

# ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



## STAFF REPORT

**MEETING DATE:** 8/7/2024

**Staff Report No.** 23-250i

**TO:** AC Transit Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Michael A. Hursh, General Manager/Chief Executive Officer  
**SUBJECT:** Set Public Hearings: Realign Draft Final Network Plan

### ACTION ITEM

**AGENDA PLANNING REQUEST:**

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):**

Consider setting hybrid Public Hearings before the Board of Directors at 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 11, 2024, at AC Transit's General Offices; and setting remote (virtual) staff-led Public Hearings on September 9, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. and September 10, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. regarding the Realign Draft Final Network Plan.

Staff Contact:

Ramakrishna Pochiraju, Executive Director of Planning & Engineering  
Claudia Burgos, Director of Legislative Affairs & Community Relations

#### **STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:**

Goal - Convenient and Reliable Service

Initiative - Service Quality

Setting the public hearings for September 2024 will allow the Board to receive and consider public comments on the Realign Draft Final Network Plan before staff proposes adoption of related service changes in October 2024. Service changes adopted in October 2024 will begin to be implemented as soon as March 2025. The proposed service changes in the Realign Draft Final Network Plan are designed to adjust AC Transit's service network in response to changes in how the communities AC Transit serves use transit service following the pandemic.

#### **BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:**

The Public Hearings themselves have an estimated cost of \$24,000 for interpreters and consultant support costs, which are built into the larger consultant contract for the plan, along with the cost of staff resources. All costs associated with the Public Hearing are included within the adopted FY 2024-25 budget.

#### **BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:**

This report asks the Board to consider setting (a) hybrid Public Hearings regarding the Realign Draft Final Network Plan on Wednesday, September 11, 2024, at AC Transit's General Office and via Zoom at 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., and (b) two remote Public Hearings via Zoom and led by staff on September 9, 2024, at 6:00

p.m. and September 10, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. The proposed Public Hearings will also cover comments regarding service on new street segments associated with the Draft Final Network Plan and listed in Attachment 6.

Staff and the consultant team led by Kittelson and Associates have reviewed the input received on the service scenarios during the Phase 3 engagement window in the Fall/Winter of 2023 and Spring of 2024. The Realign Draft Final Network Plan detailed in this report incorporates work and findings from all analysis and public outreach and engagement conducted to-date through the close of this most recent outreach period on June 5, 2024.

For background, the project is divided into five key phases, the first three of which are complete:

1. Develop Plans and Learn Rider Needs (Mar 2023-Jun 2023) - Complete
2. Align Guiding Principles with Community Assessment (Jul 2023-Aug 2023) - Complete
3. Develop Service Plan Scenarios and Gather Feedback (Sep 2023-Dec 2023) - Complete
4. Draft Plan/Draft Final Plan and Service Standards, and Plan Adoption (Jan 2024-Oct 2024) - In progress
5. Implementation/Inform Riders about Service Changes (Oct 2024 - Mar 2025) - Upcoming

The planning process is now in Phase 4, which focuses on creating a Draft Final Network Plan for public hearing and adoption. The adjusted phasing and timelines above reflect direction from the AC Transit Board in January of this year to delay implementation until at least March 2025 to allow for additional plan revisions and another round of public outreach and engagement. Staff's effort is further guided by Board direction provided during the March 13 and June 5, 2024, Board meetings.

The proposed Public Hearings would cover service changes included in the proposed network plan for March 2025 implementation, as well as subsequent potential service increases associated with Realign+ (Plus), as detailed in Attachment 1. Realign+ is the District's plan for adding service to reach 100 percent of pre-pandemic service levels as bus operator hiring continues and the number of available bus operators for service trends upward.

### ***Revisions since the May 2024 Plan***

Key differences between the attached Realign Draft Final Network Plan and the Draft Plan put forward at the June 5th special Board meeting include:

- Line 6 would not extend into Alameda and instead would retain the current routing in service today. This change was made based on feedback from the public and bus operators about the previously proposed Line 6/51 changes.
- Line 7 would not serve the Emeryville Amtrak station and instead would end at Christie and 64th, traveling between downtown Berkeley and Emeryville via Shattuck, Adeline, Stanford, Powell, and Christie. This change is a result of bus turning movement tests in the field and layover capacity constraints.
- Line 19 would not extend to Kaiser Hospital and Piedmont Avenue. The line would instead end in downtown Oakland on its west end and Fruitvale BART on its east end. With 51A service from Alameda to Kaiser retained, the need for this connection is lessened.
- Line 20 would operate further into Alameda Point. Line 20 would operate on Atlantic, Pan Am Way, and Midway in response to public feedback and the results of bus turning movement tests in the field.

