

Seeking Policy to: Create dedicated formula funding for operating and capital investments for public transit systems, such as **Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System**, that relieve congestion into and within National Parks.

Description: The Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) is the nation’s oldest public transit system providing service to a National Park. With more than 20 years of history, YARTS is the product of a partnership among the member counties of its Joint Powers Authority, the U.S. Forest Service, and the National Park Service. YARTS was the solution to the congestion and pollution created by millions of people visiting the Yosemite National Park every year in personal vehicles. Today, YARTS provides coach transit service into the Park from each of the four highways into Yosemite during the summer months, and year round on Highway 140. Each year, more than 100,000 visitors enter Yosemite on a YARTS bus.



Necessity: Currently, there are insufficient federal funding streams to support YARTS and the service expansion needed to address the growing congestion issues in Yosemite National Park. The system relies heavily on FTA 5311(f) and 5339 grant funding for some of the operational and capital infrastructure needs but this provides only a small amount of what is needed to provide optimal service to this expansive, mountainous region of central California. Currently, YARTS owns only half of the vehicles needed for its fleet and relies on more expensive, leased vehicles to fulfill service needs. The over-the-road coaches YARTS owns are all nearing the end of their useful life and will all need to be replaced in the next five years. In addition, YARTS will need to purchase nine buses at the end of the current lease in late 2022 to maintain existing service levels.

Funding request:

Replace existing YARTS-owned fleet: replacement of 10 clean-diesel, over-the-road coaches	\$7.5 million
Maintain existing service levels: add 9 coaches to YARTS-owned fleet	\$6.75 million
Prepare for transition to an electric fleet beginning in 2026: conduct an electric vehicle infrastructure analysis of the six-county region	\$300,000
Total	\$14,550,000

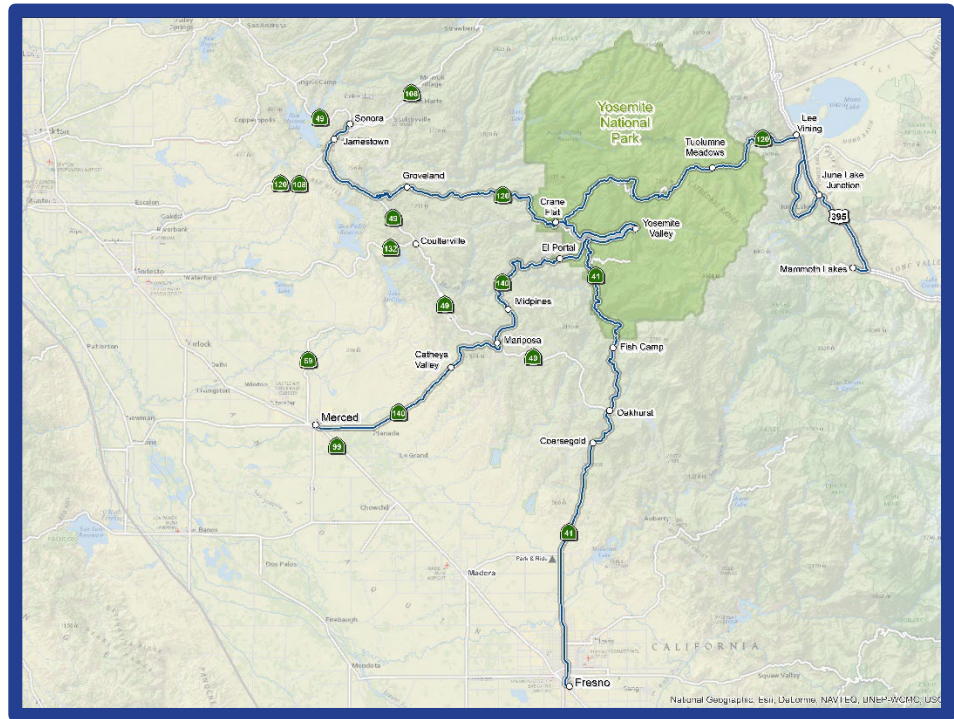
Investing in YARTS means:

- Supporting the creation of **JOBS** in rural communities that depend on Yosemite for tourist-generated revenue.
- Providing **EQUITABLE access** to Yosemite National Park from surrounding disadvantaged communities.
- Prioritizing the **SUSTAINABILITY** of public transit through the conversion to a zero-emission, electric fleet.

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YARTS Service Area

The area served by YARTS spans six counties, and 480 square miles, between the cities of Merced and Fresno in the San Joaquin Valley to Mammoth Lakes in the eastern Sierra Nevada mountains.



YARTS Coach Replacement and Acquisition Costs by Year

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Replacement of YARTS-owned vehicles	\$3,750,000 <i>5 vehicles</i>	\$1,500,000 <i>2 vehicles</i>	\$750,000 <i>1 vehicle</i>	\$750,000 <i>1 vehicle</i>	\$750,000 <i>1 vehicle</i>
Acquisition of vehicles in lieu of leased coaches	\$0	\$6,750,000 <i>9 vehicles</i>	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$3,750,000	\$8,250,000	\$750,000	\$750,000	\$750,000

A Zero-Emission Future

Intensifying the funding needs outlined above are new California rules which require 25 percent of buses purchased by 2026 to be zero emission vehicles; this rate ramps up to 100 percent of purchases starting in 2029. Zero emission buses (ZEB) are more expensive than diesel coaches, so capital investment in ZEBs looms as another large challenge on the YARTS horizon. ZEBs require supporting infrastructure, including charging stations, an upgraded electrical grid(s), and more. The extent of the infrastructure needed by the YARTS fleet is complex and has not been fully examined. A comprehensive analysis of electric infrastructure over this large, mountainous region will be required in the next three years in order to pave the way for a zero-emission future.

Impacts of COVID-19

In addition to the capital issues outlined above, YARTS' ridership has fallen 57 percent in the past year, resulting in a steep decline in revenue. This, combined with increased costs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has greatly impacted an already constrained operational budget.

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