

BLUE RIBBON



TRANSIT RECOVERY
TASK FORCE

RETURN TO TRANSIT

Existing Research + Program Overview

Presenters

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Project Purpose and Research Notes

- ▶ Review and summarize existing research provided by Bay Area transit operators and other entities to MTC around the impact of COVID-19 on current and future transit ridership
- ▶ Summarize barriers and motivators for the public's return to transit
- ▶ Determine where there are gaps in the information already gathered
- ▶ Inform the design of future public opinion and employer research on this topic

Research Notes

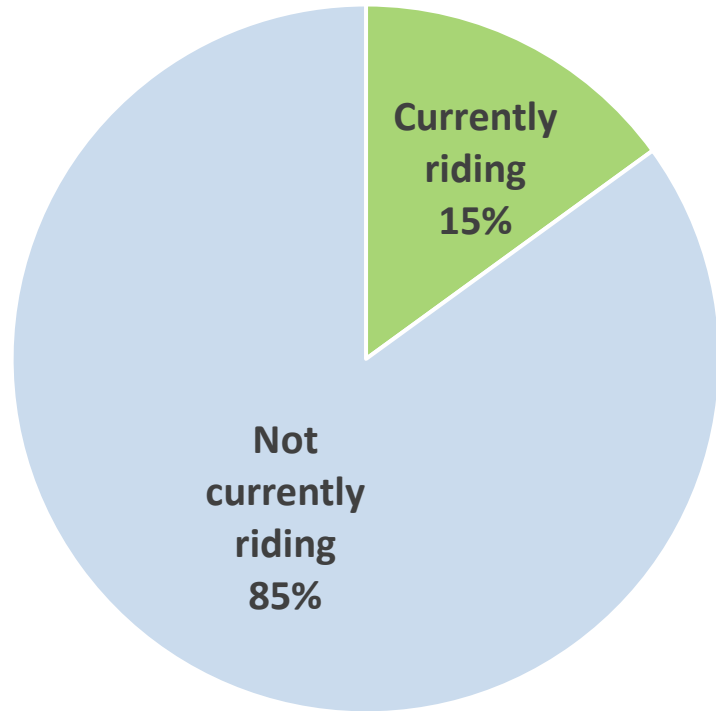
Most of the reviewed research was conducted in the May to July 2020 timeframe, when return to work plans were just beginning to be formulated and much was still not understood about COVID-19.

Transit rider research was provided by 11 Bay Area transit agencies, including ACE, AC Transit, BART, Caltrain, Capitol Corridor, Golden Gate Transit, Golden Gate Ferry, SamTrans, SMART, VTA, and WETA. Most of the agency research was conducted online using invitations distributed through rider lists, social media postings, agency websites, and community groups.

Employer research was provided by Bay Area Council, Silicon Valley Leadership Group, and Caltrain's GoPass program.

Current Rider Behavior

Are you currently riding BART?
(among pre-COVID riders)