- Line 21 would be modified so that trips alternate between Skyline High School and the Chabot Space & Science Center during the day on weekdays, with all trips going to the Chabot Space & Science Center on weekends. This would preserve access for students and staff traveling to Skyline High School on weekdays while improving community access throughout the week to the Chabot Space & Science Center, as well as outdoor recreation space at Joaquin Miller Park, the Roberts Regional Recreation Area, and Redwood Regional Park. The proposed change would also improve operator restroom access, with proposed restroom facilities at the Chabot Center and adjacent to Skyline High School. Following field test results, the alignment would change so that buses turn around via Mecartney Road, Island Drive, Maitland Drive, and again on Mecartney Road in Alameda. Routing through the Dimond District would be modified to match the existing Line 39 alignment and improve transfer opportunities, traveling via Fruitvale Avenue, Macarthur Blvd, and Lincoln Avenue rather than via Fruitvale Avenue, Harold Street, and Lincoln Avenue.
- Line 29 would end in downtown Berkeley rather than at the Rockridge BART station, as preserving lines 51A and 51B as they exist today requires use of the layover space that was intended for the Line 29 extension. Line 29 also would no longer operate along 65th Street as test bus runs revealed safe right turns from Hollis Street onto 65th Street would require additional infrastructure changes. Line 29 would instead operate in both directions via Hollis Street, Powell Street, Stanford Avenue, Market Street/Sacramento Street, Alcatraz Avenue, College Avenue, Bancroft Way/Durant Ave, and Oxford Street.
- Lines 51A and 51B would not be consolidated, and would retain their current routing in service today. This change reflects public and operator feedback. In addition, a longer Line 51 service would require more substantial transit priority treatments, traffic and parking enforcement from partner jurisdictions, and/or consistent line management practices to ensure reliable operation.
- Lines 73 and 805 would be modified based on field testing and public and operator feedback. Traveling towards the San Francisco Bay Oakland International Airport, buses would operate via Hegenberger Road, Hamilton Street, 63rd Avenue, Hawley Street, 61st Avenue, Snell Street, 69th Avenue, and San Leandro Street. Traveling towards the Eastmont Transit Center, buses would operate as they do today.

More detail on the specific proposals is included in Attachment 1 and will be available on the project website at [actransit.org/realign](https://actransit.org/realign) following a Board’s decision setting the public hearing. The website would also include data about the current system and background data about the proposals.

The Draft Final Network Plan reflects an ongoing commitment by staff to listen to our riders, communities, bus operators, and labor partners, to incorporate their feedback, and to forge a reliable network that meets the needs of our communities with a keen eye on improved service reliability. It represents a strong starting point for a future network upon which the District can add additional service as more operators and funding become available. With the right routing in place, the District will be able to scale up frequency to pre-pandemic service levels according to the framework included in the attachments.

The proposed plan assumes that frequencies of individual lines may be adjusted after final Board adoption of the new service network by as much as five minutes based on layover constraints and real-world operating conditions as staff implements the plan.

### ***Paratransit Policy Implications***

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting state of emergency declarations at the local, state,

and federal levels in March 2020, multiple fixed-route lines were discontinued. Given the extraordinary circumstances, the decision was made to maintain paratransit service levels and coverage at pre-pandemic 2019 levels. With forthcoming more detailed analysis and more collaboration with East Bay Paratransit, staff will provide the board with additional specific details about impacts on the actual paratransit user base for the Board to make a fully informed policy decision on paratransit service levels and coverage.

***Feedback from Operators, Transportation and Safety Staff, and Labor Partners***

Consistent with Board direction, staff has continued its engagement with operators and ATU leadership in this most recent phase of service network plan development. AC Transit planning staff participated in town-hall style meetings at every operating division during the week of June 24, 2024, and received significant feedback from operators.

Presentations by planning staff discussed key elements of Realign and provided an overview of the significant amount of work staff has completed over the last year as part of an operator working conditions task force. This effort included detailed interviews with operators at every division, field visits by staff at every layover location in the system and documenting restroom infrastructure shortcomings, and a detailed operator survey.

