

To: Board of Directors

Date: February 14, 2019

From: Rick Ramacier
General Manager

SUBJECT: Draft 2019 Federal Legislative Program

Background:

Staff has reviewed two drafts of the proposed 2019 County Connection Federal Legislative Program with the MP&L Committee. Below are the five issues the MP&L Committee and staff are recommending be the core of our 2019 program. They are primarily similar to last year's set of issues with new attention paid to federal re-authorization. The MP&L Committee further recommends that last's pamphlet format be retained for 2019. A mock-up of the pamphlet is enclosed and copies will be available at the board meeting.

Issues

1. Fund the federal transit program in FY2020 at the authorized levels of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. County Connection is projected to receive just over \$1.5 million in federal funding to assist in supplying Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit services in FY20.
2. Urge that public transit be adequately included in any major infrastructure package that may move through Congress. There is a projected \$90 billion shortfall to keep the current federal transit systems in a state of good repair. This does not include building in any new capacity.
3. Find a permanent fix to the growing shortfalls in the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) and the related Mass Transit Account (MTA). Both of these are on target to be essentially bankrupt by the end FY21 according to most experts. Thus, projects that are programmed for funding from these accounts will be unable to be completed. The potential funding at risk for County Connection is well into the millions and involves on-going critical support for ADA paratransit services as well replacing our diesel fleet with zero emission based electric buses.
4. Create a new funding program in the next re-authorization to provide demonstration project funding for first & last mile public transportation solutions that both are innovative and provide mobility integration. While funds would be granted to public transportation providers as defined, these grantees would be allowed to fully partner with other public entities as well as private sector partners or non-profit partners to being about demonstration projects under this new funding category. Up to 10% of the federal transit program should be applied to this.
5. Modernize the federal definition of public transportation to support and encourage public transit evolving into mobility integrators. This will allow public transportation providers to take advantage of new technologies that create opportunities to offer innovative, cost effective, and higher quality services without being hamstrung by the current decades old federal definition of public transportation. Any update should maintain longstanding definitions that a public transportation service is "publically-funded" and that private organizations cannot be independently eligible for federal funding.

Action Requested:

The MP&L Committee and staff respectfully request that the Board of Directors adopt the draft 2019 Federal Legislative Program as presented.

2019 Federal Advocacy Program



Connecting our community by providing innovative transportation choices when and where you need it.

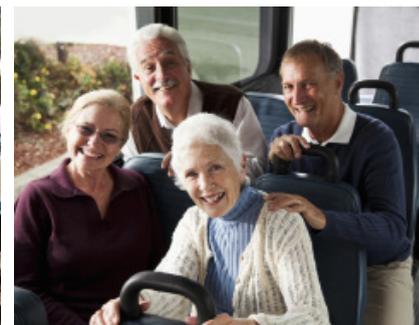
COUNTY CONNECTION

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County Connection Provides These Important Transit Benefits

- Commuter shuttles that reduce travel time, relieve congestion, and connect to regional transportation services.
- Comprehensive local services that allow students to use public transit to go to and from school.
- Direct and convenient service between communities of concern which are transit dependent.
- Over 200 jobs directly and hundreds more indirectly through the purchase of American made vehicles and supplies.
- Alternative modes of transportation that support the local economy and environmental improvements, energy independence, senior mobility, student transportation, and connections to the Bay Area region for all activities.
- Direct connections to shopping via shuttles from neighborhoods and BART.



County Connection Innovation

- The highly successful Walnut Creek downtown shuttle is now using **battery electric inductively charged buses**. Partners include Gillig Corporation, BAE Systems, and WAVE, Inc. This project was made possible by a federal grant.
- County Connection maintains nationally recognized public-private **partnerships** with major job centers. The Bishop Ranch Business Park provides frequent shuttles between Bishop Ranch and two **regional rail systems**, BART and the ACE Train. This features significant operating cost reimbursement as well as a fare subsidy from Bishop Ranch.
- The Shadelands Business Park provides **frequent service** back and forth to the Pleasant Hill BART station. Fares are underwritten by the Shadelands property owners.
- County Connection is a **fully technologically supported** bus service. This is highlighted by Clipper (a Bay Area electronic fare payment system).
- All buses enjoy **Wi-Fi** capability. Customers can also use Bus Tracker, a real-time bus stop information system that allows people to access real-time bus arrival predictions from their laptops or smart phones.
- County Connection has participated in the planning of **innovative transit oriented development** (TOD) projects at both the Pleasant Hill and Walnut Creek BART stations. The Walnut Creek Transit Village is tentatively set to open in February 2019. Additionally, the North Concord BART station has begun its Developer selection process, which County Connection is part of in an effort to align the TOD with future development at the Concord Naval Weapons Station.
- County Connection has completed a year-long service restructure planning process with the primary goal of **increasing productivity** by aligning service with demand. These service changes will be implemented in Spring 2019.



