

# ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



## STAFF REPORT

---

**MEETING DATE:** 10/14/2020

**Staff Report No.** 20-320

---

**TO:** AC Transit Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Michael A. Hursh, General Manager  
**SUBJECT:** All-Door Boarding Pilot

### ACTION ITEM

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

Consider approving a pilot for all-door boarding on 25 buses operating on lines in Oakland and Berkeley.

#### **STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:**

Goal - Convenient and Reliable Service

Initiative - Service Quality

This pilot program will be used to evaluate the benefits and drawbacks associated with all-door boarding. At other agencies, all-door boarding has led to reduced interactions with the operator, faster boarding, and more reliable service. Staff will be gathering data and determining whether this is a program that should be expanded beyond the initial 25-bus pilot fleet.

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

The cost to the District for the 25 additional rear-door Clipper Readers is \$20,045, all-inclusive. The initial obligation is being made with Operating Budget funds to expedite the project, but this initiative was intended to be funded by the FY20-21 Capital Budget. After budget approval, expenses may be transferred to the matching Capital Budget project.

Staff reviewed the results of peer agencies who have implemented all-door boarding and produced projections of operational savings that amount to 25% shorter dwell times and four minutes on average per one-way trip. These may not necessarily translate to cost savings as they could be used to buffer recovery time for operators and improve speed and reliability for customers.

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

Numerous agencies - including San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency - have piloted or implemented all-door boarding on some or all of their fleet. All-door boarding on AC Transit service would allow customers with Clipper Cards to board through the rear door and tag a Clipper Card reader to pay their fare. It requires the installation of readers in the rear doors of all vehicles participating in the pilot.

All-door boarding can be beneficial to AC Transit in a number of ways. In the current COVID-19 environment, there have been many requests by customers, staff, and board members to incorporate rear-door boarding

into the District's fare payment policies and procedures. The District is currently operating fare-free and promoting rear-door boarding during the pandemic. This pilot project will allow for the District to collect fares and promote passenger boarding through the back door, reducing the number of customer interactions with operators through the front door. In addition, based on the results of all-door boarding implementation at other transit agencies, allowing customers to board through all doors can reduce dwell-time at the individual passenger level as well as in the aggregate, even if ridership increases. This reduction in dwell time leads to quantifiable improvements in speed and reliability for lines and stops where all-door boarding is in place. Finally, these improvements in operational performance translate directly to tangible improvements in the customer experience. Customers can board more quickly, and the buses will get them to their destinations faster and more reliably. This is the same basis for the District's decision to use all-door boarding on the Tempo Bus Rapid Transit service.

Should the all-door boarding pilot yield sufficient safety, dwell, and travel-time improvements, the District may be able to reduce runtime out of existing schedules and either save resources or re-invest the resources into higher frequency or longer layovers to improve reliability.

This project proposes the installation of 25 Clipper readers on the rear-doors of 40-foot buses at Division 2. This will facilitate the pilot test of 25 buses in operation on lines 6 and 51B for at least 6 months to identify the benefits and challenges associated with all-door boarding. The pilot will begin only once the District resumes fare collection and the rear-door Clipper Readers are installed on the batch of 25 buses in the pilot.

Staff will work with External Affairs, Marketing and Communications to convey this information to the riders on these lines to ensure they are aware of the new boarding option, keeping in mind all riders will still be able to board through the front door, as normal.

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

The key advantages associated with implementing the pilot include the ability to measure the savings in dwell time at stops, improvements in overall route speed and reliability, and reduced interactions with the operator at the front of the bus. Staff will be able to use the pilot to evaluate how the process is working and make any adjustments needed in the event the District would like to pursue a wider-scale implementation.

The disadvantages include the potential for fare evasion as non-paying customers will no longer be required to pass by the operator. Staff will quantify the loss of fare revenue during the pilot project and include that as a consideration when making a decision about the future of all-door boarding at the District.

#### **ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:**

The two alternatives staff evaluated in addition to this pilot were:

- 1) Not implementing the pilot and maintaining current boarding processes.
- 2) Implementing all-door boarding system-wide or at a larger scale.

Staff elected to implement the all-door boarding pilot given recent requests to evaluate the process from Board members, other departments, and the public given concerns about bus operator interactions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The decision to keep the pilot small was made in part based on the number of surplus Clipper Card readers available from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the desire to keep the

pilot small and manageable.

**PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:**

None.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

None.

**Prepared by:**

Michael Eshleman, Service Planning Manager

**Approved/Reviewed by:**

Robert del Rosario, Director of Services Development and Planning

Ramakrishna Pochiraju, Executive Director of Planning & Engineering

Chris Andrichak, Acting Deputy Chief Operating Officer

Claudia L. Allen, Chief Financial Officer

Derik Calhoun, Director of Transportation

Cecil Blandon, Director of Maintenance

Salvador Llamas, Chief Operating Officer

Beverly Greene, Executive Director of External Affairs, Marketing & Communications

Jill A. Sprague, General Counsel