Short Range Transit Plan

Prepared By:

In Association With:

September 27, 2017
# VOLUME I EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Executive Summary

The Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) is a blueprint for the development of mobility services in Simi Valley over a five-year period. The SRTP is being developed in three distinct phases:

- **Phase I** is the community outreach, information, and data gathering effort. Based on this effort, organizational and service alternatives have been prepared with an analysis plan that will be conducted in Phase II. The results of Phase I are the subject of this working paper and will be presented to the Simi Valley City Council.

- **Phase II** is the detailed analysis of alternatives. The results of the analysis of the various alternatives will be presented for a second round of community input. The analysis and additional community input will be utilized by the City Council in selecting the recommended elements of the service, organization, fares, and marketing plan to be included in the draft SRTP in Phase III. A Phase II working paper will be prepared and presented at community meetings and the City Council.

- **Phase III** is the preparation of the draft and final SRTP, including a detailed operations and capital financial plan over a five-year period. A third presentation to the City Council will be made on the draft SRTP.

The Phase I working paper is presented in two parts. The first part consists of three sections, the first of which is a review of the existing services and how they are being utilized, including a profile of existing fixed route passengers. The second section focuses on the Simi Valley Transit organization. The third section compares recent performance to other Ventura County transit agencies.

While the first part of the working paper is about the past, the second part of the working paper looks forward to the development of a cost effective, integrated system of mobility services in Simi Valley over the next five years. There was extensive community input on Simi Valley Transit’s future, and the key themes of the outreach effort are reported. Mission statement options, goals and performance measures are introduced for consideration. Organizational options that provide more cost efficiency are presented. Four different mobility service delivery options and three financial scenarios are recommended for analysis, and details on the proposed alternatives are provided for more detailed analysis in Phase II of the SRTP.

This is Volume I, the Executive Summary for the SRTP. Volume II is the full report and includes each of the chapters referenced in this Executive Summary.
Part 1: Review of Existing Services, Organization, and Performance

Review of Existing Services

Fixed-Route Service

Simi Valley Transit (SVT) operates four independent fixed routes throughout the City of Simi Valley, with one route traveling east into Los Angeles County to the Chatsworth Metrolink station. Service is provided six days a week for routes A, B, and C, and on weekdays only for Route D. The SVT route structure is primarily oriented east-west. Routes A and B function as a clockwise and counterclockwise circulator throughout the City. Both Routes C and D provide bi-directional service that splits the city in half, with Route C operating at the eastern end of the City and Route D providing service in the western half of the City. The routes vary slightly in their span of service, but typically operate from 5:15 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. The cash fare is $1.50 for the general public and $0.75 for elderly and disabled individuals. Multi-ride tickets are available including a $50 monthly pass for the general public and $25 for the elderly and disabled.

Chapter 2 has significant detail on passenger ridership utilization by time of day for both weekday and Saturday service. The following graph is from Route A, the highest ridership route.

Exhibit ES-1 Route A Average Weekday Boardings by Hour of Day

(September 1, 2015 – August 30, 2016)

Note: Two buses operate on Route A. Therefore, on weekdays, between 1:00 and 4:00 p.m. there were an average over 30 passenger boardings per bus for the entire year.
Average weekday boardings peak during the afternoon hours beginning at 1:00 p.m. and ending at 4:00 p.m., with an average of 66 passengers between the hours of 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. With two buses operating, this is 33 passengers per hour, meaning that buses are mostly full at this time. This peak in passenger boardings can be attributed to both school and work locations along the route.

Overall, ridership is also reasonable on Routes B and C. Buses are completely full on average as they leave the Chatsworth Metrolink station during the morning commute hours. On the other hand, Route D has some ridership during the school commute times, but typically has less than five passengers on a run, which means the bus is mostly empty at most times of the day.

There was also a review of connectivity for transfers between Simi Valley Transit routes and between Simi Valley Transit and the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) East County route. Overall connectivity is very poor, with average transfer wait times at key locations often over 20 minutes or more. There were 12 identified near misses where the bus a passenger wants to transfer to has already left 0-5 minutes before the bus the passenger is on has arrived at the transfer location. These are transfer opportunities that can be arranged with minor tweaks in the schedule. The lack of connectivity is especially problematic since most runs on all routes have two eight-minute recovery times during the route, which far exceeds state labor law requirements. Minor changes in the schedule and reducing the recovery times would not only improve passenger convenience, but would also enable seamless transfers among buses and improve ridership productivity. Simi Valley Transit is now in the process of working to update connections between VCTC service and Simi Valley Transit schedules.

**ADA/DAR Service**

Simi Valley Transit operates a demand response service, whereby passengers call in advance for a trip, the vehicle comes to their home address, and then delivers them to their destination address. Trips are often shared-ride experiences, where other passengers are picked up or dropped off before the initial passenger is delivered to his or her destination. Simi Valley Americans with Disability Act (ADA)/Senior Dial-A-Ride (DAR) serves two populations: 1) those who are Americans with Disabilities Act certified as substantially disabled and unable to use fixed-route public transit for some or all trips; and 2) those who are over age 65 and disabled but not ADA certified. In compliance with Federal law, the service must assure that trips requested by ADA certified passengers are served. Trips for seniors and persons with disabilities who are not ADA certified are provided on a space-available basis; that is, they are served when there is sufficient capacity and when serving the non-ADA rider does not impact the ability to provide ADA certified passengers with their trips. The operating hours of the ADA/Senior Dial-A-Ride are 5:30 a.m. (first pickup) to 7:30 p.m. (last pick-up) on Mondays through Saturdays, complimenting the fixed-route service. As with the fixed-route, no service is available on Sundays. Fares are $2.00 for a one-way trip.

Presently, on a weekly basis, approximately 800 one-way passenger trips are provided with more than 130 trips per day. Simi Valley’s ADA/ Senior Dial-A-Ride ridership has grown at varying rates in recent years. As shown in Exhibit ES-2 below, the ADA/DAR ridership has steadily ranged between 3,000 to 4,000 trips per month for the past four years.
There has been a steady increase in the proportion and number of passengers using wheelchairs or other mobility devices which has important service implications. For the current 2017 calendar year, a rate of 25.4% of wheelchair/mobility device trips is projected, now one in four trips. The Chevy Arbocs each have up to three wheelchair tie-down positions. This is important to keep in mind as alternatives such as Lyft and Uber are reviewed. There is a critical need to have wheelchair accessible vehicles available to ensure that Simi Valley ADA/Senior Dial-A-Ride can meet the mobility needs of the high number of wheelchair users.

On-time performance is another area important to riders and by which public transit agencies are routinely monitored. An analysis of April 2017 trips contrasted the computer-recorded, scheduled time with the driver-recorded actual time. Passengers are advised in calls the day before their trip of the 30-minute window during which their ADA/DAR bus will arrive. There is some variability in how this window is applied making it difficult to pin down on-time performance for the Dial-A-ride service. Between 62% and 70% of trips are provided within this 30-minute window, leaving too many trips either early or late. In an ideal demand response operation, no trips should arrive before the pick-up window and only a very small number of trips should arrive outside of the pick-up window, with at least 85% to 90% of trips provided within the window.

Simi Valley Transit is in the process of updating the Senior Dial-A-Ride application to include frequently asked questions about the service.

### Exhibits

**Exhibit ES-2**

**DAR Trips by Month - Completed Trips**

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<thead>
<tr>
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**On-Board Survey Key Findings**

A survey of Simi Valley Transit fixed route riders was conducted during the week of May 22, 2017. The full survey was completed by 490 riders. Another 57 of those riders also provided additional origin-destination data when intercepted on subsequent trips.
Demographics

Most SVT riders (84%) are residents of the City of Simi Valley. However, on Route C which serves the Chatsworth Metrolink Station, half of riders are from outside the area. Among the 16% of all riders who are not local residents, 68% are making work trips, likely traveling to jobs within Simi Valley.

