



Short Range Transit Plan



Yosemite Area Regional
Transportation System

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Final Report

March 2011

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YARTS Short Range Transit Plan in Three Volumes

The Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) Short Range Transit Plan is presented in three volumes:

Volume I: Service, Institutional, and Financial Plan

Volume II: Marketing Plan

Volume III: Market Research Report

The three volumes are bound together in this report. Each volume has its own cover and table of contents.

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Short Range Transit Plan

Volume I: Service, Institutional and Financial Plan



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Other Short Range Transit Plan Volumes

- II. Marketing Plan
- III. Market Research Report

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides:

- The purpose of the Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP).
- A historical perspective of the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) that provides the context leading up to the five-year SRTP.
- Organization of the SRTP and companion volumes.

Short Range Transit Plan Objectives

The SRTP is intended to guide the development of YARTS over the next five-year period. The SRTP:

- Provides opportunities for public input into the future of public transit services in all areas of the three YARTS counties: Merced, Mariposa and Mono counties.
- Summarizes the results of extensive market research efforts that were utilized to guide key recommendations of the SRTP. (As discussed in more detail below, the full Market Research Report is included as Volume III of the SRTP.)
- Establishes goals and performance standards.
- Provides a comprehensive marketing plan. (As discussed in more detail below, the Marketing Plan is volume II of the SRTP.)
- Reviews institutional options to improve the governance of YARTS, including if YARTS were to expand membership and route(s) in other corridors.
- Provides service plan recommendations.
- Establishes a detailed operating and capital financial plan.

The SRTP is essentially a blueprint for future action over the next five years. Most of the recommendations will require specific action at a regularly scheduled YARTS meeting before implementation occurs.

Historical Perspective of YARTS

Over an 18-year period, the development and subsequent implementation of YARTS service has undergone significant changes, especially during its early formative years.

YARTS Formation

In 1992, the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors (MCAG) initiated a collaborative planning process with four neighboring counties, the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and the California Department of Transportation to prepare a strategy for providing transit service for visitors and employees into Yosemite National Park from gateway communities. In FY 1994/95, monies were identified in the National Park Service budget for transportation planning around Yosemite National Park. In FY 1995/96, the committee requested MCAG to administer the study. This planning process produced two key products. The first was the formation, in 1999, of a joint powers authority (JPA), made up of the member counties of Mariposa, Merced, and Mono, to implement the transit service. Madera County and Tuolumne County decided not to participate in the JPA. The second product was a proposal for a two-year transit demonstration program, for FY 2000/01. The JPA, known as the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS), entered into a Cooperative Agreement with the National Park Service for the purposes of coordinating the new transit service with in-Park shuttle transportation, cooperative transit planning, visitor and employee education, and funding support. YARTS contracted with the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) to provide management functions. On May 19, 2000, YARTS began providing ongoing “fixed route” transit service throughout the Yosemite Region.

Service Development to 2003¹

Initially, YARTS provided service to Merced County on Hwy 140, to Mono County on Hwy 120/395, and to Coulterville on Hwy 132/120. Due to low ridership and budgetary limitations, the service to Coulterville was discontinued, and the service to Mono County remained active only during the spring and summer months.

During the first 17 months of YARTS, Hwy 140 service was provided by Yosemite Concession Services (YCS), who received both subsidy and fares as payment for its service, and VIA Adventures (VIA), who received only fares as payment. Visitor passengers paid fares set by YARTS and could ride either company service on a “space-available” basis. During this period, employees with jobs in the national park could ride the YCS-provided runs free, as the National Park Service provided funding to accommodate their employees. Employees could ride the VIA-provided runs with fare payment.

During the first summer season, there were 23 to 26 daily runs between Yosemite, Mariposa, and Merced provided by YCS and VIA. For the first six weeks (mid-May through June 30, 2000) of that season, all passengers, visitors, and employees rode

¹ Much of this section is taken directly from: MCAG, Short-Range Plan for YARTS, October 2003 and MCAG website.

free on YCS runs to promote the service. During the first winter season, service runs were reduced to eight runs.

A new transit service contract was awarded to VIA beginning September 2001. A phase out schedule for YCS and a phase in schedule for VIA was implemented during the second summer season. During the summer, National Park-situated employees could ride all the runs, including the additional runs to Merced, on the schedule for free, regardless of which company was providing the service. YCS ended its contract with YARTS on September 9, 2001. VIA became the sole Hwy 140 service provider on September 10, 2001. On May 27, 2007, after a competitive bid process, the YARTS Board approved a five-year contract to VIA through May 31, 2012.

For service to Mono County from 2000-2002, YARTS contracted with Mammoth Mountain Ski Area Inc. (MMSA) to provide service from Mammoth Lakes, June Lake, Lee Vining, and Tuolumne Meadows into Yosemite Valley. California Cruisers and Tours took over this service in the summer of 2003.

MMSA provided this service for the farebox revenue. During the first year of the YARTS Demonstration Program, Mammoth Mountain provided just weekend service for farebox revenue only. The second year, there was an extension of the weekend service to seven days a week, using the farebox revenue and a grant from the Federal Transit Administration. The third year, Mammoth Mountain provided this service for farebox revenue only. For the fourth year, California Cruisers and Tours was contracted to be the new service provider.

Since September 2001, service on Route 140 has stabilized at 12 runs on weekdays and 10 runs on weekends and holidays. However, the Yosemite National Park lost its ability to provide funding to subsidize service for both visitors and employees. As a result, effective October 1, 2001, all Yosemite-bound employees were required to pay transit fares or purchase monthly passes. An employee voucher program has been implemented for employees of the National Park Service. No such program exists for employees of the Yosemite Concession Services or other Yosemite-based employers.

Major Milestones Since 2003

The first Short-Range Transit Plan was produced by MCAG staff in October 2003. The 2003 SRTP analyzed the performance of the first three years of operations, projected future service, evaluated service alternatives, established performance criteria, evaluated alternative fuel technologies, included a capital plan and marketing plan, and provided a 5-Year Action Plan for implementation.

Some of the key recommendations of the 2003 SRTP have never been implemented. The plan called for the procurement of compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicles, but after further review, YARTS decided to purchase clean diesel buses that meet the 2010 engine standards. In addition, over-the-road buses were not available with a

CNG fuel option. The plan also called for adding three additional runs, but funding limitations and demand levels did not justify implementation of expanded runs. In FY 2009/10, the average load factor (percentage of passengers to seats available) for the Summer/Fall schedule was 45% and the Winter/Spring schedule was just 35%.

In May 2006, a major landslide temporarily closed Highway 140, and required YARTS to utilize an alternative route to reach Yosemite Valley. A temporary bridge was installed that enabled YARTS to continue service with small buses. In August 2006, a one-lane bridge allowed the resumption of regular service, although a signal to control traffic can delay buses by 15 minutes or more during peak seasons.

Prior to the summer season in 2007, the schedules and fares were re-evaluated. Fare proposals were presented to the YARTS Board based primarily on distance-based fares. Fares were raised for the first time in the history of the service at that time at the beginning of the Summer/Fall schedule in 2007. At that time discount rate for youth was changed to under 12 on both routes.

In June 2007, YARTS signed an agreement with the National Railroad Corporation (Amtrak) to provide Thruway bus service on YARTS buses. Through the Caltrans Division of Rail, Amtrak offers Thruway bus service to provide bus connections to final destinations, in this case Yosemite Valley and the Town of Mammoth Lakes. The agreement is scheduled to be renewed in early 2011.

When YARTS went out to bid in 2007, the new contract called for service on both sides of the mountain. YARTS had terminated the contract for Highway 120 service at the end of the previous season with that in mind. When awarded the new competitive contract, VIA operated both Route 140 and 120.

YARTS has been working on replacing the Via-provided fleet with nine buses owned by YARTS. YARTS has received funding with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) fund with grants for FTA 5320 and FTA 5309 funding, with local match provided by the participating counties. One new bus has been delivered, and the remaining buses will be ordered in the near future. A new branding scheme for the buses has been adopted.

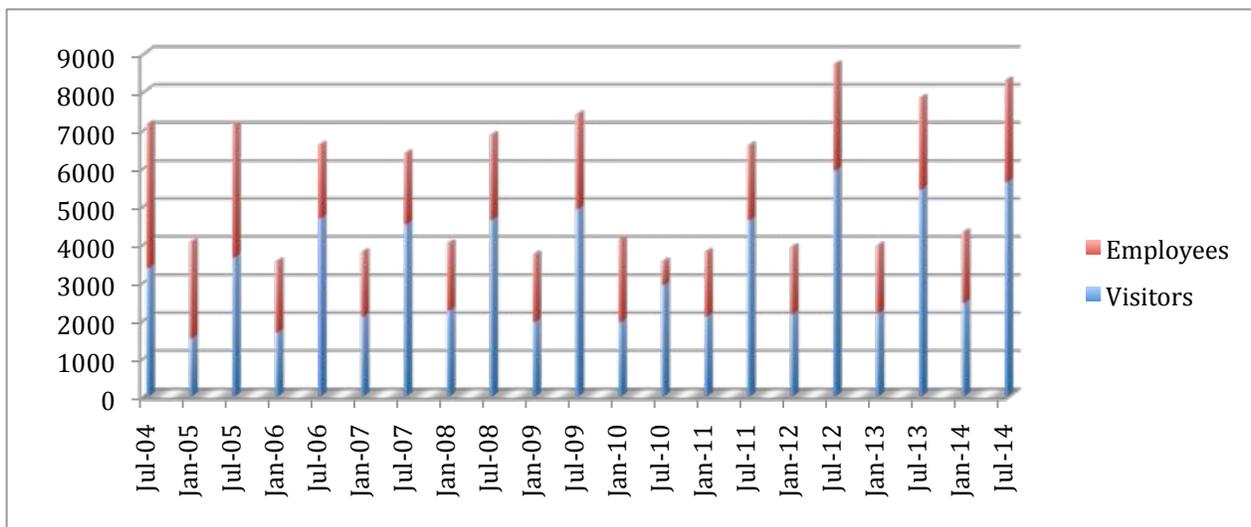
Historical Ridership Trends

Exhibit 1-1 is the historical ridership of YARTS on Route 140 without Amtrak ridership² in July (peak month in summer) and January (low Winter ridership month). Total monthly ridership spiked to over 7,000 riders during the first year when the service was free and service levels were the highest. Since fares were introduced and service levels stabilized at 12 runs on Route 140 in September 2001,

²YARTS has not kept historical ridership records of Amtrak ridership. Via operated Amtrak Thruway service before YARTS contracted directly with Amtrak.

employee ridership has remained fairly constant with peak employee ridership during the summer months. Visitor ridership has grown as a proportion of total ridership, even when excluding Amtrak ridership. In the first year, visitor ridership was 47% and has ranged from 67% to 70% since 2002 with the exception of the 2006 after the landslide. In January, visitor ridership is about 50% of the total and has ranged from 47% to 56% since the inception of YARTS. January YARTS ridership has been consistently between 56% and 60% of July ridership with the exception of 2006 with the landslide.

**Exhibit 1-1
Historical YARTS Ridership
High Summer (July) and Low Winter (January)**



After the initial spike when fares were free, annual ridership totals have gradually increased with the exception of 2006 when the landslide occurred.

Overview of Short Range Transit Plan

The next chapter is a profile of services on both Route 120 and Route 140. An analysis of performance is included.

The third chapter is a summary of the extensive market research conducted for this project, including the results of public workshops, stakeholder input and a passenger survey of YARTS users conducted in July 2010. While the key findings are included in Chapter 3, the full Market Research Report is included as Volume III of the SRTP. This third chapter also includes a review of future needs for YARTS service that were brought to light during the market research effort.

The fourth chapter contains recommended goals, objectives and performance standards. These are key policies that YARTS would like to achieve over the next five years. For service standards, both minimum and target standards are provided.

The fifth chapter provides service and fare alternatives and recommendations for both Routes 120 and 140. These alternatives were discussed at a joint meeting of the YARTS Board and AAC on December 15, 2010 YARTS..

The sixth chapter is a review of institutional options that YARTS could consider over the next five years. These institutional questions will need a great deal more discussion before the YARTS Board can make a decision on a plan to proceed.

The seventh chapter is the recommended action plan over the next five years. The chapter also includes recommended actions for services, fares, capital procurements, marketing and institutional options. This chapter provides a good summary of the recommendations provided in the three-volume Short Range Transit Plan. For readers who do not wish to read the entire report, a review of Chapter 7 will provide a good overview of the recommendations by plan year.

The final chapter is a comprehensive operations and capital financial plan for YARTS. It provides details on revenues, revenue enhancement, operating expenditures, and capital procurements for the next five years.

Volume II of the Short Range Transit Plan is the detailed Marketing Plan.

Volume III of the Short Range Transit Plan is the Market Research Report that documents the finding of the stakeholder interviews, public workshops, and on-board surveys of passengers on both Route 120 and 140.

Chapter 2: PROFILE OF YARTS SERVICES

This chapter provides a review of existing YARTS services on Route 140 and Route 120.

OVERVIEW

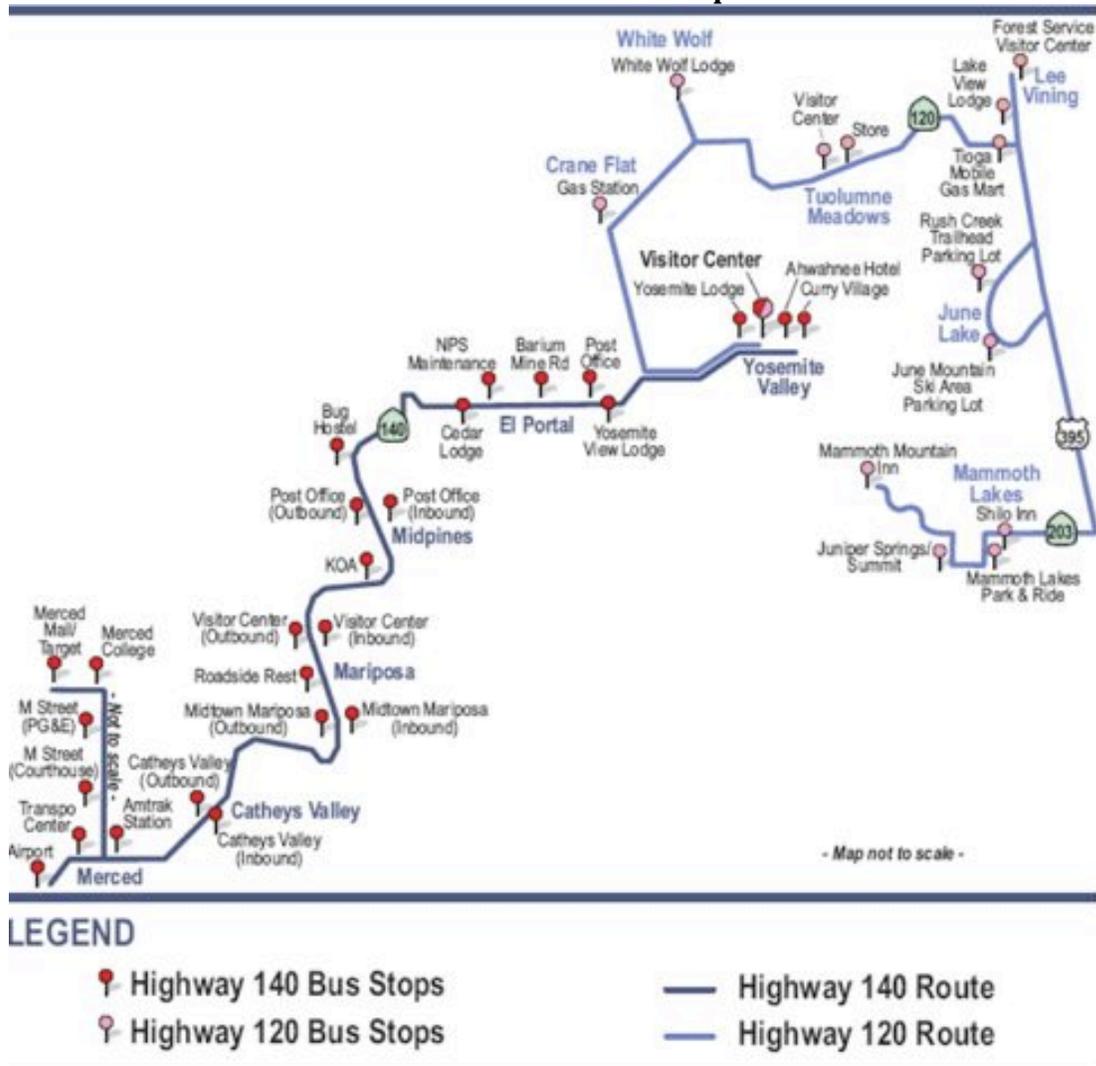
In FY 2010/11, YARTS is projected to provide 12,262 vehicle service hours as shown in Exhibit 2-1. The vehicle service hours provided in the summer and winter months on Route 140 are almost equal at 5,808 and 5,846, respectively. The special hours listed in Exhibit 2-1 are extra service runs required mostly by Amtrak group sales from the Merced Amtrak station to Yosemite Valley. These extra runs are paid for by Amtrak and are a relatively minor number of hours, approximately 90 in FY 2009/10 which is the same number projected for FY 2010/11.

**Exhibit 2-1
Vehicle Service Hours by Route and Season**

	Actual	Budget
	FY 2009/10	FY 2010/11
Highway 140		
Summer		
Base Hours	5,598	5,773
Special Amtrak, Other	35	35
Total Hours	5,633	5,808
Winter		
Base Hours	5,580	5,791
Special Amtrak, Other	55	55
Total Hours	5,635	5,846
Total		
Base Hours	11,177	11,564
Special Hours	90	90
Total Hours	11,267	11,654
Highway 120	2010	2011
Base Hours	609	609
Special Hours	-	-
Total Hours	609	609
Total		
Base Hours	11,786	12,173
Special Hours	90	90
Total Hours	11,876	12,263

Exhibit 2-2 below shows the two YARTS routes and stops for both the 140 and 120 services. The large majority of hours currently provided are for the 140 corridor with 11,654 hours. With just one run in each direction and service limited to weekends in June and September, there are 609 annual vehicle service hours for the 120 service.

**Exhibit 2-2
YARTS Route Map**



Route 140

Exhibit 2-3 shows the Route 140 ridership by stop for both the Summer and Winter schedules. There were a total of 79,812 YARTS passengers in FY 2009/10. Winter ridership was about 45% of the total YARTS ridership. The most significant difference in ridership between the seasons are the lodging locations for visitors such as the KOA campground (closed November to March) and Cedar Lodge, where winter ridership is about 50% of the summer ridership. Ridership at the Merced Mall is also significantly lower during the Winter schedule.

Exhibit 2-3
Route 140 Boardings By Stop, FY 2009/10
With Amtrak Riders

Stop: Route 140	Summer	Winter	Total
Merced Mall/Target	513	153	666
Airport	69	48	117
Merced College	105	214	319
Mall (PG&E)	45	13	58
Downtown(Court)	153	159	312
Amtrak	5,292	4,933	10,225
Transpo	1,882	1,348	3,230
Catheys Valley	516	547	1,063
MP Midtown	1,195	1,162	2,357
Roadside Rest	3,904	4,285	8,189
MP Vstr Center	1,219	1,287	2,506
KOA campground	1,898	870	2,768
Midpine Park and Ride	1,543	1,351	2,894
Midpine Post Office	1,243	1,271	2,514
Bug Hostel	2,025	1,611	3,636
Cedar Lodge	980	445	1,425
NPS Maintenance	1,879	2,438	4,317
Barium Mine Rd.	870	837	1,707
El Portal Post Office	1,409	1,430	2,839
YV Lodge	2,203	1,164	3,367
Yos.Visitor Center	5,746	3,807	9,553
Curry Village	3,229	2,043	5,272
Ahwahnee	572	627	1,199
Yosemite Lodge	4,909	3,916	8,825
UC Merced	215	239	454
Total	43,611	36,201	79,812

The top four boarding locations are:

1. Amtrak 10,225
2. Yosemite Visitor Center 9,553
3. Yosemite Lodge 8,825

4. Roadside Rest (Mariposa) 8,189

No other stop location has more than 5,000 annual boardings.

Schedule Patterns To and From Yosemite

YARTS provides different schedules in summer and winter. The primary difference between the Summer/Fall and Winter/Spring schedules is that in the Summer/Fall schedules, Run 6 operates all the way to Yosemite Valley and then returns from Yosemite Valley as Run 14 starting at 8:05 pm at Curry Village.

Appendix A includes a color-coded schedule for the Summer and Winter schedules. Runs 2, 3, 4, and 5 in both the winter and summer have layovers of four hours or more before making the return trip to Merced, and in the case of Run 10, to Mariposa. For example, Run 2 in both the Summer and Winter schedules starts at 6:15 am from Mariposa to Yosemite Valley and drops off its last passenger at Yosemite Lodge at 8:10 am. The driver then lays over in Yosemite Valley until the return trip to Merced, as Run 9 departing Yosemite Valley at 3:40 pm and making its last scheduled drop-off at 6:36 pm at the Transpo in Merced (and continuing to Merced airport if a passenger requests it).

It is important to point out that several of the schedule patterns are designed to meet Amtrak trains for trips both to and from Yosemite. Runs 4 and 5 to Yosemite and 9 and 12 from Yosemite serve as Amtrak Thruway buses and YARTS is contractually obligated to provide these runs.

Given the peak commute nature of the YARTS ridership, it is not surprising to have such long layovers for some drivers. Runs 1 and 7 are not operated on weekends and holidays.

Analysis of Productivity by Run

An analysis was conducted of the productivity as measured in passengers per vehicle service hour by run for both the Summer/Fall and Winter/Spring schedules. The purpose of the analysis is to look at the current effectiveness of the existing schedules. The analysis identifies current unproductive runs and determines if there are potential mitigations to improve productivity. Finally, it provides a basis for exploring and evaluating schedule options that might improve productivity.

The evaluation criterion selected was four passengers per vehicle service hour or less. For a three-hour trip to Yosemite Valley, this would mean that there are only a total of 12 passengers on the bus for the entire trip. Different runs have different starting and ending points, and passengers per vehicle service hour allows a normalized comparison of productivity. Runs that had less than four passengers per hour triggered a review to determine if 1) there are different operating times for the run that might improve

productivity or 2) whether the run might be eliminated. YARTS contractual obligations with Amtrak and the National Park service do provide important input into the analysis. The first two early morning runs to Yosemite and the first afternoon return trip to Merced at 3:40 pm are the most productive YARTS runs in the Winter/Spring schedules. The first run starting in Mariposa at 5:45 am and heading to Yosemite Valley ranges from 9.8 passengers per hour in December to 11.7 passengers per hour in March. Run 2 is generally about two passengers per hour higher, the highest productivity. In the summer with a mix of NPS employees and Yosemite visitors, run 2 reaches a high of 15.8 passengers per hour, which means when the run reaches the NPS maintenance facility in El Portal, the bus is essentially full of passengers.

The average productivity with less than four passengers per hour is highlighted in yellow on Exhibits 2-4 and 2-5 on the following pages.

- The first run starting at the Merced Transpo at 8:50 am and connecting with an Amtrak train has less than four passengers per hour between November and March. In May and June, this run doubles its ridership and remains at seven to eight passengers per hour throughout the summer and then begins to decline.
- The only Summer/Spring weekday schedule that is below desirable productivity is the last run, leaving Yosemite Valley at 8:05 pm, about three passengers per hour from May to September, but dropping to just 1.1 passengers per hour in October 2011.
- Run 10 on weekends leaving Yosemite Valley at 4:20 pm drops to below four passengers per hour on weekends in July and August and to below two passengers per hour in October.
- In winter, the last run departing Yosemite Valley at 5:40 pm drops to below four passengers per hour in all winter months on weekdays and five of the seven months on weekends. It is very common for the last run of the day in many transit services to have the lowest productivity.
- On weekends, run 6 is below four passengers per hour during all of the winter/spring months.

Exhibit 2-4: Winter/Spring Schedule Passengers Per Vehicle Service Hour

Winter/Spring Schedule: Weekday Passengers/Hour FY 2009/10 (Includes Amtrak)

Run #	Origin	Desitnation	Nov-09	Dec-09	Jan-10	Feb-10	Mar-10	Apr-10	May 1-16
1	5:45 AM Mariposa	7:38 AM Y Lodge	11.32	9.77	11.48	11.50	11.70	10.67	11.63
2	6:15 AM Mariposa	8:10 Y Lodge	12.55	11.87	14.24	15.26	14.58	12.63	13.77
3	7:00 AM Mcd Transpo	9:55 AM Y Lodge	4.97	6.24	4.70	4.21	5.64	8.23	8.98
4	8:50 AM Mcd Transpo	11:45 AM Y Lodge	2.28	3.75	2.55	2.92	3.77	5.22	5.69
5	10:20 AM Mcd Airport	1:25 PM Y Lodge	4.28	6.80	5.55	6.15	6.12	7.90	7.84
6	5:00 PM U.C. Merced	6:50 PM Y Bug Res.	7.57	5.09	7.07	6.97	7.91	6.58	4.13
7	6:20 AM Y Bug Res.	7:51 AM UC Merced	8.38	5.91	6.80	8.58	8.49	6.39	6.97
8	9:32 AM Y Curry Vill.	12:36 PM Mcd Transpo	5.21	5.32	6.05	4.26	5.50	5.13	7.00
9	3:40 PM Y Curry Vill.	6:36 PM Mcd Transpo	11.09	12.06	12.84	12.33	13.81	12.65	12.55
10	4:20 PM Y Curry Vill.	6:12 PM Mariposa	7.09	7.38	7.12	10.03	9.69	10.24	11.17
11	5:05 PM Y Curry Vill.	7:55 PM Mcd Transpo	5.28	5.17	4.68	4.79	6.48	8.20	8.94
12	5:40 PM Y Curry Vill.	8:31 PM Mcd Transpo	2.12	2.84	1.89	2.90	2.53	2.63	2.87

Winter/Spring Schedule: Weekend/Holiday Passengers/Hour FY 2009/10 (Includes Amtrak)

Run #	Origin	Desitnation	Nov-09	Dec-09	Jan-10	Feb-10	Mar-10	Apr-10	May 1-16
2	6:15 AM Mariposa	8:10 AM Y Lodge	3.40	4.21	9.37	8.71	7.43	4.22	5.40
3	7:00 AM Mcd Transpo	9:55 AM Y Lodge	3.89	2.64	4.59	2.80	3.84	5.82	7.44
4	8:50 AM Mcd Transpo	11:45 AM Y Lodge	3.31	4.12	5.26	3.01	5.52	5.04	6.44
5	10:20 AM Mcd Airport	1:25 PM Y Lodge	5.49	6.74	7.57	5.90	6.85	5.89	12.28
6	5:00 PM U.C. Merced	6:50 PM Y Bug Res.	2.27	2.57	2.75	3.54	3.44	2.96	3.27
8	9:32 AM Y Curry Vill.	12:36 PM Mcd Transpo	3.46	5.05	5.39	3.94	3.39	4.80	9.20
9	3:40 PM Y Curry Vill.	6:36 PM Mcd Transpo	6.26	6.24	10.19	6.11	7.07	9.37	20.21
10	4:20 PM Y Curry Vill.	6:12 PM Mariposa	2.99	2.35	1.88	2.35	3.09	4.14	5.30
11	5:05 PM Y Curry Vill.	7:55 PM Mcd Transpo	4.08	2.87	4.93	3.87	4.22	3.58	4.57
12	5:40 PM Y Curry Vill.	8:31 PM Mcd Transpo	1.47	2.53	3.38	4.18	4.44	2.72	3.47

Below 4 passengers per vehicle service hour

Exhibit 2-5 Summer/Spring Productivity Passengers Per Vehicle Service Hour

Summer/Spring Schedule: Weekday Passengers/Hour FY 2009/10 (Includes Amtrak Passengers)

Run	Origin	Desitnation	May 17-31	June	July	August	September	October		
1	5:45 AM	Mariposa	7:38 AM	Y Lodge	16.53	16.38	15.23	16.33	15.02	11.09
2	6:15 AM	Mariposa	8:10 AM	Y Lodge	14.08	13.96	15.77	14.26	14.51	12.97
3	7:00 AM	Mcd Transpo	9:55 AM	Y Lodge	12.33	12.23	11.60	8.56	6.78	5.09
4	8:50 AM	Mcd Transpo	11:45 AM	Y Lodge	8.43	8.36	7.93	6.59	4.90	3.50
5	10:20 AM	Mcd Airport	1:25 PM	Y Lodge	5.50	6.17	7.76	8.05	6.78	5.36
6	5:00 PM	U.C. Merced	8:20 PM	Y Lodge	7.07	7.01	7.88	8.14	7.89	6.65
7	6:20 AM	Y Bug Res.	7:51 AM	UC Merced	6.35	5.45	5.49	6.37	9.08	9.51
8	9:32 AM	Y Curry Vill.	12:36 PM	Mcd Transpo	8.28	8.21	8.39	8.99	8.99	6.95
9	3:40 PM	Y Curry Vill.	6:36 PM	Mcd Transpo	18.71	16.08	17.66	13.97	12.07	11.01
10	4:20 PM	Y Curry Vill.	6:12 PM	Mariposa	11.90	10.55	10.83	8.82	8.82	7.43
11	5:05 PM	Y Curry Vill.	7:55 PM	Mcd Transpo	10.25	10.64	8.81	9.74	7.26	6.22
12	5:40 PM	Y Curry Vill.	8:31 PM	Mcd Transpo	6.81	7.43	7.07	5.34	4.79	3.37
14	8:05 PM	Y Curry Vill.	10:59 PM	Mcd Transpo	2.96	2.93	3.03	3.09	1.56	1.10

Summer/ Spring Schedule: Weekend/Holiday Passengers/Hour FY 2009/10 (Includes Amtrak Passengers)

Run	Origin	Desitnation	May 17-31	June	July	August	September	October		
2	6:15 AM	Mariposa	8:10 AM	Y Lodge	8.73	10.72	10.70	7.74	7.60	4.09
3	7:00 AM	Mcd Transpo	9:55 AM	Y Lodge	9.79	12.03	7.24	8.17	7.05	3.56
4	8:50 AM	Mcd Transpo	11:45 AM	Y Lodge	5.29	6.49	9.25	8.13	5.27	3.98
5	10:20 AM	Mcd Airport	1:25 PM	Y Lodge	6.04	6.94	6.70	9.10	6.48	3.26
6	5:00 PM	U.C. Merced	8:20 PM	Y Lodge	3.27	4.02	5.93	5.24	5.39	3.67
8	9:32 AM	Y Curry Vill.	12:36 PM	Mcd Transpo	4.33	5.32	7.63	6.68	7.63	4.73
9	3:40 PM	Y Curry Vill.	6:36 PM	Mcd Transpo	10.69	11.38	11.84	10.73	9.40	6.15
10	4:20 PM	Y Curry Vill.	6:12 PM	Mariposa	4.19	4.61	3.33	3.29	4.64	1.96
11	5:05 PM	Y Curry Vill.	7:55 PM	Mcd Transpo	6.74	8.28	5.67	6.34	4.44	3.49
12	5:40 PM	Y Curry Vill.	8:31 PM	Mcd Transpo	4.81	5.91	5.36	5.14	5.82	2.95
14	8:05 PM	Y Curry Vill.	10:59 PM	Mcd Transpo	2.62	3.22	3.00	2.76	1.72	1.11

Passengers per vehicle service hour below 4.0

Route 120

Route 120 operates between June and September when Tioga Pass is open. In June and September, service is operated weekends only, weather permitting. In July and August the service is offered daily.

The Route 120 service provides one round trip daily from Mammoth Lakes, starting at 7:00 am and serving June Lake, Lee Vining, Tuolumne Meadows and Yosemite National Park. The morning bus is scheduled to arrive at its last stop at 10:55 am at the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center. In the other direction, the bus departs at 5:00 pm from the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center and is scheduled to arrive at its last stop in Mammoth Lakes at 8:51 pm. The Summer 2010 Route 120 schedule is provided below as Exhibit 2-6.

Exhibit 2-6

HIGHWAY 120E/395 ROUTE		Effective June - September 2010	
Summer 2010			
June and September - weekends only		July and August - Daily	
YARTS BUS STOP		TO YOSEMITE <i>Read Down</i>	FROM YOSEMITE <i>Read up from bottom</i>
Mammoth Lakes	Mammoth Mountain Inn	7:00 AM	8:51 PM
	Juniper Springs Summit	7:15 AM	8:36 PM
	Mammoth Lakes Park & Ride - Old Mammoth Rd. at Tavern Rd.	7:17 AM	8:33 PM
	Shilo Inn	7:20 AM	8:30 PM
June Lake	June Lake Ski Area Parking Lot	7:50 AM	8:00 PM-Stop on Demand Only
	Rush Creek Trailhead Parking Lot	7:55 AM	7:55 PM-Stop on Demand Only
Lee Vining	Lake View Lodge	8:20 AM	7:30 PM
	Forest Service Visitor Center	8:17 AM	7:27 PM
	Tioga Mobil Gas Mart	8:30 AM	7:22 PM
Tuolumne Meadows	Tuolumne Meadows Store	9:05 AM	6:50 PM
	Tuolumne Meadows Visitor Center	9:10 AM	6:45 PM
Yosemite Park	White Wolf Lodge	9:50 AM	6:00 PM
	Crane Flat Gas Station	10:20 AM- Stop on Demand Only	5:30 PM-Stop on Demand Only
	Yosemite Valley Visitor Center	10:55 AM	5:00 PM

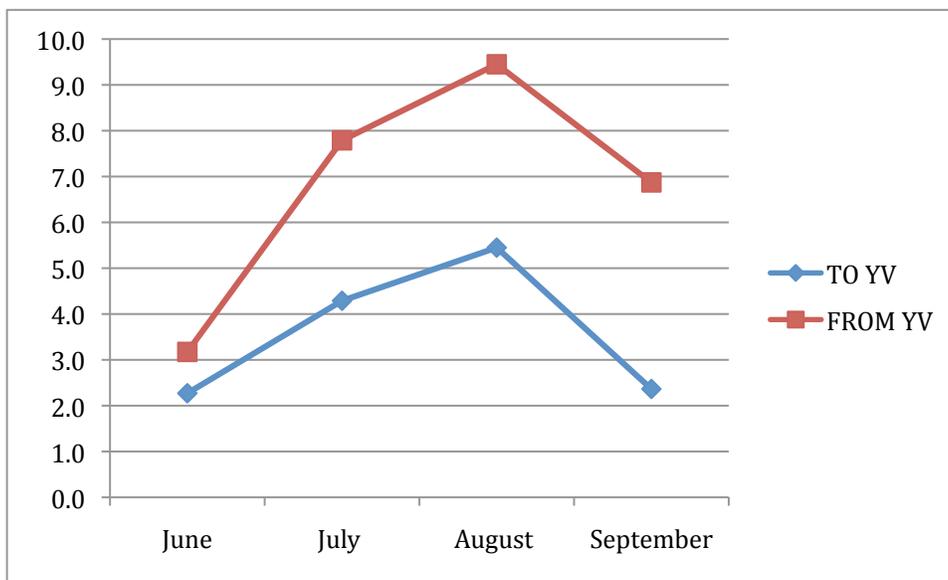
DNC operates a tour shuttle service between Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne Meadows that complements the YARTS existing schedule. In the morning the DNC shuttle departs Curry Village 8:00 am with the last stop at Tuolumne Meadows Lodge at 10:35 am. The bus then departs from Tuolumne Meadows Lodge at 2:05 pm, arriving back to Yosemite Valley at 4:15 pm.

In the summer of 2010, there were a total of 3,764 passengers on the Route 120 service. Almost two-thirds of the trips taken in the direction from Yosemite Valley to Mammoth Lakes, with 2,418 trips or 64% of the total. Based on the July 2010 survey of

passengers, 86% of passengers were making a one-way trip on YARTS. Route 120 is predominantly a hiker and backpacker bus with 69% staying at a campground or in the backcountry after getting off the YARTS bus. Consultant observations found that many of the respondents staying in a hotel were at a hotel in Mammoth Lakes, for example, after getting out of the backcountry.

In the summer of 2010, there were a total of 609 vehicle service hours provided, with an average productivity of 6.18 passengers per vehicle service hour. Since each trip is about four hours long, there were an average of about 25 passengers per bus on Route 120 throughout the summer. As would be expected, July and August are the prime summer months and ridership and average productivity was significantly higher than during the shoulder months of June and September. As shown in Exhibit 2-7, productivity on trips from Yosemite were significantly higher than the trip from Mammoth Lakes to Yosemite.

Exhibit 2-7
Route 120 Weekend passengers per hour by Month, 2010



According to ridership pick-up locations, more than half (55%) of the passengers are picked up in Yosemite Valley at the Visitors Center. Exhibit 2-8 provides a breakdown of ridership by stop for the summer of 2010.

Exhibit 2-8
Route 120 Ridership by Stop, Summer 2010

Pick-Up Location	Jun-10	Jul-10	Aug-10	Sep-10
Mammoth Mountain Inn	9	77	132	17
Juniper Springs Summit	2	39	34	2
Mammoth Lakes P&R	5	49	42	2
Highway 203, Shilo Inn	8	142	142	30
June Mountain Ski Area	1	5	8	0
Rush Creek Trailhead	4	4	7	3
Lake View Lodge	3	21	29	3
Forest Service Center	2	14	14	0
Tioga Mobil Gas Mart	12	33	47	5
Tuolumne Meadows Store	17	264	255	40
Tuolumne Visitors Center	0	18	37	1
White Wolf Lodge	0	34	53	0
Crane Flast Gas Station	0	10	12	0
Yosemite Visitor Center	98	888	886	215
Total	161	1598	1698	318

2010 survey sample size of 97 passengers is fairly small for origin/destination data. However, the data provides a reasonable indicator of the primary origin/destination patterns shown in Exhibit 2-9 below.

Exhibit 2-9
Primary Origin-Destination Pairs, Route 120

Origin-Destination Pair	Percentage	Cumulative %
Yosemite Valley-Tuolumne Meadows	28.6%	
Tuolumne Meadows-Yosemite Valley	14.3%	42.9%
Mammoth Lakes-Yosemite Valley	17.3	
Yosemite Valley-Mammoth Lakes	6.1%	23.4%
Tuolumne Meadows-Mammoth Lakes	2.0%	
Mammoth Lakes-Tuolumne Meadows	6.1%	8.1%

The dominant origin-destination on Route 120 is between Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne Meadows with 42.9% in both directions (cumulative percentage above). At present, three times as many passengers travel between Mammoth Lakes and Yosemite Valley than between Mammoth Lakes and Tuolumne Meadows.

Stakeholder input indicated there was significant amount of latent demand between Mammoth Lakes and June Lakes to Tuolumne Meadows that was not captured in the survey because the only trip leaves at 7:00 am in the morning and doesn't return until almost 9:00 pm at night. Stakeholders stated that a service with multiple trips to and from Tuolumne Meadows would change the current trip patterns significantly. Alternative route and schedules and recommendations for Route 120 are included in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3: Market Research and Future Needs

This chapter starts with a summary of the key findings of the market research effort. This includes the major stakeholder themes from interviews and workshops. The second section of this chapter provides the key finding of the July 2010 on-board survey. **The full Market Research Report is available in Volume III of the Short Range Transit Plan.** The final section of this chapter is devoted to the key trends that may influence future demand for YARTS services.

Major Stakeholder Themes

During the initial visit, the consultants met with key stakeholders including Merced County Association of Government staff, representatives of each of the YARTS member counties, the service operator and drivers, National Park Service and members of the Gateway Partners group. During a second on-site visit, a series of public workshops were held in Merced, Mariposa, El Portal, Yosemite Valley, June Lake, Lee Vining and Mammoth Lakes. The following are twelve key major thematic findings from the stakeholder input:

- 1. There is a need to have more stable funding sources for YARTS.* Unlike most transit services, YARTS does not have dedicated funding sources. There is a need to provide YARTS with more certain operating funding over the next five years.
- 2. Interest in exploring the expansion of YARTS to other gateway corridors.* YARTS service along the Highway 41 corridor between the Fresno Airport, Wawona, and Yosemite Valley was often suggested during stakeholder interview. The potential for service between Yosemite Valley, Groveland, and possibly Sonora was also discussed often.
- 3. Desire for improvements in connectivity to other transit links.* Amtrak provides a major source of visitor riders for YARTS, but stakeholders most often cited improvements in midday access. A better connection between CREST in the eastern Sierras and YARTS' 120 route should be explored.
- 4. Schedule improvements would help to tap into potential demand for greater utilization.* While many stakeholders recognized YARTS' resource constraints, the most frequent suggestions for Route 140 were better midday service, earlier morning service to Yosemite, and an earlier outbound schedule on Fridays to better serve El Portal National Park Service employees. On Route 120, two round trips a day between Mammoth Lakes and Yosemite was the most frequent suggestion by stakeholders.
- 5. Operational issues limit the reliability of YARTS service.* Employees interviewed complained of being late to work due to YARTS delays. Summer traffic and the

bridge delays on Route 140, combined with mechanical problems on the older buses, can play havoc with YARTS schedules.

6. Infrastructure and equipment improvements would vastly improve comfort and convenience for YARTS passengers. Suggestions were made for bus shelter improvements, better YARTS signage, and passenger amenities when YARTS orders new buses.

7. The fare structure should be re-evaluated, especially in order to attract family groups. While YARTS has a policy of allowing one child 12 and under to ride free with each adult ticket, stakeholders did provide suggestions for a “family pass” that would better facilitate use of YARTS by families.

8. Need some system for communicating service delays to riders. Both resident and visitor riders expressed the desire for some means of communication to let them know when YARTS is delayed. Regular riders noted that buses are often late and they have no way of knowing if it will be 5 minutes or 30 minutes. Note: There is a 24/7-phone line that riders can call into, however this was not mentioned by riders.

9. Improve passenger information via collateral and bus stop displays. Stakeholders and users both commented on the need to enhance YARTS passenger information tools such as printed schedules and brochures, and information panels at bus stops.

10. Capitalize on the Internet and social media to communicate with current and potential users. The critical role of the Internet in travel planning was discussed in virtually every meeting. Stakeholders noted the need to insure that YARTS Internet information is easily accessible and user friendly, and to utilize social media to communicate with riders more directly.

11. Increase marketing and communications to visitors through hotels, campsites, tour companies, airport and other tourism gatekeepers. Many YARTS riders learn about YARTS through a tourism industry gatekeeper such as hotel, campsite, tour company or travel agency. These entities represent important marketing partners for YARTS and were discussed extensively in the stakeholder meetings and workshops. Many participants spoke of the importance of communicating with hotel “front desk” staff and campsite hosts to make sure they are aware of and ready to promote the service.

12. Better Define Institutional Roles and Responsibilities. Stakeholders provided input on the roles and responsibilities of YARTS versus Delaware North Corporation’s (DNC) hiker shuttle. They also discussed the potential benefit of a separate, local contract for Route 120 service.

Resident and Visitor Passenger Survey

During July of 2010 a survey was conducted of passengers onboard YARTS buses. Unique questionnaires were developed for residents and visitors on each route. A total of 407 completed questionnaires were returned on Route 140 and 102 completed questionnaires on Route 120.

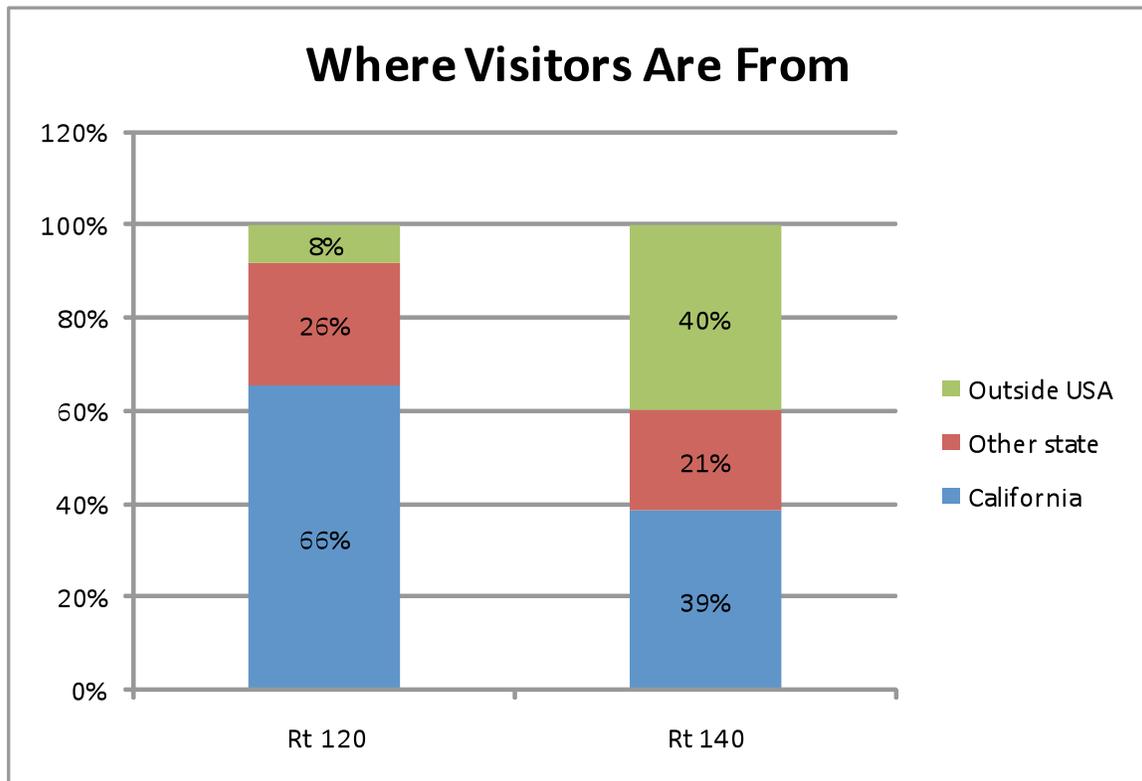
How passengers found out about YARTS

For visitors, the Internet is how one third of respondents learned about YARTS. Word of mouth accounts for about another quarter of the visitor responses. Residents were most likely to learn about YARTS from their employer (35%) or a friend (27%).

YARTS rider profile

For visitors, Route 120 attracts mostly Californians, with two thirds of its riders residing in the state and only 8% of its riders being international. Route 140, on the other hand, attracts a large number of international visitors, 40%. Exhibit 3-1 provides a profile of where visitors are from.

Exhibit 3-1



YARTS visitor ridership includes a spectrum of ages. However, the largest age group on both routes is the 18-29 age group. For residents, the 18-29 age group is also highest with 26% but is followed closely by ages 50-59 with 24%.

On Route 120, the majority of riders had visited the park before (72%), and about 18% of visitors had ridden YARTS before. On Route 140, fewer had visited the park before (42%), but a similar proportion (19%) had ridden YARTS before.

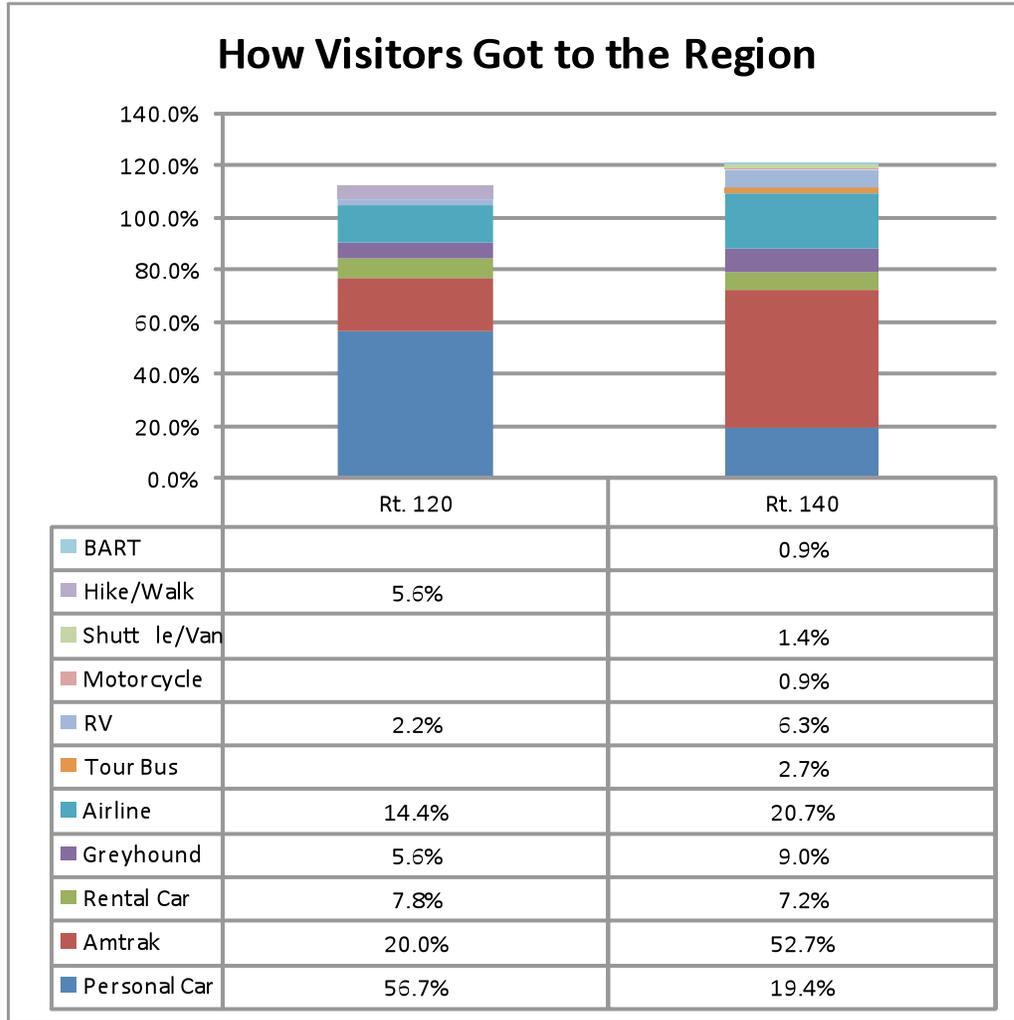
Nearly two-thirds (63%) of YARTS resident riders are long term riders, they began riding in 2008 or earlier. The majority of resident riders (72%) who completed the questionnaire were on their way to or from work. Ten percent were traveling for recreation and 17% were traveling for shopping, medical or other non-commute reasons. 60% said they work for the National Park Service and 20% for DNC.

Visitor Access to YARTS

The greatest number of Route 120 riders arrive via personal car (57%). This is not surprising given the fact that 60% of them are from California. Intercity transit is the second most used mode for Route 120 riders, with 20% saying they used Amtrak to arrive in the region and another 6% saying they used Greyhound. It should be noted that 120 riders who say they came via Amtrak or Greyhound must have used Route 140 originally, as both Amtrak and Greyhound serve Merced and not Mammoth Lakes.

For Route 140, Amtrak is the most cited mode for accessing the region and is used by 53% of respondents. Another 9% say they arrived by Greyhound. Hence more than 60% came to the region without a private vehicle. Again, this reflects the differing makeup of the riders; there are many more international visitors. It is also a result of the fact that Route 140 serves the Amtrak station directly. Exhibit 3-2 provides a profile of how visitors arrive to the Yosemite gateway before travelling on YARTS.

Exhibit 3-2



About 20% of all visitor riders say they travel via airline for part of their trip to the region. The majority (60%) flew to San Francisco.

The majority of visitors (around 80% overall) who responded to the survey on both routes are staying overnight in the Yosemite region. Route 120 riders are most likely to be staying at a campground or backpacking in the wilderness (69%), with only 14% staying in a hotel. On the other hand, Route 140 Riders are more evenly divided between those staying at a hotel (42%) or a campground (37%).

Trip Patterns

Only 14% of visitor riders on Route 120 said they were making a round trip. The other 86% said they were traveling one way. A review of origin and destination patterns on Route 120 indicates that a large percent of passengers (43%) are traveling between Tuolumne Meadows and Yosemite Valley rather than traveling

to/from a location outside the park. About 31% are traveling between Mammoth Lakes and the park, while another 5% are traveling between June Lake/Lee Vining and the park.

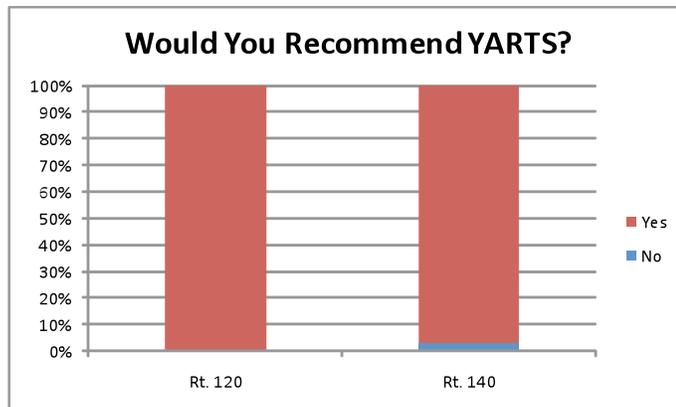
On Route 140, the resident trip patterns are dominated by work trips from Mariposa and Midpines to El Portal and Yosemite Valley. For visitors, Yosemite Valley and Merced represent the largest boarding/alighting locations. However, significant boardings occur at the lodging establishments in Mariposa, Midpines and El Portal.

Customer Satisfaction

The highest satisfaction ratings from both visitors and residents were for the YARTS drivers, both in the area of safe driving and courtesy, and for the cleanliness of the vehicles. Overall, riders gave YARTS a very good rating of 6.16 on a scale of 7, a little higher on route 120 than on route 140.

The lowest rating among both visitors and residents was for how well the bus schedule meets your needs. This was also the topic, by far, on which the most comments were received to an open-ended question on how YARTS might improve service. On Route 140, 114 comments on schedules and frequency were received and on Route 120, 31 comments (about 30% of all respondents) were received. Many visitors and employees commented on the need for earlier, later or mid-day trips, as well as the difficulty of making connections with other transportation services.

Employee and visitor passenger satisfaction with the YARTS service is also reflected in their nearly universal willingness to recommend it to a friend or coworker as shown in the chart to the right.



Driving Forces that May Influence Future YARTS Demand

There are a number of factors over the next five years that will influence future YARTS demand. Those most significant factors include:

- Visitation of Yosemite National Park over the next five years.
- Potential re-location of employees outside of Yosemite National Park to both Mariposa and Lee Vining.
- Continuance of the Commuter Tax Benefit and Amtrak services as part of the Federal reauthorization of transportation.
- Availability of parking for employees working in Yosemite National Park.
- Price of gasoline.

Yosemite Visitation

Over the past 25 years, visitor use of Yosemite National Park has seen two major cycles of demand. In 1985, Yosemite visitation was 2.9 million annual visits and increased gradually to a peak of almost 4.2 million annual visits in 1996. Visitation increased by slightly over 100,000 annual visits during this time. After major flooding in Yosemite in January 1997, visitation dropped gradually to a low of just below 3.4 million annual visits in 2006, the year of the major landslide that temporarily closed Highway 140. Starting in 2007, visitation has again increased and at this writing was approaching 4.0 million visits for 2010 in December 2010.

The National Park Service does not have visitor forecast over the next five years. As discussed previously, YARTS ridership spiked its first year when fares were free. Over the past three full fiscal years, ridership has grown at just under 4% per year on average. This is slightly higher than the growth over past three years to 2010 for overall Yosemite visitation.

