



# San Joaquin Council of Governments

Triennial Performance Audit of  
the City of Ripon for the period  
FY 2021/22 - FY 2023/24



**SAN JOAQUIN**  
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
CALIFORNIA

Final Report | June 2025





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## Chapter 1 | Executive Summary

In 2024, the San Joaquin Council of Governments (SJCOG) selected Moore & Associates, Inc., to prepare Triennial Performance Audits of itself as the RTPA and the seven transit operators to which it allocates TDA funding.

The California Public Utilities Code requires all recipients of Transit Development Act (TDA) Article 4 funding to undergo an independent performance audit on a three-year cycle in order to maintain funding eligibility. Audits of Article 8 recipients are encouraged.

As it receives no funding under Article 4, the City of Ripon is not statutorily required to undergo a Triennial Performance Audit, nor has it traditionally been held to the requirements of the TDA. However, the SJCOG, as the RTPA, includes the City in its Triennial Performance Audit process both to provide a comprehensive and objective review to offer beneficial insights into program performance and as oversight given the City receives State Transit Assistance funding.

The Triennial Performance Audit is designed to be an independent and objective evaluation of the City of Ripon as a public transit operator, providing operator management with information on the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of its programs across the prior three fiscal years. In addition to assuring legislative and governing bodies (as well as the public) that resources are being economically and efficiently utilized, the Triennial Performance Audit fulfills the requirement of PUC Section 99246(a) that the RTPA designate an entity other than itself to conduct a performance audit of the activities of each operator to whom it allocates funds.

This chapter summarizes key findings and recommendations developed during the Triennial Performance Audit (TPA) of the City's public transit program for the period:

- Fiscal Year 2021/22,
- Fiscal Year 2022/23, and
- Fiscal Year 2023/24.

The City of Ripon provides bus service within city limits and connecting to nearby Modesto. The Blossom Express fixed-route service operates two days each week (Tuesday and Thursday), providing two morning and two afternoon round trips between Ripon and Modesto. Up to two deviations to locations within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of the route may be provided each trip.

Local demand-response service is provided through an agreement with Bethany Home, which organizes volunteer drivers for on-call service as needed.

This performance audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that the audit team plans and performs the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for its findings and conclusions based on the audit objectives. Moore & Associates believes the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions.



This audit was also conducted in accordance with the processes established by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), as outlined in the *Performance Audit Guidebook for Transit Operators and Regional Transportation Planning Entities*.

The Triennial Performance Audit includes five elements:

- Compliance requirements,
- Prior recommendations,
- Analysis of program data reporting,
- Performance Audit, and
- Functional review.

#### Test of Compliance

Based on discussions with City staff, analysis of program performance, and an audit of program compliance and function, the audit team presents no compliance findings.

#### Status of Prior Recommendations

The prior audit – completed in March 2022 by Moore & Associates, Inc. for the three fiscal years ending June 30, 2021 – included two recommendations:

1. [Prepare an updated Short-Range Transit Plan with a five-year planning horizon.](#)  
**Status:** Implementation in progress.
2. [Update the City’s Blossom Express and Transportation webpages to more accurately represent transit offerings available in Ripon.](#)  
**Status:** Implemented.

#### Findings and Recommendations

Based on discussions with City staff, analysis of program performance, and a review of program compliance and function, the audit team submits no compliance or functional findings for the City of Ripon.

## Chapter 2 | Audit Scope and Methodology

The Triennial Performance Audit (TPA) of the City of Ripon’s public transit program covers the three-year period ending June 30, 2024. The California Public Utilities Code requires all recipients of Transit Development Act (TDA) funding to complete an independent review on a three-year cycle in order to maintain funding eligibility.

In 2024, the San Joaquin Council of Governments selected Moore & Associates, Inc., to prepare Triennial Performance Audits of itself as the RTPA and the seven transit operators to which it allocates TDA funding. Moore & Associates is a consulting firm specializing in public transportation, including audits of non-TDA Article 4 recipients. Selection of Moore & Associates followed a competitive procurement process.

The Triennial Performance Audit is designed to be an independent and objective evaluation of the City of Ripon as a public transit operator. Direct benefits of a Triennial Performance Audit include providing operator management with information on the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of its programs across the prior three years; helpful insight for use in future planning; and assuring legislative and governing bodies (as well as the public) that resources are being economically and efficiently utilized. Finally, the Triennial Performance Audit fulfills the requirement of PUC Section 99246(a) that the RTPA designate an entity other than itself to conduct a performance audit of the activities of each operator to whom it allocates funds.

This performance audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that the audit team plans and performs the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for its findings and conclusions based on the audit objectives. The auditors believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions.

The audit was also conducted in accordance with the processes established by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), as outlined in the *Performance Audit Guidebook for Transit Operators and Regional Transportation Planning Entities*, as well as *Government Auditing Standards* published by the U.S. Comptroller General.

### Objectives

A Triennial Performance Audit (TPA) has four primary objectives:

1. Assess compliance with TDA regulations;
2. Review improvements subsequently implemented as well as progress toward adopted goals;
3. Evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the transit operator; and
4. Provide sound, constructive recommendations for improving the efficiency and functionality of the transit operator.



## Scope

The TPA is a systematic review of performance evaluating the efficiency, economy, and effectiveness of the transit operator. The audit of the City of Ripon included five tasks:

1. A review of compliance with TDA requirements and regulations.
2. A review of the status of recommendations included in the prior Triennial Performance Audit.
3. A verification of the methodology for calculating performance indicators including the following activities:
  - Assessment of internal controls,
  - Test of data collection methods,
  - Calculation of performance indicators, and
  - Evaluation of performance.
4. Comparison of data reporting practices:
  - Internal reports,
  - State Controller Reports, and
  - National Transit Database.
5. Examination of the following functions:
  - General management and organization;
  - Service planning;
  - Scheduling, dispatching, and operations;
  - Personnel management and training;
  - Administration;
  - Marketing and public information; and
  - Fleet maintenance.
6. Conclusions and recommendations to address opportunities for improvement based upon analysis of the information collected and the audit of the transit operator's major functions.

## Methodology

The methodology for the Triennial Performance Audit of the City of Ripon included thorough review of documents relevant to the scope of the audit, as well as information contained on the City's website. The documents reviewed included the following (spanning the full three-year period):

- Monthly performance reports;
- State Controller Reports;
- Annual budgets;
- TDA fiscal audits;
- Transit marketing collateral;
- TDA claims;
- Fleet inventory;
- Preventive maintenance schedules and forms;
- Accident/road call logs; and
- Organizational chart.



The methodology for this review included a site visit to the City of Ripon City Hall (259 N. Wilma Ave, Ripon) on September 26, 2024. The audit team met Lisa Roos (Finance Director) and reviewed materials germane to the triennial audit.

This report is comprised of eight chapters divided into three sections:

1. Executive Summary: A summary of the key findings and recommendations developed during the Triennial Performance Audit process.
2. TPA Scope and Methodology: Methodology of the review and pertinent background information.
3. TPA Results: In-depth discussion of findings surrounding each of the subsequent elements of the audit:
  - Compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements,
  - Status of prior recommendations,
  - Consistency among reported data,
  - Performance measures and trends,
  - Functional audit, and
  - Findings and recommendations.



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## Chapter 3 | Program Compliance

This section examines the City’s compliance with the Transportation Development Act as well as relevant sections of the California Code of Regulations. An annual certified fiscal audit confirms TDA funds were apportioned in conformance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations. The City of Ripon considers full use of funds under California Code of Regulations (CCR) 6754(a) as referring to operating funds but not capital funds. The TPA findings and related comments are delineated in Exhibit 3.1.

The City does not use any TDA Article 4 funding for transit and is not statutorily required to be audited, nor has it traditionally been held to the requirements of the TDA. However, the San Joaquin Council of Governments, as the RTPA, requested the City be audited to support a comprehensive and objective review to provide beneficial insights into program performance.

Status of compliance items was determined through discussions with City staff as well as an inspection of relevant documents including the fiscal audits for each year of the triennium, State Controller annual filings, California Highway Patrol terminal inspections, National Transit Database reports, year-end performance reports, and other compliance-related documentation.

No compliance items were identified for the City of Ripon.

### Developments Occurring During the Audit Period

For many operators, the FY 2021/22 – FY 2023/24 audit period reflected both the acute impacts of and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. By the end of the audit period – even earlier in some cases – most operators had exhausted federal relief funds, even though penalties for non-compliance with farebox recovery ratios continued to be waived. Many operators, even more than four years after the onset of the pandemic, still struggle with ridership that has yet to recover to pre-pandemic levels.

Given this is not the first Triennial Performance Audit to be conducted since the COVID-19 pandemic, this report will not focus on actions taken as a result of the health crisis. Instead, the compliance review, functional review, and resulting recommendations will focus on ensuring program sustainability once penalty waivers and other emergency legislation have ended.

Assembly Bill 90, signed into law on June 29, 2020, provided temporary regulatory relief for transit operators required to conform with Transportation Development Act (TDA) farebox recovery ratio thresholds in FY 2019/20 and FY 2020/21. Assembly Bill 149, signed into law on July 16, 2021, provided additional regulatory relief by extending the provisions of AB 90 through FY 2022/23 and adjusting definitions of eligible revenues and operating costs. Most recently, Senate Bill 125, signed into law on July 10, 2023, extended protections provided via earlier legislation through FY 2025/26. While this means the audit period covered by this audit is fully exempt from penalties for non-compliance with the farebox recovery ratio, for example, it also means that transit operators will likely need to be in compliance by the last year of the next audit period.

