

MADERA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Madera County Transportation Commission
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Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan

Fiscal Years 2022/23 - 2026/27



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Transportation Planning Acronyms

A

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act

B

BNSF: Burlington Northern Santa Fe

C

CARES: Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act

CATX: Chowchilla Area Transit Express

CPOC: Coordinated Plan Oversight Committee

CTSA: Consolidated Transportation Services Agency

D

DAR: Dial-A-Ride

F

FAST: Fixing America's Surface Transportation

FTA: Federal Transit Administration

FY: Fiscal Year

H

HCBS: Home and Community-Based Services

I

IIJA: Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

J

JARC: Job Access and Reverse Commute

L

LTF: Local Transportation Fund

M

MAP-21: Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century

MCC: Madera County Connection

MCTC: Madera County Transportation Commission

MUSD: Madera Unified School District

N

NEMT: Non-Emergency Medical Transportation

O

OAA: Older Americans Act

R

RTPA: Regional Transportation Planning Agency

Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan

S

SAFETEA-LU: Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users

SSTAC: Social Services Transportation Advisory Committee

STA: State Transit Assistance

T

TDA: Transportation Development Act

U

UP: Union Pacific

Y

YARTS: Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System

Chapter 1 Introduction

Madera County is located in California’s San Joaquin Central Valley. Encompassing 2,147 square miles, the County is situated in the geographic center of the State of California along State Route (SR) 99, approximately 18 miles north of Fresno. The County has an average altitude of 265 feet ranging from 180 to 13,000 feet above sea level. The San Joaquin River forms the south and west boundaries with Fresno County. To the north, the Fresno River forms a portion of the boundary with Merced County. Mariposa County forms the remainder of the northern boundary. The crest of the Sierra Nevada Mountains forms the eastern boundary with Mono County. Generally, the County can be divided into three broad geographic regions – the Valley area on the west, the foothills between Madera Canal and the 3,500-foot elevation contour to the crest of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Madera County is served by a variety of human service organizations, senior center, private transportation companies and three public transit operators. Transit funding is limited at both the state and federal level. Therefore, it is important for these small organizations to coordinate transportation services in order to maximize mobility for residents and eliminate duplication of services.

The primary focus of this plan is to develop and refine existing implementable strategies that increase mobility for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes through public and stakeholder input through FY26/27. The strategies update the current Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan and involve the public transit operators’, private transportation providers, non-profit transportation providers or tribal transportation providers.

Federal Grant Eligibility

The Madera County Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan identifies the transportation needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities. This plan aims to better understand the needs for wheelchair, paratransit, and low-income transportation. In addition, it aims to identify strategies to improve transportation services and coordination among the human services transportation providers in the region.

This plan serves two purposes:

First, it serves as a framework to improve coordination among transportation service providers and human service agencies in Madera County to enhance transportation services for seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Second, the plan satisfies federal requirements for a “locally developed, Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan” – or Coordinated Plan – that includes the following elements:

- ❖ An assessment of available services that identify current transportation providers (public, private, and non-profit);
- ❖ An assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes. This assessment can be based on the experiences and perceptions of the planning partners, or on more sophisticated data collection efforts, and gaps in service;
- ❖ Strategies, activities, and/or projects to address the identified gaps between current services and needs, as well as opportunities to achieve efficiencies in service delivery;
- ❖ Priorities for implementation based on resources (from multiple program sources), time, and feasibility for implementing specific strategies and/or activities that have been identified.

Furthermore, the plan is a prioritization of transportation services for funding and implementation through the available programs in Madera County.

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES FOR COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION

Public Transit Funding Sources

FTA Section 5311 Rural Area Formula Grants

This program provides capital, planning, and operating assistance to support public transportation in rural areas, defined as areas with fewer than 50,000 residents. Funding is based on a formula that uses land area, population, and transit service. Since FY13/14, updates to the application include:

- ❖ Revised maximum project duration to recognize timing of federal grant approval process and State contract execution process
- ❖ Support Employment Services (SES) – a new category reflecting the consolidation of Section 5316 (JARC) funding into rural and urban formula programs under MAP-21. Operating Assistance for existing JARC funding has been “grandfathered” into SES. All applicants can also apply for new operating assistance SES projects. Include operating expenses as part of the regular budget and note the percentage of expenses attributable to SES
- ❖ Fare Table to provide additional information on fare projects used
- ❖ Mobility Management Request Form – now part of Section 5311 program and eligible for up to 80% federal funding

- ❖ In-Kind Valuation Form which may be used with Mobility Management Request
- ❖ New fleet and facility inventory form

FTA Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities

This program is intended to increase the mobility of seniors and persons with disabilities by providing funds for programs to serve the needs of transit-dependent populations beyond traditional public transportation services and American with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit services. At least 55% of program funds must be spent on the types of capital projects which are public transportation projects planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable. The remaining 45% may be used for public transportation projects that exceed the requirements of the ADA, public transportation projects that improve access to fixed-route service and decrease reliance by individuals with disabilities on complementary paratransit, and alternatives to public transportation that assist seniors and individuals with disabilities. Funding apportionment for the Section 5310 program changed under the MAP-21 federal surface transportation funding bill.

Funds under the Section 5310 program are apportioned to states for all small urban and rural areas with a population under 200,000 and large urbanized areas (UZAs) over 200,000. Eligible sub-recipients include states or local government authorities, private non-profit organizations, or operators of public transportation that receive a grant indirectly through a recipient. Funds are apportioned for urbanized and rural areas based on the number of seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Specific goals for Section 5310 include:

- ❖ Supporting operational effectiveness of non-profit organizations in human services transit delivery
- ❖ Assisting with improving program compliance among participant agencies
- ❖ Identifying barriers and opportunities in improving service coordination
- ❖ Expanding technical capacity for program participants
- ❖ Improving regional understanding of different human-services transit models
- ❖ Creating a needs assessment and short-range plan for establishing an effective mobility management program in the region

Toll Credit Funds in Lieu of Non-Federal Match Funds

Federal-aid highway and transit projects typically require the project sponsors to provide a certain amount of non-federal funds as match to the federal funds, as described above. Through the use of “Transportation Development Credits” (sometimes referred to as toll revenue credits), the non-federal share match requirement in California can be met by applying an equal amount

of Transportation Development Credit and therefore allow a project to be funded with up to 100% federal funds for federally participating costs.

Caltrans has been granted permission by the FTA to utilize Toll Credits and in the past has made credits available for FTA Section 5310, Section 5311, Section 5316, and Section 5317 programs. A potential grantee would need to review any call for projects to determine if Toll Credits will be allowed during that grant cycle.

Transportation Development Act Local Transportation Fund Program

A mainstay of funding for transit programs in California is provided by the Transportation Development Act (TDA). The major portion of TDA funds is provided through the Local Transportation Fund (LTF). These funds are generated by a ¼ cent statewide sales tax, returned to the county of origin. The returned funds must be spent for the following purposes:

- ❖ 2% may be provided for bicycle facilities per TDA statues. (Article 4 and 4.5)
- ❖ Up to 5% may be claimed by a Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA) for its operating costs, purchasing vehicles or purchase of communications and data processing equipment. (Article 4.5)
- ❖ The remaining funds must be spent for transit and paratransit purposes, unless a finding is made by the Transportation Commission that no unmet transit needs exist that can be reasonably met. (Article 4 and 8)
- ❖ If a finding of no unmet needs reasonable to meet is made, remaining funds can be spent on roadway construction and maintenance purposes. (Article 8)

State Transit Assistance (STA) Funds

In addition to LTF funding, the TDA includes a State Transit Assistance (STA) funding mechanism which is derived from the statewide sales tax on diesel fuel. Statue requires that 50% of STA funds be allocated according to population and 50% be allocated according to operator revenues from the prior fiscal year.

