



MEMORANDUM

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BOD ITEM #7
APRIL 7, 2021

Date: March 31, 2021
To: SamTrans Board of Directors
From: Jim Hartnett, General Manager/CEO
Subject: General Manager/CEO Report

Amended 4-1-2021

8-months Ending February 2021 Summary

It has been a year since the shelter-in-place Health Order went into effect on March 17, 2020. SamTrans took actions and implemented safety procedures to reduce the risk of spreading the virus for employees and riders. Vaccines are becoming available and SamTrans is providing free trips for people getting their vaccination. Through the end of March, SamTrans provided approximately 300 free bus trips and 100 free ADA trips for people getting their vaccination shots. SamTrans is committed to maintaining safety measures to protect SamTrans employees and riders, **Safety** remains “**priority 1.**”

Service has been at approximately 82.0 percent of the pre-COVID levels. With some service being added back at the end of March, service will be approximately 82.4% percent and may be adjusted upward as schools reopen.

In February, most San Mateo County schools continued distance learning. However, the Governor is encouraging all schools to develop plans to resume some in-person learning this school year. Additionally, the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) recently released additional guidelines for school reopening. Staff remains in close contact with the County Office of Education and continues to monitor individual school district’s reopening plans. Additional information about resuming school service is detailed below.

School Service Plans

As the County moved to the Red-Tier of the four-tier state’s reopening plan in February, more and more schools are announcing plans to reopen in the Spring. On March 16, 2021, San Mateo County move to the Orange-Tier and multiple schools have requested for school-day service to resume.

Given the operating constraints posed by the pandemic, SamTrans could not maintain all of the routes traditionally serving schools. Staff has identified the high-need routes providing bus service to schools and reserved some school day service on routes serving the highest-need populations in San Mateo County (a high number of transit dependent households, high percentage of low income households, and racial/ethnic minorities). Routes that are not high-need were not prioritized for service in the 2020-21 academic year.

Staff are currently working to implement school-based services for a number of schools that are reopening in San Mateo County who have requested service. Requests are being processed in the order of receipt. Currently, requests received before March 10, if approved for implementation, are being implemented on March 28. To date, SamTrans has received requests for service from the following schools and is planning on resuming the following routes:

Community Routes & School Trips Only Local Routes					
School	Start Date	All Routes	High-Need Routes	Routes to Resume	# of Trips
Parkside MS*	03/11	140, 141	140, 141	140, 141 (school trips)	4
Borel MS	04/12	53, 55, 58	53, 55	53, 55	4
Bowditch MS	04/12	54	-	-	-
Tierra Linda MS	03/22	60, 61, 95	95	95	2
Menlo-Atherton HS	04/05	80, 81, 82, 84, 286	81, 286	81, 286	4
Woodside HS	04/05	87, 275	275	275 (school trips)	2

* 03/11 (6th Grade), 03/25 (7th Grade), 03/22 (8th Grade)

On 3/26/21 Staff met with the San Mateo County Office of Education and school district Superintendents to share the plan. Staff will continue the ongoing close communication with the schools during this academic year and develop plans for the 2021-22 academic year. As of March 31, school-day service resumed on nine (9) high-need routes: 83, 55, 81, 83, 95, 140, 141, 275, and 286.

COVID-19 Health Update

Since the COVID-19 pandemic erupted, there have been a total of 37 positives on company property. 24 were at North base, 12 at South Base, and 1 at Central. The last case was in mid-February.

Human Capital Investment

	<u>Feb. 2021</u>		<u>YTD FY 2021</u>		<u>YTD FY 2020</u>	
	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Days</u>
New Bus Operator Trainees	1,232	154	5,087	636	12,536	1,567
New fleet/route orientation	0	0	0	0	311	39
VTT/DMV mandated training	184	23	1,932	242	1,978	247
Bus Operator retraining	136	17	1,683	210	1,600	200
Maintenance training	160	20	2,349	294	4,489	561
Bus Simulator training	2	-	135	17	0	0
CPR/AED/First Aid/Other	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>244</u>	<u>31</u>
Total Hours	1,714	214	11,186	1,398	21,158	2,645

Training Class #165 started on January 20 with 6 Trainees graduating on April 2, 2021.

The following employees received their certificate from the University of Pacific Transit and Paratransit Management Program:

- Tomisha Young
- Leita Lee
- Van Pham
- Jonathan Steketee
- Bruce Thompson

Ride Now Taxi Subsidy Pilot Program – Grant Expiration and Pilot Discontinuation

The Ride Now Taxi Subsidy Pilot Program launched on August 1, 2020 and offers a subsidized taxi service for seniors and people with disabilities, including existing SamTrans Redi-Wheels customers. The pilot is funded by the Federal Transit Administration 5310 grant program, which is administered by Caltrans. The grant funding expires in April 2021.

Staff recommendation on next steps: Given the grant expiration date, low program usage, and ongoing reduction in travel due to the Covid-19 pandemic environment, staff recommend that SamTrans discontinue the pilot program as originally planned on April 30, 2021.

Through the pilot, SamTrans staff learned the benefits and challenges of on-demand taxi service and will utilize these findings to replicate the benefits of the program in other ways. For example, Ride Now customers indicated that the main benefit of the program was the availability of same-day service. Going forward, staff will continue to support the procurement of paratransit software that will assist with providing same-day paratransit service.

Background and Program Usage

The Ride Now program offers a subsidized taxi service for seniors and people with disabilities, including existing SamTrans Redi-Wheels customers. Taxi trips subsidized through this program must start and end within San Carlos, Redwood City, and North Fair Oaks. Participants pay a \$5.00 copay per one-way trip and can take up to 8 one-way trips per month, with no restrictions on the trip purpose or destination. SamTrans contracted with Serra Yellow Cab to provide this service.

From August 2020 to February 2021, there were a total of 99 one-way rides taken with the Ride Now program by 21 different people. The table below summarizes the ridership, trip length, and sign-ups by month. This usage is far below the projected program usage but the Covid-19 pandemic and associated stay-at-home orders had a detrimental effect on usage of this pilot program.

	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	TOTAL
Number of rides	13	29	17	8	14	8	10	99
Unique riders	8	13	7	4	8	3	5	22
Average Trip Length (miles)	2.4	2.1	2.6	2.8	2.9	2	3.1	2.56
Sign-ups by month	98	16	9	0	3	0	0	126

SamTrans received feedback on the Ride Now program through a rider survey, sent out in January 2020, and through calls to SamTrans customer service. The most common complaints were around wait times and unavailability of taxis. Also, some taxi drivers were unaware of the parameters of the pilot program and tried to charge the rider more than the \$5 flat rate. Additionally, one survey participant indicated that the taxi was unable to accommodate their accessibility needs.

Communication on Pilot End

In early April 2021, staff will send out a mailer to all 126 customers that have signed up for the Ride Now pilot to notify them of the pilot end date. The mailer will include information on Redi-Wheels to encourage eligible customers to sign-up if they are not already enrolled.

Lessons Learned

Despite the discontinuation of the pilot, there are several key takeaways and lessons learned for SamTrans:

- When applying for grant funding for a new service, consider the limitations of the grant funding. For this pilot, we were unable to contract with Transportation Network Companies (i.e. Uber and Lyft) due to FTA vendor limitations.
- Consider the vendor options for providing a service. In San Mateo County, there are only a few taxi cab companies, and only one that is able to provide the type of services requested by this pilot program.
- Clearly communicate the purpose of the program and allocate adequate funds and staff time for marketing efforts.