



City of Ceres
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Ceres, CA 95307
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CITY COUNCIL

Chris Vierra, Mayor
Ken Lane Linda Ryno
Mike Kline Bret Durossette

September 2, 2015

Honorable Marie Sovey Silveira
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of California
Stanislaus County
P. O. Box 3488
Modesto, CA 95353

Re: Two Responses to Civil Grand Jury Reports

Enclosed please find the Ceres' certified copy of the Ceres City Council Resolution # 2015-116, approving the City of Ceres' **response** to the Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations contained in the Stanislaus County Public Transit Systems for 2014/15, Case # 15-02C, concerning Ceres Transit.

Also enclosed you will find a certified copy of the Ceres City Council Resolution # 2015-117, approving the City of Ceres' **response** on AB 109/Prop. 47.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Toby Wells
City Manager

I:\Ceres Letter_Response to Grand Jury Rpt_2015

RECEIVED
SEP 15 2015
Civil Grand Jury

*Read by
J. Silveira*

RESOLUTION NO. 2015 - 116

**APPROVING THE RESPONSE TO THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
CONTAINED IN THE STANISLAUS COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY REPORT ON
STANISLAUS COUNTY PUBLIC TRANSIT SYSTEMS FOR 2014/15, CASE# 5-02C,
CONCERNING CERES TRANSIT**

THE CITY COUNCIL
City of Ceres, California

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Ceres has duly considered the findings and recommendations contained in the report of the Civil Grand Jury for 2014/15, Stanislaus County Public Transit Systems, Case Number 15-02C; which involves Ceres Transit, and,

WHEREAS, the City Council has caused to be prepared a RESPONSE to the Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations, a copy of which is shown as Attachment "A", and,

WHEREAS, the City Council has reviewed and considered said response.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Ceres that the response to the Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations is approved as set forth in Attachment "A"; and City staff is directed to serve and file the response in the manner required by law.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Ceres City Council at the regular meeting thereof held on the 24th day of August, 2015, by the following vote:

AYES: 5 Council Members: Durossette, Kline, Lane, Ryno, Vierra


NOES: 0 Council Members:

ABSENT: 0 Council Members:



Chris Vierra, Mayor

ATTEST:



Lori Frontella, MMC
Interim City Clerk

CERTIFICATION

STATE OF CALIFORNIA)
COUNTY OF STANISLAUS) ss.
CITY OF CERES)

I, Lori Frontella, MMC, City Clerk of the City of Ceres, California, do hereby certify that Resolution 2015-116 is an approved, full, true, and correct copy, on file in the Office of the City Clerk of Ceres, California.

Dated this 1st day of September, 2015



Lori Frontella, MMC, City Clerk
City of Ceres

City of Ceres Response to the Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury
Report on Stanislaus County Public Transit Systems
Case #15-02C

Response to Findings (SCCGJ Findings are shown in italics)

F1: The four transit authorities within Stanislaus County have differing policies, contracts, operating procedures, and ridership needs. These differences have a negative impact, which is affecting ridership.

Respondent disagrees with this finding to the extent that these differences have a negative impact on ridership in the City of Ceres.

Ceres' Response: The policies, and procedures of each of the transit agencies have been adopted in response to the particular needs of the community they serve as determined by their respective governing bodies.

Over the years, the various transit managers in Stanislaus County have worked together to standardize policies, to make things easier for the public, such as issuance of transfers between Ceres Dial-A-Ride (CDAR)/ Ceres Area Transit (CAT), and Modesto Area Dial-A-Ride (MADAR), Modesto Area Express (MAX), and Stanislaus Regional Transit (StART) fixed route service, defining seniors as 65 years old and older, allowing one child to ride free with a paying passenger, etc. By working together, the transit services offered provide connectivity to the riders. Collaboration among the transit operators contributes to more ridership gains within each service area.

We believe that a further consolidation would result in the City of Ceres residents paying more for reduced transit service levels.

F2: Transit authorities have previously discussed consolidation strategies, and some authorities have completed both ridership and comprehensive reports with an emphasis toward partial or total consolidation of public transit needs.

Respondent agrees with this finding.

Ceres' Response: The issue of consolidating transit systems in Stanislaus County has been discussed by the various transit agencies and StanCOG. A list of pros and cons was developed several years ago. The information was presented to the StanCOG committees and the Policy Board. In regards to this, a comprehensive technical report was **not** prepared on the strategies, steps and associated costs of consolidation.

F3: All four transit authorities are deficient in current technological services.

Respondent disagrees with this finding.

Ceres Response: In 2014, the City made technological advances by procuring an automated farebox system for the Ceres Transit buses. The automated Genfare Odyssey farebox system was installed and activated in February of 2015. The Odyssey farebox contains a number of technological features that have benefitted the transit passengers. This includes accepting and issuing magnetic striped fare

media on the buses, and issuing electronic change for rider convenience. Recently, the Ceres and Stanislaus County collaborated to accept transfers from each operator on their bus systems. There is the potential of issuing a county-wide transit pass in the future.