SVT’s ridership includes a cross section of all age groups. About a quarter of the riders are youth under 18, while another 14% are young adults between 18 and 24, hence 40% of riders are in school or early in their working life. Eight percent of riders are seniors 65+, while another 12% are adults over 55.

As with age, SVT transit’s ridership includes individuals across the income spectrum. Most riders (60%) who answered the question have very modest household incomes, under $25,000 per year, while 13% said they have household incomes of $75,000 or more. Of those reporting incomes of $75,000 or more, most were young people (under 23), presumably living at home and reporting their family’s income.

Fourteen percent of respondents completed the survey in Spanish. On Route C, 27% of the respondents were Spanish speaking, compared to only 11% on Routes A/B. Overall 39% reported their ethnicity as White and 31% Hispanic.

Over six in ten (63.3%) riders are employed, full time (34.8%), part-time (10.8%), employed students (17.7%). Another 23% of riders are students who are not employed. So, in total, 86.3% are economically active as employees and/or students. The remaining riders are a mix of retirees (4.8%), unemployed individuals (4.6%), homemakers (1%) and persons who are disabled and not employed (3.4%). Three quarters of employed riders said that they work in Simi Valley.

Employment status varies significantly between the local circulator routes A and B, and Route C which goes to Chatsworth Metrolink station. As shown to the right, on Route C, 67% of riders are employed and another 9% are employed students. Routes A/B also carry many employed persons (40%) but have many more student riders (19% employed).

Most riders who are employed sometimes work on Saturday, Sunday and/or evenings after 8 p.m. In fact, nearly 40% of employed riders must at some point work during all of these times. This means that there are times when using the bus to get to or from work is impossible.
Riders were asked if they have a driver’s license and if a vehicle was available for the trip on which they were interviewed. Just over one third (36%) of SVT riders have a driver’s license while only 27% had a vehicle available on the day they were interviewed.

Usage Characteristics

Fourteen percent of those surveyed said they rode every service day during the prior week, while another 32% rode five days. So, nearly half (46%) of riders use the bus on a very regular basis. Another 29% of riders use the bus regularly (3-4 days per week) but not daily. And the final quarter of riders (25%) ride occasionally (1-2 days per week).

Many riders (36% in total) said they would be making only a single one-way trip. A closer examination reveals that these one-way riders are primarily commuters to/from work (39%) or school (33%).

The largest number of riders (41%) were going to or from work. This was particularly true for the five or six-day-a-week riders (47%). However, even among the occasional riders, 33% were traveling to or from work. The second most common response was middle/high school (19%). Again, the five or six-day riders were more likely to be going to school than the other segments. The remainder of the riders were using the bus for a mix of purposes including shopping (8%), recreation (7%), medical appointments (4%) and social service appointments (4%).

Riders were asked what year they began riding Simi Valley Transit. Almost 40% of riders are long term users, having begun riding in 2012 or before. On the other hand, about a third (32%) of the ridership is new to the system in 2016 or 2017 (the survey was conducted in May – so this is a 17 month period). Many of the new riders, not surprisingly, are students going to school or college, while the largest group of the long-term riders are work commuters.

Satisfaction Ratings

Riders were asked to rate various aspects of service on a 7-point scale, where 7 is excellent and 1 is poor. Riders rated Simi Valley Transit quite positively on all factors. For overall satisfaction, half rated the service as excellent (7), while another 27% rated it as very good (6).

The highest ratings are for driver courtesy and helpfulness which 65% rated as excellent and 17% as very good. We find this is common in small community transit systems where riders come to like and rely on their regular drivers.

The least positive ratings are for the convenience of connecting between SVT buses – something that we know from observation, driver comments, and focus groups is not easy.
Service Improvement Priorities

To encourage riders to differentiate between the many desired improvements, they were asked, “If Simi Valley could make only one improvement, which would be most important to you.” This results in much clearer priorities.

Sunday bus service is the top choice by a factor of two. Thirty percent of respondents selected it as their top priority. Buses until 10 PM is the second highest priority, rated most important by 14% of respondents. This is followed by more shelters (11%), more buses on Routes A and B (9%) and Realtime information (9%).\(^1\) It is notable that at least four percent of the riders judged every improvement tested to be the most important.

Communications

SVT riders get passenger information from an array of sources. Printed schedules and the Simi Valley website are the primary information sources (32% each); however, a significant number of riders rely on the information at the stop (15%). Just over a third (35%) of respondents had visited the Simi Valley website in the past 30 days. Asked about mobile phone usage, 64% of riders had a smartphone, 30% a conventional cell phone, and 6% no mobile phone.

Existing Organizational Structure

Fixed route and ADA/DAR services are provided by Simi Valley Transit and administered by the Community Service Department. Significantly more detail on the existing organizational structure is included in Chapter 4.

Simi Valley Transit is a directly operated service. This means that all personnel for Simi Valley Transit are directly hired by the City of Simi Valley. As shown in ES-3, this is in contrast to the other transit agencies in Ventura County that contract out for all or a portion of their fixed route and ADA Paratransit operations and maintenance.

\(^1\) Simi Valley Transit current provides real time transit information through NextBus, but many passengers are unaware of the service.
Recent Performance

There were three important takeaways from the review of existing performance:

1. **Productivity as measured by passengers per vehicle service hour is reasonable.**

   Despite the fact that Route D runs empty most of the day, *Routes A, B, and C generate reasonable ridership and the average productivity is 13.2 passengers per vehicle service hour.* What this means is that the bus has 13 passengers get on the bus in an average one hour of service. This is higher than the average of other Ventura County transit agencies. While this is below what it could be with more direct, convenient and frequent service, there are a number of long time riders who really depend on the fixed route service and utilize it frequently.

   On the ADA/DAR service, the productivity has improved to 2.5 passengers per vehicle service hour, and is above the productivity for Gold Coast Transit and Thousand Oaks Transit.

   Another way to think about passenger productivity is that there are 1,083 fixed route passengers who board a Simi Valley Transit bus every day. In addition, another 141 passengers take a one-way trip on ADA/DAR service.

2. **Fare revenues generated are good, with many passengers taking advantage of multi-ride fares and tickets.**

   On fixed route, the 333,619 passengers generated $389,211 in fare revenues, or an average fare of $1.17 per passenger trip. Since the base cash fare is $1.50, the lower average fare indicates utilization by seniors and disabled individuals eligible for the $0.75 fare as well as utilization of multi-ride tickets such as the day pass and 21 ride pass and the unlimited monthly pass.

   The base fare for Dial-A-Ride is $2.00. However, the average fare is $2.87. This likely means that human service agencies are purchasing multi-ride tickets and not utilizing them.
3. Simi Valley Transit has very poor cost efficiency.

What really stands out in the review of recent performance is the overall poor cost efficiency of Simi Valley Transit compared to other Ventura County transit agencies. In FY 2015/16, the cost per vehicle service hour and cost per passenger trip for Simi Valley Transit ADA/DAR is $187.38 and $74.79, respectively. The average for other Ventura County transit agencies is $65.66 per vehicle service hour and $25.10 per passenger trip, respectively. The cost of both of these important performance measures is almost three times the average of other Ventura County transit agencies.

Fixed route cost efficiency is not much better. In 2015/16, the average cost per vehicle service hour was $79.45 for other transit agencies in Ventura County. For the Simi Valley fixed route service, the cost per vehicle service hour was $121.33, more than $40 per hour more than the Ventura County average.

Operating costs are expected to increase from $6.3 million in 2015/16 to $8.1 million FY 2017/18 with essentially the same service supply. Simi Valley’s operating cost per vehicle service hour is expected to increase substantially.