Other Human Service Agency Funding Sources

Older Americans Act (1965)

The Older Americans Act (OAA) addresses senior's access to health care and their general well-being. The Act established the federal Administration on Aging which is charged with the duty of implementing a range of assistance programs aimed at seniors, especially those at risk of losing their independence. Providing access to nutrition, medical and other essential services are all goals of the Act. There is no specific portion of the funding dedicated to transportation; however,

funding can be used for transportation under Title II (Support and Access Services, Title IV (Grants to American Indian Tribes), and the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) program.

Medi-Cal

Medi-Cal is California's health care program for children and adults with limited income and resources. Medi-Cal will pay transportation expenses for non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) trips for individuals who require wheelchair van, ambulance, litter van or simply a high level of care. However, the transportation provider must be licensed by Medi-Cal.

STUDY PROCESS

Coordinated Plan Oversight Committee

MCTC understands the importance of input and consensus. Thus, a collaborative process is utilized to create this coordinated planning document. Throughout development of this plan, the Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC) sought the opinion and feedback of interested parties, including local transit agencies, various social service agencies, tribal governments, non-profit organizations, other stakeholders, and the general public.

MCTC utilized public outreach feedback and comments pertaining to public transit service collected over the last five years from such activities as the Unmet Transit Needs process, Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy planning, and feedback from comments received during the development of this plan.

The Stakeholders were invited to become members of the Coordinated Plan Oversight Committee (CPOC) and were involved in development of the Coordinated Plan. Over the course of 3 meetings, MCTC gained insight into their transportation issues and needs.

On April 5, 2022, an introductory meeting was conducted with the CPOC with Local Transit Agencies staff, Madera County Transportation Commission staff, members of the public and other representatives of social service agencies. Participants were given an overview of the process. Participants then began discussing needs and strategies to combat them.

On May 17, 2022, a second meeting was conducted with the CPOC. Participants sought to have involvement from additional organizations and an additional meeting to provide opportunities for input. The discussion for the needs and strategies aimed to refine and specify the language.

On June 10, 2022, a final meeting was conducted with the CPOC. Participants were able to refine and finalize both the Transportation Needs Assessment and the Coordination Strategies along with help from additional community groups who provided input.

Survey of Transportation Disadvantaged Populations

April 20 – Unmet Transit Needs Hearing

On April 20, 2022, MCTC conducted the annual Public Unmet Transit Needs Hearing to obtain input on current Unmet Transit needs. The comments were presented to both the Social Services Transportation Advisory Committee (SSTAC) and the CPOC during the needs analysis portion of the plan development.

Chapter 2 Existing Conditions

The existing setting forms the basis for transportation demand anticipated to grow as the community's population and employment base expands. This demand will provide the impetus and direction for both the public and private sectors to cooperatively develop effective transportation options.

CURRENT LAND USES

Generally, Madera County can be divided into three broad geographic regions – the valley area on the west; the foothills between the Madera Canal and the 3,500-foot elevation contour; and the mountains from the 3,500-foot contour to the crest of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The Valley area is generally flat and ranges in elevation from 45 to 1,000 feet. This area contains approximately two-thirds of the County's population and includes the cities of Chowchilla and Madera, as well as the unincorporated communities of Fairmead, Madera Ranchos and Bonadelle Ranchos. A well-developed agricultural economic base characterizes this area. The foothill area contains the remaining one-third of the County population residing in the unincorporated communities of Oakhurst, Ahwahnee, North Fork, Coarsegold, Raymond and Yosemite Lakes Park. The agricultural base in this area is primarily grazing. Much of the area's employment base is involved in the tourist-related services with a significant commuter component going to Fresno, Madera and other valley employment and service centers. The mountain area is essentially uninhabited with most of the land located in the Sierra National Forest, Yosemite National Park, Devils Postpile National Monument and the Ansel Adams and John Muir Wilderness Areas. Historically, the national forest area has supported a strong lumber-based economy; however, this has been curtailed by environmental actions.

POPULATION TRENDS

As shown in Table 2-1, Madera County's 2020 population was 156,255, according to the U.S. Census. The table shows the distribution of the total population from 1990 to 2020 among the incorporated areas and the unincorporated areas. The County's population rose from 88,090 in 1990 to 156,255 in 2020. In 2020, the unincorporated county area accounted for 46% of the County population compared to 42% for the City of Madera and 12% for the City of Chowchilla.

Table 2-1 Madera County Population Trends 1990 - 2020

LOCATION	1990		2000		2010		2020	
	POPULATION	% OF TOTAL	POPULATION	% OF TOTAL	POPULATION	% OF TOTAL	POPULATION	% OF TOTAL
City of Madera	29,281	33%	43,207	35%	61,416	41%	66,224	42%
City of Chowchilla*	5,930	7%	11,129	9%	18,720	12%	19,039	12%
Unincorporated Area	52,879	60%	68,775	56%	70,729	47%	70,992	45%
Total County	88,090	100%	123,109	100%	150,865	100%	156,255	100%

*2000, 2010 and 2020 includes population from two women’s prisons.

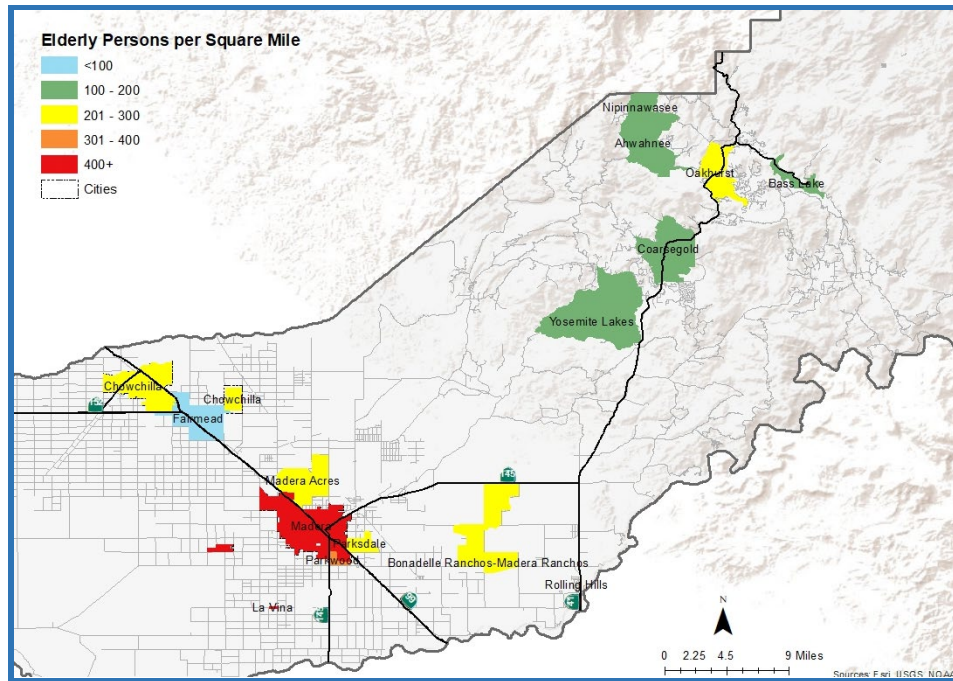
Source: U.S. Census

In 2020, 30.3% of Madera County’s population was under 20 years old, 55.4% between 20 and 64 years, and 14.3% over 65 years of age or older. In terms of racial breakdown, 55.3% of the population was Hispanic, 33.2% white (not Hispanic or Latino), 4.2% African-American, 4.4% American Indian, and 2.9% Asian or Pacific Islander. The population of Madera County is projected to reach 178,070 in 2030.

