

#33 Dos Rios

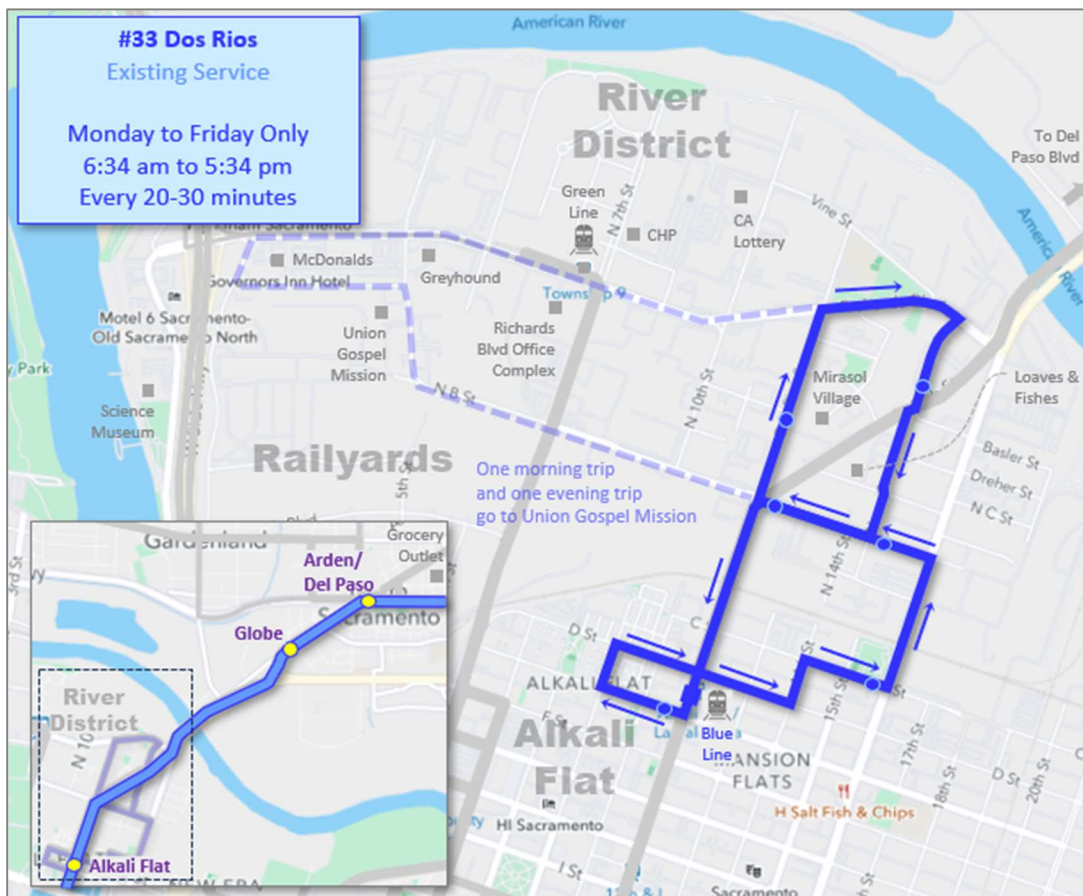
Proposed Changes – Extend evening hours so that the last trip departs Alkali Flat station at approximately 6:44 pm, providing a connection with Blue Line trains arriving at 6:38 and 6:39 pm, contingent upon securing approximately \$115,000 of grant funds.

Background – On November 13, 2023, the SacRT Board voted to not designate approximately \$10 million to close a funding gap for the Dos Rios light rail station project and keep the project on track for completion before expiration of a \$17 million Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) grant from the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC). In coordination with the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA), SacRT developed potential improvements to Route 33 as one of several potential alternative projects that would benefit the Dos Rios area and the broader River District, which could be funded with the \$17 million and fully spent by June 30, 2027.

The decision of November 13, 2023 was ultimately reversed by the SacRT Board on January 8, 2024, so TCC funds are no longer potentially available for Route 33. However, in consultation with SHRA two elements of the TCC grant were found to be infeasible: Transit Passes for Boys & Girls Club and Bike Share. If approved by SGC, \$115,000 of grant funds originally designated for those two projects would instead be available to fund Route 33 service improvements. The proposed improvements to Route 33 would increase operating cost by approximately \$54,000 per year, so the \$115,000 in grant funds could cover a little over two years of the additional service.



