DATE: May 4, 2016
TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Steven P. Brown, General Manager
SUBJECT: Receive Presentation on the Ventura County Transportation Measure Investment/Expenditure Plan and Consider Authorizing the General Manager to Prepare Letter of Support for the Plan

SUMMARY

On April 22, 2016 the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) approved the Ventura County Transportation Measure Investment/Expenditure Plan which details how funds generated by a proposed 30-year ½ cent sales tax would be utilized in Ventura County. If enacted, the Expenditure Plan would allocate 5.8% of generated funds to support bus transit in Ventura County. While GCTDs' long-term funding needs far exceed the amount included in the expenditure plan, staff understands that funding is critically needed for all types of transportation needs in Ventura County.

The purpose of this item is to provide the Board of Directors with a presentation on the Plan in general and specifically the Bus Transit Enhancements & Fare Support component of the Expenditure Plan, and to give the Board an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the Plan. The Board is also being asked to consider authorizing the General Manager to prepare a Letter of Support to VCTC for the Proposed Expenditure Plan, and provide comments on the Transit Component that would give GCTD the flexibility to meet the goals of the Plan.

BACKGROUND

Over the past few months, VCTC has conducted an educational outreach campaign including print and radio, a direct mail piece sent to every residence in Ventura County, and a transportation plan website, www.keepvcmoving.org. The purpose of the community education program is to raise awareness of VCTC and the transportation challenges facing Ventura County in light of the limited resources from federal and state sources.

Based on results from opinion polling and input from the community, VCTC approved moving forward to seek approval to include the measure on the upcoming November 2016 General Election Ballot. In order to be placed on the ballot, the measure must first be approved by a majority of Ventura County’s cities, with a majority of the residents, and the Board of Supervisors. If VCTC is successful in getting the measure placed on the ballot, it will require 66.7% approval of voters to be enacted.
The proposed Ventura County Transportation Measure could potentially generate 3.3 billion dollars over 30 years to fund local roads, freeways, regional roads/freight access, transit, commuter rail, bicycle/pedestrian programs, environmental mitigation, and taxpayer oversight. Based on polling data collected by VCTC several key themes such as fixing the 101 Freeway and keeping transportation for seniors and people with disabilities generated a highly favorable response in potential voters.

Last year, VCTC formed an Ad Hoc Committee to meet and discuss how the transportation sales tax measure revenue stream would be invested toward Ventura County transportation projects and programs. The Ad Hoc Committee developed an initial proposal that dedicated 19.6% of funds for non-auto modes of transportation (7.3% for Bus Transit, 7.3% for Commuter Rail and 6% for Bike/Ped). However, after review of the proposal, the Ventura County City Managers Group (VCCM) unanimously supported dedication of at least 50% of the funds for local streets and roads to meet major shortfalls in local funding. Given the “zero-sum” nature of the expenditure plan, the dedication of 50% for local streets and roads required a reduction in other areas. In order to accomplish this goal, VCTC staff recommended reducing funding for non-auto modes of transportation to 14.6% (5.8% for Bus Transit, 5.8% for Commuter Rail and 3% for Bike/Ped).

While GCTDs’ long-term funding needs far exceed the amount included in the expenditure plan, staff understands that funding is critically needed for all types of transportation needs in Ventura County. On April 22nd, VCTC approved the following Expenditure Plan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investment/Expenditure Plan Component</th>
<th>30 Year Total</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Local Streets and Roads</td>
<td>$1,650,000,000</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Freeway Program</td>
<td>$660,000,000</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Regional Roads</td>
<td>$227,700,000</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Bus Transit Enhancements &amp; Fare Support</td>
<td>$191,400,000</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Commuter Rail Enhancements</td>
<td>$191,400,000</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Bicycle &amp; Pedestrian</td>
<td>$99,000,000</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Transportation Mitigations</td>
<td>$198,000,000</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. State Board of Equalization Fees</td>
<td>$49,500,000</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Admin/Taxpayer Oversight</td>
<td>$33,000,000</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$3,300,000,000</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LONG-TERM FUNDING CHALLENGES FOR TRANSIT

While a new source of funding would be a welcome benefit to transit, the cost of significant expansion of service and improved frequency exceeds the proposed annual Transit Enhancements and Fare Support proposed in VCTC’s Recommended Investment/Expenditure Plan. In the future, GCTD will need to aggressively seek other funding sources in order to make a more impactful improvement to transit service in Ventura County.

