



Agenda Item No. (4)

To: Transportation Committee/Committee of the Whole
Meeting of June 26, 2025

From: David Davenport, Principal Planner
Ron Downing, Director of Planning
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Subject: **AUTHORIZE THE SETTING OF A PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED
CHANGES TO GOLDEN GATE TRANSIT BUS ROUTES AS IDENTIFIED
IN THE MARIN-SONOMA COORDINATED TRANSIT SERVICE
(MASCOTS) PLAN**

Recommendation

The Transportation Committee recommends that the Board of Directors (Board) authorize the setting of a public hearing to receive public comment on a proposal to modify Golden Gate Transit (GGT) bus routes, as recommended in the Marin-Sonoma Coordinated Transit Service (MASCOTS) Plan. The public hearing would take place on Thursday, August 21, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. in the Board Room, Administration Building, Golden Gate Bridge Toll Plaza, San Francisco, with the understanding that Board policy requires that a public hearing be held for service changes that affect 25% or more of the revenue service mileage of a route or result in the discontinuation of a route. Due to the significance of the proposed changes, all proposed service changes described below will be included in the public outreach prior to the public hearing, even if they do not meet the threshold.

This matter will be presented to the Board of Directors at its June 27, 2025, meeting for appropriate action.

Background

Impacts of New Transit Service and External Factors

The Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit District (SMART) opened in phases beginning in 2017, providing new passenger rail service. With enhanced local service by Marin Transit, ridership patterns began to shift in the North Bay. The Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District (District) planned to undertake a comprehensive operational analysis (COA) in 2020 to take a fresh look at GGT bus service. However, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic tabled that effort, and the District focused week-by-week on its ability to provide ongoing service for those riders who were essential workers across its bus and ferry systems.

The pandemic also resulted in a dramatic decline in traditional office-oriented commute patterns, which was demonstrated both in reduced Golden Gate Bridge traffic and diminished transit ridership. The combined effect of these declines affected the District's ability to sustain its transit network, particularly regarding commute services into San Francisco. While the four all-day, seven-days-per-week regional GGT routes continued service, all but three commute routes were suspended. As ridership returned incrementally, two other commute routes were restored, and regional all-day service was adjusted to meet new ridership patterns.

A renewed interest in regional collaboration in the Bay Area public transit environment emerged during the pandemic, as did the District's need to develop a new Strategic Plan that would ensure the continued relevancy and financial viability of the agency.

Strategic Plan

The Board of Directors developed a Strategic Plan during 2023, and the *Final Strategic Plan* was approved in May 2024. Three of the Initiatives (3, 8, and 9) support both regional collaboration and right-sizing the District's transit services:

3. Match Bus and Ferry service levels to changing customer demand post-pandemic to maximize passengers per trip. Tailor service to the varied and unmet customer demand during the workweek and seasonally.
8. Work with partner agencies to develop a comprehensive, forward looking service plan for the Highway 101 Corridor and evaluate where there is duplicative North Bay service between SMART, GGT, Marin Transit and Sonoma service providers.
9. Support the Regional Network Management goals, such as those embodied in the MASCOTS program.

Marin and Sonoma Coordinated Transit Service Plan (MASCOTS)

MASCOTS is the first subregional transit analysis conducted under the guidelines of Regional Network Management, which came out of the Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force, established during the pandemic to further collaboration between the region's transit operators and the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC). MASCOTS also reinforces the District's three Strategic Plan Initiatives described above.

MASCOTS is a cooperative and collaborative effort encompassing the District, SMART, Marin Transit, Sonoma County Transit, Santa Rosa CityBus, Petaluma Transit, the Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA), Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM), and MTC.

These agencies committed to taking a fresh look at travel in the Highway 101 Corridor as if all the local bus, regional bus, ferry and rail services were operated by one entity focused on efficiently growing overall transit ridership in the Corridor utilizing existing resources.

A consultant, Nelson\Nygaard, was brought in by MTC to assess travel patterns, transit performance, and duplication in the transit network in the two counties. MASCOTS analyzed the underlying market viability of regional public transit service in Marin and Sonoma Counties.

Comprehensive travel data gathered by MTC for the Bay Area's Transit 2050+ long-range plan was harnessed to establish travel demand along the Highway 101 Golden Gate Corridor.

The analysis determined that roughly 70% of all travel (Bridge, bus and ferry) across the Golden Gate Bridge to/from Marin and Sonoma Counties has an origin or destination from San Rafael south. Novato accounts for 17% of the travel market, and the remainder is associated with Sonoma County.

For travel between Marin and Sonoma Counties, the analysis determined that about 75% of travel occurs within the SMART commute shed. Lastly, about 75% of travel from Marin and Sonoma Counties to San Francisco is destined to the northeast quadrant of the city, primarily focused in the Downtown, Fisherman's Wharf, and Civic Center areas.

