

November 7, 2019

Attention: Joint MTC Legislation Committee & ABAG Legislation Committee
Re: Agenda Item #4B, 2020 Draft Joint Advocacy Program

Honorable MTC Commissioners and ABAG Executive Board Members,

Thank you for considering an overview of the 2020 Draft Joint Advocacy Program, since there are important issues relating to transportation and housing that will be before the state legislature this coming year.

We request that “Institutional reforms to advance a seamlessly integrated transit system” be listed as a distinct initiative of MTC/ABAG’s 2020 Joint Advocacy program, and not just as part of advocacy regarding a Regional Ballot Measure.

The Bay Area’s present transit system is experiencing major challenges, including declining per capita ridership and increased competition from new forms of mobility. Bay Area transit provides fragmented and cumbersome experiences for users, making public transportation uncompetitive with driving; and it does not make the most effective use of taxpayer resources that are available. Major capital projects routinely have cost overruns, are delivered years late, and do not deliver seamless connections among modes.

Based in over two years of research and interviews with leaders across the Bay Area, our organization, Seamless Bay Area believes that institutional reforms are urgently needed to support seamlessly integrated planning and operations of the public transportation system. The public is hungry for change. Over 1,250 members of the public have signed a petition in support of seven “Seamless Transit Principles”, one of which is “Prioritize reforms to create a seamless network”. The Seamless Transit Principles (see Attachment) have been endorsed by over a dozen organizations, including SPUR and TransForm and one city, the City of Berkeley.

We are glad to see that there is a sentence embedded within the line item on a Regional Transportation Revenue Ballot Measure that calls for “reforms to support the efficient management and seamless operation of our transportation system.” However, given the complexities of pulling together a regional funding measure, such a funding measure may happen later than 2020.

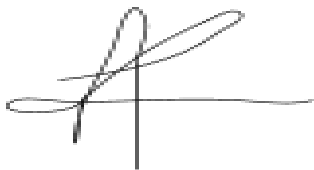
Advocacy for institutional reforms to create a seamless system has independent value and shouldn't be contingent on a regional funding measure. In the event that a regional transportation funding measure occurs later than 2020, it would be beneficial to initiate institutional reforms sooner, so that when there is a large amount of new funding, the public can have confidence that the funding will be spent efficiently to create a seamlessly integrated, high-performing system.

We therefore request that “Institutional reforms to advance a seamlessly integrated transit system” be a distinct initiative of MTC/ABAG’s 2020 Joint Advocacy program, as its own line item, to advance and monitor regardless of whether a legislation enabling a Regional Funding Measure occurs in 2020.

Thank you very much for your consideration,



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Attachment: Seamless Transit Principles

ATTACHMENT

The Seamless Transit Principles Viewable at: www.seamlesstransitprinciples.org

SUPPORTERS: Seamless Bay Area, SPUR, San Francisco Transit Riders, TransForm, Urban Habitat, City of Berkeley, Friends of Caltrain, Working Partnerships, Transport Oakland, Tech Equity Collaborative, 350 Bay Area, East Bay for Everyone, Peninsula for Everyone, TransitScreen, ARC Alternative + Renewable Construction



1) Run all Bay Area transit as one easy-to-use system

Public transit should work as one seamless, connected, and convenient network across the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. Getting around on transit should be as fast and easy as driving a car. Coordinated bus, rail, and ferry routes and schedules should encourage effortless transfers. Consistent and clear customer information, branding, and maps should make using transit simple and dignified.



2) Put riders first

Riders should feel comfortable when using transit and be treated like valued customers. Public transit agencies must do more to listen to riders and continuously improve service. They must prioritize riders' needs above all else, and overcome all operational, political and bureaucratic barriers to provide an excellent and seamless customer experience.



3) Make public transit equitable and accessible to all

People of all income levels, ages, abilities, genders, and backgrounds should have access to world-class public transit. People who are the most reliant on transit are best served by a universal, inclusive, regionally integrated, connected system that is used by all. People with limited means to pay for transit should be provided with discounts.



4) Align transit prices and passes to be simple, fair, and affordable

Transit should provide good value for money. Fares across the region's 27 public transit agencies must be aligned into a consistent, fair, and affordable system that encourages using transit for all types of trips and doesn't punish riders for transferring. Cost-effective monthly passes should work across the Bay Area and should be widely available to individuals, employers, and schools.



5) Connect effortlessly with other sustainable transportation

A person's journey does not end when they get off a bus or exit a station. Excellent pedestrian, bicycle, and other pollution-free transportation options should seamlessly connect public transit to communities and destinations, supporting door-to-door trips that don't require a car.



6) Plan communities and transportation together

High quality public transit should be at the heart of communities across the Bay Area. Transportation should be closely aligned with our region's land use, promoting a connected network of transit-oriented, walkable communities that expands access to affordable housing and job opportunities, and reduces car travel and greenhouse gas emissions.



7) Prioritize reforms to create a seamless network

A regionally integrated, world-class transit system won't happen on its own -- it will take leadership, unprecedented levels of cooperation, and changes to existing local, regional, and state policies. The cities, counties, public transit agencies, regional authorities, business leaders, advocacy groups and elected representatives of the San Francisco Bay Area and Northern California megaregion must prioritize the broad public interest and urgently work together collaboratively to advance critical reforms. Our future depends on it!