Detailed notes from each individual division visit and the District's collaboration with Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 192 (ATU 192) are included in Attachment 4. Operators generally expressed concerns regarding the following:

- Scheduling, runtime, and layover at all divisions and on specific lines, some of which are being addressed with the upcoming August 2024 service change. Planning staff noted that the plan will redirect resources, focusing less on frequency and more on runtime and recovery time as appropriate on certain lines with relatively lower on-time performance.
- Operator morale, i.e., operators feeling unheard, a perception that management doesn't respond to complaints.
- Run design, with runs having too many platform hours and less opportunity for earning overtime premium pay than previously, especially as related to the loss of higher paying Transbay runs for operators.
- Long commutes and wages relative to the cost of living.

Operators also provided input on potential efforts to speed up buses, including increasing Clipper use.

In addition to in-person operator outreach, AC Transit Planning, Labor Relations, and Transportation management staff also met multiple times with the President, Vice President, and Business Agent from ATU 192 to discuss similar content to that presented to operators at Divisions.

Specific elements incorporated in the proposed Realign Draft Final Network Plan that reflect feedback from operators and union leadership, which are in addition to previously-planned reliability improvements, include the following:

- Retention of lines 51A, 51B, and 6 as they exist today.
- Restructuring of Line 21 to include layover and improved restroom access adjacent to the Chabot

Space and Science Center and Skyline High School.

- Restructuring Line 54 to include layover time on each end.

Staff will continue to incrementally address the other concerns about the operator experience not related to the route network through other efforts and initiatives, such as the quarterly service change process, and initiatives like Family Weekend, Bus Roadeos, and the upcoming employee engagement platform.

A qualitative summary of customer feedback received on a line-by-line basis, together with responses from the project team explaining how and why comments were or were not incorporated in the Draft Final Network Plan, is included as Attachment 5.

### ***Community Engagement Updates***

AC Transit conducted Phase 4 community engagement between May 5 and June 5, 2024. Attachment 3 summarizes the first period of Phase 4 outreach, the goal of which was to share the Draft Plan with the community, provide information about how the plan was developed, and gather public feedback. The feedback collected as part of this robust outreach effort helped inform updates to the Draft Final Network Plan. More details on engagement results can be found in Attachments 3 and 9.

Outreach activities were planned to ensure feedback from a broad range of audiences was solicited and documented. Participation in community events, Pop-ups at bus stops and onboard buses, presentations, and a district-wide online workshop were directed towards the public, while Community-Based Organization (CBO) -led events and a Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG) meeting focused on CBOs and their networks to ensure that AC Transit heard from the most vulnerable, transit-dependent members of the community. In the initial period of Phase 4 outreach, the Realign Outreach team conducted nearly 200 outreach activities, including community events, council presentations, events with CBOs, and intercepts at heavily trafficked bus stops/transit centers, with over 5,700 touchpoints recorded across the AC Transit service area. Additionally, outreach activity resulted in 23,116 Realign website page views, Social Media Performance of 45,836 impressions/engagements, and featured eNews distributions to 20,834 recipients, along with print and digital ads online, on buses, in local media, and at 21 East Bay libraries.

Phase 4 outreach will continue as the project team solicits formal public comments on the Draft Final Network Plan as part of the Public Hearing process.

#### **Community Input**

Community input collected during the initial period of Phase 4 was received via an online feedback form, social media, formal letters, and at nearly 200 in-person/virtual engagement events. Resulting data, which consists of mostly line-specific feedback, was used by the project team to develop the Draft Final Network Plan. The following sections summarize the positive and negative feedback received. The online feedback form received over 500 responses, with the most comments received on lines DB7 (17%), DB67 (13%), and DB21 (12%). Of the comments, 70% included feedback on the schedule changes while 56% included feedback on the route changes. Additional details are contained in Attachments 3 and 9.

#### ***Positive Sentiment***

Community members were generally grateful for the Realign project and the efforts being made to listen to riders about their experiences; there was also recognition of the resource constraints, difficult decisions, and trade-offs that the District faces. Positive feedback included support for Draft Plan changes that provide better transit connections and more direct routes, and for the Draft Plan maintaining or increasing service to specific

neighborhoods. There was appreciation for the increased frequency of some lines (i.e., Line DB28), the introduction of 15-minute weekday frequency, and the restoration of other lines and/or their frequencies (particularly regarding lines DB18 and DB29). Community members also expressed support for the route changes and extended service under the Draft Plan for several lines, including lines DB27, DB6, and DB52.

