

**To:** Marketing, Planning, & Legislative Committee

**Date:** 11/18/2022

**From:** Pranjali Dixit, Manager of Planning

**Reviewed by:** MR

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**SUBJECT: Final FY 2023-28 Short-Range Transit Plan**

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### **Background:**

The Short-Range Transit Plan (SRTP) is County Connection's operations and financial planning document. In order to effectively execute planning and programming responsibilities, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) requires each transit operator receiving federal funding through the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to prepare, adopt, and submit an SRTP to MTC every four years in order to remain eligible to receive federal funding.

County Connection's last Full SRTP was completed in 2016 and the current effort will result in an updated SRTP covering FY2023 through FY2028. Revised guidelines were established as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and narrow the scope to a five-year planning horizon with a focus on financial and service planning.

A draft was submitted to MTC on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022, and the plan was revised based on the comments received by the staff from MTC.

### **Planning Scenarios:**

The plan focuses on evaluating existing service and developing future service plans based on three scenarios of varying revenue recovery over the next 5 years. The operating budget assumed for each scenario is based on the level of federal stimulus available, recovery of revenue from other sources, and ridership recovery as outlined in the MTC Resolution No. 4512 adopted on March 23, 2022. The service plans are aimed to align resources available in each of the scenarios with ridership demand as well as feedback received from the passenger survey conducted during September 2022.

The **Robust Recovery** scenario assumes there is adequate funding to return overall revenue to 100% of pre-pandemic levels, with escalation. Projected operating revenue over the five-year period is estimated to be roughly \$221M. However, due to the increased cost of operations, under this scenario, overall service levels would be reduced and some resources would be shifted from commuter routes to provide additional service along the Monument Corridor and on weekends, where ridership recovery has been the strongest.

The **Revenue Recovery, with Fewer Riders** scenario assumes that federal relief funds are eventually exhausted and are replaced by subsequent recovery of other funds to pre-pandemic levels. The scenario also assumes that farebox recovery remains stagnant and below pre-pandemic levels for the next 5 years. Projected operating revenue over the five-year period is estimated to be roughly \$215M. Under this scenario, along with the reduction and reallocation of resources from the previous scenario, service

levels would be further reduced on commuter routes along with service level reduction on routes serving Diablo Valley College (DVC) during peak hours, where ridership growth has been lagging.

The **Some Progress** scenario assumes that federal relief funds are eventually exhausted, and total revenue available is 15% below pre-pandemic levels for the next 5 years. Projected operating revenue over the five-year period is estimated to be roughly \$188M. Under this scenario, service levels would need to be significantly reduced. The proposed service plan aims to preserve service coverage to essential destinations through reductions in service levels on some high-frequency corridors such as Clayton Road and downtown Walnut Creek and reductions in span of service.

The service planning concepts are based on the revenue projections outlined in the MTC Resolution and the actual service may vary based on changes in demand and revenue levels.

**Comments and Revisions:**

The most significant change to the draft presented in October was to the operating cost and revenue assumptions. While staff originally based projections on the current FY 2023 budget, MTC is requiring the use of their revenue forecasts, which reflect a lower level of recovery. Thus, even in the most optimistic “Robust Recovery” scenario, service cuts would still be necessary.

The draft plan was also released for public comment on November 7, 2022. A Public Hearing has been scheduled for December 15, 2022, preceding the Board meeting. The public may also submit written comments via mail, email, and online through County Connection’s website. A summary of written comments and staff responses will be included in the plan presented to the Board for final approval.

**Financial Implications:**

The service plan scenarios aim to match projected revenues with expenses. Based on the assumptions presented, County Connection would maintain a fully balanced budget during the SRTP period under each of the three scenarios.

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that the MP&L Committee forward the attached Final SRTP to the Board for review and approval upon completion of public hearing at the December Board meeting.

**Action Requested:**

Staff requests that the MP&L Committee forward this item to the Board for approval.

**Attachments:**

Attachment 1: Final Short-Range Transit Plan FY2023 – FY2028

# COUNTY CONNECTION | 2023–2028 SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN



# County Connection

CENTRAL CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT AUTHORITY (CCCTA)  
Bill Churchill, General Manager

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**Adopted by the CCCTA Board of Directors on \_\_\_\_\_.**

Federal transportation statutes require that the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), in partnership with state and local agencies, develop and periodically update a long-range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), and a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) which implements the RTP by programming federal funds to transportation projects contained in the RTP. In order to effectively execute these planning and programming responsibilities, MTC requires that each transit operator in its region which receives federal funding through the TIP, prepare, adopt and submit to MTC a Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP). The preparation of this report has been funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) through section 5303 of the Federal Transit Act. The contents of this SRTP reflect the views of the Central Contra Costa Transit Authority, and not necessarily those of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) or MTC. The Central Contra Costa Transit Authority is solely responsible for the accuracy of the information presented in this SRTP.

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## 1. TRANSIT SYSTEM OVERVIEW

The Central Contra Costa Transit Authority (CCCTA, also known as County Connection) is the primary public transit system for the central area of Contra Costa County.

### 1.1 Agency History

On March 27, 1980, County Connection was created to coordinate, integrate, and expand transit service in the central portion of Contra Costa County. On July 1, 1980, CCCTA began operating service with its first route serving Walnut Creek. Within three years, a hodgepodge of locally operated and contract services had been restructured into a system connecting all of the member communities and integrating local services within each community. In 1990, three private paratransit operators were combined to form County Connection's LINK paratransit service, and BART feeder service became a part of County Connection's responsibility in 1994.

Today, County Connection covers a service area of over 200 square miles with a network of 59 fixed-routes, as well as paratransit service. The fixed-routes include a mix of local, select, express, and weekend services. Most routes run at 30 to 60 minute headways. These services help connect people to jobs, school, recreational activities, and appointments within Central Contra Costa and beyond. Connections to the surrounding areas around Central Contra Costa are made possible through coordinated schedules and transfer agreements with ACE, Amtrak, BART, FAST, Tri Delta Transit, SolTrans, WestCAT, and Wheels.

