



## Lompoc City Council Agenda Item

**City Council Meeting Date:** November 19, 2024

**TO:** Dean Albro, City Manager

**FROM:** Richard Fernbaugh, Transit/Airport Administrator  
r\_fernbaugh@ci.lompoc.ca.us

**SUBJECT:** Review of Draft City of Lompoc Transit (COLT) Reimagined Study and Service Alternatives

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### **Recommendation:**

Staff recommends the City Council review the Transit Reimagined Study Draft Final Report (Attachment 1), receive public comments, and provide direction regarding City of Lompoc Transit (COLT) service and the Preferred Service Alternative

### **Background:**

COLT operates four fixed routes (Attachment 1, page 11) and reservation-based Dial-A-Ride origin-to-destination service for people with disabilities (ADA Service<sup>1</sup>) between 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on weekdays, and from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays within the City, Mission Hills, and Vandenberg Village. COLT also provides a shared-ride evening shuttle service from the Lompoc campus of Allan Hancock College departing the campus at 8:10 p.m., 8:40 p.m., 9:10 p.m., and 9:40 p.m., Monday through Thursday, transporting riders to their requested destinations within the designated service area (Allan Hancock College Shuttle). Additionally, COLT operates three fixed route round trips per day Monday through Saturday between Lompoc, Buellton, and Solvang (Wine Country Express). COLT also provides one round trip to Santa Barbara and Goleta on Tuesdays and Thursdays (Santa Barbara Shuttle). (See Attachment 1, Chapter 2.)

In an effort to optimize COLT service performance, on April 16, 2024, the City Council awarded a consulting contract to Moore and Associates, Inc. (Moore) to conduct and prepare a Transit Reimagined Study (Attachment 1). Over the course of six months Moore reviewed transit data, coordinated with City staff, and engaged the public to develop improved service alternatives for COLT. Public engagement was achieved through various activities including a mailer to 15,000 households; bilingual interactive web page; and information booths located at the Flower Festival, Old Town Market, and

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<sup>1</sup> See COLT Dial-A-Ride Service discussion on page 12 of Attachment 1.

various storefronts. Additionally, two rounds of community workshops were held at the Dick DeWees Center.

A total of eight scenarios as well as additional recommendations were presented at the community workshops held September 18, 2024. Each round of workshops included two sessions and was attended by a cross-section of Lompoc residents including both transit riders and non-riders. Discussion during the first round of workshops contributed to the crafting of a series of service alternatives presented for further discussion during the second round of workshops.

### **Discussion:**

Feedback from the final list of service alternatives and recommendations produced three service alternatives and several additional recommendations with the greatest support from the community workshops. (See Attachment 1, Chapter 6.)

The most popular service alternatives and recommendations included:

- Scenario #5: No changes to current fixed route service, but replacing weekend and evening services with micro-transit<sup>2</sup> alternatives.
- Scenario # 7: Changes current fixed routes coverage areas and adds an additional North/South “H” Street Shuttle. Replaces weekend and evening fixed-route and ADA Dial-A-Ride services with micro-transit alternatives.
- Scenario #8: Replace all local fixed-route and ADA services with on demand micro-transit service.
- Recommendation A: Improve connections with the Wine Country Express
- Recommendation F: Improve connections with SMRT Route 30<sup>3</sup>
- Recommendation H: Improve connections with the Clean Air Express<sup>4</sup>

### **Preferred Service Alternative:**

Moore and Staff evaluated the various scenarios, considered key metrics, available transit revenue, operational costs, capital costs, and other factors, and determined Scenario #7 would be most beneficial to the City, and is therefore recommended as the Preferred Service Alternative (See Attachment 1, page 159). This decision was influenced by community feedback and observational data, indicating that it aligns best with the needs of the community.

Scenario #7 would develop an H Street Shuttle<sup>5</sup> consisting of one fixed-route bus making round trips between the Lompoc Transit Hub located on Cypress Avenue between I Street and J Street and Mission Plaza located in the Albertson’s shopping center every 20-minutes, thereby providing frequent bi-directional service along H Street. Additionally,

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<sup>2</sup> Micro-transit most commonly refers to a general public on-demand shared-ride origin-to-destination service, which typically uses vehicles smaller than traditional transit.

<sup>3</sup> See SMRT Route 30 discussion on page 15 of Attachment 1.

<sup>4</sup> See Clean Air Express discussion on page 15 of Attachment 1.

<sup>5</sup> See Attachment 1, page 164.

COLT Routes 1, 2, and 3 would be redesigned to provide 40-minute round trips in an east-west direction in south Lompoc, central Lompoc, and north Lompoc, offering connections with the H Street Shuttle at several locations. The H Street connections would eliminate the need for Routes 1, 2, and 3 to each stop at the Lompoc Transit Hub and Mission Plaza, as they do currently. COLT Route 4 connecting Mission Hills and Vandenberg Village with Mission Plaza would continue to operate substantially as it does currently, but with minor schedule adjustments to enhance connections with other routes.

Micro-transit is recommended instead of fixed-route service after 5 pm and on Saturdays because ridership has been substantially lower during those times, making micro-transit more cost-effective. Additionally, micro-transit should generally result in shorter travel times for riders because it generally provides transportation more directly from the rider's origin to its destination. Additional details of the Preferred Service Alternative are described below.

