



**HERITAGE VALLEY TRANSIT SERVICE
POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (HVPAC)**

AGENDA

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85623928962?pwd=ZTBONXZNU25EWUNyZzIMN2IWS3RYUT09>

**Wednesday, May 12, 2021
10:00 a.m.**

In light of Governor Newsom's State of Emergency declaration regarding the COVID-19 outbreak and in accordance with Executive Order N-29-20 and the Guidance for Gatherings issued by the California Department of Public Health committee panelists will participate in the meeting from individual remote locations, which is in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order. Members of the public are encouraged to attend the meeting remotely. Persons who wish to address the HVPAC committee on an item to be considered at this meeting are asked to submit comments in writing to the committee at vvega@goventura.org by 4:30PM, Tuesday May 11, 2021. Due to the current circumstances if you would like to participate in a verbal public comment on any item on the agenda during the meeting, please email your public comment to vvega@goventura.org. Any public comment received will be read into the record during the public comment portion of this meeting. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Government Code Section 54954.2, if special assistance is needed to participate in the HVPAC meeting, please contact VCTC staff (805) 642-1591 ext. 118. Notification of at least 48 hours prior to meeting time will assist staff in assuring that reasonable arrangements can be made to provide accessibility to the meeting.

ITEM 1 CALL TO ORDER

ITEM 2 INTRODUCTIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

ITEM 3 PUBLIC COMMENTS: Any member of the public may address the Committee for up to two minutes on any subject within the jurisdiction of the Committee that is not scheduled for a public discussion before the Committee.

ITEM 4 FARE PROMOTION

- Approve a six-month, half-price fare promotion for the Valley Express, beginning July 1, 2021 and running through December 31, 2021.
- Approve a three-month continuation of a fare-free promotion for Dial-a-ride trips to/from Vaccine appointments, beginning July 1, 2021 and running through September 30, 2021.

ITEM 5 ADJOURNMENT

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DATE: MAY 12, 2021
MEMO TO: HERITAGE VALLEY POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (HVPAC)
FROM: AARON BONFILIO, PROGRAM MANAGER
SUBJECT: FARE PROMOTION

RECOMMENDATION

- Approve a six-month, half-price fare promotion for the Valley Express, beginning July 1, 2021 and running through December 31, 2021.
- Approve a three-month continuation of a fare-free promotion for Dial-a-ride trips to/from Vaccine appointments, beginning July 1, 2021 and running through September 30, 2021.

BACKGROUND

In late March 2020, the Valley Express, along with VCTC and many of the other transit operators in the nation, suspended fare collection in an abundance of caution in response to COVID-19 pandemic. This practice has continued since that time. With an immediate shutdown of the economy and public health orders to social distance and eliminate non-essential travel, transit ridership plummeted across the country.

Today, as local, state and national COVID-19 case rates continue to decline, and vaccines are distributed, more and more of the economy is re-opening. Around the nation transit agencies have resumed fare collection activities; however, some transit agencies are considering longer-term fare promotions or changes to fare policy to consider incentivizing transit use. In addition, the State of California has suspended penalties associated with regulations which mandate the collection of a certain percentage of operating revenues be from passengers or other local sources.

At the March 11, 2021, Heritage Valley Policy Advisory Committee, the Committee approved the draft budget for Fiscal Year 2021/20221 which referenced fare resumption would begin in coordination with VCTC's countywide contactless fare system. Tentatively, fare collection was anticipated to resume prior to the end of the fiscal year, June 2021; however, the start-date was subject to change, as needed in light of the ongoing pandemic response and current ridership trends. Most recently, Valley Express ridership is approximately 60% below pre-pandemic levels, when comparing this past quarter, January-February-March 2021, to the same period during the prior year.

To simplify matters, VCTC is formally launching the countywide contactless fare system, at the beginning of the fiscal year, July 1st. To incentive ridership VCTC Intercity is implementing a "half-year, half-price" fare promotion. This promotion is anticipated to run from July 1st – December 31st, as part of a ridership campaign. On April 16, 2021, VCTC staff met with the Heritage Valley Technical Advisory Committee to discuss potential for a similar promotion for the Valley Express in an effort to have a coordinated reopening and set of fare policies for transit riders in Ventura County. Unfortunately, coordinating such policy has been a challenge, as some agencies have decided to resume fare collection at full price, and some agencies will continue to forgo fare collection altogether (for potentially up to six months).

The HVTAC agreed in concept with implementing a similar promotion to VCTC, as it gradually reintroduces fare collection. The HVTAC recommended that the policy be considered by the HVPAC prior to implementation. As noted to the HVTAC, the anticipated fare revenues for the upcoming fiscal year are \$41,000. Participation in the “half-year, half-price” fare promotion would equate to an approximate 25% decrease in projected farebox revenues or \$10,250.

Staff recommends implementation of a “half-year, half-price” fare promotion for the Valley Express service, through December 31, 2021. The promotion will apply to the single trip “cash” fare. Riders may choose to pay for their fare using cash, or the new contactless fare collection system which includes the option of using mobile devices or reloadable smartcards. (Unlimited use pass products, which offer similarly priced discounts, will not be subject to the promotion.)

In addition to the “half-year, half-price” promotion, staff is recommending the continuation of suspending fare collection, specifically for trips on the general-purpose dial-a-ride system to and from vaccine appointments (only). Currently, Valley Express has promoted the use of dial-a-ride to obtain vaccinations. With fare collection currently suspended, this has meant passengers are able to access the COVID-19 vaccine using ‘door-to-door’ transit free, without any charge. This “promotion” has been active for approximately two months, with twelve trips taken by ten people.

Staff recommends that the HVPAC consider approving a tandem promotion, effective July 1st, for the Valley Express dial-a-ride mode to continue offering free rides to/from vaccination sites. Gold Coast Transit District, which began charging fares May 3, 2021, has also implemented a similar promotion for its on-demand service, Go Access. In addition, specific to this promotion, Go Access service is available to the general public, whereas Access is typically only available to ADA certified riders and those over 75 years. This potential promotion is currently under consideration with the other dial-a-ride operators in Ventura County, such as Thousand Oaks, Moorpark, Simi Valley and Camarillo. If the broader operator group participated, this would mean transport to vaccines would be available free of charge across each of the transit demand-response service areas. The recommended end-date for the promotion is through September 30, 2021.