***Negative Sentiment***

The most common concern was regarding the reduction of frequency on certain lines (primarily lines DB7, DB72R, DB65, DB67, and DB19), with many comments suggesting that reducing frequency will reduce ridership, lower reliability, and greatly affect transit for students, commuters, and seniors. If increased frequency all day is not feasible given resource constraints, community members emphasized the need for increased frequency at least during morning and evening peak hours. Beyond frequency, there was disappointment with the elimination and/or consolidation of certain routes, especially regarding Line 21 service to Oakland Airport and Line 51A. While there were some people in support of the consolidation of lines 51A and 51B, many do not support the potential changes, and there was some concern regarding the elimination of Line 21 service to Oakland Airport without any replacement or alternative. In general, community members advocated for the Draft Plan to include proposals for alternative transit options wherever reductions in service or frequency are being considered. Negative sentiments were also expressed regarding changes in frequency and routes that would affect service levels in certain areas, especially central Alameda, the Berkeley Hills, and the El Cerrito Hills; community members commented that reducing frequency near where they live would significantly impact ridership and their quality of life. There were also several requests to see Transbay lines, particularly Line H, reinstated for those who depended on Transbay services to commute to and from work. The lack of weekend service in the Draft Plan was also a point of concern.

***Plan Schedule***

The following schedule assumes the Board approves the proposed Public Hearings, and then a version of the Draft Final Network Plan:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Action</b>
8/2/2024	4:00 p.m.	8/7 Board Meeting Packet posts & Public Comment Period Opens
8/7/2024	5:00 p.m.	Board Meeting: Set Public Hearing Dates and Introduce Draft Final Network Plan
9/9/2024	6:00 p.m.	Hold Public Hearing #1 (Staff-led)
9/10/2024	9:00 a.m.	Hold Public Hearing #2 (Staff-led)
9/11/2024	2:00 p.m.	Hold Public Hearing #3 (Board-led)
9/11/2024	6:00 p.m.	Hold Public Hearing #4 (Board-led) and Close Public Comment Period
9/25/2024	5:00 p.m.	Board Meeting: Service Standards
10/9/2024	5:00 p.m.	Board Meeting: Realign Board Decision
Early 2025	TBD	Vision (Unconstrained) Plan - 2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft Review
As early as March 2025	TBD	Implement Realign Service Changes
TBD	TBD	Implement Realign+
Mid-to-Long term	TBD	Implement Vision Plan

**ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:**

Setting a Public Hearing allows the project team to keep the project on schedule and will allow for formal input on the Draft Final Network Plan for the Board to consider prior to proposed adoption of a Final Network Plan in October.

**ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:**

The Board could choose to not hold Public Hearings in September, which would delay the Board's timeline for adoption of a final plan beyond October 2024, and delay implementation beyond March 2025.

With respect to the proposals in the plan itself, staff considered retaining additional route proposals brought forward in June. Ultimately modified the proposals as discussed above in response to public and operator feedback, field testing and other rationale as detailed in the Background section of this report.

**PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:**

SR 22-502 Network Redesign Timeline Update and Procurement Approval  
SR 23-250 Realign Network Plan Update  
SR 23-250a Realign Network Plan Update  
SR 23-250b Realign Network Plan Update  
SR 23-250c Realign Network Plan Update and Revised Guiding Principles Approval  
SR 23-250d Realign Draft Service Scenarios  
SR 23-250e Realign Phase 3 Summary  
SR 23-250f Set Public Hearings: Realign Draft Final Plan Proposal  
SR 23-250g AC Transit Realign Phase 4: Updates and Key Decision Points  
SR 22-502a AC Transit Realign Timeline Extension and Change Order Approval for Realign Consultant Services  
SR 23-250h Realign Draft Plan Workshop

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Realign Draft Final Network Plan Matrix
2. Public Hearing Notice
3. Phase 4 Engagement Report
4. Operator and Labor Partner Feedback Matrix with Responses
5. Community Feedback Matrix with Responses
6. Table of Proposed New Streets
7. Maps of Proposed Discontinued Segments
8. Realign Draft Final Network Plan Presentation
9. Phase 4 Engagement Report Appendices

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