



DATE: March 25, 2026

TO: Citizens Oversight Committee Members

FROM: Zoe Unruh, Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Marin-Sonoma Coordinated Transit Service Plan (MASCOTS) Update

RECOMMENDATION: Discussion Item

SUMMARY:

The introduction of SMART train service, and the evolving post-pandemic transit market prompted a multi-agency coordinated service planning effort to determine the future of transit service in the US 101 corridor in Marin and Sonoma Counties, known as the Marin-Sonoma Coordinated Transit Service Plan (MASCOTS). MASCOTS is a collaborative planning effort to comprehensively analyze transit service in the Highway 101 corridor, including areas of overlapping or duplicative regional transit service, areas of underserved demand, and connections between services.

The MASCOTS plan was designed as a three-phase process to understand current conditions, develop solutions to address opportunities, and document impacts of alternatives. In Summer 2025, the recommendations from the MASCOTS plan were presented to the Board of Directors, and in September 2025 the plan was presented to SMART's Citizens Oversight Committee (Attachment 1). The MASCOTS effort is now transitioning into implementation. The service changes recommended through the MASCOTS Plan will go into effect on April 12th. SMART service changes constitute a 19% increase in trips, and include:

Weekday Service

- Increase from 42 to 48 trips (14% increase)
- Span of service increased from 4:30am – 10:00pm to 4:00am – 11:15pm
- Elimination of midday maintenance of way service window
- Trips added to fill midday and PM peak hour gaps, and offer later service
 - Consistent 32 – 64-minute frequency all day

Weekend Service

- Increase from 16 to 24 trips (50% increase)
- Span of service increased from 7:00am – 9:00pm to 7:00am – 11:00pm
- Increase in frequency to 64-96 minutes

Background

The MASCOTS Plan is a coordinates and comprehensive structural analysis of transit service in the Highway 101 corridor. The purpose of this effort is to improve service efficiency, effectiveness, and legibility along Highway 101 corridor to better serve existing and future transit customers. The MASCOTS assessment of existing ridership patterns, overlapping or duplicative service through the 101 corridor, underserved demand, and connections between services concluded that SMART has replaced Golden Gate Transit Route 101 as the predominant passenger choice for regional trips between Sonoma and Marin, transit routes on Highway 101 in southern Marin need to be streamlined, 70 percent of Sonoma and Marin travel to San Francisco originates in San Rafael or further south, and there is a need for local services to make stronger and more direct connections to SMART. The MASCOTS service recommendations are designed to achieve a more legible network, better regional connections, and more frequency on key corridors. The proposed service changes will reinvest service hours where higher demand exists, improve the efficiency of existing resources, and is anticipated to result in increased ridership.

Next Steps

The MASCOTS service changes going into effect on April 12, 2026 are part of a three-year pilot, starting in Spring 2026, with regular evaluation milestones to ensure it meets the intended goals and continues to be financially feasible.

ATTACHMENT: 1.) September 2025 COC MASCOTS Memo



DATE: September 24, 2025

TO: Citizens Oversight Committee Members

FROM: Emily Betts, Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Marin-Sonoma Coordinated Transit Service Plan (MASCOTS) Update

RECOMMENDATION: Discussion Item

SUMMARY:

The introduction of SMART train service, and the evolving post-pandemic transit market prompted a multi-agency coordinated service planning effort to determine the future of transit service in the US 101 corridor in Marin and Sonoma Counties, known as the Marin-Sonoma Coordinated Transit Service Plan (MASCOTS). MASCOTS is a collaborative planning effort to comprehensively analyze transit service in the Highway 101 corridor, including areas of overlapping or duplicative regional transit service, areas of underserved demand, and connections between services.

Developed through a three-phase process to understand current conditions, develop solutions to address opportunities, and document impacts of alternatives, the following high-level recommendations are included in the plan:

SMART and Golden Gate Transit Route 101:

- Truncate Route 101 in Novato, and increase frequency between San Rafael and San Francisco
- Increase SMART frequency and span of service to ensure high-quality transit is available between Sonoma and Marin Counties when Route 101 is shortened

Southern Marin Bus Service:

- Streamline routes between San Rafael, Marin City, Sausalito, and San Francisco

Local Bus Connections to SMART:

- Improve strong, direct connections to SMART by Petaluma Transit, Santa Rosa CityBus, Sonoma County Transit, and Marin Transit

GGT Commute Routes in Sonoma:

- Combine into a single alignment with improved frequency, and restrict San Francisco local travel to reduce travel time

GGT Route 580 in San Rafael:

- Follow 580X alignment to improve travel time; 580 and 580X would continue to differ in the East Bay.

