

LINE 78 PILOT SERVICE – LESSONS LEARNED

AC Transit Line 78 was implemented as a pilot service in August 2021 following the opening of the Water Emergency Transportation Authority’s (WETA) new ferry terminal at Seaplane Lagoon in Alameda Point. Line 78 is a crosstown route providing weekday peak-hour service along Ralph Appezzato Memorial Parkway and Santa Clara Avenue between the Seaplane ferry terminal and Fruitvale BART. Trips are timed to meet the ferries going to San Francisco in the morning and coming from San Francisco in the evening. At the April 27, 2022 AC Transit Board meeting, the Board authorized an extension of the Line 78 pilot for continued service through August 2023. At the April 12, 2023 AC Transit Board meeting, the Board voted not to extend the pilot a second time, so Line 78 will cease operations after August 2023.

SCHEDULE

The Line 78 schedule is aligned to arrive at Seaplane Lagoon ten minutes before the ferry departs toward San Francisco in the morning, and to depart four minutes after the ferry arrives in Alameda during the evening. There are new midday ferry trips added in October 2022 which Line 78 is not timed to serve. Additionally, a new eastbound ferry trip (9:25 p.m. arrival at Seaplane Lagoon) was added on April 3, 2023 that is not met by Line 78; the next Line 78 trip/connection is 10:44 p.m.

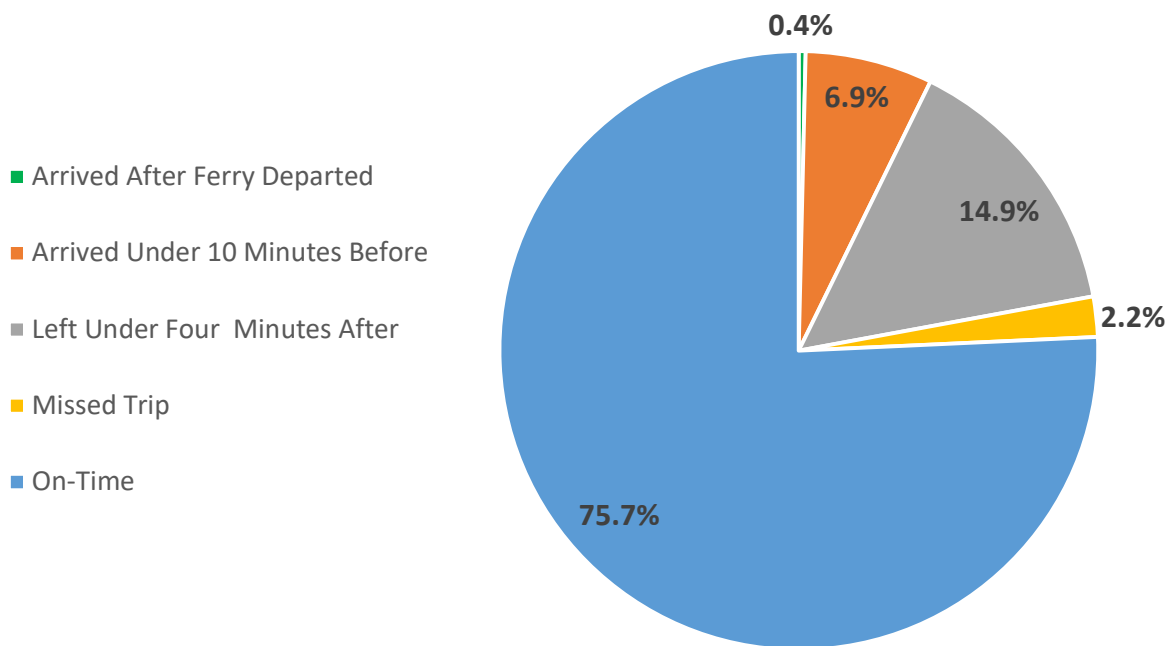
Exhibit 1 – Line 78 Schedule vs Ferry Schedule

AM	
Line 78 Arrival at Seaplane Lagoon	Alameda Seaplane Ferry Departure
6:20 AM	6:30 AM
6:50 AM	7:00 AM
7:15 AM	7:25 AM
8:10 AM	8:20 AM
9:05 AM	9:15 AM
PM	
Alameda Seaplane Ferry Arrival	Line 78 Departure from Seaplane Lagoon
3:50 PM	3:54 PM
4:50 PM	4:54 PM
5:50 PM	5:54 PM
6:45 PM	6:54 PM
7:20 PM	7:24 PM
8:45 PM	8:54 PM
9:25 PM (new trip added 4/3/23)	no service
10:40 PM	10:44 PM

LINE RELIABILITY

Staff reviewed 276 trips scheduled on Line 78 between mid-March and mid-April. Of those trips, more than 75 percent were operated as designed, with morning trips arriving 10 minutes or more before the ferry's scheduled departure and evening trips departing four or more minutes after the ferry's scheduled arrival. About seven percent of trips arrived fewer than ten minutes before the morning ferry departure and about 15 percent departed fewer than four minutes after the ferry's scheduled arrival. There were six total missed trips and one instance when a bus arrived after the ferry had been scheduled to depart. The reliability of the ferry, on the other hand, is consistent due to very limited sources of delay such as inclement weather.

