



Lake Transit Authority

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Public Transit Benefits in Lake County

INTRODUCTION

Lake Transit Authority (LTA) is a joint powers authority formed in 1996 with the expressed purpose of providing public transit throughout the geographic areas of the City of Clearlake, the City of Lakeport, and the County of Lake. Each of the entities committed their share of the Local Transportation Fund (LTF) revenue which is derived from 1/4 cent of the sales tax collected per dollar within the County. This paper is intended to illustrate some of the countywide benefits provided today by LTA. The benefits described below are essentially direct benefits that can be easily enumerated. While there is no attempt to apply economic multipliers, there are certainly many economic, social, and health benefits that result from the public transit system.

FISCAL INPUTS

One of the responsibilities of LTA is to maximize the use of state and federal funds. During the most recently completed fiscal year, the LTF money received by LTA represented approximately 32% of the total agency revenue. The remaining 68% is composed of federal transit grants and state funding sources that are exclusively dedicated to public transit.

The Lake Area Planning Council estimates in its 2020/21 Final budget that Local Transportation Funds revenues will total \$1,561,560. Of this amount, \$875,928 was allocated to LTA for public transit. The remaining \$685,632 is available for LTF administration, Lake Links (Consolidated Transportation Services Agency), bicycle and pedestrian projects, and various transportation planning projects included in the Lake County Overall Work Program.

Together, the LTF and State Transit Assistance (STA) funds (\$597,584 2020/21), comprise 38% of agency funding. Fare and advertising revenues (\$374,616) are another 10%. Together, these funding sources provide the stable local base that allows LTA to provide continuity of service and local matching funds to pursue federal and state grant opportunities.

COUNTY AND COMMUNITY BENEFIT FROM LOW COST TRANSPORTATION

During FY 2018/19 LTA recorded 319,952 passenger boardings. Passengers use LTA for a wide variety of trip purposes, including work/school commutes (44%), shopping (26%), medical trips (17%), social service appointments (7%), and recreation/other purposes (6%).

Of the 319,952 passenger trips, 107,025 were trips in which the bus fare was paid by a County agency, or another public or non-profit agency, or a medical provider. On average, these fares paid about 18% of the cost of the service. LTA provided for the remaining cost through public transit subsidies totaling

\$769,510. In each of these cases, the community benefitted when clients were able to get to needed services, jobs, and job training.

COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES

The Lake County Department of Social Services (LCDSS) has had a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with LTA for many years. The relationship began when LCDSS moved to its Lower Lake location. The new location created problems for employees commuting to work, and for the public needing to access the LCDSS office to obtain services. With route guarantee funding provided by LCDSS, LTA implemented a new bus route to serve the Lower Lake facility. Perhaps from this experience, it became apparent to LCDSS that public transit is an important service to encourage participation by CalWorks participants in work and education opportunities. The route guarantee was discontinued in favor of purchasing monthly passes for CalWorks participants. The monthly passes were a win-win-win. CalWorks participants were given the mobility they needed for school, work, shopping, and other travel needs. The monthly pass program is discounted through transit subsidies to reduce the cost of this program to LCDSS. LTA gained riders, many of whom would continue to use public transit when they were no longer CalWorks participants.

In FY 2018/19, LCDSS purchased 1,848 monthly passes from LTA at a cost of \$73,920. CalWorks participants used the passes to make an estimated 22,199 trips on Lake Transit. The value of these trips based on LTA's average cost per trip is estimated at \$195,129. This represents a \$159,611 public transit subsidy provided by LTA to the LCDSS CalWorks program. Most important, it is a program that provides mobility and opportunity.

OTHER COUNTY PROGRAMS

LTA provides similar subsidized transportation services to a wide variety of County programs. In each case, the program requiring service purchases monthly passes, multi-ride punch passes, or single fare tickets for their clients. Typically, these fare instruments are about 80% subsidized. Departments or programs that regularly use LTA services include:

- Behavioral Health
- Public Health
- Community Care
- Lake Family Resource
- Office of Education
- Office of Ed - Workability Program
- Sheriff's Department - Jail
- Victim Witness
- Probation

Collectively, these County programs purchased fares for clients to make 11,149 trips during the 2018/19 fiscal year on Lake Transit services. The County's subsidized cost for these trips totaled \$17,838. The estimated value of the trips was \$98,000 resulting in a public transit subsidy to the County of \$80,162.