While the ability to maintain state mandates and performance measures is important, these measures enable transit operators to adjust to the impacts of COVID while continuing to receive their full allocations of funding under the TDA.



Together, these three pieces of legislation include the following provisions specific to transit operator TDA funding under Article 4 and Article 8:

1. Prohibits the imposition of the TDA revenue penalty on an operator that did not maintain the required ratio of fare revenues to operating cost from FY 2019/20 through FY 2025/26.
2. Expands the definition of “local funds” to enable the use of federal funding to supplement fare revenues and allows operators to calculate free and reduced fares at their actual value.
3. Adjusts the definition of operating cost to exclude the cost of ADA paratransit services, demand-response and microtransit services designed to extend access to service, ticketing/payment systems, security, some pension costs, and some planning costs.
4. Allows operators to use STA funds as needed to keep transit service levels from being reduced or eliminated through FY 2025/26.

SB 125 calls for the establishment of the Transit Transformation Task Force to develop policy recommendations to grow transit ridership and improve the transit experience for all users. In the 50-plus years since introduction of the Transportation Development Act, there have been many changes to public transportation in California. Many operators have faced significant challenges in meeting the farebox recovery ratio requirement, calling into question whether it remains the best measure for TDA compliance. In 2018, the chairs of California’s state legislative transportation committees requested the California Transit Association spearhead a policy task force to examine the TDA, which resulted in a draft framework for TDA reform released in early 2020. The Transit Transformation Task Force is required to submit a report of its findings and policy recommendations to the State Legislature by October 31, 2025. This report is expected to include recommendations for TDA reform, which may impact the next Triennial Performance Audit period.



Exhibit 3.1 Transit Development Act Compliance Requirements

Compliance Element	Reference	Compliance	Comments
State Controller Reports submitted on time.	PUC 99243	In compliance	FY 2021/22: January 30, 2023 FY 2022/23: January 30, 2024 FY 2023/24: January 14, 2025
Fiscal and compliance audits submitted within 180 days following the end of the fiscal year (or with up to 90-day extension).	PUC 99245	In compliance	FY 2021/22: December 28, 2022 FY 2022/23: December 28, 2023 FY 2023/24: December 13, 2024
Operator’s terminal rated as satisfactory by CHP within the 13 months prior to each TDA claim.	PUC 99251 B	Not applicable	
Operator’s claim for TDA funds submitted in compliance with rules and regulations adopted by the RTPA.	PUC 99261	In compliance	
If operator serves urbanized and non-urbanized areas, it has maintained a ratio of fare revenues to operating costs at least equal to the ratio determined by the rules and regulations adopted by the RTPA.	PUC 99270.1	Not applicable	
Except as otherwise provided, the allocation for any purpose specified under Article 8 may in no year exceed 50% of the amount required to meet the total planning expenditures for that purpose.	PUC 99405	Not applicable	The City does not receive Article 8 funds for transit.
An operator receiving allocations under Article 8(c) may be subject to regional, countywide, or subarea performance criteria, local match requirements, or fare recovery ratios adopted by resolution of the RTPA.	PUC 99405	Not applicable	The City does not receive Article 8 funds for transit.
The operator’s definitions of performance measures are consistent with the Public Utilities Code Section 99247.	PUC 99247	In compliance	
The operator does not routinely staff with two or more persons a vehicle for public transportation purposes designed to be operated by one person.	PUC 99264	In compliance	
The operator’s operating budget has not increased by more than 15% over the preceding year, nor is there a substantial increase or decrease in the scope of operations or capital budget provisions for major new fixed facilities unless the operator has reasonably supported and substantiated the change(s).	PUC 99266	In compliance	FY 2021/22: +29.31% FY 2022/23: +50.94% FY 2023/24: +89.78%  <i>Annual budget increases are primarily due to anticipated vehicle maintenance due to the aging fleet (1997 vehicle). Actual costs tend to be lower than budgeted for a given fiscal year. Source: TDA claims for FY 2022 – FY 2024</i>
If the operator serves an urbanized area, it has maintained a ratio of fare revenues to operating cost at least equal to one-fifth (20 percent).	PUC 99268.2, 99268.4, 99268.1	Not applicable	



Compliance Element	Reference	Compliance	Comments
If the operator serves a rural area, it has maintained a ratio of fare revenues to operating cost at least equal to one-tenth (10 percent).	PUC 99268.2, 99268.4, 99268.5	In compliance	FY 2021/22: 96.64% FY 2022/23: 99.04% FY 2023/24: 100.00%  <i>Source: TDA fiscal audits, FY 2022 – FY 2024. Includes fare revenues and Measure K funds.</i>
For a claimant that provides only services to elderly and handicapped persons, the ratio of fare revenues to operating cost shall be at least 10 percent.	PUC 99268.5, CCR 6633.5	Not applicable	
The current cost of the operator’s retirement system is fully funded with respect to the officers and employees of its public transportation system, or the operator is implementing a plan approved by the RTPA, which will fully fund the retirement system for 40 years.	PUC 99271	In compliance	City staff’s retirement is funded through a defined contribution plan and elective 457 deferred compensation plan.
If the operator receives State Transit Assistance funds, the operator makes full use of funds available to it under the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964 before TDA claims are granted.	CCR 6754 (a) (3)	Not applicable	Although the City is a recipient of State Transit Assistance Funds, it does not utilize federal formula grant funds to support transit operations.
In order to use State Transit Assistance funds for operating assistance, the operator’s total operating cost per revenue hour does not exceed the sum of the preceding year’s total plus an amount equal to the product of the percentage change in the CPI for the same period multiplied by the preceding year’s total operating cost per revenue hour. An operator may qualify based on the preceding year’s operating cost per revenue hour or the average of the three prior years. If an operator does not meet these qualifying tests, the operator may only use STA funds for operating purposes according to a sliding scale.	PUC 99314.6	In compliance	This requirement was waived through FY 2025/26 under AB 90, AB 149, and SB 125.  However, it should be noted that the City met the efficiency requirement in FY 2023 and FY 2024 due to increased service hours in FY 2021 and FY 2022.
A transit claimant is precluded from receiving monies from the Local Transportation Fund and the State Transit Assistance Fund in an amount which exceeds the claimant’s capital and operating costs less the actual amount of fares received, the amount of local support required to meet the fare ratio, the amount of federal operating assistance, and the amount received during the year from a city or county to which the operator has provided services beyond its boundaries.	CCR 6634	In compliance	



## Chapter 4 | Prior Recommendations

This section reviews and evaluates the implementation of prior Triennial Performance Audit recommendations. This objective assessment provides assurance the City of Ripon has made quantifiable progress toward improving both the efficiency and effectiveness of its public transit program.

The prior audit – completed in March 2022 by Moore & Associates, Inc. for the three fiscal years ending June 30, 2021 – included two recommendations:

1. [Prepare an updated Short-Range Transit Plan with a five-year planning horizon.](#)

**Discussion:** The Service Planning functional area examines the operator’s planning and service evaluation activities, including goal-setting, evaluation of existing routes, and public engagement. The City’s most recent Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) was prepared in 2010 and included a 10-year planning horizon. That planning horizon has since elapsed. In addition, changes in travel patterns and adjustments to service by San Joaquin RTD are likely to impact the needs of transit riders within Ripon.

The 10-year planning horizon ended during the audit period. Absent the COVID-19 pandemic, continuing the service plan outlined in the prior SRTP might be sufficient. However, doing so in the wake of the pandemic was not recommended given the scope of the changes that have occurred.

While the prior SRTP included a 10-year planning horizon, the prior auditor recommended a five-year planning horizon due to the dynamic conditions surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. The prior auditor recommended the City consider engaging a consultant experienced in developing SRTPs for small transit programs. Depending on the stability of conditions upon the expiration of that plan, a 10-year planning horizon might be able to be utilized moving forward.

**Progress:** The City went out to bid for a consultant to prepare the Short Range Transit Plan update in 2024. A contract to update the SRTP was awarded on September 10, 2024. It is expected to be completed in June 2025.

**Status:** Implementation in progress.

2. [Update the City’s Blossom Express and Transportation webpages to more accurately represent transit offerings available in Ripon.](#)

**Discussion:** Marketing and Public Information is one of the functional areas examined during the audit process. The City maintains a Blossom Express page on its website. This page contains key service information, including a downloadable brochure that can be easily printed on a home printer. The City’s website also features a separate Transportation page, which includes links to transit programs in Escalon, Modesto, and San Joaquin county. In addition, the City of Modesto



recently merged with the County of Stanislaus to form Stanislaus Regional Transit Authority (StanRTA). While the link to the MAX webpage remains valid at present, it should be monitored to ensure it remains active and renamed to Stanislaus Regional Transit Authority.

