

STAFF REPORT

DATE: July 27, 2023
TO: Unitrans Advisory Committee
FROM: Jeff Flynn, Unitrans General Manager
SUBJECT: General Manager's Report

Recommendation

None

Fiscal Impact

None

Council Goals

Ensure a Safe, Healthy, Equitable Community; Foster Excellence in City Services

Background & Analysis

Unitrans staff continues to focus on service stability and training to restore pre-pandemic service levels. On September 21, 2022, Unitrans resumed academic year service with reduced service levels from pre-March 2020 levels due to staffing challenges. On June 16, 2023, Unitrans was able to resume regular, pre-pandemic summer service thanks to improved driver staffing. Unitrans has not operated full summer service since summer 2019. All active services are operated by Unitrans with no direct Yolobus support. The following summarizes service levels this academic/fiscal year:

Fall 2022 service levels started on September 21, 2022:

- 30-minute service: B, C, D, G, J, K, M, P, Q, V-Ex, V-Lt, and W
- 60-minute service: A, E, F, L, and Z

Winter 2023 Service Starting January 9, 2023:

- 30-minute service: B, C, D, E, F, G, J, K, L, M, P, Q, V-Ex, V-Lt, and W
- 60-minute service: A and Z

Spring 2023 Service Starting April 3, 2023

- 30-minute service: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, K, L, M, P, Q, V-Ex, V-Lt, and W
- 60-minute service: Z

Summer 2023 Service Starting June 16, 2023 (Full Pre-Pandemic Summer Service)

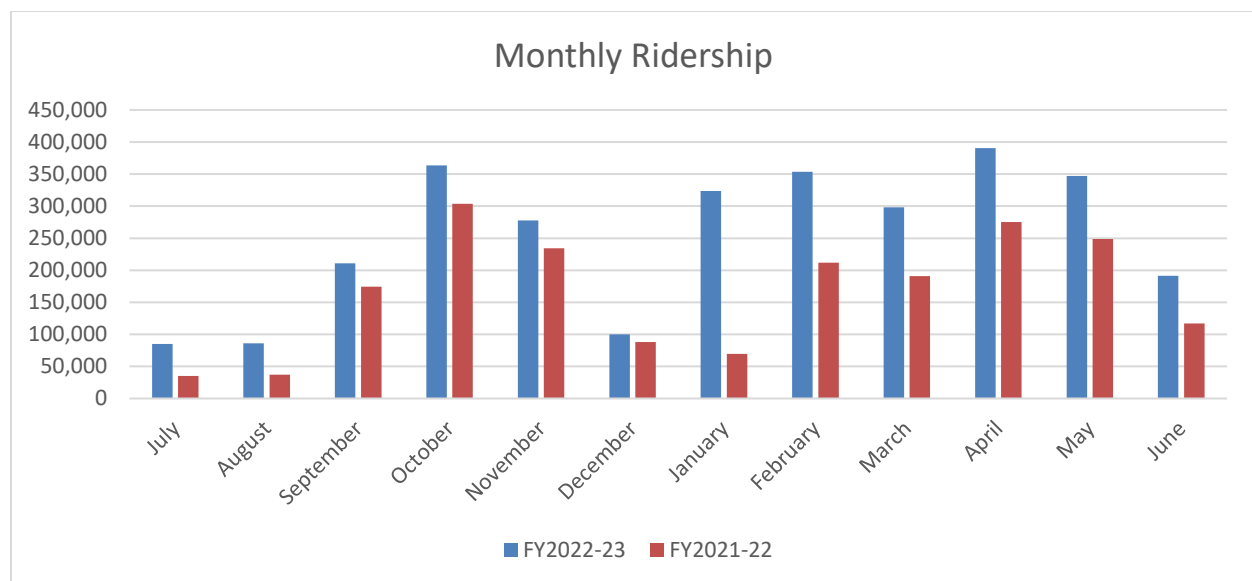
- 30-minute service: D, G, J, P, Q, V, and W
- 60-minute service: A, B, C, E, F, K, L, M, and Z

During Spring 2023, only one bus line had 60-minute service, the Z line serving East Davis and Target via Fifth Street. Fifth Street is also supported by 30-minute A line service and 30-minute peak Yolobus Route 42 service providing robust, convenient service to Fifth Street residents and alternatives to Z line customers.

As drivers finish training, Unitrans gradually restored service to 30-minutes on bus lines and continued to focus on crowding/on-time performance issues. Unitrans was not able to restore 15-minute service during academic year 2022-23 due to staffing issues. Unitrans expects to continue Spring 2023 service levels into Fall 2023 and gradually restore service as staffing continues to improve and stabilize.

