# CHAPTER 4 – PEER REVIEW

A simple tried-and-true method of evaluating the effectiveness of a transit service is peer review. A peer review compares County Express' Fixed Route and Dial-A-Ride services with those of similar transit programs in California. This review will also illustrate the amount of service provided by each peer in relation to the number of persons riding within the respective service area.

It is difficult to find exact matches to any transit system. Like-peers were identified using the following criteria (listed in order of importance):

1. Comparable service areas, population, and fleet size;
2. Similarity in type of services offered (i.e., combined fixed-route and demand-response);
3. Similarity in funding and governance; and
4. Comparable performance indicators (i.e. operating costs, passengers, etc.)

The goal of this review is to quantitatively analyze County Express' performance as compared to like-peers. Exhibit 4-1 provides a basic comparison between San Benito and transit programs in Madera, Tulare, Amador, and Kings Counties. All performance indicators reflect FY 2005/06 data, while demographic data reflects Census 2000.

Exhibit 4-1 Cornerstone Evaluation Criteria

| | San Benito County | Madera County | Tulare County | Amador County | Kings County |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Area (square miles)** | 1,391 | 2,153 | 4,863 | 605 | 1,391 |
| **Population** | 53,234 | 123,138 | 368,021 | 38,471 | 129,461 |
| **Passengers** | 64,362 | 9,056 | 73,206 | 113,200 | 759,007 |
| **Vehicles** | 10 | 4 | 7 | 12 | 14 |

## PEER PROFILES

### Madera County

Madera County, located in California's Central Valley, lies to the east of San Benito County. The Madera County Transportation Commission is responsible for the administration of several transit services within the County of Madera. Services include Madera Area Express and its complementary demand-response service (City of Madera), Chowchilla Area Transit Express (City of Chowchilla), Madera County Connection, and Eastern Madera County Senior Bus and Escort services.

Madera Area Express is a fixed-route service operating Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. until 6:30 p.m.; and Saturday 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. The base fare is seventy-five cents. The City of Madera's demand-response service is offered as a complementary service having the same hours of operation as Madera Area Express, with additional service on Sunday, 8:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. The fare for the general public Dial-A-Ride is two dollars, which includes travel throughout the designated service area. The base fare for seniors and persons with disabilities is one dollar within city limits and two dollars for travel throughout the county.

Chowchilla Area Transit Express (CATX) is a general-public demand-response service operating Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. The base fare is one dollar within the designated "inner zone" and $1.50 in the designated "outer zone."

Madera County Connection is an intercity fixed-route service that consists of three routes: Eastern Madera County, Chowchilla and Fairmead, and Eastin Arcola-Ripperdan-La Vina. The Eastern Madera County service operates Monday through Friday, 6:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. and includes trips to Madera College, Children's Hospital, and Yosemite Lakes. The Chowchilla and Fairmead service operates Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. until 6:30 p.m., traveling along Highway 99 from Chowchilla to the Madera Municipal Airport. The Eastin Arcola-Ripperdan-La Vina service operates on Wednesday and Friday, 8:00 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. The base fare for each of these services is two dollars, while children age five and under ride free when accompanied by a fare-paying adult.

The Eastern Madera County Senior Bus is a demand-response service operating Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. This service is provided for seniors and persons with disabilities and the base fare is $1.50.

The Eastern Madera County Escort Service is demand-response service utilizing volunteer drivers and private vehicles. The service includes medical trips to Madera, Fresno, and Clovis. Service is also available within the rural communities of North Fork, Bass Lake, Oakhurst, Coarsegold, and Ahwahnee. The service operates Tuesday and Thursday, 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., with a base fare of ten dollars. The Eastern Madera County Escort Service also operates in the Madera Ranchos area Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m., with a base fare of five dollars.

### Tulare County

Located just south of Fresno County in the San Joaquin Valley, Tulare County provides deviated fixed-route service (Tulare County Area Transit) with complementary general-public demand-response service. Deviations to the fixed-route service are restricted to patrons with special needs. There are four intercity routes and five local circulator routes. Service is provided Monday through Friday beginning as early as 5:40 a.m. and ending as late as 7:30 p.m.

The four inter-city routes are designated North, South, Northeast, and Southeast County routes. The North County Route travels between Cutler, Dinuba, East Orosi, Justice Complex, Orosi, Patterson Tract, Seville, Sultana, Visalia, and Yettern. The South County Route travels between Delano, Earlimart, Matheny Tract, Pixley, Richgrove, Teviston, Tipton, and Tulare. The Northeast County Route travels between Ivanhoe, Lemon Cove, Three Rivers, Visalia, and Woodlake. The Southeast County Route travels between Lindsay, Porterville, Strathmore, and Visalia.

The community circulator route names reflect the areas they serve: Dinuba-London-Traver-Delft Colony, Lindsay-Strathmore-Plainview-Porterville, Portervile-Springville (Tuesday and Thursday only), Porterville-Terra Bella (Monday and Wednesday only), and Woodville-Poplar-Porterville. The base fare for any Tulare County Area Transit fixed-route service is $1.50.

General-public demand-response service is offered at different times, depending on the individual service area. Service within the Dinuba/Sultana/Monson/Cutler/Orosi area operates from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Service within Lindsay and Toneyville operates from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Service within the Pixley/Tipton/Earlimart area operates from 6:15 a.m. to 8:15 a.m., and again from 10:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Service within the City of Tulare operates from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., and again from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. All services operate Monday through Friday. The base fare is seventy-five cents.

### Amador County

The Amador Regional Transit System operates as a deviated fixed-route service within Amador County and its five incorporated cities: Ione, Amador City, Plymouth, Sutter Creek, and Jackson. Deviations of up to one-half mile off the fixed route can be accommodated. There are seven routes within the Amador Regional Transit System. Route C (Sutter Hill/Ione/Camanche), Route V (Sutter Hill/Pine Grove/Volcano), Route S (Jackson/Sutter Creek Shuttle), Route M (Jackson/Mace Meadow), Route P (Jackson/Plymouth), Route I (Sutter Hill/Ione), and Route X (Amador/Sacramento Express).

The adult base fare for the local routes is one dollar, with seniors and persons with disabilities eligible for a discounted fare of fifty cents. Route X, the express route to Sacramento, costs $3.50 each way for the entire trip ($1.85 for seniors and persons with disabilities). Service begins as early as 5:40 a.m. and runs as late as 7:14 p.m. All routes operate Monday through Friday.

### Kings County

Kings Area Rural Transit, the largest public transit provider within Kings County, is operated by the Kings County Area Public Transit Agency. Kings County is situated in the San Joaquin Valley just south of Fresno County. Kings County Rural Transit provides fixed-route and demand-response services throughout Kings County and into neighboring counties, including the cities of Armona, Avenal, Corcoran, Fresno, Grangeville, Hardwick, Kettleman City, Laton, Lemoore, Lemoore Naval Air Station, Stratford, and Visalia.

