

**NOTICE OF REGULAR MEETING**  
**OF THE**  
**YOSEMITE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**  
**(YARTS) AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Monday, August 4, 2008 – 10:00 a.m.**

**Town/Country Conference Room**  
**437 Old Mammoth Road, Suite P**  
**Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546**  
**(209) 723-3153**

- 1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- 2. INTRODUCTIONS**
- 3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**PERSONS WISHING TO COMMENT ON ANY ITEM NOT ON THE  
AGENDA MAY DO SO AT THIS TIME. PLEASE LIMIT YOUR  
COMMENTS TO A MAXIMUM OF FIVE MINUTES PER PERSON.  
STATING YOUR NAME FOR THE RECORD IS OPTIONAL, BUT  
USEFUL IN ACTING ON COMMENTS AND REQUESTS. FOR ITEMS  
NOT ON THE AGENDA, NO ACTION WILL BE TAKEN AT THIS TIME.**

**THE PUBLIC IS INVITED TO SPEAK ON ANY ITEM ON THE AGENDA.**

**PERSONS WISHING TO COMMENT ON ITEMS LISTED ON THE  
AGENDA MAY DO SO WHEN THE COMMITTEE CONSIDERS THAT  
ITEM. THE CHAIRPERSON WILL CALL FOR COMMENTS  
FOLLOWING STAFF INTRODUCTION OF THE ITEM AND  
QUESTIONS BY COMMITTEE MEMBERS HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED.**

**COPIES OF STAFF REPORTS OR OTHER WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION RELATING TO ITEMS OF BUSINESS REFERRED TO ON THE AGENDA ARE ON FILE IN THE OFFICE OF MERCED COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS. PERSONS WITH QUESTIONS CONCERNING AGENDA ITEMS MAY CALL MCAG TO INQUIRE ON THE NATURE OF THE ITEM DESCRIBED ON THE AGENDA.**

**ITEM**

**STAFF**

- \* **4. Minutes of the April 7, 2008 YARTS Authority Advisory Committee Meeting**
- 5. Information/Discussion Only**
- # a. VIA Monthly Service Reports for March 2008 – June 2008
- # b. Ridership History by Fiscal Year – Hwy 140 and Hwy 395/120 East
- # c. YARTS Revenue History by Fiscal Year
- 6. Grant Funding Update** Dick Whittington  
For information and discussion only.
- \* **7. Cooperative Agreement Between YARTS and the National Park Service (NPS)** Dick Whittington  
  
Recommend the YARTS JPA approve the Cooperative Agreement between YARTS and the National Park Service in Yosemite and authorize the YARTS Executive Director to sign the agreement.
- # **8. Revision of Staff Report - “A More Regional Yarts”** Dick Whittington  
  
For information only.
- \* # **9. VIA Hourly Service Rate Increase Request** Dick Whittington  
  
Recommend the YARTS JPA approve a new service hour constructive rate based on the proposal by VIA Adventures.

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|---|--|------------------|
| # | <b>10. Hwy 140 / Use of Larger Buses</b>       | Dick Whittington |
|   | For information and discussion.                |                  |
| # | <b>11. YARTS Marketing</b>                     | Dick Whittington |
|   | For information and discussion.                |                  |
|   | <b>12. Manager's Report</b>                    | Dick Whittington |
|   | For information and discussion.                |                  |
|   | <b>13. Oral Report – National Park Service</b> | Tom Pimentel     |

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*\* Action*

*# Attachment*

*+ Enclosure*

*The next YARTS AAC meeting, will be held on Monday, October 27, 2008 at  
the Mariposa County Government Center, Mariposa, CA*

**YOSEMITE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM  
(YARTS) AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

**APRIL 7, 2008**

The regular meeting of the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) Authority Advisory Committee held Monday, April 7, 2008, at the Merced County Association of Governments Conference Room, 369 W. 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Merced, CA was called to order by Chair Frank Quintero at 10:07 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Barbara Carrier, Mariposa County Public Works  
Sandy Hogan, U.S. Forest Service, Retired (via teleconference)  
Janet Kasper, Merced County Transit, (for Larry Shankland)  
Candy O'Donel-Brown, Private Citizen, Midpines  
Gwen Plummer, Mono County Planning Department (for Scott Burns, via teleconference)  
Frank Quintero, City of Merced  
Danna Stroud, Mammoth Lakes Tour and Recreation (via teleconference)  
Richard Wiebe, The Sierra Club

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Tom Dumas, Caltrans  
Jennifer Krumm, Greater Merced Chamber of Commerce  
Tom Pimentel, National Park Service

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Denise Demery, VIA Adventures  
Ken Gosting, Transportation Involves Everyone  
John Helm, Eastern Sierra Transit Authority (via teleconference)  
Robin Lamas, YARTS staff  
Marty Nielson, National Park Service  
Dick Whittington, YARTS Staff

**1. Introductions**

So noted.

**2. Public Comment**

None.

**3. Minutes of the January 14, 2008 YARTS Authority Advisory Committee Meeting**

Richard Wiebe moved to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2008 YARTS Authority Advisory Committee.

