

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Emerald High School Service

FROM: Michael Tobin, Director of Operations  
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DATE: March 25, 2024

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**Action Requested**

None requested – this is an informational update.

**Background**

The existing high school in Dublin, Dublin High School (DHS), opened in 1969. Since that time, the City has seen extensive residential development and growth – particularly to the east – placing higher demand upon its one high school, therefore leading it to be over capacity.

In 2020, plans to open a new Emerald High School (EHS) were finalized, choosing a site located on the east side of the city, between Dublin Boulevard and Central Parkway. Since then, Agency staff have worked closely with City staff to secure adequate bus stop staging on the streets facing the new school. The new facility is nearly complete and is scheduled to open this coming fall of 2024.

The district boundary for EHS will roughly correspond with students living east of Hacienda Drive, while students living west of Hacienda Drive will continue to be assigned to DHS. The transition will be phased: approximately 1,000 students will attend EHS to start with in fall of 2024 (freshmen and sophomores). The transition will be completed three years later, at which time enrollment is forecasted to be approximately 2,700 students.

Commensurate with this transition, the enrollment at DHS over the same timeframe is projected to *decrease* to less than half of what is there today – from approximately 3,500 students down to approximately 1,500 students when EHS is at full enrollment in the 2026/27 school year.

**Existing Wheels Service in the Emerald High School Vicinity**

The primary Wheels route operating in the area of the new school is the #30R, a robust service operating east-west along Dublin Boulevard every 20 minutes throughout most of the day. Also, Route 2 is a commuter/school hybrid route in the vicinity, serving, among other

locations, Fallon Middle School and the East Dublin/Pleasanton BART station – although it does not directly serve the EHS site.

In addition, three school-focused routes (501, 502, 504) operate in the general east Dublin area but are dedicated toward transportation to/from DHS.

### **Discussion**

In order to remain resource neutral with buses and drivers, the planning assumption is that any new school-focused service for EHS will need to be created by reallocating existing resources from other existing school-focused routes; specifically, from DHS. Staff have been analyzing expected ridership at DHS for the 2024/25 school year to determine which bus resources can be reallocated to EHS.

This will be helped, however, by the assumption that the percentage of students using Wheels at EHS will be more in line with that seen at the two high schools in Pleasanton (~8% in the p.m.), as opposed to the higher share at DHS (~15% in the p.m.). EHS is located closer to higher density development and to where its students live, making active transportation (walking and biking) a viable option for travel to/from EHS. This lesser demand at EHS, in turn, would make the Wheels ridership transition easier to accommodate, though the operational challenge will be to get through the early stages of reallocating existing service.

It should be noted here that a survey was conducted in January with parents of students that will attend the new school in the fall. 142 of the respondents indicated that their child(ren) would be using the Wheels service if it was available, which would be more than the above-mentioned baseline assumption. There is reason, however, to believe that not all respondent households would ultimately use the service – and that some would use it on a less-than-daily basis. Also, many students would likely use the existing Wheels service in the area, such as the #30R. The survey results notwithstanding, staff are fairly confident that the aforementioned assumption of ~8% percentage of students riding the bus to EHS is accurate.

### **Capacity Reallocation**

Based on the anticipated start-up enrollment at EHS this fall against the above assumptions, the estimated demand would be approximately 40 students in the a.m. and 80 students in the p.m. This would require one bus in the morning and two buses in the afternoon, which would need to be reallocated from capacity on the current crosstown DHS-bound 500-series routes.

No existing route would be discontinued; rather, the capacity would be reallocated by carefully assessing tapering demand for currently operated overflow buses. Staff will consult closely with Operations to finalize which overflow buses can be culled. But likely, this would be one of four buses on the a.m. #501; one of five buses on the p.m. #501; and one p.m. bus out of the two on either the #502 or #504.

### **Routing of New Service**

The street network in eastern Dublin is limited. The primary arterials that bound the area generally consist of Dublin Boulevard, Tassajara Road, and Fallon Road, largely defining what a new route to EHS would look like. As noted above, the existing Route 30R operates on Dublin Boulevard along the new high school's southern perimeter; students traveling to neighborhoods east or west of the site will be able to access this route directly by the bus stop pair at Grafton Street. Thus, the need for a new service would be to/from the north.

With this in mind, staff is recommending a new EHS route that in the morning would start at Positano Hill, follow Fallon Road and Tassajara Road in a counterclockwise direction, then serve Dublin Ranch Road, and end in front of the school on eastbound Central Parkway.

In the afternoon, the route would pick up at the same location on eastbound Central Parkway, travel to Positano Hill, and then complete the Fallon Road and Tassajara Road loop in the same counterclockwise direction as in the morning, including Dublin Ranch Road.

All roadway segments and bus stops along the new route are already active and served by other Wheels routes (primarily Route 2). As such, the new service would not require the creation of new bus stops or other new infrastructure.

The proposed routing of the new service is shown in Attachment 1.

### **Implementation**

Even with the above assumptions, the actual demand at the new school on day one will only be known after startup. On the higher end, demand could be closer to that indicated in the parent survey. On the other hand, of the total number of students wishing to use Wheels, some would use the existing Route 30R that travels east-west, as opposed to the new supplemental route that would serve areas to the north. Nonetheless, staff would work closely with its Operations contractor staff to address contingencies once the service starts.

Staff is recommending implementing this new EHS service as a pilot; once service starts in the fall and the ridership has settled, staff will proceed with taking the new service through the Board's formal public hearing process.

### **Budget**

There would be no direct budget impact from the new EHS service, as its resources would be reallocated from existing school-route overflow capacity.

### **Recommendation**

None-information only

Attachments:

1. Maps of proposed new route to EHS

Proposed new EHS route, a.m. service



Proposed new EHS route, p.m. service

