



**RIVERSIDE
COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION**



FY 2022-2024

Triennial Performance Audit of Palo Verde Valley Transit Agency

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Final

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Section I

Introduction

California’s Transportation Development Act (TDA) requires that a triennial performance audit be conducted of public transit entities that receive TDA revenues. The performance audit serves to ensure accountability in the use of public transportation revenue.

The Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) engaged Michael Baker International to conduct the TDA triennial performance audit of the public transit operators under its jurisdiction in Riverside County. This performance audit is conducted for the Palo Verde Valley Transit Agency (PVVTA, Agency, RidePV) covering the most recent triennial period, fiscal years 2021–2022 through 2023-2024.

The purpose of the performance audit is to evaluate the transit agency’s effectiveness and efficiency in its use of TDA funds to provide public transportation in its service area. This evaluation is required as a condition for continued receipt of these funds for public transportation purposes. In addition, the audit evaluates the transit agency’s compliance with the conditions specified in the California Public Utilities Code (PUC). This task involves ascertaining whether the transit agency is meeting the PUC’s reporting requirements. Moreover, the audit includes calculations of transit service performance indicators and a detailed review of the transit administrative functions. From the analysis that has been undertaken, a set of recommendations has been made which is intended to improve the performance of transit operations.

In summary, this TDA audit affords the opportunity for an independent, constructive, and objective evaluation of the organization and its operations that otherwise might not be available. The methodology for the audit included in-person interviews with agency administration and management, collection and review of Agency documents, data analysis, and on-site observations. The *Performance Audit Guidebook for Transit Operators and Regional Transportation Planning Entities*, published by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), was used to guide the development and conduct of the audit.

Overview of the Transit System

Under a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) between the County of Riverside and the City of Blythe executed on January 24, 1978, PVVTA was created to provide demand-response and fixed-route transit service branded as PVVTA to the City of Blythe, the adjacent unincorporated areas of Riverside County, and neighboring Ehrenberg, Arizona. PVVTA currently operates as a deviated fixed-route system. Prior to the creation of PVVTA, there were no transit services in the Palo Verde Valley. PVVTA services are operated under contract by Irvine-based Transportation Concepts, Inc. In March 2024, PVVTA rebranded its public-facing services under the name RidePV, signaling a fresh, modernized approach to transit in the Palo Verde Valley. This new brand emphasizes simplicity, accessibility, and regional pride.

Based on the 2020 US Census, Blythe’s population was 18,317, showing a population decrease of 12 percent since the 2010 US Census. The senior citizen population, comprising residents aged 65 and over, is 9.8 percent. The 2025 population for Blythe is estimated to be 15,400 as reported by the California Department of Finance, Population Estimates for Cities, Counties, and the State, January 1, 2025. The city covers a 26.60-square-mile area.

Agriculturally based and a winter “snowbird” destination, Blythe is located on the California-Arizona border along the Colorado River and serves as a commercial center for eastern Riverside County. The area’s population varies seasonally. The area’s largest employer is the California State Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, which operates the Chuckawalla Valley and Ironwood State Prisons, located approximately 20 miles west of Blythe.

Major highway connections serving Blythe and the Palo Verde Valley are Interstate 10 (I-10), State Route (SR) 78 and US Highway 95. I-10 is the main east–west highway connecting Blythe with the Coachella Valley and Inland Empire to the west and Arizona to the east. SR 78 connects Blythe with the community of Ripley and the Imperial Valley to the southwest. US Highway 95 runs northerly along the Colorado River to Needles. Major arterial streets traversing Blythe include Broadway, Hobsonway, Intake Boulevard, Lovekin Boulevard, and 7th Street.

System Characteristics

PVVTA operates a deviated fixed-route system. The transit system operates Monday through Friday from 5:20 a.m. to 6:25 p.m. and Saturdays from 8:10 a.m. to 12:10 p.m. PVVTA does not operate on Sundays and the following holidays: New Year’s Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents’ Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. Only Silver Route 5 operates the day following Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and New Year’s Eve. Red Route 3 Express does not operate on any observed California state or federal holiday. PVVTA’s deviated fixed-route services during the audit period are summarized in Table I-1.

**Table I-1
PVVTA Route Summary**

Route	Description	Frequency/Operation	Key Time Points
Blue Route 1	City of Blythe Circulator	Weekdays; every 60 minutes; approximately 30 minutes at peak (from 6:25 a.m. to 5:40 p.m.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kmart Transfer Center ▪ Palo Verde High School ▪ 7th Street/Rite Aid ▪ 14th Avenue/7th Street ▪ Juliana Lane at Casa Encinas (must call to request pick up) ▪ Palo Verde Hospital ▪ Civic Center

Route	Description	Frequency/Operation	Key Time Points
Gold Route 2	Palo Verde College Crosstown	Monday through Thursday; every 60 minutes (from 6:45 a.m. to 4:35 p.m.) and Friday; every 60 minutes (from 6:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hobsonway WB/7th Street ▪ Palo Verde Hospital ▪ Civic Center ▪ Kmart Transfer Center ▪ Palo Verde College ▪ 7th Street/Rite Aid ▪ Hobsonway/Intake US 95
Red Route 3 Express	Express California State Prisons	Weekdays; three a.m. peak trips and three p.m. peak trips (from 5:20 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.); no service on Thanksgiving Day, day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Main Street Park & Ride ▪ Palos Verde Hospital ▪ Hobsonway/SR 78 Neighbours (must call to request pick up) ▪ Hobsonway WB/Mesa (must call to request pick up) ▪ Carlton at DPSS (must call to request pick up) ▪ Chuckawalla Valley State Prison ▪ Ironwood State Prison
Green Route 4 Rural Rider	Rural Rider	Weekdays; five round trips (from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Last 5:30 p.m. trip offered upon request only).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 7th Street/Rite Aid ▪ Kmart ▪ Hobsonway/SR 78 Neighbours ▪ Ripley – Desert Rose Apts. ▪ Mesa Verde – Roy Wilson Community Center
Silver Route 5 Saturday & In-Service Holidays	Blythe/Ripley/Mesa Verde	Saturdays & in-service holidays (day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve); three round trips (from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kmart Transfer Center ▪ 7th Street East/Albertsons ▪ Hobsonway/Intake US 95 ▪ Hobsonway/SR-78 Neighbours ▪ Ripley – Desert Rose Apts. ▪ Mesa Verde – Roy Wilson Community Center (must call to request pick up)
Express Route 6	Coachella Valley Connector	One round trip Monday, Wednesday, & Friday (departing Blythe @ 6:30 a.m., returning @ 4:00 p.m.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Main Street Park and Ride ▪ Mesa Verde ▪ Desert Center Post Office ▪ Chiriaco Summit ▪ Hwy 111 @ Flower SunLine Transfer Center ▪ Indio-JFK Hospital

Route	Description	Frequency/Operation	Key Time Points
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rancho Mirage – Eisenhower Med Center ▪ Palm Springs – Desert Regional Med Center

Source: PVVTA

Desert RoadTRIP

Desert RoadTRIP is short for the Desert Road Transportation Reimbursement and Information Project, which is a partnership between PVVTA and the Partnership to Preserve Independent Living for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities. Since 1995, the Desert RoadTRIP program has offered this specialized transit service for seniors 60 years of age and disabled persons living in isolated locations in the Palo Verde Valley and eastern Riverside County, who are unable to drive and do not have access to transportation.

This service utilizes qualified volunteer drivers, who are reimbursed on a mileage basis. The volunteer drivers are required to have a valid driver’s license, a registered vehicle, and auto liability insurance. Each qualified rider identifies his/her own volunteer driver. The driver could be a family friend, neighbor, or another trusted individual known to the rider. The eligible rider files a reimbursement claim based on the mileage traveled during the month with Desert RoadTRIP and, after receiving the claim, reimburses the driver. The reimbursement is paid at \$0.32 per mile. An individual is allowed up to 460 miles per month, and an eligible family is entitled to 690 miles per month. A \$5.00 per one-way trip fee is charged to riders. A 2018 SRTP recommendation is for Desert RoadTRIP to be integrated into the Coachella Valley Connector (formerly the Blythe Wellness Express) to expand the service to Riverside University Medical Center in Moreno Valley and medical services in Loma Linda.

X-Tend-A-Ride

In addition to PVVTA’s fixed route, Coachella Valley Connector, and Desert RoadTRIP services, the X-Tend-A-Ride demand-responsive service operates during special events during the evening or on non-service days. The service is accessible to the public for \$5.00 a trip. It is designed to be a guaranteed ride home service when the regular fixed route is not in operation.

Fares

PVVTA’s fares are structured based on passenger, route, and service type. Multi-trip passes are also available for purchase in person or by mail at the PVVTA operations office at 415 North Main Street in Blythe. The fare structure is summarized in Table I-2.

Table I-2, PVVTA Fare Schedule

Fare Category	Fares
Fixed Route Case Fare – Routes 1, 2, 4, 5	
General Public (Ages 5 to 59 Years Old)	\$1.75
Seniors (Ages 60 and Older)	\$0.85

Fare Category	Fares
Persons with Disabilities (ADA or Medicare Card)	\$0.85
Children (Under 5 Years of Age) First Boarding with Full Fare Adult	Free
Children (Under 5 Years of Age) Second & Third Boarding with Full Fare Adult	\$0.85
Fixed Route Cash Fare – Route 3 Express	
Red Route 3 Express (All Adult Categories)	\$3.50
Route Deviations – All Fixed Routes	
Route Deviations (One Way To/From Route)	\$0.85
DV8-Card (8 One Way Deviation Fares)	\$6.80
Fixed Route Go Passes	
10-Ride Punch Pass (Routes 1, 2, 3 Local & 4 & 5)	\$17.50
Senior/Disabled 10-Ride Punch Pass (Routes 1, 2, 3 Local & 4 & 5)	\$8.50
General Public 31-Day Pass (Routes 1, 2, 3 Local & 4 & 5)	\$45.00
Seniors 31-Day Pass (Routes 1, 2, 3 Local & 4 & 5)	\$30.00
Persons with Disabilities 31-Day Pass (Routes 1, 2, 3 Local & 4 & 5)	\$30.00
Summer Youth Pass (Routes 1, 2, 3 Local, 4 & 5)	\$40.00
10-Ride Punch Pass (Red Route 3 Express)	\$35.00
20-Ride Punch Pass (Red Route 3 Express)	\$70.00
General Public 31-Day Pass (Red Route 3 Express)	\$125.00
Other Cash Fare—X-Tend-A-Ride & Coachella Valley Connection (CVC)	
X-Tend-A-Ride, General Public, Seniors & Persons with Disabilities	\$5.00
CVC, General Public, Seniors & Persons with Disabilities, One-Way	\$10.00
CVC, General Public, Seniors & Persons with Disabilities, Round Trip	\$15.00

Source: PVVTA

During the audit period, PVVTA implemented a fare-free program for all riders as part of a Clean California initiative funded by Caltrans. This was designed to increase ridership, reduce barriers to transit access, and support community revitalization efforts in Blythe and surrounding areas.

