

County Connection

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Summary Minutes Operations & Scheduling Committee Friday, September 4, 2026, 8:30 a.m.

Directors: Jim Diaz, Tim Farley, Kerry Hillis

Staff: Bill Churchill, Ruby Horta, Andrew Smith, John Sanderson, Pranjal Dixit, Rosa Noya

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 August 7, 2026

The Committee approved the minutes.

4. Battery Electric Bus Update

Mr. Longmire informed the committee that the Battery Electric Bus (BEB) Battery Management System Upgrade Project has encountered significant technical setbacks following the closure of Xalt, the parent company's sub-entity. Prior to Xalt shutting down operations, the Authority secured forty battery sub-packs at a discount to maintain inventory. However, he reported that these sub-packs require proprietary software programming that neither County Connection nor its third-party contractor, Renewance, can currently access. Director Longmire noted that intermittent communication failures with the WAVE inductive charging system are further compounding these maintenance obstacles.

He highlighted that these operational challenges have severely impacted fleet availability, leaving seven of the Authority's eight BEBs out of revenue service. Regarding financial implications, Director Longmire noted that \$270,880 of the previously authorized \$804,112 budget has been spent on sub-packs and charger repairs. He concluded that staff is reluctant to invest additional funds into the current BEB fleet until these software and charging issues are resolved, leaving \$673,261 in grant funds available for future zero-emission needs.

Mr. Churchill also added that given the recent setbacks, staff is renegotiating the ICT Rollout plan with CARB staff along with evaluating options to retire the BEB fleet early.

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5. Farebox Retrofit Project

Mr. Longmire informed the committee of a proposal to address the Authority's aging fare collection equipment. He reported that County Connection has operated its current Genfare Transview fareboxes for over 20 years, creating significant challenges in procuring replacement parts. Mr. Longmire noted that purchasing new Genfare units would cost approximately \$20,000 per unit and include unnecessary features. Consequently, staff sought an alternative solution compatible with the Authority's existing secure vault collection system.

Mr. Longmire detailed a collaborative solution developed with Diamond Manufacturing to retrofit the existing equipment with a manual, dump-lever attachment. He noted that this hybrid approach routes fares directly into the current vault system, extending the operational life of existing infrastructure while significantly reducing equipment and implementation costs. Furthermore, he highlighted Diamond Manufacturing's extensive service record across all 50 states, ensuring reliable long-term parts availability.

Mr. Longmire outlined the financial requirements, stating that 150 DMOO Retrofit Kits would cost a total of \$367,375, and that staff would be using the TDA capital funds that are programmed in the FY 2026-27 budget to fully cover the purchase. The Committee forwarded staff's recommendation to the Board to authorize a purchase order to Diamond Manufacturing in an amount not to exceed \$367,375.

6. Fixed Route Year End Report

Mr. Dixit informed the committee that fixed-route ridership stabilized in Fiscal Year 2026 at approximately 2.7 million total passengers, a slight 0.3% year-over-year decrease. He reported that reliability metrics saw improvements, driven by a 13.6% reduction in missed trips and an increase in on-time performance to 80.6%. Additionally, Mr. Dixit noted that safety metrics improved to under one accident per 100,000 miles. Farebox revenue expanded to \$4.01 million, which lifted the system's farebox recovery ratio slightly.

He detailed that service changes were implemented across four bid periods between August 2025 and June 2026 to enhance operational efficiency, regional connectivity, and schedule compliance, highlighting key actions such as regional connection adjustments under the MTC TRANSFER Plan, Route 99X schedule modifications for Martinez Amtrak train connections, and an AHSC grant-funded realignment of Route 4. He further reported that Clipper card adoption among fare-paying riders rose to an average of 82.6%, surpassing pre-COVID baseline levels due to the implementation of Clipper 2.0, expanded START and Youth program discounts, and mobile app usage.

Director Farley inquired about the impact of gas prices on ridership, to which Mr. Dixit responded that while analysis revealed a brief spike in March, ridership quickly returned to previous levels, mirroring trends observed across neighboring suburban bus agencies. Mr. Churchill provided background on the drop in accident rates, explaining that in the past with the rise in complete streets projects with narrowed lanes had led to mirror strikes, and noted that staff has since been actively collaborating with cities to review plans and ensure sufficient lane width for bus maneuvering and reduce accident rates.

7. Paratransit Year End Report

Ms. Noya informed the committee that County Connection LINK maintained strong on-time performance and improved productivity in FY26, even as total ridership remained slightly below FY25 levels. She reported that total LINK program costs decreased by approximately 3.2% to \$8.24 million, driven primarily by a 4.8% reduction in direct contract costs. Additionally, she noted that while overall complaint rates rose to 2.6 per 1,000 trips over the full year, service consistency improved considerably during the second half of the fiscal year.

She explained that non-ADA initiatives and regional partnerships continued to expand, with the Choice in Aging program providing 10,640 trips and the One-Seat Ride initiative experiencing a 7.2% increase in unlinked passenger trips. She pointed out that OSR deadhead activity grew significantly alongside demand, contributing to total program costs of approximately \$1.6 million, which exceeded the budgeted amount of \$1.2 million. Conversely, she stated that LAVTA Wheels Dial-A-Ride saw lower ridership and overall service activity, ending the year 9% below its operating budget despite a 3.3% increase in total costs.

8. Monthly Reports

a. Fixed Route

Mr. Dixit reported that during the month of July, Clever Devices deployed an erroneous software update across the bus fleet, which prevented fare collection data from being tracked for the second half of the month. He informed the committee that staff was actively working to generate a reliable revenue estimate using validated data collected during the first half of the month.

b. Paratransit

Ms. Noya reported that paratransit ridership decreased year-over-year. She informed the committee that productivity remained strong and OTP reached 95% in July, which was above the 92% target. Finally, she noted that complaints dropped after peaking in June and saw 1.2 preventable accidents per 100,000 miles, which was above the standard.

9. Committee Comments

None

10. Future Agenda Items

None

11. Next Scheduled Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for October 2, 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.

12. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:29 a.m.

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