



Tuolumne County Transit Agency

Short-Range Transit Plan and Coordinated Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan

Public Participation and Community Outreach Plan

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TUOLUMNE COUNTY TRANSIT AGENCY



Tuolumne County Short-Range Transit Plan and Coordinated Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan

Public Participation and Community Outreach Plan

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Prepared for:



975 Morning Star Drive, Suite A
Sonora, CA 95370
Phone: (209) 533-5603

Prepared by:



114 5th Avenue, 17th Floor
New York, NY 10011



4630 W. Jennifer, Suite 105
Fresno, CA 93722
Phone: (559) 271-1200



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INTRODUCTION

About Tuolumne County Transit Agency

As the Regional Transportation Planning Agency, the Tuolumne County Transit Agency (TCTA) / Transportation Council (TCTC) tackles transportation issues that are important to both the county and the towns and communities in Tuolumne County (reference **Figure 1**), while also meeting Federal and State transportation planning requirements. The methods used to handle these issues may involve communication, planning, policy development, coordination, advocacy, and managing funds for regional transportation and transit systems. Tuolumne County Transportation Council functions as the planning branch of Tuolumne County's Regional Transportation Planning Agency, while Tuolumne County Transit Agency engages in the management of public transit for the Region.

The TCTA is a rural public transit service provider operating four fixed-route bus lines on weekdays along with a Dial-A-Ride service, open to the general public and available on a pre-scheduled basis Monday-Saturday. The Dial-A-Ride service also provides nonemergency medical transportation to seniors ages 60 and older through its Golden Years Transit program, in partnership with the Area 12 Agency on Aging. These services are primarily focused on the more populated portions of Tuolumne County, serving key communities such as the City of Sonora, Jamestown, and Columbia. Three of the four fixed routes operate throughout the day on weekdays, while the fourth is a commuter-oriented service which operates a daily round-trip between Columbia and Groveland. Additionally, TCTA operates a seasonal Ski Bus service between Sonora and Dodge Ski Resort. To serve additional destinations not covered by these services, TCTA also manages a countywide volunteer driver program open to seniors (60+), veterans, low-income residents, and people with disabilities.

Tuolumne County Short Range Transit Plan and Coordinated Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan

The Short-Range Transit Plan (SRTP) and the Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan) will guide TCTA's operations for the next five years, 2025 - 2030. The planning process will:

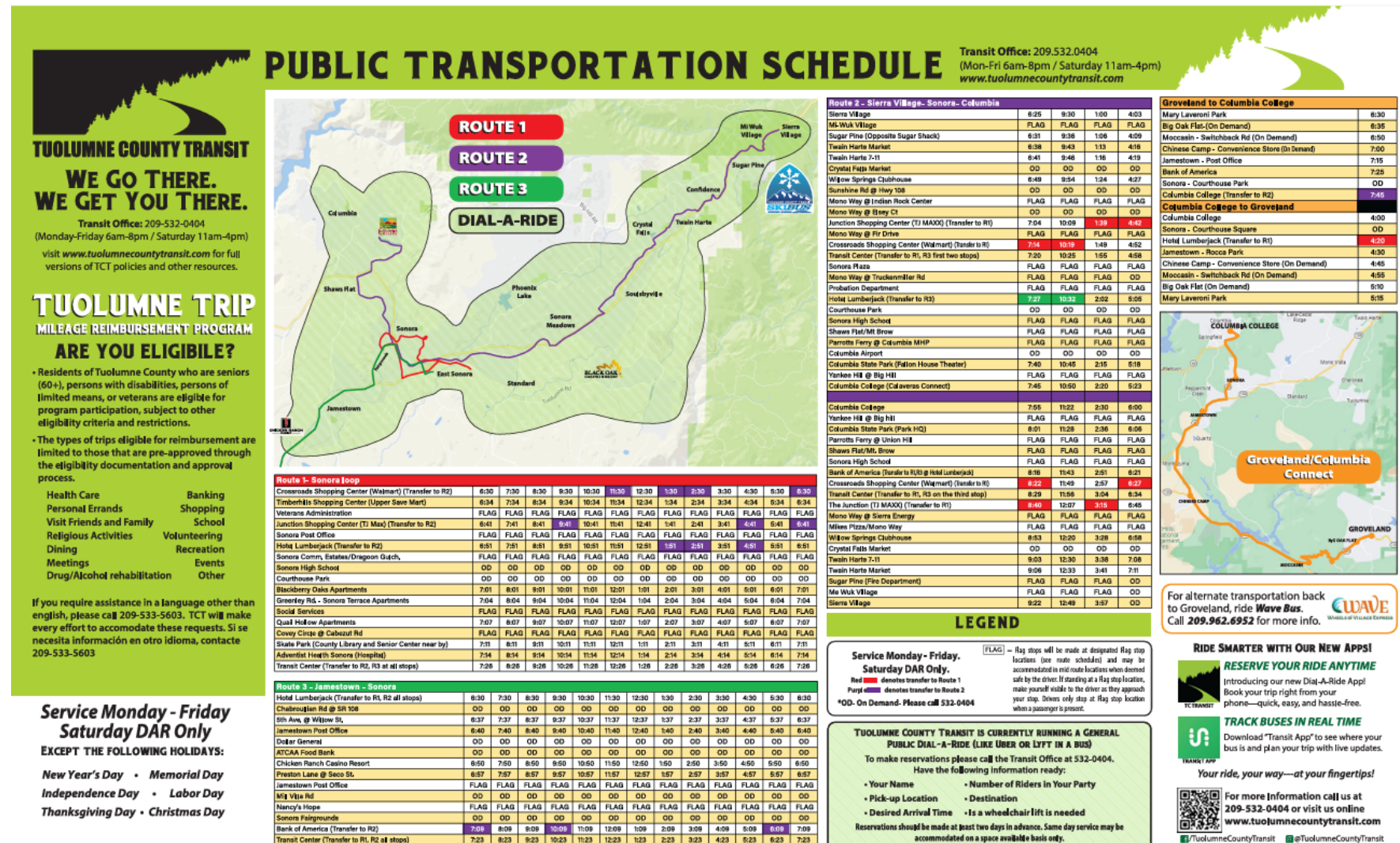
- ✓ Provide opportunities for public input regarding transportation needs and how TCTA might effectively address them
- ✓ Conduct market research to determine who is riding Tuolumne County Transit (TCT), how they are using the system, how satisfied they are with the services provided, and identify priorities for improvements
- ✓ Evaluate the recent performance of existing services
- ✓ Develop and prioritize service plan and fare recommendations for the next five years
- ✓ Establish a detailed operating and capital financial plan
- ✓ Provide updates on zero emission bus requirements

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TRANSIT-HUMAN SERVICES

Figure 1 – Tuolumne County Regional Transit



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The Coordinated Plan, mandated by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for recipients of Section 5310 funding, outlines regional priorities for transportation investments and initiatives aimed at coordinating human services and public transit to meet the needs of older adults, individuals with disabilities, and low-income individuals. The Coordinated Plan creates a platform for a diverse group of stakeholders who share an interest in human services and public transportation to come together and collaborate on the best ways to provide transportation services for these specific populations. Stakeholders will specifically be asked to identify service gaps and obstacles, devise solutions that are most suitable for local conditions, and prioritize these needs for inclusion in the Coordinated Plan. This plan will document discussions among local stakeholders and set the groundwork for future planning and coordination efforts. The planning process will emphasize strategies that can be implemented at a regional level and will suggest potential strategies and priorities for projects aimed at transportation-disadvantaged populations.

The planning process for the SRTP and Coordinated Plan will involve significant community engagement, including passenger and stakeholder surveys, as well as community events and workshops to shape important elements like performance standards, transit demand analyses, development of transit alternatives, financial assessments, and operational plans.

Considering the region's population of elderly, disabled, and low-income residents, these updates are essential to meet the changing transit needs of these communities. By regularly updating these plans, TCTA can enhance mobility options for all residents and visitors in Tuolumne County.

Public Participation and Community Outreach Responsibilities

TCTA and the consultant team will provide outreach services to support the planning effort for the SRTP and Coordinated Plan. Such responsibilities include:

- ✓ Sharing important information about public participation and community outreach opportunities by:
 - Sending emails to TCTA's contacts in Tuolumne County
 - Posting social media materials to social media platforms utilized by TCTA
 - Updating the TCTA website with links to the surveys and community outreach events
 - Posting posters in visible areas within the TCTA geography
 - Posting information in local online newsmedia
- ✓ Identifying affordable ways to communicate that effectively involve stakeholders and the public in developing the SRTP and Coordinated Plan, particularly reaching out to those in underserved areas of Tuolumne County by:
 - Coordinating with Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), and other stakeholder groups to send emails and post social media materials to their members

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Table 1 below lists the groups that will be involved in the planning process, including the Project Team, key stakeholders, and the public. Stakeholder Groups and individuals will continue to be identified and invited to participate in the planning and outreach process over the course of the planning process.



