

To: Operations and Scheduling Committee

Date: 4/23/2019

From: Ruby Horta, Director of Planning, Marketing & Innovation **Reviewed by:** *WC.*

SUBJECT: Bishop Ranch Service Restructure

Background:

As part of the overall service restructure and in an effort to increase efficiencies, staff designed a service restructure for routes serving Bishop Ranch. The goal was to increase frequency from the Walnut Creek BART station by shifting service on the 97X from Dublin/Pleasanton to Walnut Creek. This would then allow for the elimination of Route 95X and the creation of a new weekend route in San Ramon, Route 335. The proposal was designed to be cost-neutral, with more service from Walnut Creek BART, a shift of 97X commuters to the more frequent 35, and new weekend service for San Ramon.

On March 21st, the County Connection Board of Directors authorized staff to initiate the public hearing process for the proposed changes to Bishop Ranch routes and a new weekend route in San Ramon. Staff received comments mostly via email and on the website. Two public hearings were also held, one in Walnut Creek and the other in San Ramon on April 9th and 10th, respectively.

Public Comments:

The comments received covered three main themes: support for weekend service in San Ramon (Route 335), concern about the elimination of service to the Danville Park & Ride (Route 95X), and opposition to the increased travel time by shifting commutes from 97X to 35.

Support for weekend service in San Ramon was not surprising. Concerns about service between the Danville Park & Ride and Walnut Creek BART were misinformed since the new 97X would serve the Park & Ride (northbound in the AM and southbound in the PM) at similar times as the 95X and with more frequent service. Lastly, the main concern was raised by 97X commuters traveling northbound for employment at Chevron.

Currently, Chevron employees benefit from the fastest travel time on the 96X and 97X. The scheduled travel time on the 97X from Dublin/Pleasanton BART to Chevron is approximately 15 minutes. The closest stop to Chevron on Route 35 (the alternate route for 97X commuters) is the stop at City Center (Sunset Dr./Bishop Dr.). The scheduled travel time from Dublin/Pleasanton BART to Sunset/Bishop is 21 minutes, plus the walk required to arrive at Chevron, approximately 7 minutes. Essentially, travel time for 97X commutes would double. This is legitimate concern for commuters accustomed to a 15 minute commute.

Further Review:

In addition to the opposition to eliminate 97X, during the public comment period staff was made aware of Chevron's potential plans to minimize public access to their facility. Given this development, 97X commuters may be inconvenienced with an increased travel time if County Connection is no longer allowed to access the stop in front of Chevron. This would require the 97X to be re-routed to the next closest stop (currently served by the 35) at Sunset/Bishop. In this scenario, the travel time comparison between a potentially new 97X and the existing 35 would be 22 vs. 28 minutes. Another stop that would be negatively impacted by the restricted access to Chevron, would be BR1. The current stop is only accessible via the Chevron entrance and would have to be relocated in order to continue to serve it. Based on this developing information, staff is evaluating the potential for express trips on the 35, which would make it more competitive to the 97X.

Conclusions

Sunset Development is scheduled to have a Board meeting to discuss Chevron's plans on April 30th. Staff should have a better idea of the impacts to its routes, subsequent to the meeting. However, rather than create a proposal in haste, it would be more prudent to evaluate the impacts to 97X commuters, the potential for express 35 trips, and compare travel times based on available access to Chevron and BR1.

Although it may be too soon to make a final proposal on the weekday service to Bishop Ranch, staff does find value in moving forward with the implementation of a weekend 335. As stated earlier, the draft proposal was designed to be cost-neutral. Therefore, moving forward with the implementation of a new route would increase costs, at approximately \$170,000 per year. Nonetheless, staff remains committed to making the other changes once additional information from Sunset Development is available and intends to implement the Bishop Ranch route changes by the Winter bid, which would help mitigate the expense of Route 335.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the O&S Committee forward the proposal to implement a new Route 335 in the Fall and postpone Bishop Ranch route changes to the Winter.

Financial Implications:

The proposed Route 335 would require approximately \$170,000 per year to operate.

Action Requested:

Staff request O&S forward the proposal to implement a new Route 335 in the Fall and postpone Bishop Ranch route changes to the Winter, for Board approval at the May Board meeting.