

City of Visalia Transit Needs Study

Introduction

This document fulfills an implementation action directed by the City of Visalia 6th Cycle Housing Element:

- **Program 7.3(e):** Collaborate with TCaT/TCAG to prepare a study on transit needs for Visalia residents and identify actions to address those needs, focusing on connecting residents to job centers. Work with TCaT to expand transit services that connect Visalia to other cities in the County.

Table of Contents

- 1) Background / History on usage of Transit Services
- 2) Existing Services
 - a) Visalia Fixed-Route Services
 - b) Visalia Dial-A-Ride Service
 - c) V-Line
 - d) TCRTA (formerly TCaT) and Other Inter-County Services
 - e) Visalia Connect
- 3) Existing and Forthcoming Plans
 - a) Short Range Transit Plan 2022 (covering 2018-2022)
 - b) Short Range Transit Plan (FY 2026-2031) / Reimagine Study
 - c) General Plan Update 2027
 - d) Regional Project: Regional Transit Express Transit Service Project - Cross Valley Corridor / Cross Valley Express (CVX)
 - e) Regional Project: Regional Transit Express Transit Service Project – Mooney Boulevard BRT
- 4) Actions Intended to Address Needs
 - a) Transit Needs summarized from Existing Plans
 - b) Implementation of SRTP Recommendations in Chapter 7
 - c) Conclusions and the Role of the Reimagining Study
 - d) Implementation Actions and Timeframes

Appendix A – Cross Valley Express and Mooney Bus Rapid Transit Systemwide Map

References

- City of Visalia – Visalia General Plan Update:
https://www.visalia.city/depts/engineering_n_building_planning_n_community_preservation/planning/gp.asp
- City of Visalia – Visalia Transit Long Range Transit Plan:
https://www.visalia.city/depts/transit/getting_involved/short_range_transit_plan.asp
- City of Visalia / TCAG – Visalia Transit 2022 Short Range Transit Plan:
https://www.visalia.city/depts/transit/getting_involved/short_range_transit_plan.asp
- TCAG – 2024 TCAG Unmet Transit Needs Report:
<https://tularecog.org/tcag/planning/transit-planning/unmet-transit-needs-reports>
- TCAG – Cross Valley Corridor Phase 1 Operating Plan:
<https://tularecog.org/tcag/planning/transit-planning/cross-valley-corridor>

Prepared by:

City of Visalia Planning Division
315 E. Acequia Avenue
Visalia, CA 93291
Phone: (559) 713-4359
Email: planning@visalia.gov

December 2025

1. Background / History on Usage of Transit Services

Public transit service in the form of a “fixed route” service was initiated by the City of Visalia in 1981. For the first several years the service operated chiefly within city limits. However, over the years transit service has been extended into neighboring communities (e.g., Exeter, Farmersville, Goshen) through various cooperative funding agreements. As of 2022, an estimated population of 140,000 resides within Visalia Transit’s 40-square mile local service area.

Given its age of 40 years, Visalia Transit is considered to be a “mature” transit system. The local transit route network (consisting of 13 routes) has remained largely unchanged for several years, and transit service is provided within reasonable walking distance of approximately 65 percent of Visalia households.

Visalia Transit’s local service employs a hub-and-spoke design, with nearly every route “pulsing” through the City’s downtown transit center (East Oak Avenue / Santa Fe Street), thereby facilitating convenient bus-to-bus connections.

Historically, school-age youth represent a significant ridership component. As such Visalia Transit provides scheduled service within close proximity of nearly all local schools including College of the Sequoias, San Joaquin Valley College, Fresno Pacific University, and Visalia Adult School.

Similar to almost every public transit provider in America, Visalia Transit was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Key impacts from the pandemic include a significant reduction in annual ridership, ongoing challenges recruiting and retaining qualified drivers, and a significant decline in annual fare revenue. While the City has received a variety of one-time federal transportation funding to help offset the loss of fare revenues, it is currently unclear how post-pandemic transit funding in California will be addressed. Further, based on transit market research nationally, it is unlikely Visalia Transit ridership activity will return to pre-pandemic levels for several years if ever.

Over its 44 year span, Visalia’s public transit service has also expanded to include external services to provide extended transportation service. The V-Line and Sequoia Shuttle are two examples of current external services. Of these two services, the V-Line is the only one which provides service to nearby metropolitan areas, namely the City of Fresno. The Sequoia Shuttle provides seasonal service between Visalia and Sequoia National Park.

Other public transit services offered in Visalia include Dial-A-Ride – an on-demand service to seniors and disabled riders – and the recent addition of Visalia Connect – an on-demand “micro-transit” service for all persons similar in scope to other privatized ridesharing services.

2. Existing Services

a. Visalia Fixed-Route Services

Visalia Transit's current fixed-route bus service, illustrated in Figure 2-1 on the next page, serves a majority of the City of Visalia and neighboring communities of Exeter, Farmersville, Goshen, and Tulare. Most of the service operates on 30-minute headways and route lengths are commonly 30 minutes one-way running times. Buses are scheduled to allow for passenger transfers at the downtown transit center. To accomplish the coordinated schedule pulse and provide easy to remember schedules (memory headways – generally uniformly every 15 or 30 minutes) the bus routes are designed to be about 15 miles in length.

Operational Hours

Visalia Transit's fixed-route bus service generally operates from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., with last departures occurring at 9:00 p.m. Weekend service generally operates from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., with last departures occurring at 6:00 p.m.