MASCOTS also analyzed the existing regional transit network across Marin and Sonoma Counties and identified areas with the highest ridership potential, called out underperforming service, and recommended ways to decrease duplication with other transit agencies. Ridership data on each route, on a trip-by-trip basis, was analyzed by the consultant to determine where service was viable, where it was duplicative, and what service strategies would improve performance. From a customer perspective, one of the goals of MASCOTS was to simplify overlapping routes and route numbering to improve understanding of which route or service to take.

The proposal contained in this narrative illustrates potential service changes to improve regional travel in Marin and Sonoma Counties as recommended by the consultant. While there are recommendations specific to other transit operators in the corridor, only those relevant to GGT will be covered. As noted above, the consultant concluded that the highest potential for regional ridership growth is in the area from San Rafael south. The Larkspur Ferry serves an important role in that travel market, but enhanced Route 101 express service between Novato, San Rafael, and San Francisco was also identified as a key component of that growth.

These service changes would position GGT to better serve the regional travel market in Marin and Sonoma Counties by (1) focusing service in areas with the highest ridership potential, (2) reducing underperforming service, and (3) decreasing duplication with other transit agencies. Importantly, there would be no overall decrease in GGT annual service hours.

The MASCOTS Plan proposes routing and/or schedule changes to Routes 101, 130, 172, 580, and 580X and the discontinuation of Routes 150, 164, and 172X. As shown in Attachment 1, nearly all riders on the routes proposed for discontinuation would have alternative service available. If these proposed changes are approved to move forward for a public hearing in August, and should final changes be approved by the Board in September, changes to these routes would take effect in early 2026.

Detailed Route and Ridership Analyses

Sonoma County

GGT Route 101 is the backbone of the regional bus network and provides mobility between Sonoma and Marin Counties and San Francisco, serving the town centers of every community

between Santa Rosa and San Rafael before operating non-stop to San Francisco. While popular in Marin County, Route 101's ridership has lagged since SMART opened its initial segment between Santa Rosa and San Rafael. Route 101 duplicates SMART between Santa Rosa and San Rafael, and with fewer trips from Sonoma to San Francisco, overall travel demand does not support both GGT Route 101 and SMART service north of Novato. Post-pandemic ridership increases on SMART have been much more pronounced due to higher reliability, faster travel times, and lower fares than Route 101. As a result, the consultant recommends that Route 101 be truncated in Novato, due to low ridership (averaging in the low single digits on most trips) and replaced by improved frequencies and span of service on SMART.

GGT Routes 164, 172, and 172X provide commute service from Sonoma County to San Francisco. Route 172 serves Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, and Petaluma. At the busiest times of day, Route 172X serves Santa Rosa and Rohnert Park but bypasses Petaluma, which is instead served by Route 164. The portion of Route 164 in East Petaluma has poor ridership, averaging fewer than two passengers per trip, which does not support direct bus service. Further, ridership from the portion of Route 164 in West Petaluma does not meet the District's service standard of 20 passengers per trip. While the performance of Route 172X is acceptable, it is difficult to align schedules with Route 172 and maintain adequate trip spacing along the 60-mile length of these two routes. MASCOTS proposes that all the resources dedicated to Routes 164, 172, and 172X be combined, with Route 172 providing more frequent (every 20-30 minutes) service along a consistent alignment. Route 172 would be shortened to Santa Rosa Transit Mall; customers currently boarding at Piner & Industrial would have to park and ride at the Brookwood lot instead. The consultant has also recommended that Route 172 no longer serve local passengers in San Francisco, typically traveling between the Marina District and the Financial District, to offset the longer travel time passengers from Santa Rosa and Rohnert Park would experience by having to travel through Petaluma.

Marin County

GGT currently operates all-day service between San Rafael and San Francisco on Routes 101, 130, and 150. Route 101 provides non-stop service from San Rafael Transit Center to the Golden Gate Bridge Toll Plaza hourly throughout the day, seven days a week with service between Novato, San Rafael, and San Francisco every 30 minutes during weekday peak periods.

Route 150 begins in San Rafael and serves all four intermediate freeway bus pads at Lucky Drive, Paradise Drive, Tiburon Wye, and Seminary Drive before serving Manzanita Park & Ride and then Marin City.

Route 130 also begins in San Rafael, and serves those same bus pads and Marin City, like Route 150, hourly throughout the day, seven days a week. Route 130 differs from Route 150 in that it operates along Bridgeway in Sausalito. Marin Transit also operates extensive local bus service on Routes 36 and 71 between San Rafael and Marin City, duplicating Routes 130 and 150. Combined, the two agencies operate six buses per hour along this corridor, which has been cited by the MASCOTS consultant as an oversupply of service with too many route numbers for the public to understand.

