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September 17, 2018

Honorable Board of Directors  
Marin County Transit District  
3501 Civic Center Drive  
San Rafael, CA 94903

**SUBJECT: Analysis of 2017-18 School Transit Services and Transit Youth Pass Program**

**board of directors**

Dear Board Members:

stephanie moulton-peters  
president  
city of mill valley

**RECOMMENDATION:** Accept report.

damon connolly  
vice president  
supervisor district 1

**BACKGROUND:** School-based trips are a significant share of ridership on Marin Transit services, and demand for school service continues to rise each year. Students in K-12 and higher education programs countywide rely on public transit and yellow bus service to attend a host of academic campuses. This letter summarizes the District's operational activities during the 2017-18 academic year related to: supplemental public transit school services, the yellow bus program the District managed in Ross Valley, the College of Marin (COM) student pass program, and the College of Marin express service (Route 122). The letter also provides a summary and analysis of the 2017-18 Marin Transit Youth Pass Program. The Youth Pass Program report is provided as an attachment to this letter.

dennis rodoni  
2nd vice president  
supervisor district 4

judy arnold  
director  
supervisor district 5

**Supplemental School Service**

kate colin  
director  
city of san rafael

The District provides ten Supplemental School routes to accommodate overcrowding on regular public transit services due to the demand for school-related transportation. These routes operate school days only and add capacity at specific times of the day when schools start and release. These services are open to the public and operate with published timetables. The supplemental routes provide approximately 36 additional peak hour bus trips daily and carry an average of over 1,000 daily passenger trips, about 30 students per bus.

kathrin sears  
director  
supervisor district 3

katie rice  
director  
supervisor district 2

Due primarily to equipment availability, the Supplemental School transit operation is at capacity and does not provide room for expansion. A combination of factors has consumed any additional ability to provide new service on school days. These factors include: limited parking and maintenance facility resources, fleet limitations,

adjustments to schedules in response to shifting school bell times, and increasing ridership.

The continued growth in Supplemental School route ridership is a positive trend for the District and supports congestion relief in the County. However, the constraints identified above do not allow for additional services. These capacity constraints also challenge the District's ability to maintain reliability. Supplemental service is intended to add service capacity and reduce the pressure on the general public's access to regular local transit services. Student transit ridership in many parts of the County is so high that even these regular services are full and some passengers experience extended wait times.

The District took some actions in 2017-18 to add service capacity to Supplemental service. First, staff helped facilitate a partnership between the Larkspur Corte Madera School District (LCMSD) and the Tiburon Traffic Relief Joint Powers Authority (TTRJPA) to develop a yellow bus route to serve the Cove School. This route was added to the existing program operated by the TTRJPA by using a bus that was already under contract for service and with availability to serve an additional school. By transitioning the Cove School students from Supplemental Route 117 to the yellow bus route, Marin Transit was able to redeploy those resources to help reduce overcrowding on other high demand Supplemental routes.

In 2017-18, the second action the District took was to approve the purchase of two additional vehicles to support Supplemental services. These vehicles were paid for using SB 1 (State Transit Assistance) funding and are expected to arrive in October 2018. They will be put into service on routes that currently experience overcrowding. Operating resources to fund these services will come from cancelling underproductive fixed route services that were initiated in June 2018.

Staff continue to monitor conditions and work with school administrators and parents to ensure that student riders can depend on Marin Transit services. Ongoing growth in student enrollments and ridership has created challenges during the peak school days. Through a subcommittee of your Board, the District is actively pursuing longer-term solutions identified in the Coordinated Countywide School Transportation Study.

### **Transit Youth Pass Program**

Marin Transit has offered a school-based Youth Pass Program to Marin County students for the past nine years. In Fiscal Year 2017-18, nearly 4,500 youth pass "stickers" were distributed to 33 participating public and private schools. Youth Pass distribution levels were higher than last year. A complete analysis of the 2017-18 Youth Pass Program is attached.

### **Ross Valley School District Yellow Bus Program**

Marin Transit continued contracting for yellow school bus operations in Ross Valley for the 2017-18 school year. In the program's third year, over 600 students signed up for the service that offered transportation to families from around the school district to White Hill Middle School (WHMS) and Hidden Valley Elementary School (HVES). In addition to these schools, students from Ross Valley Charter (RVC), located on the White Hill Middle School campus, could also purchase bus passes. Marin Transit worked with the Ross Valley Charter (RVC) staff to develop a bell time schedule that enabled optimal use of the buses already under contract. RVC students had a dedicated bus route in the morning and shared a bus route with White Hill Middle School students in the afternoon.

Marin Transit contracted for the operation of six yellow buses with Michael's Transportation, a local school bus provider. Through a partnership with the County of Marin, Michael's had access

to mid-day and overnight parking in San Rafael. This eliminated the need for buses to travel back and forth between Marin and Vallejo where the company headquarters is located.

