WESTCAT Evolution

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Final Plan

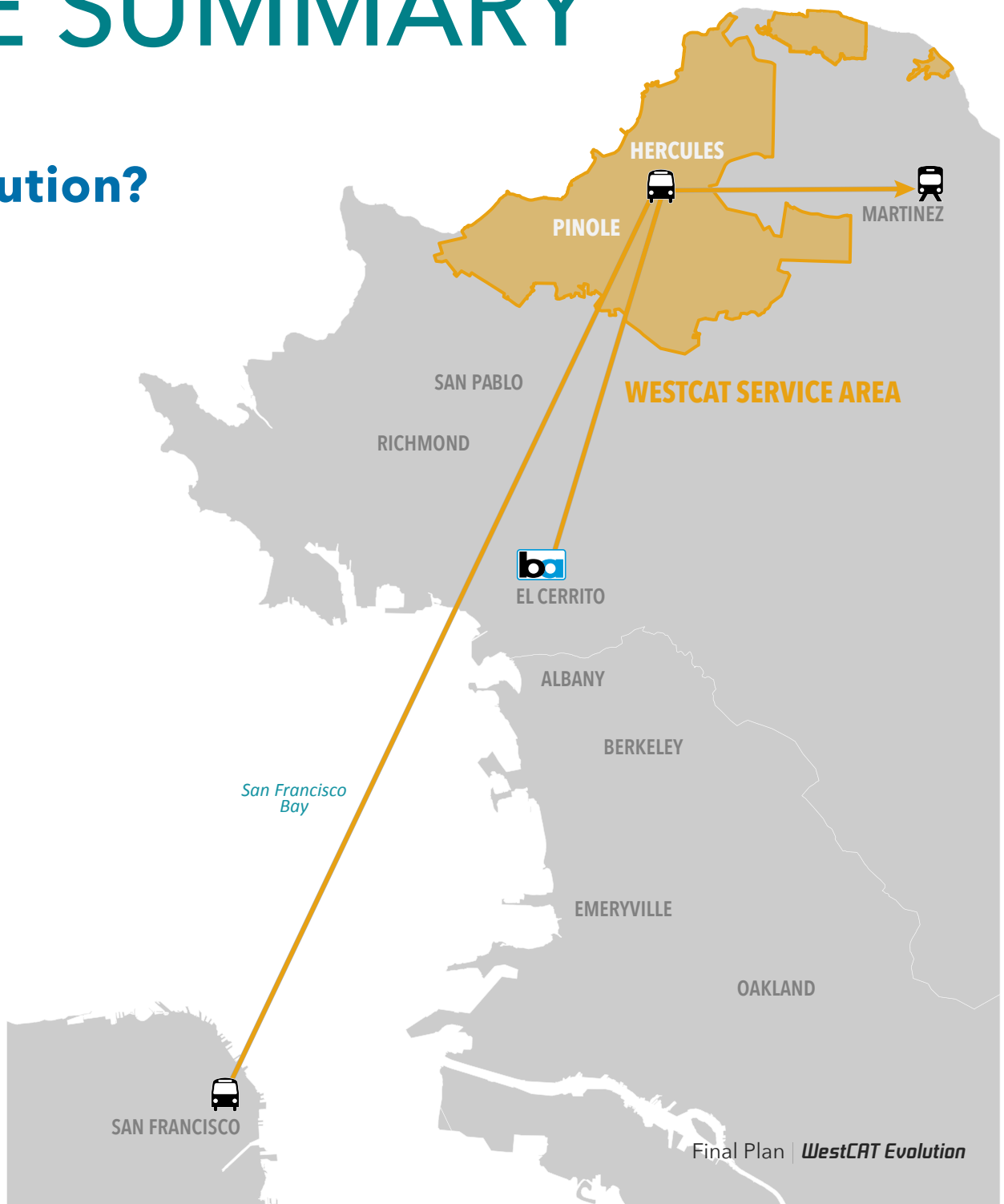
Adopted August 13th, 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is WestCAT Evolution?

For decades, WestCAT has provided transit service tailored to the needs of Hercules, Pinole, and nearby unincorporated communities, connecting local neighborhoods with schools, shopping, medical destinations, BART, and downtown San Francisco. WestCAT's services continue to play an important role in daily life for a wide range of passengers, while also linking the service area to the larger regional transit network across the Bay Area and beyond.

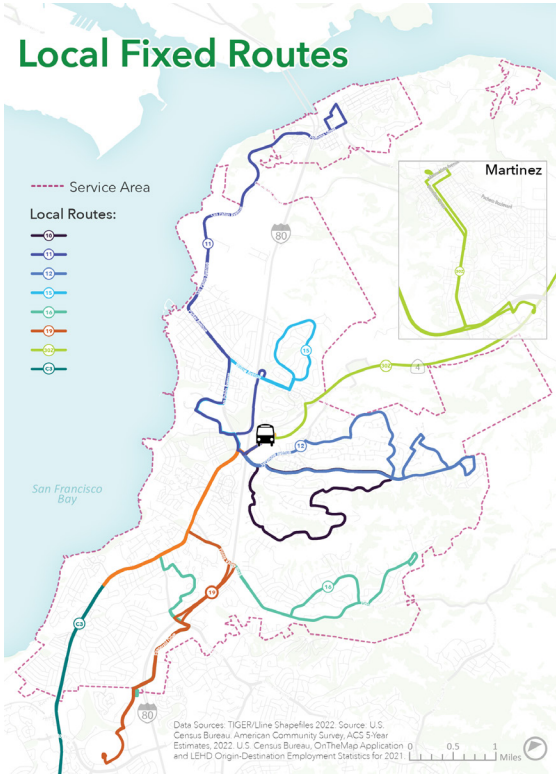
WestCAT Evolution is a chance to take a fresh look at its services and assess how well the system is adapting to the Bay Area's changing post-pandemic landscape. The project combines service and ridership analysis with extensive public engagement to understand what is working well, what passengers and community members want, and how WestCAT can make the best use of available resources. The result is a set of practical recommendations shaped by both data and people.



