



**OUTREACH AND ANALYSIS OF  
TRANSIT-DEPENDENT NEEDS IN THE  
SACOG REGION**

## **Acknowledgments**

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# Executive Summary

In recent years, the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) has seen an increasing need to plan for the mobility needs of the SACOG region's population of seniors and persons with disabilities and low incomes.

In 2006, SACOG completed an analysis of the transportation issues faced by seniors and people with disabilities in the six-county SACOG Region. In 2009, SACOG completed a Public Transit and Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan examining ways to improve mobility for seniors and persons with disabilities and/or low-incomes.

This study, funded through a Caltrans Environmental Justice Planning Grant, builds upon these efforts to examine more specifically the public transportation needs of low-income, transit-dependent residents of the SACOG region.

This study was particularly timely in light of a number of recent developments:

- California's economic recession;
- Increases in regional unemployment rates;
- Recent cuts in transit funding and services in the region;
- Health care reform and its implications for expanded health care services and access needs; and
- The potential for transit service restoration or expansion if transit funding increases due to voters' passage of Proposition 22 and/or rebounding of local sales tax revenues that fund transportation.

SACOG undertook both analysis and outreach to identify transportation needs, service gaps, and recommendations for next steps to meet the public transportation needs of low-income, transit-dependent residents in the region. SACOG's work included:

- Identification and mapping of concentrations of low-income residents, existing transit routes, and essential or "lifeline" destinations.
- Review of related studies;
- Environmental Justice focus groups;
- Stakeholder interviews and surveying; and
- Public outreach and community workshops.

Essential or "lifeline" destinations included programs serving low-income and homeless persons, medical facilities, community-based veteran, disability, mental health and social/human service agencies, key public offices, adult education, rehabilitation, job training and employment services, large subsidized day care centers, and public schools, colleges, universities, and community colleges SACOG's outreach and analysis found many challenges for low-income, transit-dependent residents to reach essential or "lifeline" destinations in the Sacramento region.

These included:

- Transit availability in terms of both areas served and hours of service, especially given recent service cuts by some of the region's transit operators
- Transit access to health care
- Intra- and inter-county travel and transit connectivity issues
- The affordability of transit fares for those with limited means
- The apparent disconnect between planning decisions made by providers of essential/lifeline services and those of transit operators.
- Issues with the path of travel to transit
- Operational issues with public transit
- Transit information needs
- Youth transit needs

The study identified a number of policy questions and recommendations for next steps to address low-income, transit dependent needs in the SACOG region. Recommendations include additional studies; follow-up forums and joint planning efforts; exploring options for additional supplemental services, programs and funding; expanding FTA trip reporting to increase receipt of federal funds; expanded information-sharing; and updating maps produced during the project to support future planning.

The study report is organized as follows:

- Introduction
- Methodology
- Existing Transit Services
- Study Findings
- Policy Questions
- Recommendations for Next Steps

## INTRODUCTION

The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) is an association of local governments in the six-county Sacramento region. Its members include the counties of El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba, and 22 cities. SACOG is overseen by directors chosen from the elected boards of its member governments. SACOG provides transportation planning and funding for the region, and serves as a forum for the study and resolution of regional issues.

In 2006, the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) completed a study analyzing the transportation issues faced by seniors and people with disabilities in our six-county Region. That study (at [www.sacog.org/transit/Senior%20and%20Disabled%20Mobility%20Study.pdf](http://www.sacog.org/transit/Senior%20and%20Disabled%20Mobility%20Study.pdf)) recommended action steps to address and facilitate senior/disabled transportation in the future.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires that projects seeking funds under Section 5310, 5316 and/or 5317 federal grant programs be derived from a locally developed coordinated human services transportation plan, developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation and human services agencies and with participation by members of the public.

In 2009, SACOG completed this required Public Transit and Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan for the region. The 2009 Coordinated Plan included recommendations for greater coordination between transit operators on schedule revisions, and community partnerships and other strategies to improve mobility primarily for seniors and persons with disabilities. The plan is available online at: [www.sacog.org/transit/2009/03/10/Coordinated-Plan/SACOG\\_07-023%20amendment%201.pdf](http://www.sacog.org/transit/2009/03/10/Coordinated-Plan/SACOG_07-023%20amendment%201.pdf).

While a portion of the region's seniors and people with disabilities have low incomes, there is a still broader population of low-income adults and youth who also have public transportation needs. Thus, as a corollary to the Senior and Disabled Mobility Study and the Coordinated Plan, SACOG sought and obtained a Caltrans Environmental Justice Planning Grant to begin to examine more specifically the transportation needs of low-income, transit-dependent residents of the SACOG region, and analyze gaps in public transit service to reach essential or "lifeline" destinations.

This study was particularly timely in light of a number of recent developments:

- California's economic recession;
- Increases in regional unemployment rates;
- Recent cuts in transit funding and services in the region;
- Health care reform and its implications for expanded health care services and access needs; and
- The potential for transit service restoration or expansion if transit funding increases due to voters' passage of Proposition 22 and/or rebounding of local sales tax revenues that fund transportation.

The Sacramento Area Council of Governments sees an increasing need to plan for and address the mobility needs of all three sectors of the region’s population: seniors, persons with disabilities, and low-income, transit-dependent residents. While a range of public transportation services exist in the Region, transportation challenges remain due to transit funding constraints, land use development patterns, siting decisions by essential service providers, housing affordability and availability, as well as choices and income constraints on the part of many residents.

This report presents SACOG’s initial analysis of the transportation issues faced by low-income residents in our six-county Region, and includes an array of policy issues and recommendations for future study and implementation.

The study report is organized as follows:

- Methodology, including mapping, focus groups and public outreach.
- Findings
- Policy questions and recommended steps to address transportation issues and needs for low-income residents in the SACOG region.
- Appendices

## **METHODOLOGY**

SACOG undertook both analysis and outreach to identify transportation needs, service gaps, and potential transportation solutions for low-income and transit-dependent residents in the region. SACOG’s work included:

- Mapping
- Review of Related Studies
- Environmental Justice focus groups
- Stakeholder interviews and surveying
- Public outreach and community workshops

These are described in more detail on the next pages.

### **Mapping**

The 2009 Coordinated Plan described above included a recommendation to: “Coordinate with SACOG and the county human services departments on mapping that overlays current transit routes with concentrations of CalWORKS recipients, and review transit routes and frequencies of service in those areas for service revisions/expansions to better meet local needs.” As part of this study, SACOG undertook an effort to locate and map the locations of low-income transit dependent communities and existing regional public transit services, and added “lifeline”

destinations that low-income, transit-dependent populations are most likely to need to reach in the six-county area.

To complete the maps, SACOG:

- a. Worked with county Departments of Human Assistance (DHAs) to obtain data on their low-income client locations. The DHAs of El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, and Yolo Counties provided information, while Yuba County DHA declined. A GIS layer was created from the data provided, showing the relative concentrations of assistance clients throughout the region (except Yuba County as noted), but masking specific addresses of clients to preserve confidentiality.
- b. Worked with the regional transit operators, Community Services Planning Council, Capitol Community Health Network, county information and referral services, service providers, program clients, environmental justice focus group participants, and community members throughout the region to identify essential destinations. These “lifeline” destinations included:
  - Medical facilities, including hospitals and clinics serving low-income patients
  - Homeless services
  - Food banks and meal programs
  - Public assistance program offices such as WIC, CalWORKS, food stamps, Medi-Cal, Social Security Administration, and Veterans Administration
  - Community-based veteran, disability, mental health and social/human service agencies
  - Other key public offices, like courts, parole, libraries, and post offices
  - Adult education, rehabilitation, job training and employment services
  - Large subsidized day care centers
  - Public schools, colleges, universities, and community colleges
- c. Mapped environmental justice areas identified in SACOG’s most recent Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). These environmental justice (EJ) areas represent census block groups where 50% or more of all households earned less than half the median income of the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) in which they resided plus census block groups that meet this lower income criteria; and/or where 40% or more of the population was Non-White or Hispanic, both based on 2000 Census data. The EJ areas were extensively vetted with environmental justice and community groups prior to their incorporation into the MTP adopted in 2008.
- d. Obtained current routing from all of the region’s transit operators. SACOG used this data to map the existing regional network of light rail and fixed-route buses by operator and weekday and weekend service.

Using this data, SACOG staff produced maps for each of SACOG’s six counties (Yuba and Sutter Counties are combined). These maps illustrate the location of low-income communities,

the region’s existing transit network, and key lifeline destinations. The maps were used to analyze the transit network in the region, and service gaps. Maps were also used with organizations and individuals during the outreach process to review and add lifeline destinations. Appendix A includes copies of these maps, which are available for viewing at a larger scale at <http://www.sacog.org/transit/lifelinetransitstudy.cfmwww.sacog.org/>.

