



REIMAGINE SAMTRANS



Frequently Asked Questions | Spring 2021

Project Background

What is Reimagine SamTrans?

In Summer 2019, the San Mateo County Transit District launched *Reimagine SamTrans*, a comprehensive operational analysis (COA) to redesign the entire SamTrans bus system. *Reimagine SamTrans* began its work by evaluating every element of the SamTrans system to identify improvements to local and regional travel connections, route design, how often the buses run, best practices for operations and public health, and more. *Reimagine SamTrans* utilized data and public input to pinpoint the strengths and challenges in the current bus system. The project is also utilizing data and trip-making patterns during COVID-19 to be responsive to how bus ridership and travel patterns may change in the coming years.

Reimagine SamTrans has three goals:

- **Improve the experience** for existing SamTrans customers
- **Grow new and more frequent ridership** on SamTrans
- **Build SamTrans' efficiency and effectiveness** as a mobility provider

Why is SamTrans conducting an analysis of its bus system?

SamTrans is evaluating its system with the goal of launching a new network that best meets San Mateo County's transit needs.

Like many other public transit agencies, SamTrans struggled with declining and fluctuating ridership prior to and since the COVID-19 pandemic. Transit agencies across the country are embarking on comprehensive studies to better meet changing travel patterns, improve the customer experience, and adjust to changing market trends.

In San Mateo County demographic, growth, and technology patterns have changed significantly over the past five years. With new emerging mobility companies and private employer shuttles, San Mateo County residents have more options than ever when making a trip.

Finally, with the passage of Measure W in 2018, SamTrans has a unique opportunity to reimagine and reshape its bus system to meet the changing needs of San Mateo County and ensure we are providing a world-class mobility system.

How are we incorporating and building resiliency for COVID-19?

With the information currently available, the project team has generated a set of assumptions that we believe are reasonable when looking ahead to August 2022. These include:

- A vaccine will be widely available and riders will feel physically safe on transit
- We will be able to welcome high numbers of riders on board our buses again
- Schools and colleges will have returned to in-person learning
- Our bus system will still be essential to those who rely on it
- The bus fleet will be fully connected via a cellular network

In light of COVID-19, many of our project goals are even more important to achieve. Improving the experience of using SamTrans for our current riders, many of whom are essential employees, remains a top priority of *Reimagine SamTrans*. Improving bus speeds, reliability, and real-time passenger information are beneficial in a public health crisis and into the future.

What is the project timeline?

Reimagine SamTrans launched in Summer 2019 and is anticipated to result in a new bus system in Summer 2022.

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| Fall 2019 – Winter 2020 | Existing Conditions and Public outreach; analyze the current state of the SamTrans bus system; conduct market research on what riders and potential riders want out of SamTrans bus service |
| Spring – Summer 2020 | Reimagine SamTrans on hold due to COVID-19 impact to ridership and need for responsive planning |
| Fall 2020 | Develop a service policy framework with guiding principles and service design guidelines for how SamTrans will plan bus service |
| Fall 2020 – Winter 2021 | Develop three bus system alternatives, with up to three potential changes for each route in the system |
| Spring 2021 | Public outreach; receive input on three alternative route systems with details on each individual route |
| Summer 2021 | Develop a preferred bus system based on input |
| Fall 2021 | Public outreach; conduct outreach on a single recommended bus system; refine and develop plan for implementing new bus system |
| Winter 2022 | SamTrans Board adoption of new bus system |
| Summer 2022 | Implementation of new bus route network |

Where are we now?

After hearing from the community and evaluating the ridership and reliability of each SamTrans route in late 2019, the project team developed three new potential bus systems called alternatives. Now, we’re taking input on these alternatives before we create one final new bus system later this year. The public input period for the alternatives is April 5-May 31, 2021.

What do we want to accomplish in the new bus system?

- Address reliability and improve on-time performance
- Improve bus service in communities that use transit most
- Improve bus and rail connections at transit hubs
- Reduce route duplication within our system
- Improve real-time bus arrival information technology
- Improve the efficiency of school-related services

What are the three proposed Bus System Alternatives?

The project team designed three new options for bus service. These are known as “bus system alternatives.” Each bus system alternative sets a different vision for future bus service in San Mateo County, and each has benefits and trade-offs.



Frequency

Alternative 1 focuses on direct and frequent bus service in San Mateo County

- Buses on high-demand routes come more often all day long, seven days a week
- Routes are more direct
- Less service is provided in some parts of the county and in San Francisco



Connections

Alternative 2 expands connections to rail stations and the region

- Express bus services are expanded into San Francisco
- New routes connect BART and Caltrain stations with residential areas, college campuses, and key employment areas
- Less service is provided in some parts of the county



Coverage

Alternative 3 maintains coverage and explores innovative transit

- Coverage of service throughout the county is maintained
- On-demand bus service (microtransit) is proposed for hard to reach communities
- Frequency of service stays about the same on most routes

What happens when the analysis has been completed?

Following three rounds of public input, a new bus system will be identified. The preferred new SamTrans bus system will go to the SamTrans Board of Directors for adoption in Winter 2021-22. Staff will then work toward implementation of the new system in mid-2022 while minimizing disruption to service for current customers.