Fleet

Nine vehicles were in revenue service during the audit period. In addition, PVVTA has seven support vehicles and three contingency vehicles for emergency usage. Vehicles in the fleet are wheelchair accessible with tie-downs in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). Table I-3 summarizes the PVVTA fleet.

**Table I-3
PVVTA Fleet – Revenue Service**

Year	Make/Model	Quantity	Fuel Type	Seating Capacity
2013	Ford	1	CNG	32 (2 W/C)
2016	Chevrolet	1	Gasoline	18 (2 W/C)
2018	Ford	1	Gasoline	20 (2 W/C)
2018	RAM	1	Gasoline	6 (2 W/C)
2019	Ford	1	Gasoline	20 (2 W/C)
2019	Ford	2	CNG	20 (2 W/C)

Year	Make/Model	Quantity	Fuel Type	Seating Capacity
2019	Ford	1	CNG	14 (2 W/C)
2019	Dodge	1	Gasoline	6 (2 W/C)
Total		9		

Source: PVVTA

Section II

Operator Compliance Requirements

This section of the audit report contains the analysis of PVVTA’s ability to comply with state requirements for continued receipt of TDA funds. The evaluation uses the Caltrans guidebook *Performance Audit Guidebook for Transit Operators and Regional Transportation Planning Agencies* to assess transit operators. The guidebook contains a checklist of 11 measures taken from relevant sections of the PUC and the California Code of Regulations. Each of these requirements is discussed in the table below, including a description of the system’s efforts to comply with the requirements. In addition, the findings from the compliance review are described in the text following the table.

Table II-1 Operator Compliance Requirements Matrix		
Operator Compliance Requirements	Reference	Compliance Efforts
The transit operator has submitted annual reports to the RTPA based upon the Uniform System of Accounts and Records established by the State Controller. Report is due within seven (7) months after the end of the fiscal year (on or before January 31). The report shall contain underlying data from audited financial statements prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, if this data is available.	Public Utilities Code, Section 99243	Completion/submittal dates: FY 2022: January 30, 2023 FY 2023: January 30, 2024 FY 2024: January 30, 2025 Conclusion: Complied.
The operator has submitted annual fiscal and compliance audits to the RTPA and to the State Controller within 180 days following the end of the fiscal year (Dec. 27) or has received the appropriate 90-day extension by the RTPA allowed by law.	Public Utilities Code, Section 99245	Completion/submittal dates: FY 2022: January 25, 2023 FY 2023: March 27, 2024 FY 2024: March 31, 2025 A 90-day extension was granted by the RCTC pursuant to the TDA statute. Conclusion: Complied.
The CHP has, within the 13 months prior to each TDA claim submitted by an operator, certified the operator’s compliance with Vehicle Code Section	Public Utilities Code, Section 99251 B	PVVTA, through its contract operator, participates in the California Highway Patrol (CHP) Transit Operator Compliance

Table II-1 Operator Compliance Requirements Matrix		
Operator Compliance Requirements	Reference	Compliance Efforts
1808.1 following a CHP inspection of the operator’s terminal.		<p>Program in which the CHP conducted inspections within the 13 months prior to each TDA claim.</p> <p>Inspections were conducted at the PVVTA operations facility located at 415 North Main Street, Blythe.</p> <p>Inspection dates applicable to the audit period were July 7, 2021; July 6, 2022; July 18, 2023; and May 21, 2024.</p> <p>Inspections were rated satisfactory.</p> <p>Conclusion: Complied.</p>
The operator’s claim for TDA funds is submitted in compliance with rules and regulations adopted by the RTPA for such claims.	Public Utilities Code, Section 99261	<p>As a condition of approval, PVVTA’s annual claims for Local Transportation Funds (LTF) and State Transit Assistance are submitted in compliance with the rules and regulations adopted by RCTC.</p> <p>Conclusion: Complied.</p>
If an operator serves urbanized and non-urbanized areas, it has maintained a ratio of fare revenues to operating costs at least equal to the ratio determined by the rules and regulations adopted by the RTPA.	Public Utilities Code, Section 99270.1	<p>This requirement is not applicable, as PVVTA only serves a non-urbanized area.</p> <p>Conclusion: Not Applicable.</p>
The operator’s operating budget has not increased by more than 15% over the preceding year, nor is there a substantial increase or decrease in the	Public Utilities Code, Section 99266	<p>Percentage increase in PVVTA’s transit operating budget (less depreciation):</p>

Table II-1 Operator Compliance Requirements Matrix		
Operator Compliance Requirements	Reference	Compliance Efforts
scope of operations or capital budget provisions for major new fixed facilities unless the operator has reasonably supported and substantiated the change(s).		<p>FY 2022: +11.3% FY 2023: +26.6% FY 2024: -6.9%</p> <p>The increases in the operating budget are attributed to the implementation of the Coachella Valley Connector and higher operations contract costs.</p> <p><i>Source: PVVTA TDA Article 4 Financial Statements (Audited) for FYs 2021–2024</i></p> <p>Conclusion: Complied.</p>
The operator’s definitions of performance measures are consistent with Public Utilities Code Section 99247, including (a) operating cost, (b) operating cost per passenger, (c) operating cost per vehicle service hour, (d) passengers per vehicle service hour, (e) passengers per vehicle service mile, (f) total passengers, (g) transit vehicle, (h) vehicle service hours, (i) vehicle service miles, and (j) vehicle service hours per employee.	Public Utilities Code, Section 99247	<p>PVVTA’s definition of performance is consistent with PUC Section 99247. A review of trip sheets and TransTrack reports generated during the audit period indicates that correct performance data are being collected.</p> <p>Conclusion: Complied.</p>
If the operator serves an urbanized area, it has maintained a ratio of fare revenues to operating costs at least equal to one-fifth (20 percent), unless it is in a county with a population of less than 500,000, in which case it must maintain a ratio of fare revenues to operating costs of at least equal to three-twentieths (15 percent), if so determined by the RTPA.	Public Utilities Code, Sections 99268.2, 99268.3, 99268.12, 99270.1	<p>This requirement is not applicable, as PVVTA only serves a non-urbanized area.</p> <p>Conclusion: Not Applicable.</p>

Table II-1 Operator Compliance Requirements Matrix		
Operator Compliance Requirements	Reference	Compliance Efforts
<p>If the operator serves a rural area, or provides exclusive services to elderly and disabled persons, it has maintained a ratio of fare revenues to operating costs at least equal to one-tenth (10 percent).</p>	<p>Public Utilities Code, Sections 99268.2, 99268.4, 99268.5</p>	<p>Operating ratios for PVVTA using audited data including local support revenue and exempting new services were as follows:</p> <p>FY 2022: 10.63% FY 2023: 13.72% FY 2024: 10.81%</p> <p>PVVTA is subject to a system-wide farebox standard of 10 percent.</p> <p>*Assembly Bill (AB) 90 prohibits the imposition of a penalty on an operator that does not maintain the required ratio of fare revenues to operating cost during FYs 2019–20, 2020–21, and 2021–22.</p> <p>*AB 149 extends the penalty exemption through FY 2022–23 and authorizes transit operators to include federal grant funds as local funds for the purpose of computing fare revenue ratios. This bill, until July 1, 2026, would exempt an operator from specified requirements related to fare box ratios and eligibility standards for a fiscal year in which the operator expended from local funding, as defined, an amount for transit operations not less than the amount the operator expended from local funding for transit operations during FY 2018–19.</p>

Table II-1 Operator Compliance Requirements Matrix		
Operator Compliance Requirements	Reference	Compliance Efforts
		<p><i>Source: PVVTA TDA Article 4 Financial Statements (Audited) for FYs 2022–2024</i></p> <p>Conclusion: Complied.</p>
<p>The current cost of the operator’s retirement system is fully funded with respect to the officers and employees of its public transportation system, or the operator is implementing a plan approved by the RTPA which will fully fund the retirement system within 40 years.</p>	<p>Public Utilities Code, Section 99271</p>	<p>To be eligible for TDA funds, the annual TDA claims form requires a sign-off from the transit claimant to comply with standard assurances, one of which is that PVVTA’s retirement system is funded.</p> <p>PVVTA contracts with a private provider for operations, but the Agency participates in the California Public Employees’ Retirement (CalPERS) System covering all regular Agency employees. Participation in CalPERS aligns with the City of Blythe’s retirement program.</p> <p>Conclusion: Complied.</p>
<p>If the operator receives state transit assistance funds, the operator makes full use of funds available to it under the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964 before TDA claims are granted.</p>	<p>California Code of Regulations, Section 6754(a)(3)</p>	<p>As a recipient of State Transit Assistance funds, PVVTA utilizes federal funds that are available to the Agency, as reported in the Transit Operator Financial Transactions Reports and fiscal and compliance audits as follows:</p> <p>FY 2022: \$406,203 (Operations) FY 2023: \$464,682 (Operations) FY 2024: \$286,493 (Operations) \$199,509 (American Rescue Plan Act-ARPA)</p>

Table II-1 Operator Compliance Requirements Matrix		
Operator Compliance Requirements	Reference	Compliance Efforts
		<i>Source: PVVTA TDA Article 4 Financial Statements (Audited) for FYs 2022–2024</i> Conclusion: Complied.

Findings and Observations from Operator Compliance Requirements Matrix

1. Of the compliance requirements pertaining to PVVTA, the operator fully complied with all nine applicable requirements. Two additional compliance requirements did not apply to PVVTA (i.e., intermediate farebox recovery ratio under PUC 99270.1 and exclusive urbanized farebox recovery ratio).
2. Based on the farebox calculation in the annual TDA Article 4 Financial Statements (*Audited*), PVVTA's farebox recovery ratio met or exceeded the required minimum standard of 10 percent during the audit period. The system-wide farebox recovery ratios were 10.63 percent in FY 2022, 13.72 percent in FY 2023, and 10.81 percent in FY 2024.¹ Local support revenue such as from CNG fuel sales, private contributions, Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District (MDAQMD) and the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) included in the ratio helped to prop up the farebox calculation.
3. Through its contract operator, PVVTA participates in the CHP Transit Operator Compliance Program in which the CHP has conducted inspections within the 13 months prior to each TDA claim. The CHP inspection reports submitted for review were found to be satisfactory.
4. The operating budget exhibited moderate fluctuations during the audit period. PVVTA saw an increase of 11.3 percent in the operating budget in FY 2022 followed by a 26.6 percent increase in FY 2023. In FY 2024, the budget decreased by 6.9 percent. The increases in the operating budget are attributed to the implementation of the Coachella Valley Connector and higher operations contract costs.

