

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Update on the Breeze Intercommunity Bus Service

MEETING DATE: August 18, 2005

AGENDA ITEM: 11

STAFF CONTACT: Scott Spaulding

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive update on the Breeze intercommunity bus service, operating between Lompoc and Santa Maria.

SUMMARY:

The Breeze intercommunity bus service began in May with weekday bidirectional service between Lompoc, Vandenberg AFB, and Santa Maria. Ridership has grown steadily in the first three months, and the service is already approaching a 20% farebox recovery ratio.

DISCUSSION:

The Breeze bus service began on May 9, 2005, and ridership has been growing steadily. The total ridership for the month of May, which included an initial two weeks of free service, was 1,776 riders or an average of 111 per service day. In June, ridership was 2,480, with an average of 113 per service day, and in July, 2,345 with an average of 117 per service day. Fares are \$2 per trip, or \$75 for a monthly pass.

The farebox recovery ratio is the percentage of the services' operating costs that are covered by fares. Although still preliminary, estimates for July indicate the farebox recovery ratio for the Breeze is about 15%. The service is required to achieve a farebox recovery ratio of 20% by the end of the three-year pilot phase, as mandated by the Transportation Development Act (TDA). A figure of 15% after the second full month of operation is a very positive indicator for the long-term viability of the Breeze.

Since the Breeze began operating in May, many riders have provided feedback about how to improve the service. To better meet demand for bicycle users, racks capable of holding three

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bicycles will be installed on all four buses, an improvement made possible through a grant from the Air Pollution Control District (APCD). Improved communication equipment is also being purchased for the fleet to facilitate passenger's transfers to the SMAT system in Santa Maria. The run schedules are being slightly modified based on driver input to ensure on-time performance. Outreach efforts at Vandenberg AFB have been accelerating to help increase use of the Breeze bus by commuters from both Lompoc and Santa Maria. Working with a marketing consultant under contract with the City of Santa Maria, considerable attention has been focused on raising public awareness of the Breeze service. The marketing effort has included radio ads, a website (breezebus.com), appearances at local events, a brochure, and outreach at Vandenberg AFB.

The Breeze is managed by SMAT, which receives guidance from a Technical Advisory Committee composed of representatives of COLT, SMAT, SBCAG, and the County of Santa Barbara. A representative of SMAT will make a brief presentation on the Breeze at the Board's August 18, 2005 meeting.

COMMITTEE REVIEW: None