

ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 10/22/2025

Staff Report No. 25-495

TO: AC Transit Board of Directors
FROM: Salvador Llamas, General Manager/Chief Executive Officer
SUBJECT: Supplementary Service

BRIEFING ITEM

AGENDA PLANNING REQUEST: ☒

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Consider receiving an overview report on Supplementary Service. [Requested by President Shaw - 7/23/2025.]

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

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:

Goal - Convenient and Reliable Service
Initiative - Service Quality

Supplementary Service is additional service provided by the District to ensure the District's regular bus service is not overloaded by student travelers during school bell start/end times, improving on-time performance and reducing pass-ups.

BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:

There are no budgetary or fiscal impacts associated with the briefing item report. As requested by the Board of Directors, costs to provide Supplementary Service are included in the Staff Report and the attached overview report.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

Supplementary Service is provided in two operational formats: 1) additional trips on local lines to relieve overcrowding, and 2) 600-series coordinated service lines, open to all riders, scheduled to align with school bell times, operate using segments drawn from one or more fixed-route lines. The operation of Supplementary Service is guided by the standards set forth in Board Policy 546.

Staff prepared a report (Attachment 1) detailing the District's Supplementary Service Program. Below is a high-level summary of the full report:

Supplementary Service Provided

The District provides a total of 160 Supplementary Service trips each weekday, operating across forty-six (46)

600-series coordinated lines and six (6) local lines. Notably, the majority of trips (99 trips or 61.9% of trips) are scheduled in the afternoon. This imbalance between morning and afternoon service likely reflects the higher volume of students being dropped off by parents in the morning, resulting in greater demand later in the day.

More than one-third of the Supplementary Service trips - 60 in total - serve schools in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). Additional coordinated service is provided to West Contra Costa Unified (WCCUSD) (33 trips), Fremont Unified (27 trips), Alameda Unified (9 trips), Newark Unified (6 trips), Hayward Unified (3 trips) and San Lorenzo Unified (3 trips). Service to Fremont Unified has increased in recent years, reflecting the District's transition of junior high schools into middle schools, which has driven greater demand.

Ridership Levels

In Fall 2024, the District's Supplementary Service carried an average of 4,204 riders daily, with roughly 26 riders per trip. Most of these riders - 76.1% - come from just three school districts: Oakland Unified, Fremont Unified, and West Contra Costa Unified. OUSD's Skyline High School sees the highest individual-school usage, with 642 riders each weekday. However, overall demand at Skyline has been declining, leading to a reduction in service. In contrast, Fremont Unified has experienced steady growth in ridership, prompting the addition of extra buses this past school year to meet increasing demand.

Resource Requirements

On a typical weekday, Supplementary Service provides nearly 208 platform hours - the total time buses spend both carrying passengers (revenue service) and not carrying passengers (traveling to or from the bus yard or between routes) - or 3.6% of the District's overall platform hours. Of this total, roughly 74 hours occur in the morning and more than 134 hours in the afternoon. The majority of service, over 73% of platform hours, is concentrated in three school districts: OUSD (35%), Fremont (19.7%), and WCCUSD (19.6%).

Afternoon service levels are higher, which means more vehicles are needed later in the day - 81 compared with 53 in the morning. One factor contributing to this difference is that afternoon trips are less able to interline - continuing directly into a different route - with other supplementary service trips, as school bell schedules tend to coincide. During the morning peak, 42 buses typically operate one or two school trips before returning to the division, while in the afternoons, that number rises to 45 to accommodate this concentrated demand.

When the District can interline supplementary service trips with other services, the cost of providing the service decreases. During the morning peak, there are fewer opportunities to interline with other services (local or Transbay) compared to the afternoon. Staff can only interline 11 of the 53 buses in the morning, meaning 42 buses typically operate one or two school trips before returning to the division. In the afternoon, when school and work commutes are at different times, staff can interline 36 of the 81 buses.

Cost/Reimbursement and Challenges

Supplementary Service costs the District just over \$14 million each year, a figure that has grown by more than 70% over the past decade. During that same period, however, funding has not kept pace and now stands at only 20% of what was provided ten years ago. Today, the District receives \$500,000 annually plus revenue from bulk ticket sales to OUSD and WCCUSD - around \$1.2 million total - enough to cover just 8.5% of the total cost - which highlights a widening gap between the service provided and the resources available to support the service. Adding Supplementary Service trips now comes at a higher cost than in previous years, and the

District's flexibility to manage these trips has been greatly reduced. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the reduction in available Transbay service has eliminated many of the efficiency opportunities that once allowed staff to interline trips and respond dynamically to changing demand. Currently there are few scheduling options available to absorb new ridership without adding resources. Previously, staff could adjust service and add trips as capacity issues arose, keeping pass-ups to a minimum. Current constraints on the number of available Operators and the inability to link trips together means that without additional resources, the District faces a real possibility of students being unable to board buses during peak school bell times.

Pass Programs

Alameda County Transportation Commission's Student Transit Pass Program (STTP) offers free youth Clipper cards to eligible middle and high school students in Alameda County. The program, which started as a pilot in 2016-2017, has expanded from 21 schools in 2018-2019 to 62 schools in 2019-2020, and over 165 schools county-wide in 2024-2025. It includes 26,354 participants across 143 schools within AC Transit's service area (August 2025). The District is reimbursed for administration costs along with all the rides taken.

The West Contra Costa Unified School District's Student Bus Pass Program (SBPP) has funds for 2,200 bus passes each month and is offered on a first-come, first-served basis until the funds are exhausted. Students accepted into the program receive a monthly bus pass (either AC Transit Youth Pass or WestCAT) starting in October. Since July 2020 through September 2025, WCCUSD has purchased 31-day youth passes (mag strip) totaling \$1,534,530, with FY 2024-25 purchases totaling nearly \$482,000.

Also available for WCCUSD students is the Pass 2 Class program. This program provides free bus passes to students in Contra Costa County, promoting the use of public transportation to reduce congestion and air pollution. Up to two students per household can receive up to two months' worth of passes.

Peer Review/Program Comparison

Staff contacted seven public bus service providers in the Bay Area-County Connection, Golden Gate Transit, VTA, SamTrans, SFMTA, Union City Transit, and Wheels-to find out what level of supplemental school service, if any, they offer. None of these agencies reported operate as many trips as the District. SamTrans operates the next highest number of supplementary trips per day (120). Golden Gate Transit was the only agency contacted that does not provide any type of supplemental school service.

All agencies that provide supplementary service do make some accommodation for school's early dismissal times. The level of schedule flexibility varies from agency to agency. While AC Transit and SamTrans will only adjust schedules for regularly occurring early dismissal days, other agencies, such as County Connection, will also adjust their schedules based on the irregular early dismissal days, such as half days and testing days.

Union City Transit is the only other transit agency, aside from AC Transit, that receives funding from a school district to offset the cost to provide supplemental school service.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:

This report does not recommend an action and therefore, has no advantages or disadvantages.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:

This report does not recommend an alternatives analysis.

PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:

Board Policy 546 Standard for Operation of Supplementary Service

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Supplementary Service Overview-Fall 2025 Report
2. Agenda Planning Request Form (President Shaw)

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