**Sacramento DHA Study**

In February 2010, the County of Sacramento Department of Human Assistance (DHA) completed a DHA Jobs Access Reverse Commute (JARC) Plan, with the help of consultants Fehr and Peers and HDR/The Hoyt Company. Its purpose was to identify the most effective way to use \$666,500 in programmed but unexpended JARC funds to meet clients’ transportation needs. (This was an effort undertaken directly by Sacramento County DHA, separate from SACOG’s JARC and Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plans). The Sacramento DHA study undertook its own mapping and outreach for Sacramento County to make recommendations for enhanced DHA and public transit services. SACOG reviewed information from the Sacramento County DHA JARC plan for this lifeline study.

**Environmental Justice Focus Groups**

With support from Caltrans and the consulting firm MIG, Inc., SACOG also undertook a series of environmental justice focus groups to provide more detailed input on the region’s transportation system. The eight focus groups were held between November 8 and November 17, 2010, as follows:

1. Asian-Pacific Islander	Sacramento
2. African American	Sacramento
3. Native American/American Indian	Sacramento
4. Low Income	Yuba City
5. Low Income	Placerville
6. Low Income	Sacramento
7. Hispanic/Latino	Sacramento
8. Hispanic/Latino	Woodland

Facilitators for the focus groups matched the race/ethnicity of the participants. The Asian-Pacific Islander focus group was conducted in English with a Chinese/Vietnamese interpreter. The two Hispanic/Latino groups were conducted in Spanish. Groups were mixed in terms of age, occupation, and education level.

Input from these focus groups is included in the findings described in this study. A detailed focus group report may be found on SACOG’s website at [www.sacog.org](http://www.sacog.org).

## **Public Outreach and Community Workshops**

To gain further community input, the lifeline project combined with the Unmet Transit Needs process. SACOG conducts hearings annually on unmet transit needs in the four counties where it serves as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency: Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba Counties. SACOG staff designed this year's Unmet Transit Needs hearings in combination with a Lifeline Transit Workshop. These combined hearings/workshops were broadly publicized through:

- Transit operator newsletters, on-board bus overhead cards and take away cards
- SACOG emails and letters to contact lists built in the course of this project as well as environmental justice and other outreach for the MTP 2035 and other SACOG projects.
- Emails sent by the Community Services Planning Council to its service provider database
- Follow-up with targeted environmental justice and social/human service/health programs to encourage participation by their staff and clients/members/residents. .

The joint Unmet Transit Needs/Lifeline Transit Workshops were held in January 2011. A total of five workshops were held in the four counties for which SACOG is the regional transportation planning agency: Yolo County (1), Yuba/Sutter Counties (1), and Sacramento County (3). In addition, SACOG participated in five Unmet Transit Needs Workshops in Placer County to discuss the lifeline transit study.

## **Stakeholder Meetings, Interviews and Surveying**

From August 2010 to February 2011, SACOG staff also conducted outreach, including meetings, phone interviews, and surveys to help inform this study. The purpose was to gain input from service providers, program clients/ participants, and low-income, transit-dependent populations, about key locations people want or need to reach, existing transportation challenges, and transit and other improvements that would help people travel more easily to reach essential or lifeline destinations.

Appendix B contains a more detailed description of the outreach conducted, including a summary of input provided at the Lifeline Transit Workshops.

## **EXISTING TRANSIT SERVICES IN THE SACOG REGION**

All urbanized and many rural areas of the six-county SACOG region are served by bus transit services that run on regular routes and fixed schedules, known as “fixed-route transit.” Twelve operators in the SACOG region provide regular fixed-route bus services:

El Dorado County: El Dorado Transit

Placer County: Auburn Transit, Lincoln Transit, Roseville Transit, and Placer County Transit

Sacramento County: Elk Grove Transit, Folsom Stage, Regional Transit, SCT/Link (South County)

Yolo County: Yolo County Transit District (Yolobus); and Unitrans in Davis

Yuba and Sutter Counties: Yuba-Sutter Transit

The Sacramento Regional Transit District (RT) offers light rail service within Sacramento County.

Besides local transit service, Placer County Transit, El Dorado Transit, Elk Grove Transit (e-tran), the Yolo County Transportation District (Yolobus) and Yuba-Sutter Transit offer commuter routes to downtown Sacramento. Roseville Transit has commuter buses to both downtown Sacramento and to the Butterfield light rail station on the Highway 50 corridor.

There are also several employment-related shuttles in the Sacramento area, including:

- Franchise Tax Board Shuttle – Shuttle offered by the Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance between South Sacramento and the Franchise Tax Board to facilitate seasonal and entry-level employment shifts outside of Regional Transit service hours.
- McClellan Park Shuttle/RT Route 85 – provides weekday peak-hour service between the Roseville Road light rail station and McClellan campus.
- North Natomas Shuttle – provides four different weekday peak-hour routes between North Natomas neighborhoods and downtown Sacramento.
- Rancho CordoVan – weekday peak-hour shuttle service between the Cordova Town Center light rail station and employment areas south of Highway 50 (operated by Regional Transit for the City of Rancho Cordova)
- Granite Regional Park Shuttle – weekday shuttle serving the Franchise Tax Board and Granite Regional Park offices and park near Power Inn Road and Folsom Boulevard.

In Fiscal Year 2008-09, the area’s public operators provided nearly 1.3 million vehicle service hours and over 44 million unlinked passenger trips on fixed-route transit. These services were supported by federal and state funds, local revenues, and passenger fares. Additionally in FY 2008-09, operators supplied nearly 416,000 vehicle service hours and over 1.1 million demand-response trips for eligible riders.

The principal program supporting conventional public transportation is the Transportation Development Act (TDA) which provides ¼ cent sales tax revenues for the support of transit services and other transportation programs.. Under TDA, in fiscal year 2009-10, \$63.3 million in

sales tax revenue was returned to the localities in the SACOG region in which the revenue was collected. These funds were provided to cities, counties and transit agencies and used either for transit purposes or for local streets and roads where it could be shown that, in accordance with State law, there were no “unmet transit needs” that were “reasonable to meet.” The Sacramento Regional Transit District, Counties of Sacramento and El Dorado, and Cities of Citrus Heights, Elk Grove, Folsom, Marysville, Placerville, Roseville, and West Sacramento currently spend all of their Local Transportation Funds on public transportation.

As required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), most of these operators also operate complementary ADA paratransit service for people with disabilities. Operators include the El Dorado, Elk Grove, Lincoln, Placer County, Roseville, and Yuba-Sutter Transit agencies, Folsom Stage Line, SCT/Link, and Yobus. Davis Community Transit provides demand-response service in the City of Davis. Within the boundaries of the Sacramento Regional Transit District, Paratransit, Inc. provides ADA complementary paratransit service to RT’s customers, plus additional service exceeding ADA requirements for seniors and persons with disabilities.

Paratransit, Inc. is also the Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA) for Sacramento County. In its role as the CTSA, Paratransit, Inc. provides service exceeding ADA requirements for seniors and persons with disabilities outside RT operating hours and the ¾-mile boundary of RT fixed-route service. Paratransit, Inc. also coordinates and partners with community agencies to provide human services transportation in Sacramento County.

The Western Placer CTSA, which began in January 2009, funds a number of human services transportation programs, including a collaboration with Seniors First, a local nonprofit, to provide non-emergency medical transportation service, a volunteer driver program, and a transportation voucher program. The CTSA also funds enhanced transit service on Taylor Road, the Transit Ambassador Program, a forthcoming South Placer Transportation Call Center (with Roseville Transit as the designated operator), and the Retired Dial-a-Ride Vehicle Program.

## STUDY FINDINGS

*Despite* the number of operators, SACOG's outreach and analysis found many challenges for those who need public transportation to reach lifeline destinations in the Sacramento region. These include the availability of service, connectivity, fare levels, the location of essential destinations, and available funding. These are discussed in more detail below.

### Service Availability

Even when transit funding was more available, fixed-route bus service was not offered uniformly in terms of days and hours of service throughout the region. Given smaller populations and more limited resources, the region's suburban and rural operators tend to offer more limited service than in the more urbanized areas, especially on evenings and weekends. For example, with changes in 2010, Roseville Transit now only runs until 6:30 pm. Folsom Stage Line, Placer County Transit, and Lincoln Transit have no weekend service. SCT/Link, Auburn, El Dorado, Roseville and Yuba-Sutter Transit do not offer service on Sundays. Placer County Transit offers one weekday morning and mid-afternoon run between Auburn and Alta and other communities along Interstate 80. Yuba-Sutter Transit and Yolobus offer service two days a week to more rural communities such as Wheatland, and Dunnigan, Yolo and Knight's Landing, respectively. Some rural areas are not feasible to serve at all with fixed-route transit (or demand-response service), given their population size, the cost of service, and required fare box recovery ratios.

