

Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Policy Advisory Council Equity & Access Subcommittee

June 22, 2020

Agenda Item 4

MTC Express Lanes Equity Update

Subject: Update on staff's plan to address equity in express lanes.

Background: Express lane operator staff are completing a strategic planning process to inform the scope of the Regional Express Lanes Network in Plan Bay Area 2050 (PBA 2050) and explore issues and policies for the Network. As part of the project performance evaluation phase of PBA 2050, express lanes were evaluated and given a 'challenge' rating relative to equity, meaning that project benefits skew towards higher income individuals. Separately, staff received significant public comment that affordability of express lanes is a concern prior to the Bay Area Infrastructure Financing Authority (BAIFA) adopting tolling rules for the I-880 Express Lanes. As a result, staff has been working internally and with other express lanes operators on how to make express lanes more equitable for low-income individuals.

In March 2020, MTC staff updated this subcommittee on the creation of the Express Lanes Strategic Plan and its work to explore strategies to further equity. At the time, staff planned to research and prepare a series of white papers, including one on equity. The subcommittee was clearly interested in making express lanes more accessible to low-income individuals through near-term action. This was underscored at the May 2020 meeting of the Policy Advisory Council. Staff listened to the criticism and is proposing a means-based toll pilot as a near-term action. At the June Operations Committee meeting, MTC staff committed to pilot a means-based toll on its express lanes (those operated BAIFA). MTC staff will repurpose the white paper effort on activities to implement the pilot. Staff will seek input from the low-income community during pilot design to address needs and the evaluation for 'lessons learned'. In addition to the pilot, MTC is seeking a commitment from other express lanes operators to support means-based tolling as one of various strategies in Plan Bay Area 2050 that could address equity for all Bay Area express lanes.

Staff will present the sketch concept for a means-based toll discount pilot and 'next steps' for discussion and feedback at the June 22 meeting.

Attachments: PowerPoint



Equity: Plan Bay Area 2050 & Express Lanes

Policy Advisory Council's Equity & Access Subcommittee

June 22, 2020

Approach to Equity Has Evolved Over Time

Before:

Express lanes are a choice

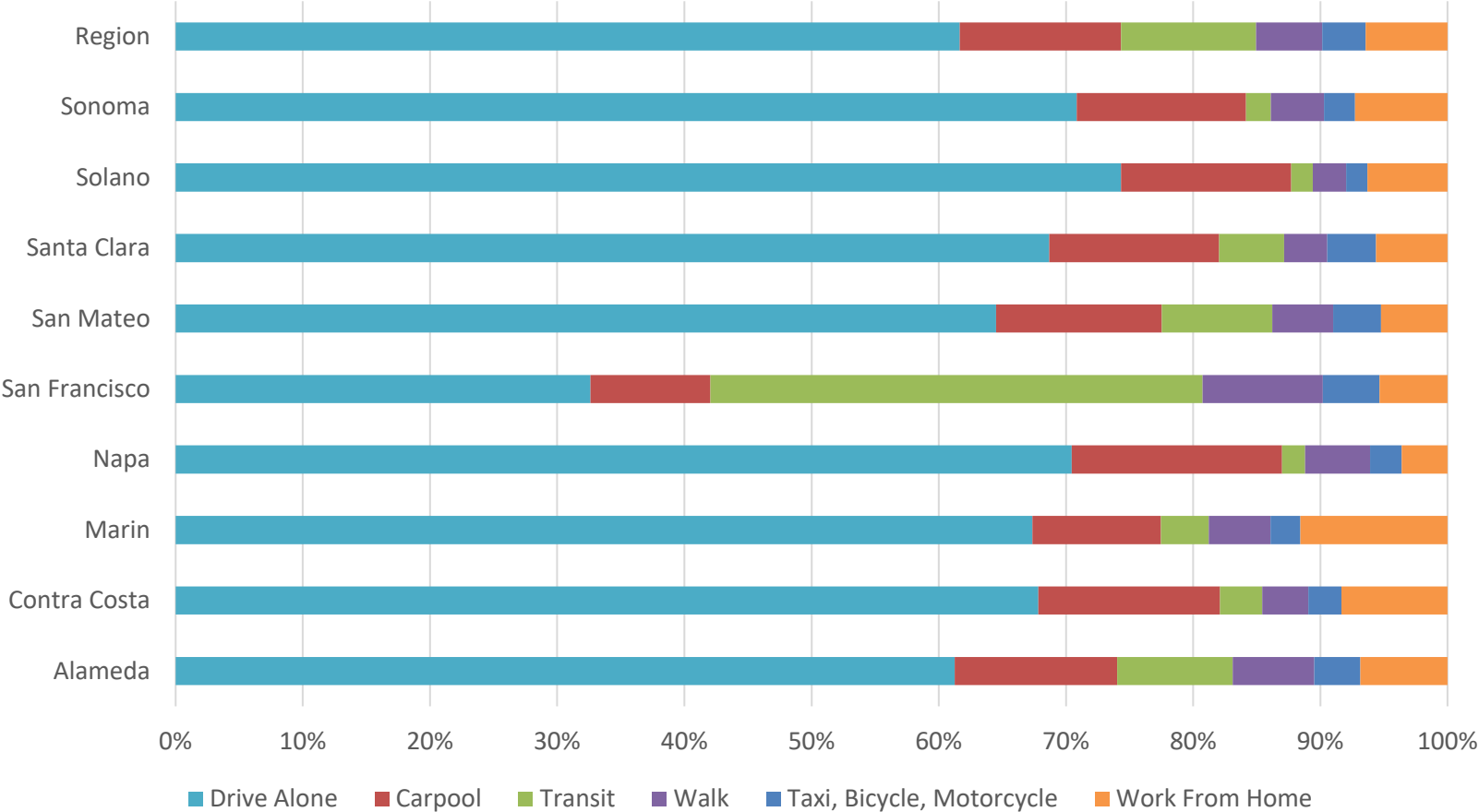
Now:

**Choice is limited without
the means to pay**



Photo - Sharon McCutcheon, unsplash.com

A majority of low-income workers are drivers



62% of workers making less than \$35,000 per year drive alone to work, region-wide

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2018, 5-Year Average
Note: Individuals with less than \$35,000 have been categorized as low-income.

Plan Bay Area 2050 and Equity

- Examines projects through a social equity lens
- All persons should have fair & equal access to opportunity
- Express lanes: Equity Challenges
 - Benefits skew to higher income



MTC's commitment to equity for express lanes

- Issue: low-income adults cannot afford to use express lanes and transit may not be an equally good option
- Opportunity to expand customer base
- MTC seeks commitment to means-based discount in Plan Bay Area 2050
- Near-term pilot on BAIFA's express lanes
 - Leverage tools and rules of Clipper START pilot
 - Engage low-income drivers in pilot design
 - Operations & toll discount paid for by express lanes tolls

Pilot: BAIFA express lanes

D

I-680 Contra Costa

G

E

I-880



Potential pilot goals

IMPLEMENTATION

AWARENESS



Customers aware
of program

**POSITIVE
EXPERIENCE**



Easily accessible

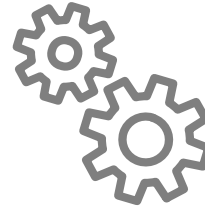
**FINANCIAL
VIABILITY**



Created by Laura Anaya
from the Noun Project

Feasible for operators
and region

**ADMINISTRATIVE
FEASIBILITY**



Management feasible

IMPACT

AFFORDABILITY



Participants less
burdened

**INCREASED
ACCESS**



Access to opportunities

Synergies with Clipper START pilot

Clipper START

Pilot Locations

- 4 transit agencies (BART, Caltrain, Golden Gate Transit, SF Muni)

Eligibility

- Adults earning 200% or less of federal poverty level (~\$52,000 for family of four)

Implementation

- Offered through Clipper
- Duration: 18 months
- Centrally administered: Customer services systems and eligibility contractor
- Outreach: Social service agencies, community-based organizations & advertising

BAIFA Pilot

Pilot Location(s)

- BAIFA express lanes (I-680 Contra Costa and/or I-880)