¹ AB 90, passed into law and signed by the governor in June 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic impacts, prohibits the imposition of penalties on a transit operator that does not maintain the required ratio of fare revenues to operating cost during FY 2019–20 or FY 2020–21. AB 149 extends the penalty exemption through FY 2022–23 and authorizes transit operators to include federal grant funds as local funds for the purpose of computing fare revenue ratios. This bill, until July 1, 2026, would exempt an operator from specified requirements related to fare box ratios and eligibility standards for a fiscal year in which the operator expended from local funding, as defined, an amount for transit operations not less than the amount the operator expended from local funding for transit operations during FY 2018–19.

Section III

Prior Triennial Performance Recommendations

PVVTA’s efforts to implement the recommendations made in the prior triennial audit are examined in this section of the report. For this purpose, each prior recommendation for the Agency is described, followed by a discussion of PVVTA’s efforts to implement the recommendation. Conclusions concerning the extent to which the recommendations have been adopted by the Agency are then presented.

Prior Recommendation 1

Consult and collaborate with peer transit agencies regarding the implementation of zero emission vehicle technologies.

Background: PVVTA had been planning for the implementation of zero emission vehicles (ZEV) and infrastructure in accordance with the California Air Resources Board mandates. The Agency was awarded a \$65,000 voucher from the Volkswagen (VW) Environmental Mitigation Trust for the procurement of two ZEVs to be delivered in FY 2023 and FY 2024. PVVTA also approached Southern California Edison about the installation of electric charging infrastructure at its facilities. As the Agency moves towards the adoption of ZEV, it was suggested that it reach out to peer agencies in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, which could prove helpful in the evaluation process. Those peer agencies would include neighboring transit systems such as the SunLine Transit Agency and the Victor Valley Transit Authority.

Actions taken by PVVTA

During the audit period, PVVTA actively collaborated with peer agencies—including SunLine Transit Agency and Riverside Transit Agency (RTA)—to advance the implementation of ZEV technologies as part of its long-term fleet transition strategy, which may include future hydrogen infrastructure development in Blythe. PVVTA joined a county-wide ZEV planning initiative led by RCTC and supported by California Air Resources Board (CARB) and the Center for Transportation and the Environment (CTE). This collaborative effort helped small transit agencies like PVVTA align with CARB’s regulatory timelines and technical requirements.

CARB has provided PVVTA with technical guidance on ZEV technologies and deployment strategies; policy updates to ensure PVVTA’s compliance with evolving state regulations; opportunities for stakeholder engagement, including workshops and webinars focused on ZEV implementation.

Conclusion

This recommendation has been implemented.

Prior Recommendation 2

Pursue targeted marketing efforts and rebranding of the service.

Background: PVVTA has been tasked with serving the mobility needs of eastern Riverside County residents, particularly in the City of Blythe. In recent years, the Agency implemented route restructuring and the Coachella Valley Connector (formerly the Blythe Wellness Express) route to the Coachella Valley to serve the needs of riders more efficiently. PVVTA had been contemplating strategies to improve its messaging and outreach to the community. With the recent development of the Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA), PVVTA included a marketing component that identified how the Agency could raise its profile and attract new ridership. Elements under consideration included a rebranding initiative. It was suggested that PVVTA work with the COA consultant to develop a brand identity for the transit service that could center around a new name, logo, or new vehicle procurement. This could be done in concert with the implementation of ZEVs, smaller-sized vehicles, and mobile fare collection.

Actions taken by PVVTA

In 2024, PVVTA officially rebranded its public transit service as RidePV. This rebranding was part of a broader strategy to modernize the agency’s image and make the service more recognizable and appealing to the community. In addition, PVVTA hired a marketing consultant, who previously worked for the SunLine Transit Agency in the Coachella Valley to assist with developing more targeted marketing strategies.

As part of its broader marketing and community engagement strategy, PVVTA partnered with the City of Blythe to implement the Clean California Beautify Blythe Project, a transformative initiative funded by a \$2.9 million grant from the Caltrans Clean California Grant Program. Transit-Focused Infrastructure Enhancements included ADA-accessible bus shelters with solar lighting and trash receptacles were installed throughout the RidePV service area; upgrades to the Main Street Park & Ride Transit Center that included fencing, solar lighting, and an outdoor public engagement space; and PVVTA’s CNG Station was enhanced with a decorative wall, perimeter solar lighting, and a public restroom. By integrating RidePV branding into upgraded infrastructure, the agency reinforced its new identity.

Conclusion

This recommendation has been implemented.

Prior Recommendation 3

Revisit fare structure in light of low farebox recovery from passenger revenue.

Background: The prior audit noted that even though fares were adjusted by PVVTA, the farebox ratio without local support for deviated fixed-route service remained well below the TDA standard of 10

percent, even before the pandemic. On June 20, 2018, the PVVTA Board of Directors adopted a new fare schedule; new fare rates went into effect on July 1, 2019. Trends in fare recovery and recent state legislation enable non-fare revenue to be included in the ratio; however, it was suggested that PVVTA evaluate its fare policy and test fare scenarios in complying with the farebox recovery standard. The COA under development could provide operational insight into transit services that could be aligned with the various fares charged on the route. PVVTA should balance the level of fare pricing with its ridership market and undertake a review to verify whether rebalancing is needed to better align fares and ridership with the ability to meet the recovery standard.

Actions taken by PVVTA

During the audit period, PVVTA implemented a fare-free program for all riders as part of a Clean California initiative funded by Caltrans. This was designed to increase ridership, reduce barriers to transit access, and support community revitalization efforts in Blythe and surrounding areas. The agency has also been applying funds from LCTOP and the MDAQMD to support its free fare initiative. PVVTA has still been charging fares for trip deviations and the TRIP program. However, the agency's administration is looking to conduct a fare study for implementation in the future.

Conclusion

This recommendation has not been implemented and is being forwarded in this audit for full implementation and future consideration.

Section IV

TDA Performance Indicators

This section reviews PVVTA’s performance in providing transit service to the community in an efficient and effective manner. TDA requires that at least five specific performance indicators be reported, which are contained in the following tables. Farebox recovery ratio is not one of the five specific indicators but is a requirement for continued TDA funding. Therefore, farebox calculation is also included. Two additional performance indicators, operating cost per mile and average fare per passenger, are included as well. Findings from the analysis are contained in the section following the tables.

Table IV-1 provides the performance indicators for PVVTA system-wide. Graphs are also provided to depict the trends in the indicators. It is noted that operating costs and fare revenues are based on audited figures. Operating costs exclude depreciation and extension of services permissible by the TDA. Fare revenue generated from service extensions is also exempt.

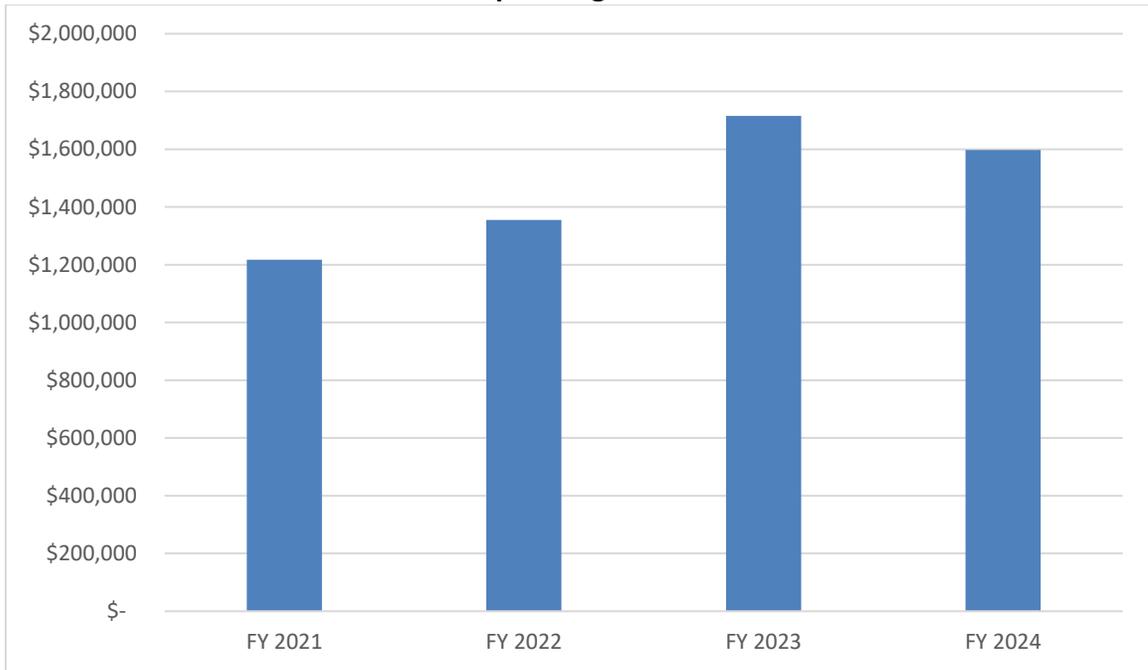
**Table IV-1
PVVTA TDA Performance Indicators**