Fare Structure

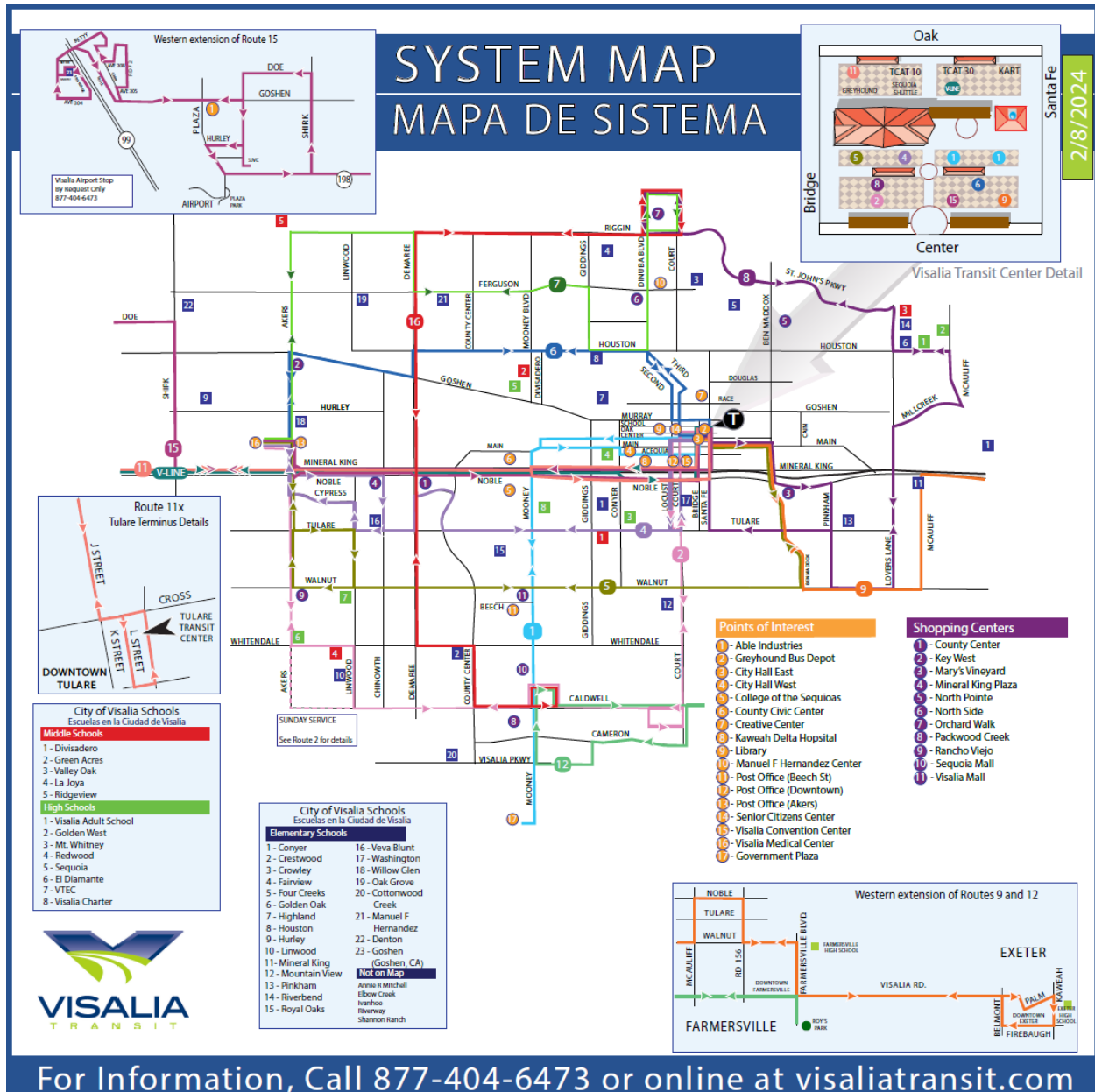
The current fare structure has been in effect since February 1, 2021. The fixed-route service offers a basic case care for one-way service, as well as one-day and multi-day passes. Discounted fares are available to several categories of people. The fixed route fare structure is illustrated in Table 2-1 below.

TABLE 2-1: FIXED-ROUTE FARE STRUCTURE – LOCAL SERVICE (SOURCE: SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN, PG. 17)

| | General Public | Discounted* | Children* |
|---------------------------|----------------|-------------|-----------|
| Visalia Transit | | | |
| Cash fare (one-way) | \$1.75 | \$0.85 | Free |
| Day pass | \$3.50 | \$2.50 | N/A |
| 7-day pass | \$14.00 | \$7.50 | N/A |
| 31-day pass | \$50.00 | \$30.00 | N/A |
| Half-off Pass (HOP)^ | \$25.00 | N/A | N/A |
| Monthly Regional T-Pass | \$55.00 | N/A | N/A |
| Mid-month Regional T-Pass | \$30.00 | N/A | N/A |

**Discounted fares available to seniors (age 65+), persons with disabilities, Medicare cardholders, and active military (and families).
 +Up to two children age 6 or younger ride free with a fare-paying passenger. Additional children must pay the full cash fare.
 ^The Half-off Pass is available to new riders only.*

FIGURE 2-1 FIXED ROUTE SYSTEM MAP (SOURCE: VISALIA TRANSIT WEBSITE,
https://www.visalia.city/depts/general_services/transit/default.asp)



Route Descriptions

The fixed-route system currently operates 13 local routes, summarized in Table 2-2 below.

Route 11 is the most productive in terms of revenue miles per revenue hour. This is due to the intercity nature of the route, which travels between Visalia and Tulare and has very limited stops. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Route 6 saw good performance with this metric. Since the COVID pandemic, Routes 9 and 15 are the next highest performers after Route 11.

Route 1 is consistently the most productive in terms of passengers per revenue hour and is the only route to meet the standard of 15 passengers per hour. Prior to onset of the COVID pandemic, Routes 11 and 4 were the next-highest performing. However, since the COVID pandemic, Route 6 has become the second-highest performer, followed by Routes 2 and 9.

Route 1 is also the most productive route with respect to passengers per revenue mile. It is one of just two routes (the other is Route 4) that have been above one passenger per mile between 2018 and 2022.

TABLE 2-2 FIXED ROUTE SYSTEM TABLE

| Route Number | Major Destinations | Point of Origin | Out of town Service |
|---------------------------|---|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Route 1A & Route 1B | Downtown - Mooney Blvd. -Government Plaza (TCat Transfer) | VTC | |
| Route 2A & Route 2B | Kaweah Delta Urgent Care - Mooney & Orchard- Visalia Medical Clinic | VTC | |
| Route 4A & Route 4B | Tulare Avenue- College of the Sequoias- Visalia Medical Clinic | VTC | |
| Route 5A & Route 5B | Walnut Avenue- Visalia Mall- Visalia Medical Clinic | VTC | |
| Route 6 | Houston Avenue- Visalia Medical Clinic | VTC | |
| Route 7 | Dinuba Blvd- North Target Shopping Center | Visalia Medical Clinic | |
| Route 8 | St. John's Parkway - North Target Shopping Center | VTC | |
| Route 9A & Route 9B | Farmersville - Exeter | VTC | Farmersville, Exeter |
| Route 11X | Tulare Transit Center | VTC | Tulare |
| Route 12 | Connection with Routes 1A & 1B- Farmersville | Mooney & Orchard | Farmersville |
| Route 15 | Visalia Transit Center - Visalia Medical Clinic - Plaza Park/Wyndham (by request only) - Industrial Park - Goshen | VTC | Goshen |
| Route 16 | Connection with Routes 1A & 1B - Demaree St - Target on Dinuba Blvd. | Mooney & Orchard | |
| Route 17 | Visalia Medical Clinic - Industrial Park - Riggins Ave. - Plaza Dr. | Visalia Medical Clinic | |
| North Target Express- NTX | Downtown - Dinuba Blvd - North Target Shopping Center | VTC | |

Fixed-Route Survey

In early September 2021, as part of the update to the City's Short Range Transit Plan, a team of bilingual surveyors conducted an intercept survey across all Visalia Transit's local service lines. The survey fielding did not include the V-Line service linking Visalia and Fresno, nor the Sequoia Shuttle service linking Visalia and Sequoia National Park. Persons not wishing to complete the survey while onboard the bus had the option of completing the survey online. To encourage participation, each person responding in advance of the stipulated response deadline was entered into a random drawing for a series of VISA gift cards.

Despite a ridership decline of approximately 40 percent (due chiefly to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic), a sample size of nearly 400 surveys was achieved. This translates to a data confidence level of 95 percent and a margin of error of 5 percent.

Based on the survey data, Moore & Associates (the consultants preparing the Short Range Transit Plan) created a profile of the "typical" Visalia Transit local bus service rider. Key characteristics include:

- Is between the age of 18-44 (48 percent).
- Is currently employed (32 percent).
- Most common trip purpose is to access "work/employment" (26 percent)
- Lacks access to a personal vehicle (79 percent).
- Lives in a household with an annual income of less than \$25,000 (38 percent).
- Rides three or more times weekly (50 percent).
- Most preferred services enhancements:
 - "Later service hours" (37.5 percent) and "More weekend service" (34.5 percent)
- Indicates a very high satisfaction (combined "excellent" and "good ratings") regarding the City's local bus service (93.2 percent).

Based on the customer profile along with the overall survey data, it was concluded that 1) there is very high customer satisfaction, 2) there is a high degree of transit-dependency exhibited by the core customer group, and 3) introduction of the preferred service improvement would result in ridership growth (that is, additional weekly rides by the core customer group).

b. Visalia Dial-A-Ride Service

The City's Dial-A-Ride service is a curb-to-curb service primarily for persons with disabilities who are ADA-certified. The service also accepts same-day reservations from the general public on a space-available basis. Dial-A-Ride operates from 6:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

As a demand-response service, Dial-A-Ride revenue hours, revenue miles, and operating cost are directly dependent on demand. As such, lower ridership translates to lower operating cost (unlike fixed-route service, where the service operates largely the same regardless of ridership).

In the year following the COVID pandemic, ridership had dropped approximately 67% from the last full pre-pandemic year, from a ridership of 39,908 in 2019 to 12,888 (projected 12-month estimate based on a 6-month tally) in 2021.

Dial-a-Ride Survey

To assess dial-a-ride customer satisfaction as well as program performance, Moore & Associates (the consultants preparing the Short Range Transit Plan) conducted a self-administered survey of recent dial-a-ride customers. A bilingual questionnaire was distributed via first class mail to 465 individuals listed within the City's dial-a-ride user database. The survey mailer included a postage-paid reply envelope to facilitate survey return. To encourage participation, each person responding in advance of the stipulated response deadline was entered into a random drawing for one of three 50-dollar VISA gift cards.

Subsequent to the mailing, approximately 20 mailer were returned is "non-deliverable". This means the actual sample size was 445. Seventy valid responses were received translating to a participation rate of approximately 16 percent.

Based on the survey data, Moore & Associates creates a profile of the "typical" Visalia Transit dial-a-ride user. Key characteristic include:

- Is age 62 years or above (65 percent).
- Ride three or more times weekly (38 percent).
- Resides within Visalia (83 percent).
- Most common trip purpose is to access healthcare services (56 percent).
- Doesn't drive/no longer drives (63 percent)
- Has access to the internet (52 percent), uses text messaging (52 percent), and owns a smart phone (56 percent).
- Indicates a high satisfaction (combined "excellent" and "good" ratings) regarding the City's dial-a-ride service (90 percent).

Based on the customer profile along with the overall survey data, it was concluded that 1) there is very high overall customer satisfaction, 2) there is little potential for possible mode-shift to the City's fixed-route bus service, and 3) the program policies and procedures appear to be effective.

c. V-Line

The V-Line travels between the Visalia Transit Center in downtown Visalia and Courthouse Park in Fresno, with additional stops at the Visalia Municipal Airport, Fresno Yosemite International Airport, and California State University Fresno. Northbound service is operated six times each day, with departures from the Visalia Transit Center at 4:00 a.m., 6:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., 4:00 p.m., and 6:30 p.m. Southbound service departs the Fresno Airport at 5:00 a.m., 7:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m., 5:00 p.m., and 7:30 p.m. V-Line operates from 4:00 a.m. to 9:15 p.m. (returning to the Transit Center). The service operates on the same schedule seven days per week.

In the year following the COVID pandemic, ridership had dropped approximately 76% from the last full pre-pandemic year, from a ridership of 28,167 in 2019 to 6,574 (projected 12-month estimate based on a 6-month tally) in 2021.

d. TCRTA (formerly TCaT) and KART

The Visalia Transit Center serves as a point of origin for three fixed-transit lines which are not managed by Visalia Transit.

Two lines – C10 and C30 – are operated by the Tulare County Regional Transit Agency (“TCRTA”, formerly Tulare County area Transit / TCaT). One line – KART – is operated by the Kings Area Rural Transit.

TCRTA’s Commuter Route C10 travels the North County between the Visalia Transit Center and the Dinuba Transit Center, with additional rural stops including the County Juvenile Justice Center and the towns of Yetttem, Seville, Cutler, and Orosi. Route C10 operates from 6:15 a.m. to 7:05 p.m. (returning to the Visalia Transit Center).

TCRTA’s Commuter Route C30 travels the Northeast County between the Visalia Transit Center and the Woodlake Whitney Transit Center, with additional rural stops including the towns of Ivanhoe, Lemon Cove, and Three Rivers. Route C30 operates from 5:15 a.m. to 8:15 p.m. (returning to the Visalia Transit Center).

In addition to Routes C10 and C30 that originate from the Visalia Transit Center, Route C40 originates at the Tulare County Government Plaza and travels to the Porterville Transit Center with additional rural stops. Visalia Transit’s Fixed Route 1A and 1B provides a direct route between the Visalia Transit Center and the Tulare County Government Plaza.

KART Route 15 provides a direct service between the Visalia Transit Center and the KART Multi-Modal Transit Center in Hanford, in neighboring Kings County.

e. Visalia Connect

The City of Visalia launched a micro transit service beginning in June 2025, offering an on-demand ridesharing services that are booked through a mobile device. The service is branded within the City as “Visalia Connect”.

This micro transit system operates as part of a new wave of technology-enabled services that has flourished across the United States in the last 10 years. Micro transit is a system comprised of smaller passenger vehicles, rather than large buses such as those used for fixed-route service, that passengers can access by utilizing an application on their phone or accessible web portal and booking trips that will get them from point A to point B within a specified region. Passengers are also offered intermodal trips for itineraries that can take advantage of the existing fixed route service and connect to neighboring communities. The Visalia Connect service utilizes minivans with a 5 passenger per vehicle capacity.

This program is grant-funded through the Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG) with SB125 State transit funding and the branding and marketing component is supported and included in that budget.

Affiliation with County-wide program

The concept of a micro transit service in Visalia was explored further beginning in 2022, when the City was approached by the TCRTA with an opportunity to partner on a three-year pilot program. The program would serve most of the urbanized area of Tulare County and the rural area between. During the pilot program, data collected from the system would be used to establish performance metrics that could be utilized in creating a more efficient transit system. Furthermore, the system is flexible and customizable and is designed with the ability to make real time adjustments, such as wait time or vehicle availability in specified areas. Prior to launching the operation, Visalia Transit staff chose to have a separate contract specifically for the City to contract directly with the software company, and a vendor was chosen in 2023. In 2024, the vehicles were purchased, and in 2025, the City contracted with a service to brand the micro-transit pilot program.

The service continues to operate as part of a broader regionwide service. TCRTA continues to implement and promote the service as “TCRTA Transport” with five designated service zones operating around Tulare County. Riders are able to travel anywhere within the zone for the same fee, but riders cannot travel between zones. Of the five zones, Visalia is serviced by Zone 3, which also allows service to the cities and communities of Goshen, Tulare, Ivanhoe, Farmersville, Exeter, and Tooleville (see Figure 2-2 below for an illustration of the service areas). Region-wide there are approximately 50 Micro transit vehicles, with about 15-20 designated specifically for the Visalia Zone 3 region.