Background

Transit operators in Sonoma and Marin counties form a unique sub-region and have a history of coordinating transit service, fares, marketing, bus stops, and schedules to improve the network of transit services in the area. Regional services are operated by Golden Gate Transit Bus (GGBHTD), Golden Gate Transit Ferry (GGBHTD), Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART), and are complemented with local transit services provided by Sonoma County Transit, Santa Rosa CityBus, Petaluma Transit, and Marin Transit.

These six agencies have a history of coordinating fares, marketing, bus stops, and schedules to improve the network of transit services in the area. However, transit service planning in the Sonoma-Marín region has historically been done by each agency independently for their service area with agencies responding as possible to changes in other agencies' schedules. With the introduction of SMART service in 2017 and subsequent expansion, and the evolving post-pandemic transit market, the need has risen for a comprehensive evaluation of service along the US 101 corridor in Marin and Sonoma counties.

In 2023, catalyzed by Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District's (GGBHTD) strategic planning process, transit operators and transportation agencies kickstarted an ongoing coordination process, consisting of a service planning project called the Marin Sonoma Coordinated Transit Service (MASCOTS) Plan, a regular marketing coordination meeting, financial coordination meetings, and a monthly meeting of General Managers and Executive Directors. Participating agencies are Marin Transit, GGBHTD, SMART, Santa Rosa CityBus, Petaluma Transit, Sonoma County Transit, Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM), Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA), and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). MASCOTS is the first subregional transit analysis conducted under the guidelines of Regional Network Management, which came out of the Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force, established during the pandemic to further collaboration between the region's transit operators and the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC). These agencies committed to taking a fresh look at travel in the Highway 101 Corridor as if all the local bus, regional bus, ferry and rail services were operated by one entity focused on efficiently growing overall transit ridership in the Corridor utilizing existing resources.

The MASCOTS Plan is a comprehensive structural analysis of transit service in the Highway 101 corridor. The purpose of this effort is to improve service efficiency, effectiveness, and legibility along Highway 101 corridor to better serve existing and future transit customers. MASCOTS assesses existing ridership patterns, areas of overlapping or duplicative service, areas of underserved demand, and connections between services to meet the need/demands within the corridor.

Key findings from MASCOTS highlight that SMART has replaced Golden Gate Transit Route 101 as the predominant passenger choice for regional trips between Sonoma and Marin, transit routes on Highway 101 in southern Marin need to be streamlined, 70 percent of Sonoma and Marin travel to San Francisco originates in San Rafael or further south, and there is a need for local services to make stronger and more direct connections to SMART.

Regional transit recommendations include truncating Golden Gate Transit Route 101 service in Novato and increasing SMART frequency and span to ensure all-day high-quality transit between Sonoma and Marin counties.

The recommended service structure is for SMART to be the predominant Sonoma-Marin regional service provider, Golden Gate Transit to provide all-day express service from Marin to San Francisco, including frequent service connecting with SMART at San Rafael Transit Center, and peak period commute bus services from Sonoma and Marin counties direct to San Francisco. Golden Gate Ferry would continue to provide strong connections to/from SMART to connect riders to San Francisco. Sonoma County local transit service recommendations are for stronger and more direct connections to SMART. Marin Transit service recommendations are to provide local service along Highway 101 and connections to regional SMART, Ferry, and Golden Gate Transit services.

Service recommendations are designed to achieve a more legible network, better regional connections, and more frequency on key corridors. The proposed service changes will reinvest service hours where higher demand exists, improve the efficiency of existing resources, and is anticipated to result in increased ridership. MASCOTS service changes are intended to be implemented through a three-year pilot, starting in Spring 2026, with regular evaluation milestones to ensure it meets the intended goals and continues to be financially feasible.

Recommended SMART service changes constitute a 19% increase in trips, and include:

Weekday Service

- Increase from 42 to 48 trips (14% increase)
- Span of service increased from 4:30am – 10:00pm to 4:00am – 11:15pm
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MASCOTS Plan is being presented to various boards and committees from late June through October, and an engagement campaign surveyed current and potential transit riders throughout in Julye and August. Any revisions to the plan will be included in a final document presented for adoption in October to the SMART Board of Directors.

FISCAL IMPACT

While the plan was designed to be revenue hour neutral, the recommended increases to SMART service are not cost neutral; estimated total cost for the 19% service increase is \$2.5M. The MASCOTS agencies have worked together to come up with a funding plan for the three-year pilot. The revenue hours shifts between counties and projected ridership changes will affect the shares that agencies receive through the coordinated claim formulas in each county. Funding shifts between agencies, along with additional contributions, will ensure that the package of changes is fully funded and all funding eligibilities and requirements are met.