

Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit District



General Manager's Report – June 2020

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COVID-19 PANDEMIC



Public Health Considerations for Transportation Networks During the COVID-19 Pandemic

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK TASK FORCE

*Marin County, California
June 2020*

At the request of the Marin County Public Health Officer, a task force was assembled to discuss the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on the local and regional transportation network. The task force consisted of representatives from local and regional bus services, regional train and ferry, paratransit, and ride hailing services.

This document was prepared by the task force as best practices and guidelines for re-opening the transportation network.

Individual Control Measures and Screening

Transit Operations Personnel

- Temperature and/or symptom screenings of employees.
- Encourage staff who are sick or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 to stay home.
- Encourage frequent handwashing and/or use of hand sanitizer.
- Provide and ensure staff use all required protective equipment.
- Provide disposable gloves to staff using cleaners and disinfectants if required. Consider gloves as a supplement to frequent hand washing for other cleaning, tasks such as handling commonly touched items, or conducting symptom screening.
- Staff are required to wear facial coverings
- Restrict non-employees entering the facility to essential persons.

Transit and Paratransit Riders

- Riders are required to wear a facial covering while on public transit
- Riders are reminded to avoid directly facing other passengers up close.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Protocols

- Perform thorough cleaning on high traffic areas.
- Perform routine cleaning and disinfection of all frequently touched surfaces.
- Clean all areas of drivers' cabs between shifts or users, whichever is more frequent.
- Avoid sharing phones, other work tools, or equipment wherever possible. Never share Personal protective equipment.
- Use products approved for use against COVID-19 on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved list and follow product instructions and Cal/OSHA requirements.
- Equip stations, transit and rail offices, and transit and rail vehicles with proper sanitation products, and provide personal hand sanitizers to all frontline staff (e.g., operators).
- Ensure that sanitary facilities stay stocked at all times.
- Where possible and feasible consider upgrades and/or operational changes to improve air filtration and ventilation.

Operating Policies Enacted to Address COVID-19

- Installed signage outlining social distancing protocols to prevent the spread of germs on buses, ferry's and trains and at key stops
- Have implemented additional vehicle cleaning and sanitizing
- PPE provided to drivers and train and ferry crew
- Installed signage to encourage six feet of separation on buses & trains and at key stops
- Installed signage requiring riders to wear a facial covering
- Installed hand sanitizer dispensers on all trains
- In some routes, have established maximum passenger loads

Issues and Considerations for Recovery Strategies

The available capacity of the current Transit providers hardly met the demand for service prior to COVID-19. While the ridership is very low now, it is anticipated that as the economy recovers, ridership will continuously increase. If Transit capacity is reduced for social distancing reasons, demand will exceed service capacity. We must note that most transit riders rely on transit for their trips and do not have other means of transportation to work/school or medical appointments. Adding more resources, even if funding is available, will take many months, at a minimum, to order a bus, a train or hire and train drivers/operators.

For these reasons, we recommend flexibility in approach as opposed to a fast rule that assumes one size fits all.

The current 6 feet social distancing requirements result in reduced vehicle capacity. Impacts are significant. Some modes of transportation can accommodate the current practice, but many will not be able to meet the required public demand and maintain the 6 feet distancing.

WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND: In order to reduce the risk of infection to riders and staff on public transit: Require all staff and passengers on public transit to wear face coverings, and when feasible, restrict the passenger capacity of all trains, buses and ferries to one-half of the number of passenger seats.

Below are some potential challenges from Marin Transit providers:

- To meet pre-COVID-19 ridership demand, we would need 5 or 6 times the number of buses and it would cost 5 or 6 times as much to operate the service.
- Family groups traveling together do not need to socially distance, resulting in potentially greater vehicle capacity
- Expectations of drivers to monitor and enforce social distancing must be realistic given other driving responsibilities and need to avoid confrontation with passengers
- Re-opening of industry and economic sectors in other counties, along with actions in Marin, affects regional transit operations.
- Re-opening of industry and economic sectors with greatest impacts on local transit operations are:
 - Schools (20-25% of our riders are under the age of 18)
 - Restaurants, other service industry employers
 - Retail
 - Group activity centers, such as lunch programs for seniors (paratransit impacts)
 - Parks, especially Muir Woods (shuttle service)

Considerations for Resuming Normal Paratransit Operations

SOCIAL DISTANCING - As service ramps up to normal levels (~450 trips per day) we'll need more drivers and vehicles to maintain peak demand. We will provide estimates on the new demand levels shortly—however, initial review suggests a 40%-45% increase during peak periods (up to 50 vehicles running vs. 35). If resources are not available to provide more vehicles/drivers to meet peak demand periods, we may need to consider prioritization of trips.

Airporter and Charter-Bus Operations

- Able to offer greater passenger social distancing on large coaches, making Marin Airporter a safer transportation choice than most alternatives
- For example, a 56-passenger Airporter coach that is re-configured for a 24-passenger maximum capacity and is disinfected several times a day may offer the passenger a greater measure of safety and/or peace of mind than, say, a ride-hailing car where passengers sit with the driver in a more confined space.
- Similarly, charter bus service may be viewed as a favorable choice. For example, a sports team with a total of 20 players and coaches might find that it is safer to spread out in a professionally-cleaned motor coach than to arrange for carpools in private vehicles. The same may be true for business gatherings, shuttles in connection with business conventions and conferences, tour groups, etc.