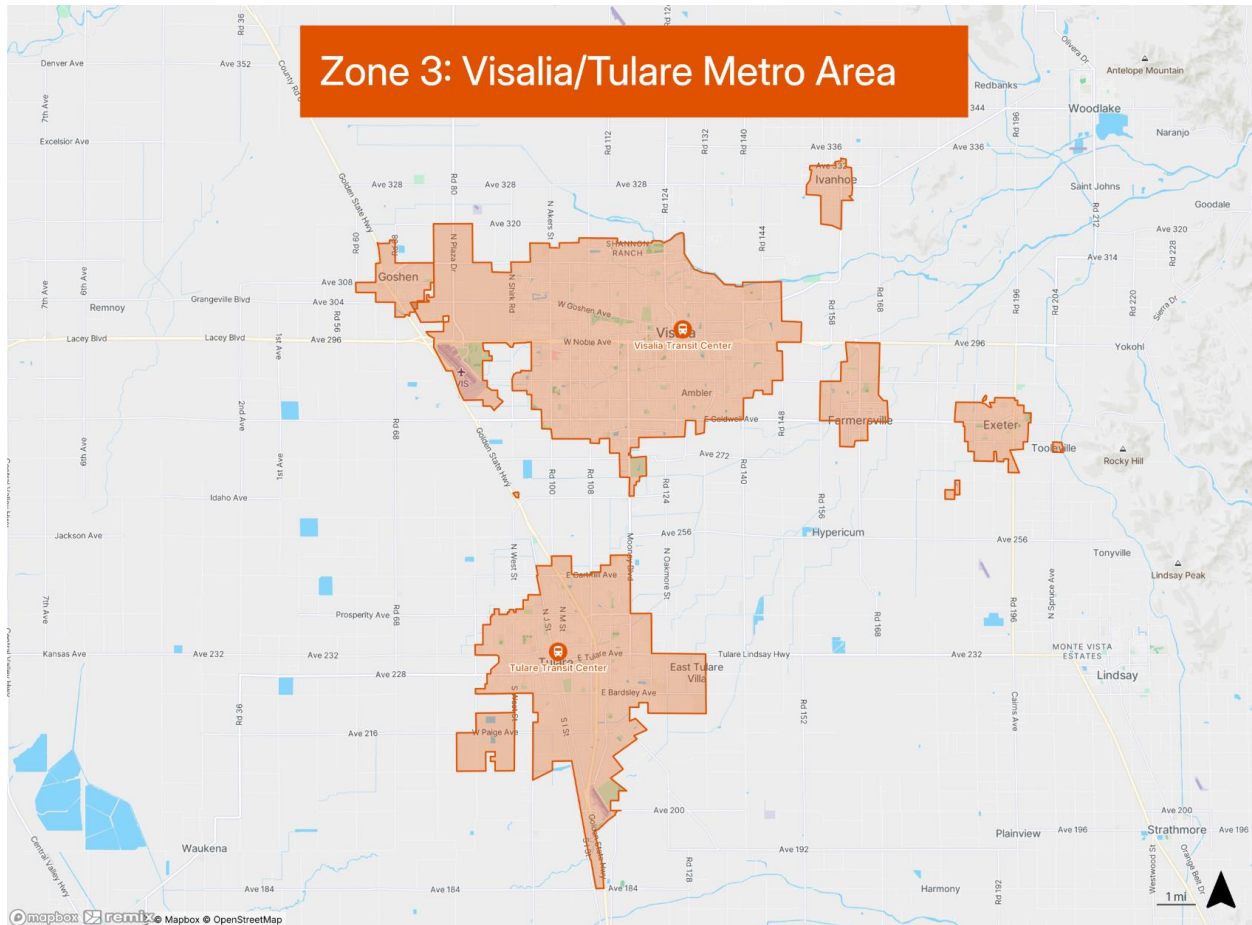
Operational Hours

Visalia Connect hours are generally the same as Visalia’s fixed-route busses, from 6:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Fare Structure

The fare is \$5 per person, per trip, to travel anywhere within the Zone 3 area.

FIGURE 2-2 VISALIA CONNECT SERVICE AREA MAP (ZONE 3) (SOURCE: TCRTA WEBSITE, <https://gotcrrta.org/services-and-schedules/on-demand-micro-transit-service/>)



Ridership

The Visalia Connect program launched to the public in June 2025. In the first three months, there were 5,991 total completed passenger rides, equating to an average of just under 2,000 rides per month and an average of 67 rides per day. In the first six months, there were 15,917 total completed rides, representing a 66% increase over the first three months. The six month total averages to 2,650 rides per month. Also in the six month period, the service had a 96% “met demand” rate which means of all the users that check ride times, 96% of the are satisfied with the pickup response time and book the ride.

3. Existing and Forthcoming Plans

The following plans – all initiated, adopted, and managed by the City of Visalia – have a direct impact upon guiding development within the City as it pertains to residents, employment, and transportation between the two subjects.

a. Short Range Transit Plan 2022 (covering 2018-2022)

The Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) is intended to be a five-year “road map” to guide the continuing development of the City’s public transit program. The plan further provides an objective evaluation of both current and recent program performance employing quantitative (measurable) performance criteria.

The plan begins by establishing specific goals and objectives appropriate to its services and its operating environment, and utilizes these to prepare performance measures and standards. Preparation of the plan entailed completion of three customer surveys, administered to users of the dial-a-ride and fixed route services, and to the general public with focus on locations of significant public activity. The latter was made available City wide as an online survey, with nearly 250 valid responses received.

The Needs Assessment, included as Chapter 5 of the SRTP, discusses future opportunities for providing transit service that is in concert with the plan’s goals and objectives, taking into account available resources, changing market conditions, and professional insight. The chapter identifies that demand for transit service is comprised of two elements: “actual”, which takes into account current as well as recent transit ridership activity, and “latent” which reflects potential demand. However, to help compensate for the realities of demand within a particular environment, an approach based chiefly on “propensity” to use public transit is used. A compilation of the comments received through Community Outreach as part of this chapter is discussed in Chapter 4 of this document.

Service recommendations are introduced in Chapter 6 of the SRTP, culminating from all of the data and engagement collected for the plan. These recommendations – 17 in total – are then given implementation details, a prioritization, and potential funding source, and finally discussed as an Operations Plan in Chapter 7. A summary of the prioritized recommendations is discussed in Chapter 4 of this document.

Chapter 8 of the SRTP includes a list of current and possible additional funding sources for operations, and the cost estimates for each individual recommendation.

b. Short Range Transit Plan (FY 2026-2031) / Reimagine Study

As Short Range Transit Plans are intended to cover a period of five years, Visalia is preparing to launch an update to its RTP to cover the Fiscal Years 2026 through 2031. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was released on October 6, 2025 to solicit qualified consultants to prepare an update. The Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG) is circulating the RFP on behalf of the City of Visalia.

One of the objectives in this upcoming SRTP, according to the RFP, would be to have a thorough analysis of the City's existing transit services, including pilot data from the new micro transit service. Such analysis would fundamentally "reimagine" or redesign the City's public transit system, with the intent to strategically replace low performing fixed routes with the more flexible on-demand micro transit service that uses smaller vehicles rather than larger buses. Such a "reimagined" study would be more intuitive, convenient, efficient, and would effectively meet the mobility needs of the local transit-reliant population.

