

Draft Sign on Letter for MTC & Other Bay Area Transportation Stakeholders

November 17, 2021

Dear Governor Newsom,

As you prepare your proposed State Budget for FY 2022-23, the undersigned San Francisco Bay Area organizations urge you to maintain your strong commitment to public transit, active transportation and climate adaptation for transportation infrastructure. As negotiations on high-speed rail funding and an accompanying transportation funding package resume from the last session when those monies reverted to the General Fund, we call upon you to champion these programs even more prominently and stand ready to assist with a unified Bay Area transportation advocacy agenda built on three key points:

- Support High Speed Rail
- Direct General Fund surplus revenues to transportation commensurate with its extraordinary needs
- Prioritize public transit, active transportation and climate adaptation and use proven approaches to ensure geographic balance and consideration of regional priorities.

We Support High Speed Rail

We support an appropriation of Proposition 1A funds to continue construction of the High-Speed Rail segment from Bakersfield to Merced, vital to the statewide system that will ultimately connect to the Bay Area. Critically, many of our region's major transit expansion projects that have been supported by the voters as well as prior state and federal funds, including Diridon Station, the Caltrain Downtown Rail Extension, and Caltrain Electrification are integrally linked to High Speed Rail. Some still require significant additional investment and will only realize their full potential when high-speed rail connects to the Bay Area. Additionally, the state's unwavering commitment to high-speed rail is essential to compete for \$46 billion in new competitive grants in the recently-passed federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

Transportation Needs Warrant Significant GF Surplus Investment

Assuming a budget surplus in the \$30 billion-\$40 billion range, we support a \$10 billion General Fund commitment to transportation that provides at least \$5 billion for public transit, at least \$1.5 billion for active transportation, and at least \$500 million for transportation-related climate adaptation—all investments advanced in last year’s budget negotiations. For the remainder, other important underfunded needs include local road and bridge preservation, green goods movement projects, railroad grade crossings, and highway mobility improvements to help buses and carpools offer a more reliable trip than driving alone.

Why such a large investment in transportation now? Despite passage of the IIIJA, our state’s transportation needs still greatly exceed available resources at the local/regional, state and federal levels and infrastructure is a wise investment of one-time funds. For a sense of the magnitude statewide, in the nine-county Bay Area alone, our six largest transit operators have identified \$10 billion in capital funding shortfalls (net of secured funds) over the next four years and \$17 billion over the next 5-10 years. This includes, for example, transit fleet replacement and expansion for AC Transit, BART, SFMTA and VTA to achieve the state’s ambitious zero emission transit rules and meet future ridership demand and transformational transit projects that can commence or complete construction with a final infusion of funding, like BART to San Jose, BART Core Capacity, and Caltrain Electrification.

Likewise, active transportation and investing in strengthening the resilience of our infrastructure pay dividends beyond “mobility.” Equity is lifted up particularly as our poorest, most vulnerable communities suffer disproportionate gaps in bike and pedestrian safety and bear the brunt of climate change-driven impacts on the economy writ large, and on their communities in particular.

Steer Transit Funding Where It’s Most Needed and Ensure Geographic Equity

To build support for an augmentation of funds at this scale, it is essential to ensure that regions across the state will benefit and have some certainty about how much funding (at a minimum) they will receive. Specifically for transit, we recommend use of the well-established State Transit Assistance (STA) formula, with 75 percent of any General Fund transit augmentation allocated

to regional transportation planning agencies, such as MTC, for programming according to their region's priority transit needs (consistent with their state-mandated sustainable communities strategies (SCS) to reduce climate impacts associated with transportation) and 25 percent to the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) to augment the statewide competitive Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) program, which is heavily oversubscribed. Funding partnerships like this between the state, regional and local transit agencies can accelerate project delivery by streamlining the grant award process and are key to delivering benefits consistent with your office's vision and those of regions, such as Plan Bay Area 2050, the region's recently updated SCS.

Conclusion

On the heels of the COP 26 United Nations Climate Change Conference, California has an opportunity to invest our budget surplus to greatly accelerate implementation of your Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure, which recognizes the need for significant mode shift away from single-occupant vehicle travel to sustainable modes like transit, active transportation and carpooling. The faster we secure the funding to build this sustainable future, the closer we'll reach our urgent climate goals and provide a more affordable and equitable transportation system for Bay Area residents and those of all regions statewide.

Sincerely,

Alfredo Pedroza, MTC Chair

[Signatures of transit general managers, Executive Directors of partner organizations to follow...]