



Valley Express
Bus & Dial-A-Ride

VENTURA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
Heritage Valley Technical Advisory Committee (HVTAC)
www.goventura.org | www.valleyexpressbus.org
Fillmore City Council Chambers
250 Central Street, Fillmore
Monday, October 21, 2024
1:30 p.m.

AGENDA

Action may be taken on any item listed on the agenda.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Government Code Section 54954.2, if special assistance is needed to participate in a committee meeting, please contact the Administrative Assistant at (805) 642-1591 ext. 111. Notification of at least 48 hours (about 2 days) prior to meeting time will assist staff in assuring reasonable arrangements can be made to provide accessibility at the meeting.

ITEM 1 CALL TO ORDER

ITEM 2 INTRODUCTIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

ITEM 3 PUBLIC COMMENTS

Under the Brown Act, the committee should not act on or discuss matters raised during the Public Comment portion of the agenda which are not listed on the agenda. Committee members may refer such matters to staff for factual information or to be placed on the subsequent agenda for consideration.

ITEM 4 AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS

ITEM 5 ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Recommended Action:

- Receive and file.

Responsible Staff: Jeni Eddington

ITEM 6 UPDATE ON DIAL-A-RIDE SCHEDULING SOFTWARE IMPLEMENTATION

Recommended Action:

- Receive and file.

Responsible Staff: Matt Miller

ITEM 7 UPDATE ON THE COUNTYWIDE SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN

Recommended Action:

- Receive and file.

Responsible Staff: Matt Miller

ITEM 8 POTENTIAL FUELING LOCATIONS

Recommended Action:

- Verbal update.

Responsible Staff: Matt Miller

ITEM 9 RIDERSHIP AND OUTREACH REPORT

Recommended Action:

- Receive and file.

Responsible Staff: Erin Kenneally

ITEM 10 UPDATE ON REPLACEMENT VEHICLES

Recommended Action:

- Receive and file.

Responsible Staff: Erin Kenneally

ITEM 11 DRIVER SHORTAGE

Recommended Action:

- Verbal Update

Responsible Staff: Matt Miller

ITEM 12 ADJOURNMENT

MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Susanna Arroyo, County of Ventura (Chair)
Clete Saunier, City of Santa Paula
Georgie Gerardo, City of Fillmore (Vice Chair)

VCTC STAFF PRESENT: Claire Grasty, Public Transit Director
Aubrey Smith, Regional Transit Planner
Matt Miller, Transit Operations Manager
Erin Kenneally, Transit Planner

ITEM 1 CALL TO ORDER

Chair Arroyo called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

ITEM 2 INTRODUCTIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Clete announced his retirement. Matt announced the launch of the Fillmore-Moorpark route. The new General Manager for MV Transportation, Sal Knutsen, introduced himself.

ITEM 3 PUBLIC COMMENTS – None

ITEM 4 AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS – None

ITEM 5 ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

The committee accepted the meeting minutes from the previous meeting.

ITEM 6 SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN

The committee received a presentation on the Short-Range Transit Plan (2025-2034) including the plans objectives, timeline, fixed route challenges, dial a ride conditions, and opportunities ahead.

The committee discussed 1) meeting local infrastructure demands, 2) service east of Fillmore and to/from The Oaks in Santa Paula, 3) increasing DAR service for seniors, 4) launching a Santa Clarita route, 5) medical trips to Oxnard and the relocation of the Santa Paula Hospital to Hallock Drive, and 6) the construction of multi-family homes on Faulkner Road.

ITEM 7 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:01 p.m.



DATE: OCTOBER 21, 2024

MEMO TO: HERITAGE VALLEY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (HVTAC)

FROM: MATT MILLER, PROGRAM MANAGER

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON DIAL-A-RIDE SCHEDULING SOFTWARE IMPLEMENTATION

RECOMMENDATION

- Receive and file update on progress of Dial-A-Ride scheduling software implementation.