Seconded by Sandy Hogan.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**4. Information/Discussion Only**

- a. VIA Monthly Service Reports for December 2007 – February 2008
- b. Ridership History by Fiscal Year – Hwy 140 and Hwy 395/120 East
- c. YARTS Revenue History by Fiscal Year
- d. Hwy 140 – Summer 2008 Schedule

So noted.

**5. Recorded Meeting Tapes and Public Access to Same**

Dick Whittington gave a review of the staff report in the agenda.

Sandy Hogan moved to recommend the YARTS JPA formalize the tapes as for minutes only and once the minutes are approved, the tapes are held for 30 days, then destroyed.

Seconded by Gwen Plummer.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**6. Grant Funding Update**

So noted.

**7. YARTS Proposed Budget – 2008 / 2009**

Dick Whittington gave a review of the proposed budget for YARTS for FY 2008 / 2009. He stated that the budget was larger than last year due to a new contract with VIA Adventures, which included increased services, added runs in summer, CPI and fuel adjustments. The proposed budget does not have a capitol budget at this time. There are questions on when we might be able to start a park and ride project in Mariposa.

Richard Wiebe moved to recommend the YARTS JPA approve the FY 2008 / 2009 Operating Budget and direct staff to proceed with its implementation.

Seconded by Candy O'Donel-Brown.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**8. Agreement for Services**

Sandy Hogan moved to recommend the YARTS JPA authorize the Chair to sign an extension of the Services Agreement for a period of one year, from July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009.

Seconded by Gwen Plummer.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**9. YARTS Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Plan for FY 2008/09**

Gwen Plummer moved to recommend the YARTS JPA adopt Resolution 2008/04-07-01 approving the FY 2008/09 YARTS Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Plan.

Seconded by Barbara Carrier.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**10. VIA Adventures Rate Adjustment Request**

Dick Whittington gave a review of VIA Adventures request for a rate adjustment in the vehicle/hour rate effective May 1, 2008, based on fuel cost increases. The proposed budget that was recommended to be approved by the JPA Board took the fuel increase and CPI into consideration.

Richard Wiebe moved to recommend the YARTS JPA approve a rate increase effective May 1, 2008, based on documented fuel cost increases which takes the new Contracted Rate of \$112.60 and a new Constructive Rate of \$129.52 per service hour, as defined by the contract between YARTS and VIA Adventures.

Seconded by Candy O'Donel-Brown.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**11. A More Regional Yarts**

Dick Whittington gave a review of the staff report. Under the "Perspective" section of the report, the staff report stated responses came back from all areas and most were positive or at least encouraging. Ken Gosting, Transportation Involves Everyone, stated that the responses from Madera County were in reluctance towards YARTS and that the staff report wording implied otherwise. Dick Whittington explained that Commissioner Bauer had received written and phone responses that were of the positive nature and that was what was being referred to.

So noted.

**12. Park and Ride Projects Update**

So noted.

**13. Election of Officers for FY 2008-2009**

Scott Burns moved to nominate Frank Quintero as Chair for FY 2008-2009.

Seconded by Sandy Hogan.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Frank Quintero moved to nominate Scott Burns as Vice-Chair for FY 2008-2009.

Seconded by Sandy Hogan.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**14. FY 2008-2009 Meeting Dates**

Candy O'Donel-Brown moved to recommend the YARTS JPA establish the date of the regularly scheduled meetings for the YARTS AAC and JPA as stated in the staff report for fiscal year 2008-2009.

Seconded by Barbara Carrier.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**15. Managers' Report**

So noted.

**16. Oral Report – National Park Service**

Marty Nielson gave a brief report from the National Park Service.

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS OF THE YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE, THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 12:03 A.M.**

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE: JULY 25, 2008**

**TO: YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER**

**RE: RIDERSHIP HISTORY BY FISCAL YEAR – HWY 140 AND HWY 395/120 EAST**

Attached for your review is the ridership history through June 2008.

Ridership for June was up 44.09% compared to the previous June. Visitor riders increased 38.97% for the month; employee ridership was up 52.12% and the ever-volatile June figures for the Hwy 120 service were up 82.72% (296 vs. 162). Cumulative increase for the year was 20.32%.

Because of the strong results in June, the 2007-2008 fiscal year ended up being the best year in the history of the service, topping the 2005-2006 fiscal year, which had set the previous record. The increase over that year was not significant, 405 riders, but we were able to accomplish the increase using the smaller buses and despite the incessant delays on the road.

There can be little doubt that the price of gasoline helped create the increased ridership, but being able to add service beginning in mid-May of 2008 and creative use of buses during the summer months in 2007 made a difference as well.

Staff believes that the 2008-2009 fiscal year should be significantly better than the one just past. The removal of the one-way controlled traffic at “the narrows” in the park should help YARTS provide more timely service to employees traveling to the park. The return to the use of the larger buses on the more heavily used runs should also play in attracting more employee ridership.

For the visiting public, the personal cost of gasoline should make transit much more attractive, particularly over the long distances required to visit Yosemite National Park. Also, so long as the dollar stays weak, we should see a greater number of foreign travelers, many of who come to the area transit dependent.