The complexities of initial free fares, initial high service levels, the 2006 landslide and the lack of historical data on Amtrak ridership¹ does not allow for a good analysis of the correlation of YARTS ridership to Yosemite visitation trends. However, since the landslide in May 2006, there has been a good correlation of ridership to overall Yosemite visitation.

Employee Relocation to Mariposa and Lee Vining.

During the market research phase of the SRTP, the consulting team was told that: "The park may be moving some administrative people from El Portal to Mariposa (50-100 people)" and "there is discussion in the Tuolumne River Plan of re-location of an unspecified number of employees to Lee Vining." In reviewing these statements with NPS management, the discussion of re-location of employee housing and offices to Mariposa and Lee Vining continues to be in the idea stage with some movement on securing office space in Mariposa. The Draft Tuolumne River Plan will be coming out in 2011, and housing park staff in Lee Vining is being considered as one of the alternatives.

While it is uncertain whether the re-location will come to fruition, YARTS should be prepared for the possibility over the next five years. Housing additional employment in Mariposa has the potential of exceeding available capacity on Runs 1, 2, and 10 in the future. It could also have the opposite effect in reducing YARTS demand if current Mariposa residents working in Yosemite are re-located to work in Mariposa. The effect on YARTS demand will depend on who is re-located and what their resident origins and employment destinations are.

¹ In YARTS' early years, VIA had a contract with Amtrak to provide Thruway services to Yosemite Valley, and this early Amtrak ridership data is not part of the YARTS records.

Continuance of the Commuter Tax Benefit and Amtrak services in SAFETEA-LU reauthorization.

As discussed in the previous chapter, NPS employees are a significant ridership component of YARTS. Up to \$230 per month of pre-tax benefits can currently be utilized by NPS employees. This is a significant monetary benefit, which has helped to encourage YARTS ridership by NPS employees. While the benefit has been extended to 2011, the status of the benefit beyond 2011 is not known. Given the early history of YARTS, if Congress were to eliminate this benefit, it could have a significant impact on overall YARTS ridership.

Amtrak is also subject to transportation reauthorization in Congress. Funding levels may or may not affect Amtrak service levels to Merced. Visitor ridership is very dependent on YARTS ridership, and any future significant reductions in Amtrak service would likely have a significant impact on YARTS ridership.

Changes to Parking Supply and Policies

The Transportation Improvement Strategies Report (TISR) is a technical document that compiles a broad range of ideas about how to improve visitor transportation systems and services in and around Yosemite National Park. In this report, strategies will be evaluated and prioritized by specific criteria. This collection of ideas will ultimately be used to inform future planning and management efforts. The TISR is scheduled to be completed by March 2011 by the consulting firm RSG, Inc. One important strategy area that could have a significant impact on YARTS ridership is parking supplies and policies for both visitors and employees. If DNC and NPS employees have fewer parking spaces available to them, for example, YART demand would increase. Other strategies may be recommended that could affect YARTS demand.

Price of Gasoline

The recent history of spikes in gasoline prices across the nation created a strong correlation of increased transit ridership, especially in commuter ridership. The price of gasoline is an overall important variable for future YARTS ridership and overall operating costs.

Chapter 4: GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

This chapter provides policy guidance for the YARTS Board of Commissioners over the next five years.

YARTS Mission Statement

The following is the adopted YARTS Mission Statement contained in the 2004 YARTS Short-Range Transit Plan:

YARTS will provide a positive alternative method of access to Yosemite National Park, carrying visitors, employees and residents. YARTS service is not intended to replace auto access or trans-Sierra travel, but is intended to provide a viable alternative that offers a positive experience, emphasizing comfort and convenience for riders while guaranteeing access to the Park.

The existing mission statement has a number of deficiencies, based on the market research and review of contracts with existing funding partners for the 2010 Short-Range Transit Plan. The mission statement doesn't include:

- Connectivity to regional rail and bus providers.
- Safety of passengers.
- Customer satisfaction.
- Cost-effectiveness.

The following is the YARTS mission statement approved by the YARTS on January 24, 2011:

YARTS will provide a safe and convenient public transit alternative for access to Yosemite National Park and communities along its service corridors in the Yosemite region, serving visitors, employees and residents in a cost-effective manner. YARTS will achieve high customer satisfaction with reliable service. YARTS will provide good connectivity to regional transportation providers in order to guarantee convenient public transportation access in the gateway corridors to Yosemite National Park. YARTS service is not intended to replace auto access or trans-Sierra travel, but is intended to provide a viable alternative that offers a positive experience, emphasizing comfort and convenience for riders while guaranteeing access to the Park.

Recommended Goals and Performance Standards

The goals establish general direction for policies and operation, are value-driven, and provide a long-range perspective. The minimum performance standard is the recommended minimum performance standard for achieving the goal. The recommended target performance objective is what YARTS should strive to achieve during the next five years. Importantly, the data source for ongoing monitoring is identified for each recommended performance standard.

Goal #1: Continue to provide safe and convenient public transportation services to the residents and visitors to Merced, Mariposa and Mono counties, along the Highway 120 and 140 corridors to Yosemite Valley, for employment, recreation, shopping, education and social service trips, so long as service can be provided in a cost-effective manner. (Safe and accessible goal)

Accessibility and Convenience: The minimum standard is to provide a minimum of four round trips on Highway 140 and one round trip on Highway 120. Four round trips is the minimum required in the Cooperative Agreement with Yosemite National Park.

The target objective is to meet consumer demand in all seasons with six to seven round trips daily as demand warrants. The current schedule provides six round-trips.

Regional Connectivity: The minimum standard is to provide connection on two trips inbound to Yosemite and two trips outbound from Yosemite daily to both Amtrak and Greyhound.

The target standard is to provide connections on three trips inbound to Yosemite and trips outbound from Yosemite daily to both Amtrak and Greyhound.

The contract with Amtrak states “To the maintain the present schedule patterns which offer reasonable connections to and from certain AMTRAK trains at Merced. These YARTS bus schedules include the connections with trains 702/711 and 712/701 inbound to Yosemite and trains 713/714, 717/704 and 703/718 outbound from Yosemite...”

Total Accidents: The minimum standard should be 100,000 miles between preventable accidents with a target objective of 500,000 between all accidents. In FY 2009/10, VIA reported three accidents of a minor nature. Two of the accidents could be characterized as non-preventable accidents, including a rock falling on a bus. There was only one preventable accident in 359,319 vehicle service miles in FY 2009/10, far exceeding the minimum standard. YARTS has never had injury accident.

Training and Safety Plan: The minimum standard and target objective is 100% compliance with the employee selection, drug testing, and training requirement included in the operator contractor. A summary of training and safety compliance should be included in the operator contract and validated by YARTS staff.

Goal #2: Ensure than all transit programs can be provided at a high quality of service. Quality of service is more important than expansion of service. (Service quality goal)

The recommended performance standards to monitor the service effectiveness goal are:

On-time performance: The minimum standard is 0.5% percent of trips that are not early and 95% of trips that are no more than 10 minutes late to stops on average for a particular run on days without unusual weather or a traffic incident beyond the control of the contractor. Driver and bus mechanical issues are within control of the contractor. Abnormal delays due to temporary construction, waiting more than one signal cycle at the rockslide bridge, traffic accidents, abnormal traffic during the top 5% of Yosemite visitation days, and late Amtrak trains are beyond the control of the contractor. When a minimum of seven YARTS buses are in service, the target objective is zero percent of trips that are not early and 95% of trips that are no more than five minutes late. At that time the service delay report should include trips with service delays of five minutes or more.

Road Calls: A minimum standard of 15,000 miles between road calls for all buses in the fleet that are within their normal useful life is suggested. A target objective would be 30,000 miles between road call for all buses in the fleet that are within their normal useful life. The contractor report includes all road calls for the entire fleet. In FY 2009/10, there were 39,924 miles between road calls on the YARTS fleet. VIA currently exceeds the target objective and its performance is exemplary.

Missed trips: A minimum standard is no more than twelve missed trips per year. A target standard is zero missed trips annually. In FY 2009/10, there were a total of 40 missed trips, reported by VIA Adventures, Inc. The contract with VIA defines a missed run as “any run that operates more than 15 minutes late shall be considered a missed run. Mechanical failure resulting in delays of 15 minutes or greater shall be considered a missed run.” VIA pays a fine of \$500 for each missed run. It is recommended that a missed run be defined as something within the control of the contractor, including mechanical failure, and driver error or driver performance, but exclude such factors as traffic delays due to accidents, traffic congestion in Yosemite Valley, and late arriving trains in Merced. In practice this is what is included as missed trips. Forty missed trips for FY 2009/10 is significantly

higher than the minimum standard. The YARTS Transit Manager should continue to closely monitor missed trips.

Customer Satisfaction: On an annual basis, temporary or part-time YARTS employees or contractors should conduct a random customer satisfaction survey.

Goal #3: Provide an effective level of service in response to demonstrated community and visitor market needs. (Service effectiveness goal)

Service productivity: The following are target objectives and minimum standards for measuring productivity as measured in passengers per vehicle service hour:

Minimum standard average passengers per vehicle service hour:

Summer/Fall Schedule Route 140: 8.0

Winter/Spring Schedule Route 140: 7.0

Summer Route 120: 6.5

Target objective average passengers per vehicle service hour:

Summer/Fall Schedule Route 140: 10.0

Winter/Spring Schedule Route 140: 8.5

Summer Route 120: 7.5

FY 2009/10 Actual Performance:

Summer/Fall Schedule Route 140: 7.8

Winter/Spring Schedule Route 140: 6.5

Summer Route 120 (Summer 2010): 6.2

Minimum standard average per run:

All routes: four passengers per vehicle service hour.

All runs falling below the average minimum standard for a season shall be reviewed and mitigation steps considered.

Load Factor: Load factor is the percentage of seats occupied by passengers. The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of passenger by the number of seats available and multiplying by 100%.

Minimum standard load factor:

Summer/Fall Schedule Route 140: 45%

Winter/Spring Schedule Route 140: 35%

Summer Route 120: 45%

Target objective load factor

Summer/Fall Schedule Route 140: 60%

Winter/Spring Schedule Route 140: 45%
 Summer Route 120: 60%

FY 2009/10 Average Actual Performance:
 Summer/Fall Schedule Route 140: 39%
 Winter/Spring Schedule Route 140: 28%
 Summer Route 120 outbound (Summer 2010): 57%
 Summer Route 120 inbound to Yosemite: 32%

The load factor in July during the peak ridership month is significantly higher than the average. In July 2010, the average load factor was 55% for Route 140, and 65% for Route 120 outbound.

Although the load factor on average is below 50% for the Summer/Fall Schedule, some runs exceed the seated capacity on a few runs during the peak season. In July 2009, for example, 86 passengers were left behind due to the bus being full, despite allowing standees. In fact, on average in July 2009, there was a load factor of 109% on Run 3 on weekdays, 101% on Run 4 on weekends, and an average of 95.6% on Run 9.

Passengers Left Behind

VIA tracks the number of passengers left behind due to full buses. In FY 2009/10, there were 122 passengers left behind, mostly in July 2009. This is due to peak passenger demand on Runs 3 and 9 during the peak summer demand.

The minimum standard should be that fewer than 25 passengers are left behind in a fiscal year. The target objective is that no passengers are left behind.

Based on this analysis, an extra bus is recommended in July only to increase capacity during the peak of the peak summer season.

Goal #4: Provide YARTS services that are financially sustainable within existing local, state and federal funding programs and regulations in a cost-efficient manner (service cost-efficiency goal)

Farebox Recovery: The minimum standard should be 20%. The target objective system wide is 30%. The average farebox recovery in FY 2009/10 was 27%. However, in FY 2010/11 the farebox recovery ratio is expected to drop to 24% or below due to significantly less NPS voucher revenue.

The target objective for farebox recovery is 30%

Cost Per Vehicle Revenue Hour: The cost per vehicle service hour is not easily compared to other transit systems because:

- At present the contractor is providing all but one of the buses.
- There is significant layover time in Yosemite.
- The schedules have significant deadhead time.
- The Route 120 driver needs to stay in Mammoth Lakes in the summer months only.

All of these factors are considered in the VIA contract rate. Including the VIA contract and all other operating expenses, the cost per vehicle service hour was \$144.24.

The cost per vehicle service hour rate for a VIA-supplied bus is \$134.08 and the cost for YARTS-owned bus is \$117.16.

The minimum standard should be that the costs per vehicle service hour not exceed the consumer price index adjusted for increased fuel costs.

The target standard is to have the cost per vehicle service hour be below \$130 per hour, adjusted for inflation.

Subsidy Per Passenger Trip: The subsidy per passenger trip is calculated by subtracting fare revenues from operating expenses and dividing the resulting sum by total passengers. In FY 2009/10, the total subsidy per passenger trip was \$15.02 per passenger.

The minimum standard should for the subsidy per passenger trip to be below \$14 per passenger trip.

The target objective should be to get the subsidy per passenger trip under \$10 per trip. This would be the result of the streamlined scheduling recommended in Chapter 5, the results of increased ridership from the Marketing Plan in Chapter 5, increased fares also recommended in Chapter 5, the transition to a YARTS owned fleet, and competitive bidding of the operations and maintenance contract.

Percentage of Administrative Costs to Operating Costs

Administrative costs are a subset of operating costs. Administrative costs are the MCAG staff and overhead costs to manage YARTS. These include the current budget line items in the budget of:

- Management accounting, planning and service monitoring
- Audit and insurance
- Transpo Station Lease
- Marketing Administration (MCAG staff time)

Administrative costs are projected to be 10.6%¹ of the total operating costs in FY 2010/11. This is excellent and is below the recommended target objective of 12%. The minimum standard should be that administrative costs should not exceed 15% of total operating costs.

Goal #5: YARTS should continue to develop into a regional Yosemite gateway corridor public transit provider if expansion to other gateway corridors can be accomplished without adversely affecting existing YARTS services.

The YARTS Board should consider the following set of policies before accepting a proposal for operating a third or fourth route in a different corridor:

- Any proposal to operate a new route should not jeopardize the current funding agreements that YARTS currently relies upon. In other words, any proposal for expansion should not significantly detract from YARTS core services. This would likely require some additional analysis and direct discussion with partners, especially with Caltrans for FTA 5311 (f) funding, Amtrak, and the National Park Service. For example, if Amtrak were to provide the Highway 41 corridor service to Yosemite the same type of agreement for Thruway service if another provider operates that service, would that agreement have any impact on the agreement with YARTS, both short-term and long-term? Stakeholders from the National Park Service have indicated that the \$300,000 is pretty well set, no matter how many other corridors YARTS might serve. Would there be an expectation from the sponsors of the new route to utilize some of the \$300,000 for operating support for the new route?
- The proposal should clearly identify the funding source to be utilized to share YARTS' costs. The companion working paper on institutional options suggests two specific cost sharing options. Any proposal to join YARTS should also utilize what the YARTS Board establishes a basis for sharing YARTS' costs.
- The operations plan should have sound expense forecasts based on market rates for service per vehicle service hour. The route should achieve a minimum of six passengers per vehicle service hour after one full year of operation.
- The fare structure should be compatible with the overall YARTS fare structure. The proposal should demonstrate a minimum of a 20% farebox recovery after one full year of operation.
- A financial plan should be provided for operations that provide a sustainable source of funding for the route over a five-year period. This should be done in collaboration with the YARTS Transit Manager. A pilot or demonstration program budget should be supplemented with a plan on what sources YARTS would utilize after the pilot or demonstration phase is completed.

¹ Assumes that 50% of the current budget for public education/media relations/marketing administration is MCAG staff time.

The YARTS Transit Manager has discussed the potential for additional FTA 5311 (f) funding with Caltrans. Caltrans staff was open to having a proposal to fund FTA 5311 (f) for different corridors. Therefore, if there were a decision to expand YARTS to the Highway 41 corridor to Fresno, or the 120 corridor west to Modesto, it may be possible to receive up to the \$300,000 maximum for each corridor served. This is only a possibility, to be explored further in direct discussions with Caltrans.

- The capital needs for the new route should be clearly identified including buses, bus stops, shelters and passenger information. The Short Range Transit Plan will include a capital plan over a five-year period. In collaboration with the YARTS Transit Manager, a proposed amendment to the Capital Plan would need to be provided. Proposed contribution for capital matching should be included.

Chapter 5: SERVICE AND FARE OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides service fare options and recommendations based on the input received from the market research effort summarized in Chapter 3. The findings and recommendations are also based, in part, on the analysis of performance in Chapter 2. Service options and recommendations are provided for Routes 140 and 120. This chapter is meant to document the service and fare options considered along with recommendations. Chapter 7 provides a listing of recommended actions by year over the next five years. Other service options are being proposed in parallel studies along the Highway 41 corridor between Fresno and Yosemite Valley, and along the 120 corridor in Tuolumne County to Yosemite Valley. The status of these studies is also briefly reviewed in this chapter.

I. SERVICE OPTIONS

Service Options for Route 140

The Short Range Transit Plan is a document that provides a blueprint for the development of YARTS services over the next five years. A baseline financial forecast¹ points to the need for taking several steps to improve service efficiency and cost-effectiveness, increase ridership and fare revenues, and pursue revenue enhancements to balance the budget, meet funding agreement contractual requirements, and meet the growing visitation demands in Yosemite National Park.

Service Efficiency and Reduction Options

The following are several potential service cutbacks that might be feasible based on the review of performance in Chapter 2. It should be noted that the YARTS operating contract has a provision such that if YARTS drops below 11,529 vehicle service hours, the contract rate goes up based on an agreed upon scale. YARTS currently is projected to have 12,262 vehicle service hours in FY 2010/11. Selection of minor reductions in #1-3 below would not result in an hourly rate increase, but implementation of Option #4 below would trigger an hourly rate increase, decreasing the potential savings

1. *Start the Winter/Spring schedule October 1 instead of November 1.* Ridership and passenger productivity drops off significantly between September and October. In FY 2009/10, monthly ridership peaked in July 2009 at 8,950 passengers and then declined to 7,164 in September 2009. Ridership then dropped to 5,740 in October 2009. Most importantly, productivity on Route 140 dropped from 3.09 in August

¹ Presented to the YARTS Board of Commissioners on December 15, 2010 and included in Chapter 8.

2009 to 1.56 passengers per hour in September 2009 and 1.10 in October 2009. The other winter route change would be to Route 6, with ridership productivity dropping from 8.14 passengers in August to 7.89 in September and then 6.65 in October 2009 on weekdays and just 3.67 passengers per hour on weekends. Starting the Winter/Spring schedule on October 1 would save 155 annual vehicle service hours and \$20,782 annually. *Recommended for implementation in FY 2011-12*

2. *Eliminate Route 6 on winter weekends.* In the Winter/Spring schedule, the last run to Yosemite Valley currently leaves the Merced Airport at 10:20 am on Run 5. Run 6 starts at UC Merced at 5:00 pm and operates until 6:50 pm and terminates at Midpines. While this does provide an important intercity link in the afternoon between Merced and Midpines, ridership on weekends and holidays is very low and does not exceed more than 3.5 passengers per hour the entire winter. Weekday ridership on Run 6 is about twice that on weekends. Elimination of Route 6 during the Winter/Spring schedule would reduce vehicle service hours by 82.8 annually and would save approximately \$12,006 annually, assuming the use of a VIA small bus. The savings would be slightly greater if the Winter/Spring schedule started in October as suggested above. *Recommended for implementation in FY 2011-12*

3. *Eliminate Runs 3 and 10 in the winter months on weekends.* Run 3 has less than four passengers per hour on weekends between November and March. Run 10 is designed to serve NPS employees in El Portal, and works quite well on weekdays, but not on weekends. Run 10 has less than four passengers per vehicle service hour in all winter/spring months except for April, when it was 4.14 passengers per vehicle service hour. Elimination of Runs 3 and 10 on weekends would not affect Amtrak service and would still be within the four daily runs required in the National Park Service funding agreement. Elimination of Runs 3 and 10 on weekends would reduce YARTS service by 267 annual vehicle service hours and would save \$34,516 annually, assuming the use of a VIA small bus. *Recommended for implementation in FY 2011-12*

4. *Eliminate Runs 3 and 11 on weekdays during the Winter/Spring schedule.* This would only be implemented if efforts to secure additional operating revenues were not successful. Based on the analysis of productivity, Run 4 has the lowest productivity and would normally be considered. However, YARTS' funding agreement with Amtrak requires connections with Amtrak and Run 4 provides this. Later in this section, it is suggested that Run 4 be moved to later in the day to meet the 12:59 Amtrak train (Train 714) to improve ridership and productivity. This would meet the intent of the Amtrak agreement.

As mentioned previously, the Amtrak funding agreement suggests that Run 12 be retained in order to provide reasonable connections with Amtrak. However, shifting Run 12 to 5:20 pm would still enable a reasonable transfer time to Amtrak and would help to increase ridership if Run 11 had to be eliminated due to budgetary constraints. Eliminating Runs 3 and 11 on weekdays during the Winter/Spring schedule would save 806 annual vehicle service hours and \$104,299 annually, assuming the use of a small VIA bus. This is an alternative to Option #3

above if the YARTS Board of Commissioners desires more savings. *Not recommended unless additional savings are needed at the discretion of the YARTS Board of Commissioners.*

Service Enhancement Options Based on Market Research

Passengers and stakeholders had the following input for adjusting the schedule to better meet passenger demands. Given the productivity analysis and ridership evaluation above, the question is whether or not existing riders and stakeholder requests for improvements in the schedule can be made. The most prevalent requests were the following:

- At least one midday run in each direction. At present, there is a gap in departure times from Yosemite Valley from 9:32 am on run 8 to 3:40 pm on run 9. From Merced to Yosemite, there is a gap between 10:45 am and 5:40 pm.
- An early morning run that would accommodate both DNC employee shifts as well as hikers desiring to leave early in the morning, for example to climb Half Dome.
- Start one of the early morning runs from the Merced Transpo instead of Mariposa.
- An earlier Friday outbound bus to accommodate NPS workers.

Stakeholders also mentioned that the National Park Service has evolving plans to re-locate more employees outside the National Park to El Portal, Mariposa, and Lee Vining. Depending on the type of re-location it could either increase or decrease demand for YARTS service.

5. *Shift Run 4 to start at 1:20 pm at the Merced Transpo and depart from Merced Amtrak station at 1:30 pm during the Winter/Spring schedule.* Run 4 starts at 8:50 am at the Merced Transpo. From November to March, passenger productivity on Run 4 is below four passengers per vehicle service hour. The run arrives at the Merced Amtrak station at 9:00 am and provides the opportunity for a transfer from Train 702 that departs Sacramento at 6:40 am and arrives in Merced at 8:51 am. If Run 4 were shifted to arrive at Merced Amtrak at 1:30 pm, it would enable a transfer from Amtrak Train 714 with train service departing from Oakland at 10:05 am, and arriving in Merced at 12:59 pm. It would also connect with the northbound Amtrak train departing from Bakersfield at 10:05 am and arriving at Merced at 1:08 pm. There is also 11:25 am Greyhound bus from Sacramento that this schedule would provide a good connection with.

It is the general hypothesis that a later departure would serve the same number of Amtrak trains, but would generate greater ridership and productivity on Run 4. In reviewing Amtrak on/off counts over the past year, there were 3,431 offs on Train 714 arriving at 12:59 pm compared to 2,539 for Train 702 arriving at 8:51 am, a 40% difference. If a YARTS connection were possible, it would be expected that Train 714 would have even more offs, since Yosemite bound passengers could leave

the Ferry Building in San Francisco at the reasonable hour of 9:35 am and arrive in Yosemite at 4:00 pm. This would address the midday train requests from the passenger survey to Yosemite, at least during the winter months. In the summer, productivity is around eight passengers per hour, and does attract sufficient ridership, so the shift in run times is not warranted in the summer months.

If Run 4 were to leave from the Transpo at 1:20 pm, it would arrive first at the Curry Village at 4:00 pm and would be scheduled similar to Runs 6 and 14 in the Summer/Fall schedule, where drop-offs for Run 4 and pick-ups for Run 10 would occur at the same time, with a 20-minute layover at Yosemite Lodge before departing at 4:35 pm. This change would be cost neutral. *Recommended for implementation in FY 2011/12.*

6. *Provide an early Friday bus to serve NPS employees in El Portal.* This option assumes Option #5 is implemented. In this option, the Run 11 bus would have an early Run 10 schedule to serve the NPS employees who get off work at 3:30 pm. The bus would depart Curry Village at 2:50 pm and arrive at NPS Maintenance at 3:45 pm. This early run would replace the normal Run 10 schedule. The Run 10 bus would operate the Run 11 schedule at 5:05 pm. This change would be cost neutral. *Recommended for implementation in FY 2011/12*

7. *During the summer months only, start Run 2 from the Merced Transpo at 5:18 am.* This would respond to the market research input for having a bus available for hikers desiring an earlier morning bus. This would increase vehicle service hours by 109 annual vehicle service hours at a cost of \$14,462. *Recommended for implementation in FY 2012/13.*

8. *Implement an early morning bus from Mariposa to attract DNC employees coupled with a new midday run returning from Yosemite Valley at approximately 2:30 pm.* This option is primarily designed to serve DNC shift employees starting work at 6:00 and 6:30 am. DNC currently provides vanpools to early shift employees. DNC employs 1,700 employees in the summer with 1,100 living in the Valley and 1,100 in the winter with 900 living in Yosemite Valley. The 2:30 pm departure would be attractive to some Yosemite visitors, since there currently is a gap in existing YARTS service between 9:32 am and 3:40 pm. It is expected that 90% of the ridership would be from DNC.

These special runs would require an additional bus. It would require 1,387 annual vehicle service hours at a cost of approximately \$186,000.

YARTS should consider this as a subscription service. In order for the service to be initiated, it would require that a minimum of 40 seats be sold at \$100 each. It would be up to DNC to decide if they want to partially subsidize or guarantee seats in order for YARTS to operate the service. This would cover approximately 80% of the cost, but would allow some public access to and from Yosemite. *Not recommended unless YARTS Board discussions with DNC result in a monthly guarantee of 40 seats.*

9. *Expand Run 6 to Yosemite Valley in the winter months.* This option would allow park employees to run errands in Mariposa or Merced and return to Yosemite Valley on the same day. This is currently possible with the Summer/Fall schedule but not with the Winter/Fall schedule. YARTS did try this previously, but ridership increases did not justify the costs.

Based on the current contract terms, the extension of service would require approximately 335 annual vehicle service hours and cost \$43,236 assuming a VIA small bus. This is approximately \$220 per day.

This run extension would primarily benefit employees living in the Park. Since the National Park Service (NPS) is already contributing \$300,000 to YARTS, the benefit to NPS and a 50% share of the subsidy would be included in their existing contribution. This service should only be initiated if a funding agreement with DNC paid \$100 per day for the extension of Run 6 to Yosemite Valley. *DNC has indicated to the consulting team that they are not in a position to provide any direct subsidy to YARTS and therefore this option is not recommended.*

10. *Implement a midday run between Yosemite Valley and Mariposa.* In order to accomplish midday service with the same number of buses, one option would be to operate a midday run between Runs 3 and 11 all year long. A bus would depart Yosemite Valley at about noon and return from Mariposa to Yosemite Valley at 2:00 pm. This alternative would add 1,368 vehicle service hours at a cost of \$183,522 (assuming the VIA owned bus rate for a large bus.)

It is difficult to predict the ridership on such a route. It would provide NPS and DNC employees a reasonable option for midday trips from Yosemite Valley and El Portal to Mariposa. *Overall, the potential ridership benefits do not appear to justify the costs and this option is not recommended.*

Service Enhancements Based on Review of Goals, Objectives and Service Standards.

A review of the load factors (number of passengers on the bus divided by the capacity of the bus) by run and the number of passenger left behind in FY 2009/10 revealed that the load factor in July 2009 was 108% on Run 3 and 95% on run 9. In July 2009, there were a total of 86 passengers left behind and another 28 left behind in August 2009. The Marketing Plan actions recommended in Volume II of the Short Range Transit Plan will increase demand for YARTS service and unfortunately, will add to the peaking problem.

YARTS does not keep records of where passengers are left behind. In discussions with the VIA Operations Manager, it appears that most passengers are left either at Cedar Lodge or Yosemite View Lodge. It is almost two-hour wait for the next bus after being left behind on Run 3, for example.

VIA knows in advance if there is going to be an overload in passengers at the Amtrak station. If the bus is full at the Amtrak, an additional bus is added.

The National Park Service has discussed with YARTS management the potential for adding supplemental YARTS service on the 25 peak visitations days when the Yosemite visitor experience is degraded with congestion in the park.

The peaking issue should be addressed in a demand responsive way by the YARTS Transit Manager in order to achieve the dual objective of substantially reducing the number of passengers left behind and providing additional service on peak days based on further discussions and contract negotiations with NPS.

A total of 226 vehicle hours have been added to add supplemental service during peak days at a cost of approximately \$26,000. It should be implemented in the Summer/Fall schedule of 2011. During the summer, peak loads should be monitored to determine the effectiveness of the extra trips. It may be necessary to expand the number of hours depending on the number of peak visitation days in Yosemite Valley.

Route 120 Service Level Options

The following are the service options for the Route 120 service. The following range of options is presented for discussion purposes. There are four different routing alternatives. For several of the routing options there are several scheduling options depending on whether one or two buses are utilized. With two buses operating on the 120 corridor there are numerous hybrid combinations of routes and schedules possible. The routing and scheduling options and number of buses utilized per option are described below:

Routing Option 1: Keep the status quo YARTS routing between Yosemite Valley and Mammoth Lakes.

- 1.1. Status Quo with one daily morning trip from Mammoth Lakes to Yosemite Valley and one daily afternoon trip from Yosemite Valley to Mammoth Lakes with one bus.
- 1.2 One daily morning trip from Mammoth Lakes leaving at 9:00 am to provide day trip options between Mammoth Lakes and Tuolumne Meadows. Return bus from Yosemite Valley could leave earlier to provide a positive Tuolumne Meadows to Mammoth Lakes day trip experience.
- 1.3 Two trips in each direction between Mammoth Lakes and Yosemite Valley with two buses.
- 1.4 Interline with buses from Merced to Yosemite Valley in the morning and from Yosemite Valley to Merced in the afternoon. Option assumes two buses.

Routing Option 2: YARTS route is between Mammoth Lakes and Tuolumne Meadows.

- 2.1 With one bus, two daily round trips between Mammoth Lakes and Tuolumne Meadows.
 - 2.1.1 Schedule is optimal for day trips to Tuolumne Meadows.
 - 2.1.2 Schedule is optimal for connections to CREST.

2.2 With two buses, four daily round trips between Mammoth Lakes and Tuolumne Meadows.

Routing Option 3: YARTS provides a shuttle service between Lee Vining and Tuolumne Meadows.

3.1 With one bus, four daily trips are provided with schedules focused on convenient day trips to Tuolumne Meadows.

3.2 With one bus, four daily trips are provided with schedules driven by transfers to and from CREST service.

Routing Option 4: YARTS provides service from Lone Pine to Yosemite Valley in cooperative agreement with CREST and Inyo National Forest.

4.1 With two buses, one bus would operate between Lone Pine and Yosemite Valley daily, with the second bus operating between Yosemite Valley and Lone Pine.

4.2 With four buses, both a morning and afternoon schedule would be operated in both directions between Lone Pine and Yosemite Valley.

Hybrid Routing Option: With two buses, one bus operates the status quo route and schedule and the second bus operates Option 2.1 between Mammoth Lakes and Tuolumne Meadows.

Routing Option 1: Keep the status quo YARTS routing between Yosemite Valley and Mammoth Lakes.

1.1. Status Quo with one daily morning trip from Mammoth Lakes to Yosemite Valley and one daily afternoon trip from Yosemite Valley to Mammoth Lakes with one bus. In this alternative, the status quo is preserved. As described above, the existing Route 120 service has good productivity and provides adequate once a day service in each direction between Yosemite Valley, Tuolumne Meadows, Lee Vining, June Lake, and Mammoth Lakes.

The existing service is complementary to the DNC operated shuttle between Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne Meadows, providing service at the opposite times of the day between these two origin and destination pairs. Hikers and backpackers currently have an option to take either a morning or afternoon bus between Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne Meadows.

Passengers are very happy with the service and over half of the boardings currently occur in Yosemite Valley. Passengers rated the service highly in the passenger survey.

The existing 120 service has 609 vehicle service hours with an annual cost of \$81,655.

1.2 One bus with scheduled design to maximize convenience for day trips between Mammoth Lakes and Tuolumne Meadows.

The current Route 120 schedule is designed to allow a day trip to either transport backpackers back to Yosemite Valley or to allow for a day trip between Mammoth Lakes and Yosemite Valley. As discussed earlier, Route 120 is rarely utilized for a day trip to Yosemite Valley and back to Mammoth Lakes. It is a very long day and includes a very long bus ride in both directions.

This option would re-work the schedule to provide a convenient day trip between Mammoth Lakes and Tuolumne Meadows. If the bus were to leave from Mammoth Mountain Inn at 9:00 am, it would arrive to the Tuolumne Meadows Visitor Center at 11:10 am and arrive to Yosemite Valley Visitor Center at approximately 12:55 pm. After a driver break and lunch the bus could depart from Yosemite Valley at 4:00 pm, arriving to Tuolumne Meadows at 5:45 pm and arriving back in Mammoth Lakes at 7:51 pm. This would allow visitors to have a picnic lunch in Tuolumne Meadows and then go on a several hour hike before returning to Yosemite Valley. This option is cost neutral. *This option is recommended for implementation in FY 2011/12.*

1.3 Two trips in each direction between Mammoth Lakes and Yosemite Valley with two buses. This option responds to the market research input 1) a choice of two trips per day in each direction between Yosemite Valley and Mammoth Lakes 2) enable a one-day trip between Lone Pine and Yosemite Valley and 3) shorten the interval between Route 120 arriving in Yosemite Valley and Route 140 departing from Yosemite Valley for passengers desiring to travel between Mono County and Merced County.

- Bus 1 from Mammoth Lakes to Merced would depart at 8:30-9:00 am, enabling it to connect with the CREST bus from Lone Pine in Mammoth Lakes. The bus would arrive in Yosemite at 12:50 pm.

The alternative for Bus 1 is to have the YARTS 120 bus leave at 5:30 am instead of 7:00 am in order to reach Yosemite in time for Run 8, which departs the Valley Visitors Center at 9:42 am. Run 8 provides a direct connection to Greyhound and Amtrak. In the passenger survey of 120 riders, a question was asked as to whether or not the passenger would like the bus to leave earlier than 7:00 am. An overwhelming 86% said no. Of the 14% who said yes, only four stated they would want to leave at 5:30 am. Ridership in the direction between Mammoth Lakes and Yosemite Valley is already significantly lower than the reverse direction. It is likely that such an early departure would not be attractive to riders, based on the survey results.

- Bus 2 from Mammoth Lakes to Yosemite Valley would depart at 11:00 am and would arrive in Yosemite Valley at 2:50 pm. This would allow sufficient time for passengers to depart on the 3:40 pm bus to Merced.
- Bus 1 would return to Mammoth Lakes from Yosemite Valley at 1:30 pm.

- Bus 2 would depart Yosemite Valley at its current time of 5:00 pm.

At present, a VIA bus and one contractor driver stay overnight in Mammoth Lakes. In this alternative two buses and two drivers would need to stay overnight in Mammoth Lakes.

1.4 Interline with buses from Merced to Yosemite Valley in the morning and from Yosemite Valley to Merced in the afternoon. This option assumes two buses. This is essentially the same option as 1.2, but would involve the “interlining” of 120 and 140 buses. In bus operations, interlining means that a bus on one route continues on another route. Therefore, in this case, the 120 bus would become a 140 bus and the select Route 140 buses would become Route 120 buses.

- Bus 1 from Mammoth Lakes to Merced would depart at 9:00 am enabling it to connect with the CREST bus from Lone Pine. The bus would arrive in Yosemite at 12:55 pm. Passengers could leave their backpacks and luggage onboard, and the bus would continue as the current Run 9, departing Yosemite Valley to Merced at 3:40 pm. In order to avoid capacity problems, Run 10 would likely need to be routed to the Merced Transpo for passengers leaving Yosemite and not going to Merced Amtrak. With this interlining option, it's quite possible that there might be enough demand to Amtrak to have the 3:40 pm bus be an express bus to Amtrak. As requested in the market research this run would enable a passenger to travel from Lone Pine to Yosemite Valley and Merced Amtrak in a single day.
- Bus 2 from Mammoth Lakes to Merced would depart at 1:20 pm and would arrive in Yosemite Valley at 5:10 pm. The bus would depart as Run 12, leaving Yosemite Valley at 5:40 pm.
- Bus 3 from Merced to Mammoth Lakes would start as the current Run 3 starting at the Merced Transpo at 7:00 am, arriving at Yosemite Lodge at 9:55 am. The bus would depart Yosemite Valley at 10:30 am, arriving in Mammoth Lakes at 2:20 pm.
- Bus 4 from Merced to Mammoth Lakes would start as Run 5 starting at the Merced Airport at 10:20 am and arriving at the Yosemite Lodge at 1:25 pm. The bus would depart Yosemite Valley at 1:55 pm and arrive at the Tuolumne Meadows store at 4:00 pm, arriving in Lee Vining by 4:45 pm in time for the transfer to the 4:50 pm CREST bus for trips to Bishop and Lone Pine. The bus would continue to Mammoth Lakes, arriving at 5:45 pm.

An alternative schedule for Bus 4 would mimic Option 1.2 and leave Yosemite Valley at 4:00 pm, arriving at Tuolumne Meadows at 5:45 pm and arriving in Mammoth Lakes at 7:51. The later schedule may be more convenient for day trips from Mammoth Lakes to Tuolumne Meadows. Survey of passengers with option 1.2's “day trip to Tuolumne Meadows emphasis” to be implemented in FY 2010/11 would help to determine the schedule with the most demand.

Due to driver hour restrictions of a maximum of 10 driving hours per day, drivers would only drive one way, either from Merced to Mammoth Lakes or from Mammoth Lakes to Merced. Two of the buses and two of the drivers would need to stay over in Mammoth Lakes.

This option has the advantage of minimizing the wait time between the 120 and 140 buses for through trips from Mammoth Lakes, Lee Vining and Tuolumne Meadows to Mariposa and Merced. Feedback given during the market research was that the current gap of between over five hours in the eastbound direction and over six hours in the westbound direction was unreasonable.

A second advantage is that Route 120 could potentially become eligible for FTA 5311(f) funding that could provide the necessary subsidy to operate. It should be eligible since it does make direct connections to Greyhound and Amtrak in Merced. Separate funding for the Route 120 service would need to be discussed and approved by Caltrans as noted earlier.

The other advantage is that YARTS passengers from Merced and Mariposa who desire to travel to Tuolumne would have a choice of an 8:00 am departure on the DNC bus or a 10:30 am or 1:55 pm on a YARTS bus. For return trips from Tuolumne Meadows, there would also be three daily choices departing at approximately 10:30 am by YARTS, 2:05 pm by DNC bus or 4:30 pm by YARTS bus.

Both options 1.3 and 1.4 would cost an additional \$81,654 assuming they operate the same number of summer days as the current 120 YARTS bus. *Option 1.4 is recommended for implementation in FY 2013/14 if sufficient funding is identified.*

Institutional Option for Options 1.3 or 1.4

In order to avoid potential passenger confusion, differential fares for different directions (the one-way YARTS fare between Yosemite and Tuolumne Meadow is \$8 by YARTS and \$14.50 on the DNC bus), and to better coordinate schedules, a sub option would be for YARTS to operate the Hikers Shuttle to Tuolumne.

DNC has a contractual obligation to operate the Tuolumne Hiker's Shuttle. In preliminary discussions with NPS management, they are open to YARTS having discussions with DNC to take over the Hiker's Shuttle. Discussions with DNC on a potential funding agreement would only take place if the YARTS Board directed the Transit Manager to make a proposal to DNC management and enter negotiations. The agreement would need to be approved by the National Park Service.

The money from the DNC funding agreement could be utilized to help subsidize the second round trip between Yosemite Valley and Mono County in options 4a and possibly 4b.

In this alternative, in order to mimic the DNC schedule, a bus would leave Yosemite Valley to Mammoth Lakes at 8:00 am and 5:00 pm. The second bus from Mammoth

Lakes to Yosemite would be scheduled to arrive in Tuolumne Meadows at about 2:30 pm.

Routing Option 2: YARTS route is between Mammoth Lakes and Tuolumne Meadows.

2.1 With one bus, two daily round trips between Mammoth Lakes and Tuolumne Meadows. In this option, two round trips daily would be operated between Mammoth Lakes and Tuolumne Meadows with the same number of vehicle service hours and the same bus. Passengers desiring travel to Yosemite Valley from Mammoth Lakes would be required to transfer to the DNC bus.

It takes two hours and ten minutes based on the current schedule. The schedule would enable families based in Mammoth Lakes or June Lake to have a reasonable day trip to Tuolumne Meadow and back.

2.1.1 Schedule is optimal for day trips to Tuolumne Meadows. Two potential schedules are possible with the existing single bus. The first is for the convenience of persons wanting to take a day trip to Tuolumne Meadows and back. The schedule could be written so that a 9:00 am departure could arrive in Tuolumne at 11:00 am leave for Mammoth Lakes at 11:30, picking up campers and backpackers for return to June Lake and Mammoth Lakes. The DNC bus arrives from Yosemite Valley at approximately 10:30 am, and passengers desiring a trip to Lee Vining, June Lake, or Mammoth Lakes would have a one-hour layover in Tuolumne Meadows. In this scheduling option, passengers desiring a trip to Yosemite Valley would need to transfer to the DNC bus, departing from the Tuolumne Meadows store at 2:15 pm.

The bus would depart Mammoth Lakes again at 2:00 pm, arriving in Tuolumne Meadows at 4:10 pm. The YARTS bus would leave for Mammoth Lakes at 6:00 pm, arriving back in Mammoth Lakes at 8:00 pm. The bus could depart as early as 4:30 pm, but the later departure mimics the current schedule and would give the 4:10 arrivals the opportunity for a short hike if they so desire.

2.1.2 Schedule is optimal for connections to CREST. The second schedule is designed to make connections with CREST to Reno in the morning and Lone Pine in the afternoon. The CREST schedule and map is included in Appendix B. The CREST bus operates between Reno, Lee Vining, Mammoth Lakes, Bishop, and Lone Pine on Monday-Tuesday-Thursday and Friday only. The following is the framework for the schedule and connections to the CREST bus:

- 5:20 am bus departs Mammoth Lakes.
- 7:30 am bus departs Tuolumne Meadows to Mammoth Lakes; connects with CREST bus at 8:50 am northbound at Lee Vining. The bus arrives in Mammoth Lakes at 9:30 am.
- The bus departs from Mammoth Lakes at 3:15 pm and arrives in Lee Vining at approximately 4:30 pm, connecting with the CREST southbound

bus to Lone Pine at 4:50 pm. The bus arrives in Tuolumne Meadows at approximately 5:30 pm.

- The bus returns from Tuolumne Meadows at 5:30 pm, arriving back in Mammoth Lakes at approximately 7:30 pm.

With the above schedule, it would not be feasible to transfer to or from the DNC bus to Yosemite Valley. The schedule is not very convenient for day trips to Tuolumne Meadows. It points to the difficulty of providing both connections to the current CREST schedule and providing convenient service for day trips to Tuolumne Meadows.

2.2 With two buses, four daily round trips between Mammoth Lakes and Tuolumne Meadows. This option would only be explored if Option 2 above were implemented and achieved an average of eight passengers per vehicle service hour. It would be the same as Option 2, but with double the frequency.

Routing Option 3: YARTS provides a shuttle service to Lee Vining and Tuolumne Meadows.

This routing option would emphasize frequent shuttle service between the parking lot at the Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center² and Tuolumne Meadows. Four round trips daily could be offered. The driver is limited to no more than ten hours of driving time, so this limits the number of round trips per day to four and would need to include driver breaks. This assumes the bus and driver would stay in Lee Vining instead of Mammoth Lakes. If the bus and driver needed to stay in Mammoth Lakes, it would limit the number of round trips to three. The trip between Lee Vining and Tuolumne Meadows is approximately 45 minutes.

As with Routing Option 2, the schedule could be designed to maximize the opportunities for day trips to Tuolumne Meadows or it could be designed to connect with CREST.

3.1 With one bus, four daily trips are provided with schedules focused on convenient day trips to Tuolumne Meadows with connection to DNC bus for trips to Yosemite Valley.

- Bus departs Lee Vining at 9:00 am to Tuolumne Meadows, arriving well in advance of the DNC bus arriving from Yosemite Valley at 10:30 am.
- Departs Tuolumne Meadow at 10:45 am. Driver break after arriving in Lee Vining.
- Departs Lee Vining at 12:50 pm, connecting with the 2:15 pm DNC bus from Tuolumne Meadows to Yosemite Valley.
- Departs Tuolumne Meadows at 2:45 pm.

² This concept of a park-and-ride lot has not been reviewed with the US Forest Service as to its feasibility.

- Departs Lee Vining at 3:45 pm.
- Departs Tuolumne Meadows at 4:45 pm.
- Departs Lee Vining at 5:45 pm.
- Departs Tuolumne Meadows at 6:45 pm.

3.2 With one bus, four daily trips are provided with schedules driven by transfers to and from CREST service with connections to the DNC bus. With the emphasis on CREST, the schedule could be designed to connect with the CREST bus to drop-off passengers from Tuolumne Meadows to the CREST bus in Lee Vining at 8:50 am and at the same time pick-up passengers from the CREST bus and the park-and-ride lot to Tuolumne Meadows. Another round trip would be scheduled for connections from the DNC bus from Yosemite Valley, which arrives in Yosemite Valley at 10:30 am. The schedule could also be written to provide transfers from Tuolumne Meadows to the CREST bus at Lee Vining at 4:50 pm. The following is a schedule framework with connections to CREST:

- Departs Lee Vining 6:45 am (or deadhead and start in Tuolumne Meadows).
- Departs Tuolumne Meadow at 7:45 am, arriving in Lee Vining at 8:30, in time for the 8:50 am CREST northbound bus.
- Departs Lee Vining at 9:00 am to Tuolumne Meadows, arriving well in advance of the DNC bus arriving from Yosemite Valley at 10:30 am.
- Departs Tuolumne Meadow at 10:45 am.
- Departs Lee Vining at 12:50 pm, connecting with the 2:15 pm DNC bus from Tuolumne Meadows to Yosemite Valley. Bus and driver layover in Tuolumne Meadows.
- Departs Tuolumne Meadow at 3:45 pm to Lee Vining. Passengers wanting to catch the 4:50 pm CREST bus southbound would take this bus.
- Departs Lee Vining at 5:00 pm, after picking up passengers on the 4:50 CREST bus.
- Departs Tuolumne Meadow at 6:30 pm or later.

This option would provide very convenient service between Lee Vining and Tuolumne Meadows. Locals living in the eastern Sierras and visitors to the Eastern Sierra could drive to Lee Vining and potentially park at the Visitor Center for Mono Lake. It would be a very convenient option for day trips from the eastern Sierras to Tuolumne Meadows with multiple choices of buses in each direction. By using the YARTS bus, the Yosemite gate fee would be avoided, and passengers could enjoy the scenery instead of having to drive.

While the demand for increased services from either Mammoth Lakes or Lee Vining is not known, it would undoubtedly attract a whole new market not currently being served by YARTS. The existing market primarily consists of Yosemite visitors making backpacking trips. The market for a service between Tuolumne Meadows and either Lee Vining or Mammoth Lakes would be day trips and some backpacking trips.

In either Routing Options 2 or 3, more visitors could take a day trip to Yosemite's Tuolumne Meadows and still camp or stay in lodging in the eastern Sierras. It would have a positive economic impact on eastern Sierra businesses.

Passengers desiring to go to Yosemite Valley would need to transfer to the DNC bus from Tuolumne Meadows. During peak summer days, there could be capacity issues on peak days that would not allow transfers from the YARTS bus to the DNC bus. According to DNC, there are an average of 30 passengers on the Tuolumne Hiker's Shuttle. In the summer of 2010, there were 9 days when the DNC buses exceeded 80% of available capacity.

As pointed out previously, more than one-half of the passengers boarding on Route 120 originate in Yosemite Valley. This option would require passengers desiring to start their backpacking trip outside the Valley and hike back into the Valley to depart at 8:00 am instead of the current 5:00 pm. The significant existing ridership on YARTS from Yosemite Valley would be lost in this alternative.

The other significant issue with this option is that it does not provide the opportunity for Amtrak or Greyhound passengers from Merced to make a Thruway bus connection to Mammoth Lakes.

Routing Option 4: YARTS provides service from Lone Pine to Yosemite Valley in cooperative agreement with CREST and Inyo National Forest

This alternative would avoid the need to transfer buses with CREST to Lone Pine, as the YARTS bus would become the CREST/YARTS bus from Lee Vining to Lone Pine. This would enable backpackers to have a one-seat ride to return to their cars in one day from Yosemite Valley to Lone Pine and points in between. It would provide transfer opportunities to other trailheads along the 395 corridor and Yosemite locations for both backpacking and day hikes. This need is based on the input received during the market research and the ESTA Short Range Transit Plan objective of having increased service frequencies along the 395 corridor. It must be emphasized that there is not currently available operations funding for this routing option.

4.1 With two buses, one bus would operate between Lone Pine and Yosemite Valley daily, with the second bus operating between Yosemite Valley and Lone Pine. This option would require two buses and two drivers to operate, as it would take approximately six hours between Lone Pine and Yosemite Valley, and nine hours if the bus were interlined to Merced.

It would also respond to a strong desire in study after study along the 395 corridor to have improved bus frequencies along the 395 corridor. The following is a suggested scheduling framework that would need to be fine tuned with input from ESTA and the US Forest Service.

Bus 1 would start from Lone Pine at approximately 9:00 am and would arrive in Tuolumne Meadows at 1:15 pm and in Yosemite Valley at approximately 3:15 pm, in time for the 3:40 pm bus to Merced. If an agreement with DNC were worked out, the bus could depart later for pick-ups and drop-offs in Tuolumne Meadows at 2:15 pm to mimic the existing schedule.

The departure from Yosemite Valley would also depend on whether this bus also served as the Hiker Bus to Tuolumne Meadows. If not, and the existing 8:00 am DNC bus from Yosemite Valley to Tuolumne Meadows remained, the ideal time for Bus 2 to depart would be after Run 5 gets to Yosemite at 12:45 pm.

4.2 With four buses, both a morning and afternoon schedule would be operated in both directions between Lone Pine and Yosemite Valley. Under this alternative, a morning and afternoon bus would depart Lone Pine to Yosemite Valley. Likewise, a morning and afternoon bus would depart Yosemite Valley. The schedule would need to be developed in collaboration with ESTA and the US Forest Service. This is the recommended long-term option, but is not likely to be funded during the planning horizon of the Short Range Transit Plan.

Hybrid Routing Option: With two buses, one bus operates the status quo route and schedule, Option 1.1, and the second bus operates Option 2.1 between Mammoth Lakes and Tuolumne Meadows.

This alternative is a hybrid of Routing Option 1, the status quo between Yosemite Valley and Mammoth Lakes, and Option 2 between Mammoth Lakes and Tuolumne Meadows. It has significant advantages of maintaining both the existing popular schedule from Yosemite Valley and providing additional trips between Mammoth Lakes and Tuolumne Meadows.

Current Status of Gateway Community Studies on Transit Options to Yosemite

Highway 41 Corridor³

The Fresno-National Parks Connection Study is being conducted by Fehr & Peers for the Fresno Council of Governments. The purpose of the feasibility study is to determine the viability of implementing one or more transit routes between the City of Fresno and Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. The feasibility will be determined based on a number of factors, including local support, ridership

³ Much of this section has been taken directly from Working Paper #4, Operating Plan, prepared for the Fresno-National Parks Transit Connections Study by Fehr & Peers, on behalf of the Fresno Council of Governments.

potential, and financial sustainability. The study is currently in the draft report stage and no final recommendations have been made.

Like the YARTS Short Range Transit Plan, the consulting team has developed a series of working papers to evaluate the feasibility. The Draft Report was released in January 2010 the following preliminary plan:

On the Highway 41 corridor, the route would originate at the Fresno Greyhound Station, and serve the Fresno Amtrak station, Fresno-Yosemite International Airport, Fresno State University, North Fresno hotels, Chuckchansi Gold Resort-Casino, Oakhurst, Tenaya Lodge, Wawona, Curry Village, Ahwahnee Hotel, Yosemite Visitor Center and Yosemite Lodge.

The Draft Report recommends pursuing funding for year round service with five runs in each direction (seven days a week) from May 1 to September 30 and reduced service (three inbound and three outbound runs per day) during the off-peak season from October 1 to April 30.

The service would be operated in a demonstration period of one to three years. During the demonstration period, ridership and customer demographics should be evaluated and provision of service should be reassessed and adjusted accordingly.

The operating plan would require six buses, similar to the type of buses utilized by YARTS. The Operations plan assumes that the buses will be stored and maintained at the FAX facility, but does provide the option of having FAX operate the service or the service could be contracted to a private company.

Preliminary estimates of the annual operating costs range from approximately \$1.8 million to \$2.4 million. The initial capital cost, which would be primarily for purchase of 9-12 new large buses, ranges from \$6 million to \$9 million. A funding assessment concludes: "The potential to obtain funding to operate a transit route between Fresno and Yosemite National Park is moderate to high. A key factor in the success of any new transportation project or program is having strong local support and a project/program champion(s)."

Administratively, four options are being considered:

1. Fresno COG would create a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) to create identity for the service and maximize state and federal funding potential (similar to YARTS).
2. Fresno COG would contract out administration of the transit service to YARTS.
3. Fresno COG would contract out the administration of the Fresno-Yosemite route to YARTS and Fresno-Sequoia/Kings Canyon route to Visalia Transit.
4. Fresno COG would work with YARTS and other agencies to create a regional Yosemite-Sequoia/Kings County entity (essentially an expanded YARTS JPA) to administer transit services for all interested agencies.

Highway 120 West Corridor

Magic Consulting prepared a draft of the Transit Development Plan Update for Tuolumne County Transit for the Tuolumne County Transportation Council in September 2010. The plan evaluated the potential demand for a number of options including a Sonora-Groveland-Yosemite service with a focus on summer months. An option for combining commuter service to Modesto was also considered in the evaluation of options. The options described included having YARTS operate service to Groveland or to Modesto.

The recommended service plan is for “a summer Saturday service to Yosemite National Park will be provided on a subscription basis, if desired by Tuolumne County Transit.” A pre-set number of reservations per run would be needed at least 24 hours before scheduled departure, otherwise the demand response service would not be operated. Service would begin in May 2011.

2. Fare Options and Recommendations

This section reviews the fare history of YARTS, provides an analysis of the fare structures, discusses fare options and provides recommendations for fare adjustments over the next five years.

Background

In 2001, a fare structure was established for the Route 140 service. The fares were quasi- distance based such that the round-trip fare from Merced to Yosemite Valley was \$20, from Mariposa to Yosemite Valley was \$10, and the fare from El Portal to Yosemite Valley was \$7. The cash fares were “quasi” distanced based because the fares between Merced and Mariposa and Merced and Midpines were exactly the same at \$7 per round-trip. In addition, fares for trips between Mariposa and Midpines were set at \$1 each way or \$2 round trip and are not distance based.

