

To: Operations & Scheduling Committee

Date: 01/26/2024

From: Pranjali Dixit, Manager of Planning

Reviewed by: MR

SUBJECT: Bus Stop Placement & Amenities

Background:

County Connection provides service to over 1,200 bus stops in the entire service area serving residential neighborhoods, regional shopping centers, educational and medical institutions, municipal and government offices, as well as transit hubs and other transportation centers. Since County Connection does not have purview over the public right-of-way, staff works with cities and the County via the encroachment permit process to install, remove, or relocate bus stops as needed. Neighborhood preference, geography, right-of-way and accessibility are some of the factors that have determined bus stop locations.

Bus Stop Amenities:

Once a bus stop location is approved by the City/County, County Connection staff is able to install a bus stop sign and/or information panels on the bus stop pole or in the shelter. Information panels include schedule information for each route that services that stop. All stop locations include, at minimum, a bus stop pole and flag. Stops that are only served by one route do not have an information panel due to maintenance staff constraints. In addition, over 150 locations include a bench and approximately 160 locations include a shelter with seating area (see Attachment 1).

In 2014 County Connection was awarded a federal grant to improve access to transit. Since then, County Connection staff has worked with various cities to replace and/or relocate shelters. Existing shelters can be relocated but must be approved by Outdoor Media and the respective jurisdiction. Per the ad agency's contract with the various jurisdictions, the total shelter count does not change, unless specifically outlined in the agreement. Existing agreements require the ad agency to provide all maintenance, which includes cleaning, trash removal and graffiti removal and repairing any damage. County Connection does not receive any revenue from bus shelters advertising. All proceeds go to the respective jurisdiction.

Recent shelter replacement/relocation projects focused on stops with the highest boardings. For example, the City of Concord requested the relocation of a shelter from a location with minimal boardings, to another area that is close to senior housing, shops, and businesses. In other cases, shelter installation has not been feasible due to limited public right-of-way, resistance from private property owners near the bus stop, and/or accessibility improvements being cost prohibitive.

In addition to bus stops managed by the cities and county, stops at BART stations are assigned and maintained by BART or the developer within each station. Finally, County Connection collaborates with other transit agencies when serving bus stops out of County Connection's service area to minimize conflict and ensure adequate information is available.

Bus Stop Spacing:

Bus stop spacing plays a crucial role in balancing walking distance for passengers with bus speed and reliability. Closer stops offer easier access but slow down buses, while wider spacing speeds up travel but requires longer walks. This trade-off is carefully considered based on route demand, service type, and pedestrian infrastructure.

High-demand routes with frequent service can benefit from wider spacing, as passengers are more willing to walk for faster trips and reliable schedules. Conversely, feeder services with fewer riders at each stop prefer closer spacing to minimize delays. Beyond demand, stop spacing also considers pedestrian network quality and topography. Grid networks with short blocks offer better connectivity, while sprawling development and hills can make walking more challenging. Additionally, passenger characteristics, such as mobility limitations, are factored in.

The spacing of bus stops is currently not consistent across County Connection's service area, and stops have generally been added, removed, or relocated on a case-by-case basis in response to new developments or construction, city requests, and/or other external factors. To optimize bus stop placement on a more holistic, systemwide level, County Connection partnered with on-call planning consultant, Transportation, Management and Design (TMD) to develop a bus stop spacing policy. This policy will help identify locations for relocating and consolidating stops to improve transit speed and reliability for passengers.

Bus Stop Placement:

The policy outlines various factors that are to be considered for choosing the specific stop locations:

- **Safety:** Prioritizing locations that minimize risk to pedestrians and passengers, availability of crosswalk
- **Ridership:** Targeting areas with existing/projected high demand and Facilitating connections between different routes and services.
- **Service Level:** Aligning stops with service type (express, local, etc.) for efficiency.
- **Accessibility:** Ensuring stops are accessible to all, including those with disabilities.
- **Land Use:** Balancing stop placement with current and future development patterns.
- **Travel Time:** Minimizing delays from stop placement and ensuring efficient routes. Optimizing locations based on signalization, turning lanes, and safety.
- **Service Quality Trade-offs:** Carefully considering potential trade-offs between various service aspects (e.g., speed vs. coverage).

Next Steps:

The bus stop spacing policy will help drive the bus stop consolidation project forward, which includes the following:

- Inventory of all existing bus stops including amenities such as benches, shelters, etc.
- Identify stops for consolidation based on ridership, safety, schedule reliability
- Identify priority stops for amenity improvements such as real-time signage, shelter etc. through the lens of equity and ridership
- Identify stops for ADA improvements
- Identify inter-agency stop consolidation opportunities

Staff is also working to enhance information available at the bus stops as part of the larger regional mapping and wayfinding efforts aimed at unifying the branding of transit across the Bay Area.

Financial Implications:

None, for information only.

Recommendation:

None, for information only.

Action Requested:

None, for information only.

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Bus Stop Amenities

Attachment 2: County Connection Bus Stop Spacing and Location Guide