This was a good year, even if challenging. Next year could be a lot better!

**REQUESTED ACTION**

For information only.

Attachment: Hwy 140 and Hwy 120 Ridership by Fiscal Year

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE: JULY 25, 2008**

**TO: YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER**

**RE: YARTS REVENUE HISTORY BY FISCAL YEAR**

Attached for your review and comment is the revenue history for YARTS, last updated on July 15, 2008. At the time of the update, fares collected by vendors, other than VIA, were not available.

Because of the contract with Amtrak (started June 2007), the form was altered to make comparisons with and without Amtrak income included. The "with Amtrak", of course, causes the comparison to be unrealistically high. Next fiscal year the problem will reconcile itself. Staff believes that the Revenue History format is still hard to read and will have it changed to an easier format before your next meeting.

Revenue from ticket vendors is down by 52.64%. This is principally due to the loss of the California Welcome Center, Merced as one of those vendors. Revenue reported by VIA increased by 49.79%. Some of this increase is due to the loss of the California Welcome Center, Merced ticket sales moving to the driver sold tickets, but the largest share is simply due to increased ridership. In real dollars, vendor income was down by \$28,000, whereas, revenue reported collected by VIA was up by \$67,903.

In the budget approved in April of 2007, DOT revenue was projected at \$97,000. That number was revised to \$100,000 with the budget revision. Revenue from DOT was up by 26.74%, to \$124,714.

At your last meeting, staff projected that the ridership revenue could reach \$350,000. That has happened. Total ridership revenue for the fiscal year was \$354,185, up 22.99% over last year, all due to increased ridership.

Revenue from Amtrak is always going to fluctuate. The group runs that needed to go through Modesto, the extra runs when the train was late getting to Merced, and other anomalies make the contract numbers and the actual numbers different. The contracted amount was \$273,750. Actual total revenue from the Amtrak contract was \$324,550.

**REQUESTED ACTION**

For information only.

Attachment: YARTS Revenue by Fiscal Year

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE: JULY 25, 2008**

**TO: YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER**

**RE: GRANT FUNDING UPDATE**

**5311(F) – Intercity Bus Program Grant (Operating)**

The 5311(f) Intercity Bus Program has been very important to the funding picture for YARTS for the past three years. For each of the past two years, because of the capacity problems created by the rockslide on Hwy 140, the program has approved grants to YARTS of \$400,000, twice the normal maximum amount.

5311(f) funding is aimed at providing connectivity between rural areas and the “national intercity bus system”. Applicants are required to prove meaningful connection with the national bus service (Greyhound in our case). Connections to rail service are considered as well, but are secondary to the bus connections. It is not for commute. Specifically, the National objectives of the program are:

- 1. To support the connection between non-urbanized and the larger regional or national system of intercity bus service.**
2. To support services to meet the intercity travel needs of residents in non-urbanized areas.
3. To support the infrastructure of the intercity bus network through planning and marketing assistance and capital investment in facilities.

The program defines intercity bus service as:

- Regularly scheduled bus service to more distant points
- Available to the general public
- Making limited stops
- Operating on fixed routes
- Connecting two or more urban areas not in close proximity
- Capacity for transporting baggage
- Provide meaningful connections and reasonable layover times
- Excludes air, water, rail transportation, charter tour and commuter service

For the 2008-2009 fiscal year, the maximum amounts available under the grant program have increased to \$300,000 from the previous \$200,000 ceiling. Operating projects (which is what we

have traditionally filed for) receive up to 55.33% in federal funding (meaning the match is 44.67%). Capital projects are funded up to 88.53% in federal funding (11.47% match).

The rules for the use of this funding, as applied by Caltrans, are changing somewhat and becoming more specific and rigid in their application.

It is likely that the grant application we make this fall will see individual routes excluded from funding if they appear to be more oriented to commuting than to intercity service. The number of stops on the routes may affect the level of funding as well. In the past there have been discussions about these issues, however, now Caltrans has established specific criteria to evaluate all of the requirements and we will not be able to depend on the same level of support from them under this program as in the past.

In the 2008-2009 budget the Board approved in April, the 5311(f) funding anticipated \$400,000 from the program. That was before we knew that we would be able to return to the use of the larger buses. Adjustments to the budget will be necessary when we know more about if the application is approved and for how much.

5311(f) funding is year specific, meaning that it must be used in the fiscal year it is awarded. Since our fiscal year is July through June and the application process will not be completed until roughly December, Caltrans says that it will be possible to bill back to the start of the fiscal year, if the YARTS application is approved.

### **5311(f) (Capital)**

Staff will also be submitting a grant application in August for the purchase of electronic fare boxes. The grant will require an 11.47% match, which VIA Adventures has agreed to provide, if the grant is approved. The total amount of the grant application (cost of the equipment) is still being researched.

### **5304 – Transportation Planning Grant**

In February, staff filed an application for a “Transit Technical Planning Assistance Grant in the amount of \$92,500, with a total project cost of \$100,000 (\$7,500 match). The grant is intended to fund a new YARTS Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP). The current SRTP covers the period of 2004 – 2009. Estimated time of the grant award announcement was given as summer of 2008, but was pending the approval of the state budget.