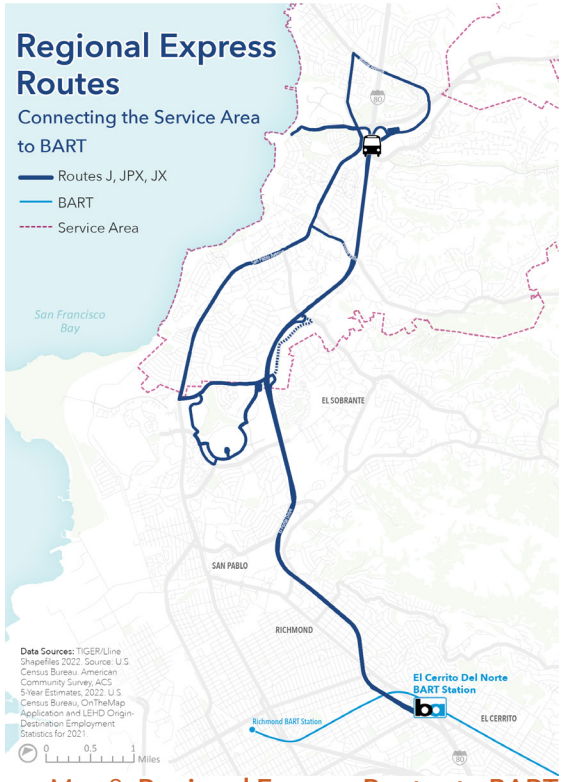
WestCAT Today

Today, WestCAT provides a mix of local and regional transit services across Hercules, Pinole, and nearby unincorporated communities in western Contra Costa County. The network includes eight local routes (Map 1), Regional Express service to BART (Map 2), and Lynx transbay service to downtown San Francisco (Map 3), along with ADA Paratransit, Senior Dial-a-Ride, and school trippers timed to local bell schedules.

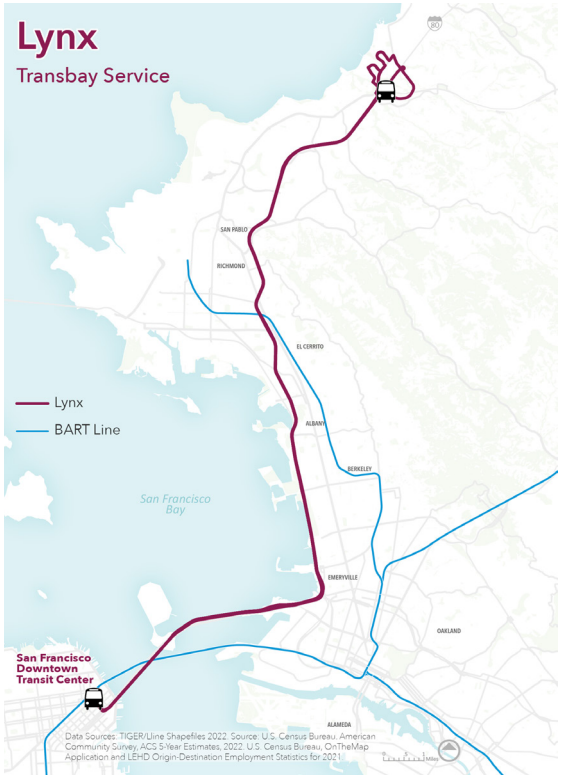
WestCAT's service area is in a regionally advantageous location, adjacent to many other local and regional transit systems which bring the area's residents, the majority of which leave the service area for work, to destinations in all directions. WestCAT's regional routes account for a large share of ridership, and nearly three-quarters of surveyed passengers said they usually transfer to or from another transit system. At the same time, the local routes remain important for access to neighborhoods, schools and colleges, recreation, medical destinations, last-mile connections, and key transfer points.