Six fixed-route alignments "pulse" within downtown Hanford. These services run Monday through Friday, 6:30 a.m. until 6:30 p.m.; and Saturday, 9:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. The base fare is one dollar.

Additionally, there are six inter-city fixed-route services within Kings County. One service runs from Hanford to Lemoore, Monday through Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 10:50 p.m. Another service runs from Hanford to Lemoore to Lemoore Naval Air Station, Monday through Friday, 5:00 a.m. to 7:20 p.m.; and Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:50 p.m. The Hanford-Avenal service runs Monday through Friday from 6:15 a.m. to 6:15 p.m., with one morning and one afternoon roundtrip on Saturday. The Hanford-Corcoran route has one morning and one afternoon roundtrip each weekday. The Hanford-Fresno Route makes one roundtrip each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The Hanford-Laton Route makes one roundtrip on Monday through Friday. The inter-city base fare is $1.50.

A general-public demand-response service is available to those requiring service more than one-half mile from a designated Kings Area Rural Transit bus stop/route. This service operates Monday through Friday, 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. After 6:30 p.m. service becomes available to any Hanford resident. Service is available in Lemoore Monday through Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; and Saturday, 9:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. Service is available in Avenal Monday through Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The base fare for all demand-response services is two dollars.

Exhibit 4-2 Peer Systems Base Fares

| | Fixed-Route | Demand-Response |
|---|---|---|
| San Benito | | |
| Regular | 75 cents | $1.75 |
| Discounted | 50 cents | 75 cents |
| Madera | | |
| Regular | $2.00 | $1.50 |
| Discounted | N/A | N/A |
| Tulare | | |
| Regular | $1.50 | 75 cents |
| Discounted | N/A | N/A |
| Amador | | |
| Regular | $1.00 | N/A |
| Discounted | 50 cents | N/A |
| Kings | | |
| Regular | $1.00 | $2.00 |
| Discounted | N/A | N/A |

## FIXED-ROUTE PEER REVIEW

Presented in Exhibit 4-3 are comparisons between County Express' key fixed-route performance indicators for Fiscal Year 2005/06 (as discussed in Chapter 4) and those of the selected peers for the same period.

Exhibit 4-3 Fixed-Route Key Indicators (FY 2005/06)

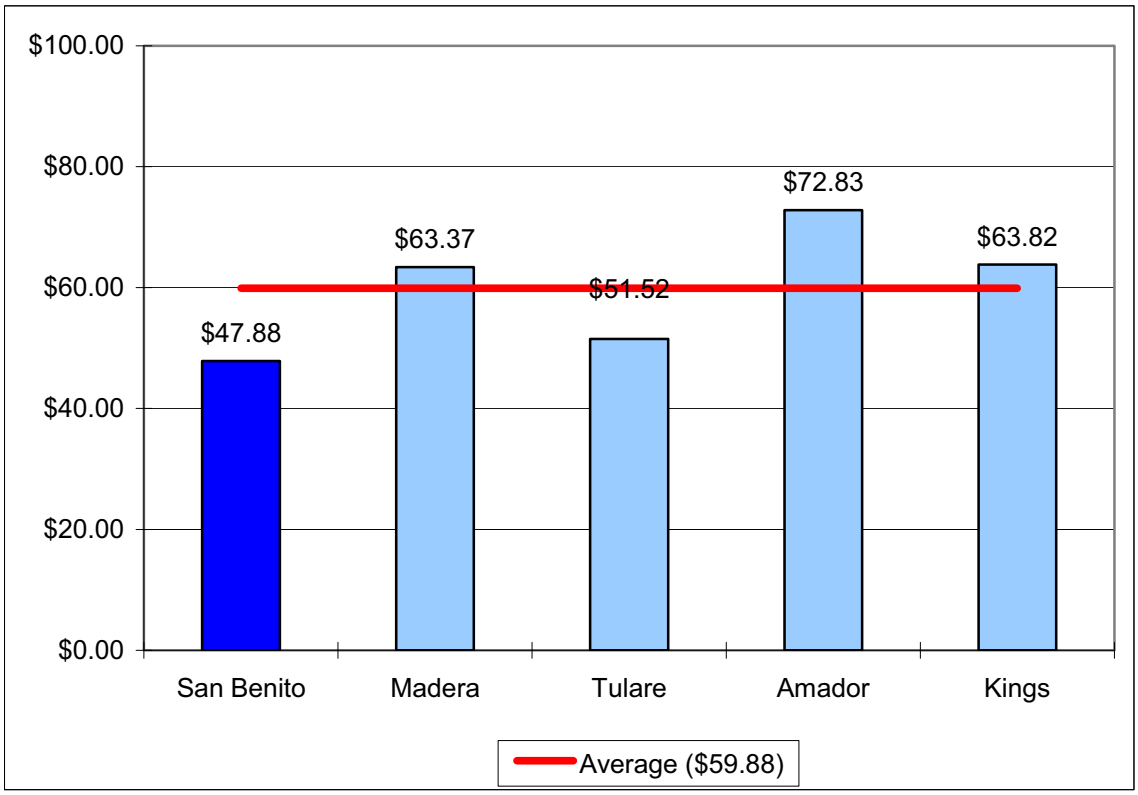
| | San Benito County | Madera County | Tulare County | Amador County | Kings County | Median | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Operating Cost | $403,445 | $300,000 | $712,995 | $1,002,005 | $2,519,368 | $712,995 | $822,969 |
| Fare Revenue | $25,407 | $12,797 | $98,337 | $221,204 | $440,010 | $98,337 | $132,959 |
| Vehicle Service Hours (VSH) | 8,427 | 4,734 | 13,840 | 13,759 | 39,478 | 13,759 | 16,048 |
| Vehicle Service Miles (VSM) | 83,163 | 153,086 | 396,578 | 311,127 | 680,349 | 311,127 | 324,861 |
| Passengers | 64,362 | 9,056 | 73,206 | 113,200 | 759,007 | 73,206 | 203,766 |
| Total Fleet | 12 | 5 | 9 | 12 | 14 | 12 | 10 |
| Peak Fleet | 10 | 4 | 7 | 12 | 14 | 10 | 9 |
| | | | | | | | |
| Operating Cost/VSH | $47.88 | $63.37 | $51.52 | $72.83 | $63.82 | $63.37 | $59.88 |
| Operating Cost/VSM | $4.85 | $1.96 | $1.80 | $3.22 | $3.70 | $3.22 | $3.11 |
| Operating Cost/Passenger | $6.27 | $33.13 | $9.74 | $8.85 | $3.32 | $8.85 | $12.26 |
| Passengers/VSH | 7.6 | 1.9 | 5.3 | 8.2 | 19.2 | 7.6 | 8.46 |
| Passengers/VSM | 0.8 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.4 | 1.1 | 0.4 | 0.50 |
| Farebox Recovery | 6.3% | 4.3% | 13.8% | 22.1% | 17.5% | 13.8% | 12.8% |
| Average Fare/Passenger | $0.39 | $1.41 | $1.34 | $1.95 | $0.58 | $1.34 | $1.14 |

## Service Efficiency

Two performance indicators are employed to assess service efficiency: Operating Cost/Vehicle Service Hour and Operating Cost/Vehicle Service Mile. Efficiency is defined as having the resources required to achieve the reported outcome. For these indicators, lower dollar figures represent greater service efficiency.

