

COVID-19 Update

March 21, 2020

We continue to address the needs and proactively communicate with VTA employees and our customers to ensure their safety throughout this pandemic health emergency. Our Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is activated and VTA staff members are fully engaged and supporting the efforts of the Santa Clara County EOC. Together with my leadership team, we are involved in daily conference calls with local, regional, state and federal agencies, and our peer transit organizations.

Transit operators in the 9-county Bay Area are collecting and sharing information on ridership, operating service levels and revenue losses experienced to date. This past Monday, I joined VTA Board Chair Cindy Chavez, Mayor Sam Liccardo and city and county executives at the “Shelter-in-Place” news conference where public health directors from most of the Bay Area issued this unprecedented order.

Ridership/Service

As you might expect, our latest ridership numbers show a steep decline from last week’s report. As of Monday, our average weekday ridership has declined systemwide by 56.5 percent – a substantial difference from the 18.7 percent reported last week. We are analyzing what changes in levels of service may be warranted while staying committed to providing service for “essential travel” defined in the County’s latest legal order.

Other actions taken to find system efficiencies and/or conform with public health directives:

- On Monday, March 23, we will suspend service on the [Rapid 500 bus that serves San Jose Diridon Station to Berryessa Transit Center](#). Customers can take Lines 64A, 64B or the 68.
- [School trippers remain suspended](#) while schools are closed.
- Implemented rear-door boarding on our buses to promote social distance measures between our passengers, our elderly/disabled riders and the operators. Front door boarding is reserved for passengers in need of the bus ramp or access to priority seating.
- We stopped collecting fares on VTA bus, light rail and Paratransit through the “shelter-in-place” period.
- Our Downtown Customer Service Center is temporarily closed and properly noticed to inform customers that we are accommodating in-person, customer service needs at VTA Headquarters.
- Most customer needs are being handled via phone and emails, while prerecorded messages on our Customer Service information line (321-2300) has proven effective in providing information to our customers.

Like everyone else in this situation, with employees on leave or working from home, we will experience gaps in service. We are constantly monitoring the situation so that we can provide regular updates to keep the riding public informed through real-time service alerts and website updates.

Public information is shared through press releases, media interviews, blog, and social media posts, and through our [COVID-19 Information Center page](#) displayed prominently on the VTA [homepage](#).

Human Resources

We have had several communications with staff around processes/procedures related to working from home, leave criteria, etc. through email and continued updates to our employee website (the Hub).

Thus far we have:

- Identified employees who can work from home (WFH) and implemented a systemwide WFH plan.
- Implemented a protocol for managers/supervisors to track employee requests for exceptions for reporting to work.
- Communicated to supervisors and managers the protocol for how to respond to employees who have tested positive for COVID-19, believe they have been exposed to COVID-19, or are observed of exhibiting COVID-19 related symptoms.
- Initiated a COVID-19 reporting email address for employees (vta.covid-19.rpt@vta.org) and a telephone hotline.

As of March 20, VTA's WFH plan was updated to reflect immediate changes to compensation during this unprecedented time and communicated to all VTA employees. This memo is also attached.

Finance/Procurement

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has granted transit operators the ability to use capital grant funding for direct operating costs associated with COVID-19. While we cannot use these funds to compensate for revenue losses due to fares and sales tax, the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) has submitted a request to Congress and the Trump Administration, on behalf of all transit agencies in the U.S., for \$16.0 Billion to cover all expenses and losses through the end of the calendar year in the next COVID-19 related appropriation bill under consideration. VTA's estimated additional costs and losses noted below, are included in the requested amount.

VTA estimates the following financial impact per month:

Source	Financial Impact (in millions)
Loss of fare revenues	\$3.25
Loss to due decline in all sales tax-based revenues	\$13.50
Loss of toll revenues	\$0.65
<u>All other revenues</u>	<u>\$0.08</u>
Total lost revenues per month	\$17.50
Additional labor and cleaning supplies cost per month	\$0.50
Total loss of revenues and additional costs per month	\$18.0

VTA's revenues are mainly dependent upon sales tax which are currently on budget. However, we anticipate these revenues will dramatically decline over the next few months. *We will update you as to whether we need to access our operating reserves once we have more information of the impact of COVID-19 on the economy.*

Public Meetings

VTA Board Chair Chavez will convene the April 2 Board meeting remotely given the critical items that are on that agenda. By executive order, Governor Newsom suspended certain meeting requirements of the Brown Act in response to the Coronavirus. The Board and the public will be strongly encouraged to participate via Zoom or YouTube live or by teleconference. The Board Office is working with our IT Department to get this done. We will also strictly monitor the number of people in the meeting room to ensure compliance with the public rules for gatherings.

All April advisory committee meetings are cancelled, and the April 17 Board workshop is postponed. We will poll Board members for a possible workshop for a later date.

Other Steps Taken This Week

- Restricted visitors to VTA campuses, limiting guests to business-critical interactions only.
- Converted the River Oaks Cafe to a take-out only operation.
- Installed disinfecting wipes or sanitizers in VTA break rooms for use on surfaces and microwave door handles; added signage reminding employees to wash their hands before and after using items in the break rooms.
- Posted reminders to staff and guests at our facilities on social distancing; Supervisors are working with employees to ensure workspaces allow for this distancing.
- Requested staff to either postpone meetings and/or hold them virtually. In the event of in-person meetings those will only be held where social distancing can be achieved.
- Added information on our light rail station platform digital display boards promoting VTA's actions to combat COVID-19.