

# ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



## STAFF REPORT

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**MEETING DATE:** 2/25/2026

**Staff Report No.** 26-089

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**TO:** AC Transit Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Salvador Llamas, General Manager/Chief Executive Officer  
**SUBJECT:** Realign Ridership and Customer feedback Summary

### BRIEFING ITEM

**AGENDA PLANNING REQUEST:**

**RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):**

Consider receiving a report on ridership changes and customer comments resulting from the implementation of Realign.

Staff Contact:

Ramakrishna Pochiraju, Executive Director of Planning & Engineering  
Claudia Burgos, Executive Director of External Affairs and Customer Experience

**STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:**

Goal - Convenient and Reliable Service  
Initiative - Service Quality

The Realign planning effort combined a comprehensive review of existing service, robust public and stakeholder engagement, and market research to craft a new service network with existing resources for the District that responds to the changing travel needs of the communities we serve. This report provides a general overview of the customer feedback received by the customer services department, as well as a preliminary review of three months of ridership after implementation.

**BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

**BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:**

AC Transit Realign (Realign) was a comprehensive review of the existing service network to understand rider needs and travel patterns. The goal was to right-size AC Transit's bus network to directly respond to hybrid and remote work patterns, shifting ridership demand, and resulting fiscal challenges and constraints, while remaining flexible to meet the evolving travel needs of East Bay riders.

This report focuses on feedback received in Phase 5, which focused on rider education in the lead-up to the August 10, 2025 implementation date, as well as feedback received following implementation. The report will also provide an update on ridership changes, post Realign implementation.

### Pre and Post Launch Communications and Feedback

Public-facing communications regarding the details of the Realign service changes began on July 7, 2025. As shown in Attachment 1, Figures 1-4, outreach efforts included ambassadors and AC Transit employee outreach at bus stops, on board bus stops along with announcements at council meetings engaging with more than 5,000 riders and community members. Also included were updates to the District's website, multiple eNews communications, and social media messaging along with targeted print and digital advertisements.

While not all outreach and communications tactics were used for the same periods i.e. eNews messages were distributed from May to August while social media efforts were during July to September, they are included in Attachment 1: Realign Ridership and Customer Feedback Summary, to illustrate the communications tactics that were in market during the period leading up to implementation and likely generated the increased feedback, as intended.

These outreach activities generated an increase in customer feedback across multiple channels, including phone calls, emails, walk-ins, letters, and social media. Feedback received through these channels was tracked and monitored through the Customer Relations (CusRel) database.

Customer comments received between July and November increased by 20% year over year, rising from 4,500 in 2024 to 5,391 in 2025 as shown in Attachment 1, Figure 5. This increase reflects the anticipated rise in customer activity following the Realign service change. Feedback specifically related to Realign accounted for 569 comments, representing 11% of total customer comments during the period.

As is typical for any given time period, mobile app submissions and telephone calls were the most common sources of customer feedback related to Realign. Notable differences for Realign feedback submissions included a significant increase in direct email comments and comments submitted to the Board of Directors, alongside a substantial decrease in the relative number of phone calls. Attachment 1, Figure 6 illustrates the distribution of feedback sources.

Realign feedback was focused on 16 of the 49 available Reason Codes in the Customer Feedback database (CusRel). Attachment 1, Figure 7, shows the Reason Codes that were used ten or more times for Realign-related feedback. *Routes & Schedules* and *Bus Overloaded* were by far the most common categories. Typical themes include general comments about changes to the schedule (*Routes & Schedules*) and feedback regarding specific crowded coaches, or lines that were chronically overloaded post-Realign (*Bus Overloaded*). Attachment 2: Customer Comments, provides examples of customer comments received.

During this period, feedback was collected across 77 bus lines, though many received very few comments, with some receiving only one. However, 17 lines received ten or more comments, accounting for a combined total of 408 comments, which is 72% of all Realign feedback. In addition, 33 general Realign comments were submitted that did not reference a specific line. The highest volume of feedback was concentrated on lines O, 21, 33, and 39 as shown in Attachment 1, Figure 8.

Attachment 1, figure 9 details the Reason Codes for each of the 10 bus lines that received fourteen or more comments. Numbers shown in red indicate the most common Reason Code for each line. Figure 10, attachment 1 compares average weekday ridership with the total number of comments received from July

through November for each of these 10 lines. When compared directly, these numbers highlight the relatively low number of comments per line. For example, the O-line averaged about 1,200 weekday boardings but received just 72 comments over the period, equivalent to less than one comment per weekday.

