

Nevada County Transportation Commission meeting – July 17, 2024

Draft Eastern Nevada County Transit Development Plan Presentation by Genevieve Evans from LSC Transportation

Aaron Hoyt:

Good morning, Chair and Commissioners. I just wanted to introduce briefly this item. Genevieve Evans, Principal with LSC Transportation Consultants, will provide a greater detail overview of the Eastern County or Truckee Transit Development Plan that will guide the next five years of implementation of the transit system here in the Town of Truckee.

We kicked this off back in May with a request for proposals, and LSC Transportation Consulting was selected as the highest ranked firm. Since then, we have been working with the Town of Truckee and LSC to look at existing transit services that are offered within the Town, how things are working, where some of the highlights are in terms of ridership, cost-effectiveness, and a number of different parameters and indicators of the system. Through looking at what options there may be, and interests of the Town in expanding services, changing services, they've looked at that, along with public engagement, participation, and what would the public like to see, what's working well for them.

They took all that information in and crafted a plan, looking at the financial constraints as well as an unconstrained scenario of how might transit look in the next five years in the Town of Truckee. Today, Genevieve Evans will be presenting that overview. In your packet there is a link to the draft plan. It's a little lengthy so it was not included in its full entirety of your electronic document, but it is available. The plan will be presented to the Town Council on their August 27th meeting for input and discussion there amongst the elected officials as well as more public opportunity to provide input on the plan.

Once all the comments from today as well as that Town Council meeting are provided, the plan will be revised and put into a final version, and ultimately it will come back to your body here, the Commission, for acceptance in September. And when I say acceptance, we're assuming that the Town is comfortable with the plan, they're supportive of the plan and the plan actually lays out a realistic roadmap, if you will, or transit map to get to their goal within five years. So that's the upcoming schedule of events for the overall plan. But I'll let Genevieve dive into more details and we welcome any comments and questions that you may have throughout this presentation and towards the end. Thank you.

Genevieve Evans:

Thank you. Good morning, Commissioners and everybody. Aaron had a great introduction for what a Transit Plan is, but I'd like to give you a little bit of overview of what a Transit Development Plan is and why we're doing this. We think of a TDP, for short, as a business plan for the transit agency. It should provide guidance and direction for NCTC, board, staff, Town of Truckee Council and staff as to how to direct public transit investments over the next five years.

It's also a great opportunity to do public outreach, surveys, talking to riders and folks in the community, what they would like to see changed or what has changed in Truckee over the years. And it's also a great opportunity, as Town of Truckee staff is busy running the transit agency, for a third party to dig into the numbers and really see how services are performing, how cost-effective they are, and analyze a wide variety of options as to how we can potentially improve mobility for folks in Truckee and make the system as cost-effective as we can with our limited budget.

The first step in a planning process is setting the scene for transit with background conditions. The Town of Truckee has about 17,000 people, which is a small portion of the total Nevada County population. Nevada County's population is not expected to increase significantly in the next 10 years or so, which is normal for rural counties. However, the Town of Truckee is anticipated to grow. Obviously we're a resort town here and it's a little different. So that's anticipated to grow about 7%. So

that's something to think about. We do look to census data to figure out where we think folks who are most reliant on public transit for their everyday needs live. And we found that there are higher concentrations around the downtown area, near where the fixed route goes now, Sierra Meadows, southern downtown, also out in Central Glenshire, which obviously is a little bit more difficult to serve with public transit.

The Nevada County population is aging in place as most places are. This is important to think about in terms of Dial-a-Ride. About 97% or so of Dial-a-Ride users are elderly or disabled in some way and need a little additional assistance. When we look at ridership numbers, you'll see Dial-a-Ride is steady or increasing and that's a trend that will likely continue. Commute patterns are something that we have to think about here in Truckee with the ski resorts and a lot of employers. And even though Truckee is a town, we have the resort triangle. So, there's a lot of folks going between North Lake Tahoe and Truckee as well as Reno and Truckee. And when you look at census data on commute statistics only, of the employed residents in Truckee, 59% travel outside of Truckee for work. And it goes the other way as well.

