County Connection

INTER OFFICE MEMO

TO: Board of Directors

DATE: February 11, 2021

FROM: Rick Ramacier
General Manager

SUBJECT: Draft 2021 County Connection Federal Advocacy Program

Background

Attached please find a draft PDF of the proposed 2021 County Connection Federal Advocacy Program. Also attached is a companion power point highlighting the draft program. The power point will be used at remote virtual meetings with legislative offices. The PDF is meant to be a leave behind item for legislative staffs and other interested partners.

The proposed priorities are similar to last year's: transportation re-authorization, full federal transit appropriations, restoration of the Highway Trust Fund (and the Mass Transit sub-account), and additional Covid-19 related support. This year we are focusing our accomplishments section on our Covid-19 responses.

Change in Program Presentation Format and Congressional Office Meeting Visits

It is likely that the Covid-19 situation will require that our congressional office visits be done remotely well into 2021.However, legislation important to public transit will be considered throughout the next six months. Thus, we should plan to be in communication with our delegation sooner rather later regarding our 2021 interests.

Staff proposes that we up a series of remote meetings with our delegation in late February or early March. It is at these meetings that we would present our program. We can then follow up remotely as things progress throughout the legislative year. Once the congressional offices are reopened to the public, we can consider in-person visits.

To facilitate these meetings and to present our program, staff recommends that we depart from the brochure/pamphlet format to one that takes advantage of technology driven communication. This includes the use of a brief summarizing power point in these meetings along with a PDF based leave behind.

MP&L Committee Review & Recommendation

The MP&L Committee reviewed the proposed program and presentation materials. They agreed with the four priority areas of the draft program. They provided staff with feedback on the presentation material. The feedback is reflected in the two attachments. The MP&L Committee has sent this item to the full Board for your review, feedback, and approval.

Action Requested

The MP&L Committee and staff ask that you review, provide feedback, and approve the draft 2021 County Connection Federal Advocacy Program.

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2021 FEDERAL ADVOCACY PROGRAM

County Connection relies on federal transit funding for necessities crucial to the Authority. Moreover, sufficient federal investments in public transit will be imperative as we recover from COVID-19. Thus, County Connection supports the following:

Priority #1: COVID-19 Relief/Stimulus Funding

We support the proposal under consideration to provide $30 billion for public transit in additional Coronavirus relief/stimulus. The American Public Transit Association (APTA) estimates that public transit will need another $39.2 billion through FY23 to avoid further COVID-19 related service cuts, employee layoffs, or capital project cancellations.

County Connection anticipates losing as much as $12 million in fare revenue through FY23 due to COVID-19 related ridership losses. We are likely going to experience additional losses of an unknown amount due to decreases in local/state funding.

Priority #2: Re-authorization of the Federal Transportation Bill

We seek a timely re-authorization of The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST) which will expire in September. Historically, County Connection has received $8 million dollars in federal support on an annualized basis. These funds are primarily used to replace aging buses and vans for far cleaner and reliable buses. Thus, re-authorization of FAST is a top priority for County Connection.

The House passed the Invest in America Act to re-authorize FAST. This bill increases the federal investment in public transit by 133% over FAST. We applaud this. As the Senate takes up this legislation, we urge them to include language that provides funding for and males it easier for public transit operators to implement innovative first and last mile and other micro transit solutions that can support a strong transit backbone and promulgate greater ridership and coverage.

Priority #3: FY22 Federal Public Transit Appropriations

County Connection relies on federal funds for the timely completion of capital projects and to support its services to folks with disabilities. In FY22, we have programmed federal funds to support the timely replacement of 40 buses. The new buses will be much cleaner and more reliable. To ensure that we receive this critical capital funding, the federal transit program must be fully funded at levels consistent with FAST.

Priority #4: Restore the Federal Highway and Mass Transit Accounts

With the Federal Highway and Mass Transit Accounts nearly broke, more and more of the federal transit program is at risk of not being funded. We urge that a permanent fix to this problem be found. Without financial stabilization for these accounts, many County Connection projects will be at risk.

CENTRAL CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Connecting our community by providing innovative transportation choices when and where you need it

2021 Federal Advocacy Program

COUNTY CONNECTION

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County Connection

County Connection provides vital local transit service for communities in Central Contra Costa County.

