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October 7, 2019

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

**SUBJECT: Analysis of 2018/19 School Transit Services and  
Marin Transit's Youth Pass Program**

**board of directors**

Dear Board Members:

damon connolly  
president  
supervisor district 1

**RECOMMENDATION:** Accept report.

dennis rodoni  
vice president  
supervisor district 4

**BACKGROUND:** School-based trips are a significant share of ridership on Marin Transit services, and demand for school service continues to rise each year. In 2018/19, 36 percent of all fares were attributed to youth categorized fare media. Countywide, students in K-12 and higher education programs rely on public transit and yellow bus service to attend a host of academic campuses.

kate colin  
2nd vice president  
city of san rafael

This letter summarizes the District's operational activities during the 2018-19 academic year related to: supplemental public transit school services, the District managed yellow bus program in Ross Valley, the College of Marin (COM) student pass program, the College of Marin express service (Route 122), and the approval to distribute Measure AA funds to eligible yellow bus programs in Marin County.

judy arnold  
director  
supervisor district 5

**Supplemental School Service**

In FY 2018/19, the District provided ten Supplemental School routes to accommodate overcrowding on regular public transit services due to the demand for school-related transportation. A map showing Supplemental School Routes is shown in Attachment A. These routes operated school days only and added capacity at specific times of the day when schools start and release. These services were open to the public and operated with published timetables. The supplemental routes provided approximately 36 additional peak hour bus trips daily and carried an average of over 1,000 daily passenger trips or approximately 30 students per trip.

stephanie moulton-peters  
director  
city of mill valley

katie rice  
director  
supervisor district 2

kathrin sears  
director  
supervisor district 3

eric lucan  
alternate  
city of novato

The Supplemental School transit service is currently at capacity and does not provide room for expansion. A combination of factors has prevented Marin Transit from providing any additional new services

on school days. These factors include: limited parking and maintenance facilities, 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. The constraints on adding capacity, however, challenge the District's ability to maintain reliability. The role of supplemental service is 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 Marin County is so high that even these regular services are full and some passengers experience extended wait times.

In 2018/19, staff identified opportunities for limited expansion to provide additional service on existing routes. For example, the afternoon Route 119 service from Redwood High School to Tiburon is consistently at capacity with two buses. Staff increased the service to three buses on select days of the week using existing resources.

The District also purchased two additional vehicles to support Supplemental services using SB 1 State Transit Assistance funding. The vehicles were delivered in January 2019 and tested throughout the Spring semester in anticipation of their operation for the 2019/20 academic year.

### **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 2018/19, over 4,600 youth pass "stickers" were distributed to 33 participating public and private schools. Youth Pass distribution levels were slightly higher than last year. A complete analysis of the 2018/19 Youth Pass Program is included as Attachment B.

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

Marin Transit continued to contract for yellow school bus operations in Ross Valley for the 2018/19 school year. In the program's fourth year, over 550 students signed up for the service that offered transportation to White Hill Middle School (WHMS) and Hidden Valley Elementary School (HVES). Students from Ross Valley Charter (RVC) located on the White Hill Middle School campus could also purchase bus passes. Marin Transit worked with RVC staff to develop a bell time schedule that enabled optimal use of the buses 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 Transportation 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.

### *Pass Sales*

Marin Transit sold "AM Only" and "PM Only" passes for \$395 each. A parent must purchase passes for the morning and afternoon to provide a "round trip" ride for their student. The total cost of the combined passes to and from school was \$790, equivalent to \$2.19 per trip. Parents could pay for the passes in full or in monthly installments. The cost of the annual "round trip" to/from school increased by five percent from the "round trip" pass price in 2017/18. All passes were available for purchase through the program website at <https://rossvalleyschoolbus.com/>.

Students whose families demonstrated income restrictions were eligible to submit an application to the Ross Valley School District to obtain an annual reduced-price bus pass. The cost of the reduced-price bus pass was \$197.50 per morning or afternoon pass or \$395 for a “round trip.”

For the 2018-19 school year, pass sales opened in late May 2018 and continued throughout the summer. By the end of the school year, over 550 Ross Valley students had a pass to ride the yellow bus. Table 1 provides a breakdown of pass sales by school campus and compares pass sales over the four years of the program’s operation. Note that the table combines RVC pass sales with WHMS pass sales. Year over year, annual pass sales declined approximately seven percent at WHMS. Based on historical enrollment data provided by the WHMS Principal, enrollment at WHMS declined eight percent which was consistent with the reduced number of pass sales. Even with the reduction in purchased passes, select routes serving WHMS sold out within days of the passes going on sale.