Although Cap and Trade Funding has been mentioned as a potential new source of transit funding, it is currently only able to fund capital needs or new services, and is not eligible for ongoing operational costs. Transit funding is unique in that once a new service is funded, operational costs continue year after year. Without other funding sources, the recommended transit improvements in GCTD’s adopted Short Range Transit Plan won’t be feasible without identifying other sources of continuous operational funding in the future.

For example, the estimated annual cost for implementing new service to the Naval Base between Port Hueneme and the 101 along Ventura Road (Proposed Route 23) and minor increases in the frequency of service for routes 6, 8, 16, and 22 is $5 million. Other long-term recommendations described in GCTD’s adopted Short Range Transit Plan, such as improving frequency during peak hours for its most popular routes to operate buses every 15-20 minutes and adding Express routes between Oxnard, Ventura and Ojai to provide more direct service would cost an additional $10 million annually to operate.

ENSURING THE TRANSIT COMPONENT OF THE PLAN IS FLEXIBLE

GCTD staff recognizes that in VCTC’s polling several key focus areas such as keeping fares affordable and transit for seniors and people with disabilities generated a highly favorable response in potential voters. However, because funding for existing operations is limited, it is important that the plan be as flexible as possible to support GCTD’s and other local transit operator’s ability to meet these goals with current services. GCTD staff suggests that the following comments be submitted to VCTC for consideration as it refines the plan:

1. Eliminate the specific dollar amount identified for Countywide Affordable Fares, County Bus Transit Improvements and County Paratransit Improvements. Instead, consider allocating the transit component funding by need (ridership, hours, service miles etc.) to each Transit Operator to allow them to meet these goals in their service area.

2. Under Countywide Affordable Fares – Suggest emphasizing keeping “transit affordable” instead of lowering fares. Given that TDA requires a 20% farebox recovery—lowering fares could hurt GCTD’s ability to meet that requirement. As an alternative, GCTD would be able to support fare subsidy programs that reduce costs of transit and utilize technological improvements that make it easier to purchase and use fares.

3. Under Countywide Bus Transit Improvements, it should be noted that a large percentage of fixed-route passengers are seniors and people with disabilities. Transit improvements to fixed-route service would benefit more of these vulnerable populations who want the flexibility and freedom that fixed-route service offers. In addition, GCTD’s Short Range Transit Plan calls for the greatest long term investment to go toward increasing service
frequencies on existing routes. Within the Transit Component, 70% of dedicated transit funds should be dedicated to transit improvements IF specific percentages are defined.

4. Under County Paratransit Improvements: Consider changing the name of this category to “Transit Improvements for Seniors & People with Disabilities” so this is not exclusively tied to dial-a-ride service which is more costly to operate. For example, GCTD’s fixed-routes 10, 11, and 22, serve East Ventura which has the highest concentrations of seniors in Ventura County. Many seniors and people with disabilities in our service area have expressed that they would prefer to use fixed route bus service if it were more accessible. Funding should allow Transit Operators the flexibility to improve fixed-route services that serve these populations such as neighborhood circulators that serve seniors, more accessible vehicles, improvements to bus stop accessibility, travel training, taxi/on-demand ride-sharing vouchers, and technological advancements that make riding the bus more convenient.

5. While GCTD does not currently own any bus stop infrastructure such as sidewalks or amenities, at some point in the future it may. Consider allowing special districts to apply for Pedestrian/Bike funds in partnership with local jurisdictions in order to fund infrastructure improvements or “Safe Routes to Transit” initiatives, and remove barriers for seniors and people with disabilities to be able to access transit.

6. The Ad Hoc Committee recommendation notes that in making adjustments to the Plan, VCTC’s future “Regional Transportation Planning” was reduced annually to $0. The report notes that VCTC will need to use LTF to maintain transportation planning activities. Because LTF is an important major source of local transit funding, the impact of diverting more of these funds for regional planning purposes should be taken into consideration in future funding determinations.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The Ventura County Transportation Measure Expenditure Plan would support GCTD’s efforts to implement programs that keep transit affordable and support continuing transit service that benefit seniors and people with disabilities.

It is recommended that the Board Authorize the General Manager to prepare a Letter of Support to VCTC for the Proposed Expenditure Plan, and provide comments to ensure the Transit Component is flexible to allow GCTD to meet the goals of the plan.

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General Manager’s Concurrence