Marin Transit simplified the pass program by selling “AM Only” and “PM Only” passes with each priced at \$375. A parent purchased passes for the morning and afternoon for a “round trip” ride for the student. The total cost of the combined passes to and from school was \$750 and equivalent to \$2.08 per trip. Parents were able to pay for the passes in full or in monthly installments. The cost of the annual “round trip” to/from school increased by \$50.00 from the “round trip” pass price in 2016/17. All passes were available for purchase through the program website at <https://store.marintransit.org>. Students whose families demonstrated income restrictions were eligible to obtain an annual reduced-price bus pass by submitting an application to the Ross Valley School District. The cost of the reduced-price bus pass was \$175 per morning or afternoon pass or \$350 for a “round trip.”

For the 2017-18 school year, pass sales opened in late May 2017 and continued throughout the Summer. Over 600 Ross Valley students had a pass to ride the yellow bus by the end of the school year. Table 1 provides a breakdown of pass sales by school campus and a comparison with pass sales over the three years of the program’s operation. Note that RVC pass sales are combined with WHMS pass sales. Annual pass sales have remained steady for the yellow bus service and select routes are routinely sold out within days of the passes going on sale. This demonstrates strong support for the program and commitment from parents to use school transportation services throughout the school year and not just seasonally - based on weather or after school programs.

**Table 1: Summary of annual one-way passes sold over initial three years of program operation**

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Annual One-Way Pass Price	\$ 300.00*	\$ 350.00*	\$ 375.00
White Hill	922	928	951
Hidden Valley	54	39	62

\* one-way pass is calculated as half of round trip pricing

In 2017-18, one of the most significant changes to the program from the prior academic year was afternoon bus assignments for students. In the first two years of the program, students who purchased a PM bus pass were allowed to take any bus and travel to different destinations day by day. This system was advantageous for students and families who had different after school activities in different locations. However, this flexibility led to overcrowding on the most popular routes and unsafe behavior on campus for students competing to get in line first. Marin Transit staff worked with WHMS staff to develop a new policy that required students to hold a bus pass for a specific PM route. When parents purchased a pass through the program website they chose a route for their student to ride in the afternoon every day. This new system eliminated the need for early queueing and overcrowding. To maintain some flexibility, routes were designed to serve multiple high demand stops and students alighted the bus at any stop along the route.

In the morning, WHMS has two different arrival times for students (0 period and 1<sup>st</sup> period). This allows for re-deployment of buses after a first route. The RVC school also has a morning start time that is offset from these two times. These factors enable Marin Transit to design nine

routes to meet all of the requested demand in the morning. In the afternoon, however, all WHMS students are released at the same time and RVC students are released shortly after. All six buses depart WHMS at the release time and two buses return to operate a second route. The buses returning to school are delayed approximately 30 – 40 minutes after the initial release bell. This reduces demand for these two routes. The lower ridership in the afternoon reflects the variable demand combined with one less route compared to the morning. Table 2 summarizes average ridership by school for the AM and PM routes.

**Table 2: Average Peak Ridership 2017-18 School Year**

School	AM Routes	PM Routes
White Hill	376	321
Hidden Valley	25	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>339</b>

While White Hill routes operated at capacity through most of the year, Hidden Valley passes did not sell out during the school year. As a result, a pay-per-ride program for Hidden Valley students was continued from the previous year. Families could purchase ticket booklets of 5 or 10 passes for \$20 or \$40, respectively. Hidden Valley students purchased a total of 155 single ride passes at seven orders of 5-ticket booklets and twelve orders of 10-ticket booklets.


**College of Marin Class Pass Program and Express Route 122**

In August 2015, Marin Transit and the College of Marin (COM) began a partnership that enables students to use a valid College of Marin student ID to ride any local Marin Transit service. The program is funded through a COM transportation fee approved by 72 percent of the student body in Spring 2015. Fall/Winter passes are valid from August through January, and Spring/Summer passes are valid from January through August. During the 2016-17 school year, over 4,500 passes were issued and an average of 500 local bus trips were taken using the pass each school day.

This Class Pass program includes a direct route to the Kentfield campus. The Route 122 links the San Rafael Transit Center to the campus with one stop in San Anselmo and reduces the travel time by about 25 percent compared to other local routes. During the 2016-17 school year, Route 122 carried an average of 139 passengers daily. Compared to the prior year, total ridership increased by 16% and productivity remained steady at approximately 11.5 passengers per hour.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** There is no fiscal impact associated with this item.

Respectfully submitted,



Kelly Zalewski  
School Operations Analyst

**Attachment A:** Analysis of the 2017-18 Youth Pass Program