

## STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** April 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. 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

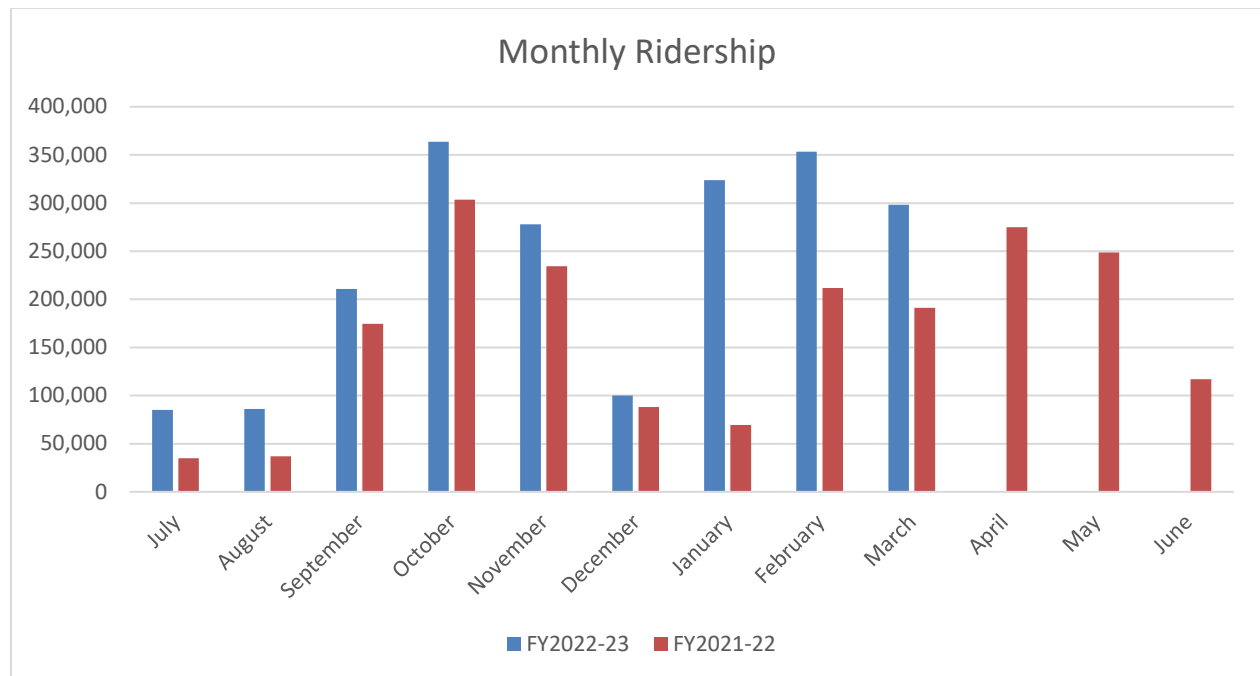
Currently, only one bus line has 60-minute service, the Z line serving East Davis and Target via Fifth Street. Fifth Street is also supported by 30-minute A line service and 30-minute peak Yolobus Route 42 service providing robust, convenient service to Fifth Street residents and alternatives to Z line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

As drivers finish training, Unitrans has gradually restored service to 30-minutes on bus lines and has continued to focus on crowding/on-time performance issues. Unitrans will

not restore 15-minute service this academic year due to staffing issues and does not foresee restoring higher service levels until early 2024.