Staff has been told that the selections of the successful grant applications has been made, but Caltrans staff will not release any information until after the approval of the state budget.

### **Appropriation Request**

In February, staff filed an Appropriations Request with the office of Congressman Radanovich in the amount of \$400,000. There are absolutely no guarantees of funding from these requests, either in approval or amounts. They are not competitive in the way the above-mentioned grant

applications are, but are every bit as uncertain. Notice of approval, or not, would likely come in the late fall of 2008.

According to the Congressman's office, the possibility of this funding being approved is now very uncertain. With a new transportation bill to be worked on for next year, (to replace the current SAFETEALU funding bill), they believe it is possible that last year's funding may simply be replicated, which would not allow for any earmarks.

### **5309 (Earmarks)**

YARTS currently has two 5309 grants available for use. This type of funding is typically used for capital costs, but can be used for the cost of contracting for buses, which is how YARTS has used it and how it is appropriated for YARTS. If used for the cost of contracting, the required match is 60%. If used for capital, the match is 20%.

The two available earmark grants are:

\$388,711 with a balance of \$341,920 – filed July 2005

\$247,500 with a balance of \$247,500 – currently being processed by FTA

Because of the onerous match required for this funding, YARTS has used it last, favoring other forms of funding that have a lower match, if they are available.

### **5309c (Earmark)**

In 2005, YARTS received an earmark in the SAFETEALU transportation-funding bill of \$2.09 million for the purchase of new buses. The funding was to come to YARTS in four annual increments of between \$450,000 and \$550,000 per year. Because we did not want to purchase buses from four different model years, the funding was held to accumulate.

When the first years funding was appropriated, the announcement in the Federal Register assigned the funding to Mariposa, CA and Yosemite National Park. It also called out the purchase of CNG-Hydrogen buses (CNG = compressed natural gas). Both designations were incorrect and staff contacted the offices of Congressman Radanovich to get the wording corrected. The funding should have designated YARTS as the recipient and the buses should have been diesel. There are currently no CNG or Hydrogen fueled over-the-road-coaches in production in the U.S.

The Congressman's office contacted the Chair of the House Transportation Committee and a letter was issued by them seeking to correct the error.

When the Federal Register listed it incorrectly for the third year's appropriation, staff made contact with the Congressman's office yet again.

When news came that new detour bridges were to be built, which would allow YARTS to return to the use of larger buses, staff contacted FTA regarding getting the matter resolved so that YARTS could proceed with the purchase of new, full sized buses.

Basically what FTA told staff was that what appeared in the Federal Register was law and they had no option but to enforce it. We went back to the Congressman's office. The Congressman's office talked with our contact at FTA and later with others in the management of that Department.

The end result was a call from FTA to YARTS staff saying that the funding could proceed. The first appropriation is going to expire unless filed within the allotted time of three years. We will be filing the appropriate applications in the very near future for the first three appropriations.

The fourth increment of the funding will not be available to YARTS until appropriated in the 2009-2010 federal budget.

#### **REQUESTED ACTION**

For information and discussion only.

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE: JULY 25, 2008**

**TO: YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER**

**RE: COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT BETWEEN YARTS AND THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (NPS)**

Each year, for the past four years, YARTS has entered into a Cooperative Agreement with the National Park Service (NPS) in Yosemite. Each year there have been a few, mostly housekeeping, changes, that have been proposed by NPS.

This year, NPS did not get a copy of the proposed agreement to staff before the deadline for the preparation of the YARTS August agenda. We are assured that there is no problem with making the agreement, only that there are administrative functions taking place that have slowed the process.

The Cooperative Agreement needs to be fully executed prior to the beginning of the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY), which starts on October 1, 2008. The next regularly scheduled YARTS Board meeting is calendared for October 27, 2008, beyond the deadline for the agreement to be signed.

There is a possibility that copies of the agreement could be available in time for the August 4, 2008 meeting. If it can be available by then, the Board can discuss, and hopefully, approve it during the meeting.

If it is not available by the August 4, 2008, meeting staff would like the Board to approve allowing the YARTS Executive Director, Jesse Brown, to sign the agreement when it is available. This, of course, presumes no drastic changes from previous agreements. If there are significant changes proposed, the YARTS Board could meet at a special meeting to resolve issues raised by those changes.

**REQUESTED ACTION**

Recommend the YARTS JPA approve the Cooperative Agreement between YARTS and the National Park Service and authorize YARTS Executive Director authorization to sign the Agreement.

**ITEM 8**

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** JULY 25, 2008

**TO:** YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**FROM:** DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER

**RE:** REVISION OF STAFF REPORT – “A MORE REGIONAL YARTS”

At your meeting in April, the completeness of a staff report on “A more regional YARTS” was called into question, and, at the suggestion of Supervisor Aborn, the Board directed staff to rewrite the report to more fully express the negative comments that were made during a meeting held at the Fresno Council of Governments office.

Attached is the original staff report showing the revised comments in italics.