The original fare structure had discounts for seniors 62 and above, youth 16 and under, and disabled passengers. The discount fare varied from 10% to 33%, and there was no consistency in the discounted fares provided. For example, the fare discount from Merced to Yosemite Valley was set at \$14 compared to the full fare of \$20. The fare discount from Catheys Valley to Yosemite Valley was also set at \$14 even though the full fare was \$15. In many rural areas, the discounts provided range from 10% to 50% depending on the agency. In urbanized areas that receive Federal Transit Administration 5307 funding, there is a half-fare requirement.

YARTS established commuter passes, including both a monthly pass and 40-rides (20 round-trips) fares for the same price. Using a 21-day work month, a rider from Mariposa to Yosemite would pay \$210 (using the original rate of \$10 per round-trip) per month paying the regular cash fare rates. By using the commuter pass, that rider could ride any or all of the 30 days of the month for only \$75. For the same \$75, could also take 40 one-way trips within a 90-day period. The commute from

Mariposa to Merced would be \$147 paying 21 days of full adult cash fare, but translates to \$70 with the commuter pass. In setting the commuter pass fare rates there was generally a 50% or more discount when comparing the cash fare to the commuter pass rate. These deep discounts were likely designed to attract both NPS employees who enjoyed the commuter tax benefit that paid for their commute tax with pre-tax dollars, and DNC employees and other park-based employees whose employees do not participate in the commuter tax program.

In July 2006, the YARTS Board approved fare increases for Routes 120 and 140 based on recommendations from the YARTS Transit Manager. The round trip fare from Merced to Yosemite on Route 14 was raised from \$20 to \$25, a 25% increase. This reflected YARTS increased operating costs since the fares were established. Shorter distance fares were distance based to some degree and the discounted fares for seniors and children were computed at roughly 70% of the adult fares.

In July 2006, the YARTS Board also approved a 10% increase per year for three years on the commuter passes. The original increase from Merced to Yosemite Valley increased the commuter pass from \$165 to \$182 the first year, and after three years to \$220. The commuter pass increased from Mariposa to Yosemite Valley from \$75 to \$100 per year.

The ridership response to the fare increase is complicated due to the landslide on Highway 140. However, comparing the FY 2004/05⁴ ridership that paid a fare to YARTS (excludes Amtrak ridership that paid a fare to Amtrak), to FY 2009/10, it does appear that the fare increase did not have a detrimental affect on either overall visitor or employee ridership. Visitor ridership increased from 36,401 in FY 2004/05 to 43,645 in FY 2009/10, a 20% increase. Employee ridership growth was more constrained, with NPS and DNC employee ridership growing from 22,215 in FY 2004/05 to 25,221 in FY 2009/10, a 13.3% increase.

In comparing ticket vendor revenues and fares collected by VIA on Highway 140, before the 2006 fare increase and landslide, there was a 30% increase in “cash” revenues between FY 2004/05 and FY 2009/10, which is 5% greater than the overall fare increase of 25%, but does not account for the increase in ridership.

The fare increase undoubtedly prompted some commuter ridership to purchase the deeply discounted commuter passes. According to YARTS records, NPS voucher revenue to YARTS more than quadrupled from \$59,569 to \$242,216 between FY 2004/05 and FY 2009/10, which is far less than actual ridership recorded by YARTS of just 13.3%. YARTS is expecting about \$100,000 less in NPS voucher revenues in FY 2010/11 due to tightened eligibility and distribution procedures of the commuter tax benefit voucher program implemented by the National Park Service in Yosemite.

⁴ 2004/5 is the full fiscal year before the landslide on Highway 140.

Future Fare Considerations Over the Next Five Years

There are several important factors in considering fare policy over the next five years.

1. As discussed previously, the load factor for both the Summer/Fall and Winter/Spring schedules are both on average under 50%. In an effort to build ridership, fares need to be attractive and appear reasonable to prospective passengers, including both the commuter and visitor markets.
2. Marketing efforts that will be undertaken over the next year need to have time to take effect and produce results to achieve a 30% farebox recovery ratio, from the existing 24% farebox recovery.
3. Overall fare increases should be tied to the increase in contractor costs. This was the rationale for the cash fare increase in 2006 and should be adjusted to keep up with the contractor, which represents about 87% of the expense budget
4. The reverse commute and intra Mariposa County trips for shopping or medical trips are much more price sensitive than the Yosemite visitor trips. Increasing passenger fares would limit growth on runs 6 and 7, for example.

Analysis of Existing Fare Structure

As discussed previously, the existing fares are based on quasi-distance based fares. On Route 140, a \$26 fare (rounded upward from \$25 so that each trip direction is \$13) round-trip fare is the equivalent of 16.1 cents per revenue mile on Route 140 for the 162-mile round-trip. On Route 120, the one-way mileage is approximately 114 miles (228 miles round trip) with the current one-way fare of \$15 or \$30 round-trip (very few passengers utilize a round-trip on Route 120), but is equivalent to 13.2 cents per revenue miles. Exhibit 5-1 shows the existing fares for both Route 140 and Route 120.

The cash fares for trips within Mariposa County might be characterized as flat regional fare since the fare between Mariposa and Midpines is just \$1 each way and there is a flat rate of \$6.00 each way between Merced and Mariposa and Midpines. These low fares help to encourage affordable public transportation and intercity service among cities in Mariposa County.

**Exhibit 5-1
Existing YARTS Fares**

Route 140: Existing One-Way Fares

	Merced	Catheys Valley	Mariposa	Midpines	El Portal	Yosemite Valley
Merced		\$ 3.00	\$ 6.00	\$ 6.00	\$ 9.00	\$ 13.00
Catheys Valley	\$ 3.00		\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 6.00	\$ 9.00
Mariposa	\$ 6.00	\$ 3.00		\$ 1.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 6.00
Midpines	\$ 6.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 1.00		\$ 3.00	\$ 6.00
El Portal	\$ 9.00	\$ 6.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00		\$ 4.00
Yosemite	\$ 13.00	\$ 9.00	\$ 6.00	\$ 6.00	\$ 4.00	

Route 140: Commuter Pass Fares

	Merced	Catheys Valley	Mariposa	Midpines	El Portal	Yosemite Valley
Merced		\$ 47.00	\$ 94.00	\$ 120.00	\$ 173.00	\$ 220.00
Catheys Valley	\$ 47.00		\$ 47.00	\$ 74.00	\$ 128.00	\$ 173.00
Mariposa	\$ 94.00	\$ 47.00		\$ 26.00	\$ 80.00	\$ 100.00
Midpines	\$ 120.00	\$ 74.00	\$ 26.00		\$ 53.00	\$ 100.00
El Portal	\$ 173.00	\$ 128.00	\$ 80.00	\$ 53.00		\$ 47.00
Yosemite	\$ 220.00	\$ 173.00	\$ 100.00	\$ 100.00	\$ 47.00	

Route 120: Existing One-way Fares

	Mammoh Lakes	June Lake	Lee Vining	Tuolumne Meadows	White Wolf	Crane Flat	Yosemite Valley
Mammoth Lakes		\$ 3.00	\$ 5.00	\$ 8.00	\$ 10.00	\$ 13.00	\$ 15.00
June Lake	\$ 3.00		\$ 3.00	\$ 5.00	\$ 8.00	\$ 10.00	\$ 13.00
Lee Vining	\$ 5.00	\$ 3.00		\$ 3.00	\$ 5.00	\$ 8.00	\$ 10.00
Tuolumne Meadows	\$ 8.00	\$ 5.00	\$ 3.00		\$ 3.00	\$ 5.00	\$ 8.00
White Wolf	\$ 10.00	\$ 8.00	\$ 5.00	\$ 3.00		\$ 3.00	\$ 5.00
Crane Flat	\$ 13.00	\$ 10.00	\$ 8.00	\$ 5.00	\$ 3.00		\$ 3.00
Yosemite Valley	\$ 15.00	\$ 13.00	\$ 10.00	\$ 8.00	\$ 5.00	\$ 3.00	

On Route 120, the distance-based fares are about 13.2 cents per revenue mile. It is approximately 114 miles from Mammoth Lakes to Yosemite Valley, and the current one-way fare is \$15.

For comparison purposes, CREST fares ranges from 14 to 22 cents per revenue mile. CREST fares between Lee Vining and Mammoth Lakes are more expensive than the YARTS one-way fares (\$6.50 for CREST compared to \$5.00 for YARTS). The Sequoia National Park service from Visalia to the Giant Forest Museum is slightly lower at 13 cents per mile for the end of the route destination, but charges a flat fare regardless of the distance. Other recreation -based fares include the Muir Woods Shuttle in Marin County which averages 43 cents per mile. One-way midday fares on intercity routes from outlying counties in Yuba, Sutter, and El Dorado counties to downtown Sacramento, for example, range from 10 to 12 cents per mile.

The research comparing YARTS one-way cash fares shows that the 16 cents per revenue mile are in the lower mid-range of \$.07-\$.43 cents per revenue mile for other California intercity services presented in Exhibit 5-2. It is the general conclusion that the existing one-way fares on YARTS are reasonable and comparable to other transit services.

The commuter pass that YARTS offers is very unusual. The consulting team is not aware of another transit system that offers both a monthly pass and a 40-ride ticket, good for 90 days, for the same price. The commuter pass is significantly discounted compared to the regular cash fare. For trips between Mariposa and Yosemite Valley, for example, it is \$100, or the equivalent of \$2.50 per ride or less, since the pass is good for use in a calendar month or for 40 rides during a 90-day period. In comparison, the one-way fare between Mariposa is \$6.00. Utilizing this example, the 40-ride or monthly commuter pass both offers a 58% discount and is equivalent to almost 17 one-way fares per month.

There are two primary disadvantages to the commuter pass pricing structure. The most important disadvantage is that low-income individuals must purchase a 40-ride ticket pass and purchase the full value of a monthly pass. For low-income individuals, a \$100 purchase is a major cash outlay, something they cannot often afford. As will be discussed in the fare options section below, most transit agencies offer 10- or 20-ride tickets to minimize the cash outlay by low-income persons.

The second disadvantage of the commuter pass is that there is no incentive to purchase a monthly pass, compared to the 40-ride ticket. Unfortunately, YARTS records do not distinguish between the purchase of 40-ride ticket passes and monthly passes, so it is not known how many of each are purchased, and what the volume of passes purchased is between origin and destination pairs. Commuter pass options are discussed in the next section.

Fare Structure Options and Recommendations

The following are options currently utilized by YARTS and other transit systems. The following are options for the:

- Fare Basis: distance based, zone fares, flat fares, and hybrid.
- Discounts for seniors, disabled, and youth: No discount, 10%, 20%, 30%, or 50%
- Age eligibility of discounts: for seniors typically 62 or 65; youth is 12, 7, and 5.
- Discount rates for monthly pass: An equivalent of 30, 36 and 45 times the one-way fares are typical but vary greatly. Discounted one-way rides are more typically in 10 or 20-ride denominations and offer a 10 to 20% discount.

Fare Basis

The fare basis utilized by YARTS is a hybrid based on distance-based fares, with zonal fares between some locations.

A distance-based fare is common for longer intercity services like YARTS. A common approach is to apply a cost per revenue mile and multiply it by the distance between stops to get the fare.

If fares were based entirely on distanced based fares, Exhibit 5-2 shows the one-way fares (rounded up to the nearest whole dollar), round-trip fares and the difference between the existing and current fares. In general, fares based on distance would increase fares in nine of the community pairings, would stay the same in five community pairings and decrease in two of the community pairings. The most significant increase would be between Merced and El Portal, which would increase by \$4.00 round-trip. The most significant decrease would be between Yosemite and El Portal, which would decrease by \$3.00 round-trip.

A flat fare is simply a single charge per ride. The Sequoia-Kings Canyon charges a flat \$15 round-trip fare between Visalia and destinations within the National Park.

A zonal fare can be distance based, but fares are the same for any point within the zone. In essence, YARTS current fare structure is a flat fare of \$12 round trip fare for trips anywhere in Mariposa and Midpines and \$6 round-trip from Catheys Valley to Mariposa or Midpines. Within the Mariposa and Midpines zone, any local travel is currently \$1 each way.

**Exhibit 5-2
Route 140 Distance Based Fares**

Route 140 Mileage between Locations Google maps, Merced Amtrak, Yos. Lodge)

	Merced	Catheys Valley	Mariposa	Midpines	El Portal	Yosemite Valley
Merced						
Catheys Valley	25.2					
Mariposa	37.1	11.9				
Midpines	43.5	18.3	6.4			
El Portal	65.9	40.7	28.8	22.4		
Yosemite	81.2	56	44.1	37.7	15.3	

Route 140: Round Trip fares, based on actual distance (rounded to nearest dollar)

	Merced	Catheys Valley	Mariposa	Midpines	El Portal	Yosemite Valley
Merced		\$ 8.00	\$ 12.00	\$ 14.00	\$ 22.00	\$ 26.00
Catheys Valley	\$ 8.00		\$ 4.00	\$ 6.00	\$ 14.00	\$ 18.00
Mariposa	\$ 12.00	\$ 4.00		\$ 2.00	\$ 10.00	\$ 14.00
Midpines	\$ 14.00	\$ 6.00	\$ 2.00		\$ 8.00	\$ 12.00
El Portal	\$ 22.00	\$ 14.00	\$ 10.00	\$ 8.00		\$ 4.00
Yosemite	\$ 26.00	\$ 18.00	\$ 14.00	\$ 12.00	\$ 4.00	

Route 140: Existing Round Trip Fares

	Merced	Catheys Valley	Mariposa	Midpines	El Portal	Yosemite Valley
Merced		\$ 6.00	\$ 12.00	\$ 12.00	\$ 18.00	\$ 25.00
Catheys Valley	\$ 6.00		\$ 6.00	\$ 6.00	\$ 12.00	\$ 18.00
Mariposa	\$ 12.00	\$ 6.00		\$ 1.00	\$ 6.00	\$ 12.00
Midpines	\$ 12.00	\$ 6.00	\$ 1.00		\$ 6.00	\$ 7.00
El Portal	\$ 18.00	\$ 12.00	\$ 6.00	\$ 6.00		\$ 4.00
Yosemite	\$ 25.00	\$ 18.00	\$ 12.00	\$ 12.00	\$ 7.00	

Round Trip Fare Difference, actual distance based compared to current fares

	Merced	Catheys Valley	Mariposa	Midpines	El Portal	Yosemite Valley
Merced		\$ 2.00	\$ -	\$ 2.00	\$ 4.00	\$ 1.00
Catheys Valley	\$ 2.00		\$ (2.00)	\$ -	\$ 2.00	\$ -
Mariposa	\$ -	\$ (2.00)		\$ -	\$ 4.00	\$ 2.00
Midpines	\$ 2.00	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 2.00	\$ -
El Portal	\$ 4.00	\$ 2.00	\$ 4.00	\$ 2.00		\$ (3.00)
Yosemite	\$ 1.00	\$ -	\$ 2.00	\$ -	\$ (3.00)	

It is recommended that YARTS stay with its hybrid fare basis for one-way and round-trip fares for Route 140 and the distance-based fares on Route 120. As concluded above, the distance-based fares are reasonable, and the discounted fares for travel within Mariposa County serve an important purpose. Route 120 distance-based fares should be adjusted to be comparable to Route 140 fares at 16 cents per revenue mile.

Age Discounts

The existing 30% discount for seniors 62 and over, children 12 and under, and disabled persons is quite generous. In the CREST fare structure, for example, the discounts are in the 7.5% to 15% range.

Most 62-year-old persons are able-bodied and not retired. One option is to increase the senior eligible age to 65 or over, with everyone presenting a Medicare card to be eligible. *It is recommended that the age for discounted fares be changed to 65.*

The YARTS Board changed the discount for children to 12 and under in 2006. With each adult ticket, one child 12 and younger rides free. *The current youth policy is very family friendly and no changes are deemed necessary.*

Commuter Pass Discount

There are three different levels of options for commuter pass discounts.

1. Determine whether or not the 40-ride ticket pass should be the same as the monthly pass.
2. Should there be a 10-ride, 20-ride or 40 discounted ticket pass?
3. How much should the discounts be for a monthly pass?

Most transit agencies that offer both discount ticket books for an extended period of time have a lower discount rate for discount ticket books than for monthly passes. The discount books are more typically 10 or 20 one-way rides. It is very common to have a 10% discount for the 10-ride tickets or no discount at all.

In conducting this analysis, it is important to understand who is buying the existing passes, and which type, and for what purpose of trip. The data is simply not available from YARTS records.

Since it is recommended that YARTS hold off increasing the fares on Route 140 until FY 2012/13, it is recommended that market research and data collection be conducted early in FY 2011/12 to provide a basis for an informed recommendation on commuter passes.

Recommended Fares

Route 120 One-way Fares

It is recommended that fares on Route 120 be increased in two steps during the five-year period based on distance-based fares. The first increase would be for the Summer 2011 season, and would increase the revenue per mile to be equivalent to Route 140 service or approximately 16 cents per mile. Exhibit 5-3 shows the recommended fares both for full fares and discounted fares for implementation in FY 2011/12. The discount rate is 80% of the full fare rate.

The second step in fare increase would be implemented after YARTS increases the service level to two buses, tentatively scheduled for FY 2012/13 and if the farebox recovery ratio falls below 30% for Route 120. Fares would be increased equivalent to the percentage increase of the cost for YARTS contracted service since fares were last changed in 2006. At present through FY 2010/11, the contractor rate for a VIA-provided large bus has increased by 15%. It is not known if a subsequent rate adjustment will be made in FY 2011/12. Exhibit 5-3 shows what the fare levels would increase, based on the 15% adjustment. The second fare increase is scheduled for FY 2013/14, but is dependent on the actual farebox recovery ratio.

Route 140 One-Way Fares

It is recommended that fares be increased in FY 2012/13 to match the contractor rate increases between FY 2006/07 through FY 2011/12. The delay to FY 2012/13 would enable new electronic fareboxes to be in place. It would also allow the implementation of the marketing recommendations in FY 2011/12 without the confusion and complications of fare increases. Excellent passenger response to marketing efforts could increase the farebox recovery ratio to above the desired 30% farebox recovery objective and delay the fare increase. Exhibit 5-4 shows the recommended fares based on a 15% increase. Discounted fares are at 80% of the full adult fares.

Commuter Passes

No recommendations are provided at this time. A data collection effort and market research effort is recommended for FY 2011/12 in order to determine the potential impact of adjustments to the commuter pass program. Based on the data collection and market research effort, an analysis should be conducted to determine the appropriate recommendations for the YARTS commuter pass.

**Exhibit 5-3
Route 120 Recommended Fares**

Recommend Fares FY 2011/12**Regular Fares**

	Mammoh Lakes	June Lake	Lee Vining	Tuolumne Meadows	White Wolf	Crane Flat	Yosemite Valley
Mammoth Lakes		\$ 4	\$ 6	\$ 9	\$ 13	\$ 16	\$ 18
June Lake	\$ 4		\$ 3	\$ 6	\$ 9	\$ 12	\$ 15
Lee Vining	\$ 6	\$ 3		\$ 3	\$ 6	\$ 9	\$ 13
Tuolumne Meadows	\$ 9	\$ 6	\$ 3		\$ 3	\$ 6	\$ 9
White Wolf	\$ 13	\$ 9	\$ 6	\$ 3		\$ 3	\$ 6
Crane Flat	\$ 16	\$ 12	\$ 9	\$ 6	\$ 3		\$ 3
Yosemite Valley	\$ 18	\$ 15	\$ 12	\$ 9	\$ 6	\$ 3	

Discounted Fares for Seniors, Disabled and Youth 12 and Under

	Mammoh Lakes	June Lake	Lee Vining	Tuolumne Meadows	White Wolf	Crane Flat	Yosemite Valley
Mammoth Lakes		\$ 3	\$ 5	\$ 8	\$ 10	\$ 13	\$ 15
June Lake	\$ 3		\$ 2	\$ 5	\$ 7	\$ 10	\$ 12
Lee Vining	\$ 5	\$ 2		\$ 2	\$ 5	\$ 8	\$ 10
Tuolumne Meadows	\$ 8	\$ 5	\$ 2		\$ 2	\$ 5	\$ 7
White Wolf	\$ 10	\$ 7	\$ 5	\$ 2		\$ 2	\$ 5
Crane Flat	\$ 13	\$ 10	\$ 8	\$ 5	\$ 2		\$ 2
Yosemite Valley	\$ 15	\$ 12	\$ 10	\$ 7	\$ 5	\$ 2	

Recommended Fares When Route 120 Transitions to Two Round Trips Per Day**Regular Fares**

	Mammoh Lakes	June Lake	Lee Vining	Tuolumne Meadows	White Wolf	Crane Flat	Yosemite Valley
Mammoth Lakes		4	7	11	14	17	20
June Lake	\$ 4		3	7	10	14	17
Lee Vining	\$ 7	\$ 3		4	7	11	14
Tuolumne Meadows	\$ 11	\$ 7	\$ 4		4	7	10
White Wolf	\$ 14	\$ 10	\$ 7	\$ 4		4	7
Crane Flat	\$ 17	\$ 14	\$ 11	\$ 7	\$ 4		3
Yosemite Valley	\$ 20	\$ 17	\$ 14	\$ 10	\$ 7	\$ 3	

Discounted Fares for Seniors, Disabled and Youth 12 and Under

	Mammoh Lakes	June Lake	Lee Vining	Tuolumne Meadows	White Wolf	Crane Flat	Yosemite Valley
Mammoth Lakes		3	6	9	11	14	16
June Lake	\$ 3		2	5	8	11	14
Lee Vining	\$ 6	\$ 2		3	6	9	11
Tuolumne Meadows	\$ 9	\$ 5	\$ 3		3	6	8
White Wolf	\$ 11	\$ 8	\$ 6	\$ 3		3	5
Crane Flat	\$ 14	\$ 11	\$ 9	\$ 6	\$ 3		2
Yosemite Valley	\$ 16	\$ 14	\$ 11	\$ 8	\$ 5	\$ 2	

**Exhibit 5-4
140 Recommended Fares**

Recommended Route 140 Fares 2012/13

Regular Fares (One-Way)

	Merced	Catheys Valley	Mariposa	Midpines	El Portal	Yosemite Valley
Merced		\$ 4.50	\$ 7.00	\$ 8.00	\$ 12.50	\$ 15.00
Catheys Valley	\$ 4.50		\$ 2.50	\$ 3.50	\$ 8.00	\$ 10.50
Mariposa	\$ 7.00	\$ 2.50		\$ 1.50	\$ 4.00	\$ 8.00
Midpines	\$ 8.00	\$ 3.50	\$ 1.50		\$ 3.50	\$ 7.00
El Portal	\$ 12.50	\$ 8.00	\$ 4.00	\$ 3.50		\$ 3.50
Yosemite Valley	\$ 15.00	\$ 10.50	\$ 8.00	\$ 7.00	\$ 3.50	

Discounted One-Way Fares for Seniors 65 or older, disabled and children 12 and younger

	Merced	Catheys Valley	Mariposa	Midpines	El Portal	Yosemite Valley
Merced		\$ 3.50	\$ 5.50	\$ 6.50	\$ 10.00	\$ 12.00
Catheys Valley	\$ 3.50		\$ 2.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 6.50	\$ 8.50
Mariposa	\$ 5.50	\$ 2.00		\$ 1.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 6.50
Midpines	\$ 6.50	\$ 3.00	\$ 1.25		\$ 3.00	\$ 5.50
El Portal	\$ 10.00	\$ 6.50	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.00		\$ 3.00
Yosemite Valley	\$ 12.00	\$ 8.50	\$ 6.50	\$ 5.50	\$ 3.00	

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Chapter 6: INSTITUTIONAL OPTIONS

OVERVIEW

The YARTS Short Range Transit Planning process addresses a wide range of topics from service analysis and deployment, to funding, to marketing, to institutional issues. This chapter addresses institutional aspects of YARTS. The organizational framework of the agency has a great deal to do with the overall strength of the agency as well as its effectiveness in fulfilling its mission. This chapter examines three key components of the institutional setting for YARTS:

- Governance including expansion of YARTS Board Membership and the issues surrounding Board composition
- Management options for technical support and ongoing oversight of the operation
- Cost Sharing options for participating agencies in YARTS

These topics are somewhat interrelated. This chapter presents the current context for these critical topics as well as optional approaches to the current arrangements.

YARTS GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Overview of YARTS Board Membership

YARTS is a multi-jurisdiction governmental entity established pursuant to the California Joint Exercise of Powers Act as set forth in the California Government Code (Section 6500 et seq.). While early discussion of the formation of YARTS included consideration of an Authority with more initial participating jurisdictions, the final agreement brought together three counties to create the organization. The Counties of Merced, Mariposa, and Mono exercised their rights to enter into an agreement to create YARTS. That agreement is entitled “Joint Powers Agreement Establishing The Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System Authority.” The YARTS JPA agreement contains a number of provisions that are common to transit agency joint powers agreements. It also contains provisions that are unique to the circumstances and setting of YARTS.

In looking at possible modifications to the YARTS Agreement, it is important to begin with an understanding of the current circumstances and setting.

Review of Current Structure

YARTS was formed in 1999 as a regional organization to fulfill a number of purposes. These are set forth in the JPA Agreement itself. These are:

- Undertaking a demonstration project to institute bus service to serve the “geographic jurisdictions of the Parties and within Yosemite, as well as any other areas that the Board may deem appropriate.”
- “Establishing and increasing coordination and communication between the National Park Service and the Parties hereto an important purpose of this Authority.”
- “To accommodate the increasing demand for visitation to Yosemite National Park through an increasing number of transportation options for visitors and employees.”
- “To develop transportation alternatives in ways that do not degrade the visitor experience or the natural resources in the region.”
- “To undertake coordinated political and administrative efforts necessary to resolve issues, obtain funding from outside sources, and to keep projects and programs on schedule.”

The JPA Agreement also defines the regional function of the organization. The document states: “The Authority shall function as the regional representative, within the combined territory of the parties to this JPA, for transit and alternative transportation, as well as for supplemental and related matters to carry out the stated functions and purposes of this JPA.” The official parties, the Counties of Merced, Mariposa, and Mono, and the cooperative partner the National Park Service have pledged their regional cooperation through the JPA Agreement.

The JPA Agreement goes on to specify the necessity to enter into a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service or the JPA is dissolved. This provision ensures that the JPA and the Park Service will work together in perpetuity to achieve the objectives of the participating organizations. This language in the agreement was necessary for Park Service participation in light of federal legal provisions forbidding its formal inclusion as a JPA member.

A number of issues are worthy of review. These are the major structural topics identified by the consulting team. They are presented with their current context and with alternative approaches for review and discussion.

Board Representation: Current

Governance of YARTS is entrusted to a Board of Commissioners. The Board structure for YARTS has features that are common to most transit joint powers agreements. It also contains features that are unique to YARTS. The Agreement provides for one voting member from each of the three participating jurisdictions. According to the Agreement, the Board Member must be an elected official. At the present time, all Commissioners are members of their respective Boards of Supervisors. There is merit in having Supervisors on the YARTS Board in that they directly represent the member agencies. Any possible additional Commissioners discussed below are presumed to be in addition to the existing Board of Supervisors representatives.

However, there is a provision in the original agreement that has not been used and which was relatively unknown to current Board Members during interviews in preparation of the Short Range Transit Plan. The designation of representatives in the Agreement is stated as follows: “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.” This provision means that while the Commissioner can be a member of the Board of Supervisors of a County, it can also be an elected representative of any other jurisdiction within the County. Merced and Mono Counties have incorporated jurisdictions with elected representatives. Mariposa County has no incorporated cities. But all of the counties have other elected officials. School boards, sheriffs, and other offices are elective and would qualify under this provision. Thus in Merced and Mono Counties, the representative on the YARTS Board could be an elected official from one of the towns in the County or from another elected body. In Mariposa County, elected officials from other elected bodies would qualify, as there are no incorporated cities. Since the creation of YARTS, the option of appointing a representative from another jurisdiction within a participating county has not been exercised.

Under the current structure, an Authority Advisory Committee has been created to support the Board and to represent other interests in the decision process. This body has been active in its role as the technical committee for YARTS decision-making. The Committee is made up of a variety of government and business organizations. The 13-member committee includes staff members from each County, Caltrans, the City of Merced and Merced County Transit (The Bus), and representatives of business and tourism interests in each county. The Committee typically meets prior to the Board of Commissioners and advises the Board on technical matters including funding, service structure, fare issues, and other operating details. Of the 13 current members, only four clearly represent area business interests. Other areas such as South Lake Tahoe’s transit system have much greater business participation.

Board Representation: Alternative Approaches

The YARTS Board structure is set forth in the original Joint Powers Agreement document and is further defined in the agency’s Bylaws. The official documents call for Board Members to be elected officials. They must hold elective office in the County that is the formal participating member in the Authority. While that has historically translated to each County Board of Supervisors appointing one of its own members, the current JPA provisions also allow for the appointee to hold other elective office in the appointing County. Thus city council members in jurisdictions with incorporated cities could serve as representatives on the YARTS Board. This provision broadens the range of options currently available for Board Member selection.

The California Government Code section pertaining to the governing structure of joint powers authorities (Govt. Code Section 6508) specifies that the Board must be

made up of elected officials from the participating jurisdictions. This limits formal voting participation to officials from the member agencies or other elected bodies or positions within their boundaries.

Research for this project included a comparative analysis of the institutional setting of the Lake Tahoe region to that of the Yosemite region. This work, performed by the Center for Urban Transportation Research at the University of South Florida, emphasized the importance of private sector interests in the transportation infrastructure. In the Tahoe region, there is substantial participation by the private sector in public transit issues. The agency originally established to run service in South Lake Tahoe was structured such that it included private sector representatives on the Board of Directors. That agency, since replaced by the Tahoe Transportation District as a result of local financial issues, was governed by a nonprofit corporation rather than a public agency such as a JPA. This structure allowed for other participation in the governing structure. The heavy involvement of the business community in the Tahoe operation was facilitated by this structure. Further, the budget of the agency included substantial contributions by area ski resorts and casinos that depend heavily on transit to serve their customer base.

However, a key circumstance that is common to both regions is the critical dependence of both regions on tourism as their economic base. While public facilities (Yosemite National Park and Lake Tahoe) are the principal tourism generators, much of the private sector in both regions depends upon tourism as the basis for the local economy. In both cases a public bus system is a vital element of the transportation network in the region. A significant difference between the two regions is the greater participation of the private sector in the Tahoe area. The Tahoe region involves the private sector in a very significant way in the provision of transit service. Private sector firms are included on the Board of Directors of the transit operating agency. The Tahoe agency is not a joint powers authority but is instead a nonprofit corporation and thus offers governing structure options that are not available under the current YARTS structure. Their participation is further strengthened by funding agreements with the transit agency whereby private firms such as ski resorts and casinos in the region contribute to the funding of the transit agency. This situation recognizes the critical link between public agencies and private interests in the community.

Such private sector participation does not occur to the same degree in the YARTS case. While there are major private sector business interests in the region that do benefit directly from the provision of transit service to Yosemite National Park, the difference in board structures prevents private interests being directly represented on the YARTS Board. However, given the nature of the economic interests in the region, it is appropriate that private business interests be involved in a significant way with YARTS. This situation suggests possibilities for broadening the role of the private sector on YARTS.

Due to the restrictions of the Government Code relative to JPA's, private sector participation could take the form of a greater advisory role. This is provided for in

the JPA legislation. Elevating the role of business interests in the region could strengthen the overall organization. Further, as funding alternatives for future years are considered, private sector funding should be included in the mix. Though not carrying voting weight, the advisory structure can play a vital role in incorporating other views into the decision process.

An alternative to an advisory role for the private sector in YARTS could be to establish a structure similar to that in the South Lake Tahoe region. This could include the creation of a nonprofit corporation to serve as the governing body for YARTS operation. Such a change in structure would require redrafting the JPA agreement with the possible inclusion of provisions for the establishment of such a corporation to oversee day-to-day operations. This could then result in the JPA simply serving as a conduit for funding etc. and as an appointing body to the operating corporation.

Another alternative structure could include the creation of a nonprofit corporation for overall management of YARTS and elimination of the JPA altogether. There are examples of nonprofit operating organizations in California that directly receive substantial public funds. In these cases, it is common for the Board structure to be specified in the nonprofit Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws and including the Board appointment process. Such a process ensures government oversight of an organization receiving public funds.

Another alternative for enhancing private sector participation in YARTS would be to make greater use of the ex-officio status for Board representation. The YARTS Bylaws provide for the appointment of ex-officio members to the Board. Though the ex-officio members do not have a vote on the Board, they are able to engage in dialogue with the Board. These members do not need to meet the criteria of being elected officials. They can be appointed by various agencies as presently configured. The Bylaws specifically name as potential ex-officio appointing agencies 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. Ex-officio membership by local tourism interests would be possible as an alternative to Advisory Committee membership. Ex-officio status on the Board would suggest greater stature and influence than Advisory membership. The Bylaws allow the Board of Commissioners to designate ex-officio members. Having local tourism interests represented on the Board could be of greater importance than having the State Division of Tourism represented.

Board Size: Current

A three member Board of Commissioners has governed YARTS since its establishment. Each County appoints one Board Member as its representative. Historically this representative has been a member of the County Board of Supervisors. The term of the appointed Board Member is at the discretion of the appointing jurisdiction. There is no specified term limit on the appointment.

However, if an appointee is no longer an elected official, that individual's term of office ceases. A new Board Member would have to be appointed in such a circumstance.

The three-member Board structure has functioned since the formation of YARTS. It has served the basic governance requirements and has done so in compliance with the Ralph M. Brown Act concerning public meetings. However, research with officials currently involved with YARTS indicates that there can be issues with such a small Board of Commissioners. In interviews with Board Members, there was common though not unanimous mention of the three-member board as a limitation on the ability of the Board to conduct business. This is further complicated by the great geographic separation of the Board Members. Two are located on the west side of the Sierras while one is located on the east side. The distance between the two sides of the YARTS region makes aspects of governance difficult. This is further complicated in winter months when travel between the two sides of the region is made very lengthy due to mountain road closures.

The three member Board presents other issues. The minimal representation from each jurisdiction can and has resulted in the appointed member being identified as "YARTS" in their county. This is particularly true in Mono County where many including her own Board of Supervisors see Commissioner Bauer as "YARTS".

Another issue raised by existing Board Members and others is the limited ability for the Board to meet in anything but full session to conduct business. The three-member format does not allow for effective use of any subcommittees to address specific issues outside of full Board involvement. One Board Member specifically mentioned this limitation relative to such issues as evaluations of management personnel.

While the three Commissioner structure does represent the member jurisdictions, other options are available to expand the Board representation. Because the Counties are the member jurisdictions, they should continue to appoint at least one County Supervisor to the Board. This ensures that the member jurisdiction is directly represented.

Board Size: Alternative Approaches

Changing the size of the YARTS Board to include additional members would require amendment to the Joint Powers Authority Agreement and the agency bylaws. Other changes including options within the current three member structure could be accomplished without amendment of the Agreement. To address the latter point, there was little recognition among Board and staff participants in YARTS that the current Agreement and bylaws allow the appointee from any participating county to be another elected official from within the county, not just the County Board of Supervisors. Each county has various elected offices. Both Merced and Mono Counties have incorporated cities with elected council members. Mariposa County does not have incorporated cities. However, the Government Code relative to

elected office does not specify that elected officials must represent municipal government or the county. It is broadly written to open the option of other elected officials serving on a JPA Board. This could conceivably include school board members, sheriffs, treasurers, etc. Positions such as these are elected and could meet the test required for JPA Board participation.

The expansion of the Board would require amendment of the Agreement. There are many JPA Board models to consider in exploring alternatives to expansion. This is important to consider on two levels. One is the expansion of the Board size representing the current three participating counties. The other is potential expansion to include other counties in the organization. Potential new member counties include Madera, Tuolumne, and Fresno.

For many reasons, it is worth considering expansion of the Board of Commissioners even without adding additional counties. Among the reasons identified in the research, some mentioned above, for expanding the Board are the following:

- Make YARTS participation less a perceived matter of personal ownership.
- Allow for a broader mix of viewpoints and involvement in the governance of the agency.
- Introduce other options for Board dialogue including use of committees in the Board decision process.

Alternative I: Current Three Counties – Same Representation Requirements

Expanding Board membership to include additional Commissioners would to a great degree address the issues listed above. This could be done within the same provisions that currently exist in the JPA Agreement and Bylaws. That is that Commissioners could be required to be elected officials of any political subdivision. Within this provision, the Board could be expanded to include additional members. Each county could for example simply appoint one additional member. Per the Government Code, these could include elected officials serving within the county.

A consequence of simply adding Commissioners would be an even number of Board Members. While many Boards or Councils have an odd number of members, there is precedent for an even number of Board Members. The Eastern Sierra Transit Authority (ESTA) in Inyo and Mono Counties is a JPA made up of four jurisdictions: Inyo County, Mono County, the Town of Mammoth Lakes, and the City of Bishop. Each participating jurisdiction appoints two members to the board. The result is an eight-member board. This structure was included in the original JPA Agreement and continues today. Reports indicate that the even number of Board members has never caused any procedural problems with the governance of the agency. Both the Mono County YARTS Commissioner and the Alternate serve on the ESTA Board and are very familiar with the structure.

Alternative II: New Member Counties – Same Representation Requirements

If YARTS were to expand to additional counties, the same revised approach to board membership could apply. The addition of one county (e.g. Fresno or Tuolumne) would result in the addition of two board members from the new participant. This would create an eight-member board. Again, it is an even number but preceded within the region with a transit agency (ESTA). Should more than one additional county join YARTS, there would be the possibility that the board could grow eight, ten, or even twelve members. This number could be too large for the effective conduct of business. However, there are certainly JPA boards that are this large or larger.

The threshold for reconsideration of the two members per county structure could be built into any amendment of the JPA agreement that might be introduced to expand the Board within the three current YARTS member structure. This would mean that the debate and consideration of agency expansion and the resulting governance issues would be dealt with up front.

Summary of Issues Concerning YARTS Governance

- The issue of governance structure is both complex and sensitive. It deserves considerable discussion and consideration by the Board of Commissioners. While some options have been presented in this report, further discussion is required. The subject of governance could be a subject for consideration in a forum such as a dedicated retreat by Board members where time is not so constrained.
- Current Board structure imposes certain limitations: Consider expanding Board representation to two from each jurisdiction. Consider the existing provision allowing for other elected officials than County Supervisors to be appointed. Expanding the Board of Commissioners appears to have near universal support. It should be considered within the context of the item above but in the absence of any other significant restructuring, should be implemented at some point.
- Business Community Involvement: Within the limits imposed by the Government Code, identify other means to involve the business community in a greater way in the governance of YARTS possibly through greater involvement in the Authority Advisory Committee. Or as an alternative, consider elevating local tourism interests to the level of Board participation as ex-officio members as an indication of the importance of their input (versus membership on an Advisory Committee). This suggestion goes with the first item above and should be a major consideration in any forum dedicated to consideration of governance issues.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Overview of Current Approach

Management services have been provided to YARTS through an agreement with the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) since the agency was formed in 1999. This arrangement for the provision of management services includes providing professional staff support as well as supporting business services such as accounting, risk management, and other necessary agency functions. YARTS entered into the latest agreement with MCAG in July of 2009. This agreement was for one year but included provision for annual extensions for a period totaling five years through 2014. YARTS has already exercised the first of the extension periods through June 30, 2011.

The cost of this contract for management services for FY 2011 is \$117,614. It includes all aspects of management and support services including grant management. An additional expense item of \$27,500 is included to cover the annual audit and insurance for the agency. The agreement also includes \$4,600 for the lease of a transit station. These items total \$149,714. Finally, the operating budget includes \$84,714 dedicated to marketing. The revenue that is specifically dedicated to this expense includes \$75,000 in CMAQ funds from MCAG and \$9,714 in carryover from the previous year.

By all accounts, the arrangement for management services through MCAG has served YARTS well to date. There has been consistency in leadership through the fact that the Executive Director of YARTS is also the MCAG Executive Director. He has served with MCAG for some 25 years and has been the Executive Director of YARTS since it's founding. The Executive Director has been supported by other MCAG staff through the years and in particular in recent years. The Transit Manager assigned by MCAG and dedicated to YARTS has been assigned to the project for approximately six years. The current commitment level is approximately 30 hours per week. Other staff members provide support to YARTS for basic office functions and grant support.

Effective July 1, 2010, MCAG assumed responsibility for the management of Merced County Transit. Serving in an oversight role for the JPA that manages Merced County Transit, MCAG has expanded its transit operating purview. As the agency responsible for managing both YARTS and Merced County Transit, MCAG offers additional options for transit management. Given one to two years to evaluate transit service relationship issues, MCAG may find efficiencies in some form of joint YARTS/Merced County Transit coordination. This would most likely come at the operations level through consolidation of operating functions or possibly through on-street service integration. In any case, the range of possible management efficiencies expanded with the Merced County Transit management change.

The arrangement with MCAG is an obvious option for continued management services for YARTS. The provision of management services by MCAG offers the

benefit of the support of a regional agency which has as one of its primary activities the entire grant management process. MCAG is well known to federal and state agencies as a capable source of technical and managerial oversight of grant programs. The agency has applied these technical skills to the management of YARTS through its many years of oversight. Thus the current contract with MCAG remains the first option for management services.

Alternative I: YARTS Hires Staff Directly

Many joint powers authorities employ their own staffs directly. There are many JPA transit agencies throughout the state that have chosen this alternative. ESTA in the eastern Sierra operates with this model. Under the direct employment model, the JPA Board exercises complete control over the staff for their organization. This is typically accomplished through Board selection of an Executive Director and the Executive Director selection of any additional staff. Under this model, it is also common that the Board independently selects legal counsel.

Direct employment of staff gives the JPA control over the senior management of the agency. Under the contracted model, such as with MCAG, a change in personnel at MCAG would leave assignment of staff to YARTS to the discretion of MCAG. An alternative process is not specified in the agreement between the agencies. Specification of selection criteria or involvement by the Board in the selection process could correct this in the current model.

Independent employment of staff can bring higher costs to the JPA. Often services provided by another agency such as MCAG are not priced to reflect their full cost in the open market. This can apply to both staff and support services. Accounting, risk management, legal services, and other support are often provided at less than market rates. Interviews with the MCAG Executive Director for this project suggested that MCAG is charging substantially less than the full cost of the services being provided.

The choice of contracted or in-house staff services is greatly affected by another significant component of the organizational model. Whether service delivery itself is provided by the agency with staff resources or contracted to an outside vendor greatly affects the choice of management options. YARTS has chosen to provide direct service through a private contractor. The implications of this model include among other things:

- *Most employees are not YARTS employees:* Because most of the personnel who provide YARTS services are employed by a private contractor, YARTS has minimal need for human resources, payroll, accounting, and other functions.
- *Maintenance is not provided in-house:* Maintenance in the YARTS model is provided by a contractor. Not only does this eliminate the need for YARTS to provide a facility and supporting infrastructure, but it also nearly eliminates

from YARTS direct involvement the number of transactions that are routinely accounted for in procurement of parts, outside repair services, cleaning services, etc.

- *Management oversight of day-to-day operations rests with a contractor:* Management of a transit operation requires direct supervision of personnel, service on the road, and other elements of quality control. Because this is provided through a contractor, it greatly diminishes the infrastructure required by YARTS. In contrast, ESTA directly employs all personnel, provides all supervision, and is responsible for all vehicle maintenance. These requirements are much better suited to the ESTA model of in-house management.

Alternative II: Contract With An Outside Management Firm

Another alternative management model is to contract management services to an outside firm. There are several examples of this model in both short and long term situations throughout California. There are firms in the transit management business that provide such services on either a short or long term basis. Depending upon the credentials of an outside management firm, such an organization can offer a broad range of services based upon other management experience. This might include having experienced a variety of complex transit functions in other environments. These might include funding issues, grant management, or other functions that could offer insights to YARTS.

Alternative III: Obtain Management Services from a New Member Jurisdiction

Should another jurisdiction choose to join the YARTS JPA, it could offer an alternate source of management services. Counties that may join YARTS include Tuolumne, Madera, and Fresno. Any one could conceivably provide management services. Various options are available for consideration. For example, should Fresno County join the agency, management services could be provided through an arrangement with Fresno COG. Such an arrangement could have the same type of grant expertise that MCAG presently offers. Such an agency could also offer the various support functions similar to MCAG such as accounting, legal, and other services.

In considering such an alternative, consideration would have to be given to the legacy role of MCAG as the long-term institutional framework for YARTS success. Many stakeholders specifically identified MCAG's long-term leadership and stability as critical reasons why YARTS has experienced years of successful operation.

Alternative IV YARTS consolidates management with The Bus

YARTS' Board and management could evaluate the benefits of integration of the management of YARTS with Merced County Transit (The Bus) within the next two to three years in order to identify possible efficiencies achievable through some form of consolidation. MCAG is currently providing administrative support to The Bus.

Summary of Issues Regarding Management Options

- Stakeholders have endorsed MCAG's leadership as a reason for YARTS' success. MCAG's experience with and resources available for grant management suggest continuing the relationship with MCAG for management services.
- YARTS should consider establishing "principles" to guide consideration of alternative management services structures in the future. These would be particularly applicable in discussions involving the addition of member jurisdictions. A preliminary list of proposed principles follows:
 - Management of YARTS should be provided by an organization that has extensive experience with grant funding sources and with grant management.
 - Management should be provided by an organization that is known to funding agencies that are typically involved with programs available to or utilized by YARTS.
 - Management should be provided by an organization that has the depth of resources to address potential changes in personnel.
- YARTS provides service through a contractor rather than directly through agency employees. This approach minimizes the need for in-house staff dedicated to day-to-day management.
- Supervisory and other functions can be provided through the operating contractor dependent upon the structure of the contract.

COST SHARING OPTIONS

Overview of Existing Cost Sharing

YARTS management has been effective in finding sources of funding that in combination have supported the agency through the years. These have included funding that is regional and not specific to a jurisdiction and funds that are contributed by member jurisdictions.

Organizations that consist of multiple jurisdictions eventually face decisions regarding the equitable distribution of financial responsibility among member agencies. Sometimes with a new organization these decisions are addressed during formation. A funding formula for allocation responsibility can be created at formation and become a factor in the initial decision to join.

In other cases, an agency is formed and supported by "available" revenue or current contributions to some existing service that are rolled into a new organization. YARTS is an example of this. The Joint Powers Authority establishing YARTS contains a very important perspective regarding funding responsibility for the agency. In the recitals outlining the conceptual foundation of the agency it states, "Whereas, it is the expectation and hope of the parties to this JPA that the

administrative costs of operating the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System Authority, a public agency created by this JPA can be defrayed by utilizing Federal, State and other grant funds and that funding for administrative costs shall be sought from the Parties only as a last resort.”

The JPA document goes on to state that an agreement for funding must be reached with National Park Service or the agency is dissolved. This further supports the financial basis for the organization as coming from sources other than member contributions.

Through the years of YARTS operation, management has operated according to the guidance of the JPA agreement. Vigorous and creative efforts have lead to a combination of funding sources made up substantially of regional, federal and state funds. The adopted budget for 2010/11 includes only 13.3% of funds coming from member counties. The remaining funds come from a variety of sources including farebox revenues.

Exhibit 6-1 on the following page details the structure of YARTS’ adopted operating budget for FY 10-11:

**Exhibit 6-1
FY 2009/10 YARTS Budget**

Expenditures		Revenues	
Service Contract	\$1,579,356	Mariposa County	\$136,360
		Mono County	\$30,000
Management, plan, etc.	\$117,614	NPS Contribution	\$300,000
Audit, insurance	\$27,500	Caltrans 5311 (f)	\$300,000
Transpo Station lease	\$4,600	YARTS Carryover	\$21,582
		Section 5309	\$109,278
		Farebox	\$435,650
		Amtrak Contract	\$321,200
		ATPPL	\$75,000
Subtotal Expense	\$1,729,070	Subtotal Revenue	\$1,729,070
Pub. Educ; Marketing	\$84,714	MCAG CMAQ	\$75,000
		YARTS Carryover	\$9,714
Total Ops Expense	\$1,813,784	Total Ops Revenue	\$1,813,784

Financial Responsibility

Though considered the “last resort,” financial contributions by member agencies were contemplated in the formation of the Authority. Since formation, local jurisdictions have contributed funds to YARTS administration and operation as well as to the purchase of capital. The contributions specified in the table above have

been provided in recent years and reflect the approach taken to operating fund contributions.

Historically YARTS has not used formulae to determine the contribution of each participant. Rather a form of “ability to pay” approach has been applied to the members. Over the years of YARTS operation, little change has occurred in the level of local funding contributed directly by the members. Mariposa County’s contribution has remained steady. Mono County’s contribution has remained at the consistent level. However, the \$30,000 annual contribution from Mono County used to be provided by Mammoth Mountain Ski Area. The Mountain’s contribution was discontinued several years ago and replaced by a comparable contribution from Mono County. Merced County has not contributed to YARTS operating cost. However, as discussed below, it has made major contributions to capital.

Financial responsibility of member agencies has followed the original concept in the JPA agreement. A budget has been constructed on the basis of allocating regional, federal and state sources first, then completing the budget on the basis of local contributions. Mariposa County has contributed (7.5%) of the overall budget using Local Transportation Funds (LTF) as its source. Similarly Mono County has contributed (1.7%) of the total budget also from LTF. Finally, the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) has contributed (4.1%) using CMAQ funds.

Most funding sources require a portion of local match. While YARTS has done an exemplary job in obtaining federal and state funding to support operations and capital needs, it is vital that the member agencies contribute sufficient funds to match available funding. This approach has characterized YARTS through its history. With the likely end of stimulus funding that in some cases was provided on a 100% federal share, local matching funds will be increasingly important. Decisions relative to YARTS budgeting must take into account the use of local funds for matching purposes.

Several issues are raised by this set of circumstances. These are:

- Contributions bear no formula relationship to measures of service.
- Contributions have remained relatively constant over the years (Mono County contribution was raised from \$25,000 to \$30,000 in FY 2005/06). Allocations of local funds by members have not been adjusted to reflect inflationary increases in costs.
- CMAQ funds contributed by MCAG have historically required an 11.76% local match. The Energy Independence and Security Act increased the federal funding from CMAQ to 100% for YARTS this past fiscal year. The use of 100% CMAQ funds for certain operating expenses may at some point revert to the original formula.

The member jurisdictions have established their financial responsibilities for support of YARTS. Even though no formula for inflation adjustment has been applied, contributions have been sustained in recent years. Though not officially

established as an allocation methodology, the current approach or status quo is one alternative for determining financial responsibility. Financial responsibility could be defined by YARTS using a number of alternative approaches. These include:

- Status Quo: This method would continue the existing allocation process, which is based upon the current fixed amounts, contributed by each jurisdiction.
- Fixed contributions adjusted for inflation: The current contribution levels could be left in place but accompanied with a factor for inflation. Currently there is no inflation factor associated with any of the member contributions. Thus as operating costs increase, the share of total cost covered by the member's decreases.
- Formula based cost allocation method with an inflation factor: Another method for determining financial responsibility would be to apply an allocation method and include with that method an inflation factor to reflect cost increases. Various approaches to cost allocation are discussed in the following section.

The establishment of financial responsibility is presently based upon the use of grant funds from regional, federal, or state sources before member jurisdiction portions are determined and assigned. This approach follows the JPA agreement specification that contributions from members only be sought as a last resort. The concept of "last resort" is based upon the expectation that every funding option will be explored before any member contribution is sought.

Funding Allocation

Responsibilities for funding YARTS in part through local contributions has been clearly established since YARTS formation as a "last resort." Typically JPAs such as YARTS have some mechanism for their allocating financial responsibility among its members. Having a defined allocation mechanism or formula then serves as a basis for budgeting by the JPA and also by the member agencies. The absence of some established formula introduces the potential for variability and uncertainty. The level of funding can vary among jurisdictions creating potential equity issues. As the demand for funding grows, the absence of an accepted formula leaves the decision by a contributing member to be made with no necessary relation to service level. The lack of a funding formula also leaves the JPA in a constant state of uncertainty regarding funding availability.

Allocation formulas for transit funding can be based upon a number of variables. They typically represent some measure of service in each jurisdiction. They can include measure of service provided such as revenue hours or revenue miles. They can also be based on a measure of service consumed such as passenger boardings. The impact of the application of various formulas can vary substantially. For example, the use of passenger boardings where a large percentage of passengers board in Yosemite Valley could assign a high proportion of responsibility to

Mariposa County, which includes that area. The use of revenue miles or hours allocates cost relative to the services through a jurisdiction without regard to the actual passenger usage. Some transit agencies construct more complex formulas that include some measures of each.

YARTS is not without some guidance on the subject of allocation. While there is no prescribed formula for allocating financial responsibility in the JPA agreement, the original document did anticipate a possible formula application. The JPA articles concerning Termination and Dissolution (Article 13) and Return of Surplus Funds (Article 14) both offer insight regarding an initial method of allocation. Both Articles call for their respective issues, the cost of dissolution of the distribution of assets, to be “in proportion to the level of transit service hours provided to each jurisdiction as delineated in the most recent transit services plan approved by the Authority.” This guidance could serve as a basis for adoption of a funding formula to be applied to existing members. Additional research will be necessary to establish the precise impact of such a decision on each jurisdiction.

YARTS could choose to adopt an alternative allocation method based on measures such as revenue miles or passenger boardings. Revenue miles are a measure of service input or service provided. The calculation would be based upon the length of a particular route times the number of trips that are operated over that route. It is a measure of the level of service in a jurisdiction. The calculation and impact of this measure would be similar to using revenue hours. Again, both are measures of service provided. Neither takes into account the number of passengers who actually ride the service. This allocation method would assess member jurisdictions a portion of cost based upon the level of service operated within their jurisdiction. An example of the potential impact of such a method is that Mariposa County, which includes Yosemite Valley, could be charged a significant portion of the operating cost of service primarily serving Merced or Mono Counties. The use of a measure such as revenue hours or miles would reflect that fact that service is not operated consistently among jurisdictions throughout the year. Mono County service does not operate during winter months. The reduction of service to Mono County would be captured in revenue hours or miles as these would cease during the winter.

Yet another approach to cost allocation would be to use a measure of service consumed such as passenger usage. Passenger usage is often used as a cost allocation method to reflect the population that actually benefits from the service provided no matter what jurisdictions they traverse to and from destinations. Passenger usage could be measured in either boardings or alightings. This means that allocation could be based upon either the jurisdiction where people board the bus and thus benefit the population in that jurisdiction. Alternatively, the measure of usage could be alightings. This would reflect the importance of the destination by allocating cost based upon where people get off of the bus. Passenger boarding and alighting data by stop would define the allocation model.

The consulting team has performed an analysis of the impact of the three primary allocation factors on YARTS cost distribution. Exhibit 6-2, Cost Allocation Options

presents data compiled by the team regarding passenger boardings, revenue miles, and revenue hours by jurisdiction. The information was derived from the monthly reports provided by VIA adventures, bus schedules, and a Google analysis of mileage in the service area. As presented, the information is as accurate as can be compiled without conducting more specific data collection efforts. Based upon other similar work by the consultants in other settings, this information is more than sufficiently accurate to present the concepts.