County Connection provides ADA compliant paratransit service within  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1.5 miles of all its routes, as well as ADA service on behalf of BART during certain hours. Both fixed-route and paratransit services operate seven days a week.

### 1.2 Governance

County Connection is organized as a Joint Powers Agency (JPA) of eleven jurisdictions. Members include the cities of Clayton, Concord, Lafayette, Martinez, Orinda, Pleasant Hill, San Ramon, Walnut Creek; the towns of Danville and Moraga; and the unincorporated areas of central Contra Costa County.

## 2. SERVICE AREA

### 2.1 Population

County Connection's 200+ square mile service area has a population of over 500,000 people (including the adjacent unincorporated jurisdictions).

The city of Concord currently has the largest population of all the jurisdictions in Central Contra Costa followed by San Ramon and Walnut Creek.

### 2.2 Population Growth

The population of the service area is expected to increase by approximately 10% over the coming decade. Over half (55%) of the total population will reside in the three cities of Concord, Walnut Creek and San Ramon. Most of the total growth in the service area over the coming decade will occur in the city of Concord, which is expected to grow over 30% by 2030. Much of this growth will be part of the Concord Community Reuse Project, with some additional growth planned in the downtown area.

The central portion of the county has largely developed around a traditional suburban housing and retail model (i.e., low-density single-family homes bolstered by parking oriented small retail developments).

Higher levels of housing density and accompanying retail and commercial development can be found in downtown Walnut Creek, downtown Concord, and Pleasant Hill along Contra Costa Blvd. Though Pleasant Hill is certainly not one of the large cities in the service area, it does have the highest population density. Pleasant Hill’s density is expected to further increase as higher-density housing is planned for development over the next 10 years. This is something worth exploring in more detail when assessing where to allocate transit service in the future.

On the other side of the spectrum, Orinda, Lafayette, and Moraga are the least densely incorporated jurisdictions in Central Contra Costa, with an average of roughly 1,700 people per square mile. Low population density tends to track fairly closely with lower levels of transit use and subsequently the County Connection route network within these areas is fairly limited. Though these jurisdictions do have plans for some higher density in-fill developments, the overall level of density in each community isn’t expected to change significantly over the coming decade. County Connection will continue to work with these jurisdictions to understand their mobility needs and continue providing them with service that works most efficiently and effectively.

### 2.3 Demographics

The majority of residents in the County Connection service area are White followed by Asians. About 16% of the residents are Hispanic or of Latino Origin.<sup>(1)</sup> 60% of households is estimated to have an annual household income above \$100,000, whereas 9% of household have an annual household income below \$25,000.<sup>(1)</sup>

Vehicle availability is a key metric to understand the transit dependency of the population. It is estimated that about 1.8% of the total workers in Central Contra Costa County did not have access to a vehicle and about 5.3% of total households did not have access to a vehicle.<sup>(1)</sup>

Compared to the average resident, County Connection riders tend to have fewer vehicles available, larger household sizes, more workers per household, and lower annual incomes. They also tend to be younger in age and do not self-identify as White.

## 3. TRANSIT SERVICES

### 3.1 Fixed Route

County Connection provides fixed-route services to the ten jurisdictions and the unincorporated areas of Central Contra Costa County. All routes are operated using vehicles that can accommodate up to two wheelchairs and two bicycles. The service area can be divided into five service areas:

- Core Service Area – Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill, Concord and Clayton areas
- North Service Area – Martinez and North Concord areas
- Lamorinda Service Area – Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda areas
- South Service Area – Danville, San Ramon and Dublin areas
- Miscellaneous Service Area – Oakland and Events

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2020-2025 American Community Survey

### Service Types

There are three main types of designated services within County Connection’s transit system:

- **Regional Routes** are limited-stop and/or weekday, peak hour services that primarily connect commuters with regional transit hubs like BART, ACE, and Capitol Corridor stations for access to other areas around and outside of Central Contra Costa County
- **Local Routes** are routes that tend to operate all day schedules, either on weekdays only or seven days a week and cater to the people who travel within the boundaries of Central Contra Costa County.
- **Community Routes** are often designed to serve a localized travel need and may only operate on certain days of the week (e.g., weekends only) or hours of the day (e.g., peak/off-peak). They can also add extra capacity to the network during periods of high ridership demand. These services typically operate seasonally with irregular frequencies and are timed around a specific event or school bell time.

### **3.2 Paratransit**

County Connection provides paratransit service called LINK for people with disabilities who are unable to take fixed-route transit services. This is a door-to-door service run by a contractor, Transdev, and a subcontractor, Big Star. County Connection owns the vehicles and provides a maintenance facility for their use, while Transdev is responsible for labor, scheduling, management, ride reservations, and maintenance.

LINK rider eligibility is determined in accordance with the requirements of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) using regional application materials. County Connection staff performs eligibility tasks and in-person assessments when deemed appropriate. LINK’s service is provided within a 1.5-mile buffer around weekday and weekend routes. LINK’s hours of service vary depending on the area and are based on the operating hours of fixed-route services.

### **3.3 Other Services**

In March 2020, County Connection launched an on-demand pilot program in partnership with the City of San Ramon and the Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority (LAVTA). The program provides a discount on rideshare trips on Lyft and Uber within a designated service area. The service area includes portions of south San Ramon, where fixed-route service was recently discontinued, and several key destinations in San Ramon and Dublin, including BART stations, the San Ramon Transit Center, and the San Ramon Regional Medical Center.

The program provides 50% off the fare for a Lyft Shared or Uber Pool trip within the service area, with a maximum discount of \$5 per trip. The trip must also be taken within County Connection’s regular fixed-route hours of operation in order to qualify for the discount.



