



City of Sonora

Tuolumne County
"Queen of the Southern Mines"
94 N. Washington Street
Sonora, CA 95370
www.sonoraca.com

Mary Rose Axiak-Rutikanga,
City Administrator
209-532-4541
mrutikanga@sonoraca.org

April 1, 2021

The Honorable Jim Costa, District 16
2081 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support for YARTS funding

Dear Congressman Costa:

I am pleased to offer this letter on behalf of the City of Sonora in support of YARTS' request for community development funding.

The Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System – or YARTS – is a Joint Powers Authority comprised of the Counties of Merced, Mariposa, Mono, and Tuolumne. YARTS has worked in close partnership with the National Park Service for more than 20 years in providing public transit service to Yosemite National Park from the communities of Merced, Mariposa, Sonora, Mammoth Lakes, Oakhurst, and Fresno.

The entire YARTS fleet is aging and requires the replacement of all 10 of its over-the-road coach vehicles in the next five years. YARTS will also need to purchase an additional nine coaches in the next two years to replace vehicles it currently operates through a lease agreement. In total, these 19 vehicles will allow YARTS to continue to provide its current level of service throughout its mountainous, 480-square mile service area. In particular, this \$14.25 million investment will allow the City of Sonora to maintain important access to Yosemite into the foreseeable future.

YARTS must also begin preparation for its transition to an electric fleet. In order to realize its commitment to sustainability, an electric infrastructure analysis must be conducted in the next three years to enable the service to meet California's zero-emission fleet regulations starting in 2026. YARTS has no funding through which it can perform this critical study and without it, compliance will be difficult, and service levels may be adversely impacted.

The YARTS service is critical to the City of Sonora. The YARTS agency provides transportation and reduces some of the traffic on the way to the park and in the park. People from outside the City of Sonora stay in our City to visit Yosemite. Tourists eat here, they lodge here, they rent rooms here, and add to the Sonora tourism, which is the leading, most-lucrative industry in the City of Sonora. Prior to the pandemic, YARTS carried more than 100,000 individuals to and from Yosemite every year. These passengers provide key sources of tourism revenue and generate jobs in gateway communities. They also include individuals who are not able to access the wonder of Yosemite any other way. We respectfully request your strong support of YARTS.

Sincerely,

Mary Rose Axiak-Rutikanga
City Administrator