

To: Marketing, Planning, & Legislative Committee

Date: 4/21/2016

From: Ruby Horta, Manager of Planning

Reviewed by:

SUBJECT: New Service Request Process

Background:

Agencies across the State were affected by the recession a few years back. In 2009, County Connection was faced with the difficult decision of significantly reducing service. This was due to state revenue losses, declining sales tax revenue, fuel cost volatility and depletion of the agency's reserves. At the time, County Connection's Board of Directors set a goal to cut about 20% of the service in order to balance the budget.

Since then, County Connection has periodically altered service, based on customer demand. However, any service changes made since 2009 have either been a zero sum change (i.e. when a trip is added another trip is cut), due to budget constraints, or there has been a partner willing to pay for the requested service. For example, a complaint may come in stating that a route is experiencing overcrowding on the morning trips, thus additional morning service is requested. One method to accommodate this request would be to shift existing service hours to the morning commute. If evening service on that route is not very productive, staff may decide to cut service hours in the evening and add those hours to morning trips to reduce overcrowding.

Another way to increase service is through partnerships. On numerous occasions the City of Walnut Creek and Bishop Ranch have reached out to County Connection to increase service in their respective jurisdictions. For example, Route 4 offers extended service during the holiday season, paid for by the City of Walnut Creek. Bishop Ranch has made requests for additional trips on already established routes and is responsible for the additional cost incurred.

Occasionally, funds are made available for specific service. Route 3 is funded by a State program, the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP). This type of funding is typically limited in how it can be used. In the LCTOP at least 50% of available funding must provide a benefit to a disadvantaged community (DAC). There is only one DAC in County Connection's service area and all funding available is used to fund that route, Route 3.

New service requests from the public are typically submitted to customer service or directly to planning staff. Additionally, staff meets with drivers on a regular

basis to obtain their feedback on scheduling issues they experience or any comments received from passengers. All of the comments received are reviewed by planning and scheduling staff on a quarterly basis. Requests that can be accommodated within the budgetary constraints are included for the following driver bid.

Over the last few years, due to budgetary constraints, requests for new service that do not have a funding source identified have not been fulfilled. Other requests for schedule adjustments that can be easily accommodated and do not require additional service hours, such as meeting an Amtrak train, or a school bell, have been fulfilled.

Recommendation:

None

Financial Implications:

None.