

## STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** January 25, 2024  
**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**

Over the summer, staff worked diligently towards training drivers and preparing for fall. With over 50 drivers graduating, our goal was to maintain spring 2023 service levels for fall 2023. Driver recruitment went well at the beginning of summer, but Unitrans struggled to attract driver hires in mid and late summer, a trend that other UC Davis student employers also experienced. Despite the challenges, Unitrans continued spring 2023 service levels into fall 2023 which started on September 27, 2023. Our goal is to continue to gradually restore pre-pandemic service levels as the academic year continues.

The following summarizes service levels this academic/fiscal year to date.

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

Fall 2023 Service Starting September 27, 2023:

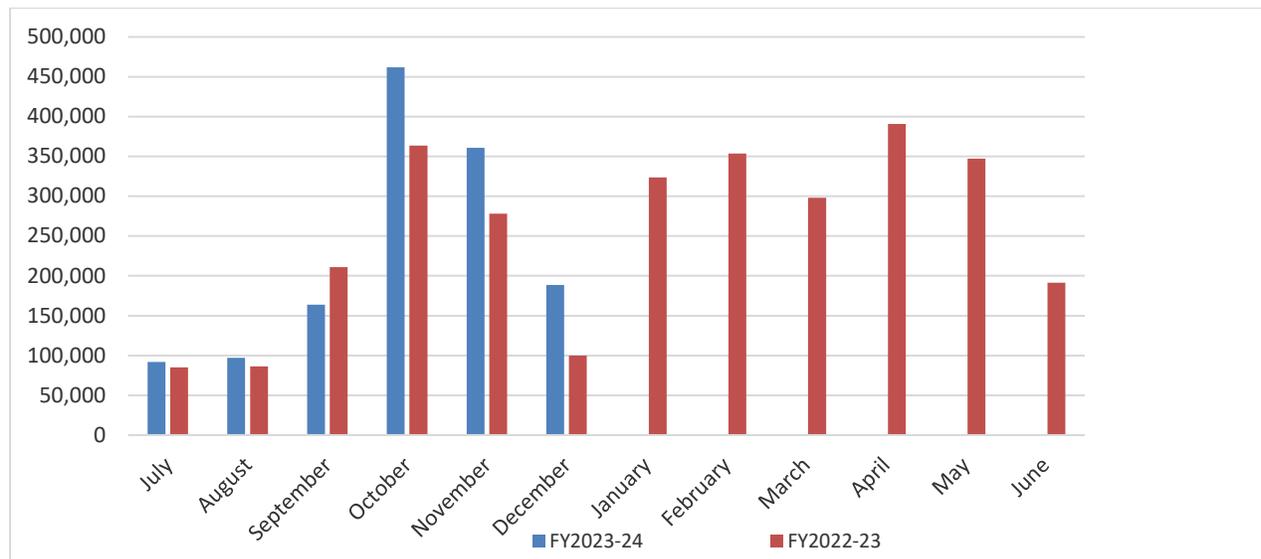
- 30-minute service: B, C, D, E, F, G, J, K, L, M, P, Q, V-Ex, V-Lt, W, and Z
- 60-minute service: A

Over the course of the fiscal year, Unitrans will aim to restore 30-minute service to all bus lines and implement 15-20 minute frequencies on our most crowded routes. Unitrans does not expect to be at pre-pandemic service levels without additional training support. While hiring is currently strong, the Training Department does not have the capacity to replace graduating employees and increase staffing to pre-pandemic levels.