**REQUESTED ACTION**

For information only.

Attachment: Revised staff report dated March 31, 2008 entitled “A More Regional YARTS”

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** MARCH 31, 2008

**TO:** YARTS JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY

**FROM:** DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER

**RE:** A MORE REGIONAL YARTS

Chairperson Bauer asked that an item be put on the agenda that would prompt a discussion regarding the current status of YARTS becoming a more regional provider of public transit in the Yosemite region.

### Perspective

In October of 2006, with the approval of the YARTS Board, Chairperson Bauer sent letters to elected officials and others in all of the counties that make up the Yosemite region. The letters went to officials in Madera, Fresno, Merced, Mariposa, Mono, Tuolumne, and Stanislaus Counties and invited a conversation about the future of YARTS and whether it should provide a more regional transit presence in the region.

Responses came back from all areas and most were positive or at least encouraging. The Fresno/Madera area, along the Hwy 41 corridor, had the strongest response. Three meetings were subsequently held in Fresno.

One at the Fresno Council of Governments office was open to all interested parties and included people from both Madera and Fresno counties. 27 people were in attendance. Ken Gosting (TIE), Lou Alceto (Oakhurst resident), and three tour bus operators from Madera County spoke against the idea of YARTS operating on Hwy 41 between Fresno and Yosemite Park. Members of the staff of the Fresno CVB, the Fresno Office of Tourism, and the National Parks Conservation Association, expressed positive feelings about the possibility of the service. Russ Widmar, Fresno Air Port Manager, seemed to favor the idea, but said he could not commit parking or any financial resources to YARTS.

Representing YARTS was Mariposa County Supervisor Lee Stetson, Mono County Supervisor Vikki Bauer, and YARTS Transit Manager Dick Whittington. Mariposa County Supervisor Dianne Fritz, an alternate to the YARTS Board, was also present. Because of potential for Brown Act violations, which were pointed out by Mr. Gosting, Supervisors Fritz and Stetson agreed not to participate in the discussions.

The Fresno Conference and Visitors Bureau sponsored a “by invitation” meeting and Supervisor Bauer and I also met with members of the Fresno Mayor’s staff. Supervisor Bauer also made an appearance in front of the Madera County Supervisors during this time frame.

The approach that has been taken from the outset is not one of selling YARTS to the people who met with us, but rather to let them know that YARTS is interested in talking to anyone who would like to see YARTS transit service in their area. We also made an effort to educate about the way the service operates and the history of YARTS service to that time. All of this was taking place during the timeframe just following the Ferguson rockslide on Hwy 140 and the challenges that it had brought to YARTS operations.

### More Recently

#### **National Parks Conservation Association**

Staff has learned that the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), Fresno Office, has, as part of its long-range strategic plan, the intent to actively pursue options to provide public transit to Yosemite National Park and Kings Canyon National Park from Fresno. YARTS is specifically mentioned in that plan.

#### Fresno Conference and Visitors Bureau

The Fresno Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) recently developed a strategic plan to guide them for the next three years. Among the many goals they set was to “Work to establish YARTS service from Fresno into Yosemite National Park and developing public transportation from Fresno to Kings Canyon National Park.”

Laura Whitehouse, the new President/CEO of the Fresno CVB, has a long history of supporting YARTS as an option to provide transit service out of Fresno. Copies of the Strategic Plan will be available to you at the meeting.

#### Supervisor Tom Wheeler, Madera County

At the meeting that Supervisor Bauer attended in Madera, that Board of Supervisors assigned newly elected District 5 Supervisor, Tom Wheeler, who resides in the Oakhurst area, the task of looking into transit on Hwy 41 and the possibility of YARTS providing that service. Since that time, staff has fielded questions from the Supervisor and provided information to him that seemed timely to staff.

#### Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Indians

Staff recently had an email from Margaret Arechiga, who works for the Chukchansi Tribal government in the Coarsegold area, asking about the possibility of transit service on Hwy 41 that would/could stop at the tribe’s Chukchansi Gold Casino. In a subsequent phone conversation,

staff informed Ms. Arechiga of the current status of the possibility for service on Hwy 41. She indicated she would carry our discussion to the tribal leaders.

### California Intercity Bus Study

Over the past year, Caltrans has been conducting an Intercity Bus (rural transit) Study and preparing a document to reflect their findings. The intent of the study was to look for underserved areas and to seek opportunities for connectivity between existing services. Intercity bus service is that which connects rural areas to metro areas where Greyhound, Amtrak and others provide transit services to the nation.

In January 2008, the draft of that study was made available for review and comment. Hwy 41 from Fresno to Yosemite was mentioned in the discussion of underserved areas or areas that would satisfy the definition of intercity service but currently do not have service.

According to a Caltrans spokesperson, the final version of the study is anticipated sometime in March, but no decision has been made about when it will be released, at this time.

### Tuolumne County

Staff was recently contacted by the manager of a 200-space RV Park in Groveland regarding the possibility of YARTS providing service in that area. We spent considerable conversation time on how public transit works and is paid for and on the history of the YARTS service. Staff suggested that she contact her elected Supervisors in Tuolumne County to further her quest.