BACKGROUND

In 2008, VCTC purchased Trapeze paratransit scheduling and dispatch software on behalf of Ventura County operators. Due to the age of the current and outdated version of the Trapeze scheduling software being used at some agencies, VCTC released an RFP to collect proposals and purchase a modern replacement system on behalf of those agencies. After an evaluation that included county operators, VCTC awarded RideCo, inc. a five-year contract for on-demand scheduling software.

DISCUSSION

Since 2008, Valley Express operations staff have been using legacy software to book paratransit, senior dial-a-ride and general-purpose dial-a-ride trips in the Heritage Valley. The software lacked many modern capabilities like optimization tools, user-friendly interfaces, data analysis tools, driver monitoring tools, automatic reports, and a passenger self-booking phone app with vehicle location tracking. The new system purchased by VCTC for the County operators has all these features and will lead to more efficient trips to be booked with more shared rides, hopefully leading to a productive and reliable dial-a-ride system for Valley Express passengers, as well as increasing availability of the general-purpose dial-a-ride system.

Staff launched RideCo on Sunday, October 13th after virtual and in-person training was held with management staff, dispatchers and reservationists, and drivers. As of the writing of this staff report, shared rides were 50% of all rides taken, a sharp increase, and the on-time performance was 98%. As the system is used and more data is collected a clearer picture of the benefits will come into view and staff will report back to the HVTAC and HVPAC on the progress.

While the rollout of the software has gone very well and we have not received complaints since rollout, the system has an impact on the passengers and the way their trips were scheduled before. Passengers will have to share trips with others much more frequently than they did prior, will no longer be able to change their destination during the trip or have the driver wait for them while they run an errand (picking up food, going to the pharmacy, etc.) and will in general be less flexible. Though these changes are necessary to modernize the system, make it more efficient, slow the sharp increases in cost, serve more passengers, keeping the denial and refusal rate low and ensuring the service financially sustainable.



DATE: OCTOBER 21, 2024

MEMO TO: HERITAGE VALLEY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (HVTAC)

FROM: MATT MILLER, PROGRAM MANAGER

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE COUNTYWIDE SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN

RECOMMENDATION

- Receive and file an update on progress of the countywide short range transit plan (SRTP), specifically findings and possible recommendations for the Valley Express service.

BACKGROUND

VCTC is leading a Countywide SRTP to study and recommend strategies and changes transit operators can implement to improve services and efficiency, increase transit use, and strengthen long term sustainability. The consultant team has completed collecting passenger surveys and existing conditions report.

DISCUSSION

In July, VCTC and consultant staff presented initial findings of the SRTP existing conditions report to the HVTAC. Since then, staff have been working with the consultant to develop recommendations to improve services and efficiency, increase transit use, and strengthen long term sustainability of the Valley Express service. While studying the Valley Express service, staff found that the Santa Paula A & B fixed-route service was nearly unusable due to its limited availability and explains the high use of the more expensive and unpredictable general public dial-a-ride system. For the fixed route to be an attractive modal option and used more, it must be a practical alternative, which is not in its current form.

Among some of the recommendations are changes to streamline the Santa Paula, Fillmore and Piru fixed routes and add all-day service (more trips) on the Santa Paula A & B fixed routes or new proposed routes. Additionally, it will be important to utilize the new on-demand scheduling software, RideCo, recently implemented at Valley Express, and likely change general public dial-a-ride policies to nudge people away from using the more expensive dial-a-ride service to using a new and improved fixed-route service. In essence, the goal is to create a fixed-route transit service that is the backbone of transit service in the Heritage Valley with paratransit, senior dial-ride and general public dial-a-ride supplementing the fixed-route service. This will help the service to be more financially sustainable, easier to project costs and is the typical way transit networks are designed in order to serve more passengers. An additional recommendation is to consider re-branding the general-purpose dial-a-ride to microtransit, which is increasingly popular and will emphasize this premium service to draw clear distinctions between the programs.

Included in the Countywide SRTP is a fare study which will begin in the next couple of months and will most likely include a recommendation for fare increases throughout the county, including for some or all the

Valley Express programs. Valley Express fares are much lower than peer agencies and a fare change has not occurred since 2015.