The analysis offers insights as to how an allocation plan for YARTS might be developed. Exhibit 6-2 shows that 54% of current local funding comes from Mariposa County. The County's share of miles and hours closely reflects this funding share. However, Mariposa County is the source of 79% of the YARTS passenger boardings. This is largely due to the fact that Yosemite Valley is in Mariposa County. Passenger boardings can be misleading since an individual can board a bus multiple times. For example, a passenger arriving at Merced Amtrak station could stay in lodging in El Portal, and board YARTS four times during the stay.

On the other hand, Mono County contributes 12% of current local funding while accounting for only 1% of boardings, 3% of miles, and 2% of hours. Finally, Merced County accounts for a relatively high 46% of miles and hours but only 20% of total boardings. Each of these factors is an important element of the discussion of the equity of cost allocation. The dialogue is further complicated when capital contributions are included in the funding mix allocated to jurisdictions. The capital cost factor is discussed in greater detail below.

Another important consideration in deriving a funding allocation plan is the impact of potential new YARTS members. Adoption of a formula should be done taking into account the impact on new members. Adoption of an allocation plan would alert potential new YARTS members to their financial responsibilities upon joining. This would serve as a framework for negotiating the addition of new member agencies. An approach that could make the operating cost allocation more easily defined for potential new members would be to consider administrative costs of operating YARTS separate from service delivery costs. Such an approach would suggest that there is a cost to joining by a new member agency regardless of the service level that might be provided to their jurisdiction. The service level would then be quantified separately much as is done now with the VIA operating contract.

At its January 24, 2011 meeting, the YARTS Board decided to utilize vehicle service hours as the basis for funding allocation for YARTS member counties.

**Exhibit 6-2
Cost Allocation Options**

ALLOCATION FACTORS	Merced County	Mariposa County	Mono County	YARTS Carryover	New Member	Total
Current Cost Contributions	\$75,000	\$136,360	\$30,000	\$9,714		\$251,074
Portion of Current Funding	30%	54%	12%	4%		100%
Boardings	16,444	65,771	843			83,058
Percent of Boardings	20%	79%	1%			
Miles	163,788	184,669	10,863			359,319
Percent of Miles	46%	51%	3%			
Hours	5,462	6,192	225			11,879
Percent of Hours	46%	52%	2%			
ALLOCATION OPTIONS (allocation by service measures)	Merced County	Mariposa County	Mono County		New Member	Total Cost
Current Cost Contributions	\$75,000	\$136,360	\$30,000	\$9,714		\$251,074
BY Boardings	\$49,708	\$198,818	\$2,548			\$251,074
BY Miles	\$114,447	\$129,037	\$7,590			\$251,074
BY Hours	\$115,443	\$130,874	\$4,757			\$251,074
CAPITAL	Merced County	Mariposa County	Mono County		New Member	Total Cost
Current Capital Contributions	462,205	34,369	25,750			522,324
Portion of Current Funding	88%	7%	5%			100%

Role of Capital Cost Contributions

Capital funding is a vital component of the finance structure of YARTS. Capital funding is made up of two key components: grant funds and local matching funds. Certain capital funding sources utilized by YARTS have not required a local match. Others have required a matching contribution. For example, FTA 5320 funds have not required a local match. These funds can be used without match for capital purposes. However, it is possible that with the federal transit program reauthorization that will soon face Congress, a local match could be applied to these funds. Some level of match is required of most capital funding programs. However, recent stimulus programs have complicated the funding landscape. PTIMSEA funds have been used to match federal 5309 funds. Such a program is available due to the current economic environment and is not a traditional transit funding source. YARTS has benefitted greatly from such programs. Such benefits may not be available with the end of stimulus funding or the reauthorization of the federal transit program.

Partner agencies in YARTS have made varying contributions to capital. The level of funding has varied in part on fund availability to the contributing jurisdiction. The funding pattern included in the FY 10-11 budget is indicative of the variation in circumstances among jurisdictions. Exhibit 6-3 identifies the capital funding sources in the adopted budget.

Exhibit 6-3
FY 2010/11 Budgeted Capital Revenue Sources

Funding Source	Amount
ARRA	\$717,421
5320 Program (Federal Transit Admin)	\$582,579
5320 Program (Federal Transit Admin)	\$1,605,000
US DOT	\$2,085,193
Mariposa Co. PTMISEA	\$34,369
Mono Co. PTMISEA	\$25,750
Merced Co. PTMISEA	\$462,205
YARTS Carryover	\$79,467
5304 Program (Federal Transit Admin)	\$92,500
Total Capital Budget	\$5,684,484

Exhibit 6-3 indicates the range of sources for capital funds. It also points to the variance among jurisdictions in their level of capital contribution. Capital contributions tend to be less suited to a formula based allocation process. However, over time they can be as important to the success of the organization as are routine contributions to operating expense.

An approach to capital contributions could take the form of an “assessment” applied to each member based upon an adopted capital program. Such an approach would

presume that regional capital funding sources such as ARRA or 5320 have been applied to capital acquisitions on a 100% basis first if possible. Once funds capital funds requiring a match have either been committed or identified as available, the member jurisdictions would face the decision as to committing local funds to secure the grants. An assessment for capital could be programmed for members to allow them to plan in advance and to know the level of contribution that would be necessary. Since many of the immediate capital needs have been recently addressed, the assessment process could be minimal in the near future and also done on a fairly sporadic basis.

At the January 24, 2011 YARTS Board meeting, it was decided to continue the negotiated approach to capital contributions among YARTS member counties, and to utilize an allocation based on vehicle hours as needed for potential new YARTS members.

Chapter 7: RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

In Chapter 5, the full range of service and fare options were reviewed. Chapter 6 reviewed several governance, management and cost sharing options. This chapter provides the specific recommended actions by fiscal year, from the current FY 2010/11 to FY 2015/16. The details of marketing and communications actions are provided in Volume II Marketing Plan of the Short-Range Transit Plan.

The action plan assumes the continued operation of Routes 120 and 140 with no expansion along the Route 41 or Route 120 west corridors.

FY 2010/11

Management/Institutional Actions

- The new Mariposa Park and Ride facility opened in January 2011.
- YARTS will be ordering new buses in FY 2010/11. A total of eight additional buses are needed, but the cost per bus has gone up. The YARTS Transit Manager is meeting with the bus manufacturer in early 2011 to finalize details and the price per bus. There is currently about a 9-month lag time between ordering the bus and delivery.
- The Short Range Transit Plan will be finalized in FY 2010/11.
- YARTS Board will review and comment on proposals to operate bus service in the Highway 41 and Highway 120 west corridors.
- A fare media and implementation plan for electronic fareboxes will be developed.
- New automatic chains will be procured and installed on buses during the Winter/Spring schedule as necessary.
- Advocate with Congressional delegation the eligibility of YARTS to directly receive FTA 5307 funding as part of the reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU. At the same time, continue to advocate for the eligibility of FTA 5320 funds for operating purposes.

Service Plan and Fare Actions

- Increased fares on Route 120 will be implemented to be equivalent to Route 140 fares on a per mile revenue basis. Route 140 full fares were equivalent to 16 cents per revenue mile and Route 120 was 13 cents per revenue mile in summer 2010.

Marketing Plan Actions

- Several marketing and communications items have been undertaken as part of the Short Range Transit Plan process. Items completed include:
 - The YARTS Board adopted a branding design for the vehicles in July 2010. The vehicle graphics clearly identify YARTS as “Public transit to Yosemite,” a descriptor that will be used in all branding and promotional elements.
 - The YARTS Board at its December 2010 meeting adopted the design for bus stop signs. The work to start replacing the signs should start immediately in FY 2010/11, but will likely carry over to FY 2011/12.
- “Reason to Ride Guides” and “Schedule Brochures” have been designed. The final schedule based on the Short Range Transit Plan adoption will be included in the final drafts. The new public information is targeted to be distributed for the 2011 Summer/Fall schedule.
- Initiate implementation of new bus stop signs at all bus stop and new customized information displays at all bus stops and shelters.
- Hire staff or retain volunteers as gatekeeper contacts for ongoing information distribution at key locations for both Highway 140 and 120. Efforts should begin in the summer of 2011.
- Information displays will be enhanced at the Transpo and Merced Amtrak stations.

FY 2011/12

Management/Institutional Actions

- Due to the work volume in FY 2011/12, either hire .5 FTE temporary employee or retain intern or consulting assistance to provide management assistance with implementation. \$50,000 has been added to the MCAG administrative budget for this purpose.
- Conduct commuter pass market research evaluation.
- Apply for a 5311(f) grant to support marketing of connections to Amtrak and Greyhound.
- Initiate the procurement process for the operations and maintenance contractor for operation of YARTS. Incorporate the expected changes in this Action Plan in the bid documents. Rate and analyze bids, and negotiate new contract with successful bidder.
- Initiate a YARTS Board meeting with DNC management with National Park Service management participation. Items on the agenda should include, having YARTS posters on the Yosemite Valley shuttles, increased visibility of YARTS on the yosemitepark.com website, inclusion of YARTS in new employee orientation, the potential operation of the Hiker’s Shuttle by YARTS, the potential for subscription bus service for DNC employees, and extension of Run 6 to Yosemite Valley during Winter/Spring schedule requiring a direct DNC subsidy.

- Conduct a special joint AAC and YARTS Board retreat to fully discuss the governance options presented in Chapter 6.
- Submit a FTA 5320 grant application to fund a study for real time transit information on YARTS buses. Coordinate with NPS on ITS architecture.
- Order new electronic fareboxes based on the fare media and implementation plan developed in FY 2010/11. When new fareboxes are delivered, conduct pilot tests of new fareboxes in Winter/Fall schedule of 2012.

Service Plan and Fare Actions

- Start the Winter/Spring schedule October 1 2011 instead of November 1.
- Eliminate Run 6 on weekends during the Winter/Spring schedule.
- Eliminate Runs 3 and 10 in the Winter/Spring schedule on weekends.
- Shift Run 4 to start at 1:20 pm at the Merced Transpo, departing from the Merced Amtrak station at 1:30 pm during the Winter/Spring schedule, with connections to Greyhound and Amtrak Trains 713 and 714 at the Amtrak station.
- Provide an early outbound Friday bus to serve NPS employees in El Portal.
- Implement a new schedule on Route 120 with buses leaving from Mammoth Lakes at 9:00 am to make a day trip to Tuolumne Meadows convenient to Mono County visitors and residents. The departure time from Yosemite Valley would remain at 5:00 pm.
- Supplemental YARTS service will be added to accommodate peak demand during the Summer/Fall schedule. The YARTS Transit should have the flexibility to marshal resources based on actual demand and in cooperation with the National Park Service on peak visitor days. This will help to avoid passengers left behind with expected additional ridership with improved marketing efforts.

Marketing Actions

- Finalize implementation of new bus stop signs at all bus stop and new customized information displays at all bus stops and shelters.
- Hire a website designer and upgrade the YARTS website based on the recommendations in the Marketing Plan.
- Design a YARTS poster for Yosemite Valley shuttles.
- Pursue adding YARTS to Google Transit in cooperation with Caltrans.
- Implement social media strategies by hiring a summer intern in the Summer 2012. Intern could also be responsible for increasing the frequency and level of contact with gatekeepers.
- Before the Summer/Fall schedule of 2012, develop tourism/travel packages with updated schedule information. Give tourism employees the “YARTS experience” at the beginning of the 2012 Summer/Fall schedule.

FY 2012/13

Management/Institutional Actions

- If negotiations with DNC and NPS are successful, prepare detailed implementation, funding and marketing plan for YARTS operation of the Hiker's Shuttle at the beginning the Summer 2013 Summer/Fall schedule.
- Evaluate the need for the extra July bus runs in each direction on Route 140 to eliminate passengers left behind. Determine if the extra bus is needed between June 15 and August 15 depending on the success of marketing effort and Yosemite visitation.
- Fully implement new electronic fareboxes with change in fares.
- Conduct real-time transit information study and determine funding sources to implement.
- When new branded YARTS buses arrive, plan celebratory media event.

Service and Fare Actions

- A second bus on Route 120 would be added for the Summer/Fall 2013 schedule, allowing a choice of two trips a day between Mammoth Lakes, Tuolumne Meadows, and Yosemite Valley. Schedule focus will ensure both convenient trips between Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne Meadows and convenient day trips between Mammoth Lakes and Tuolumne Meadows.
- Implement the fare increases recommended in Chapter 5 for route 140. The fare increase would be approximately 15% for both full fares and commuter passes.
- In the Summer/Fall schedule for 2013, start Run 2 from the Merced Transpo at 5:18 am. Operate in Summer/Fall schedules only.

Marketing Actions

- If agreed to by DNC, provide content to upgrade the YARTS information on yosemitepark.com
- Install YARTS posters on Yosemite Valley shuttles, The Bus and ESTA buses.
- Revamp media advertising campaigns to provide targeted and sustained exposure to target markets. Follow recommendations of the Marketing Plan.
- Submit updated information to travel guides.

FY 2013/14

Management/Institutional Actions

- If second bus on Route 120 is successful in inaugural year, begin process for incorporating a 10th bus in the capital plan.
- Initiate bid document for implementation of real time transit information for YARTS. Start installation.

Service and Fare Actions

- Initiate second bus and new schedule on Route 120.
- Implement fare increase recommended in Chapter 5 on Route 120.
- Submit funding application for implementation of real-time information.
- If discussions and negotiations with DNC top management with the YARTS Board are successful, initiate new run to provide subscription service to DNC employees. Initiate Run 6 service to Yosemite Valley in the 2013 Winter/Fall as part of the negotiated package.

Marketing Actions

- Evaluate marketing campaigns for effectiveness in increasing YARTS load factors and overall ridership.
- Sustain and refine marketing efforts implemented in previous fiscal years.
- Develop marketing plan for rollout of real time YARTS schedule information.

FY 2014/15

- Fully implement real-time information for YARTS buses.
- Put 10th YARTS bus in summer 2014 service.
- Sustain marketing efforts implemented in previous fiscal years.
- Order 11th YARTS bus if the additional June 15 to August 15 bus for Run 5 and Run 13 proves to be successful.

FY 2015/16

- Sustain marketing efforts implemented in previous fiscal years.
- Place Bus #11 into Summer 2015 service.

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Chapter 8: FINANCIAL PLAN

This chapter has several distinct sections that build upon one another. The sections include:

Operating Financial Plan

- Baseline Operating Baseline Revenues and Expenditures: a discussion is provided on baseline revenues and expenditures, based on the status quo operation. The section provides a basis for comparison of the baseline projections with the recommended operating costs and revenues.
- Operating Expenditures: a discussion of the existing operating expenditure categories with a description of the operating costs assumptions and expenditures planned over the next five years.
- Operating Revenues: a discussion of existing revenue sources and need for operating revenues over the next five fiscal years.
- Operating Revenue Enhancements: Discussion of seven revenue enhancements that YARTS should consider over the next five years.

Capital Financial Plan

- Capital Expenditure Categories: discussion of the capital expenditure categories including buses, bus stop improvements, and other capital equipment. Recommendations are made over the next five years.
- Capital Revenue Sources: discussion on the recommend use of capital revenues over the next five years.

Baseline Financial Projections

The Short Range Transit Plan provides a five-year operating budget. This section provides a baseline financial forecast of expenses and revenues based on the status quo. This baseline forecast assumes that the number of vehicle service hours stays constant and only “reasonably expected” revenues are included. It provides a planning tool to compare estimated changes to in the recommended operating and revenue plans in following sections of the chapter.

There are a number of assumptions utilized in the baseline financial forecast. On the expenditure side, the following assumptions are utilized for the purpose of the baseline projections:

- 12, 262 vehicle service hours are projected.
- Two additional YARTS buses are put in revenue service in October 2011. The remaining YARTS fleet is mostly implemented in July 2012, and the use of VIA buses for operations is completely phased out by July 1, 2014.

As discussed previously, the operating cost per hour is \$16.92 less when a YARTS owned bus is utilized.

- The baseline forecast assumes there are no significant fluctuations in gasoline and insurance costs.
- The California CPI averages 2% per year over the five-year period.
- Increasing YARTS staffing demands increase the MCAG administration costs by 5% per year, above the expected CPI rate of 2%.

On the revenue side, the status quo is assumed:

- Fare revenues increase at 3% per year based on historical ridership growth and modestly successful marketing efforts.
- The existing FTA 5309 and 5320 grant funding utilized for vehicle lease and “capital cost of contracting” for YARTS’ current grants will be exhausted this fiscal year. The baseline budget assumes that YARTS does not apply for new grants.
- Mariposa County, Mono County, and MCAG CMAQ funding all remain at FY 2010/11 budget levels.
- The cooperative agreement with Yosemite remains at \$300,000 over the five-year period. This assumes that the legislation allowing Yosemite to retain gate fees is renewed.
- The commuter transit subsidy that NPS employees utilize continues.
- YARTS is successful in receiving a modest increase in the agreement with Amtrak.
- There is no operating reserve provided, as YARTS does not have a formal policy on operating reserves.

Exhibit 8-1 shows the baseline financial forecast over the next five years utilizing the above assumptions. The expiration of FTA 5320 and 5309 funding from existing grants for operations in FY 2011/12 results in a \$217,865 deficit if no steps are taken to address the deficit. Despite declining contractor rates based on the successful delivery of YARTS buses, the deficit drops in FY 2012/13 to approximately \$142,000 before slowly climbing to \$194,000 in FY 2015/16.

**Exhibit 8-1
Baseline Budget: Assumes Status Quo**

Operating Revenues	FY 2010/11	FY 2011/12	FY 2012/13	FY 2013/14	FY 2014/15	FY 2015/16
Fares	\$435,650	\$448,720	\$462,181	\$476,047	\$490,328	\$505,038
Local Government Contribution						
Mariposa County	\$ 136,360	\$ 136,360	\$ 136,360	\$ 136,360	\$ 136,360	\$ 136,360
Mono County	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000
MCAG CMAQ	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000
Subtotal	\$ 241,360	\$ 241,360	\$ 241,360	\$ 241,360	\$ 241,360	\$ 241,360
Regional Partner						
Amtrak	\$ 321,200	\$ 335,800	\$ 335,800	\$ 335,800	\$ 335,800	\$ 335,800
NPS	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000
Subtotal	\$ 621,200	\$ 635,800	\$ 635,800	\$ 635,800	\$ 635,800	\$ 635,800
Federal/State						
FTA 5311(f)	\$350,065	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
FTA 5309	\$109,278					
FTA 5320	\$75,000					
Subtotal	\$ 534,343	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000
YARTS Carryover	\$ 31,296	\$ 25,654				
Total	\$ 1,863,849	\$ 1,651,534	\$ 1,639,341	\$ 1,653,207	\$ 1,667,488	\$ 1,682,198
Expenses						
Service Contract	\$ 1,603,119	\$ 1,628,127	\$ 1,533,359	\$ 1,553,018	\$ 1,572,850	\$ 1,604,307
MCAG Management	\$ 117,614	123,494.70	129,669.44	136,152.91	142,960.55	150,108.58
Audit, Insurance	\$ 27,500	\$ 28,325	\$ 29,175	\$ 30,050	\$ 30,951	\$ 31,880
Transpo Station Lease	\$ 4,600	\$ 4,738	\$ 4,880	\$ 5,027	\$ 5,177	\$ 5,333
Marketing	\$ 84,714	\$ 84,714	\$ 84,714	\$ 84,714	\$ 84,714	\$ 84,714
Total Expense	\$ 1,837,547	\$ 1,869,399	\$ 1,781,798	\$ 1,808,961	\$ 1,836,653	\$ 1,876,342
Surplus/Deficit	\$ 26,302	\$ (217,865)	\$ (142,456)	\$ (155,755)	\$ (169,165)	\$ (194,144)

YARTS Operating Expenditures

This section is the recommended five-year plan for operating expenditures. The primary driver of YARTS costs is the number of vehicle service hours provided in the YARTS schedule. The first section reviews the recommended service supply in vehicle service hours based on the recommendations

Service Supply

The service supply is the number of vehicle service hours provided by the operations and maintenance contractor, currently VIA. Exhibit 8-2 is a summary of the service supply over the next five years. At the bottom of the exhibit is the specific service recommendations made in Chapter 5, reflecting the changes in vehicle service hours. Those changes are reflected in the upper portion of exhibit in the summary of the 140 Summer/Fall, 140 Winter/ Spring and total vehicle service hours being provided in a particular fiscal year.

In the current fiscal year, YARTS is projected to have a total of 12,263 vehicle service hours. In Chapter 5, the following service changes were recommended for FY 2011/12. These include:

Winter/Fall Schedule

- Eliminate Run 6 on weekends: reduction of 82.8 annual vehicle service hours
- Eliminate Runs 3 and 10 weekends: reduction of 267 vehicle service hours
- Shift Run 4 to Midday: no impact on vehicle service hours

Summer/Fall Schedule

- Provide extra peak demand service in Summer 2011 to avoid passengers being left behind and to assist National Park service with peak visitor demand. This would increase vehicle service hours by 226 vehicle service hours
- Provide early Friday service to El Portal: no impact on vehicle service hours by shifting Friday schedule

With these changes in service supply, there would a slight reduction in vehicle service hours to 11,991 in FY 2011/12.

In FY 2012/13, the only service supply change is the extension of Run 2 to Merced in the Summer/Fall schedule. This would increase vehicle service hours to 12,114.

In FY 2013/14, the second bus would be added to Route 120, adding 609 vehicle service hours. In addition the extra July bus would be extended from June 15 to August 15, resulting in a total of 12,310 vehicle service hours.

**Exhibit 8-2
YARTS Service Supply**

	Actual FY 2009/10	Budget FY 2010/11	Projected FY 2011/12	Projected FY 2012/13	Projected FY 2013/14	Projected FY 2014/15	Projected FY 2015/16
Highway 140							
Summer							
Base Hours*	5,598	5,773	5,844	5,953	6,142	6,142	6,142
Special Amtrak, Other	35	35	35	42	42	49	49
Total Hours	5,633	5,808	5,879	5,995	6,184	6,191	6,191
Winter							
Base Hours	5,580	5,791	5,441	5,441	5,441	5,441	5,441
Special Amtrak, Other	55	55	62	69	76	83	90
Total Hours	5,635	5,635	5,635	5,635	5,635	5,635	5,635
Total							
Base Hours	11,177	11,564	11,285	11,394	11,583	11,583	11,583
Special Hours	90	90	97	111	118	132	139
Total Hours	11,267	11,654	11,382	11,505	11,701	11,715	11,722
Highway 120							
Base Hours	609	609	609	609	609	609	609
Special Hours	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Hours	609	609	609	609	609	609	609
Total							
Base Hours	11,786	12,173	11,894	12,003	12,192	12,192	12,192
Special Hours	90	90	97	111	118	132	139
Total Hours	11,876	12,263	11,991	12,114	12,310	12,324	12,331
Hours=Vehicle Service Hours: Bus in revenue service							
Service Plan Actions							
Route 140							
Start Winter/Spring							
Schedule Oct. 1, 2011			-155				
Eliminate Run 6 weekends							
Winter/Spring Schedule			-82.8				
Eliminate Runs 3 and 10							
Weekends, Winter			-267				
Shift Run 4 to 1:00 pm			0				
Winter/Spring Schedule							
Early Friday bus			0				
Start Run 2 from Merced				109			
Peak Demand Supplement			226		189		
Route 120							
Add second round-trip					609		

Operating Contract

The most significant YARTS expenditure is the current service contract with VIA Adventures, Inc. (VIA). The current agreement with VIA is from June 1, 2007 to May 31, 2012. Compensation in the agreement is based on the provision of vehicle service hours. The cost per vehicle service hour is adjusted based on the California Consumer Price Index and other factors that YARTS may consider. In October 2010, the YARTS Board approved the following rate structure: VIA-owned small bus \$129.37 per vehicle service hour, VIA-owned large bus \$134.08 per vehicle service hour, and YARTS-owned bus \$117.16 per vehicle service hour. A vehicle service hour is when the vehicle is in revenue service and do not include any out-of-service vehicle time used for operator bus checkout, breaks, lunches, or deadheading (empty bus heading to start of run or returning from the end of the run). Both parties can open negotiations if fuels costs fluctuate by 15% or more or if insurance costs fluctuate by 20% or more.

VIA is responsible for providing vehicles if YARTS has not provided a bus. As YARTS continues to procure a fleet of nine buses on its own, VIA will utilize less and less of its fleet. VIA provides all drivers, mechanics, dispatchers and other personnel needed to operate an intercity bus service. On a per hour basis, the contractor costs will decline as YARTS puts additional YARTS-owned buses into revenue service.

In FY 2010/11, it is projected that VIA will operate 12,173 vehicle service hours of regular service and 90 special vehicle service hours, mostly Amtrak group trips that are reimbursed by Amtrak, with a service contract budget of \$1,579, 356.

In FY 2011/12, YARTS will put the operating contract out to competitive bid. It is a very competitive market and it is assumed that the contract will increase at 5% per year starting in FY 2012/13, which accounts for fuel costs that are anticipated to significantly higher than normal inflation.

In FY 2012/13, it is assumed that YARTS will receive 7 of its new buses by the beginning of the fiscal year. This is the reason that the service contract costs are expected to decline from \$1.60 million FY 2010/11 to \$1.56 million in FY 2012/13.

MCAG Administration

YARTS has an agreement with Merced County Association of Governments to provide transit service management, marketing, financial management, grant administration and transportation services. Fees are established in the annual budget, with the latest line item approved by the YARTS Board on April 5, 2010 in the amount of \$117,614 for "Management, Accounting, Planning and Service Monitoring" and \$84,714 for "Public Education/Media Relations-Marketing Admin." Compensation is based on a cost reimbursement basis.

Starting in FY 2011/12, the SRTP operating budget has included MCAG staff costs associated with marketing in the Management, Accounting, Planning and Service Monitoring” category. Direct ongoing marketing costs recommended in the Marketing Plan are included as a separate line item in the operating financial plan. As a result in the operating expense five-year plan, costs for marketing ongoing direct costs drop from \$86,000 in FY 2010/11 to \$43,500 in FY 2011/12.

Other Operating Costs

There are only three other line items in the YARTS operating budget, audit, insurance and Transpo lease costs totaling \$32,100. There are several yet to be determined ongoing costs that are included in the “Other Operating Expenses” in the five-year operating plan. This includes the necessary maintenance costs of the Mariposa Park and Ride lots and the ongoing maintenance of bus stops and shelters.

Exhibit 8-3 is the projected operating costs between FY 2010/11 and FY 2015/16. It is anticipated that YARTS operating costs will increase from \$1.86 million annually in FY 2010/11 to \$2.07 in FY 2015/16.

Exhibit 8-3
YARTS Operating Expenditure Plan

Expenses	FY 2010/11	FY 2011/12	FY 2012/13	FY 2013/14	FY 2014/15	FY 2015/16
Service Contract	\$ 1,603,250	\$ 1,592,067	\$ 1,559,683	\$ 1,633,429	\$ 1,704,935	\$ 1,791,199
MCAG Management	\$ 117,614	\$ 179,375	\$ 129,375	\$ 135,844	\$ 142,636	\$ 149,768
Audit, Insurance	\$ 27,500	\$ 28,325	\$ 29,175	\$ 30,050	\$ 30,951	\$ 31,880
Transpo Station Lease	\$ 4,600	\$ 4,738	\$ 4,880	\$ 5,027	\$ 5,177	\$ 5,333
Marketing Start-Up Costs	\$ 26,500	\$ 10,000				
Marketing Ongoing Direct Costs	\$ 86,000	\$ 43,500	\$ 44,805	\$ 46,149	\$ 47,534	\$ 48,960
Other Expenses		\$ 15,000	\$ 16,000	\$ 17,000	\$ 18,000	\$ 19,000
Total Expense	\$ 1,865,464	\$ 1,873,005	\$ 1,783,918	\$ 1,867,498	\$ 1,949,234	\$ 2,046,140

YARTS Operating Revenue Plan

YARTS has done an exemplary job of bundling an array of funding resources to provide YARTS services. The current status of YARTS' main funding resources is reviewed below. Exhibit 8-4 provides an overview of the YARTS budgeted operating revenue for FY 2010/11.

Exhibit 8-4
YARTS Operating Revenue Budget: FY 2010/11

	Operating \$\$	Percent
Fares	\$435,650	24.0%
Local Government Contribution		
Mariposa County	\$ 136,650	7.5%
Mono County	\$ 30,000	1.7%
MCAAG	\$ 75,000	4.1%
Subtotal	\$ 241,650	13.3%
Regional Partner		
Amtrak	\$ 321,200	17.7%
NPS	\$ 300,000	16.5%
Subtotal	\$ 621,200	34.2%
Federal/State		
FTA 5311(f)	\$300,000	16.5%
FTA 5309	\$ 109,278	6.0%
FTA 5320	\$ 75,000	4.1%
Subtotal	\$ 484,278	26.7%
YARTS Carryover	\$ 21,582	1.2%
Total	\$ 1,813,784	100%

Fares

Passenger fares account for \$435,650 of the budget, and represent approximately 24% of the total operating revenues. Therefore, in FY 2010/11, there was a need for 76% of the budget, or \$1,293,420, to be subsidized with other funding resources.

The fare contributions are somewhat complex for YARTS. The farebox revenues currently include ticket vendor sales, Federal Subsidy Program and proceeds' from National Park Service employees¹, and sales of individual tickets onboard the bus. The farebox revenues do not include Amtrak Thruway passengers as Amtrak essentially purchases fares and contributes a subsidy to YARTS with their funding agreement with YARTS.

¹ In April 2000, Executive Order 13150 mandated that all Federal agencies in the National Capital Region (NCR) implement a Transportation Subsidy Program by October 1, 2000. On July 26, 2000, the Department adopted the policy of making the Transportation Subsidy Program available to all qualifying Department of the Interior (DOI) employees nationwide. For eligible commutes, this allows up to \$230 per month in commute subsidies.

The minimum farebox recovery requirement for funding of rural transportation services for funding sources such as the Local Transportation Fund in California is 10%. For urbanized areas, the minimum is 20%. In providing intercity service with a significant commuter ridership, YARTS' 24% farebox recovery estimate for FY 2010/11 (without the Amtrak fare component included) is very good but not atypical.

YARTS has excess capacity on its existing runs that would enable it to receive additional fares without additional costs. A 30% farebox recovery ratio was the recommended target performance standard Chapter 4.

A fare increase was recommended in Chapter 5 for Route 120 in FY 2011/12. The fare increase would bring the fares per revenue mile to an equivalent level of Route 140.

On Route 140, a fare increase is recommended in FY 2012/13. The fare schedule was included in Exhibit 5-4 in Chapter 5. The fare increase for adult regular fares would be a minimum of 15%, which reflects the contractor rate increase since the last time the fares were increased in 2006. It is also recommend to reduce the discount rate for seniors, youth, and disabled from 70% to 80%.

A second round of fare adjustments is also recommended on Route 120. The second adjust also reflects a minimum of 15% in contractor rates since 2006. The fare increase would only be implemented if the combination of increased marketing efforts and the other fare increases do not increase the farebox recovery ratio above 30%.

Fare revenues were budgeted for \$435,000 in FY 2010/11 by the YARTS Board. Fare revenues are projected to increase to approximately \$506,000 in FY 2011/12 based on results of the marketing efforts and increased ridership. The fare increase on Route 120 in FY 2011/12 will also help to bolster revenues. Fare revenues are projected at \$535,000 in FY 2012/13 based on the increase in fares on Route 140. Ridership would be expected to normally drop by 5 to 7% after the fare increase, but given the demographics of the ridership and the affordability of the fares, it is expected that overall marketing efforts will enable ridership and fare revenues to continue to grow at a rate of 5% per year over the next five years. In FY 2015/16, fare revenues are expected to increase to approximately \$585,000. This assumes that Congress reauthorizes the Commuter Tax Benefit that NPS employees currently have available to them.

County Contributions Toward Operating Subsidies

The local YARTS signatory counties currently are budgeted to contribute 13.3% of the budget in FY 2010/11. Mariposa County currently provides \$136,650 to YARTS and utilizes Local Transportation Funds. Mono County currently contributes \$30,000 annually and also utilizes Local Transportation Funds. Local funds are also needed for capital matching purposes.

The Local Transportation Fund (LTF) is part of the funds received from Transportation Development Act (TDA) monies. TDA funds are derived from the state sales tax and are earmarked for transportation purposes. The law (SB 325, enacted in 1971) created a local transportation fund (LTF) in each county that is funded from ¼ cent of the base statewide six-cent retail sales tax that is collected in each county. If there are no unmet needs, the remaining funds can be utilized for street and roads purposes. An annual claims process determines how much LTF monies are available based on sales tax receipts and how much is apportioned to each transit service in each respective County.

Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) currently provides \$75,000 in Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) funds. These funds are utilized to fund YARTS' public education and marketing efforts. CMAQ funds are jointly administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and were reauthorized in 2005 under SAFETEA-LU. The SAFETEA-LU CMAQ program provides over \$8.6 billion dollars in nationwide funds to State DOTs, MPOs, and transit agencies to invest in projects that reduce criteria air pollutants regulated from transportation-related sources over a period of five years (2005-2009). The formula for distribution of funds considers an area's population by county and the severity of its ozone and carbon monoxide problems within the nonattainment or maintenance area, with greater weight given to areas that are both carbon monoxide and ozone nonattainment/maintenance areas. Public education is one of the eligible uses of the funding. The Federal share of funding has historically been 80%, but the Energy Independence and Security Act increased the federal funding from CMAQ to 100% for eligible projects the past two fiscal years.

The subject of cost sharing options will be discussed at the January 24, 2010 YARTS Board of Commissioners meeting. The options were presented in Chapter 6. For purposes of the draft SRTP report, the status quo for local County contributions is assumed. The final SRTP will be adjusted based on the outcomes of the January 24, 2010 discussion.

It should be recognized that the 2010/11 budget also includes contributions in PTMISEA funds (Proposition 1B funds) from Mariposa County (\$34,369), Mono County (\$25,750), and Merced County (\$462,205) to assist with the procurement of YARTS buses. This is discussed further later in the capital plan section of this chapter.

Regional Partners

The National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) and the National Park Service are Regional Partners and have separate funding agreements with YARTS that specify the terms and conditions of the agreement for the funding provided.

The YARTS Board approved the Cooperative Agreement Between YARTS and National Park Service, Department of Interior, Yosemite National Park Agreement

renewal in September 2010. The agreement provides specific terms and conditions for both parties for the \$300,000 financial assistance from the National Park Service. The agreement specifies that a minimum of 2,000 annual hours of service be provided within Yosemite National Park with a minimum of four runs daily, both of which YARTS exceeds. The Cooperative Agreement also includes significant performance and financial reporting requirements each year. Funding is authorized each year and the agreement specifically states: "Any award beyond the current fiscal year is subject to availability of funds; funds may be provided in subsequent fiscal years if project work is satisfactory." The National Park Service contribution increased from \$250,000 to \$300,000 in fiscal year 2007/08. Future negotiations with the National Park Service should attempt to build in Consumer Price Index increases, at a minimum. However, since the outcome of the negotiations is uncertain, the revenue financial plan holds the \$300,000 current contract amount constant.

The source of funding that the National Park Service utilizes to fund YARTS are the gate fees collected at the entrance to the Park. Legislation that currently allows the National Park service to keep some of the gate fees expires in December 2014. Stakeholders at the National Park Service have mentioned it is uncertain what will happen if the fees go to the general U.S. Treasury. This is a potential threat to what has been a stable funding source for YARTS.

YARTS has a funding agreement with the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak). The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), Division of Rail, is a party to the funding agreement. The essence of the agreement is that in return for \$800 per day, YARTS provides Thruway Bus Service between Merced and Yosemite Valley, or intermediate points served by YARTS. On the 120 route, Amtrak collects an amount of the YARTS ticket price for Thruway bus service. YARTS claims these fares through invoicing Amtrak off the tickets that are returned by VIA Adventures. Amtrak also pays \$800/bus for groups of 20 or more for service between Merced and Yosemite and El Portal. YARTS drivers collect valid Amtrak-issued tickets and MCAG remits the tickets with the invoice to Amtrak. The current agreement is \$292,000 annually. The FY 2010/11 budget anticipated an adjustment to the rate, which is anticipated to come to the YARTS Board in January 2011 for adoption. While subject to the terms of a renewed funding agreement, the agreement with Amtrak has very positive outcomes for both parties, and there are no known threats to this funding source at this time. It is possible that when Congress finally addresses transportation reauthorization (the current 6-year authorization has expired and temporary authorization was approved for this year), the funding for Amtrak could potentially be affected in discussions on the federal deficit in the new Congress. However, at this time, there are no known threats to the Amtrak funding agreement with YARTS.

Collectively, the Regional Partners contribute 34.2% of the budget. Both sources of funding can also be utilized as local match for federal funding sources.

Over the next five years, it is recommended that YARTS negotiate with Regional Partners to adjust the contributions to keep up increased costs of YARTS operations. Over the next five years, the Regional Partners are expected to provide \$3.2 million to YARTS.

Federal and State Funding

Federal funding for Intercity 5311(f) is channeled through the State of California (Caltrans) and has provided \$300,00 to YARTS based on a competitive grant application. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5311(f) Intercity Bus Program in California is designed to address the “intercity bus transportation needs of the entire state” by supporting projects that provide transportation between non-urbanized areas and urbanized areas that result in connections to intercity bus service of greater regional, statewide, and national significance.

The purpose of the Section 5311(f) funding is to provide supplemental financial support to transit operators and to facilitate the most efficient and effective use of available Federal funds in support of providing rural intercity transportation services. The intercity route must provide a meaningful connection in the California Intercity Bus Network. YARTS provides such meaningful connections in Merced at the Transpo, including Greyhound, and with Amtrak.

Based on a Caltrans initiative, FTA 5311(f) funding is now on a three-year cycle that enables greater predictability for this funding source. For FY 2009/10, YARTS received an extra \$100,131 in FTA 5311 (f) funding. This is considered a one-time allocation and is not carried forward in the SRTP financial planning. Required local match for this operating program is 44.67% and funds must be expended in the year they are received.

The financial plan assumes that the \$300,000 in FTA 5311 (f) funding that YARTS currently receives to support services continues over the five-year planning horizon. However, in FY 2010/11 YARTS has been successful in obtaining \$78,000 in supplemental FTA 5311 (f) funding that will enable YARTS to pay for both capital and operating marketing start-up costs.

It is recommended that YARTS apply for \$20,000 in additional marketing funds in FY 2011/12 to specifically market Amtrak and Greyhound connections. If successful, grant monies would not be fully expended until FY 2012/13.

YARTS has two federal funding sources that have been utilized for the private fleet currently provided by VIA Adventures, Inc. YARTS utilized a portion of its FTA 5320 and FTA 5309 grants for this purpose. The grant monies currently on YARTS’ book will not be available after this fiscal year for this purpose. However, until YARTS has 100% of its own fleet, FTA 5320 or FTA 5309 could be utilized if new grants were awarded to YARTS.

YARTS is not directly eligible to receive several traditional funding sources that are typically utilized in California public transportation operations.

Section 5311 is a non-urbanized area formula-funding program authorized by 49 United States Code (U.S.C) Section 5311. This federal grant program provides funding for public transit in non-urbanized areas with a population smaller than 50,000 as designated by the Bureau of the Census. FTA apportions funds to governors of each State annually. The California State Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Division of Mass Transportation (DMT) is the delegated grantee. 15% of the funds go to the Intercity Bus Program, FTA 5311 (f) that YARTS currently receives.

The 75% Regional Apportionment is distributed to non-urban areas based on population through Regional Transportation Planning Agencies ((RTPA) whose county or region contains a non-urbanized area as identified by the United States Census Bureau. This Regional Apportionment is based on the population of the county or region. The RTPA submits a Program of Projects that identifies sub recipients and projects to receive Section 5311 funds in their planning area by December 31st of each year. The sub recipient must complete and submit a Section 5311 Program Application, including all required other submittals by the appropriate deadline. Technically, Mono, Mariposa and Merced counties could identify YARTS as a sub recipient for FTA 5311 funding. However, this would reduce the amount that the county-based transit programs receive. These existing county-based transit programs rely on FTA 5311 funds to maintain minimum service levels. This is the primary reason that YARTS has not received FTA 5311 formula funds in the past. The local match is 44.67% for operating and 11.47% for capital expenditures.

State Transit Assistance (STA) funds are derived from the Public Transportation Account. STA funds can be utilized for both operating and capital purposes, but are subject to performance criteria for the utilization for operating purposes. These funds are allocated to the Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPA) and are claimed by eligible public transportation providers. These funds can be utilized for either capital or operating purposes. The funds have been very unpredictable over the past several years. There are other California examples where STA funds are claimed for intercity bus services. The Tahoe Area Regional Transit (TART) bus service, for example, does claim STA funds from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency for their intercity service in Placer County. However, any effort by YARTS to tap into STA funds that are received by the RTPAs in the YARTS member counties would take funding away from local transit program funding. It is therefore very unlikely that STA funding can be utilized to fund YARTS over the next five years.

In Chapter 5, one of the options for expanding Route 120 to two buses in order to provide two rounds a day when Route 120 is operating during the summer months is to have YARTS negotiate with DNC to take over responsibility for the Hiker's Shuttle to Tuolumne Meadows for an appropriate subsidy amount. The NPS would also be involved with these discussions. This is one of several options for funding a second bus between Mammoth Lakes and Yosemite National Park.

Operating Reserves and Working Capital

Over the past 10 years, YARTS has been able to accumulate substantial unrestricted assets that have been utilized for cash flow purposes and to balance the budget with carryover funds. At the end of FY 2010/11, it is estimated that this reserve fund will be \$1,009,264. YARTS currently utilizes this fund for cash flow purposes. For example the new YARTS bus was purchased with this working capital as it takes Caltrans a significant amount of time to reimburse YARTS. *At the January 24, 2011 YARTS Board meeting, it was decided that \$600,000 of this fund should be set aside as an ongoing operating reserve in case funding sources do not come through.*

End of Year Balance

Exhibit 8-5 is the summary of expected revenues between FY 2010/11 and FY 2015/16. Overall revenues are expected to be \$10.7 million over the next six-years, including the current fiscal year. Only reasonably expected revenues are included in Exhibit 8-5. The exception to this is fare revenue responses to marketing efforts to increase ridership and increases in fares as these revenues are in control of YARTS. However there is \$728,000 less anticipated six-year revenues than anticipated six-year expenses.

This potential deficit needs some context. A significant example is the expansion of the second bus on Route 120. The costs of this expansion would be \$80,200 annually, but the revenues to support this operation are not included. The service would not be implemented unless the funding package was secured. Potential revenue sources are discussed in revenue enhancements in the next section below.

The YARTS Board also discussed cost sharing options among YARTS' signatory counties at its January 24, 2010 meeting. It was decided to allocate funding based on vehicle service hours. Since YARTS Board members need to have their respective Board of Supervisors adopt this new policy, Exhibit 8-5 maintains the status quo contributions from member counties.

Exhibit 8-5
YARTS Operating Revenue Plan

Operating Revenues	FY 2010/11	FY 2011/12	FY 2012/13	FY 2013/14	FY 2014/15	FY 2015/16	6-year total
Fares	\$435,650	\$505,711	\$535,175	\$551,231	\$567,768	\$584,801	\$3,180,336
Local Government Contribution							
Mariposa County	\$ 136,360	\$ 136,360	\$ 140,451	\$ 144,664	\$ 149,004	\$ 153,474	\$860,314
Mono County	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,900	\$ 31,827	\$ 32,782	\$ 33,765	\$189,274
Merced County/MCAG	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000	\$ 77,250	\$ 79,568	\$ 81,955	\$ 84,413	\$473,185
Subtotal	\$ 241,360	\$ 241,360	\$ 248,601	\$ 256,059	\$ 263,741	\$ 271,653	\$1,522,773
Regional Partner							
Amtrak	\$ 302,888	\$ 348,109	\$ 348,724	\$ 350,426	\$ 353,373	\$ 355,416	\$2,058,935
NPS	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$1,800,000
Subtotal	\$ 602,888	\$ 648,109	\$ 648,724	\$ 650,426	\$ 653,373	\$ 655,416	\$3,858,935
Federal/State							
FTA 5311(f)	\$391,288	\$300,000	\$320,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$1,911,288
FTA 5309	\$109,278						
FTA 5320	\$75,000						
Subtotal	\$ 575,566	\$ 300,000	\$ 320,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$2,095,566
Total	\$ 1,855,464	\$ 1,695,180	\$ 1,752,500	\$ 1,757,715	\$ 1,784,882	\$ 1,811,869	\$10,657,610
<i>Balance (revenues- cost) (1)</i>	<i>\$ (10,000)</i>	<i>\$ (177,825)</i>	<i>\$ (31,418)</i>	<i>\$ (109,783)</i>	<i>\$ (164,353)</i>	<i>\$ (234,270)</i>	<i>(\$727,650)</i>

Recommended Revenue Enhancements

There are several options for enhancing YARTS revenues that could erase the financial deficit described above.

1. *Include an inflation escalation factor in all future funding agreements.* The service contract utilizes the California CPI to adjust costs. While there have been adjustments in revenue sources such as increasing the daily rate of Amtrak from \$750 to \$800 per day, and the National Park Service contribution from \$250,000 to \$300,00, there has not been a corresponding increase in the county contributions, for example. At a minimum, all funding agreements should consider including an inflation factor so that revenues keep up with rising expenditures.

2. *Submit a grant for FTA 5316 funding with one or more YARTS County members.* The FTA Section 5316 is apportioned as follows: 60% to large urban areas (over 200,000 population), 20% to small urban areas (between 50,000 and 200,000) and 20% to rural areas (less than 50,000 population). FTA Section 5316 funds must be used for projects that relate to the development and maintenance of transportation services designed to transport welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals to and from jobs and activities related to their employment. Caltrans administers FTA 5316 for rural areas. Title 49 U.S.C. 5316, as amended by SAFETEA-LU, requires a recipient of Section 5316 funds to certify that projects selected are derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan (coordinated plan). A 50% match for operating projects is required.

Because FTA 5316 funding must be derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human service transportation plan, YARTS would need to partner with one or more of its member counties in a funding application. Unfortunately, utilizing YARTS to serve the needs of low-income workers is not currently an identified strategy in the adopted coordinated public transit-human service transportation plans in the three member counties and would not be eligible for funding.

The plan for Mariposa County clearly identifies the employment needs and opportunities in Yosemite for low-income individuals. The stakeholder interviews conducted for the Short Range Transit Plan identified the importance of YARTS service for low-income individuals working in Yosemite Valley. The plan would need to be amended or updated to identify a specific strategy for increased utilization of low-income workers by YARTS. The plan strategy could be to fund vouchers for low income or welfare recipients to utilize YARTS, or provide direct operating support to maintain or expand runs designed to facilitate transportation for low-income individuals. As currently configured, runs 6 and 7 are particularly relevant to FTA 5316 funding and would have a very good chance of funding in future cycles.

Many other transit agencies in California have been successful in receiving up to \$200,000 per year in FTA 5316 funding. While there are significant reporting

requirements, the benefits of this funding far outweigh the additional administrative costs.

Since Mariposa, Merced, and Mono counties have not included the utilization of YARTS as an implementation strategy in their current plans, the YARTS operating financial plan does not include a line item for FTA 5316 funding. However, if one of more of the local counties does include a relevant strategy for utilization of YARTS by low-income workers, YARTS and a partner county should pursue a future FTA 5316 grant application.

3. *Apply for FTA 5311 (f) separately for Route 120.* FTA 5311(f) funding is currently part of the budget and is primarily utilized for Route 140 service. The YARTS Transit Manager has discussed the potential for additional FTA 5311 (f) funding with Caltrans. Caltrans staff were open to having a proposal to fund FTA 5311 (f) for different corridors. Therefore, if there were a decision to expand YARTS to the Highway 41 corridor to Fresno, or the 120 corridor west to Modesto, it may be possible to receive up to the \$300,000 maximum for each corridor served. This is only a possibility, to be explored further in direct discussions with Caltrans.

Based on these preliminary discussions, it may be possible to have separate funding applications for Route 140 and Route 120. For the existing 120 corridor service, it would ideally need to have direct transfers to the CREST service with a direct connection to Greyhound in Reno and Lancaster as well as Metrolink in Lancaster. The other possibility, as discussed in one of the service options below, is to have the YARTS bus on 120 continue to the Merced Transpo and Amtrak after it drops off passengers in Yosemite Valley.

The potential for FTA 5311(f) funding is dependent on further discussions with Caltrans. It should be considered as the part of the implementation strategy for the implementation of a second YARTS bus on Route 120 in FY 2012/13. As discussed earlier in Chapter 5, it is recommended that the Route 120 buses be interlined to facilitate good connections with Amtrak and Greyhound in both directions. The operating financial plan includes the expenses, and revenues required are in the "Balance Required" row. The funding strategy should be done in conjunction with discussions with DNC for taking over the Hiker's Shuttle to Tuolumne Meadows.

4. *Apply for FTA 5311(f) to support marketing efforts.* Caltrans staff have indicated a willingness to consider a grant application to support additional YARTS marketing activities. This would be particularly important if a new ticket agreement is reached with Greyhound. The portion of marketing funding would need to be focused on improved intercity connections.

5. *Invest in additional dollars for marketing in order to boost fare revenues.* The companion Marketing Plan has a number of recommendations that can improve ridership on the existing YARTS services. Investment in marketing activities should result in additional fare revenues. While it is impossible to predict the ridership response to marketing activities, it would not be unreasonable to expect farebox

recovery to increase to 30% from the existing 24%. Increases in fare revenues based on the marketing plan implementation have been included in the five-year operating revenue financial plan.

6. *Submit a grant application to pay for the lease portion of VIA buses until YARTS assumes ownership of all its vehicles.* This would continue the current practice that is included in the YARTS FY 2010/11 budget. In order to continue this practice, YARTS would need to receive additional FTA 5320 monies through a grant application or FTA 5309 monies through an earmark. The later option is very unlikely given the timing of Congressional discussions about earmarks.

7. *Legislative action to provide YARTS with Federal formula funding.* The Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program (FTA 5320 funding) was established to address the challenge of increasing vehicle congestion in and around our national parks and other federal lands. America's national parks, wildlife refuges, and national forests were created to protect unique environmental and cultural treasures, but are now facing traffic, pollution and crowding that diminishes the visitor experience and threatens the environment. To address these concerns, this program provides funding for alternative transportation systems, such as shuttle buses, rail connections and even bicycle trails. Eligible expenses are limited to capital and planning purposes. YARTS has benefited from this program with its bus procurements.

The FTA 5320 program does not allow for funding to be utilized for operating purposes. A YARTS Board member has been active in lobbying in Washington D.C. to make operations an eligible expense when Congress reauthorizes the federal transportation bill. There has been support from other jurisdictions on this front. It is not known whether this effort will be successful, and if it is, how much operating money YARTS might receive. All FTA 5320 grant processes have been highly competitive.

The other potential for future possible Federal formula funding for YARTS could be the FTA 5307 program. The Urbanized Area Formula Funding program (49 U.S.C. 5307) makes Federal resources available to urbanized areas and to Governors for transit capital and operating assistance in urbanized areas and for transportation related planning. An urbanized area is an incorporated area with a population of 50,000 or more that is designated as such by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Because YARTS is a rural transit service, it is not eligible for FTA 5307 funding. In the Tahoe area, there is a legislative effort to amend the 5307 authorization when Congress reauthorizes SAFETEA-LU. The specific proposal is to:

“Amend Section 5307(h) of Title 49, USC, Chapter 53 to add a new subsection 5307(h)(2):

(2) For purposes of this section, the Lake Tahoe Region, as defined in Title 49 USC 5309(f)(3)(A), shall be treated as an urbanized area with a population of 150,000 and a land area of 77 square miles, as defined in Section 5302.”

The argument being utilized by the Tahoe Transportation District and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is that significant operating funds are necessary to provide an effective region wide transit system given the dominance of federal land ownership at Lake Tahoe (approximately 77 percent), the policy direction of the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact (Public Law 96-551) to provide alternatives to the automobile, and the large annual visitation that comes to enjoy Lake Tahoe.

A similar argument could be made for the Yosemite area to be treated as an urbanized area in order to qualify for FTA 5307 funding. Legislative efforts would need to be made with the California Congressional delegation to make a similar amendment to Section 5307(h) of USC, Chapter 53 in the reauthorization SAFETEA-LU.

This section has described the existing funding framework that enables YARTS to operate. Utilizing “reasonably expected” assumptions, a baseline financial forecast has been made in order to evaluate what YARTS faces if no revenue enhancements are received. The range of options for revenue enhancements was presented above. The next section provides an evaluation of existing YARTS services to determine if there are changes to services that might reduce costs or improve efficiencies.

Capital Expenditure Plan

Between FY 2011/12 and FY 2015/16, YARTS will need to procure the following type of capital items:

- New buses
- Automatic chains
- Electronic fareboxes
- Bus stop shelters
- Installation of new bus stop signs
- System to provide Real-Time Transit Information

New Buses

Historically, YARTS has utilized a fleet owned by its contractor, currently VIA. The YARTS Board of Commissioners desires to own its fleet and the process received a boost in 2005 when \$2.09 million was designated in an earmark with the passage of the SAFETEA-LU.

YARTS has received delivery of one new over-the-road bus and needs eight additional new buses to completely own the YARTS fleet. The timing of the bus procurements has been dependent on securing matching funds for its FTA 5309 earmark of \$2.09, received in 2009. This is discussed in more detail under capital revenues below. However, the expense of buses has continued to go up. New 2010 engine emission standards and acceptance of engine emissions by the Air Resources

Board has delayed procurement. The buses are currently budgeted at \$530,000 each, and the YARTS Transit Manager is meeting with the bus manufacturer to late January to finalize the price. The new emission compliant engines and the new YARTS branding are adding to the cost of the bus in addition to normal inflation. To be conservative, the cost per bus is estimated at \$600,000 in the capital plan.

The timing of the bus procurement remains uncertain. YARTS hopes to order three buses in FY 2010/11 for delivery in FY 2011/12. This will depend on YARTS Board action in approving additional funds to make up the difference from the \$1,605,000 in secured FTA 5320 funding and the final costs of the three buses. It is possible that the YARTS Board will approve procurement of two buses in FY 2011/12.

YARTS plans to order five additional buses in FY 2011/12 and six buses if only two are ordered in FY 2010/11. This is dependent on the sales of PTMISEA bond funds that have been secured for matching purposes. There is also an expected shortfall in the between the aggregate available from FTA 5309 funds (\$2.09 million) and PTMISEA matching funds (\$522,324), due to the expected increase in bus costs.

There may be a need to add two additional buses to YARTS during the five-year SRTP planning horizon. These would include the need for a second bus on the 120 route and the potential need for a supplemental bus in the summer to handle peak demand. The five-year capital expenditure plan has included these procurements in the FY 2014/15 and 2015/16. The need for the buses will be confirmed by the end of FY 2012/13.

YARTS need to proceed as expeditiously as feasible with bus procurements. The buses currently utilized by VIA are aging and will increasingly need additional maintenance with additional numbers of road calls required. As discussed previously, the cost per vehicle service hour is significantly lower with the use of YARTS-owned buses. With the new YARTS brand on each new bus, it will help to bolster the image of YARTS and increase visibility.

Bus Chains

YARTS need automatic bus chains for winter road conditions. This will save driver time in manually installing and taking off the chains. It will better enable the drivers to keep to the printed timetables in the winter. The estimated cost is \$2,500 per bus or a total cost of \$22,500. A FTA 5311(f) grant has been secured and procurement is scheduled for FY 2010/11.

