

To: Operations & Scheduling Committee

Date: 11/11/2022

From: Pranjali Dixit, Manager of Planning

Reviewed by: MR

SUBJECT: Regional Signup Coordination and Spring Bid Update

Background:

County Connection has the opportunity to modify service four times per year during driver bid changes. Adjustments are made in response to various factors including ridership trends, feedback from passengers and operators, on-time performance, and changes to school bell times or BART schedules. As COVID cases continue to decline and people are resuming more of their day-to-day activities, ridership has been slowly returning. However, traffic congestion has returned as well and has had impacts on schedule reliability. In addition, the operator shortage remains a key hurdle to increasing service, and staff have continued to work on expanding and enhancing recruitment and training efforts.

Ridership Trends:

Historically, the Fall bid has higher ridership due to schools coming back from the summer break. The combination of the Weekend Monument Free, Pass2Class, and October Free Rides fare promotions helped continue the ridership recovery. Ridership in October grew to its highest levels since the initial shelter-in-place orders in March 2020. As of October, weekday local routes were down 28% from pre-COVID baseline levels, express routes were down 56%, school routes were down 15%, and weekend routes were down around 9%.

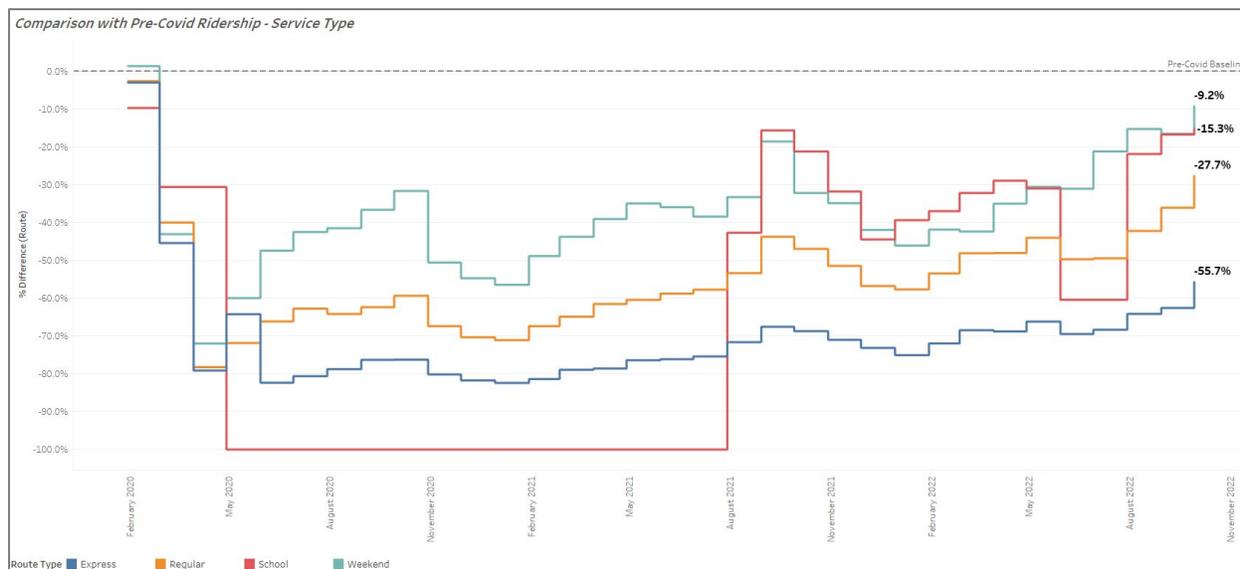


Figure 1: Comparison with Pre-Covid Ridership

Regional Signup Coordination:

Through the Planning & Operations subcommittee that was formed from the Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force (BRTF), staff from various transit agencies have been working to increase coordination across Bay Area transit systems. One of the near-term strategies identified was the alignment of signup calendars to ensure that schedule changes occur at or around the same time. The second Sundays in January and August were chosen as the two dates that operators would target for any major service changes.

The August date is consistent with the typical timing of County Connection's Fall bid, which aligns with the start of the school year. However, the Spring bid has usually started in February. Staff met with the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) and agreed on moving the upcoming Spring bid start date to January 8, 2023, to align with the regional coordination efforts. Because of the longer duration of the Spring bid, which will be in place until June, staff agreed to the ATU's request to have operators rebid midway through the 6-month signup.

Spring Bid:

Staff has been closely monitoring service and working with the ATU to respond to recent increases in traffic congestion and changes in travel patterns. The service changes for Spring were guided by analysis of schedule adherence as well as feedback received from the operators.

- Schedules on Routes 10 and 20 are being modified to improve schedule adherence and modify recovery time.
- Due to construction on Locust St. in downtown Walnut Creek, Route 4 will operate on a long-term detour through the end of 2023.
- Schedules on eight (8) weekend routes (Routes 301, 310, 311, 314, 315, 320, 321, and 335) are being modified to improve schedule adherence due to changes in traffic conditions as well as provide additional recovery time.

Financial Implications:

None. The service levels for the Spring bid are consistent with the current FY 2023 budget.

Recommendation:

None, for information only.

Action Requested:

None, for information only.

Attachments:

None.