

Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments
Joint MTC ABAG Legislation Committee

March 11, 2022

Agenda Item 3g

Senate Bill 917 (Becker): Seamless Transit Transformation Act

Subject:

Requires MTC to develop a Connected Network Plan and requires transit agencies to meet various requirements related to integrated fares, mapping and wayfinding, and real-time transit information.

Overview:

Senate Bill (SB) 917 builds on the work of MTC's Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force and prior legislation authored by Assemblymember David Chiu, including Assembly Bill (AB) 629 in 2021 and AB 2057 in 2022, to require Bay Area transit operators to meet various requirements related to transit fares, mapping and wayfinding, and real time transit information data standards and requires MTC to adopt a Connected Network Plan. The bill sets specific deadlines for compliance with the new requirements, and provides that if the Commission finds an operator out of compliance with any of those requirements, then that operator shall be ineligible to receive State Transit Assistance (STA), including population-based and revenue-based funds. Attachment A summarizes the key provisions of SB 917.

Recommendation:

Support if Amended (MTC)

Discussion:

In some respects, SB 917 is aligned with the intent of Item 2a in our 2022 Advocacy Program, which directed staff to “pursue legislation and funding to help ensure timely implementation of the Transit Transformation Action Plan” including provisions to “help accelerate the early action items, namely transit fare integration, mapping and wayfinding and transit priority.” However, the bill has no provisions related to transit priority despite it being one of the early action items, and the Connected Network Plan and real-time transit information provisions, while included in some form in the Transit Transformation Action Plan (Action Plan), were *not* early action items. Additionally, SB 917 sets specific timelines for significant fare integration policy changes, such as regional fare integration and an individual transit pass, that have not yet been developed or

agreed upon by the transit operators in detail, and for items that have been agreed upon, sets more aggressive timelines than staff believes to be reasonable. The bill does require one fare policy change that has received general acceptance as something to be implemented with the rollout of the Next Generation Clipper® system, namely free transfers from local-local and local-regional transit service. The Bay Area Transit Fare Policy Vision Statement is included as Attachment B for reference.

Enforcement Mechanism Needs Flexibility

Staff has heard concerns from transit operators about the linkage the bill makes between compliance with its provisions and access to STA funding as the enforcement mechanism. Staff shares some of the concerns in that the linkage lacks flexibility and is tied to several outcomes and strategies not yet fully developed or funded. Therefore, we believe the bill’s provisions should be revised to provide MTC with greater flexibility and discretion to take extenuating circumstances into account.

Conclusion:

Staff recommends a “support if amended” position on the bill. Staff will provide specific amendments before the Joint Legislation Committee meeting.

Known Positions:

Support

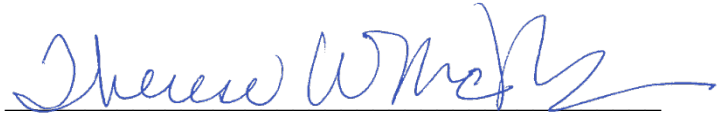
Co-Sponsors – Bay Area Council, Silicon Valley Leadership Group, SPUR, Transform ARC Alternative and Renewable Construction, Center for Independent Living, North Bay Leadership Council, Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club

Oppose

None on file

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Provisions of Senate Bill 917 (Becker)
- Attachment B: Bay Area Transit Fare Policy Vision Statement



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Provisions of Senate Bill 917 (Becker)

Fare Integration

SB 917 requires MTC to adopt an integrated transit fare structure, in consultation with the transit operators by December 31, 2023 that will become effective no later than July 1, 2024.¹ The bill requires this policy to include the following components:

1. No-cost transfers for local-local and local-regional across multiple operators;
2. Common fare structure for regional service;
3. Common transfer rules for local fares, such as means for validation;
4. Common definitions for adults, youth, seniors, persons with disabilities and other categories;
5. A multiagency pass, which may include a cap, that allows access to all operators on a daily or monthly basis for one set price; and
6. A simplified system for local fares where intersecting local transit services have the same fares.

The bill provides that none of the requirements above shall prohibit an operator from offering free transit.

