

ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 10/14/2020

Staff Report No. 20-367

TO: AC Transit Board of Directors
FROM: Michael A. Hursh, General Manager
SUBJECT: 2020 Annual Ridership and Route Performance Report

BRIEFING ITEM

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Consider receiving the FY19-20 Annual Ridership and Route Performance Report in accordance with Board Policy 545 - Service Standards and Design Policy.

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:

Goal - Convenient and Reliable Service
Initiative - Service Quality

The ridership report is a key metric to measure the District's improvement in service quality. Since adopting the Strategic Plan, this report has served as the baseline for measuring future improvement.

BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:

There are no budgetary/fiscal impacts associated with this report.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

The 2020 Annual Ridership and Route Performance Report provides a summary and assessment of the District's service performance with respect to ridership, productivity, passenger loads, frequency, and on-time performance. The detailed analysis by service type and route-level are provided in the attachments and identify COVID-19 pandemic impacts on ridership.

Ridership levels for July and August 2020 have shown a slight uptick in average weekly riders since bottoming in April 2020. With added service levels from the new service schedule implemented on August 9, 2020, including the introduction of the Tempo BRT line, the District has added capacity for its riders. However, some of the future ridership gains are also offset by the physical distancing thresholds on buses to ensure the safety of bus operators and customers.

Ridership - Summary [Attachment 1 - Chart 1.1]

For the fiscal year, ending June 30, 2020, system-wide ridership totaled 44.4 Million annual riders, reflecting a 16% year-over-year (Y-Y) decrease. Between July 2019 to February 2020, ridership grew 4% Y-Y. This steady growth came to an abrupt halt in March 2020 with the announcement of the Shelter-In-Place (SIP) Order and

school closures taking effect as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic impacts. Operating under emergency COVID-19 protocols, a modified Sunday service schedule went into effect from 3/31/20 - 8/8/20. By April 2020, monthly ridership dropped to 1.4 million riders, a -69% Y-Y decrease. Subsequent months of May and June held steady at 1.6 million riders per month with SIP orders continuing the following months. The steep ridership declines were also experienced across all service modes including contracted service, with Paratransit ridership falling 25% Y-Y (Attachment 1 - Chart 1.2).

Ridership - Productivity [Attachment 1 - Chart 1.3]

Productivity varied greatly by service type. On a passenger per hour basis, weekday service averaged 26 passengers per hour across the service types. Supplementary service averaged 71 passengers per hour, while Trunk, Broadway Shuttle, Rapid, and Transbay service averaged between 27 - 33 passengers per hour. Lower rider volume routes (Low Density, Owl, Crosstown, Feeder, Early Bird services) averaged between 8 - 24 passengers per hour. Weekend service averaged 16 passengers per hour on Saturdays, and 14 for Sundays.

Top Performing Routes [Attachment 1, Charts 1.3, 1.4]

The top 10 weekday performing routes are ordered by passengers per hour, and average daily ridership. The top 10 routes carried between 38 - 53 passengers per hour, with an average of 46. These routes covered Transbay, Trunk, Early Bird, and Broadway shuttle services, consisting of Lines J, 51B, E, 701, P, Broadway, FS, 702, 40, and 1. The top 10 routes by daily ridership were primarily Trunk lines (Lines 1, 51B, 40, 51A, 57, 6, 18, 72), Rapid (72R), and 14 (Urban Crosstown). These routes carried between 3,200 - 9,100 average daily riders.

Bottom quarter performing routes [Attachment 3]

Staff assessed routes performing in the bottom quarter of each service type as measured by passengers per hour. Low performing routes are rank ordered and compared against other routes within the specified service type. Note that the number of routes per service type varies. In addition, much of the service was impacted due to COVID-19 and may have been suspended during Q4 of the fiscal period. Proposed changes and adjustments to these routes are provided for review.

