

To: Operations and Scheduling Committee

Date: 4/25/2019

From: Sean Hedgpeth – Manager of Planning

Reviewed by: *Ref*

SUBJECT: March 2019 Service and Fare Restructure Ridership Update

Background:

On March 10th, County Connection implemented a large service restructure which modified most of the routes in the system. This service change also coincided with a fare change, which eliminated paper products such as transfers and punch cards, eliminated the 10am-2pm midday free program for seniors and the disabled (with the exception of the Bridge and RES Success programs), and increased the base cash fare while keeping Clipper fares unchanged.

The service change added service on more productive routes and eliminated less productive service. Several route alignments were modified to match area demand and to create faster travel times. In keeping with goals for a sustainable budget, nearly 12% of total weekday service hours were cut compared to the transit service profile from Spring 2018.

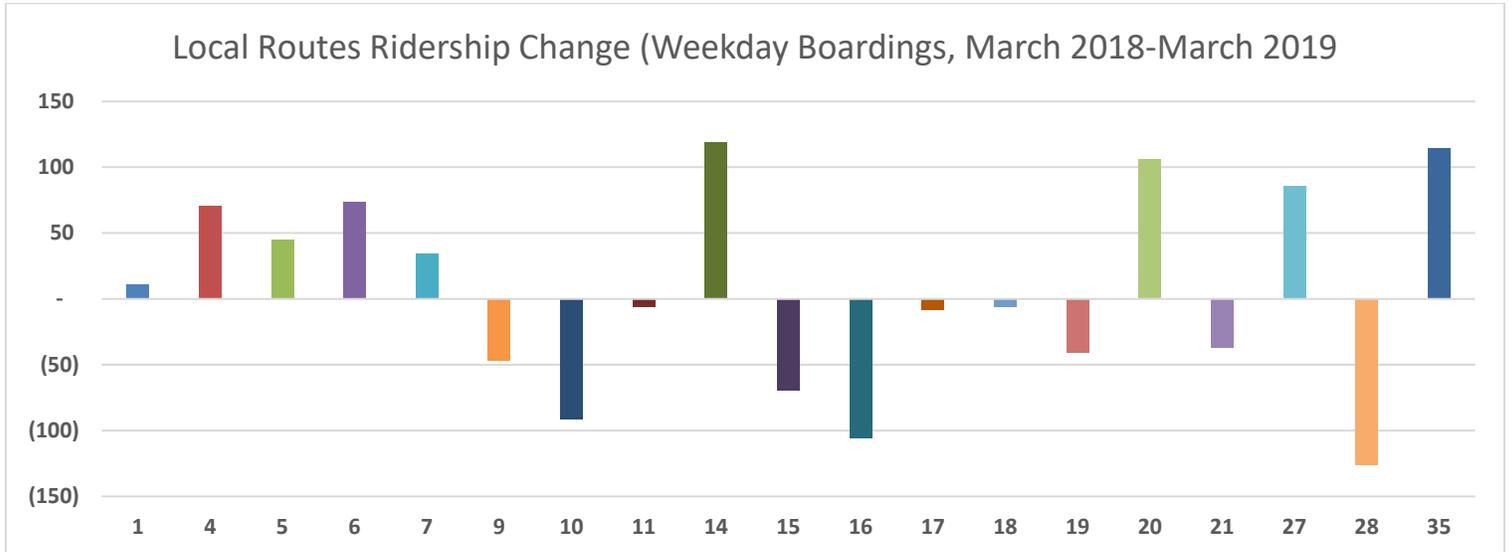
Major Highlights:

Average weekday ridership was down 2.8% compared to March 2018, and weekend ridership was down 13.4%. Total monthly ridership was down 6.9%, which was affected by there being one more weekday in March 2018. Although ridership is down, it should be noted that the system ridership was experiencing average weekday ridership drops of 7%, 4% and 7% in the last three months.

