

To: Board of Directors

Date: 2/8/2021

From: Melody Reeb, Manager of Planning

Reviewed by: 

SUBJECT: 2021 Service Plan Draft Recommendation

Background:

At the October meeting, the Board authorized staff to proceed with the public comment process on three proposed service scenarios for implementation in mid- to late-2021. These scenarios were developed in anticipation of reduced revenues due to COVID-19 and would result in service cuts totaling approximately \$3, \$5, and \$7 million annually. In developing the proposals, staff sought to prioritize essential services and workers, as these riders have continued to rely on transit throughout the pandemic.

Since all three scenarios would be considered a major reduction in service, per Board policy, staff has conducted public outreach to gather input on the proposals and is now presenting a draft recommendation for Board feedback. Staff will then complete a Title VI equity analysis and present a final recommendation for potential Board approval in March. The earliest that staff could implement any major service reductions would be Summer 2021. However, depending on financial needs and service requirements as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves, implementation could be delayed until Fall or Winter 2021.

Public Comment:

Staff conducted an initial webinar on December 1, 2020 to provide the public with a high-level overview of the three service scenarios and gather some preliminary feedback. This was followed by a series of four virtual public hearings, which were held on January 5th and 8th. Each public hearing focused on a different part of County Connection's service area and provided an opportunity for the public to provide formal comments on the proposals. The public was also able to provide comments via phone, mail, email, and online.

No public comments were received during the public hearings. However, a total of 12 written comments were received by email and online that were directly related to the proposal. These comments are included in Attachment A. Below is a summary of the comments:

- Opposition to the elimination of Routes 95X and/or 96X under Scenario 3 (5 comments)

- Concern about reducing service frequency on Route 98X under Scenarios 2 and 3, particularly regarding potential impacts on connections to Amtrak and/or BART (2 comments)
- Opposition to the elimination of the Orinda Community Center loop on Route 6 under all three scenarios (2 comments)
- Concern about reducing service frequency on Route 99X under Scenarios 2 and 3 (1 comment submitted)
- Concern about reducing service frequency on Route 35, particularly on the Windemere loop (1 comment)
- Support for Scenario 1 over the other two scenarios (1 comment)

Proposed Service Plan:

Given current financial projections, staff is recommending the implementation of Scenario 1, which is very similar to the service levels currently being operated. However, based on public feedback, staff is proposing a revision to the initial Scenario 1 service plan to retain service on Route 6 to the Orinda Community Center.

The proposed service plan would be about a 13% reduction in service hours compared to pre-COVID service levels. Service frequency would be reduced on Routes 4, 5, 6, 7, 27, 35, 92X, 95X, and 96X. There would also be two alignment changes—extending Route 28 to Concord BART and simplifying the routing through Bishop Ranch on Route 92X to remove stops at BR 15 and Bishop/Sunset. All of these proposed changes have been in place on a temporary basis since October 2020. A summary of Scenario 1 is included as Attachment B.

All 600-series school service will be retained at the service levels that County Connection typically operates during a normal school year.

Future Service Restoration:

There is still a large degree of uncertainty as it relates to COVID-19, including its potential long-term impacts on the economy and travel patterns. In addition, circumstances that affect ridership demand can change relatively quickly, such as schools reopening or workers returning to offices, and County Connection needs to be prepared to restore and/or modify service in response to these changes in demand. If the proposed service plan is approved, staff will still be closely monitoring ridership trends and financial projections to determine whether additional service is needed.

As schools, businesses, recreational facilities, and other non-essential services return to normal operations, staff will need to respond quickly to augment service based on the community's needs and the agency's financial capacity. Any restoration of service will be implemented as a

temporary adjustment and made permanent once the pandemic is behind us. A similar public outreach process and Title VI analysis will be conducted once staff is comfortable making the changes permanent.

Financial Implications:

Based on initial estimates, this service plan could reduce operating costs by approximately \$3 million annually. This is an initial projection and will be finalized once the schedules are complete.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Board review the comments received, discuss the proposed service plan, and provide feedback to staff. Based on feedback received, staff may adjust the proposal and will return to the Board in March for final approval.

Action Requested:

Staff requests that the Board review and discuss the proposed service plan. No action will be requested at this time. Formal Board action is expected at the March 2021 Board meeting.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Public Comments Received

Attachment B – Scenario 1 Summary

Attachment A:

Summary of Public Comments

As of January 22, 2021

All comments are presented as submitted; no revisions were made.

