

**Joint MTC ABAG Legislation Committee****March 11, 2022****Public Comment****Agenda Item 3g**

Date: March 10, 2022  
Attention: Chair Jesse Arreguin, Joint MTC ABAG Legislation Committee  
Re: **Agenda Item 3g., March 11, 2022 Meeting - Analysis and Proposed Amendments to Senate Bill 917 (Becker)**

Honorable Commissioners,

We are grateful to MTC for the stalwart leadership in the Blue Ribbon Task Force/Transformation Action Plan.

Our organizations are writing to express concern over some of the amendments proposed by staff about SB 917 (Becker), the Seamless Transit Transformation Act. We support the intent to modify the language to ensure that the actions the bill calls for are feasible.

However, several of the proposed amendments go too far and would significantly weaken the bill's ability to bring about a more customer-focused, seamless transit system that can bring back riders, and build the necessary public confidence in MTC and transit agencies to compel the public to vote in favor of additional funding for transit.

We'd ask that rather than suggesting areas of SB 917 to be removed, that staff come forward with creative suggestions on how we can meet the goals and deadlines within the bill, recognizing the urgent need for transformation of our transit system in order to meet our climate, equity, and ridership goals. **Therefore, we request that the Commission direct staff to continue discussing the amendments with bill sponsors and author.**

At several points over the past number of years the MTC has called upon its staff to be 'bold and unflinching' in pursuit of a more seamlessly integrated transit system. The Region's Transformation Action Plan reinforced this ambitious direction and identified 27 near term actions to advance transformation. Polling conducted by MTC indicates that 89% or more of Bay Area residents strongly support seamless transit integration for riders.

SB 917 is an endorsement of the Transformation Action Plan priorities and deadlines for action. Yet, the proposed amendments from staff included in this report suggest a 'walking back' of the commitments the Task Force and MTC adopted just six months ago that should be deeply concerning to the commission and members of the public. Specifically:

## Mapping & Wayfinding

Mapping & Wayfinding was identified as one of 3 accelerated priorities in the Transformation Action Plan. SB 917 sets deadlines identical to what was approved in the Transformation Action Plan, less than a year ago. The proposed amendments suggest postponing these deadlines for creating wayfinding standards by an entire year, even though planning has been underway for many years on this initiative. The deadline specified in the bill for wayfinding standards is 2 years and 3 months from now; this would extend the deadline to 3 years 3 months from now. Taking over *three years* to develop wayfinding standards, when efforts on this topic have been underway for over a decade does not seem reasonable.

## Connected Network Plan

Similar to mapping and wayfinding, staff propose amendments to SB 917 that would remove deadlines that were approved by the Task Force and MTC just six months ago. Completion of a Connected Network Plan is critical to our region's ability to offer a vision of integrated service to take to voters in a 2024 ballot measure that could address the 'fiscal cliff' agencies are facing.

The deadline of December 31, 2023, 21 months from now, will build voter confidence in any proposed funding measure in 2024. This is the primary reason the Connected Network Plan is specifically called out in SB 917.

The staff report notes "SB 917 adds additional components to the scope of the Plan, while keeping the December 31, 2023 date". We would support amendments that maintain the intent of the Transformation Action Plan item in order to be able to meet the December 31st, 2023 deadline - rather than eliminate the deadline.

## Fare Integration

Staff propose to eliminate any deadlines for the implementation of a common fare structure for regional services, and for making multi-agency transit passes available to the general public. Instead staff propose that MTC submit a report to the legislature on progress by January 1, 2025.

If funding is the main issue, we encourage MTC staff to propose amendments that allow deadlines to be extended by action taken by the commission due to funding restrictions, rather than removing the deadlines.

Stronger commitments are needed considering the scale of our climate and transit crisis. The common regional fare structure was identified in the Fare Integration Study as the single most beneficial fare policy the region could pursue to increase transit ridership, and it was a policy that could be pursued in a range of funding scenarios. A multi-agency pass for the general public is something that riders have been requesting for decades and which is available in most other regions; it also performed very well in the analysis. These are both common sense policies that must be prioritized. By setting deadlines for these policies, SB 917 can act as a powerful motivator for transit agencies and MTC to figure out how to deliver these rider-first improvements in a timely manner.

Finally, we do not view SB 917 as intending to pursue local fare consistency, and we would support amendments to clarify that the bill does not require local fares to be consistent across the region. The bill also doesn't preclude local agencies from offering discounts or free transit to certain populations if desired.

In summary, we ask you to reinforce the call to be 'bold and unflinching' in pursuit of a more integrated transit system. Rather than suggesting areas of SB 917 be removed, we request that staff come forward with creative suggestions on how we can meet the goals and deadlines within the bill.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ian Griffiths".

Ian Griffiths  
Policy Director, Seamless Bay Area

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hayley Currier".

Hayley Currier  
Policy Advocacy Manager, TransForm