Map 1: **Local Fixed Routes**



Map 2: **Regional Express Routes to BART**

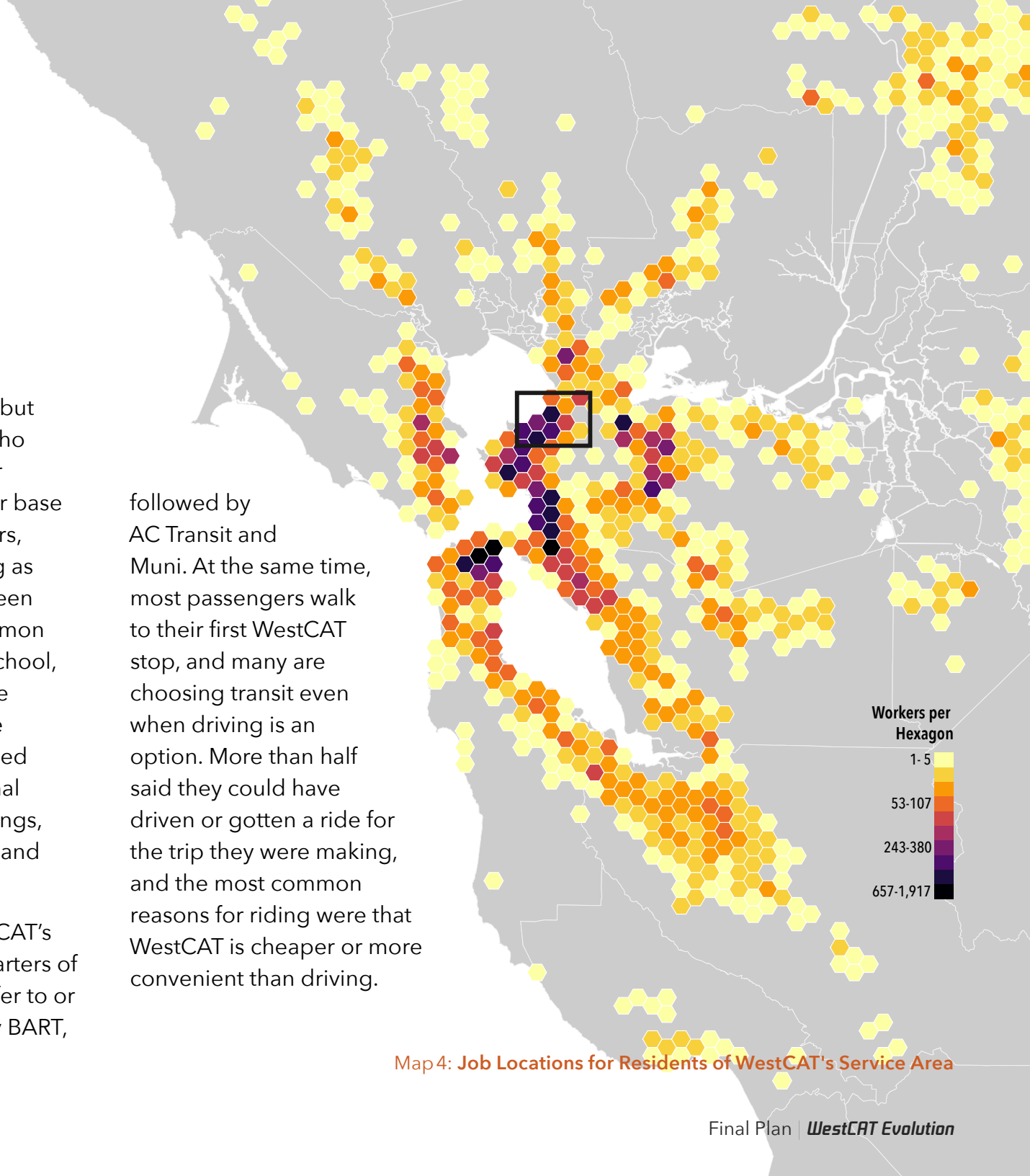


Map 3: **Lynx Transbay Service**

Who Uses WestCAT and Why?

WestCAT serves a broad mix of passengers, but the most common are working-age adults who commute multiple times a week and transfer between systems. Survey results show a rider base made up largely of full- and part-time workers, with about one in five passengers identifying as students. Many ride often, and many have been riding for years. Work is by far the most common trip purpose, but WestCAT is also used for school, recreation, and medical trips, which gives the system a wider role in daily life than a simple commute-only service. The survey also showed that many passengers work outside traditional office hours, including early mornings, evenings, and weekends, which helps explain the demand for service across a broad span of the day.

Passenger travel behavior also reflects WestCAT's strong regional orientation. Nearly three-quarters of surveyed passengers said they usually transfer to or from another transit system, most commonly BART, followed by AC Transit and Muni. At the same time, most passengers walk to their first WestCAT stop, and many are choosing transit even when driving is an option. More than half said they could have driven or gotten a ride for the trip they were making, and the most common reasons for riding were that WestCAT is cheaper or more convenient than driving.



Map 4: **Job Locations for Residents of WestCAT's Service Area**

What we heard from riders and the community

WestCAT Evolution drew on a wide-reaching and layered public engagement process designed to hear from both current riders and people who do not regularly use the system. Input came from passengers, non-riders, caregivers, community members, Dial-a-Ride users, and local stakeholders through surveys, interviews, open houses, customer comments, and outreach in community settings. That breadth matters because many of the same themes surfaced again and again across different groups, giving the findings a strong degree of consistency.

The top service improvement desired by riders and non-riders alike was for the **bus to come more often on existing routes** and was more popular than adding routes to new destinations or piloting new service models. Riders specifically wanted **more frequent all day service** and **more frequent service on the regional and transbay routes**. When asked with an open-ended response, the most commonly named destinations that both riders and non-riders wanted to go were places WestCAT already serves, especially BART and San Francisco, which suggests that the strongest need is to **make existing key corridors work better and improve connections**. Comments about getting to BART often focused not only on frequency, but also on the need for schedules that **line up better with connecting trip**s.

Figure 1: **WestCAT Evolution Open House Attendees**

Recommended Fixed Route Service Improvements

WestCAT Evolution identified the following improvements to the fixed routes, which are operating adjustments that WestCAT can make directly, such as bus routing, days of operation, and transfer points. The set of recommended fixed route service changes summarized in this section and described on page 8 of the full plan represent both cost savings and additions, but taken as a whole the recommended set of service changes is cost-neutral and would not increase the overall operating budget. A summary table of all the recommended fixed route service improvements is on page ES-16.

REGIONAL EXPRESS SERVICE TO BART

Combine JL & JR into One Streamlined Route

Proposed Change

Combine the two versions of Route J into one single alignment that serves both Hilltop Mall and the Richmond Parkway Transit Center on every trip. See map on page ES-6.

Context

Route J, the backbone of WestCAT's fixed routes, alternates between two different alignments. One is much longer and serves Hilltop Mall and the shorter one serves Richmond Parkway Transit Center. Both are heavily used stops and important transfer points for switching to Route 16 and JPX, as well as AC Transit.

Description

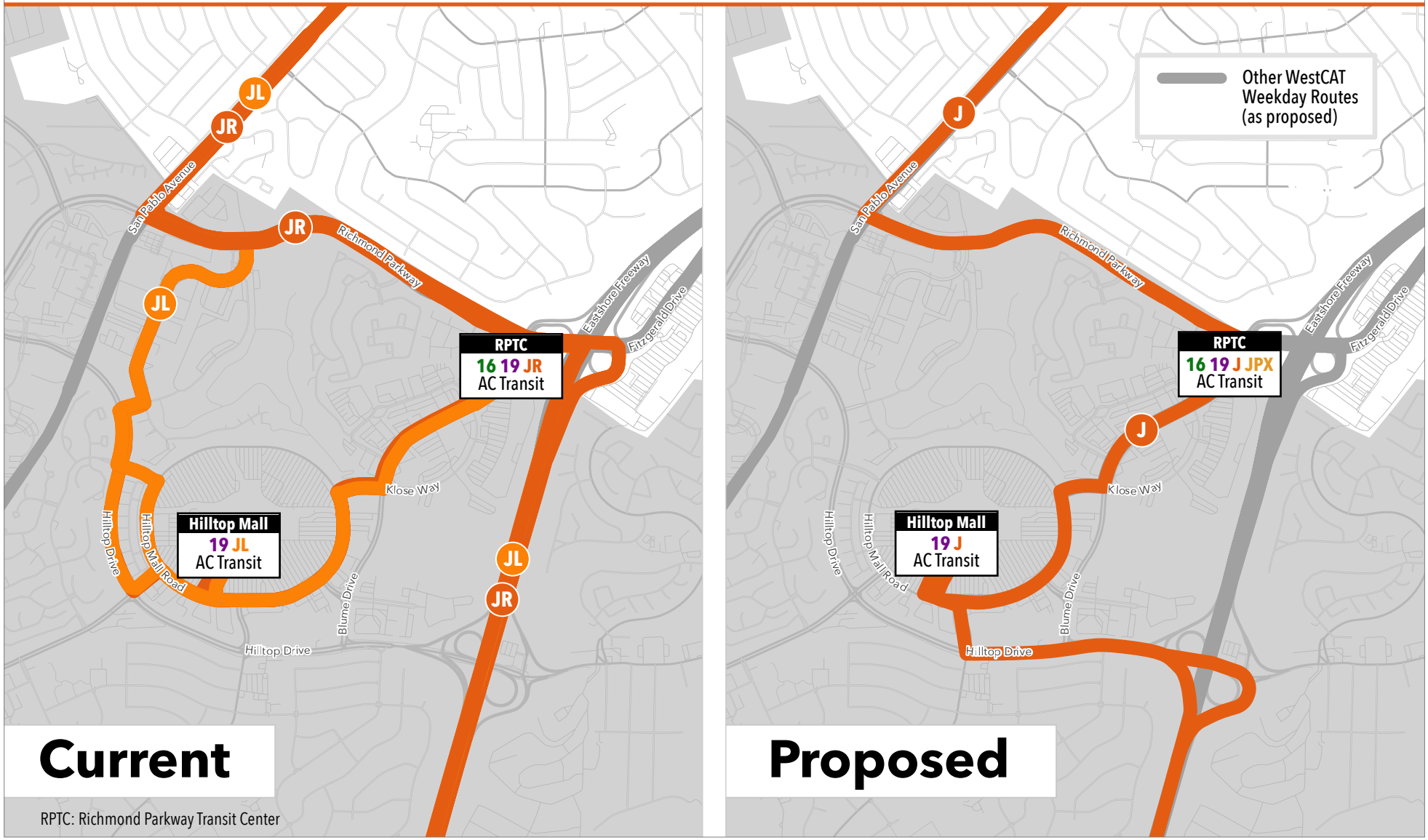
Under this recommendation, every J trip would serve both locations using a single, more direct route that enters and exits the freeway one stop south of the current interchange.

Why

This service change would simplify the schedule, make the route easier to understand, remove the discrepancy in trip times, and reduce the need for trip planning. Additionally, ensuring that every J bus serves both major stops, this recommendation increases transfer opportunities and responds to the importance of those connection points within the regional context.

RECOMMENDED SERVICE CHANGE

Combine JL & JR into One Streamlined Route



Map 5: **Recommended Service Change - Combine JL & JR**

REGIONAL EXPRESS SERVICE TO BART

Increase the Frequency of J and JPX to Better Align with BART

Proposed Change

Increase the frequency of routes J and JPX to each operate every 20 minutes, timed alternately so that one of the two routes meets each BART train every 10 minutes at El Cerrito del Norte for 10 hours each weekday.

Context

The J and JPX carry a large share of system ridership and connect passengers to BART and other neighboring transit systems. The J and JPX operate in a key corridor identified for future regional rapid transit service.

Description

Under this recommendation, J and JPX arrival times would be staggered, which would allow for either a J or JPX to meet each BART train at Del Norte Station, which arrive every 10 minutes. The same is true of the other stops that the two routes share, which are the heavily utilized Hercules and Richmond Parkway Transit Centers

Why

This recommendation responds directly to strong demand for more frequent, all-day service on these two routes and better connections with BART, which is the most common transfer point.

Reallocate all JX Service to Increase Frequency on J and JPX

Proposed Change

Discontinue Route JX and reallocate those service hours to support increased frequency on J and JPX.

Context

JX provides an express trip between the Waterfront, Hercules Transit Center, and BART, but the route has relatively low performance and duplicates key connections already provided by J and JPX. The current Waterfront stop has little usage and is expected to be affected by future development.

Description

This recommendation would eliminate JX as a separate route and shift those resources back to the J and JPX routes. The Waterfront stop would instead be served by an adjusted Route 15, which is described on page ES-9.

