



West Marin Needs Assessment Service Strategies & Solutions



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Chapter 1 Introduction

This report is intended to provide both short term adjustments and longer term direction for the West Marin Stagecoach service. This Service Plan is the second deliverable in the West Marin Needs Assessment Project. The first deliverable focused on Existing Conditions, including the results of extensive data collection on the existing Stagecoach service. This report includes a summary of existing conditions; more detailed information may be obtained from that initial report.

The goals of the West Marin Needs Assessment project are to:

- Evaluate the existing West Marin Stagecoach service
- Identify any existing or projected unmet transit needs
- Develop/confirm goals and performance measures for the service
- Recommend service and schedule improvements that might better match transit service to demand in West Marin.
- Develop a sustainable implementation plan that reflects both the goals and performance objectives for the Stagecoach and the financial realities of providing transit service in a rural area

This report builds on previous work documented in the West Marin Needs Assessment Existing Conditions report. Based on those findings, it identifies both near term transportation strategies and a longer term vision for transit services in West Marin. The purpose of this report is to document service options for prioritization by Marin Transit, stakeholders, and members of the public.

Subsequent deliverables will further develop the service concepts presented here, including detailing operating and capital costs and prioritizing projects for implementation.

Organization of this Report

Building on the information gathered, this report consists of six chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Existing Conditions

Chapter 2 gives a brief overview of the existing conditions which influence recommendations in this report. Topics included are the existing transit service, community outreach efforts on which the recommendations are based, demographics trends for West Marin, and the financial context for future service changes.

Chapter 3: Results of Outreach

Chapter 3 highlights the major findings of the outreach process, identifying significant aspects of West Marin demographics and transit ridership patterns, and presents the most-requested service changes received from the public.

Chapter 4: Service Alternatives

Chapter 4 proposes criteria for evaluating and prioritizing service strategies and alternatives offered, and then by geographic area, presents both a long-term vision and short term actions for meeting transportation goals.

Chapter 5: Operating Cost of Additional Service

Chapter 5 presents the preliminary operating costs for service proposals in this plan.

Chapter 6: Marketing and Promotional Initiatives

Chapter 6 makes recommendations in the area of information and marketing, partnerships and coordination.

Chapter 2 Existing Conditions

The alternatives recommended in this report are based on previous work documented in the West Marin Needs Assessment Existing Conditions Report. Following is a summary of findings from that report relevant to the recommended alternatives. For more details on topics covered in this chapter, please refer to the Existing Conditions Report.

Overview of Existing Transit Services

The Stagecoach began operation in 2002 as a two-year demonstration program to provide residents of West Marin improved access to medical, educational, civic, shopping, and workplace sites throughout the County. The Stagecoach is administered by Marin Transit, and operates under contract with MV Transportation. West Marin Stagecoach ridership has grown markedly in the past year, with a significant increase throughout the spring and summer. The West Marin Stagecoach provides the only year-round public transit to West Marin County. The service is comprised of three routes:

- Route 61 (South route) between Marin City and Bolinas via Stinson Beach
- Route 62 (Coastal Route) between Bolinas and Point Reyes Station via Stinson Beach
- Route 68 (North Route) between the downtown San Rafael Transit Center and Point Reyes Station

Routes 61 and 68 run seven days a week, while the Coastal Route 62 runs on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

The West Marin Stagecoach operates in a rural environment, connecting low-population coastal areas to transit hubs in more urban central and eastern Marin. San Anselmo, San Rafael, and Marin City are important transfer points to Golden Gate Transit service, connecting Marin to Sonoma County and San Francisco, as well as providing connections to local Marin Transit routes. The newest route, the Coastal Route 62, connects Point Reyes Station and Stinson Beach – the endpoints of the other two routes - with each other.

Figure 2-1 West Marin Needs Assessment Study Area

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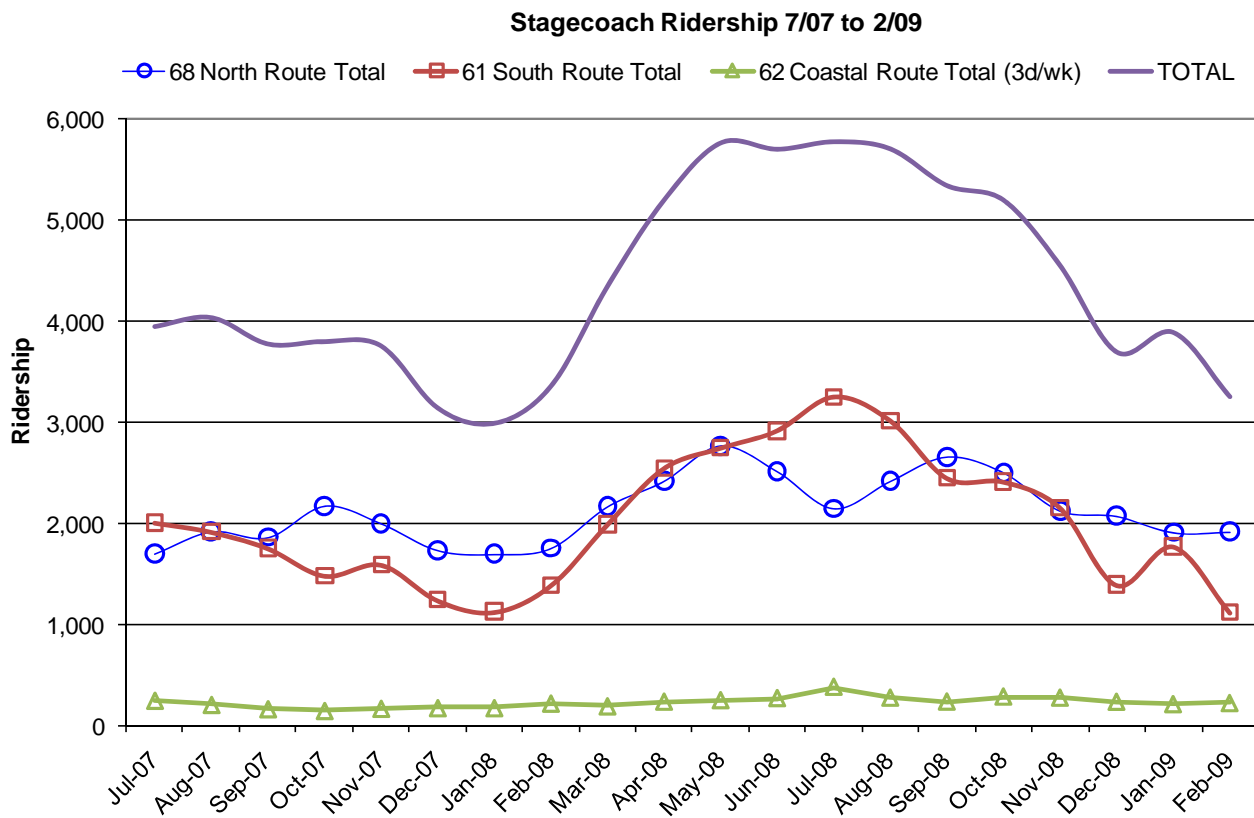
Figure 2-2 West Marin Stagecoach Route Map

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The West Marin Stagecoach serves a wide variety of rider types, varying by time of day, day of the week (weekday and weekend), and time of year. During the week, commute-hour trips serve workers commuting both from West Marin to jobs in the urban parts of the county and from the urban parts of the County to West Marin jobs. During the school year, the system carries large numbers of students going to high schools in Mill Valley and Fairfax. On weekends, youth ridership remains high; in addition, over half of the riders on the South route are recreational travelers coming from Marin as well as from San Francisco and the east Bay. The tourist market is active year-round on good-weather weekends. As student ridership drops off in the summer, the system is supported by large numbers of recreational visitors throughout the peak season of mid-May through mid-September. In this way, the travel patterns of local residents and visitors combine across the seven days of the week as well as the seasons so that there are no times of significant ridership fall-off.

The figure below shows the ridership by route for the period from July 2007 through February 2009. Ridership dips in the winter; during 2007-2008, the lowest ridership month in 2008 was in January at just under 3000 passengers, and lowest in 2009 in February at 3250 passengers.

Figure 2-3 Stagecoach Ridership, July 2007 – February 2009



An important feature of all the West Marin Stagecoach routes is that they will stop anywhere along the route where it is safe to do so to let passengers on or off the bus. This includes all

Golden Gate Transit stops as well as wide road shoulders. This “flag stop” system mitigates the situation of having formal stops very far apart.

Marin Transit provides two other important services in West Marin. The West Marin Stagecoach ***Deviated Route Service*** provides curb to curb service for American with Disabilities Act (ADA) eligible riders. The Stagecoach will deviate up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the regular fixed route during regular service hours to pick up or drop off riders. Rides must be booked at least 24 hours in advance and can be reserved up to 7 days ahead. The Stagecoach Route 61 (South route) does not deviate on weekends; all other routes will deviate during their regular service hours. Paratransit to complement weekend Route 61 service is provided by Whistlestop Wheels.

Dial-a-Ride service to Muir Beach was established in March 2008. The service is operated through a contract with Whistlestop Wheels, providing curb-to-curb Dial-A-Ride service between the Muir Beach area and Tam Junction, Tam High School, Manzanita Park & Ride or Marin City during specific days and times. Rides may be booked a minimum of one day to a maximum of seven days in advance by phone.

Community Outreach Efforts

An important goal of this study is to provide an opportunity for a diverse range of stakeholders with a common interest in transportation in West Marin to participate in project activities and to influence its outcome. The public was invited to provide their perspectives and ideas on all aspects of Stagecoach service, identify barriers to using the West Marin Stage, strategize on solutions most appropriate to meet these needs, and prioritize these solutions. Input was solicited from a broad base of individuals and groups including transit riders and potential riders, transit drivers and managers, social service agencies, and groups with common concerns such as recreational travelers, Spanish-speaking residents, and residents of hard-to-reach communities, as described in the following section. While community outreach is always an important component of service planning, it is essential in West Marin where residents feel a strong sense of ownership over their rural transit system, and have worked hard to maintain and expand it.

Steering Committee

A Steering Committee made up of members of the community representing a wide array of interests was convened to provide overall guidance to Marin Transit staff and the project consultant team for the duration of the project. The Committee represented the interests of their group, reviewed project materials, and provided data or program information to help support project findings.

Public Meetings

Public meetings were held to gather input from the public at large. The first set of meetings sought input on the community perceptions and experiences with the Stage, as well as what riders and non-riders would like to have improved or changed. Meetings were held at varying locations, days, and times in order to provide the widest opportunity for people to attend. All meetings were accessible via the Stage. The schedule for the first round of public outreach meetings was:

Figure 2-4 Public Meetings

Town	Location	Date	Time
Pt. Reyes Station	Point Reyes Dance Palace	Tuesday December 9, 2008	2 PM to 4 PM
Stinson Beach	Stinson Beach Community Center	Tuesday December 9, 2008	6:00 PM to 7:30 PM
San Geronimo	San Geronimo Valley Community Center	Saturday December 13, 2008	12 PM to 1:30 PM

A second round of meetings is scheduled for May 2009 to review and refine these recommendations.

Stakeholder Interviews

The consultant team conducted over 20 interviews with a broad range of stakeholders including representatives from human service agencies, transportation providers, employers and others to identify what is working well with the transportation system, where transportation issues affect the stakeholder, visions for a future system, and perspectives on the future of the communities in the study area.

Focus Groups

Three focus groups were conducted to examine more closely the transportation needs of specific groups. The three groups were:

Recreational Travelers – This meeting, held at the Point Reyes National seashore, included eight representatives from National, State and local parks, hostel managers, local innkeepers, and Visitor’s Bureau staff.

Latino Community – Through West Marin Latino Family Services, a group of social service providers met and shared their perspectives on transit needs for the Latino community in West Marin.

Residents of Bolinas – This meeting focused on the transportation needs for this remote community, and included representatives from seniors, school students, people with disabilities, and low income people.

In addition, we met with the West Marin Stagecoach drivers and managers to get their unique, long-term and valuable perspective of all aspects of service including rider preferences, route and stop issues, where and when the system is overloaded or underused, and vehicle issues.

The matrix below lists details for the focus group meetings.

Figure 2-5 Focus Groups

Group	Town	Location	Date	Time
MV Transportation	San Rafael	Marin Transit offices	November 3, 2008	2:30 PM to 3:30 PM
Recreational Users	Point Reyes National Seashore	Red Barn Schoolroom	January 16, 2008	1:00 PM to 3:00 PM
Latino Community	Point Reyes Station	Latino Family Services Offices	March 24, 2009	3:30 PM to 4:30 PM
Bolinas	Bolinas	Bolinas Community Public Utilities District	March 24, 2009	6:30 PM to 8:00 PM

The results of the outreach efforts described above contributed significantly to the alternatives presented in this report.