## 4. SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

### 4.1 Pre-Pandemic State of Service (FY 2018-19)

#### Fixed Route

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, County Connection operated a total of 58 routes and carried a total of 3,118,041 passengers over 218,385 hours of service in FY 2018-19. During that year, County Connection implemented a major service change in March 2019 which saw 6 unproductive routes being eliminated, redeployment of resources to increase peak frequency, added new trips, streamlined routes, made alignment changes and implemented the new Route 27.

Additionally, County Connection introduced the new express Route 99X between North Concord BART and Martinez AMTRAK station in August 2018, and in February 2019, County Connection began operating two new 700-series routes as part of the Early Bird Express network, which was established to allow BART extra time for a seismic retrofit of the Transbay Tube.

#### Ridership Trends

Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 provide a summary of FY 2018-19 ridership and service provided based on Service Type and Service Area.

- Local routes ridership constituted 75% of total ridership, on par with the 77.5% of total scheduled revenue hours and was followed by Community routes which carried 16.5% of total passengers
- In terms of service area, the Core service area routes carried 62% of total ridership followed by South service area routes at 18.5%.

Service Type	Total Passengers	% Passengers	Total Revenue Hours	% Revenue Hours	Productivity (Pax/Rev Hr.)
Local	2,333,052	75.0%	168,492	77.5%	13.8
Community	513,728	16.5%	27,440	12.6%	18.7
Regional	265,730	8.5%	21,348	9.8%	12.4
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3,112,509</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>217,279</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>14.3</b>

Table 4.1 Pre-Pandemic Service Distribution by Service Type

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Service Area	Total Passengers	% Passengers	Total Revenue Hours	% Revenue Hours	Productivity (Pax/Rev Hr.)
Core	1,958,702	62.9%	121,904	56.1%	16.1
South	559,792	18.0%	47,322	21.8%	11.8
North	302,337	9.7%	29,744	13.7%	10.2
Lamorinda	226,356	7.3%	16,342	7.5%	13.9
Miscellaneous	65,323	2.1%	1,967	0.9%	33.2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3,112,509</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>217,279</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>14.3</b>

Table 4.2 Pre-Pandemic Service Distribution by Service Area

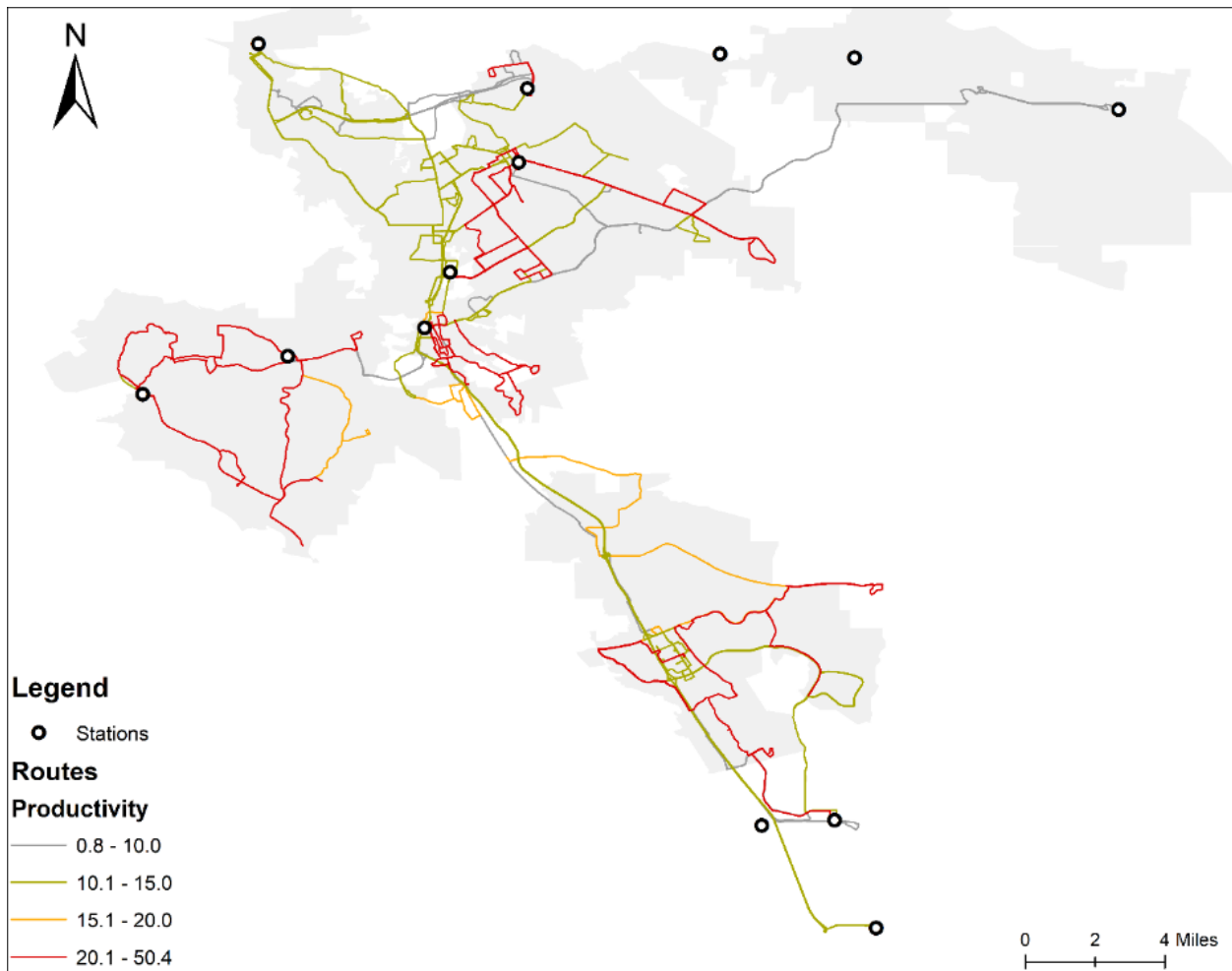


Figure 4.1 Productivity by Route – FY 2019

Paratransit

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, County Connection LINK Paratransit operated an average of 47 cutaway buses and carried a total of 152,606 passengers over 101,256 hours of service in FY 2018-19. Of those trips, 36% originated in Concord, followed by Pleasant Hill at 17% and Walnut Creek with 12%. The average trip length was 7.3 miles, and 35% of the trips were attributed to adult day care trips, followed by medical trips at 17% and school trips at 16%.