Why

This recommendation supports the direct response to riders' and non-riders' most consistent requests for increased frequency and better regional connections by reallocating service from a low-performing, duplicative, and inefficient route to the route pair that can accommodate those requests.

Expand Routes 11 and 19 to Provide Sunday Service

Proposed Change

Add Sunday service to routes 11 and 19 at the same levels that those routes currently operate on Saturdays.

Context

Route 11 connects the communities of Rodeo and Crockett to essential services in Hercules and other WestCAT routes at the Hercules Transit Center. Route 19 currently operates only Saturdays and complements the Route J by serving shopping destinations and connections along the I-80 corridor. Adjustments to Route 19 are recommended on page ES-13 that would add a key transfer stop, offer more north/south connections, and reduce duplicative service. Route J is currently the only WestCAT route that operates on Sundays.

Description

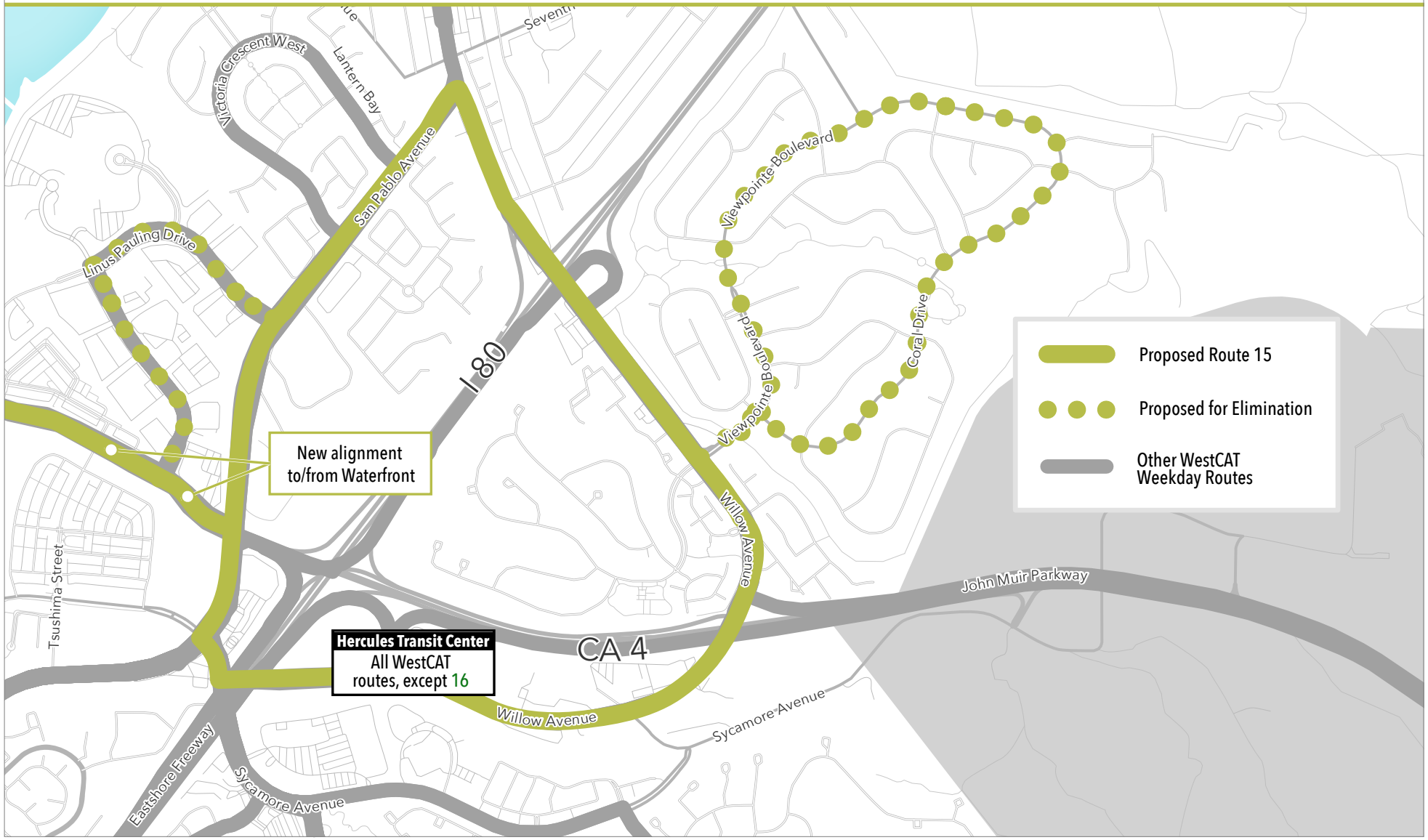
This recommendation would add Sunday service to routes 11 and 19 at the same levels that they currently operate on Saturdays so that WestCAT operates the same service on both weekend days. This recommendation assumes that the proposed adjustments to Route 19's routing are implemented.

Why

Public engagement feedback repeatedly brought up needs for more local weekend service, particularly on Sundays. Current route 11 and 19 passengers who were surveyed were especially supportive of additional weekend service, many work weekends, and almost all walk to their first WestCAT bus stop. Route 19 passengers had especially high rates of dependence on transit and riding six or more times per week.

RECOMMENDED SERVICE CHANGE

Optimize Route 15, Add Service to the Waterfront



Map 6: **Recommended Service Change - Optimize Route 15 & Add Service to the Waterfront**

Optimize Route 15 and Serve the Waterfront

Proposed Change

Optimize Route 15 by removing low-ridership deviations, shifting to an hourly schedule, and extending the route to serve the Waterfront. See map on page ES-9.