Even agencies that run seven days a week offer more limited services at times. Unitrans operates 5 of its 15 regular routes on weekends, and offers more restricted services during UC Davis breaks. Since 2010 service cuts, Regional Transit offers only 28 of its 50 regular (non-supplemental) routes on Saturdays, and 23 routes on Sundays.

The Sacramento County DHA Jobs Access Reverse Commute Plan<sup>1</sup> completed in February 2010 listed a number of areas in Sacramento County that clients identified as most in need of enhanced transportation services in terms of frequency, evening and weekend service. These were areas with high concentrations of employment opportunities and/or households with low incomes. They included: Carmichael/Arden-Arcade, Southeast Sacramento County, Elk Grove, Mather/Rancho Cordova area, Antelope, Natomas/North Natomas/Del Paso Heights, Orangevale/Folsom, Rio Linda/McClellan, and Greenhaven.

With the decline in transit funding in recent years, a number of the region's transit operators have cut at least some fixed-route transit service, even from that described in the 2010 DHA report. Most notably, all of the Sacramento County operators have implemented significant service changes or reductions:

- Folsom Stage reduced some of its fixed-route service and also the hours available for Dial-a-Ride service in 2009.

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<sup>1</sup> Transportation Access to Jobs and Services Plan – Department of Human Assistance, February 2010, prepared by Fehr and Peers.

- SCT/Link fundamentally changed its service in Galt, switching from a fixed-route service to a higher fare, general public dial-a-ride service. It requires a reservation but will pick up and drop off at any location within the city of Galt. Same-day reservations may be made only on a space-available basis.
- In the Fall of 2010, Elk Grove Transit cut 30% of its service due to budget shortfalls. They significantly restructured fixed-route services and eliminated demand-response service to and from destinations outside Elk Grove, except for medical trips. However, e-van ADA paratransit service within Elk Grove now has longer hours, provides more weekend service, and began offering a peak-hour, deviated fixed-route service for employment and other destinations in Sacramento. These routes are open to the general public and will deviate up to a mile from the route for an e-van pick-up or drop-off.
- Sacramento Regional Transit cut over 20% of its bus and light rail service in June 2010, which included eliminating routes, reducing coverage or frequency on others, and cutting off most service on buses and light rail after 9:00 pm.

For some residents, service changes have meant longer distances to reach public transit service and lifeline destinations. Elimination of RT's Route 4 has meant that clients seeking services at the One Stop Career Center on Gerber Road must walk 0.8 miles to and from the nearest bus stop. With the elimination of Route 8, residents of St. John's Shelter for Women and Children on Power Inn must walk .8 miles to/from light rail at the various times when St. John's shuttle is unavailable. Such walking distances can pose a hardship for those with mobility limitations and mothers traveling with young children, especially during hot or inclement weather, or when it becomes dark earlier and safety concerns increase. With the realignment of Roseville Transit's Route M to reach desired locations like Winco and Walmart, the nearest bus stop to Eskaton Roseville Manor -- a 48-unit affordable senior apartment complex -- is now 1.4 miles, generally too far for residents who might want to use the bus to walk.

Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (SETA) staff noted that service changes have affected clients seeking employment. Staff reported that SCT/Link's new reservation requirement for Galt Dial-a-Ride service and the limited service in Delta communities make it difficult for clients to meet with a prospective employer or make it to an interview on short notice, especially outside of Galt. Reductions in service in Citrus Heights have also made it hard for SETA clients to travel to/from the Citrus Heights/Auburn Blvd./Sylvan area to employment centers.

RT's elimination of later evening service has also meant that Sacramento-area workers and students often cannot use public transit to get home from jobs or evening classes that end after 9:00 pm. This limits access to employment and training opportunities, especially in the suburbs. For example, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) reported that a number of their local members provide janitorial services in buildings in downtown Sacramento, Rancho Cordova or Folsom, but live in South Sacramento or Natomas where transit service is limited for those working late evening shifts. Students recounted how classes at American River and Sacramento City Colleges can run until 10:00 pm, after transit service has ended. Volunteers of America noted that the Route 75 provides hourly service between light rail and the Mather Campus -- which houses over 200 formerly homeless adults -- but it only runs until early evening.

VOA runs an after-hours van to light rail to fill the gap for Mather Campus residents' employment and education needs

Even if riders are able to use light rail which runs slightly later, many cannot get the bus connections they need to get home to their neighborhoods in Sacramento County. Also, some employees and students can no longer make late-evening connections across the Sacramento River into Yolo County, even though some Yolobus service runs past 10:00 pm.

## **Connectivity**

Additionally, this study identified that many people's essential destinations lie outside their neighborhoods or communities. SACOG's outreach found there is significant intra- and inter-county travel, especially for services, education and medical care. This increases the need for transit connectivity to reach key destinations.

Connectivity can be an issue in crossing operator boundaries. For example, Lincoln residents must transfer from Lincoln Transit to Placer County Transit at Twelve Bridges Library, and then to Roseville Transit at the Roseville Galleria to reach many destinations in Roseville. Residents of Russell Manor's 65 affordable senior apartments in Valley Hi live just over the Elk Grove boundary. However, unless they can walk a half-mile, they must take an RT bus to Cosumnes River College and then transfer to e-tran, paying two fares, to get to Elk Grove for shopping or services.

Connectivity within operator boundaries also emerged as an issue, since many people need to reach destinations throughout individual counties – especially Sacramento County. For example:

- Three Sacramento County Office of Education community schools – Elinor Lincoln Hickey Junior/Senior High School on Ethan Way, North Area Community School on Pinell St., and the Hickey Branch Community School on Gerber Rd. -- serve high-risk, transit-dependent students living throughout the county. Enrollment in these schools varies year-to-year but in 2009-10 totaled over 220 students.
- Residents of the 80 cottages at MLK Village, a supportive housing program in South Sacramento for formerly homeless men and women, reported needing to travel to many disparate locations, including Rancho Cordova for payee services, North Sacramento for mental health services, central Sacramento for medical services, and the Florin area for Social Security.
- Many of the 100 young adults participating in the Sacramento Regional Conservation Corps travel by public transit from all over Sacramento County. Some have to make multiple transfers to arrive by 7:00 am at Corps locations near the 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue Light Rail station or at Citrus Heights City Hall, or else they risk being cut from the program.

In general, connectivity to essential destinations and frequency of service emerged as significant issues. Many focus group participants, service providers, and program clients in Sacramento, Placer and other counties reported long trips on public transit to reach a single destination due to transfers between vehicles of the same operator, or between operators. Riders noted that half-hourly or hourly headways can make waits for transfers long, particularly if someone misses

their connection and must wait for the next bus, or where schedules are not well-coordinated between operators. A number of people reported making multiple transfers, especially between feeder buses and light rail, which can also lengthen total trip times.

Public and nonprofit supplemental services do help fill transportation gaps in the SACOG region. However, changes are occurring in these programs as well. Some organizations have closed that provided supplemental transportation services, including Jewish Family Services and Sacramento Lao Family Community. Volunteers of America ended some of its shuttle services due to reduced funding. The Asian Community Center of the Sacramento Valley needs more vehicles due to rapidly increasing demand for transportation to senior nutrition services. Demand for Health Express in Placer County has also exceeded projections. Some areas have few supplemental services including Elk Grove and El Dorado County, which has no general volunteer driver program.

### **Access to Health Care**

A major concern identified by SACOG's outreach is transportation access to health care. People's medical care is not always near where they live. For example, some patients travel from Roseville to Auburn, Wheatland to Lincoln or Roseville, Yolo County to Sacramento, Citrus Heights to Roseville, South El Dorado County to Placerville, or Placer County to Mercy San Juan in Carmichael or the Veterans Administration (VA) hospital at Mather. Health and mental health providers that accept low-income, Medi-Cal, and indigent patients are often particularly limited. However, fixed-route transit cannot always be offered cost-effectively to serve these individual trips. As a result, trips for transit-dependent residents to reach providers can require multiple bus and/or light rail transfers, or transfers between different operators across city or county lines.

Some demand-response and medical shuttle services aid a portion of residents with such cross-county travel for medical trips. For example:

- Paratransit, Inc. takes Citrus Heights ADA-qualified riders who cannot make transfers to specific medical facilities in Placer County.
- The Gathering Inn, a homeless service program in Roseville, has made an arrangement with a Placer County clinic in Auburn for homeless persons to be seen by a physician before regular office hours. Because clients would otherwise have to make transfers and pay multiple transit fares, the Gathering Inn offers shuttle service (including through a vehicle donation facilitated by PCTPA) to clients to travel between Roseville and Auburn.
- Placer County's Health Express offers service to Western Placer County residents without other transportation options to reach scheduled medical appointments in Roseville, Lincoln, Auburn, and other parts of Placer County, and once weekly in Sacramento County.
- El Dorado Transit's SAC-MED offers twice weekly service to medical providers in Sacramento County.
- Yolobus Special Premium Service takes persons with disabilities into Sacramento County for medical-related appointments and mobility-assist repair purposes. It also provides access to medical facilities in the Vacaville area for eligible customers.

