

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: October 5, 2009

Reviewed by: BP

SUBJECT: Traffic and Safety recommendation to send a letter to AC Transit regarding proposed service adjustments

REPORT BY: Aleida Andrino-Chavez, Transportation Planner

TRAFFIC AND SAFETY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council affirm the action by Mayor Atkinson, to send a letter to AC Transit Board Directors regarding the City's opposition to proposed service adjustments being considered by AC Transit (attached).

Note: Because the AC Transit comment period ended on September 30, the Mayor proceeded in reviewing and signing the attached letter, on behalf of the City Council, and as recommended by the Traffic and Safety Commission.

BACKGROUND

Due to drastic funding cuts and reduced sales tax revenues, AC Transit is proposing to restructure its bus service in order to respond to a projected \$57 million deficit. In doing so, AC Transit has developed a plan that includes reduced hours, elimination of weekend bus service and bus line restructuring. The proposed plan would reduce annual service hours by about 15 percent. AC Transit developed this plan by evaluating each line in terms of ridership, operational efficiency, and importance in the overall East Bay transportation system. The Agency conducted a series of workshops in May 2009 to talk to riders about different service options, and gauge the relative importance of the potential adjustments to the rider community.

AC Transit is conducting a second round of workshops before presenting the proposed plan to the AC Transit Board of Directors on October 11, 2009. The last public hearing about these service adjustments was scheduled for September 30, 2009. AC Transit has requested that all written comments be sent to the agency by close of business day on Wednesday, September 30, 2009. Therefore, the attached letter was sent to AC transit. The proposed changes can be viewed by visiting AC Transit's website at www.actransit.org.

A special meeting of the Traffic and Safety Commission took place on September 3, 2009. The meeting did not have a quorum and only one member of the public was present. AC Transit staff presented the service adjustments and urged the members of the Commission

to contact the AC Transit Board Director with jurisdiction over the City of Albany and comment on the proposed changes.

DISCUSSION

As a result of the service adjustment plan, AC Transit presents a service that fragments trips between the cities of Albany, Berkeley, and Oakland by splitting routes that currently provide direct service to desirable destinations. The proposed plan splits current Line 18 by introducing new Line 10 to serve part of the existing Line 18 between Solano and Oakland. Another proposal is to split Line 52L by adding new Line 25 to serve Albany along Pierce Street, Buchanan Street, UC Village, and The Alameda/Martin Luther King Drive to Downtown Berkeley BART. Residents of West Albany, primarily Pierce Street residents, wish to have a direct connection to Solano Avenue as this is an important destination in the City for daily shopping and social activities. This connection was originally lost when Line 43 was eliminated in 2006. However, the proposed changes provide an opportunity to restore this needed connection by having every other trip of the new Line 10 deviate at the intersection of Marin and San Pablo Avenues to Buchanan Street, Pierce Street, Central Avenue, El Cerrito Plaza BART Station and Solano Avenue. If this can be accomplished, the alignment of the proposed new Line 25 in Albany could be eliminated. Another proposal is the elimination of local weekend service (new Line 25) between west Albany and Downtown Berkeley BART, including destinations within Albany, such as UC Village and Pierce Street. As stated in the attached letter, this would affect local merchants whose businesses depend on local patrons, as well as those coming from neighboring cities.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT

Maintaining a transit service that is passenger-efficient dovetails with the City's Transit First Policy, Emissions Reduction Policy, and Draft Climate Action Plan. In order to encourage the community to use public transit, the City has to work with AC Transit for the provision of convenient routes that go where people want to travel. Thus, it is important to ask AC Transit to respond to the transit needs of Albany residents. This particularly applies to providing the Pierce Street-Solano Avenue Connection, and maintaining an adequate level of weekend service, at least similar to what currently exists.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

No financial impact is identified by sending this letter to AC Transit

Attachments:

Letter to AC Transit Board of Directors