

I. INTRODUCTION

Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) carries nearly 4.7 million passengers a year in Monterey County, using 78 transit buses, 6 historically-themed trolley buses, 11 minibuses, 26 paratransit vans, 4 paratransit minivans and 2 paratransit sedans. MST serves 14 municipalities in three counties and nearly 10 additional communities in the unincorporated areas of Monterey County. The cities of Monterey and Salinas act as major transit hubs. A board of directors governs MST and is appointed by the eight members of the Joint Powers Agency.

Purpose of Business Plan

The aim of the MST business plan is to strengthen the transportation system for our community. Transit is part of the fabric of the community and a critical element in the overall transportation system. Transit increases mobility for tens of thousands of commuters and visitors, thereby reducing traffic congestion, air pollution, and energy consumption. Additionally, thousands of senior citizens, disabled individuals, and people living below the poverty level rely on transit as a vital link connecting them to jobs, shopping, education, health care, and the American society, in general.

Furthermore, according to research conducted by the American Public Transit Association, each dollar invested in transit adds value to the economy; for example, 475 jobs are created for each \$10 million invested in transit capital projects, and over 570 jobs are created for each \$10 million invested in transit operations. Businesses benefit as well, with a \$32 million increase in business sales for each \$10 million in transit operations spending. This business plan calls for at least \$100 million (FY 2006 dollars) to be spent by MST during the next five years on operations and capital projects.

The business plan sets the direction, establishes expectations, and defines actions. Preparation of the business plan helps MST and the community deal with changing circumstances and enhances MST's ability to think and act strategically. Raising and resolving important issues is at the heart of this strategic planning effort (see Section

VI—Major Issues). The intent of strategic planning and the resulting business plan is to meet and exceed community and customer expectations.

Relationship of Business Plan to Federal and State Transportation Plans

The MST business plan is incorporated biennially into the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) managed by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG). The MTIP covers the three counties (Monterey, Santa Cruz, San Benito) administered by AMBAG, which is designated as the federal metropolitan planning organization.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regulations encourage preparation of a short-range transit plan to assist planning and to document the support basis for the use of federal funds. The MST business plan satisfies this goal. AMBAG forwards the MST business plan to the FTA via Caltrans (California Department of Transportation).

The MST business plan is also incorporated biennially into the regional transportation improvement program (RTIP) managed by the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC). The RTIP is a programming document that identifies the projects that will receive funding in the state transportation improvement program. TAMC is the designated state regional transportation planning agency.

Process to Develop the Business Plan

Community and customer expectations drive the planning effort. Expectations are identified through regular surveys of stakeholders (e.g., government jurisdictions served by MST, business organizations, nonriders), customers (e.g., riders, employers), and employees. Expectations are also obtained from citizen-advisory committees, MST's comment-management system, public hearings, and community meetings.

The MST business plan is a result of contributions and ideas of stakeholders, customers, and MST staff. It recognizes the MST Board of Directors' priorities as stated

in the MST mission, core values, and four key business drivers (see Section II—System Description), as well as the requirements to set performance goals and measure progress.

The planning team consists of MST staff and the planning and operations committee of the MST Board of Directors. This team reaffirms the MST mission statement, defines objectives, and develops strategies to achieve the objectives, including supporting financial plans. A draft business plan is presented to the full board of directors and then to the public for comment. After a formal public hearing, the board considers adopting the plan.

Organization of the Business Plan

This business plan describes community and customer expectations. It reports how successful MST is in meeting these expectations and what is needed for improvement. The plan then provides three-year financial plans to implement these improvements and lists those improvements that cannot be implemented due to constrained funding. The sections of the plan are summarized below:

Section I—Introduction.

Section II—System Description. Describes community and customer transit needs and government mandates are described, and MST’s organizational structure is highlighted as it strives to meet these needs and mandates.

Section III—Performance of Fixed-Route System. Describes how successful the organization depicted in Section II is at meeting community and customer needs.

Section IV—Performance of MST RIDES ADA paratransit program. Describes how successful the organization depicted in Section II is at meeting community and customer paratransit needs.

Section V—System Needs and Improvements. Describes what improvements are needed to increase performance to meet community and customer needs. It includes lists of unfunded operating and capital requirements.

Section VI—Major Issues. Frames issues that need to be addressed in order to achieve the improvements described in Section V.

Section VII—Strategies for Fiscal Years 2005, 2006, and 2007. Describes plans to accomplish the improvements listed in Section V.

Section VIII—Transportation Improvement Plan. Describes the financial resources available to accomplish the strategies listed in Section VII.

Schedule for Future Updates

The business plan and the associated financial plans (i.e., transportation improvement plans) are reviewed and updated annually. The business plan is formally reviewed and fully updated biennially.

MST aims to think and act strategically at all times, not just once a year. The business plan, therefore, remains open to unforeseen opportunities.