The reimagined study is a response to two primary factors: the emergency of the COVID pandemic earlier in this decade and the rise in popularity of technology-enabled on-demand ridesharing services. Since the emergence of the COVID pandemic, transit agencies nationwide have seen dramatic shifts in travel patterns, demand, and rider behavior. With ridership of the City's fixed-route services still hovering between 50 and 60% of 2019 levels, the City believes that there is a need for its system to be reinvigorated and "reimagined". Visalia Connect, the new micro transit service launched in June 2025, is already seeing promising ridership numbers. This suggests that micro transit will provide a valuable supplement to existing transit services, enabling a substantial reconfiguration of fixed routes to provide greater convenience and efficiency.

Staff fully expects to see that the updated SRTP comprehensively redesigns the Visalia Transit system to increase the convenience of riding transit, reduce travel times, concentrate fixed route services when and where they operate most efficiently, and employ micro transit to effectively fill spatial and temporal gaps in scheduled services. The final plan should include a more efficient redesigned system with a combination of Fixed Route and Micro Transit or Flex vehicles.

c. General Plan Update 2027

The General Plan is a long-range visioning document which guides the City of Visalia on how the City shall grow and flourish towards a set year. State law requires that each California municipality prepare a general plan and further sets three overall guidelines for general plans: that it must be comprehensive, both geographically and in addressing the full range of issues that affect the jurisdiction's physical development; that it must be internally consistent; and that it must have a long-range perspective. The City of Visalia's current General Plan was adopted October 14, 2014, and articulates a vision for the year 2030.

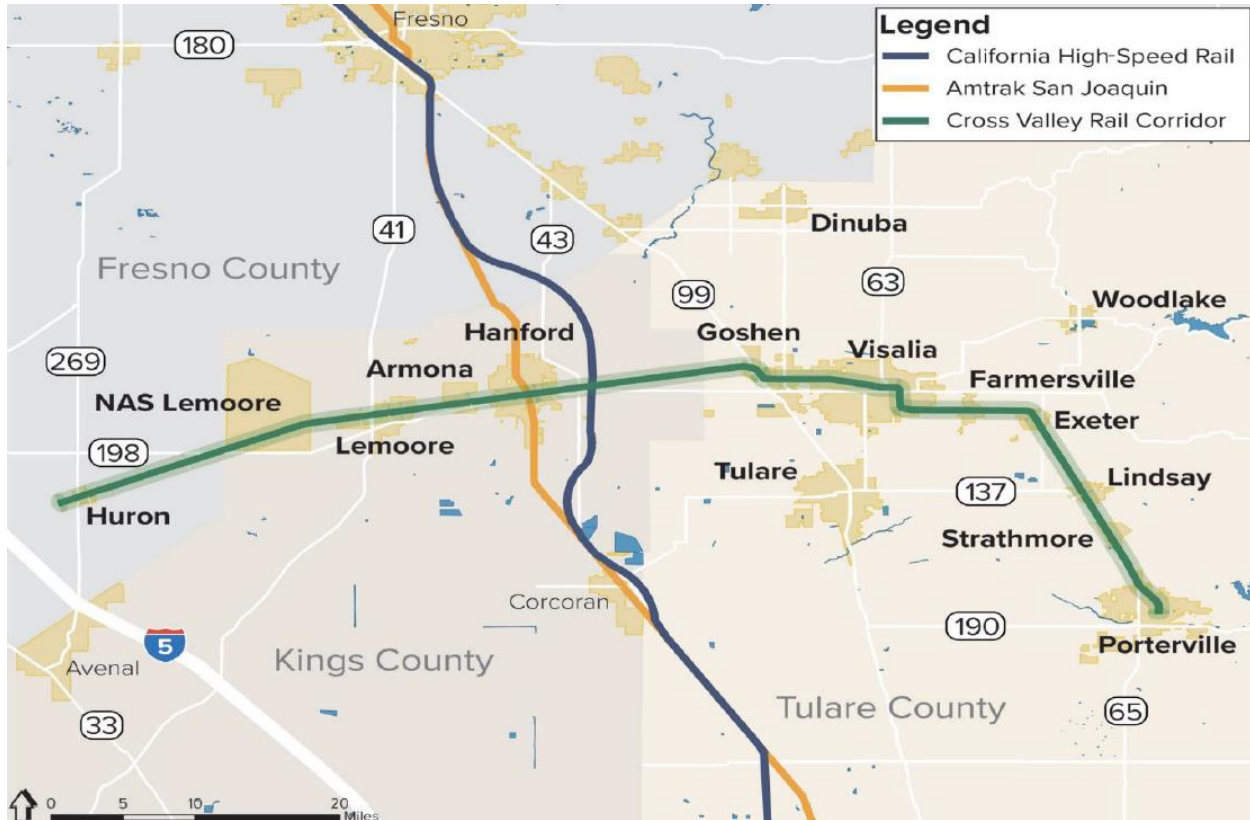
The City is currently preparing to begin its next General Plan Update effort. No earlier than mid-2026, the City will prepare a Request for Proposals to seek a qualified consultant who can assist with the preparation of the plan. The City anticipates preparation of the plan, together with a Program Environmental Impact Report, to take approximately four to five years, putting the adoption date at approximately 2031-2032. The update will include an extensive and comprehensive process of obtaining input from residents, businesses, property owners, and other interested groups and organizations.

This plan, like the previous updates, will dictate the locations where both residential and job centers will be located, including any opportunity areas to revitalize or encourage growth. In tandem with the growth component will be discussion on connectivity to areas within the plan and expansion toward new outlying growth areas and beyond the City. The discussion on connectivity shall address improving existing key corridors, completing missing links in roadway networks, and moving towards a “complete streets” concept that is amenable to vehicular, transit, walking, and biking use.

d. Regional Project: Regional Transit Express Transit Service Project - Cross Valley Corridor / Cross Valley Express (CVX)

The Cross Valley Corridor is a proposed 75-mile regional transit corridor linking cities and towns in Tulare and Kings Counties, from east to west across the Central Valley, using the existing San Joaquin Valley Railroad freight corridor. Visalia is located directly on the corridor near its center.

The Cross Valley Corridor Plan, first directed in 2016 by the Tulare County Association of Governments Board of Directors, is a vision for a high-frequency, high-quality express regional transit service connecting the communities along this corridor (see Figure 3-1 for a map of the Corridor overlaid with other vicinity rails). The completed rail will ultimately connect Huron and the Naval Air Station (NAS) Lemoore to the west with the Cities of Lindsay and Porterville to the east. This Plan was adopted in 2018, and was followed up with the Cross Valley Corridor Phase 1 Operating Plan adopted in 2024. The 2024 Operating Plan recommends incremental implementation of the 2018 Plan, with initial express transit service along the most active and viable segments. Additionally, the 2024 State Rail Plan identifies and supports express transit service along the Cross Valley Corridor, initially to connect with San Joaquin's Amtrak trains at the Hanford Station, and later with high-speed rail trains at the Kings-Hanford Station upon the opening of that system.

FIGURE 3-1 CROSS VALLEY CORRIDOR PLAN MAP

Recently, on November 3, 2025, the Visalia City Council authorized the City of Visalia's participation as the project lead and primary operator of the Regional Express Transit Service Project, funded by TCAG. This Project is comprised of two separate but intersecting transit services in the region, including the Cross Valley Express (CVX) project and the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system on the Mooney Boulevard corridor between Visalia and Tulare (explained further in the next section below).

