

# ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



## STAFF REPORT

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**MEETING DATE:** 4/12/2023

**Staff Report No. 23-123a**

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**TO:** AC Transit Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Michael A. Hursh, General Manager/Chief Executive Officer  
**SUBJECT:** Proposed Pilot Services

### ACTION ITEM

**AGENDA PLANNING REQUEST:** ☐

**RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):**

Consider receiving a report on existing pilots on Line 60 and Line 78 performance and provide direction on:

1. Extending the existing Line 60 Chabot College - South Hayward BART pilot until implementation of the District's network realignment plan.
2. Extending the existing Line 78 Santa Clara Avenue - Seaplane Lagoon Ferry Terminal pilot until implementation of the District's network realignment plan.
3. Whether to implement or defer an extension of existing Line 7 along the Ashby corridor to Emeryville and considering implementation of the service under the District's network realignment plan.

Staff Contact:

Ramakrishna Pochiraju, Executive Director of Planning & Engineering

**STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:**

Goal - Convenient and Reliable Service

Initiative - Service Quality

Service pilots allow the District to respond to requests from riders and communities by testing new service concepts and evaluating their performance to inform future permanent planning decisions.

**BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:**

The resources needed for the pilots, based on numbers from the Fall 2022 sign-up period and their estimated costs, are detailed below.

Pilot	Additional Daily Hours	Service Days per Week	Annual Service Days	Additional Annual Hours	Hourly Cost	Additional Annual Cost
Line 60 - South Hayward BART Extension	18.2	7	365	6,643	\$258	\$1,713,894
Line 78 - Seaplane Lagoon	18.15	5	255	4,629	\$258	\$1,194,282
Line 7 - Arlington/Emeryville Amtrak	25.5	7	365	12,484	\$258	\$3,221,000

The Line 60 South Hayward BART extension service requires two operators. The Line 78 Seaplane Lagoon service is blended with Lines 51A and O but if eliminated, may provide opportunity for savings and efficiencies. The existing Line 60 and Line 78 are currently part of District's operating budget and will remain so if approved to be extended. The new pilot Line 7 extension would require six (6) operators to implement and those operators would need to be shifted from other lines through service reductions or a reduction in improvements associated with the August Sign-up if implemented at the same time.

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

##### Line 60 Pilot

Since the District eliminated Line 22 in 2017 to improve frequency on the other lines with which it overlapped, students and administrators at Chabot College requested a direct connection between the South Hayward BART Station and Chabot College via Tennyson Road. In December 2021, the District extended Line 60 from Chabot College along Hesperian Boulevard and Tennyson Road to the South Hayward BART Station as a one-year pilot that would address those concerns. On March 30, 2022, staff held a public hearing for the proposed continuation of the Line 60 pilot service in compliance with AC Transit Board policies and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements. The public hearing generated 169 comments with about 85 all in favor of Line 60 and the remaining in favor of Line 78 with some overlap. At the April 27, 2022 Board Meeting, the Board authorized an extension of the Line 60 pilot for continued service through December 2023. Line 60 currently operates every 40 minutes on weekdays and weekends.

##### Line 78 Pilot

In August 2021, the Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA), which operates the San Francisco Bay Ferry, opened their ferry terminal at Seaplane Lagoon in Alameda Point with robust direct service to San Francisco. In conjunction with the ferry terminal development and opening, AC Transit introduced a pilot that provides a peak-hour timed connection to the ferry terminal that operates across the island along Ralph Appezato Memorial Parkway and Santa Clara Avenue and up to the Fruitvale BART Station. The alignment takes advantage of the stops located in the Alameda Point development and serves as a first step toward 15-minute service planned at full build-out of the Point. Current service operates every 30-60 minutes on weekdays. Early residents and employees of Alameda Point now have a line connecting them to the ferry as well as across the island to Webster and Park Street commercial and transit corridors. This overlay also provides critical additional capacity along the 51A corridor for those looking to make trips to and from the

Fruitvale BART Station and within Alameda. On March 30, 2022, staff held a public hearing for the proposed continuation of the Line 78 pilot service in compliance with AC Transit Board policies and FTA requirements. The public hearing generated 169 comments with about 90 all in favor of Line 78 and remaining in favor of Line 60 with some overlap. At the April 27, 2022 Board Meeting, the Board authorized an extension of the Line 78 pilot for continued service through August 2023.