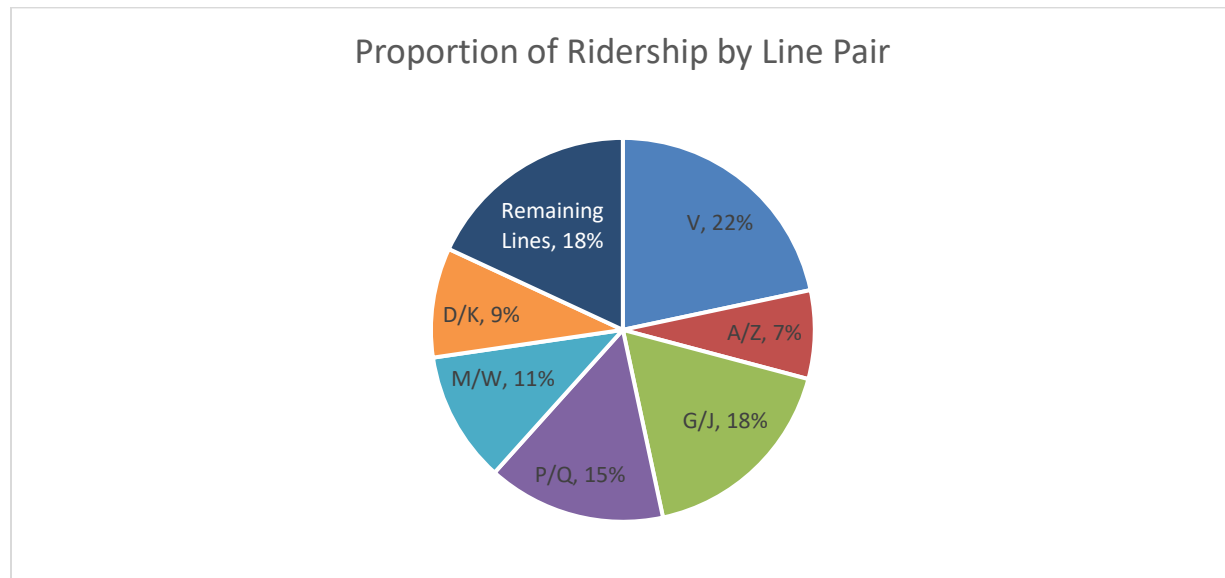
Average academic weekday ridership hit a three year high of 18,400 in January 2023 with our highest ridership day exceeding 20,000 passengers at the beginning of winter quarter. Average weekday ridership fell to 17,400 in February and to 11,000 in March with finals and spring break. A return to in-person learning at UC Davis along with cold, wet weather likely led to the increase in ridership. With service levels still below pre-pandemic levels, Unitrans struggled to meet customer demand in the morning peak period.

Based on current academic year ridership, Unitrans expects to transport 2.7 – 2.9 million customers in FY2022-23.



In winter quarter, 30-minute service was restored on the E, F, and L lines. E line ridership surged 45% in winter quarter compared to fall. F line ridership increased 16% compared to fall and L line ridership increased 8% compared to fall. Overall winter ridership was up 10% compared to fall.

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 15%, the M/W lines in South Davis for 11% of riders, and the D/K in West Davis for 9% of riders. Even though ridership increased on the E and F lines, both lines were still the lowest ridership lines systemwide.



### Summer 2023 Plans

Summer plans are still being assessed but Unitrans hopes to operate regular summer service starting June 16 until fall quarter 2023 begins. If driver numbers are favorable, this will be the first time since summer 2019 that Unitrans will operate regular summer service.

### Mobile Fare Payment Introduction - ZipPass

Unitrans launched the smartphone mobile app, ZipPass, in December 2022. ZipPass allows customers to pay their fare and buy a pass on their smartphone. ZipPass is now accepted on Unitrans, Yolobus, Causeway Connection, and Sacramento Regional Transit allowing customers to more easily use and transfer between almost all services in Davis and on campus.

Unitrans Fares/Passes Available:

- Single Ride
- 10-Ride Ticket
- Monthly Pass
- Quarterly Pass
- Annual Pass (next fiscal year)
- Senior, Youth, and Customer with Disability Pass

A 20% discount for fares and passes was available on ZipPass through March 10, 2023. The undergraduate registration card/pass is not available on ZipPass however staff is exploring this addition with campus staff. Sales have shifted strongly to ZipPass with half of sales going mobile since January.

