

APPLICATION/PROJECT PROGRAMMING REQUEST

A. PROJECT INFORMATION					
Applicant/Implementing Agency		Public Agency Sponsor (if different)			
Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District					
Project Title					
Transit Operations					
Brief Description/Scope of Work (attach extra pages to fully describe scope)					
<p>Funding will support the implementation of the Reimagine METRO Service Recovery and Expansion Plan in two phases: 1) Service Restoration and 2) Service Expansion. Phase 1 will increase service 16% relative to today and add 29,000 annual revenue hours, restoring service to pre-COVID levels. Phase 2 will increase service 43% relative to today to levels last seen in the mid-2000s, funding a completed service expansion plan, and add 66,000 revenue hours over Phase 1. The requested funding will fund three full years of service recovery and expansion and a total of 252,000 additional revenue hours.□</p>					
<p>Project encompasses fixed-route service improvements over METRO's entire service area (See Alternatives Report).</p>					
Roadway Functional Classification:					
Summary of Project Benefits, Purpose and Need					
<p>In December 2022, Santa Cruz METRO initiated a 15-month planning and public outreach effort to re-envision where buses go and how often they run. Key goals of the Reimagine METRO effort include 1) Increasing the amount of service provided, 2) Making transit more reliable, and relevant to the community's needs, 3) Adapting to post-COVID travel patterns, and 4) Creating a network that is useful and attractive for many people's trips. Based on an initial assessment of METRO's existing fixed-route bus network completed in March 2023, there are important reasons to redesign parts of METRO's existing fixed-route network: 1) existing service is infrequent, with routes running only every 30-60 minutes throughout the day 2) service has been reduced several times in recent years and is currently 30% less than it was 20 years ago, 3) service is often slow and unreliable due to primarily to the lack of transit priority on County roadways but also to existing route patterns and scheduling, and 4) the public and riders want change. In recent polling and outreach, county residents think METRO should provide more service, focus on higher frequency in core areas, and prioritize the needs of disadvantaged communities. These priorities were echoed during subsequent rounds of outreach, as summarized in the Alternatives Report. The requested funding will respond to community desires for the restoration of transit service in Santa Cruz County and support the implementation of Reimagine METRO Phase 1 Service Restoration (approved by the Board in September 2023) and Phase 2 Service Expansion (planned for implementation beginning in March 2024). Funding will support three full years of service</p>					
Funds requested	\$34,339,199	Total Project Cost	\$34,339,199	Estimated # of Daily Users	20,625
Are you able/willing to receive federal funds?		Yes			
Was project previously programmed for funds by RTC?		No	RTIP ID	TBD	
Project Cost by Mode (list approximate percentage of total project costs)					
Mode		% of Total Cost			

SCCRTC Consolidated Call for Projects (RSTPX, STIP, LPP)

Pavement Preservation (rehab, overlay, etc.)					
Road-Auto serving (not rehab)					
Bicycle					
Pedestrian					
Transit				100%	
Transportation System Management (TSM)					
Transportation Demand Management (TDM)					
Other:					
Total				100%	
Priority	Project is priority #	1	of	1	applications submitted
Contact Name		Phone		E-mail Address	
John Uργο		831-420-2537		jurgo@scmtd.com	

B. PROJECT BENEFITS/ EVALUATION CRITERIA

Information in this section will be used to evaluate projects. The RTC is required to consider how well projects advance