- Local fixed routes (Routes 1-4 and the H Street Shuttle) would operate from 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and would be scheduled to improve connections with the Wine Country Express, SMRT Route 30, and the Clean Air Express.
- ADA Service (Dial-A-Ride ADA Paratransit) would operate from 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- Micro-transit (general public on-demand service) would operate two vehicles from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and one vehicle from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- Moore and Staff recommend adding to the Preferred Service Alternative one micro-transit vehicle operating from 5:00 a.m. to 6:30 a.m., Monday through Friday, only to provide connections to the early morning Clean Air Express trips.
- Micro-transit would operate a minimum of four vehicles from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, replacing both fixed-route and ADA Paratransit service with general public on-demand service.
- The Wine Country Express would continue to provide three trips per day, Monday through Saturday, as currently scheduled.
- The Santa Barbara Shuttle would continue to provide service between Lompoc and Santa Barbara on Tuesday and Thursday as currently scheduled.

Moore and Staff anticipate the Preferred Service Alternative, Scenario #7, will meet the needs of existing COLT riders better than the existing service does, and will also attract new riders because of its improved service. The addition of the H Street Shuttle will significantly reduce north-south travel times for riders along that route from the current 60-minute round trip duration of existing COLT Route 1. The redesigned COLT Routes 1, 2, and 3 will also provide shorter 40-minute round trips and will cover more service area than existing COLT service does. The increased morning and evening COLT service hours, which will be made cost-efficient by use of one or two micro-transit vehicles rather than four or five fixed-route vehicles, further enhances the benefits of the preferred alternative. Scenario #7 surpasses Scenario #5 due to the significant benefits of providing the H Street Shuttle service and the enhancements to Routes 1, 2, and 3.

Scenario #7 is expected to out-perform Scenario #8 because the weekday fixed routes provide consistent integrated thorough coverage of the service area allowing them to transport more riders in less time at lower cost than the variable independent micro-transit shared-trips can during busy daytime service hours. The City's current transit fleet of buses and vans is expected to be adequate to deliver the Preferred Service Alternative.

**Fiscal Impact:**

Public transit is primarily funded by a mix of dedicated state and federal transit funding which cannot be used for other non-transit purposes, and which exceeds COLT's operational and capital financial needs. Additionally, rider fares, dedicated local transit funding, and other sources contribute small percentages of revenue to COLT. The City's General Fund does not contribute revenue to COLT. (See Attachment 1, Chapter 7, page 180.)

COLT uses a private contractor (Contractor) to provide daily transit operations and management services, including operating and cleaning the buses and vans; collecting and accounting fares paid; providing customer service and dispatch functions; providing a full-time on-site manager and necessary support staff; providing computer hardware, software, and other items necessary to operate and manage the service; and preparing and submitting to COLT and other agencies all required reports and data. The Contractor is typically hired for terms of multiple years through a competitive procurement process which includes price among the evaluation criteria for selecting the successful Contractor. The price of the contract is the product of the hourly rate charged by the Contractor for providing revenue service during each fiscal year of the contract multiplied by the number of revenue service hours provided each corresponding fiscal year. COLT limits the number of revenue service hours which are billable in the contract based upon the amount of service COLT approves the Contractor to provide throughout the contract. In that way, COLT may reduce or increase service to meet the changing needs of the community throughout the contract term.

**Preferred Service Alternative, Scenario #7:**

Scenario #7 is estimated to increase the total revenue service hours of the Contractor by 3.91% above the current COLT service, which translates to a 3.91% increase in operating cost over the status quo under the current contract's billing model (based solely on revenue service hours) (see Attachment 1, Exhibit 6.9 on page 172). As shown on Exhibit 7.1 on page 180 of Attachment 1, COLT revenues are projected to be substantially in excess of operating expenses for Scenario #7. Moore and Staff recommend limiting further increases in COLT service above the base recommendation of Scenario #7 until operating and ridership data confirm the success of the base scenario and also the likely success of each potential service increase. Potential service increases are discussed in Chapter 6 of Attachment 1, and they are outlined in the Phase 2 section of Exhibit 8.1 of Attachment 1. Staff also recommends reserving COLT revenue which is in excess of operational needs for future capital expenditure needs, such as facilities, bus replacements, etc.

Implementation Schedule for Preferred Service Alternative:

November 19, 2024	Council review and direction, public review and comments
December 3, 2024	Council review, direction, consider approval
January/February 2025	Moore and Staff prepare solicitation for new service contract
February/March 2025	Advertise for new service contract proposals
April 2025	Council review and consider award of new service contract
April 2025	Council review and consider adjustments to rider fares
April-June 2025	Contractor(s) transition to new service contract
July 1, 2025	Begin new service contract and Preferred Service Alternative

**Conclusion:**

The Preferred Service Alternative formed through community input, data analysis, and professional recommendation is anticipated to significantly improve COLT service at a minimal increase in overall cost. After reviewing the Transit Reimagined Study draft report and considering public input from November 19 through December 3, 2024, the Council may consider approval of the Preferred Service Alternative on December 3, 2024 to allow sufficient time to begin a new service contract on July 1, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

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Richard Fernbaugh, Transit/Airport Administrator

**APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL TO THE CITY MANAGER:**

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Michael W. Luther, P.E., Public Works Director

**APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL TO THE CITY COUNCIL:**

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Dean Albro, City Manager

Attachment: 1) Transit Reimagined Study Draft Final Report document available on the City's website via link below:

<https://www.cityoflompop.com/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/6934/67>