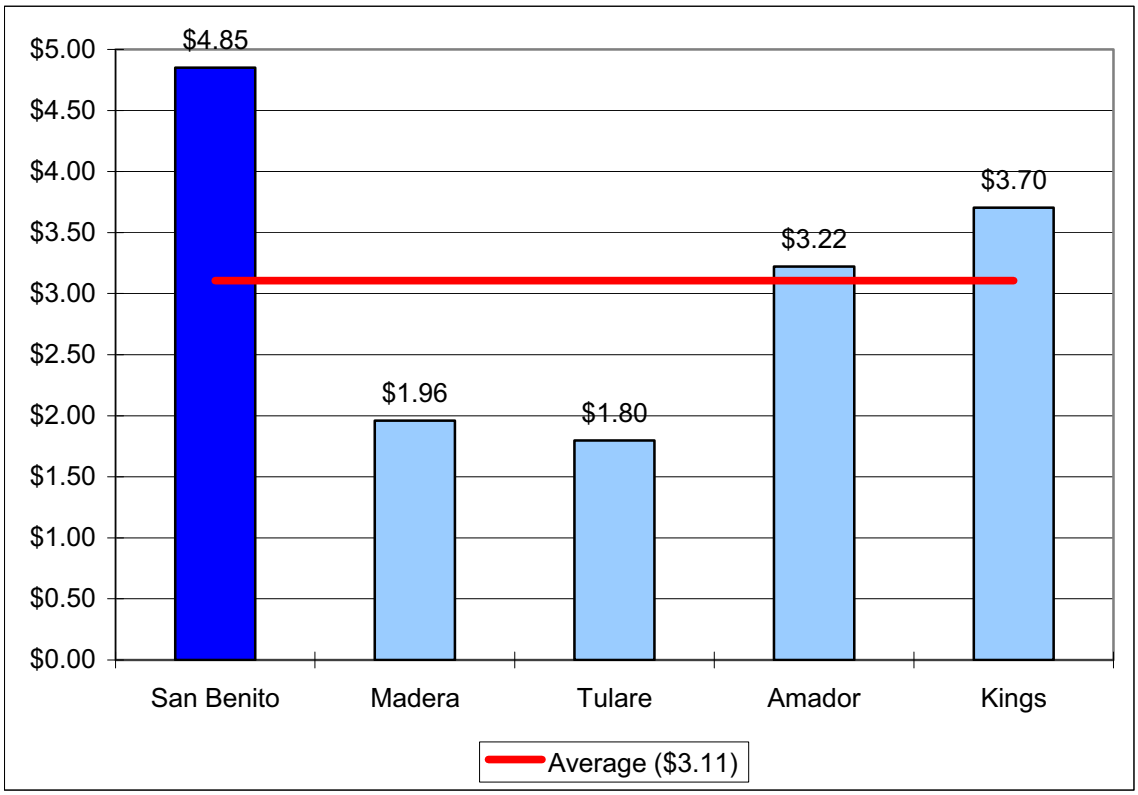
Amador Regional Transit System's Operating Cost/Vehicle Service Hour was the highest of the peer group (21.6 percent above the peer average). County Express reported the lowest at $47.88 (20 percent below the peer average).

Exhibit 4-4 Fixed-Route Operating Cost/Vehicle Service Hour



Tulare County Area Transit posted the best rating among the peers ($1.80) in terms of service efficiency as measured by Operating Cost/Vehicle Service Mile. By contrast, San Benito's had the highest Operating Cost/Vehicle Service Mile at $4.85 (38.8 percent above the peer average).

Exhibit 4-5 Fixed-Route Operating Cost/Vehicle Service Mile

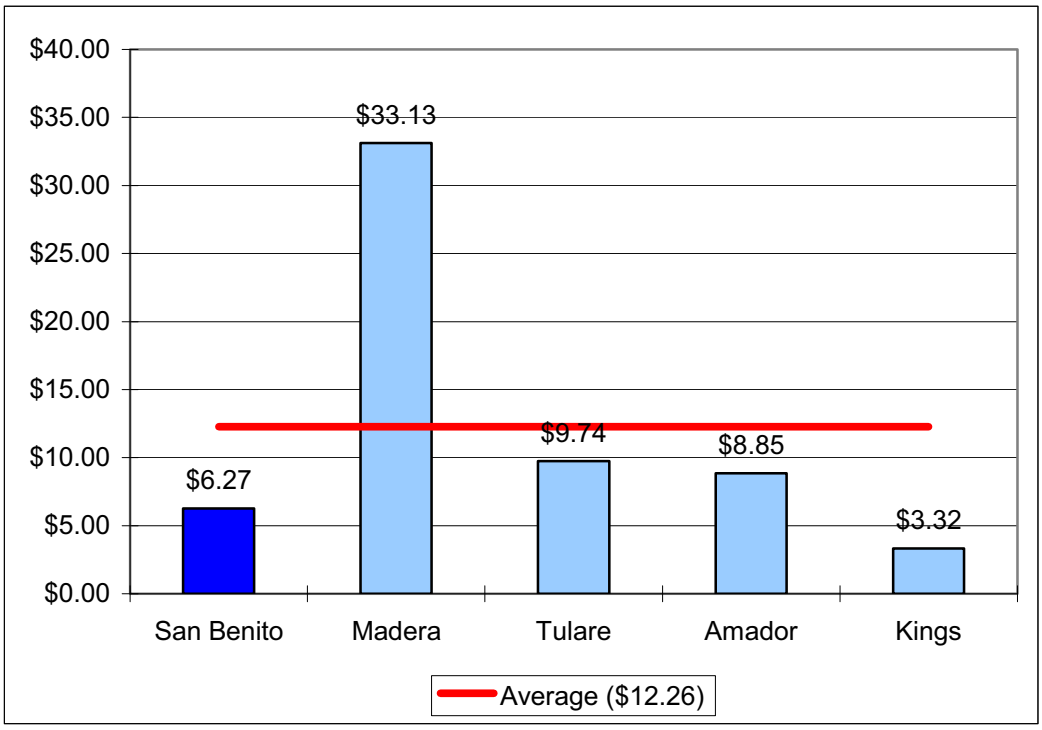


## Service Effectiveness

Operating Cost/Passenger is an indicator of service effectiveness. Effectiveness is defined as to the extent to which a service is meeting its intended goals. As with the two previous indicators, lower dollar figures indicate better service effectiveness.