During the latter half of FY 2018-19, County Connection implemented a pilot project to address the transportation needs of a subset of ADA Paratransit-eligible riders who participated in programs through Choice in Aging and required more assistance and shorter travel times. SilverRide, a local Transportation Network Company (TNC), was able to provide door-through-door transportation for those riders.

Additionally, County Connection entered a contract with a new operations contractor, Transdev, for paratransit services, which started July 1, 2019. This allowed LINK riders to have access to more technological features due to the new contractor’s experience with existing software as well as new technologies, including a mobile app that allows riders to track their paratransit vehicle’s location, submit feedback, and cancel rides.

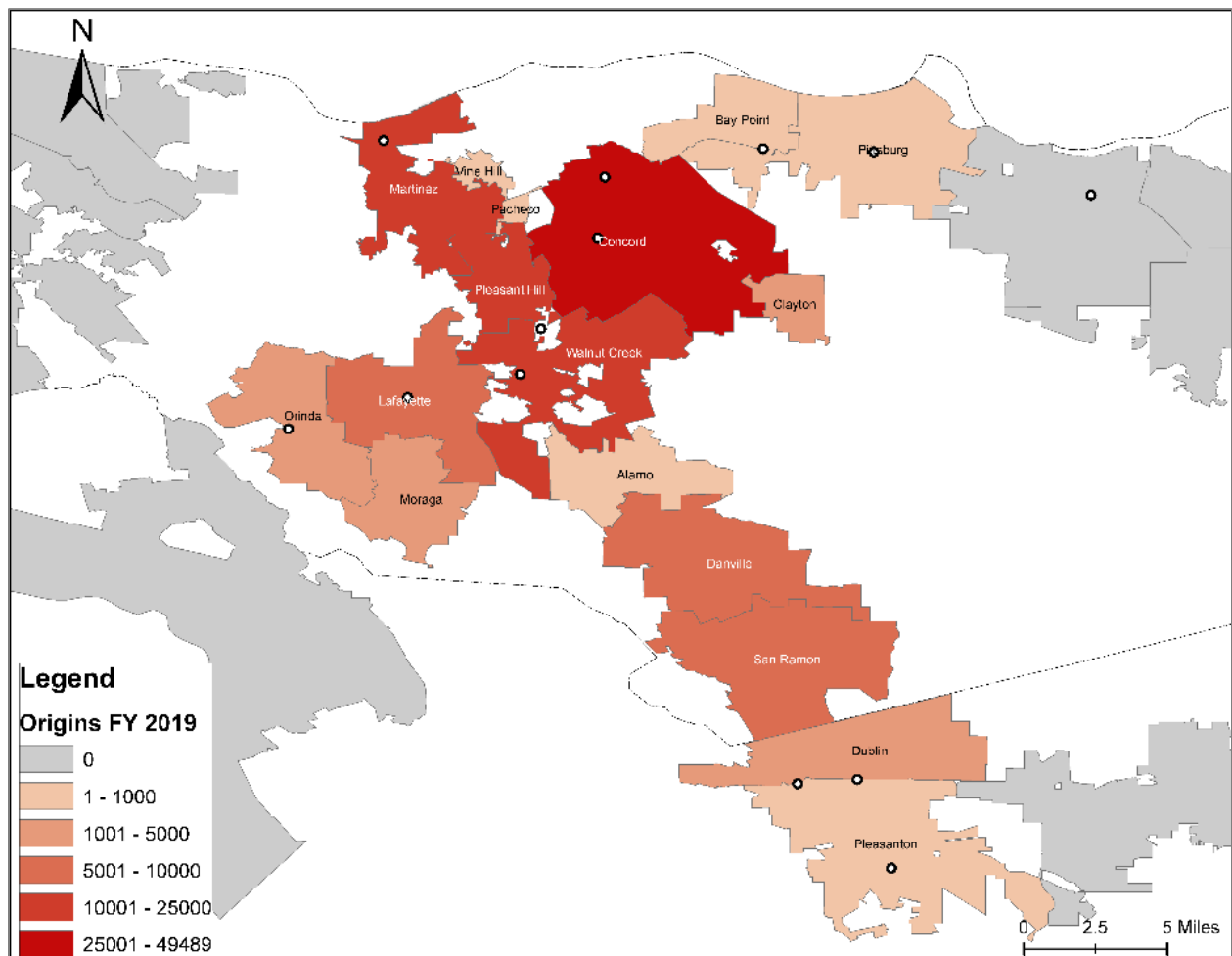


Figure 4.2 Trip Origins by City – FY 2019

## 4.2 Current State of Service (FY 2022-23)

### Fixed Route

#### **Early Pandemic Response**

At the start of the pandemic, there were significant service disruptions due to reduced operator availability. County Connection temporarily implemented rear-door boarding and stopped collecting fares starting in March 2020 to allow for social distancing. Fare collection resumed in November 2020.

Schedule changes were made effective August 2020 in response to this reduced workforce in an effort to minimize service disruptions. The service changes were also made in response to ridership demand and sought to prioritize essential services and workers.