DATE: OCTOBER 21, 2024
MEMO TO: HERITAGE VALLEY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (HVTAC)
FROM: ERIN KENNEALLY, TRANSIT PLANNER – TRANSIT OPERATIONS
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON DIAL-A-RIDE SCHEDULING SOFTWARE IMPLEMENTATION

RECOMMENDATION

- Receive and file.

BACKGROUND

Valley Express service includes four fixed routes serving the cities of Santa Paula, Fillmore, and the unincorporated area of Piru, Dial-A-Ride services for the general public, and complementary ADA paratransit. In August 2024 a fifth fixed route was added to the service connecting the cities of Fillmore and Moorpark.

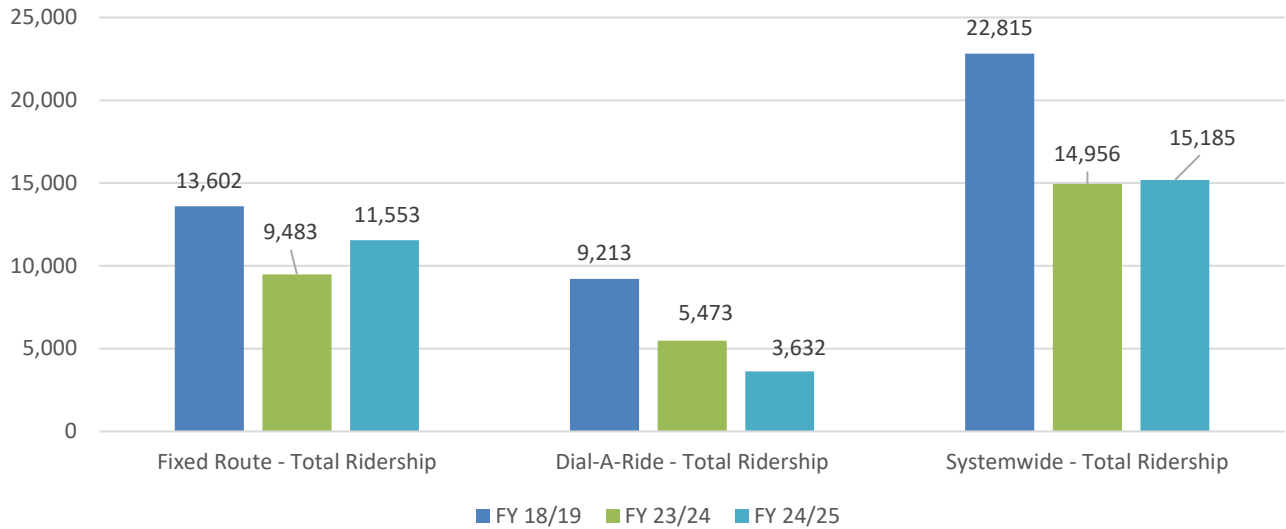
This report provides a Quarter 1 (July-August-September) comparison between key performance indicators (KPI) in FY 24/25 and previous years. In addition, this report provides an update regarding the recent marketing and outreach activities for Valley Express. Though overall ridership in Q1 increased over the same quarter last year, that was primarily due to an increase in fixed route ridership as Dial-A-Ride saw a significant decrease this quarter.

Key Performance Highlights:

- The Fillmore-Moorpark Route began on August 1, 2024. In only two months of service, it already has higher ridership than all other routes except the Piru route.
- This quarter, Valley Express ridership increased by 1.5% percent to 15,185 passenger trips compared to 14,956 in the same quarter of last year. Fixed route ridership increased by nearly 22% while Dial-A-Ride ridership decreased by nearly 34%. Even discounting ridership on the new route, fixed route ridership still increased 9%.
- The Piru route currently accounts for 67% of fixed route ridership as well as 51% of systemwide ridership. It is currently at 98% of pre-COVID ridership and has seen the most ridership recovery.
- DAR ridership is currently at 39% of our pre-COVID numbers and is lower than it was in FY 20/21 during the height of the pandemic. Fixed route ridership is currently at 76% (not including the Fillmore-Moorpark route).
- The new Dial-A-Ride scheduling software and app launched on Sunday, October 13. We are optimistic that it will reduce wait times and maximize ride availability as well as decrease

costs per passenger. We believe that the current wait times and availability are contributing to the low ridership on Dial-A-Ride. Additionally, last fiscal year MV was fully staffed