Regional ridership at intermediate points between San Rafael and Marin City is low, averaging less than three passengers per trip. In some cases, there are no regional riders boarding at any of the four freeway bus pad stops nor Manzanita Park & Ride. A small number of Marin local riders are carried along the freeway bus pads on both Routes 130 and Route 150, but these riders have numerous Marin Transit service options for their trips.

MASCOTS proposes discontinuation of Route 150 and the shortening of Route 130, to operate only between Marin City and San Francisco, rather than serving the four freeway bus pads and San Rafael. Route 130 service would improve from hourly to every 30 minutes to take advantage of greater ridership potential between Sausalito and San Francisco.

Replacement service at the freeway bus pads would be provided by Marin Transit, which would offer 15-minute frequencies between San Rafael and Marin City along a single route alignment. Roughly half the total affected weekday customers at the four freeway bus pad stops would be able to use GGT Route 132 to/from San Francisco during peak periods. Any remaining customers at the four freeway pad stops would make a timed transfer between Marin Transit and the more frequent service on GGT Route 130 at Marin City.

Route 101 service from San Rafael south to San Francisco is proposed to be enhanced using resources from Route 150. Route 150 has a longer travel time than Route 101 between San Rafael and San Francisco, and Route 130 offers a longer travel time than Route 150. Thus, customers using GGT at San Rafael Transit Center have demonstrated a strong preference for Route 101.

In addition to eliminating Route 150 and the northern segment of Route 130, the MASCOTS proposal calls for service every 30 minutes all day on this portion of Route 101. Further, peak service would be provided every 15 minutes on weekdays to accommodate higher passenger loads. Improved headways on Route 101 would provide better SMART connections in San Rafael, making the train-to-bus transfer more attractive.

MASCOTS proposes one additional morning trip on Route 132. No changes are recommended for other bus routes in Marin County, including Routes 114 and 154.

Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Corridor

Route 580 provides an important regional link between San Rafael and the East Bay. It is supported by MTC using a mix of Regional Measure 2 and Regional Measure 3 toll funds from the State-owned bridges, including the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.

Two service variations are currently offered on Route 580: All-day service, seven days a week on the Route 580 alignment, which travels through East San Rafael to/from the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, and the Route 580X alignment, which bypasses East San Rafael and the stop in Point Richmond at Castro Street and Tewksbury Avenue. Regional connections to/from the East Bay, Solano County, and Napa County are made at El Cerrito del Norte BART Station.

The local street running in East San Rafael on Route 580 is time consuming and generates very few riders, creating a time penalty for regional travelers who are mostly traveling between BART or the City of Richmond and San Rafael Transit Center. Therefore, the MASCOTS consultant's

proposal recommends that Route 580 follow the same alignment as Route 580X in this area, with no stops between Bellam Boulevard and the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge. About twelve passengers per day would have alternate service on Marin Transit Route 23.

Only the stop in Point Richmond would differ between Routes 580 and 580X due to this change, and it is recommended that seven trips—all but three westbound morning trips—on Route 580X be converted to Route 580. There is a substantial travel time penalty to serve Point Richmond westbound in the morning, but not at other times.

Golden Gate Ferry

GGF service was assessed in the MASCOTS Plan, but as with the GGT routes not listed above, no service change recommendations were made.

Title VI Impacts

Title VI guidelines issued by the Federal Transit Administration and the Title VI policy approved by the Board in August 2013 dictate that major service changes, which affect 25% or more of revenue service miles per route, be analyzed for equity impacts. This threshold will be met for Routes 150, 164, and 172. Therefore, a Title VI equity analysis will be conducted by staff for those three routes and will be presented, along with a final set of recommendations, to the Board in September for a final decision regarding the potential elimination of or changes to these routes.

Public Outreach

If the proposal to hold this public hearing is approved by the Board, outreach will be conducted in July and August. MTC has offered Kearns and West, an on-call consultant specializing in public outreach, to coordinate the format for outreach with direction given by District staff. Public outreach activities will include:

- Creation of a project website (mascotsplan.org);
- Informational sessions to be held online and in person;
- Presentations at the Bus Passengers Advisory Committee (BPAC) and Advisory Committee on Accessibility (ACA) meetings;
- Advertisements in the *Marin Independent Journal*, *Press-Democrat*, *La Voz*, and *La Prensa*;
- Posters on-board buses and in passenger waiting rooms at Piner & Industrial and San Rafael Transit Center;
- Direct outreach to passengers on affected routes;
- Press releases to local media;
- Social media postings on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter); and
- Email blasts to customers and community-based organizations.

Translation of all printed materials and handouts in Spanish will be available in accordance with the District's Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan.

Public Comment Process

Public comments on this proposal can be submitted in several different ways:

1. Attend a meeting or hearing and comment directly;
2. Email publichearing@goldengate.org; and/or,
3. Send written comments to the District Secretary.

The District's practice is to treat all comments equally without regard to the manner in which the comments are submitted or received. Therefore, individuals need not attend the public hearing and provide testimony in person if they have commented through email or written forms. All comments received through the above methods will be considered in the final recommendation. Comments must be received by 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 21, 2025.