Other Transportation Related Challenges

SCHOOL CROSSING GUARDS

1. Currently crossing guards are provided at 106 locations for morning and end-of-school day shifts during the regular school year, along with five supervisors.
2. The Transportation Authority of Marin and their contractor will need to work with schools and The County Health Department to develop protocols for the Crossing Guards to safely perform their functions once schools re-open. The past practice of bunching up a number of children before a crossing guard would cross the group together, will need to be modified to a smaller number. The crossing guards will be required to wear a facial covering.
3. Additionally, if school hours, start date, or shifts are significantly changed, Transit providers and other related services need to evaluate and possibly expand their services to determine what level of service can be provided.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS – defer to general local/state requirements for public education and guidelines from Marin County Office of Education, for program staff who are working at school sites.

VANPOOLS/CARPOOLS – A number of public and private entities currently provide incentive payments for workers who use vanpools or carpools, to promote an efficient and low-emission commute. The current practices would need to be reviewed and updated to reflect the current conditions. For example, waive certain requirements or implement new ones in order to ensure safe distancing within vehicles as well as use of facial coverings.

MARIN COMMUTES – TAM’s program to promote alternative commuting strategies. In light of COVID, TAM may need to evolve best practices and adjust certain program activities and expand telework information. Existing website could be used as a community resource/collection point for disseminating information related to transportation and commute alternatives including teleworking.

MARIN AND SONOMA BIKE SHARE PROGRAM (under development, launch expected in 2021) - TAM will need to coordinate with the program contractor and local jurisdictions within Marin and Sonoma counties to ensure safe use of shared bike and cleaning practices to promote public safety. Best practices in use at other programs already under operation will be explored as well.

May 2020: Latest Centers for Disease Control Guidelines titled: Public Health Considerations for Reopening Mass Transit During the COVID-19 Pandemic

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/MassTransit-DecisionTree.pdf>

Transportation Network Companies

LYFT AND UBER

Additional information is available for Uber at: <https://www.uber.com/newsroom/supporting-our-communities/> including specific information on how public health authorities can work with the company; and information for Lyft is available at: <https://www.lyft.com/blog/posts/lyft-launching-health-safety-program>.

Transportation Network Task Force Members

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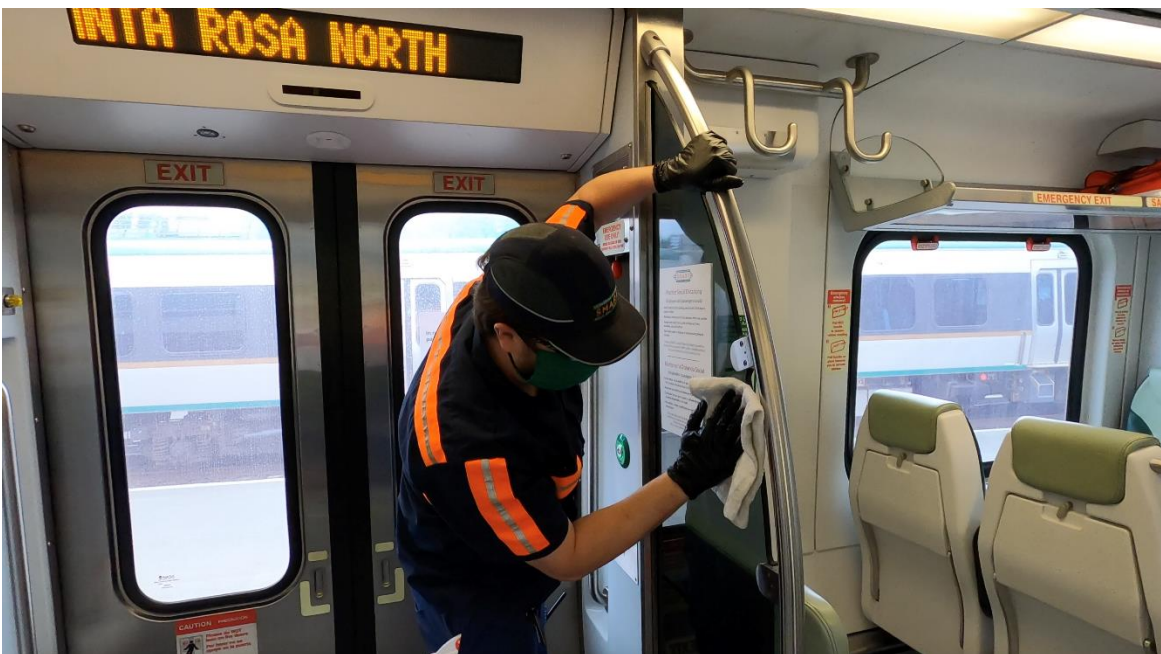
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CLEANING OF TRAINS

Essential workers continue to serve our community during the COVID-19 Pandemic. SMART is proud to keep the North Bay moving by providing our essential workers a clean and safe way to travel to work every day.

In early March our **Operations staff began performing a deep cleaning twice daily for each train.** Additionally, hand sanitizer dispensers were purchased and installed on every train. There are two hand sanitizer dispensers on each train car.