Table 1 - Groups for SRTP / Coordinated Plan

Group	Description
Project Team	• TCTA Manager and planning staff • Via Project Manager and planning staff • VRPA Technologies planning and outreach staff
Key Stakeholders	• Local government agencies (e.g., Area 12 Agency on Aging, City of Sonora, County Social Services, County Veterans Services, Tuolumne County Transportation Council) • Community Based Organizations (CBOs) (e.g., Family Resource Center, Mother Lode Job Training Tuolumne) • Educational institutions (e.g., Columbia College) • Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) providers (e.g., Adventist Health Sonora, LogistiCare) • Human-service transportation providers (e.g., Southside Community Connections/WHEELS, Common Ground Senior Services/Silver Streak) • Business and industry representatives (economic development corporations and chambers of commerce) • Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) • Veterans groups • Other private-sector representatives (e.g., Dodge Ridge ski resort, Black Oak Casino)
Public	• Current TCT passengers • The general public and the diverse communities in the Tuolumne County region

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH PLAN

This Public Participation and Community Outreach Plan (Outreach Plan) outlines the approach for public engagement and community outreach for the Tuolumne County SRTP and Coordinated Plan and details the responsibilities of the Via Team (including Via and VRPA Technologies) and TCTA staff. All engagement efforts for the SRTP and Coordinated Plan will be documented, and feedback will be considered throughout the duration of the planning process. This Outreach Plan is a living document and will be revised to reflect relevant changes to the engagement process, as necessary.

Description

Public engagement is a problem-solving approach which brings together community members and planners to discuss complex issues facing the communities and their residents. Working together to achieve a common goal, this partnership encourages affected parties to bring forward unique ideas and solutions to potential issues. As each community member is different, so are their hopes and aspirations and the ways to implement them. By listening to each other, the decisions generated will reflect the greater community at large.

The process of public engagement is most successful when the process is transparent with access to decisions,

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services, and information for all interested stakeholders and community members. The active participation of the community ensures that the outcomes are better tuned to meet the community's needs today and in the future. State and Federal transportation laws, regulations, policies, and guidance require and encourage public involvement throughout the planning process, particularly regarding environmental justice populations and underserved communities, including low-income and minority populations. This Outreach Plan establishes consistent guidelines to ensure people have meaningful opportunities to be involved in the SRTP and Coordinated Plan planning process.

Purpose

For the public and local agencies to effectively evaluate and comment on the SRTP and Coordinated Plan, they should be adequately informed about and understand the details concerning these plans and the related public engagement process. The purpose of conducting public engagement is to involve people and to incorporate their input into decisions related to the SRTP and Coordinated Plan. A comprehensive Outreach Plan is critical to the success of the public involvement process. Thorough and well-thought-out plans assist the outreach process by providing a systematic approach, maximizing the use of available resources, and minimizing delays by ensuring that public engagement activities are coordinated with the planning process' tasks and milestones.

Goals

The main goal of this Outreach Plan is to allow the public and other community members opportunities throughout the process to influence the development of the SRTP and Coordinated Plan. The Outreach Plan reflects ways to identify and contact the community, inform them of the need for the SRTP and Coordinated Plan, and involve them in the decision-making process. Another goal of the Outreach Plan is to actively seek the participation of communities and their stakeholders, agencies, individual interest groups, and the general public throughout the planning process. Public involvement provides the public and agencies with continuing opportunities to be involved. Input from affected agencies and the public also lends credibility to key decisions made during the SRTP and Coordinated Plan planning process. Making timely, accurate, and useful information available to the general public and other community members will help to achieve the following goals of the public engagement process:

- ✓ Engage a broad spectrum of residents who reside or travel in Tuolumne County, not only current public transit riders, but other residents, workers, and interested stakeholders as the SRTP and Coordinated Plan documents are prepared
- ✓ Identify, contact, and inform key stakeholders and community members of the need for the SRTP and Coordinated Plan
- ✓ Provide the public and other community members with multiple opportunities to learn about, and influence, the development of the SRTP and Coordinated Plan
- ✓ Seek opportunities to involve a broad range of community members, including those who may not typically participate in the public engagement process, to ensure that the Project Team understands the issues from all those who may be impacted
- ✓ Create and distribute public information that is user-friendly, easily understood, and culturally sensitive to communities that may be potentially affected

