

ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 3/26/2025

Staff Report No. 25-202

TO: AC Transit Board of Directors
FROM: Kathleen Kelly, Interim General Manager/Chief Executive Officer
SUBJECT: Service Reliability Program - Schedules/Runcut Improvements

BRIEFING ITEM

AGENDA PLANNING REQUEST:

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Consider receiving a report on the District's continuing efforts to improve Service Reliability, specifically as it relates to structuring operator work assignments and the operator sign-up process.

Staff Contact:
Ramakrishna Pochiraju, Executive Director of Planning & Engineering
Salvador Llamas, Chief Operating Officer

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:

Goal - Convenient and Reliable Service
Initiative - Service Quality

This Board report is a continuation of recent staff reports that discuss the District's efforts to improve service reliability, a multi-pronged approach endeavor that includes focusing on conditions for operators in the field, scheduling and run-cut changes, line management deployment, operator recruitment and retention, and development of a modified duty program designed to better manage operators on workers' compensation. In February, the Board received an update on actions taken to improve conditions for operators in the field, including increased availability of restrooms for operators. In addition to this report, another item on this agenda describes activities of Operations staff to improve service reliability, including line management teams. In April, the Board will receive a report on HR activities that focus on increasing operator availability, which is key to service reliability, and in May the Board will receive a new quarterly report on service reliability that tracks key performance indicators.

This report provides an update on the operator sign-up process, run assignment structure, and schedule improvements made in conjunction with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ATU 192 Leadership for the June and August 2025 service changes. Staff is focused on improving operator assignments and bringing predictability to the sign-up process because both are key to retaining operators and scheduling staff, which, in turn, increases service reliability for the communities that AC Transit serves.

BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:

This report is informational only and there is no associated fiscal impact.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

Run structure and the Sign-up process directly affect the District's ability to put service on the road and operate reliably. Beginning in 2022, the Service Development & Planning department established a baseline of qualitative and quantitative analysis to evaluate how field conditions changed over the years. Planners and schedulers engaged with operators through surveys, direct conversations, and workshops at the Operating Divisions. This qualitative assessment was paired with data analysis of run types, platform hours, and types of trips operated between August 2019 and August 2023. This analysis is a work in progress; however, there are immediate and longer term fixes that staff will implement to address these pressing issues resulting from the analysis.

The most frequent issue staff hears from bus operators and ATU 192 leadership is insufficient running time and layover. Additionally, staff also hears that platform time (driving time, including layovers) is too high, particularly relative to pay hours.

Between 2019 and 2023, during the pandemic and subsequent recovery, AC Transit has undergone significant operational shifts including decreases in the number of system-wide trips, transformation of trip types, an increase in the number of straight runs, and a shift in the ratio of platform hours to pay hours. Despite the persistent bus operator shortage and a decrease in the total number of trips, total layover hours have remained close to pre-pandemic levels at a system-wide level.

The AC Transit and ATU 192 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) establishes a minimum of ten percent of one-way running time plus four minutes for layover. This means the length and travel speed of a line determines the minimum layover time a trip is scheduled to receive. The amount of layover time above and beyond this minimum varies by time of day.

System-wide, the amount of scheduled layover time per trip increased by 3.2 minutes (from 13.0 minutes to 16.2 minutes) from Fall 2019 to Fall 2020, due to pandemic running times and general traffic conditions. Between Fall 2020 and Fall 2023, as running times increased, layover time per trip decreased by 0.8 minutes (from 16.2 minutes to 15.4 minutes) but still remain at 2.4 minutes above Fall 2019 levels.

Improved Sign-Up Process

The District's routine practice for each quarterly Sign-up and service change involves extensive review by the Drivers' Committee and executive management. First, Service Planning and Scheduling staff compile the Service Specifications. These show all timepoint and schedule changes for inclusion in the next service change. These are approved by executive management and reviewed by the Drivers Committee and ATU 192 Leadership in advance of Scheduling staff inputting the information into the Hastus scheduling system.

Next, the Drivers' Committee and ATU 192 Leadership review and provide comments on the draft run-cut. The Drivers' Committee is made up of two bus operator representatives from each division appointed by ATU leadership. By the rules of the CBA, the committee reviews and provides comments on the run-cut to the Scheduling Department for two working days. Once the final run-cut is complete, the Committee gets three working days to review and provide feedback on the roster (or the days off for each operator assignment)

before it is finalized by the Scheduling Department. The final rosters are then ready for processing and the operator sign-up selection process can proceed.

Beginning in 2024, the District and ATU 192 union staff began a new approach to supplement the routine practice, whereby the top management from the District and Union jointly identified and signed off on the priorities for runtime or layover adjustments, and agreed that if an adjustment did not require additional operators, staff would make the change in the sequential sign-up, and if additional operators became available, the group would jointly prioritize the lines where resources would be added. Adjustments that required operator resources were incorporated in the August 2024 and December 2024 sign-ups. Signed documents between management and ATU leadership agreeing to these improvements are attached (Attachments 2 and 3).

Further improvements are expected as part of the major service change that will be implemented in August 2025. These vehicle schedules are still in draft form and are pending review in advance of implementation of the service changes.

The Scheduling Department also participated in an agency-wide effort to help ensure operators are receiving their proper meal and rest breaks, which is discussed further in a companion staff report.

ATU 192 and AC Transit MOU

In advance of the major service change in August 2025, District management worked with ATU 192 leadership on an MOU (Attachment 4) to help ensure timely implementation. This MOU seeks a smooth schedule development and sign-up process for the June and August 2025 service changes. It lays out an agreement for the following:

- 1) A 'rehang' of the March 2025 runs in June 2025,
- 2) More time to develop the August 2025 service changes
- 3) Limited term Side Letter that provides additional pay for operators driving Trunk lines, from June 2025 through December 2025, with a provision to evaluate success based on meeting 98% of Service Operated KPI.
- 4) Active monitoring of Key Performance Indicators on these Trunk lines.

Major Service Change Running Time Fixes

Staff conducted an analysis in 2023 of how much extra cycle time (runtime plus layover) would be required to ensure that all trips in the system reach their final timepoint within one minute of the scheduled time 70 percent of the time. This analysis revealed that implementing this solution would require adding 20 buses to the Fall 2023 service level network which would either require more than 40 additional bus operators or a reduction in frequency on 20 lines to implement. Staff have been adding the necessary runtime fixes into each quarterly service change and will add the remaining amount into the August 2025 service change.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:

This report is informational on staff efforts to improve service delivery and reliability. There is no identified advantage or disadvantage to receiving this report.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:

There is no alternatives analysis associated with this briefing report.

PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:

SR 25-152 Operator Restrooms and Projects Update
SR 25-181 Field Condition Elements Related to Service Reliability

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Sign-up and MOU Presentation - Service Reliability
2. Management/ATU Signed List of August 2024 Service Improvements
3. Management/ATU Signed List of December 2024 Service Improvements
4. ATU 192 and AC Transit MOU Side Letter June and August 2025

Prepared by:

Owen Goetze, Senior Transportation Planner

In Collaboration with:

Mike Eshleman, Service Planning Manager

Approved/Reviewed by:

Robert del Rosario, Director of Service Development & Planning
Dwain Crawley, Director of Transportation
Salvador Llamas, Chief Operating Officer
Ramakrishna Pochiraju, Executive Director of Planning & Engineering