

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: RACHEL EDE, DEPUTY DIRECTOR - TRANSIT
TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
SUBJECT: CITYBUS MODIFIED HOLIDAY SERVICE

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Transportation and Public Works Department that the Council, by resolution, authorize CityBus to modify the CityBus Holiday Schedule to operate at a Saturday level of service on the following holidays: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day; President's Day; the day after Thanksgiving; as well as Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve when they fall on weekdays, to align with Sonoma County Transit, consistent with the Sonoma County Transit Integration and Efficiency Study.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Currently Santa Rosa CityBus operates a holiday schedule that is unique from those of its partner transit operators in Sonoma County, creating inconsistency and confusion for riders around holiday service schedules. As part of the Sonoma County Transit Integration and Efficiency Study implementation, CityBus seeks to align its holiday schedule with that of Sonoma County Transit, which in turn brings the schedule into better alignment with other partner operators such as SMART and Golden Gate Transit. To effect this change, the Transit Division seeks Council approval to operate a Saturday level of service on five additional days each year. This proposal is informed by analysis of ridership patterns on those days as well as public input.

BACKGROUND

In late 2019 the Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) completed the Sonoma County Transit Integration and Efficiency Study (TIES) to identify actions to better integrate the three local bus transit operators in Sonoma County (Santa Rosa CityBus, Sonoma County Transit, and Petaluma Transit) with the goals of improving service quality, creating a more seamless experience for riders, and achieving additional efficiencies. In 2020 an Ad Hoc of the SCTA Board was formed to guide and oversee implementation of the TIES recommendations. Working with SCTA and transit

operator staff, the Ad Hoc identified three implementation phases. Alignment of holiday schedules was identified as an action within Phase 1 of TIES implementation.

Currently CityBus operates either no service or full scheduled service on holidays, while its partner operators in the region all employ a reduced level of service on certain holidays that have significantly reduced ridership. CityBus currently does not operate on New Year's Day, Easter Sunday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day.

After surveying holiday service schedules among transit operators serving Marin and Sonoma Counties, Transit Division staff analyzed ridership levels on five days on which CityBus currently operates a full weekday service while Sonoma County Transit and many of the other regional operators operate a Saturday level (or otherwise reduced) service. These days are: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, President's Day, the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and New Year's Eve. This analysis determined that CityBus could operate a reduced schedule on these days and still accommodate overall ridership demand given significantly lower ridership and school being out of session. An updated version of this analysis is further discussed below.

Based on this outcome and Council's direction to continue to pursue transit integration activities with partner operators in Sonoma County, Transit Division staff included this potential change in negotiated updates to the Unit 8 MOU (representing the City's Bus Operators), subject to Council approval of this change in service levels.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

On October 12, 2021, Transit Division staff provided a study session on efforts to improve integration of the local bus systems in Sonoma County under the auspices of the TIES study in order to improve the customer experience, promote ridership growth, and support recovery from the pandemic. One of the near-term goals staff highlighted in that presentation was the alignment of holiday schedules between the three Sonoma County bus operators.

On October 12, 2022, Transit Division staff provided an overview of the proposed change to holiday service and related public feedback to the Climate Action Subcommittee.

ANALYSIS

Staff compiled two sets of data to ensure this new schedule will not disproportionately affect CityBus riders in an adverse way. The first data point was a review of historical ridership for the five holidays prior to the pandemic and in the last year. Some of the recent holiday data is from 2021 due to the fact those specific holidays have not yet occurred in 2022. Tables 1 – 5 shows the trends for each of the five holidays and the corresponding percentage change in ridership between a standard day and the day of the holiday.

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Table 1: Martin Luther King Jr Day

	2019	2022
Martin Luther King Jr Day	4,143	2,300
Average Monday in January	5,725	3,260
<i>% Difference Average vs Holiday</i>	-28%	-29%
Average Saturday in January	2,707	1,439

Table 2: President's Day

	2019	2022
President's Day	3,687	2,340
Average Monday in February	5,292	3,077
<i>% Difference Average vs Holiday</i>	-30%	-24%
Average Saturday in February	2,566	1,827

Table 3: Day After Thanksgiving

	2019	2021
Day After Thanksgiving	4,014	2,503
Average Friday in November	5,588	3,855
<i>% Difference Average vs Holiday</i>	-28%	-35%

Table 4: Christmas Eve

	2019	2021
Christmas Eve	4,082	2,052
Average Weekday in December	6,561	3,334
<i>% Difference Average vs Holiday</i>	-38%	-38%
Average Saturday in December	2,642	1,873

Table 5: New Year's Eve

	2019	2021
New Year's Eve	4,722	2,346
Average Weekday in December	6,561	3,334
<i>% Difference Average vs Holiday</i>	-28%	-30%
Average Saturday in December	2,642	1,873

As shown in the tables above, the drop in ridership on the five holidays has stayed proportionate when comparing pre-pandemic and current ridership. While these holidays do not see ridership that is at or below an average Saturday, they do come close.

Given that the proposed reduced service is likely to affect some riders, CityBus surveyed riders, in both English and Spanish, asking how a Saturday schedule will

affect their ability to complete the trips they need to make on the five holidays. Riders were given the option of responding that the proposed change "...will not affect me at all", "...will affect me a little, but I will be able to get where I need to go", and "...I will not be able to make the trips I need to make on that day". The results are shown in Tables 6 – 11 below.

Table 6: Martin Luther King Jr Day

Level of Inconvenience	Percentage
...not affect me at all.	54%
...will affect me a little, but I will be able to get where I need to go.	28%
...I will not be able to make the trips I need to make on that day.	18%

Table 7: President's Day

Level of Inconvenience	Percentage
...not affect me at all.	56%
...will affect me a little, but I will be able to get where I need to go.	27%
...I will not be able to make the trips I need to make on that day.	17%

Table 8: Native American Heritage Day (Day After Thanksgiving)

Level of Inconvenience	Percentage
...not affect me at all.	56%
...will affect me a little, but I will be able to get where I need to go.	28%
...I will not be able to make the trips I need to make on that day.	16%

Table 9: Christmas Eve

Level of Inconvenience	Percentage
...not affect me at all.	61%
...will affect me a little, but I will be able to get where I need to go.	22%
...I will not be able to make the trips I need to make on that day.	17%

Table 10: New Year's Eve

Level of Inconvenience	Percentage
...not affect me at all.	58%
...will affect me a little, but I will be able to get where I need to go.	28%

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...I will not be able to make the trips I need to make on that day.	14%
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On average 57% of riders surveyed are unaffected by a Saturday level of service on the five holidays, 27% are affected but can still make it where they need to go, and 16% say that they will be unable to make their trip.

The shift to Saturday level service would mainly impact frequency in the CityBus system on the days in question, since the span of service on Saturdays is equal to that of weekdays. The only areas in the CityBus system that do not have coverage on Saturdays compared with weekdays are Northpoint Parkway and Corporate Center Parkway on Route 2, and Round Barn Boulevard on Route 10.

Given the results of the rider survey and ridership analysis, and the benefits to transit integration efforts from aligning holiday service schedules, Transit Division staff recommend proceeding with implementing Saturday-level service on the proposed five holidays. Riders will be given advance notice of the reduced service levels on these days and assistance in trip planning to identify alternative trips within the Saturday schedule to help them reach their destinations. This change can be re-evaluated by Council in the future should evolving rider needs or regional transit holiday schedules call for it.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact on the General Fund.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guideline section 15378.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable

ATTACHMENTS

- Resolution

CONTACT

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