

North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan

Final Report

April 2025



Executive Summary

Introduction

The North State Intercity Bus to Rail Plan (NSIBRP) was developed by the Shasta Regional Transportation Agency (SRTA) to address the need for improved intercity travel options to/from Shasta County and around the North State Region. Assistance in the development of the NSIBRP was provided by a consultant team consisting of AECOM and AIM Consulting.

Purpose: To coordinate and plan for better intercity bus options in the short and mid-term and improved passenger rail transportation in the long-term between the Shasta Region and the large metropolitan areas of Greater Sacramento, the Bay Area, and north into Oregon, as well as improve intercity transportation connections across the North State Region of California.

Partners: SRTA is working with key partners from the North State Region and beyond. Many of these key partners are part of the North State Super Region Transit Working Group. For a list of partners, see **Figure ES-1**.

Figure ES-1. NSIBRP Partners



Funding: This project is funded by a Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant (Strategic Partnership Grant (FTA 5304)) and Local Transportation Funds (LTF).

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

The development of the NSIBRP was informed by a robust outreach effort targeted at the community at large and relevant stakeholders, with the intent of incorporating valuable input into project planning and development. The outreach process, including key engagement events and milestones, are shown in **Figure ES-2**.

Recommendations

The demand and feasibility analysis, the data collected, as well as stakeholder and community input, suggests that efforts should focus primarily on coordination and improvement of bus-related intercity services over the near-term (within 5 years) and the mid-term (within 10 years), while supporting state efforts to improve passenger rail services for potential implementation over the long-term (10+ years), should the appropriate set of circumstances warrant.

Strategies meant to guide future efforts are listed below and are divided into general and hub/route-specific strategies. The specific strategies are presented in order according to the overall rankings of the hubs/routes. Following the strategies is a Strategic Action Plan, which is shown in **Table ES-2**.

General Strategies

1. Support the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Corridor ID Program for the San Joaquin Valley Corridor, which is being conducted by Caltrans Division of Rail.
2. Encourage Caltrans to increase their role in supporting the planning, funding, and operation of intercity transit service, including a connected and reliable statewide intercity bus service.
3. Conduct or support initial planning to designate and strengthen **Redding as the central multi-modal hub** for all existing and proposed North State intercity bus and rail services.
4. Engage Amtrak (national) to determine if there is any way to improve capacity, seat availability, or reliability for the Coast Starlight long-distance service to address local and regional passenger rail transportation needs.

Strategies for Hubs and Routes

Redding – Sacramento Hub (bus) – I-5 Service (a.k.a. Salmon Runner)

- Support RABA with the near-term funding and implementation of the service and consider the possibility of utilizing RABA's Route 99X buses for this service initially.
- Facilitate or support interagency agreements between RABA, Glenn Ride, SJJPA, and Amtrak to fund and implement initial Salmon Runner service.

Redding – Chico Hub (bus and rail)

- Collaborate with RABA to continue operating the current bus service between Redding and Chico utilizing existing funding and service agreements until service transitions to the Redding-Sacramento bus service along I-5 (a.k.a. Salmon Runner).
- Coordinate with Caltrans on the San Joaquin Valley Corridor ID planning efforts and advocate for exploration of a future rail extension to Redding.
- Collaborate with RABA, SJJPA and other partners to support Caltrans in the Corridor ID process.

Redding – Eureka–Arcata Hub (bus)

- Collaborate with partner agencies to confirm consensus on the elements of the North State Express proposal produced by Humboldt Transit Authority and support the near-term implementation of an initial service phase.
- Support establishing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to implement elements of this proposal.

Figure ES-3. Hubs and Routes Identified and Evaluated



Source: Google MyMaps (base map), AECOM (annotations)

Demand/Feasibility Analysis

The proposed service concepts for each hub/route were analyzed in terms of potential demand and feasibility. Based on this analysis, each concept was scored and ranked across a variety of criteria, including connectivity, access to travel markets, user experience, cost v. benefit, geographic features, and ease of implementation. An overall ranking was then developed based on each concept’s performance across the selected criteria, informing a potential prioritization scheme for future

Redding – Eugene Hub (bus and rail)

- Engage in discussions with regional partners and with Caltrans and Oregon DOT staff to explore in the near/mid-term a phased implementation of the proposed bus service along I-5.
- Continue to support Caltrans and Oregon DOT efforts to improve Amtrak service between Redding and Eugene.