Fiscal Impact

The MASCOTS Plan, including associated outreach, is already funded by the District and its partner agencies. The fiscal impact of providing the public hearing is estimated at less than \$15,000 and will be covered by the existing Marketing and Communications Department budget and the District Secretary's Office operating budget.

Attachment 1: Summary of Proposed Changes and Alternate Service

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ATTACHMENT 1
SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES AND ALTERNATE SERVICE

Route	Alignment Change	Frequency Change	Alternate Service
101	Truncate service in Novato.	Improve to every 30 minutes between San Rafael and San Francisco, plus weekday peak service every 15 minutes. No change between Novato and San Rafael (every 60 minutes, plus weekday peak service every 30 minutes).	Enhanced service on SMART between Novato and Santa Rosa; Sonoma County Transit Routes 10, 44, 48, and 48X; Santa Rosa CityBus Route 10.
130	Discontinue service between San Rafael and Marin City.	Improve to every 30 minutes between Marin City and San Francisco.	Enhanced service on GGT Routes 101 and 132 at San Rafael Transit Center; GGT Route 132 and Marin Transit at bus pads between San Rafael and Marin City.
132	No changes.	One additional weekday morning trip.	N/A
150	Discontinue route.	N/A	Enhanced service on GGT Routes 101 and 132 at San Rafael Transit Center; GGT Route 130 at Marin City; GGT Routes 114 and 132 at bus pads between San Rafael and Sausalito; Marin Transit between San Rafael and Marin City.
164	Discontinue route.	N/A	Enhanced service on GGT Route 172. Passengers in East Petaluma would have alternate service at the Fairgrounds Park & Ride.
172	Discontinue service between Piner & Industrial and Santa Rosa Transit Mall. No local rides in San Francisco would be permitted.	Improve to every 20-30 minutes during weekday peak periods (9 trips per direction).	Park and ride at Brookwood instead of Piner & Industrial. San Francisco passengers would use other GGT commute routes.
172X	Discontinue route.	N/A	Enhanced service on GGT Route 172.
580	Move service from Francisco Blvd. E. to I-580 between Bellam Blvd. and Richmond Bridge (current Route 580X alignment).	Add 2 westbound and 5 eastbound trips on weekdays, replacing most Route 580X service.	Marin Transit Route 23.
580X	N/A	3 westbound morning trips only; all other trips converted to Route 580.	GGT Route 580.