### **REQUESTED ACTION**

For information and discussion and to provide staff with direction for future efforts.

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE: JULY 25, 2008**

**TO: YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER**

**RE: VIA HOURLY SERVICE RATE INCREASE REQUEST**

Attached is a copy of a letter and supporting documentation from VIA Adventures requesting an adjustment in the vehicle/hour rate effective June 1, 2008. The vehicle/hour rate is the amount that YARTS is billed by VIA for each hour the buses actually operate in fulfilling the YARTS schedule.

Under the provisions of the contract, Section 1;

*The vehicle/hour prices shall be adjusted annually, after year one, based on the California Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the prior year, along with other factors, which may in YARTS sole discretion, be considered in determining the increase, if any. In addition to the annual review, YARTS or the Contractor shall have the right to open negotiations in the event that: a.) The total cost of fuel increases or decreases by 15% or beyond the CPI adjustment from the cost as of March 1, 2007. b.) The annual cost of insurance increases or decreases by more than 20% beyond the CPI adjustment from the budget amount.*

As you can see in the above contract language service hour rate increases are not a mandatory part of the contract between VIA Adventures and YARTS. Rather, the contract is written in a way to give the Board freedom in acting and to give the contractor a fair hearing regarding raising costs not anticipated in original contract proposals.

When the five-year contract was written, there was no anticipation of the use of larger buses during the term of the contract. As written and approved, the contract specifies only a rate for the smaller buses. That rate, on Exhibit A-3, which is actually a sliding scale, was \$124.77.

At the April 2008 meeting, the Board approved an increase based on fuel costs that took effect on May 1, 2008. The approved service hour rate was adjusted to \$129.52. It was also decided that the CPI increase would be brought forward at the August meeting to allow a more appropriate comparison of the CPI numbers.

This request is based on two criteria, the California Consumer Price Index and on the raising costs of fuel.

When VIA made their request in April, fuel had increased from \$2.381 per gallon to \$3.57 per gallon, nearly a 50% increase. The cost of fuel has continued to raise to \$4.099, a 14.8% increase over what it was in March of 2008 and a 72.2% increase over March of 2007, the base date for calculations based on Section 1 of the contract.

Two rates are now being brought forward, one for the smaller buses and one for the larger buses. The proposed rates reflect an increase of \$2.13 per service hour for the smaller buses and establish a new hourly rate for the larger buses reflecting an increase above current rates of \$10.14.

The two charts attached to the VIA letter as supporting documents provide a graphic look at the rate increase proposal. Vehicle costs are static. Fuel and other costs are shown separately and the effect of the proposed increases is calculated for each.

VIA also provided information on the CPI increases calculated from April 2007 through April 2008, the closest to the contract year of June through May and also available. (June 2008 figures will not be published for at least two more months.) The CPI increase is shown as 3.04%.

Staff believes that fuel may be included in the CA CPI calculations, but timing of the letter from VIA did not allow further investigation prior to the deadline for the preparation of the agenda. We will bring information regarding this at the time of the meeting to help the Board in making their decision.

The way that the increase is being brought forward, in pieces, may seem clumsy or confusing, however, it is part of a more equitable system that staff worked with VIA to produce. As example, the cost of the buses does not change during the term of the lease, so should not be considered as a part of the CPI calculation. The cost of fuel is specifically called out as a trigger for negotiation in the contract as is the CPI. All are being dealt with separately in the VIA proposal.

VIA proposes a new total constructive rate of \$134.64 per service hour for the smaller buses and \$142.46 for the larger buses.

Curtis Riggs of VIA Adventures, has indicated he will be attending the August Board meeting and be available to answer questions should there be any.

## **REQUESTED ACTION**

Recommend the YARTS JPA approve a new service hour constructive rate based on the proposal by VIA Adventures.

Attachment: Contract Exhibit A-3  
Letter of July 18, 2008 from VIA Adventures, Inc. including supporting documents

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** JULY 25, 2008  
**TO:** YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
**FROM:** DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER  
**RE:** HWY 140 / USE OF LARGER BUSES

On Friday, June 27, 2008 Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger cut the ribbon (see attached photos) on the new detour bridges on Hwy 140, referred to as the *Essential Access Interim Bridge Project* by Caltrans, which will now allow 45-foot vehicles to return to the use of the highway.

A parade of large vehicles followed the speeches and ribbon cutting ceremony, and the 45-foot Prevost bus we currently use on the Hwy 120 service led the procession across the bridges.

We began the use of the larger buses that evening on Run 6 and have changed to the larger buses on runs that have demonstrated a need for greater capacity. Using the larger buses on the high-demand runs only and using the smaller buses where demand is not so great will save on fuel costs and hourly service rates.

Currently runs 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 going into the park are using the larger buses. Runs 8, 9A, 10, 11, and 14 coming out of the park use the larger buses. As the demand grows and we need the capacity, we will add larger buses to the other runs. July and August are the largest demand months of the year. It is possible that all runs will be in large buses as the demand peaks.

