

ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 3/26/2025

Staff Report No. 25-190

TO: AC Transit Board of Directors
FROM: Kathleen Kelly, Interim General Manager/Chief Executive Officer
SUBJECT: Active Line Management and Division Teams to Improve Service Quality

BRIEFING ITEM

AGENDA PLANNING REQUEST:

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Consider receiving a report on Active Line Management and Division Teams to improve Service Quality.

Staff Contact:
Salvador Llamas, Chief Operating Officer

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:

Goal - Convenient and Reliable Service
Initiative - Service Quality

Active Line Management is a key function that contributes to making bus service more reliable and on schedule. Reliable service improves the experience of both the customer and the bus operator.

BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:

There are no budgetary/fiscal impacts associated with this briefing item.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

On October 23, 2024, staff report 24-411 Road Supervision Active Line Management/Service Quality Improvement was presented to the Board. The staff report provided details regarding the three additional supervisors to be dedicated for the On-Time Performance (OTP) Team, overall staffing levels for the Transportation Supervisor positions, the various assignments to support operations activities, and a comparison of the APTA peer survey indicating that the District is well below the ideal supervisor ratios as compared to respondents. This report provides a summary of ongoing activities involving multiple departments, including the OTP Team, and Union partners to further improve service quality and reliability.

On Time Performance

The District system-wide Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for On-Time Performance (OTP) is 72%. Although AC Transit has consistently exceeded this target, it is not representative of the full potential we can achieve or rider expectation, and several low-performing routes are not meeting their individual goals. To address this, the strategy is to identify performance issues on low-performing routes at each division and develop targeted

improvements. This initiative aims to elevate overall service delivery and raise the system-wide OTP. By targeting low-performing routes, this initiative will drive improvements in OTP and contribute to higher overall performance across the service area. As an example, in 2013 OTP averaged 67% and has gradually improved year-over-year to 74% in 2024, the only anomaly was 75% in 2020 during the pandemic when traffic conditions and ridership was very low.

Increasing the KPI goal is the next step after sustained performance above the current KPI of 72% for more than 12-months. This will ensure we assess all seasons and service impacts throughout a full year. In FY26, the KPI goal will increase to 75% OTP, and then again once we sustain that performance level, we will gradually increase that metric. Once we fill 100% of all vacant operator positions, (including reducing long-term leave), and with the benefit of District initiatives to improve conditions for operators in the field (including restroom availability), and adjustments in scheduling running and layover time, staff is confident we can reach 80-85% OTP.

Active Line Management and Service Delivery

Active line management and service delivery are both critical components to ensure the efficient operation of AC Transit service, especially when it comes to delivering safe, reliable, sustainable transit service that responds to the needs of our customers and communities. To improve service delivery through active line management, staff takes a hands-on approach to be involved in system performance by reviewing data, regularly collecting operator feedback, and directly engaging with other District departments for improvements. By utilizing multiple sources to collect systems data and field performance feedback, staff can make strategic decisions to focus service improvement efforts. Some examples of active line management include:

- **Performance Monitoring:** Actively tracking system performance against established goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPI).
- **Consistent Communication:** Having an open feedback loop with operators and staff to gain an understanding of service issues and concerns.
- **Problem Solving:** Quickly documenting and addressing any obstacles that may hinder line performance by providing solutions in real-time.

District Teams

Each of the District's four divisions has a District Team comprised of representatives from Transportation, Service Supervision, Maintenance, Scheduling, Planning, Business Sciences, and Innovation & Technology. Business Sciences provides performance statistical data that is reviewed monthly by the District Team groups from each division. The group looks at trends and low-performing routes and targets those for service improvements. The District Teams then develop strategies and campaigns focused on improving the performance of those routes.

Transportation Supervisors in the field work together to monitor, manage, and mitigate service issues. Supervisors perform gate checks in the division yard to ensure buses depart on time and use mobile tablets to track operator activity, monitor communications and active line management. Supervisors can also monitor on tablets the lines that are not logged in and the lines that are running early, late, or off-route. With this information, the supervisors make field contact with operators to identify and resolve performance issues. The

Operations Control Center (OCC) staff utilize line management methods to monitor and track performance. Each OCC Controller is responsible for reviewing and monitoring the routes of a specified Division, responding to the needs of the operators, and collaborating with field supervision to address in-service delays. OCC also works directly with division staff to cover open route assignments which mitigate service loss.

To improve OTP, the Transportation Department established an OTP Team within the Supervision Department that is specifically focused on a service line performance. This team consists of three veteran supervisors, all former operators, with deep knowledge and experience of the service network challenges and a strong ability to provide valuable feedback for improvement. The OTP Team works closely with District Teams and is strategically deployed to high-priority areas and routes requiring attention. One supervisor is assigned at the at the start of the line, one in the middle, and one at the end of the line. Their role includes supporting operators at strategic locations in the field, direct observation of line performance, ensuring buses depart the first timepoint on time, and implementing service improvements responsive to changing conditions in the field. The OTP Team maintains close communication with OCC for added performance monitoring and support.

While in the field, OTP Team members take corrective actions to improve service delivery, document their observations, and make recommendations for schedule adjustments. The feedback collected provides valuable insight on field operations to adjust routes in time for upcoming signups. Working in collaboration with the ATU Local 192 Drivers Committee, the Planning and Scheduling departments incorporate recommendations from the OTP Team and several other performance data and feedback sources to develop the next service signup schedules. This multiprong collaborative approach to data-based decision making has yielded positive results.

