



## **ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT**

### **MINUTES**

#### **Board of Directors & Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting VIRTUAL MEETING**

**Wednesday, July 28, 2021 at 1:00 PM**  
**<https://bit.ly/3f9zqlv>**

#### **MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

**ELSA ORTIZ, PRESIDENT (WARD 3)**  
**JOEL YOUNG, VICE PRESIDENT (AT-LARGE)**  
**JOVANKA BECKLES (WARD 1)**  
**JEAN WALSH (WARD 2)**  
**MARK WILLIAMS (WARD 4)**  
**DIANE SHAW (WARD 5)**  
**H. E. CHRISTIAN PEEPLES (AT-LARGE)**

#### **MEMBERS OF THE ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE:**

**SANDRA JOHNSON, CHAIR**  
**ERIKA BRUHNS, VICE CHAIR**  
**PAMELA FADEM, JANET ABELSON, DON QUEEN,**  
**MARY CLUTTS, BARBARA WILLIAMS, JAMES ROBSON,**  
**CHONITA CHEW, JONATHAN ELKUS, MELISSA GETZ,**  
**SHAWN FONG, TANYA WASHINGTON, HALE ZUKAS**

## 1. CALL TO ORDER

The Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District Board of Directors held a joint meeting with the Accessibility Advisory Committee on Wednesday, July 28, 2021.

Members of the Board and the Accessibility Advisory Committee participated via video conference from off-site locations in accordance with Executive Order N-08-21. Pursuant to the Executive Order, notice of teleconference locations is not required.

At 1:05 p.m., Director Shaw, Chairing as the Liaison Representative to the AAC, and Chair Johnson called the joint meeting to order.

## 2. ROLL CALL & INTRODUCTIONS

**AC Transit Board Members Present:** Director Beckles (arrived at 1:14 p.m.), Director Walsh, Director Shaw, Director Williams, Director Peeples, President Ortiz

**Absent:** Vice President Young

**ACC Members Present:** Sandra Johnson, Janet Abelson, Don Queen, Mary Clutts, Erika Bruhns, Barbara Williams, James Robson, Chonita Chew, Jonathan Elkus, Melissa Getz, Pamela Fadem; Shawn Fong (arrived at 1:14 p.m.)

**Absent:** Tanya Washington, Hale Zukas

### **Staff for the District:**

Michael A. Hursh, General Manager

Jill A. Sprague, General Counsel

Linda A. Nemeroff, District Secretary

### **Staff for the Accessibility Advisory Committee:**

Mallory Nestor-Brush, Accessible Services Manager

Kimberly Ridgeway, Accessible Services Specialist

Tammy Kylo, Secretary to the Committee

## 3. PUBLIC COMMENT

**Warren Cushman** thanked the Board and the AAC for holding the joint meeting, saying that there were a lot of issues discussed at the Metropolitan Transportation Commission meeting earlier in the day that affected AC Transit such as paratransit, wayfinding, and fare integration.

**Sheela Gunn-Cushman** spoke on the issue of bus stop signage at BART stations, saying that the stops needed signage that a blind person can read. Gunn-Cushman also complained that transit connections at the Fruitvale and

Bayfair BART stations needed to be better timed and closer together to allow better connectivity for riders. It was also stated that the synchronicity between bus and BART needed to allow enough time for a disabled person to get from one transit mode to another.

#### 4. DISCUSSION ITEM(S)

##### 4.A. District Financial Update and Service Recovery. 21-334

Chief Financial Officer Chris Andrichak provided an overview of the District's finances while the Director of Planning and Service Development Robert Del Rosario presented an overview of ridership and service recovery priorities.

##### **Public Comment:**

**Warren Cushman** expressed concern with low ridership numbers and the projected length of time it may take to restore service to pre-pandemic levels.

**Sheela Gunn-Cushman** was concerned about Flex Service and poor frequency on Line 28, saying that some people do not have a choice and must ride the bus.

**Hulan Barnett** complained about speeding buses through his Hilltop neighborhood in Richmond (Line 72), saying that if ridership is down, then why are buses exceeding the 25 mile per hour speed limit and not stopping at stop signs. Barnett added that numerous complaints to the District had gone unanswered.

##### **Board/Committee Discussion:**

Member Abelson asked which buses were considered main line. Mr. Del Rosario advised that main lines included the T1, 51A, 51B, 72, 72M, 72R, 40, 57, 97, 99, 10, and the 6.

Member Fadem thanked staff for the presentation and expressed concern with the low ridership and revenue losses, saying that it seemed counterproductive to engage in extensive public outreach to attract riders at a time when the public health situation is still very uncertain due to a surge in the Delta and other Covid variants. Member Fadem felt the District needed to shore up its funding in order to weather the ongoing pandemic.

Member Clutts asked if Line B service would be restored in August. Mr. Del Rosario advised that a return of Line B service was not scheduled for

August, saying that while most Transbay service is fairly productive, Line B was on the lower end of the Transbay routes in terms of ridership. However, some routes adjacent to Line B are slated to return. Member Clutts rationalized the vital need for Line B as some of the areas served by the line were in the hills and not otherwise accessible to people with disabilities.

Member Clutts also commented on a petition with over 250 signatures in support of restoring service on Line B and wanted to know what other information District staff needed to restore service. Mr. Del Rosario acknowledged the petition, but advised that rather than assess service line by line, staff planned to assemble a list of priorities for Transbay service that the Board would consider at an upcoming meeting, which would also allow the public to provide feedback. He added that the next opportunity to make a service change would be in December. Member Clutts commented that pre-pandemic, casual carpooling had an impact on Line B and possible NX ridership, which is no longer the case. She added that there are neighborhood associations that are willing to work with AC Transit on what can be done to help restore the service. It was also pointed out that many of the employers in San Francisco are requiring proof of vaccination and/or testing in order for their employees to return to work on a limited basis, which will impact commuting patterns and suggested that staff look at the schedule and frequency and time of day of the service, saying that it might be possible to bring the service back sooner in order to serve the hundreds of people who wish to use the service.

Vice Chair Bruhns reported that one of the bus stops on Line 79 (NB at Berryman/MLK) still has a service notice for the August 2020 service reduction. Mr. Del Rosario advised that he would ask the service supervision team to remove the notice.

Member Robson suggested that service on Line 28 be increased from once an hour because it was an important connection between Bayfair BART and Castro Valley. He added that the elimination of Flex had also hurt service in this area. Member Robson also inquired about the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's plan for greater connectivity between AC Transit, BART and other transit agencies, but also acknowledged the unpredictability of delays, saying that more frequent

service on BART would make it difficult to coordinate bus service. Mr. Del Rosario advised that regional coordination between AC Transit and other transit operators was at the highest level he has seen due to advancements in communication and technology. Scheduling information via mobile devices has also improved connectivity.

**4.B. Update on MCI delivery schedule. (verbal) 21-336**

Technical Services Manager Stuart Hoffman presented information on the delivery of new MCI buses, saying that the first of 36 new buses had arrived at the District on June 23rd and that Maintenance staff was installing additional components on the bus (farebox, radio, and Clipper readers). He added that the new buses will be a vast improvement over the old buses and would offer ease of entry and exit for passengers with mobility devices and increased seating capacity. The buses would also feature a second low floor door with a deployable ramp which would allow for quicker boarding and alighting for wheelchair passengers. In addition, the wheelchair securement would consist of one forward-facing and one rear-facing Q-Straint Quantum automatic securement system. The buses would also offer the latest safety updates, including an operator safety barrier and passenger awareness monitor. Once the bus is placed into service, staff will gather feedback from operators, mechanics and passengers for future improvements. The remaining buses are scheduled for delivery later this year.

**Public Comment:**

There was no comment offered.

**Board/Committee Discussion:**

Member Fadem commented on accessibility issues with the previous MCI buses and hoped the Committee could get a preview of the new bus. Director Peebles noted that the new buses were specifically designed for greater wheelchair accessibility and MCI attended an AAC meeting to receive feedback on ideas for the design of the bus and also presented a test bus. Ms. Fadem recalled her familiarity with the bus, saying that people in wheelchairs had to sit in a separate area and was not pleased in general with the bus. Accessible Services Manager Mallory Brush advised that the AAC looked at the vehicle, tested the securement system, and MCI was present to receive feedback from the AAC on the vehicle.

Member Abelson asked if a people in wheelchairs had to sit in a separate area on the bus by themselves. Chief Operating Officer Salvador Llamas reported that there were two wheelchair positions in the lower vestibule area and two flip-down seats. He added that in order for the wheelchair to board the bus, there needed to be enough clearance so that two independent wheelchair positions (facing each other) have enough space while allowing other passengers to step up for seating. He added that the MCI was an over-the-road coach that has an area carved out of the storage compartment to accommodate two wheelchairs which is accessible by a ramp, rather than a lift. Further discussion of the interior of the bus was deferred to the item on Lift/Ramp Reporting.

**4.C. Lift/Ramp Reporting. 21-338**

Director of Maintenance Cecil Blandon provided an overview of the Lift/Ramp Report for the month of June. He further showed and described photographs presented during the report, including photos describing the new ramp apparatus on the new MCI buses that will be deployed on Transbay service. Chair Shaw thanked staff for their work on pre-trip lift report, saying that it made a difference to riders.

**Public Comment:**

**Sheela Gunn-Cushman** believed that the new MCI bus would pose a concern for her as she could not climb stairs. Gunn-Cushman was also concerned that wheelchair passengers might feel isolated with the new configuration of the securement area and strongly urged more discussion and problem solving around this issue.

