets for this.
 - What is the charge? Who does the shopping?

Marketing

- Very little YARTS publicity in Inyo County
- How do people making connections know about the connections?
- If I call Greyhound, will they know about service to Lone Pine?
- Radio problems in Lone Pine
- Radio works best
- Word of mouth
- Tell people where to go for more information
- Put big maps/signs in dead spots: Lone Pine Community Association
- Need more information for travel to Los Angeles.

Coordination

- There is good coordination locally.
- How to better coordinate between adjacent transit providers?
- Washington State has legal requirements for coordination of transit services

Rail

- Make sure there is room for skis, bags
- Must stop through small communities, serve Lone Pine
- Nice train, comfy seats, walk to dining car, so that you can get up and move around. On the bus, you're stuck. Once you sit down, you can't move, feel "cramped"
- Restrooms
- Train can be expensive
- Train can't compete with cars, others (freeways, politics)

Other

- It's a complicated system: "Complexity"
- Transit can be a "social" activity
- IMACA program
- Is this the future of Highway 395: growth in the corridor?
- Death Valley

Mammoth Lakes and Long Valley

Thursday, October 14, 6:00 PM
Town Offices, Mammoth Lakes

Number of attendees (excluding NN staff): 16 +
NN staff: Joey Goldman, Tam Tran

Major connections include

- Bishop
- Los Angeles
- Reno
- Airports in Reno, Los Angeles area
- Parks:
 - Yosemite, Death Valley
- Carson City
 - Costco, WalMart, Hospitals
- Local recreation destinations
 - Whitmore, Lake Basin, Mammoth Mountain, Rock Creek
- Shopping:
 - Mammoth, Carson City, Bishop, Reno, Lancaster
- Medical:
 - Mammoth has the only hospital in the county. For specialized medical services, residents have to go outside of the county.
 - For appointments in Carson City, Ridgecrest, Reno, South Tahoe: People take transit *and then* a taxi or something else to get to the appointment
- Most important area for Mammoth residents are north of Mammoth, including Las Vegas and Victorville
- Workforce travels to:
 - Bishop, Crowley, Benton, June Lake, Lee Vining
- People going *into* Mammoth are tourists and workers or commuters
- Residents leaving Mammoth include:
 - Seniors going on medical trips
 - Latinos without cars
 - Transient workforce
 - Those traveling outside the area (e.g. to LAX)

When and frequency

- Seven days a week for travel outside area and medical trips
- Local survey found that the most frequent local trips made were students going to school on the bus
- Local and express service:
 - 2 buses in AM, at 6:30 AM and 8:00 AM
 - 2 buses in PM, at 4:30 PM and 6:00 PM

- Actual times would depend if you are coming from town or from the Mountain
- Need to accommodate service jobs at night

Markets

- Consider evening bus for youths, including evening activities and after school programs
- Give option for extended stays or mid-week visits
- For tourists: Schedule every day, same time
- People need to be able to make one round trip in one day
- Avoid 395 on Friday afternoon and evening and Sunday afternoon and evening. It is less safe because visitors are going home
- Specialized ground transportation for future regional airport
- Ridesharing programs in Bishop and Mammoth. But need P&R's at Tom's Place, Crowley Place, Rovana and others
- On-site vans (e.g. concierge cars) at new developments owned by lodges
- Residential developments in Portland, OR had car share arrangements
- One or two companies: Groceries, concierge company for second homeowners
- Volunteer driver programs more likely for short connections (e.g. within communities)
 - Concerns: screening, insurance, reliability
- Cost, time, convenience → Right stop at right time
- Traveling with family or multiple people
- Safer than driving
- Car safety: Where are you leaving your car?
- Groceries/errand service is a desirable option

Rail

- What about freight? It is also a cause of congestion on roads.
- Need transit gateways
- Bishop to Los Angeles
- Need connections that make sense and are timely, e.g. CREST to Bishop to Los Angeles
- Rail v. airport
 - Train can be more expensive
 - People forget about time costs to take flights
 - Weather concerns for airports
- Have a "party train" for visitors from Los Angeles area, e.g. train on late Friday afternoon or night to Mammoth and then returning train on Sunday late afternoon or night.
- Is there funding four-laning of Highways 14 and 395?
- Too many transfers can be prohibitive

Marketing

- It needs to be a cooperative effort (countywide). Right now, only the Town of Mammoth is active with marketing
- Trade shows, tour operators are good marketing resources
 - But they need a daily schedule, price point, and need to know rates early so that they can create tour packages
- IMT needs better web site
 - Easier to use, provide more info
 - Need to publicize transit links (e.g. to YARTS, Reds Meadow)
- Trip planning software
- How about surveying incoming and outgoing flights from Reno airport? Know when they coming and going so that CREST and other transit can make connections

Mojave and California City

Wednesday, October 20, 6:00 PM
Mojave Recreation Building, Mojave

Number of attendees (excluding NN staff): 4
Staff: Marilyn Beardslee, Linda Wilbanks
NN staff: Linda Rhine, Tam Tran

