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STANISLAUS  
COUNCIL OF  
GOVERNMENTS  
- COUNTY OF  
STANISLAUS

FINAL TRIENNIAL PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF THE  
COUNTY OF STANISLAUS

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*Triennial Performance Audit of  
Stanislaus County Transit  
Service, Stanislaus Regional  
Transit ("StaRT")*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Why the Review was Conducted**

This is the Performance Audit report for the County of Stanislaus' transit service, Stanislaus Regional Transit ("StaRT"), covering Fiscal Years 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09. An audit is required triennially of every transit operator in the state of California to be eligible for Transportation Development Act (TDA) funding. This audit was commissioned by the Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG) and was conducted in accordance with the audit process established by the California Department of Transportation.

**What the Review Found**

During the course of our performance audit we assessed the status of prior audit recommendations and examined compliance with applicable laws, rules and regulations as prescribed by the Transportation Development Act. We also examined key performance measures of operational efficiency and effectiveness as well as performed a high level functional review of key operational areas.

We found that the County had implemented three of four prior triennial audit recommendations to collect performance data by mode; assess service efficiency by mode; and create mode specific marketing strategies. The County did not specifically implement on recommendation to link the Triennial Performance Audit with the Short Range Transit Plan but the intent of the recommendation was met.

Performance, as measured by six indicators of operational effectiveness and efficiency, increased over the audit period. With an increase in ridership, there was an associated increase in the number of passengers carried per vehicle service mile and per service hour. In addition, there was a small increase in operational costs associated with a new contract with the operations contractor. Lastly, the County maintained compliance with all 9 applicable TDA regulations.

Lastly, we found the County functioned in an efficient, effective and economic manner during the period under review. All transit operations are conducted by experienced, capable and dedicated staff both at the County and contractor level, as provided by Storer Transit Systems. The County exercises proper oversight of the contractor, and the contractor conducts operations with strong controls and managerial oversight of operations, personnel, training and maintenance.

## INTRODUCTION

This report of the Performance Audit for the County of Stanislaus' transit service, Stanislaus Regional Transit ("StaRT"), covers a three-year period ending June 30, 2009. The California Public Utilities Code requires all public transit agencies to conduct a Triennial Performance Audit to be eligible for Transportation Development Act (TDA) funding. The performance audit is intended to be a high-level review to evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of transit operations, while ensuring compliance with the Transportation Development Act.

### OBJECTIVES

The audit is designed to be an independent and objective evaluation of Stanislaus County as a transit operator. The examination addressed three areas:

- (1) Compliance with TDA regulations,
- (2) Progress at implementing prior audit recommendations, and
- (3) Efficiency and effectiveness of operations. This report also includes strategies for improving the efficiency and functionality of transit operations.

### SCOPE & METHODOLOGY

Our approach to the audit included:

- In-person interviews with the Stanislaus County Transit Manager and Staff Services Coordinator, Associate Planner and Storer Transit Operations Manager, Human Resource Analyst and Safety and Training Manager.
- Analysis of transit operation documents, financial information, Transportation Operators Financial Transactions reports submitted to the California State Controller, bus driver training records, maintenance records and short-range transit plans.
- Verification of performance indicators by conducting trend analyses on performance.
- On-site physical observation of operations.
- Verification of the accuracy of passenger and mileage data.

MCG used the *Performance Audit Guidebook for Transit Operators and Regional Transportation Planning Entities (2009)*, published by the California Department of Transportation, as a guide to develop and conduct the performance audit.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TRANSIT SYSTEM

Stanislaus Regional Transit (StaRT) operates fixed route, intra-city dial-a-ride, intercity dial-a-ride shuttle and deviated fixed route service throughout Stanislaus County. StaRT also provides fixed route service to the Transportation Center in Merced and non-emergency medical transportation to Bay Area medical facilities. Service is provided to all incorporated cities in Stanislaus County, and most unincorporated communities in Stanislaus County. StaRT serves eighteen cities and communities.

Fares for StaRT services are illustrated below in Tables 1.0 and 2.0. Discounted ticket books and 20-Ride cards are also available.

**StaRT Fixed Route and Runabout Services**

- StaRT fixed routes operate between the cities of Stanislaus County, which provides intercity service for passengers needing to get from city-to-city for services, shopping, medical appointments and other purposes. The County contracts with a private contractor to provide these services.
- The StaRT Waterford/Modesto Runabout provides deviated fixed route service between the cities of Modesto and Waterford. The service provides both fixed stop and curb-to-curb service.
- StaRT fixed routes and Runabout operate Monday through Saturday. They do not operate on major holidays.
- Fares are shown below in Table 1.0 and in 2.0 for the Runabout curb-to-curb service.