Valley Express Ridership FIRST QUARTER COMPARISON



Quarterly Ridership Comparison by Route

FIRST QUARTER COMPARISON (July-August-Sept)

Valley Express Bus & Dial-A-Ride	FY 18/19	FY 23/24	FY 24/25	% Change from FY 18/19	% Change from FY 23/24
Santa Paula Fixed Route	2,114	488	582	-72.5%	19.3%
Santa Paula Tripper	242	113	71	-70.7%	-37.2%
Fillmore Fixed Route	2191	345	934	-57.4%	170.7%
Fillmore Tripper	1141	1,039	1,011	-11.4%	-2.7%
Fillmore-Moorpark Route [^]	***	***	1,209	***	***
Piru Fixed Route	7914	7,498	7,746	-2.1%	3.3%
Fixed Route Total	13,602	9,483	11,553	-15.1%	21.8%
Santa Paula DAR	6942	4274	2,786	-59.9%	-34.8%
Fillmore DAR	2271	1199	846	-62.7%	-29.4%
Dial-A-Ride Total	9,213	5,473	3,632	-60.6%	-33.6%
Valley Express Bus & Dial-A-Ride Total	22,815	14,956	15,185	-33.4%	1.5%

[^] Fillmore-Moorpark route launched August 1, 2024

Valley Express

1st Quarter (July-August-Sept)

	FY 18/19	FY 23/24	FY 24/25	Change over 23/24
Fixed Route - Total Ridership*	13,602	9,483	10,344	9.1%
Dial-A-Ride - Total Ridership	9,213	5,473	3,632	-33.6%
Systemwide - Total Ridership	22,815	14,956	13,976	-7%

*Excluding Fillmore-Moorpark Route

Detailed Quarterly comparisons system-wide and for fixed route service and DAR service are shown in the following Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1 System-wide Quarterly Comparison

SYSTEM-WIDE SERVICE - Valley Express KPI		Qtr 1 FY 2023/24	Qtr 1 FY 2024/25	Yr over Yr % Change
Ridership	System-wide	14,956	15,185	1.5%
Passengers per Mile	System-wide	0.26	0.24	-7.9%
Passengers per Hr	System-wide	2.40	2.82	17.4%
Revenue Hours	System-wide	6,237	5,392	-13.6%
Revenue Miles	System-wide	58,276	64,272	10.3%
Operating Cost	System-wide	\$ 634,173	\$ 592,323	-6.6%
Cost per Hr	System-wide	\$ 101.68	\$ 109.85	8.0%
Cost per Passenger	System-wide	\$ 42.40	\$ 39.01	-8.0%

Table 2 Fixed Route Quarterly Comparison

FIXED ROUTE - Valley Express KPI		Qtr 1 FY 2023/24	Qtr 1 FY 2024/25	Yr over Yr % Change
Ridership	Fixed Route	9,483	11,553	21.8%
Passengers per Mile	Fixed Route	0.33	0.27	-18.5%
Passengers per Hr	Fixed Route	6.01	4.81	-19.9%
Revenue Hours	Fixed Route	1,577	2,400	52.2%
Revenue Miles	Fixed Route	29,061	43,440	49.5%
Operating Cost	Fixed Route	\$ 161,533	\$ 261,598	61.9%
Cost per Hr	Fixed Route	\$ 102.41	\$ 108.99	6.4%
Cost per Passenger	Fixed Route	\$ 17.03	\$ 22.64	32.9%

