

**TRANSIT RECOVERY
TASK FORCE**

TO: Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force

DATE: October 26, 2020

FR: Steve Kinsey, CivicKnit

RE: BRTRTF Meeting #5 Summary**Mutual Understanding from Task Force Meeting #5** (September 14, 2020)

- 1) Additional transit rider survey and messaging information should be presented.**
- 2) Additional funding is needed to support both existing and expanded services.**

Identified Concerns

- 3) How is equity achieved in this work?**
- 4) Survival is a preoccupying responsibility for operators at this time. The near-term recovery stage is much longer than originally anticipated.**
- 5) Will a qualified consultant be retained to evaluate institutional issues?**

Meeting Summary

Chair Sperling opened the meeting by expressing appreciation to Carl Guardino for his many civic contributions as CEO of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group and welcomed Jason Baker as a new Task Force member, replacing Carl upon his retirement. He also acknowledged the Task Force's contribution to the Operators' *Healthy Transit Plan* and said that the MTC Commission will receive regular updates.

He described the meeting as a pivot point, turning from CARES funding and health issues to a focus on the future of public transit. Recognizing that recovery is taking longer than originally anticipated, the Chair said that it is still important to proceed, which began with several presentations at the September meeting.

MTC Executive Director, Therese McMillan, initiated a joint presentation on the Stage 3 *Transformation Action Plan*; acknowledging that transit's existing situation is challenging and highly uncertain as a result of the pandemic's continuing impact on both revenue and ridership. She recognized that the Stage 3 focus should be on a post-COVID future, but cautioned that it must be balanced with parallel consideration of the operator-led Stage 2 Recovery. In all aspects of MTC's planning and programming, it is essential to address the historic disparities facing underserved and vulnerable transit riders, including directly seeking out their input in the work of this Task Force.

Marin Transit General Manager, Nancy Whelan, presented the operators' perspective on the challenges associated with improving transit's coordination and performance, emphasizing that agencies are in "survival mode", with a 77% decline in ridership regionally. In a review of the transit trips since April 2020, operators have found that most trips are local, with an average distance of less than six miles.

Ms. Whelan highlighted that while transit agencies are continually seeking to improve, there exists a significant number of elements outside of their control that impact transit operations. She suggested that improvements should be considered in the context of near-term and longer-term. Near-term improvements to service coordination, low-cost innovations, and an improved 511 may

be possible without significant new funding. With additional funds and time to plan, other transit priority improvements and a regional express bus service could build the Bay Area into a world-class system. She closed by identifying several different levels of management and governance options, ranging from non-binding to consolidation.

Task Force members, followed by the public, responded with questions and comments, offering thoughts on equity, the importance of improving existing service before further expansion, the need to identify new funding sources, the inherent issues that make consolidation difficult, and how now is the opportunity to think about making changes that create significant improvements. Further, the needs of people with disabilities should be an integral topic in this process and future discussions.

Assembly Member Chiu stated that health safety and survival are important and hopes that we can build public confidence without the need to pursue legislation. He encouraged thinking about ways to make the recovery do more than achieve 4% of trips on transit.

A second presentation was made by Ian Griffiths, Seamless Bay Area's Policy Director and Jonathan Kass, SPUR's Interim Transportation Policy Director. They emphasized that institutional reform is essential during this recovery period to address problems such as infrequent, unreliable, and inequitable service. They also identified changing land use policies and securing additional transit funding as needed in addition to institutional reform. They focused on the benefits that can be achieved through the use of a network manager with broad, binding authority, and illustrated systems around the world that function under that structure. They recommended that the Task Force retain a qualified consultant to analyze the Bay Area's transit investments and governance structure as the best approach to transform our network.

Task Force members, followed by the public, responded with questions and comments. Several supported the idea that the region's transit management is too fractured, warranting consolidation. Some emphasized that no significant improvement can occur without substantial additional funding, while others felt that improved services are not wholly dependent on more funds. Some believe that MTC can or does serve as the Network Manager. Others questioned whether any U.S. Network Manager examples exist, and the Seattle area was identified.

Public members encouraged changes be designed by thinking of the customer first, giving special attention to fare integration and affordability.

Task Force member feedback and public comments from the September meeting will be used to develop a focused work scope discussion for the October 26 meeting.