Chapter 8

RTA Short Range Transit Plan

The following provides a comprehensive plan to improve the RTA program over the coming five years. Service enhancements are first presented. This is followed by capital improvements, including fleet improvements, facility plans, passenger amenities, and other capital items. Management and financial strategies are then identified. Finally, an implementation plan is defined.

This discussion builds upon the review of conditions and alternatives presented in previous chapters. The reader is encouraged to refer to these previous chapters for additional information regarding the plan elements.

SERVICE PLAN

A summary graphic of service improvements is presented in Figure 28.

Provide Mid-Day Express Service on Route 9 and Route 10

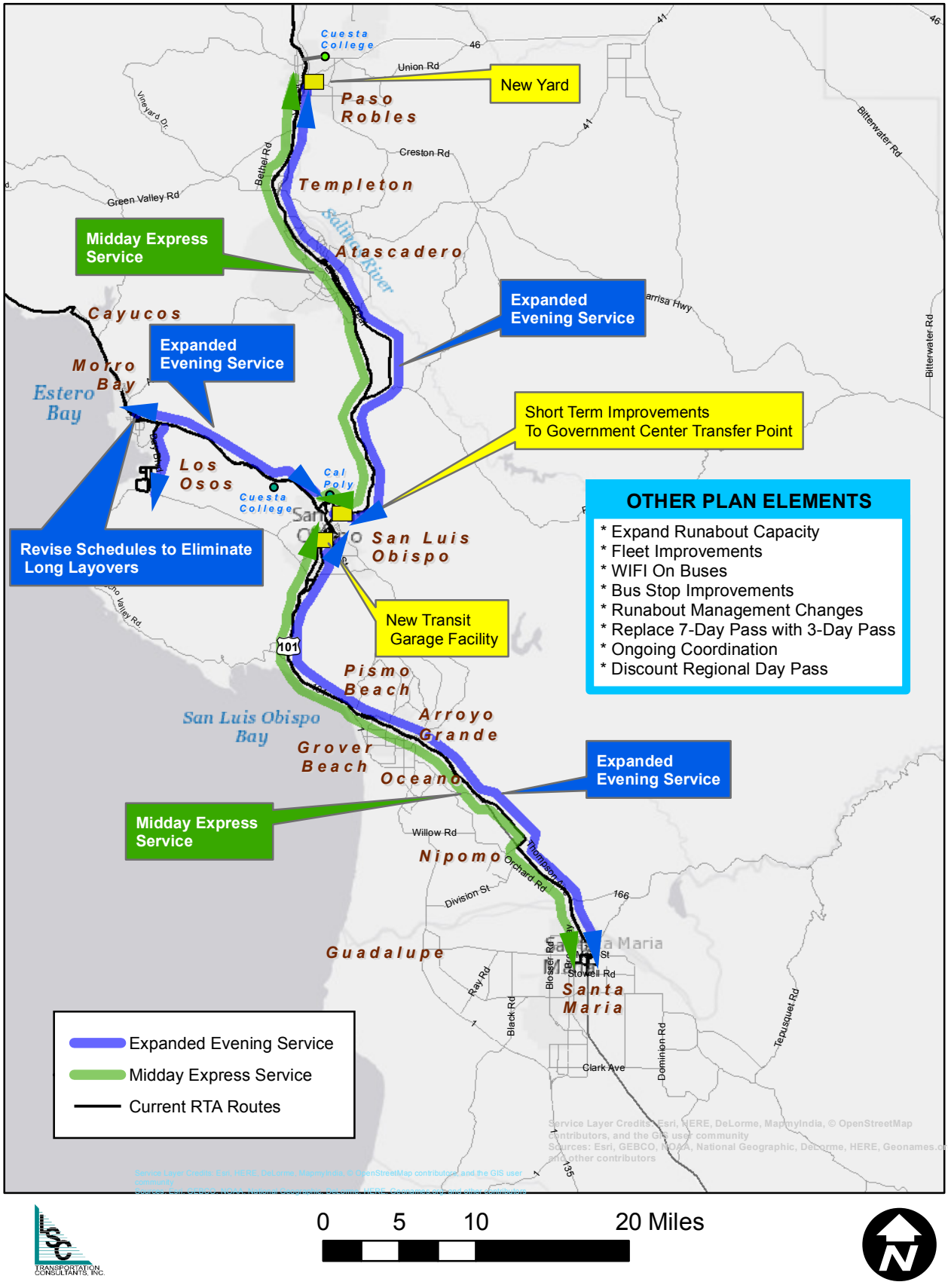
This plan will enhance weekday daytime service on Routes 9 and 10 by adding new mid-day limited stop express service to the current schedule. This is considered a high transit priority for funding generated through a new countywide sales tax for transportation funding purposes.

RTA should implement weekday express service on Route 9 between San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles in the mid-day period, consisting of four additional round trips. Stops should be limited to Government Center, Atascadero Transit Center, Las Tablas Park-and-Ride and the North County Transit Center. An additional (fourth) bus should be added to the mid-day period (roughly 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM) while maintaining all existing runs. New northbound runs should depart San Luis Obispo at 8:33 AM, 10:33 AM, 12:33 PM and 2:33 PM, and new southbound runs depart Paso Robles at approximately 9:35 AM, 11:35 AM, 1:35 PM and 3:35 PM. This will reduce in-vehicle travel times by up to 20 minutes, expand the frequency of service between these key transit centers, and help address the crowding issue. It will not require an additional bus. Ridership is forecast to increase by 25,900 passenger boardings per year.

A mid-day weekday express service should also be implemented on Route 10. This service should be limited to the following stops:

- Cal Poly (Kennedy Library)
- Government Center
- Pismo Beach Premium Outlets
- Halcyon Park-and-Ride
- East Grand Avenue/El Camino Real
- Tefft/Carillo
- Santa Maria Transit Center

Figure 28
RTA Short Range Transit Plan



It is estimate that 60 percent of Route 10 passenger-trips are made between these key stops. The current 74 minute end-to-end travel time would be reduced to 55 minutes. Note that not all stops may be served on all runs, in order to maintain a two-hour round trip cycle time. Five new express runs in each direction will occur between roughly 7:30 AM and 5:50 PM, which will allow use of existing express buses. It is expected that the existing Route 10 short runs (the 7:21 AM run from Arroyo Grande to Government Center and the 4:05 PM run from Cal Poly to Arroyo Grande) will be folded into these new runs. Specific schedule times and stops will be developed through detailed planning. In addition, more travel time choices would be provided. Overall, this strategy will increase ridership by an estimated 26,100 passenger-trips per year.