About 63% of jobs in Truckee are filled by folks living outside of Truckee. This is where transit services such as Placer TART are important because they provide regional connections between North Lake Tahoe and Truckee. We'll give you a quick overview of the Truckee TART services that we're thinking about as part of this plan. We have a fixed route, what we call a local route, which operates once an hour from about 6:30am to 6:30pm. You can go anywhere from the Goldstream area on the west in the northeast part up to near Grays Crossing, there's some workforce housing up there. And now you can go all the way down to the development near Raley's and Soaring Way.

The Railyard Mobility Hub is now our transfer point with Placer TART and that's in the middle near the Railyard project. Dial-a-Ride is open to the general public with preference to folks who need a little bit more, seniors and disabled. And that encompasses the entire Town of Truckee. However, you do need a 24-hour advance reservation. Of course, there's special event shuttles which are highly productive for Truckee Thursdays and 4th of July as a way to mitigate parking and traffic problems. These are successful programs. And then we have our Truckee TART Connect pilot program, which I'm sure you've heard a lot about. This is microtransit on-demand. How it's different from Dial-a-Ride is that you don't need to make an advanced reservation. You make a reservation like Uber through your phone, and with luck a vehicle will come within a half an hour but it could be longer, and it's available within the whole Town of Truckee.

This has been a very successful way of serving the neighborhoods that the fixed route has not been able to serve as effectively. And then of course, the Town contributes money to the Placer TART program as there are connections, and does serve some of Truckee. And there's regional services, Greyhound, North Lake Tahoe Express, and Amtrak. I have a few graphs here of ridership and performance to give you an idea of how Truckee transit has been forming over the years. This is historical ridership for the different services. The yellow line on the top is Placer TART, which carries more people, making those regional connections. You can see the dip for COVID there in 2021. And look at the rebound though. This is great compared to most rural transit services that haven't gotten above those pre-COVID levels yet, but Placer TART certainly has.

And Truckee local fixed route never really had that dip during COVID. The numbers aren't as great as Placer TART, as high, but we're seeing an increase up to 2022/23. However, with fiscal year 2023/24 numbers just coming out, I think fixed route numbers are declining a little bit as more people are choosing TART Connect over the fixed route service. Speaking of TART Connect, you can see how much more ridership is carried on that service. Now we can look at some seasonal trends for the fixed route and Dial-a-Ride. You can see that winter is the more popular time to ride the bus. Fixed route carries about a hundred passenger trips a day and Dial-a-Ride about 14.

Let's look at TART Connect. Since this is a pilot program, it started on a smaller scale and it has grown now to what it is town wide from 6:30am to as late as midnight during peak seasons. So it's difficult to compare. We're just getting to a point we can compare almost a full year of service. We've broken this

down by seasons to see how the TART Connect program has grown and what you're seeing here is total passengers and average passengers per day. We're starting in the 200-300 passengers per day when we started back in summer 2022. We increased a little bit, and we can see that by winter of 2023/24, just this past winter, we were up to 566 passenger trips.

So that's Truckee TART Connect. Here is a graph comparing performance. And as transit planners we like to look at, particularly when we're comparing microtransit with fixed route and evaluating those services, is passenger trips per vehicle hour, that's boarding per vehicle hour of service. And we call that a productivity measure that shows you how productive the service is. Truckee fixed routes, this is for fiscal year 2022/23, was carrying 6.6 passenger trips per vehicle service hour, which was still more than TART Connect at 5.6. However, that's for a demand response type service. That's actually quite productive. As you can see, Dial-a-Ride's only carrying two and a half passenger trips per hour, which is pretty standard for a Dial-a-Ride service. As we're getting into this next year, now that we have a full year's data, TART Connect is approaching and almost overtaking, I believe, the productivity levels of the fixed route. However, they're pretty similar at this point.

We look at operating costs by service. And again, this is for fiscal year 2022/23. When you see the pie chart, you'll notice TART Connect, even though it's very productive, it has quite the price tag to it. Back in 2022/23 it was about \$1.2 million. The fixed route's total operating cost was \$1.1 million with Dial-a-Ride about \$400,000. And the other special services is a smaller amount. But if you look at the operating cost per passenger trip, another performance measure we like to look at which determines or looks at cost-effectiveness of different routes, you can see that TART Connect is more cost-effective.

