



Agenda Item No. 3

To: Transportation Committee/Committee of the Whole
Meeting of December 12, 2008

From: Ron Downing, Principal Planner
Alan R. Zahradnik, Director of Planning
Teri M. Mantony, Deputy General Manager, Bus Division
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Subject: **APPROVE ACTIONS RELATIVE TO GOLDEN GATE TRANSIT
SERVICE CHANGES**

Recommendation

The Transportation Committee recommends that the Board of Directors approve implementation of a modified staff proposal to:

1. Redeploy underutilized commute bus service to address overcrowding on other routes:
 - *Route 8:* Discontinue one trip
 - *Route 9:* Eliminate all five service trips
 - *Route 60:* Eliminate three midday service trips
 - *Route 75:* Eliminate one round trip
2. Reconfigure regional basic bus service to improve travel times and service productivity:
 - *Routes 80 and 101:* Modify Route 80 service during weekday daytime periods (approximately 6 a.m. to 7 p.m.) to eliminate stops between Novato and San Rafael and between San Rafael and the Spencer Avenue pad stop. New express service would be referred to as Route 101. Replacement service would be provided by other GGT routes.
 - *Routes 10 and 92:* Modify Route 10 service to operate on Van Ness Avenue and Lombard Street instead of along Geary Boulevard within San Francisco and extend this route to Manzanita Park-and-Ride Lot and Strawberry in Marin County. Create new Route 92 to provide weekday peak period service from Marin City and Sausalito to points along the Geary Blvd. corridor.

If approved by the Board, the proposed implementation date for these changes is March 8, 2009.

Summary

Today's staff recommendation concludes a process that began in October 2008, when the Board of Directors approved a public outreach process to solicit public comment on a proposal to redeploy underutilized regional bus transit resources. The proposal was designed to move underutilized resources to address overcrowded conditions on other routes, or to increase service

productivity. An extensive public outreach component included public workshops and presentations to other stakeholders, and culminated in a Public Hearing, which was held on November 21, 2008. Several Board members requested specific information in response to some public comments, and responses to these requests are incorporated into the Staff Responses to Public Comments shown in Attachment "A".

This report summarizes the staff's recommendations, the public outreach process and the public comments received on the proposed services changes.

Service Proposal and Revisions

Staff recommends that the Board approve eliminating Golden Gate Transit Route 9 and discontinuing selected trips on Routes 8, 60 and 75. These changes are proposed due to the identified routes or trips falling below productivity standards. At the same time, other Golden Gate Transit routes are operating over capacity. These other routes could benefit from additional trips, but resources are not available to fund new service expansion.

Staff also recommends that the Board approve (1) creating new Route 101 to reduce excessive travel time and improve service currently provided by Route 80 along U.S. 101 between San Francisco, Marin and Sonoma counties, and (2) realigning Route 10 service from Geary Blvd. to Lombard Street and Van Ness Avenue within San Francisco to provide greater capacity on the Van Ness Avenue corridor.

After evaluating the input received through the public comment process, staff has revised the proposed service reconfiguration plan to include the following changes:

- 1) **Route 9:** Eliminate this route, but work with Marin Transit to reschedule local Route 19 to better serve Blue & Gold Ferry arrivals and departures in Tiburon.
- 2) **Route 75:** Staff proposes to continue the second southbound trip and first northbound trip because several commenters noted that they take an earlier bus because of traffic congestion. Staff has observed that the trips proposed for discontinuance have shown some recent ridership growth. At the same time, the two more-productive trips have lost some riders. The impending completion of the HOV Gap Closure project in Marin County will mitigate traffic congestion for GGT buses and may result in riders shifting back to trips serving core work hours. Staff has further considered the proposal to discontinue the first southbound and last northbound trips on this route, and found that ridership has not grown and remains well below productivity standards. As a result, these trips remain proposed for discontinuance.