Electronic fareboxes

The procurement of electronic fareboxes will provide significant benefit to YARTS. It will provide security of cash received from passengers, allow for credit card and debit card purchases, and will enable the use of magnet cards and reloadable smart

cards. They will improve both passenger convenience and financial accountability.

Nine electronic fareboxes are planned for procurement. After fare media plan is completed that works out the details of transactions from the National Park Service, ticket vendors, and credit card sales, the fareboxes are scheduled to be ordered in FY 2010/11 and delivered in FY 2011/12. A total of \$200,000 is currently budgeted by YARTS, but a final price will need to be determined after the detailed specifications are finalized. The estimated cost includes all units, a backup, spare parts, a data recording system and attendant software, a printing and encoding machine and startup ticket stock as well as installation. If the price is higher after the final specifications are determined, then a smaller number of fareboxes can be ordered and additional grant monies and matching funds sought to make up the difference.

Bus stop shelters

YARTS has installed excellent bus shelters at most stops with good passenger volumes on Route 140. There is need for three additional shelters, one of which is currently being installed in Midpines County Park at the location of the park-and-ride lot. The two other bus shelter needs are at Barium Mine Rd. and the El Portal Post Office. Both are on NPS land and it may be possible for a funding partnership to be worked out. The overall bus shelter improvements would be \$50,000 over the six-year period.

Bus Stop Sign Replacement

In December 2010, the YARTS Board approved a new bus stop design. These new signs and information panels need to be installed at all YARTS locations. A contractor will need to fabricate and install the new signs and information panels where needed. There is a need to reconsider the location of the bus stops in a few locations and therefore some new poles and installation may be required. The Forest Service Visitor Center stop location is one example of where the bus stop location may need to be re-located for greater visibility.

Based on the recent consultant experience with similar projects, the cost should range between \$25,000 and \$35,000 based on the number of YARTS bus stops. The higher cost is included in the five-year capital expenditure plan. This project is a high priority and should commence in FY 2010/11. Grant funding has already been identified to complete this work.

Real-Time Transit Information

The market research effort and the resulting Marketing Plan in Volume II points to the need for having real-time transit information available on the internet, accessible by PDA phone, and displayed at key bus stops. The provision of such information will vastly enhance passenger convenience and help to build YARTS

ridership.

There are significant challenges in providing real-time transit information for the YARTS service due to the lack of satellite signals in mountainous terrain. Yosemite National Park Service has recently been awarded a \$495,000 FTA 5320 grant with the following description:

“These funds will be used to install an intelligent transportation system (ITS) and transit information systems in the southern part of Yosemite National Park. This project will facilitate visitor access via transit to Mariposa Grove and Badger Pass as well as install a parking occupancy and information system for Glacier Point.”

A study is needed to evaluate the feasibility of installing an intelligent transportation system along the 140 corridor with the capability for real-time transit information. The YARTS Transit Manager has requested information on the above grant award from Yosemite National Park management, but to date has not received information. It would be best to coordinate with the National Park Service on this project.

A total of \$30,000 has been included for a feasibility study in FY 2012/13. The feasibility study will hopefully be done in conjunction with the National Park Service along Route 140. After the feasibility has been completed the project costs can be determined. A placeholder value of \$300,000 in FY 2013/14 is included for the installation of the real-time transit information system.

Capital Revenue Plan

Several funding sources were mentioned above in the five-year capital expenditure plan. This section provides details on the revenues sources that would be utilized to fund the five-year capital expenditure plan.

FTA 5309

In 2005, YARTS received designated 5309 funding of approximately \$2.09 million, appropriated over four years, for the purchase of new buses. The funding was spread out over four years in the following specific amounts:

FY06: \$480,000

FY07: \$501,000

FY08: \$543,000

FY09: \$564,300

The funding requires a 20% local match of \$522,325.

In February 2010, the member counties agreed to contribute a portion of their

Proposition 1B funding (PTMISEA) allocation to help YARTS make the required match, and to move the project forward. PTMISEA funds and YARTS member county contributions to capital revenue is discussed further later in this section.

Over a six-year SRTP period, YARTS is expected to utilize \$2,085,193 in FTA 5309 funds.

5320 – Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks and Public Lands (formerly Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands (ATPPL))

YARTS has successfully utilized FTA 5320 funds to partially fund the Mariposa Park and Ride lot. \$582,579 is being utilized this fiscal year and the park-and-ride facility was open in January 2011.

YARTS has an existing approved grant for \$1,605,000 for the purchase of three new over-the-road buses. The cost of the buses has risen since the time of the grant application and the current funding will only cover two of the three planned buses. This funding does not require a local match.

YARTS, in collaboration with the National Park Service, will be need to submit two additional FTA 5320 grants over the next five years. One grant would be for the real-time transit information project and a second grant would be for the two additional YARTS buses starting in FY 2014/15. The grant process is highly competitive and there is no assurance that YARTS and the Yosemite National Park will be successful.

Over the six-year period (including FY 2010/11), YARTS would utilize \$3.8 million in FTA 5320 monies if all grant applications are successful.

FTA 5311 (f)

YARTS has been successful in obtaining FTA 5311 (f) capital grants for procurement of the electronic fareboxes, automatic snow chains, and bus stop sign installation. The FTA shares of these projects are 88.53% with a local match of 11.47% required. The six-year total of FTA 5311(f) funds required would be \$202,535.

Capital Local Match

As described previously, YARTS currently has extensive local match requirements on its capital procurements. YARTS worked successfully with member counties to develop a matching element with PTMISEA funds from the three YARTS participating counties.

As approved by the voters in the November 2006 general election, Proposition 1B enacts the Highway Safety, Traffic Reduction, Air Quality, and Port Security Bond Act of 2006. Statewide, this is a \$19.925 billion state general obligation bond that is meant to fund high priority projects. There are 16 different programs under Proposition 1B, and two directly benefit public transportation. Caltrans requires that each county prepare a plan for use of the Public Transportation Modernization, Improvement and Service Enhancement Account (PTMISEA) over a 10-year period. Counties also receive allocations for The Transit System Safety, Security, and Disaster Response Account of Proposition 1B.

In Chapter 6, cost sharing options for both operating and capital expenditures by YARTS participating counties. The options will be discussed at the January 24, 2010 YARTS Board meeting.

Exhibit 8-6 is the Capital Revenue Plan over the next five years, but also includes the current fiscal year. The \$636,000 in "Other Capital Revenues" needs to be resolved as part of the discussion on the cost sharing options on January 24, 2010.

**Exhibit 8-6
YARTS Capital Expenditures and Revenue Plan**

	FY 2010/11	FY 2011/12	FY 2012/13	FY 2013/14	FY 2014/15	FY 2015/16	6-year Total
Capital Expenditures							
Mariposal Park and Ride	\$1,300,000						\$1,300,000
Purchase 3 Buses*		\$1,800,000					\$1,800,000
Purchase 5 Buses*			\$3,000,000				\$3,000,000
Chains: 9 sets	\$ 25,081						\$25,081
Electronic Fareboxes		\$ 200,000					\$200,000
Bus Shelter Improvements	\$ 15,000	\$ 17,500	\$ 17,500				\$50,000
Bus Stop Signs/Replace	\$ 35,000		\$ 5,000	\$ 5,150	\$ 5,305	\$ 5,464	\$55,918
Study for Real Time Transit			\$ 30,000				\$30,000
Real Time Transit Implementation				\$ 300,000			\$300,000
Expansion to 10 buses*					\$ 636,000		\$636,000
Expansion to 11 buses*						\$ 655,080	\$655,080
Total Capital Expenditures	\$1,375,081	\$2,017,500	\$3,052,500	\$305,150	\$641,305	\$660,544	\$8,052,079
Capital Revenues							
FTA 5311 ARRA	\$ 717,421						\$717,421
FTA 5311 (f)	\$ 25,475	\$ 177,060					\$202,535
FTA 5320	\$ 582,579	\$ 1,605,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 636,000	\$ 655,080	\$3,808,659
FTA 5309			\$ 2,085,193				\$2,085,193
PTMISEA Mariposa County			\$ 34,369				\$34,369
PTMISEA, Mono County			\$ 25,750				\$25,750
PTMISEA, Merced Co			\$ 462,205				\$462,205
Carryover	\$ 39,606	\$ 39,861					
Other Funding Sources	\$ 10,000	\$ 195,579	\$ 414,983	\$ 5,150	\$ 5,305	\$ 5,464	\$636,480
Total Capital Revenues	\$ 1,375,081	\$ 2,017,500	\$ 3,052,500	\$ 305,150	\$ 641,305	\$ 660,544	\$8,052,079

* Shown in the fiscal year the buses would expect to be delivered.



Short Range Transit Plan

Volume II: Marketing Plan



Yosemite Area Regional
Transportation System

TRANSIT RESOURCE CENTER

TRANSIT  marketing
LLC

Final Report

January 2011

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Introduction

Yosemite Area Regional Transit System (YARTS) is a unique kind of public transportation. Its primary purpose is transporting visitors and employees from Merced, Mariposa and Mono Counties to Yosemite National Park. However, it also serves, to a lesser extent, as local transit service between Mariposa and key activity centers in Merced County and as a shuttle between Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne Meadows within the park.

YARTS operates two bus routes – each with a distinctive ridership base.

- The Highway 140 route connects Merced, the communities of Mariposa County and Yosemite Valley with six round trips per day. It operates year round, with somewhat expanded service in the summer, and serves a roughly equal mix of local residents and visitors.
- The Highway 120 Route connects Mammoth Lakes with Tuolumne Meadows and the Yosemite Valley, serving Lee Vining and June Lake along the way. It operates one round trip per day, only in the summer when the Tioga Pass is open. This route serves almost exclusively visitors, primarily backpackers who often ride the bus in only one direction.

This marketing plan will serve as a companion to the YARTS Short Range Transit Plan. It has been informed by the findings in the Market Research Report as well as a review of the existing marketing program. It will address a wide variety of communications strategies which will support the success of the service recommendations. The plan is organized into three sections:

- **Market Assessment**

This section provides a brief overview of the current marketing program, identifies marketing objectives and analyzes current and potential target market segments.

- **Strategies**

This section is the core of the marketing plan and includes a review of current marketing efforts, plus recommended strategies and detailed tactical plans for accomplishing the stated objectives. The strategic recommendations are grouped into the following focuses:

- Branding
- Locally-Based Passenger Information
- Internet-Based Passenger Information
- Customer Experience
- Visitor Gatekeeper Outreach
- Co-Marketing with NPS and DNC

- Co-Marketing with Connecting Transportation Systems
- Advertising
- Local PR/Outreach
- Corporate Sponsorship

Each sub-section begins with a review of current marketing activities in this area, then provides strategies to build on these efforts.

■ Implementation Guidelines

This section will address priorities, budget and timing of the plans implementation.

Market Assessment

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Marketing Program

YARTS has just celebrated its 10th Anniversary and its continued existence is a testament to effective marketing – not only to potential riders, but to partner communities, the National Park Service and other funding agencies. YARTS continues to thrive as a result of steadily growing ridership, the committed support of partner communities and the multi-faceted support of the National Park Service.

To date, the YARTS program manager has been responsible for all marketing efforts, with website assistance from the MCAG staff. Creative concepts and copy for promotional and passenger information materials have been created in house, with minimal outside support for graphics or production.

The current marketing budget for YARTS is \$85,000 - 5% of the \$1.8 million operating budget. However this is somewhat misleading, as the marketing budget covers not only promotional materials and expenses, but staff time, travel and tickets sales support. The 2009/10 allocation of the budget included \$45,000 for salaries (time spent by the Transit Manager and MCAG support staff on marketing related activities) and \$1700 for travel. The amount allocated to promotional marketing and even passenger information is probably no more than \$35,000 or about 2% of the operating budget. Hence media advertising and distribution of collateral materials has been very limited.

The strength of the YARTS marketing program to date is in the marketing partnerships which the Transit Manager has forged. Key among these is YARTS relationship with the National Park Service. NPS supports YARTS in a number of ways – financially and as a marketing partner.

- NPS provides funding for YARTS out of recreation fees.
- NPS waives the gate fee for YARTS buses, hence making the YARTS fares more economically advantageous for riders.
- NPS, through the federal transit benefit program, provides a 100% subsidy for NPS employees who ride YARTS. If fares increase or the federal transit benefit limit decreases, the subsidy may no longer be 100%. Employees are provided with information about YARTS and the vouchers during orientation.
- NPS includes limited information about YARTS on shuttle maps within the park and in its shuttle brochure.

A similarly important partnership is with Amtrak which purchases “thruway bus service” from YARTS. This provides predictable funding for operation of the system, as well as a venue for letting incoming visitors (not all of whom are thruway passengers) know about YARTS’ connection from Merced to Mariposa, Yosemite and on to Mono County. YARTS also works with Greyhound to attract riders who arrive in the region via intercity bus and is currently negotiating a ticketing agreement whereby Greyhound would be able to sell YARTS tickets as part of the Greyhound fare.

Another important marketing relationship is with the tourism industry in Merced, Mariposa and Mono Counties. Lodging establishments, visitor centers and other gatekeepers for the visitor population have been provided with information binders (which are updated periodically) that provide complete information about YARTS services. Some lodging establishments and other businesses also serve as ticket sales agents for YARTS. A number of tour operators include YARTS tickets as part of their tour packages. In addition, YARTS has worked with the airlines serving Merced and Mammoth Lakes to market to airline travelers coming to the region.

A more detailed review of current marketing efforts is included in the Marketing Strategy section. Each set of recommended strategies (e.g. Branding, Passenger Information, etc.) will begin with a review of existing related efforts and will identify opportunities for enhancing or building on these efforts.

Target Markets

Profile of Current Ridership

YARTS monthly ridership report provides a profile of ridership by fare category and location. The on-board survey conducted as part of this project enhanced that profile with demographic, travel and usage characteristics.

The two YARTS routes serve very different regions and ridership groups. While there is some cross over between the two routes (primarily among backpackers), the ridership bases are quite distinct. Route 140 serves a mix of commuters, domestic travelers, international travelers and some local non-commute trips. Route 120 on the other hand serves a much more homogenous group – almost exclusively domestic visitors – primarily Californians.

Route 140

Based on first day results from the passenger survey in July, it appears that visitors make up about 48% of the summer ridership on Route 140, while residents comprise the remaining 52%.

Data from the July 2010 ridership report for Route 140 indicates that one third of riders (34%) boarded in a fare category that clearly identified them as employees or commuters and hence residents. The other two thirds (66%) boarded with a cash fare (51%), as a free child (4%) or with an Amtrak ticket (11%). While most boarding with an Amtrak ticket are clearly visitors, the cash fares likely include both visitors and residents. Therefore, the roughly even split found in the on-board survey is our best estimate of the breakdown between residents and visitors during the summer season.

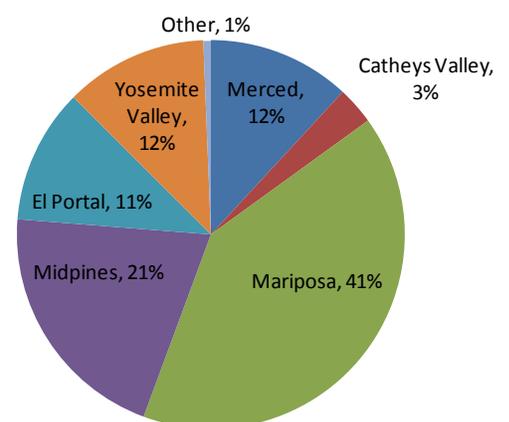
Winter/Spring ridership is more heavily dominated by local ridership, particularly commuters, as visitor ridership is significantly lower in the off-season. Commute oriented ridership is relatively stable throughout the year. However the percent of overall ridership which it represents varies from a low of 33% in August to a high of 54% in February (2010).

Resident Riders

The majority of resident riders (72%) use the bus to commute to work. Of employed resident riders, 60% are employed by the National Park Service, 20% by DNC and 20% by other employers.

Most resident riders live in Mariposa (41%), Midpines (21%) or Cathy's Valley (3%). Nearly a quarter live in El Portal (11%) or

Where Do Resident Riders Live?



Yosemite Valley (12%), while 12% live in Merced. The key destinations for resident riders are El Portal (35%) and Yosemite Valley (39%). Merced is the destination for about 14% of resident riders – primarily those who live in Yosemite Valley.

About 4 out of 10 (39%) resident riders say they use the bus daily (5-7 days per week), while 31% ride 3-4 days and 30% ride less often. Many NPS employees don't ride on Friday because of a short work day and no midday YARTS return.

Visitor Riders

Visitor riders on Route 140 are a mix of Californians (39%), travelers from other states (21%) and a large component of international travelers (40%).

Visitors come to the region using a variety of travel modes including train, air travel, Greyhound bus, personal vehicle, rental car and RV. Amtrak is the most cited mode for accessing the region – used by 53% of respondents. Another 9% say they arrived by Greyhound. Hence more than 60% came to the region without a private vehicle. This reliance on public transit appears to be closely related to the large segment of international visitors among the Route 140 ridership.

Most visitors (78%) are staying overnight in the region -- 42% in hotels/motels and 37% in campgrounds. While a wide variety of lodging locations were noted, the Bug Hostel and KOA Campground were the most often mentioned in the July on-board survey. (Note that KOA is closed in winter).

Visitor riders cross the spectrum of age groups, however nearly half of Route 140 riders are under 30 years old.

Forty two percent (42%) of visitors surveyed had visited Yosemite before and 19% had used YARTS on previous trips. This is very significant from a marketing point of view. Yosemite attracts a high level of repeat visitorship, providing an opportunity to promote future YARTS usage.

Route 120

As previously noted, Route 120 riders are almost exclusively domestic visitors, primarily from within California (66%). Only 8% of those surveyed were international travelers. Among this group, the dominant mode of travel to the region is personal or rental vehicle (68%).

A much larger share – 72% - of Route 120 riders (than 140 riders) have visited Yosemite before. However, a similar number 18% have used YARTS before.

Most route 120 riders are staying overnight in the region, but primarily in campgrounds (69%) rather than hotels/motels (14%). This is indicative of the core group using this route – backpackers. It is also reflected in the fact that most riders are making one-way rather than round trips (86%) and that many are using YARTS to travel between Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne Meadows (43%) rather than as a method for accessing the park (at least on the trip when surveyed).

Route 120 visitors also span the age spectrum. They are somewhat older than Route 140 riders, with two concentrations. Forty-one percent (41%) of riders are under 30, while a similar number (38%) are over 50.

Target Market Segments

In seeking to build ridership and support for YARTS, marketing efforts must address a variety of target markets. The following market segmentation is based on both the profile of current riders and discussions with stakeholders regarding the potential for market expansion. While some target segments are relevant to both routes others are specific to Route 140 or 120. This is indicated parenthetically after the label for each group.

Visitors

While visitors can be segmented in a variety of ways, the most effective is a segmentation which provides a cost effective means for reaching them. Therefore, we will segment visitors based on how they access the region and where they stay.

- **Hotel Guests (140 & 120)** –YARTS provides convenient service to a large number of hotels/motels in Merced, Mariposa, El Portal, Yosemite, June Lake and Mammoth Lakes. Ridership is greatest from the lodging establishments in Mariposa and El Portal where service is very direct and the trip to Yosemite relatively brief. On Route 140, 42% of visitor riders are staying at hotels in the region, with the Bug Hostel, Curry Village and Yosemite Lodge most often cited. On Route 120, only a small number of visitor riders (14%) are staying in hotels.
- **Campground Guests (140 & 120)** – YARTS also serves a large number of campsites which are utilized by visitor riders on both Routes 140 and 120. On Route 140, 37% of visitor riders say they are staying in a campground, frequently the KOA in Midpines. On Route 120, a large majority (69%) of riders are camping, primarily in the backcountry or Tuolumne Meadows. Many of the backpackers riding Route 120 are using the service in only one-direction. To travel into or out of the park, or to travel between various camping/hiking locations within the park. Nearly two-thirds of boardings are on out-bound trips.
- **Amtrak Riders (primarily 140)** – YARTS Route 140 provides direct service from the Amtrak station in Merced to Yosemite and is designated a “Thruway Bus” for Amtrak travelers. Amtrak riders can either buy an Amtrak ticket which includes their YARTS ticket, or they can buy an Amtrak ticket to Merced and then purchase a YARTS ticket on the bus. In the on-board survey, 52% of visitor riders on Route 140 and 20% of visitor riders on Route 120 said they used Amtrak for part of their trip to the region.
- **Greyhound Riders (primarily 140)** – The Transpo Center in Merced is a connection point between Greyhound and YARTS Route 140. Nine percent (9%) of visitor riders on Route 140 and 6% on Route 120 say they used Greyhound as part of their travel to the region.
- **Airline Travelers** – Commercial air service is provided to Merced by Great Lakes Airlines and to Mammoth Lakes by Horizon Air. In Merced, YARTS picks up and drops passengers directly at the airport. While a significant number of YARTS riders (21% on 140, 14% on 120) said they used air travel to access

the region, most flew into San Francisco (60%), Fresno (9%) or somewhere else outside the immediate area.

Residents

Resident riders are primarily a target for Route 140. They can be segmented based on whether they are using the bus to commute and whether their travel is to Yosemite or not.

■ **Park-Bound Employees (140)**

Employees who travel to the park for work are a critical target group only on Route 140. They represent roughly a third of this route's ridership and are the bulk of the "regular" riders on YARTS. This group includes three components.

- NPS Employees. The park has about 1,125 employees in summer and 741 in winter. These employees enjoy the federal transit benefit and hence ride YARTS at no personal cost. They make up about 60% of the employed resident riders currently using Route 140.
- DNC Employees. DNC, which runs the concessions at the park, employees about 1,700 employees in the summer and 1,100 in winter. This group makes up about 20% of the employed resident riders on Route 140. They pay their own way on YARTS.
- Other Park-Bound Employees. A small number of commuter riders work for other employers in the park.

■ **Locals residents visiting Yosemite National Park (120 & 140)**

A potential target audience for YARTS which has not been greatly captured is that of local Merced, Mariposa and Mono County residents traveling to the park for recreation. The waiver of the gate fees makes YARTS a cost effective mode for day trips to the park. High potential segments within this group might include hikers, bicyclers, naturalists and seniors.

■ **Other Local Residents (140)**

Route 140, in addition to offering access to and from Yosemite, also provides service between the communities of Mariposa and Merced Counties, connecting residents of communities along Highway 140 with jobs, educational opportunities and services in Merced. About 15-20% of travelers on Route 140 (based on the passenger survey) fall into this group which includes various segments.

- Non-Park Commuters - a small percent of riders use YARTS to commute to jobs or schools in communities along Highway 140.
- Non-commute, non-park travelers - another segment uses YARTS for non-commute purposes – traveling to medical appointments, shopping and other services.
- Park residents traveling to Merced – NPS and DNC employees who live at the park or in El Portal, use YARTS to travel to services in Merced. This is difficult in the winter when the evening trip is eliminated.

Stakeholders and Gatekeepers

As noted earlier, the strength of the YARTS marketing program to date has been in the development of partnerships with other organizations and businesses. This approach should be continued and strengthened, hence stakeholders and gatekeepers are important target segments.

■ Participating Jurisdictions

Elected officials and staff at participating jurisdictions are important to the on-going financial support of YARTS.

■ National Park Service

■ Lodging/Tourism Industry Gatekeepers

Tourism industry businesses and organizations within the YARTS service area are critical gatekeepers for current and potential visitor riders. They can serve as information distribution networks, promoters, ticket agents, and tour packagers.

- Hotels/Motels – Merced, Mariposa and Mono Counties
- Campgrounds – Mariposa County, Mono County, inside Yosemite National Park
- Amtrak – Merced Station
- Greyhound – Merced Station
- Local Airlines – Great Lakes Airlines and Horizon Air
- Visitor Centers, Tourism Bureaus and Chambers of Commerce
 - Merced Visitor Center at Transpo
 - Mariposa Visitor Center and Chamber of Commerce
 - Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau
 - Mono Lake Visitor Center
 - Mammoth Lakes Visitor Center
 - Mono County Tourism Bureau
 - June Lake Chamber of Commerce
 - Lee Vining Chamber of Commerce

■ Yosemite Gateway Partners

This group includes many of the gatekeepers listed above plus many more organizations focused on preserving and promoting the Yosemite region.

■ DNC – Delaware North Corporation is a gatekeeper for a large number of employees traveling to and from the park. It is also a connecting transit partner, in that it provides the shuttle services within the park.

Marketing Objectives

As a companion to the Short Range Transit Plan, this Marketing Plan will seek to insure the success of the service strategies recommended for YARTS. Specific objectives which will be pursued include:

Enhance customer satisfaction and experience.

Much of YARTS' ridership is the result of "word-of-mouth" advertising. By enhancing the customer experience, YARTS will insure continued positive "word-of-mouth" and repeat ridership among both resident riders and visitors who return to Yosemite again and again.

Generate increased ridership to fill capacity.

While some YARTS buses are operating at capacity (particularly outbound trips during commute hours), overall the system operates at about 50% of capacity, offering potential for ridership growth. The service plan will address the issue of overcrowding on isolated trips, while this marketing plan will address strategies for building ridership to utilize more of the existing capacity.

Retain resident riders and increase frequency of use.

Enhanced customer communications strategies will seek to retain ridership among NPS, DNC and other Yosemite bound employees and encourage them to use YARTS on a daily basis. Likewise, these strategies will improve ease of use for other resident riders using YARTS for commute and non-commute purposes.

Attract increased ridership among Yosemite visitors.

The greatest opportunity for ridership growth is among park visitors who number nearly 4 million per year. YARTS will seek to attract ridership from among both returning and first-time Yosemite visitors, by communicating with them prior to their arrival, via connecting transportation modes and once they are in the region.

Generate additional revenue.

Generating increased ridership will increase farebox revenues. In addition, the marketing plan will explore the potential for sponsorships as a means for generating revenue.

Continue partnership building.

YARTS will continue to build on the strength of its marketing program – partnerships with jurisdictions, organizations and businesses throughout the service area. Partnerships which provide marketing support for YARTS will be a particular focus of this marketing plan.

Strategies

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Strategies

This section is the core of the marketing plan and includes recommended strategies and detailed tactical plans for accomplishing the stated objectives. Each sub-section begins with a review of current marketing activities in the area of focus, then provides strategies to build on these efforts.

Following is a preview of the recommendations included along with a priority for each.

Priority	Strategy
Branding	
1	Vehicles
1	Bus Stops
1	Brand Continuity
Locally-Based Passenger Information	
Collateral and Displays	
1	Reasons to Ride Guides
1	Schedule Brochures
1	Displays
Information at the Bus Stop	
1	Bus Stop Signs
1	Customized Info Displays
3	Real-Time Information
On-Bus communications	
2	On-bus Info Display
Internet-Based Passenger Information	
1	Website
2	Google Transit
3	Social Media
1	On-Line Links
Customer Experience	
Residents	
2	Establish Channel to Communicate Delays
2	Ease Voucher to Ticket Conversion
2	Guaranteed Ride Home and/or Midday Return
Visitors	
2	Enhanced Info at Bus Stop/Real Time Info
2	Family Friendly Fares
3	Credit Card Sales On-Bus and/or On-Line

1 = Immediate

2 = Important

3 = Longer Term

4 = Optional

Priority Strategy	
Visitor Gatekeeper Marketing	
1	Gatekeeper Contacts/Info Distribution
3	Give Tourism Employees YARTS Experience
3	Tourism Bureaus/Travel Packages
2	Yosemite Gateway Partners
4	Submit Info to Travel Guides
Co-Marketing with NPS/DNC	
	Visitors
2	YARTS Poster on Shuttle Buses
2	Shuttle Info on YARTS Guide & Website
3	Enhanced Listing for YARTS on Yosemite Guide
3	Improved Visibility on yosemitepark.com
3	Park Outreach Program
	Employees
2	YARTS Brochure for Employee Orientation
3	YARTS Display in HR Offices
Co-marketing with Connecting Transportation Services	
2	Website Links and Passenger Guide References
1	Enhance Infor Displays at Amtrak and Transpo
3	Mammoth Lakes Bus Stop Displays
3	Provide Connecting Transit Info On-board YARTS
4	YARTS Posters on The Bus and ESTA Buses
Advertising	
3	Highly Targeted, Sustained Exposure
Local Outreach	
3	Yosmemite to Merced Travelers
3	Mariposa to Merced Travelers
3	Outdoor Enthusiasts
3	College Students
Corporate Sponsorship	
2	Solicit Corporate Sponsorship

Branding

Branding is an area of YARTS' marketing program that can be greatly enhanced. In the past branding of the service has been limited, partly because of the fact that service was operated with contractor vehicles which were also used for other purposes. The vehicles themselves have been minimally branded, or not at all. While the system's name and logo are used on all items related to YARTS, there is no distinctive YARTS identity which unifies the various elements.

A second issue related to branding of YARTS is the fact that it is not always recognized as public transportation. The tour bus style vehicles allow it to be easily confused with the hundreds of private tour vehicles operating within and through the Yosemite region.

Hence, the challenge is to establish a unified visual brand for YARTS which clearly identifies the nature of the service – *Public Transit to Yosemite* – and which is attractive to the primary target audience – park visitors.

Recommended Strategies

For any transit service, buses and bus stops are key elements of the visual brand as they are seen by thousands of potential riders every day. This is doubly true for a transit system whose primary target audience is highly transient. Every day, a new group of visitors must be made aware of YARTS, find their way to the bus stop and take their first ride. While we hope to educate many visitors before they arrive in the region, the vehicles and bus stops remain critical elements in building visibility and awareness for YARTS services, in addition to guiding visitors to the right spot to catch the bus. Branding begins with a distinct, cohesive look for vehicles and bus stops.

Current YARTS Brand



Transportation System
y. Not the road!

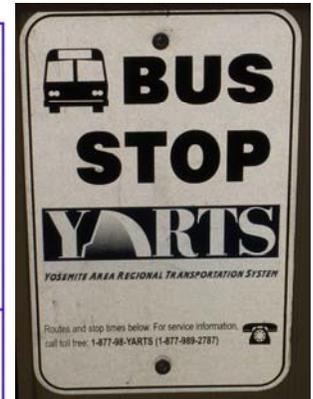
Summer 2010 Hwy. 140 Schedule
Effective May 17 - Oct. 30, 2010

Tickets are available from bus drivers or from the following ticket vendors:

Beer Creek Cabins	Midpines	966-5253
Cedar Lodge	El Portal	379-2812
Camelot Inn	Mariposa	964-4444
Happy Burger Diner	Mariposa	966-2719
KOA - Yosemite	Midpines	966-2201
Mariposa County		
Visitor Center	Mariposa	966-2656
Miner's Inn	Mariposa	742-7777
Quality Inn	Merced	742-3711
Yosemite View Lodge	El Portal	379-2481
Yosemite Bay Inn		
Mountain Resort	Midpines	966-6666

Fees

Month	Yosemite Valley	Mariposa	Midpines	El Portal	Yosemite
July	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$4.00
August	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$4.00
September	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$4.00
October	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$4.00



About YARTS | Stop Map | Schedules | Tickets | FAQ | Planning | Travel Reviews

WELCOME TO
YARTS
The Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System

Since it began operating in May of 2000, the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System, YARTS, has provided an alternative to driving to over 125,000 riders traveling in the Yosemite Region. With YARTS now in its 10th year, the number of new riders continues to grow and we hope you will become one of them.

We say, "Watch the scenery, not the road". Take away the challenge and stress of driving and the beauty of the trip comes into full focus. Many riders who have been to Yosemite before have told us that they have seen something for the first time while riding on YARTS buses.

We hope you will consider using YARTS for your trip to the Yosemite region. It will let you make the trip to Yosemite part of the pleasure of going.

And I want you to know this: We are always trying to improve the YARTS experience. If you ride with us and come away with an idea about how we might do it even better, please contact me using the Contact Us link on this site. I will get back to you.

Dick Whittington, YARTS Transit Manager

Yosemite National Park
39°F
AccuWeather.com
Reporting partners

We want your photos
Photos by Emily Chicago Edman, IL

Rider Survey
Survey
Feedback
Email
Phone

Vehicles

The enhancement of the YARTS brand will begin with the introduction of a distinctive, consistent look for the system's new fleet of dedicated vehicles. The illustrations at the right show the new vehicle design approved by the YARTS board of directors in July of 2010. The new look combines an eye-catching two-toned paint scheme, environmentally oriented colors and pine needle graphics that relate to the Yosemite Valley environment.

The vehicle graphics also clearly identify YARTS as "Public Transit to Yosemite," a descriptor that will be used in all branding and promotional elements. In fact these words should essentially become part of the YARTS logo.

Introduction of the new look will begin in Fall 2011 and continue as new buses are delivered through FY 2012/2013.

Bus Stops

YARTS current bus stop signs are relatively nondescript and badly faded. Hence this is an ideal time to replace them with bolder, more highly visible signage. The colors and visual elements from the buses will be carried through in updated bus stop signage. A concept for the sign, approved by the YARTS board of directors and TAC, is shown at the right. These signs will be placed on the ends of the shelters where they can be seen from both directions. Signage along the front edge of the shelter will continue to identify the specific stop location.



Elements of the bus stop sign include:

- YARTS, Public Transit to Yosemite
- Bus Symbol
- Website
- Phone Number
- Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System

Signs will also include a distinct bus stop number (such as shown on the design) which could be used to quickly identify the bus stop location. This would be useful for travelers calling in for information. Later, when real time information is available, it might be used by travelers to access real-time information via text or automated phone system.

Additional information at the bus stop will be provided in a changeable panel which is discussed on page 24.

Brand Continuity

The visual brand initiated with buses and bus stops, must then be carried through to everything associated with YARTS including passenger guides, promotional collateral materials, on-line communications and advertising. The goal of branding is to create a cohesive identity such that whenever a person sees one element of the system, it brings to mind everything else they've seen related to the service.



Locally-Based Passenger Information

Effective passenger information is the cornerstone of any transit marketing effort. Without clear, easy-to-understand “directions,” transit services are seen as cryptic, confusing and just too difficult to use.

Passenger information is particularly critical when dealing with a transient ridership base such as visitors. While YARTS has a core of regular riders on Route 140, the vast majority of its passenger base is made up of individuals with little or no experience using the system. Every day, nearly half of YARTS riders may be “first-time riders.”

The passenger information strategies recommended for YARTS fall into two primary groups:

- Locally-based passenger information to reach residents and visitors once they are in the Yosemite region. These are addressed in this section.
- Internet based passenger information to reach visitors when they are planning their trip to Yosemite. These are addressed in the next section.

Current Efforts

Currently, YARTS’ primary “local” passenger information tools are its schedules and bus stop information panels. The cover sides of the schedules are shown at the right. The bus stop panel is shown on the next page.

The schedules are printed and distributed by YARTS on a limited basis. They are also provided to hotels (as part of their information binders) for in-house reproduction. The bus stop information panels are posted at every YARTS stop (with the exception of Transpo) and are updated each season with the current schedule. Both pieces are produced in house with minimal budget committed to them. (Note: At Transpo information has been posted inside the visitor center, but not outside at the stop. YARTS has recently negotiated an agreement with the City of Merced to allow a YARTS signs and information at the bus bay.)

While both items are functional and provide valuable information to the prospective rider they are far from ideal.

The schedules have no graphic appeal (a fact which having hotels photocopy a copy doesn’t improve). In addition, they are not particularly user friendly.

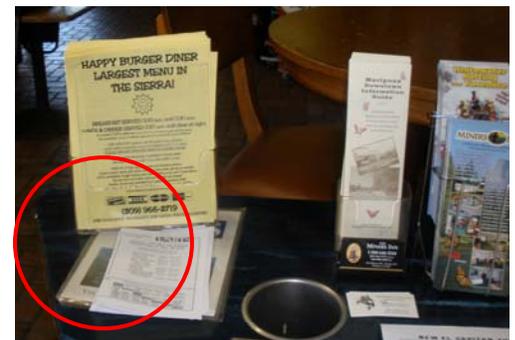
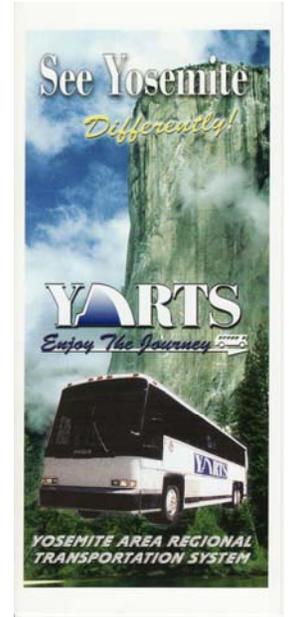
From	To	Adult	Child	Senior	Student	Senior	Student
Merced	Yosemite	\$1.50	\$0.75	\$1.00	\$0.50	\$0.75	\$0.50
Merced	Happy Burger	\$1.50	\$0.75	\$1.00	\$0.50	\$0.75	\$0.50
Merced	Yosemite Valley Lodge	\$1.50	\$0.75	\$1.00	\$0.50	\$0.75	\$0.50
Merced	Yosemite Valley Lodge	\$1.50	\$0.75	\$1.00	\$0.50	\$0.75	\$0.50
Merced	Yosemite Valley Lodge	\$1.50	\$0.75	\$1.00	\$0.50	\$0.75	\$0.50

- They include the schedule table and a great deal of text information, but no map to help the rider orient themselves.
- They often require the rider unfamiliar with YARTS to work for the information they need. (For example, the Route 140 schedule lists only round trip fares and includes this note. “Fares listed (except *) are round trip (US\$) leaving/returning to the same location. One-way tickets cost one half, rounded to the nearest \$.”)
- And they do little to highlight important facts such as the fact that one child under 12 rides free with each adult or that gate fees are included in the fare. While these pieces of information are included, they are simply lost in the overall busy-ness of the piece.

The information panels at the bus stops provide schedule information and a map but no information about fares. The schedule provided is the overall route schedule and the small type is difficult to read in the conditions found at a bus stop (low light, dirty plexiglass, etc.).

In addition, YARTS has created the *See Yosemite Differently* brochure shown at the far right. This brochure is somewhat more promotional in nature and has more graphic appeal. However, it does not appear to be widely distributed at this time.

Once on-board the YARTS bus, riders are provided with a packet of information that includes a hikers map, information about Yosemite and YARTS schedule. In the past, the packet included granola bars provided by Nature Valley (very popular with riders).



YARTS info at Miner’s Inn in Mariposa

Recommended Strategies

Collateral & Displays

Since a passenger guide or schedule is often the first aspect of a transit service that the potential user experiences, it serves both an image and an information function. An attractive, easy-to-use guide indicates to the customer that the service will be the same. In addition, an attractive guide is more likely to be prominently displayed by a hotel or other gatekeeper and to provide awareness building value. For these reasons, it is recommended that YARTS redesign and upgrade its printed and posted passenger information displays to be more graphically appealing and user-friendly. These collateral pieces should be printed by YARTS in quantities sufficient for broad distribution throughout the service region.

■ **Create “Reasons to Ride” Passenger Guide for Each Route**

Tourism gatekeepers expressed a desire for a YARTS collateral piece that does more than provide the schedule - a guide that really tells the prospective user what to expect and why YARTS is a good option.

The passenger guide should be a friendly fun information piece that uses small photos or illustrations and brief text to communicate “Reasons to Ride YARTS to Yosemite.” There should be a version for each route so that it can include an attractive map showing destinations along the route and can highlight factors specific to the communities served along Highway 140 and in Mono County. *(A draft list of “Reasons” is shown at the right – recommended copy will be provided separately.)* The “Reasons to Ride” brochures should be designed for multiple year use. They should not include schedule or fare information which is likely to change.



The text box at the right provides a draft list of “10 Reasons” for each of the YARTS routes. The image above illustrates the style of the proposed brochures.

Reasons to Ride YARTS to Yosemite (Rt. 140)

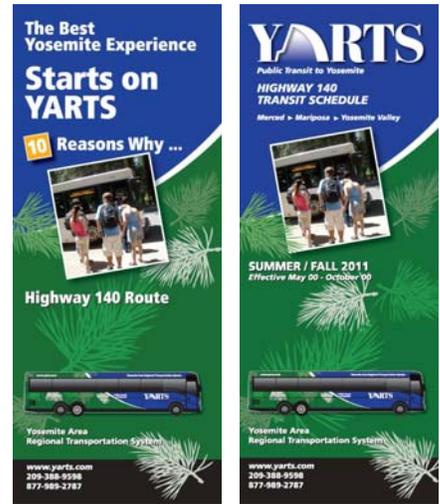
1. Save \$ on Gas and Gate Fees
2. Avoid the hassles of traffic and parking in Yosemite
3. Bus Stops convenient to hotels and campgrounds Mariposa, Midpines, El Portal and Yosemite.
4. Free Park & Ride Lots in Merced, Mariposa and Midpines.
5. Multiple trips to choose from, 7 days-a-week
6. Comfortable, spacious buses with under bus stowage for luggage, backpacks and bikes.
7. Connects to/from Amtrak, Greyhound and Great Lakes Airlines (Merced Airport).
8. Connects to free Shuttle Services in the Park. Yosemite Valley year-round, El Capitan and Tuolumne Meadows Shuttles in the Summer, Badger Pass in the Winter.
9. Connect to YARTS Hwy 120 buses for through trips to the Eastern Sierras
10. Watch the scenery, not the road.

Reasons to Ride YARTS to Tuolumne Meadows and Yosemite Valley (Rt. 120)

1. Save \$ on Gas and Gate Fees
2. Avoid the hassles of traffic and parking in Yosemite
3. Connect to free Shuttle Services in Tuolumne Meadows and Yosemite Valley.
4. Bus Stops convenient to hotels and campgrounds Mammoth Lakes, Lee Vining and June Lake
5. Free Park & Ride Lots in Mammoth Lakes, Lee Vining and June Lake.
6. Comfortable, spacious buses with under bus stowage for luggage, backpacks and bikes.
7. Connects to the Crest Route on Hwy 395 for trips to/from Reno and Lancaster.
8. Connects to free transit in Mammoth Lakes for easy access to all hotels.
9. Connect to YARTS Hwy 140 buses for through trips to Mariposa and Merced, with connection to Amtrak and Greyhound.
10. Watch the scenery, not the road.

■ **Create Companion Schedule for Each Route**

A coordinated, similarly styled schedule brochure should be created as a companion to each Passenger Guide. The Schedule should include the timetable, fare and ticket prices and other key information, and be updated each season to reflect fare and or schedule changes. While the “Reasons to Ride” brochure focuses on visitors to Yosemite, the schedule brochures should be designed to meet the needs of both visitors and residents. The primary version of the schedule should not include commuter fare info, however a commuter version of the Route 140 schedule brochure or an insert with this information should be provided for distribution through NPS and DNC to park employees.



■ **Provide Information Displays to Gatekeepers**

To make information readily available to potential riders and to build greater visibility for YARTS at lodging and other gatekeeper establishments, YARTS should provide hotels and visitor centers along the routes with passenger information displays which will accommodate both the “10 Reasons” and the Schedule for the appropriate route. *Note: Hotels in Mariposa contacted during the outreach effort were very receptive to providing space for such a display. In fact, a few were still using displays provided some years ago.*



Displays2Go: \$25-30

A wide variety of prefabricated display units are available from vendors such as Beemak Plastics (www.beemak.com) and Displays2Go (www.displays2go.com). Both counter displays and wall mounted units are available in various styles. The two displays shown at the right would be effective choices for YARTS. The top display, while somewhat more expensive, allows for an 8 ½ X 11 poster display in addition to the two brochure pockets. YARTS may wish to conduct a “survey” of gatekeepers to determine which model would be most appropriate for their location and then offer them a choice of two or three display options.

Brochure holders should be silkscreened with the YARTS logo, website and phone number to insure that hotel staff know who to contact for additional brochures if they run low.



Beemak: \$7.25

In addition to the interior display, gatekeepers should also be provided with a poster appropriate for display in a window and/or on a bulletin board. Posters can be produced as static window clings and/or on paper laminated for durability and appearance.

A specialized poster-cling or door decal should be provided to those locations that are ticket sales outlets to identify them as such.



An important part of this collateral/display effort will be setting up a maintenance system to insure that stocks of brochures and schedules are provided to gatekeepers on a regular basis. Strategies for accomplishing this are discussed under Gatekeeper Outreach on page 36.

Information at the Bus Stop

For a system dominated by transient riders, information at the bus stop is very important. It will serve as a primary source of information for some riders and as reinforcement for others – validation that they are in the right place at the right time. Bus stop information will be valuable to new or infrequent resident riders, as well as visitors.

■ Larger bus stop signs, consistent with bus branding

As previously discussed, the current bus stop signs will be replaced with larger, more visible signs that are consistent with the new vehicle graphics. These signs will include the following information:

YARTS Logo/Name, Public Transit to Yosemite

Bus Symbol

Toll free phone number and www.yarts.com

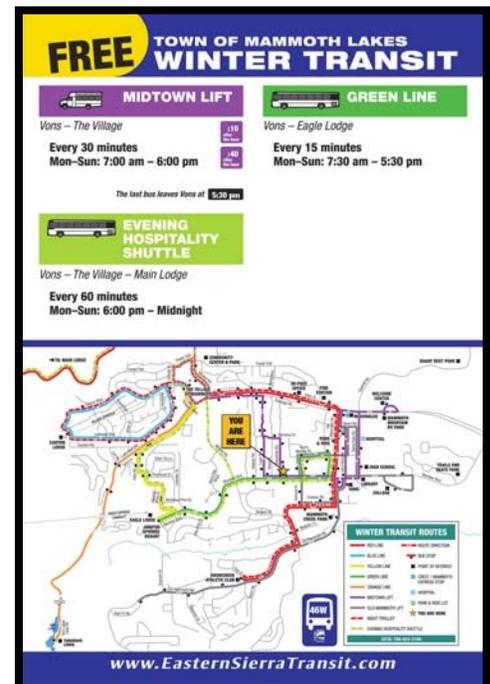
It would also be appropriate to include a clearly visible bus stop number on the sign to allow easy reference when a customer is calling or texting for information.

■ Customized information displays for each stop

The information displays currently posted at each bus stop will also be upgraded and expanded – possibly using a 3-panel display that surrounds the bus stop sign or is mounted in the shelter.

(Source: www.transitinformationproducts.com) The displays should include the following information:

- Easy to read route map with a clear YOU ARE HERE designation
- Larger type schedule for the appropriate direction of travel, with the target stop highlighted.
- Fare information for one way and round trip fares (with the target location highlighted).



- Other basic facts that a new rider would need to use the system effectively.

All of this will be created in an attractive graphic style, with type sizes and colors that are easy to read in a bus stop environment.

Note: Mammoth Lakes currently undertook a similar project of putting customized information at 131 bus stops. The bus stop sign elements were created by a graphic artist, then the signs were compiled and customized in house using Microsoft Publisher. The signs were output on a color printer and laminated. A sample sign is shown above.

■ QR Code

The bus stop information panel might also include a QR Code which riders with smart phones could scan to provide a direct connection to YARTS schedule or other customized information.

USE YOUR SMARTPHONE
TO LEARN MORE



■ Real-time Information

The ideal at-the-stop display would involve real-time information. This would be particularly useful given the long distances traveled by YARTS buses and the frequent delays caused by weather, traffic conditions and other factors. Provision of real-time information would, of course, require Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL) technology on the vehicles. If and when this becomes possible, the information should be utilized in a number of ways:

- Next bus information displays at major boarding locations including (at a minimum) Yosemite Valley, Transpo, Mariposa P&R and Amtrak on Route 140; Yosemite Valley, Tuolumne Meadows, Lee Vining and Mammoth Lakes Park & Ride on Route 120.
- Provision of next bus information by phone and on the website. For example, the passenger would be able to use the stop name/number to access next bus information on their cell phone or computer. Clear instructions should be included in all bus stop displays as to how to access the real-time information.

An immediate strategy for letting passengers know about service delays via text message is discussed under Customer Experience on page 33.

On-bus Communications

YARTS passengers are on the bus for quite some time, allowing plenty of opportunity to communicate with them about what to expect at the other end of their trip and to provide promotional support for partner organizations.

■ On bus Information Display

It is recommended that the new buses be outfitted with a multi-pocket display rack (either behind the driver or on the back wall of the bus) which can display the following information:

- YARTS Route Map Display - as a reference for riders during their trip
- YARTS Schedule Brochure
- Yosemite Guide
- NPS Yosemite map
- Yosemite Shuttle Map
- Merced (Rt. 140) or ESTA (Rt. 120) information about connecting transit services

In addition to making this valuable information available to passengers, this would eliminate the need to have boxes of gift bags and information in the boarding area of the bus.

A variety of prefabricated display units are sold.

Or a customized unit can be constructed using standard elements. A few examples of on-bus information centers are shown here.



Internet-Based Passenger Information

The internet has become the travel planning tool of choice for most travelers. As such, it is the ideal tool for communicating with potential Yosemite visitors about YARTS in advance of their trip to the region, thus allowing them to incorporate YARTS into their travel plans.

Through social marketing tools, it is also an excellent vehicle for establishing a relationship with passengers, and for allowing current passengers to educate new users about YARTS and what it offers.

Current Efforts

YARTS has a dedicated website at www.yarts.com that is cited as an information source by about one out of five visitor riders. Thirteen percent cite other websites as their source of YARTS information.

The YARTS website includes an overview of the service, schedule and route information, fares and ticket information, commuter pass information, contact information, a page of links to connecting transportation services and testimonials from YARTS riders about their experiences using the service.

The website is “decorated” with photos submitted by YARTS users. Most are simply photos from their trip to Yosemite with no direct relationship to the transit service.

In addition to the dedicated website, YARTS information or links to www.yarts.com can be found on a wide variety of Yosemite related websites such as:

- MCG website – link on homepage
- National Park Service/Yosemite
- Yosemite.com
- Visitmariposa.net – link to YARTS and handy fare calculator
- Homeofyosemite.com – link under “Travel in Yosemite”
- Monocounty.org – link under Yosemite
- Mariposachamber.org – listing under community resources, no link
- Comfort Inn, Mariposa
- KOA Campground, Midpines



Likewise, YARTS appears regularly in chat and Q&A on various websites relating to hiking, backpacking and Yosemite. The YARTS manager monitors mention of YARTS on such websites where current users frequently pass on information about YARTS to other naturalists.

Recommended Strategies

The following strategies are intended to build on and enhance the already positive on-line presence which YARTS has developed. As the internet and social media become increasingly the dominant communications tool, these strategies will become increasingly critical.

Website

While the YARTS website provides a great deal of information, it is not particularly user-friendly, nor easy to navigate. One of the key laws of website design is that “internet surfers scan, they don’t read.” The website needs to be redesigned for quick access to relevant information. Text, particularly on the home page, should be minimized in favor of relevant graphics and descriptive links presented in a graphic format that is clean and consistent with the new look of the buses, bus stop signs and materials.

Key elements of the website should include the following:

■ **Interactive map with links to schedules and to all connecting transit services**

A central feature of the website should be an interactive route map. Each bus stop should be a link to detailed information about that stop, including:

- Exact location of stop (possibly with a photo of the stop)
- Scheduled departure times for that stop
- Key destinations proximate to the stop
- Connecting transit services

Examples of interactive maps

www.deltarides.com

http://www.trilliumtransit.com/clients/mountain_rides/map.php *

**Demo created by Aaron Antrim-Trillium Transit*

■ **Schedules in html, PDF and download for PDA**

The schedules should be easily accessible:

- For on-screen reading (html format will allow them to be read by a screen reader used by persons with sight impairment)
- As PDF for printing
- For download to a PDA (for example, as an I-Phone App)

■ **Fare Calculator**

An easy to use fare calculator (such as the one found on [visitmariposa.net](http://www.visitmariposa.net)) should be included. It should allow the user to ask for one-way or round trip fares and should allow for the inclusion of one free child with each adult. (<http://www.visitmariposa.net/bus.html>)

■ **Reasons to Ride list with links to details**

To promote the advantages of riding YARTS and deliver logistics information in a fun format, it is recommended that the website include a “Reasons to Ride YARTS” list that parallels the brochure discussed previously. Each reason would be a link which offers the viewer more information about the specific aspect of service – for example, Just how much you can save by riding YARTS instead of driving, or exactly where the P&R lots are located.

■ **Stop on Demand**

There needs to be a clear distinction between “Stop on Demand” stops shown on the schedule and courtesy stops made to accommodate hikers and backpackers inside the park. Different terminology for each would be appropriate. For example: Request Stops (to designated stops on the schedule) and Courtesy Drops (to designate unscheduled drop off points where there is no boarding).

Along with the policy about unscheduled stops, the website should include a clear list of non-designated stops where it is safe for the bus to drop-off passengers at trailheads or other destinations along the route. This is likely to be far more useful to passengers (who are likely not as familiar with the route as YARTS staff and drivers) and might provide encouragement for them to use YARTS to get to places they may have thought inaccessible by bus. YARTS staff should work with local hiking enthusiasts to construct this list and annotate it with the locations of trailheads and recreation sites.

■ **Dedicated landing pages for specific types of visitors**

One great advantage of the internet is the ability to provide targeted information to specific ridership segments. For example, the website might include a dedicated page for Amtrak riders, Greyhound passengers and backpackers. These targeted pages could provide information of specific interest to these segments under a web address such as www.yarts.com/Amtrak which could be included in targeted communications and linked from the homepage.

■ **Multilingual information or translator function**

A large percent of YARTS riders are international travelers. While many speak some English, it would be useful and courteous to provide basic information in other languages . BART’s website (bart.gov) is a good example of providing key information in several languages (indicated by small flags at the bottom of the home page). Another approach would be to tie into a translator program that would translate the entire website. While automated translations are not perfect, they can be useful. It should also be noted that Google Transit provides information in 12 languages.

■ **Feedback**

The feedback page should give visitors the chance to provide feedback in a variety of ways:

- Ask questions via e-mail
- Submit compliments, complaints or suggestions via email

- Submit their stories and photos for posting on the website
- Provide phone numbers

■ **Travel Reviews**

The travel reviews page should definitely be continued and possibly expanded to be a more inclusive rider input page. It might include links to:

- General Reviews
- Favorite things to do on a YARTS day trip to Yosemite
- Best hikes using YARTS

■ **Link to Facebook and Twitter**

Links from the homepage should take the viewer directly to YARTS Facebook page or provide the opportunity to sign up to follow YARTS on Twitter. These are discussed below under Social Media.

Google Transit

■ **Submit route/schedule information to Google Transit**

YARTS should become a partner in Google Transit by submitting its route and schedule information in the General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS). (For more information visit

<http://maps.google.com/help/maps/transit/partners/participate.html>)

This will offer YARTS a number of advantages:

- YARTS will be able to include an easy to use Google trip planner on its website – allow potential riders to plan their trip as they would a car trip.
- Google Transit data can make constructing a truly interactive map for the website much easier.
- Individuals will be able to get YARTS information via Google Maps on their smart phones.
- Individuals looking for driving instructions to Yosemite will be able to click on the transit option button and get YARTS instructions instead. (Note: Amtrak and the Bay Area transit agencies are already in Google Transit, meaning that travelers could plan their entire trip from the Bay Area.)
- Websites which use GTFS data (such as TransitandTrails.org) will be able to provide information about YARTS.

Social Media

For younger populations, social media such as Facebook and Twitter have become primary communications tools. For older populations with an interest in travel, on-line forums have long been a place to exchange information. These social media offer YARTS an opportunity to communicate directly with potential riders and to join the conversation that riders and potential riders are having about the service.