The City contracts with Storer Transit Systems to operate Ceres transit. Storer Transit installs security and surveillance cameras on all buses. Furthermore, Storer uses a paratransit scheduling and dispatch management software program to schedule trips for CDAR passengers. Storer Transit has been using this technology for many years and has recently upgraded the software program.

Furthermore, all transit systems in Stanislaus County participate in Google's trip planner, which is a program that enables potential customers to plan trips over the internet. The Google trip planner software, Easy Rider, is on Ceres' website as well as the other transit operator's websites. The Easy Rider trip planner provides information about each system and offers riders the ability to connect to and from other transit operations in Stanislaus County.

Customers enter their origin and destination into the Easy Rider trip planner and receive information that shows the different bus routes available to take them to their destination, the location of the nearest bus stops for those routes, walking time to those stops, and the times that the next two to three buses are scheduled to serve the stop.

Response to Recommendations (*SCCGJ Recommendations are shown in italics*)

R1: The Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors should direct StanCOG to complete Request for Proposals and hire an independent professional consultant to conduct an all-inclusive consolidation of transit services study within Stanislaus County.

Respondent disagrees with this recommendation.

Ceres Comment: The Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors is not in a position to direct StanCOG.

StanCOG is directed by its own policy board, which consists of representatives of the City of Ceres, all other cities in Stanislaus County and the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors. Any effort to evaluate the consolidation of transit services in Stanislaus County should be done per the direction of the StanCOG's policy board.

StanCOG has funds budgeted to hire a consultant to prepare a transit study that provides an in-depth look into the region's current transit systems' services, and further offer recommendations regarding how possible improvements or best management practices could be implemented that would benefit each system's performance and ability to achieve higher farebox recovery. StanCOG's staff is currently preparing a Request for Proposals (RFP) and a scope of services.

R2: The consolidation study should examine all public transportation systems within the County and include a cost/benefit analysis for a complete or partial consolidation. This study should take all operational and ridership matters into consideration and make specific recommendations to both StanCOG and the Board of Supervisors that will best serve the transit authorities, users, and taxpayers.

Respondent partially agrees with this recommendation.

Ceres Response: This recommendation requires further analysis. Furthermore, the recommendation mentions examining all of the transit systems in the County, including Ceres, but does not include making specific recommendations to the City of Ceres City Council. The Ceres City Council will

determine if a consolidation will meet the needs of the Ceres community. Of great concern is ensuring service levels in Ceres and the potential costs of regionalization.

R3: StanCOG, StaRT, BLAST, CAT and MAX should begin inquiry into the implementation of technological advances in the areas of both transit management and rider services, such as automated fare boxes, auto-announce, Wi-Fi, GPS tracking and phone app schedules.

Respondent partially agrees with this recommendation.

Ceres Response: As mentioned in the response to the findings above, Ceres has implemented technological advances, as CDAR and CAT transit buses have automated fare collection systems. Ceres will continue to research and seek advancements in technology as budgets allow. It is important to keep in mind that with each technological advance, there are associated costs for procurement, maintenance, and replacement, and ongoing operational expenses.

Comments on Body of Report

Report statement: The four different transit authorities find themselves in competition for limited funds.

Ceres Comment: StanCOG limits the amount of TDA funds each of the four (4) transit systems are allowed to use for transit, based on a cost sharing formula allowed by statute. In every non-recession year, TDA funds are left over for street purposes after the transit entities receive what they are allocated. (However, the City of Modesto must use their funds on transit, not for street and road purposes.) Consequently, the transit entities are not competing among themselves for those funds. However, it is costly to procure, maintain and operate some of the new technology features listed in the SCCGJ Final Report. Each of the transit agencies need to reach a farebox ratio requirement. Operating some of the new technologies would increase the operating costs for transit, which could make reaching the farebox requirements even more difficult. Careful evaluation is needed.

Report Statement: Each authority receives both FTA and TDA funds through StanCOG.

Ceres Comment: The City of Ceres receives no Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) Funds. If Ceres were to receive FTA funds for Ceres Transit, the administration of the funds would significantly increase the costs of Ceres Transit operations. Ceres would need to hire additional staff to meet significant increased reporting requirements, and federal regulations, etc.

Report Statement: Technology such as automated fare boxes, auto-announce, Wi-Fi, GPS tracking, and phone app schedules are currently unavailable on all or most buses countywide.

Ceres Comment: As discussed above, the Ceres Transit System has automated fare boxes on Ceres buses which greatly enhances the ease for passengers to ride CDAR and CAT. The City will evaluate its technological needs and build upon current technology that will enhance transit services provided by the City. The City will also keep in mind associated enduring costs.

Report Statement: The information and table on Page 3 states that Ceres Transit needs to achieve a farebox ratio of 20%.

Ceres Comment: Results from the 2010 Census showed that Stanislaus County's population exceeded 500,000; thereby, resulting in a need to increase Ceres Transit's farebox ratio as required by the TDA. TDA also allows five years for a transit system to reach the new farebox requirement. As such, beginning Fiscal Year 2015/2016, Ceres Transit's required farebox ratio will be at 20%.