

Central Contra Costa Transit Authority Advisory Committee Report to Board of Directors, February 2024

The stated purpose of the Central Contra Costa Transit Authority Advisory Committee (“Advisory Committee”) is to bring feedback to the County Connection Board of Directors reflecting the voices and needs of the communities, riders, and other stakeholders represented by our Advisory Committee members.

January 2024 Advisory Committee Meeting

The Advisory Committee held its regularly scheduled meeting on January 9, 2024.

As has been the case in most meetings of the Advisory Committee to date, at the January meeting the Advisory Committee received several informational reports from staff. Pranjal Dixit, Manager of Planning, provided an updated performance report for the fixed route system, and Rosa Noya, Manager of Accessible Services, updated the Advisory Committee on the paratransit performance report; both reports were for informational purposes and required no committee action. Director of Marketing Ryan Jones presented the FY25 marketing plan to the Advisory Committee, which prompted one of our committee’s most robust discussions to date. In what has become almost a recurring agenda item, Committee member Birdwell provided an update on the travel training program that she directs to facilitate use of the system, particularly among our community of seniors. These informational reports and updates typically do not require any committee action but serve as useful tools to provide context and background information for committee members.

PCC Representative

Prior to the January meeting it came to our attention that the Advisory Committee bylaws provide that the committee shall appoint a representative to the Contra Costa Paratransit Coordinating Council (PCC). We agendaized this item and learned that Committee member Birdwell already sits on the PCC as a representative of another organization she is involved with, Independent Living Resources. Since she is able and willing to wear both hats on the PCC, Committee member Birdwell was appointed as the Advisory Committee’s representative on the PCC as well.

Advisory Committee Vacancies

The Advisory Committee currently consists of three members, with eight seats vacant after the term of the representative from the Moraga district expired in November, the Committee

member from Concord resigned his seat in January, and the vice chair from Martinez resigned his seat in February, creating additional vacancies to join the existing vacancies for the districts of Danville, Orinda, Clayton, Lafayette and San Ramon; Filling these vacancies would bring our Advisory Committee to a full roster of eleven members, and we respectfully renew our request that the Board help facilitate appointments of members from those jurisdictions.

In addition to recruiting new committee members through the traditional channels, at the January meeting the Advisory Committee discussed this issue as part of our agenda discussion about improving collaboration between the Advisory Committee and the Board. Committee member Obolensky suggested that we send a letter on behalf of the Advisory Committee to each district with a vacant seat to prompt them to recruit a representative. The Advisory Committee unanimously approved the resolution to send such a letter, which we are currently drafting and plan to send in February.

When recruiting new members, we seek to identify candidates who are potential or actual local riders, closely connected with their communities, and who can bring diverse perspectives and viewpoints to the advisory committee, especially viewpoints from underrepresented and marginalized populations. The recent appointees bring a valuable new perspective and a breadth of practical and professional experience to the Advisory Committee, and we hope that future appointees will do the same. We also encourage each Board member to connect directly with the advisory committee member serving the same jurisdiction.

Improving Collaboration Between Board and Advisory Committee

Even in our current composition with numerous vacancies, recent appointments have brought new energy and experience to the Advisory Committee, which is positioned to assume a more impactful role in County Connection governance. At this point as we continue the lengthy process of reconfiguring the Advisory Committee after a lengthy period of dormancy, we would benefit from some more specific guidance from the Board about what kinds of information it would find useful for the Advisory Committee to gather and provide. There are several ways the Board could provide this guidance, including through staff and/or written communication. At prior Board meetings we have discussed holding a joint Board/Advisory Committee meeting in the near future, and there was support from the Board for the idea. If there is still support from the Board, I still personally think such a meeting could be useful on a number of levels, and I hope it wouldn't exceed the time commitment threshold of our Advisory Committee members.

However the Board provides guidance, as we continue the process of recruiting new members to fill vacancies, it would be helpful to establish a more defined institutional role for the Advisory Committee so that we can use this information to work more effectively, as well as to recruit and retain members. It would be particularly helpful to know that we share a coherent, consistent vision for what the Advisory Committee's specific role in the governance should be.

Our next Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for March 12, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

Ian McLaughlin, Chair