**Table 1.0: Fixed Route and Runabout Fixed Stop Fares**

Type	Fare
General Fare Fixed Route Buses & Waterford/Modesto Runabout (Fixed Stops Only)	\$1.25
Seniors (age 65 and older) and Disabled	\$1.00
General Fare for Route 70	\$2.50
Senior/Disabled Fare for Route 70	\$2.00
Transfers to StaRT, MAX, BLST, CAT, Ceres DAR, CAT, ROTA, eTrans DAR	25¢
Transfers between Route 40 (Westside Stage), Route 45 (Westside Runabout) & the Newman Dial-A-Ride (Fixed Stops Only)	Free

Source: StaRT Ride Guide

**StaRT Dial-a-Ride and Shuttle Curb-to-Curb Services**

- StaRT Dial-A-Ride and Shuttle services provide, demand response curb-to-curb public transit service throughout the County to the general public. The County contracts with a private contractor to provide these services.
- StaRT Dial-a-Rides (DAR) are operated under Memorandum of Understandings in three cities, Newman, Patterson and Waterford. These DARs provided intra-city, curb-to-curb general public demand response service in those respective cities.
- StaRT Shuttles provide intercity, curb-to-curb general public demand response service between Modesto and Turlock (the Turlock/Modesto Shuttle) and Modesto and Oakdale (the Eastside Shuttle).

- StaRT Dial-a-Ride and Shuttles operate Monday through Saturday. They do not operate on major holidays.
- Fares are shown below in Table 2.0.

### Medivan

- The StaRT Medivan provides non-emergency medical transportation from the downtown Modesto Transportation Center to Bay Area medical facilities. The service is operated by a private contractor under contract to the County.
- The Medivan operates Monday through Friday. It does not operate on major holidays.
- Fares are shown below in Table 2.0

**Table 2.0: Dial-A-Ride, Shuttle, Runabout Curb-to-Curb and Medivan Fare Structure**

Shuttles and Runabout Curb-to-Curb Service (Reservations Required) <i>One-Way</i>	\$2.50
General Fare	
Senior (65 & over) & Person w/ Disability Senior/Persons with Disability Discount Card Required.	\$2.00
Out of Area - Additional to Fare Above	\$1.50
General Fare Newman, Patterson & Waterford Dial-A-Ride (Reservations Required) <i>One-Way</i>	\$1.25
Senior (65 & over) & Person w/ Disability Senior/Persons with Disability Discount Card Required.	\$1.00
Out of Area - Additional to Fare Above	\$1.50
Medivan Bay Area (Reservation Required) <i>One-Way</i>	\$9.00
Attendant <i>One-Way</i>	\$2.00
Round Trip	\$18.00
Attendant Round Trip	\$4.00

Source: StaRT Ride Guide

## CHAPTER 1: AUDIT RESULTS

## COMPLIANCE RESULTS

This section of the audit report contains the analysis of Stanislaus County Transit's ability to comply with state requirements for continued receipt of TDA funds. The evaluation uses the guidebook, *Performance Audit Guidebook for Transit Operators and Regional Transportation Planning Agencies*, which was developed by the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to assess transit operators. The guidebook contains a checklist of 11 measures taken from relevant sections of the Public Utilities Code and the California Code of Regulations. Each of these requirements is discussed in Figure 1.0 below, including a description of Stanislaus County's efforts to comply with the requirements.

Stanislaus County fully maintained compliance with TDA rules and regulations for the audit period. The Public Utilities Code (PUC) and California Code of Regulations include eleven operator compliance requirements. Specifically, the Stanislaus County is in full compliance with the 9 applicable PUC requirements, as shown in Figure 1.0. Notably, the County's farebox recovery ratio remained above the TDA required percent level for a rural area transit service. Also, the County completed its reporting and certifications in a timely manner, including fiscal audits, Operator Reports to the State Controller's Office and to the RTPE, and CHP certifications. Also, the StaRT operating budget did not increase over 15 percent within the audit period, and the County utilized UTMA funds before TDA claims were granted. Fiscal audits also confirmed that TDA funds were apportioned correctly.