



Agenda Item No. 3

To Finance-Auditing Committee/Committee of the Whole
Meeting of April 12, 2007

From: Alan R. Zahradnik, Planning Director
Susan C. Chiaroni, Deputy General Manager, Bus Division
Joseph M. Wire, Auditor-Controller
Celia G. Kupersmith, General Manager

Subject: **APPROVE A RECIPROCAL TRANSFER ARRANGEMENT WITH THE
CITY OF PETALUMA AND SONOMA COUNTY TRANSIT AND AMEND
MASTER ORDINANCE 2007 ACCORDINGLY**

Recommendation

The Finance-Auditing Committee recommends that the Board of Directors approve a reciprocal transfer arrangement in Petaluma with the City of Petaluma and Sonoma County Transit effective June 10, 2007; and amend Master Ordinance 2007 accordingly.

Summary

Sonoma County Transit is constructing a new transit hub in Petaluma known as the “Copeland Street Transit Mall” to improve inter-operator connections. The new facility is expected to open during July 2007. The location is east of downtown Petaluma at the intersection of East Washington Street and Copeland Street, adjacent to the Petaluma railroad station, and will replace the current on-street transfer location at 4th & C Streets that is used by Golden Gate Transit (GGT), Petaluma and Sonoma County Transit systems.

Effective June 10, 2007, Regional Basic Route 80 will be realigned to serve the new Transit Mall by discontinuing service on N. Petaluma Blvd. and instead operating on U.S. Highway 101 to East Washington Street. Both Sonoma County Transit and Petaluma Transit will provide service on North Petaluma Blvd. via connections at the new Transit Mall. The two operators currently accept GGT transfers for a local fare credit. A reciprocal transfer arrangement to allow that same local fare credit on GGT buses is proposed by staff to avoid an unintended fare increase for existing GGT Route 80 riders using North Petaluma Avenue. Formal fare agreements with these agencies will be executed to implement this proposed arrangement.

Recommended Transfer Credit

A reciprocal local fare transfer credit for travel in Petaluma (currently \$1.00) is proposed to minimize the fare impact to existing GGT riders affected by the Transit Mall service proposal and to foster greater coordination between transit operators in Sonoma County. It is

recommended that Section 3, D, 2, "Inter-Operator Transfers," of Master Ordinance No. 2007 be amended to reflect this change.

In the past, GGT has worked with other transit operators to establish cooperative fare arrangements to minimize the financial impact to riders when GGT service has been replaced by another operator. A cooperative fare arrangement was established in 2003 with Sonoma County Transit when GGT Route 78 (Sebastopol to San Francisco) and Route 90 (Town of Sonoma to San Francisco) were discontinued and replaced in part with Sonoma County Transit service. The replacement service provided connecting service to other GGT services in Rohnert Park and San Rafael, respectively, for continuing travel to or from San Francisco. With the approval of the Board of Directors, staff would develop and execute a formal fare agreement with the City of Petaluma and Sonoma County Transit covering the recommended reciprocal transfer arrangement.

Service and Routing Options Considered

Petaluma is currently served by GGT Transbay Commute Bus Routes 73, 74 and 76, Sonoma/Marin Commute Bus Route 75 and Basic Bus Route 80. The new facility is located in a commercial/industrial area and will not have commuter parking. Very few commuters use local buses to access GGT commute bus services. As a result, staff is not planning to change the existing routes of its commuter bus routes to serve the new Transit Mall since the likelihood of increasing GGT commute ridership is low. On the other hand, GGT Basic Route 80 operates throughout the day between Santa Rosa, Petaluma, Novato, San Rafael, Marin City and San Francisco with many intermediate stops allowing for connections with local bus services. Staff considered three routing options to bring Route 80 service into the new Transit Mall.

Three Route 80 service options, shown on the attached map, were considered:

1. Extend the route from N. Petaluma Blvd. into the Copeland Street facility, where it would turn around and backtrack to S. Petaluma Blvd. to resume its regular route.
2. Streamline the route, making greater use of U.S. 101— eliminate S. Petaluma Blvd.
3. Streamline the route, making greater use of U.S. 101— eliminate N. Petaluma Blvd.

Option 1 would add approximately 10 minutes to each Route 80 trip. This added running time on 37 daily trips translates to just over six hours each day, or approximately 2,250 annual hours. At a minimum, the annual cost of this option is estimated to be approximately \$76,500. This figure is based on an hourly rate of \$34 that reflects only direct costs (fuel, tires and maintenance) but no bus operator costs. It is likely that additional bus operator costs would be needed to cover the added 20 minutes of round trip operating time.

