

NOTICE OF REGULAR MEETING
OF THE
YOSEMITE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM
(YARTS) JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY

Monday, October 27, 2008 – 1:00 p.m.

Mariposa County Government Center
Board of Supervisors Chambers
5100 Bullion Street
Mariposa, California
(209) 723-3153

**THIS MEETING WILL BE CONDUCTED BY TELECONFERENCE
AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATION:
MINARET VILLAGE MALL,
437 OLD MAMMOTH ROAD, SUITE P, MAMMOTH LAKES, CA.
MEMBERS OF THE YOSEMITE AREA REGIONAL
TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AUTHORITY ADVISORY
COMMITTEE AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC MAY ATTEND
AND PARTICIPATE IN THE MEETING AT THE
TELECONFERENCE LOCATION. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC
APPEARING AT A TELECONFERENCE LOCATION WILL BE
PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THE LEGISLATIVE
BODY DIRECTLY AS PROVIDED BY LAW.**

1. INTRODUCTIONS
2. 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

- * **3. Minutes of the August 4, 2008 YARTS Joint Powers Authority meeting**

- 4. Information/Discussion Only**
- # a. VIA Monthly Service Reports for July 2008 – September 2008
- # b. Ridership History by Fiscal Year – Hwy 140 and Hwy 120 East/395
- # c. YARTS Revenue by Fiscal Year

- 5. Grant Funding Update** Dick Whittington
- For information and discussion only.

- 6. YARTS Short Range Transit Plan** Dick Whittington
- Provide staff with direction on items to be considered in the new YARTS Short Range Transit Plan.

- * **7. YARTS Fare Increase** Dick Whittington
- Determine:
 - a. Whether or not a fare increase should be implemented; and
 - b. If a fare increase is implemented, establish the percentage of the fare increase; and
 - c. Establish the date of the fare increase.

- 8. Oral Report – YARTS Marketing** Dick Whittington

- # **9. Increasing the Size of the YARTS Board of Commissioners** Dick Whittington
- For information and discussion.

10. Oral Report – Managers’ Report

Dick Whittington

11. Oral Report – National Park Service Report

Marty Nielson

12. Board of Commissioners Remarks

** Action*

Attachment

+ Enclosure

*The next YARTS JPA meeting, will be held on Monday, January 12, 2009
at the Merced County Association of Governments, 369 W. 18th Street
Merced, California*

**YOSEMITE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM (YARTS) JOINT
POWERS AUTHORITY**

Minutes

August 4, 2008

The regular meeting of the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) Joint Powers Authority held Monday, August 4, 2008 at the Town/County Conference Room, 437 Old Mammoth Road, Suite P, Mammoth Lakes, CA, was called to order at 1:07 PM by Commissioner Vikki McGee-Bauer.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Vikki McGee-Bauer, Mono County Supervisor
Dianne Fritz, Mariposa County Supervisor (via teleconference)
Mike Nelson, Merced County Supervisor

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

OTHERS PRESENT

Dick Whittington, YARTS staff
Gwen Plummer, Mono County Staff
Marty Nielson, National Park Service
Denise Demery, VIA Adventures
Kenneth Gosting, Transportation Involves Everyone (via teleconference)
Brad Aborn, Mariposa County Supervisor (via teleconference)

2. Introductions

3. Public Comment

Mr. Gosting requested that he receive a full agenda packet for future meetings.

Mr. Gosting expressed concern for the location on Hwy 140 that was used during the recent Telegraph fire in Mariposa County to turn back traffic and suggested that YARTS management should share its perspective on such closures, moving them to a more logical and safer locations.

Mr. Gosting noted that there had been some confusion on the part of YARTS drivers who were making the reverse loop through Midpines during the fire emergency about who would pick up waiting riders and suggested an emergency protocol be written and agendized at a future meeting.

Mr. Whittington said that Mr. Gosting had made him aware of the situation previously and that it had been taken care of already.

4. Minutes of the April 7, 2008 YARTS Joint Powers Authority meeting

Commissioner Fritz moved to approve the minutes of the April 7, 2008 YARTS Joint Powers Authority Meeting.

Seconded by Commissioner Nelson.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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

So noted.

6. Grant funding Update

So noted.

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

Commissioner Nelson noted that the Cooperative Agreement between YARTS and the National Park Service must be signed by October 1, 2008. The agreement is currently at the NPS regional office for approval. There are no changes other than the amount of \$300,000 from prior year agreements.

Commissioner Nelson moved to approve the Cooperative Agreement between YARTS and the National Park Service in Yosemite and authorize the YARTS Executive Director to sign the Agreement as long as there are no other changes. If any changes are proposed to the agreement then the YARTS Joint Powers Authority will hold a special meeting to approve or disapprove the changes.

Seconded by Commissioner Fritz.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

8. Revision of Staff Report- “A More Regional YARTS”

This item was tabled until later in the meeting until Mr. Gosting had a chance to review the changes.

Mr. Gosting reviewed the changes and then noted the accompanying Strategic Plan was not attached. Mr. Whittington noted that it was in the original report and not a part of this staff report. Mr. Whittington explained he had corrected the original report as requested.