■ Facebook Fan Page

YARTS should establish a Facebook Fan Page to provide an easy venue for providing timely information about YARTS and a forum for riders to share their experiences, questions, comments and stories. Creating a Facebook page is free and quite easy. However, the trick is to maintain it: Providing timely, useful information on a regular basis, responding to inquiries and deleting inappropriate posts. YARTS may wish to consider enlisting the support of a college marketing intern to provide support for this function. Types of information YARTS may wish to convey via Facebook:

- Service changes, disruptions or delays.
- Enhancements to service (e.g. new park & ride in Mariposa).
- Helpful travel tips (e.g. bringing bikes along)
- Advantages of YARTS over driving (Reasons to Ride brochure topics).
- Special events going on at Yosemite that might give locals a reason to ride YARTS.

Examples of transit systems that are using Facebook and Twitter Effectively

- Trimet.org – Portland, OR
- Bart.gov – Oakland, CA
- Mountainline.az.gov – Flagstaff, AZ
- Charlottesville Area Transit–VA
- Busride.org – Morgantown, WV

Go to website, then click on Facebook or Twitter logos to see what they are doing.

■ Twitter

Twitter can be an effective tool for communicating information that you want to get to users immediately – such as delays, weather conditions or other “timely” issues. Individuals who choose to “follow” YARTS on Twitter will receive these messages via text messages on their phones. Regular commuter riders may wish to follow YARTS on a regular basis. Visitors can be encouraged to follow YARTS during their stay in the Yosemite region to get the most timely information.

■ On-Line Forums

On line forums are a very popular way for hikers, backpackers and other travelers to share information about their travel experiences. YARTS’ Manager already follows these discussions. This practice should be continued and YARTS should comment on the discussions when there is information of value which can be added.

On-Line Links

As noted above, many regional websites already have links to YARTS information. However, many others that should do not. It is recommended that YARTS initiate a comprehensive effort to inventory and ask for links on relevant websites such as:

- National Park Service
- Connecting Transit Services (Amtrak, Greyhound, the Bus, ESTA, Merced Airport)
- Jurisdictions and agencies within the service area (Cities, towns, counties)
- Chambers of Commerce and Tourism Bureaus in Merced, Mariposa and Mono Counties

- Hotels along the routes
- Other Yosemite related websites
- Sierra Nevada Geotourism website

This will likely require a combination of e-mail, snail mail, phone contacts and in-person requests (as part of the gatekeeper outreach effort described on page 36). To facilitate the links, provide the gatekeepers with the YARTS website address, a very brief description of the service and a small logo graphic to use as a link. You might also offer a reciprocal link on the YARTS website.

Customer Experience

Visitor and resident riders have very different experiences on YARTS. While visitors have the challenges of doing something unfamiliar, resident riders encounter the day to day aggravations of commuting. While both groups are largely satisfied with YARTS service, there are a few factors which could enhance the customer experience for each group.



Residents

■ **Establish Channel to Communicate Delays**

The greatest complaint among commute riders is the uncertainty caused by frequent delays in service. While they understand that traffic and weather conditions sometimes make delays unavoidable, they would like some way to be notified. If/when real time information becomes viable, this would be a relatively simple process of making the real-time information available via cell phone/PDA. In the short term however, a possible strategy is to use Twitter or subscription text messages to convey delay information. Here is how it might work.

- Riders would be encouraged to register on the YARTS website or sign up to follow you on Twitter.
- The contractor would establish a system to identify when buses are running late. For example, drivers might be required to phone in when running more than 10 minutes down.
- The dispatcher could then send a brief text message or tweet letting “followers” know what type of delay to expect and, if possible, when they could expect the bus to arrive.

Other transit systems are using this technique successfully. One example is Mountain Line in Morgantown, WV.

Note: A first step in this effort would be to talk with commute riders about their ability to receive text messages and tweets at home, in their offices and at the bus stops in Mariposa, El Portal and Yosemite Valley.

■ **Work to ease voucher to ticket conversion**

Another concern of commuters is the difficulty of converting the vouchers they receive from NPS to YARTS tickets at the beginning of each month. Issues include:

- Bus running late at the start of the month due to drivers having to sell tickets (this particularly impacts DNC employees who are required to punch a time clock and do not get vouchers).

- Drivers running out of tickets.

The ideal solution would allow transit tickets to be delivered directly to NPS employees via National Park Service. (YARTS is working towards this solution with a plan to provide electronic tickets to DOT for direct distribution to NPS). Until this is possible, consider putting a second employee on the commute oriented morning runs during the first few days of the month to handle ticket sales.

■ **Establish Guaranteed Ride Home Program and/or Midday Return Trip**

A factor which limits the frequency with which commuters use YARTS is the inability to get home during the midday – either in an emergency or simply when the workday is shorter than normal (e.g. Fridays). This situation could be remedied in one of two ways:

- Provide a midday return trip (at least as far as Mariposa) which would accommodate the needs of NPS employees who get off early on Fridays and would provide more flexibility at all times.
- Identify a mechanism for offering a Guaranteed Ride Home program. This might be accomplished in conjunction with NPS (for example, a staff car might be made available in the case of an emergency), as it would provide a further incentive for employees to use public transit rather than driving to the park.

Visitors

■ **Enhanced Information at Bus Stop/Real Time Information**

Enhancing the level and quality of information available at the bus stop will reduce uncertainty and improve the customer experience for visitors. This has already been discussed on page 24. However, the uncertainty experienced when a bus is delayed will remain: “Did I miss the bus? Will I make my connection to Amtrak? Am I stranded?” Ideally, when AVL is available, this would be addressed by the provision of real-time information displays at major bus stops (particularly within Yosemite). In the short term, visitors can be encouraged to follow YARTS on Twitter during their time in the region or to call the toll free number for updated information. However, this approach would require that the contractor was tracking bus departure times and could provide delay information via Twitter or phone.



■ **Family Friendly Fares**

During the study outreach, stakeholders discussed how YARTS fares might be more family friendly. Two issues were raised. (1) One of the advantages of riding YARTS is the savings resulting from the waived gate fee. However, this is only a benefit on the first day of use, because the Yosemite gate fee entitles a car to unlimited access for 7 days while YARTS fares are the same every day. (2) For families with several children, riding YARTS may become significantly more expensive than driving. The free child with each adult feature of the fares was not broadly understood. To make YARTS fares more broadly attractive the

free child with each adult fare should be more prominently communicated and included as a selling point in promotional efforts.

In addition, two possible fare options might be considered:

- **Family Pass**

A Family Pass could be offered and marketed, which would allow two adults and up to three to five children to ride for a package rate. A reasonable price might be the current round trip fare for two adults plus a small premium. Hence the family pass from Mariposa to Yosemite might sell for \$25-30. Merced to Yosemite might be \$50-\$60. You may wish to consider making the age for “children” higher in the family package (e.g. 15) to allow for families with young teens. (Assuming capacity is available).

- **Multi-Day Pass**

YARTS offers a three-day pass, which provides three round trips for the price of two. However it has not been promoted and is not sold by all vendors. To make YARTS more attractive to visitors who are staying in the region for multiple days, this pass should be clearly communicated and promoted in the passenger guide, on the website and through gatekeepers.

- **Electronic Fareboxes that Accept Credit Cards and On-line Ticket Sales**

Giving passengers a non-cash means for purchasing tickets would improve customer convenience and speed boarding. Two ways in which this might be accomplished:

- Fareboxes that could accept credit cards would eliminate the need for passengers to have cash (electronic fareboxes are included in the capital plan).
- Advance ticket sales through the YARTS website would allow passengers to pay for and print their tickets in advance, reducing uncertainty and committing them to riding YARTS.

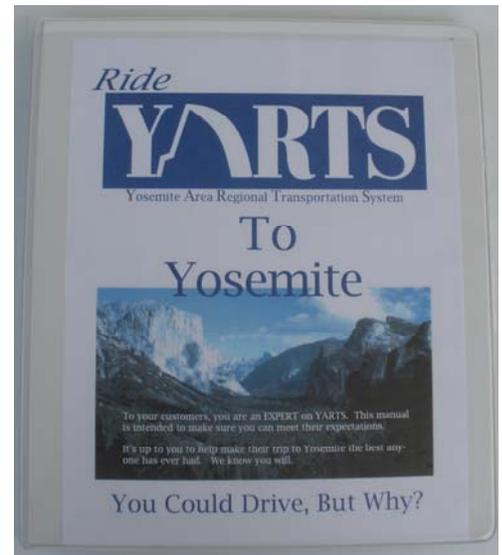
Note: The issue of vehicle comfort, which was highlighted in the research report, is not discussed here because it is already being addressed by YARTS.

Visitor Gatekeeper Marketing

In the on-board survey, 13% of riders said they got YARTS information at their hotel or lodging establishment, 10% from a Visitor Center, 6% from Amtrak and 25% said “someone” told them about it. In total, a lot of riders find out about YARTS from a gatekeeper – a tourism industry organization or employee. This section will address how YARTS has and should continue to work with gatekeepers to convey information about YARTS.

Current Efforts

YARTS management has long recognized that hotels, visitor centers and ticket sales outlets are important channels for conveying information to potential riders. To provide these gatekeepers with the information they need to act as promoters for the service, YARTS has distributed the binder shown at the right to nearly 60 establishments. The binder includes: contact information, route and schedule information for both routes and frequently asked questions. Establishments are encouraged to keep the binder at the front desk for use by staff in answering visitor questions. Updated page inserts are sent out seasonally to provide up-to-date schedule information.



A poster, similar to the cover of the binder has also been distributed to gatekeepers for posting in their window or on a bulletin board.

Visits to hotels located in Mariposa, conducted as part of the study process, found a mix of awareness about YARTS. At some locations, front desk staff had the binder handy and could answer questions about the service. At other establishment no information about YARTS was available.

Recommended Strategies

Increase Frequency and Level of Contact with Gatekeepers

To better capitalize on the role of gatekeepers as salespeople for YARTS, it is recommended that more frequent and direct contact be established. This can be initiated with the distribution of information displays (see page 21) , but will need to be followed up with a systematic program of periodic gatekeeper contact and distribution of promotional materials. The targets of this effort will be:

- Front desk staff a hotels and motels
- Campsite hosts
- Visitor center employees

These individuals need to be educated about what YARTS has to offer and how it works. They also need to be provided with promotional tools which they can use to communicate with potential YARTS riders and the opportunity to become a ticket sales outlet. These efforts must be repeated frequently since staff turnover or forget, materials are depleted and service changes seasonally. Ideally, contact should occur monthly, at a minimum quarterly.

■ Staffing/Tasks

This will clearly require support beyond YARTS limited staff. One possibility is to establish a part-time position (paid or volunteer) and/or an agreement with a partner organization in each community that would be responsible for visiting a defined set of gatekeepers each month to perform the following tasks:

- Speak with gatekeepers to insure they are fully aware of YARTS and the available promotional tools.
- Freshen the display as needed.
- Update the information binder.
- Replenish supplies of brochures, schedules and posters.

A part-time position should be structured to allow for a higher level of effort at the beginning of each season, and a maintenance level throughout the year. If a volunteer is recruited, a free annual YARTS pass might be sufficient incentive. If a partner organization is recruited, such as the Chamber of Commerce, a fee or in-kind trade might be in order.

■ Coverage Areas

Given the expanse of the service area, separate arrangements would probably need to be made for each community/area. Gatekeepers which should be included:

- Mariposa (a dozen hotels, Visitor Center, ticket sales outlets).
- Midpines (KOA, Bug Hostel, other lodging).



- El Portal (Cedar Lodge, Yosemite View Lodge, El Portal Market, other lodging and campgrounds).
- June Lake (hotels, campgrounds, RV parks and visitor center).
- Lee Vining (hotels, campgrounds, Lee Vining Chamber, Mono Lake Visitor Center, Tioga Mobil Gas Mart, Forest Service Visitor Center).
- Mammoth Lakes (Visitor Center, Mammoth Mountain Inn, Shilo Hotel, other lodging proximate to stops).
- Merced (Transpo Visitors Center, Amtrak, Hotels) - It is likely that YARTS staff could handle locations in Merced.

There are also establishments located within Yosemite National Park (Yosemite Lodge, Curry Village, White Wolf Lodge, Crane Flat Gas Station, Yosemite Valley Visitor Center, Tuolumne Meadows Visitor Center, Tuolumne Meadows Store, etc.) where YARTS needs to maintain contacts and information displays. These may be combined with the Mariposa County position, or treated separately.

Give Tourism Employees the YARTS Experience

Most tourism employees have never ridden YARTS and hence cannot speak to customers with firsthand knowledge. Two suggestions for remedying this situation came from stakeholders interviewed as part of the study outreach.

■ FAM Tour Using YARTS

Use a YARTS bus to transport tourism employees from Mono County and/or Merced/Mariposa to Yosemite as part of a familiarization tour sponsored by the park at the start of the summer season. This would give the employees the experience of using YARTS and would provide an extended opportunity to talk to them about how YARTS works and its benefits. In addition, the on-bus time could be used by NPS staff as part of their presentation time.

■ Free YARTS tickets for tourism employees at start of season

During an initial round of contacts with tourism employees at the beginning of the summer season offer all hotel/motel, campground and visitor center front line staff persons a pair of free roundtrip tickets on YARTS (valid only during a specified pre-season period) so that they can take a friend or family member on a day trip to Yosemite. As with the FAM tour, this would give them firsthand experience about YARTS that they could impart to co-workers and customers.

Work with Tourism Bureaus to Encourage Inclusion of YARTS in Travel Packages

YARTS is already included as a component of tour packages created by and some tour bus companies. (They find it more cost effective and flexible to have passengers use YARTS to travel from the hotel to the park, than to pay the \$300 fee to take the tour bus into Yosemite.) Other tour packagers should also be encouraged to build packages that include YARTS as the final leg of the trip to Yosemite. This can best be

initiated by the local tourism bureaus (Mono, Mariposa and Merced Counties) and the State of California tourism program. These organizations work to promote travel to the Yosemite region.

To facilitate this effort, YARTS will need to provide the tourism bureaus with information about YARTS services and ticket prices a full year in advance of the season being sold.

Actively Participate in Yosemite Gateway Partners

YARTS should continue to actively participate in Yosemite Gateway Partners meetings as a venue for interacting with a wide variety of gatekeepers for Yosemite visitors.

Submit Updated YARTS Information to Travel Guide Publishers

Guidebooks are a source of information about YARTS for a small number of visitors (3%). To facilitate the inclusion of accurate information about YARTS in guides relating to the Yosemite region, an annual mailing to guide book publishers is recommended. The mailing can simply include a letter asking them to include YARTS in their guide, along with a copy of the current passenger guide. The most popular guidebook publishers include:

- Lonely Planet
- Rough Guides
- AAA/CAA Tour Book
- DK Eyewitness
- Fodor's
- Frommers
- Michelin Guide

A complete list of guide book publishers with links to contact information can be found at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guide_book#Guide_book_publishers

Co-Marketing with NPS/DNC

Since Yosemite provides the focus of the transit service, YARTS' most important marketing partners are the National Park Service and Delaware North Corporation. There are a number of opportunities for co-marketing efforts.

Current Efforts

A key strength of the YARTS program is the partnership which has been forged with the National Park Service – both as a funding and marketing partner. NPS already provides YARTS with a number of communications channels for reaching both park employees and visitors.



- **Inclusion of YARTS information on Yosemite National Park website, maps and publications relating to transportation.**

- The Yosemite Valley Shuttle Guide and maps at the shuttle bus stops include an icon indicating which stops are also served by YARTS. YARTS is defined in the legend (by name), but no additional information is provided (e.g. website).
- The Yosemite website includes information about YARTS under "Directions," and a link to the YARTS website.



- **Inclusion of YARTS information on DNC's yosemitepark.com website.**

YARTS is referenced on DNC's website, but the reference is pretty well buried under Directions and there is no link. There is no mention of YARTS on the Public Transportation page which deals only with service operated by DNC.

- **Inclusion of Yosemite Shuttle Information on YARTS website.**

On the Travel Planning page of the YARTS website, there are links to a variety of connecting transit services including the Yosemite Valley Shuttle.

- **Dissemination of YARTS information to employees.**

New NPS employees at the park are told about YARTS during the orientation program when they are informed of the federal transit benefit program.

Recommended Strategies

To Reach Visitors

- **Provide YARTS poster for display on-board Yosemite Shuttle vehicles.**

Many visitors return to Yosemite again and again, so it makes sense to educate them about YARTS during one visit to the park to encourage them to use the bus on their next visit. One way to do this is while they are on the Yosemite Valley Shuttle vehicles. Attractive posters on-board the vehicles tell riders about various aspects of Yosemite, but there is currently no information about YARTS. It is recommended that YARTS work with NPS and DNC to create and post an attractive poster that encourages visitors to avoid the driving and parking hassles and save money by riding YARTS to the park.

- **Feature Yosemite Shuttle Info on YARTS Guide and Website**

Availability of the Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne Shuttle services should be promoted on YARTS passenger guides and website as it provides an “extension” of the public transit service and gives riders easy access to everything the park has to offer.

- **Enhanced Listing for YARTS in Yosemite Guide**

Currently the Yosemite Guide includes a listing for Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System with the web address under Regional Info. Ask NPS if it would be possible to enhance the listing by having a separate heading that reads “Public Transit to Yosemite” and/or the text “Public Transit to Yosemite from Merced, Mariposa and Mono Counties.”

- **Improved Visibility for YARTS on DNC yosemitepark.com Website**

This is the website visitors will use to make reservations for lodging and activities at Yosemite. Work with DNC to make information about using YARTS to get to the park more visible.

- **Park Outreach Program**

NPS conducts outreach programs to local schools and organizations. Once the new collateral materials are printed, YARTS should meet with the outreach coordinator to insure that they have complete information about YARTS to distribute during their presentations. The contact is:

Santiago Palacio, Community Outreach, Santiago_Palacio_Jimenez@nps.gov, 209-372-0359

To Reach Employees

- **Provide YARTS Passenger Guide to NPS and DNC for Distribution to Employees at Orientation and through Employment Offices**

The new schedule brochure for Route 140 should be provided to NPS and DNC for distribution to employees during their orientation programs. A commuter oriented version of the schedule should be created which includes commuter fares ,information about exchanging vouchers for tickets and other

information of specific relevance to employee riders. This commuter specific information can be imprinted on an employee edition of the brochure or can be included as an insert panel.

■ **YARTS Information Display for HR Offices**

Insure that YARTS Information is readily available to NPS and DNC employees who may not be regular YARTS riders by providing the HR departments with a YARTS display and maintaining their supply of schedule brochures.

■ **Work with DNC to Encourage Ridership**

DNC has chosen not to subsidize fares because YARTS serves only a portion of their employees and shifts. However, continue to talk with DNC about potential incentives for their employees to use YARTS and/or service changes which would make YARTS a more viable option. At a minimum, they may be willing to act as a commuter pass sales agent for their employees reducing the burden of on-bus sales.

■ **Periodic YARTS information in Daily Briefing to Employees and Posted in Employee areas**

YARTS should continue to provide periodic information about services changes, enhancements and advantages for inclusion in NPS's daily employee briefing publication. In addition, providing NPS with targeted posters (8 /12" X 11") for posting in employee areas can be an effective communications strategy for reminding employees about YARTS.

Co-marketing with Connecting Transportation Services

Many of YARTS riders, particularly on Route 140, come to the region via another public transportation mode – Amtrak, Greyhound, Horizon Air (Mammoth Lakes) or Great Lakes Air (Merced). While they are in the region, they may also use local transit services (ESTA, The Bus and the Yosemite Shuttle) to get around. All of these connecting transportation providers offer opportunities for co-marketing.

Current Efforts

YARTS has worked closely with Amtrak to market YARTS as a Thruway Bus for Amtrak riders going to Yosemite. YARTS schedule information is included on the Amtrak schedule for their San Joaquin line and Amtrak passengers are able to purchase YARTS service as part of their Amtrak ticket. Amtrak pays YARTS a contracted amount for Thruway service. In addition, many other Amtrak riders simply purchase a ticket to Merced and then buy their YARTS ticket on the bus. YARTS partnership with Amtrak contributes greatly to ridership.

Greyhound also delivers many customers to YARTS at their station at Transpo, the intermodal transit center in Merced. In the past there has not been a formal arrangement between YARTS and Greyhound, however YARTS staff is currently working with Greyhound to establish a through-ticketing agreement.

YARTS has also worked, to a lesser extent, with the airlines which serve Merced and Mammoth Lakes, and has purchased advertising in their on-plane publications.



Recommended Strategies

■ **Website Links and Passenger Guide References**

Ask for a YARTS link on the websites of all connecting transit services and for references in their passenger guides. This will allow passengers using those services to see that they have the option of connecting to YARTS for trips to Yosemite.

- Amtrak (on the Merced station page and San Joaquin Schedule)
- Greyhound (on the Merced station page and appropriate route schedules)
- Merced Airport (on their homepage)

- Mammoth Lakes Airport (on their homepage)
- ESTA (on their Bus Routes page and passenger guide)
- The Bus (currently under Rider Info/ Regional Transportation)
- **Enhance Information Displays at Amtrak and Transpo in Merced**
Amtrak and Transpo are two of YARTS' primary boarding locations. Enhanced passenger information displays will be particularly important at these locations, as it will aid passengers in making the transfer from Amtrak, Greyhound or The Bus to YARTS.
- **Mammoth Lakes Bus Stop Displays**
All bus stops in Mammoth Lakes (131) have display panels with information about the routes serving that stop. At many stops, served by only one or two routes, there is open space on the displays which could be used for a small ad about YARTS. Work with the town of Mammoth Lakes and ESTA in advance of next summer's sign production to determine if this is viable.
- **Provide Connecting Transit Information On-board YARTS Buses.**
On page 25, the strategy of providing local and connecting transit information on-board YARTS buses was discussed. This would let passengers know what their transportation options will be when they get off YARTS (either in Yosemite or back in the community where they are staying) and would serve to promote YARTS local transit partners.
- **YARTS Posters Targeting Residents on The Bus and ESTA Buses**
For residents of Yosemite region communities, YARTS offers an economical option for a day-trip to Yosemite. Ask ESTA and The Bus to provide on-bus space for a poster promoting YARTS and Yosemite Day Trips to local riders.

For Example, in Merced the poster might feature a photo of a couple or family boarding YARTS at Transpo and focus on the benefits of experiencing the Yosemite Valley for the day with no driving or parking hassles, no gate fees and no charge for children*.

In Mono/Inyo County, the poster would mention both Tuolumne Meadows and Yosemite Valley.

Advertising

The target markets for YARTS are broadly distributed throughout the state, the nation and the world. Cost effectively reaching them with traditional advertising is very difficult. For that reason, this plan has focused primarily on efforts which provide on-going marketing value (passenger information displays, on-line presence, etc.) rather than media advertising.

Current Efforts

In the past YARTS has used a significant portion of its very limited marketing budget to place media advertising in targeted channels including:

- Airline travel magazines (Alaska and Great Lakes Air)
- Sierra Heritage Magazine
- AAA Via Magazine
- Westways
- Yosemite Experience
- California Visitors Guide and Travel Planner
- Yosemite.com
- Local Newspapers

During FY 2009-10, about \$25,000 was allocated for advertising and promotional expenses.

Recommended Strategies

Given YARTS very limited marketing budget, it is recommended that media advertising be utilized only when it provides very targeted and sustained exposure to a primary target market. For example:

■ **Yosemite Insert in California Visitors Guide and Travel Planner**

This piece allowed YARTS to join forces with a wide variety of Yosemite Gateway partners to promote YARTS along with the region. It was a piece that travelers interested in Yosemite would likely tear out and keep, hence providing on-going value.

■ **Campgrounds of Mono County**

During the outreach phase of this project, the consultant came upon a map of the campgrounds of Mono County. This would likely be another example of an inexpensive, but highly targeted communications channel for reach the key Route 120 market – hikers and backpackers.

■ **Favorite Hikes Map**

YARTS was featured in a Favorite Hikes of Yosemite map sponsored by Nature Valley. Like the publications listed above, this is a piece that Yosemite travelers will keep and refer to providing sustained exposure and a reminder that they have a public transit option for reaching the park.

■ **On-line Advertising**

To the extent possible, YARTS should work to get free on-line exposure through links and information on gatekeeper websites. However, if resources allow, you may wish to commit a small portion of the budget to on-line advertising, purchasing banner ads on Yosemite related travel website.

It is not recommended that YARTS continue to advertise in airline magazines or other general audience travel publications unless it is done as a cooperative effort with other Yosemite Gateway Partners. In addition, advertising in local publications is likely to be less cost effective for attracting local riders than enhancing passenger information programs.

Local Outreach

For local residents, YARTS offers economical transportation to Yosemite and an option for regional intercity travel. Currently local non-commute riders make up a small but significant share of ridership on Route 140 (15%) and are virtually non-existent on Route 120.

Current Efforts

In the past YARTS has used a combination of advertising, promotion and outreach to build visibility and encourage utilization among the local population. Efforts have included:

- Ads in local weekly papers in Merced, Mariposa and Mono Counties
- Radio promotion that included giveaway of trip to Yosemite with lunch at Ahwahnee
- YARTS Manual at Student Services at UC Merced and Merced College
- Presentations at Service Clubs – giveaway YARTS ticket as raffle item
- Outreach at Seniors Fairs
- National Bike Race – gave away bags with YARTS info

Recommended Strategies

Strategies which enhance branding and passenger information will be effective in building awareness among and attracting local residents as well as visitors. Beyond these very broad measures, it is recommended that marketing to reach local residents be focused tightly on those segments with particular potential to use YARTS. The five highest potential groups, in relative order of potential, include:

■ **NPS and DNC Employees**

This plan has already addressed strategies for reaching these very important commute rider segments through their employers and enhanced passenger information.

■ **Yosemite to Merced Travelers**

A large number of DNC employees (some with dependents) live in the Yosemite Valley (Summer – 1100, Winter – 900). In addition, quite a few NPS employees live in the Valley or El Portal. For these employees, some of whom do not have vehicles, YARTS provides a connection to services, shopping and continuing transportation in Merced. Enhanced passenger information and possible schedule adjustments being considered as part of the SRTP are the strategies most appropriate strategies for this group. Targeted communications through DNC can also address this group.

■ **Mariposa to Merced Travelers**

YARTS provides Mariposa residents with access to jobs, schools, services, shopping and medical facilities in Merced. When identifying locations for YARTS information displays in Mariposa, consider some that target local residents – Library, Post Office, Grocery Store, etc. Since this is the “local” market with the

greatest potential to use YARTS, some local advertising in the Mariposa newspaper would be advisable. The focus of these ads should be on YARTS as a regional transit service, rather than as access to Yosemite.

■ **Outdoor Enthusiasts**

Local residents most likely to ride YARTS to Yosemite are those with a particular interest in outdoor activities – hiking, biking, birding and rafting. Low-cost marketing to these groups can be accomplished through:

- Outreach to relevant organizations and businesses (bike shops and clubs, hiking clubs, Audubon society, etc.) in Merced, Mariposa and Mono Counties. Provide relevant businesses with a window poster and/or YARTS info display.
- Work with local newspaper columnists who write about hiking and outdoor activities to incorporate YARTS into stories.

■ **College Students (UC Merced and Merced College)**

To let students at UC Merced and Merced College know that they have a public transit option for traveling from Mariposa County to school:

- Continue to provide information to student services, possibly including a YARTS information display for placement at a high traffic location (student union/cafeteria).
- Ask UC Merced and Merced College to include a link to YARTS under the Transportation/Directions section of their website, and to provide similar information in their class schedule.

Corporate Sponsorship

A Corporate Sponsorship could provide a potential source of new revenue for YARTS. Sale of advertising on YARTS buses is definitely NOT recommended. However establishing a sponsorship relationship with a single, relevant business could provide significant revenue and promotional value.

LLBean has such a relationship with Island Explorer, the transit system which serves Acadia National Park in Maine. Since 2002, they have contributed \$2 million to support the transit service because of its positive impact on the Acadia environment. Island Explorer buses carry the LLBean logo (as shown at the right) and the relationship is prominently featured on the transit's system's homepage.



If YARTS seeks a corporate sponsor, several issues would need to be considered. What type of sponsor to solicit, what does YARTS offer a sponsor and what level of contribution is appropriate. In addition, it would need to be determined if the contribution is made directly to YARTS or through a non-profit support group (such as Friends of Acadia).

■ Sponsorship Solicitation

The ideal sponsor would be one with a target audience similar to YARTS and a commitment to conservation. By having a target audience similar to YARTS, the sponsor would benefit greatly from exposure to YARTS riders and Yosemite visitors. By having a green image, the sponsor would reflect positively on YARTS.

A business that provides products for outdoor activities and is strongly associated with conservationism would be a perfect partner. A few possibilities that fit these parameters include:

- REI
Privately held corporation organized as a consumer's cooperative. Over 100 stores in 27 states and 9500 employees. 2008 sales \$1.43 billion. Headquarters – Kent Washington.
- Patagonia Sportswear
Privately held corporation that manufactures and sells outdoor apparel and equipment . Very strong focus on environmentalism and environmental causes. Based in Ventura, California.
- Columbia Sportswear
Sportswear manufacturer and largest seller of ski wear. Based in Oregon. 2008 sales of \$1.37 billion. Has purchased a number of other sportswear manufacturers, including San Francisco based Mountain Hardwear.

Other types of businesses might be relevant to YARTS and Yosemite in a different way:

- “Health” oriented food company
Nature Valley previously sponsored the Favorite Hikes map and has provided granola bars for distribution on YARTS buses.
- Green energy company
An energy company with a focus on renewable energy sources.

■ **Promotional Offerings**

A second consideration will be what YARTS can offer a potential sponsor. Exposure might include:

- Sponsor’s logo on the outside of YARTS buses (seen by riders and Yosemite visitors)
Since advertising is not allowed within the National Park System, this would be a singular opportunity for the sponsor to have exposure within the park (assuming it is acceptable to NPS).
- Sponsor’s logo on YARTS bus stop signs
- Acknowledgement of sponsorship on YARTS homepage with link to sponsor website
- Sponsor logo and acknowledgment on YARTS schedules
- Distribution of sponsor literature on-board YARTS buses

■ **Sponsorship Level**

Based on the LLBean/Acadia case, a sponsorship level of \$250,000-\$300,000 per year might be an appropriate starting point for negotiations. Yosemite has almost 4 million visitors per year (compared to 3 million for Acadia National Park).

Implementation Guidelines

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Marketing Resources

Budget

A rule of thumb is that a transit system should spend about 2% of its operating budget on promotional marketing activities. This is in addition to the amount spent to deliver basic passenger information, and does not include staff time.

YARTS current “marketing” budget is about 5% of the operating budget. However, this includes staff time, travel expenses and schedule printing. As a result, the actual amount spent on advertising and promotion of YARTS is about 1.5%. And the amount spent on passenger information production and printing is negligible.

Implementation of this plan will require two types of expenditures. One-time expenditures to upgrade branding and signage and purchase display fixtures, then annual expenditures for passenger information materials, promotional materials and advertising. In addition, staff time will be required to coordinate the promotional activities and conduct outreach efforts.

A reasonable level of staff support to allow effective implementation of the plan would include:

- Staff Time...one third to half of a professional staff person (Transit Manager or other) to oversee the marketing function.
- Part-time staff (paid or volunteer) and/or local partner support to conduct gatekeeper outreach efforts and information distribution.
- Marketing intern to provide support for social media function
- Contract support for graphic design, website design and collateral production

Annual costs for materials and advertising (after the one-time expenses) will require the following funding:

- Passenger Information (Printed, At Stop, Internet)...\$15,000 to 20,000
- Promotion & Advertising...\$20,000 to \$25,000

The dollar amounts shown above include advertising, printing and contract support for graphics/website maintenance. They do not include staff time, staff travel or other administrative costs.

Staffing

In the past, all marketing for YARTS has been handled in house by the Transit Manager with the support of MCAG staff. There has been little or no outside support. Effective implementation of this plan will require outside support in the areas of graphic design, website design and possibly Google Transit implementation. In addition, additional staff (paid or volunteer) will be required to increase outreach to and contact with gatekeepers such as lodging establishments and visitor centers.

A cost effective solution for meeting the staffing needs of the plan might be:

- Contract with free-lancers or firms that specialize in graphics, website design and Google Transit to accomplish those tasks. (These costs have been estimated in the implementation budget that follows.)
- Establish a student intern position to provide support for the social media strategies.
- Establish part-time positions (paid or volunteer) and/or partnerships with local organizations to provide outreach to gatekeepers in Mariposa and Mono Counties.

Photo Library

Establishing a YARTS digital photo library would facilitate the development of various marketing tools needed for implementation of this plan (brochures, flyers, ads, websites, etc.). An easy way to create a library is to hire a photographer and recruit volunteer “talent” for a day. This small group would ride the bus to Yosemite, spend the day photographing the various bus stops and locations within the park and then ride the bus back. The objective would be to create a broad library of photos of people using YARTS to experience Yosemite. The photographer would be provided with a list of desired shots and photo releases (for when shots include employee or visitor riders). A starter shot list is shown at the right...the more variety, the better.

Implementation Table

The table that follows provides estimated budgets for the strategies included in the plan over a five year period. In addition, the table includes a priority for each strategy. The priorities are defined as.

1 = Immediate Implementation, critical to success of other strategies

2 = Important – Implement in Year 1-2 if possible and maintain throughout

3 = Longer Term – Should be implemented when possible (e.g. real time information, credit card sale of tickets)

4 = Optional, if resources allow

STARTER SHOT LIST FOR PHOTO SHOOT

- Employee Riders Boarding, On the Bus and Alighting in El Portal
- Visitor Riders Boarding, On the Bus and Alighting at various Yosemite stops
- Visitors boarding at Transpo and Amtrak
- Family with children boarding
- Bike, backpack, luggage being stowed under bus
- Visitors waiting at various bus stops in Yosemite
- Shot of interface between YARTS and Yosemite Shuttle
- Park & Ride Location
- Visitors boarding in Mammoth Lakes, Lee Vining, June Lake (separate effort)
- YARTS bus with major hotels in background (Cedar Lodge, Yosemite View, Mariposa hotels)

Priority	Strategy	1-Time Cost	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Branding							
1	Vehicles	Capital					
1	Bus Stops	Capital					
1	Brand Continuity						
Locally-Based Passenger Information							
	Collateral and Displays						
1	Reasons to Ride Guides	\$2,500	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
1	Schedule Brochures	\$2,500	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
1	Displays	\$2,500	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
	Information at the Bus Stop						
1	Bus Stop Signs	Capital					
1	Customized Info Displays	\$5,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
3	Real-Time Information	Capital					
	On-Bus communications						
2	On-bus Info Display	\$3,000	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
Internet-Based Passenger Information							
1	Website	\$10,000	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500
2	Google Transit	CalTrans		\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
3	Social Media			Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff
1	On-Line Links		Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff
Customer Experience							
	Residents						
2	Establish Channel to Communicate Delays		Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff
2	Ease Voucher to Ticket Conversion		Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff
2	Guaranteed Ride Home and/or Midday Return		Operations	Operations	Operations	Operations	Operations
	Visitors						
2	Enhanced Info at Bus Stop/Real Time Info						
2	Family Friendly Fares						
3	Credit Card Sales On-Bus and/or On-Line						

Priority	Strategy	1-Time Cost	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Visitor Gatekeeper Marketing							
1	Gatekeeper Contacts/Info Distrbution		Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff
3	Give Tourism Employees YARTS Experience		\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500
3	Tourism Bureaus/Travel Packages		Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff
2	Yosemite Gateway Partners		Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff
4	Submit Info to Travel Guides		Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff
Co-Marketing with NPS/DNC							
Visitors							
2	YARTS Poster on Shuttle Buses		\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
2	Shuttle Info on YARTS Guide & Website						
3	Enhanced Listing for YARTS on Yosemite Guide						
3	Improved Visibility on yosemitepark.com						
3	Park Outreach Program						
Employees							
2	YARTS Brochure for Employee Orientation		\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
3	YARTS Display in HR Offices	\$200					
Co-marketing with Connecting Transportation Services							
2	Website Links and Passenger Guide References						
1	Enhance Infor Displays at Amtrak and Transpo	Capital					
3	Mammoth Lakes Bus Stop Displays						
3	Provide Connecting Transit Info On-board YARTS						
4	YARTS Posters on The Bus and ESTA Buses		\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
Advertising							
3	Highly Targeted, Sustained Exposure		\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Local Outreach							
3	Yosmemite to Merced Travelers	\$250	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
3	Mariposa to Merced Travelers	\$250	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500
3	Outdoor Enthusiasts	Staff	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
3	College Students	\$250	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500

Priority	Strategy	1-Time Cost	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Corporate Sponsorship							
2	Solicit Corporate Sponsorship	Staff					
TOTAL			\$43,000	\$43,500	\$43,500	\$43,500	\$43,500

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Short Range Transit Plan

Volume III: Market Research Report



Yosemite Area Regional
Transportation System

TRANSIT RESOURCE CENTER

TRANSIT  marketing
LLC

Final Report

January 2011

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Executive Summary

YARTS provides regularly scheduled public transit service between Yosemite National Park and the gateway communities along its two routes, in air-conditioned, over-the-road coaches. Route 140 operates year-round providing service between Merced and Yosemite Valley along the Highway 140 corridor, serving Mariposa County communities. Route 120 provides service between June and September between Yosemite Valley, Tuolumne Meadows and the eastern Sierra communities of Lee Vining, June Lake and Mammoth Lakes.

This research report summarizes the results of stakeholder interviews, public workshops and passenger surveys on YARTS buses. The research report is the first product of the YARTS Short-Range Transit Plan that is being developed to provide a blueprint for YARTS routes, schedules, marketing and funding over the next five years. The results of the research report will be utilized to inform the next steps of the Short Range Transit Plan, including the review of service plan and schedule options, and the development of marketing recommendations.

YARTS has established an excellent reputation during its 10 years of operation, among both stakeholders and riders (residents and visitors). Visitor riders gave YARTS a very good rating of 6.16 on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 being the highest. The very high satisfaction with the service is also reflected in nearly universal willingness of both visitors and residents to recommend YARTS. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of visitors and 99% of residents would recommend YARTS to a friend or coworker.

Major Stakeholder Themes

During the initial visit, the consultants met with key stakeholders including Merced County Association of Government staff, representatives of each of the YARTS member counties, the service operator and drivers, National Park Service and members of the Gateway Partners group. During a second on-site visit, a series of public workshops were held in Merced, Mariposa, El Portal, Yosemite Valley, June Lake, Lee Vining and Mammoth Lakes. The following are twelve key major thematic findings from the stakeholder input:

- 1. There is a need to have more stable funding sources for YARTS.* YARTS does not have dedicated funding sources like most transit services. There is a need provide YARTS with more certain operating funding over the next five years.
- 2. Interest in exploring the expansion of YARTS to other gateway corridors.* YARTS service along the Highway 41 corridor between the Fresno Airport, Wawona, and Yosemite Valley was often suggested during stakeholder interview. The potential for service between Yosemite Valley, Groveland, and possibly Sonora was also discussed often.
- 3. Desire for improvements in connectivity to other transit links.* Amtrak provides a major source of visitor riders for YARTS, but improvements in midday access were most often cited by stakeholders. A better connection between CREST in the eastern Sierras and YARTS' 120 route should be explored.

4. *Schedule improvements would help to tap into potential demand for greater utilization.* While many stakeholders recognized YARTS' resource constraints, the most frequent suggestions for Route 140 were better midday service, earlier morning service to Yosemite, and an earlier outbound schedule on Fridays to better serve El Portal National Park Service employees. On Route 120, two round trips a day between Mammoth Lakes and Yosemite was the most frequent suggestion by stakeholders.
5. *Operational issues limit the reliability of YARTS service.* Employees interviewed complained of being late to work due to YARTS delays. Summer traffic and the bridge delays on Route 140, combined with mechanical problems on the older buses, can play havoc with YARTS schedules.
6. *Infrastructure and equipment improvements would vastly improve passenger comfort and convenience for YARTS passengers.* Suggestions were made for bus shelter improvements, better YARTS signage, and passenger amenities when YARTS orders new buses.
7. *The fare structure should be re-evaluated, especially in order to attract family groups.* While YARTS has a policy of allowing one child 12 and under to ride free with each adult ticket, stakeholders did provide suggestions for a "family pass" that would better facilitate use of YARTS by families.
8. *Need some system for communicating service delays to riders.* Both resident and visitor riders expressed the desire for some means of communication to let them know when YARTS is delayed. Regular riders noted that buses are often late and they have no way of knowing if it will be 5 minutes or 30 minutes. Note: There is a 24/7 phone line which riders can call into, however this was not mentioned by riders.
9. *Improve passenger information via collateral and bus stop displays.* Stakeholders and users both commented on the need to enhance YARTS passenger information tools – printed schedules and brochures, and information panels at bus stops.
10. *Capitalize on the internet and social media to communicate with current and potential users.* The critical role of the internet in travel planning was discussed in virtually every meeting. Stakeholders noted the need to insure that YARTS internet information is easily accessible and user friendly, and to utilize social media to communicate with riders more directly.
11. *Increase marketing and communications to visitors through hotels, campsites, tour companies, airport and other tourism gatekeepers.* Many YARTS riders learn about YARTS through a tourism industry gatekeeper – hotel, campsite, tour company or travel agency. These entities represent important marketing partners for YARTS and were discussed extensively in the stakeholder meetings and workshops. Many participants spoke of the importance of communicating with hotel "front desk" staff and campsite hosts to make sure they are aware of and ready to promote the service.
12. *Better Define Institutional Roles and Responsibilities.* Stakeholders provided input on the roles and responsibilities of YARTS versus Delaware North Corporation's (DNC) hiker shuttle. They also discussed the potential benefit of a separate, local contract for Route 120 service.

Resident and Visitor Passenger Survey

During July of 2010 a survey was conducted of passengers onboard YARTS buses. Unique questionnaires were developed for Residents and Visitors on each route. A total of 407 completed questionnaires were returned on Route 140 and 102 completed questionnaires on on Route 120.

How passengers found out about YARTS

For visitors, the internet is how one third of respondents learned about YARTS. Word of mouth accounts for about another quarter of the visitor responses. Residents were most likely to learn about YARTS from their employer (35%) or a friend (27%).

YARTS rider profile

For visitors, Route 120 attracts mostly Californians, with two thirds of its riders residing in the state and only 8% of its riders being international. Route 140, on the other hand, attracts a large number of international visitors – 40%. For resident riders on Route 140, 41% live in Mariposa and 21% live in Midpines.

YARTS visitor ridership includes a spectrum of ages. However, the largest age group on both routes is the 18-29 age group. For residents, the 18-29 age group is also highest with 26% but is followed closely by ages 50-59 with 24%.

On Route 120, the majority of riders had visited the park before (72%), and about 18% of visitors had ridden YARTS before. On Route 140, fewer had visited the park before (42%), but a similar proportion (19%) had ridden YARTS before.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of YARTS resident riders are long term riders, they began riding in 2008 or earlier. The majority of resident riders (72%) who completed the questionnaire were on their way to or from work. Ten percent were traveling for recreation and 17% were traveling for shopping, medical or other non-commute reasons. 60% said they work for the National Park Service and 20% for DNC.

Visitor Access to YARTS

The greatest number of Route 120 riders arrive via personal car (57%). This is not surprising given the fact that 60% of them are from California. Intercity transit is the second most used mode for Route 120 riders, with 20% saying they used Amtrak to arrive in the region and another 6% saying they used Greyhound. It should be noted that 120 riders who say they came via Amtrak or Greyhound must have used Rt. 140 originally, as both Amtrak and Greyhound serve Merced and not Mammoth Lakes.

For Route 140, Amtrak is the most cited mode for accessing the region – used by 53% of respondents. Another 9% say they arrived by Greyhound. Hence more than 60% came to the region without a private vehicle. Again, this reflects the differing makeup of the riders – many more international visitors. It is also a result of the fact that the Route 140 serves the Amtrak station directly.

About 20% of all visitor riders say they travel via airline for part of their trip to the region. The majority (60%) flew to San Francisco.

The majority of visitors (around 80% overall) who responded to the survey on both routes are staying overnight in the Yosemite region. Route 120 riders are most likely to be staying at a campground or backpacking in the wilderness (69%), with only 14% staying in a hotel. On the other hand, Route 140 Riders are more evenly dividing between those staying at a hotel (42%) or a campground (37%).

Trip Patterns

Only 14% of visitor riders on Rt. 120 said they were making a round trip. The other 86% said they were traveling one way. A review of origin and destination patterns on Route 120 indicates that a large percent of passengers (43%) are traveling between Tuolumne Meadows and Yosemite Valley rather than traveling to/from a location outside the park. About 31% are traveling between Mammoth Lakes and the park, while another 5% are traveling between June Lake/Lee Vining and the park.

On Route 140, the resident trip patterns are dominated by work trips from Mariposa and Midpines to El Portal and Yosemite Valley. For visitors, Yosemite Valley and Merced represent the largest boarding/alighting locations. However, significant boardings occur at the lodging establishments in Mariposa, Midpines and El Portal.

Customer Satisfaction

The highest satisfaction ratings from both visitors and residents were for the YARTS drivers, both in the area of safe driving and courtesy, and for the cleanliness of the vehicles.

The lowest rating among both visitors and residents was for how well the bus schedule meets your needs. This was also the topic o, by far, the most comments received on an open-ended questions on how YARTS might improve service. On Rt. 140, 114 comments on schedules and frequency were received and on Route 120, 31 comments (about 30% of all respondents) were received. Many visitors and employees commented on the need for earlier, later or mid-day trips, as well as the difficulty of making connections with other transportation services.

Stakeholder Interviews and Workshops

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Thematic Summary

Qualitative input regarding YARTS service and its future was collected during two on-site visits. During the initial visit, the consultants met with key stakeholders including MCAG staff, representatives of each of the member counties, the service operator and drivers, National Park Service and members of the Gateway Partners group. During a second on-site visit, a series of public workshops were held in Merced, Mariposa, El Portal, Yosemite Valley, June Lake, Lee Vining and Mammoth Lakes. Participants for the groups were recruited through various stakeholders, news releases and posters placed on buses and at key destinations. During both visits, the consultants rode YARTS and spoke directly with passengers. A complete list of individuals who provided input to this plan is included in the appendix.

This section will provide a summary of the key themes which arose during the outreach effort.

1. There is a need to have more stable funding sources for YARTS.

YARTS' current operating budget consists of funding agreements, member contributions, and fares. YARTS has been able to access federal grant based funding for capital purchases, including new buses.

Stakeholders discussed the ongoing need to broaden the eligibility for additional operating funds. The YARTS Board has been involved with ongoing advocacy to expand the eligibility of Federal Transit Administration 5320, Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program to include operations funding. At present, 5320 funds may support capital and planning expenses for new or existing alternative transportation systems in the vicinity of an eligible area.

YARTS management has also begun to determine if and how it might become eligible for a FTA 5311 appropriation from Caltrans. Discussions with Caltrans will be undertaken as part of the Short Range Transit Plan's Financial Plan.

One of the important funding agreements is with the National Park Service. Legislation that currently allows the National Park Service to keep some of the gate fees expires in December 2014¹. Stakeholders mentioned that it is uncertain what will happen if the fees instead go the general U.S. Treasury. This is a potential threat to what has been a stable funding source for YARTS.

2. Interest in exploring the expansion of YARTS to other gateway corridors.

In almost every interview and workshop there was interest in expanding YARTS to the Highway 41 corridor from the Fresno Airport to Yosemite. In addition, the 120 east corridor, especially with service to Groveland and possibly Sonora, was mentioned and discussed on several occasions. Several stakeholders spoke to the

¹ The Federal Lands and Recreation Act was passed on December 8, 2004 16 U.S.C. 6801-6814; P.L. 108-447 and will expire December 2014.

history of why Madera and Tuolumne counties decided against participating in YARTS ten years ago. As one stakeholder pointed out, YARTS was originally conceived as an all-gateway system.

Stakeholders described the demand generators for prospective service along the Highway 41 corridor: the Fresno Airport, Chukchansi Casino, Tenaya Lodge, Wawona, and Mariposa Grove. Potential employment and visitor trips on this potential route were discussed. Public support, according to stakeholders, remains mixed for expanding YARTS to the 41 corridor. There are supporters and vocal opponents to the concept. The Fresno Council of Governments is sponsoring a feasibility study along this corridor, in addition to potential service to Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks.

The most common concept discussed along the 120 east corridor was service between Groveland and Yosemite, possibly with a connection to the existing summer 120 service at Crane Flat. Some stakeholders discussed the need for service from Sonora all the way to Yosemite Valley during the summer months. According to stakeholders, the Groveland population triples during a summer weekend. There are several major development projects in the pipeline and being planned that could generate additional demand along this corridor in the future. Tuolumne County currently is reviewing an administrative draft of a Short Range Transit Plan that includes some discussion and analysis of a service connection to Yosemite.

3. Desire for improvements in connectivity to other transit links.

A somewhat related theme of discussion during the stakeholder interviews and workshops was the desire for enhanced connections with other transit systems, Greyhound, Amtrak, airports, and even future high speed rail.

Connectivity discussions included both schedule coordination and fare considerations. On schedule coordination, the most frequent comment was the current lack of coordination between the CREST bus along the 395 corridor and YARTS. Hikers coming out of Lone Pine, for example, have to spend the night in Mammoth Lakes to catch the YARTS bus the next morning. Stakeholders and Highway 120 route passengers both expressed a strong desire for same-day bus service between Lone Pine and Yosemite Valley. This would require improved coordination between YARTS and CREST. A second common theme by both stakeholders, and survey respondents was the lack of a midday bus for Amtrak riders.

There was some discussion of the need to review the fare structures for trips on multiple systems. Ideas were presented on the value of using electronic fareboxes, and having a universal pass that would be good for all services accessing Yosemite.

4. Schedule improvements would help to tap into potential demand for greater utilization.

While the very large majority of stakeholders and passengers surveyed were pleased with the YARTS service overall, the area of least satisfaction by current riders and a topic of common conversation was the need for schedule improvements. The following are most common themes discussed in both the 140 and 120 corridors.

The 140 corridor has many regular commute trips. The most common comments were:

- There is a need for improved midday trips. To Yosemite from Merced, there is a gap in departures in the summer from 10:45 am to the last bus at 5:40 pm. From Yosemite, there is a gap in return service at Yosemite Lodge (the last pickup point in Yosemite Valley) from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Some stakeholder would like to see at least one midday return trip between Yosemite Valley and Mariposa, while others commented on the need for better midday connections to Amtrak. Finally, some stakeholders felt a midday run would serve as a good “guaranteed ride home” option if a rider felt ill after getting to work, or needed to unexpectedly go home during the day.
- The need for earlier morning service to Yosemite Valley. In the summer, the first bus arrives at the Visitors Center in Yosemite Valley at 7:23 am. Two specific market segments suggested a desire for earlier morning service: Delaware North Company (DNC) workers who start at 6:00 am and 6:30 am and hikers wanting to hike up to Half Dome. It should be noted that DNC sponsors two vanpools that currently pick up some of the early morning demand. One regular hiker from Merced pointed out that service to Yosemite from Merced starts at 7:00 am and would like the first bus that currently starts in Mariposa at 5:45 am to start at the Merced Transpo.
- There is a need for earlier bus service on Fridays for NPS workers at El Portal. NPS workers at El Portal generate significant YARTS ridership, but they get off at 3:30 pm on Friday, when there is no YARTS service for an hour and a half. Hence, most drive on Fridays rather than take the bus.

In the 120 corridor, there is currently one trip in each direction between Yosemite Valley and Mammoth Lakes. The primary theme of comments on the schedule was :

- There is a need for two trips a day in each direction on the Route 120 bus. Some stakeholders expressed the need for twice a day service from Mammoth Lakes and Tuolumne Meadows, while others expressed the need for service all the way to Yosemite Valley, and another advocated for even more frequent service between Lee Vining and Tuolumne Meadows.

There were many other requests for schedule improvements on specific runs, and later evening service in the winter, but the above were the most prevalent themes.

5. Operational issues limit the reliability of YARTS service.

There were many comments received regarding the reliability of YARTS service, mostly on the 140 route. Most stakeholders recognize that YARTS is a long route and that the current bridge signal to bypass the landslide does cause schedule variances. However, the following were the most prevalent themes:

- The buses are often late by 15-30 minutes for no apparent reason and it causes employees to be late for work.
- Summer traffic is very heavy, and bus schedules don’t seem to account for peak traffic days and nonpeak traffic days.
- There is a need to be able to communicate with regular riders if there is an incident when the bus will be later than 15 minutes.
- Schedule adherence is often very different with different drivers.

- The sale of passes and conversion of NPS vouchers cause significant transactions the first few days of the month. This causes the bus to routinely run late. This is a particular problem for DNC employees who have to punch a time clock. The contractor used to have a second person on the bus to handle such transactions, but this was discontinued.
- Mechanical problems also contribute to the reliability issue, according to YARTS staff and operations. It is hoped that the new buses will reduce this issue.

6. Infrastructure and equipment improvements would vastly improve passenger comfort and convenience for YARTS passengers.

- There were numerous comments by riders who participated in workshops and passengers comments on the surveys that the new bus that YARTS has in operation is uncomfortable. Complaints centered around hard seat cushions, a lack of back support, and the high seat backs which limit passenger sightseeing and create a claustrophobic feeling.
- Bus stop signs are faded and in need of replacement.
- Some bus stop locations need to be re-evaluated.
- Improvements are needed to some bus stops: the Midpines Park and Ride lots (YARTS is working on this currently), Barrium Mine Road needs a shelters and Post Office Stop in El Portal.
- Electronic fareboxes could speed up sales transactions and allow for the acceptance of credit cards.
- Families that drive to Mariposa have lots of “stuff.” Their “stuff” can be accomdated on the YARTS bus but presents a problem once they reach the park. This brought up a discussion of the need for lockers at Yosemite to store belongings while visitors or hiking or doing other activities. (Mariposa Meeting)
- Park and Ride in Mammoth Lakes. Overnight parking is not technically allow, but could be allowed in summer for YARTS users. Would need signage to this effect.

7. The fare structure should be re-evaluated, especially in order to attract family groups.

While fares were not a major topic of discussion, they did come up in a couple of workshops. The first major discussion point was that fares for a family with teenagers are very high and discourages use. Also, the fact that one child 12 or under rides free with each adult ticket was not universally understood. The introduction of a family pass or discount was suggested.

The second fare discussion was that the \$20 entrance fee for Yosemite is good for 7 days. However, persons staying just outside the park who ride multiple times must pay every day. This reduces the benefit of “no gate fee” and might be reason to consider a multi-day pass for visitors.

8. Need some system for communicating service delays to riders.

Both resident and visitor riders expressed the desire for some means of communication to let them know when YARTS is delayed. Regular riders noted that buses are often late and they have no way of knowing if it will be 5 minutes or 30 minutes. Visitors who were interviewed at the bus stops in Yosemite while waiting for the bus feel a general uncertainty about what to do or expect when a bus doesn't arrive as planned. This is particularly disconcerting when passengers are planning to connect to Amtrak in Merced and fear they will miss their train.

Suggestions which were offered for remedying this situation included.

