SB 125 Allocation Package Narrative

An explanation of what funding and service actions are being taken within the region that utilize resources other than SB 125 funding

Operating shortfalls

During the COVID-19 pandemic, ridership dropped drastically, and more residents began to work from home. Operating revenues and ridership levels have not recovered. The San Joaquin Council of Governments (SJCOG), as the regional transportation planning agency (RTPA), has been diligently coordinating with the region's transit operators, including both bus and rail operators, to support their efforts to increase ridership. In the same fashion, SJCOG also took a delicate and responsible approach with regards to allocating the available SB 125 funds allocated to the region. In coordination with California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) staff, the SJCOG Board, understanding the legislative intent of SB 125, took action to support the local transit operators in the region.

Existing Funding Resources

Outside of the SB 125 funds, transit agencies have existing funding sources to support daily operations. The following table (Table 1) identifies the other various funding resources that the region's transit operators are utilizing to support their operations for FY 24/25 and 25/26. Funding sources not identified in Table 1 are being used for necessary capital expenditures that contribute to maintaining assets in a state of good repair.

Table 1. Funding sources that San Joaquin County transit operators plan to utilize for operations in FY 25/25 and 25/26

Operating Revenue Sources For FY 24/25 and 25/26	RTD	SJRRC	Escalon	Lodi	Manteca	Ripon	Tracy
Passenger Fares	X	X		X	X	X	X
FTA 5307	X	X		X	X		X
FTA 5311	X	X	X			X	
FTA 5337		X					
ARPA/CARES/CRRSAA	X		X		X		
LTF	X	X	X	X	X		X
STA		X	X			X	
LCTOP	X	X	X	X		X	X
SGR			X			X	
Measure K	X	X	X	X		X	X
Other (Ads, Rent, Misc. Revenues)	X	X	X	X	X		X

Service Actions

The transit operators in San Joaquin County strive to maintain the highest quality of service for their passengers. Despite challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, the San Joaquin Council of Governments and local transit operators have worked to increase ridership, reduce service duplication, and coordinate efforts to enhance mobility for San Joaquin residents.

SJCOG

SJCOG supports transit operators by conducting studies, producing long ranges plans, and with pursuing state and federal grants, and programming awarded funds. Moreover, in 2020, SJCOG, in coordination with the region's transit operators and with local sales tax measure dollars, launched the mobile ticketing platform, EZHub. EZHub, which was integrated into the Vamos Mobility app, allowed residents to both plan trips and buy transit fares within a single, innovative, "Mobility-as-a-Service" mobility application. Now, four years later, the Vamos Mobility app, with ticketing by EZHub, continues to provide San Joaquin residents with multimodal transportation options including biking & walking, bus, rail, electric carshare (Miocar) and rideshare (Uber) as options.

Additionally, in 2021, SJCOG was awarded a Sustainable Transportation Equity Project (STEP) grant through the California Air Resources Board (CARB). Through the STEP grant SJCOG has been able to provide clean mobility services (carshare, Vamos mobility app, bikeshare), and transit incentive debit cards to qualifying residents in Stockton. These re-loadable cards allow users to purchase transit (bus and train) fares, greyhound tickets, reserve carshare (Miocar), and even reserve Uber/Lyft rides. The cards can only be used for transportation services, and not for groceries, or retail items. As of August 2024, over 900 people are participating in the incentive card program.

The incentive cards, along with the Vamos Mobility app, are helping residents be more informed about their travel options and are increasing access and mobility to vulnerable populations in the most disadvantaged communities.

Rail

San Joaquin regional rail Commission (SJRRC):

The San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRC) operates the Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) service for commuters to and from San Joaquin County to destinations in the Bay Area region during weekdays, and serves approximately 2,500 passengers daily. The route length is 86 miles with 10 stations from Stockton to San Jose, and there are four west-bound trips in the morning, and four east-bound trips in the afternoon with special train service on select dates.

