



**Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS)
Authority Advisory Committee
MINUTES**

**DATE
April 5, 2023**

A regular meeting of the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) Authority Advisory Committee (AAC) was held Wednesday, April 5, 2023, via teleconference/videoconference and was called to order by Chair Baker at 1:41p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Karen Baker, Chair, Merced County representative
 Jim Donovan, Yosemite National Park representative
 Jonathan Farrington, Mariposa County Representative
 D.S. Gorder, Yosemite National Park representative
 Lisa Mayo, Tuolumne County representative
 Candy O'Donel-Browne, Executive Director representative
 Rhonda Salisbury, Madera County Salisbury
 Hilda Sousa, Department of Transportation representative*
 Nanette Villegas, Merced County representative
 Maddie Brown, Merced County representative
 Len Otley, Tuolumne County representative

MEMBERS ABSENT

Marcella Rose, Mono County representative
 Betsy Truax, Mono County representative
 Vacant, Madera County representative
 Vacant, Mariposa County representative

GUESTS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Serenity Anderson, First Transit

STAFF PRESENT

Nav Bagri, Deputy Executive Director
 Jose Perez, Assistant Transit Manager
 Tara Rodriguez, Staff Analyst I
 Lucia Huerta, Transit Administrative Assistant I
 Mary-Michal Rawling, Public Affairs Manager
 Griselda Villa, Public Program Specialist I
 Myrissa Bravo, Multimedia Specialist

Arrived after roll call*

1. Call to order

- a. Roll call
- b. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Baker led the introductions and called the meeting to order at 1:41 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was present. Maddie Brown led the pledge of allegiance.

2. Public Comment

None.

3. National Park Service Report

Jim Donovan presented the National Park Service report and discussed the following topics:

- Road damage following winter storms has been extensive. Wawona Road and Big Oak Flat Roads will have temporary traffic lights and use a single lane.
- Mariposa Grove is open to walk-in visitors, but the road is damaged and cannot be used by visitor vehicles or shuttle buses. There will be no shuttle service provided to Mariposa Grove until the roadway is repaired.
- Construction on Glacier Point Road was cut short by the onset of winter, so the road will remain closed until July or later.

Tioga Road re-construction was completed last fall, but we do not know the condition of the pavement until snow removal is underway. Snow removal begins after April 15. Shuttle bus service was suspended during the worst of the storm, but service resumed on March 18. All visitor services are opening by Friday in Yosemite Valley and Wawona.

5. Information Items:

- a. YARTS Quarterly Marketing and Media Update
- b. Minutes of the February 13, 2023 YARTS Governing Board Meeting
- c. AAC/Governing Board Sign-up sheet
- d. Federal Community Project funding request
- e. Service Update, Ridership History and Customer Service Reports
- f. YARTS AAC/GB meeting schedule for Fiscal Year 2023-2024
- g. YARTS/Mariposa County Annual Agreement for Services – Fiscal Year 2023-24
- h. YARTS/Tuolumne County Annual Agreement for Services – Fiscal Year 2023-24
- i. YARTS/ National Park Service Cooperative Agreement Modification No. 3 – Fiscal Year 2023-24

Lisa Mayo asked if would be possible to do a pre-season run to the park for just tourism industry folks in the gateway communities so they could better promote the service.

Mary-Michal Rawling replied that staff would love to do that, but YARTS has some challenges with the fleet this year; staff has not made that determination yet.

Ms. Rawling asked the group to look at Item 4c. AAC/Governing Board Sign-up sheet. Karen Baker asked if there were any volunteers.

Lisa Mayo volunteered for April 17, 2023.

None yet for the July 17, 2023 meeting.

Karen Baker volunteered for October 16, 2023.

Jonathan Farrington volunteered for February 12, 2024.

Rhonda Salisbury volunteered for April 15, 2024.

Karen Baker asked if there was going to be more national or international marketing done for the service? Mary-Michal Rawling stated there were some national publications, but the focus is on gateway communities into the park. YARTS has a tight budget so is limited in options, but staff is open to suggestions. There are many ads placed in tourism publications in gateway communities such as visitor guides.

5. Consent Calendar:

- a. Approve the minutes of the February 1, 2023 YARTS Authority Advisory Committee regular meeting
- b. Recommend the Governing Board authorize the Low Carbon Operations Program Fiscal Year 2022-23 and adopt Resolution No. 2023/04-17-02
- c. Recommend the Governing Board accept YARTS Fiscal Year 2021-22 Audit
- d. Recommend the Governing Board approve the YARTS/MCAG Annual Agreement for Services – Fiscal Year 2023-24

Rhonda Salisbury moved to approve the consent calendar.

Seconded by Candy O'Donel-Browne.

Roll call vote:

Ayes – Members Baker, O'Donel-Browne, Mayo, Villegas, Gorder, Donovan, Salisbury,

Noes – none

Abstain – Farrington, Brown, Otley

MOTION CARRIED.

6. Action Items:

- a. Recommend the Governing Board authorize YARTS to adjust fares and hold a public hearing

Jose Perez discussed holding a public hearing regarding fare adjustments. YARTS is making it a simplified rate structure for riders. Jim Donovan asked just to clarify if this was a second phase in the short range transit plan? Jose Perez commented that this is a basic clean-up, and staff is adjusting Reduced Fares to make them more consistent with YARTS fare structure.

Jonathan Farrington asked what is the acronym for CMAQ?

Jose Perez replied with Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Funding.

Nanette Villegas moved to recommend the Governing Board authorize YARTS to adjust fares and hold a public hearing.

Seconded by Maddie Brown.