Demographic Trends for West Marin

Based on data from Marin County as well as stakeholder interviews, some trends for future demographics, with implications for future transit service, were identified.

- Projections for transit demand in 2030 show a 6% increase in home-based work trips originating in West Marin, with a 4% increase in West Marin residents working in Sonoma or Novato. Based on these work trip projections, increased service to Central Marin and Novato might be considered.
- Housing growth in West Marin is very constrained, and will remain so; land prices and rents have been rising for the last decade, and will continue to rise. Lack of affordable housing means that lower wage workers commute long distances from East Marin and Sonoma County to work in West Marin; farm workers are an exception, as they are typically housed on site. Employers noted that a lack of affordable housing and inter-county transportation services can make hiring difficult.
- Full-time residents are increasingly replaced by weekend and part-time residents.
- West Marin school populations have been shrinking; this trend is expected to continue, in part because of the high cost of living in this area.
- The percentage of senior residents is increasing as long-time residents get older, and most newcomers are retirees.

Financial Climate for the West Marin Stagecoach

The Stage is supported by a Federal Transit Administration program for rural lifeline transit service. Approximately 60% of operating costs are from Measure A Funds, a half cent county-wide sales tax dedicated to transportation purposes. The expenditure plan for Measure A stipulates that 3% of the sales tax proceeds be available to rural transit initiatives. As a result of the overall economic downturn starting in 2008, this source is expected to see a 13% drop in the next fiscal year, leading to an operating deficit that will be met through other sources, drawing down agency reserves. Fares cover only a small portion of the cost to operate the Stage. The average subsidy for each passenger trip on the Stage is nine dollars.

The current recession and decline in operating revenues make it impossible to plan for significant system expansion in the immediate-term. This plan provides a blueprint for enhancing Stagecoach service over time, with short term actions that can be sustained with relatively little new investment over the next 1-3 years. Even at its fullest implementation, the plan does not attempt to provide service “from everywhere to everywhere” but rather recognizes that providing transit service in relatively low density rural areas requires making difficult choices with the goal of providing the most service to the most promising markets – maximizing productivity without sacrificing basic mobility.

Chapter 3 Results of Outreach

This chapter reviews the findings of the Existing Conditions report related to travel demand, and presents comments on Stagecoach service resulting from outreach efforts as well as themes and trends emerging from data collection, an analysis of existing and projected travel demand, and extensive public outreach.

Ridership and Demographics

Travel demand forecasts and population projections suggest that West Marin will continue its pattern of very slow growth over the next decade and beyond. The proportion of seniors over age 65 in the West Marin population will increase slightly over time, while the number of school-age children will decrease. This trend is consistent with the rest of Marin County and all of the United States – as the baby boomers become senior citizens, average age increases. Other significant findings related to West Marin’s current and future demographics:

- While two-thirds of Stagecoach riders are adults of working age; students, aged 17 and younger make up more than a quarter (26%) of Stagecoach riders. This is disproportionately high for the number of students in the population and is particularly high for a transit system. High school students comprise a sizable proportion of the ridership on both the Route 61 and the Route 68.
- Of survey respondents, 30% have an annual family income of \$10,000 or less. In general, the incomes reported for Stagecoach riders are lower than the general population of Marin County.
- Three quarters of Stagecoach riders live in Marin, and of those, 66% live in West Marin. A surprising share of Stagecoach riders on the Route 61 and 68 are “reverse commuters” using the service to travel to West Marin in the morning and back into central and eastern Marin in the afternoon. On the weekdays where ride checks were done, 55% of the passengers on the first Route 61 trip were westbound. Similarly, on the first Route 68 round trip, subtracting students getting off at Drake High School, 75% of passengers on the roundtrip were westbound.
- Ridership is very different on weekends than during the week. While 85% of weekday riders live in Marin, less than 70% of weekend riders are West Marin residents, as recreational riders take advantage of the system. This recreational ridership benefits the residents of West Marin significantly, since the impact of visitor autos
- The two reasons cited most frequently for using the Stagecoach are that no car is available, and to improve the environment. If the Stagecoach service were not available, almost half the riders would have no transportation alternative, while others would bicycle, walk, or hitchhike.
- Most riders walked to and from the bus stop, with some transferring from other services in eastern Marin. Low-density residential areas make getting from home to the bus stop and back difficult. Residents who cannot drive are often isolated and cut off from the wider community.

Trip Origins, Destinations, and Travel Patterns

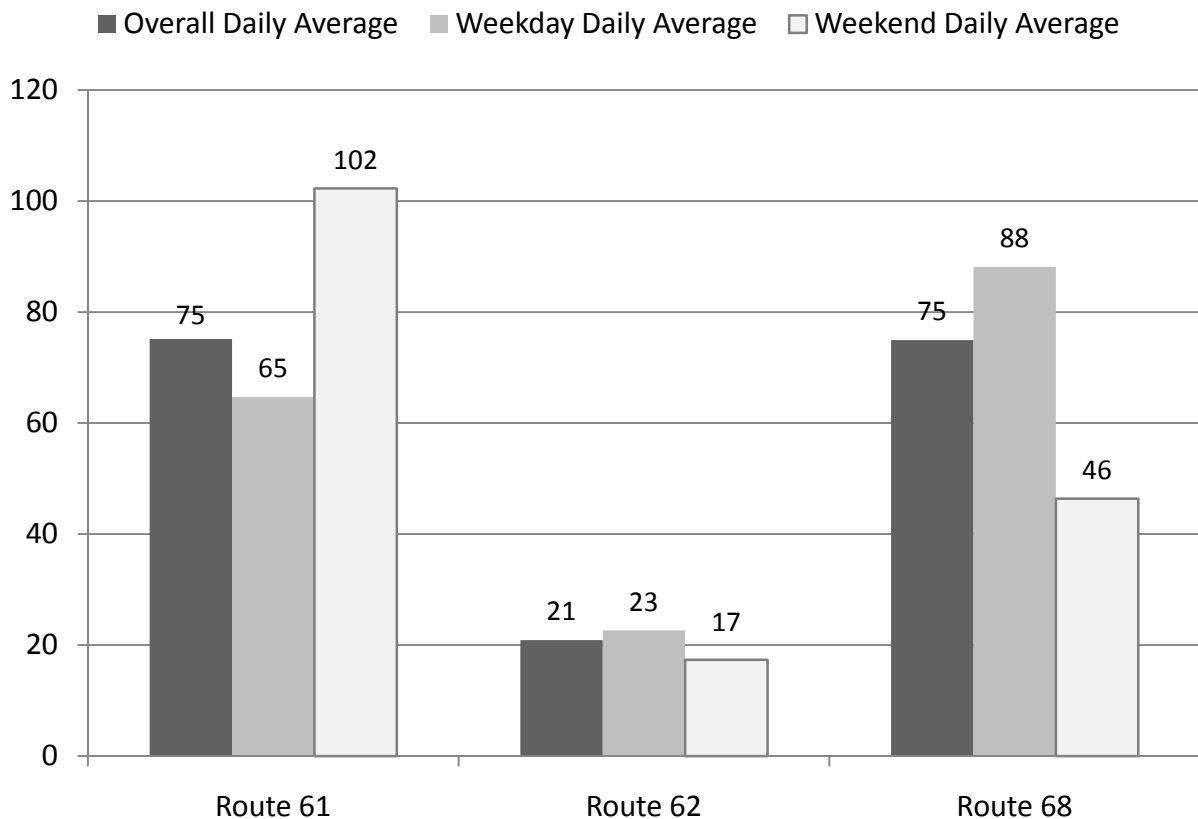
Based on ride check data, interviews, and other public input, these specific places were identified as important origins and destinations for West Marin residents, including both Stage riders and non-riders.

- Within Marin County: Sausalito, Mill Valley, San Rafael, Novato, Stinson Beach, Bolinas, Olema, Woodacre, Lagunitas, Point Reyes, Point Reyes Station, Inverness,
- Petaluma (Sonoma County), particularly the Transit Center
- Recreational areas at Mt. Tamalpais State Park, Samuel P. Taylor State Park, Muir Woods National Monument, Point Reyes National Seashore beaches and lighthouse, Tomales Bay State Park
- Hospitals in Greenbrae, Terra Linda and Petaluma; the Point Reyes Clinic; the Marin County HHS Dental Clinic, 4th St., San Rafael; and Coastal Health Alliance Clinics in Bolinas, Stinson Beach, and Point Reyes Station
- Shopping malls in Corte Madera and San Rafael, United Market
- Connecting to Golden Gate Transit at San Rafael and the Sausalito Ferry
- San Francisco and the airport
- The northern end of West Marin is underserved, since there is no public transit north of Point Reyes. The Coast Guard Training Center at Two Rock and Tomales High School were cited as important origins and destinations, as well as the Marshall Store (in the town of Marshall) and Tomales Bay State Park.

Weekday and Weekend Travel

Certain factors varied significantly between weekday riders and weekend riders. During the week, 85% of riders live within Marin County and over 60% are using the service to go to work or to school. On the weekends, fewer than 70% live in Marin, with 21% coming to Marin from San Francisco. Those commuting for work or school account for the majority of riders during the week, and only 2% of trips connect to outside Marin County. By comparison, 17% of riders connect outside the county on weekends, and 55% of weekend trips are for recreational purposes. This is without any focused marketing effort to recreational users in the Bay Area.

Ridership on the two most-used routes, the South 61 and the North 68, varies significantly between weekdays and weekends. During 2008, The South Route 61 had more passengers on the weekends than during the week, while the 68 carries more of its passengers – many of them students - during the week. Ridership on the Coastal 63 is fairly even across weekdays and weekends. The following figure shows the daily average ridership for all of 2008, for weekdays and for weekends, by route.

Figure 3-1 Average Daily Ridership by Weekday and Weekend, 2008

Data: Marin Transit. Averages are approximate and are calculated based on 21 weekday service days and 9 weekend service days per month for the 61 and 68; and 8 weekdays and 4 weekend days per month for the Route 62.

Target Stagecoach Markets

Given current and projected ridership, several significant market segments emerge that are most attracted to the Stagecoach service currently, and are expected to be important markets going into the future.

Students, particularly high school students take the Stage regularly to get to school. Teens of middle and high school age are dependent on getting rides and on public transportation for mobility. Students in the Point Reyes area use the Route 68 to travel to and from Drake High School; Drake does not provide any student transportation services. In the south part of the county, students use the Route 61 to travel from Stinson Beach to Tamalpais High School in Mill Valley. The school does provide limited transportation for these students, so the Stage is used to supplement school bus service. Service to Tomales High School and from Muir Beach to Tam High is not yet offered and was requested.

Youth riders use the Stage on the weekends as well as during the week. Middle-school students use the Stage regularly to access entertainment and shopping and students use the system for travel to local summer programs. Youth riders provide a strong rider base for the service,

especially for the Route 68. The basic mobility needs of this group appear to be met adequately with existing service, although the current schedule may prevent students from participating in some after-school activities with later end times. Sometimes teens “get stuck” if they missed the last bus requiring someone to pick them up. One parent made the point that a new state law prohibits teens from driving other teens, making carpooling more difficult.

Workers who live in West Marin travel to central Marin (40%), San Francisco (23%), Novato (12%) and southern Marin (11%) to work. The Route 61 and Route 68 provide service connecting West Marin with these locations, with the exception of Novato.

Due to the high cost of housing in West Marin, people who work in West Marin either commute from areas with lower-cost housing, like Petaluma (Sonoma County), Solano County, or Novato, or live on the farms where they work. Travel demand projections predict an increase in workers travelling in both directions between West Marin and Petaluma or Novato.

Seniors make up a smaller percentage of the West Marin population than in Marin as a whole, and ride the bus in lower than expected numbers. These potential riders might take more advantage of the system if travel training were offered to acquaint them with the Stage system. Destinations for West Marin seniors include Sutter Hospital in Novato, Kaiser Hospital in Terra Linda, and daycare programs in Point Reyes. Many organizations are concerned about access to health care for this group, and suggested direct transit service to larger medical facilities in eastern Marin. Marin seniors will be the focus of a Senior Mobility Plan to begin in the summer of 2009.

Recreational users ride the Stagecoach on the weekends. These riders could benefit from connections to regional bus service, ferries, and the Airporter service in eastern Marin to allow them to get to the Stagecoach directly from San Francisco. Respondents in the business and recreational sectors echoed residents’ concerns that transit services are inadequate for visitors, and that the number of cars in the area due to tourism negatively effects the quality of life for residents. There is a strong desire to provide tourists with alternatives to driving to popular beach and park destinations in West Marin. Many respondents suggested integrating services with existing or new shuttle services operated by the National Parks.

The Latino community in West Marin lives and works on dairies and farms on the Point Reyes peninsula, along the east side of Bodega Bay, and in the area between Marshall and Petaluma in the Chileno Valley. Many do not have drivers’ licenses; women in particular are isolated if the only vehicle available to the family is used for work trips. In addition to residents, other Latino workers commute into West Marin from east Marin or from Petaluma. Barriers to using the West Marin Stage include inability to read the schedule, remoteness from routes, apprehension about allowing youth on the bus alone, and work schedules which do not fit with the bus schedule. This group may take more advantage of the Stage if travel training were available.

