

Frequently Asked Questions About AC Transit's 2009 Service Adjustments Plan

Why is there a budget deficit and how much is it? The deficit is primarily the result of unprecedented, large cuts in state funding and a decline in sales-tax revenue due to the recession. If no pro-active steps are taken, by current projections, AC Transit will face a \$57 million deficit by the end of June 2010.

What's happened with the state funding? This year the District was entitled to receive \$26 million in State Transit Assistance (STA) funds but was given only \$3.4 million. Longer term, the state has declared that there will be no more STA funds for transit agencies for at least the next five years. Even worse, the state has taken \$7 million in AC Transit's property tax revenues but won't be paying it back in full for three years!

Voters passed the Measure V V parcel tax last November and AC Transit raised fares in July.

Why isn't this enough? The parcel tax will bring in about \$14 million a year and the fare increase will likely bring in another \$5.7 million a year. Without these new funds the deficit would be even larger, which would have led to even deeper service cuts.

Isn't AC Transit getting federal stimulus money? Yes, about \$26 million for one year. Again, without this much needed help the deficit would be even larger and service cuts even deeper.

Can't AC Transit reduce expenses without cutting service? In times like these, we want to focus on our core business and take a "back to basics" approach. After a comprehensive review of all aspects of our operations, support functions, and other activities, the District Board of Directors is set to consider budget recommendations that will restructure programs to improve efficiency, substantially reduce the workforce, and ensure that grant funds are used optimally.

Are you going to talk to the public before you decide on service cuts?

Yes. In May, the District conducted a series of community workshops to gauge the importance of transit-service types and designs to the community. Information from these valuable sessions was used to help determine proposals for service changes. The District will conduct a second series of workshops to inform the community of proposed changes and to receive input. Comment cards received at these workshops (and via online, fax, and mail) will be incorporated into the public hearing record, so these workshops are a great way for your voice to be heard. The District will conduct formal public hearings in September.

How did you decide what services to change and/or cut? Given the magnitude of the budget shortfall, AC Transit is forced to reduce service by about 15%. A reduction of that scale demands that the District review all services top to bottom and assess their current performance as well as each line's importance in the overall East Bay regional system. Using statistically valid data, staff completed a stop-by-stop review to determine how many people use each stop. This information was placed on maps, and ridership activity was analyzed along entire lines and also segments of lines. Services were then realigned to preserve higher-use segments and to ensure efficient and effective operations. Lower-performing lines and segments of lines that couldn't be incorporated into new lines have been proposed for elimination.



Ridership activity on a trip-by-trip basis throughout the day was also reviewed to assess when the highest activity is occurring. Typically, morning and afternoon commute periods show as the most productive times, and staff tried to maintain service on those trips as much as possible.

Finally, AC Transit is making a commitment to our patrons that the service we continue to run will be run more efficiently and effectively. Several lines have been split in key areas, which should help them to stay on schedule.

For more information on the proposed changes, please go to www.actransit.org and follow the links to our 2009 Service Adjustments Plan pages. You'll find detailed descriptions of each change as well as maps.

Why is AC Transit still proposing a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service, given your current fiscal crisis? One of the hardest times to look forward is when it's hard to make ends meet, but that's exactly when you most need to. Studies have shown that forecasted population growth in the East Bay will continue to congest traffic, and consequently degrade life for residents, if proactive steps aren't taken. AC Transit has worked with its regional partners to secure a majority of the required local, state, and federal funds to implement BRT. Also, by implementing the project we will be bringing jobs and economic growth to the East Bay at a time when the economy will still be in recovery.

Why is AC Transit still spending money to purchase new buses if there is a deficit? Similar to the BRT funding, the money used to purchase buses is specifically available for that purpose (known as "capital improvements") and cannot be spent for operations (such as maintenance, fuel, and salaries). Additionally, when the District replaces buses, they are nearly always more than 12 years old. Just like a private automobile, the older a vehicle is the more maintenance and upkeep it requires. By replacing old buses with new buses, AC Transit is pro-actively keeping its maintenance costs low.

Why don't you use smaller buses? Wouldn't that save money? When fuel, maintenance, operators' salaries (operators are paid the same amount regardless of the size of bus they are driving), etc., are factored in, there is actually no significant cost difference between operating a small bus and larger one. That said, we do use smaller, 30-foot buses whenever we can, most notably on lines in the hills with narrow, winding streets. Even then, smaller buses are not always practical, given ridership volume. It's important to remember that while you may not see your neighborhood bus full in the middle of the day, chances are that it is well-used during commute times. Likewise, if you see a bus near the end of its line, it will likely have fewer people on it.

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