



SunLine Transit Agency
April 22, 2021
11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

AGENDA

STRATEGIC PLANNING & OPERATIONAL COMMITTEE Regular Meeting

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Pursuant to California Governor Newsom's Executive Orders N-25-20 issued on March 4, 2020 and N-29-20 issued on March 18, 2020, the Board Operations Committee meeting will be conducted remotely through Zoom. Please follow the instructions below to join the meeting remotely.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ELECTRONIC PARTICIPATION

Join Zoom Meeting - from PC, Laptop or Phone

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83036152780>

Meeting ID: 830 3615 2780

Teleconference Dial In
888-475-4499 (Toll Free)
Meeting ID: 830 3615 2780

One tap mobile
+16699009128,,83036152780#

Phone controls for participants:

The following commands can be used on your phone's dial pad while in Zoom meeting:

- *6 - Toggle mute/unmute
- *9 - Raise hand

For members of the public wishing to submit comment in connection with the Strategic Planning & Operational Committee Meeting: all public comment requests need to be submitted via email to the Clerk of the Board at clerkoftheboard@sunline.org prior to April 21, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. with your name, telephone number and subject of your public comment (agenda item or non-agenda item). Members of the public may make public comments through their telephone or Zoom connection when recognized by the Chair. If you send written comments, your comments will be made part of the official record of the proceedings and read into the record.

ITEM

RECOMMENDATION

In compliance with the Brown Act and Government Code Section 54957.5, agenda materials distributed 72 hours prior to the meeting, which are public records relating to open session agenda items, will be available for inspection by members of the public prior to the meeting at SunLine Transit Agency's Administration Building, 32505 Harry Oliver Trail, Thousand Palms, CA 92276 and on the Agency's website, www.sunline.org.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Government Code Section 54954.2, and the Federal Transit Administration Title VI, please contact the Clerk of the Board at (760) 343-3456 if special assistance is needed to participate in a Board meeting, including accessibility and translation services. Notification of at least 48 hours prior to the meeting time will assist staff in assuring reasonable arrangements can be made to provide assistance at the meeting.

ITEM

RECOMMENDATION

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. FLAG SALUTE

3. ROLL CALL

4. PRESENTATIONS

5. FINALIZATION OF AGENDA

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS

RECEIVE COMMENTS

NON AGENDA ITEMS

Members of the public may address the Committee regarding any item within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Committee; however, no action may be taken on off-agenda items unless authorized. Comments shall be limited to matters not listed on the agenda. Members of the public may comment on any matter listed on the agenda at the time that the Board considers that matter. Comments may be limited to 3 minutes in length.

7. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

RECEIVE COMMENTS

**8. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF THE DRAFT FY22-24
SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN (SRTP) – SUMMARY
AND HIGHLIGHTS**

**DISCUSSION
(PAGE 3-31)**

(Staff: Rohan Kuruppu, Chief Planning Consultant)

9. ADJOURN

SunLine Transit Agency

DATE:	April 22, 2021	DISCUSSION
TO:	Strategic Planning & Operational Committee	
FROM:	Rohan Kuruppu, Chief Planning Consultant	
RE:	Review and Discussion of the Draft FY22-24 Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) – Summary and Highlights	

Background

The FY22-24 Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) describes near and long-term initiatives for SunLine Transit Agency (SunLine) to support the local economy, meet the mobility needs of the Coachella Valley, attract choice riders, expand transit market share, gain new transit users and recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The SRTP, updated annually, covers fiscal years 2022 to 2024, and describes SunLine's short-term operating and capital plans, and identifies Coachella Valley's long-term transit needs including frequency improvements for planning and developing funding sources to implement the improvements over a 25-plus year planning horizon. This plan represents the local efforts of SunLine, pending approval of Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) and Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), which are the regional planning agencies for the Coachella Valley.

The SRTP is prepared in accordance with the requirements and guidelines of RCTC, as well as the California Public Utilities Code and California Transportation Development Act.

Furthermore, the SRTP lists projects eligible for Transportation Uniform Mitigation Fee (TUMF) funds administered by the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG). TUMF funds and collaborative planning efforts with CVAG are essential to deliver regionally significant transit services and transit-supportive infrastructure projects such as transit signal priority, super stop mobility hubs, high quality transit corridors, hydrogen fueling infrastructure, acquisition of buses, improved accessibility to transit, and first-mile/last-mile solutions. Furthermore, the recommendations of the SRTP should be modeled and analyzed as a key mobility component of the Nexus Impact Fee Study that supports overall mobility, funding and project delivery strategies for the Coachella Valley. As a local funding source, TUMF funds are essential to leveraging federal and other discretionary grants.

The FY22-24 SRTP identifies financially feasible improvements that can provide faster, more efficient, and more convenient service to help attract choice riders. Implementation of these recommendations is contingent on funding, demand and

recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Attached is a summarized version of the SRTP for discussion and to obtain input.

The next steps will include presenting a full draft of the SRTP to the Strategic Planning & Operational Committee in May and presenting the final SRTP to this committee and the full Board of Directors for approval in June. The draft versions are also simultaneously reviewed by RCTC staff and finally approved by the RCTC Commission in July.

The service improvements recommended for implementation are within the confines of the budget under preparation.

Attachments:

- [Item 8a](#) – FY2022-2024 SRTP Summary
- [Item 8b](#) – SRTP Update Presentation

Attachment

SRTP FY22-24 Summary – Discussion item

SunLine is the premier transportation provider in the Coachella Valley, connecting its residents with health care, jobs, schools and a spectrum of other destinations. In 2020, despite the significant challenges prompted by the coronavirus pandemic, SunLine charted an ambitious and strategic path forward and implemented key elements of the plan to push the agency in a new direction aimed at attracting choice riders, boosting ridership and creating a brighter future.

The annual Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) covers a three-year span and serves as the actual implementation and financial plan for year one and projections for two additional years.

REFUELED INITIATIVE

During the year, SunLine made great strides to improve its service, completing a multitude of capital projects and, as part of its Refueled initiative, overhauled its transit network by restructuring its routes to meet future demand.

More specifically, as shown in Figure 1. the Refueled initiative included:

1. The consolidation of 15 routes to nine (9) routes, minimizing transfer connections and introducing more one-seat rides, expanding the high-frequency span of service, introducing a Timed Transfer System, laying the transit network along current and future transit supportive land uses, simplifying the route numbering system so customers could better understand and memorize their trip which is a key component of improving customer service and making public transit attractive to choice riders.
2. The implementation of SunRide which is a microtransit service operating in four pilot zones along the Cook Street corridor in Palm Desert, Desert Edge, Coachella and Mecca-North Shore.
3. The launch of 10 Commuter Link service between Indio and San Bernardino (implementation postponed until July 12).
4. The introduction of Route 1X pilot project to test the viability of limited-stop express service between Indio and Palm Springs (implementation postponed until September 7).

Figure 1. Four pillars of the Refueled initiative.



PANDEMIC EFFECTS ON REFUELED INITIATIVE AND SERVICE

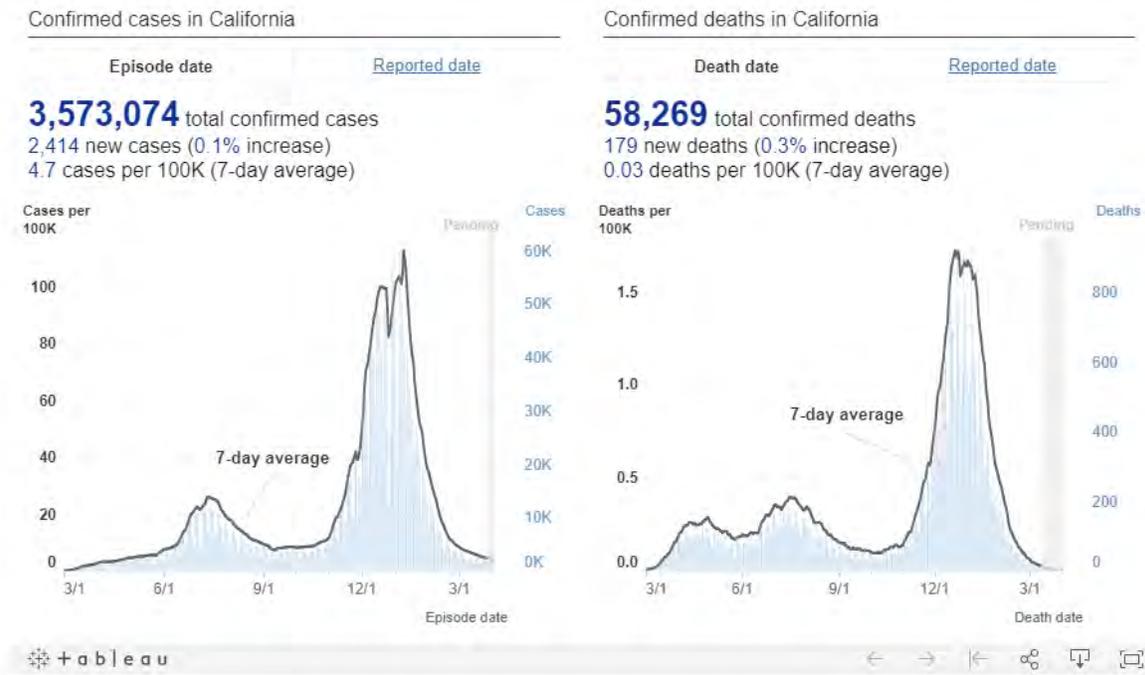
In the midst of these planning efforts, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a major national and global disruption with the closures of businesses, schools, and entertainment venues and the enforcement of national and statewide public health policies.

Consequently, SunLine rolled out only the first two pillars of the Refueled initiative, the Consolidated Fixed Route Network and SunRide, and postponed the start of the other two pillars: the implementation of 10 Commuter Link and Route 1X.

Additionally, SunLine had to reduce service, operating on a Sunday schedule seven days a week and implementing an ambitious plan to maximize safety for both customers and employees by enforcing face coverings and social distancing requirements as well as rear-door boarding, operating ghost buses to minimize overcrowding, suspending fare collection to minimize contact, enhancing the cleaning and sanitizing of buses and office spaces. These safety measures were unprecedented but necessary, given the fact that during the months of December 2020, and January 2021, the number of confirmed cases and deaths peaked in the State of California as shown in Figure 2. as we rolled out the first two pillars of the Refueled initiative.

FY2022-2024 SRTP Summary
Document For Discussion Only

Figure 2. Covid-19 Pandemic Trend in California

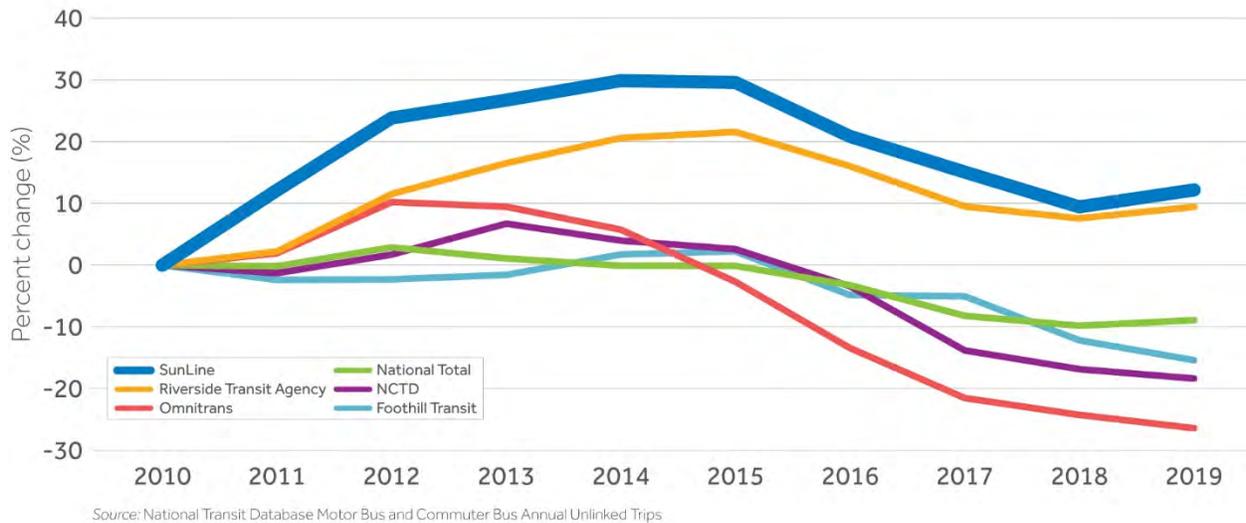


Note: Numbers do not represent true day-over-day changes as these results include cases from prior to yesterday. Episode date is the date the event is estimated to have taken place. Reported date is the date the event was reported to the California Department of Public Health. Cases includes people in state and federal prisons, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement facilities, US Marshal detention facilities, and Department of State Hospitals facilities. These groups are excluded from the Blueprint tier assignment calculations, which show different case and test positivity rates. A negative number of reported deaths means that deaths previously attributed to COVID-19 were determined to not be associated with COVID-19.

