

**Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Regional Network Management Committee**

January 10, 2025

Agenda Item 3a

Means-Based Eligibility and Enrollment Model

Subject:

Update on an initiative to assess eligibility and enrollment partnership opportunities to inform policies and practices for Clipper START, Express Lanes START, and State Route 37.

Background:

Plan Bay Area 2050 charts a course for a Bay Area that is affordable, connected, diverse, healthy and vibrant for all residents through 2050 and beyond. MTC has a portfolio of means-based, multi-modal initiatives to address transportation affordability in various stages of development and implementation. MTC aims to promote coordination between internal means-based initiatives. A priority for this coordination is to focus on pilots for Clipper START, Express Lanes START, and State Route 37 (SR-37) with an emphasis on aligning, where possible, eligibility and enrollment across these means-based programs and exploring opportunities to extend program access. Clipper START, launched in June 2020, provides a 50% transit discount on 22 Bay Area transit agencies for eligible individuals aged 19 to 64. Express Lanes START, launched in April 2023, provides a 50% discount for tolls on Interstate 880 Express Lanes only. MTC is currently exploring options to provide means-based discounts for future tolling of SR 37 as part of the Sears Point to Mare Island Improvement Project located in Solano and Sonoma counties.

Since the rollout of MTC's means-based pilot programs, Commissioners have emphasized the importance of improving transportation affordability and requested that staff explore ways to increase participation, including by making it easier to enroll in the programs. Evaluation of the pilots revealed significant opportunities to increase enrollment, especially among Bay Area individuals experiencing the greatest barriers. Staff are currently advancing recommendations from last year's Clipper START evaluation such as working with community-based organizations on marketing and outreach. Express Lanes START completed a 12-month evaluation and is identifying strategies to improve customer experience.

Means-Based Program Assessment – Eligibility and Enrollment

Staff is responding to a request from the Commission to assess the agency’s means-based eligibility threshold and enrollment model. Key research questions include:

- How do MTC’s START programs compare with other peers/partner programs in the areas of eligibility criteria and qualification process?
- What can strengthen MTC’s transportation affordability initiatives to make them more comprehensive in eligibility and services as well as more flexible in how they can be accessed and used while still being feasible at scale?

A key finding is that the existing eligibility threshold is in line with the vast majority of peer programs and there is a significant opportunity to capture an untapped market and get benefits to more customers even at the current eligibility threshold. Please refer to the presentation included in **Attachment A** for a summary of key findings that will inform draft recommendations on how to improve the eligibility and enrollment process.

Next Steps:

Staff will incorporate comments to inform draft recommendations on how to improve the eligibility and enrollment process and return to the Committee in spring 2025 to hear feedback on the recommendations.

Issues:


None identified.

Recommendations:

Information.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Presentation



Andrew B. Fremier