#### Pilot Service Performance

Two key factors affect ridership on the Line 60 extension: 1) weekday service on Line 83, which serves Tennyson Road, has yet to be restored in line with the District's service recovery priorities, which means that the Line 60 extension fills a temporary service gap with demonstrated demand; and 2) Chabot College has yet to fully return to in-person learning. Based on stop-level Automatic Passenger Count (APC) count averages, staff estimate that over the Fall 2022 Sign-Up, an average of 311 trips per weekday were taken along the route extension, with 1,007 average daily passengers on the line overall and a productivity of approximately 19 passengers per hour. Productivity on the pilot segment is 17.1 passengers per hour compared to average ridership productivity for AC Transit's crosstown routes of 19.1 passengers per hour. Should the board elect to continue the pilot, Staff will continue to monitor performance with expected increases associated with continued transition back to in-person learning, and the increasing resumption of commute trips as people return to office.

Ridership on Line 78 and its connection with ferry service has been low, with few trips being made to or from the ferry terminal stop. Based on stop-level APC count averages, staff estimate that over the Fall 2022 sign-up period ending December 2022, an average of 21 trips per weekday were taken to and from the ferry, with 157 passengers per day on Line 78 and an overall productivity of 8.7 passengers per hour compared to average ridership productivity for AC Transit's crosstown routes of 19.1 passengers per hour. The low ferry terminal ridership on Line 78 is in part due to the availability of an abundance of free parking around the terminal. Staff has pointed out to City staff and WETA that ridership would be low given this condition. As a result, the City of Alameda is implementing paid parking at the ferry terminal in Spring 2023, starting at a rate of \$3.00 per day. Staff expects that the forthcoming implementation of paid parking at the ferry terminal will yield ridership improvements.

#### Line 7 Pilot

District implemented two of the three pilots adopted in May 2021. The third pilot, the Line 79 extension along Ashby was not implemented. This is the result of two key factors:

- 1) The District began to have significant constraints on its workforce beginning in 2022 and didn't have enough operators to implement it.
- 2) It would have removed service from Claremont between Rockridge BART and Ashby Avenue.

At the March 8, 2023 Board meeting, staff discussed multiple alternatives for Ashby Avenue that would address the issue with removing service on Claremont and also presented options for reducing service elsewhere to free up resources for implementation. At the same meeting, the Board requested staff to present a single alternative for implementation and what would be required to make that alternative feasible. Staff does not recommend a pilot service on Ashby in advance of the network realignment plan because of existing higher-priority needs for improving service reliability and operator shortages. Should the Board elect to implement a pilot on Ashby, staff has determined that the extension of Line 7 would be the most effective

solution compared to others presented to the Board for a number of reasons:

- 1) It would not remove service from other communities by shifting the routing of a current line.
- 2) It would generate higher ridership by connecting Ashby to regional job and activity centers as well as along high-ridership corridors along College Avenue and UC Berkeley's Southside.
- 3) It would have restroom and layover facilities at both ends.
- 4) It would help relieve the layover space constraints in downtown Berkeley by extending Line 7.

Implementation of this alternative would require resolving two key issues:

- 1) Identifying resources to operate the pilot.
- 2) Agreement with Amtrak regarding leasing space for layover at Emeryville Amtrak.

Staff has determined the August 2023 system-wide changes for service reliability would free up 14 operators. Six operators savings would need to go toward the Line 7 extension pilot, leaving only eight operators for service reliability changes such as addressing missed trips.

If Line 7 extension is approved as a pilot, Board Policy #110 would exempt it from requirements for a public hearing and Title VI Service Equity Analysis for the 12-month pilot period. Staff expects any service on Ashby thereafter to be included in the public hearing and Title VI analysis components of the network realignment process.

Since service along Ashby did not operate during the pandemic, it is difficult to estimate the performance of the pilot service because a number of factors -- some unquantifiable -- determine ridership. Pre-pandemic, the Ashby portion of Line 80 carried 496 daily rides with productivity of 21.6 passengers per hour. Systemwide ridership is currently at 64% of pre-pandemic level. If the ridership percentage is applied to the Ashby portion of Line 80, estimated ridership would be 317 daily rides with productivity of 13.8 passengers per hour.

#### Summary of Pilots Ridership and Productivity

Below is a summary table that compares ridership and productivity of each pilot proposal as stated above. Note that the average ridership productivity for AC Transit's crosstown routes is 19.1 passengers per hour.