Expand Evening Service on Routes 9, 10, and 11

Evening service on Route 9 should be expanded by providing the following additional local route runs:

- Weekday departing Paso Robles at 8:00 PM and 9:00 PM and departing San Luis Obispo at 9:33 PM

- Saturday departing Paso Robles at 8:10 PM and departing San Luis Obispo at 9:33 PM

- Sunday departing Paso Robles at 7:10 PM and departing San Luis Obispo at 8:47 PM

In addition, Runabout service hours in the Route 9 corridors will be expanded to match the new hours of fixed route operation.

The need for extended evening service was a common comment by stakeholders and the public in this SRTP plan process, in particular to allow participation in evening activities in Atascadero or Paso Robles among San Luis Obispo residents as well as to allow residents of the northern communities to take part in evening activities in San Luis Obispo. At present, the last weekday departures on Route 9 are at 7:00 PM southbound from Paso Robles and 8:33 PM northbound from San Luis Obispo, the last runs on Saturday depart at 6:10 PM southbound and 7:33 PM northbound, while the last runs on Sunday depart at 4:10 PM southbound and 5:33 PM northbound

Additional evening runs should also be added to the existing Route 10 schedule. Specifically, the following runs should be added:

- Weekdays - Additional northbound runs departing Santa Maria at 8:14 PM and 9:14 PM and one additional southbound run departing San Luis Obispo at 9:33 PM

- Saturdays – One additional northbound run departing at 8:14 PM and southbound at 9:33 PM

- Sundays – One additional northbound run departing at 7:14 PM and southbound at 8:33 PM

This was a common request among participants in the SRTP study. It will expand resident's access to jobs, cultural activities and educational opportunities along the corridor. Based upon the relative hourly ridership of evening service in similar regional transit programs offering later service, this alternative will add 8,700 passenger-trips on weekdays, 1,100 on Saturdays and 1,000 on Sundays annually.

Finally, an additional weekday evening run should be added to the Route 12 schedule, departing San Luis Obispo at 9:33 PM. The last Route 12 weekday run currently departs San Luis Obispo at 8:33 PM, returning from Morro Bay at 10:38 PM. Considering the relative ridership by hour of similar services, it would generate an estimated increase of 3,200 passenger-trips per year.

In addition to adding fixed route service, this strategy will also require expansion of Runabout service to provide ADA paratransit mobility during the additional fixed route hours. Extension of dispatch/mechanics hours will also be necessary.

Modify Route 10 Services As Demand Warrants

Ridership patterns on Route 10 are relatively complex in comparison with the other RTA fixed routes, as Route 10 has strong transit generators at both ends as well as in the Five Cities area and Nipomo along the route. Ridership patterns should be monitored (particularly as service enhancements are implemented) to identify specific route segments that warrant additional service or that experience bus crowding. As necessary, additional runs on portions of the route should be added, such as runs between Five Cities and San Luis Obispo.

Modify Route 12 Schedules to Eliminate Long Layovers in Morro Bay

Route 12 should be rescheduled to eliminate the long Morro Bay layovers on many runs (while still serving Morro Bay). This will reduce the in-vehicle travel time between Los Osos and San Luis Obispo by up to 20 minutes (depending on the specific run). While this will no longer provide direct bus-to-bus transfers between Route 12 and Route 15, ridership data indicates little or no transfers are currently occurring. As a result, the net effect of this modification will be to increase ridership, while eliminating a common complaint among Los Osos transit riders.

Expand Runabout Capacity

As discussed in Chapter 2, the San Luis Obispo County elderly resident population age 65 to 79 is forecast to increase by 34 percent between 2015 and 2021. While the demand for Runabout service is generated both by elderly as well as non-elderly persons with disabilities, this reflects an overall substantial growth in underlying demand for Runabout service. As discussed below, this SRTP includes strategies to improve Runabout efficiency and manage demand for service that will help address the need for expanded capacity. However, it remains prudent to plan for

expansion of Runabout capacity. Based on the demographic forecasts and the expected benefits of management strategies, this plan includes the provision of one additional Runabout vehicle in peak operation every two years, along with a 2 percent annual growth in Runabout service hours and miles.

One potential strategy to address growth in demand for Runabout services (particularly for long trips in more outlying areas) is a taxi subsidy program. While the recent Request for Letters of Interest process yielded only limited interest among taxi operators, this may well change in the future. This option should be reconsidered periodically, particular if demand increases unexpectedly or if late evening services are implemented.

CAPITAL PLAN

Fleet Improvement Plan

Table 46 presents the fleet improvement plan for RTA. This assumes no change in peak vehicle requirements as a result of service plan changes. As shown, a total of 12 RTA fixed route buses plus 30 Runabout vehicles will need to be purchased to maintain acceptable fleet conditions over the six years from FY 16-17 to FY 21-22[1]. This is estimated to require a total capital outlay of $6,198,000 for RTA fixed route buses plus $2,429,000 for Runabout vehicles.

Not shown in this table is that significant additional replacement needs come due in the period immediately after this SRTP plan period. In particular, RTA has seven heavy-duty buses that will reach the end of their useful life in FY 2022-23, with an estimated replacement cost of $3,360,000. This indicates a particular need for capital reserves as the end of the SRTP plan period nears.

In addition, RTA will need to replace two staff vehicles (currently a pickup truck and a hybrid car) in 2016/17.

Implement Wi-Fi Service on Fixed Route Buses

The provision of internet Wi-Fi connectivity to transit passengers is becoming increasingly common, as a means of attracting additional riders and better serving existing riders. In particular, providing connectivity on long commute trips helps to make transit service more competitive with driving. While no detailed studies have been conducted, anecdotal information indicates that a ridership increase of several percentage points can be attributed to provision of Wi-Fi service. Examples of existing transit systems providing Wi-Fi service are

[1] Including some existing Runabout vehicles that will require replacement twice within the period.