NEW PATHWAY

NEW MULTIUSE PATHWAY SEGMENTS ARE ON THE HORIZON

June has been a banner month for SMART multiuse pathways. 9.1 miles of pathway in Sonoma County are currently under design and will soon be constructed. This includes three segments:

- Lakeville Street in Petaluma to Payran Street in Petaluma (0.2 mile)
- Southpoint Blvd in Petaluma to Main Street in Penngrove (4.4 mile)
- Golf Course Drive in Rohnert Park to Bellevue Avenue in Santa Rosa (4.5 mile)

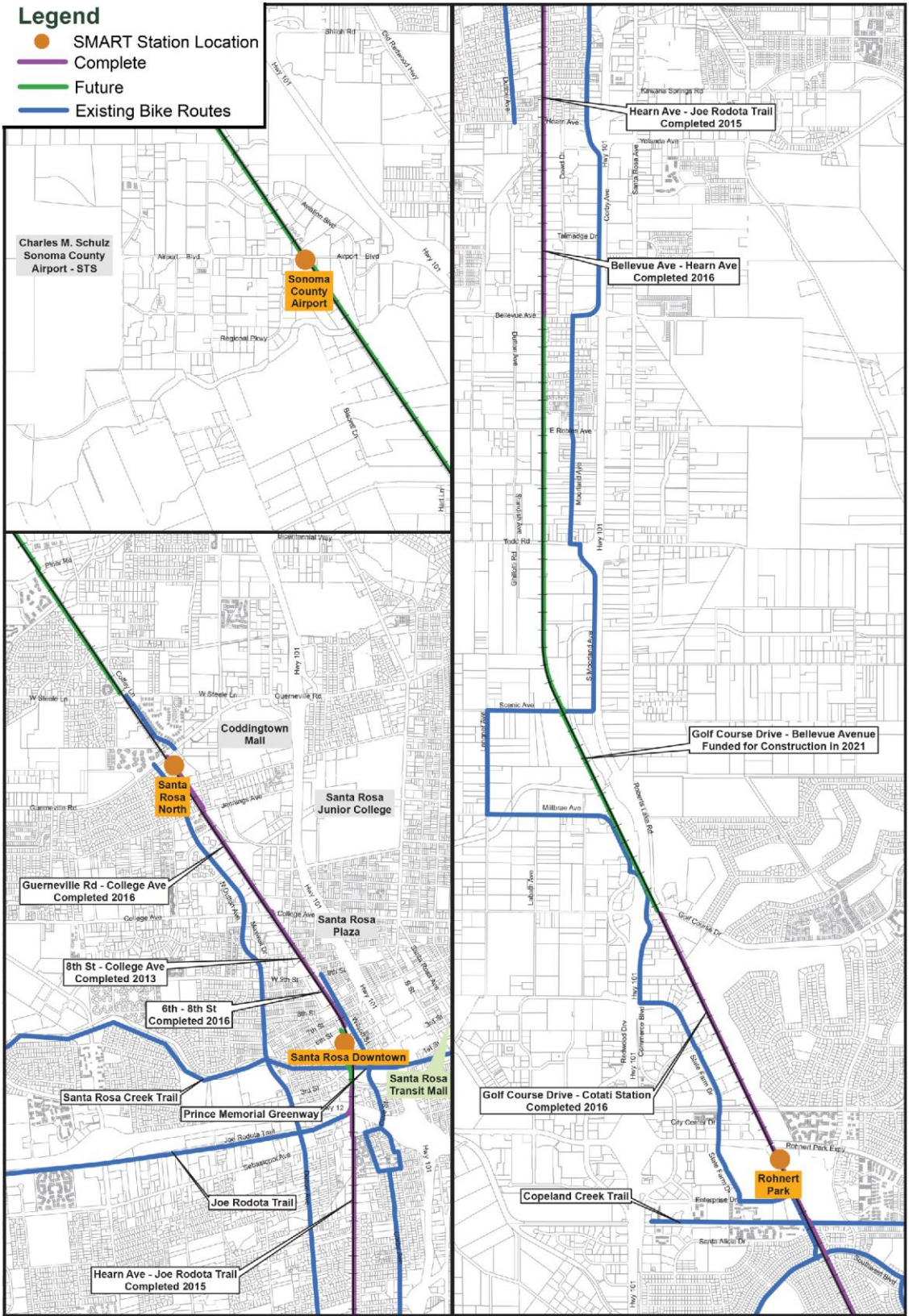
Additionally, an [Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities grant](#) provides funding to close a key pathway gap connecting the SMART multiuse pathway to downtown Santa Rosa and the SMART Station via a new bike and pedestrian crossing on Third Street.

The gap closure creates 10 miles of continuous pathway from the SMART Santa Rosa North station to Sonoma Mountain Village in Rohnert Park, while also connecting to the 8.5-mile Joe Rodota Trail to Sebastopol.