Route	Average Daily Ridership	Ridership Productivity (pax/hr)
Ashby Corridor	317 (estimated)	13.8 (estimated)
Line 60 Extension	311	17.1
Line 78	157	8.7

#### Pilots, Service Recovery and Service Reliability

Per the Board motion on the Ashby Corridor Staff Report in March 2023, staff reviewed the pilots in the context of the Service Recovery Priorities adopted in 2022 by the Board. Of the 43 local routes ranked in the priorities that are not operating at pre-pandemic levels, Line 60 and Line 80 (serving Ashby) ranked number 25 and 40, respectively. When looking only at the Ashby portion of the pilot, the service ranks in the low teens on the priority list based on the pre-pandemic productivity on Ashby segment. Line 78 was created in 2021

and is therefore not included in the Service Recovery Priorities, which focused on pre-pandemic service. However, the performance of Line 78 ranks low compared to the performance of other local routes.

When compared to other routes currently suspended due to the pandemic, Line 60 ranks higher than all but one of them in the Service Recovery Priorities. On the contrary, all but one of the suspended routes ranks higher than Line 80. Note that proximity to other transit lines is included in the service restoration principles.

If the Board approves the extension of Line 7 to serve the Ashby Corridor, the line and its customers would receive the benefit of weekend service and more connections to the Southside, Elmwood and South Berkeley neighborhoods in Berkeley. Line 7 ranked number 36 on the priorities list and is therefore low on the list of service recovery, let alone service expansion.

The operation of these pilots requires the use of scarce operator resources that could be used for other purposes, including service reliability improvements. With the District facing a daily operator shortage, commitments to operating additional transit service directly impacts the ability of the District to fill its current runs on a daily basis. In the case of the proposed Ashby Corridor pilot, the six operators needed to operate the service will require reductions in service reliability improvements. These resources could be used for the pilot or to reduce the District's overall operator requirement to deliver service each day..

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

The advantages of extending the pilots on lines 60 and 78 are three-fold:

1. The proposals respond to needs previously identified by the communities we serve.
2. The existing pilots were subjected to recent public hearing processes.
3. Extending the evaluation period for lines 60 and 78 will allow staff to better understand how they will integrate into the rest of the transit network as the region continues to emerge from pandemic market trends. For Line 78 in particular, extending the evaluation period will allow staff to get a better picture of ridership impacts as the City of Alameda implements paid parking at the Seaplane Lagoon Ferry Terminal.

Deferring pilot service on Ashby will allow the District to use those resources toward improving service reliability. In addition, staff can thoroughly evaluate the appropriate level of service for the corridor under the network realignment process that will be data-driven, customer-focused and wholistically planned and vetted.

The primary disadvantage is that the existing pilot services require bus operators and funding. The District is on a gradual path toward service recovery but is well short of the operators the network required pre-pandemic. Also, not implementing pilot service along Ashby leaves no service on the corridor where it existed prior to the pandemic.

#### **ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:**

There were several alternatives considered to these lines, with the primary alternative being to discontinue them. This alternative would save the District money and operators but would not be responsive to requests from customers and the community.

For the Line 60 extension, staff looked at reviving Line 22 but it would require as many as 14 operators to run and overlaps with service on every street on which it would run.

For Line 78, staff has long looked at Line 96 as an option for Seaplane Lagoon service, but the ferry riders in Alameda are primarily east of Webster Street and Line 96 would not serve them at all, so a cross-town option was needed. Staff evaluated converting Line O trips from Transbay to ferry-serving trips but elected to move forward with a new line to test a concept improving multimodal access. Staff also considered recommending eliminating the line but elected instead to provide sufficient time for the paid parking program at the ferry terminal to be in place to be able to evaluate ridership from mode shift to transit.

Staff presented a series of alternatives to the Board for serving the Ashby corridor at the March 8, 2023 Board meeting.

**PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:**

Board Policy No. 110 Public Hearing Process for the Board of Directors

Board Policy No. 518 Title VI and Environmental Justice Service Review and Compliance Report

Board Policy No. 544 Service Adjustments

Staff Report 21-255 Proposed Pilot Services

Staff Report 21-311 Service Recovery Priorities

Staff Report 21-508 Network Redesign Timeline Update

Staff Report 22-140 Set Public Hearing for Extension of Line 60 and Line 78 Pilots

Staff Report 22-140a Approval for One-Year Extension of the Line 60 and 78 Service Pilots

Staff Report 23-123 Update on Pilot Service Options for Ashby Ave

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Excerpt from March 8, 2023 Board Minutes on Action Taken
2. Line 7 Extension Pilot Service Details
3. Existing Line 60 and Line 78 Pilot Service Descriptions

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