Roll call vote:

Ayes – Members Baker, O'Donel-Browne, Mayo, Sousa, Villegas, Gorder, Donovan, Salisbury, Farrington, Brown, Otley

Noes – None

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

- b. Recommend the Governing Board adopt the FY 2023-2024 budget

Nav Bagri presented the Capital Budget for FY 2023-24 and discussed the following topics:

- Provided safe, reliable transportation to and from YNP on all corridors.
- Successful transition of new Operations and Maintenance Contractor.
- Secured Community Project Funding Award of \$3.68 million to purchase four buses.
- Received our new MCI's buses.
- In discussions with the City of Fresno Hwy 41-operating from Oakhurst to Yosemite.
- Hwy 120 will have one run from Sonora to Yosemite and two runs from Groveland to Yosemite.
- Hwy 140 went from nine trips to Yosemite down to seven trips to Yosemite Park.

- Procurement of 9 Clean Diesel Buses.
- Increase in Operation and maintenance Contract.
- Increase in Staffing
- Decrease in CMAQ in housing design
- Bus Purchase for 9 new over the road coaches

Candy O'Donel-Browne moved to recommend the Governing Board adopt the FY 2023/24 budget.

Seconded by D.S. Gorder.

Roll call vote:

Ayes – Members Baker, O'Donel-Browne, Mayo, Sousa, Villegas, Gorder, Donovan, Salisbury, Farrington, Brown, Otley

Noes – None

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

c. Recommend Summer Service Expansion on Highway 41

Jose Perez stated this is an item for the Governing Board to take action on expanding the summer service on Hwy 41. Staff has had several meetings with the Fresno Airport and the City of Fresno staff – both of which have communicated their commitment to not only continuing service this summer but beyond, and also have Fresno County join the YARTS JPA. They are eager to not only resume the service but be local champions for its long-term sustainability. Staff has coordinated with First Transit and determined it possible to include one run out of Fresno to connect to existing service in Oakhurst this summer. This would be at a proposed cost to Fresno in the amount of \$75,000 which includes operations and maintenance costs, as well as staff time and marketing. This run would not require an additional bus to be added to the corridor.

Rhonda Salisbury commented on the routes, she thought Oakhurst would continue to have two stops. Jose Perez commented YARTS has two runs out of Oakhurst. The new hotel will be the designated stop, not the Best Western hotel.

Nanette Villegas moved to recommend summer service be expanded on Highway 41 to Fresno.

Seconded by Maddie Brown.

Roll call vote:

Ayes – Members Baker, O'Donel-Browne, Mayo, Sousa, Villegas, Gorder, Donovan, Salisbury, Farrington, Brown, Otley

Noes – None

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

7. Discussion Items:

a. Bicycle Storage on Buses

Jose Perez presented YARTS Bike Storage and covered the following:

- All buses are 45-feet and the YARTS do not have bike racks or designated bike storage.
- There are certain YARTS routes that discourage the use of bike racks in the front or rear of the buses because of the limited turning radius.

The new YARTS buses are a vestibule style vehicle, which provides more space for wheelchairs. However, the additional space on the bus limits the space for luggage and storage of items such as bicycles.

- YARTS staff will continue to track the number of bikes transported, as well as any issues that may arise due to the lack of space available on the under storage.

b. Fleet update: New and Leased Buses

- Nav Bagri stated YARTS was supposed to receive the remaining five ordered buses in the next couple of months. Now, staff is expecting to receive two this month and the remaining three in

May or early June. It puts YARTS in a predicament to where it will have to lease the buses beginning in May instead of July. Leasing buses ensures YARTS adequate buses and spare buses not interruption in services.

- \$9,000.00 per bus, which makes it \$36,000.00 additional because of the delay.
- The award we received for the five buses, the order was never placed. So, this is the reason we have to lease the buses.

Jim Donovan commented the bus storage is compact, there are other options in the park for renting bikes.

Nav Bagri stated there may be way to promote bike rental options online.

Mary-Michal Rawling asked if the bikes could be reserved online. Jim Donovan stated you could rent them at the Village Market, Valley Lodge and Curry Village.

8. Transit Managers Report

Jose Perez reviewed the following items:

- Ridership in January 2023: there was increase of 6%, year over year
- Ridership in February 2023: there was an increase of 113% from last year
- Public outreach: YARTS plans to attend the Los Banos Fair in May, followed by the June Fair in Merced
- If any member knows of any public outreach, please let staff know.
- As far as public private partnership, YARTS staff had a great meeting with the Hotels in Oakhurst to pick up and drop off passengers. Rhonda Salisbury was a big help with this.
- Advertisement opportunities on YARTS: the Governing Board gave direction to explore other vendors for advertising on the YARTS buses.
- Small technical committee update meeting next month.
- YARTS has formulated a good approach regarding last year's Equity distribution for the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP).
- YARTS will be forming a small committee from each county to explore a hotel-voucher program.

No comments.

9. Member remarks

Len Otley is happy to be on board and is very familiar with the YARTS system. Mr Otley is interested in the fact that YARTS is looking into a Fresno option.

Candy O'Donel-Browne congratulated and thanked the YARTS staff for all the details in the agenda packet.

D. S. Gorder asked if staff is able to explain why diesel buses continue to be used by YARTS.

Ms. Rawling commented that the technology does not exist to have zero-emission vehicles operate in YARTS' mountainous geography. The YARTS staff needs assistance from committee members to help inform the community that it is not that YARTS does not have the desire to go electric, but the infrastructure does not exist for the transit system at the moment. The purpose of YARTS is to get people out of their vehicles, and to have fewer vehicles driving into the park, which makes the service an environmentally-friendly transportation option.

There being no further business of the YARTS Authority Advisory Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.