


## Informational Memorandum

Date: January 23, 2020

To: Honorable Mayor, Members of City Council, and Interim City Manager

From: Scott Schafer, Public Works Director  
Alvie Maxey, Yakima Transit Division Manager 

Subject: Special Route to YMCA Aquatics Center and SOZO Sports Complex

Yakima City Council recently requested that Yakima Transit investigate the possibility of creating a direct bus route that transports residents who live in the east side of our community to and from the YMCA Aquatics Center and the SOZO Sports Complex. City Council also requested that Yakima Transit investigate the creation of a bus service or program that specifically accommodates children/youth who want to travel directly to and from the YMCA Aquatics Center at no cost, or with a voucher.

The Federal Transit Association (FTA) Region 10 Office has indicated to Yakima Transit that the creation of a bus route which exclusively transports east side residents directly to and from the YMCA Aquatics Center and the SOZO Sports Complex risks violation of Federal Title VI regulations. Officials from the FTA Region 10 Office warned that providing an exclusive service to a specific demographic such as this, would violate Federal Title VI regulations which prohibits discrimination based on Race, Color or National Origin in regard to public transportation. FTA officials also added that utilizing federal assets to provide transportation for only one group would be a violation of Title VI. To summarize, Yakima Transit is prohibited from providing special or preferential services to select members of our community, while excluding or severely limiting the availability of such a service to others. Yakima Transit is obligated to operate our public transportation system in a manner that is fair and equitable for all passengers.

In order to avoid violating Title VI regulations, Charter Rules, and/or repercussions relating to discriminatory practices, we are proposing that the newly opened YMCA Aquatics Center be included in our free summer "Bus to Pools" program to satisfy City Council's request. This successful program has been available for the past few years to all Transit passengers for approximately two and a half months during the summer. As children/youth are generally out of school during the summer months, this program is highly utilized and does not exclusively serve select members of our community or exclude others. However, for the YMCA Aquatics Center to be included in the Bus to Pools program, this would require the YMCA to actively partner with Yakima Transit just as the Parks and Recreation staff currently do. Yakima Transit will reach out to YMCA officials to coordinate efforts.

To summarize, Yakima Transit fixed route service must utilize established bus stops and operate on established bus routes which are advertised and available for the use of all passengers within our system. Yakima Transit is not to provide exclusive or special trips to select individuals or groups, or endeavor to create routes which intentionally or unintentionally, exclude access to some of the riding public while providing preferential services to others as this may jeopardize federal funding and place the City out of compliance with FTA.

In the meanwhile, staff will work with the YMCA to include them within the City's "Bus to Pools" summer program.