Exhibit 2 – Line 78 Schedule Reliability



CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

Since its inception, 78-line has received 119 customer comments made by 55 unique customers. Overall, the number of customer comments were similar or lower by percent, to other lines and the system overall, with three notable exceptions:

1. The most common feedback was in the No-Show category, which accounted for 35% of all 78-line comments. Within this category, most complaints (83%) were from riders heading away from the Ferry terminal.
2. Of the twelve comments regarding the Route & Schedule, almost all were related to the posted schedule of the bus: either the bus was to arrive too late for riders to catch the ferry westbound or departed too early for eastbound passengers leaving the ferry. It's critical to note the schedule

was designed to serve SF-bound ferry trips in the morning and Alameda-bound ferry trips in the evening. The ferry runs bi-directionally all day so some customers may be filing complaints about missing ferry trips in the off-peak direction that Line 78 was not designed to meet.

3. The number of complaints about the bus being off route was unusually high. Other lines with high numbers in this category were only around two percent of that line’s total; the 78-line was at nearly seven percent. This can be attributed to initial confusion about the routing along some unmarked streets in Alameda Point.

Exhibit 3 – Line 78 Customer Complaints by Category

Category	Count
No Show	42
Routes & Schedules	12
Lost Property	11
Pass Ups	10
Late	10
Early	9
Off-Route	8
Operator Misconduct	4
Commendation	4
Fare Dispute	2
Hazardous Operation	1
Bus Stop	1
Web Page/Mobile Site	1
Signage	1
Realtime	1
Lack of Information	1
Improper/Unauthorized Stop	1
Grand Total	119

Sample comments:

“Schedule, timed with ferry, for bus 78 has been cancelled again. There is no way for rider to get to and from Seaplane Lagoon ferry terminal in Alameda. This (is) suppose(d) to be a pilot program to get people out of the cars an in public transportation. If schedule doesn’t run, there is no way to evaluate the line.” Sept. 16, 2021

“I’m curious about the new route 78 bus service in Alameda to the Seaplane Ferry. It looks like the weekday afternoon bus schedule does not meet up with the Ferry on the right timing. For example, the ferry departs Alameda at 6:00 pm, but the bus arrives at the

terminal at either 5:28 pm or 6:27 pm? This does not seem correct to me. The morning times seems to be right. Am I reading something incorrectly?" - Aug 16, 2021

The second comment is an example of a customer expecting a departure to San Francisco in the evening when Line 78 is designed to serve arrivals from San Francisco at that time.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Ridership on Line 78 has been low, and the overall ridership productivity of the line has been lower than the average productivity for AC Transit's other crosstown routes. Below are the challenges and lessons learned over the nearly two-year period that Line 78 has been in service:

- **Abundance of free parking at the Seaplane Lagoon Ferry Terminal.** A primary contributor to the lack of ridership on Line 78, and particularly at the ferry terminal, is the ample free parking adjacent to the terminal. The City has been working to implement a paid parking scheme at the terminal at a rate that is high enough to discourage solo driving to the ferry terminal but not so high as to make the ferry an uncompetitive option (compared to driving to BART or driving to San Francisco). Paid parking would likely lead to some mode shift onto Line 78; however, implementation has been delayed due to challenges with getting the mobile payment equipment needed. The City now expects paid parking to begin in late spring or summer 2023.
- **Mode share to the ferry terminal.** WETA's 2022 On-Board Passenger Survey found that 51 percent of Seaplane ferry passengers currently drive alone to get to the ferry terminal, and 33 percent either bike or walk. This mode share is fairly consistent with the other ferry terminals in Alameda (primarily drive alone, carpool, or active mode of transportation). Limited bike storage on buses and plenty of bike storage at Seaplane Lagoon (capacity for 62 bikes on racks and 24 bikes in lockers) makes Line 78 an uncompetitive option for these ferry passengers.
- **Ferry connection challenges.** The Line 78 pilot was established to provide peak-hour timed connections to the ferry. Since implementation, staff has made modifications to the Line 78 schedule to match with changes to ferry trip timing (the bus arrives at the ferry terminal 10 minutes before the ferry departs in the AM peak period and departs from the ferry terminal four minutes after the ferry arrives in the PM peak period). The main challenge with consistently providing the bus-ferry timed connection is the inconsistent service adjustment schedule between WETA and AC Transit - WETA does not have a set schedule for service changes, and AC Transit only makes service changes in March, June, August, and December.
- **Delays due to roadway conditions.** In late 2022/early 2023, ongoing construction along Fruitvale Avenue led to delays affecting some of the morning Line 78 trips. Construction events and unexpected roadway conditions can lead to missed bus-ferry connections since we do not have the ability to hold the ferry for late buses.
- **Routing challenges.** In the westbound direction, Line 78 currently serves the Seaplane Lagoon ferry terminal then continues on to its western terminus at the U.S.S. Hornet to layover. In the eastbound direction, Line 78 starts at the U.S.S. Hornet and makes a loop around the ferry terminal area (via Viking Street, Atlantic Avenue, Ferry Point, and Oriskany Avenue) to pick up ferry passengers before heading towards Fruitvale BART. Line 78 was designed with this routing

to ensure that there would be restroom availability for operators at the western terminus of the route (there are restrooms located in WETA's Maintenance and Operations Facility). Unfortunately, this loop routing has proven to be somewhat confusing, particularly for newer operators. Division 4 Supervision has made every effort to support new operators by providing guidance on the configuration and timing of this line, but this area of Alameda Point can still be difficult to navigate due to roadway construction and unclear street signage, which is even more of a challenge at night. Staff has identified an adjustment to the Line 78 alignment to help reduce navigation issues in Alameda Point and improve connections from ferry trips – Line 78 trips would start and end at the ferry terminal and no longer serve U.S.S. Hornet. New public restroom facilities were recently installed next to the Alameda Waterfront Park and operators have expressed a preference for this facility over the WETA facility, which eliminates the need to layover near U.S.S. Hornet and make a loop around the ferry terminal area. This routing change will go into effect with the June 2023 signup.

- **Availability of other bus options along Santa Clara Avenue.** Line 78 could be seen as a duplicative route since there are other bus lines (Lines O and 51A) operating along Santa Clara Avenue that Alameda riders can take to get to San Francisco. Line O provides service between Fruitvale BART and Salesforce Transit Center every 30 minutes, seven days per week. Line 51A also operates seven days per week, with service as frequent as every 10 minutes, and provides connections to the nearest BART stations to Alameda: Fruitvale and 12th Street.
- **Workforce challenges.** Line 78 operates out of Division 4, which covers more bus lines than any other division. On days when there is an operator workforce shortage or other situation where trip cancellations are unavoidable, Line 78 service has a lower priority than other scheduled trips (such as Supplementary Service) and is more likely to face cancellation in these instances, in accordance with AC Transit Board Policy No. 471.
- **Mobile app challenges.** The beta version of the AC Transit Mobile App was launched in March 2021 and Line 78 was listed on the beta version starting August 8, 2021. In August 2022, a software glitch during the data export for the Fall sign-up affected the Line 78 listing on the Mobile App, which led to customer confusion and complaints about reliability and missed trips. The Mobile App issue was resolved shortly after the problem was initially identified.
- **Difficulty marketing Line 78 when parking is free and ample.** At launch in August 2021, AC Transit marketing tactics included: a brochure distributed on AC Transit lines serving Alameda; signage at bus stops including destination and schedule information; and brand ambassadors distributing flyers at the Seaplane Lagoon and at bus stops. The City of Alameda provided additional flyer support at stops and distributed information in City newsletters and other channels. At launch, WETA included Line 78 in their media outreach about the new Seaplane Lagoon ferry terminal and service, and throughout the pilot, WETA distributed information and made announcements to passengers about the bus service and its free transfer. WETA also partnered with the San Francisco Chronicle to include Line 78 as part of a “total transit” day-long journey across the Bay Area’s transit systems in September 2022. Throughout the pilot period, the District distributed social media posts promoting Line 78 including video and graphic content. Messages included the timed bus-to-ferry transfer, the free transfer from WETA to AC Transit, service to the U.S.S.

Hornet, and connection to the ferry from across the island. An example of a marketing message is below.



Despite these efforts, free and ample parking discouraged ferry riders from considering the bus as an alternative mode, reflected in analysis suggesting limited ferry rider understanding of the free transfer from ferry to bus.