TABLE 46: RTA Fleet Replacement Plan and Costs

Assumed Annual Inflation Rate 2.5%

Vehicle Type		FY16-17	FY17-18	FY18-19	FY19-20	FY20-21	FY21-22	TOTAL
Number of Vehicles								
RTA Fixed Route								
Total Over-the-Road Coach Purchases		**2**	**0**	**2**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**4**
Total Heavy-Duty Bus Purchases		**3**	**2**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**6**
Total Cutaway Purchases		**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**1**
Total Trolley Purchases		**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**
Total		**6**	**2**	**2**	**0**	**2**	**0**	**12**
Runabout								
Total Cutaway Purchases		**2**	**0**	**8**	**0**	**6**	**2**	**18**
Total Minivan Purchases		**6**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**6**	**12**
Total		**8**	**0**	**8**	**0**	**6**	**8**	**30**
Cost Estimate								
RTA Fixed Route	**14/15 Unit Cost**							
Over-the Road Coaches	$650,000	$1,366,000	$0	$1,435,000	$0	$0	$0	$2,801,000
Heavy-Duty Buses	$480,000	$1,513,000	$1,034,000	$0	$0	$557,000	$0	$3,104,000
Cutaway Buses	$90,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	$104,000	$0	$104,000
Trolley	$180,000	$189,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$189,000
Total		$3,068,000	$1,034,000	$1,435,000	$0	$661,000	$0	$6,198,000
Runabout								
Cutaway Buses	$90,000	$189,000	$0	$795,000	$0	$626,000	$214,000	$1,824,000
Minivans	$45,000	$284,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	$321,000	$605,000
Total		$473,000	$0	$795,000	$0	$626,000	$535,000	$2,429,000

SLO Transit, the Regional Transportation Commission in Reno, Nevada, as well as Sonoma County Transit. However, some transit services have also faced challenges in implementing dependable Wi-Fi service, due to issues over cell coverage and the availability of various service plans. The rapid changes in smartphone technologies also adds uncertainty to this issue.

It is recommended that RTA implement Wi-Fi on a limited basis, expanding service once any initial issues have been addressed. A reasonable approach would be to first install Wi-Fi on the four over-the-road coaches and make them available on Route 9 and Route 10 express runs, and then expand service to the remainder of the fixed-route fleet. Installation costs are typically $1,500 per vehicle, with ongoing data plan costs of $50 to $100 per vehicle per month.

Continue to Provide Retiring Vans to Other Transportation Providers at Nominal Cost

As a means of expanding mobility options for San Luis Obispo County residents while helping to contain future costs of Runabout service, it is recommended that RTA continue to make older low-value surplus vans available to other transportation providers in the region, such as public agencies, non-profit organizations, as well as for-profit transportation companies. Other transit systems providing paratransit services have found that expanding the availability of wheelchair-accessible vehicles (no matter the entity providing the service) helps to reduce the demand for costly demand-response services while giving residents new options for meeting their mobility needs.

San Luis Obispo Transit Garage Facility

RTA's primary garage facility is located at 179 Cross Street (off of Tank Farm Road) in the southern portion of San Luis Obispo. This facility is leased from a private development firm, and is relatively modest in size (2.7 acres) for a transit operation of RTA's size. All RTA, SCT, SLOCAT and Paso Express vehicle maintenance is conducted at this site, along with all administrative functions and the large majority of operations functions.

The primary detriment of this facility is that the space for vehicle maintenance is insufficient, with only two tandem bays available. (Common bus facility planning standards indicate the need for seven bays at present.) There is also insufficient space for battery storage and tire storage. In addition, the facility provides no room to expand the transit fleet, large equipment storage, staff vehicle parking and employee parking. As the parcel is 100 percent "landlocked" with existing development on all sides, a new site is clearly needed.

RTA recently conducted an evaluation of new sites, including development of an appropriate site program to accommodate long-range growth and an assessment of the operational and preliminary environmental issues associated with four sites. Of these, a 10-acre parcel at 253 Elks Lane was found to be substantially preferable. Key factors in favor of this site are its adequate size, compatibility with adjacent land uses, relatively good proximity to US 101 and to the downtown transit center, and location close to the SLO Transit operations facility (across the street) and to the County Department of Social Services and homeless services.

The RTA Board recently selected this site as the preferred option, and directed staff to start the environmental review (NEPA/CEQA) process. Total cost of land acquisition and construction (sized to accommodate long-term needs) is estimated by RTA to be on the order of $9.8 million. This excludes the costs of permitting, environmental analysis and design/engineering. Funding (largely FTA Section 5307) for environmental assessment has been set aside for expenditure in 2016. In addition, RTA has started the process of setting aside a total of $4 Million in 5307 funding over a ten-year period to fund a large portion of this facility's costs.

In addition, the first three years of the SRTP plan period are also the last three years of loan payments on the current garage facility. A total of $612,900 will be required to pay off the cost of previous tenant improvements.

RTA Use of Portion of County Yard in Paso Robles

Due to a change in ownership and planned development, RTA will not indefinitely have use of the existing parking yard at 4th and Pine Streets in Paso Robles, as well as operations office space. As a replacement, RTA is currently overseeing an engineering/architectural study of a new facility on County-owned land on Spring Street adjacent to US 101. This new facility will need to be completed in 2016. Federal Transit Administration 5307 funding totaling $300,000 has been set aside to fund these improvements, as well as the $291,000 in FY 15-16 LCTOP funds.

Downtown Transit Center

A weak point of the regional San Luis Obispo public transit network is the existing transit hub in downtown San Luis Obispo (Government Center). This currently consists of a SLO Transit facility on the west side of Osos Street between Mill Street and Palm Street, and an RTA facility on the east side of Osos Street between Monterey Street and Palm Street. The SLO Transit facility provides sawtooth bays for up to five buses along with shelter structures. The RTA facility provides approximately 200 feet of straight curb, which is adequate to accommodate up to three buses, depending on the order that individual buses arrive. There is also a drop-off only area around the corner on Palm Street that accommodates the fourth bus. The facility includes two 20-foot passenger shelters. Overall, this facility has a long list of deficiencies:

- There is inadequate space for all RTA buses at peak times, resulting in buses that park around the corner on Palm (potentially conflicting with other uses), or that end up parked at an angle to the curb. This can block travel lanes on Osos Street, and also increase hazards to passengers boarding/alighting the bus and preclude deployment of the wheelchair lift/ramp.

- The number of bays available for SLO Transit limits the ability to schedule services to maximize direct bus-to-bus transfers.

- While there are restrooms available at nearby public buildings (City Hall, Library), these are only available during operating hours.

- Transferring between the SLO Transit and RTA systems requires walking across two streets.

- Both blocks are on a grade that exceeds the desired maximum slope of a facility as defined by the ADA (2 percent)[2]. This creates challenges to wheelchair users transferring between buses, and can also increase hazards associated with using a lift or ramp.

