

# ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



## STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 5/26/2021

Staff Report No. 21-255

**TO:** AC Transit Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Michael A. Hursh, General Manager  
**SUBJECT:** Proposed Pilot Services

### ACTION ITEM

#### RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Consider approving proposed pilot services to address requests from the public, customers, and stakeholders in Alameda, Berkeley, and Hayward as part of District transit recovery efforts.

#### STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:

Goal - Convenient and Reliable Service  
Initiative - Service Quality

These pilots will allow the District to respond to requests from customers and communities while also evaluating the performance of the pilot services. Any findings can be used to inform future permanent planning decisions. Following a review of the performance of these pilots, a decision about whether to make these permanent will be brought to the Board for approval as part of the development of a new network by August 2022.

#### BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:

The three proposed pilots are independent of each other and can be implemented separately. The resources needed for each and their estimated costs are detailed below.

Pilot	Daily Hours	Service Days per Week	Annual Service Days	Annual Hours	Hourly Cost	Annual Cost
Line 78 - Seaplane Lagoon	16	5	255	4,080	\$140.00	\$571,200
Line 79 - Ashby Extension	16	5	255	4,080	\$140.00	\$571,200
Line 60 - South Hayward BART Extension	18	7	365	6,570	\$140.00	\$919,800

Staff estimates the Ashby service will require two to four more operators and the South Hayward service will require two more. The Seaplane Lagoon service will require no more than six additional operators, but likely fewer than that depending on how the trips are tied (i.e. interlined) with other service at the Fruitvale BART Station.

These proposals have been reviewed as to their impact on the budget and operator count and staff is confident they are included within the District's financial plans for recovery in the next fiscal year without impacting the sustainability of existing service.

### **BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:**

The ongoing pandemic has had significant impacts on the District's service levels but has also led to changes in the way the District approaches planning for the future. The District started a public engagement process with the Transit Talks series in Late April and that will be part of the inputs into a larger, system-wide planning process for implementing a new network in August 2022 that will serve as the foundation for the future of transit service in the communities AC Transit serves. In the interim, there are opportunities to respond to feedback from the community over the last several years about what's working and what isn't. Staff has identified three opportunities to pilot new services or changes to existing lines to respond to this feedback and is seeking Board approval for those pilots.

- 1) As planned for many years, the Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA), which operates the San Francisco Bay Ferry, is opening a new ferry terminal at Seaplane Lagoon in Alameda Point with robust direct service to San Francisco. AC Transit is proposing to provide a peak-hour timed connection to the ferry terminal that operates across the island along Ralph Appezzato Memorial Parkway and Santa Clara Avenue and up to the Fruitvale BART Station. WETA has aligned their service start date with our service change timeline to allow for a coordinated launch with bus and ferry service should the pilot be approved. This alignment will take advantage of the new stops located in the Alameda Point development and serves as a first step toward 15-minute service planned at full build-out. Early residents and employees now have a line connecting them to the ferry as well as back across the island to Webster and Park street corridors. This overlay also provides critical additional capacity along the 51A corridor for those looking to make trips to and from Fruitvale BART and within Alameda. This service may be eligible for future Regional Measure 3 funding when that source becomes available.
- 2) Line 80 was suspended in August 2020 - it had the lowest productivity of all remaining regular local lines - the buses, operators, and funding used to operate it were diverted to adding back service to lines with significant overcrowding and pass-ups, such as the 51s and 72s. The highest-ridership segment of Line 80 was the Ashby corridor and staff has identified an adjustment to Line 79 to serve Ashby and connect it more effectively to strong demand centers.
- 3) Since Line 22 was eliminated in 2017 to improve frequency on the other lines with which it overlapped, students and administrators at Chabot College have been requesting a direct connection between the South Hayward BART Station and Chabot College via Tennyson Road. Staff have identified an extension of Line 60 from Chabot College along Hesperian Boulevard and Tennyson Road to the South Hayward BART Station as a potential pilot that would address those concerns.

More details on these proposals - including route maps - can be found in Attachment 1.

The pilots are in addition to the District's commitment to resume some suspended routes as resources allow.

Resuming suspended routes without public hearing is part of the District's service recovery plan and is permissible under Section B.1.d of Board Policy No. 544 Service Adjustments. With each upcoming Sign-up, staff will update the Board on which routes can be restored pending available resources.