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MASCOTS

Marin-Sonoma Coordinated Transit Service Plan

Recommended Service Improvement Proposals

June 26, 2025



Agenda

1 Introduction

- What is MASCOTS and the Process
- Existing Conditions Summary

2 Recommendations

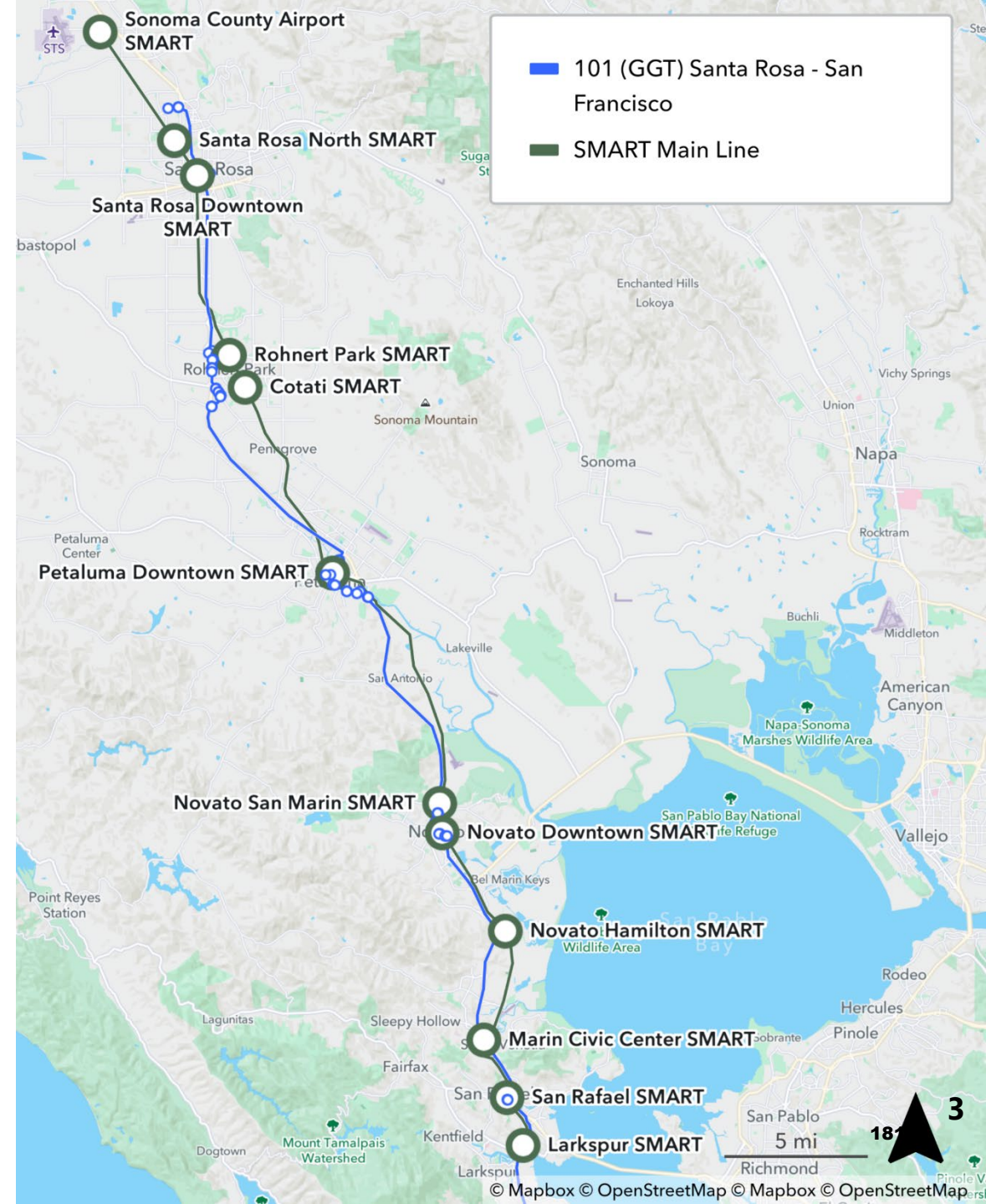
3 Next Steps

What is MASCOTS?

- Collaborative comprehensive analysis of transit services in Highway 101 corridor
- Focused on regional services
- Grounded in post-pandemic travel behavior and work patterns