- Bus shelter capacity is inadequate at peak times, particularly for RTA passengers. The south-facing passenger shelters also cause passenger discomfort during afternoon periods due to inadequate shade.

- There is inadequate street lighting for night-time operations, as well as to address personal security concerns.

- The 8' wide sidewalks adjacent to the RTA bus locations get congested, particularly when a wheelchair lift or ramp is in use.

SLOCOG is leading an ongoing effort to construct a new, enhanced transit center along Higuera Street in the block between Santa Rosa Street and Toro Street. The current focus is on developing a joint public/private project that would include the transit center as well as a public parking structure. The feasibility of this concept and the source of the necessary public funding have yet to be determined. Per the *2012 San Luis Obispo Council of Governments Coordinated Transit Center Study*, as well as further analysis, the facility is currently envisioned to consist of the following (if constructed):

- Up to 11 bus bays

- Indoor and outdoor passenger waiting areas

- Driver break area and operational space

- Restrooms

- Transit information counter

Given that completion of a new transit center is at best several years in the future, and in light of the importance of this facility to both the RTA and City of SLO systems, a modest level of improvements to the existing RTA facility is warranted. The following is recommended:

[2] ADA regulations allow greater slopes for bus bays along streets with greater slopes, so long as the existing slope is not increased.

- Elimination of the four existing parking spaces on the east side of Osos Street north of Monterey Street, to allow additional RTA buses to be at the site without blocking travel lanes and to ensure that buses are parallel against the curb when loading passengers.

- Two additional bus shelters and two additional benches on the RTA side, with improved shade for passengers.

- Enhanced street lighting, on both the SLO Transit and RTA sides.

A cost estimate for these improvements is shown in Table 47. As illustrated, the improvement cost on the RTA side, exclusive of staff costs, is $66,500. As also shown in Table 47, the additional street lights required for the SLO Transit side amount to a cost of $26,000, culminating in a total project cost of $92,000.

TABLE 47: Estimated Short-Term Government Center Improvement Costs

	Units	Unit Cost	Cost
RTA Bus Stops			
Shelters	2 EA	$ 10,400	$ 20,800
Benches	2 SF	$ 2,600	$ 5,200
Additional Low Level Streetlights: RTA Transit Stops	5 EA	$ 8,000	$ 40,000
Striping/Signing			$ 500
Subtotal			$ 66,500
SLO Transit Stops			
Additional Streetlights: SLO Transit Stops	4 EA	$ 8,000	$ 26,000
Subtotal			$ 26,000
Total Probable Project Costs			**$ 92,500**

Note: Excludes any hazardous waste remediation costs.

Bus Stop Improvement Plan

Bus stops are an important element of a successful public transit system. Particularly for "choice" riders with access to a car, the comfort and safety perceived by persons waiting at a bus stop can be crucial in passenger's overall perception of the transit program, and can well make or break an individual's decision to be a regular transit user.

Table 48 presents the recommended bus stop improvements. This was developed based upon the following:

TABLE 48: Recommended RTA Bus Stop Improvements

Excluding Government Center

Stop	Route					Recommended Improvement							
	9	10	10X	12/14	15	Shelter	ADA Pad	Sign	Bike Rack	Trash Can	Information Kiosk	Solar Lighting	
Cal Poly Kennedy Library	▼		▼	▼				▼	▼				
Santa Rosa at Mustang Village	▼			▼		▼	▼		▼	▼			
Santa Rosa at Foothill	▼			▼					▼	▼			
Atascadero City Hall	▼								▼				
Cal Poly Performing Arts Center NB	▼								▼				
Cal Poly Performing Arts Center SB	▼								▼				
Monterey at Grand	▼								▼		▼		
6 Stops in SLO County (Santa Margarita area)	▼						▼						
4 Stops in SLO City	▼						▼						
Spring St @ 30th St	▼								▼				
Viejo Camino @ Bocina	▼					▼	▼		▼	▼			
Tefft St @ Carillo St (SB)		▼				▼							
El Camino Real @ E. Grand SB		▼				▼							
El Camino Real @ E. Grand NB		▼				▼							
Santa Maria Transit Center		▼									▼		
4 Stops in SLO County (Nipomo area)		▼					▼						
El Camino Real @ Albertson's		▼							▼				
Morro Bay Park				▼	▼								
11 Stops in SLO County (Los Osos area)				▼			▼						
30 Stops in SLO County					▼		▼						
Nicholson/E.Cypress (Santa Maria)							▼						
Pismo Beach Premium Outlets							▼						
TOTAL						5	58	1	10	3	2	12	
Unit Cost (Includes Construction/Installation)						$10,400	$1,300	$300	$800	$800	$500	$4,000	**Total**
Total Costs[1]						$52,000	$75,400	$300	$8,000	$2,400	$1,000	$48,000	**$ 187,100**

Note: Excludes Government Center in San Luis Obispo, discussed elsewhere

- The "Prioritizing RTA Fixed-Route Bus Stop Improvements" report prepared recently by RTA staff.

- A review of other RTA bus stops not included in this report. In particular, boarding activity was compared against a standard of providing a shelter for stops serving 20 or more boardings per day, in order to identify new shelter locations.

- A review of traffic volumes to identify locations where new bus bays (pullouts) are needed. This was conducted focusing on high-activity stops, and applying a standard of providing a pullout where needed to avoid a bus stopping in a travel lane serving 4,000 or more vehicles per day. No such locations were found to exist.

As shown in the table, the following improvements are warranted:

- Wheelchair pads (8' X 5' concrete or asphalt pads) are needed at a total of 58 locations[3] around the system as identified by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Many of these locations also will require an accessible path of travel for persons using mobility devices to the nearby transit trip generator. While the ADA does not require these improvements until/unless other changes are made to a stop, it is recommended that the RTA implement a multi-year program to provide these ADA amenities. A five-year program would require new ADA pads at 12 locations per year for all transit programs operated or managed by RTA (including SCT and Paso Express).

- New shelters are warranted at five locations, of which three are along Route 10.

- Bike racks or other bicycle storage facilities are needed at ten locations, with nine needed along Route 9 and one needed on Route 10. Provision of racks can help to avoid damage to nearby trees and other property due to informal bike storage, can help to encourage transit use, and can help address capacity problems with the on-bus bike racks.

- Additional trash cans, signs, and information kiosks are also warranted at several existing stops.

