

Summary Minutes
Operations & Scheduling Committee
Friday, March 6, 2026, 8:30 a.m.

Directors: Jim Diaz, Tim Farley, Kerry Hillis
Staff: Bill Churchill, Ruby Horta, Andrew Smith, John Sanderson, Pranjali Dixit
Public: None

Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Jim Diaz.

1. Approval of Agenda

The Committee approved the agenda.

2. Public Communication

None.

3. Approval of Minutes of February 6, 2026

The Committee approved the minutes

4. Draft Alternative Service Plan

Mr. Smith informed the committee that County Connection is facing a structural deficit because expenses are growing faster than available revenue. He reported that while previous COVID-19 funding and service cuts helped build a reserve, these funds will likely be exhausted by Fiscal Year 2029 unless new revenue is found. To prepare for this, Mr. Smith presented a Draft Alternative Service Plan designed to cut the annual operating budget by approximately \$6.5 million by FY 2029, a step required if voters do not approve the Connect Bay Area Transit Initiative this November.

Mr. Smith detailed two primary options for these reductions: Scenario 1 would eliminate all 600-series school routes and ten other low-productivity lines, while Scenario 2 would keep school service but reduce the frequency of 13 routes and end service on seven others. He also reported that BART has adopted its own major service reduction plan, which would severely impact the 34% of County Connection riders who transfer to or from BART trains. During the discussion, Director Hillis informed the committee of his preference for Scenario 2 because it protects school service and maintains service in San Ramon. Additionally, Director Farley suggested that staff create outreach materials for Directors to use within their own jurisdictions, and Mr. Churchill emphasized that the agency must be prepared to make these difficult decisions if the transit initiative fails.

Item was forwarded to the Board with Committee's preference for Scenario 2 noted.

5. Spring Bid Update

Mr. Dixit reported that the Spring Bid service changes will take effect March 29, 2026, featuring a frequency increase on Route 4 in Walnut Creek to every 15 minutes. He noted that this enhancement is funded by an AHSC Grant, while other adjustments to weekend and school routes aim to improve reliability and address overcrowding at Monte Vista High School. Additionally, he informed the committee of minor stop consolidations in Martinez to support a Regional Mapping and Wayfinding pilot project with the MTC. Mr. Churchill provided an overview of project and informed that County Connection has funding available to upgrade the bus stops and design guidelines finalized through this project would get us closer to rolling out new signs systemwide.

Regarding ridership, Mr. Dixit stated that systemwide levels have reached 82% of the pre-pandemic baseline as of December 2025. He highlighted that while weekday express routes remain low at 43%, school and weekend services have significantly exceeded 2019 levels at 126% and 114%, respectively. He attributed the strong school ridership to the success of the "Youth Ride Free" and "Pass2Class" programs.

6. Monthly Reports

a. Fixed Route

Mr. Dixit presented the latest performance report, noting that ridership in January saw a 4% year-over-year decline while year-to-date ridership is down about 8,000 rides compared to the same time last year. Additionally, Mr. Dixit highlighted a recent spike in the number of missed trips across the system. General Manager Bill Churchill provided further context regarding service reliability, informing the committee that the implementation of SB 616 has contributed to increased operator absences. He noted that these absences are particularly prevalent on Mondays and Fridays, with a broader seasonal spike in unscheduled absenteeism occurring between January and March. Director Hillis suggested staff explore incentive programs to reward good attendance.

b. Paratransit

Mr. Sanderson reported that January ridership declined 6.3% year-over-year, remaining 35% below pre-pandemic levels. He noted that while productivity and on-time performance (OTP) standards were met, customer complaints saw a measurable increase. He explained that the OTP methodology now includes the drop-off window to provide a more comprehensive view of service quality. Regarding financial performance, Mr. Sanderson informed the committee that the cost per trip has stabilized at \$75, representing a 3.8% increase over the previous year. He further noted that while overall program costs have decreased since last year, they remain higher than pre-pandemic levels due to the rising cost of operations.

7. Committee Comments

Director Hillis informed the Committee of St. Mary's College's plans to expand student and faculty housing, which is expected to increase transit demand in Moraga. He reported that the Town of Moraga will install grade-separated bike lanes and improve bus stops on Moraga Road between Campolindo Drive and Corliss Drive. Furthermore, he noted that while a downtown circulator micromobility program is under consideration, its feasibility depends on the creation of a special funding district. Director Hillis also informed the Committee that the Moraga Town Council has invited the family of the late Al Dessayer to honor his contributions and suggested County Connection attendance, leading Director Farley to volunteer as the authority's representative.

8. Future Agenda Items

None

9. Next Scheduled Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for April 3, 2026 at 8:30 a.m. in the Small Community Meeting Room at the Pleasant Hill City Hall located at 100 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill, CA.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:33 a.m.

Minutes prepared and submitted by: Pranjali Dixit, Manager of Planning