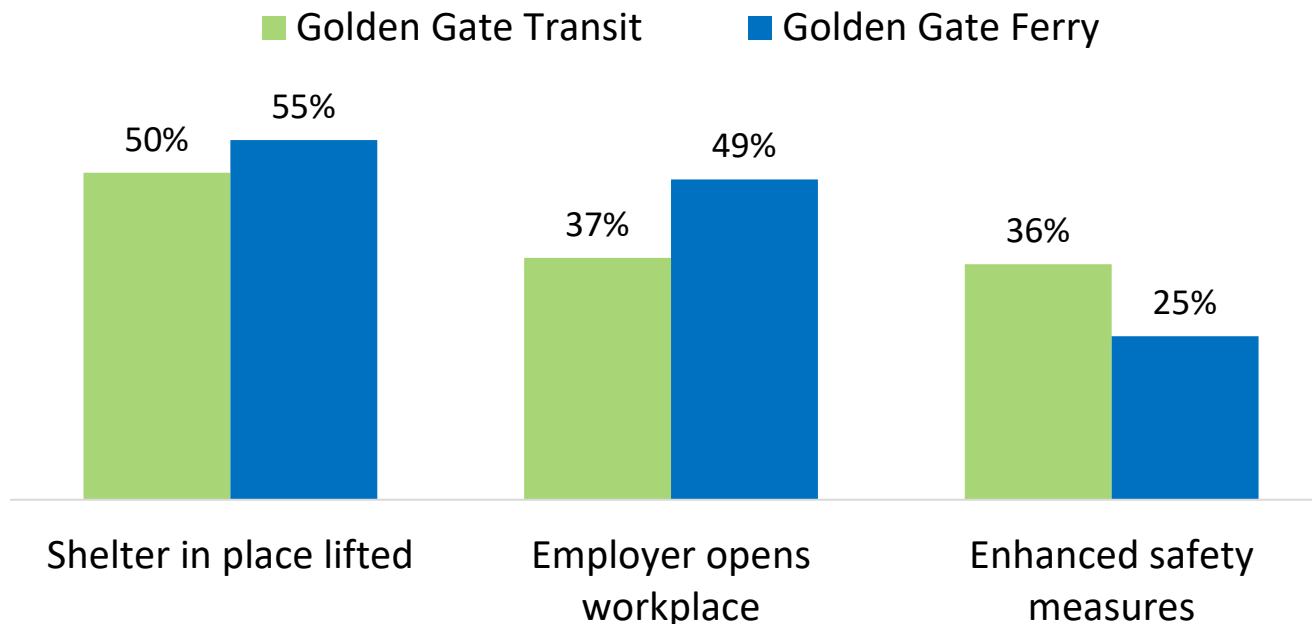
*Current BART riders primarily work in
healthcare, construction, food service, or
government*

- ▶ A majority of Bay Area transit riders **stopped riding transit** in March 2020; many of the rest reduced their ride frequency.
- ▶ The reduction was largely driven by **employers shutting down workplaces** and requiring work be done remotely; replacing transit riding with another travel mode was a much smaller driver of trip reduction.
- ▶ Remaining riders were mostly **commuting to work**, and many identified themselves as **essential workers**; those continuing to ride were largely lower income, more likely to be Black or Hispanic, and less likely to own or have access to a vehicle.

When Will They Return to Transit?

Many riders believed they would return to at least some transit riding **when employers reopen workplaces** and the shelter in place orders are relaxed; **few said they would wait for a vaccine** or cure to consider a return to transit.

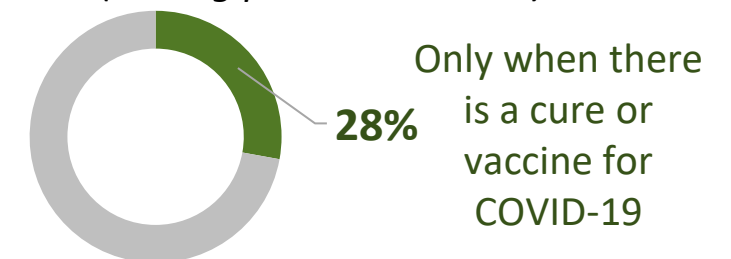
What needs to happen for you to return to riding Golden Gate Transit/Ferry?
(among those not riding now)



When the shelter in place order is lifted, how often do you expect to ride AC Transit?
(among pre-COVID riders)