As demand wanes later in the year, we will be able to shift back to the smaller buses to reduce fuel and operating costs where possible.

**REQUESTED ACTION**

For information and discussion.

Attachment: Ribbon Cutting Photo  
YARTS bus crossing bridges photo  
YARTS Hwy 140 Schedule

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE: JULY 25, 2008**

**TO: YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER**

**RE: YARTS MARKETING**

Following are marketing activities during the fourth quarter:

Advertising

Ads were placed in VIA Magazine, Westways Magazine, and California Tour and Travel. VIA and Westways provide reader requests for additional information, which we respond to with printed materials.

YARTS also advertises on the [www.YOSEMITE.com](http://www.YOSEMITE.com) web site.

Publicity/Promotion

Three different 5 to 8-minute interviews with KYOS news director, Dennis Daily, were aired on KYOS radio in Merced in May.

Also in May, staff participated in a 30-minute community information program, *Valley Voice*, with Mike Ellis, news director for KUBB and KHTN (sister stations in Merced). The program aired on both stations.

The focus of these interviews was the expanded schedule YARTS planned for summer of 2008.

In June, two 8-minute interview segments with Dennis Daily ran on KYOS. Focus here was the impending move to larger buses with the opening of the new detour bridges, and the Thruway service to Mono County.

Free tickets were provided to the following for promotional consideration:

Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMIAI), No. CA Chapter – for their 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Silent Auction in Palo Alto. Funds raised going to charity.

Merced County Salute to Seniors (Los Banos) – Annual event to honor senior citizens in the county.

Castle Air Museum – *Plane Crazy* fundraising event for the museum. Two sets of two YARTS tickets to go along with Delaware North Corporation (DNC) who contributed free valley tours to make a package of the offering.

Ticketing was provided to a reporter for the Mammoth Times to ride the bus to the park from Mammoth Lakes and do a story about her experience. A copy of the article is attached.

News releases were sent out regarding the record ridership during the 2007-08 FY. Any articles that those releases stimulate will be presented at your meeting.

### Gift Bags on Buses

As mentioned to you in one of my periodic updates, YARTS joined with American Park Networks (APN - the folks who print the green Yosemite Guides) to distribute granola bars and hiking maps, both provided free by Nature Valley. Nature Valley is a subsidiary of General Mills.

YARTS and APN went together to purchase printed bags that the granola bars and tourist information are inserted into for distribution to riders on YARTS. Bags, bars and hiking maps also went to Visitor Centers in Merced, Mariposa, and Mammoth Lakes (who shared theirs with Lee Vining). The bags include the YARTS logo on both sides along with those of other sponsors of the effort.

Part of the consideration of YARTS participation in the distribution effort was a free ad in the Yosemite Guide (pg. 65).

Our cost in this effort is for a portion of the purchase price of the printed bags and the labor costs of assembling the materials into the bags. All other materials were free.

We will provide each of you with a bag filled as it goes to visitors at your meeting.

A Bonus: During the recent fires in Mariposa County, YARTS donated eight cases of the granola bars, about 1200 pieces, to the firemen who were working the fire lines. According to the fire department auxiliary, the bars were very well received as the firemen could take them into the field for some quick energy.

### YARTS.com

The YARTS website continues to operate and is being remodeled and upgraded. The website provides a valuable link to the entire world and generates a significant amount of contact between prospective riders and YARTS staff.

Tracy, the MCAG Webmaster, got a later than expected start on this effort, but it is moving ahead and will be done this year. It will be much more organized than the existing one, have more photos and more relevant information for people coming to the Yosemite region.

### Email

Staff handles email questions almost daily, presumably generated by our advertising efforts and by the web site. The emails come from all over the world, but principally Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the U.S., of course.

One of the emails recently received from Israel was highly complimentary of Robin Lamas, who was the responder in this case. A copy of that email is attached.

### **REQUESTED ACTION**

For information and discussion.

Attachments: Email from Anat Amely, Israel  
Letter from Chowchilla Mountain Women's Club  
Mammoth Times article

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE: JULY 25, 2008**  
**TO: YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER**  
**RE: MANAGER'S REPORT**

**Conflict of Interest Filing**

At the April meeting, a question arose about whether or not members of the AAC were required to make Conflict of Interest filings in the same way that Board members are. Staff checked with YARTS legal counsel and was told that, so long as the AAC members are advisory only, not actually setting policy or making policy decisions, that the filing was unnecessary.

**Midpines Park and Ride**

You will remember that YARTS is seeking a more formal agreement with Mariposa County for the use of the Midpines County Park as a Park and Ride facility. In a recent conversation with Mariposa County CAO, Rick Benson, I was asked to provide a framework document that an agreement could be crafted out of. I will be preparing that very shortly.

**Budget Amendments**

So many changes have taken place this year that it is a certainty that the budget you approved in April will have to be amended. I will be working on getting the figures together for your October meeting.

**Fare Increase Proposal**

We believe that the time is correct for a discussion of a possible fare increase. There simply was not time to bring it forward in August, but I will be preparing a presentation for your October meeting.

