

**Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Policy Advisory Council**

May 13, 2020

Agenda Item 9

Staff Liaison Report – May 2020

Subject: Relevant MTC policy decisions and other activities.

Recommendation: Information

Attachments: Attachment A: Staff Liaison Report – May 2020



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

**Agenda Item 9
Attachment A**
Bay Area Metro Center
375 Beale Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
TEL 415.778.6700
WEB www.mtc.ca.gov

Memorandum

TO: Policy Advisory Council
DATE: May 13, 2020
FR: Marti Paschal, Staff Liaison
W.I. 1114
RE: Staff Liaison Report – May 2020

Local Heroes Honored in MTC Video

Even during a pandemic, there is a need for essential workers to travel. MTC's Mark Jones produced a video honoring those workers. In particular, Bay Area transit agency employees continue to get people to jobs, critical medical appointments and grocery stores, despite the risks. When the public health crisis abates, these workers will be there to resume their larger role in the region. In the meantime, they stand ready to serve Bay Area residents for essential trips. The video can be found here:

<https://blog.bayareametro.gov/posts/local-heroes-honored-mtc-video>

Congestion Pricing Suspended at the Bay Bridge

In light of the steep drop in vehicle traffic across the Bay Area's seven state-owned toll bridges due to state and local shelter-in-place mandates during the ongoing COVID-19 health emergency, the Bay Area Toll Authority (BATA) voted on April 22 to suspend weekday congestion pricing — also known as time-of-day pricing — at the Bay Bridge toll plaza. Effective at midnight on April 23, tolls for regular two-axle vehicles on each of the state-owned toll bridges are standardized at \$6 on all days and at all times.

Congestion pricing originally was implemented at the Bay Bridge in 2010. Currently, weekday Bay Bridge tolls are set at \$5 from midnight to 5 a.m., from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and from 7 p.m. to midnight; and rise to \$7 during the traditional peak hours of 5 a.m. to 10 a.m. and from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. The current \$6 toll rate at the Bay Bridge on Saturdays and Sundays will remain unchanged, as will the \$3 toll rate for three-person carpools and qualifying clean-air vehicles.

The volume of weekday traffic across the Bay Bridge and the six other state-owned toll bridges has fallen about 50 percent below 2019 levels since the Bay Area's shelter-in-place order went into effect on March 17, while weekend traffic has stabilized at about 65 percent below last year's levels.

Caltrans and BATA encourage all toll bridge customers who do not already have FasTrak accounts to open accounts online at www.bayareafastrak.org or by phone at 1-877-229-8655 (BAY-TOLL). Customers who may be leaving their homes to buy food or medicine at a Costco or Walgreens store may obtain a FasTrak toll tag at these stores and then activate their new accounts online. A map of retail locations at which FasTrak toll tags are available may be found at www.bayareafastrak.org/en/howitworks/retailmap.html.

BATA administers all toll revenues from the region's seven state-owned toll bridges. In addition to the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, these include the Antioch, Benicia-Martinez, Carquinez, Dumbarton, Richmond-San Rafael and San Mateo-Hayward bridges. Caltrans owns and operates the state highway system, including the seven Bay Area toll bridges.

Executive Director's Report

The following items are excerpts from the April 2020 Executive Director's Report to the Commission. To read the report in its entirety go to:

<http://www.mtc.ca.gov/whats-happening/news/executive-directors-report>.

Key Reports:

COVID-19 Activity Status

As the Bay Area has moved into its sixth week of shelter in place—and as we are meeting collectively in our second remote session as a full Commission—I review below how the crisis is impacting our agency, and increasingly the policy environment that shapes our work.

Internal Focus:

From the perspective of the agency and our staff, I am proud of the talent, commitment and creativity the MTC team has brought forward to support you and our public. Our IT personnel in particular deserves kudos for constantly adjusting and serving the needs of a remote work environment—the relatively smooth transition has been possible with the often-unseen heroic efforts of that group. As a truly regional service network attached to the business of 375 Beale Street, Nick Roethel and his staff support not only internal staff meetings, but a range of MTC, ABAG and Air District board meetings involving our public. Enormous thanks to them.

We are mindful and vigilant regarding public health orders that impact the current shelter in place status, and eventually the transition out of it. I fully expect that transition to be a phased one, and paramount will be maintaining a safe environment for our staff, our board, and anyone doing business with us at our headquarters. We will keep you posted of those efforts should they commence in advance of the next Commission meeting.