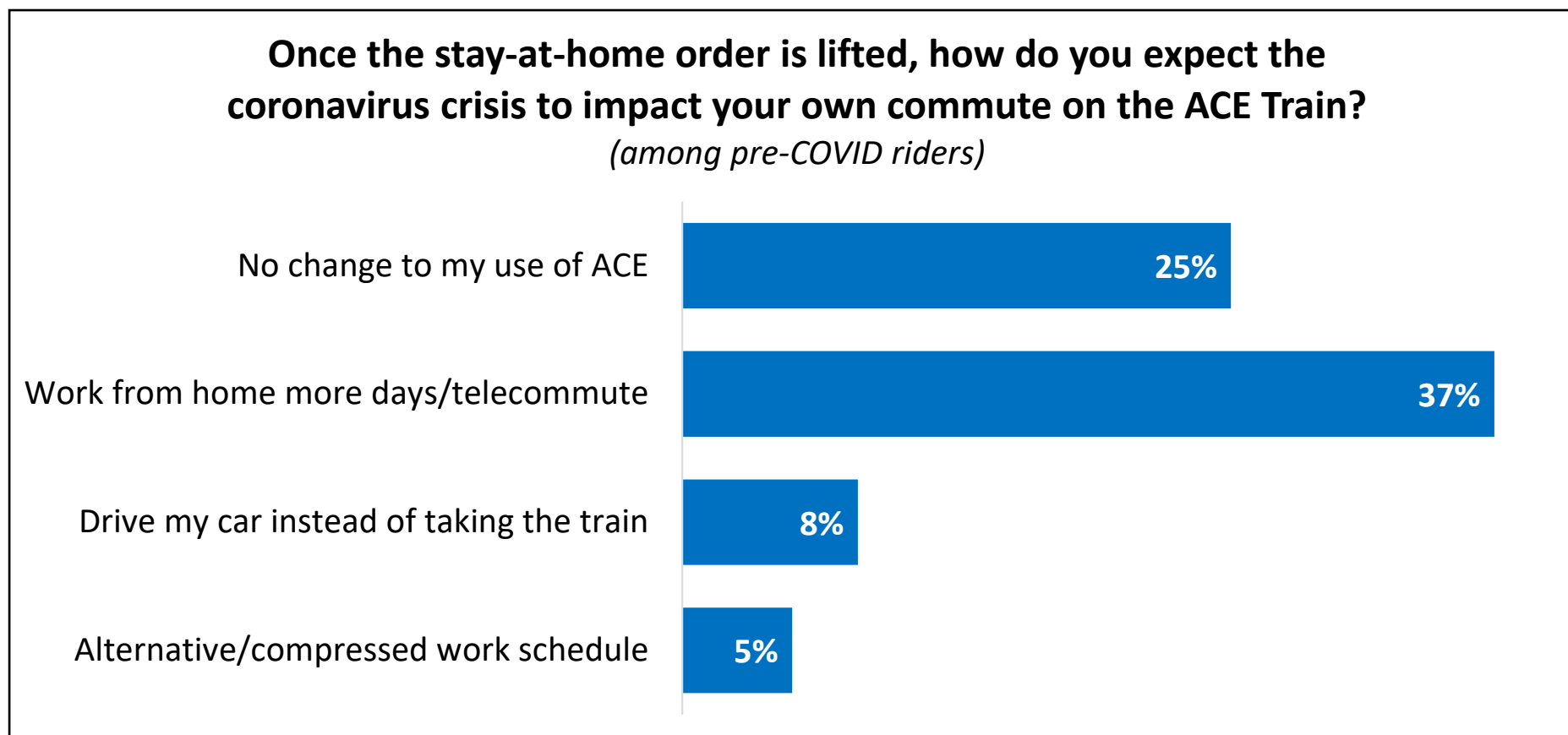
As frequently as before	49%
Less often than before	20%
Not at all	8%
Don't know	23%

What would it take for you to return to your previous level of VTA usage?
(among pre-COVID riders)