**Ridership**

As requested by the Board at the November 19, 2025 meeting, staff reviewed route level network ridership data for the three months (September, October and November) following the implementation of Realign on August 10, 2025. Staff did not include the August data since there wasn't a full month's worth of data available. Staff compared the average daily ridership with the same period from the previous year. Initial data shows that overall ridership decreased in this year-over-year comparison by 3.1%.

	2024	2025	Y-Y% Change
Weekday Realign Local Routes	73,541	71,216	-3.2%
Weekday Non-Realign Local Routes	57,328	54,607	-4.7%
Weekday Realign Transbay Routes	470	357	-24.1%
Weekday Non-Realign Transbay Routes	7,964	8,344	4.8%
Supplementary Service Routes	7,441	7,486	0.6%
<b>Weekday Total Ridership</b>	<b>146,744</b>	<b>142,009</b>	<b>-3.1%</b>

Average daily ridership on Saturdays and Sundays also decreased during the same time period as shown in the tables below. There was a small decrease in ridership on Saturdays of 1.4% and a larger decrease on Sundays of 5.3%.

	2024	2025	Y-Y% Change
Saturday Realign Routes	52,087	51,039	-2.0%
Saturday Non-Realign Routes	36,866	36,611	-0.7%
<b>Saturday Total Ridership</b>	<b>88,953</b>	<b>87,651</b>	<b>-1.4%</b>

	2024	2025	Y-Y% Change
Sunday Realign Routes	45,566	43,120	-5.4%
Sunday Non-Realign Routes	33,542	31,874	-5.0%
<b>Sunday Total Ridership</b>	<b>79,108</b>	<b>74,994</b>	<b>-5.3%</b>

While the implementation of Realign was the major change in service in between fall 2024 and fall 2025, ridership data suggests that there could be factors outside of Realign affecting ridership. In the weekday ridership data above, routes changed under Realign show a decrease in ridership by 3.2%, whereas routes that were largely unchanged under realign decreased by 4.7%. Largely unchanged routes include lines 1T (-5.7%), 6 (-6.9%), 51A (-5.9%) and 51B (-5.4%), among others. Attachment 3: Route-level Ridership Comparison, includes a year-over-year average daily ridership comparison at the route-level.

Other factors that could be contributing to ridership decrease are:

- Realign created longer routes that allowed some riders to complete their trip on one bus instead of two. While this is a benefit to those riders, ridership data would record one unlinked trip instead of two, thus lowering the ridership count.
- Until the District transitions to a validated 100% sample count, the District uses FTA approved sampling methodology to calculate and report out route-level and systemwide ridership data. Realign increased service operated which is a benefit to the rider but that increase spreads the boardings on more trips lowering the ridership counts on some samples.
- The route changes under Realign are still new and riders still need to adjust. If a rider was negatively affected by the elimination or significant reduction in service on a line, that rider may stop using AC Transit. However, growing ridership from the benefits of Realign (creation of a frequent network, improved connections and service to new destinations) may take time as people become aware of these improvements. The District has done a comprehensive job communicating the changes to our riders. The next step would be to implement targeted marketing campaigns to attract riders to the new and improved service.
- Data from the fall of 2025 showed a decrease in school attendance in parts of Oakland due to the anticipation of federal enforcement actions. The timing of this report correlates with the time-period of staff's ridership reporting post Realign.
- The District implemented Realign in August 2025 in conjunction with the start of the school year and an increase in the return-to-office commute. This resulted in overcrowding on some routes, including Line 60 and some Transbay routes. The February service change addressed many of these issues by adding more trips on impacted routes. This should, in turn, increase ridership.
- The implementation of Realign introduced unforeseen schedule reliability issues that the District fixed with the February service change. These reliability improvements should improve on-time performance and the customer experience on several routes, which should also help increase ridership.

Through existing quarterly, semi-annual and annual reports, staff will periodically report to the Board on ridership and other performance metrics. These updates will provide to the Board with additional data on how Realign affects service and ridership, particularly as riders continue to adjust to the new network and the District makes ongoing service adjustments to improve the customer experience.

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

There are no notable advantages or disadvantages associated with this briefing report.

#### **ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:**

This report has no alternative analysis, as no recommended action is provided.

**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  
SR 23-250i Set Public Hearings: Realign Draft Final Network Plan  
SR 23-250j Public Hearings: Realign Draft Final Plan  
SR 23-250k Realign Final Network Plan Approval  
SR 25-364 August 2025 Service Changes  
SR 25-542 January 2026 Service Changes

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Realign Ridership and Customer Feedback Summary
2. Customer Comments
3. Route-level Ridership Comparison

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