Performance Data and Indicators	FY 2021	Audit Period			% Change FY 2021- 2024
		FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	
Operating Cost (less depreciation)	\$1,217,303	\$1,354,903	\$1,715,058	\$1,597,221	31.2%
Operating Costs Related to New Services/Expansion	\$451,068	\$488,456	\$0	\$0	-100.0%
Adjusted Operating Cost	\$766,235	\$866,447	\$1,715,058	\$1,597,221	108.5%
Total Passengers	17,892	21,404	39,447	39,657	121.6%
Vehicle Service Hours	5,032	5,536	8,245	8,770	74.3%
Vehicle Service Miles	121,463	135,540	171,939	173,606	42.9%
Employee FTE's	12	13	13	13	8.3%
Passenger Fares	\$39,572	\$44,835	\$98,326	\$61,948	56.5%
Auxiliary Revenue (Advertising, Interest, etc.)	\$112,712	\$67,758	\$136,954	\$110,719	-1.8%
Total Revenue	\$152,284	\$112,593	\$235,280	\$172,667	13.4%
Fare Revenue Related to New Services/Expansion	\$15,894	\$20,463	\$0	\$0	-100.0%
Adjusted Passenger Fare Revenue	\$136,390	\$92,130	\$235,280	\$172,667	26.6%
Operating Cost per Passenger	\$68.04	\$63.30	\$43.48	\$40.28	-40.8%
Operating Cost per Vehicle Service Hour	\$241.91	\$244.74	\$208.01	\$182.12	-24.7%
Operating Cost per Vehicle Service Mile	\$10.02	\$10.00	\$9.97	\$9.20	-8.2%
Passengers per Vehicle Service Hour	3.6	3.9	4.8	4.5	27.2%
Passengers per Vehicle Service Mile	0.15	0.16	0.23	0.23	55.1%
Vehicle Service Hours per Employee	419.3	425.8	634.2	674.6	60.9%
Average Fare per Passenger	\$2.21	\$2.09	\$2.49	\$1.56	-29.4%
Fare Recovery Ratio	3.25%	3.31%	5.73%	3.88%	19.3%
Fare Recovery Ratio w/Auxiliary Revenue	17.80%	10.63%	13.72%	10.81%	-39.3%
Percentage Change in Consumer Price Index (CPI-All Items & Consumers, LA-Riverside-Orange Co.)	3.31%	2.45%	2.85%	8.24%	

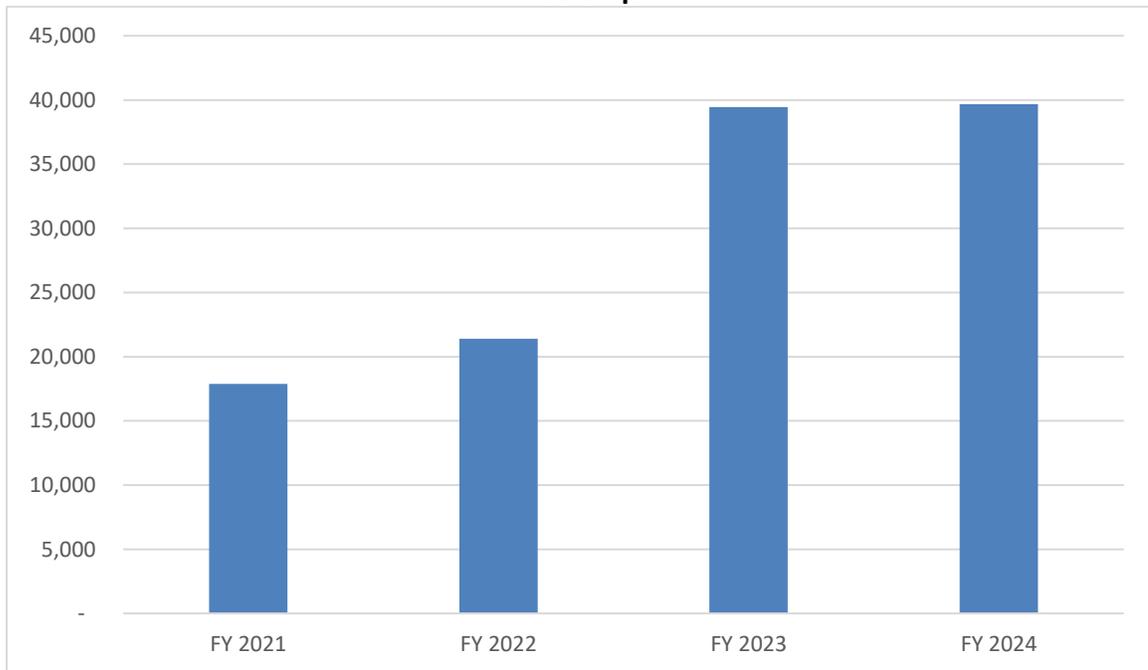
Operating costs exclude depreciation, mobility services, and extension of services, permissible by TDA. Fare revenue excludes service extensions.

Source: Annual Fiscal & Compliance Audits, Table 2.1 PVVTA SRTP, Transit Operators Financial Transactions Reports

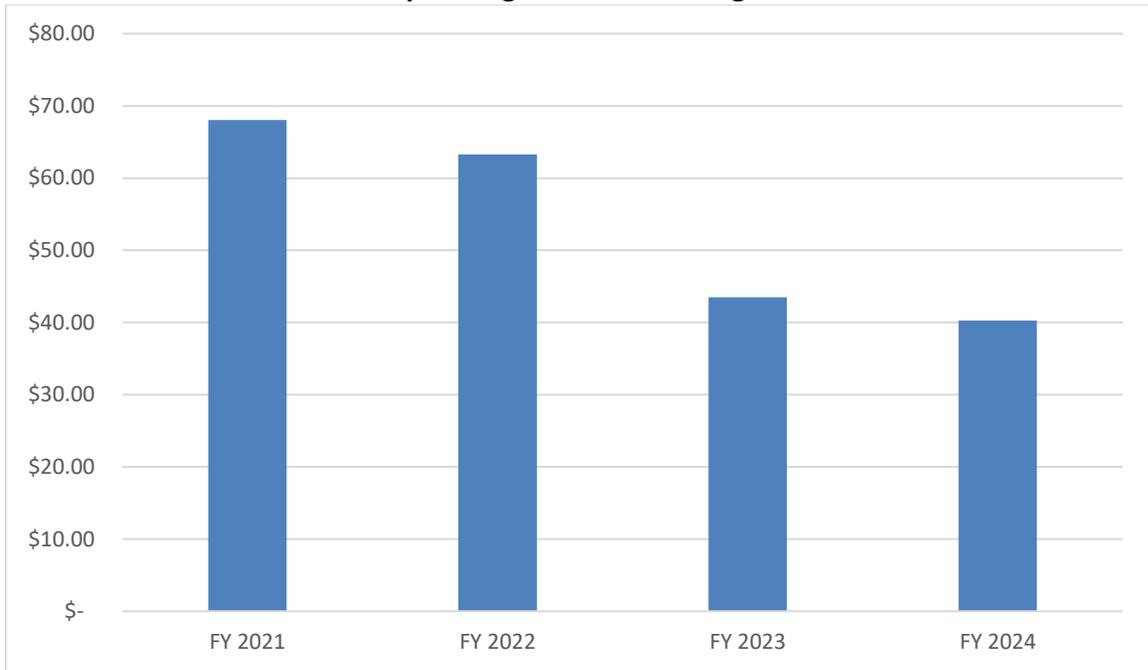
**Graph IV-1
Operating Costs**



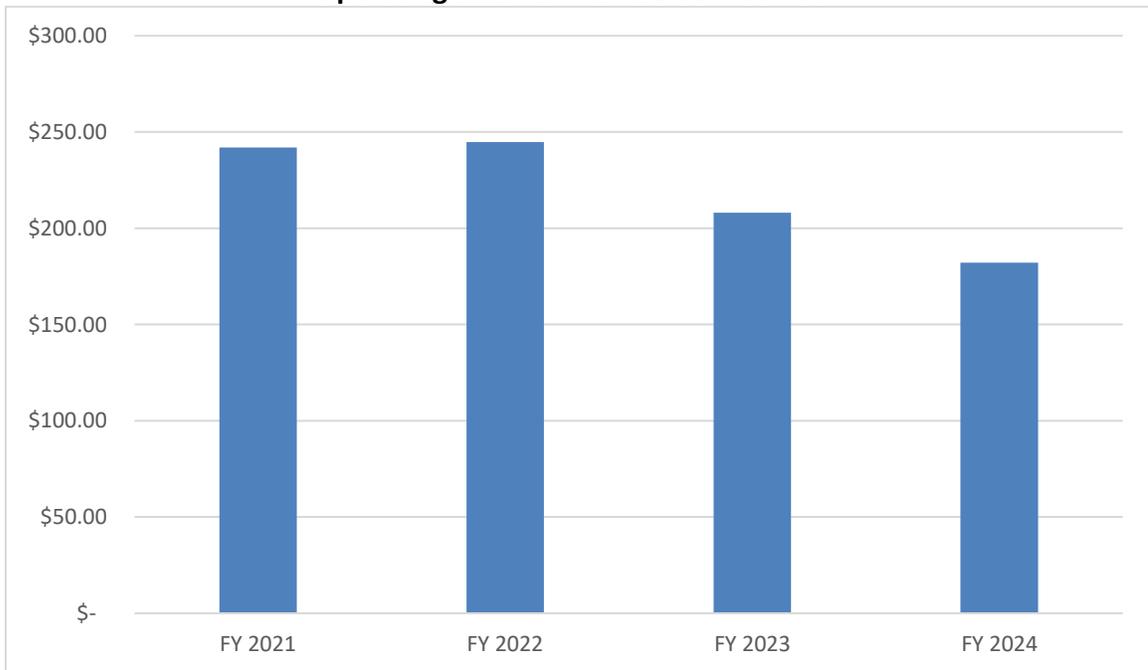
**Graph IV-2
Ridership**



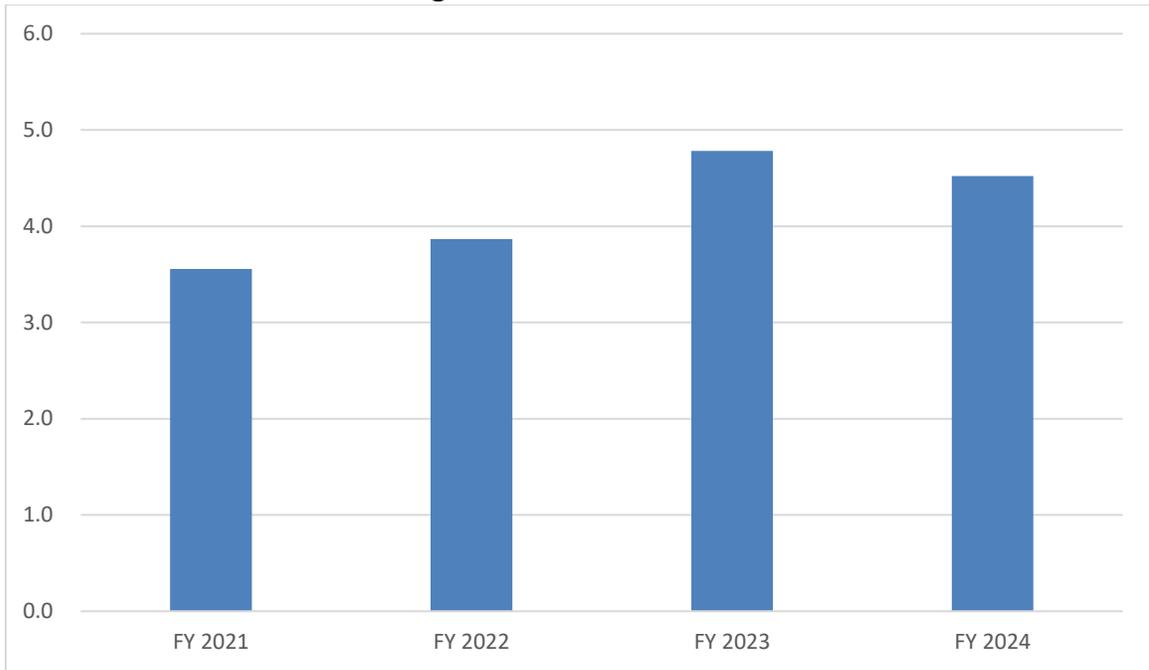
**Graph IV-3
Operating Cost Per Passenger**