This recommendation included several separate components. First, the links on the Transportation page should be updated. Updating the Modesto link was not urgent, as it provided current information about StanRTA's The S service. Promotion of the Van Go! service could benefit Ripon residents, though it could also reduce Blossom Express ridership further since it operates on-demand. However, given the cost of a trip on the Blossom Express (\$2.00) versus the four-dollar base plus fifty cents per mile fare of the Van Go! service, Blossom Express would certainly remain the more affordable option. Making Ripon residents more aware of the service, while not strictly the City's responsibility, could potentially enhance their mobility. Information about RTD's County Hopper Route 91 should also be referenced.

**Progress:** Both the Blossom Express and Transportation webpages have been updated and are accurate.

**Status:** Implemented.



## Chapter 5 | Data Reporting Analysis

An important aspect of the Triennial Performance Audit process is assessing how effectively and consistently the transit operator reports performance statistics to local, state, and federal agencies. Often as a condition of receipt of funding, an operator must collect, manage, and report data to different entities. Ensuring such data are consistent can be challenging given the differing definitions employed by different agencies as well as the varying reporting timeframes. This chapter examines the consistency of performance data reported by the City of Ripon both internally as well as to outside entities during the audit period.

Overall, most of the operating data reported internally and externally was highly consistent.

- **Operating cost:** There were slight variances in operating cost reported in FY 2021/22 and FY 2023/24.
- **Fare Revenue:** There were slight variances in fare revenue in all three years of the audit period.
- **Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Employees:** The City is reporting this metric using the proper definition. However, due to the fact that the State Controller Report only accepts data entered as whole numbers, the City must report one FTE per mode for a total of two FTE, even though the actual calculation is less than one FTE total.



Exhibit 5.1 Data Reporting Comparison

Performance Measure	System-Wide		
	FY 2021/22	FY 2022/23	FY 2023/24
<b>Operating Cost (Actual \$)</b>			
<i>TDA fiscal audit</i>	\$53,629	\$60,848	\$88,489
<i>State Controller Report</i>	\$55,926	\$60,498	\$87,446
<b>Fare Revenue (Actual \$)</b>			
<i>TDA fiscal audit</i>	\$1,937	\$1,872	\$1,923
<i>State Controller Report</i>	\$1,862	\$1,952	\$1,908
<b>Vehicle Service Hours (VSH)</b>			
<i>Monthly Performance Reports</i>	440	458	457
<i>State Controller Report</i>	442	457	457
<b>Vehicle Service Miles (VSM)</b>			
<i>Monthly Performance Reports</i>	8,461	8,272	8,154
<i>State Controller Report</i>	8,461	8,272	8,154
<b>Passengers</b>			
<i>Monthly Performance Reports</i>	693	684	715
<i>State Controller Report</i>	693	684	715
<b>Full-Time Equivalent Employees</b>			
<i>State Controller Report</i>	2	2	2
<i>Per City methodology</i>	0.41	0.40	0.38
<i>Per TDA methodology</i>	0.41	0.40	0.38



## Chapter 6 | Performance Analysis

Performance indicators are typically employed to quantify and assess the efficiency of a transit operator's activities. Such indicators provide insight into current operations as well as trend analysis of operator performance. Through a review of indicators, relative performance as well as possible inter-relationships between major functions is revealed.

The Transportation Development Act (TDA) requires recipients of TDA funding to track and report five performance indicators:

- Operating Cost/Passenger,
- Operating Cost/Vehicle Service Hour,
- Passengers/Vehicle Service Hour,
- Passengers/Vehicle Service Mile, and
- Vehicle Service Hours/Employee.

To assess the validity and use of performance indicators, the audit team performed the following activities:

- Assessed internal controls in place for the collection of performance-related information,
- Validated collection methods of key data,
- Calculated performance indicators, and
- Evaluated performance indicators.

The procedures used to calculate TDA-required performance measures for the current triennium were verified and compared with indicators included in similar reports to external entities (i.e., State Controller and Federal Transit Administration).

### Operating Cost

The Transportation Development Act requires an operator to track and report transit-related costs reflective of the Uniform System of Accounts and Records developed by the State Controller and the California Department of Transportation. The most common method for ensuring this occurs is through a compliance audit report prepared by an independent auditor in accordance with California Code of Regulations Section 6667<sup>1</sup>. The annual independent financial audit should confirm the use of the Uniform System of Accounts and Records. *Operating cost* – as defined by PUC Section 99247(a) – excluded the following during the audit period<sup>2</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> CCR Section 6667 outlines the minimum tasks which must be performed by an independent auditor in conducting the annual fiscal and compliance audit of the transit operator.

<sup>2</sup> Given the passage of AB 149, the list of excluded costs will be expanded beginning with FY 2021/22.



- Cost in the depreciation and amortization expense object class adopted by the State Controller pursuant to PUC Section 99243,
- Subsidies for commuter rail services operated under the jurisdiction of the Interstate Commerce Commission,
- Direct costs of providing charter service, and
- Vehicle lease costs.

#### Vehicle Service Hours and Miles

*Vehicle Service Hours* (VSH) and *Miles* (VSM) are defined as the time/distance during which a revenue vehicle is available to carry fare-paying passengers, and which includes only those times/miles between the time or scheduled time of the first passenger pickup and the time or scheduled time of the last passenger drop-off during a period of the vehicle's continuous availability.<sup>3</sup> For example, demand-response service hours include those hours when a vehicle has dropped off a passenger and is traveling to pick up another passenger, but not those hours when the vehicle is unavailable for service due to driver breaks or lunch. For both demand-response and fixed-route services, service hours will exclude hours of "deadhead" travel to the first scheduled pick-up, and will also exclude hours of "deadhead" travel from the last scheduled drop-off back to the terminal. For fixed-route service, a vehicle is in service from first scheduled stop to last scheduled stop, whether or not passengers board or exit at those points (i.e., subtracting driver lunch and breaks but including scheduled layovers).

#### Passenger Counts

According to the Transportation Development Act, *total passengers* is equal to the total number of unlinked trips (i.e., those trips that are made by a passenger that involve a single boarding and departure), whether revenue-producing or not.

#### Employees

*Employee hours* is defined as the total number of hours (regular or overtime) which all employees have worked, and for which they have been paid a wage or salary. The hours must include transportation system-related hours worked by persons employed in connection with the system (whether or not the person is employed directly by the operator). Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) is calculated by dividing the number of person-hours by 2,000.

#### Fare Revenue

*Fare revenue* is defined by California Code of Regulations Section 6611.2 as revenue collected from the farebox plus sales of fare media.

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<sup>3</sup> A vehicle is considered to be in revenue service despite a no-show or late cancellation if the vehicle remains available for passenger use.



### TDA Required Indicators

To calculate the TDA indicators for the City of Ripon, the following sources were employed:

- Operating Cost was not independently calculated as part of this audit. Operating Cost data were obtained via State Controller Reports for each fiscal year covered by this audit. Operating Cost from the reports was compared against that reported in the City's audited financial reports and appeared to be consistent with TDA guidelines. In accordance with PUC Section 99247(a), the reported costs excluded depreciation and other allowable expenses. However, the significant variance between reports called into question which one accurately reflects the costs for the City's transit services.
- Fare Revenue was not independently calculated as part of this audit. Fare revenue data were obtained via State Controller Reports for each fiscal year covered by this audit. This appears to be consistent with TDA guidelines as well as the uniform system of accounts. Fare revenue data reported to the State Controller may not reflect other revenues reported as fare revenue to the NTD.
- Vehicle Service Hours (VSH) data were obtained via State Controller Reports for each fiscal year covered by this audit. The City calculates VSH using driver trip sheets. The City's calculation methodology is consistent with PUC guidelines.
- Vehicle Service Miles (VSM) data were obtained via State Controller Reports for each fiscal year covered by this audit. The City calculates VSM by subtracting deadhead and out-of-service miles from total vehicle mileage (as noted on each vehicle's odometer). This methodology is consistent with PUC guidelines.
- Unlinked trip data were obtained via State Controller Reports for each fiscal year covered by this audit. The City's calculation methodology is consistent with PUC guidelines.
- Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) data were obtained from State Controller Reports for each fiscal year covered by this review. Use of the TDA definition regarding FTE calculation was confirmed.

### System Performance Trends

Systemwide, operating cost rose year over year throughout the current audit period after experiencing year-to-year decreases in the prior audit period. Between FY 2018/19 and FY 2023/24, there was a net 91.7 percent increase in operating cost. The most significant increase occurred in FY 2023/24, which experienced a 44.5 percent increase. Fare revenues, however, generally decreased between FY 2018/19 and FY 2020/21. Fare revenues were heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a 25.3 percent net decrease over the six-year span. However, the first two years of the audit period experienced increases resulting in a net 2.5 percent increase for the audit period.

Vehicle service hours (VSH) experienced a net 4.6 percent increase across the six-year span and a net 3.4 increase during the audit period. Vehicle service miles (VSM) were varied, resulting in an 11.8 percent net decrease across six years and 3.6 percent net decrease during the audit period.

Ridership was mixed throughout the last six years. Overall, ridership increased by 3.2 percent during the audit period, but decreased a net 48 percent across the six-year period. A triple-digit percentage ridership increase in FY 2021/22 led to this significant improvement.