- Improving lighting at bus stops is important for passenger safety and comfort, particularly as RTA expands evening service. Recent improvements in solar technology allow urban shelters to be provided with lighting without the need for utility connections, for a unit cost of approximately $4,000. In addition, rural bus stops can be lit through solar power (using a pole-mounted system) for approximately $1,500 per stop. Lighting should be installed in 12 shelters, to be determined based upon existing lighting conditions, location, and the potential for evening ridership.

[3] One of these locations is at the Pismo Beach Outlet Stores. While there is one pad at this location, an additional pad is needed for peak transfer times.

Implementing many of these improvements will require coordination and possible cost-sharing with other organizations (Cities, County and Cal Poly, in particular). Depending on right-of-way, utility location and other site-specific factors, moreover, some improvements may prove infeasible. As shown in Table 47, the total cost of these improvements (excluding costs associated with ADA path of travel improvements beyond the pads) is $187,100.

In addition, some RTA stops are located along relatively high speed roadways, away from signalized intersections or other pedestrian crossing protection. In recent years, traffic engineers have developed an expanded selection of pedestrian crossing enhancements, including the "Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacon" (which increases driver awareness of pedestrian crosswalk locations), as well as the "Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon" (which provides for a full stop of traffic when activated by a pedestrian). One location that merits particular consideration of enhanced pedestrian protection is along El Camino Real north of Santa Barbara Street in Atascadero. Due to pedestrian risk, this stop location is currently not used by Route 9, despite its shelter and bus pullout area.

Coordinate Joint Bus Shelter Program

RTA and SLO Transit should combine boarding data to review activity at shared stops, and program new shelters at locations where 25 or more passengers per day board. Costs for improvements should be shared based upon the proportion of boarding by each system. RTA and SLO Transit can utilize passenger activity data collected through GPS-based Automatic Passenger Counter systems to determine these proportions.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Management plan elements consists of revisions to RTA service standards, as well as recommended management strategies for the Runabout program and strategies to improve coordination among transit programs in the region.

Revise Service Standards

Based upon the review of existing RTA service goals, policies and standards, as well as the current service performance, the following revisions are recommended:

- RTA demand response service efficiency standards should be established at 2.0 passengers per revenue vehicle-hour and 0.2 passengers per revenue vehicle-mile.

- On an individual route basis, a minimum productivity of 10.0 passengers per revenue vehicle-hour should be adopted.

- The current system-wide standard of standees on no more than 10 percent of runs on any individual route should be relaxed given the relatively short travel time between San Luis Obispo and the main Cuesta College campus. In turn, a standard load factor of 1.0 of seated

capacity should be adopted on commuter/express runs. On local runs (Routes 9, 10, 12, 14, and 15), a standard load factor of 1.5 of seated capacity should be used. Automatic Passenger Counter systems can be used to determine when passenger loads on buses exceed these factors.

- The preventable collision rate should be evaluated on a quarterly basis, rather than the current practice of reviewing for each individual month.

Improve Runabout Eligibility and Certification Process

The following modifications to the Runabout process of determining eligibility are recommended:

- The website should be modified to include a checklist for self-assessment of eligibility, a description of accessible features of fixed-route service as an option, and the availability of travel training.

- A standard script should be used by Runabout staff for a potential passenger's initial call. An example script is provided in Appendix B.

- All individuals who apply for eligibility to use Runabout should be required to complete an in-person interview after the application form has been completed and submitted to RTA.

- RTA should implement a consistent, regular approach to recertification, including monthly review of the database

Modify Runabout Scheduling Procedures

The following scheduling recommendations are provided to lower costs and improve productivity for Runabout:

- Continue to use flexible start and end times for all drivers on Runabout.

- Reduce the minimum scheduled lunch time to 30 minutes for all Runabout paddles that include a lunch break.

- Accept requests for subscription trips as long as capacity is available for individual trip requests. Standing trip requests allow schedulers to develop a more efficient schedule.

- Reduce the number of Runabout bids and make greater use of casual and extra board drivers as much as possible to increase flexibility for scheduling and respond to actual levels of demand.

- Work with RouteMatch to develop a report which shows non-productive time separate from breaks for all Runabout drivers. Review this report at least monthly with schedulers to identify opportunities to increase the number of passengers per hour of service.

- Emphasize the need to group trips and avoid long slack periods on driver manifests.

- Continue to enforce the no-show and cancellation policy to minimize the disruptions to schedules and the corresponding loss in productivity.

Also, RTA and Ride-On are currently conducting an 18-month study of technology solutions to better coordinate the two programs. The results of this study may identify other good strategies for enhancing on-demand transit services for people with mobility issues.

Focus on Coordinating Runabout and Fixed Route Services

Where appropriate, RTA should seek out opportunities to reduce long Runabout trips by coordinating individual passenger's trips with fixed route services. This is not a viable option for all passengers and for all individual trips, and should be considered on a case-by-case basis. When using fixed route services for a portion of the trip is viable (particularly for recurring trips), it can reduce overall RTA costs and expand passengers' travel options.

Provide Expanded Regional Travel Training

A region-wide travel training program should be implemented to make effective use of resources, ensure that all travel options are presented in a consistent manner, and yield benefits to residents and to the transit programs.

Continue and Expand Coordination Efforts with SLO Transit

This planning process has underlined the importance of building on the strong coordination between RTA and SLO Transit. It is recommended that the senior management of both transit programs meet on a quarterly basis to continue coordination efforts. The following are topics that are recommended as a starting point:

- **Work Towards A Single Regional Bus Tracker Website** – Optimally, a transit passenger could visit a single website or download a single app that would show all regional buses on the same map. As the RTA and SLO Transit bus tracker programs are developed on differing software platforms, this is a challenging endeavor. However, it remains a valid goal and an important strategy to making the regional transit network operate as a convenient system for the passenger.

- **Develop A Single ID For Persons With Disabilities Accepted On Both Systems** – The regional system would be easier for persons with disabilities to navigate and overall administrative costs reduced by developing a single ID program good for boarding both

systems at discount fare (or free fare, for persons eligible for Runabout). This should include a magnetic stripe to allow convenient tracking of boardings by fare category.

- **Coordinated Policy On Baggage** – Policies regarding items allowed on the buses (groceries, shopping carts, strollers, etc.) would optimally be consistent between the two systems. At present, RTA's policy is "*Carry-on items (including folded strollers) must be held or secured to protect other passengers in case of a sudden stop and must not block the aisles or exits*" while SLO Transit's policy is "*Carrying objects blocking aisle or stairway or occupying seat is prohibited, except at driver's discretion if space allows; stroller must be folded prior to boarding*". A consistent policy would avoid confusion or conflict as to what is allowed.