As shown in Figure 3, before the pandemic, SunLine had been leading its peers in ridership gains since 2010, bucking the national ridership trend. SunLine’s 2019 onboard rider survey showed a remarkable 93 percent overall customer satisfaction rating. These accomplishments and current initiatives such as the launch of 10 Commuter Link service between Indio and San Bernardino, the introduction of Route 1X pilot project to test the viability of limited-stop bus service between Indio and Palm Springs, the student Haul Pass program, and the SolVan vanpool program reflect SunLine’s ambitious plans to support the Coachella Valley’s economy and educational objectives. The remarkable outcomes are a direct result of SunLine’s continuous expansion, experimentation, and development of new service strategies and cleaner fuels to meet the local and national mobility and energy goals.

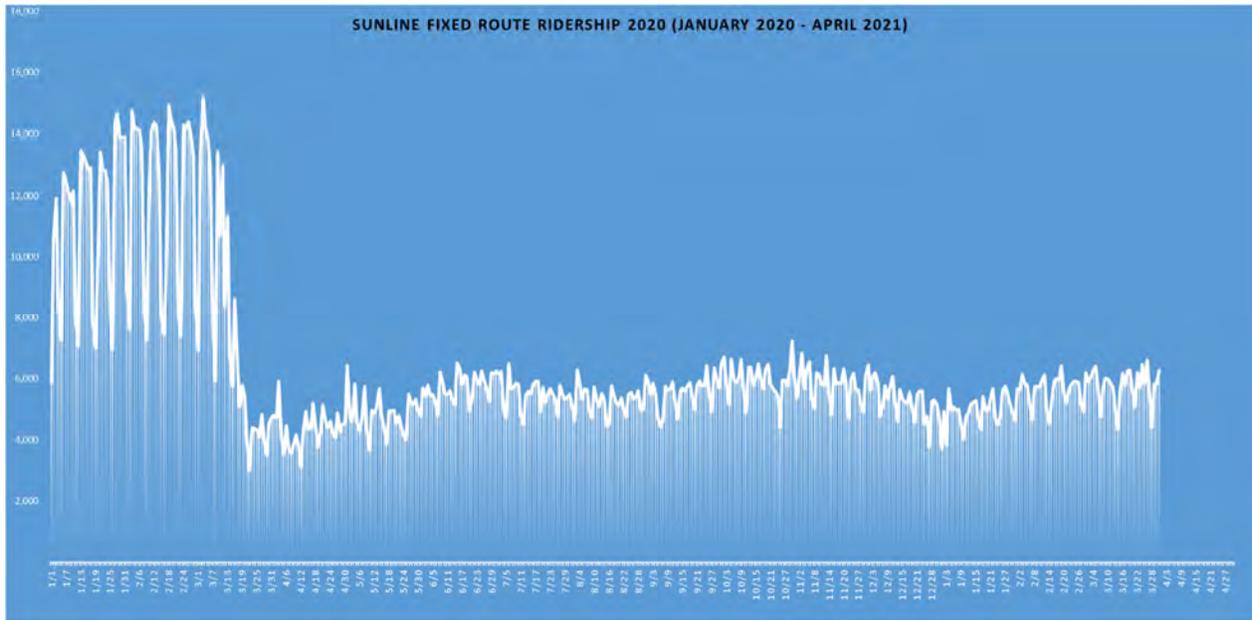
FY2022-2024 SRTP Summary
Document For Discussion Only

Figure 3. Percent Change in Fixed Route Ridership Relative to 2010 (to be updated with 2020 data in the final SRTP, 2020 NTD data is not available yet)



In March 2020, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the adverse effects on SunLine’s ridership peaked (Figure 4.). SunLine’s weekday fixed-route ridership dropped by 70 percent to 4,300 daily boardings. Paratransit ridership decreased by 80 percent to 100 daily boardings, compared to the same month of the previous year. The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting secondary impacts on the Coachella Valley’s economy, employment and day-to-day life warranted SunLine to change course to immediately support the region’s post COVID-19 pandemic recovery efforts. It’s important to note that SunLine kept service rolling and remained financially healthy avoiding any staff or service reductions and layoffs. That wouldn’t have been possible without the unwavering support of our Board of Directors, dedicated employees, community leaders and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Figure 4. Ridership Trend Since January 2020 to April 2021



Preliminary ridership gains as shown in Figures 5. and 6. suggest that the Refueled fixed-route network restructuring was successfully implemented. Typically, when bus routes are consolidated and transfers are eliminated, there is a drop in the number of boardings because more people will be enjoying one-seat rides to complete their trip – a key objective of the Refueled initiative. Based on first quarter data, the increase in the number of riders indicate that Refueled initiative is off to a great start, possibly even attracting new riders. Although a date has not yet been identified, as the region recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, and schools, businesses and entertainment venues reopen, SunLine plans to eventually resume normal service, akin to Level 1 (operating regular weekday schedule).