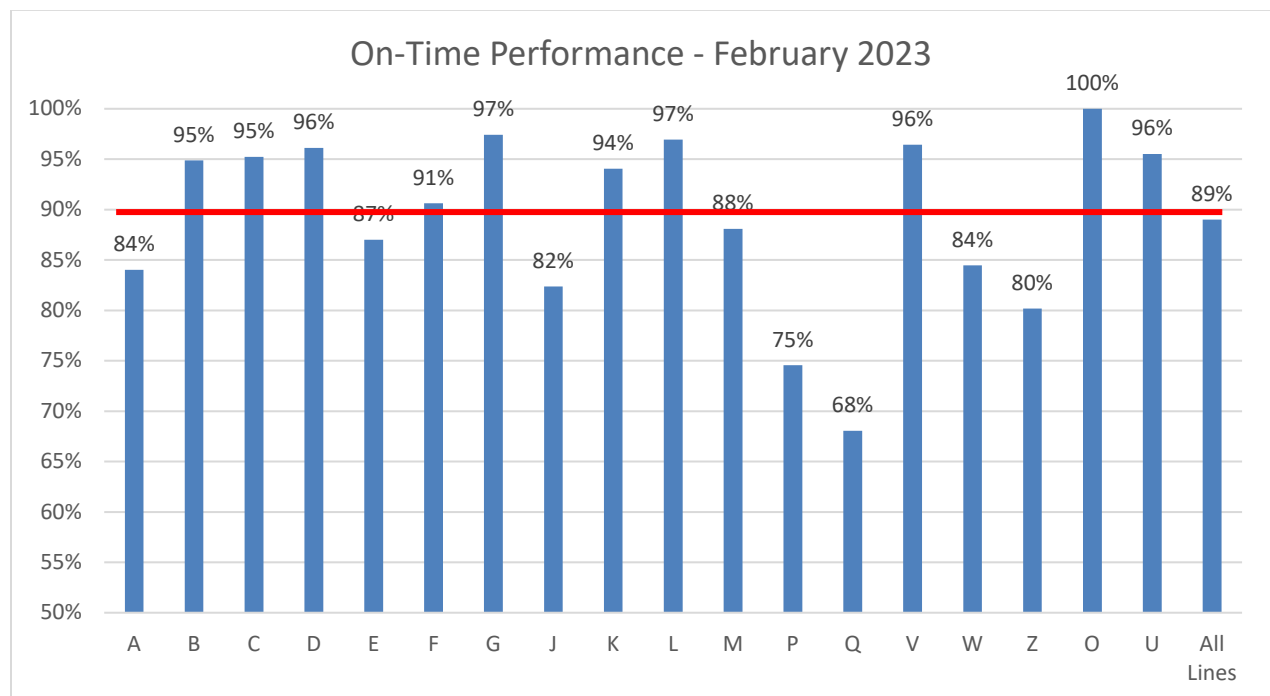
## On-Time Performance (OTP)

Quarterly on-time performance is based on a one month review each quarter. For winter, the review month is February. In February, systemwide on-time performance was 89%, up approximately 2% from fall quarter.

Ten lines improved compared to fall performance and only two declined in performance.

Systemwide performance overall was below the 90% on-time performance goal however individually, 10 of 18 lines were at or above the 90% goal.

Unitrans staff is continuing to work with campus partners on signaling systems. UC Davis campus confirmed in winter 2022 that the Unitrans funded signal priority system was shut down across campus and does not have information on when this occurred. Campus is hiring a consultant to study restoring transit signal priority.



## Customer Service

With three-quarters of the year over, 98 complaints have been received, approximately the same as last year and lower than pre-pandemic numbers. With ridership up, a higher level of complaints was expected compared to last year. The most frequent complaint categories are for driver safety and pass ups. "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, 27% of complaints were regarding driver safety issues, 22% for pass ups, 8% for early bus arrivals, and 15% 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 18 customer commendations; this is the most commendations we have received in a nine-month period.

## **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 through March 2023 however despite high ridership and poor weather.

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 will last 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 is to assist with safe interactions between all modes of transportation in and around the Silo Terminal area. The program may be extended into next fiscal year if successful.

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.

## **Finance**

The Unitrans FY2022-23 budget is balanced with \$8.7 million in revenues and expenditures. The budget includes 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. Through March 2023, Unitrans spent an estimated, unaudited \$5.7 million or 66% of the annual budget. Revenues are only at 47% of budget as spring 2023 student fees and Federal funds are not yet allocated. Overall expenditures are up 5% from last year. Expenditures are below the expected level this year due to lower than budgeted service levels as the driver shortage continued.

## ***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 electric double decker buses. SACOG will be reporting on program award recommendations in May 2023.

## **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 11 buses are completed to date with the last two buses underway. Due to supply chain issues, completion of the remaining buses was delayed. The engine work is projected to be completed by June 2023.

In addition to the engine rehabilitation, the exterior of the buses will be repainted. A request for proposals was submitted to University's Contracting Services for review and bidding. We expect the project to be awarded this summer.

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 July 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 spring 2023.

In the meantime, 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. There is no progress to date.

### ***Bus Stop Improvement Project***

Unitrans and City staff are working on ADA accessibility for the bus stop on Sycamore Lane Northbound at Russell Boulevard. The stop is not currently accessible. The City is moving the bus stop location slightly to the north and removing 15 feet of parking that will result in an accessible bus stop. This will be a great improvement for our customers who go to Trader Joe's!

Attachments:

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