Each of these groups travels at different times and days. Students commute to school weekday mornings and afternoons from Fall through Spring; workers commute during the same morning hours but later in the day. On weekends when these groups do not travel as much and during the summer when the students are not commuting, recreational visitors replace them on the Stage. Service adjustments should be made with the underlying goal of supporting these disparate groups.

Identified Transit Needs

Riders and West Marin residents generally have a very positive perception of the Stagecoach service. Of comments gathered from the on-board survey, almost a third complimented the service, referring to how much it is needed, how convenient it is, that it runs on schedule, and that the drivers are friendly. Of greatest concern was that the service continues and not be reduced.

While existing riders are satisfied, there was also a general lack of awareness of the service among non-riders. Community venues where events are held, for example, said they had not considered scheduling events to be convenient to transit. Some riders and non-riders said they were unaware that Stagecoach buses could be flagged down at any safe point along the route.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Among the many groups and individuals interviewed, there was wide agreement on the strengths of the service, which include:

- Exceptional on-time performance
- Travel speed comparable to driving
- Routes connecting all major communities in West Marin with each other and with major transfer points, providing connectivity to regional transit
- Friendly drivers
- School service, without which this essential daily transportation would be extremely difficult
- A simple easy-to-understand fare system for all routes, days, and times
- Newer larger vehicles that are comfortable and stable
- The “flag stop” system

These are great strengths to build on for the West Marin Stagecoach. When a system is viewed so favorably by the community and when a community feels the level of “ownership” that is felt in West Marin for the Stage, it is important that changes be undertaken only with great care. Services should be given ample time to produce results, and changes should be made only when there is a clear transportation or productivity benefit to the system.

Generally agreed-on weaknesses include:

- The low frequency of trips for the North and South routes, requiring very long layovers on the eastern end of the route
- For the Route 62, the long mid-day wait in Point Reyes Station waiting to return to Bolinas or Stinson
- Lack of carrying capacity for more than two bicycles per bus
- Need for service that starts earlier in the day and ends later in the evening
- There was also concern that there is a lack of awareness regarding the Stagecoach ADA deviated service, difficulty in arranging for it, and distrust in its reliability.

Requests for Service Changes

Following are the service changes and features asked for most frequently or rated most highly from all public input sources. It should be noted that potential service improvements come entirely from the public outreach, have not been filtered for feasibility, and may or may not be supported by data. Analysis of these requests is included in the following chapter.

Frequency

The most requested service improvement was increased frequency on the North (68) and South (61) routes - for example, six times daily instead of four times. Public perception is that four daily round trips leave too large a gap between buses; many stakeholders expressed a desire for additional mid-day service so there are shorter waits to return home. Additional trips would increase the number of vehicles required for service, as well as adding drivers and service hours.

Coastal route riders requested greater frequency of the regular Route 62; on its current schedule, there is a gap in the mid-day when it goes to San Rafael and back. Bolinas residents' top request was daily service on the Coastal Route from Bolinas to Point Reyes. Currently this runs on Tuesday, Thursdays and Saturdays; they would prefer seven days a week.

In addition, more service was requested between the most popular recreational destinations during the crowded summer season. It was suggested that the Stage run one bus from Stinson to the Pan Toll Ranger Station or Mt. Home Inn and back during the summer to handle the afternoon crush loads. Drivers stated that the Stinson to Pan Toll segment is overloaded during the summer, typically between 1:00 PM and 6:00 PM; they routinely pick up 22 people in the Stinson Beach parking lot, and another 14 downtown, filling the bus to capacity.

While not part of the Stage service, the Muir Woods Shuttle is seen as part of the West Marin transportation system. The public requested that this service expand to weekends all year long rather than the summer months only.

Service Hours

Earlier and later service for both the 61 and 68 was a top request, in order to get people to work and school earlier and home later. Employers in West Marin, especially the parks, also asked for earlier service as it would enable employees and volunteers to get to work on time and let early-bird visitors start their trips earlier in the day. This also allows a longer on-site visit; since it takes quite a while to get to these sites, visitors want to stay later in the day than allowed by the current Stage schedule. Later service would enable students who participate in after-school activities to get home on transit.

Related to this are requests for better coordination with Golden Gate Transit (GGT) buses at Marin City and San Rafael for the trip to work, and better coordination or connections with the Larkspur and Sausalito ferries. Connections to regional transit are especially important for the visitors coming from outside the Bay Area. Connections to park shuttles were also requested, although currently there is no intersection point between the Stage and the park-sponsored Lighthouse Shuttle during the winter months.

Routes & Stops

The most requested new route was between Point Reyes and the Petaluma Transit Hub. A route connecting West Marin with Petaluma in Sonoma County would both allow West Marin residents

to travel to work in Petaluma, and workers who live in less expensive housing in Petaluma to travel to work on dairies, farms, restaurants and lodgings in West Marin.

The second most-requested new route was from Point Reyes to Novato, for similar reasons. In addition, some Point Reyes students attend high school in Novato. Related to this, direct service to hospitals in east Marin - Kaiser in Terra Linda, Sutter in Novato, and Marin General in Greenbrae - was also requested, primarily by seniors or their representatives.

The most frequent request for an additional stop was on the mesa in Bolinas. Currently the route stops in downtown Bolinas, but the majority of homes, as well as the medical clinic and fire station, are on the mesa. The distance between the downtown and the mesa is too far to walk for the infirm or those with small children.

Bus drivers' major concern was the physical configuration of the stops. The Stagecoach started out as a small system and has grown, but the infrastructure has not grown with it. Initially the service used 13-passenger vehicles, but now they are using 30-passenger vehicles, and need more pullouts and cutouts. All drivers spoke of the difficulty of stopping in designated stop locations, the lack of a place to park the bus, autos parking in bus stop zones, and having no place to turn the bus around.

Marketing & Information

People were very aware that an increase in ridership may allow for an increase in Stage service, and valued marketing activities as a way to bring this about. The top marketing request was to increase marketing of the service in general, but especially to recreational users and seniors; both of these groups were seen as underserved and as having great potential for becoming new riders. Marketing ideas varied from information distribution through various media, to training for seniors, to collaborations with local businesses in getting information onto the internet. Specific marketing measures are covered in Chapter 5.

Vehicles

Every group cited the lack of space for bicycles on the bus as a serious problem. On a rural system such as the Stage, bicycles can serve as an extension between the bus and the trip origin or final destination. Combining this with the large number of recreational visitors who do or could use the Stage, the 2-bicycle limit per bus becomes a genuine barrier to people using the system.

Some riders also complained that the stiff suspension on the Stage buses makes the ride uncomfortable, especially where roads are in disrepair.

Chapter 4 Service Plan

The focus of the needs assessment is to identify strategies and solutions to address the service gaps and transportation needs presented in Chapter 3. This chapter identifies these strategies for the long term and also identifies changes that might be made within 12 to 24 months.

Goals and Objectives

Transit system performance must be measured based on goals and standards that reflect the particular operating environment and values of the community it serves. Information from other similar systems can provide insight into what should be achievable, but it is important to recognize that the goals and standards established for a transit service reflect the unique values of the area served – for example, while one system may focus entirely on productivity, another may require that all residents be within a certain distance of transit, regardless of the impact on productivity.

The goals and performance measures recommended for the West Marin Stagecoach are designed to focus on improving system productivity and on achieving a sustainable system that meets local mobility needs. These criteria are based on input from stakeholders, and attempt to reflect the values and opinions of the members of the communities served by the Stagecoach as well as review of existing information about the Stagecoach service.

Goal 1: Provide Transportation for West Marin Residents

The primary goal of the West Marin Stage is to provide transit for West Marin residents, connecting them with schools, jobs, shopping, medical care, and regional transit.

To the extent possible, the Stage should be designed so that West Marin residents can be linked with schools, medical facilities and concentrations of employment and to minimize transfers. This requires an emphasis on timed connections at major transfer hubs.

A secondary goal is to provide linkages between communities within West Marin. Services meeting these goals would not necessarily make connections in Central or Southern Marin, but rather would link residents in coastal communities with local services, including schools, senior centers and medical facilities.

Because rural transit services are generally not as cost effective as transit services in denser urban areas, Stage services may not be as frequent as other Marin Transit routes, and may not run on all days or at all times of day. Riders may need to schedule their travel more carefully than in areas with higher population density. However, it is a goal of the Stagecoach to provide basic mobility within West Marin and to provide access to needed services for West Marin residents.

Goal 2: Provide a Financially Sustainable Service

The Stagecoach is relatively unique in that it has a dedicated funding source from sales tax revenues. However, it is important that the system be planned conservatively to ensure that services that are implemented can be sustained over time.

Transit operations face difficult choices in an environment of limited resources. Therefore, where choices need to be made, Stagecoach routes will be designed to maximize productivity – to

provide the most service in the areas where it will be most used, even though this means not providing service to places where demand does not justify it.

Marin Transit remains committed to working with the communities of West Marin to explore creative ways of meeting mobility needs that go beyond providing standard fixed route transit service. Working with community partners, Marin Transit will attempt to provide services tailored to demand.

Goal 3: Support Existing Markets While Working to Expand Ridership

The previous section of this report identified existing markets including students, recreational riders and lower income workers who already ride the Stage in large numbers. Building on existing ridership is often the best way for transit operators to increase ridership, since it is generally easier to get someone who already uses transit for some trips to use the system for more of their trips than it is to convince someone who has rejected transit altogether to use it regularly. Therefore, a primary goal of the Stagecoach service is to enhance service to groups that are already predisposed to use the service.

A secondary goal of the Stagecoach is to increase its ridership base by providing better service and/or better information to groups that are not yet using, or are underutilizing, the service. This could include seniors, who are underrepresented in current ridership, recreational users who plan their trips in advance using internet resources, and people travelling to West Marin for organized special events such as Coastal Cleanup Day.

Goal 4: Focus on Productivity Before Service Expansion

A primary goal of the Stagecoach is to increase productivity, fully utilizing existing infrastructure before adding new or speculative service. Marin Transit's performance standard for rural transit is four passengers per hour, which is being met by two of the three routes. Stakeholder interviews and focus groups suggest that even within the communities that are well served by the Stage, there is a general lack of awareness about the service, including what level of service is offered and how to access it. Better information and information integrated with other sources, such as National Park Service (NPS) information for Pt. Reyes, visitor bureau promotions, and worksite and school information sites, could increase ridership without significant investment in new services. As funding is available, new services will be added over time to address demonstrated needs.

Service Plan

This section of the report proposes service and operations changes, starting with changes affecting overall service, followed by service strategies and changes organized by community, based on the area served by each of the three Stage routes. Areas that are not currently served by the Stage but that may require service in the future are also discussed.

General System Enhancements

Recommendations in this section are not specific to any route but affect overall service.

Increase Bicycle Storage Capacity on Buses

Bicycle access is an increasingly important consideration for Stage routes. Both recreational travelers and local riders use bikes to access Stage routes and at their destination end. In West Marin, Stage routes stay on the main roads, and there can be quite a distance from the rider's origin to the bus stop and from the bus stop to their final destination. In rural areas, bicycles can act as an extension of transit service, solving the "last mile" problem, and making it usable for those who otherwise could not take advantage of it.

The vehicles currently used by the Stagecoach hold up to two bicycles. The preferred location for bicycle storage is on the front end of the vehicle; this allows the driver to see if someone is loading or unloading a bicycle, whether a bicycle has come loose from its rack, and also discourages theft. However, adding more bicycles to the front of the vehicle extends the length, which is problematic for the South Route, which travels very windy roads over Mount Tamalpais. Racks that hold up to three bicycles are now common and should be considered for the Stage. Other bike securement methods should also be considered as biking increases.

Sportworks¹, a company in Woodinville, WA, sells two kinds of three-bicycle racks that mount on the front of buses. The Veloporter 3 is made of a resilient bumper-like material, and costs \$950. Their stainless steel model Trilogy DL3 model costs between \$900 and \$1350, depending on finish. All bike racks require additional mounting hardware, and in California, may require a "deployment kit" to let the driver know when rack is being used. However, they do not recommend the 3-bike racks for the type of buses used to provide Stage service (known as cutaway buses). This is due to the narrower width of the vehicle, which causes the rider to enter the traffic lane to mount their bike on the rack. Further, the stiffer suspension on these vehicles causes the racks to deteriorate faster.

They also manufacture bicycle trailers (12- and 16-bike capacity) and bicycle mounts ("interlocks") for inside buses. Inside racks require removal of some seats at the front of the bus to allow proper securement of a few bicycles.