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

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Annual One-Way Pass Price	\$ 300.00*	\$ 350.00*	\$ 375.00	\$395.00
White Hill	922	928	951	876
Hidden Valley	54	39	62	65

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

### *2018/19 Program Changes*

In 2018/19, one of the most significant changes to the program from the prior academic year was the establishment of a joint committee. On January 1, 2019, the Ross Valley Yellow Bus Transportation Services Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement (JEPA) went into effect. The members of the JEPA form a joint committee including the Town of San Anselmo, Town of Fairfax, County of Marin, and Ross Valley School District.

The purpose of the joint committee is to provide enhanced public oversight and transparency for the Ross Valley yellow bus program operated by Marin Transit. The joint committee provides policy guidance and advice to Marin Transit.

Joint committee meetings are open to the public and the agenda is available online at the program website. Parents are encouraged to attend to provide feedback regarding the program.

### *Ridership*

In the morning, WHMS has two different arrival times for students (0 period and 1<sup>st</sup> period). This allows the District to re-deploy buses after completing the first route. The morning start time for RVC school is offset from the two WHMS start 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. The resulting wait times reduces demand for these two routes. Table 2 summarizes average ridership by school for the AM and PM routes.

**Table 2: Average Peak Ridership 2018-19 School Year**

<b>School</b>	<b>AM Routes</b>	<b>PM Routes</b>
White Hill	322	323
Hidden Valley	28	17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>340</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, the District continued a pay-per-ride program for Hidden Valley students from the previous year. Families could purchase ticket booklets of five or ten passes for \$20 or \$40, respectively. Hidden Valley students purchased a total of 175 single ride passes at five orders of 5-ticket booklets and 15 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 2015. Fall/Winter passes are valid from August through January, and Spring/Summer passes are valid from January through August. During the 2018-19 school year, 4,538 passes were issued and an average of 672 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 2018/19 school year, Route 122 carried an average of 115 passengers daily. Compared to the prior year, total ridership increased by three percent with slightly reduced productivity at approximately 9.7 passengers per hour.

**Distribution of Measure AA Funds to Eligible Yellow Bus Programs in Marin County**

In November 2018, voters approved Measure AA, a 30-year extension of the 1/2-cent transportation sales tax and expenditure plan. The Measure AA Expenditure Plan acknowledges the importance of school transportation in Marin County by requiring Marin Transit to commit five percent of the net sales tax revenue to school transportation. In addition to supporting Supplemental school service and the Youth Transit Pass program, Marin Transit will now directly support eligible yellow school bus programs by distributing Measure AA funds to support program operations.

Your Board approved the “Yellow Bus Funding Allocation” on January 7, 2019 for distributing these funds in FY 2019/20. The formula takes a percentage subsidy of a program’s one-way pass price and multiplies it by the number of one-way passes distributed by each program in FY 2017/18. These amounts are the base annual allocation and will remain set for three years beginning in FY 2019/20. Amounts will be adjusted annually based on Marin County sales tax projections. The District may adjust these amounts if a program fails to meet the annual eligibility requirements and/or if the recipient reduces service levels by more than 20 percent compared to the previous year.

In FY 2019/20, Marin Transit will distribute \$598,441 according to the approved distribution formula. The funds will be distributed to five existing yellow bus programs operating in Marin County. The recipients are: Mill Valley School District, Tiburon Peninsula Traffic Relief JPA (Reed USD + the Cove School), Ross Valley (administered by Marin Transit), San Rafael Elementary School District, and Miller Creek School District. Table 3 lists the FY 2019/20 funding allocation for each recipient.

**Table 3: Measure AA Yellow Bus Funding Recipients and FY19/20 Allocations**

Mill Valley	Reed USD + Cove	Ross Valley	San Rafael ESD	Miller Creek	Total
\$25,279	\$135,877	\$162,956	\$232,085	\$42,244	<b>\$598,441</b>

Recipients of Measure AA yellow bus funding must meet the eligibility requirements as defined in the funding agreement and maintain compliance throughout the term of the agreement. Funding amounts are contingent on maintaining 2017/18 service levels. For Marin Transit to monitor each recipient’s ongoing eligibility and service levels, the funding agreement requires recipients to submit updated program data annually such as:

- Pass distribution
- Pass prices
- Program structure: including number of buses, number of routes, and number of schools served etc.
- Program budget

In addition, recipients must certify annually that their program continues to maintain a 20 percent local funding contribution threshold and provides at least a 50 percent reduction in pass price for income-qualified students. Attachment C includes a summary of the program data for the 2018/19 academic year.

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

Respectfully submitted,



Kelly Zalewski  
Senior Operations Analyst

**Attachment A:** Supplemental School Routes Map – FY 2018/19

**Attachment B:** Analysis of the 2018-19 Youth Pass Program

**Attachment C:** Measure AA Yellow Bus Program Data Summary