



Legislation Details (With Text)

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**Title:** \*\*\*RESOLUTION - In support of Fresno Council of Governments or Fresno County to provide and restore Yosemite Area Regional Transit System (YARTS) funding for continuation of temporary trial service and to restore YARTS for the 2023 season and engage in Joint Powers Authority discussions for permanent service on the SR 41 route. (Council District 4)(Subject to Mayor's Veto)

**Sponsors:** Airports Department

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Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
3/30/2023	1	City Council	ADOPTED	Pass

**REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL**

**FROM:** HENRY THOMPSON, Director of Aviation  
Airports Department

**SUBJECT**

\*\*\*RESOLUTION - In support of Fresno Council of Governments or Fresno County to provide and restore Yosemite Area Regional Transit System (YARTS) funding for continuation of temporary trial service and to restore YARTS for the 2023 season and engage in Joint Powers Authority discussions for permanent service on the SR 41 route. (Council District 4)(Subject to Mayor's Veto)

**RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends Council adopts a resolution in support of maintaining transit access from the City of Fresno to Yosemite National Park as part of the YARTS system that is consistent with the level of service that has been provided through last season and will continue to be provided from other valley cities.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

YARTS service from the City of Fresno will not commence with the upcoming summer season due to lack of funding by The County of Fresno and Fresno COG. Without restoration of funding, Fresno will be the only city in the system without transit access through YARTS. The remaining cities have secured funding from their respective counties and will see no interruption.

## BACKGROUND

Since 2015, YARTS has provided a vital link to Yosemite National Park with scheduled transit service from Sonora, Merced, Mammoth Lakes, and Fresno. YARTS service has been managed by Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG). YARTS is a JPA comprised of Merced, Mariposa, Tuolumne, Madera, and Mono Counties. Fresno County has not agreed to participate in the JPA resulting in the Fresno route operating as a trial route since the launch of service. Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) funding has been provided through Fresno Council of Governments (Fresno COG) to support Fresno runs along the Highway 41 corridor. The congestion mitigation grant funding expired at the end of the season in September 2022.

As a result, Fresno YARTS service will not commence in the coming season (May through September 2023) creating a void for access to the park from Fresno. The routes from the remaining valley communities served will not be affected as they are supported by the respective counties as part of the JPA.

YARTS service from FAT provides a vital link for residents and travelers coming to the region specifically for this type of vacation.

YARTS provides environmentally friendly and sustainable access for Fresno residents and visitors to access Yosemite National Park as an alternative to driving a vehicle to the park. This is especially important during the periods when a reservation and parking fee is required to access the park or when vehicles within the park are restricted. YARTS transit option provides an alternative to those who have limited transportation options.

Because the discussion is occurring late in the planning process for the Summer 2023 schedule, it is recommended that Fresno County continue in a trial service this season which will restore minimally one daily round trip to the park throughout the summer season. This can be accomplished with short notice and would allow time for Fresno County to engage in the Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) that all surrounding County's participate in to operate YARTS service.

Despite little promotion of the service, ridership was improving, mostly through word of mouth, and with the addition of air service at Fresno Yosemite International Airport (FAT). The potential for continue growth is very favorable as marketing and promotion efforts improve.

To secure future service, staff recommends a Council Resolution that:

- Requests funding of approximately \$75,000 from Fresno County for the continuation of limited Highway 41 service for the Summer 2023 season.
- Request Fresno County engage in participation in the Joint Powers Authority (JPA) with surrounding counties, including Madera, Mariposa, Sonora, Merced, Tuolumne, and Mammoth Lakes.
- Request Fresno County engage the City of Fresno/COG on the level of transit service and schedule needed to support the Highway 41 route after the Summer 2023 trial period.

## ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS

This is not a "project" for the purpose of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378.

## **LOCAL PREFERENCE**

Local preference is not applicable because this item does not include an award of a construction or service contract.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

This request does not anticipate direct funding impact from the City of Fresno but rather proposes the continuation of funding from County of Fresno resources.

Attachment: Resolution