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- ✓ Reach out to minority and low-income populations by producing materials in multiple languages if needed
- ✓ Provide policy makers with information about the public's opinions and values regarding the SRTP and Coordinated Plan

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

It is important to ensure that the public, interested parties, and stakeholder groups have many opportunities to provide informed input throughout the planning process. The most effective public engagement efforts use a combination of methods and technologies to convey and receive information; build awareness; provide resources; and develop relationships. The public engagement methods that will be used to keep the public informed are referenced below.

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Figure 2 – Timeline of Proposed Engagement Activities

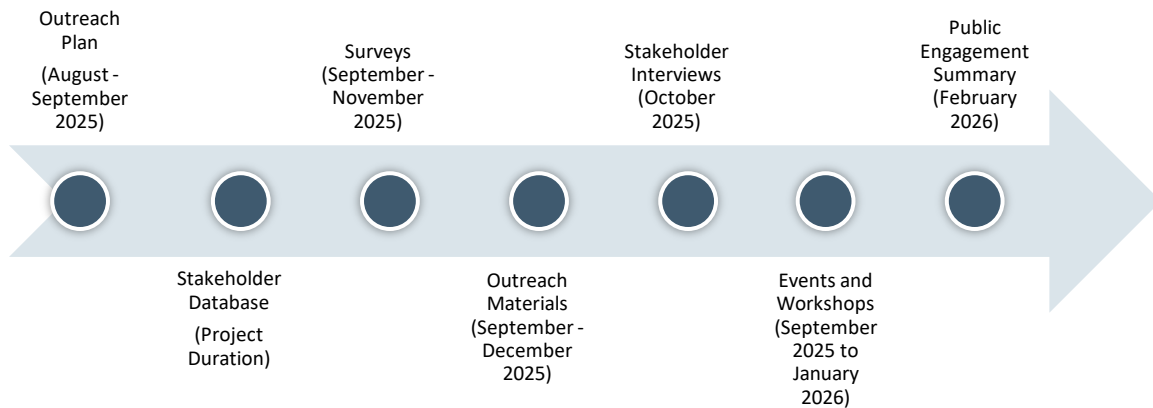


Table 2 – Overview and Timeline of Proposed Community Outreach Activities

Engagement Activity	Deliverables	Timeframe
Outreach Plan	Draft and final Outreach Plan (updated as needed throughout the project)	August 2025
Stakeholder Database	- Compile available databases from TCTA and other partner agencies or groups - Update, expand, and maintain the prepared Stakeholder database listing - Listing will include: - Organization or agency - Contact name and title - Email address - Telephone number, if available	Duration of Engagement Activities
Passenger and Community Surveys – Printed and Online Versions (English and Spanish)	- Draft and final survey instruments in English and Spanish (Survey Monkey and hard copies) - QR codes for direct access to the finalized online survey instruments - One (1) passenger survey Instrument to be printed and distributed onboard buses on fixed-route and Dial-A-Ride services, with a QR Code - One (1) community survey Instrument to be distributed on paper and via QR Code among the wider community - Compiled and summarized survey results - Three (3) \$100 Visa Gift Cards as incentives for passenger surveys, community surveys, and bus/Dial-A-Ride drivers to encourage passengers to take the surveys	September - November 2025

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Engagement Activity	Deliverables	Timeframe
Outreach Materials (English and Spanish)	For each event: - One (1) workshop/event flyers - One (1) newspaper advertisements, if desired - Free announcements on up to two (2) local radio programs, if desired - Two (2) sets of Social Media content to be used in coordination with prepared flyers - Two (2) sets of presentation boards - One (1) draft and final PowerPoint presentation (workshops only) - One (1) set of workshop polling questions for use in Mentimeter audience response software (workshops only) - Event materials, including Sign-in Sheets, Comment Cards, Workshop Station Signage, and Directional Signage	September 2025 - January 2026
Stakeholder Interviews – Virtual	- Comprehensive listing of twelve (12) or more stakeholders to participate in interviews/focus groups - Up to twelve (12) virtual stakeholder interviews, or equivalent group interviews or focus groups - Stakeholder interview questions - Stakeholder interview summaries	October 2025
Three In-Person (3) Community Workshops / Events	- Three (3) in-person community workshops/events - Locations, schedule, and facilitation/staffing - Related workshop materials identified above	- September 24, 2025, Community Roots Resource Fair - October 29, 2025, Stakeholder Workshop - January 29, 2026, Public Workshop (staffed by TCTA)
Draft SRTP and Coordinated Plan	Draft documents to be available to TCTA staff before the January 29, 2026, Public Workshop	January 26, 2026
Public Engagement Summary	- Summary outline - Documentation of public participation and community outreach process and results - Key feedback received during the engagement process and how it was used in the planning process - Draft and final outreach findings summary memo	February 2026