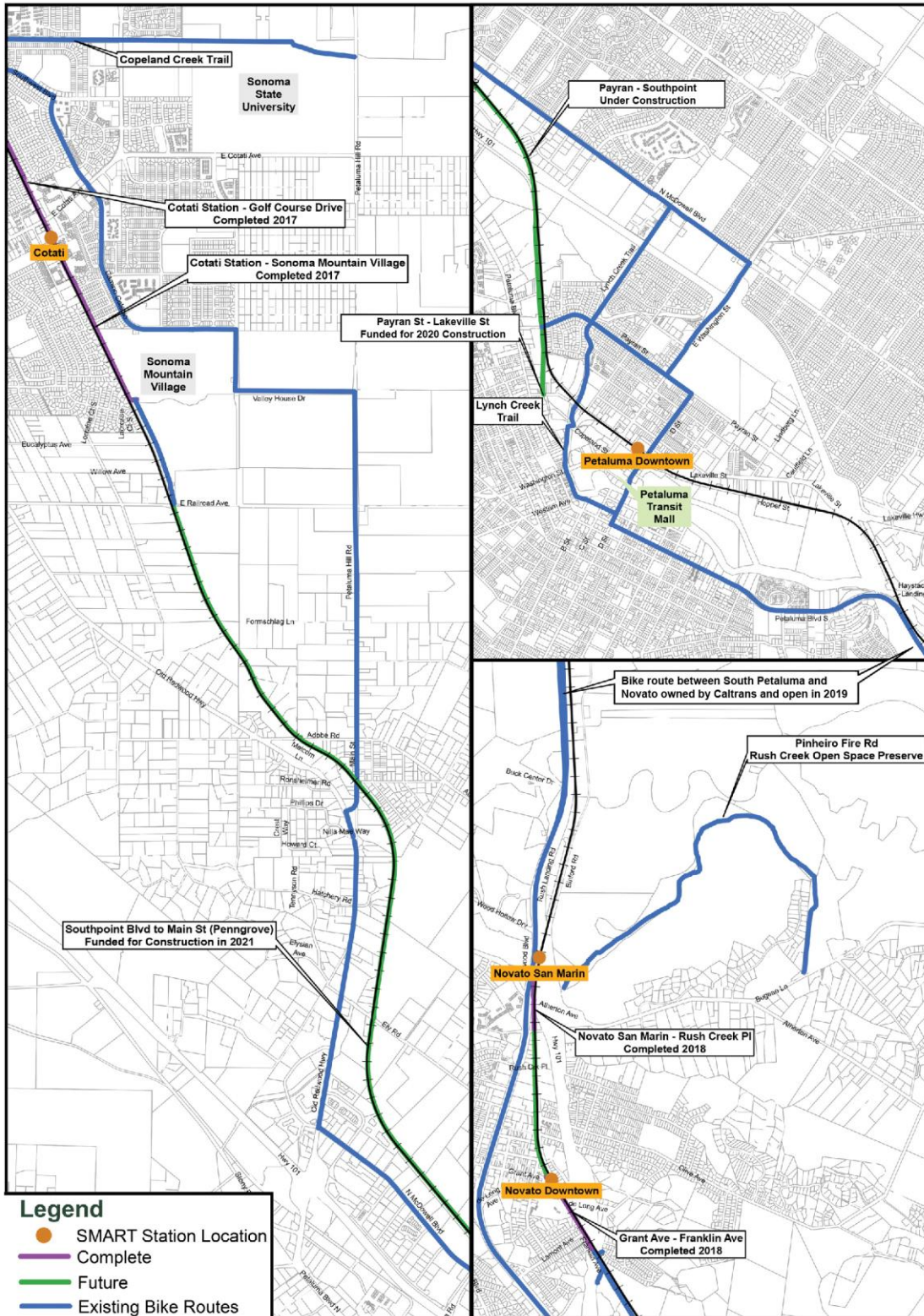


Legend

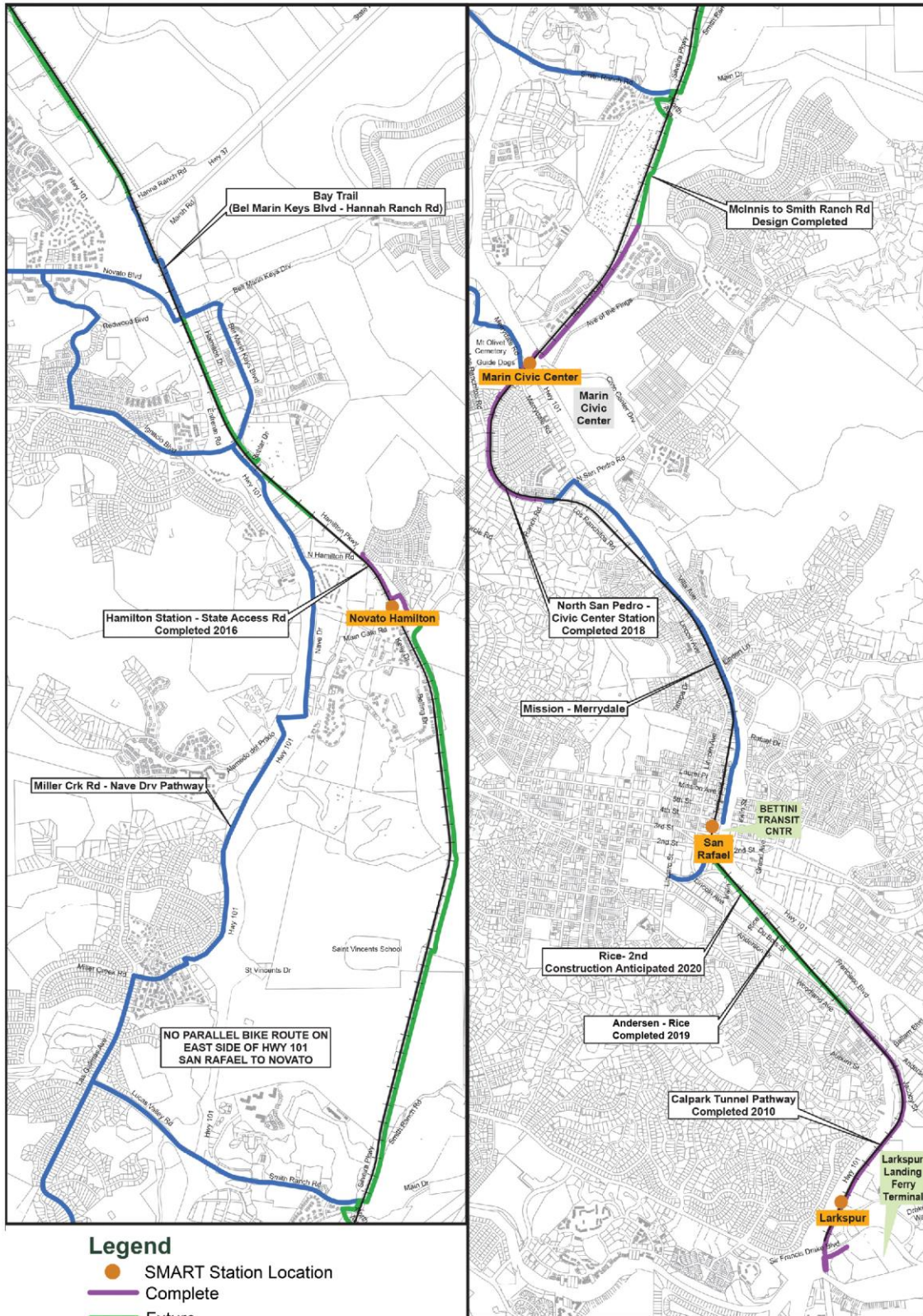
- SMART Station Location
- Complete
- Future
- Existing Bike Routes



September 2019



September 2019



- Legend**
- SMART Station Location
 - Complete
 - Future
 - Existing Bike Routes

September 2019

PETALUMA SECOND TRAIN STATION

SMART BOARD OF DIRECTORS AUTHORIZES FUNDS FOR A SECOND TRAIN STATION IN NORTH PETALUMA

On June 17, the Board of Directors authorized using the \$8M proceeds from the sale of a Downtown SMART property to fund the design and construction of a second station in Petaluma at Corona Road and N. McDowell Boulevard.

SMART has continually sought funding opportunities for the unconstructed stations and railway segments. One such opportunity presented with the sale of a 4.48-acre lot to real estate developer, Lomas Partners. The real estate transaction will provide SMART with \$8M to be applied towards the construction of a new station at Corona Road, and a separate 1.27-acre parcel at the corner of N. McDowell Boulevard and Corona Road planned for a station parking lot.

Funding for the design and construction of the Petaluma Corona Station is proposed to come from the proceeds of the sale of the SMART downtown property upon successful closure of the escrow, currently scheduled to close on November 19, 2020.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND MARKETING

Community Outreach | Safety Education and Awareness