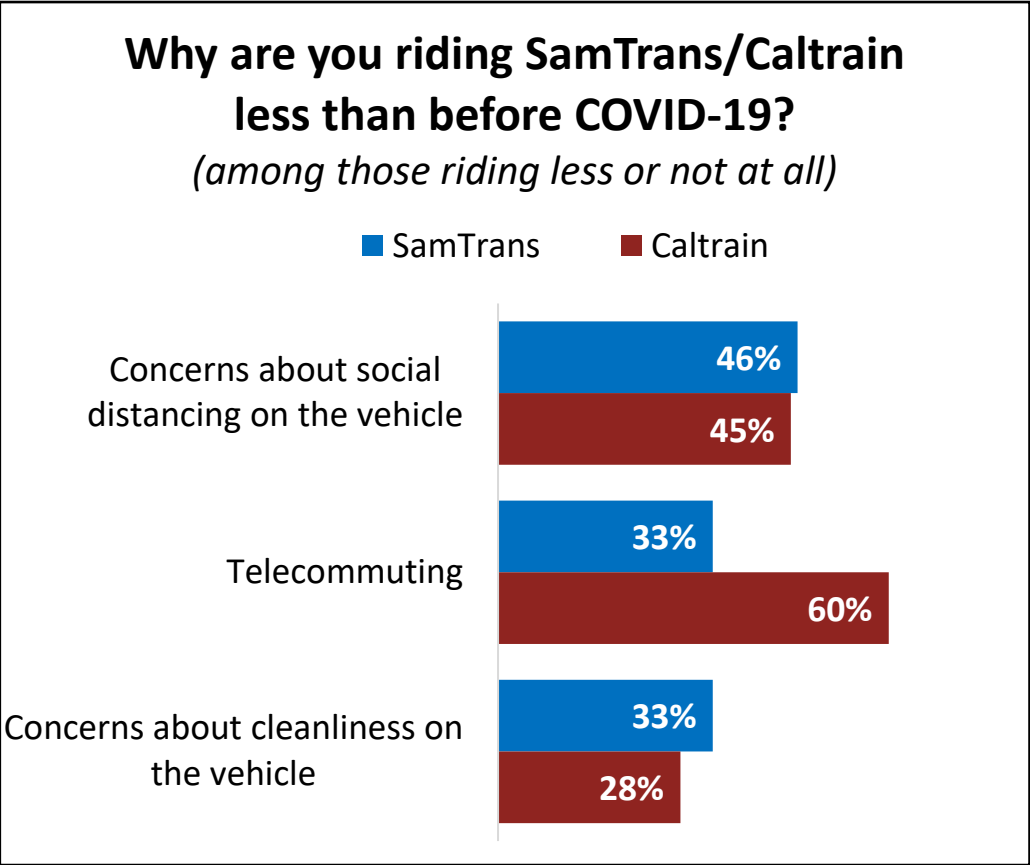


Anticipated Commute Changes

Many riders expect to **telecommute more frequently** than before COVID, and many felt their employers may support **flexible work schedules** to ease commute crowds. For most agencies there is a small segment likely to replace some or all of their transit trips with driving.



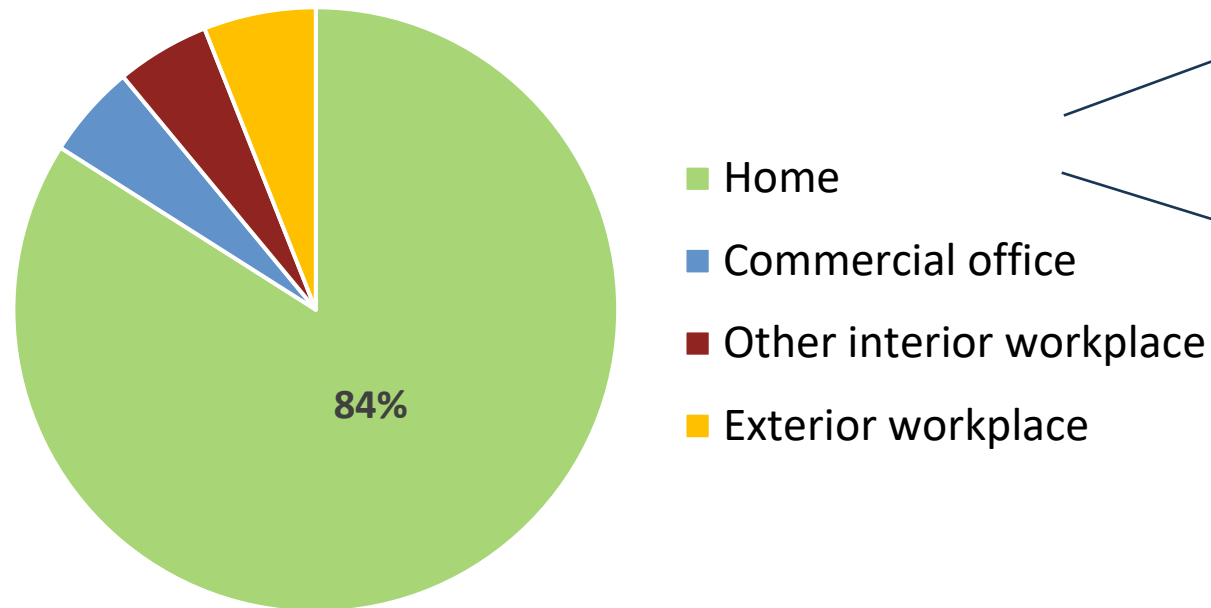
The biggest concern both current and former riders have about returning to transit is the **potential for exposure** to the virus. Enforced **mask wearing**, enhanced vehicle and station **cleaning**, **distancing**, and **hand sanitizer** are important both for current and past riders. Clear and consistent **communication** and **visible cleaning and enforcement** were requests.