Ridership surged during the fiscal year. In-person classes as well as cold and rainy weather likely helped bolster ridership. In July 2022, Unitrans estimated annual ridership of 2.5 million to 2.7 million for the fiscal year however Unitrans transported over 3 million people! This is a 52% increase compared to FY2021-22 but still 20% below pre-pandemic levels.

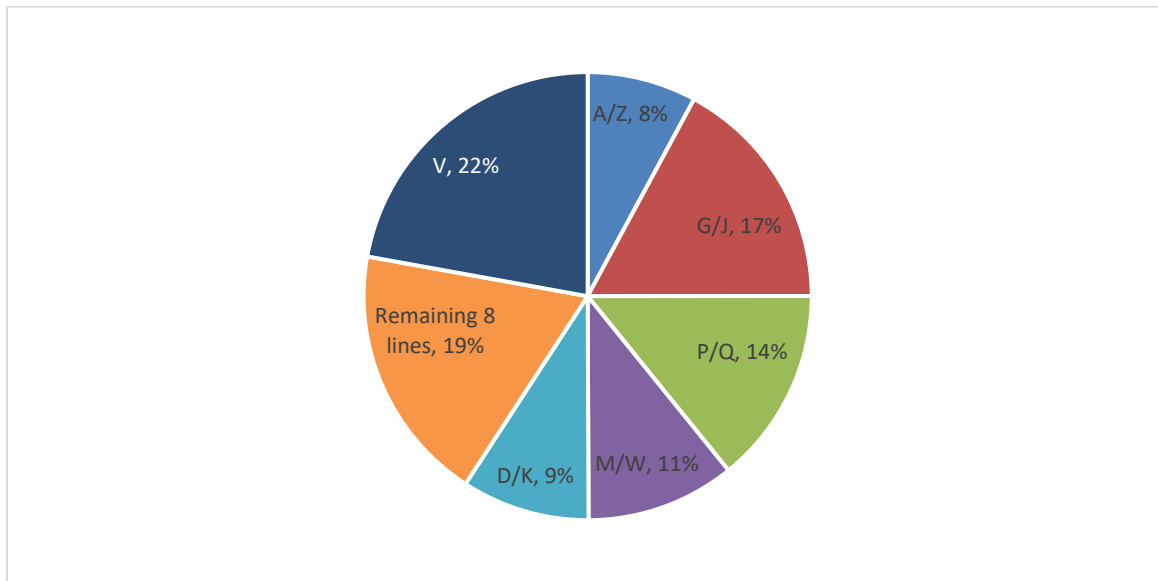
Spring quarter weekday ridership was approximately 17,000 per day compared to 17,500 per day in winter quarter. Ridership was strong all quarter long and all year long, exceeding expectations and leading to high crowding on some routes.



Ridership gains were experienced across all routes except the Z line. The A and L lines were operated by Yolobus in FY2021-22 which skews the data for those lines and the Z line. University riders have a general preference for Unitrans service compared to Yolobus service, so the Z line was more popular in FY2021-22 since the A line was operated by Yolobus. For FY2022-23, both the A and Z were operated by Unitrans, so

customers shifted their preference back to the line that goes to the Silo (A line) and as a result the Z line experienced an annual decline in ridership. Ridership was up over 50% compared to last year on the C, D, E, F, J, T, and W lines.

By line, ridership was highest on the V line in West Village which accounted for 22% of all riders. After the V line, the G/J lines accounted for 18% of customers, the P/Q accounted for 14%, the M/W lines in South Davis for 11% of riders, and the D/K in West Davis for 9% of riders. The lowest ridership was on the E and F lines although E line ridership increased 84% and F line 62% compared to last year. Thirty-minute service was restored on both lines in winter, leading to gains.

