

To: Marketing, Planning & Legislative Committee

Date: 4/27/2020

From: Ruby Horta, Director of Planning, Marketing & Innovation

Reviewed by: WC.

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Service Levels

Background

County Connection staff, from operators and mechanics to dispatchers and customer service representatives and all maintenance and administrative positions, have accomplished great feats during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the first regional shelter-in-place order, County Connection has remained operational by following the health officer's recommendations. Social distancing has been in effect for over a month and face coverings are now required, both throughout the administrative offices and maintenance buildings, as well as on all County Connection buses.

According to the order of the health officer of the County of Contra Costa, dated April 17, 2020:

“...requires that people wear Face Coverings, when waiting for or riding on public transportation and other types of shared transportation.”

Fares are currently not being collected to allow for rear door boarding. However, driver shields continue to be installed for the protection of our bus operators and to potentially allow for fare collection to resume in the future.

As we prepare for the upcoming months, we must continue to evaluate how to address social distancing on the buses as the State stages the reopening of business and additional passengers return to public transit. We do not anticipate this to happen overnight, however, we must establish some guiding principles.

Bus Capacity:

County Connection operates three vehicle sizes on fixed routes: 30, 35, and 40 feet in length. In order to meet the social distancing requirements, vehicle capacities must be significantly reduced. Most 40' buses have a capacity of 50-60 passengers. The following is the initial recommendation, which assumes passengers sitting 6 feet apart:

Bus Length	30'	35'	40'
Single Riders	6	7	8
Priority Seating	2	2	2

These guidelines assume all single riders are unaccompanied. Unfortunately, capacity cannot be set in stone given the nature of some trips. It should be recognized that families may travel together and would not be required to social distance, thus increasing the capacity. Also, a person with a disability traveling with a companion would not be required to sit 6 feet apart.

Since the shelter-in-place orders went into effect, the reduced capacity has not presented any issues. However, at the current reduced level of service, we can expect to begin experiencing “over-capacity” once people return to work.

As operators return to work, staff has managed to deploy service on routes with the greatest demand. We are optimistic that the Summer bid will proceed as originally planned and that service over the summer will suffice to meet the social distancing requirements.

Future Service Changes:

As we plan for the Fall bid, the Board should be aware of some limitations staff is anticipating. The financial uncertainty will be exacerbated by any social distancing requirements, particularly on the 600 series and express service. In the past, some of these trips have carried more than 40 passengers. It would be impossible to allocate five buses to complete a trip previously fulfilled with one bus. We do not have the capital, nor the labor required to meet this level of demand. Therefore, staff is currently evaluating new service levels to hopefully align the new financial picture as well as health guidelines. There is a great degree of uncertainty and staff will maintain the Committee apprised of potential service realignments.

Financial Implications:

Any financial implications are yet to be determined, based on new levels of service.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the MP&L Committee forward this item to the Board as information and for feedback.

Action Requested:

None, for information only.