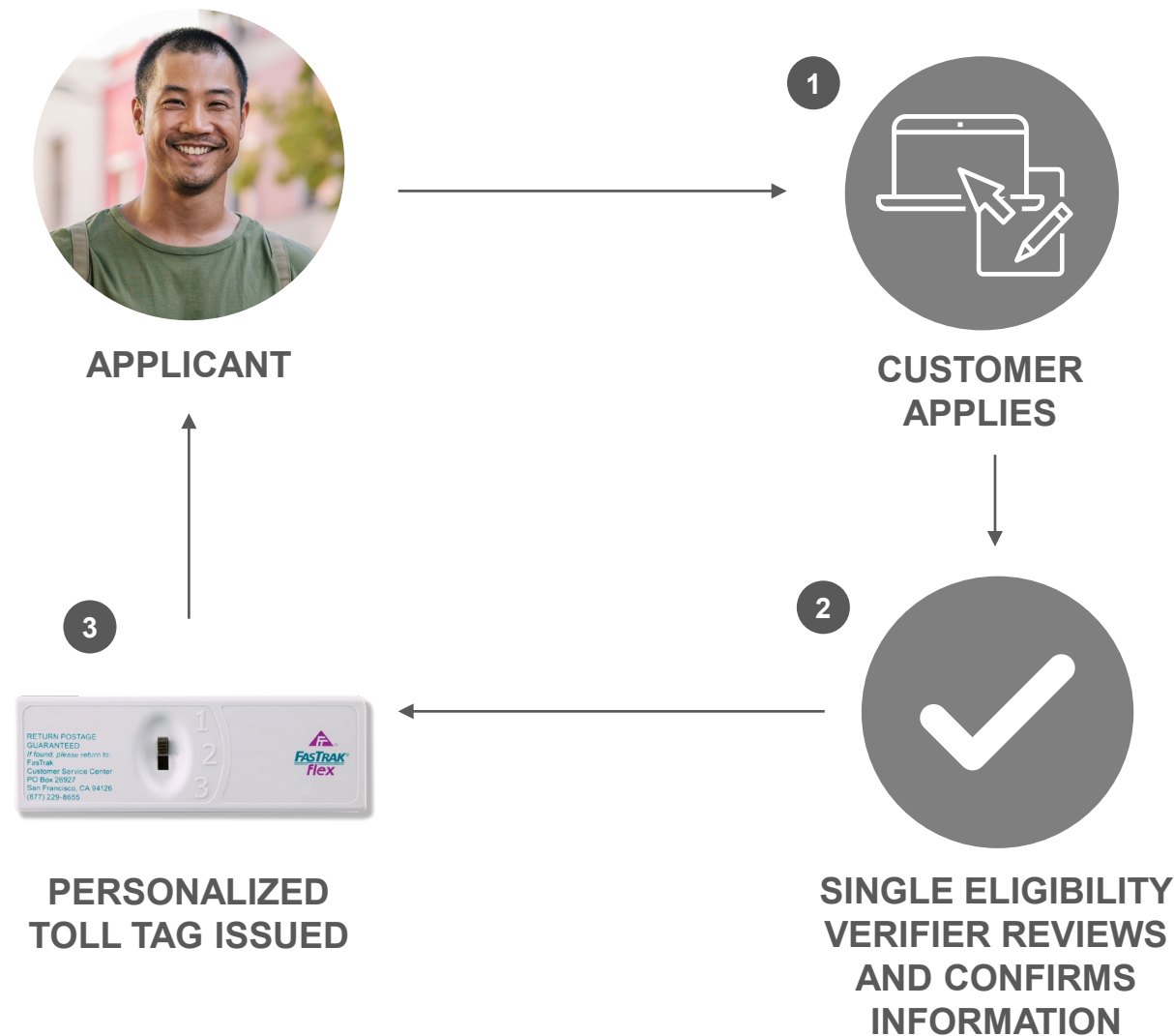
Eligibility

- Adults earning 200% or less of federal poverty level (~\$52,000 for family of four)