In October 2020 additional temporary service changes were made that included about a 13% reduction in service hours compared to pre-COVID service levels through service frequency reduction and alignment changes. In the winter of 2020, the Board authorized a public comment process and subsequently approved the 2021 Service Plan, which continued the reduced service levels operated since October 2020.

#### **Service Restoration**

In August 2021, service on the 600-series routes was reintroduced in response to schools resuming in-person instruction. Schedule changes to redistribute resources from underperforming routes to other routes were made in February 2022 in response to changing ridership demand along with modifying trips to connect with the new BART schedule. Additionally, minor schedule changes were made to improve connectivity between buses, adjust recovery times, and modify run times in accordance with the change in traffic conditions.

County Connection implemented various fare promotions in coordination with other transit agencies in the Bay Area to encourage the public to return to transit. The Pass2Class program was implemented to allow students to ride the buses for free for two months starting in August 2021. Additionally, County Connection provided free rides for all passengers for the month of September 2021, which led to increased ridership; however, the rise in Omicron variant thereafter led to a subsequent drop in ridership and slow recovery.

#### **Ridership Trends**

Table 4.3 and Table 4.4 provides a summary of FY 2021-22 ridership and service provided based on Service Type and Service Area.

- Local routes ridership constituted 77% of total ridership, on par with the 79.8% of total scheduled revenue hours and was followed by Community routes which carried 20% of total passengers
- In terms of service area, the Core service area routes carried 66% of total ridership followed by North service area routes at 13.1%.
- The South service area saw a large decline in ridership due to the extended remote work policies at offices in Bishop Ranch that are served by Express routes. Similarly, this trend is also evident in the sharp decline in Regional service ridership which mainly includes Express routes.
- Average weekday ridership fluctuated between 45%-60% below normal pre-COVID levels throughout FY 2022.

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- Weekend ridership recovered more quickly than on weekdays and was down between 18%-38% compared to before the pandemic.

Service Type	Total Passengers	% Passengers	Total Revenue Hours	% Revenue Hours	Productivity (Pax/Rev Hr.)
Local	1,415,603	77.2%	150,598	79.8%	9.4
Community	368,717	20.1%	23,853	12.6%	15.5
Regional	50,214	2.7%	14,193	7.5%	3.5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,834,533</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>188,644</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>9.7</b>

Table 4.3 Current Service Distribution by Service Type

Service Area	Total Passengers	% Passengers	Total Revenue Hours	% Revenue Hours	Productivity (Pax/Rev Hr.)
Core	1,221,942	66.6%	10,7267	56.9%	11.4
North	241,024	13.1%	30,231	16.0%	8.0
South	233,826	12.7%	38,523	20.4%	6.1
Lamorinda	137,673	7.5%	12,619	6.7%	10.9
Miscellaneous	69	0.0%	3.5	0.0%	19.8
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,834,533</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>188,644</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>9.7</b>