Mr. Gosting had an issue with the “Perspective” section. He remembers more people were against YARTS. The staff report appears to note twenty-seven were for YARTS and three against. Commissioner McGee-Bauer did not feel the report said that, and noted that the Commission has no obligation to correct minutes that were already approved. She noted that it was Mr. Gosting’s opinion that more than three people were in opposition. The changes Mr. Whittington made to the staff report were that *Mr. Gosting, Lou Aceto and three tour bus operators* were against the expansion. Mr. Whittington suggested that the words “and others” be added to the sentence to reflect a more negative view. Mr. Gosting accepted the suggestion and the Commission approved the changes to the minutes.

Marty Neilson noted that Mike Tolfson recently met with the staff of the Fresno Chamber of Commerce and the Visitor’s Bureau. They are interested in establishing YARTS service from Fresno to Yosemite.

9. VIA Hourly Service Rate Increase

Mr. Whittington noted that last April the Commission approved an increase in the service hour rate based on the increased cost of fuel, which went into effect May 1, 2008. At that time the increase for the CPI increase, which is part of the contract, was put off until Mr. Whittington could get the April through April CPI comparisons which are now available. There are two requests before the Commission; 1) Increase the service hour rate based on the increase in the CA Consumer Price Index (CPA); and 2) Increase the service hour rate due to increased fuel costs between March 2007 and March 2008. VIA is asking YARTS to revisit and approve a second increase based on the fuel increase. The VIA contract states, that if the total cost of fuel increases or decreases by 15%, a change can be requested.

The CPI stated by the State of California does include gasoline costs and Mr. Whittington has called the State to find out what influence of fuel cost has on the CPI. He has not received an answer as yet. Once staff has that information they may have to adjust the CPI figure to deduct the fuel portion out of the CPI if the fuel increase today is approved.

Ms. Demery reviewed the documentation in the packet, and explained how they arrived at the costs associated with the rate increase.

Commissioner Nelson moved to approve the VIA hourly service rate increase.

Seconded by Commissioner Fritz.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

10. Hwy 140/ Use of Larger Buses

Mr. Whittington noted that YARTS is now able to use the larger buses on the runs where demand requires it and uses smaller buses where possible to reduce costs.

Commissioner Fritz thanked Denise Demery and Dick Whittington for the bridge grand opening, and noted that this was the first time that a seated Governor has visited Mariposa County.

11. YARTS Marketing

Mr. Whittington gave a review of the YARTS marketing that is 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. Nature Valley provided granola bars and trail maps to be included in the goody bags.

Mr. Whittington stated that he is working hard on the possibility of a corporate sponsor. He will keep the Board informed of any progress.

Ken Gosting stated Arcadia National Park in Maine has a corporate sponsorship, which is working well and encourages YARTS to get corporate sponsorships if possible.

12. Manager’s Report

Dick Whittington gave a review of the staff report.

Commissioner Bauer noted that the fare increase proposal needed to move forward and that the last fare increase was approved three years ago with the final increase from that approval being operational in November.

Commissioner Fritz proposed a discussion for a future meeting to increase the number of people on the YARTS Board.

So noted.

13. Oral Report - National Park Service Report

- Marty Neilson gave thanks to YARTS, to Dick, and to VIA for their efforts to maintain the schedules during the Telegraph fire.
- Curb replacement Southlake Drive will have impacts to later runs.
- Power line replacement in the Narrows will cause a four-day period of construction delays.
- In the process hiring a contractor to assist in a Transportation Study in the fall for the park.
- Visitation up overall for the year. July 5, 2008 was one of the biggest visitor’s days in quite a while.
- Occupancy stayed high during fire.
- The NPS planning process could take a year or more.

14. Board of Commissioners Remarks

So noted.

Please note - Next Meeting is October 27, 2008 in Mariposa not Merced

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS OF THE YARTS JOINT POWERS
AUTHORITY, THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 2:19 PM.**

MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 20, 2008

TO: YARTS JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY

FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER

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

Attached for your review and comment is the YARTS ridership history through September 2008.

Ridership for each of the three months of the first quarter of this fiscal year increased markedly. July ridership was up 35% over the previous July and set a new one-month record. The 35% increase in July was on top of a 75% increase the previous year.

August, which is typically the largest month for ridership, proved not to be this year, but still recorded a 25% increase. A serious fire in Mariposa County, the Telegraph fire, caused some disruption to the service and probably caused the numbers to be lower than they might have normally been.

September posted a 36% increase and brought the cumulative increase to 31.73%.

REQUESTED ACTION

For information and discussion only.

Attachment: YARTS Ridership History by Fiscal Year

MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 20, 2008

TO: YARTS JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY

FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER

RE: YARTS REVENUE HISTORY BY FISCAL YEAR

Attached for your review and comment is the revenue history for YARTS. It was last updated on October 7, 2008.

The form has been revised to try to make it easier to read and understand. All of the YARTS farebox information is in the top section; the Amtrak information is in the middle section and the total of the two is in the bottom section. If we need to revise it further, please let us know.

As you can see from the revenue history, during the first quarter farebox has increased by 40% and will climb a little more as the vendors report their ticket sales for September. With ridership up 36.35% for the first quarter of the year, revenue is following closely.

During the quarter ridership increased on the Hwy 120 service by 50% and revenue from that service increased by 45%.