Warm summer weather means more people are enjoying outdoor activities, including walking and biking on SMART's multi-use pathway. SMART partnered with national rail safety education organization Operation Lifesaver to identify key locations along the right-of-way for geotargeted safety outreach. The outreach team has also launched a series of safety ads on Facebook, targeting a broad region along the entire rail alignment. The messaging focuses on the importance of safety when near tracks and trains, with a specific focus on families and bicycles.



Link: [Always Expect a Train / Siempre Anticipe un Tren](#)



Safety messages, including graphics and video, will run in English and Spanish on SMART's social media platforms throughout the summer.

Community Outreach | Customer Service

The Communications and Marketing department has been preparing to bring customer service responsibilities in-house. SMART will perform the customer service functions previously done by Golden Gate Transit, including emails, calls, walk-ins, and lost and found. Several departments, including community outreach, the front desk administrator, operations and information technologies, will be coordinating to identify and manage the components of customer service. The outreach team has started to develop processes and procedures for each role. SMART's Information Technologies team will research software that will facilitate the various functions and ensure that

SMART can continue to provide the highest level of customer service. The transition process is expected to be completed by early fall.

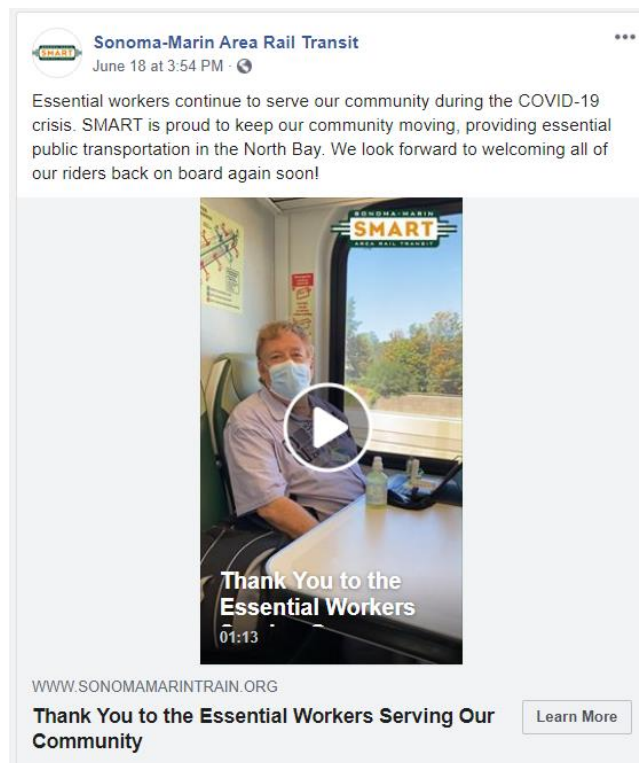
Community Outreach | Construction Outreach

