

County Connection

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CCCTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING

November 18, 2021

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL/CONFIRM QUORUM

Chair Dave Hudson called the regular meeting of the Board of Directors to order at 9:00 a.m. Board Members present were Directors Andersen, Haydon, Hoffmeister, Noack, Schroder, Storer, Tatzin, Wilk and Worth. Director Sos was absent.

Staff: Ramacier, Chun, Churchill, Glenn, Hill, Horta, Kamara, Longmire, Martinez, McCarthy, Mitchell, Reeb and Rettig

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Marjorie McWee introduced herself as the newly elected Chair of the County Connection Advisory Committee. She explained the need for strategic collaboration between the Advisory Committee and Board is now more important than ever. Staying mindful of the riders and their present-day transit needs is as important as budgeting and program planning. Although the Advisory Committee's membership has dwindled as it faces inertia, we are working to figuring out how to recruit new members who are active users from across the county. At our last meeting, I was elected as the Committee's chair. Our first priority is to fill the seats at the table and then form a working body. In the meantime, we plan to begin collaborating with the Board. In due time, the Committee hopes to raise a number of strategic topics to help inform the Board's future planning. We look forward to being on future agendas and linking arms with you.

CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION: Director Haydon moved approval of the Consent Calendar, consisting of the following items: (a) Approval of Minutes of Regular Meeting of October 21, 2021; (b) Resolution No. 2022-014 Approve Designation of Treasurer and Auditor, and Changes in Authorized Signatories for Union Bank, (c) Resolution No. 2022-015, Finding that the Proclaimed State of Emergency for the COVID-19 Pandemic Continues to Impact the Ability for the Board and its Committees to Meet Safely in Person, and Directing that Virtual Board and Committee Meetings Continue. Director Andersen seconded the motion, and it received the following vote of approval:

Aye: Directors Andersen, Haydon, Hoffmeister, Hudson, Noack, Schroder, Storer, Tatzin, Wilk and Worth
No: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Director Sos

REPORT OF CHAIR:

Chair Dave Hudson reported that the APTA Expo was well attended and the main focuses were Diversity, Equity and Autonomous Vehicles.

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER:

Presentation of the Bay Area Fare Coordination and Integration Study: Draft Business Case Study

Mike Eastman and Bill Bacon made a presentation of the Bay Area Fare Coordination and Integration Study: Draft Business Case Study. According to the study, fare policy is one among several factors that have constrained the growth of transit ridership in recent years. Current fare policies are informed by funding and governance models that incentivize locally-focused fares without providing a coherent set of policies to set fares that support ridership growth.

As a result, fare coordination and integration has a role to play in restoring transit ridership, supporting recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and delivering the transportation system the Bay Area needs for its coming decades of growth.

The purpose of the Transit Fare Policy Vision Statement is to allow the Fare Integration Task Force to articulate a policy direction it supports in principle and to provide direction to transit agency and MTC staff about how to prioritize upcoming work, including returning to the Task Force with specific actions related to the proposed pilot all-transit agency employer/institutional pass.

In collaboratively advancing these improvements for the benefit of the Bay Area's transit customers, we also recognize the continued economic challenges facing the region, and the transit industry in particular. The Task Force recommends that transit operator and MTC staff work to advance these policies, while also acknowledging that successful delivery will require the pursuit of complementary and necessary objectives.

Implementation will not require the transfer of locally sourced funds between transit agencies. Prior to implementation of any of the Transit Fare Policy Initiatives, new funding sources will be sought to offset adverse transit agency revenue impacts resulting from implementation. Implementation of any of the Transit Fare Policy Initiatives will require approval by the appropriate transit agency governing body. Implementation of any of the Transit Fare Policy Initiatives will not result in a reduction of transit agency operating service levels.

Introduction of County Connection's new Chief Financial Officer, Amber Johnson

Rick Ramacier introduced Amber Johnson to the Board and all welcomed her to County Connection.

Update on PEPR and Section 13(c)

Rick Ramacier stated that this item has been getting a lot of media attention. The US Department of Labor is indicating that they may begin holding up California federal transit grants later this month based on their current position that PEPR (the 2013 state law that implemented public pension reform) violates the bargaining rights of unions under Section 13(c) of the federal transportation authorization.