Income from the Department of Transportation, which pays for the vouchers used by NPS employees to purchase their monthly passes, was also up by 45%. This likely comes from the infusion of over 80 new seasonal employees that the Park Service added to their roster this year.

Amtrak income was little changed during the quarter and should not fluctuate much from last year. The minor adjustment in the daily rate charged to Amtrak moved it from \$750 to \$800 per day. Extra runs are called for from time to time and could cause some variations as we go through the year. Last year the contracted amount was \$273,750 and the actual was \$324,550. Added income from this source ends up being a wash as it simply pays for one run per day and the extra demand service. More service, more income, more costs.

REQUESTED ACTION

For information and discussion only.

Attachment: YARTS Revenue by Fiscal Year

MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 20, 2008

TO: YARTS JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY

FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER

RE: GRANT FUNDING UPDATE

5311(f) (Capital)

It had been staff's intention to file a grant application under this program to purchase electronic fareboxes. That intent was under the assumption that the allowable amount under the program for this use would be \$200,000.

In conversation with Caltrans staff, which administers the program, it was made clear that the maximum amount for this use under this program would be \$100,000. The funding would have been further factored by the amount of "write-down" that Caltrans staff did because of the number of commuters YARTS carries. The 5311(f) program specifically excludes credit for providing commuter services.

Because of the reduced amount that YARTS might have been able to receive if the application was approved, staff did not submit an application for this project. Staff is in the search for a different funding option that will allow for full funding (except for the match) for the project.

5311(f) (Operating)

The 5311(f) program 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). Connections to rail service are considered as well, but are secondary to the bus connections. It is not intended to support commuters.

For the 2008-2009 fiscal year, the maximum amounts available under the grant program have increased from the ceiling of \$200,000 previously. Match for the program is 44.67%, down from 50% just two years ago.

This federal program is managed by Caltrans. Caltrans has made it clear that they are going to be tightening the application of the rules set by FTA in selecting and approving applications. This will almost certainly mean that YARTS will not receive funding at the maximum level, because of the number of commuters the service carries.

For the past two years, YARTS has received \$400,000 from this program because of the damage to the system caused by the size-restrictive detour bridges on Hwy 140. Prior to that time, YARTS typically received the maximum amount of \$200,000.

Staff filed an application with Caltrans for 5311(f) operating funds in the maximum amount of \$300,000. With 35-40% of YARTS ridership coming from commuters, an approved application will likely see an amount well below the maximum. It is anticipated that the successful applications will be announced in November with the funding being available in December, according to Caltrans staff.

5304 – Transportation Planning Grant

Staff has received notice that the YARTS application for a grant to fund a new Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) has been approved. The grant is in the amount of \$92,500, with a match of \$7,500, for a total of \$100,000 available for the project.

Staff will be preparing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to seek consultants to perform the work of preparing the SRTP, and will be looking to the YARTS Board for direction of what specific items they would like to see in the plan.

5309c (Earmark)

In 2005, YARTS received an earmark in the SAFETEA-LU transportation-funding bill in the amount of \$2.09 million for the purchase of new buses. The funding was to become available to YARTS in four annual increments of around \$500,000 per year.

After some problems with the wording in the Federal Register that prevented YARTS from accessing the funds, the way has been cleared and staff has made application with the FTA for the three increments that have been appropriated. We will file for the fourth, if/when it is appropriated in 2009.

On September 11, 2008 we received a copy of the “Grant Advance Notice” from Thane Young, MCAG Washington lobbyist in Washington, D.C., saying the grant would be released three days after the date of the notice. The amount announced is \$1,768,393. The 20% match required on this funding (\$442,098) will bring the current amount available to purchase buses to \$2,210,491. Currently, new over-the-road coaches are estimated to cost between \$470,000 - \$500,000 each, meaning that the available funding would be sufficient to purchase four buses.

5309 (Earmarks)

YARTS currently has two 5309 grants available for use. This 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. Used for the cost of contracting, the required match is 60%.

The two available earmark grants are:

\$388,711 with a balance of \$111,662 – filed July 2005

\$247,500 with a balance of \$245,000 – currently being processed by FTA

5320 – Alternative Transportation in Park and Public Lands (2)

a) In 2007, YARTS filed an application with the 5320 program through its NPS contact office in Seattle for funding that would allow for an expanded schedule during the summer months. A similar previous application was approved and was used to expand the schedule in the summer of 2008. The amount of the grant application in 2007 was \$272,520.

\$25 million was available for this year. 84 applications were filed for \$55.2 million in funding, more than twice the amount available. The Federal Register of October 10, 2008 announced the selected projects and YARTS was on the list of approved projects.

b) In 2008, YARTS submitted a “pre-application” to the 5320 program seeking funding for two different projects. One project is seeking funding to complete the park and ride facility in the town of Mariposa for which the costs have soared beyond the funding available to complete the work. The second is seeking \$1 million for the purchase of two new clean-diesel buses.

According to NPS in Seattle, both pre-application items have made it through the NPS Regional priority-setting process. The NPS Service-wide priority setting process will take place in November. It is currently assumed that applications that make it through that process will be eligible to apply, possibly in fall of 2009.

The pre-application is a departure from previous procedures. This step did not exist for previous applications.

Staff was previously informed, by our NPS contact, that the 5320 program will likely be over-subscribed for 2010 and that no new applications will be accepted to the program for that year. That information seems to conflict with the procedures described above.