Connected Network Plan

SB 917 requires MTC to adopt a Bay Area Connected Network Plan by December 31, 2023. The bill requires the connected network plan be consistent with the State Rail Plan, identify connected transit network corridors and hubs of regional significance and identify service level standards for different parts of the network. Specifically, these standards must:

- Identify connected network transit corridors and hubs of regional significance.
- Identify service level standards for different parts of the network corresponding to different levels of density by identifying target travel times between key hubs and quantifying access to jobs, housing and other opportunities.

The Connected Network Plan would also be required to identify funding needs and potential governance, institutional or legislative changes that would support it.

Real-Time Transit Information

The bill requires that the Commission establish open data standards in consultation with the regional transit coordinating council (RTCC) to provide real-time transit vehicle location, arrival and departure predictions and service alerts data to transit riders and requires that all transit agencies in the region comply with such standards, which are required to be aligned with any standards produced by the state, but may exceed them. The bill requires these requirements to take effect on January 1, 2023.

Accountability Provisions:

The bill provides that if MTC determines that an operator is out of compliance with the bill's provisions related to fare integration, real-time transit information or mapping and wayfinding requirements, then the operator shall be ineligible for State Transit Assistance Funds.

^{i i} The bill requires MTC consult with the “regional transit coordinating council.” This is an existing body that MTC was required to establish by statute, and which in practice, means the general managers of all of the transit operators. Its current name as referenced in Resolution 3866, our Regional Transit Coordination Plan, is the Partnership Transit Coordinating Council.

Bay Area Transit Fare Policy Vision Statement

Based on the draft findings of the Fare Coordination and Integration Study (FCIS), the Fare Integration Task Force (Task Force) recognizes that the implementation of more coordinated and integrated transit fare policies may offer cost-effective options for improving the transit customer experience, promoting transit ridership recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and reducing regional vehicle miles traveled, greenhouse gas emissions, and transit travel times for customers, in ways that are compatible with the equity goals of transit operators, local stakeholders, MTC, and the State of California.

Transit Fare Policy Initiatives for Further Development

The Task Force endorses continued work by transit operators and MTC staff to advance the following policy initiatives:

1. Deployment of an all-transit agency institutional/employer pass demonstration pilot in 2022, with a focus on educational institutions, affordable housing properties, and employers of various sizes, pending available resources/technical considerations.
2. Implement no-cost and reduced cost transfers for transit users transferring between different transit agencies beginning in 2023, coinciding with the rollout of the Next Generation Clipper® system/Clipper® 2.
3. Continue to develop a proposal for implementing an all-transit agency pass product for the general public after the launch of the Next Generation Clipper® system/Clipper® 2 in 2023 or later (pending outcomes and data from the pilot noted in no. 1 above).
4. Continue to refine the vision of eventually creating a common fare structure (distance or zone-based) for regional rail, ferry, and express bus service after Next Generation Clipper® system/Clipper® 2 implementation. Direct transit operator staff and MTC staff to continue to evaluate the benefits and costs of a common fare structure for regional transit services in the context of a broader evaluation of post-COVID-19 pandemic ridership patterns, the role of regional transit service in the region, and the funding strategy for these regional transit services.

Complementary and Necessary Objectives to Facilitate Delivery of Transit Fare Policy Initiatives

In collaboratively advancing these improvements for the benefit of the Bay Area's transit customers, we also recognize the continued economic challenges facing the region, and the transit industry in particular. The Task Force recommends that transit operator and MTC staff work to advance the above policies while also acknowledging that successful delivery will require pursuit of the following complementary and necessary objectives:

- Implementation will not require the transfer of locally sourced funds between transit agencies.
- Prior to implementation of any of the Transit Fare Policy Initiatives, new funding sources will be sought to offset adverse transit agency revenue impacts resulting from implementation.
- Implementation of any of the Transit Fare Policy Initiatives will require approval by the appropriate transit agency governing body.
- Implementation of any of the Transit Fare Policy Initiatives shall not result in a reduction of transit agency operating service levels.