The most immediate risk is to County Connection's FY22 ARP funds. Staff, at the request of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and MTC have applied for these funds recently. However, we have yet to begin the FY23 budgeting work on how we would use these funds. Thus, a hold up of these funds could be endured for some yet to be determined time. However, there is a federal deadline as to when these funds must be spent. To cover any significant delay in receiving our ARP funds, we can use funding from TDA reserves. We will continue to report back with any news that we receive.

Update on the Enactment of H.R.3684, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (bipartisan infrastructure bill)

Rick Ramacier explained that this bill authorizes funds for Federal-aid highways, highway safety programs, and transit programs, and for other purposes.

Update on H.R.5376, the Build Back Better Act (BBB Act) budget reconciliation bill

Rick Ramacier said that in the coming months a more thorough report will be coming from the MP&L committee. But as of right now, this bill will account for over 1 trillion dollars, that nearly doubles the Federal Government funds that will go to transit.

Status of Employee Vaccinations at County Connection

Rick Ramacier stated that County Connection has not made vaccinations mandatory as of yet, we are waiting for more direction from the government. As of right now, we are at 82% of employees that are vaccinated and we have not had any positive COVID-19 tests since the summer.

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Marketing, Planning & Legislative Committee

Pass2Class Update-Information Only

Ruby Horta explained that the Pass2Class Program is funded by 511 Contra Costa as part of their efforts to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution by reducing the number of cars being driven to school. Pass2Class offers free transportation, for a limited period, on AC Transit, WestCAT, TriDelta and County Connection to Contra Costa students, encouraging the use of public transit to and from school. The application was available from July 15th through October 15th offering each household up to two (2) passes. The County Connection pass is valid through October 31st and 511 Contra Costa reimburses County Connection \$1.60 per trip. The pass is valid on all County Connection fixed route services.

Some of our local routes logged more Pass2Class trips than many of the 600 series. In the San Ramon area, Route 35 which is the main local route, carried more youth pass holders than Route 635, the comparable school route. The 600 series routes serving the Walnut Creek area were among the top 5 routes that carried youth pass holders in August 2021. Route 601 carried the most Pass2Class users out of all the routes. Route 606 serving the Lamorinda area, ranked 2nd in Pass2Class usage in the month of August 2021. The Concord-Pleasant Hill schools are relatively well-served by local fixed service and is evident in how the pass has been used. Local routes 10, 15, 18 and school route 611 were among the top 10 routes that carried pass holders in August 2021. These local routes attracted more Pass2Class users than the school routes serving the area combined. The local routes provide access to other destinations often frequented by students, like libraries, shopping centers and eateries. Since we offered free fares on all County Connection service during the month of September, the next Pass2Class report will include October data and can guide future promotions and target areas for incentive programs targeting students in the various communities we serve.

September Free Rides Promotion-Information Only

Melody Reeb explained that in May 2021, the Board approved a promotion offering free rides on all County Connection routes and paratransit services for the month of September. This promotion was part of the regional "All Aboard Bay Area Transit" marketing effort that was aimed at encouraging transit use by providing fare discounts as an incentive. Free rides were also being offered on Tri Delta Transit, WestCAT, and Wheels, and

BART provided a 50% discount on all Clipper fares. This coordinated effort to make transit more accessible aligned with the goals of the Blue-Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force and the principles adopted by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission for the distribution of federal stimulus funds.

The multi-agency September promotions provided an opportunity for expanded collaboration on the marketing efforts. In addition to marketing the free fares promotion through the County Connection website, social media platforms, and on buses, staff worked with one of BART's marketing contractors Zero Company to run digital ads helping extend the reach of the campaign, particularly since those who are not currently using transit are less likely to be interacting with the communication channels that are more typically used. Because Zero Company has worked on previous BART campaigns, they were able to leverage their prior experience and target some of the same audiences for County Connection's campaign. Ads were run in both English and Spanish from mid-August through September through programmatic advertising, as well as Google, Facebook, and Twitter. A dedicated webpage was created with information on the September free rides promotion, as well as several other fare promotions.