Goals

- Grow ridership
- Work as if one agency
- Develop a plan, not just a study



MASCOTS Process

Summer 2024

PHASE 1: Research/ Understanding Current Conditions

Fall-Winter 2024/25

PHASE 2: Develop Solutions to Address Opportunities

Winter 2024/25 – Spring 2025

PHASE 3: Document Impacts of Alternatives

Summer 2025

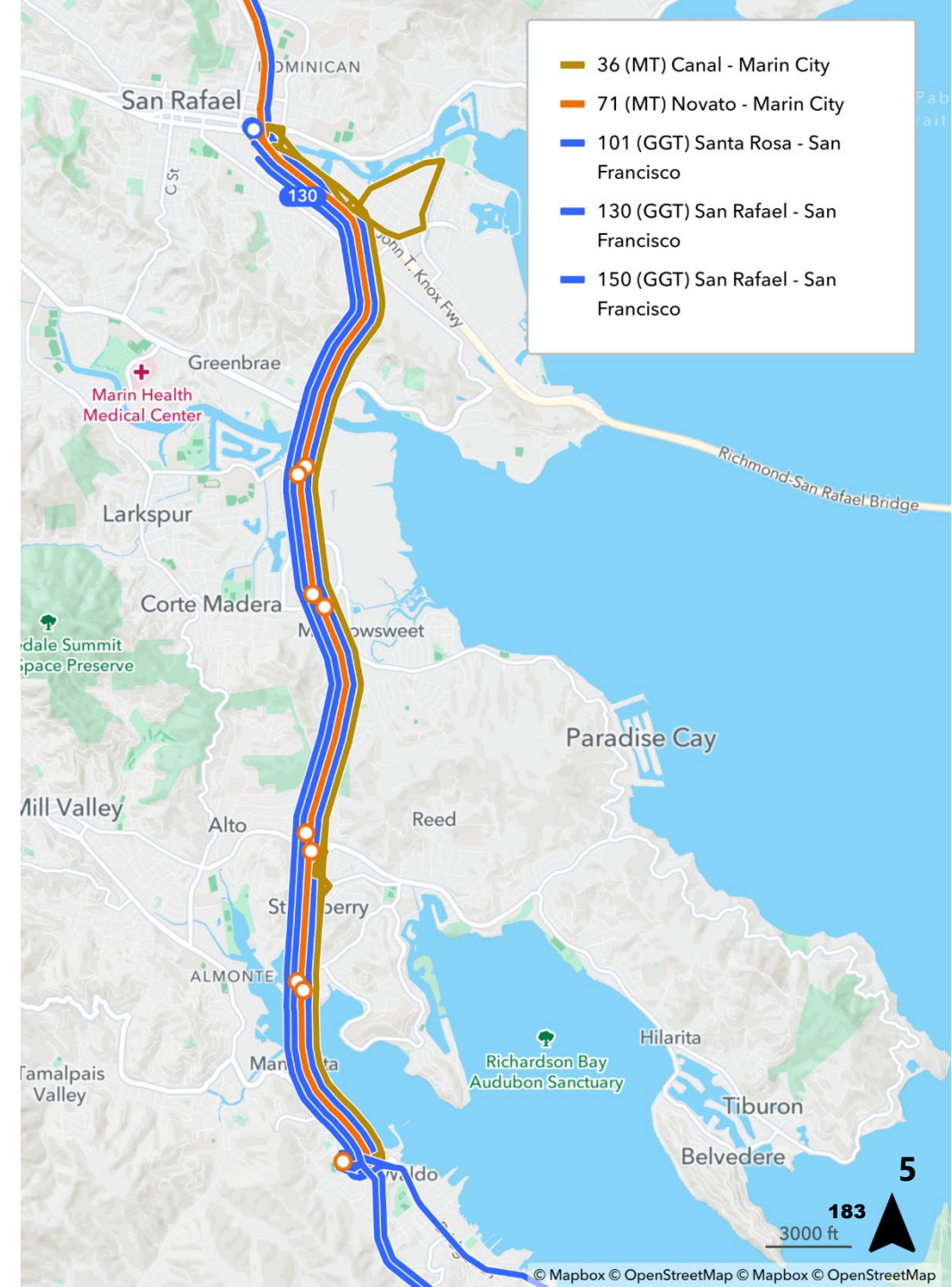
Public Outreach and Final Adoption

Early 2026

Implementation

Existing Conditions Summary

- SMART has replaced Golden Gate Transit Route 101 as the predominant passenger choice for Sonoma-Marín regional trips
- Highway 101 in Southern Marin is overserved; there are too many bus routes carrying too few riders, which is inefficient and can cause customer confusion
- 70% of Marin-Sonoma travel to San Francisco originates in San Rafael or further south
- Local services need stronger, more direct connections to feed SMART