**Board/Committee Discussion:**

Accessible Services Manager Mallory Brush asked staff to comment on the video and security systems that were installed in the wheelchair securement area in the hope that it might alleviate fears of isolation. Technical Services Manager Stuart Hoffman advised that the bus operator can view the securement area before moving the bus to ensure everyone is secure.

Member Getz asked what consideration had been given to things like rollators (four-wheel walkers) since the bicycle storage area was eliminated to accommodate wheelchairs. Mr. Hoffman advised that a three-position bicycle rack was installed on the front bumper of the bus.

Member Abelson did not recall the AAC's endorsement of the bus, offering that it seemed like it would be difficult for the operator and passenger to communicate with one another. Mr. Llamas displayed a photo of the bus interior with a detailed view of the securement area and displayed the relevant distance between the operator and the securement area. He added that the ramp would deploy in a way similar to buses on local service and that the bus had one standard securement system and one Quantum system. General Manager Hursh suggested that the discussion be agendaized for the next AAC meeting and that staff arrange to have a live video camera on the bus so the AAC could see the actual bus. He added that when the prototype bus was initially well received by the AAC.

Director Peeples commented that the AAC was intimately involved in the design of the bus, was enthusiastic about the bus, that the bus was designed at the AAC's request, and that engineers with MCI met with the AAC and used that feedback in designing the bus. He added that he attended the meetings, and that MCI was now selling the bus across the United States.

Member Clutts recalled the recounts of Director Peeples, but asked if there was another way to audibly communicate with the bus operator (other than pressing the stop button). Mr. Hoffman advised that the way the bus is configured will require a lot of interaction between the operator and the passengers in the vestibule. Ms. Brush advised that staff would revisit this discussion at the next AAC meeting.

#### **4.D. Role of the AAC.**

**21-335**

District Secretary Linda Nemeroff presented an overview of the role of the AAC and solicited feedback from the Board and the Committee on ways the Committee's role might be enhanced.

#### **Public Comment:**

**Sheela Gunn-Cushman** expressed the need for consistency and logic with respect to wayfinding and how bus service is mapped out at BART stations, saying it would save time and make it easier for people with disabilities. She also challenged the idea of being able to rely on the "community" in the current Covid environment, saying that people with disabilities

shouldn't need to feel dependent on others for wayfinding assistance.

**Board/Committee Discussion:**

Chair Shaw opened the discussion by saying that the AAC could be a valuable resource to provide feedback on the usability and effectiveness of new technology and the readiness of new products such as the website, wayfinding, and mobile applications.

With respect to the AAC's role concerning bus stops, Member Abelson noted that the Committee's role should involve the "accessibility" of bus stops. Staff made note of the addition.

**4.E. Review of the AAC's Top Priorities.**

**21-337**

Chair Johnson presented an overview of the AAC's top priorities for 2021-2022.

**Public Comment:**

There were no comments offered.

**Board/Committee Discussion:**

Accessible Services Manager Mallory Brush discussed some of the activities that the AAC is engaged in and thanked Director Shaw for her leadership in helping the AAC get more involved in accessibility matters at the District and within the community.

Director Walsh appreciated the AAC's priorities, but wanted to know how often the AAC would evaluate its progress. Ms. Brush advised that the AAC has regular monthly public meetings, has minutes that are presented to the Board monthly, and planned to report regularly in the General Manager's Quarterly Report. Chair Shaw shared her hope that the AAC would review current/upcoming activities at its meetings and assign members of the Committee to participate in these activities and provide monthly updates on the progress made and identify any actionable items that may require attention, and evaluate metrics quarterly.

Director Walsh also asked how the agendas for the Committee are set in order to ensure that certain initiatives (website, maps, etc.) get before the Committee. Ms. Brush advised that the AAC sets its own agenda and has a pending list of routine and upcoming items. The Board of Directors can also ask the AAC to review an issue either directly or through its liaison to



the Committee. She added that the AAC is up to date on current issues, including the August service changes.

Member Fadem invited Director Walsh to attend a regular AAC meeting, saying that the members of the AAC are either seniors or people with disabilities who use public transit and often work with these groups of constituents. Member Fadem also commented that the AAC is an important community outreach venue for AC Transit, and it works hard to keep AC Transit honest in providing access to people with disabilities. It was added that customer service was another growing area of interest to the AAC.

Director Peeples agreed with Member Fadem in that the lived experience of the AAC members brings a depth of knowledge to the Committee. He added that there is a rhythm to what happens at AC Transit with regard to budgeting, service changes, etc., which is tracked by Accessible Services staff to ensure these major events are brought to the AAC before they come to the Board of Directors.

## **5. BOARD/STAFF COMMENTS**

(Government Code Section 54954.2)

There were no comments offered.

## **6. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board of Directors and the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the annual joint meeting adjourned at 2:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Linda A. Nemeroff  
District Secretary