The External View:

As noted by Chair Haggerty, you will be hearing today of the significant effort that the MTC team has led to distribute the critical federal CARE Act funding made available as emergency assistance to our transit operators. This represents an extraordinary consensus among our transit partners across the region on what an initial distribution of funding should entail in response to the immediate crisis. It also sets the foundation for an equally demanding, forthcoming decision to address the recovery stage under COVID-19's deep, still evolving drag on the economy and our communities. The one thing we know is that things will not be the same after this crisis. As a regional public agency, we are compelled to face the question of what will be the "New Normal"—and what can/should/must we do to try and shape the post-crisis future.

This is a question too global and pervasive for MTC and ABAG to address alone. But I offer four broad areas our agencies need to explore and address, in ways not yet fully understood. This is not an all-inclusive list, but ones we certainly will be building upon.

- How we travel
Our transportation system is experiencing seismic shifts in usage— transit systems, bridges, highways and roads. How will those systems rebound? Will people want to use them in the same way? How can people pay for their use? Will the experience of telecommuting on an unprecedented scale forever shift the need and desire to travel at all?
- Where we live
Housing availability and affordability were regional crises before the pandemic. How will those manifest within an economy shaken by unemployment that increases pressure on those least able to be or remain housed? Will that same depressed economy have an upside wrangling construction costs to a manageable level allowing housing production to gain footing and accelerate?
- How we contribute
How will job sectors react in the face of national, state and local market forces— and subject to federal, state and local interventions still unfolding? Will jobs return to the same level— and critically in the same locations within the Bay Area? Will “jobs/housing” relationships be fundamentally changed— and thus impact the transportation system that links them?
- Who we are
This public health crisis at its core attacks people— and everything redounds from that fact. And we are realizing that this crisis impacts segments of our community far more deeply than others. Simply said, those vulnerable before are even more so in the face of COVID-19. Inequities— economic, racial, societal— are at once highlighted and undeniably exacerbated under the thumb of the virus. And if people were not on equal footing before the crisis, and are dragged even further down as it unfolds, it only stands to reason efforts to recover from the crisis will be similarly disparate absent early and intentional actions to own the disparities and redress them in the climb upward.

There are many policies, programs and projects where answering these questions become crucial. Staff will be identifying these intersections, and bringing them forward in the ensuing weeks and months. Importantly, the Governance Committee is advancing to the MTC Commission and ABAG Executive Board for consideration, today and tomorrow respectively, a proposal to consolidate committees of each agency, in order to more deeply share ownership of core regional issues. The questions above unquestionably fall under that charge.

OTHER NEWS

Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP)

Yesterday, Tuesday, April 21, CalSTA Secretary David Kim announced \$500 million statewide of grant awards for Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP). The Bay Area received four awards, totaling just over \$168 million, representing 34% of the total.

- BART Corridor Core Capacity Program — 34 new expansion rail cars: \$107.1 million.
- SFMTA Core Capacity Program — Transit signal priority, transit-only lanes, facility improvements, etc.: \$41.7 million.
- Solano Transportation Authority (STA) — Solano Express regional bus service with shared electric bus charging: \$10.4 million.
- WETA – Expansion of WETA ferry services — Electric vessel and with charging infrastructure for Mission Bay and Downtown San Francisco: \$9.1 million.

MTC endorsed all four projects either under the MTC's Cap and Trade Framework priority projects or the small-projects criteria.

The TIRCP program is funded through both Cap and Trade auction proceeds and SB1 revenues. Calls for projects are made on a biannual basis.

I would like to draw attention to this news not just because the Bay Area did well, but that this action is a strong statement that the state of CA is working towards the future just as hard as we are working through this very difficult moment.

BOMA 360 Performance Program

The Bay Area Metro Center, managed by Cushman & Wakefield and owned by the Bay Area Headquarters Authority was awarded a notable honor of being officially recognized for the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) 360 accreditation. The BOMA 360 Performance Program sets the standard worldwide for operational best practices in the commercial real estate industry. The program benchmarks building performance in six key areas: operations and management; security and safety; training and education; energy; environment and sustainability; and tenant relations. By earning the prestigious BOMA 360 label, the 375 Beale Street headquarters is now listed amongst the top performing buildings across all areas of operations and management.