- **Joint Driver Training On Managing Difficult Passengers** – In recent years there has been an increase on both RTA and SLO Transit in passengers causing conflicts with other passengers or drivers. While drivers in both systems already have training in this matter, there are specialized training classes available that could aid drivers in difficult situations. Joint training would be both cost-effective, and would help ensure that both transit systems address these issues in a consistent manner. As a starting point, the lead trainers from RTA and the SLO Transit contractor should meet along with Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County staff to discuss opportunities.

- **Work Towards a Common Bus Replacement Policy** -- At present, RTA has an adopted policy to "*Replace 100 percent of all revenue vehicles no more than 40 percent beyond the FTA-defined useful life standard in terms of years or miles"* while the City has a less-specific standard of "*clean and good conditions"* regarding revenue equipment. A consistent policy between the two systems could help ensure that limited Federal and state funding resources are best used to maintain the region's transit fleets in good condition, and merits ongoing discussion. These discussions could also consider tightening the RTA's standard, such as reducing the 40 percent figure, if funding permits.

- **Route Coordination** – On an ongoing basis, route scheduling should be considered to maximize the convenience of transfers between the various transit systems in the region. In addition, consideration should be given to consistent region-wide designation of routes.

FINANCIAL PLAN

Monitor the Need to Increase Fares

No fare increases are proposed under this plan. As discussed below, the overall RTA funding balance is sufficient to negate the need for fare increases under current financial expectations. However, there is a high degree of uncertainty regarding future funding figures, particularly at the state and Federal levels. As part of the annual budgeting process, fare revenues should be reviewed to determine if changes in fares are necessary to continue to fund a high quality of transit service for the region.

Offer Discount Regional Day Pass

RTA currently allows seniors age 65 to 79, persons with disabilities as well as K-12 students to board the bus at a 50% discount fare when using cash, the 31-day regional pass, and the 31-day RTA pass. However, no discount is available when using the $5 regional day pass. A discounted $2.50 regional day pass is recommended to increase transit usage between the various transit systems among persons in the discount categories. While this is estimated to reduce RTA fare revenues by $26,500 per year, it will increase ridership by 7,500 new boardings per year. To simplify the boarding process, the day pass should be the only regional pass option that can be purchased directly from the RTA bus driver.

Replace 7-Day Pass with 3-Day Pass

To better align the RTA and SLO Transit programs, the RTA-only 7 day pass should be eliminated and replaced with an RTA-only 3 day pass. On the SLO Transit system, the 3-day pass is roughly 3 times more popular with riders than the 7-day pass. Consistent with the current daily cost of the 7-day pass, the 3-day pass should be provided for $6, for all riders. If future demand and ridership requests warrant it, consideration could be given to making this a region-wide pass.

Accept SLO Transit Picture ID for RTA Discount Fares

To board at the reduced fare available to persons with disabilities, RTA current requires the passenger to display either a Medicare card or a letter from the Veterans Administration. SLO Transit also provides the option of obtaining a picture ID card that can be used to verify disability status. RTA should modify policies to allow use of this SLO Transit ID card to document disability status.

Potential Countywide Half-Cent Sales Tax Increase

SLOCOG is currently evaluating the potential for a county wide “local option” sales tax increase to fund a wide range of transportation improvements. This could be important in supporting improvements, including:

- Expansion of Runabout services to persons with disabilities
- Expansion of evening service on Routes 9, 10 and 12
- Initiating Mid-Day Express Service on Routes 9 and 10
- Expanding transit availability to seniors and persons with disabilities through the discounted Day Pass.

Given the current uncertainty regarding this new funding source, it is not included in the financial plan discussed below.

Fund RTA Through Fares and Existing Subsidy Sources

The following methodology was utilized in developing this Financial Plan:

- First, forecasts of annual operating and administrative costs were developed, as presented in Table 49 for FY 2016/17 through FY 2020/21. "Base case" operating and administrative cost forecasts were estimated based on the existing revised budget. Per SLOCOG planning criteria, a 2 percent rate of inflation was assumed through 2018/19, and 3 percent thereafter, in the absence of any change in service levels. Next, operating and administrative cost estimates were identified for each SRTP element, based upon the analyses presented in previous sections of this document, and consistent with the implementation plan presented below. These costs were also factored to reflect the assumed rate of inflation. Operating and administrative costs by the fifth year of the plan will total approximately $10,489,200 which is 15.4 percent over the base-case cost of $9,091,100.

- Next, ridership for each SRTP element was estimated, as presented in Table 50. The "base case" ridership reflects expected ridership assuming no changes in service. The ridership impact of each Plan element is then identified and summed. This includes the ridership generated by the new discount Day Pass, as discussed above. As new services do not immediately attain the full potential ridership, ridership on new evening services is factored to reflect 66 percent of potential ridership in the first year of service and 90 percent of potential ridership in the second year. Ridership is expected to respond relatively quickly to Mid-Day Express service (80 percent in the first year, and 95 percent in the second year). For the relatively small change to Route 12 schedules, a 90 percent factor is assumed for the first year and full ridership thereafter. In addition, ridership (for both base case and for the service improvements) is factored to reflect a 0.8 percent annual increase in population and associated ridership demand. By FY 2019/20, ridership is forecast to equal 879,800 one-way passenger-trips per year, which is 94,600 trips over the base case forecast of 785,200. This indicates that the plan will result in a 16.9 percent increase in ridership by the end of the plan period.

- Based on the ridership figures presented in Table 50, the estimated farebox revenues are presented in Table 51. As presented, by the end of the plan period the service improvements will increase fares by $96,100 per year (including the loss in fares associated with the discount Day Pass), or 6.7 percent over the base case fares.

- The next element necessary in the development of the SRTP is estimation of the capital cost for vehicles, passenger amenities, passenger facility improvements and operating equipment, as shown in Table 52 for each year of the Short Range Transit Plan period. For the new main Transit Garage Facility, $500,000 is identified in the first four years of the plan (per current budgeting), followed by $695,300 per year to finance the estimated $8.3 Million remaining construction and land acquisition cost over 15 years at 3 percent interest

rate. Funds are also included for the final three years of the current loan obligation on the existing garage facility. Based on the capital plan, presented above, the capital costs total $13,042,300 over the five-year period.

