

Day Without Driving

Mayor's Report

On Tues. 10/1, I participated in a "Day Without Driving" as part of the "Week without Driving" initiative.

I rode Sonoma County Transit's 44 line to get to work in Petaluma, 6 miles away from my home in Cotati. Here is a summary of the experience:

- The buses were clean and safe, and the ride was pleasant.
- The drivers were courteous.
- Payment with the Clipper Card was easy and convenient.
- The morning bus to get to work was on time.
- The morning journey took about 50 minutes, including 20 minutes of walking to the bus stop and 30 minutes of riding.
- In comparison, it takes on average 12 minutes for me to drive to work.
- I had to delay going home approximately 1 hour later than I usually would because of the limited schedule.
- In the afternoon, the bus was 10 minutes late. This was uncomfortable because there was no shade at the bus stop, and the temperature was over 100 degrees. By the time the bus arrived, I would have already been home if I had used my car. And I was overheated and still had a 50 minute journey ahead of me.
- Overall, the bus was a reasonable option of last resort, but I will not be using the bus in the future regularly because of the large time commitment it requires. As a daily commute, using the bus would cost me over 10 hours per week of time that I do not have.

I am sure that my choice not to use the bus mirrors the choice of many other Sonoma County residents. I understand that we can only run routes that are justified by ridership, but we need a critical mass in which the system is much more convenient in order to compete with an automobile. For climate reasons, I would actually prefer to ride the bus if it were feasible. The following changes would help:

- Bus runs more frequently so that I could use it without having to alter my schedule dramatically, and so that riding the bus isn't such a risk – at some times during the day a missed bus means waiting 2 hours for the next ride.
- Bus route is more direct so that the travel time difference between driving and taking the bus is more competitive.
- Shade at every bus stop, and take particular care to ensure that buses run on time on days with excessive heat advisories.