It only costs \$15 or \$16 per passenger trip versus the fixed route costs \$30 per passenger trip carried. And again, these numbers, I believe TART Connect is even more cost-effective now as of fiscal year 2023/24 and Dial-a-Ride is typically always least cost-effective. You're providing a special service. So it's \$76 passenger trip. We've included fiscal year 2023/24 numbers, and this graph shows you ridership of all the Truckee services combined, just to see how it compares between 2023/24 and the year before.

Note that in October of that first year, and November, TART Connect did not operate. So numbers are lower and you can also see the seasonal variation of course. But the general trend is upward when you look at ridership of all the services. And then you can see over time these past couple years, fixed route ridership has been decreasing, but Dial-a-Ride's up 3% and TART Connect has increased significantly, about 124%. So that's our background of the information, the performance that we looked at. And then our next step was to look at a wide variety of options. Again, how can we improve things? What did the public say? What has come out in surveys? How can we make things better to work best for the Town of Truckee? We divided this into looking at both the fixed route local services, and then TART Connect separately.

In terms of fixed route local services, the idea that always pops up and is reviewed is half-hourly service right now. It's hourly service, that can be inconvenient. What we did find is that it's not extremely productive. It only carries an additional 2.7 passenger trips per hour, so it would not increase our overall cost-effectiveness and productivity of fixed route service. There are, as you're probably aware, different contractors operating the fixed route and the microtransit service. The microtransit contractor has less expensive per hour rate. So we looked at what if, and since TART Connect is such a popular service, what if the fixed route went away and TART Connect was used for everything. There would yes, be some cost savings overall. However, there are a lot of people who depend on the fixed route to get to work and they need that regular bus stop fixed route service. I think about 60% of the people who ride the fixed route ride it to work, so there is a need for that. And you would still have the high price tag of TART Connect so we're not recommending that at this point.

And you saw the productivity of the two services are fairly similar still. If the fixed route got to say maybe two passenger trips an hour or so, then maybe that would be something to consider. We did look at maybe there's certain times of day that we could end fixed route earlier and have another van on TART Connect and maybe that would be more effective. It did prove to save a little money. However, it might be confusing for people. We were looking at the 5:30pm to 6:30pm hour. If you

take the bus to work in the morning, then you have to take TART Connect to work back in the afternoon. Maybe that's a little confusing, so we're not necessarily recommending that either.

We also looked at ways to improve the Northstar night service. Potentially it could be cheaper if operated by the microtransit contractor. On the TART Connect side of things, our challenge was, it's a rather large price tag. Looking forward about \$2.4 million to operate the TART Connect service as it is right now. And it's being funded through general funds, not through TDA or FTA funds. Therefore, this is still a pilot program and we need to find funding for it. So, are there ways we could reduce the scope of the program to make it a little easier to fund? We looked at some drastic measures such as only evening service, less drastic, maybe just eliminating service after 10:00pm. And maybe there's a way, it takes a while to get out to Glenshire, that can make the service less productive. Maybe limit trips to Glenshire at certain times of the day, limit a trip length or establish a minimum trip length. We did hear comments that some school kids requested a ride for down the block or something like that. Or limiting service area.

We looked at how much ridership we lost and how much money could be saved by those different options. We also did look at expanding TART Connect into areas of unincorporated Placer County up in Ponderosa Palisades area, that's essentially Truckee, to make it more equitable that they have the service as well. And that would be something that should be coordinated with Placer County. And I believe that discussions have begun about that. We also looked at can we add another van to just the downtown hospital area, particularly as maybe parking restrictions are expanded and to help people and employees get around the downtown area.

And lastly, one option to help save money would be to implement a fare. We looked at a pretty significant fare of \$5 and that would save quite a bit of money. It would also lose some ridership. We'll get into a few more details here in a minute. However, this is not in accordance with the goals of the Town to offer a fare free service. That was a great boost in ridership when that change did occur a few years ago and can make it be a little bit inequitable for lower income folks. So, in summary, what we've found is that TART Connect is a very productive service although it's expensive and don't have at this time a long-term funding source to keep it going. However, there are plans for this potentially to happen, a potential sales tax measure in the Town of Truckee.