Context

Route 15 serves neighborhoods, services, and shopping destinations north of Hercules Transit Center where it begins and ends. The route is meant to provide access to local destinations in a low-density suburban area and so the success of the route is primarily measured by coverage. However, Route 15 currently includes two looped deviations that add significant travel distance and time, but see very low stop activity, even for a coverage route. At the same time, the Waterfront will need service for the approximately six people per day who currently board the JX, which is the only route that serves that stop and is recommended for reallocation.

Description

This recommendation would remove the Viewpointe Blvd./Coral Dr. loop and business park loop, return to Hercules Transit Center along a shorter path, and extend the route to the Waterfront. The revised route would still serve nearly all of it's current passengers since the two busiest stops on the Viewpointe loop and the busiest stop on the business park loop are only a couple hundred meters or less away from other stops on 15's main route.

This recommendation includes extending an arm of Route 15 to the Waterfront area stop heading westbound along John Muir Parkway after leaving Hercules Transit Center.

Why

This recommendation improves Route 15 in two ways. First, it removes two low-ridership deviations that add time and distance to the route without serving barely any passengers that couldn't use an adjacent stop along the main route. This would make the service more direct and travel times shorter, which improves reliability for the riders who use it. Second, it redirects those saved resources to preserve service to the Waterfront after the proposed elimination of Route JX. The result is a more efficient coverage route that still serves important local destinations, continues to connect with the broader WestCAT network at Hercules Transit Center, and provides Waterfront access at a much lower cost than maintaining a separate express route.

LOCAL ROUTES

IMPROVE TRANSFERS

Streamline Route 16

Proposed Change

Remove two low-ridership deviations from Route 16 and instead run the route directly along Appian Way, with an added stop at Pinole Middle School. See map on page ES-12.

Context

Route 16 provides a vital link between southeastern Pinole and schools, shopping destinations, and key connections points to the north and east at I-80, San Pablo Ave, and Richmond Parkway Transit Center. The route often has the highest ridership among WestCAT's local routes, but it includes two sections that see very little stop activity while adding time and distance to each trip.

Description

Similar to the proposed changes for Route 15, this recommendation removes the Wright Avenue/ Doidge Avenue leg that occurs at the eastern end once per round trip. The deviation from Appian way between San Pablo Ave and I-80 that loops through a neighborhood should be eliminated and service should be ran directly along Appian Way. A stop should be added on Appian Way to serve Pinole Middle School and a 154-unit development currently under construction.

Why

This change would make Route 16 trips more direct, shorter, and easier to understand. Removing the two deviations would have very little impact on ridreship, yet would save a significant amount of operating costs that would be reallocated elsewhere. The busiest stops on both stretches are very close to adjacent stops that would stay in service, therefore passengers could easily use these stops instead, further mitigating the effect on ridership.

Streamline JPX and Serve Richmond Parkway Transit Center All Day

Proposed Change

Revise JPX to serve the Richmond Parkway Transit Center on every trip and eliminate the midday deviation to Fitzgerald Drive. See map on page ES-12.

Context

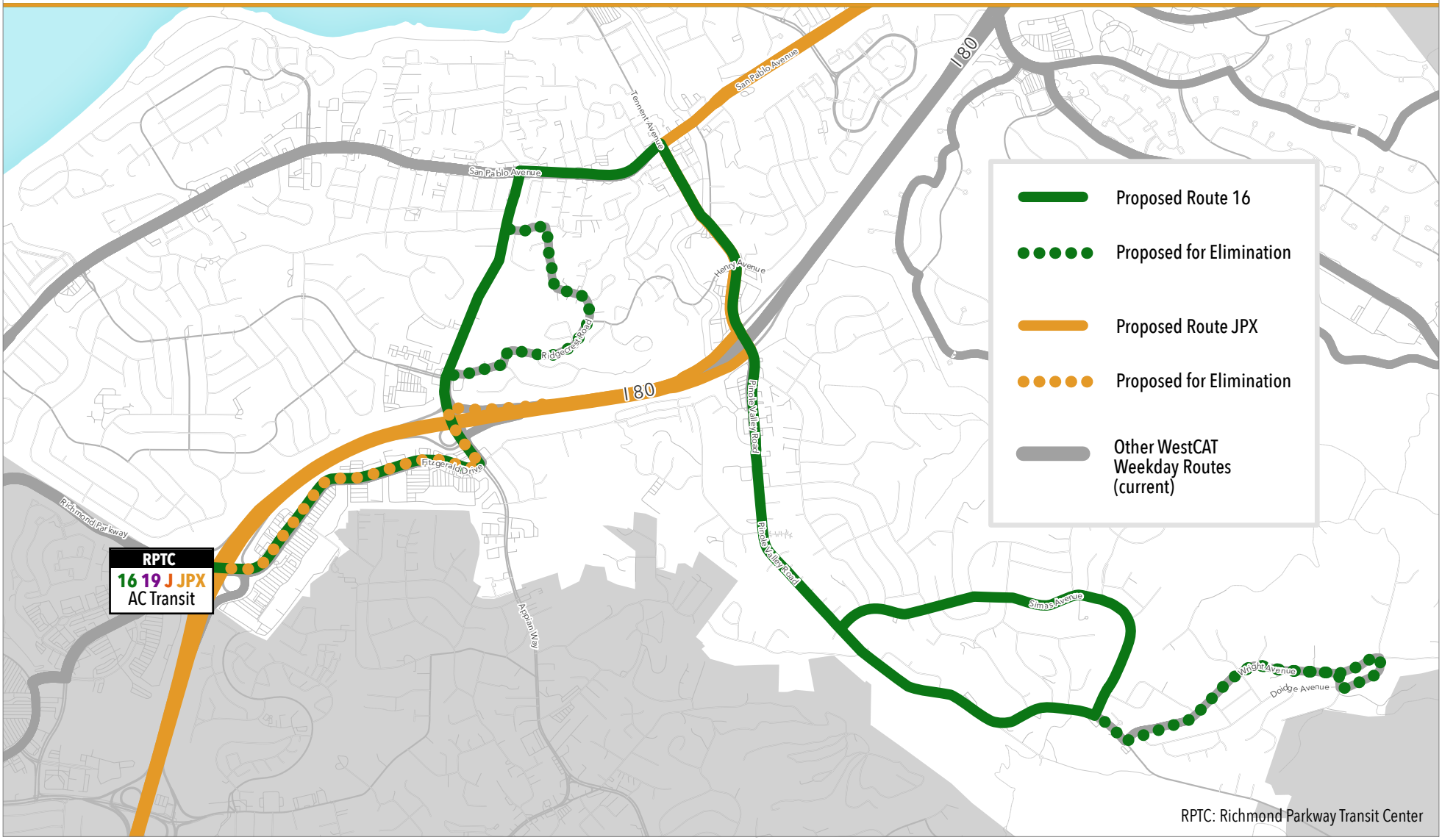
During the midday, JPX currently serves the Richmond Parkway Transit Center and three stops along Fitzgerald Drive, which are rarely used by JPX passengers. Route 16 serves the same Fitzgerald stops and the Richmond Parkway Transit Center all day.

