Monterey – Salinas Transit
Comprehensive Operational Analysis

Choices Report
Community Meeting
June 7, 2021

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We are reviewing where and how much bus service MST provides, and whether that needs to change.

The intent is to establish a consistent set of service goals, and to use those goals to redesign the network.
How do we get there?

- **Learn** about your network and your community
- **Listen** to riders and stakeholders
- Gather community input on **priorities** and **trade-offs**
- **Redesign** the network
- **Implement** the changes
MST’s Existing Network

Monterey-Salinas Transit Existing Midday Network
(February 2021)

On weekdays, the bus comes about every...
- 15 minutes or better
- 16-25 minutes
- 26-39 minutes
- 40-60 minutes
- Over 60 minutes
- Limited service (8 trips or less per day)
- Non-stop segment
Regional Routes
Why does the MST network need a redesign?
1. It’s been a while.

- MST last looked at the whole network 20 years ago.

- MST has done many local area studies since then, and strives to be as responsive to community requests as possible.

- But without consistent policy, responding to everybody’s requests means bus lines have tended to become numerous, specialized and complex.
2. Frequencies are very low.
3. It takes a long time to get from A to B.

• Many transit trips require more time spent waiting than actually riding the bus.

• This is true even when people have the best information at their disposal.
4. People don’t live where they used to.
5. There is clear unmet demand in Salinas

- Salinas is the largest, densest community in Monterey County.

- Large numbers of people need to make trips that are relatively short, but too long to walk.

- Yet most of the city is served by bus lines that come once an hour or less.
5. There is clear unmet demand in Salinas
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6. The pandemic has altered everyone’s reality.

• MST Ridership is down ~70%

• Rush hour and midday ridership are almost equal.

• Weekday and weekend ridership are almost equal.

• Ridership has dropped the least in low-income communities of color.

• What does that mean for the future?
What conditions allow transit to be useful?
**Density**

*Density* How many people, jobs, and activities are near each potential transit stop?

- Many people and jobs are within walking distance of transit.

- Fewer people and jobs are within walking distance of transit.
Walkability

Is it possible to walk between the stop and the activities around it?

+ It must also be safe to cross the street at a stop. You usually need the stops on both sides for two-way travel!
**Linearity**

*Linearity* Can transit run in reasonably straight lines?

+ A logical transit line is a direct path between any two destinations on it.

- Destinations located off the straight path force transit to deviate, discouraging those who want to ride through and increasing cost.
**Proximity**

Does transit have to traverse long gaps?

- Short distances between many destinations are faster and cheaper to serve.

- Long distances between destinations means a higher cost per passenger.
How does that match conditions in Monterey County?
1. People and jobs are very spread out.
2. There’s no one “Downtown”
3. More and more people live very far from the places they need to go.
What choices does MST need to make?
Where and how much service?

• Right now, MST provides about:
  
  – 50% of its service in the greater Monterey area
  – 35% of its service in the greater Salinas area
  – 15% in the rest of the county

• Is that the right balance?

• If not, what should it be?
For what purpose?

Imagine you had 18 buses to serve this fictional town.

Dots are the locations of residents and jobs.
Ridership Goal

The Ridership Goal

Maximum access for the greatest possible number of people

But:
• not available for everyone
• not necessarily available to all the people who need it most.
Coverage Goal

Some service near everyone, a baseline level of access everywhere.

But it’s unlikely to be useful for many people and trips.
Both goals matter

**Ridership Goal**
- Maximum total access to opportunity.
- Lowest subsidy per passenger.
- Support dense and walkable development.
- Emissions reduction.
- Reduction in vehicle miles traveled.

**Coverage Goal**
- Some service near every home and job.
- Baseline level of access available everywhere.
- Service to every member city or electoral district.
This tradeoff is unavoidable.

But you CAN choose a deliberate balance point on the spectrum between these goals. ("Devote ___% of our resources to the ridership goal and ___% to the coverage goal.")
Ridership vs. Coverage

• Right now, MST provides about:
  
  – 40% of its service in places and at frequencies where it would generate the most possible ridership.
  
  – 60% of its service to extend coverage to as many places as possible.

• Is that the right balance?

• If not, what should it be?
What does focusing more on ridership mean?

- **High frequencies.** Preferably every 15 minutes or better.

- **On straight lines** that make travel relatively direct and convenient.

- **In dense places** where many people live and work nearby.

- This creates very useful service, but it’s expensive, so MST couldn’t provide this in too many places.
In very rough terms...
What is the most important purpose of coverage service?

• **Equality vs. Equity.** Right now:
  
  – MST has a dedicated source of funding to meet the relatively high needs of seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities.
  
  – There is no dedicated funding for the relatively high needs of people with low incomes, or who don’t own a car.

• Should MST explicitly prioritize the needs of disadvantaged communities in designing service for coverage purposes?
What we’ve heard from the public so far.
Public Outreach So Far

• Interviews with stakeholder organizations

• Focus groups with existing riders, in English and Spanish

• Phone survey
  – 500 responses
  – Sample chosen to reflect the full diversity of Monterey County’s population in terms of age, income, location, race/ethnicity and primary language

• This meeting!
In Monterey County, the public values frequency and usefulness somewhat more than coverage.

**Telephone Survey Tradeoffs: Should MST...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus on providing service to as many places as possible, even if that means the bus only comes every hour or two and most trips take a very long time?</th>
<th>35%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on providing fast and frequent service, that comes every 15 minutes and takes the most direct routes, even if that means transit is only available in the areas where the most people live and work?</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note: Quantitative data shown from “the public” in this presentation reflects results of a phone survey of 500 people in Monterey County. People were called randomly, and responses were gathered to reflect the county’s diversity in terms of age, location, income, and race/ethnicity. Details in Appendix A to the Choices Report. The high-level conclusions of this survey are consistent with what the consultant team heard in interviews with a wide variety of stakeholders, and 9 focus groups with current MST riders from all parts of the county.
But not at the cost of equity.

Focus first on needs of communities where many people have low incomes, or don’t have reliable access to a personal vehicle?

OR

Provide service equally to all communities, regardless of need, income or access to a personal vehicle?

69%

30%

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This is reflected in the more concrete priorities we heard from the public.

How important is it for MST to provide....

- Routes tailored to needs of elderly and disabled: 41% Extremely important, 52% Very important
- Affordable transportation where many people lack vehicles: 34% Extremely important, 56% Very important
- Help limit air pollution and greenhouse gases: 26% Extremely important, 50% Very important
- Routes that get workers to places where the most jobs are: 26% Extremely important, 57% Very important
- Routes for people to get to stores and appts: 25% Extremely important, 53% Very important
- Transportation to colleges & universities: 25% Extremely important, 58% Very important
- Transportation to high schools: 23% Extremely important, 49% Very important
- Help reduce the growth of traffic congestion: 18% Extremely important, 48% Very important
- Increase overall amount of service: 15% Extremely important, 49% Very important
- Support denser, walkable development: 14% Extremely important, 46% Very important
- Service to all places, even where few people ride: 14% Extremely important, 40% Very important
- Special tourist services to reduce traffic congestion: 12% Extremely important, 45% Very important
What are the next steps?

- **Analyze the Network**
  - Ongoing

- **Community Input**
  - Ongoing

- **Redesign the Network**

- **Choices Report**
  - May 2021

- **Committee Direction**
  - June 2021

- **Draft Network Plan**
  - August 2021

- **Board Decision**
  - Early 2022

- **Implementation by MST**

- **Final Plan**
  - December 2021
Questions or Comments?

Project website:
https://mst.org/about-mst/planning-development/comprehensive-operational-analysis/

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