What we've done for the Transit Plan is to come up with two scenarios. One, under the assumption that a new recurring funding source is found, that a sales tax is passed, that this could pay for the TART Connect program. We're recommending that we keep the fixed route as is, the Dial-a-Ride as is and keep TART Connect as is. Right now there's still a fare charge for Dial-a-Ride for general public passengers but we get very little in revenue through that, about \$1,500 a year. It's not worth the administrative time of going through this process of charging a fare, so we are recommending eliminating that. Also, to keep it consistent with a fare free service.

We're recommending that the Special Event shuttles continue as is, funding to Placer County continues as is. The Northstar night service, if TART Connect is continued, should be operated as a hybrid microtransit service. It would be a little bit cheaper, and then you could also do some on-demand pickups along the Brockway corridor on your way to Northstar. This would not mean you're picking up people all over Northstar, they have their own Dial-a-Ride service for that. We would also be recommending establishing a minimum trip length of about a half mile. We don't think you're going to lose a lot of ridership. It's not necessarily going to save you a lot of money, but we think it's a good policy to keep in place.

Under Scenario A, the annual operating cost of this program would be about \$4.2 million. However, we would carry 215,000 in passenger trips. You compare this to Scenario B, which is there is no new recurring funding source for TART Connect. We're pretty much at the levels that we've been operating in the past, our TDA funding, our FDA funding, maybe there's some little extra revenue coming from some other sources that could expand your services a little bit. But under this scenario, fixed route Dial-a-Ride would remain the same, Shuttle Special Event services remain the same. Northstar night service would be operated by the fixed route contractor if microtransit does have to go away. And the

TART Connect pilot program would end after this year as it would no longer be funded. This would decrease your annual operating costs down to \$1.9 million. However, ridership would decrease from 215,000 to 44,000.

Under scenario B, without additional funding sources, we are projecting that there still will be an operating budget deficit in the future years. TDA revenues are decreasing, operating costs are increasing. A lot of transit agencies are seeing this. Some transit agencies are planning on using SB 125 funds to fill some of this operating deficit, so that's an option. I know here in Nevada County, a lot of this is going to capital programs and we don't know the long-term future of SB 125. There's also a potential for additional revenue from parking funds through the Town or general fund revenues, perhaps a little bit through additional STA. If you remember back in 2019, the Transit Funding Equity Study, the idea that the Town of Truckee because of its small population, is not receiving that same amount of LTF money allocated back as it actually produces in sales tax revenues. However, STA funds are decreasing and probably decreasing more. That's based on diesel tax and with everybody going more electric.

The bottom line is there may be some other small revenue sources out there, but without an additional source such as a sales tax, we're going back to the levels of transit that we've had and there's potential for a deficit. If there is a good amount, some revenue, perhaps not the \$2.4 million we need to operate TART Connect as is. Some of the options of limiting TART Connect service that popped up is limit Truckee TART connect to downtown, the hospital and the Sierra Meadows area. The disadvantage is this would not get the outlying neighborhoods. However, most of the transit dependent folks are in this more central Sierra Meadows area. Except for the folks in Glenshire, that came up the transit dependent area. And this would decrease ridership by about 50% of what TART Connect carries now. But it would still carry about 78,000 trips, which is still more than what the fixed route is projected to carry. And it would still cost about \$1.4 million, which is still a hefty price tag.

Another option that has formed with a similar cost but less reduction in ridership is charging a fare. And there's different ways you can reduce the negative impact here on low-income folks, if you're eligible for certain programs such as SNAP, you can have an already established card or some sort of identification or part of a program, perhaps you're eligible to not pay a fair or pay a reduced fare. There are caps per account, say maybe you're only allowed to take two or three trips a day for free, and then after that you have to pay. So, there are ways to maybe lessen the blow there, but again, it's not in accordance with the goals of the Town to have a fare free public transit system.

So that's the service plan. Capital of course is a part of the transit plan process. We're not only looking at how to improve the routes, but we need to make sure the infrastructure is kept up and that we're placing vehicles at the appropriate intervals. And as you are aware, we have a mandate from the state to go to zero emission vehicles. The Town is already in the process of procuring zero emission vehicles and getting grants to have chargers in the infrastructure. The Railyard Mobility Hub will have some fast chargers and slow chargers, as well as phase two will include more of a transit center. This is funded through TIRCP program. The Corp Yard, the Town public service center will need to be expanded to accommodate more vehicles.

