



Legislation Text

File #: 2022-0922, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Transportation and Public Works

Staff Name and Phone Number: Johannes J. Hoevertsz, 707-565-2231

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

Funding of Sonoma County Transit's Fare-Free Program on Local Routes 28 and 32.

Recommended Action:

- A) Provide annual on-going funding in the amount of \$8,000 annually to cover costs related to Sonoma County Transit's fare-free program on Local Route 28 (Guerneville, Monte Rio and Occidental).
- B) Approve execution of the annually renewing Letter of Agreement with the City of Sonoma for the Local Route 32 "Fare-Free" program, with annual City contribution of \$15,000 and County contribution of \$35,000.
- C) Delegate authority to the Director of Transportation and Public Works to negotiate and amend the subject Letter of Agreement with the City of Sonoma, to allow for increased contributions to accommodate increased ridership, in form approved by County Counsel and contingent on availability of sufficient funds.

Executive Summary:

This action requests funding to support Sonoma County Transit's fare-free programs on unincorporated area routes 28 and 32. These two routes provide local service within the River Area communities of Guerneville, Monte Rio and Occidental and within the greater Sonoma/Sonoma Valley area, respectively. This request seeks re-establishment of local funding support for these two routes, effective July 1, 2022.

Discussion:

Following successful implementation of fare-free local transit within the cities of Sebastopol, Windsor, Healdsburg and Cloverdale, the Board of Supervisors on December 11, 2018, approved funding for fare-free programs on local routes 28 and 32.

This included a subsidy maximum of \$56,925 for the period of January 1, 2019, through June 20, 2020.

In March 2020, all Sonoma County Transit fares were suspended due to COVID-19 and did not resume until February 2021. Since February 2021, CARES Act funding was provided to fund the route 28 and 32 fare-free programs. Those funds have now been expended.

This funding request is to reinstate multi-year financial support for fare-free service on local routes 28 and 32, at an annual maximum amount of \$43,000: \$8,000 for Route 28 and \$35,000 for Route 32. These amounts reflect projected ridership and allow for an increase to pre-pandemic levels.

Because Route 32 operates within the jurisdiction of the City of Sonoma and in the unincorporated Sonoma Valley, the Route 32 fare-free program will be funded by contributions from both entities pursuant to the proposed Letter of Agreement between the City of Sonoma and the County. Under the Letter of Agreement, the City of Sonoma will contribute 30% of the cost of the program and the County contributes the remainder, capped at a maximum County contribution of \$35,000. More than half of Route 32’s service area is outside the City of Sonoma.

As illustrated on Attachment “A,” currently all Sonoma County Transit local routes are fare-free. Agreements for such are in place with the cities of Sebastopol, Healdsburg, Cloverdale and the Town of Windsor. The Cotati/Rohnert Park routes are funded in FY 2022-23 with federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Over the next year, staff will work to establish an agreement with these two cities to fund fare-free service beyond FY 2022-23.

With the exception of local routes, College Students and Veterans, fares are collected on all Sonoma County Transit intercity routes. Intercity route ridership represents approximately 68% of Sonoma County Transit’s current ridership.

Note that while this funding program is in place, other systemwide fare-free programs may be implemented to meet local or regional efforts to boost ridership. Should another program be implemented, funding from that program will be used in lieu of funding provided through this action.

It should be noted that Sonoma County Transit has also been collaborating with Santa Rosa CityBus and Petaluma Transit to develop a coordinated fare-free pilot program for all youth riders and has submitted a funding request for that project through Round 2 of the Sonoma County Climate Resilience Fund (CRF). The coordinated fare-free youth program was developed in response to feedback on Sonoma County Transit’s initial request for Round 1 CRF funding.

The requested funding to support continuation of the Route 28 and 32 fare-free program (requested in this action) and the proposed program for the CRF funded youth fare-free program are independent funding requests that complement each other in their implementation.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Prior Board Actions:

12-11-2018 No. 45 - Board approved funding for Sonoma County Transit’s Fare-Free Program - Unincorporated Local Routes 28 and 32

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 22-23 Adopted	FY23-24 Projected	FY 24-25 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$43,000	\$43,000	\$43,000
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	\$43,000	\$43,000	\$43,000
Funding Sources			

General Fund/WA GF	\$43,000	\$43,000	\$43,000
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$43,000	\$43,000	\$43,000

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

Revenue appropriations were requested in the FY 22-23 Transit Division recommended budget. Future funds will be requested during each fiscal year budget process. The expenditure has previously been paid from the General Fund.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

None.

Attachments:

Attachment A

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

Agreement with City of Sonoma