- Allow riders (both residents and visitors) to register on YARTS webpage to receive alerts about service delays. These could be sent as text messages or Twitter. Most residents say they have cell service at the bus stops. These alerts would need to be initiated by VIA dispatchers based on input from bus drivers about their status at certain points in the trip. It would require significantly enhanced oversight of the operation, but might result in both improved reliability and better customer relations.
- Equip buses with GPS and utilize an Automatic Vehicle Locator system to provide real time information at key bus stops and on line. This may or may not be doable, given the terrain of the area.

9. Improve passenger information via collateral and bus stop displays.

Stakeholders and users both commented on the need to enhance YARTS passenger information tools – printed schedules and brochures, and information panels at bus stops.

Once specific recommendation was to create a brochure which would really describe what visitors can expect when using YARTS – addressing both the benefits and logistics (such as how to handle all the “stuff” that families bring with them). It was discussed that different versions of the brochure could be needed for the two routes in order to make them specific to the communities and destinations served. It was felt that the schedule should be separate from the brochure (so as not to date it) but that it should be a “companion” piece produced in an equally passenger friendly format. Both pieces could be provided to lodging establishments, visitor centers and other gatekeepers in Merced, Mariposa/Midpines, El Portal, Lee Vining, June Lake and Mammoth Lakes.

Many comments were received regarding the need for more clearly signed bus stops and for more information in the bus stop displays. Specifically information about fares was requested. One visitor said “I didn't know what to expect to pay.”

10. Capitalize on the internet and social media to communicate with current and potential users.

The critical role of the internet in travel planning was discussed in virtually every meeting. Stakeholders noted the need to insure that links to YARTS information are included on as many websites as possible that relate to the Yosemite region. And that the YARTS website should be as clear and user friendly as possible.

The potential to utilize social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.) to enhance YARTS web presence was also discussed on several occasions. Blogs and chat sites used by backpackers are already an important channel through which YARTS information is disseminated. It was felt that YARTS could take a more active role in making information about how and why to use the service available.

For example, one discussion included allowing hikers/backpackers to post their favorite hikes (including where to get on and off the bus). A related suggestion was posting a list of safe “request” stops on the website, so riders would know what is and isn’t allowable.

Other participants thought it would be useful to have “suggested day trips” (e.g. walk to the falls, then have lunch at the Ahwahnee) that would allow locals and visitors to see how they might use the YARTS service for recreation.

11. Increase marketing and communications to visitors through hotels, campsites, tour companies, airport and other tourism gatekeepers.

Later in this report, the on-board survey will demonstrate that many riders learn about YARTS through a tourism industry gatekeeper – hotel, campsite, tour company or travel agency. These entities represent important marketing partners for YARTS and were discussed extensively in the stakeholder meetings and workshops.

Many participants spoke of the importance of communicating with hotel “front desk” staff and campsite hosts to make sure they are aware of and ready to promote the service. The tourism manager in Mammoth Lakes suggested a FAM (familiarization) tour for hotel staff at the beginning of the season, while a hotel manager in El Portal suggested giving staff persons a free ticket to make the trip on their own. On both sides of the mountain, the importance of frequent communication with lodging establishment staff was noted.

After the workshop in Mariposa, the consultant made a tour of all of the motels in the community, speaking with the front desk staff. Some personnel knew a good bit about YARTS. Several had the information manual and had schedules ready to hand out. Others had heard of the service but had no information and simply told potential riders where the bus stop is. Few had every used the service themselves. In all cases, the staff said they would be happy to be provided with an attractive display for their lobby or counter which would promote the YARTS services, and that they would distribute brochures or schedules if provided.

Another topic of discussion was the opportunity to create tour packages that include YARTS. A number of tour bus operators already do this – offering packages that include transportation to El Portal, rooms at

Cedar or Yosemite View Lodge and YARTS tickets. Packages which might include air transportation to Merced, YARTS tickets and hotels in Merced or Mariposa were suggested.

The Tourism commissions in Mammoth Lakes, Mariposa and Merced can be instrumental in providing packagers with information about YARTS. However, it was noted that schedule and fare information would need to be provided a year in advance to facilitate this effort.

12. Better Define Institutional Roles and Responsibilities.

This theme of institutional roles and responsibilities came up in both direct and indirect ways. In a direct manner, in the Eastern Sierra communities it was discussed whether or not there should be separate contractors for the 140 and 120 routes. ESTA has successfully taken over the Reds Meadow shuttle. Stakeholders felt an ESTA operated 120 route might help with CREST coordination and ESTA might have more local knowledge. YARTS began before ESTA was formed, and the contracting role should be looked at, stakeholders suggested.

The other direct input was from a stakeholder who wanted public transportation to Yosemite to be a single, seamless entity, and not operated with transfers from other systems.

Indirectly, the institutional issue was brought up as DNC currently operates a free hikers shuttle to Tuolumne in the morning and back to the Yosemite Valley in the afternoon. YARTS operates paid service to Yosemite from Mammoth Lakes in the morning and returns to Mammoth Lakes in the afternoon, the opposite of the DNC service. While the question was not directly stated, the indirect question that was being asked is “What role does YARTS play in comparison to DNC’s internal shuttles such as the hikers shuttle.” As will be noted in the survey results later in this report, about 43% of the passengers surveyed on Route 120 are travelling between Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne Meadows. At least one stakeholder did directly suggest that service from Mammoth Lakes and other Lee Vining communities should only be to Tuolumne Meadows in order to enable twice a day service on the east side. This would require that DNC carry the entire responsibility for service between Tuolumne Meadows and Yosemite Valley.

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Passenger Survey

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Methodology

During July of 2010 a survey was conducted of passengers onboard YARTS buses . Unique questionnaires were developed for Residents and Visitors on each route. Copies of the four questionnaires are included in the appendix. For each route, the Visitor and Resident versions of the questionnaire were printed back to back on card stock.



Questionnaires and pens were placed on the seats of the bus prior to the beginning of each trip. Passengers were instructed to complete the questionnaire while on the bus and return it in a box next to the front door prior to leaving the vehicle. Questionnaires were collected in an envelope marked with the run number and date and were sent for data entry. The survey was conducted on Route 140 on a Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday (July 21, 22, 24). It was conducted on Route 120 on Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday(July 24, 25, 26, 27). Passengers were asked to complete the survey only once.

The chart at the right shows the number of visitors and residents who completed the survey on each route.

Sample Size	Visitors	Residents
Rt. 140	245	162
Rt. 120	99	3

It should be noted that each person was asked to complete the survey only once, so the numbers of surveys collected from each group do not necessarily indicate the share of overall boardings they represent. On the first day of the survey on Route 140, 98 residents and 91 visitors completed the questionnaire indicating a roughly 52%/48% split between the two groups (assuming similar cooperation rates).

This report will provide an overview of the findings of the survey. Since the questionnaires were quite different for visitors and residents, and since their manner of using YARTS is very different, the findings will be presented separately. First Visitors on Routes 120 and 140, then Residents on Route 140. Note only three residents completed the questionnaire on Route 120.

Visitor Profile

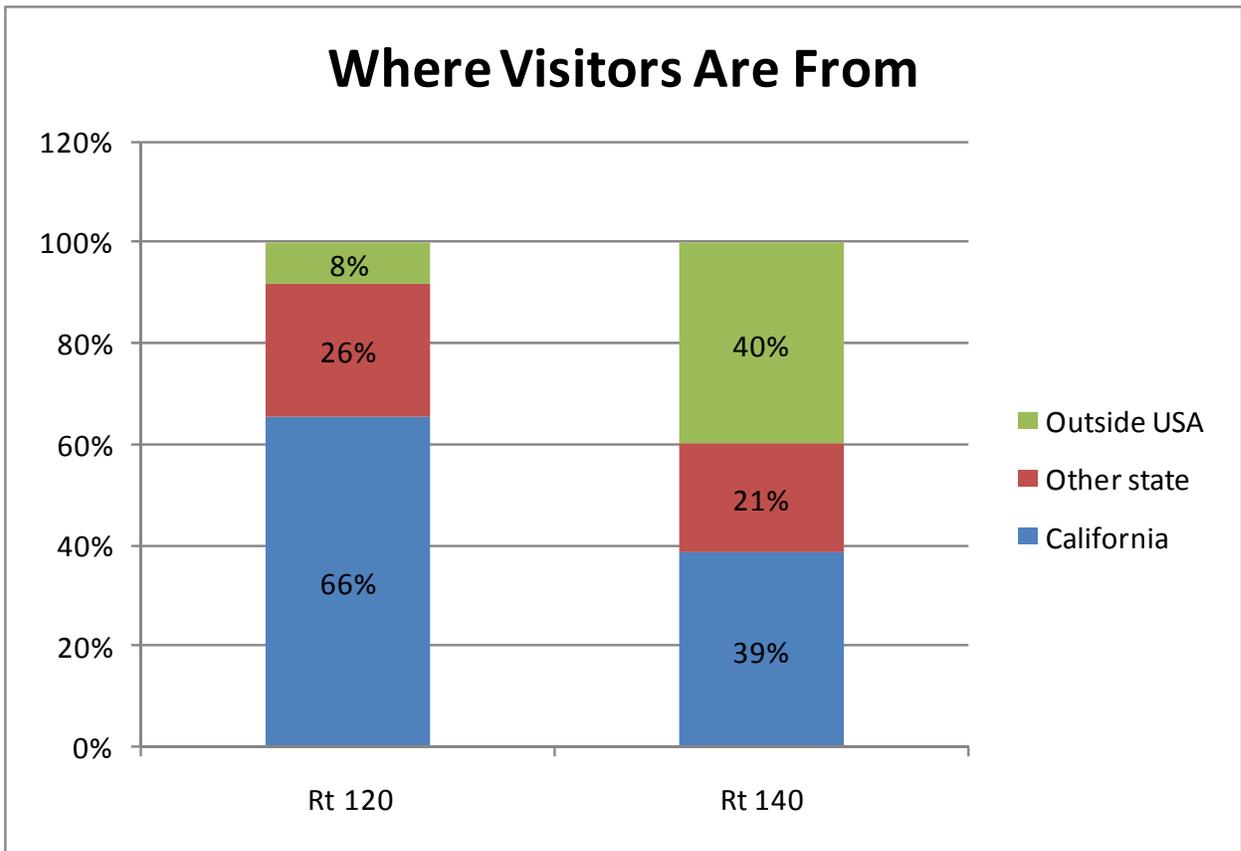


Figure 1 Where Visitors are From

Where Visitors Are From

Figure 1 shows the where visitors who ride YARTS live. There is a distinct difference in the makeup of ridership on the two routes.

Route 120 attracts mostly Californians, with two thirds of its riders residing in the state and only 8% of its riders being international.

Route 140, on the other hand, attracts a large number of international visitors – 40%.

The table at the right shows the raw number of riders completing the survey who said they were from each country outside the US.

Germany and England/Ireland seem to provide the most visitors who use YARTS.

International Visitors		
120	AUSTRALIA	1
	CANADA	1
	FRANCE	4
	HOLLAND	1
	MONTREAL, CANADA	1
140	NEW ZEALAND	1
	AUSTRALIA	3
	CANADA	1
	DENMARK	6
	ENGLAND/UK	6
	FRANCE	2
	GERMANY	12
	EUROPE	1
	HOLLAND	3
	IRELAND	5

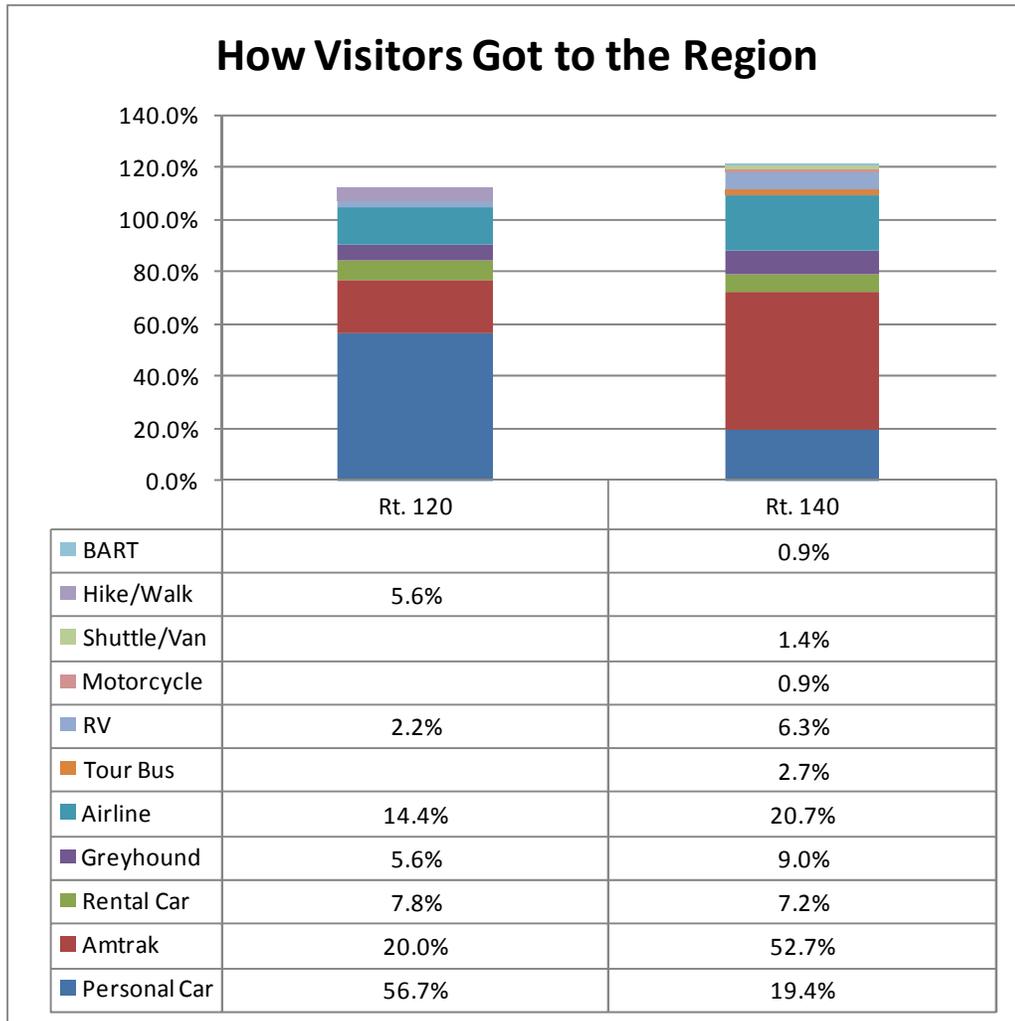


Figure 2 How Visitors Traveled to the Yosemite Region

How Visitors Got to the Region

dVisitors travel to the Yosemite region using a variety of modes – some using multiple modes (hence columns above may total to more than 100%). The distribution of travel modes varies distinctly between the two routes.

The greatest number of Route 120 riders arrive via personal car (57%). This is not surprising given the fact that 60% of them are from California. Intercity transit is the second most used mode for Route 120 riders, with 20% saying they used Amtrak to arrive in the region and another 6% saying they used Greyhound. It should be noted that 120 riders who say they came via Amtrak or Greyhound must have used Rt. 140 originally, as both Amtrak and Greyhound serve Merced and not Mammoth Lakes.

For Route 140, Amtrak² is the most cited mode for accessing the region – used by 53% of respondents. Another 9% say they arrived by Greyhound. Hence more than 60% came to the region without a private vehicle. Again, this reflects the differing makeup of the riders – many more international visitors. It is also a result of the fact that the Route 140 serves the Amtrak station directly.

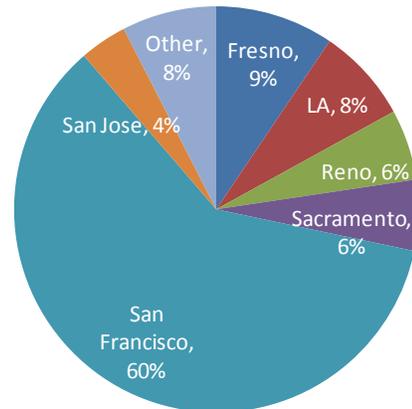
Nineteen percent of Route 140 riders drove their personal car, while another 7% rented a car.

Overall, about 20% of visitors say they flew to the region (possibly in conjunction with another mode).

The pie chart at the right shows that the majority (60%) flew into San Francisco, 9% into Fresno, 8% into LA and smaller numbers flew into Reno, Sacramento and San Jose.

About 13% of respondents answered “other” to this question. These have been recategorized into specific groups. Many answered motor home or RV, while others said Tour Bus or motorcycle. Some answered YARTS, apparently misunderstanding the question. These have been eliminated from the analysis.

**What City Visitors Flew Into
(of the 17% who arrived by air)**



² It should be noted that one reason for the high number of YARTS riders who said they came to the region via Amtrak is because YARTS provides Thruway service under contract to Amtrak. In July, approximately 11% of boardings were made with Amtrak Thruway tickets. Other Amtrak riders purchase YARTS tickets separately. In total Amtrak riders appear to represent about one quarter of boardings on the system, but about half of visitor riders.

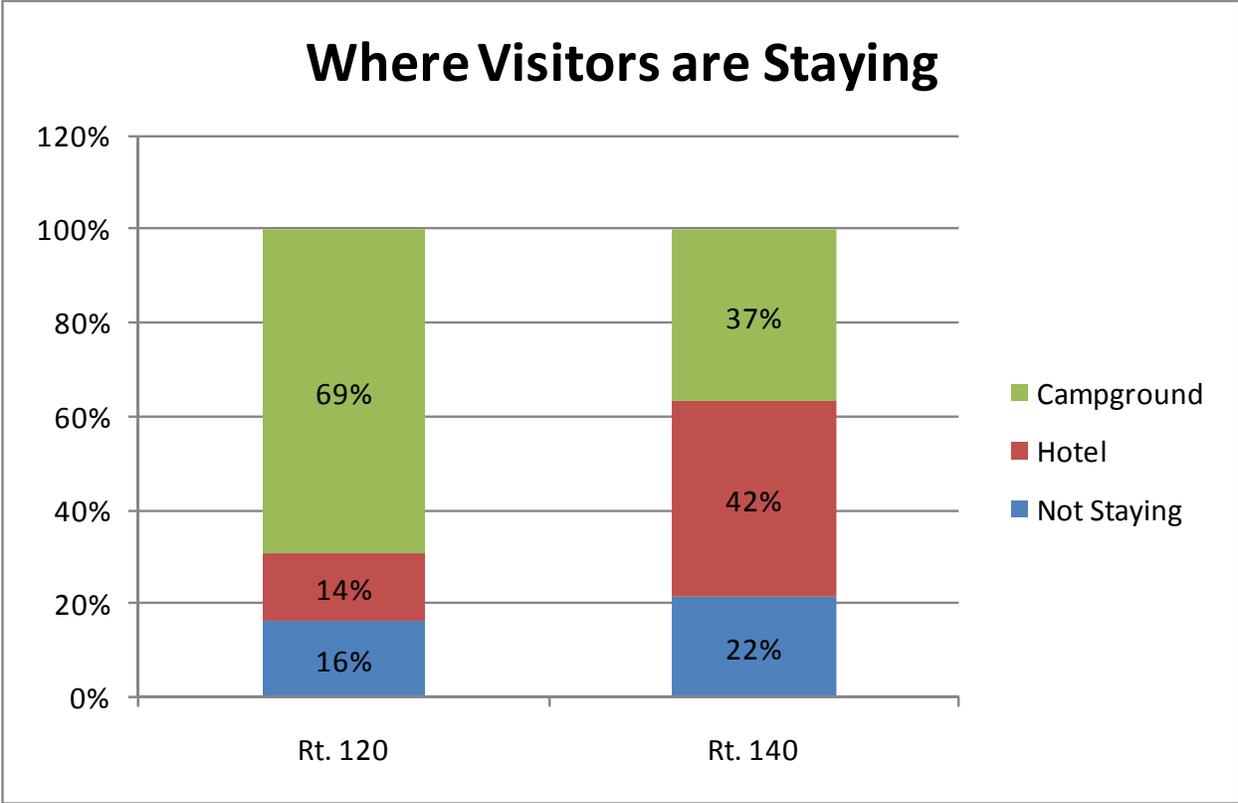


Figure 3 Overnight Stays

Staying Overnight in the Region

The majority of visitors (around 80% overall) who responded to the survey on both routes are staying overnight in the Yosemite region. However, the type of accommodations they are using varies widely.

Route 120 riders are most likely to be staying at a campground or backpacking in the wilderness (69%). Only 14% are staying in a hotel.

On the other hand, Route 140 Riders are more evenly dividing between those staying at a hotel (42%) or a campground (37%).

The chart at the right shows the number of visitor passengers who said they were staying at specific locations or in specific communities.

Note: Yosemite View Lodge is the number one sales outlet for YARTS tickets.

Where Visitors Are Staying		Hotel	Camping
120	Mammoth Lakes	10	2
	Curry Village	2	
	Mariposa	1	
	Merced	2	
	Groveland	1	
	June Lake		2
	Tuolumne Meadows		15
	Backpacking Misc.		46
140	Merced	8	
	Mariposa	10	
	Bug Hostel	20	
	Midpines	4	
	El Portal	7	
	Yosemite View	11	
	Curry Village	14	
	Yosemite Lodge	7	
	Wawona	2	
	Yosemite (other)	6	
	KOA		40
	Tuolumne Meadows		3
	Backpacking?Misc		39

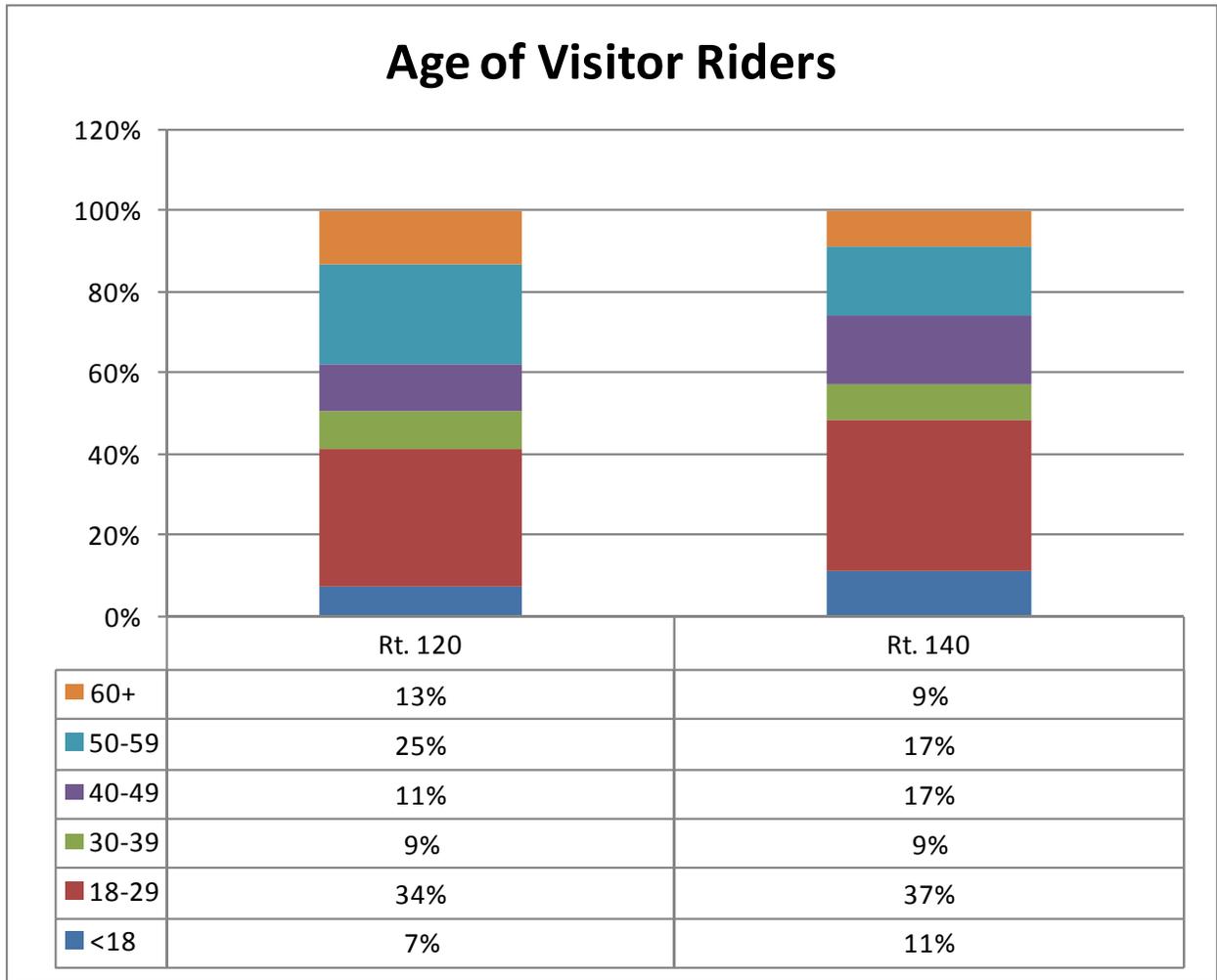


Figure 4 Age of Visitors

Age of Visitors

YARTS visitor ridership includes a spectrum of ages. However, the largest age group on both routes is the 18-29 age group, which represents over a third of visitors who completed the questionnaire.

Outside of this group, Rt. 120 riders tend to be older than Rt. 140 riders. On Rt. 120, 38% of visitor riders are over 50, while on Rt. 140, only 26% of visitor riders are over 50.

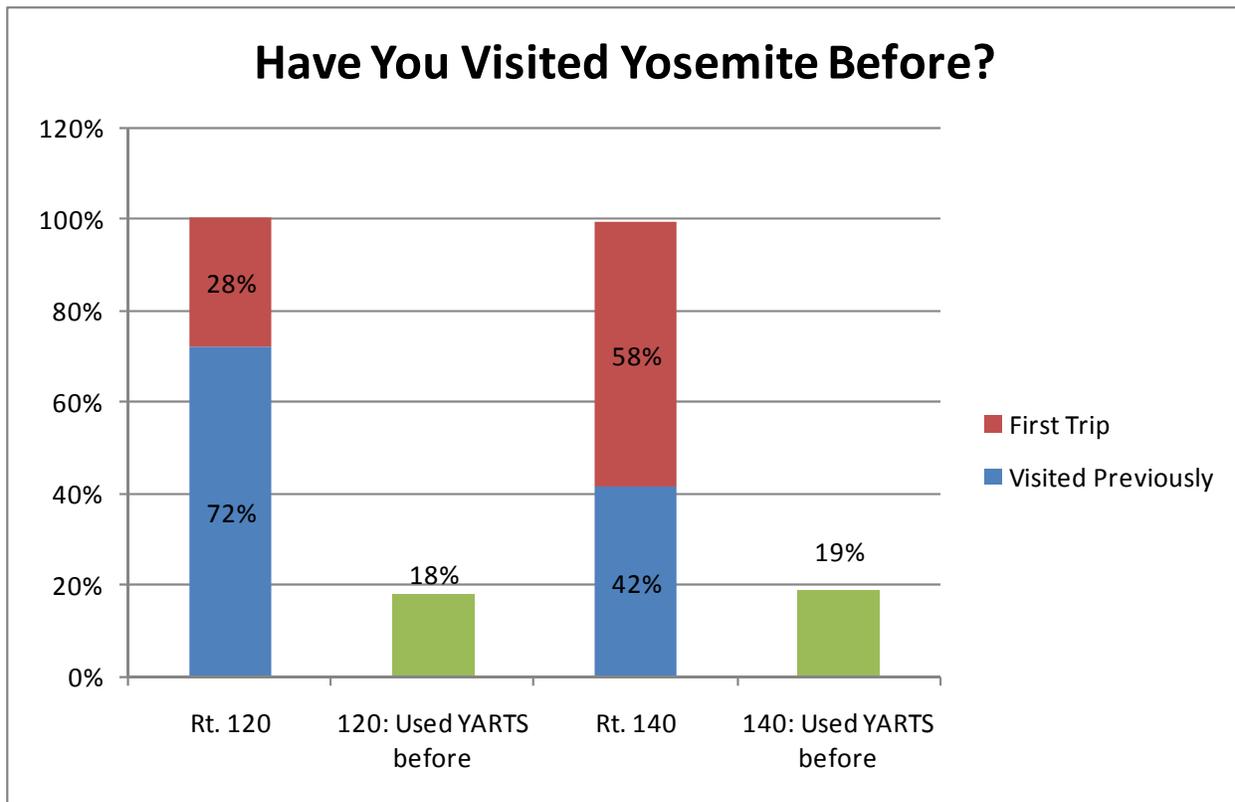


Figure 5 Repeat Visitation and Ridership

Repeat Visitation and Ridership

According to the National Park Service, many Yosemite travelers are repeat visitors. So YARTS visitor riders were asked if they had visited the park before and if they had used YARTS on previous trips. The Chart above shows the responses to both questions.

On Route 120, the majority of riders had visited the park before (72%), and about 18% of visitors had ridden YARTS before. On Route 140, fewer had visited the park before (42%), but a similar proportion (19%) had ridden YARTS before.

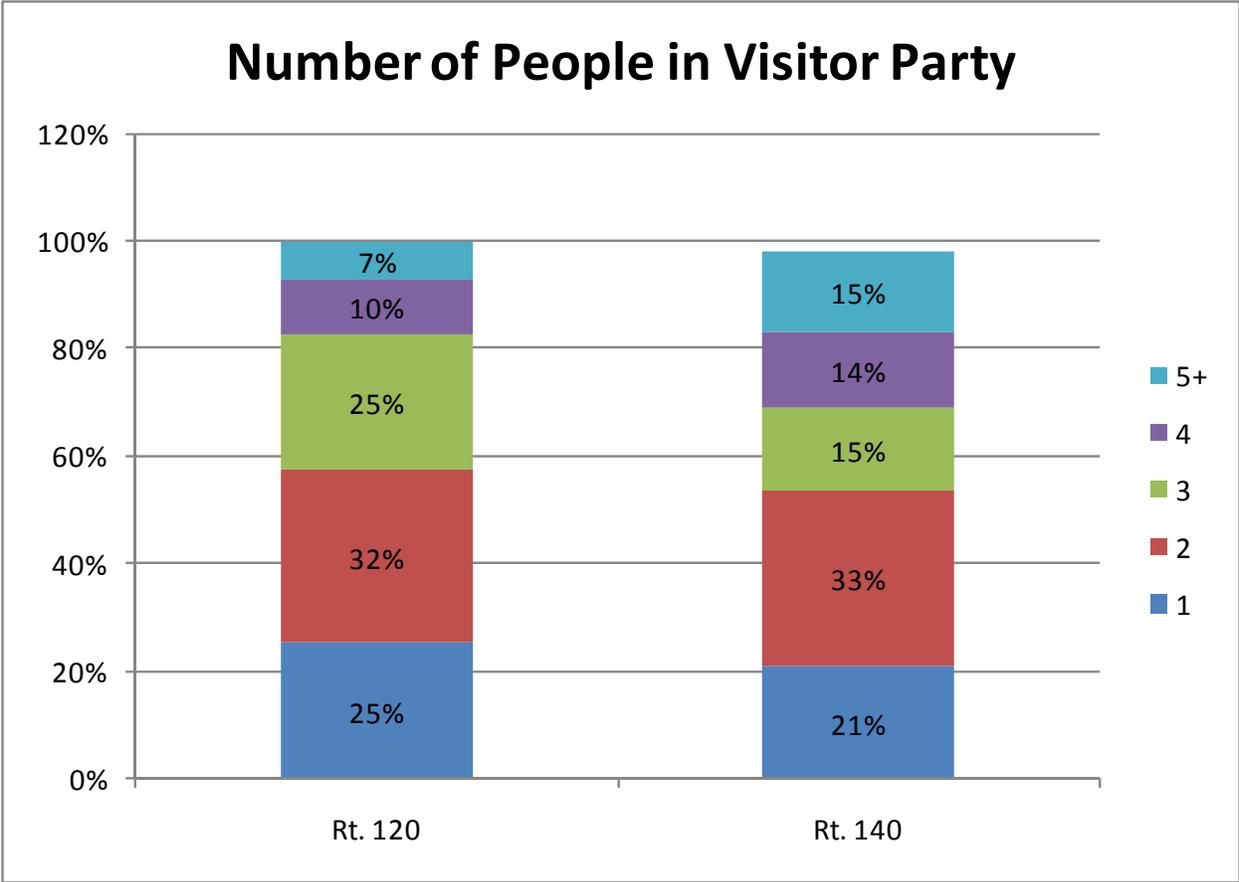


Figure 6 Number of People Traveling Together

Traveling in Groups

YARTS riders travel in groups of various sizes. While about a quarter of visitor riders are traveling alone, the majority are traveling in groups of two (one-third) or three.

There are more large groups traveling on Route 140 (15% are traveling in groups of 5 or more), probably as a result of the Amtrak connection and the tour companies who use YARTS as part of their package.

Visitor Boarding and Alighting

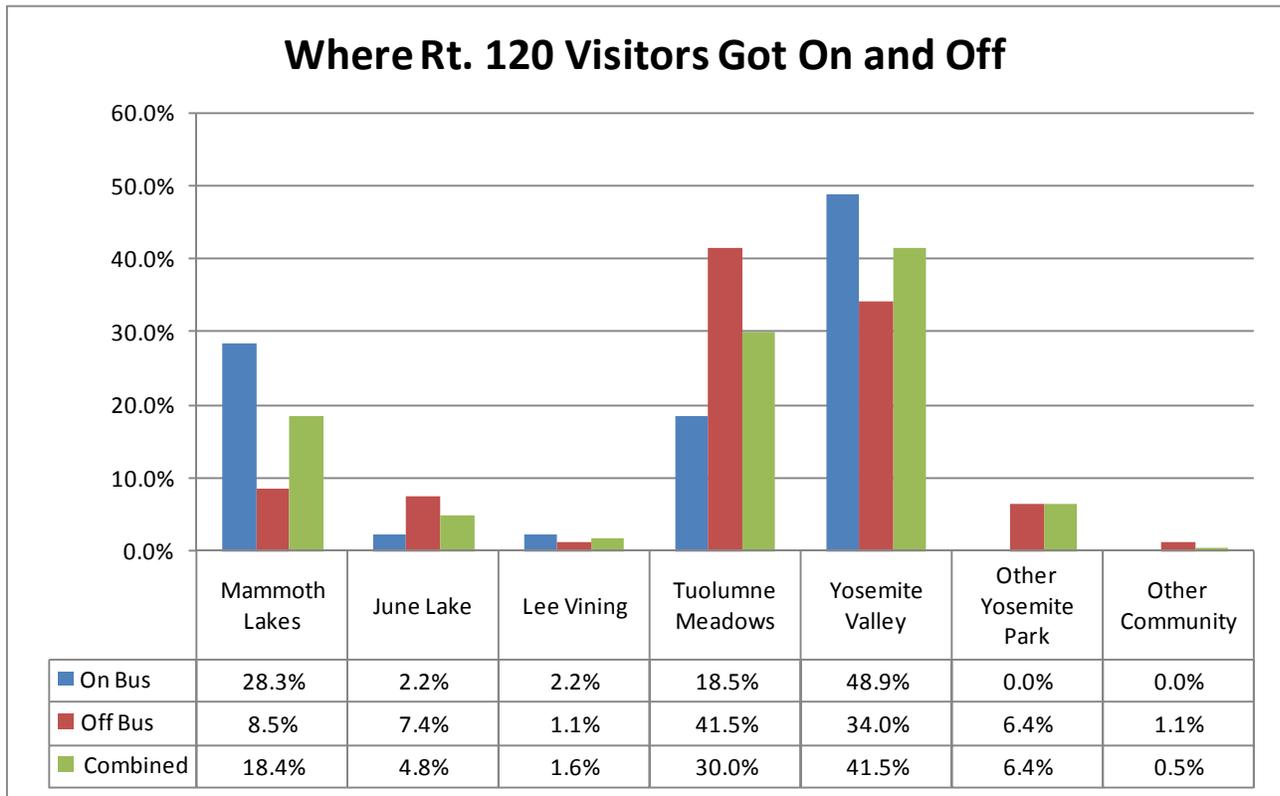


Figure 7 Visitor Boarding and Alighting - Route 120

Where Route 120 Riders Boarded and Alighted

Visitor passengers were asked where they got on the bus and where they planned to get off. Note that passengers were only asked to complete the questionnaire once, and those making a round trip were most likely to complete it on the first trip of the day. Hence this data is not a complete on-off count, but simply a record of where those passengers who completed the survey were traveling to and from on a particular trip.

The Chart above shows the percent of Route 120 riders who said they boarded (blue) and alighted (red) at each of the areas on the route. The fact that most visitors completed the survey in the morning is reflected in that fact that many more were traveling TO Yosemite than FROM Yosemite.

The third line on the chart (green) is a composite of all boardings and alightings. This represents the percent of overall boarding/alighting activity for a given location. (Note that the combined percentage for a given location has a realistic maximum of 50%). The chart clearly shows that the vast majority of activity on this route is within Yosemite National Park – 41% in Yosemite Valley , 30% in Tuolumne Meadows and 6% in other park locations. Only about a quarter of combined boarding and alighting locations are in Mammoth Lakes, June Lake and Lee Vining.

The table below shows a crosstab of where passengers said they got on the bus and where they will get off. Percentages for the total table add to 100% so each cell is a distinct group of riders.

This indicates that a large percent of passengers (43%) are traveling between Tuolumne Meadows and Yosemite Valley rather than traveling to/from a location outside the park. About 31% are traveling between Mammoth Lakes and the park, while another 5% are traveling between June Lake/Lee Vining and Yosemite Valley.

RT 120 VISITORS OFF ▼	ON ▼						
	Mammoth Lakes	June Lake	Lee Vining	Tuolumne Meadows	Yosemite Valley	Other	No Answer
Mammoth Lakes				2.0%	6.1%		
June Lake					4.1%		1.0%
Lee Vining			1.0%				
Tuolumne Meadows	6.1%	0.0%	1.0%		28.6%		3.1%
Yosemite Valley	17.3%			14.3%			1.0%
Other	1.0%	1.0%		1.0%	6.1%	1.0%	1.0%
No Answer	2.0%				1.0%		

Because it was believed that many riders on Route 120 are backpackers who ride only one way, visitors on Route 120 were also asked if they were making a one-way or round trip. Only 14% of those who responded to this question said they were making a round trip. The other 86% said they were traveling one way.

Rt. 120 Visitors - Most Travel One-Way

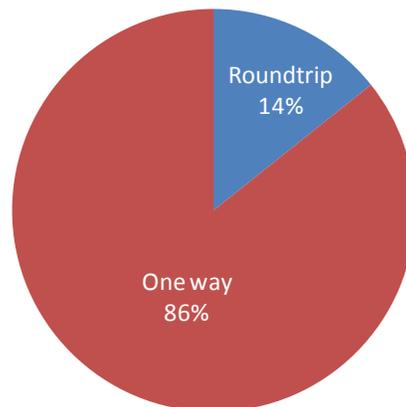


Figure 8 Rt 120 One-way or Roundtrip

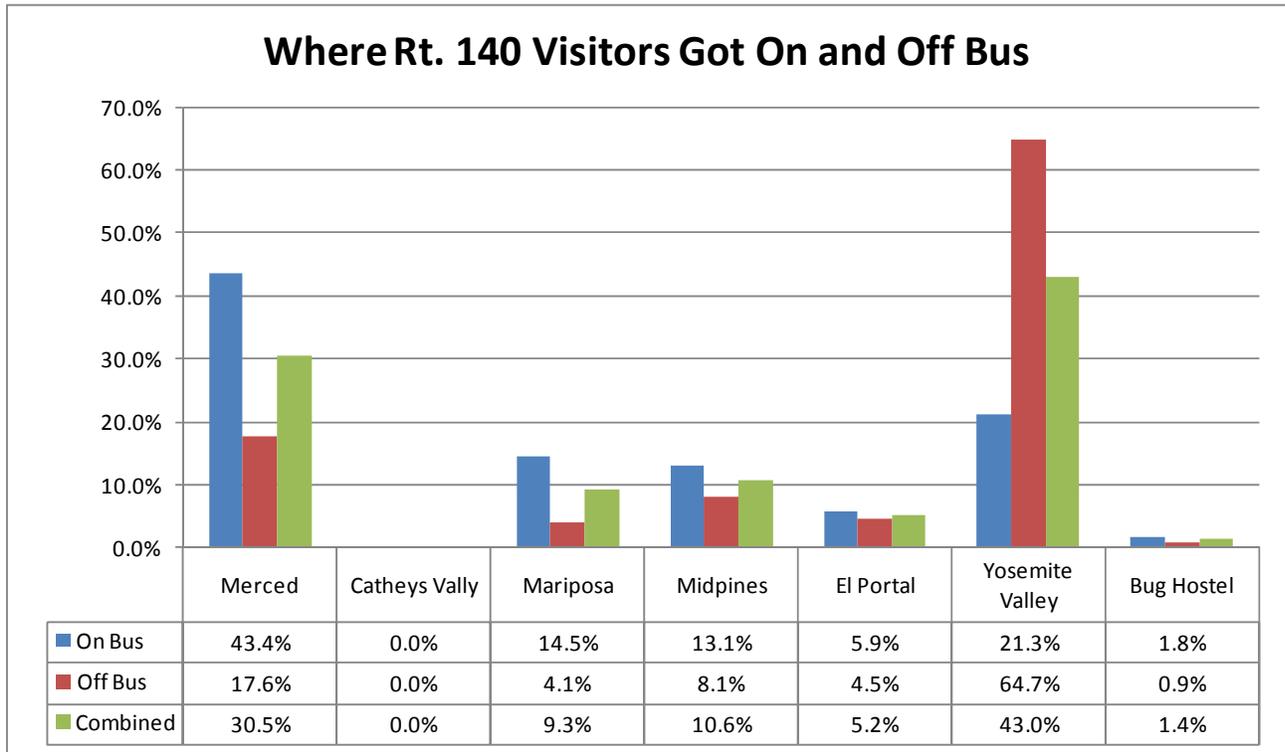


Figure 9 Visitor Boarding and Alighting - Route 140

Where Route 140 Visitors Boarded and Alighted

The Chart above shows the percent of Route 140 visitor riders who said they boarded and alighted at each of the areas on the route. As before, there is also a combined percentage which includes both boardings and alightings.

Yosemite Valley and Merced represent the key boarding/alighting locations with 43% and 30.5% of the combined boarding and alighting activity, respectively.

The table below shows a crosstab of where passengers said they got on the bus and where they will get off. Percentages for the total table add to 100% so each cell is a distinct group of riders.

RT 140 VISITORS		ON ▼					
OFF ▼	Merced	Catheys Valley	Mariposa	Midpines	El Portal	Yosemite Valley	No Answer
Merced	1.7%			1.2%	1.7%	9.1%	2.1%
Catheys Valley							
Mariposa	1.2%		0.4%	0.0%		1.7%	0.4%
Midpines	3.7%			0.4%		3.3%	0.8%
El Portal	1.2%			0.4%	0.4%	1.7%	0.4%
Yosemite Valley	28.6%		10.8%	9.1%	2.9%	0.8%	6.2%
Other							0.8%
No Answer	3.3%		2.1%	1.2%	0.4%	1.7%	

Like the chart above this crosstab reflects the fact that many visitors are traveling from Merced to Yosemite or back (28.6% and 9.1%), while another significant group are traveling from Mariposa to Yosemite or back (10.8% + 1.7%).

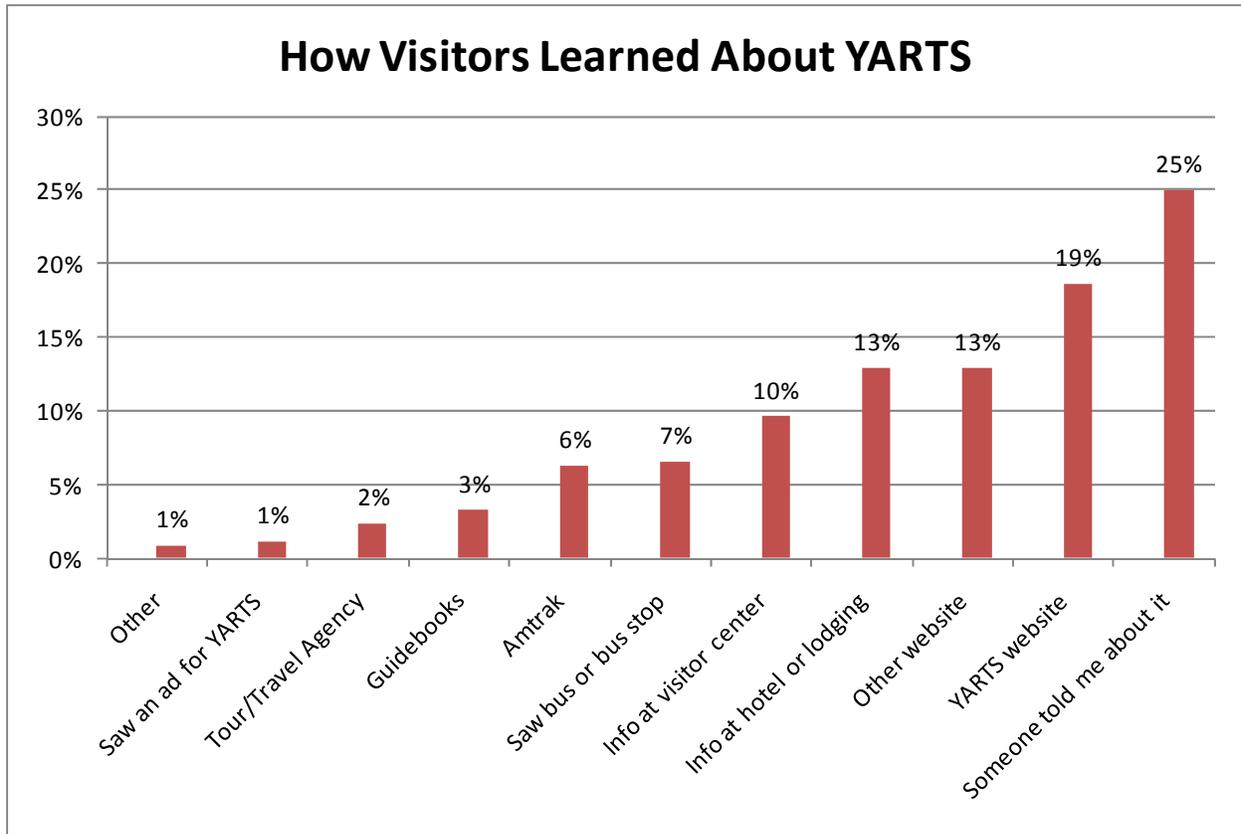


Figure 10 Information Sources

Information Sources

Riders appear to learn about YARTS in a wide variety of ways. If we combine those who mentioned the YARTS website (19%) and those who mentioned other websites (13%), the internet accounts for about one-third of information sources.

Word of mouth – someone told me about it – accounts for a quarter of awareness, while lodging sites and visitor centers, account for another quarter.

If we look at differences between the information sources cited by riders on Rt. 120 and 140, we find that Rt. 120 riders are more likely to say they learned about YARTS via the YARTS website, while Rt. 140 riders were more likely to say AMTRAK.

The chart at the right compares previous Yosemite visitors with first time visitors. First time visitors are much more likely to get information from their hotel or lodging.

How Visitor Learned About YARTS	Have visited before	Have not visited before
	(51% of total)	(49% of total)
Someone told me	28%	20%
Saw bus or bus stop	6%	6%
YARTS website	23%	14%
Other website	11%	13%
Info at Visitor Center	12%	10%
Info at hotel or lodging	8%	19%
Saw an ad for YARTS	1%	1%
Amtrak	8%	6%
Guidebook	3%	4%
Tour/Travel Agency	1%	3%
Other - nonspecific	0%	3%

Visitor Satisfaction with YARTS

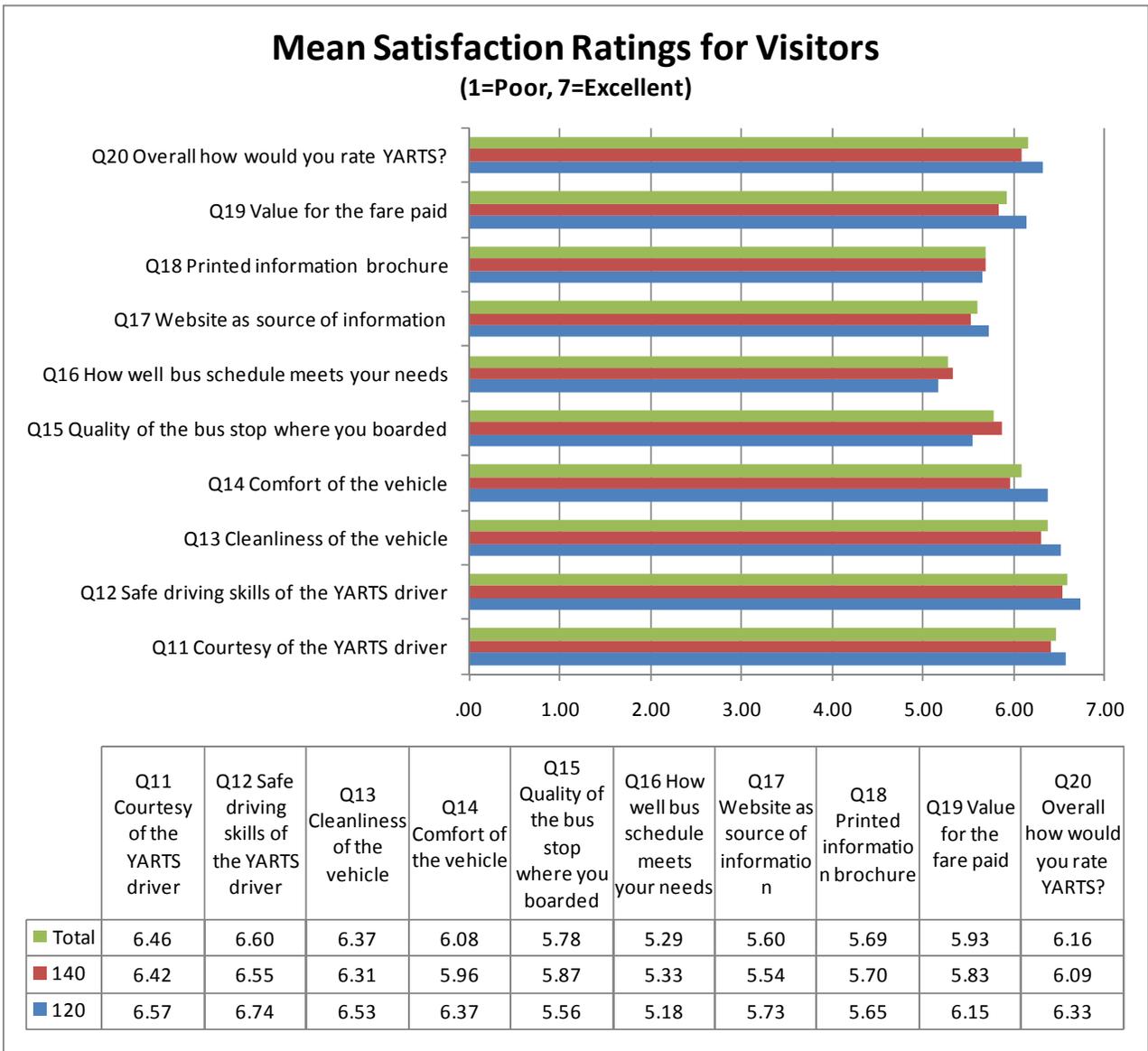


Figure 11 Visitor Satisfaction Ratings

Visitor Satisfaction Ratings

Visitors were asked to rate various aspects of YARTS service on a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 is poor and 7 is excellent. The chart above shows the mean satisfaction ratings for each route and for the total sample.

Many aspects of service received ratings of very good to excellent – 6 or higher. The highest ratings were for the drivers, in both the areas of safe driving and courtesy. These were followed by the ratings for cleanliness and comfort of the vehicles. Value for the fare paid was just under 6 for the overall sample.

A second tier of ratings related to issues of bus stops and information. Quality of the bus stop, the printed information brochure and the website were all rate in the high fives....good, but not great. Many comments related to the need for improved signage and information at the bus stop, on the website and in print.

The lowest rating was for how well the bus schedule meets your needs. Many visitors commented on the need for earlier, later or mid-day trips, as well as the difficulty of making connections with other transportation services.

Overall, riders gave YARTS a very good rating of 6.16 – a little higher on route 120 than on route 140 (despite the very limited service).

Their satisfaction with the service is also reflected in their nearly universal willingness to recommend it to a friend or coworker.

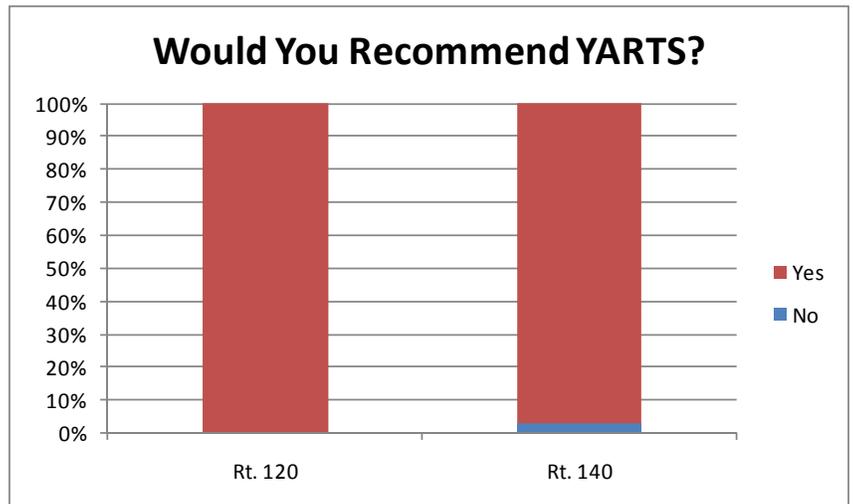


Figure 12 Recommend YARTS?

Resident Profile

Where Do Resident Riders Live?

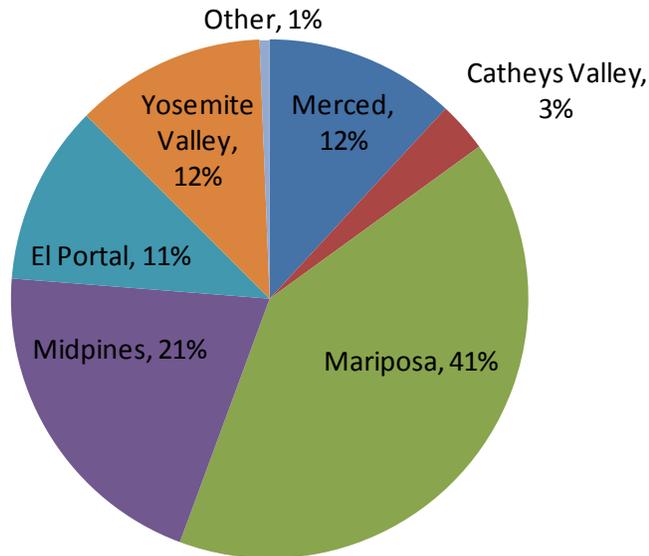


Figure 13 Where Residents Live

Community of Residence³

Approximately half of the ridership on Route 140 is made up of residents of the Yosemite Region. The chart above shows where the 162 residents who completed the questionnaire live. The Mariposa-Midpines-Cathys Valley area accounts for about two-thirds of the local ridership. Yosemite Valley and El Portal contribute nearly a quarter, with the remaining 12% coming from Merced.