Staff is trying to get some greater clarification on the details of this program funding.

Appropriations Request

In February, staff filed an Appropriations Request with the office of Congressman Radanovich in the amount of \$400,000. While these are not competitive in the sense of the grants previously mentioned, they are every bit as uncertain. There is no assurance that the application will be approved or that the requested amount will be met.

Notice of an approved application was anticipated in late fall of 2008, however, the Congressman's office has recently indicated that work on the transportation bill to replace SAFETEA-LU may prompt a repeat of last year's funding and preclude any earmark funding.

REQUESTED ACTION

For information and discussion only.

MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 20, 2008

TO: YARTS JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY

FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER

RE: YARTS SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN

The YARTS Joint Powers Authority adopted the initial Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) in February 2001 and in October of 2003, approved a SRTP covering the years 2004-2009. It is time to begin the process of completing a new SRTP as the current one expires.

As stated in the 2003 SRTP, the document is intended to evaluate previous performance, project future needs, and lay out methods of accomplishing the goals of the plan.

The last SRTP was prepared in-house, but staff believes that it would be worthwhile to have the new SRTP done by consultants. There are a number of issues that require a hard look, with a dispassionate eye, which could best come from an outside expert.

Staff is set to begin preparing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to mail to consultants who are interested in bidding on the job of creating the new SRTP for YARTS. The RFP will detail the work to be accomplished and the areas of concern to be looked at.

Staff is looking for input from the Board regarding issues that the Board believes the SRTP should consider. We previously sent you a copy of the current SRTP to refresh your memory on the different kinds of issues that were previously investigated.

A partial list of staff generated issues include:

- Finding new stable funding sources
- Corporate sponsor(s)
- Service on Hwy 41 between Fresno and Yosemite
- Member-County Contributions (establish basis for)
- Evaluation of economic benefit of YARTS service on established service corridors
- Fare structure
- Levels of service
- Bus replacement plan
- Carryover funding
- Size of the governing board

The new SRTP will require the consultant to hold public hearings in the areas of service, to solicit comments from the stakeholders, park employees, lodging owners, general public, and visitor riders, along both service corridors. If you can add to the list to be contacted, that would be useful.

In September, YARTS was notified that the Transit Technical Planning Grant application to prepare a new Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) had been approved by Caltrans. The grant is in the amount of \$92,500 and requires a \$7,500 match, for a potential maximum project total of \$100,000. The exact cost of the study will depend on the proposals submitted and selected.

REQUESTED ACTION

Provide staff with direction on items to be considered in the new YARTS Short Range Transit Plan.

MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 20, 2008

TO: YARTS JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY

FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER

RE: YARTS FARE INCREASES

A number of circumstances have converged to justify a discussion of a fare rate increase for YARTS: uncertain funding; increased fuel and contract costs; costs for other services, IE audits, wages, insurance and fees.

For the first years of the service (2001-2006), rates stayed unchanged. In July of 2006, the YARTS Board approved a fare increase of 25%, taking fares from \$20 to \$25 for a round trip ticket from Merced to Yosemite National Park (174 miles). On Hwy 120 from Mono County, fares went up to \$30 for the longest round trip (250 miles). Fares on both schedules were adjusted to make them more distance based, the shorter the trip, the lower the fare and were effective on Nov. 1, 2006.

In 2006, the YARTS Board also increased the cost of commute passes 10% per year over a three-year period. The third increment of that increase will go into effect on November 1, 2008.

The original contract with VIA Adventures, made in 2001, set the service hour rate at \$88.77. At the time of the last rate increase in 2006, YARTS was paying VIA a service hour rate of \$109.97 for the large buses and \$104.89 for the smaller ones. Today, that service rate is at \$142.46 and \$134.64 respectively. The percentage of increase from just three years ago is 29.54% and 60.48% since 2001.

Service hour rates and the service contract represent the single largest expense item in the YARTS budget.

The Debate

There is a debate among transit providers about whether it is better to keep fares low to encourage ridership or that the fares should be raised to keep pace with costs.

Both Amtrak and Bart use the same theory in that they do small increases each year to avoid “sticker shock” and to keep the individual systems fare box at an acceptable level (as determined by them).

Others argue that higher fares begin to push away ridership and they delay increases for as long as possible. The level of subsidy seems to have a lot to do with this belief. Heavily funded services seem to favor the lower fares to increase ridership.

When YARTS was just beginning, rides were free and ridership was very high until a fare structure was established.

In each fiscal year since 2004-2005, YARTS paid ridership exceeded that of 2000-01, when it was free. In 2007 – 2008 ridership on YARTS set a new annual record.

Which philosophy to follow is at the discretion of the YARTS Joint Powers Authority.

Who Rides YARTS?

Basically we have six different groups of people that YARTS is providing service to: visitors to Yosemite and the Yosemite region, NPS employees, DNC employees, other private employees, locals just getting around in the region and Amtrak Thruway passengers.

Visitors

The first group, the visitors to the Yosemite region and the park, make up the largest percentage of the ridership. In 2007-08, this group accounted for roughly 58 % of the total ridership.

In surveys that have been done on the YARTS buses, visitor riders indicate they believe that the rates are very reasonable and in some cases they are surprised that they are so low. According to a survey that the park conducted, park visitors are likely to be a little more mature, better educated, and probably a little more affluent.

