ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT

STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 6/9/2021 **Staff Report No.** 20-320a

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

BRIEFING ITEM

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Consider receiving a report on the initial performance of the All-door Boarding Pilot on Lines 6 and 51B. Requested by Director Walsh - 4/14/21]

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:

Goal - Convenient and Reliable Service
Initiative - Service Quality

This pilot program was launched 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 has been gathering data and this report includes an early assessment of the program during the first two months of service.

BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no budgetary impact associated with this report as it is an update on the performance of the pilot program.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

AC Transit launched its All-door Boarding Pilot on March 1, 2021, on Lines 6 and 51B. Numerous agencies have piloted or implemented all-door boarding on some or all of their fleet including the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency. All-door boarding on AC Transit service allows customers with Clipper Cards to board through the rear door and tag a Clipper Card reader to pay their fare. The pilot required the installation of readers on the rear doors of all 25 vehicles participating in the pilot.

All-door boarding can be beneficial to AC Transit in several 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. This pilot project allows the District to reduce the number of customer interactions with operators as well as reduce dwell time at the individual passenger level. 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.

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.

Rear-door boarding will potentially improve the reliance on contactless payment, like Clipper Card, and possibly result in increased Clipper adoption among cash carrying riders. Moreover, as a result of AC Transit Staff negotiations with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Clipper 2 project team, additional funding has been approved for rear-door Clipper Card Readers equipment and installation services. The Clipper 2 project funding will enable the AC Transit fleet to be fully equipped, all-doors, with the next generation devices, improving data security, processing and transmission time.

This staff report represents the first check-in with the program's performance. Staff collected data from March 1 to April 27 to gauge compliance with the District's own Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the program as well as the performance of the lines with respect to dwell, reliability, and ridership. In addition, this report includes some early results from ongoing surveys of riders and bus operators. At the time of this report's development, Clipper data on rear-door tags to understand fare revenue impacts were not available.

Attachment 1 includes detailed analysis of the program's performance across the following metrics:
1) Compliance with Procedures
2) Ridership and Revenue
3) Reliability and Dwell
4) Customer Survey Results
5) Operator Survey Results

The program is still in its early stages and this document represents a snapshot of how the pilot has performed between March 1 and April 27, 2021. Overall, compliance with the program's standard operating procedures was inconsistent and has made evaluating some of the other categories more challenging.

Each weekday, the pilot requires 19 of the 25 buses to be assigned, leaving six spare vehicles to cover regular maintenance activities. However, the average weekday during the first two months only had 16 of the 19 vehicles assigned, meaning an average of three vehicles did not have rear-door Clipper readers on any given weekday. This is due in part to some ongoing warranty issues with some of the pilot vehicles which meant an average of five vehicles were unavailable on the average weekday, leaving only one extra spare vehicle. The other key compliance issue was operators not opening the rear doors at every stop. Operators on Line 51B opened the rear doors approximately 40 percent of the time and Line 6 operators only opened the rear doors approximately 25-30 percent of the time, which is consistent with the rest of the system where rear-door boarding is not allowed.

With respect to reliability and dwell, the data revealed improvements in dwell time per passenger and an increase in the number of early departures on these lines. In general, there hasn't been a tangible improvement in overall speed because schedules have not been adjusted to reflect the reduced dwell time.

Staff expects to have a clearer picture of the impacts on speed, dwell, and reliability as the region opens and capacity restrictions are lifted, thus allowing for the rear-door boarding capability to split and spread passenger boarding activity more effectively.

The project team has reviewed this information and are actively monitoring compliance. The teams responsible for compliance have made headway since the end of this evaluation period and the team is confident the next performance report will reflect better vehicle assignment and door-opening rates.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:

This report is informational only and there are no advantages or disadvantages with receiving it.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:

There are no alternatives associated with this performance report.

PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:

SR 20-320 All-Door Boarding Pilot

ATTACHMENTS:

1.   All-door Boarding Performance Report

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