Route History - Route 33 was created in 2004 as a shuttle from the Alkali Flat station to the Dos Rios area to essentially fill a gap in the light rail network, i.e., the lack of a Blue Line station in the Richards Blvd area. SacRT's Short Range Transit Plan (S RTP) assumes Route 33 will be eliminated once the Dos Rios station is constructed, which would save approximately \$535,000 per year in current dollars.



Public Engagement – In anticipation of the potential cancellation of the Dos Rios station project, SHRA and several partnering community-based organizations began to conduct public engagement several months ago on potential alternative projects that might benefit the area and be eligible for TCC grant funds. This process led to the interest in improvements to Route 33, including later evening service, weekend service, and an extension west on Richards Blvd.

Following the SacRT Board's decision on November 13, SacRT staff immediately began conducting ride-alongs and other site visits to observe the route's performance and solicit community input on board the route and in Mirasol Village, to supplement the effort led by SHRA and assure adequate SacRT involvement in the public input process. This

included three visits to Mirasol Village, a series of conversations with the property manager and several long-time residents, phone discussions with other residents and employees, discussions with all three regular operators and conversations with a number of long-time passengers. SacRT's findings were largely in agreement with those of SHRA and partner groups.

Public Engagement Results - The two most commonly-observed groups of users on Route 33 are: (1) visitors to Loaves and Fishes, and nearby social services in the B Street area; and (2) residents at Mirasol Village, on Dos Rios St and Richard Blvd. Residents of Mirasol Village expressed a number of transportation needs, including the following, broken down by direction:

- *West* – Many residents currently walk west on Richards Blvd, since there's no bus service. A key destinations is the transfer point to #11 Truxel, which takes people to Bel Air in Natomas, Walmart and other shopping on Truxel, and Natomas High School. Other destinations include McDonalds and other food services farther west on Richards Blvd.
- *South* – Many residents also travel south, via Alkali Flat light rail station, for example, to Target on Broadway, Safeway on S Street, or other destinations downtown.
- *Northeast* – Some residents like to shop at Grocery Outlet on Del Paso Blvd or to Grant High School (via a transfer to Route 15). Arden Way is also a transfer point to several other SacRT bus routes used to get to various destinations throughout the region.



Other input captured from bus operators, customers, and first-hand observations included the following:

- *Weekend Service* - Since the introduction of Route 33 over twenty years ago, the area has grown and developed. The focus of the route was originally limited to daytime travel to social services, but with the residential population growing, weekend service is even more needed than ever.
- *Evening Service* - Many of the visitors to the area take advantage of daytime services, and the 5:34 pm end time was reasonable for many of those customers, but with the growing residential population, evening service is also needed, for example, so residents can complete errands and attend meetings and other social functions.
- *SmaRT Ride* - SmaRT Ride already serves Mirasol Village with a single hot spot, which is useful, but it would be more useful if the hot spot was enlarged to include one or two other bus stops where residents are used to boarding Route 33. (This is something staff is evaluating separately and independently.)



A follow-up visit to Mirasol Village was made on Wednesday, November 15, where staff shared project status and conceptual plans with several residents, and gathered additional input, including:

- *#11 Evening Service* – Currently, the last trip on Route 11 to Natomas comes through the area around 7:00 pm. If SacRT extends evening hours on Route 33 to approximately 9:30 pm, it would make sense to do the same to Route 11.
- *Wheelchair Capacity* – The cutaway bus currently used on Route 33 has two wheelchair spaces, but the space between them is not wide enough to easily accommodate two modern larger-sized wheelchairs at the same time.
- *Wheelchair Pass-ups* – Because of the existing capacity problems, it is crucial to keep Route 33 frequency at every 20 minutes or better. If it was lengthened to every 30 minutes, there would likely be an increase in wheelchair pass-ups, and a longer wait for a wheelchair customer for the next bus.
- *Evening Connections* – For the potential new schedule for Route 33, in the evening, it is important to have well-timed connections with light rail, coming back from Arden/Del Paso, because the train is at longer 30-minute headways at that point.
- *Morning Connections* – In the morning, it will be important for the potential new Route 33 schedule to be well-timed with Route 11 headed north to Natomas, which comes only every 30 minutes, for students who need to get to school on-time.

Demographics – Route 33 riders are estimated to be 70.4 percent minority and 91.7 percent low-income, both well-above systemwide averages for SacRT. Improvements to Route 33 would be favorable from the standpoint of SacRT's Title VI civil rights policy, as discussed in Section II of this report.

