

**To:** Board of Directors

**Date:** 11/07/2022

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

**Reviewed by:** MR

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**SUBJECT: Weekend Monument Free Ridership Update**

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**Background:**

In July 2019, County Connection started offering free rides on three of its weekday bus routes – Routes 11, 14, and 16. All three routes served the Monument Corridor in Concord and connect from Concord BART to various destinations in Martinez, Pleasant Hill, and Walnut Creek, including BART stations, Martinez Amtrak and Contra Costa Regional Medical Center. The project is being funded by a grant through California’s Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP), which distributes cap-and-trade proceeds to support programs and projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and serve disadvantaged communities (DACs).

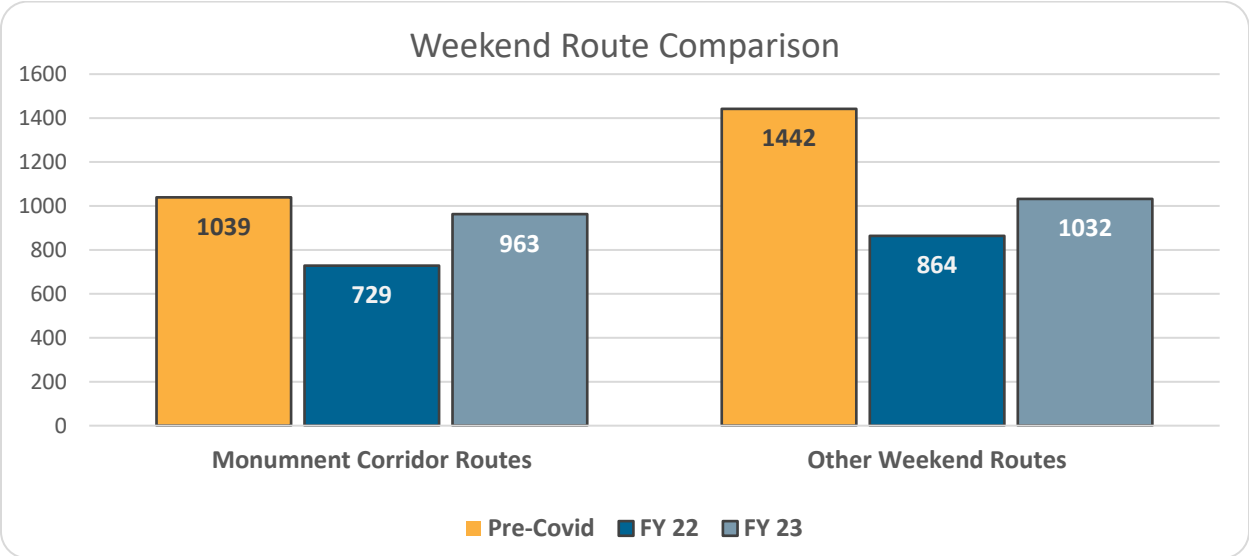
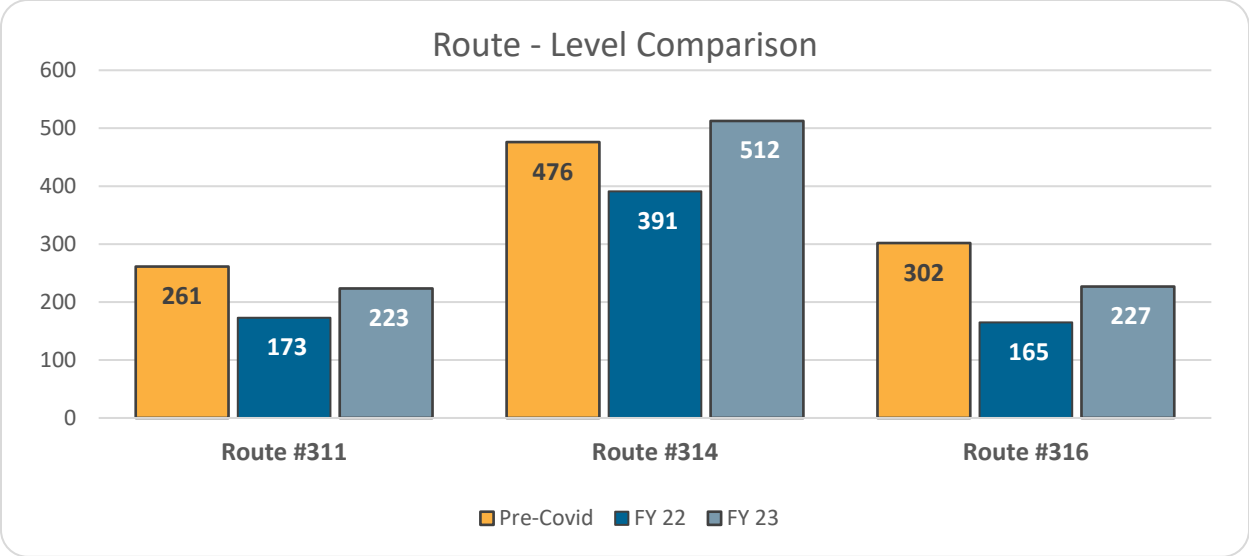
At the March 2022 meeting, the Board approved an expansion of the project to include the three weekend routes on the Monument Corridor – Routes 311, 314 and 316. This was a result of increased available funding for FY 2021-22, as well as rollover funding from previous years that wasn’t spent due to reduced ridership as a result of COVID-19.

**Ridership:**

The expansion of free rides to weekend Routes 311, 314 and 316 had an instant impact on ridership with all three routes performing better than the previous fiscal year. The weekend Monument Corridor routes grew by 32% compared to the previous fiscal year average, while the other weekend routes grew by only 19%. Route 314 grew by 30% compared previous fiscal year average and was 8% higher than its pre-COVID levels. Route 311 grew by 29% and Route 316 grew by 38% compared to previous fiscal year.

The expansion of free rides has accelerated ridership recovery as seen in the following charts. As of September 2022, the weekend Monument Corridor routes are only 7% below pre-pandemic levels compared to other weekend routes that are 28% below pre-pandemic levels.

The expansion of the Monument Free program to weekend routes was initially implemented as a pilot in July. Because the program reduces fares on the affected routes, it is considered a fare change and requires an equity analysis after six months under the FTA’s Title VI regulations. A Title VI analysis will be conducted along with a subsequent public hearing at the December Board meeting on the proposed continuation of the Monument Free Program for the weekend routes.



**Financial Implications:**

None, for information only.

**Recommendation:**

None, for information only.

**Action Requested:**

None, for information only.

**Attachments:**

None