

ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 5/28/2025

Staff Report No. 25-293

TO: AC Transit Board of Directors
FROM: Salvador Llamas, General Manager/Chief Executive Officer
SUBJECT: Rescission of Covid-19 Vaccine Mandate

ACTION ITEM

AGENDA PLANNING REQUEST: ☐

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Consider rescinding the District's COVID-19 vaccine mandate.

Staff Contact:
James Arcellana, Interim Executive Director of Human Resources

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:

Goal - Safe and Secure Operations
Initiative - Employee Recruitment, Training and Retention

Ending the COVID-19 vaccine mandate will help ensure efficiency of both operations and hiring within the District.

BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:

Rescinding the vaccine mandate may reduce costs associated with administrative time required to implement and monitor compliance with the mandate.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

On December 8, 2021, the AC Transit Board of Directors received a report on the District's vaccination rates along with information on general public vaccination rates and vaccination initiatives. The report also detailed options the Board could consider to increase vaccination rates among District employees. At that time, staff recommended that the Board adopt a vaccine mandate. After receiving the report, the Board approved the implementation of a COVID-19 vaccine mandate for all employees with no testing alternative; a process was also set up for employees to request an exemption.

Evolving Context and Regional Practices

The Board approved the vaccine mandate during the height of the pandemic. On May 5, 2023, the World Health Organization declared an end to the global Public Health Emergency (PHE) for COVID-19. On May 11, 2023, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared the end of the PHE for the United States.

Since the implementation of the vaccine mandate, there has been a decline in both the severity and spread of the COVID-19 virus, as well as an increase in the number of vaccinated people. To date, 94.8% of all District employees have provided proof of vaccination with the remaining 5.2% having received an exemption. Most local entities have ended their own vaccine mandates.

- **Alameda County** rescinded its health officer order requiring COVID-19 vaccinations for workers in specified settings, effective September 2022.
- **Contra Costa County** ended its vaccine and testing mandate for first responders and healthcare workers in August 2022.
- **San Francisco City and County** rescinded its health officer order requiring COVID-19 vaccinations for employees (which includes **MUNI** employees) in August of 2023.
- **Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART)** rescinded its vaccine mandate for employees in September of 2023.
- **San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans)** revised its COVID-19 Prevention Plan on April 21, 2023.
- **Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA)** rescinded its COVID-19 vaccination requirement in its entirety on April 4, 2023.

These local jurisdictions and transit agencies reflect a broader transition from pandemic-era mandates to long-term endemic COVID-19 management, consistent with California Department of Public Health guidance.

While the District's vaccine mandate supported a safer working environment for employees during the height of the pandemic, it also resulted in additional work for staff tasked to implement and enforce the mandate. Additionally, the mandate has been an obstacle in the hiring process. Some potential candidates have chosen not to complete the recruitment process upon learning that the District still has a vaccine requirement. It has also increased the amount of time that the average recruitment takes, as candidates often need additional time to either locate vaccine verifications or to become vaccinated.

Staff recommends that the Board end the COVID-19 vaccine mandate. Should circumstances change and the need for the mandate arise again, staff will return to the Board with a recommendation to reinstate the vaccine mandate.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:

Advantages:

Ending the District's vaccine mandate will align the District with other local public agencies, reduces administrative burden allowing for a more efficient recruiting process, and increases the applicant pool .

Disadvantages:

There are no disadvantages to ending the District's vaccine mandate.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:

The alternative is to retain the current mandate; however, this is not recommended for all the reasons cited above for rescinding the mandate.

PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:

Staff Report 21-468 (September 8, 2021)

Staff Report 21-468a (December 8, 2021)

Staff Report 21-468b (June 22, 2022)

ATTACHMENTS:

None

Prepared by:

James Arcellana, Interim Executive Director Human Resources

Approved/Reviewed by:

Aimee L. Steele, General Counsel/Chief Legal Officer