



FAQs

Will the City of Porterville need to pay any severance fees to TCRTA to exit?

The City must pay its portion of the agency's debt, a standard requirement for these matters. We've asked for that figure for over four months, but TCRTA's leadership has not given us a specific number. This failure by the agency is consistent with its inability to provide appropriate financial and operational information over the past few years to member municipalities while expanding its administrative overhead at a higher level than expected for the service it provides. Our exit from TCRTA and relaunching our own service will offer a more transparent, efficient and effective service to those who live, work and play in our city.

How can you be sure you can save money by relaunching your transit service?

We already possess the highly skilled staff to do this and recently welcomed back Porterville's own Richard Tree, one of the region's foremost experts in public transportation, to lead the department. We've already done a cost analysis and know the financial requirements to make this happen, given the bids we expect to receive from regional companies to help us operate our own system. We raised this issue with TCRTA's Executive Director. Yet despite our repeated requests, the agency stopped providing appropriate financial and operational information to member municipalities while expanding its administrative overhead at a higher level than expected for its services. This move provides a more transparent, efficient and effective service to those who live, work and play in our city.

Are you now walking away from a regional transportation strategy with this move?

Not at all. We welcome the continued collaboration with our neighboring cities and the County of Tulare on a regional strategy. That said, we cannot remain a member of TCRTA knowing that we can operate a more transparent, efficient and effective service to those who live, work and play in our city.

Will bus routes and other timetables be altered?

It's too early in the process to outline that level of detail. However, we can say that we will offer the same level of service regarding accessibility to public transportation. This move provides a more transparent, efficient, and effective service to those who live, work, and play in our city.

Will the buses get re-painted and look different?

No, however the City is planning to have the City seal placed on each of its vehicles and remove the former provider's name. We will offer the same level of service regarding accessibility to public transportation. This move provides a more transparent, efficient, and effective service to those who live, work, and play in our city.

What happened with TCRTA that prevented it from meeting the City of Porterville's expectations?

To reiterate, Porterville helped establish TCRTA in 2020, expecting that doing so would offer a more efficient and cost-effective regional transportation infrastructure. We even shared Richard Tree, who previously led its transportation division, to spearhead the launch of the new agency. After he left TCTRA in 2022, the agency stopped providing appropriate financial and operational information to member municipalities while expanding its administrative overhead at a higher level than expected for the service it provides.

With our efforts to uncover the reasons for the exponential rise in membership fees to the agency exhausted, we notified TCRTA a year ago of its intentions to leave the agency and submitted a formal declaration in January per the established procedures. This move provides a more transparent, efficient and effective service to those who live, work and play in our city.

How will the Porterville bus system operate with its staff?

Our dedicated and highly skilled staff will oversee all aspects. They will seek and secure a contract with a transportation company to perform the operations, and the City will ensure that they meet our service and safety standards within the budget we set. We estimate that restarting our own transit system with the same level of service will save taxpayers as much as 30 percent of the costs we're spending now. This move provides a more transparent, efficient, and effective service to those who live, work, and play in our city.

Will bus services continue as before through these changes?

We are insisting that this happens but are concerned that TCTRA changed transit operators without notice recently. We will continue to stress that, per our existing agreement, the agency's bus services continue to service Porterville through June 30. Come July 1, we will offer a more transparent, efficient, and effective service to those who live, work, and play in our city.

A recent news article cited Richard Tree's experience in senior management stint in his family's transportation services business that caters to municipalities. Isn't there a conflict of interest with his appointment at the City?

Richard worked for the City of Porterville for nearly two decades before moving to TCRTA. In both cases, his employment was vetted for any conflict of interest. Moreover, Richard has and always will recuse himself when his family's business is being considered for a contract by Porterville. This was continued when he was the Executive Director with TCRTA. This transparency is on the record during TCRTA board meetings

and documented in the minutes of the meetings, with TCRTA legal counsel present. Richard is one of the region's foremost experts in public transportation, and we're excited to have him back to lead the department.

There was a time, though, when Richard was still a Managing Agent for the City while standing up TCRTA. In that time, his family's business was under consideration for, and ultimately secured, the operating contract for the regional agency. Isn't this a clear-cut case of a conflict of interest?

To clarify, The City of Porterville shared Richard with the regional agency as TCRTA stood up. He was instrumental in launching the agency and getting it off the ground, and this move was approved by all parties.

Moreover, Richard has and always will recuse himself when Porterville considers his family's business for a contract. Richard is one of the region's foremost experts in public transportation, and we're excited to have him back to lead the department.