- Mercy, Sutter and UC Davis hospitals provide free weekday shuttles for patients, employees, visitors and the general public from various RT light rail stations to Mercy General and Sutter Memorial hospitals in east Sacramento, Sutter General Hospital in Midtown Sacramento, and UC Davis Medical Center on Stockton Boulevard.
- The VA Northern California Health Care System operates a shuttle between the Mather VA Medical Center and the Mather Field Light Rail Station (as well as from Mather to VA medical facilities in the Bay Area).
- With an advance reservation, SCT/Link offers service on Thursdays and Fridays from Galt to the Cancer Institute, Kaiser South, UC Davis Medical Center, Sutter General, and clinics related to those hospitals.
- Through an agreement with the City of Isleton, Rio Vista's Delta Breeze offers deviated fixed route bus service for Isleton residents, enabling them to reach Sutter Delta or Kaiser medical facilities in Antioch on Tuesdays, or Kaiser or Sutter facilities in Fairfield on weekdays or Saturdays by request.

Other options such as nonprofit and volunteer driver programs, family, friends, taxis, and individuals willing to drive people for pay (although a violation of common carrier laws) also help fill gaps.

Nonetheless, affordable, available transportation access to health and mental health care emerged as a key concern across the SACOG region. For example, it was reported that Sacramento County's Medi-Cal program does not use transportation access as a criteria when assigning recipients to medical providers, which may increase trip lengths and transfers for low-income households. In Woodland, CommuniCare staff was concerned that travel to the Peterson Clinic for reproductive health services from Pioneer High School – which now has a program for pregnant teens – requires two buses to cross town. West Sacramento residents noted the lack of local health care facilities, requiring travel to Woodland or Sacramento for medical care. A partnership of health and human service agencies in El Dorado County noted that public transit does not connect very low income and homeless patients from south El Dorado County to essential medical and other services in Placerville, and that transportation is frequently a problem for follow-up care to hospitalization. In forums sponsored by the Placer Community Network – a county-wide network of health and human service providers – and a needs assessment conducted by First 5 Placer, transportation also emerged as a key barrier to health care access.

Other medical transportation access issues identified by this study include:

- Some cross-county service is only offered certain days of the week, but appointments may not be available those days.
- Some medical care is drop-in only. Patients can wait many hours and may then have difficulty planning return transportation or miss a final bus home.
- Dialysis patients from the same area are not necessarily scheduled at the same dialysis clinic or at the same time, making demand-response transportation less effective and more costly.

In the short term, state and county funding shortfalls may also impact transit demand and needs. For example, Sacramento County Public Health closed several of its public clinics, meaning that some residents had to find transit to a different clinic for services. Other programs have also closed, with clients having to find a way to reach needed services at alternate locations.

The issue of transportation access to health care will likely become even more important in light of federal health care reform legislation. If health care reform is implemented, both health care services and public transportation demand by the region’s residents to reach them will likely increase significantly. The location of new services will also have implications for future public transportation planning.

### **Income and Fares**

In the Sacramento region, unemployment has increased significantly, leaving households with fewer resources to afford transportation and other needs. The following table shows the increase in unemployment in each county in the region between 2005 and 2009 (the last year with annual figures available), and the estimated rate of poverty for people of all ages in each county.

County	Annual unemployment rate - 2005 <sup>2</sup>	Annual unemployment rate - 2009	Estimated poverty rate 2009 <sup>3</sup>
El Dorado	4.8%	11.3%	7.6%
Placer	4.3%	10.6%	7.2%
Sacramento	5.0%	11.3%	15.3%
Sutter	9.7%	17.0%	14.8%
Yolo	5.6%	11.3%	15.7%
Yuba	9.1%	17.3%	19.5%

In 2009 and 2010 surveys by the Homeless Employment Committee of Sacramento Steps Forward of homeless individuals in Sacramento County, 31-34% attributed their homelessness to loss of a job, and another 37-39% to insufficient income.<sup>4</sup>

SACOG’s outreach identified fares as another significant barrier to travel for low-income residents to lifeline destinations, particularly for those who use public transit in Sacramento County. Transit fares vary widely in the SACOG region. The table on the next page shows the general fares of all operators in the region (not including ADA demand-response service). The last two columns also show the differing definitions for youth and senior fare discounts

<sup>2</sup> Source: California Employment Development Department California Labor Market Information

<sup>3</sup> Source: US Census, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.sacramentostepsforward.com/\\_pdf/2010-Homeless-Employmen-Report.pdf](http://www.sacramentostepsforward.com/_pdf/2010-Homeless-Employmen-Report.pdf)

### Sacramento Region Fares

Operator	Monthly Pass:			Daily Pass:			Single Ride:			Transfers	Discount definitions	
	Adult	Youth	Senior/ disabled	Adult	Youth	Senior/ disabled	Adult	Youth	Senior/ disabled		Youth	Senior
El Dorado Transit	\$60.00	\$30.00	\$30.00				\$1.50	\$0.75	\$0.75		Student K-12	60+
Placer County Transit	\$37.50	\$18.75	\$18.75	\$2.50	\$1.25	\$1.25	\$1.25	\$0.60	\$0.60		6-12	60+
Auburn Transit	\$18.00	\$18.00	\$18.00	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$0.80	\$0.60	\$0.60		Student <18	60+
Lincoln Transit	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$15.00				\$1.00	\$0.75	\$0.75		6-18	60+
Roseville Transit	\$58.00	\$29.00	\$29.00	\$4.00	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$1.50	\$0.75	\$0.75		Student 5-18	60+
Sacramento Regional Transit	\$100.00	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$6.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$2.50	\$1.25	\$1.25		Student 5-18	62+
Folsom Stage Line		\$50.00	\$50.00				\$2.50	\$1.25	\$1.25		Student 4-18	55+
Elk Grove Transit	\$80.00	\$40.00	\$40.00	\$6.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$2.25	\$1.10	\$1.10	\$0.25-0.50	Student 5-18	62+
South County Transit Link							\$2.50	\$1.75	\$1.75		Student	60+
Yolo County Transportation District (Yolobus)	\$85.00	\$42.50	\$42.50	\$6.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$2.00	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$0 (except to express service)	5-18	62+
Unitrans	\$25.00	\$25.00	\$0.00				\$1.00	\$1.00	\$0.00 (& UCD students)		>5	60+
Yuba-Sutter Transit	\$30.00	\$15.00	\$5.00				\$1.00	\$0.50	\$0.50		5-12	62+

Note: Some agencies also offer specific commuter fares or other pass options.

Transit operators in Sacramento County have the highest fares in the region, from \$2.25 to \$2.50 per single ride. Many organizations and individuals commented particularly on the adverse impact on low-income riders of RT's elimination of transfers, and fare increases to the \$2.50 single fare, \$6.00 day pass, and \$100 monthly pass.

SACOG's outreach found that RT fares can be especially hard for persons with very low incomes to afford. Young adults over 18 who attend full-time education or training programs outside of the Los Rios Community College system do not qualify for discounted student fares and must pay full daily or monthly rates, even with no income. People who are homeless and without a vehicle must now come up with at least \$5.00/day, or \$6.00/day if they make transfers, to get to Loaves and Fishes, the Salvation Army, Union Gospel Mission, Volunteers of America, or other homeless programs for meals and services. If they are bringing children to meals or to Mustard Seed School (Loaves and Fishes' school for homeless children), the cost is even greater. Those who have lost jobs or have little income need to travel but often don't have the money to do so. One homeless mother summed up this Catch-22, asking, "How can people get assistance if they can't get there?"

Staff of Women's Empowerment, a homeless women's program in Sacramento, noted they have clients whose children cannot get to school because the family doesn't have the funds to pay for transit, so the kids become truant. Even for working families, affording fares can be difficult. For example, a single mother of two school-age children working at minimum wage earns \$1,470 a month -- below the federal poverty line of \$1,526 per month. To use RT, she would have to pay \$100/month for her own transit pass to get to work, and another \$100/month (\$50 each at discount) for her two children to get to school. This is \$200/month or 13% of her total income, plus she still needs to pay for rent, food, clothing, and other necessities for her and her family. Some focus group participants and service providers reported people walking long distances and/or avoiding trips to reduce such out-of-pocket costs.

For residents of other counties, fares can also be a challenge. With the elimination of transfers by RT, low-income, transit-dependent residents of Folsom, Elk Grove, Placer, and El Dorado counties needing to travel to Sacramento must pay their local operator's fare plus RT's fare. Transfers between higher cost demand-response services also require payment of double fares. Although round-trips within Yolo County are \$4.00 (or \$2.00 discounted) with free transfers, Yolobus now offers a \$6.00 regular or \$3.00 senior/disabled daily pass for travel involving transfers to and from RT.

