

**To:** Board of Directors

**Date:** 11/24/2023

**From:** Melody Reeb, Director of Planning, Marketing, & Innovation

**Reviewed by:** *Ref*

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**SUBJECT:** I-680 Express Bus & Hydrogen Fueling Station Update

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### **Background:**

In March 2022, the Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA), in partnership with County Connection and the Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority (LAVTA), submitted a grant application to the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) for a zero-emission express bus service along the I-680 corridor between the Martinez Amtrak Station and Dublin/Pleasanton BART. Of the \$124 million funding request, the project was awarded about \$36 million for the purchase of six hydrogen fuel-cell buses (FCEBs), construction of hydrogen fueling stations and maintenance infrastructure at both County Connection and LAVTA's facilities, as well as construction of a shared mobility hub in San Ramon. The award also includes funds for developing the Integrated Transit Plan (ITP), which is currently underway, and for Transit Bus on Shoulder (TBOS) training and testing at GoMentum station.

### **Express Bus Service:**

In 2021, LAVTA completed a study to evaluate potential express bus service along I-680 between the Tri-Valley area and Suisun City, and one of the near-term options identified was to operate an initial segment between Martinez and Dublin/Pleasanton BART, with stops in Walnut Creek and San Ramon and extending to the Pleasanton ACE Station during the commute period. This service would operate hourly on weekdays, and based on pre-pandemic ridership assumptions, was projected to carry about 1,000 daily riders. The service would potentially be operated by both County Connection and LAVTA, to help reduce deadhead by having a bus yard located at either end of the route.

However, the pandemic has shifted travel patterns and reduced the demand for express bus service, which primarily serves commuters who have not returned to offices full time. Table 1 shows a comparison of pre- and post-pandemic ridership on County Connection's existing express routes along I-680. Overall, ridership on those routes is still only 31% of what it used to be, whereas other County Connection routes have recovered closer to 80% of pre-pandemic ridership. In addition, Route 98X, which has seen the most ridership recovery among the five routes, operates more like a local route and serves all local stops through Martinez.

Although the over-the-road hydrogen FCEBs envisioned for the service will not be available for another few years, the grant award included \$600,000 to retrofit six existing buses in order to deploy service more immediately. However, given the ongoing operator shortage, neither County Connection nor LAVTA currently have the resources to operate additional service. Furthermore, operating funds for the new service have not yet been identified. Thus, staff will likely look to current services along the I-680 corridor to find opportunities to restructure existing routes in order to provide some modified version of the service that's more in line with current resources as well as post-pandemic conditions.

**Table 1: Average Daily Ridership on Existing I-680 Express Routes**

<b>Route</b>	<b>Pre-Pandemic (FY 2020 thru Feb)</b>	<b>Current (FY 2023)</b>	<b>% of Pre-Pandemic</b>
92X	178	16	9%
95X	209	75	36%
96X	499	80	16%
97X	89	23	26%
98X	314	211	67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,288</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>31%</b>

**Shared Mobility Hub:**

About \$10 million in TIRCP funds was awarded for the construction of a Shared Mobility Hub (SMH) in San Ramon at the Bollinger Canyon Park-and-Ride lot, which is located at the southwest corner of the I-680/Bollinger Canyon Rd interchange. However, following Chevron’s departure from Bishop Ranch and subsequent redevelopment plans, CCTA and County Connection staff worked with Sunset Development to identify a new location for the SMH within Bishop Ranch. The new location near Bishop Ranch 3 (BR3) would be closer to the major activity centers in the area, including City Center and the Iron Horse Regional Trail, and would replace the existing Transit Center to the north.

**Hydrogen Fueling Station:**

The grant award also includes about \$13 million for the construction of hydrogen fueling stations and maintenance infrastructure, which will be split 50/50 between County Connection and LAVTA. However, the source of funds for this component of the project will be federal instead of state, which requires an 11.47% local match as well as environmental clearance under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). County Connection staff is planning to install a skid-mounted fueling station within the existing bus yard, which minimizes the need for construction and provides flexibility for future fleet purchases. Upgrades will also be made to the maintenance facility to provide the safety features necessary to work on hydrogen buses such as sensors and ventilation.

**Financial Implications:**

County Connection will be responsible for the local match of \$853,966 for the hydrogen fueling and maintenance infrastructure. Staff is planning to use Transportation Development Act (TDA) capital funds for the local match, which will be included in future years’ budgets.

**Recommendation:**

None, for information only.

**Action Requested:**

None, for information only.

**Attachments:**

None