TABLE 49 : RTA Short Range Transit Plan Operating Costs

All Figures in Thousands

Plan Element	FY16-17	FY17-18	FY18-19	FY19-20	FY 20-21	5-Year Plan Total
Base Case Operating Costs	$8,236.5	$8,401.2	$8,569.2	$8,826.3	$9,091.1	$43,124.3
Operating Plan Elements						
Provide Mid-Day Express Service on Route 9	$0.0	$250.9	$255.9	$263.6	$271.5	$1,042.0
Provide Mid-Day Express Service on Route 10	$0.0	$319.3	$325.6	$335.4	$345.5	$1,325.8
Expand Evening Service on Route 9	$0.0	$253.1	$258.1	$265.9	$273.8	$1,050.9
Expand Evening Service on Route 10	$0.0	$256.4	$261.6	$269.4	$277.5	$1,064.9
Expand Evening Service on Route 12	$0.0	$67.5	$68.9	$70.9	$73.1	$280.4
Modify Route 12 Schedules To Eliminate Long Layovers	$0.0	$0.0	$0.0	$0.0	$0.0	$0.0
Expand Runabout Capacity	$22.0	$44.9	$68.7	$94.3	$121.4	$351.3
Wi-Fi Operating Costs	$0.0	$4.8	$42.4	$43.7	$45.0	$136.0
Total: Service Plan Elements	*$22.0*	*$1,187.9*	*$1,272.1*	*$1,333.8*	*$1,398.1*	*$5,214.0*
Total With Plan Elements	*$8,258.5*	*$9,589.1*	*$9,841.3*	*$10,160.1*	*$10,489.2*	*$48,338.3*
Percent Increase over Base Case	*0.3%*	*14.1%*	*14.8%*	*15.1%*	*15.4%*	*12.1%*

Base Case costs based upon FY 2015-16 Amended Budget, excluding capital and management contract costs
Inflation assumptions identified in the SLOCOG RTP were applied: two percent annual inflation through 2018/19, and three percent thereafter
Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

TABLE 50: RTA Short-Range Transit Improvements Ridership Forecasts

All Figures in Thousands

Plan Element	FY 15-16	FY16-17	FY17-18	FY18-19	FY19-20	FY 20-21	5-Year Plan Total
Base Case Ridership [1]							
Fixed Route	709.0	714.5	720.1	725.7	731.4	737.1	3,628.8
Runabout [2]	43.6	44.5	45.4	46.3	47.2	48.1	231.4
Total	752.6	759.0	765.5	772.0	778.6	785.2	3,860.3
Service Plan Elements							
Provide Mid-Day Express Service on Route 9		0.0	21.0	25.2	26.7	26.9	99.8
Provide Mid-Day Express Service on Route 10		0.0	21.2	25.4	26.9	27.1	100.6
Expand Evening Service on Route 9		0.0	8.1	11.1	12.5	12.6	44.3
Expand Evening Service on Route 10		0.0	7.2	9.9	11.1	11.2	39.4
Expand Evening Service on Route 12		0.0	2.1	2.9	3.3	3.3	11.6
Modify Route 12 Schedules To Eliminate Long Layovers		0.0	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.4	5.2
Expand Runabout Capacity		0.9	1.7	2.6	3.5	4.4	13.1
Total: Service Plan Elements		0.9	62.5	78.4	85.3	86.9	314.0
Discount Regional Day Pass Fare		7.5	7.5	7.6	7.6	7.7	
Total Ridership		767.3	835.5	858.0	871.5	879.8	3,444.8
% Growth over Base Case		*1.1%*	*9.2%*	*11.2%*	*12.0%*	*12.1%*	
% Growth over FY 15-16		*2.0%*	*11.0%*	*14.0%*	*15.8%*	*16.9%*	

Note 1: Base case ridership on fixed routes increased by 0.78% per year, per the mid-range projections presented in Final Report - San Luis Obispo County 2040 Population, Housing & Employment Forecast (SLOCOG, 2011)

Note 2: As Runabout ridership is a function of the service level provided, growth in ridership is reflected in the service plan element.

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

TABLE 51: RTA Short-Range Transit Improvements Fare Revenues

All Figures in Thousands

Plan Element	FY16-17	FY17-18	FY18-19	FY19-20	FY 20-21	5-Year Plan Total
Base Case Operating Revenues (Fares and Adve	$1,330.0	$1,340.4	$1,361.4	$1,393.5	$1,437.5	$6,862.7
Service Plan Elements						
Provide Mid-Day Express Service on Route 9	$0.0	$27.5	$33.0	$34.9	$35.2	$130.6
Provide Mid-Day Express Service on Route 10	$0.0	$22.9	$31.4	$35.3	$35.6	$125.2
Expand Evening Service on Route 9	$0.0	$12.9	$15.5	$16.4	$16.5	$61.3
Expand Evening Service on Route 10	$0.0	$10.7	$14.7	$16.4	$16.6	$58.4
Expand Evening Service on Route 12	$0.0	$4.2	$4.5	$4.5	$4.8	$18.0
Modify Route 12 Schedules To Eliminate Long Layovers	$0.0	$1.2	$1.6	$1.9	$1.9	$6.5
Expand Runabout Capacity	$2.6	$5.1	$7.7	$10.3	$12.8	$38.5
Discount Regional Day Pass Fare	-$26.5	-$26.7	-$26.9	-$27.1	-$27.3	-$134.5
Net Change in Fare Revenues	-$23.9	$57.7	$81.4	$92.6	$96.1	$304.0
Total Annual Fare Revenues	$1,306.1	$1,398.1	$1,442.8	$1,486.1	$1,533.6	$7,166.6
Percent Change	*-1.8%*	*4.3%*	*6.0%*	*6.6%*	*6.7%*	*4.4%*