Another way of increasing bike access is to partner with a bike vendor who would rent bikes at major bus stops and/or provide secure bike parking at bus stops so that riders who don't need to use their bikes on both ends of a trip feel comfortable leaving their bike behind. This is particularly important since even with increased bike capacity on-board; there will always be the possibility that bike racks will be full. Secure bike parking could be provided at selected stops in partnership with local communities in West Marin. Bike storage, bike rental, and bike repair could be offered if space is available at the Marin City and San Rafael Transit Centers. Marin Transit should explore partnership opportunities with the Marin County Bicycle Coalition (see Partnership section, Chapter 6) to identify opportunities to offer a bike station at transfer hubs and should include bike parking at selected West Marin stops.

In addition, drivers and residents of Bolinas said that many passengers want to bring surfboards and boogie boards as well, particularly on summer weekends. Storage under the current vehicles is limited to items less than five feet in length. When new vehicles are purchased, Marin Transit should research possible options for carrying larger items.

¹ www.bicycleracks.com

Other Vehicle Improvements

Currently, about half of the West Marin Stagecoach vehicles are provided by the contractor. Only a portion of the current fleet is owned by Marin Transit. That will change soon when Marin Transit utilizes Economic Stimulus funds to purchase additional vehicles for the Stage. Marin Transit will order the vehicles off of a State contract. Most small operators order vehicles from a larger State procurement. To qualify for stimulus funds the agency must move quickly to purchase the vehicles and avoid a drawn out individual procurement.

To the extent that Marin Transit has flexibility in specifying the type of vehicle to be purchased, they should attempt to procure a vehicle that is quieter and more comfortable than the current small buses, which are “body on chassis” vehicles that tend to be noisy and do not have the suspension required to operate over the very difficult roads that the Stage covers, especially through Samuel P. Taylor Park. While heavier duty vehicles may not be appropriate for that road, passengers do complain that the bus ride is bumpy, noisy and uncomfortable in the current vehicle. This issue may be somewhat mitigated by planned road repairs for the Taylor Park section of Sir Frances Drake Boulevard.

West Marin residents are also very aware of environmental concerns, and would be supportive of a hybrid or alternative fuel vehicle. It is unlikely that an alternative fuel vehicle will be available from the State procurement that will happen this year, but future procurements should consider emerging technologies and look for a clean fuel solution if the vehicles can meet the operating requirements of the Stagecoach routes. For example, on the South route, the engine on a hybrid vehicle would have to be much larger and more durable than designed as much of the route will require use of the engine due to the hilly terrain.

Hybrid cutaway buses are not currently available, although Marin Transit is participating in a special joint procurement of the first production. These will be suitable for community shuttle service, but not for Stage service. Marin Transit is committed to hybrid technology if it is appropriate to the operational requirements of a service and sufficient capital funds are available to cover the cost.

Another suggested improvement was better communication between the buses. This will help when people are trying to make transfers, or if buses are running off schedule. Several ideas were brought up, including short-range radios. Communications will improve substantially if and when a cell tower is installed in the Stinson area. Marin Transit is working with partner agencies on possible communications network alternatives.

Recommendations for improved vehicles are considered longer term. The upcoming procurement will be done with federal stimulus funding, which requires very quick commitment of funds.

Fare Media

West Marin Stagecoach offers a variety of fare options for passengers including one-way cash fares, discount ticket books, youth passes, and transfers. In 2008, Marin Transit's board adopted a policy to expand fare media to include daily, weekly, and monthly passes. These passes will simplify fare payment for regular passengers, and will encourage visitors to take transit because they can pay once and then get on and off the Stage without paying an additional fare.

Another fare payment method used on many transportation systems in the Bay area is TransLink, an electronic fare payment system linked to a bank account or credit card. This system is being adopted by an ever-greater number of agencies, and is currently accepted on Marin Transit’s services operated by Golden Gate Transit. If the installation of TransLink on Marin Transit vehicles is physically and financially feasible, adopting this system on the West Marin Stage would make Stage travel easier for Bay Area residents already familiar with and using the system.

Service Enhancements by Area

The following section looks at each of the areas served by the three existing routes and Dial-a-Ride service, and makes specific recommendations for service changes to support future direction of the service. Areas that do not currently have service but that may be studied for future transit service are also discussed. A map of the Stage routes can be found on page 2-3.

Following is a summary of immediate, short-, and long-term actions and strategies recommended in this section, as pertains to bus operations. Marketing recommendations can be found in Chapter 6.

Figure 4-1 Overview of Short- and Long-Term Recommendations

Route	Immediate Term (12-18 months)	Short-term Action (1-5 years)	Long-term Actions & Strategies
South 61	Extend Route 61 to Sausalito ferry	Short-turn service from Stinson Beach to Mt. Home Inn	Adjust schedule earlier and later; add vehicles and drivers
			Explore management/ charging for parking at Stinson Beach
			Design and implement a better bus stop arrangement for downtown Stinson Beach
Coastal 62	Provide deviated fixed route service to the Health Clinic on the Bolinas mesa on request	Increase frequency (keep the 62 on the Coastal Route) by adding a midday 68 bus	Deviate to the Point Reyes hostel
			Add a another weekday service day
			Add more service days as demand warrants (weekdays first, then Sunday)
North 68	(No changes)	Add an early westbound bus to increase frequency and to replace midday service provided via the Coastal Route	Work with Parks to connect to possible future recreational services
New service			1 Point Reyes to Novato
			2 Point Reyes to Petaluma

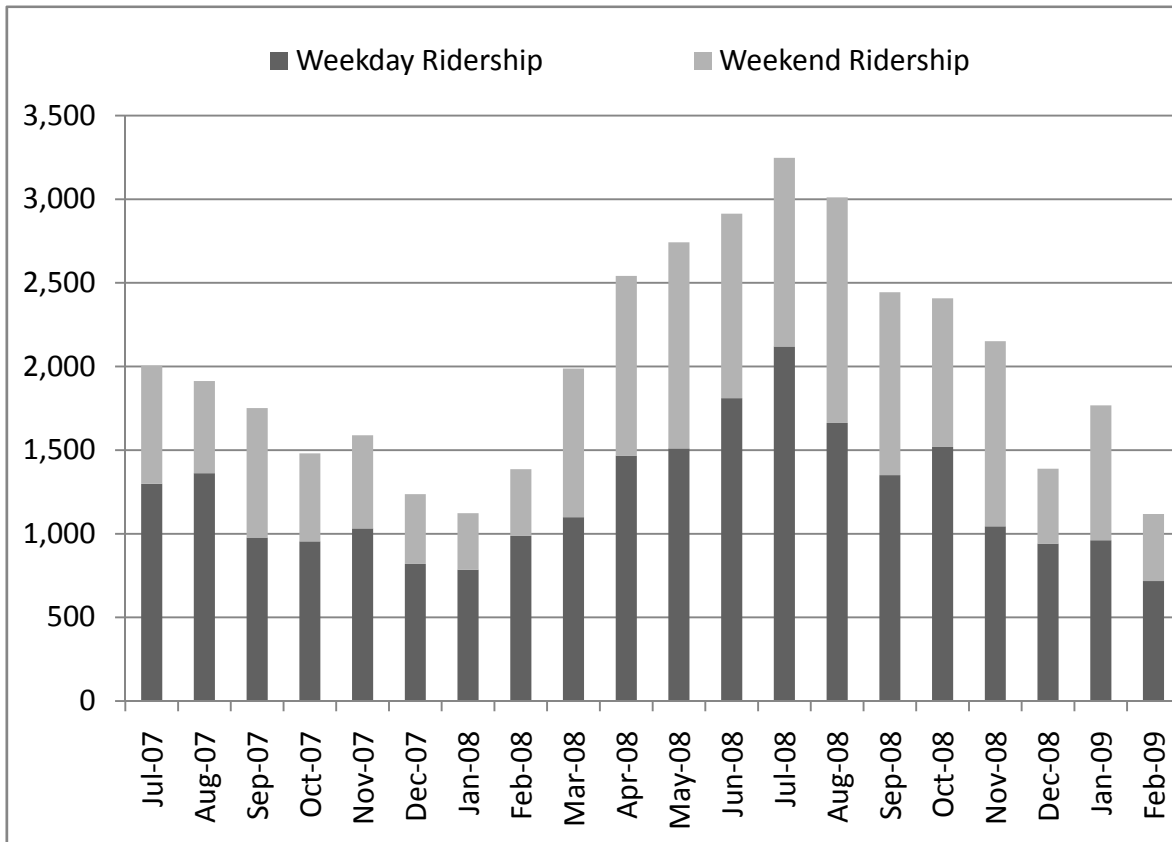
			3 Extend to northern West Marin and PRNS
Other	Partner with MCBC on bike parking/sharing/rentals in West Marin	Muir Beach: Explore partnerships with school transportation providers	Work with GGNRA and Caltrans to establish a bus stop in Muir Beach
	Partner with West Marin businesses, especially recreational, for co-marketing	Muir Beach: Provide a van to a community-based organization for volunteer driver program	Acquire hybrid buses for routes for which they are suitable
		Implement TransLink	
		Continue to look for ways to increase bicycle capacity	

South Route 61 – Bolinas to Marin City

Existing Service

The South Route 61 travels 7 days a week from downtown Bolinas through Stinson Beach with a short detour to Tamalpais High School in Mill Valley en route to Marin City, with four round trips per day on weekdays. On the weekends from early March through early December, the bus originating in Bolinas completes three round trips, while an additional bus starts in Marin City and completes four round trips, for a total of seven round trips on Saturdays and Sundays. This service has been added in order to better serve weekend tourists and others. Weekday service begins at approximately 7:00 AM and ends at 8:00 PM and weekend service runs from 8:40 AM to 8:00 PM.

Ridership is higher on the weekends than during the week, particularly in the summer, primarily because this route is used by recreational travelers from the urbanized parts of Marin and especially from San Francisco to get to many recreational activities along this route.

Figure 4-2 South Route 61 Ridership, July 2007 - February 2009**Service Requests / Identified needs**

The following service requests were made by stakeholders and members of the public during outreach activities.

- Greater frequency of service, particularly increased frequency during the summer, especially on weekends, to alleviate crowding between Stinson Beach and Mount Tam.
- Earlier departures from Bolinas (6, 7, 8, 9 am) and arrivals later in the evening (6, 7, and 8pm) for better connections to GGT.
-
- Adjusted or later service hours to support students participating in late afternoon after-school activities in Mill Valley; stakeholders indicated that service should be provided until 5:30 PM and even later to encourage evening recreational activities.
- Add a stop on the Bolinas Mesa (see Route 62 recommendations)
- Extend the Route 61 through Marin City to the Sausalito Ferry.
- Increase the Muir Woods Shuttle service to run on weekends all year long, not just the peak season. (Outside the study area)

- Reinstatement service to Muir Beach (see “Service to Muir Beach” below)

Service Vision & Recommendations

The South Route 61 connects the remote communities of Bolinas and Stinson through Mt. Tamalpais State Park to Marin City, the southern transit hub and connecting point for regional transit in Marin. This route has high ridership on both weekdays, carrying commuters and students, and weekends, serving recreational travelers as well as young people and some workers. Connecting with regional transit is important for both weekday commuters and weekend visitors. By strengthening the connections between this route and regional transit, the Route 61 can build ridership from both of these groups. Recommendations for service changes are:

Immediate term:

- Extend Route 61 service to Sausalito

Short-term (1-5 years as funding allows):

- Additional “short-turn” service on Summer Weekends

Long-term (as funding and partnerships develop):

- Extend Route 61 hours earlier and later
- Develop a parking management program for Stinson Beach that contributes towards improved transit service
- Improve the bus stop in downtown Stinson Beach

Extend Route 61 Service to Sausalito

Both West Marin residents and those in the recreational focus group requested better connections from West Marin to regional transportation such as the Sausalito and Larkspur ferries. One way to accomplish this is to extend the regular Stagecoach Route 61 service to the Sausalito Ferry. This would serve both West Marin residents going to the City on weekdays, and recreational travelers from San Francisco going to West Marin on weekends.

The current route begins in downtown Bolinas at 6:55 AM and ends in Bolinas at 8:00 PM, for a 13 hour shift, with a total of 185 minutes of recovery/layover time built in to the schedule (65 in Marin City and 120 in Bolinas). The distance from the eastern terminus of the Route 61 at Marin City to the Sausalito Ferry terminal is a little over 2 miles, adding approximately 10 minutes in each direction to the route (based on the GGT Route 10 schedule). For the four trips, this adds 80 minutes of on-the-road time for this route. Accommodating this extension would require some adjustment to the current Route 61 schedule, but may fit within the current span of service, because there would still be 105 minutes of recovery/layover time left in the schedule. With 8 minutes of recovery/layover time for each of the four trips, there are still 73 minutes left in the schedule for larger breaks.

In addition to meeting the shuttle, there is also a need to ensure that the Stage connects with other local and regional transit services in Marin City. A full operational analysis in cooperation with the Stagecoach operator must be conducted to determine whether these changes can be accommodated without impacts to labor rules, fueling schedules, and operating costs.