Project Title:		Transit Operations
Generally, what are the benefits of this project?		
• 43% more service, made possible by accelerated driver recruitment		
Benefit Category (See Attachment 2 of Call for Projects for additional information and sample		How does this project address any of the following? Projects are not expected to address all of these: if not applicable or not a primary
1	Safety and Collisions (reduce fatal or injury collisions)	METRO has budgeted an additional \$1.5 million per year in the project to implement a transit ambassador program to have safety ambassadors stationed at major transit centers, riding routes, and responding to disturbances. This program is being implemented for a variety of reasons: anticipated increases in ridership and new customers unfamiliar with the system; new routes and schedules; the planned disruption downtown due to the closure of the current transit center, relocation to the temporary operations facility, and relocation back to the permanent Pacific Station; and the introductions of free transfers/expanded free fares programs. Level of investment represents a tripling of safety and security staff.
2	System Preservation / Infrastructure Condition (maintain existing transportation infrastructure, service, or program)	Phase 1 represents a 16% increase in service relative to today and a restoration to pre-COVID levels. Phase 2 will increase service 43% relative to today to levels last seen in the mid-2000s.
3	System Performance	The project will recalibrate run times, implement/improve schedule coordination across multiple routes, and better accommodate passenger loads in the highest demand areas. This will result in more accurate travel times, reduce delay, and remove inefficiencies, freeing up resources that can be reinvested in more service.
3a	Reduce Emissions and/or Vehicle Miles Traveled	Taken as a whole, these improvements are expected to catalyze over 1.75 million new passenger trips annually. These new transit trips will result in a total VMT reduction of 12.25 million miles per year and GHG emission reduction of 8,506 MTCO _{2e} annually, or 36.75 million VMT and 25,500 MTCO _{2e} reduced over the life of the funding.
3b	Improve travel times, travel time reliability; reduce delay	The project will recalibrate run times, implement/improve schedule coordination across multiple routes, and better accommodate passenger loads in the highest demand areas. This will result in more accurate travel times, reduce delay, and remove scheduling inefficiencies.
3d	Improve freight or goods movement efficiency	By making transit more desirable, the project will encourage transit mode shift on the heavily traveled Highway 1 corridor, thereby improving the reliability of freight and goods movement.
4	Increase Access for All (Expand multi-modal travel options/choices, especially to and within key destinations for all users)	The Project would increase access to service every 30-minutes or better by at least 20 percentage points, compared to existing conditions, with greater increases for low income and minority individuals. The project would also increase access to jobs for over 62% of the population, with greater increases for low income and minority individuals. More detail can be found in the attached METRO Alternatives Report.
5	Public Health and Equity - Enhance health, safe access to key destination for transportation-disadvantaged populations	The Project will help address public health and equity by expanding access to jobs, healthcare, and education, particularly in the historically disadvantaged communities in Watsonville where many of the service improvements are targeted. Phase 1 brings 56% more jobs (+11,500) and 35% (+14,735) more residents within 45 minutes of a trip originating from downtown Watsonville. Phase 2 is projected to double these access

5a	Improve public health or promote healthy communities, provide outreach to targeted users/health issues	The project has a dedicated outreach component with bilingual staff trained to talk to residents of DACs about project specific benefits.
5b	Serve people who are transportation disadvantaged due to age, income, ability or language or other challenges	METRO ridership largely consists of riders who are generally low-income, senior, and/or disabled, as well as students. A majority of METRO's riders on this corridor are transit dependent, with 65% earning less than \$24,000 (44% have an annual household income of below \$15,000), and nearly 60% report riding METRO five or more days per week (OTRS, 2019). 84% of the population in this area is of Hispanic/Latino origin and a similar percentage responds Spanish as the primary language spoken at home.
5c	What percent of the population in the project area is minority or low-income?	The Project will deliver the majority of benefits to Transportation Disadvantaged census tracts of the city of Watsonville with poverty score of 84%, unemployment score of 59%, and housing burden score of 74%.
5d	Will the proposed project increase traffic in low-income and minority neighborhoods?	Increased transit frequency and improved travel time and reliability will promote the use of transit, reducing the necessity for personal vehicle usage throughout Santa Cruz County. The increased connectivity and access will further reduce daily VMT, promoting alternative transportation options. Future transit-oriented development along the planned high-frequency corridors will further reduce vehicle miles traveled to access daily needs and will help to reduce traffic congestion throughout Santa
6	Climate Change and Resiliency (reduces greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions or vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita)	Taken as a whole, these improvements are expected to catalyze over 1.75 million new passenger trips annually. These new transit trips will result in a total VMT reduction of 12.25 million miles per year and GHG emission reduction of 8,506 MTCO _{2e} annually, or 36.75 million VMT and 25,500 MTCO _{2e} reduced over the life of the funding.