Bus Transit

Tracy Tracer: Tracy Tracer offers fixed-route service, with four fixed routes with Monday – Friday and Saturday service, and four commuter routes weekdays only. Tracer also provide door-to-door paratransit service Monday – Saturday during the same times as the fixed-route operations for ADA eligible and Senior (65+) passengers, and general public curb-to-curb on-demand service all day Sunday with early morning and later evening service Monday – Saturday. The area population served by Tracy Tracer was 93,000 according to the 2020 Census.

In an effort to increase ridership during and post-COVID, Tracy has implemented a Students Ride Free program using LCTOP funding to promote the use of the bus among school age riders. LCTOP funds were also used to for additional free ride promotional periods for the general public. Tracy has also implemented the TracerPLUS on-demand service which provides curb-to-curb rides for the general public during times when the fixed route is not operating as an effort to expand service to 7-days a week. This service was recently used to replace the last hour of fixed-route service in an effort to reduce costs.

Escalon eTrans:
Escalon offers a local dial-a-ride and deviated fixed route bus service, also known as "eTrans" within city limits, plus additional service to the cities of Riverbank and Modesto. eTrans operates 3 buses which are ADA compliant. The urbanized area served by eTrans had a population of 7,523 according to the 2020 Census.

Lodi GrapeLine: The Lodi GrapeLine currently services five (5) regular weekday routes, three (3) express routes, and four (4) weekend routes. The door-to-door VineLine ADA paratransit service is available to ADA eligible passengers, and the door-to-door General Public Dial-A-Ride service is available to the general public. The urbanized area served by Lodi GrapeLine had a population of 66,348 according to the 2020 Census.

Manteca Transit: Manteca Transit offers four fixed routes and paratransit service. The urbanized area served by Manteca Transit had a population of 83, 498 according to the 2020 Census.

Ripon Blossom Express: Ripon Blossom Express offers fixed-route service on Tuesdays and Thursdays to destinations in Ripon to Modesto. The area population served by Ripon Blossom was 16,013 according to the 2020 Census.

San Joaquin Regional Transit District (RTD): RTD offers 46 routes. These routes include local and commuter routes, intercity Hopper van service between Stockton and other cities in San Joaquin County (Tracy, Manteca, Ripon, Lathrop, Escalon). RTD's commuter routes serve Stockton residents who work in other areas outside of San Joaquin County, connecting workers to the Dublin BART station and Sacramento. The Stockton urbanized area served by RTD had a population of 320,806 according to the 2020 Census.

Additionally, residents in priority population areas often lack access to transportation and have poor air quality so the improvements to rail and transit service that the SB 125 funding will make possible will help maintain/improve access to transportation and air quality by reducing vehicle miles traveled.

A description and justification of the RTPA strategy to use SB 125 funding to construct capital projects and fund operating expenses that lead to improved outcomes in its jurisdiction.

A major concern from San Joaquin County transit operators in the years following the COVID 19 epidemic, was that ridership was slow to increase, and may not return to pre-covid levels. Less ridership equates to less revenues in future years. Thus, the SJCOG Board agreed to make supporting transit operations a priority for the initial tranches of SB 125 funds.

With maintaining existing transit services levels in mind, at its November 2023 meeting, the SJCOG Board instructed staff to convene a working group to develop a strategy on how to distribute Senate Bill (SB) 125 funds. SB 125 issues $93.5 million in funding to the San Joaquin region via the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) and the Zero Emission Transit Capital Program (ZETCP). Table 3 identifies the funding distribution for the SB 125 funds being allocated to the San Joaquin Region by CalSTA.

Table 2. SB 125 Funding Breakdown to SJCOG by Year

Program	Year 1* FY 23-24	Year 2* FY 24-25	Year 3 FY 25-26	Year 4 FY 26-27	TOTAL
TIRCP	$39,935,609	$20,017,842	$20,017,842	----	$79,971,293
ZETCP	$5,031,810	$2,822,723	$2,822,723	$2,822,723	$13,499,979
TOTAL	**$44,967,419**	**$22,840,565**	**$22,840,565**	**$2,822,723**	**$93,471,271**

A detailed breakdown and justification for how the funding is proposed to be distributed between transit operators and among projects, consistent with the legislative intent described in SB 125.

