

ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 11/19/2025

Staff Report No. 24-384a

TO: AC Transit Board of Directors
FROM: Salvador Llamas, General Manager/Chief Executive Officer
SUBJECT: Updated Board Policy 545 - Service Standards

ACTION ITEM

AGENDA PLANNING REQUEST: ☐

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Consider approving the proposed final draft of an updated Board Policy 545 - Service Standards.

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

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:

Goal - Convenient and Reliable Service
Initiative - Service Quality

The revised Board Policy 545 provides updated standards to assist the District in planning high quality bus service, measuring the quality of the customer experience, and continuously improving service delivery. The new metrics associated with this policy focus on active management of the bus system, in line with the 2022 Strategic Plan addendum.

BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no budgetary impact associated with the approval of the proposed policy amendments. However, meeting the aspirational goals included in the proposed policy would require additional funding over time to hire operators and road supervision and pursue the capital investments needed to increase service levels.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

Overview

Staff developed and shared a first draft of a revised Board Policy 545 (Service Standards) at the September 24, 2024 Board Meeting. This initial draft was based upon a Best Practices Review conducted by the Realign project team, which included a thorough overview of practices at seven different peer agencies and drew upon public outreach and engagement throughout 2023 and 2024 over the course of the Realign planning process.

The development and implementation of service standards align with transit industry best practices. Service

standards foster an organizational culture that offers communities a high-quality customer experience, specifying where, when, and how a transit network should operate, along with metrics that evaluate how well the organization delivers its service. These standards aim to provide staff, the Board, and riders with a logical framework to guide planning and enhance performance without imposing a one-size-fits-all approach across the District's diverse geographic and cultural service areas.

Summary of Feedback on Draft Standards and Staff Responses

Specific summaries of Board comments received at the September 24, 2024 Board Meeting, along with listening sessions with advocacy organizations representatives (conducted in April 2025) and ATU labor leadership (conducted in October 2025) are included as attachment 5 and attachment 6.

General themes of key comments and questions and corresponding staff responses are grouped as follows:

- *Call for Inclusion of Reliability Metrics*
In response to feedback from Board members and advocates, updated reliability metrics have been included to help identify reliability issues and solutions, such as raising the on-time performance goal to 75% and establishing a new standard for first-time point departure. Feedback from labor partner Amalgamated Transit Union Local 192 (ATU) emphasized that better performance requires adequate resources and must not come at the expense of operators. The District fully agrees, pledging to identify root causes together and collaborate on solutions to improve the customer experience.
- *Call for More Aspirational Vision for Service*
In response to advocates' feedback, adjustments have been made to the aspirational frequency and span goals, while also modifying minimums for frequency and span to better align current resources and District practices.
- *How would this policy guide new pilots?*
The policy establishes a two-year performance period for a new line under Board Policy 545 standards, including a Title VI service equity analysis before the one-year mark in accordance with Board Policy 518 and Federal Title VI compliance requirements. If the service does not meet standards at the two-year point, it may be discontinued or adjusted to enhance performance in line with those standards.
- *How would this policy guide future service increases and/or reductions?*
This policy establishes a framework for regularly monitoring performance and adjusting service levels accordingly. In a fiscal emergency, it provides a basis for identifying options for service reduction and includes the equity analysis requirements outlined in Board Policy 518. If the needs of a fiscal emergency go beyond the scope of this policy, staff may present additional guiding principles to the Board on an ad-hoc basis.
- *Feedback on Microtransit*
In response to feedback from advocacy groups and labor partners, microtransit has been removed from the standards.
- *Call for Application of Proposed Standards to Fall 2025 Service*

In response to feedback from Board members, Attachment 1 includes overview slides following the main staff presentation that show how the current post-Realign service so far ranks according to metrics proposed by staff.

- *How would the First Timepoint Standard be applied, and what purpose would it serve?*

The first timepoint standard would provide the District, its labor partners, and community members with another tool to better identify the root causes of service quality issues so that they can focus on the right solutions. Remedies could include scheduling adjustments, restroom access improvements, line management and supervision enhancements, individual operator coaching, changes to roadway and signal infrastructure, and/or transit priority measures.

Changes Incorporated in Proposed Final Draft

Changes to the standards compared to the September 2024 first draft are categorized by section below:

Service Classifications

Route Classifications

- Microtransit has been removed from the standards following discussions with ATU leadership. Staff may bring policy amendments to the Board in support of microtransit at a future date at the Board's request and as circumstances, including the District's financial capacity, permit. Staff continues to track new technologies that could improve service for our riders.

Primary Route Network (PRN)

- Staff developed standards for the PRN in tandem with the previously proposed Realign+ service enhancements. The PRN outlines a vision for significant investment in AC Transit's core network of high ridership lines.
- The proposed Board Policy 545 categorizes the PRN as an aspirational goal rather than as a minimum standard to meet given current and potential future fiscal challenges.
- Inclusion of the PRN in the policy as aspirational allows the District to actively track incremental progress toward its full implementation while recognizing the primary role of service standards to track service performance on an on-going basis.
- The proposed standards set a minimum for routes identified as part of the PRN of 30 minutes.

Service Design Standards

Regional Connectivity

- The proposed standards now refer more generally to regional and local transit providers rather than calling out only some of the agencies that connect with AC Transit service.

Percent of Service Area Residents Covered

- The proposed standards include refined percentage minimums and aspirational goals to match

relevant data sources available from the Census' American Community Survey (ACS) instead of the Decennial Census. Updates to ACS datasets are published every year rather than every ten years, which better aligns with the quarterly and yearly reporting timeframes for service monitoring included in this proposed final draft of the updated policy.