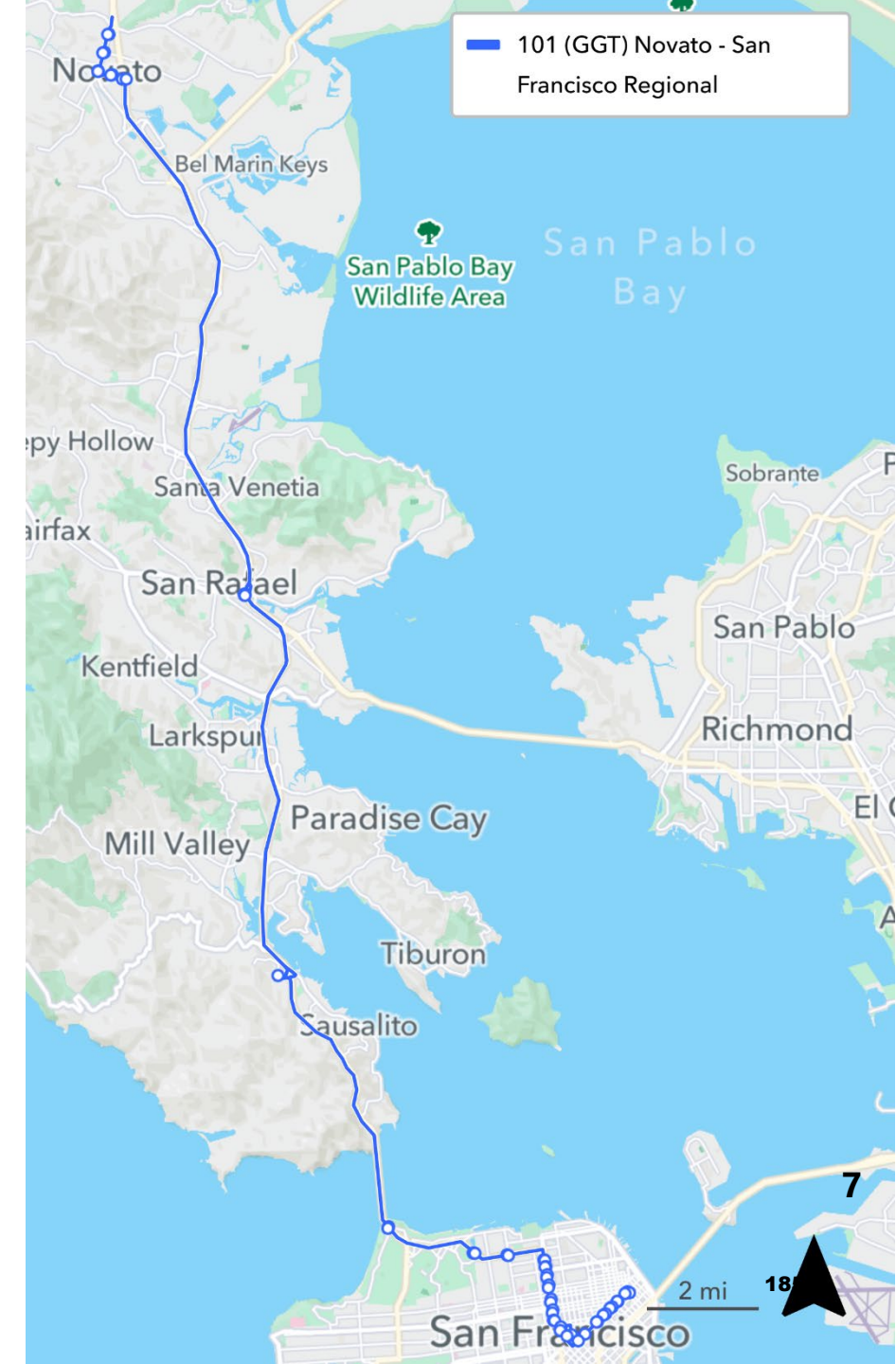


Key Themes of Recommendations

- **Reduce Duplication**
 - Streamline overlapping services
 - Major corridors would have one option that comes more frequently
- **Improve connections**
 - Make the network more usable and improve connections between operators
- **Match service to demand, supporting ridership growth**
 - Redirect resources to where ridership growth potential is highest
 - Reduce or remove service on low-ridership routes and alignments

Rationalize SMART and Golden Gate Transit Route 101

- **Golden Gate Transit (GGT) Route 101:**
Truncate Route 101 in Novato, and increase frequency between San Rafael and San Francisco
- **SMART:** Increase SMART frequency and span of service to ensure high-quality transit is available between Sonoma and Marin Counties when Route 101 is shortened



Optimize Southern Marin Bus Service

- Improve service south of San Rafael by simplifying and reducing redundancy
- **GGT Regional Service to/from San Francisco**
 - Increase **Route 101** frequency between San Rafael and San Francisco
 - Operate **Route 130** between Marin City, Sausalito, and SF with increased frequency
 - Discontinue **Route 150** to reflect low ridership, and reinvest resources in service with better ridership potential
 - Former Route 130 and 150 riders would use Routes 101, 114, or 132 instead, or take Marin Transit and transfer to Route 130 in Marin City
- Consolidate **Marin Transit routes** along Highway 101 between San Rafael and Marin City to simplify and improve legibility for customers
 - One route every 15 minutes serving all bus pad stops

Improve Local Bus Connections to SMART

- Petaluma Transit, Santa Rosa CityBus, Sonoma County Transit, and Marin Transit should make strong, direct connections to SMART



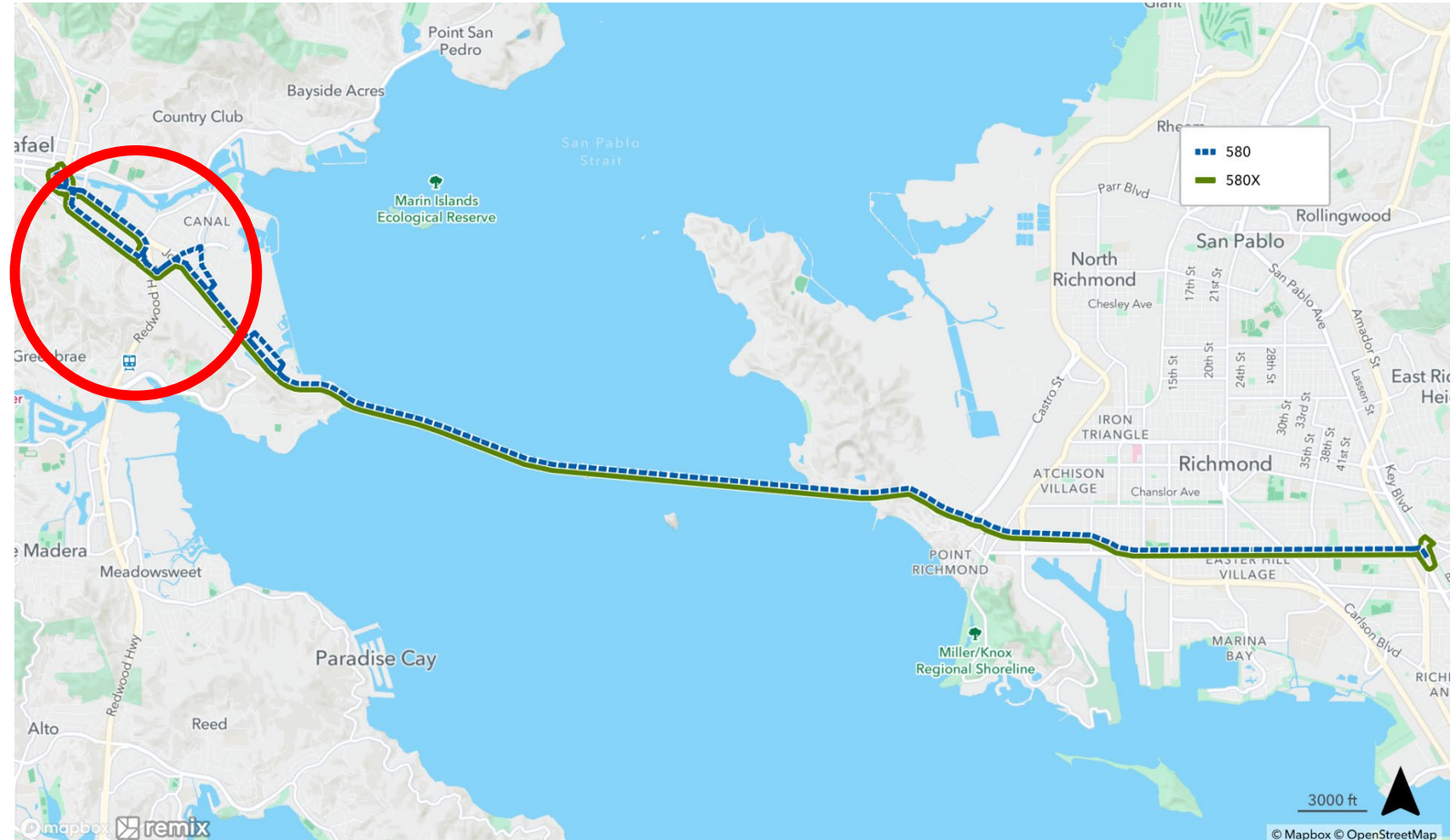
Simplify GGT Commute Routes in Sonoma County