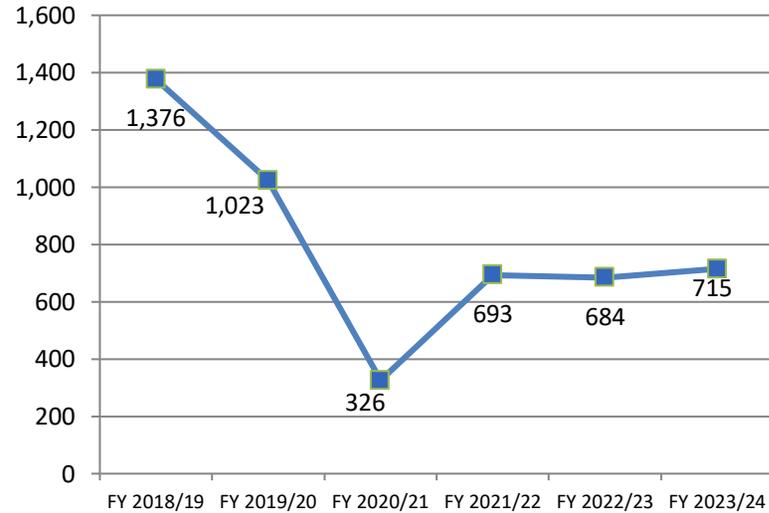
Cost-related metrics typically provide an indicator of a system’s efficiency, while passenger-related metrics offer insight into its productivity. Improvements are characterized by increases in passenger-related metrics and decreases in cost-related metrics. Operating cost metrics increased during the audit period. Passenger-related metrics varied, with passengers per VSH decreasing by 0.2 percent and passengers per VSM increasing by 7.1 percent during the audit period.

**Exhibit 6.1 System Performance Indicators**

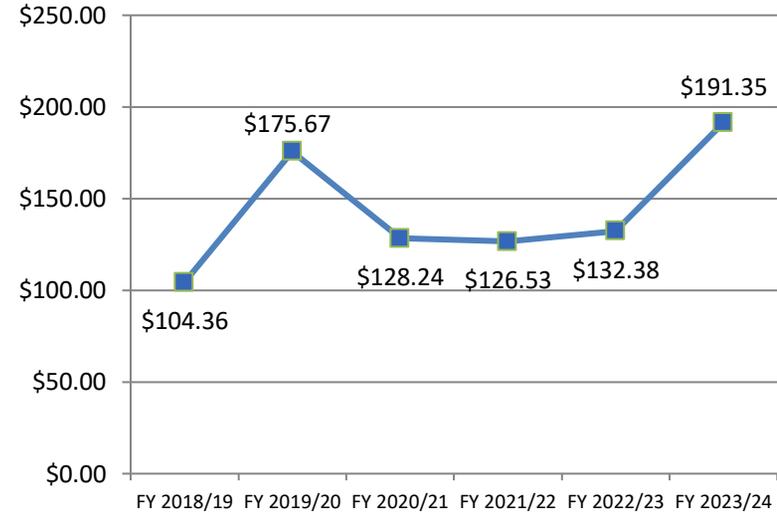
Performance Measure	System-wide					
	FY 2018/19	FY 2019/20	FY 2020/21	FY 2021/22	FY 2022/23	FY 2023/24
<b>Operating Cost (Actual \$)</b>	\$45,606	\$54,459	\$48,475	\$55,926	\$60,498	\$87,446
<i>Annual Change</i>		19.4%	-11.0%	15.4%	8.2%	44.5%
<b>Fare Revenue (Actual \$)</b>	\$2,554	\$2,271	\$1,117	\$1,862	\$1,952	\$1,908
<i>Annual Change</i>		-11.1%	-50.8%	66.7%	4.8%	-2.3%
<b>Vehicle Service Hours (VSH)</b>	437	310	378	442	457	457
<i>Annual Change</i>		-29.1%	21.9%	16.9%	3.4%	0.0%
<b>Vehicle Service Miles (VSM)</b>	9,247	6,199	6,900	8,461	8,272	8,154
<i>Annual Change</i>		-33.0%	11.3%	22.6%	-2.2%	-1.4%
<b>Passengers</b>	1,376	1,023	326	693	684	715
<i>Annual Change</i>		-25.7%	-68.1%	112.6%	-1.3%	4.5%
<b>Employees</b>	2	2	2	2	2	2
<i>Annual Change</i>		0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Performance Indicators</b>						
<b>Operating Cost/VSH (Actual \$)</b>	\$104.36	\$175.67	\$128.24	\$126.53	\$132.38	\$191.35
<i>Annual Change</i>		68.3%	-27.0%	-1.3%	4.6%	44.5%
<b>Operating Cost/Passenger (Actual \$)</b>	\$33.14	\$53.23	\$148.70	\$80.70	\$88.45	\$122.30
<i>Annual Change</i>		60.6%	179.3%	-45.7%	9.6%	38.3%
<b>Passengers/VSH</b>	3.15	3.30	0.86	1.57	1.50	1.56
<i>Annual Change</i>		4.8%	-73.9%	81.8%	-4.5%	4.5%
<b>Passengers/VSM</b>	0.15	0.17	0.05	0.08	0.08	0.09
<i>Annual Change</i>		10.9%	-71.4%	73.4%	1.0%	6.0%
<b>Farebox Recovery</b>	5.6%	4.2%	2.3%	3.3%	3.2%	2.2%
<i>Annual Change</i>		-25.5%	-44.7%	44.5%	-3.1%	-32.4%
<b>Hours/Employee</b>	218.5	155.0	189.0	221.0	228.5	228.5
<i>Annual Change</i>		-29.1%	21.9%	16.9%	3.4%	0.0%
<b>TDA Non-Required Indicators</b>						
<b>Operating Cost/VSM</b>	\$4.93	\$8.79	\$7.03	\$6.61	\$7.31	\$10.72
<i>Annual Change</i>		78.1%	-20.0%	-5.9%	10.6%	46.6%
<b>VSM/VSH</b>	21.16	20.00	18.25	19.14	18.10	17.84
<i>Annual Change</i>		-5.5%	-8.7%	4.9%	-5.4%	-1.4%
<b>Fare/Passenger</b>	\$1.86	\$2.22	\$3.43	\$2.69	\$2.85	\$2.67
<i>Annual Change</i>		19.6%	54.3%	-21.6%	6.2%	-6.5%

Sources: FY 2018/19 – FY 2020/21 data taken from prior Triennial Performance Audit.  
FY 2021/22 – FY 2023/24 data taken from State Controller reports.

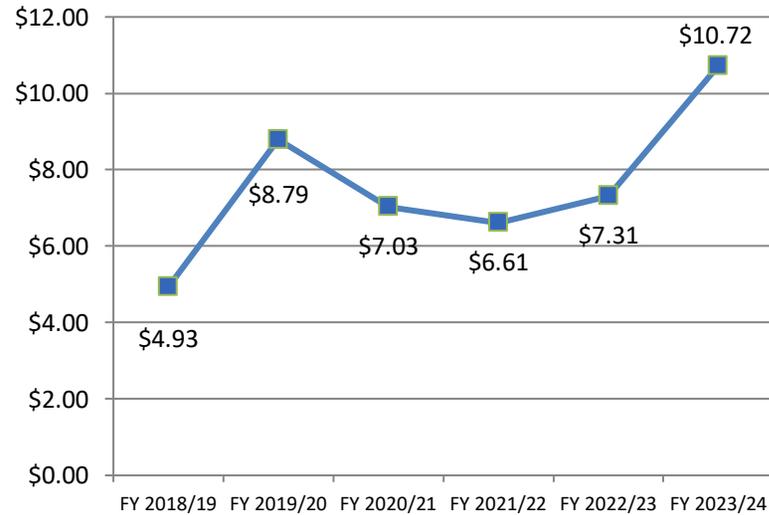
**Exhibit 6.2 System Ridership**



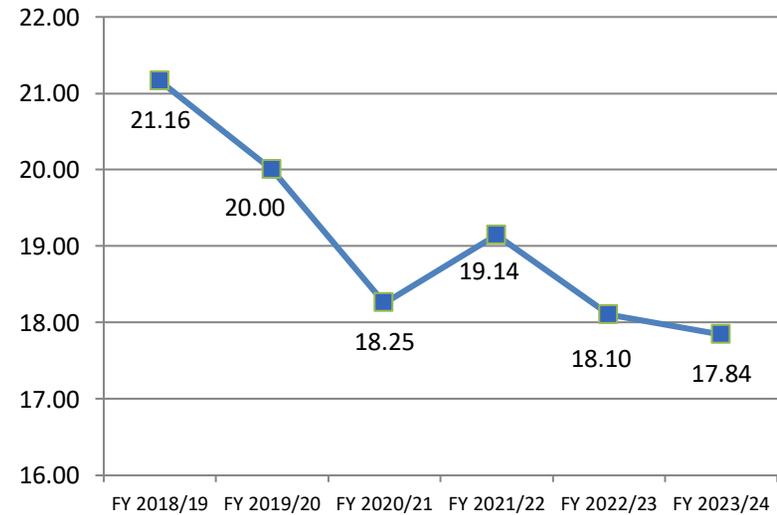
**Exhibit 6.3 System Operating Cost/VSH**



