

To: Marketing, Planning & Legislative Committee

Date: 03/29/2023

From: Pranjali Dixit, Manager of Planning

Reviewed by: MR

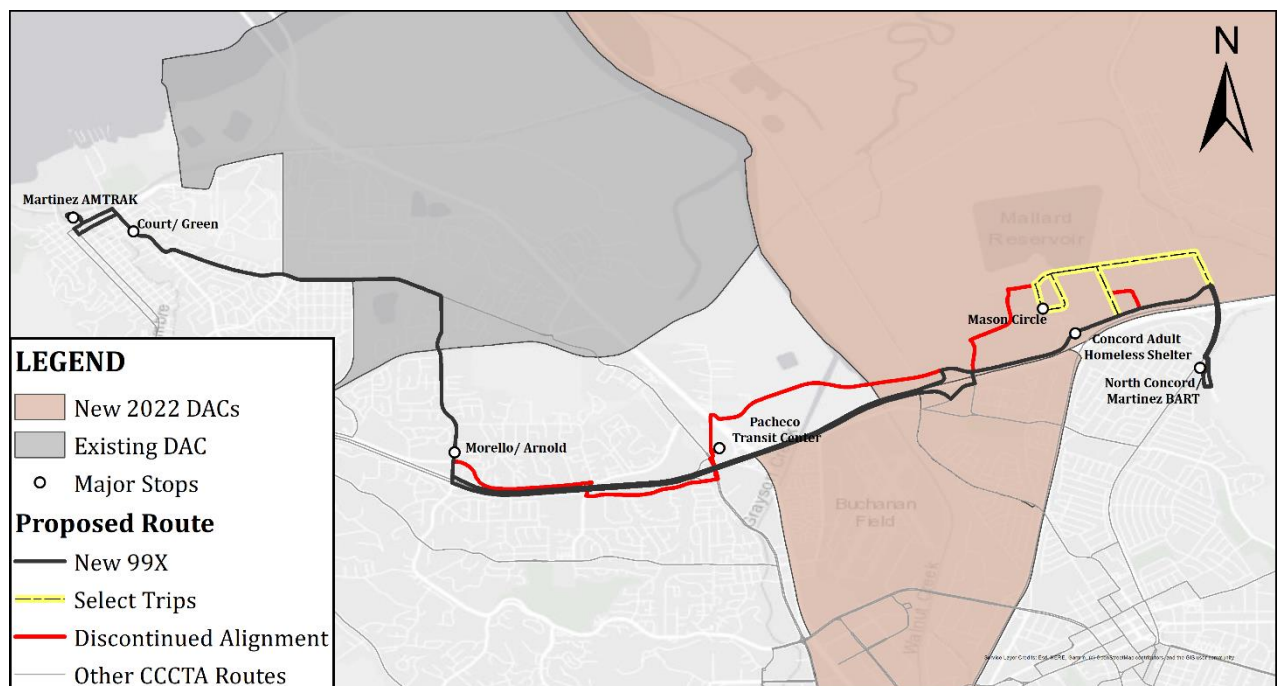
SUBJECT: 99X Free Fares

Background:

Starting in August 2018, County Connection launched Route 99X, which runs from Martinez Amtrak to North Concord BART during peak hours and serves the Pacheco Transit Center, Concord Adult Homeless Shelter, Contra Costa County offices at Glacier and Muir, and the courthouse in Martinez. The route is funded by the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) cap and trade grant program. Route 99X serves the Disadvantaged Community (DAC) in Martinez around Pacheco and Morello as shown in the map below. Beginning in FY 2021-22, DAC definitions were updated, and there are now three additional DACs in County Connection's service area in Concord.

During the pandemic, as people started working remotely, ridership on commuter trips went down and has remained significantly below pre-pandemic levels as many workers have not yet returned to the office full time. Although overall Express route ridership continues to lag, Route 99X continues to underperform compared to other express routes.

In March 2023, staff presented a service change proposal that included consolidation of Route 27, which currently provides limited trips within North Concord, with Route 99X, along with elimination of route segments with little to no ridership on both routes. The Board authorized staff to proceed with a Title VI Service Equity Analysis and public hearing, which will be held at the May Board meeting.



Proposed Fare Change:

Currently, passengers using Clipper on Express routes pay a \$0.25 premium for single rides and \$10 premium for a monthly pass. Consolidation of Route 27 into Route 99X would result in current riders on Route 27 paying the higher Express route fare. Given that the routes serve three DACs in Concord and Martinez and riders who are disproportionately low-income and transit-dependent, staff is proposing to offer free fares on the new Route 99X.

Subsidizing the fares on this route will also help stimulate ridership in the corridor. Staff estimates that ridership could increase by about 20% and believes that Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) funding will be sufficient to subsidize the fares.

Route	FY 23 (Estimated)		FY 24 (Projected)	
	Ridership	Fares	Ridership	Fares
27	6,471	\$ 8,385	--	--
99X	11,036	\$ 12,974	21,009	\$ 25,631
Total	17,508	\$ 21,359	21,009	\$ 25,631

Financial Implications:

As shown above, staff estimates that annual lost fare revenue by offering free rides on Route 99X would be about \$25,631. LCTOP funds will be used to subsidize fares and continued operation on Route 99X. For FY 2024, a total of \$611,179 was approved by the Board in March for this service.

Recommendation:

None, for information only. Staff will be presenting a Title VI Equity Analysis and holding a public hearing at the May Board meeting for potential approval of the proposed service and fare changes.

Action Requested:

None, for information only.

Attachments:

None