1	<p>I take 2 buses in the morning (98X and 28). I commute from downtown Walnut Creek to Center Ave. in Martinez. I walk over a mile to the WC BART to catch the 98X. I start work at 8am. I have to take the 6:30am 98X bus and then wait 20 minutes for the 28 bus at Pacheco/Center that arrives at 7:03am. There's a 6:50am 98X bus but it doesn't connect with the 28 bus. If the 28 could be adjusted back to arriving at Pacheco/Center at 7:06am, that would be ideal.</p> <p>My commute home has turned into a 2 hour commute. I have to rush to catch the 28 bus after I get off work at 5pm. Once I get to Pacheco/Center, I have to wait 45 minutes to catch the 98X. So it's basically a hurry up and then wait... When I get to WC Bart, I catch the 4. So that's another 10-15 minute wait. I end up walking the mile home from the Bart station.</p> <p>If there are further reductions in service it will become more impossible to get to and from work. I've been relying more on Uber, which is not sustainable for me. Since I currently only commute into work 2x week now due to COVID, my input probably won't make any difference in considering service changes.</p>
2	<p>For Route 6, we are concerned about the proposed alignment change to eliminate the Orinda Community Center loop. That loop serves 2 senior housing complexes located near the Orinda Way/Irwin Way intersection. It also provide access to the Orinda Library and Community Center. We request County Connection not eliminate the Orinda Community Center loop.</p>
3	<p>If you must scenario 1 would be the best of all scenarios. I know it doesn't save as much as the others but it would have the least negative impact on the ridership</p>

<p>4</p>	<p>There are still essential workers that uses the Express buses going to San Ramon. Eliminating both the 95 and 96 buses is going to leave us stranded. Please consider keeping at least the 95x Where it will make the rounds essential workers work-Cosco area, Kaiser, Anabel,Bishop Ranch 8 which easier to walk to Bishop Ranch 6 for At&t workers We will greatly appreciate if you at least consider.</p> <p><i>[In Response to Another Comment]</i> For the essential workers who still comute from walnutcreek to San Ramon Bishop Ranch when you say the Rapid transit is faster is it the 21 that goes through town and very slow and like Lisa said it takes about 50 minutes and for for those of us who have to be at work 8AM and walk from the transit center to Anable Bishop Ranch 6 and 8 in the rain is going to be very difficult. Or are there going to be other buses .Or just have to one Express bus that runs 2times in the morning peak hours and one in the afternoon between 4and 6pm</p>
<p>5</p>	<p><i>[In Response to Another Comment]</i> I agree with Yayush, please do not eliminate all the express buses to San Ramon, the only other option is the 50mn 21 route and all those minutes add up during the week. Thank you</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>I was wondering if going bring 96 at 1:30pm from San Roman trasit center to. Walt creek Bart</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>I would like to see the Orinda Community Center loop on route 6 maintained. It appears that is only retained in scenario 2 and 3.</p> <p>It would be desired to maintain current service levels on route 6 as depicted in scenario 1, but if that is not possible then the Orinda loop would be a priority request and default then to scenario 2 or 3.</p>

8	<p>I have relied on County Connection bus service as my primary mode of local transportation since I moved to Central Contra Costa County in 2005. I currently live in Martinez on Pacheco Blvd. between Ace Truckbox Center and Morello Ave. I work at Muir Parkway Offices on Arnold Drive less than two miles from my home. The relatively short commute distance is necessary for me because I do not have a car and I deal with health conditions that make walking long distances difficult. The proposed reduction in service frequency for Route 99X under Scenarios Two and Three would affect me directly. My current work schedule is 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM. If the Route 99X service reduction is to take effect, I would respectfully request that the schedule reflect my need to take the morning run heading towards North Concord BART and arrive at Muir Parkway Offices by approximately 8:20. Likewise, I would greatly appreciate it if service heading towards Martinez Amtrak would be available for me to catch the bus at Morello and Arnold at approximately 5:15. Additionally, I periodically take Route 28 to Kaiser Permanente Martinez Medical Offices on Muir Road. The next bus stop along that route in the Concord BART direction is Muir and Glacier, which is a considerable stretch. I am requesting that a Route 28 bus stop be installed at Muir Road and Morello Ave. so that I could potentially travel between medical appointments at Kaiser and my workplace. I concede that your agency cannot be expected to specifically accommodate the needs of a single individual rider in your service planning. Even so, I figure that it is worth a shot to express my needs, and I am grateful for the opportunity to do so, as well for the service that everyone at your agency has provided me for the last 16 years. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.</p>
9	<p>This letter is in regards to the cancellation of services to Bishop Ranch. I myself commute from Cameron Park ,Ca to Toyota which is 111 miles from my home. Transit is essential as I drop my car in Dixon, take Blue Line to Walnut Creek and then catch Bishop Ranch 95X. Being an essential worker has allowed myself and many colleagues to continue working. Taking the 95X that goes to Bishop Ranch 8 is a huge advantage to those of us that work at Toyota and cost saving as well. Please consider keeping it at least peak hours in the morning and in the afternoon between 4:00pm – 6:30pm. At least 2 in the morning and 2 in the afternoon. Only stopping at the Transit Center with the 96X and having to be at work at 8:00am and walking in bad weather would make it a very unpleasant daily occurrence along with compromising our jobs at 8:00am in the morning. Please consider.</p>