Recent Success Stories

Some of the recent success stories are a direct result of the hard work, collaboration, and focus of the District Teams, Active Line Management, and OTP Team. Staff targeted the specific lines listed below due to the low performance trend and focused on filling all or most assignments, deploying the OTP Team, adding an additional bus when possible, using Road Supervisors and OCC armed with technology tools and new datasets to target problem areas. These efforts have led to significant improvements in the performance and service delivery of the following lines:

- **6-line** (D2 route operates between Downtown Berkeley and Downtown Oakland)
 - November to December 2024: OTP was 67.69%
 - January to February 2025: OTP improved to 72.19%
- **72R-line** (D3 route operates between Del Norte BART Station and Downtown Oakland)
 - August to December 2024: OTP was 70.45%
 - January to February 2025: OTP improved to 72.23%
- **14-line** (D4 route operates between Fruitvale and West Oakland BART Stations)
 - August to December 2024: OTP was 71.24%
 - January to February 2025: OTP improved to 72.15%
- **Tempo Line** (D4 route operates between Downtown Oakland and San Leandro BART)
 - September to December 2024: OTP was 68.65%

- January to February 2025: OTP improved to 79.65%
- 56-line (D6 route operates between Hayward BART and Union Landing)
 - November to December 2024: OTP was 69.75%
 - January to February 2025: OTP improved to 73.77%

Service Disruptions Management:

Several tools are utilized to assist with effective line management for improved service delivery. For example, the Clever Devices Computer Aided Dispatch (Clever CAD) system offers intuitive features that allow the OCC to manage service delivery efficiently and provide real-time updates to customers.

- Cancellations/Reinstatements: If a bus is delayed due to an incident, accident, or mechanical failure, OCC can cancel subsequent trips in the system for that run so customers are informed that the schedule is not in service. Once the issue is resolved, OCC can reinstate the trips back into the system to resume service.
- Dynamic Detours: If buses are blocked due to police activity, construction, or unforeseen incidents, OCC will dispatch a supervisor to assess the situation. Upon arrival to the incident location, the supervisor will determine approximately how long the incident may impact blocking the route and find a safe detour for the buses. If the detour is lengthy, OCC will publish a Dynamic Detour in the system by drawing a new route on the service map in real time. Information of the new detour route is sent to buses in the field which changes the head sign display to show, “Detour” alerting customers to the change in the route.
- Social Media Integration: Social Media Coordinators are integrated into the OCC workflow, with a direct feed into the cancellation screen. This allows the Social Media Team to view open runs and analyze how service disruptions may impact customers. The cancellation screen shows all open assignments across AC Transit, which is continuously updated. The Social Media Team uses this information to craft timely messages, notifying the public of delays on specific routes allowing them to explore other travel options.
- Color Validation: To help improve OTP, the onboard bus Transit Control Head (TCH) computer is equipped with color validation. If an operator arrives early at a bus stop, the TCH displays a red bus icon with a countdown timer. Once the countdown reaches the scheduled departure time, the bus icon turns green, signaling to the operator that it is time to depart.

Meal and Rest Periods

The chart below shows the total meal and rest break issues reported by operators of problematic routes that prevent them from taking an uninterrupted meal and/or rest break during the August and December signups in 2023 and 2024. Thanks to the collaboration with ATU Local 192, Division Teams efforts, and subsequent improvements included in the runcut by the Scheduling Department significant progress has been made since the August 2023 Fall Signup, including a reduction in valid issues reported and an overall improvement in service delivery.

Sign-up	Total Reported	Invalid	Valid
Aug-23	45	22	23
Dec-23	33	9	24
Aug-24	38	22	16
Dec-24	16	13	3

Other initiatives to improve line management and service quality include reviewing factors that impact operational efficiency, such as dwell time at congested locations. The District is actively monitoring how much time passengers take to board at these locations, identifying ways to streamline the process and reduce delays. Additionally, long traffic light cycles, restroom access, and layover locations are regularly evaluated to ensure they do not hinder service flow. Continuous attention to these details helps optimize service delivery and minimize disruptions ultimately resulting in better service quality.

Even the most advanced live data dashboards cannot replace having a Transportation Supervisor in the field monitor the service. Dashboards are effective tools for supervisors but will not improve or change human behavior. Only well trained and professional supervisors can best mentor, coach, or hold accountable operators to achieve established KPIs and improve service delivery. We learned from the APTA survey the District needs about 30 more supervisors; however, we also learned from our experience that having a dedicated OTP Team at each Division can significantly improve sustained service quality and reliability. This would require an additional nine Transportation Supervisor positions added to the budget. When we have the financial resources, staff intends to add these positions to the budget for Board consideration.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:

The advantages of having an active line management program are staff can make strategic decisions to focus service improvement efforts by utilizing multiple sources to collect systems data and field performance feedback to improve service quality.

Since Active Line Management is an industry best practice, there are no disadvantages associated with the program.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:

An alternate would be to manage lines strictly from the Operations Control Center, but this option does not provide the physical presence or attention to detail in the field that is needed for this important initiative.

PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:

24-411 Road Supervision Active Line Management/Service Quality Improvement.

ATTACHMENTS:

None

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