Additional Considerations in Project Evaluation:		
A.	RTP Consistency: If project is included in the 2045 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Project List, list RTP Project Number	The Project is consistent with the current approved Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategies. See Local Transit Service Restoration and Expansion (MTD-P14) for additional details on the alignment of the Project with the 2045 Santa Cruz County Regional
B.	Consistency with Complete Streets guidelines and policies: Describe how is project consistent with guidelines, integrates complete streets elements	The Project envisions increasing service on the complete street corridors implemented as part of METRO's Rapid Corridors project, which include enhancements such as high-visibility crosswalks, bus-only lanes and shared bus/bike to separate buses and bikes from traffic congestion.
C.	Consistency with other plans. What other plans is this project listed in, if any?	The Project is consistent with the 2045 Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy. See AMBAG ID#SC-MTD-P14-MTD.
D.	Public engagement: How was this project determined to be a priority? What outreach will occur during implementation?	In December 2022, Santa Cruz METRO initiated a 15-month planning and public outreach effort to re-envision where buses go and how often they run. Three rounds of outreach and stakeholders meetings have been held throughout Santa Cruz County to determine community priorities. Please see attachments for summaries of these meetings.
E.	Scale of Benefits - How many users are expected to use the facility, service or program? What is the source of this estimate?	6.75 million annual users are expected to use the planned additions to service. Applying the principle that the elasticity of transit use with respect to transit service frequency averages 0.5, ridership is expected to increase by 1.75 million trips per year above pre-COVID current levels of 5 million.
F.	Potential Risks (and plans to mitigate them)	The plan is predicated on hiring and training 75 new bus operators, which is the plan's primary element of risk. However, over the past year, METRO has hired and trained near 50 operators, and has 20 more in the queue by the end of the year. This is due to expansion of the training program and increased recruitment efforts that have paid off.

F1	Funding - Is this project fully funded? What other funding has been secured for the project?	The project requires \$34.3 million to be fully funded.
	How will potential cost increases be funded?	Personnel costs are easier to plan than capital. Staff have built contingencies into the operation budget but will tap into local and regional discretionary funds if necessary.
	Will funds programmed by RTC be used to leverage other grants? If funds are not approved by the RTC during this competitive grant cycle, will other funding be at risk of being lost?	METRO plans to use the entirety of the TIRCP Transit Operation funds for project purposes (approximately \$11 million per year), supplemented by existing operational funding (approximately \$60 million per year).
	Is this project eligible for any other competitive grants?	METRO relies mainly on formula grants for operating expenses. Future competitive operational grants are not expected.
F2	Schedule: Describe any potential delays to schedule	The primary delay in implementation would involve hiring sufficient bus operators. As mentioned above, METRO has implemented an accelerated hiring and training program.
F3	Deliverability: Describe why your agency is capable of delivering this project. (sufficient staff, project management, performance in past)	Year in, year out, METRO successfully delivers an operating budget of \$60 million. METRO's successful delivery methods include managing risks to the project's schedule and cost, and diligent monitoring of tasks that are critical to the overall schedule. The team takes a proactive approach by engaging with stakeholders, property owners, utility companies, and regulatory agencies early in the project development process in order to maintain the overall schedule of service delivery.
F4	Environmental: Describe any potential environmental issues, mitigations, risks associated with current and future environmental conditions (climate change, extreme weather, seismic)	No environmental risks are expected to this transit operating project.
F5	Other: Describe any other potential risks and plans to mitigate risks	See section F2 above.

E. CERTIFICATION AND ASSURANCES

As authorized representative for my agency, I hereby certify that the information contained in this application, including required attachments, is accurate and hereby certify the following:

Project:	Transit Operations	INITIALS
1	The project implementing agency possesses legal authority to nominate projects and to finance, acquire, construct, and/or implement the proposed project;	MT
2	This project is among the highest priorities for this agency;	MT
3	The proposed transportation investments have received the full review and vetting required by law;	MT
4	Such investments are an appropriate use of taxpayer dollars. The agency shall adhere to principles and policies that ensure government oversight and management of the contracting process to ensure taxpayer funds are spent wisely; contracts are not wasteful, inefficient, or subject to misuse; unnecessary no-bid and cost-plus contracts are avoided; and contracts are awarded according to the best interests of California taxpayers;	MT
5	The agency will maintain and operate the property acquired, developed, rehabilitated, or restored for the life of the resultant facility(ies) or activity. I understand that with the approval of the California Department of Transportation, the Administering Agency or its successors in interest in the property may transfer the responsibility to maintain and operate the property;	MT
6	If these new funds are used to replace funds previously committed to this project, the agency will maintain its effort with regard to redirecting those funds to similar transportation projects;	MT
7	The agency will give RTC and California Department of Transportation's representative access to and the right to examine all records, books, papers, or documents related to the project;	MT
8	Work on the project shall commence within a reasonable time after receipt of notification that funds have been approved, allocated or obligated, as applicable, and that the project will be carried to completion with reasonable diligence;	MT
9	The agency will comply where applicable with provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation, and any other federal, state, and/or local laws, rules and/or regulations;	MT
10	The agency shall comply with all reporting requirements outlined by FHWA, FTA, RTC, Caltrans, the California Transportation Commission (CTC) or state statute, as applicable;	MT
11	The agency will commit the funds necessary to ensure this project is fully funded.	MT

Implementing Agency Representative:

Signed _____ Date 10/10/2023
 Printed (Name and Title) Michael Tree/CEO/General Manager

Implementing Agency

Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District

Project Sp



Signed

Date

Printed (Name and Title)

Enter Name/Title

Sponsor Agency

Enter Sponsoring Agency Name

Transit Operations Funding

If an agency is requesting an allocation of funding for transit operations for one or more of the STA- eligible transit operators in its jurisdiction, it shall include the following information for each operator covered by its request:

1. Name of Transit Operator

Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District

2. 2022-23 Ridership for the Operator and Operator's Percent of Region's Total Ridership

3,275,802 (100%)

3. Amount of Funding Requested, by source (TIRCP or ZETCP) and Budget Year

34,339,199

4. List of Specific Activities Funded by the Request, quantified where possible:

a. Amount of service being paid for by the additional funding expressed in both revenue service hours and by nature of service retention, restoration or increase invested in (e.g. preventing a reduction in frequency on one or more routes (or systemwide), frequency increases on particular routes or launch of new routes made possible by the funds).

Costs involved in maintaining current operations may include those necessary for ensuring safety and state of good repair of the vehicles and infrastructure necessary to operate service and shall be identified with respect to the current service level they are protecting.

Funding will support Reimagine METRO Service Recovery and Expansion Plan in two phases: 1) Service Restoration and 2) Service Expansion. Phase 1 will increase service 16% relative to today and add 29,000 annual revenue hours, restoring service to pre-COVID levels. Phase 2 will increase service 43% relative to today to levels last seen in the mid-2000s, funding a completed service expansion plan, and add 66,000 revenue hours over Phase 1. The requested funding will fund three full years of service recovery and expansion and a total of 252,000 additional revenue hours.

b. Identification of operating expenses invested in increased safety and security measures

As part of the Reimagine METRO service expansion plan, METRO plans to increase its safety and security budget to staff additional safety ambassadors stationed at METRO's major transit centers and routes. Cost is anticipated at an additional \$1.5 million per year.

c. Identification of operating expenses that are intended to increase ridership, including those that fund actions to improve coordination of routes and schedules

METRO is not requesting funds for these purposes; however, funding requested will be used to leverage ongoing efforts already in progress and/or funded - including Cycle 6 TIRCP funded activities to increase ridership and improve the passenger experience through schedule coordination, systemwide contactless payment, real time passenger information and Reimagine METRO service planning and outreach.

5. Identification of benefits to transit dependent riders of activities funded by the request.

The Project would increase the number of County residents with access to service every 30-minutes or better by at least 20 percentage points, compared to existing conditions, with greater increases for low income and minority individuals. The project would also increase access to jobs for over 62% of the population, with greater increases for low income and minority individuals. The Project will help address public health and equity by expanding access to jobs, healthcare, and education, particularly in the historically disadvantaged communities in Watsonville where many of the service improvements are targeted. Phase 1 brings 56% more jobs (+11,500) and 35% (+14,735) more residents within 45 minutes of a trip originating from downtown Watsonville. Phase 2 is projected to double these access numbers.