



Office of the City Manager

## Supplemental AGENDA MATERIAL

**Meeting Date:** December 10, 2002

**Item Number:** 22

**Item Description:** AC Transit Proposed Changes in Services

*(This cover sheet should be used only if the agenda item the material refers to is in addition to or is a revision of the material included in the original report)*

MIRIAM HAWLEY

Berkeley City Council  
District 5

REVISED ITEM

CONSENT CALENDAR  
December 10, 2002

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: Councilmember Miriam Hawley  
Subject: **Letter to AC Transit Commenting on Proposed Changes in Service**

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council send a letter to AC Transit commenting on the recently proposed changes in service that would directly affect Berkeley. (See attached letter.)

BACKGROUND

In November, AC Transit published a new service deployment plan that includes multiple route changes that would have a major impact on bus riders in Berkeley. AC Transit has sent this proposal to all members of the Council, and hosted a meeting on Wednesday, December 4 at the North Berkeley Senior Center for the general public to submit comments.

The AC Transit service cuts in Northern Alameda County would unfairly target the City of Berkeley. Several lines would be cut or reduced, and many more would suffer decreased frequency, making it untenable for many to depend upon bus travel. These cuts are based upon 1997 statistics and are not always consistent with the productivity of the lines to be cut or reduced.

Based upon AC Transit's own numbers, 75% of its cost reduction plan is based upon service cuts in Berkeley. This is especially frustrating considering Northern Alameda County's traditionally strong support of bus service. In the allocation of its share of Measure B money (\$.05 sales tax), Northern Alameda cities dedicated a disproportionate amount of their share to AC Transit. More recently, north county voters approved Measure AA, a parcel tax dedicated to maintaining the level of AC Transit service we now enjoy.

The City of Berkeley also needs to consider its investment in the Eco Pass and Class Pass programs and its Transit First policy. Without access to convenient, frequent bus service, it will be increasingly difficult to persuade commuters to shift their dependence away from the automobile.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

CONTACT PERSON

Mim Hawley, Councilmember, District 5 981-7150

December 10, 2002

AC Transit Board of Directors  
1600 Franklin Street  
Oakland, CA 94612

The Berkeley City Council is seriously concerned about the changes in service proposed in AC Transit's most recent Service Deployment Plan. Phase I of Plan I, to be implemented in mid-2003, would degrade service throughout Berkeley. Thirteen of Berkeley's seventeen transit routes would be affected; most would operate at frequencies reduced from the current standard of 15-20 minutes to 30-40 minutes, three would be discontinued altogether, and portions of at least seven would be eliminated.

In response to the negative reaction from many Berkeley citizens, AC Transit has prepared a draft Plan II for consideration. This plan would correct at least two harmful changes proposed in Plan I — it would reinstate the #7 and #43 lines in North Berkeley, both of which are productive lines used by students and others to go to downtown Berkeley, UC Berkeley, or to employment centers in Oakland. As AC Transit continues to evaluate its planning options, we urge that these two lines retain their current configurations and service levels.

Several new or re-named lines have also been proposed; however, the added service hours they will provide are far from equal to the cuts in hours in either Plan I or Plan II. Most of the new lines are designed to cover a few areas that would be left without service by the proposed cuts. One new line, the #19, is to be the only line providing service to the new East Shore State Park. Unfortunately, this line does not provide the kind of service that will make it easy for Berkeley residents to take transit to the park. It does not go to any BART station, it runs only every half hour, and its route, between University Avenue and Oakland along 6<sup>th</sup> Street, offers few Berkeley residents direct service to the new Park. Because it is important to minimize auto use to the Park as much as possible, we request that AC Transit work with City of Berkeley staff to design a more user-friendly service to the park.

Both Plan I and Plan II would have drastic impacts on the mobility of many Berkeley residents. Service in West and South Berkeley has been inadequate for many years; and the proposed cuts in the frequency of service on Ashby, Dwight Way and Gilman Street will make it increasingly difficult for the transit-dependent residents there to get to work, school, and shopping. Even on San Pablo Avenue, where the first Rapid Bus is to be deployed, peak-period local service frequencies are to be cut from 4-7 minutes to 15 minutes. Service in the Berkeley hills will also be cut; the proposal calls for eliminating service on two routes, the #8 and the #67, that will strand transit-dependent people there and lead to more driving on our neighborhood streets.

We realize that AC needs need to realize savings by cutting services if it is to balance its budget in this difficult year. This proposal, however, is not fair to Berkeley. The net effect of Plan II would be to place at least a third of the net loss of services in Berkeley. If Plan I were to be implemented, it is likely that the loss of service in Berkeley would approach half of the total net service cuts in the two-county, 16-city AC Transit District.

The City of Berkeley's ability to pursue its transit first policy is jeopardized by the proposed cuts. Berkeley has invested heavily in its Eco Pass program for all City employees, which has demonstrated a promising first-year performance, although the ridership is not yet cost-effective (the City's cost is about \$2.00 per rider). It is our hope to continue the program and to attempt to expand it. But if the many proposed cuts are implemented, it will be very difficult for the City to sustain this program. We understand that University staff are concerned, also, about the Class Pass program that is funded by the students. Therefore, we request that AC Transit put off its final decision on the Service Deployment Plan until after mid-January when the students will return to Berkeley and have an opportunity to make their comments on the proposals.

Berkeley is a city that takes its Transit First policy seriously. Our land use and housing policies call for increased density along transit corridors. We have limited the amount of parking in our city to make transit a more desirable option. We have joined other Northern Alameda County cities to allocate 64% of all the Measure B funds for operations and paratransit to AC Transit. The Central County allocation amounts to 26%, and the South County allocation, to 10%. We have worked for the passage of Measure AA, which AC Transit assured us would protect our current levels of bus service. We are working with AC Transit for improvements on University Avenue that will enable the buses to run faster, and to implement signal prioritization for buses. Berkeley deserves equitable treatment from AC Transit.

It is not at all clear that the proposed service plan has taken into account the productivity of lines in Berkeley. Many of the line proposed to be cut — the #7, #43, #65, #72 and #73, for example — are among the more productive lines in the AC Transit system. Other lines in other cities, with less productivity, are not slated for cuts. We would be less concerned that Berkeley has been unfairly targeted for cuts if we had been shown that the cuts were based on a consistent set of criteria, and that up-to-date ridership figures had been used in the analysis.

Berkeley has the appropriate density, the transit-supportive policies, and residents who, in large numbers, use alternatives to their cars to get to work. Berkeley can be a model to demonstrate that transit can work -- if adequate services are available. Please work with City staff to design a service plan that reflects the needs and possibilities for transit in Berkeley.

Copies to:

Rick Fernandez, AC Transit General Manager

Jim Gleich, Deputy General Manager

Kathleen Kelly, Deputy General Manager for Service Deployment

Jaimie Levin, Manager of Marketing.

Loni Hancock, State Assembly Member, 14<sup>th</sup> District