Description

The recommended service changes are for the JPX to serve the Richmond Parkway Transit Center all day and to discontinue the midday

RECOMMENDED SERVICE CHANGE

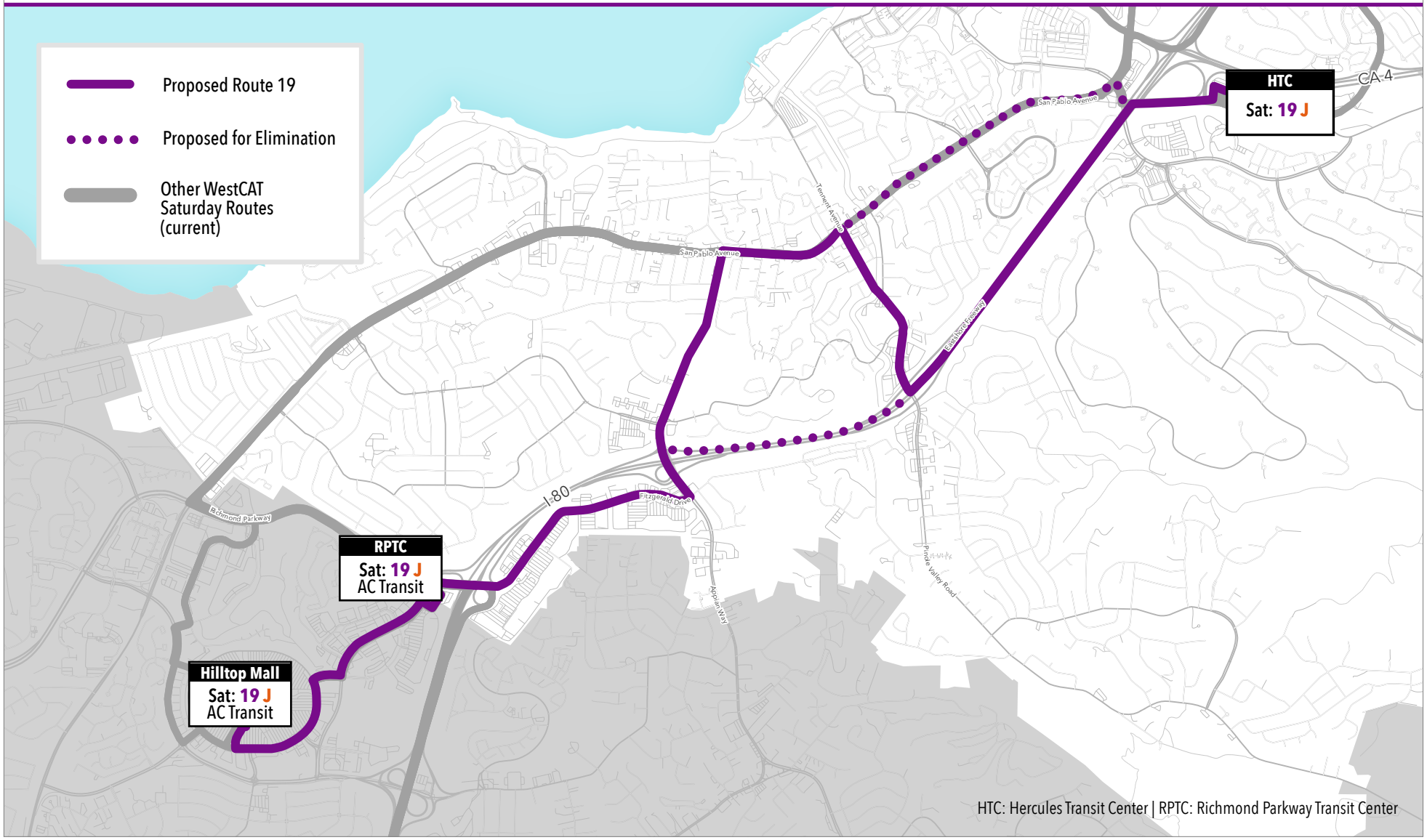
Streamline and Connect Routes 16 & JPX



Map 7: **Recommended Service Changes - Streamline and Connect Routes 16 & JPX**

RECOMMENDED SERVICE CHANGE

Optimize Route 19



Map 8: **Recommended Service Change - Optimize Route 19**

deviation to stops along Fitzgerald Drive, instead of staying on the faster express route along I-80.