- Consolidate Sonoma County commute buses into one route serving Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, and Petaluma more frequently
- New combined route would utilize new HOV lanes in the Narrows, and would not make local pickups in San Francisco



Streamline GGT Route 580 in East San Rafael

- Operate all Route 580 trips on the freeway, saving approx. 9 minutes
- Nearly all affected riders could take Marin Transit
- Route 580X would continue to bypass Pt. Richmond stop



Summary of Recommendations

1. **SMART and Golden Gate Transit Route 101:**

- Truncate Route 101 in Novato; increase frequency between San Rafael and SF
- Increase SMART frequency and operate trains earlier and later in the day

2. **Southern Marin Bus Service:** Streamline routes between San Rafael, Marin City, Sausalito, and San Francisco

3. **Local Bus Connections to SMART:** Improve Petaluma Transit, Santa Rosa CityBus, Sonoma County Transit, and Marin Transit with strong, direct connections to SMART

4. **GGT Commute Routes in Sonoma:** Combine into a single alignment with improved frequency, and restrict San Francisco local travel to reduce travel time

5. **GGT Route 580 in San Rafael:** Follow 580X alignment to improve travel time; 580 and 580X would continue to differ in the East Bay

MASCOTS Highway 101 Service Structure

- **SMART** is the Sonoma-Marín regional service provider
- **Golden Gate Transit** provides:
 - All-day express (limited stop) service from key hubs in Marin County to San Francisco, including high-quality, frequent service connecting with SMART at San Rafael Transit Center
 - Peak period commute bus services from Sonoma and Marin Counties direct to San Francisco
- **Golden Gate Ferry** provides strong connections to/from SMART to connect riders to San Francisco
- **Sonoma Co. local transit** operators make strong direct connections to SMART
- **Marin Transit** provides local service along Highway 101 and connections to regional SMART, Ferry, and GGT services

Rider Benefits of Recommendations

- **Easier to understand network**
 - Fewer lines on the map
 - More consistency in stops
- **More frequency and more options**
 - Frequency is improved in key corridors
 - Greater frequency improves transfer connections to all service providers
- **Better regional connections**
 - Increased SMART service
 - More frequent service connecting San Rafael and points south to San Francisco
 - Faster service to the East Bay

Simplicity, frequency, and better connections will increase ridership

Benefits/Impacts for Transit Operators

- Benefits
 - Increase ridership – projected to be 8-15% increase
 - Reinvest service hours where higher demand exists
 - Improve efficiency of existing resources
- As proposed, bus route and schedule changes designed to be service hour neutral; can be implemented with existing funding
- No major new capital investments needed
- Impact – Rider education necessary to explain new service options

Timeline

- June-August: Public outreach
- August: Golden Gate Transit Public Hearing on Major Service Change
- September: Marin Transit Public Hearing on Major Service Change
- Fall 2025: Agency Boards finalize changes
- Spring 2026: Implement changes as three-year pilot
- Pilot evaluation after two years

Public Outreach for MASCOTS Plan

- Joint effort between all participating agencies
- MTC consultant will work with agency staff to develop plan
- Outreach may include surveys, community pop-up events, and virtual information sessions