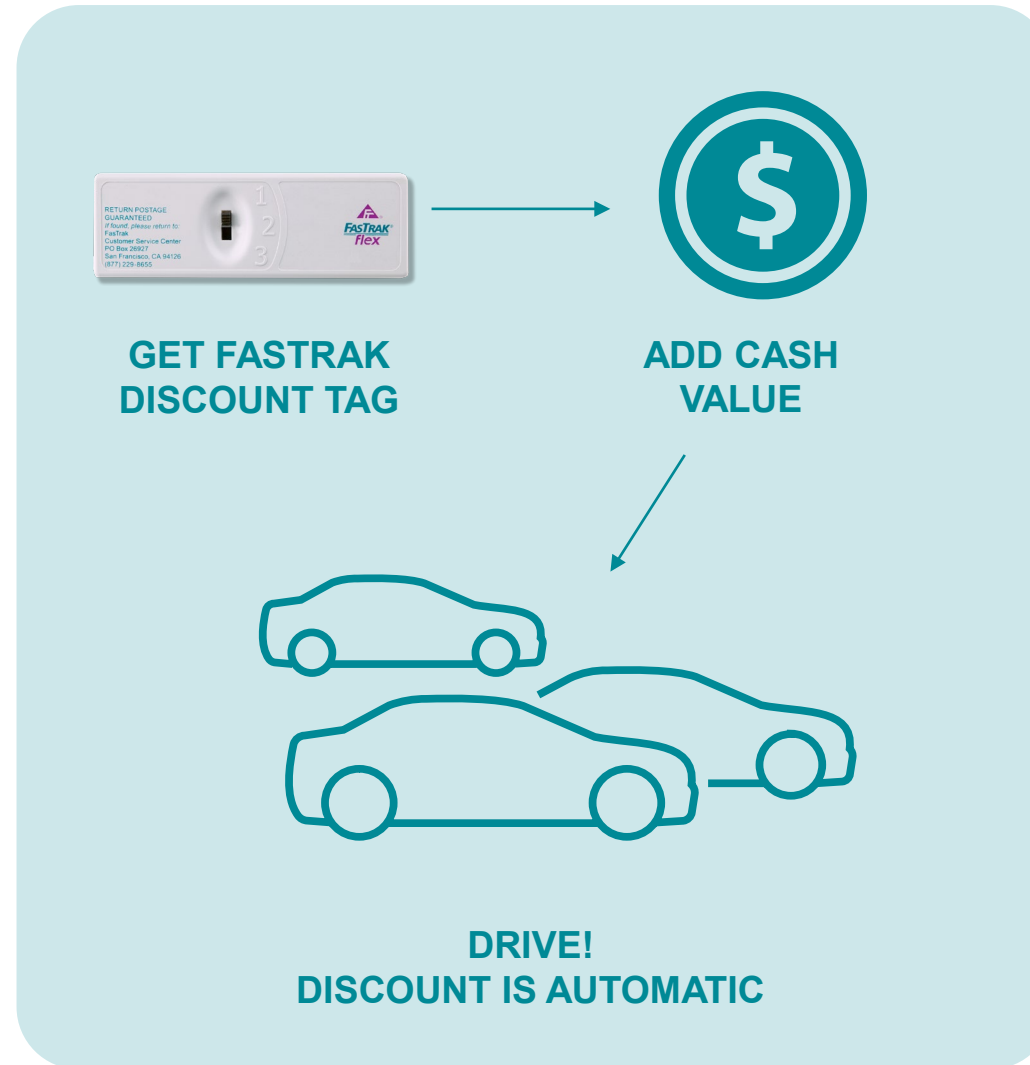
Implementation

- Offered through FasTrak[®]
- Duration: to be determined
- Centrally administered: Customer service systems and eligibility contractor
- Outreach: Social service agencies, community-based organizations & advertising

Simple application process like Clipper START



Pay less in the express lane as a solo driver



Pilot next steps

- Scan peer agencies and projects (underway)
- Create work plan (1-2 months)
 - Scope & schedule
 - Use & operations
 - Cost & funding
 - Public/community involvement & outreach
 - Evaluation & coordination
- Align resources as needed (funds, staff, contractors)
- Implement work plan

Discussion ‘food for thought’

- Does this group support the pilot concept?
- If BAIFA has to prioritize one pilot corridor, should it be I-680 Contra Costa or I-880? Why?
- How can BAIFA make sure that the perspective of low-income individuals is factored into the pilot?
- How should this group be involved in the pilot?