Frequent rider passes offered by YARTS

There are two kinds of passes; one is month-specific and provides for riding any and all days of a month. There is also a pass that is good for 90 days and provides 20 round-trip rides. Both are location specific (i.e. Mariposa to Yosemite). The second pass is aimed at people who do not work full-time and students who do not attend college every day. Pricing on the passes is distance based. The price for both types of passes is the same.

Using the frequent-rider pass rates that will go into use on November 1, 2008, current commuter costs range from as little as \$47 from El Portal to Yosemite Park to \$220 for commuting from Merced to Yosemite. Today, actual usage ranges in cost from \$47 to \$173. There are no current commuters from Merced to Yosemite. The frequent rider passes are made available to everyone.

Employees

NPS employees who ride YARTS receive a subsidy for their commute under the “Commuter Choice” legislation, which their employer has opted to participate in. Under this program, NPS is allowed to provide up to \$110 per month toward each employee’s commuting costs. Only six NPS employees are currently faced with out-of-pocket expense for commuting on YARTS. Six employees from Catheys Valley pay the difference between the \$110 subsidy and the \$173 commuter pass costs or drive to Mariposa to reduce the cost of their pass.

In September of 2008, 222 NPS employees were receiving the commute vouchers, but the number will diminish as the seasonal employees leave.

DNC employees are not offered the benefits of the “Commuter Choice” program. They use the same passes as the NPS employees, but pay for the passes themselves. In surveys taken on the buses, these employees have been critical of the fare structure, even with the passes, feeling it is too expensive.

In FY 2007-2008, there were 13,009 boardings by NPS employees and 4,031 DNC employees. Employee numbers during this fiscal year were strongly affected by the construction at “the narrows”, inside the park, which inflicted up to 30-minute delays on YARTS buses and prevented YARTS from maintaining scheduled times.

Other employees who use the YARTS system, such as riders from Mariposa to Merced, purchase the passes, but any subsidy they may receive is unknown to us. These employees represented 5229 boardings in the 05-06 FY.

There is also a group of employees who travel to the park, but do not work for NPS or DNC. There were 3259 boardings recorded for these riders.

Locals getting around

We are not aware of any locals who use the system regularly enough to purchase passes, but the system is used by locals to move around Mariposa county and to Merced on the Hwy 140 corridor.

Amtrak Thruway Riders

Amtrak Thruway riders numbered 10,641 during the year. These riders board the bus using Amtrak tickets and YARTS contracts with Amtrak for this service. YARTS does receive the fare (from Amtrak) for Thruway riders going on to Mono County from Yosemite.

Recommended Increases

It is the opinion of the staff that fares should increase at some time in the very near future. Those increases would very likely be readily acceptable to the visitors and unnoticed by most NPS

employees. The employees who do not have the benefit of the employer subsidy likely will not be very favorable of the idea.

Using the Internal Revenue Service allowable business reimbursement amount to establish a value for the trip, the Merced to Yosemite round trip, 174 miles at \$.585 per mile, would be valued at \$101.79. That does not take into consideration the fact that YARTS riders do not pay entrance fees. With the cost of gasoline now hovering at or above \$4 per gallon, particularly in mountain counties, YARTS would remain a bargain, even with an increase.

If fare increases were to be implemented, staff would recommend that the increase take place on December 15, 2008.

Scheduled fares

Below is the rate structure currently used on the YARTS schedules for the Hwy 140 service corridor. The numbers in parentheses () show fares for seniors (62 or older) and children (12 and under). In 2006, the Board also approved a new definition of “child” as being 12 years or younger. It had previously been age 16. Also, as before, with each paid adult passenger, one child rides for free. Fares structures are based on distance.

Current Rate structure

	Merced	Catheys Valley	Mariposa	Midpines	El Portal	Yosemite
Merced		(\$4) \$6	(\$8) \$12	(\$8) \$12	(\$13) \$18	(\$18) \$25
Catheys Valley	(\$4) \$6		(\$4) \$6	(\$4) \$6	(\$8) \$12	(\$13) \$18
Mariposa	(\$8) \$12	(\$4) \$6		\$1	(\$4) \$6	(\$8) \$12
Midpines	(\$8) \$12	(\$4) \$6	\$1		(\$4) \$6	(\$8) \$12
El Portal	(\$13) \$18	(\$8) \$12	(\$4) \$6	(\$4) \$6		(\$5) \$7
Yosemite	(\$18) \$25	(\$13) \$18	(\$8) \$12	(\$8) \$12	(\$5) \$7	

Proposed Rate Structure

The proposed rate reflects a 30% increase on all runs, except the runs from Mariposa to Midpines, which would increase from \$1 to \$2. (This fare was not increased in 2006.)

