

## **Central Contra Costa Transit Authority Citizens Advisory Committee Report to Board of Directors, May 2025**

As per its bylaws, the purpose of the Central Contra Costa Transit Authority Citizens 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, and to disseminate information from County Connection back to these stakeholder groups within the community. As the Board members are aware, the Advisory Committee has struggled mightily in recent years with vacancies and meeting attendance, which is directly related to the continuing need to establish a more meaningful role for the Advisory Committee within the County Connection governance structure.

### **Vacancies**

Within the last month James Donnelly, the Advisory Committee member representing the town of Danville, resigned from the committee. In his resignation email, on which Director Storer representing the same district was copied, former member Donnelly cited specifically as the reasons for his resignation the challenges in filling vacant seats on the Advisory Committee and in regularly obtaining a quorum at meetings, as well as the lack of relevance of the Advisory Committee’s role in general, while acknowledging the ongoing efforts that have been made to establish a more meaningful role for the Advisory Committee. He also specifically called upon the Board members to fulfill their obligation to take a more active role in appointing members to the Advisory Committee from their jurisdictions. Mr. Donnelly was an active and engaged member of the Advisory Committee, and his input will be missed, but he expressed several valid concerns that are shared by other members of the Advisory Committee.

With the resignation of Mr. Donnelly, the Advisory Committee currently consists of six members, with five seats vacant. The recent vacancy for the town of Danville joins the vacancies for San Ramon, Orinda, Lafayette, and Clayton. We did, however, have a new member attend our May meeting representing Pleasant Hill, a gentleman who has been a regular user of County Connection and will add great value to the committee based on his experience with the system as a user. We were also joined at our May meeting by the Advisory Committee member representing Moraga who previously was not receiving the meeting notices due to a clerical error that has been rectified, so we are inching slowly closer toward a full committee, or at least toward more regularly achieving a quorum.

Staff has reached out to the jurisdictions with vacant seats already to urge them to appoint a representative, but we renew our request that the Board members take a more active role in finding and appointing suitable candidates if they represent a district with a vacant seat on the Advisory Committee. Our current bylaws also allow for up to five “at large” members that can be approved directly by the Advisory Committee through a more efficient process, and staff has prepared an application form for persons interested in becoming an “at large” member of the Advisory Committee. The application will be posted on the website, and at our May meeting we discussed different avenues to disseminate information about the availability of “at large”

membership on the Advisory Committee and to distribute the application more broadly. Also, at our May meeting we discussed the potential for reaching out directly to persons or organizations that represent our target constituencies to request that they identify someone to apply for an “at large” seat. For instance, we lack a student voice on the Advisory Committee even though students are intended and frequent users of the fixed route system, so we discussed directly recruiting a student from a school within the service area, for example, to represent that constituency.

### **Recent Advisory Committee Meetings**

The Advisory Committee held its regularly scheduled meetings in April and May 2025. In April we barely eked out a quorum, but that was inconsequential because our agendas are typically light and more ceremonial than substantive, as has been the case with most meetings since the undersigned joined the Advisory Committee in 2022. The April meeting was notable, however, due to an unusually large number of public attendees from the County Department of Health and Human Services. Committee member Sarah Birdwell (unincorporated county), who directs the travel training program, is actively engaged with several of County Connection’s core potential user groups through that program and regularly invites them to attend Advisory Committee meetings as members of the public to inform us of their needs and voice their concerns. At the May meeting we achieved a quorum and were once again joined by a large (for our committee) contingent of attendees from the public, approximately 10 people, this time from a senior living center in San Ramon, who provided feedback on route planning as it relates to their specific facility.

At our May meeting, prior to receiving the usual informational reports from staff regarding the performance of the fixed route and paratransit systems, we agendaized two related substantive issues that are discussed in more detail elsewhere in this report and directly affect the Advisory Committee’s ongoing viability: filling vacant seats and establishing a meaningful role for the Advisory Committee.

### **Meeting Schedule**

At the May meeting the Advisory Committee also discussed another revision to our meeting schedule. The issue was raised by Vice Chair Allison Picard (Martinez), who questioned the need for monthly meetings given the Advisory Committee’s persistent lack of substantive agenda items, and noted the co-benefits that meeting less frequently would reduce the burden on staff to prepare and present informational reports to the Advisory Committee that do not require immediate action, and might also improve member attendance. The Advisory Committee only recently moved to a monthly meeting schedule under our new bylaws, but Vice Chair Picard’s point was well taken, and the Advisory Committee discussed the possibility of meeting less frequently going forward. Although the Advisory Committee did not officially vote to switch to quarterly meetings, the Director of Accessibility Services pointed out that the new bylaws specifically allow for cancellation of meetings when not necessary, so the Advisory

Committee decided to retain the current (monthly) meeting schedule but to cancel individual meetings more liberally in the future if there is no action item on the agenda in a given month.

### **The Need For Direction From Board/ Creation Of Workplan**

As noted above, one reason the Advisory Committee has experienced such difficulty in attracting and retaining members and with meeting attendance has been the lack of a substantive role for the committee within the County Connection governance structure. We have appreciated the Board's support for the Advisory Committee as a conduit to represent the voices and viewpoints of intended users of County Connection's services, including the time and effort Board members put into the unprecedented joint workshop held in May 2024. That workshop generated some fruitful discussion and interesting ideas for making the Advisory Committee a more relevant body, but it did not result in any systemic changes nor any official Board action that has been transmitted to the Advisory Committee for consideration. Although the Advisory Committee amended its bylaws following the joint workshop and the Board approved the amendments, as a subordinate and advisory body to the Board, it is difficult for the Advisory Committee to carve out its own institutional niche. We would benefit greatly from more specific institutional guidance from the Board about how the Advisory Committee can add value to the Board's decision making and how our two bodies should relate to each other structurally and procedurally. There are some generic guidelines in our bylaws about annual projects on which the Advisory Committee shall provide input, but those seem to be outdated duties held over from previous versions of our bylaws, and at this point we really need more concrete direction from the Board based on current circumstances about how it envisions an advisory body benefiting its deliberations so that we can determine whether creating an annual work plan is necessary. At our May meeting we deferred the annual work plan for this fiscal year due to the challenges outlined in this report, and the need for formal guidance from the Board.

In conclusion, for the last several years since the undersigned joined the Advisory Committee we have been engaged in a process of trying to create long-term institutional change from the bottom up and establish a new role for the Advisory Committee within County Connection, which is a complex, multi-faceted process that takes time, involves some growing pains, and remains a work in progress. We respectfully request more specific institutional guidance from the Board to inform and guide that process, as well as a more active role by Board members in recruiting representatives for the Advisory Committee from their jurisdictions.

Our next Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for June 5, 2025, but that meeting will be confirmed later this month in consultation with staff regarding a possible agenda. We welcome your feedback and direction on the issues outlined above.

Respectfully submitted,

Ian McLaughlin, Chair

CCCTA Citizens Advisory Committee