STAFF REPORT

TO: Planning Committee
     AC Transit Board of Directors

FROM: Kathleen Kelly, Interim General Manager

SUBJECT: Grass Valley Service Pilot

ACTION ITEM

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Consider setting a public hearing on September 2, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. regarding the continuation of the Line 46L service to Grass Valley.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In December 2014, the District reinstated weekday service along Golf Links Road as a one-year pilot (Line 46L). The pilot route operates via the majority of the existing Line 46 (with nine limited stops) and then along Golf Links Road between Mountain Boulevard and Dunkirk Avenue, as previously provided before 2010.

Setting the public hearing for Line 46L at this time would allow staff to conduct the required notification process and Title VI analysis prior to the expiration of the one-year pilot. After the hearing, if the Board votes to continue the service, this would allow the service to continue without a gap at the end of the pilot.

BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:

Continuation of Line 46L will require 14 vehicle hours per weekday. On an annual basis, operating the service will cost the District $303,693, based on the District’s marginal rate of $85.68/hour.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

The Line 46L Pilot operates on an hourly headway between 6:00am and 7:00pm, weekdays only. The District implemented the service on December 7, 2014 in response to requests from some Grass Valley residents for reinstated service. Line 46L trips are scheduled to be staggered with existing Line 46 trips, providing approximately 30-minute frequency for passengers at selected stops shared by both lines.
Ridership and Productivity

Ridership on Line 46L during the pilot program averaged 163 per weekday (12.1 passengers per revenue hour). At this level of productivity, Line 46L would be one of the lower performing routes, not only in the District's Urban Crosstown route category, but in the entire route network.

Nearly 70% of the ridership (113 trips per day) occurred within the segment of the route shared by Line 46. The overlaying of the 46L on the 46, which essentially doubled frequency to/from multiple locations along line 46, shifted some existing riders to the pilot service.

While Line 46 ridership decreased by 8.5% (from 422 to 386 passengers per weekday), the combined 46/46L ridership within the existing 46 route increased by over 18% (from 427 to 499). The increase can be attributed to the added frequency at the common stops along the corridor. Bus stops served by both lines 46 and 46L have shown a 25% increase in ridership compared to previous Line 46-only ridership.

Line 46L was able to capture 50 new trips per weekday along the Grass Valley segment of the route. This neighborhood at the top of Golf Links Road, east of Mountain Boulevard has not had local service since staff eliminated Line 98 in March 2010 as part of District-wide service reductions.

The combined productivity of the 46 and 46L is 20 passengers per revenue hour.

Service Recommendation for Public Hearing

With an increase in District operating revenues, staff would like to increase service in East Oakland along Line 46. As a result, staff is recommending that the Line 46L service pattern continue at the level of the pilot program. This maintains the hourly service into Grass Valley and continues to provide added frequency at limited stops along 81st and 82nd Avenues.

Based on operator feedback, staff may be able to add a couple of additional bus stops to Line 46L without impacting on-time performance should the service continue. This would increase the number of locations which would have combined 30-minute headway along 81st and 82nd Avenues.

Per Board policy No. 163, the District must hold a public hearing for major adjustments of transit service including the implementation of a new route. Since Line 46L is currently a pilot route that staff is recommending to continue as a permanent route, it falls under the classification of a new route and thus, requires a public hearing.

This service does not require environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act because the proposed service operates on streets that have existing bus service or have had bus service in the past.
ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:

The advantage of continuing this pilot service is that it provides an additional mobility option for a neighborhood that currently has limited public transit availability. The service would also continue to provide additional service to a corridor in East Oakland with only hourly frequency.

The disadvantage is that the money used to provide the service will not be available to use on other, potentially more productive service improvements.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:

The 14 platform hours used to create Line 46L could be used differently to improve service. Staff explored other alternatives prior to making a recommendation to maintain Line 46L, including:

Elimination of Line 46L

This alternative would eliminate Line 46L and continue to operate Line 46 on an hourly headway. Prior to the introduction of the 46L, Line 46 had a productivity of over 31 passengers per revenue hour. Staff does not recommend this alternative because by not serving Grass Valley and only operating Line 46, the District would also lose the ridership gains (127 per weekday) from the pilot service.

Elimination of Line 46L and increase of frequency on Line 46

This alternative would eliminate Line 46L and use the resources on Line 46. Under this alternative, staff would increase Line 46 frequency to every 30 minutes instead of the current 60 minutes at all stops instead of the only the nine shared 46/46L stops.