In Yuba and Sutter counties, daytime fixed-route service is a \$1.00 basic fare for adults and teens 13+, and \$.50 for seniors, disabled and children 5-12. However, weekday evening service, provided through a general public Dial-a-Ride system, costs triple that at \$3.00/ride for adults and teens, and \$1.50 for seniors, persons with disabilities, and children.

Transit service is already heavily subsidized, but has not been designed by the state or federal governments as a free service for low-income, transit-dependent riders. There are limits to transit funding, requirements that a certain percentage of operating costs come from passenger fares, and recognition in the ADA that higher fares are needed to operate more costly complementary ADA paratransit service. So even with subsidies and fare discounts for certain groups, transit fares can end up costing more than some low-income residents feel they can afford.

As a result of their financial situation, some adults and youth seek to obtain bus entry with less than full fare or to evade paying RT light rail fares. Fare evasion on light rail appears to many a rational risk to take, since there are no ticket gates at stations and they can save their limited funds for other necessities. SACOG's outreach found that many people do not understand why it is even important to pay fares. Some of the clients of Women's Empowerment, a homeless women's program, said they didn't see why they had to pay full fare, because they believed that monthly passes purchased by others should cover the costs.

However, getting caught for fare evasion worsens many people's situations. For example, the Sacramento Regional Conservation Corps is a program providing education as a charter high school and work experience to young adults aged 18-25, 95% of whom are high school dropouts. Staff report that some of their Corpsmembers and Academy participants have been caught for light rail fare evasion because they can't afford the \$100 monthly pass. Often these young adults do not have the money to pay fines and ignore notices or move frequently so the fines escalate. Then after they have work experience and decide to apply for a driver's license – a requirement for many entry-level jobs – the warrants catch up with them. If they cannot pay, they cannot obtain a license, affecting their ability to become employed. Or if someone is stopped for another violation and has one or more outstanding warrants for fare evasion, they can be sent to jail.

Fare evasion also poses a dilemma for service providers. They want to support legal behavior but know their clients need to reach essential programs and services to make progress in their lives.

Some agencies in the region help subsidize transit passes for their clients. Seniors First in Roseville obtained community development block grant funds to help low-income seniors cover transit fare for local fixed-route and Dial-a-Ride services. Most county CalWORKS programs provide clients with free monthly transit passes if they are engaged in welfare-to-work activities and do not have a vehicle. For example, the Yuba County CalWORKS program covers Yuba-Sutter transit passes and RT passes for participants working in Sacramento County, plus transit tickets for pregnant and parenting teens to complete school.

However, most service agencies are unable to provide free or discounted monthly passes for all of their low-income clients or families. In addition, many providers who have helped with transportation services in the past are going through difficult times with the economic downturn and state/county funding cuts. For example, the Area 4 Agency on Aging reported they would be out of FY 2010-11 funds for transportation subsidies for Yuba-Sutter residents by February 2011. Wind Youth Center in Del Paso Heights no longer had grant funds to buy discounted transit passes or tickets for the at-risk teens they serve. Volunteers of America reduced their transit pass purchases for homeless and other clients due to funding cuts. SETA noted the program ended by which they could offer discounted or free passes to refugees, even though most have no transportation or family locally. What limited resources SETA has for transit tickets are targeted to those already enrolled in the program or in training. Resources for Independent Living also offers limited transit support, for clients working on an independent living plan. The Mercy Medical primary clinic at Loaves and Fishes cautiously guards available bus tickets and taxi vouchers to help the neediest patients reach more specialized medical care.

With the current state budget deficit and further proposed cuts in social/human services programs, agency support for transit use may become even more of a concern in the region. Yuba-Sutter Transit reports that a large portion of their customers' fares is covered by agencies.

Francis House, which organizes bulk purchases of discounted RT passes and tickets, has seen a decrease in bulk orders from Sacramento area nonprofits. Staff noted that a diversity of agencies were no longer ordering passes. If agencies can no longer subsidize fares, operators' transit ridership and farebox recovery rates may also be impacted, possibly continuing the downward spiral of service cuts and fare increases.

## **Program Decisions and Planning**

Another key finding from SACOG's outreach process is the apparent disconnect between planning decisions made by providers of essential lifeline services, including health, education, social and human services, court and probation services, and those of transit operators.

SACOG's mapping found that transit operators have developed routes that generally serve essential or lifeline destinations in their service areas, although gaps exist because the hours of service vary significantly for some of these locations. SACOG's mapping also identified gaps where fixed-route transit service is completely unavailable, such as the George Sims Community Center in the Lemon Hill area of Sacramento, and the new Placer Center for Health in Rocklin, operated jointly by UC Davis and Mercy/Catholic Healthcare West.

Service providers make siting decisions based on a variety of factors. These include land or space availability, suitability of the site for the program, cost of construction and/or tenant improvements, parking availability, ongoing rent and program costs, neighborhood support or opposition for the program purpose, space or rent donations, etc. Developers of homeless shelters, supportive and transitional housing programs, and affordable apartment complexes often have limited choices on where local jurisdictions and neighbors will allow them to site.

Some programs deliberately choose locations near transit. For example, the Sacramento Society for the Blind and the Sacramento Regional Conservation Corps both recently moved to sites with close proximity to light rail. The Gathering Inn, a homeless services program in Roseville, located downtown to be near both its clients and public transportation.

However, transit availability and/or the path of travel to transit may not necessarily be an overriding siting consideration for programs or essential destinations, or conditions may change. Some examples:

- St. John's Shelter for Women and Children was offered an unused building by Sacramento County on Power Inn Road and located its shelter there, but RT recently cut bus service serving that location.
- The building that houses Wind Youth Center's homeless teen shelter fit the purpose and didn't face community opposition – but is over a mile from light rail and seen as unsafe for teens to walk to/from transit, especially after dark.
- According to the North Natomas Transportation Management Agency, a number of colleges and training institutes, including a satellite American River College campus, have located in the Natomas area where there is limited transit service, especially in the evenings.
- The relocation of a Sacramento Social Security Administration office now requires a walk or roll of nearly half a mile along busy Folsom Blvd from the College Greens light rail station.

- The Rio Cosumnes Correctional Center in Elk Grove is located six miles from the nearest bus stop, inhibiting visits to inmates by transit-dependent families – even though staying connected is often important to reentering the community after incarceration.
- The Gathering Inn reported that a Sacramento-based health and mental health program chose a location for expansion in Roseville across the freeway from downtown and with less convenient transit access for many potential clients.
- The Yuba County Senior Center, which offers senior meals, was until recently located in the Yuba County Annex in Marysville, and accessed from transit via a tunnel under the railroad tracks. In 2010, the Senior Center moved to Olivehurst on a local bus line, but now requires a bus transfer from Marysville. The center reportedly moved in part because the County Office of Education offered them use of a vacant property at very low rent.

Transit operators report that most agencies do not consult with them before making siting or programmatic decisions that could impact transit access, demand, or cost. For example, Yuba County's CalWORKs program noted that when they moved recently, Yuba-Sutter Transit extended a route to serve them. Relocation of the Social Security Administration (SSA) office in West Sacramento forced YCTD to extend bus routes to serve SSA's transit-dependent clients in an area that is inefficient to serve. Per Roseville Transit, the Placer County courts and jail facility located well away from reasonable access to existing public transit. PRIDE Industries sited on the northern edge of Roseville away from other uses, but is a key employment program for people with disabilities so Roseville Transit provides service.

Sites approved for new affordable apartments are not always in areas served effectively by transit either. In 2012, Mercy Housing is planning to begin construction on 60 apartments for low and very low income seniors 62+ on the 33-acre Sisters of Mercy campus in southeast Auburn. The location is over half a mile from the nearest transit stop. As noted previously, Eskaton's Roseville Manor for low-income seniors is over a mile from where Roseville Transit found it efficient to provide service.

When programs and affordable apartments are sited in outlying locations, transit operators face difficult decisions on whether to try to extend service at significant cost and risk of not meeting service standards and farebox recovery ratios, or to leave destinations unserved. Transit operators cannot always and should not continually be expected to change their existing service to meet the independent siting decisions of governmental, social, and private programs that serve the public, particularly the transit-dependent public.

School district decisions also affect transit service. High schools sometimes change bell times without notifying transit operators, which means students may not be able to arrive on time to zero or first period classes. For budget reasons, the San Juan Unified School District is considering terminating its remaining school bus program. This could have significant implications for student demand for Regional Transit, but was only recently discovered by RT planning staff at a lifeline transit workshop.