	Merced	Catheys Valley	Mariposa	Midpines	El Portal	Yosemite
Merced		(\$5) \$8	(\$10) \$15.50	(\$10) \$15.50	(\$17) \$23.50	(\$23.50) \$32.50
Catheys Valley	(\$5) \$9		(\$5) \$9	(\$5) \$9	(\$10) \$15.50	(\$17) \$23.50
Mariposa	(\$10) \$15.50	(\$5) \$8		\$2	(\$5) \$8	(\$10) \$15.50
Midpines	(\$10) \$15.50	(\$5) \$8	\$2		(\$5) \$8	(\$10) \$15.50
El Portal	(\$17) \$23.50	(\$10) \$15.50	(\$5) \$8	(\$5) \$8		(\$6) \$9
Yosemite	(\$23.50) \$32.50	(\$17) \$23.50	(\$10) \$15.50	(\$10) \$15.50	(\$6) \$9	

Commuter Passes

Commuter passes offer an exceptional value to regular commuters on YARTS. Using a 21-day work month, a rider from Mariposa to Yosemite would pay \$252 per month paying the regular fare rates (using current rates). By using the commuter pass, that rider can ride any or all of the 30 days of the month for only \$100. The current commuter pass rate schedule is shown below.

Current Commuter Rates Schedule (Effective Nov. 1, 2008)

COMMUTER RATES (for HWY 140 ONLY)						
NON-TRANSFERABLE / NON-REFUNDABLE						
HWY 140	Merced	Catheys Valley	Mariposa	Midpines	El Portal	Yosemite Valley
Merced		\$47	\$94	\$120	\$173	\$220
Catheys Valley	\$47		\$47	\$74	\$128	\$173
Mariposa	\$94	\$47		\$26	\$80	\$100
Midpines	\$120	\$74	\$26		\$53	\$100
El Portal	\$173	\$128	\$80	\$53		\$47
Yosemite Valley	\$220	\$173	\$100	\$100	\$47	

In April of 2007, the YARTS Board approved an increase in the cost of passes of 10% per year for 3 years. The actual increase created by that method produced an increase of between 33 and 34 percent, depending on the rounding of numbers that occurred annually when the calculations were done.

Staff is recommending that commuter pass prices again be raised 10% per year for the next three years, adjusted annually at the date of the schedule change each fall. The chart below reflects the proposed first years' adjustment. Remainders were taken to the next largest whole number.

The three-year rate adjustment program would bring these fares into line with the increases on regular fares, but over a longer period.

Proposed Commuter Rates Schedule

COMMUTER RATES (for HWY 140 ONLY)						
NON-TRANSFERABLE / NON-REFUNDABLE						
HWY 140	Merced	Catheys Valley	Mariposa	Midpines	El Portal	Yosemite Valley
Merced		\$52	\$103	\$132	\$190	\$242
Catheys Valley	\$52		\$52	\$81	\$141	\$190
Mariposa	\$103	\$52		\$29	\$88	\$110
Midpines	\$132	\$81	\$29		\$58	\$110
El Portal	\$190	\$141	\$88	\$58		\$52
Yosemite Valley	\$242	\$190	\$110	\$110	\$52	

As was mentioned previously, the third of three annual 10% increases takes effect on November 1, 2008. If the Board decides to approve the increase in the rates on passes, staff would recommend that the increases be effective on November 1 in 2009, 2010 and 2011.

Hwy 120 Rate Structure

The chart below shows the current rate structure for the service on Hwy 120 East from Mono County.

	Kind of Ticket	Mammoth Lakes	June Lake	Lee Vining	Tuolumne Meadows	White Wolf	Crane Flat	Yosemite Valley
Mammoth Lakes	Round trip		(\$3) \$5	(\$7) \$10	(\$10) \$15	(\$13) \$20	(\$17) \$25	(\$20) \$30
	One way		(\$2) \$3	(\$3) \$5	(\$5) \$8	(\$7) \$10	(\$9) \$13	(\$10) \$15
June Lake	Round trip	(\$3) \$5		(\$3) \$5	(\$7) \$10	(\$10) \$15	(\$13) \$20	(\$17) \$25
	One way	(\$2) \$3		(\$2) \$3	(\$3) \$5	(\$5) \$8	(\$7) \$10	(\$10) \$15
Lee Vining	Round trip	(\$7) \$10	(\$3) \$5		(\$3) \$5	(\$7) \$10	(\$10) \$15	(\$13) \$20
	One way	(\$3) \$5	(\$2) \$3		(\$2) \$3	(\$3) \$5	(\$5) \$8	(\$7) \$10
Tuolumne Meadows	Round trip	(\$10) \$15	(\$7) \$10	(\$3) \$5		(\$3) \$5	(\$7) \$10	(\$10) \$15
	One way	(\$5) \$8	(\$3) \$5	(\$2) \$3		(\$2) \$3	(\$3) \$5	(\$5) \$8
White Wolf	Round trip	(\$13) \$20	(\$10) \$15	(\$7) \$10	(\$3) \$5		(\$3) \$5	(\$7) \$10
	One way	(\$7) \$10	(\$10) \$15	(\$3) \$5	(\$2) \$3		(\$4) \$8	(\$4) \$8
Crane Flat	Round trip	(\$17) \$25	(\$13) \$20	(\$10) \$15	(\$7) \$10	(\$3) \$5		(\$3) \$5
	One way	(\$9) \$13	(\$7) \$10	(\$5) \$8	(\$5) \$8	(\$2) \$3		(\$2) \$3
Yosemite Valley	Round trip	(\$20) \$30	(\$10) \$20	(\$13) \$20	(\$10) \$15	(\$7) \$10	(\$3) \$5	
	One way	(\$10) \$15	(\$7) \$10	(\$7) \$10	(\$5) \$8	(\$3) \$5	(\$2) \$3	

The chart below reflects an increase of 30% as is proposed for Hwy 140.