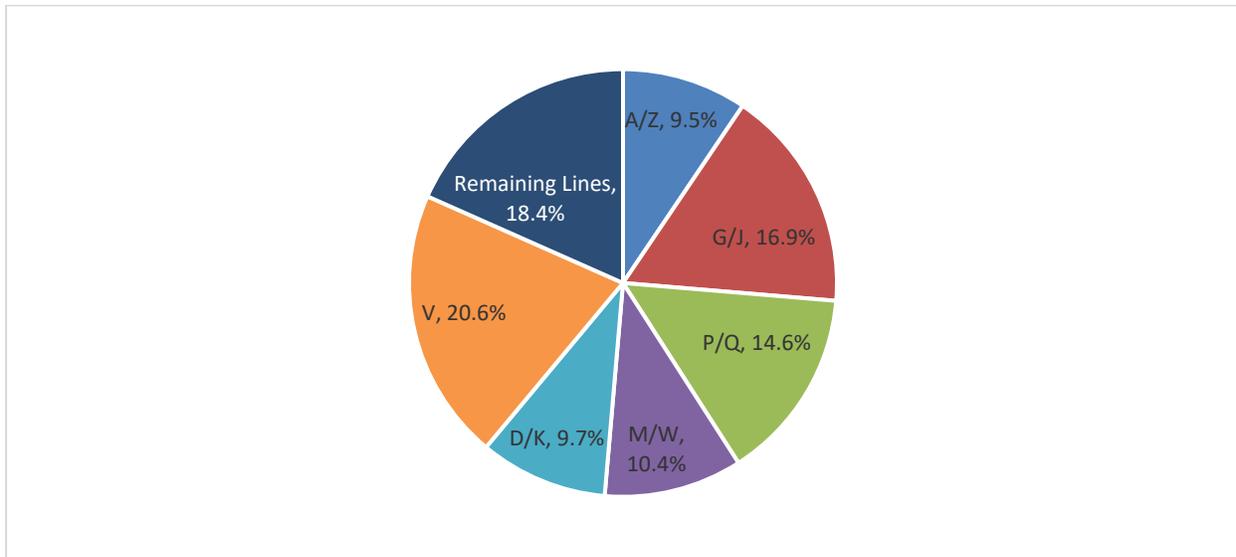
Unitrans is working with University partners on how to temporarily increase the size of the Training Department to increase driver staffing.

Ridership was up 21% compared to the previous year with service hours and miles up approximately 15% each compared to the previous year. Since July 1, 2023, Unitrans transported 1.36 million customers compared to 1.12 million the previous year. Unitrans projects annual ridership of 3.2-3.5 million in FY2023-24 compared to 3.0 million last year. Pre-pandemic annual ridership was 3.8 million. Buses were crowded and late because of high ridership and traffic, emphasizing a need for more service.

While September ridership was noticeably lower due to the late start in UC Davis classes this year, October, November, and December ridership were up strongly. Last academic year, Unitrans averaged 17,000 weekday boardings in fall quarter and this fall, Unitrans averaged 19,000 weekday boardings.



By line, the V line in West Village (including V Express and V Limited lines) carried the most customers accounting for 20.6% of all customer trips. The G/J lines accounted for 17% of customers, P/Q lines for 14.6% of customers, M/W lines for 10.4% of customers, and the D/K and A/Z lines each accounted for about 9.5% of customers. The lowest ridership was on the F line which carried approximately 2% of customers.

