

AGENDA ITEM 2 A
Action Item

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 7, 2020
TO: El Dorado County Transit Authority
FROM: Brian James, Planning and Marketing Manager
SUBJECT: Approve Transit Service Plans for COVID-19 Response and Recovery

REQUESTED ACTION:

BY MOTION,

Approve a proposed plan for continuation of essential transit services with revisions, as necessary to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic

BACKGROUND

In response to the slowdown in transit ridership as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the El Dorado County Transit Authority (El Dorado Transit) has temporarily adjusted Sacramento Commuter, program transportation and local Dial-A-Ride services to better align with the current demands.

Subscription Dial-A-Ride transportation was suspended for attendees of the Adult Day Services program in Placerville and El Dorado Hills due to the program's closure on March 13, 2020, and contracted service was suspended to the Motherlode Rehabilitation Enterprises (M.O.R.E) program which has likewise been closed since March 16, 2020. Adjustments were also made to the other Demand Response services including Dial-a-Ride, ADA and Sac-Med due to a loss of demand when Statewide stay-at-home orders were issued.

In response to a drastic decrease in Sacramento commuter ridership, the commuter routes were reduced on March 23, 2020 from eleven (11) to four (4) buses in the morning and afternoon running on their typical holiday schedule. The modified commuter routes do not currently include the Placerville Station Transfer Center or the overflow park and ride lot at Vine Street and Mercedes Lane in El Dorado Hills. As demand increases for commuter service and economic conditions recover from the current pandemic, service to these locations may be reinstated as feasible.

DISCUSSION

While ridership has decreased on the Local Fixed Routes during the pandemic, it has not decreased as much as other services. Given the sustained demand for these essential services

and the need to maximize cost efficiency, staff proposes continuation of these services and early implementation of a few recommended changes from the 2019 Short- and Long-Range Transit Plan. Analysis indicates that the proposed changes would reduce operating costs while providing the same local route coverage and frequency as currently offered. The reduced operating costs will help El Dorado Transit with the anticipated reduction in revenues from COVID-19. Staff proposes the following changes that would reduce the number of Local Fixed Route weekday buses from eight (8) to seven (7) and reduce overall vehicle service hours:

The 50 Express (50X) route will provide hourly service between the Placerville Station Transfer Center and the Iron Point Light Rail Station in Folsom using three (3) buses. It will offer direct transfers with Route 60 (Pollock Pines) and Route 20 (Placerville) at the Placerville Station Transfer Center, with Route 30 (Diamond Springs/El Dorado) at the Missouri Flat Transfer Center, and with Route 40 (Cameron Park/Shingle Springs) at the Cambridge Road Park and Ride. The route will continue to operate from 6:00 am to 8:00 pm Monday through Friday.

The 2019 Short- and Long-Range Transit Plan states, *“With the growth in ridership on the 50X route, there is an increasing benefit in extending Route 50X east to Placerville Station. This would eliminate some of the need for passengers to transfer at Missouri Flat, providing better connections between Placerville and the communities to the west.”*

Route 20 (Placerville) will provide hourly service in the City of Placerville by operating one (1) bus with direct transfers with the 50X and Route 60 at the Placerville Station Transfer Center. The revised route will add service to Eskaton Placerville and hourly service to the Upper Room. The route will operate from 6:30 am to 7:30 pm Monday through Friday.

Route 60 (Pollock Pines) will offer hourly service between the Placerville Station Transfer Center and the Camino/Pollock Pines area by operating one (1) bus with direct transfers with 50X and Route 20 at the Placerville Station Transfer Center. The route will operate from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm Monday through Friday.

Route 30 (Diamond Springs/El Dorado) start time will be moved from 6:00 am to 7:00 am due to low ridership during the first hour. The route will operate from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm Monday through Friday.

The 2019 Short- and Long-Range Transit Plan states, *“The 6:00 am run of Route 30 serves an average of only 0.6 passenger boardings per weekday. Eliminating this run would reduce ridership by an estimated 150 per year but would save \$27,700 in annual operating costs.”*

Route 40 (Cameron Park/Shingle Springs) will have minor changes to improve efficiency and on-time performance. The route will continue to operate from 6:30 am to 7:30 pm Monday through Friday.

The Saturday Route 25 (Saturday Express) and Route 35 (Diamond Springs-Saturday) will have minor changes to improve efficiency and on-time performance. Both routes will continue to operate from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Staff anticipates implementing the changes to the Local Fixed Routes on Monday, July 13, 2020. Maintaining the level of local route services, with the additional changes outlined above, will further improve efficiencies and on-time performance as well as position El Dorado Transit to accommodate increased fixed route demand during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic recovery. This includes potential for ridership demands from the reopening of modified school and childcare programs, local retail and service industries, employment centers, government offices, human services and other public spaces.

Demand for subscription Dial-A-Ride and contracted services will be dictated by the reopening of individual programs and services will be reinstated as feasible to best address these priority services.

In the later stages of the recovery when higher-risk and/or regional workplaces reopen, and Statewide orders are lifted more broadly for vulnerable populations, public Dial-A-Ride and Sacramento commuter demand may gradually increase. Staff anticipates an ongoing public outreach and analysis process to determine how best to return these services to former levels within fiscal constraints. Like the approach taken with the local route changes outlined previously, opportunities to improve efficiency, on-time performance and customer service will be explored throughout the recovery process with the goal of returning to prior ridership levels and beyond.

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact of the emergency reductions in Demand Response and Commuter services due to COVID-19 are still being analyzed and will be reported in future Board agenda items.

The proposed reduction in the number of Local Fixed Route buses is expected to reduce annual operating costs by an estimated \$317,855 and the reduction in one hour of service on Route 30 (Diamond Springs/El Dorado) is expected to reduce annual operating costs by an estimated \$27,700.

A phased, fiscally constrained approach to reinstatement of all remaining services will be employed throughout the recovery from the present public health crisis.