SJCOG staff and the SB 125 Working Group received the SJCOG Board direction and developed a methodology to distribute the first two years of SB 125 (TIRCP and ZETCP) funding to existing State Transit Assistance (STA)eligible transit service providers via a weighted funding formula based on recently available ridership and operations data. The distribution formula was approved by the SJCOG Board in February 2024. The approved formula funds existing operating shortfalls in order to prevent disruptions, mitigate service cuts, fare increases, or layoffs relative to the 2022 service baseline, and helps agencies achieve short-term financial sustainability.

The initial tranche of SB 125 funding will be allocated to the STA eligible transit providers for operating assistance. Table 3 breaks down the formula allocation to each operator by TIRCP and ZETCP amounts, and reflects the total, not-to-exceed amount, that agencies should receive by the end of FY 25/26.

Table 3. Total TIRCP and ZETCP funding to be allocated to the STA-Eligible Transit Operators in FY 24/25 and 25/26

Jurisdiction	TIRCP	ZETCP	Total
Tracy	$3,407,444.86	$446,411.14	**$3,853,856**
RTD	$38,326,708.81	$5,021,202.19	**$43,347,911**
Escalon	$77,828.63	$10,196.37	**$88,025**
ACE	$12,724,015.11	$1,666,979.88	**$14,390,995**
Manteca	$1,453,652.26	$190,443.74	**$1,644,096**
Lodi	$3,341,348.22	$437,751.78	**$3,779,100**
Ripon	$22,916.67	$3,002.33	**$25,919**
SJCOG	$599,534.65	$78,545.35	**$678,080**
Total	$59,953,449.23	$7,854,532.77	**$67,807,984**

Project Descriptions

Each transit operator will be using their allocation on operating assistance. However, each operating assistance project is unique to the operator's system. Below are the list of projects that will be implemented by the SB 125 funds in San Joaquin County, to include if an agency plans to utilize funding on the security and safety measures, coordination of routes and schedules, and how the project's activities positively impacts transit dependent riders.

Tracy Project Description:

Tracy receives funding from FTA Section 5307 funds which pay for up to 50% of operating costs. The remaining balance must come from local funds, which are also used to pay for the costs of capital projects such as bus replacements, bus stop improvements, and facility upgrades. Funding for this project will allow the Tracer system to keep operating at existing services levels, and may provide opportunities for service expansion in underserved areas.

Tracy is currently updating its Short Range Transit Plan to make transportation more accessible, increase ridership, and increase service levels.

Funding Schedule

Project Title	TIRCP		ZETCP		**Total**
	FY 24-25	**FY 25-26**	**FY 24-25**	**FY 25-26**	
Operating Assistance	$ 2,269,734	$ 1,137,711	$ 285,982	$ 160,429	**$ 3,853,856**

Lodi Project Description:

The funding will provide operating assistance for the Lodi GrapeLine, preventing reductions to existing transit service, which currently includes: Five (5) regular weekday routes, three (3) weekday Express Routes, four (4) weekend Routes, and VineLine ADA paratransit/General Public Dial-A-Ride 7 days a week.

As a part of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the GrapeLine has been focusing on restoring and maintaining service, with emphasis on:

- Restoration & preservation of weekend Saturday and Sunday service (Routes 1/30, 2/22, 34, and 5/31)
- Restoration & preservation of weekend Saturday and Sunday Service General Public Dial-A-Ride
- Restoration & preservation of service span of Weekday Regular Routes, including early morning and late evening service hours.
- Restoration & preservation of service span of General Public Dial-A-Ride
- Restoration & preservation of Weekday Express Routes
- Preservation of expanded frequency on Lodi's four most productive & in-demand routes (based on passengers per revenue hour): Route 2, Express 1, Express 2, and Express 6.