TRANSIT DEPENDENT POPULATIONS

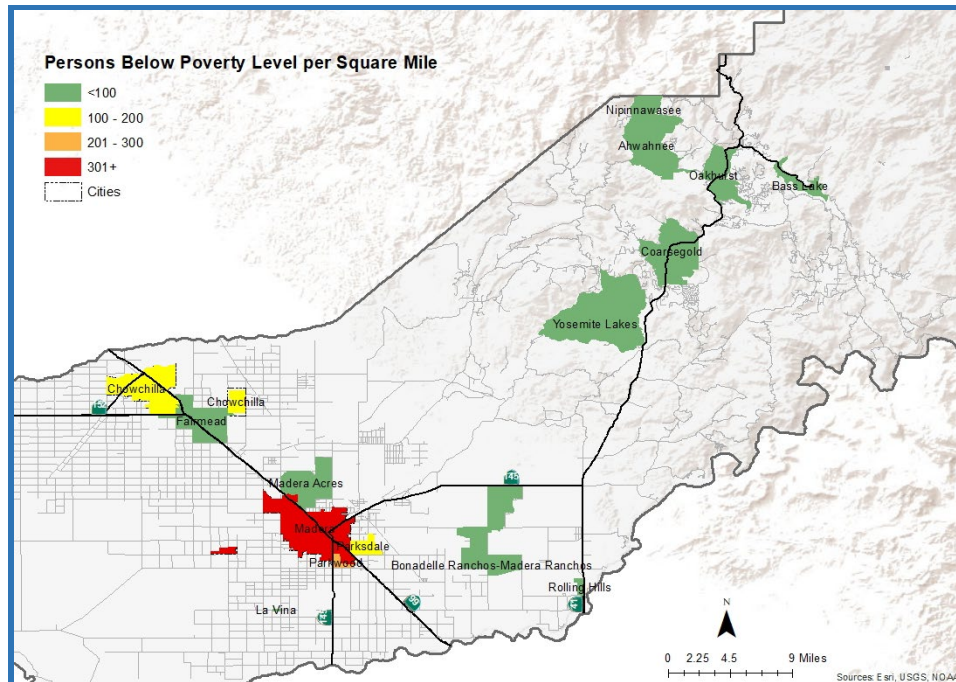
Madera County has made notable progress in addressing many public transit needs throughout the region. MCTC’s “Unmet Transit Needs” process annually determines whether transit needs within Madera County exist and must ensure that these needs have been reasonably met by County transit systems. These transit systems provide vital transportation services while reducing single-occupancy vehicle trips and improving air quality. Madera County’s future population growth, combined with an increase in transit-dependent residents, rising fuel costs, changing demographics, and travel patterns, undoubtedly will impact the demand for transit services. While public transit will continue to play an important role in the mobility of those who are dependent on transit as a lifeline service and increasingly for those residents seeking transportation options, delivery of transit services must be reliable, convenient, and cost-effective.

Figure 2-1 Transit Dependent Populations: Elderly Persons



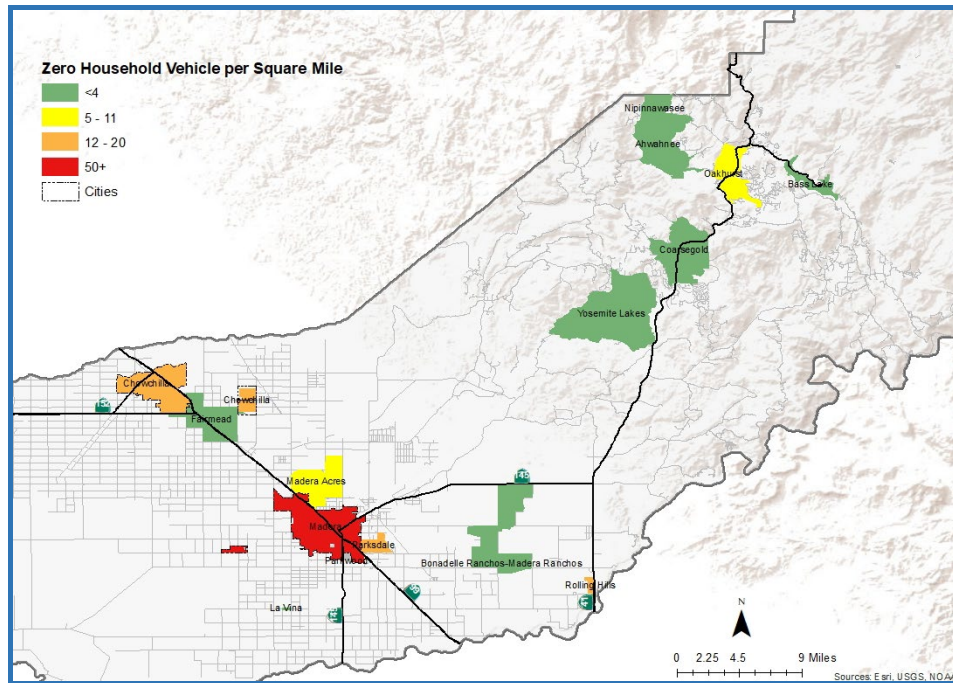
Source: US Census

Figure 2-2 Transit Dependent Populations: Persons Below Poverty



Source: US Census

Figure 2-3 Transit Dependent Populations: Zero Household Vehicles



Source: US Census

For a longer-range perspective, MCTC’s Regional Transportation Plan for Madera County forecasts planned transit improvements over a 24-year timeframe. These future transit improvements reflect continued funding of transit services for all systems in the County and initiation of enhanced transit service in core growth areas. These areas are identified through population and household growth derived from the MCTC transportation demand model enhancing the overall quality of life for residents throughout the County.

EMPLOYMENT

Madera County has experienced a relatively stable civilian labor force comprising 61,700 workers in 2010, rising to 62,400 in 2012 and 61,700 in 2020. Over the past 11 years, the labor force averaged 61,500. However, like most of the nation, the County experienced increasing unemployment rates starting in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, of which the effects are yet to be fully realized. The unemployment rate soared from 7.0% in 2019 to 10.8% in 2020.