Our Riders

Compared to Central Contra Costa County residents, our riders are:

4.4X more likely to have no car

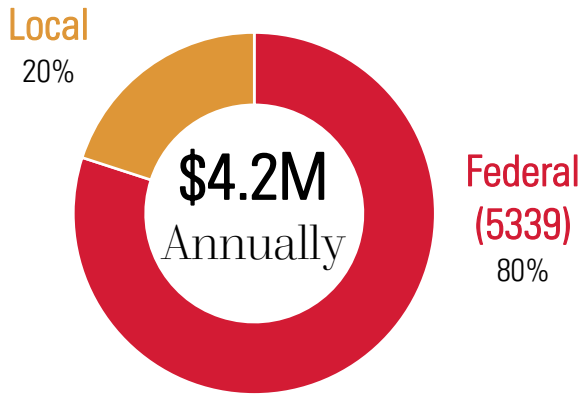
3.8X more likely to be in a 3+ worker household

3.0X more likely to earn less than $50,000/year

2.7X more likely to be ages 18-24

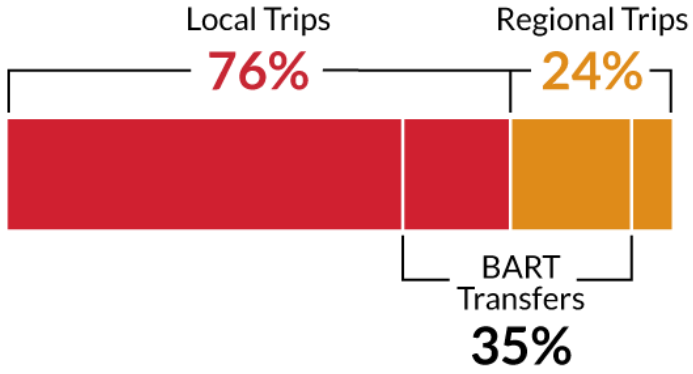
Capital Funding

Federal funding accounts for an estimated 80% on an annualized basis.



Local vs. Regional Trips

While the majority of routes serve a BART station, most of our riders (76%) are making local trips within Central Contra Costa.



Also, while 35% of our riders transfer between our buses and BART, roughly half of them stay within Central Contra Costa.

Federal Advocacy Program

Priority #1: Additional COVID-19 Relief/Stimulus Funding

- Surveys show public transit will need an estimated $39.2 billion through FY23 to avoid further COVID-19 related service cuts, employee layoffs, or capital project cancellations.
- County Connection anticipates a $10-$12 million need through FY23 to avoid any further reductions in service due to COVID-19.

Priority #2: Re-authorization of FAST ACT

- The Invest in America Act is a good start to re-authorization as it increases the federal investment in public transit by 133% over FAST.
- County Connection continues to seek potential changes to make it easy for public transit systems to pursue innovative first and last mile and micro transit-based solutions.

Federal Advocacy Program

Priority #3: Fully Fund the Federal Transit Program

- A fully funded transit appropriations bill will ensure County Connection can capitalize its upcoming 40-bus project.
- New buses will be cleaner (using renewable fuels) and much more reliable than those they replace.

Priority #4: Restore the Federal Highway Trust Fund

- Without a reliable and sustainable trust fund, many transit projects will be at risk.

County Connection Innovation During COVID-19

- County Connection's paratransit division began the essential transportation of COVID-19 positive individuals to medical facilities and hotels. **LINK Paratransit has transported over 459 COVID positive passengers.**
- County Connection continues to partner with the County in developing opportunities to **assist with the COVID vaccines**.
- County Connection's service and fare restructure has proven to be a great success. Prior to the impacts of COVID-19, **ridership was experiencing double-digit (13%) growth**.
- County Connection operates a total of eight **battery electric inductively charged buses**, primarily serving downtown Walnut Creek. This project was largely funded by two separate federal grants.

County Connection Provides These Important COVID-19 Related Transit Benefits

- **Continued service** during COVID-19 to many other essential workers and communities of concern which are transit dependent.
- Delivery **resources** to food and meal programs in the **entire County**, not just the County Connection service area
  - Meals on Wheels program: >21,301 meals to the vulnerable senior population
  - School Lunches: 7,239 lunches for at-risk youth
  - County and Food Banks: > 4,000 lbs. of food
  - City of San Ramon: 2,499 meals to the city's citizens

THANK YOU

for joining this presentation

For questions or comments, please contact:

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