Transit users also pointed out that some site designs do not support easy access to and from transit. A number of large shopping centers in the region containing pharmacies, grocery stores or low-cost retailers reportedly exclude bus stops near their front doors, impacting transit access for those with limited mobility, large purchases, or children in tow. As an example, the Yolo

County Transportation District (YCTD) suggested a bus stop be located within a short walking distance from entrances of the major retailers at a new shopping center in one city in Yolo County; however, the approved bus stop location ended up further away.

Without greater communication and discussion prior to such siting, program and design decisions, transit-dependent people will continue to be hindered in using public transit services to reach essential destinations, and transit operators will face continued challenges to providing cost-effective services that meet the needs of transit-dependent riders. Since public funding supports both transit operators and many essential programs, greater coordination between them could have the benefit of using total public funds more efficiently.

### **Transit Path of Travel**

According to the FHWA publication, *Pedestrian Safety Guide for Transit Agencies*:

The location and design of transit stops can significantly impact the safety and comfort of pedestrians accessing transit services. The design of paths, sidewalks, and transit stops contribute to a passenger's experience and perception of safety on the transit system. ... [R]oadway crossings should be made safer with an appropriate combination of facilities, such as marked crosswalks, median crossing islands, warning signs, and pedestrian signals. ... Creating safer places for pedestrians to travel along roadways can encourage more people to use transit systems. It is critical to ensure that sidewalks and other pedestrian pathways have appropriate width, surface, separation from motor vehicle traffic, lighting, and signage along roadways.<sup>5</sup>

In this study, people who are transit-dependent and mobility-impaired noted that many locations have poor pedestrian access to/from the nearest transit stop, which can make it challenging to get to essential destinations. EJ focus group members noted a number of bridges and tunnels where the safety of pedestrian conditions to/from transit is of concern. A number of women and youth cited concerns with waiting at stops and walking to/from transit, especially after dark. Wheelchair users noted that some stops are located in grassy or dirt areas without a solid pad or sidewalk where riders can safely load or unload, or where there are sidewalks with barriers to accessing the stop.

### **Operations**

Focus group participants and program clients cited positives in the current public transportation system. These included: services that take people where they need to go; bus drivers who are nice and helpful; call centers and on-line trip planning tools that are useful; discounts that make fares more affordable for youth, seniors and persons with disabilities; automated stop information; mobility training and information sessions provided by operators; special ride days; and lost and founds that return items.

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<sup>5</sup> Federal Highway Administration, *Pedestrian Safety Guide for Transit Agencies*, Feb. 2008, at [http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped\\_bike/ped\\_transit/ped\\_transguide/ch3.cfm](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/ped_transit/ped_transguide/ch3.cfm)

However, the SACOG effort also found concerns from some low-income riders with day-to-day transit operations that impact their experience using transit, and their ability to reach their destinations. SACOG's outreach with EJ focus groups, service providers, clients, and residents identified issues with:

- Long waits for transfers
- Buses being late
- Missed or uncoordinated connections
- Lack of bus shelters, benches, and bus stop lighting
- Safety at bus stops and light rail stations and on transit.
- Varying attitudes towards low-income, minority, senior, disabled, and other riders on the part of drivers.
- Inconsistent practices regarding passengers boarding with strollers, shopping carts, or mobility devices.
- Insufficient time to load bicycles, children and strollers on light rail.

Some riders also cited experiences such as buses passing riders by or buses or light rail trains keeping riders who use wheelchairs or mobility equipment from boarding. This was reportedly due to passenger loads, wheelchair limitations, or because riders without disabilities or with open shopping carts were occupying the areas designated for senior and disabled passengers. Riders noted that being left behind can lead to missed medical and other appointments, health impacts from waiting in hot, wet or cold weather, spoiled groceries, or even people not being able to get home at all if they cannot make their last bus or connection.

Those who are low-income and transit-dependent expressed that they want safe, timely service to reach appointments and services, and to be treated with kindness and respect by transit drivers. Those with limited mobility and dexterity noted they would like to see buses, stops and fare machines better address access needs. Riders also wanted transit operators to let them know the outcome of complaints they lodged with the operator. Otherwise, many assume their complaints were ignored.

## **Information**

Certain subgroups appeared to be less familiar with transit information sources, or to want or need information in different formats. Some groups had not discovered RT or Google on-line trip planning. Some did not appear to know that RT provides phone information in a variety of languages. A lifeline workshop participant in Yolo County found hard-copy schedules difficult to read because of small print, and suggested posting schedules on local cable stations. A number of youth reported they did not know how to get transit information or found on-line trip planning confusing.

Even if people know about transit services, some groups are still fearful of using fixed-route transit because of language barriers and/or safety concerns. Meetings with ESL students and refugee populations indicated concerns about becoming lost and being unable to communicate with drivers to find their location or connection. At the Yuba-Sutter lifeline workshop, a representative of First Five commented that many Spanish-Speaking families with children

within Yuba City are without transportation but are afraid to use the bus because of language and unfamiliarity with the system.

A number of transit agencies have sought to respond to residents' language needs. These resources are listed in a toolkit put together by SACOG as part of this study and which was shared with a number of programs in the region who work with low-income residents with limited English.

## **Seniors**

A January 2011 SACOG white paper entitled "Changing National Demographics and Demand for Housing Types" notes,

As boomers start to retire, many are seeking more of a senior-friendly lifestyle and housing. Although many are expected to stay in their existing homes and communities, others will choose to downsize homes and/or seek more service-rich environments. Because this generation is so large, the impact on the built environment will be equally large. According to national real estate research firm Robert Charles Lesser & Company (RCLCO), three-quarters of retiring boomers want to live in mixed-age amenity-rich communities with walkability and access to public transit.

This study found that some areas are actively looking more closely at how to enable older adults to continue to live successfully in their communities. For example, the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) has a Committee on Aging made up of COG Board members and other public and private members to work through the issues of how people can "grow up and grow old in the same community." DRCOG has a regional agreement among member governments to pursue a portfolio of strategies to meet the needs of older adults, building on its Mile High Compact. DRCOG is also using incentive grants and the Transportation Improvement Program to incentivize local communities to become more senior friendly.

## **Youth**

This study also found that what may be considered essential destinations differs somewhat for youth of middle school and high school age. On Feb. 1, 2011, E:merge held a videoconference for teens on safe places outside of school and transportation. Youth identified a number of safe places, including after-school programs, parks, Boys and Girls Clubs, sports complexes, and other community centers. However, youth noted that some are not easily accessible by transit or require transfers or walking in what they perceive as scary locations.

Youth from the Yuba-Sutter chapter of Friday Night Live noted that many students want to be able to go to Friday night football games or the movie theater on weekend nights, but cannot get home by transit afterwards. Many area teens attending a Youth Development Network conference in November 2010 wanted to be able to go to popular destinations like movie theaters, Arden Fair Mall, Roseville Galleria, and Arco Arena. While these may not be "lifeline" destinations, teens from transit-dependent families noted their desire to be able to participate in social outings like other youth.

## **Public Transportation Planning and Funding**

A number of additional activities are underway that could help address the needs of low-income, transit-dependent residents of the region:

- In February 2011, Regional Transit kicked off a Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA) with Transit Management and Design, a California-based consulting firm. The purpose of the COA is to examine RT's current bus and light rail system and develop a plan for restoring transit services that are efficient and effective in the RT service area. The effort is expected to include significant public outreach and surveying to help inform the planning.
- Placer County is starting a South Placer Transportation Call Center that will serve as a one-stop source of transportation information, and make reservations for people to use demand-response services of local transit operators. Placer County operators are also now updating their Short-Range Transit Plans (SRTPs).
- A number of other transit agencies in the region, including Elk Grove Transit, Unitrans and Yolo County Transportation District, are seeking to update their SRTPs for services in the next 5-7 years.

In addition, SACOG's investigation found that that the region may be able to obtain more federal funding through expanded reporting of public transportation trips provided in the region. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for many years has required reporting to the National Transit Database (NTD) by the region's operators of fixed-route and ADA complementary paratransit trips and costs. These transit performance data are used to apportion billions of dollars in FTA funds to transit agencies in urbanized areas. This is done by formula to areas with over 200,000 in population.

In recent years, FTA has also begun to encourage more coordinated human services transportation. As a result, FTA in 2009 broadened NTD reporting to include agency-sponsored trips that provide individuals with public transportation services as part of a Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan. Through this lifeline study, SACOG has learned that:

1. In its role as the Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA) for Sacramento County, Paratransit, Inc. can report the trips it provides directly to seniors and persons with disabilities outside of RT's ADA complementary paratransit service. In addition, many trips provided through partner agencies of Paratransit, Inc. may be reportable, as long as these trips constitute public transportation according to FTA guidelines. For partner agencies, Paratransit, Inc. could become a "consolidated reporter" so that partners do not each have to submit a report on their own. This expanded reporting could add a large number of trips to the Sacramento area's total, which could increase the area's FTA apportionment.
2. Placer County reports its subsidized vanpool program in the annual NTD report. The FTA in October 2010 proposed new guidelines on reporting of public and private vanpool services that constitute "public transportation." Comments were due in early December 2010, and new regulations will likely be issued in Spring 2011. SACOG has been piloting a vanpool program

for agricultural workers in the region. SACOG is also exploring an expansion of vanpool services in the region with reportable data. If new guidelines are adopted, reporting of more vanpool trips may also be of benefit to apportionments in the SACOG region.