Details of Proposed Service Changes (Including Revisions)

The revised proposal contains the following elements:

- 1) **Routes 10/80/92/101:** Reconfigure Route 80 service to Route 101 express service during weekday daytime periods when Marin Transit Route 71 service is operating between Novato and Marin City, and modify seven-day-per-week Route 10 service to serve Strawberry and Manzanita on the northern end and, on the southern end, move from Geary Blvd. to operate instead on Lombard Street and Van Ness Avenue to address capacity issues along those streets in San Francisco. Route 92 commute shuttle service

would be provided in both directions on the Geary corridor during weekday commute times to offer replacement service. During other time periods, Muni provides alternate service to Geary Boulevard.

- 2) **Route 75:** Staff proposes to continue the second southbound trip and first northbound trip because several commenters noted that they take an earlier bus because of traffic congestion. With the opening of the HOV Gap Closure project in early 2009, it is expected that traffic congestion will improve, particularly for buses using the HOV lane. Staff also proposes to retime the arrivals at the Marin Civic Center and evaluate how the ridership responds to the remaining three southbound and three northbound trips. Due to low ridership levels that do not meet productivity standards, it is recommended that the first southbound and last northbound trips be discontinued on this route. The southbound trip arrives at the Marin Civic Center at 6:35 a.m., averaging 15 passengers, and the last northbound trip departs at 5:46 p.m., averaging 11 passengers. These trips carry small numbers of passengers to and from the Marin Civic Center and are outside of core work hours for the majority of Civic Center employees.
- 3) **Route 8:** Staff reviewed the productivity of the Route 8 trip proposed for cancellation, noting that it continues to fall below productivity standards. Of the riders on board, five or fewer are destined for Tiburon, with approximately 10 riders having service alternatives along the U.S. 101 corridor. While one commenter objected to transferring to the Marin Transit Route 19 bus to reach Tiburon, staff has identified a connection from commute Route 18 to the Route 19 as an alternative to direct Tiburon service.
- 4) **Route 9:** Staff reviewed the ridership numbers on Route 9 and concluded that, while intercounty ridership is higher on one trip due to those riders previously being reported as local riders, the trip still falls below productivity standards. Ridership on the other trips continues to average less than 3 per trip. Overall, it costs the District nearly \$26 in subsidy for every Route 9 passenger carried. One commenter requested that a small fare be charged. It is important to note that the only fare revenue collected is for the FEW local riders who pay a \$2 fare. Passengers travelling to the Blue & Gold ferry do not pay a fare. Even if a \$2 local fare were charged for these passengers, the District would still be subsidizing this route at \$20 per passenger. Staff has identified the Route 19 as a reasonable service alternative to the Route 9. With some adjustments, Route 19 may be able to provide better connections to the Blue & Gold ferry. Since Route 19 is a local route managed by Marin Transit, staff is working with Marin Transit staff to coordinate adjustments to the extent that they do not negatively impact local service. As a result of the Route 19 being a reasonable alternative, staff continues to recommend the cancellation of Route 9 service.
- 5) **Route 60:** There has been no change in the proposal to eliminate three low-productivity midday Route 60 trips. Two early morning southbound trips are proposed to be consolidated into Route 27.

Impacts of the Proposed Changes

The proposed redeployment of Golden Gate Transit service from low-productivity routes and trips to high-volume routes must consider the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The District finds that the proposed changes are necessary for the purpose of: (a) providing efficient and effective transit services with District resources, (b) addressing higher demand in

specific areas within existing resources, and (c) meeting operating expenses within existing budget constraints. There is no possible significant impact on the environment since total service is not being reduced, but instead is being reallocated from low-ridership to high-ridership areas. Accordingly, the proposed service adjustments are not subject to the requirements of CEQA, as provided for under 14 California Code of Regulations, Section 15061(b)(3).

Staff has further considered the impact to disadvantaged communities, as required by Title VI. Title VI stipulates that no disadvantaged community shall be adversely affected by transit service changes compared to the impacts to users of the rest of the system. For these proposed changes, disadvantaged communities in the service area are located within Marin County (in Novato, San Rafael [the Canal Area] and Marin City) and in San Francisco. Residents of the three areas within Marin County would see no change to the frequency of service to points along the U.S. 101 corridor or to San Francisco. Service is currently operated every 30 minutes during weekday daytime hours and would continue to be available every 30 minutes under the proposed route restructuring. San Francisco residents would continue to have service to the U.S. 101 corridor every 30 minutes and every 60 minutes to Sausalito, as they do now. Passengers accessing Route 10 service from disadvantaged communities in San Francisco currently use Muni to access Golden Gate Transit, and would continue to do so. As a result, staff has concluded that there is no adverse impact to disadvantaged communities as a result of the proposed changes.