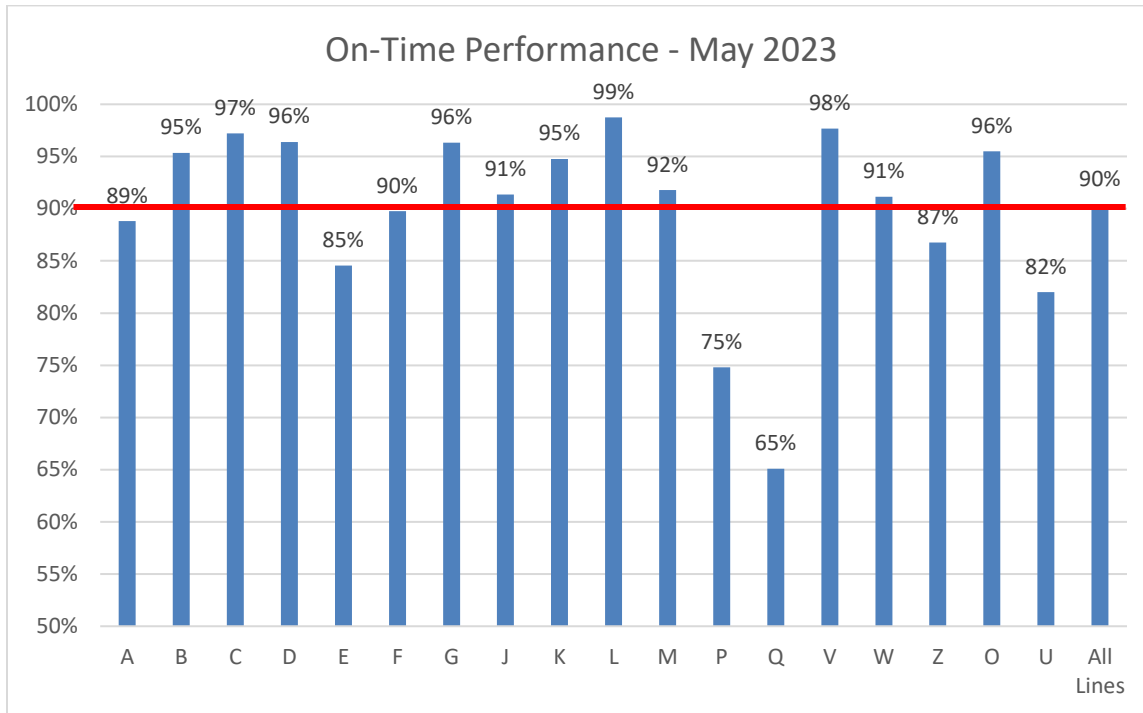


On-Time Performance (OTP)

Quarterly on-time performance is based on a one month review each quarter. For spring, the review month is May. In May, systemwide on-time performance was 90%, up for the second quarter in a row.

Eight lines improved compared to winter performance and four declined in performance.

Systemwide performance was at the 90% on-time performance goal and individually, 12 of 18 lines were at or above the 90% goal. The worst on-time performance was on the P and Q lines which are continually marred by traffic on 14th Street and in East Davis on and around Mace Boulevard.



Staffing Update

Currently, Unitrans has 155 active drivers and 40 driver trainees however 46 drivers graduated in spring and are leaving. For full regular service, 175 active drivers are needed. Based on current trainees and hires, Unitrans expects to have staffing near “pre-pandemic” levels in spring 2024. Hiring is currently focused on fall 2023 and replacing the drivers who are graduated in June 2023.

Customer Service

For FY2022-23, Unitrans received 130 complaints, approximately 12% higher than last year and the same as the last pre-pandemic year. With ridership up, a higher level of complaints was expected. The most frequent complaint categories are for driver safety and pass ups accounting for about half of all complaints. “Other” issues also make up a large portion of complaints and include missing bus stop sign reports, passenger/passenger conflicts, disruptive passenger complaints, and NextBus GPS issues.

By category, 26% of complaints were regarding driver safety issues, 24% for pass ups, 8% from customers with disabilities, and 14% for other issues as summarized above.

Safety complaints focused on perceived speeding and buses “weaving” in the roadway. These complaints are followed up on and investigated. Speeding complaints can be investigated via on-board systems. Most speeding complaints are perceived and are not actually speeding buses. For weaving vehicles, these complaints are focused on areas

with low hanging trees where drivers must slow down and enter the center median or opposing lane of traffic to avoid damaging the vehicle.

Unitrans received 24 customer commendations; this is the most commendations we have ever received.

Safety

For the past three fiscal years, Unitrans has had no safety incidents that have required vehicle towing or a medical transport. In September 2022, Unitrans had four incidents requiring testing and/or towing. There were no additional incidents between October 2022 and June 2023 however despite high ridership and poor weather in winter.

For spring quarter, Unitrans, with the University and ASUCD, implemented a crossing guard pilot program at the Silo Terminal to help with high bicycle, pedestrian, bus, and other vehicle traffic in the area. The pilot program lasted through spring quarter on weekdays from 8:30 AM to 7:30 PM at a cost of approximately \$80,000. The goal of the program was to assist safe interactions between all modes of transportation in and around the Silo Terminal area. The program may be extended into next fiscal year. The program was well received by Unitrans and University staff however cross guard behavior was inconsistent among the staff.

Unitrans started using driver focused safety cameras in winter 2023. The cameras flag driving behavior that needs review. Our Safety Manager and a career trainer currently review all footage and alerts and follow up with drivers on issues. The program has been helpful in identifying safety issues and providing evidence of good, safe defensive driving.

Security

Staff filed an official request in June 2021 to have all fencing around the Unitrans Operations and Maintenance Facility upgraded to eight-foot fencing from the current five-foot fencing. Half the facility has the taller fencing which was upgraded when the electric bus infrastructure was installed. There has been no progress to date.

