



April 21, 2020

Attention: Metropolitan Transportation Commission, April 22 Meeting

Re: Agenda Item 7(f): MTC Resolution No. 4420. Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (H.R. 748) - Emergency Transit Assistance Programming

Honorable MTC Commissioners,

In allocating the \$1.3 billion of CARES Act Funds, MTC's goal should be not only to enable transit agencies to continue to operate service that meets the needs of transit-dependent people and essential workers, but also to incrementally start to rebuild transit ridership and promote a reliable, affordable, and connected network.

With transit agency ridership down by 80-90% across most of the region, Bay Area transit needs more than just funding to survive - it needs bold solutions to restructure transit service to move essential workers to their jobs, help those most dependent on transit, and position the transit system for a recovery.

Transit agencies acting together, instead of in isolation, to coordinate service regionally and maintain reliable access will assure the best use of our limited resources. Transit service across the region must respond to the drastic and ongoing shifts in travel patterns, now and as the crisis evolves. Now is the time to quickly adapt our transit network to best serve those who need it most.

We support swift approval of the CARES Act funding and its quick distribution to transit agencies to meet the most pressing needs and keep service going. At the same time, MTC has a critical and unique role to play in the planning and coordination of a regional network that is needed now and over the next several years. In connection with approval of the CARES allocations, we ask that MTC quickly mobilize to lead implementation of the following policies in partnership with transit agencies to help create a more consistent, reliable experience for riders to help our region's transit system rebuild more quickly.

1. Develop a Core Transit Network Plan within 30 days in order to inform service planning decisions.

- The region does not have a regional core transit network plan that clearly identifies key corridors with common levels of transit service - minimum frequencies and speeds - that make up a connected, multi-modal transit network.
- In the absence of a core transit network plan, transit agencies have made service cuts without coordination, leaving large gaps in the network. As service gets restored, gaps will continue to exist. Without a coherent regional prioritization process for bringing back service, it will be difficult to deliver reliable regional service that will bring back riders.

- Once developed, MTC and transit agencies should work together to update the plan every 30-60 days for the next two years in close consultation with riders, as service gets restored to ensure a core connected transit network is maintained.
- This will ensure that as service is cut and restored, a reliable core rapid transit system is maintained that prioritizes the needs of transit-dependent riders and essential workers.
- It will also ensure that resources (financial, workforce, and vehicles) can be most efficiently deployed to best support access, equity, and a quality transit system.
- The plan should be transit agency-agnostic, should respond to the changing needs of riders, and maximize access to essential destinations region-wide during times of reduced service.
- The plan should consider the most cost-effective ways of providing mobility and access.
- Transit agencies should meet the minimum service levels identified for each corridor, funded by the emergency operating funds. The plan should identify priority corridors for service at least every 10 minute, 20 minute and 30 minutes.
- During the pandemic, the levels of service should support adequate social distancing and the wise use of scarce transit resources.
- The Emergency Core Transit Network Plan should form the basis of a more coherent connected network plan as the region restores service.

2. Eliminate restrictions that prevent transit agencies from transporting passengers in other service areas

- In light of COVID-19, some transit agencies have already begun to relax these restrictions; for example Golden Gate Transit and Muni have agreed to allow Golden Gate to transport passengers within SF.
- Removing these restrictions will allow for more flexible and efficient deployment of resources and greater service for passengers as service is restructured over the coming months. Combined with eliminating transfer fees and honoring other operators' monthly pass products, this will also make transit more affordable to riders.
- Deploy this policy in accordance with the emergency network plan principles and modify if, for example, opening a route would lead to unsafe crowding.

3. Eliminate Transfer Fees - Charge riders only one fare

- To support critical access for essential trips and transit-dependent riders in the near-term, agencies should eliminate transfer fees for the duration of emergency funding.
- This will benefit low income and transit-dependent people most, reduce the relative cost of transit compared to driving, and help support more transit-supportive travel habits and rebuilding of ridership as people resume regular routines.
- To implement this quickly and simply, we propose that:
 - For any transit trips involving one or more transfers within a 2-hour period, users should be charged a maximum fare equal to that of the most expensive leg; all other fares should be waived or rebated.
 - For transfers between two regional services (e.g. BART, Caltrain, SMART, Ferry, Golden Gate Transit) a standard flat discount may be applied, roughly corresponding to the cost of a local transit fare (\$2-3).
- Beyond the period of emergency funding, look to the results of the fare integration business case study for the appropriate strategy to implement integrated fares in the longer term.

4. Make transit free for children 12 years of age and under

- Currently only children ages 0-4 ride for free across most Bay Area systems. Children 12 and under are nearly always accompanied by an adult and should also be able to ride for free to support transit-dependent families, especially when school is not in session.
- MTC should require that transit agencies provide free transit to all children 12 and under.
- Once travel restrictions start to be lifted, this policy supports quicker rebuilding of transit ridership, incentivizing more families to use transit, especially on weekends and non-peak times. Because children under 12 are usually accompanied by adults, it helps build adult, full-fare ridership.

5. Develop regionally consistent emergency safety standards for workers and riders

- Bay Area transit agencies have struggled to protect workers and riders' safety, including adequate provision of personal protective equipment, leading to significant trust challenges between operators, riders, and agencies.
- Standards are already being developed on a national level by groups such as the American Public Transit Association, but MTC still has an important role to play in facilitating transit agency access to national, state, and international expertise, as well as improving communications to the public and riders.
- Moving forward, MTC should take a leadership role in creating common regional safety protocols and standards, and resources to help transit agencies through this period.

COVID-19 has created new urgency for our region to address the challenges of a fragmented transit system. We ask you to call for bold solutions that help us ensure people in our region who rely on transit will be able to conveniently and affordably get around for the next several years. Please require that emergency transit funding be accompanied by policies that will enable us to deliver a more coordinated and responsive system for transit riders.

Sincerely,



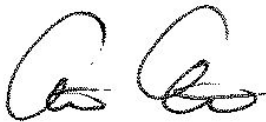
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