Right now the vehicles used for the on-demand service are owned or leased by the contractor. The Town is trying to acquire this type of vehicle that could be used for Dial-a-Ride as well, and these vehicles would be zero emission. But this would expand the fleet so we need a larger maintenance and storage facility. Some SB 125 funds have been allocated for that. As is common there is, when you look out the five years, assuming being awarded competitive funding for replacing transit vehicles, FTA funds, will give you an 80% grant and you have to pay 20%. We're still seeing a deficit in the long term, but this is normal for capital programs. You're always looking for different sources and competitive funding to complete all your capital programs.

So that is the draft plan at this point. And again, we will be discussing this with the Town at the end of August, but in the meantime you can always email myself or Aaron with detailed questions, but I'd be happy to take any you have right now.

Tom Ivy:

There we go. The TART program seems idiosyncratic to the Town of Truckee and I'm just wondering what this commission has actually to do with that. What kind of approval from this commission is needed? Why is it actually in front of us?

Aaron Hoyt:

Commissioner Ivy, I'll go ahead and start this off. And Mike, please feel free to add anything to it. The item before you today is just for comment. We're looking for comment from this body to help frame the final document itself, and why we're bringing it to you is, we, working with the Town of Truckee, funded the study for this. NCTC has funded the study and prior iterations also and will likely continue to in the future. As part of our Overall Work Program that we presented to this body back in May, there is a budget and a list of activities of what we'll do, and this is one of those activities. So we like to come back to this body to share updates on what we're doing, and why it's important. I think what we're looking for is not necessarily a stamp of approval, but, "Hey, what if we looked at this?"

I think there's really two, maybe three key takeaways I had of this that I'll share with you. One, the Town of Truckee and their services and operations that they've put in place has done something I think most other transit agencies in the state of California has not done, which is looking at the trajectory of ridership that happened when we hit those dark days in 2020 through Covid. They had the forethought and determination to, "Let's put something new out there right now," in a time where everyone else is pulling back. They put the microtransit into play and ridership went up. So they've done something I think no one else really has in the state. There's still a lot of transit agencies that are struggling too.

I think the other takeaway is that there's a lot of good things that have happened and to continue those good things. There are some conversations about funding, there are some conversations about, "If we don't have the funding, what do we do? What's going to be the best thing suited for the Town?" And so while Commissioner Zabriskie probably has the most interest in this and maybe Supervisor Bullock representing this area, I think thoughts from the rest of you are helpful in terms of helping the Town find the path that's best for them.

Question:

The TART program sounds like a terrific kind of thing if you can pay for it. Who makes the final decision as to whether to continue the TART program or not?

Aaron Hoyt:

I will say within the confines of the scenario A or scenario B that was presented, a lot of it really is the Town. But I think we'll say that adding NCTC into that since the funding does come through the Local Transportation Fund, the State Transit Assistance funds come through us to them. I think our goal is what's going to work best for you, the Town of Truckee, within financial constraints that we know of.

Question:

That doesn't really answer my question, who's the decider here?

Aaron Hoyt:

The Town of Truckee Council will decide on scenario A or scenario B and we're going to support them.

Question:

I got it. My other question was if TART depends on the passage of a sales tax measure, we've had all kinds of experiences with sales tax measures in many different contexts. Has anybody looked at the feasibility of a sales tax measure in this community for that program? I see people shaking their heads yes.

Aaron Hoyt:

Commissioner Strauss I will maybe defer to one of the Town staff members. I failed to mention in the beginning and I should have, but with us we have Alfred Knotts who's the Town Transit Manager. We also have Jen Callaway with staff also.

Jen Callaway:

Good morning, thanks for being here. I'm Jen Callaway, I'm the Town Manager. To answer your question, commissioner, we have done polling to evaluate the interest in supporting this with a sales tax measure. We've looked at both specific measures and general sales tax measures. The council approved placing a general sales tax measure on the November ballot with the polling results rate about 50 to 55% depending on before or after the arguments against it. So there seems to be community support for this and some other unfunded needs such as housing, wildfire preparedness and environmental type programs.