There are several reasons for the relatively poor cost efficiency for Simi Valley Transit relative to other Ventura County agencies. In Phase II of the SRTP, a detailed evaluation of the costs and revenues will be undertaken with the objective of increased cost efficiency. As requested by the City Council, this will include an evaluation of organizational alternatives as discussed in more detail within the report.

Significantly more detail on recent performance is provided in Chapter 5.
Part II Looking Forward: Service, Organization, Fare and Marketing Alternatives

Key Themes of the Community Outreach

The following is a summary of the community outreach effort that was central to Phase I. On March 28-29, 2017, three members of the consulting team spent two days on-site conducting a kick-off meeting, riding all buses, observing ADA/DAR operations, and conducting some initial stakeholder interviews.

The primary community effort was conducted from May 22 to 25, 2017 and included the following key elements:

1. Five facilitated focus groups, with 8-12 participants each.
2. Two open house sessions held in the Library Community room on Tuesday May 23rd between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 and 7:00 p.m. Four stations for input were provided focusing on local fixed route, ADA/DAR service, regional transportation improvement, and alternative transportation. Each of the 78 participants were given $100 in play money in 24 “improvement buckets” at the 4 stations.
3. An onboard survey of passengers with 490 completed questionnaires returned
4. Stakeholder interviews with 27 key stakeholders.

A very wide range of opinions on Simi Valley Transit was expressed during the community outreach effort. The continuum of opinions ranged from one extreme, a plea to make no changes because the “services are perfect as they are”, to the opposite end of the continuum, public transportation should be abandoned or replaced with only private sector services with no public subsidy. The primary sentiment in the middle of the continuum was provided by the large majority of participants in the community outreach effort and can be summarized as:

Public transportation is an important government service for people who need it such as seniors, disabled and youth in the Simi Valley community, but significant improvements are needed in how public transportation services are managed, delivered and communicated to the residents and employees of Simi Valley.

Chapter 6 has significantly more detail on the findings, but the following are the most important themes.
Local Fixed Route Service

*Existing passengers need the service to conduct their daily life.*

There are many passengers who ride fixed route buses on a regular basis for work, school and shopping. 63.3% of the riders using Simi Valley Transit are employed and they need to use Simi Valley Transit for trips to and from work.

*For many, including existing bus riders, the primary complaint is that a bus trip takes way too long between point A and B.*

This was the most prevalent comment received from the consulting team riding the bus, talking to passengers at the open house, and input received at the focus groups. An existing fixed route focus participant summed it up from her perspective: “Everything on the bus takes 6 hours.” Another focus group participant of Simi Valley residents who work in Simi Valley said, “It takes an hour to go three miles; it just takes too long.” Routes A and B are two very long loop routes that require a significant amount of out of direction travel because the routes are primary designed along an east-west axis with very little north-south travel.

*With the last run for buses typically starting at 7:00 p.m., ending around 8:00 pm, and not operating on Sundays, it’s a significant barrier to many who would like to ride local fixed route service.*

One of the most pervasive comments we heard from passengers on board the buses, in focus groups, at the open houses, and in stakeholder interviews was that buses do not operate late enough. The Free Clinic, for example, sees patients until 8:00 p.m., and when their mainly transit dependent clientele leaves the clinic after 8:00 p.m., they are stranded and have difficulty getting home.

The need for Sunday service was a strong request from passengers. In the “bucket investments” in the open houses it received $827 compared to $520 for the second ranked improvement, real time bus information. In the onboard survey, it also ranked first, with 30% of passengers saying it was the most important improvement to make, compared to 14% for the second rated improvement.

*The strong local perception of residents, stakeholders and some City Council members that buses are empty all of the time is both true and false.*

A prevalent theme heard during a number of stakeholder interviews and during at least one of the focus groups was that buses are running around empty. This is both true and false and needs proper context.

It is very true that Route D which serves the Reagan Library, Simi Valley Town Center, Simi Valley Hospital and the Civic Center area operates with 35-foot buses, and is pretty much empty all day long from the time it starts in the morning at 5:17 a.m. until it ends at 7:46 p.m. Yearlong statistics for Route D between September 1, 2015 and August 31, 2016 show that this route does receive some regular
school ridership, but overall, without the school ridership, it serves five or fewer passengers on most of its trips.

The same yearlong data also supports the fact that Routes A, B, and C are not running empty on a majority of their trips. In fact, there are more than 20 people boarding these buses from 5:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on the average day. On Route C, ridership statistics show that the first three hours of service between 5:00 and 8:00 a.m. average between 36 and 42 boardings per hour.

*If Simi Valley Transit is going attract potential riders, then direct and convenient fixed route transit service will need to be implemented.*

Routes A and B currently operate every 45 minutes and Route C operates every 1 hour and 10 minutes. If local bus service is going to attract any residents or employees that are not transit dependent, the service must be convenient, direct, and frequent. The two focus groups of residents of Simi Valley were able to succinctly summarize the attributes that are needed to attract a broader ridership spectrum.

- Frequent service: 15-minute service is desirable, but 30-minute service is reasonable.
- Direct service between origins and destinations with fewer stops if possible. Willing to walk to and from bus stops, even if longer distance.
- Good connections between both local and regional routes.
- Fares need to be reasonable and cheaper than driving.

**Simi Valley ADA/Senior Dial-A-Ride**

*Service is very much appreciated and drivers are commonly complimented.*

Some riders describe the Dial-A-Ride as a family, with drivers like family, that they are hospitable, patient and kind, that they do an excellent job. *A common theme was “Dial-A-ride has kept me independent and I couldn’t make it without it”.*

*There is a need for continuing and consistent driver and dispatcher training.*

Several riders and stakeholders expressed a wish for continuing and consistent driver training. Particularly around wheelchair securement and even sometimes driver sensitivity towards passengers with disabilities, there was interest in additional training opportunities for drivers.

Simi Valley Transit is in the process of training dispatchers and coach operators to properly communicate with the riding public.

*ADA/DAR service policy implementation is reported as inconsistent and riders are confused about trip reservation policies.*

Simi Valley’s demand responsive service addresses the mobility needs of two populations: those who are certified as substantially disabled under the Americans with Disabilities Act and those who have
mobility needs by virtue of advanced age. Riders of both groups conveyed that while they understand that ADA riders have priority and that seniors can use the service on a “space available” basis, this policy can still be confusing and may be inconsistently enforced. Seniors and others who are not ADA certified but use the Dial-A-Ride indicated that they have, on multiple instances, found the service “booked up” when they wish to make a trip. Several seniors reported that they try to call more than 24-hours ahead but that dispatch will tell them they are full; the non-ADA senior cannot get the trip he or she needs.

**There is confusion about service policies on the part of users.**

There was a lack of clarity about existing policy among those interviewed in the following areas:

- **Pick-up window and on-time performance window** – Riders recognize there is a window during which time the riders can expect the vehicle; however, defining just when the 30-minute reservation window is applied, when it starts and ends, and therefore when a vehicle is early or late is not clear.
- **Drivers and dispatchers appear to be using different sets of policies** – Comments related to the interpretation of the on-time performance window indicate there are differences between dispatch and drivers in understanding of on-time windows and in communicating that to passengers.

**Technology to improve service to Dial-A-Ride users.**

Over 90% of the Dial-a-Ride users participating in these focused discussions reported they have cell phones and a majority of these (by more than two to one) are smart phone based. Discussion participants expressed interest in several types of technology innovations and tools:

- **Automatic call back to indicate the vehicle is close** – this is of interest to riders, which even with a 30-minute window can feel long for someone watching for the arrival of a vehicle;
- **Electronic “where’s my ride” information** – riders would like an electronic ability to know that their bus is close, if it is late or when they can expect their bus.