Table 2-2 Major Employers in Madera County

EMPLOYER	TYPE	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	LOCATION	SERVED BY TRANSIT
Madera Unified School District ❖ Madera High School ❖ Madera South High School ❖ Matilda Torres High School	Public	3,500	Madera	Yes Yes Yes
State of California ❖ Valley State Prison for Women	Public	2,600	Chowchilla	Yes Yes
Children’s Hospital	Private	2,500	County	Yes
County of Madera ❖ Madera County Mental Health	Public	1,700	County	Yes Yes
Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino	Private	1,400	Coarsegold	Yes
Madera Community Hospital	Private	936	Madera	Yes
City of Madera ❖ Madera City Hall	Public	400	Madera	Yes
Ardagh Group	Private	350	Madera	Yes
Constellation Brands	Private	350	Madera	Yes
Walmart	Private	350	Madera	Yes
U.S. Government	Public	300	Madera	Yes
Lion Raisins, Inc.	Private	250-499	County	No
San Joaquin Wine Co.	Private	250-499	County	No
Lamanuzzi & Pantaleo Cold Storage	Private	250-499	County	No
Cherokee Freight Lines	Private	250-499	Madera	Yes
Baltimore Aircoil Co.	Private	242	Madera	Yes
Community Action Partnership of Madera County	Private	235	Madera	Yes
CertainTeed Corp.	Private	185	Chowchilla	Yes
JBT Food Tech	Private	165	Madera	Yes
EVAPCO, Inc.	Private	140	Madera	Yes
Warnock Food Products	Private	130	County	No
Georgia-Pacific Corp-Madera	Private	125	Madera	Yes
Home Depot	Private	100-249	Madera	Yes
Lowe’s Home Improvement	Private	100-249	Madera	Yes
Sierra Tel	Private	100-249	Oakhurst	Yes
Span Construction, Inc.	Private	100-249	Madera	Yes
Madera Rehab Center	Private	100-249	Madera	Yes
Azteca Milling	Private	100	Madera	Yes
Oldcastle Enclosure Solutions	Private	100	Madera	Yes

Source: Madera County Economic Development Commission

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The transit industry worldwide has experienced an unprecedented ridership decline due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Beginning in the latter half of FY 2019/20, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant declines in ridership and farebox revenue. In many instances, transit operators strove to retain operations staff despite adopting a reduced schedule, resulting in significant changes to many cost-related performance metrics. While infusion of funding through the CARES Act and other actions have mitigated some of the lost revenues, most transit programs have yet to return to pre-pandemic ridership and farebox levels. Madera County transit operators will be challenged to ensure safe, reliable, and quality services can be provided to return to pre-pandemic ridership levels.

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT

On November 15, 2021, President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs (IIJA) Act (Pub. L. No. 117-58) into law. The IIJA authorizes \$1.2 trillion over a decade. Of that, about \$550 billion is new spending. Specifically, the bill authorizes:

- \$66 billion on passenger/freight rail
- \$39 billion on public transit
- \$15 billion on electric vehicles
- \$11 billion on transportation safety programs

INFLATION

The annual inflation rate in the United States is 9.1% for the 12 months ended June 2022. This is the largest annual increase since November 1981 and after rising 8.6% previously, according to Department of Labor data published July 13, 2022.

Increasing costs for goods and energy will seriously impact the ability of transit agencies to operate frequent services on routes, staff vehicles, and implement infrastructure projects such as bus shelters and charging stations.

Chapter 3 Transportation Providers

EXISTING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Public transit in Madera County includes Madera Metro fixed route and Dial-A-Ride, Madera County Connection, fixed route, Dial-A-Ride, MCC Madera Dial-A-Ride and MCC Chowchilla Dial-A-Ride, Eastern Madera County Senior Bus, Escort Program, Chowchilla Area Transit Express specialized social service transportation services, intercity bus with Greyhound, taxi services and ride hailing services with Uber and Lyft. Public transportation is provided by fixed-route and demand-response transit systems, as described below.

City of Madera

The City of Madera and its environs are served by several public and private transportation providers. The city operates the **Madera Metro (Metro)** fixed-route system and **Madera Dial-A-Ride (DAR)**, a general public demand-responsive system. Both services are operated under contract with MV Public Transportation.

Madera Metro

The Madera Metro is a fixed-route system that operates weekdays from 7:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Service operates primarily within the city limits, as shown in Figure 3-1. The system transported over 55,700 riders in FY 20/21. The city completed the construction of the new Madera Transit Center located at 1951 Independence Drive. The facility opened in the fall of 2020 and provides facilities for fueling, washing, maintenance, parking, and administrative functions.

Madera Dial-A-Ride

Dial-A-Ride is a general public system primarily serving the elderly and disabled. The service operates weekdays from 7:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Sundays from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The system operates within the Madera urban area covering a five-mile radius from the downtown area, as depicted on Figure 3-2, and transported 4,300 riders in FY 20/21.

Figure 3-1 Madera Metro Route Map

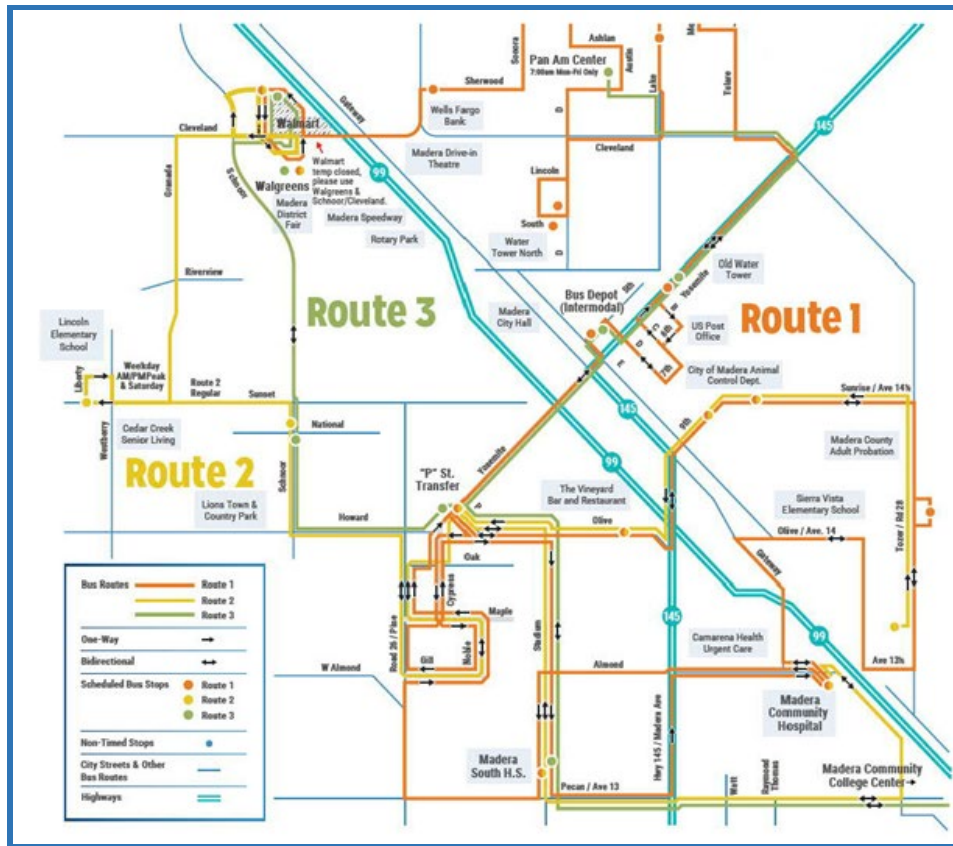
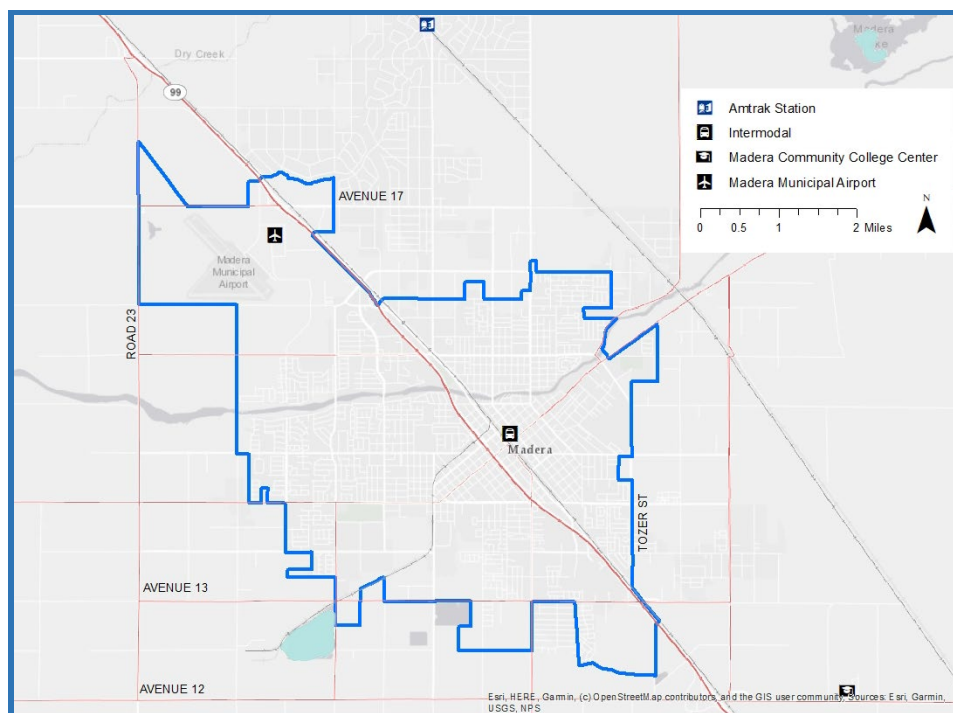


