

## INTER OFFICE MEMO

**To:** Board of Directors

**Date:** 06/05/2017

**From:** Ruby Horta, Manager of Planning

**Reviewed by:** *RH*

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**SUBJECT: 600 Series Service – School Trippers**

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### **Background:**

County Connection has been providing public transportation to various schools in its service area for over 30 years. In 1986, County Connection established a policy to accommodate requests for early dismissals. The policy was adopted to ensure compliance with federal regulatory requirements, which require public transit services be “open to the public”. This was defined as service that operates (1) on a regular schedule, (2) along a predesignated route with predesignated, publicly accessible stops, and (3) with “door open” to all members of the public.

Over time, the service requested by the schools has increased in complexity and goes beyond early dismissals. Now, it includes varying start/end times, minimum days, and conference and finals week, to name a few. Accommodating school service can conflict with County Connection’s role as the public transportation agency providing efficient and effective service to commuters at peak hours and connecting riders to BART and other transit providers.

Every spring, County Connection staff undertakes a rather exhaustive effort to develop the 600 series service, also known as “school trippers”. County Connection typically obtains the school bell times in May and must finalize fall schedules in early June. This is usually the first time County Connection staff is made aware of any new scheduling structure. The operations, scheduling, planning and marketing departments work together to collect school start/end times from 6 different school districts and more than 30 schools. In some cases, schools are not able to meet the deadline, which creates additional challenges, due to federal regulations requiring service to appear on published timetables.

### **Current Service:**

Although the 600 series service does not provide individualized service to all 30 schools, County Connection has traditionally been able to accommodate schedule requests from about 16 schools. Additionally, while our fixed routes do not provide school service directly, we often tailor our schedules to conveniently serve school bell times.

During FY Ending 2016, County Connection provided about 10,000 revenue hours on the 600 series. This accounts for almost 5% of total weekday revenue hours. Currently, County Connection accommodates the following types of bell times for 16 schools on the 600 routes:

*Monday-Friday  
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday  
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday  
Monday Only  
Wednesday Only  
Minimum Days  
Conference Week  
Finals Week  
State Testing Week  
Last Day of School*

For the upcoming 2017-2018 school year we have identified school bell structures that will be problematic to meet without neglecting other services. Schools with block schedules or different start/end times each day of the week would negatively impact our ability to provide public transportation service to the general public.

Given the short notice of new school schedule needs, staff had to make a decision for Fall 2017. In order to meet federal regulations, particularly the requirement to publish the schedules in a timely fashion, schedules were designed to meet the earliest start bell time. This will ensure that students arrive to school on time every day. Going forward, staff will discuss potential solutions to address school needs while meeting federal regulatory requirements.

The affected schools in the 600 series will be: Acalanes and Miramonte High Schools. Both schools have a start bell at 8:35am on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and 8:00am on Tuesday and Thursday. Due to this change, County Connection will only be able to provide service to meet the first bell time, 8:00am Monday – Friday. Schools along our fixed routes, which have transitioned to a block schedule, will also be impacted. For example, Windemere Ranch Middle School has two start times (7:53am and 8:40am) and two end times (2:28pm and 3:15pm) on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Their Wednesday start/end bell times differ from the rest of the week. The two start times on Wednesday are 8:48am and 9:29am; end times are 2:02pm and 2:45pm. This school is served by Route 35, which will continue to operate on its current schedule.

**Recommendation:**

The O&S Committee recommends that 600 service meet the first start bell time and the last end bell time on regular and minimum days, for Fall 2017. Additionally, staff will begin drafting an update to the 1986 policy to address the new complexities in school service.

SUBJECT: Provide Bus Service to Public Schools for Early Dismissals

POLICY: This policy has been established to accommodate requests for special services from the schools operating in CCCTA's service area.

If a school desires CCCTA to provide special services to serve students on "early-out days," CCCTA must receive a written request notifying us of the school's location and dates and times for early dismissal(s) eight weeks prior to the beginning of the period covered by the applicable timetable.

This policy has been adopted to ensure compliance with federal regulatory requirements imposed on CCCTA as a recipient of Urban Mass Transportation Act (ACT) funding. All public transit services funded under the Act must be "open to the public." Federal regulations define "open to the public" as a service which operates (1) on a regular schedule, (2) along a predesignated route with predesignated, publicly accessible stops, and (3) with "doors open" to all members of the public wishing to board at a predesignated fare.

To meet the first Act requirement, all service provided by CCCTA, including service to accommodate "early bell times," must appear on its regularly published timetables. Therefore, our ability to meet a school's needs is tied to our publication deadlines.

It is the intent and desire of CCCTA that by offering each school the opportunity to notify CCCTA of the school's special needs, an equitable balance can be struck between federal regulatory requirements and the needs of those schools.

DATE OF ADOPTION: September 18, 1986