



CITY OF LODI

COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

AGENDA TITLE: Unmet Transit Needs Report

MEETING DATE: June 7, 1995

PREPARED BY: City Manager

RECOMMENDED ACTION: None required. Information only.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The City annually receives the Unmet Transit Needs report prepared by the San Joaquin County Council of Governments (COG). A copy of applicable pages from this report is attached (Exhibit A). The report concludes that "there are no unmet transit needs in Lodi at this time."

FUNDING: None required

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas A. Peterson
City Manager

TAP:br

Attachment

APPROVED: _____

THOMAS A. PETERSON
City Manager

Lodi

Current Service Description

The City of Lodi offers general public Dial-A-Ride transit service and on November 25, 1994, launched fixed route service, dubbed "The GrapeLine."

1. Dial-a-Ride service area includes the City of Lodi and the unincorporated areas of Woodbridge, the Arbor Mobile Home Park in Acampo, and the Freeway Mobile Home Park south of the Lodi City limits. Service to areas outside of the city limits is carried out by contractual agreement between the County of San Joaquin and the City of Lodi. Lodi City provides service to these areas, but the transit subsidy comes from San Joaquin County.

Lodi's Dial-A-Ride fleet includes 4 full-size wagons and 2 sedans. The fleet also has 2 ramp-equipped vans, and 2 new, lift-equipped buses. The buses can seat nine with a wheelchair in place. Service is available weekdays from 6:30 a.m. - 7:00 p.m., on Saturday from 7:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m., and on Sundays from 12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m.

Approximately 88% of the people who use the dial-a-ride system (pre-GrapeLine) are seniors or individuals with disabilities who require special transportation assistance. Over the three years prior to the implementation of the new GrapeLine service, Dial-A-Ride ridership increased by roughly 9% each year.

The general public Dial-A-Ride fare was raised when GrapeLine service began, from \$1 per trip to \$2. Senior and disabled passengers now pay \$1.00, not 50¢. Fares for service to areas outside of the City limits, but within the general service area (Woodbridge, Acampo, Freeway Mobile Home Park) are \$1.00 higher.

2. GrapeLine fixed route service began the day after Thanksgiving, November 25, 1994. To promote ridership, coupons for free rides were distributed in attractive flyers describing the new service. The GrapeLine includes:

-  New mini-buses
-  Four fixed routes that converge at the Post Office in downtown Lodi
-  30-minute frequencies
-  Affordable fares (50¢ each way, seniors 25¢)

GrapeLine hours of operation are from Monday to Friday, 6:00 a.m. - 6:30 p.m., and Saturday from 7:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Prior to the GrapeLine service, Lodi already had general public dial-a-ride serving the City and some of its surroundings. In fact, a chief reason for the GrapeLine's launch was to take pressure off of its publicly-acclaimed dial-a-ride system. City management has repeatedly stated that the GrapeLine is meant to supplement, not take the place of, the dial-a-ride system. A reason Lodi was able to make a commitment to fixed route service is the very fact that the city is growing. The 1990 census showed that Lodi's population passed 50,000, making the city eligible for Federal Transit Administration Section 9 formula grant funds. These funds are a major contributor to the new system's capital and operating expenses.

Lodi's new fare structures should prove conducive to transferring patrons from the dial-a-ride to the GrapeLine. Before the GrapeLine, dial-a-ride fares were \$1.00 for trips within Lodi. When GrapeLine service began, dial-a-ride fares doubled to \$2.00. The fare differential (\$2.00 vs 50¢) should make the GrapeLine relatively more attractive.

Despite problems acquiring new vehicles from the original contracted vendor, through the use of loaner vehicles and reliance on diverted dial-a-ride vehicles, the fixed route service is running. On January 4, 1995, Lodi's City Council rescinded its original contract and awarded it to California Bus Sales. By March 1, 1995, shiny new mini-buses should be running on the GrapeLine.

In addition to Lodi's GrapeLine and dial-a-ride services, elderly and disabled individuals who need intercity transit service to points outside of Lodi but within San Joaquin County are eligible for San Joaquin County's CAT Dial-A-Ride Service. Eligible riders must make trip reservations between 1 - 14 days in advance (at least 24 hours). Lodi's CAT boardings in FY 93-94 were 3,193.

Last, since SMART's October 3, 1994 launching of intercity and interregional transit services, Lodi patrons can take advantage of two new intercity routes. Route 20 connects

Lodi with Stockton, Lathrop, and Tracy. The 21 connects with Stockton and Manteca. Both the intercity lines are route-deviation services. In addition, Bay Area and Sacramento area employees can ride new commute service coaches to major employers. For a further description of the new intercity and interregional transit services, please see "Chapter 6 - Intercity and Interregional Transit."