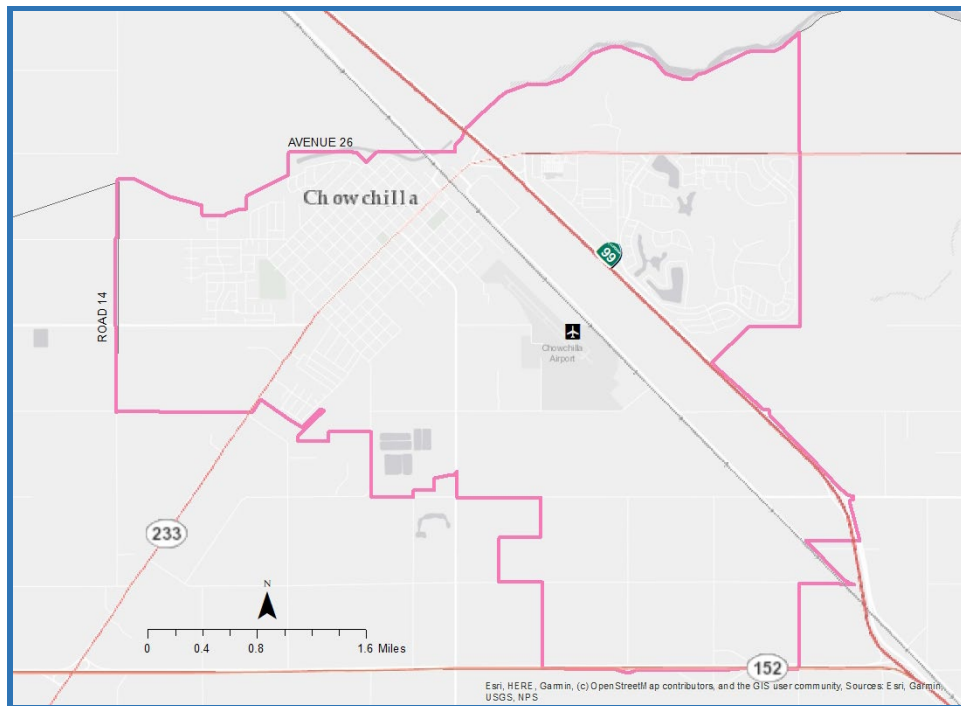
Figure 3-2 Madera Dial-A-Ride Service Area



City of Chowchilla

The City of Chowchilla operates **Chowchilla Area Transit Express (CATX)**, a general public, demand-responsive service within Chowchilla city limits area shown in Figure 3-3. Service is offered weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Figure 3-3 CATX Service Area



County of Madera

Madera County operates a general public, fixed-route system, and demand-response services. The **Madera County Connection (MCC)** is an inter-city fixed-route bus service. **MCC Madera Dial-A-Ride** and **MCC Chowchilla Dial-A-Ride** are general public, demand-response services.

The County operates two specialized services. The **Eastern Madera County Senior Bus Program**, an intra-community demand-response bus service, serves seniors and disabled residents, and the **Eastern Madera County Escort Program** is an intercity demand-response van service. County services are operated by a third-party contractor, Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission (Fresno EOC).

Madera County Connection

MCC is a general public, inter-city, fixed-route weekday service. As shown in Figure 3-4, the system operates three fixed-routes. The Eastern Madera route serves the communities of North Fork, Oakhurst, and Coarsegold, extending to the Madera Ranchos and the Children's Hospital of

Central California via the City of Madera. The Chowchilla/Fairmead route provides service between the City of Madera, Fairmead, and the City of Chowchilla. The Eastin Arcola/Ripperdan/La Vina route provides service from the City of Madera to the communities of La Vina, Ripperdan, and Eastin Arcola every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

MCC operates weekdays from about 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on the Eastern Madera County route and from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on the Chowchilla/Fairmead route. The Eastin Arcola/Ripperdan/La Vina route operates Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 8:45 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. In FY 2020/21, MCC transported a total of 13,695 riders.

MCC Madera Dial-A-Ride and MCC Chowchilla Dial-A-Ride

MCC also provides general public demand-response service to County areas surrounding the cities of Madera and Chowchilla, as reflected in Figure 3-5 and Figure 3-6 respectively. MCC Madera Dial-A-Ride service is provided Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and Sunday from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. MCC Chowchilla Area Dial-A-Ride service is provided Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Each of these services is operated with one 16-passenger bus. Reservations can be made a day in advance or up to two hours prior to the time of pick up. In FY 2020/21, MCC Madera Dial-A-Ride and MCC Chowchilla Dial-A-Ride transported 2,479 riders and 214 riders, respectively.