Figure 5. SunLine’s Refueled Ridership Variance Compared to April 2020 Baseline

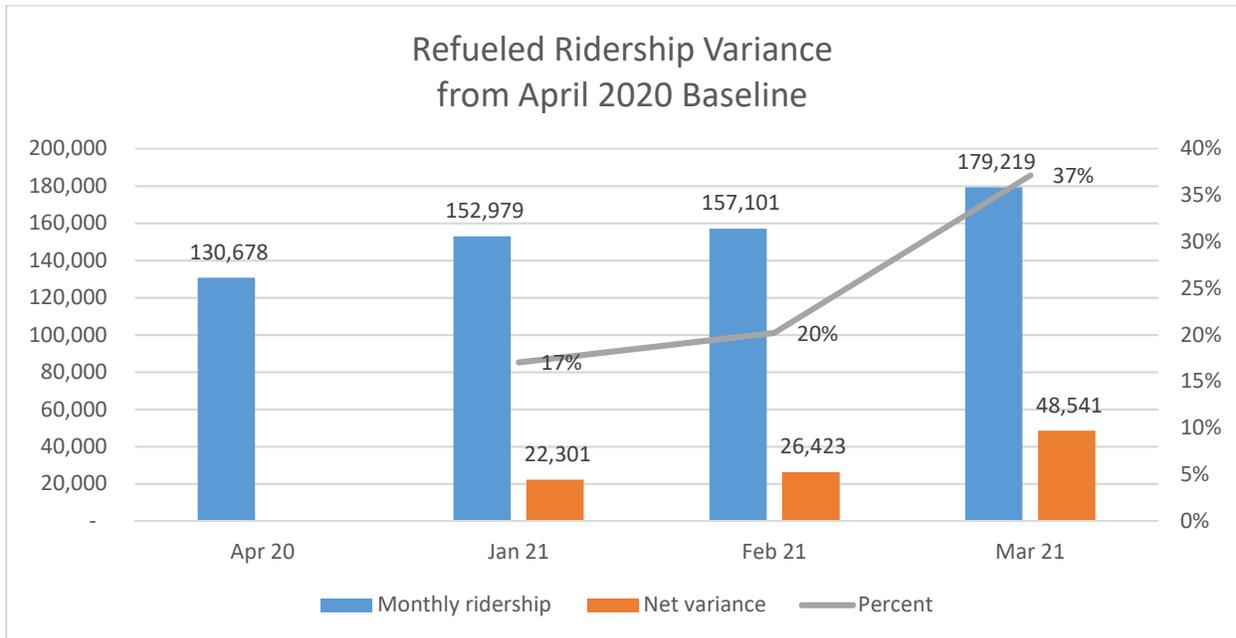
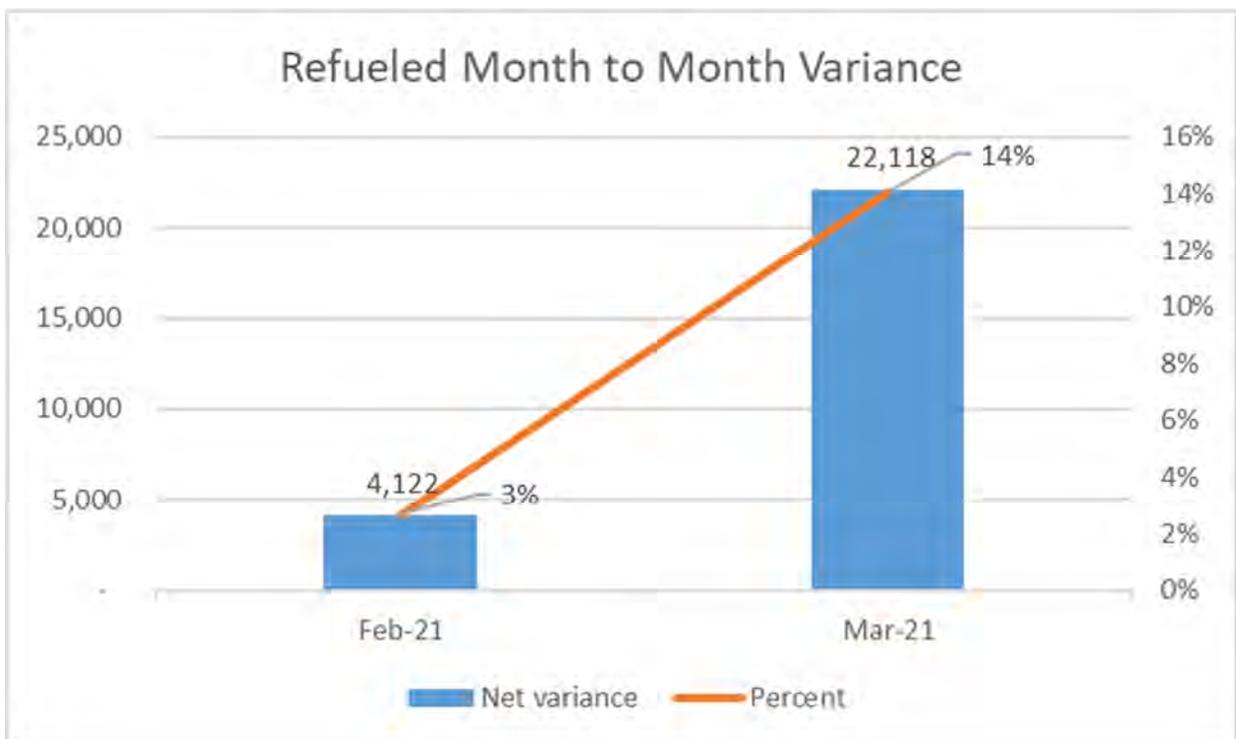


Figure 6. SunLine’s Refueled Ridership Month to Month Variance (since Refueled implementation January 2021)



FY2022-2024 SRTP Summary
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The Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) provided much-needed financial relief. With the combined federal assistance of the CARES Act and CRRSAA, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), SunLine was able to keep lifeline service on the streets to provide essential transportation to customers needing a ride to medical appointments, work, grocery shopping and other destinations.

While the American Rescue Plan is changing the course of the pandemic and delivering relief for working families, SunLine proactively planned and implemented the multimodal transit network to rebuild a new economy and support the American Jobs Plan, an investment in America that will create millions of jobs, rebuild our infrastructure, and position the United States to better compete in the global economy. This means SunLine is taking students and residents to schools, colleges and job training centers while developing the next generation of clean fuels and technologies.

The new law does far more than fund transit's COVID-19 needs. It also offers a wide range of longer-term assistance to workers, employers, schools, restaurants, retail businesses, event organizers, and towns, cities, and states – all of which are essential to reviving Coachella Valley's economy. SunLine is poised to undertake this challenge; we have been proactive and well prepared to support these economic recovery efforts.

MOVING FORWARD FROM THE PANDEMIC

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, SunLine pushed forward to fully implement the Refueled initiative with community involvement and outreach efforts. No doubt, the communities of Coachella Valley power and guide SunLine's decisions, providing a foundation for every decision we make. In every respect, the Refueled initiative is a direct response to improvements requested by the community.

Our work has just begun.

The FY22-24 Short Range Transit Plan lays out a methodical blueprint for recovering from the pandemic, attracting "choice riders" - which are essentially customers who have other mobility options but choose transit instead - and supporting the broader regional and national initiatives. The plan reflects the fact that the service provided by SunLine is a key part of supporting the local economy and building thriving communities through greener, more efficient and sustainable transportation options that connect with other forms of travel such as bicycles, carpools, park-and-rides, trains, and neighboring public transit providers.

Transit planning requires an understanding of all modes of transportation because they are all linked along the journey. Because every trip begins and ends with a trip to or from a bus stop,

FY2022-2024 SRTP Summary
Document For Discussion Only

accessibility and interconnectivity are essential components of planning and developing transit services to attract and encourage residents to use transit. SunLine is committed to building a multimodal transit network in partnership with the local jurisdictions, regional planning and funding agencies.

A well-designed transit network becomes part of the urban fabric that can be used by everyone for its simplicity and value. A great transit network values the customer's time. Transit that is easy to understand, easy to use, and simple to operate creates its own ridership and grows with the community. Layers of transit service, from high frequency to community shuttle are designed to create an effective network that grows with the community with each layer serving a different purpose. SunLine will continue to develop and implement strategies to attract choice riders, expand SunLine's market share and increase ridership.

LOOKING AHEAD

Fully implementing the approved Refueled initiative remains the highest priority. Item 2 below, which has been Board approved, will be implemented as a part of the May 2021 service change. The remaining items previously approved by Board of Directors are slated for implementation in FY22 as noted below during the first year of the SRTP and the other items will be implemented during the subsequent years as we develop new programs, apply for grants and develop new funding sources.