	Kind of Ticket	Mammoth Lakes	June Lake	Lee Vining	Tuolumne Meadows	White Wolf	Crane Flat	Yosemite Valley
Mammoth Lakes	Round trip		(\$4) \$6.50	(\$9) \$13	(\$13) \$19.50	(\$17) \$26	(\$22) \$32.50	(\$26) \$39
	One way		(\$2) \$3.25	(\$4.50) \$6.50	(\$6.50) \$9.75	(\$8.50) \$13	(\$11) \$16.25	(\$13) \$19.50
June Lake	Round trip	(\$4) \$6.50		(\$4) \$6.50	(\$9) \$13	(\$13) \$19.50	(\$17) \$26	(\$22) \$32.50
	One way	(\$2) \$3.25		(\$2) \$3.25	(\$4.50) \$6.50	(\$6.50) \$9.75	(\$8.50) \$13	(\$11) \$16.25
Lee Vining	Round trip	(\$9) \$13	(\$4) \$6.50		(\$4) \$6.50	(\$9) \$13	(\$13) \$19.50	(\$17) \$26
	One way	(\$4.50) \$6.50	(\$2) \$3.25		(\$2) \$3.25	(\$4.50) \$6.50	(\$6.50) \$9.75	(\$8.50) \$13
Tuolumne Meadows	Round trip	(\$13) \$19.50	(\$9) \$13	(\$4) \$6.50		(\$4) \$6.50	(\$9) \$13	(\$13) \$19.50
	One way	(\$6.50) \$9.75	(\$4.50) \$6.50	(\$2) \$3.25		(\$2) \$3.25	(\$4.50) \$6.50	(\$6.50) \$9.75
White Wolf	Round trip	(\$17) \$26	(\$13) \$19.50	(\$8) \$12	(\$4) \$6.50		(\$4) \$6.50	(\$9) \$13
	One way	(\$8.50) \$13	(\$6.50) \$9.75	(\$4) \$6	(\$2) \$3.25		(\$2) \$3.25	(\$4.50) \$6.50
Crane Flat	Round trip	(\$22) \$32.50	(\$17) \$26	(\$12) \$18	(\$9) \$13	(\$4) \$6.50		(\$4) \$6.50
	One way	(\$11) \$16.25	(\$8.50) \$13	(\$6) \$9	(\$4.50) \$6.50	(\$2) \$3.25		(\$2) \$3.25
Yosemite Valley	Round trip	(\$26) \$39	(\$22) \$32.50	(\$17) \$26	(\$13) \$19.50	(\$9) \$13	(\$4) \$6.50	
	One way	(\$13) \$19.50	(\$11) \$16.25	(\$8.50) \$13	(\$6.50) \$9.75	(\$4.50) \$6.50	(\$2) \$3.25	

REQUESTED ACTION

Determine:

- a. Whether or not a fare increase should be implemented; and
- b. If a fare increase is implemented, establish the percentage of the fare increase; and
- c. Establish the date of the fare increase.

ITEM 9

MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 20, 2008

TO: YARTS JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY

FROM: DICK WHITTINGTON, TRANSIT MANAGER

RE: INCREASING THE SIZE OF THE YARTS BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

At your last meeting Chairperson Fritz asked that a discussion take place at the October 27 meeting regarding ways to increase the size of the YARTS Board.

Currently the YARTS Board has one elected Supervisor from each of the member counties. Those Board members are selected to serve on the YARTS Board by their respective Boards of Supervisors. Those Boards of Supervisors also select an alternate to serve on the YARTS Board if the primary member is unable to attend.

The three-member YARTS Board, while compact, creates some unusual situations in trying to accomplish YARTS business. It is not legal for two of the Board members to discuss YARTS business other than during a public meeting because of Brown Act provisions. For the same reason, it is impossible for the Board to form special committees to look into matters that the Board deems important.

The YARTS By-Laws (dated 10-4-99) speak to the construction of the Board of Commissioners as follows:

(Section 1)

“The membership of the Board of Commissioners is governed by the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System Joint Powers Authority (JPA). Parties to the JPA are the County of Mariposa, the County of Merced, and the County of Mono.”

(Section 2)

“The Board of Commissioners shall consist of three voting members. Each Party shall designate one Board Commissioner and at least one alternate Commissioner from among the elected officials of any publicly elected political office within its geographic limits. Designee of ex-officio and/or non-voting members of the Board need not be elected officials.”

“The official membership may by majority vote appoint special committees composed of non-members, or request special information or advice from knowledgeable persons, as is necessary to carry out the objectives of the Board of Commissioners.”

(Section 3)

“The Board of Commissioners may also include ex officio members as identified in the Joint Powers Agreement or as designated by the Board of Commissioners. Ex officio members may be appointed by the National Park Service, United States Forest Service, the Federal Transit Administration, the Federal Highway Administration, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and the California State Division of Tourism.” The ex officio members would not be voting members of the Board.

Complete copies of the By-Laws and the Joint Powers Agreement are attached to this report to provide guidance in your discussions.

Other considerations:

There are two things going on at present that may warrant discussion in this deliberation.