Question:

I'm curious, how does one enforce a minimum trip length?

Genevieve Evans:

Through the app, if you request where you get on and you get off, it could say, "Invalid trip," or something like that. Technology.

Question:

So just a couple of thoughts, and I don't have a chart in front of me. These are from meetings a couple of years ago. But when we go to number one, the topic of the half-hourly service, one of the meetings I went down to in Southern California, many of the communities were finding that not just convenience, but more so quality of life for their local service staff specifically and just employees, they couldn't afford to subsidize all day long with half hour. But they found that it was critical to go half-hourly between 6:00am, 7:00am, 8:00am and 9:00am. And the chart that I saw, and it's been a couple of years, I wish I had that, didn't even know we were going to cover that topic necessarily today, showed that it was critical the quality of life for their local residents to have 6:00am, 6:30am, 7:00am, 7:30am and then 8:00am, 8:30am because the majority of people go to work at 7:00am, 8:00am, or 9:00am.

And you have some service staff, restaurants' coffee hours that start at 6:00am. And then conversely, they did the same thing in the afternoon. Most people get off at 4:00pm, 5:00pm or 6:00pm. So they went half-hourly at 4:30pm, 5:30pm and 6:00pm, and they found that on average it was allowing people

to stay home between 30 and 45 minutes longer in the morning to get their kids ready for school, to get themselves ready for work and then to get home between 30 and 45 minutes earlier in the evening to get dinner ready for themselves, for their families or kids. And it was a very, very big topic at the meeting that I went to down in Southern California. They found that that was critical and worth subsidizing even though they couldn't really justify the volume of individuals per trip and increase, but that for their local communities, that made a massive difference.

So, I'm just throwing that out there. And it looks like other places around the country are doing this and adopting this. And then something you already know, but obviously with what we're dealing with with Robin down in Western Nevada County now with the zero emissions buses. I'm seeing reports nationwide in the colder areas, which obviously Truckee compared to Western Nevada County, you guys get hit much harder than we do. That the performance of those vehicles are dramatically lower than what they are being typically presented by the manufacturer. Again, you guys know that, I'm just throwing that out there because that's something that a lot of folks are having major issues with the engineering and the performance of those buses and those buses being available on a daily basis without issues with the battery systems.

Question:

Thanks for the presentation. Yeah, it was good to see and TART Connect has been amazing. Incredible addition to the compliment of opportunities here. I see it everywhere because I live in Truckee so I see it. Van going this way, van going that way, bikes on the back, hikers. And the presentation was great. A couple of questions, has there been conversation about connecting some of the outlying unincorporated areas at Hirschdale, Soda Springs and trying to use that and plugging in other jurisdictions that help support that on the financial side? Question one. And then question two, what analytics have been done on the pay the fare box? Who pays and how much? And you talked about SNAP as being a delineating one there for people that may not be able to afford it. What actual hard data have you done on that?

Genevieve Evans:

Okay, the first question, you're thinking of the TART Connect program serving a wider area. We did look at serving Ponderosa Palisades and that area, and we would recommend that in coordination, some funding from Placer County. We didn't go as far as Donner Summit. Donner Summit has been served in the past by fixed route. And the fixed route has actually shrunk a little bit because of ridership and the time it takes to get out there. My guess is that it's a long trip out there to serve with TART Connect, it would make it less efficient. So it's probably not recommended at this time. And your second question was fares. There's not much data out there. When you have a fare free system and then all of a sudden you implement a fare, that doesn't normally happen. It's usually the other way around.

But we do have data on that and there's a pretty drastic increase. I think in Truckee is 40%, almost maybe 50% increase in ridership when the fare was dropped. And that might also be including TART, I'm not sure. We reversed the percentage to try and figure out how many fewer people we thought might take TART Connect because of that. And we considered in the numbers that are in the report of a portion of seniors and disabled based on prior ridership patterns, who would be paying maybe \$2.50 instead of \$5. Haven't gotten into figuring out the numbers of how many low income folks we thought that might be and how that might affect things. Yeah, that could be another next step.