Existing Ridership – Today, Route 33 averages approximately 107 daily passenger boardings. Over its 11.5 hour service day, this yields a productivity of 9.3 boardings per vehicle hour, about two-thirds of SacRT's systemwide average of 14.4. While it is below average, it is still approximately double Smart Ride's productivity, and staff has never considered it a candidate for elimination due to poor productivity. Since it uses a smaller bus, and because many passengers use wheelchairs or bring other baggage, the route typically feels relatively full. The route runs a very short-distance loop with just about a half-dozen bus stops, most of which have some activity on every round trip. As mentioned above, wheelchair capacity can be an issue. Wheelchair pass-ups were a common complaint.

Key Parameters – Based on public input collected so far, SacRT’s Operating Budget forecasts for the coming years, existing performance of Route 33 today, and other investments being made in the area (i.e., the Dos Rios station project) staff feels the following are key parameters for any improvements to Route 33:

- *Single Bus* – Service needs to remain operable by a single bus. A longer route on the same frequency or better frequency on the existing route would require a second bus. SacRT does not have any additional buses available in the fleet and, in addition, increasing the operating requirement from one to two buses would approximately double the existing operating cost of \$535,000.
- *High Frequency* – Current frequency is typically every 20 minutes, with occasional gaps where there are 30 minutes between buses (to recover the schedule and allow break time for the operator). Staff believes frequency should remain the same or better, primarily for wheelchair capacity. The route already experiences some wheelchair pass-ups. If it came fewer times per hour, wheelchair pass-ups would be likely to increase, wait time for the next bus would be longer, and there would be a greater likelihood of compounding problems (i.e., getting passed up twice in a row).
- *Cost-Neutrality* – Based on the considerable investments being made in the area (i.e., the Dos Rios station project) improvements to Route 33 should be fully covered by grant funds, at least approximately until the station construction is complete.
- *Limited Term* – In view of the long-term cost-effectiveness of serving the area with an infill light rail station, rather than Route 33, SacRT should consider improvements to Route 33, as well as the route itself, to remain as temporary solutions, to be discontinued when the station is opened.
- *Community Support* – Whatever is put forward must have community support.

Based on these parameters, SacRT could add one extra hour of service on weekdays, but could not add weekend or holiday service, as the increase in operating cost would exceed the grant funds.

East/West Service – Many residents requested Route 33 be extended west on Richards Blvd, to add connections to Route 11, the Green Line, state offices, Greyhound, and eateries. However, if additional miles are added to the route, then the single bus cannot come as frequently, and staff feels it essential to maintain the existing frequency (e.g., for wheelchair capacity). Nevertheless, staff is investigating possible alternative routes that might be faster or more compact, so that at least some new stops could be added without the need for a second bus and operator.

Planning staff will be investigating these options and holding follow-up meetings with residents (e.g., at Mirasol Village), project partners (e.g. SHRA), and advisory committee members for the project.

Fiscal Impact – The proposed improvements to Route 33 would increase direct operating costs by approximately \$53,823 per year.

This would be offset by \$115,000 of new grant revenue, which would cover the increase in operating costs for approximately 28 months, from August 25, 2024 through December 31, 2026, when the grant expires and the station is expected to be complete. Over this 28-month period, this works out to \$49,285 of grant support per year, for a net cost of \$4,538 per year.

If the new service was continued beyond December 31, 2026, SacRT would have to cover the entire \$53,823 annual cost, unless other funding sources could be found.

Note that the fiscal impact from the proposed Route 33 improvements arise strictly from the additional hour of evening service. The potential change in route alignment (e.g., west on Richards Blvd) will be recommended in the final version of this plan only if staff can devise a new route that meets all the key parameters, including continuing to serve all existing key destinations in a convenient and reliable way, remaining operable with just one bus, and having clear community support.

Ridership – The additional hour of service on Route 33 would generate an estimated 3,870 new passenger boardings per year, at a rate of \$14.00 per passenger. If the route alignment is changed, that would likely change ridership, although it is difficult to predict if the results would be favorable or unfavorable, and to what degree.

Future Changes - Historically, SacRT has planned to discontinue Route 33 if and when the Dos Rios light rail station is constructed, because light rail would provide frequent 15-minute service, direct to all the numerous destinations along the Blue Line, and seven-day service with longest-in-the-system hours of service. Staff believes it is appropriate for SacRT to adhere to that plan; however, the current proposal does not commit SacRT to a specific end date for the Route 33 service improvements. Discontinuation of these improvements or of Route 33 altogether would require a new affirmative act of the SacRT Board.