Since the pandemic, ridership has continued to experience a year-over-year increase.

Preservation of these services is critical for the continued ridership recovery towards pre-pandemic levels, and critical for the Lodi residents who rely on the bus service for mobility daily.

Funding Schedule

Project Title	TIRCP		ZETCP		Total
	FY 24-25	FY 25-26	FY 24-25	FY 25-26	
Operating Assistance	$1,581,987.93	$1,759,360.29	$207,257.07	$230,494.71	**$3,779,100**

Manteca Project Description:

This project will allow Manteca Transit to continue to provide Fixed Route services and ADA paratransit to the visitors and residents of the Manteca community.

Funding Schedule

Project Title	TIRCP		ZETCP		Total
	FY 24-25	FY 25-26	FY 24-25	FY 25-26	
Operating Assistance	$726,826.13	$726,826.13	$95,221.87	$95,221.87	**$1,644,096**

Escalon Project Description:

The funding will cover operational deficits related to eTrans. Additional marketing will occur to promote eTrans ridership after the redevelopment of the transit system based on a new Short Range Transit Plan.

Funding Schedule

Project Title	TIRCP		ZETCP		Total
	FY 24-25	FY 25-26	FY 24-25	FY 25-26	
Operating Assistance	$ 51,842	$ 25,986	$ 6,532	$ 3,665	**$88,025**

Ripon Project Description:

The funding will cover operational deficits related to Ripon Blossom Express. Additional marketing will occur to promote Ripon Blossom Express ridership after the redevelopment of the transit system based on a new Short Range Transit Plan.

Funding Schedule

Project Title	TIRCP		ZETCP		Total
	FY 24-25	FY 25-26	FY 24-25	FY 25-26	
Operating Assistance	$ 15,265	$ 7,652	$ 1,923	$ 1,079	**$25,919**

RTD Project Description:

One of RTD's core values is its commitment to creating a safe, secure, and responsible environment for our employees, customers, and community. The importance of public transit safety and security cannot be overemphasized and RTD continuously monitors and looks for opportunities to improve safety and security for the transit system. A safe and secure transit system is paramount for restoring and increasing transit ridership.

RTD staff will continue to maintain its onboard bus and facility security camera systems, vehicle locators, onboard bus passenger counters, Pedestrian Collision and Avoidance Detection System (PCADS), and other innovative safety technology. There is a funding need for additional future projects as RTD continues to make transit related safety and security improvements.

RTD is the regional transit service provider for San Joaquin County, serving the Stockton Metropolitan Area and the County with intercity, interregional, and rural transit services. The California Public Utilities Code, Division 10, Part 5 includes Chapters and Sections that authorize RTD to provide regional services. RTD's service includes underserved communities that were particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. RTD has returned to pre-COVID levels of service in the majority of its programs, focusing on underserved communities.

RTD's goals and focus are to:

• To recover and increase ridership to pre-pandemic levels.

• Add new services to increase our ridership and better serve the region and the underserved communities.

• Increase frequency of all Local Routes to significantly decrease wait times and allow for easier connections with other routes. This greatly benefits passengers, including those in Underserved Communities who need to make transfers between Local Routes, reducing their wait time and providing more time for important tasks or activities such as education, employment, and health.

• Increase the span of service to meet the needs and better service our underserved communities.

• Operate reliable service that benefits our underserved neighborhoods using new clean air vehicles in routes serving these communities, which suffer from different health issues such as asthma and heart disease.

• Improve service to underserved neighborhoods offering more frequent stops and improved connectivity to other Local Routes and popular destinations.

• Decrease walking distances for bus riders, making transportation more accessible and saving time for passengers, especially the seniors and the disabled community.