OTHER SERVICES OR PROGRAMS FOR COUNTY RESIDENTS

A variety of agencies provide social services in Lake County. Similar to County agencies, these non-profit, public, and quasi-public agencies also purchase subsidized public transportation from LTA. These agencies include:

Kelseyville United Methodist Church
Konocti Unified School District
Mendocino College - Lake Center
Mendocino Community High School
Mendocino County - Ukiah Parole Division
Pinoleville Pomo Nation
Redwood Coast Regional Center
Redwood Community Services
Rocky Point Care Center
Salvation Army
Scotts Valley Pomo Indians
Sonoma State University
Vet Connect
Woodland College

These agencies provide vital services to County residents who are veterans, have disabilities, need health care, and more. During the 2018/19 fiscal year, these agencies purchased fares for clients to make 43,826 trips on Lake Transit. They paid LTA a total of \$70,121 for service valued at \$385,230. The public transit subsidy to help make these services possible was \$315,109.

COLLEGE FREE FARES PROGRAM

During the summer of 2018 LTA entered into an agreement with the local colleges that would allow for a pilot project. This project would further supplement trips to the colleges. This would be completed by allowing all students in Lake County to travel to the colleges in the Woodland College and Mendocino college system to ride the bus unlimited for free. During FY 18/19, this program provided 11,457 trips for our community members accessing higher education. This was a further supplement of \$80,772. In 2019, LTA expanded the scope of this project to include the Summer Cruisin' Program which provides free fares for riders between the ages of 7 and 17 between June 15 and August 30. During the summer of 2019, LTA provided 5,702 trips under this program. The public transit subsidy to help make these trips possible was \$39,975.

MOUNT KONOCTI EXCURSIONS FOR SENIORS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

LTA has supported the County in their efforts to provide accessible services to the park on top of Mt Konocti. The existing fare structure supports the bus operation. It does not however provide reimbursement for the administrative support and reservation system for the program. This is operated by LTA and covered within our internal structure and staffing.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Medical service providers ranging from Adventist Health and Sutter, to tribal and community health clinics, and convalescent care facilities also rely on LTA for affordable transportation for their clients. These providers purchased 12,133 trips. They paid \$19,413 for service valued at \$106,649 resulting in a public transit subsidy of \$87,236.

DISASTER RESPONSE

LTA plays a key role in the Lake County Emergency Response Plan. During the past several years, LTA has responded to OES evacuation requests for the Rocky Fire, the Valley Fire, the Clayton Fire, the Lakeview Senior Apartments Fire, 2016 floods, the Sulphur Fire, and the Mendocino Complex Fire. In addition to evacuations, LTA is committed to assisting with recovery efforts with special shuttles, fare free and bus service linking evacuees to needed services. .

Since 2015 Lake County has seen a substantial increase in wildfire and emergency events. LTA support the community by providing a dedicated team of professionals that are available 24/7 365 to answer the call for assistance. Our staff has often been placed in harm's way to support evacuation efforts and the needs of the community. This is offered based on the community needs and has been supported financially by existing funding thru efficient management of our existing resources during most situations.

Although OES resources may have been available to reimburse LTA, the transit agency instead was able to successfully appeal to Caltrans and FTA for additional funds to assist with recovery during the majority of these events. This made a difference as LTA was able to go above and beyond to enhance its recovery response in the community.

LAKEPORT WARMING CENTER

For the past four years, LTA has assisted with transporting homeless individuals to the Lakeport Warming Center where they can obtain shelter from the winter cold. This program has provided nearly 4,000 rides at a cumulative cost of about \$35,000.

LAKE LINKS - COMMUNITY COORDINATION

LTA has worked with the Lake County/City Area Planning Council (APC) for several years to establish a spin-off non-profit agency that can facilitate social service and non-emergency medical transportation development in Lake County. This effort is in response to community input and APC planning projects that identified needs. Lake Links is now incorporated as a non-profit. Currently, it is funded through LTF Article 4.5 funds, and through federal mobility management and specialized transportation grants obtained by LTA. These grants fund a Mobility Management coordinator and part-time assistance for three years, and provide operating funds for a volunteer driver program, mileage reimbursement program, and out-of-county non-emergency medical transportation services.

In addition to the grants to support Lake Links, LTA prepared a coordinated federal grant application which resulted in funds for seven paratransit vehicles which are utilized by People Services and Adventist Health.

CONCLUSION

Lake Transit Authority has aggressively pursued state and federal funding to greatly expand public transit services and benefits for the community. LTA's member jurisdictions (the County and cities), together with various community agencies, expend about \$1.17 million annually of LTF funds and for subsidized transit fares. In return, LTA operates a responsive, community oriented county-wide transit system with an annual budget of approximately \$3.6 million. The mobility afforded by LTA provides crucial connections for individuals to reach needed services, as well as affordable transportation to jobs, education, and other activities that bolster the quality of life in Lake County.