Eastern Madera County Senior Bus

The Eastern Madera County Senior Bus has been in operation since 1983. It is a demand-response service operating Monday through Friday (except holidays) from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. This program serves Eastern Madera County seniors 60 years and older and disabled residents. As shown on Figure 3-7, the service area encompasses a large region, including Oakhurst, Bass Lake, Coarsegold, and Ahwahnee. The system utilizes two 18-passenger lift-equipped buses. Each bus is fully air conditioned, accommodates two wheelchairs and has front and rear running signs. This service is reserved for seniors and disabled individuals and requires an approved application to use this service. The one-way fare on the Senior Bus is \$1.50. A 24-hour advance reservation is required, except for medical emergencies. The service had a ridership of 1,923 in FY 2020/21.

Eastern Madera County Escort Service

The Medical Escort Service has been in operation since 1988 as a demand-response, general public transportation service. The system provides transportation to medical-related appointments in Madera and Fresno Counties. It serves Eastern Madera County general public residents with an emphasis on serving senior residents 60 years and older and the disabled.

Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan

Service is provided on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. A 24-hour advanced reservation is required, except for medical emergencies. Individual requests for a ride are coordinated through a contracted exchange service. The Escort Service serves the area covered by the Senior Bus, but also serves the community of North Fork and offers trips beyond the Eastern Madera County region as far as the Cities of Madera, Fresno, and Clovis. The system utilizes two vehicles (one active and one backup). The five-passenger vans may carry one wheelchair. The service transported 287 riders in FY 2020/21.

Figure 3-4 MCC Fixed-Route Service Area

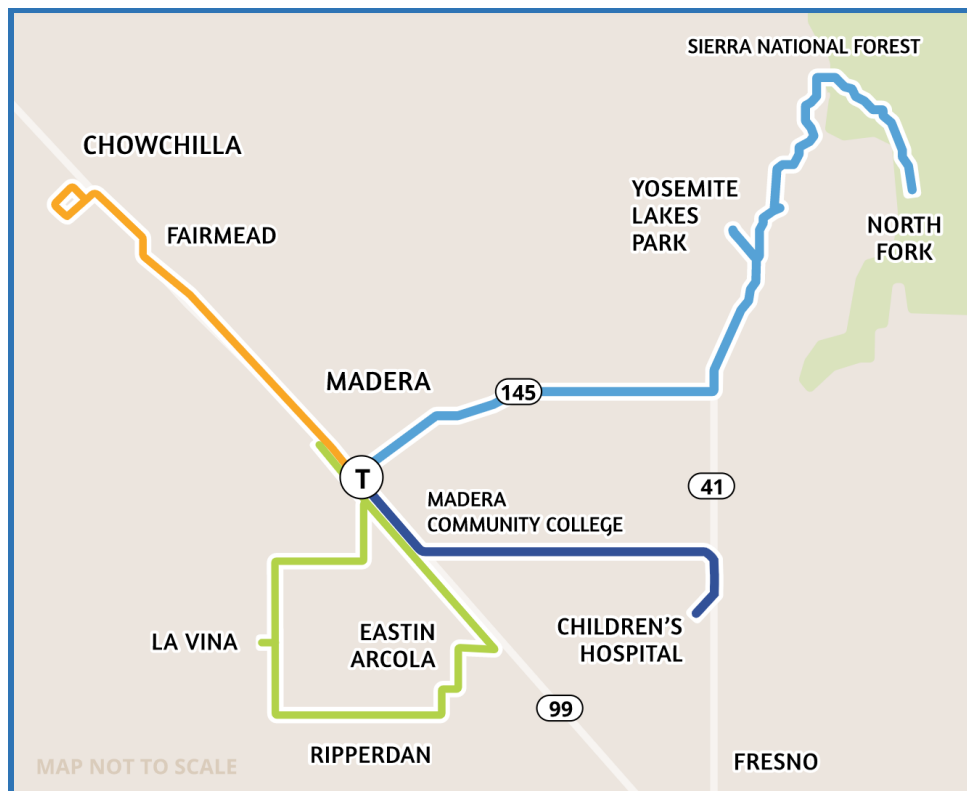


Figure 3-5 MCC Madera Dial-A-Ride Service Area

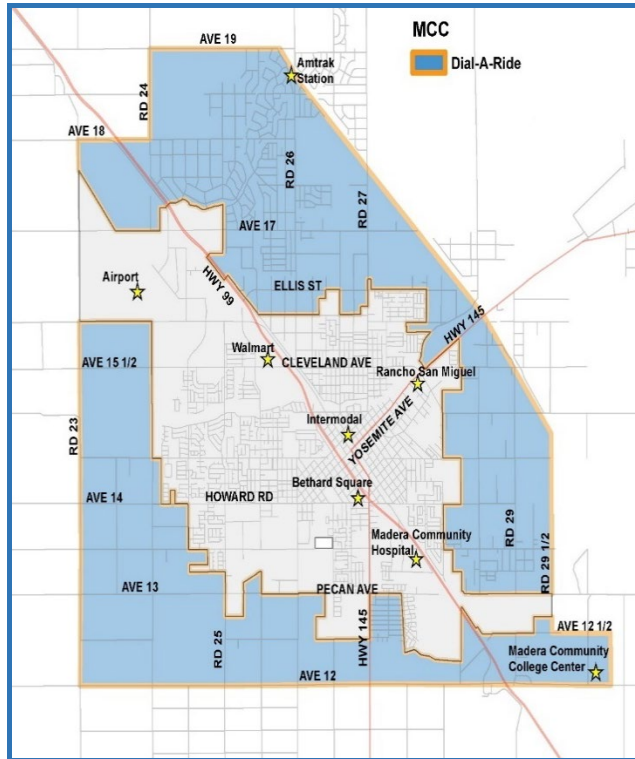
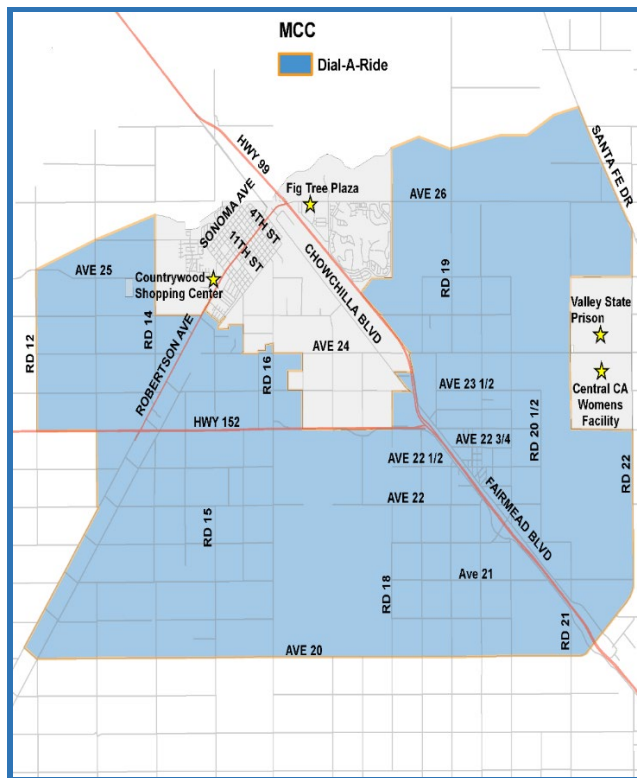


Figure 3-6 MCC Chowchilla Dial-A-Ride Service Area



YARTS fares vary based on distance; all fares to the park include the entrance fee to Yosemite National Park. Round Trip fares for the Highway 41 route range from \$5.00 to \$34.00. YARTS service on Highway 41 is seasonal, providing service through the summer months.

