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January 24, 2012

Board of Supervisors  
800 S. Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009

**SUBJECT: Recommendation of Supervisor Bennett to Authorize the Public Works Agency Transportation Department to include City of Ojai Gold Coast Transit service in the Annual TDA Allocation Funding Board Item for Fiscal Year 2012/13**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Authorize the PWA Transportation Department to include City of Ojai's Gold Coast Transit service in the annual TDA Allocation Funding Board Item for Fiscal Year 2012/13 and include related modifications in the Ojai Trolley Service Agreement.

**DISCUSSION:**

The City of Ojai operates a trolley service within the City and the nearby unincorporated areas of Meiners Oaks and Mira Monte in which the County participates financially. The City is also a member of Gold Coast Transit (GCT), along with Oxnard, Ventura, Port Hueneme and the County.

In recent years, Ojai's Transportation Development Act (TDA) apportionment has been insufficient to cover their trolley and GCT operating costs, and the City has covered the shortfall with City general funds. Because of the adverse budgetary impact this has caused, the City Council directed that cost-saving and revenue enhancement actions be taken in the city transportation budget.

The City Manager and a citizens committee evaluated a range of service reduction and fare increase options. The chief recommendation from this process was to realize a \$100,000 annual savings by eliminating GCT bus service within the city.

On December 13, 2011 the Ojai City Council unanimously approved modifications to trolley operating hours and fares, along with adopting a Resolution to withdraw from GCT for fixed route service. Although the Resolution authorizes withdrawal from GCT, it is the City's preference to continue as a member of GCT for paratransit services only. As the foregoing is unprecedented, GCT Legal Counsel will advise the GCT Board on that matter. The

Resolution also authorizes the City Manager to negotiate with GCT and the County to develop alternate approaches to providing services in or near the City of Ojai.

As our Board knows from Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) meetings, Senate Bill 716, enacted in 2009, requires that all TDA funds allocated to jurisdictions be committed solely to transit beginning on July 1, 2014. Until then, if a jurisdiction satisfies all of its transit needs, the TDA balance may be spent on street and road maintenance. In response to SB 716, the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) embarked on a Regional Transit Study, to define a direction for improving the quality, efficiency, and overall sustainability of public transportation countywide. Per SB 716, VCTC will adopt a regional strategy later this year.

The County has participated financially in the Ojai Trolley for 20 years and also pays the largest percentage of GCT Route 16 which runs between Ventura and Ojai. Budget cutting measures by the Cities of Ventura and Ojai in the past two years have negatively affected riders on Route 16, which has the second highest ridership in the GCT system. Eliminating GCT service within the City of Ojai would not only have serious consequences for transit-dependent Ojai residents, but also for residents of the unincorporated area seeking to travel to Ojai.

After funding all identified unincorporated area transit needs in 2011/12, a County TDA balance of approximately \$750,000 remained, which can be used either for transit or for streets and roads. The Public Works Agency anticipates that we will have close to that amount of TDA balance in 2012/13. Additionally, a GCT prior year carryover balance of \$149,000 will accrue to the County for GCT service in FY 2012/13.

Following Ojai's withdrawal from GCT, their \$100,000 savings will simply be spread among the remaining four GCT members. Because most of the miles in Route 16 are in the unincorporated area, the County will see a significant cost increase in the wake of Ojai's withdrawal, meanwhile transit riders would receive greatly diminished service. The financial impact to other GCT members that are already fully utilizing their TDA money could likely spark another round of transit cuts in those cities, with the concomitant re-spreading of costs among the remaining members, resulting in system-wide degradation of transit service just as we are planning for the year 2014 regionalization of transit service. This cascade of financial and service impacts can be avoided by the recommended action, the cost of which will fall well within the carryover GCT account balance alone.

Looking forward to a regional transit system, transit service decisions will be prioritized based on the needs of the riding public. Route 16 from Ventura to downtown Ojai should logically be restored to its original configuration as a regional connector, and certainly will be in 2014. By including the Ojai portion of GCT service in the County's annual TDA funding until that time, our Board moves forward in regional cooperation and affirms the transit service goals adopted in our General Plan in 2006.

This service proposal was developed in concert with the Public Works Agency and is supported by the Public Works Agency. Implementation of this service approach will necessarily involve ongoing coordination with the City of Ojai to assure service connectivity with the trolley and bus stop planning, which can be addressed through the annual trolley service agreement.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Bennett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Steve Bennett  
Supervisor, First District