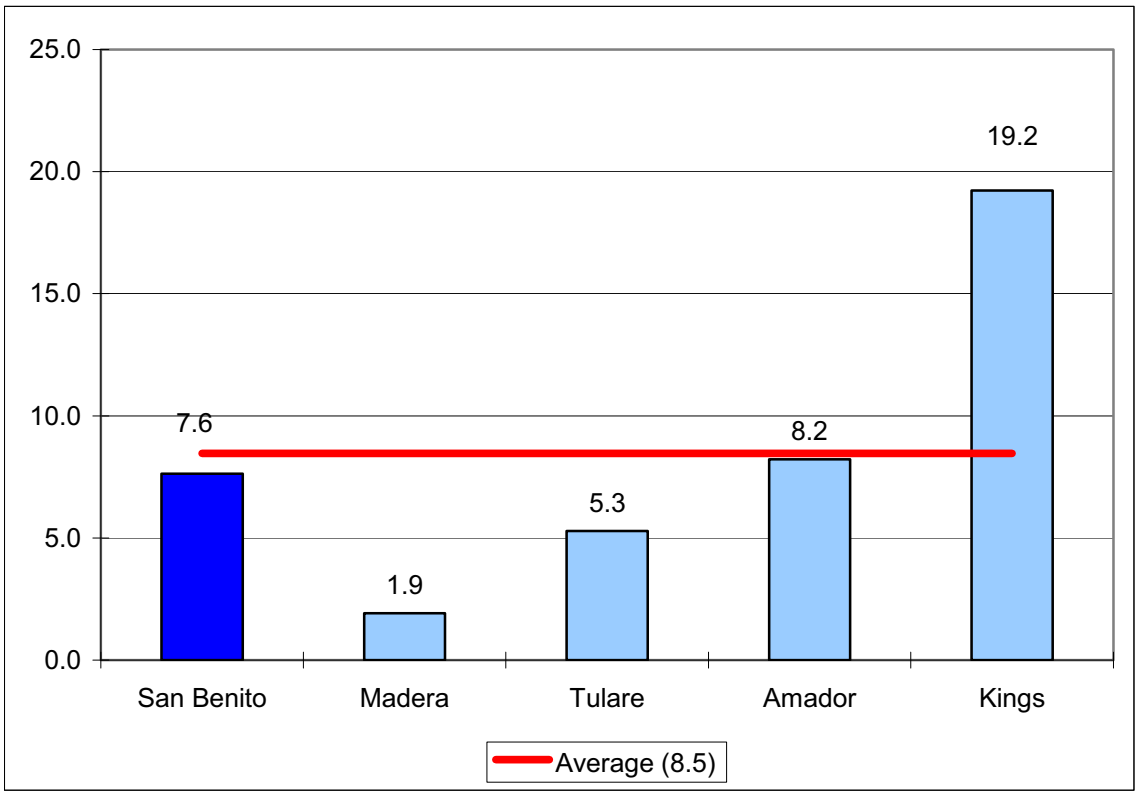
County Express had the second-lowest indicator within the peer group, 48.9 percent below the peer average. Madera County Connection had the highest, 170 percent greater than the peer average. County Express' prior Short Range Transit Plan set a benchmark of Operating Cost/Passenger at $3.50. While lower than three of the four peers, the program has yet to meet the adopted standard.

Exhibit 4-6 Fixed-Route Operating Cost/Passenger



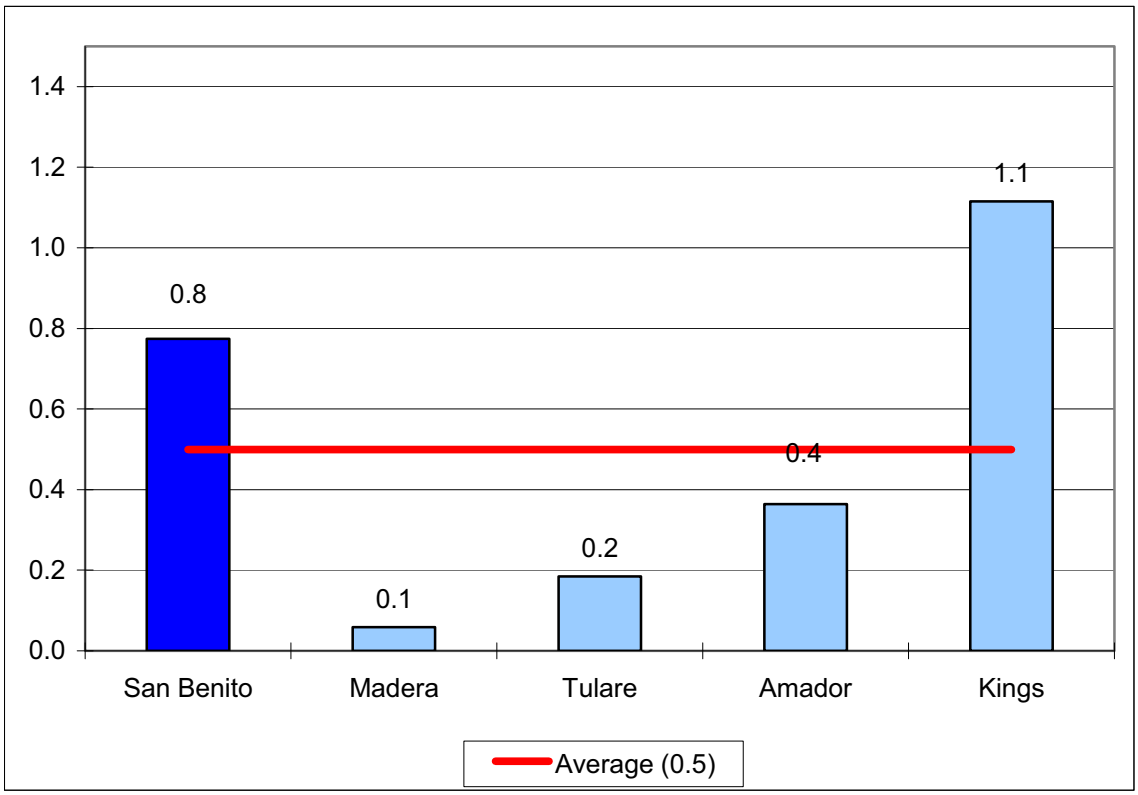
Another measure of transit service effectiveness, Passengers/Vehicle Service Hour, indicates, on average, how many passengers are transported for each mile the vehicle is in service. When an indicator assessing the number of passengers is high, it likely indicates rising fare revenue as well as popularity of the service. At 7.6, the County Express was rated right in the middle of its peers, 13 percent below the peer average. Kings Area Rural Transit carried the most passengers per hour, while Madera County carried the least.