The Communications and Marketing Team continues to keep the public informed about the progress of the Windsor Extension project. Construction updates are being issued regularly over various communication channels including NextDoor, a dedicated project website and HTML based emails. Additionally, we are coordinating with the Town of Windsor to keep the public informed about construction activities related to this project.

Digital Programs | Social Media

June was Pride month, and this year, Pride celebrations throughout the North Bay have gone virtual. At the start of the month, SMART encouraged participation in online events in a post on social media, reaching nearly 8,000 users and creating significant engagement.

Public transit employees continue to work on the front line of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we want to continue to thank them for keeping our community moving forward. Many essential workers have been riding the train during the COVID-19 crisis to get to work, where they provide critical services, including hospital employees, grocery store workers, and electricians.



Link: [Thank You to the Essential Workers Serving Our Community](#)



Last month, the SMART's Communication and Marketing department coordinated with public outreach teams across the Bay for the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's video highlighting Bay Area transit agency's focus on safety. Several SMART team members are featured in final the video project that illustrates our dedication to providing a service that is clean and reliable. You can view the video posted on MTC's website: <https://blog.bayareametro.gov/posts/video-bay-area-transit-agencies-focus-safety>

STAYING APART KEEPS US MOVING

Stay safe, Bay Area.

Remember to follow all COVID-19 guidelines for safe public transit riding.

CLIPPER METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION 511 SF Bay

Media | News Coverage

- June 22, CA: *SMART adopts trimmed budget, approves east side Petaluma station* (Mass Transit Magazine)
- June 22, CA: *Marin officials scrutinize bill to streamline transit projects* (Mass Transit Magazine)
- June 21, *Marin officials scrutinize bill to streamline transit projects* (Marin Independent Journal)
- June 18, *Uber makes SaaS move in on-demand transit partnership in California* (Intelligent Transport)
- June 18, *SMART adopts trimmed budget, approves east side Petaluma station* (Santa Rosa Press Democrat)
- June 17, *SMART approves 2020-21 budget, service cuts* (Marin Independent Journal)
- June 17, *Santa Rosa poised to land \$25 million grant package for housing, rail projects* (Santa Rosa Press Democrat)
- June 16, *Dick Spotswood: Faded ferry fury of past should give embattled SMART supporters hope* (Marin Independent Journal)
- June 14, *Marin Voice: San Rafael Northgate PDA rush is bad democracy* (Marin Independent Journal)
- June 11, *Pedestrian struck, injured by SMART train in Petaluma* (Santa Rosa Press Democrat)
- June 8, *Sonoma County housing projects tied to SMART line face mounting obstacles* (Santa Rosa Press Democrat)
- June 8, *SMART sets plans for weekday service cuts* (Trains)
- June 5, *SMART cutting weekday service by one-third as part of \$7 million in cost savings* (Petaluma Argus Courier)
- June 5, *SMART cutting 33% of trains* (KSRO Radio)
- June 4, *SMART cutting weekday service by one-third as part of \$7 million in cost savings* (Santa Rosa Press Democrat)
- June 3, *Editorial: SMART purchase makes sense, but timing is off* (Marin Independent Journal)
- June 3, *SMART limits staffing, train service cuts on 2020-21 budget* (Marin Independent Journal)
- May 30, *Transit partnerships take on first/last mile problem* (Government Technology)
- May 30, *Opinion: Russell A. Colombo joins Marin IJ editorial board as public member* (Marin Independent Journal)
- May 30, *Dick Spotswood: Don't count on freight rail to generate substantial new sums for SMART* (Marin Independent Journal)
- May 27, CA: *SMART approves plan to acquire California short-line* (Progressive Railroading)

CAPITAL PROJECTS

MULTI USE PATHWAY PROJECTS

Sonoma County Pathway Gap Closure Project: **There are three sections and a total of 9.1 miles of pathway within this project:**

1. Lakeville Street in Petaluma to Payran Street in Petaluma (0.2 mile)
 2. Southpoint Blvd in Petaluma to Main Street in Penngrove (4.4 mile)
 3. Golf Course Drive in Rohnert Park to Bellevue Avenue in Santa Rosa (4.5 mile)
- SMART executed the contract with GHD, Inc. in an amount of \$949,138 for the engineering design and support service on June 17, 2020. Design to begin by end of June.

WINDSOR EXTENSION PROJECT

- Anticipate opening end of 2021.
- Design work is on-going.
- Removal of the old track is in progress.
- Tree and stump removal is ongoing
- Rail, Grade crossing roadway panels, and railroad ties, have been delivered.
- Coordination with the Town of Windsor and County of Sonoma is on-going.
- Environmental permitting is on-going.