Option 2 reroutes Route 80 to provide direct service through Petaluma to the Copeland Street Transit Mall. Instead of backtracking, the route would be streamlined to use U.S. Highway 101 in conjunction with East Washington Street. Northbound service from San Francisco and Novato would remain on U.S. 101 until the E. Washington St. exit, then travel via E. Washington St. to the Copeland Transit Mall and downtown Petaluma. It would resume its regular route from E. Washington St. and N. Petaluma Blvd. Southbound service would follow this routing in reverse. Service on S. Petaluma Blvd. would be discontinued. This proposal avoids incurring the operating costs as described in Option 1.

Option 3 is similar to Option 2, except GGT service would be discontinued on N. Petaluma Blvd. (instead of S. Petaluma Blvd.). Northbound Route 80 buses from San Francisco and Novato would continue to serve S. Petaluma Blvd. and downtown Petaluma, but would turn on E. Washington St. to serve the Copeland Street Transit Mall. From the Transit Mall, buses would continue east to U.S. 101 to Cotati and Santa Rosa. Southbound buses would follow this routing in the reverse direction. Similar to Option 2, this proposal also avoids incurring the operating costs as described in Option 1.

Ridership activity was examined for both South Petaluma Blvd. (discontinued with Option 2) and North Petaluma Blvd. (discontinued with Option 3). The ridership is about equal on both segments and very modest (about 20 total boardings per day, or an average of less than one per trip). N. Petaluma Blvd. has alternate transit service provided by Sonoma County Transit, and Petaluma Transit will be implementing a new route that will operate as far north as the city limits at the Factory Outlet Mall. S. Petaluma Blvd. has only GGT service. Also, under Option 2, eliminating service on S. Petaluma Blvd. means that Route 80 service would be available only at the northern fringe of the downtown Petaluma business district.

Discussions have taken place with staff of both Petaluma Transit and Sonoma County Transit regarding the potential implementation of Option 3 and removal of Route 80 service from N. Petaluma Blvd. Both operators indicated that they could absorb the 20 riders per day that board on N. Petaluma Blvd. The City of Petaluma has authorized GGT's use of E. Washington Street to access the Copeland Street Transit Mall.

Preferred Service Option

Option 3 is preferred by staff to provide Route 80 service to the Copeland Street Transit Mall. Option 3 provides service to the Copeland Street facility at no additional operating cost. Staff is now working to implement the realignment of Route 80 effective with the next quarterly schedule change on June 10, 2007.

Fare Impacts

If approved, there would be no cost impact to customers. As many as 20 riders per day on N. Petaluma Blvd. could be affected by the removal of Route 80 service under Option 3. These riders would have to pay a \$1.00 local fare on Sonoma County Transit or Petaluma Transit in order to connect to GGT regional service at the Copeland Street Transit Mall. Passengers transferring from GGT to Petaluma Transit or Sonoma County Transit are granted a \$1.00 local fare credit on those two systems, but GGT does not currently have a reciprocal agreement with the City of Petaluma or Sonoma County Transit to accept transfers from those operators for intercounty trips. Currently, passengers making local trips staying within Sonoma County are granted a nominal credit on GGT (\$0.10) when presenting a transfer from these operators.

Fiscal Impact

The fiscal impact of making the proposed Route 80 alignment change to serve the new Copeland Street Transit Mall and allowing a \$1.00 transfer credit on GGT for transfers from Petaluma Transit and Sonoma County Transit is estimated to be about \$7,300 per year of reduced fare revenue. It is possible that the improved ability to transfer between Petaluma Transit, Sonoma

County Transit and GGT offered at the Transit Mall could generate new passengers to offset any decline in revenue.

The proposal also avoids incurring an additional annual operating cost of at least \$76,500 to serve the new Transit mall associated with retaining service on both South and North Petaluma Blvds. with Option 1.

Attachment

Route 80 Service Options Serving Petaluma Copeland St Transit Mall

Service Options

- Option 1: Extend from Petaluma Blvd to Copeland and back track to Petaluma Blvd.
- Option 2: Eliminate S. Petaluma Blvd. - Use 101 instead
- Option 3: Eliminate N. Petaluma Blvd - Use 101 Instead

