

## **County Connection Advisory Committee Report to Board, July 2022**

Our purpose is to bring feedback to the County Connection Board that reflects the voices of the community, riders, and stakeholders. This will help the Board more fully understand factors impacting the system's ridership and help inform its decisions.

### **Committee Discussion Points at its July 2022 Meeting**

- After hearing staff updates on new programs/projects, we made recommendations for program design and implementation of the Clipper Institutional Pass pilot and two new Measure J line 20a/TRANSPAC Grant programs. For the new travel training program, we have offered to participate in the early definitional/scope setting processes.
- We have provided staff with ideas for outreach and marketing for the programs presented to us.
- We will participate in an upcoming program pilot for the Transdev app as part of the LINK/LAVTA program rollout. The app's new features will allow riders to self-schedule rides and use real-time tracking for their shuttle's arrival, both of which are empowering. The committee will also offer ideas for the transition planning of the LINK/LAVTA program.
- Committee members are becoming involved in outreach within the community. Through one-on-one conversations with riders and non-riders, we are gathering feedback and developing an understanding of public sentiment about the factors, perceptions, and barriers that influence ridership in today's environment. (See next section)

### **Strategic Feedback for the Board**

We have started strategic level conversations with staff to understand the agency's current philosophy on route design and fleet composition. We conveyed what we are hearing from the public:

- Constituents often observe that they won't use County Connections because it is inconvenient, requires circuitous routes, and they are waiting too long for the next bus—unless the rider is going to BART. Taking a short distance trip across the county often takes hours to complete.
- COVID aside, many would be more inclined to take the bus, if the agency used shuttles with frequent headways on direct routes that served today's most visited intra-county destinations.
- In recent years, the county has developed many districts including high-density housing, commercial/retail, and large healthcare campuses. These districts include the transit villages, but others are in outlying areas far from the BART stations.
- With all this development, the increasing population is becoming more concentrated. Meanwhile, the county's demographics are shifting—some is attributable to the pandemic, while other trends are part of the natural/social factors. More vehicles are on the road again and many traffic routes and patterns have evolved. On the other hand, the agency's current routes reflect the COVID reductions in service which overlaid the existing design which had been built upon earlier patterns and conditions. We're now in a changed environment.
- People who are traveling to/from these intra-county destinations want to go the most direct route which is usually most easily achieved by automobile. In contrast, taking a bus typically adds extra wait and travel time while it swings by a BART station or a transit center. The bus often lays over there, and many riders must transfer to another route to continue their trip. Waiting for that next bus usually requires more time. Most time-pressured people won't give up the extra hours required to travel this way—especially when the same trip in a car would take less than 30 minutes door-to-door. How might running frequent shuttles across these parts of the county change that experience? (Continued on next page)

- Rethinking the strategic vision and related operational philosophies with an eye towards the county's future growth and the needs of non-BART riders may improve our service to them and their willingness to ride County Connections.

#### Requests of the Board

- Set a date for a joint meeting: At a recent board meeting, Director Worth suggested a joint meeting. We were encouraged by this idea and agree it would be beneficial. We will be asking staff to help us facilitate this for later this year.
- District Representation: While our group is becoming increasingly effective and gaining momentum, there are still empty seats at the table. Filling them is important and will allow us to round out our perspectives especially since for those outlying areas not nearby a BART station. Since these areas are most impacted by the observations above, voices from these districts will be important to future planning and strategic discussions.

The four open seats are:

- |             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| • Clayton   | • Martinez  |
| • Lafayette | • San Ramon |

When recruiting members, consider constituents who are local riders and who bring diverse perspectives such as students of all ages, commuters, intra-county travelers, veterans, disabled, seniors, parents, people whose incomes are below poverty thresholds, and other underrepresented or marginalized groups.

Our Next Meeting is Scheduled for September 13, 2022

Respectfully submitted,  
Marjorie McWee, Chair