County Connection



County Connection

County Connection is a joint powers agency that provides fixed-route and ADA paratransit services through the communities of Clayton, Concord, Danville, Lafayette, Martinez, Moraga, Orinda, Pleasant Hill, San Ramon, Walnut Creek, and unincorporated communities in Central Contra Costa County. County Connection operates a fleet of 121 fully accessible transit buses and 63 paratransit vehicles.

Ridership

County Connection is an integral Bay Area agency linking customers that rely upon public transportation. Our riders are:

- From diverse backgrounds both socially and economically
- Using regional rail like BART, Capitol Corridor and the ACE Train (Altamont Commuter Express)
- Seniors, persons with disabilities, and veterans who are dependent on public transit
- Actively using public transportation to reduce their carbon footprint

- Commuting to work
 - Students going to school
- Central Contra Costa County**
- Approximately 200 square miles
 - Population around 540,000
 - Annual ridership estimated at 3.5 million (fixed-route and paratransit)



Federal Advocacy Program

County Connection relies on over \$7 million dollars annually in federal transit funding for necessities crucial to the Authority such as federally mandated bus replacement and preventive maintenance. Moreover, sufficient federal investments in public transit will be imperative in order to attract new ridership and acquire long-term solutions to issues such as air quality and traffic congestion. County Connection supports the following:

1. Funding the FY20 federal transit program at authorized levels
2. Adequately funding public transit in any infrastructure initiative
3. Finding a permanent source of funding for the Highway Trust Fund and Mass Transit Account
4. Creating a new funding program in the next re-authorization
5. Modernizing the definition of public transportation

Position #1: Fund the FY20 Federal Transit Program at Authorized Levels

County Connection relies on federal funds to maintain service levels and capital equipment to a state of good repair. The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act must be honored by appropriating to the full authorized levels of funding in FY20. The Authority expects to receive approximately \$1.4 million in 5307 funds to assist in supplying Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit services. This portion of funding is 25% of the paratransit operating budget. Without it, County Connection would need to transfer \$1.4 million from fixed-route operations to cover paratransit needs, which would result in a cut of fixed-route service.

Position #2: Adequately Fund Public Transit in Any Infrastructure Initiative

The Administration and incoming House majority are interested in pursuing a comprehensive infrastructure proposal. Nationwide, there is a projected minimum \$90 billion shortfall to keep the current transit system in a state of good repair. This amount does not include what it would take to add new capacity. While such a comprehensive package has yet to take any final form, County Connection urges that any such proposal contain meaningful funding for public transit.

Federal Advocacy Program

Position #3: Find a Permanent Source of Funding for the Highway Trust Fund and Mass Transit Account

According to most experts, the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) and the related Mass Transit Account (MTA) are on target to be essentially bankrupt by the end of FY21. County Connection urges that Congress and the Administration increase their efforts to find a permanent fix to these growing shortfalls. Without financial stabilization for these accounts, many County Connection projects that are planned could be at risk.

Position #4: Create a New Funding Program in Next Re-Authorization

As mobility options in transit continue to emerge, County Connection must stay at the forefront of initiatives in order to increase ridership and remain as efficient as possible. Creating a new funding program in the next re-authorization would allow demonstration project funding for first and last mile public transportation solutions that are both innovative and provide mobility integration. While funds would be granted to public transportation providers as defined, these grantees would be allowed to fully partner with other public entities as well as private or non-profit sectors for demonstrations under this new funding category. Up to 10% of the federal transit program should be applied to this.

Position #5: Modernize the Definition of Public Transportation

Modernizing the federal definition of public transportation supports and encourages public transit evolving into mobility integrators. This will allow public transportation providers to take advantage of new technologies that create opportunities to offer innovative, cost effective, and higher quality services without the constraints of the current decades old federal definition of public transportation. Any update should maintain longstanding definitions that a public transportation service is "publically-funded" and that private organizations cannot be independently eligible for federal funding.