TCAG, together with stakeholders, has worked to develop a service, operations, and capital investment plan for the CVX in the form of express bus service, to be implemented in phases over the next 10 years.

Phases 1A and 1B of the plan have respectively started in July 2024 and the end of 2025, to provide service between the Hanford Transit Center and the Visalia Transit Center (with a connecting transit line from Visalia to the Farmersville Transit Center). The latter phase will utilize 8 transit vehicles operating at 30-minute service frequencies between 6:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m., including stops at the Visalia Industrial Park, College of the Sequoias, Kaweah Health Medical Center in Visalia (see Appendix A for a systemwide map of the Cross Valley Express). Visalia Transit will serve as the primary transit provider, supported by the Tulare County Regional Transit Agency (TCRTA) and Kings Area Regional Transit (KART).

Phase 1C will begin in 2028 as the branded service of the Cross Valley Express, initially extending the Phase 1B route to run from Hanford to the Lindsay Transit Center. This initial

route is intended to begin after completion of the new Hanford Transit Center, but prior to the start of California High-Speed Rail service. Prior to the start of High-Speed Rail Service, the route will be extended from Hanford to NAS Lemoore in cooperation and by agreement with Kings County. Service would be offered using new, double-deck fully electric buses branded as the Cross Valley Express. A total of 18 stops each way will be served throughout Kings and Tulare counties. Service will be offered daily every 30 minutes from 6 AM to midnight.

It is the goal that by the completion of the final phase, there will be the development of a new transfer station in the Visalia Industrial Park (potentially at the Tulare County Office of Education Center at Shirk & Doe), installation of 12 new CVX transit stops, and 20 intersection traffic signal preemption systems

Long-term plans would be to provide rail service all the way from Huron to Porterville. It should be noted that the center of the corridor is the future Kings-Tulare High-Speed Rail Station, a vital connection between Kings and Tulare counties with the San Joaquin Valley and the statewide rail network.

e. Regional Project: Regional Transit Express Transit Service Project – Mooney Boulevard BRT

On November 3, 2025, the Visalia City Council authorized the City of Visalia's participation as the project lead and primary operator of the Regional Express Transit Service Project, funded by TCAG. This Project is comprised of two separate but intersecting transit services in the region, including the Cross Valley Express (CVX) project and the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system on the Mooney Boulevard corridor between Visalia and Tulare.

The Mooney Boulevard BRT would operate along Mooney Boulevard with five vehicles at 15-minute service frequencies for 16-18 hours per day over the approximate 11 miles between the Tulare Transit Center and the Visalia Transit Center, including stops at Prosperity Avenue (Tulare), Visalia Parkway, Caldwell Avenue, Walnut Avenue, Tulare Avenue/College of the Sequoias (COS), and Kaweah Health Medical Center, intersecting with the CVX at COS, Kaweah Health and the Visalia Transit Center (see Appendix A for a systemwide map of the Mooney Boulevard Bus Rapid Transit).

Visalia Transit will serve as the primary transit provider, supported by TCRTA. It is also the goal that the BRT would begin operations in Fall 2028, including the installation of six new BRT transit stops, 20 intersection traffic signal preemption systems, and necessary EV-charging or hydrogen-fueling infrastructure. Given the significance of Mooney Boulevard as the regional commercial corridor, it will be imperative that the project not create additional congestion and/or interfere with commercial operations and development, and that the City maintain authority over the BRT routes, timing and operations.

The BRT is planned to begin in 2028 as part of Phase 1C of the 2024 cross Valley Corridor Phase 1 Operations Plan.

4. Actions Intended to Address Needs

a. Transit Needs summarized from Existing Plans

Needs are primarily addressed in two Planning documents: Visalia Transit's Short Range Transit Plan from 2022 (SRTP) and Tulare County Association of Government's Report on Unmet Transit Needs from 2023-2024 (TCAG / Unmet Transit Needs Report).

Visalia Transit Short Range Transit Plan

The SRTP represents a thorough analysis of all aspects of Visalia Transit's services together with a vision for the future in 5-year increments. The 2022 plan has formulated a set of program goals and objectives, with new considerations resulting from the COVID pandemic and the rise in rideshare programs.

The following goals and corresponding objectives directly relate to the needs of Visalia:

Goal 2: Address the growing demand for new services and implement efficient and cost-effective solutions to meet the increasing public transportation needs of the community.

- Objective 1: Increase transit's "footprint" throughout the City of Visalia.
- Objective 2: Introduce transit service to new commercial development through financial partnerships with developers, employers, and tenants.
- Objective 3: Continue to function as a key link within the regional transit network.
- Objective 4: Identify new modes or services to balance increased demand for service with cost.

Goal 4: Educate the public about transit services in the area and the benefits of public transportation to the Visalia community.

- Objective 1: - Expand Visalia Transit's customer base beyond the historic transit-dependent riders.
- Objective 2: Enhance Visalia Transit's image within the Visalia community at large.
- Objective 3: Improve customer satisfaction.

The SRTP process entailed two separate surveys, including a community survey with a series of three community workshops conducted in September 2021 which provided an opportunity for Visalia residents to discuss their mobility needs and priorities.

Chapter 5 of the SRTP represents the Needs Analysis component of the plan, which compiles findings from the community workshops and the two surveys. The following table, in Table 4-1, represents a summary of key take-aways from the SRTP's Needs Assessment and associated outreach.

TABLE 4-1 SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT KEY TAKEAWAYS

| Source of Take-Away | Comment | Comment Type |
|-----------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Community Workshop | Desire for service to the Global Learning Charter School (former Fairview Elementary School). School site was served formerly via a stop at Giddings and Robin, which was less than a quarter-mile from the school. Now children must use Route 7 and a light at Giddings and Ferguson, which is more than a half-mile from the school and requires crossing a main thoroughfare. | Stop Request |
| Community Workshop | Preference for smaller vehicles operating throughout Visalia neighborhoods. Less noise and visual “footprint.” Perceived as “more inviting” to use. | 9 – Smaller vehicles |
| Community Workshop | Request for more/larger bike racks on buses, as well as increased promotion of the transit-cycling connection. | |
| Community Workshop | Preference to focus service (including more service frequency) on higher ridership routes. Anything less than 30-minute service frequency is not attractive. | 5 - Frequency |
| Community Workshop | Use smaller vehicles (as circulators) to travel throughout neighborhoods. To connect (feed) with larger buses operating on trunk lines/higher ridership routes. | 4 – Neighborhood circulators |
| Community Workshop | Revise the V Line service to include a stop at Fresno Airport. | Fresno service |
| Community Survey | A preference for smaller vehicles such as the 15-passenger vans. | 9 – Smaller vehicles |
| Community Survey | Installation of a bus stop on McAuliff between Mill Creek and Mineral Way. | Stop Request |
| Community Survey | Travel training (i.e., how to use the service, plan a trip, etc.). | |
| Community Survey | Bus stop improvements (e.g., benches, shelters, signage, lighting, etc.). | |
| Community Survey | Re-introduction of Visalia Transit’s former Routes 7a and 7b (including stops near Town Meadows, Oak Meadows, and Target). | Routes 7A/7B |
| Community Survey | Return to fare-free policy. | |
| Community Survey | Link between College of the Sequoia’s main campus and COS Tulare and COS Hanford. | 7 – Campus shuttle |
| Community Survey | Installation of a bus stop on Ben Maddox and Santa Fe Avenue (between Walnut and Caldwell). | 10 – Ben Maddox route |
| Community Survey | Service to Plaza Drive. | Stop Request |
| Community Survey | Reduced distance between bus stops. | |
| Community Survey | Service to the Fresno Airport. | Fresno service |
| Fixed-Route Survey | Pursue requests for “extended evening” transit, with a consideration for an incremental basis as well as a trial basis. | Increased service times |
| Fixed-Route Survey Recommendation | Neighborhood circulator | 4 – Neighborhood circulators |
| Fixed-Route Survey Recommendation | Reinstate former Routes 7a / 7b | Routes 7A/7B |
| Fixed-Route Survey Recommendation | Service to new developments | 8 – New Developments |