³ Only three residents completed the survey on Route 120. Therefore this discussion will focus only on Route 140 riders. It should be noted however, that the 3 Route 120 riders were all residents of June Lake and all age 60+. They were riding for recreation, on two different days. Two were first time riders, the other had ridden occasionally.

Trip Purpose for Residents on Rt. 140

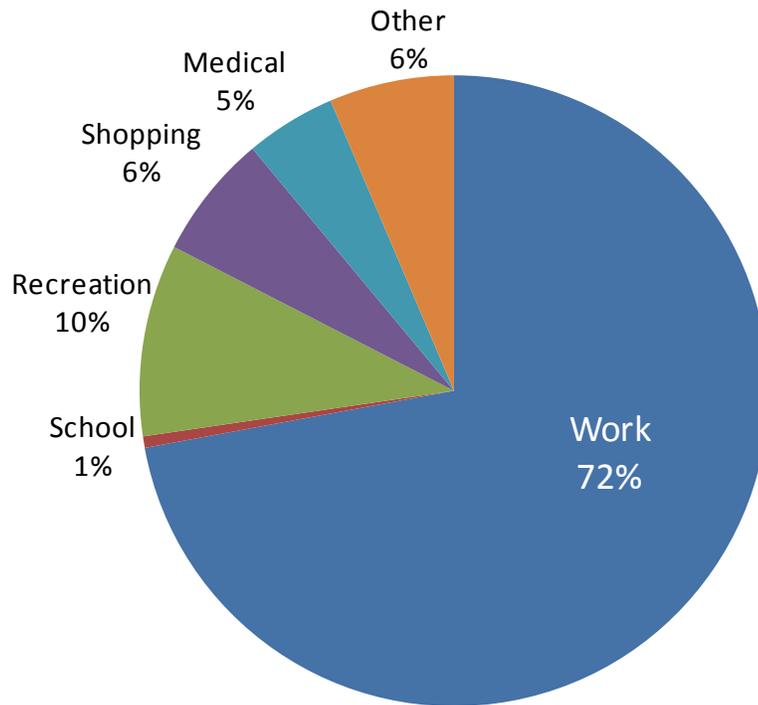


Figure 14 Resident Trip Purpose

Trip Purpose

The majority of resident riders (72%) who completed the questionnaire were on their way to or from work. Ten percent were traveling for recreation and 17% were traveling for shopping, medical or other non-commute reasons such as automotive work, taking a child to day care or attending family functions.

Where Do Resident Riders Work?

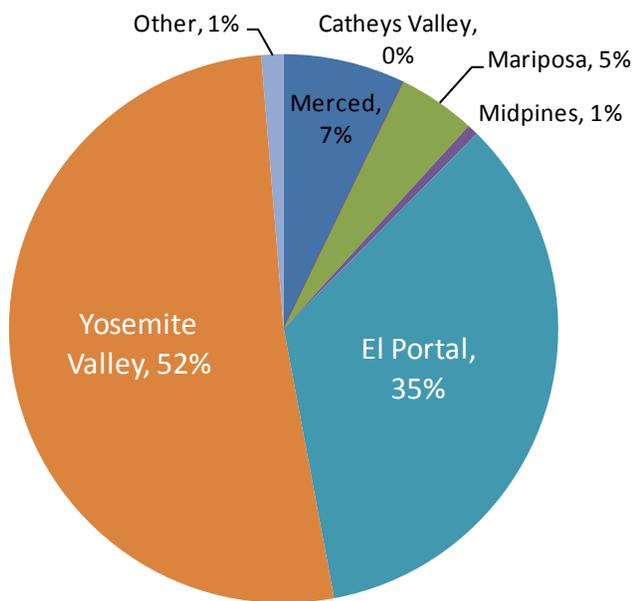


Figure 15 Where Riders Work

Employment Location and Employer

Riders who use YARTS to travel to work, were asked where they work. The vast majority work in Yosemite Valley or El Portal (87% combined). A small number work in Merced, Mariposa or other locations.

Asked about their employer, 60% said they work for the National Park Service and 20% for DNC. The remaining 20% worked for a variety of employers including:

OTHER Employers (raw number of responses)

Employers in Merced	5
Employers in/near Yosemite	13
Employers in Mariposa	2
Unknown Location	8

Employer of Residents (83% of respondents answered)

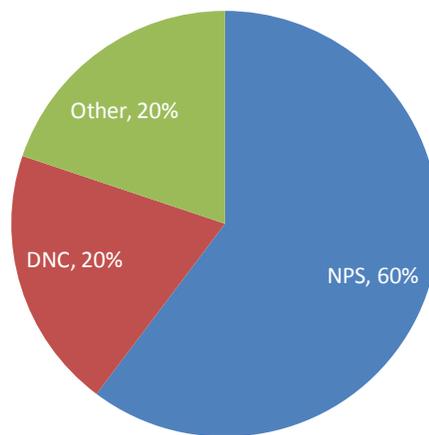


Figure 16 Employer

Frequency of Use (140 Residents)

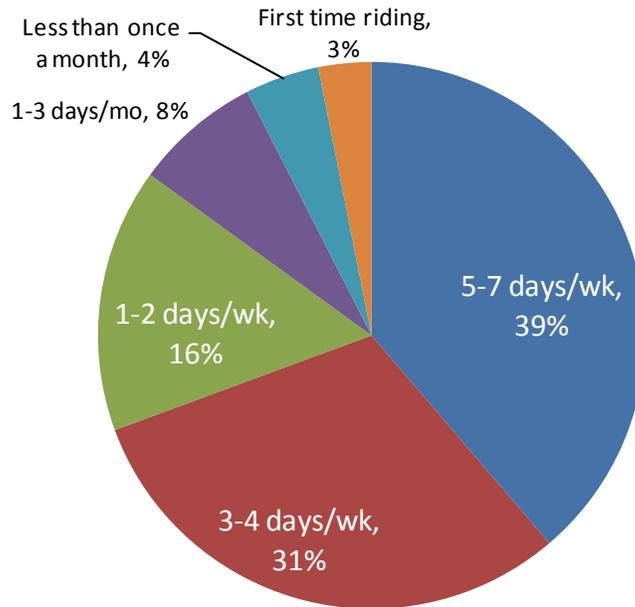


Figure 17 Frequency of Use

Frequency of Use by Resident Riders

Most of YARTS resident riders are regular users. Seventy percent (70%) ride the bus three or more days a week. However 31% ride only 3-4 days and 30% of riders ride less often, indicating some room for increased frequency of use among the existing ridership base.

Among those who use YARTS to commute to work 47% ride 5-7 days per week, while the remainder ride less often. During the workshop with NPS employees, it was noted that they get off early on Friday. Many therefore drive on Friday, rather than waiting for the bus. (This was one of several arguments for an earlier return bus).

Work Commuters	
5-7 days/wk	47%
3-4 days/wk	40%
1-2 days/wk	11%

When Residents Started Riding

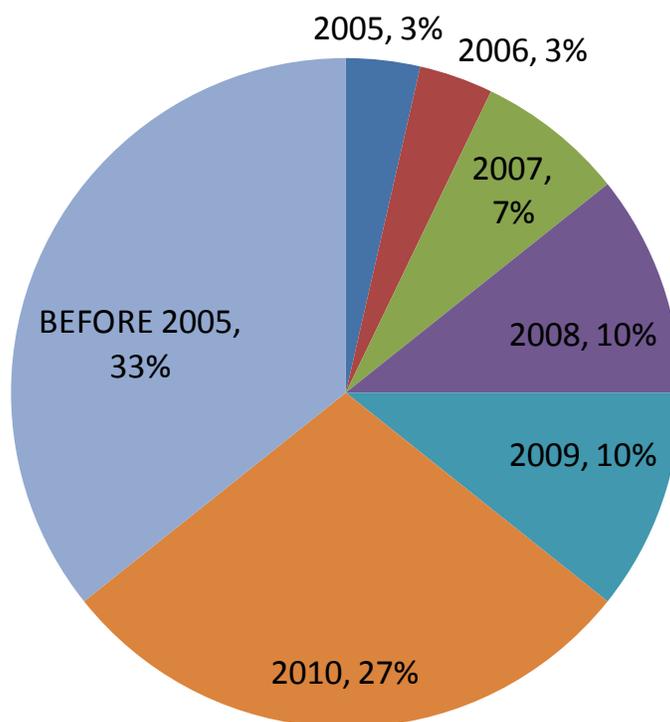


Figure 18 Duration of Use

Duration of Using YARTS

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of YARTS resident riders are long term riders – that is they began riding in 2008 or earlier. The other 37% have begun riding in the past year and a half.

The vast majority (85%) of the riders who have begun riding in 2009 and 2010 are work commuters. Over half are NPS employees.

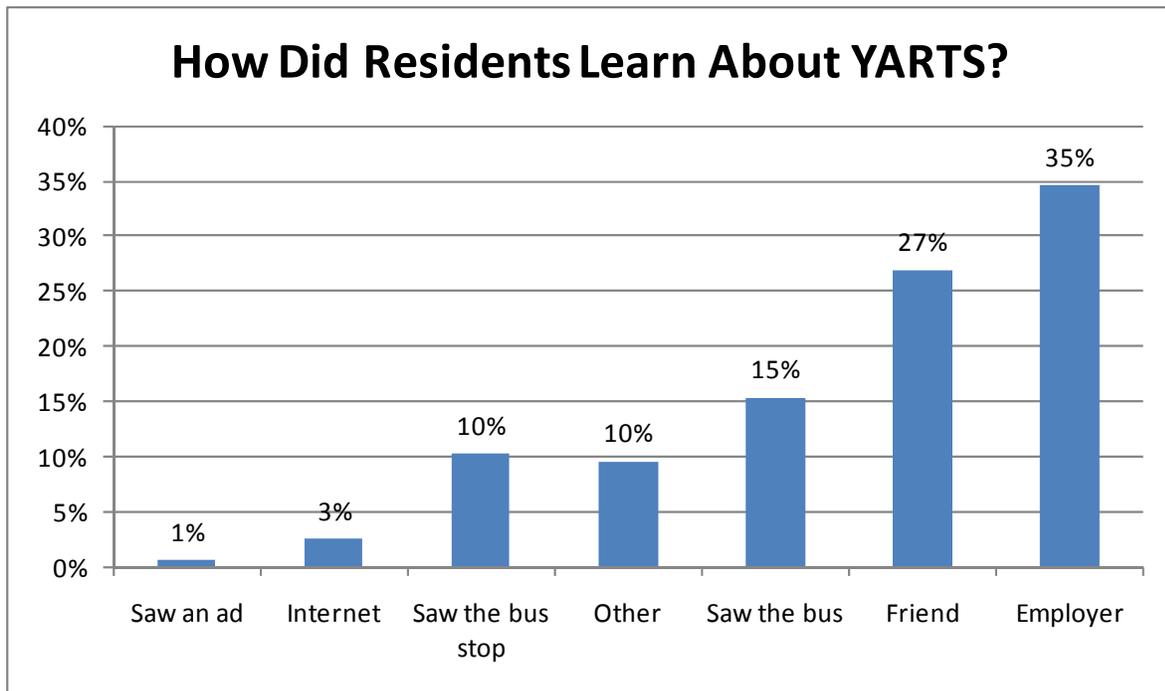


Figure 19 How Residents Learn About YARTS

Information Sources for Residents

Over a third of local YARTS riders learned about YARTS from their employer. (NPS and DNC include YARTS information in their new employee briefings.) A quarter (27%) heard about YARTS from a friend while another quarter (25%) saw a bus or bus stop.

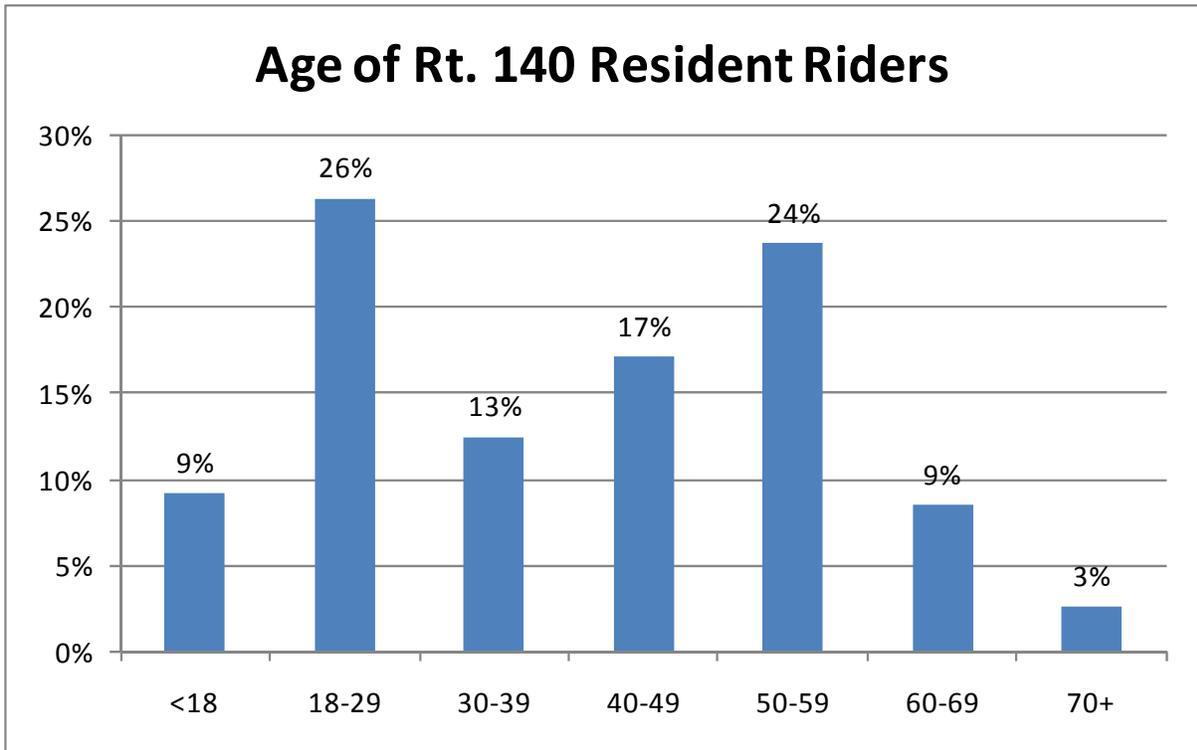


Figure 20 Age of Resident Riders

Age

YARTS resident riders cover the age spectrum from teens to seniors. However, most riders, as would be expected, are working age adults between 18 and 69.

Resident Travel Patterns

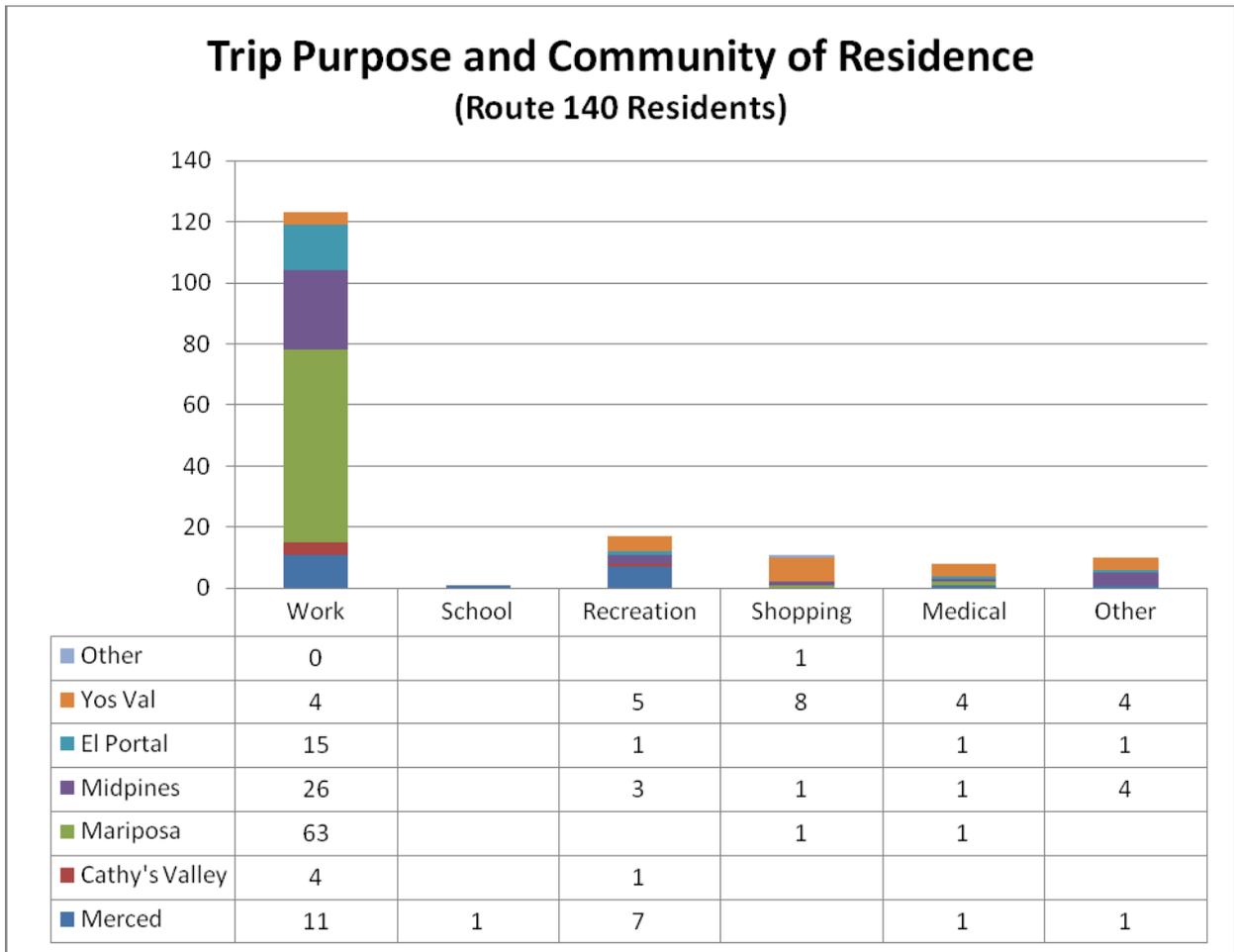


Figure 21 Trip Purpose by Community

Trip Purpose by Community of Residence

The chart above uses the raw number of responses to show the number of respondents from each community who said they were making trips for specific purposes. Using raw numbers allows you to easily see that the bulk of all trips were for work purposes, but that they originated in a variety of communities. The largest number of work trips, however, originated in Mariposa and Midpines.

While recreational trips originated throughout the area, shopping and medical trips were most likely to be made by residents who live in the Yosemite Valley.

RT 140 RESIDENTS DESTINATION ▼	HOME ▼					
	Merced	Catheys Valley	Mariposa	Midpines	El Portal	Yosemite Valley
Merced	1.9%	1.3%	3.1%		0.6%	7.5%
Catheys Valley	1.3%	0.6%				
Mariposa	3.8%		0.6%	2.5%		0.6%
Midpines				1.3%		
El Portal	0.6%	1.3%	20.8%	9.4%	2.5%	
Yosemite Valley	4.4%		16.4%	7.5%	7.5%	3.1%
Other					0.6%	0.6%

The table above shows a cross tab of community of residence and destination for the trip on which the respondent was surveyed. The overall table totals to 100%, so each cell represents a percentage of all resident riders surveyed. For example, 20.8% of all resident riders surveyed on Rt. 140 live in Mariposa and were making trips to/from El Portal.

Resident Satisfaction with YARTS

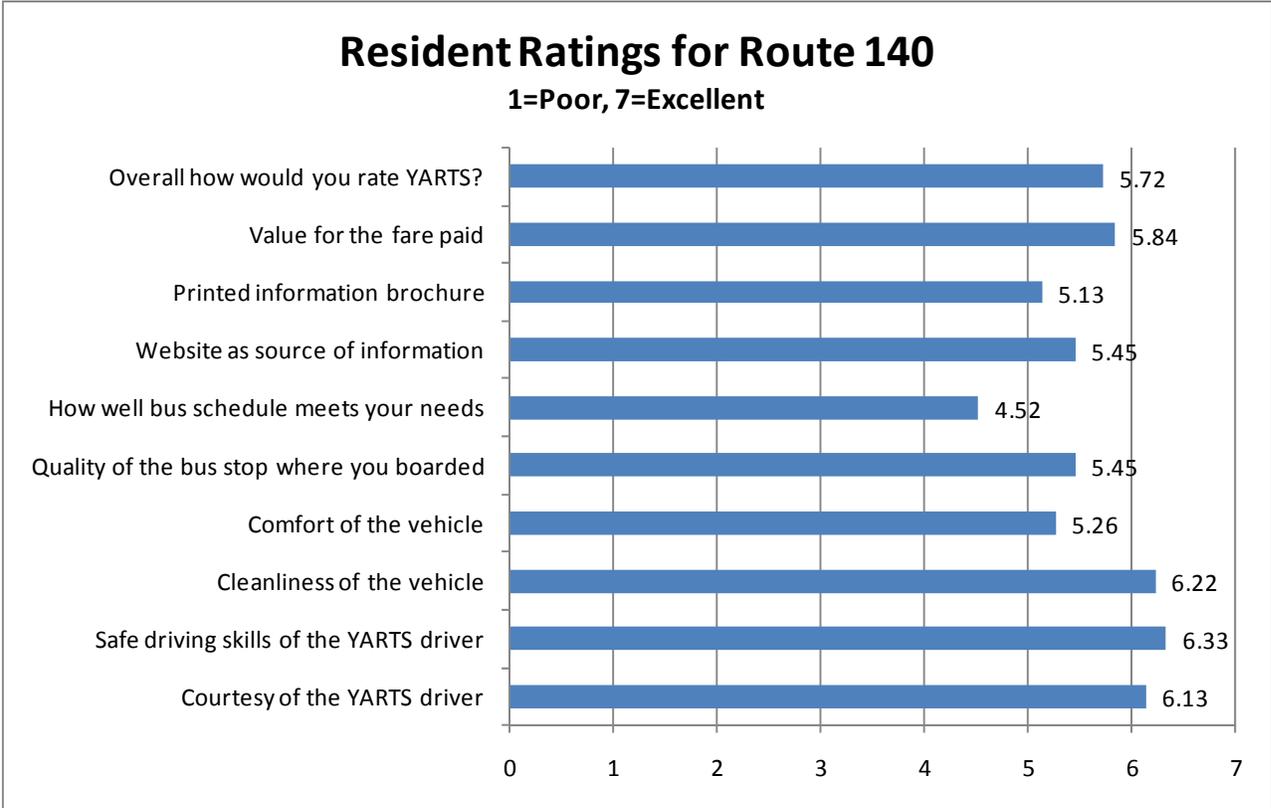


Figure 22 Resident Satisfaction Ratings

Resident Satisfaction with YARTS

Residents use YARTS much more intensely than visitors and hence rate it from a very different perspective. Like visitors, however, they rate the drivers and cleanliness of the vehicles quite highly – over 6. Value for the fare paid they rate as close to 6. However, other aspects of the service are rated in the low 5's (good, but not great) clearly leaving room for improvement in areas such as printed information, comfort of the vehicle, and quality of the bus stops.

How well the bus schedule meets your needs is rated at 4.52 with a significant number of riders rating it as poor (16%). On a few runs, more than half of riders rated this item as poor.

How well bus schedule meets your needs

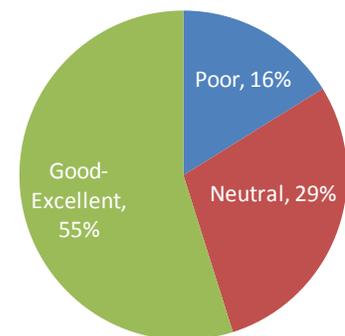


Figure 23 Bus Schedule Satisfaction

Comments

Respondents were asked to comment on what improvement in YARTS they would consider important. A wide variety of comments were provided. They have been categorized and included in the appendix. Below is a summary of the number of comments received by topic. (Note subcategories are included for topics with large numbers of comments – schedule/frequency and buses.)

Comment Category/Subcategory	120 Visitors	140 Visitors	140 Residents
Schedule/Frequency	31	56	58
Connections to other transit	7	4	
Yosemite Valley to Tuolumne	6		
Specific time issues	3	21	43
Frequency - general	15	26	15
Other		5	
Reliability	2	7	30
Locations/Routing	4		4
Drivers	1		10
Buses	5	28	25
New Bus Comfort	0		12
General Comfort	2	12	8
A/C	1	4	2
Other	2	12	3
Bus Stops	1	4	8
Commuter/Overcrowding Issues			10
Fares	2	6	6
Information/Marketing	4	16	1
Compliments	7	3	6

Appendix A: Stakeholders and Workshop Participants

Stakeholder Interviews

Dick Whittington, YARTS

Barbara Carrier, Mariposa

Hub Walsh, Merced County Supervisor

Rod Ghearing, Merced County Transit

John Gray and Melissa Eades, Tuolumne County

Kevin Cann, Mariposa County Supervisor

Marty Nielson, NPS

Denise Demery, VIA Ops Manager

YARTS Drivers

YARTS Riders

Merced Meeting

Hub Walsh, Merced County Supervisor

Denise Demery, YARTS manager, VIA Adventures

Curtis Riggs, Owner, VIA Adventures

Ronald K. Elliot, Merced Airport

Larry Harris, YARTS rider

Dick Whittington, MCAAG

Yosemite Valley Meeting

Coary Rosenfeld, DNC, Transit Manager

Melissa Eads, Tuolumne Public Works

Wendy Malone, NPS

El Portal Meeting

Wynona Tillel, NPS

Don Smith, NPS (commutes from Merced)

Darlene Hales, NPS

Julie Crossland, NPS

Kim Tucker, NPS

Tricia Radmacher, NPS

Leonor Perez, NPS

Elizabeth Munding, NPS

William Crane, NPS

Sheri Ogden, Business Mgr. - NPS

John Friedrich, Yosemite Conservancy

Joe Segale, Resource System Group

Jim Bacon, NPS Planning

Mariposa Meeting

Tolly Gorham, VP, Mariposa Chamber

Candy Brown, YARTS Advisory Committee

Lana Luiz, Yosemite Mariposa County Tourism Bureau

Jerry Sarazin, Sierra Sun Times

Kevin Shelton, Yosemite Management Group

Denise Demery , Via

Mariposa Lodging Visits

(Consultant spoke with front desk staff)

Comfort Inn

Best Western Yosemite Way Station

Yosemite Inn

America's Best Value

Super 8 Motel

Mother Lode Lodge

Miner's Inn

Lee Vining Meeting

Chris Lizza, Mono Basin RPAC

Nancy Brown, Murphy's Lodge (spoke with her at motel)

June Lake Meeting

Vikki Bauer , Mono County Supervisor/Gull Lake Lodge

Pam Maisey, Cinnamon Bear B&B

Rian Gamble, MCMWTC

Cheri Bromberger, June Lake Motel

Mammoth Lakes Meeting

Gwen Plummer, Mono County

Sandy Hogan, YARTS Advisory Committee

John Helm, ESTA Manager

Danna Stroud, Mammoth Lakes Visitor Bureau

Stuart Need, DMO

Lara Kirkner, The Sheet

John Urdi , DMO/MLT

Alicia Vennos, Mono County

Dan Lyster , Mono County

Appendix B: Verbatim Comments and Questionnaires

Comments Categorized by Topic

Comments Relating to Schedule/Frequency

120 Visitors

Connections

- Connect with ESTA from lone pine-50 Whitney hikers don't need to spend a day in mammoth lakes!
- Frequency of shuttle and time for Amtrak & greyhound connection to other cities
- It would be better if Crest service and YARTS linked on same day
- It would coordinate with the bus system leaving lone pine/bishop so hikers can get back to the valley in one long day
- More schedule on morning to coordinate Greyhound or Amtrak
- When I get to Yosemite Valley, there is a huge overlay between the next bus to Merced. I just miss a bus that I came for Merced
- Direct from lone pine to Yosemite

Yosemite Valley to Tuolumne

- Bus up to Tuolumne meadows in the morning
- Earlier departures from the valley to Tuolumne & later departures from Tuolumne to the valley
- More frequent connection from valley to Tuolumne meadows for backpackers
- More scheduled transit from Yosemite valley to Tuolumne and back
- More scheduled transits from Yosemite valley to Tuolumne and back
- More trips from Yes valley to mamma lakes per day & the driver could help load luggage.

Specific Times

- Earlier bus
- Later 5 pm departure, 6?
- Better 120 service to cater for backpackers, 7 am from mammoth is impossibly early, one bus each way a day is very limiting. A better service would encourage more people to use it. (Received on Rt. 140)

Frequency in General

- At least one more ride mammoth lakes-Yosemite a day (received on Rt. 140)
- More scheduling than 5 pm Yosemite

- More trips on this route
- More trips per day if economically viable.
- More trips per day, better publicity for YARTS
- More trips to and from valley in one day
- Mid day service
- Schedule frequency is poor
- More bus runs. 2 buses a day would give more options
- Don't know, haven't used it enough. More daily runs?
- More buses
- More buses in September
- More frequency schedule better backpack storage
- More frequent departures (2-3 times a day)
- More pick up times

140 Visitors

Connections

- Better connection to the greyhound arrivals. (and get real tickets. There's some decent data to be harvested if you do)
- Improvement of the schedule. Better connections for greyhound (Amtrak transfers, shorter waiting times)
- More frequent service using smaller buses if necessary & better coordination with local shuttles e.g. at reds meadow/mammoth lakes.
- Regular arrival that fit to the Amtrak arrival from 8 am San Francisco-Oakland.

Specific Times

- Waiting all the afternoon 1:00 pm to 5:30 pm (at Merced) for a bus to Yosemite (NR)
- 1 more bus in the afternoon
- 1 pm bus leaving Yosemite on a Thursday.
- A full schedule on weekends, holidays as at peak times lots of people need the service at these times!
- A non restricted service on weekends i.e. run the earliest bus
- An earlier bus to help those going to half-dome.
- An earlier trip to Yosemite

- An early bus to allow people climb half dome- starting the hike at 8 am is dangerous!
- Bus at 9:00 end 11 am
- Earlier bus to make it easier to reach half-dome
- Frequency to the Yosemite lodge. Especially during night time.
- More buses 1 around 5:30 am (to yos), 1 around 9 am (to yos), 1 around 11pm (from Yosemite) (Yosemite bug stop time).
- Mid afternoon run
- Some other bus to Merced between 9:42 am and 3:50 pm (at least one)
- That'll be nice if there are frequent bus services from Yosemite to Merced. Currently, YARTS has 10:00 am & 4:00 pm from Yosemite to Merced. We wish to leave Yosemite at 1:00 pm. 10:00 is too early 4:00 is too late.
- Buses between 11 & 5
- We wish YARTS could have bus service to Merced at 12:00 pm or 1:00 pm for Yosemite lodge.
- Where is route 13 on the schedule? Have a bus at 7:00 pm from Yosemite.
- More frequent services e.g. one at 7 am to get us into the park earlier
- More time schedule between 11 am & 5 pm
- More trip/day. We arrived by Amtrak at 1:00 pm so we have to wait 5:30 pm (we miss shuttle at the park and by the way, the hotel we already paid. Wawona)

Frequency in General

- I would make them aware of the limited number of journeys (NR)
- Bus schedule doesn't meet my needs, it is few (NR)
- Too few the buses come (NR)
- If there were more schedules for the bus, that would be nice
- Frequent bus schedule
- More buses
- More buses and time table to choose
- More buses.
- More buses/service times
- More daily runs- spread out more during the day
- More frequency of buses

- More frequent return journeys
- More frequent routes
- More frequent schedule
- More frequent buses
- More morning stops.
- More of them
- More rides a day.
- More runs
- More schedules
- More schedules or can be reserved on the website besides Amtrak's reservations
- More times and flexibility
- Run buses more often
- Schedule- I want more buses to Merced
- Schedule- it's hard to regulate the time which I'll come back
- More YARTS buses- fewer cars

Other

- An express route (less stops) Merced to Yosemite
- Better schedule and a better price
- Faster
- Like most buses & trains less stops. I know that can't be helped.
- More affordable fares

140 Residents

Midday and Other Specific Times

- 1 bus later than 5:50 earlier than 8:35, maybe 6:30ish?
- A 3:30 stop at NPS warehouse at least on Fridays. And fix the a/c, they never blow cold in afternoon
- A 7-6:45 am stop at mariposa park & ride, first two runs very close together, third run too late
- A mid day run west out of Yosemite
- A run to yose @ 7:30 am from midlines- very important!

- A stop at NPS warehouse that picks up at 3:30 pm (heading to mariposa) many of us work an 8 hr shift on Fridays and must wait until 4:30 pm bus to go home (or drive).
- Add a bus that departs curry village @ 9 or 9:30 pm fri-sat after evening programs
- Add a run from Yosemite to mariposa with stop between 10:30 am run and 4:30 pm run @ el portal. If an el portal employee has to leave between these times- he/she has to 1) walk to hotel, 2) bring/arrange for alternative transportation, or 3) they're stuck!
- Add more routes- a morning run to arrive in El Portal at 8 am, shuttle service from Yosemite to el portal during the day.
- Adding bus between 10 & 4 leaving valley 1 or 2 pm bus (legally blind)
- Additional routes I usually get off work @ 11:30. I have to leave early to catch the 11 bus back. Otherwise I have to wait in town until 5:30
- An early (6:00 am) express run to Yosemite from Merced transpo- stopping on at mariposa midtown, Midpines post office, bug hostel, before coming into the valley- it would make it possible to stay overnight in Merced, and get back soon enough for work in curry by 8:30.
- Another stop before 4:32 pm 243?
- Better times for pick up, e.g. instead of getting up to Yosemite valley at 10:00 am we would get up there at 9 am. Or picking up people up in Yosemite at around 6:50 instead of the 8:15 bus being the last one.
- Buses to be on time. Afternoon departures from yose valley should be spread out more.
- Change evening schedule to be in el portal @ 4:30 & 5:30
- Please add back the old run that went through mariposa at 7 am to arrive in El Portal at 8 am.
- Earlier morning bus to Merced
- Early afternoon run- say 1 pm to Merced. Smoke break! Include a 15 min stop in mariposa and hold the drivers to it! Any ?'s call me David 209-201-1132
- Early employee bus every Friday. Leaving valley at 3:35 pm.
- For residents of Yosemite who spend winters there, the schedule is horrible if they don't have a car. Since there are no afternoon buses returning all the way to the valley; one is forced to spend the night in Merced or mariposa in order to get an early am bus back. Please have route #7 run on weekends and holidays.
- Having one or two runs in the winter back to el portal/Yosemite earlier in the afternoon if needed.
- I would like the 6:00 pm bus that stops in mariposa to take passengers to Merced. It goes to Merced.
- I would like the YARTS co to have an earlier bus from the Yosemite valley e.g. 7:30 am
- More midday runs for people who work @ 2pm or 3pm. Stuck in mariposa town too long! 12 pm to 6pm ug!

- It doesn't fit my schedule well because of no midday options. That's why I can only take it a couple times per week. In winter, it is not dependable to get to work on time.
- Include run 1 on weekends- exclude run 2- all who ride during the week can continue to use on sat, sun, holiday- please!!
- A later bus leave Merced 6:00 pm.
- More buses for summer peak when there are more employees & visitors riding bus it's too full. Also an earlier run in afternoon 3:30 exiting el portal and if possible 1 earlier run in morning many many employees start earlier would like to ride
- More morning routes out of Yosemite
- More pm runs, bus often full often late in afternoon. Earlier run on Friday for those that work a shorter day on Friday
- More runs to and from Yosemite especially between 11:00 am and 6 pm towards Yosemite and 12 pm - 4 pm from Yosemite. Have the 6 am bus run on weekends & holidays
- More runs- one in the gap between runs 2 & 3 in the morning & one to alleviate overcrowding in the evening Amtrak run.
- One more morning bus, arrive at 8ish. Bus etas online and by phone sometimes it's 1/2 hour late!
- Sometimes I miss the 5:50 bus leaving the valley (due to OT) & the next one isn't til 8:30 pm. I wish there was one in between.
- There needs to be a time slot between 5:50 and 8:20 too long of a gap
- To have the bus stop between 6 pm - 8 pm (to have another route)
- To Yosemite run or bug hostel run at least 1 more before 6:30 pm
- We need more morning runs from Midpines to town and an afternoon run from town to Midpines
- Winter evening route from Merced to Yosemite valley
- Later buses- I work til 11 pm most nights & have to ride my bicycle in the dark to el portal. Bicycle rack or storage, more.
- Scheduling early into mariposa from Yosemite, or a 4th morning to Yose, 8 pm worked
- An 8:00 am departing run from Yosemite Valley.

Frequency in General

- Please have more frequent bus arrivals and departures! (NR)
- Flexible schedules
- I think there should be an additional run for commuters.
- Make run 1 an express run that doesn't stop at cedar or big (unless sod).

- More buses coming to mariposa
- More buses from hostel to town, but I realize that's asking too much.
- More buses- too crowded on run 1
- More buses!
- More frequent trips; including more afternoon departures and please more departures and arrivals all the way to and from the Yosemite valley in the winter!
- More runs
- More often to the Merced Amtrak
- More scheduled buses
- More stops at different stations along 140 and more times available.
- One earlier time leaving the park.
- Timing

Comments Relating to Reliability

120 Visitors

- On 7-23 bus driver did not stop at Silver Lake Rush Creek parking lot. He was on the main road, only slowed down and left 10 riders
- YARTS driver on 7-23 drive by stop and did not tour parking lot trail head drove by.

140 Visitors

- I would like to see the bus be on schedule, especially in the morning when I can potentially be late for work. I've waited 20 minutes for the bus to show up before. What about a # to call to see if the bus is on time or not?
- Got to bus stop at 6:40 am to wait for 6:47 am bus. It never came. The bus finally came at 7:26 am. It would be better to rent a car as I may now miss my tour (NR)
- I got stuck an afternoon long at Merced, then arrive too late to go to my hotel room at Wawona (no more shuttle arrive) (NR)
- Bus need to stick to schedule.
- Please be on time & reliable!
- Punctual
- Punctuality

140 Residents

- Somehow but a signal when the bus crosses the bridge at the other stops (NR)
- Sometimes YARTS is undependable at getting you to work on time- I am late more frequently as a bus rider (NR)
- Only no because bus can be late, so if on time schedule then no, otherwise yes (NR)
- Micki leaves the stop 3-5 min before 6:50 am- a lot! I miss the bus which costs me \$26 per day-infuriates me-grr! There are others that don't ride because of this too. I have to drive an extra 25 miles because of this! Yaqui Gulch should be a stop at Catheys Valley. Catheys Valley is technically started at Yaqui Gulch.
- A couple of bus drivers are never on time consistently (some ones).
- Be on time coming out of park
- Be on time of your schedule always late
- Be on time!
- Be on time.
- Bus should be one time the drivers shouldn't be rude. And employers should get seated first and more comfort
- Buses to be on time. Afternoon departures from Yosemite Valley should be spread out more.
- Dependability & FYI the seats on the new bus are very uncomfortable.
- Ensure that buses run on time! Some drivers are reliable while others are habitually late.
- For the buses to arrive on time in the afternoon. 5:50 bus (el portal) often doesn't arrive until 6:20-6:30.
- I would ride it more if it kept on time, particularly in the morning (I can't be late for work) better. Also, I'd love if there were an evening bus leaving Yosemite in the winter (8:30 pm) too! I'd use it 1-2x/week.
- Keeping scheduled stops on time
- Late bus run in winter
- More consistently on time. 3-4 days out of 5 things are fine getting to work, bus usually late 10-20 minutes leaving el portal @ 5:07
- Also at times the YARTS to Merced in the am is late which makes it hard when you need to be at work on time
- On time arrival rate. Bus was 30 minutes late. This is common. I may be late for work.
- On time more often. Employees get seats before tourists.
- On time
- Also, the buses are usually not on time.

- Routes 1-4 run late
- Run #1 is late way too often
- The buses are never on time. Also, there is overcrowding and employees end up standing most of the time.
- The buses returning to Midpines are late (sometimes very late) every day. We get home an hour to one and a half hours after we end work, even though the drive time is only thirty minutes.
- This summer your hired new drives- buses come to the valley late- 2nd run so, please be on time
- To try and stick to the schedule, to be at the stops on time (or within 5 min) and if not for the driver or somebody to apologize.
- Stopping/waiting longer at stops, especially in valley e.g. 5 mins

Comments Relating to Locations/Routing

120 Visitors

- Why do you not stop at White Wolf anymore? Don't stop the service to White Wolf.
- Extend service to Fresno, fold down foot rest for short people, extend service to kings canyon
- Service from Fresno airport, since I couldn't find it
- Shuttle farther south!

140 Residents

- Oakhurst
- Service to Tuolumne meadows
- Stops at Tuolumne meadows
- A Fresno to Yosemite route.

Comments Relating to Drivers

120 Visitors

- Driver should tell us a bit about what we are seeing/history of the area

140 Residents

- Most drivers are friendly & helpful. I have seen 2 make extra efforts to be helpful. However, one female driver (Anna?) Was very rude to the passengers when the bus broke down. When we asked what was going on she told us it was none of our business. When we asked if another bus was coming she said 'you will know if one is coming when another bus comes.'

- A couple of bus drivers are never on time consistently (some ones).
- Better driver training
- Better training of new drivers
- Bus should be one time the drivers shouldn't be rude. And employers should get seated first and more comfort
- Driver being more personal willing to give more info
- Drivers should never leave a stop early.
- Drivers should wear name tags & should call out the destinations louder.
- More women drivers
- Working air conditioning, prohibit drivers from narrating trip. Both hands on wheel at all times. This driver was fine.

Comments Relating to Buses

120 Visitors

- Better ac!
- Bus I took from Merced to Yosemite had a weird seat with poor lumbar support
- I think that the seats should be bigger
- Tables for all seats
- A tray

140 Visitors

Comfort

- Comfort of the vehicle, long ride
- Invest in new buses
- Legroom, piñata, clown, shark tank under seat, pool, waterslide, sauna!
- Let the seats recline without hitting the person behind you.
- Make seats recline without squishing the person behind you
- More comfortable seats
- More comfortable seats.
- More comfy seats.
- More cushy seat backs.

- More modern, more comfortable bus
- More seat room larger cup holders
- The area between the seats a little bigger. Would be nice when carrying suitcases and stuff.

Air Conditioning

- Air conditioning needs some improvement
- Openable windows
- The cabin is too cool.
- Not so cold, please (last hour) some people had to stand- seemed uncomfortable & dangerous? On the other hand, one of those passengers thanked the driver so he must have preferred that to no ride at all.

Other

- Green fuel buses less air conditioning
- Brakes squeaking on bus.
- Bus brakes squeak.
- Cleaner emissions
- Handicapped accessible
- Headphones & playing movie
- I miss the safety belts
- Movies where TV's are available please
- Show some info documentaries on the bus
- We would like a YARTS bus where movies are available!
- Wi-Fi
- Wi-Fi, pillows, blankets

140 Residents

Comfort-New Buses

- Don't get more buses like the one new YARTS. It's very uncomfortable.
- The new buses are terrible- uncomfortable seats & rough rides
- On the new YARTS bus, I hope there would be an improvement of making the seat go back a little more & more comfortable. That new bus that say YARTS on the side & the color is white, that bus hurts my back and my whole body. It needs improvement

- The high backed seats on the new bus are 1) too big to see around to the front, claustrophobic and more motion sickness, and 2) uncomfortable. The older bus seats are much better!
- Dependability & FYI the seats on the new bus are very uncomfortable.
- The new bus sucks! Very uncomfortable. Earlier afternoon hours improved Midpines park bus stop
- Do not use the white bus, seat not comfortable and hard to see out.
- Get rid of new white YARTS bus old buses are much more comfortable
- Lose the white bus! It is uncomfortable as hell.
- New bus is not as comfortable seats don't go back enough- besides that... YARTS rocks! Mark is the best!
- More new white buses
- Schedule changes & comfort of seats in white bus

Comfort - General

- Comfier seats and employee boarding first
- If possible, a bus with more space between the seats. Thanks!
- It's seating to employees more comfort
- More comfort seats
- More comfortable seats
- More room fix older buses or get new ones.
- 501 no leg room.
- When seats are broken fix them. Also the ac can be a bit much a times

Other

- Working air conditioning, prohibit drivers from narrating trip. Both hands on wheel at all times. This driver was fine.
- It's a little too chilly in the mornings on occasion.
- All is okay with me except yellow bar bus seat belts
- Bike racks
- Play movies

Comments Relating to Bus Stops

120 Visitors

- Benches/better signage @ the bus stops

140 Visitors

- Have bus driver check Mariposa visitors center entrance for riders not clear where bus stop was
- The bus stop was not clear that it was the right place to be. A YARTS placard would help.
- More bus stop signs
- Benched at bus stop 7th & 140 hwy

140 Residents

- Covered stop at the Midpines park and ride at the county park in Midpines
- Develop good bus stop at Midpines park and ride- better circulation for buses, shelter for riders
- Safe & lighted waiting areas
- Shade & cover at bus stop
- Shelters at every stop- especially at stops where it is impractical to wait in a personal vehicle, i.e. Midpines
- Consider a bus stop @ the triangle intersection
- Would love to see if I could get a drop off stop @ 21st & cherry st. There is a bus stop there. I am going to be using the bus to go to work. Christina peterson725-8785
- Keep rest area stop in mariposa.

Comments by Commuters Relating to Overcrowding

140 Residents

- Comfier seats and employee boarding first
- Bus should be one time the drivers shouldn't be rude. And employers should get seated first and more comfort
- Employee boarding first and more comfy seats
- Employee only buses
- Employee only small bus for run #9
- Employees 1st seating so we can get home more comfy seats.
- Majority of YARTS passengers are employees of park. Treat us nicer & maybe look into having a stop @ the garage. Discounts?
- More room for everyone and a hot bus driver!!!
- Overcrowding for employees is a big issue.

- Crowded.

Comments Relating to Fares

120 Visitors

- Cheaper price
- Lower price?

140 Visitors

- Seems a bit expensive
- A 3 day pass.
- A little cheaper!
- Better schedule and a better price
- More affordable fares
- Provide bus driver with sufficient amount of money to make change; especially early morning routes; otherwise the YARTS valuable, convenient, reasonably priced service.

140 Residents

- 30 day commuter pass; or cheaper pass
- Cheaper for Yosemite employees
- Discounts for frequent use. Public transportation should be more affordable!
- Why is it \$3 from EP to Mariposa, \$3 from Mariposa to Merced, but \$9 from EP to Merced?
- Lower fare.
- The park service is making it difficult for us to get YARTS passes

Comments Relating to Information/Marketing

120 Visitors

- Better clarity on website
- Better signage at stops
- Bus stop was different than on website, hard to decide where exactly to stand- 'at McDonald's' was vague!
- Bus schedule

140 Visitors

- Need prices of fare listed at bus stops. Didn't know what to expect
- Print fare rates on signs and handouts. How much? Thanks
- Don't know first visit. Need directions at station
- The bus stop was not clear that it was the right place to be. A YARTS placard would help.
- Estimated travel times listed at stops
- More bus stop signs
- Maybe the gift bus is something that can be at Amtrak so when we wait for bus we can read it. There was no information at the station!
- Mention the YARTS website in the Amtrak #17 san Joaquin printed schedule. #18 have YARTS brochures prominently displayed at Amtrak san Joaquin stations. Provide more departures/arrivals (i.e. Amtrak adds trains to their schedule).
- The times of each route & stop on website & buses between 11 & 5
- Encourage greater promotion of the service via the hotels/motels en route.
- Encourage people to leave car at home & travel by bus- makes for less congestion/better environment in valley
- Encourage the hotels/motels along the YARTS route to vigorously promote use of the service to their guests.
- Vigorous promotion of service availability through outlets (including hotels/motels) along the route.
- Time tables
- Need clear indication to go to wagon (inside Yosemite park)! Yosemite park don't give clear information, too. Where and when are the shuttles? (to Wawona) probably the last time I go to Yosemite.
- Cooler acronym

140 Residents

- NPS worker- somehow communicate when not able to make departure time

Compliments

120 Visitors

- Great bus for scenic appreciation of the park. Wonderful driver!
- Worked out great for me! Thanks!
- Great ride-safe

- It's a great service
- Keep it up!
- Nice ride
- No room for improvement

140 Visitors

- An excellent system.
- Everything fine
- Great service

140 Residents

- Every day we do (recommend)
- I do frequently recommend it to visitors
- I recommend it to guests all the time!
- It's necessary
- On my trip to the Philippines, I got on the YARTS, then Amtrak, then to BART to SFO with no glitches.
- Aside from free coffee it's pretty good

RESIDENTS OF THE YOSEMITE REGION

(VISITORS: Please Complete Other Side)

Please help us improve YARTS by completing this survey. Circle or PRINT your answers.

1. What is the purpose of your trip today?
 a. Work b. School c. Recreation
 d. Shopping e. Medical f. Other _____
2. How often do you ride YARTS?
 a. 5-7 days per week b. 1-3 days per month
 c. 3-4 days per week d. Less than once a month
 e. 1-2 days per week f. This is my first time riding
3. In what community do you live?
 a. Merced b. Cathy's Valley c. Mariposa
 d. Midpines e. El Portal f. Yosemite Valley
 g. Other: _____
4. In what community is or was your destination today?
 a. Merced b. Cathys Valley c. Mariposa
 d. Midpines e. El Portal f. Yosemite Valley
 g. Other: _____
5. If you use YARTS to travel to work, who is your employer?
 NPS DNC
 Other _____
6. Where is your work location?
 a. Merced b. Cathy's Valley c. Mariposa
 d. Midpines e. El Portal f. Yosemite Valley
 g. Other: _____
7. When did you start using YARTS (circle the year)?
 2010 2009 2008 2007 2006 2005 Before 2005
8. How did you first learn about YARTS?
 a. Saw the bus b. Saw the bus stop
 c. Friend d. Employer
 e. Saw an ad f. Internet
 g. Other _____
9. What is your age? _____
10. How many people (including yourself) are in the group you are traveling with today? _____

	⊗ 1=Poor				7=Excellent ☺		
PLEASE RATE YARTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Courtesy of the YARTS driver	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Safe driving skills of the YARTS driver	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Cleanliness of the vehicle	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Comfort of the vehicle	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Quality of the bus stop where you boarded	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. How well bus schedule meets your needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Website as a source of information	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Printed Information brochure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. Value for the fare paid	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Overall, how would you rate YARTS?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

21. Would you recommend YARTS to a friend or co-worker?
 Yes No

21A. If NO, why not? _____

22. What is the one most important improvement you would like to see YARTS make? _____

THANK YOU. PLEASE RETURN SURVEY AS YOU EXIT BUS.

VISITORS TO THE YOSEMITE REGION

(RESIDENTS: Please Complete Other Side)

Please help us improve YARTS for travelers by completing this survey. Circle or PRINT your answers.

1. Where do you live?
 - a. California
 - b. Other State in US _____
 - c. Outside US _____
2. How did you travel to the Yosemite area? (mark all that apply)
 - a. Personal Car
 - b. Amtrak
 - c. Rental Car
 - d. Greyhound
 - e. Airline to _____
 - f. Other _____
3. Will you stay in the Yosemite region overnight?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. If yes to #3, where are you staying?
 - a. Hotel/Motel—in what town? _____
 - b. Camping—where? _____
 - c. Other _____

Where are you going from and to on this YARTS bus?

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 5. <u>Boarded Bus at:</u> | 5A. <u>Will Get Off Bus at:</u> |
| a. Merced | a. Merced |
| b. Catheys Valley | b. Catheys Valley |
| c. Mariposa | c. Mariposa |
| d. Midpines | d. Midpines |
| e. El Portal | e. El Portal |
| f. Yosemite Valley | f. Yosemite Valley |
| g. Other _____ | g. Other _____ |

6. Have you visited Yosemite National Park before this trip?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No, this is my first visit
7. Have you used YARTS on previous trips to the region?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
8. How did you learn about YARTS?

a. Someone told me about it	b. Saw bus or bus stop
c. YARTS website	d. Other website
e. Info at Visitor Center	f. Info at hotel or lodging
g. Saw an ad for YARTS	h. Other _____
9. What is your age? _____
10. How many people (including yourself) are in the group you are traveling with today? _____

	⊗ 1=Poor				7=Excellent ⊙		
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20. Overall, how would you rate YARTS?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

21. Would you recommend YARTS to a friend or family member?
 Yes No

21A. If NO, why not? _____

22. What is the one most important improvement you would like to see YARTS make? _____

THANK YOU. PLEASE RETURN SURVEY AS YOU EXIT BUS.

RESIDENTS OF THE YOSEMITE REGION

(VISITORS: Please Complete Other Side)

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 a. 5-7 days per week b. 1-3 days per month
 c. 3-4 days per week d. Less than once a month
 e. 1-2 days per week f. This is my first time riding
3. In what community do you live?
 a. Mammoth Lakes b. June Lake c. Lee Vining
 g. Other: _____
4. Where is or was your destination today?
 a. Mammoth Lakes b. June Lake c. Lee Vining
 d. Tuolumne Meadows e. Yosemite Valley
 f. Other _____
5. If you use YARTS to travel to work, who is your employer?
 NPS DNC
 Other _____
6. Where is your work location?
 a. Mammoth Lakes b. June Lake c. Lee Vining
 d. Tuolumne Meadows e. Yosemite Valley
 f. Other _____
7. When did you start using YARTS (circle the year)?
 2010 2009 2008 2007 2006 2005 Before 2005
8. How did you first learn about YARTS?
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Yes No

21A. If NO, why not? _____

22. What is the one most important improvement you would like to see YARTS make? _____

23. YARTS currently leaves Mammoth at 7:00 am and gets to Yosemite at 10:55 am. Would you prefer that the morning bus to Yosemite leave Mammoth Lakes earlier?

NO YES → What time should it leave? _____ AM

THANK YOU. PLEASE RETURN SURVEY AS YOU EXIT BUS.

VISITORS TO THE YOSEMITE REGION

(RESIDENTS: Please Complete Other Side)

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 - b. Other State in US _____
 - c. Outside US _____
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 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 4. If yes to #3, where are you staying?
 - a. Hotel/Motel—in what town? _____
 - b. Camping—where? _____
 - c. Other _____
- Where are you going from and to on this YARTS bus?
- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 5. <u>Boarded Bus at:</u> | 5A. <u>Will Get Off Bus at:</u> |
| a. Mammoth Lakes | a. Mammoth Lakes |
| b. June Lake | b. June Lake |
| c. Lee Vining | c. Lee Vining |
| d. Tuolumne Meadows | d. Tuolumne Meadows |
| e. Yosemite Valley | e. Yosemite Valley |
| f. Other _____ | f. Other _____ |
- 5C. Will you make a round trip, or will you ride YARTS only one-way?
 - a. Round Trip
 - b. One-way
 6. Have you visited Yosemite National Park before this trip?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No, this is my first visit
 7. Have you used YARTS on previous trips to the region?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 8. How did you learn about YARTS?

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21A. If NO, why not? _____

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NO YES → What time should it leave? _____ AM

THANK YOU. PLEASE RETURN SURVEY AS YOU EXIT BUS.