We had no major reportable security incidents this quarter.

Finance

The Unitrans FY2022-23 budget is balanced with \$8.7 million in revenues and expenditures. The budget included higher wages for front line student staff to improve retention, higher fuel and parts costs, and a restoration of service levels to pre-pandemic levels. Fiscal year end projections show an estimated, unaudited \$7.87 million in expenditures or 90% of the annual budget. Lower service levels and staff vacancies led to the lower overall expenditures. Revenues are at 90% of budget when

federal fund reimbursements are factored in. Overall expenditures are up 7% from last year.

Grant Application Updates

Unitrans submitted a proposal for the SACOG Regional Program in January 2023 to replace our two 2009 modern diesel-powered double decker buses with two new battery electric double decker buses. Unitrans is happy to report that SACOG staff recommended our program for full funding and the SACOG Board awarded us \$2,665,900. This project is expected to start in 2025.

Capital Update

2009 New Flyer Rehabilitation Project

Unitrans was awarded \$1.2 million in Federal State of Good Repair funding to rehabilitate our aging 2009 New Flyer single deck bus fleet. This funding is being used to rehabilitate 13 buses and help extend the useful life of these vehicles. New near-zero emission engine technology will replace the 14-year-old engines. The project kicked off in spring 2020 and all 13 buses are completed as of June 30, 2023! Due to supply chain issues, the program was delayed.

In addition to the engine rehabilitation, the exterior of the buses will be repainted. A request for quotes was released in June and will be awarded in August.

The total project cost estimate is \$2 million.

Battery Electric Bus Purchase

Unitrans secured funding for 14 battery electric buses to replace 14 old compressed natural gas buses. To purchase the buses, Unitrans has battery-electric bus options in an active joint procurement with the California Department of General Services. Unitrans completed negotiations for all 14 buses in June 2021. Six buses arrived in April 2022 and entered service in September 2022.

Unitrans is now working with New Flyer on the four buses due in August 2023.

The project is funded through Federal Transit Administration urban area formula funds, a \$3.76 million discretionary FTA Bus and Bus Facilities grant, and a SACOG regional program grant for \$2.52 million.

The project cost estimate is \$14 million.

Operations and Maintenance Facility Electrification, Rehabilitation, and Improvements – Phase 2

Unitrans worked with DCM to prepare conceptual engineering for the second phase of the electric bus support project. The second phase may expand bus parking to the east of the current facility footprint and support up to 14 additional battery electric buses. Because securing funding can take many years, Unitrans staff requested the Phase 2 cost estimate and conceptual drawings now to pursue funding. The second phase is planned for ~2025 which means engineering work needs to start by 2024.

Consultant work on Phase 2 kicked off over fall quarter with preliminary review due in August 2023.

As part of this project, staff is pursuing additional repairs to the northern half of the facility which has severely degraded asphalt. A project request was submitted to repave the northern half of the facility, upgrade security fencing, and mechanize the in and out gates.

Bus Stop Improvement Project

Unitrans is preparing the permits for bus stop improvements to Covell Boulevard at Wright Boulevard and Covell Boulevard at Pole Line Road. Both stops have aging Sacramento Regional Transit bus furniture. Unitrans plans to install bus shelters, benches, and bicycle racks at these two stops this summer.

Thanks to City staff, the Sycamore Northbound at Russell bus stop (Trader Joe's bus stop) is now accessible!

Service Changes Effective August 7, 2023

At the April 2023 UAC meeting, the committee approved our proposed annual bus service changes. The changes are scheduled to go into effect on August 7, 2023.

Approved changes:

A and Z line terminal changes – Starting August 7, the A line will go to the Memorial Union Bus Terminal and the Z line will go to the Silo Bus Terminal. Both schedules are significantly revised. The change is focused on safety to help reduce the number of buses operating through the campus core during the class passing periods.

Approved Changes On Hold:

The UAC approved an O and Z line route change to operate on Cantrill Drive northbound instead of Pena Drive northbound. The only accessible bus stop location available on Cantrill Drive is in front of the Police Station which made the bus stop and routing infeasible. We'd like to now work with the City on establishing a stop on Cantrill Drive closer to The U Apartments that would not conflict with the Police Station.

Other Changes:

- Minor schedule changes will go into effect on the C, E, G, L, U, and V lines.
- The first weekend morning P & Q trips will be full trips starting from the terminal.
- All 12:00 PM departures will become 12:10 PM departures to reduce buses driving on campus during class passing periods.
- The All Door Boarding Pilot Program which started in fall 2021 will come to an end. On single deck buses, customers will be directed to only board through the front doors. On double deckers, customers may board through the rear door when a conductor is present. Fare/passes will be checked at both doors.

Attachments:

1. Quarterly Charts
2. General Manager's Report Presentation