Linking Trapeze dial-a-ride scheduling and the telephone system for an automatic day-of or evening before call-back is technologically feasible and in practice in neighboring Los Angeles County. The “where’s my ride” communication will require linking Trapeze and vehicles’ AVL (automatic vehicle locator) information with the City’s telephone software to enable a real-time, automatic call out to riders.

**Regional Mobility Improvements**

Regional service improvements include suggestions for improvements for VCTC intercity bus services, but also input on prospective regional mobility improvements such as new commuter buses, vanpools, and potential for improved carpools.

**Metrolink is the most commonly used regional transit service by Simi Valley residents.**

A majority of the commuter focus participants, those living in Simi Valley, but commuting to outside of Simi Valley, had utilized Metrolink to travel to and from downtown Los Angeles. In fact, one participant
used it daily for Grand Jury service for six months. City Councilperson Bercera regularly utilizes Metrolink for his commute to Metro at Union Station. He mentioned that Simi Valley has good utilization of the Metrolink service. Overall, there was a very positive perception of Metrolink.

The VCTC East County bus service may not be well known among Simi Valley residents.

While Metrolink is well known and well-utilized in Simi Valley, the qualitative input we received from the focus groups is that VCTC services are not well known. The VCTC East County route operates among Thousand Oaks, Moorpark, Moorpark College, and Simi Valley 12 times a day. Although the sample of focus group participants is small, the VCTC East County service was not known by most of the focus group participants.

Time, cost, and flexibility are the three most important factors in potentially utilizing a regional alternative to driving alone.

Focus group participants emphasized the importance of time in making the decision to utilize a regional alternative; “time is everything” was the mantra that several participants utilized for emphasis. A second important factor was the cost of the ride. Overall, focus group participants said they would like to see some savings compared to driving. Most commuters felt that a fare less than $100 per month would be attractive and comparable to what they currently spend commuting. The third important factor was flexibility. Under these circumstances 9 of 12 commuter focus group participants would be willing to try a commuter bus. Several of the participants mentioned a commuter bus as the most important improvement. There was also significant interest in the vanpool concept. Several participants have friends who commute by vanpools and liked the concept.

Uber/Lyft/Taxis and Carpooling

There was general support of considering discounted taxis, Uber and Lyft as a mobility option in Simi Valley

One of the focus group participants described Lyft and Uber as “game changers” in providing mobility options other than driving their own car. All of the focus group participants had heard about Uber or Lyft but only 6 of 22 participants had actually utilized either Uber or Lyft. The concept of subsidized rides for Uber and Lyft ranked fourth in the mobility improvements by open house participants. It is a concept that City Council members would like to see explored as part of the SRTP.

Facilitating carpools is an inexpensive means of enhancing mobility options for Simi Valley employees and residents.

Carpooling is most common among family members and arrangements with school age children for rides to school and after school programs. They are also common among employees at companies in sharing rides to and from work among fellow and trusted employees.
Communications and Information

*Enhanced passenger information would make the fixed route system more user-friendly for both current and new riders.*

Simi Valley Transit has made valid efforts to provide passenger information in print, at the bus stop, online and through a real-time app. However, these tools are not easy to use or are often inaccurate. During the four-day site visit, the following were five sub-areas of enhanced passenger information that we observed or received input on:

A. *Printed schedules need to be consolidated and more user friendly.*

B. *Information displays at the bus stop need to be updated and stop specific.*

C. *Content and technology of the website need to be enhanced.*

D. *NextBus app is valuable, but not always accurate.*

E. *Being part of Google Transit would serve both current and potential riders.*

Simi Valley Transit is currently in a procurement process for a GTFS feed that will provide accurate schedule and route information for applications such as Google Transit and the NextBus app.

*Demand response service suffers from the same lack of clarity as fixed route passenger information.*

The ADA and Senior Transportation service brochure provides six panels of tightly packed text describing the services. It is daunting for the average reader and likely more so for seniors or anyone with a cognitive disability. In focus groups with seniors we heard much confusion about how far ahead trips must be scheduled and what the “pick up window” really is.

*Expanded and better communicated options for purchasing fare media would improve the customer experience.*

While day passes can be purchased on the bus, multi-ride and monthly passes can only be purchased at City Hall. Printed schedules provide no information about where to purchase passes. It would make riding a lot more user friendly if passes could be purchased at locations where riders already go – e.g. grocery stores, the library, and schools (currently sold at all middle and high schools).

**Mission, Goals and Performance Measures**

**Mission Statement Options**

Based on the stakeholder interviews with the Mayor and two City Council members and the City Manager, and during the four-day site visit, there were four potential policy directions for the City Council to consider in adopting a mission statement:

1. To provide safe and cost effective mobility options throughout Simi Valley to serve the transportation needs of residents and visitors.
2. To provide and safe and cost effective mobility options to serve the transportation needs of transportation disadvantaged individuals in Simi Valley.

3. To provide safe and cost effective mobility options throughout Simi Valley to serve the transportation needs of residents, students, employees and visitors with a priority resource allocation to transportation disadvantaged individuals.

4. To provide safe and cost effective mobility options led by private sector innovation in meeting market driven transportation needs of Simi Valley residents and visitors.

The mission statement options represent the range of viewpoints of what the mission of Simi Valley Transit should be. Four goals are proposed:

1. Provide safe and convenient transportation services to the residents of Simi Valley for employment, shopping, education and social service trips, so long as service can be provided in a cost-effective manner. (Safe and accessible goal)

2. Ensure than all transit programs can be provided at a high quality of service. Quality of service is more important than expansion of service. (Service quality goal)

3. Provide an effective level of service in response to demonstrated community market needs. (Service effectiveness goal)

4. Provide public transportation services that are financially sustainable within existing local, state and federal funding programs and regulations in a cost-efficient manner (service cost-efficiency goal)

In Chapter 7, specific performance measures and potential standards are proposed for each of these goals. In Chapter 10 and later in this Executive Summary, each of the four service delivery scenarios are developed based on one of these mission statement options.

Organizational Alternatives

Simi Valley is a directly operated public transportation service with governance by the City of Simi Valley. With input from three City Council members and the City Manager, there are two parts to the organizational structure analysis:

- Governance: setting the vision and goals and monitoring performances
- Directly operated versus contracted service

There are four recommended alternatives for full evaluation in Phase II of the SRTP.

Streamline Simi Valley Transit’s Existing Structure

There are a number of technology changes that are being proposed that should significantly reduce the amount of paperwork and data entry that is currently being performed. The key question is to what degree can staffing be streamlined once an effective Transit Management System is fully operational, reducing the significant amount of data entry and paperwork requirements that currently exists? The analysis will determine what potential cost savings are feasible and realistic.
A second area of inquiry is the appropriate administrative staffing for the new service plan. Most transit systems the size of Simi Valley have a single Transit Manager, a single Transit Operations Manager, and a Senior Management Analyst as their management team. Support staff include one Transit Supervisor per shift, a Senior Dispatcher, one dispatcher per shift and one clerical position. The Senior Dispatcher is equivalent to a Transit Supervisor and provides coverage when one of the Transit Supervisor is ill or on vacation. In most transit systems the size of Simi Valley, the Transit Operations Assistant (TOA) positions do not exist. There will likely be a number of recommended changes to the way of Simi Valley Transit does business depending on the service plan that is adopted by the City of Simi Valley. The Phase II analysis will determine the appropriate staff and skill sets necessary to efficiently manage Simi Valley Transit depending on the service scenario option selected.

**Contract for Operations and Maintenance**

For this organizational alternative, similar to the cities of Moorpark, Thousand Oaks, and Camarillo, the City of Simi Valley would contract with a third party vendor for both operations and maintenance. The City of Simi Valley would still retain administrative oversight of Simi Valley Transit. The City Council would still be the governing body.

The Transit Manager would be in charge of developing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for competitive procurement of both operations and maintenance functions for fixed route and ADA/DAR services. The Transit Manager would be responsible for providing oversight to ensure that the contract terms are being satisfied. Typically, cities that contract for operations and maintenance retain the grants, financial management and marketing functions of a transit operation. In Phase II, the evaluation would recommend a City of Simi Valley staffing plan for this alternative.

Federal labor laws will minimize the potential cost savings of moving to a contracted environment. Federal Department of Labor provides protections to transit employees in providing any change from employment status as from a City of Simi Valley employee to a contractor employee. This can be a barrier to absorbing typical higher cost wage and benefits City employees into a contractor wage and benefit environment. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

**Evaluate the Benefits and Costs of Joining Gold Coast Transit**

Simi Valley does have the option of becoming a participating agency in the Gold Coast Transit District. The Gold Coast Transit District (GCTD) is a dependent special district that was formed on October 13, 2013. The GCTD has legislative provisions in place to accommodate potential expansion of the District into the jurisdictions of any of the currently non-member cities within the County (i.e., Santa Paula, Fillmore, Camarillo, Thousand Oaks, Moorpark, and Simi Valley), upon approval by (1) the City Council of the non-member city that is requesting to become a member of the District, (2) the GCTD Board of Directors, and (3) LAFCo.

Gold Coast Transit is governed by elected officials from the five current agencies. AB 664 in forming the Gold Coast Transit District allows for adding another member if a city like Simi Valley were to join the Gold Coast Transit District.
“....may be expanded with the addition of new members but shall not exceed 11 directors. One director shall be appointed by the governing body of each member...”

*It must be emphasized that the consulting team has not contacted Gold Coast Transit District management to begin discussion of this alternative.* The consulting team will make the contact in concert with Community Service management staff if the City Council decides to include this alternative in Phase II analysis of the SRTP.

In this alternative, the policy control of transit operations would be with the Gold Coast Transit Board. The Board could expand to have one of the Simi Valley City Council members join the Gold Coast Transit Board.

There are potentially significant cost efficiency advantages to joining Gold Coast Transit. According to the 2015/16 Performance Audit, the cost per vehicle service hour for Gold Coast Transit fixed route was $73.58 for operation of 201,903 vehicle service hours. This means it cost Gold Coast Transit $73.58 to operate one hour of bus service while it was in operation available to collect fares. This is a primary measure of transit cost efficiency. In FY 2015/16, It cost Gold Coast Transit with its contract operations for ADA Paratransit $66.21 per vehicle service hour for 43,007 vehicle service hours of operation.

Simi Valley Transit’s cost per vehicle service hour is significantly higher. For fixed route service, the cost per vehicle service hour was $121.33 for the operation of 25,345 vehicle service hours. The cost per vehicle service hours for ADA/DAR in 2015/16 was $187.38 with 17,356 vehicle service hours.

*Overall, there are many trade-offs involved with considering becoming part of the Gold Coast Transit District.* These could be fully explored in Phase II of the SRTP. For the revenues available, Gold Coast Transit District would likely be able to operate significantly more service than Simi Valley Transit can currently afford to operate. Overall, it could mean more frequent, direct, and later evening service.

Gold Coast Transit fixed route services are directly operated and their ADA/DAR services are contracted. As discussed earlier, the analysis for the Gold Coast Transit organizational alternative would need to evaluate the federal labor law implications in transferring operations for ADA/DAR drivers to a contract operation.

**Evaluate the Benefits and Costs of a Single Operator for ADA/DAR services in the East County**

In this alternative, both Simi Valley Transit administration and fixed-route operations would continue to be directly operated by the City of Simi Valley. ECTA would be contractor for a single operator for ADA/DAR service, both for local and CONNECT intercity services.

The implementation of a single operator for ADA/DAR services in East County is a high priority project goal of East County Transportation Alliance. This could potentially reduce the overall costs of ADA/DAR service delivery. A step in this direction was taken with implementation of the CONNECT service. CONNECT currently provides approximately 7,200 longer (and therefore more expensive) trips at an average cost of $38.42 per trip. For shorter trips, the cost per trip for Simi Valley Transit trips was
$74.79 in FY 2015/16, almost double the cost provided by the contract operator for CONNECT. The farebox recovery ratio for CONNECT is 11.9%. Similar to the option above of contracting for both operations and maintenance for both fixed route and ADA/DAR services, the consideration of federal labor laws would be considered in the evaluation.

The consulting team will explore with the ECTA management committee what steps would be necessary to implement this high priority action in East County. The cost implications would be evaluated.

**Financial Scenarios to Achieve Financial Sustainability**

There are three different ways to think about financial sustainability for Simi Valley Transit. One school of thought is that financial sustainability is the ability to provide overall mobility services in the most cost-effective manner possible, close to the average performance of Ventura County agencies. The importance of cost effectiveness was stressed in the stakeholder interviews with City Council members. A second way to think about financial sustainability is to recognize the high structural costs of operating a municipal transit service, but taking steps to streamline management, and focus on achieving the farebox recovery ratio with increased local contributions. A third financial scenario would be for Simi Valley to join the Gold Coast Transit District.

It is important to note that these three financial scenarios will be paired with each of the four service delivery scenarios described in the last section of this Executive Summary. Significantly more detail is provided on the financial scenarios in Chapter 9.

**Cost Efficiency Financial Scenario**

This financial scenario emphasizes cost efficiency to achieve financial sustainability. It explores a number of efficiency measures to lower the costs as measured by the systemwide cost per vehicle service hour. The goal would be to come as close as possible to the average cost per vehicle service hour for other Ventura County transit agencies. This would likely require radical changes to the organizational structure and a new mix of service delivery options.

**Streamline SVT Management and Increased Local Contributions.**

A less radical approach to the Cost Efficiency Financial Scenario is doing whatever is feasible to improve efficiency within the existing organizational structure, but with the focus on fostering partnerships and utilizing some strategically targeted general fund money to sponsor specific services. Achieving the farebox recovery ratio of 10% for ADA/DAR and 20% for fixed route is one way to view achievement of financial sustainability. As explained in more detail in Chapter 9, recent changes in state law provide more flexibility in utilizing local contributions to satisfy the farebox recovery requirements. This scenario would emphasize the use of increased fares and local contributions to achieve the farebox recovery requirements.
Join the Gold Coast Transit District Financial Scenario

This financial scenario recognizes the potential benefits of cost efficiency and additional supply of transit services by joining the Gold Coast Transit District. In this financial scenario, these benefits outweigh the costs of loss of direct control over local transit and the overhead contributions made by transit to the City of Simi Valley.

The difference between Simi Valley Transit’s cost per vehicle service and Gold Coast Transit District cost per vehicle service hour was described earlier. Utilizing the $73.58 cost per vehicle service hour from Gold Coast Transit, for illustration purposes only, would enable 41,793 vehicle service hours instead of the 25,345 vehicle service hours actually provided by Simi Valley Transit. This could potentially enable more frequent service, a longer span of service, and Sunday service, three of the top priorities of existing passengers.

For ADA/DAR, Simi Valley spent $3,252,231 on ADA/DAR services. Utilizing the $66.21 per vehicle service hour spent by Gold Coast Transit would enable 49,120 vehicle service hours instead of the actual 17,356 actually provided by Simi Valley Transit in 2015/16. Some of these hours could be transferred to improved fixed route service, making the overall Simi Valley transit operations more cost effective.

**Recommended Service Delivery Alternatives for Analysis**

**Fixed Route**

In providing fixed route transit service, the following are the key design variables that will be utilized in Phase II to finalize the design of fixed route service alternatives. The following are some of the key considerations, and they are reviewed in more detail in Chapter 10.

**Service Design Variables**

1. **Transfer Locations:** Unlike most small urbanized areas similar to Simi Valley, there is currently no transit center. A transit center is where buses arrive and depart and passengers are able to conveniently transfer from one bus to another to reach their final destination. There are four candidate locations for a Simi Valley Transit Center:
   - Civic Center
   - Town Center Mall
   - Cochran/Galena in the Walmart area
   - Simi Valley Metrolink station or area

An example of a transit Center is the Transportation Center in Thousand Oaks shown above. In addition, a few secondary on-street transfer locations where two or three buses can park need to be established.
2. Service Frequency and Scheduling: Alternatives to be reviewed in Phase II include:

- 30-minute service: in focus groups and open houses, 65% of riders ranked more frequent buses on Routes A and B as very important (“6” or “7” on a scale from 1 to 7).
- 45 minutes (status quo)
- 60 minutes

Depending on demand, service frequencies can be lower in the early morning and in the evening. Ideally, service frequencies are on “clock headways”. What this means is that the bus departs the stop at the same time each hour. For example, buses might depart at :50 and :20 after the hour at the Civic Center and :12 and :42 after the hour at Los Angeles and Yosemite. *This make schedules easy to remember for passengers.*

3. Span of Service: By far, implementing Sunday service received the most “investment” at the two Open Houses. Additionally, in the onboard survey, Sunday service was the most important service improvement by a factor of two. Service to 10:00 p.m. was a common refrain during the focus groups and open houses, and input from the onboard survey found that this was the second most important service improvement after Sunday service. However, there is a distinct trade-off for providing Sunday service as ridership is typically 50% of average weekday ridership, and therefore Sunday service normally reduces average productivity and farebox recovery ratio. Service past 7:00 p.m. typically has the same trade-off issues.

The alternatives to explore for span of service will be:

1. Status quo and adding Sunday service from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
2. Service to 10:00 p.m. Monday to Saturday and 8:00 p.m. on Sunday
3. Service to 9:00 p.m. on weekdays, 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, and 5:00 p.m. on Sunday
4. Service starting at 5:00 a.m. on Route C but at 6:00 to 6:30 a.m. on other routes

4. Directness of Route

*To maximize ridership, routes that provide two-way service along the same street will be a primary design feature.* There were a number of focus group and open house comments about the importance of providing frequent two-way service along the entire length of E. Los Angeles Ave. between Yosemite and Madera Rd.
For alternatives that maximize coverage to areas not served by Simi Valley Transit, curvilinear routes will be utilized.

One way loops will only be employed where the bus needs to turn around - short one-way loops at the end of the route are tolerable.

Simi Valley does have an East-West orientation, but routes that have an L-shape can provide two-way service on both the primary east-west orientation and also on key north-south streets such as Sycamore St. The utilization of two-way L-shaped routes will be fully evaluated in Phase II of the SRTP.

5. Connectivity: As discussed earlier, connectivity is a significant issue with the existing schedules. There are too many near misses and long passenger wait times. There are really no alternatives for this feature. *The restructured Simi Valley Transit routes will be structured such that connectivity between routes is a key consideration.*
Service Delivery Scenarios

In order to illustrate the trade-offs of the fixed route restructuring to achieve different community goals, in Phase II we plan to develop the following service scenarios:

1. Transit Service Delivery Scenarios
   - Lifeline Transit Network
   - Maximize Ridership
   - Private Micro-Transport
   - Balanced

2. Market focused
   - School Trippers
   - Reagan Library shuttle
   - Community service routes
   - Uber/Lyft subsidies for short trips, $5 cap
   - Crowd sourced fixed route app

The design variables described above will be incorporated into each of these service scenarios. They are discussed below. Three of the scenarios would utilize traditional fixed route service, while the Private Micro-Transport Scenario would likely only utilize crowd-sourced fixed routes. The degree of the utilization of other market-focused options will depend on the scenario. The Lifeline Transit Network Scenario would be at one end of the continuum utilizing mostly traditional transit service and little or no market focused services. At the other end of the continuum, the Private Micro Transit Scenario would have little or no traditional fixed route transit and would rely more on market focused services such as crowd-sourced routes and Uber/Lyft.

The Lifeline Transit Network Scenario provides traditional transit fixed route service that offers efficient service as much as possible, but also provides the necessary coverage so that existing riders and other transit dependent riders are able to utilize bus service as a means of conducting their lives. The service scenario is aligned to the mission statement: “To provide and safe and cost-effective mobility options to serve the transportation needs of transportation disadvantaged individuals in Simi Valley.” In addition to
traditional transit, this scenario would utilize community service routes to connect senior housing locations with medical, shopping, government, and recreation activities.

A second transit service delivery scenario would be to focus services where they can maximize ridership potential, what we’ll call the *Maximize Ridership Scenario*. This scenario is aligned with the mission statement option: “To provide safe and cost-effective mobility options throughout Simi Valley to serve the transportation needs of residents and visitors.” The focus of this scenario would be to develop a minimum of 30-minute service to be provided on local routes, but would have less coverage than the *Lifeline Transit Network Scenario*.

A third transit delivery scenario, *Private Micro-Transit Scenario*, would mostly rely on market-focused service delivery including Lyft/Uber/taxi as well as crowd sourced fixed routes. The emphasis would be on private sector and demand based solutions while minimizing public subsidy dollars. This scenario is in response to a few attendees at the open house, a stakeholder interview participant, and discussion at one of the City Council stakeholder meetings where micro-transit options were discussed. This scenario responds to mission statement option: “To provide safe and cost effective mobility options led by private sector innovation in meeting market driven transportation needs of Simi Valley residents and visitors.” In this scenario, the fixed route options would utilize crowd-sourced app options similar to Chariot that are described in more detail in Chapter 10. The scenario would supplement this with Lyft/Uber/Taxi discounts for very low-income residents. Traditional DAR service would be available to disabled residents, including the high number of wheelchair trips.

A fourth scenario, the *Balanced Service Scenario*, would combine the best features of *Lifeline Transit Network* and *Maximize Ridership Scenarios* to balance the needs of the transportation disadvantaged with targeted services for other Simi Valley residents and visitors. It is possible that some elements of the *Private Micro-Transit Scenario* could also be incorporated. This service scenario is aligned to the mission statement option: “To provide safe and cost effective mobility options throughout Simi Valley to serve the transportation needs of residents, students, employees and visitors with a priority resource allocation to transportation disadvantaged individuals.”

**Market Focused Services**

As described above the degree to which market-focused services are utilized will depend on the service scenario. The service concepts and methodologies to be employed in Phase II are provided below for three of the market focused services. Chapter 10 provides industry examples for all of the market focused services listed earlier.

**School Trippers**

School trippers are special routes that are open to the general public, but that connect high concentrations of middle and high school resident locations with the bell times at the beginning and end of the day at the schools they attend. School tripper routes only operate when schools are in session. The consulting team is working with the Simi Valley Unified School District to get data on residential concentrations of students attending different schools. The data will also be mapped. The SVUSD will provide bell times for the schools. A few pilot school trippers with the best chance for success will be
developed with a preliminary route and schedule. Financial partnership options will be explored. In other school tripper arrangements, the partnerships range from selling transit passes at the school site (currently being done), guaranteeing a minimum number of monthly transit pass sales, to a direct cash contribution to support the school tripper service. Most school trippers have full buses and generate high farebox recovery ratios.