Rank importance from 1 to 6 <i>(among pre-COVID riders)</i>	SamTrans Riders	Caltrain Riders
Mandatory face coverings	1	1
Enforced distancing on vehicles	2	2
Limiting riders	3	4
Enhanced cleaning practices	4	3
Available hand sanitizer	5	5
Distancing markers at stops	6	6

Nearly all employers surveyed reported that **most or all of their workforce was working remotely** when the surveys were conducted, and most felt they would not ask staff to come back until the **stay at home order was ended**. Many were only starting to work on return to work strategies.

Percent of current company workforce in each location
(among Bay Area Council members)



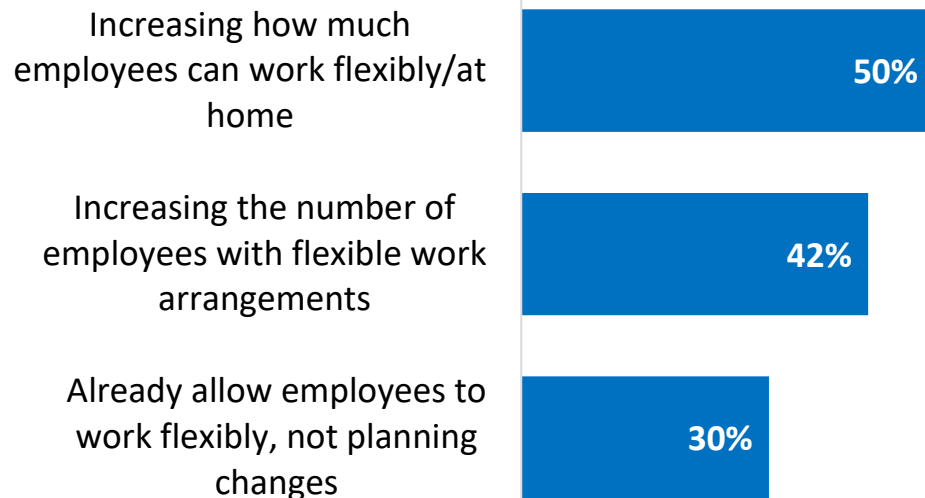
61% were just starting to work on return to work strategy

70% of at-home workforce would not be asked to return until the end of the stay at home order

Employer Adjustments

Many employers said they were willing to continue **allowing employees to work remotely** even when restrictions are lifted, or allow for **flexible work arrangements** such as staggered hours or rotating office shifts. Many employers were also preparing to offer **protective equipment and supplies** for their employees, as well as creating distancing guidelines.