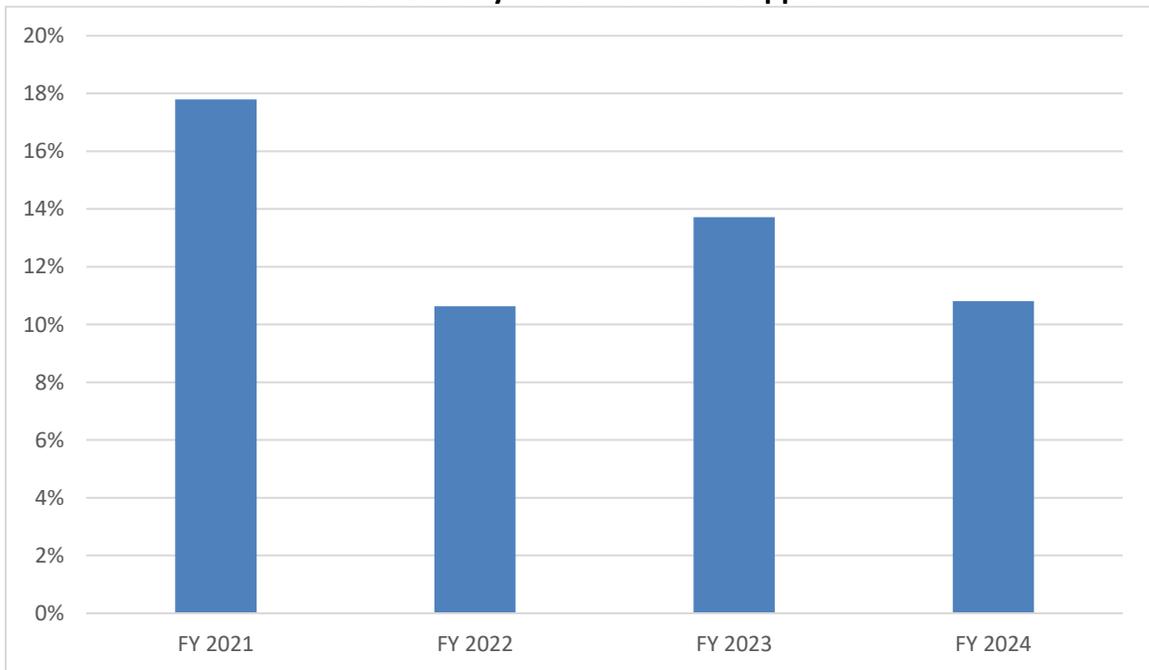
**Graph IV-4
Operating Cost Per Vehicle Service Hour**



**Graph IV-5
Passengers Per Vehicle Service Hour**



**Graph IV-6
Fare Recovery Ratio with Local Support**



Findings from Verification of TDA Performance Indicators

1. **Operating cost per vehicle service hour**, an indicator of cost efficiency, decreased 24.7 percent from \$241.91 in the FY 2021 base year to \$182.12 in FY 2024. Operating costs (less depreciation and before new service exclusions) increased 31.2 percent while vehicle service hours increased by 74.3 percent during the period. Pursuant to the TDA statute, PVVTA was allowed to exempt new service expansion from its operating cost and farebox revenue calculation for up to two years, with operating costs for new service beginning in FY 2023.
2. **Operating cost per passenger**, an indicator of cost effectiveness, decreased 40.8 percent system-wide from \$68.04 in FY 2021 to \$40.28 in FY 2024. Ridership system-wide increased by 121.6 percent, from 17,892 passengers in FY 2021 to 39,657 passengers in FY 2024, outpacing the increase in operating costs during the same period.
3. **Passengers per vehicle service hour**, which measures the effectiveness of the service delivered, increased 27.2 percent system-wide between FY 2021 and FY 2024 from 3.6 passengers per hour to 4.5 passengers per hour. Overall ridership and vehicle service hours increased by 121.6 percent and 74.3 percent, respectively, during the audit review period.
4. **Passengers per vehicle service mile**, another indicator of service effectiveness, increased 55.1 percent with an annual average of 0.19 passengers during the audit period. Passengers per service mile increased from 0.15 passengers in FY 2021 to 0.23 passengers in FY 2024. The passenger trips and vehicle service miles increased by 121.6 percent and 42.9 percent, respectively, between FY 2021 and FY 2024.
5. **Vehicle service hours per employee** increased 60.9 percent system-wide between the FY 2021 base year and FY 2024 from 419.3 hours in FY 2021 to 674.6 hours in FY 2024, as vehicle hours decreased, and the number of full-time equivalents (FTEs) increased from 12 to 13 during the period. This measure is based on the number of employee FTEs, calculated using employee pay hours from the State Controller’s Report and dividing by 2,000 hours per employee. As service hours have resumed to pre-pandemic levels, the number of hours per employee has surpassed the pre-pandemic metric—from 555.5 hours in FY 2019 to 674.6 in FY 2024.
6. **Farebox recovery** exhibited an increase of 19.3 percent system-wide between FY 2021 and 2024, excluding local support revenues. System-wide, passenger fares increased by 56.5 percent. Local support revenue is composed of fuel sales, interest, private contributions, and LCTOP. With the auxiliary revenues factored in, farebox recovery decreased 39.3 percent as costs increased and auxiliary revenues decreased. Fare revenues related to new services and system expansion were excluded from the fare recovery ratio with auxiliary revenue—in FY 2021 and FY 2022, Route 1 expenditures and revenues were exempted.

Conclusion from the Verification of TDA Performance Indicators

During the audit period, PVVTA demonstrated notable improvements in both cost efficiency and service effectiveness, reflecting the agency's strategic investments in service expansion and operational optimization. PVVTA's performance indicators reflect return in ridership following the COVID-19 pandemic as well as incremental service expansion. Vehicle service hours and service miles increased by 74.3 percent and 42.9 percent, respectively. The number of passenger trips increased by 121.6 percent.

The agency leveraged provisions under the TDA to exclude new service expansion costs from its farebox and operating cost calculations for up to two years, beginning in FY 2023, which helped manage the financial impact of growth. Adjusted operating costs increased 108.5 percent. FY 2023 saw the highest increase in unadjusted operating costs of 26.6 percent due to the integration of operating costs related to service expansion. Local support revenues are required to help the transit system maintain its farebox recovery standard, both before and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Section V

Review of Operator Functions

This section provides an in-depth review of various functions in the PVVTA transit system. The review highlights accomplishments, issues, and/or challenges that were determined during the audit period. The following functions were reviewed at PVVTA administrative offices located in Blythe:

- Operations
- Maintenance
- Planning
- Marketing
- General Administration and Management

Within some departments are subfunctions that require review as well, such as Grants Administration, which falls under General Administration and Management.

Operations

PVVTA made significant strides in operational development, sustainability, and community engagement. A major initiative underway is the planned construction of a new operations and maintenance facility, which will include a hydrogen fueling station to support the agency's transition to zero-emission vehicles. In the interim, PVVTA upgraded its existing compressed natural gas (CNG) station by adding a second set of compressors, financed through a partnership with the local school district and its grant resources. The agency also transitioned to 100 percent renewable natural gas, enhancing its environmental profile and securing full energy credits for the fueling station.

As the only public transit operator in eastern Riverside County, PVVTA's RidePV system consists of six core routes designed to meet the diverse mobility needs of Blythe and surrounding communities. Throughout the audit period, the agency maintained a stable route structure while implementing targeted adjustments to improve service efficiency and rider experience. Operational challenges during the audit period included population decline, downsizing by local employers, and staff retention difficulties. Despite such challenges, PVVTA has sustained a 12 percent increase in ridership over pre-pandemic levels, aided by rebranding to RidePV, fare subsidies through LCTOP funds, and robust community engagement.

Local routes are aligned to meet up at the Main Street Park-and-Ride lot adjacent to the PVVTA administration and operations facility. Blue Route 1 operates as a loop service centered around Main Street Park and Ride, connecting key destinations such as Palo Verde High School, Civic Center, Palo Verde Hospital, and local retail hubs. This route serves as the backbone of local circulation, offering consistent access to education, healthcare, and commerce. The Blue Route's schedule and stop

placement were designed to accommodate student travel patterns, especially during peak class hours at Palo Verde College. Most of Blythe’s population lives within 0.75 miles of this route.

Gold Route 2 complements Blue Route 1 by serving residential and commercial corridors not covered by the primary loop. It provides essential connectivity to community centers and social service locations, supporting riders with varied travel needs. Red Route 3 is tailored to the prison corridor, primarily serving staff commuting to and from the facility. While PVVTA does not transport inmates, the route remains vital for employees and administrative personnel. The agency has minimized deadhead mileage by keeping the route centrally located and strategically aligned.

The Green Route 4 focuses on southern Blythe, linking parks, schools, and housing developments. It connects Blythe with the rural communities of Ripley and Mesa Verde. The route operates on two-hour headways and serves four Park-and-Ride lots and local public housing developments. It is particularly responsive to youth and family mobility patterns, with scheduling that supports school-day travel.

Saturday service is offered on the Silver Route 5, which functions as a flexible coverage route, filling service gaps and connecting lower-density areas. It is often used to support ADA-accessible stops and seasonal or event-based service needs.

Buses can deviate three-quarters of a mile from the scheduled route with a 30-minute advance reservation or upon request when boarding. There is a maximum of three deviations per loop and deviation requests may be denied if a bus is running 15 minutes or more late. The PVVTA X-Tend-A-Ride program operates as a demand-responsive community-based service with limited weekday afternoon service to the state prisons and the fair, as well as during special community events and outside normal operating hours. X-Tend-A-Ride does not operate in place of fixed-route services.

