

7 Metro routes on chopping block

Transportation
\$2.8 million shortfall next year may also alter 17 other routes

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Get ready, bus riders: Some more "nasty, ugly" cuts are coming to bus service.

The Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District, struggling with a projected \$2.8 million shortfall in the 2004-05 year and a \$3.3 million shortfall in 2005-06, is proposing to eliminate seven bus routes and juggle 17 others.

The proposed cuts, which would touch every part of the county, would save \$700,000. This will be the fourth cut in three years to Metro's service.

These cuts, proposed to go into effect in the fall, are in addition to other cuts going into effect next week.

Metro Finance Director Elizabeth Ross said after this year, they expect to be able to balance the 2005-06 budget without more cuts.

Still, board member Mike Keogh called these cuts "nasty, ugly things we have to do." Board member Jan Beautz called the cuts "pretty massive."

"There's hardly anything that's not getting cut," Assistant General Manager Mark Dorfman told the board at its Friday meeting, held at the Capitola City Council chamber. "These are real serious cuts."

The Metro board set three public hearings for June 14-17 to acquaint riders with the suggested changes and explain how they could affect them, as well as gather comments. Another meeting for Capitola is being scheduled.

Though some routes proposed to be eliminated, such as the Route 2 to Santa Cruz's Westside, have as few as an average 3.9 riders an hour, the district is doing its best to expand other routes or juggle other service so people aren't left with-

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ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER

out service.

In Watsonville, for instance, the district proposes to cut service to Salipuedes, but intensify service along densely-developed roads such as East Lake Avenue. They also are proposing to create a new route, Route 75, that would serve the new housing developments on the city's western edge.

"In Watsonville, we've got an interesting situation, because there's high ridership there," Dorfman said. "So we don't want to hurt that, but there's also a lot of new development occurring that needs service. So what we have proposed there is really a restructuring. We're trying our best to keep as much service on the road as possible."

As bus routes are cut back or eliminated, so is paratransit service. The district is proposing to cancel paratransit service in areas where bus service is eliminated. The rule for paratransit service — door-to-door service for elderly or disabled people who cannot take the bus — is the district provides service if the rider lives within ¼ mile of a bus route.

But if, for instance, the district goes ahead with a recommendation to cut Route 31 service to Scotts Valley on weekends, paratransit customers will not be able to use paratransit on those weekends, either.

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Fall Service Cuts Proposals

The Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District will hold four public meetings next month to inform the public and gather information from riders about service cuts designed to save the district \$800,000.

The proposed service cuts are in the following areas:

SANTA CRUZ

■ Eliminate Route 2 (Mission/Western) weekdays and weekends.

■ Eliminate Routes 3A (Mission/Lighthouse), 3N (Mission/Lighthouse) and 22 (University Express) weekdays.

■ Route 3B (Mission/Lighthouse) would change and be extended to the Grandview Street area off Mission Street.

■ Route 7 (Beach) would be extended to cover the Pelton-Lighthouse area.

■ Route 20 (University Westside) will increase to run between 7:20 a.m. to 8:20 p.m. year round to compensate for other cuts.

SCOTTS VALLEY

■ Eliminate Route 31 (Scotts Valley/Santa Cruz via Highway 17) weekends, and delete the 10:25 a.m., 11:25 a.m., 12:25 p.m. and 5:25 p.m. Route 31 trips weekdays.

■ Change the 12:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. outbound Route 35 (Boulder Creek) to 35A, to serve Scotts Valley Drive at those times, mitigating the loss of Route 31.

NORTH COAST AREAS

■ Expand the 8:30 a.m. trip of Route 40 (Davenport/North Coast beaches) to serve Waddell Creek, weekends.

■ Delete the 11 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. trips of Route 40 (Davenport/North Coast Beaches), weekends.

■ Delete the 1:15 p.m. and 5:15 p.m. trips of Route 41 (Bonny Doon), weekends.

■ Add a 12:30 p.m. trip of Route 42 (Davenport/Bonny Doon), weekends.

5-29-04
■ Move the 7:15 p.m. trip of Route 42 to 5:30 p.m., weekends.

APTOS/LA SELVA

■ Eliminate Route 52 (Capitola/Soquel) weekdays.

■ Reduce service to the Mar Vista area on Route 55 (Rio del Mar) weekdays.

■ Add a Capitola Mall to Cabrillo express link to the Route 56 (La Selva), weekdays.

LIVE OAK

■ Eliminate Route 65 (Live Oak via 30th).

■ Route 67 (Live Oak via East Cliff) will be changed to serve the Broadway-Seabright neighborhoods, eliminating the 26th Avenue to East Cliff to 30th Avenue loop.

LOCAL WATSONVILLE

■ Eliminate Route 73 (Airport/Buena Vista).

■ Change Route 72 (Corralitos) so it serves Green Valley Road between Main Street and Freedom Boulevard both directions.

■ Create a new route, Route 74, to serve Errington Road, Rolling Hills, Buena Vista and Manfre Road.

■ Remove Auto Center Drive, Manner Drive and Pennsylvania Drive from Route 75 (Green Valley).

■ Remove Pajaro, Riverside Drive and the Martinelli area from Route 79 (East Lake).

MEETINGS

■ Santa Cruz, June 14, 4 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.
Santa Cruz City Council Chamber
809 Center St., Santa Cruz.

■ Scotts Valley, June 15, 4 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Scotts Valley City Council Chamber
1 Civic Center Drive, Scotts Valley.

■ Watsonville, June 17, 4 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Cabrillo College, Watsonville Center
318 Union St., Watsonville.

■ Another meeting is being planned for Capitola.