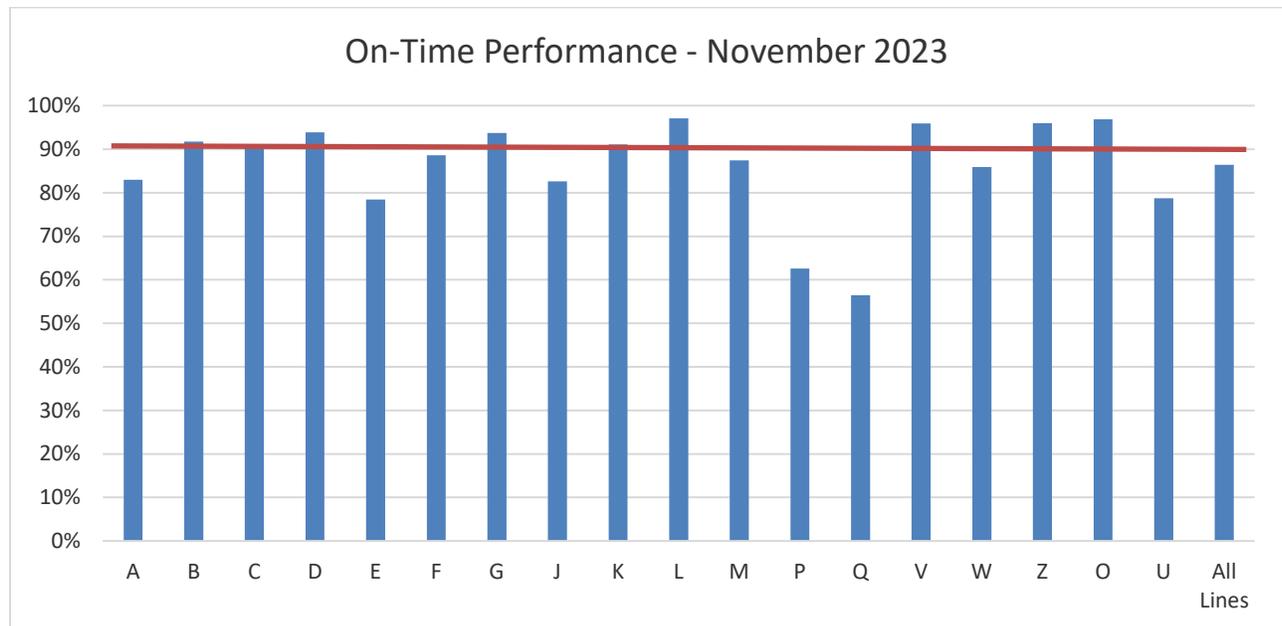


### **On-Time Performance (OTP)**

The quarterly on-time performance review is based on a one month review each quarter. For fall, the review month is November. On-time performance fell to lows not seen since before the pandemic as ridership continued to grow and traffic increased.

Systemwide performance was at the 86% on-time performance goal with 9 of 18 lines at or above the 90% goal. The worst on-time performance was on the P and Q lines which were severely impacted by traffic and construction delays. The Q line was only on-time 56% of the time and the P line only 63% of the time. Traffic on the 14<sup>th</sup> Street corridor during school bell times and Mace Boulevard in the afternoons contributed to low on-time performance.

Unitrans staff has been working since 2020 to advocate for reactivation of signal priority systems on campus and on Russell Boulevard. The campus acknowledged in 2022 that the system was turned off at some point and hired a consultant to review the system and prepare new timing plans. As of winter break 2023, the transit signal priority system has been restored at the four campus controlled intersections.



## Customer Service

In the first half of the fiscal year, Unitrans received 83 complaints and six commendations. This is the highest level since the pandemic. Fall and winter quarter is when we see higher than usual complaint volumes due to crowding issues and delays.

The most frequent complaint categories are for driver safety and pass-ups accounting for 35% of all complaints. "Other" issues made up 26% of complaints and include disruptive passenger issues and passenger/passenger conflicts (trending up), bus stop sign reports, bus stop cleaning requests, passenger/passenger conflicts, and issues with bus arrival predictions.

Safety complaints focused on perceived speeding, running red lights or stale yellow lights, 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.

Almost 40% of complaints were deemed valid, 40% invalid, and 20% unknown due to lack of information for follow-up or another reason.

## Safety

In spring 2023, 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 was suspended during summer due to lower traffic volumes but resumed for the start of fall quarter 2023. Contracted crossing guards assisted the Silo Terminal area for the first four weeks of fall quarter and then the UC Davis Police Department support staff provided assistance through fall finals week. Starting in winter 2024, UC Davis PD will continue support for the first half of the quarter and the University's Transportation Services department will assume responsibility over the crossing guard program during the second half of the quarter.

## Finance

The Unitrans FY2023-24 budget is balanced with \$9 million in revenues and expenditures. The budget includes the January 1 minimum wage adjustment for student staff, a student staff retention wage adjustment of \$0.25/hour, higher fuel and parts costs, and a restoration of service levels to pre-pandemic levels although our ability to deliver on this may not be possible due to staffing issues. The budget increased 3.6% this year compared to last year. To date, 44% of budget expenditures have been recorded with 50% of the year completed. Overall spending is up 5% compared to the same time last year.