3. Small urbanized areas in the SACOG region –Yuba City, Galt (as part of the Lodi/Galt urbanized area), and Woodland if it is eventually designated as an urbanized area – may also be able to bring in more FTA funding. Under the Small Transit Intensive Cities (STIC) program, there are six benchmarks that operators in small urbanized areas must meet to receive extra funds. These benchmarks change every year with the allocation of program funds by Congress. If an operator is not meeting the benchmarks, adding another reporter of public transportation trips in the area (such as a supplemental service) might help the operator clear one or more benchmarks. This may make the area eligible to claim extra FTA funding.

SACOG also continues to monitor the availability of public transit funding and help secure state and federal funds for local public transportation services.

## POLICY QUESTIONS

Through this study, a number of policy questions emerged that the SACOG Board, the region's member jurisdictions and transit operators may wish to discuss concerning lifeline transportation needs and service in the SACOG region. These questions include:

- Are there effective ways for the region to address transportation to reach lifeline destinations where needs exist, but where farebox recovery ratios and available transit revenues are insufficient, and it is not productive for fixed-route or demand response operators to offer service?
- Should the region consider a community-based transportation planning/prioritization effort in low-income areas?
- Should the region consider a lifeline transportation grant program to support more transportation enhancements and services to reach lifeline destinations in the region?
- How might the region address inter-county travel needs where it would be unproductive for an individual operator to provide service that crosses into another SACOG county but some residents need service (e.g., Wheatland residents going to Placer County for medical care or employment)?
- Should the SACOG region in partnership with other areas address any cross-county travel needs where residents of a non-SACOG jurisdiction need to cross into the SACOG region for medical care (e.g. from the non-SACOG Lake Tahoe portions into the western SACOG portions of El Dorado or Placer Counties)?
- Should the SACOG region consider developing a process to provide fare support for very low-income residents who are transit-dependent, given the cuts to social/human service programs that used to provide more subsidized transit passes or tickets?
- How could jurisdictions in the SACOG region be encouraged to support more housing options affordable to low-income persons near transit serving lifeline and essential destinations?
- How can funding and planning decisions of public agencies, health care providers, and developments serving transit-dependent populations be better linked to public transit accessibility? Could there be more of a "life cycle" approach to residential and agency planning and siting decisions, to calculate the total public cost of such decisions, including the impacts on transit service and access?
- As the population ages, where will people live and how will they travel? What are the implications of the SACOG region's aging population for public transportation and housing demand, and how might these be addressed in regional and local planning?

## **RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS**

This section highlights recommendations developed from SACOG's outreach and analysis for next steps to address low-income, transit dependent needs in the SACOG region.

### **Additional Studies**

- a. Complete a study of transit service needs after 9:00 pm in the region. With cuts in transit service in the more urbanized areas, and financial constraints facing suburban and rural transit providers, it can be difficult for those working non-traditional hours to get to and from employment or education and training opportunities in the evenings. Yet, not enough is known about the impact on workers (or students) of recent light rail and bus service reductions or lack of evening service to assess potential gap-filling or service restoration options. A study led by SACOG of after-nine public transportation needs, working with groups including employers, employment and training agencies, service worker unions, and low-income job seekers, will help area transit providers better understand market demand for evening service. It can also help identify potential alternatives, such as vanpools, shuttles, or evening rideshares, and assess if other options might meet evening transportation needs more cost effectively than fixed-route transit services. In addition, the analysis of evening service needs in the region could be expanded through Short-Range Transit Plans, the unmet needs process, and other means.
- b. Undertake a regional demand-response connectivity study. As noted, a number of demand-response providers and supplemental services in the SACOG region directly carry transit-dependent riders across operator boundaries into other cities and counties for medical care, while others require transfers and double fares for such cross-county travel. Meanwhile, SACOG and a number of operators are working to implement a transit Connect Card system, which will help streamline fare-paying for riders across fixed-route systems. A next step is for SACOG to undertake a study examining in more detail cross-county travel demands for medical care and current barriers to connectivity. The study would build on work done within Placer County, and evaluate and recommend options to streamline services to meet cross-county health care transportation needs.

### **Regional Forums/Joint Planning Efforts**

As discussed, a number of key regionwide issues were identified in this lifeline study. These included transportation access to health care, and agency planning and siting decisions that impact demand for and access to transit services. A number of options emerged for next steps to address these issues critical to the SACOG region.

#### Recommendations:

- a. Building on the work of Valley Vision on health care access, organize a regionwide forum on transportation access to health care, in light of current access needs and coming health care expansion under health care reform. Such a forum could bring together health and transportation interests from throughout the region. The forum could include sessions on the implications of health care reform for the Sacramento region, projections for transportation

access needs to existing and new medical facilities, transportation considerations for siting new facilities, trends in telemedicine, mobile and in-home health services that may reduce the need for public transportation, and models and opportunities for partnerships to address public transportation needs to reach health care in the region.

As an example, MTC undertook a project to assess and make recommendations for the transit accessibility of social service and health facilities in urban/suburban areas of Alameda and Contra Costa counties. This project culminated in a regional summit, “Better Access, Better Service” in September 2010. The summit brought together representatives of cities and counties, health care, social service agencies, public transit agencies and real estate firms to discuss strategies for ensuring that new facilities are sited in areas with sufficient transit access for clients and staff. (See [http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/smart\\_growth/services/](http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/smart_growth/services/) for details.)

- b. Continue the conversation begun with health, social/human service and education providers through the lifeline study. This could include working with the provider community to: review existing state and local requirements or barriers to siting near transit; encourage greater information-sharing and coordination with transit operators; adopt criteria to consider in siting essential programs and services to insure transit access; develop a methodology to calculate the total public costs – including transportation costs – of siting decisions; strengthen relationships and the connections between program and transportation planning.

### **Transportation Programs/Funding**

This lifeline study also identified challenges for very low-income households with transit fares, existing transit services, and use of alternatives. The MTP workshops, environmental justice focus groups, and other outreach identified solid public support, even among drivers, for expanding transit and other options in the region to facilitate travel by low-income and transit-dependent residents.

#### Recommendations:

- a. As part of the next Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan, to the extent feasible, inventory programs that provide subsidized transit passes to clients, the amount spent in the region on transit subsidies, and the likelihood of continuing that fare support.
- b. Explore the viability of any options during this economic downturn to provide additional assistance to help cover high transit fares for low-income residents to essential or lifeline destinations. The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Authority (SFMTA) in 2005 adopted a Lifeline Fast Pass Program to provide a fare discount to low-income individuals. SFMTA now offers a \$30 monthly pass to San Francisco residents who are recipients of specified county-administered public assistance programs or meet other low-income eligibility criteria. (This compares with other monthly passes at \$60 for adults and \$20 for seniors, disabled and youth 5-17.) Lifeline Fast Passes may be used on all MUNI buses, trains and trolleys, but not cable cars or BART. Demand for the pass averaged 5,000-6,000 per month in the first four years of the program. With fare revisions that made the Lifeline pass more economical compared with other MUNI passes, purchases increased to over 16,000 in June 2010. Given the growth in demand, SFMTA has been pursuing various

program revisions to decrease administrative costs and make pass purchases simpler for riders. (For more information, visit <http://www.munilifeline.org/>) Even if transit funding levels may not be sufficient for operators to offer additional fare discounts, there may still be options to explore for short term fare support through public funds, private grants, or other sources.

- c. Explore the potential for a community-based transportation planning/prioritization effort in the lowest income communities in the Sacramento region and/or for a regional lifeline transportation program where service is not productive under federal guidelines and/or resources are not otherwise available.

As an example, as part of its 2001 Regional Transportation Plan, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) undertook a Lifeline Transportation Network Report. The report findings led to creation of a Lifeline Transportation Program (LTP). As part of this effort, MTC identified 25 communities of concern, based on their proportion of low-income and ethnic/racial minority residents. With funding support from MTC, these communities developed community-based transportation plans identifying their priorities for transportation/lifeline improvements. MTC through the LTP has provided grant funding for local lifeline services and infrastructure projects, drawn largely from the community-based plans. Grant-funded projects have included shuttles, bus stop improvements, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements on the path of travel to transit. MTC has programmed funds for the LTP in successive RTPs, and has used funds from JARC, STA, CMAQ and Proposition 1B to support the Lifeline Transit Program. LTP grant funds are distributed to each of the nine Bay Area counties in proportion to their share of the Bay Area's low-income population. Each county's Congestion Management Agency reviews and selects the lifeline projects for funding in its county, and decisions are ratified by the MTC Board. The program has operated on a three-year funding cycle and is undergoing its second evaluation. (For more details on the program, see <http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/lifeline/>.)