Table 3 Dial-A-Ride Quarterly Comparison

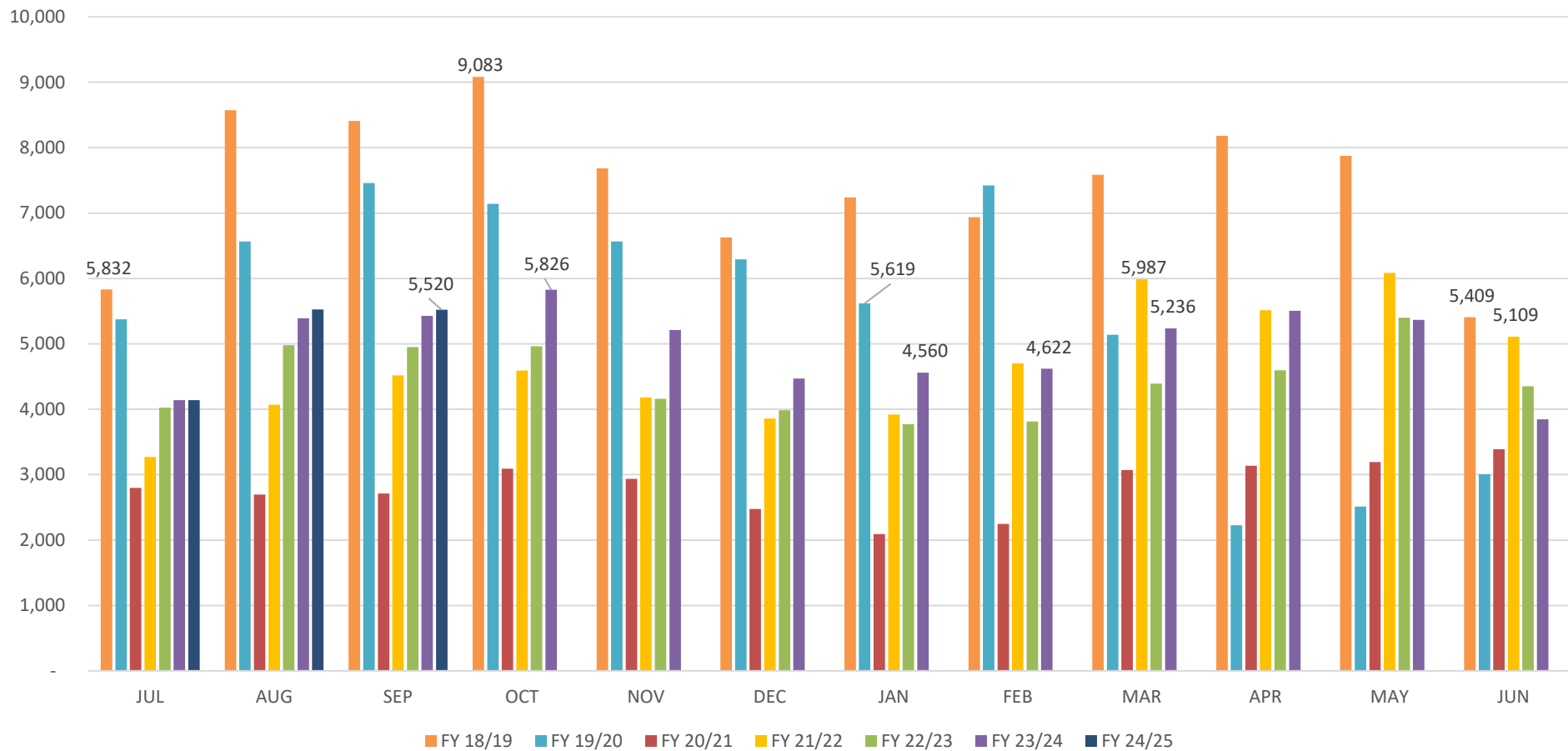
DIAL-A-RIDE (DAR) - Valley Express KPI		Qtr 1 FY 2023/24	Qtr 1 FY 2024/25	Yr over Yr % Change
Ridership	Dial-A-Ride (DAR)	5,473	3,632	-33.6%
Passengers per Mile	Dial-A-Ride (DAR)	0.19	0.17	-6.9%
Passengers per Hr	Dial-A-Ride (DAR)	1.17	1.21	3.4%
Revenue Hours	Dial-A-Ride (DAR)	4,660	2,992	-35.8%
Revenue Miles	Dial-A-Ride (DAR)	29,215	20,832	-28.7%
Operating Cost	Dial-A-Ride (DAR)	\$ 472,640	\$ 330,725	-30.0%
Cost per Hr	Dial-A-Ride (DAR)	\$ 101.43	\$ 110.55	9.0%
Cost per Passenger	Dial-A-Ride (DAR)	\$ 86.36	\$ 91.06	5.4%