Route Performance during COVID-19 pandemic

Ridership patterns during the pandemic changed greatly due in part to essential trips being made on transit and the type of service the District elected to operate. As previously noted, the District suspended all Supplementary Service and all commuter Transbay service. The latter was eliminated due to the 96% drop in Transbay ridership in the initial weeks of the SIP order. The District-imposed vehicle capacity limits in response to the pandemic didn't affect many riders on the low volume routes but artificially capped ridership on the trunk routes. As a result, the District increased frequency to weekday levels on most trunk lines. The SIP order significantly altered commute patterns with peak ridership now occurring in the mid-afternoon to early evening.

The top performing routes during the pandemic are: Lines 72, 1, 72M, 40, 72R, 57, 14, 76, 51A, and 800, averaging 23 passengers per trip. Lines 72, 1, and 72M averaged 28-29 passengers per trip and were the top 3 routes during COVID-19, while lines 76, 51A, and 800 averaged 17- 19 passengers per trip.

On-Time Performance (OTP) [Attachment 1, Chart 1.5]

Overall system-wide OTP averaged 71.8% on weekdays, 73.2 % Saturdays, and 75.7% Sundays. Weekday OTP improved slightly, from 70.3% last year. In the chart, OTP is grouped by service type in boxplots visualize the

variations with the individual routes that make up each service type. Slight improvements of 1-2% are seen across the different service types. The largest improvement comes from Transbay service, improving from 63% to 69%. However, this jump was likely attributed to the COVID-19 impacts, significantly lowering Bay Bridge vehicle congestion, as well as Transbay service being reduced to 3 lines, thus allowing for a bigger jump in OTP performance compared to the local services. Recent OTP has also increased to 77% with more reports of early trips at 9%. Staff plans to adjust travel times on a number of routes during the December 2020 Sign-up to more accurately reflect traffic conditions and potentially reduce the number of early trips.

Passenger Trips, Service Hours [Attachment 2 - Service Type Performance]

Overall weekday service levels were reduced by 10% (passenger trips and revenue hours) due to operating an emergency COVID-19 Sunday schedule in Q4 (April - June) of the Fiscal Year. This drop corresponded to a 13.5% drop in average daily passengers. Saturdays saw a reduction by 6% in passenger trips and revenue hour service, and Sundays dropped 4% (passenger trips), and 5% in revenue hours. This corresponded to a 14.6% decline in average daily passengers (Saturdays), and 10.2% decline (Sundays).

Passenger Loads [Attachment 1, Chart 1.6]

Assessment of typical passenger loads on each route ensures fleet type assignments can accommodate peak load demands to minimize overcrowding or pass up conditions. In Chart 1.6, routes are grouped in the categories to visualize typical maxloads experienced during the fiscal period. To show the impacts of COVID-19 on passenger loads, that data are aggregated quarterly, showing the steep drop off in ridership activity in Q4.

Industry and emerging trends [Attachment 1 - Chart 1.7]

Recent ridership data was pulled from FTA's NTD ridership database which contains data from other transit providers. The chart provides a side-by-side comparison of the severity in ridership declines impacted by the COVID-19 operating environment across the industry. Filtering by the largest transit providers with at least 15 million annual riders, all the agencies experienced year-over-year declines, averaging -19% Y-Y, and ranging from -7% to -36%. As the latest data available is only through June 2020, the severity of these impacts on transit ridership will carry forward until environmental conditions allow for ridership to rebound.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:

There are no advantage or disadvantages associated with this report as it solely reports on service and route performance as required by Board Policy 545.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:

There are no alternatives associated with this report.

PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:

SR 19-318 - 2019 Annual Ridership and Route Performance Report

ATTACHMENTS:

Att.1 FY19-20 Ridership Performance Summary

Att.2 Service Type Performance

Att.3 Bottom quarter performing routes

Att.4 Route Performance (Weekday, Sat, Sun)

Prepared by:

Campbell Jung, Manager of Systems Analysis

In Collaboration with:

Michael Eshleman, Service Planning Manager

Howard Der, Planning Data Administrator

Approved/Reviewed by:

Ramakrishna Pochiraju, Executive Director of Planning & Engineering

William Tonis, Director of Project Controls & Systems Analysis

Robert del Rosario, Director of Service Development and Planning