



Frequently Asked Questions | Fall 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.

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 is SamTrans taking equity into consideration?

One of the guiding principles of the *Reimagine SamTrans* project is to design service that supports the principles of social equity. SamTrans conducted analysis to understand the areas of San Mateo County where people are more likely to be of lower income, not have access to a car, and identify as a race or ethnicity other than white. The *Reimagine SamTrans* project is committed to prioritizing bus service improvements in these communities with disproportionate transportation barriers.

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 and beyond. 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.

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	<i>Reimagine SamTrans</i> 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 recommended 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; conduct CEQA and Title VI analysis
Winter 2022	SamTrans Board adoption of new bus system
Summer 2022	Begin phased implementation of changes to bus system

Where are we now?

Last Spring, we gathered public input on three network alternatives, which provided valuable insight to the project team and supported the development of a new bus network. We are now inviting the community to review the new recommended network to help us finalize the blue print for the future of transit in San Mateo County.

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 over phases, beginning in Summer 2022.

What is the new bus system designed to achieve?

Reimagine SamTrans is a project to redesign the entire SamTrans bus system. After hearing from the community and conducting a system-wide analysis, SamTrans is recommending changes to bus routes across the network.



Equity

Prioritize buses to high-need communities from underused and duplicate routes



Efficiency

Create faster, reliable service through more direct and consolidated routes



Connections

Provide expanded all-day service, and more service to transit hubs and job centers

What happens after the *Reimagine SamTrans* analysis is complete?

Following three rounds of public input, a new bus system will be identified. The recommended new SamTrans bus system will go to the SamTrans Board of Directors for adoption in Winter 2022. The new SamTrans bus network as recommended in *Reimagine SamTrans* will be implemented in phases, beginning in Summer 2022. Recommendations for service expansion will be implemented during regular service changes beginning in 2023.

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 survey and 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 to travel patterns and ridership

Through *Reimagine SamTrans*, bus riders, local transit officials, community leaders, 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.

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 Group 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

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

Based on input from riders and potential riders, we may recommend changes to where the route travels, its frequency, hours of operation and more. We evaluated and considered 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. We encourage you to participate in the process, so you have a say about any recommended 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 beginning in Summer 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 recommended bus system changes, which will be presented to the SamTrans Board of Directors for adoption in Winter 2022.

How can I get involved or learn more?



Comment Form – Review the recommended network on our website reimaginesamtrans.com and fill out a comment form by November 8, 2021.



Public outreach and events – We have now entered the final round of community outreach of this project. Visit reimaginesamtrans.com/events to learn more about how you can join us at an event near you or online. Event dates will be posted there as they become available.

Four multilingual virtual community meetings will be scheduled in Fall 2021, one for each region of the county.

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.