VALLEY EXPRESS				
Total Annual Ridership				
	FY 21/22	FY 22/23	FY 23/24	% Change
Fixed	38,353	37,244	40,930	9.9%
DAR	17,447	16,145	18,668	15.6%
Systemwide	55,800	53,389	59,598	11.6%

At the end of the second year of the Youth Ride Free program, Valley Express has provided nearly 40,000 youth rides. Those rides accounted for nearly 40% of all Valley Express ridership.

Valley Express Total Monthly Ridership FY 18/19 to present

Valley Express
Total Monthly Ridership



MARKETING AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Celtis Ventures, Inc., continues to assist us in promoting the Valley Express service within the Heritage Valley. Celtis is currently working on promoting the new Fillmore-Moorpark route as well as the new Dial-A-Ride software.



DATE: OCTOBER 21, 2024
MEMO TO: HERITAGE VALLEY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (HVTAC)
FROM: ERIN KENNEALLY, TRANSIT PLANNER
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON REPLACEMENT VEHICLES

RECOMMENDATION

- Receive and file update on progress of Valley Express vehicles replacement.

BACKGROUND

VCTC, on behalf of Valley Express, received grant funding for replacement vehicles. The Valley Express fleet vehicles have met the end of their useful life benchmark and will be replaced. The current fleet vehicles were purchased in 2015 and consists of five 12-passenger cutaway buses, five 16-passenger cutaway buses, and five 24-passenger low-floor cutaway buses. At the May 2024 HVTAC meeting, VCTC staff presented recommended vehicle types to replace the existing fleet and provided an update on progress being made toward submitting an order.

DISCUSSION

The FY2024/2025 Valley Express budget includes a total of \$2,683,320 in FTA 5339 capital grant funds, State of Good Repair grant funds, SB 125 funds and local match to purchase 15 replacements service vehicles. As stated above the current fleet is made up of a variety of cutaway buses that are used for dial-a-ride (DAR) and fixed route service with the smallest vehicles used for DAR service.

The HVTAC agreed with staff's recommendation that five 8-passenger + 2 wheelchair position Dodge Promaster BraunAbility vans, six medium-sized 16-passenger/two wheelchair position 22-foot Diamond cutaways with wheelchair lifts and four larger ARBOC cutaways that seat 21-passengers/ two wheelchair positions outfitted with ramps be purchased.

Since the May meeting, one change has occurred. Instead of purchasing six 16-passenger Diamond cutaway buses, staff decided to purchase six 16-passenger Glaval cutaway buses. Staff decided to purchase the Glavals after staff were unable to find another public transit agency that operates the Diamond vehicles, and a reference could not be contacted to gain information on their reliability and quality. Glavals are currently in the Valley Express fleet, are good quality and have lasted well beyond their FTA useful life. All the vehicles being purchased are more expensive than the total grant funds awarded for this project and SB125 funds will be used to close the gap.

The Dodge Promaster BraunAbility vans are scheduled to be delivered in 4-6 weeks and currently having fareboxes, camera system, and graphics installed. The Glaval and four larger ARBOC cutaway buses are estimated to be delivered in 8-10 months (between June & August).