### *Student Fee Revenue*

The student fee revenue increase, approved by the student body in February 2019, started in October 2019. Unitrans operations financial support directly from the undergraduate student body has more than doubled since 2019 as a result. Of the increase, 75% is provided to Unitrans and 25% is returned to student financial aid. Starting in FY2023-24, the fee is indexed to an annual campus-determined inflation factor.

Category	Pre-2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	2024+
Operations	\$29.00	\$39.00	\$45.00	\$51.00	\$57.00	+CPI
Capital	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$4.00	+CPI
Return to Student Aid	\$1.50	\$4.83	\$6.83	\$8.83	\$10.83	+CPI
<b>Total Quarterly Fee</b>	<b>\$34.50</b>	<b>\$47.83</b>	<b>\$55.83</b>	<b>\$63.83</b>	<b>\$71.83</b>	<b>+CPI</b>

### *Federal Transit Administration 5307 Formula Funds*

Unitrans received federal apportionment totals for federal fiscal year 2023 in January 2023. The City of Davis was apportioned \$5.9 million in FFY2023. These totals are temporarily increased due to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill. Stable federal funding ensures stable operations and stable investment in capital programs. Increased funding will ensure Unitrans can continue progress on restoring service, affording inflationary

impacts, and investing in the transition to electric buses as required by California State laws.

### *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act*

Since December 2020, two additional COVID-19 relief packages were signed into law. In late December 2020, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 (CRRSAA) relief package included transit funding provisions however additional aid was focused on large urban areas and the City of Davis received no additional funding. With the March 2020 package known as the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the City of Davis was allocated \$830,150 in additional transit funding by the Federal Transit Administration.

Through the original Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act authorized in March 2020, the City of Davis was apportioned \$10,308,599 in funding. The total was higher than similar sized communities because Unitrans ridership is so high and efficient which results in additional funding for "transit intensive communities". Yolo County Transportation District and Unitrans staff provided a joint recommendation to City staff to provide 36% of the funding to YCTD and 64% of the funding to City of Davis (DCT and Unitrans).

Through the Program of Projects approved by the UAC on August 5, 2021 and by City Council on August 31, 2021, all ARPA funds and an additional increment of CARES funds were allocated to the Yolo County Transportation District from the City of Davis to fund local Davis bus service via Yolobus for the 2021-22 UC Davis academic year. The ARPA funds allocated to YCTD for 2021-22 service in Davis were not fully expended. The remaining funding allocated to Unitrans will be used to offset TDA contributions through FY2023-24 as agreed to with the City in April 2021.

All Unitrans CARES Act funding will be exhausted this fiscal 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 the SACOG Board awarded us \$2,665,900. Staff are now working with the University on the contracting process to purchase these buses.

## **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 replaced the 14-year-old engines. The project kicked off in spring 2020 and all 13 buses were completed as of June 30, 2023. Due to supply chain issues, the program was significantly delayed.

In addition to the engine rehabilitation, the exterior of the buses will be repainted. A request for quotes was released in early summer 2023, bids were received and reviewed, and the contract was awarded in fall 2023. The first bus is being repainted as of January 10, 2024.

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. Four more buses arrived in August 2023 and entered service in October 2023.

Unitrans is now working with New Flyer on the final four buses due in fall 2024.

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 will focus on constructing an overhead charging gantry system in the northern part of the Unitrans bus yard and is planned to support up to 16 more buses. The cost estimate for the project is approximately \$8 million and includes fencing upgrades and pavement rehabilitation for half of the bus yard.

The second phase is planned for 2026 which means engineering work needs to start this year.

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

Unitrans received the permit 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. The work is scheduled for January 2024.

City staff are working to improve accessibility to over 40 locations across the City where parking, lack of sidewalks, or landscaped medians are blocking full bus stop accessibility.

Attachments:

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