Question:

Yeah, thanks. The outlying areas is interesting because one, and maybe Alfred's already thought of all this, but I think some jurisdictions would probably chip in on some sort of test period to see how many people would utilize it and what the actual true cost of those passenger miles may be. So if you had

two people going to Soda Springs and we sent somebody like Nevada County a request for reimbursement on that. And we have to measure it over some period of time, maybe a peak period, it may be a good way to understand if there's demand in there. I talked to a lot of constituents that commute from Reno and the concept of having something like if you could park in Hirschdale and then get that final mile was something that went back and forth. Or also getting people up to the summit or some of the other outlying areas.

Placer County has other areas that would be commensurate with Nevada County. I think it would be a welcome kind of experiment of sorts. I guess just to understand if there was demand there to serve those outlying areas because really transportation in my mind is a regional service.

It's great inside the town, Truckee, but also there's all these other areas that are becoming filled with demand from recreation. And then on the measurement of the fare part, I think just from my perspective, it would be awesome to see some hard data on understanding what you could charge for it. Because I know the local piece that I have heard discussed is some of us are on our own time schedule and we have our own car so we pay for it. And some people obviously get it free. There are people in our community that should get it free. There are other people that have every ability to chip in a little bit to try and close that massive gap that the taxpayer is going to have to fill if we go out for a bond. So there's some conversation there I think to be had, more conversation.

Question:

Genevieve, following up on Supervisor Bullock's questions about regional, did you look at how to improve transit service between this region, Eastern Nevada County and the commuters from Western Nevada County and Northern Placer County and Washoe County on the east? Because you showed a large percentage of people coming from a good distance.

Genevieve Evans:

We did take a good look at connections between Truckee TART and Placer TART and if we can improve those at all. And because we only have hourly service, we have a great connection in one direction and not in the other. And so if you're moving that you're either just doing the reverse or you're making it four connections for both directions. So we didn't see a way to improve that beyond just increasing frequency.

We didn't look at any surfaces down to the Western slope. We're really focused... I mean this is the Eastern Nevada County Transit plan, but it's really essentially become Truckee. And Truckee's goal is to provide services within the Town of Truckee and offer connections to Placer. I believe there is a commuter study going on right now in terms of vanpools, the Town is also going to subsidize vanpools, which could help commute trips between Washoe County and the Town of Truckee. But at this point we're not looking at any say fixed route service in that direction.

Question:

Okay. You mentioned that labor... I think it was labor rates were less on TART Connect than they are on the fixed route. What's the reason for that?

Genevieve Evans:

I don't know. It's what they charge. Probably a lot of that is the TART Connect drivers don't require as many special certificates. They're not driving a bigger bus, wheelchair lifts and all that. Public transit drivers are highly trained in a lot of ways and it's very safe to drive with a public transit driver. So that

probably has a lot to do with it. The TART Connect program is not funded with FDA funds, so they're not subject to FDA drug and alcohol testing requirements. And so that accounts for some of that.

Question:

And that leads into what accounts for the nearly double cost on a per passenger ride basis for fixed route and on demand. The on demand is the smaller vans while the fixed route is the larger buses. Can you tease out for me to what extent the difference in the per ridership cost and what other variables in this apples and oranges comparison accounts for the difference?

Genevieve Evans:

I think that would be difficult to do. I think it's more... When that graph that I showed of operating cost per trip, I think it's more than just the contractors rate, you're carrying so many more people on TART Connect. But you're right, that does contribute a lot to the price difference. And to be able to pull that out, that might be a bit of a challenge. The contractor comes up with a per hour rate, you don't always know what's built into it. They also have a fixed monthly rate. That's something I should note is when contracts have to be renegotiated for both contractors, they will likely change, particularly if the scope of services changed and their fixed monthly costs will change. We can't predict that.

Question:

Okay. So you can't tell me what the difference in ridership costs would be if fixed route buses were simply the nine passenger vans like we use for TART Connect.

Genevieve Evans:

Oh, I see what you're saying. So if we used a different vehicle for the fixed route, we still operated as a fixed route?

Question:

Yes.

Genevieve Evans:

Oh, the cost wouldn't be that much off, I don't think. You already have the vehicles. I don't think the fuel consumption would be that different. I don't know about fuel consumption, but...

