



DATE: January 31, 2022
TO: STA Board
FROM: Ron Grassi, Director of Programs
RE: Temporary Suspension of *Some* Solano Express Service *Runs* on
Blue Line and Green Express *Due to Driver Shortages, Bus
Availability and the Solano Express Transition*

Background:

The health crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic led to rapid and significant modifications to the Solano Express services in March 2020. Since the initial reductions of service, STA staff and the transit agencies' staff from Solano County Transit (SolTrans) and Fairfield and Suisun Transit (FAST) worked on a plan to stabilize the service and create a connected and sustainable longer-term express bus service plan. A Solano Express Partial Service Restoration Plan and budget with Federal and State funding assistance to address the health and safety, ridership demands, and financial sustainability of service was approved by the STA Board on June 10, 2020, and implemented July 2020.

Since the initial implementation of the Solano Express Partial Restoration Plan in July 2020, Staff from STA, SolTrans, and FAST have monitored the performance of the Solano Express system. Based upon staff observations, modifications were made to the Red Line that included the expansion of Route (RT) 82 as a pilot into San Francisco which was approved by the STA Board on December 9, 2020. Modifications of the Solano Express schedule were made to the Blue Line and Green Express through STA Board action on February 10, 2021.

On April 14, 2021, the STA Board adopted the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-22 Solano Express Intercity Funding Plan, which increased service hours by approximately 17,500 hours to a total of approximately 62,500 annual Solano Express service hours. As more Bay Area counties moved to less restrictive tiers in California's Blueprint for a Safer Economy, demand for Solano Express service was anticipated to increase.

On June 9, 2021, the STA Board approved Solano Express service modifications which modified the Red Line by scheduling the capacity buses into the passenger schedule and adding additional trips that were having capacity constraints. Additionally, RT 82 added a morning trip and adjusted the timing to space the trips apart so that it would require only one bus in the morning. The Yellow Line frequency was increased from 2-hour intervals to every hour. The Blue Line was modified to start servicing Walnut Creek BART rather than Pleasant Hill BART. The Green Express was modified to add capacity buses into the passenger schedule and added additional trips that were having capacity constraints, effectively doubling the service with all runs servicing the Suisun Train Depot. The Solano Express service modifications were implemented effective August 2021.

On September 8, 2021, the STA Board approved the transition of the Solano Express service from a two transit operator system to a one transit operator system. The Board also authorized the negotiation of a contract with SolTrans for the operations of the four routes comprising the Solano Express Service. On October 13, 2021, the STA Board approved the Final

Framework of Solano Express Transition Plan and Implementation Schedule, which included a two phased schedule with the Green Express transitioning to SolTrans in April 2022 and the Blue Line in August 2022.

Following STA Board action on October 13, 2021, staff from STA, SolTrans, and FAST have been conducting recurring Solano Express transition meetings, to discuss and coordinate details of the transition, including bus availability and driver shortages. As part of the Green Express transition, SolTrans requested that FAST transfer five (5) buses to them as soon as possible, so that SolTrans could begin outfitting the buses with their equipment in advance of SolTrans beginning operation of the Green Express. As a result of this coordination, FAST transferred five (5) buses to SolTrans on February 1, 2022. The five (5) buses will be returned to service when SolTrans begins operation of the Green Express on April 4, 2022.

A 2 for 1 Solano Express promotional program was approved by the STA Board in October 2021 to encourage riders back to transit.

Discussion:

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a labor shortage in many sectors of the workforce *throughout the region and country*. Beginning in December 2021, a *shortage* of bus drivers *has* greatly affecting the Solano Express Green Express, and Blue Line operated by FAST *and has been further exacerbated during the COVID-19 surge due to the Omicron variant*.

On January 18, 2022, at a regularly scheduled *Solano Express* transition meeting with STA, FAST, and SolTrans, *staff discussed the challenges of continuing to provide the Green Express and Blue Line service during the Solano Express transition, given driver and equipment shortage*. Five Green Express runs and four Blue Line runs were suggested to be *temporarily* suspended by FAST staff. The data that was presented as the backup was from September 2021 on/off counts performed by FAST. Due to a scheduled outreach event at the Fairfield Transportation Center (FTC) on the morning of January 19, 2022, STA staff recommended holding off on any changes until *current* ridership could be verified and the proposed service reduction could be *further* analyzed.

