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DATE: November 18, 2024

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council through City Manager

FROM: Jared Hall – Transit Manager, Public Works and Utilities Department (PW&U)  
Gina Benedetti-Petnic, PE – Interim Director of PW&U

SUBJECT: Resolution Adopting the 2024 Title VI Program Update for Petaluma Transit  
Ensuring Equitable and Non-Discriminatory Access to Transit Services

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the City Council adopt the Resolution adopting the 2024 Title VI Program Update for Petaluma Transit ensuring equitable and non-discriminatory access to transit services.

### **BACKGROUND**

The City of Petaluma is deeply committed to ensuring that all residents and visitors have fair and equitable access to Petaluma Transit services. We believe that everyone—regardless of race, color, sex, age, disability, religion, family status, or national origin—should be able to use our transit system without barriers. The Title VI Program, established under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, helps us uphold these values and make sure that no person is excluded from participating in or denied the benefits of Petaluma Transit.

In addition to ensuring equitable access to transit for the Petaluma community, the Title VI Program is also a requirement for continued funding. Since 2008, Petaluma has been eligible for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grants, which have been critical for fleet replacement and transit capital projects. This funding has been essential to improving the financial viability and quality of Petaluma Transit services.

### **DISCUSSION**

Petaluma Transit relies on funding from the FTA, which mandates that fund recipients adopt and regularly update a Title VI Program to prevent discriminatory practices and ensure equitable transit services. The City must submit an updated Title VI Program every three years to stay in compliance with FTA regulations. Our last plan was approved in June 2021, and an updated plan is due for submission in 2024.

The Title VI Program helps us ensure that Petaluma Transit remains accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of the entire community. This plan includes clear procedures for community outreach, addressing limited English proficiency, processing Title VI complaints, and defining feedback channels to help us better serve underserved populations.

Key updates to the 2024 Title VI Program include:

- An updated list of agencies identified for community partnership and outreach;
- Integration with the City's newer outreach mechanisms developed since the last plan update;
- Expanded efforts to connect with communities of concern and other underserved populations throughout Petaluma;
- Increased use of community outreach events throughout the year; and
- The introduction of an on-call translation service for real-time phone assistance in over 100 languages.

By adopting this plan, the City will continue to use these updated policies and procedures to ensure fair and non-discriminatory access to Petaluma Transit for all users.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

The Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) unanimously approved a recommendation in support of Council adopting this resolution at the October 15, 2024, TAC meeting.

This agenda item appeared on the City's tentative agenda document on November 4, 2024, which was a publicly noticed meeting.

## **COUNCIL GOAL ALIGNMENT**

The 2024 Title VI Program Update aligns with several of the City Council's key goals:

- **A City That Works for Everyone:** The Title VI Program ensures that Petaluma Transit remains accessible and inclusive for all residents and visitors. This program helps create a transit system that truly serves everyone.
- **An Economy That Prospers:** Equitable access to public transportation is crucial for economic mobility. The Title VI Program helps ensure that all residents, regardless of background or circumstance, have the ability to access employment, education, and services, which supports the overall economic vitality of the city.
- **A Safe Community That Thrives:** By reaching out to communities of concern and ensuring non-discriminatory access to public transit, the Title VI Program contributes to the safety and well-being of all Petaluma residents. Safe and reliable transit options enhance mobility and promote a sense of community.

- **Spaces and Places That Inspire:** The City’s commitment to a fair and inclusive transit system promotes community pride and engagement. By fostering connections through transportation, the Title VI Program helps create public spaces that are welcoming to all.

## **CLIMATE ACTION/SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS**

The adoption of the updated Title VI Program and continued receipt of FTA 5307 funding will enable Petaluma Transit to maintain regular operations and advance key elements of its capital improvement projects, particularly the ongoing transition of its fleet from carbon-based fuel vehicles to zero-emission vehicles. Delays in adopting the update plan could postpone the replacement with zero-emission vehicles, prolonging the use of carbon-emitting vehicles.

By continuing the transition to a zero-emission fleet on schedule, Petaluma Transit will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, making significant progress toward achieving carbon neutrality and improving air quality for the community.

Furthermore, approximately 2/3 of Petaluma’s greenhouse gas emissions are related to transportation. Accessibility and equitable access improvements to Petaluma Transit programs, especially zero-emission vehicles, assist in achieving the City’s carbon neutrality goals.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The proposed action is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061 and 15378, in that the updating of a Title VI plan does not meet CEQA's definition of a “project,” because the action does not have the potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, and because the action constitutes organizational or administrative activities of governments that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACTS**

Adopting the 2024 Title VI Program Update will ensure Petaluma Transit remains eligible to receive FTA 5307 funding, which is a critical source of revenue for transit operations and capital improvement projects. Failure to adopt the updated plan could result in the loss of these federal funds, leading to potential delays or cancellations of key capital projects as outlined in the Capital Improvement Plan.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

Adopting an updated Title VI Program is essential to ensure continued eligibility for FTA 5307 funds, which serve as the primary capital project funding source for Petaluma Transit. Failure to adopt the updated 2024 plan could delay or inhibit the City’s ability to receive these funds, resulting in delays or interruptions to planned capital projects as outlined in the City of Petaluma Capital Improvement Plan.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Resolution with Exhibit A (TITLE VI Plan)