Route 6, the Coachella Valley Connector, operates three days a week—Monday, Wednesday, and Friday—and provides long-distance service to the Coachella Valley. This route is highly valued by riders, especially for access to medical appointments and wellness services. Despite its extended travel time, Route 6 receives consistent praise and strong ridership, particularly as local services such as Rite Aid have closed, increasing reliance on regional access. The service is open to the general public and interlines with SunLine Transit Agency at the Indio Transportation Center located at SR 111 and Flower.

Grant funding for the Coachella Valley Connector was received from the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District and the LCTOP. Federal grant funds were also applied toward the new service, and the Agency was awarded rural formula Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5311 funds to support the service.

PVVTA’s operational achievements also include securing a \$2.9 million Clean California Grant in collaboration with the City of Blythe. This funded 24 bus shelter amenities, ADA improvements, a front shade structure at the operations facility, and transit-specific enhancements such as solar chargers, bike racks, and a restroom at the CNG station. Additionally, PVVTA received a \$111,000

public art grant from Creative Corps Inland Empire to beautify the transit system and reinforce its community presence.

PVVTA’s Desert RoadTRIP program is a specialized mobility initiative designed to support seniors and individuals with disabilities in the Palo Verde Valley region. The program operates under the TRIP (Transportation Reimbursement Incentive Program) model, which allows eligible participants to arrange transportation with friends, neighbors, or family members and receive reimbursement for mileage. PVVTA also requires backup documentation and medical receipts for reimbursement. Desert RoadTRIP participants can travel up to 460 miles a month, including using Greyhound (690 miles for a family).

The contract operator prepares an operations data report for review by PVVTA on a quarterly basis. The operations data report contains a detailed breakdown of ridership, revenue miles, total miles, revenue hours, total hours, deviations, and fare revenue. The data are categorized by route and month.

The US Department of Transportation defines an accident as an occurrence involving a commercial motor vehicle which results in: a) a fatality; b) bodily injury to a person who, as a result of the injury, immediately receives medical treatment away from the scene of the accident; or c) one or more of the vehicles incurs disabling damage, requiring it to be towed from the scene. According to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, a preventable accident is one that occurs because the driver fails to act in a reasonably expected manner to prevent it. Incidents include accidents plus personal casualties (inside vehicles and while boarding and alighting vehicle) and fires. Table V-1 summarizes accidents and incidents that occurred during the audit period for PVVTA.

**Table V-1
Accidents and Incidents**

	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Accidents	0	1	2	2
Incidents	3	9	2	6
Total	3	10	4	8

Source: PVVTA

Between FY 2021 and FY 2024, PVVTA experienced a modest rise in reported accidents, increasing from zero in FY 2021 to two annually in both FY 2023 and FY 2024. Incident reports, however, fluctuated more dramatically—peaking at nine in FY 2022 before dropping to two in FY 2023 and rising again to six in FY 2024. The total number of safety-related events reached its highest point in FY 2022 with ten combined accidents and incidents, suggesting a temporary spike in operational challenges. This trend suggests that while PVVTA has made substantial progress in reducing operational disruptions, continued attention to incident management and passenger safety remains important. Each vehicle is equipped with between four and six cameras that can be accessed by wireless remote from dispatch.

Dispatching functions are currently handled on a manual basis with no electronic software utilized other than an Excel spreadsheet. On-time performance is monitored by having drivers call in when running five minutes late or longer. Field supervisors also perform periodic checks to ensure schedule adherence. In addition to its bus cameras, PVVTA can access video footage from City security cameras mounted near bus stops. Table V-2 summarizes on-time performance during the audit period on PVVTA.

**Table V-2
On-time Performance**

	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
On-time Performance	98.00%	98.74%	97.59%	96.59%

Source: PVVTA

The industry standard is 95 percent on-time performance. PVVTA exceeded the minimum standard during the audit period.

Fareboxes installed on the vehicles are standard Diamond F1 rectangular fareboxes. Fares deposited into the farebox are not accessible until the end of the run. Farebox vaults are pulled at the end of the shift and placed in a secure area. The fares are counted by the lead dispatcher and by another designated employee in a secure room monitored by cameras. The cash reconciliation form contains a line item for any overages and shortages. Once counted, fare proceeds are placed into a secured locked money pouch, and a secondary count is performed by the finance director before being deposited. Random fare checks are conducted on the vehicles. Trip sheets are reviewed for accuracy, and the dispatcher inputs the operations data into monthly and quarterly reports.

ADA certification is conducted at the PVVTA facility with the whole process typically taking about 24 hours to turn around. Physician verification is not required in every case. Travel training is also offered to passengers as needed. PVVTA staff have attended mobility trainings offered through CalACT to improve its capability to educate and transition riders onto transit. PVVTA also tracks and responds to customer complaints. Table V-3 summarizes complaints received during the audit period on PVVTA:

**Table V-3
Complaints**

	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Complaints	2	0	6	4

Source: PVVTA

PVVTA experienced a notable shift in customer complaints during the audit period. PVVTA’s complaint trends over the four-year audit period show notable fluctuations. In FY 2021, the agency received two complaints, followed by a complete absence of complaints in FY 2022. However, complaints rose to six in FY 2023, followed by a slight decline to four in FY 2024. PVVTA received an average of 2.5 complaints per year over the audit period, with 2023 being the year with the highest complaint volume. Increased ridership in the latter two years also could be a factor in the trend.

Personnel

PVVTA has maintained a stable workforce throughout the audit period, reporting a low staff turnover rate of under six percent. The agency currently employs one direct staff member, the General Manager, with plans to expand to five direct employees to support finance and administrative functions. Administrative functions continue to rely on consultants, including support from the former General Manager of Morongo Basin Transit Authority, who assists with procurement and serves as a liaison to Caltrans.

Operations and maintenance are contracted through Transportation Concepts, which provides a staff of 15 employees (13 FTEs). Contract staff include seven drivers (full and part-time); two dispatchers (who also handle customer service); one mechanic; one utility worker; one operations supervisor; one operations manager; one finance assistant; and one administrative supervisor. PVVTA has implemented several recruitment incentives, including a \$1,500 new hire bonus, word-of-mouth referral programs, and outreach via social media, Indeed, and Monster. The agency reports success in attracting younger employees who value community engagement, flexible schedules, and quality-of-life benefits. Drivers frequently volunteer for community events, reinforcing PVVTA's local presence.

The average years of service among drivers is approximately three years, reflecting recent turnover due to retirements and generational shifts. Routes are assigned based on seniority, replacing the previous bid-based system. Morale is generally high, though PVVTA continues to monitor wage competitiveness in light of rising minimum wage and cost-of-living pressures.

PVVTA is a non-union shop, and all drivers are required to hold a Commercial Class C license with a passenger endorsement, even for cutaway vehicles. The agency has not faced significant competition for drivers, although non-emergency medical transportation providers offer higher wages, posing a potential recruitment challenge.

New hires undergo a comprehensive program based on the TAPCO curriculum, which includes 23–24 training videos, in-class commercial driving instruction, and field training. The TAPCO curriculum used by PVVTA for bus driver trainees is a structured, multi-modal training program designed to ensure safety, compliance, and service quality. TAPCO (Transit and Paratransit Company) specializes in transit-focused training materials that are widely used across the industry. After obtaining a permit, trainees undergo hands-on driving practice, route familiarization, and supervised operation of transit vehicles.

Ongoing education is provided through NTI, PASS (Passenger Assistance Safety and Sensitivity), and California Transit Association (CTA) programs. Staff also receive specialized instruction in human trafficking awareness, mental health de-escalation, and disability sensitivity, with support from Arizona DOT due to PVVTA's proximity to the state line.

Driver performance is evaluated quarterly through ride-alongs and observation checks conducted by supervisory staff. Pre- and post-trip inspections are manually documented using Daily Bus Inspection

Reports (DBIR), which feed into the Pledio system used by the mechanic for maintenance tracking. Drivers check in with dispatch at the start of each shift, receive keys, and confirm readiness before departing for their routes.

Maintenance

PVVTA maintained a consistent and proactive approach to vehicle maintenance through its contracted provider, Transportation Concepts. Maintenance operations are conducted on-site at the PVVTA facility in Blythe, California, which has undergone targeted enhancements including the installation of canopies, security upgrades, and the procurement of an electric forklift to improve vehicle access and safety. The facility is equipped with one major lift and several portable lifts, supporting a state of good repair across the fleet.

PVVTA adheres to a preventive maintenance inspection (PMI) schedule of every 6,000 miles or 45 days, with a strong emphasis on the 45-day interval. The agency has consistently met this schedule without lapses. Maintenance is tracked and managed using the Fleetio software platform, which includes modules for inventory control and PMI scheduling. Oversight is provided by Transportation Concepts' maintenance director, who monitors performance remotely and ensures compliance.

The agency has experienced an increase in maintenance costs, attributed to extended vehicle service life (now averaging seven to eight years) and the need for engine and transmission rebuilds. These services are performed on-site when feasible, with outsourcing reserved for specialized repairs, such as alignments, welding near fuel tanks, and high-risk tasks like pressure washing and solar panel maintenance. SunLine provides operational emergency support to the Coachella Valley Connector when the vehicle operates in the SunLine service area.

Drivers are allotted 15 minutes to conduct pre-trip inspections. The driver vehicle inspection report (DVIR) is configured into 10 categories. The DVIR is completed in triplicate and includes post-trip details. The top white sheet stays with the vehicle during its operation, the pink copy stays in dispatch, and the yellow copy remains on the vehicle as a record. The CHP is responsible for certifying PVVTA's maintenance facilities and for inspecting vehicles on an annual basis. PVVTA vehicles have received satisfactory terminal inspections from the CHP.

The fleet consists of nine revenue service vehicles, with six deployed daily and the remainder held in reserve for contingencies, including potential disruptions at the agency's compressed natural gas (CNG) station, which PVVTA is committed to maintaining through 2035. Due to local infrastructure limitations—such as narrow streets and unpaved roads—PVVTA relies on cutaway vehicles, avoiding larger models like the El Dorado. A trial of battery electric buses (BEBs) revealed performance issues under extreme heat, reinforcing the agency's cautious approach to zero-emission transitions. PVVTA continues to monitor developments at peer agencies such as SunLine Transit Agency and Valley Metro in Phoenix before committing to BEB adoption.