Demographic Information

The 1990 census data reveals that the City of Lodi has a relatively high concentration of senior citizens, 15.7% of the population compared to countywide average of 11%, but is otherwise rather average in its demographics, as they relate to COG's definition of transit disadvantaged. Low-income persons constitute 12% of the Lodi City population. This is below the countywide average of 15%, but still represents a significant number of people: 6,284. Six percent of Lodi's seniors are low-income and 13% of the non-institutionalized seniors have a reported mobility limitation. Countywide the percent of seniors who are low-income is 7.7% and the percent who have mobility limitations is 15%.

The number of vehicles available is also an indicator of transit need. Nearly 10% of the Lodi City households had no vehicles available in 1990. This is higher than the average for incorporated areas.

Current Input

In August, 1992 a Transit Needs Assessment and System Development Plan was developed for the City of Lodi by Arthur Bauer and Associates. This plan identified a growing need for transit service and recommended a phased, incremental approach to improve the Lodi Transit system. The plan recommended the eventual implementation of a fixed route system that would be complemented by the existing dial-a-ride service. In October, 1992, the City Council endorsed the plan along with staff's recommendations to proceed with the recommended incremental system improvements.

In July, 1993, COG and the Lodi City Council adopted the FY 1993-94 Through 1997-98 Short Range Transit Plan a document produced jointly by City of Lodi and COG staffs. This Plan reaffirms the goals of the previously mentioned System Development Plan and provides a schedule of system improvements and planning tasks that need to be accomplished to create a two-tiered, Fixed Route/Dial-a-Ride, transit system for the City of Lodi.

During the summer and into the fall of 1994, City of Lodi staff and James E. Brown and Associates conducted public meetings to get an idea of major origins and destinations across the city. Citizens pointed out destinations using pins on push maps. Using these maps and the City's own dial-a-ride data, Lodi staff developed tentative routes for the new service. The routes were presented to the City Council and the public at another public meeting. With Council approval and equipment procured, Lodi was ready to initiate service.

During December, the first full month of service, 9101 passengers were carried on the GrapeLine. City staff is pleased with the diversity of patrons and trip purposes. GrapeLine service as yet has had virtually no impact on dial-a-ride patronage.

In January, with no free passes and 23 days of rain, ridership has slipped to 60% of December's totals. Regardless, Lodi staff is quite pleased with the early success of its new service.

The City of Lodi held two public hearings to receive public input on unmet transit needs. Both hearings were held on December 21, 1994, the first at 10 a.m., the second before the City Council at 7:30 p.m.

Transit issues and concerns raised through public testimony at these meetings are summarized below:

- ✓ The need for GrapeLine service to better cover the east side of town was raised by petition
- ✓ The need for more GrapeLine service in the Turner Road areas and other specific sites
- ✓ General support and praise for the GrapeLine fixed route service
- ✓ The need for hearings sponsored by various agencies to be consolidated (see Chapter 4)

Discussion

The City of Lodi now has two-tiered transit service. With the assistance of Federal Transit Administration Section 9 formula grants and TDA funds, the City has launched GrapeLine fixed route service. As with any new transit system, the GrapeLine is experiencing growing pains. A petition with 134 signatures was presented during Lodi's unmet transit needs hearings calling for fixed route service to the east side of town.

Though sensitive to the concerns of Lodi citizens who may desire expanded service, for the following reasons, COG staff is not prepared to identify an unmet need.

- ✓ General Public Dial-a-Ride service is still available. One reason for launching the fixed route service was to lighten the burden being placed on the Dial-a-Ride system. However, that service is still in operation and still serves the general public, though dial-a-ride's fares have been raised.

- ✓ Access to the new service is not uniform across the City. Though the routing of the buses was based on a public planning process, that gaps should appear after the service commences should be no surprise. Through informal conversation, Lodi's staff acknowledges holes in the service and will try to adapt and fine-tune the current system to bring its routes closer to those who desire better fixed route access. Making route changes during the first few months of service could confuse riders. During the next fiscal year, the relevant time-frame for this report, Lodi will modify, or perhaps add to, its GrapeLine service to better 'fill the holes' it now has.
- ✓ New Services such as the GrapeLine need time to gain public recognition, achieve mandated farebox recovery ratios, and adjust to meet the calls for service demanded of it.

COG staff will monitor Lodi's progress toward extending fixed route service to the City's east side during next year's unmet transit needs analysis. City of Lodi staff is aware that operational issues, such as routing, need to be addressed. City staff has informed the COG that a public workshop will be held during April, 1995 to address service gaps. At this workshop different routings and frequencies will be proposed and discussed. A longer route could serve more of East Lodi, though less frequently. Or a shorter route that loops into downtown but promotes more transfers may also be discussed.

Meanwhile, COG staff wishes Lodi many years of success with the GrapeLine.

Conclusion

There are no unmet transit needs in Lodi at this time.