Redding – Reno Hub (bus)

- Support long-term efforts to develop intercity bus service between Redding and Reno, including coordination with Caltrans and Nevada DOT on future planning.

Strategic Action Plan

Based on the strategies above, a Strategic Action Plan was produced that lists specific actions for each route/hub (see **Table ES-2**). These actions are also delineated by short-, medium, and long-term time horizons. Additionally, the hub/routes are listed in order of priority, which correspond to **Table ES-1**.

All actions shown in the table below will be brought back to the appropriate agency board at the appropriate time for further consideration and action.

Table ES-2. Strategic Action Plan

Hub / Route (ordered by priority)	Mode	Lead agency	Key partners (not prioritized)	Near-term (within 5 years)	Mid-term (within 10 years)	Long-term (10+ years)
Redding– Sacramento	Bus	RABA	SRTA	Implement initial Redding- Sacramento bus service along I-5 (a.k.a. Salmon Runner) within two years	Expand frequency of Redding-Sacramento bus service along I-5 (a.k.a. Salmon Runner)	Modify bus service to complement increased rail service to Redding
			Caltrans Division of Rail			
			Caltrans Districts 2 and 3			
			SJPPA			
			Tehama Rural Area eXpress (TRAX)			
			Glenn Ride			
			Colusa County Transit Agency			
			Lake Transit Authority			
County RTPAs						
Redding– Chico	Bus	RABA	SJPPA	Secure additional funding to maintain current 99X RABA service until service transitions to the Redding- Sacramento bus service along I-5 (a.k.a. Salmon Runner)	Enhance and improve Glenn Ride express bus service to support planned North Valley Rail service to Chico	Cease Glenn Ride express bus service when intercity rail service established (see below)
			SRTA			
			Caltrans Division of Rail			
			Caltrans Districts 2 and 3			
	Rail	SJPPA	SRTA	Participate in the Corridor ID planning project and advocate for inclusion of rail service to Redding	Complete Corridor ID project development phase	Implement intercity rail service by extending North Valley Rail service
			Union Pacific			
			Caltrans Division of Rail			
Redding– Eureka/	Bus	HTA or Trinity	SRTA	Implement improvements related	Develop plan to study a one-operator	

implementation. **Table ES-1** presents the results of the demand and feasibility analysis and the overall ranking. Details related to this analysis can be found in **Chapter 5** of this document.

Table ES-1. Results of the Demand and Feasibility Analysis – Hub/Route Prioritization

Hub/route	Ranking by criterion 6 = Highest 1 = Lowest						Sum	Overall ranking 6 = Highest 1 = Lowest
	Demand analysis			Feasibility analysis				
	Connect-ivity	Travel market	User experience	Cost v. benefit	Geographic factors	Ease of implementation		
Redding – Ashland–Medford – Eugene Hub (Bus, I-5)	5 (tie)	4 (tie)	1	5 (tie)	3 (tie)	4	22	4 (tie)
Redding – Klamath Falls – Eugene Hub (Rail, Amtrak Corridor)	5 (tie)	1	3 (tie)	1	3 (tie)	1	14	1
Redding – Chico Hub (Rail)	2 (tie)	5	6	3 (tie)	5	2	23	5
Redding – Sacramento Hub (Bus)	6	6	5	6	6	6	35	6
Redding – Reno Hub (Bus)	3	2	4	3 (tie)	3 (tie)	3	18	2
Redding – Eureka–Arcata Hub (Bus)	2 (tie)	4 (tie)	3 (tie)	5 (tie)	3 (tie)	5	22	4 (tie)

Source: AECOM, 2025

Governance

Given the involvement of multiple agencies in the North State Region, governance models were studied as part of the NSIBRP to assess coordination frameworks, administrative structures, and potential implementation strategies for effective interagency collaboration.

Governance objectives, elements and options were identified as shown below. More details can be found in **Chapter 6** of this document.