In an effort to increase ridership, RTD has implemented substantial service improvements in the current year and plans to focus on restoring and improving service to underserved communities in Stockton. RTD extended the span of service to later in the evening to provide better connections, consistency in the span of service, and accommodation for late work schedules, as well as shopping or going out in the evening. RTD will focus on increasing the frequency of services in underserved communities, high percentages of minorities, and low-income populations, covering trips to hospitals, schools, community centers, and employment. RTD provides additional local service to its corridor with the highest demand for public transit, Route 40 local. RTD will continue to focus on improving service in underserved neighborhoods and monitor routes looking into opportunities to enhance current service and frequency on weekend routes and County Hopper service. RTD will look into improving frequency and for coordinated connections from County Hopper routes to other jurisdiction local routes at their transit stations.

Funding Schedule

Project Title	TIRCP		ZETCP		**Total**
	FY 24-25	**FY 25-26**	**FY 24-25**	**FY 25-26**	
Operating Assistance	$25,529,814	$12,796,895	$3,216,707	$1,804,495	**$43,347,911**

ACE *Project Description:*

ACE operates four (4) daily roundtrips starting in Downtown Stockton at the Robert J. Cabral Station, through the Tri-Valley, Silicon Valley, and into San Jose's Diridon Station. The 86-mile route includes ten (10) station stops at Manteca, Tracy, Vasco Road, Livermore, Pleasanton, Fremont, Great America, and Santa Clara. The ten (10) locomotives and thirty (30) cars travel the eighty-six-mile corridor in approximately two (2) hours and twelve (12) minutes, with feeder shuttle services available at all stations including connections to light- rail and BART along tracks owned by Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) and Caltrain.

Currently, the ACE trains operate on weekdays only and are scheduled during the peak commute periods with special train service on select dates. The trains average six cars plus a locomotive. This funding will directly address significant shortfall challenges that ACE is experiencing from the loss of revenue, which offset core operating costs. Key shortfall areas include purchased transportation, fuel, insurance, host access fees, labor and benefits, consumables, preventative maintenance on rolling stock and facilities as well as safety and security costs which have seen dramatic escalation in non-discretionary costs outpacing typical inflation. Safety and security programs include operations lifesaver, active passenger rail training and emergency response activities. State of good repair programs include facility asset management evaluations and scheduled projects to ensure proper lighting, ADA compliance, parking improvements and other needed projects.

The supplemental funding will allow transit dependent workforce commuters who rely on ACE as their main mode of transportation into surrounding counties to continue to rebound post pandemic. ACE has regained ridership both year over year and in every service month of FY 23/24 as compared to 22/23. This critical funding will preserve the existing service and allow for trainsets to return to longer consist as passenger demand strengthens and it is anticipated the by 2026/27 budget cycle revenues will be fully restored.

This funding will directly augment the significant challenges that ACE is experiencing from the loss of revenue and will preserve and grow ongoing efforts to attract new riders. While the state overall has seen population growth stall or decrease the San Joaquin Valley has seen growth in cities that are currently being served by ACE such as the Lathrop Manteca and Tracy areas. Various capital projects are underway for ACE service that will allow improved coordination between rail and the cities that operate local transit services for first/last mile connectivity.

Funding Schedule

Project Title	TIRCP		ZETCP		**Total**
	FY 24-25	**FY 25-26**	**FY 24-25**	**FY 25-26**	
Operating Assistance	$6,362,007.55	$6,362,007.56	$833,489,94	$833,489,94	**$ 14,390,995**

SJCOG *Project Description:*

SJCOG plans to support transit agencies in ensuring they're complying with all local and state guidelines, and by providing data and technical planning assistance for local jurisdictions and agencies. SJCOG will also utilize these resources to identify and pursue new grants and funding sources.

Funding Schedule

Project Title	TIRCP		ZETCP		**Total**
	FY 24-25	**FY 25-26**	**FY 24-25**	**FY 25-26**	
Operating Assistance	$ 299,767.32	$299,767.33	$ 39,272.67	$ 39,272.68	**$ 678,080**