On January 19, 2022, STA staff joined SolTrans staff at a scheduled outreach event at the FTC from 4 to 7:30 am to inform riders about the forthcoming transition to SolTrans of the Green Express in April 2022 and Blue Line in August 2022. During the outreach event, staff was able to talk with riders and perform on and off ridership counts for the Blue Line and Green Express. Staff heard from the riders that the driver shortage was creating issues on both the Green Express, and the Blue Line. STA staff was informed that on January 18, 2022, three Blue Line buses did not show up at the Walnut Creek Bart Station the 4:40 5:10, and 5:40 pm scheduled departure times. That left Blue Line riders waiting almost 2 hours for the 6:10 pm bus. On the afternoon of January 19, 2022, staff received calls from Blue Line riders that the 4:10 and the 4:40 pm buses did not show up at Walnut Creek, thus riders had to wait over an hour for the 5:10 pm bus. On January 24, 2022, STA staff received a call from a Blue Line rider that the Blue Line 5:12 am departure from FTC did not show up nor did the 5:39 am departure bus.

On January 25, 2022, STA, FAST, and SolTrans staff meet to discuss potential routes to be *temporarily* suspended based on driver *and equipment shortage*. Attachment A reflects the Green Express routes which staff agreed upon to be recommended for temporary suspension based on input from FAST, SolTrans, and STA along with analysis from STA's consultant, TMD. *The runs being proposed for suspension have the least amount of ridership*.

On January 26, 2022, STA staff monitored the Vacaville Transit Center to talk with riders and perform on and off ridership counts for the Blue Line from 4:15 to 9:00 am. On January 31, 2022, STA staff continued its Blue Line outreach at the Walnut Creek BART station from 2:30

to 7:30 pm. Based on STA staff observations and ridership counts, and in consultation with our consultant, and FAST and SolTrans staff, attachment B reflects the Blue Line *runs* which are recommended to be temporarily suspended *based on ridership*.

Upon STA Board approval, STA staff *will work with SolTrans and FAST staff to* ensure the modified Solano Express schedules *are* posted on the available websites and social media and transit staff. Staff recommends bringing back the item for an update to the Board following the transition of the Green Express to SolTrans on April 4, 2022.

Fiscal Impacts:

The service *run* suspensions are within the Solano Express FY 2021-22 Budget approved by the STA Board. A full reconciliation based on operator invoices will need to be completed at the end of FY 2021-22 and before funds are claimed for FY 2022-23.

Recommendation:

Approve the following:


1. The temporary suspension of *some* Solano Express Green Express *runs recommended* by *STA, Solano County Transit (SolTrans), and* Fairfield and Suisun Transit (FAST) effective February 28, 2022 as shown in Attachment A;
2. The temporary suspension of *some* Solano Express Blue Line *runs recommended* by *STA, SolTrans, and* FAST effective February 28, 2022 as shown in Attachment B; and
3. Provide STA Board with an update of the Blue Line and Green Express at the April 13th Board meeting.

Attachments:


- A. Solano Express modified Green Express Schedule
- B. Solano Express modified Blue Line Schedule

Effective February 28, 2022: Due to driver and equipment shortages, some bus runs have been temporarily suspended.

AM Schedule

						
WESTBOUND			EASTBOUND			
SUISUN CITY	FAIRFIELD		EL CERRITO	EL CERRITO	SUISUN CITY	FAIRFIELD
Suisun/ Fairfield Amtrak	Fairfield Transp Center (Arrive)	Fairfield Transp Center (Depart)	El Cerrito del Norte BART (Arrive)	El Cerrito del Norte BART (Depart)	Suisun/ Fairfield Amtrak	Fairfield Transp Center
MONDAY – FRIDAY						
-	-	4:10	4:50	4:56	5:41	5:51
4:10	4:20	4:25	5:05	5:11	5:56	6:06
4:40	4:50	4:55	5:35	5:41	6:26	6:36
5:10	5:20	5:25	6:05	6:11	6:56	7:06
-	-	5:40	6:20	6:26	7:11	7:19
5:41	5:51	5:56	6:36	6:46	7:31	7:39
5:56	6:06	6:11	6:51	7:01	7:46	7:54
6:26	6:36	6:41	7:21	7:31	8:16	8:24
6:56	7:06	7:11	7:51	8:01	8:46	8:54