Summary of Public Involvement

At the start of the public involvement process, staff was directed to undertake a comprehensive public outreach process intended to inform the public about the District's proposed Golden Gate Transit service changes to seek public input on these options. Public outreach included:

- Five Community Workshops: the first, third and fifth in the County of Marin on November 5, 8 and 13; the second in the City and County of San Francisco on November 6, and the fourth in the County of Sonoma on November 12;
- Press releases that have been issued several times over the last two months, resulting in extensive media coverage throughout the Bay Area;
- A public hearing that was held on November 21, 2008, at the Board Room, Administration Building, Golden Gate Bridge Toll Plaza, San Francisco, CA; and
- Public hearing notices published in the *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, the *Marin Independent Journal* and the *San Francisco Examine*, during the period of October 28 to November 6, 2008. Display ads were placed in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Marin Independent Journal*, *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, *Commuter Times*, *Marin Scope*, *Tiburon Ark*, *Petaluma Argus-Courier*, and *La Voz* and *Avance News* (two Spanish-language newspapers) during the period of October 27 to November 13, 2008; on www.511.org and on the District's web site. Email updates were sent to subscribers on November 5 and 6, 2008; and posters in English and Spanish were placed on Golden Gate Transit buses and ferries, and at bus stops and ferry terminals.

Summary of Public Comments

At the close of the public hearing period on November 21, 2008, 114 comments were received by the District. Of these, 37 (33%) expressed support for changes contained in the proposal, and 38 (34%) opposed specific elements of the proposal. Thirteen comments (12%) contained suggestions on modifying other Golden Gate Transit or Marin Transit routes to provide alternatives to the discontinued service, and 11 comments (10%) were duplicate comments submitted one or more times by the same individual. Fourteen comments (12%) were on items not related to the specific transit service changes under consideration.

Thirty-seven of the 114 comments supported the proposal. Twenty of the 114 comments (18%) were specifically in favor of the proposed new Route 101 express service, 7 (6%) expressed support for increased service on high-volume commute routes. Six commenters (5%) supported changes to Routes 8 or 9 and made suggestions to reconfigure other Golden Gate Transit or Marin Transit routes to provide alternate coverage. Three commenters (3%) expressed support for the proposed Route 92 commute shuttle on Geary Blvd., and 1 comment (1%) endorsed all the changes in the proposal.

Thirty-eight of the 114 comments opposed specific elements of the proposal. Nineteen commenters (17%) expressed concern about the elimination of trips on Route 75; 7 (6%) opposed eliminating Route 9; 4 (3.5%) opposed the elimination of the Route 8 trip; and another 4 (3.5%) opposed discontinuation of midday service on Route 60. Two individuals (2%) opposed elimination of Route 10 service from Geary Blvd., 1 commenter (1%) was opposed to eliminating both the Route 8 trip and Route 9; and 1 (1%) was opposed to Route 101 service.

Attachment "A" provides a summary of these comments, aggregated by main topic, with a staff response below each comment.

Fiscal Impact

The proposed service changes redeploy existing bus transit resources and, as a result, are expected to have no impact on operating costs. Because resources will be moved from low-ridership routes to high-ridership routes, the revenue loss from discontinued commute trips should be more than offset by revenue increases when those trips are reassigned. Nearly all passengers on trips to be discontinued have service options. If passengers on the discontinued trips do not use alternate service and leave the system, revenue would decrease by approximately \$100 per day, or \$25,000 per year. That decrease could be offset by a less than 1 percent increase in ridership on Routes 4, 54 and 101. Recent ridership trends have shown a higher ridership growth on these routes than would be expected to generate a net increase in system revenues.

Attachment:

Attachment A: Staff Responses to General Categories of Public Comment

Attachment A

Staff Responses to General Categories of Public Comment

Summary

At the close of business on Friday, November 21, 2008, the District had received 114 comments on the proposed transit service changes.