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

TABLE 52: RTA Short Range Transit Capital Plan

All Figures in Thousands

Plan Element	FY16-17	FY17-18	FY18-19	FY19-20	FY 20-21	5-Year Plan Total
Capital Plan Elements						
Fixed Route Buses (See Table 46)	$3,068.0	$1,034.0	$1,435.0	$0.0	$661.0	$6,198.0
Runabout Vehicles (See Table 46)	$473.0	$0.0	$795.0	$0.0	$626.0	$1,894.0
Transit Garage Facility	$500.0	$500.0	$500.0	$500.0	$695.3	$2,695.3
Paso Robles Bus Storage Facility	$850.0	$0.0	$0.0	$0.0	$0.0	$850.0
Wi-Fi Bus Equipment	$0.0	$6.0	$45.0	$0.0	$0.0	$51.0
Short Term Government Center Transit Hub Improvements	$92.5	$0.0	$0.0	$0.0	$0.0	$92.5
Programmatic Capital Improvements[(1)]	$189.0	$133.1	$130.2	$96.7	$99.6	$648.6
Loan Payment on Current Garage Facility	$200.6	$200.6	$211.7	$0.0	$0.0	$612.9
Subtotal: Capital Plan Elements	*$5,373.1*	*$1,873.7*	*$3,116.9*	*$596.7*	*$2,081.9*	*$13,042.3*

Inflation assumptions identified in the SLOCOG RTP were applied: two percent annual inflation through 2018/19, and three percent thereafte

Note 1: Programmatic capital improvements include bus stop improvements, maintenance equipment and computer/communications equipment

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

The results of Tables 49 through 52 were used to develop the Financial Plan, as presented for each of the five years of the Short Range Transit Plan period in Table 53. In addition to passenger fare revenues, this Financial Plan incorporates the following funding sources:

- Farebox and advertising revenues.

- Rural Transit Fund revenues are used for operating, assumed to grow with the rate of inflation, and are also assumed to fund half the cost of new Runabout vehicle purchases.

- FTA Section 5307 (Urban Program) funds are used for operations, facilities, and the purchase of local fixed route buses. Operating funding is assumed to grow with the rate of inflation, while capital funds are identified as needed to balance the capital improvement budget.

- FTA Section 5311 (Rural Program) funding is used for operations serving rural areas, and is assumed to grow at the rate of inflation.

- The Cuesta College contribution is assumed to continue, growing at the rate of inflation.

- A modest amount of interest income is included.

- Transportation Development Act funding is calculated to balance the operating budget.

- The final year of the Proposition 1B (Safety and Security) funds are reflected in the first year of the plan.

- State Transit Assistance funds are used as capital funding. Given current uncertainty regarding this source, no change from current levels is assumed.

- Low Carbon Transit Operations Program funds are used for capital purposes. While these funds are discretionary, overall they are assumed to grow with inflation.

This financial plan yields a balanced operating budget. A balanced budget is also identified on the capital side, with the exception of FY 2019-20, when revenues will exceed costs (thus indicating an increase in Capital Project Reserves).

TABLE 53: RTA Short-Range Financial Plan

All Figures in Thousands

	FY16-17	FY17-18	FY18-19	FY19-20	FY 20-21
OPERATING					
Operating Costs (From Table 49)	$8,258.5	$9,589.1	$9,841.3	$10,160.1	$10,489.2
Operating Revenues					
Fare Revenues (From Table 51)	$1,306.1	$1,398.1	$1,442.8	$1,486.1	$1,533.6
Rural Transit Fund	$234.6	$244.1	$259.0	$283.1	$318.7
FTA Section 5307	$2,038.9	$2,079.6	$2,121.2	$2,184.9	$2,250.4
FTA Section 5311	$639.3	$652.1	$665.1	$685.1	$705.6
Cuesta Contribution	$55.5	$56.6	$57.7	$59.4	$61.2
Interest	$3.0	$3.0	$3.0	$3.0	$3.0
Transportation Development Act	$3,981.2	$5,155.7	$5,292.5	$5,458.6	$5,616.7
Total	$8,258.5	$9,589.1	$9,841.3	$10,160.1	$10,489.2
Balance	$0.0	$0.0	$0.0	$0.0	$0.0
CAPITAL					
Capital Costs (From Table 48)	$5,373.1	$1,873.7	$3,116.9	$596.7	$2,081.9
Capital Revenues					
FTA 5307	$4,042.8	$1,015.4	$1,849.1	$0.0	$842.1
Proposition 1B	$241.3	$0.0	$0.0	$0.0	$0.0
State Transit Assistance	$561.5	$561.5	$561.5	$561.5	$561.5
Low Carbon Transit Operations Program	$291.0	$296.8	$308.8	$330.9	$365.3
Rural Transit Fund (Capital)	$236.5	$0.0	$397.5	$0.0	$313.0
Total	$5,373.1	$1,873.7	$3,116.9	$892.4	$2,081.9
Balance	*$0.0*	*$0.0*	*$0.0*	*$295.7*	*$0.0*

FTA - Federal Transit Administration

Source: LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Fiscal Year 2016-17

- Implement the short-term improvements to the RTA passenger facilities at Government Center in San Luis Obispo
- Conduct environmental analysis and engineering/permitting tasks for new Transit Garage in San Luis Obispo
- Construct new Paso Robles yard
- Improve Runabout eligibility and certification process, and scheduling procedures
- Purchase five buses, one trolley (for the Avila Trolley route) and eight Runabout vehicles
- Start offering a discounted Regional Day Pass
- Replace 7 day pass with 3 day pass
- Finalize schedules for Mid-Day Express services and extension of evening services.
- Continue coordination efforts with other transit agencies
- Improve bus stops

Fiscal Year 2017-18

- Implement the Mid-Day Express services and extension of evening services. While these are identified for initiation in Fiscal Year 2017-18, the specific timing may depend on future ridership trends, the annual unmet transit needs process, as well as the development of new funding sources.
- Modify Route 12 schedule to avoid long layovers
- Finalize plans and funding strategies for new Transit Garage in San Luis Obispo
- Expand Runabout capacity through additional vehicles and expanded vehicle hours of service
- Purchase two buses
- Implement Wi-Fi on over-the-road coaches
- Begin engineering and design of long-term Transit Garage
- Continue coordination efforts with other transit agencies
- Improve bus stops

Fiscal Year 2018-19

- Start construction of new Transit Garage in San Luis Obispo
- Expand Runabout capacity
- Purchase two buses and eight Runabout vehicles
- Expand Wi-Fi service to remainder of fixed-route fleet
- Continue coordination efforts with other transit agencies
- Improve bus stops

Fiscal Year 2019-20

- Move into new Transit Garage in San Luis Obispo
- Expand Runabout capacity
- Continue coordination efforts with other transit agencies
- Improve bus stops

Fiscal Year 2020-21

- Expand Runabout capacity
- Purchase two buses and six Runabout vehicles
- Continue coordination efforts with other transit agencies
- Improve bus stops
- Update Short Range Transit Plan