



Berkeley City Councilmembers
 Susan Wengraf, District 6
 Mark Humbert, District 8
 2180 Milvia Street, 5th Floor
 Berkeley, CA 94704

CONSENT CALENDAR
 December 12, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Wengraf (Author), Councilmember Humbert (Author),
 Mayor Arreguin (Co-Sponsor), Councilmember Hahn (Co-Sponsor)

Subject: Letter to AC Transit Regarding Draft Realignment Scenarios

RECOMMENDATION

Send a letter to AC Transit with Council feedback on their Realign Draft Service Scenarios presented to Council on Nov 14, 2023.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

BACKGROUND

At the November 14, 2023 Council Meeting, Ryan Lau and Carissa Lee from AC Transit co-presented their agency's draft Realign scenarios for bus routes. The Realign plan options were based on changes in rider travel patterns and community input.

Although many of the changes included in AC Transit's Realign plans were positive, there were some that were deeply concerning to the Council.

The letter urges AC Transit to revise its plans to address the following concerns:

1. Increase or, at the very least, maintain the current level of service, including preservation of both the 65 and 67 lines in the north-east Berkeley Hills.
2. Maintain direct service to the Berkeley Marina.
3. Preserve the 72 Rapid line (72 R).

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

If one of only two buses serving over 15,500 people in the steep terrain of the north-east Berkeley Hills is cut, it will force people to own and drive cars, which is not in alignment with our climate action goals.

CONTACT PERSON

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Attachments:

1. Letter



Berkeley City Council

2180 Milvia Street, 5th Floor
Berkeley, CA 94704

Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District Board of Directors
1600 Franklin St
Oakland, CA 94612

RE: AC Transit Realign Proposals

December 12, 2023

Dear AC Transit Board of Directors,

The Berkeley City Council understands the challenges of devising a bus network; and we recognize that service plans are like puzzles where all the pieces must fit together and any one change can cascade through the system. We appreciate AC Transit's efforts to thread the needle and balance sometimes disparate needs and input from diverse stakeholders.

Although many of the changes included in AC Transit's Realign plans are positive, there are some that are deeply concerning to the Berkeley City Council. Berkeley has some of the highest ridership of anywhere in AC Transit's network and the final plans should support rather than hinder this success. The Berkeley City Council urges AC Transit to revise its plans to address the following concerns.

Service in the Berkeley Hills must be maintained at minimum and, if possible, expanded. The 65 and the 67 routes represent the only transit access and connection to BART for the steep NE Berkeley Hill area. The Frequent Service Scenario's merger of these two lines would cut service and access for home healthcare workers, students who would then have to be driven, and visitors to Tilden Park, among others.

Moreover, this proposal is inconsistent with Berkeley's adopted climate action goals and hills housing policies. If anything, the currently anemic service should be expanded to include later nights and weekends, as well as greater frequency. But at the very least, these independent lines must remain at current service levels, keeping both routes 65/67, as listed in the Balanced Coverage Scenario. We believe there must be a means to preserve the 65 and 67 while still allowing for higher frequency on other lines.

Direct service to the Berkeley Marina must also be maintained. Serving the Marina only via a route that is circuitous and infrequent (especially on weekends) would negatively impact recreation access and necessitate major route/frequency changes when ferry service arrives. AC Transit should find a way to maintain direct Marina access by way of University Avenue, potentially by having some buses on the new F6 route extend to the Marina.

The 72 Rapid line must also be preserved. The 72R provides critical north-south and Downtown Oakland service in a part of Berkeley that is not well served by BART. Although streetscape improvements are anticipated to improve performance of the 72 line(s), this does not justify counteracting those improvements by eliminating limited stop service. We urge AC Transit to retain the 72 and 72R, and find another way to provide access to the different areas served at the northern ends of the 72, 72R, and 72M.

Thank you for your service and for giving us the opportunity to comment on the proposed service changes.

Respectfully,
Berkeley City Council