There was a nearly immediate boost in ridership once the free fares promotion began on September 1st. Over the first full week of the promotion, ridership increased about 8% despite the Labor Day holiday. By the end of the month, weekday ridership was averaging about 7,200 daily riders, an increase of about 15% compared to just before the promotion started, and weekend ridership was up 32%. However, most of these ridership gains were lost when fare collection resumed in October, and ridership levels have since returned to those at the end of August. It should be noted that the significant drop in weekend ridership shown at the end of the chart can likely be attributed to severe weather.

Operations & Scheduling Committee

Ridership and Operations Update-Information Only

Ruby Horta explained that 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.

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 on that service have not returned at significant levels.

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.

One-Seat Ride Extension and Resolution No. 2022-013

Rashida Kamara stated that in November 2020, the Board of Directors approved a six-month pilot to provide a One-Seat Regional Ride program (Program) for paratransit passengers wishing to travel across multiple transit agency service areas. Participating in the program is Eastern Contra Costa Transit Authority (Tri-Delta Transit), Western Contra Costa Transit Authority (WestCAT), Livermore-Amador Valley Transit Authority (Wheels Bus) and Central Contra Costa Transit Authority (County Connection LINK). The pilot program aims to streamline current regional ride practices by eliminating required transfers for trips that cross multiple transit service areas.

With the Program, passengers can have a one-seat ride for the entire duration of their trip. The Program has been in development for quite some time, but amid COVID-19 concerns, the implementation date was accelerated to help minimize interactions between passengers, drivers, and vehicles.

The pilot was then extended in April 2021, because the participating agencies experienced challenges, such as billing algorithms, data management and mapping trips crossing multiple service areas and providing test trips for East Bay Paratransit.

After one year, while it is clear that from the rider's perspective the Program has been successful, the participating agencies are still collecting and analyzing data on the Program, including all the pricing ramifications to determine the best way to make the Program permanent.

The projected cost for a one-year extension is approximately \$170,00, and one of the components of staffs' request for the extension is to determine how to equitably divide the cost among the participating agencies.

Public Comment: Matt Bush spoke as a Walnut Creek resident. He views the fare integration as one of the most important things that Bay Area transit agencies can do to improve rider experiences, and to move towards a “de-Balkanization” of our many separate agencies. Riders shouldn’t have to care who operates a service, they should just be able to use them all easily and seamlessly. I am pleased that this seems to already have strong support.

MOTION: Director Hudson moved approval of Resolution No. 2022-013, the extension of the One Seat Regional Ride program through November 30, 2022, Director Storer seconded the motion, and it received the following vote of approval:

Aye: Directors Andersen, Haydon, Hoffmeister, Hudson, Noack, Schroder, Storer, Tatzin, Wilk and Worth
No: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Director Sos

Paratransit Executive Summary Report August 2021

Rashida Kamara explained that as of August 2021, the effects of COVID-19 continue to have a profound effect on the overall performance of our Paratransit service. In March 2020, after the Governor's shelter in place order, Paratransit service dropped to 25% of normal levels. As a result, resources were used to serve the community in other ways by delivering meals to seniors, lunch boxes to students, performing emergency services for the county health department and taking passengers to get vaccines. Paratransit continues to be our core service.

The SilverRide Program with Choice in Aging has not yet resumed, because Choice in Aging has not reached full capacity at their facilities. Staff continues to meet with them on a weekly basis as they diligently engage in their reopening plan, and we stand ready to resume this project when they reopen to full capacity.

BOARD COMMUNICATION: None

CLOSED SESSION:

Conference with Legal Counsel-Existing Litigation (54956.9) Case 3:21-cv-01312AGT

The Board of Directors went into closed at 10:53 a.m.

OPEN SESSION:

The Board of Directors came into open session at 11:24 a.m. and no reportable action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT: Chair Hudson adjourned the regular Board meeting at 11:25 am.
Minutes prepared by



Lathina Hill
Assistant to the General Manager

Date: December 8, 2021