Question:

Okay. And then I'm trying to project out not just five years, but 10 or 20 years where we're going to be in terms of public transportation. And with TART Connect, presumably getting people accustomed to riding public transportation, is there a point where the increase in use of public transportation is going to make it more economical to go back to fixed routes rather than on demand door to door service?

Genevieve Evans:

It would be nice that we have this younger population who is getting used to taking public transit. However, we're also very used to convenience. And I think that's really what's contributed to TART

Connect's popularity is we're accessing every house in those neighborhoods. And even with a fixed route up into Donner or Glenshire, you're not going to be able to have the same access. So yes, maybe there would be an increased trend in mode split transit. I think this microtransit model is working for Truckee.

Tom Ivy:

Are there any other comments?

Question:

The whole thing intrigues me. I think when you first put this into action, it's just the dollars behind it and how are we going to come up with the funding. And I look at that and they'll figure out the new car systems and power and energy that we have to consume to do that. So there's a lot to this still. I do like the outlying areas, how do you get people... That's like Uber got so popular so people could be parked and move around and they were willing to pay for it. And then you look at a tax initiative, which I get, but how much taxes can you keep putting on people and still want them to stay here and shop. Especially when you're looking at your median income folks that you want to come here and work that have to commute in from Reno or West County or Placer County.

So it's really interesting, I think, how do we find the dollars? I mean everybody asks good questions that kind of sunk in. I'm going to be very interested to watch which public comment comes from the city because I think that... And I was just curious, so on demand is interesting because sometimes you only have two or three people on the bus as well. On demand doesn't necessarily mean they come just to your house. They might make three stops before they come and pick somebody up. I think people need to be aware about that. It's not always just a one person ride.

Genevieve Evans:

Exactly. And that's why Truckee TART Connect does well is because they're able to group quite a few trips.

Question:

Yeah. So they could figure that out. And then I guess probably looking at how do you figure out what the kids' situations where they just want to get from school to McDonald's to get dinner or whatever. So there'd be some adjustments with that part I'm sure over time. But then you don't have kids running around the road either. So there's another key component to that that's not so negative. Yeah, so I think everybody had good questions. Like I said, I'm going to be really interested to see what the Town thinks.

Tom Ivy:

I agree. I think the questions are excellent. I think the presentation is great. I appreciate the train of thought, the logic, and I just want to reiterate that it's important that our commission does share this burden. I personally work up here a lot. I represent the City of Grass Valley, but I'm in this community a lot. So while I don't feel the need to, or have the basis to understand the nuts and bolts as much as some, it's important that we tackle this problem as a community. So thank you. Is there any other comments? Do we need to open this up to public comment?

Aaron Hoyt:

I don't believe we need to open up to public comment, just because it's an informational item only, but we can take a second to see if there's anyone who might be on Zoom who might want to comment.

Mike Woodman:

There's no one online, but happy to take comments from members there in the council chambers.

Tom Ivy:

Okay, well seeing no one coming up to the podium, I think I'll just give us one more chance to provide any more comments.

Question:

One more little thing that I forgot on the half hour leave that they presented all these things keep popping up in my head. They justified subsidizing that in a couple of communities in Southern California that are in the, I guess they call it the Inland Empire more out towards Mount Baldy, Big Bear, where they have winter conditions where typically they don't, obviously in most of SoCal. Was it reduced what they considered public safety issues because many of the folks that have to take the bus do so because they cannot afford to maintain a vehicle. Such as in Truckee that would have four wheel drive or they don't have the physical ability to install chains. And if they got pressure to get to work, couldn't make the bus on a half-hourly schedule, they would drive their car even though it was not safe to do so and take the chance to get there so they wouldn't lose their job. So they made a public safety argument on that also for justifying the half-hourly subsidizing. I just remember that.

Tom Ivy:

I think that's a great point and I'll just give us one more chance, otherwise I think you have your direction.

Aaron Hoyt:

Yes, thank you for all the comments and questions. And so Genevieve and Town of Truckee staff, Alfred and Danielle will work on finalizing the document once they hear from Town Council. And when we come back to you in September, we'll make sure that we present kind of a high level summary of comments and any changes that were received. That way you can connect the two different points in time.