Social Service Transportation Providers

As shown in Table 3-1, five social service agencies provide transportation in Madera County. These agencies largely provide service to their clients and to specific sites.

Table 3-1 Social Service Transportation Providers in Madera County

SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCY	TRANSPORTATION PROVIDED
Heartland Opportunity Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Demand-response service ❖ Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. ❖ Serves disabled persons over 18 years old
Davita Dialysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Demand-response service ❖ Monday – Saturday from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. ❖ Serves dialysis patients
American Cancer Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Volunteer driver program using private vehicles ❖ Serves ambulatory cancer patients ❖ Suspended during the pandemic
Madera County Public Health Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Anthem Blue Cross, Cal Viva and MediCal offer transportation services for insurance holders
Camarena Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Provides patients with free bus tickets on Metro, MCC and DAR services

Private Providers

Several private carriers provide inter-city services, including Greyhound and Madera Cab Company. Greyhound operates seven days per week from the City of Madera’s Downtown Intermodal Center on North “E” Street to cities throughout the valley. Madera Cab Company provides service in Madera County seven days per week, 24 hours per day.

Lyft and Uber operate in the greater Fresno area, including parts of Madera County. These ridesharing companies provide customized person-to-person travel solutions, smart phone reservations and payments, with fares established by the companies and will travel to a requested destination within designated boundaries.

Passenger Rail / Support Facilities

Madera County is served by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) and the Union Pacific (UP) Railroads. Before the pandemic, Amtrak operated seven days per week with fourteen daily stops in Madera along the BNSF Railroad alignment. However, during the pandemic, Amtrak operated with ten daily stops. As of July 22, 2022, service has been restored on two trips, giving a current total of twelve daily stops in Madera. The nearest stop to the north is Merced and to the south, Fresno.

Chapter 4 Transportation Needs Assessment

Federal guidelines related to coordinated transit planning require an assessment of transportation needs for residents with disabilities, older adults, and low-income individuals. The needs assessment for Madera County was developed from input obtained through the review of existing services and needs and coordination with the Coordinated Plan Oversight Committee (CPOC), composed of transit and human service agencies staff, as well as residents with disabilities and older adults.

Existing Coordination of Services

Coordination efforts are underway and continuing in Madera County. A number of major public transit milestones have been reached in Madera County changing the way in which transit services are delivered in the region.

Significant fixed-route and demand-responsive service changes in the City of Madera and its environs have resulted from in-depth assessments of transit needs. These studies have resulted in comprehensive planning analyses and notable service improvements.

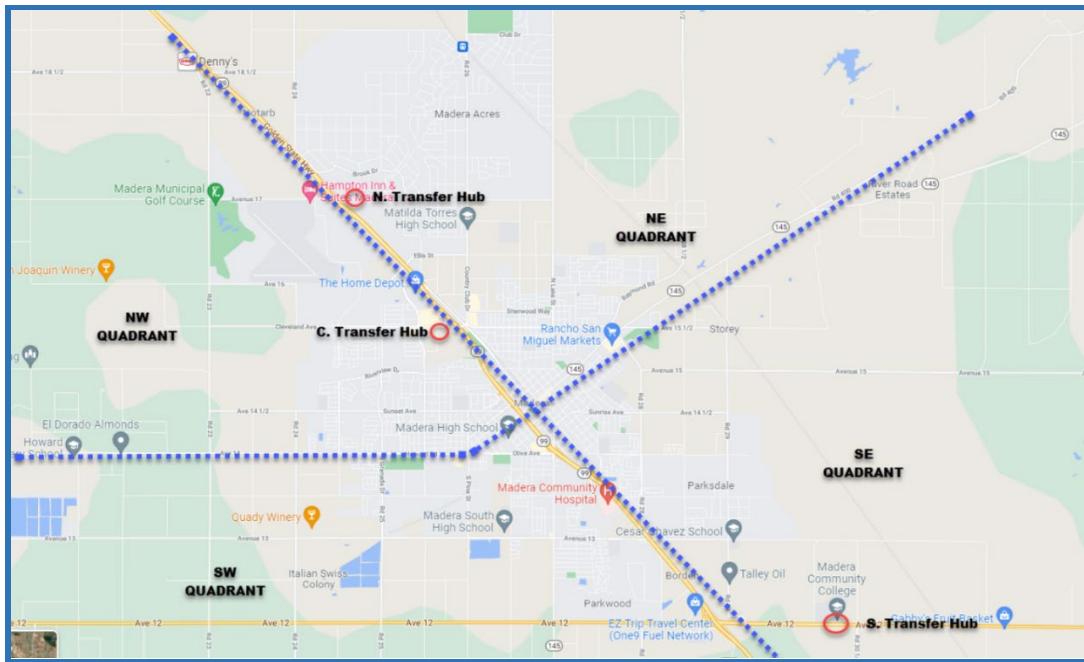
In addition to assisting passengers with trip planning and other services, Madera Metro is in close contact with a wide variety of human service agencies. Specifically, Metro has coordinated with different human service agencies and other regional entities in the area in the following ways:

- ❖ Coordinates with riders and agencies to offer timed transfer connections
- ❖ Coordinates with the Community Agencies to provide transportation to/from the day program from consumers' homes
- ❖ Social Agencies refer to clients to local transit services
- ❖ Multiple agencies purchase Metro, Dial-A-Ride, CATX and MCC bus passes for their clients.

Potential Coordination Opportunities

In the spring of 2022, Madera Metro completed Phase 1 of the Madera Transit Plan. Phase 2 aims to incorporate local mobility hubs across the City of Madera, as shown in Figure 4-1. The purpose of these mobility hubs is to tie together the four designated quadrants of the city, divided by SR-99, Yosemite Ave, and Howard Road. Currently, transfer hubs are planned near the intersection of SR-99 and Avenue 17, the intersection of Schnoor Ave and Cleveland Ave, and at the Madera Community College. These hubs will offer transfers to other Metro routes, MCC routes, and other fixed-route services, allowing additional transfer points to traverse the city outside of downtown.

Figure 4-1 Madera Transit Plan Quadrants and Hubs



Madera County Social Services had noted that their agency had many resources available for the production and distribution of information and offered to share their resources to transit partners in order to better educate the public on resources available.

An idea to create a unified log for all public and private transit services was considered. This would allow riders to compare transit options as well as view how the different transit options interact with each other.

Madera Unified School District (MUSD) was present to describe the resources and methodology used for the transportation of students to schools in the County. Consideration was given for the ability of MUSD to effectively transport students. For gaps in service area where neither MUSD nor Madera Metro operated, alternative transportation, specifically active transportation, was identified as an area to explore.

Major Barriers to Coordination

The idea for a unified log for all transit services has been considered before, but several issues hindered its implementation. Changes to different services' schedules occur frequently, so printed bus schedules become outdated. Once distributed, there is no way to guarantee their accuracy. A Local Transit Guide was published previously detailing all transit services within the County. However, it also became outdated with time. Other agencies in the region had attempted to reprint their transit guides in order to keep up with changes in service, but it was found to be cost-prohibitive.