Of these, 37 (33%) expressed support for changes contained in the proposal, and 38 (34%) were opposed to specific elements of the proposal. Thirteen comments (12%) contained suggestions on modifying other Golden Gate Transit or Marin Transit routes to provide alternatives to the discontinued service, and 11 comments (10%) duplicated comments submitted one or more times by the same individual. Fourteen comments (12%) were on items not related to the specific transit service changes under consideration.

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Comments on the Specific Elements of the Proposal:

Comment: Do not cancel trips on Route 75.

Of 19 comments expressing opposition to the Route 75 trip cancellations, 4 were from infrequent riders who wanted the trips proposed for discontinuation to be continued as an alternative when their carpools were not available, when their schedules varied, or for others who might want to use the service. One commenter requested that the service be continued for Marin Local riders or for Sonoma County residents who might want to get to San Francisco, both markets for which the Route 75 is not designed. One commenter was opposed to cuts on Route 75 and claimed that these were intended to provide more service on Routes 10 and 80. Eleven commenters requested that specific trips be continued, although the specific trips requested varied. One commenter requested that the first southbound trip arriving at the Marin Civic Center at 6:35 a.m. be retained and noted that it carried 6 people to that destination. One commenter submitted their own written comments with their personal observations of patronage on specific trips and suggested that ridership on the trips proposed for cancellation was higher than noted in the staff report.

Staff reviewed all the comments from Route 75 riders and concluded that the first southbound trip arriving at the Marin Civic Center at 6:35 a.m. averages 16 passengers. Although that is

higher than the 13 passengers reported earlier, it is still below performance standards. Staff collected additional information at the Marin Civic Center stop and found that no more than 6 passengers are destined to that stop. The destinations of the remaining passengers on board are to points along the U.S. 101 corridor or the San Rafael Transit Center, where they will have other service options.

The last northbound Route 75 trip leaves the Marin Civic Center just after 5:45 p.m. This trip continues to perform poorly and averages 11 passengers, since it operates outside of core work times at the Civic Center. Only 2 to 3 passengers typically board at the Marin Civic Center, and 5 board at the San Rafael Transit Center. Passengers boarding at the SRTC will have other service options on new Route 101.

Because of continued low ridership, staff proposes to discontinue the first southbound and last northbound Route 75 trips. These trips have not increased in ridership and have not shown any potential for growth.

Staff proposes to continue the second southbound trip and first northbound trip because several commenters noted that they take an earlier bus because of traffic congestion. With the opening of the HOV Gap Closure project in early 2009, it is expected that traffic congestion will improve, particularly for buses using the HOV lane. Staff also proposes to retime the arrivals at the Marin Civic Center and evaluate how the ridership responds to the remaining three southbound and three northbound trips.

Comment: *Do not eliminate Route 8 trip.*

Five individuals requested that the Route 8 trip not be eliminated. Two commenters took exception to the low ridership, with one stating that the trip “never has less than 15 riders” and the other claiming that the buses are “always packed”. One commenter stated simply that the route should be kept, and one felt that we should add Route 8 trips rather than cut. One commenter did not want to transfer to complete her trip.

Staff reviewed the productivity of the Route 8 trip proposed for cancellation and it continues to fall below productivity standards. Of the riders on board, 5 or fewer are destined for Tiburon, with approximately 10 riders having service alternatives along the U.S. 101 corridor. While one commenter objected to transferring to the Marin Transit Route 19 bus to reach Tiburon, staff has identified a connection from commute Route 18 to the Route 19 as an alternative to direct Tiburon service.

Comment: *Do not eliminate Route 9.*

Seven commenters requested that this route not be cancelled. Three stated simply that the route should be retained, while one commenter who does not use the route feels it is needed for others. Another commenter takes the service intermittently and does not want to pay for parking in Tiburon. One commenter believed the route should be kept because ridership is greater than reported, and another commenter felt a small fee should be charged.

Four other commenters did not oppose the discontinuance of Route 9 but asked whether Marin Transit Route 19 could serve as an alternative to that service.