Table 4.4 Current Service Distribution by Service Area

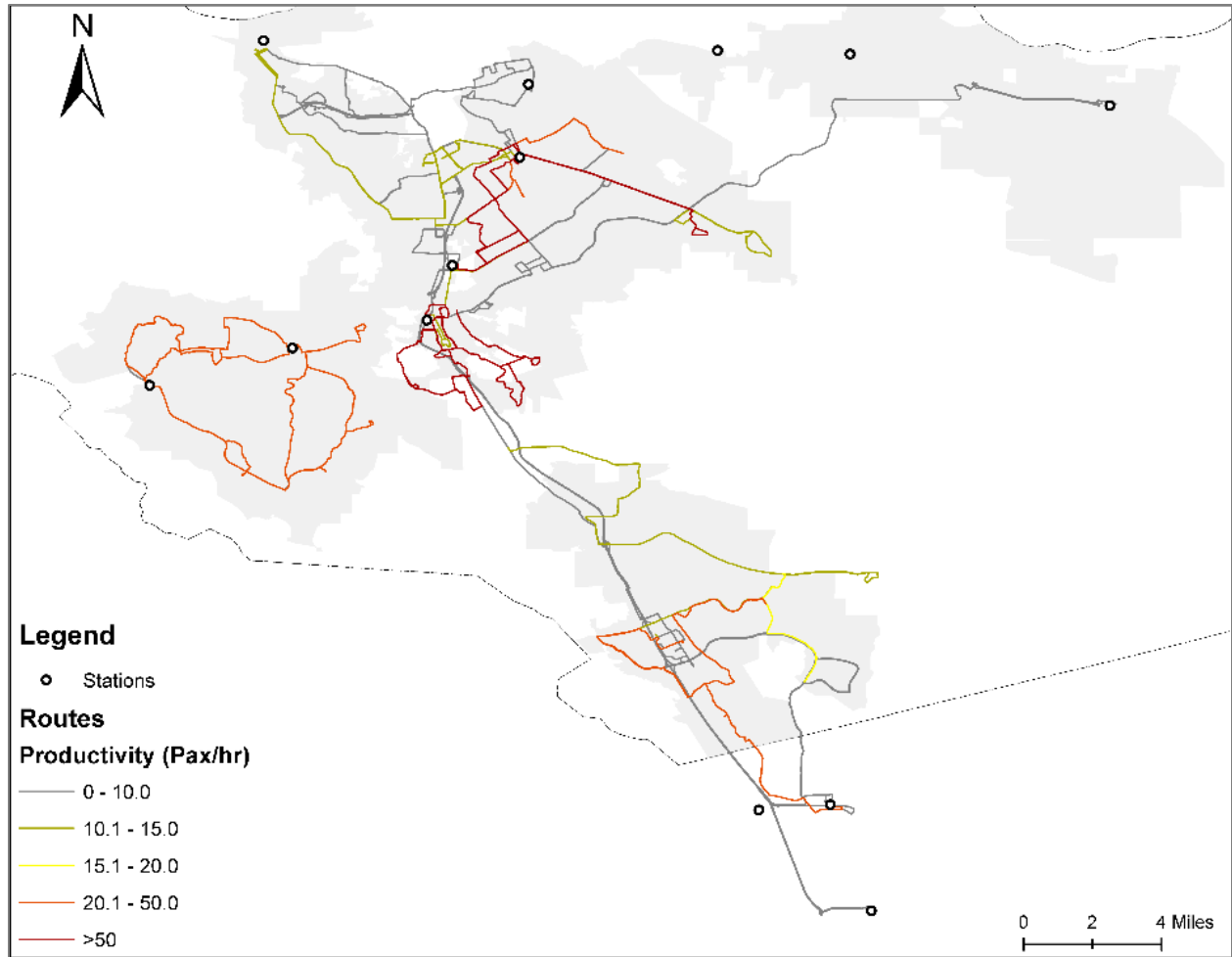


Figure 4.3 Productivity by Route – FY 2022

### Challenges

Although the ridership grew in FY 2022 on a year-over-year basis, the operator shortage, despite extensive recruitment and training efforts, continues to be a main hurdle to expanding service levels. About 1.8% of scheduled trips were missed over the course of FY 2022, mostly because of the operator shortage. Currently, the full-time operator count is at 133 in comparison with the estimated requirement of 138.

Wages and benefits are the Agency’s largest expense. Even before the pandemic, the tight labor market was putting a stress on transit operator recruitment efforts with an effective attrition rate<sup>(2)</sup> of 13% pre-pandemic, making it difficult to attract and retain qualified bus operators and mechanics. These challenges were only exacerbated by the pandemic as the effective attrition rate increased through the pandemic to 19% due to operator retirements and temporary suspension in recruitment activities until the beginning of FY 2022. Currently, operator recruitment continues to be challenging despite wages being increased significantly. County Connection has made changes to its pay scale for operators in response to these challenges, resulting in a more competitive compensation package.

<sup>2</sup> Effective Attrition Rate =  $\frac{(\text{Operators lost}) - (\text{Operators Hired})}{\text{Average Operator Count}}$

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Time Period	Average Operator Count	Operators Lost	Operators Hired	Balance	Attrition Rate	Hiring Rate	Effective Attrition Rate
July 2018 – March 2020	158	59	39	20	37%	25%	13%
April 2020 – June 2022	145	45	17	28	31%	12%	19%

*Table 4.5 Recruitment Stats*

The FY 2023 budget includes a 12.5% increase to starting wages for fixed-route operators and trainers to aid the recruitment process. County Connection also offers paid training, so candidates do not need a Commercial driver’s license when applying. County Connection continues to participate in local hiring and career fairs and works with agencies such as the California Employment Development Department and the Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County.

Along with the increase in ridership, as widespread opening of businesses continued, traffic conditions worsened, leading to a decline in on-time performance. Upcoming service changes will include a robust analysis of running times and optimization of schedules to improve on-time performance based on new traffic conditions.

**Passenger Survey**

In September 2022, staff conducted passenger surveys to collect demographic and trip purpose data used to support future local and regional transit planning efforts. The survey included questions related to demographic information, travel pattern/choice information, and service quality. Additionally, questions related to current and future remote working was also included as part of the survey to better understand post-pandemic commute patterns for improved service planning. The survey was conducted both onboard the buses and online and was available in both English and Spanish.

The onboard survey was aimed to capture the travel patterns of our existing riders, while the online survey helped reach a wider audience to capture former riders who have not yet returned to transit as well as potential new riders in the region.

Staff received 314 responses over a 4-week period and following are the observations:

- 27% of the respondents chose to use the service due to unavailability of car
- 23% of the respondents reported that they would use TNCs like Uber/ Lyft if the bus was unavailable followed by 21% reported they would get a ride from a friend/ family
- 41% of the respondents were White followed by 23% Hispanic/Latino, 14% Asian, and 7% Black/ African American
- 26% of respondents spoke Spanish either as their primary or secondary language

- 20% of the respondents reported working remotely more than 3 days a week in the previous month, whereas 16% reported they would be working more than 3 times a week remotely in the next year
- 36% of the respondents requested more frequent service followed by 12% for both early/late service, reliable service and more weekend service
- Operator courtesy and condition of buses were rated the highest, whereas frequency of service and time when service ends were rated the lowest.

### Paratransit

#### **Early Pandemic Response**

In the beginning of the FY 2021, paratransit ridership was down 80% due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Like most transit agencies, ridership and associated fare collection impacted overall service. As a result, an amendment to the contract for ADA Paratransit services was made to ensure the retention of drivers, transporting one passenger at a time, and finding new ways to service the community. This meant establishing relationships with the County Health Department; activating the Emergency Operations Center with the County; and reaching out to social service groups, senior advocacy groups, and other health groups to offer our resources.

In an effort to keep serving the community, County Connection LINK offered services to deliver meals to seniors, meals to schools, provide transportation services for the County Emergency Department for COVID-19 positive passengers, and trips to vaccination sites once vaccines became available.

#### **One Seat Pilot Project**

To minimize contact tracing, staff started the One Seat Pilot program, which enables passengers to utilize only one bus to travel across service jurisdictions versus multiple buses and multiple drivers. In addition to County Connection, the partners involved in the pilot program include Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority, Eastern Contra Costa County Authority, and Western Contra Costa Transit Authority. This pilot program started in November 2020 after Board approval and has continued successfully through an extension.

