

ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 4/22/2026

Staff Report No. 26-177

TO: AC Transit Board of Directors
FROM: Salvador Llamas, General Manager/Chief Executive Officer
SUBJECT: East Bay Paratransit Fixed Operating Hours

BRIEFING ITEM

AGENDA PLANNING REQUEST:

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Consider receiving a report on converting to fixed paratransit operating hours. [Requested by President Shaw - 12/10/2025.]

Staff Contact:
Ramakrishna Pochiraju, Executive Director of Planning & Engineering

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:

Goal - Convenient and Reliable Service
Initiative - Service Quality

Fixed operating hours will provide additional paratransit service which, in turn, will improve service access for paratransit riders.

BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:

Switching East Bay Paratransit to a fixed 5:00 a.m. - 11:59 p.m. window would result in over-serving in some areas for example where buses stop at 8:00 p.m. Initial high-level order of magnitude estimate indicates that changing to a fixed paratransit operating time would cost approximately \$1.4 million annually. More work is necessary to fully understand all the potential costs, operational changes, and equity implications.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

At the request of the Board of Directors, staff examined the implications and analyzed the costs of changing East Bay Paratransit (EBP) service to a fixed operational time (for example 5:00 a.m. to 11:59 p.m.) from the current structure of providing comparable service during the same hours and days and within three-quarters of a mile on either side of an operating fixed-route bus and/or rail line. It should be noted that any paratransit operational changes would require agreement with BART.

In theory, East Bay Paratransit could adjust its service hours to a single fixed window (like 5:00 a.m. to 11:59 p.m.) for all locations, but it must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Federal Transit

Administration (FTA) requirements to be available during the same hours and days as the fixed-route service (both AC Transit and BART) for any given trip. Some major requirements are:

- EBP has to meet all demand during their fixed operating hours without capacity constraints like waitlists.
- EBP could not under-serve any area and would still have to match BART's late-night service, which runs until 1:00 AM.
- EBP service would cost more when over-serving areas where buses currently stop running before the end of the fixed window.

Staff developed a rough cost estimate of about \$1.4 million annually for this potential service change to extend paratransit coverage throughout the District’s current area by day type, from 5:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. The result is that the District would offer the maximum level of service on weekdays, including the areas served by Supplementary Service and peak-only Transbay service. On Saturday and Sunday, service coverage as estimated would not include areas served only on weekdays. More details on the cost estimation process and a map of the expected passenger demand are provided in Attachment 1.

Figure 3 in Attachment 1 highlights some key areas where staff forecasts demand increases. Notably, the highest estimated demand is concentrated in areas served today only by Supplementary Service, including areas of Richmond, El Sobrante, the Oakland hills, and Fremont, as well as parts of San Francisco currently only served by overnight Owl service outside the ¾ mile footprint of BART stations. The model also projects some additional demand scattered across the District along fixed-route lines that currently begin operation later than 5:00 a.m. and end earlier than 12:00 a.m.

The Board also asked staff to clarify how many people are impacted by the current schedules and how many could potentially benefit from the change. Staff cannot precisely determine the number of people affected by the current setup because there is no easy way to determine if someone outside the existing paratransit buffer would be a rider. Similarly, it is not possible to exactly quantify how many people might benefit from the change, so the analysis focused on showing potential advantages. The analysis estimated how many trips could be generated based on trip counts to estimate hours. A linear regression model was used to predict the number of trips relative to the number of hours. For context, the District’s 2024 National Transit Database (NTD) submission reported 480,000 unlinked trips and 368,000 annual demand response revenue hours. The average trip lengths used are based on actual data by time of day, making them much shorter than the NTD average trip length (about 15-20 minutes, depending on the day type, instead of 46 minutes). Many trips occur early in the morning and late in the evening, which may explain why the trip lengths are significantly shorter than the overall NTD average.

Day Type	Estimated Annual Hours	Estimated Annual Cost at NTD \$131.26/hour	Estimated Unlinked Trips
Weekday	8,338	\$ 1,094,446	26,249
Saturday	1,173	\$ 153,968	4,841
Sunday	1,013	\$ 132,966	3,778
Total	10,524	\$ 1,381,380	34,868

The agenda planning request also mentioned that some transit agencies in the Bay Area have fixed paratransit operating times. Upon closer examination, staff found that these agencies do not actually use a fixed paratransit operating time but instead use fixed hours as a way of simplifying the ADA Comparability Rule for their riders so as not to violate federal law. Attachment 2 contains a Summary of this fixed hours approach with a comparison of Bay Area Paratransit Provider Hours.

Additionally, staff was asked to explain the costs required to reconfigure our software for every service change with a variable schedule and determine whether it would result in cost savings as EBP implements a new software platform. As the Board is aware EBP is replacing legacy software ADEPT with a technologically advanced software platform, Spare. Per the technical requirements contained in the Request for Proposal (RFP) Spare had to demonstrate that it could import, on a quarterly basis, the bi-directional start/end times (weekday, Saturday and Sunday) of the District's fixed-route system. Spare successfully demonstrated this ability with the import of the Realign Plan in August of 2025. Spare will have an additional opportunity to demonstrate this ability with the April 5, Spring 2026 export. Due to Spare's existing ability to accept the quarterly fixed-route data, there would be no additional cost should the Board elect to move to a fixed operational window.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:

This is not applicable as this is a briefing item.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:

No alternatives were considered as this is a briefing item.

PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:

None

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Fixed Operational Period Cost Analysis
2. Summary Comparison of Bay Area Paratransit Providers Hours
3. Agenda Planning Request

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