Stakeholder Database

Stakeholders are people or groups who are directly or indirectly affected by a project, as well as those who may



have an interest in a project. The study development team will work together with TCTA staff to create a database of important contacts that will be used during the development of the SRTP and Coordinated Plan. This database will include the names of people and organizations, their email addresses, and phone numbers and addresses, if available. As the work on the SRTP and Coordinated Plan continues, this database will be updated and expanded to help in sharing information, materials, and updates related to the Plan development.

Passenger and Community Surveys

Surveys are quick, efficient means of gathering information from a large, diverse group of participants. Surveys are easy to use for the participants and allow for effective quantitative analysis by the Project Team. Surveys allow participants to answer questions at their convenience, increasing engagement and improving response rates.

The Project Team will prepare survey instruments for current transit and Dial-A-Ride passengers and for the general public, tailored to reflect local conditions and generate key insights about transit needs and preferences with respect to transit and paratransit needs. The survey instruments will contain approximately twelve (12) to fifteen (15) approved questions, plus additional questions collecting demographic information, and will be ordered in such a manner that they will be comfortable and understandable. Surveys will be prepared in both English and Spanish. Questions will be tested by TCTA staff prior to being provided or posted live to a survey platform such SurveyMonkey. TCTA will distribute the onboard printed passenger survey, along with a QR code linking to an online version, to passengers on TCT Routes 1-3 and the Dial-A-Ride service. TCTA staff will ride the buses and encourage passengers to take the survey. VRPA will offer a \$100 Visa gift card as an incentive for TCT drivers to encourage passengers to take the survey. The driver that collects the highest number of completed surveys will win the gift card. In addition, TCTA will place an ad on the exterior of one or more buses through their bus advertising contractor and will place announcements on the inside of the buses pointing passengers to the QR code.

The consultant team will distribute the online community survey among the wider community via Constant Contact eblasts to the stakeholder list to reach a broader cross-section of Tuolumne County residents, including those who only ride TCT occasionally or do not ride due to a lack of service near where they live. Printed versions will be provided at the stakeholder workshop, with a QR code encouraging people to take the survey online.

Noticing for the surveys will be completed via eblasts to the stakeholder database, including flyers with the QR codes, as a link on TCTA's webpage, and can be shared by TCTA and other stakeholders through social media platforms. Once completed, survey results will be compiled and summarized.

Outreach Materials

Bilingual (English and Spanish) flyers will be developed to share information about important SRTP and Coordinated Plan community outreach activities. These flyers will serve as a tool to make sure everyone receives the same accurate information, no matter where they are or who they're talking to. The plan development team will put together the flyers' text and design, including images and graphics, to make them visually appealing.

Once completed, TCTA will post the flyers onto the TCTA website and social media sites, such as Facebook, and will widely distribute the flyers through email to the stakeholder database. TCTA will also encourage stakeholders

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(Columbia College, TCTC SSTAC, Community Based Organizations [CBOs], Faith Based Organizations [FBOs], etc.) to share the flyers on their own websites and social media. The consulting team will make the finalized flyers into a noticing poster for distribution by TCTA at key locations throughout the County. In addition, the consulting team will reach out to local online media (e.g., The Union Democrat, MyMotherlode.com) requesting publicity. All materials will be available in English and Spanish.

Throughout the planning process, key project-related social media content will be developed by the Project Team and provided to TCTA staff for posting to their social media platforms. The social media campaign will include up to four (4) sets of social media posts on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Next Door, providing information about the SRTP and Coordinated Plan, why community input is vital to the success of the project, and how to participate. The consulting team will provide messaging, images, and social media posting schedules.

