

From: M. Cohen Zakai
Sent: Tuesday, October 25, 2022 6:36 AM
To: MTC-ABAG Info <info@bayareametro.gov>
Cc: Eugene Bradley <ebradley@svtransitusers.org>
Subject: The pandemic isn't over

External Email

- The pandemic isn't over, and wishing it were won't make it so. Neither will business as usual. Public transit that wants to increase ridership needs to adapt to the new reality we live in.
- COVID-19 is still much more dangerous, especially to older adults, the immunocompromised and disabled, than a cold or the flu.
- Looming before us is the third winter in the pandemic; we experienced significant surges during the two previous winters but we don't know what's in store for this one.
- Dr. Sara Cody on Oct. 17: "things are not what they seem," because reported case numbers are unreliable and we must look at wastewater monitoring to understand our actual risk of infection; wastewater indicates that the virus levels are still high and transmission intense
- We aren't sure whether new variants and sub-variants will render current vaccines and treatments ineffective
- We know that two of the protective measures to reduce harm remain highly effective regardless of any future increases in transmissibility, immune evasiveness and/or lethality: masks and ventilation/filtration

BART upgraded its ventilation/filtration, but masks are optional, and we know that universal masking is much more effective at reducing transmission.

VTA has virtually ignored rider/driver health risks. Masks are even optional on Paratransit!

Older residents of San Jose who haven't yet been included in the RYDE expansion are hoping it will happen soon. Until then, VTA vehicles remain high-risk for SARS-CoV-2 infection, reinfection and long Covid. As such, those who can avoid travel on VTA will opt out.

No one can predict whether older, immunocompromised and disabled transit-dependent people can be counted on to increase ridership. But as long as VTA continues to ignore these groups' health and safety, it is doubtful that all but the most desperate will return.

Respectfully,
Marcia