#### **My Transit Manager**

County Connection's paratransit contractor, Transdev, rolled out the My Transit Manager mobile app in November of 2019 to County Connection LINK Paratransit riders. For riders who are familiar with mobile apps, it provides some tools including:

- Ability to monitor trips in real time
- Locate on a map where the paratransit vehicle is located
- Ability to rate a ride/trip
- Ability to receive notifications when a vehicle is about to arrive or if it's waiting at your door
- Allows caretakers/family members similar access to the above-mentioned features



Transdev is preparing to launch an additional feature on the My Transit app. The new ride booking feature will allow riders/users the ability to schedule rides to recently traveled destinations directly from their mobile app. Beta testing for a select group of Paratransit riders has been in effect since July of 2022.

**Ridership Trends**

The following map shows trip origins on LINK paratransit for FY 2022. During that year, 38% of the trips originated in Concord, followed by Walnut Creek at 16% and Pleasant Hill with 12%. The average trip length was 6.6 miles, and 39% of the trips were attributed to Medical trips, followed by Adult Day Care trips at 17%.

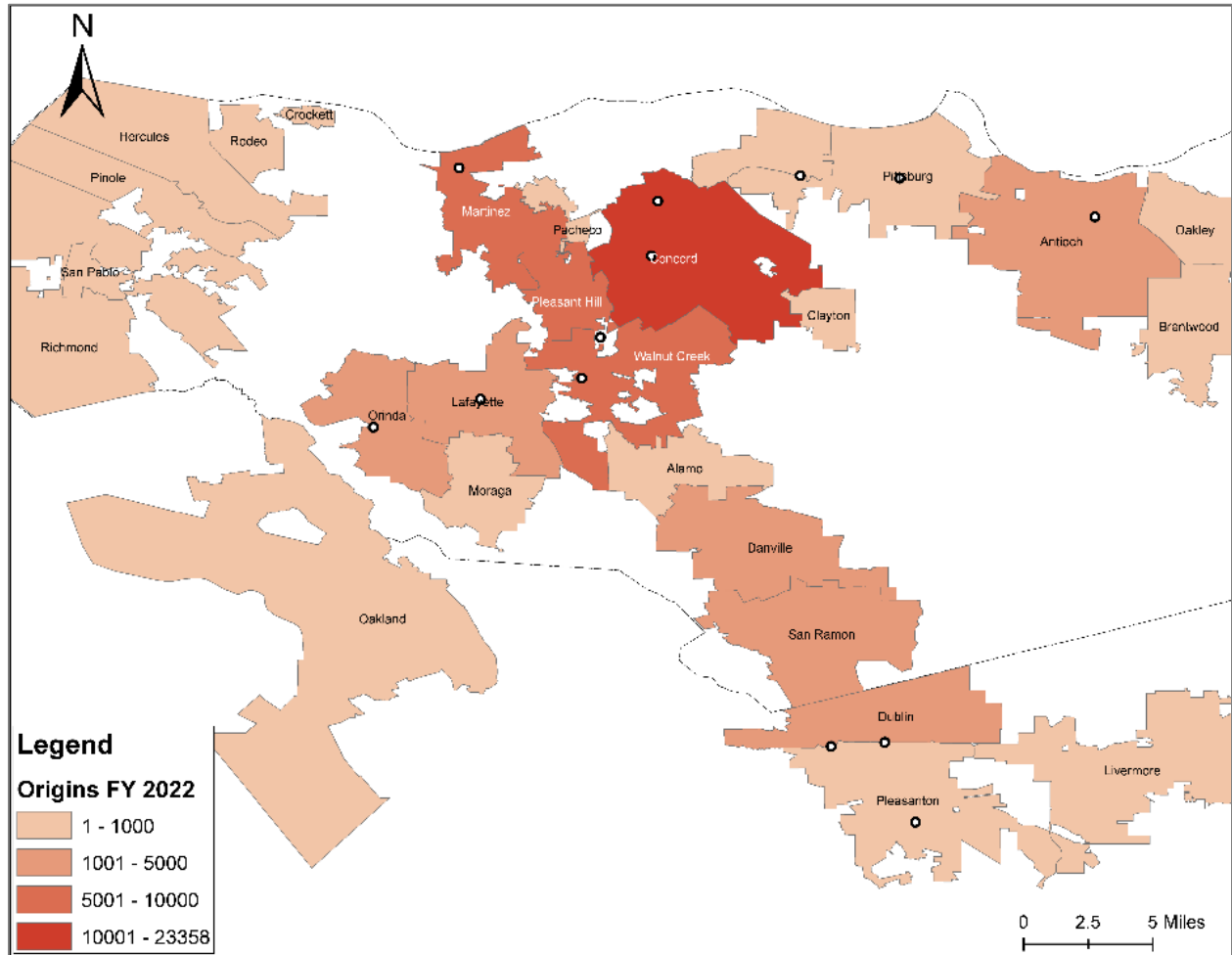


Figure 4.4 Trip Origins FY 2022

## 5. SCENARIO PLANNING CONCEPTS (FY 2023-24 THROUGH FY 2027-28)

The following service planning concepts are based on the revenue projections outlined in the MTC Resolution No. 4512 on March 23, 2022, and the actual service may vary based on change in demand and revenue levels. However, the increased cost of recruitment, training and overall operational cost have risen due to the inflationary environment currently and will continue to pose challenges for increasing the service levels.

### 5.1 Robust Recovery

This scenario assumes that adequate funding has returned to 100% of pre-pandemic levels, with an escalation based on 2.2% inflation. The projected manpower requirement for the scenario is 138 for fixed route and 44 for paratransit. The total projected operational cost for the scenario is \$221,200,000.

	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28
MTC Revenue Projections (M\$)	\$42.3	\$43.3	\$44.2	\$45.2	\$46.2
Fixed Route Operating Cost (M\$)	\$33.84	\$34.64	\$35.36	\$36.16	\$36.96
Paratransit Operating Cost (M\$)	\$8.46	\$8.66	\$8.84	\$9.04	\$9.24
Operating Cost/Hour	\$180.82	\$186.24	\$191.83	\$197.58	\$203.51
Service Available (hours)	187,151	185,996	184,332	183,012	181,612

Table 5.1 Service Projections for Scenario 1

As the ridership began recovering from the pandemic lows, it has been observed that weekend ridership has been recovering faster than weekday ridership. Most of County Connection weekend routes operate on a 30-60 minute headway, except two routes. Increasing frequency over the weekend to provide frequent access to BART is essential to attract more ridership.