**Exhibit 6.4 System Operating Cost/VSM**

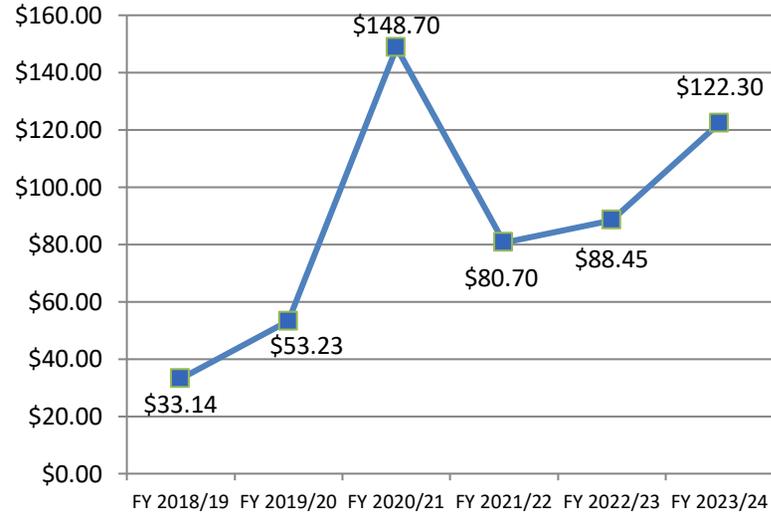


**Exhibit 6.5 System VSM/VSH**

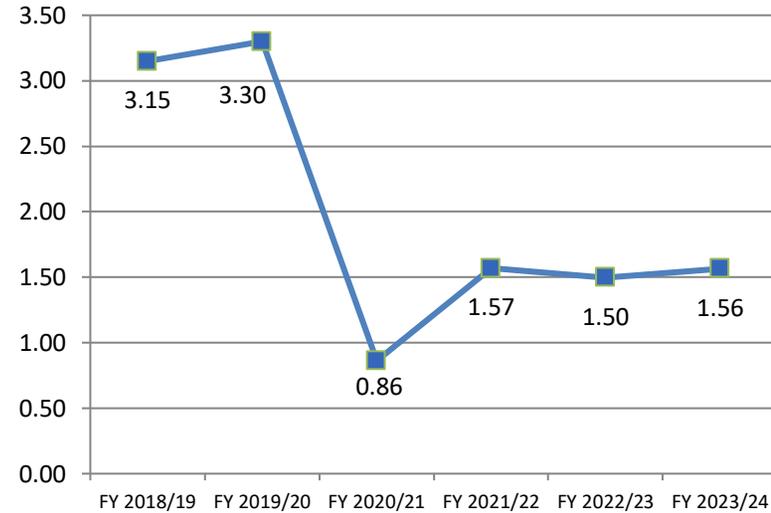




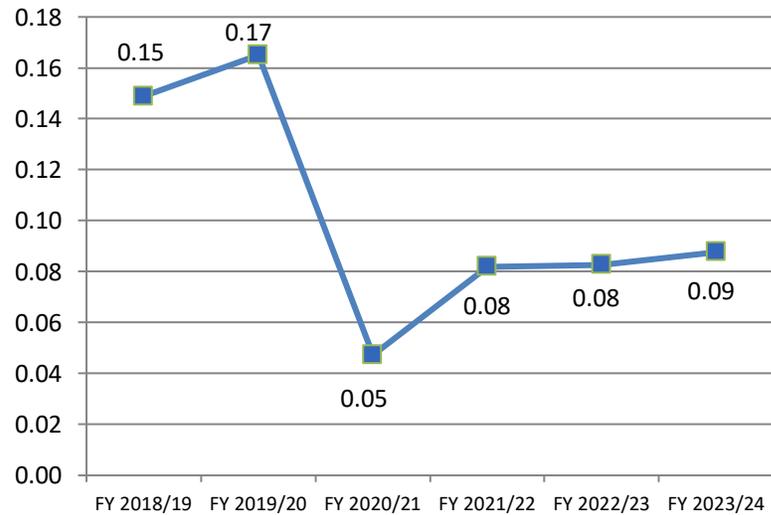
**Exhibit 6.6 System Operating Cost/Passenger**



**Exhibit 6.7 System Passengers/VSH**



**Exhibit 6.8 System Passengers/VSM**



**Exhibit 6.9 System VSH/FTE**

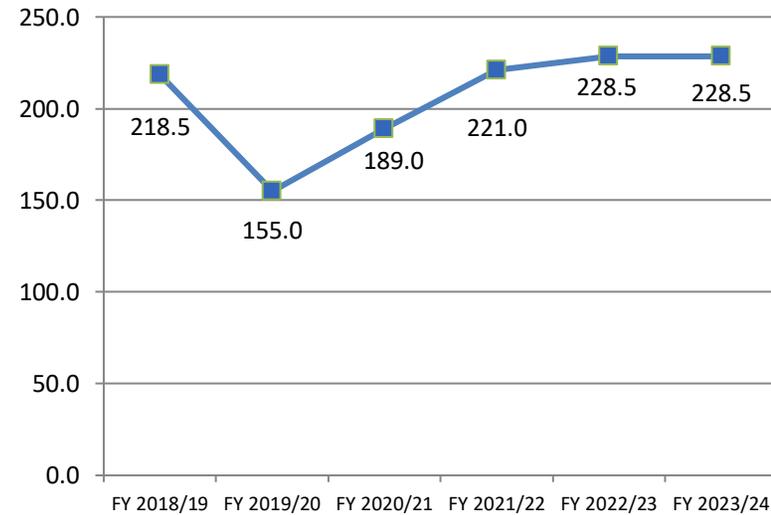




Exhibit 6.10 System Farebox Recovery

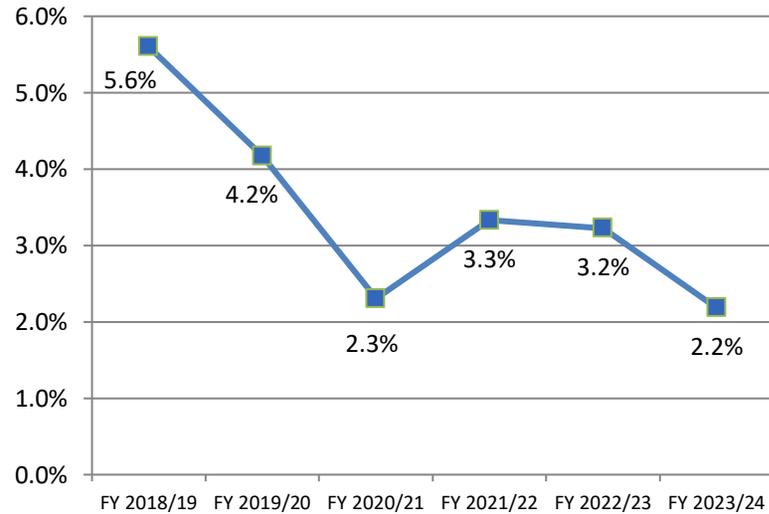


Exhibit 6.11 System Fare/Passenger





### Fixed-Route Performance Trends

Fixed-Route vehicle service hours (VSH) steadily increased from FY 2020/21 to FY 2022/23. This resulted in a net increase of 3.2 percent during the audit period and a net 3.0 percent increase over the past six years. Vehicle service miles (VSM) were mixed, resulting in a net decrease of 3.8 percent during the audit period, and a net decrease of 1.2 percent since FY 2018/19.

Ridership declined each year of the prior audit period, before increasing by triple digits in FY 2021/22. Overall, fixed-route ridership increased by 2.1 percent during the audit period, but decreased by 38.8 percent over the six-year period.

Passenger-related metrics varied, with passengers per VSH experienced a decrease of 1.1 percent and passengers per VSM increased by 6.2 percent during the audit period.

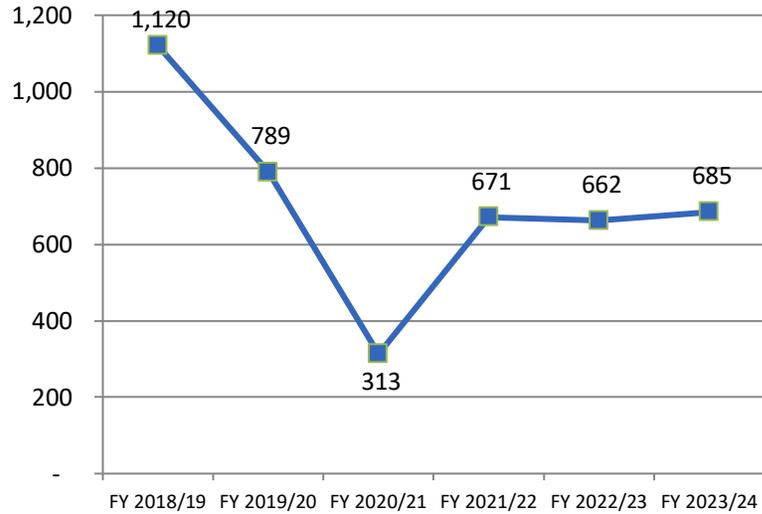
Exhibit 6.12 Fixed-Route Performance Indicators