- 1) School trippers began on March 29 for students returning to in-class learning at local schools.
- 2) Fare collection and front-door boarding resume May 2.
- 3) 10 Commuter Link service between Indio and San Bernardino is expected to begin July 12, coinciding with the start of California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) on-campus classes on August 23.
- 4) Route 1X Pilot Project is expected to launch September 7, testing the effectiveness and desirability of limited-stop service between Indio and Palm Springs.
- 5) SunLine will continue to develop and implement strategies to attract choice riders, expand SunLine's market share and increase ridership. The following are potential action items:
 - a) Support the national American Jobs Plan and implement Level of Service 1 regular schedules as ridership and demand warrants.
 - b) Conduct an attitude and awareness survey/study in the fall to measure the effectiveness of the Refueled initiative. The survey should result in recommendations for future improvements and adjustments.
 - c) Update bus stop signs and schedule holders to enhance customer service, modernize our image on the streets and improve communications.
 - d) Develop strategies to implement approved frequency improvements to capture choice riders by developing successful new funding streams and grants.

FY2022-2024 SRTP Summary
Document For Discussion Only

- e) SunLine will capitalize on the CVLink multimodal corridor, which has the potential to connect neighborhoods to transit, activity centers, and address some of the first- and last-mile mobility needs of the Coachella Valley.
- f) Continue with SunLine's ongoing improvement, communications and education programs to enhance collaborative planning efforts that protect the integrity of the transit network and benefits of transit.
- g) Promote SunRide (microtransit service) as a way to provide lifeline service in areas that are difficult to serve with traditional fixed-route bus service.
- h) Improve the experience of the entire journey.

With the aggressive implementation of the SRTP's recommendations, SunLine is poised to meet the mobility needs for the residents of Coachella Valley and regional and national economic recovery efforts. A full draft of the SRTP and budget will be presented to the appropriate committee for review in May and the final Board approval is slated for June.



STRATEGIC PLANNING & OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

FY22 – 24 SRTP UPDATE DISCUSSION

1. Fiscal years 2022 to 2024
2. Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC), California Public Utilities Code and California Transportation Development Act
3. Plan must be financially constrained

FY22 – 24 SRTP FOCUS

1. Complete the implementation of Refueled initiatives
2. Recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic
3. Support the local economy
4. Building the multimodal transit network of Coachella Valley
5. Attract choice riders, expand transit market share, gain new transit users

FOUR PILLARS



**CONSOLIDATED FIXED
ROUTE NETWORK**

LAUNCHED JANUARY 2021



SUNRIDE

10 COMMUTER LINK

PLANNED JULY 2021



ROUTE 1X

PLANNED SEPTEMBER 2021

IMPLEMENTATION

1. School trips launched March 29
2. Fare collection and front-door boarding May 2
3. 10 Commuter Link service July 12
4. Route 1X Pilot Project September 7



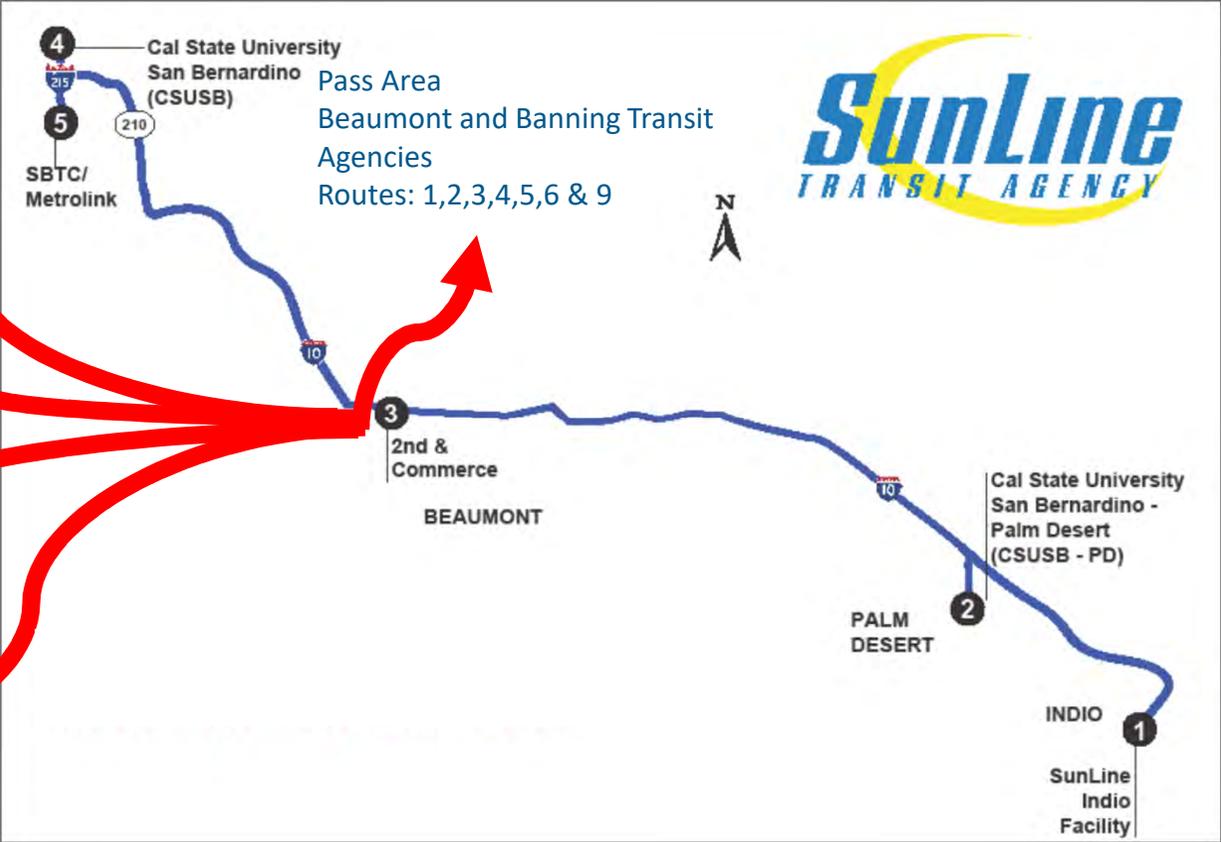
ROUTE 10 COMMUTER LINK SERVICE BETWEEN INDIO/CSUSB-PD TO SAN BERNARDINO (July 12)

