



**Before the
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

FILED
05/29/26
08:00 AM
A2605023

In the matter of the Application of:)
)
THE SONOMA COUNTY AIRPORT EXPRESS,)
INC.)
PSC-1120) Application No. _____)
)
to establish new base tariff rates and to establish a)
Zone of Rate Freedom (“ZORF”) of Plus 15% or)
Minus 15%, to that newly established tariff, pursuant)
to provisions of Pub. Util. Code § 454.2, and to)
modify certain of its services and routes.)

APPLICATION

The Application of The Sonoma County Airport Express, Inc. (hereafter referred to as “APPLICANT”), respectfully shows:

I.

The exact legal name of APPLICANT, its address and telephone number are as follows:

THE SONOMA COUNTY AIRPORT EXPRESS, INC.
5807 Old Redwood Highway
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
Telephone: 707-837-8700

II.

All notices, correspondence, and communications with respect to this Application should be addressed as follows:

THE SONOMA COUNTY AIRPORT EXREPSS, INC.
ATTN: Judy Lin Bristow
2001 W Broad Street, Suite 2015
Richmond, VA 23220
Email: jbristow@groometrans.com

III.

For ease of reference, the following abbreviations will be used in this APPLICATION:

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|---|------|
| 1. | San Francisco International Airport | - | SFO |
| 2. | Oakland Airport International Airport | - | OAK |
| 3. | Zone of Rate Freedom | - | ZORF |

IV.

APPLICANT presently holds a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity as a Passenger Stage Corporation (PSC-1120), authorizing the transportation of passengers and their baggage, between points in Sonoma County and SFO, on the one hand, and between points in in Sonoma County and OAK, on the other, over specified routes, the “services”.

By this Application, and pursuant to the provisions of Pub. Util. Code § 454.2 and General Order No. 158-A, APPLICANT hereby requests authorization from the Commission to increase its base tariff rates to (i) \$55 for each one-way travel between Sonoma County and SFO or OAK, (ii) \$41 for each one-way travel between Marin County and SFO or OAK, and to establish a ZORF in amount of plus 15% or minus 15% over its current base rates. The requested rate increases are set forth in the attached Exhibit 1.

V.

In support of this ZORF, the following documents are attached hereto:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| EXHIBIT 1 | A statement showing the APPLICANT’S current base rate, current fares, proposed based rates for Sonoma and Marin Counties, SFO and OAK which also reflects the application of the ZORF authority being requested herein by APPLICANT. |
| EXHIBIT 2 | APPLICANT’S proforma income statement for the twelve-month period ending March 31, 2026. |

VI.

This Application comes within the purview of Pub. Util. Code § 454.2, as there is competitive transportation in APPLICANT’S corridor of its service. APPLICANT competes with other PSCs, taxicabs, charter limousines, vans, and buses, and private automobiles in its service area.

VII.

The justification for the proposed rate increase and ZORF is as follows:

1. **REGULATORY RECOGNITION OF FLEXIBILITY IN RATE ADJUSTMENTS TO MEET INCREASING COSTS OF PASSENGER SERVICES BY ENACTING PUB. UTIL. CODE § 454.2.** In creating the ZORF options to adjust existing rates in a more expeditious fashion than the normal administrative hearing process, the Legislature clearly intended to eliminate the administrative costs and burdens for both passenger carriers and the Commission, by providing that routine fare increases necessary to meet increased costs and operational expenses may be processed and approved in an expeditious manner through the ZORF process. The present Application is consistent with the purposes and intent of this legislation, as well as the Commission's history of considering and approving necessary rate increases as such those proposed herein. Such regulatory flexibility is all the more critical now as the passenger stage industry undertakes to maintain essential services previously curtailed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Compounding these post-pandemic challenges, recent escalating fuel costs have severely impacted Applicant's operating margins. Granting a Zone of Rate Freedom (ZORF) is necessary to mitigate these adverse economic consequences, thereby safeguarding vital airport transit lines for the significant number of local passengers who rely on APPLICANT's services. Accordingly, APPLICANT seeks to support such a public commitment by the rate flexibility provided through the ZORF mechanism.
2. **INCREASED FUEL COSTS.** APPLICANT continues to face escalating operating costs across the transportation industry, driven by global supply chain disruptions affecting parts, maintenance, and fuel. As a passenger stage carrier relying on diesel fleets, APPLICANT is acutely impacted by exponential fuel price increases, compounding the financial burden of associated sales and excise taxes. Granting this ZORF will allow APPLICANT to make necessary, real-time fare adjustments within approved regulatory parameters, stabilizing bottom-line profitability while preserving its essential network of passenger services. .
3. **INCREASED LABOR COSTS.** In tandem with ongoing inflationary pressures affecting the broader economy, securing and retaining a highly qualified workforce remains a critical operational challenge. APPLICANT operates a fleet of high-capacity motor coaches and mini-buses that historically operate at full capacity, requiring drivers to possess a valid Commercial Driver's License (CDL). Amid a severe nationwide shortage of credentialed commercial drivers, reliable operators command a premium, forcing wages and benefit options sharply upward. To maintain its competitive edge and preserve its legacy of excellent service, APPLICANT consistently pays above the statutory minimum wage and must continue advancing these rates to mirror market demands. The requested Zone of Rate Freedom (ZORF) will provide the vital economic agility required to maintain competitive compensation models, thereby retaining APPLICANT'S loyal driving

staff and successfully recruiting new personnel. In addition, the increasing cost and availability of housing in the counties served by APPLICANT has caused greater pressure on wages. The extraordinary cost of living in the Bay Area, reaching into Sonoma and Napa Counties, is well-documented. Our drivers need housing and to afford to live in the area, necessary salary adjustments. For example, Sonoma County represents an exceptionally high-cost operating environment, maintaining a cost of living that sits well above the national baseline and exceeds the California state average. Driven by steep local housing and goods pricing, these regional economic conditions require APPLICANT to absorb higher labor and operational overhead costs, making the rate flexibility of a ZORF vital to sustaining our airport transit routes. These increases in pay levels, necessary to maintain a valued and needed service to the general public, will have a negative impact on bottom line profit, to be offset by the ZORF relief sought by APPLICANT. In addition, the traffic congestion to and from Applicant's base of operations creates greater salary pressures to induce drivers to continue to participate in this vital occupation. When a passenger uses APPLICANT's service, there is a corresponding and positive benefit to the environment given the corresponding decrease in the number of automobiles traveling within APPLICANT's market, thereby creating a positive environmental outcome.

4. **PUBLIC INTEREST.** Granting the requested ZORF directly serves the public interest by supporting the long-term continuity, safety, and reliability of vital passenger transport within our regional service corridor. In an economic climate defined by volatile fuel markets and severe commercial driver shortages, rigid fare structures threaten the financial viability of essential transit routes. Approval of the ZORF provides APPLICANT with the operational agility necessary to absorb real-time macroeconomic shocks without resorting to significant service reductions or route cancellations. By safeguarding these schedules, the ZORF protects local commuters, airport travelers, and transit-dependent populations who rely on our network for consistent regional mobility. Furthermore, maintaining a robust, accessible public stage carrier reduces single-occupancy vehicle congestion on major highways, actively supporting state environmental and emission-reduction goals. Ultimately, this regulatory flexibility balances consumer protection with operational necessity, preserving a critical transit utility. .

VIII.

Pursuant to Commission Rule 24, notice of this filing of this Application with the Commission is being made by sending a copy of this Application to both SFO and OAK, respectively. Furthermore, APPLICANT respectively submits this Application should be categorized as ratesetting, so that no hearing relative to same is necessary. APPLICANT further confirms that APPLICANT has on file with the Commission the require proof of insurance in accordance with General Order Series 101, as well compliance with the controlled substance and alcohol testing program pursuant to PUC Code 1032.1 and General Order Series 158. In addition, APPLICANT is enrolled in the pull notice system as required by Section 1808.1 of the California Vehicle Code.