Vehicle fueling is conducted on a card-lock basis at the Blythe CNG Station in the City Corporation Yard located at 440 South Main Street at 14th Street. The CNG station opened in May 2014 and is

accessible by the general public 24 hours daily and has portable restroom facilities with wash station, 24-hour closed-circuit surveillance cameras, free Blythe visitor information, and free Wi-Fi. Revenues from CNG fueling contribute to the system farebox recovery.

PVVTA conducts quarterly inventory cycle counts and a full annual inventory, allowing for accurate forecasting and procurement. Parts are acquired through a competitive bulk bid process, with vendors including A to Z Bus, NAPA Auto Parts, AutoZone, Model1, TransAir, and Phoenix-based RWC. The agency maintains seasonal stockpiles of high-demand items such as compressors, belts, and suspension components, especially during summer months. Alignments are now performed annually or semi-annually, reflecting increased wear due to poor road conditions and limited municipal infrastructure investment.

Road calls have remained minimal throughout the audit period, with most issues—typically involving tires or air conditioning—identified and resolved during scheduled PMIs. Windshield damage due to regional construction is treated as routine maintenance rather than road calls. Road calls are recorded when a tow truck and/or mechanic responds to a mechanical/service problem for a disabled transit vehicle that is in revenue service. Table V-4 summarizes road calls that occurred during the audit period.

**Table V-4
PVVTA Road Calls**

	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Road Calls	0	2	6	3

Source: PVVTA

PVVTA’s road call activity showed a rising trend followed by a partial decline over the audit period. In FY 2021, no road calls were reported, suggesting minimal on-road mechanical issues due to lower service demand. The number increased to two in FY 2022 and peaked at six in FY 2023, before declining again to three in FY 2024. This pattern suggests that while occasional spikes may occur due to aging vehicles or seasonal factors, PVVTA’s maintenance program continues to effectively minimize service disruptions.

Planning

PVVTA has demonstrated a proactive and community-responsive approach to transit planning during the FY 2022–2024 audit period. PVVTA prepares a Short-Range Transit Plan (SRTP) on an annual basis. The SRTP covers a three-year planning horizon and includes a system overview, performance analysis for each route and service, service changes, and financial and capital plans. Under the services and performance chapter, a series of recommendations for service improvements is presented for each route or program. Performance data from TransTrack Manager is also included to provide an annual comparison.

During the spring of 2021, PVVTA released an RFP to provide a Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA) that would also feed into the development of the FY 2022–2024 SRTP. After only receiving one

proposal, PVVTA re-released the RFP to include a marketing analysis component as well as for assistance with writing an RFP for the renewal of the operations contract in 2022. Mobility Advancement Group conducted the COA, and its primary objectives were to assess PVVTA's transit services and operating conditions, review relevant background materials including funding and service structures, and propose potential service models for the next operations contract term. The COA provided a structured evaluation through five key sections: a Transit Agency Overview, Community Overview, Peer Comparison, Research and Community Outreach, and a set of Recommendations. This analysis has since served as a strategic foundation for PVVTA's planning, guiding service improvements, rebranding efforts, and future contract development.

Route evaluation occurs during mid-year budget reviews, with performance analysis integrated into SRTP updates. PVVTA avoids debt-financed projects, which can delay implementation timelines. Planning efforts are closely aligned with ADA improvements, although PVVTA has encountered resistance from local government entities when proposing transit enhancements. Despite this, the agency remains engaged through its role on the City of Blythe's Project Review Committee, and the General Manager regularly attends Chamber of Commerce meetings to advocate transit integration.

Community input is central to PVVTA's planning process. The agency is a member of the Citizens and Specialized Transit Advisory Committee (CSTAC) and conducts outreach through public meetings, driver feedback sessions, and presentations. Draft plans are shared with both the public and staff before finalization, ensuring transparency and responsiveness. PVVTA also monitors demographic shifts, including the exclusion of the prison population from Blythe's official count, which has implications for service planning and funding.

In 2023, PVVTA released its Zero-Emission Bus (ZEB) Rollout Plan in response to California's Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) regulation, which requires all public transit agencies to transition to zero-emission fleets by 2040. The ZEB Rollout Plan assesses fleet needs and fuel consumption. The agency is leaning toward hydrogen fuel technology, citing challenges with battery electric buses in extreme heat. While the community supports zero-emission initiatives, city leadership has been less receptive, particularly in joint development projects. Transit-oriented development (TOD) opportunities have been limited due to political and logistical barriers, although PVVTA continues to advocate for transit amenities in new developments.

PVVTA's planning process has also been informed by regular board meetings, held monthly except in July and August, and quarterly coordination with Caltrans District 8. The agency continues to advocate for transit-friendly policies and infrastructure, despite limited support from local government. Notably, PVVTA leveraged its stop on 7th Street through a beautification project, demonstrating its commitment to incremental improvements and community engagement.

Marketing

PVVTA undertook a comprehensive rebranding initiative, transitioning its public identity to RidePV. This effort was guided by a marketing consultant with prior experience at SunLine Transit Agency and emphasized a community-centered approach. The rebranding included a refreshed color scheme,

updated marketing collateral, and a rollout plan developed in collaboration with the PVVTA Board and community stakeholders. The rebranding remains an ongoing effort, with continuous outreach and visibility enhancements.

The RidePV website (<https://www.ridepv.org/>) reflects the agency's rebranding and offers essential rider tools but is still undergoing upgrades to enhance usability and access to real-time data. The site prominently features RidePV branding, aligning with the agency's community-focused marketing strategy. The color scheme and logo reflect the updated identity. The agency's General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) feed is hosted by Trillium, enabling real-time bus location tracking via GME. The site includes a "Track My Bus" feature powered by GME and Trillium, allowing riders to view live bus locations on mobile devices. The agency has observed a shift toward electronic rider guides and contactless payment, reducing printed materials from 5,000 to 1,500 units. While word-of-mouth remains strong in this small community, digital engagement is growing.

RidePV maintains an active social media presence on Facebook and Instagram, using these platforms to share service updates, engage with riders, and respond to community concerns. The agency is proactive in addressing issues publicly, especially during incidents involving law enforcement or service disruptions, helping to mitigate negative press and maintain trust. Marketing efforts also extend to local radio advertising, further broadening public awareness. Radio spots are broadcast over local stations such as KJMB 100.3 FM and Spanish language Radio Bilingüe KERU 88.5 FM.

Community engagement has been a cornerstone of RidePV's marketing strategy. The agency regularly participates in local events and holiday celebrations, setting up booths that distribute branded materials and promotional items, including giveaways for children. Drivers and dispatchers are often present at these events, reinforcing the agency's commitment to personal connection and visibility. Outreach efforts have included presentations at the Senior Center and coordination with the Riverside County Office on Aging Integrated Services (RIVCOI) for integrated service delivery. Transit agencies like RidePV participate in RIVCOI outreach by attending events, giving presentations, and distributing materials at locations such as senior centers and aging offices.

Pursuant to the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, PVVTA has an adopted Title VI Program. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that no person in the United States, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. PVVTA's Title VI Plan was last updated in June 2023. This update was approved by the PVVTA Board of Directors on June 14, 2023, and reflects compliance with the Federal Transit Administration's Title VI requirements under Circular 4702.1B. Program compliance includes Title VI notices and complaint forms posted at the PVVTA operations office and on transit vehicles and website.

General Administration and Management

The PVVTA Board of Directors is composed of five members: two elected representatives from the Blythe City Council, one appointed public member from the city of Blythe, one member from the County of Riverside Board of Supervisors, and one public member appointed by the County of

Riverside Board of Supervisors. The secretary to the board is the City of Blythe City Clerk. Regular meetings of the PVVTA Board of Directors are generally held the first Wednesday of the month at noon at the PVVTA administrative and operations facility located at 415 North Main Street in Blythe in Conference Room A, unless otherwise noted.

PVVTA operations were previously managed by the contract general manager provided under the Agency's agreement with Parking Concepts, Inc. In July 2021, the PVVTA Board entered into an employment agreement with the contract general manager to serve as the Agency's general manager. The agreement spells out the duties and responsibilities of the position, employment benefits, and terms of the contract. The employment contract is in effect for a five-year period through June 2026.

Parking Concepts, Inc. dba Transportation Concepts, has served as the PVVTA contract operator since 2003. During the audit period, PVVTA released Request for Proposals No. 06-2022-OM on June 24, 2022, for the management and operation of its transit services. Transportation Concepts submitted a proposal on August 12, 2022, affirming its qualifications, licensing, and capacity to deliver the required services. Transportation Concepts was selected from two strong bids, with service commencing in October 2022.

The PVVTA Board of Directors approved the agreement on September 7, 2022, with a base contract term of five years, commencing October 1, 2022, and concluding June 30, 2027. The agreement includes provisions for up to five additional one-year extensions at PVVTA's discretion.

The agency also experienced turnover in key administrative roles, including the finance manager, which led to a transition from the outdated EDEN/Tyler accounting system to Microsoft Dynamics, customized by Infinite Computing. While the cloud-based system is user-friendly, early implementation required extensive data reconciliation due to abrupt staff departures and incomplete data migration. The sudden exit of the City's accountant also compounded the challenge, leaving PVVTA without complete data and requiring staff to manually reconcile financial records line by line. This incident underscored the need for greater internal administrative capacity.

In a recent development, PVVTA recruited for a finance manager position. The job posting appeared in August 2025 with an application deadline in October 2025. The finance manager position reports to the General Manager and oversees daily financial activities, including budgeting and grants management. The agency hired an accounting professional in the fall of 2025, thus successfully filling the position.

PVVTA's Board has since expressed interest in expanding direct staffing beyond the General Manager to include up to five agency-employed positions, such as a dedicated finance manager and administrative support roles. The goal is to reduce dependency on external consultants, improve continuity, and strengthen institutional knowledge. As PVVTA continues to grow and manage complex initiatives—such as zero-emission planning, grant administration, and fare restructuring—building a resilient internal team will be critical to sustaining operational and financial integrity.

PVVTA has taken steps to improve internal capacity and efficiency. During the audit period, PVVTA transitioned to a new legal firm—Bridgett Hanson, a transit-specialized counsel based in San Francisco—following concerns about the inefficiencies and lack of transit expertise in the previous municipal-focused legal team. Upon reviewing PVVTA’s governance structure, the new legal counsel identified a conflict-of-interest involving Board composition: a City of Blythe official was serving as the County’s appointed representative on the PVVTA Board.