SBTC/Metrolink
 Beaumont Transit - Route 120

VA Hospital/LLUMC
 Beaumont Transit - Route 125

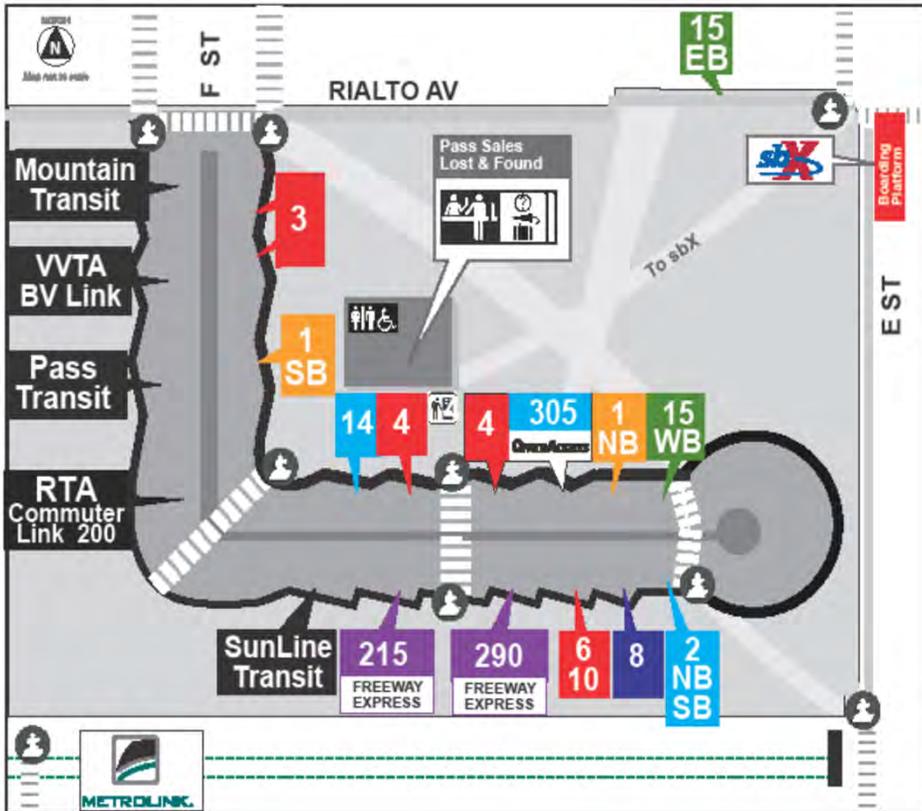
RUMC, Kaiser, UCR,
 Downtown Riverside,
 Moreno Valley
 RTA Routes 31 WB

Hemet, San Jacinto, RCC
 RTA Route 31 EB



DRIVING THE FUTURE OF TRANSIT

SAN BERNARDINO TRANSIT CENTER (SBTC)



SunLine
Refueled

DRIVING THE FUTURE OF TRANSIT

CAL STATE SAN BERNARDINO (CSUSB)



PARSONS | sbX Bus Rapid Transit Corridor
 GRUENASSOCIATES | OMNITRANS San Bernardino, California

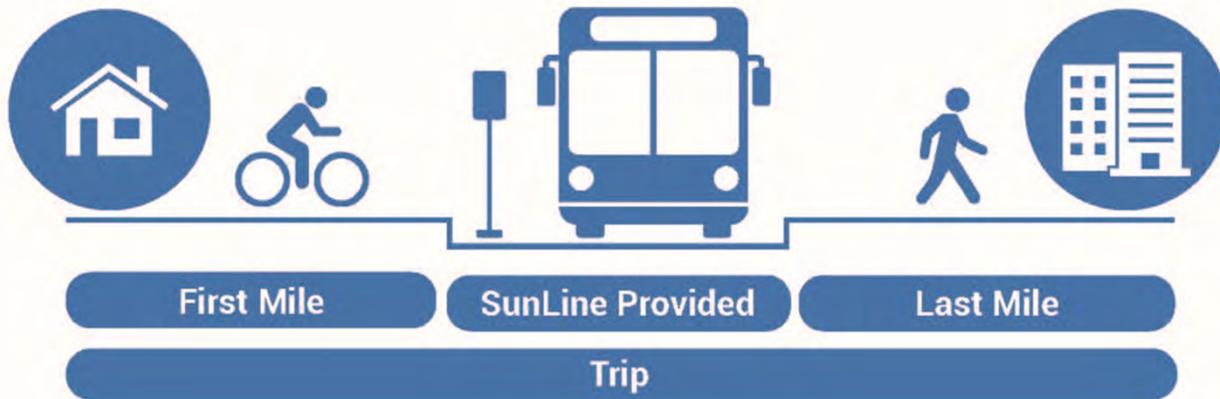


CSUSB STATION - ALTERNATIVE 2A
 TRANSIT CENTER WITH EXCLUSIVE LANE 2

ROUTE 1X (September 7)