Staff reviewed the ridership numbers on Route 9 and concluded that, while ridership is higher on one trip, it still falls below productivity standards. Ridership on the other trips is much lower, and overall, it costs the District nearly \$26 in subsidy for every passenger carried. One commenter requested that a small fare be charged. It is important to note that the only fare revenue collected is for the small number of local riders who pay a \$2 fare. Passengers travelling to the Blue & Gold ferry do not pay a fare. Even if a \$2 local fare were charged for these passengers, the District would be subsidizing this route at \$24 per passenger.

Staff has worked with Marin Transit staff and identified the Route 19 as a reasonable service alternative for morning trips to Tiburon because both Route 9 and Route 19 arrive at the ferry at nearly the same time. Staff is working out the details of potential modifications to the afternoon trips. Route 19 has capacity available to absorb the Route 9 ridership. As a result of the Route 19 being a reasonable alternative, staff continues to recommend the cancellation of Route 9 service.

Comment: *Do not remove Route 10 service from Geary Blvd.*

Two commenters opposed removing Route 10 service from Geary Blvd. and rerouting it via Lombard Street and Van Ness Avenue. One commenter asked for service to be continued 7 days a week, and the other commenter expressed opposition unless fares were coordinated with Muni.

Staff further examined ridership on the Geary corridor. Average ridership for stops along the Geary corridor is less than 5 persons per trip outside of weekday commute hours. On weekends, an average of 3.3 boardings and alightings are made along the entire length of Geary Blvd., currently served by Route 10. Commute hour service on Route 10 is much more productive and would be retained in both directions through new Route 92 service.

Route 10 service is needed to address crowded conditions on other basic service on Lombard Street and Van Ness Avenue. The operation of Route 10 on Lombard Street and Van Ness will increase the productivity of that route and provide direct access to Sausalito for tourists. Maintaining weekend service on the Geary corridor would require that either a shuttle be provided from the Toll Plaza to Geary Blvd. or that additional service be operated along Van Ness Avenue and Lombard Street to address overcrowding on other basic routes. The estimated annual cost of providing weekend shuttle service from the Toll Plaza to Geary Blvd. is estimated at \$57,000 per year for Saturday service and \$121,500 for Saturday and Sunday service.

One commenter also expressed concern about midday access to hospitals along Geary Blvd. when the Route 92 is not operating. Staff is not recommending that midday service be considered for several reasons. First, the resources used on midday Geary Blvd. service are needed to address crowded conditions on the Van Ness/Lombard corridor. Second, midday Route 92 service would cost approximately \$30,000 per year for each hour of midday service retained and, when combined with the availability of frequent Muni service, is not a cost-effective use of District resources. Staff consulted with Kaiser Hospital staff regarding that institution's need for direct service from the north counties and interest in a midday shuttle between the Toll Plaza and their medical facilities, and they stated that direct service is not a high priority and declined to offer such a service, citing not only the cost of doing so, but that their transportation budget which supports existing shuttle services is expected to be cut in response to declining revenues and that there is ample Muni service along Geary Blvd..

One commenter was concerned with fare coordination with Muni. GGT and Muni staff have been discussing the issue of fare coordination, but no agreement has yet been reached.

TransLink is expected to be operational on Muni in February 2009 and will help provide passengers a seamless way to pay GGT and Muni fares.

Comment: *Do not discontinue Route 60.*

Four commenters expressed opposition to this change. One commenter stated that the route should not be cut, while two specifically noted that they only use it on Friday when they get out of work early. The fourth commenter specifically requested that the route be continued as a midday alternative to get back to the Manzanita Park-and-Ride lot.

Staff re-examined Route 60 and found that it continues to perform poorly. Service alternatives to Route 60 will exist on Route 10, Route 70, and the new Route 101. For passengers destined to the Manzanita Park-and-Ride lot, extended service on Route 10 will serve that midday need, as will Route 4 commute service, which begins at approximately 2:30 p.m. Passengers using the Route 60 to get to Sausalito will continue to have Route 10 service; passengers destined to U.S. 101 pad stops will have Route 70 service or Route 10 service, with a transfer to Route 71; and passengers destined to San Rafael will have a faster trip on the new Route 101. Staff continues to recommend discontinuing midday Route 60 trips and redesignating early morning trips as Route 27 service.