Additional Short-Turn Service on Summer Weekends

During busy summer weekends, the Route 61 experiences overflow ridership between Stinson Beach and the Pan Toll Ranger Station. Visitors often choose to drive and park near the Pan Toll Ranger station and then hike or bike into Stinson Beach, intending to ride the bus back up to their cars. Data on the Route 61 shows very good ridership on weekends, and Stage drivers have said that the buses are filled to capacity between Stinson Beach and the Pan Toll Ranger Station. Passengers are sometimes passed up, with long waits for the next bus. In addition, the existing buses cannot accommodate all the bicycles passengers attempt to bring on board.

One remedy to this would be to add service between Stinson Beach and the Mountain Home Inn during summer afternoons to accommodate people who hiked or biked down and want to ride back up. Care would have to be taken to effectively communicate to passengers that the bus is a “short-run” bus, only going half-way to Mill Valley.

The proposed service would run on summer weekends and holidays from May 1 through September 30, for four hours in the afternoons. The departure times would be between the regular scheduled times for the Coast Route 61. An example schedule, based on 24 minutes of travel time plus a 6 minute recovery at each end, could be:

**Figure 4-3 Example Schedule –
Route 61 Summer Short-Turn Service**

Depart Stinson Beach Parking Lot	Arrive Mountain Home	Depart Mountain Home	Arrive Stinson Beach Parking Lot
1:45 PM	2:09 PM	2:15 PM	2:39 PM
2:45 PM	3:09 PM	3:15 PM	3:39 PM
3:45 PM	4:09 PM	4:15 PM	4:39 PM
5:10 PM	5:34 PM	5:40 PM	6:04 PM

See Chapter 5, Operating Cost of Additional Service, for cost estimates.

Extend Route 61 Hours Earlier and Later

The Route 61 would better serve both commuters and students with earlier and later service to accommodate the trips to work during the week, and recreational visitors on the weekends. Extending the span of service slightly earlier and slightly later would enable employees and volunteers to get to work on time, and let early-bird recreational visitors start their trips earlier in the day.

The current Stage schedule has the first bus leaving Bolinas at 6:55 AM, arriving in Marin City at 8:10 AM; this is too late for workers in either east Marin or San Francisco to arrive by an 8:00 AM start time. While Tamalpais Unified School District provides school buses starting in Bolinas, Bolinas residents have requested that service start earlier so that should students miss the school bus, they would have another option that would still get them to school on time. A 6:25 AM departure would arrive at Marin City at 7:40 AM, in time to board Golden Gate Transit for an 8:30 AM arrival in Downtown San Francisco, or to get to school or employment in southern Marin by 8:00 AM, without adding another bus.

The last buses on weekdays leave Bolinas at 5:25 PM, and Marin City at 6:45 PM, probably adequate for commuter needs. On the weekends, the last departure from Bolinas is at 6:30 PM; this may be adequate during most of the year, but on summer weekends when the sun doesn't set until after 8PM, later service in the summer might be considered to enable tourists to stay later for an evening meal.

In the near-term, Marin Transit could shift the starting times slightly earlier and the last runs slightly later on summer weekends without adding significant service hours. However, even this adjustment is likely to have some cost, as the expansion of the service day will require an additional driver and a road supervisor. Ultimately, expanding hours of service by adding additional trips should be considered, as operating funds become available.

Parking Management and Transit Service Expansion at Stinson Beach

Funding for Route 61 service expansion described above is not available in the immediate term. One funding option, which simultaneously reduces auto congestion, would be to engage the community and GGNRA in a program of charging parking fees at Stinson Beach to support additional transit service. Charging for parking would help to manage limited parking supply while supporting transit access goals. With support and collaboration from the GGNRA, the Town of Stinson Beach, and the County, funds generated from parking fees could be used to support additional Stage service, manage traffic, maintain the parking lot, and pay for fee-collecting equipment. Additional transit service would in turn generate more farebox revenue.

While charging for parking has proven to be an effective way to reduce auto usage, there are many concerns among Stinson Beach residents and business owners about how this would affect various factors from visitation numbers to on-street parking management. This proposal is definitely long-term rather than immediate; none of the necessary discussions have been held, nor has the idea been examined by the GGNRA. Should the details be worked out, such a system may help relieve traffic congestion, build transit ridership, and provide funding for both the park and transit services, and is included in this report to encourage further conversation.

Improve the Bus Stop in Downtown Stinson Beach

At the corner of Calle del Mar and Highway 1 in downtown Stinson Beach. the bus stop on the north side of Highway 1 (the westbound direction) consists of a bus stop pole and a small flat area. The paved area is currently used for parking; but even if parking were prohibited in this space, the bus would still not have room to move completely off the road.

When the bus stops at this location, it blocks traffic on Highway 1. This can create serious issues with traffic flow on summer weekends. Because it is a busy stop, convenient to downtown services and directly across the street from the partner eastbound stop, this is the ideal location for the stop. Construction of a stop at this location out of the flow of traffic would require engineering in coordination with Caltrans, since a retaining wall would most likely have to be built to create space for a shelter and for the bus to stop out of the roadway. It would also result in the loss of two or three parking spaces. While this is a somewhat urgent problem, funding for this capital improvement has not yet been determined thus it is included in the long-term actions.

Coastal Route 62 – Bolinas to Point Reyes Station

Existing Service

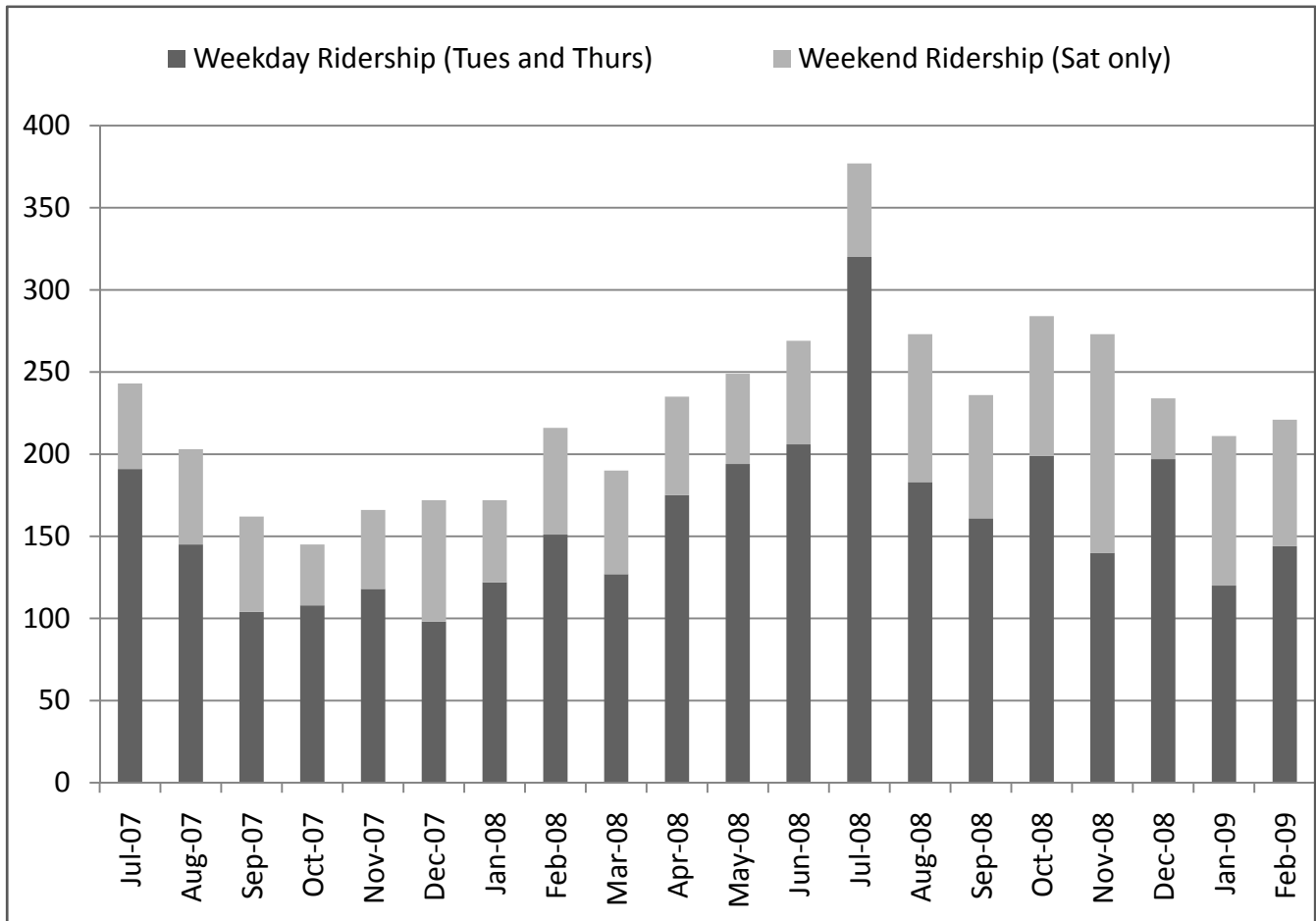
The Coastal Route 62 travels north on Highway 1 between Stinson Beach, Bolinas, Olema and Point Reyes Station. One trip on Route 62 connects with Route 68 allowing travel to Lagunitas, Fairfax, San Anselmo, and San Rafael. Three Northbound and Southbound trips run on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from the hours of 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

The Coastal Route serves the most remote parts of West Marin. Service was started in April of 2007. It has the lowest ridership of the three Stage routes, although it has steadily increased. For FY 07/08 (July '07 through June '08) Route 62 productivity was 1.9 passengers per hour. For the first six months of the current fiscal year (July '08 through February '09), the route averaged 2.4 passengers per hour, with the highest productivity in July '08, which had a 40% increase over the previous month. Marin Transit's performance standard for rural transit is four passengers per hour.

The growth in passengers per hour is primarily due to the addition of the extension to San Rafael Transit Center, essentially adding a fifth roundtrip onto the North Route. The cost per passenger on the Coastal Route is currently \$25.26 per trip.

This route was intended to provide a lifeline service connecting Bolinas residents with medical and financial services in Point Reyes Station that were not available in Bolinas. The route serves distinctly different markets and needs depending on the time of year and day of the week. During the week and in the winter, ridership is primarily residents commuting to work and shopping. During the summer and on the weekends, the Route 62 is used by recreational users because it connects significant recreational sites – Stinson Beach, Audubon Canyon Ranch, and Point Reyes National Seashore – to the towns of Olema and Point Reyes Station.

Figure 4-4 Coastal Route 62 Ridership, July 2007 - February 2009



Service Requests / Identified Needs

Resident-oriented:

- Daily service on the Coastal Route from Bolinas to Point Reyes
- Greater frequency of daily trips to shorten the wait in Point Reyes for a return trip
- Add a stop on the Bolinas Mesa
- Better coordinate the meets of the Route 62 and Route 68 at Olema and Bolinas
- Extend the 62 to Tomales High School at least once in the morning and once in the afternoon

Visitor-oriented:

- Connect with shuttle services in the National Seashore

- Beach access from the North route (Drake's Beach and others via Inverness)
- Service to the Point Reyes hostel twice a day

Service Vision & Recommendations

The Coastal Route 62 travels some of the most scenic areas in the country, while at the same time serves local residents in day-to-day transportation. As described in Chapter 6, building partnerships and implementing marketing recommendations would strengthen the position of the Coastal route as recreational transit connecting world-class vacation areas. By focusing on recreational users, ridership might be gained to provide the financial stability to increase days of service, while also relieving summer congestion on Highway 1.

In the long-term, the Coastal Route could extend service to recreational areas it does not currently serve, such as Tomales Bay State Park and other points north of Point Reyes. This would also be the logical choice to connect with any transportation sponsored by the Point Reyes National Seashore in the future.

In the short term, the more pressing needs of residents might be addressed without a significant increase in cost. Recommendations to improve the Route 62 for both local residents and recreational visitors are:

Immediate Term:

- Provide deviated fixed route service to the Coastal Health Alliance Clinic on the Bolinas mesa; on demand available to all riders and not just to ADA-eligible riders.

Short-term (1-3 years as funding allows):

- Increase frequency on weekdays by adding a midday bus to Route 68 and keeping the coastal route in West Marin (requires additional operating funds)
- Add another weekday of service (requires additional operating funds)

Long-term (or as funding and partnerships develop):

- Extend service to the Pt. Reyes Hostel twice a day in partnership with the National Seashore
- Continue to increase the number of weekday service days on the route.
- Add service on Sundays to better meet both local and recreational riders, enabling access to shopping, church, and recreation (requires additional operating funds)

Deviate Service to the Mesa in Bolinas

There was significant support for the Stage to stop on the mesa in Bolinas, particularly at the Coastal Health Alliance Clinic. This is where the bus drivers park during their breaks, although it is not on the route. Additional locations on the mesa suggested by residents are the Public Utilities Building on Elm St., and Agate Beach at the end of Elm. Two educational retreat facilities, Commonweal and the Regenerative Design Institute, are located at the end of Mesa Road and have hundreds of students visit each year.