INTERMODAL CONNECTED CLEAN TRANSIT NETWORK



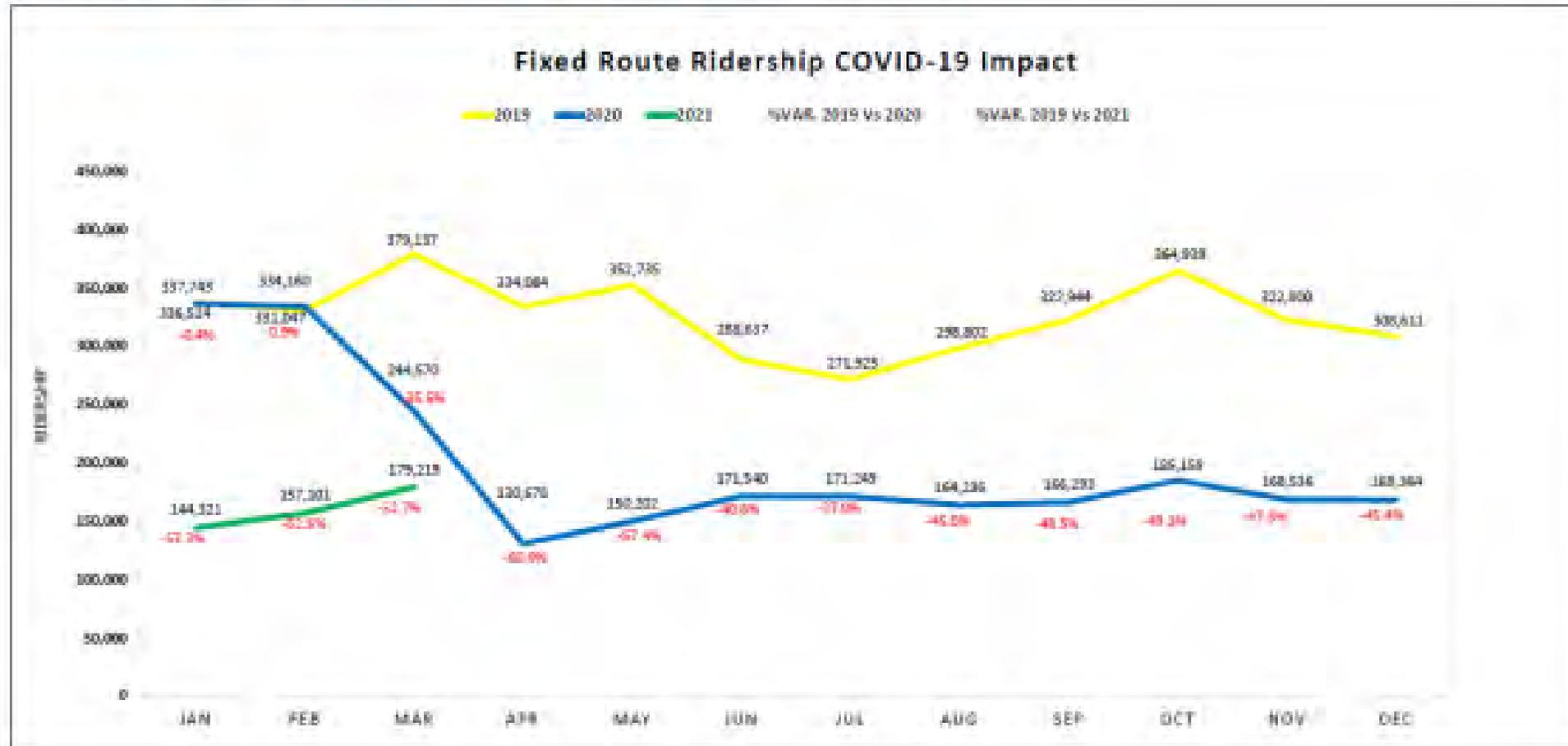
CHOICE RIDERS/EXPAND MARKET

1. Support American Jobs Plan and implement Level of Service 1
2. Attitude and awareness survey/study
3. Update bus stop signs and schedule holders
4. Develop strategies to implement approved frequency improvements

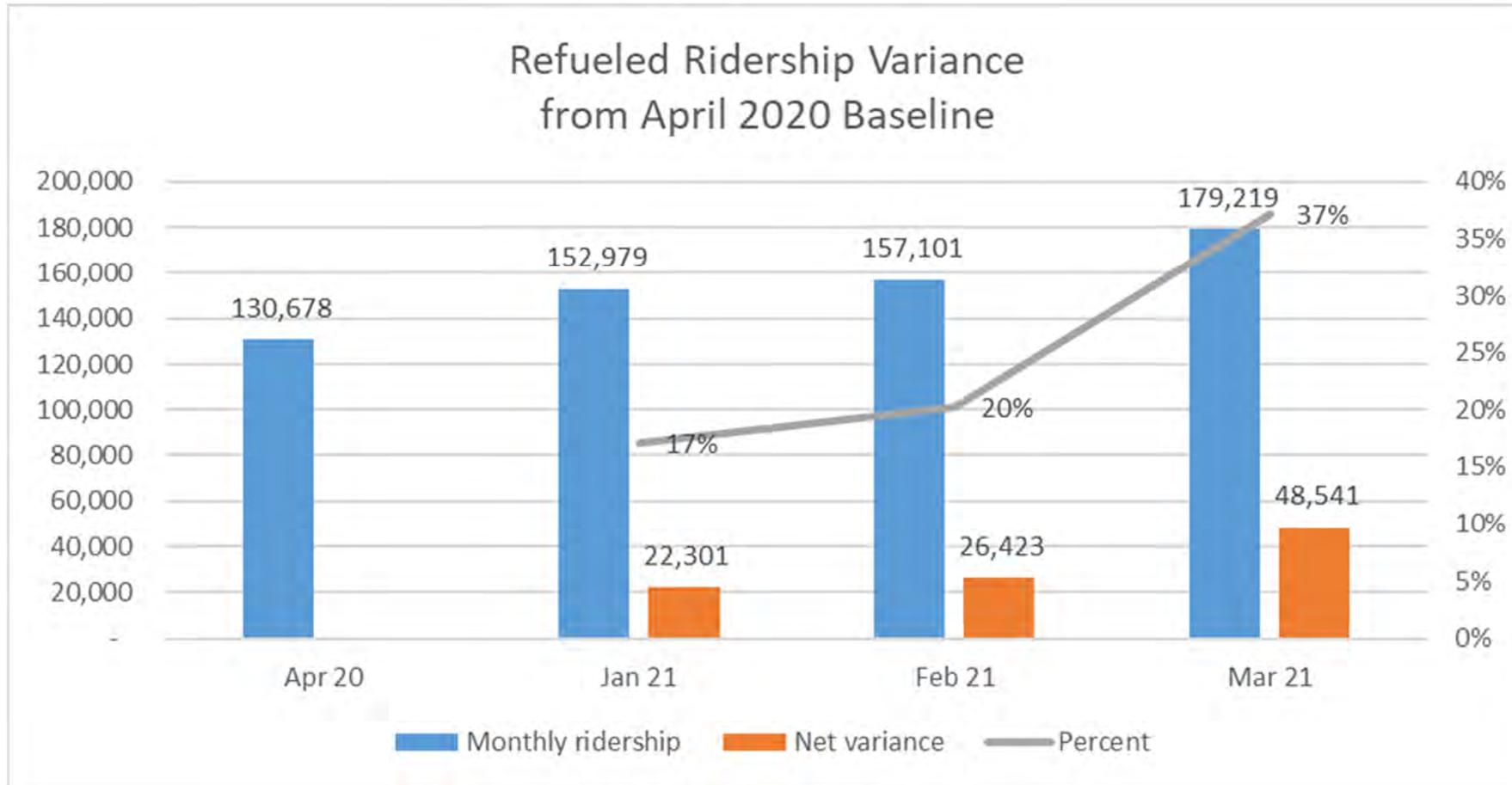
CHOICE RIDERS/EXPAND MARKET

5. CVLink multimodal corridor
6. Continuous improvement
7. Promote SunRide (microtransit service)
8. Improve the experience of the entire journey