Performance Measure	Fixed-Route					
	FY 2018/19	FY 2019/20	FY 2020/21	FY 2021/22	FY 2022/23	FY 2023/24
<b>Vehicle Service Hours (VSH)</b>	437	310	372	436	453	450
<i>Annual Change</i>		-29.1%	20.0%	17.2%	3.9%	-0.7%
<b>Vehicle Service Miles (VSM)</b>	8,067	5,679	6,701	8,293	8,162	7,974
<i>Annual Change</i>		-29.6%	18.0%	23.8%	-1.6%	-2.3%
<b>Passengers</b>	1,120	789	313	671	662	685
<i>Annual Change</i>		-29.6%	-60.3%	114.4%	-1.3%	3.5%
<b>Employees</b>		1	1	1	1	1
<i>Annual Change</i>		0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Performance Indicators</b>						
<b>Passengers/VSH</b>	2.56	2.55	0.84	1.54	1.46	1.52
<i>Annual Change</i>		-0.7%	-66.9%	82.9%	-5.0%	4.2%
<b>Passengers/VSM</b>	0.14	0.14	0.05	0.08	0.08	0.09
<i>Annual Change</i>		0.1%	-66.4%	73.2%	0.2%	5.9%
<b>Hours/Employee</b>		310.0	372.0	436.0	453.0	450.0
<i>Annual Change</i>			20.0%	17.2%	3.9%	-0.7%
<b>TDA Non-Required Indicators</b>						
<b>VSM/VSH</b>	18.46	18.32	18.01	19.02	18.02	17.72
<i>Annual Change</i>		-0.8%	-1.7%	5.6%	-5.3%	-1.7%

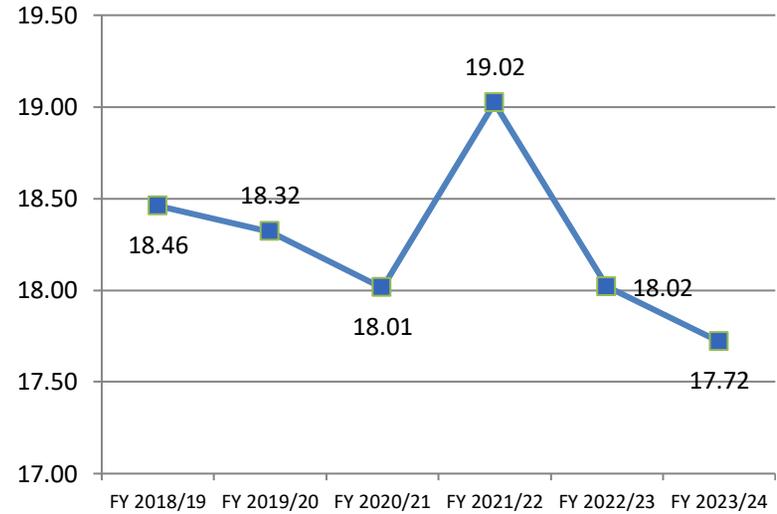
Sources: FY 2018/19 – FY 2020/21 data taken from prior Triennial Performance Audit.  
FY 2021/22 – FY 2023/24 data taken from State Controller reports.



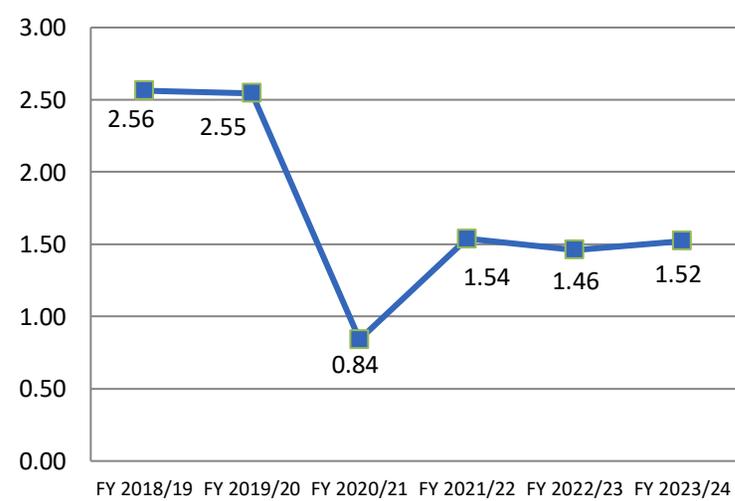
**Exhibit 6.13 Fixed-Route Ridership**



**Exhibit 6.14 Fixed-Route VSM/VSH**



**Exhibit 6.15 Fixed-Route Passengers/VSH**



**Exhibit 6.16 Fixed-Route Passengers/VSM**

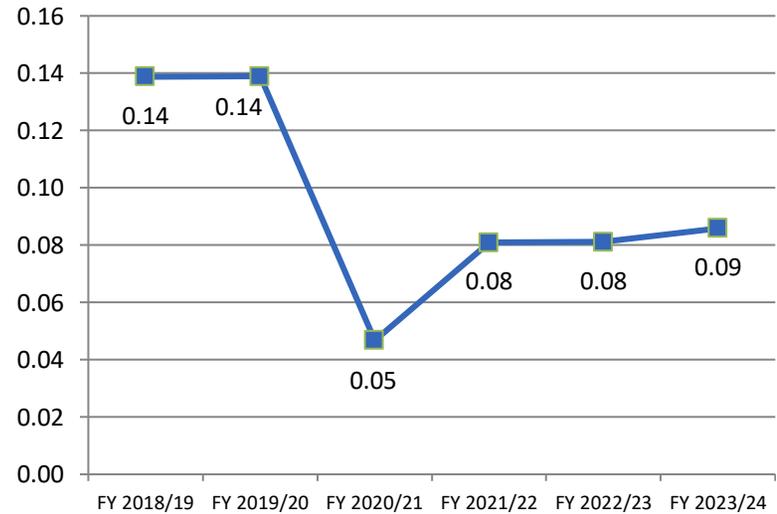
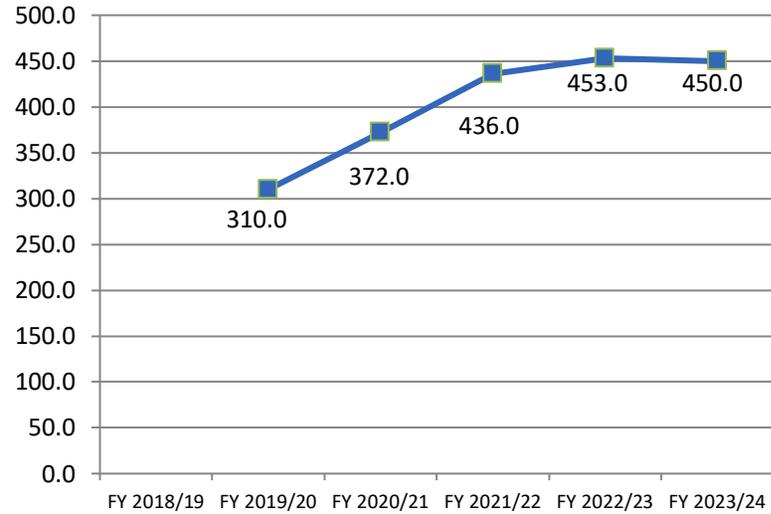




Exhibit 6.17 Fixed-Route VSH/FTE





### Demand-Response Performance Trends

Demand-response vehicle service hours (VSH) varied throughout the audit period, for an increase of 16.7 percent during the audit period. Vehicle service miles (VSM) also decreased every year with the exception of a 63.6 percent increase in FY 2023/24. This resulted in an increase of 7.1 percent during the audit period, and a decrease of 84.7 percent since FY 2018/19.

Ridership declined throughout the prior audit period, before experiencing two years of increases. Overall, demand-response ridership increased by 36.4 percent during the audit period, and decreased by 88.3 percent over the six-year period.

Passenger-related metrics rose, with passengers per VSH and passengers per VSM increasing by 16.9 percent and 27.3 percent, respectively, during the audit period.

**Exhibit 6.18 Demand-Response Performance Indicators**

Performance Measure	Demand-Response					
	FY 2018/19	FY 2019/20	FY 2020/21	FY 2021/22	FY 2022/23	FY 2023/24
<b>Vehicle Service Hours (VSH)</b>			6	6	4	7
<i>Annual Change</i>				0.0%	-33.3%	75.0%
<b>Vehicle Service Miles (VSM)</b>	1,180	520	199	168	110	180
<i>Annual Change</i>		-55.9%	-61.7%	-15.6%	-34.5%	63.6%
<b>Passengers</b>	256	234	13	22	22	30
<i>Annual Change</i>		-8.6%	-94.4%	69.2%	0.0%	36.4%
<b>Employees</b>	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Annual Change</i>		0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Performance Indicators</b>						
<b>Passengers/VSH</b>			2.17	3.67	5.50	4.29
<i>Annual Change</i>				69.2%	50.0%	-22.1%
<b>Passengers/VSM</b>	0.22	0.45	0.07	0.13	0.20	0.17
<i>Annual Change</i>		107.4%	-85.5%	100.5%	52.7%	-16.7%
<b>Hours/Employee</b>	0.0	0.0	6.0	6.0	4.0	7.0
<i>Annual Change</i>				0.0%	-33.3%	75.0%
<b>TDA Non-Required Indicators</b>						
<b>VSM/VSH</b>			33.17	28.00	27.50	25.71
<i>Annual Change</i>				-15.6%	-1.8%	-6.5%

Sources: Available FY 2018/19 – FY 2020/21 data and all FY 2021/22 – FY 2023/24 data taken from State Controller reports.