Section B.1.e of Board Policy No. 544 allows the District to operate pilot services for no more than 12 months before conducting a public hearing in accordance with Board Policy No. 110 Public Hearing Process for the Board of Directors and conducting a Title VI Service Equity Analysis per Board Policy No. 518 Title VI and Environmental Justice Service Review and Compliance Report. Staff plans to use the pilots as an opportunity to evaluate the performance of these proposals before deciding to include them in the Public Hearing planned for Spring 2022 for a larger set of network changes. This allows the District to test new service options and gather real-world feedback before making a commitment to include them in the network long-term. If staff requires more time to evaluate these pilots - a possibility given the pandemic - a separate public hearing may be conducted before the end of the 12-month mark for each line.

Staff is proposing the implementation of the Seaplane Lagoon pilot in August 2021 and the extensions of Lines 60 and 79 as soon as December 2021, provided forecasts show enough available funding and operators. The Seaplane Lagoon service is proposed for implementation earlier because not timing it with the launch of ferry service means ferry customers may get accustomed to driving to and from the ferry and won't be as amenable to taking the bus once they get used to driving. This pilot demonstrates true collaboration between transit providers to improve mobility for the region, a key recovery goal of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the region's transit operators .

These proposals do not constitute the entirety of what the District plans to recover as the region emerges from the pandemic. While the District has the authority to restore service on other lines without Board approval, these specific proposals do require approval of a pilot and a public hearing within 12 months of permanent service launch.

#### **ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:**

The advantages of these proposals are two-fold:

- 1) The proposals respond to issues raised by the communities we serve; and
- 2) They serve as a nimbler way of trying out new ideas within the context of a pilot and can yield critical information about what works and what does not.

The primary disadvantage is these services require bus operators and funding. The District is on a path toward recovering service, but is still almost 150 operators short of the levels the network required pre-pandemic. These proposals will require between 2 and 10 operators when fully implemented. However, they very much help in transit recovery by either restoring service, improving key connections, serving key destinations and/or more efficiently serving commuters.

#### **ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:**

There were several alternatives considered to these lines, with the primary alternative being to not implement them. This alternative would save the District money and operators but would not be responsive to requests from customers and the community.

For the Ashby service, staff evaluated a number of other routing alternatives but settled on the 79 extension because it most effectively connected Ashby riders to downtown and UC Berkeley as well as shopping and employment anchors in Emeryville. Restoration of Line 80 was also considered, but even at every 40 minutes, it would require 10 operators, which is the maximum total of all three pilots combined. Another key consideration with the proposal to extend Line 79 would be the loss of service along Claremont between College and Ashby. Staff analyzed ridership on Line 79 Pre-COVID (when it was much higher) and determined only 25 daily riders used those stops on line 79 Northbound and 44 used them southbound. Ridership along the portion of Ashby being served by Line 80 pre-COVID was 494 going towards Emeryville and 620 going towards Claremont.

For the Seaplane Lagoon service, staff has long looked at Line 96 as an option for Seaplane Lagoon service but the ferry riders in Alameda are primarily east of Webster and Line 96 would not serve them at all, so a cross-town option was needed. Staff evaluated converting Line O trips from Transbay to ferry-serving trips but elected to move forward with a new line to ensure Line O has capacity as the region recovers.

For the Line 60 extension, staff looked at reviving Line 22 but it required as many as 14 operators to run and overlaps with service on every street on which it runs.

**PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:**

Board Policy No. 110 Public Hearing Process for the Board of Directors

Board Policy No. 518 Title VI and Environmental Justice Service Review and Compliance Report

Board Policy No. 544 Service Adjustments

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Pilot Services Memo
2. Seaplane Lagoon Letters
3. Line 80 Letter
4. Line 60 Letters

**Prepared by:**

Michael Eshleman, Service Planning Manager

**In Collaboration with:**

Phillip Halley - Program Manager, Contracts Compliance and Title VI Programs

David Berman, Transportation Planner

Carissa Lee, Transportation Planner

**Approved/Reviewed by:**

Jill Sprague, General Counsel

Robert del Rosario, Director of Services Development and Planning

Ramakrishna Pochiraju, Executive Director of Planning & Engineering

Derik Calhoun, Director of Transportation

Cecil Blandon, Director of Maintenance

Salvador Llamas, Chief Operating Officer

Claudia Burgos, Director of Legislative Affairs & Community Relations

Beverly Greene, Executive Director of External Affairs, Marketing & Communications

Chris Andrichak, Chief Financial Officer