- d. Explore the possibility of any programs to support more bicycling by low-income program clients or residents. Programs might include low-cost equipment, bicycle sharing and/or bike repair and safety training. For example, Outreach and Escort Inc. in Santa Clara County has developed a Bike to Work and School program for CalWORKS participants to provide free bike distribution for adults, including helmets, lights and safety equipment. The Bicycle Kitchen in Sacramento has also worked with local agencies to provide no-cost support for bicycling.

### **Trip Reporting to Increase Federal Funding**

As discussed, this study found potential opportunities to increase federal transit funding for the region through increased trip reporting to the FTA's National Transit Database (NTD).

#### **Recommendations:**

- a. Support Paratransit, Inc. as needed to expand reporting to NTD of CTSA trips provided directly by Paratransit, Inc. and by agency partners that qualify as public transportation per FTA guidelines.

- b. Follow up on FTA guidelines for NTD reporting of vanpool trips, and work with vanpool operators to record and report data on public vanpool transportation in the region.
- c. Investigate further whether any of the small urbanized areas in the SACOG region would benefit from reporting of agency sponsored trips under the STIC program, and work with operators accordingly.

### **Supplemental Programs**

This study identified transportation needs of low-income adults and youth that operators say they cannot and likely will not be able to meet through fixed-route transit, given growth patterns, cost, funding availability, potential ridership levels, and farebox requirements. As a result, a number of agencies operate supplemental transportation programs, and others are interested in doing so to help provide more transportation options.

For example, e:merge, a local youth development organization, was working with teen leaders from Elk Grove, Natomas, Rancho Cordova, El Dorado County, and other areas on identifying “safe places” where youth can go for educational and recreational opportunities outside of school hours. These include after-school programs, Boys and Girls Clubs, the Greenhouse in the Gardenland/Northgate neighborhood, Stanford Settlement in North Sacramento, and Elk Grove Teen Center. It can be challenging for teens to reach some of these places, for example, from parts of Natomas to the downtown Boys and Girls’ Club, or from South Sacramento to the George Sims Community Center. E:merge was researching how to transport youth directly from schools to safe places where transportation is limited. Such programs could help keep track of youth after school, and alleviate parental concerns about teens waiting and traveling to/from transit stops, especially with transfers or after dark in the fall and winter.

The Asian Community Center of Sacramento Valley (ACC) recently took over the senior nutrition and Meals on Wheels program from Sacramento County. Demand for transportation to senior meal sites has increased dramatically. ACC has found they need more vehicles to keep up with this demand but as a donation-funded program does not have sufficient funds to purchase and maintain more vehicles without other assistance.

A number of agencies already have vehicles, but do not use them continuously. This may provide opportunities for vehicle-sharing between programs. However, there is currently no forum by which agencies can learn about sharing opportunities. Particular concerns that arise for agencies are liability and operating funds. Also, many agencies are unaware of available funding programs for acquiring vehicles. A number of SACOG activities might help address these issues and facilitate vehicle-sharing and more gap services.

### **Recommendations**

- a. Develop a more detailed inventory of regulatory requirements, barriers and exemptions to spur transportation innovation.
- b. As part of SACOG’s upcoming Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan, conduct a more detailed inventory of vehicles owned by nonprofit agencies, churches, community groups, etc., and assess which agencies might be interested in sharing vehicles if liability can

be addressed. Using this information, develop a vehicle-sharing database to allow agencies and nonprofits with different needs to offer or find potential vehicle shares.

- c. Research options to address liability concerns and reduce insurance costs for supplemental services across the region, including agency vehicle shares, car sharing, volunteer driver and other supplemental transportation programs. This could build on Paratransit Inc's current insurance pool in partnership with Nonprofits United. Additionally, research options for covering costs or reducing multiple fingerprinting requirements for volunteers for driver programs.
- d. Disseminate information on successful supplemental services and vehicle sharing models, including a model MOU for agencies interested in vehicle sharing. For example, Volunteers of America and the Sacramento Area Emergency Housing Center recently signed an agreement to share vehicles for use at different hours by each agency. The agreement addresses liability issues, what happens in case of accident or mechanical failure, and more.
- e. Explore the potential for a demonstration car-sharing project, possibly in conjunction with an affordable home developer or apartment complex. Car-sharing for short or occasional trips has been developed by companies such as Zip Car (now operating in the City of Davis and on the UC Davis campus) and the nonprofit City CarShare in San Francisco. These services charge a flat membership fee, then an hourly car rental rate that includes insurance. Car-sharing could potentially offer another gap-filling option for those needing to make short trips that cannot be made effectively by transit or other means. However, it would likely require a pilot effort to assess how the concept could be developed specifically for low-income residents, who are not likely to be served by or be able to afford regular car-sharing companies.
- f. Explore options for agencies to make available surplus retired demand-response vehicles for use by other agencies or nonprofits, building on examples of Placer County Transportation Planning Agency, Regional Transit, Paratransit, Inc., and Contra Costa Transit Authority. .

## **Information**

Transit agencies in the SACOG region already provide information on their services through hard-copy schedules and materials, by phone and on-line. However, new potential transit users are always on the horizon. These include people who move to the area or nearer to transit services, become teenagers, are newly disabled, can no longer drive or lose their driver's license or vehicle, or simply want an alternative to driving and/or rising gas prices.

SACOG may be able to help increase available resources for those seeking public transportation information and to improve alternative options for low-income residents.

## **Recommendations**

- a. Highlight further SACOG's 511 service with public transportation information, and new mobility management call centers in Sacramento and Placer counties. Include resources in the region for transit information available in languages other than English. If possible, also

include in 511 or via links more information on supplemental transportation services available throughout the region, and keep information updated as needed.

- b. Explore and publicize options in the region for agencies to obtain technical assistance with starting supplemental transportation or volunteer driver programs.
- c. Identify and publicize information and training assistance for agencies working with populations that need help to better understand public transit and reduce fears of the system.
- d. Encourage an informational campaign by transit operators to explain to riders the costs of transit, and the purpose and importance of paying fares.
- e. Provide information and technical assistance on complete streets to help support improved pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access for residents of low-income neighborhoods.

## **Operations**

Specific comments and route suggestions received through SACOG's outreach are being shared with the relevant transit operators.

In general, SACOG encourages area operators to highlight accountability on the part of drivers for safe and consistent treatment of riders. SACOG also encourages transit operators wherever possible to follow up with riders who submit complaints, so that riders know what the operator has done to respond to their concern(s), and feel they have been heard.

## **Mapping**

The maps produced as part of this study are being shared with all of the region's transit operators to help guide their service planning. In addition, maps were given to various service agencies to help with their staff's understanding of the transit system and their own planning. The maps can be used as part of Short Range Transit Plan development, RT's Comprehensive Operational Analysis, the MTP2035, and as part of HUD-funded grant work by SACOG and community partners to develop a Regional Plan for Sustainable Development.

## **Recommendation**

To help support ongoing regional lifeline and public transportation planning, periodically update maps with new or relocated lifeline destinations, and new Census or ACS data to show regional changes in concentrations of low-income, transit-dependent residents and employment areas.

## CONCLUSION

SACOG has produced this study to provide information and recommendations that SACOG, local jurisdictions, transit operators, service providers, advocates, and community residents can use to begin to address the needs for public transportation options among the Region's low-income, transit-dependent residents.

Through the study, SACOG has identified a variety of issues that impact the ability of low-income residents to reach essential or "lifeline" destinations. In the coming months, SACOG will be pursuing and encouraging next steps to implement Study recommendations.

As a first step, SACOG has sought federal JARC funds to carry out the recommended study of transit service needs after 9:00 pm. SACOG also plans to seek grant funding to undertake the recommended connectivity study of regional demand-response services to assess ways to improve connectivity for riders and cost-effectiveness of services.

SACOG plans to utilize the mapping undertaken in this study to provide key information for Regional Transit's COA and upcoming Short-Range Transit Plan updates. In addition, concurrent with the update of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP2035), SACOG expects to build on the project mapping to inform SACOG's work on the development of a Regional Sustainable Development Plan and selection of 4-5 Transit Priority Areas in the region. This sustainability effort began with a public kick-off in February 2011, and is funded by a HUD Sustainable Communities Grant.

SACOG anticipates that these and additional follow-up efforts to implement study will help facilitate mobility for the region's low-income, transit-dependent residents – including low-income seniors and persons with disabilities – over the years to come.