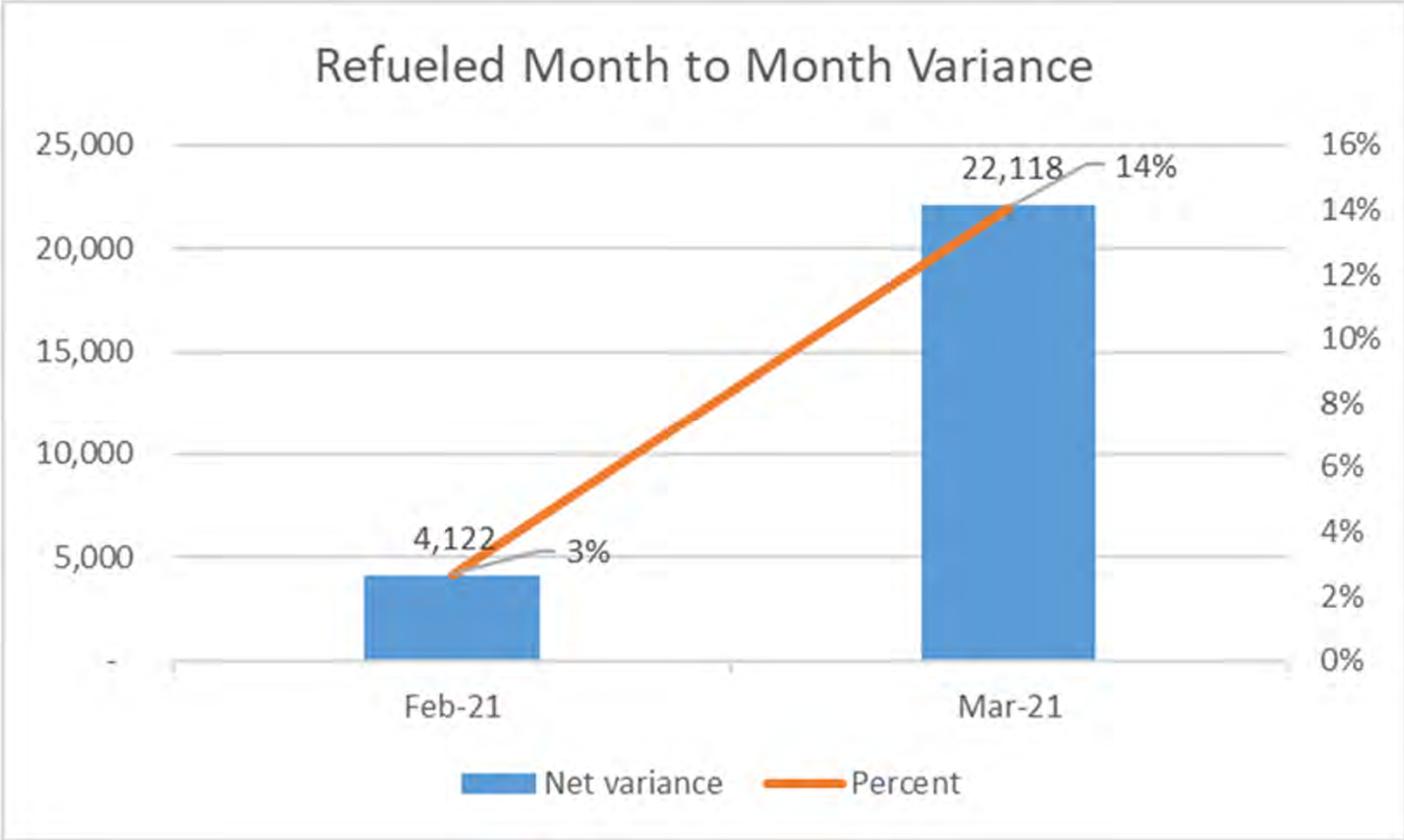
FIXED ROUTE RIDERSHIP



RIDERSHIP VARIANCE COMPARTED TO APRIL 2020

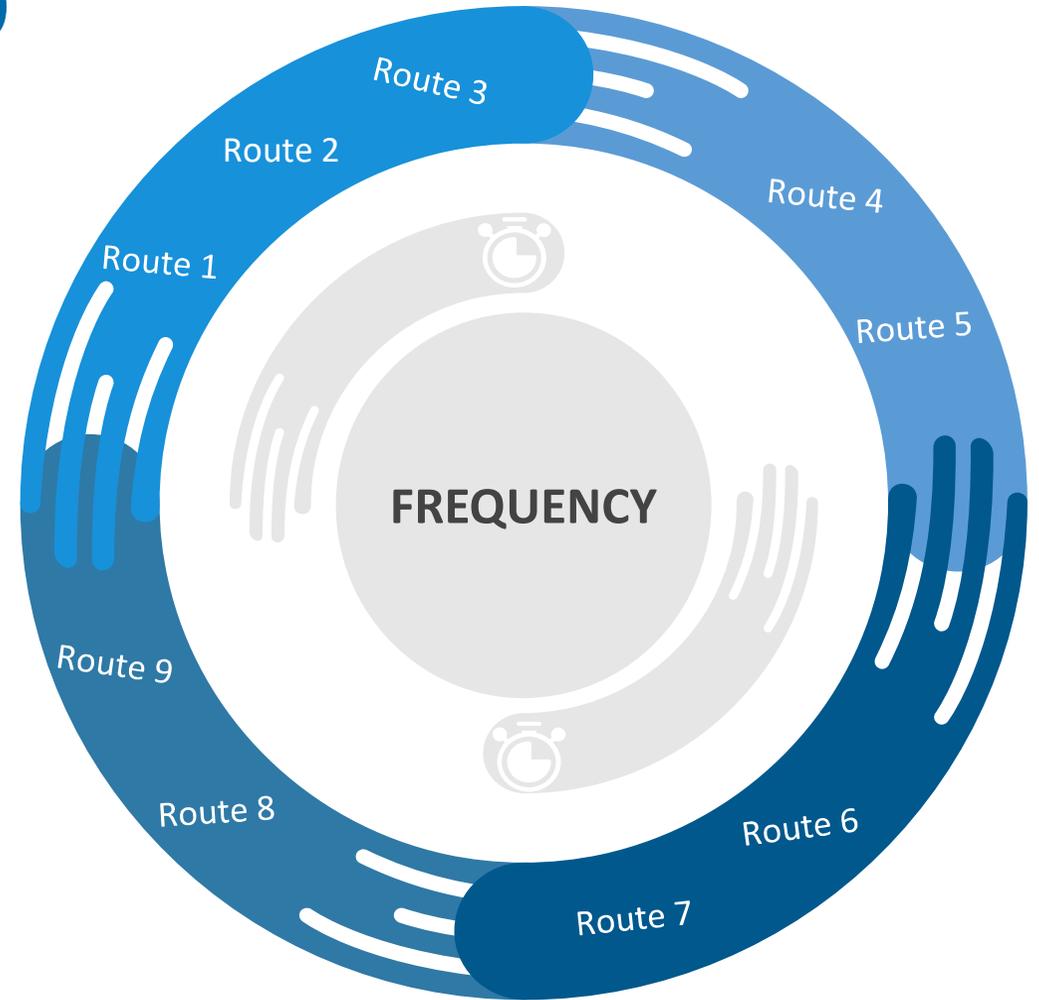


MONTH TO MONTH RIDERSHIP VARIANCE



NEXT PHASE OF REFUELED

- Frequency is important for a high performing system and attracting choice riders
- High frequency means transit is coming soon, resembling the experience of owning a car where you can travel anytime that is convenient for you
- Reduces waiting and makes connections easy



NEXT STEPS

- May: Strategic Planning & Operational Committee and Board review
- June: Board approval
- Simultaneous Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) staff review
- If needed, meeting with Cities and County

Thank You

SunLine
Refueled
DRIVING THE FUTURE OF TRANSIT

Questions?

Visit SunLine.org

Email refueled@sunline.org

Call [760-343-3456](tel:760-343-3456)