Providing regular service to this location presents a problem in that it would create an obligation for Marin Transit to provide paratransit service for most of the mesa, greatly expanding its service area and requiring difficult decisions about which streets are safe to navigate with a bus and which are not. An alternative cost-effective approach would be to allow a route deviation (or “flex route”) to the clinic on the mesa at the advance request of a passenger. This would affect both Routes 61 and 62. The passenger would have to arrange to be picked up from this location through either calling the West Marin Stagecoach 24-hours in advance, or arranging it with the driver who dropped them off. Because it is not fixed-route service, matching paratransit would not be required.

Flexible Transit Services

A “flex route” is a route that has specific time points, but that can go “off route” (up to a certain distance) between those time points in order to pick up or drop off people at their homes or other locations (in this case, the Mesa clinic). Flexible transit services usually fall into two categories: (1) Route deviation - the bus operates along a fixed route with a fixed schedule but may deviate to pick-up or drop off customers within a certain distance from the route, returning to the route at or as near as possible to the point of exit, before continuing on the route; and (2) Point deviation - the bus may operate along any path to serve “in-between” requests, as long as the bus gets to the next scheduled bus stop on time.

An alternative solution to providing transit to the medical clinic would be to donate a van to the Coastal Health Alliance, perhaps with some “seed” money for operating the van, allowing them to transport their clients between their homes or the regular transit stop and the clinic. This has the disadvantage of being limited to clinic clients rather than anyone who wanted to go to the mesa, and would require a source of funding for vehicle maintenance, insurance, etc..

Increase Frequency / Eliminate the Mid-day Trip to San Rafael

The vehicle on this route currently provides a mid-day Route 68 trip from Point Reyes to San Rafael on Tuesday, Thursdays and Saturdays. Residents of Bolinas would strongly prefer that the Route 62 stay on its regular route, since this mid-day run creates a large gap during the day, with no northbound service between 10:30 AM and 3:30 PM. If the extra mid-day Route 68 trip is added as described below, then the 62 could stay on its own route, providing increased frequency on this route. On weekend service days it would still make the mid-day trip to San Rafael. Schedules for the 62 and 68 should be coordinated closely for transfers in Point Reyes Station and in Olema. The added frequency would be implemented as funding allows.

See Chapter 5, Operating Cost of Short Term Service Improvements, for estimated costs for the proposed change.

Increase Weekday Service Days

The Route 62 (Coastal Route) runs on Tuesday, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Residents of Bolinas have requested that this be made 7-day a week service, similar to the other Stagecoach routes. Because of the current low ridership, expanding the three day a week service to seven days is not a high priority, as the additional riders gained by more than doubling the amount of service would not be justified by the cost. However, a gradual increase in service days may be possible as sustainable long term funding becomes available and passenger demand warrants.

Because the service runs on only two weekdays, transit-dependent residents find it difficult to get to work on a regular 5-day-a-week schedule. An additional weekday would help with this problem. As people are more likely to take Fridays and Mondays off, and national holidays fall on Mondays, Wednesdays may be a good choice for the next additional day of Route 62 service.

Limited Service to Point Reyes Hostel

The Point Reyes Hostel is six miles northwest of the Bear Valley Visitor Center at Point Reyes National Seashore, and is not served by transit. Visitors either drive or take transit to the BVVC and then walk the rest of the way. This limits users, especially the young, low-income, or European travelers relying on transit. The hostel manager has requested service twice a day – once in the morning and once in the late afternoon – to both enable visitors to arrive there without a car, and to provide transportation for those staying at the hostel to other sites such as Point Reyes and Stinson Beach, so that driving is not the only way practical to get there.

Assuming a 20 mile per hour travel speed, travelling the six miles each way plus time to unload and load passengers would add approximately 20 minutes to the Route 62 schedule. The Route 68 already serves the Bear Valley Visitor Center, but does not serve the hostel and does not have adequate time in its schedule to make this deviation. However, service to the hostel might be provided by deviating the Route 62, which travels 45 minutes in each direction and stops in Olema, a few minutes from the BVVC. The proposed service would detour to the hostel on its way south from Point Reyes Station on the first trip of the day (9:15 AM) and the last trip (4:15 PM). Because the hostel is located well within the Pt. Reyes National Seashore, ideally, this service extension would be done in partnership with the park. The additional cost to extend the service to the hostel would be relatively modest, and would provide a very cost effective alternative for the park.

Additional Service Days as Demand Warrants

In the very long-term, if the demand from both local residents and recreational visitors grows, service days may be added to the Route 62. Once three weekdays are in place, it may make sense to add service on Sundays. The consistent schedule for both weekend days might increase recreational ridership on this fledgling route, especially if more aggressive marketing measures and partnerships are pursued. Research into regularly scheduled events on Sundays, such as church services and farmer's markets, might inform the initial scheduling of Sunday transit service. The next logical step, should ridership increase sufficiently, would be to add Mondays or Fridays, with the eventual goal of seven day a week service should resources be available.

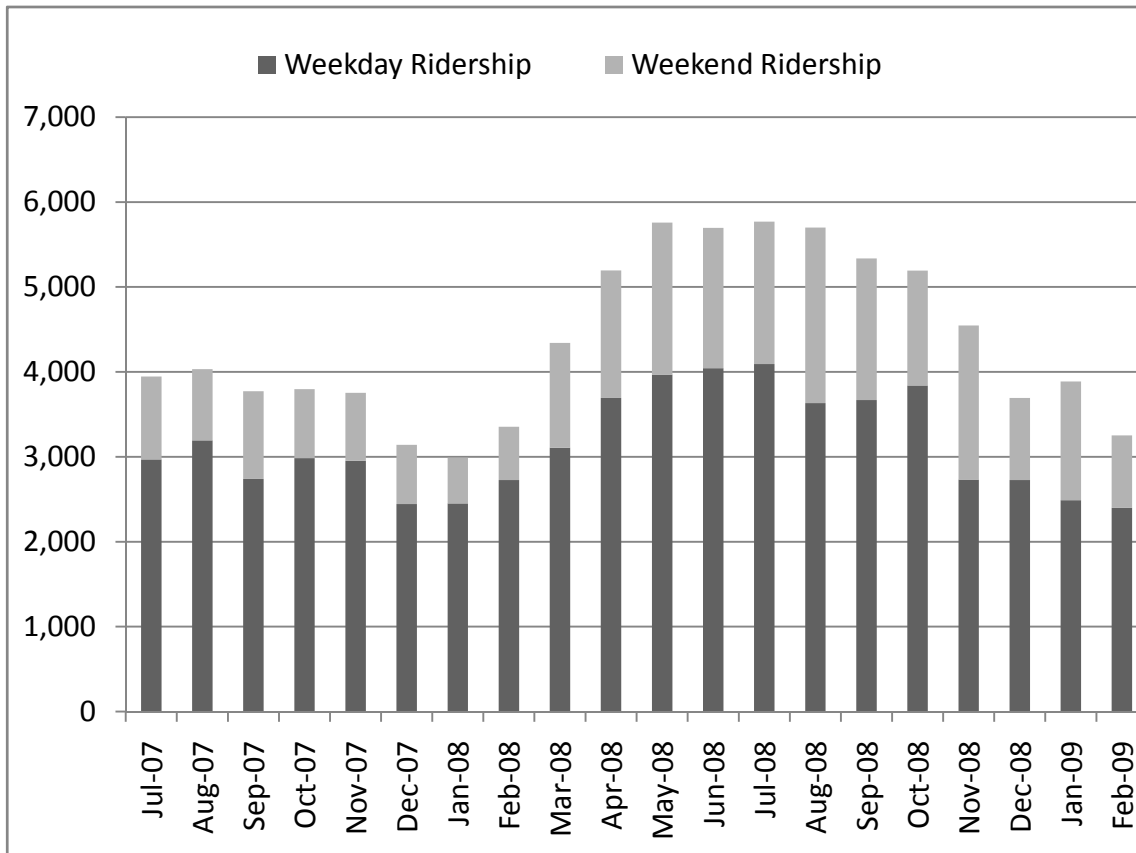
North Route 68 – Point Reyes to San Rafael

Existing Service

North Route 68 travels between Inverness and San Rafael Transit Center via Sir Francis Drake Blvd with service to Point Reyes National Seashore Bear Valley Visitor Center, Samuel P. Taylor State Park, San Geronimo Valley and Fairfax. Route 68 operates 7 days per week. Four eastbound and westbound trips run daily, with an extra mid-day trip in each direction running on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Weekday service begins at approximately 6:30 AM and ends at approximately 8:00 PM.

Route 68 had the highest ridership of all three West Marin Stagecoach Routes and was the most productive fixed route, carrying over 6 passengers per revenue hour. Ridership was the highest during May through August, 2008.

Figure 4-5 North Route 68 Ridership, July 2007 - February 2009



Service Requests / Identified Needs

- Increased frequency - The current schedule between Inverness and San Rafael means that the time between arriving and departing on the next scheduled bus is up to 3 hours. Combined with the one-hour trip each way, many people, especially seniors, find this is too long to wait to return.
- Earlier departures - workers using the Stage requested earlier service in both eastbound and westbound directions in the morning to allow workers a full day on the job.
- One Friday or Saturday night per month designated “movie night” with a late return from San Rafael and Fairfax, around 10 PM

Service Vision & Recommendations

The Route 68 is successfully serving its market, carrying over 47% of the system’s passengers in 2008, and over 50% of passengers for the first two months of 2009. Weekday ridership for 2008 averaged slightly over 90 passengers, with a steady student and commuter ridership. There were

almost no suggestions or complaints specific to this route except for the desire for more service. Recommendations for this route include:

Immediate Term:

- Maintain existing service

Short-term (1-3 years as funding allows):

- Add a bus on weekdays to add earlier westbound service and increase service frequency for both the 68 and the 62 (requires additional operating funds)

Long-term (or as funding and partnerships develop):

- Continue to define partnership opportunities with the National Park and State Park systems for connecting recreational services

Add earlier westbound service and increase service frequency

Increased frequency was the most requested service adjustment for the Route 68. On the current schedule, the bus stays in San Rafael for less than an hour – too short a time to complete errands or appointments. The next bus leaves approximately two hours later – lengthy for anyone, but especially daunting for seniors who do not like to be away from home that long. Given that the trip from Point Reyes to San Rafael is close to an hour and fifteen minutes, the start-to-finish round trip takes over 5 hours. (This round-trip is closer to 4 hours on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays when there is an extra mid-day trip provided by an extension of the Coastal Route 62.)

In addition, the study ride check showed a significant number of workers commuting on this route from Central Marin into West Marin in the morning. The first departure from San Rafael is at 8:05 AM, arriving in Point Reyes at 9:18 AM, quite late for those working in restaurants, tourist lodgings, and milk processing plants.

Adding a westbound bus from San Rafael early in the morning, weekdays only, would address both of these issues by putting an additional vehicle in service on this route. A 7:00 AM departure from San Rafael would arrive in Point Reyes at 8:26 AM, allowing a reasonable work start time. This bus could then return to San Rafael, not to start west again until 2:00 PM. This would be a 6-hour split workday. An example schedule is shown below.

Figure 4-6 Example Schedule – Added Route 68 Service

Depart San Rafael	Point Reyes Downtown	Arrive Inverness	Depart Inverness	Point Reyes Downtown	Arrive San Rafael
7:00 AM	8:13 AM	8:21 AM	8:30 AM	8:39 AM	9:52 AM
2:00 PM	3:13 PM	3:22 PM	3:30 PM	3:39 PM	4:52 PM

Currently the Route 68 works in conjunction with the Coastal Route 62. On Tuesday, Thursdays and Saturdays, there is a mid-day trip covered by the Route 62 continuing on to San Rafael. This extra mid-day Route 68 trip might take the place of the Route 62 mid-day run, particularly if the

proposal to shift the Route 61 service days is implemented. Monday through Friday mid-day would be covered by this additional bus, with Saturday and Sunday covered by the Route 62.

See Chapter 6, Operating Cost of Additional Service, for cost estimates.

Connections to Recreational Shuttles

Route 68 currently serves the Bear Valley Visitor's Center at Pt. Reyes National Seashore. Opportunities to expand marketing of this service are described in the following chapter. However, in addition to joint marketing efforts, ridership on this route would be increased if the service connected with recreation-oriented shuttles which could be provided by the National Seashore, by the State Parks, and/or by others interested in moving recreational visitors to their destinations.