Exhibit 6.19 Demand-Response Ridership

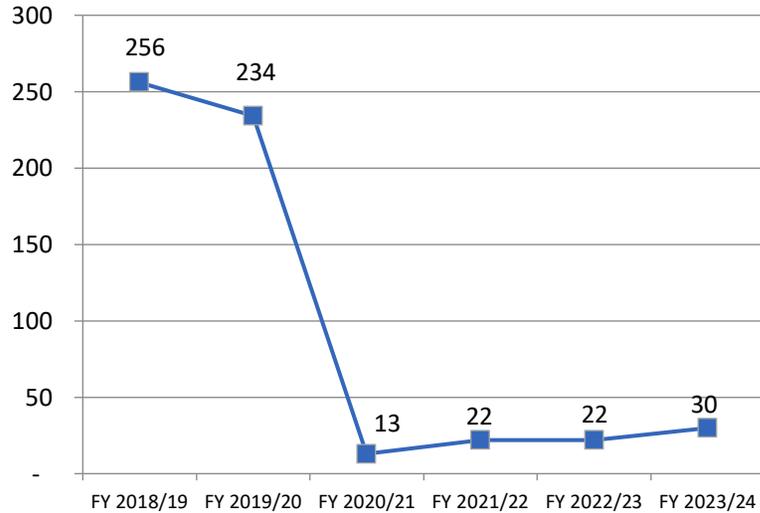


Exhibit 6.20 Demand-Response VSM/VSH

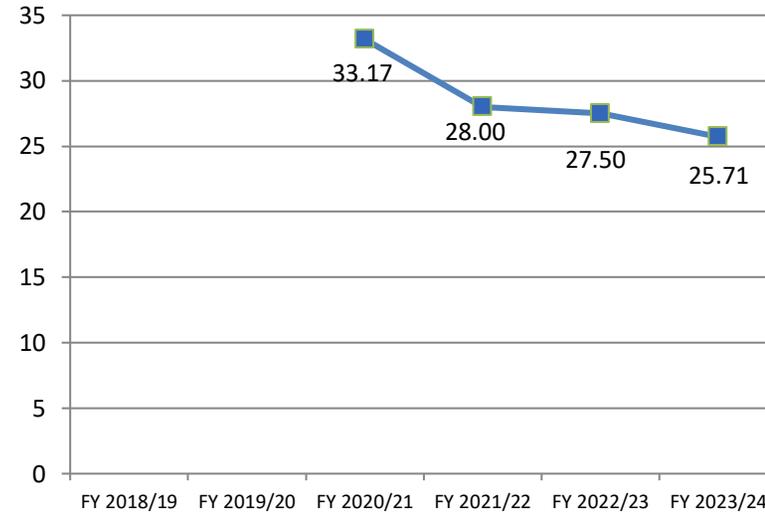


Exhibit 6.21 Demand-Response Passengers/VSH

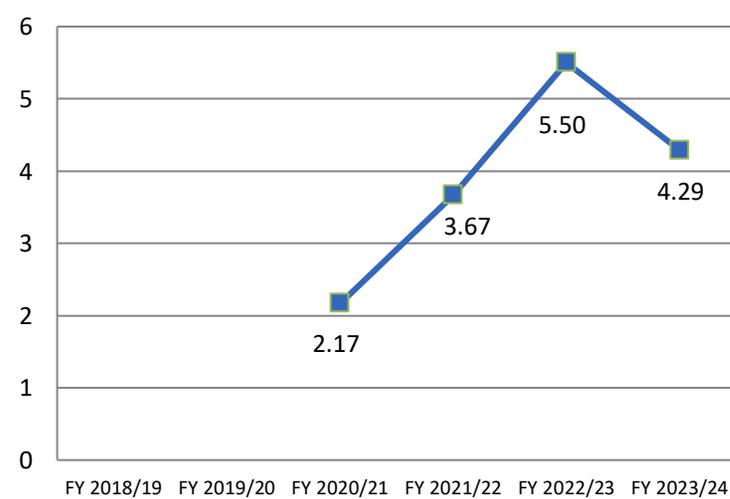


Exhibit 6.22 Demand-Response Passengers/VSM

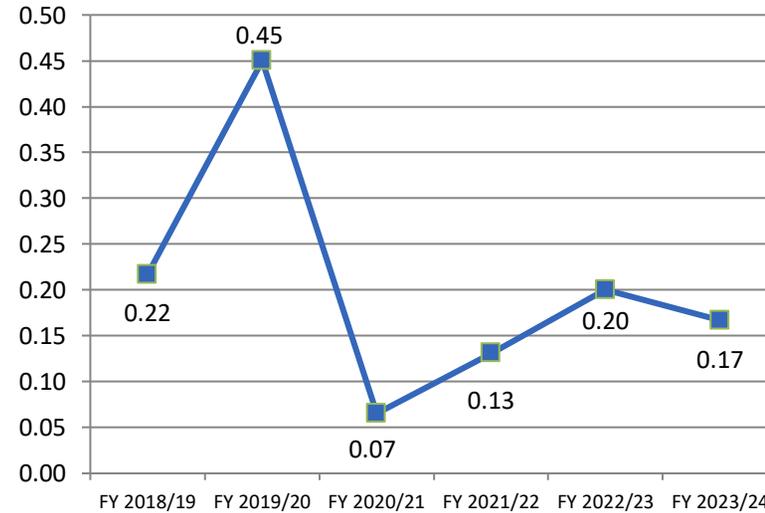
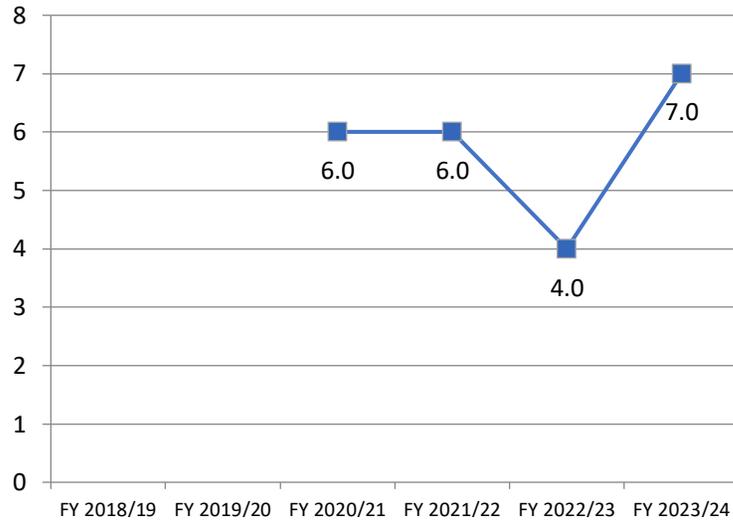




Exhibit 6.23 Demand-Response VSH/FTE





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## Chapter 7 | Functional Review

A functional review of the City of Ripon’s public transit program is intended to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the operator. Following a general summary of the City’s transit services, this chapter addresses seven functional areas. The list, taken from Section III of the *Performance Audit Guidebook* published by Caltrans, reflects those transit services provided by the City:

- General management and organization;
- Service planning;
- Administration;
- Marketing and public information;
- Scheduling, dispatch, and operations;
- Personnel management and training; and
- Maintenance.

### Service Overview

The City of Ripon provides bus service within city limits and connecting to nearby Modesto. The Blossom Express fixed-route service operates two days each week (Tuesday and Thursday), providing two morning and two afternoon round trips between Ripon and Modesto. Up to two deviations to locations within ¼ mile of the route may be provided each trip.

Local demand-response service is provided through an agreement with Bethany Home, which organizes volunteer drivers for on-call service as needed.

The base fare for the Blossom Express service is \$2.00. Discounted fares are available for seniors (60+), Medicare cardholders, students age 5-17, college students with valid ID, and ADA Certificate of Eligibility card holders. Up to four children age four and under ride free with a fare-paying adult. Personal care attendants (PCAs) ride free when accompanying a disabled passenger. Discounted 10-trip passes may be purchased at City Hall. Fares and passes for Blossom Express may also be purchased electronically using the regional EZHub Vamos Mobility app.