Governance Objectives	Governance Elements	Governance Options
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New or better service – fast service, enhance frequency, weekend service, filling of gaps • Improved coordination with and between existing services • Standardized branding, customer information, and signage • Integrated marketing and ticketing • Sharing of resources • Improved opportunities for grant funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service agreements • Service management and operation • Policy guidance and oversight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service coordination agreement • Corridor-specific agreements • Regional transit service authority • State intercity transit management • Interstate transit agreement

applications for grant funding to better define the service and quantify the associated capital and operating costs.⁽¹³⁾

Figure 3-3 illustrates a schematic map of the service as currently envisioned. As shown in **Figure 3-3**, the all-electric intercity service would include the I-5 “backbone” service (a.k.a. the Salmon Runner) between Redding and Sacramento, plus a Valley Feeder service connecting Chico, Corning, and Willows with the service along I-5. Initial service would be 2 trips per direction per day (potentially expanding later to 4 trips per direction per day), with intermediate stops in Red Bluff, Orland (for the connection to the Valley Feeder service), and Sacramento International Airport.

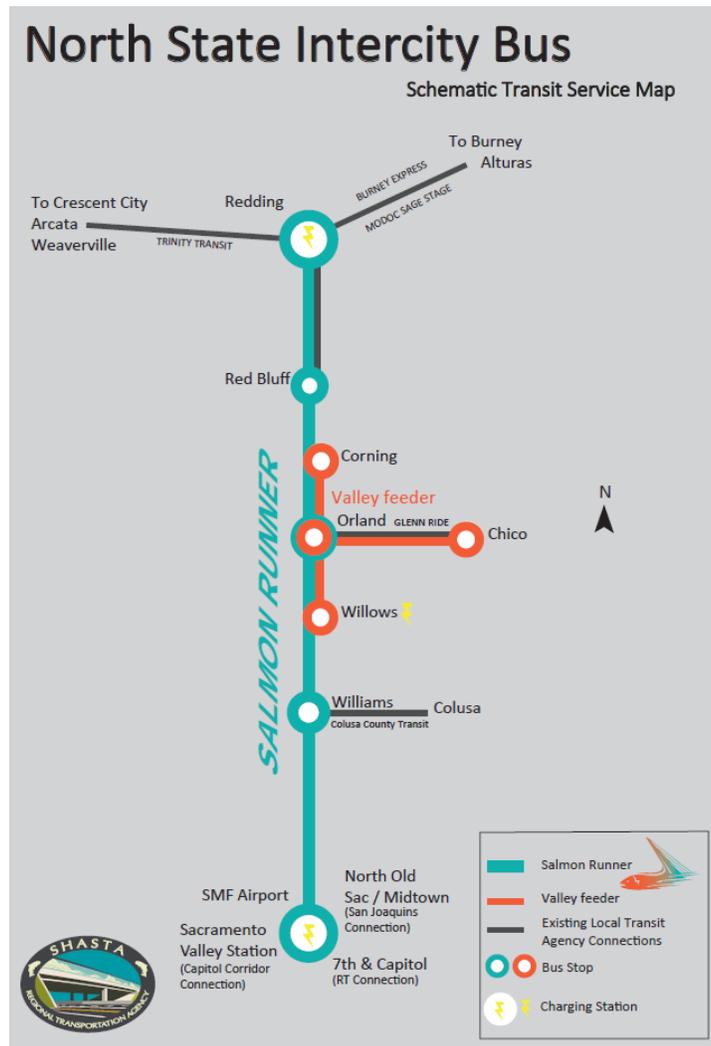
3.1.2.5 ResilientShasta

ResilientShasta is a vulnerability assessment and adaptation plan to address climate change and extreme weather events and their effects on the mobility infrastructure of the Shasta Region. Vulnerability was assessed with respect to several different hazards, including temperature and heat waves, extreme precipitation/snowfall, wildfire, flooding, and landslides. Infrastructure identified as being vulnerable to climate change and extreme weather events include locations or segments along I-5, SR 299, and other highways, as well as the Union Pacific Railroad corridor. In some locations and segments, vulnerability to specific hazards is unknown due to insufficient data or mapping.⁽¹⁴⁾

3.1.2.6 North Valley Passenger Rail Strategic Plan

The *North Valley Passenger Rail Strategic Plan* (2024), published by the Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG), developed an initial concept for a new passenger rail service (“North Valley Rail”) in the Northern Sacramento Valley region. The service would better link Butte, Yuba, and Sutter counties with Sacramento, the Bay Area, and the rest of the State, including the initial high-speed rail (HSR) service between Merced and Bakersfield. The planned northern terminus for North Valley Rail would be