Private Bus Service Example in Upstate New York

- A former private bus company owner from NY dominated much of the discussion at this meeting. He talked about how municipal operators and private bus companies have unique arrangements along Route 17 in upstate New York. They share revenues – both passenger fares and public subsidies with NYDOT as the “broker”. He cited this as good example of how mix of public and private operators could work cooperatively together in Eastern Sierra. He explained that there are local services that feed into major trunklines and work in coordinated fashion.
- LR suggestion – We may want to look into some peers that have inter-county or inter-state JPAs or other governance arrangements whereby they coordinate service and revenues, etc. This could be longer-term strategy for the three counties, perhaps LA too.
- Linda Wilbanks pointed out the Inyo – Mono Counties have an MOU... We should know what is included in this, perhaps this is a starting point!
- Even though Greyhound has eliminated service, the company may still maintain “rights” along the corridor to operate service at a future date and time. It was suggested that we find out through the State PUC.
- Suggestions for bus improvements are to provide one long-haul service – perhaps only one trip per day along the entire length of the corridor with some short haul trips (not traveling entire corridor but servicing major destinations). Feeder network would provide local services and connect with long haul service.
- Transit Check mentioned by NY person – Neither Marilyn or Linda Willbanks heard of it – could be good to include as something to improve marketing transit in area through employers.

Ridgecrest and Inyokern

Thursday, October 28, 6:30 PM
Kerr McGee Center, Ridgecrest

Number of attendees (excluding NN staff): 14
Staff: Marilyn Beardslee, Linda Wilbanks
NN staff: Joey Goldman, Paul Lutey

Connections

- Medical trips
 - West Los Angeles Veterans Hospital, UCLA Medical Center, and other major medical facilities
 - Easier to get to Bakersfield
 - Medical trips often require an overnight stay
 - There isn't enough medical transportation from smaller communities (e.g. Ridgecrest)
 - But Ridgecrest medical facilities can't offer all services
- Airport service
 - Los Angeles and Ontario are closer and easier; maybe Burbank
 - Inyokern airport service is not frequent enough
 - Is Reno airport a possibility with better transit connections?
 - Reno is more for entertainment or vacation
- Connection to Metrolink
- Transfer center in Mojave is an issue
- Change at Stater Brothers in Mojave for service further south
- Shopping trips are difficult because of all you need to carry
- Service further north mainly for recreation and entertainment purposes
- Los Angeles vs. Bakersfield
 - Bakersfield for some purposes (e.g. county seat, entertainment). It's easier to get to.
 - New airport is another option if going to Northern California or other limited destination

Frequency of services

- A lot of people still do not know about service
- May not be cost-effective to provide more
- Five days a week would be better

Greyhound?

- It would help greatly
- Need bus depot
- Must market service
- Still have it run through Mojave

Transportation Options

- Car-sharing could benefit some families with limited car access
- Need to look at local fixed-route in Ridgecrest
- Volunteer driver program
 - What about insurance?
 - Concern about being part of transit system
 - Include: Inyokern, Randsburg, Johannesburg
 - Senior nutrition program is handled by County with volunteer drivers. The problem is getting volunteers.
- Senior bus service: No funding to operate or maintain
- Ridgecrest carries six riders per hour. Maybe fixed route would provide more flexibility?
- Fixed route could have some appeal if there could be fixed route/DAR combo.

Rail

- Could walk around, can work on train, bring bike
- Lancaster to Mojave
- Ridgecrest for train?
- Serve Inyokern
- Takes you off the road and away from traffic
- Reservations would be required so that you get a seat
- Assistance for seniors and others to make connections – “like an airline”
- Good information, good customer service
- Are there enough parking spaces in Inyokern and Lancaster park-and-ride lots?
- Seniors: Concerned about the connections to shuttles, medical appointments, and local senior centers

Other

- Amtrak bus
- Longer layover time for regional service
- May not have enough time on current schedules, including for same-day service
- Maybe there should be more options than current service

Rosamond

Tuesday, October 19, 6:00 PM
Hummel Hall, Rosamond

Number of attendees (excluding NN staff): 3
Staff: Marilyn Beardslee, Linda Wilbanks
NN staff: Linda Rhine

General

- Comments on Power Point (Note: handouts only at this meeting)
 - Job centers should include Ridgecrest, Edwards Air Force Base (not Rosamond – it is bedroom community only)
 - 1000 employees in Mojave at Spaceport
- Suggestions to improve/correct examples in “The Transportation Options”
 - Project Clean Air (no longer around) – need another example for Rideshare (carpool/vanpool)
 - May not be a Star Yellow Cab in Ridgecrest – double check
- Mammoth Airport has plans for expansion. May be longer term because of environmental issues.

Bus-Related

- AVTA (Antelope Valley Transit Authority) should be added to study because this service has one route extending into the service area (According to one person, AVTA plans to introduce a service to Edwards Air Force Base with buses used internally on base as shuttle during day –issue of security means service MAY not be general public -- need to check into specifics)
- The “honorary Mayor of Rosamond” says the top priority in next 3 years is to provide an “active bus service” for workers in the Rosamond area. Service should run every hour and be reliable and dependable.
- Consider park-and-ride facilities at key locations to connect with long distance bus service. Possible locations along Sierra Highway in Rosamond – others TBD

Rail

- As first step to bring rail service into area, should extend Metrolink to Ridgecrest