Staff does not recommend this alternative because the projected ridership is less than actual ridership gained from the pilot service. Based on the ridership gains along the Line 46 corridor where the 46 and 46L shared stops, staff projected similar gains at other Line 46 bus stops under this scenario. After comparing the projected ridership gains from this alternative to the gains from the Line 46L pilot, the pilot captures more ridership by operating the limited stop service along 81st and 82nd avenues coupled with the new segment along Golf Links Road in Grass Valley.

PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTIONS/POLICIES:

Staff Report No. 14-229; Grass Valley Service Pilot Project

Board Policy 163- Public Hearing Process for Board of Directors
ATTACHMENTS:

1: Draft Public Hearing notice

Department Head Approval: Aida R. Asuncion, Interim Chief Planning, Engineering and Construction Officer

Reviewed by: Denise C. Standridge, General Counsel
James Pachan, Chief Operating Officer/Interim Chief Financial Officer
Robert del Rosario, Director of Service Development

Prepared by: Sean Diest Lorgion, Senior Transportation Planner
PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District

PROPOSED CONTINUATION OF LINE 46L BUS SERVICE TO GRASS VALLEY

Notice is hereby given that the AC Transit Board of Directors will hold a Public Hearing on Wednesday, September 2, 2015, at 5:00 p.m. at the AC Transit General Offices, Second Floor Board Room, 1600 Franklin Street, Oakland, California, to receive public comment on the Proposed Continuation of Line 46L Bus Service to Grass Valley as more specifically described below under “PROJECT DESCRIPTION”.

The proposed service options are detailed on AC Transit’s website at www.actransit.org, and available in printed format at the District’s General Offices, located at 1600 Franklin Street, Oakland, California, and at a variety of other locations, including main county and city offices as well as the main libraries located within the District’s service area. For information on exact locations where the documents are available in your specific area, please telephone (510) 891-XXXX.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

In December 2014, the District began operating a new route- Line 46L- as a one year pilot project. Line 46L (Coliseum BART to Grass Valley Elementary School via 81st Ave., 82nd Ave., Fontaine St., Mountain Blvd. Golf links Rd. Dunkirk Ave., Glen Artney St., and Shetland Ave) operates Weekdays-Only between approximately 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., with trips leaving every 60-minutes. Line 46L operates as Limited stop service between Coliseum BART and Mountain Blvd./Golf Links Rd.; local stop service is provided between Mountain Blvd./Golf Links Rd. and Grass Valley Elementary School.

The District is now considering whether or not to continue Line 46L past the one-year pilot deadline (December 2015) with the span of service and frequency of operation remaining as described above. If approved by the Board of Directors, Line 46L would continue without a disruption in service at the end of the one year pilot.

Your Comments Are Invited

Public Comment on the Proposed Continuation of Line 46L Bus Service to Grass Valley is invited either in writing or at the public hearing scheduled for 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 2, 2015, at the AC Transit General Offices, Second Floor Board Room, 1600 Franklin Street, Oakland, California. The public is urged to submit written comments by letter, facsimile, or email, which must be received no later than Monday, August 31, 2015, at 5:00 p.m. in order for the comments to be copied and provided to the Board of Directors for review prior to the hearing. Written comments will receive the same attention as verbal comments received at the Public Hearing. Please address written comments to the AC Transit Board of Directors, 1600 Franklin Street, Oakland, California, 94612; by facsimile at (510) 891-7157; or by email to planning@actransit.org. Comments may also be submitted by voicemail at (510) 891-7201. For Spanish-language comments, call (510) 891-XXXX; and for Chinese-language comments, call (510) 891-XXXX.

Meeting site is wheelchair accessible.
Spanish and Chinese interpreters will be available at the meeting. Upon request, a sign language interpreter or a foreign language interpreter (for languages other than those mentioned in this notice) will be present at the hearing. Please contact the District Secretary’s Office at (510) 891-7201 by Thursday, August 27, 2015, at 5:00 p.m., to make arrangements. For TDD for hearing impaired, call 711, California Relay Service, and specify (510) 891-4700.

Transit to the Hearing Site

All AC Transit bus lines serving downtown Oakland stop within walking distance of the public hearing site. For trip-planning, visit www.actransit.org or call 511 (and say, “AC Transit”). The site can also be reached via BART to the 19th St. Oakland station.

Please do not wear scented products to the meeting.