Figure 3-3. Salmon Runner

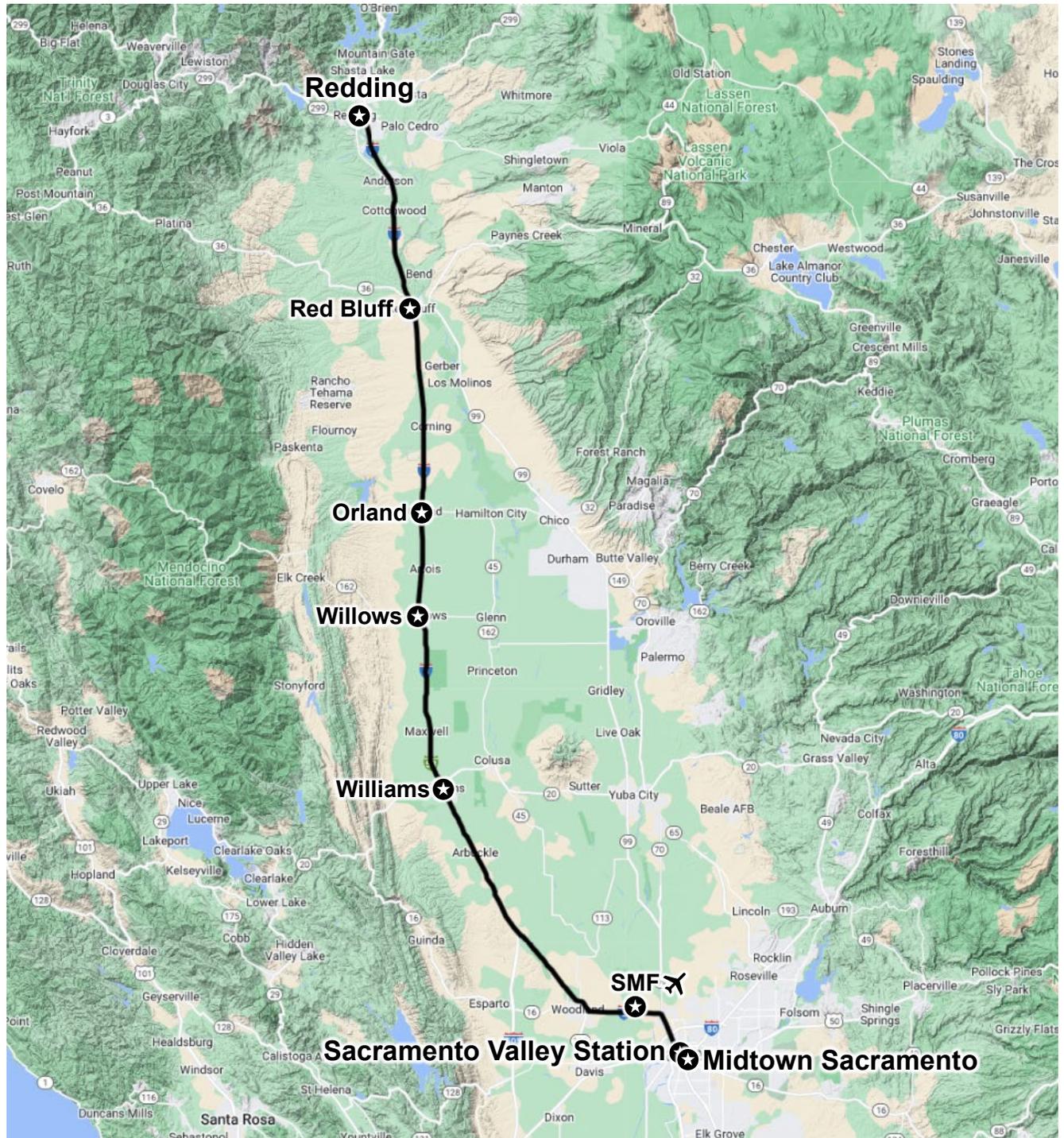


Source: SRTA

(13) Shasta Regional Transportation Agency. *North State Intercity Bus System Business Plan*. June 19, 2018 (approved). Available at <https://www.srta.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4099/North-State-Intercity-Bus-System-Business-Plan-June-2018>.

(14) Shasta Regional Transportation Agency. *ResilientShasta Extreme Climate Event Mobility and Adaptation Plan*. Final Report. April 28, 2022. Accessed October 13, 2024. Available at <https://srta.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/5974/ResilientShasta-Final-Full-Report>.

Figure 4-5. Potential Service Concept – Redding to Sacramento Hub (Bus)



Source: Google MyMaps (base map), AECOM (annotations), 2024