



CHAPTER I

Introduction

The Kern Council of Governments (COG) contracted with LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. to develop a Transportation Development Plan (TDP) for the City of Ridgecrest, California. The purpose of this document is to provide recommendations with which the City may improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its public transportation service.

The Ridgecrest Transit System (RTS) has been experiencing significant losses in ridership over the past few years. RTS operates a general public demand-response service whereby customers call 24 hours or more in advance to book a trip on RTS. LSC planning staff concentrated on developing new service that would enhance and improve ridership for RTS. The Planning Team reviewed existing transportation plans for the Ridgecrest area, studied the existing transit providers in the area, developed a community profile of Ridgecrest and individuals who use transit in Ridgecrest, assessed the transit needs of the community, conducted an onboard survey and key person interviews on the needs for transit in Ridgecrest, assisted in the development of Goals and Objectives for RTS, provided institutional and service alternatives to enhance RTS service, and, once the recommendations were approved, prepared an implementation plan for the new service.

RTS, Kern COG, and the City of Ridgecrest chose to consider changing the existing general public demand-response service to a flexible fixed-route service that will be phased in over the next seven years. Having the new service phased in over a relatively short period of time will allow the City to see if the new service is accepted by the community and give the City a timeframe in which to garner financial resources to fund the new service. This report presents how this type of service was determined and how the City of Ridgecrest may phase in the new service.

Chapter II reviews existing transportation plans in the Ridgecrest and Kern County area. Knowing what transportation planning has been conducted aids the Planning Team in the development of the TDP. Existing transportation plans are useful in knowing overall how the region plans and develops transportation projects.

Chapter III reviews and presents a discussion on the existing transit providers in the area. Having the knowledge of what forms of transit are available to the community assists RTS in any efforts to coordinate with regional service in the area as well as any social service agency which may provide transportation. Coordinating these services generally enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of each transit agency.

Chapter IV presents a demographic profile of the community as well as showing places of employment and areas of interest such as parks, libraries, and schools. Studies have shown that various segments of the population (elderly, low-income and disabled individuals) tend to use transit more than other segments of the population and are generally described as transit dependent. This chapter shows areas in the City of Ridgecrest which have large populations of transit-dependent persons.

Chapter V assesses the transit needs of the community. Using proven computer modeling techniques, this chapter estimates the need for public transit in the community and projects this need into the future. This information is helpful in developing the transit service area and frequency of service needed.

Chapter VI presents the findings of the public input gathered by the Planning Team. This includes an onboard survey, key person interviews, a public meeting at the Ridgecrest Senior Center, and ideas from a meeting with RTS drivers.

Chapter VII presents the Goals and Objectives which were used to develop this plan and can be used to guide the operations and services of RTS. The Goals and Objectives were developed over several meetings with the City of Ridgecrest Organizational Committee which oversees the Department of Public Works and

the transit service. Kern COG staff also played a role in the development of the Goals and Objectives.

Chapter VIII provides institutional alternatives and a recommendation for which alternative should be best for RTS. Several alternatives were explored including the existing institutional form of having RTS as a division of the Department of Public Works.

Chapter IX presents service alternatives developed by the Planning Team. The team studied the effectiveness of fixed-route service, flexible fixed-route service, demand-response service, and a hybrid service that used several types of transit service.

Chapter X presents the recommended service plan for RTS. This plan offers flexible fixed-route service that will be phased in over a seven-year time span. This recommended service met with the approval of the Organizational Committee.

Chapter XI provides an implementation plan for RTS. This plan addresses issues such as management, operations, capital and support facility needs, a financial plan, and a marketing plan.

Chapter XII proposes a plan that will monitor the new service and provides statistical methods with which to evaluate the performance of the transit service. This Service Monitoring and Performance Evaluation Plan is very important in judging whether the service is efficient and effective or not.