

STAFF REPORT

DATE: November 18, 2024
TO: Sacramento Regional Transit Board of Directors
FROM: Laura Ham, VP, Planning, Grants and Procurement
SUBJ: APPROVING THE FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT ROUTE BETWEEN DAVIS AND SACRAMENTO WITH UC DAVIS AND YOLO COUNTY TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt the Attached Resolution.

RESULT OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

The recommended action will amend the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Causeway Connection bus service, extending the term for another two years to May 3, 2027, with operations fully funded.

FISCAL IMPACT

Payments from the University of California, Davis (UCD) to SacRT will total \$753,552. Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds will cover the remainder of operating costs for the service. These revenues are included in the FY 24/25 Operating Budget and will be incorporated into future Operating Budgets for each fiscal year impacted.

DISCUSSION

On May 4, 2020, SacRT executed an MOU with the Yolo County Transportation District (YCTD) and UCD providing for operating support from UCD to SacRT and YCTD to fund the Causeway Connection bus service (designated Route 138) operated jointly by SacRT and YCTD for a three-year period from May 4, 2020 to May 3, 2023.

On April 20, 2023, SacRT executed a new MOU with the same parties continuing service for an additional two years to end on May 3, 2025, along the same basic terms, including an approximate 50/50 split of operations between SacRT and YCTD, an unchanged level of service, increases to the hourly rate to reflect cost escalation, and clean-ups to the contract language.

The attached Resolution would approve an extension to continue the service for an additional two years, ending May 3, 2027. UCD would continue to help cover the operating cost of the service, with UCD funds split approximately 50/50 between SacRT and YCTD. The level of service would be unchanged, but the hourly rate would escalate to reflect

increased costs for both SacRT and YCTD. Other aspects of the prior MOU will remain in place, including but not limited to recognition of the UCD undergraduate ID as a valid form of fare media, authorization to operate within the territory/property of the other parties, operational coordination, and joint marketing and branding.

Major service changes require a Title VI service equity analysis and 30-day public review prior to implementation; however, the proposed contract extension would merely continue the existing service levels. Consequently, there are no Title VI or public engagement requirements for approving this extension; however, if SacRT were to terminate the service or if the updated MOU required major changes to the Causeway Connection service, SacRT would be required to prepare a Title VI analysis for 30-day public review, prior to adoption of any major service changes by the SacRT Board.

Performance

The Causeway Connection service has now been in operation since May 2020, over four years. Service levels were initially peak-only, consisting of just 5 round trips per day. On September 28, 2020, service was improved to hourly from 5:30 a.m. to 8:50 p.m., totaling 15 round trips per day.

Ridership has grown steadily, although it has flattened out over the past few months, and now averages 263 boardings per day, between SacRT and Yolobus combined. The cost per passenger is a little over \$13, compared to \$9 for SacRT fixed route bus service overall (although operating costs are currently 100 percent covered by UCD and CMAQ).

The busiest trips are eastbound departing at 7:07 a.m. and westbound departing at 5:20 p.m., both of which average 22 passengers (compared to 38 seats on the bus). These two trips serve the peak-hour commute to Sacramento, but in general, ridership tends to be fairly balanced, with strong ridership commuting to Davis as well. Persons with UCD ID cards ride for free, as a condition of the MOU with UCD.

The most common complaints are late buses and bicycle capacity. Compared to other bus routes, the Causeway Connection can be subject to greater variability in schedule because of the long segment on Interstate 80. Vehicle reliability has also been a source of delay (e.g., a bus with a low battery must be swapped out for another bus).

Like other SacRT fixed-route buses, the Causeway Connection fleet is equipped with a triple front bike rack, which is the maximum allowed under state law. Staff has investigated a number of options to improve bicycle capacity, but staff believes the only feasible option is to increase the number of trips or replace the fleet of standard transit buses with over-the-road motorcoaches, which typically include a luggage stowing area with capacity for five or more bicycles.