Exhibit 4-7 Fixed-Route Passengers/Vehicle Service Hour



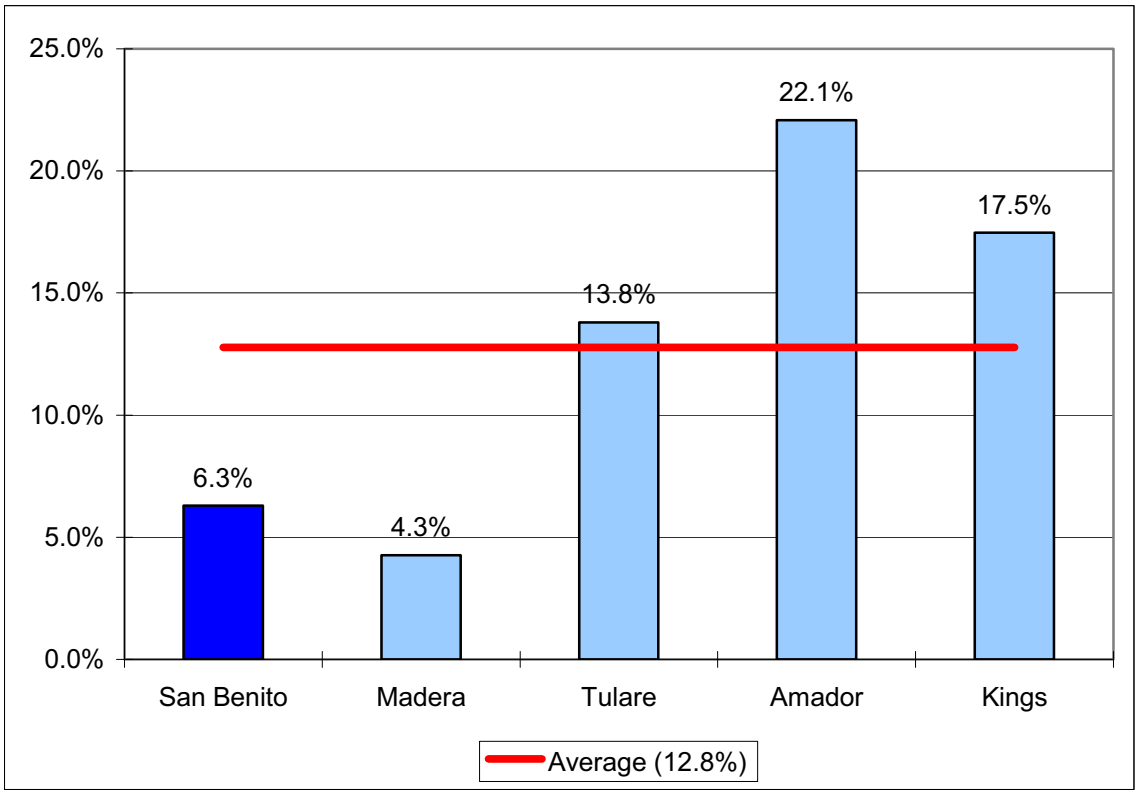
At 0.8, San Benito was second only to Kings County in another measurement of service effectiveness, Passengers/Vehicle Service Mile. The Local Transportation Authority's prior Short Range Transit Plan set a standard of 1.3 Passengers/Vehicle Service Mile. Except for Kings County, none of the peers is close to that figure. San Benito has reached nearly 40 percent of this benchmark. Lowering the benchmark to 1.0 Passengers/Vehicle Service Mile would make achievement of this standard more likely.

Exhibit 4-8 Fixed-Route Passengers/Vehicle Service Mile



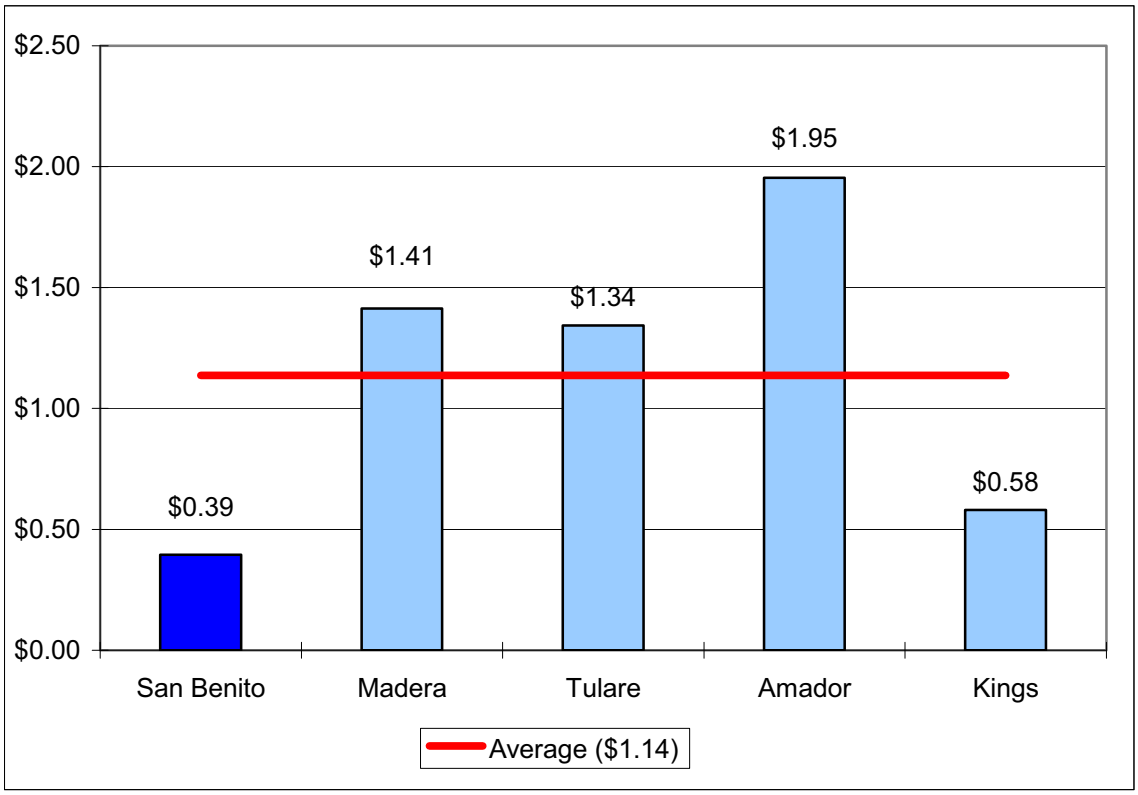
A transit program's farebox recovery ratio illustrates the percentage of operating cost recovered through passenger fares. It is the most common measure of public subsidy of a transit service. County Express' farebox recovery was 6.3 percent, 50 percent below the peer average of 12.8 percent. The prior Short Range Transit Plan set a benchmark of 15 percent. County Express has not only failed to meet the adopted standard, but has since dropped below the Transit Development Act-mandated 10-percent farebox ratio. Bringing the farebox recovery ratio back up to acceptable levels should be a priority for the Local Transportation Authority.