As people started working remotely, commuter trips went down and have remained significantly below pre-pandemic levels as many workers have not yet returned to the office full time. However, weekend transit usage has grown, and while this is partly due to an increase in recreational, social, and shopping trips as the economy has reopened, it is also reflective of the non-traditional work schedules of transit riders. On the recent passenger survey, 32% of the respondents who indicated that they either worked onsite or did not have the ability to work remotely also reported an annual household income of less than \$35,000 a year. Hence, reallocating of resources from commuter routes to increase service on weekend routes is necessary to balance the rising cost of operations and ensuring quality service coverage for transit dependent riders.

Through the pandemic, the routes along the Monument Corridor which serve low-income communities have shown strong recovery. The Monument Free program was also expanded to include weekend routes in July 2022. Increasing of service levels along the Monument Corridor will not only help boost ridership, but also help connect low-income and minority populations to schools and jobs.

Description	Current Service (Peak/Off-Peak)	Proposed Service (Peak/Off-Peak)
Increasing service along the Monument Corridor	40m/40m	30m/30m
Increasing frequency of service on weekends	75m/75m	60m/60m
Reducing service levels on Commuter routes	Peak trips only	Reduce peak trips and consolidate routes

Table 5.2 Service Recommendations for Scenario 1

## 5.2 Revenue Recovery, with Fewer Riders

This scenario assumes that federal relief funds are eventually exhausted and are replaced by subsequent recovery of other funds to pre-pandemic levels. The scenario also assumes that farebox recovery remains stagnant and are below the pre-pandemic levels for the next 5 years. The projected manpower requirement for the scenario is 135 for fixed route and 41 for paratransit. The total projected operational cost for the scenario is \$215,400,000.

	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28
MTC Revenue Projections (M\$)	\$41.2	\$42.10	\$43.10	\$44.00	\$45.00
Fixed Route Operating Cost (M\$)	\$32.96	\$33.68	\$34.48	\$35.20	\$36.00
Paratransit Operating Cost (M\$)	\$8.24	\$8.42	\$8.62	\$8.80	\$9.00
Operating Cost/Hour	\$180.82	\$186.24	\$191.83	\$197.58	\$203.51
Service Available (hours)	182,284	180,841	179,744	178,153	176,895

Table 5.3 Service Projections for Scenario 2

As overall ridership undergoes recovery, it has been observed that Commuter express routes have lagged significantly compared to Weekend and Local routes.

The express routes serving Antioch and the South service area have significantly underperformed post-pandemic due the drop in commuter ridership to offices at Bishop Ranch and Pleasanton ACE Train. Additionally, routes serving colleges like Diablo Valley College have lower loads despite frequent service.

To balance the service levels in accordance with the demand, express routes would be consolidated to reduce overall service levels, along with reductions in frequency and span on local routes in order to free up resources for the increased service on weekend and Monument Corridor routes.

Description	Current Service (Peak/Off-Peak)	Proposed Service (Peak/Off-Peak)
Increasing service along the Monument Corridor	40m/40m	30m/30m
Increasing frequency of service on weekend	75m/75m	60m/60m
Reducing service levels on Commuter routes	Peak trips only	Reduce peak trips and consolidate/suspend underperforming routes
Reduce peak hour service level on routes serving DVC	15m/30m	30m/30m

Table 5.4 Service recommendations for Scenario 2

### 5.3 Some Progress

This scenario assumes that federal relief funds are eventually exhausted, and total revenue available is 15% below pre-pandemic levels for the next 5 years. The projected manpower requirement for the scenario is 117 for fixed route and 36 for paratransit. The total projected operational cost for the scenario is \$188,000,000.

	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28
CCCTA Revenue Projections (M\$)	\$36.00	\$36.80	\$37.60	\$38.40	\$39.20
Fixed Route Operating Cost (M\$)	\$28.80	\$29.44	\$30.08	\$30.72	\$31.36
Paratransit Operating Cost (M\$)	\$7.20	\$7.36	\$7.52	\$7.68	\$7.84
Operating Cost/Hour	\$180.82	\$186.24	\$191.83	\$197.58	\$203.51
Service Available (hours)	159,277	158,075	156,807	155,479	154,095

Table 5.5 Service Projections for Scenario 3

County Connection received timely and significant federal funding for transit operations through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriation Act of 2021 (CRRSAA), and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021.

The funding was used to offset the cost of suspending fare collection between March 2020 and November 2020, restoring service as ridership recovered, hiring and training operators, and fare promotions like free rides during September 2021 and October 2022. Although the reopening of businesses and fare promotions have helped in attracting some passengers back on transit, the rising cost of operations and stagnant commuter ridership recovery will pose challenges to maintaining current service levels once the federal stimulus funding have been exhausted.

To balance the service levels in accordance with the demand, service levels on commuter routes would be reduced. Also, in order to preserve service coverage to essential destinations, service levels on some

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high-frequency corridors such as Clayton Rd, Monument Blvd, and downtown Walnut Creek would need to be reduced along with reductions in span of service.

Description	Current Service (Peak/Off-Peak)	Proposed Service (Peak/Off-Peak)
Reduce service levels on Commuter routes	Peak trips only	Reduce peak trips and consolidate/suspend underperforming routes
Reduce service levels on high-frequency routes	15-20m/20-30m	30m/30m
Reduce Service level on routes serving DVC	15m/30m	30m/30m

*Table 5.6 Service recommendations for Scenario 3*