Removal of the old track south of Windsor River Road, Windsor



Removal of old ties



Delivery of new rail in Windsor



Removing a tree stump at Airport Blvd.

OPERATIONS

MAINTENANCE OF WAY:

- Maintenance Staff completed fence repairs at 10 locations that had been cut by trespassers. In addition, a segment of the z-gate at Lakeville Street was replaced that had been vandalized and removed.
- The Signal team began a retrofit project to install additional backlights at 21 crossings. To date 9 are completed.
- Maintenance Staff completed a cleanup annual respirator fit testing and training.
- Maintenance Staff provided 42 man-days of flagging in June for outside contractors and other municipal agencies.
- A Signal Technician resigned to pursue other employment opportunities. We are beginning the recruiting process to back fill the position.

VEHICLE MAINTENANCE:

- Changed out fly wheels on Diesel Multiple Units 105, 115, 104, and 108 due to a defect found on each fly wheel. This involves jacking each Diesel Multiple Unit and removing the engine.
- Changed out fire suppression extinguisher's on Diesel Multiple Units 113 and 114.
- Performed mid-year maintenance on 3 Diesel Multiple Units.
- Performed 500-hour oil change on 6 Diesel Multiple Units.
- Automatic Train Control maintenance performed on 5 Diesel Multiple Units. This maintenance keeps us compliant with Federal Regulatory Association regulations in regards to positive train control.
- Changed out thermostat on Diesel Multiple Unit 104 due HVAC partial failure. After further inspection it was determined the thermostat was the cause for the failure.

TRANSPORTATION:

- Currently up-dating Absorb online training for year 2020.
- Engineer training is continuing for two employees.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Vehicle crashed into Gate at Roblar Drive in Novato



Removal of intoxicated people along bike path at 8th Street in Santa Rosa



Three trespassers remove north of Olive Ave in Novato



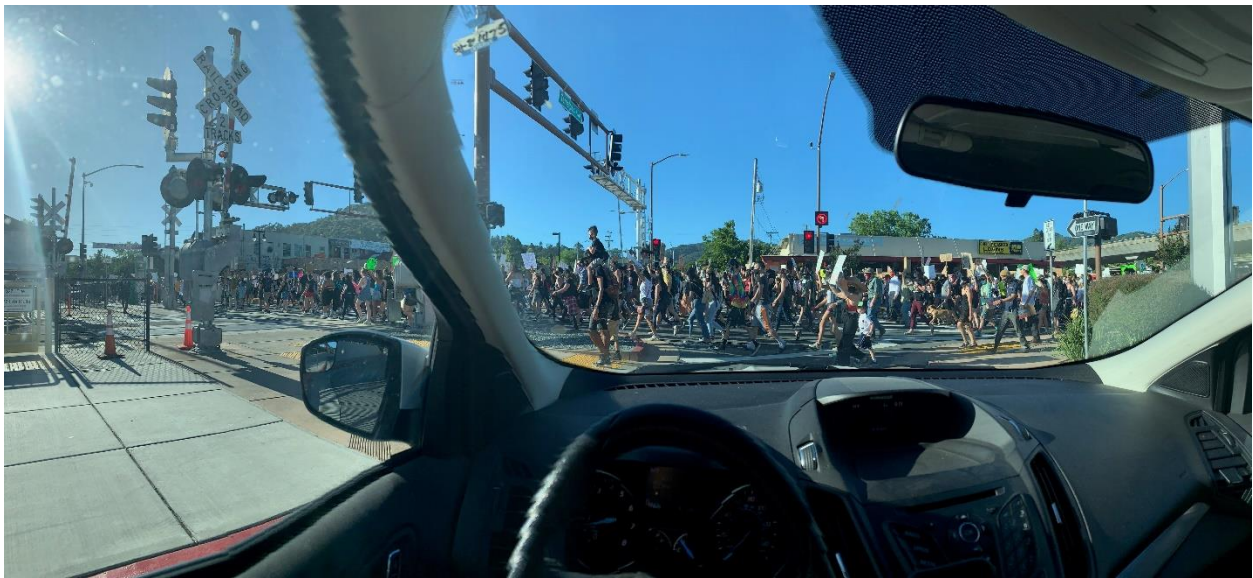
Removal of trespasser at Redwood Landfill in Petaluma



Hwy 101 vehicle crash affecting SMART's Right-of-Way, Novato



Monitoring Protestors at San Rafael to insure they are safe and train is aware of what is happening.



HUMAN RESOURCE

RECRUITMENT:

Signal Technician (There are currently 3 vacancies in that class)

HIRES:

The District has not hired any new staff in this month.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Human Resources will be changing its recruiting software from CalOpps.org to the recruiting module provided by our current HR/Payroll vendor, Innovative Business Solutions, as a cost savings measure. The new recruiting site will be implemented by July 1, 2020. A new link will be available for the public under the job opportunities section of SMART's public website.

GRANTS, LEGISLATION, PLANNING AND REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

GRANT ACTIVITIES

Affordable Housing Sustainable Communities: The State of California has created the Affordable Housing Sustainable Communities (AHSC) Program with the fifth cycle of programming underway for \$550 million available statewide. SMART submitted as a joint applicant with MidPen Housing and the City of Santa Rosa for the Roseland Village Project, to construct 75 affordable housing units and a series of transportation investments. If successful, SMART and the City of Santa Rosa would receive resources to complete the SMART Pathway from Joe Rodota Trail across 3rd Street, connecting to the Downtown Santa Rosa Station. SMART would also receive necessary funding towards the completion of the Windsor extension project.