Comment: *Many Route 70 trips run in tandem with Route 80. Use these Route 70 trips to provide 15-minute service within the corridor.*

Under the staff proposal, hourly Route 80 service will be converted to Route 101 service that will run express between Novato and San Francisco with a stop at San Rafael. A combination of Route 70 and 71 service will provide local service every 30 minutes in the U.S. 101 corridor. Thus, it will not be possible to shift service to provide 15-minute service. Staff examined the cost of offering weekday service between Novato and San Francisco every 15 minutes, and that would be approximately \$1.4 million per year.

Comment: *Consider the impact of shifting local riders from the Route 80 to Routes 70 and 71.*

The Route 80 trips proposed for conversion to Route 101 service all have a second bus running in tandem to handle local demand. Staff is proposing to operate all Route 71 service with articulated buses to ensure adequate capacity. The combined local patronage of current Route 80 and 71 service operating together does not exceed the approximately 60 seats available on the articulated buses currently in service. There is no operating cost impact as a result of local riders being shifted to other routes since these resources are already in place.

Comment: *Have Route 101 service stop at the Spencer Avenue pad stop.*

Staff has considered the impact of Route 101 service to the Spencer Avenue pad stop. This is the only pad stop that does not have Marin Transit local Route 71 service. As a result of the proposed changes, instead of service every 30 minutes on Routes 70 and 80, the Spencer Avenue stop would have only Route 70 service every 60 minutes. As result of this impact, staff modified the proposal to include a stop at the Spencer Avenue pad on Route 101 service, thus continuing 30-minute service to that location.

Comment: *Additional service on Route 4 was left off the public hearing materials.*

Public notice is not required to increase service. The high-volume routes identified as being over capacity were examples and, depending on the extent of resources available when the final proposal is implemented, staff can add service to routes that require it without a public hearing.

Comment: *Route 60 and Route 27 both have trips leaving the San Rafael Transit Center in close proximity. With Route 60 being consolidated into Route 27, are two trips still necessary?*

Staff will look at respacing the two trips to provide additional capacity where it is needed.

Comment: *With the initiation of Route 101, please consider whether it is necessary for commute routes to stop at bus pads. Express service would be so much more attractive.*

Route 101 service will be hourly throughout the day. Commute service operates much more frequently during peak periods of high demand. There is not much overlap between Route 101 service and commute service, and as a result, no adjustments in commute route service patterns are proposed because of the new Route 101 service.

Comment: *Is there any reason the proposed Route 92 should not operate only from the Toll Plaza to Geary Blvd., like the Route 93?*

Route 92 is designed to provide direct service both from Sausalito to Geary Blvd. and from Geary Blvd. to Sausalito for people making commute trips. Service between the Toll Plaza and Sausalito for reverse commuters is limited; requiring those passengers making reverse commute trips to transfer at the Toll Plaza will be difficult because of limited service frequencies on Routes 10 and 92. Route 93, in contrast, has more frequent service that facilitates transfers.

Comment: *Please survey Route 8 riders as to the best afternoon departure time.*

Staff conducted extensive surveying of passengers between 2006 and 2007 to assess trip patterns. The later afternoon trip now proposed for cancellation was instituted in response to survey results, but ridership never developed. At present, the trip proposed for cancellation carries only approximately 5 passengers beyond Strawberry to Tiburon. Alternate service is available on Route 19 between Strawberry and Tiburon.

Comment: *Consider extending Route 10 service to Mill Valley instead of Strawberry.*

Extending Route 10 service to Mill Valley would require additional resources since buses cannot turn around in downtown Mill Valley because of roadway configurations. Service would have to continue to Strawberry, which would be a longer route and require additional operating resources.

Comment: *GGT needs to identify how many local passengers are losing their trips through route or run eliminations.*

Only a small number of local passengers (averaging less than 1 per trip) travelling to the Tiburon hills will have no local service alternative directly to that area. Staff has worked with Marin Transit staff to identify alternate services, such as Route 71 service covering local trips between Novato and Marin City that can presently be made on Route 80.

In addition to the comments and responses described above, 14 submittals contained comments that were not related to the specific transit service changes under consideration.