PM Schedule

						
WESTBOUND			EASTBOUND			
FAIRFIELD	SUISUN CITY	EL CERRITO	EL CERRITO	FAIRFIELD		SUISUN CITY
Fairfield Transp Center	Suisun/ Fairfield Amtrak	El Cerrito del Norte BART (Arrive)	El Cerrito del Norte BART (Depart)	Fairfield Transp Center (Arrive)	Fairfield Transp Center (Depart)	Suisun/ Fairfield Amtrak
MONDAY – FRIDAY						
2:40	2:50	3:25	3:31	4:19	4:25	4:35
3:10	3:20	3:55	4:01	4:49	5:00	5:10
3:40	3:50	4:25	4:31	5:19	5:24	5:34
4:10	4:20	4:55	5:01	5:49	5:59	6:09
4:25	4:35	5:10	5:16	6:04	6:09	6:19
4:40	4:50	5:25	5:31	6:19	6:24	6:33
5:00	5:10	5:45	5:48	6:36	6:41	6:48
5:24	5:34	6:09	6:14	7:02	7:07	7:15
5:59	6:09	6:44	6:47	7:35	-	-
6:24	6:33	7:08	7:15	8:03	-	-

PM trips indicated in bold



Masks
Required



clippercard.com



tokentransit.com



fasttransit.org
707-422-2877



solanoexpress.com
800-535-6883

Effective February 28, 2022: Due to driver and equipment shortages, some bus runs have been temporarily suspended.

BLUE LINE SACRAMENTO – WALNUT CREEK

SOUTHBOUND											NORTHBOUND											
SACRAMENTO		DAVIS	DIXON	VACAVILLE		FAIRFIELD			BENICIA	WALNUT CREEK	WALNUT CREEK	BENICIA	FAIRFIELD			VACAVILLE		DIXON	DAVIS	SACRAMENTO		
Sacramento Valley Station	9th Street & L Street	UC Davis Silo	Dixon Park & Ride	Vaca Valley Parkway	Vacaville Transp Center	Fairfield Transp Center (Arrive)	Fairfield Transp Center (Depart)	Suisun Valley Rd & West America Dr	Benicia Bus Hub/ Industrial Way	Walnut Creek BART (Arrive)	Walnut Creek BART (Depart)	Benicia Bus Hub/ Industrial Way	Suisun Valley Rd & Kaiser Dr	Fairfield Transp Center (Arrive)	Fairfield Transp Center (Depart)	Vacaville Transp Center	Vaca Valley Parkway	Dixon Park & Ride	UC Davis Silo	2nd & Capitol Mall (Drop off only)*	Sacramento Valley Station	
MONDAY – FRIDAY																						
-	-	-	-	-	4:22	-	4:42	-	5:00	5:24	5:26	-	-	5:56	6:04	6:19	-	6:33	-	6:59	7:11	
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6:20	6:35	-	6:40	7:02	7:28	7:40	
-	-	-	-	-	4:52	-	5:12	-	5:30	5:54	6:00	6:18	6:32	6:42	6:47	7:02	-	-	-	-	-	
-	-	-	4:56	5:08	5:19	-	5:39	-	5:59	6:24	6:30	6:48	7:02	7:13	7:21	7:36	7:45	7:57	8:10	8:34	8:45	
-	-	-	-	-	5:42	-	6:02	6:11	6:29	6:54	7:00	7:18	7:32	7:42	7:47	8:02	-	-	-	-	-	
-	-	-	5:49	6:00	6:12	-	6:32	6:41	6:59	7:24	7:30	7:48	8:02	8:12	8:17	8:32	8:41	8:53	9:06	9:30	9:41	
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-	-	-	-	-	7:42	-	8:02	8:11	8:29	8:54	9:00	9:18	9:32	9:42	9:47	10:02	10:11	10:23	-	-	-	
7:29	7:35	8:07	8:23	-	8:37	-	9:01	9:10	9:27	9:50	9:56	10:14	10:28	10:38	10:43	10:58	-	-	-	-	-	
7:58	8:04	8:34	8:40	8:58	9:17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
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9:56	10:02	10:34	10:50	11:02	11:11	11:28	11:33	11:42	11:59	12:21	12:33	12:51	1:06	1:15	1:24	1:39	-	-	-	-	-	
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SATURDAY																						
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-	-	1:04	1:20	1:33	1:42	2:00	2:10	2:20	2:38	3:00	3:05	3:23	3:39	3:50	4:00	4:18	4:26	4:39	4:54	-	-	
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-	-	5:06	5:22	5:35	5:45	6:04	6:14	6:24	6:42	7:04	7:07	7:24	7:40	7:50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	

PM trips indicated in bold

*Sacramento northbound trips are drop off only