Exhibit 4-9 Fixed-Route Farebox Recovery



Average fare/passenger assesses the average fare received per ride once all discounted fare media and free rides have been factored in. County Express' average fare is lowest amongst the peers (66 percent below the peer average). However, this figure is just 15 percent less than County Express' fixed-route base fare of 75 cents. Amador's high indicator can be attributed in part to its express route, which has a base fare of $3.50.

Exhibit 4-10 Fixed-Route Average Fare/Passenger



## DIAL-A-RIDE PEER REVIEW

The demand-response peer review compared San Benito's Dial-A-Ride performance within several key indicators for Fiscal Year 2005/06 with those of Madera County, Kings County, and Tulare County. A comparison of San Benito with like-peers reveals the demand-response service is performing within typical parameters.

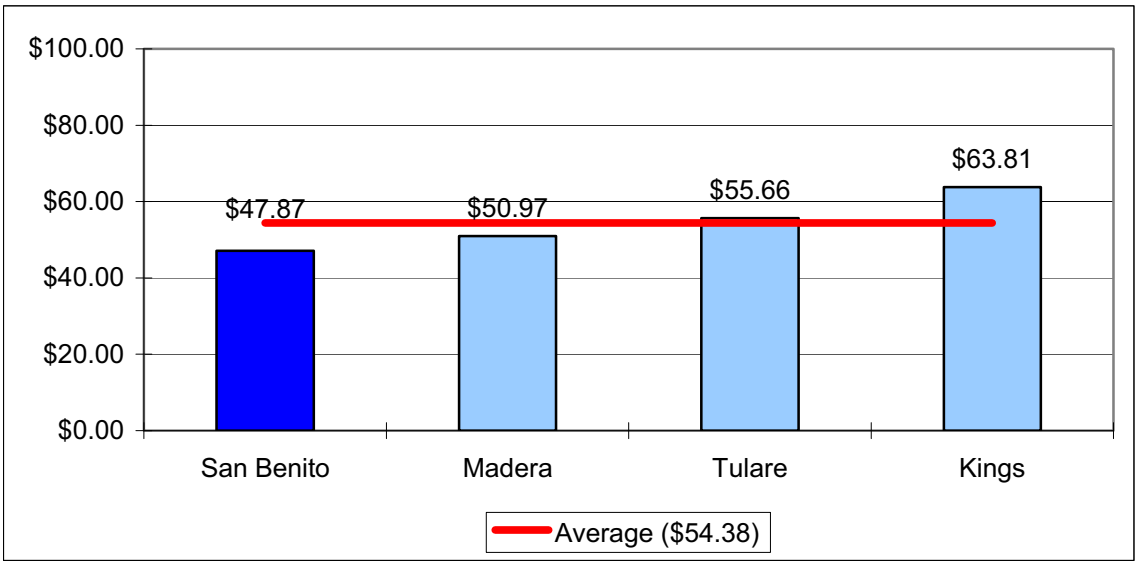
Exhibit 4-11 Demand-Response Key Indicators (FY 2005/06)

| | San Benito County | Madera County | Tulare County | Kings County | Median | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Operating Cost | $696,838 | $450,259 | $103,530 | $941,710 | $573,549 | $548,084 |
| Fare Revenue | $48,869 | $56,581 | $9,925 | $44,514 | $46,692 | $39,972 |
| Vehicle Service Hours (VSH) | 14,556 | 8,834 | 1,860 | 14,757 | 11,695 | 10,002 |
| Vehicle Service Miles (VSM) | 211,659 | 147,135 | 15,801 | 148,456 | 147,796 | 130,763 |
| Passengers | 65,465 | 40,538 | 17,806 | 43,733 | 42,136 | 41,886 |
| Total Fleet | 10 | 5 | | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| Peak Fleet | 4 | 5 | | 8 | 5 | 6 |
| | | | | | | |
| Operating Cost/VSH | $47.87 | $50.97 | $55.66 | $63.81 | $53.32 | $54.58 |
| Operating Cost/VSM | $3.29 | $3.06 | $6.55 | $6.34 | $4.82 | $4.81 |
| Operating Cost/Passenger | $10.64 | $11.11 | $5.81 | $21.53 | $10.88 | $12.27 |
| Passengers/VSH | 4.5 | 4.6 | 9.6 | 3.0 | 4.5 | 5.4 |
| Passengers/VSM | 0.3 | 0.3 | 1.1 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.5 |
| Farebox Recovery | 7.0% | 12.6% | 9.6% | 4.7% | 8.3% | 8.5% |
| Average Fare/Passenger | $0.75 | $1.40 | $0.56 | $1.02 | $0.88 | $0.93 |

## Service Efficiency

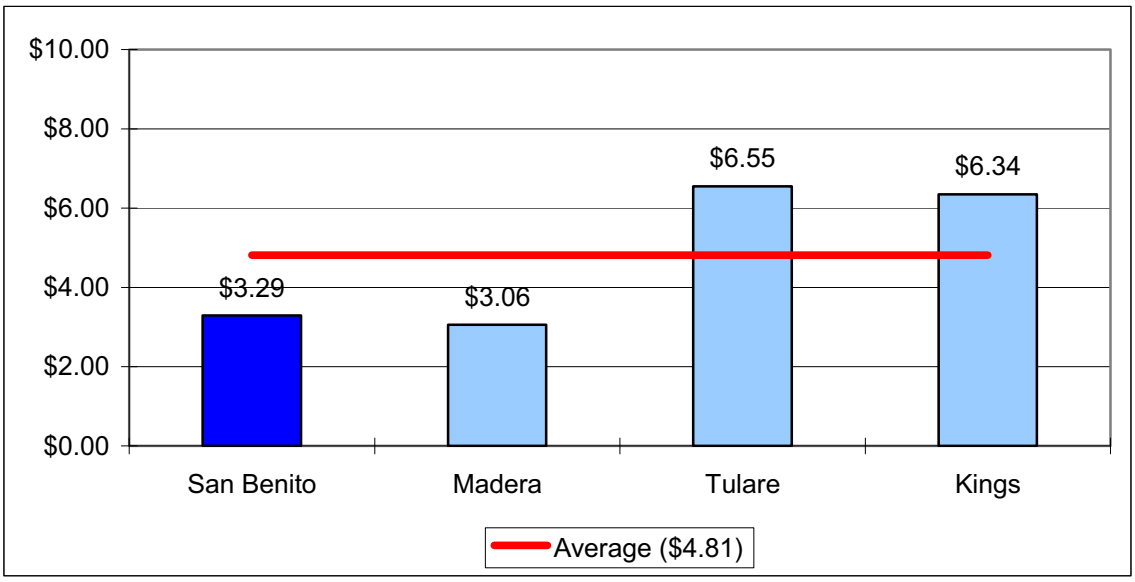
The Operating Cost/Vehicle Service Hour indicator scored well against like-peers. County Express was the lowest, 13.4 percent below the peer average. This can be attributed to lower annual operating costs and fewer revenue hours. No standard was set for this indicator in the prior Short Range Transit Plan. In light of current performance, it is recommended the County set an interim benchmark of not more than $48.00/Vehicle Service Hour. In addition, the Local Transportation Authority should re-evaluate this indicator at the six-month point within the soon-to-be-executed operations contract.