This dual role raised concerns about governance, as the individual was elected to represent the City but was simultaneously designated to represent County interests. Such overlap can compromise the integrity of representation, blur jurisdictional accountability, and potentially violate principles of fair and independent oversight. The issue highlighted the need for PVVTA to revisit its Board appointment protocols to ensure that each member clearly and exclusively represents their designated jurisdiction—whether City or County—and that governance remains transparent and compliant with best practices.

PVVTA is expected to address this concern in coordination with its legal counsel and member agencies to strengthen its organizational structure and uphold proper representation. Both accounting and legal functions are now managed in-house, reflecting a broader goal to consolidate administrative oversight.

PVVTA’s Transit Operators Financial Transactions Report submitted to the State Controller is prepared by an independent CPA firm and signed off by the PVVTA finance director. PVVTA submits the annual TDA claim for funds to RCTC. TDA claims are based on the PVVTA annual budget and the financial element of the SRTP. Reserve allocations for LTF and State Transit Assistance (STA) funds are included as separate line items on the claim form.

The primary source of transit funding support is derived from TDA for operations and capital. LTF is used primarily for operations and STA funds are used for both operation and capital expenditures. Based on the audited TDA Article 4 Financial Statements data, the Agency’s LTF revenue was \$816,954 in FY 2022; \$735,569 in FY 2023; and \$1,072,454 in FY 2024. STA funds received by the Agency were \$49,694 in FY 2022; and \$8,608 in FY 2023. STA funds are utilized toward capital procurement such as vehicle replacement, bulk supplies, and bus stop amenities.

Grants Management

Grant funding allocated toward the transit system has been derived from state and federal sources. This mix of federal, state, and local funding reflects PVVTA’s strategic approach to sustaining service and enhancing rider access.

Capital grants are tracked quarterly on an Excel spreadsheet that is configured into sections showing each grant and its funding amount, running balance, purpose, and drawdowns. The finance manager prepares the financial element of the SRTP and provides quarterly reporting to RCTC through the capital tracking report. The administrative supervisor/mobility manager oversees project

management, and the general manager oversees vehicle procurement. Bus procurement encompasses bulk maintenance supplies, support vehicles, bus shelters, and radio equipment.

The agency consistently received \$20,000 annually from the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District, contributing to its environmental and operational goals. Under the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP), PVVTA secured increasing support for fare-free service, with allocations of \$36,955 in FY 2022, \$62,443 in FY 2023, and \$47,837 in FY 2024. Substantial operating assistance was provided through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5311 program, peaking at \$464,682 in FY 2023 before declining to \$286,493 in FY 2024. Additional funding under FTA Section 5311(f) supported interregional service on Route 6, totaling \$16,640 across FY 2022 and FY 2023. Notably, PVVTA received a one-time infusion of \$199,509 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in FY 2024, bolstering its financial resilience amid pandemic recovery efforts.

PVVTA received \$12,657 in SB 1 State of Good Repair grant funds in FY 2024 to support preventive maintenance activities. These funds were directed toward sustaining the operational reliability and safety of the transit fleet, ensuring that vehicles remained in a state of good repair and compliant with performance standards. The investment contributed to minimizing service disruptions and extending the useful life of PVVTA's assets.

PVVTA received \$111,600 in Clean California grant funding during the audit period to support enhancements in transit accessibility and community engagement. The funding was used to install solar-powered bus stop lighting and bilingual informational signage across its service area. These improvements aimed to increase rider safety, promote environmental sustainability, and make transit services more inclusive for non-English-speaking passengers. The grant aligns with Clean California's broader goals of beautifying public spaces and reducing pollution through infrastructure upgrades.

Section VI

Statement of Facts

The following summarizes factual events and trends obtained from this triennial audit covering fiscal years 2022 through 2024. A set of recommendations is then provided.

1. Of the compliance requirements pertaining to PVVTA, the operator fully complied with all nine applicable requirements. Two additional compliance requirements did not apply to PVVTA (i.e., intermediate farebox recovery ratio under PUC 99270.1 and exclusive urbanized farebox recovery ratio).
2. Based on the farebox calculation in the annual TDA Article 4 Financial Statements (*Audited*), PVVTA's farebox recovery ratio met or exceeded the required minimum standard of 10 percent during the audit period. The system-wide farebox recovery ratios were 10.63 percent in FY 2022, 13.72 percent in FY 2023, and 10.81 percent in FY 2024.² Local support revenue such as from CNG fuel sales, private contributions, Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District (MDAQMD) and the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) included in the ratio helped to prop up the farebox calculation.
3. Through its contract operator, PVVTA participates in the CHP Transit Operator Compliance Program in which the CHP has conducted inspections within the 13 months prior to each TDA claim. The CHP inspection reports submitted for review were found to be satisfactory.
4. The operating budget exhibited moderate fluctuations during the audit period. PVVTA saw an increase of 11.3 percent in the operating budget in FY 2022 followed by a 26.6 percent increase in FY 2023. In FY 2024, the budget decreased by 6.9 percent. The increases in the operating budget are attributed to the implementation of the Coachella Valley Connector and higher operations contract costs.
5. PVVTA satisfactorily implemented two of three prior audit recommendations. PVVTA collaborated with peer agencies and regulatory bodies to advance zero-emission vehicle planning and successfully rebranded its service as RidePV with targeted marketing and infrastructure upgrades. The third recommendation—to revisit the fare structure—remains in progress, with a fare study planned for future implementation and is being carried forward in this audit.

² AB 90, passed into law and signed by the governor in June 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic impacts, prohibits the imposition of penalties on a transit operator that does not maintain the required ratio of fare revenues to operating cost during FY 2019–20 or FY 2020–21. AB 149 extends the penalty exemption through FY 2022–23 and authorizes transit operators to include federal grant funds as local funds for the purpose of computing fare revenue ratios. This bill, until July 1, 2026, would exempt an operator from specified requirements related to fare box ratios and eligibility standards for a fiscal year in which the operator expended from local funding, as defined, an amount for transit operations not less than the amount the operator expended from local funding for transit operations during FY 2018–19.

6. Operating cost per vehicle service hour, an indicator of cost efficiency, decreased 24.7 percent from \$241.91 in the FY 2021 base year to \$182.12 in FY 2024. Operating costs (less depreciation and before new service exclusions) increased 31.2 percent while vehicle service hours increased by 74.3 percent during the period. Pursuant to the TDA statute, PVVTA was allowed to exempt new service expansion from its operating cost and farebox revenue calculation for up to two years, with operating costs for new service beginning in FY 2023.
7. Operating cost per passenger, an indicator of cost effectiveness, decreased 40.8 percent system-wide from \$68.04 in FY 2021 to \$40.28 in FY 2024. Ridership system-wide increased by 121.6 percent, from 17,892 passengers in FY 2021 to 39,657 passengers in FY 2024, outpacing the increase in operating costs during the same period.
8. Passengers per vehicle service hour, which measures the effectiveness of the service delivered, increased 27.2 percent system-wide between FY 2021 and FY 2024 from 3.6 passengers per hour to 4.5 passengers per hour. Overall ridership and vehicle service hours increased by 121.6 percent and 74.3 percent, respectively, during the audit review period.
9. Passengers per vehicle service mile, another indicator of service effectiveness, increased 55.1 percent with an annual average of 0.19 passengers during the audit period. Passengers per service mile increased from 0.15 passengers in FY 2021 to 0.23 passengers in FY 2024. The passenger trips and vehicle service miles increased by 121.6 percent and 42.9 percent, respectively, between FY 2021 and FY 2024.
10. As the sole public transit provider in eastern Riverside County, PVVTA maintained a stable six-route network under the RidePV brand, tailored to the mobility needs of Blythe and surrounding communities. Despite challenges such as population decline, employer downsizing, and staffing constraints, the agency achieved a 12 percent ridership increase over pre-pandemic levels.
11. PVVTA implemented free fares funded through LCTOP, targeted route adjustments, and fostered strong community engagement. PVVTA also expanded regional access through the Coachella Valley Connector, a long-distance service interlining with SunLine Transit Agency, which has become a vital resource for riders seeking medical and wellness services outside the local area.
12. Operations and maintenance are contracted through Transportation Concepts, which supplies a team of 15 employees (13 FTEs), including drivers, dispatchers, maintenance personnel, and supervisory staff. PVVTA has implemented proactive recruitment strategies such as a \$1,500 new hire bonus, referral incentives, and outreach via digital platforms. These efforts have successfully attracted younger employees who value community engagement and flexible scheduling. PVVTA maintained a stable and committed workforce throughout the audit period, reporting a low staff turnover rate of under six percent.
13. Maintenance operations are conducted on-site at PVVTA's Blythe facility, which has seen targeted upgrades including canopy installations, security enhancements, and the acquisition of an electric forklift to improve safety and vehicle access. Preventive maintenance inspections are performed

every 6,000 miles or 45 days, with strict adherence to the 45-day interval. Maintenance activities are tracked using the Fleetio software platform, and oversight is provided remotely by Transportation Concepts' maintenance director.

14. PVVTA demonstrated a proactive and community-responsive planning approach throughout the FY 2022–2024 audit period. The agency prepares an annual SRTP with a three-year horizon, incorporating route-level performance analysis, service recommendations, and financial planning. A COA conducted by Mobility Advancement Group provided strategic insights that shaped service improvements, rebranding efforts, and contract development.
15. PVVTA launched a comprehensive rebranding initiative during the audit period, transitioning its public identity to RidePV. The rebranding emphasized community engagement and included a refreshed color scheme, updated collateral, and a rollout strategy developed in collaboration with the PVVTA Board and local stakeholders. The agency has shifted toward digital rider guides and contactless payment, reducing reliance on printed materials and expanding its online presence.
16. In July 2021, PVVTA transitioned its contract general manager to a direct employment role under a five-year agreement through June 2026, formalizing leadership responsibilities and enhancing continuity. PVVTA also renewed its operations contract with Transportation Concepts following a competitive procurement process in 2022, securing a five-year base term with optional extensions.

Recommendations

1. Conduct a Comprehensive Fare Study.

This recommendation is being carried over from the prior performance audit for full implementation. PVVTA is encouraged to proceed with its planned fare study to evaluate the long-term sustainability, and equity impacts of its fare-free program. While the initiative—funded through Clean California, LCTOP, and MDAQMD—has successfully increased ridership and reduced access barriers, the agency continues to charge fares for trip deviations and the TRIP program. A comprehensive fare study will help determine appropriate fare structures, assess revenue implications, and guide future funding strategies. The study should also consider community feedback, regional best practices, and the potential integration of contactless payment technologies. Given the declining population and employer base in the service area, the study should also examine how fare policy can support economic resilience, maintain ridership growth, and ensure financial sustainability amid shifting local demographics.