

ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 7/14/2021

Staff Report No. 21-311

TO: AC Transit Board of Directors
FROM: Michael A. Hursh, General Manager
SUBJECT: Service Recovery Priorities

ACTION ITEM

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Consider approving the District's plan (Plan) to prioritize lines for service recovery through August 2022, including Transbay and Supplementary service. [Requested by Directors Walsh - 5/12/2021 and Shaw - 5/26/2021]

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:

Goal - Convenient and Reliable Service
Initiative - Service Quality

This report details the implementation criteria to determine which lines to prioritize for recovery as additional resources and workforce become available. The Plan prioritizes service on lines serving Disadvantaged Communities (DACs), and lines with high ridership that have not yet been returned to pre-pandemic service levels. It clarifies which lines to expect service increases on until a new network is adopted by the Board and implemented in August 2022.

BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no budget impact associated with this item. It is a proposed set of criteria and priorities to guide decisions about what service to restore as budget and workforce become available.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

As the region recovers and shelter-in-place orders are lifted, AC Transit is receiving more requests for restoration of service and is also seeing increased ridership on many lines. Staff developed a proposed methodology for how to prioritize service recovery as the District continues with its system-wide planning effort for a new network in 2022.

The plan identifies two screening criteria:

- 1) Is there workforce, funding, and rolling stock (vehicles) available to expand service at the next sign-up?
- 2) Is a given line below pre-pandemic service levels?

Once the first criterion is met, staff will draw from the list of lines that also meet the second criterion to

identify opportunities for service restoration. Given there are 75 lines below their pre-pandemic service levels in some way (frequency, span, service days, or not operating altogether), an additional screening step is taken with three subsequent key criteria to rank those lines and sort them into three different priorities with separate consideration for Transbay, Shuttle, and Supplementary lines.

Methodology

Staff developed an index that combined the scores of each line then ranked the lines based on their combined scores.

- First, any line at or above pre-pandemic levels was excluded and placed in the “Full Service” category (Lines not at full service were assigned a score of “3” to ensure they indexed higher than lines at full service).
- Second, Supplementary Service was excluded as it will be restored starting in August 2021.
- Third, Transbay lines were separated out into a separate category to be implemented when opportunity hooks become available as other services are expanded.
- Fourth, shuttle lines were separated out as the Broadway Shuttle is operated under contract and the 300-series and Flex lines carry very few riders.
- Lines serving DACs were assigned a score of 1 or 0.
- Lines with high ridership were assigned a score of 2, medium ridership (near the average system productivity) a 1, and lines with low ridership a 0.
- Lines providing coverage to low-density areas were assigned a 1 and lines serving dense areas a 0 since the District has restored nearly all trunk and major corridor routes.

System-wide, the District will be at 83 percent of pre-pandemic service levels in August 2021. Digging into specific service types, Supplementary Service will account for 197 daily platform hours versus 207 pre-pandemic, or about 95.2 percent. There will be 353 total Transbay trips operating, or about 55.4 percent of pre-pandemic levels (638 daily trips), with a significant portion attributed to lines F, NL and O which operate all-day service.

Priorities

The proposed methodology allowed staff to separate the 45 lines not included in the Full-service, Supplementary, Shuttle, or Transbay buckets and group them into priority groups.

- Priority 1 - Major corridors and lines serving DACs with high ridership in Alameda, Emeryville, Richmond, Berkeley, Oakland, and Hayward.
- Priority 2 - Crosstown service in San Leandro, Berkeley, and Hayward as well as Berkeley Hill service and more productive service in South County.
- Priority 3 - Duplicative or less productive service District-wide.

For this proposal, staff calculated the number of vehicles and operators that would be required to implement each line and rolled those up by priority group. It would take approximately 147 additional operators (including Extra Board) to implement all the non-Transbay service priority categories. This would mean 50 operators for Priority 1, 48 for Priority 2, 34 for Priority 3, and 15 for Shuttle services. The operator requirement after the August Sign-up is 1,185 so in order to implement all of Priority 1, the District would need to have 1,235 operators available in time for a future sign-up.

Assuming operator availability will increase in increments smaller than the full buckets of Priority 1, staff will be using a combination of ridership, DAC service, and geographic equity to determine the order of restoring Priority 1 lines. Note that service will need to be increased in Special District 2 (Fremont/Newark) as commensurate service is added in District 1. This means that some 200-series lines will be restored ahead of their planned priority in order to achieve this balance.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:

The primary advantage of adopting this set of service recovery priorities is to provide the Board, customers, and the public a clear set of expectations regarding what service will be recovered first as resources - bus operators, vehicles, and funding - are available. All parties will understand the order with which service will be restored.

The primary disadvantage of adopting this set of priorities is that it is prescriptive down to the individual lines, meaning if more flexibility is required in the future due to rapid changes in the operating, hiring, or funding climate; staff will need to seek Board approval to change the priorities or not be able to respond effectively.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:

There are two main alternatives to adopting this set of service recovery priorities. The first is to not adopt service recovery priorities. This would allow for maximum flexibility but would leave stakeholders and riders in the dark regarding which lines would be first to recover. The second alternative is to utilize a different methodology that may yield a different set of priorities. Staff has worked through several methodologies before arriving at the one in this report. Staff looked at prioritizing DACs above all else (like the District's Clean Corridors Plan), or ridership above all else but landed on the current set of priorities after blending multiple approaches together.

PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:

20-180 - 2020-2021 Service Plans

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Service Recovery Priorities Report
2. Service Recovery Priorities Presentation

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