Chapter 5 also lists comments summarized from the most recent (date unspecified but prior to 2022) public comments from the Transportation Development Act (TDA) Unmet Needs Assessment. These are summarized in Table 4-2.

TABLE 4-2 SUMMARY OF COMMENTS PERTAINING TO VISALIA TRANSIT FROM 2023-2024 TCAG UNMET TRANSIT NEEDS REPORT

| Comment | Comment Type |
|---|-------------------------|
| Prepare an inventory of bus stops. | |
| Extend weekday evening service by three hours. | Increased service times |
| Reinstate the former Route 7. Several requests. | Routes 7A/7B |
| Introduce service along Ben Maddox between Walnut and Caldwell. Create a bus stop at Monte Verde. | 10 – Ben Maddox route |
| Display the driver’s names inside the front of each dial-a-ride vehicle. | |
| Introduce bus service to Fresno State. Multiple requests. | Fresno service |
| Introduce service along Houston. | Stop Request |
| Introduce service to Fresno Airport. | Fresno service |
| Use smaller buses/vehicles. | 9 – Smaller vehicles |
| Non-specific requests for increased service frequency. | 5 - Frequency |
| Introduce service on or near Golden West. | Stop Request |

TCAG Unmet Transit Needs Report

The Unmet Transit Needs Report is prepared in compliance with the Transportation Development Act (TDA) of 1971, being that TCAG is the administrator of TDA funds and the regional transportation planning agency for Tulare County. The purpose of the report process is to ensure that all unmet transit needs that are "reasonable to meet" are met before TDA funds are expended for non-transit uses such as streets and roads. "Unmet Transit Needs" are considered to exist where public transit services are not currently provided for persons who rely on transit to conduct their daily, routine, and essential activities. The "Reasonable to Meet" standard is based on several criteria that analyze how responding to that transit need will impact the overall system. If a proposed 'unmet transit need' meets the criteria for equity, feasibility, performance, and community acceptance as detailed in the adopted TCAG unmet needs criteria on the following page, it is deemed "reasonable to meet". The process is done annually and consists of comprehensive outreach to solicit comments from the public and two public hearings.

For the 2023-2024 TCAG Report, the two public hearings were held on March 18, 2024. Comments were also accepted by phone, postcard, email, and social media. During the public comment period, a total of 56 separate comments were received, of which 12 comments applied directly to services provided by Visalia Transit, and 5 comments pertained directly to the needs of providing service to residents and job centers. The comments received were about fairly divided between being an unmet need and not an unmet need.

The following table, in Table 4-3, represents a summary of comments pertaining to Visalia Transit from the 2023-2024 TCAG Report.

**TABLE 4-3 SUMMARY OF COMMENTS PERTAINING TO VISALIA TRANSIT FROM 2023-2024 TCAG
UNMET TRANSIT NEEDS REPORT**

| Comment | Evaluation of Unmet Need vs. Not an Unmet Need | Comment Type |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| No buses or stops down Mineral King by us too far East. Might be nice to have one. Request is for bus stop near Express Mini-Mart at 3332 E Mineral King Ave). | Unmet need, not reasonable to meet. Visalia Transit does not have a route that goes down Mineral King in this area. | Stop request |
| Route 9 needs to add a bus stop by Jack in the Box (Farmersville & E Walnut) heading to Visalia and another corner E. Walnut & Farmersville heading to Exeter. | Not an unmet need. Visalia Transit has two inbound and two outbound stops that service the Farmersville Rd. & Walnut Ave. area in Farmersville. | Stop request |
| We need a bus stop at hla6 Amazon | Not an unmet need. Visalia Transit has a bus stop at the Amazon location in Visalia on Riggins Ave. and Kelsey St. that is serviced by the Route 17. | Stop request |
| a. restoration of Route 7 to its previous configuration or reasonable approximation thereof b. addition of fixed-route bus service to the DMV in Visalia. | Route 7: Not an unmet need. Visalia Transit has rerouted the Route 7 from Prospect to Houston providing a connection from the Transit Center, Route 6, at Houston Ave. and Dinuba Blvd. to the Visalia Orchard Walk shopping mall, Route 7. This was implemented in February 2024. DMV Stop: Unmet need, reasonable to meet. Visalia Transit is in the works to have a stop at the Visalia DMV along Cain CT. implemented by July 1, 2024. | Route 7a/7b Stop request |
| Longer weekend bus hours. | need, not reasonable to meet. Our route schedules were shortened at the end of the day as directed by our Council due to low ridership. | Increased service times |

b. Implementation of SRTP Recommendations in Chapter 7

Service recommendations, introduced in Chapter 6 of the SRTP, culminate from all of the data and engagement collected for the plan. These recommendations – 17 in total – are then given implementation details, a prioritization, and potential funding source, and finally discussed as an Operations Plan in Chapter 7. A summary of the recommendations is provided in Table 4-4.

TABLE 4-4 PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS OF 2022 SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN (EXHIBIT 7.0.1 OF THE PLAN)

| # | Recommendation | Category | Short, medium, long-term |
|----|--|----------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | Increase staffing. | Administrative | Short |
| 2 | Increase security. | Administrative | Short |
| 3 | Install driver name placards inside the front of DAR vehicles. | Administrative | Short |
| 4 | Implement neighborhood circulators as feeders to trunk routes. | Operations | Medium |
| 5 | Maintain minimum 30-minute service frequency throughout service day on Routes 1 and 2. Implement 15- to 20-minute service frequency during AM and PM peak service. | Operations | Short |
| 6 | Consider utilizing dial-a-ride vehicles to provide weekday evening “first and last mile” coverage. | Operations | Short |
| 7 | Work with COS to establish an inter-campus shuttle. School days only. | Operations | Long |
| 8 | Introduce transit service to new developments. | Operations | Medium |
| 9 | Consider utilizing smaller vehicles, especially for lower productivity routes and/or neighborhood circulators. | Operations | Medium |
| 10 | Introduce service along Ben Maddox between Walnut and Caldwell. | Operations | Medium |
| 11 | Upgrade or replace fareboxes. | Capital | Medium |
| 12 | Syncromatics training for staff. | Capital | Short |
| 13 | Bus stop amenities improvements. | Capital | Medium |
| 14 | Transit Operations and Maintenance Facility. | Capital | Short/Medium |
| 15 | Support and increase awareness of the bus-bike connection. | Marketing | Short |
| 16 | Institute travel training program. | Marketing | Short |
| 17 | Enhance transit website/Ensure transit website and GTFS information is kept up-to-date. | Marketing | Short |

