



LAMORINDA WEEKLY

[Home](#) | [Read Online](#) | [Archive](#) | [Links](#) | [Advertising](#) | [Contact](#)

[printer friendly](#)

[download pdf](#)

Published November 26th, 2008

County Connection Cuts Will Affect Service to Seniors and Students

By *Sophie Braccini*

County Connection has announced that it must cut 20% of its routes to meet budgetary challenges. On November 12th they met with the Lamorinda community to explain and get feed back. Two segments of the population were particularly leery of service cuts because the bus is their primary mode of transportation: Senior citizens and students.

Two cuts affect this part of the population: the suppression of route 126 that serves the Orinda Senior Village once an hour during the week, and the closing of the route 106 stops in Moraga along Canyon and Camino Pablo that are used by students from Campolindo High School and Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School (JM).

The seniors were prepared and almost a dozen of them came to the County Connection meeting. Eartha Newsong is a very active organizer and a strong defender of her fellow seniors; she voiced their concerns. "The Senior Village depends on that route to go to BART and meet with their health professionals, some of us can walk the mile to the station but others are too frail, and in very hot, cold or wet weather we depend on the bus," explained a very concerned Newsong.

Limited means of alternative transportation exist for the seniors. A van comes once or twice a week to the Village, and it takes them shopping around town, they can use the Lamorinda Transportation Alliance vans, but the volunteer group services seniors in all of Lamorinda and is not reliable enough as far as timing is concerned to meet appointments in Walnut Creek and beyond.

When she presented her case at the meeting, Newsong understood that the criticalities of senior needs are not taken into account in the measurement system used by County Connection: the agency made its decision about which routes to cut by considering only the number of riders.

This same factor got the route 106 stops along Canyon and Camino Pablo cut: not enough riders.

"That bus is the only means of transportation my son has to go to Campolindo and back home," said Mernoosh Paya, mother of a Campolindo sophomore who lives on Dickenson. Many students ride that bus, but it's only twice a day, so it does not account for a large number of daily rides. Campolindo High School has no school bus service for the students.

At JM, the problem is a bit different since there are school buses in service. Still, some students are not served by a school bus and use the 106 which currently stops in front of the school; if everything goes according to plan, that won't happen anymore. "We know our cuts will create some problems for some people," said County Connection's Ann Musiny, "it is unfortunately unavoidable, but we desperately need to hear from the public." They urge residents to send them email with the specific routes and stops they are interested in. Send your comments to: planning@cccta.org.

In Orinda the seniors are not staying idle. One partial solution could be AC Transit's bus #74, an express bus that runs along San Pablo Dam road and connects Richmond with the Orinda BART station. If the City of Orinda would agree to build two bus stops on that route at the level of Safeway, it would help the seniors reach BART.

"It is only a partial solution," says Newsong, "a real one would be to have a shuttle going around Orinda, up to Wilder, serving the whole community." Newsong uses the shuttle that the town of Walnut Creek and County Connection have set in place and she thinks that such a system should be included in the new Orinda downtown plan currently in progress; adding that a shuttle service would help with revitalization of downtown business as well.

For Campo and JM students, the best hope is to have parents get behind this. "I believe some concerned parents have already contacted the County Connection," says JM PTA President Diana Obrand, "I would recommend that they continue to take this course of action."

"Since all publicly funded agencies are struggling in these economically challenging times, I fully understand why County Connection is making these difficult, no-win decisions" adds Acalanes Union High School District Superintendent Jim Negri. "County Connection provides a valuable service for our students since the district cannot afford to provide home-to-school transportation. I would hope that County Connection could find a way to provide routes that allow students to participate in afterschool events and still use public transportation to go home. Since our high schools are located on major streets, County Connection helps reduce the flow of traffic, which benefits both our students and the community."

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

[Home](#) | [Read Online](#) | [Archive](#) | [Links](#) | [Advertising](#) | [Contact](#)

[back to top](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA