

**SAN MATEO COUNTY TRANSIT DISTRICT (DISTRICT)
1250 SAN CARLOS AVENUE, SAN CARLOS, CALIFORNIA
MINUTES OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPECIAL MEETING / BOARD STUDY SESSION**

AUGUST 24, 2021

MEMBERS PRESENT: C. Groom, M. Fraser, J. Gee, R. Guilbault, R. Medina, D. Pine,
(Via Teleconference) J. Powell, P. Ratto (Vice Chair), C. Stone (Chair)

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: C. Mau, J. Cassman, D. Olmeda, A. Chan, C. Wegener,
M. Tolleson, J. Brook, D. Seamans

1. CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Charles Stone called the meeting to order at 9:04 am, and requested that Director Jeff Gee lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Dora Seamans, District Secretary, confirmed that a quorum of the Board was present.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

There were no comments.

3. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE

Carter Mau, Acting General Manager/CEO, provided introductory remarks about what type of service network SamTrans needs to provide to serve the regional market, especially with the added challenge of the pandemic.

Derek Hansel, Chief Financial Officer, provided the presentation.

Director Gee suggested that the Board have a future discussion about implementing strategies to reduce pension liability. Mr. Hansel responded that the District is exploring such strategies.

Chair Stone asked about the possibility of running a pilot of various equity programs involving free transit. Mr. Hansel said that staff would investigate and provide the numbers. Chair Stone asked if the District had made any progress in setting up a meeting with MTC (Metropolitan Transportation Commission) on the topics of zero emissions and the electrification of Caltrain. Mr. Hansel said that they had had several different conversations with MTC on improvements of infrastructure and rolling stock.

4. REIMAGINE SAMTRANS UPDATE

Christy Wegener, Director of Planning, provided the initial part of the presentation on policy guidance and assumptions.

Director Josh Powell said he was on board with the District's understanding of equity versus equality.

Director Rico Medina said that it is important to educate the community about changes to the bus system.

Vice Chair Peter Ratto said resources could be put to better use. He said he was in favor of increasing bus capacity, adding that it is not that much of hardship to have standees on buses since most trips are short.

Director Gee concurred that the hybrid commuting model was replacing the 9-to-5 model.

Director Dave Pine expressed doubt that the passenger maximum load would return to pre-COVID levels or higher. Ms. Wegener said that the tolerance for crowding depends on the route type and they would be looking at exactly what the loads are.

Director Marina Fraser said that she was supportive of improved service allocations for schools. She said that it was critical that the public be aware of the amount of resources needed to provide school services during peak times.

Chair Stone said the Board was interested in continuing with more outreach to and engagement with the public. He said he was concerned with the effect of the state mandates and alignment with school bell schedules, noting that staggered start/end times would help the outcome for service delivery. He asked what the long-term effects of the pandemic would be on transit ridership.

Director Carole Groom asked about having a conversation about fare reduction or elimination.

Director Rose Guilbault said that Reimagine should come with some sort of rebranding. She said that SamTrans' role is that of mobility manager for San Mateo County. Mr. Mau noted that there would be a regionwide fare study as part of the Blue Ribbon Task Force, which would be discussed at a future Board meeting. He said the website redesign included SamTrans rebranding.

The Board meeting recessed at 10:18 am and reconvened at 10:26 am.

Millie Tolleson, Principal Planner, continued with the presentation on the three network alternatives overview and public input.

Chair Stone asked where the equity priority areas are. Ms. Tolleson said in Daly City, South San Francisco, San Bruno, portions of Millbrae, Northern San Mateo, Redwood City, Fair Oaks, East Palo Alto, and a sliver of Redwood Shores.

Director Guilbault asked how many students use the Portola Valley route. Ms. Tolleson said 20 students in the afternoon and nine students in the morning. She said the priority is to preserve the afternoon service based on parental preference. Director Guilbault asked how they make the decisions on service since the route is not on the equity map.

Vice Chair Ratto said the route that he hears is of most interest to riders is Route 292. He said he was pleased that the route was being retained.

Chair Stone asked if they had metrics for how equity would work. Ms. Tolleson said they would be working on that over the next few months.

Director Gee asked staff to further define equity priorities so that the Board can weigh in more and reach agreement.

The Board meeting recessed at 10:46 am and reconvened at 11:10 am.

Ms. Wegener and Ms. Tolleson continued the presentation on the draft preferred network.

Director Gee asked when the next riders survey would be; Ms. Wegener said September - October 2021.

Vice Chair Ratto expressed his support for the alternatives.

Director Groom said the County has purchased a hotel in Redwood Shores for housing low-income seniors. Ms. Tolleson said the portion of Route 260 that is being retained would serve that facility.

Director Fraser expressed her support for the route alternatives meeting the equity needs.

Vice Chair Ratto asked what the northern terminus of Route 112 would be. Ms. Tolleson said it would remain at Colma, but the southern terminus would change to Sharp Park.

Chair Stone noted that a large development was going in near or at the Serramonte Center in Daly City. Ms. Tolleson said that the Serramonte area would continue to have robust service. Chair Stone suggested that outreach be made to the cities' community development departments. Ms. Wegener said the technical advisory group, which includes various city representatives, would be reviewing the route alternatives. Chair Stone asked about restoring service on Route FCX (Foster City Express). Ms. Wegener said the service was scheduled to be fully restored in August 2022. Chair Stone suggested outreach to Foster City residents that the route is currently running and has been doing so continuously throughout the pandemic.

Chair Stone asked how the District was facing staffing challenges. David Olmeda, Chief Operating Officer/Bus, said that the operator onboarding process takes 10 weeks for

training alone. Mr. Mau said all transit agencies in the Bay Area are experiencing operator shortages, due to a lack of retention. Chair Stone said the high cost of living in the Bay Area is a deterrent to hiring potential operators.

Chair Stone asked what factors helped define the equity priority areas. Ms. Tolleson said they are based on predefined census tracts. She said the primary indicators are income, no-car households, and non-white populations. He asked if the new on-demand services would be pilots. Ms. Wegener said that both the on-demand and some of the fixed routes would be pilots. She said for the on-demand service, they would now operate two vehicles instead of one and that the service would overlay the fixed-route service.

Chair Stone asked if the ECR (El Camino Real) Rapid route would have a possibility of being reinstated in the future. Ms. Wegener said that resources currently do not allow reinstatement of the service. She said that planning would continue to evolve beyond the Reimagine alternatives. Chair Stone said that east-west commute time is already being affected by TSP (traffic signal priority) on north-south routes and electrification of Caltrain. He asked if TSP would be needed on buses once Caltrain ridership achieves equity since it would essentially be duplicating Caltrain service. Ms. Wegener said that Rapid riders do not just go from train station to train station. She said that the ECR route could be sped up with fewer stops if they have a system where there is fare integration with Caltrain.

Chair Stone asked what future outreach plans were. Ms. Tolleson noted the email address Reimagine@samtrans.com where the public can receive a reply from staff and the public website Reimaginesamtrans.com where input can be submitted via a comment form. Chair Stone praised the efforts of the Planning department to inform the public with the email address, website, and surveys.

Mr. Mau thanked the Board for their support and said the District was looking forward to receiving input from the public.

5. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 12:24 pm.

An audio/video recording of this meeting is available online at www.samtrans.com. Questions may be referred to the District Secretary's office by phone at 650-508-6242 or by email to board@samtrans.com.