Of the 17 recommendations listed above, there are seven recommendations listed in the Operations category (listed in Table 4-5 below). Five of these seven recommendations would most directly assist connecting residents to job centers, with the two exceptions being

Recommendations #7 (COS inter-campus shuttle) and #9 (utilization of smaller vehicles). Specifically, recommendations #4 (neighborhood circulators), #6 (dial-a-ride first and last mile coverage), #8 (introduce transit to new developments), and #10 (introduce service along [South] Ben Maddox) would all increase the percentage of Visalia households within a reasonable walking distance of transit service (i.e. a half mile). Recommendation #5 (maintain 30-minute service frequency with 15-20 minute frequency during AM & PM peak service) would provide greater accommodation and perhaps desirability on the fixed route service's two highest productivity lines (i.e. Routes 1 and 2). In fact, Route 1 already maintains such frequencies, so changes to Route 2 would only be recommended.

It should be noted that the three recommendations listed in the Marketing category, if implemented, serve to increase ridership, which may indirectly introduce new opportunities for connecting residents to job centers.

TABLE 4-5 OPERATIONS RECOMMENDATIONS OF 2022 SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN

| # | Recommendation | City Status |
|----|---|-----------------------------|
| 4 | Implement neighborhood circulators as feeders to trunk routes. | |
| 5 | Maintain minimum 30-minute service frequency throughout service day on Routes 1 and 2. Implement 15- to 20- minute service frequency during AM and PM peak service. | Implemented in various ways |
| 6 | Consider utilizing dial-a-ride vehicles to provide weekday evening "first and last mile" coverage. | Implemented in various ways |
| 7 | Work with COS to establish an intercampus shuttle. School days only. | |
| 8 | Introduce transit service to new developments. | Implemented in various ways |
| 9 | Consider utilizing smaller vehicles, especially for lower productivity routes and/or neighborhood circulators. | Implemented in various ways |
| 10 | Introduce service along Ben Maddox between Walnut and Caldwell. | |

c. Conclusions and the Role of the Reimagining Study

The findings of the City of Visalia's latest (2022) Short Range Transit Plan together with shifts in the role of transit in Visalia over the past five years are painting the picture for what may be the shape of transit to come. As described in the above, there is much documented testimony and public comment, mostly from current users of transit in the Visalia area, regarding how the existing services can either be expanded or adapted to better suit their needs.

These ideas for expansion and adaptation are largely encapsulated in the Short Range Transit Plan's Operations Recommendations listed in Chapter 7, listed in the table above. The City has been able to take some actions to implement these recommendations.

To see the full realization of other certain recommendations, such as the implementation of neighborhood circulators (#4) or the utilization of smaller vehicles (#9), a new Short Range

Transit Plan containing an updated set of goals and objectives must be prepared. This is where the ongoing City effort to scope a new plan called the “Reimagining Study” comes into play.

The Reimagining Study is further intended to build upon the success of Visalia’s participation in a micro-transit program, including utilization of its ridership data to better understand the patterns and frequency of transit riders within the City. The City, together with TCAG and TCRTA, have been fortunate to utilize funding made available by the state toward providing a micro-transit service, which follows upon the success of similar for-profit ventures around the nation while being made available at a substantially lower cost to the user.

The vision of utilizing smaller vehicles represents a further shift in the outward appearance of a Citywide fixed route transit system, particularly for a mid-sized city such as Visalia. While the shift responds to a number of documented public comments, it does reflect a reality that many of Visalia’s fixed route bus go underutilized and perhaps are out of scale for many of the routes serving the City. The utilization of smaller vehicles will have some benefits, particularly the reduced cost of the vehicles and the reduced fuel usage. Furthermore, the introduction of neighborhood circulators as feeders to fixed routes in Visalia is a recommended practice that would, at least initially, only necessitate the use of smaller vehicles.

The Reimagining Study will also take into account the City’s recent participation as a primary operator in the Regional Transit Express Service Project, which will assist with increasing the transit mode share among communities in Tulare and Kings Counties, particularly in providing service to NAS Lemoore. This project is funded through the awarding of multiple federal and State transit grant applications applied for by TCAG.

Finally, a note should be made regarding the current standing of micro-transit service in Visalia. The recent implementation of Visalia Connect has brought a new alternative to the City’s Dial-A-Ride on-demand transit service which has already been in operation for many years. It is important to note that Visalia Connect is not planned to be a successor to the Dial-A-Ride Program, as each service has their different roles and regulations, and each will continue to cater to different segments of the population. In particular, Dial-A-Ride provides priority service to individuals with disabilities, takes reservations by phone, and allows for reservations to be booked in advance.

d. Implementation Actions and Timeframes

The following actions that were previously studied and analyzed in the Transit Needs Study are summarized here, together with their implementation timeframes, in Table 4-6. Completion of these actions has the goal of increasing the collective ridership among all services provided by Visalia Transit by five (5) percent over the next six years (i.e. by end of 2031), corresponding to the remainder of the planning period of Visalia’s 6th Cycle Housing Element.

TABLE 4-6: IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

| # | Action | Timeframe |
|----|---|---------------------|
| 1. | <u>Short Range Transit Plan</u> : Circulate a Request For Proposals and enter into a contract with a consultant for preparation of a Short Range Transit Plan / Reimagining Study. | Oct 2025 – Feb 2026 |
| 2. | <u>Visalia Connect</u> : Collect data to establish performance metrics that will be utilized in creating a more efficient transit system | Jul 2025 – Jun 2028 |
| 3. | <u>Visalia Connect</u> : Seek and secure funding sources to continue providing a micro-transit service beyond the three year pilot program that provides on-demand service citywide and potentially to outlying communities. | 2026 – 2027 |
| 4. | <u>Short Range Transit Plan</u> : Carry out an update to the Short Range Transit Plan. The Plan shall provide analysis and recommendations on Smaller Vehicles, Neighborhood Collectors, Stop Frequency on Fixed Routes, and Expansion of Fixed Routes. | 2026 – 2027 |
| 5. | <u>Cross Valley Express</u> : Expand Phase 1B of the Cross Valley Corridor service to Phase 1C, to run from Hanford to the Lindsay Transit Center, together with expanded service hours. | 2028 |
| 6. | <u>Mooney Boulevard Bus Rapid Transit</u> : Begin bus rapid transit operations, including the installation of six new BRT transit stops, 20 intersection traffic signal preemption systems, and necessary EV-charging or hydrogen-fueling infrastructure. | 2028 |
| 7. | <u>Transfer Station</u> : Between the completion of Phase 1C and Phase 2 of the Cross Valley Corridor, the City will develop a new transfer station in the Visalia Industrial Park. | 2028 - 2031 |
| 8. | <u>Outreach</u> : Educate the public about available transit services in Visalia and the benefits of public transportation to the community. Outreach shall include but not be limited to social media and surveys. | Annually |

APPENDIX A – CROSS VALLEY EXPRESS AND MOONEY BUS RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEMWIDE MAP

CVX and Mooney BRT - Systemwide map