JPX passengers traveling to destinations along Fitzgerald Drive could transfer to Route 16 at the Richmond Parkway Transit Center all day.

Why

Public engagement feedback included the importance of reliable connections at Richmond Parkway Transit Center and frustration with inconsistent schedules. The recommended service changes would increase all-day transfer opportunities between WestCAT routes and to AC Transit, while improving speed and consistency for through riders. The recommendations also reduce duplication while maintaining coverage and makes the schedule easier to understand.

Realign Route 19 to Improve Coverage and Connections

Proposed Change

Change the northern half of Route 19 to better serve central Pinole on Saturdays and add a stop at the Richmond Parkway Transit Center. See map on page ES-13.

Context

Route 19 operates only on Saturdays, mainly serves shopping destinations along the I-80 corridor, and ends at Hilltop Mall where passengers can transfer to Route J and two AC Transit routes. At its northern end, the route shares a segment with Route J along San Pablo Ave. Very few Route 19 riders use any of these three shared stops in either direction.

Description

This recommendation would shift Route 19 onto a new alignment that mirrors weekday Route 16, adding coverage through central Pinole along Appian Way. Adding a stop at the Richmond Parkway Transit Center in both directions is also included in this service change recommendation.

Why

This change would improve Saturday coverage in a useful area, increase strong transfer opportunities, and respond to current Route 19 riders' needs. The recommendation also removes a low-performing service overlap with Route J.

Figure 2: **WestCAT J Bus at El Cerrito Del Norte BART Station**

Additonal WestCAT Service Recommendations

WestCAT Evolution looked at the other existing and potential services in the system, beyond the fixed routes, including the two Dial-a-Ride programs and various options for supporting student transit use to schools.

Dial-a-Ride

WestCAT's ADA Paratransit and Senior Dial-a-Ride programs (DAR) provide ample service for older adults and people with disabilities who have difficulty using regular transit. Interviews with DAR passengers and community feedback showed clear appreciation for the drivers and high satisfaction with the service overall. The most common concern was with trip booking process, including the uncertainty regarding wait times and the lack of clarity about the process. The good news is that WestCAT is already in the process of upgrading the phone system, which will directly ameliorate these issues. The rest of the recommendations include offering group trips for senior and assistend living communities, continuing with regional coordination efforts, and increasing awareness of the programs.

Transit to Schools

Public transit to middle and high schools emerged as an important topic during WestCAT Evolution from the data analysis, public engagement, and through direct coordination with school representatives. Existing data shows that WestCAT already serves a meaningful number of middle school, high school, and college riders, and staff noted that student ridership on school-oriented trips was higher before the pandemic.

The first set of recommendations focus on near-term opportunities related to current fixed-route and school tripper service. Those opportunities include considering morning trippers on routes 10 and 12, improving connections after school pickup, and establishing stronger communicationc and coordination with school staff.

The second recommendation responds to direct input from school staff and outlines a practical process for working with schools to understand student travel needs, gather data, coordinate with partners, and evaluate potential service responses. Rather than proposing a one-size-fits-all school transportation solution, the plan recommends a repeatable framework that WestCAT can adapt over time as new needs and opportunities emerge.

Recommended Fixed Route Service Changes - Overview

Recommended Service Change	Current Context	Why Make the Change?	
Combine JL & JR into One Streamlined Route **J** that serves both **Hilltop Mall** and the **RPTC**	The two alternating variations of Route J are different lengths and each serve a different transit center/key connection point	Combining the two variations would simplify the route and increase the opportunities to transfer between WestCAT routes and to AC Transit	8
Increase the **Frequency** of **J & JPX** to meet **BART** every 10 minutes on Weekdays	Route J (JR&JL) and JPX each operate every 30-50 minutes on weekdays and provide a vital connection for WestCAT passengers	Responds to strong demand for more frequent, all-day service on these two routes and better connections with BART	9
Reallocate all **JX** Service to Increase Frequency on **J & JPX**	The JX starts at the Waterfront, which not only has very low ridership, but also adds time and distance, making it a relatively low performing and inefficient route overall	Reallocating the JX resources supports other improvements and is not likely to negatively impact ridership when combined with the recommendations for Route 15	10
Expand Local Routes **11 & 19** to Provide **Service on Sundays** at the Same Levels as Saturdays	Route 11 operates Mon-Sat connecting Rodeo and Crockett to essential services, Route 19 operates only on Saturdays, and only the J operates on Sundays	Answers the significant need expressed for more local weekend service, particularly on Sundays and for transit dependent riders of routes 11 and 19	11
Optimize Route **15** and **Add Service** to the **Waterfront**	Route 15 takes two devations to serve loops that have very little ridership, except at the stops closest to the main route	The recommendations will make Route 15 more more direct and adding service to the Waterfront stop will maintain access with a more apprpriate service type	12
Streamline Route **16** to be **Faster** and more **Direct**	Route 16 includes a leg at its southeastern end along Wright Ave and a deviation off of Appian in central Pinole that both see very little stop activity	Removing the two underutilized sections would make the rest of the route faster, more reliable, and easier to understand	14
Streamline **JPX** and **Add Service** to the **RPTC** All Day	The JPX currently deviates from I-80 on midday trips to serve RPTC and three stops along Fitzgerald Dr, which are rarely used by JPX passengers	Serving the RPTC all day provides more reliable connection points and removing the Fizgerald Dr portion eliminates duplicative service	15
Realign Route **19** to **Improve Coverage** and **Add Service** to the **RPTC**	Route 19 serves the I-80 corridor on Saturdays, overlaps with Route J at its northern end, and stops at Hilltop Mall where passengers can transfer to Route J and AC transit	Realignment would improve weekend coverage of central Pinole and adding a stop at RPTC would improve transfers between routes and to AC Transit	17