Exhibit 4-12 Dial-A-Ride Operating Cost/Vehicle Service Hour



Operating Cost/Vehicle Service Mile is another measure of cost effectiveness. San Benito scored second-highest among its peers, 31.6 percent below the peer average. Madera County's performance was only slightly better.

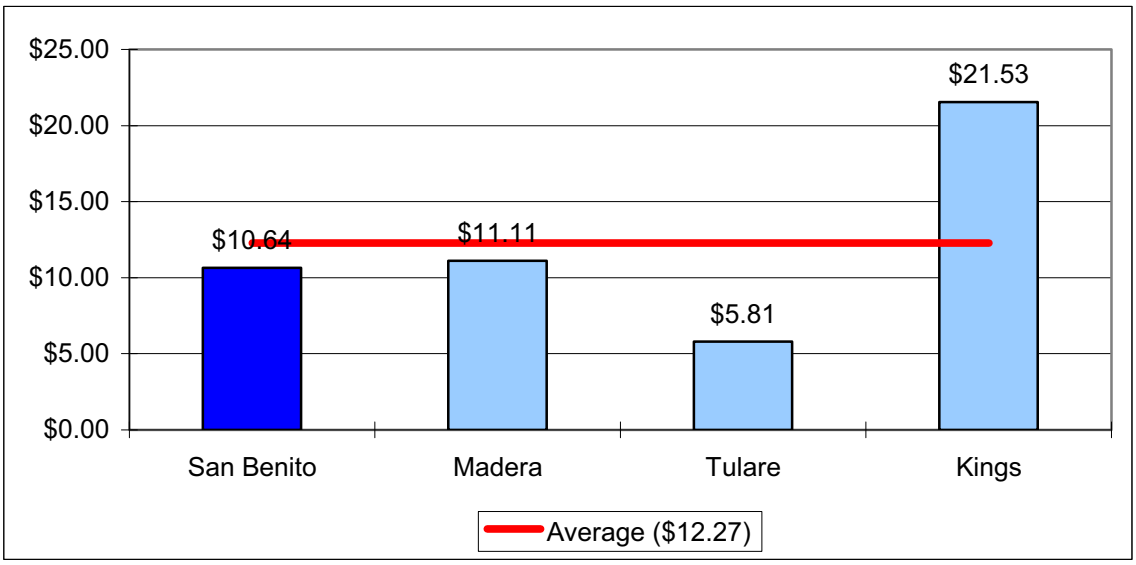
Exhibit 4-13 Dial-A-Ride Operating Cost/Vehicle Service Mile



## Service Effectiveness

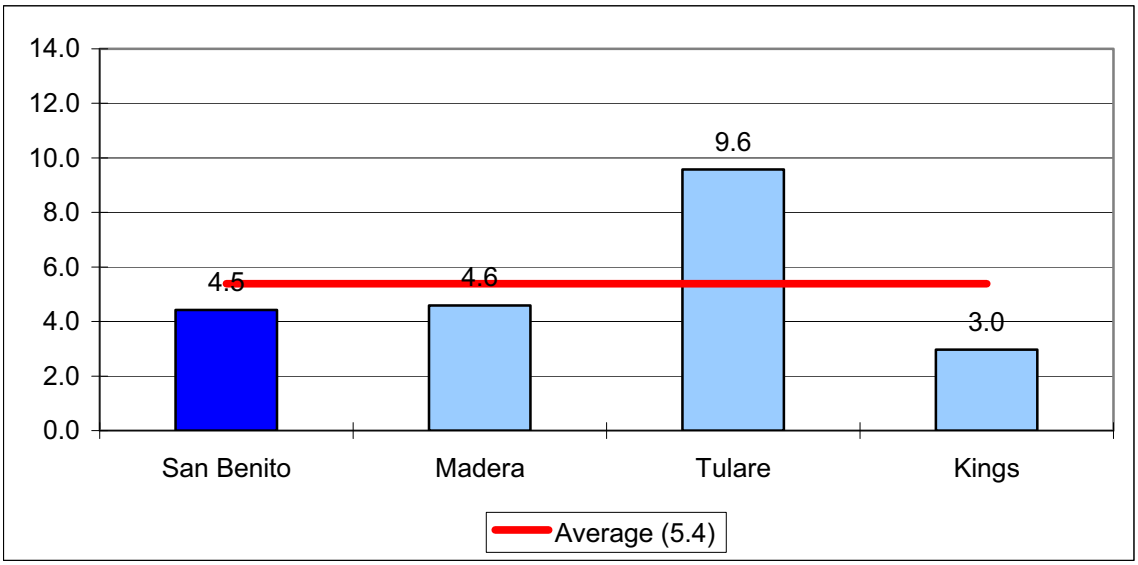
San Benito's Dial-A-Ride has an Operating Cost/Passenger indicator of $10.64, 13.3 percent below the peer average. County Express is performing well because it has significantly higher ridership than like-peers and a relatively low operating cost. With an operating cost much higher than County Express and 20,000 fewer passengers annually, Kings Area Rural Transit Dial-A-Ride has the highest Operating Cost/Passenger (43 percent above the peer average).