Stakeholder Interviews

The consulting team will conduct up to twelve (12) stakeholder interviews to ensure that affected agencies, community leaders and key stakeholders have the opportunity to provide their input. These interviews will prioritize those individuals with a history of past engagement with public transit issues and existing passenger groups, such as seniors, low-income residents, students, veterans, and people with disabilities. To reach a wider audience and encourage conversations among different groups, the Project Team may also organize group interviews or focus groups with stakeholders who share similar views and interests (e.g., Medi-Cal transportation providers, organizations serving people with disabilities). The consultant team will collaborate with TCTA to select the individuals and organizations to interview. Interviews will be conducted virtually (via Zoom). [Table 1](#) contains a list of potential interview candidates, including members, department representatives, and agency representatives from each city and Tuolumne County.

Critical components of this task will be to:

- ✓ Identify a comprehensive list of twelve (12) or more key stakeholders
- ✓ Prepare interview questions
- ✓ Schedule the 12 interviews, or subsets of group interviews or focus group meetings
- ✓ Hold the interviews to discuss challenges/opportunities
- ✓ Assess and summarize the interview findings

The summary of the stakeholder interviews will be included in both the SRTP and Coordinated Plan. These interviews, along with the results from interactive polls and surveys, and the workshops and events, will offer important insights to help guide the planning process.

In-Person Community Workshops/Events

At the request of TCTA, the first community event will be the Tuolumne County Community Roots Resource Fair on Wednesday, September 24, 2025, to provide information on fixed route services and Dial-A-Ride services, and to solicit feedback from the public on their transportation needs via the community survey. The team will also engage with other agencies and service providers that are present at the Resource Fair.

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The second event will consist of a stakeholder workshop. The workshop will provide stakeholders an opportunity to hear the results of the stakeholder interviews, hear initial concepts being considered by the project team, and provide input before the plans are drafted. Mentimeter audience response polling software will be used to ensure that all workshop participants can provide input, not just those who are vocal. These tools can be used to solicit priorities using real-time response features available for download on smart phones. The data collected will serve as additional quantitative data for the planning process.

The third event will consist of an in-person community workshop, giving the Project Team an opportunity to provide a summary of key proposed changes between the existing SRTP and Coordinated Plan and the proposed plans underway. The target audience will include transit and paratransit riders, business owners, residents, school district officials, city and county officials, non-profit leaders, the general public, and other interested parties. The goal is to exchange and gather information. The events will also give the attendees the opportunity to learn more, identify areas of concern, and ask questions and explore issues with TCTA staff. The event will be interactive to obtain maximum input from meeting participants.

To further ensure broad participation, the community workshop will include Spanish translation services, and additional languages if requested. Community workshop materials including flyers, exhibits, and comment cards will be available in both English and Spanish. The Project Team will also enlist the services of Community-Based and Faith-Based Organizations, as well as other similar agencies, to enhance participation by underrepresented and disadvantaged communities and individuals.

Public Engagement Summary Memo

Following the completion of all community outreach and engagement activities, the consultant team will prepare a Public Engagement Summary Memo. This report will provide a summary of all public participation and community outreach activities and outcomes, including:

- ✓ Key findings from the passenger and community surveys, including number of responses received, and summary charts for each survey question and open-ended text comments
- ✓ Key findings from each of the stakeholder interviews or group interviews/focus groups, including number of participants and organizations represented
- ✓ Key findings from each of the workshops/events, including number of attendees and summary of major comments received
- ✓ Appendices containing copies of all materials prepared and used during the public engagement process, including:
 - Public outreach materials, including flyers and posters, webpage and social media content materials, workshop presentations and polling results, and workshop materials
 - Passenger and community survey materials
 - Questions used in the stakeholder interviews/focused groups

Upon completion, the Public Engagement Summary will be incorporated into the final SRTP and Coordinated Plan documents.



EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Implementation of the Outreach Plan is expected to result in the following outcomes.

- ✓ Increased awareness and understanding of the SRTP and Coordinated Plan
- ✓ Partnerships with key community members to disseminate education materials and information
- ✓ Coordinated efforts with CBOs, FBOs, and other local, State, or regional partners to enhance the awareness of the Plans, particularly in underrepresented communities
- ✓ Increased opportunity to participate in the planning process by underrepresented communities
- ✓ Documentation of public concerns and opportunity for input
- ✓ Better use of agency resources as evidenced by effective, results-oriented meetings
- ✓ Project buy-in from community members and partner organizations