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County Connection Transit Agency announces proposed fare and route changes

By John T. Miller



James Mason, a driver with the County Connection Transit Agency, steps out of the No. 6 bus to greet passengers at the Lafayette BART station. Photo John T. Miller

community meetings, public workshops, and a public hearing to receive input on the proposed changes.

According to Horta, "Opposition to the elimination of the midday fare was a constant theme behind the public comment process."

Currently, the Midday Free Program accounts for over 260,000 rides on an annual basis.

The proposed fare increases would only impact passengers paying cash. These include a 50-cent raise for adults and youth on regular routes, and a 25-cent raise on express routes, bringing the total to \$2.50 per ride. Fares for seniors would be raised 25 cents to \$1.25. Children under 6 years old will continue to ride free.

Paper passes, including paper transfers, will be eliminated; however, Clipper will continue to support transfers.

"We've seen the trend of passengers going to Clipper since BART added the surcharge on paper tickets," says Horta. "There will be no changes in the price of rides using Clipper."

Clipper provides a Day Pass and Day Pass Accumulator. The Day Pass deducts regular and express bus fares, and discounted transfer fares from the stored cash value. Clipper cards can also save money by allowing unlimited rides on most County Connection, Tri Delta Transit, WestCat and Wheels routes. Once \$3.75 in fares is reached in a day (\$1.75 for senior and RTC customers) on any combination of participating transit services, rides are free for the rest of the day.

The only restructure of routes to the Lamorinda area will be the elimination of Route 25 due to low ridership, and a potential increase in peak service on Route 6, which runs from the Orinda BART station to Saint Mary's College and on to the Lafayette BART station. It then returns via the same route. There are no changes planned for the 600 series that serves the local schools.

The last time the system was overhauled was in spring 2009. Horta acknowledge a number of changes since then, including housing developments, traffic patterns, demographic shifts, job centers and increased congestion.

Horta summed up the process, saying, "As transit planners, we would want more service to our customers, but the financial outlook is forcing us to make some difficult decisions in order to create long-term financial viability."

While final adjustments may be made, the changes should be put in place early next spring, assuming the board approves the plans in November of this year.

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