Most of the routes that lost ridership had a high number of cash payment and paper transfers. The reduction in ridership may have been affected by the fare change, which increased the cash base fare by 50 cents, eliminated midday-free and eliminated paper transfers. Additionally, weekend riders tend to be our most transit dependent, and the elimination of the paper transfers ended a long standing 3 hour paper transfer window on weekends. This may have suppressed some ridership. Transfers are now Clipper only and they are capped at 2 hours, every day. Route level specifics are covered on the following page.

Route Level Information

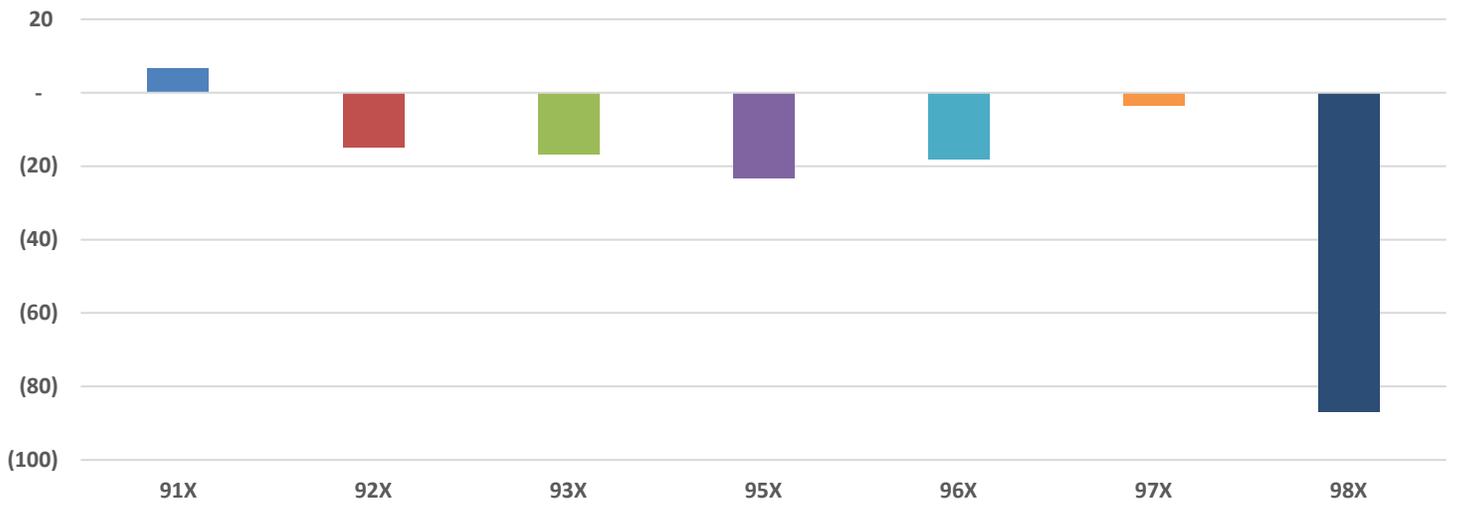
Route level graphs and accompanying text are included on the proceeding pages, including Local Routes (1-36), Express Routes (91X-99X) and Weekend Routes (301-321).



The more significant drops in ridership on local routes included Routes 10, 16, and 28, all of which had a high percentage of cash payment. Routes 10 and 28 had coverage reduced, with less Route 10's going all the way to Clayton and Route 28 terminating at DVC. Route 27 picked up about a third of the Route 28 riders in the North Concord area. Routes that were eliminated include 1M, 2, and Route 36, which are not shown on this graph. Route 15's losses were largely made up by Route 14's extension to Walnut Creek BART, which covered the area formerly served by Route 15.

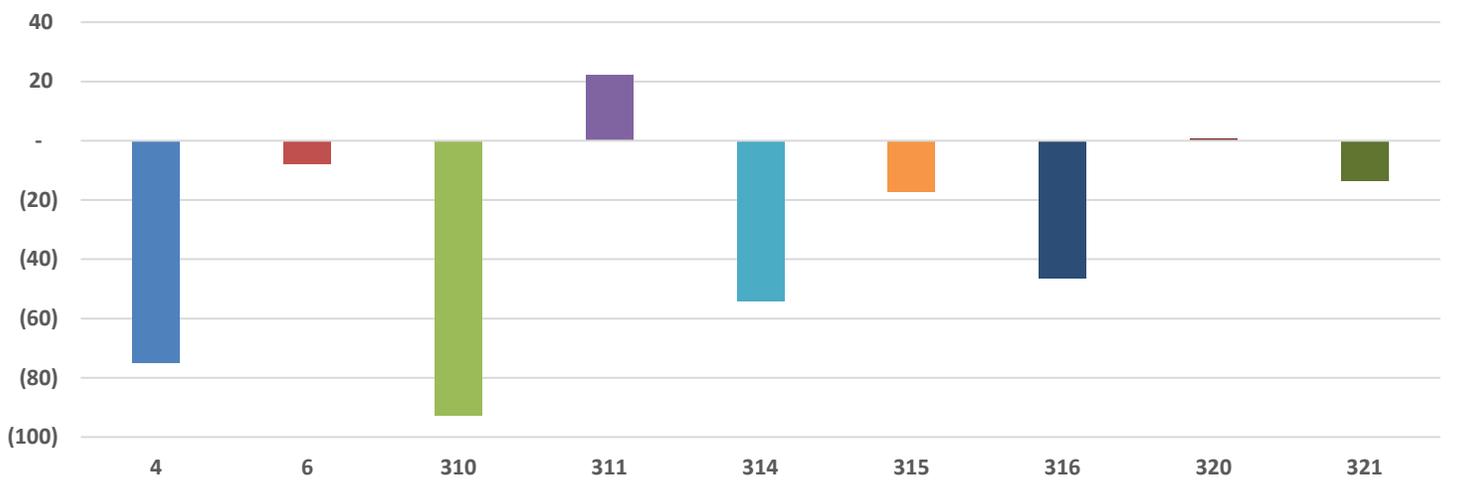
Ridership increased by over 100 daily riders on Routes 14, 20, and 35, all of which had increased service as part of the restructure.

Express Routes Weekday Ridership Change (March 2018-March 2019)



Express routes were all down except for a modest increase on Route 91X. Alignments were changed on Route 92X (small portion of Alcosta Blvd. removed), 93X had an express trip converted to an all stops pattern and 98X had its last trip eliminated but got two new round trips at each peak period. Route 98X was down over 80 daily riders this month, likely due to the fare changes as 98X had a lot of cash, midday free, and transfer use. Route 99X was implemented in August 2018, therefore March 2018 data is not available.

Weekend Routes Daily Ridership Change (March 2018-March 2019)



Weekend ridership was down except for an increase on Route 311, which got extended to John Muir Medical Center in Walnut Creek. This increase accommodated most of the Route 301 passengers, who switched to the John Muir Medical segment of the 311 after Route 301 was cancelled as part of the changes.

The 310 was down, once again likely due to fare changes. The route was extended to Downtown Clayton, running at a frequency of every two hours. During the first few weeks of the changes, there were about 27 daily weekend boardings within the City of Clayton on this new Route 310 extension.

Conclusions

Staff expects ridership to settle out somewhat in the next few months, when riders discover some of the newer service. Ridership on the trip times that most closely resembles the previous schedules are getting the most ridership, with the new service still emerging. Staff is monitoring the service daily, and steps will be taken to either market lightly used service or to plan tweaks in the future to match rider demand. Staff also expects increased ridership during the free week of Walnut Creek BART fares as well as the planned pilot for free fares on the 11, 14, and 16, as part of our LCTOP funded program.

Although ridership was expected to decrease with the overall service reduction and fare changes, it is important to note efficiencies have improved. The service change not only slowed down our decline in weekday boardings, but the new restructure has also increased efficiency, with 13 passengers per service hour carried in March 2018 increasing to 14 passengers per service hour in March 2019 on our local routes.

Recommendation:

None at this time. This item is informational only.

Financial Implications:

None.