WHEREFORE, it is respectfully requested that the Commission authorize the following, on an ex parte and expedited basis:

1. A ZORF to APPLICANT in the amount of plus 15% and minus 15% to its base tariff rates referenced above, also as set forth in Exhibit 1; and
2. Such other and further relief as the Commission deems proper.

DATED this 27th day of May, 2026.




JUDY LIN BRISTOW
General Counsel
THE SONOMA COUNTY AIRPORT
EXPRESS, INC.

VERIFICATION

I am General Counsel of The Sonoma County Airport Express, Inc., and am authorized to make this verification on its behalf. The statements in the foregoing document are true of my own knowledge, except as to matters which are therein stated based on information or belief, and as to those matters, I believe them to be true.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on May 27 2026, in Richmond, Virginia



JUDY LIN BRISTOW
General Counsel
THE SONOMA COUNTY AIRPORT
EXPRESS, INC.

EXHIBIT 1

FARES TO OR FROM SONOMA COUNTY ONE WAY TO/FROM SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND OAKLAND INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (INCLUDING INTERMEDIATE FARES WITHIN SONOMA COUNTY AND MARIN COUNTY ALREADY ON THE ROUTE TO/FROM SFO AND OAK)

	Current Base Rate	Current Fare	Proposed Base Rate
Adult	\$48.00	\$55.00	\$55.00
Senior	\$46.00	\$53.00	\$53.00
Military (w/ID)	\$46.00	\$53.00	\$53.00
Students (13-21 yrs w/ID)	\$46.00	\$53.00	\$53.00
Child	\$0	\$0	\$0
Intermediate Stop in Sonoma or Marin County			
	Minus 15% ZORF	Proposed Base Rate	Plus 15% ZORF
Adult	\$46.75	\$55.00	\$63.25
Senior	\$45.05	\$53.00	\$60.95
Military (w/ID)	\$45.05	\$53.00	\$60.95
Students (13-21 yrs w/ID)	\$45.05	\$53.00	\$60.95
Child	\$0	\$0	\$0
Intermediate Stop in Sonoma or Marin County			

FARES TO OR FROM MARIN COUNTY ONE WAY (TO/FROM OAK)

	Current Base Rate	Current Fare	Proposed Base Rate
Adult	\$37.00	\$41.00	\$41.00
Senior	\$35.00	\$39.00	\$39.00
Military (w/ID)	\$35.00	\$39.00	\$39.00
Students (13-21 yrs w/ID)	\$35.00	\$39.00	\$39.00
Child	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Minus 15% ZORF	Proposed Base Rate	Plus 15% ZORF
Adult	\$34.85	\$41.00	\$47.15
Senior	\$33.15	\$39.00	\$44.85
Military (w/ID)	\$33.15	\$39.00	\$44.85
Students (13-21 yrs w/ID)	\$33.15	\$39.00	\$44.85
Child	\$0	\$0	\$0

EXHIBIT 2
INCOME STATEMENT

	Current		Prior
	Apr 2025 - Mar 2026		Apr 2024 - Mar 2025
	<i>Actuals</i>		<i>Actuals</i>
Revenue			
Revenue	\$ 8,795,632	\$	8,814,397
Operating Expense			
Payroll Expenses	3,439,712		3,336,832
Fuel Expense	1,093,083		1,102,402
Parts & Repair	514,001		391,474
Vehicle Expenses	518,639		481,079
Insurance - Claims	198,503		181,751
Insurance - Fixed Cost	153,127		122,075
General and Administrative	2,030,166		1,935,980
All Other Operating Expenses	30,192		32,613
Other Expense (Income)	25,026		205,436
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 8,002,449	\$	7,789,643
Interest Expenses	(9,194)		10,225
Depreciation	442,478		459,014
Earnings Before Taxes	\$ 359,899	\$	555,515
Taxes	-		-
Net Income	\$ 359,899	\$	555,515