One is the possibility of the new YARTS Short Range Transit Plan being produced within the next six to eight months. While YARTS is reviewing all of the operational assumptions looking to the future, it might also be an opportunity to have a discussion of the size and makeup of the YARTS Board of Commissioners.

The other is the resurgence of interest on the part of individuals and organizations in Fresno and Madera counties to see YARTS service on Hwy 41. Should this effort prove successful and YARTS decides to accept an invitation to provide service on that highway, two more counties may appropriately be considered as a part of the YARTS Joint Powers Authority and have membership on the YARTS Board.

REQUESTED ACTION

For information and discussion.

Attachments: Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System By Laws
Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System Joint Powers Agreement

**YOSEMITE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM (YARTS) JOINT
POWERS AUTHORITY**

MINUTES

OCTOBER 27, 2008

The regular meeting of the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) Joint Powers Authority held Monday, October 27, 2008 at the Mariposa County Government Center, Board of Supervisors Chambers, 5100 Bullion Street, Mariposa, CA, was called to order at 1:04 PM by Chairperson Dianne Fritz.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Vikki McGee-Bauer, Mono County Supervisor
Dianne Fritz, Mariposa County Supervisor
Mike Nelson, Merced County Supervisor

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

OTHERS PRESENT

Lou Aceto, Oakhurst Resident
Dick Whittington, YARTS staff
Denise Demery, VIA Adventures
John Gedney, Caltrans District 10
Kenneth Gosting, Transportation Involves Everyone
Robin Lamas, YARTS staff
Tom Pimentel, National Park Service

1. Introductions

2. Public Comment

Lou Aceto thanked Ken Gosting for making a correction in regards to a prior item on the April 2008 agenda.

Lou Aceto handed to staff a statement from Jeanne Aceto, Oakhurst, dated December 4, 2000 regarding YARTS JPA meeting (Public Comment) for the record.

3. Minutes of the August 4, 2008 YARTS Joint Powers Authority meeting

Commissioner Nelson moved to approve the minutes of the August 4, 2008 YARTS Joint Powers Authority Meeting.

Seconded by Commissioner Magee-Bauer.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. Information/Discussion Only

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

So noted.

5. Grant funding Update

Dick Whittington gave a review of the grant funding staff report.

6. YARTS Short Range Transit Plan

The Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) is a five-year plan. The current SRTP will expire in 2009. Staff is set to begin preparing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to mail to consultants who are interested in bidding on the job of creating the new SRTP for YARTS.

Staff is requesting input on things that should be included in the RFP for the new SRTP.

Dick Whittington gave a list of items the YARTS AAC members requested be brought to the attention of the Board of Commissioners as follows:

- a. Economic benefits for Mariposa County or on the corridors of service
- b. Expansion of Mammoth service maybe into mid or late September and start a week or so earlier for June passengers (meaning everyday and not just weekends for June and September)
- c. Expanding the Hwy 120/395 corridor (doing a strategy by corridor)
- d. Focus on connectivity with local services
- e. Evaluation of bus stop locations, validate their need
- f. Outreach to future partners; a “how to” for other areas to join YARTS
- g. Marketing and operations to take bicycles – letting riders know what is available
- h. Through SRTP, raising the status of YARTS to show how YARTS connects the Mammoth/Mono area to Yosemite

Items brought forward from the YARTS commissioners:

- a. How to connect the County – need connectivity - Mariposa
- b. ESTA just did a SRTP (service equity allocations)
- c. Annually confirming contributions earlier in the year
- d. Internal operations– MCAG is currently doing everything
- e. Discuss different contractors for Hwy 120 and Hwy 140
- f. Review Bylaws and update

Dick Whittington stated that he would take all the information given to staff and include this information in the RFP for the hired consultant to come back with recommendations for a new SRTP.

7. YARTS Fare Increase

Dick Whittington gave a review of the possible YARTS fare increase. The fuel increases over the past months was the reason staff brought this item before the Board. VIA stated to staff that currently fuel is \$1.00 a gallon less than at the high peak.

After discussion by the Board of Commissioners this item was continued until the January meeting to give staff time to rework the figures based on the current reduction in fuel prices.

8. Oral Report – YARTS Marketing

Dick Whittington gave a brief review of the YARTS marketing noting that staff was able to get an ad in Peaks and Plains quarterly magazine that is placed in the seat back on Great Lakes Airlines.

9. Increasing the Size of the YARTS Board of Commissioners

Dick Whittington gave a review of the YARTS Joint Powers Authority (JPA) Board and the request by Chairperson Fritz to discuss ways to increase the size of the YARTS JPA Board. Some of the suggestions by the AAC committee was to temporarily include the alternates to the JPA Board as members until the Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) is completed noting that after the plan is completed there could be a possibility of adding new member counties. Another suggestion was to have two members from each county, and then review the membership if additional partners were added to the Board.

The YARTS Board of Commissioners requested bringing this item back before the Board in January for more discussion determining that no decision would be made until after the Short Range Transit Plan was completed.

10. Manager's Report

So noted.

11. Oral Report - National Park Service Report

Tom Pimentel gave a brief report from the National Park Service. A copy of his report is attached for your information.

12. Board of Commissioners Remarks

Commissioner Fritz stated this meeting was her last meeting and that she was very pleased to have served on the YARTS Board.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS OF THE YARTS JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY, THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 2:25 PM.