An analysis of the public transit system for the first six months of FY 2004-05 indicates that Fixed Route ridership has increased slightly over the first six months of last fiscal year, and the Average Fare per Passenger is stable. One obvious difference, which is negatively impacting our required 20% Farebox Ratio, is a significant increase in Operating Costs. The major contributing factor is the 35.7% increase in vehicle maintenance. According to statistics provided by Field Services, there has been a 15% increase in parts and labor, and a 28.64% increase in fuel costs. Transit buses are now required to use ultra low sulfur diesel to comply with Air Resources Board regulations, which is five to ten cents per gallon more expensive than diesel, likely causing the majority of the increase. On a more positive note, contractor services, system-wide for the first six months, have resulted in a $15,000 savings.

Staff is proposing several modifications to the Fixed Route system, all of which would be implemented by July 1, 2005. Routes 2 and 5 require modifications, and an additional route, to be known as Route 7, has been planned to accommodate the new location for the Porterville Adult School in the building formerly occupied by Rockwell. Public transit has not previously served this location; therefore, it required planning services of TPG Consulting; data review of existing bus stops on Routes 2 and 5; and field inspections and trial runs to determine if the route could be successfully implemented. Route 2 currently serves the northwestern portion of the City, and Route 5 serves the Morton Avenue/Henderson Avenue loop. These two routes consistently have difficulty with overcrowding and on-time performance issues. Staff has been monitoring these two routes very closely over the last year, and have determined they both require modifications to be more consistent with the remainder of the system.

Staff proposes to make these modifications by reducing the area covered by Routes 2 and 5, and incorporating those areas in the new Route 7. All service areas presently covered will continue to be covered. In fact, with the implementation of Route 7, additional areas never previously served will now be included on a transit route. All changes would be effective and implemented by July 1, 2005.
With the 20% Farebox Ratio requirement, staff is concerned about further increases to Operating Costs, without a significant increase in ridership (route revenue) to offset those costs. Since students at the Porterville Adult School already use the transit system, the new Adult School location is not expected to generate any significant increase in student ridership. The majority of the other areas to be served by Route 7 are those areas currently served by Routes 2 and 5. At this time, we can only assume some additional ridership may develop in areas not currently served by public transit.

With one additional bus operating 11 hours per day during the week, and 8 hours on Saturday, Operating Costs for the new route could easily exceed $100,000 the first year. Staff has reviewed system surveys and the data generated from those surveys which were completed in the Fall of 2004. We would like to share with the Council the actual ridership totals generated on each route. Each route runs on 30-minute intervals. The actual ridership, per each 30-minute segment, was averaged for the entire day to determine ‘Passengers Per Run.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route No.</th>
<th>Total Passengers</th>
<th>Passengers Per Run</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>25.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>24.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>28.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>21.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>11.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Porterville Adult School has indicated it will not require 30-minute service. Most of their classes are three-hour sessions. There will be segments of time before and after school sessions when service will be required, and Staff will coordinate those designated times with the Porterville Adult School. Other stops on Route 7, however, will require at least hourly service.

In order to maintain the integrity of the transit service, operational modifications are required, and Staff is proposing a plan to make these modifications cost-neutral. Since Route 6 is our newest, and least cost-effective route, with approximately half of the ridership of the remaining routes, Staff proposes operating Route 7 on an hourly basis, alternating Route 7 with Route 6. One bus could be used for both routes, eliminating the need for an additional bus, an additional driver, thus eliminating additional revenue hours. A seventh full-time bus operating daily would create a great demand on the existing transit fleet. Currently, the City has seven 28-passenger MST buses, three 22-passenger buses, and two 16-passenger buses, in reserve. With preventive maintenance services each month, as well as normal repairs and upkeep on the equipment, it is not possible to have all seven MST’s available for service at all times. This would necessitate reliance on the City’s older, and smaller fleet; and it will be approximately two years before two additional CNG 30-passenger buses will arrive to expand the equipment availability.
With this proposal, for the first 30 minutes, Route 7 could be served, then the bus would make its way to the Transit Center alternating its route to serve Route 6. The proposal would place Route 6 on hourly intervals, rather than every 30 minutes; but after reviewing the current statistics, this appears to be an opportunity to increase efficiency, add additional service, and maintain current Operating Costs.

Staff consistently monitors the transit system for required on-time performance indicators, ridership statistics, revenue statistics, etc. As the Jaye Street/Highway 190 area develops, the transit system could revert back to 30-minute intervals on Route 6, and earlier if ridership statistics change favorably. This is simply a method to effect system modifications currently needed, without increasing costs, and an attempt to make the system more cost-effective. Staff will monitor Route 6 and Route 7 on a regular basis; and after a period of several months of statistics, will meet with impacted parties and assess the performance of this alternative. Staff proposes that after a period of six months, this option be re-evaluated to determine how adequately the combination of Route 6 and Route 7 has served the community.

Another area analyzed is the operating hours of the public transit system. Currently, Fixed Route operates Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., with 5:30 p.m. being the last complete run; and Saturdays, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Demand-Response operates Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., with 9:30 p.m. being the last scheduled pick-up; and Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. In order to further accommodate working passengers, Staff is recommending increasing the Fixed Route operating hours by one hour – Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., with Saturday hours remaining the same. The Demand-Response system is experiencing a significant drop in demand in the later evening hours, and the contractor, in an effort to be more cost effective, has been decreasing the number of available Activans and drivers by 8:15 p.m. during the week. Instead of five cars and drivers being available, there are now two cars and drivers remaining until the 10:00 p.m. closing time. Originally, Demand-Response was scheduled to operate until 10:00 p.m. due to the high volume of ridership generated from Porterville College students enrolled in late evening classes. This trend seems to be changing, with only an average of 11 riders per month using public transportation during the late evening hours (6:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.). In order to compensate for the additional operating time being considered for Fixed Route, Staff recommends the reduction in Demand-Response operating time to 9:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, with Saturday operating hours remaining the same.

RECOMMENDATION: That the City Council approve:

1. The modifications to Routes 2 and 5;
2. The addition of Route 7;
3. The operation of Routes 6 and 7 on an hourly basis, alternating one
bus between these two routes;

4. The extended hours of Fixed Route, to include service from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, with Saturday service remaining at 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.;

5. The reduction of Demand-Response operating hours, to include service from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, with Saturday service remaining at 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.;

6. All operational modifications to become effective July 1, 2005.

7. The Staff meeting with affected parties to this proposal after six months of operation to assess the effectiveness and service adequacies.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed Fixed Routes as of July, 2005;

2. Proposed Route 2;

3. Proposed Route 5;

NOTES:
Modified/new routes are shown as dashed lines.

Routes 6 and 7 will operate on an hourly basis, alternating one bus between these routes.