Exhibit 7.1 Fixed-Route Fare Structure

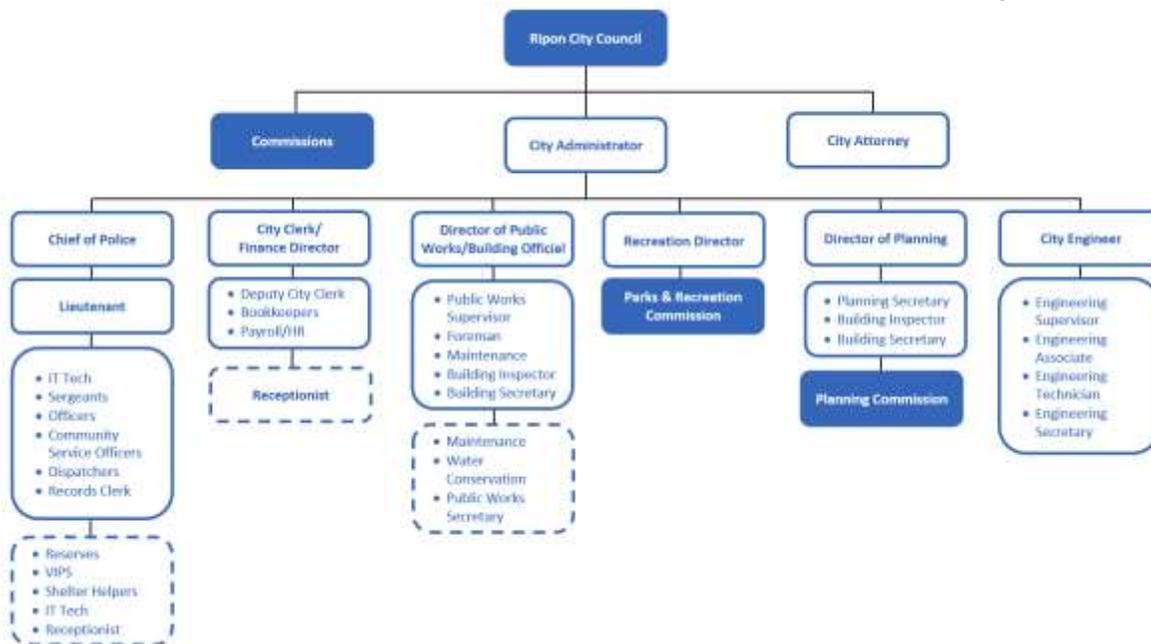
Fare Category	Fare
One-way general fare	\$2.00
One-way discount fare	\$1.00
Deviation fee general fare (additional fee)	\$2.00
Deviation fee discount fare (excludes students) (additional fee)	\$1.00
Full day pass general fare	\$4.00
Full day pass discount fare	\$2.00
10-Ride Discount Booklet general fare	\$16.00
10-Ride Discount Booklet discount fare	\$8.00
Children (age 4 & under) (up to 4 with a fare-paying adult)	Free
Additional children (age 4 & under)	\$2.00
Personal care attendants	Free

### General Management and Organization



Transit is overseen by the City’s Finance Director, who is supported by the Engineering Secretary, Bookkeeper, and Receptionist with respect to customer service, contract monitoring, and reporting. The Director of Public Works oversees the City’s maintenance employees. Operation of the Blossom Express service is contracted to the San Joaquin Regional Transit District (RTD). Operation of the demand-response service is provided by volunteer drivers through Bethany Home. The City provides maintenance for all revenue vehicles. The City’s Finance Director is the liaison with RTD and SJCOC. The program is structured and staffed appropriately.

Exhibit 7.2 Organizational Chart



The Ripon City Council is the governing body for the City’s transit program. The Council meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the City’s Council Chambers, located at 259 N. Wilma Ave. in Ripon.

City staff monitors program performance by reviewing monthly reports. Ripon’s City Council does not have any particular concerns about transit, but tends to be supportive of the City’s programs.

### Service Planning

All service planning for the City’s transit service is provided by consultants. The City’s primary service planning document is its Short Range Transit Plan, which was completed in 2010 with a planning horizon through 2020. The City is in the process of updating its Short Range Transit Plan, with completion expected in June 2025.

The Blossom Express deviated fixed-route service was launched in FY 2012/13. A Gillig CNG-powered transit bus was purchased by piggybacking onto a purchase made by the Stark Area Regional Transit Authority (Canton, Ohio). A second vehicle was purchased by piggybacking onto the Central Contra Costa Transit Authority, using an option from Monterey-Salinas Transit. Both vehicles were funded by a CMAQ





grant. No new vehicles were purchased during the audit period. The City's transit program is currently funded through Measure K and does not receive federal or LTF funds.

#### Administration

The city-wide budget is prepared by the City Administrator and City Clerk/Finance Director. The City Clerk/Finance Director handles the budget based on prior year actuals. The City has a Budget Development Committee that considers budget policies and makes recommendations for the City Council's consideration. The City does not have a grants manager. The Finance Director oversees any grants with assistance from the Engineering Secretary. The Finance Director prepares the annual TDA claim.

The City's Finance Director handles risk management. The City has a third-party provider that is very helpful. All accident and injury claims go through the Finance Director or the Director of Public Works.

Contract management activities are minimal, and the City is generally satisfied with the San Joaquin RTD as its service provider. Invoices are typically paid monthly, and the operations contract has been renewed on an annual basis. Purchasing and procurement policies are handled by the Engineering and Finance Departments.

#### Marketing and Public Information

Service information is available primarily through the City's website, with a Blossom Express brochure available at the City Hall front desk. The City uses Nixle to push information about transit promotions out to its residents. Documents are available in English and Spanish. The webpage includes links to the Blossom Express brochure, route and schedule information, fare information, and Title VI notice and complaint form. Engineering staff handles customer calls. There is little information about the dial-a-ride service available online.

#### Scheduling, Dispatch, and Operations

San Joaquin Regional Transit District (RTD) uses one driver to operate the City's deviated fixed-route program. A backup driver is provided when the regular driver is not available. RTD drivers are assigned through the bidding process three times per year based on seniority. Drivers are not formally rotated through routes, but may do so as the bid allows. Vacation is scheduled in advance so a back-up driver can be assigned to the Ripon route.

Vehicles are assigned to routes based on service type. The two larger vehicles are used for the deviated fixed-route service, while the small vehicle is used for demand-response service.

Fares are collected onboard the buses in locked fareboxes. The driver brings the farebox into the City's reception area. The receptionist unlocks the farebox and counts the money in front of the driver, then reconciles the fares. There are cameras in the reception area, but they do not capture the cash counting, which is done at the back counter. The money is delivered to cash receiving in the Finance Department and is recorded as fare revenue in the transit fund. The cash is put into the City vault until it can be delivered to the bank. A City staff member takes the deposit to the bank using a personal vehicle. Given the City takes in less than fifty dollars per week in transit fare revenue, this level of security is deemed to be appropriate. The City also uses the county-wide Vamos app for mobile ticketing, though revenues through the app are modest.



### Personnel Management and Training

San Joaquin RTD is continuously hiring and those who operations management feel would be a good fit for Ripon's Blossom Express service are trained on the route to be used as a backup driver. All RTD applicants are required to have their Class B permit with passenger and air brakes endorsements. RTD then provides training for them to obtain their commercial Class B license.

RTD uses internal recognition such as Employee of the Month and Employee of the Year to motivate employees. When turnover does happen, it is typically because drivers choose to leave or retire (rather than due to disciplinary action). One of the main causes for turnover among RTD drivers during the audit period was the amount of the mandatory contribution to the defined benefit plan, which affects represented employees. The RTD's CFO has been working to reduce the contribution.

The Blossom Express driver is shared with RTD's County Division pool. Job performance evaluations are completed regularly for all operator staff.

RTD's Training Department and Transportation Training Supervisors provide comprehensive operator training and certification. Trainers hold the Instructors Course for Transit Trainers Certificate and Transit and Paratransit Manager Certificate. Operator training consists of classroom and behind-the-wheel training that meets all state and federal requirements. RTD's training program is registered through the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Entry Level Driver Training Program. Commercial license testing is provided through the DMV. All operators complete at least eight hours of training annually. The Safety, Security, and Risk Management Department is responsible for reviewing safety curriculums and ensuring implementation of initial, refresher, and safety certification training.

The collective bargaining agreement specifies progressive discipline and an attendance policy for represented employees. The RTD's drug and alcohol program conforms with applicable federal and state requirements.

RTD drivers and their dependents are offered medical, dental, and vision insurance benefits. RTD's human resources department handles benefit questions.

Demand-response volunteer drivers are recruited through Bethany Home, a local senior living community. Potential drivers provide their DMV record for review and receive driver training from the Public Works Supervisor.

### Maintenance

The City provides transit vehicle maintenance. Preventive maintenance is conducted in accordance with the manufacturer's recommended schedule. Compliance with the preventive maintenance schedule can be easily judged through maintenance records. Every effort is made to ensure maintenance does not conflict with regular vehicle use, though having two of the larger buses offers more flexibility if a more time-intensive repair is required or the vehicle is waiting on a part. Warranty repairs are identified and appropriate adjustments are made.



The Ford E350 cutaway is 27 years old, while the two 35-foot Gillig coaches are newer (twelve and six years old at the end of the audit period). Given the frequency with which each vehicle is used (one or two days per week), they accrue mileage much slower than a typical transit vehicle.

The City has budgeted for the purchase of a nine-passenger vehicle in FY 2024/25 to replace the 1997 Ford cutaway vehicle. It anticipates using LTF set-aside funds for the procurement.

Exhibit 7.3 City of Ripon Transit Fleet

Vehicle #	Year	Make	Model	Fuel	PAX	WC Positions
68	1997	Ford	Econoline	Diesel	9	1
69	2012	Gillig	Bus	CNG	31	2
82	2018	Gillig	Bus	CNG	31	2



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## Chapter 8 | Findings and Recommendations

### Conclusions

The City of Ripon does not receive any TDA Article 4 funds for transit and has not traditionally been required to be in compliance with the requirements of the Transportation Development Act. Moore & Associates finds the City of Ripon to be in compliance with the requirements of the Transportation Development Act. In addition, the entity generally functions in an efficient, effective, and economical manner.

### Findings

Based on discussions with City staff, analysis of program performance, and an audit of program compliance and function, the audit team presents no findings or recommendations.



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