The Strategic Growth Council finalized the staff recommendation to award \$25 million for this partnership, including \$5.225m to SMART, at their June 25, 2020 meeting.

Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act: The Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) provides funding to public transit agencies to support operations retroactive to January 20, 2020. SMART received a first grant on May 18 totaling \$10,375,471 from the Federal Transit Administration, as concurred to by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

It is anticipated that a second programming of CARES Act funding of a yet undetermined amount will be recommended for SMART at the July 2020 Commission meeting.

REGIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Local Planning Department Notification and Coordination Tracking: SMART Planning Staff also tracks and reviews all notices sent by local jurisdictions for projects occurring adjacent to or nearby the railroad tracks. In 2019 staff received and reviewed 171 different notices, with 94 notices by July 2019. To date in 2020, SMART has received and reviewed **67** different notices.

State Route 37 Policy Committee: Staff virtually attended the latest meeting of the State Route 37 Policy Committee on Thursday June 4, 2020. Discussions included the Sonoma Creek Baylands Strategy, funding update on bridge tolls and sales tax, 2020 SHOPP programming funding, and project specific updates.

Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) Planning Advisory Committee: Staff virtually attended SCTA's monthly Planning Advisory Committee met on Thursday June 18, 2020. Discussions included updates from the participating local jurisdictions, Senate Bill 743 update, MTC/ABAG Housing Methodology Committee, RECPA 2030 Climate Emergency Mobilization Strategy, SCTA's pending development database, Go Sonoma Sales Tax Measure and a brief Plan Bay Area 2050 Update.

SYSTEM ACCESS PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Bike Share: The Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) and Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM) are implementing a Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)-funded bike share system in close proximity to the SMART stations as a First/Last-Mile access solution. SCTA & TAM have selected Gotcha Mobility as the operator of the Bike Share Pilot Program. The pilot program will roll-out 300 GPS-enabled electric bicycles for three years centered around SMART stations. The Bicycle Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which is comprised of representatives from each jurisdiction along the SMART line, including SMART, met remotely on Wednesday June 24, 2020. Due to COVID-19, the program implementation timeline has been impacted by community outreach and manufacturing limitations. Additional program modifications regarding COVID related protocols are under development and will be discussed in future TAC meetings.

Clipper START Program: – In 2015 MTC launched a study to determine if a transit fare program based on household income would be feasible and effective. SMART has been participating in the MTC-hosted Clipper START Program, with monthly meetings and a recent launch of a Clipper-based means-based fare pilot program on selected regional transit operators, which include BART, SFMTA, Caltrain & Golden Gate Bus & Ferry. At the February 5, 2020 meeting, SMART Board unanimously approved Resolution Number 2020-05 which authorized SMART’s formal request to participate in the regional Clipper START Low Income Fare Program. Staff participated in the most recent technical advisory meeting, which was held on June 9, 2020.

The Clipper START Pilot Program will officially launch July 15, 2020, on four transit agency systems (Golden Gate Bus & Ferry, BART, Caltrain, and SFMTA).

Transit Coordination Meetings:

- June 3, 2020 - Staff participated in the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) monthly **Transit Finance Working Group** meeting. Discussions included legislative updates, funding notices, Transportation Improvement Program update, Cap and Trade Update, FY17-FY20 Transit Capital Priorities Programming update, California Air Resources Board Innovative Clean Transit Regulation Update, Transit Capital Program update, and COVID-19 response.
- June 10, 2020 – Sonoma County Transportation Authority’s monthly **Transit Technical Advisory Committee** meeting. Discussions included transit operator updates and regional funding updates.
- June 15 and 29, 2020 – **Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force** – Staff attend the second and third Regional Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force meetings in June. The Task Force is assembled by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and topics covered included Near-term Transit Recovery Strategies and distribution of Federal CARES Act funding to transit operators within the region.

- June 17, 2020 – **MTC Partnership Board Seamless Mobility Subcommittee** – Staff participated in the second Seamless Mobility Subcommittee meeting. The committee was formed in February 2020 with the purpose of bringing the transit operators and County Transportation Agencies together to enhance Seamless Mobility, defined as *“Improving the traveler experience for all trips through an interconnected, safe, equitable, multimodal transportation system to reduce vehicle miles traveled, increase transit ridership and achieve Plan Bay Area goals”* (from the Committee’s draft memo).
- June 22, 2020 – **MTC CARES Funding Distribution Discussion** – Staff participated in the most recent of several transit operator briefings regarding the distribution of CARES funding within the region.
- June 23, 2020 - **Transit Recovery and Resiliency Workshop #2** – Staff participated in the second SPUR-hosted workshop on Tuesday June 23rd, brainstorming how Bay Area transit operators can successfully recover from the current COVID-19 crises.
- **COVID-19 Transit Coordination Phone Calls** – Staff is calling into biweekly phone meetings with Sonoma County Transit, Santa Rosa City Bus, Petaluma Transit, and Golden Gate Transit to discuss how transit services are being affected by COVID-19.