

To: Operations & Scheduling Committee

Date: 10/27/2021

From: Ruby Horta, Director of Planning, Marketing & Innovation **Reviewed by:** *W.C.*

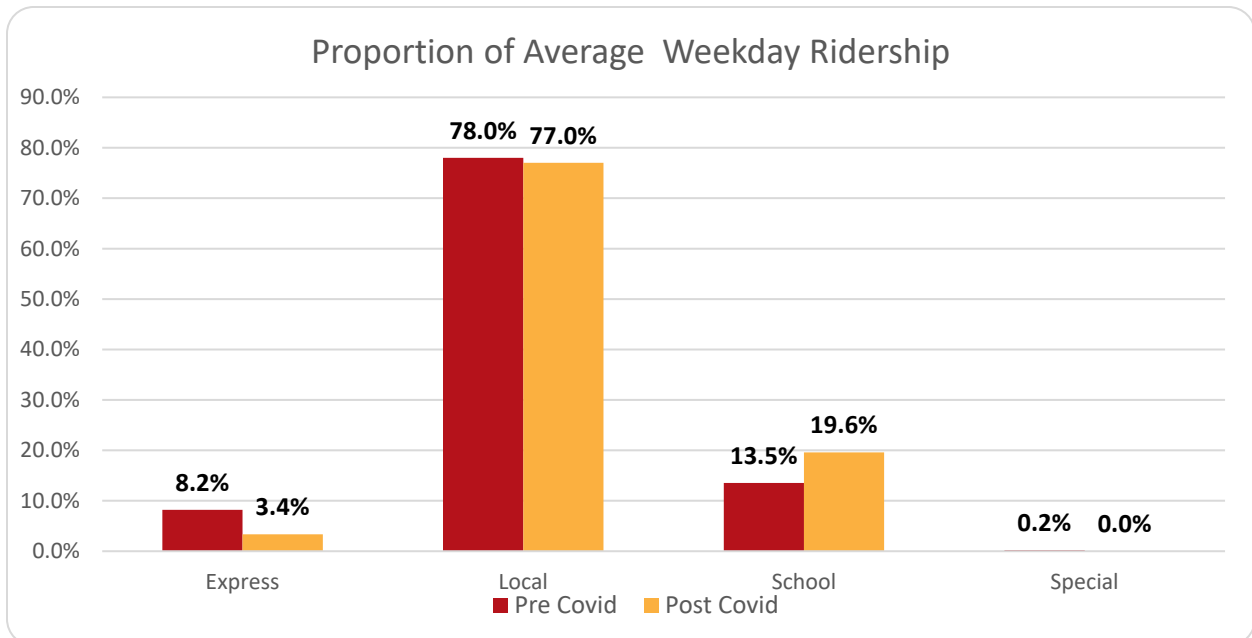
SUBJECT: Ridership and Operations Update

Background:

In the months following the shelter-in-place order, service provision was rather unpredictable as staff tried to address both labor uncertainties and new demands for essential service. As the COVID-19 pandemic continued, County Connection staff decided to implement a major service change in response to the shift in ridership demand, the 10-year financial forecast, and regional equity goals. Implementing this change provided a certain level of operational predictability to both the public and our operations department.

Ridership Composition:

Staff has been providing monthly ridership updates, and periodically focusing on different aspects of our riding public. As of September 2021, County Connection ridership is about 50% of pre-COVID levels. However, the types of services and, as a result, the composition of that ridership has changed slightly, as shown in the chart below.

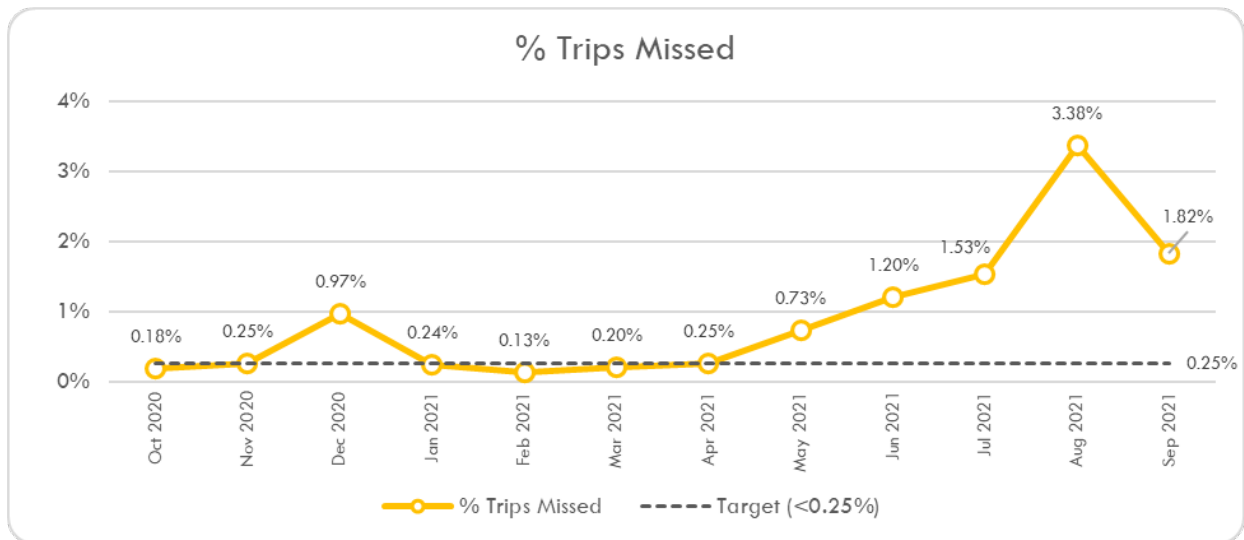


Ridership on local service, as a proportion of overall ridership, has remained consistent. However, as would be expected, given the shift to remote work for many office workers, riders on our express services only make up about 3% of total ridership compared to 8%, pre-COVID. On the opposite end, our school routes are operating at pre-pandemic levels and those riders have returned to transit at a higher rate. Our special services have been temporarily discontinued, except for the Alamo Creek shuttle, but riders have not returned at significant levels.

Operator Availability

Due to COVID-19 guidelines, the hiring and training of operators was not feasible for over a year after the pandemic started. While we were not able to hire new operators for most of 2020 and 2021, attrition continued at normal levels. An unexpected positive by-product of the major service change was having a service profile that was more evenly aligned with our reduced operator availability. However, despite these efforts, there is still an operator shortage and hiring new operators is imperative to meet currently scheduled service levels and, more importantly to be able to restore or add any additional service. County Connection’s hiring and training departments have been actively recruiting new operators completing a class over the summer and having started another class in September. Staff will continue to recruit and train operators until such time the open positions are filled.

Although our missed trip trend has increased over the last several months, largely due to operator availability and school service resuming, our ridership continues to recover. This demonstrates our operations department’s commitment to deploy available operators where our riders need it most.



Financial Implications:

None, for information only.

Recommendation:

None, for information only.

Action Requested:

None, for information only.