Exhibit 4-14 Dial-A-Ride Operating Cost/Passenger



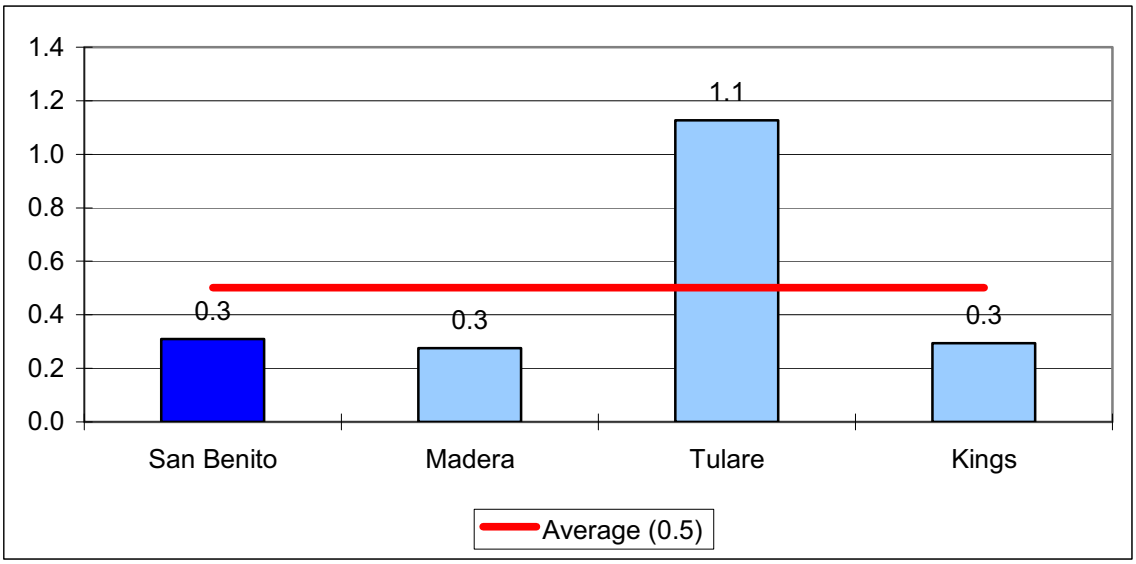
In terms of service effectiveness, Dial-A-Ride carried 18.5 percent fewer passengers than the peer average. While the service experienced high ridership, that figure was offset by high vehicle service hours. The prior Short Range Transit Plan set a benchmark of 5.0 Passengers/Vehicle Service Hour. In light of recent performance trends, raising this benchmark to 10.0 would be appropriate.

Exhibit 4-15 Dial-A-Ride Passengers/Vehicle Service Hours



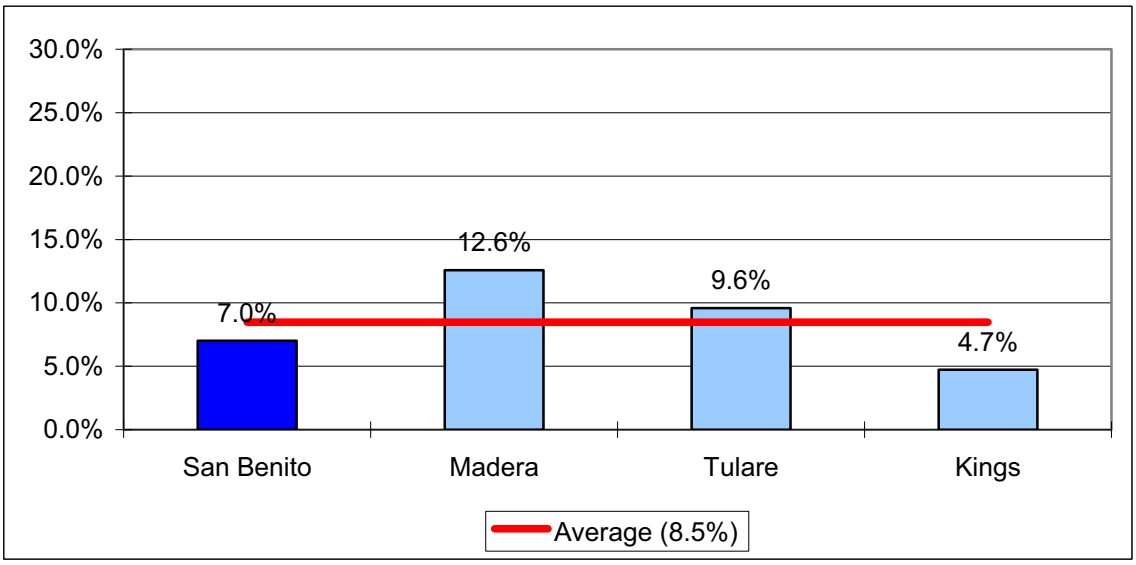
Dial-A-Ride's Passengers/Vehicle Service Mile indicator mirrors those of Madera and Kings Counties. Tulare County has an unusually high indicator, resulting in a skewed average. Tulare's high indicator was due to having 2,000 more passengers than vehicle service miles for FY 2005/06.

Exhibit 4-16 Dial-A-Ride Passengers/Vehicle Service Miles



The farebox recovery ratio for County Express Dial-A-Ride was 17.6 percent below the peer average of 8.5 percent. Kings County had the lowest farebox recovery ratio (just under five percent). The prior Short Range Transit Plan set a benchmark of 12 percent. In light of recent performance, it is recommended this standard be adjusted to 10 percent, the Transportation Development Act threshold. Of the peers, only Madera County is performing above the Transportation Development Act-mandated level.

Exhibit 4-17 Dial-A-Ride Farebox Recovery



Dial-A-Ride collected an average fare of seventy-five cents per passenger. This indicator was 19.4 percent lower than the already-low average of 93 cents. The prior Short Range Transit Plan set a subsidy per passenger benchmark of not greater than ten dollars. It is recommended the benchmark be lowered to a goal of six dollars per passenger.

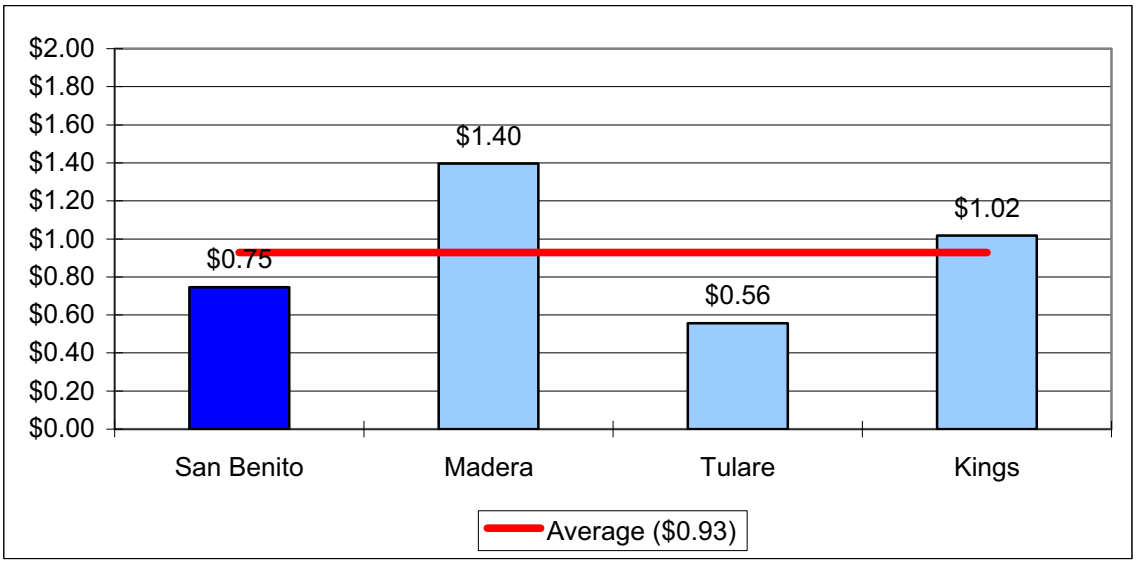



Exhibit 4-18 Dial-A-Ride Average Fare/Passenger