Future Changes

CMAQ funds, which have helped cover operating costs since the introduction of the service in 2020, will be fully depleted by the new end date of May 3, 2027, and will need to be replaced. The fleet of Proterra battery-electric buses, which totals 12 vehicles

between SacRT and YoloBus, has also experienced reliability problems, despite being only four years old.

The Yolo 80 Corridor Improvements Project (Yolo 80) is led by Caltrans District 3, with YCTD acting as a responsible agency. As discussed in the Final EIR/EA, the Yolo 80 project would result in induced vehicle miles traveled (VMT), which represents a significant impact and required Caltrans to identify proposed mitigation measures. The final Caltrans VMT Mitigation Plan for the Yolo 80 Project includes a proposed allocation of \$800,000 per year for three years to expand Causeway Connection service, beginning around Fall 2027, which could fund an improvement from 60- to 20-minute headways during peak hours. These funds would be restricted to expansion, so funding would still be needed to maintain existing service levels (i.e., UCD funding would still be needed and CMAQ funds would still need to be replaced).

The Yolo 80 project would provide funds for Causeway Connection expansion for only a limited period (e.g., three years). After that period, toll revenue from the Yolo 80 project could be available for the Causeway Connection expansion, but any such contributions would require an act of the Board of Directors of the recently-formed Capital Area Regional Tolling Authority (CARTA).

In late May 2024, after approval of the FEIR/EA by Caltrans, two lawsuits were filed by two environmental advocacy organizations seeking an injunction against the project on EIR-related grounds including evaluation of alternatives, analysis of impacts, and mitigation of VMT impacts. These lawsuits may affect the project's mitigation measures.

Yolo 80 funds are not proposed to cover capital costs for expansion fleet or to replace the Proterra fleet. As discussed above, motorcoaches would be a better vehicle type for the Causeway Connection; however, SacRT does not currently own or operate any motorcoaches, so there could be new training and facility needs.

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) rule requires transit agencies to transition to a zero-emission fleet; however, there have been fewer options on the market for zero-emission motorcoaches than standard transit buses. Battery-electric buses also tend to work better on shorter-distance, lower-speed routes where there are more opportunities for regenerative braking. Hydrogen Fuel Cell Electric Buses (FCEBs) offer greater range, which might be a better fit for an intercity route such as the Causeway Connection. SacRT was recently awarded \$76.8 million to buy up to 29 new FCEBs to replace older buses, modernize a maintenance facility, and initiate a workforce development program.

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-11-108

Adopted by the Board of Directors of the Sacramento Regional Transit District on this date:

November 18, 2024

APPROVING THE FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT ROUTE BETWEEN DAVIS AND SACRAMENTO WITH UC DAVIS AND YOLO COUNTY TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT

WHEREAS, on May 4, 2020, SacRT executed a Memorandum of Understanding (Original MOU) for Pilot Public Transit Route Between Davis and Sacramento (The “Causeway Connection” Bus Route) with the University of California, Davis (UC Davis) and the Yolo County Transportation District (YCTD); and

WHEREAS, on April 20, 2023, SacRT executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Pilot Public Transit Route Between Davis and Sacramento with UC Davis and YCTD, updating and restating the scope, budget, and terms of the Original MOU; and

WHEREAS, the parties desire to continue the Causeway Connection funding and operation, under revised terms, but without major changes to the route or schedule;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SACRAMENTO REGIONAL TRANSIT DISTRICT AS FOLLOWS:

THAT, the First Amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding for Public Transit Route Between Davis and Sacramento with UC Davis and YCTD, whereby UC Davis agrees to provide operating funding support for the Causeway Connection public transit service, through May 3, 2027, is hereby approved.

THAT, the General Manager/CEO is hereby authorized and directed to execute the foregoing Amendment.

PATRICK KENNEDY, Chair

A T T E S T:
HENRY LI, Secretary

By: _____
Tabetha Smith, Assistant Secretary