NPS operated a summer shuttle from Bear Valley Visitor's Center to Limantour Beach as a pilot project during a portion of the summer season in 2008. While the service was considered marginally successful, the park has not identified funds to continue operations. Connecting services to the Stage would provide for a "car free" day in the park. Similarly, bike rentals could be provided at the Bear Valley Visitor's Center and/or in Pt. Reyes station with maps suggesting routes that recreational riders might consider through West Marin. Stretching the transit system through more localized connections would increase ridership and reduce the impacts of the cars that accompany visitors.

Service to Muir Beach

In the past, Muir Beach was served by the South Route 61 until the 61 was re-routed to take Panoramic Highway instead of Shoreline Highway. While this change added riders to the Stage, it left Muir Beach without service until the Muir Beach Dial-a-Ride service was added in March 2008.

The service operated through a contract with Whistlestop Wheels, providing curb-to-curb Dial-A-Ride service between the Muir Beach area and Tam Junction, Tam High School, Manzanita Park & Ride or Marin City during specific days and times. Rides were booked a minimum of one day to a maximum of seven days in advance by phone. The service operated Wednesday through Sunday. Weekday service was during commute hours, from 6:00 AM to 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM. Weekend service operated between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM.

This service carried fewer passengers than any of the regular routes, with an average of 1.5 passengers per hour, and the annual cost was \$78,750. The Marin Transit Board of Directors held a public hearing in May 2009 and decided to discontinue this service. This section explores some possibilities for providing basic mobility service to Muir Beach in the future.

The Muir Woods Shuttle operates on summer weekends from May through September, travelling from Sausalito via Marin City and Muir Beach to Muir Woods. Currently there is no official bus stop in Muir Beach. Establishing a safe and legal pair of stops (one in each direction) would allow those residents to have relatively frequent service (20-30 minutes) to Marin City and the Sausalito Ferry on shuttle service days. If it is possible to provide a safe and accessible bus stop in Muir Beach, this will allow residents to connect with eastern Marin and regional transit and will allow those going to Muir Woods to include Muir Beach in their recreational plans. Although this is a fixed route service, it could reasonably be considered express service, since it does not stop west of Marin City; thus it would not trigger the need for matching paratransit. As Marin Transit and

GGNRA consider expansions to the Muir Woods shuttle service, the shuttle could provide an increasing level of service in Muir Beach.

Challenges to establishing a stop include the need for a safe pullout area, the lack of sidewalks on one or both sides of the road, and the lack of any traffic controls in the most logical area to place a stop. While the physical and political issues are not insignificant, the benefits to residents and visitors as well as the environment are significant, with potential to off-set vehicle congestion during peak periods by making a viable transit connection to Muir Beach. Marin Transit should continue collaborating with local residents, the GGNRA, and Caltrans to establish a safe and legal bus stop in Muir Beach. The National Park Service is investing in design and construction of a new, fully accessible pedestrian connection between Highway 1 and Muir Beach parking area via Pacific Way.

Coordinating with the local high school district may provide some transit to Muir Beach. The Tamalpais Union High School District provides transportation for their students who live in the southern area of West Marin. On school days the bus starts in Bolinas, goes through Stinson Beach, and travels on Panoramic Highway before entering Mill Valley. There is one trip in and one trip out each day. Since Panoramic is served by the West Marin Stagecoach, it might be possible to coordinate with the school so that they served Muir Beach while the Stage served Panoramic Highway. The school bus could provide minimal service to this remote community Monday through Friday during the school year if there was room on the bus, and if all parties agreed to the arrangement. However, it is likely that Muir Beach will need its own dedicated school bus in the future due to changing demographics of the community. The Transportation Authority of Marin will be working with residents to organize a school carpool program in the interim.

In California,² there are no state statutes or regulations that prohibit using school buses from transporting non-pupils. Indeed, from the state perspective, the use of school buses and in particular the co-mingling of pupils and non-pupils on school buses appears to be allowed as long as seating is available. Any implementation of these strategies could not and would not proceed without engaging the school district, parents of school children, and the community at large in a discussion of how the whole community would be best served.

An additional option for expanding service to Muir Beach residents would be to develop a partnership with a local community-based organization. Marin Transit could provide a van and seed money for operations with the CBO providing the majority of operating funds either through a paid or volunteer driver program, based on community input. Similar partnerships have been established in other places including more remote areas of the Portland Oregon region, with the result being more personalized service at lower cost than traditional transit can provide.

New Routes and Services

The following options for expanding service area coverage were supported by the public, and might be considered as possibilities for the long term. Cost estimates have not been included because these may depend on many external factors, including partnerships with others.

² Based on Information provided by John Green, California Department of Education, for TCRP Report on Integrating School Bus and Public Transportation Services in Nonurban Communities, and confirmed via e-mails and a telephone conversation with NN staff in June 2008.

Point Reyes to Novato and Terra Linda

Several different groups requested service to Novato from Point Reyes. With its lower-cost housing, shopping and businesses, it is both a source of and destination for workers in West Marin. In addition, senior advocates in West Marin have requested service from Point Reyes to the major hospitals in east Marin – Sutter Medical Center in Novato, and Kaiser Medical Center in Terra Linda. (Kaiser in downtown San Rafael is already served by the Route 68). At the same time, the town of Nicasio has indicated that it would like to work with Marin Transit to get Stage service. Converging the needs of these groups, Marin Transit could consider a new route from Point Reyes directly through Nicasio, along Nicasio Valley Road to Lucas Valley Road, ending in Novato, with a stop at Sutter Medical Center. Such a route might start on a more limited basis, such as operating three days a week to gauge demand and ridership.

Point Reyes to Petaluma

Petaluma in Sonoma County is a destination for West Marin residents for shopping, entertainment, and jobs, as well as being a source of workers for West Marin. This was a frequent request from outreach participants; employers in West Marin cited difficulty in hiring people for lower-wage jobs who need to drive an hour each way to work a part-time job. Transit service between Petaluma and Point Reyes would serve residents of both areas.

However, because Petaluma is in another county, and Marin Transit is supported primarily by Marin County sales tax, creating a service which enables Marin County residents to shop in Sonoma would be viewed as financially self-defeating. Such a service might be possible though a partnership with Sonoma County Transit or Petaluma Transit, where costs and revenues of the service would be shared. Researching work start and stop times in both locations could inform an initial schedule, with possible Saturday shopping service.

Extend service to northern West Marin and the Point Reyes Peninsula

Participants in this study, including park personnel and Latino residents living and working in dairies along Bodega Bay, requested service between Point Reyes and the towns of Tomales Bay and Marshall. These remote communities north of Point Reyes have no transit service.

Tomales Bay State Park is also just north of Point Reyes but is unconnected to transit. It is comprised of seven separate land parcels located on both the west and east shores of Tomales Bay. On the east side, the Stagecoach service ends at Point Reyes, approximately five miles south of the Millerton area of Tomales State Park. On the west side, Stage service ends in Inverness, about six miles south of Heart's Desire Beach, also part of the park. Three or four times a year the 160 spaces in their parking lot fill, and park staff has to close the gate. Parking at Shell Beach is also limited. In addition, parking is a challenge when there are events at Vista Point, a facility in the park used for weddings and other gatherings. Extending the Stage to these areas, perhaps only on weekends, could help relieve the parking pressures there, and would make this park more accessible to those without cars. In the recommended service changes in this report, an additional mid-day trip is suggested for the Route 68 schedule. If that was added for 7 days a week, then perhaps the Coastal Route 62 could extend to these northern areas in place of its current mid-day trip to San Rafael. Another interim option for connecting to points north of Point Reyes would be to partner with the school bus system in this area. The Shoreline Unified School District runs a bus system for their students, which travels about 1000 miles a day.³ Routes extend from Santa Rosa in Sonoma County and Novato in Marin, to north of

³ Interview, Steve Rosenthal, Superintendent, Shoreline Unified School District

Bodega Bay, along the coast through Dillon Beach, Tomales Bay, Marshall and Point Reyes, and out through the Point Reyes National Seashore.

Point Reyes National Seashore owns all the land within the park, and holds ten-year leases with dairy operations throughout the park. . Many members of the Latino community who live and work on these dairies do not have cars or licenses and are unable to get to medical services, shopping, or school functions without finding a ride with someone or hitchhiking. However, with the school service running twice a day to pick up and bring home schoolchildren, it may be possible to provide a little transportation for those in this remote area. Any exploration of this strategy should involve the school district, which is ultimately responsible for school bus operations, parents of school children, and the community at large to see if there is support for this approach. The value in connecting these remote communities to employment opportunities, social services, and education opportunities may outweigh concerns regarding comingling students and the public.

Chapter 5 Operating Cost of Short Term Service Improvements

Among the alternatives recommended in this plan are several for adding hours of service. This section presents some approximate costs for these additional service hours. The cost per service hour used is based on the FY 2009/10 hourly service cost for the Stage (\$62.76).

Route 61 – Summer PM Short-Turn Service

This proposes adding afternoon service between the Stinson Beach parking lot and the Mountain Home Inn on weekends and holidays from May through September. Costs for adding this service are relatively low, primarily because the service is added only for a few hours per day and only on summer weekends. This service increase is intended to address an overcrowding situation and should be implemented as soon as possible if ridership continues to be high.

Approximate service costs would be as follows:

Figure 5-1 Service Costs, Route 61 Summer Short-Turn Service

Annual number of service days (5 months of weekends plus Memorial Day, July 4 and Labor Day)	43 service days*
Daily span as per proposed schedule	4.5 hours per service day
Cost per service hour (FY 2009/2010)	\$62.76
Cost per day	\$282.42
Annual cost	\$12,144.06

* Would vary slightly with calendar years

Route 62 – Additional Service Day

This proposes an additional service day for the Coastal Route, adding Sunday for a four-day schedule. Each additional service day would add approximately \$23,000 per year to the cost of this route.

Approximate service costs for an additional day on the Route 62 would be as follows:

Figure 5-2 Service Costs, Route 62 Additional Service Day

Annual number of service days – 4 days/week	208
Days <i>added</i> to current schedule – 1 day per week	52
Daily span as per existing schedule	7 hours per service day
Cost per service hour (FY 2009/2010)	\$62.76
Cost per added day	\$439.32
Annual cost for added day	\$ 22,844.64

An additional proposal for the Route 62 is to keep it on the coastal route and not divert it to San Rafael in the mid-day. This might also allow some other deviations, for example, to the Point Reyes Hostel and to the Mesa. If this change were made, then the Route 68 change described below would take the place of the mid-day Coastal trip to San Rafael.

Route 68 – Added Westbound AM Service

This proposes an additional bus departing San Rafael at 7:00 AM on weekdays, making one round trip in the morning and one round trip in the afternoon. The afternoon trip would take the place of the Coastal Route 62 mid-day trip, leaving the 62 to stay on the coast and provide higher frequency and perhaps some deviations.

Each round trip is three hours, making a six hour workday with a four-hour break in San Rafael. Assuming that this can be operated as a split shift, the incremental operating costs would be approximately \$86,000 per year. If split shift operations are not acceptable, the costs will be significantly higher.

Approximate service costs would be as follows:

Figure 5-3 Service Costs, Route 68 Added Service

Annual number of service days – 5 days/week	240
Daily span as per proposed schedule	6 hours per service day
Cost per service hour (FY 2009/2010)	\$62.76
Cost per day	\$ 376.56
Annual cost	\$ 90,374.40

Chapter 6 Marketing & Promotional Initiatives

User-friendly marketing and useful public information are vital to the success of transit systems. The implementation of the recommended service alternatives provides an opportunity to create user-friendly marketing materials, inform the public about the service, and build alliances with local organizations to support the improved services. Marketing goals must support overall goals while focusing primarily on providing public information. The marketing focus of the Stagecoach should be to provide information about and market its transit program while at the same time, build alliances and public support for transit in West Marin.

There is strong support from West Marin residents, Stage riders, and local employers to increase Stage ridership, for two reasons: this would provide stronger financial support for transit, with a possible result of more service; and greater ridership would reduce the number of autos on the road. Marketing was seen by these groups as a way to increase Stage ridership without increasing service costs substantially.

Refine Service Marketing Tools

Participants in the outreach process made recommendations for multiple incremental improvements in current service information, including updating the schedule brochure and adding Stage signs to the GGT bus stops. Many of the marketing recommendations below are low or no-cost, and might be implemented immediately. Any of the measures described in this section could include a free or discounted ride coupon to encourage first-time users and build ridership.

Strengthen Marin Transit's web presence

Marin Transit's web presence exposes the service to more people who want to take transit to West Marin. Marin Transit is preparing a new website for all of its services that will assist riders with planning their trips. Beyond this, its web presence can be extended through other related web sites. The initial step is establishing working relationships with organizations and agencies that already have web pages and an interest in promoting transit. These include National and state parks, and West Marin organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and Innkeepers Association, community groups, and event producers.

Advertise locally

Take advantage of free local advertising in various community-based newsletters. Every small town in West Marin has a newsletter and many have web pages. Marin Transit should make sure that transit information and information on special services as well as transit-related public meetings is distributed to all of these groups. These include Stone Soup (San Geronimo Community Center newsletter), Inverness Association "Bagpiper", and the San Geronimo Planning Group newsletter (120 families).