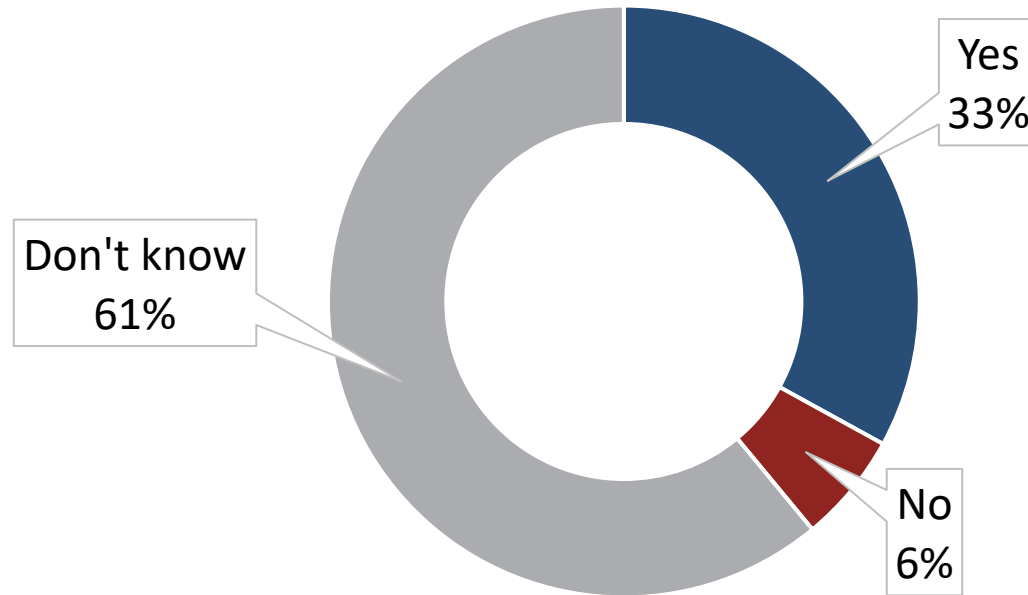
How likely is your organization to consider adopting more flexible work arrangements post-COVID? (among SVLG members)



Which is your company considering implementing? (among BAC members)	% of employers
Providing disinfectants/hand sanitizers	90%
Moving to partial remote work	89%
Moving some employees to support distancing	78%
Providing masks for employees	73%
Requiring employees to wear specific PPE	69%
Creating rotating office shifts	66%
Providing gloves for employees	46%
Moving to full remote work	18%

Employers may be **hesitant to encourage transit use** or shared rides for commuting coming out of the pandemic.

Will your company continue to encourage employees to use transit or shared ride options for their commute?
(among Caltrain GoPASS program employers)





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TRANSIT RECOVERY
TASK FORCE

RETURN-TO-TRANSIT PROGRAM

RETURN-TO-TRANSIT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- MTC acted on 10/14/20 to fund resident and business/employer research.
- This research will help to inform a communications effort when riders return to transit in greater numbers, and to inform decisions that can be made in the meantime.
- MTC is working on this effort with the Transit Operators Communications Working Group.



Future Research Topics: Riders/Public



- ▶ Better understand challenges and perceptions of transit-dependent populations, low-income communities, communities of color, and people with disabilities.
- ▶ Track key behaviors and perceptions on workplace reopening, transit ridership, and safety
- ▶ Monitor potential for long-term change in commuting



- ▶ Gauge reactions to evolving public health information and developments regarding COVID, including impact of national, state, and local leadership
- ▶ Measure awareness of transit operator safety measures and communications on COVID safety
- ▶ Test impact of potential messaging around safety and return to transit

Future Research Topics: Employers



- ▶ Hear from a range of employer types, sizes, industries, and locations, about the near and long-term transportation needs of their employees
- ▶ Understand planning process and timeline for asking employees to return to work, including the triggers that might set a plan in motion
- ▶ Gauge potential for mid- and long-term changes in support for increased or continued remote work
- ▶ Understand how employee commute behaviors interact with perceptions of workplace safety
- ▶ Support collaboration between employers and operators to ensure transit planning is coordinated with return to workplace plans
- ▶ Explore what employers are learning from their own employee engagement processes on future commute plans and concerns





www.mtc.ca.gov/mtc.ca.gov/blue-ribbon-transit-recovery-task-force



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