Community Service Route
Community service routes are designed to meet the needs of seniors and disabled individuals, but are open to the general public. The primary goal is to offer these target populations a convenient alternative to the significantly costlier ADA/DAR service. Another primary goal is to reduce the demand of ADA/DAR service by giving a cheaper and much more convenient option for the trip they need to make. The community service route has the following features:

- Operates every weekday from approximately 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Connect senior housing with the grocery store, pharmacy, medical clinics/doctor office complexes, senior center, shopping, and the library with a one seat ride (no transfers required).
- Schedules are designed such that the bus stops at each location the same time each hour. So if a senior is dropped off at a grocery store at 10:05 after the hour, the bus will return again at 11:05 a.m.
- Operates with small low floor buses, similar to the Arboc buses that currently operate on the fixed route services. Fixed route buses have two wheelchair stations. The community service route buses could accommodate three or four wheelchairs.
- The bus stops are at the front door of the activity center, for example, at the front door of Target

A map has been prepared of key housing and activity centers in Simi Valley (page 10-16 in Volume II). In Phase II, a community service route from West Simi Valley and a second route from East Simi Valley will be prepared with a preliminary schedule. Both routes would serve the Civic Center and Simi Valley Hospital areas. A community workshop will be held at the end of Phase II to receive additional senior and disabled individual input on the proposed route and schedules. This input will be provided to the City Council.

Reagan Library Shuttle
The objective of the Reagan Library Shuttle would be to enable a tourist to Simi Valley to stay overnight after taking the Metrolink train to Simi Valley, visit the Reagan Library, and then return to the Metrolink station in order to catch the train back to the Los Angeles area. A special route would be designed to take Metrolink passengers to 1) major hotels and 2) Reagan Library.

There are four service delivery options that will be evaluated in Phase II:

- Contracted service with a qualified vendor
- Collaborative effort and joint venture among interested hotels. This would utilize the same models that multiple hotels use for service to and from nearby hotels and the airport.
• Special code with Uber or Lyft for qualified trips from Metrolink to the hotel and from the hotel to or from the Reagan Library.
• Service operated by Simi Valley Transit, as either a fixed route or demand response service.

A key factor in determining the feasibility of a Reagan Library Shuttle are willing and able partners. In the stakeholder interviews with the Reagan Library, and in a brief group meeting with the Simi Valley Tourism Alliance representative at the Chamber of Commerce, there appeared to be support for implementing one of the service delivery options described above.

ADA/Senior DAR Policy, Operations and Alternatives

There are five factors in re-evaluating ADA/DAR service delivery:

1. Compliance with Law, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
2. Clarifying service policies to improve the passenger experience and support efficient service delivery
3. Reducing Dial-A-Ride Program Costs
4. Managing ADA Trip Demand and Establishing Lower-Cost Service Options for ADA/Senior Dial-A-Ride Users
5. Technology improvements to support reliability and customer access

Compliance with Law, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

Simi Valley ADA/Senior DAR is first and foremost an Americans with Disabilities Act complementary paratransit service that must complement Simi Valley fixed-route services to provide an accessible transportation option for those riders unable to use fixed-route transportation. It must comply with ADA regulations. Secondarily, it provides transportation – on a space available basis – to Simi Valley residents who are age 65 and older. Serving seniors is a discretionary service option, and many areas do not have senior transportation service.

Reduce Service Area Strictly to ¾ Mile Envelope Around Fixed Route:

While this may largely be happening, there are suggestions from the ridership that trips to or from particular locations are sometimes provided while at other times they are not allowable – or space isn’t available to provide these. Options for service beyond the ¾ mile will be considered in Phase II – for example, subsidized taxi, Uber or Lyft trips of, for example, $5 a trip could be made available as a service that is not ADA service but is an alternative for trips for this population. However, it should be clear that this is a premium service, providing service beyond the ¾ mile radius of fixed route service, and is a discretionary policy choice of the City Council.

Ensure Strict Initial Certification and Recertification Procedures

Comments were offered during this study’s public outreach processes that persons who may not be ADA eligible are in fact getting certified. It is beyond the scope of this study to assess whether that is the case. Currently VCTC has responsibility for ADA certification procedures and for re-certification. Many communities, in order to manage carefully the considerable resources required to provide effective ADA
complementary paratransit, often seek to tighten the entrance to the service and to carefully review participants’ certification when that comes up in annual or biennial re-certification processes.

**Clarifying service policies to improve the passenger experience and support efficient service delivery**

Reducing two-week advance reservation to one-week advance reservation.

This alternative proposes a shorter advance reservation time frame of seven days rather than the current fourteen days. While for passengers making advance medical appointments or some other type of appointment, this may require some adjustment in practice, for ADA registered riders where they are guaranteed a pick-up, they can be assured that their trip will be served.

**On-time pick-up window clarification**

For all alternatives, it will be necessary to clarify how the 30-minute pick-up window is applied and to consistently communicate this to the passengers. Modifications to the Trapeze scheduling software practices – both parameters set within the computer algorithms and in practice by dispatcher – will improve the passenger experience and support efficient service delivery.

**DAR Policy, Procedures and Riders Guide Revised**

As the Simi Valley Dial-A-Ride program considers changes to a number of rider-related and operational policies and procedures to ensure the program’s cost-effectiveness and compliance with law, these changes should be translated into new policies and procedures for riders, for drivers, and for dispatch.

**Training for Dispatch and Drivers Tied to New Policies and Procedures**

When Dial-A-Ride policies are reviewed and revised, they need to be immediately followed with training for all Simi Valley operations personnel. An important dimension of this will be how policies and procedures are communicated to the ridership public. Striving for consistent and clear policy that is in compliance with law will be the intent.

**Reducing Dial-A-Ride Program Costs**

Scheduling to demand rather than to pre-existing driver shifts

The practice of driver scheduling that uses short shifts followed by a break and then a second shift, known as split shifts, is common in the demand response industry. This type of driver scheduling recognizes the bi-modal peaks that are very common, when riders are traveling out in the morning and then back in the afternoon to and from various daily activities. Without split shifts, the otherwise regular seven to eight-hour driver shifts will always result in too much vehicle capacity during the midday and again later in the afternoon when passenger are not traveling.

Exhibit ES-4 clearly shows the excess of seat supply (blue line) compared to actual trips taken (red line). It does not recognize the volume of passengers using mobility devices who require additional vehicle capacity and, with longer dwell times to board and disembark, will impact how the overall fleet can be used. It takes more vehicle capacity to load the same number of persons in mobility devices, in contrast with those who are ambulatory and have neither a walker nor use a wheelchair.
Managing ADA Trip Demand and Establishing Lower-Cost Service Options

Expanding Alternative Travel Modes through Fare Discounts, Travel Training, Travel Ambassador and Volunteer-Driver, Mileage Reimbursement Programs

Building upon Simi Valley Transit’s travel training experience will be important. There are numerous examples of the strategies that transit agencies can employ in helping riders and potential riders of expensive demand response services consider – and then use – lower cost alternatives. The City of Simi Valley currently has a reduced fixed-route fare for Senior/ADA Dial-A-Ride users. Some systems institute free fixed-route to all ADA certified riders, as in the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Metro service area.

Community Partnerships Extending Dial-A-Ride Service for New Populations

During this SRTP outreach effort, some need was expressed by the School District for assistance with group trips associated with off-site training experiences for students with disabilities and some after school activities for these and other student populations. Where there is sufficient vehicle capacity, some group trip reservations can be served to transport numbers of riders to common destinations, as with the Community Service Routes. In Claremont, California’s City Dial-A-Ride program, there is a Group Van service available to the general public but used heavily by the school district. School administrators make advance reservations – typically recurring reservations – for groups of students that are generally six persons or more.
Technology improvements to support reliability and customer access

Trip Scheduling Software that Supports Real-Time Trip Scheduling Suggestions
Phase II will provide guidelines for the procurement of new scheduling software. Software that can enable the call taking function to move immediately into the trip reservation function is advisable, given that the Division has just two full-time and two part-time dispatchers to cover the six-day operating week, from 5:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. dispatch hours. Reducing staff time in passenger call-backs is desirable. Software features should be able to distinguish between ADA and non-ADA riders and be able to readily provide the caller’s common trips and special characteristics.