Update and improve the schedule brochure

The schedule brochure with the route map is the primary marketing piece for Marin Transit. Several suggestions were made to improve the brochure.

- While flag stop service is defined in the schedule, many people are unaware of it. Highlight the flag stop service in all marketing materials so people know they can stop a bus in any safe location. Expand on the information in the current schedule to explain how to flag down a bus, and what constitutes a “safe” location.
- Add to the brochure that the Stage will stop at any GGT bus stop.
- Change the label on the map printed on the schedule from “Pt. Reyes Seashore” to “Point Reyes Seashore / Bear Valley Visitor Center”. The current label is confusing to people coming from out of the area, in that they think they will arrive at the beach.
- Add information to the Stagecoach marketing materials (schedule, web sites, etc.) explaining how much luggage can be taken on board the bus.
- Change the requirement to call 24 hours in advance for deviated service to “by 4:00 PM the previous day”.

Street Presence

The Stage will stop at any GGT bus stop, but very few stops have Stage signs. By adding the Stagecoach or Marin Transit sign to all Golden Gate Transit sign poles, riders will know they can get the Stage there, and non-riders will become more aware of the service. As a result of Marin Transit’s 2008 Strategic Marketing Plan, plans are underway to implement signage that provides information on the family of Marin Transit services available at each stop.

Incorporate the West Marin Stagecoach Schedules in 511 Service Information

Most travelers get trip information from the Internet, particularly those unfamiliar with the area or who are planning their trip in advance. Travelers from out of the area will not be aware of the Stage or of Marin Transit, so they won’t know to go to the Marin Transit web page for transit information. Bay Area residents familiar with this service will look there for information on how to get to West Marin on transit. Including Stagecoach information on 511 will plug into these markets.

Marketing to Specific Groups

Travel Training for Seniors, Youth Riders, and the Latino Community

Transit education programs in the schools, at senior housing developments, and at senior centers can create new demand for transit services from transit dependent populations. Many seniors and students may not understand how to use transit. While students, especially middle-school age and older, do use the Stage, the number of senior riders is less than might be expected, given the senior population in West Marin. A number of factors surfaced during outreach, including uncomfortable vehicles, bumpy roads, long turnaround times, and a lack of knowledge on how to use the system, leading to fear of getting stranded and not being able to get home. Travel training might increase the number of seniors using the Stage. Interviews with members of the Latino community in West Marin revealed a hesitance to use the bus because of lack of knowledge on how to use the service, and how to read the schedule.

Having Marin Transit staff available to speak at school events, senior groups and Latino community events on using transit is an excellent, inexpensive way to advertise the service. Public speaking not only allows one to get across a simple message regarding services and availability, but also allows the speaker to educate potential riders how to use public transit, making them better riders. Opportunities to address young, elderly and Spanish-speaking populations should be welcomed. These events would allow transit staff to answer questions and explain how to use transit and where their nearest bus stop is located. Such speaking engagements also provide good opportunities for distributing promotional items and information brochures.

Beyond site visits, travel training can include a Transit Ambassador Program to provide Marin Transit with an efficient, cost-effective means to interact with the public. Transit Ambassador Programs use current bus riders who use transit regularly and are enthusiastic supporters of transit to provide outreach and travel training to people who are unaware of transit, do not know how to use transit, or are unsure if transit is “right” for them. These ambassadors provide hands-on training and information to small groups or individuals who contact the transit agency directly or events sponsored by the agency. It is recommended that ambassadors be matched properly to the group or individual they assist, such as a senior citizen for events at the senior center or at retirement communities, or a wheelchair user if speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair or other mobility aid. Likewise, bilingual ambassadors should be used at events oriented to Spanish-speakers. This allows the ambassador to relate to the prospective rider and demonstrate that transit can be used by all people.

Marin Transit currently has an Ambassador program but is seeking volunteers. Ambassadors will be trained by Marin Transit staff to familiarize them with any necessary policies. Ambassadors are typically retired people or others available during the daytime and are unpaid volunteers. As compensation, however, free or discounted bus service should be provided to the ambassadors.

Marketing to Latino residents

In addition to travel training, there are other opportunities to encourage members of the Latino community to use the Stage services. Suggestions from the Latino focus group included having more bilingual drivers, insuring that Spanish schedules are on the bus, and having someone go to the Catholic Church in Olema for a Saturday night service to explain the bus service. It was suggested that having the priest bless the bus would be appropriate for this group. With stronger ties to Petaluma than to San Rafael, this group was very interested in a partnership with Petaluma Transit to get service directly from Point Reyes; in the meantime, Marin Transit could provide more information on how to take the Stage to San Rafael and transfer to regional service to Petaluma from there.

Marketing to the Recreational Visitor

Recreational visitors emerged as an important group toward which some targeted marketing might be focused. These potential riders fall into two broad groups – Bay Area residents who visit west Marin for a few hours or a day, on the spur of the moment; and visitors from outside the Bay Area or state, who plan their trips well in advance and get most of their information from the Internet. Point Reyes National Seashore averages 2.5 million visitors per year, while other West Marin parklands combined account for another million visitors. Especially during the summer, many come from outside California and the U.S. where riding transit is more the norm. They are less likely to have a car with them, and are likely to care about the environmental impacts of their choices.

Visitors starting their trip in San Francisco are likely to ask at their hotels or seek transportation information in local guides. The National Park Service has marketed the Muir Woods Shuttle through these channels for the four years of its service; Marin Transit could add Stage information to the Shuttle information provided at hotels, on ferries, at the ferry building, and on GGT buses.

Partnering with others who share the goal of having visitors arrive by transit would be low-cost or free. Both the parks and the innkeepers experience parking shortages and the negative effects of traffic. Local innkeepers have expressed enthusiasm for taking measures that would reduce auto traffic in West Marin, and have both individual and association websites. Hotels in Marin pay taxes to the Marin County Visitors Bureau. This may be a possible source of revenue to support marketing of the Stage.

Specific groups with this shared interest, marketing resources and web sites include California State Parks, the National Park Service, the GGNRA, Point Reyes National Seashore, the West Marin Innkeepers Association, the Marin County Visitor's Bureau and the West Marin Chamber of Commerce. Using these websites in addition to Marin Transit's, visitors planning their trip could be presented with comprehensive information about West Marin and how best to enjoy it without a car. Visitors coming from far away are more likely to trust and follow the advice of local innkeepers. The experience might be marketed as being more European, showing how to get around on local transit and where to rent bicycles and kayaks, as well as providing discounts from local businesses. The day pass intended for implementation in June 2009 will be a popular feature for this group, allowing visitors to get on and off the bus throughout their visit.

The Muir Woods Shuttle Pilot Project was the subject of four years of studies, looking at why people did or did not ride the bus to the park. Findings from that study indicate that while people coming from long distances get most of their information from the web, those coming from other parts of the Bay Area were most influenced by roadside signs indicating that the parking lot was full, and then indicating where to get on the shuttle. Carrying this over to other recreational sites such as Stinson Beach, the use of changeable message signs on Highway 101 would be a powerful incentive to direct people to take the West Marin Stage to the beach rather than drive. Some moveable signs are already in place and are used for the Muir Woods Shuttle; outreach participants suggested also using the large fixed highway signs currently used to indicate traffic conditions or to issue "Amber Alerts". Messages could indicate that beach parking is full, the availability of transit, and the exit and location where the Stage could be boarded.

Partnerships and Coordination

West Marin National and State Parks

Millions of visitors come to West Marin every year to visit Point Reyes National Seashore (PRNS). With almost all access by private auto, congestion on roadways frequently occurs during the peak periods and parking lots are often full at the most popular parks. This congestion and the resulting emissions negatively impact the park itself and park visitors, as well as the quality of life for residents. Congestion also creates pressure to expand roadways and parking lots, which would damage the land the park is designed to protect.

Marin Transit serves most of the state parks within the study area (Mount Tamalpais, SP Taylor), as well as Stinson Beach (part of the GGNRA), but brings passengers only as far as the visitor's center at PRNS. In addition, neither the east nor west sides of Tomales Bay State Park are accessible by the Stage. Of all these parks, PRNS has by far the highest number of visitors per

year. PRNS has attempted to provide transportation within the park from the Bear Valley Visitor's Center to Limantour, but funding for this shuttle is not sustainable.

The GGNRA is currently updating their General Management Plan and Transportation Plan. Public input to this process emphasizes that the public wants transit options getting to and through parklands. The Muir Woods Shuttle, managed by Marin Transit as of 2009, is an example of how successful park-oriented transportation can be.

Marin Transit should strengthen its partnership with the GGNRA and PRNS in their transportation planning efforts. As seen from the Muir Woods Shuttle experience, the parks can bring grants to support public/park transportation partnerships. Some elements of a partnership would include:

- Seeking joint funding for expanded service areas to include more parklands in a seamless transit system
- Having a representative from Marin Transit participate in the GGNRA and PRNS transportation planning process, and inviting representatives from these parks to participate in Marin Transit's planning processes on a regular basis
- Providing technical assistance to the parks in navigating the regional transportation funding process
- Developing joint marketing efforts to encourage recreational visitors to take the Stage and the Muir Woods Shuttle

During the process of this needs assessment, representatives from all the state and national parks in the study area expressed great interest in increasing the number of visitors using transit to access their sites, as well as developing more park-based transportation such as a hub-and-spoke park shuttle system, and more frequent service in some high-traffic locations (beaches and recreation sites at the southern end of the study area). With ongoing communications and partnered planning efforts between Marin Transit and the parks, these transportation services have a better chance of becoming a reality.

Local Recreational Businesses

As discussed below, the lack of adequate bicycle storage on the Stage is a barrier for some people in using the service. An alternative to providing on-board bike storage is to encourage and perhaps partner with bicycle rental operations in West Marin to offer discounts to people arriving by transit. Commuters need to bring their bicycles with them on the bus. Recreational visitors coming to West Marin can rent a bicycle at their destination, relieving the need for on-board bike storage.

Marin Transit could establish a program to encourage local bicycle rental companies to give a discount on rentals for taking transit. This might be extended to local kayak rentals as well as other local businesses through the local Chamber. Stage service information should include caveats about the limited bicycle storage capacity, and information about or links to bicycle rental companies in West Marin.

Local Event Coordinators

West Marin, particularly Point Reyes, is host to events at community centers, farm and ranch tours organized by the Marin Agricultural Land Trust, as well as special events a few times a year such as Western Weekend, Fourth of July activities, and the annual Earth Day Coastal Cleanup

Day in September. Marin Transit could partner with these organizations to encourage attendees to take transit, and also to encourage them to adjust the scheduled time of events to allow people to get to them using the Stagecoach. Marin Transit vehicles could participate in Fourth of July parades and other high-visibility events.

The Latino Business Community

Outreach to the Latino community in West Marin elicited numerous suggestions on possible partnership opportunities. The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Camera Comercio Latino are organizations of businesses catering to the Spanish-speaking community. A partnership between the bus and the businesses could include mutual promotion through coupons and bus tickets, and coordinating bus service with special events such as Cinco de Mayo, or events at the Wellness Center in the Canal district of San Rafael.

The Bicycling Community

As previously discussed, bicycles can provide an important connection between transit and origins and destinations, especially for rural systems. Marin has a very strong bicycling community, organized under the Marin County Bicycle Coalition (MCBC). Marin Transit should

Marin Transit and MCBC could work together to:

- promote bike sharing or rental operations at main connection points, especially in West Marin, so that riders who don't need to use their bikes on both ends of a trip feel comfortable leaving their bike behind
- offer a bike station, providing storage, rental, and repair services, at the Marin City and San Rafael Transit Center
- provide secure bike parking at more heavily used Stage stops

Auxiliary Transportation

Even with extraordinary measures, the Stage will not serve the needs of everyone needing transportation in West Marin. Residents have shown a willingness to organize informal transportation systems such as carpools and ridesharing through internet sites to connect with east Marin. Marin Transit might play a role in filling these gaps by assisting community groups, social service agencies, and senior centers in acquiring vans so they can provide their own transportation. Arrangements will need to be in place to maintain, insure, and fuel any vehicles obtained.

Advertising on the Stage

Stagecoach vehicles are equipped with overhead advertising racks. Marin Transit could use these to market its services to riders, as well as generate revenue by selling space. The opportunity to advertise to local residents on the Stage might be attractive for local businesses, recreational facilities, and event planners, especially if the business or event were on the bus route. Some examples include events at the Dance Palace in Point Reyes, the Thursday night Farmer's Market in San Rafael, the soon-to-be-revived Marin City Flea Market, and the Marin Airporter. All of these are on a Stagecoach route, and some have limited parking, making transit an attractive option. This would encourage greater ridership, reduce traffic at these events, and help educate people on transit options.