MUSD has its own independent guidelines and routing for service. Additionally, per 49 CFR Part 605 Subpart B, “no recipient or operator of project equipment shall engage in school bus operations using buses, facilities, or equipment funded under the Acts.” This stipulation outlines transit operators cannot share resources with school transport. However, transit operators can provide students with service as part of their regular routes and schedules. They can even provide “tripper service” to manage overloads, but it must be open to the public and cannot be designated “school bus” or “school special.”

Duplication of Services

The primary goal of coordination is to maximize limited transportation resources by eliminating duplication of the same type of transportation services. Examples of duplication of services may include:

- Multiple agency vans providing transportation along the same route at the same time
- Multiple volunteer driver programs which, if combined, could maximize the use of volunteers as well as administrative staff time
- Vehicles which lay idle for a good portion of the week
- Multiple contracts for vehicle maintenance. Through economies of scale, several agencies could potentially obtain a lower rate for maintenance
- Eligibility requirements for program services sometimes result in duplication of services. For example, grant funding for senior services may only be used to transport seniors even if the van stops near a “non-senior” activity center

There is no significant duplication of services in Madera County. In general, human service agencies refer transit dependent clients to Madera Metro, CATX, MCC, and respective Dial-A-Ride services when possible, and only provide transportation to/from destinations outside the public transit service area and operating hours.

Gaps in Service

As with all smaller counties with rural areas, Madera County is plagued with the problem of how to connect transit dependent residents living in remote outlying areas to services in the larger communities. Whether it is due to a lower cost of living or a higher quality of life, there will always be a part of the transit dependent population who live far from the goods and services they require.

Additionally, due to the pandemic and repercussions from it, services have been reduced. While pandemic stimulus funding did help keep services funded in lieu of fare revenue, with the expiring of these funding methods, services may not return to pre-pandemic strength for some time.

Unmet Transit Needs

The Transportation Development Act requires that the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) establish an appropriate citizen participation process including at least one public hearing represented by the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) to hear the transit needs of the transit disadvantaged population. The following outlines some of the unmet needs for older adults, low income and individuals with disabilities which have been discussed at recent unmet needs hearings.

- Request to add a bus stop at Walmart
- Need for wastebaskets at bus stops in the City of Madera
- Improve wait times for buses
- Need for infrastructure improvements
- Desire for improved customer service
- Request for fare decrease
- Request for service expansion

Chapter 5 Coordination Strategies

The final step in the coordinated planning process is to develop strategies to address the gaps in service and transportation needs identified in the previous chapters. The following coordinated strategies are based on the original coordinated strategies set forth in the 2015 Coordinated Plan, updated based on public input and current conditions to ensure that they meet current transportation needs for low income, older adults, and residents with disabilities. These strategies were developed in close coordination with the SSTAC, human service agencies, local transit providers, and community members.

These coordinated strategies are intended to provide general guidance to local transit providers as well as to human service agencies and other local officials. The primary goal of this document is to provide background information and demonstrate the need for transportation services that can be used for the purpose of securing grant funding and ensuring that it will be well used to address the specific needs of the region. Detailed cost or ridership estimates are not provided, as it is intended these specifics will be finalized at a later stage in the development of transportation services. The coordinated strategies are intentionally broad, in order to allow for flexibility for implementation, as needs and funding sources may change over time. These strategies are designed to maximize current community financial and other resources as well as potential outside funding sources.

Evaluation Criteria

Each strategy was evaluated by the Coordinated Plan Advisory Committee and the SSTAC according to evaluation criteria developed through the previous coordinated planning effort. Three separate evaluation criteria were set forth.

CRITERIA 1: COORDINATION

How would the strategy build upon existing services? The strategy should:

- ❖ Avoid duplication and promote coordination of services and programs
- ❖ Allow for and encourage participation of local human service and transportation stakeholders

CRITERIA 2: MEETS DOCUMENTED NEED

How well does the strategy address transportation gaps or barriers identified through the Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan? The strategy should:

- ❖ Provide service in a geographic area with limited transportation options

- ❖ Serve a geographic area where the greatest number of people need a service
- ❖ Improve the mobility of the clientele subject to state and federal funding sources (i.e., low income, elderly, persons with disabilities)
- ❖ Provide a level of service not currently provided with existing resources
- ❖ Preserve and protect existing services

CRITERIA 3: FEASIBILITY OF IMPLEMENTATION

How likely is the strategy to be successfully implemented? The strategy should:

- ❖ Be eligible for grant funding
- ❖ Result in efficient use of available resources
- ❖ Have a potential project sponsor or individual champion with the operational capacity to carry out the strategy
- ❖ Have the potential to be sustained beyond the grant period

Coordinated Strategies

Strategy #1 – Reconvene CPOC more frequently due to rapidly changing aspects due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, inflation etc.

As documented in Chapter 2, several national ongoing events are having impacts on the operations of local transit providers. Since March 2020, the world is still reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic and the pervasive repercussions from it. In November 2021, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act was passed. As of July 2022, inflation was 9.1%. Due to the several once-in-a-generation events occurring simultaneously, different aspects of transit operations are constantly changing.

Considering that the previous Coordinated Plan was approved in 2015, maintaining an accurate plan become difficult given the large length of time between publications. CPOC recognized the present abnormal environment. CPOC recommends reconvening the Committee and to alter the Coordinated Plan on a more frequent basis.

Strategy #2 – Create a unified log of all transit services available, public and private, within the County of Madera to combat issues in adapting to new routes and schedules

As listed in Chapter 3, there are many public and private transit providers in Madera County. The City of Madera offers Madera Metro (Metro) and Madera Dial-A-Ride. The City of Chowchilla offers Chowchilla Area Transit Express (CATX). The County of Madera offers Madera County Connection (MCC), MCC Madera Dial-A-Ride, MCC Chowchilla Dial-A-Ride, Eastern Madera

County Senior Bus Program, and Eastern Madera County Escort Program. Additionally, there is the California Vanpool Authority (CalVans), the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS), social service transportation providers, private providers, and passenger rail.

In order to keep track of all transit services available as well as their operational status, a unified log of all transit services available should be created and made readily available to be viewed by the general public. This log should be digital to allow for changes to be implemented constantly and immediately so that the information provided is always up to date and to save money on printing.

Strategy #3 – Utilize local government agencies for outreach and advertising; engage in cross-agency public events

When it comes to awareness of available services, many stakeholders noted that promotion of services was desired by their respective constituents. While all transit agencies currently engage in marketing at their respective facilities and websites, there is a continued need for more. Ideas were given for promoting transportation services in public areas and public events. These would include information on services available as well as their interaction with other services.

In attempting to better market available service, cross-agency involvement was highlighted as a potential avenue to explore. Many local agencies outside of transportation have resources for advertisement to reach their respective constituencies. These resources may be made available to transit agencies in order to market through new channels with new technologies. This aims to reach a wider audience throughout Madera County.

Strategy #4 – Encourage alternative transportation options for schools

A major problem identified in regard to local transportation was the influx of traffic due to transporting children to school during the morning rush hour. While Madera Unified School District does offer bus services, many arterial roads throughout the city are congested with drivers trying to get to and from schools across Madera County.

Alternative transportation methods for students should be explored in order to ease congestion during rush hour. These alternative options may include:

- Child ridesharing
- Passenger vans
- Safe Routes to School
- Walking school bus

Additionally, transit services should coordinate with schools to optimize routes so areas not served by school bus service may have other options available.