Providing Automatic “Call Outs” to Indicate the Vehicle is Arriving within 30 Minute Window
Passengers find it difficult to wait for the arrival of a vehicle that could show up at their curb at any time within the thirty-minute on-time window. One strategy for aiding customers and reducing no-shows is to provide an automatic call-out, a telephone call to riders to indicate that their vehicle is scheduled to arrive within a certain number of minutes. These can be automated and tied to dispatching software, to provide riders’ with relatively immediate information about vehicle arrival.

Better On-Line Information about Service Area and Fares
Increasingly users of paratransit services, and sometimes the care providers or adult children who assist them, turn to the Internet to understand a demand response service, where it goes and what it costs. Better tools on the Internet will aide Simi Valley ADA/Senior Dial-A-Ride users and those assisting them.

One such tool would be an interactive map that provides clear information as to whether one is within the ADA service area, that is within the ¾ mile envelope of the fixed-route service. In “clicking on” a given address, it could become immediately evident as to whether this was within the ADA service area or not.

Regional Service Alternatives
The range of regional service improvements include:

1. Improvements to existing VCTC service
2. Implementation of East/West Connector service between Simi Valley and Ventura
3. Commuter Express bus service
4. New vanpool program

Improvements to Existing VCTC Services
VCTC Routes Serve New Transit Center Location
Whatever transit center location is decided upon for the local fixed route service, incorporating the VCTC East County Route will be important. The East County Schedule includes the Thousand Oaks Transportation Center on all schedule patterns, and it would be important to do the same for the proposed new Transit Center in Simi Valley.
Provide Reasonable Connections Between VCTC East County and Simi Valley Local Routes

The VCTC August 2015 SRTP had the following important observation:

“Clock face headways of 15, 20, 30, and 60 minutes make it easier to memorize trip times and not rely on a schedule, thereby increasing customer satisfaction. Clock face headways also allow for timed connections when implemented at a system or countywide level.”

Connectivity among East County transit agencies was a significant issue addressed in the VCTC 2017 Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan.

Schedule coordination will be addressed in Phase II of the SRTP. Simi Valley Transit staff is currently working on improving connections between Simi Valley Transit and the East County VCTC route.

Implementation of East-West Connector between Simi Valley and Ventura

The Ventura County Transportation Commission and the cities of Simi Valley, Moorpark, Camarillo, and Ventura submitted a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) application for funds to establish a new route that would provide a direct connection from East Ventura County to West Ventura County, using the Highway 118-Highway 34 corridor and Highway 101.

The route would serve Simi Valley, Moorpark, Somis, Camarillo and Ventura on weekdays from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., with 120 minute headways and a limited number of stops. Service is expected to start in 2017. Efforts will be made to coordinate with VCTC on schedule coordination and serving major activity centers in Simi Valley.

**Commuter Bus Service**

Route C is an existing Commuter service to Chatsworth. In Chatsworth, there are important connections to the LA Metro Orange Line, LA Metro buses, LADOT Commuter Express buses, and Santa Clarita Transit.

A second bus could be added to Route C, with runs starting from Civic Center at approximately 5:00 a.m., with buses operating approximately every 30-40 minutes during peak commute periods. Making some runs express runs will be explored. A second alternative would be adding Wi-Fi to the buses. A third potential improvement would be the extension of Route C on select runs to the Warner Center, Pierce College, and Kaiser Permanente Woodland Hills. All three are relatively adjacent and bus service could be extended to these major San Fernando Valley locations. A fourth potential improvement would be adding one or two runs in the evening for service both to and from Chatsworth. It should be noted that existing ridership drops off significantly for the existing last run that arrives to the Metrolink station at 7:59 p.m. Extending service further into the evening will not enhance farebox recovery ratio.

**New Vanpool Service**

Vanpools are commuter vans that range from mini-vans with seven passengers to full size 15-passenger vans. There are a number of transit agencies that provide vanpools as part of their mix of services. The driver of the vanpool is one of the group, but doesn’t pay the monthly fare and has use of the vehicle on
weekends in exchange for driving duties. There is normally a back-up driver so that the vanpool can operate when the primary driver is ill or on vacation.

There are several models for administering and operating a vanpool program. One is utilizing a third party vendor such as Vride, Enterprise or CalVans to provide the vanpools and handle all of the insurance and vehicle leasing arrangements.

A second model that used by some transit agencies is to utilize available transit capital funds to purchase the vanpools and have passengers share in monthly operating costs, ensuring a very high farebox ratio.

There are potential benefits of additional FTA 5307 funding with a robust vanpool program. This will be explored in Phase II.

**Fares and Fare Analysis**

As discussed above, there are four different service delivery scenarios. Pricing of fares needs to provide the right mix of carrots and sticks to achieve overall cost effectiveness and cost efficiency goals. One of the alternatives for ADA/DAR is increase fares for ADA passengers to $3.00, the maximum allowed under the Americans with Disability Act. This is twice the fixed-route general fare. There is also an option to provide a community service route for the reduced fare of $1.00 or free to reduce demand on ADA/DAR services and encourage utilization of the community service routes whenever possible.

Each of the four service delivery scenarios should have an accompanying fare structure and policies that will help to achieve the objectives of that particular service delivery scenario. It is proposed that the basis of comparison would be the subsidy per passenger trip required. This is the cost per passenger trip minus the average fare revenue generated. We will utilize sketch planning tools including fare and service elasticities to estimate ridership potential and fare revenue potential. This will provide the City Council at the end of Phase II the information needed to help make the decision about which of the service delivery scenarios should be included in the final Short Range Transit Plan document.

**Marketing Plan Elements**

The SRTP will include a Marketing Plan which will serve as a companion to the service plan, with the intent of maximizing utilization of Simi Valley Transit. Detailed marketing recommendations will be developed in each of the following strategic areas.

**Passenger Information**

Our customer experience review, rider focus group, stakeholder interviews and open house all *highlighted the need for easier to use, more accurate passenger information tools.* This will be a key focus of the marketing plan and will address:

- GTFS – trip planning capabilities
- SVT website
- Printed passenger information guides
• Realtime information app
• At-the-bus stop information displays
• Information displays at key destinations

Simi Valley Transit is in process of determining how to best utilize funds to upgrade the website.

**Fare Media Sales**

SVT’s current fare media program requires riders and stakeholders to “go out of their way” to purchase fare media. The marketing plan will address the potential for expanding the pass sales network and capturing the promotional value of fare media.

**Branding**

SVT’s current brand is relatively bland. Bolder branding of buses and bus stops could play a role in increasing visibility of the system.

**Gatekeeper Marketing**

Organizations which serve constituencies who use or have the potential to use public transit are important “gatekeepers” for these market segments. Several of the school and social service stakeholders we spoke with expressed an interest in working as marketing partners with SVT.

**Community Outreach & Public Relations**

There is a pervasive belief among some Simi Valley residents that “no one rides the bus.” This misperception needs to be combated with a community outreach effort to communicate who does ride the bus and how Simi Valley benefits from the system. The marketing plan will address marketing strategies such as:

• Presentations to civic, business and neighborhood organizations
• News release calendar
• Social media

**Advertising and Promotion**

The plan will address the potential to use local media advertising as well as other promotional efforts to generate trial ridership among new riders. Based on viability and cost, strategies may include:

• Local print advertising
• On-line banner advertising (on newspaper or local blog sites)
• On-line Google or Facebook ads
• Free ride promotions
• Special event promotions (Dump the Pump, Earth Day, etc.)