<p>10</p>	<p>Please keep the time of the 1st 98x bus and possibly the 2nd out of Martinez Amtrak. People transferring at Walnut Creek to the Bart train and to other buses need to ride the 1st 98x bus because many are commuting to cities to the south and the west and start work at 8:00 or before.</p> <p>In addition, people who commute by riding the 1st Capitol Corridor Amtrak out of Sacramento, transfer to the 1st 98x at the Martinez Amtrak station as a part of their daily commute to work in a variety of locations In the Bay Area.</p> <p>Please also keep the run of the last 98x bus out Walnut Creek Bart to Martinez Amtrak, for those who are returning from a commute that takes them some time to reach Walnut Creek at the end of the day.</p> <p>When the 1st run of line 16 out of Martinez Amtrak was eliminated, it left only the 98x operating at an early enough time out of Martinez.</p> <p>Bart trains are now not operating as frequently as they did precovid. So it is important for those riding the 98x to get to Walnut Creek as early as they can.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Firstly, thank you all for your service to our community and continuing to keep public transportation available during this challenging time.</p> <p>I am perhaps 10% of your current ridership on the 95x. I don't drive and commute to Berkeley (via WC BART) on the 95x every day. To be honest, most of the time I am the only person on the bus, so I totally understand if you need to cut it to cover (projected) budget deficits. It is unfortunate that ridership is unlikely to increase without the Covid situation comfortably behind us.</p> <p>Just in case the 95x gets axed, I beg that the 21's schedule be adjusted to better match the BART schedule during commuting hours. As far as I'm concerned the morning is okay, but in the evening if I catch a BART at MacArthur at 5:20-something, I'll arrive at WC BART at 5:42, then have to wait nearly 30 min for the next bus in the Danville/San Ramon direction. Thus, if the schedule could be pushed back by 5 minutes (so 5:45 departure from WC), it would be much appreciated. In case the 95x isn't cut entirely, it would also be nice if the 95x WC departures could be staggered with the 21. Right now they both leave at the same time which can be frustrating when you've missed them both by 2 minutes.</p> <p>I really am thankful for the CCCTA and hope your ridership increases in 2021!</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>I'm a regular rider of the bus 35 via Windermere route. Considering there are only a few schedules looping through this area, it'd be greatly appreciated if you do not cut any services in the upcoming planning.</p> <p>Thank you so much for your service to take care of people like me who depends on public transportation.</p>

Attachment B:

Scenario 1 Summary

Scenario 1 would largely continue current service levels (as of October 4, 2020).

Frequency Reductions:

Route	Pre-COVID (peak/off-peak)	Scenario 1 (peak/off-peak)
4	12 min	20 min
5	20/45 min	40 min
6	20/60 min	30/60 min
7	15/- min	20/- min
27	40/60 min	3 trips
35	15-20/30-60 min	30/60 min
92X	8 trips	4 trips
95X	20/- min	30/- min
96X	20/60 min	30/- min

Alignment Changes:

- ~~Route 6 – eliminate Community Center loop~~ (Service to be retained based on public feedback)
- Route 28 – extend to Concord BART, reroute from Arnold/Center to Muir Rd
- Route 92X – simplify routing through Bishop Ranch to remove stops at BR15 and Sunset/Bishop

