



Agenda Item No. 2

To: Transportation Committee/Committee of the Whole  
Meeting of October 12, 2006

From: Ron Downing, Principal Planner  
Alan Zahradnik, Director of Planning  
Susan C. Chiaroni, Deputy General Manager, Bus Division  
Celia G. Kupersmith, General Manager

Subject: **STATUS REPORT ON MARIN COUNTY TRANSIT DISTRICT/GOLDEN GATE TRANSIT LOCAL BUS SERVICE CHANGES**

### **Recommendation**

The following report is provided for informational purposes and does not require any action.

### **Background**

Under the Agreement for Intra-County Public Bus Transit Service in Marin County, Marin County Transit District (MCTD) is responsible for basic design of the local bus system, including street alignment headways and span of service for 26 Golden Gate Transit (GGT) bus routes identified in the Agreement. GGT is responsible for reviewing and confirming the operational feasibility of MCTD service design and providing the resources required to operate, maintain and administratively support the services. On September 10, 2006, major changes were made by MCTD to these GGT local bus routes. The changes represent the first major adjustment of service under the Agreement between the MCTD and the District.

#### **Outreach to the Public and Inauguration of the New Service**

Inauguration of the new service was preceded by an extensive public outreach process sponsored by MCTD that included signage/customer notification as well as public open houses and outreach tables at key locations, including shopping centers and farmers markets. GGT staff from Customer Relations, Marketing, Planning, and Bus Operations assisted MCTD at each of these events. The main purpose of this process was to let the public know about the upcoming changes, provide GGT Transit Guides with the new schedules, and provide trip planning assistance.

GGT successfully implemented the new MCTD service on Sunday, September 10, 2006. All new and modified local routes are operating according to the service parameters specified by MCTD staff. GGT also provided extensive staff coverage during the week of September 10 to inform passengers of the new routes and to answer questions. Spanish-speaking bus drivers provided invaluable assistance to Latino passengers at a number of locations including the Canal area, the San Rafael Transit Center, Strawberry Village, Ignacio, and Redwood & Grant in

Novato. Staff from various departments also assisted passengers at these locations and other important transfer points. In addition, staff distributed MCTD comment cards in English or Spanish that passengers could mail directly to MCTD. Approximately 20 cards were returned to GGT drivers and staff, which have been forwarded to MCTD.

#### Customer Comments Received by GGT Call Center

Call Center staff has been receiving customer comments on the MCTD service. The volume of comments has been relatively low, with approximately 50 received so far. As of the week of October 2, the number of complaints to the call center regarding the MCTD service changes has been averaging four per day. All complaints or comments that are received by GGT staff have been logged and forwarded to MCTD.

#### Ridership Patterns

Ridership and transfer patterns on MCTD local routes have remained essentially unchanged compared to before the service changes. Prior to September 10, there were around 8,400 fare-paying passenger trips on an average weekday on MCTD routes, and between 2,700 and 2,900 transfers per day, a total of over 11,000 boarding passenger trips per weekday. In the two weeks following the changes, the number of average weekday boardings and transfers has remained virtually unchanged from pre-September 10 levels. Staff will continue to monitor ridership as passengers become more familiar with the new routes.

#### Service Issues

Since the MCTD changes went into effect, several service issues have emerged that can be grouped into three general categories. These categories include Service Design (related to time span or headways), Service Reliability (schedule adherence and transfer connections), and Service Capacity (overcrowding). MCTD staff is considering how to address these issues, particularly when additional resources are needed.

##### 1. Service Design Issues

Evening service in specific geographic areas and service frequency reductions in the Sir Francis Drake Blvd. corridor have been the most identified concerns.

- a. The lack of later evening service in several areas that previously had service has been a major concern among some riders, especially those traveling home from service jobs. These areas are primarily Mill Valley and Fairfax. GGT and MCTD staffs have been working together to identify ways to restore some of that service.
- b. Changes to the service frequency of Route 29 from half-hourly to hourly at Marin General Hospital, and along Sir Francis Drake Blvd. and Andersen Drive have been cited by many riders as problematic. GGT has relayed those concerns to MCTD.

##### 2. Service Reliability (Schedule Adherence)

Service reliability concerns are limited to two routes that operate together in Central Marin, affecting peak period pulse times at the San Rafael Transit Center (SRTC), plus some minor instances of schedule reliability in Novato.

- a. Routes 22 (SRTC-San Anselmo-Larkspur-Marin City-Sausalito) and 23 (SRTC-Fairfax) have experienced on-time performance issues during weekday peak periods as a result of traffic congestion. More bus running time and layover time is needed. The current situation also causes reliability issues for pulse times at the SRTC, since other buses must hold for transfers. GGT has identified this as an area requiring immediate attention, and is working with MCTD to identify resources that might be shifted from other areas to these two routes.
  - b. Several minor schedule adherence issues have emerged on new local routes in Novato, due to school traffic congestion. By having these buses begin their trips earlier, GGT staff has identified a solution that does not require additional resources.
3. Overcrowding
- Overcrowding has been limited to specific instances related to student ridership, particularly where the new MCTD local youth pass has been distributed at no-cost by the school. School service overloads have occurred at Redwood High School, Terra Linda High School and San Marin High School. GGT has already identified a solution to the Terra Linda High School overcrowding and will be working collaboratively to solve this issue at the other two schools.

#### Conclusion

The District has delivered the service requested by MCTD effective with the September 10, 2006 system signup. GGT staff has been working closely with MCTD staff to monitor these changes and has recommended modifications that have been implemented, plus some that may be implemented in December. Based on feedback to date, the service is working reasonably well, with the potential for some minor restorations of service during evening and off hours to address basic mobility needs. Although there have been some overcrowding issues, these have been at very specific locations related to school travel.

#### Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact to the District as a result of implementing the MCTD service changes, since District costs are within those amounts included in the FY 2006/07 budget and covered by the Marin Local Agreement. GGT staff is working with MCTD staff to identify “cost-neutral” shifts in resources to allow some solutions to the issues identified. Some of these changes – to some supplemental school services, for example – have already been made. Others will be addressed in the next system wide signup in December.