**YARTS First Accident**

For the first time in the eight-year history of YARTS an accident was reported. The new Prevost was on its way out of Yosemite Valley, heading for Mono County, when a group of motorcyclist

came around a corner hugging the center line of the road and leaning into the bus's driving lane. The driver pulled to the right to miss the motorcyclist, but made contact with a granite wall on the right side of the bus. There were no injuries on the bus or to the motorcyclists, who just kept going. VIA says that damage to the bus will exceed \$10,000 in bodywork.

Passengers on the bus gave statements about the accident saying that the driver's quick action probably saved the life of one or more of the cyclists.

The accident occurred on the day that a reporter for the Mammoth Times was riding on the bus to do a story about YARTS. She concurred with the others giving statements. Her story is included with the Marketing staff report.

A few words about good news

It has been a while since we have had a lot good to talk about. I was really ready for some good news and it is finally coming.

We set a ridership record this year under very difficult conditions.

Employee ridership appears to be surging back with the use of the larger buses.

Prospects for setting a new ridership record in 2008-09 appear very good right now.

Revenue from ridership is up significantly over last year.

The grant funding for our new buses are finally available through an understanding with FTA.

The new detour bridges are open and we have returned to the use of larger buses.

Traffic delays of up to 30 minutes, from the emergency road construction in the park, have ceased.

We are going to continue to face challenges with the price of fuel continuing to increase and the economy seeming to have lost its way for a while, but the current lull in bad news is a welcome respite.

## **REQUESTED ACTION**

For information and discussion.

**YOSEMITE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM  
(YARTS) AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

**AUGUST 4, 2008**

The regular meeting of the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) Authority Advisory Committee held Monday, August 4, 2008, at the Town/Country Conference Room, 437 Old Mammoth Road, Suite P, Mammoth Lakes, CA was called to order by Chair Frank Quintero at 10:55 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Scott Burns, Mono County Planning  
Jennifer Krumm, Greater Merced Chamber of Commerce (via telephone)  
Marty Nielson, National Park Service, for Tom Pimentel  
Frank Quintero, City of Merced  
Danna Stroud, Mammoth Lakes Tour and Recreation

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Barbara Carrier, Mariposa County Public Works (teleconference would not work)  
Tom Dumas, Caltrans  
Candy O'Donel-Brown, Private Citizen, Midpines  
Richard Wiebe, The Sierra Club

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Karen Baker, Director CA Welcome Center  
Denise Demery, VIA Adventures  
John Helm, Eastern Sierra Transit Authority  
Gwen Plummer, Mono County Planning  
Dick Whittington, YARTS Staff

**2. Introductions**

So noted.

**3. Public Comment**

None.

**4. Minutes of the April 7, 2008 YARTS Authority Advisory Committee Meeting**

Scott Burns moved to approve the minutes of the April 7, 2008 YARTS Authority Advisory Committee.

Seconded by Marty Nielson.

**As a quorum was not present, the minutes were accepted by consensus.**

**5. Information/Discussion Only**

- a. VIA Monthly Service Reports for March 2008 – June 2008
- b. Ridership History by Fiscal Year – Hwy 140 and Hwy 395/120 East
- c. YARTS Revenue History by Fiscal Year

5b. – Dick Whittington noted that the FY 2007-2008 set a record for ridership.

5c. – Dick Whittington noted that farebox revenue also set a new record for FY 2007-2008..

So noted.

**6. Grant Funding Update**

Dick Whittington gave a brief Grant Funding update.

**7. Cooperative Agreement Between YARTS and the National Park Service (NPS)**

Dick Whittington stated the Cooperative Agreement between YARTS and the National Park Service needed to be signed by October 1, 2008. The agreement is at the National Park Service regional office for approval. The request of this item is for the Director of YARTS, Jesse Brown, to sign the agreement. There are no changes other than the amount of \$300,000 from prior years agreements.

Scott Burns moved to recommend the YARTS JPA approve the Cooperative Agreement between YARTS and the National Park Service in Yosemite and authorize the YARTS Executive Director to sign the agreement.

Seconded by Frank Quintero.

**As a quorum was not present, the motion was passed by consensus.**

**8. Revision of Staff Report – “A More Regional Yarts”**

Dick Whittington noted that Commissioner Bauer was the architect to get more regional participation for YARTS.

So noted.

**9. VIA Hourly Service Rate Increase Request**

Marty Nielson moved to recommend the YARTS JPA approve a new service hour constructive rate based on the proposal by VIA Adventures.

Seconded by Scott Burns.

**As a quorum was not present, the motion was passed by consensus.**

**10. Hwy 140 / Use of Larger Buses**

So noted.

**11. YARTS Marketing**

Dick Whittington gave a review of the YARTS Marketing that was currently being used. He handed out goody bags provided by the American Park Network that are being distributed in Mono, Mariposa and Merced counties on the YARTS bus routes.

Staff is looking for a corporate sponsor for YARTS and has been working diligently with “American Park Network”.

**12. Manager’s Report**

So noted.

**12. Oral Report – National Park Service**

Marty Nielson gave a brief report from the National Park Service.

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS OF THE YARTS AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE, THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 12:04 A.M.**