What data and information will SamTrans use to build a better bus system?

Here are just some of the data and information sources we are using in *Reimagine SamTrans*:

- Public outreach exercises and feedback gathering
- Market research focus groups
- Current SamTrans route information, including ridership, on-time performance, and scheduling practices
- GPS trip data showing trip-making patterns in San Mateo County
- Demographic trends and trips-to-work data from the US Census
- Development patterns and changes
- Recent complementary planning studies
- Input from SamTrans bus operators, dispatchers and other field staff
- COVID-19 related impacts

Through *Reimagine SamTrans*, local transit officials, community leaders, bus riders, and residents will help build a bus network for San Mateo County that functions more efficiently and effectively for trips to work, school, or play.

Is *Reimagine SamTrans* about new riders or current riders?

Reimagine SamTrans seeks to both improve the experience and service we provide to our current customers and attract new riders. SamTrans wants to hear from current riders about how we can improve and from potential riders who can be introduced to our system. SamTrans will accomplish this by studying demographic changes, conducting public outreach, and determining what needs to be improved in order to encourage people to try SamTrans.

How will *Reimagine SamTrans* build on other planning studies?

Reimagine SamTrans will utilize data and key findings from recent transportation studies in the area, including the US-101 Express Bus Feasibility Study, Coastside Transit Study, SamTrans Service Plan (2014) and the Caltrain Business Plan. The team will also seek to learn from the work of private partners such as the San Francisco International Airport, among others.

Who will advise the SamTrans team during the *Reimagine SamTrans* project?

In addition to conducting three rounds of public outreach throughout the county, SamTrans regularly convenes two advisory groups. The project's Technical Advisory Committee is comprised of city and county representatives, nearby transit service operators, and other technical advisors. The project's Stakeholder Advisory Committee includes representatives from advocacy and social services, businesses and major employers, active transportation and new mobility companies, and more.

SamTrans Service

When can I expect to see changes to SamTrans service?

SamTrans staff will continue to pilot new services and service improvements while *Reimagine SamTrans* is ongoing, including responding to changing trends post-COVID-19, as well as make regular updates to schedules to improve the reliability of current routes. You can learn about other SamTrans services at www.samtrans.com.

The recommendations from *Reimagine SamTrans* are slated to be implemented in Summer 2022.

Will *Reimagine SamTrans* result in changes to bus routes and bus stops?

Reimagine SamTrans will evaluate each route individually and the way the routes interact to form a cohesive transportation network. For each route, we are considering the route's purpose, key destinations, the ridership at different points in the route, and the route's frequency and hours of operation. Based on input from riders and potential riders, we may recommend changes to the route's design to better meet the route's purpose. We encourage you to participate in the process, so you have a say about any proposed changes.

Will this lead to fare changes?

Separately from *Reimagine SamTrans*, SamTrans regularly evaluates its fare structure and products. SamTrans also participates in regional efforts to streamline and align fare products whenever possible. Visit <https://www.samtrans.com/fares.html> for the latest information on SamTrans fares.

Will *Reimagine SamTrans* improve SamTrans transfer connectivity to adjacent transit services, such as Caltrain and BART?

One of the many goals of *Reimagine SamTrans* is to improve SamTrans connections with other transit systems. The SamTrans team analyzed data and heard from the community about how they use SamTrans and other nearby transit services. These trip patterns and findings were considered when designing the bus system alternatives, which include new routes connecting communities to regional rail stations.

Will SamTrans service be affected during the project?

No service interruptions are anticipated in coordination with *Reimagine SamTrans* project work. However, riders may see SamTrans employees or notifications posted at bus stops doing outreach to inform the process and solicit feedback. There will be a separate outreach effort once the bus service changes

are ready to be implemented in 2022. SamTrans will continue to adjust service as normal, as well as make COVID-19-related service changes throughout 2021 and in 2022.

Will this impact Redi-Wheels or Redi-Coast paratransit service?

We do not anticipate any changes at this time to SamTrans paratransit service as a result of *Reimagine SamTrans*. Visit www.samtrans.com/Accessibility/Paratransit for all information on paratransit service.

Public Input

Why should I participate in *Reimagine SamTrans*?

This project presents a real opportunity to help shape the future bus and mobility network of San Mateo County. *Reimagine SamTrans* is much like its name suggests — it's a true reimagining of a bus network that has served an important role in this community but needs a refresh. Redesigning a bus network allows SamTrans to make some choices that will lead the agency into the future. Join us to inform how we make those choices. Your input will be used to refine the proposed bus system changes, and a final round of public input in Fall 2021 will guide the selection of a new bus system.

How can I get involved or learn more?

SamTrans welcomes comments throughout the *Reimagine SamTrans* project via our comment form.

In addition, we invite you to participate through:



Public outreach and events – We are planning three rounds of community outreach over the course of this project. Event dates will be posted here as they become available.

Have a Question? *What question do you have that we didn't answer?*

Write to us at reimagine@samtrans.com or call 1-800-660-4287 to speak to us about the changes. The *Reimagine SamTrans* team will add frequently asked questions to the website throughout the project.