- Staff has established a consistent methodology and workflow for keeping this calculation updated in line with the proposed standards.

Frequency

- The proposed standards revise the minimum frequency for Local service to every 60 minutes given current and potential future fiscal challenges.
- The proposed standards set a floor of 30 minutes for routes identified as part of the PRN. This is in response to feedback received from advocates, in the interest of preserving the District's highest ridership trunk services.
- The proposed standards also include aspirational frequency standards for different modes in response to feedback received.
- Microtransit has been removed from the standards following discussions with ATU leadership. Staff may bring policy amendments to the Board in support of microtransit at a future date at the Board's request and as circumstances, including the District's financial capacity, permit. Staff continues to track new technologies that could improve service for our riders.
- Lastly, the proposed standards revise frequency targets for the PRN to be included as aspirational goals rather than as minimum standards given today's fiscal realities.

Span of Service

- Staff revised the minimum span for Local service to 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. for all day types given current and potential future fiscal challenges.
- Staff also revised span of service targets for the PRN to be included as aspirational goals rather than as minimum standards given today's fiscal realities.
- Microtransit has been removed from the standards following discussions with ATU leadership. Staff may bring policy amendments to the Board in support of microtransit at a future date at the Board's request and as circumstances, including the District's financial capacity, permit. Staff continues to track new technologies that could improve service for our riders.

Service Performance Standards

Efficiency and Effectiveness Measures

- On-Time Performance
 - Prior to the implementation of Realign, AC Transit was already meeting existing on-time

performance standards, and in response, staff propose to raise the bar to help the District identify opportunities to further improve service reliability.

- Staff included a new target of 75% for on-time departures. Today, the District's target is 72% for on-time departures with a window of one minute before the scheduled time to five minutes after.
- Staff included a new standard for first timepoint departures, with a new proposed target of 95% within a window of zero to one minute after a trip's scheduled first timepoint departure time.
- A first timepoint departure standard will help AC Transit pinpoint service reliability root causes on a route-by-route basis and identify solutions, including more active line management and runtime and layover changes, among others.
- For future headway-based schedules, staff proposed to define on-time as within 3 minutes of the scheduled headway at each timepoint. AC Transit does not currently schedule or operate any lines on a headway basis, but this standard is included as a future-proofing measure.
- These metrics will be monitored continuously and goals adjusted in response to future on-time performance improvements.
- **Service Operated**
 - Staff renamed the Trip Completion standard to "Service Operated" to align with the District's existing name for this metric under its existing KPI program.
 - Staff revised to match existing 99.5% standard rather than moving forward with a 99.98% standard, given on-going performance data trends. With future updates and increased performance, the District can reconsider standards above the existing standard.
- **Passenger Load Factor**
 - Staff adjusted the load factor to 200% of seated capacity on the Bus Rapid Transit fleet, reflecting the unique seating configuration of that sub-fleet.

Service Evaluation

On-Time Performance

- Staff incorporated On-Time Performance standards, including regular timeframes for reporting on metrics.

Feedback Not Incorporated

Performance Incentives for Bus Operators

- Any performance incentives would be subject to collective bargaining with ATU.

Changes to Crowding Methodology

- Staff actively considered and modeled the use of a detailed approach to crowding like that of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA), which deems a trip to be crowded if 5% of the stops exceed the load standard, or other potential more passenger-focused delay metrics used by some larger agencies operating more frequent service than AC Transit. This is compared with the initial AC Transit approach to simply use the 85th percentile maximum load to classify crowding. After results revealed few practical differences, staff opted for the simpler percentage-focused methodology originally proposed.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:

Approving the amended policy reflects the District's Strategic Plan, shaping how the District plans future service, monitors the quality of service delivery, and makes improvements. This updated policy will help the District better use new technologies and methods to make better data-driven decisions.

Other than cost to achieve some of the goals and standards of the policy, staff can identify no disadvantages.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:

The Board could choose to retain the existing version of the policy and forego the adoption of a revised policy, but this is not recommended given that this revised policy draws upon nearly two years' worth of analysis and community outreach and engagement work to help align the District's practices with today's transit industry best practices.

The Board could also elect to receive this report, provide additional feedback, and direct staff to receive another round of feedback on this draft from advocacy groups and ATU and have staff return with a second proposed final draft that reflects that feedback. The Board could direct Staff to further include specific elements already discussed as part of this staff report and/or SR 24-384, or further direct staff to explore other performance management avenues. Staff is confident, however, that it has received sufficient comments on the initial draft through two in-depth engagement sessions with advocacy groups and one similar session with ATU leadership. Staff does not recommend delay. New standards will bolster efforts to identify issues and implement solutions in a virtuous cycle that benefits the District's customers and operators.

PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:

SR 24-384 Draft Board Policy 545 (Service Standards) Update

BP 501 - Bus Stops

BP 518 - Title VI and Environmental Justice Service Review and Compliance Report Policy

BP 544 - Service Adjustments

Existing BP 545 - Service Standards and Design Policy

BP 546 - Standards for Operation of Supplementary Service

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Presentation

2. Revised BP 545 - Service Standards and Design Policy (proposed final draft)
3. Existing BP 545 - Service Standards and Design Policy
4. BP 545 Redline comparing September 2024 first draft and Nov 2025 draft
5. Summary of Board Member Feedback and Staff Responses
6. Summary of Feedback from Advocacy Groups and ATU Labor Leadership

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